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Unique La

BY ANDREW J. BRAMLETT

Since the city of Kennesaw was incorporated in 1887, countless laws and ordinances have been passed by our City Council. While most are quite normal, some early laws approved by our city leaders are what we now see as unique, strange and sometimes wacky. These laws also show how our bustling community was once a quaint village.

Each of these laws was taken from City Council minutes, which were transcribed by Mark Smith in 1980. It should be noted that some of the spelling in these early minutes is unusual. For example, “authorized” can be found as “artherised,” and “prisoner” was often spelled “prisner.”

In March 1891, it became “unlawful for any person to carry or use a slingshot (commonly called an Ala Flipper)” in Kennesaw. It’s unknown why the hand-held catapult was banned, but the fine for being caught with one was \$1. In October of that year, playing baseball on the Sabbath was outlawed, and violators could be fined or imprisoned. And at a meeting on Dec. 18, the council passed a strange ordinance ending the construction of sidewalks and bridges. The city was back to building sidewalks, however, in 1895.

Following a petition started by G.L. Howell, all liquor and domestic wine were banned in July 1893 and carried a fine of \$30. At the same meeting, a new \$2 license was approved for picnic refreshments.

Two years later, cattle grazing was banned on all city property, and a 10 p.m. curfew was set for all minors. That curfew was amended in 1914 to say minors would no longer be allowed on “public streets or highways” between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. In December 1895, council members voted to move the “Callaboose” (or jail) and make it “more comfortable.”

Less than a week before Christmas 1898, the City Council passed an ordinance allowing fireworks to be launched from Christmas Eve to New Year’s Eve, “provided those firing same do not throw at horses, stock or persons.”

In March 1899, a “Public Water Closet” (restroom) was approved for the south side of town. Another “watter closet,” likely located near what is now Depot Park, was built in 1902. In December 1899, it became “unlawful hereafter for anyone to give or have a public dance upon any of the parks or public property” in Kennesaw, with fines ranging between \$10 and \$30.



Baseball games like this were banned on the Sabbath in Kennesaw in 1891. Photo courtesy of Joe Bozeman.



Several early laws that were enacted pertained to automobiles. Photo courtesy of Sara Dick.

ws of Kennesaw's Past



This 1908 view shows the buildings on Main Street. In 1911, an 8 mph speed limit was created for these dirt roads. Photo courtesy of the Kennesaw Historical Society.

In September 1900, the “Mad Dog Ordinance” was passed, making it illegal for dogs to run free throughout the town during the 20 days following the law’s passage. In January 1902, the council had to ask for wagon scales to be removed from the street in front of J.W. Bennett’s store.

On the railroad, hobos evidently became a problem. A Feb. 27, 1902, ordinance made it illegal for anyone to “jump on and off of the moving trains unless while on duty of said trains.” A similar law was passed in 1912 pertaining to “any automobile, wagon or any vehicle.”

After the J.G. Lewis Building was constructed in 1903, the council had to ask Jane Shumway to fill in a pit where the material for the structure’s bricks was excavated. The building still stands at the corner of Lewis and Main streets, but it’s unclear where this pit had been located.

In May 1904, “gambling of all kinds” was banned in the city, carrying a fine “of not less than one dollar nor more than five dollars” plus community service.

Following a March 1906 smallpox epidemic, it was decided a red flag should be placed at all houses where residents had been affected by the

disease. Additionally, signs were “posted on all the roads leading into Kennesaw ... warning all persons who have been exposed to contagious diseases” to stay away.

On Dec. 23, 1907, Benjamin Carrie and J.M. Steele were “appointed as extra police through Xmas holidays.” It’s unclear what holiday ruckus was expected that would require additional police officers.

In 1911, speeding automobiles and motorcycles had become enough of a problem for Kennesaw to enact its first speed limit. It was 8 mph. Luckily for drivers, it was increased to 15 mph in August 1914.

It is fascinating to see what laws were passed in the first 30 years of the Kennesaw City Council. The next few decades after that also had a wide variety of antiquated ordinances, but these early laws better remind us of our community’s humble beginnings.



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