

THE PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF POLICE: SOME HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

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HAVE the people of Pittsburgh deserved a better police force than they have had over the years, or have they had a better police force than they deserve? This is a question that readers may wish to ponder as they examine some points of historical interest in the development of the police force of the city of Pittsburgh.

The history of a police function in the Pittsburgh area dates back to the days of Pitt Township.¹ Pitt Township had a constable who was called upon to make a report of his district at each term of court at Hannastown. He was the one official in the area with the power to arrest. When Pittsburgh was incorporated as a borough in 1794, the position of constable was carried forward with the establishment of the office of High Constable. No assistant constables were provided for at the incorporation which must be taken as an indication of a lack of police business at this time. The constable's duties were largely confined to civil matters. It is difficult to imagine today that Pittsburgh, at this time (1794), was but a small plot of territory. The limits of the borough were Grant Street on the east and Eleventh Street on the north. It had a population of about a thousand.

The first suggestion of anything like a police force is contained in a series of recommendations by the borough's retiring burgesses to their successors.² The time is 1802. The incoming burgesses were

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1 " . . . Pitt Township: Beginning at the mouth of Pockety's Run; thence up the Allegheny river and by the line of the county to Flaherty's Run; thence up the Ohio River to the mouth of the Monongahela River; thence up the said river to the mouth of Turtle Creek; thence up Turtle Creek to the mouth of Brush Creek; thence by the line of Plumb Creek to the place of beginning." — *Colonial Records*, XVI, 149.

2 Henry Mann, *Our Police and Firemen* (Pittsburgh, 1889), 48. The Mann book is a treasure of information on the early police function of Pittsburgh — one of the few such sources — and it is highly recommended for the reader interested in a detailed account of police happenings in the 1800's. Henry Mann, an author and editorial writer, spending most of his time in New York City, came to Pittsburgh in 1889 to do a concentrated study of the Pittsburgh police. He gratefully acknowledged the cooperation of local papers and the Pittsburgh Library Association.

admonished that there were a growing number of complaints of a police nature on the part of citizens and it was urged that the new city officials give some thought to establishing a patrol force for the city. It was pointed out that Philadelphia, faced with similar problems, had allocated funds to hire constables to patrol the streets. If Philadelphia could do this, why not Pittsburgh?

The police problems of the early 1800's have a familiar ring. Then, as now, there seems to have been a problem of juvenile delinquency. The recommendations of the burgesses in 1802 referred to the "frequent complaints on the subjects of boys and other disorderly persons disrupting the public peace on Sundays." There were also complaints about the "indecent practice of bathing publicly in daylight."

In 1803 there was a petition by John Woods, Zadok Cramer, E. Denny, William Gazzam, George Robinson, Robert McCune and Hugh Scott to take up at a general town meeting the matter of policing the borough. Attention was called to the grave danger caused by those persons who galloped their horses through the streets at high rates of speed. Burgess Presley Neville, in 1804, expressed concern over the matter of disorderly houses.³ Significantly, in the light of today's police problems, there also was concern by civic leaders in these early times about public apathy. The petitioners referred to above noted "that as things stand now, there are few people who will take the trouble to follow up and prosecute for these breaches of the law."

In spite of the fact that the seed for some type of formal policing seems to have been planted around this time, there was apparently not sufficient public support for such a function. The only noted change was to place upon the High Constable the duty of patrolling the streets on Sunday. For this task he received \$25.50 a year.

The Act of Assembly of March 4, 1816, establishing Pittsburgh as a city, did not specifically provide for a police force. However, under the corporation's general powers the Select and Common Councils did have the authority to appoint law officers. In an August 24, 1816, ordinance, Council chose to exercise this authority and provided for a night watch.⁴ Three hundred dollars a year was allocated for this municipal function.

Under the provisions of this ordinance, a captain of the watch and twelve night watchmen were appointed and charged with caring for the oil, wicks, and utensils belonging to the city. They were empowered to

³ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴ Ordinance of the Select and Common Councils of the City of Pittsburgh, August 24, 1816, Ordinance Book A-1, 11-12.

arrest all persons disturbing the peace or engaged in "any unlawful or evil design, or drunken and disorderly." A principal function of this first night watch was to alert the town (population now about 10,000) in case of fire. With this number of people now living closely together in highly inflammable structures, fire was one of the municipality's greatest concerns.⁵

Any watchman failing in his duty was to be fined \$20 and dismissed. The superintendent of the watch, for similar misconduct, was liable to a fine of \$40 and dismissal. A penalty of \$5 was also provided for any person who dared to mock or mimic the watchmen in any way.

This first night watch had no sooner been established than the city repealed its earlier ordinance and abandoned this force — March 5, 1817.⁶ The difficult financial plight of the city prompted this action. The general public, too, most of them hard-pressed financially, began to question the spending of \$300 of tax money on such a frivolous activity as the night watch. The city government easily bowed to this pressure. (The city's taxing power at this time was limited to five mills.)

The policing of Pittsburgh for the next several years was to remain a function of the High Constable and his two-to-four assistants. A letter in 1833 to the Select and Common Councils from Samuel Pettigrew, President of the Sanitary Board of the city, again called attention to the inadequacy of the constables in dealing with the damage to property within the city and to "the outrageous conduct of many individuals during the night." He recommended appointment of a secret night watch, which recommendation was approved.⁷

The appointment of watchmen appears to have been an off again, on again affair until 1836.⁸ Finally, an ordinance of April 5, 1836, firmly established a night watch for Pittsburgh under the supervision of a Police Committee composed of members of both Councils. The ordinance provided for a captain of the watch, two lieutenants, and sixteen watchmen.

⁵ John Newton Boucher, *A Century and a Half of Pittsburgh and Her People* (Lewis Publishing Co., 1908), II, 342.

⁶ Ordinance of the Select and Common Councils of Pittsburgh, March 5, 1817, Ordinance Book A-1, 42.

⁷ Minutes of the Select and Common Councils of Pittsburgh, January 28, 1833. In Archives of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, hereinafter noted as HSWP. The Historical Society, in its Archives, has records of the City of Pittsburgh, largely minutes of council meetings, from 1830 to 1930. (No record was found of any "secret" watch in actual operation.)

⁸ For example, there is a letter to the Councils from four officers, dated November 29, 1832, in which they reminded Councils that they had received no pay for their police duties. HSWP.

The police have, from early times, seemingly been underpaid, overworked, and their function misunderstood. This plight is quite succinctly stated in a letter from the sixteen night watchmen to the City Councils in 1836:

We the undersigned members of the night watch of this city . . . inform your Honorable body that we have been duly organized as a corps of watchmen for this city and have endeavoured to fulfill our duties . . . as far as in our power and that in the fulfillment of the same to justify ourselves and do justice to our fellow citizens . . . We do know by experience already that it requires us to make use of our whole time in walking by night and resting from manual labor by day . . . We have also found that the wages of 20 dollars a month is insufficient to maintain us without employing ourselves part of the day in labor. This needs not to be explained farther than to look at our house rents, provisions, clothing, fuel

We therefore ask your Honorable body that you give us a reasonable advance in our wages sufficient to maintain us. We further state that if your Honorable body does not think it expedient to accede to our request we will be under the necessity of leaving our several charges on the first of May next.⁹

The Councils concurred in this request and wages were eventually raised to \$26 a month. The police budget of the city in 1836 was \$8,230.69.

The watchmen again petitioned the Councils for a raise in 1844.

We the undersigned members of the Night Police would respectfully ask . . . that our salaries may be advanced from its present amount which is \$26 a month to \$30 per month. In asking the above advance we would state to you that our duty is more toilsome now than it was before our salaries were reduced, in as much as our beats now extend over the whole ward and the number of lamps which each of us have charge of now are 20 when formerly it was only 7 and 8¹⁰

Watchmen were able to supplement their pay under a policy which allowed them 60 cents additional for every arrest resulting in conviction. The policy created quite some rivalry within the force and apparently some unfortunate arrests on the part of eager officers. Since those patrolling the central part of the city often made as much as \$25 additional by their arrests while those on the outer beats were fortunate to make \$5, there was great competition for the central beats. (About ninety per cent of all criminal activity in the 1800's occurred in Pittsburgh's central business district.)

The night watchmen operated from a series of watch houses around the city, four-by-five feet in size. These houses served as the post for each watchman as well as his shelter during severe weather.

⁹ Letter to the Select and Common Councils of Pittsburgh, April 26, 1836. HSWP.

¹⁰ Letter to the Select and Common Councils of Pittsburgh, January 29, 1844, signed by 16 watchmen. The Common Council referred the matter to the Police Committee; the Select Council tabled the request. HSWP.

They were also used to lock up prisoners until they could be taken to "Mount Airy," as the jail on Grant's Hill was called.

The city's watchmen in these early years wore no distinguishing uniforms. They carried no weapons, only sticks or clubs about two or three feet long. Their beats were not extensive. For example, one beat was from Market to Ferry Street, another from Fourth Avenue to the river, and another from Market to Wood Street. Captain William Reed, who served as a watchman during these early years, related to Henry Mann (see footnote No. 2) the communications procedure during the time of the first established watch. When a watchman wished to know where his fellow watchman was, he gave three raps on the pavement; the reply was one rap, and then the first fellow answered with another rap. This was an indication that everything was in order. A lieutenant, making his rounds, gave two raps and the policeman answered with one rap. If the lieutenant wished the policeman to come to him, he rapped again.

Watchmen were also charged with the duty of calling out the hour of the day and also the weather conditions: "one o'clock and a starlight morning" or "one o'clock and a cloudy morning." This they did from 10 o'clock at night until 4 or 6 o'clock in the morning, depending on the time of the year. The City Council, around 1845, attempted to discontinue the practice of calling the weather and the time but met with such public opposition that the practice was reinstated. It was apparently reassuring to citizens to know where the watchmen were in case of need and it also assured citizens that this "police force" was not sleeping on the job, squandering the public funds.

No account of the early history of the Pittsburgh Police Bureau would be complete without a passing reference to the very difficult position of the city's watchmen during the term of Mayor Joseph Barker. Barker is the only mayor in the city's history to be elected (1850) while serving out a prison term in the County Jail. He was among the most prominent of a series of street preachers dominating the city during the 1840's and had found himself in trouble with the law off and on. In November 1849, during one of his more intemperate harangues, he found himself indicted for obstructing the streets, using obscene language, and causing a riot. He was sentenced to a year in prison.¹¹ But his trial made him even more of a hero to his followers

¹¹ Allen Humphries Kerr, *The Mayors and Recorders of Pittsburgh: 1816-1951 — Their Lives and Somewhat of Their Times*, unpublished manuscript, Historical Society of W. Pa., 1952, 79-80. Mr. Kerr provides a quite vivid picture of the term of Mayor Barker, relying heavily on newspaper accounts of the time.

and he was put up as a candidate for mayor. Not many took his candidacy seriously. After all, noted *The Chronicle*, "people generally know him and we are willing to leave him in their hands." Since no one did take his candidacy seriously, he won. In the language of *The Gazette*, "It was astonishing."

The situation would have been even more astonishing (and difficult) had Governor Johnson not come through with a pardon for Barker after his election. And the city fathers, apparently finding some humor in the whole situation, invited the sentencing judge, Benjamin Patton, to administer the oath of office to the mayor-elect.¹²

The term of Mayor Barker, however, was not a humorous one for the police. Barker soon found himself embroiled in a dispute with the Police Committee of the Select and Common Councils. Witness the following excerpt from *The Gazette*:

Gross outrage — Mayor Barker accompanied by some of his myrmidons went yesterday evening to the room of the Select Council where the Police Committee was holding a meeting and entering it, ordered the following gentlemen, Messrs. William Shore, William Day, Benjamin Lutton, Robert McKean, and C. Yeager (the members of the Committee) together with Mr. John Major, the clerk, to be arrested. They were dragged to the Mayor's office where they were compelled to endure such contumacious language that two of the gentlemen informed us that the Mayor shook and struck them. Barker says that they had been conspiring against him (alluding to the proposed ordinance abolishing the night police) and threatens to have all the members of Council in jail today. After subjecting them to the farce of an examination, he ordered them committed to prison for further hearing until 10 o'clock this morning. Bail amount was, of course, offered but he regarded the offence which he says they committed as being so heinous in nature as not to be bailable. Barker ordered Captain Roberts, late of the night police who was discharged by him and reinstated by the Police Committee, to be arrested also. He called him a thief and other choice terms and ordered him to be forthwith taken to jail which was at once done. As, however, he had forgotten to send a commitment, the Captain was discharged. He went up to the jail a short time afterwards and found all of the prisoners making themselves as comfortable as the circumstances of the case would admit. The jailer's office was crowded and lawyer's writs of *habeas corpus* were at once sued out. Whether at this late hour of the night at which we write any of the judges can be found admits us some doubt . . . Since reporting the above, all of the gentlemen who had been committed were discharged on giving bail in the sum of \$1,000 for their appearance at 10 o'clock this morning. Suits will at once be entered against the Mayor . . .¹³

The issues became so sharp between the Mayor and the Police Committee that the watchmen had to make a choice: obey the orders of the Police Committee or obey the Mayor. The watchmen chose to side with the Police Committee, whereupon the Mayor organized his own police force. There were, then, two police forces patrolling the city during this time in history, fighting one another. Several more

¹² *Ibid.*, 83; Mann, 85-86.

¹³ *The Gazette*, October 2, 1850.

suits were brought against Mayor Barker and finally a truce was reached. The Mayor's men took care of the lamps; the other watchmen marched around the city, as a body, attending to the routine police business of preserving the peace and arresting perpetrators. The question of authority was finally taken to the courts, and the Police Committee was upheld. Henry Mann, in his book, notes that the Mayor's police force received no compensation for all their work.

The city's continuous growth, both in population and territory,¹⁴ brought with it an increase in crime and disorder with which the small night watch was unable adequately to cope. Mayor John B. Guthrie, in 1851, informed the Select and Common Councils that he had, under powers granted in the April 5, 1836, ordinance, and with the approval of the Police Committee, appointed nineteen additional watchmen. He urged the Councils to consider raising the size of the force to seventy-five, saying that "the lives and property of our citizens are more deserving of greater consideration than many other objects on which large sums of money are expended."¹⁵ A communication to the Councils by the Police Committee also referred to the alarming increase in robberies and property destruction and urged the Councils to increase the night watch "at least in the same ratio as the increase in population and territory in and to our city."¹⁶

The Police Committee, also in the early 1850's, urged the Councils to appropriate funds for the construction of two Lock-up Houses, one on the rear of the Good Intent Engine Lot on Wylie Street in the Sixth Ward, and another on the rear of the Niagara Engine Lot in the Fifth Ward. The Committee noted that "officers on duty in those remote parts of the city from the Mayor's office are compelled to be absent from their beats for a great proportion of the night when conveying prisoners to the tombs . . ."¹⁷ Councils approved the Committee's request and appropriated \$700 for the construction (February 24, 1851).

The growing need for police protection in Pittsburgh finally resulted in the establishment of a Police Department in 1857 under the direction of a Chief of Police, its members to be known as "officers."¹⁸

¹⁴ Pittsburgh's population in 1850 was 36,601.

¹⁵ Letter from Mayor John B. Guthrie to the Select and Common Councils, February 24, 1851. HSWP.

¹⁶ Undated Letter (between 1851 and 1853) from the Police Committee to the Select and Common Councils. HSWP.

¹⁷ Letter from the Police Committee to the Select and Common Councils, February 24, 1851. HSWP.

¹⁸ December 19, 1857, Ordinance of the Select and Common Councils. State legislation earlier that year (1857 Pa. P.L. 541) established that Pittsburgh should provide for an efficient day and night watch.

Mayor H. A. Weaver appointed Robert Hague as the first police chief. The creating ordinance called for a permanent day force, in addition to the night watch, although the two forces were considered separate. A day policeman received \$50 a month and a night watchman, \$2 a night. The salary of the Chief was established at \$1,000 a year. Apparently these wages were considered sufficiently adequate to allow the Councils to decree in 1862 that policemen not engage in any outside business in order that they might perform their police duties more efficiently.

On January 7, 1868, during the term of Mayor James Blackmore, the day and night police forces were combined. This action gave Pittsburgh its first Police Department in the true sense of the word. The 1868 ordinance gave the mayor a stronger voice in appointments to the force. Although his appointments were subject to approval by the Police Committee of the Councils, he could continue to nominate members to the force until the requisite number had been confirmed. He had the power to suspend up to ten days and could dismiss without cause. It should be underscored — for it is important in the history of the police force — that police officers had little in the way of security. They served at the will of the mayor, and early records confirm that it was not unusual to see an almost complete turnover of the force at each mayoralty election. The practice continued until the police were placed under civil service in 1907,¹⁹ but even civil service, in its early years, did not save the force from political interference.

The tables below summarize, for the next nineteen years (through 1887), information as to the size of the police force and the names of police chiefs during this period.*

TABLE 1
POLICE STRENGTH
PITTSBURGH POLICE DEPT.
1868-1887

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number Policemen*</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1868 | 109 |
| 1869 | 122 |
| 1870 | 134 |
| 1872 | 165 |
| 1873 | 216 |
| 1874 | 236 |
| 1877 | 120 |
| 1887 | 250 |

*Mann, 99-101, 140

TABLE 2
POLICE CHIEFS
CITY OF PITTSBURGH
1868-1887

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Chief of Police*</i> |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1868-69 | Matthew J. Green |
| 1869-72 | Robert Hague |
| 1872-75 | John Irwin |
| 1875-76 | James McCandless |
| 1876-77 | W. M. Hartzell |
| 1877-78 | Philip Demmel |
| 1878-79 | Robert Hague |
| 1879-81 | Thomas A. Pender |
| 1881-83 | J. P. Hersel |
| 1884 | L. G. Brown |
| 1885-86 | T. A. Blackmore |
| 1887 | N. S. Brokaw |

*Mann, 101, 139

There was apparently an effort to formalize police procedures after the 1868 reorganization. Applicants to the force, for the first time, were required to submit a formal application stating their name and address, occupation, place of birth, age, height, and the length of time as a Pittsburgh resident. The application was to be accompanied by reference letters of six respectable citizens attesting to the candidate's good moral character, his integrity, his correct and orderly deportment, his sobriety, industriousness, and his fitness to be a policeman by temper, habits and manner. The applicant also had to answer the question, "Have you paid, or promised to pay or give any money or other consideration to any person, directly or indirectly, for any aid or influence towards procuring your appointment?" The answer had to be supported by an oath or affirmation.²⁰

The chief of police was charged with the overall direction of the force and reported directly to the mayor. The captain was required to keep a record of, and make a report to the gas company, of the hours of lighting public lamps and the number of hours the gas had been burned. He also certified to the city controller the number of hours worked by each police officer. Lieutenants kept a daily record of all complaints and crime in the city. They submitted daily reports to the mayor showing the disposition of each case. Patrolmen were responsible for the general preservation of the peace and the lighting and extinguishing of public lamps. They were also required to take action against any person "wasting water flowing through the city water pipes." Patrolmen were also directly charged with taking action against gamblers, extortionists, prostitutes, any one abusing his family, pickpockets, rioters — in short, all the many forms of crime and disorder that are still prevalent today.

It was during this period — 1874 — that the city began to provide uniforms for its police force.

The 1868 to 1887 era is perhaps highlighted by the great railroad strike in July 1877. From a police point-of-view, the strike is significant mainly because of the inability of the force effectively to control the riots. It is almost uncanny that the city, under Mayor William McCarthy, chose June of this year to reduce the size of the police force to 120 — almost a fifty per cent cut. The action was attributed to the heavy indebtedness of the city resulting from an extensive program of general public improvements. The result was the almost complete abolition of the day force. When the riots broke out the morning of

²⁰ Mann, 100.

July 19, only nine policemen were on duty in the city.²¹ It was to be almost ten years before the Pittsburgh Police Department regained its pre-1877 strength.

Prior to 1887, the city of Pittsburgh was governed largely by committees of the Select and Common Councils. State legislation of this year permitted a regrouping of responsibility for various governmental functions in city departments whose heads were directly responsible to the mayor. Among the departments established was the Department of Public Safety which was charged with administering police and fire affairs, public health, city telegraphs, and building inspection.²² The city's implementing ordinance established under the Director of Public Safety, a Bureau of Police with a Superintendent of Police (at \$200 a month), one assistant superintendent (\$125 a month), three inspectors (\$110 a month), five captains (\$100 a month), ten lieutenants (\$3 a day), twenty sergeants (\$2.75 a day), and 210 patrolmen (\$2.50 a day).

The first Director of Public Safety was Joseph Owen Brown — teacher and lawyer and one-time City Prothonotary.²³ Under his direction, the Police Bureau blossomed into an efficient and effective law enforcement agency. That it did so must be attributed to the apparent administrative skill of Director Brown, his unqualified interest in the police force, and to the political forces which brought him to this important post.

J. O. Brown was a protégé of William Flinn who, with Christopher L. Magee, held the monopoly of political power in the city. The fact that he had the support of the political bosses gave him certain advantages in instituting new policies and procedures, particularly so since Flinn and Magee had come out in favor of "cleaning-up" the city.²⁴ Brown's strong political position also accounts for his long tenure in office — until 1901 — allowing him to see many of his plans through to fruition. That many of his predecessors and successors had not the same good fortune is regrettable.

21 The city population was about 150,000 at this time.

22 City of Pittsburgh Ordinance of December 17, 1887, Ordinance Book 6, 227. The city's new Charter Act of March 7, 1901 (1901 Pa. P.L. 20) continued to provide for the Department of Public Safety.

23 Brown became Mayor of Pittsburgh (known then as Recorder) in 1901. He resigned March 16, 1903, and died shortly thereafter.

24 It is not possible properly to understand and evaluate the police function of a city without taking into account the lines of political power. Although this is a most interesting and important aspect of the history of the Pittsburgh Police, it is beyond the scope of this brief historical survey. Kerr, in *The Mayors and Records of Pittsburgh*, provides insights into the politics of the time.

Brown surrounded himself with an effective police superintendent, Gamble Weir, and assistant superintendent, Roger O'Mara, and swiftly clamped down on vice of all kinds, particularly gambling and disorderly houses. He organized his force effectively to cope with the gangs of hoodlums and criminals that had infested the city and was scarcely in office a year before the improvement in policing the city became so marked as to be a matter of general congratulations.²⁵

Brown brought an almost military discipline to the Police Bureau. A manual of rules and regulations was developed laying down procedures for all police ranks. Rule 5, for example, stipulated that the patrol of each beat was to be so thorough as to make it almost impossible for anyone to commit a crime. The absence of crime on each beat was to be the test of efficiency. There was to be no walking together or talking to people — especially females — unless strictly in the line of duty. There was to be no smoking or drinking on duty; only absolute truthfulness in every statement made by police; no vulgar or disrespectful language to any citizen; no unnecessary conversation in station houses about nationality, religion, or political party affiliation; and no unnecessary violence in subduing criminals.

Pittsburgh, for police purposes, was divided into three administrative districts and eight police precincts. The first (central city) district housed precincts one, two and three. The second district (East) also was divided into three precinct areas, and precincts seven and eight comprised the third police district. (The city at this time — the late 1880's — was just about 29 square miles in area.)

Pittsburgh's police stations were, from the beginning, makeshift affairs. One, for example, was a converted liquor store; another a grocery store. Under Brown's prompting, the city embarked on a building campaign, including a Public Safety Building at Sixth Avenue and Cherry Way (now William Penn Place) and three new station houses especially designed to meet police needs.²⁶ One of these was the Romanesque structure on Forbes Avenue between Bouquet Street and Oakland Avenue — now the Kings Court Theater. Another was built on Frankstown Avenue and the third on Forty-third Street.

An interesting and unique feature of two of the new stations was the inclusion of a police gymnasium on the third floor of each. Along with weekly close-order drill, Safety Director Brown placed great

²⁵ Kerr, 226-237. Kerr's account of Brown's performance is based largely on newspaper reports of the time.

²⁶ The city eventually sold the Public Safety Building to the Philadelphia Company.

emphasis on gymnastic training. Under a philosophy of "old men for counsel; young men for war," youth and strong physique were the order of the day. (The average age of police bureau personnel in 1888 was between 27 and 30.) According to Assistant Police Superintendent Roger O'Mara, police work required that a man be a good runner and that he be strong and have considerable endurance. Without these qualities "he is little more than a walking uniform." The stronger a man, the less likely he is to be required to use his club. Accordingly, a gymnastic trainer was hired (Thomas Sterck) who spent two days in each district giving instruction.

Policemen voluntarily contributed fifty cents a month to pay for gymnastic training; senior officers chipped in to buy the necessary equipment. The program, besides stressing good health and fellowship, had as its goals the quickening of an officer's reactions, the sharpening of his understanding, and the improvement of his manners and dress. Police Inspector John McAleese, in an interview with Henry Mann, commented upon the decided improvement in character and deportment.

The gymnastic program was apparently received with considerable enthusiasm — at least outward enthusiasm. It was made clear from the beginning, according to Mr. O'Mara, that if anyone felt the new training program too strenuous, he might as well resign. The police force was not to be a "walking hospital," according to the assistant superintendent!

But other things were happening in the police bureau. Electric street lights had come to Pittsburgh causing one police officer to comment that city vice would now have to go far to find a dark place. The police were relieved of much of their responsibility of caring for the city's gas lamps. The telephone, too, had come to the police bureau, and phones were, by the late 1880's, used to connect all police stations and police headquarters. One officer at each station was assigned the task of handling all phone calls.

Most significant to the police function at this time was the introduction of police patrol wagons and the installation of the Gamewell system. The Gamewell system is perhaps more readily identifiable in terms of the police call box system. The costly installation of the system and the necessary horses, and additional men to go with it, was provided for in a January 15, 1886, ordinance authorizing the Police Department to establish a system of police telephone and signal telegraph "for the purpose of more perfectly controlling the police force, and enabling prompt arrest of offenders against the law

and the conveyance of same to the police station." Council did not immediately provide the necessary funds for installing the system, and it did not become operational until December 1887.

There was great excitement to think that an officer, making an arrest, could go to one of "those little green boxes" on his beat, pick up a phone, and have a patrol wagon come "speeding" to his location to pick up the prisoner. During the first week of operation in the Central District, 136 wagon calls were made and there were 182 arrests. The average run made by the wagon was three-quarters of a mile and the total distance covered by the horses in the first week was eighty-five miles. Patrol wagons in the Central District carried three men; those in the other districts, two. Each wagon doubled as an ambulance and was equipped with a medicine chest containing spirits of ammonia, brandy, a box of mustard, bicarbonate of soda, gauze, adhesive plaster, etc.

As a point of interest, any citizen could secure a special key for the police call boxes, duly registered. However, if he used the police call box, he could not retrieve his key from the lock until a policeman came by with a release key.

Before leaving the Brown era, it should be mentioned that he strongly influenced the passage of pension bills in the State Legislature for the benefit of police and firemen and also an insurance tax bill, the proceeds of which went to these pension funds.²⁷

The combination of factors which brought the police operation in Pittsburgh to a new point of prestige was not soon again to be repeated.

The consolidation of Pittsburgh and the City of Allegheny in 1907 raised the city's population to over 500,000 and extended its territory to about 41 square miles. The number of police precinct areas was increased to eleven. Pittsburgh had become a metropolitan area; its population had grown complex and began to reflect the wide variety of social and economic backgrounds that have come to characterize urban areas. The onslaught of the automobile in the 1920's, the increasing mobility of suburbanites in and out of the city each day, the growing slums, the high density living, and highly professionalized syndicated crime organizations — all began to place a new burden on the city's police bureau in the early 1900's. The city was not prepared to respond in kind to the challenge.

To be sure, certain innovations did take place in police procedure.

²⁷ Kerr, 228.

Safety Director Frank Ridgeway, in 1906-7, introduced the police whistle as a signaling device for cornermen harassed with mounting traffic problems.²⁸ He introduced the mounted police patrol — The Black Horse Troop — which was not disbanded until January 1, 1954.²⁹ Even more significant was the gradual replacement of the horse-drawn wagons by the Model "T" in 1924 and the old "Blue Goose" Willys Knight touring cars a year or so later. The writer spoke with police officers who served on the force in the early 1900's and who remember driving these first cars.

By and large, however, the police force, during the first fifty years of the century, was not particularly attuned to the dynamics of population trends; the variable demands in criminal activity, traffic flow, and service; and the need for technical and professional knowledge. Just to mention a few examples:

1. There was little or no formal recruit training until 1950. "Take this baton and go forth and police the city" was the extent of most training.

2. There was no central records or central communications system until the 1950's.

3. Selection standards were not demanding. There were no educational requirements for police applicants until the late 1940's and then it was only eighth grade or the equivalent. (It remained eighth grade until 1960.) Applicants were required to pass a mental and physical examination, but provisional appointments without examinations continued to be prevalent as late as 1935.³⁰ A 1937 survey of the Pittsburgh Police Bureau commented on the worthlessness of police examinations at that time:

Informed sources state that in the past copies of former examination papers were supplied to applicants . . . with the admonition to study them well. At the time of the test, one such paper was selected and given as the examination. It is a splendid labor-saving device, but . . . such a process of selection is hardly worth the name.³¹

The same survey pointed out that under the multiple certification process of appointment the very best candidates were passed over in order to get at political favorites.³²

4. There was little concept of selective enforcement — putting

28 Unidentified Pittsburgh paper, December 31, 1907. HSWP.

29 Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, *Annual Report*, 1954, 7.

30 *Report of the Police Research Commission of Pittsburgh*, Elmer D. Graper, Chairman, February 11, 1935, 10.

31 Institute of Public Administration, *Survey of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Bureau of Police* (New York: 1937), 20.

32 *Ibid.*, 25.

police personnel at the greatest place of need at the greatest time of need. The night shift, requiring some of the best police talent, often was reserved for those needing "discipline," according to the 1937 survey.

5. Police personnel were often moved around at the dictates of politicians.

6. Appointment to investigative work (detective) was largely political as late as 1937.³³ Detectives were not placed under civil service until 1955 (1955 Pa. P. L. 147).³⁴

It is possible to point to several references which indicate "police problems" in the early 1900's. Safety Director John M. Morin, in 1912, was found guilty of mismanagement and resigned on January 28, 1913. In the election of 1925, Mayor William Magee suspended a number of policemen for showing partisanship and cowardice in connection with the elections. Mayor Charles H. Kline promised to break up the alliance of police and organized vice.³⁵ It is not particularly surprising, then, in view of public pressures, to find the Council of the City of Pittsburgh authorizing, in 1934, a Police Research Commission to examine the police operation in the city and to make recommendations for the administrative improvement of the bureau.³⁶

The Commission recommended a survey by an outside agency which it considered to be essential to sound recommendations for re-organization. A report to the City Council by the Commission on February 11, 1935, mentions the opposition to such a study:

Several months ago your Commission took steps to provide a technical survey of the Police Bureau. We regret that the opposition of the Mayor deprived the city of the advantages which such a study would have provided . . . Despite the opposition of the Mayor and the lack of cooperation by the personnel of the Police Bureau, your commission held a number of public and private hearings . . . and followed further the tangled trail of corrupting and disorganizing influences which militate against honesty and efficiency in the city's police administration.³⁷

The Police Commission, in its report, not only hit hard at the involvement (willingly or unwillingly) of police with the rackets (the

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ Detectives were made a part of the Police Bureau in 1906. (City of Pittsburgh Ordinance of May 19, 1906, Ordinance Book 17, 484.)

³⁵ Kerr, 280.

³⁶ City of Pittsburgh Ordinance No. 97, April 16, 1934, Ordinance Book 45, 561.

³⁷ *Report of the Police Research Commission of Pittsburgh*, Elmer D. Graper, Chairman. Submitted to City Council of February 11, 1935. The mayor at this time was William H. McNair. Mr. McNair was in disagreement with Council during most of his term. He resigned in 1936 and was succeeded by Cornelius D. Scully.

yearly amount paid for protection was estimated at \$5,000,000), it was critical also of police disregard for the rights of labor.³⁸

We have found those in control of the Pittsburgh Police Department in the past have frequently been in the control of the organized employers and have frequently managed the police to the damage of civil rights Charges were made, and not denied, that police have consistently prevented and broken up peaceful and lawful picketing; that pickets were arrested without warrant and without charges being made against them . . . that strikers were beaten up and denied medical attention³⁹

The report attacked the police selection procedures, and the outmoded horse and buggy organization so ill equipped to meet the 1935 "modern era."

Finally, under a new city administration, the Commission's suggestion for an extensive survey of the police bureau was adopted, and in 1937 the Institute of Public Administration, New York City, was invited to study the bureau and make recommendations for improvement.

The surveyors, Bruce Smith and L. S. Timmerman, spent the better part of a year in the city and finally came up with a 143-page report of findings and recommendations. The suggestions, if adopted, would have given the city essentially a well equipped, organized and staffed police bureau. But, of all the suggestions made, about the only one adopted was the institution of a police school (which lasted only a year or so).⁴⁰

Whatever may be the reasons for the failure to adopt the recommendations of the 1937 survey, they soon became relatively unimportant in the face of the major preoccupation with national defense which the nation and its cities began rapidly to assume by 1939. It is not difficult to understand why little effort was made during the 1940's to deal seriously with the administrative problems of the police bureau. By 1950, however, the bureau was caught in an ever tightening net of a large population (676,806), an increasing crime rate, thousands of calls from citizens for assistance, and more and more traffic congestion. Telephone and radio equipment were inadequate. The increasing crime and traffic problems pointed up lack of police training and the absence of good administrative procedures.

The situation finally reached a climax with the murder of Jean Brusco in November 1949 — one of a series of unsolved major crimes

38 *Ibid.*, 4.

39 *Ibid.*, 13-14.

40 Christine Altenburger, *An Administrative Survey of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police: 1937-1960*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1961.

in the city. The newspapers, providing detailed accounts of police "bungling" in the Brusco murder investigation and pointing up the lack of any effective police communications,⁴¹ and a citizens' group, armed with a report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation labeling Pittsburgh one of the poorest policed cities in the United States,⁴² brought sufficient pressure to (1) have 100 additional police officers added to the force and to (2) prompt the city to invite the International Association of Chiefs of Police to survey the bureau and again present recommendations for improving its administrative fabric and operational procedures.

This 1950 survey made sweeping recommendations for a reorganization of the police bureau and this time the recommendations were accepted, almost without reservation. The result is the streamlined organization of today: the Superintendent of Police and four assistant superintendents, each heading a functional division — traffic, uniform (patrol), detective, and services. Included in the latter division (services) is a modern Central Communications Section and a Central Records Section.⁴³

The 1950 reorganization of the police bureau ushered in a new philosophy of police work, beyond an emphasis on numbers and more modern equipment.⁴⁴ In 1960 applicants to the force were required to have a tenth grade education. A high school education will be required for those coming on the force in 1966. All applicants are subjected to professionally administered examinations which test general intelligence level and aptitude for police work. A psychological examination is also being added to the test battery. Political interference with police appointments today is negligible, if not non-existent. Applicants are selected on the basis of their test scores, starting at the top of the certification list. All recruits are subjected to ten weeks of training prior to assuming any police duties.

The many changes which have occurred in the Police Bureau since 1950 reflect the changing role of police in urban areas. Police work is no longer a matter of out-running an individual. The emphasis has shifted from brawn to brain. Indeed, urban police work contrasts to

41 *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 29, December 2, December 3, 1949.

42 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 24, 1950.

43 The Central Communications Section handles all telephone complaints and dispatches all police equipment. By 1956 all police radio equipment was two-way; much of it today is three-way. The bureau's Records Section began using IBM data processing equipment in November 1959.

44 The Pittsburgh Police Bureau had a manpower strength of 901 in 1915; 1,102 in 1937; 1,144 in 1949; 1,255 in 1950; 1,493 in 1955; 1,521 in 1960; and 1,780 in 1965.

those early years almost beyond recognition. Never in the history of the city has there been grouped together so many people of varied beliefs and modes of conduct in such a competitive and complex social structure. City dwellers today live so interdependently that almost their every movement requires a delicate balance of cooperation.

The Pittsburgh police are charged with maintaining order in this complex urban society. By default, the police bureau falls heir to a great many of the social ills that have come to characterize all large cities. The police bureau is viewed as being the organization that is capable of doing all things for all people. Whenever an emergency occurs, whenever the behavior of another person appears dangerous, in almost any community situation which seems out of control, someone is likely to say, "Call the police!"

To the average citizen, police work is identified most closely with crime — robbery, murder, assault, vice. Although this traditional role still remains, the public has come to expect the police to act in a broader capacity — a care-giving capacity. Almost ninety per cent of police work today is concerned with non-criminal activity. The police officer's knowledge must today extend to an understanding of human behavior for he finds himself often in the role of mediator and counselor. Further, he must stay abreast of court decisions in the area of criminal law, for gaining a conviction in court will depend on his absolute adherence to the court's latest ruling on the admissibility of evidence, the use of confessions, and the officer's action in the arrest procedure.⁴⁵ The officer must have a far better than average knowledge of first-aid. He must know how to handle the mentally disturbed person. He delivers babies upon occasion. The police are usually first on the scene of most emergencies and must make almost instant decisions on a course of action.⁴⁶ In short, police work, 1966, requires a great deal of talent of a wide variety.⁴⁷

45 Beginning in 1961 in the case of *Mapp v. Ohio*, the Supreme Court of the United States has handed down a series of landmark decisions which have directly and indirectly influenced police procedure. For example, *Mapp* placed restrictions on the use of evidence in State courts; *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963) provided indigent defendants with the right to appointed counsel in State courts; *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964) extended the right to counsel to pre-trial stages of criminal proceedings, thus limiting the freedom of police in obtaining a confession.

46 The Pittsburgh police, in 1964, responded to some 185,000 calls coming to the Central Communications Center.

47 The University of Pittsburgh, through its Institute of Local Government, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, began offering in-service training courses for police personnel in the Greater Pittsburgh area in 1963. One course covered principles of Police Leadership and Supervision; two were offered in the area of Criminal Law, and two in

The police function, for the better part of Pittsburgh's history, was permitted, for the most part, to grow with the city under the concept that "anyone can be a policeman." It took close to a hundred years to break with this tradition and to put police work in its proper perspective.

*Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.⁴⁸*

The proud traditions of service and sacrifice which have characterized police work in Pittsburgh from the beginning have many times in the history of the force been hard fought for against hard odds. The battle has not been completely won, but the Police Bureau and the citizens of Pittsburgh can look with pride to what has been accomplished.

Human Relations, covering basic principles of psychology. The response of law enforcement personnel to this training has been most enthusiastic, and to date over three hundred officers have satisfactorily completed one or more of these classes.

48 Friedrich Von Logau (tr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow).