

### **Patrolman William Jenkins - First Black Dayton Police Officer 1897**

The role of African Americans in law enforcement in Dayton is one of limited numbers but heroic action and great sacrifice. In 1897, William Jenkins became the first black man to be appointed to the position of patrolman. No other African American men are known to have been appointed to the police force until Lucius Rice joined in 1909 and George Wheeler joined in 1910. These two men would have long and remarkable careers. In 1915, Patrolman Rice became the first African American to be promoted to the rank of sergeant.

In 1926, Sergeant Rice was wounded in a gun battle but was able to shoot down his attacker. Thirteen years later, in 1939, Detective Sergeant Rice became engaged in another gun battle... this time he was killed. Det. Rice was the second African American and the longest-serving Dayton police officer to have been killed in the line of duty with 30 years of service. On either side of Det. Rice were two other courageous African American police officers who sacrificed their lives in service to the Dayton community: Patrolman William 'Tom' Wilson, the first African American Dayton officer to die in the line of duty in 1928 and Officer Eddie Hobson in 1981.

In 1943, Patrolman George Wheeler became the first African American police officer to retire from the police force after a 32-year career. Three years later, in 1946, Phillip Greer was appointed to police service and patrolled the streets of Dayton. Greer would follow in Lucius Rice's footsteps by advancing to the detective ranks. Detective Greer retired from the police force in 1972, after a 26-year career. There were six black officers on the police department when Det. Greer joined and by 1964 the number had increased to seven.

In 1973, cities across the nation were pressed by federal civil rights legislation to alter hiring practices, and Dayton began adjusting as well. Consequently, the police department began actively campaigning to increase the number of African Americans in its ranks. That year, Tyree Broomfield was appointed to Chief of Staff at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, the first African American to serve in a command position on the police force. By 1977, there were 50 black officers on the Dayton Police Department.

In 1983 Lt. Col. Broomfield became the Dayton Police Department's first African American Chief of Police. Other African Americans who were the first to be promoted to higher ranks on the Police Department were Officer Jaruth Durham-Jefferson, a black woman to the rank of sergeant in 1987; Sergeant Steven Miller to the rank of Lieutenant in 1991 and Ronald Lowe, Sr., the first African American career Dayton police officer appointed to the rank of Major in 1988 and then to the head the police department in 1995 as Chief of Police.