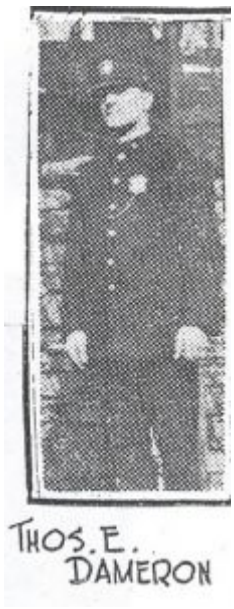
Patrolman Thomas Eph Dameron | Cincinnati Police Department



Age: 29
Served: 2½ years
June 9, 1924 to December 17, 1926

THE OFFICER

Tom was born January 2, 1897 in Kavanaugh (Boyd County), Kentucky to Lafayette “Lat” and Luverniah “Vernie” (Spencer) Dameron. His father died when Tom was 10½ years old, and Tom took care of his mother for the next nineteen years. By 1918,

they were living at 321 Ellen Street in Cincinnati.

Tom joined the United States Navy on January 5, 1918 to fight in World War I. He completed basic training, was promoted to Apprentice Seaman, and was sent home on March 18th to await orders. On June 5th, AS Dameron was sent to Norfolk, Virginia for training until July 3, 1918. He was then assigned to the submarine base in New London, Connecticut. Almost immediately upon arrival, he was promoted to Seamon 2nd Class for one day, then again to Seaman. Seaman Dameron was honorably discharged on December 9, 1918.

After returning home, he went to Flint, Michigan for work as a machinist in an auto assembly plant. By 1924, he was working as a brakeman back in Cincinnati. He was also an amateur boxer from 1921 to 1925 at The Cincinnati Gym and the Fenwick Club. He was the Fenwick Club Champion on March 10, 1924.

Tom joined the Cincinnati Police Department as a Substitute Patrolman on June 9, 1924. This was a probationary position in the Department, usually lasting 6 to 18 months, and often the officers would be assigned daily to whichever district needed personnel. On January 7, 1925, he was promoted to Patrolman and assigned to District 6 (Eastern Avenue). On May 1, 1925, he transferred to District 4 (475 West Fifth Street).

On July 16, 1925, Patrolmen Dameron and Raymond Biller responded and investigated the fatal accident involving Merchant Policeman Christian Christman, identifying the hit-skip vehicle, and arresting its owner, and successfully prosecuting him.

In his brief time as a patrolman, he was highly active in rooting out illegal moonshine in the West Fourth Street area. By August 1926, he had already fired his sidearm in two separate incidents.

He was living with his mother at 334 Baum Street.

MURDERER

Dee Hurd was born January 25, 1885 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His criminality made him familiar to Chattanooga police and Hamilton County, Tennessee deputy sheriffs. He spent some time in prison, but we do not know where. Later, he was arrested for Larceny, convicted, and sentenced to the Chattanooga Workhouse. He escaped in 1922, came to Cincinnati, and lived under an assumed name – Dee Herd – with an assumed date of birth and place of birth.

He married a woman claiming to be Beatrice Espy on August 23, 1925, possibly also using a false name, birthdate, and place of birth. Both claimed to be living at 1041 West Sixth Street, but they are not in the Cincinnati city directory.

On July 3, 1926, Ohio Railroad Detective James O'Neill, Jr. (son of murdered Cincinnati Patrolman James O'Neill, Sr.) was standing at 6th and Baymiller Streets. While his attention was on another subject, Hurd snuck up behind him and grabbed the revolver from his holster and ran. When Detective O'Neill chased him, Hurd shot at the disarmed officer.

On July 10th, Hurd went to the home of Frank "Uncle Bud" Horston, the real resident at 1041 West Sixth Street, struck the old man on the head with a brick, and stole $3.60.

On the 15th, Patrolman Clyde McMahon saw Hurd. McMahon pursued him and Hurd shot at him and escaped again.

INCIDENT

On August 1, 1926, about 5 a.m., after a restless night in the area, during which three people were stabbed or cut, Substitute Patrolman Clarence Turner saw Hurd and another man, Gus Saunders, in an alley near Third and Smith Streets. Turner stopped them and while searching Hurd, the other man, August Saunders, delivered a powerful blow to his head knocking him to the ground and nearly unconscious. The two took Turner's badge, wallet, blackjack, and revolver and beat him over the head with his blackjack inflicting several lacerations. Though stunned, Turner borrowed a revolver from a resident and pursued the robbers, firing shots at them.

Patrolmen Dameron, McMahon, and Herze heard the shots and responded. On the way, they saw Hurd and Saunders and gave chase up Webb Alley. Dameron shot Hurd, knocking him to the ground, at which time he dropped O'Neill's revolver. Saunders picked up O'Neill's revolver and the officers pursued him to a home at 518 West Sixth Street. Saunders, using both O'Neill's and Turner's revolvers, engaged the officers, striking Dameron in the left breast.

The patrolmen returned fire. In the fusillade of bullets, Saunders was struck four times in the abdomen, once in the head, and once in the arm. He lunged down the cellar stairs into the basement. He was found to also have Turner's badge and pocketbook on his person.

Hurd escaped again, across the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad bridge into Kentucky.

Patrolman Dameron was taken to General Hospital with a bullet in his spine. Patrolman Turner was taken there also with severe lacerations and bruises about the head, bruises about the head and a broken jaw. Saunders was also taken to General Hospital

and died several hours later.

By August 3, 1926, Patrolman Dameron was still hospitalized in serious condition. By September 25th, while Hurd was being tried, news accounts suggested a likelihood that his wound would be fatal.

JUSTICE

Information came to police headquarters on August 9, 1926 that Hurd was hiding out in his home with a bullet wound to his hip. Police responded and this time he was arrested.

On August 12th, he was bound over to the Grand Jury by Municipal Judge William D. Alexander.

On August 30, 1926, the Hamilton County Grand Jury indicted Hurd for three counts of Robbery.

On September 24, 1926, a jury convicted Hurd in Judge Fred Hoffman's courtroom for robbing Detective O'Neill of his revolver on July 3, 1926 and then shooting at him. Assistant Prosecutor Edward Strasser prosecuted. Hurd denied his involvement and even that he had a bullet wound, but the jury took all of two minutes to find him guilty. He was sentenced to 15 years by Judge Hoffman for the single robbery.

He would be tried later of the Horstman robbery, but never for his involvement in the Dameron shooting.

DEATH

After suffering through 4½ months of tremendous pain, Patrolman

Dameron succumbed to septic peritonitis on December 17, 1926 at 1:30 a.m.

Patrolman Dameron was survived by his mother, Vernie Dameron.

Police Inspector, Eugene T. Weatherly, managed the arrangements for his funeral. It seems that he was unceremoniously transported that morning to Catlettsburg, Kentucky and buried the next day. He is buried next to his father on December 18, 1926, in Catlettsburg Cemetery at the top of Section A next to the road.

EPILOGUE

After serving 7 years, less than half the sentence for just one of his crimes, Hurd was paroled.

His freedom did not last long, however. Less than eight months after his release, On May 5, 1934, another Hamilton County Grand Jury indicted Hurd for Cutting to Kill another man. On June 15, 1934, after his conviction, Judge John H. Druffel ordered his parole revoked and added another one to twenty years in the Ohio State Penitentiary.

Two weeks later, on July 1, 1934, Hurd was diagnosed with tuberculosis. He died on September 7, 1934. His body was disposed of at the Ohio State University Pathological Department.

Patrolman Dameron’s mother married Fred Schuleter. She died in 1952 and is also buried in Catlettsburg Cemetery.

If you know of any information, archives, artifacts, or images

regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Museum@Police-Museum.org.

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