

Parker Nichols, a Civil War hero



It is seldom that I find a tintype photo that is identified with the sitter's name, not to mention his date of birth and death. So, when I saw this tintype on sale on Etsy, I had to get it. It came to me from the United States. I was curious to find out about his life. And it wasn't difficult to find him in the genealogy paper trail.

Parker Prescott Nichols was born on November 23rd, 1846, in Troy, Rensselaer, New York. His father Henry Nichols was an iron worker/heater in Troy and in the 1865 census listed as a landowner. Parker was the third of altogether 9 children.

When Parker was just 18 years old, he was drafted to serve as a private of the 7th Regiment, New York Heavy Artillery on the side of the Union in the American Civil War. He was taken prisoner in June 1864 in Petersburg, VA. His obituary (please see the end of the blogpost for full view) says:

"His war experiences included engagements in and about Washington, D.C., during the defense of the nation's capital against the Confederate Army. He was also taken prisoner several times. He was honorably discharged in 1865."

After the Civil War, Parker became a heater at the Iron Works in Troy, like his father had been (according to the 1870 census). He married twice. Although I have not been able to confirm it, I believe Parker's first wife Carrie née Smith might have died from complications at childbirth. She passed away in 1872, in the same year their son Frederick Paul Nichols was born.

In 1879, Parker Nichols re-married. In the 1880 census, Parker and his wife Elizabeth H. née Barto is found to be living at 777 Batavia Street in Troy. His oldest son Frederick Parker is found to be living with Parker's parents Henry and Jane Susannah Nichols also in Troy. Perhaps Parker's unemployment at the time and his new marriage might have been the reason why his 8-year-old son was not living with him at the time. Or perhaps it was just merrier at the grandparents' house since several Frederick's cousins also lived with his grandparents.

Frederick Paul fought in the Spanish-American War in 1898 and was killed by lightning in Tampa, FL, in 1898, during his service.

With his second wife Elizabeth, Parker had 8 more children:

— Inez Anna Leathem (1880-1968). Inez married James Francis Leathem in May 1899 in Troy and the couple had two children: Myrtle Francis Lawyer née Leathem (1900-1994), and James Francis Leathem Jr. (1905-1976). In the 1930s, Inez and James were living in Trenton, New Jersey. Inez' grandchildren might be alive today.

— Henry Bennett Nichols (1881-1888)

— Parker Prescott Nichols Jr. (1883-1954) married Helen Rosaline née Defreest (1894-1945) in 1911 and the couple had 5 children: Robert Nichols (1912-1932), Charles Geller Nichols (1915-1980), Clifton Parker (1917-1960), Ralph William (1920-1997), and Raymond Edwin (1924-2004). Parker Jr. was a WWI veteran (Click [HERE](#) for his draft card). He might also have living grandchildren.

— Elmer James Nichols (1884-1945) married Jennie Lillian née Payne (1887-1918) and the couple had 2 sons: Kenneth Elwin Nichols (1908-1969), and Elmer James Nichols Jr. (1917-2007). Elmer Sr. served in WWI. At the time of being drafted, he owned a vegetable grocery shop in Troy. Just by looking at the dates here, a bitter-sweet tragedy plays in my head: Elmer fought in WWI and amidst the horrors he probably saw in action, his second son Elmer Jr. was born. Elmer Sr. survived the war, returned home only to become widowed with two small children in 1918. Quite a bit of a déjà-vu with the story of his father, so heart-breaking! Elmer was drafted (or volunteered?) for WWII at the age of 57. He passed away in 1945, unfortunately I don't know if in connection with WWII. Elmer's grandchildren seem to be alive today.

— Anson M. Nichols (1885-1893)

— Charles E. Nichols (1887-1887)

— Robert K. Nichols (1888-1905). In 1905, Parker Sr. acted on behalf of his late son Robert and sued the Searle Manufacturing Company, Gardener and Cuff and Collar Factory in Troy (Click [HERE](#) to view the probate record). I have not found the death record of the 17-year-old Robert and therefore don't know the cause of his death, but I suspect that it could have been an accident at the workplace of the young man which would explain why his father Parker sued the company as part of his probate proceedings.

— Emma L. Nichols (1890-1891)

In his last years, Parker and Elizabeth lived with their daughter Inez and son-in-law James in Trenton, New Jersey. Parker passed away on September 23rd, 1933, in Trenton, New Jersey, at the age of 86. I found his obituary and it speaks volumes. And it includes a photo of Parker Nichols in his last years of life! How absolutely cool is that!!! He kept his bushy moustache, too.



26, 1933

Last Rites Friday For P. P. Nichols

Civil War Veteran Dies; Was Taken Prisoner In Conflict

The funeral of Parker P. Nichols, 87 years old, of 333 Garfield Avenue, one of Trenton's few surviving Civil War veterans, who died late yesterday afternoon following a brief illness, will be held at 2:30 o'clock Friday afternoon from Gettysburg Baptist Church with the Rev. Ellis C. Francis, pastor, officiating. Interment will be in Greenwood Cemetery under the direction of W. T. Saul & Son. Military services under the direction of Bayard Post and Sons of Union Veterans, of which Mr. Nichols was also a member, will be held at the grave. Friends may call at the Garfield Avenue residence Thursday evening. Mr. Nichols had resided with his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. James Latham, at the Garfield Avenue address.

He was one of the two surviving members of Bayard Post No. 2, Grand Army Republic, the lone member of the post long being locally active. Mr. Nichols saw active service in Civil War as a member of Company "C," 7th Regiment, New York Volunteer Heavy Artillery.

His war experiences included engagements in and about Washington, D. C., during the defense of the nation's capital against the Confederate Army and at Appomattox Court House. He was also taken prisoner several times. He was honorably discharged at Baltimore, Md., June 16, 1865.

Mr. Nichols was born in Troy, N. Y., and came to Trenton nearly 50 years ago. He held the post of officer of the day in Bayard Post at the time of his death and was a member of a Trenton delegation of Civil War veterans who attended the three-day encampment of the New Jersey Department, G. A. R., at Cape May several years ago.

Mr. Nichols was also among the honored guests at a banquet held by Garfield Camp, No. 4, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, last February at Hotel Hildebrecht.

Besides his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Burtis Nichols, survivors are a daughter, Mrs. Latham, two sons, Parker P. Jr., of Trenton, and Elmer J., of Troy, N. Y., a brother, James, of Troy, eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and a number of nephews and nieces.

G. A. R. Plans Tribute At Nichols Services

Military services will be conducted for Parker P. Nichols, 87-year-old Civil War veteran, at his late home, 333 Garfield Avenue, tomorrow night at 8 o'clock, by members of Dayton Camp No. 8, Sons of Veterans. Also the G. A. R. will conduct military services at 1:30 o'clock Friday afternoon at his late home. Members of the Dayton Camp will turn out in front a firing squad that day at the Greenwood Cemetery. The funeral will be held from the Gettysburg Baptist Church Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Mr. Nichols died Sunday.

Source: Ancestry Click [HERE](#)

Having outlived 6 of his 9 children, widowed with a newborn after having fought in the Civil War and taken prisoner, and then to reach such an old age after having experienced so much loss and hardship in life, for me it is a sign of extreme courage and resilience. Rest in peace, Parker Nichols.

The original tintype photo of Parker Nichols has gone home to his brother's family where it will be cherished.