

HISTORY OF LOPD

The History of LOPD, Part 1. Oswego began its history of recorded law enforcement on December 11, 1909. Prior to that time, if its citizens captured lawbreakers, they turned them over to the Portland Police or the Clackamas County Sheriff.

At its first council meeting on January 21, 1910, Charles N. Haines was sworn in as the marshal and served until May 5 for a salary of \$2.50 a month and 10% of all road poll taxes he could collect for the city. Mr. Haines owned a confectionery shop next to the bath house on the northwest corner of First Street and A Avenue, and it was speculated by the authors of Oswego's Early Lawmen that "selling candy and other goodies must have taken too much of his time from the marshal's duties."

At the next council meeting held on June 16, A. S. Clinefelter was elected as the next marshal, but served less than one month before he resigned. Finally on October 6, 1910, H. R. Davison took the marshal's job. Mr. Davison was a part-time barber and soon won respect as a marshal. It was said that he got the nickname of "The Old Marshal" because he was slow moving, rather than because of his age. However, it was also said that on Saturday nights, he would move like lightning and break up any fight no matter what was used (fists, knives, or guns), and he rarely ever used the little jail shack to lock up anyone for disturbing the peace. Marshal Davison was given a claw hammer and one of his duties was to keep the town's wooden sidewalks in repair.

It was said that Marshal Davison was quiet in manner, an expert billiard player, and always neatly dressed, wearing a raincoat buttoned to his chin, smoking a corncob pipe, and carrying a rolled-up umbrella. The Old Marshal, with his salary of \$15 a month, looked after the peace of Oswego until his death early in 1917. He is buried in the Oswego Pioneer Cemetery on Stafford Road.

The History of LOPD, Part 2. Following Marshal Davison were Marshals Andrew Jacob Wirtz, 1918; James E. Headrick, 1919; and Charles Didzun, 1920. Years later, Charley Didzun told members of the Oswego Junior Historical Society of his brief term of office in this way. After he locked up a stray cow in the pound, where it had to stay until her owner paid a fine, a friend warned Charley that the owner of the cow was looking for him with a club, vowing to kill him. Marshal Didzun turned in his badge to the city council, saying his life was worth more than \$15 a month.

James E. Headrick became Marshal again to fill out Marshal Didzun's term in 1921, followed by C. Art Mabal in 1922. According to some complaints on file in the city attorney's office, Marshal Mabal was kept busy enforcing the first ordinance signed by council, Licensing of Dogs. His other duties were keeping an eye on persons speeding their vehicles in excess of 20 miles per hour; driving a vehicle with improper license tags; driving a vehicle on a sidewalk, or parking in a safety zone.

In 1925, the city council appointed six police officers and authorized the "issuance of stars," meaning that the first police officer badges were a five-point, star-shaped badge. The department changed from a star-shaped badge to the current shield-type in 1960.

In 1926, the first City Hall building was completed in the first block of A Avenue and Andrew B. Perkins was sworn in as the ninth marshal. Marshal Perkins worked for the Chicago Great Western Railroad in Iowa before coming to Oregon. The marshal's duties now included city business license enforcement. Marshal Perkins had to tell the man selling ice cream from his wagon that he had to purchase a license. Another new job was arresting the rowdy persons at the popular baseball games.

A family member related this story about Marshal Perkins. He remembered when a caravan of folks driving Cadillacs came into town and parked on Front Street (now State Street), and started setting up camp. Marshal Perkins told them, "You fire these things up and don't come back," and they did. Marshal Andrew Perkins died in 1948 and is buried at the Riverview Cemetery in Portland.

The History of LOPD, Part 3. In 1930, Tom Clinefelter became the tenth marshal. Marshal Clinefelter was followed by Lloyd W. Shriner in 1936 and the City Council authorized Marshal Shriner to purchase a first aid kit and a fingerprint outfit.

At a Council meeting in May of 1942, the Oswego Rifle Squad offered to help the City as volunteer police officers in case of emergency. The mayor deputized the members of the Squad, also known as the Home Guard and a part of the original State Guard. With equipment leased from Civil Defense, it met for military drill practice on Tuesday evenings at the Lakewood School in Oswego.

William A. Knowles became the first to be called Chief of Police in December of 1943. According to the authors of Oswego's Early Lawmen, Chief Knowles' duties included keeping watch over the business district at night. In a place where the safe was not visible from the window, he was provided with a key for entry to check the safe.

One night in March of 1944, Chief Knowles went into the dimly lighted Moody's Tavern and discovered a man kneeling on the floor, trying to open the safe. Chief Knowles whipped out his gun and ordered the man to follow him as he backed to the door. Then the Chief heard a sound in the back room. As he turned toward the back room, the man ran out the front door. Knowles ran after him, yelling, "Stop, or I'll shoot." The intruder kept running and Knowles shot once, hitting him in the hip. As the man disappeared around the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, Chief Knowles ran to his car and radioed for help. Shortly he was assisted by deputies from Multnomah and Clackamas County, officers from Oregon City and the State Police. They found the intruder under the freight platform at the depot and transported him by ambulance to the Oregon City Hospital for surgery.

The intruder informed on his accomplice, who had supposedly been waiting in the back room of Moody's Tavern with an axe. The partner was later captured and sent to the "pen." The hospitalized intruder escaped after three days by jumping out of a window, hid out in a school, but later died of complications from tearing his stitches and exposure from the cold. Both men had allegedly committed 46 prior robberies.

Chief Knowles' shouting and his actions in this incident were witnessed by a family who lived next door to Moody's Tavern. Chief Knowles was exonerated and commended by the City Council for his efforts.

The History of LOPD, Part 4. The first Police Reserve Unit was organized in 1948 under the direction of Chief Knowles to complement his police force of two men. He contacted business and professional people in the City and recruited as many men as possible and trained them in the fundamentals of the department operations so they could assist in case of emergencies such as fires, floods, windstorms and civil disasters. Bob Dueber was the first man recruited for the Reserve Unit and he patrolled the City on twelve-hour shifts for compensation of 85 cents per hour.

Bill Knowles resigned as Chief of Police in February of 1950 to become Manager of the Department of Motor Vehicles in Oswego. He served as Municipal Judge from 1953 to 1961 and as a member of the City Council from 1963 to 1972. He died on October 11, 1972 at the age of sixty-eight.

The appointment of Leonard Givens as the second Chief was on January 16, 1951. His tenure was brief as the third police chief, Regis Thornton, was hired in July of 1951 at a salary of \$325 per month.

Carroll Hanson was appointed the fourth police chief in August of 1952 and remained for four years. The force at this time consisted of the Chief and four police officers. The city council meeting minutes of September 11, 1954 mentioned two on-call special policewomen, Mrs. Carroll Hanson and Mrs. Ted Parker. This means that women were being arrested and the policewomen were needed to guard the integrity of the department.

Russell Thorn left his job as a police officer in Anchorage, Alaska to become Oswego's fifth police chief on January 15, 1957. In 1960, the department personnel roster was Chief Thorn, Captain Bud Mace, and Officers Ted Parker, Graham Harris, Morris Sweet, Gene Davidson, and Robert Ryan. The department's vehicle inventory consisted of two cars and a motorcycle, and police officers had to furnish their own uniforms and gun on a starting wage of \$280 a month. Chief Thorn resigned on April 1, 1965.