

A Century of Service



Royal Oak
POLICE DEPT

ROPD Blue:

Police Chiefs through the Years

By Judy Davids

The history of leadership in the Royal Oak Police Department reflects the transformation of a rapidly growing village to the eighth largest city in Oakland County.

Alexander Lewless, known as the one-eyed sheriff, served as the town marshal (Royal Oak Township) for more than 40 years. Lewless resided at 208 West Fifth Street until his death in 1918. That same year, Philip H. Beauvais established a new kind of law and order with the formation of a local police department, three years before the village was incorporated as a city in 1921. Beauvais performed the duties of both village manager and police chief, which meant when necessary he assisted with arrests and hauling prisoners to the county jail in Pontiac.

Today, Chief Corrigan O'Donohue heads what is regarded as one of Michigan's premier police departments. In O'Donohue's tenure, the Royal Oak Police Department has earned its spot on the list of "100 Top Safest Cities in America." With a staff of 79 sworn officers, O'Donohue oversees multiple units and departments that strive to be leaders in efficiency, effectiveness, innovation and public safety in the 21st century.

Royal Oak Police Chiefs

By charter, Royal Oak's city manager has invested in him the power to appoint the police and fire chief. Here's a list of individuals that have earned the designation of Royal Oak Police Chief.

- **Philip H. Beauvais**, 1918-20—When the department was established in 1918, there was no mention of a police chief. Through *Daily Tribune* articles, the suggestion is Village Manager Philip H. Beauvais also performed the duties of police chief.
- **Isaac Ryal**, 1920-26—Isaac Ryal is the earliest mention of an appointed chief. He resigned in 1926.
- **Lloyd R. McClintock**, 1926-28—At age 24, he was believed to be the youngest police chief in the country. After attempting to resign several times, feeling he was too young for the job, he was reassigned to head of the traffic department. McClintock ultimately moved to Myrtle Creek, Oregon, where he served as police chief for a number of years before being elected mayor in 1952.

■ **Raymond J. Whitney**, 1928—After the reassignment of Lloyd McClintock, City Manager Raymond J. Whitney announced he would run the department until such time a new chief could be found.

■ **William T. Lorimer**, 1928—William T. Lorimer, a retired lieutenant of the Detroit Police Department, took the office of chief. He resigned in 1932.

■ **Alfred Reynolds**, 1932-36—Alfred Reynolds was named acting chief. He served in that capacity until 1936, when he asked for the assignment of lieutenant.

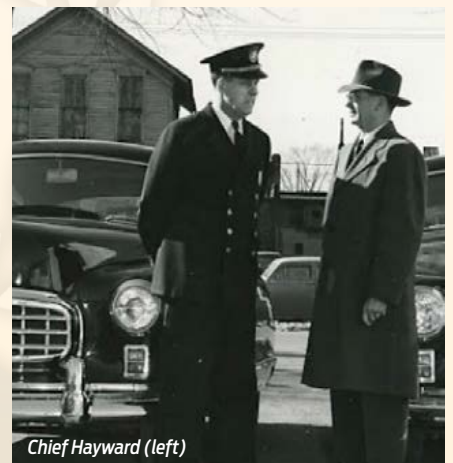
■ **Ray C. Hayward**, 1936-63—After 27 years as Royal Oak's top cop, Ray C. Hayward resigned on his 60th birthday in 1963. He worked for only two city managers during his entire tenure. After his retirement, Hayward went on to be one of the most popular and colorful bailiffs in Oakland County Circuit Court.

■ **Herman Potts**, 1963-71—

During Herman Potts's tenure as chief, the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) required police procedure ensure suspects were informed of their rights to remain silent, consult an attorney and that any statements made may be used against them. Miranda Rights, Potts believed, put a burden on police officers. Another source of concern for Potts was what he told the *Daily Tribune* was "a seemingly larger generation gap than ever before." In 1970, police dealt with a number of youth confrontations at Memorial Park, which Potts said



Chief Reynolds



Chief Hayward (left)



Chief Scott with Officer Kent

created “anxiety” for the department. He retired at age 60, the mandatory retirement age for Royal Oak police officers.

- **James Soules**, 1971-73—As chief, James Soules implemented a four-day work week of 10-hour shifts and organized three new departments: traffic safety division, special investigation unit and cadet program – with the city’s first federal grants. He retired after 37 years in law enforcement, in which he held every rank in the Royal Oak Police Department.
- **Virgil L. Scott**, 1973-77—During Virgil L. Scott’s tenure as police chief, Royal Oak had one of the highest densities in the Metro Detroit area, with a population of more than 86,000. In 1976, the Royal Oak Police Department began the use of computers in law enforcement management by joining Oakland County’s Courts in Law Enforcement Management Information System, also known as CLEMIS. In 1977, the main desk and communication rooms were remodeled, improving security at the main desk and facilitating the processing of prisoners with a communication center.
- **Clayton Besanson**, 1978-80—During Besanson’s tenure, then-city manager William Baldridge created a public safety director’s job that eliminated the assistant police and fire chief positions and had the police and fire chiefs report directly to the director. Besanson was second in command to Public Safety Director John Ball. As head of the South Oakland Tactical Police Unit in 1970, Besanson controlled rioters at Memorial Park, which he considered one of the highlights of his career. In 1979, a crime prevention unit was formed under Besanson, which received strong public support.
- **John Taylor**, 1980-85—In the 1980s, Royal Oak was almost entirely developed but many of its neighboring communities were not, and the city’s population began to shift and decline as young families moved to developing suburbs. During the Taylor years, the city

struggled with monetary difficulties and no new programs or operations were initiated or enlarged during this period. Upon his retirement in 1985, he told the *Daily Tribune* that during his three decades in law enforcement, police work matured from a low-paying job that attracted a few dedicated men in the 1950s to a professional career that involved both men and women.

- **Richard G. Kemp**, 1985-92—Prior his appointment to chief, Richard G. Kemp served in virtually every unit and division in the department. Kemp was a knowledgeable and capable manager and worked closely with Public Safety Director John Ball to oversee the department.

- **John Ball**, 1979-93—John Ball, the director of public safety, also performed duties of chief near the end of his long career with the Royal Oak Police Department. He was in charge in 1991 when a fired postal worker fatally shot four people and wounded six others before taking his own life at the Royal Oak Post Office. The events of that day drew national attention and Ball was propelled into the media spotlight. He retired after a 33-year career in law enforcement to begin a new career as director of pastoral ministers for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit.



Chief Ball

- **John Tyler**, 1994—John Tyler was appointed by City Manager William Baldridge as interim chief after the departure of John Ball. Since Baldridge himself was due to retire, he felt his successor should make the decision on who should be the new police chief.
- **Mel J. Johnson**, 1994 -2000—Mel J. Johnson was the first appointment of incoming City Manager Larry Doyle. Johnson faced many challenges during his administration, including a police officer fatally shooting a suspected car thief, railroad crossing deaths, a whistle stop visit from President Bill Clinton, the collapse of the 911 system due to an Ameritech problem and Jack Kevorkian. During Johnson’s tenure, the department implemented its first K-9 unit with the arrival of Johnnie, a Belgian Malinois, in 1996.
- **Theodore H. Quisenberry**, 2001-09—The hiring of Theodore H. Quisenberry, a recently retired deputy police chief from the city of Southfield, was somewhat controversial in that he was selected from outside the department. Quisenberry’s appointment indicated a desire to change the direction of the department and he was specifically tasked with restructuring the agency to be more engaging with citizens, businesses, and the various organizations within the city. During his tenure,

Quisenberry instituted several community policing-based programs intended to increase police/community interaction, including a bicycle patrol, Chaplain program, Central Business District patrols, Citizen Police Academy and Honor Guard program.

■ **Christopher Jahnke, 2009-11—**

Christopher Jahnke was the first appointment of City Manager Don Johnson. As Royal Oak evolved, so did its police department, becoming much more responsive and proactive – something Jahnke was very proud to be part of. Unfortunately, police staff was depleted during his years as chief. In 2010, following the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, the department would lay off 12 officers. In that same year, Arts, Beats & Eats came to Royal Oak for the first time and the department was charged with keeping record crowds safe during the four-day event. After his retirement, Jahnke accepted a position with



Chief Quisenberry

the Michigan Treasury Department's Gaming Division in Detroit.

■ **Corrigan O'Donohue,**

2011-present—For Chief Corrigan O'Donohue, there is no debate regarding the importance a values-based culture plays in building a premier police department. After voters passed a public safety millage in 2012 by a more than 2-to-1 margin, O'Donohue has been deliberate in selecting and investing in qualified officers that are committed to the department's core values of integrity, loyalty, compassion, courage and service. These values, which shape routine decision-making, have resulted in one of the best safety rankings in the nation and contribute to Royal Oak being named one of the happiest, most exciting, safest and best places to live, according to a number of state and national "Best of" lists. In 2015, O'Donohue's responsibilities expanded to include the duties of assistant city manager.



Chief O'Donohue

Why Do Police Wear Badges?

By Carol Schwanger

Badges date back to the Middle Ages when commoners and nobility alike wore symbols on their clothing to indicate their loyalty to a house or group. Gallant knights wore the coat of arms on their shields to identify allegiance to justice, chivalry and their royal leaders, and just like police of today, swore an oath to protect and serve.

The shape of the badge remains consistent with the shape of a knight's shield and is also displayed in artwork in police stations and on police vehicles. No matter where you go, you will see this shape for police, while sheriff's departments will feature a star shape with five to seven points.

Royal Oak's badge has changed very little over 100 years, with the current design being more than 40 years old. A collection of Royal Oak Police Department badges can be found at the Royal Oak Historical Museum, 1411 W. Webster.



To celebrate a century of service, Royal Oak officers will wear a special badge in 2018. The commemorative design will be worn by every member of the department, with slight variations.



Women, Policing & the 'Flapper Era'

By Ruth Cleaveland,
Historic District Commission and Study Committee Chair

A new era for women

When the peace treaty of World War I was signed in 1918, more than a war ended. It was also an end to the expected role of women that had prevailed during the Victorian and Edwardian eras of housewifery and childbearing.

Skirts were dramatically shortened, hair bobbed, and boned corsets discarded. Women began to smoke publicly and drink in bars. Cloche-style hats replaced the exaggerated feathered hats once featured on women's elaborately coiffed heads. Bright makeup adorned those newly eligible to vote. A new feminine culture had arrived.

This wave of changed behavior provoked serious concern in many people, including police departments

whose previous focus had been mainly directed toward public safety and illegal behavior by the male population.

Women in law enforcement

Lily Salheim Nelson was the first woman to join the police department as an officer in the early 1930s. The *Daily Tribune* reported, "After prohibition ended, a great number of beer gardens had opened up and there were problems with underage drinking and gambling." Chief Ray Hayward felt a woman would be a lot of help "cleaning these situations up." A widow, Salheim Nelson joined the force. Her assignments mainly consisted of undercover work.

Elizabeth Leshner became the first female detective in 1955. She was assigned cases "dealing with women's

problems," according to a *Daily Tribune* report.

Esther Cheyne, a 27-year police vet, is the first woman named "Police Officer of the Year."

Female officers have made a significant and positive impact on Royal Oak in the years that ensued, and they owe their opportunity to these trailblazers who proved what women could offer to law enforcement and the community in general.



Esther Cheyne

Working 'K-9 to Five'

By Elizabeth Scussel and Judy Davids

In 1998, the Royal Oak Police Department welcomed its first furry, four-legged officer when two-year-old Johnnie, a purebred German shepherd, arrived via the Netherlands. A full-fledged police officer, he was tasked with performing duties and services that tend to be difficult for humans – such as using his sniffer to hunt illegal contraband, search buildings, and track criminals.

Today, Royal Oak has two K-9 officers, Ryker and Jesse. Both police dogs arrived in Royal Oak after completing an extensive six-week training program with their partners at Vohne Liche Kennels in Indiana. Both embody the department's core values of integrity, service, courage, compassion and loyalty.

Here's a look at the Royal Oak Police Department K-9 Unit through the years:

- **1996** — The City of Royal Oak approves the addition of a police department K-9 unit to their annual budget.
- **1998** — Johnnie becomes the department's first police dog. He is partnered with Officer Marty Lavin. His job duties include searching for and seizing controlled substances,

tracking burglars and other crime suspects, as well as leading police searches for missing children and residents suffering with Alzheimer's Disease. Johnnie retired in 2005.

- **2004** — Rex, a two-year-old Belgian Tervuren, arrives and is assigned to Officer Brian Zelakiewicz. Rex was initially intended to be swooped up by the Navy SEALs based on his extraordinary abilities, but his coat was too long and not suitable for the desert heat. Rex was trained specifically for the detection of cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamines. On numerous occasions, the Drug Enforcement Administration and Oakland County Narcotics Team requested Rex to assist with search warrants. The gentle warrior earned multiple awards. He retired in 2011.
- **2005** — Johnnie, now retired, goes missing. It is believed he may have



A limited number of K-9 Ryker and K-9 Jesse trading cards are available at the Royal Oak Police Station.

mistaken fireworks for gunshots and escaped out the door during Fourth of July celebrations. After weeks of intense searching, Johnnie is discovered dead near a wooded area. It is believed he was hit by a car.

- **2005** — Charlie, a two-year-old Belgian Malinois, joins the department and is partnered with Officer Zack Nottle. Charlie, in his prime, could run up to 40 miles per hour. During his career, he is credited with the seizure of roughly \$500,000 in drug forfeitures, and apprehending 44 fleeing criminals. He retired in 2012.
- **2012** — Ryker, an 18-month-old Dutch Shepherd, is assigned to Officer Richard Chipman. On his very first night on patrol, Ryker assisted police and located the subject of an area search hiding in, oddly enough, a doghouse. The man pulled from the doghouse was recognized as someone the Detroit Police Homicide Unit wanted for questioning.
- **2015** — Officers ask residents to choose a name for their newest police dog. The name Jesse is chosen in honor of fallen officer Jesse R. Crowe, who was accidentally shot and killed by another officer in a dark alley in 1931 while investigating a burglary. Later that year, Jesse, a 2-year-old Belgian Malinois, arrives and is assigned to Officer Michael Stajich. He is trained in narcotics detection, tracking, building, area and article search, and suspect apprehension.

Police dogs and handlers develop a special bond that continues long after the dog retires and goes from K-9 officer to family pet. After his retirement, K-9 Rex, shown in photo, lived with his longtime partner, Officer Brian Zelakiewicz, until his passing at age 15 in Sept. 2017.



History of Royal Oak Police Headquarters

Pre-1915: As the Village of Royal Oak expanded in the early 1900s, police services followed. In the first part of the 20th century, the town marshal was responsible for law and order and, as necessary, delivered prisoners to Pontiac for safekeeping while they awaited a trial.

1915: A fire hall is built in Royal Oak at Main and Sixth Streets and a small room is provided with two cells to house prisoners.

1918: A local police department is officially established. The headquarters continue to be located at the fire hall.

1924: The department moves its headquarters from the small room on the right of the fire hall to a room on the left for one year.



Merrill House

1926: Citing a lack of space, the Royal Oak Police Department moves into the two-story Merrill House, at the northwest corner of Second and Williams Streets. The 47-year-old farmhouse has eight cramped rooms. The jail cells will remain at the fire hall for a period of time before being transferred to the basement of the Merrill House.

1928: Chief William Lorimer and the city's health officer report the conditions of the cellblocks are unsanitary and repairs are ordered, which include installing new iron doors, two fresh coats of light paint, new bunk beds and a sheet-metal screen in front of the toilets.

1951: The *Daily Tribune* announces a new radio system is installed at the police station that will link Royal Oak with Detroit.

1953: After more than 20 years in the wood-framed Merrill House, the police move into what the *Daily Tribune* referred to as "relatively luxurious quarters." The department moves around the block into a brick building that formerly housed City Hall at Third and Troy. With 15 rooms on a single level, the department nearly doubles its space. A cellblock and a garage are added to the rear of the building and a local man offers to purchase the former Merrill House for \$102.

1964: For the first time in its history, construction of a brand-new building is completed for the sole purpose of being headquarters of the Royal Oak Police Department. The three-story, 22,253-square-foot brick building at 221 E. Third has a cell block for male, female and juvenile prisoners and includes a target range.



Main desk
before and
after.



1977: The main desk and communication rooms are remodeled to improve security at the main desk, and streamline the processing of prisoners with a communication center.

2016: Plante Moran Cresa (PMC) completes an analysis of City Hall, the

police station and parking for the City of Royal Oak. The real estate consultant reports the Royal Oak station is undersized in comparison to other police stations in southeast Michigan. The analysis states the current facility was “designed and constructed for police functions with different prisoner transport processes, evidence processing, as well as little-to-no integration of technology or consideration of an Emergency Operations Center.” Due to the poor condition of the building and its structural framing, any type of renovation of the 1964 facility will have limitations and be uneconomical, according to PMC.

2017: Preliminary drawings of a proposed two-story police station with basement and covered parking are presented to the city commission and the public. Input from every police department employee helps drive the final plan of the 40,000-square-foot facility. Spending more than a year on the design, architects and police say the new station layout will improve efficiency in operations. Approved by the city commission, construction is expected to begin in 2018, the 100-year anniversary of the Royal Oak Police Department.

Acknowledgments

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Royal Oak, Michigan: The Early Years by Owen Perkins (published in 1971) was also used in the research of the police department's history.



Mission Statement

"To Keep Royal Oak Safe."

Vision Statement

"To build Michigan's premier police agency that is a recognized leader for efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, and public safety."

Core Values

Integrity | Service | Courage |
Compassion | Loyalty

Important Contacts and Information

Emergency: 911*

Front Desk / Non-Emergency: 248-246-3500

Snow Emergency: 248-246-3442

**Criminal Investigation Division
(Detective Bureau):** 248-246-3515

Records: 248-246-3530

Property: 248-246-3564

Auto Impounds and Auctions: 248-246-3427

Sign-Up for Crime Alerts: romi.gov/crimealerts

Crime Stoppers: Share information about a crime anonymously at 1-800-SPEAK UP or www.1800speakup.org

Crime Mapping: View reported, verified criminal activity near any address at crimemapping.com

Identity Theft:
consumer.gov/section/scams-and-identity-theft

Proposed New Police Station Information:
romi.gov/policestation