

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



Law Enforcement in Colonial America

- Sheriff
 - Appointed by colonial governor
 - Chief local government official
 - Law enforcement
 - Collect taxes
 - Conduct elections
 - Maintain bridges & roads
- Constable
 - Some responsibility for enforcing law and maintaining order
 - Originally elected, later appointed
- Watch
 - Watchmen patrolled to guard against
 - Fire
 - Crime
 - Disorder
 - Originally, only night watch
 - All males were expected to serve
- Slave Patrol
 - Distinctly American
 - Guard against slave revolts and capture runaway slaves

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

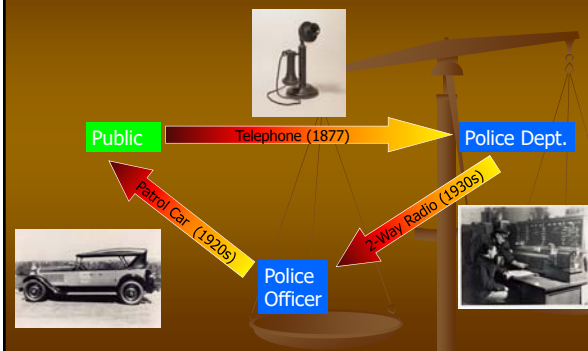
- Conflict between police & African Americans
 - Major race riots
 - East St. Louis (1917)
 - Chicago (1919)
- Commissions made recommendations, but virtually nothing was done
 - Some dept.s hired African Americans, but assigned them to black communities
 - None were hired in the South
 - Discrimination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

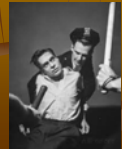


Impact of Technology (cont.)

- 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")
 - 1966, *Miranda v. Arizona*
 - 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

Police Crisis of the 1960s (cont.)

- The Police in the National Spotlight
 - Rising public concern about police-community relations led to a series of national reports
 - American Bar Foundation report (1955-57)
 - Police officers exercise broad discretion
 - Most police work involves non-criminal activity
 - President's Crime Commission (1965-67)
 - Had similar findings
 - Called for:
 - Higher recruiting standards
 - More training
 - Better management & supervision
 - Controls over police discretion

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 call 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

New Developments in Policing, 1970-2000

- 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)