

Patrolman Carl Edward Thorwarth | Cincinnati Police Division



Badge: 387
Served: 28½ years
August 4, 1915 to November 24, 1943

OFFICER

Carl and his twin brother, Jacob R. Thorwarth, were born April 10, 1892 in Cincinnati the last of seven children born to John George and Barbara (Kobel) Thorwarth. Their father immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1881 and plied his trade as a locksmith. Their mother immigrated a year earlier. Eight days after their birth, Jacob died from convulsions.

By 1900 the family was living at 1851 Fairmount Avenue in a two-family frame house. Barbara died from appendicitis on March 29, 1906 when Carl was 13. Carl attended Cincinnati public schools through the tenth grade. About 1809, when he was 17, he began working as a clerk for Engineering Specialties and did so for six years.

In 1915, hundreds of men applied for the position of Substitute

Patrolman on the Cincinnati Police Department. On July 12, 1915, the Civil Service Commission announced that 162 passed the physical examinations and continued to the written examination, of which 145 passed and were placed on an eligibility list in accordance with their score. Carl finished in the top ten percent at Number 14. On August 4, 1915, Acting Safety Director Durr appointed Carl and seven others as Substitute Patrolmen. He was promoted to Patrolman on February 1, 1916, issued Badge 387, and assigned to District 8 on Short Vine Street in Corryville. By 1917, he was a Mounted Patrolman. Later, he transferred to the Motor Patrol and then to a Patrol Wagon.

He was still living at 1851 Fairmount when he married Lenora Caroline Meifert on June 12, 1918. They lived in separate accommodations from his father and two sisters.

On April 21, 1920, their first child died at birth. Then, on January 13, 1921, his father died. During 1922, they had a son. The family of three moved in 1923 to 4218 30th Street (later renamed "Eileen Drive", in Oakley. They would each live there the rest of their lives.

During his career, Patrolman Thorwarth was injured four times requiring leaves of absence, but never for more than a week. By November 1943 he had served his community for over 28 years. On November 24, 1943, he was working on Patrol 6 with his partner Patrolman Nicholas Smith.

OFFENDER

Walter Ray Norris was born January 25, 1896 in Pancoastburg, in Madison Township, Fayette County, Ohio near what is now Deer Creek State Park. He was the fourth of at least six children born to blacksmith David Mcmelan and Alice Ollie N (Timmons)

Norris. By the time he was four years old, his father was gone and he was living with his unemployed mother and four siblings. By 1900, at the age of 14, his father was back and they were living in Mt. Sterling. During June 1917, he was working as a laborer for the Ohio Fuel and Gas Company in Pickaway County. On his draft registration, he claimed that he was the sole supporter of his father and mother, but there is no other indication that his father or older siblings were unemployed.

He was drafted nonetheless into the United States Army for World War I. On June 24, 1918, he and 13 other recruits departed for Camp Sherman in Chillicothe for basic training. Norris was assigned to a Military Police Company and then a Machinegun Company. He served overseas from September 1918 to July 1919 and was honorably discharged in August 1919.

By January 1920, Norris was living again with his parents and brother, Fred, and he, his father, and brother were farm laborers in Monroe Township, Madison County. By 1930, Walter, his parents, and two siblings were back in Deercreek Township. His father was working as a gas station attendant, and he was working as a guard on a farm.

We do not know when, but by 1936 he moved to Cincinnati and was living at 414 E. 3rd Street. Then, in 1940, he was in Louisville, Kentucky, locked up in the Louisville Workhouse on charges that we cannot locate. On January 9, 1943, at 47, Norris was living at 2621 Melrose Avenue and working as a laborer at the Baldwin Piano Company on Gilbert Avenue. By the end of the year, he was living with his wife, Martha Norris, at 921 E. McMillan Avenue.

INCIDENT

On November 24, 1943, Martha Norris called the police to 921 E. McMillan Street. Patrolman Charles Gear responded, determined that her husband, Walter Ray Norris, abused her, arrested him, and called for a patrol wagon to come pick him up.

Patrolmen Thorwarth and Nicholas Smith, Patrol 6, responded. Patrolman Gear took Mrs. Morris to the Cincinnati Municipal Clerk's Office at City Hall to obtain a warrant for Norris on a charge of Abuse of Family. After Gear left, Norris refused to leave the home and, though handcuffed, the two patrolmen struggled mightily to overpower the 5'10", 225-pound piano mover.

When they finally forced him into the back of the patrol wagon, Patrolman Thorwarth rode in the back with the unruly prisoner while Patrolman Smith drove the patrol wagon toward Central Station (the city jail), also in City Hall.

The patrol wagon had not traveled a block when, as it turned from McMillan Street onto Kemper Lane, Norris yelled, "There's something wrong with your partner!" Patrolman Smith stopped the patrol wagon, opened the rear, found Patrolman unresponsive on the floor. He rushed him to General Hospital.

DEATH

Patrolman Thorwarth died in the arms of fellow officers as he was being carried into the receiving ward of General Hospital. The coroner determined that he died from a coronary thrombosis.

He was predeceased by his siblings, Elenora Maria Emeric, George Thorwarth, Albert M. Thorwarth, and Jacob R. Thorwarth. Patrolman Thorwarth was survived by his wife of 25 years, Lenora Caroline (Miefert) Thorwarth; son, Edward C. Thorwarth; sisters,

Elizabeth Thorwarth and Alma Thorwarth; and brother-in-law, William Frederick Emerich.

Police Chief Eugene T. Weatherly appointed the pallbearers, Auto Patrolmen Robert Goke, Nicholas Smith, Oscar Deckert, William Tekulve, William Interreiden, and Samuel Gough. The funeral services were held at the Witt, Kelsch, and Wood Funeral Home at 3026 Madison Road on Monday, November 29, 1943. The Police Masonic Club, of which he was a member, also held services. He was buried in Walnut Hills Cemetery.

JUSTICE

On November 26, 1943, Mrs. Norris failed to appear in court to prosecute her warrant and the case against Norris was dismissed. He went home to his wife. We can find no documentation that Norris was ever prosecuted for resisting arrest or any other offense regarding the death of Patrolman Thorwarth.

EPILOGUE

Lenora Thorwarth, at 75 years of age, grew infirmed, and was residing at the Park Nursing Home in Norwood when she died on July 15, 1969. Edward Thorwarth died suddenly two days later on July 17, 1969 at their home on Eileen. A double funeral was held at Witt, Good, and Kelsch Funeral Home. Both were buried next to Patrolman Thorwarth and his stillborn daughter. Patrolman and Mrs. Thorwarth have no surviving descendants.

Walter Norris had more trouble with the law. On April 17, 1944, while recklessly driving a truck, tipped it over and dumped carboy of sulfuric acid over several yards of curbing and asphalt at Market Street and Columbia Avenue in Reading. In

January 1945, he forged and cashed a United States family assistance check issued to another family living in the same building on McMillan. Secret Service Agent Richard G. Pfeffer advised the victim that Norris had been arrested in Louisville. Norris was indicted on February 20, 1945 and on March 10th sentenced to 28 months in prison with 24 months suspended. After his release four months later, he repeatedly violated the terms of his probation and on December 4, 1946, Federal Judge John H. Druffel sentenced him to serve out his remaining two years at the Pennsylvania Federal Penitentiary. Mrs. Norris divorced him during March 1947. We do not know where he was from 1950 for the next 26 years, but on February 18, 1976, Norris died in the Veterans Hospital in Dayton at the age of 80.

During November 2021, the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum's Registrar, Superintendent Philip L. Lind (Retired), was gleaning data from a 1943 Cincinnati Police Annual Report when he discovered the line of duty death of Patrolman Thorwarth. He forwarded the information to the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society's Memorial Committee and together they researched the incident and determined that it was a line of duty death in accordance with their standards.

In May 2026, based on information provided by the Historical Society to the Ohio Attorney General's Office and the National Law Enforcement Memorial in 2024, the National Memorial contact the Cincinnati Police Interim Chief Adam Henni and request more information for inclusion on their memorial. Lieutenant Colonel Mark Burns enlisted the aid of the Historical Society to complete the necessary paperwork.

If you know of any information, archives, artifacts, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater

Cincinnati Police Historical Society's Memorial Committee at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

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