

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 begun until the late 1970's.

When a new officer joined the force in the 1930's, 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.

One long retired officer who joined the department in 1937 related that his firearms training consisted of going into the woods off Phoenix 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, departments didn't worry about legal liability.

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 class himself. Cranston continued to run a recruit academy until 2005.

In 1963, Chief Fouchcourt was responsible for obtaining the site of the present day police training academy and firing range on Phoenix Avenue. The site was originally a quarry that was no longer used. Its 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 the land.

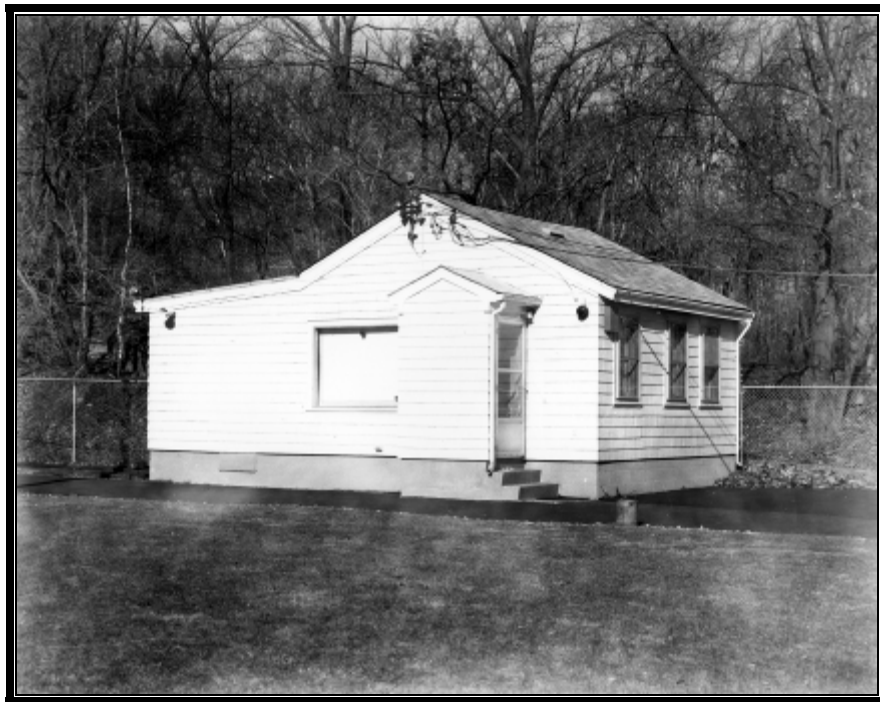
At about this time, Route 95 was being constructed through Cranston. There was a flower shop that stood on Wellington Avenue that was in the way of the project and slated for demolition. When the chief heard about it, he arranged for it to be donated to the police department and moved to its present 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 photo's courtesy of Sgt. William Loux – CPD retired)



The training classroom, 1968



A view of the firing range circa 1967



Range targets, 1967

In 1985, it became necessary to build a larger training complex to meet the growing needs of the department. 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.

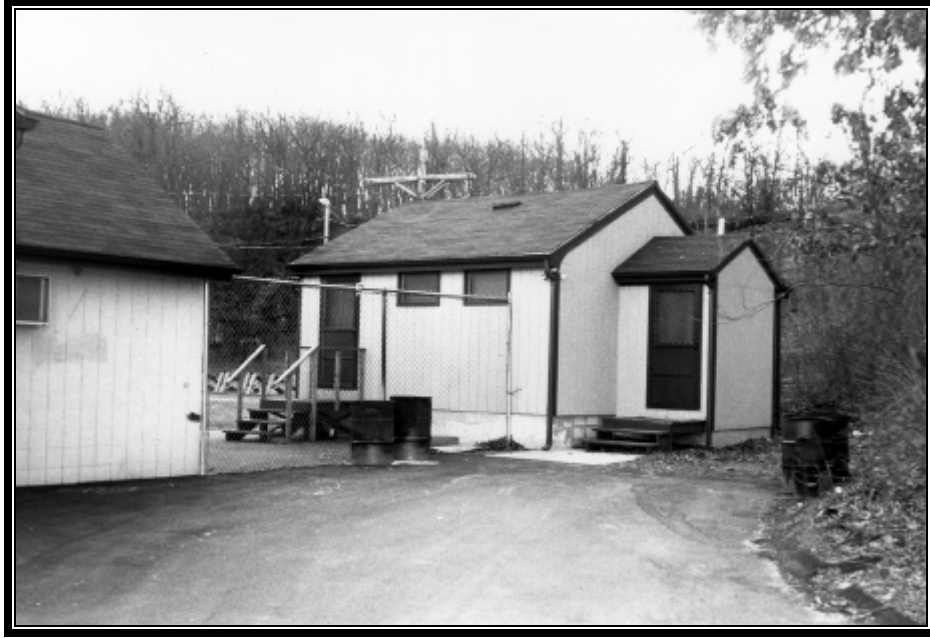
The Training Division itself was expanded. Before 1985, the division consisted of a single lieutenant. By 1986 the division had been expanded to include a captain, two officers. The DARE officers and school patrol officers were also incorporated under the training division.

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 for a about two weeks.

During the 1990's, 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 no matter what the weather conditions.



Cranston's training academy building, 1990



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 for young children about crime prevention. (Officer Al Corrente drew a coloring book featuring “Robo-Buddy” that would be given out to the children.)