Special Deputy Albert Russell | Hamilton County Sheriff's Office

Age: 23
OFFICER

We have found no information that is verifiable with regard to Special Deputy Albert Russell other than his fulltime job was that of a livery driver. We suspect he was very recently appointed as a special deputy.

BACKGROUND

Racial and political tensions were still high in October 1884 during the fifth general election since the end of the Civil War. These were tumultuous times with riots breaking out during almost every election and the great Courthouse Riot during March 1884 resulting in hundreds of casualties, including the deaths of Ohio National Guard Captain John Desmond and Cincinnati Patrol Wagon Driver Joseph Sturm.

Democrats ran Cincinnati at the time and Republicans nationwide thought that Democrats controlled the voting – including by voting multiple times and preventing others who would likely vote Republican from voting at all. During March 1883, Lot Wright was appointed as United States Marshal of the Southern District of Ohio and he set out to stop these abuses.

Leading up to the 1884 election, Wright requested military

response to Cincinnati, deputized 1360 men as U. S. Deputy Marshals, and armed 600 of them with .44 caliber British Bulldog revolvers provided by the National Republican Committee. Many of these short-termed deputy marshals were not from Ohio – a violation of law – and it was impossible for Wright to check their backgrounds. Many of these men had criminal records for theft, counterfeiting, bribery, fraud, shooting to kill, cutting to kill, carrying concealed weapons, and murder. Many more had an extensive list of misdemeanor convictions and frequently were locked up in the Workhouse. Wright later admitted under oath that he could not know the character in his deputies and many of them became involved in Election Day drunken binges, fracases, stabbings, shootings, and general mayhem.

On October 14, 1884, Hamilton County special deputy sheriffs and Cincinnati patrolmen were assigned to keep the peace at polling places.

INCIDENT

About 9 a.m., 28-year-old Deputy U. S. Marshal John Payne, normally a laborer living at 74 Longworth Street, approached Special Deputy Albert Russell at the entrance to the polls and tried to get Deputy Russell to leave his post by telling him someone wanted to see him. Deputy Russell stood his post and told Payne to "go to Hell" and mind his own business. Deputy Russell reached for his revolver, and Payne left.

About 11:30 a.m., Payne brought another man, named Copeland, and stood near the polling place. Deputy Russell approached and Payne engaged him in conversation about the earlier incident. The discussion is privy to Payne and Copeland, but it resulted in both men going for their revolvers and Payne shooting Deputy Russell in the chest with a .42 caliber Bulldog revolver issued

to him the night before by Marshal Wright.

Payne quickly walked down Central Avenue to 4th Street and then to the United States Marshal's Office where he was concealed.

Deputy Russell was carried to Winkleman's Drug Store from which Cincinnati Police Patrol Wagon No. 1 was called. The ball had entered Deputy Russel's left side and went through his heart. He died before the patrol wagon arrived. Patrolman Honeyman took charge of his revolver and his body was carried to Habig's.

JUSTICE

When officers arrived, Marshal Wright refused to surrender his deputy. At 5:30 p.m., Cincinnati Police Chief, Colonel M. F. Reilly, dispatched Sergeant Phillip Rittweger to the Marshal's Office. Sergeant Rittweger arrested Payne and charged him with Murder.

Payne appeared in Police Court on October 23, 1884 and the case was continued. On October 25, 1884, he was prosecuted by Thomas F. Shay and defended by Major Blackburn and Howard Ferris. Five witnesses testified that Payne drew his weapon first. Copeland and three other witnesses testified that Deputy Russell did. The judge bound him over to the Grand Jury on a charge of Murder of the 1st Degree.

The Grand Jury indicted Payne on a charge of Manslaughter and he was arraigned for in the Court of Common Pleas on December 9, 1884. Payne was acquitted of Manslaughter by a jury on March 17, 1885.

EPILOGUE

Later on the night of October 14, 1884, two more law enforcement officers, Cincinnati Patrolmen Martin Gorman and Henry Scherloh, would be shot and killed protecting another election poll.

Lot Wright was investigated by the United States Congress during January 1885 and discussed while in session during April 1885. He was relieved of duty on June 9, 1885.

On September 15, 1885, angry at another man and again determined to kill, John Payne went home to retrieve his British Bulldog revolver. Police intercepted him and charged him with Disorderly Conduct and Carrying a Concealed Weapon. On September 18, 1885, he was found guilty in Police Court and sentenced to the Workhouse for eleven months and fined $250. Less than three months later, on December 2, 1885, the Workhouse Board of Directors at their annual meeting, directed his release.

If you know of any information, artifacts, archives, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

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