



Joseph B. Waldrupe

Staff Position: Correctional Officer

Location: USP Leavenworth

Date Killed: November 10, 1901

Each morning during the construction of the new U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, correctional officers would march 400 inmates from the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth to the construction site. Construction had begun in 1898. Only 16 correctional officers were assigned to supervise inmate workers during construction; Officer Joseph B. Waldrupe was among them.

Two walls of masonry were already completed and two temporary wooden barriers had been erected with makeshift officer stations. Eight unarmed officers patrolled the grounds, while eight armed officers stood watch in temporary guard posts built on a wall. The armed officers would climb up to their posts, then their weapons were handed up to them.

On the morning of November 8, 1901, after arriving at the partially-constructed prison, the officers placed the inmate workers in a wire enclosure. Unbeknownst to the officers, a number of weapons (including revolvers) had been hidden at the site, which was left unguarded at night. That afternoon at approximately 3:40 p.m., 26 inmates retrieved the weapons and over-powered the unarmed officers and construction crew. Holding hostages in front of them, the inmates then went on to attack the officers in the guard posts. Officer Waldrupe was able to shoot and kill the inmate ringleader before being shot twice.

Despite having been mortally wounded with one shot gun pellet penetrating his forehead, Officer Waldrupe continued to defend his position even after inmates entered his post through a trap door in the floor. He clubbed one inmate with his rifle before he was beaten with the same rifle. One inmate protected the dying officer from the others, not letting them enter the tower. Officer Waldrupe died of his injuries two days later.

The inmates involved in the disturbance took the officer's horses and fled the institution after breaching the wooden barrier. A massive search followed and all were recaptured, except for at least those who were killed in clashes with pursuing authorities.