

Patrolman Jacob Kuenzel | Cincinnati Police Department



Patrolman
Jacob Kuenzel

Age: 42

Served: 10½ years

January 6, 1905 to June 24, 1916

Officer

Jake was born July 5, 1873 in Walnut Hills to German immigrants Edward and Margaret (Zolleis) Kuenzel. In 1894, Edward purchased 2415 Boone Street and moved his family there.

By 1901, Jake was working as a news dealer. On April 10, 1901, he married Katie Hanss of Alsace Lorain, Germany who immigrated to the United States and was living with her parents at 2327 Guy Street (now Stratford Avenue). The couple moved to May and McMillan Streets where he opened a cigar and news store. Their first son, Adrian Edward Kuenzel was born on September 26, 1902

at the residence. Sometime between 1903 and 1905, Jacob became a paper hanger and moved to 2513 Boone Street.

Jake joined the Cincinnati Police Department as Substitute Patrolman on January 6, 1905 and was assigned to the 7th District at 2401 Concord Street. It was a six-minute walk from his home and his beat included the neighborhood that he lived in for 11 years. Already by October 15, 1905, he had shown his bravery when he singlehandedly, while off duty and in civilian clothes, took on a combative man with a razor, two blocks from his home, at Boone and Wilkinson Streets; and then fended off an angry crowd without either the prisoner nor himself being cut.

He was promoted to Patrolman on August 2, 1906. During December 1908, he and Patrolman Jones responded to a report of a 16-year-old youth galloping up and down Marquis Alley, which was four blocks from his home, and firing a rifle. They arrested the youth without anyone being shot. On August 2, 1909, a man flashed a large revolver at a festival. As the attendees panicked and ran out, Patrolman Kuenzel appeared at the entrance and disarmed and arrested the man. Again, off duty, this time at his home on September 29, 1909, he heard a woman screaming for help from a burning home. He ran into the burning home and brought the woman out through the smoke. On October 31, 1909 he responded to a report of a woman firing shots at 'an enemy from the old country.' He disarmed and handcuffed the woman whose husband, seeing her in handcuffs, tried to cave the officers head in with a chair. He survived the attempt, and both assailants went to jail.

By 1910, Patrolman Kuenzel's reputation was such that he was selected to be on the Exposition Detail, including the Governor's Detail, for the tri-state's Ohio Valley Exposition in September of that year.

His heroics had made an impression on Katie Kuenzel as well. Not as an admirer, but as one whose husband had a job that was too dangerous. She desperately feared that he might die performing it. He provided her with more evidence for her fears during February 1912 when, about seven blocks from their home, he and Lieutenant Fisher stopped a runaway four-horse team and transfer wagon, saving numerous civilians lined up for street cars at Peeble's Corner. They came away with considerable scrapes, bruises, and shredded uniforms. Katie was becoming increasingly concerned and mentally unstable.

Things were a little better at the Kuenzel household in 1915 when Patrolman Kuenzel transferred to the 2nd District (314 Broadway), a good distance from Katie's observation of his professional activities. On November 26, 1915, she gave birth to their second son, Richard Jacob Kuenzel.

But, during January 1916, the baby developed symptoms of a stomach flu and died on January 30, 1916 of gastroenteritis. Katie had to be confined to a sanitarium (probably the Oxford Retreat, now Cook Field on the Miami University campus). Patrolman Kuenzel made the $1\frac{1}{4}$ -hour trip to visit her every Sunday. On June 18, 1916, she begged him to take her home. Either with a one-week pass or indefinite discharge, he took her home. To him and their neighbors and relatives she seemed to be mentally stable again.

Five days later, on June 23, 1916, Patrolman Kuenzel went to work third shift. He was relieved at 7 a.m. the next morning, June 24, 1916, and went home to nap prior to his mandatory appearance at a Preparedness Parade.

As the patrolmen assembled in the staging area in the courtyard of City Hall, their commanders called the roll, Patrolman Kuenzel did not answer.

INCIDENT

Katie Kuenzel, though she seemed well, was still laboring under the delusion that her husband was destined to be killed in the line of duty, never to return to her. After Patrolman Kuenzel fell asleep, she systematically locked the door and all of the windows and descended into the basement room where he was sleeping. With the irrational thought of saving him from his destiny, she picked up his service revolver, aimed it at his head and fired four times. Three bullets struck the couch and wall, but one struck him in the head, killing him instantly, 12 days before his 43rd birthday.

Upon hearing the shots, their neighbors, including Jake's sister Annie, broke a window to enter the home. Annie wrestled the revolver away from Katie. The two ran upstairs where Annie prevented Katie from jumping out a window. But she was unable to stop her from getting to the medicine cabinet and consuming carbolic acid. Katie died at Cincinnati General Hospital three hours later.

FUNERAL

Patrolman Kuenzel was survived by their son, Adrian Edward Kuenzel (14); both parents; and sisters, Margarite Kuenzel (40) and Anna Kuenzel (37). A double funeral was held from their home at 2413 Boone Street on Monday, June 26, 1916 and they were buried together at Mt. Healthy Cemetery (now Mt. Pleasant Cemetery).

EPILOGUE

Patrolman Kuenzel's father, Edward, died 2½ years later on January 24, 1919 at the age of 79. His mother, Margaret, died on April 8, 1936 at the age of 88. Both are buried in the Mt. Healthy Cemetery.

Adrian went to live next door with his grandparents. He married and had two sons, Richard J. Kuenzel and Robert Bruce Kuenzel. He has five great-grandchildren, living in Cleveland, Minneapolis, Chicago, and West Virginia. He has seven great-grandchildren and, as of 2025, eight great-great-grandchildren.

One, Jacob Kuenzel's great-grandson, Robert Bruce Kuenzel, II, followed in his great-grandfather's footsteps, joining the West Virginia State Police Department as a Trooper in 1988. He later served as a criminal investigator until sustaining a serious back injury in an accident. He retired in 1998 and went back to school, graduating from the West Virginia University College of Law in 2001. He has been employed as an attorney since 2002.

If you know of 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 and revised December 11, 2025 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President/CEO. Cincinnati Police Homicide Detective Edward W. Zieverink III (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Curator, found the gravesites. All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.