



History of Police Department

The Urbandale Police Department marks its 50 year anniversary with the retirement of Police Chief Dave Hamlin and the selection of Ross McCarty to head the department.

Law enforcement has undergone many changes in Urbandale as the population has rapidly increased. Records of early years are sketchy from the time Urbandale was incorporated in 1917. As more businesses were added there was one mention that someone was to be hired as a "merchant policeman" in 1940 at a salary not to exceed \$19 a month.

Harry Hull was sworn in as the official Town Marshall in June of 1947. As the main city employee Harry's duties for other departments included grading streets, spreading gravel, filling holes, cleaning culverts, hauling garbage, reading water meters, catching stray animals, posting signs, and enforcing traffic regulations. Harry and the City Clerk were the only paid town employees for a number of years. Harry worked out of the cement block building at 3807 70th Street, which also served as the City Hall and the Fire Station.

The first full-time Police Department in Urbandale was organized in 1958 under the leadership of Mayor H.C. Bible. When Gaylord Martin began his duties, his salary was set at \$400 each month. He was on duty from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. Dave Spurgin then had the patrol shift from 7 p.m. until 5 a.m. Mendall Munyan was to be on call from 5 a.m. until he reported to work at City Hall each morning.

A 1946 Chevrolet had been used for a message car and police duties. In 1955 the City Council had purchased a new blue Ford Tudor equipped with a heavy duty generator from Ankeny Motors for \$1,686.

In 1960 Wayne Woods, a local city maintenance worker since his discharge from the Army, became the third full-time police officer, and made 24 hour on-duty protection

available. Records listed a patrolman's salary as \$425 per month with a \$10 per month clothing allowance.

In the first annual City Hostess book published by the Woman's Club in 1961, the Urbandale Police Department was described in this way: "With the rapid increase in our population and expansion of new commercial and industrial areas, also annexations, there has been a great need for more officers. We have 3 officers and expect to expand more in the next year. We have one officer on duty all the time ready to act in any situation that may arise. On holidays and special assignments we do call on extra help. We have 2 regular patrol cars and a plain car which is used for investigation and radar. Radar is a major safety promotion and has been quite effective in speed control. You need not fear it, just observe and obey the speed signs. If you have any further questions or problems we will be glad to serve you."

The Urbandale Police Court was established in January of 1962 with Walker Johnston serving as presiding judge for \$100 per month. Max Boten was named judge pro tem; Donald Crowl, bailiff; Mary Hannam, clerk; and Hazel Avaux, matron. Court sessions were often held before City Council meetings.

The police department was now one of several city departments housed in the new city building at 70th and Roseland.

In 1965, Wayne Woods was officially named Chief of Police. The department had increased to six patrolmen: Lloyd Moore, Robert G. Evans, Clarence E. Wallace, George Radkin, Danny Corsbie, and Richard Curd. Dispatcher was P. Mae Zimmerman with Evelyn Evans working at night.

By 1970 Urbandale's population had increased to 14,000. The Police Department was now located at 9401 Hickman. Woods was still Chief of Police, Danny Corsbie was now Lieutenant and Richard Steely, Robert Evans and Perry Triggs were Sergeants. There were nine patrolmen. During the

school year, Nicholas Lemmo was assigned as a liaison officer between students, teachers and the police department to expand communications.

Improvements in the department as recommended by the International Association of Chiefs of Police included implementing an Investigative Division as well as Patrol Division. An Auxiliary Police Unit was formed to supplement the regular department. These men were volunteers and did work under the direct supervision of regular officers.

In 1974 there were 19 officers. A dispatcher was on duty 24 hours a day with three policemen on duty every shift. Cars were equipped so the policemen could get the messages directly.

Arlee Dansfield was named chief in 1978. Residents were encouraged to participate in crime prevention by contacting the police station for ID numbers and using an engraver to mark valuables and warning stickers for doors advising any potential burglar of this marking.

Another program where citizens and police worked for the good of the community was the Blue Star Program started in cooperation with the P.T.A. for the welfare of children going to and from school and during the summer. Blue Stars were exhibited in the front windows of selected homes, so a child could go inside in case of an emergency. Blue Star house mothers would then call police to report the problem.

In 1979, Sam Powers was chief and Dave Hamlin, who had joined the force in 1975, was now a sergeant. This year provided one of the greatest challenges for the department. They had to coordinate with other agencies to provide for safety and transportation needs when an estimated 340,000 individuals came to the Living History Farm when Pope John Paul II came to visit rural America.

Hamlin was named to head the department in 1981. There were now three divisions for the authorized 25 officers — patrol, investigation, and special services. In the spring of 1982 the department moved to the new police facility at 86th and Douglas. One of the patrolmen hired to fill out the staff in 1984 was Ross McCarty.

Now in 2009, after more than 34 years of service, Hamlin is retiring. Sgt. Ross McCarty was selected from a large field of qualified candidates to be the new chief. McCarty has been watch commander of the department's daytime patrol shift as well as a polygraph technician. He has worked in the investigation division and been involved with the leadership of the West Metro Police Departments' Special Emergency Response Team. He places increased communication with residents as one of his top priorities based on customer service and new policy trends. He places a high value on integrity in standards and dealing with the public.

Statistics show that last year Urbandale police investigated over 700 traffic accidents, made 977 arrests for all types of problems, and responded to 1200 false alarms as part of thousands of calls for service.

So from the early days of a town marshal with part-time duties, to an official department with two officers in 1958, to a department with 25 officers assigned to the patrol division, a fleet of vehicles to be maintained in some capacity, and a newly expanded facility, the Urbandale Police Department has seen many changes.

But as was reported in 1964, "Around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in weather ranging from balmy to blizzard, Urbandale residents rest easier, and Urbandale children are safer because the city police are on the job."

We owe them all our thanks and support!



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