



Sheriffs of the 20th Century



Silas E Davis, Sheriff – 1897 until 1901. It must have been a great honor to have served as Sheriff at the turn of the Century. Sheriff Silas Davis had a distinguished career in law enforcement. He was also St. Augustine's Town Marshall and Chief of Police. His legacy in law enforcement continues today. Sheriff Davis' son, Silas Davis Jr, served as Police Commissioner for the City of St. Augustine and his sons, Silas Davis and Mark Davis, were deputies with the St. Johns Sheriff's Office in the 1970's through the early 2000's. Sheriff Davis has 2 great grandsons in law enforcement, one being Silas E. Davis III is with the University of Las Vegas Police Reserve. In addition, great-great grandson Kevin Mark Davis is police officer with the Liberty University Police Dept in Lynchburg, VA. The law enforcement tradition is a continuing tradition in Sheriff Davis' family.



Charles Joseph Perry, Sheriff – 1889 until 1897 and 1901 until 1919. Although Sheriff Joe Perry served split terms, he was the longest serving Sheriff of our county's history, having been elected and reelected seven times, for a total of 26 years as Sheriff. Before becoming Sheriff he served as deputy sheriff in Putnam county and in St. Johns County under Sheriff Floyd. By all available accounts, he was known for being a "big, bold man," at 6'6" and weighing 300 pounds. He was apparently very popular and reputed to have gone on the most dangerous calls right along with his deputies until the last couple of years of his term, as he was very ill. He died in office on February 7, 1919, at the age of 56.

Prior to Sheriff Joe Perry, there is almost no information available about Deputy Sheriffs who served with Sheriffs or what their jobs were like. Among the Deputies who served with Joe Perry: Raymond Sabate, Charles F. Perry (Sheriff's son), Guy White, Joe Appler (who was later indicted and then cleared in a murder case), and Charles Green.

It was during Sheriff C. J. Perry's tenure that the first known Deputy Sheriff was killed in the line of duty. Deputy Guy White was killed while in the act of disarming four prisoners on March 5, 1911, at

Espanola, Florida. White had deputized Abe Schenider, a local businessman, to assist him with the arrest. Schneider was also killed. At that time, Espanola was in St. Johns County.



Elmer E Boyce, Sheriff – 1919 until 1942. The next era in law enforcement here was headed by Sheriff Elmer Boyce. He took office in 1919, and held the office for twenty-three years. He was very well thought of in the community according to the local newspapers at the time. Under Sheriff Boyce's leadership, moonshiners and other illegal, homemade liquor manufacturers were aggressively pursued.

Remember, the Prohibition Era was during his tenure. It was common practice for Sheriff Boyce or one of his senior Deputies to bust a still, gather up the goods and head for the city gates by the bayfront. This allowed a chance for newspaper persons and other local citizens to see that Sheriff Boyce and his deputies were working, and they were working hard!

Sheriff Boyce had many problems that we still contend with today; the busting up of moonshine stills, the death of three deputies, complaints about his jail, and not enough funds due to a fee system in place during his tenure.

On November 4, 1927, Deputy P. A. Turlington was killed in a vehicle crash while en route to an emergency call. Deputy Turlington had completed bringing a prisoner to the jail from his district in Hastings, when he received a call of three robbers on the loose in his district. While responding, his steering gear apparently failed. This caused him to catapult through the windshield, killing him. Deputy Turlington left behind a wife and children.

On May 7, 1933, Deputy Lamar Knight and Deputy Frank Quigley were shot and killed. They were en route to a disturbance call when they saw two individuals matching the description of the suspects on Mill Creek Road. While the deputies questioned the men (Clarence Baker and Ike Williams), Ike Williams turned and shot both deputies. Deputy Knight was killed instantly and Deputy Quigley died later at the hospital. Both suspects were arrested and charged. Sheriff Boyce was succeeded upon his death on November 27, 1942, by Governor-appointed, and later elected, Sheriff J. T. Shepard.



Jurant T. Shepard, Sheriff – 1942 until 1949. In 1946, Sheriff Shepard was responsible for extensive experimental work in the use of the new two-way radio. It proved exceptionally valuable to county law enforcement. The first system consisted of a low band transmitter and two cars having two-way radio sets. Sheriff Shepard was also the first Sheriff to put his deputies on light (8) hour shifts.

The period of 1900-1950, saw the addition of traffic problems, and the Prohibition Era came and went. Higher standards of inmate security and housing had to be implemented. Along with these issues came the support of new technology to assist the Sheriff and his deputies.

Sheriff's Office personnel had to deal with serious financial concerns. In the early years, the Sheriff's Office was solely supported by the goodwill of the town and the fee system. Guess which paid more, and not by a lot? This did not allow a Deputy Sheriff to draw a respectable salary by any means. The rewards of the job were not monetary, but from the self-respect gained by job performance. The June 16, 1933, issue of the Hastings Herald deplored the fee system, The paper said that this system caused law enforcement officials to "commercialize on their authority for the sake of fees, instead of exercising their authority in an effort to keep the peace. . . "

In the 1950's, the fee system was replaced by a more sensible portion of the county's tax revenue being allotted to the management of the Sheriff's Office.



Sheriff Lawrence O. "L.O." Davis – 1949 until 1970. Sheriff Davis held office for 21 years. During those years, society saw a changing culture.

In 1952, a new jail was completed and Sheriff Davis moved his headquarters from the old jail on McWilliams Street to the new jail on Lewis Speedway. It was during his tenure that uniforms were adopted. The incident prompting uniforms occurred with Deputy Kenny Masters.

It seems Deputy Masters was on the beach patrolling and found a man sleeping on the beach. Deputy Masters, being in civilian clothes, wearing a gun and a very small Sheriff's shield, approached the man. When the man awakened, he saw Deputy Masters' gun and thought he was being robbed. The man then reached for his gun, and Deputy Masters shot the man. Later at the hospital, Deputy Masters asked the man why in the world did you go for a gun? The man said, "I thought your were trying to rob me." The next day, Deputy Masters went down to the store, bought khaki work shirts and slacks, and pinned his shield on his shirt. Later Sheriff Davis got patches, and they were sewn onto the khaki shirt. From there, our current Sheriff's uniform developed into what it is today.

It was also during Sheriff Davis' time that the first marked patrol car was put on the street. Painted green and white with a star on the sides, the car was assigned to Deputy Noah Carter.

One major development that his tenure as Sheriff saw was the civil rights movement, a challenging time for our nation, state and county. In 1963, the Reverend Martin Luther King and his associates came to St. Augustine, the oldest city in the nation. St. Augustine became the site of many demonstrations. During one of these, Dr. King was arrested by deputies and booked into the St. Johns County Jail. Shortly afterwards, Dr. King and others were released from jail.

The climate was stressful in those years, but with Sheriff Davis' leadership the community held together. This nation moved forward after the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Sheriff Davis was well respected in the community. Many citizens tell stories of his kindness; taking bags of groceries to those who were in need, or helping others get jobs. Sheriff Davis had been a city police officer for approximately three years prior to taking the Office of Sheriff. He had a deep, abiding commitment to the youth of our county. Also, he was one of the founders of the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch, which grew from a small camp on the banks of the Suwannee River to a working ranch system, serving thousands of Florida's children every year.

In 1970, then Governor Claude Kirk removed Sheriff Davis from office based on allegations made by several individuals. Subsequently, in a trial, Sheriff Davis was found innocent. Later, at hearings in Tallahassee in front of the Senate, Sheriff Davis was exonerated. By this time, Governor Kirk had appointed Dudley Garrett, to take Sheriff Davis' place.

In the 1972 election, "L.O." Davis tried to regain the office, but lost to Sheriff Garrett.



Sheriff Dudley Garrett – 1970 until 1980. Sheriff Garrett served as an Alachua County Deputy Sheriff working his way up to Patrol Commander there before going to work as an investigator for the State Attorney's Office, 7th Judicial Circuit. Sheriff Garrett's tenure saw unprecedented growth in St. Johns County. A quiet man, he was known for his relentless pursuit of drug dealers, a developing crime problem of the 1970's, which plagues law enforcement to this day.

Sheriff Garrett expanded the patrol unit and established shifts to cover the county 24 hours a day. He adopted the first policy manual and upgraded the equipment needed to perform the duties of law enforcement. He was often seen at crime scenes or as a backup unit, and on one such occasion had to shoot an armed man who was holding a child hostage.

The decade of the 1970's was transitional for the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office. Despite all the improvements, life was still very difficult for deputies and corrections officers. The pay was low, the hours long, and there were just not enough people to do the job. Back-up for a road deputy often took 30-45 minutes, and a corrections officer ran the jail by himself overnight.



Francis M. O'Loughlin, Sheriff – 1981 until 1985. A St. Augustine City Police Officer for more than 20 years, Sheriff O'Loughlin settled in St. Augustine after a tour in the US Navy. He was well known in the county and was committed to upgrading and improving the Sheriff's Office operations. As he took office, the promise of change and growth was in the air.

In 1981, the Sheriff's Office was fragmented with administrative offices and a small communications center in the downtown courthouse, while the Patrol Division and Investigations Unit were housed in old railroad houses near the county jail. All the facilities were too small and in very poor condition, particularly the jail.

Sheriff O'Loughlin obtained funding and planned a state-of-the-art county jail and Sheriff's Administration Building in order to have all the inmates and the Sheriff's Office located in one area. These projects were not completed until after Sheriff O'Loughlin left office, but they stand as a testament to his vision