

General Marsena R. Patrick



As Portrayed By Barry Kirkner



Marsena Rudolph Patrick (March 15, 1811 – July 27, 1888) Patrick was born in Hounsfield, Jefferson County, New York (near Watertown). He worked on the Erie Canal and briefly taught school.

He was appointed to the United States Military Academy in nearby West Point, and graduated in 1835. Initially appointed a brevet second lieutenant in the infantry, promoted to first lieutenant in 1839, to captain, in 1847, brevet major in 1849. He saw service in the Seminole Wars and Mexican–American War. However, Patrick decided to resign from the Army in 1850 and returned to New York.

For a time, he was president of the Sackett's Harbor and Ellisburgh Railroad, as well as becoming an expert farmer, studying and using the latest scientific advances to prosper. In 1859, Patrick was appointed President of the New York State Agricultural College, serving in that role for two years before the outbreak of the Civil War. In March 1862, Patrick was appointed as a brigadier general of volunteers and sent to the Shenandoah Valley. He was subsequently appointed military governor of Fredericksburg, Virginia, in April 1862. Transferred later in the year to the Army of the Potomac under Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, he commanded the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Division, I Corps in the defenses of Washington, D.C.. Patrick's brigade (renumbered as the 3rd Brigade) suffered hundreds of casualties in the Maryland Campaign, seeing action at the battles of South Mountain and Antietam.



In the reorganization of the command structure following Antietam, Patrick was named as the provost marshal for the Army of the Potomac on October 6, 1862. To support his efforts, he had the equivalent of a brigade of troops. New army commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker had Patrick create the Bureau of Military Information, a network of intelligence agents. At the Battle of Gettysburg, Patrick oversaw the processing of thousands of Confederate prisoners of war. In early 1864, when Ulysses S. Grant arrived in the Eastern Theater and assumed authority over multiple armies, Patrick was elevated to provost marshal for the combined forces operating against Richmond, Virginia.

Postbellum career: After the war Patrick remained in northern Virginia as provost of the District of Henrico in the Department of Virginia. Although appointed a brevet major general in the volunteer army, Patrick resigned from the Army a second time on June 12, 1865. Patrick served as president of the New York State Agricultural Society, then spent the next two years as a state commissioner, a role he again held from 1879 through 1880. He became a widely known public speaker, particularly on topics related to technological advances in agriculture. Interested in the care of former soldiers, Patrick moved to Ohio and became the governor of the central branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.



Barry Kirkner, who portrays General Patrick, does so to educate people on an aspect of civil war history that is often not considered by today's casual visitor to civil war events, the handling of Prisoners of War and Intelligence gathering. Mr. Kirkner is a retired military veteran and lives in Honey Brook, PA.