

THE CATALYTIC EVENT AND THE DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT:
A DESCRIPTION AND AN ANALYSIS¹

A routine raid by the Detroit Police Department on an illegal drinking place² in the early hours of a mid-summer Sunday set off widespread rioting, looting, arson and sniping in the city. It is paramount to this report to set down at this point a more exhaustive narrative of events relating to this raid, emphasizing the reactions of the Detroit Police Department to the ensuing series of happenings.

The United Community League for Civic Action, 9125 Twelfth Street.

According to a departmental report, this address had been known as the site of a "blind pig" operation for over a year (see Exhibit 14). The officer in charge of the night "clean up" crew on Saturday, July 22, 1967, was Sergeant Arthur Howison. Assigned to his crew were Patrolmen Anthony Fiermonti, Charles Henry and Joseph Brown. Howison and Fierimonti were working out of a department car, Henry and Brown were working out of Henry's private automobile. Howison had personal knowledge of this particular "blind pig" as he was in charge of a clean up crew that raided it over a year ago (see Exhibit 14). Furthermore, Fiermonti stated that he regularly works clean up and that he had known of this "blind pig" for three or four years.³

This particular raid was the result of a "bitter complaint".⁴ Henry and Brown had attempted admittance at approximately 10:00 p.m., Saturday, July 22. They tried to pass Brown off to the doorman as an out-of-town basketball player.

¹See Appendix A.

²There were 76 "blind pig" raids by the Detroit Police Department in 1966, from which 1,088 arrests were made (Detroit Police Department, 1966 Annual Report, p. 51).

³Detroit Police Department, Special Investigation Bureau Report on the July 23, 1967 Raid at 9125 12th Street, July 31, 1967.

⁴Detroit Police Department, Report on Case Investigated, Complaint Number A 139526 (July 23rd Raid at 9125 12th Street).

Exhibit 14

ACTION BY THE TENTH PRECINCT CLEAN UP CREW AT 9125 TWELFTH ST. - TO JULY 23, 1967

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTION AND RESULTS</u>
2/11/66	Raid by Sergeant Howison and crew, ten persons arrested.
10/21/66	.Attempted raid by Patrolman Hooper, no response
10/22/66	Attempted raid by Patrolman Lovelace, refused admittance
10/28/66	Raid by Sergeant Harris and Patrolman Urquhart, found children's halloween party in progress
11/05/66	Observed by Sergeant Guffery and crew, no evident action
11/11/66	Attempted raid by Patrolman Henry, no response
11/12/66	Observed by Sergeant Guffery and crew, no evident action
12/02/66	Observed by Sergeant Gordon and crew, no evident action
6/03/67	Raid by the Vice Squad, 28 persons arrested.

Source: October 17, 1967 - Inter-Office Memorandum from Sergeant Howison, Supervisor of the 10th Precinct Clean Up Crew, to the Lieutenant-in-charge of the Tenth Precinct.

The doorman told them they could not enter as it was a private party.⁵ At approximately 3:00 a.m., Henry gained admittance by mingling with three women while approaching the door. It was after 3:10 and closer to 3:40 when the Tenth Precinct Clean-up Crew entered the "blind pig". Up to this report, 3:45 a.m. had been accepted as the entry time for the clean-up crew. This was the result of two factors. First, a complete and thorough chronology of this period was not available. Secondly, Patrolmen Henry and Brown, when interviewed, gave different estimates of the time Henry gained admittance. Henry stated 3:45, while Brown mentioned "approximately 3:00"⁶ However, the facts we have gathered support the earlier time:

1. Sergeant John Smith, the Twelfth St. beat sergeant that evening, mentioned that at approximately 3:10 a.m., he heard a call by 10-80, the Tenth Precinct Clean Up Crew, for the Tenth Precinct cruiser to meet them at Delaware and Twelfth Street. Sergeant Smith and his men also responded. Sergeant Howison asked for their assistance. At this point, the cruiser arrived, and it was dispatched to a fire house to get a sledge hammer for entry, another factor of delay.⁷
2. The first scout car dispatched to assist the clean-up crew was at 3:38.⁸
3. The Tenth Precinct cruiser was summoned at 3:05.⁹
4. Sergeant Howison stated that they would ordinarily survey a suspected "blind pig" "soon after" 3:00 a.m. to see if it was operating. Given a positive observation, an officer would attempt to gain entry and make a buy.¹⁰

⁵Special Investigation Bureau Report

⁶Ibid.

⁷Detroit Police Department, August 2, 1967, Special Investigation Bureau Report No. 2 (July 23rd Activities of Sergeant John Smith, Supervisor of the 12th Street Detail)

⁸Detroit Police Department, Tenth Precinct dispatch tickets

⁹Detroit Police Department, Tenth Precinct Activity Log

¹⁰Special Investigation Report, July 31, 1967

The loading of the prisoners, although orderly, attracted spectators. The crowd contained friends of the prisoners, and they kidded the prisoners to such effect as, "I told you you'd get caught one day up there." By the time that the last prisoners were being loaded into the wagon, eight to ten scout cars had responded to the scene. At this point, bottles were being thrown at the police and police cars from the rear of the crowd. One of the bottles struck and broke the rear window of the cruiser. When the last prisoners were loaded into a paddy wagon, all the police cars were ordered out of the area. The time previously accepted here has been 5:00 a.m. Our analysis of police records disclosed that it was very close to 4:40 a.m. (see Exhibits 15 and 16). Exhibit 15 lists 4:27 as the last dispatch to the raid. All of the scout cars dispatched to the scene departed by 4:40.¹¹ The ordering of the cars out of an inflamed neighborhood (de-escalation) had been employed successfully by the Detroit Police Department and others in the past as a tactic of crowd dispersion. Apparently, the presence of police is a knitting factor to a crowd. Exhibit 16 shows that the cars dispatched to the raid were engaged in non-riot related activity around 4:40, tendering two observations:

1. There was routine patrol work after the raid, while waiting for the Twelfth and Clairmount situation to return to normal.
2. Since scout cars were free for disposition, had there been a more serious appraisal of the situation, an area containment attempt certainly could have been initiated.

Patrolman Brown was left behind at the scene. He was sitting in Henry's car waiting for Henry to return, not knowing that Henry had gone with a scout car to the Tenth Precinct. Brown heard what he thought was glass breaking coming from

¹¹Tenth Precinct Activity Log

Exhibit 15

TIMETABLE OF RECORDED POLICE DISPATCHES - TENTH PRECINCT

JULY 23, 1967, FROM 3:38 A.M. TO 6:12 A.M.

<u>TIME OF DISPATCH</u>	<u>SCOUT CAR ORIGIN</u>		<u>DISPATCH MESSAGE</u>
	<u>PRECINCT</u>	<u>TERRITORY</u>	
3:38 A. M. ¹	10	5	To 9123 12th, raid with 10-80 (Tenth Precinct Clean-up Crew)
3:40	10	2	To 9123 12th, raid with 10-80
3:41	10	16	To Precinct 12, get wagon, to 9123 12th
3:47	10	1	To 12th and Clairmount, raid
3:50	10	4	To 12th and Clairmount
3:50	10	7	To 12th and Clairmount
3:51	10	3	To 12th and Clairmount
3:59	13	Auto ²	To 12th and Clairmount
4:00	10	2	To station guard prisoners
4:22	10	14	12th and Clairmount, raid
4:27	6	Auto	12th and Clairmount, raid
4:27	13	Auto	12th and Clairmount, raid
5:00	10	4	12th and Clairmount, man down on sidewalk in front of shoe store, bad cut
5:03	10	5	14th and Clairmount
5:03	2	14	12th and Clairmount
5:03	2	15	12th and Clairmount
5:07	10	4	9035 12th, ADT alarm
5:10	10	7	To Lodge and Clairmount, meet 10-70 (Sergeant Mulvihill and Lieutenant Good)
5:35	10	1	9101 12th (shoe store) - Guardian Alarm
5:37	10	1	Busy at Clairmount and Lodge
5:37	10	5	Busy at Clairmount and Lodge
6:12 ³	10	6	Busy at Byron and Taylor with the Lieutenants (10-60)

Source: Detroit Police Department, Tenth Precinct dispatch tickets

¹ First dispatch reference to the raid

² Paddy wagon (auto patrol)

³ Last recorded dispatch until 8:01, the reason given was that the activity became too heavy for any recording.