



BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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March 2015 150th Anniversary Historical Vignette

On March 5th, 1913, the city approved the purchase of a combination patrol-ambulance for the police department. With its arrival, the Burlington Police Department entered the automotive age. The combination patrol-ambulance was a mammoth, with a cumbersome, but accommodating capacity. Documents of the day describe how the vehicle might be used. It was the typical paddy-wagon style police automobile, capable of transporting “injured victims to the hospital, or dead bodies to the morgue.” Its shielded cargo compartment could easily transport “a half-dozen prisoners or a handful of drunks.” With its pitch black painted finish and low growling engine, it was not long before the officers of the department fondly named the automobile, The Black Mariah.

It was not until 1928 that officers were assigned to patrol automobiles. The police officers selected to operate the automobiles were Officers Clarence E. Weston, Frank J. Medler, Levi Vincent, Joseph F. Vincent, John H. Francis and Albert J. Gutchell. Although the department had been utilizing automobiles for several years, it had never had such a fleet at its disposal. It was a substantial step away from the foot patrols of the previous decades, and would have a profound influence on the evolution of the police department.



Respect ~ Honor ~ Remember

*Officer James P. McGrath, end of watch May 12, 1904; Officer J. Albert Fisher, end of watch December 15, 1947;
Officer Robert W. Provost, end of watch January 13, 1954*