

THE STRONG ARM SQUAD A TERROR TO THE GANGS

The Rowdies Who Make Trouble Get a Dose of Their Own Medicine.

Waldo's Detachment of Suppressors of Disorder Is a New Plan.



John D. O'Connor, Who Pursues Undraped Bathers.



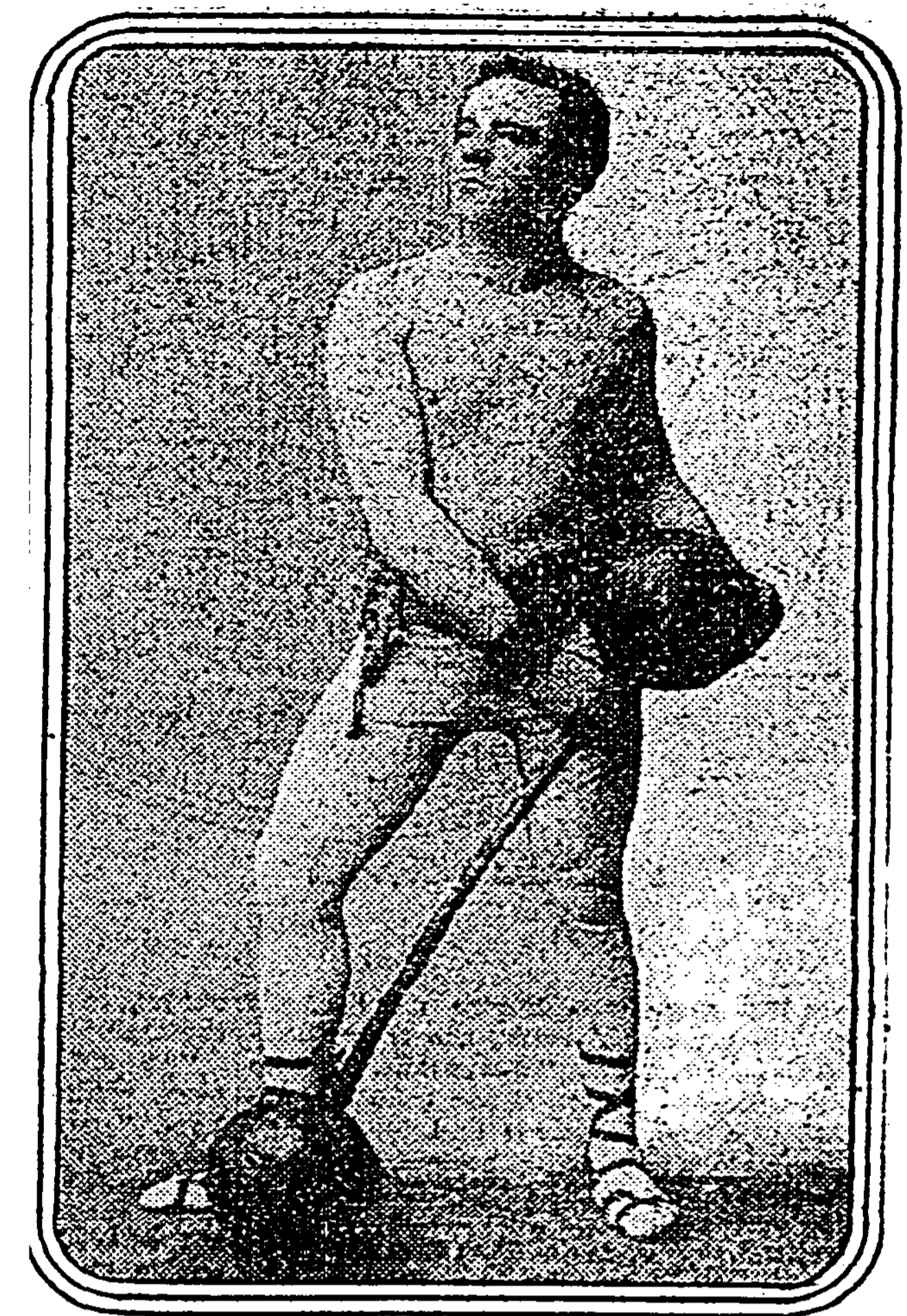
John T. Shields as a Longshoreman.



LT. CHAS. BECKER
in Command of Strong Arm Squad



Phil Faubel, "Old Sleuth."



Ajax Whitman, the Strong Man of the Police Department.

GIVE him a strong dose of his own medicine—that is Police Commissioner Waldo's prescription for purging the system of the gangster, the corner tough, and the car rowdy, of the desire to maul and beat up peaceful citizens.

Acting upon this new theory in police therapeutics, Commissioner Waldo was only in office a short time when he organized what is officially known at Headquarters as "The Special Squad." The unofficial title—"The Strong-Arm Squad"—is far more descriptive.

This squad is made up of twenty huskies whose sole duty it is to travel about the city and hand out generous doses of strong-arm medicine to any and all who show unmistakable signs of being in need of it.

Now it is perhaps best to say at this point that there is no official order on file at Police Headquarters directing the men of The Special Squad to administer strong-arm medicine.

Inquire at the Commissioner's office, and you will be told that The Special Squad has been organized for the prevention of crime, to break up gangs, to disperse corner loafers, to suppress ferry-boat hoodlums, and discourage car rowdies. All of these much-needed reforms, you will learn at the Commissioner's office, are to be accomplished by arrests.

But The Special Squad knows the prescription that Commissioner Waldo believes in. They make the arrests all right, but at the same time they administer a strong dose of their particular brand of medicine.

Complaints to Commissioner Waldo that "citizens" have been clubbed and punched by The Special Squad.

No, the Commissioner has not heard a single complaint of that kind.

But the Magistrates before whom The Special Squad has brought its prisoners have heard many tales of cruel and abusive treatment. Not a Magistrate, however, has as yet censured a member of the squad for his treatment of a prisoner.

Here is the police court record of the squad. It not only shows the urgent need of this city for this body of men, but it also shows the excellent judgment the men have used in making arrests.

During the month of July The Special Squad made 345 arrests, out of which 308 convictions were secured. The sentences imposed totaled 2,275 days, and the fines \$900.

The record for the first ten days of the month of August is 237 arrests and 220 convictions. Last Sunday 104 arrests were made, 95 of the prisoners being sent to the Workhouse.

This unusual record in police efficiency is the result of Commissioner Waldo's theory as to the type of policeman that should make up The Special Squad. He wanted men who in emergencies would use their judgment first and their fists or hills afterward, but who could use judgment, fists, and billics equally well.

Lieut. Charles Becker was picked as the man to be put in command of the strong-

arm squad. He looks the part, standing over six feet in his socks, tipping the scale over 200 pounds, broad-shouldered, with eyes, jaw, and fists of a fighter.

Then men were picked from the various precincts who had earned reputations for their fighting capacity, for their judgment in making arrests, and for their ability in securing evidence to back up their arrests.

The squad includes a number of men who are already known to the newspaper readers of this city. There is Ajax Whitman, the "strong man" of the Police Department, and his brother, Nathan Whitman, who has been dubbed "the Yiddish Irishman." The Whitmans are Hebrews. Then there are Conlon, the "strong-arm dude"; "Old Sleuth" Faubel; Joe McLaughlin, known as "Eat 'Em Up Alive"; "Boots" Trojan, who knows all the gangs and whom Lieut. Becker describes as being as "good as four ordinary men to go into a muss with."

The men of The Special Squad do not do duty in uniform, yet it would scarcely be accurate to describe them as plain clothes men, for their clothes are more than plain. Their work is usually along the docks and in the rougher parts of the city, and they dress to fit the locality. Sometimes they rig up as longshoremen, sometimes as engineers' assistants, sometimes just as plain loafers.

But it occasionally happens that their work takes them into more ornate districts. Certain corners of the "Great White Way" are known as the gathering places of wire-tappers, bunco men, card sharps, and other members of the well-dressed variety of crook.

The Special Squad has cleaned up the corners a number of times, and when on this kind of work the men put on their white collars and niftiest clothes. Conlon being the Beau Brummel of the squad, his ability to dress and fight well having earned him the title of "the strong-arm dude," is usually picked to do the reconnoitering before the squad itself swoops down on these Broadway corners.

No matter where their task may lay, each man carries a billy, a blackjack, and a revolver.

Excepting their strenuous Sunday work, which will be spoken of later, The Special Squad usually go out as the result of complaints that citizens send to Headquarters.

To illustrate how the squad works, let us suppose that complaint is made that a gang of toughs camps nightly at a certain corner, insulting women, holding up pedestrians for "beer money," and beating up those who refuse tribute.

A couple of the squad dressed as toughs saunter along the avenue and mix with the crowd on the corner. They wait quietly until they get "the goods" on the roughs, until they see them hold up some one or start a fight. Then they give a signal, and their comrades, who are



Joseph McLaughlin in Disguise.



JOHN J. BOWES,
of a "Corner Tough"



M. B. CONLON
"The Strong Arm Dude"



GEORGE TROJAN
"Boots Trojan"

also in disguise and who have been loafing meanwhile on various near-by corners, swoop down on the crowd.

Fight back? Oh, yes, the crowd fights, and sometimes does it with a comparative degree of success. Two of the members of the squad have had their heads laid open, one was hit with a brick and another with a rock. These are the total casualties to date.

Ask any of the squad about these casualties, and they smile grimly and say that they are entirely satisfied with the way the score stands.

The average newspaper reader would be surprised to see the complaints that come into Headquarters. Here is one sent by a Wall Street lawyer:

"Some years since my partner, Mr. P., was appointed by the New York Supreme Court to execute a trust which had devolved upon the court. In the course of his administration of this trust, he came into possession of two mortgages on properties at — and — East Ninety-seventh Street. Until recently the property has been well tenanted and the owners prompt in the payment of interest and taxes.

"These same owners have now abandoned their property. A notorious gang, known as the 'Car Barn Gang,' has taken forcible possession of the property and terrorized the entire block. The owner states that he is afraid to go near his property. The adjoining owner tells a similar story. Desirable tenants have moved from the houses and a condition of

such lawlessness exists that both owners have thrown up their hands and abandoned valuable equities.

"Under these circumstances Mr. P. commenced foreclosure through myself as his attorney, and the Supreme Court placed its receiver in charge. The receiver, after investigating conditions, has now signified his desire to resign, upon the ground that even the receiver of the



Nathan Whitman Disguised as An Irishman.

Supreme Court can do nothing against this gang without protection. The plumbing and fixtures have been ripped out, stair railings destroyed, and serious injury done to the building.

"Mr. P. and I have requested the receiver to defer his application to resign until we can confer with you, as we cannot consent that it shall go on record that a representative of the Supreme Court is unable to discharge his duties in this city because of the unchecked deprivations of a lawless gang."

Commissioner Waldo turned this complaint over to Lieut. Becker for action. Becker took six of his men and visited the property at midnight, the hour at which the gang usually held its revels.

But somehow or other the gang had got word of the impending visitation. When Becker and his men reached the place, the houses were dark as pitch.

Using their electric flash lanterns, the policemen searched the houses from roof to cellar. Not a gangster was found. But just as Becker stepped out of the doorway to the street a big iron pot filled with boiling water dropped within a few inches of his face and smashed on the pavement.

Another midnight visit was made a few nights later, and this time the gang was caught in the midst of one of their mixed-ale orgies.

And then things happened. The lamp was knocked over. One of the gangsters grabbed it up and hurled it at one of the officers. Beer bottles and other handy missiles flew in the dark. But a few

busy minutes, and Becker and his men led a string of damaged bad men to the nearest station house. They are now summing in the Workhouse.

The Gopher gang, which hangs out in the neighborhood of Tenth Avenue and the Twenties, figured recently in the columns of the newspapers, through a murder on one occasion, and at another time because it attempted to rescue a prisoner from a policeman.

But the peaceful residents of the neighborhood can tell a much longer story of the crime and lawlessness of this gang, and some of these stories they have recounted through the mail to Commissioner Waldo.

Lieut. Becker was put on the job. At dusk on the evening of July 17 he took four of his men and went into the heart of the district. At the corner of Twenty-sixth Street a crowd of about thirty young men were indulging in the familiar forms of concerted rowdyism, insulting passersby and holding up the more prosperous for the price of drinks. Becker and his squad charged the crowd. There was trouble at once. More men and boys materialized from shadowy doorways. Soon several hundred were surging about the corner, and out of the crowd came voices: "Kill the cops!"

Before the squad had rushed the crowd eleven had been picked out as the chief offenders. The policemen managed to nab these, and to this collection added two more who were the most active in trying to rescue their comrades.

The prisoners fought and the crowd surged and clamored. Then came the reserves from the West Twentieth Street Station. Even then it was with the greatest difficulty that the prisoners were finally landed behind the bars.

Two of the liveliest scrimmages that the Strong-Arm Squad have been in developed when they raided the negro toughs of San Juan Hill, and a few nights later the disorderly negroes who gather on the corner of Lenox Avenue and 135th Street.

The stories of both raids are very much alike, so only the tale of the San Juan Hill encounter will be told.

Dressed as longshoremen Becker and fourteen of his men sauntered down Amsterdam Avenue. On the corners of Sixty-first and Sixty-second Streets were the usual gatherings of disorderly negroes.

The Strong Arms loafed about until they got a line on the ringleaders. Then at a signal from Becker, they swooped down on them.

In a moment the Strong Arms were involved in running fights up and down Amsterdam Avenue and in the side streets.

Calls were sent to the West Forty-seventh, Sixty-eighth, and One Hundredth Street Stations for patrol wagons, but long before these reached the scene the neighborhood was rallying to help their captured brethren.

A shower of bricks, stones, and bottles rained down from tenement windows and roofs on the heads of policemen and prisoners alike.

A crowd of 1,500 gathered and the police were forced to draw their revolvers to keep it back.

Things were looking serious when Lieut. Becker led his men and the prisoners into a big iron shed on the corner, where with drawn revolvers they kept the crowd at bay until the patrol wagons arrived with help.

Thirty-one negroes were loaded into the patrol wagons and carted to the nearest station house. The Magistrate fined all of them.

All through the week the Strong Arms are kept busy, sometimes going out singly to attend to small jobs, or rather jobs that these men consider small. Lieut. Becker estimates the size of the job and assigns the number of men that he thinks necessary to clean it up.

The tasks that the men get are occasionally peculiar. There is one Strong Arm, for instance, who has as one of his disguises an old blue flannel bathing suit. He is assigned every now and then to go along the water front and force a lesson in modesty upon the men who go in swimming undraped.

Sunday being the day of the ferryboat hoodlum and the car rowdy, the Strong Arms on that day confine their attention to the entertainment of these high-spirited young men.

To look after this task Commissioner Waldo gives Lieut. Becker sixty additional men, who are carefully picked from the various precincts. This force is divided up into twenty entertainment committees, a regular member of the squad being put in charge of each committee.

These committees are then scattered throughout the city at points where experience has shown that their own peculiar variety of entertainment is likely to be needed.

These instances will show the way the squad covers the city every Sunday: Five men are sent to the Ninety-second Street Ferry; 5 men to the Ninety-ninth Street Ferry; 5 men to the Woodside station of the Long Island Railroad; 5 men to the Staten Island Ferry boats; 5 men to the Woodside barns in Queens; 4 men to North Beach; 3 men to the Maspeth Depot; 3 men to the Van Cortlandt Park Ferry station; 2 men to the Dyckman Street Subway station; 5 men to Fort George; 2 men to South Beach, Staten Island. The chief danger points in all five boroughs are covered.

Lieut. Becker keeps in touch with the various details by telephone, so that in the event of anything of a particularly lively nature developing, he can send additional men to that point.

Thus far, each detail has proved itself capable of taking care of all that came its way.

Yes, quite a little. There have been hard fights on ferryboats, on trolley cars running through lonely stretches of the outlying parts of the city. Each fight usually means that a good-sized gang has lined up against two or three officers. But the story of each fight always ends the same way—"so-and-so arrests were made."

Lieut. Becker and his men have justly earned their name of "The Strong Arm Squad."