

34 Cross Street, the Beginnings

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When did we begin at 34 Cross St? As a young patrolman I was always told that this building was taken over by the WPD in 1935 but no exact date was known. I decided to research the exact date and in the process found that the institutional memory was wrong.

A search of our in-house records for clues as to our start at 34 Cross St. proved negative. The search was going to be harder. I went to the Watertown Public Library and began to search through the archives. I searched the town's Annual Report to narrow the focus. Chief Milmore's¹ annual report to the town in the early 1930's continuously bemoaned the need for "adequate quarters" (new police station). A committee was reported to have been established in 1931 to search for a site for a new station. The Annual Report for 1935 has the following line from Chief Milmore "a new police station is at last a reality." So 1935 is where I began my search.

I started to read the microfiche records of the Watertown Sun of 1935 and was able to find the following stories:

Oct. 31, 1935, *Town to Act on Proposed New Station*- a special assembly is to be held in the Senior High School auditorium on Nov. 13, 1935 to determine if the town will approve a new Police Station. The Federal government has approved a grant of \$33,750.00. Sub headline, *Cross Street Site Likely to Find Opposition*-town meeting members want a site that the town already owns. There may be opposition to the appropriation of \$7000.00 for the land purchase.

Nov. 14, 1935, *New Police Station Is Voted By Town On Cross Street Site*- The town meeting of November 13, 1935 was practically unanimous in it's decision that a new police station was needed. The issue became where to site the new station. A debate of one and one half hour ensued. The opposition to the proposed site did not believe that it should be "relegated to a back street", that taking property assessed at \$18,000.00 off of the tax rolls was not fiscally prudent. The proponents of the Cross St. site explained the savings to the town in "transferring the wires". The vote in favor of our present site (34 Cross St.) was carried 77 to 26.

Dec. 12, 1935, *State PWA² Holds Police Station Bids* -A meeting of the Building Committee for a New Police Station recommended William Donaldson of 28 Centre St. Watertown as the contractor for the new Police Station. He awaits PWA approval. The

¹ Chief John Milmore, Chief of Police Watertown PD during the 1930s.

² PWA, Public Works Administration

architect of the building is Charles G. Loring of Boston. The building is to be 2 stories and a garage. First Floor contains booking space, public space, chief's office, signal room, vaults, toilets, closets, matron's room, women's cells, men's cells, garage, emergency room and conference room. The second floor will consist of offices for inspectors, sergeants, lieutenants, photographs, guard room, conference space, library, lockers, toilets and storage. The basement will furnish garage space, boiler room, vault, armory, shooting range, public toilet, storage and closets.

Apr. 08, 1937, *Sheridan³ Turns New Police Station Over to the Town Fathers*- On Saturday April 03, 1937 the new police Station was accepted by the town. The keys were then turned over to Chief Milmore. The final cost for the building was \$90,000.00.

So on April 03, 2007 say Happy Birthday to 34 John Sonny Whooley Way (Cross St.) our home for 70 years.

³ James H. Sheridan, ex-selectman, head of the Police Station Building Committee