No one suspected that the morning of November 17, 1930, would be any different from any other early November day. But the events that took place that particular day left Kirksville in an uproar and with much drama.

At approximately five in the morning, two Kirksville policemen, George Scriven and John Rose, were trying to get a trace on two men who had robbed Loney's Garage on North Franklin Street of $19.44 two hours earlier. Instead, they came upon a suspicious man at the corner of Missouri and Elson Streets, who, they later discovered, had robbed a Hannibal theatre the night before.

George Scriven had been a night marshal for the city of Kirksville for about a year and a half at the time. Previously he held jobs as a mine worker, mine superintendent, and construction worker. He was born in Shakersville, Pennsylvania, and while still a small child, George moved to Kirksville with his family. He married Alma F. Findling in 1916, and they had five children.

After being a detective for the Kirksville Police Department and the Wabash Railroad Company in Moberly, Missouri, John Rose was promoted to night marshal. Officer Rose was 60-years-old at the time and had lived in Kirksville, off and on, for 35 years. He moved to Kirksville 18 years after his birth in Putnam County, Missouri, and in 1891 he married Iona Johnson.

Officer Rose was finishing his 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift, while Officer George Scriven was preparing to go on duty when they received a tip. They were easily recognized by their dark blue uniforms and matching police caps. Each carried with him a service revolver, a flashlight, and a "blackjack." A "blackjack" is a leather wrapped piece of lead about one-foot long. As police officers, their duties included keeping peace in the city. They took care of any disturbance calls they received while on duty, and these duties were handled while they were patrolling the city on foot. For example, they kept an eye on the security of the downtown stores by wiggling front door locks and looking in windows.

Mr. Bruce Hunt, an eyewitness to the events, recalls that particular morning as a cool one. "I remember it was around the Thanksgiving vacation time. I was a senior at New Bloomfield High School in Missouri and was home for vacation. And as I remember it, I was going back to school the following day. The way it came about, I was with some friends who were working at the Kennedy Theatre and it was their job to clean up the theatre after the second show. After we finished we would go down to the White Cabin and have hamburgers and coffee. Well, this particular evening, about one or two in the morning, we saw a lone individual in a car that aroused our suspicion. We watched him park across the street from the theatre. Finally he drove slowly down the street and stopped in front of the office window of the Kennedy Theatre. The drapes were drawn to one side and a lone lightbulb was shining over an office safe. The man was looking over this safe, and this continued to arouse our suspicion so we kept an eye on the fellow. Later he drove up to the Missouri Street Garage Filling Station on the corner of Elson and Missouri Streets (where County Meat Market is today). We then circled the block and picked up Officers Rose and Scriven."

Mr. Hunt was able to locate policeman Scriven on the west side of the town square. At this time, Officer Scriven asked Officer John Wesley Rose, who was fatally wounded during the incident, was formerly a detective in Moberly, Missouri, before returning to Kirksville and joining the police force in 1928.
By Leigh Klinginsmith
Kristy Mollick

Officer Rose if he would mind accompanying him to investigate further. They got into Mr. Hunt's 1929 Model A Ford and drove to where the stranger's car had been parked on Elson Street. The suspicious looking man was purchasing gasoline for his Dodge Eight. Seriven approached the car to question the man. Seriven asked him where he was going, and the man rolled down his window to give Seriven his response.

"We drove down and to the opposite side of the pumps from where the man was. They (Officers Rose and Seriven) got out of my car and walked over to him and asked him to step out so that he could answer a few questions. He readily agreed to step out, but as he came out of the car, he came out backwards and turned around with a gun in each hand," replied Mr. Hunt.

Clifford Seriven, the son of George Seriven, remembers his father telling him that he thought the bandit was going to hit him, so he ducked. His father also told him that he did not expect the man to be armed, and he was quite stunned to see the guns in his hands.

The bandit shot Seriven first, in the shoulder, and the sudden impact knocked him down. He next shot Officer Rose twice. Officer Rose, who was standing across from Officer Seriven, was shot once in the neck and once in the groin. He was killed instantly. Officer Seriven fired at the bandit twice, while Seriven was lying on the concrete, but as he jumped up the bandit shot at him a second time. The second shot hit some keys and extra shells in Seriven's pocket. The bandit ran around the back of the car then north on Elson Street. Seriven continued firing but failed to hit the bandit. The bandit was last seen as he turned west on a vacant lot and went towards Main Street.

Mr. Hunt remembers seeing the shots fired. "I saw the shots. The second shot hit John Rose in the upper body. It was just like a sledge hammer hitting him and it knocked him completely off his feet. Rose didn't move. He stayed down while the bandit shot once more at George Seriven. This shot hit Officer Seriven in the lower left leg, as I remember, and hit a bunch of keys and these kept the bullet from penetrating the leg. This bullet left a large bruise on his leg about the size of a walnut. The bandit then swung his gun at Seriven again and Seriven raised his arm. These shots stunned and dazed him. The bandit then took off and ran around the corner. I remember seeing George Seriven sitting with his back against the pump and his empty gun in his hand. We called for help. I am not really sure how we got help, but the police came and assisted.

That was about the extent of my participation in the incident."

Seriven, who had his revolver in his hand as the bandit stepped out of the car, said the entire affair took place in such a short period of time that he hardly realized what had happened. Since the bandit did not seem to mind being questioned, Seriven did not expect him to shoot and was unprepared for such an emergency. Seriven had an excellent opportunity to shoot the bandit as he ran in front of him, but by that time his gun was empty. Rose had a gun in his pocket, but never had a chance to use it.

Rose's body was moved to the Summer's and Son Funeral Home, while Seriven was taken to Grim-Smith Hospital. Ac-
cording to the *Kirksville Daily Express*, dated November 17, 1930, Scriven "was shot in the left shoulder, the bullet entered in the back near the lower point of the shoulder blade. An X-ray picture was taken and it showed that the bullet did not break the shoulder blade but still left the danger of infection. The bullet fired hit some keys in his pocket, which prevented the bullet from entering the body. It did make a large bruised spot which gave him more pain than the shoulder wound. Scriven was allowed to leave the hospital the next afternoon."

The man responsible for this incident was apparently experienced in robberies because robbery tools were found in a suitcase in his car. Another suitcase containing clothing, two automatic Winchester shotguns, and several boxes of shells for the .45 calibre revolver he used during the shooting, were found. Also discovered was a sack containing money and checks he had stolen in the robbery from the Orpheum Theatre in Hannibal, Missouri, the night before. Members of the Kirksville Police Department also found a black silk scarf and a new cap that had been purchased in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Although the bandit had many names, after being captured in later years he was known as Lawrence Barton, alias DeVolt. On January 9, 1938, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for the slaying of an officer in Minneapolis, apparently ending any chances for extradition to Kirksville to face charges for the death of Officer John Rose.

The *Kirksville Daily Express* helped to organize a John Rose Fund for the Rose family because of his heroic duty as a police officer. The newspaper asked for people to send their donations to the Kirksville Chamber of Commerce. As for George Scriven, he was bedridden for quite a while after the incident. He was unable to return to the police force and eight years later, in 1949, he died of heart failure.

This event was a sad and tragic one, but it showed two courageous men who met danger in doing their job. And who would have thought it would happen on that one cold, November morning?

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Above: These are the remnants that are left from the shooting, which happened 54 years ago. Scriven’s police cap and the silk scarf found in the bandit’s car are now in the possession of George Scriven’s son, Clifford. Officer Rose’s granddaughter, Sarah Grossnickle, has the bullet which killed him. Top left photo: Pictured is the proclamation which the city of Kirksville gave to the John Rose family in recognition of his courage. Bottom left photo: County Meat Service, Inc. is the site of the former Missouri Storage Garage Filling Station where the shooting occurred.