

Livestock, Fruit, and Liquor Stores

By Carol Bruce

This is another in an occasional series of columns that looks at some of the interesting—and sometimes amusing—insights into Herndon’s past that can be found in the old Town Council minute books.

From the very beginning, livestock were a topic of considerable interest among the Town’s elected officials. On April 26, 1879, the Council adopted regulations that made it unlawful “to allow horses, mules, hogs, cows, and ox to run at large and graze on sidewalks or highways of the Town.” In furtherance of the cause, two months later—on June 7—it was announced that the first pound for animals picked up running at large had been completed, at a cost of \$4.40 for labor and materials. Impounded animals apparently were there on the honor system, however, as there was no padlock. That situation was remedied a year later, on April 24, when said lock was purchased for the princely sum of \$0.65.

Herndon’s leaders were still focused on the four-legged inhabitants of the Town at the dawn of the 20th century. On August 22, 1910, an ordinance was passed that said no one could ride or drive a horse or any other animal on the streets of the Town at a speed above eight miles per hour. (We suspect the horses were pleased.)

Dogs weren’t overlooked when it came to regulations, either. On November 13, 1880, a tax on dogs was levied—\$0.75 per year for each male dog, and \$1.50 per year for each female dog. And the consequence for failure to pay was pretty draconian: If the owner failed to pay the tax, the sergeant or collector was empowered to “kill any dogs for which tax remained delinquent after the second request for payment.”

Animals weren’t the only concern of early Town Councils. On April 12, 1879, the Council passed a general ordinance for the Preservation of Order and Property. Among other things it declared that stealing fruit and garden produce was a crime.

And, finally: It’s nothing new for members of Council, and citizens alike, to participate in highly charged debates about the issues of the day. But recent debates may well pale in comparison to what unfolded when, in 1936—two years after the repeal of Prohibition—the Town leaders considered allowing the Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Board to open a liquor store in Herndon.

The debate played out over several months, beginning on January 15, when a resolution was adopted that invited the ABC Board to establish such a store. That didn’t sit well with some of the citizenry, however, and at the next meeting a petition was introduced that opposed such a move. In response, on February 10, a new resolution rescinding the invitation was passed. Councilmember Seymour Robb, who had cast the sole vote against the resolution, promptly resigned in protest.

To the Mayor and Town Council:

I hereby tender my resignation as a member of the Town Council of the Town of Herndon effective immediately.

I wish to point out that my relations with each member have been most pleasant. My resignation is presented after careful consideration and is offered not in a spirit of anger or disappointment or fear of criticism, but because I fell [sic] that my efficiency as a member of the Council is now useless. I have no wish to remain as a member under these conditions.

Robb clearly was not the only person in Town who favored the ABC store. Subsequent to that February 10 vote, Councilmembers Gibson, Linkins, and Wiley—all of who had voted against liquor sales—were hung in effigy in the center of Town.

Once again, thank you to Town Clerk Viki Wellershaus and her staff for their assistance in compiling much of the information we've used in these columns.