

Lower Merion Township Officer Francis “Buck” Roy E.O.W. 9/15/1924

On July 3, 1924, Officer Francis “Buck” Roy and Officer Albert Miller responded to a call about a Ku Klux Klan rally. They arrived to a cross burning on the grounds of Haverford College and to about 200 Klan members beginning to depart. When Roy and Miller attempted to question two men who were leaving the site, one of the men shot and struck Officer Roy in the leg and abdomen. Officer Miller, who was off duty at the time, was shot in the leg. Miller managed to crawl over 200 hundred yards through the woods to a local residence and call for assistance. He refused to be taken to the hospital “until you get Buck and bring him here.”

Roy was transported from the scene to Bryn Mawr Hospital, where he lay in and out of consciousness for 2 months until he finally succumbed to his injuries on September 15, 1924. Roy, who was considered the “pride of the Lower Merion Force” and “popular with the residence of the township” was the first Lower Merion Police officer to die in the line of duty.

According to the July 5, 1924 edition of the Philadelphia inquirer, Chief James Donaghy issued the following order at Roll Call on July 4th: “The next time the Ku Klux Klan holds a demonstration in the confines of this township, you are to rush to the scene and shoot to kill. Shoot to kill first and ask questions afterward. I shall face the responsibility of your acts. That is all.” A \$1,000.00 award was offered for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators.

Five men were tried and acquitted for Officer Roy’s murder. However, 28 months later, Moses V. Rodgers, a janitor at Haverford College, confessed to the killing. Rodgers was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to 3 to 6 years in the County Prison.