

Lieutenant Levi Parker | Cincinnati Police Force

Age: 51

Served: ~5 years

1843 to 1846, Hamilton County Sheriff's Office; 1855 to 1856,
Cincinnati Police Force

OFFICER

Levi Parker was born April 14, 1805 in Vermont or Connecticut. We know nothing of his parents or ancestry and nothing of his first forty years, other than his enlistment into the United States Army. On August 25, 1830, Levi, while living in New Haven, Connecticut and working as a carpenter, enlisted at Whitehall for a five-year stint in the infantry. The country was at peace, and he was honorably discharged more than three years early on January 18, 1832.

Eight years later, in 1840, he was living in the 3rd Ward of Cincinnati with a woman and two girls: presumably, his wife, Lucy, an English immigrant, and children, Mary and Sarah.

On August 9, 1841, Levi was elected as a delegate for the 3rd Ward to the County Convention in Carthage. The next month, on September 13th, he was instrumental in forming the Workingmen's Association of the Third Ward. During 1842, and probably before, he was working in a bell and brass foundry and living on Arch Street.

In 1843, Levi was appointed as a Jailer at the Hamilton County Jail on Sycamore between Hunt (Reading Road) and Jail Alley

(Michael Baney Way). On March 12, 1844, he was nominated by the Democratic Party for the position of Engineer of Water Works. We believe he was not successful in the bid and that he continued as a Jailer until at least 1845. He was likely replaced when newly elected Whig sheriff candidate, Thomas J. Weaver, came into office on January 1, 1847.

By 1850, Levi and Lucy were living with three daughters, Mary, Sarah, and Julia, at 22 Baum Street where he operated a boarding house. He was also back working as a brass finisher. Some in the Democratic Party were pushing him to run for Hamilton County Sheriff. We find no indication that he was officially nominated.

Sometime before 1855, Levi was appointed Cincinnati Watchman in the 17th Ward and survived a political purge during July 1855. Soon after, Watchman Parker was promoted to Police Lieutenant.

MURDERER

Even less is known about Henry (aka, Harry or H.W.) Harrington. We found no record of him until 1852, when he married Sarah Breen. During 1853 he was living in the Erie House at 59 Front Street, near Pike Street.

His marriage with Sarah did not last long, because on February 3, 1856, he married Fannie Allen. They also lived in the Erie House.

Law enforcement had several dealings with Harrington, almost always ending in an arrest, and every arrest ended in a brawl.

INCIDENT

On April 27, 1856, between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m., a cold and stormy night, Lieutenant Parker and Patrolman Lawrence Hazen, while walking along Front Street near Pike Street, were drawn to the sounds of a woman crying outside the Lake Erie House. Patrolmen William Harvey and William White, on patrol on their beat, also heard the screams and responded (NOTE: There was no forms of communications at the time other than voice). They found Mrs. Harrington, scantily clad and out in the weather, because her newlywed husband refused her entry into their home.

When the officers arrived, she invited them into the home and, when she stepped in, Harrington shoved her away roughly. Lieutenant Parker said, "Henry, you must not abuse your wife, or we will arrest you."

Harrington asked, "Might I have a word?" Lieutenant Parker said, "Yes." Harrington jumped behind a counter, grabbed an exceptionally large revolver, and shot Lieutenant Parker. The ball entered his back left shoulder and lodged in the joint. Simultaneously, a dog living at the residence attacked Lieutenant Parker, biting him severely. While Lieutenant Parker exclaimed, "I am shot!" Harrington was telling him, "It's none of your G-damned business!".

Patrolmen Harvey and White were able to pry the pistol out of Harrington's hand and, with great difficulty, get him to the Hammond Street Station several blocks away. (Note: There was also no ready form of transportation at the time.)

Patrolman Hazen took Lieutenant Parker to his residence on Baum Street where he was attended to by Doctors Dandridge and Foster. The seriousness of the wound to Lieutenant Parker's shoulder was immediately apparent. The doctors determined that, at best, he would not have use of his arm and that he was in danger of succumbing to the wound.

DEATH

Lieutenant Parker died eight days later at 12:30 a.m. on the morning of May 4, 1856. Immediately thereafter, a vigilante mob attempted to take Harrington from the jail, but they were unsuccessful.

Lieutenant Parker was survived by his wife, Lucy (Patterson) Parker (53); and daughters, Sarah Parker, Mary E. Parker (24), and Julia Parker (8). His funeral was held from his home on Baum Street on May 6, 1856. The entire police force and nearly all municipal and county officials attended. Lieutenant Parker was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery.

JUSTICE

Harrington was charged with Murder of the First Degree on May 5, 1865. His trial commenced on May 27, 1865. The trial ended the next afternoon and, at 5 p.m. on May 28th, the jury returned a finding of guilty of Murder in the Second Degree. Harrington was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Ohio Penitentiary. On July 30, 1856, he attempted to scale the wall, but was recaptured.

Less than six years later, during January 1862, the Supreme Court of Ohio ordered a new trial for Harrington on the ground of some legal informality. He was again convicted of Murder in the Second Degree, and again sentenced to life.

“Life” imprisonment often has a different meaning to politicians than to those who elect them. A few years later, Harrington’s friends tried to convince Ohio Governor Rutherford B. Hayes that

he was fully reformed and to grant him clemency, but Hayes refused advising there were no grounds for Executive Clemency. But the next governor, Edward F. Noyes, gave him clemency in August 1872. Or as the Cincinnati Enquirer put it, "it remained for Governor Noyes, the felon's liberator, to set him free to prey on the society he once outraged."

Not surprisingly, Harrington was not reformed. Within four months, in November 1872, he was arrested for stealing a man's valise at the foot of Walnut Street. Then in 1897 he was arrested for Robbery. Nothing else is known about him. Maybe he served more time for Robbery than the cold-blooded murder of a policeman.

EPILOGUE

Lieutenant Parker's wife, Lucy, continued to run the boarding house for dozens of years. She also worked as a seamstress.

Their oldest daughter, Sarah Parker, died four years after Lieutenant Parker, in 1860, and is buried with him.

Mary Parker married Solomon Baker, a railroad worker, and they and their children also lived with Lucy in the boarding house.

Julia Parker married Manly Seymour, another railroad worker. When Manly was promoted and transferred to Marietta, Ohio, Lucy moved with them. She died there, thirty years after her husband, on July 6, 1886, and is buried with him in Spring Grove Cemetery.

If you know of any information, archives, artifacts, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater

Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

© This narrative was revised on June 6, 2021, by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President, with added information provided through the research of Cincinnati Police Sergeant David R. Turner (Retired), Memorial Committee Researcher. All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.