



Hawthorne Police Department
445 Lafayette Avenue
Hawthorne, New Jersey 07506
Headquarters 973-427-1800



HISTORY OF THE HAWTHORNE POLICE DEPARTMENT

In preparing a history of the type of law enforcement in force in Hawthorne over the many years, we could find no record prior to the incorporation of Hawthorne as a "Borough" by the New Jersey Legislature, March 24, 1898, Chapter 105, Public Laws of 1898. The first election for a Mayor and six Councilmen was held at Nelke's Hotel, with 314 citizens listed in the pollbook as qualified to vote.

At the first regular meeting held on April 26th, on the first floor of Lafayette School, now the Municipal building, the Council set up a Borough Court and appointed Ira L. Dubois as Recorder. To enforce the laws of the State of New Jersey and ordinances to be adopted by the Council, three marshals were appointed, Wallace H. Moore, William Holley, and John Blarney, with Wallace Moore as Chief Marshall. Each marshal was required to furnish a \$100 bond. As the population increased, additional marshals were appointed from time to time.

Additional duties assigned to the marshals were to impanel and return good and lawful men for juries, execute all writs, process all warrants, and collect unpaid poll and personal taxes. They were to do no wrong to any, but do right to all. Take none but lawful fees. Diligently and honestly, without fraud, deceit, oppression, favor or impartiality exercise and perform all services, acts and duties of said force.

The Council authorized the purchase of shields, billets, hand cuffs and chains for use by the marshals, the same to be the property of the Borough of Hawthorne. All such property to be placed in the hands of the Chief Marshall, he to give bond to the borough sufficient to cover same. Upon distribution of such property to each marshal, each marshal had to give cash bond or deposit sufficient to cover cost of articles left in his care by the Chief Marshall. Said cash bond to be returned when articles are returned to the Chief Marshall in good condition.

The Chief Marshall was directed to submit to the Council once a month, a written report on all arrests, by whom made and for what offense. On April 5, 1906 Richard Keefe, a Passaic County Court attendant, and a borough marshal since August 18, 1899, was appointed as Chief Marshall to succeed Wallace H. Moore.

With a change of government from Mayor and Council to the Commission form of Government under the Walsh Act, a Board of three Commissioners held their organization meeting September 19, 1911. Edward A. Johns was appointed as Recorder. Richard Keefe was continued as Chief Marshall and the appointment of fifteen marshals comprised the force. The minutes of the Board of Commissioners record that marshals were assigned to patrol duty at night at various times, and that they were also assigned to preserve the peace on two occasions when there was a labor dispute at an industrial plant. For this service they were paid the sum of *twenty-five cents* an hour.

An April 4, 1913, the Board of Commissioners adopted an ordinance, "An Ordinance to establish, equip and regulate a police department of the Borough of Hawthorne and adopting rules for its government". The rank of Richard Keefe was changed from Chief Marshall to that of Chief of Police. The department continued to consist of marshals. Each marshal was required to furnish a bond of \$500.00.

In April, 1917, with the United States at war with Germany, the Board of Commissioners appointed all volunteer firemen to also serve as marshals.

On October 30, 1918, Chief of Police Richard Keefe passed away. On June 4, 1919, Joseph Jowett, who also was a Passaic County Court attendant and a borough marshal was appointed Chief of Police to fill the vacancy due to the death of Richard Keefe. Borough Marshall John Clark was selected as Assistant Chief of Police, together with the appointment of twenty-two marshals. On January 7, 1920, the Chief of Police, although a part time position, was placed on an annual salary of \$240.00.

At the organization meeting of the Board of Commissioners, May 16, 1923, Commissioner Arthur Rhodes was designated as Director of Public Safety. Joseph Jowett was continued on as Chief of Police and forty-two marshals were appointed.

To get around the Hershfield Revolver Act, which prohibited marshals carrying firearms, the Board of Commissioners on October 31, 1924 amended the police department ordinance designating all marshals as police officers. There was also created the rank and appointment of three captains, two lieutenants, two sergeants and a physical instructor, and sixty-seven patrolmen. Later one captain and one lieutenant and several patrolmen were transferred to a plain-clothes unit within the department. All officers and patrolmen to serve during the term of the commissioners. On a rotation basis, the men of the department performed traffic duty on Sundays and holidays by manual operation of Stop and Go signals placed at three intersections along Goffle Road, and at Lafayette and Rea Avenue. Two second-hand motorcycles were purchased by the borough for borough-wide patrol. Some of the men were also on duty in the evening. Uniforms and equipment were furnished by the men themselves from proceeds from dances conducted by the Hawthorne Police Protective Association.

On October 29, 1926 a police headquarters was set up in the vacated one room school house building located on Goffle Road, north of Goffle Hill Road, taken over by the borough from the Board of Education. The equipment consisted of a police desk, chairs, telephone, and a pot stove for heat in the winter. The building was also used for holding Recorder Court sessions.

As the result of a municipal election, three Commissioners took office May 17, 1927. Harold P. Schoonmaker was appointed Recorder, and thirty-seven special police officers were appointed to replace those who had served in the previous administration. Patrolman John Chrisbacher was appointed as a full time school crossing guard.

On July 11, 1928, an ordinance which had been introduced by Director of Public Safety Peter Mason was adopted by the Board of Commissioners creating a full time paid police department.

Appointed were five men who had been serving as special police officers, Ryan Vandervalk, Chief of Police; John Chrisbacher, Captain; Nathan Danielson, Lieutenant; Leslie I. Henion, Patrolman and later made Captain, and John Holmes, Patrolman. The department commenced operations August 1, 1928, in the one room former schoolhouse building opposite the present pumping station but since torn down. The equipment consisted of a second hand motorcycle and a telephone. All records and police blotter in use by the former part time department had been taken away. In order to provide the public with a continuous

twenty-four hour police service, the men were divided into two twelve hour shifts, with each man granted one day a month off. To fill in special policemen were assigned to duty, Sundays, Holidays and Saturday evenings. The following February, 1929, Patrolman Robert Rollo and in April, 1929, Patrolman Joseph Putz, later made a Captain, were added to the department. With seven men on full time duty, the operation of the department was divided into three eight hour shifts.

As the result of a Special Election held September 4, 1929, Arthur Rhodes was returned to office to replace Commissioner Peter Mason as Commissioner and Director of Public Safety. During his term a Ford two-door sedan was added to the equipment for use in patrol work.

With a change of administration in May, 1931, Commissioner John Houman was designated as Director of Public Safety. During his term of office, a manual of Rules and Regulations covering the duties of all police officers and procedures of operations of the department was adopted on June 24, 1931. In April, 1933, with the consent of the Bergen County Police Department, a one-way police radio receiver was installed in the police car and at police headquarters, and hooked up with their police radio network, the first such means of communication in Passaic County. In September 1931, Charles F. Kenyon was appointed a patrolman. He was later promoted to sergeant and captain. On March 1, 1962, upon the retirement of Chief Ryan Vandervalk on pension, he was promoted to Chief.

Upon arrangements with the Peoples Bank of Hawthorne, police headquarters was moved to their *vacant* bank building, January 1, 1936, located at Lafayette and Garfield Avenues. One half of the building was set up with a police desk, office for Chief of Police, record room and a cell. The other half was set up as a Records Court Room and magistrate chambers.

At the general election in November, 1936, the voters approved a pension system for members of the uniform force, to take effect January 1, 1937.

The police ordinance was amended that in all appointments, the applicant must first undergo a physical examination by the Police Surgeon, and a written and oral test by a Police Examining Board consisting of the Director of Public Safety, the Chief of Police, the Superintendent of Schools, the Police Surgeon and a citizen of the borough not holding office in the municipality. In June, 1937, Joseph Snyder was appointed a patrolman, and in 1962 made a Lieutenant, and in 1963 made a Captain, and James Van Voorhies was appointed as a civilian police clerk and assigned to the record file room.

All police officers were instructed in all phases of first aid and a first aid kit placed in each patrol car. A camera unit was purchased for use in mugging prisoners and taking photographs of traffic accidents and crime scenes. Another police car was added to the patrol equipment and each car equipped with a machine and riot, and tear gas guns. A master fire alarm unit was installed at police headquarters enabling the officer at the desk on telephone call to sound any box in the borough.

At the invitation of John Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Chief of Police underwent a course of training in Police Administration, scientific investigative techniques, photography, and fingerprint classification, and identification, for three months, January, February, and March of 1938, at the F.B.I. Police Academy in Washington. Upon return to the borough a dark room was installed for processing and printing films, and a classification identification and file system adopted.

With the resignation of Commissioner Houman February 1, 1938, Joseph Harrison was appointed to fill the vacancy and designated as Director of Public Safety. During his term of office the record file system was modernized to conform to the uniform record and crime reporting system set up by the International

Association of Chiefs of Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This was made possible by engaging personnel from the Works Progress Administration.

September 1, 1939 the department installed its own two-way police radio communication system. This permitted the officer at the desk and the car on patrol to be in constant contact with each other. With seventy per cent of all fire alarms sounded from police headquarters it enabled the officer on patrol to direct the firemen to the exact scene of the fire.

In 1939, at the request of the Passaic County Police Chiefs Association to the Board of Chosen Freeholders, a teletype receiver, hooked up with a twelve state alarm system, as installed in seven other police departments throughout the county, was installed in the department, with Paterson Police as the key sending station. This service is now individualized by departments, with communications to all fifty states. The expense of the rental of this equipment is a shared expense between the department, the New Jersey State Police and the Federal Government, through grants awarded to the New Jersey State Police.

With the United States entering the war in December 7, 1941, the department became a part of the local Civil Defense. An auxiliary police force was organized consisting of some ninety men, equipped and trained to be ready for any emergency. As a means of identification, fingerprints were taken of some two thousands local citizens engaged in our civil defense. Fingerprints were also taken of some three thousand school children. During the course of the war fingerprints were taken of all employees working in two local plants engaged in defense work, together with all those who made application for employment. Some two hundred ninety-nine confidential investigations were conducted for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Intelligence Divisions of the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine and Air Corps.

With a change of administration in the election held in May 1943, Mayor Louis Bay 2nd, was designated as Director of Public Safety to take the place of Commissioner Joseph Harrison who did not run for reelection.

During his tenure to date much progress has been made in the efficiency of the department. Each patrolman upon being appointed to the department must undergo six weeks of basic training before being assigned to regular duty.

All members of the department have from time to time attended refresher courses in investigative techniques, special courses in photography, and fingerprint identification and schools for superior officers. The instructors were from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New Jersey State Police.

Since Civil Defense and Disaster Control was reactivated in 1950, an efficient auxiliary police unit of seventy-five civilians was recruited, trained and uniform equipped, always ready to assist in case our nation should be subject to an air raid, or a disaster due to natural causes, or where a large number of men is necessary to regulate traffic.

On March 1, 1952 the department moved to more modern quarters in the present Municipal Building location. It included two modern equipped cells, identification and dark room, and is fully equipped for mugging prisoners, taking fingerprints, enlarging photographs, processing and printing films, investigative kit, photostat machine. A record room with a modern record file cabinet unit sufficient to file records for the next 25 years. An officers locker room and space to make up reports. Equipment to make ammunition for use in firearms practice to keep each officer proficient in the use of firearms.

The police department received a new headquarters as a result of fire that destroyed Borough Hall in the late 1970's, a facility that was subsequently upgraded in 2012 to meet current standards.

In recent years, the department has taken advantage of technological advances by making use of computer-aided dispatching, computers in police cars, electronic fingerprinting and e-ticketing.

In May, 2013, the Department received accreditation by from the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police. This accreditation acknowledges the Department's implementation of policies and procedures that are conceptually sound and operationally effective, meeting 112 standards for professional law enforcement operations.

The Hawthorne Police Department remains one of the finest and most respected police departments in North Jersey.