

Janet Liatt

THE
MARTINSVILLE
POLICE DEPARTMENT
(THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED YEARS)

BY: J.S. WITHEROW, MARTINSVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

DATE: JULY 6, 1976

Gentlemen, gentlemen, please take a seat so that this meeting can start. The Honorable H.G. Mullins was standing at the head of the room, a pipe in one hand and the other hand held high in the air. As the chatter of talk died down so did the tone of Mr. Mullins voice. Then he began, gentlemen, please answer to the call of the roll, Mr. P.D. Spencer, "here sir"; Mr. H.C. Lester, "here", Mr. J.R. Brown, "here sir, but let me add that I would much rather be on the public square with all the other towns people celebrating this nations birthday." The Honorable Mr. Mullins looks over his glasses and speaks in a low but firm voice, yes Mr. Brown, we all would like that very much. Mr. Mullins reads on... Mr. O.P. Kearfott, "here sir", Mr. C.D. Keffer, "present Sir", Mr. B.A. Rives, "here", thank you gentlemen, now lets get down to business.....

That was July 4, 1885, the place was in the law office of Staples & Mullins and the event was the town council meeting. As for Mayor Mullins and all the councilmen it was the first council meeting for a new administration. (Later this administration was called "The Business Administration". It is believed that previous records had been kept in a rather haphazzard manner.)

Mayor Mullins and the town council were not the only ones elected in the election a month earlier, the Town of Martinsville, Virginia had elected a Town Sergeant, and this is the start of the Police Department for the Town of Martinsville as it is recorded in book number one of the Town Council Minutes.

"Mr. George F. Dyer was elected Town Sergeant on May 28, 1885 with 130 votes. Three men ran against Mr. Dyer, they were, Mr. W.H. Ivie, 85 votes, Mr. L.O. Lester, 4 votes, and Mr. William Harris, 1 vote!"¹

Mayor Mullins called Sergeant Dyer to the front of the room but Mr. Dyer did not respond to the mayors request. Mr. Dyer had for the last few minutes been thinking back to the year 1875. He was wondering what it was like for Mr. W.W. Watson, "who on June 1, 1875 submitted a bill to Martinsville for \$16.50 for his service as Sergeant. He charge \$5.00 per month for being the Martinsville police department. Mr Watson offset his charge for the \$5.00 a month compensation by \$7.50 for service of papers and \$7.60 collected in fines, then he added \$5.00 for June in advance and after adding two or three other items and deducting a couple of more wound up with a total due him of \$16.50."²

It is unknown how long Mr. Watson was Sergeant of Martinsville, or if the job was part time. No official record can be found other than a bill he submitted for the \$16.50.

Also at this July 4th meeting a police affairs committee was appointed, the members were, "O.D. Keffer, B.A. Rives and P.D. Spencer!" Doctor J. Moss Smith (who later became Mayor, and one of three Doctors who have served as Mayor of Martinsville since 1885)" was appointed health officer for one year. Captain J. Tabb was elected sanitary police to see that all lots, alleys and streets of the town was kept in a healthy condition.³ Within a few weeks it was ordered that Captain Tabb be released from all police duty until work on

the streets is completed.

On July 11, 1885 it was ordered by the town council that "all male persons over sixteen and under sixty years old shall be required to work the streets two days or pay the sum of .75¢ for each day he fails to do so."⁴ This order is unclear as to the two days a person had to work the streets, was it two days a month or two days a year. But what ever it was, the police had the job to see that this order was carried out.

As time went by it was found that one police officer was not enough to patrol the few streets that Martinsville had. So on July 3, 1886, "John F. Shelton was appointed night policeman with a salary of \$20.00 per month and fees."⁵ (the fees that policemen received was payment for serving legal papers, the more papers they served the more fee they received.)

At the meeting of the town council of the Town of Martinsville held at the Superior Court Clerk's Office in Martinsville, on August 7, 1886, "it was ordered that the election or appointment of the night police be postponed."⁶ It is not recorded why this was ordered or when it was postponed to. The record did say that the fines would be collected by the police and a report made to the council as to how much he had collected. Part of this money went to pay the salary of the police.

On July 10, 1887 the town had four men serving as night police. At this July 10th meeting of the council, W.R. Mills was appointed additional police to go into office August 1, 1887 with a salary of \$20.00 a month plus fees.

At the council meeting of August 1, 1887, held in the Mayors

office (located on Main Street near the public square) with the Mayor being Mr. J.H. Paris and the councilmen were, P.P.Watson, S. Sheffield, S.A. Anderson, J.W. Stutls, H.B. Hundley Jr, and J.D. Gregory, the police committee prescribed the duties of "Town Officers" and made the following report, which was adopted August 1, 1887.

1. "Policeman, Richard Mills, shall be known as Policeman number one. He shall remain on duty from 12o'clock AM until 12o'clock PM. He shall, while on duty, conform to all of the by-laws and regulations now in force; and, in addition thereto, it shall be his duty to light, and keep in order, the street lamps of the town; and, shall vigilantly patrol the streets while on duty."⁷
2. "Policeman, Hundley, shall be known as Policeman number two, who shall be on duty from 12o'clock PM, until 12o'clock AM; he shall, while on duty, conform to all of the by-laws and regulations now in force; he shall extinguish the street lamps, and shall vigilantly patrol the streets, while on duty"⁸
3. "The Town Sergeant shall remain on duty, subject to police regulations, until 11o'clock PM; he shall sleep at the same place every night in order that his place of sleeping may be known to the policemen, where he must always be found, should his services be required."
4. "No Sergeant or other police officer shall be allowed to attend any place of amusement (except in the discharge of his duties as an officer) during the hours he is required to

be on duty. He shall not take part, or participate in any game of pool or billards, while on duty. The penalty for violation of this regulation shall be removed from office."⁹

The police regulations of 1887 were few, but then so were the laws that the town police had to enforce.

On July 10, 1888, Richard Mills was appointed police officer for another year. Also in 1888, the town council ordered that the office of Street Commissioner of the Town of Martinsville be abolished and that the duties of the street commissioner be turned over to the Town Sergeant and Policeman of the town. The town council minutes listed the duties to be performed as this, the Sergeant and Policeman of said town, "shall discharge said duties alternately or as they may elect, provided that one of said officers shall remain on police duty while the other is in the discharge of the duties aforesaid. Said Sergeant or Policeman shall receive as compensation for the extra work thus imposed upon him, one dollar per day for the time actually and necessarily engaged in working the streets or otherwise acting in the capacity of Street Commissioner in addition to the compensation of fees to which any ordinance, concurrent with this may entitle him and twenty-five cents per day for his horse when such officer shall furnish a horse for necessary work for which the Town is nor may be liable for payment."¹⁰

In 1889 the salaries of the town policeman and Sergeant was increased so that the policeman shall receive twenty-five dollars per month plus his legal fees, and the Town Sergeant will receive

five percent of all money collected by the town on licenses and fines in addition to his legal fees.

In 1889 another first occurred in the Town of Martinsville, Officer W.R. (Richard) Mills was suspended from the town police department for being off duty during the time he was to be on duty. Officer Mills was suspended by the Mayor, however, at a called meeting of the Council for the Town of Martinsville, held in the Mayor's office on May 28, 1889, a motion was made by Councilman Brown and seconded by Councilman Jones, to reinstate Policeman Mills, and the motion was carried by a unanimous vote.¹¹

Why was Mills off duty when he was to be working? Mills worked from noon to midnight, 12 hours a day, and after he got off work he could have stopped off for a few minutes of relaxation before going home, after getting home at three or four in the morning and feeling very tired he went to bed and over slept. This making him late for work.

July 1, 1890, David H. Collins was elected to the town police and was placed under a \$250.00 bond.

Meeting of the Council on July 1, 1892, indicates that D.H. Collins was unanimously elected Policeman number one. For Policeman number two the names of W.R. Mills and D.E. Marshall were placed in nomination. W.R. Mills having received a majority of the votes cast, was declared duly elected.

January 2, 1893, the "Mayor reported that he had suspended Policeman Mills for failing to attend to his duties as Policeman number two, and was sustained in his action by a vote of Council." ¹²

October 2, 1893, Officer D.H. Collins was expelled from the police force, in consequence of a difficulty he had with Captain Johnson of the N & W Railroad. D.E. Marshall was appointed policeman for one month in place of Officer D.H. Collins. On November 8, 1893 Officer Collins was reinstated.

On November 15, 1893, the police force (two men) was told to take charge of the street hands and superentend their work and attend to having the street lamps lighted every night and keep them in repair, for this service they were to be allowed ten dollars each month.¹³

Policeman number one and Policeman number two was elected to office on July 2, 1894 with a salary of twenty-five dollars a month. They were, D.E. Marshall, number one, and Frank Stultz, number two.

The police department was told on January 7, 1895 to buy locks and lock up the oil which they kept for lighting the street lamps. Then on January 6, 1896 the policemen (still only two policemen) were told to care for the fire hose and reels, and to dry the hose and put the hose away after each use.

At the Town Council meeting of October 5, 1897, it was ordered that the duties and compensation of the two policemen of said town shall be as follows: Said policemen are required in addition to their general duties as Police Officers, to superintend alternately, or as the engineer of the town shall direct the working of the streets of the town and are also required to light the street lamps and perform all labor necessary to put the same in condition for lighting at their own expense.

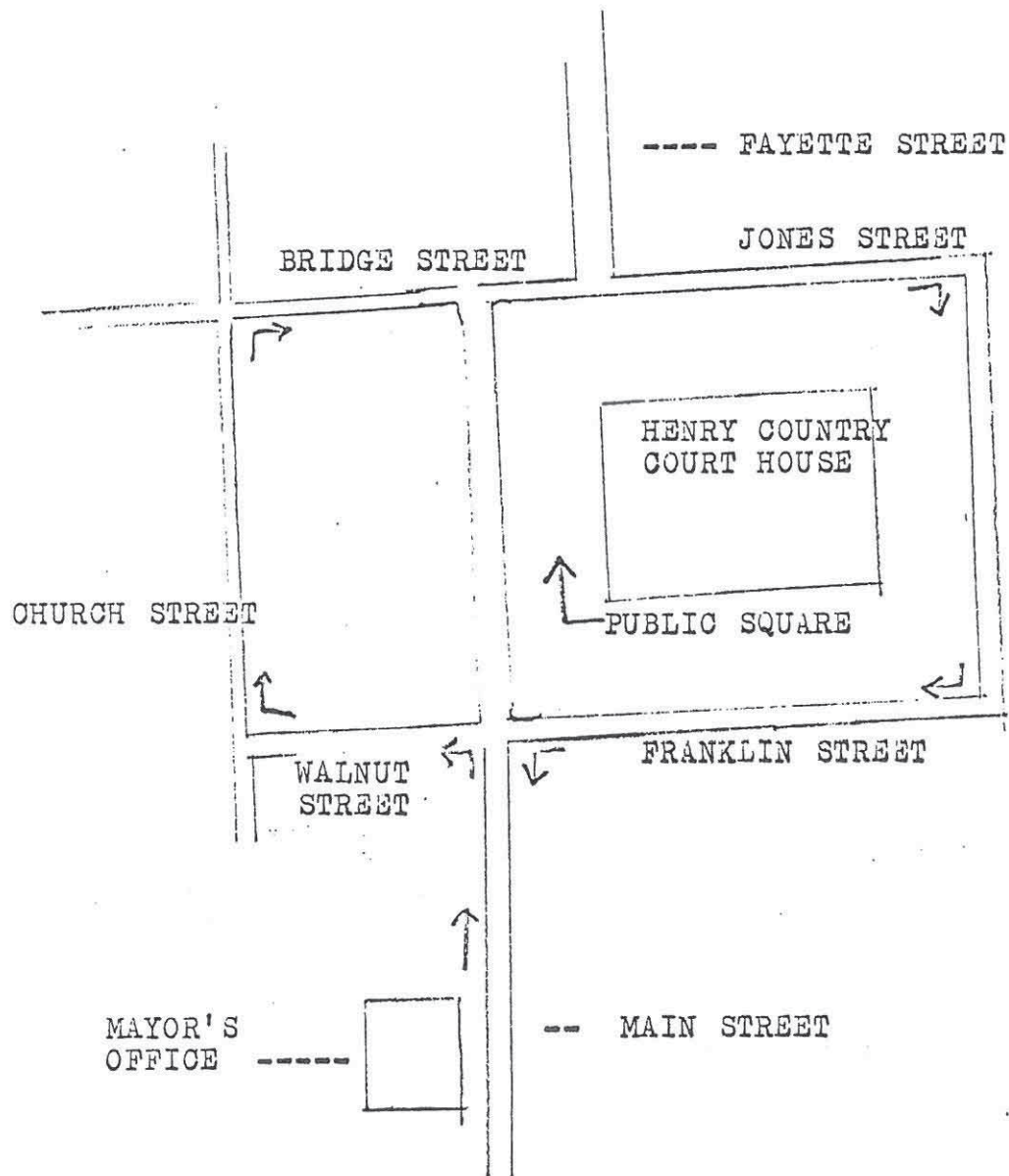
Also at this meeting of October 5, 1897, the Council ordered that one of the policemen be on active duty from eight pm to four am with a regular beat (except when called to do police duty elsewhere) as follows: "Beginning at the Mayor's Office, thence to Walnut Street, thence Walnut Street to Church Street, thence Church Street to Bridge Street, thence Bridge Street to the Public Square, thence to the corner of Fayette Street and Jones Street, thence Jones Street to Franklin Street, thence Franklin Street to the Public Square and Main Street to the Mayor's Office, the beginning."¹⁴ The day policeman shall be on duty from six am to eight pm and any fees of the Sergeant for making arrests and doing other work as policemen when collected, shall be divided equally between Policemen number one and two. The Sergeant shall not receive any compensation for performing police duty hereunder. Policemen number one and two shall receive the sum of \$30.00 per month payable monthly in addition to the fees of their office collected in money and in case of suspension, such policeman shall receive no compensation for the time suspended.¹⁵

The Town Sergeant of the Town of Martinsville shall do police work and be the Chief of Police. So on October 5, 1897, Martinsville gets it's first Chief of Police, Chief J. Moss Smith. (On July 1, 1895, J. Moss Smith was elected Sergeant after a tie with J.W. Tuggle. The mayor had to decide the winner and picked Mr. Smith. During this same election D.E. Marshall was elected Policeman number one and B.F. Stultz was unanimously elected Policeman number two.)

REGULAR BEAT OF THE TOWN POLICE

OCTOBER 5, 1897

NORTH



The first authorized purchase the new Chief of Police made was whistles and lanterns for the policemen. This was on November 5, 1897.

On July 7, 1898 the policemen's salary was reduced to twenty dollars per month, but on July 2, 1900 the police salary went back to thirty dollars a month. By February 17, 1905, each police officer of the town had to devote his entire time while on duty, to the discharge of the duties of such policemen, and will not be connected with or interested in a pool or billard room or other gaming room or house or in a restaurant. On October 24, 1906, Officer E.L. Stephens was removed from office for reasons unknown.

September 23, 1912, it was ordered that all Policemen have a telephone installed in their place of residence, for office use and without rental fee. If the telephone was to be used for personal use or for general use then the rental fee was fifty cents a month.

The Town Council minutes of July 17, 1919 indicated that the policeman who makes the best record during the year in the matter of the amount of fines collected, be designated Policeman number 1. Just a month before this order was put out to the policemen a tragedy occurred in Martinsville that was still in the minds of the men on the police force, as well in the minds of the people in the town. On Saturday afternoon, June 14, 1919, at about 3:30, "a cold blooded and atrocious murder was committed in the ravine just below the old Lester tobacco factories north of the Danville & Western railroad track, when Policeman George F. Carter was killed by thugs while he was on detective service to apprehend gamblers."¹⁶ The two killers, Sam and Ewell Martin had used Officer Carter's gun to kill him with, and it was reported that Officer Carter had put up a "fierce struggle" with his killers

and he also put up a "brave fight for his life".

Sam and Ewell Martin was transfered from the Martinsville jail to the Danville, Virginia jail. Later when the Martin's made bail, they left Martinsville and the State of Virginia. It was some twenty to thirty years later that Chief Stultz went to Massachusetts and returned with Sam & Ewell Martin. The two Martin's stood trail in Martinsville and was given ten to fourteen years for the murder of Officer George F. Carter.

On October 12, 1920, a request was made for the "employment of a traffic policeman and the purchase of a motorcycle for his use".¹⁷ This request was referred to the Police Committee, with instructions to suggest a suitable man for such employment and to submit their recommendation as to the purchase of said motorcycle. A short time later, Martinsville got it's first traffic squad and first motorcycle.

On April 12, 1921, it was ordered that the room adjoining the Mayor's Office be used as the Police Headquarters. Later in 1921, on September 14, the council minutes indicated that in case of the "conviction of any person of unlawfully transporting, selling or having in possession, intoxicating liquors within the Town of Martinsville, or the jurisdiction thereof, the policeman or policemen arresting such person shall be allowed and paid a compensation of \$25.00, payable out of the Town Treasury, in addition to the fees of such officers now provided by law; provided that such additional compensation shall not be paid in those cases where the amount of intoxicating liquors found in possession of, or being transported and sold by such person, is

less than five gallons, except that in aggravated cases in which such less amount of liquor is involved, on the recommendation of the Mayor and approval thereof by the Council, such additional compensation may be paid".¹⁸

The duty of the Police Committee in June 25, 1923, was, with the approval of the Mayor, to formulate rules and regulation for the performance of the duties of police officers, including the designation of the hours of duty for each policeman and the "beats" or territory to be patrolled by them, the same to be reported to the Mayor and to the Council

The fee system was abolished on June 29, 1936, at that time Martinville had nine Patrolmen, three outside Sergeants, one inside Sergeant and the Chief for a total of fourteen men on the police force.

On June 6, 1939 a new motorcycle was purchased for the police department because the old motorcycle was worn out and too dangerous for the men to ride. The 1939 model Harley-Davidson "80" was purchased from J.R. Bolling Co. of Winston-Salem, N.C. The price of the new motorcycle was \$520.15, less \$225.00 for the old bike, for a total cost to the town of \$295.15.

The Police Commission, on October 3, 1939, made the recommendation to City Council "that an allowance of \$50.00 per officer, per year, be granted to the Police Officers of the City, for a trial period of one year from October 1, 1939 to October 1, 1940, to be used to purchase uniform suits, caps and overcoats."¹⁹ The recommendation was continued for further consideration as the City Council was of the opinion that the city could not afford to furnish uniforms since the expense was

not contemplated in the budget for that year. Later the Council set aside \$2.50 each month for each policeman and fireman in the service of the City, to be placed in a separate fund, to be known as a uniform fund. Each year the men can draw from the fund \$30.00 to buy uniforms, this was in October, 1939.

On December 19, 1939, a resolution was made by City Council that all bicycles had to be registered at the Police Department at a fee of twenty-five cents and was effective as of January 1, 1940.

It was noted in the City Council Minutes of March 5, 1940, that the Police Department was given the authority to kill and dispose of all stray dogs and unclaimed and unlicensed dogs in the city and be provided with a gun and ammunition which would be suitable for this work. (The Police Department had requested this job be given to them as they would get \$2.50 for each dog killed and disposed of and they wanted to apply the money to supplies and equipment)

June 12, 1940, the Police Department was appropriated \$140.00 for the purchase of guns and ammunition that would enable them to have target practice.

June 18, 1940, a state wide police teletype communication service was installed in the Police Department at a rate of \$27.50 per month. (The cost of our communication system of today is around \$180.00)

By February 18, 1941 the police department had two police cars and two motorcycles.

On May 5, 1942, the police department was authorized to have photographs taken for identification purposes of all persons arrested.

So on July 14, 1942 the police department was authorized to purchase and set up a camera, flood lights and other necessary equipment, to be obtained second hand if possible at a cost not to exceed \$125.00. This camera is still at the Police Department today.

Before 1944, the police cars did not have two way radios, so to find out if you were needed the men would drive by the police station about every thirty minutes or when every they made their rounds, and see if the red light, that was on the outside of the building was on. If the red light was on the officers would have to go inside to find out what the call was about and be told where to go. So on February 22, 1944, the Police Commission, at a special meeting, considered the purchase of two way radios for the department. On March 7, 1944, the General Electric Company said that they would furnish and install a base station and two mobil radios for \$1967.00.

Base pay for a police officer on March 11, 1947 was \$150.00 per month, and the salary for all other policemen was ten percent more than base pay.

It was suggested on December 11, 1947 that the police commission be abolished but the suggestion was turned down. Then in February of 1949, the City went to a City Manager form of Government, and on March 1, 1949, the Police Commission was abolished.

The 1960 City budget indicates that Martinsville had a total of thirty Policemen, three clerks, and five school guards. The 1970 City budget indicates a total of thirty-eight policemen, three clerks, and eight school guards. And to-day the Police Department has a total of forty-seven policemen, three clerks, ten school guards, and two police aids.

Now on July 6, 1976, as I patrol the streets of Martinsville, I can't help but to look back and wonder what it was like for the men on the police force. Here I am today, driving a 1976 Dodge police car, but what was it like on April 11, 1922 for the men on the force, for that was the day the department got it's first police car, yes, you are right, a Dodge car to be used in the apprehension of criminals. Or what was it like for Officer John D. Holt, who, according to the town council minutes, was recently severely wounded while in the discharge of duty, is granted leave of absence from duty, without pay for one month, that was on January 15, 1929. How about December 9, 1930, that is when the police department traded a Ford Touring car with the Acme Motor Company for a Ford Sedan that was recently turned in to the Acme Motor Company by Burch-Hodges-Stone Inc. for a difference of \$75.00. Then on December 12, 1931, the Police Department recieved from Self Motor Company a 1931 Chevrolet Sedan at the price of \$740.00. The old police car was traded in and the Town had to pay a total amount of \$400.00.

Boy! things have really changed from the good old days, or were they!!!

MARTINSVILLE MAYORS

1885 to 1976

Henry G. Mullins	July 4, 1885 - December 19, 1885
J.R. Brown	December 31, 1885- January 3, 1886
C.B. Bryant	January 3, 1886- May 29, 1886
J.H. Paris	July 3, 1886 - July 10, 1888
Will Scott	July 16, 1888 - January 8, 1890
J.W. Carter	January 8, 1890 - June 11, 1890
Samuel Morgan	June 27, 1890 - June 30, 1892
J.R. Gregory	July 1, 1892 - September 19, 1893
J.B.O. Ambrose	October 2, 1893 - June 25, 1894
Samuel Morgan	July 2, 1894 - June 3, 1902
George L. Gravely	June 3, 1902 - July 10, 1908
John W. Carter	September 11, 1908 - June 8, 1912
Thomas G. Burch	September 12, 1912 - April 14, 1914
O.M. Hart	April 21, 1914 - August 27, 1914
H.B. Hundley	September 8, 1914 - August 8, 1916
G.A. Brown	August 8, 1916 - January 27, 1936
J.R. Walker	January 27, 1936 - August 21, 1936
J.W. Booker, Jr	September 1, 1936 - August 24, 1948
Nick Prillaman	September 3, 1948 - August 22, 1950
J.R. Walker	September 1, 1950 - August 26, 1952
Rieves S. Hodnett	September 3, 1952 - August 28, 1956
Fred V. Woodson	September 1, 1956 - April 28, 1957
John W. Stultz	May 3, 1957 - August 31, 1960
J. Frank Wilson	September 1, 1960 - August 31, 1966
Fred T. Renick	September 1, 1966 August 31, 1972
Francois T. West	September 3, 1972 - August 31, 1974
Harry Lee Boaz	September 3, 1974 - August 31, 1976

NOTES

1. Town Council Meeting Minutes, Book #1, page 27, dated: July 4, 1885
2. Martinsville Daily Bulletin, July 1939 Edition, Article by: Mr. H.N. Dyer, Chairman, Finance Committee, Martinsville City Council.
3. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 31, Dated: July 4, 1885.
4. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 31, Dated: July 4, 1885.
5. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 53, Dated: July 3, 1886.
6. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 60, Dated: August 7, 1886.
7. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 90, Dated: August 1, 1887.
8. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 91, Dated: August 1, 1887.
9. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 92, Dated: August 1, 1887.
10. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 127, Dated: July 10, 1888.
11. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 162, Dated; May 28, 1889.
12. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 347, Dated: January 2, 1893.
13. Town Council Minutes, Book #1, Page 390, Dated: November 15, 1893.
14. Town Council Minutes, Book #2, Page 308, Dated: October 5, 1897.
15. Town Council Minutes, Book #2, Page 309, Dated: October 5, 1897.
16. The Henry Bulletin, June 20, 1919 Edition, Vol. 36 No. 51.
17. Town Council Minutes, Book #5, Page 527, Dated: October 12, 1920.
18. Town Council Minutes, Book #6, Page 20, Dated: September 14, 1921.
19. Town Council Minutes, Book #10, Page 79, Dated: October 3, 1939.