

# Cranston Police Stations

Very limited information could be found about Cranston's early police stations. The first documented Cranston police station stood on Dyer Avenue just south of Cranston Street. It sat along a spur of railroad track that ran from the Dyer Avenue Crossing towards the yard of the Cranston Print Works. The Town Clerk's office and a post office were also located in this area.

In 1886, a new Town Hall was built where a gazebo now stands in Knightsville, and at some point the police department occupied some rooms on the first floor. These rooms became police headquarters which was supported by at least three smaller police stations (precincts) in what were then the most populated areas of the city; Edgewood, Arlington, and Auburn.

It is said that Chief John Bigbee (Who served as chief from 1886 to 1908.) had his official office at the Town Hall, and an "unofficial" one located in the gatehouse to the entry way of Narragansett Park. The park, which once sat on land now occupied by the Providence Shipyard, was a popular amusement destination in the late 1800s, complete with rides and a beach for bathing.

The Edgewood Precinct was located at the intersection of Broad Street and Norwood Avenue. According to a Providence Journal newspaper article from 1909, the office was manned by at least one officer from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. While one officer manned the station, another would patrol the surrounding district, and the officers would switch duties every two hours.

The Auburn Precinct was located somewhere on Doric Avenue south of Park Avenue, but the exact location has been lost to history.

Arlington also had a precinct, but its location is also unknown. More than likely, it was located somewhere along Cranston Street far enough away from Knightsville to justify its existence.



**A postcard view of the Cranston Town Hall – circa 1900. It was later the police station.**



**Sgt. Mahar in the Knightsville station – circa 1930**



**The Cranston police station in Knightsville - circa 1966.  
A gazebo and park now occupy this site.**



**Sgt. Charles Rogers – circa 1955**



**Officer Ken Gilkenson working the teletype machine – circa 1960**



**Dispatch Area at the Knightsville station – Circa 1965.  
L to R: Bill Loux, Charles Beckman, Ken Gilkenson.**

As transportation improved and the automobile came into general use, the precincts were eventually closed.

As Cranston prospered, it became obvious that more room for government operations was needed. When the present-day City Hall was built in the 1930s, the old town hall was turned over to the police department for use as a headquarters. Now instead of occupying just a few rooms, the department had use of the entire building.

By the 1960s it was apparent that the police headquarters in Knightsville was no longer suited to the needs of a modern police department. Since 1910, the department had grown from ten officers to over one-hundred. The building was old and in need of costly repairs. Besides inadequate interior space, there was limited parking, which was a problem for both officers and the public. Therefore, it was decided that a new modern police station needed to be built.

Several sites were considered for the new station, but it was finally decided that a site on Atwood Avenue would be best suited due to its location near the geographical center of the city. The site also offered plenty of room for expansion and parking.

In 1965, construction began at 275 Atwood Avenue. The work was done by DiOrio & Co., and the final cost was \$425,077.00. The new station was said to be a prototype for a city of Cranston's size. Construction was completed in 1966. At that time the old Knightsville station was abandoned and torn down and today, a gazebo stands in its place. The park behind it is the former site of the city garage.

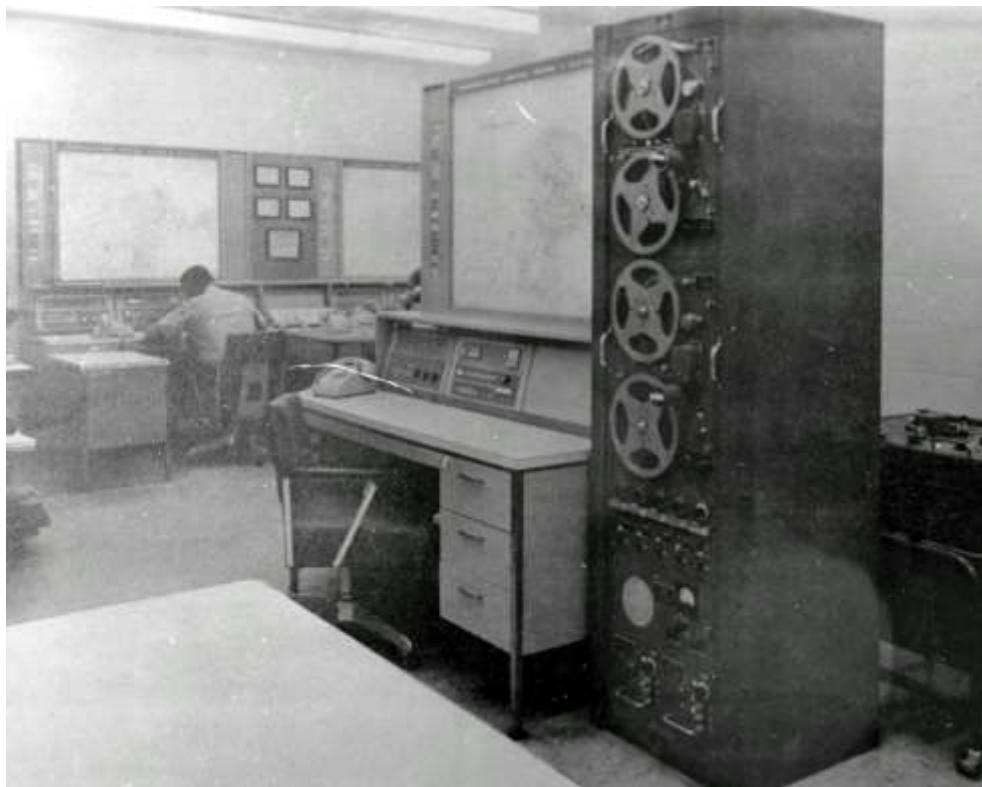
The Atwood Avenue station was remodeled and changed several times over the years. At one time the 8<sup>th</sup> District Court was housed on the third floor, and the dispatch area was once located next to the cell block.



**Cranston Police Station, 275 Atwood Avenue – circa 1966**



**The 8<sup>th</sup> District Court room was once located on the third floor of the Atwood Avenue police station. This is how it looked in the 1960s.**



**Dispatch center at the Atwood Ave. police station – 1967.  
The dispatch center was originally located close to the cell block,  
but later moved to the center of the second floor where the lobby was located.**





**Officer David Palazzolo in dispatch area - circa 1972**



**Dispatch Center – 1978 (Note the computers.)**



**Dispatch Center - 1984**  
**Showing illuminated beat maps and stations 1 & 2.**



**Dispatch Center - 1984**  
**Showing NCIC computer and station 3.**





**The Patrol Sergeant's office – 1981  
L to R: Richard Robinson, Sgt. Augie Comella, Pasquale Sperlangono**



**The Records Division as it looked in October of 1983. This area later became the roll call room in 1990 after renovations of the Atwood Ave. station were completed. Prior to that, roll calls were held in a room in the basement.**

In 1989, plans were unveiled to remodel the Atwood station and give it a general “face lift”. During the renovations, the 8<sup>th</sup> District Court was moved to Providence; the Detective Division was relocated from the basement to the third floor, and the Cranston Municipal Court was moved to the basement.

The renovations cost \$300,000, and when they were completed, the station was re-dedicated the City of Cranston Police Judicial Memorial Complex. Many rooms in the building were dedicated to the memory of deceased officers as a way of remembering and honoring them. The rooms were marked with plaques stating the officer’s name, rank, and the dates they served.



**Atwood Avenue station lobby after renovations - 1990**



Roll Call Room – 1990

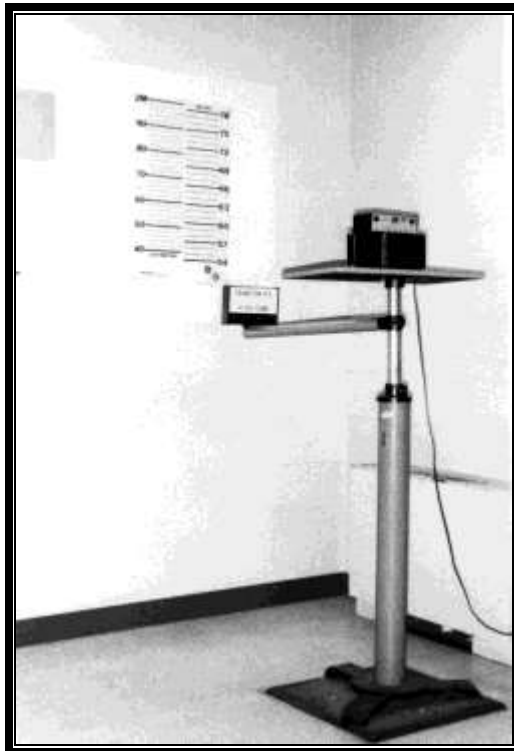


3 – 11 roll call; photo taken January 2, 1993, just before Officer Sam Baligian's last shift before his retirement. Officer Baligian patrolled 207 Post in Arlington for over seventeen years.

L to R: John Ryan, Sgt. John Moretti, Paul Rousseau, Sam Baligian, Tom Dodd, Sgt. Jim Ignasher, Craig Piernunzi, Lt. Bill Bourroughs, Sgt. Dick Robinson.



**Cell Block looking towards the sally port - 1991**



**“Mug Shot” camera at booking station – 1991  
This room was just of the cell block.**



**Computer Room – March, 1991**

This was where civilian transcriptionists would type the reports dictated by officers from call-boxes on their beat. The small machine next to the computer played mini-tapes with recorded reports dictated on them.



**Computer Room – 1991**  
(Those are printers along the wall.)





**Dispatch Center – 1991 (Channels 1 & 2)**



**Dispatch Center, Channel 3 - 1991**



### **Portable radios and radio recording machine in dispatch center - 1991**

By the dawn of the new millennium the department found itself in need of a new police station. Proposed sites included New London Avenue just south of Howard Ave; an undeveloped area on Phenix Avenue near Route 37; and along the Pawtuxet River on Dyer Avenue just south of Cranston Street. There was also a proposal to double the size of the existing station on Atwood Avenue by building an addition off the front. All of these proposals were rejected for various reasons, and a parcel of land once occupied by the old Narragansett Brewery was selected.

The new station was completed in 2006 and the department moved in shortly afterward in 2007. Cranston's current police station is far superior to any occupied by the department in previous times, and retired officers who have visited look on with envy at what is available to today's officers.

It is said that the department intends to occupy the present building for at least twenty-five years. One can only guess what technology will be available, and what the needs of the department will be when the time comes for a new building.



**The former Narragansett Brewery - July 1986.  
Today this land is occupied by a mall, and Cranston's police station.**



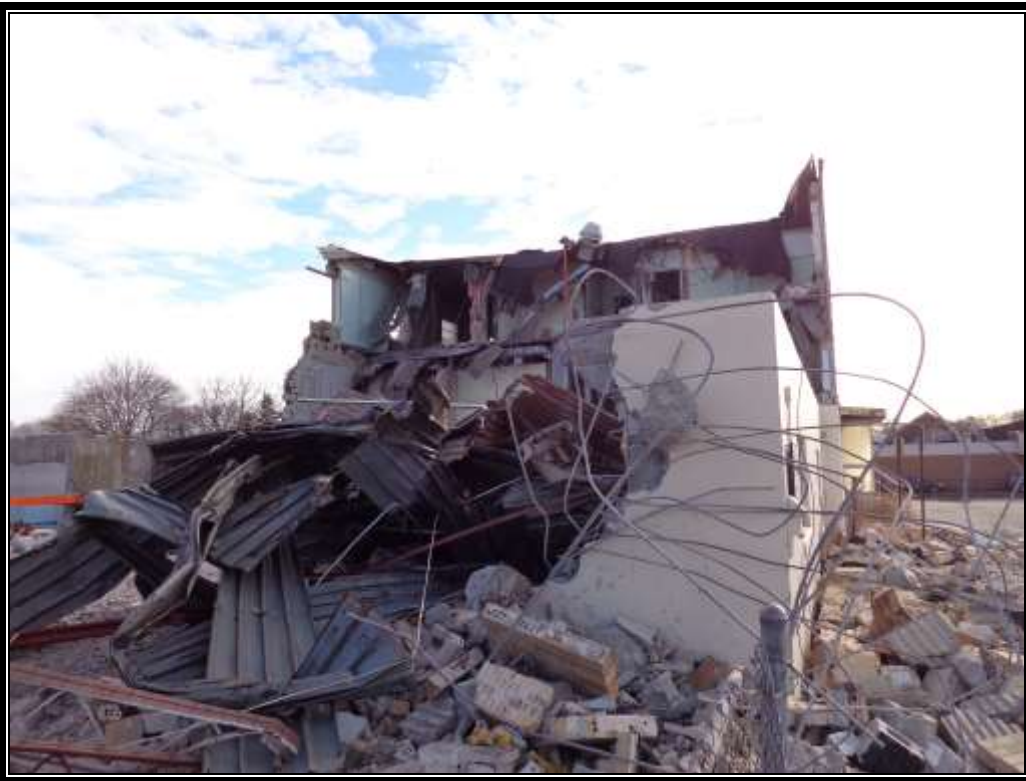
**Current police station - December 28, 2011**





**Demolition of the old police station at 275 Atwood Avenue was begun in December of 2013. (Photos taken December 28, 2013)**









**South-east view, rear parking lot**



**Rear parking lot**



**Ramp to sally-port and cell block**



Rear door



**The final farewell to a piece of C.P.D. History.**

There's an old saying that if the walls of old buildings could talk, imagine what tales they could tell.