

# History of the Winston-Salem Police Department



- **1915 - FIRST POLICE CAR:** July 9- Board approved the purchase of "...a five passenger Ford automobile to be used in connection with the Police Department." The Police Committee had recommended a White Steamer for \$3,200 or a Cadillac for \$2,700. The Aldermen approved the purchase of the Ford for \$533.27.
- **1919 - FIRST MOTORCYCLE PURCHASED:** June 13-The Chief of Police was authorized to secure a motorcycle to be used in connection with the Police Department. A second motorcycle was authorized to be purchased on August 29. It was approved to purchase Harley-Davidson's to replace the first motorcycle model used by the department, the Indian. I'm not sure when the
- **1919 - POLICE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM:** July 11, - The Board authorized \$24,380 for the purchase and installation of a Police telephone and telegraph system.
- **1921 - POLICE PISTOLS PURCHASED:** Feb 25, 1921-An order was placed for forty .45 caliber USA Colts pistols for use by the Police Department at a price of \$8.00 each. Previously policemen had used their own guns or confiscated weapons.
- **1922 – PHOTOGRAPHY:** Under Dewey C. Brown, the Records/Identification section began using photography with the first mug shots made August 17, 1921. A dark room and processing equipment was purchased. Crime scene photography began in the late 20's or early '30's, but was only used in serious crimes. Fatal traffic accident scenes were also photographed.

Sgt. Brown was sent to the FBI Academy for fingerprint training that same year. A new position fingerprint expert was added to the police budget in 1922. Brown's rise through the ranks is nothing short of meteoric. Brown came to the department after serving as a truck driver with the US Expeditionary Forces in Europe during World War I. He had been appointed on March 29, 1920, promoted to Desk Sgt. in August of that same year and promoted to Captain on September 1, 1929. Brown would take medical retirement in August of 1930.
- **1928 - BOY SAFETY PATROL:** Nov 9 - The Aldermen and the Police faced an issue of traffic safety in 1928 involved the boy (Safety) patrol. Alderman minutes from November 9, "We endorse the movement of the Boy Patrol and think rules of safety for children should be stressed in schools. After a careful survey of the various schools, we find five schools have boys only to the fifth grade; four schools only to the seventh grade. The Police Department cannot delegate authority to boys of this immature age and for the safety of children, must keep a policeman at hours needed at these dangerous crossings. No direct benefit would come from the Police Department, so we recommend that the expense of an instructor be not charged to the Police." By the '30's this attitude would change and Winston-Salem's school patrol project became the model for the state.
- **1931 – THE SPIDER GANG:** A group of detectives became known as the "Spider Gang" partly of their own publicity campaign for the way they wove such a tight web of evidence around their suspects. The original spider gang was headed by Sgt. A.C. Wall and included J.A. Cofer, the late L.G. Teague and Jim Matthews, who later left the Police Department to become county jailer. Other members included Sam Simpson, C.E. Stutts, Bill Burke and Tim Mackie.

- **1940 – THE TRAFFIC SQUAD:** A traffic squad was formed in 1940 with emphasis on parking violations and accident investigation. The seven radio cars got their first two-way communications. Most officers, and all the rookies, walked a beat and used the call boxes. A change in schedule gave each officer one day off in seven instead of one in 21. The new schedule still allowed 30 men to be on duty at any time. There were now three divisions—uniform, traffic and detective.
- **1941 – FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN OFFICER:** The first African-American police officer was hired in October 1. John Joyce was a graduate of A&T State University. He and his wife had operated the juvenile detention home for African-American boys since 1933. He had been used on numerous occasions as a paid police informant. He was not given a uniform and his title was "Plainclothes Special Duty Officer."
- **1947 – FIRST FEMALE SWORN:** Winston-Salem's first sworn-in female was Gloria Robbins. She did not carry a firearm or wear a uniform, but preferred to refer to herself as a police department welfare worker. During the seven years she served the City, Miss Robbins worked mainly on non-support cases, domestic cases, juvenile work and searching of female prisoners. She resigned on November 22, 1955 to enter private business.
- **1951 – THE INTOXIMETER:** Dr. William Wolff of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine was a pioneer in the use of blood tests for determining amount of alcohol in the blood stream.
- **1952 – RADAR:** There were a number of new techniques and tools placed in the hands of police in the early 1950s. Radar nicknamed "The Whammy" was first used in 1952. It consisted of three pieces: a "black box" mounted on top of the stationary police car containing transmitter, receiver and antenna, a power unit and an "electronic meter."
- **1952 – METER MAIDS:** Four police women were hired and two more the next year to check parking violations in the uptown area.
- **1952 – MOVIE PROJECTOR/CAMERA:** A movie projector and 16 mm camera were purchased. Films were made for training as well as some surveillance and to record drunk drivers.
- **1953 – RECORDER IN RADIO ROOM:** A recorder was installed in the radio room in October. A newspaper article stated that it would record "all incoming and outgoing message on the radio."
- **1957 – FIRE-POLICE PATROL:** The Public Safety concept traces its roots to September when a 1957 Chevrolet wagon, equipped with both police and fire radios and equipment, and two cross-trained men began patrol in the western section of the city.
- **1958 – FIRE-POLICE COMMUNICATIONS JOINED:** Fire and Police Communications merged in June. A *Journal* article stated..."two operators would be on duty at all times. Each was cross-trained in the other department's policies and procedures. A third operator would be added at busy periods. In case of major disaster or enemy attack, the staff could be expanded quickly by civilian defense forces."
- **1959 – BREATHALYZER:** As the DUI problem grew, new mechanisms were developed to assist law enforcement officers. While the blood test was still used, the simpler and faster Breathalyzer was purchased in 1959 and replaced blood tests in court in March 1960.
- **1960 – FIRE-POLICE CADET PROGRAM:** August 1-In an effort to recruit for the fire and police departments, a program for young men 18-21 was approved. In the Police Department the cadets would assist in the Records Division; work in Communications; assist the jailer; assist the Traffic Division with clerical duties and other duties. They would also receive classroom and in-service training. Starting pay was \$240 per month. Several men who started as cadets continued with the Department until retirement. The program was phased out in the early 70's and revised with very similar guidelines in 2000.
- **1963 – CANINE UNIT:** Two K9 officers began patrol in March of 1963.
- **1963 – PHOTO LAB:** January 21- A color photo printing lab was approved for the Police

Department at a cost of \$4,230. It was installed on the second floor north wing, of City Hall.

- **1965 – INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND INTELLIGENCE:** 1965 saw Internal Affairs and Intelligence under Sergeant M.A. Robertson begin. Through a federal grant, a Community Services Unit began.
- **1966 – JAIL: POLICE ADMINISTRATION TAKES OVER OLD JAIL SPACE IN CITY HALL:** June 20- With the move of some departments to the Government Center and the construction of a new county jail, a proposal was presented to renovate the ground and third floors of City Hall at a cost of \$25,170. The renovated space would be used by Police Administration in the north wing (formerly the jail), the Planning Board and Public Works in the south wing.
- **1970 – POLICE ATTORNEY:** September 27- Attorney George Cleland was hired to the full time position of Police attorney. His job was to advise the department on all legal matters, defend police officers in court and to teach basic law to entrance level recruits. Cleland would return to private practice in 1974.

The police attorney became Public Safety Legal Advisor and Larry Jones, A Washington and Lee University Law School Graduate who had not passed the bar was appointed on August 16. He left in November 1976 to be replaced by Mary Claire McNaught, a practicing attorney.

McNaught would serve until 2000 when she retired. The position had evolved during her tenure. While she still taught entrance level and in-service legal, she was the Chief's legal advisor more than the officer. In the ever changing lawsuit world, McNaught saw her position as the chief's confident and advisor, especially under George Sweat. She was followed by Julie Richer in 2001.

- **1975 – TEAM POLICING:** Chief Surratt pushed the new law enforcement concept of the 1970's known as "Team Policing."

On January 20- The Police Department applied for and received a \$179,000 federal grant to implement "Neighborhood Team Policing Concept." At that same meeting the Alderman approved renovations to the Harris Home Center on Cassell St. for use by the Police as part of the Team Policing Concept.

- **1977 – TV EQUIPMENT PURCHASED:** A Grant for \$13,300 from the Governors Highway Safety Commission for video tape equipment was approved. (90-256) Bids were open on August 15 for:

1 portable camera	\$3,373
1 portable recorder	\$2,327
2 color monitors	\$1,230
1 editor/recorder	\$4,855
1 video player	\$1,134
1 character generator	\$2,500

This equipment would be used for training and crime scene documentation for the Police. It was the beginning of a video division of the city training division and was the basis for equipment and personnel for the city government television channel which came on cable channel in 1989.

- **1983 – PUBLIC SAFETY CENTER:** The long awaited Public Safety Headquarters building began to take shape in the summer of 1983. The new facility was to house fire and police administration, communications, records, training and the field and investigative services division. It would bring the department back under one roof for the first time in almost 15 years. Before it was finished, Powell resigned to enter private business.

Cost overruns and frustrating construction delays pushed the move to the public safety center back to January of 1985. The building was formally dedicated on March 29. N.C. Attorney General Lacy H. Thornburg was the dedicatory speaker.

"Obviously, much vision, determination and hard work were necessary to see to it this building went from concept to reality. It is a very handsome structure, as everyone can see, but

there's far more to it than just bricks and mortar: It's a powerful symbol of what is best about government." The building project cost came to \$5,700,535. It was completed without issuing Revenue bonds. The major problem was that the department completely filled the building when they moved in. There was no room for the inevitable growth.

- **1986 – VICTIM SERVICES UNIT:** February 17- Victim Services Unit approved within the Police Department; initially using funds from the Governor's Crime Commission
- **1987 – END OF PUBLIC SAFETY:** Almost since it was implemented in 1973, the Public Safety Officer concept was beset with detractors. No one who worked in it really liked it. Its promoters were City management who saw it as a great money saver with fewer men in fire stations awaiting a fire call, and in theory, more men on the street to fight crime. Firefighters were used to working as a team and when one or two team members changed constantly, it added to the stress. Police resented the fact that after a fire, firefighters could go to the station and rest while they had to return to law enforcement duties.

Several cities across the country had tried it in various forms. Locally, Durham seemed to have the most success. By the mid-eighties almost all had returned to traditional fire and police roles.

In June of 1986 the subject came up again and this time the Aldermen asked for a study to determine the cost to return to traditional roles and how soon it could be done. In November the Board voted unanimously to scrap the system as soon as possible.

By February of 1987, the plan to hire enough firefighters to give the stations full compliments was in place. Money to pay them was approved in the 1987-88 budget. Upon the graduation of the firefighters from basic training in November 1987, public safety quietly died. Police officers turned in the fire gear- boots, helmet, turnout pants, fire coats and gloves- they had lugged to the trunk of patrol cars for many years. Eight hours of fire training was retained in basic training so police officers would know what to do to assist the firefighters in a catastrophe.

Only a few police officers had resisted the efforts to make them firefighters. Most had volunteered to take the training and it was required of all incoming recruits from 1973 until 1987. It was obvious that the way to promotion was through public safety. No "police" officers were promoted to Sergeant during the Public Safety era.

- **1990 – D.A.R.E. PROGRAM:** August 20- The Police Department received approval to begin the D.A.R.E. program in elementary schools.
- **1993 – MOUNTED PATROL:** The mounted unit was phased out completely in 2000 and replaced with officers on bicycles.
- **1999 – FIRST FEMALE POLICE CHIEF:** In late 1998, Assistant Chief's, Linda Davis had retired. Davis had joined the department in 1966 as a secretary for then Major Thomas Surratt. Eighteen months later she transferred to the patrol division and completed the police rookie school. While she was not the first woman in patrol, (that was Bobbie Burcham who had transferred to patrol from the traffic division where she had been hired as a meter maid), Retiring in 1998, Davis was lured back as interim chief the following year when Chief **George Sweat** left to head the state Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Davis's appointment was soon made permanent...

Davis was the first to enter the sworn ranks through the patrol division. City Manager Stuart asked her to come out of retirement to become the City's twelfth Chief. During her four years she made a number of promotions...advanced the use of computer terminals in cars and oversaw the development and implementation of a departmental strategic plan. She retired as Chief on February 28, 2004.

