

# POLICE COMMISSION MEDAL

*Researched & written by Staff Sergeant Jack Templeman (retired)*

In early 2000, two heavy die casts were donated to the Museum which were used to make the front and back of a medallion or medal. The inscription showed it was for "The Winnipeg Police Commission Medal" and had a flat space on the back for engraving.



*Police Commission Medal*

The donor, retired Chief Herb Stephen was unable to offer any information about the dies and a few retired members were contacted but they could not remember them. The only clue was a postage date stamp on a piece of cardboard for only 4 cents, so obviously it was not used to ship the dies but the date on the stamp clearly showed the year 1947.

Research into the Police Commission records starting in 1947 soon paid off with the following entries from the meeting of May 7th, 1947.

Chief Constable Charles MacIver reported an attack on an 8-year-old girl who was criminally assaulted. He reported that this may have gone unsolved if it had not been for the co-operation of good citizens. Three youths ranging in age from 11 years to 15 years had witnessed the girl being abducted and got the vehicle license number and then a man and his wife got involved and notified police. This led to the arrest of the man responsible.

The practise at the time was to send letters of thanks to the citizens, but the Commission decided it wanted something special to recognize young people who helped the police department.

It was decided that a "Board of Police Commission Medal" should be designed for presentation in such cases. Mr. R.B. Graham KC, Counsel, and Mr. Red Law, Secretary, were instructed to enquire as to design and costs.

On May 14th Mr. Graham presented the following resolution which was passed unanimously.

*"Whereas occasions arise in which persons, not members of the police force, through prompt action and sometimes at considerable risk, render meritorious service in the enforcement of law and order.*

*Be It Hereby Resolved that on any such occasion the Board may, in its discretion, issue and present to any person, not a member of the force, who renders meritorious service in the enforcement of law and order, a medal to be known as "The Winnipeg Police Commission Medal".*

The medal shall be of bronze bearing on the obverse the arms of the City of Winnipeg and the words "Winnipeg Police Commission Award" and on the reverse the words "for meritorious service in law enforcement" with the name of the recipient and the date of the service rendered.

The Commission instructed that the casts be made and two medals prepared. This was changed to four medals with one intended as a spare which was soon put to use for an eighteen-year-old who had twice helped the department in the apprehension of criminals during break and enters.

Clay-Law Company made the dies and the first two medals for \$145.73 and then the additional two medals for another \$10.25.

The presentation of the medals was made in the office of the Mayor who also served as Chairman of the Police Commission. The first ceremony took place on November 26th, 1947, before senior police officers and family and friends of the recipients. The medals went to Anthony Pilutik, 11 years old, Ronald Lawrence, 15 years old, and Cullen Hargrave, 18 years old. The fourth medal for Stuart Hurrell, 15 years old, was sent to his new location where it was presented by the Mayor of North Vancouver

The next awards were made in 1948 on April 7th to Jerome Madden, 17years old, and Vincent Allen, 17years old. These boys had witnessed an armed robbery attempt at 558 Portage Avenue and followed the gunman to the YMCA. At one point the man turned and pointed the gun and warned them to stop following, but they hesitated only moments then continued on. The boys saw two beat constables & informed them of the circumstances and they were able to arrest the man without incident.

Another award was made in 1948 on December 1<sup>st</sup> to Miss Marion Hebel who was employed as a clerk at the ShopEasy Store on Academy Road on November 8th. This 24-year-old clerk became suspicious of a man who got out of a car and walked across the street to a parked Brink's armoured car which was unattended. The male used a key to open the right-hand front door and it was later learned that he removed \$7,265.00 and some cheques from the glove compartment. Miss Hebel knew the employees and went across the street to a restaurant and advised them of the strange happening. She also took a description of the male and his vehicle. This was the first attack of any sort on an armoured truck in Winnipeg. The male who had at one time worked for Brinks was arrested a short time later and the money was recovered.

The last medal award was made on June 15th, 1949, to Reeve Nelson Unger. On March 14th about 11:30 p.m. while walking on Sherbrooke Street he observed three men drag another man between buildings where they beat and robbed him of his wallet and gold cigarette case. Unger went to his assistance and fought with the assailants and managed to hold on to one while the others ran off. The other men were arrested soon after.

An interesting sidelight to this incident was the fact that less than three months later Reeve Nelson Unger joined the Police Force as constable #7A on September 5th, 1949. Constable Unger suffered a fatal heart attack on September 5th, 1965.



*Constable Reeve Unger, 1965*

There would have been at least one more medal awarded, but due to the circumstances, the Board of Police Commissioners decided to avoid publicity or endanger the recipient so gave him a cash reward of \$25.00 instead.

This last incident occurred on November 29th, 1949, at about 1:30 a.m. when Constable Archibald McKenzie was on beat patrol on Sutherland Avenue and he noticed three suspicious men near a warehouse near Darby Street. He approached them started to search them when one man pulled a .38 handgun and held it to his head and relieved the officer of his service revolver. At the same time and only a short distance away, Constable George Thomson was standing by a stolen truck while his partner in CC #20 went to Jarvis Street to locate the owner.

Constable Thomson heard yelling and went to investigate and saw Constable McKenzie but as he approached a juvenile shoved a sawed-off .22 rifle against his back and then disarmed him. The three well-armed males warned the officers not to chase them and fled over the CPR tracks towards Higgins. The officers flagged down a taxi and the dispatcher was notified to call the Rupert Street Station.

The search for the armed men spread quickly with extra police personnel called out including all the senior officers in detectives. A short time later a call was received from Northern Taxi indicating that their driver Patrick Lynch had picked up three suspicious men on Higgins at about that time and had taken one to a Henry Avenue address and the other two to the Kirkfield Inn.

Within an hour of the incident, a number of officers raided the Kirkfield Inn and arrested a male adult and a juvenile for the robbery. The two police guns were recovered as well as a .38 revolver. The sawed-off barrel of the .22 cal rifle was located later at a different location. A second male juvenile was arrested at the Henry Avenue address.

This seems to have been the last time the medal was considered for presentation. There is nothing in the records up to the late 1950s showing any other awards. Payments to Clay-Law only cover the three medals in 1948 and one in 1949 for Unger.

There is no record showing a reason for discontinuing the medal so it may have just been a matter of the Police Commission forgetting about the medal or a lack of recommendations for it. Most of the Commission members, as well as the Chief Constable, remained the same between 1947 and 1953, as well as Mr. Graham who had presented the original resolution. Whatever the reason, this award is obviously rare with only 8 ever awarded.

The dies and a sample medal are now on display at the Police Museum.