

The Detective Division

In 1910, the police department consisted of a chief and ten patrolmen.

In 1912, the position of Police Inspector was created by city ordinance. The Inspector was in effect the department's second-in-command and his duties included prosecution and detective work.

James G. Miller, a police constable since 1896, and one of the original ten patrolmen of the permanent police department, was the first officer to be promoted to this position. The promotion earned Inspector Miller an extra two-hundred dollars a year.

The department operated in this fashion for many years. It wasn't until the late 1940s that a detective division as we know it today began to form. Different priorities of the times dictated how the division was organized. For example, during the 1950s, when illegal bookmaking and gambling was considered a big problem, the mayor and the chief of police formed an "Anti-bookmaking Squad" to seek out and raid betting parlors.

In the 1960s, and '70s, when illegal drugs became a major social problem, a Narcotics and Vice unit was formed.

Crimes involving children necessitated a division that specialized in sex crimes.

By 1995, the detective division had grown to 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 4 sergeants, and 31 detectives.

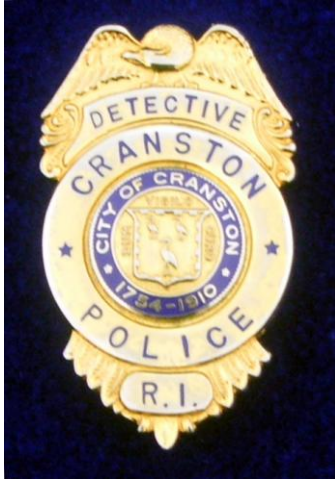


**Inspector James G. Miller as a patrolman - 1898
He was Cranston's first Police Inspector in 1912,
and later served as Chief of Police.**



Cranston Police Detective Division - 1951

Left to Right – front row – Capt. A.J. Moretti, Inspector J.J. Ryan
2ed row –A. Hay, J.H. Gibbs, J.J. Sullivan
3rd row – L. Morenzi, M. Morrow
4th row – G.J. Coffey



Early detective badge -1950s

In 1950, the Detective Division consisted of six men, two of whom worked nights. Early badges were gold colored and carried the title "DETECTIVE". In the 1960s the title was changed to "INVESTIGATOR" and the badges were silver colored.



Detective badge with the title of 'INVESTIGATOR'

In the 1970s, the title of "Detective" was changed to "Investigator". Officers in specialized units were also issued this style of badge with different titles such as, "B.C.I.", and "Prosecution" in place of "Investigator".

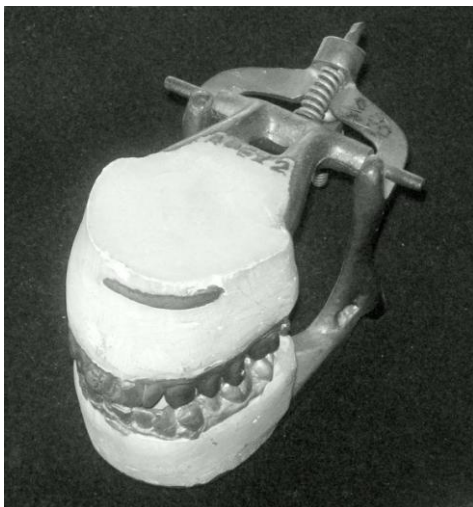


A second, larger style Investigator badge.

Detective Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain, badges were of this style but gold in color. They would read, (rank), "Investigator", "Cranston Police", and "RI".
These badges were discontinued in 1995



Prisoner Transport Van – June, 2001



This casting of a set of teeth was used for many years as a paperweight around the police station. Very few knew the interesting story of how they helped to convict three men of robbery and kidnapping.

The following story was related by Sergeant Harry Sunderland (Retired) during my research for this history project.

Just before closing time on the night of September 15, 1956, three men entered the Scott Super Market at 725 Reservoir Avenue with the intent to commit a robbery. The lone manager in the store was on the phone taking a last minute order which he was writing down with a pencil. When he was finished, he put the pencil in the front pocket of his smock and turned to face the men. At that moment they produced guns and forced him to open the safe which held twelve-thousand dollars in cash.

After taking the money, they forced the manager into their waiting car and told him to put his smock over his head, and to lie on the floor of the back seat. When he did so, the pencil fell out of his pocket and landed on the floor of the car. The gunmen then drove the manager to Roger Williams Park where they left him tied to a tree.

The gunmen were arrested a few days later and pled innocent at their arraignment. In searching the defendant's car, detectives found the pencil from the manager's pocket. If they could link it to the robbery, they reasoned, it could be a key piece of evidence at the trial.

Detectives noted that the pencil contained teeth marks embedded in the soft wood, and learned that a female clerk at the market had a habit of putting pencils in her mouth and biting down on them. With her permission, they brought her to a dentist and had a set of impressions made of her teeth.

During the trial, the prosecutor demonstrated that a person's teeth marks are as unique as a set of fingerprints. To prove it, he had the clerk bite down on several pencils and then placed each in the casting of her teeth, showing that the bite marks on each pencil matched up with the teeth castings. He then had each member of the jury do the same, and showed that the jury's teeth marks did not match up with the castings. He then showed how the pencil recovered from the

getaway car was a perfect match, thus illustrating that the pencil found in the suspect's car did in fact come from the market. The men were convicted.



Detective Louis Corvese points out damage to his unmarked police car after a shoot-out with armed robbers on Borad Street – 1970.

On the night of November 9, 1970, Detectives Louis Corvese and John Smith were on Borad Street in an unmarked police car when they encountered an armed robbery in progress at Jerry's Chemist Shop at Borad St. and Wheeler Ave. Two men were inside the shop, one armed with a sawed-off shotgun, the other with a revolver. As they attempted to escape, a shoot-out ensued in which one suspect was wounded. Although their police car was hit by gunfire, neither detective was injured.

Many years later, Detective Corvese retired as a Detective Sergeant, and Detective Smith retired a Captain.