

Roy Cobb

Roy Eugene Cobb was born on January 26, 1886, in the outskirts of Scranton, Pennsylvania.¹ He graduated from Scranton Technical High School in 1908, and went on to become “one of the most promising young businessmen” of Scranton, working an administrative position at a local silk throwing mill.² In 1914, Roy married Marguerite Weeks, with whom he had two daughters: Ruth and Marion.³

On May 10, 1919, Roy was admitted to Ward 4 of Friends Hospital.⁴ From May 10 until May 17, Roy was kept in restraints for an unspecified amount of time, though presumably 24 hours a day. From May 13 until May 18, he was recorded as “unclean.” He took part in no activities at the Hospital. On May 19th, 9 days after his arrival at the hospital, Roy died at the age of 33. The reports about his cause of death are conflicting: while his death certificate attributes his death to exhaustion and psychosis, with cerebral edema as a secondary cause, his obituary mentions only cerebro spinal meningitis.⁵ The discrepancy in reported cause of death was likely because of stigma surrounding mental illness, and the fact that Roy was from Scranton rather than Philadelphia. It is possible that residents of Scranton didn’t know that Friends Hospital was a mental institution, and the writers of Roy’s obituary decided to use this to portray his death as the result of physical rather than mental illness.

Ward 4, May 1919

- Admitted on May 10

¹ Roy Eugene Cobb, grave marker, Fairview Memorial Park, Elmhurst Township, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, digital image s.v. “Roy Eugene Cobb” (died 19 May 1919), *FindaGrave.com*.

² “Roy E. Cobb Dies in Philadelphia Hospital,” *The Tribune*, May 20, 1919, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/48468200/>.

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⁴ All following information, unless otherwise noted, is from Daily Record Book, 1918-1921, MC-1261, Item 116, Friends Hospital Records, Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections, Haverford, Pennsylvania.

⁵ See “Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates, 1906-1969,” digital image s.v. “Roy E Cobb” (died 19 May 1919), *Ancestry.com* and “Roy E. Cobb Dies in Philadelphia Hospital,” *The Tribune*, May 20, 1919, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/48468200/>.

- May 10: special diet, restrained
- May 11: medicine, special diet, fed, restrained
- May 12: medicine, special diet, fed, restrained
- May 13: medicine, special diet, fed, restrained, unclean
- May 14: medicine, special diet, fed, restrained, unclean
- May 15: medicine, special diet, fed, restrained, unclean
- May 16: medicine, special diet, fed, restrained, unclean
- May 17: medicine, sick in bed, fed, restrained, unclean
- May 18: medicine, sick in bed, fed, unclean
- May 19: died

Obituary says he died of “cerebrospinal meningitis,” death certificate says exhaustion and psychosis with cerebral edema as a contributing cause