



NEWS RELEASE

INDIANA LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL

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Remembering the Eight Indiana Township Constables With Line of Duty Deaths Constables and Sheriffs Represented Early Law Enforcement in Indiana

Early law enforcement in Indiana can be traced back to Sheriff John Small (1759–1821), who was appointed to serve two-year terms from 1790 until 1795 in Knox County, our state's first established county and where Vincennes served as the first capital of the Indiana Territory before it was moved to Corydon in 1813.

As more counties were formed and population grew, territorial laws created constables to be appointed to one-year terms in each township by the Court of Common Pleas. They had police power to act throughout their respective county and local magistrates were permitted to appoint special constables.

A year after statehood in 1816, constables were appointed to one-year terms in each township by the Board of County Commissioners with the same countywide jurisdiction where justices of the peace were permitted to appoint special constables.

In 1831, constables became an elected township office with one-year terms in the same number as there were justices of the peace in that township. It was not until 1889 when their elected terms would transition from one to four years in office.

Nearly a century later, in 1975, when small claims courts were created and could become operational in those townships, constables continued to be elected to four-year terms. They acted as the bailiff of the court but retained police powers to make arrests, keep the peace and carry out the orders of the court.

Under state law that was amended in 2004, constables currently are only authorized in Marion County townships having a small claims court where they continue to be elected to four-year terms in office. Constables have retained their police powers but are not subject to mandatory training requirements by the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy.

We honor each of these eight constables, ranging in age from 22 to 74 and serving in law enforcement from one week to 18 years, for the ultimate sacrifice they made for the citizens of our state.

Constable Robert Murphy • Bath Township (Franklin County) • November 11, 1824 *
Age: 24 • Law Enforcement Service: 1 week • Cause of Death: Stabbed

Constable John Walsh • Pigeon Township (Vanderburgh County) • Monday, April 14, 1862 †
Age: 68 • Law Enforcement Service: 1 year • Cause of Death: Gunfire

Constable Thomas Cummines • Jefferson Township (Dubois County) • September 28, 1886 †
Age: 40 • Law Enforcement Service: 9 years, 11 months • Cause of Death: Gunfire

Constable Oliver William Wilhoite • Center Township (Hendricks County) • May 26, 1911 †
Age: 58 • Law Enforcement Service: 7 years • Cause of Death: Gunfire

Constable Dennis M. O'Donnell • Harrison Township (Vigo County) • July 22, 1912 †
Age: 50 • Law Enforcement Service: 3 months • Cause of Death: Gunfire

Constable Albert Hawkins • Anderson Township (Madison County) • July 9, 1913 ‡
Age: 22 • Law Enforcement Service: — • Cause of Death: Stabbed

Constable Hamilton Perry Dalton • Sugar Creek Township (Vigo County) • August 2, 1927 ‡
Age: 60 • Law Enforcement Service: — • Cause of Death: Gunfire

Constable Frank Orlando Ury • Center Township (Grant County) • September 15, 1928 ‡
Age: 74 • Law Enforcement Service: 18 years • Cause of Death: Gunfire

* Appointed to one-year terms

† Elected to one-year terms

‡ Elected to four-year terms

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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.