Superintendent Philip Henry Deitsch, Sr. (1840-1903)

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Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society



EARLY LIFE IN GERMANY

Phil was born October 7, 1840 to Ludwig and Catherine (Manss) Deitsch in Edenkoben, Rhenish Bavaria, a small town on the Rhine about fifteen miles east of Heidelberg. His family was of Huguenot heritage, but his father had been driven out of Nancy, France during the severe religious persecution of the French Revolution. They had a sound religious faith and strict family

discipline. Ludwig opened a flour mill in Edenkoben and, as a boy, Phil was employed there.

While working one day, a native of Edenkoben, and emigree to America, revisited his hometown, stopped in the flour mill, and filled young Phil with the wonders of America. Phil's father died and, against all his family's entreaties, at fourteen, he packed a carpet sack with all his belongings and sailed from Hamburg to New York in 1854.

Upon arrival in Cincinnati, he enrolled in public school and engaged in manual labor for self-support.

MILITARY

Indian Wars



Two years later, at sixteen, Phil enlisted in the United States Army. He was assigned to Company B of the 4th Infantry Regiment, also known as *The Warriors* regiment, on the Pacific coast. The Warriors was a battle-hardened regiment having survived some of the worst battles in the Mexican War. Upon Private Deitsch's arrival, Company B was assigned to Fort Vancouver in the Oregon Territory.

California had already been admitted to the United States, but Oregon and Washington were still territories. The territories were rugged, the Indians were numerous, their outrages were frequent, and there was no railroad or telegraph. For six months at a time, soldiers heard no news from "the States."

The young Germanic Private Deitsch was initially treated with scorn, but he went about his business ignoring the distractions. When an Irish soldier called him out to fight, he resisted. But

the Irishman tagged him as a coward. This, Deitsch could not ignore. Three minutes later, the Irishman lay on the ground, pummeled. After that, Private Deitsch was treated with respect and as one of the Warriors.

In May 1857, his company was sent on an expedition against the Indians in the mountains. No white man had ever trod on these trails and there was no communication between them and the fort. They were almost always entirely surrounded by hostile Indians and skirmishes came often. Six months later, having subdued the Indians for a time, the solders returned to the fort.

The company was reassigned to Fort Humboldt in northern California where Captain Ulysses S. Grant was the Quartermaster General. They served in detached duty, requiring travel to various distant points, which always included skirmishes with Indians.

Company B transferred to Fort Yamhill in Oregon, 300 miles north of San Francisco. At Fort Yamhill, Private Deitsch served under First Lieutenant Phil Sheridan. Late in October 1857, they were sent out on a special mission which included a forced march for 300 miles to Klamath and Trinidad Rivers via Christian City, and then returned to Fort Humboldt.

During the entire year of 1858 he was continuously on Indian expeditions. In the Spring he was part of a detail under Captain Joseph B. Collins sent out to make a road through the mountains. Provisions began to run out as they reached Round Valley and Captain Collins ordered seventeen-year-old Private Deitsch to take charge of a squad of five soldiers and Mexicans, and to return with pack mules to the fort for resupply. On the way, they attracted no Indian attention. But on their return, trouble began. Two days out, they started seeing campfires in the mountains. On the fifth day, a shot rang out and a soldier fell

dead. Over the next ten days, the remaining four defended themselves and the provisions as best they could, with defensive tactics arranged by Private Deitsch. The other three men continuously begged him to give up the supplies, but he resisted. After ten days of fighting and with little sleep, the exhausted men arrived to find Captain Collins's men near the point of starvation. When the detail returned to the fort, the company was transferred to Fort Terwah and Deitsch was promoted to Corporal during the Autumn of 1858.

Corporal Deitsch was detailed with a squad to escort General Mansfield from Fort Garrison to Fort Terwah. On the way, they were attacked and Corporal Deitsch was wounded in the wrist by a poison-tipped arrow. The general arrived safely, but Deitsch's arm swelled up and the doctor was going to amputate it. Deitsch said he would rather die, and the doctor gave him up for dead. An old Indian squaw nursed him back to health. The eighteen-year-old's valor was rewarded with a promotion to First Sergeant, the fourth highest noncommissioned officer rank and highest on any regimental roll.

His enlistment having come to an end, First Sergeant Deitsch was honorably discharged during 1860.

Civil War

At twenty, Sergeant Deitsch traveled east and reenlisted in the Army of the Potomac. He was assigned to Sykes' Division, 5th Army Corps, United States Infantry.



We do not know where, but he married Anna Jane Johnson during

March 1862.

A month later, Sergeant Deitsch participated in his first Civil War action at the Siege of Yorktown for almost the entire month of April 1862. The Rebels withdrew to Williamsburg where they fought again on May 5th. In the end, there were 2,466 casualties, more than Sergeant Deitsch had seen in all his years in the West.

He and the regiment reengaged the enemy on June 26, 1862 at Beaver Dam Creek and the next day began the The Seven Days Battle and Battle of Malvern Hill, resulting in 17,849 casualties, including 2,134 killed. A couple of months later, August 28th to 30th, another 1,747 were killed at the second Battle of Manassas (Bull Run). The next month, September 16th and 17th, they fought at Antietam and 2,108 were killed. In December at Fredericksburg another 1,284 Union soldiers died. Winter set in and the regiment went back to work at Chancellorsville from May 1 to 5, 1863 and another 1,606 Union soldiers died.

Two months later, First Sergeant Deitsch was at Gettysburg and became one of 23,049 causalities. He was seriously wounded with a shot through the body. He described it later as feeling almost nothing in the heat of the battle. General Ulysses S. Grant, having personally seen his valor in the West and in the East, promoted him to Ordnance Sergeant of the United States Army on or about his 23rd birthday in October 1863. Ordnance Sergeants were singularly responsible for all the ordnance, arms, ammunition, and other military stores at whichever post they were assigned. They were removed from the regimental rolls and answered only to the commanding officer.

After Sergeant Deitsch recuperated and returned to the regiment as an ordnance sergeant, it is not known how involved he was in

the actual fighting as an Ordinance Sergeant. The regiment fought on May 6, 1864 the Battle of the Wilderness (2,246 killed), May 16th at the Spotsylvania Court House (2,275 killed), and eight days later at the North Anna River (395). Then during the final battles and siege at Petersburg into 1865 the Union experienced 42,000 casualties and the Confederates far more.

The war over, Ordnance Sergeant Deitsch's combat experience came to an end. He came to Cincinnati with his wife sometime between April and December 1865, apparently in an inactive reserve status. He and Anna had their first child, Anna Jane Deitsch, on December 3, 1865.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

About mid-1866, Mayor Len Harris, former Captain of the Guthrie Grays, a Cincinnati company of infantry in the Civil War, appointed Ordnance Sergeant Deitsch as a Substitute Patrolman. Very soon thereafter, he promoted him to regular Patrolman and assigned him to the 2nd District at the Hammond Street Stationhouse. His beat was very dangerous, lying between *Bucktown* to the north and *The Bottoms* to the south and he excelled. In two months, he was promoted to Sergeant on September 14, 1866 and two months later to Lieutenant. While assigned there, he defended against two major riots, one at Front and Race Street and the election riot during Grant's first campaign.

United States Army Ordnance Sergeant Deitsch was officially honorably discharged again in 1867.

During 1868, the Deitsches were living at 401 E. 3rd Street. By 1870, they had moved to 19 Martin Street, and then further up at

25 Martin, in 1871.

At the end of 1872, for the first time since before the Civil War, Cincinnati elected a Democrat mayor. Upon taking office in 1873, Mayor George W. C. Johnson immediately dismissed multiple Republican police personnel, including Lieutenant Deitsch. Deitsch took a position as a letter carrier for the United States Post Office. A year later, he was appointed as a Gauger for the Revenue Service of the Treasury Department. By 1877, he and his family were living on Knowlton Street in Cumminsville, then they moved to Hamilton Pike, north of Chase Avenue. By 1880, the family had grown and included six children: Anna (14), Lenora (13), Philip, Jr. (11), Fred (9), Orwell (7), and Florence (5).

On June 22, 1884 Deitsch was in contention for the Republican Party nomination for Sheriff. During the August convention, he withdrew his name, deferring to Samuel Beresford, Jr., who was thereafter elected. On February 9, 1885, Deitsch was appointed Chief Clerk in the Probate Court of Hamilton County under Judge Herman P. Goebel.

CHIEF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER



With partisanship and corruption running rampant (such as Mayor Johnson's, but not restricted to Democrats), the State of Ohio passed a statute that, on March 31, 1886, effectively dismissed the entire Cincinnati Police Force. In its place, the statute created a nonpartisan Commission of Public Safety to hire, promote, demote, and terminate officers in a new nonpartisan Police Department beginning April 1st.

The Commission's first choice for Superintendent was Arthur Moore, a mechanical engineer. When the superintendency of the Water Works became available 2½ months later, on June 18, 1886, Colonel Moore resigned and took that position. Mayor Amor immediately nominated former Lieutenant Deitsch to the Commissioner to succeed Moore.

On the next day, the Commission called a special meeting with a single item on the agenda, the confirmation of Superintendent Deitsch. His salary would be $3500 (less than $60,000 in today's numbers) and he initially turned it down. But he was persuaded by some prominent politicians to take it. He took his oath of office on June 23, 1886.

Cincinnati law enforcement, being organized in 1803 under the new United States Constitution, was the first law enforcement system to give serious attention to law enforcement of the people, by the people, and for the people. Cincinnati was the first to combine fast response, horse-drawn patrol wagons and dial telegraphs on street corners in 1881 where citizens could call for immediate police response in 1876. American law enforcement was about to experience another major improvement and, once again, Cincinnati was going to lead the way.

Local Law Enforcement

The pre-1886 Police Force was recognized by most to be about the worst in the history of the city. However, that force was gone and the only men to be rehired where going to have to pass examinations testing their intelligence, aptitude, literacy, and physical ability including minimum and maximum age, height, weight, and strength. Superintendent Deitsch's first task was to reorganize the new department into a paramilitary organization worthy of citizens' respect.

Simultaneously, he reformed the uniforms and the wearing of them. Previously, officers appeared at roll call in semi-officer attire. Night after night, the chief showed up for roll calls and checked for polished shoes and soiled uniforms or missing uniform parts. Violations would cause the officer to be sent home. Soon, Cincinnati had the best dressed officers and cleanest unforms outside of the famous Broadway Squad of New York City. A year later, he ordered an annual public inspection of his troops, the first one at Garfield and Race.

He also established the first personnel file, permanently documenting the hiring, promotion, disciplinary, and termination record of all of its members.

He then looked outside his own department and at the lack of cooperation between almost every other police department and their reticence to share information, so much so that there was no standard vehicle to do so. He was going to have to discuss this with other police chiefs around the country. On September 26, 1887, Superintendent Deitsch departed for a tour of eastern city police departments. After his return, he submitted a report to City Council on November 15, 1887.

During July 1888, his department would be showcased to thousands coming to the Cincinnati Centennial Exposition. Colonel Deitsch extensively reorganized the Department to accommodate the months of celebration and exposition. On February 22, 1890, he led the George Washington Birthday Parade mounted on a horse. On April 29th, he and his mounted patrol and patrol wagons led a “monster parade” honoring Ohio veterans.

No stranger to valor, on July 5, 1890 Superintendent Deitsch rescued two people at Fourth Street and Central Avenue by running in front of and subduing a runaway horse and buggy. Actions of this sort were almost automatically recognized by the

Commission of Public Safety by appending the officer's name to a Roll of Honor, which was accomplished on July 8, 1890. Whether he believed his action to be so much less than he had seen displayed in the military, or less than he had himself displayed, or he thought it did not serve the best interests of the Police Department to have its superintendent listed, on July 29, 1890, his name was rescinded at his request.

By 1890, Cincinnati was "statistically freer of cranks, thieves, confidence men, till-tappers, and safe-workers than any other city in the nation."

National and International Law Enforcement

For a July 10, 1891 visit to Chicago, Superintendent Deitsch, Chicago's Inspector John B. Shea, and Milwaukee's Chief J.P. Jenson had arranged for George N. Porteus to bring from Europe the Bertillon System, a system of body measurements intended to singularly identify individual criminals.

International Association of Chiefs of Police

After many visits to other cities and meetings with their chiefs and/or upper management, in May 1893, Colonel Deitsch was instrumental in founding a collaborative of 46 other chiefs called the National Association of Police Chiefs.

The fledgling organization first met in 1893 at St. Louis. On May 4, 1894, he attended the Convention of Chiefs of Police in St. Paul. That June, the Ohio governor appointed him to represent Ohio from June 16 to 20, 1894 at the National Prison Congress Convention in St. Paul. In their report of the conference, *The St. Paul Dispatch* wrote, "One of the most distinguished superintendents attending … is Colonel Philip Deitsch of Cincinnati, Ohio. … He has established and maintained the finest force in the nation. … It is hoped Colonel Deitsch

will long remain in the position."

By 1894, Colonel Deitsch was in his 9th year at the helm of the Department. Those in city government could not recall a chief who lasted so long. By then, the national organization Colonel Deitsch helped form was already informally being referred to as the international association of chiefs of police. And, as the organization assumed a greater scope, he was a perennial member of the Board of Directors. It was soon extended to Canada and eventually became the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). For one term, Colonel Deitsch served as its vice president and for another, its president.

On March 1, 1895, The Baltimore Sun reported that Virginia Prosecuting Attorney W. Seymour White, speaking of Colonel Deitsch, exclaimed, "I found that for honesty, integrity, and probity, he occupied a high place in the esteem of the citizens of Cincinnati, and in it (the city) among the horde of criminals that infest our great cities, men sleep secure in the possession of their life and property is because men like Philip Deitsch… keep watch and ward."

On April 30, 1895, he was a member of another committee that attended the National Prison Congress Convention in Washington, DC. On May 17, 1895, after the closing of the Washington DC annual convention of chiefs of police, the *Nebraska State Journal* reported that during the convention no business was conducted "of a character interesting to the general public" with exception of the remarks of Chief Deitsch and his ideas of military discipline and advocacy for federal legislation to facilitate the apprehension of fugitives from justice.

National Identification Bureau

On May 11, 1897, the *Topeka State Journal* reported that, at the opening of the 4th annual convention of the National Association of the Chiefs of Police of the United States and Canada in Pittsburgh, Chief Deitsch spoke of a establishing a central bureau to which measurements of every criminal would be sent. The next day, *The Montgomery Advisor* opined that the most important business being conducted at the convention was a commission appointed in Atlanta in 1896, consisting of William Pinkerton (of the Pinkertons), Colonel Deitsch, and four others. The *Los Angeles Evening Post-Record* reported on the progress of the Bertillon System and Colonel Deitsch. He was then elected the first President of the Board of Governors of the National Identification Bureau (NIB) and his duties included management of the Bureau for Identification and Classification of Crooks. Finally, on May 25th, he was a premier speaker with the topic, *How to Make a Model Police Department*.

On April 5, 1898, he attended the Convention of Chiefs of Police in Milwaukee. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that he was re-elected President of the Board of Governors of the NIB and that the most important business expected was the very successful Bertillon system inaugurated by the NIB, and an effort to get the federal government to adopt the management of the system. While the NIB was established in 1895, it had only been in operation since about November 1887. On the second day Colonel Deitsch gave his report on the NIB and reiterated that cooperation of more agencies would bring help from Congress to support the bureau. The United States Secret Service was very much in favor of it and the expected recipient (keeping in mind that the FBI did not yet exist).

The Bourbon News, on August 12, 1898, wrote, “Cincinnati’s Police Force is recognized the country over as having attained an unusually high degree of proficiency. The city’s reputation

in that respect is not excelled by any other city in the country."

By January 11, 1899, the Board of Governors of the NIB was meeting annually and in Chicago where it was based, under the day-to-day management of George Porteous. On January 11, 1901, Colonel Deitsch was again re-elected as president.

In Cincinnati, the International Convention of Chiefs of Police met for the 7th time on May 8, 1900 with 300 delegates, by far the largest gathering to that point in its history. Even New York, for the first time, was represented. Philip Deitsch was elected vice president.

During May 1901, at a gathering of police chiefs in New York, Superintendent Deitsch, Colonel James Casey, and Police Board Commissioner David Henshaw were the center of attention.

On September 10, 1901, in Cincinnati, Clyde M. Allen, editor of the International Police Journal, the official publication of the National Association of Chiefs of Police of the United States and Canada, alleged that "the fact that anarchy is rampant in the United States today is due to the parsimony of the government" in that they underfund the Secret Service and will not accept management of the National Identification Bureau. On September 16, 1901, Chief Deitsch called for a special meeting of the Board of Governors of the National Identification Bureau to be held in Washington DC on October 16, 1901. The purpose of it was to take formal action in transferring the NIB from Chicago to Washington, D.C. and to make some changes in taking of measurements in the Bertillon system.



In the meantime, President McKinley was assassinated and Theodore Roosevelt assumed the presidency. Both presidents had been Deitsch's friends. So, while in Washington, he was invited to the White House and while touring the grounds, he spied a chair made of elkhorns. Washington Police Department Major Sylvester, acting as guide, advised that the chair was not marked with its provenance, because its origins were a mystery. Deitsch informed President Roosevelt that many years before, as a sergeant in the Army based in the Washington Territory, he knew the trapper that made the chair and presented it to President Lincoln. The chair was so marked with the provenance and still is to this day.

During the 1902 meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Colonel Deitsch was elected President. On September 9, 1902, City Council passed an ordinance permitting Colonel Deitsch to receive a diamond scarf pin presented to him from Prince Henry, younger brother of the Emperor of Germany and commander of Germany's East Asia Squadron. For the rest of his life, Colonel Deitsch considered it his most prized possession.

As the year 1903 began, Colonel Deitsch was Superintendent of the much renowned Cincinnati Police Department, President of the Board of Governors of the National Identification Bureau, and on the board of directors of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. He was still advocating for affiliating the NIB with the only national law enforcement agency of the time, the United States Secret Service. His bill to transfer it was still before the 57th Congress.

DEATH

On January 21, 1903, the *Courier Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky announced that Chief Deitsch, "who has a national reputation as a peace officer," was critically ill with bronchial pneumonia. *The Nashville Journal* asserted on the same day the same condition and diagnosis but added that his wife was also near death and that she was kept ignorant of his condition. The *Topeka State Journal* identified him as "favorably known in police circles throughout the country" and advised that the doctors held no hope for his recovery.

Colonel Philip H. Deitsch died in at his home in Cumminsville of an apparent heart attack at 10:20 a.m. on January 23, 1903 at the age of 62. Church bells throughout the city and the one at City Hall tolled at the report of his death. Flags at the courthouse and city hall were lowered to half-staff.

Within hours of his passing, the mayor, Board of Police Commissioners, and police chiefs from around the country gave heart-felt accounts of their associations with Superintendent Deitsch. Regrets poured in from St. Louis, Washington D.C., the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Indianapolis, Chicago, Nashville, Philadelphia, Memphis, Baltimore, Cleveland, Columbus, Louisville, New York, Pittsburgh, and New Orleans. All spoke of his brilliance, his nature as a soldier, as an enemy of the criminal, his sympathetic heart, and his record unblemished by scandal or amoral accusations. The mayor of Philadelphia opined that his death was a national loss. Colonel Deitsch was recognized as one of the best police officers in the United States, and the department he led was one of the best. On the following day, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* devoted an entire page to his life and legacy. The *Democrat Advocate* of Greenville, Ohio called him "The Chief of Chiefs."

Colonel Deitsch, additionally, had been a charter member of the George H. Thomas Post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR);

later, the E. F. Noyes Post, and finally the Cincinnati Post #67. He was a member of the Union Veteran League #124, Past Master of the Spring Grove Hoffner Blue Lodge of the F. and A. M. of the Scottish Rite, and the Syrian Temple, Mystic Order of the Shrine, and had been a member of the Cincinnati Commandery No. 3, Knights Templar, organized in 1839.

He was predeceased by his son, Orwell Deitsch, and son-in-law, Silas A. Roll. Colonel Deitsch was survived by his wife of 40 years, Anna Jane (Johnson) Deitsch; children Anna Jane (William) Wilson, Lenora (Frederick) Wachwell, Philip Henry (Julia) Deitsch, Frederick W. (Georgia) Deitsch, U.S. Army Lieutenant Auswell Edmund (Grace) Deitsch, Florence M. Roll, and Sarah Deitsch; and grandchildren, Margaret Deitsch, Philip O. Deitsch, Dorothy Deitsch, Philip Arthur Roll, and Flora Jane Roll.

His remains were dressed in his full-dress uniform with cap and baton and placed in a military casket draped with an American flag. Officers were posted round the clock as honor guards until the funeral. The funeral on Monday, January 26, 1903 was held from the Scottish Rite Cathedral on Broadway between Fourth and Fifth Streets. “Every ceremony of honor with which mortal hands can invest the return of earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes, was arranged” for his last rites. He was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery. The following inscription is written on his monument, “Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O’er”.

EPILOGUE

Anna Jane (Johnson) Deitsch lasted almost six months and died on June 15, 1903. She was buried with her husband.

On July 26, 1908, an unnamed and unauthorized unit within the United States Department of Justice took over management of the

National Identification Bureau in 1908. In 1909, that unit was publicized at the Bureau of Investigation, later the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Bertillon artifacts can be viewed at the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Museum.

Today, while none bear his surname, he has great-grandchildren scattered throughout the country from New York to California and some in between, but we believe none in Cincinnati.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police has grown to 32,000 members in 170 countries and is the world's largest and most influential professional association for police leaders.

Hiring standards of Colonel Deitsch's era have changed very little in the 137 years since and the personnel documentation system he originated can be seen at the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.

There is no statue of Philip Deitsch, nor street named for him, or any other honorable mention of him in Cincinnati to the best of our knowledge. Nor do the International Association of Chiefs of Police or Federal Bureau of Investigation mention him in the histories of the Association nor the National Identification Bureau.