The Chicago Police Department in Hermann Schuettler's Day! 1882/1918 I

What may be especially interesting to us as police officers today is to glance back at the Chicago Police Department Hermann Schuettler rose through the ranks from and eventually commanded. Schuettler's 3,200 man CPD seems rather small compared to today's department strength of 13,000 especially when considering it served a population only 700, 000 less (2,185,283 per 1910 census) than Chicago's present population (ca. 2.8 million per 2010 census).

What we also can note is that despite all the technological advancements and improved training methods since that time, many similarities still exist today. In ***Historical Roots of Police behavior in Chicago, 1890 to 1925,*** Mark H. Haller (Law & Society Review, Vol.10, No.2; Winter, 1976.) provides a rare glimpse into the Chicago Police Department of Hermann Schuettler's time. Throughout, Haller draws extensively from official CPD documents, Chicago Crime Commission reports, newspaper articles, as well as academic papers and books , most of which were written within Schuettler's era or at least within a generation of it.

The Chicago Tribune hailed Hermann Schuettler as "Chicago's Greatest Policeman," in its obituary of him in 1918. This article provides a glimpse of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department of Schuettler's time from which he rose from the ranks from as a police officer to eventually commanding it as Superintendent.

Demographically Schuettler's CPD broadly represented the people and the neighborhoods they served with the exception of an over representation of Irish officers as Haller explains:

> Chicago policemen came to their jobs from a skilled or semi skilled blue collar experience and from an ethnic, disproportionately Irish, background. In 1887, in a city that was 40 percent foreign born, some 54 percent of the force was foreign born. In a city in which the Irish born and their children were less than 20 percent of the population, about half the force was Irish, fully 35 percent Irish born and another 13 , at least, of Irish parentage. Only the German born, with 10 percent of the force, constituted a rival ethnic group within the department.

This is understandable given the Irish participation level in politics, and the fact that German immigrants were more likely to be gainfully employed in the skilled trades that were in the forefront of the emerging labor union movement and whom had also fanned out after arriving in Chicago all over the Midwest in pursuit of cheap land in which to farm. (It should not be forgotten that, even today, every state in the Midwest has a German American majority, most of whose ancestors immigrated first to (or passed through) Chicago sometime between 1850 and 1910.) The remaining 40 percent of the CPD was comprised of far lesser percentages of recently arrived immigrants such as the Poles, Italians, Swedes, Jews, etc. residing in the city.

Though Chicago's black population was quite small at this time, the CPD did include 83 black members. Female officers, of course, at this time were non existent.

It should also come as no surprise that most police officers then had far less education than they do today. Not only was a university education limited to the upper classes, even a high school education for most of these officers was exceptional. This was an age when mandatory public education was a concept whose time had already come but its implementation left much to be desired. Many young males merely followed their father, older brothers or uncles into skilled, semi skilled or laboring jobs that were not only plentiful but primarily responsible for Chicago's rapid growth from a prairie settlement in the 1830s to the nation's pre-eminent industrial city by 1910. The educational level of police officers, however, did reflect that of most of Chicago's residents. Basic literacy was just about all one needed to be a police officer besides the ever present and indispensable, requirement of political patronage.

Police training was also far more limited than it is today as Haller notes:

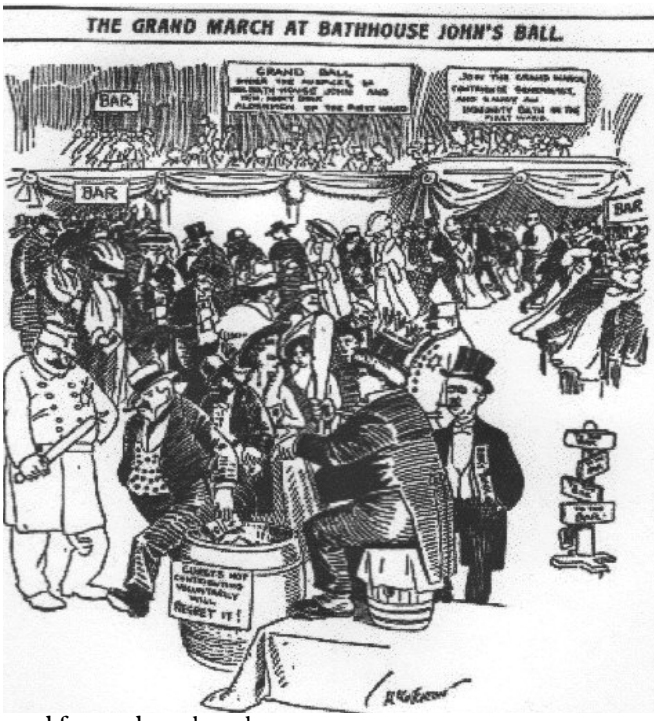
> As late as 1900, when Chicago's police department numbered 3,225 men, there was no organized training. New policemen heard a brief speech from a high ranking officer, received a hickory club, a whistle, and a key to the call box, and were sent out on the street to work with an experienced officer. . . .

In the Fall of 1910, a one month school for recruits operated sporadically until it was abolished in 1919.

But, then again, "street smarts" or even "plain common sense" can't be taught in a book, let alone in a police academy. And patrolmen, more so than today, bore the brunt of police service, though a small but growing detective division became increasingly responsible for follow up and more time consuming investigations.

The overwhelming political influences on the department flowed directly from the mayor's office down to local ward offices and contributed a heavy hand to its day to day operations and enforcement activity. How could it not when elected officials also controlled each and every aspect of city employment!? Though civil service was introduced in 1895, ward bosses did not lose control of hiring, assignments or promotions. Haller states:

The police superintendent was generally chosen from among the captains and inspectors on the basis of his known loyalty to the party organization that won the last election; and until the 1960s, his office was in city hall rather than police headquarters. Captains and inspectors were assigned to districts and precincts to work with locally powerful ward political leaders. Patrolmen and detectives, in turn, often linked themselves to political factions and, in any event, carried out the political policies of local police captains. Those wishing to avoid punitive assignments far from home or ambitious to rise in the department had to be skillful in finding their way through the complicated maze of urban politics.



In Schuettler's time Democrats did not have a lock on the mayor's office nor all the aldemanic seats or other major offices in the city or county as they have today or have had for the last several generations. This political uncertainty left ambitious police officers easily compromised, especially when "their guy" lost office. Haller further explains,

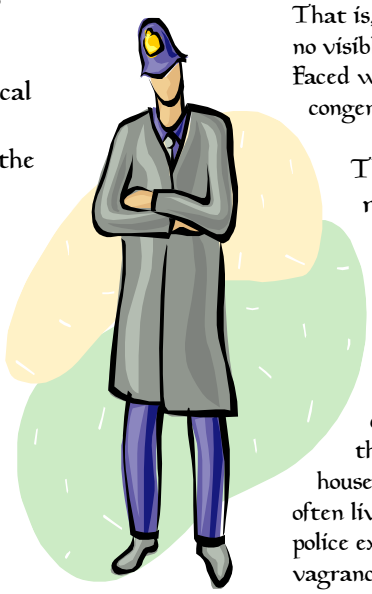
Policemen were expected to contribute a portion of their salaries to the dominant party. (Before the 1904 election, Mayor Carter Harrison had the police payday moved forward, so that the police would have an opportunity to make an extra contribution to the fund being raised for the mayor's supporters.) The police, in addition, sold tickets to party picnics, distributed campaign posters, and in some cases worked the precincts in the days before the election. Furthermore, powerful local politicians, especially in ethnic and slum neighborhoods, financed their organizations through levies upon businesses, and the police often assessed and collected such payments. This was true not only of illegal activities such as houses of prostitution and gambling dens but also of legal activities: saloons, pool halls, dance halls, and numerous retail stores. Finally, of course, police aided local politicians by ignoring or protecting those illegal activities carried on by local politicians and, sometimes, by harassing illegal activities of political rivals. In many ways, then. . . control of the police department, because of its size and crucial role in the city, was a major prize that went with political success.

This was the era when police officers became known as "flatfoots," as patrolmen who walked their beats, or at least to certain locations on their beats.

Patrolmen, because they walked their beats with minimal supervision, spent much of their time in saloons, barbershops, and other neighborhood centers. In 1880, when the department proposed to install call boxes so that a policeman would have to report periodically to the station, the patrolmen resisted the innovation out of an unrealistic fear that they might have to patrol their beats. When an investigator studied the city's police for several months in 1903 and 1904, however, he found only one patrolman in the city who walked his beat for as long as thirty minutes.

No doubt patrolmen spent most of their time where their supervisors or patronage suggested they spend it and collected tribute accordingly. Not having a union, few patrolmen would carry on in any way that might cause problems with their bosses let alone to their reassignment to less desirable districts. Of course, they ate for free on the job and obtained many other services for free in the places they frequented. As far as drinking liquor on the job? Free beer and whisky shot chasers for everyone! Who didn't imbibe on the job in whatever line of work in that day and age! Saloon owners liked the in house security on duty police officers provided as well as staying open beyond the hours their

city licenses allowed. In some ways, it might be said. it was just *old school* "community policing."



Diverse ethnic representation on the department not only provided political representation but the "street smarts," language skills and cultural familiarity the CPD sorely needed in gathering intelligence on "hoodlum" activity in order to prevent it or even in accomodating it in the various ethnic neighborhoods of the city. Haller relates:

Black detectives were assigned to pursue black felons hiding in black neighborhoods; Italian policemen before World War I were given special responsibility to control the "black hand" gangs that preyed on the city's Italians through extortion. When policemen were protectors or coordinators of crime, Jewish policemen were the primary protectors of Jewish pickpockets and other Jewish thieves, while black patrolmen were assigned to the precincts of politically powerful black gamblers to help operate their gambling enterprises. . . . For these purposes, detectives developed informers and maintained extensive informal relationships. . . . In addition, relationships between detectives and thieves were often influenced by the fact that some thieves had ties with politicians made by performing services on elections day or by hanging out in saloons operated by persons with political influence. As a result, there was often an uneasy alliance of professional thieves, police and politicians.

Of course, the primary responsibility of the police department, then as it is now, is control of the street in order to prevent crime. When the police can control street traffic, they are better able to deter opportunities for crime to occur. In medieval times, towns had walls, gates and moats which prevented "undesirables" from even entering, especially if it was easily enough determined that those "without means" wishing to enter had no constructive business in which to conduct. But even in Schuettler's time, as well as in all the years prior to the mid 1990s when Chicago's municipal loitering ordinances were vacated by court order after being deemed unconstitutional, (and eventually replaced by the civil libertarian induced gang and narcotics loitering ordinances), the police had far more discretion and leverage in controlling who walked the streets and where, especially in those areas where crime was more prevalent. As Haller describes it,

One of the standard crime control measures used by detectives was to "vag" known criminals until they left town. That is, known criminals were arrested for vagrancy (having no visible means of support) and taken to court to be fined. Faced with repeated arrests, thieves, might well seek a more congenial city in which to practice their professions.

This proactive policing accounted for the great majority of all police arrests for:

The police believed that, in the prevention of crime, the control of tramps and other rootless men was a central responsibility. As the major rail center and crossroads of the Midwest, as well as the most rapidly growing city in the nation, Chicago had a constant stream of persons flowing into and through the city. Skid row areas west and south of the Loop housed thousands of men who sought occasional work and often lived in the interstices of industrial society. In part the police exercised control by their system of harassment through vagrancy and disorderly conduct laws. In 1876, the police superintendent argued for a stronger vagrancy law "so that strangers could be sent out of the way of doing harm, without waiting until they commit some crime." For, he warned, "in the absence of any crime committed by them, a good vagrancy law is the only safeguard, and the only way by which they can be effectually disposed of." Until at least the 1930s, vagrancy and disorderly conduct constituted between 40 and 66 percent of all arrests each year; those arrested were disproportionately young men, out of work, and often from out of town.

The more sophisticated criminal element, however, those whose scams, cons, extortions, rackets or other means of thievery were too lucrative to abandon, sought to game the system through a variety of ruses which would allow them to "stay in business." Seldom did they include obtaining a legal defense to fight the arrest charges:

If possible, underworld figures established mutually profitable relationships with policemen or politicians to protect themselves against arrest. If arrested, their first move was to attempt to bribe the arresting officer or the police sergeant. If that failed, a number of strategies remained: pay a political fixer to bring pressure upon the police or court; visit the complaining witness and offer full or partial restitution in return for an agreement to drop charges; or jump bail until witnesses were no longer interested.

To be continued. . . .

Mike Haas, GAPA Editor

Source: ***Historical Roots of Police behavior in Chicago, 1890 to 1925,*** Mark H. Haller (Law & Society Review, Vol.10, No.2; Winter, 1976)