Special Agent Cleveland Kemp | Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad



Age: 30
Served: at least four years
Before 1910 to June 7, 1914

OFFICER

Cleveland Kemp was born in May 14, 1883 in Falmouth to James and Malissa (McClanahan) Kemp. He married Sallie Buckley on March 23, 1910 in Bracken County. By then, he was a railroad detective. On August 10, 1912, Sallie gave birth to Carston Beckett Kemp.

INCIDENT

Agent Kemp normally worked the railroad yards at Second and Park Streets in Cincinnati, but for the first time, on the night of June 6, 1914, he was assigned to the Silver Grove yards ten

miles upriver from Newport.

About 2 a.m. the next morning, June 7th, while making his rounds between Tracks 11 and 12, someone came up from behind and landed a powerful blow with a pickax to the back of his head crushing his skull and killing him. The murderer(s) dragged Agent Kemp's body over Track 12 and under the cut of cars that stood on the track and rolled him down an embankment of cinders.

Shortly after 4 p.m. on the afternoon of June 7, 1914, Joseph Peacock and Thomas Moree, both 14 years of age and residents of Silver Grove, were on the way to the Ohio River for a swim when they found Kemp's body just north of track No. 12, in a deep gully and partially covered by cinders.

Agent Kemp's remains were removed to his home at 1532 Banklick Street in Covington. Agent Kemp was survived by his wife, Sallie Kemp (21), and son, Carston Kemp (1¾). His funeral was held June 10, 1914. He was buried in the Johnsville Cemetery in Bradford, Kentucky.

INVESTIGATION

Also, about 2 a.m. on June 7th, in another portion of the yards, without any idea what was happening to Agent Kemp, Special Agent Adkinson found a carload of meat with a broken seal. He resealed the car and continued his rounds. He then encountered a suspicious character that he held at gunpoint. But the man gave a credible story and Adkinson released him.

Coroner Digby responded to the scene after the boys found Agent Kemp's remains. He established where the murder occurred and where the body was dragged. One of the railroad workers, searching for evidence, found the pickax in the weeds thirty

feet from the murder scene. Coroner Digby searched Kemp's pockets and determined that the only item missing was his searchlight. Later, Coroner Digby found that his hat was also missing. Agent Kemp's fully-loaded revolver and blackjack were still in a hip pocket. Digby advised that death came very soon after the blow was initiated.

A search was initiated for Agent Atkinson's suspect and telegrams were dispatched to various regions and railroad yards containing his description. It was thought that even if he was not involved in the murder, he may shed some light on it. By June 9, 1914 Coroner Digby reported that there were no leads other than Agent Kemp's missing searchlight and hat. He held an inquest on June 12, 1914 at the City Building and determined that it was a Homicide by train car thieves.

To our knowledge, his murder was never solved. Within the next 12 months, two more railroad workers were killed in the Silver Grove yards; Special Agent Leslie Johnson and Switchman L. Archie Howley. Those murders were also unsolved.

EPILOGUE

Mrs. Kemp remarried three years later. Three years after that, during 1920, their child, Carston, died from Tonsillitis at the age of 7.



In researching the lives of Agent Kemp and his survivors, the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum's Memorial Committee found that he was buried without a gravestone or, to our knowledge, any special honors. The Museum located family with

the help of the Bracken County Historical Society, received permission from them and the Johnsville Cemetery, and arranged for a donated (Schott Monument) gravestone to be installed on his grave. On June 7, 2016, his grave was rededicated with all the honors afforded a fallen law enforcement officer provided by the Hamilton County Police Association's Honor Guard. Moore and Parker Funeral Home provided tents and chairs for the event and dozens of people, mostly extended family, attended.

If you know of information, archives, artifacts, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

© 2018 – This narrative was further researched and revised June 7, 2018 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President, with extensive research provided by Cincinnati Homicide Detective Edward W. Zieverink III (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Historian. All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society.