

06-03-1964 New Milford CT – Kenneth Couch – LEO Attempted Rescue



OFFICER DOWN MEMORIAL PAGE

REMEMBERING ALL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S HEROES

<https://www.odmp.org/officer/3507-patrolman-harmon-kenneth-couch>

ODMP Remembers...

[United States](#) > [Connecticut](#) > [New Milford Police Department](#) > Patrolman Harmon Kenneth Couch



Patrolman

Harmon Kenneth Couch

New Milford Police Department, Connecticut

End of Watch: Wednesday, June 3, 1964

Patrolman Kenneth Couch drowned while attempting to make a rescue in the Housatonic River.

He drowned after falling out of a boat during a search and rescue operation.

Patrolman Couch was a U.S. Army veteran of WWI and had served with the New Milford Police Department for 10 years. He was survived by his wife.

New Milford recognizes fallen police officer

<http://m.newstimes.com/local/article/New-Milford-recognizes-fallen-police-officer-6266671.php>

Nelson Oliveira | May 15, 2015

NEW MILFORD -- When police received a report of a man and a 13-year-old boy whose boat may have capsized near the Bleachery Dam on the Housatonic River, two officers immediately rushed to the waters.

Bio & Incident Details
Age: 61
Tour: 10 years
Badge # Not available
Military veteran
Cause: Drowned

It was June 1964 and the [New Milford Police Department](#) only had a resident trooper and four sworn police officers.

Officers [H. Kenneth Couch](#) and [Ted Adams](#) took a small boat from a marina on the Housatonic and went into the turbulent river below the dam near White Street. The boat was pulled into the dam and capsized with the two officers caught in an undertow. Couch was trapped under the dam and drowned.

Fifty years later, the officer's ultimate sacrifice was recognized with a memorial ceremony outside the police station.

A monument and a plaque were dedicated to Couch during the Friday morning event, which marked National Peace Officers' Memorial Day.

"Officer Adams was able to reach the shore. Officer Couch did not," New Milford Police Chief [Shawn Boyne](#) said. "I was privileged to meet Officer Adams and it was evident in our conversations that the actions on that date were without hesitation or concern for their own safety.

"This monument is our commitment to rededicate ourselves to extending his legacy, to carry on the work that defined his service and his life he laid down for the citizens of New Milford," Boyne added.

Lt. [William Scribner](#), Mayor [Pat Murphy](#) and her husband, state Sen. [Clark Chapin](#), were among the speakers at the ceremony.

"On behalf of this community, I would like to recognize the supreme sacrifice and thank his family," Murphy said.

Most family members no longer live in the area and were not able to attend the event, but one of his nephews did. Larry Couch said his uncle would be humbled by the dedication.

"He was a very quiet person," he said. "He didn't like to be in the limelight." Officer Couch was 61 when he died. Adams, who was hospitalized for some time, eventually became the department's police chief.

"Today is the day that everyone who passes through these doors will know the supreme sacrifice of Officer Couch," Boyne said. "It will no longer be a vague and sadly forgotten, even unknown, memory to those who choose to condemn us without warrant or cause. We are a remarkable group of people, whose stories are a testament to the bravery and patriotism, and valor of law enforcement at every level. This monument will forever memorialize his and our commitment to service and excellence."

The original report of the overturned civilian boat turned out to be unfounded.

Fifty-one years later, hats are off for Officer Couch

<http://www.newmilfordspectrum.com/local/article/Fifty-one-years-later-hats-are-off-for-Officer-6261454.php>

May 14, 2015 By [Susan Tuz](#)

A New Milford police officer who lost his life in the line of duty will be remembered for years to come.

A memorial monument and plaque placed in front of the [New Milford Police Department](#) will be dedicated this week.

Officer [H. Kenneth Couch](#), 61, died June 3, 1964 while attempting a water rescue on the Housatonic River.

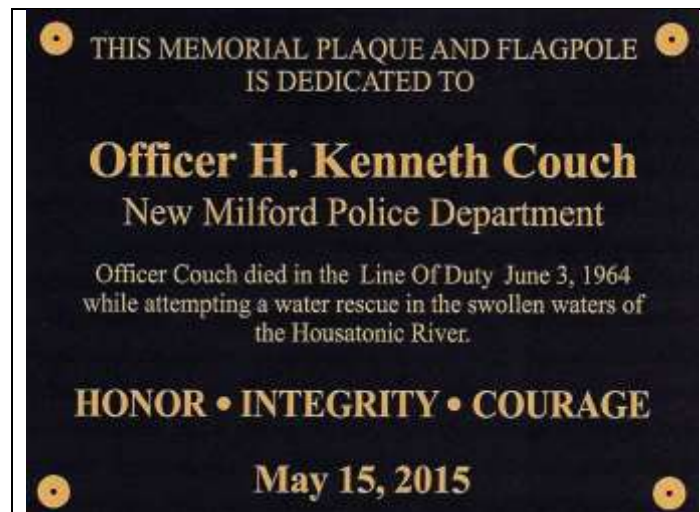
On Friday, May 15 at 10 a.m., a ceremony at the police department will honor his memory and commemorate the monument and an American flag to be flown there.

"It was just a little over 50 years ago that he was lost," said NMPD Lt. [William Scribner](#). "What better way could we have to honor a man who gave his life serving the community."

The emergency call came in that day in 1964 around 1 p.m. that a man and a 13-year-old boy may have been in a boat that capsized near the bleachery dam at a treacherous turn in the river.



H. Kenneth "Buss" Couch, a New Milford police officer, died June 3, 1964 at the age of 61 in the line of duty. He will be honored Friday, May 15, 2015 at the New Milford Police Department.



This plaque honoring the late H. Kenneth Couch, a New Milford police officer, will be dedicated Friday, May 15, 2015 at the New Milford Police Department.

At that time, New Milford had a resident state trooper and four sworn police officers.

State Trooper [William McMahon](#) and Officer [Ted Adams](#) were in the courtroom then located on the second floor of town hall for a court proceeding.

Couch came up to the court and got Adams to respond to the call.

The two officers commandeered a small boat from a marina along the Housatonic and went into the turbulent river below the dam near West Street.

The boat was pulled into the dam, capsized and they were caught in an undertow.

Couch was trapped under the dam and drowned. Adams, who was much younger, was able to swim to shore, Scribner said.

No boaters in distress were ever found.

McMahon remembered Couch as a "gentleman, very quiet."

"He loved the job and had an excellent relationship with the residents in town," McMahon recalled. "He would walk around downtown, greeting everyone he met and talking with them."

McMahon said June 3 was "a horrible day."

"There were five of us policing the town and, not only did we lose Officer Couch, we were suddenly down two men," he said. "Officer Adams was hospitalized for some time. The barracks in Litchfield and Ridgefield boosted our manpower, adding patrols."

Adams would go on to one day be the department's chief.

Couch's nephew, Lawrence Couch, now in his 70s, remembers his uncle as "a quiet person."

"He didn't look to be in the limelight," Lawrence Couch said. "He was a policeman and he did his job."

"I think it is a very nice thing that the department and town is doing in his memory," he added. "Most of the remaining family lives out of the area but I will be at the ceremony."

The American flag and flag pole were donated by New Milford resident [Peter Orenski](#) and the monument with brass plaque was designed by fellow resident [Ray Crawford](#).



The unsuccessful rescue scene along the Housatonic River is shown in this June 1964 photograph published in the New Milford Times. New Milford police officer Kenneth Couch died in the line of duty June 3, 1964

"Bill Scribner called me and said the department wanted to put up a flag pole to honor a fallen officer," said Orenski, a custom flag dealer. "I was so very impressed that 50 years later they were honoring one of their own. I asked if I could donate the flag pole and the first round of flags."

Crawford said he was also contacted by Scribner.

"It's a fantastic tribute to a man who gave his life in the line of duty, trying to save someone else," Crawford said. "Lt. Scribner contacted me and asked if I'd like to get involved. Being an artist, the monument is my contribution."

Ptl. Kenneth Couch
61 years old
New Milford Police Department
New Milford, CT

Ptl. Kenneth Couch drowned April 10 1963 while attempting to save the life of a 13-year-old boy.