

= Isaac Parker =

Isaac Charles Parker ( October 15 , 1838 ? November 17 , 1896 ) was an American politician and jurist . He served as the United States Congressman for Missouri 's 7th congressional district for two terms and presided over the United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas for 21 years .

He became known as the " Hanging Judge " of the American Old West due to the large number of convicts that he sentenced to death . In 21 years on the federal bench , Judge Parker tried 13 @, @ 490 cases . In more than 8 @, @ 500 of these cases , the defendant either pleaded guilty or was convicted at trial . Parker sentenced 160 people to death ; 79 of them were executed .

Parker 's health deteriorated in the 1890s and the jurisdiction and power of his court were reduced by Congress . In September 1896 , Congress effectively closed the District Court for the Western District of Arkansas by removing its jurisdiction . Shortly after , on November 17 , 1896 , Parker died of complications due to Bright 's disease . He is buried in Fort Smith .

= = Early life = =

Parker was the youngest son of Joseph Parker and his wife Jane Shannon , and the great @-@ nephew of Ohio Governor Wilson Shannon . He was raised on the family farm near Barnesville , Ohio . He attended Breeze Hill Primary School , followed by the Barnesville Classical Institute , a private school . He taught in a county primary school to pay for his secondary education . At 17 , he began an apprenticeship in law , and passed the Ohio bar exam in 1859 .

Parker moved to St. Joseph , Missouri between 1859 and 1861 and worked at his maternal uncle 's law firm of Shannon and Branch . On December 12 , 1861 , Parker married Mary O 'Toole , with whom he had sons Charles and James . By 1862 , Parker had his own law firm and was working in the municipal and country courts .

= = Political career = =

In April 1861 , Parker ran as a Democrat for the St. Joseph part @-@ time city attorney . He served three one @-@ year terms from April 1861 to 1863 . The American Civil War broke out four days after Parker took office and he enlisted in a pro @-@ Union home guard unit , the 61st Missouri Emergency Regiment . He had reached the rank of corporal by the end of the war .

During the 1860s , Parker continued both his legal and political careers . In 1864 , he formally split from the Democratic Party over conflicting opinions on slavery . He ran as a Republican for county prosecutor of the Ninth Missouri Judicial District . By the fall of 1864 , he was serving as a member of the Electoral College and voted for Abraham Lincoln . In 1868 , Parker won a six @-@ year term as judge of the Twelfth Missouri Circuit .

Parker was nominated for Missouri 's 7th congressional district on September 13 , 1870 , backed by the Radical faction of the Republican party . He then resigned his judgeship and devoted his energy to his campaign . Parker won the election after his opponent withdrew two weeks prior to the vote .

The first session of the Forty @-@ second Congress convened on March 4 , 1871 . During his first term , Parker helped to secure pensions for veterans in his district and campaigned for a new federal building to be built in St. Joseph . He sponsored a failed bill designed to enfranchise women and allow them to hold public office in United States territories . He also sponsored legislation to organize the Indian Territory under a territorial government .

Parker was again elected to Missouri 's 7th district in the forty @-@ third Congress . A local paper wrote of him , " Missouri had no more trusted or influential representative in ... Congress during the past two years " . In his second term , Parker concentrated on Indian policy , including the fair treatment of the tribes residing in the Indian Territory . His speeches in support of the Bureau of Indian Affairs gained national attention .

In 1874 , Parker was the caucus nominee of the Republican Party for a Missouri Senate seat . However , the political tide had shifted in Missouri ; it seemed unlikely that he would be elected to

the Senate , so he sought a presidential appointment as judge for the Western District of Arkansas .

= = District judge = =

On May 26 , 1874 , President Ulysses S. Grant nominated Parker as Chief Justice of the Utah Territory to replace James B. McKean . However , following a request from Parker , Grant instead nominated him for the United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas , replacing William Story who was facing impeachment proceedings due to allegations of corruption .

Parker arrived in Fort Smith on May 4 , 1875 , initially without his family . His appointment at age 36 made him the youngest federal judge in the West . Parker 's first session as the district judge was on May 10 , 1875 , with court prosecutor W. H. H. Clayton , who remained the United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas for fourteen of Parker 's twenty @-@ one years on the court .

In May 1875 , Parker tried 18 men during his first session of court , all of whom were charged with murder ; 15 were convicted in jury trials . Parker sentenced eight of them to a mandatory death penalty . He ordered six of the men to be executed at the same time on September 3 , 1875 . One of those sentenced to death was killed trying to escape , and another 's sentence was commuted to life in prison due to his youth . Parker gave an interview to the St. Louis Republic on September 1 , 1896 , in which he stated that he had no say whether a convict was to be hanged due to compulsory death sentences , and that he favoured " the abolition of capital punishment " .

Parker 's court had final jurisdiction over the Indian Territory from 1875 until 1889 , as there was no court available for appeals . The legal systems and governments of the Five Civilized Tribes and other Native American tribes in the Indian Territory covered their own citizens , and federal law applied to non @-@ Indian United States citizens in the territory .

According to Congress , the federal court for the Western District of Arkansas was to meet in four separate terms each year : in February , May , August , and November . The court had such a large caseload that the four terms ran together . Parker 's court sat six days a week in order to ensure that they tried as many cases as possible each term , and often up to ten hours each day . In 1883 , Congress reduced the jurisdiction of the court , reassigning parts of the Indian Territory to federal courts in Texas and Kansas ; however , the increasing number of settlers moving into the Indian Territories actually increased the court 's workload .

From May 1 , 1889 , changes made by Congress allowed appeals of capital convictions to the United States Supreme Court . Forty @-@ four cases in which Parker imposed the death penalty were appealed to the Supreme Court , which overturned and ordered a re @-@ trial for 30 of them .

While serving as a district judge in Fort Smith , Parker served on the Fort Smith School Board and was the first president of St. John 's Hospital ( known today as Sparks Health System ) .

In his time on the court , Parker presided over a number of high @-@ profile cases , including the trial of Cherokee Bill and the " Oklahoma Boomer " case involving David L. Payne , who illegally settled on lands in the Indian Territory . In 1895 , Parker heard two cases involving Crawford Goldsby ( Cherokee Bill ) . The first involved Goldsby killing a bystander during a general @-@ store robbery in 1894 . He was convicted in a case that lasted from February 26 to June 25 , 1895 , and Parker sentenced him to death . However , while awaiting execution , Goldsby attempted to escape prison and killed a prison guard . He was again brought before Parker , who gave him a second death sentence on December 2 , 1895 . Goldsby was eventually hanged on March 17 , 1896 .

= = = Later years = = =

Keeping up with continued settlement in the West , the Courts Act of 1889 established a federal court system in the Indian Territory ; this decreased the jurisdiction of the Western District Court at Fort Smith .

Parker clashed with the Supreme Court on a number of occasions , with around two @-@ thirds of cases appealed to the Supreme Court being upheld . In 1894 , Parker gained national attention in a dispute with the Supreme Court over the case of Lafayette Hudson . Hudson was convicted of assault with intent to kill and sentenced to four years imprisonment . He appealed to the Supreme

Court and was granted bail . Parker refused to release Hudson on the grounds that statute law did not provide the Supreme Court the authority to demand Hudson 's release .

In 1895 , Congress passed a new Courts Act which removed the remaining Indian Territory jurisdiction of the Western District , effective September 1 , 1896 . This effectively closed the federal court for the Western District of Arkansas by removing its jurisdiction .

= = Death and legacy = =

Parker was at home when the August 1896 term began , too sick to preside over the court , as he suffered from Bright 's disease . The jurisdiction of the court came to an end on September 1 , 1896 , over lands in the Indian Territory ; reporters wanted to interview him about his career but had to talk to him at his bedside . Parker died on November 17 , 1896 , of a number of health conditions , including heart degeneration and Bright 's disease . His funeral in Fort Smith had the highest number of attenders up to that point . He is buried at the Fort Smith National Cemetery .

In 21 years on the federal bench , Parker tried 13 @, @ 490 cases ; more than 8 @, @ 500 defendants either pleaded guilty or were convicted at trial . He sentenced 160 people to death and 79 were executed ; the others either died while incarcerated or were acquitted , pardoned , or their sentences were commuted .

Parker has been represented in a number of fictionalised portrayals of his time at Fort Smith . Charles Portis features Parker in his novel True Grit , which has twice been adapted as films of the same name . Parker is a featured character in the sequel to the first film . He was portrayed by James Westerfield in the 1969 movie and by John McIntire in the sequel . He was played by Jake Walker in the 2010 remake of True Grit . Douglas C. Jones features Parker as a supporting character in several novels about the men who " rode for Parker " . Zeke Proctor , one of Parker 's deputy marshals , is featured in Larry McMurtry 's 1997 novel Zeke and Ned .

In 1887 , November 27th My Great great Uncle Leander Dixon ( who lived in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas was in a logging camp in the Oklahoma Indian territory . He had brought his wife along in an attempt to get his sister away from the bandit Smith who was a horse thief and a peddler of illegal whiskey ( selling to indians was against the law in those days ) This is the first I have ever read this newspaper account but I was aware of the story for years . My cousin obtained all the hand written records from ( Hanging Judge Parkers court in Ft Smith Arkansas ( Parker is famous in Hollywood movies , Hang em High , True Grit etc ) I read the accounts and from surviving family and onlookers and they all contradicted the newspaper account ( which has no date or byline ) Also contradicted by my great Aunt Belle who was 4 years old at the time . She recalled her Aunt coming through the door of their Arkansas home with the news , she had bullet holes in her apron and had barely escaped being killed herself . The Federal Marshal Frank Dalton ( a brother of the infamous Dalton gang who were all killed in the famous Coffeyville Kansas bank robbery ) was the Marshal that Judge Parker sent to arrest Smith . The latest update to the story is that his brother Bob Dalton who was killed later as a bandit in Coffeyville was a Deputy at the time and was with him . Onlooker accounts said that the deputies rode up without warning and started firing into the tent killing my Great Great Aunt Mary Leander 's wife and that Leander came out with a pistol firing and killed the deputy . ( But the court depositions made no mention of Leanders firing . He was rounded and died of pneumonia in the jail which is still part of the museum in Ft Smith .. a dirt floor dungeon in those days no ventilation and filthy . I spent my childhood visiting my Grandfather in a nearby town and he was still bitter at Judge Parker and opposed honoring him with the monuments . I was never told why until many years after he died. around ten years ago I was made aware of this story and it gets more embroidered with histories on the net and I have tried to correct and give the families side but I have made little headway in getting corrections made.[@-@ williamtoddpower.htm](http://www.franksrealm.com/?/pa?/outlaw) [@-@ williamtoddpower.htm](http://www.franksrealm.com/?/pa?/outlaw) [@-@ dalton">@-@ best ? court records now are kept at](http://www.americancowboychronicles.com/?/frank)

= = = Books = = =

