

Winter 1932

Michigan State Police

Oscar G. Olander

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Oscar G. Olander, Michigan State Police, 23 *Am. Inst. Crim. L. & Criminology* 718 (1932-1933)

This Criminology is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

population and small urban centers, a satisfactory solution will almost necessarily involve complete destruction of all local police agencies and substitution of a single statewide police force.

Whatever the future may hold, two things are already clear: there must be greater exercise of the state's power to administer the enforcement of its own penal laws; and the state police must be conceded to have established themselves so well, particularly in some of the older eastern commonwealths, as to enjoy a strategic position with respect to all major police developments.

MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

OSCAR G. OLANDER¹

During the year 1917, the legislature passed an appropriation and created the War Preparedness Board. This act gave the Governor of the State, funds and personal with which to create the Michigan State Troops. The purpose of the Michigan State Troops at that time was to replace the National Guard which had been called into active service. Its duties were to handle any emergency which might arise during the absence of its military units. Five troops were formed and the rank and pay and rules and regulations were similar to those of the Michigan National Guard. After formation and proper training, this group guarded and policed various centers in the State; such as mines in the Upper Peninsula, locks at Sault Ste. Marie, railroad centers, chemical plants, stockyards, etc.

The Michigan Permanent State Troops, as a unit, carried on its work in such a satisfactory manner that in 1919, following the World War, the legislature passed Act No. 26, creating the Michigan State Police. The State Police took over the personnel and equipment of the Michigan State Troops. The duties of the State Police were varied. The State Police was organized primarily to assist local law enforcing agencies and the entire department has been constructed with this thought in mind.

In 1921 the legislature decided to centralize several of the state departments and at that time the Michigan State Police was merged with the Fire Marshal Department, Oil Inspection Department, Boxing Commission and several of the duties of the Food and Drug Commissioner were assigned to this department, which is known as

¹Commissioner of Michigan State Police.

the Department of Public Safety. At this time, however, the Fire Marshal Department and the Boxing Commission are no longer units of the Department.

The Uniform Division (State Police) is the largest division of the Department. Its members give a police service primarily to all rural communities of the State. All laws of the state are enforced uniformly and without partiality. Through this division is the avenue of entry into the Department's service in practically all instances. The State is divided into eight districts with a captain as district commander and a lieutenant as assistant district commander. Every State Police sub-station is under his command in that particular district. A captain is assigned to State Police headquarters who is commander of the entire uniform division and who is directly responsible to the Commissioner of Public Safety.

At the present time we have twenty-five stations with a personnel of five and upwards to fifteen men for each station. Every post has a suitable number of patrol cars and motorcycles. They are constantly patrolling the state trunk line highways and other roads in their district. Special attention is given to disabled motorists and courtesy is the slogan of the Department. Every patrol car is equipped with a first aid kit. Two of our district headquarters are located on prison property to be used for any emergency which might arise at these institutions.

The State Bureau of Criminal Identification is a division of the Department of Public Safety. The state law makes it compulsory for the officer arresting any person for a felony to submit fingerprints of the party arrested to this Bureau. The personnel of the Bureau is made up of a superintendent, deputy superintendent and twenty-two fingerprint experts and clerks. This Bureau is the second largest in the United States, second only to the National Bureau at Washington. At this writing we have approximately 1,300,000 sets of prints on file, together with other information pertaining to the identification of criminals. The registrations of firearms are filed in this office and we have on file 160,000 registrations, 8,000 license to purchase permits, and 25,000 licenses to carry concealed weapons. More than 450 lost, stolen and mislaid guns have been returned to their proper owners. A ballistics and moulage expert is employed as a part of this Bureau.

The 1925 legislature passed an act providing for a training school for peace officers of the State. This school not only trains the officers and men of this Department but conducts zone schools in the

various parts of the state which makes law enforcement uniform throughout the state.

The Detective Bureau, a division of this Department, is made up of a chief of detectives, deputy chief of detectives and seventeen detectives. The members of this Division aid local officers throughout the state in the investigation of criminal offenses of any nature and are subject to call by officials of any local branch of state government. The Detective Bureau functions similar to the detective bureau in any metropolitan police department.

The 1929 legislature passed an appropriation providing for a state-owned and operated radio broadcasting station. This station has been indispensable in curbing crime. The fact that Michigan has not had a single bank robbery in 1932 shows that criminals have decided Michigan to be an unhealthy place in which to operate. Every detachment and all sheriff's offices throughout the state are equipped with receivers as well as all of our patrol cars.

An operators' license law was passed by the 1931 legislature and a portion of the revenue derived therefrom is turned over to this Department for the maintenance of a highway patrol.

Not only does the large area to be policed make the plan of taking over the duties of the local law enforcing officer an impracticable one at this time, but the training of personnel and the familiarizing of the personnel with the territory to be policed presents a problem which might prove very detrimental to the furnishing of proper police protection to citizens and their property if undertaken without due preparation.

It is an admitted fact that familiarity and acquaintance with the persons permanently residing in a locality, is a very desirable asset to the organization whose duty it is to protect those people, the local sheriff has that acquaintance and is familiar with local conditions in his county and hence is an asset to law enforcement; in like manner is the city or village police officer.

It would seem at a glance that there is danger of the various agencies working at cross purposes, that there might be duplication of effort; this condition can be met and remedied by the earnest effort on the part of the State and County or City officers to cooperate in a more careful manner than ever before.

There can be no doubt of the practical value of a central agency which will coordinate all of the efforts of different agencies of proper law enforcement. The apparent necessity of this is acknowledged because of changed and changing criminal conditions.

The modern criminal is of the transient type who commits a crime in one locality and spends the proceeds in another within a very short time after the crime is committed. He is able to do this because of modern methods of transportation which he utilizes in the commission of his criminal act and in his escape from the scene of the crime. The modern automobile, the airplane, the well paved or improved highways are a distinct asset to him in the commission of the crime and his efforts to escape apprehension.

The character of the criminal and his method of operation have changed in recent years. We may look for a further change in the method of operation as well as in the criminal; to illustrate; the criminal of yesterday was a person who engaged in crimes as an individual, while the criminal of today and tomorrow is connected either directly or indirectly with the gang whose headquarters is usually located in our larger centers of population but who have their agents or other connections in every part of the state or country.

Crimes of yesterday were committed by local criminals while crimes of today and tomorrow are and will be committed by an agent of the larger and more powerful gang.

To successfully combat the criminal of today and tomorrow it is therefore imperative that a state or national organization of law enforcement agents to coordinate the efforts of the local agencies should be maintained.

The boldness and audacity of the modern criminal is demoralizing our present day social structure, so much so that it is not an uncommon thing to hear our best citizens speak slightly of the efforts made by officers to prevent crime and to apprehend the criminal. The ridicule which the officer of today is called upon to face by persons who should sympathize and assist him in his efforts to perform his duties, has a very disheartening effect upon the morale of the officer and causes him to become careless and inattentive in the performance of his difficult tasks.

Constructive criticism would aid him but he hears none of this; he is severely criticized by the public generally and ridiculed by the criminal and his friends; he is constantly exposed to corruption and sometimes criticized because he is not susceptible to graft.

Activities of criminals and the manner in which they commit their crimes are invaluable to every peace officer. This information can only be supplied by the state or national organization who must of necessity be actively engaged in the suppression of crime and the apprehension of the criminal.

The possibility of corruption among officers is greater without the state or national agency and when the law enforcement machinery breaks down in one locality, if a state or national agency is available to be thrown into the temporary break, the less chance there will be of organized crime getting a foothold from which it might be difficult to dislodge them were they allowed to carry on their criminal practices undisturbed for even a short time.

A spirit of friendly rivalry might be established between the different agencies which if properly handled would go far toward solving our crime problem.

Petty jealousies have no place in the modern enforcement of law, but I fear it is true that they exist, perhaps the reason for their existence is because law enforcement agencies are sometimes hampered by politicians who, while they may be honest in their intentions, are not familiar with the necessity of keeping the profession of law enforcement out of politics.

The danger of this situation is taken advantage of by organized crime and criminals are quick to note the possibilities that lie in the selection to public office of the citizen who advocates the policy that the police officer is a needless expense thrust upon the already overburdened taxpayer. A false sense of security is created and the taxpayer pays a greater tax because of the depredations of the criminal than he would by maintaining an efficient agency for the protection of his life and property.

**PAGES 723-728 ARE
INTENTIONALLY OMITTED**

