

History of the Grover Beach Police Department



By
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Chumash Indians occupied the area currently known as Grover Beach, at least 9,000 years ago. It later became included in portions of the 7,000 acre Rancho El Pismo. Four years before California became a State, this rancho was awarded to Jose Ortega in a Mexican land grant in 1846, , Ortega sold the Rancho to Isaac J. Sparks who was the owner of Rancho Huasna, south of Arroyo Grande. In 1848 the property, known as Rancho El Pismo, was sold to John M. Price.

Although named after Dwight William Grover, the community was actually founded and developed by the partnership of D.W. Grover and George Gates. Together, they purchased 1,149 acres on the sloping bluff overlooking Pismo Beach, which was known as Huntington Beach, at the time. Of course, Huntington Beach later became the name of a city in Southern California.

Grover and Gates filed plans to develop the Town of Grover on August 1, 1887. They hired a local civil engineer who surveyed the proposed community into town lots, villa, and farm tracts. Twenty acres were set aside for the construction of a beautiful hotel expected to cost \$ 75,000. Unfortunately, the hotel was never built.

This well designed community had a grand avenue, one hundred feet wide from the water's edge into Arroyo Grande. All of the streets were wide and laid very straight with many of the names taken from popular beaches of the era.

The developers of the community honored themselves with prestigious titles, according to the Daily Republic newspaper on August 16, 1887. Mr. D.W. Grover was proclaimed as the mayor while his partner was the "Town Marshal."

George Gates was also an auctioneer who dealt in other real estate. The first auction of lots in the Town of Grover was conducted on August 2, 1887. The well-advertised event brought nearly one thousand people to the bidding blocks. Residential lots measuring 50 feet by 150 feet were sold between \$ 50 and \$ 225 each. The first day of the auction earned the partners \$ 15,000 from the sale of 121 lots.

Gates and Grover sold their interest in the development to J.F. Beckett in 1892. He then continued selling the lots in the community under the name of "Beckett Park." The land was passed onto Beckett's two sons who sold the remaining lots to H.V. Bagwell in 1937.

Success of the community was assumed to be guaranteed by the opening of a U.S. Post Office in March, 1947. Besides the Post Office, the town could then boast a service station, grocery store, auto court (motel), and a church.

The Grover Civic Association launched a fund raising drive to survey the feasibility of incorporation. The fundraising committee chairman, Ken Grensted, set its goals at hiring an independent consulting company to evaluate the proposal. To illustrate their fundraising progress, a campaign thermometer was placed in the 900 block of Grand Avenue with a goal of \$ 1500.



A successful petition drive was lead by Jack Lancaster to incorporate Grover City. The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to allow the incorporation of Grover on September 8, 1959. The Board of Supervisors felt that the incorporation of Grover would be one step closer to the consolidation of the entire five cities area as a single city. The five cities included Arroyo Grande, Grover City, Oceano, Pismo Beach, and Shell Beach.

The decision to incorporate was then sent to the voters. A slate of proposed council members and other civic officers were also to appear on the ballot. The city boundaries coincided with the fire and water districts to allow for an easy transition.

Grover City was finally born after a vote on December 1, 1959, with 644 for incorporation to 381 against incorporation. The newly formed city of about 6,500 residents was officially incorporated on December 21, 1959.

After incorporation, it is incumbent upon the city to provide public safety and other services that were previously provided by the County of San Luis Obispo. To meet this mandate, the city initially contracted with the Sheriff's Department for law enforcement and the California Highway Patrol for traffic control. Long-term contracts were considered but abandoned by the City choosing to form its own Police Department.

The City hired David Greason as its first Police Officer on September 7, 1960. With a total Police Department budget of \$ 22,033.14 for fiscal year 1960/61, the city purchased an \$1800 patrol car and paid a whopping \$ 400 per month to their patrolman.





The Police Department was set up inside the fire station which had just separated from the Fairegrove Fire District to a City Fire Department.

James Harner, a former Deputy Sheriff, became the first Chief of Police on August 2, 1962. He had also been the first Fire Chief and very active in the incorporation effort.

Police Operations were moved into the City Hall near 8th Street and Rockaway, upon completion of the building on December 23, 1961. A total of 900 square feet was originally allocated for the police operation and was later increased to 1100 square feet by Chief Brown.

The Police Officers of the time wore green pants and tan shirts with brown epaulets and pocket flaps. Their badges were a gold star with a unique green enamel lettering. The officers purchased their own handguns and were permitted to carry any size or caliber they desired.

The entire Grover City Police Department budget was \$ 274,354 during fiscal year 1977/78. Under the direction of Chief David Brown, the newly appointed chief as of March 1977, the police department was staffed by 12 sworn officers, 5.5 non-sworn, and 4 reserve officers. Two of the sworn offers were funded by grants reducing the cost to the city.



On October 30, 1977, the uniforms were changed to dark blue, conforming with most modern agencies. The star shaped badge was replaced with a large oval shield, as was becoming the trend across the State. The city also purchased .357 magnum Smith and Wesson handguns for the staff achieving department wide consistency. In 1989, the

department again changed handguns to a Smith and Wesson 9mm semi-automatic pistol.

The growing Police Department found itself with a variety of colors on the patrol cars until 1979. Some were green and white, some brown, and others blue, until a police car color of solid white was adopted. A linear blue stripe was later added.

Experiencing an increase in crime, the department appointed its first full-time Detective in 1978.

A new Police Facility was authorized by the city council during a session in January of 1980. It would be built at 711 Rockaway, adjacent to the City Hall. The station was completed in February 1981, at a cost of \$ 400,000. The 5,000 square feet was designed to meet the ever-increasing demands on a professional law enforcement agency.

Maria Vasquez was hired as the first full-time female Police Officer in 1983. She had worked as a part time reserve officer and dispatcher with the city since 1978.



The city officially changed its name to Grover Beach, after a successful ballot-initiative was decided by the voters on November 3, 1992. The city council had changed the name earlier in the year passing a city ordinance. Unfortunately, their decision became very controversial with supported and opponents of the name change in favor of letting the community decide on such a change. The election was very close with 2,275 for the change to Grover Beach and 2,179 for remaining Grover City. The name change finally became official on December 1, 1992.

The controversy over the name change continued after the election through newspaper articles citing the expense of changing the signs and insignia. Unfortunately, the change came at a time when all municipalities were experiencing severe financial problems brought about by an enormous state deficit.

Many innovative approaches to policing the community were used in the 1990's. Programs were initiated to patrol by bicycle and on horseback for congested areas or those not accessible by vehicle. A benefit of these activities was an improved relationship between the police and the citizens.

By fiscal year 1993/94, the Police Department budget had reached \$ 1,556,091. The sworn staff had grown to 17 Police Officers, 7 non-sworn employees, and 8 reserve officers.

Grover Beach and Arroyo Grande conducted an extensive study during 1993 and 1994, to consider the consolidation of police services. A lingering recession and concern for improving service through the elimination of duplicate functions were the driving factors for the study. The consolidation was hoped to increase the number of field officers and



provide supervision around the clock for both cities. However, the consolidation plan was never implemented.

Chief David Brown retired on December 30, 1994, after 17 ½ years as the “top cop.” He was particularly proud of the accomplishments during his tenure including the construction of the police facility and developing a top-notch professional organization.

On January 9, 1995, Ernie Klevesahl became the next Chief of Police. Klevesahl came to Grover Beach with an extensive background in law enforcement. He worked for the San Diego Sheriff’s Department, San Diego Police Department, and most recently as the Chief of Police in Lincoln, California. Additionally, he held a bachelor’s degree in business and a master’s degree in public administration.

Klevesahl left the city to accept a position as Chief of Police in Manhattan Beach in 1999.

John Bradbury was appointed Chief of Police on February 10, 2000. Bradbury, had retired from the Los Angeles Police Department after serving for twenty-three years. In 1993, he accepted a position with the Grover Beach Police Department as a sergeant. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1994, which was later re-titled to commander.

Chief John Bradbury retired from the City of Grover Beach in early September 2004 and Jim Gardner was chosen to serve as the interim Police Chief. His served in that capacity for four months during the recruitment and selection of a permanent Chief.

In January 2005, the City of Grover Beach selected Jim Copsey as the 8th Police Chief to serve the community.

On January 10, 2005, Jim Copsey was officially appointed as the Chief of Police. Copsey came from the King City where he had been serving as their Chief of Police for nearly three years. Copsey began his career in 1988 in the City of Monterey, working many assignments. Included in his vast experience were roles as a patrol officer, detective, narcotics investigator, bicycle patrol, mounted horse patrol, field training officer and sergeant before moving to King City as Police Chief. Additionally, Chief Copsey holds an Associate of Arts degree in criminal justice and a Bachelor of Arts degree in management.

In 2006, the Police Department changed to Chevrolet Impala patrol cars and adorned them with a new graphic design. This move resulted in a new fleet of patrol vehicles that were more reliable and used less fuel. In 2009, the department was able to obtain, through grant funding, their first Chevrolet Tahoe SUV command vehicle. This new vehicle is used by the patrol division as a sergeant's vehicle and allows the department to provide the community with an immediate command post as the scene of an emergency.



The Grover Beach Police Department now operates with a sworn staff of 19 officers and a support staff of 9 people. The current FY09/10 budget is \$3,639,049.

The citizens of Grover Beach are justifiably proud of their community Police Department. They have continuously demonstrated their support for the staff since incorporation in 1959.

Chiefs of Police

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| 1959-1961 | Contract with Sheriff's Department |
| 1961-1962 | James Harner |
| 1962-1967 | Jack Scarborough |
| 1967-1971 | Bill Allison |
| 1971-1977 | Bill Malone |
| 1977-1994 | David Brown |
| 1995-1999 | Ernest Klevesahl |
| 2000-2004 | John Bradbury |
| 2005-Present | Jim Copsey |



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Shoulder Patches of the Grover Beach Police Department



Top: First issue, 1960

Center: Second issue

Bottom: Third issue



Fourth issue, 1977 to 1992



Fifth issue, 1992 to present