The History of the American Police

Chapter 2

The 1st American Police Officer
- No training
- Patrolled on foot
- No radio
- No dispatch
- No weapons
- Little education
- No SOPs or policies

Flash Forward: 1950s
- Most likely had at least a high school education
- Was male
- Probably had some brief academy training
- Had SOPs & policies (that contained little on how to handle domestics, pursuits, use of force, etc.)

Why Study Police History?
- The study of police history can:
  1) Highlight the fact of change
  2) Put current problems into perspective
  3) Help us understand which reforms have worked
  4) Alert us to the unintended consequences of reforms

English Heritage
- American policing comes from the English heritage
- Characterized by three enduring features
  1) Limited police authority
  2) Local control of law enforcement agencies
  3) Highly decentralized & fragmented system of law enforcement

Creation of the Modern Police: London, 1829
- Sir Robert Peel
  - "Father" of modern policing
  - London Metropolitan Police
- Introduced the elements of:
  1) Mission
     - Crime prevention
  2) Strategy
     - Preventive patrolling
  3) Organizational structure
     - Quasi-military
Law Enforcement in Colonial America

- Colonists borrowed from their English heritage
- Sheriff
- Constable
- Watch (Night & Day)
- Boston created its first watch in 1634
- Started out as a civic duty; evolved into a paid position

Quality of Colonial Law Enforcement

- Inefficient
- Corrupt
- Affected by political interference
- Reactive
- Too few
- No real way for citizens to report crimes
- In actuality, ordinary citizens played a major role in maintaining order

The First Modern America Police

- Established in the 1830s and 1840s
- Movement to create police forces was slow
  - Boston had 9 officers in 1838
  - New York – 1st police dept. with a day & night shift (1844)
- First police officers:
  - Did not wear uniforms, only a hat & a badge
  - Did not carry firearms
  - Often hired based on who they knew

Three Eras of American Policing

- The political era (1830s-1900)
- The professional era (1900-1960s)
- The era of conflicting pressures (1960s-present)

American Police: 1830s-1900

- Characterized by:
  - Political control/influence/corruption
  - No personnel standards/patronage
  - Inefficiency
  - Weak/non-existent supervision
  - Few in number
  - High turnover
  - Poor police-citizen relations (ethnic/religious)
  - Reform failures
The Professional Era: 1900-1960
- August Vollmer, Chief of Berkeley, CA
  - Advocated higher education for police officers
  - Hired college graduates
  - Established 1st college level police science courses
  - Wrote 1931 Wickersham Commission Report on Police

The Reform Agenda
- Professionalization Movement
  - Defined policing as a profession
  - Eliminated the influence of politics
  - Appointed qualified chief executives to head police departments
  - Raised personnel standards for rank-and-file officers
  - Introduced modern management principles
    - Centralized command & control
    - Utilized new technologies
  - Created specialized units
    - Vice, traffic

Impact of Police Professionalization
- Slow progress
  - Success was very limited, but concept of professionalism firmly established
- Creation of police subculture
  - Focus was mostly on administrators; rank-and-file alienated
  - Emergence of unions
  - Increase in dept. size & specialization created complex bureaucracies

Police & Minorities
- Conflict between police & African Americans
  - Major race riots
    - East St. Louis (1917)
    - Chicago (1919)
  - Commissions made recommendations, but virtually nothing was done
  - Some dept.s hired African Americans, but assigned them to black communities
  - None were hired in the South
  - Discrimination remained

New LE Agencies
- New agencies appeared before WWI
  - State police
    - Some were highway patrols
    - Others were general LE agencies
  - FBI
    - Established in 1908 (Bureau of Investigation)
    - Renamed FBI in 1935

Impact of Technology
Impact of Technology (cont.)

- Patrol cars
  - Removed officer from the street; reduced informal contact
- Police dept.s encouraged people to call
  - Promised immediate response
- Citizens became socialized to "call the police"

Results:
- Number of calls/workload increased
- Police needed more personnel/equipment to keep up with increased workload
- More resources only encouraged more calls
- Process repeats itself

New Directions in Police Administration, 1930-1960

- Wickersham Commission Report (1929)
  - 1st national study of the American criminal justice system
  - Published 14 reports, but most shocking was the Report on Lawlessness in LE
    - Exposed “Third Degree”
  - Inspired new generation of police administrators to professionalize the police

New Directions in Police Administration, 1930-1960 (cont.)

- Professionalization continues
  - O.W. Wilson
    - Protégé of Vollmer
    - Wrote Municipal Police Administration
    - Developed formula for assigning/managing patrol officers

New Directions in Police Administration, 1930-1960 (cont.)

- Simmering Racial & Ethnic Tensions
  - Reforms did almost nothing to improve relations with racial/ethnic minority communities
  - 1943 – Wave of racial riots
    - Detroit
    - NYC
    - LA (“Zoot Suit Riot”)
  - Riots led to modern police-community relations movements

New Directions in Police Administration, 1930-1960 (cont.)

- J. Edgar Hoover & the War on Crime
  - Increased scope/size of Bureau activities
  - Emphasized education/training/personnel standards
  - Introduced UCR
  - Created FBI crime labs
  - Master at manipulating the media
  - Huge influence on other agencies to focus on crime fighting

Police Crisis of the 1960s

- Police and the Supreme Court
  - 1961, *Mapp v. Ohio*
    - Illegal search & seizure (Exclusionary rule or “fruits of the poisonous tree”)
    - Led to “Miranda Rights”
    - Both decisions provoked enormous controversy
Police Crisis of the 1960s
- Police & Civil Rights
  - Nationwide wave of race riots 1964-1968
  - National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission)
    Created after the riots of 1967 to study race relations
    Found “deep hostility between police & ghetto communities as a primary cause of the disorders.”
    Recommended:
    - Routine police operations be changed to “ensure proper individual conduct & to eliminate abrasive practices”
    - More African American police officers be hired
    - Police dept.s improve their procedures for handling citizen complaints

- Police Crisis of the 1960s (cont.)
  - Police and Civil Rights (cont.)
    - Kerner Commission (cont.)
      Also found “many of the serious disturbances took place in cities whose police are among the best led, best organized, best trained, & most professional in the country”
      The patrol car had removed the officer from the street & alienated the police from ordinary citizens
      Aggressive crime-fighting tactics were also a source of tension

- Police Crisis of the 1960s (cont.)
  - Police and Civil Rights (cont.)
    - Police dept. responses
      Established special police-community relations units
      - Spoke to community groups
      - Citizen ride-alongs
      - Neighborhood storefront offices
    - Justice Dept. report
      Programs had little impact on:
      - Day-to-day police work
      - Police-community relations

Research Revolution
- Explosion of police research occurred in the 1960s
  - Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) grants
  - National Institute of Justice (NIJ) grants
  - Police Foundation grants

Research Revolution (cont.)
- Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment (1972-1973)
  - One of the most important pieces of police research ever conducted
  - Found that:
    - Increased patrols did not:
      - Reduce crime
      - Have a significant effect on public awareness about police presence
    - Reduced patrol did not lead to an increase in crime or public fear of crime
Research Revolution (cont.)

- Other research showed:
  - Faster police response time did not lead to more arrests
    - Few calls involve crimes in progress
    - Most crime victims do not call the police immediately
  - Follow-up investigations by detectives are very unproductive
  - Most crimes are solved through info obtained by the first officer on scene
  - Most detective work is boring, routine paperwork


- Increase in the number of women & minority officers
- Limits on police discretion
- Emergence of Police Unions
- Citizen oversight of police
- Community Policing & Problem-Oriented Policing
- IT-driven reforms
- Racial profiling & discrimination
- Police reform through federal litigation (“pattern or practice” lawsuits/consent decrees)