

Shootings, Stabbings and Close Encounters 1866-2002

WILLIAMSPORT BUREAU OF POLICE

Williamsport, Pennsylvania
1866-2002

Researched and Compiled by
Capt. James G. Carn (Ret.)
2002 Edition

August 15, 1867

On the morning of August 15, 1867, between 1:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m., Chief Michael Heisley, Officers George W. Wilkinson, Samuel B. Coder and Appollos W. Grafius responded to Meitzer's Saloon, West Fourth and Market Streets, which was full of noisy, drunken men. They attempted to quell the disturbance and ordered the establishment closed.

William Taper unsuccessfully attacked Officer Grafius with a knife, then Officer Wilkinson who warded him off with several blows from a cane. Taper then turned on Chief Heisley and stabbed him in the upper arm above the elbow.

Taper was subdued and taken into custody along with other rowdies. He was arraigned before Justice Hepburn on charges of assaulting an officer with intent to kill and was committed to jail in default of \$1,000 bail.

Later that month in the Court of Quarter Sessions, Judge Alexander Jordan presiding, Taper was found guilty of "an assault, not knowing them to be officers." He was fined \$5 and costs.

May 13, 1876

Between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m., on May 13, 1876, Officer Joseph Piatt and two civilians were following one Cornelius Cotter, 38, an Irish Immigrant who came to the United States 17 years earlier. Cotter was recently released from the insane asylum at Danville and was suspected of setting fire to Starkweather & Munson, Beaver Mills Lumber Company and B.H. Taylor & Son's lumber operations on the night of Tuesday, May 9.

Piatt observed Cotter set lath on fire in a lumber yard at the foot of Hepburn Street after Cotter used the whittlings he had shaved from a piece of wood with a 14" knife.

As Piatt attempted to place Cotter under arrest, Cotter drew the knife and rushed toward Piatt with it uplifted. Piatt smashed his night stick over Cotter's head and splintered the club to pieces. It had little effect on Cotter. Piatt pulled a revolver and retreated backwards and fired two shots at him. Cotter struck at Piatt with the knife. Piatt pulled the revolver twice in Cotter's face, but it would not go off. Piatt screamed for civilian Charley Donnel for help. Donnel came up to the rear of Piatt and emptied his revolver at Cotter. Piatt then grabbed a loaded musket belonging to civilian Valentine Luppert, but it had no cap and wouldn't fire. Luppert gave Piatt a cap and Piatt fired and hit Cotter in the legs.

It was found that Cotter suffered two pistol shots to the left arm and a number of similar wounds to his front legs from the knees down. Cotter recovered from his wounds and entered a not guilty plea in county court on September 25, 1876. A jury was empaneled the same day and found Cotter not guilty due to his being of unsound mind at the time of the offenses. On October 7, 1876, he was committed to the State Hospital for the Insane at Danville, Pa.

March 13, 1907

Officer John P. Maloney, in plain clothes, was shot and fatally wounded at 8:30 p.m., on the night of March 13, 1907, when he encountered suspected burglar George B. Nelson in the Newberry section of town.

Maloney was on special assignment to locate and arrest Nelson, who was wanted for breaking into the Linck Hardware & Stove Company and numerous residential burglaries.

Maloney encountered Nelson, 21, and Thomas B. Reed, who had just been released from the Eastern State Penitentiary days before, sitting on a pile of ties along the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad just west of Lycoming Creek.

As Maloney approached the twosome, Nelson jumped down and a tussle ensued. Several shots rang out and Officer Maloney lay dead, having been shot three times. He never had a chance to pull his own duty weapon. In the excitement, Nelson had shot himself in the leg.

Nelson and Reed escaped, but Nelson was apprehended the next afternoon in the city's east end. Tom Reed was never located, but was wanted only as a witness and not for the crime.

Nelson was convicted of the murder and the Linck burglary on December 4, 1907, and committed to the Eastern State Penitentiary where he died six years later from the effects of his wound.

May 30, 1907

About 9:30 p.m., on May 30, 1907, Officers John R. Mahaffey and Ward L. Tilberg entered a City Hall holding cell to settle down one Christian Kistner who had been brought in for playing an accordion in Market Square and being generally drunk and disorderly.

Suddenly Kistner pulled a knife and began slashing wildly and stabbed Mahaffey in the chest twice and once in the hip. Kistner also stabbed Tilberg about two inches below the heart and slashed the Officer's clothing in a half dozen places. Other Officers responded and Kistner "was beaten into submission," according to newspaper accounts.

Mahaffey was off work about one week and always carried the scars as a result of the attack. Tilberg was off two days as a result of his injuries.

December 24, 1907

At 2:15 a.m., on the morning of Tuesday, December 24, 1907, Officer Fred Schlesinger was making his rounds and was near the intersection of Erie Avenue (now Memorial Avenue) and Cemetery Street when he observed a man walking east on the Northern Central Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Schlesinger noticed that the man was carrying a bag that appeared to be "weighty." His suspicions aroused, Schlesinger approached the man, who was a Negro, and began walking down the line with him making inquiries about the bag. The man said he was from Cogan Station and only had clothing in the bag.

Schlesinger wasn't satisfied and insisted on looking in it. When they came to Grier Street, the man sat the bag down and as Schlesinger bent to look inside, the man reached into his own pocket. Schlesinger straightened up in a hurry and hit the man over the head with his billy club. The Negro then pulled a gun and fired, the bullet "passing dangerously close to the policeman's head."

Schlesinger managed to fire two shots at the fleeing man, who then turned and fired two more shots at Schlesinger. Neither of them were hit with the flying lead and the Negro escaped into the night.

Upon examination Schlesinger discovered that the bag contained "twelve chickens with their heads cut off and their bodies warm, indicating that the Negro had only a short time earlier robbed some hencoop."

There are no further newspaper accounts to be found indicating whether the fleeing black man was ever apprehended.

1917

Concerning Officer Oscar Reed, the April 9, 1941, edition of "The Siren," a city police newspaper, states: "The highlight in Patrolman Reed's career as a policeman is the time in 1917 that he captured a hold-up man at the rear of the old Updegraff Hotel following a robbery which took place in a store at the southwest corner of Market and Willow Street.

"Officer Reed recalls all the details of how a young woman clerk in the store screamed when the hold-up man flashed a gun. Patrolman Reed was at Pine Street. He hurried down Willow Street

and trailed the gunman to the rear of the hotel. There, despite the officer's warnings to halt, the hold-up man fled and Patrolman Reed shot in the air to frighten the man. When he failed to halt, he fired another shot which grazed the fleeing criminal enough to stop him."

No account other than this one has been located to date to verify the story and learn whether or not the robber was apprehended and prosecuted.

June 7, 1923

On the night of June 7, 1923, Motorcycle Officer Truman Logan was pursuing a vehicle on Hepburn Street for traffic violations and he fired several shots at the car, one of which struck the rear tire. The chase continued for several blocks when the subject, Thomas E. Kessinger, leaped from the car and was there struck in the leg by a bullet fired by Logan.

Kessinger was admitted to the Williamsport Hospital for a long period of time. Kessinger filed suit, but an out-of-court settlement appears to have taken place as the charges were "adjusted" according to a newspaper account.

August 18, 1927

In the summer of 1927 the Vallamont area was virtually up in arms over a prowler who became known as the "ladder burglar." His modis operandi was to prop a ladder up against a home to enter by way of the second floor.

So numerous were burglaries and sightings of prowlers that many residents armed themselves and recklessly pointed, brandished and discharged their weapons at whim.

About midnight August 18, 1927, an unidentified special officer wounded an unidentified prowler in the vicinity of Walnut Street and Rural Avenue after two men were seen running across the Bura C. Keefer Manufacturing lot opposite the house they were allegedly prowling around. The special officer called to them to halt and when they failed to do so he fired five shots at them. One of the men was struck in the left leg.

A citizen mistook the plainclothesman for the burglars and fired two shots at him as the fleeing prowlers escaped.

No follow-up articles are to be found in the newspapers concerning this incident.

September 4, 1968

Sgt. Robert E. Kujawa shot a burglar, Robert J. Carducci, 22, who broke into the Dice Drug Store at E. Third and Mulberry Streets, shortly after 9:00 p.m., on the night of September 4, 1968.

The burglar fled the building after Officers Anthony DeFrancesco and William S. Smith lobbed tear gas inside. The intruder fled out the east side door that he had entered through and a foot chase ensued at which time Carducci was struck by a police car driven by Det. Charles W. Croft. The impact did not knock Carducci down.

Carducci was confronted by Sgt. Kujawa at the northwest corner of Little League Boulevard and Mulberry Streets where Carducci knocked Kujawa down and began beating him with a nightstick that he got away from Officer John W. Springman. Kujawa, who was down on his knees, pleaded for Carducci to stop. Appearing that he was about to be hit on the head by the deadly force of the nightstick, Sgt. Kujawa fired a shot upward and hit Carducci in the stomach as he, Carducci, was standing over him.

Even after being shot, the suspect continued to struggle violently with Officers. The suspect died at the Williamsport Hospital at 10:05 p.m., that evening.

February 13, 1969

Officers Raymond O. Kontz, II, and Robert E. Marchese were involved in the non-fatal shooting of Otha Dudley on night of February 13, 1969. Dudley, 21, was discovered burglarizing the Palace Grill, 660 Second Street at 11:55 p.m.

Dudley ran out the barroom door with a screwdriver in hand and Officers Kontz and Robert E. Marchese fired at him as he was fleeing, one of the shots hitting Dudley in one leg and the bullet

was lodged in the other.

Dudley escaped, but he was apprehended at 2:15 a.m. the next morning and was charged with burglary and larceny. He pleaded guilty March 13, 1969, and was given 6 to 36 months in prison.

August 8, 1974

On August 8, 1974, cab driver James C. Butler appeared at the Divine Providence Hospital carrying a shotgun. Hospital personnel called police after Butler left the premises in his cab. Butler was called into cab headquarters on Penn Street where police were waiting to disarm him. He alighted from the cab and pointed the weapon at Officers on the scene and stated, "I got you!" Officer Mayers fired a shot and then Sgt. Wilson fired shots. Butler was hit once and died instantly. Other Officers on the scene at the time of the shooting were: William F. Miller, Sr., and George P. Stack.

May 30, 1975

At 4:18 p.m., on the afternoon of May 30, 1975, Officer Charles W. Croft's voice cracked over the air, "Officer Wise has been stabbed!"

Officers Robert W. Saam, Joseph D. Wise, and other Officers had been dispatched to 347 Academy Street at 4:00 p.m., in regard to a group of hippie-type youths fighting in the street with knives.

Officers Wise and Saam went inside the apartment building where they found one Daniel R. Eagleberger, 20, lying in the hallway on the steps leading to the second floor. Eagleberger was intoxicated and became very loud and boisterous and threatened to punch out a 16-year-old white female juvenile who was also present. When Officer Wise attempted to escort the juvenile out of the way, she jumped on Officer Wise's back and started hitting him. An unidentified woman then lead the juvenile out of the building while police continued to grapple with Eagleberger. While Officer Wise was handcuffing Eagleberger, the same female juvenile that had just been escorted out of the building, came in and passed behind Officer Wise and stabbed him, Wise, in the right shoulder with a 3" knife.

Officer Croft pursued the youth into a room where he managed to get the knife away from her after Officer Saam struck her on the hand with his nightstick to get her to release the weapon. Eagleberger was charged with Disorderly Conduct, Underage Drinking and Resisting Arrest. The young female that stabbed Officer Wise was arrested for Assault and Interfering with an Officer Making a Lawful Arrest.

On September 11, 1975, Judge Thomas C. Raup issued a court order directing that the juvenile be placed on strict probation and house arrest for one month. In addition she was to undergo intense counseling by the West Branch Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.

Officer Wise's wound was not life threatening and was superficial in nature.

June 12, 1975

Near daybreak on June 12, 1975, Officer Joseph D. Wise and Thomas Glendon, a state Bureau of Drug Control agent, were accidentally shot by another drug control agent in a third floor apartment at 754 West Fourth Street, in the Weightman Block.

Two drug-raiding parties were sent to the same address by the district attorney's office; the second team to arrive mistook law enforcement officers already in the apartment as armed occupants. In the confusion shots were fired into the apartment by a drug control agent who panicked, striking Wise and Glendon. Both recovered and eventually returned to duty.

January 31, 1976

On the night of January 31, 1976, a burglary in progress call at a residence at 700 Hepburn Street was received at 7:37 p.m. Officer Robert W. Saam spotted the suspected burglar, Charles H. Crumady, as Crumady ran east across Market Street between Sixth and Grafius Streets.

Officer Saam alighted from his police vehicle and gave foot pursuit around the rear of the First United Methodist Church, and then east across Packer Street. Officer Saam confronted Crumady, who was on the east side of a parked Volkswagen on Packer Street at the northeast corner of Bennett Street.

Crumady drew a .32 caliber revolver and pointed it at Officer Saam who was on the opposite side of the vehicle. Saam went to draw his service revolver only to discover that it had fell out of his holster as he was pursuing Crumady. Saam sought to conceal himself beneath the car shouting, "He has a gun! He has a gun!" Crumady leaned over the car and said to Officer Saam, "You're a dead man! and "I got your ass!" and pulled the trigger, but fortunately the revolver did not discharge.

Officers James Carn and Robert Kibler took up positions north and south of Crumady, respectively, and with their service weapons drawn he was ordered to drop the revolver, which he did.

Crumady was arrested for numerous charges and was sentenced on November 7, 1980, as follows: pay the costs of prosecution and serve five to ten years imprisonment in a state correctional institution on charges of Criminal Attempt to Commit Burglary, to be served consecutively to the sentence which he was presently serving in the Commonwealth of Virginia upon a charge of Rape; Upon the two charges of Aggravated Assault, pay the costs of prosecution and undergo imprisonment and serve two and one-half to five years on each count, to be served in a state correctional institution consecutively to the sentence of Criminal Attempt to Commit Burglary, but was to be served consecutively to the sentence which he was presently serving in the Commonwealth of Virginia, but concurrently with the sentence heretofore imposed upon the charge of Rape; Upon the count of Simple Assault, he was ordered to pay the costs of prosecution and the sentence was suspended; Upon the charge of Carrying Firearm Without a License, the sentence was suspended.

August 4, 1989

Officer Michael W. Foust shot Carl F. Moyer, Jr., 35, on August 4, 1989, in the 200 block of William Street, after Moyer pointed a loaded, stolen 9MM semi-automatic pistol at him. Foust's partner, Officer Debra Smith, also drew her duty weapon on Moyer but did not fire.

Moyer was charged with Criminal Attempt Homicide, Simple Assault, Aggravated Assault, Recklessly Endangering, Terroristic Threats, Theft and Receiving Stolen Property. Moyer was sentenced on December 3, 1991, after being found guilty by a jury, to eight years and eight months to eighteen years in state prison.

June 18, 1993

At 7:07 p.m., on the night of Friday June 18, 1993, Lycoming County Probation Officers requested assistance from the police department in apprehending one Mark Arness Walker, who was fleeing on foot from them in the Park Avenue and Cherry Street area. Walker was on parole for robbery, possession of prohibitive offensive weapons and simple assault. He had violated technical violations of his parole and officers were attempting to pick him up.

City police officers responded to the area and a foot pursuit ensued with Walker running into a double house on Park Avenue where he ran to the attic. He climbed over an attic partition into the other side of the house where Officer Michael D. Hoover then went to search for him.

At 7:20 p.m., there was a radio report of shots fired. In checking the attic, Officer Hoover was startled when Walker suddenly jumped out from behind a large box while swinging his arms. Officer Hoover fired one shot from his Glock 9MM semi-automatic pistol, which grazed Walker's arm.

Walker was taken to the Williamsport Hospital & Medical Center where he was treated and released within an hour. Walker was then detained in the county prison on a parole detainer and was later charged with Criminal Trespass and Defiant Trespass.

Walker pleaded guilty to the charges on July 26, 1993. On August 12, 1993, he was sentenced by Judge Thomas C. Raup to serve 6 to 36 months in prison on the Criminal Trespass charge and 3 to 12 months on the Defiant Trespass charge, the sentences to run concurrently.

On August 19, 1993, Officer Hoover was indefinitely suspended from the police force concerning the shooting.

Walker filed a law suit and was awarded a \$5,000 out of court settlement by City Council on September 30, 1993.

A hearing was held before City Council on November 16, 1993, at which time the Preziosi Administration recommended he be fired. On December 7, 1993, City Council unanimously suspended Officer Hoover for 30 days and reinstated him on condition he complete remedial training at his own expense.

February 1, 2002

Officers Hugh E. McGee and Kevin G. Stiles were questioning 18-year-old Ibrahim Musa Wells near Hepburn and Pine Streets on Friday morning, February 1, 2002. Wells matched the description of an individual involved in a firearm incident the week before. Wells was obviously nervous and presented a photo identification card that did not resemble him. When he was asked if he had a firearm and told to raise his hands he bolted suddenly and took off at a run. He ran north, then west toward the 300 block of High Street. With the officers in pursuit on foot, Wells drew a loaded .22 caliber Rugar Mark II that had been stolen. He threw it on the roof of a house after allegedly pointing it at Officer Stiles. During the chase Anthony "Larry" Lamb was taken into custody for twice blocking Officer Stiles' pursuit of Wells. Wells was charged with three counts of aggravated assault, simple assault, receiving stolen property, two counts related to possession of a firearm, recklessly endangering another, and altering marks and identification. A pre-liminary hearing was subsequently held before District Justice Allen P. Page III, who ruled that the testimony did not support the assault charges or the receiving stolen property count. Wells was bound over for court on the other charges.

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