



Athens-Clarke County Police Department

Directive 1.00



HISTORY OF THE ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Effective Date:	June 28, 2019	Cancels:
-----------------	---------------	----------

Updated Date:	08/26/22	Section(s):	SME Review Date:
---------------	----------	-------------	------------------

Updated Date:		Section(s):	September 2025
---------------	--	-------------	----------------

Updated Date:		Section(s):
---------------	--	-------------

CONTENTS

1.00.01	PURPOSE
1.00.02	HISTORY

1.00.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this written directive is to provide a history of the Athens-Clarke County Police Department.

1.00.02 HISTORY

Someone once said that any success that we will achieve in our professional endeavors will be possible because we have stood on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. The understanding that each of us have regarding our role within the organization is enhanced if we know something of the history of how the organization came into existence and the personalities who helped mold its direction but who are no longer on the scene. In many ways we have profited from both the successes and failures of those who have preceded us.

An understanding of the history of the Athens-Clarke County Police Department begins with a brief summary of the early history of the Athens community. Following the completion of the Revolutionary War, the General Assembly of Georgia passed a resolution establishing a state university in 1785. For the first 16 years after the passage of the act, the institution existed only on paper, having no established location, facilities, budgeted funds, or students. Abraham Baldwin was appointed as the first president of

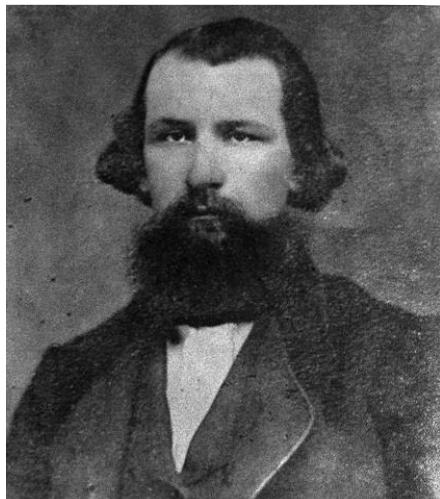
the University and began to search for a suitable site to establish a permanent campus. During the summer of 1801, Baldwin and a committee of five other men began to search the Georgia frontier near the Indian boundary for a suitable site. A frontier settler named Daniel Easley showed the committee a parcel of land located on the Oconee River near a small trading outpost called Cedar Shoals. A tract of 633 acres was purchased from Easley for the sum of \$4,000.00. This land became the University of Georgia campus. The trustees of the University decided to call the village that they knew would grow up around the campus Athens, as they wanted it to be a center of learning similar to Athens, Greece. The settlement began to grow and was chartered as a town in 1806. At that time the town consisted of the Old College building on north campus, ten framed dwelling houses, and four stores.



University of Georgia - North Campus

During the early days, law enforcement was done by the town council members who doubled as constables in the wards where they were elected. The council members were called wardens. The sheriff of Clarke County had offices in the courthouse in Watkinsville. The area of Clarke County covered all of what is now Clarke and Oconee Counties. There were no jail facilities in Athens. In 1847 the first assistant warden was hired to aid in keeping order in the village. This system was followed during the Civil War and beyond with the exception of a brief period immediately following the war when federal troops imposed martial law. The wardens were responsible for keeping the peace and also doing other tasks such as ringing the town bell to signify meetings and deterring marble playing on the sidewalks on Sunday.

The year 1871 brought substantial changes in the law enforcement community in Athens. The area that had previously been known as Clarke County was divided and the new county of Oconee was created. Athens became the county seat of Clarke County. A new courthouse building and jail were constructed on a parcel of land bounded by the Finley Street, Meigs Street, Pope Street, Hill Street and Prince Avenue. Today the only building that remains from this complex is the old jail which is located just to the right and behind Captain D's on Prince Avenue. The county sheriff worked out of this location until the current main courthouse was constructed in 1913. The community of Athens continued to grow due to the steady growth of the University, the growth of cotton related textile industries, and the influence of the first railroad, which had reached Athens in 1841. The growth of the town necessitated the reorganization of the city government with a new city charter in 1873. The charter provided for the collection of city taxes, a police force, and a recorder court to hear cases of local ordinance violations. The first chief of police of the new Police Force was Middleton P. Davis. Beginning with just a few members, the Athens Police Department grew with the town, and by 1920 had a force numbering approximately 23 officers. Foot patrol was



Chief Middleton P. Davis
First Athens Police Chief



Athens Police Department – 1906

the main method of operation. The force was headquartered in the old town hall and was eventually moved into the basement of the new city hall building, which was constructed in 1904. The turn of the century brought the construction of a city jail facility at the west end of Boulevard.

By 1893 the population of the City of Athens had reached 10,000 people. A building boom was in progress in the downtown area. Many of the old buildings now seen in the downtown area were constructed during the period of 1880 to 1930. Electric lights, electric streetcars, and paved streets made their appearance during this period. Law enforcement in the unincorporated area of Clarke County was still the responsibility of the sheriff whose headquarters was located at the courthouse. The county jail occupied the top floor of the new courthouse.



Athens, Georgia
First Streetcars – Circa 1885

During the period of 1930 to 1950 many developments in technology, forensic science, and transportation would impact the delivery of law enforcement services. The City of Athens Police acquired its first police car in the early 1930s. The police department began to use new methods in forensic science in the area of fingerprints, examination of evidence, and evidence collection. Mr. E. E. Hardy and Mr. Walt McKinnon are regarded as the first criminal investigators of the modern era in Athens. In the late 1940s they began the practice of fingerprinting all arrested subjects, collecting physical evidence from crime scenes, and forwarding evidence to scientific labs such as the FBI lab in Washington. The development of transportation on a national level impacted Athens as additional rail lines, regular passenger bus service, and finally air transportation would create new concerns for local law enforcement. An event in 1929 would introduce a new challenge to local law enforcement that remains an important operational concern today. The phenomenon of college football grew by major proportions during the first half of the century. Athens joined the list of cities who would enjoy the effects of this growth in the fall of 1929 when Sanford Stadium was dedicated, bringing with it the traffic problems, crowd control and crime control issues that we still confront on many fall Saturdays. The 1930s also brought the first Southern Bell Telephone Service to Athens and the first successful commercial radio station (WGAU).

By 1951 the City of Athens Police Department could boast of three radio-equipped cars, four motorcycles, and thirty-four sworn officers. The department was divided into three branches: uniform, detectives, and traffic.



Athens Police Department Traffic Division – 1947



Athens Police Department patrol vehicles parked at City Hall

Perhaps no period of American History brought more changes to law enforcement than the 1960s and 1970s. The continuing explosion in technology, changes in the legal environment, and social trends and changes forced many new directions upon the law enforcement agencies of the country. A steady increase in population, urban development and incidence of crime added other pressures to the law enforcement scene in Clarke County. Prior to 1960, much of the unincorporated area of Clarke County was rural and agricultural. The 1960s brought rapid changes to this environment with the advent of new industries, retail and commercial development, and the construction of planned residential subdivisions. By the early 1970s, the rising crime rate was creating a growing concern among the county government and the citizenry of the unincorporated area of the county. Many believed that the formation of a county police force similar to others that had been organized in urban areas in the state held promise for bringing the needed improvements in law enforcement services. These concerns and the efforts of the county leadership resulted in the formation of the Clarke County Police Department in 1974. The department began its operation in a small space in the basement of the county courthouse and later occupied the old health department building at the Hill Street/Pope Street government property. Mr. Kent Lawrence was appointed as the first Chief of the Clarke County Police Department. He would provide leadership to the department until 1976 and would later become the Judge of the State Court in Clarke County. It was the goal of the County Police to bring professional law enforcement and modern crime fighting techniques to the unincorporated area of Clarke County.



July 1, 1974

Lieutenant Murrell Tyson of the Clarke County Police Department.
The Courthouse, headquarters for the Department, is in the background



Chief Ronald Chandler and Sergeant Frankie Lane – 1984

Clarke County Police Department - Hill Street

The 1960s and 1970s also saw expansion and changes at the Athens Police Department. The space that had been occupied by the department in the basement of the City Hall for many years was no longer adequate to house operations. A search for a new home for the department led to a four-story building that sits on the same block as City Hall and was constructed in the 1920s by Joseph Costa and his family. Mr. Costa had operated a successful ice cream business in Athens for many years. The building was remodeled and the department moved to its new headquarters in the late 1960s. This building would serve as city police headquarters until unification.



Ribbon cutting at Athens Police Department Headquarters

133 East Washington Street

The passage of the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Act, the mandates of Supreme Court decisions, and the growth in communications and record-keeping functions forced both the city and county police departments to organize administrative divisions to augment their operational functions. The role of record keeping, communications, training and other support functions increased greatly in importance during this era. The 1960s marked another milestone as the first African American police officers were hired by the City of Athens. Among some of the first African American officers that were hired were Clifton Freeman, James Billups, and Archibald Killian.



Cliff Freeman



James Billups

The 1970s brought the first female officers into law enforcement in Clarke County. Connie Sampson, who later became Chief of Police at Georgia State University in Atlanta, was one of the first female officers and the first African American female officer to be hired by the City of Athens. Kay Pickett and Janice Richardson were some of the first female officers with the Clarke County Police Department.



Connie Sampson



Janice Richardson

Of the many challenges that faced the police departments in the 1980s, one of the most difficult issues was that of aging and inadequate physical facilities. The old City of Athens jail facility, known as the stockade, which had been constructed in the early part of the century, could no longer be maintained in a condition that met federal standards for jail facilities. This, along with the inadequate size of the county jail on the top floor of the Courthouse, forced government leaders to consolidate jail operations and seek the construction of a new jail facility to serve all of the law enforcement jurisdictions in Clarke County. The site that was selected for the new jail was the large government-owned tract of land that was adjacent to the county airport between Winterville and Lexington Roads.



Old City Stockade – Pound Street

The new jail opened and improved the crisis situation involving the housing of prisoners. The City of Athens Police Department continued its growth and was forced to move its uniform shift operations to a small annex building at the corner of Hull and Hancock Avenues. The Clarke County Police Department facilities at Hill and Pope Streets soon were too small. The County Police began planning for a new police headquarters building in the late 1980s. This facility would be built on the tract of land where the new jail had been constructed on Lexington Road. The plan for this building went forward and was revised during the consolidation process to become the current Lexington Road headquarters of the Athens-Clarke County Police Department.

The 1980s were also a period marked by important positive accomplishments by both the City and County Police. The Athens Police Department took special steps to combat growing crime in its public housing areas. A special Police Housing Unit was created, and a community police substation was opened in the Nellie B Community. This effort was very successful and was recognized on a national level as an exemplary effort to reduce crime. The Clarke County Police Department became one of the first police departments in the state to achieve status as an Accredited Police Department from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). During the 1980s the County saw the advent of Enhanced 911 technology to improve the ease of calling the police and locating ongoing problems. The Clarke County Police provided oversight and management for the new 911 Communications Center which was initially located at the main Fire Department on College Avenue. As the 1980s drew to a close, the local community began to discuss and debate the idea of unifying the City of Athens and the Clarke County Government. A proposed charter for a unified government was drafted and was adopted by a vote of the people in 1990. Effective January 14, 1991, the governments and the two police departments were unified. Due to facility problems, combined operations did not commence until the new building was occupied in July 1991. The Clarke County Police Chief Ronnie Chandler was selected as the first Chief of the new department.



New Police Headquarters – Fall 1991

Chief Chandler retired in 1996 and Assistant Chief Mark Wallace was named Acting Chief of Police. He served until January 1997 when Joseph H. Lumpkin Sr. was named Chief of Police. Chief Lumpkin was a native Athenian and former Athens-Clarke County Police Department Bureau Commander. Chief Lumpkin was the first African-American to be promoted to the Command Staff level of the City of Athens Police Department.



Chief Joseph H. Lumpkin, Sr

Under the direction of Chief Lumpkin, a state-of-the-art Communications Center was opened in December 2002. In January 2004 our West Precinct, located at the Georgia Square Mall on the Atlanta Highway, moved into a newly-renovated area of the Mall, increasing the area from 1,350 square feet to 12,000 square feet. It houses patrol officers as well as Criminal Investigation and Records personnel.

In October 2005 two new substations, with 4,350 square feet each, were opened. The East Substation, at 385 Fairview Street, replaced a store front office which was located in an Athens Housing Authority apartment. Our Crime Prevention/Weed and Seed Unit, Crime Emergency Unit, and Traffic Unit East operated out of this facility. The West Substation, located at 1060 Baxter Street, housed the Traffic Unit West and the Financial Crimes Unit.



Melanie Rutledge

Also, in 2005, Melanie Rutledge became the first female member of the Command Staff when she was promoted to Captain. During her tenure on the Command Staff, Melanie served as commander of the Uniform Patrol Division and then the Information Management Division. On April 6, 2019, Captain Melanie Rutledge retired from the Police Department after 32 years 8 months.

The Downtown Substation, which had been housed in the Costa Building on Washington Street, moved to a new facility located at 285 College Avenue in November 2010.

On March 22, 2011, the department was shaken to the core when Senior Police Officer Tony Howard was critically wounded and Senior Police Officer Buddy Christian was killed in the line of duty. The suspect was captured after a massive three-day manhunt which involved local, state and federal law enforcement officers from all over Georgia. The outpouring of support from the community was overwhelming. Senior Police Officer Howard returned to work in October 2011.

The East Precinct on Lexington Road began major renovations in the summer of 2011 which were completed in March 2012. On January 16, 2015, a new Property & Evidence building was dedicated behind the East Precinct. The 6,144 square foot building features new equipment and technology, a garage area for processing vehicles, as well as a two-story storage area and vault.

After more than 17 years of service, Chief Lumpkin left the Department in 2014 and became the Chief of Police of the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department. Assistant Chief of Support Services Carter Greene was named Interim Chief of Police in November 2014 and served a dual role until July 2015 when R. Scott Freeman, Ph.D., was named the new Chief of Police of the Athens-Clarke County Police Department. Freeman served as Chief until September 12, 2018.

On September 13, 2018, ACC Manager Blaine Williams named 30-year law enforcement veteran and ACCPD Captain Mike Hunsinger as Interim Chief of Police. Captain Hunsinger served as the Interim Chief until February 4, 2019.

On January 11, 2019, ACC Manager Blaine Williams appointed Cleveland Lee Spruill, Sr. as Athens-Clarke County Police Chief. Spruill had most recently served as Huntersville, North Carolina Chief of Police. Prior to his time in Huntersville, Spruill served the Alexandria, Virginia Police Department for nearly 27 years. This included more than 17 years of command level experience with assignments in each of the major bureaus. In his final assignment with the Alexandria Police, Spruill served as the Executive Deputy Chief, managing more than 320 sworn and 105 civilian employees, with an annual police budget that exceeded \$57 million and serving a population of more than 150,000. Chief Spruill began his duties in Athens-Clarke County on February 4, 2019. [Spruill served as Chief until March 10, 2022.](#)

On March 10, 2022, ACC Manager Blaine Williams appointed Athens-Clarke County Deputy Police Chief Jerry Saulters to serve as Interim Police Chief. Saulters has served with the Athens-Clarke County Police Department since 1998 in positions throughout the department. He was promoted to one of the Deputy Chief positions in 2019. Saulters will serve until a permanent replacement is named after the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government conducts a national search. The process is expected to be complete by the end of 2022.

Chiefs of the Athens Police Department: 1873 – 1990

1. Middleton P. Davis: 1873 -1874
2. H. C. Davis: 1875 -1883
3. D. Cran Oliver: 1883 -1891, 1894 -1895
4. B. F. Culp: 1896 -1904
5. J. S. McKie: 1905 -1909
6. L. E. Brooks: 1912 -1915
7. H. W. Beusee: 1916 -1931
8. C. E. Seagraves: 1932 -1948
9. Weldon O. Wood: 1935 -1948
10. C. O. Roberts: 1948 -1958
11. J. H. Porterfield: 1958 -1959
12. E. E. Hardy: 1959 -1970
13. Tom McGahee: 1970 -1975
14. Everett E. Price: 1975 -1988
15. Mark Wallace: 1988 -1991

Chiefs of the Clarke County Police Department: 1974 – 1990

1. Kent Lawrence: 1974 -1976
2. Tate Brown: 1976 -1979
3. Ronnie Chandler: 1979 -1990

Chiefs of the Athens-Clarke County Police Department: 1991 – Present

1. Ronnie Chandler: 1991 - 1996
2. Mark Wallace: 1996 - 1997
3. Joseph H. Lumpkin Sr.: 1997 - 2014
4. Carter Greene (Interim): 2014 - 2015
5. R. Scott Freeman, Ph.D. 2015 – 2018
6. Mike Hunsinger (Interim): 2018 – 2019
7. Cleveland Lee Spruill, Sr.: 2019 – 2022
8. Jerry G. Saulters (Interim): 2022 –

IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Officer Herman Karl Stein
March 19, 1893 - November 30, 1936
Killed while attempting to arrest
a robbery suspect November 29, 1936



Officer Donald Moon
September 21, 1933 – November 3, 1963
Died from a gunshot wound while investigating
shots fired at his personal vehicle. As he pursued
the offender on foot, he was shot and died at the scene



Corporal Thomas Earl Bowles
April 9, 1938 – January 16, 1985
Died as a result of a cerebral hemorrhage
suffered after a vehicle chase on
January 12, 1985



Senior Police Officer Elmer B. "Buddy" Christian, III
July 11, 1979 – March 22, 2011
Died from gunshots after being
ambushed by a perpetrator who
wounded another officer who was
investigating a kidnapping

SOURCES:

Thomas, Frances Taliaferro. A Portrait of Historic Athens & Clarke County. The University of Georgia Press. Athens, Ga. 1992

Other information was gained from various departmental sources, particularly, Ms. Hilda Sorrow.

Additional reading

1. Boney, Nash. A Pictorial History of the University of Georgia. The University of Georgia Press. Athens, Ga. 1985.
- 2.* Ruppersburg, Hugh, editor. Georgia Voices: Non-Fiction. The University of Georgia Press. Athens, Ga. 1994.
3. Stegeman, John F. These Men She Gave, The Civil War Diary of Athens, Georgia. The University of Georgia Press. Athens, Ga. 1964.
4. Tate, Susan Francis Barrow. Remembering Athens. The Athens Historical Society. Athens, Ga. 1996.
5. Thomas, Francis Taliaferro. A Portrait of Historic Athens & Clarke County. The University of Georgia Press. Athens, Ga. 1992.
6. Thurmond, Michael L. A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History. Clarke County School District. Athens, Ga. 1978.

**This is a collection of non-fiction works and essays by Georgia authors from days gone by and the modern era. Of interest to a student of Athens-Clarke County history is a selection by Henry Hull from The Annals of Athens. Of interest also is a chapter by John E. Talmadge called Growing Up in Georgia. Hull's piece deals with life in Athens prior to the civil war and Talmadge's selection talks about life around the turn of the century in Athens.*

By Authority of:

**Jerry G. Saulters
Interim Chief of Police**