

Fraternals: Fraternal Order of Police



Welcome to the F.O.P.....but these guys certainly are not fops! The Fraternal Order of Police started in 1915 and is the nation's largest and most respected police association with over 280,000 members and over 2,000 local lodges nationwide! The FOP is about "Cops for Cops". It does not associate itself with any other fraternal or labor organizations. The National Executive Board of the FOP *are all law enforcement officers*. The FOP is a non-profit organization whose goals are to promote fraternalism, professionalism and pride in the law enforcement world. It has a full time legislative office and lobbyists in Washington D.C.

Two foot patrolman in 1915, Martin Toole and Delbert Nagle, were the original Pittsburgh police officers who thought of organizing other officers into a body to secure much needed improvement in their way of life. In that era, police officers were underpaid and overworked. Martin Toole and Delbert Nagle met nightly and would discuss the problems of the police officer. Considerable planning had to be done in a very secretive manner, for if their plans were known heads could hit the chopping block. On Friday, May 14, 1915, twenty-three men met in secret. It was at that meeting that the name Fraternal Order of Police was adopted. Temporary officers were elected and "twenty-three" was adopted as the password for the group.

Police Superintendent Noble Matthews learned of the meeting that afternoon and was furious. History relates, after hearing what was in the wind he sent a policeman to Toole's home instructing him to report to headquarters immediately. Toole obeyed the order and told him what had transpired. Matthews tried to squash it, but it was no use. At a meeting, Wednesday, November 17, 1915, Attorney Robert G. Woodside read the Charter granted earlier that day by Judge Thomas J. Ford of the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.



Immediately plans were formulated to lobby City Council for a reduction of the 365-day work schedule. The council realized that action must be taken on the F.O.P.'s complaint and passed an ordinance on Monday, October 9, 1916, giving police officers two days off each month with pay. Other police departments took notice and they began to organize under Pittsburgh's Leadership. At the 5th Annual National Convention held August 15-18, 1921, at Reading, Pennsylvania, Joseph G. Armstrong was introduced to the assembled body as the ex-Mayor of Pittsburgh who is the father of the Fraternal Order of Police.

State Lodges were established and then the Grand Lodge was formed to encompass the United States. From the original 23 members, the membership now totals over 277,000, and there are over 2000 local Lodges, and one in Dublin, Ireland. And, like so many of the fraternal organizations, the F. O. P. does a lot of good work on the local and state levels. For example, the California branch of the F. O. P. sponsors a statewide essay contest each year that I always have my students participate in. *[I wanted to be sure and get that in because my students have won the the Northern California division three times and the statewide competition twice!]*

The cover shown here is the only F. O. P. cover I have, and, if memory serves me correctly, it may be the only one I've ever seen. There must be more, though. With 280,00 members and 2000 lodges, there has to be. Do you have any?