



THE EPITAPH



Serving the law enforcement community of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Northern Summit & Portage Counties

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Joe Mannion | President | Member of the GCPOMS Executive Board

Welcome to the GCPOMS *The Epitaph*, the official publication for the Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial Society®.

On July 23, 2025, Lorain Police Officers Phillip Wagner and Peter Gale were ambushed while eating lunch. Tragically, Officer Wagner was killed in the attack. Officer Gale was wounded, as was Officer Brent Payne, who was shot while responding to the call of shots fired.

Officer Wagner will be honored and his name inscribed on our Memorial during the May Memorial Service. His sacrifice will never be forgotten. The outpouring of support for the Wagner family and the Lorain Police Department has been extraordinary. It is deeply moving to witness the people of the City of Lorain and all of Lorain County standing united in support of our Officers. We extend our profound gratitude to Officers Gale and Payne for their heroic actions. Their bravery and quick thinking—providing critical, real-time information about the shooter—undoubtedly saved lives and protected fellow officers responding to the scene.

Officers Gale and Payne continue their recovery, and we ask for continued prayers for their healing. May God bless them and watch over all officers who serve and protect our communities with unwavering dedication.

In June, the Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial Society proudly entered into a partnership with Cornerstone of Hope, a nonprofit comprehensive bereavement support center located in Independence and provides grieving individuals and families with the resources and guidance to navigate their loss. Their mission aligns deeply with our commitment to honoring legacy and supporting those who carry the weight of remembrance. We encourage anyone in need of grief support to reach out to Cornerstone of Hope at **216-524-4673** or visit **cornerstoneofhope.org**.

On August 10, 2025, the 17th Annual Cops Ride brought together hundreds of riders in a moving show of support for the Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial Society and in honor of Ohio's Fallen Officers. We were blessed with perfect weather and an unforgettable day.

The ride began at our Memorial with a solemn service and the blessing of the riders, setting a tone of reverence and unity. A heartfelt thank you goes out to John Kikol and his dedicated staff for their tireless efforts in organizing this event. To every rider who joined us—your presence was a powerful reminder that the legacy of our fallen officers lives on through the respect and solidarity of our community.



The Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial Society is proud to announce that Annie Patsouras has been selected as this year's recipient of the Pete Lawer Memorial Scholarship. Annie, a senior at John Carroll University, exemplifies the values of service, dedication, and legacy that this award represents. The scholarship honors the memory of Pete Lawer, a founding member of the Northern Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association—now the Ohio PBA. Pete Lawer was a devoted family man and tireless advocate for the rights of his fellow officers. His leadership and vision were instrumental in the founding and growth of the Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial Society. Annie is the granddaughter of Patrolman William N. Shapiro of the Cleveland Police Department, who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty on April 26, 1974. Her academic achievements and commitment to honoring the memory of fallen officers make her a fitting recipient of this distinguished award.

We kindly remind you to renew your membership. Please visit **www.HonorOurFallen.us** or **GCPOMS.org** to renew your membership and view our upcoming schedule of events. Together, we are "Keeping the Promise" to never forget.

Stay safe and healthy,
Joe Mannion, President



"Keeping the Promise to Never Forget our Fallen Heroes"®



THE PERILS FACING LAW ENFORCEMENT: HEROES AMONG US

Mary A. Lentz | Survivor / Editor of The Epitaph

Deep appreciation is extended to Fallen Hero, Lorain Police Department Patrolman Phillip C. Wagner and his family and to injured Patrolmen Peter Gale and Brent Payne and their families for their valiant service and dedication to their community and those who pass through it. At this time of Thanksgiving we are grateful for our blessings and for those who are special in our lives. We are also thankful for all law enforcement Officers who chose a profession of such importance.

To Serve & Protect: Keeping Our Communities Safe

The Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial Society strives to memorialize the heroic law enforcement Officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice since 1853 in the counties of Lorain, Cuyahoga, Medina, northern Summit, Lake, Geauga, and Portage. It is with sadness and respect that GCPOMS honors Lorain Police Department Patrolman Phillip C. Wagner (*End of Watch: July 23, 2025*) who was killed in the Line of Duty by a 28 year old Lorain resident who fired a barrage of 103 rounds from a high-powered rifle at Patrolman Wagner and fellow Officers from a distance of 450 feet. Patrolmen Peter Gale and Brent Payne were also shot. The shooter was struck a dozen times by police fire in response, resulting in the shooter's death.



The shooter had one hundred pounds of explosives and over 7,500 rounds of ammunition in his vehicle. The Bomb Squad detonated the explosive materials. Most of the rounds were loaded into a total of 294 magazines, along with 10 weapons which included 7 rifles, 2 handguns and 1 shotgun. Five of the seven rifles had scopes. In addition, the shooter had cases of water, a cooler, and heavy body protection.

GCPOMS and Survivors stand in solidarity with the family of Patrolman Wagner and the families of Patrolmen Gale and Payne. The ambush of the Officers was incomprehensible, ruthless, and a senseless act of violence. The cowardly, violent, and irrational behavior on the part of the shooter is in complete contrast to the strength, courage, fearless and brave responses of the Lorain Officers.

Before joining the Lorain Police Department, Patrolman Wagner was a graduate of the Lorain County Community Police Academy in 2018, served as a United States Marine, and was a law enforcement Officer for the Sheffield Village Police Department in Lorain County. Patrolman Wagner completed a year of SWAT training for the Lorain Police Department and was highly respected and regarded as compassionate, professional and dedicated to his profession and to those he served in the City of Lorain community.

Patrolman Wagner was life-flighted to MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland and passed away that evening. Patrolmen Gale and Payne were hospitalized. Patrolman Gale was shot in the hand, and Patrolman Payne was in critical condition after arriving at the scene when he exited his cruiser, grabbed his assault rifle, and ran toward the wooded area where the shooter had secluded himself. Two SUVs of Lorain Police Officers arrived in support and fired their weapons striking the shooter.

The Lorain Police Department honored Patrolman Wagner posthumously with the LPD's Purple Heart and Medal of Honor which were presented to his family.

After a recovery period of 6 to 8 weeks, Patrolman Gale returned to duty. Rifle shots struck Patrolman Payne in his hip, upper leg area and arm. The bone in his arm was completely shattered, and a lengthy recover of more than a year is expected. GCPOMS and the Lorain Police Department and community will never forget the valiant responses of Officers Wagner, Payne and Gale and the responsive support of responding Officers to the shooting scene, the transport of the three Officers for medical treatment and the thousands who attended the Memorial service for Patrolman Wagner.





REMEMBERING LORAIN POLICE DEPARTMENT FALLEN OFFICERS

Mary A. Lentz | Survivor / Editor of The Epitaph

May 15th each year is Peace Officers' Memorial Day, and the calendar week is dedicated to remember all Police in special tribute to the Officers who have lost their lives in the Line of Duty and also retired, deceased and current Officers who have protected and continue to protect our communities daily. In Addition to Patrolman Wagner, the Lorain Police Department has lost three additional Officers in the Line of Duty.

Patrolman Fred J. Webber

End of Watch: December 22, 1923

Patrolman Webber, appointed February 18, 1918 to the Lorain Police Department, was the first Officer from the LPD killed in the Line of Duty. Patrolman Webber and his partner were on call to a restaurant to pick up an arrestee who was causing a disturbance. As they approached the restaurant, Patrolman Webber noticed a male standing by a bus displaying a gun in a threatening manner. Both Patrolman Webber and his partner exited the police car quickly, and Patrolman Webber seized and held firmly the wrist of the drunk-crazed male waving the weapon. Both Patrolman Webber and the gunman were wrestling and both were wounded. Officer Webber was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead from the bullet wounds. One bullet was fired by Patrolman Webber's partner, and one from the gunman's revolver. The gunman was charged with first degree murder.



Patrolman Charles C. Deal

End of Watch: November 6, 1925

Patrolman Deal was assigned to investigate an accident and to direct traffic near a railroad crossing on Elyria Lorain Road where he halted traffic to permit the wrecked car to be pulled out of a ditch. Several cars had been stopped when a vehicle came speeding down the road at a high rate of speed and passed the stopped cars. Patrolman Deal had no chance to avoid the speeding car to save his life. After striking Patrolman Deal, the driver turned off his headlights and left the scene. After one driver responded to follow the driver who had struck Patrolman Deal, the drivers of the first cars that were stopped were asked to transport Patrolman Deal to the hospital, but all refused. A car was commandeered and transported Patrolman Deal to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. All public garage owners were ordered to report all damaged cars brought to them for repairs, and law enforcement in nearby cities were alerted. The driver gave himself up to the Lorain Police Department as the driver who took the life of Officer Deal.



PATROLMAN GEORGE KIRK | End of Watch: March 30, 1944

Lorain Police Department Patrolman George Kirk began his career with the Department on March 13, 1919. From 1922 to 1927, Patrolman Kirk served the City of Lorain as a detective and as a night patrolman. An editorial in the Lorain Journal stated that the Lorain Police Department, the City of Lorain and law and order lost a good public servant and a good friend when Patrolman Kirk lost his life after an accidental fall into an open elevator shaft.

On March 30, 1944, Patrolman Kirk was on his customary night beat making his rounds in the downtown business sector of Lorain. He made his last report to police headquarters at 2:30 a.m. When Patrolman Kirk failed to make the customary later periodic calls, police cars were detailed to search for him. Police found an open door to a hardware store that led directly to an elevator shaft. An investigation concluded Office Kirk found the door unlatched, opened it and tragically fell ten feet to his death.

Each of the Lorain Police Department Fallen Heroes made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting their community, and we gratefully acknowledge their commitment to the oath of a sworn peace Officer.



*Wishing You Blessings of Peace, Hope,
Strength, and Resolve this Thanksgiving!*



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LORAIN POLICE DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC SERVICE WITH HONOR

Mary A. Lentz | Survivor / Editor of The Epitaph

The Lorain Police Department was established in 1834 and currently consists of 111 police officers and 34 civilian employees, serves and patrols over 24 square miles and protect approximately 65,337 residents. The Chief of the Lorain Police Department, Chief Michael Failing, is a thirty year veteran of the Department and was Acting Chief at the time of the ambush of Patrolmen Wagner, Gale, and Payne.

There are three major Divisions within the Lorain Police Department: Operations, Criminal Investigations, and the Traffic Division. As Executive Officer, Chief Failing is responsible for managing, coordinating, and overseeing the entire operations of the LPD, including but not limited to, formulating and implementing policies and managing daily operations. Other components of the Department include Uniform Patrol, SWAT Team, School Resource Officer, K9 Unit, Crisis Negotiations, Marine Patrol, Underwater Recovery Unit, and the Traffic Division.

The Criminal Investigations Unit includes Narcotics, Crime Scene investigations and Evidence. Chief Failing supervises all sworn law enforcement personnel in the LPD and civilian personnel. Chief Failing also oversees the Office of

Professional Standards, Policy and Procedure, CALEA and Accreditation, Performance Evaluations, Audits and Inspections, and Personnel Issues.

Civilian personnel of the LPD include a Manager of Administrative Services, Software Technology Coordinator, Administrative Secretaries, Detention Officers, and Part-time Legal Advisor and Part-time Background Investigator.

The Lorain Police Department is a comprehensive, well-organized, and efficient law enforcement agency that protects its community and has pledged to perform the fulfillment of this promise with honor.



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