

A promotional poster for the Lansing Police Department's 125th anniversary. The background features the Michigan State Capitol building in Lansing, Michigan, with its iconic dome. In the foreground, two police SUVs and a motorcycle are parked on a street, their emergency lights flashing. The text is overlaid on a dark diagonal banner on the left side of the image.

# LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT 125 Years of History

**CAPITAL CITY FINEST  
"RECOGNIZING 125 YEARS OF SERVICE"**





## 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



January 26, **1837**, Michigan was welcomed into the Union as the 26th state. It derived its name from the Ojibwa (Chippewa) Indian word Michi-Gama which means “large lake.” Being that it is surrounded by four of the five Great Lakes, which are the largest freshwater source in the United States, Michigan is known as “The Great Lakes State.”

The town of Lansing was first called Michigan; it became the Capital of the state in **1847**. During this period the Sheriff’s office was responsible for enforcing the laws within all of Ingham County, including Lansing. The Marshals were the first Policemen of Lansing, but were appointed,

so not many wanted the position. In 1848, the Michigan Legislature met for the first time and officially changed the name of the Capital from Michigan to Lansing. The name was derived from Lansing, New York, a town named for John Lansing Jr. He was a significant New York statesman who travelled to Philadelphia as his state’s delegate of the Constitutional Convention. While in New York City, Lansing mysteriously went missing and was never located. It was presumed he was murdered but no evidence ever surfaced to confirm that suspicion.



Lansing, Michigan, was incorporated as a city in **1859**. The Charter established a Marshal and three (3) City Watchmen to enforce laws and protect the city. During this time period the Sheriff and City Marshal shared rented quarters at the intersection of Allegan and Washington. The first jail was built on the south side of the 100 block of East Allegan after the Civil War and also housed the Fire Department.

Construction of the new Michigan State Capitol began in **1872** and was designed by Israel Gillett. It was described as a white, two-story structure with green shutters and a tin cupola. It sat in the block that is currently bordered by Washington and Capitol Avenues and Allegan and Washtenaw Streets because the highest site in the city was being reserved for the permanent Capitol building. The white building was sold in 1879 and used as a manufacturing plant for wooden handles until it burned down in **1882**. The existing Capitol building was dedicated on January 1, **1879**, after a Legislative Bill was passed in **1871** to build a new, permanent building to house the Capital of Lansing in the spot that it currently sits at the intersection of Capital and Washington.

In **1887** the City Marshal and Sheriff moved its rented quarters to 204 East Michigan Avenue. A jail was built in the back of the first floor of the two-story wood building. It was used by the common council for meetings until City Hall was later built. During the day, the city was guarded by one City Marshal and one Watchman (Policeman) and at night by five (5) Watchmen.



- 1837 Michigan became the 26th State
- 1847 Lansing became the State Capital
- 1848 Michigan’s name changes to Lansing as the Capital City
- 1859 Lansing is incorporated as a City
- 1872 Construction begins on the Capitol Building
- 1887 City Marshal and Sheriff move their quarters





# 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



The City Charter was amended in **1893** to provide for a six-member nonpartisan Board of Police and Fire Commissioners. This took effect May 1, 1893, and paved the way for a formal Lansing Police Department. The Board of Police and Fire Commissioners appointed a City Marshal, a Chief of Police, a Captain of Police, and Policeman (Watchman). In this same year, the first Rules and Regulations book became effective. On August 3, 1893,



John P. Sanford, at the age of 30, was appointed as the first Chief of Lansing. Also employed were one Captain, seven Watchmen, and two Jailors.



An unpopular position of the time was that of the Truant Officer, which was created in **1895**. Officer Lee Cook was the first appointed Truant Officer and he was responsible for ensuring student attendance at school.



The first City Hall was built in **1896** on the southeast corner of Ottawa and Capitol and became the home of the Lansing Police Department. It also housed government offices for city

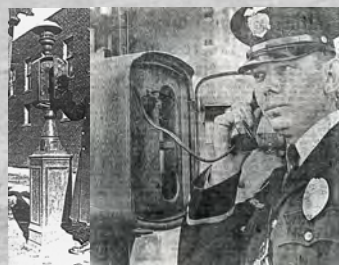


officials. Women were jailed separately from men and were overseen by Matron, Ollie Gilson.



On August 21, **1897**, Ransom Eli Olds (R. E. Olds) founded Olds Motor Vehicle Company, known today as Oldsmobile. The first vehicle manufactured in Lansing was known as the curved-dash Oldsmobile. It was the first American-made vehicle using a progressive assembly line system and it made a sensation at the 1901 New York Auto Show.

The same day that Chief Sanford resigned, August 1, **1902**, Adolph Starmont was appointed as Chief. A horse-drawn wagon was also purchased in this year and an Officer was responsible for picking up arrested individuals from Officers and taking them to the City Jail.



The first Police Call Box was installed at Michigan and Washington Avenues at the directive of Chief Starmont in **1905**. It was mandated that each Officer was to report to headquarters during his shift at a specific time. It was the first attempt at electronic communication between Police Officers and headquarters, and utilized a telephone and telegraph services in order to communicate.



It was during this time that the position of Detective was established within the Police Department. Henry E. Rowell was appointed the first Detective until **1906**.

George Palmer was appointed as Lansing's second Truant Officer. Palmer established the Palmer Shoe Fund in **1906** after recognizing that many children were not attending school because they did not have shoes. The Palmer Shoe Fund was continued by local businessmen and is currently known as The Old Newsboy Association of Greater Lansing.

- 1893 Board of Police and Fire Commissioners is established
- 1895 Truant Officer position is created
- 1896 City Hall was built
- 1897 R.E. Olds founded Olds Motor Vehicle Company
- 1902 Chief Sanford resigns, Chief Starmont is appointed
- 1905 First Call Box was installed
- 1906 First Detective was appointed, Palmer Shoe Fund was established (Old Newsboys of Greater Lansing)



## 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



On July 20, **1906**, Henry Behrendt was appointed Chief of Police by the Board of Police Commissioners. Behrendt was credited for instituting the rank of Sergeant in the Lansing Police Department in **1907**. The position was filled by D. D. Lewis who subsequently became the first Lieutenant in **1910**. It was also during this time that



Behrendt created a policy involving juvenile offenders making their parents respond to headquarters to pick them up and meet directly with him.

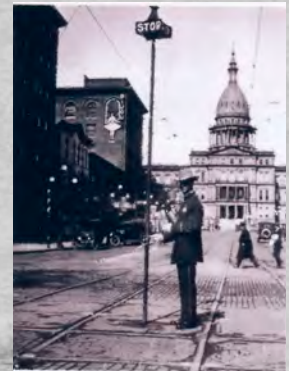
Chief Behrendt met with R. E. Olds and in **1909** an Olds Touring Car called "The Black Maria" was loaned to the Lansing Police Department. The Officers who were assigned to "The Black Maria" worked 14 to 18 hour shifts.



The use of the automobile made Lansing one of the first departments in the nation to have an auto patrol.



The Lansing Police Relief Fund Association was formed on November 1, **1910**, to aid families of Lansing Police Department during times of illness or death. In 1991, it was renamed the Police Benevolent Association and continues to uphold the ideals of its original founders aiding the families of Officers in times of need.



In **1911** the Traffic Unit was created, consisting of three Officers who operated a manual stop-and-go sign to aid with moving downtown traffic. It was necessary because of the invention of automobiles, electric streetcars, horses, buggies, and pedestrians. In the summer the first motorcycle was purchased, an "Indian" brand that became part of the traffic service.



In April **1917** the Police and Fire Retirement System was created under Ordinance 96. It was created to provide compensation for retired and incapacitated policemen and firemen. It was also during this time that Prohibition occurred within the nation. Lansing Police was tasked with creating a special force to enforce the laws and became known as "the dry squad."



On March 3rd, **1918**, highly recruited Alfred Seymour was sworn in as Lansing's fifth Police Chief. He had recently retired as a Lieutenant from the Detroit Police Department and started his second career with Lansing where he served as Chief for twenty years.



- 1907 Rank of Sergeant is established
- 1909 Police use a car called "The Black Maria"
- 1910 D.D. Lewis becomes first Lieutenant and the Lansing Police Relief Fund Association was formed
- 1911 Traffic Unit was created
- 1917 Police and Fire Retirement System was created, Congress passed the 18th Amendment
- 1918 Alfred Seymour is sworn in





## 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



Just as Chief Seymour took the reins of the Lansing Police Department, Congress had passed the 18th Amendment in **1917** and the Volstead Act in **1919**, prohibiting the sale and transport of alcoholic beverages. Special squads of Lansing Police Officers were assigned to close down the illegal activities, and made hundreds of raids yearly. These Officers were known as the “dry squad” the nemesis of bootleggers.

Officers received vacation as part of their benefits but not health care. The Metropolitan Club Spirit No. 11 was created in July of **1921** and provided health care benefits that employers did not. It was during this time that City Council also passed an ordinance

making it necessary for vehicles to pull to the right until emergency vehicles passed. In **1922** the manual stop and go sign was replaced by the first electric traffic signal. A square tower, termed the “crow’s nest,” stood in the middle of the intersection of Washington and Michigan.



An Officer would climb into an enclosed booth at the top of the tower and operate the four-sided traffic signal. Before changing the light from red to green, the Officer rang a bell to warn drivers the signal was changing. Sergeant Harry Snider designed a cardboard replica called “the silent policeman” which warned motorists to slow down in school crossing areas. It received national recognition and was used all around the United States.

In ID Unit has been in operation since **1927** when the State of Michigan enacted what is popularly called the Firearms law; the IB was designated to register and maintain files of all pistols and revolvers in the City of Lansing. In **1952** more than 500 such firearms were registered with this Bureau. This Bureau also handled fraudulent checks and continues to handle fingerprinting.



The first radio transmitter was a WDPL that had a 10-mile transmission radius. It was first used in **1931** and was a one-way radio in which a dispatcher could broadcast a call for service to the Officers on beat. Call boxes were still used in conjunction as the Officer would have to acknowledge he had received the call.

The Lansing Police Department Pistol Team was created in **1932**. They practiced at Hunter’s Gravel Pit and attended competitions around the state. Michigan’s presentation is the Governor’s Cup. The tradition is still being upheld today with the Pistol Team participating in several competitions throughout the year.

December of **1934** marked the deadliest fire in Lansing history. The Kerns Hotel located in the 100 block of Grand Avenue burnt to the ground overnight. It is unknown how many perished because the registration book listing all visitors was destroyed during the fire. Police and Fire worked together to rescue as many people as they could.

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- 1918 Alfred Seymour is sworn in
- 1919 Congress passed the Volstead Act
- 1921 Metropolitan Club Spirit No. 11 was created
- 1922 First electric traffic signal was installed
- 1931 First radio transmitter was used
- 1932 Pistol Team was created
- 1934 Kerns hotel burns





## 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY

June of **1935** marked the first year that Officers with Lansing Police Department changed to a summer uniform rather than wear the wool uniforms year round. The Officers had to purchase their own uniforms but they voted for the change. This also marked the first time that their firearm was visible. Another uniform first was the addition of the shoulder patch reading "Lansing Police Department."



In May of **1937** union workers began a strike against the Capital City Wrecking Company that came to a head on June 7. Police raids on union organizers, including the leader of Lansing's United Auto Workers, Lester Washburn, led to union members shutting down the entire city. It is known as the Lansing Labor Holiday, and it resulted in a non-violent protest that ended when Washburn and other union members were released after the Governor became involved.

Officer E. Raymond Benedict introduced a ventriloquist dummy "Safety Sammy" in **1938** as part of the safety program for elementary-aged children. This also marked the year the first two-way radios were purchased for communication. It wasn't until **1941** that all the equipment and antennas were installed and operational for use.



The Accident Prevention Bureau, now known as the Traffic Division, was created in **1942** to reduce traffic issues. This assisted with making a correlation between high-traffic accident locations and efficient record keeping to create better engineering of intersections. The creation of the Traffic Division resulted in Lansing being given the "America's Safest City" award in 1942 and 1947 for reducing fatality rates.



In **1947** the Lansing Police Department command organized a Police Training School that was mandatory for all Sergeants and Patrol to attend. They were instructed in subjects that applied to

law enforcement. It also included firearms training.

The second Policewoman to be hired was Caroline Trantham in **1948**. Trantham had worked in the jail for two years prior to becoming a sworn Officer. She was part of the Youth Division and the Safety Patrol School Program.



- 1935 Summer uniforms were worn
- 1937 Capital City Wrecking Company strikes
- 1938 Ventriloquist dummy "Safety Sammy" is introduced
- 1941 First two-way radios were purchased
- 1942 Accident Prevent Bureau (Traffic Division) is created
- 1947 Police Training School is organized
- 1948 Caroline Trantham is hired as the second Policewoman



## 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



Under Chief John Early a Crime Prevention Bureau was created and the first female Police-woman was hired to be one of two to staff the division. Clarissa M. Young was specifically educated to work with women and juveniles. She was promoted to Detective in **1948**, Sergeant in **1951**, and Lieutenant in **1953**. In **1960** she was the first female to be promoted to Captain. Her career spanned 26 years



The first black Police Officer, Raymond Riddle Jr., began working for Lansing Police Department in **1950**. He was part of the first cohort of Police Recruits that was required to pass the two-week extensive Police Training School created by its director Lieutenant Charles Straiger.



In **1951** the Police Department started planning the construction of a new building to house the expanding police force. A six-story building was built that adjoined City Hall and the Police Department. This building became the new home of the Lansing Police Department.

Detective Clarissa Young was provided the honor of escorting Mrs. MacArthur when she and General Douglas MacArthur came to visit Lansing in June of **1952** as guests of honor for a parade and luncheon. The following year, **1953**, the badge worn by Officers changed. An elephant, Little



Rajjie, was able to evade the carnival in the summer of **1958** and go on a rampage in the Holmes and Logan area. After seriously injuring a man, Little Rajjie was eliminated by an Officer.



Lansing Police Department hired its first Mexican-American Officer, Officer Tony Cruz, in **1956**. Officer Cruz was also one of several Officers who became certified members of the Underwater Recovery Dive Team in 1965. The present Lansing City Hall was built in **1959** as a part of Lansing's centennial celebrations. It housed not only the Police Department but the Mayor and other municipal departments. The following year Lansing's population topped 100,000 residents for the first time.

In **1965** the Lansing Police Recovery Dive Team was formed. The name has since been changed to the Capital Area Dive Team. The Capital Area Dive Team is a partnership between Eaton, Ingham, and Clinton counties.



While the Lansing Police Department was undergoing a restructure in **1968**, the shoulder patch was also changed. The patch was designed by Officer Paul Klein and silhouetted the Capital building against the "mitten" of Michigan. The summer brought with it a change in summer uniforms to include short sleeve shirts for the first time. This year also saw creation of the Metro Narcotic Squad. It joined Officers from the tri-county area to investigate illegal narcotic violations. The Cadet program was created in March of **1969** and afforded those selected to be exposed to law enforcement situations while providing the department young candidates to recruit.



- 1948 Caroline Trantham is hired as the second Policewoman
- 1948 Clarissa M. Young is promoted to Detective, Sergeant in 1951, Lieutenant in 1953, and Captain in 1960
- 1950 Raymond Riddle, Jr., the first African-American Police Officer is hired
- 1951 Construction begins on a new police building
- 1952 Clarissa Young escorts Mrs. MacArthur who was visiting Lansing
- 1956 Tony Cruz, the first Mexican-American Officer is hired
- 1959 Lansing City Hall is built
- 1965 Lansing Police Recovery Dive Team is formed now called the Capital Area Dive Team
- 1968 The uniform shoulder patch was changed
- 1969 Cadet Program was created and the Lansing Explorer Post 911 is created





# 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



The Lansing Explorer Post 911 was originally created in **1969** as part of the Boy Scouts of America to assist police and parks at special events. It became inactive for several years and was reinstated in **1979**. The post was called the Lansing Police 911 Clarissa Young Explorer Post in honor of the first female Officer of the Lansing Police Department. Today the Lansing Explorer Post 911 is still active and assists with various special events throughout the year. They attend a statewide competition in which they compete against other explorer posts within the state, and attend a one-week boot camp-style academy during the summer to help prepare them for careers in law enforcement.



The Road Patrol Unit became even more diverse in **1973** when Nancy Cochran became the first female Patrol Officer. She joined the entirely male force, and continued her family legacy, becoming the third member within her family to don a uniform and protect her community. She was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in **1987**. The following year **1974** brought with it many changes. For one, Lansing Police Department was awarded a grant that provided it with a helicopter, allowing a unique opportunity for Officers trained to operate the helicopter another method of patrolling and ensuring the safety of the city. It was in 1974 that Patrolmen and Policewomen were reclassified as Police Officers. Women were required to fulfill the same physical requirements as men in order to be hired.



The Office of Internal Affairs was created in **1974** to investigate complaints against Officers.

The Special Tactics and Rescue Team (S.T.A.R.T.) was created in **1976** with funding provided through the federal Crime Control Act of **1973**. It provided a specialized unit to be trained to provide safety to police, hostages, citizens and perpetrators, and the apprehension and recovery of people and property.

Another unit within the department that was created in **1976** was that of Crime Scene Investigation C.S.I. It ensured that crime scenes were properly processed by Officers trained in the collection of evidence. When the department was created, Officer Complaints were investigated by the Chief and then to Detectives.

In **1980** the new Modat Radio System was installed in patrol cars. The system allowed for a digital tone to be sent that updated the status of an Officer, which allowed for a limit to radio traffic and allowed Officers to call for help by pushing a single button.



In conjunction with the Chaplains, a Post-Trauma Team was created in **1981** by Officers who attended training on post trauma resulting from response to traumatic calls for service. The team was created so that Officers could seek out peers within the department to assist with working through a traumatic event while on the job.

The creation of the Canine Unit occurred in **1986** to utilize Officers and their "canine partners" to be trained together. The canines were employed to assist with narcotic and explosive detection in addition to searches.

- 1969 Cadet Program was created and the Lansing Explorer Post 911 is created
- 1973 Nancy Cochran became the first female Patrol Officer
- 1974 A Helicopter is purchased. Patrolmen and Policewomen are reclassified as Police Officers
- 1976 S.T.A.R.T. is created
- 1974 Office of Internal Affairs is established
- 1979 Lansing Explorer Post 911 is reinstated
- 1980 Modat Radio System is installed
- 1981 Chaplains and a Post-Trauma Team is created
- 1986 Canine Unit is created
- 1981 Chaplains and a Post-Trauma Team is created
- 1986 Canine Unit is created
- 1987 Michigan celebrates 150 years of statehood



125



## 125 YEARS OF LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY



In **1990** the Lansing Police Department participated in a two-year pilot program called Michigan COPS, Community Officers Patrolling Streets. This method provided an opportunity for long-term intervention by identifying issues within a neighborhood such as narcotic related crimes. It also encouraged Officers to get to know their community members and work with them to resolve neighborhood complaints. Events were also organized to strengthen communities and gain trust of community members. The Lansing Police Department still utilizes Community Policing and has a unit dedicated to Community Police Officers. In **1993**, the Lansing Police Department celebrated 100 years of serving its citizens.

May, **2014** the Violent Crime Initiative V.C.I. was created using an evidence based policing model that identifies the most of the violent offenders in the city. V.C.I. consists of five (5) Officers and one Sergeant tasked with reducing the number of weapons on the streets and apprehending violent criminals who are responsible for these crimes. As a result of the V.C.I. efforts, shooting have been reduced by 46% since its inception.

This year, **2018**, the Lansing Police Department celebrates 125 years, continuing the time-honored tradition of serving and protecting the citizens of Lansing in the noblest of professions.

The following resources were used to establish information contained in the 125 Years of Lansing Police Department History section:

Heyden, Patricia. *Behind the Badge, The History of the Lansing Police Department*. Stuart Publishing, Lansing, Michigan.

Capital Area District Library

Library of Congress

Geography and Map Division

Lansing Police Department Records

The Historical Society of Greater Lansing

R.E. Olds Transportation Museum

- LPD participates in a two-year pilot program called Michigan COPS
- 1993 Lansing Police Department celebrates 100 years
- 2013 A new department logo is created
- 2014 Violent Crime Initiative (V.C.I.) was created
- 2018 Lansing Police Department celebrates 125 years





*"Capital City's Finest"*  
**Police Chiefs**



John P. Sanford 1893-1902



Adolph Starmont 1902-1906



Henry Behrendt 1906-1914



Frank Cole 1914-1918



Alfred Seymour 1918-1938



John O'Brien 1938-1945



John Early 1945-195



Paul Taylor 1952-1961



Charles Straiger 1961-1967





Derold Husby 1967-1972



Thomas O'Toole 1972-1976



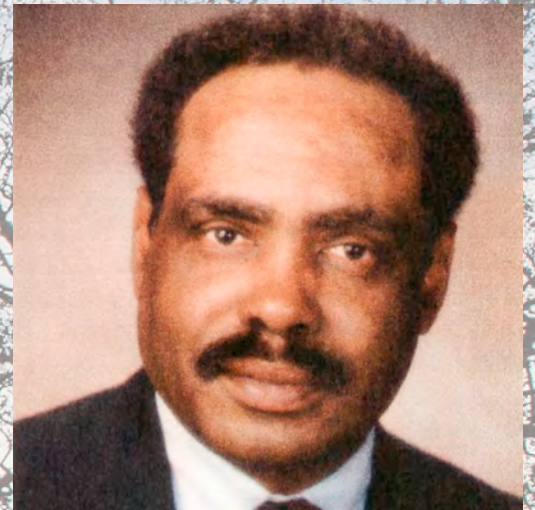
Richard Gleason 1976-1987



Charles Reifsnnyder 1987-1991



Jerome Boles II 1991-1997



Robert Johnson 1998-2000



Mark Alley 2000-2010



Teresa Szymanski 2010-2013



Mike Yankowski 2013 to Present







## Fallen Officers

This page reveals the stories of Patrolman Alexander Lang, Patrolman Gottlieb Sohn, Patrolman Mac J. Donnelly, Jr., Officer Julie Engelhardt, Officer Dean Whitehead, K-9 Sabre, and K-9 Chili. They lived to make a difference. They died as they lived, safeguarding peace, protecting the citizens of Lansing, and preserving justice.



**Patrolman Alexander Lang – End of Watch September 2, 1932**  
Patrolman Lang, age 51, was struck and killed by a vehicle while marking parking lines on the street. Officer Lang was a U.S. Army Veteran of the Spanish-American War and had served with the Lansing Police Department for 12 years. He was survived by his wife, and sister, and two brothers.



**Patrolman Gottlieb Sohn – End of Watch May 23, 1943**  
Patrolman Sohn, age 61, suffered a fatal heart attack while struggling with a suspect during an arrest attempt. The incident occurred after Officer Sohn responded to a nuisance call at a local tavern while working his downtown beat. Officer Sohn served the department for 24 years.



**Patrolman Mac J. Donnelly, Jr. – End of Watch June 16, 1977**  
Patrolman Donnelly, age 35, was shot and killed by a bank robbery suspect while attempting to rescue four hostages. Officer Donnelly rammed the suspect's vehicle with his patrol car as the man tried to flee from the bank with his hostages. The suspect shot him as he stepped out of his car. Officer Donnelly was able to return fire wounding the suspect. All of the hostages were freed during the attempt. One of the hostages, the bank manager, was shot in the hand when he tried to wrestle the gun away from the suspect. The suspect, two other men, and a woman were taken into custody. The suspect was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. Officer Donnelly was a U.S. Coast Guard Veteran and served with the department for 9 years. He was the father of five children.





**Officer Julie Engelhardt – End of Watch February 12, 1988**

Officer Engelhardt, Badge #755, age 34, was shot and killed after responding to a call from two boys who had reported a man had taken their sled away. When Officer Engelhardt confronted the man he shot her. Officer Engelhardt returned fire critically wounding the suspect. The suspect was found not guilty by reason of insanity and committed in a mental institution. Officer Engelhardt had been with the agency for 14 years and was survived by her two sisters. She became a sworn officer in July, 1974.



**Officer Dean Whitehead – End of Watch May 9, 1985**

Officer Whitehead, age 30, was killed when he was struck by the main rotor blades of a helicopter after a crash landing. He and his partner were on air patrol when they spotted a burning motor home on I-96. After fire units arrived on the scene, they began to ascend but the helicopter struck electrical lines which crossed over the median. The helicopter descended rapidly and struck the ground. As both officers fled the aircraft Officer Whitehead was struck by the rotor blades, killing him instantly. Officer Whitehead served the department for 7 years and had served in law enforcement for a total of 9 years. He was survived by his wife, parents, and 3 brothers.



**K-9 Sabre – End of Watch January 23, 1999**

On January 23, 1999, K-9 Sabre was shot and killed while attempting to take down an armed subject following a foot pursuit. The subject had broken into the basement of an occupied home while attempting to flee officers. Officers attempted to talk the man into exiting the home but he refused to do so. As entry was made into the home, the subject opened fire on the officers. Sabre immediately attacked the subject in an attempt to defend the lives of his partners, Officer Matthew Ramsey and Sergeant Mary Stevens. Officers returned fire. Both Sabre and the subject were fatally wounded during the exchange.



**K-9 Chili – End of Watch September 14, 2005**

On September 14, 2005, Officer Dennis Bunch and his partner K-9 Chili were involved in a car accident. Officer Bunch suffered minor injuries. Sadly, K-9 Chili died as a result of his injuries.





***“We Shall Never Forget”***