

ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: HARRY MAGERS (1894-1920)

Harry Magers was born November 1, 1894 in Elmhurst, Illinois. His parents were Minnie (nee Wegner) and Henry C. Magers, and he had an older sister, Amanda. His father was the caretaker of the Glos Mansion and property, and the family lived in a home on the Glos property south of the Glos Mansion.

Harry enlisted in the Navy in 1912 and was honorably discharged in 1915. He enlisted in the Army in 1918 during World War I and was honorably discharged in 1919. Shortly after his return from the Army he was made Elmhurst's Chief of Police. He married Annie Gaebler of Elmhurst on September 10, 1919.

According to a newspaper article printed in the *Elmhurst Press* November 5, 1920: "Every boy in Elmhurst over five years recognized him and loved him. He was the ideal of many. The roar of his motorcycle in the neighborhood always brought this exclamation from the youngsters: 'There's Maugie'... while his work was at times extremely dangerous, he showed constantly the keenest enthusiasm for it... he voluntarily sought the position in spite of its dangers... The little folks loved him – the lawless feared him. He unreservedly and fearlessly risked his life to protect the life and property of others, to protect your family and mine. Never did he avoid or shun duty because it was hazardous."

At the age of 26, he was shot as he responded at the scene of a robbery. About 12:30 a.m. Saturday evening October 30, 1920, Magers answered a call at St. Charles Road and York Street. Several people were robbed as they walked home from a program at the Masonic Temple on the corner of York and Arthur Streets. Magers arrived at the scene on a motorcycle and talked to two witnesses. He was quickly approached by two men – one of whom shot him. Badly wounded, Magers was taken to West Suburban Hospital in Oak Park where he died on November 2, 1920.

A funeral service for Magers was held at St. Peters Church on Friday November 6. Local businesses closed during the service, and police officers from Oak Park, Maywood, River Forest, Melrose Park, Bellwood, and Lombard attended with Army and Navy guards standing post. Donations were accepted for two funds—one for Harry Magers' widow and



Harry Magers, 1920. M85.36.2

one for “a suitable memorial to be erected at his last resting place.” The memorial erected at Elm Lawn includes the Bible verse: “*Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for friends.*” (John 15:13)

As of 2015, Harry Magers is the only Elmhurst police officer killed in the line of duty.

Nancy Wilson, Elmhurst History Museum staff

Updated July 2016