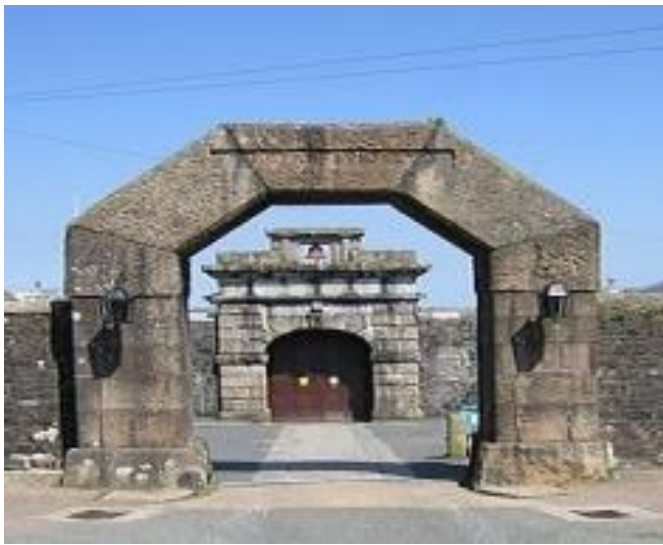


HISTORY OF OUR ERA
Dartmoor Prison and Saint Michael and All Angels Church
Princetown, County Devon, in Southwestern England

Ann Ogden Beinert, Organizing President
San Diego Chapter, San Diego, California

The town of Princetown is located on Dartmoor, an extensive, bleak and wild area full of rocky hills and bogs. Dartmoor gets its name from the Dart River which terminates in the bogs. The area has played some part in detective stores such as Sherlock Holmes, but it is most famous for the grim prison located at Princetown.

Dartmoor Prison was built in 1809 for prisoners of the Napoleonic Wars that began in 1803. Before the prison was built, the prisoners were kept on old ships in the Plymouth Harbor under



cramped and intolerable conditions. American prisoners, taken by the British during the War of 1812, were also held at the Dartmoor Prison.

Working together, the French and the American prisoners built the greystone church of St. Michael and All Angeles close to the prison. A low stone wall enclosed a church yard where the local parish members are buried. The prisoners who died in Dartmoor were buried in a mass grave a short distance from the church yard.



In 1815, after Napoleon's defeat and after the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent ending the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain, the prison was closed and the prisoners released.

In the 1850's the prison was reactivated when England became involved in the Crimean War. During this period the earlier mass graves were reopened and their contents divided evenly into two separate graves, one for the Americans

and the other for the French. In 1860, the British Government erected identical tomb stones over each grave.

The monuments can be seen facing the prison wall through a stone archway in the wall surrounding the church. The arch was erected by the N.S.U.S.D. 1812 and is named the

“The 1812 Memorial Gateway”.

Inside the church there are three flags: the flag of Great Britain, the flag of France and the flag of the United States honoring the men who built the church. Over the altar is a six-panel stained glass window given by the N.S.U.S.D. 1812 in memory of our prisoners. It was unveiled on the 4th of June 1910.

The window is inscribed as follows:

*TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMBORY OF THE AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR WHO WERE
DETAINED IN THE DARTMOOR WAR PRISON BETWEEN THE YEARS 1813 AND 1815 AND WHO
HELPED TO BUILD THE CHURCH ESPECIALLY OF THE 218 BRAVE MEN WHO DIED HERE ON
BEHALF OF THEIR COUNTRY THIS WINDOW IS PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL SOCIETY UNITED
DAUGHTERS OF 1812 DULCE EST PRO PATRIA MORI (It is sweet to die for one's country)*

Sources: *Dartmoor Prison/Saint Michael Church, Devon, S.W. England* – World Book Encyclopedia

Pictures: Public Domain – *HM Prison Dartmoor/Images*