

Boylston Police in the News

By Judy Haynes

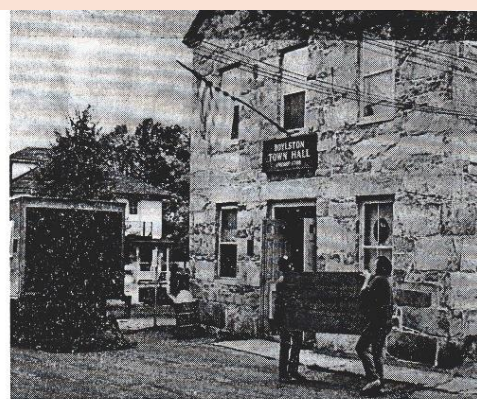
With an August 1997 newsclip headline reading “Boylston Police Station on the Move” Police Chief William Perron was so delighted to be moving to a bigger and much improved space than their former quarters in rooms above the Boylston Center Store that he is quoted, laughing and saying “we plan to move by September 18 even if we have to sit on the floor.”¹

Some renovations were needed at their new home at the Hillside Office Park Complex at 215 Main Street. The complex had been previously owned by Digital Equipment Incorporation. The Town of Boylston acquired ownership through eminent domain proceedings. One of the existing buildings on the property became the headquarters of our police department. The words of Harold Naughton, State Representative resonated succinctly the town spirit and what the move to the new location meant to the future of our town:

“There is true community spirit in this town that you don’t see everywhere. You have done a favor for your children, grandchildren and the generations to come.”²

The previous location at 1 Central Street, above the Boylston Center Store was initially to be a “temporary” move, but Sgt. Scott Szymkiewicz said he had spent 15 years there. Officer Norman Hodgerney described the move to the 215 Main Street location: “There’s no comparison. It’s just like we’ve moved from a shack to a castle.”³ “It’s literally a breath of fresh air,” Officer Marc W. Dupuis said.⁴ The rented space on the upper floor of 1 Central Street when evaluated during the period prior to 1997 was critiqued by some as “one of the worst in Massachusetts, lacking handicapped access, holding cells and electronic monitoring equipment. Prisoners were chained to a bar, officers and victims lacked privacy, and a single bathroom was used by both genders.”⁵ Although the town had limited facilities, it never kept the nine full-time police officers from protecting our rural community.

Prior to 1980, the police had been located in the Historic Town Hall at 7 Central Street. A news item from the Evening Gazette shows town employees moving from the Town Hall to what had been the former Morningdale School building, a building which had closed due to low pupil enrollment.⁶ The town had relocated some of its offices to this location. Townspeople have indicated the police did not make the move to the Mornindale School location but were operating on the second floor above the Boylston Center Store in the 1980’s.⁷ In earlier years there is evidence that the chiefs worked from home.



Boylston Moves Town Offices

Yesterday was moving day for town employees in Boylston. As voted by a special town meeting last summer, the offices of the town clerk, treasurer, tax collector and other major town offices are being moved from Town Hall in Boylston Center to the former Morningdale School building. The school was closed because of declining school enrollments in town and turned over to the town by the School Committee. Selectmen proposed using the building for town offices. The Town Hall will still be used by selectmen, Planning Board, Earth Removal Board and others for meetings and office space.

1974

The Growth of the Force

Our Official Police Force had been formed in 1935 when Matthew Hakala was named the first Chief of Police, during which time the police department was operated out of his home on School Street.^{8,9}

Gordon Hastings writes:

"When I was growing up in town in the 1940s and '50s to the best of my recollection there was then no police station. Matt Hakala operated out of his home on School Street. There was no police cruiser or ambulance ... Matt used his own personal vehicle."

An oral recollection by Ted Wirt indicates that Chief Werme had a short-wave radio in his house on Main Street in Morningdale in the 1960’s, and Gordon Hastings also recalls that David Werme worked from his home.¹⁰ Werme served as Chief of Police from 1964-1979.¹¹

¹ Rocheleau, Linda, *The Banner*, August, 1997. From Mary French Scrapbook Collection of News.

² Ibid

³ Chalifoux, Janice, *Telegram & Gazette*, 12/6/97.

⁴ Kievra, Bob, *Police Enjoy New Address*, *Telegram & Gazette*, September 22, 1997.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Boylston Moves Town Offices*, *Gazette*, October 2, 1974.

⁷ Sandra Bourrassa, Robert Bourrassa, Massachusetts.

⁸ Annual Report, Town of Boylston, 1935

⁹ Gordon Hastings, Massachusetts

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Filgate, Bruce, D., *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, Boylston Historical Society, Boylston, Massachusetts.

It was reported in the December 31, 1963 Annual Reports that

“At a special town meeting, it was voted to purchase a cruiser-ambulance which I had been trying for ten years to get for the Department. It was put into service in August, and has proved a great asset to the Department and the Town as a whole. Respectfully submitted, Matthew Hakala Chief of Police.”

A clip from the Worcester Daily Telegram, Wednesday, August 28, 1963 shows Selectman Guy S. Fuller standing outside the Town Hall on 7 Central Street handing Police Chief Matthew Hakala the keys to “Boylston’s first police cruiser, a radio-equipped station wagon that will also serve as a town ambulance.”



BOYLSTON’S FIRST POLICE CRUISER

Selectman Guy S. Fuller hands Police Chief Matthew Hakala the keys
Worcester Telegram & Gazette
August 1963

A review of Boylston’s Annual Reports of Town Officers, 1815 – 2000, indicates the evolution from two to three constables in a small town to a formal police force. What is a ‘constable’? The dictionary defines a constable as

“a peace officer with less authority and smaller jurisdiction than a sheriff, empowered to serve writs and warrants and make arrests.”¹²

In the earliest years and into the twentieth century three constables were elected annually. If the constable needed more protection for the people and jail time had to be made, the county sheriff was called. The constable’s job included keeping the peace, posting the warrants for the town meetings and examining the ballot box before election to prove it was empty, then handing the keys over to election officials. The only expense listed in the Boylston Annual Report of 1898 was \$21.00 for six pairs of handcuffs, so apparently some small crimes did exist or the preparation was made in case they would ensue.

In 1902 the names of the constables listed were William H. Vickery, Munson C. Flagg, and Sannie A. Wright. By 1906 Charles S. Knight, Willard C. Mann, and Sannie A. Wright acted as constables. In 1907 “special police officers” Charles S. Knight, Charles C. Bray and Theodore H. Wilson were paid \$2.50 each to cover the holiday activities July 3 and 4. The coverage and \$2.50 pay was listed as payments made for the holiday events through 1916. Police holiday work may have continued years longer, but no special mention of the dates or costs are mentioned until 1918 when the report mentioned 8 men were paid for July 3 and 4. Police Duty costs amounted to \$35.65 in 1919.

By 1925 in addition to the three constables – Charles Knight, Walter G. Brigham, and Augustus H. Hakala, the reports also show “special police” with 12 men listed to be called upon as needed. Special police were listed for many years following. One of those special police was Matthew Hakala, whose name would continue to appear for years to come.

Special Police Officer Matthew Hakala who had been elected as a constable in 1929, would eventually serve as the first Boylston Chief of Police from 1935 to 1963.

In 1964 David Werme took the reins of the police force and a sampling of police activities were listed as follows:

¹² American Heritage Dictionary, Houghton & Mifflin, 2002.

Arrests	15	Total Accidents	68
Accidents with personal injury	30	Persons injured	45
Fatalities	2	Property Damage	36
Bicycles & Personal Injuries	2	Ambulance Calls	23
Pistol Permits	14	Bicycle Registrations	13

Over the years officers attended various courses to keep current with the latest police work. Classes in accident investigation, traffic laws, emergency medical technicians, and other special courses relevant to the times were taken. Patsy Chiarelli was the first woman who joined the force in 1955. In later years she was listed with the Special Police. There were other female officers to come but arrests of females to date have been few in number.

By 1970 narcotics offenders were added to the list of arrests. The year 1979 listed five full-time officers, 4 reserve officers and 35 “special” officers. Radar came into use as traffic citations increased in the years following the building and operations of routes 495 and 290 with easy exit to Boylston. The greatest number of accidents happened at routes 70 and 140. The year 1979 also saw another skill added to the force; a part-time K-9 officer and dog were used as needed and it was noted the dog’s scenting skills helped track down thieves as well as find lost children.

Buddies

OFFICER PAUL “SKIP” JARVIS and his dog, Bullet are inseparable. Jarvis picked Bullet up as a stray and decided he had the stuff to be a police dog.

From Boylston stray to town’s police dog

By D. KENT DLIDDO
Boylston Correspondent

A man and his dog are inseparable so the saying goes.

In the case of Boylston’s Officer Paul (Skip) Jarvis, and his German Shepherd Police dog whose name is “Bullet” it is literally true. Jarvis who is also the town’s dog officer picked Bullet up one day as a stray and decided he was ideal police material.

Ronald Allen of the Criminal Justice Training Counsel in Grafton, Mass. trained Bullet for police work and Jarvis as his handler. The course is four days a week for 12 weeks, and was done at no cost to the taxpayers. They graduated Dec. 5. Though not at this time trained in tracking drugs, the dog is certified in building searches, attack work, article search, obedience, and can track human suspects.

According to Jarvis the dog is comparable to having two additional police officers on the squad. Their hearing range is better than that of a human being and they can search a building faster than two men. Jarvis said he feels there are so many positive aspects to employing canine police that he sees their use in the field as steadily increasing.

According to Jarvis the dog is better at crowd control than a human, and is often used to assist in the search of a lost child. Part of what these dogs must learn is to not fight with other dogs.

Because of their ability to withstand severe temperature changes it’s the German Shepherd that is almost always used for this type of work. Occasionally because of their keen nose sense Labrador Retrievers are trained for drug work.

Clinton also has canine police and on New Year’s Day because of the illness of the handler, Bullet was called to assist in the apprehension of an armed robbery suspect. He led the police to where the car that was used in the robbery was parked which later in the day resulted in an arrest.

If it were necessary, Bullet could be trained to obey the commands of another handler, but only after an additional twelve weeks of training. A dog is only expected to work effectively in the field until it’s about 9 years old. Boylston Police are not adverse to assisting departments in other towns and is available 24 hours a day. When Bullet isn’t on duty, he’s on call.

Some dogs, as is Bullet are kept in a pen, and others are kept in the homes of their handlers, and treated like any domestic pet. His presence in town according to Sargent Frank Sleeper, is an asset to the town’s law enforcement. Chief David Werme said this is the second dog Boylston has employed on the force and both he feels have been successful. The services of the previous dog had to be terminated because its handler had too many other commitments.

In the future he will take his dog to school for another three months to get him certified in drug tracking.

In the meantime it’s easy to see how proud Jarvis is of the dog that he co-owns with the Boylston Police Department. The mutual love



**OFFICER PAUL “SKIP” JARVIS & BUDDY
BOYLSTON K-9 UNIT ESTABLISHED 1979**

By 1985 David Werme announced that he would retire after 21 years. Sgt. Frank Sleeper was named Acting Chief and was appointed Chief in 1986. There were six full-time officers then who handled 155 arrests and 36 house break-ins, just to name a couple of their responsibilities that year.

Ronald Rajotte became the officer in charge of the Drug Abuse Resistance Training, the D.A.R.E. officer in 1991. He taught the training to 5th and 6th graders in Boylston’s Elementary Schools. In a later year 8th graders were included. The course took a pro-active approach with various concerns being featured such as peer pressure, drug dangers, and self-esteem. After Rajotte left Boylston, the program was reinstated and extended to include the high school students by Officer John A. Annunziata.¹³ For the further protection of our youth and citizens, highway safety was always a concern. Officers were assigned to follow school buses to insure drivers did not pass a school bus with lights flashing.

Chief Sleeper retired October 9, 1993 and Scott P. Symkiewicz was Acting Chief until William F. Perrone was hired for four and ½ years from 1994 to 1999. In 1999 Chief Anthony Sahagian took the lead until retiring in 2020, having served 20+ years. In the year 2000, two new cruisers were purchased to replace older vehicles whose mileage rose to over 100,000. It was time to replace.



**JOHN ANNUNZIATA
POLICE CHIEF
BOYLSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

It was in December 2021 when Officer John A. Annunziata was sworn to serve as Boylston’s Chief of Police. Over the years Boylston has been fortunate to have had fine men serve as chiefs and as patrolmen to safeguard freedom, and preserve both life and property.

¹³ Gottesman, Jan, Worcester Telegram & Gazette, The Item, “Transparency to the Boylston Police Department, January 7, 2022.



POLICE OFFICERS
BOYLSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JOHN ANNUNZIATA

Today our Police Officers remain housed in a building near the town offices within the Hillside Office Park Complex, the very same place that Chief Perrone was excited to move to in 1997. Many thanks to our Boylston Police Officers for safeguarding our freedom, lives, and property. If you are interested in seeing the detailed Police Reports, please visit the Fuller Research Library of our Historical Society to review the Town of Boylston Annual Reports.

Acknowledgements:

Annual Reports of Boylston, 1815 – 2021

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