

Note: This article was originally posted on Facebook by Erin Leitner at a note, since at the time a blog wasn't established at Cincinnati Museum Center.

A buried secret in a Cincinnati privy

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When our local archaeologists excavated a brick and limestone privy in downtown Cincinnati, they discovered an unusual array of items. Upon close inspection these items appear to indicate a suspicious act of concealment, possibly linked to a long-forgotten crime committed in Cincinnati. As

It may be surprising for some, but privies are great places for archaeologists to dig. They are like time capsules that display a clear timeline, and they hold things accidentally lost or in this case,

What was found? A metal waist buckle reading "POLICE"; a metal police whistle; a wooden stamp reading "DUSTIN"; 27 buttons marked with a "P" or stamped with the Seal of the City of Cincinnati, a loaded .41 caliber pearl-handled pistol, police call box keys and more. Also, a newspaper found

inside the privy alongside the uniform was dated April 1899, suggesting the uniform was discarded soon after that time.



Finding these items in such a peculiar place put us on a search to find out more about who "DUSTIN" might have been and why his entire uniform was discarded in this privy.

From police records, city directories, and newspaper articles, here is what we know about Charles Dustin, a man who lived in Cincinnati during this time period:

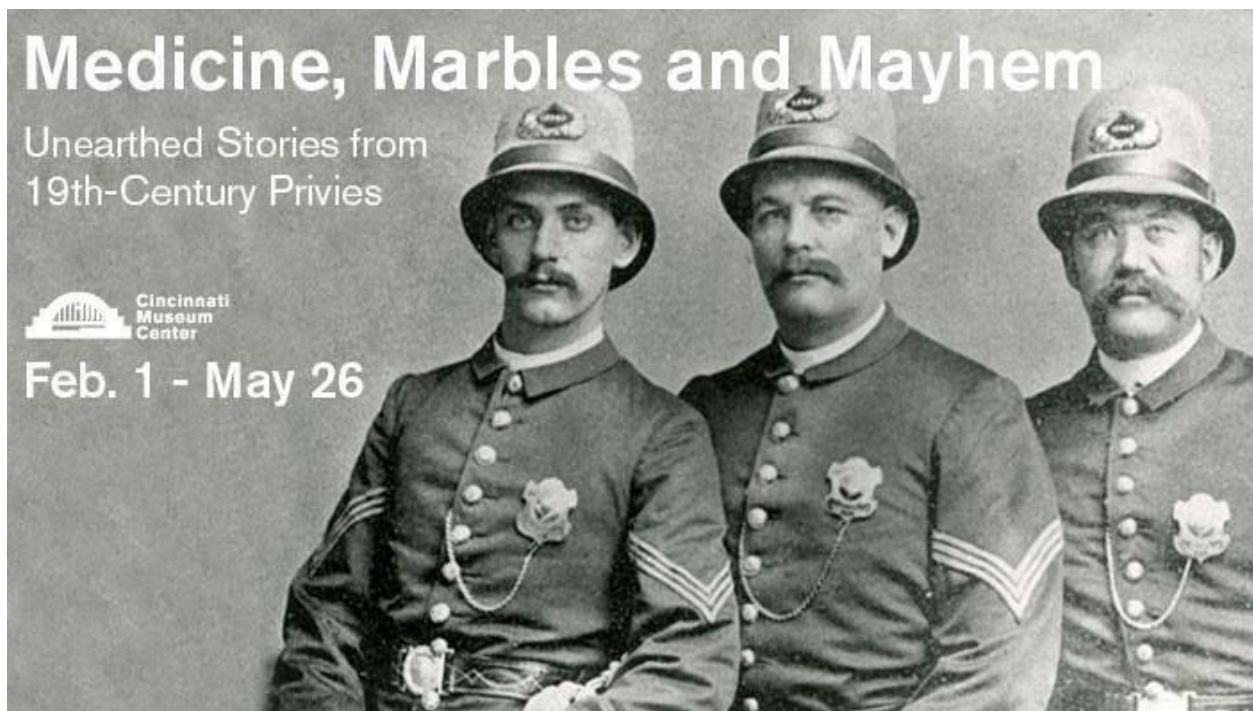
He was a Cincinnati native, son to Emerson and Amanda Dustin. The Dustins were a well-respected family living in Queensgate until Charles' mother died in 1880.

- In 1890 he was still living with his father and stepmother on West Fourth Street and Charles was employed as a policeman or watchman.

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- His father died in September 1899, and at this point historical evidence suggests his life began to spiral out of control.
- In May 1900, Charles Dustin was accused of shooting Jacob Strickmier in the leg after a feud in Avondale. Jacob was a private watchman for mayor-elect Julius Fleischmann.
- Charles was revoked as a police officer and he lost his license to carry a firearm.
- Later in December 1901, he was arrested for pulling a pistol on another private officer, Harry Weidig. Weidig was the brother-in-law of Strickmier.
- Charles was charged with assault in public view, carrying a concealed weapon, resisting arrest and tearing up the arrest warrant.
- Dustin was sentenced to the city workhouse in January 1902 for 18 months.
- After 10 months of his sentence, he was sent to Longview Insane Asylum by court order, where he lived for the rest of his life. Charles Died on Nov. 9, 1933 of a coronary embolism and is buried on an unmarked grave on the hospital grounds.

The historical documents only provide a chronological framework for a few events in Charles Dustin's life, and the archeological object simply represents a snapshot in time - likely a particularly troubling day in Charles's life. None of our historical evidence points to why he threw his uniform into the outhouse.



Come see Medicine Marbles and Mayhem for free in the Ruthven Gallery. Look at the evidence yourself, and see what you can interpret out of this Cincinnati historical puzzle. <http://bit.ly/1ebyG9H>

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Photo captions from the top to bottom.

1. Unidentified Cincinnati Police officer from 1896. Not believed to be Charles Dustin. Credit from the Cincinnati History Library and Archives.

2. Waist buckle found in Cincinnati privy beside an original Cincinnati Policeman buckle. (Photo by Erin Leitner)

3. Remains of newspaper found within privy, that allowed us to accurately date the period when Dustin discarded his uniform (Photo by Erin Leitner)

4. Charles Dustin's .41 caliber pistol uncovered in the privy (Photo by Erin Leitner)

5. 19th century Cincinnati Police officers