

PENN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

HISTORY

During the early years of its history, from about 1880 to 1905, residents relied on the protection of the York County Sheriff and those citizen police officers known as constables, which were elected by the local populace. Due to the distance to Penn Township from the county seat, which is located in York, and the rural nature of the community, the police service provided at that time was limited at best.

The police protection afforded to residents of rural Pennsylvania changed in 1905 with the establishment of the state constabulary (state police). The law that created this statewide police agency also directed that a state police barracks be located in each county seat throughout Pennsylvania. With the building of the York sub-station, police protection was provided by this state unit on a full-time basis until the mid 1950's when the Penn Township Board of Supervisors directed a part-time police officer be employed.

The Township employed John Klinedinst as its first police officer. Klinedinst, who operated his own motor vehicle without a radio or other equipment, provided the first police protection for the Penn Township community, which was under the direction of the Township supervisors. Klinedinst was followed by Richard J. Hahn, who served as the Township's first full-time officer. Hahn was assisted by other officers on a part-time basis.

The appointment in 1968 of William C. Trapnell as Chief of Police marks the birth of the modern Penn Township Police Department. Trapnell, working with the Penn Township Board of Commissioners, increased the size of the force with the addition of a sergeant and three patrol officers. On August 12, 1968, full-time professional police service came to the residents of Penn Township.

The years from 1968 through 1975 marked a period of rapid change for the department. With the resignation of Trapnell in 1970, Donald L. Young was appointed chief. Earl F. Taylor who was chief from 1972 to November 1975 followed this. Ronald R. Beeler assumed the top position in the Police Department upon Taylor's retirement.

The appointment of Chief Beeler marked the beginning of a period of stability within the department. Under his leadership the rapid turnover of officers was halted, and advanced training and education of police officers began the long process of professionalizing the department. All new officers hired would be required to complete basic police training at the State Police Academy in

Hershey. The first written Operational Procedures Manual was established, the office of criminal investigator was created, and federal grant funding was applied for and approved to activate a specialized traffic safety unit and fund two additional patrol officers.

When Beeler joined the department in 1968 police headquarters was located on the first floor of the Penn Township Municipal Building at 1016 York Street, Hanover, Pennsylvania. In 1972 the department outgrew the two-room facility and moved to the second floor of the municipal building. The department's calls were dispatched through Flickinger Answering Service, which was located to the rear of 144 Baltimore Street, until 1971 when the department changed over to the newly formed York County Control Center, known today as the York County Emergency Center.

By the mid 1980's the police department had again outgrown its facilities, and in 1986 the Board of Commissioners purchased the vacant Brookside Elementary School building located at 20 Wayne Avenue. The plan was to renovate the building and move the police department and municipal offices from 1016 York Street to 20 Wayne Avenue. The transfer was done in phases, and by June 1987 the new municipal building was fully operational.

Chief Beeler directed the police department until his resignation in 1985. The appointment of Joseph H. Maddox in 1986 as Chief of Police assured the continuation of a professional service oriented police department. Under the guidance of Chief Maddox the department saw steady growth in the service population to 12,800 and an authorized department strength of eighteen sworn officers.

With the retirement of Chief Maddox in April 1999, the Penn Township Board of Commissioners appointed Samuel G. Gilbert as Chief of Police. Chief Gilbert, a twenty-four year veteran with the department, oversees a police contingent of twenty-one sworn officers, and four civilian staff members. The department services a population of over 15,000 residents and maintains a community policing approach as the backbone of the department's service policy.

Today the Penn Township Police Department is once again undergoing rapid change and adjustment. This time it is electronic technology that is driving the change. As law enforcement moves into the twenty-first century, it must adopt new technologies and sciences if it is to meet these new challenges. While it's true that the basic services provided by law enforcement remain the same, the delivery system for those services is far removed from years past.

On July 14, 2003, the Penn Township Police Department became the first police department in York County and only the seventh in Pennsylvania to receive

state accreditation. This recognition is earned by law enforcement agencies who meet the highest standards of conduct and professionalism. The accreditation process involved nearly two thousand hours of preparation over a two year period in which the department had to prove that it met the prescribed standards established by the accreditation commission. These standards covered all areas of law enforcement, policy, facilities, rules and regulations, etc. The process culminated in a two day on-site inspection by Commission personnel.

The Penn Township Police Department of 2012 would be unrecognizable in comparison to the 1968 Penn Township Department, but the focus of public service has remained constant. The dedication and professionalism of our officers to serve and protect has not, and will not, change. Through the continued support and guidance of our elected officials, the future of the Penn Township Police Department is assured.

With the retirement of Chief Gilbert in May of 2008, the Board of Commissioners has appointed Russell L. Rhodes, Jr., Chief of Police.

With the retirement of Chief Rhodes in May 2012, the Board of Commissioners has appointed James W. Laughlin, Chief of Police.