

Early Ordinances of Medford Relate Story of Growing City

By PEG HUTCHINSON
Mail Tribune Staff Writer
Did you know that Medford had a speeding problem in the 1880's so they lowered the speed limit for horses from ten to six miles per hour.

That one member of the Medford board of trustees voted no to granting the right of way for the Southern Pacific Railroad company track along E st. through Medford?

That it was unlawful in 1885 for any person to estab-

lish a laundry within the corporate limits of the town? All of these facts are part of the old record of Medford and are being carefully preserved in the vault in city hall. A review of the first 164 ordinances passed by the city from April 20, 1885, through April 30, 1890, highlights some of the problems of the young city.

A number of the ordinances are amendments to earlier ones while others simply repeal those on the books.

Regulation of Licenses
Many early ordinances concerned the regulation of licenses and license tax, the principle source of income for the city. These included theaters, shows, or other public exhibitions, and bowling alleys, billiard tables, pigeon-

hole tables, or other tables upon which games are played with balls and cards or to keep any barroom or drinking shop.

While some licenses cost as high as \$300, ordinance 5, passed in 1885, required that any request for a license to sell liquor within the city must be accompanied by a petition signed by a majority of the legal voters of Medford.

While many persons today complain of the difficult language used in writing legal documents, one stands in awe at the variety of subjects covered in a single ordinance prior to the turn of the century.

Included Six Crimes

Ordinance 1 for the town of Medford included six crimes and the punishment for each. They include the use of profane language, assault and battery, drawing firearms or other deadly weapons, refusing to assist the marshal, set the speed limit of 10 miles an hour for horses, and prohibits the discharging of fire arms, fire works or gunpowder within the city or setting of any bonfires.

The city fathers were worried about the sanitary conditions of the town, a check of the ordinances show. Many of the early ordinances prohibited refuse or stale water in the streets or on the sidewalks, obstructions of streets,

amended several times later.

Life had its problems in the 1885's, since one can guess what happened prior to the passing of ordinance 21. It requires the marshal and police officer to leave the keys to the town jail with the recorder before leaving town.

Create New Office

The office of night policeman, with salary at \$50 per month, was created by the board of trustees June 7, 1889.

Some of the ordinances which were enforced by the police in early Medford concerned minors loitering around the Southern Pacific depot, vagrants on the streets after 10 p.m., hogs running at large, smoking opium, bawdy houses and houses of ill fame, dog control and gaming.

Fire was always a problem in a young town, and ordinance 3 for the town of Medford regulates the construction of flues and chimneys. This was approved in 1885.

In May, 1888, the board of trustees approved the sale of \$5,000 worth of bonds for the construction of a water main for fire, sewerage, purchase of fire apparatus, and construction of a reservoir in city park. The authorized bonds were to be for 10 years at 8 per cent interest per annum.

The sewer was to start at Bear creek, go under Ninth st. to a point on the line of the O and C Railroad. It was to be fitted with fire plugs or hydrants.

Claims Creek Water
The next ordinance approved claimed water from Bear creek for the city which necessitated construction of a dam and ditch. This ditch was to run through the donation land claim of E. E. Gore. He refused to sell and ordinance 55, July 27, 1888, authorized the city to go to circuit court to have the land condemned.

In 1889, the city appointed the marshal as ex officio fire warden, who has "the direction and control of all necessary acts and measures for the putting out of any fires." This ordinance required that all buildings over one

story to have ladders or stairways leading to the roof. It also included proper building construction and how to dispose of hot ashes.

With the establishment of water works in Medford, water rates were set up in ordinance 98 in 1890. Some of the annual rates were: hotels and restaurants, \$12; mills and factors, \$24; offices and stores which did not wash down the sidewalks, \$4; residences, including irrigation, \$9, and laundries, \$9.

Spread of Smallpox

In 1888, the town of Medford was concerned with the possible spread of smallpox, so made it unlawful for any person who had been exposed to the disease to enter or loiter within the town without written permission of the sanitary committee.

The following year a board of health was established to "protect the public health and prevent the spread of dangerous and contagious diseases."

Among the regulations set up by the city and enforced by this board was the displaying of flags at homes where there were contagious diseases. The flags were: green for diphtheria; scarlet for scarlet fever; yellow for smallpox and white for other diseases. It was stated that the flag had to be at least one by one-half foot in size which "may be seen by persons passing on the street."

In 1889, the city fathers added cattle, sheep and goats to the list of animals not allowed to run at large. They also prohibited the keeping of animals within the city that were to be slaughtered.

Allowed One Runner
That same year the board of trustees allowed each hotel livery stable to employ only one runner to solicit patronage, set up a street commission, established business licenses, and approved making annual assessment of property and collection of taxes in Medford. The latter was signed Aug. 29, 1889.

The first levy was \$189,585, which was 10 mills to the dollar property assessment. Of this, 5 1/2 mills was for general municipal purposes,

the remainder to a special fund for bonded indebtedness.

On Sept. 24, 1889, the director of trustees granted a 25 year franchise and right of way to F. B. Converse, Portland, for an electric railway. The ordinance, number 90, gave him the right to construct the railway west of the O and C Railroad "through the center of such streets as he may desire to use."

Grants Building Right

The ordinance also granted the Portlander the right to "erect, operate, construct and maintain poles and wires for the conveyance of electrical currents for the pur-

pose of supplying municipal and private lighting and the furnishing of electrical power to operate such railroad."

Ordinance 73, approved Aug. 22, 1889, includes nine offenses — from not providing water and food for a tied animal (fine from \$5 to \$50) to prohibiting the burying of a dead person inside the city outside of a cemetery.

It also prohibited keeping a house for smoking of opium, mistreating animals, giving or selling liquor to minors, malicious cutting of plants, shrubs, or shade trees, loitering of minors after 10 p.m. on the city's streets, minors hopping rides

on freight trains, illegal parking of horse and buggy so it blocks traffic, not tying animal securely in the downtown area, and set the speed limit at six miles per hour.

Other early ordinances provided for jailing persons for nonpayment of fines and that all funds paid into the city's treasury be paid in money.

Residents need not worry about these ordinances. All have been repealed through the years. Little could the city fathers of the 1880's visualize Medford's downtown area in the 1930's when they approved Ordinance 38. It prohibited the planting of trees on the sidewalks.

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PET TALK

By M. I. L.

UNPAID LABORERS

Labor saving inventions are the order of the day and farmers spend large sums of money for equipment to help in their work. But many of them ignore or destroy their most valuable assistants. Leading entomologists estimate one-tenth of all the agricultural products in the United States are destroyed by insects, of which there are over 100,000 kinds. The majority of these are injurious and tests have shown that one insect-eating bird destroys 2,400 insects in a year. Many believe that if the birds had been allowed to multiply instead of being destroyed, there would be no necessity to spend thousands of dollars every year for insect poisons. Besides their value in preventing undue increase of insects, their services include devouring small rodents, in destroying seeds of harmful plants and in acting as scavengers.

The farmer who sees birds eating his cherries may not consider the crops they save by destroying insects, nor remember that it is not in summer alone, but winter also, that birds are working for him. The chickadee, nuthatch, woodpecker and other birds are searching in tree trunks and along fences for the eggs and buried larvae of insects which would hatch out millions of flying and crawling creatures that would destroy the garden, orchard and field. The robin eats but little cultivated fruit, and if water is available they will be much less apt to seek this supply from the juicy fruits. Robins do destroy wasps, spiders, grasshoppers, caterpillars and especially the March fly larvae, the pest of hay fields. The meadowlark specializes on the most injurious beetles.

These are just a few of the birds who, as unpaid day laborers, free us from the pests which would destroy much of our profits. Some farmers appreciate the value of birds and understand the necessity for active measures to insure their protection. Unsprayed wild fruit trees like mulberry, choke cherry, elder, buckthorn, dogwood and others, provide food and shelter when planted between fields, along roads and fences and near orchards where they also divert the birds from the cultivated fruit.

Of course, we all know about feeding the birds in winter when they are in great danger of extermination by starving. A feeder or two and a bird-bath attracts birds the year around and we can enjoy their company and songs. Unlike a caged bird, we know they are working for us in payment for a few crumbs, birdseed and grain of almost any kind. Food boxes can be nailed to trees, turning the backs to the prevailing winds.

Easter Cruelty
This is the season when thoughtless parents buy live baby chicks, ducklings and rabbits for children too young to know how easily the baby things can be crushed to death — making the child unhappy when he sees the little limp body. Instead give toy stuffed animals which may be mauled and need neither food, water nor a place to sleep.

Dear Father, hear and bless Thy beasts and singing birds, And guard with tenderness Small things that have no words.

New Measuring Instrument Made

Eugene — Dr. E. G. Ebbighausen, professor of physics at the University of Oregon, has constructed a new instrument for making precise measurements in astronomical research.

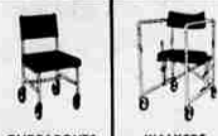
The machine is producing measurements which are four times more accurate than results obtained by older methods.

His description of the machine appears in a recent issue of the Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. Although Dr. Ebbighausen adapted techniques in use in a few other laboratories and observatories around the country, this marks the first time that such an instrument has been reported in an astronomical journal.

The instrument measures spectograms, or spectral lines, on a photographic plate. The spectral lines are produced by the light of stars as seen through a telescope. Astronomers are able to find, by measuring the lines, whether a star is moving toward or away from the earth, as well as obtaining other fundamental information about the stars. Dr. Ebbighausen is studying binary stars, two stars revolving around each other, and is able to tell from the measurements the size of the stars' orbits.

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