Night Sergeant Christopher Kolhoven | Newport Police Department



Age: 50½
Served: 1½ years
January 16, 1916 to July 11, 1917

OFFICER

Chris was born on December 31, 1866 in Kentucky, the fourth child born to John (of Belgium) and Margaret (Welch, of Germany) Kohlhoff. Very soon after, and maybe at the date of immigration, John “Americanized” his, and thereby his family’s, name to Kolhoven.

By 1894, Chris was living in Cincinnati at 88 Pearl Street and working as a cutter, probably at Ettlinger and Company. He continued to work in the industry as a trimmer, cutter, and/or foreman for decades. During 1898, he was living at 23 West Third Street in Newport. By 1902, he had moved to 325 West Seventh Street. During 1900, he was living at 118 West Third Street.

During October 1903, Chris was listed as a candidate for the

Campbell County School Board from the 4th Ward. At some point he had also served on Newport's City Council.

During 1914, Chris was living at 1109 Central Avenue and still working as a cutter.

He joined the Newport Police Department as a Patrolman on January 16, 1916, along with Patrolmen Harry Buschmiller, John Hearn, and Victor Martin. By mid-1917, he had been promoted to Night Sergeant and was still living at 1109 Central Avenue in the 6th Ward. He was also a member of the Newport Order of Elks and a charter member of the Madison Club.

MURDERER

George King was born September 23, 1895 in Lexington, Kentucky, the second of four children born to farmers, Simon G. and Florence America (Hunter) King. By 1910, the family was living on Walnut Hill Pike in Fayette County.

After Germany revived their submarine attacks on American shipping in February 1917, the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. One day prior, April 5th, George King enlisted in the Kentucky National Guard at Lexington and was assigned to Company C of the Second Kentucky Infantry. Probably after basic training, his unit was posted to bridge security and based in Newport at the Licking River under the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Bridge.

INCIDENT

In the early morning hours of July 11, 1917, Ms. Clara Bahlman, daughter of Frank Bahlman, a grocer at Ninth and Patterson

Streets, heard noises below her second-floor window. Due to previous milk thefts in the area, the nineteen-year-old retrieved a revolver and went to the window. She found the five soldiers, after a night of binge drinking, carrying milk bottles from her father's grocery. She held three – Quartermaster Sergeant Matthew White and Privates John Short and James Powell – at bay while her father called the police. Two others got away.

Sergeant Kolhoven, Patrolman Charles Mullen, and Patrol Chauffer Thomas Hollhan responded. After arresting the three, they found a fourth at 4 a.m. – Private King – on Patterson Street walking toward Hodge Street. Sergeant Kolhoven got out of the car and walked to King. King ordered the sergeant to release his prisoners. Sergeant Kolhoven put his hand on King's shoulder, and said, "Come on Jack, and go along with us." King pulled away, shouted, "Like hell I will!", leveled his rifle and shot Sergeant Kolhoven in the abdomen, severing his abdominal aorta.

King then held the other officers at bay with the rifle and, after a brief time, he fled.

DEATH

Sergeant Kolhoven died before doctors could reach him. His body was taken to his home.

Sergeant Kolhoven was survived by his father, John Kolhoven, and sister, Mrs. Anthony Freiberg. The funeral was held from Mrs. Frieberg's home at 1106 Central Avenue with services held at Corpus Christi Church at 9 a.m. on July 17, 1917. Included in the attendance were the members of the Newport Police Department, Newport Lodge of Elks, Madison Club, and Sons of German Pioneers. He was then escorted to and buried in Section

18-S037139-01 of St. Joseph Cemetery on John’s Hill Road in Wilder.

JUSTICE

Private King fled to the National Guard camp on the Licking River where he reported to Sergeant E. A. Gillespie saying, “I have killed a man.” Sergeant Gillespie took him to the Newport Police Headquarters where he was charged with Murder.

When word got out that Sergeant Kolhoven had been murdered, groups of men began to gather at the jail. Newport Mayor A. J. Livingston quickly acted and ordered Private King removed to Covington.

Sergeant White and Private Powell advised the Commonwealth Attorney that liquor was at the root of the problem. In describing the murder, they asserted that no one threatened King.

On the morning of the 11th, he waived examination by the county court and was held over to the Grand Jury.

The other three were brought to court and each was convicted of Petit Larceny and sentenced to one year in jail. Those cases were appealed to the Governor Stanley. On July 19, 1917 a writ of habeas corpus was filed for the three soldiers and a hearing was set for July 21 in front of Judge Wolff. Judge Wolff remanded the cases back to Police Court with charges of drunkenness and disorderly conduct. On July 23, 1917, the cases were continued to July 25 and then again to the 28th. On July 31, 1917, John S. Roebuck dismissed the cases for all three.

King’s father, Simon King, petitioned the United States Attorney to file for a writ of habeas corpus for his son. In Lexington,

Lieutenant W. Clarke Otte, Judge Advocate of the First Brigade, Kentucky Infantry recommended to the Central Department of the U. S. Army that King be court martialed rather than tried in a civil court. On August 11, 1917, the Campbell County Grand jury announced an indictment of King for Murder. In Frankfurt, Federal Judge Cochran, on September 24th, ruled that the military authorities have exclusive authority to try soldiers for cases of alleged murder. King was taken to Camp Stanley near Lexington following the ruling.

King's Court-martial was held in Hattiesburg, Mississippi on November 20, 1917. All the witnesses were civilians from Newport, 700 miles away, including the Campbell County Coroner and Newport detectives. King was defended by Lieutenants W. Clarke Otte, Lieutenant Logan Rock, and Lieutenant Colonel Frank L. Ripley of the 149th Infantry. Captain Keith W. Wise, Judge Advocate, argued for the government. The proceeding ended on the 22nd and the decision of the court was sent to Washington for review before it was announced. Incredibly, he was acquitted having claimed self-defense, because, while the soldier held a rifle, supposedly "the officer made a motion as to draw a revolver."

EPILOGUE

It would appear Private George King suffered no consequences for the murder, theft, or even drunkenness on duty. Nor did he serve in combat. While he was in the stockade, his unit was nationalized at Camp Sherman, Ohio on August 5, 1917, and designated Company H of the 165th Infantry Brigade. The Brigade remained at headquarters and training facility. He was honorably discharged April 22, 1919.

By 1920, King was back in Lexington living on his brother

Henry’s farm in Dog Fennel, Kentucky. By 1921 he was married to Maurine (Hunter) King and living in Lexington. Sometime between 1921 and 1940 they moved to Cincinnati. They were living at 1621 Linn Street and he was working as a fireman at the Cincinnati Coffin Company. By 1945, he moved to Price Avenue in Price Hill. He died at his home in Price Hill at the age of 67, on May 10, 1963.

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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