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JAMES JOSEPH FENTON

January 4, 1908

As Officer James Joseph Fenton patrolled 7th Street between Pine and Wood on the afternoon of January 4, 1908, he observed two suspicious individuals standing together. They caught his attention when they attempted to conceal a handbag from his view. He stopped them in front of the West Oakland Barber Shop at 1780 7th Street. When the interview deepened Officer Fenton's suspicions, he advised the two men that they were under arrest. One bolted from Fenton's grasp and fled down the street. The other struggled to get away, pulled a gun from his hip pocket and shot Officer Fenton twice. Fenton fell to the ground, unconscious.

Before the shooter could flee, he was seized by Thomas Shiell, the proprietor of the West Oakland Barber Shop. Mr. Shiell wrestled the gun away from the suspect, who then fled on foot. Mr. Shiell fired one round at the running suspect and struck him in the back. The suspect, later identified as the primary suspect in a major postal theft, died in the hospital of his wound. Prior to his death, he told detectives that he shot the officer because he feared going to prison for the theft. The suspect who precipitated the shooting by fleeing was later apprehended and convicted of the officer's slaying.

Local citizens carried Patrolman Fenton to the West Oakland Pharmacy to await medical assistance. He died prior to the arrival of a doctor.

Patrolman James Joseph Fenton was 33 years old, and was survived by his wife and two children. He had received a full appointment to the Department on January 1, 1906.