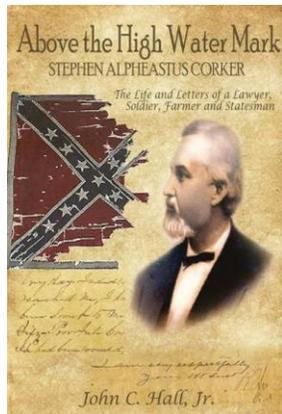


New book describes life for prisoners on Johnson's Island

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SANDUSKY — Georgia native Stephen Alpheastus Corker, an officer in the Confederate army during the Civil War, wasn't a big fan of northern Ohio's weather. Held as a prisoner of war on Johnson's Island, he wrote home on Dec. 17, 1863, "The weather is bitter cold ... I would not live here for anything."

A new book, "Above the High Water Mark," based on letters that Corker wrote before, during and after the Civil War, offers a look at what life was at the Civil War POW camp on Johnson's Island in Ottawa County. During the war, it housed captured Confederate officers. The book, priced at \$20, [is available from Amazon](#). The book was written by John C. Hall Jr., an accountant who lives in Dublin, Ga. Hall is Corker's great-great grandson.

The letters cover the period from 1859 to 1872. The Civil War took place from 1861 to 1865, so "it really tells you the story of the South," Hall said. Following the war and Reconstruction, Corker became a member of Congress.

Corker was in the thick of the war. At Antietam, the single bloodiest day in the war, Corker's sword was shot in two. Corker was captured at Gettysburg during a charge by his unit that reached the Union line. Most of the letters in the book were written from Johnson's Island, Hall said. "My book is probably one of the few real insights about what really went on there," he said. In one incident, "Two prisoners were shot dead when they tried to escape," Hall said. "Corker talks about it in one of his letters."

The camp cut rations for prisoners late in the war, forcing hungry prisoners to hunt for rats, but Corker did relatively well because his family sent him packages. "Corker came from a wealthy family," Hall said. "He wasn't chasing rats like the rest of them."

The Department of Veteran's Affairs maintains a cemetery at Johnson's Island for men who died while being held prisoner. The cemetery includes a large statue of a Confederate soldier, placed by the Daughters of the Confederacy. Tourists regularly visit the site, paying \$2 at a self-service tollgate providing admission to the island. Hall has not visited Johnson's Island yet. "It's on my bucket list," he said.

Dublin is a town of about 16,000 people, about halfway between Atlanta and Savannah. Like many southern towns, it has a Confederate monument. "It's just part of the history of this region," Hall said. "Nobody's made a fuss about it." Dublin did not play a big role in Civil War history, although it does have one distinction. After the South lost the war, the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, passed through Dublin with Union troops hot on his trail. "He was captured the day after he came through Dublin," Hall said.

Hall said working on the book gave him insight into what life was like for Corker. At the beginning of the war, Corker was a patriot, fired with zeal to defend the South. "At the end of the war, in prison, he just wants to go home," Hall said.