

Rivers Police Service

Policing in rivers over the past hundred years evolved in the same manner as many small prairie towns. There was a blend of municipal constables, Manitoba provincial police and RCMP. One unique feature in Rivers was the maintenance of its municipal police service since before the town's incorporation.

The need for a police service was on the agenda at the village of Rivers Council meeting in 1908 constables were hired were and were paid three dollars for each arrest made.

One of the officers asked counsel to provide a regular lock up as a record show various crimes occurring robberies, thefts, assaults. Local statues controlled water, a violent labour strike broke out at the grand trunk Pacific Railway roundhouse which resulted in a double shooting at the local hotel. During another incident, charges were lead against a railroad detective for assaulting a local constable.

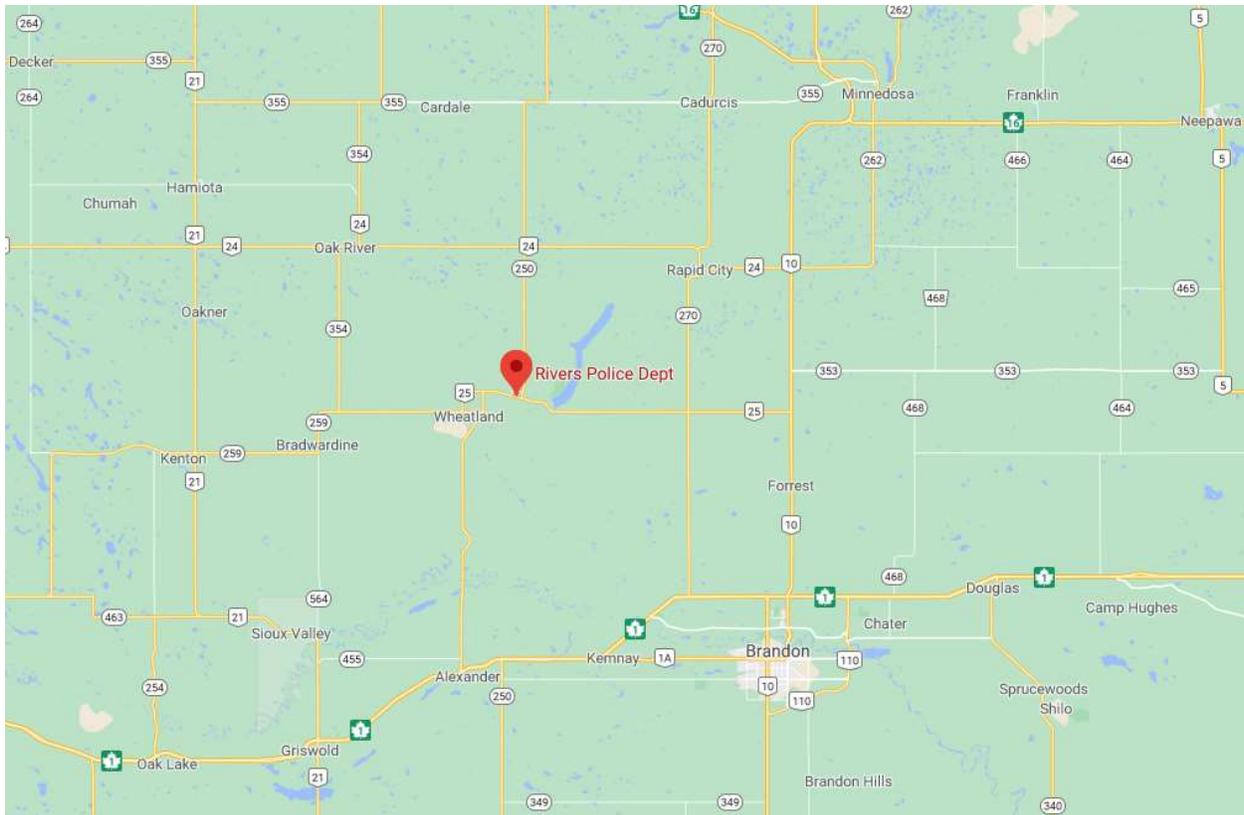
In 1913 there were additional two officers hired for \$85 a month crime continued as new problems arose with the appearance of the first automobiles. By 1917 the first auto theft was recorded. It was during this time council question paying \$1000 a year for police protection when only \$31.50 have been collected in fines.

The speed limit of 10 mph was the rule and two silent policemen were purchased. Each silent policeman was a spring-loaded post on a heavy base. Its purpose was to control vehicles at intersections and to prevent cutting corners one was located at the corner of Main the other at first Avenue opposite the railway station.

Due to lack of funds in the early 1930s, Rivers was without a regular constable. RCMP were here for a short time but that service was withdrawn when counsel determined that there was no need for this special form of policing. In 1938 a Constable was hired as the first uniform policeman and permitted to carry a gun he remained in that position until 1950.

The airbase 4 miles southwest of Rivers added some 2200 military personnel to the area. The base was staffed with its own complement of military police, but many personnel resided in rivers. Local police declared, Rivers isn't a place to swing or swagger or insult law-abiding citizens.

In 1950 the town policeman was to receive a salary of \$2000 a year with an extra hundred dollars for a uniform a suite was also supplied. Town coffers begin to swell as he brought in all who broke the local bylaws. "Lawbreakers we're having their fun but having to pay for it." The officer even charged The odd person with blasphemous language. By 1953 those breaking the law had contributed to \$1508.59 in fines. In 1961 60 applicants were received from coast to coast for an advertised position council chose Walter Chernus a Rivers applicant add a salary of \$300 a month plus uniforms. He was to supply his own vehicle with a mileage allowance. By 1964 his salary was raised to \$435 per month including uniforms, and still an allowance for using his vehicle. Chief Chernus was on call 24 hours a day seven days a week by this time the population had a total of 1700 and the base still averaged another 2000 personnel finally some 17 years later another officer was hired in 1979.



In 1979 patrol cars were provided for the police service early communication was accomplished by calling the Constables. The Constable had a house window and if the blind was up or down was a signal from his wife to let him know that he had a call. There was a CB radio placed in the patrol vehicle which is how he communicated with his wife at the time.

By 1998 and up-to-date radio system which included a mobile unit, portables radios and a cell phone was in use. The Rivers police added a CPIC terminal that year as well.

Walter Chernos had his wife Billy acting as an unpaid dispatcher from 61 to 1992 around 1980 she was given a \$75 a month honorarium.

Chief Chernos What is the longest-serving member of the Rivers police service with more than 31 years of service he retired July 31, 1992.

Since that time chief Mike Turnbull, Lloyd Collister, Leon Flannigan, Bruce Klassen, Bob Futrell have been chief.

The Rivers police service has seen many advancements over its years to a new location at 645 2nd Ave. and its current complement includes chief Bruce Klassen Sergeant Lon Schwartz Constable Jerra Green and Constable Dennis Rollins as its current complement.

In 2018 the Rivers police service assumed responsibility for policing the rural area as well which was formally known as the RM a Daly.