

NEW \$300,000 POLICE STATION READY TO OPEN

Old Desplaines St. Unit to Be Abandoned

BY EDWARD SCHREIBER

Some night at midnight, during the next week, approximately 100 policemen will gather in a new building at the northwest corner of Monroe st. and Racine av., answer roll call and start out on a regular eight hour tour of duty, and so the city's new \$300,000 26th district police station will be opened.

The only thing to be moved from the old 26th district station to the new building, according to Police Commissioner John C. Prendergast will be the arrest book and the accident book. Everything else that might be needed will undergo a period of fumigation, so vermin from the 77 year old station at 126 N Desplaines st. won't be carried along, the commissioner said.

What will happen to the old building? The commissioner doesn't care, he said. It will be turned over to the city department of works. It may be wrecked and the property sold.

Once Luxury Home Area

The old station was opened in 1882 in a district which at that time included some of the plush homes of Chicago, dwellings of wealthy citizens who rode to the loop each day in livery carriages from the area near Union Park.

Shortly after the opening, however, the scene changed and on May 4, 1886, nearly 200 bluecoats marched out of the station to break up a meeting of anarchists in Haymarket square, a block north of the station. The policemen were lined up near the meeting when a bomb was thrown, killing eight of the officers and wounding several others.

Twice the station was stormed by mobs seeking prisoners accused of murder. One, Billy Allen, a young Negro, had been accused of beating two women and killing two police officers. Actually at the time he was taken to the station, he was already dead, the victim of a gun fight with Inspector John Wheeler who had chased him into a chicken coop at Kinzie and Green sts., where Allen chose to shoot it out.

Put Body in Window

On this occasion, police stripped the body to the waist to show five bullet wounds to the crowd and propped the body on a board in the station window.

On the other occasion, a crowd gathered for the purpose of lynching Jim Dacey who had killed Alderman Gaynor. A thousand persons gathered on the street, only to be dispersed after several hours when they were told that Dacey had been spirited out a rear entrance by deputy sheriffs.

In its later days, the district station deteriorated into a lodging house for hobos and the jobless who frequent W. Madison st., but not until it had gone thru a period of being a temporary stop for the jaded ladies who made their headquarters on Madison st. in what were called palaces of sin during the years around the turn of the century.

Filled With Memories

Many of Chicago's top policemen have served their apprenticeship in the old station and to many newspapermen, too, it is a place of memories, where on dull nights they would sit with their feet on a convenient desk swapping yarns with the desk sergeant or the lieutenant, with an occasional trip to the telephone to call other west side stations in a quest for news.

They've been told of the time a bold thief walked past the desk sergeant and the lieutenant to the second floor court room, where he picked the lock on the judge's safe and removed important papers.

They have heard many times the story of the cat that wandered in, made itself at home, and finally was given a cell as its room. The cat, it has been said, succumbed to the odor of a load of prohibition era booze that was locked in the cell for safekeeping.

Reminiscing yesterday, the commissioner said he recalled hearing all these stories and many others, but his mind was on the new station, its new furnishings and equipment, and the beautiful light brick and stone construction.

"I wonder," he said, "how long it will be before we have to delouse this place every day? I hate to open it up. It is a beautiful building."