

The Training Division and Training Academy

Chief James G. Miller established the first in-service training school for Cranston's police officers in 1936. This was considered very innovative for the time because most police officers of the day received very little training past what senior officers taught them when they first joined the force. The Rhode Island Municipal Police Training Academy wasn't established until the late 1970s.

When an officer joined the department in the 1930s, he was assigned to work with a senior officer for a few weeks. The veteran would show the rookie what he needed to know before turning him out on his own. Any additional training came with on-the-job experience.

A retired officer who joined the department in 1937 related that his firearms training consisted of going into the woods off Phenix Avenue with his sergeant, taping a target to a tree, and shooting at it with a .22 caliber target pistol, which was vastly different than the .38 revolver officers were issued at the time. In those days, many police departments didn't worry about legal liability when it came to training.

In 1956, Chief Louis Fouchcourt started the first police recruit training school which gave potential new officers a certain amount of training before actually joining the department. In addition, he required continued in-service training, often leading the classes himself.

Cranston's recruit training academy was part of the process a potential officer had to successfully complete before being appointed to the department. How one finished in the recruit academy was how they placed on the eligibility hiring list. Candidates were then called as vacancies occurred, but not all candidates who made the list were hired, for the list was generally only in effect for two, and sometimes three years.

When the state of Rhode Island established its own police academy, Cranston continued with its recruit training school, appointing new officers as vacancies occurred, and sending them to the police academy within their first year of appointment. The department continued this practice until 2005.

In 1963, Chief Fouchcourt obtained the site of the present-day Cranston Police Training Academy and shooting range on Phoenix Avenue. The site was a former quarry that was no longer being used, and the high rocky cliffs made it the perfect setting for a shooting range. Costs were kept low because the chief enlisted the help of other city agencies for construction and leveling of the land.

At about this time, Route 95 was being constructed through Cranston, and there was a flower shop that stood on Wellington Avenue that was in the way of the project and slated for demolition. When the chief heard about it, he arranged for it to be donated to the police department and moved to its present location at the range.

The flower shop was converted into a classroom where in-service training and the recruit training school could be held.

A short time later, the city built a small cinderblock armory building next to the classroom building for storage of targets, ammunition, and other range equipment.



Originally a flower shop on Wellington Avenue, this building was moved to the range to be used as a classroom around 1964.
(Black & white photos courtesy of Sgt. William Loux – CPD retired)



The training classroom as it looked in 1968.



Shooting awards ceremony at the police range – 1966



Shooting awards ceremony - 1966



A view of the firing range circa 1967



Range targets – circa 1967



Captain J. Howard Gibbs and Mayor DiPrete – c. 1967



Range Officer William Loux – c. 1967



Silhouette targets – 1967



Souvenir patches from the 1971 & '72 statewide combat pistol match held in Cranston.

In 1985, it became necessary to build a larger training complex to meet the growing needs of the department. After a new building was constructed in front of the old classroom and armory building, the old classroom was then refurbished and turned into office space.

The Training Division itself was expanded. Before 1985, the division consisted of a single lieutenant. By 1986 the division had been expanded to include a captain and two officers. The DARE officers and school resource officers were also incorporated under the training division.

The new training academy was well received by the officers. Over the years it has been used for conducting recruit schools, in-service training of veteran officers, special training seminars, and on one occasion, a temporary police station when a plumbing problem forced the evacuation and closure of police headquarters on Atwood Avenue for a about two weeks.

During the 1990s, further improvements were added to the site with the erection of a repelling tower, an obstacle course, a "Hogan's Alley" for firearms training, and perhaps most important, a covering for the range area so it could be used in all weather conditions.



Cranston Police Training Academy building -1990



Academy building - 1993



The old flower shop and classroom after being remodeled into office space - 1991



A view showing both the new and old classroom buildings - 1991



A Dodge van assigned to the Training Division - circa 1996



“Robo-Buddy”, a mechanical vehicle used by the Training Division when giving presentations to young children about crime prevention. (Officer Al Corrente drew a coloring book featuring “Robo-Buddy” that would be given out to the children.)



Mobile Command Post - 1989



This vehicle was purchased at a surplus auction to be utilized as a mobile command post and other purposes connected with the Training Division. It was used by officers of the department's Dive Team, and also saw service at such incidents as the riot at the Adult Corrections Institute in September, 1991.



**The Mobile Resource Center – June 2001
Bought with Federal funds for \$170,000.**