

Van Nuys Area History

Originally "Valley Division", the origin of Van Nuys Area could be traced back to the opening of a police station in the Van Nuys Civic Center building on January 1, 1924. This building, located at 14410 Sylvan Street, remains standing today. If one stands at a good angle, they may be able to see the word "POLICE" patched over with stucco on the west doorway facing north on the front of the building. When Valley Division was established, the responsibility of patrolling over 200 square miles was handed to the personnel assigned to that station! After West Valley and North Hollywood Division opened between 1957 and 1958, "Valley Division" was renamed "Van Nuys Division", and the difficulties of patrolling such a large area was eased.

When the Valley Police Headquarters opened in 1964, Van Nuys Division relocated. The building, which is located at 6240 Sylmar Avenue, is the location of Van Nuys Area today. The design of the building stands as an architectural representation of the midcentury-modern design. The building was designed by Daniel Mann Johnson & Mendenhall. In 2008, Operations Valley Bureau and Valley Traffic Division relocated to a new facility at 7870 Nollan Place, leaving Van Nuys Area to call the Valley Police Headquarters home.

Through the 1950's Van Nuys Area, or "Valley" was responsible for patrolling an area that was residence to the infamous gangster Mickey Cohen. The 1970's and early 1980's saw a peak of "cruising" along Van Nuys Boulevard. Car owners from throughout the city descended upon Van Nuys Boulevard to show off their cars and socialize. Officers faced the challenge of traffic enforcement and mitigating any instances of violence, though rare. In recent times, cruising has made a resurgence on Van Nuys Boulevard.

Personnel assigned to Van Nuys Area have been awarded the Medal of Valor for heroic actions. They include Officers Thomas Appleby and Humberto Franco, who on July 13, 2005 were assisting Officer Humerto Franco in ordering persons from a vehicle during a traffic stop. As contact was made with the rear passenger, the front passenger rushed into vehicular traffic, armed with a hidden handgun and began firing several shots at the three officers as he ran from the scene. Appleby returned fire while he and fellow officer Moreno gave chase of the now armed suspect. Simultaneously, Franco secured the other uncooperative suspects and contacted Communications Division to request back-up.

As the suspect approached a nearby motel, he ignored orders to drop his weapon. Instead, he again pointed his gun at Appleby. Both Appleby and Moreno then fired at the suspect. Still refusing to surrender, the now injured suspect hid behind a building in the motel parking lot. Without warning, the armed suspect suddenly reappeared and fired rounds at the officers. Both officers again returned fire, causing the suspect to fall to the ground. The suspect, though injured and on the ground, reached for his weapon and again pointed it at the officers. Both officers simultaneously fired their weapons at the suspect. The suspect immediately dropped his weapon and fell onto his back. Both officers approached the suspect and took him into custody. Shortly thereafter, the suspect succumbed to his injuries.