

HISTORY OF GRIFFITH POLICE DEPARTMENT



Activated in 1904 with the appointment of Griffith's first Town Marshall, John C. Harkenrider, little is known of early organization or work of the Griffith Police, though we do know that the Marshall system was employed, and early Marshalls worked alone or with volunteers to control crime and keep the peace in the small railroad community.

Following are the chronological order of Marshalls employed within the community up until Griffith moved to a Metropolitan Police system of organization in 1956.

Years of Service	Marshall
1905-1908	John Harkenrider
1908-1913	John R. Taylor
1913-1914	John Harkenrider
1914-1917	Dan Walters
1917-1925	John Harkenrider
1925-1925	George Young
1925-1931	John Harkenrider
1931-1939	Thomas Rutledge
1939-1944	Claude C. Patterson
1944-1956	William Kussmaul

On 1/3/1956, according to the wishes of Griffith voters, the Police Department was reorganized following the Indiana Metropolitan Police Department Law of 1951. Appointed as the first Griffith Police Commissioners as prescribed by the Law of 1951 were Jerry Heffernan (elected Chairman), Josephine Currier (elected Secretary), and Haskell Hoke. John F. Hilbrich was appointed as legal advisor.

Appointed as the first Chief of Police was William Kussmaul, who had served prior to the occasion as Griffith's last Town Marshall. Other full-time Officers sworn in at the same time were Texas O. Minter, (appointed Sergeant) and Robert J. Herod and George C. Phillips appointed as 1st Class Patrolmen.

At the same time the newly created Police Commission formally recognized a group of volunteers referred to as the Griffith Police Department Auxiliary who worked alongside the regular Department members, working their days off and otherwise assisting as added manpower, to protect the Citizens of Griffith. Though the Auxiliary had existed for some time prior to this date, it was formally recognized at this time and its Charter members were as follows:

William Johnson	Jack Tubbs	Eugene Wirth
Donald Barrett	Frank DeAngelo	LaVerne Williams
Leonard Volk	Ernest Crum	Craig McFarland
Arthur Morris	Victor Savia	Vincent Lex, Jr.
Howard Marion	Joseph Pachnik	Albert Swatek
Robert Scoville		Lawrence Sands

The Griffith Auxiliary was to continue to be a vital part of the Griffith Police Department until its disbandment in 1962 by order of the Attorney General of Indiana, who ruled that Auxiliary organizations were illegal where Metropolitan Police systems were in effect. Some other Town citizens who subsequently saw service in the Police Auxiliary are as follows:

John Blazic	Frank Peters	John Koci
Charles Bulla	Richard Lloyd	Donald Schultz
John Rottier	Roland Rowe	John Hart
Floyd Roberts	Edward Rubacha	James Reyome

By 1962 the Police Department had grown from its original four (4) members (1956), to nine (9) men. New faces included Richard Fortner (1957), John Burns (1961), John Verbich (1962), Edward Rubacha (1962) and James Reyome (1962). During this same year, a reorganization created the rank of Lieutenant and designated the position as Executive Officer with the existing Sergeant's position being identified as responsible for the midnight shift. Texas Minter became the first Lieutenant for the Griffith Police Department and Robert J. Herod was appointed as Sergeant.

Also in 1962, the Department suffered a tragedy in the loss of Lieutenant and Executive Officer Texas O. Minter, who was killed after being struck by a train while enroute to the scene of construction of a new dog pound for the Town. His loss was greatly felt and the entire Town mourned the loss of a dedicated public servant.

In 1965 the longevity program was enacted to encourage Officers to remain with the Department and it continues on today as one of the better programs in the area. On August 16, 1965, the Griffith Police Commission accepted with great regret the resignation of William Kussmaul as Chief of Police, capping a long and dedicated career of service with and for the Town of Griffith. John Burns was named as Kussmaul's replacement and a reorganization at that time found Richard Fortner appointed Lieutenant and Executive Officer, James Reyome appointed Sergeant in charge of Traffic & Safety, and Robert Herod appointed Sergeant and Juvenile Officer. The compliment of the Po-

lice Department at this time was twelve (12) Officers.

By 1968 the number of Officers rose to sixteen (16). During this year John Burns resigned as Chief and was replaced by Robert Herod. At this time Herod was joined by James Reyome as his Executive Officer and Det. Lieutenant and George Phillips was promoted to Traffic Lieutenant.

During the late 1960's, Griffith developed its own Radio Communications system and office staff and by 1976 employed a staff of twenty (20) sworn Officers, as well as seventeen (17) civilian employees. In 1976, after twenty-five years of service Robert J. Herod retired as Chief of Police, joining him in retirement was Lt. George Phillips. These retirements required another general reorganization. Appointed as Chief of Police was James Reyome; others appointed were Edward Rubacha as Executive Officer and Traffic Lieutenant and William Weddell as Detective Lieutenant.

In 1979, seventy-five years after its initial beginning, the Police Department employs twenty-three (23) Sworn Officers and twenty (20) full and part-time civilian employees. The Department boasts a well-trained and well-equipped staff with a fleet of eleven vehicles and the most modern Communications facility available for a Town of its size. In addition, during 1979, the Department organized its first Police Cadet program for prospective candidates to the Law enforcement field and currently is training ten (10) young men and women for possible futures in police work.

On a sad note, 1979 also found the Police Department suffering another heartfelt loss when Lieutenant and Executive Officer Edward Rubacha suffered a fatal heart attack. In the subsequent reorganization Lieutenant William Weddell was designated as Executive officer and Sergeant John Verbich was elevated to fill Rubacha's former position as Traffic Lieutenant.

Comparatively speaking, in 1946 the Griffith Police investigated forty-three accidents within the Town limits, while during 1978 five hundred and sixty-nine such calls were answered.

All in all, we are very proud of our heritage and traditions and seek first and foremost always to serve our Citizens to the best of our ability.

Police Commissioners	1st Commissioners
	Jerry Heffernan - Chairman
	Haskell Hoke
	Josephine Currier - Secretary

Others to serve:		
George Lunde	Ray Durbin	Donald Barrett
Frank Malone	Haskell Hoke	Bill Pickett
	Fred Howitt	Elmer Yohnke
	Jerry Barenie	Donald Swingle
	John Koci	Julius Tzitz
	Dale Banks	Andy Graff

Current Commissioners	
	William George - Chairman
	John Mang - Secretary
	Jack Tubbs

Police Chiefs	Years of Service	Chief of Police
	1956 - 1965	William Kussmaul
	1965 - 1968	John M. Burns
	1968 - 1976	Robert J. Herod
	1976 - Present	James Reyome

GRIFFITH POLICE DEPARTMENT ROSTER	
Chief of Police - James D. Reyome	
Traffic Division Commander - Lieutenant John Verbich	
Detective Division Commander - Lieutenant William Weddell	
<u>Shift Commanders</u>	<u>Detectives</u>
Sergeant Kenneth LaBuda	Detective Ronald Creviston
Sergeant Dennis Maze	Detective Kenneth Daugherty
Sergeant Robert Segally	Juvenile Officer
Sergeant David Schroeder	Detective John Mowery
<u>Traffic Patrol Officers</u>	<u>Delinquency Control Officer</u>
Patrolman Patrick Degard	Detective Stephen Markovich
Patrolman Ronald Kottka	<u>Animal Warden</u>
Patrolman Thomas Schoon	Michael Rosa
Patrolman John Vanek	
Patrolman Richard Heinzman	
Patrolman Karl Grimmer	
Patrolman George Teeling	
Patrolman Michael Kuhn	
Patrolman Anthony Madejczyk	
Patrolman Joseph Mele	
Patrolman David Hardacker	
Patrolman Robert Bertuca	

Next week and weekly thereafter we will spotlight individual Department members in order to better acquaint Griffith residents with their Police Department.