

Remembering

Those killed in the line of Duty



Constable John Beattie

April 1911

Constable Beattie, 28 years old, joined the Winnipeg Police Department on March 18, 1911. He was assigned to beat patrol on the 13th of April when he attended a fire scene at Water Avenue and Main Street. When the fire was extinguished, Constable Beattie entered the building with two firemen but accidentally touched a live electrical wire and was electrocuted. This recruit had served less than a month before he became the first Winnipeg Police Officer to die in the line of Duty. Constable Beattie was survived by his mother living in England.



Constable Bernard Snowden

April 1918

Constable Snowden, 31 years old, joined the Winnipeg Police Department on October 25th, 1912. He was assigned to a beat patrol on Main Street on April 6, 1918 when he discovered the rear door of a clothing store forced open. The culprits were still inside and when Snowden entered the building, he was shot in the back and died instantly. Three males were apprehended and convicted of this murder. The adults, Frank Sullivan and Phillip Johnson were executed and juvenile John Stoike was sent to prison. Constable Snowden was survived by his wife and a daughter.



Sergeant John Verne

July 1934

Sergeant John Verne, 39 years old, joined the St. Boniface Police Department on August 20th, 1920. He was at work as a station sergeant on July 24th, 1934, when the report of a robbery-in-progress was received from the Northbridge Pharmacy on St. Mary's Road. Sergeant Verne responded from the station and arrived on scene as the culprit fled in a commandeered car over the Norwood Bridge into Winnipeg. The car was overtaken in the CNR yards where the gunman got out to face the unarmed officer and fatally shot him. The gunman was arrested within minutes by Winnipeg Police. George Jayhan was convicted of murder and executed. Sergeant Verne was survived by his wife, four sons and two daughters.



Constable Charles Gillis

February 1936

Constable Gillis, 47 years old, joined the Winnipeg Police Department on November 18th, 1912. He took leave to serve in the First World War and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery. On January 24th, 1936, he was assigned to cruiser car patrol with Constable George Blow when they responded to a hold-up in progress at the service station at Donald Street and Graham Avenue. The culprit exited the station as the cruiser car came onto the lot. A foot chase began during which the culprit turned and shot Gillis. Constable Gillis survived the fatal shot until February 7th when he died from the wound. Ian Bryson was apprehended at the scene and was later convicted of murder and executed. Constable Gillis was survived by his wife and a son and a daughter.



Constable John McDonald

February 1940

Constable McDonald, 26 years old, joined the Winnipeg Police Department on October 1st, 1936. He was assigned to a stake-out on February 10th, 1940 at the Motor League offices at 120 Fort Street with Constable Norm Stewart. The officers tried to apprehend 3 safe-breakers but a gun battle ensued in which Constable McDonald was shot and died instantly and Constable Stewart was wounded. The culprits escaped but John Barnett and John Andrusiak were captured soon after. The third man, Mike "The Horse" Attamanchuk, who was responsible for the shootings, killed himself when cornered by officers three days later. Barnett and Andrusiak were each sentenced to 20 years in prison. Constable McDonald was survived by his wife and a son.



Detective Sgt. James Edward Sims

July 1950

Detective Sgt. Sims, 42 years old, joined the Winnipeg Police Department on November 4th, 1930. He was on night duty on July 15th, 1950 when he accompanied Detectives Jack Peachell and William Anderson to 19 Argyle Street to investigate a stabbing that had taken place during a domestic dispute. The culprit returned to the house armed with a shotgun while the officers were inside. Detective Sgt. Sims tried to talk the gunman into putting the gun down but instead the officer was shot when both barrels were discharged directly at him. Henry Malanik was wounded in the following gun battle but survived to stand trial. He was convicted and was the last person to be executed in Manitoba. Detective Sgt. Sims was survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.



Constable Leonard Shakespeare

July 1969

Constable Shakespeare, 26 years old, joined the St. Boniface Police Department on October 10th, 1966. He was on cruiser car patrol with Constable Lyn Giles when they responded to a hold-up alarm from Whites Loco-Mart at Provencher Boulevard and Des Meurons Street. The officers arrived while the armed robbers were still in front of the store and a gun battle ensued in which Constable Shakespeare was shot and wounded and then fatally shot as he lay on the ground. The gunman, Clifford Wicket Lurvey was apprehended at the scene. Daniel Craib was arrested a few hours later hiding on the riverbank and Clarence Prince surrendered to Police the next day. Lurvey was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to death but this was commuted. Craib, Hewitt and Prince were convicted of second degree murder and sent to prison. Constable Shakespeare was survived by his wife and a son and a daughter.



Detective Ronald Houston

June 1970

Detective Ronald Houston, 35 years old, first joined the Winnipeg Police Department on June 3rd, 1957 but resigned on December 31st, 1964. He later rejoined the Department on October 11th, 1966. On the evening of June 27th, 1970, he was assigned to a stake-out for a vicious rapist along with Detective John Degroot. A window-peeper was observed at the apartment block at 399 Stradbroke Avenue and when the officers approached, he turned and stabbed them both with a knife he already had in his hand to cut the screen for entry. Detective Houston was stabbed in the heart and died instantly while Detective DeGroot was injured with stab wounds to his chest. The culprit escaped by swimming across the Assiniboine River. Thomas Mason Shand was identified by his prescription glasses lost in the struggle and he eventually surrendered with his lawyer. He was convicted and sentenced to death but this was commuted. Detective Houston was survived by his wife and two sons.

For more comprehensive details on all of these stories and others, please visit the Historical Stories section of the Winnipeg Police Museum's web pages at: www.winnipeg.ca/police/History/stories.stm