

Police Hoping for New West Side Station

Desplaines st. police station, which at 120 N. Desplaines st. occupies one of the oldest district station buildings in Chicago, will occupy perhaps the largest district building in the city when its new headquarters are constructed at Racine av. and Monroe st., Paul Gerhardt, city architect, said recently.

The structure now in use, a contemporary of cable cars and horse drawn patrol wagons, was erected about 1881 during a building boom which followed the business panic of 1873. The building long has outlived its usefulness, officials said, and in recent years has been criticized for its lack of modern sanitary facilities and its old fashioned architecture which necessitates much waste floor space.

Await Approval

Plans for the new structure are drawn and the contract letting awaits approval by the city council before construction begins, Gerhardt said. The headquarters should be finished in nine months after work is started, he estimated.

The building will be 72 by 145 feet and will cost an estimated \$315,000. It will be erected on a 75 by 150 foot site now occupied by one story, frame buildings easily razed, Gerhardt continued.

The fireproof structure, consisting of a basement and two stories, will be of modern design, constructed of concrete with stone and face brick trim. The basement will consist of a pistol range, records room, boiler room, and storage space.

Regarded as Innovation

First floor will have 15 double bunk cells, each 9 by 9 feet and equipped with modern sanitary facilities. Adjacent to the cell block will be a so-called felony cell and quiz room for use when solitary confinement is deemed necessary.

Altho other now district stations may have felony cells, the equipment still is regarded as an innovation by police, Gerhardt said. Desplaines, incidentally, ranks first among district stations in the number of arrests, police records show.

The first floor also will have offices for the captain, captain's secretary, lieutenant, and desk sergeant. The garage will have space for four squad cars and a patrol wagon. Second floor will consist of a courtroom with seating capacity of 132, judge's chambers, a squad room for district policemen, and offices for detectives and juvenile officer.

The station today serves an area bounded by the Chicago river, Ashland av., and Harrison and Kinzie sts., and is one of 40 districts in Chicago. In 1881 the Desplaines st. building was erected as headquarters of the 3d precinct, with substations in W. Madison st., Lake st., and W. Chicago av. Chicago then had four precincts.

Start Cable Cars

The year 1881 also saw the first cable car line laid in Chicago. It followed State st. south to 39th st. and soon afterward was extended farther south, thus fostering growth of outlying residential districts.

Capt. William J. McGarigle, superintendent of the police department, in 1880 had introduced use of the police telephone and signal system, employing street corner boxes and horse drawn patrol wagons. In 1881 this system was organized further, with 2,114 box keys distributed among citizens, horses trained to cover a mile in six minutes, and eight telephone stations. Three years later there were 434 boxes in use, requiring attention of 84 men.

The Desplaines st. station still was considered new when on May 4, 1886, its policemen dashed north to quell the rioting in Haymarket sq., Desplaines and Randolph sts. According to records, eight policemen were killed and many injured by a bomb believed to have been thrown by professional agitators.