

I was born Andrew Giles Potter, on the morning of Sunday, January 26th, 1840 at about ten o'clock. My brother Joseph had preceeded me by about 15 minutes into the world and we were identical twins. My father was Nathan Royal Potter and my mother Mary Ann Hovey Potter, my father's third wife, and I was the youngest of my father's nineteen children. I was the sixth twin that he had fathered. My father was a hearty, robust man with the power of a bear in his huge arms. He kept a store near Dumfries, Virginia in Prince William County. He also had a considerable farm and dealt in livestock. When I was six years old, Joe and I started attending school at the Berryman Schoolhouse on Cedar Run where we went from about the first of October through March of each year. My sisters went until they were ten but us boys went until we were twelve and then we started to work. My brother Earl was my hero and he was 20 years older than me. When I started to work I felt like a man and could hardly wait to go to Alexandria with Earl to drive livestock. We took cattle to market and brought back horses and mules. It was my first trip away from home and Alexandria looked like some big city to me. I had never before seen so many houses at one place. We lived at a small place called Potter's Store and there were three houses, a store and three barns with cattle pens and a blacksmith shop. Alexandria looked like something I had never seen before.

But in the Fall of 1852 Earl took a job with a business house in Alexandria and left home. He had felt the need to broaden his experiences and had agreed to travel for a shipper. It was a sad day for me when he left and I missed him so very much. My father was an old man and Earl had served the place of a father to me. I wanted to go with him but it was impossible. During the next three years we heard from him from many places. He had moved his wife, Nancy, and his children to Norfolk onto a small farm to the south, near the railroad station. And then in the early winter of 1858 we received news of the death of Nancy, his wife. Since Patty, his oldest daughter was but a lass of 14 or 15, my sister Mary went to stay with them and take care of the five children. Little Tommy was but four years old at the time. EARL then took a job with a shipping firm in Norfolk as a detective and tracer of stolen or lost goods. He had worked with some of the best detectives in the business for several years and he now took it as his business.

On my twentieth birthday I left the homestead and went to take a job with EARL EARL Earl. He had arranged with his employer to take me on as an assistant. When it came time for me to leave home my mother and sisters had baked a cake with candles and the table was set with turkey and venison and all the trimmings. My brothers had gone together and had bought me a pistol, a Colt's New Model 36 Caliber pocket pistol with mold, flask, and capbox. It was a beauty and I still have it even though it is quite worn from carrying. But then my father brought out his gift for me, it was a Sterling-Wentworth Drilling with two choked 14 gauge bores and a 45 caliber rifled bore below. It was a beauty and I was so proud of it. I left home with a heavy heart but I knew that I wanted to see more than the Virginia woods of Prince William County.

When I arrived at Norfolk I was open-mouthed astounded by the greatness of it all. I could hardly imagine the ships and the size of the bays. I liked it but I was somewhat taken aback by the awe of it all. I started right to work and detective work was not at all like I had imagined. I liked it fine but I thought all the detective did was to walk out and capture the criminals. I soon found out that it was a lot of leg work and much disappointment. But I was carefully schooled in the art and trade of the profession and I was soon getting the hang of it.

I returned to the States in April of 1862 from Barbadas to find that the country was in turmoil and that Earl had been forced to go North to prevent jail since he had been an outspoken opponent of secession. I came into Norfolk and was immediately accosted by the Provost Marshall who practically suggested that I follow Earl. I did just that. Since the ship was of Canadian registry and was headed for New York, I got right back on it and went to New York. Several days later I caught the train to Washington and went to see Earl. He invited me to join him with the Federal Police which He was then organizing. He was working for Lafayette C. Baker, a detective who had worked for the Canadian firm of Chaffey & Co. in the same capacity as Earl and I. Baker was good at his trade and although we did not always like his methods, he did get results and we had both learned a lot from him.

My first assignment was to make contact with a man in Virginia named Vincent Thiele who had been working in the Warrenton Area for a long time surveying for a canal. He had surveys which would be needed by the military with the outbreak of hostilities. It was important that not only we get the charts and maps but ~~we~~ equally important, that the rebels ~~not~~ get them. I started for Warrenton by horseback. I went without incident and soon found my Thiele at a farm near Warrenton. He was a pompous sort and it required a great deal of boot-licking to get what I wanted but I got it. I returned to Washington with a spring wagon load of charts and maps, again unmolested. I felt good about my first successful mission with the new detective service but this first time was to be deceptive. The rest were not nearly so easy. By this time it was becoming necessary to ferret out the persons in the Federal Capitol who were furnishing information to the rebels.

By executive order on February 14, 1862, L.C. Baker had been transferred from the State Department to the War Department. On March 12, 1862 Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton approved the establishment of the National Detective Police and granted the authority and money necessary for its establishment and operation. Lafayette Charles Baker was named as its Chief, responsible to Secretary of War Stanton, and to no one else. Earl Potter was designated assistant Chief by Baker but Stanton had made it clear that he did not want to deal with anyone but Baker and that Baker bore the responsibility for the entire force and its proper operation. All payments were in cash and the records were to be kept within the Bureau and were to be considered as very secret.

The organizational plan for the Bureau was Earl's and Earl was the one who ran the Bureau although Baker knew what was happening. He simply trusted Earl and disliked the boredom of receiving reports and mulling through them. Baker's orders to Earl each day were "In two minutes, tell me all that is happening now, has happened since yesterday, and is going to happen between now and tomorrow's report." During the entire war Baker was on the go and could not stay in Washington for he was a man of action. But all the time he knew what was going on for Earl collected, sorted and made his reports daily. But Earl's name never (I think) appeared on a voucher or correspondence nor was Earl ever identified to the public, all the glory went to Baker and that is the way everyone (including Earl) wanted it.

By the first of May the National Detective Police Bureau (NDP) had begun to take shape. Baker had assumed tenancy at 217 Pennsylvania Avenue as the headquarters of the Bureau but he had also acquired possession of five other buildings nearby.

The Detective Division of the National Detective Police was the force that the public saw and feared. These detectives had their offices at 217 Pennsylvania Avenue and they came and went as needed. When arrests were made it was by these men. The majority of these men were braggards and pompous showoffs although they were quite effective in their roles as secret policemen. There were men in their midsts who were quiet, effective and modest detectives who were outstanding for their inconspicuousness in a secret role as detective. E.M.Brandt was an Iowian who wore high boots, a purple velvet cape, and a large drooping hat with large plumes in it. He almost always rode a pure white stallion of high breeding and he was about as conspicuous as a pole-cat wherever he went. He doused himself each morning in Eau-de-cologne and one could smell him almost as far as he could be seen. As a detective he was a failure but as a politician he was magnificent. He was extremely popular with the ladies and the men of feminine bent. Why Baker kept him around was one of the big mysteries of the war.

There were two detectives in the Detective Division who were outstanding throughout the war. These two were James Odell and Mortimer Trull. Both were modest and never mentioned what they had done or where they had been. They were regarded with the highest respect by the competents, with disgust by the enemy, and with envy by a large majority of their colleagues. Others who were good at their profession were:

James Wade
Tyronc Nelson
Jesse Harper
Clint Eagen
John Pullen
Mark Adams
Stefan C. Berryman
Hershal Meyers
Nelson Harter
John Pitt
Sam Whitty
Joseph Wade

Jerome Sleight
Frank Potter
James Potter
Nelson Whittick
Frank Peabody
Everett Hensell
Harold Owens
Thomas Beckwith
Carl Howland
Clark Sudell
Milton Wade
Thomas Rhone

There were many more that could be mentioned but these men won distinction which I have set down in writing elsewhere. I have included a report on each of them in later pages.

The Secret Service Division was housed in a large old building on Tenth Street S.E. not far from the Arsenal. The building was large and had four floors and a basement with connections with the other two buildings in the area occupied by the NDP. When we first got moved into the building in May of 1862 I thought to myself that we would never in the world be able to fill that building it was so large. But by May of the following year we not only had filled it but had begun to occupy the building directly behind it. The Secret Service Division was indeed secret and the public never knew of our existance. There were four services within the division; they were (1) Northern Service, which had secret agents throughout the North, (2) Southern Service, which had secret agents wherever possible throughout the South, (3) Foreign Service, which had agents in Canada, England, Barbados, Bermuda, France, Belgium, Portugal, and most other foreign countries, and (4) The Courier Service, which provided couriers who traveled all over the world to bring back and forth the infomation on which our service depended.

I was, between May of 1862 and August of 1865, Chief Adjutant of

the Secret Service Division. John Wilson was my assistant until 1864 (September) when he was assigned to a special job of determining what the Fenians were up to exactly. As of September 1, 1864 he became head of the fifth service in our Division, the Fenian Investigation.

Basil Whittick was the adjutant of the Northern Service from June, 1862 through June 1, 1865 when he left the service. Tom Brandt was his assistant from July of 1862 until September of that year when he (Tom) became adjutant of the Southern Division and was replaced by George Perry. George remained with the service until his death in August of 1865.

Tom Brandt established the Southern Service in September of 1862. He had been a railroad detective in the South and he enlisted a number of persons who he knew to have loyalties to the North. He spent the Fall and most of the Winter traveling as a salesman through the south but by the middle of January of 1863 he had returned to his desk at the NDP and was making daily reports to me. His assistant adjutant during his entire period in office was Clarence Bell, a meek little man with an outstanding memory and a penchant for detail.

Henry Lyle came to the Secret Service Division from the State Department in May of 1862 and remained all during the war. He was the general adjutant of one of the most important branches of the Secret Service. John Muse was his assistant and he too had been with the State Department. His twin brother, Joseph was the adjutant for the Canadian Service from 1862 through May of 1864 when he was relieved by William R. Bernard. Andrew Tully spent the entire war in England as our agent. Nigel Flynn was our adjutant in Barbados (1862-65). Elliott Hawkes was our agent in Bermuda until he was found out and killed in 1864. John Marston then took up his duties and was even more successful than Hawkes during the remainder of the war. M. Rousseau was our adjutant in Paris; Jaques Cartier was our agent in Brussels; and Herbert Joule worked quite successfully in Lisbon. It was through these agents that we learned of the shipments of supplies to the South and we also kept informed of the attitudes of the foreign populations toward the Confederate States.

James Carmichael was the adjutant and chief clerk of our Courier Service. This service was just as important as any other and more so at times. It constantly amazed us as to how resourceful these men were in the transportation of information over long distances with the utmost of secrecy as was demanded.

The courier service had several offices through which we received foreign dispatches. The best and most desirable method of getting information out of foreign countries was in the dispatch pouches of the diplomatic service but this did not work for us due to the fact that we never or at least seldom received the dispatch for it was sent on to the State Department. Jealousy was so rampant that the State Department would never cooperate with us. The next best method was the one that worked and a number of such methods were devised. More will be said of this in pages to come.

The Records Division was under the capable direction of Gaylord Preston Widdich who was not only adjutant of this division but who had devised the method of keeping the information in such a form as to be immediately available within a few minutes. His assistant and chief clerk was Richard Delvey. Harrison Ames was assistant chief clerk. This division was to play a great part in the success of the National Detective Police and to Preston Widdich the credit must go for he was opposed by Baker for the first year that he was with us.

The Artificers Division consisted of specialists who supported the rest of the NDP. The man in charge of this division was Earl's older brother, Simon Potter. Simon had been before the war, a superintendant with the railroad. He was an excellent manager and an excellent telegrapher. He could handle people and was always smiling except when the situation was serious. ~~XXXX~~ During the hectic days of 1864 when the most difficult days for the Union appeared, when the men came to work in the morning they would ask "Is Simon smiling." If the answer was "yes" they knew that the day would go easy but if the answer was the opposite, they knew that the day would be hectic or perhaps long and disagreeable.

The Photographic Service was run by Caleb Potter and his two main assistants, Claude Wittick and John Beckwith. Foster Whittick and Herb Bensen were assistants but both were in their teens when they began for the NDP.

Nathan Potter and his sons (Charles, George, Ralph & William) ran the Printing and Document Service. The Gun Shop and Arsenal were run by William J. Potter and his son, Junior, with assistance from Thomas Frame and James Lynn.

The Cypher Room and Telegraphic Service was run by Willard Potter. The telegraphers were James Whittick, Sam Deveau and William Brennan. The Cryptographers were the Pyrrin brothers of Ohio, John and Sam. They were assisted by Carl Hegstrum, Phillip Hurley and Jaques LaBeau.

The Farrier & Saddlery Shops were run by John Eastwood who was assisted by Harvey Cox and Elsworth Hayes.

Lafayette Baker was very conscious of his lack of military rank and he found this a distinct disadvantage when dealing with the military. He prevailed on Secretary of War Stanton and in the Spring of 1863 a new division was added to our Bureau, that of Military Police. It was organized as the First District of Columbia Cavalry and was to be used in the District of Columbia and it's environs. Baker was named it's Colonel and it's organization appears elsewhere in these pages. It was a good unit which was well mounted and outfitted with the Remington 44 Caliber pistols and the Spencer carbine. It was badly needed for we could not depend on the military service to supply us with proper confidence in regard to raids and rendezvous, particularly the latter. When raids were planned we often found that by the time we got there one of the officers furnished to us by the War Department had talked or bragged to such an extent that the raid was to no avail. After the formation of the First D.C. Cavalry, this was no longer a problem. Raids worked smoothly and effectively. The Regiment was stationed at Camp Baker, which had been built about half a mile East of the Capitol and which had excellent facilities for such a troop. They were available to us at all times with no problems of administration. They soon became hated and feared by the rest of the military in the Washington area. They were soon known as "Baker's Rangers" a name given by Colonel Baker to them in an article quoted to George Alfred Townsend of the New York World newspaper. This pleased Baker no end. It also displeased him and the rest of us when the military headquarters in the War Department decided to send this special force away from us and into battle in order to rid Washington of it's effect. But more of that later.