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Grand Prairie Historical Organization

Volume XXI

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MEETING LOCATION

Our meeting is August 19th 11:30am @ the new Public Safety Building (Grand Prairie Police Department) at 1525 Arkansas Ln., Grand Prairie, Texas 75052. The meeting will be held in the Community Room on the second floor. Come to the front lobby on the east side of the building and proceed to the Community Room, second floor, via stairs or elevator. For those that want to have lunch we are going to the Summit afterwards and ordering individually from the menu they offer. If you have questions about that menu please contact the Summit directly at 972-237-4141.

Please RSVP to Angela Giessner 972-262-5151 if you plan on attending.

OUR SPEAKER FOR AUGUST 19TH WILL BE: Sgt. Eric Hansen

Officer Hansen is a long-time resident of Grand Prairie, from a family with deep roots in the community, dating back to 1917. He is a 1985 graduate of Grand Prairie High School and a 23-year veteran of the Grand Prairie Police Department where he holds the rank of Sergeant and supervises the department's Traffic Division. Eric's interest in law enforcement began at age 18 when he joined the police department's Law Enforcement Explorer Post where he quickly rose to the rank of Captain in that organization. By age 19 he was hired by the department as a dispatcher, where he worked until being hired as a police officer at age 21. Eric enjoys travel and taking photographs of fire apparatus and is a regular columnist in the fire service publication Fire Apparatus Journal. Eric has also contributed several articles and hundreds of photographs to many other fire service publications and websites. He lives in Grand Prairie with his wife Nicole and their three children.



This may be one of the last hard copies of the Newsletter published. The newsletter will still be published, but it's going to be done via email and/or on the web site. If you would like to be sure you continue to receive the newsletter, in electronic format, or would like to voice your opinion on the topic, please send an email with your name and contact number to : bingham@alliance-services.com

Our latest Life Member is:

Bebe Bingham

Please send in your dues today and help support our organization.

We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give.

Winston Churchill

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Check out the new Web Site!!!! Thank you so much to Kathleen Andrews for making this happen. Kathleen did an exceptional job with this site and volunteered hours of her time to make it look fantastic.

Grand Prairie Police Dept History 1909-2010

Law enforcement in Grand Prairie prior to incorporation was the responsibility of the Dallas County Sheriff's Office and the local constable's precinct. When the city incorporated in 1909, it was determined that a City Marshal be elected to serve as the police presence in the city, which at the time had about 1,100 residents. The first City Marshal was E.L. Raines, a farmer by trade, who resigned the position after serving only a few months. Noah Turner was appointed to serve the remainder of Raines' term. Duties of this one-man law enforcement agency included combining policing with other chores, such as collecting taxes and rounding up loose livestock. The city marshal's office was located inside the Grand Prairie Bank building, which was at the northeast corner of Center and Main streets. In 1912 the office was relocated to City Hall, at the corner of West and Pacific streets, which today is the corner of SW 2nd and Pacific on the site of the Lee D. Herring insurance office. By 1920, the elected marshal had assistance in the form of a night watchman, named J.L. Wells. In 1921 W.K. Hughes was hired as a "city policeman", also serving under the elected marshal.

Expansion of the city's law enforcement agency continued to grow in the 1920's with the addition of "Highway Police", deputy city marshals assigned to motorcycle patrol on Main Street, also known as the "Dallas-Fort Worth Pike", and later designated as U.S. Hwy 80. These officers were hired specifically for the purpose of patrolling for speeders and other traffic violators. They supplied their own motorcycles and their salaries were derived from a portion of the fines collected from citations they issued. By 1925, the office of city marshal became an appointed position and the use of motorcycle officers was discontinued.

In 1931, Perry C. Nash was appointed marshal, assisted by at least one deputy city marshal, and several part-time deputies who primarily worked on the weekends. During the 1930's the title of City Marshal and Chief of Police began to be used interchangeably. During the 1930's two famous robberies occurred in the city. On July 29, 1932, infamous outlaws Clyde Barrow and Raymond Hamilton robbed the Grand Prairie Interurban station. On March 19, 1934, Raymond Hamilton returned to Grand Prairie and robbed the First State Bank of \$1,548.76. The city's first recorded traffic fatality occurred on January 6, 1935, when pedestrian C.B. Crowell was struck and killed by a car on Main Street. The driver of the car, James Downing, was arrested by Perry Nash and was later found to be wanted for bank robbery.

The 1940's saw rapid growth and prosperity in Grand Prairie, mostly due to the North American aviation plant built on Jefferson Blvd at the city limits. In 1941 the office of City Marshal was officially changed to Chief of Police, with Perry Nash continuing to lead the department, assisted by four full time officers.

One of the more interesting news stories to come out of Grand Prairie during the 1940's was reported by the Dallas Morning News in July, 1941. Two men were arrested by Chief Nash for being drunk and were taken to the city's jail, along with their pet goat, which also appeared to be drunk. The two men admitted to giving the goat a drink of alcoholic beverage for every drink that they took, describing the goat as "a willing participant". Chief Nash was concerned for the welfare of the goat, explaining to the District Attorney's office that "it staggers all over the place" as they contemplated any additional charges on the two men. Sadly, the goat died of the effects of too much alcohol three days later. No additional charges were filed.

By 1943, Grand Prairie's population had swelled to over 18,000, making it the fastest growing city in Texas. When Chief Nash retired in 1946, he was replaced by 28-year old Don Hall, at the time the youngest department head in the state. Hall resigned a year later and Dave Drennan, a member of the department since 1943, became chief. This marked the beginning of a tumultuous time at the department, where the duties of chief changed hands four times in less than a month. In July, 1947, shortly before Drennan was officially named chief, he was accidentally shot in the chest by his own revolver after it fell from its holster while he was working on the police radio in the trunk of his squad car. While



Life Members of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization

Judy Armstrong, Billy Joe Armstrong, Carol Bell, Grant Bell, Bebe Bingham, Brian W. Bingham, Verna Brown, Jo Robertson Campbell, L.R. Cannon, Ouida Chapman Lewis, Lisa Chennault Brown, Helen Chennault, Thomas Chennault *, Thomas B Chennault, City of Grand Prairie Marketing, Joe W. Colwell, Marge Copeland, H. Victor Copeland *, Jerry Corley, Cheryl Friman Dover, Charles and Janice England, Kirk and Marcy England, Olive Galloway, Norma Hale, Marvin J (Jack) Hays, Lee D. Herring, Thomas Hight, Jorja Jackson Clemson, Vera Jinks, Marie Kerr Stufflebeme*, Blythe Kizziar, Duane McGuffey, Kenneth R. Miller, Lynn Motley, Betty Phillips, Charles Powers, Bob Roberts, Susan Shuffler, Fynlon and Eugenia Simpson, Ouida Daugherty Smith, Amy Sprinkles, Donald Stanfield, Joyce Colwell Stanfield, Angela Sutton Giessner, Donald Taylor, Ruthe Thompson Jackson, Laura Thompson Potter, Paul and Madie Vernon * Deceased

Drennan recovered at Methodist Hospital, patrolman Jack Livingston was designated acting chief. Ten days later, Livingston suffered a stroke and was also hospitalized at Methodist, prompting city commissioners to appoint Desk Sgt. H.L. Giles as the acting Chief of Police. Drennan recovered from his injury and went on to lead the department until 1949, when he resigned and was replaced by Ray "Arch" Weaver, a member of the department since 1944. Highlights of the 1940's era department include the first two-way radios in squad cars and the construction of the first new police station, located at 317 W Main St.

The revolving door of police chiefs continued into the 1950's. Chief Weaver resigned in 1950 and was replaced by Pat Watkins. Watkins lasted only seven months but his influence was long-lasting, as he introduced the navy blue uniforms on which today's uniforms are based. Prior to this time, the uniforms consisted of a long-sleeved khaki shirt and trousers. These were replaced with dark blue trousers and long-sleeved light gray shirts worn during warm weather and the dark blue shirts worn during the cooler months.

In 1951 Chief Watkins was replaced with Jack Livingston, a member of the department since 1943. By 1953, the department had grown to 20 personnel, although the turnover rate was very high, with nearly 40 men coming and going within a 12 month period. Livingston resigned and was replaced by Chief Woodard "Woody" Rawlings. During 1954, Henry "Babe" Redmon was hired as the department's first black officer, and is likely the first black officer hired by any suburban department in the region. In 1955, an auxiliary police department was formed, beginning what became one of the best police reserve programs in the state. In 1955, a new city council was elected and asked Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker to take over the department. Decker appointed one of his deputies, Buster Adams, as acting chief of the department. Adams was later appointed by council as the Chief of Police, where he served until 1961 and was replaced by Fred Conover. The police-fire civil service law was approved by voters in 1957 and remains in effect today.

The 1960's saw continued rapid growth in the city and the department. The most notable changes were the introduction of short-sleeved uniform shirts for the first time. These were light blue, without patches, and worn during the summer months. The long sleeved blue uniforms continued to be worn during the winter. By the mid-1960's civil unrest in other parts of the country forced the department to adopt a policy of wearing uniform helmets, rather than hats, when officers were out of their cars. These helmets were worn until the early 1970's. By 1968 the starting salary for a patrolman was \$439 a month, with a top out of \$572 a month after two years.

A 1968 bond election led to the construction of the department's second new police headquarters, located at 702 S Carrier Pkwy, which opened in 1973. By 1970 the light blue uniform shirts were replaced with navy blue to match the long sleeved shirts.

During the 1970's the department's motorcycle traffic unit was re-established and steps were taken to increase preventive patrols to reduce the number of traffic fatalities in the city. By the early 1980's the department had a full-time K9 unit and a SWAT team. On March 1, 1982, Ofc. Lyndon Fred King became the first GPPD officer to be killed in the line of duty. King was investigating a collision on I-30 near NW 7th Street when he was struck and killed by a drunk driver.

On June 18, 2004, the department lost its second officer. Sgt. Greg Hunter was gunned down in the parking lot of the Wal Mart on I-20 while investigating a suspicious vehicle call. The assailant was shot and killed by Ofc. Bruce Seix, who was wounded in the attack, but made a full recovery.

Through today, the department has seen huge advances in technology that has made policing more efficient. These include mobile computers in police vehicles, digital radio systems, lasers for speed enforcement, and other technologies that improve the ability to track, report, and prevent crimes. The department recently moved into a state of the art 150,000 square foot joint police/fire public safety building that includes a jail three times the size of the old one. This opportunity was afforded to the department by the generous taxpayers of Grand Prairie who financed the \$56 million dollar project through a crime tax. The building will serve the department for many years to come and will be a catalyst for quality, progressive development in the area.

Sgt. Eric Hansen

Grand Prairie Police Department



Perry Nash, our first Chief of Police, taken about 1931 when he became City Marshal.



Grand Prairie
Historical
Organization

Comments, dues and suggestions should go to:
Grand Prairie Historical Organization

Brian W. Bingham

P.O. Box 532173

Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-2173



GRAND PRAIRIE HISTORICAL ORGANIZATION BY-LAW REVISION

In the August meeting a new set of by-laws will be presented for approval by the members. There will be a copy of those by-laws available at the meeting for review. However, if you would like a copy prior to the meeting, please send an email request to bingham@alliance-services.com and you will have time to read it in detail.

This is your chance to add value to the new by-laws.



Sgt Alvin Medford along with motor officers Johnny Vandergriff and Fred Conover



Henry "Babe" Redmon, the department's first black officer, hired in 1955



Grand Prairie Police Department 1956



LBJ and the GPPD