

The Story Behind the 30 Lb. Parrott Rifle on the Public Landing

In the year 2000 David Conzett, Curator of CMC History Object Collections, learned that the Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church was interested in removing the Civil War Parrott adjacent cemetery. The naval gun had been donated to the Ridge by Mr. T. W. War veteran of the and resident of the meeting with the Session, it was Parrott gun would be donated to the Museum Center and become part of our Civil War exhibit.



gun from its The naval gun had village of Pleasant Seib (d. 1909), a Civil 6th OVI Regiment village. Following a Presbyterian Church decided that the

The initial challenge with the donation was safely removing the cannon from the church cemetery. Because of the cannon's location in the cemetery, and the danger of crushing graves with heavy equipment, the first two rigging and moving companies that were approached wanted nothing to do with the project. Fenton Rigging Company, a Center supporter, challenge of but insisted that only be done on a when the cemetery frozen. On a very removed the gun concrete pedestal and, using a portable gantry, lifted the 3,500 lb. Parrott onto a small cart and towed it out of the cemetery with a garden tractor. It arrived at the museum later that morning. All of the work associated with the transfer of the gun to the museum was performed by the Fenton Rigging Co. at no charge to the Museum Center – a very nice gift.



long time Museum accepted the moving the gun, the work could cold winter day ground was cold morning, they from its ancient

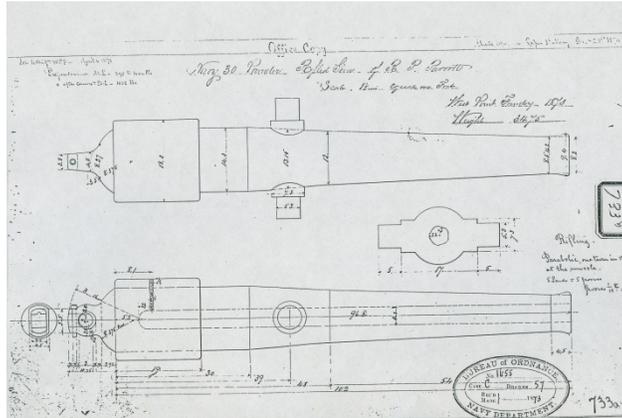
One might ask why we would accept a Civil War naval gun for the History Museum's Collection. Although the Parrott gun was not manufactured in Cincinnati and has no actual connection to the city, David wanted the Parrott as the centerpiece for a Civil War naval exhibit which would help tell the story of the inland river war. Cincinnati was a major inland US Naval recruiting depot during the Civil War; more than 8,000 sailors enlisted at the Cincinnati Naval Rendezvous. A number of shallow draft gunboats, USS Rattler, USS Queen City, USS Peosta, USS Fawn, USS Champion and several others, were produced by Queen City shipwrights for service with the western rivers flotilla. Known as *Tinclads*, for their thin armor plating, the gunboats were often armed with two or more 30 lb. Parrott guns.

To control the recoil of the large caliber Parrott, Dahlgren and Rodman deck guns, the U.S. Navy introduced the two wheel *Marsilly* gun carriage as a replacement for the earlier four wheel carriages. The Museum Center's *Marsilly* carriage was constructed according to the original specifications, drawings and photographs



from the U.S. National Archives and Library of Congress. Under the direction of Edward Abernathy, a talented local cabinet maker, a team of craftsmen completed the Parrott gun's carriage in late 2002. The museum's *Marsilly* is believed to be one of the most authentic Civil War naval gun carriages in existence.

The gun was cast at the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, New York in 1865. Parrott guns, named for their developer Robert Parker Parrott, are easily recognized by their heavy wrought iron reinforcing band around the breech of the gun. Even though Parrott was not the first to experiment with the reinforcing band concept, his applying it hot while cold water was being poured down a rotating muzzle allowed the uniformly applied addition of the band, which gave it strength; cannons made of cast iron. While accurate, they tended to suffer fractures in the breach area which occasionally resulted in explosions that caused injury or death to members of the crew firing the gun.



method of while cold water was being poured down a rotating muzzle allowed the uniformly applied. Prior to the wrought iron additional were entirely

The first Parrott rifle was created in 1860 and patented in 1861. They were manufactured in several different sizes. The 10 and 20 lb. rifles were primarily used by field forces. Transporting these heavy guns with teams of horses limited the size that could be used - a 20 lb. cannon weighed over 1,800 lbs. Naval versions included 20, 30, 60 and 100 lb. versions. Common on gunboats that patrolled the inland rivers during the Civil War, a 30 lb. gun could hurl a 30 lb. projectile over 6,500 yards (3.7 miles). Larger sizes, 200, 300 & 400 lb. versions were rarely manufactured. The heavier guns were most often used for siege purposes.

Attached to the gun, and laying on the floor is a heavy rope called a breeching. It was designed to check the recoil of the gun on boat decks where space was limited. A reproduction powder bag and shell can also be found in the display. If you examine our gun closely, you will see the initials RPP (Robert P. Parrott) and 3,505 lbs., the weight of the gun, stamped on the front of the breech band.

The long handled tools attached to the back wall of the display were used in conjunction with the firing of the gun. The ram was used to insert the powder bag and the shell into the gun. After sponge was dipped



the front barrel of firing the gun, the into a bucket of down the barrel to what had become any residue was usually pieces of worm would be them. The worm

was also used at the end of the day to remove any unfired shell and powder bag that had not been used.

Our story on the Parrott gun, and its use by the Navy, would not be complete if we did not tell you Monkey. Seen here, usually boys or young job for their speed and to keep the gun crews powder and shot Scampering back and powder magazine in gun they were often sharpshooters. When



about the Powder Powder Monkeys were teens selected for the height. It was their job supplied with gun during battle. forth between the the ship's hold and the the target of enemy ship not in combat they

served in other menial ways earning little more than a cot and food. The use of the term 'powder monkey' dates to the late 17th century.

The information contained in this article was provided by David Conzett and Bob Limoseth.