

Watchman John Brasher | City of Cincinnati's Sixth Ward

Age: 37

OFFICER

John was born in Marietta, Ohio where he married. He later moved to Cincinnati. He had been elected as Watchman for a few years and had a good reputation as one who could carry out a detail requiring intelligence and secrecy. His wife, too, was considered a most exemplary woman. Regardless, of his reputation as an efficient Watchman, during the April 6, 1849 elections, he lost his re-election bid for the 6th Ward by a single vote.

MURDERER

Jesse Jones was a burglar, even in his youth. After his last arrest for burglary, he was sentenced to 12 years in the Ohio Penitentiary, but he was released after only two years. Upon returning to Cincinnati, he fell in again with his former companions and noted thieves and started burglarizing again.

INCIDENT

On Sunday, May 6, 1849, in his last days serving his community, Watchman Brasher found Jones with a group breaking into the Good Samaritan Drug Store at Western Row (now Central Avenue) and Court Street. He apprehended most of them, but Jones escaped. On the next day, May 7, 1849, Officer Brasher swore out a warrant against Jones and tracked him to Madam

Davis' house at 15th and Elm Streets where Jones kept a mistress.

Police surrounded the house and demanded Jones' surrender and Watchman Brasher placed himself along a possible escape route. Jones burst through the rear door and the two met at a fence that Jones intended to scale. Jones warned Watchman Brasher to stop chasing him or he would be a dead man. Brasher, probably unarmed, advanced and Jones turned and shot Officer Brasher in the chest and through the heart. Watchman Brasher died there next to the Procter and Gamble Soap and Candle Factory.

INVESTIGATION

The Marshall offered at \$100 reward for the apprehension of Jones (more than \$3000 in today's dollars).

On May 8, 1849, Coroner Henry Lowry held an inquest and determined that Watchman Brasher was shot to death by Jesse Jones, but Jones could not be found.

Almost two months later, near dusk on June 28, 1849, Captain John W. Riley the Wharf Master, received information that Jones had been seen in the city. He met with 10th Ward Constable Nathan Marchant, who had been indefatigably tracking Jones, and together they tracked Jones down at 11 p.m. about half a mile past the Mill Creek bridge on River Road. He was carrying apparently all he owned in a carpet bag hanging from one arm and a bundle of clothing in the other. Thus encumbered, he could not get to his breast pocket where he had concealed a long-barreled, heavy revolver. He told the officers that it had not been his intention to be taken alive.

JUSTICE

Almost a year later, Jesse Jones was found guilty of 2nd Degree Murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Incredibly, some on the jury said they were lenient because Jones said he murdered the unarmed Watchman because he did not know that a warrant had been sworn. Then, after serving only eleven years, on December 5, 1861, Ohio Governor Dennison pardoned him. He was last known to be a criminal in New Orleans.

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

© – This narrative was created on August 28, 2013 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President, which includes some research product from Cincinnati Homicide Detective Edward W. Zieverink III (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Historian. All rights are reserved to him and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.