



THE SUMMIT COUNTY
SHIELD

A Community bulletin from the Summit County Sheriff's Office

APRIL 2020



180 YEARS
SERVING SUMMIT COUNTY

- SERVING THE CITIZENS OF SUMMIT COUNTY SINCE 1840 -

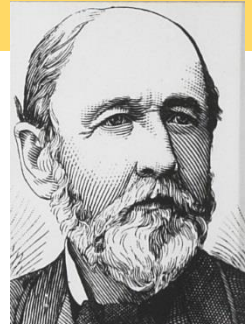


Any retelling of the history of the Summit County Sheriff's Office is of course inexorably entwined with the history of our County – for both were created within days of each other in the year 1840. Prior to that date, the Village of Akron, shire of Cuyahoga Falls, and townships of Twinsburg, Northfield, Northampton, Hudson, Stow, Tallmadge, Springfield, and Coventry were all part of Portage County. Richfield, Copley, Bath, and Norton were part of Medina County, and Franklin and Green were in Stark County.

Seeking to combine all these hamlets into a single entity, the Ohio Legislature proposed a bill on December 2, 1839 to create a new county – which they would call Summit – because of its elevation along the Ohio and Erie Canal. On February 28, 1840, the bill was voted on and passed by a margin of 19-15. But due to the fact there were no telephones, no telegraph, no train between Columbus and these communities – and that the fastest method of communication came by horse-drawn carriage, news of the new county did not reach Akron until three days later.

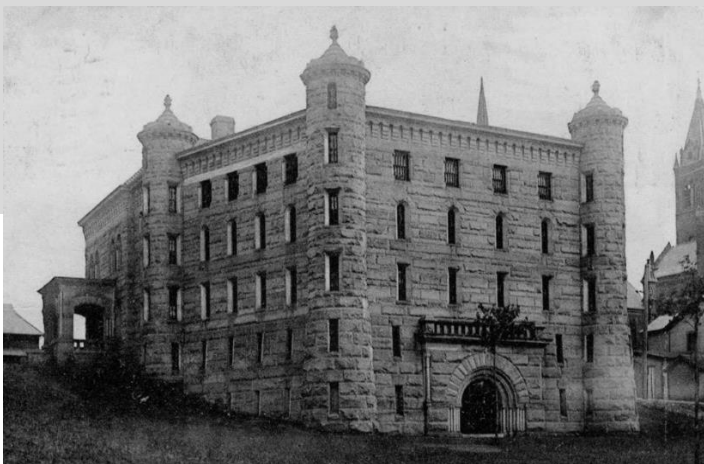
But once word arrived, it spread with the raucous revelry of the American Revolution. As described in a book written by Samuel A. Lane – noted historian and Summit County Sheriff from 1856-1861; 'With the rapidity of lightning, the news was carried from house to house, and in less than an hour, the whole town was in motion. Hats, caps, and cloaks flew into the air with jollification. Cheers, church bells, bonfires, and bright illuminations were the order of the day – while the thunder of cannon continued to proclaim the birth of the new county to all the surrounding countryside.'

At the organization of the new County of Summit, held on Monday April 6th, 1840, Thomas Wilson of Northfield was appointed Sheriff, and immediate plans were made for the construction of the first jail. When it opened on Wednesday October 3, 1843, the total number of inmates was four. By 1890, the number of prisoners regularly exceeded 100. The growth of the county and Akron in particular meant a larger jail would be needed to keep pace with the population.

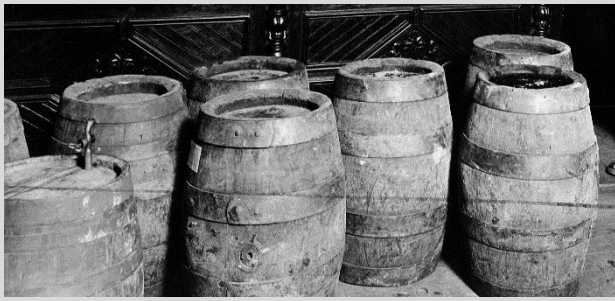


SHERIFF WILSON

Blueprints submitted at the National Prison Conference in November 1891, by local architect Frank O. Weary, called for a revolutionary design – a stone and steel fortress with an attached family residence for the sheriff. When completed in 1903, the new jail was considered the strongest, safest, and most advanced structure of its kind anywhere in the world – what today we would call a 'super-max' facility.



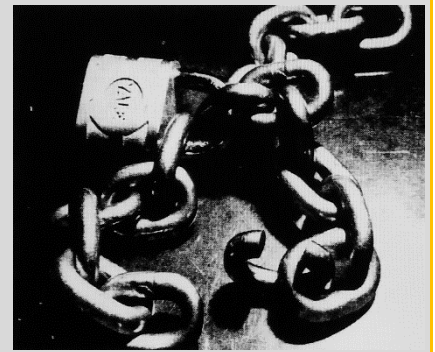
It definitely put Akron at the center of all things modern when it came to jail reform, and the Summit County Sheriff's Office enjoyed remarkable notoriety for being one of the most futuristic, effective, and efficient law enforcement agencies in the country at that time.



Of course, any organization with as long a history as ours is bound to suffer some embarrassing moments. Such was the case during Prohibition, when Sheriff Ray Potts saw a lucrative opportunity sitting in the 200 gallons of confiscated bootleg liquor stored in the basement of his bastille. Using his connections with the criminal underworld, Potts secretly arranged to sell the cache of corn whiskey to a corrupt rumrunner on New Year's Eve.

Imagine the Sheriff's surprise on the night of December 31st, 1934 when the bootlegger met him at the back door of the jail – and promptly identified himself as a federal agent, accompanied by several comrades who materialized out of the shadows and converged on the shell-shock sheriff. Potts was charged with fifteen counts of conspiracy to defeat liquor tax law, convicted, and sent to a federal penitentiary. He had served as Sheriff for only one year and by all measure was not cut out for the job.

Another ignominious event occurred on April 18, 1947 when a prisoner named Bernard Stout escaped from jail in the most ingenious way. Like something out of the movie 'Escape from Alcatraz', Stout sawed through his cell door lock, crawled through a ventilator shaft, broke out a screen leading to the roof, and climbed down onto the porch of the residence where Sheriff Robert L. Smith was sleeping. In order to fool the guards and bide him more time, Stout cleverly constructed a dummy of himself, composed of cloth, paper, and cardboard, which he left lying on his cot – along with a personal note saying farewell to Sheriff Smith.



By all accounts, it shouldn't have happened. Weeks before the escape, deputies had already intercepted several files that were being smuggled into jail by Stout's visitors – but apparently they missed one. And despite the fact that guards checked on Stout every half-hour, they failed to realize the inert form 'sleeping' on his cot was a doppelganger. Stout was eventually recaptured, but talk of his daring escape lingered long after – much to the chagrin of Sheriff Smith and his keen-eyed deputies.

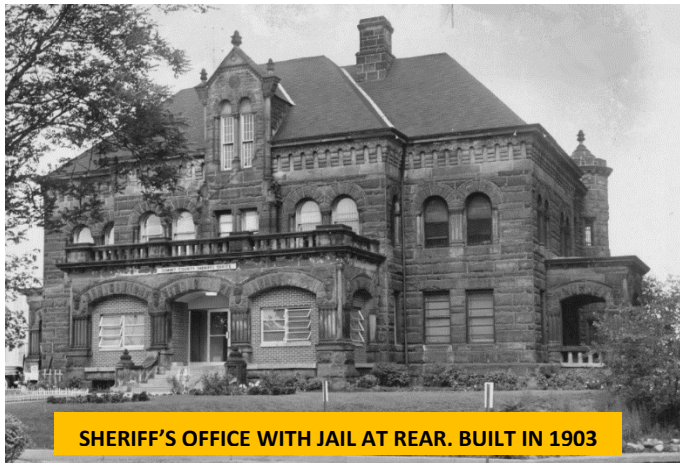
Things have certainly changed since those halcyon days of yore. We now have over 300 sworn staff and nearly 100 civilian employees, all of whom are dedicated to providing the best service possible to our community. It is because of their commitment to excellence that the Summit County Sheriff's Office is considered one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the nation. Our people today make peace with the past, take pride in the present, and prepare for the future with purpose and professionalism.



Grateful acknowledgement is extended to the following individuals who assisted Mr. Matulavich with his research for this commemorative issue of the Shield; Mary Plazo, Special Collections Division Manager at the Akron-Summit County Public Library and her assistant Barbara Leden. Vic Fleischer, Associate Professor of Bibliography and Head of the University of Akron Archival Services. Teresa Corall, Records Manager for Summit County. Mark Price, noted journalist, who wished me luck trying to condense 180 years of history into a single issue. Sincere thanks to the Akron Beacon Journal for use of the many historic photos seen here, and retired Sheriff's Major Charles Pongracz III for his contribution.



Turn back the clock - some pieces from our past



SHERIFF'S OFFICE WITH JAIL AT REAR. BUILT IN 1903



SHERIFF JIM FLOWER GIVES SPECIAL FLIGHT INSTRUCTIONS TO DEPUTY J. FRANCIS AND DEPUTY R. MAGLIONE, WHO WERE BOTH BIPLANE PILOTS AS WELL AS DEPUTIES ON JANUARY 31, 1935



DEPUTY BILL FOUTS IN UNIFORM 1934



DEPUTY VICTOR COLLINS DEMONSTRATES HIS RED CROSS TRAINING ON SHERIFF'S CAPTAIN PETE PANDELIS FEBRUARY 20, 1949



2 INMATES ESCAPED FROM JAIL AFTER PRYING OUT BARS AND USING ROPE MADE FROM BLANKETS OCTOBER 11, 1946



ROW OF SHERIFF'S VEHICLES SEPTEMBER 10, 1935

FUN FACT:
SHERIFF JAMES COREY APPOINTED THE VERY FIRST FEMALE DEPUTIES IN SUMMIT COUNTY - HILDA EBBERT AND MISSY SMITH - ON JANUARY 9, 1918

Sincere appreciation to the Akron Beacon Journal for use of their photos in this special issue. See more on our Facebook page.



PISTOL PRACTICE AT OUTDOOR RANGE ON JUNE 4, 1962



SHERIFF ROBERT SMITH (RIGHT) WITH STATE LIQUOR OFFICER THOMAS DAVIS EXAMINE AN ILLEGAL 100-GALLON DOUBLE BOILER STILL IN THE WOODS OFF CHAMBERLIN ROAD IN MACEDONIA JUNE 28, 1946



FOUR NEW FORD FAIRLANES  THE SHERIFF'S FLEET DELIVERED TO THE AGENCY MARCH 1, 1957



1903 JAIL BEING RAZED IN MAY 1965 AS THE NEW JAIL (SAFETY BUILDING) WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY BEING BUILT AROUND IT ON THREE SIDES.

SHERIFF RUSSELL BIRD AND DEPUTY W. WALTON INSPECT FIRST-EVER SHERIFF EMBLEM, CONSISTING OF A 6-POINTED STAR, ON MARCH 26, 1957. PRIOR TO THIS, ONLY WORDS WERE USED TO MARK OUR CARS.

FUN FACT:

SHERIFF SAMUEL LANE WAS SO BELOVED BY JAIL INMATES THAT THEY WOULD OFTEN GIVE HIM 'THREE CHEERS FOR SHERIFF LANE' AND PROMISED NEVER TO ESCAPE WHILE HE WAS SHERIFF. ON JANUARY 22, 1861 - 15 DAYS AFTER LANE WAS REPLACED BY SHERIFF JACOB CHISNELL, PRISONER SOBIESKI BURNETT WAS THE FIRST OF MANY TO ESCAPE.



OVERHEARING INMATES CONVERSATION, DEPUTIES FOILED A MAJOR JAIL BREAK ON FEBRUARY 22, 1961



Proudly serving the citizens of Summit County

SHERIFF'S POST IN COVENTRY TOWNSHIP 1962



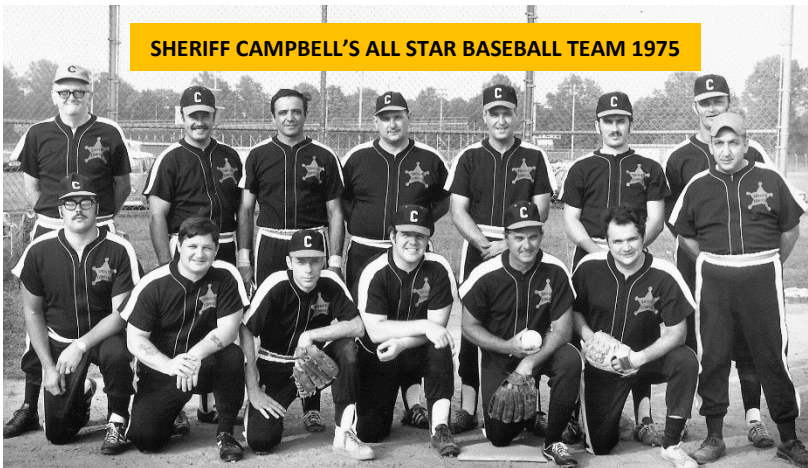
FUN FACT: SINCE 1840, THERE HAVE ONLY BEEN THREE PATCHES WORN BY UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF THE SUMMIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE. PRIOR TO 1936, NO PATCHES WERE WORN. BEGINNING IN 1936, A ROUND PATCH WAS INTRODUCED. THIS WAS REPLACED BY A TRIANGULAR PATCH IN 1950. IN 1996, A ROUNDED SHIELD PATCH WAS ADOPTED AND IS STILL IN USE TODAY.



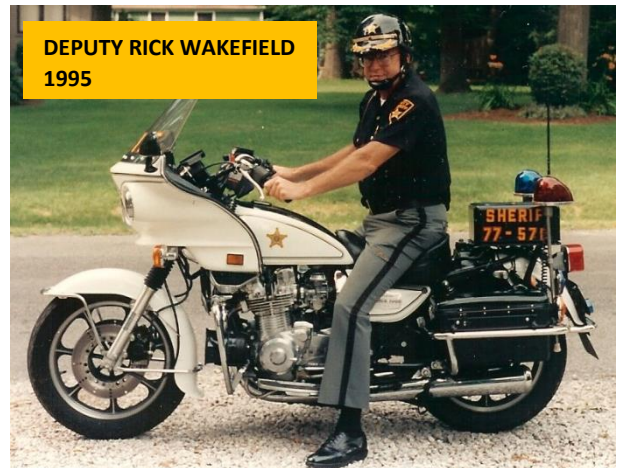
SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR IN 1977 – A PONTIAC LE MANS



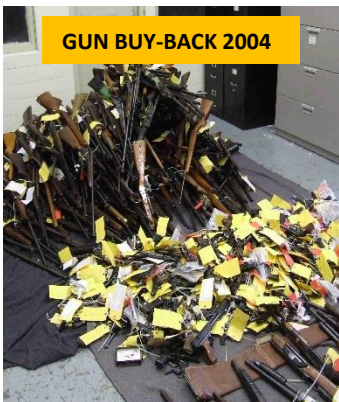
DEPUTY JIM RAYMOND PATROLS THE PORTAGE LAKES IN JUNE 1989



SHERIFF CAMPBELL'S ALL STAR BASEBALL TEAM 1975



DEPUTY RICK WAKEFIELD 1995

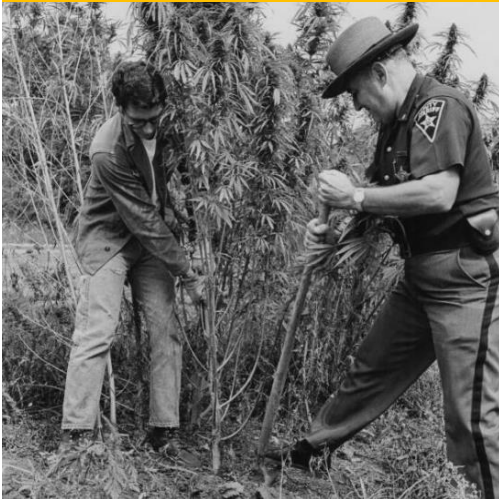


GUN BUY-BACK 2004



SHERIFF'S SPECIALTY UNITS 2002

SHERIFF MAJOR HOWARD TAYLOR DIGGING UP MARIJUANA PLANTS SEPTEMBER 10, 1968



SUMMIT COUNTY SHERIFF BADGES FROM 1880 TOP AND 1935 BOTTOM

FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN SUMMIT COUNTY JAIL MATRON MARGUERITE NASH HONORED SEPTEMBER 19, 1964



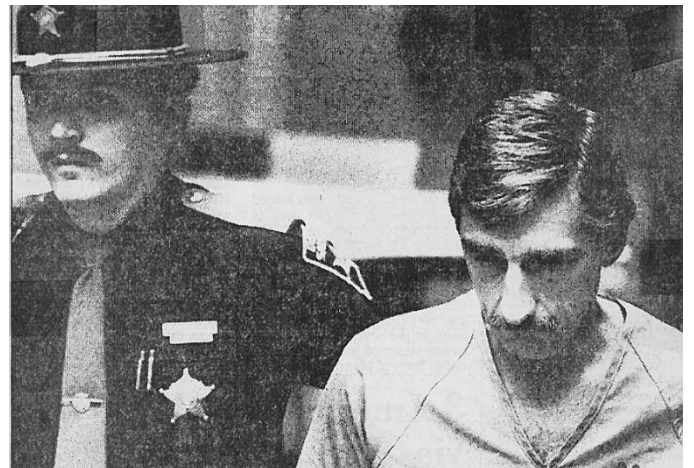
1977 SPECIAL DEPUTY BADGE LEFT AND CURRENT BADGE



SHIELD NEWSLETTER CREATED 2015



SHERIFF'S COMMUNICATIONS BUREAU / DISPATCH - 2018



DEPUTY STEVE BARRY ESCORTING MURDERER BOB BUELL 1983

FUN FACT:

IN 2019, KITCHEN STAFF AT THE JAIL SERVED 825,568 MEALS TO INMATES

DETECTIVE BUREAU SPECIAL TASK FORCE 2019



SUMMIT COUNTY JAIL DEPUTIES REFLECT OUR DIVERSITY 2016



SHERIFF'S MOUNTED PATROL 2017



Going out tonight? We are.

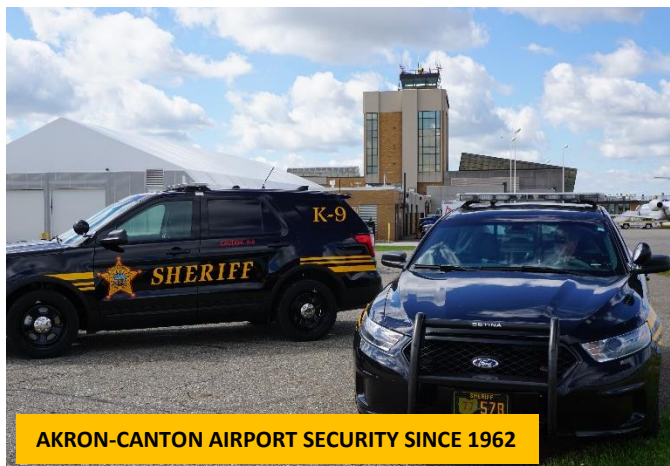
PATROL BUREAU 2016



SUMMIT COUNTY JAIL OPENED IN 1990



SHERIFF'S TRAINING FACILITY OPENED IN 2001



AKRON-CANTON AIRPORT SECURITY SINCE 1962



COURT SERVICES AND SECURITY SINCE 1840



BOMB SQUAD AND SWAT TEAM



SHERIFF'S BIKE PATROL 2019



SHERIFF'S MARINE PATROL

FUN FACT: IN THE 180-YEAR HISTORY OF THE SUMMIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, THE YOUNGEST PERSON TO BECOME SHERIFF WAS THOMAS WILSON AT AGE 29.