The Night Watch

The Greater Cincinnati Police Museum

“Preserving the History of Law Enforcement in the Greater Cincinnati Area”

When the settlers landed at what is now the foot of Broad Street they realized the need to cooperate with everyone in the area. No substantial help or assistance would be expected from the cities on the east coast, because of the Allegany Mountains, therefore cooperation and collaboration became a priority if they intended to survive.

In the same year our constitution was ratified Ohio became a state and Cincinnati was chartered as a town. Since the army could not continue its law enforcement duties they moved Fort Washington west into what is now Indiana. Cincinnati now needed law enforcement.

The city fathers looked to the Federal Government and modeled themselves after the Militia Act (every white male 21 years of age and older would be in the militia and would be used for law enforcement and to defend the country in the case of invasion). That was the birth of the Night Watch, (every male 18 years of

age and older would be part of this group, The Wide Blue Lind, everyone was involved in law enforcement). They would patrol in groups of three of four being on the lookout for burglary and fires. As time went on things started to change.

Shop owners were having problems staying up all night and running their business during the day so the started paying other people to take their spots. After a time, the city started paying individuals to be on the night watch, this took the Wide Blue Line down to the Thin Blue Line. This did not relieve anyone from their duties of cooperating with the law enforcement.