

History of Bathurst Detachment

by ex-Cst. V.N. McLean

Editor's Note: Victor N. McLean joined the Force on August 20, 1951, at Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was posted to "J" Division, New Brunswick, and served at Bathurst Detachment 1954-1955. He presently resides in Bathurst.

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Gloucester County is nestled in the north-east corner of New Brunswick, on the Baie des Chaleurs. Law enforcement, however primitive, came to the area in 1895; for county sheriff, Robert Vail, and the four constables under his command (one in Tracadie, one in Caraquet, and two in Bathurst), work consisted of serving legal papers of the court. The hardest part of their job was locating the locals, because they were unfamiliar with the region. Bootlegging and moonshining were rampant, and rumrunning was especially prevalent along the coastal areas. The sheriff and his constables had little or no control over these situations.

The province was policed in this manner until the New Brunswick Provincial Police (NBPP) was created in 1927. It was formed mainly because of the illicit liquor trade. The new police force was given the job of enforcing the laws of Canada, as well as provincial statutes. They were reasonably successful, considering that there were only 33 men, four cars and one bicycle.

Their numbers doubled in 1928, and Bathurst Detachment was created. It opened with one constable, and increased to one senior constable, a junior constable and one car, in the first year. In 1932, when the RCMP absorbed the NBPP, Bathurst Detachment had one

sergeant, three constables and two motor cars. It was located on Douglas Avenue, next door to the CN Telegraph office and Edgar Aubé was sergeant in charge.

In 1940, the detachment moved to 316 St. Patrick St., into a house which had been previously owned by a druggist named Mehan, and was later bought by Malcome Noble, and leased to the RCMP. In 1948, the detachment moved to 288 St. John St., a large house owned by Angus Noble.

When I arrived at Bathurst Detachment, November 1, 1954, the house was occupied by the NCO i/c, Cpl. E. Evans. The detachment office measured approximately 14 x 18 ft., and contained two large oak desks, a maplewood typewriter desk, a stationary cabinet, two file cabinets, a smaller desk for the Section NCO, and a radio cabinet. When all five detachment members were present, we appreciated the old adage "you had to step outside to change your mind."

The detachment remained at this location until March 1955, when it moved to a new building on King Street. This brick and cement building, approximately 50 x 50 ft., was owned by Connelly Construction. The construction company occupied half of the ground floor, and the RCMP, the other half. There were two apartments upstairs, occupied by the Section NCO and the Detachment NCO. The basement had been set up into living quarters for three single members. The work area was divided into two private offices, one each for the NCOs, and a general office area. To say the least, this was a big improvement over the St. John