

Our History

This brief history of the Lakeport Police Department was compiled by Chief Thomas W. Engstrom, on December 1, 2000. Chief Engstrom obtained the information from the City Council minutes dating back to April, 1888.

The "Town of Lakeport," originally called Forbestown, was incorporated on April 30, 1888. The first law enforcement official was W.M. Woods, the Town Marshal. He was elected to a 2-year term and paid the sum of \$15 per month. (See attached list of Town Marshals and Police Chiefs).

The Town Council busily began the task of drafting Lakeport's first ordinances. The first speeding law prevented citizens from galloping their horses down Main Street. Shortly thereafter, following the invention of the automobile, the Council outlawed vehicles on Main Street on Sundays. The cars scared the horses pulling buggies to church.

Over the years, some of the elections for Marshal were very close. In 1900, R.E. Barry ran against the incumbent, Marshal J.E. Mitchell. Barry won the election by just 2 votes, 83 to 81. Two years later in 1902, Mitchell again tried to win re-election, this time against a newcomer, R.J. Hammack. Once again Mitchell lost the election, by a vote of 56 to 53.

By 1918, the Marshal's salary was increased to \$20 per month and then jumped to \$75 per month in 1920, when the Marshal also served as Lakeport's Night Watchman. This required the Marshal to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Marshal became a one-man police department.

The Town Council changed the Marshal's position from elected to appointed in 1920. From that time on, the Marshal, and eventually every Chief of Police, served at the pleasure of the Town or City Council. This, of course, had a down side.

On one occasion, the incumbent Marshal asked the Council for a two week paid vacation. His request was granted. At the next Council Meeting, while the Marshal was away on vacation, the Town Council declared the Marshal's position vacant. The Council instructed the Clerk to inform the Marshal in writing that "his performance was less than satisfactory and that his services were no longer needed." Just that fast, he was unemployed.

Marshals drove their personal vehicles while on-duty. They also furnished a red light and siren for their vehicle and used their own revolver and holster. When one particular Marshal was terminated, the Council purchased the light, siren, revolver, and holster from him for \$25 and gave it to his successor.

On March 3, 1930, the Town Council changed the name of Lakeport to the "City of Lakeport." George E. Moore, who was serving as Town Marshal, became the City's first Chief of Police.

Since 1888, Lakeport has had 15 Town Marshals and 22 Chiefs of Police through the year 2000. The longest tenure of any Chief or Marshal was 15 years. Chief James L. Campbell served from March, 1979 to April, 1994. Campbell began his career with Lakeport as a Police Officer in 1966, when the department consisted of 6 sworn officers. When Chief Campbell retired in 1994, the department had doubled in size to 12 officers.

The shortest tenure of any Chief is one month. Chief Robert H. Mammen was hired in March, 1969, having previously served as Lieutenant for the Los Angeles Police Department. Chief Mammen accepted the position, but resigned one month later when his wife refused to move to Lakeport. To his credit, Chief Mammen did provide the Council with a thorough study of LPD prior to his departure. That study was the basis for many improvements in the police department over the next few years.

To this writer, the most inspirational Chief was Newton A. Wilcox, who served from 1930 to 1934. He died while in office at age 66. At the Chief's funeral, Mayor H.G. Crawford read City Resolution 1933-1934 A-7, which stated in part:

"Newton A. Wilcox performed his duty in a manner to be an example for other police officers. To him all men were equal before the law. He showed no favoritism. He was honest and conscientious, fearless and courageous for what he believed to be right, modest and unassuming, friendly and affable. He was liked by all."

No greater tribute could be paid to any police officer. Chief Wilcox lived by a code of ethics that we would all do well to follow.



Officer Keith Bridges with Chief Ken Fritch in front of the Police Department (1948)

The Lakeport Police Department has been housed in many locations over the years. In the early days, the Marshal was stationed in the reading room in Miss Emma Thompson's Home School. In 1891, the Levy Building was constructed across the street from the courthouse and the Marshal was stationed there for a short time. Headquarters was moved in 1918 to the newly built Carnegie Library, in what is now known as Library Park.

Eventually, LPD would share office space with other City departments at 445 N. Main Street, the current home of the Lakeport Fire Department.

Dr. Charles G. Craig built his medical office next door to the fire department, at 435 N. Main Street, in 1926. Dr. Donald Browning eventually assumed the practice and continued in that location until the City purchased the building from him in 1969. This 1700 square foot building housed not only LPD, but also Public Works Administration, City Planning and City Engineering.

The current City Hall building, at 225 Park Street, was acquired in 1984 from Pacific Bell Telephone Company. The City's move into that remodeled facility in 1987 left LPD as the sole occupant of the Craig Building.

By 1996, LPD had long out-grown their facility and the search was on in earnest for a new home. Staff now consisted of 14 officers, 4 civilians and 6 reserves.

Under the leadership of Mayor Max Ruffcorn and Councilmember Roy Parmentier, along with City Finance Director Larry Jack and City Attorney Stephen Brookes, the City purchased the building located at 916 N. Forbes Street, from Gerri and Frank Goodrich, in 1999. LPD Officers Lloyd Wells and others remodeled the building. New office furnishings were purchased and installed throughout the facility.

On June 28, 1999, LPD moved into their new home. The City Council, which included Mayor Max Ruffcorn, Roy Parmentier, Bill Knoll, Shirleen DeRezendes and Robert Rumfelt, officially named the building "Eric F. Ingalls Plaza," in honor of deceased LPD Reserve Officer Eric Ingalls, who served for 35 years. Eric's wife, Linda, and his daughters, Debbie and Donna, unveiled the new sign. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was followed by a barbecue and tour of the new facility. About 200 people were in attendance.

TOWN OF LAKEPORT MARSHALS

W.M. Woods
May 1888—May 1891

W.E. Hixson
May 1891—Sept 1891

J.E. Mitchell
Sept 1891—May 1900

R.E. Barry
May 1900—Apr 1902

R.J. Hammack
Apr 1902—Apr 1906

R.E. Barry
Apr 1906—Dec 1906

R.J. Hammack
Dec 1906—Apr 1908

J.H. Miller
Apr 1908—Apr 1918

Lyon Fraser
Apr 1918—Sept 1918

J.H. Miller
Sept 1918—Feb 1920

H.L. Jordan
Feb 1920—May 1920

C.W. Ransdell
May 1920—Dec 1922

Frank Shaul
Jan 1922—May 1926

H.R. Heidler
May 3, 1926—May 5, 1926

George E. Moore
May 1926—Dec 1927

CITY OF LAKEPORT CHIEFS OF POLICE

George E. Moore
Dec 1927—Dec 1929

R.S. Russell
Dec 1929—May 1930

Newton A. Wilcox
May 1930—Apr 1934

Otis Hileman
Apr 1934—May 1934

Marion I. Hendricks
May 1934—Dec 1943

Louis T. Taylor
Dec 1943—Feb 1944

Frank Crawford
Feb 1944—Sept 1946

Marion L. Clay
Sept 1946—Feb 1947

G.H. Welsh
Feb 1947—Sept 1948

Kenneth D. Fritch
Sept 1948—July 1949

Fritz G. Hiebert
July 1949—Sept 1950

Calvin L. Mellor
Apr 1951—May 1953

Joseph B. Colvin
May 1953—May 1957

William H. Apple
May 1957—June 1963

William G. Hofsaes
July 1963—July 1965

Ernest L. Slate
Aug 1965—June 1968

Robert H. Mammen
Mar 1969—Apr 1969

Harold Hockett
May 1969—Apr 1971

Harry Johnson
Apr 1971—June 1974

Richard R. Seigler
Oct 1974—Jan 1979

James L. Campbell
Mar 1979—Apr 1994

Thomas W. Engstrom
May 1994—May 2005

Kevin Burke
March 2006—Nov 2010

Brad Rasmussen

May 2011-