The Washington Post, December 6, 1937, p. AN29
Many Changes Were Wrought For Efficiency
Maj. Brown, Present Head, Joined Department in 1896 as 'Rookie'
By Howard F. Wentworth

(Note: There are errors in chronology of superintendents)

The Metropolitan Police Department, first organized in 1861, underwent radical changes the year The Post was founded – 1877.

After feeble struggles to combat a growing crime problem during its early history, the force was completely reorganized. At that time, the city was divided into two jurisdictions – Washington and Georgetown. A.C. Richards was Major and Superintendent.

Maj. Richards had served as police chief for 15 years, but in January of the following year he resigned. His place was taken by Thomas P. Morgan, a native Washington.

During this reorganization period, numerous changes were made in the interest of efficiency. Funds were appropriated for police stations; the police telegraph or "call box" system was perfected and the first Board of Commissioners was appointed.

Maj. Morgan served until 1879 when he was appointed a Commissioner. He was succeeded by Maj. William G. Brock.

But Maj. Brock's administration provided Washington with its first major police scandal. In 1882, according to early records, there came a startling development" in the department's history.

First Police Corruption Charged in 1882
Charges were made that several detectives were in league with gamblers and were getting "rake offs." An investigation ended with a general shakeup within the ranks and several officers were dismissed. This was probably the first instance of graft and corrupt politics in Washington's police administration.

It was during this year – the morning of July 2 – that President James A. Garfield was assassinated. Charles Guiteau, who claimed the President's death was a "political necessity," was arrested and later hanged at the jail.

The early "graft" charges focused an unfavorable spotlight of public sentiment on the Police Department and the Commissioners decided to change superintendents.

Consequently, Gen. William McE. Dye – described as a man of "force and will" – was appointed to succeed Maj. Brock. Gen. Dye was a retired Army officer, the first military man to head the Metropolitan Department.

Under his regime, new police methods were adopted and the department again became an efficient crime-fighting machine. Gen. Dye was the first to introduce methods of crime prevention and conducted a relentless war against gambling and illegal sale of liquor.

Although Gen. Dye provided the department with many innovations, he was not a native of Washington and there soon rose a cry for another local resident to head the department.

In 1886, he resigned and Samuel H. Walker was made police chief. Walker, a Washington business man , served less than a year and was succeeded by Col. W.G. Moore.

With continued shifts in administration and personnel, the department plugged steadily along during the following 10 years.

'Rookie' Brown Joined Force in January, 1896

On January 10, 1896, a "rookie" joined the force and was destined to be one of the two future superintendents who "worked his way up from the street" and held actively every position in the department. His name was Ernest W. Brown.

Up until 1899 the department had no women members. An act of Congress during that year provided the first Women's Bureau with three matrons.

The administration of Maj. And Superintendent Moore ended with his death in 1898. His place was taken by Richard Sylvester, who was then chief clerk of the department.

Maj. Sylvester, one of the department's best known characters, adopted new police methods which were copied by other enforcement agencies throughout the country.

He succeeded in establishing a House of Detention for young women and juveniles, separating them from the ordinary run of hardened criminals during periods of confinement.

He abolished many crude methods of routine and under his guidance members of the force were placed on 8-hour shifts. The shorter hours resulted in increased efficiency and general improvement in health conditions among the men.

He inaugurated the system of daily police bulletins and was the father of the photo-lithograph circular bearing pictures and descriptions of wanted criminals.

In 1906, the department again underwent a complete reorganization. An act of Congress provided for a new class of officers by automatic promotion; an assistant superintendent with the rank of inspector and various salary ranges.

Former Post Reporter Made Superintendent in 1914

Maj. Sylvester held the position of superintendent for 18 years – longer than any other Washington police chief. He was succeeded in 1914 by Maj. Raymond W. Pullman, a former Post reporter. Incidentally, The Post was his severest critic.

Maj. Pullman had no previous police experience. His term in office was marked by increasing strides toward modernization and 10 years later the superintendent's duties were turned over to Maj. Daniel Sullivan, who had made an enviable record during the race riots immediately after the war.

Like the present major and superintendent, Sullivan started as a “beat pounder” and worked his way to the top through all grades in the department.

Edwin B. Hesse, chief clerk and property clerk of the department followed Sullivan as superintendent. In turn, he was succeeded by Henry L. Gessford and Henry L. Pratt.

From the days of bicycles and policemen with helmets and flowing mustaches, the department progressed rapidly to mobile equipment. Horses soon gave way to automobiles and rapid transportation facilities were provided by motorcycles and motorized patrol wagons.

For many years after advent of the automobile, small cars were used in the various precincts for emergency purposes only. A policy of stationing “reserve” men in several station houses was soon abandoned, however, because of inadequate transportation facilities and curtailed personnel.

Until 1931, nearly all patrol work was done by footmen. A few cars were scattered throughout the precincts. During that year, however, a young officer, James Kelly, developed a police radio system within the department.

For his work in perfecting the system to its present efficient operation, Kelly was promoted to acting lieutenant. Great strides have been made by the department in radio work. Lieut. Kelly is now experimenting with a two-way short-wave system and predicts its installation within the near future.

Glassford’s Regime Was Most Hectic

The most hectic of all superintendent regimes fell to Brig. Gen. Pelham D. Glassford. He succeeded Maj. Pratt. The second Army man to be appointed as Washington’s police chief, Glassford was a familiar figure on downtown streets astride his polished motorcycle.

H held office, however, only 11 months. During that period, Washington was the scene of the 1932 bonus riots.

Glassford was confronted with one of the gravest problems in police history when the ragged army of veterans marched into the city.

Desperately, he applied Army training and organized his men for defense. Three deaths – one of them a policeman – resulted before Glassford appealed to the Regular Army for aid.

Washington will long remember that June day when tanks and mounted soldiers rode down Pennsylvania avenue to quell riots and drive the bonus seekers from the city with force and flames.

It was a short time later that Glassford resigned and the superintendency was taken over by Maj. Brown. Veteran of wide experience in some of the city’s “toughest” precincts, Maj. Brown was then an inspector in charge of the Traffic Bureau.

And it was just about this time that traffic was rapidly becoming one of the city's major problems. With his broad knowledge of the subject, Maj. Brown hastened to combat the growing civil from all angles.

His efforts have resulted in the adoption of scientific methods of saving lives, as exemplified by his present traffic training school.

Perhaps one of the most important crime-prevention movements in the history of policing was founded by Maj. Brown in establishment of his widely known Police Boys Club system.

Fostering a new understanding between young boys and policemen, the Boys Club plan has lowered juvenile crime records below any previous level.

Maj. Brown Compiles Outstanding Record Here
Recently celebrating his fifth anniversary as police chief, Maj. Brown can look back on an outstanding record in crime control. His men were the first to deal a smashing blow at the Tri-State gang of bandits and murderers. His vice squad had virtually "cleaned up" Washington gambling and petty racketeering.

Three mysterious murder cases have defied solution during recent years.

First in importance is the famous case of Mary Baker, attractive young Government clerk who disappeared on the evening of April 11, 1930. The daughter of a Virginia minister, she had been employed in the Navy Department for several years.

On the evening in question, Mary Baker left the Navy department to get to her car, parked behind the white House. She was not seen again – although several witnesses described a "florid-faced man" seated with a woman in a car near the Ellipse – until her battered body was found in a culvert near Arlington Cemetery the following day. Her blood-stained coupe was found not far away.

Numerous arrests were made, but alibis were proven and details of the case are now gathering dust in police archives.

In September of 1929, Virginia McPherson, 28-year-old nurse was found strangled to death in her apartment at the Park Lane. A pajama cord was knotted around her neck and tied beneath her ear with a surgical knot.

A coroner's jury called it suicide. But Robert Allen, a Third Precinct policeman, uncovered what he described as new evidence . Robert Mcherson, the young woman's husband, was indicted. The indictment, however, was thrown out. Policeman Allen was found guilty of insubordination and dismissed from the force. A new grand jury announced there was not enough evidence to indict anyone, and the case ended.

And again in 1930, another young woman was found dead, a bullet through her head. She was Beaulah Limerick, 19-year-old theater usher. She was discovered on a cot in the bed in the basement of her home in Southeast Washington. A young intern pronounced her dead of "natural causes." An undertaker found the bullet hole. Once more, numerous arrest were

made – including members of her family. Nothing ever came of the case and it is “still open” on police records.