



Wareham Police Department

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Wareham, Massachusetts 02571



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Thomas A. Joyce
Chief of Police

Wareham Police Department

A Brief History

At its first Town Meeting in 1739, one of the first officers to be selected was the unpaid constable. Included in the duties of this position was the collection of taxes, much the same as the sheriffs back in England.

On June 27, 1884, at the request of the Onset Bay Grove Association, the Selectmen appointed William A. Keyes as the first police officer who worked in the Onset area. This was followed by the appointment of James W. Hurley as the first chief of police in charge of all special officers.

In 1916, the Selectmen organized the first formal police department under Chief Harry C. Snow. The following year, in 1917, Elwell H. Smith was hired as the new police chief and had 12 regular police officers comprising the Town's first full time police department. From the 1940's to the present, we have had Chester Churchill, Clifton Keyes, Raphael Gallerani, Frederick Besse, Herbert Barrett, Wayne Dudley, Robert Hammond, and Thomas Joyce serve in the position of Chief of Police.

During just the last 25 years, the department has expanded significantly, from 24 full time officers in 1970 to 42 in 1995. In 1970, there was 1 matron, 1 janitor, and 28 special officers. Today we have 1 administrative assistant, 2 1/2 clerks, 3 full time and 6 part time dispatchers, 8 matrons, 4 pier attendants, 1 1/2 janitors, and 16 special officers. There were a total of 7 cruisers back in 1970, while today we operate a fleet of 24 units.

Where are we going from here? It is expected that in the next five years, the department will need to increase its civilian clerks and most likely add a computer systems manager to oversee the entire computer system operations. This will be especially important as we begin to add computer terminals or MDT's, mobile data terminals, to our cruisers. MDT's will permit our officers to not only perform license, registration, and wanted person checks, but will also allow them to access the main data base for checking on stolen property and for writing their police reports directly into the system. This will not only save invaluable time but will serve as an invaluable investigative tool as well.

While much has changed with the department, much has also changed with society and the environment. Today the police deal with a much higher volume of juvenile issues most of which are far more serious than the old mischievous mischief complaints. Our courts have been unwilling to change their conception of how to effectively deal with juveniles, and as a result, juveniles generally have absolutely no fear of criminal prosecution. The legislature just last year implemented a law which prohibits the police from placing a juvenile in a cell or keeping them physically restrained in the station house on status violations. Those are criminal violations that only juveniles can commit, such as a minor in possession of alcohol, etc.

The narcotic drug problem is still one of our biggest icebergs. It is like an iceberg because its size is masked by many issues and circumstances and its effects may not be immediately apparent. Further, much of the crime that occurs in our community is in some way related to or the result of drug problems. It is very difficult to tell which B & E was done by the addict versus the other criminal elements. Street nuisance problems as experienced in the area of Prospect & Onset Avenue is another example where not everyone who represented a problem in this area was a druggie.

One of the most important things a police department can do to help itself is to establish a positive working relationship with its citizens. It is hoped that this academy will do just that. Our aim is not to train you to be police officers or vigilantes nor is it to fill you with propaganda about what a swell police force you have. Our purpose is to educate you as to what you can reasonably expect of the police and why. By providing you some insight into the often confusing world of criminal law, the law of arrest, and search and seizures, you will be better able to appreciate why the police do or do not act in certain circumstances. It will also provide you with a better understanding of how you can help us fight the war on crime.

This is our academy, yours and mine. It is necessary that you participate, ask questions, and offer suggestions. The police hope to gain just as much as you from this opportunity to share and learn so that we may continue to improve on our performance and serve the entire Town more effectively.

1915

Law enforcement in Wareham, a town of 3,482 citizens in 1900, was carried out by elected constables until after 1915. At that time a committee was designated to study the need for setting up a police department, and in 1916, several part-time policemen were appointed. In 1917, Elwell H. Smith was appointed the first chief of police.

Chief Smith remained in office until December, 1928. In January, 1929, Chester A. Churchill was named acting chief and then was made chief a few months later. He served until his retirement in 1954. Clifton F. Keyes became chief in 1955. Following the death of Chief Keyes in October, 1962, Sgt. Raphael Gallerani took over as acting chief until the appointment of Frederick W. Besse as chief in July, 1964. Chief Besse has continued in office to the present day, heading up a force of four sergeants, two detectives, and 22 patrolmen, as well as a number of special officers.