The History of Satellite Offices

On May 1, 1963, pursuant to the many changes made by Arthur Cornelius - our first non-member superintendent - the number of state police stations was reduced from 126 to 100, including the elimination of many, if not most, non-24 hour stations.

At that time Troop C, Zone One, consisted of Sullivan and Ulster Counties. Phonecia in Ulster was closed. Narrowsburg, Roscoe and Wurtsboro in Sullivan County were closed, leaving only one station, Ferndale, in Sullivan County. Zone One was easily the busiest zone in Troop C, especially in the summer.

The superintendent was under the impression that, using the 1/2 hour overlap of the 8 1/2 hour days, all patrols were being relieved on post by their replacement, therefore there was no loss in post coverage due to the closure of many stations.

In fact, this usually did not happen. The patrols would return to their station about a half hour before the end of their tour so they could make their blotter entry and often because their car was needed for the next tour. At shift change it was common to hear radio transmissions such as "Ellenville to 374, return, the car is needed for the C Line".

(One notable exception in my experience was in Troop K's Zone Two. The zone commander, Lieutenant "Black Sam" Crodelle, would often lurk at the edge of a post to ensure the post car did not return before they were replaced.)

The other factor which was not considered was that if any arrests were made during the tour, the patrol would have to leave the post to process the prisoner at their station. In Sullivan County this was especially critical, since the busiest post was Post Four (of six), which was pretty much everything east of Monticello. The most active troopers were always sent to that post and therefore made frequent arrests, leaving the post uncovered while the defendant was processed at Ferndale, twenty or more miles away.

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Once the defendant was processed, he would have to be taken back to the Town of Mamakating to be arraigned, usually before Judge Bronner in Winterton, a 30 mile trip from Ferndale. Then back to the jail in Monticello. This left the post uncovered for two hours or more.

In August 1968 Troop F was formed and Sullivan County went from one of two counties in Zone One, Troop C, to the sole county in Zone One, Troop F. Ulster County was combined with Greene County, formerly part of Troop G, to become Zone Three, Troop F.

In 1972 I was the station commander at Ferndale and was acutely aware of the lack of post coverage. I was the only trooper living in the Village of Wurtsboro - or in the Town of Mamakating for that matter - and people would regularly call me at home with problems - I was in the book and it was part of being a trooper - I considered it a privilege to be one of those troopers whom I remembered from my childhood who worked around the clock.

I lived next door to Dennis Greenwald, the town supervisor. I asked Dennis if perhaps we could put a fingerprint stand and a breathalyzer in the town hall and get some keys so the troopers could have 24 hour access. This would eliminate the need to return to Ferndale for many of our arrests. Dennis was all for anything which would give the town better coverage. (Keep in mind there were very few sheriff's patrols in those days.) I then submitted a memo through channels to the Troop F Commander, Major Ray Kisor, proposing the idea. He liked it.

Having a place to use for processing on post worked so well that Dennis suggested that the town could rent a few rooms for us if we could put some troopers there. The town also said we could use their gas pump so we wouldn't have to go to Ferndale for fuel. I submitted a memo suggesting that if we could maintain a separate blotter and have some troopers report directly to Wurtsboro, they wouldn't have to go to Ferndale very often. While engaged in field supervision the zone sergeants could ensure that there was a return entry in the Wurtsboro Blotter for every complaint which had been dispatched from Ferndale.

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The major probably had to submit the idea to Division, but ultimately it was approved. Unfortunately, before it could be implemented, I was transferred to Kingston as a zone sergeant.

At the time one of the Zone One zone sergeants, who lived near Roscoe, was the acting zone commander. The other two zone sergeants lived in Narrowsburg. Once the proposal was approved, they took the satellite idea and ran with it. But, since their connections were at different ends of the county, Roscoe and Narrowsburg were the first satellites opened in the state. Shortly thereafter, Wurtsboro was opened as a satellite too, but it had been the catalyst for the concept even though it wasn't the first.

Three years later I was again promoted and remained in Kingston as the zone commander. About that time the federal government came up with funding for an experimental Resident Trooper Program. I submitted a grant application and we received funding to put a resident trooper in western Ulster County to work with the Woodstock, Olive and Shandaken Constabularies. (The resident trooper was Bob Scank of SP Kingston. Troop K also received a grant for a resident trooper in the Somers, Lewisboro, Pound Ridge area. The resident trooper was Art Pierce. They were the only two in the state.)

I don't remember whether the federal funds paid for it or whether the towns chipped in, but we obtained a small building in Shokan for the resident trooper to use. The regular post cars began to use it too and it became the first satellite in Zone Three. Soon we opened satellites in Hunter and Gardiner also. Thereafter the satellite idea spread throughout the state.

A side note: When the resident trooper started working with the three local constabularies, we got permission from Albany for them to install state police radios, with assigned radio numbers, in their cars. (e.g. 7F3xx; the seven denoting a non-state police unit, F for Troop F, 3 for Zone Three, followed by a designated car number). We had the constabularies' phone lines answered at SP Kingston and began dispatching for them. The idea of allowing SP radios in local PD cars spread statewide as quickly as the satellite office idea had.

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