

George Jacob Mook

Background

George Jacob Mook was born April 26, 1828 in Oxford, Ohio. He enlisted with the 4th Missouri Cavalry (Confederate) and was captured on October 25, 1864, while participating in General Sterling Price's raid into Missouri. Mook was sent to Fort Scott, Kansas, where he stayed until being sent to Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis on November 6, 1864. A few weeks later, on November 19, Mook was transferred again, to the larger Alton Prison in Illinois.

During the War

On February 5, 1865, Mook received word that he was going to be part of a large prisoner exchange in Virginia. He boarded the Alton, St. Louis & Terre Haute Railroad on February 17, 1865, and left Alton Prison to begin a long and eventful journey. Over the next few weeks he would travel through Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, and Virginia aboard the steamer *Mary Washington*. When they finally arrived at the point on the James River where the exchange was to take place, conditions had grown poor aboard the steamer. Mook described in his diary on February 26: "Some twenty or thirty cases of Small Pox aboard. Being crowded so I think there will be a hundred cases if we stay aboard the boat two days longer. Talk of suffering, but this beats anything I have experienced yet."

Mook survived the adverse conditions on the ship, and by early March he was at Camp Lee in Richmond, Virginia. The scarcity of goods in the South combined with wartime inflation made the cost of goods incredibly high. Mook found a city where a pound of coffee cost \$50. Perhaps unable to make ends meet, Mook left Richmond on foot, heading south through the Carolinas. While traveling, Mook received a great deal of assistance from the communities through which he passed. He described the aid he received in Fairfield, South Carolina, in his diary: "[I] Took breakfast at a Mr. Coleman's. Went from there to a Mrs. Feaster and got dinner, very kind people in this country." As he continued his travels into Georgia he traveled through Atlanta, where he observed the destruction wrought on the city by Union forces. He recorded in his diary: "Took a walk around town or rather what was a town once. About two thirds of the town is laid in ashes." The melancholy he must have felt seeing the destruction of the South was surely magnified when he received word of the surrender of Confederate general Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House, while he traveled across Mississippi. The final leg of Mook's journey took him to Louisiana, where he stayed for several months before boarding the steamer *Belle Memphis*, which returned him to St. Louis on June 22, 1865.

After the War

George Jacob Mook had gone on a journey of thousands of miles to return to where he began. He made St. Louis his home for the rest of his life, becoming successful as vice president and treasurer of Flesh & Mook Painting Company. He married shortly after the war, and had six children with his wife, Mary. He died in 1900 at the age of 72 and was buried at Bellefontaine Cemetery.