



NEWS RELEASE

INDIANA LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL

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Remembering Gary Policewoman Pearl Agnes Lanham 95th Anniversary of Indiana's First Female Law Enforcement Line of Duty Death

Lake County | Gary Policewoman Pearl Lanham is being remembered today on the 95th anniversary of the ultimate sacrifice she made when she was struck by a vehicle on March 12, 1930. She is the first known female law enforcement line of duty death in Indiana and the sixth in the history of the United States.

Of our 528 fallen officers, she is one of 23 who were struck by a vehicle. On that day at about 2:30 pm near the Glen Park Elementary School, she had assisted three children cross Broadway at its intersection with 39th Avenue when a southbound vehicle struck her as she was returning to the east side for several other children.

Her body was dragged some 80 feet along Broadway before the driver brought his car to a stop. She died at the scene before an ambulance arrived of shock and hemorrhage with fractures of the skull, left tibia and fibula, and both wrists. She had only served with the Gary Police Department for two weeks.

Pearl Agnes Lanham, 33, was the second-born child of John Quincy and Clara Mae (née Huffman) Wheatley and was born on January 22, 1897 in Hardin County, Kentucky. In 1919, she married John Halsey Lanham who worked for the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway and they resided at 5126 Washington Street in Gary.

She was survived by her husband; 8-, 5- and 4-year-old and 8-month-old daughters, Dr. Margaret Mary Lanham, Clara Mae Takacs, Edna Marie Petrovich and Agnes Lucille Lanham, who died at age 4 in 1934; her mother; three brothers, Jesse Francis, William Carl and James Roy Wheatley; and one sister, Mary Inez (Arthur B.) Purvis.

Her funeral was held on March 15 at the former Saints Peter and Paul Church with interment at Calumet Park Cemetery, both in Merrillville. She would later be survived by three grandsons, a granddaughter, three step-grandchildren and two great-granddaughters who were found to have lived in California, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota and Nevada.

The offender, John William Nichols, 35, of Griffith, was driving home from his shift at the steel mills in Gary. He was arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter with bond set at \$5,000. No details regarding the eventual outcome of his criminal case could be found in Lake County court records and he later died in 1949.

Policewoman Lanham is honored on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington on Panel 50W, Line 18 and on the Indiana Law Enforcement and Fire Fighters Memorial in Indianapolis on Panel L26, Line 3. She is the third fallen officer of the Gary Police Department and the 14th of 58 line of duty deaths that have originated from Lake County.

View our memorial for Policewoman Lanham at: www.officersearch.inlem.org/officer.php?id=0032

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About the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial

Founded in 2017, the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial is a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring all of our state's fallen officers. Its mission is to honor law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice; provide support to their surviving family members and affected agencies; and conduct research into and foster public awareness of Indiana line of duty deaths. Each of these over 500 officers are memorialized through a website maintained as an exclusive resource to our state with the most comprehensive details to preserve the history surrounding their incidents and an extensive compilation of statistical data.