**1st era of law enforcement**

When George Kehl retired from the Fishers Police Department in 2016, it was the end of an era. In 1978, Kehl became the town’s only marshal and held that position until he retired in 2016 as the chief of police. He was the longest serving chief of police in Indiana. His service to the community was recognized as his name now hangs outside the Fishers Police building, named in his honor. How far back does the history of the Fishers Police Department go? Let’s take a look at the history of law enforcement in Fishers from its early beginnings to the present day, which can be broken down into two time periods.

The beginning of law enforcement in Fishers dates back to the founding of Hamilton County in 1823, almost fifty years before the town was founded. At the time there were only two townships, Delaware in the south and White River in the north. Before the seat of government was placed in Noblesville, all county business, including court, was held at the home of William Connor (present day Connor Prairie). W.R. Warrick was appointed Sheriff of Hamilton County. There were also constables who were appointed to maintain order within the two townships. Edward M. Dryer and George Wise were appointed as the first constables for Delaware Township until an election could be held the following year.

In 1833, Delaware and White River townships were carved up to make new townships. Delaware would add Clay Township to the west and Fall Creek Township to the east. The county now had nine townships which were patrolled by elected constables. There is a difference between a constable and a marshal. The constable was elected by the township while the marshal was either elected or appointed by the various cities or towns within the township. The constables focused on the unincorporated areas of the township while marshals patrolled within the town limits. It is very similar to the present day system of the sheriff’s department and municipal police departments.

As Delaware Township began to grow, new settlers meant the creation of new towns. New Britton was first formed in 1851 and then Fishers followed in 1872. The town of Fishers, or Fishers Station as it was called, was a lot different than it is today. It was only a few blocks in either direction emanating from the railroad tracks. The first mention of a marshal in Fishers was in 1884. Samuel Kepner was the local blacksmith and highly respected in the community. In 1881, the two day bar brawl dubbed the Battle of Mudsock, ended with one person killed and dozens injured. The only mention of law enforcement intervening was when the sheriff formed a posse to restore order. The Battle of Mudsock could very well have been the catalyst for the creation of law enforcement in Fishers.

It is unclear how long Kepner served as marshal. In 1890, Fishers became incorporated and an election was held in 1891. The marshal was one of six elected positions along with the clerk, treasurer, and three council members. Richard Long, running on the Democratic Party ticket, was the incumbent. He had previously won a seat on the council in 1890, but resigned two months later to be appointed as the marshal. He would go on to beat John Hause, running on the Citizens Party ticket, to retain his position.

**Part II**

The marshal was responsible for enforcing law and order but was also vested with additional responsibilities by the town council. The Wild West was dirty so he had the power to compel everyone in the town to clean their streets and alleys. Any able bodied man was expected to clean the town when ordered. If any person failed to comply with the marshal’s orders, they could be fined as much as five dollars. Albert Trittipo, who ran a store in Fishers with his father, learned the hard way and realized that no one is above the law. He was fined $1.25 for failing to clean the streets, which he refused to pay. The city sued him, costing fifteen dollars to prosecute, which they won.

The marshal was a part-time position which resulted in a lot of turn-over. Most of the marshals had full-time jobs as either farmers, blacksmiths, or business owners. It was also an unpaid position until April, 1891. Up until that point, the marshal received a portion of any fines that were levied or for specific duties assigned by the council. Constables and marshals received twenty-five cents for serving a warrant plus five cents for each mile traveled. Attending court would fetch fifty cents and posting advertisements paid thirty cents. A group of citizens petitioned the town council to provide a salary for the marshal, which was granted. The marshal started to receive a salary of $25 a year, paid quarterly, in 1891.

While the elected positions carried a one year term, elections were not always held every year because of the expenses involved. John Hause who lost the election for marshal in 1890, would go on to win the election of 1891. There would not be another election held for any office for six years. Hause resigned his position three months later and there would be seven marshals appointed before an election was held in 1897.

While most marshals barely served six months, the election of 1897 saw the election of the longest serving marshal, Charley Moore. He served as marshal for six years. The town council bought a badge for him which cost $1.50. When Moore resigned in 1903, eight different marshals would serve until 1915. During that time, they were all appointed except for J.P. Heady, who was elected in 1909. In 1913, the marshal received a salary increase to $50 a year.

In July 1915, Charles Dorral resigned as marshal after three months. The next month, the town council made a new tax levy to hire a night watchman for the town instead of appointing another marshal. The marshal position was left off the ballot during the November 1915 election. There was one more attempt in 1916 to hire a marshal but the motion was defeated. The first era of law enforcement in Fishers had come to an end.

**2nd era of law enforcement**

After Fishers did away with their marshal in 1915, law enforcement within the City became the responsibility of the sheriff’s department. Occasionally, the city would hire officers for holidays such as Halloween. Then in 1962, after 47 years, the town council revived the position of marshal. Arnold Howard was selected as the first marshal to begin the second era of law enforcement in Fishers. He was hired at a salary of $125 a month. The position was still part-time, but a lot of things had changed since Charles Dorral last held the position. Radios and firearms were now part of the uniform, patches were added to the uniform, and automobiles had replaced the horse carriage.

The marshal was essentially a sheriff’s deputy. The marshal was not employed by the sheriff’s department, however the sheriff had to approve the appointment and deputize the marshal in order to enforce the laws. Two years later, the town council hired Bob Johnson as a deputy marshal at a salary of $75 a month.

In 1968, Fishers organized an unpaid auxiliary police force to assist the marshals. This is similar to the reserve officer program today. A special session was held on February 10th, 1968 to swear in the new officers. The new auxiliary police officers would have the same authority as the paid marshals, may arrest if a violation occurs within the town limits, were entitled to carry a firearm, and each were issued a badge. The new auxiliary officers, in seniority, were Albert Jarrett (Council Member), Vernon Crickmore (town council president), Charles Kearney, and Gary Reynolds.

Tensions were rising between the town council and Marshal Howard. In August 1968, he was asked to submit his resignation in writing and shortly thereafter, deputy marshal Bob Johnson submitted his resignation. By the next month, after private conversations with the council, Howard and Johnson both rescinded their resignations. Johnson agreed to stay on until the end of the year as he had moved out of Fishers. At the end of January 1969, Arnold Howard resigned his position but he agreed to stay on for a short time with no pay to train two new officers to replace them, Ed Knight and Jack Glover.

Knight and Glover were given a three month probationary period. At the conclusion, the town council voted to keep both officers on an equal status. Instead of having a deputy marshal, they were considered co-marshals. They were both paid $100 a month. However, the sheriff refused to put the marshals on deputy sheriff status. This meant that the marshals could not take enforcement action outside the town limits. They could assist other agencies in emergency situations or when requested, but could not take enforcement action.

Part 4

Technological advancements began to change how law enforcement operated. In 1968, Cook County Sheriff Joseph Woods, an ex-marine, went on television to show the effects of a new tool, Mace, which he called a “a very humane weapon.” Invented by a couple in Pittsburgh as a household invention, it soon turned into a front line weapon for law enforcement. Protests over racial inequality and the Vietnam War led to violent clashes with law enforcement. Mace gave law enforcement an alternate method of incapacitating a subject without the need for a firearm. Fishers bought three bottles to equip their officers with the latest tool in law enforcement.

The first two way radio was used in Bayonne, New Jersey, in 1933. After John Dilinger was killed in 1934, Indiana ranked fourth in the nation in bank robberies. The pursuit of Dilinger was hampered by an ineffective communications system. So that same year, a fund was established that would create a statewide short-wave radio network. In 1935, the first five AM transmitters were installed in Indiana but it was still only a one-way system.

During World War II, the Indiana State Police began to install two-way radios in the cars. While patrol cars had radios, the officers themselves did not. The portable pack radios used in the military during World War II led to the creation of hand held radios for officers. The drawback was that the radios weighed nearly five pounds and were not able to be carried on the officer’s belt.

In August 1970, Fishers acquired the first set of radios for its marshals. A county-wide radio project would link all the agencies together on one frequency and Fishers agreed to participate. The communications base would be maintained by the Noblesville Police and would give 24 hour coverage. With the assistance of a federal grant, Fishers purchased three in-car radios and received their first FCC license on the new county-wide system.

The one thing that Fishers lacked was a patrol car. The marshals were required to use their own personal vehicle for patrol. They were given an allowance for using their vehicles. The newly acquired radios were installed in their vehicles. Jack Glover recalled that in 1970, his vehicle was involved in an accident. After buying a new vehicle, he told the town council that it would not be used as a patrol vehicle. It was finally time to purchase an official patrol vehicle. The town council took bids from Don Hinds Ford, Paul Goeke Dodge/Plymouth, and Burt Pontiac Buick.

There were many models to choose from. Ford’s Galaxie model had been a popular choice among police departments since the 1950’s. In 1971, Ford equipped the Galaxie with a 7.0 liter, V8 engine, which became a favorite vehicle for the California Highway Patrol and New York City Police Department. Dodge offered the police two different models, the midsize Coronet and the larger Polara. The Polara had the larger engine, a 440, that came with 375 horsepower and a top speed of 141 mph. The more economical Coronet still had a two barrel 318 V8 engine. Both models bragged that no car could outrun a Dodge. In 1968, Plymouth became the most sold police vehicle in the world. In 1971, it also offered two models. The Fury, and the Belvedere, which had changed to the Satellite in 1971.

Don Hinds Ford was too expensive, and it came down to two choices. Burt Pontiac won the bid by unanimous vote over Paul Goeke Dodge/Plymouth. Fishers bought it’s first patrol vehicle, a 1971 Pontiac Bonneville, for $3000. It came equipped with a 455 cubic V8 engine with 185 horsepower. It was outfitted with a light bar, emblems, scanner, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and a siren/PA system. Later, the car would be equipped with rain gutters and an electronic trunk release. With the addition of the new patrol vehicle, Glover’s salary was amended to include $15 to cover the expense of housing and maintaining the vehicle as the city lacked the resources.

The town eventually bought a used 1976 Dodge Monaco from the Indiana State Police to complement the Pontiac. A popular model for police departments, it was featured in *The Blue Brothers* as the Bluesmobile.

Part 5

Marshal Knight resigned his position due to an employment conflict. He was replaced with George Kelsch, but not at the same level. Glover became the primary marshal with Kelsch as his deputy. Sheriff Larry Cook changed his policy that only one marshal can have deputy sheriff status. However, all marshals were required to carry false arrest insurance through the National Sheriff Association. In June of 1972, William Vogel was hired as a third marshal.

**First Full-Time Marshal**

As early as 1970, a survey of the residents showed that they wanted a full-time marshal. Glover explained that during the daytime, the Sheriff’s department patrolled the town while the marshals were at work. Once they were home in the evenings, the marshals were back on duty. This is how it was for years until January 1978, when Fishers hired its first full time marshal. Jack Glover, who has served as marshal for the last eight years, was offered the $12000 a year position. He turned it down because there were no insurance benefits. He opted to stay at his full-time job and remain as a deputy under the new marshal. The position went to an outsider from West Virginia, Elwood Howard Hawk.

Hawk’s tenure as marshal was strained from the beginning. He routinely missed council meetings and Glover had to fill in for him. There were times that the monthly reports were never filled out. The patrol vehicles had fallen into disrepair. After some legal troubles, Hawk was forced to resign after six months, but he didn’t go quietly. Shortly before the council meeting where his resignation was voted on, the Clerk-Treasurer noticed that $150 was missing from the safe. Only Hawk and the treasurer had keys. The office had been turned upside down and supplies were missing. It was assumed by the Board that Hawk was the culprit, but no legal action was taken.

The search began for Hawk’s replacement. George Kehl had become a deputy marshal in 1976 when George Kelsch resigned. One of the requirements the Board had was that the new marshal be certified. Kehl was a 1978 graduate of the 52nd basic class of the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. Kehl was offered the job as the next full-time marshal. Glover continued to serve as a part-time deputy marshal under Kehl until 1981. In January 1979, the town hired its second full-time deputy marshal, Jim Suter. He would serve until he retired in 2004 as assistant chief of police. He was commonly referred to as the “Major.”

**The 1980’s**

The 1980’s saw many new technological advances in how the Fishers Police Department operated. After acquiring a used radar unit from the State Police in 1978, the department bought a modern radar unit in 1981 to help enforce traffic laws. In 1984, Fishers Police had issued 758 traffic tickets along with 36 arrests for drunk driving.

Until 1984, Fishers’ officers only carried revolvers. Arnold Howard first carried a Smith & Wesson .38 Special which was used for more than ten years. When George Kehl became marshal, a Colt Python .357 was at his side. Each officer used a different weapon. The decision was made to implement the same weapon for all officers and switch from a revolver to a semi-automatic. That decision was made for three reasons. The first was the quality of the weapon. The weapons had to be taken apart from the factory because of metal shavings in the barrel and other issues. An automatic weapon raised an officer’s proficiency level by twenty percent. The third reason is it took only five minutes to clean a semi-automatic compared to 45 minutes for a revolver. The Sig Sauer P226 9MM would become the standard duty weapon of the Fishers Police Department.

In addition to switching handguns, the Fishers Police added a new weapon to the duty belt, the Nova XR-5000 stun gun. Prior to the implementation of the Taser, Nova, an Austin, Texas based company, in 1985, introduced a handheld stun gun that applied 50,000 volts of electricity. It was praised by law enforcement as an alternative to lethal force but was criticized by the public.

The stun gun, which was about the size of a calculator and operated on a nine volt battery, could incapacitate an individual and the only lasting effect was two red marks resembling mosquito bites. Although Taser guns were the chief rival to the stun gun, Tasers were considered firearms since they shot a projectile and sales were restricted by federal law. The stun guns had become a favorite weapon among civilians and law enforcement.

Critics pointed out the potential for abuse by law enforcement. Five NYPD officers had been indicted for using a stun gun to assault prisoners in custody which made national headlines. There were other incidents of abuse by law enforcement as well as stories of misuse by civilians and its use by criminals in the commission of crimes. Many states had passed laws banning the use of stun guns or at least limiting it to law enforcement use only. Tasers would have a similar controversy when it debuted for law enforcement in the 2000’s.

Throughout the 1980’s, the Fishers Police Department grew slowly. By 1988, there were six full-time officers and eight reserve officers. The police department was entering the computer age. A new computer would link the police, courts, and other county agencies together which would allow the department to run more efficiently. Officers had to fill out cards for each call they went on and then those cards had to be sorted and read to compile data for the monthly and yearly reports. The computer would reduce the amount of time to compile those statistics.

In 1988, Hamilton County Emergency Communications was upgraded to Enhanced 911. The first 911 system was installed in Haleyville, Alabama in February, 1968. Over the next couple of decades, emergency communications were being installed all over the country. Enhanced 911 would automatically provide the caller’s location to the dispatcher which would also enhance emergency response.

The growth of the city meant that the police department needed more room. In April 1989, the Fishers Police moved from 116th St to its new location, the corner of South and Moore Street. The police department was housed in the present day location of Fritz in Fishers showroom while the Council was housed in the present day art gallery nearby. The Fishers Police would share that location with the fire department. It would be their new home until it moved again in 1995.

**The 1990’s**

Fishers witnessed explosive growth during the 1990’s. In 1990, the population tripled to 20,665 people and the city expanded by annexing land which doubled the city’s size to eighteen square miles. By 1991, the Fishers Police had 12 full-time officers and two cars were on patrol at the same time. The department finally had a full-time secretary which meant that someone was at the police department during normal business hours, which wasn’t always the case.

With the explosive growth brought some growing pains. Because of construction, the department lost it’s firing range which was located behind the Sunblest golf course. With the closure of Noblesville’s firing range, Carmel Police had the only range in the county to serve 140 police officers. The town’s budget couldn't keep up with the growth and the needs of the departments. The police department had to come up with new ways to save money. Bill Hickrod, a patrol officer, also became the department’s maintenance officer. A certified mechanic, he was responsible for the maintenance of the vehicles and installation of equipment. In four months, he had saved the department over $8000.

New programs were also implemented within the department. Lt. John Cox, commander of the Uniform Services Division, introduced the Reserve Officers Training Program (ROTP) and the Field Training Program. The ROTP consisted of 244 hours of classroom and practical training. Those that complete the training would then be placed into the Field Training program. It partners a recruit with an experienced officer to evaluate them for solo patrol. The program consisted of sixty 8 hour shifts. Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVOC) was introduced to train officers in high speed pursuit situations.

DARE, which was first introduced in 1983 in Los Angeles as part of the War on Drugs, debuted in Fishers in 1992. The program was 18 weeks long. It was held once a week at three different schools, Fishers, New Britton, and Cumberland Road Elementary. That same year, the police department now had fifteen officers but was about to add another, in the form of a four legged animal. The K-9 program was another way to combat the war on drugs. Lando, a $6,000 German Shepherd imported from Germany, became Fisher’s first K-9. Sgt. Bill Knauer (future Fortville Police Chief) became his handler. A degenerative disease of the spine ended his career after four years of service in 1995.

The city implemented a two part plan to reduce crime in Fishers in 1994 that led to the creation of two new programs. The neighborhood Crime Watch program seeked to use residents to assist the police in fighting crime. Neighborhoods would be headed by a block captain. The second phase of the plan was the implementation of a bicycle patrol program. Bicycle patrol would allow officers more mobility in patrolling the city and reducing crime.

The Fishers Police Department moved into the new Municipal Complex in November 1994. The new 24,000 square foot building at a cost of $2.9 million was a huge upgrade from the old department on South Street. A two story building included a rotunda and technological upgrades such as closed-circuit television, wall-mounted keypads, and cameras mounted throughout the building. It had secure access for prisoner transport which was recorded by the cameras.

The new department received national attention as one of the most innovative law enforcement facilities in the country. The American Institute of Architects and American Correctional Association sponsor the Justice Facility Review. Fishers was one of 46 projects that were recognized as representing the most state of the art facilities in justice planning.

By 1996, the department now had 26 officers and was in the process of adding six more along with a records clerk. Six new patrol vehicles were added to the fleet.

Prior to 1999, Fisher police officers were part of the civilian pension system. In order to become a more attractive option for prospective applicants, the decision was made to change from a civilian pension plan to the 1977 Fire and Police pension plan. The 1977 fund offered better retirement options for police officers and would allow the department to be more competitive with other departments.

That same year, the new police merit commission was established. The merit commission would be responsible for the hiring and firing of police officers. Although the Chief would have the ability to recommend the termination, it is up to the commission to uphold that decision. The commission would consist of three members, two Republicans, Dan Ax, Jim White, and one Democrat, Kerry Chapman. With the establishment of the merit commission, it also eliminated the position of town marshal. George Kehl officially was granted the title of Chief of Police.