



AUGUST VOLLMER

August Vollmer was born on March 7, 1876, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to parents who had immigrated recently from Germany. In 1905, he stopped a runaway railcar

from hitting a passenger train, and the editor of the local newspaper encouraged him to run for town marshal. He did and won by a landslide against the corrupt incumbent. He ran again in 1907 and won, and then in 1909, Berkeley converted the position and Vollmer was appointed police chief, a position in which he would serve until 1932.

Vollmer was an innovative chief. He was the first to put all of his officers on bicycles in 1910, and he adopted motorcycles and patrol cars early. Through his leadership and the assistance of many of his officers, he contributed to creating the first crime lab, the modern polygraph, and the two-way radio in patrol cars. Vollmer was also very progressive; he did not believe in police brutality, he opposed

capital punishment, and he favored the decriminalization of drugs. This was all in the 1920s and 1930s!

Vollmer's greatest contribution to American policing, however, was in the area of education. He started a program of in-service training for his officers (1906) and a police academy (1907), and he developed the first criminal justice degree at the University of California at Berkeley (1916). Although the degree was known as criminology, it was largely police science, and in later years developed into criminal justice. Therefore, in 2016, criminal justice education will celebrate its 100th anniversary, and you are reading this book most likely because of the pioneering work of August Vollmer.



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