

The citizens of Weymouth could not see the need of police in their town for many decades during the early history. Constables were appointed many years before any organized police force was known.

Just when these constables were actually replaced by patrolmen can not be definitely stated. Several times the group of constables grew to more than a score in number, and then when their cost became too great for the town, the citizens would abolish the force.

Lawlessness would naturally spring forth again, and the constables would soon be back on duty; but their positions were uncertain. Politics, favoritism, and chance sentiment of the town meetings played an important part in their careers.

There is a tradition that a constable was chosen near 1636, but the earliest record is that Thomas Richards and William Reade were chosen constables in March, 1644. A year or two later the constables were charged with the collection of taxes. This was done for many years following. The position of constable, however, in later years became undesirable and many refused to hold the office; whereupon it became necessary to impose a fine for neglect or refusal to serve without acceptable excuse, and many such fines were collected.

In 1872, the first patrolman ever to be hired by the town for regular duty began to serve in Weymouth Landing. The salary of this man was collected by public subscription among some of the leading citizens in that section.

In the summer of the following year, 1873, two other patrolmen were named to do patrol duty about Weymouth. These men worked only during the summer months, and only in the evening or early part of the night.

The townspeople felt the cost of supporting these three officers was too high and in 1877 they voted at town meeting to dispense with police altogether. The town could be kept under control with constables, they thought. But this soon proved to be false.

Lawlessness and crime increased, and it was not long before the patrolmen were back in service. It was a strange form of police duty that they were asked to perform in those days. No organization; no equipment; no lockup; no transportation; no telephone was available to aid them, yet, they maintained order to a degree in their sections.

The first lockup which can be remembered in Weymouth was on the corner of Washington and Front Streets, Weymouth Landing, in a cellar. Several other lockups were later established nearby, one in Lincoln Sq.

One of the earliest police officers in Weymouth was Thomas Fitzgerald who served in Weymouth Landing. In 1902 he became the first chief of the department.

During this time the selectmen played an important part in the career of every man on the force, he remained only as long as he stayed in the good grace of the town fathers. At the 1912 town meeting the department was placed under civil service and with this new found protection the department became much more efficient.

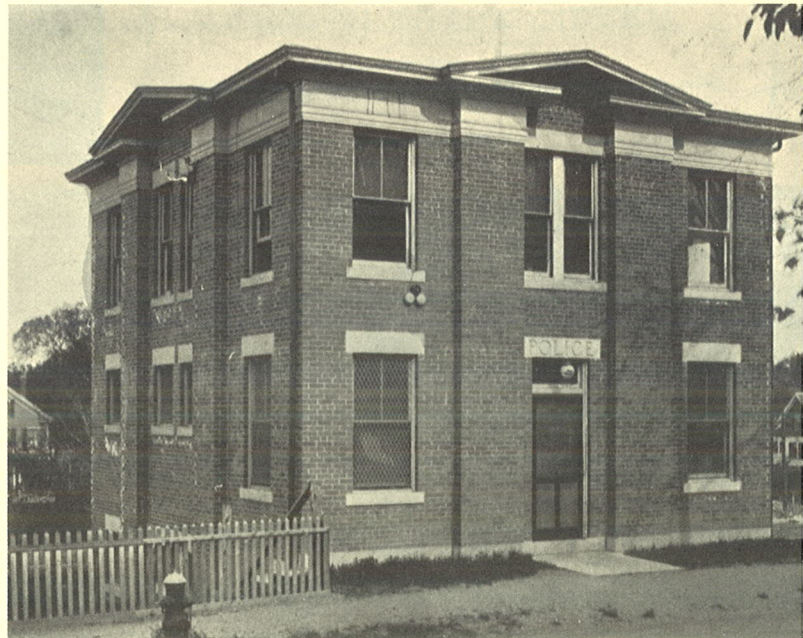
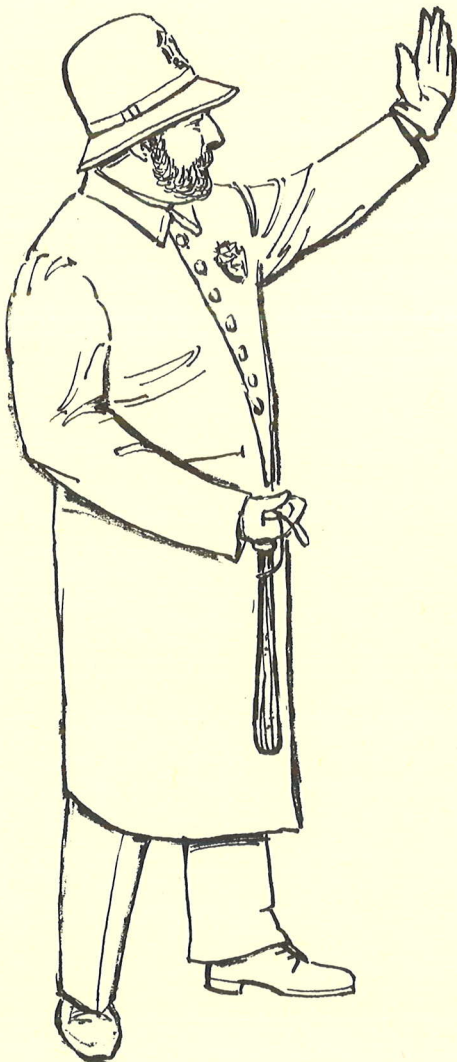
In 1914, Patrick Butler, father of the later chief Edward F. Butler, became chief of the Weymouth force. He held this position for about one year until he was killed by an automobile. From 1915 to 1931 the department was under the supervision of Chief of Police Arthur H. Pratt. Chief Pratt retired from active duty in 1931 at which time he was succeeded by Chief Edward F. Butler.



During the summer of 1920 a motorcycle officer was assigned to enforce the traffic rules and to stop speeding.

The first traffic officer of the department was assigned in 1921 to assist pedestrians through the flow of early automobiles in Washington Square. It was not long before both East and North Weymouth had traffic officers.

In 1953 Joseph O'Kane became the fifth chief of the department, and under his direction the Weymouth police department has grown with the times. We now have a force of over 100 men and 40 women who answer the ever growing demands of our citizens. With such technological advances as radar, electronic communications and a computer, the latter being a regional effort with Quincy, Braintree and Milton as the South Metrolpol District. This computer gives instantaneous information on all phases of police work. This is a far cry from the early days when an old fashioned patrolman with a helmet hat carted drunkards to the town lockup in a wheelbarrow.



*The First Police Station  
Built on Site of Present Station  
1913-14*

*Photo Courtesy Franklin N. Pratt*