

THE BRITISH IN PITTSBURGH:  
POWS IN THE WAR OF 1812

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Far from the Atlantic seaboard and the Canadian frontier, Pittsburgh was not expected to play a major role in the War of 1812. But it became involved in military affairs even before the start of the war, with Fort Fayette acting as a staging point for troops going down the Ohio River to more westerly posts, notably at Newport, Kentucky, opposite Cincinnati. After Congress declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812, troops marched from Pittsburgh to posts along the Canadian frontier in northern Ohio and Michigan.<sup>1</sup> For much of the war, too, Pittsburgh also played a little-known role as a prisoner-of-war (POW) depot for British soldiers and sailors.

The United States anticipated that many, if not most, of the British prisoners captured during the war would be taken from ships. The government therefore sanctioned holding prisoners of war at various seaports on the Atlantic coast and at New Orleans. These ports were designated in the opening months of the war, where all British prisoners were turned over to the US Marshals in their respective districts. Military prisoners were almost an afterthought in a nation that was poorly prepared for war itself. Depots for army and militia prisoners were not

officially established until 1813, almost a year after the war began. The first was to be at Schenectady, New York, but that location proved unsatisfactory and the army posts at Greenbush, New York, and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, were quickly substituted instead. This concentration of POW depots in the Northeast reflected the anticipated area of greatest army operations, along the border between Canada and New York, since the Great Lakes separated most of the remaining settled areas of the two countries.

Yet it was a naval victory, not a military one, that unexpectedly changed the situation in the west. Lake Ontario, between New York and present-day Ontario, was contested throughout the war, with both British and American fleets challenging each other for control. But Lake Erie farther west was also crucially important. Separating western Pennsylvania and Ohio from Ontario, both ends of the lake provided ready passage across the border. On the western side, Lake Erie provided crucial communications and supplies for the British posts on both sides of the border around Detroit and Amherstburgh. Overland supply was inadequate, so control of the lake was crucially important for holding these areas. The pivotal battle on Lake Erie occurred on September 10, 1813; under pressure to act, the British fleet of six ships commanded by Captain Robert Heriott Barclay attacked the nine ships of the American fleet commanded by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry. In the ensuing battle, Perry triumphed, capturing hundreds of British POWs. He then wrote Secretary of the Navy William Jones, reporting that two British ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop had surrendered to him. Perry's commander, Commodore Isaac Chauncey, similarly wrote Jones. Barclay reported that in the battle he had lost three officers and thirty-eight men killed, and nine officers and eighty-five men wounded.<sup>2</sup>

With the United States now controlling Lake Erie, Major General William Henry Harrison's forces were free to advance into Canada toward Amherstburgh. With their supplies and reinforcements now cut off, the British commander at Amherstburgh, Major General Henry Proctor, was unable to resist and began withdrawing to the east. Harrison caught up with him near Moraviantown. On October 5 a battle ensued at the River Thames between the American forces and the British and their Indian allies. During the battle, the Shawnee leader Tecumseh was killed, and over 600 British soldiers were taken prisoner.<sup>3</sup>

Both Perry's and Harrison's victories left hundreds of prisoners in American hands, with the nearest POW depot far to the east at Greenbush, opposite Albany. Marching hundreds of POWs for such a distance through

rugged and sparsely populated territory posed such serious logistical and security obstacles as to be impractical. Perry and Harrison therefore agreed to send their prisoners south, to Chillicothe, then the capital of Ohio, where there was a military command. Perry's prisoners would remain there, while Harrison's would continue on to Newport, Kentucky. Only those too seriously wounded or too ill to travel were exempted; these were to be sent to Pittsburgh.

After his victory on Lake Erie, Perry had landed his prisoners at Sandusky, Ohio, from whence they had been marched to Chillicothe to remain there pending orders from the secretary of the navy.<sup>4</sup> The British officers remained near the lake while Perry waited for orders from Jones, as he wanted to parole those with families back to Canada.<sup>5</sup> The British commander, Barclay, had been seriously wounded by grapeshot during the engagement, which rendered his right shoulder useless, although he could still bend his elbow and use his hand. The injury was especially hard on Barclay as he had lost his left arm earlier in his career. As a result, Perry promised he would parole him, and had so written Jones, acknowledging that it was the humane thing to do although he should have waited for orders from the secretary.<sup>6</sup>

When the war was declared, no formal agreement for the treatment of POWs existed between the United States and Great Britain. Nevertheless, general standards for POW treatment were recognized among the Western powers, and local arrangements were reached by various British and American commanders. Such agreements were limited to the areas and personnel under their authority. Neither the British nor American agents for prisoners of war met to negotiate a formal arrangement until April 1813.

The acting British agent for prisoners of war was Anthony St. John Baker, who had been the *chargé d'affaires* when the war was declared, and had been allowed to remain in Washington to serve in that capacity.<sup>7</sup> Receiving all his instructions from the departing British minister to the United States, Augustus Foster, Baker had no authority to negotiate a POW agreement on behalf of his government. So a formal agreement awaited the appointment of a permanent agent. A POW exchange agreement was, however, negotiated at Halifax, Nova Scotia, between the American agent for prisoners of war there, John Mitchell, and Richard John Uniacke, His Majesty's Advocate General for Nova Scotia, and ratified by the commanding admiral, Sir John Borlase Warren, but was limited to maritime prisoners and, in any case, was subsequently rejected by US Secretary of State James Monroe.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Barclay (no relation to Robert Barclay) had been appointed to be the permanent British agent for prisoners of war in the United States in late 1812, but he did not reach Washington from London until early April 1813.<sup>9</sup> There he met with newly appointed American Commissary General for Prisoners of War John Mason, and the two men negotiated a cartel for the exchange of prisoners of war over the next several weeks.<sup>10</sup> Although it was not subsequently ratified by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in London, the cartel agreement of May 12, 1813, codified the terms of treatment for POWs, most of which were generally followed by both sides.

Among its provisions were the number and locations of POW depots, all except Schenectady being at seaports; the cartel agreement provided for none in the west. Thus, news that Perry and Harrison had sent their prisoners to Ohio, Kentucky, and Pittsburgh must have come as a surprise to Mason when his letters finally reached Washington. Correspondence from the West was slow to reach the capital, so it was two weeks after Perry's victory that Mason wrote Perry about the prisoners. Mason agreed that Perry should fulfill his promise to parole the wounded Barclay either to Canada or, if he was unable to return because of the continuing military campaign on Lake Ontario, to remain on parole in the United States somewhere he would be most comfortable and receive the best medical care. Perry was to provide the same medical care for the other wounded British officers and men, but Mason could not allow them to be paroled since the British had refused to release any American officers who were POWs in Canada for months and were treating them severely. Many of them had been sent from Quebec to the prison at Halifax on crowded ships, and the British were threatening to send the rest to prisons in England. Mason nevertheless approved of the decision to send the estimated 450 POWs to Chillicothe.<sup>11</sup>

Perry's prisoners were ordered to Chillicothe, including the officers, but the 97 wounded prisoners (54 seriously, 43 slightly) were sent to Erie, Pennsylvania, until they were well enough to travel. There they recuperated for nearly three months until December 27 when they were sent to Pittsburgh.<sup>12</sup>

Pittsburgh, a town of about 5,000 people, was unprepared for large numbers of prisoners; no arrangements had been made to receive, house, feed, or guard them. Mason's few instructions regarding the Pittsburgh-bound prisoners had been sent on November 19 to US Marshal of Pennsylvania John Smith at Philadelphia. Mason wrote that he assumed a deputy marshal had been appointed at Pittsburgh to oversee the prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the war, administrative dictates from Washington suggest a smoothly running POW establishment. But the reality on the ground was frequently far different. It was easy to order that accommodations, provisions, guards, and medical care be arranged for the prisoners, but actually doing so was far more difficult.

Fortunately, Marshal Smith had appointed a deputy marshal a year earlier, after Congress enacted a law on July 6, 1812, requiring all alien enemies (British subjects resident in the United States) to report themselves to the marshals. The United States was primarily concerned about British merchants in seaports who might pass intelligence to British ships. Nevertheless, as a major military transit point, Pittsburgh was also a concern, and Marshal Smith had accordingly appointed William B. Irish as deputy marshal for that purpose.<sup>14</sup> While his initial duties were relatively simple—collecting lists of enemy aliens and reporting those who failed to register themselves—the unexpected responsibilities toward POWs were enormous. Irish, however, proved to be a conscientious, though ultimately frustrated, man.

As soon as the decision was made to send the wounded prisoners to Pittsburgh, Mason informed Marshal Smith, who instructed his deputy at Pittsburgh to receive the POWs, provide them with rations, and consult with the military commandant about their safekeeping. He also enclosed a copy of Mason's letter and instructions.<sup>15</sup>

Irish replied to Smith on December 1 that no sick or wounded prisoners had been received in Pittsburgh, nor had there been any British POWs there since the declaration of war. There had been seven prisoners held since at least October, five white and two men of color. They had initially been confined at Fort Fayette, but on October 29 the commandant, Major R. Martin, ordered them removed, so Irish placed them in the county jail, where three of them escaped over the jail wall on November 30. As they had been placed in the sheriff's custody, Irish then instructed him to advertise for their capture.<sup>16</sup>

With no major federal prisons in the United States at this time, the marshals were typically dependent on town and county jails. Local needs, however, had priority, the jails were too small to hold large small numbers of prisoners, and their use depended on the willingness of municipal, county, and state politicians to comply with the government's request. This cooperation was often not forthcoming in New England, a region generally opposed to the war. This was not the case in Pennsylvania, but using local jails was nevertheless an undesirable alternative in the government's view since the federal government was charged the same rate to care for prisoners as the town

or county, which was often exorbitant.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, there was a marked preference for marshals to confine prisoners in army garrisons, especially when large numbers were involved.

To ensure compliance with the terms of the POW agreement, the British agent was allowed to appoint his own subagents at all POW depots. Barclay offered the position of subagent at Pittsburgh to a man apparently of his acquaintance, James Swearingen. Swearingen, a US Army captain, declined it, arguing that his duties required too much time. He did recommend another Pittsburgh resident, John Linton, and gave Barclay's letter and instructions to him. Apparently eager to be the subagent even before Barclay made a formal offer, Linton called on the senior British officer as soon as the POWs arrived and arranged for the prisoners' comfort.<sup>18</sup> Barclay followed Swearingen's recommendation and offered the position to Linton, who accepted on December 31, sent his accounts for the clothing supplied thus far, and asked what money he was to supply the prisoners per month.<sup>19</sup> A few months later, the United States decided that American citizens should not act as British agents, and Barclay accordingly notified Linton in April 1814. But it appears that at Pittsburgh, as elsewhere, Barclay ignored the US regulation, and Linton continued to serve until the departure of the prisoners.<sup>20</sup>

Even before he secured a subagent to report on conditions, and almost immediately on the arrival of the POWs at Pittsburgh, Barclay complained that the British prisoners had not been supplied with bedsteads, straw, cooking utensils, or enough fuel. The complaints must have come from the POWs and, in light of subsequent events, probably from John Kennedy, the surgeon of the 41st Infantry Regiment. Barclay's attitude, widely shared in British circles, was that all British assertions were true and all American statements were merely assertions requiring proof. As he typically did, Barclay then threatened to withdraw these items from the American prisoners held by the British if British prisoners were not properly cared for. It should be noted Barclay was a New York loyalist who had fled to Canada, his property was confiscated, and he had been attainted for treason by the state in 1779. In 1805 DeWitt Clinton had described him to then-Secretary of State James Madison as "very rancorous against our government."<sup>21</sup>

By early January, fifty-six more British POWs arrived at Pittsburgh, including two of the men who had escaped the jail on November 30. These men had been recaptured by Lieutenant Jesse D. Elliott who had been conducting the British POWs to Pittsburgh, and he returned the men with the rest. Among the fifty-six new prisoners, none were officers and only thirteen

were in the Royal Navy, including the two escapees; the rest were army personnel, most from the British 41st Infantry Regiment.<sup>22</sup>

Irish received only three hours advance notice that so many men were en route, and with both the garrison at Fort Fayette and the jail already crowded, it was only with great difficulty that he was able to prevail on Major Martin, the commander at that fort, to take charge of them. Not unreasonably, Irish assumed that the military was obliged to secure prisoners of war in such cases, but Martin had received no such orders from his superiors and did not share that perspective. He soon ordered Irish to remove the British prisoners from the garrison, and with no room in the jail and few options Irish wrote Mason for instructions.

Making matters worse, Midshipman Samuel W. Adams informed Irish that still more POWs were now on their way from Erie, including officers. If they arrived, Irish wrote, he would have to build barracks to house the men and would need funds to pay the officers' allowances and other expenses.<sup>23</sup>

The usual practice at this time as codified in the cartel agreement was to confine the common men and provide them rations and necessary clothing. The officers were generally paroled within the confines of the town and given a cash subsistence which, at this time, was three shillings sterling per day per officer (calculated at four shillings six pence per American dollar). If they were not paroled—usually for some major infraction—they received no allowances and were provided with rations like the other POWs. On parole, however, the officers were expected to pay for their own accommodations in local houses or inns, and provide for their own meals.

Although confinement was usual for ordinary POWs, a fortunate few found alternatives. A British soldier at Chillicothe wrote to Henry Bakewell at Pittsburgh offering his services as an experienced glasscutter provided he could secure his parole.<sup>24</sup> Bakewell was a partner in the flint-glass manufacturing company of Bakewell, Page, and Bakewell on Water Street and managed to secure permission from Mason for the prisoner, Michael Myers, to come to Pittsburgh, promising to use the utmost vigilance to ensure that Myers would not escape, and to pay the reward for his apprehension if he did.<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a Pittsburgh architect, also wrote to Mason, seeking to employ a carpenter from among the British prisoners. He too was given permission to employ the POW. He was to be paroled to remain within two or three miles of the place of his employment provided he wanted to be hired, and on the same terms agreed to by Bakewell, which included reporting each week to the marshal.<sup>26</sup> The arrangements were

apparently satisfactory as Latrobe subsequently sought permission to hire six more British POWs at Chillicothe.<sup>27</sup>

As elsewhere, the prisoners at Pittsburgh were allowed to send and receive letters, provided they were first read by the marshal. But Irish soon intercepted an objectionable letter sent by John Kennedy, surgeon of the 41st Regiment. Irish forwarded the letter to Mason since, he wrote, it contained false and impudent claims. Kennedy was, he reported, a troublesome prisoner; he acted outrageously en route to Pittsburgh, abused the midshipman who was conducting the POWs, and behaved very insolently to Irish, for which he was warned that he would be confined if he did so again. Kennedy was particularly upset that Irish refused to provide him with subsistence pay. Because British surgeons did not hold commissioned rank at that time, Irish treated him as a common prisoner.

To avoid more obnoxious letters, Irish gave the postmaster a list of those malcontents likely to write such letters so they could be intercepted; without orders from his superiors, however, Irish doubted the postmaster would comply. Nevertheless, he felt Kennedy might seriously injure the government if he were not restricted. None of the British officers sent letters that contained anything very exceptionable and were thus allowed to continue writing. Mason reproved Irish for not confining Kennedy, as failing to send uninspected letters was a parole violation, and instructed him to examine letters in the future for infractions. Barclay declined to defend Kennedy's conduct but nevertheless suggested, as usual, that the Americans were to blame.<sup>28</sup>

Irish later complained that Kennedy was "a very impertinent fellow and a most inveterate enemy to everything American and I have no doubt will give every information respecting this country should he be permitted to return." Nevertheless, Mason subsequently ordered that Kennedy was to be held as a noncombatant, and would be paid subsistence of one shilling six pence per diem for paroled nonofficers.<sup>29</sup>

Although commissioned officers were entitled to subsistence pay, until Irish received funds from Mason he was forced to house and feed the officers as well as the common prisoners. By January 9, 1814, eighty-five British POWs including officers were held at Pittsburgh, all at Fort Fayette. He was able to house them there only because the garrison's troops had been ordered to march to Erie, thus freeing the space. But other troops were hourly expected to arrive, and when they did, he would have to find some other place to house the prisoners.



Even though he did not have to pay the paroled officers their subsistence money while they were held at Fort Fayette, Irish had already incurred considerable expenses in housing and feeding the prisoners, but had received no funds from either Mason or Marshal Smith. Irish tried to arrange for rations from the army contractor at Pittsburgh, but he was refused because he did not want to comply with the rations specified in the cartel agreement as they differed from army rations. Irish therefore found a local man who would furnish the rations, but he expected to be paid monthly. The amount would be about \$440 per month excluding officers' pay, bunks, straw, fuel, and so forth. Irish accordingly sought instructions from Mason.<sup>30</sup> None were forthcoming, however, and Irish was left to his own devices.

Fort Fayette could not be a permanent residence for the prisoners. The local jail held some, but it was too small to hold them all, and many were crowded into it. When one of them, a black man, died, the doctor and citizens of Pittsburgh urged that the prisoners be removed to roomier accommodations. Otherwise, they felt, more would die and their diseases would spread to the town. Under these circumstances, Irish took it upon himself to order the construction of frame barracks to house the prisoners and guards in early April 1814. It was, he felt, either that or release the prisoners.

The barracks resolved Irish's housing problem, but not his difficulties in supplying and guarding the prisoners. Since the prisoners arrived, Irish had been chronically underfunded. His requests to Marshal Smith for funds for these purposes had similarly gone largely unanswered, as Smith too had great difficulties in securing funds from Mason. Irish therefore accepted personal responsibility for the accruing bills and had prevailed on friends for money, but he was now so far in arrears he wrote Mason that he refused to accept further responsibility either for the prisoners' supplies or safekeeping unless he received at least \$2,000 as soon as possible.<sup>31</sup> Irish was owed \$4244.57 for May alone, most of it for the cost of building the barracks.<sup>32</sup>

Mason's office had nominally received funds for the POW service, but reimbursements to all the marshals were slow. Marshals received little or nothing in advance, but were expected to send monthly accounts supported by appropriate vouchers. Mason was responsible to the Treasury Department for his funds, which was exceedingly slow in paying its bills. This often left marshals far in arrears and personally deeply in debt. In any event, Irish was chronically, even desperately, underfunded throughout his tenure at Pittsburgh.

Prisoner-of-war life was undoubtedly tedious. Roll call was taken each morning and evening, and the prisoners cleaned and maintained their own prisons. The prisoners were organized into six-man messes that were responsible for cooking the rations issued for each meal. Fighting, cursing, and gambling were all prohibited, at least in theory.<sup>33</sup>

Though monotonous, life for the prisoners at Pittsburgh was punctuated by events beyond their control. Almost as soon as the British were captured on Lake Erie, efforts began to exchange them. Barclay's initial proposal for an exchange was at first declined, but within weeks Mason agreed to exchange all the British POWs taken from the Canadian command for all the American prisoners held in Canada. The POWs at Chillicothe and Pittsburgh would be sent to Erie and embarked on vessels for Niagara or the nearest British post.<sup>34</sup> Despite this offer, Barclay argued that it was too late in the season to send the prisoners back. They would therefore continue to be held as POWs until the lakes opened the following spring.<sup>35</sup> The lakes were still open when Barclay wrote but by the time the POWs could be readied, even if the weather did not impede their march, the lakes would likely be frozen, rendering sailing too hazardous to attempt.<sup>36</sup> The Pittsburgh prisoners therefore remained confined throughout the winter of 1813–14. But further political events also delayed their anticipated spring release.

Lieutenant General Sir George Prevost, governor and commander-in-chief of the Canadas, had sent some captured American soldiers to England in strict confinement to await trials for treason. These men were Irish immigrants and most, if not all, were naturalized American citizens, which the British refused to recognize on the argument that only the king could release British-born subjects from their natural obligations.<sup>37</sup> When President Madison learned of this many months after the men were sent to England, he ordered twenty-three British soldiers similarly confined to guarantee the safety of the soldiers sent to England.<sup>38</sup> The British were outraged at this and the Prince Regent escalated matters by ordering forty-six more American POWs confined, doubling the number of hostages held, and now focusing solely on officers.<sup>39</sup> The United States replied in kind and forty-six British officers were ordered similarly confined, which included those held at Pittsburgh.<sup>40</sup>

Barclay blamed the United States for the strict confinement that would befall the British officer POWs at Pittsburgh. He also declared that all exchanges would also cease, and he accordingly directed British POW Commander Edward Wise Buchan at Pittsburgh to inform the other British officers.<sup>41</sup>

In February Mason instructed Marshal Smith to confine the officers in Pittsburgh. They were to be arrested, confined, and their paroles suspended, which meant stopping their subsistence money and supplying them with rations like the other prisoners. Nevertheless, their rooms were to be supplied with brick stoves or fireplaces, beds, and furniture, and each field officer (i.e., major and above) was to be allowed one servant who would be confined alongside him. They were only to converse with visitors in the marshal's presence.<sup>42</sup> As the officers at Pittsburgh were already confined because little funding had reached Irish, the impact was relatively minor when Mason ordered the two lieutenants and two midshipmen at Pittsburgh confined on March 8.<sup>43</sup> Commander Buchan was not confined, having already died. He was buried in Pittsburgh, for which Barclay declined to pay, demanding instead that the cost be deducted from Buchan's personal effects.<sup>44</sup>

The hostage standoff eased when Prevost gave American POW Brigadier General William H. Winder a temporary three-month parole to the United States on his promise to try to persuade the American government to relax the retaliation. When Winder reached Washington, Secretary of State Monroe authorized him to negotiate a general release with Prevost. To reciprocate for Winder's parole, Mason offered similar short-term paroles to Canada to Lieutenant Colonel Augustus Warburton and his servant held in Kentucky. They were to travel by way of Pittsburgh and, from there, go by a circuitous route including Alexandria and Williamsburg, Virginia, to Niagara.<sup>45</sup> Mason soon offered similar paroles to three more British officers: Captains Muir, Chambers, and Crowther. These three were also to go to Canada via Pittsburgh, where they would be joined by surgeon John Kennedy and purser John N. Hoofman.<sup>46</sup>

Negotiations began between Winder for the United States and Colonel Edward Baynes, Prevost's adjutant general; an exchange agreement was concluded in April. Because of communication difficulties, the soldiers sent to England for trial were not included in this agreement and the United States rejected it. But in July 1814 an amended agreement was reached.<sup>47</sup>

All was not well with the Pittsburgh prisoners, however. Six died in the spring of 1814, including Commander Buchan.<sup>48</sup> A dozen prisoners also escaped, two from the jail, four from Fort Fayette, and the rest from the barracks, although Irish claimed all but four were recaptured.<sup>49</sup>

When word reached Pittsburgh that the prisoners were to be exchanged back to Canada, escapes accelerated. Escaped officers usually tried to return to their own side. But the same was not true of the ordinary sailors and

soldiers. When they escaped, it was rarely to their own side, fearing impressment or conscription. Instead, they fled into the interior of the United States and remained there.<sup>50</sup> So when word that British prisoners were to be sent to Canada reached Pittsburgh, another ten men escaped and were not recaptured.<sup>51</sup>

The release of POWs at Pittsburgh began early. Despite the US failure to ratify the initial exchange agreement, Mason ordered the release of some of the officers in Ohio and Kentucky, and all of those in Pittsburgh, in April. They were to be taken across the lake and exchanged near Fort George. At that time, Pittsburgh held seventy-five privates and noncommissioned officers and four officers.<sup>52</sup> This release was to be a short-term parole rather than an exchange, which obligated the prisoners to return. Some felt it was not worth the trip if they had to return so soon and declined the offer. One of the officers who did wish to return to Canada, Louis P. Johnston, was too unwell to travel, so he was removed to an airy upstairs room in the jailor's apartment in order to save his life. The other officers at Pittsburgh, however, decided to go provided Irish could furnish transportation.<sup>53</sup>

In accord with the initial exchange agreement, Prevost returned 300–400 prisoners to the United States before he learned that Secretary of State Monroe had rejected it. Based on that initial release, however, Mason ordered the release of 300 prisoners at Pittsfield to Isle Aux Noix and all 80 at Pittsburgh to be sent to Erie. Preparations were ordered begun for the journey, including traveling expenses.<sup>54</sup> At Mason's request, Secretary of War Armstrong ordered the guard at Pittsburgh to accompany the POWs.<sup>55</sup>

Irish reported that all the POWs would be sent on parole to Lake Erie under guard and there embarked for Canada on July 6, along with several women and children belonging to the prisoners.<sup>56</sup> But to do so, Irish required funds, as he needed to hire wagons for their baggage, for the infirm, and for the nine women and seventeen children who had accompanied the prisoners to Pittsburgh.<sup>57</sup> Mason had already authorized the money, and the next day Irish received \$1,000 from Marshal Smith.<sup>58</sup>

Irish also needed guards to accompany the prisoners but the militia Irish had been employing refused to go until they were paid. Furthermore, the lieutenant commanding them was near death and, even if he recovered, would be unable to go. Irish thus preferred a guard composed of regulars and expected the commander at Fort Fayette to furnish it. But when he requested one from the new commander, Colonel Hugh Brady, Brady declined, having

not yet received orders to provide it, as at this point, Mason had not yet made his request to Armstrong.<sup>59</sup>

An opportunity arose to send some of the prisoners back to Canada when Major Trimble arrived on the evening of June 3 with the paroled officers from Kentucky. But Irish would not be prepared to send the POWs to Canada for another ten or twelve days, and Trimble refused to wait longer than the sixth, as he felt the government did not wish to detain the officers. He nevertheless saddled Irish with additional expenses. Eight of the British officers who arrived with him needed horses since they had only hired horses in Kentucky to bring them as far as Pittsburgh. So when Irish wrote Mason for instructions and funds to pay for wagons, he also requested money for the officers' horses and subsistence on the march.<sup>60</sup>

Trimble and the Kentucky officers left Pittsburgh between June 6 and 9, having split into smaller parties for ease of traveling, but the Pittsburgh POWs were left behind. On June 12 Irish was still waiting for funds, but at least Midshipman Johnston had recovered enough to travel. Trimble had also left another officer, Lieutenant Colonel Evans, behind at Pittsburgh, being ill.<sup>61</sup>

At 1 p.m. on June 25, Mason had finally received enough funds to send all the POWs at Pittsburgh to Erie. But there were still problems. Colonel Brady had finally received an order to furnish regular troops to guard the prisoners, but had already sent all his troops off before the order arrived. Therefore, since the militia had recently received two months' back pay, Irish employed them as the guard for the trip. He had also provided four wagons to haul the crippled prisoners, wives, children, and baggage.<sup>62</sup>

On July 5, the POWs left Pittsburgh for Erie, Pennsylvania, where they were to request the commander of the US schooner *Ohio* to cross the lake, land the POWs at Long Point, and take receipts for their delivery. That plan, however, was frustrated as American Major General Jacob Brown had captured Fort Erie in Ontario, the ultimate destination of the prisoners, on July 3.<sup>63</sup>

With the POWs gone from Pittsburgh, Irish's responsibility greatly diminished but did not end. Other prisoners reached or passed through Pittsburgh, including British officers from Kentucky.<sup>64</sup> Some paroled British officers made repeated demands on Irish for additional funds, which Irish was unable to provide, not yet having received more. At least one, Lieutenant Edward Bremner, also passed through Pittsburgh but without Irish's knowledge.<sup>65</sup> A very late captive, Lieutenant Colonel Mahlon Burwell, paroled from Chillicothe in December 1814, also passed through Pittsburgh.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the last British POW held in Pittsburgh was the glasscutter Michael Myers. Returning POWs was a high priority for the American government, as the British would only return the same number or equivalent of American POWs as they received from their own men. Therefore, often despite the wishes of the British prisoners, they were all sent back to their own side. The sole exception, at least at Pittsburgh and perhaps in the entire United States, was Myers. It turned out that the British authorities had allowed an American soldier to opt to remain in Canada rather than return home, so Mason wrote Irish that he was to make a similar offer to Myers.<sup>67</sup> He did so, and Myers chose to remain in America as a glasscutter, the only British POW of the over 15,000 captured by the United States to be given this option.<sup>68</sup>

When most of the prisoners left Pittsburgh in late June 1814, Irish wrote Mason, asking what he was to do with the barracks that housed them. Was it to be sold or held for future use? Apparently receiving no instructions about the barracks' disposition, and having no further use for it, Irish sold it to avoid having to pay the \$100 a year in rent for the lot on which it stood. He received this amount, which he described as a trifle, since it was not fit for families to inhabit.<sup>69</sup>

By the end of 1814, having what can only be described as an exasperating experience, Irish resigned his position and was succeeded by Joseph McMasters at the Deputy Marshal at Pittsburgh.<sup>70</sup> William B. Irish then became the clerk of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.<sup>71</sup>

#### ABBREVIATIONS FOR ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES CITED

HSWPenn	Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh
LAC	Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa
LC	Library of Congress, Washington, DC
NA	National Archives, Washington, DC
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England
NYHS	New York Historical Society, New York
OHS	Ohio Historical Society, Columbus
SHSW	State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison

TNA	The National Archives, Kew, England
	ADM (Admiralty)
	CO (Colonial Office)
	FO (Foreign Office)
	WO (War Office)
UMCL	University of Michigan, Clements Library, Ann Arbor

## NOTES

1. Lt. Charles Larrabee to Lt. Adam Larrabee, Feb. 5, 1812, SHSW-Draper-Mss-Frontier-Wars, series U, roll 56, vol. 9, 1; journal of Sgt. Greenberry Keen, Oct. 2, 1812–April 24, 1813, HSW Penn-MFF1074 Archives Coll.
2. Capt. Oliver Hazard Perry to William Jones, Sept. 10, 1813, NA, RG 45, M-125, roll 31, 33; Capt. Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, Sept. 20, 1813, NYHS–Chauncey Letterbook; Cmdr. Robert Heriot Barclay to Capt. Sir James Lucas Yeo, Sept. 12, 1813, NMM, WAR/71, 112; Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 132–35; Jon Latimer, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 183.
3. Thomas Steele to John Mason, Oct. 23, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 12, folder 1, 103; Hickey, *War of 1812*, 137–39; Latimer, *1812*, 186–91.
4. Capt. Oliver H. Perry to William Jones, Sept. 13, 1813, NA, RG 45, M-125, roll 31, 41.
5. Perry to Jones, Sept. 18, 1813, *ibid.*, 66.
6. Perry to Jones, Sept. 20, 1813, *ibid.*, 73; Cmdr. Robert H. Barclay to John Barclay, Oct. 26, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 1, folder 4, 38; Cmdr. Robert H. Barclay to Capt. Sir James L. Yeo, Sept. 12, 1813, NMM, WAR/71, 112.
7. For a general discussion of agreements at this time in history on the treatment and exchange of prisoners of war, see Peter Wilson, “Prisoners in Early Modern European Warfare,” in *Prisoners in War*, ed. Sybille Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39–56; Augustus Foster to Viscount Castlereagh, June 20, 1812, TNA FO 5/86, 241; Augustus Foster to James Monroe, June 21, 1812, TNA FO 5/86, 274.
8. Cartel for the Exchange of Prisoners of War, Nov. 28, 1812, NA, RG 59, M-588, roll 6, 19, 25; NMM WAR/78, 235; James Monroe to John Mitchell, March 20, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 3, folder 1, 56; NA RG 94, entry 127, box 20, folder 1, 46.
9. Commissioners of the Transport Board to Thomas Barclay, Dec. 1, 1812, TNA ADM 98/292, 1; Thomas Barclay to the Commissioners of the Transport Board, April 18, 1813, NYHS–Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Sept. 1814, 1; Thomas Barclay to Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, April 14, 1813, NYHS–Barclay Letterbook, April–Sept. 1813, 2.
10. Cartel for the Exchange of POWs, May 12, 1813, TNA ADM 103/465pt1, 235.
11. John Mason to Capt. Oliver H. Perry, Sept. 24, 1813, UMCL-Perry; Mason to Maj. Daniel Parker, Sept. 24, 1813, LC-T-A17. 040. 1, 300; Mason to Perry, Sept. 29, 1813, LC-T-A17. 040. 1, 320.

12. John Mason to John Armstrong, Oct. 23, 1813, NA, RG 107, M-22, roll 7, 296; Mason to Robert Crockett, Nov. 3, 1813, LC-T-A17.040.1, 427; Mason to Thomas Steele, Nov. 6, 1813, LC-T-A17.040.1, 425; Mason to Maj. Richard Graham, Nov. 18, 1813, LC-T-A17.040.1, 477; Capt. Oliver H. Perry to Mason, Oct. 7, 1813, NA, RG 45, box 607; Mason to John Smith, Nov. 19, 1813, LC Mss 17.040.1, 481; Usher Parson, *Surgeon of the Lakes: The Diary of Dr. Usher Parsons, 1812–1814*, ed. John C. Fredriksen (Erie, PA: Erie County Historical Society, 2000), 61.
13. John Mason to John Smith, Nov. 19, 1813, LC-T-A17.040.1, 481.
14. Department of State circular to the marshals, July 11, 1812, NA, RG 45, box 599; John Smith to James Monroe, Dec. 8, 1812, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 16, folder 2, 19.
15. John Smith to John Mason, Nov. 22, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 16, folder 3, 51.
16. William B. Irish to John Smith, Dec. 1, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 16, folder 3, 58.
17. E.g., N. G. O'Leary, April 2, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 126, box 4, folder 2.
18. Maj. James S. Swearingen to Thomas Barclay, Dec. 5, 1813, NYHS–Barclay Papers, box 2.
19. Thomas Barclay to Maj. James S. Swearingen, Dec. 21, 1813, and Barclay to the Commissioners of the Transport Board, Dec. 23, 1813, NYHS–Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Aug. 1814, 98, 101; John Linton to Barclay, Dec. 31, 1813, NYHS–Barclay Papers, box 2.
20. Thomas Barclay to John Linton, April 14, 1814, NYHS–Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Aug. 1814, 222.
21. Thomas Barclay to John Mason, Dec. 15, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 17, folder 1, 15. DeWitt Clinton to James Madison, May 1, 1805, in *Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, vol. 9, ed. Mary A. Hackett et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 303–4.
22. William B. Irish, List of 56 British POWs delivered to Pittsburgh, Jan. 5, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 584.
23. William B. Irish to John Mason, Jan. 4, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 1.
24. Michael Myers to Henry Bakewell, March 28, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597.
25. Henry Bakewell to John Mason, April 5, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597; Benjamin Page to John Mason, April 16, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597; John Mason to William B. Irish, April 16, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597.
26. John Mason to Benjamin Henry Latrobe, April 19, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597; Mason to William B. Irish, May 2, 1814, NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:295.
27. Benjamin Henry Latrobe to John Mason, June 1, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 592.
28. William B. Irish to John Mason, Jan. 11, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 2; Mason to Thomas Barclay, Jan. 22, 1814, LC-T-A17.040.10; Barclay to Mason, Jan. 28, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 6, folder 1, 74.
29. William B. Irish to John Mason, Feb. 18, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 3; Mason to Irish, March 15, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597.
30. Irish to Mason, Jan. 9, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 584.
31. Irish to Mason, April 10, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 6.
32. John Smith to John Mason, May 18, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 16, folder 4, 175.
33. E.g., Rules and Regulations, Jan. 27, 1814, OHS, Correspondence of John Hamm.
34. Thomas Barclay to Lt. Gen. Sir George Prevost, Oct. 22, 1813, TNA CO 42/152, 35.



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35. Thomas Barclay to Senior British Officers at Chillicothe and Pittsburgh, Oct. 20, 1813, NYHS-Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Aug. 1814, 12.
36. Capt. Isaac Chauncey to Robert Fulton, Nov. 15, 1814, NYHS-Chauncey Letterbook.
37. Lt. Gen. Sir George Prevost to Earl Henry Bathurst, Nov. 18, 1812, LAC-RG8-C-series-1218, 428.
38. John Armstrong to Maj. Gen. Henry Dearborn, May 15, 1813, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 4, folder 1, 1.
39. Earl Henry Bathurst to Lt. Gen. Sir George Prevost, Aug. 12, 1813, TNA CO 42/150, 204; Maj. General Sir H. E. Bunbury to John W. Croker, Aug. 14, 1813, NMM WAR/64, 88.
40. John Mason to the Marshal of Pennsylvania, Feb. 23, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 606.
41. Thomas Barclay to Capt. Edward W. Buchan, Jan. 7, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Aug. 1814, 123.
42. John Mason to the Marshal of Pennsylvania, Feb. 23, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 606.
43. List of 42 British officers held as hostages, April 20, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Papers, box 11; John Smith to John Mason, March 8, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 16, folder 3, 125.
44. John Linton to Thomas Barclay, March 31, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Papers, box 2; Thomas Barclay to John Linton, April 14, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Aug. 1814, 222.
45. John Mason to Robert Crockett, Feb. 5, 1814, NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:117.
46. John Mason to Brig. Gen. William Winder, March 22, 1814; Mason to Robert Crockett, April 6, 1814; Mason to William R. Irish, April 6, 1814; NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:201, 228, 231.
47. Baynes/Winder Convention, April 15, 1814, LAC-RG8-C-series-692, 222; Lear/Baynes amended convention, July 16, 1814, LAC-RG8-C-series-692, 233.
48. John Linton to Thomas Barclay, March 31, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Papers, box 2; Barclay to Linton, April 14, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Letterbook, Oct. 1813–Aug. 1814, 222.
49. William B. Irish to John Mason, May 21, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 9.
50. John Mason to Benjamin Henry Latrobe, April 19, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597.
51. List of British POWs at Pittsburgh who died or deserted, June 20, 1814, NYHS-Barclay Papers, box 2.
52. British POWs, n.d., NA, RG 45, ser. 464, box 612; John Mason to Brig. Gen. William H. Winder, March 22, 1814, NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:201.
53. William B. Irish to John Mason, May 10, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 7, 8.
54. Thomas Barclay to John Mason, May 14, 1814, and Mason to John Armstrong, May 18, 1814, NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:327.
55. John Armstrong to John Mason, May 18, 1814, NA, RG 107, M-6, roll 7, 196.
56. William B. Irish, May 4, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 584.
57. William B. Irish to John Mason, May 28, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 10.
58. John Smith to John Mason, May 20, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 16, folder 4, 176; William B. Irish to John Mason, May 29 and May 30, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 11NA, RG, 12.
59. William B. Irish to John Mason, May 30, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 12; Mason to Irish, June 3, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 592; Mason to John Armstrong, June 16, 1814, NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:406.

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60. William B. Irish to John Mason, June 4, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 13; Maj. William A. Trimble to Mason, June 8, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 592.
61. William B. Irish to John Mason, June 12, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 14; Maj. William A. Trimble to Mason, June 12, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 592.
62. William B. Irish to John Mason, June 25, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 16.
63. Irish to Mason, July 10, 1814, *ibid.*, 17.
64. John Mason to the Marshal of Kentucky, May 5, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597.
65. William B. Irish to John Mason, June 19, 1814, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 15.
66. Brig. Gen. Duncan McArthur to James Monroe, Dec. 21, 1814, NA, RG 45, box 597.
67. John Mason to William B. Irish, May 23, 1814, NA, RG 217, entry 264 (UD), 2:339.
68. British Prisoners of War held by the United States, 1812–1815, NA, RG 45, entry 615, vols. 1–2, POW no. 15416.
69. William B. Irish to John Mason, June 25 and July 1, 1815, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 8, folder 1, 16, 18.
70. John Smith to John Mason, Feb. 13, 1815, NA, RG 94, entry 127, box 10, folder 3, 4.
71. James M. Riddle, *The Pittsburgh Directory for 1815* (Pittsburgh, PA: James M. Riddle, 1815), 40.