Patrolman Frederick Louis Klenk | Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad

Age: 50
Served: 17 years
1919 to February 26, 1936

OFFICER

Fred was born April 11, 1885 in Cincinnati. His parents, Ludwig and Barbara (Friedrich) Klenk immigrated three years earlier during 1882 from Germany and he worked as a Brewer.

By 1900, the family, including his parents, siblings, aunts, uncle, and cousins, were living on Lehman Road Place. Fred was 15 and working as a carriage trimmer.

By June 18, 1909 he was married and he and his wife, Wilhelmina "Minnie", had their first child, Wilhelmina "Billie". During 1910, Fred worked as a brewer and they were living at 3030 Beekman Street. They then had twins, Frederick and Florence, on July 15, 1914. He continued to work as a brewer until 1918 when he began, for a very short time, to work for the Textile Waterproof Company. By then he had moved up the street to 3085 Beekman Street.

During 1918, Fred became a Watchman for the City of Cincinnati.

He listed himself as a Detective in the 1923 City Directory and we believe he worked for the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis (also known as the Big Four) Railroad. During 1928, his title changed Patrolman, but he was interchangeably referred to as a railroad Detective, and probably wore a uniform very similar to that of Cincinnati and/or St. Bernard Police Departments. His duties were likewise similar on railroad property as his municipal counterparts within their jurisdictions.

INCIDENT

On Saturday night, November 23, 1935 Patrolman Klenk was directing traffic with a flashlight at a railroad crossing at Spring Grove Avenue and June Street, near Procter and Gamble. At or just before Midnight, Preston Godby (31), of 4508 Circle Avenue in Winton Place, driving his automobile while drunk, disregarded Patrolman Klenk's signal, ran into him, and continued on without stopping.

St. Bernard Police Department responded to the accident scene and transported Patrolman Klenk to St. Mary's Hospital, arriving Sunday morning, November 24, at 12:20 a.m. His injuries included a compound comminuted fracture of the left tibia and fibula.

Dr. Evans, Big Four Railroad Surgeon, operated on Patrolman Klenk's leg at 10 a.m. on the morning of the 24th for an open reduction of the fracture.

DEATH

Three months after the crash on February 26, 1936, still in the

hospital, Patrolman Klenk suffered an embolism, causing a blockage of a blood vessel, and died.

Patrolman Klenk was survived by his wife of 28 years, Wilhelmina “Minnie” (Wund) Klenk (55); children, Wilhelmina “Billie” (Klenk) Linnie (27), Frederick R. Klenk (22), and Florence E. Klenk (22); and numerous siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. On February 29, 1936 his funeral was held and he was buried in Vine Street Hill Cemetery.

JUSTICE

A witness to the crash took down the license number of the offending car and notified the police. Cincinnati Police District 5 found Godby at Fergus Avenue and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks (near Knowlton Street) and took him to the St. Bernard Police Station. He was then taken to General Hospital where he was examined, given a ticket for acute alcoholism, and arrested.

While Patrolman Klenk was still in the hospital, on December 11, 1935, Godby went before Saint Bernard Mayor John L. Gessendorf who found him guilty and fined him $75 (about $1400 in 2019 dollars).

There is no indication in any records or reporting that Godby was held accountable for Patrolman Klenk’s death.

EPILOGUE

Minnie Klenk died January 31, 1943, almost seven years after her husband, and is also buried in Vine Street Hill Cemetery.

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

© This line of duty death was discovered and all of the initial research was provided by Cincinnati Police Homicide Detective Edward W. Zieverink, III (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Director. This narrative was created on July 3, 2016 after further research by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President. All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society.