

Mounted Patrolman Richard Charles Lloyd Ell | Cincinnati Police Department



Mounted Patrolman
Richard C. Ell

Age: 25

Served: $2\frac{3}{4}$ years

March 4, 1916 to December 14, 1918

OFFICER

Richard was born December 9, 1893 in Cincinnati, the youngest of eight children born to German immigrants, George J. and Wilhelmina (Walz) Ell. He was a shoe worker and single when he joined the Cincinnati Police Department as a Substitute Patrolman on March 4, 1916. He was quickly promoted to Patrolman on April 14, 1916 and assigned as a Mounted Patrolman in the East Walnut Hills District. Patrolman Ell married Mary Magdalena "Lena" Zimpfer on June 22, 1916. By December 1918, they were living at 1725 Vine Street.

Mounted Patrolman Ell entered into Greater Cincinnati law enforcement midway through its most violent 5-year period, 1914 through 1918. In the two years prior to his appointment,

seven Greater Cincinnati law enforcement officers had been shot and killed. During the next three years, fourteen more were added to the list. He was Number 21.

MURDERER

Theodore A. Pohlman was born June 30, 1883 in Indiana, also to German immigrants. By 1910 he was married to Catherine, working as a carpenter, and living on Carney Street in Mt. Adams. By 1918, they and their six children moved to 2250 Ivy Street in O'Bryonville.

INCIDENT

During the afternoon of December 14, 1918, Pohlman was drinking and playing pool at John Hines's saloon, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from his home, at 2049 Madison Road. Having become too drunk and argumentative over game of pool, the bartender, Paul Dittrick, told him to leave. Pohlman went home, ate dinner, and returned to the bar in the evening. Dittrick would not let him in. Pohlman told the occupants of the bar that he was going home "to get his gun." He was last heard yelling, "I'll get even with you Democrats."

Pohlman returned with a double-barreled shotgun, aimed it at Dittrick, but the bartender caught the weapon under his arm and took it from Pohlman. He told Pohlman to go home and gave his shotgun back to him.

Patrolman Ell had been sick and unable to work for the last week and a half. He came back to work as temperatures in Cincinnati dipped into the single digits. By evening, there were more than ten inches of snow on the ground. He was near Hine's saloon and that bartender advised him of the trouble between him and Pohlman.

Patrolman Ell approached and talked to Pohlman. The content of the conversation is not known, but it seemed that he had convinced Pohlman to return home. Then Pohlman turned back toward Patrolman Ell and shot him at pointblank range with both barrels. Though his upper body was riddled with buckshot, his heart, lungs, and aorta punctured, and an artery in his neck severed, Patrolman Ell returned fire, but without effect.

Patrolman Ell was taken to General Hospital and remarkably lived for several hours. He died at 10:30 p.m., due to "shock, hemorrhage, and suffocation".

Mounted Patrolman Ell was survived by his wife of 2½ years, Lena Ell; mother, Wilhelmina Ell; and 7 siblings. He was buried in Vine Street Cemetery on December 17, 1918.

INVESTIGATION

Lieutenant John B. Muhle, Sergeant Stewart, and Patrolmen Patton and Louis Seidholz went to Pohlman's home. When they arrived at the home, Mrs. Pohlman informed that officers that Pohlman was in bed. He was arrested there. The shotgun was found under the bed. At the time, he advised the officers that he did not know that Patrolman Ell was a policeman and that he thought he was one of the men with whom he had quarreled.

Chief of Detectives William J. Love questioned Pohlman. Pohlman said, "I have examined my conscience and I do not know that I shot the officer. I shot at someone, but I do not know at whom." Lieutenant Love charged him with 1st Degree Murder on December 16, 1918.

JUSTICE

Pohlman was indicted for First Degree Murder and his trial was set for May 1919. On May 23, 1919, he pleaded guilty to 2nd Degree Murder and Judge Caldwell sentenced him to the Ohio Penitentiary for life without hope of pardon.

Lena moved back into her parents' home on Green Street. During June 1921, she married Patrolman Charles Beuttel and began to raise a family.

In his absence, Pohlman's family suffered. In less than three years, three of his children died from influenza. During 1922, Pohlman, assigned as a trustee and working as a carpenter at the State Blind School, escaped. He took his wife, Catherine, and their three surviving daughters, Aurelia, Catherine, and Hellen, to St. Paul, Minnesota. There they went by the last name of Pullman and he by the first name of Aloys. For 27 years they lived ordinary lives. His daughters married and, during 1949, his wife passed away. Also in 1949, Pohlman had an altercation with his housekeeper. As a result, his fingerprints were sent to the National Bureau of Identification and he was identified as the escaped convict. He was returned to prison in Ohio.

Charles Buettel, by then a retired Police Lieutenant, also passed away in 1949. Lena was a widow again. She would remain so until her death 24 years later .

On September 26, 1957, Pohlman was paroled, having served only 11 years – as the newspapers reported it, seemingly 3 years for the Murder of Patrolman Ell and 11 years for the escape. By then, The Cincinnati Enquirer reported a conjured-up story that in 1918, Pohlman was at the bar to buy brandy hoping to use medicinally for his flu-infected children and that he and the policeman quarreled before he killed the officer – a story which was, no doubt, proffered at the parole hearing. Pohlman returned to St. Paul and lived out his life as Albert Theodore Pullman. He died at 88 years of age on June 16, 1971.

Lena passed away August 14, 1973 at the age of 78.

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

This narrative was further researched in anticipation of the 100th Anniversary of his death and revised November 7, 2018 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society Vice President. All rights are reserved to him and the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society.