

JACOB PARROTT (1843-1908)

by

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William Pittenger, in his most complete edition (1893) of The Great Locomotive Chase, describing the meeting with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, on March 25, 1863, following their exchange from Confederate prison, states that the Secretary going in to another room he brought out a medal, and handed it to Parrott, saying "Congress has by a recent law ordered medals to be prepared on this model, and your party shall have the first; they will be the first that have been given to private soldiers in this war!" This was the presentation of the first Congressional Medal of Honor.

During this short meeting with the Secretary and the six members of the Andrews Raiding party who had just been exchanged, Mr. Stanton took a special interest in Jacob Parrott. He was the youngest of the party, 18 at the time of the raid, April 12, 1862, and he had undergone terrible physical torture following his capture as the Confederates attempted to learn who the engineer was who had driven the locomotive during the Chase. After being asked what he wished for the future, Parrott replied that he would like to get back to his regiment and continue the fight. Subsequently, on April 24, 1863, Jacob Parrott was commissioned a second lieutenant in Company K, 33rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment - the same unit in which he had enlisted in the grade of private on November 18, 1861, at Kenton, Hardin County, Ohio.

Parrott was born in Fairfield County, Ohio, on July 1<sup>7</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, 1843. At the time of enlistment he was five feet 8½ inches tall, with dark complexion, black eyes and black hair. Parrott, with others of his regiment, went

through the usual training period and fought several minor battles in Kentucky. In April 1862, the 33rd OVI Regiment was assigned to General Ormsby M. Mitchel's Division of Ohio troops and stationed in the vicinity of Shelbyville, in middle Tennessee.

When the call came for volunteers to accompany James J. Andrews on his mission to steal a train on the Western & Atlantic Railroad and wreck that road connecting Atlanta with Chattanooga with dire results for the Confederacy, Parrott volunteered. The Andrews Raiders succeeded in getting to Marietta, Georgia, by April 11, 1862, and took the north-bound train on the next morning. At Big Shanty (Kennesaw), while the crew and passengers were having breakfast, Andrews and his men stole the locomotive and three box cars and headed north to burn bridges and destroy the railroad. They failed in their mission and after a run of 87 miles, orders were given by Andrews to abandon the locomotive and head for the woods and get back to your units as best you can. Parrott and another, Samuel Robertson, did not get very far and were captured near the railroad. They denied all knowledge of the raid and their participation in it. Parrott was then stripped, held over a large rock, and unmercifully whipped with a rawhide by a young lieutenant in an effort to extort a confession. Parrott refused and was to suffer the remainder of his life for this whipping.

Soon the balance of the party was captured and imprisoned. Parrott was confined at Chattanooga, Atlanta, Madison, Georgia, and finally Castle Thunder Prison in Richmond, on January 6, 1863. It was not until February 2, 1863, that his wounds were given any medical attention and he was confined at the Eastern District Hospital in Richmond until March 17, 1863, when he along with five others, was taken to City Point for exchange. He arrived in Washington on March 19, 1863 and on March 24th, was interrogated by Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt. The Holt Report was published on

March 27, 1863, and Charles O'Neill in his book on the Raid, Wild Train, suggests that the Medals of Honor for the group was probably won at the moment Judge Holt completed his report. This was the first official account of the Andrews Raid. The timing of the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Parrott, on March 25, tends to confirm that Parrott's Medal was the jewelers model or copy and that he was the only one to physically receive the medal that date though it is recorded that six medals were awarded on March 25, 1863.

Parrott was given a furlough to visit family and friends in Ohio and was back with his regiment for duty as a second lieutenant on May 2, 1863. On May 25, 1864, he was promoted to first lieutenant and had command of his unit, Company K, 33rd OVI Regiment. He fought through the battles of Stones River, Tullahoma, Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, the Atlanta Campaign, the battles around Atlanta, and the March to the Sea. He was discharged from the service on January 3, 1865, at Savannah, Georgia, and then made his way back to Kenton, Ohio.

Parrott married Miss Sarah Lawrence of Kenton on March 10, 1866, and to this union one child was born, John Marion Parrott, on April 2, 1867. Parrott became a strong member of the community, very active in the local GAR Post, a prosperous contractor and gravel bank operator. He also did some farming. Later, his health began to suffer and he blamed it on the ill treatment he had suffered following the Raid. On February 18, 1874, he applied for an invalid pension due to his suffering from nephritis and cystitis. He was granted a pension of \$30 per month. Parrott was not an educated man and after the War taught himself to read and write. At the time of his commission in 1863, he was unable to sign his name and made his mark on the oath of office.

Parrott remained active as a war veteran and he attended several of the reunions of the Andrews Raiders. He was present at the McComb, Ohio, Reunion, Thanksgiving 1886, the GAR Reunion in Columbus, Ohio, September 1888, and, in 1906, he and Mrs Parrott journeyed to Chattanooga, Tennessee, to attend the final reunion of the Andrews Raiders and to see the old locomotive, General, that they had stolen on April 12, 1862.

In February 1887, he journeyed south to Atlanta and visited with William A. Fuller, conductor of the stolen train and who led the Confederate pursuers in the Chase. The two men were photographed inspecting the locomotive, General, which at that time was still in service. In September 1903, Parrott's account of the Raid written in conjunction with Frank C. Dougherty, appeared in McClure's Magazine.

On December 22, 1908, while walking in Kenton, Ohio, Jacob Parrott fell dead at the age of 65 years, five months and nine days. He was buried in Grove Cemetery in Kenton. An imposing granite stone marks his grave in addition to the regulation veteran's stone and includes these words "Lieut. Parrott was honored by Congress with the first medal issued for distinguished bravery."

Sarah Lawrence Parrott lived until December 6, 1911 and she was buried along side Jacob Parrott.

John Marion Parrott, son of Jacob Parrott, married Edith Gertrude Brown, daughter of Wilson W. Brown, another of the Andrews Raiders and recipient of the Medal of Honor. Three children were born of this marriage and they probably are the only individuals able to claim both grandfathers as winners of the Medal of Honor.

Parrott's Medal of Honor remains in the family, and through the efforts of his grandson, Joseph W. Parrott, was on hand for the Centennial of the Medal of Honor at the White House, Washington, April 28, 1962, with President John F. Kennedy among those present.