

Sheriffs of Knox County

Silas Brown	1808	Allen J. Beach	1883-86
Ichabod Nye	1809-13	John G. Stevenson	1887-90
John Hawn	1813-17	John G. Fowler	1891-92
John Shaw	1817-19	Noah W. Allen	1893-94
Alexander Elliot	1819-20	Charles S. Sapp	1895-96
William Beavans	1820-24	Justus D. Smoots	1897-1900
Charless Colerick	1824-28	Isaac C. Lynde	1901-03
John Shaw	1828-29	James Shellenbarger	1903-05
Johnston Elliot	1829	Rollin C. Clements	1905-08
Hugh Neal	1830-34	Peter J. Parker	1908-13
Isaac Hadley	1834-36	John M. Woolison	1913-17
William Beam	1836-40	Walter B. Mosholder	1917-21
Absalom Thrift	1843-46	Burr H. Lytle	1921-25
David C. Montgomery	1847-50	Clifton G. Stream	1925-29
Thomas Wade	1851-54	Hoy C. Lynde	1929-33
Lewis Strong	1855-56	F. Dowe Mason	1933-37
Israel Underwood	1857-60	Clyde E. Biggs	1937-41
James Shaw	1861-62	Charles R. Lawrence	1941-44
Allen Beach	1863-64	Bertha Lawrence	1944-45
George W. Steele	1865-68	Salathiel Bumpus	1945-53
Allen Beach	1869-72	Paul M. Cochran	1953-65
John Armstrong	1873-76	Ralph D. Peairs	1965-77
John Ferguson Gay	1877-80	Paul K. Rowe	1977-93

John A. Schnebly	1881-82	David B. Barber	1993-2013
David Shaffer	2013-		

Knox County Sheriff's Office History

The American Sheriffs trace their heritage back to ninth century England when the King had a personal representative in each Shire, whose title was Shire Reeve. A shire was the equivalent of an American county, and the title Shire Reeve evolved into a single word Sheriff.

When English subjects came into the New world, they brought with them the traditions of the English criminal justice system, including the office of the Sheriff.

The first Sheriff of Knox County was Silas Brown who was appointed in 1808. In his first year, Sheriff Brown performed the first public whipping of a criminal in Mount Vernon. Our first county jail was built on what is now the present square in Mount Vernon in 1809.

In 1877, Knox County Sheriff John Fersuson Gay conducted the county's first public execution by hanging convicted murderer William Bergin.

In May 1905, Sheriff James Shellenbarger was shot while attempting to arrest a man named Frank Coile in Miller Township for assault. Sheriff Shellenbarger never recovered from his wounds and died five months later.

In 1913, a new Knox County Jail was built next to the County Court House on East Chestnut Street, which served as the residence of the Sheriffs and their families for many years.

Sheriff Hoy Lynde, who served from 1929 to 1933, was the father of "Hollywood Squares" celebrity and film star, actor Paul Lynde.

In 1938, Sheriff Clyde Biggs escorted Fred Mosley to the Ohio Penitentiary, where Mosley was the first person from Knox County to die in the electric chair for the murder of his wife.

From 1944 to 1945, Knox County had its first woman Sheriff, Bertha Lawrence. Bertha was appointed to finish her husband, Sheriff Charles Lawrence's unexpired term after he died in office unexpectedly at the age of forty-one.

It was not until 1945 that any of the Sheriffs of Knox County ever served more than four years in office at one time.

The Knox County Special Deputies Unit was formed in 1955, the first such unit in the State of Ohio.

The current Knox County Sheriff's Office and 100 bed jail opened on Upper Gilchrist Road in 2002, replacing the ninety year old Chestnut Street Jail, which has been torn down for parking at the court house.

Sheriff David Barber was the longest serving Sheriff in the history of Knox County, who at the end of his current term served as the county's chief law enforcement officer for twenty years.

In 2007, the Knox County Sheriff's Office became only the fifth Ohio Sheriff's Office to become internationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement agencies.

In 2010 that distinction was maintained as the Sheriff's Office was re-accredited by CALEA.