



When the Village of Fairport was incorporated in 1867, J.C. VanNess was appointed as constable and the Fairport Police Department was born. By the 1950's, the department consisted of a chief, a sergeant, two full-time and two part-time officers. Chief Charles Kenney and Officer Joseph Santillo are shown above with two new Ford police cars in 1951.

In the early 19th century, the job of Constable was often concerned with enforcing the laws about wandering livestock and growing Canadian thistles, each of which was considered a crime. By 1898 the Constable's duties were more strictly defined as being responsible for seeing that the village ordinances were observed, arresting anyone violating those ordinances, and arresting vagrants and anyone found intoxicated on the streets. During the early decades of the 20th century, the local lock-up, which was in the basement of the Village Hall, did not always conform with state regulations which required decent lighting, wash basins, and workable toilets. By the 1930's, with the renovation of the building, the issues were resolved.

The era of Prohibition presented a particular challenge to all law enforcement agencies and Fairport was no exception. In addition to arrests for intoxication, there were a number of successful raids and subsequent confiscation of illegal booze: "So carefully had the raid [of May 17, 1922] been planned that everybody was surprised. . . . Arrangements were made for raiding, officers to be stationed at each place at 9 o'clock. . . Although the amount of liquor discovered in some cases was not large, it was

sufficient to constitute evidence of violation of the law.” The proprietors of the establishments reacted in different ways. “In [one] café an Italian gentleman in charge offered resistance (and) he pulled a knife. . . In [a local] restaurant the man in charge announced heartily, ‘Go to it. I’ll go 50-50 on everything you find.’ . . and the officers found plenty.” “[One patron] was inclined to be argumentative and want to be convinced that the officers actually had authority for the raid. He was speedily convinced.” In the end, no arrests were made, but the people involved were served with orders to appear in Federal Court, and “all the liquor collected was confiscated by Sheriff Morse and transported to the Monroe County jail.”

For the most part, however, local policing seems to have been involved mainly with issues of petit larceny, traffic infractions, and personal disagreements. For example, a “young girl reported that a boy had put snow in her face...Boy and his parents were talked to by patrol and parents will handle the matter....” “Youngsters playing hockey in the street were sent over to use the skating rink;” “received a report of a hit and run accident that demolished a tree. Patrol arranged for car owner and tree owner to get together and settle the matter” “not one but two trains broke down simultaneously and caused the main crossings to be tied up for 1 ½ hours....Patrol took care of traffic until the mess was cleaned up,””Patrol dispatched an opossum to the great beyond after finding it in a lady’s garbage can.” Only occasionally has the department had to deal with crimes of a more serious nature. .

Currently, while continuing to deal with the minor crimes and drug issues inherent in any community, the goal of the Fairport Police Department has been to continue the philosophy of community policing, creating a partnership with the community, and enhancing communication with all.