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La Grande Is Example For Other Cities Choosing Government

CITY MANAGER, IN ANNUAL REPORT, SAYS MANY REQUESTS RECEIVED FOR INFORMATION

FACTORY WAY, MEMORIAL PARK, IMPROVEMENT OF WATER SYSTEM, REDUCTION OF TAXES, ELIMINATION OF CROSSINGS, AND MANY OTHER TASKS ARE UNDERTAKEN BY MANAGER AND CITY COMMISSION.

The annual report of the city manager of La Grande for the year 1920 was issued this week and contains a review of the work done by the city during the past year. George Garrett, city manager, in the foreword to the report, addressing the city commission, calls attention to the fact that during the past year he has received numerous requests from cities from all parts of the United States "seeking information as to the facts with regard to the Commission-Manager form of government, and in a number of instances word has come back that information forwarded to certain cities has helped to bring about the adoption of new charters under more progressive lines."

He also calls attention to the growing interest in municipal government and points out that one of the best indications of this is seen in the public schools of La Grande. Special attention has been given to this subject by both teachers and pupils. "This excellent work I hope will constantly increase until every citizen of La Grande shall have a much more intimate knowledge of the governmental workings than they now have," Mr. Garrett says.

"Time was, not so very long ago, that municipal business was supposed to be left to the elective and appointive officers, and it seemed to be deemed unnecessary that the citizen should be concerned about it, except perhaps at tax paying time. This, however, is a day of enlightenment and under commission manager government it is my earnest hope that the affairs of the public shall be understood by the people. Lack of adequate information frequently brings friction and turmoil, and therefore loss of time and money, as well as unjust criticism of the city administration."

In order to show the change wrought by the commission manager form of government Mr. Garrett prefaces his report with a general review of conditions existing at the time when the commission manager form of government was first adopted and the changes that have taken place since then. On January 1, 1911, the records of the city showed a bonded indebtedness of \$275,000 and a floating debt in outstanding city warrants of \$66,785.79. The latter account had been growing for several years with apparently no signs of diminution. It was then decided to put the city government on a business basis. The plan was to select a board of commissioners and give them power to employ a man experienced in municipal administration to manage the affairs of the city.

On October 1, 1912, the voters of the city, by a majority vote decided to cast aside the councilmanic form of city government and adopt the then comparatively new commission manager plan. By that time the floating indebtedness had grown to \$197,824.17 and the city was paying annually some \$6,500 interest on this item. City warrants were being discounted ten per cent or more and the banks were reluctant to take them at any price.

Taxes Reduced
The result of the commission manager form of government has resulted in a material reduction in the taxes levied by the city, as well as reducing the indebtedness. In the report the manager states: "The bonded indebtedness has been reduced from \$275,000.00 to \$224,000.00 with securities in the hands of the city. The sinking fund for the amount of \$24,587.20 and the tax rate from 17.5 mills to 11.8 mills. All outstanding warrants issued prior to November 1, 1920, have been paid and plans have been made whereby the city finances will be on a cash basis by May 1, 1921."

In every possible business method has been applied to the transaction of the city's business. Weekly reports on all receipts and expenditures must be made by the

various officials handling money no purchase can be made without authorization from the head of the department and the sanction of the manager. Every person in charge of a city department is specially qualified for his particular position the watchwords of the city and it is always aimed to conduct the affairs of the city in as efficient a manner as any corporation or business house conducts its business.

A commission of three members is given the legislative authority in city affairs and the administrative authority is lodged in the general manager, who is appointed by the city commission. The judicial officer of the city is the municipal judge who is appointed by the commission.

Financial Statement
The financial statement in the report of the manager shows that the assets of the city are \$624,374.97. This includes the city hall and the city building, the former being used by the county while the latter is being used by the city. The bonded indebtedness is \$224,000 while improvement liens are \$177,329.25, which is regarded not as a general obligation of the city but as a lien against the property benefited, are outstanding.

Recommendations for the estab-

lishment of a sinking fund for retirement of general bonds are made in the report. The report points out in this connection that bonds in the sum of \$25,000 were issued for constructing the city hall, used as a court house, and that no provision has been made for retiring these bonds, the bonds becoming due in 1924.

A total of \$54,812.21 in improvement bonds was retired during the year 1920. The following recommendations are made regarding the charter amendments for making these bonds a general liability of the city: "The Charter should be amended to provide that all improvement bonds shall be a general liability of the city and that these bonds shall be sold and the contractor paid in cash. It should provide that improvements could be made where the cost of the improvement did not exceed the assessed valuation of the property less all other assessments against the property. This method would place our improvement bonds in the first class and enable us to secure improvements at much less cost than under the present arrangement."

The revenue of the city was \$214,155.94 during the year 1920, a balance of \$23,994.94 remaining on hand December 31, 1920. The taxes collected during the year brought in an additional \$54,735.01. Building permits for buildings estimated to cost \$188,920.00 were issued during the year. This is greater than the estimated cost of buildings for which permits were issued in 1919, the total for that year being \$150,155.00. During 1920, 156 permits were issued while during 1919 only 86 permits were issued.

On page ten of the report an interesting comparison is made of what becomes of each \$1 paid in taxes by La Grande tax payers. In 1920 31.50 per cent went to the city of La Grande, the state and county received 35.95 per cent, and school district No. 1 received 32.55 per cent. In 1920 the city of La Grande received only 28.10 per cent while the state and county's share climbed to 38.33 per cent and the share of school district No. 1 was increased to 33.57 per cent.

The vital statistics of the health officer for the year show there were more deaths than births. Only 113 babies were born in the city during the year while 143 deaths were reported. A total of 212 cases of contagious diseases were quarantined, of which 45 were for scarlet fever, 78 small-pox, 60 influenza and 29 diphtheria.

The police department work is

characterized as "very satisfactory" by the city manager's report. The department was reorganized in August and the result was very satisfactory. The number of arrests was 211 and \$1,856.50 in fines and forfeits was collected during the first seven months of the year while during the last five months, 243 arrests

were made and \$3,062.50 in fines and forfeits was collected. Other interesting facts regarding the activities of the police department are brought out in the following paragraphs of the report: "Owing to the fact that no beggars or vagrants are allowed to remain in town overnight and to the vigilance of the police the city has been kept relatively free of robberies during the last half of the year. Of the few robberies committed the perpetrators were soon apprehended and sentenced."

"A great many reports have been received from anonymous persons stating that so-and-so was making or selling 'moonshine' whiskey. Such reports have proved of very little value in apprehending 'bootleggers.' It is easy to state that so-and-so is a bootlegger but it takes substantial evidence to prove the allegation. If the people would come to the police station and sign complaints and act as witnesses in the trials of these bootleggers many more convictions would be obtained."

"Of the eighty drunks arrested during the year the vast majority had in their possession other intoxicants than whiskey, consisting principally of vanilla extract, bay rum and patent medicines of various kinds."

We do not contend that there is no bootlegging in La Grande, but we do contend that the traffic could soon be stamped out if the proper cooperation was given to the Police Department and authority could be secured whereby the municipal judge could issue search warrants which would enable the police to search all

places in which this pernicious traffic is suspected to be carried out."

The work of the fire department is praised in the report, attention being called to the difficulties encountered especially during the summer months when wages in other lines of work are high and it was hard to keep paid men long. The paid force is now composed of the chief and two truck drivers, one of fire alarm bells in the homes of members having proven of great value in case of bringing out the volunteers at night fires.

Property insured at \$217,250.00 was menaced by fire during the year the total loss on this property being \$2,936.24. Only 14 fire calls were reported during the year, the number during 1919 having been 64.

The report of the engineering department shows that the "lack of monuments properly placed has caused the expenditure of a good many dollars without commensurate results." Monuments for use in surveying were supposed to be in place at different locations but a very few of these were found, delaying the work that required survey.

Re-survey Appropriation
In order to overcome this difficulty the report of the manager urges a re-survey of the city. In this respect it says: "An appropriation in the budget for 1921 has been made to provide for a re-survey of the city, the establishing of monuments and bench marks and the securing of data necessary for the design of a new storm sewer system. When this re-survey has been completed and the monuments properly placed the cost of surveying in the city will be about one-tenth of what

it is at the present time. So it is easy to see that the cost of this work will soon pay for itself."

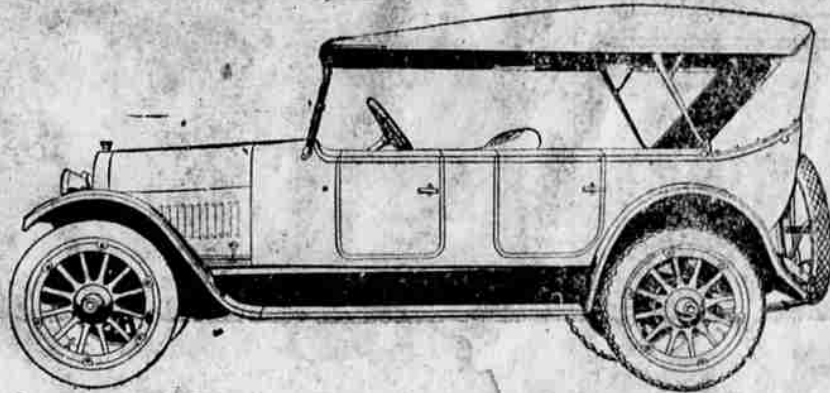
Saving in Water
Considerable space is given to the water supply of the city. Attention is called to the fact that in spite of the seriousness of the water supply question an abundance of good water has been supplied, especially during the last eight months of 1920. Regulators were installed on the flush tanks of the sanitary sewer system and this added much to the abundance of the water supply. Twenty of these tanks previously discharged 350 gallons every twenty minutes and they are now so regulated that they discharge but once every twenty-four hours, thereby saving approximately 500,000 gallons a day.

During the dry months of July and August, in spite of the railroad company using more water than ever before, this saving in water enabled the city to at all times have a plentiful supply of water for all purposes.

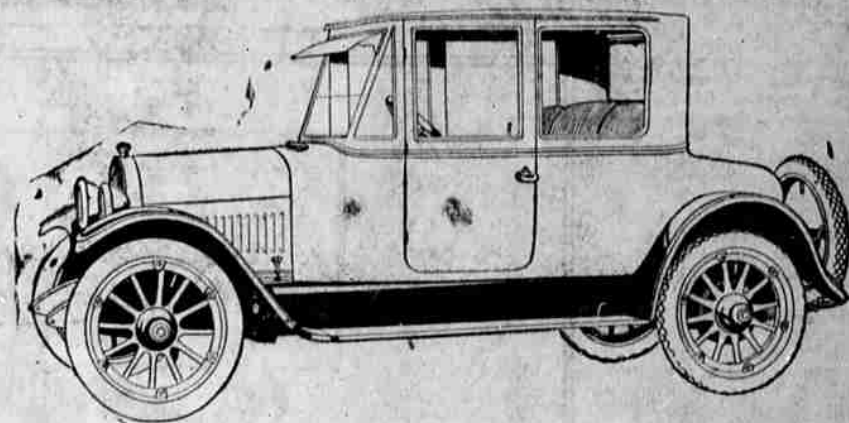
Another saving of water was effected by installing of meters in the railroad yards. The report says: "Considerable water has been saved at the railroad yards by the installation of a six-inch meter at the northwest corner of the yards and the re-location of the old four-inch meter at a point just outside of the east end of the yards. By means of this installation the total amount of water used in the railroad yards has been metered and has proved to the railroad company that millions of gallons of water have been going

(Continued on Page 4.)

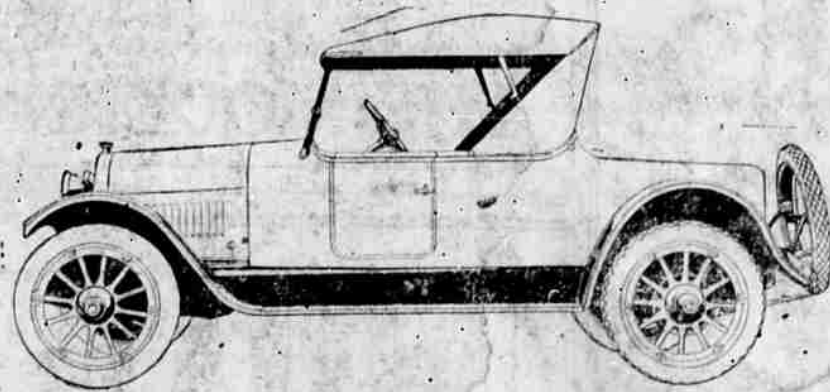
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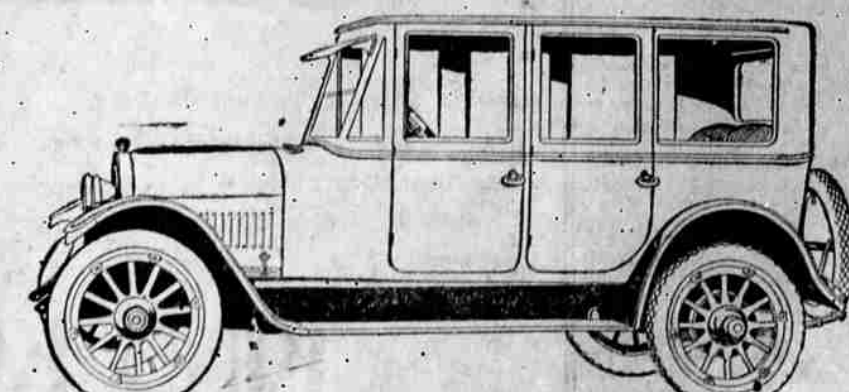
Model 43 A Touring Car



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