

## Law and Order in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Herndon

### *A Glimpse of Early Town Ordinances*

By Barbara Glakas

The Town of Herndon was incorporated in 1879. One of the early actions of the first Town Council was to start drafting a set of Town ordinances.

Not surprising, some of these ordinance addressed taxes, but many of them addressed behavior, clearly stating expectations that the Council felt would maintain good law and order in Town. Outlined below are a few examples.

- **FAST DRIVING**: “It shall not be unlawful for any person to ride or drive any horse or mule on any street or highway within the corporation at a rate of speed exceeding six miles per hour.”
- **TREES**: “It shall be unlawful for any person or person to girdle, break, bend, wound, or in any manner damage the trees ... within this corporation.”
- **PARKING AND SIDEWALK CONTROL**: “It shall not be lawful for any person to tie in any manner or fasten any horse, mule, or any other animal to any lamp-post or tree, or to drive or lead any horse, mule or other animal, or cart, wagon or other vehicle on any sidewalk with the corporation.”
- **DISORDER**: “It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to congregate at the corners of streets, or in any street, avenue or highway, or on the steps or porticoes of any building, public or private, and be engaged in loud and boisterous talking, or to insult or to make rude or obscene comments or remarks on passersby, or to crowd, or obstruct, or to incommode the footway or entrance to any building or to prevent the free and uninterrupted passage thereof.”
- **DISTURBING RELIGIOUS SERVICES**: “It shall be unlawful for any person to molest or disturb any religious exercise or other proceedings in any church or place of worship or in any public building used for said purposes.”
- **VANDALISM**: “It shall be unlawful for any person to cut, break or deface in any way, or cover or rub with filth or excrement of any kind any public or private [property] or to deface any public notices within the Corporation.”

- MISSILES AND GUNS: “It shall be unlawful for any person to throw any missile in any street or public place ... nor to fire any gun, pistol, cannon or other firearm in any street or within one hundred yards of any building within this Corporation, except to protect himself or property.”
- CONCEALED WEAPONS: “If any person carry about his person any pistol, dirk, razor, bowie knife, or other dangerous or deadly weapon, he shall be fined from five to twenty dollars, and in default of payment thereof, he shall be confined in jail, not more than three months.”
- TRESPASSING: “It shall not be lawful for any person to walk, ride or drive across the land owned or leased by another without his consent.”
- PROFANITY AND INDECENCY: “If any person shall be guilt of any profanity or the use of any obscene language or any public lewdness or indecency, whether by words or actions in any public place, or expose himself or herself in public view in any indecent manner, or shall exhibit publically any indecent painting, engraving, print, sculpture or other representation ... he shall be liable to a fine of not less than one and not more than ten dollars for each and every offence.”
- STEALING FROM GARDENS: “It shall be unlawful for any person to take fruit or garden or farm produce from any farm or garden within the limits of this Corporation except by permission.”
- GAMES: “It shall not be lawful for any person to use a bean shooter or to throw any missile in any street or public place .... The playing of marbles on any sidewalk is prohibited ... It shall be non-lawful for any person or persons to play the game of football or to play bandy, or shindy, or any other game by which a ball, stone, or other substance is thrown, or propelled by any stick can or bat in any street or highway within the corporation.”
- FALSE ALARMS: “If any person shall willfully make or cause to be made any false alarm, or shall cry fire, or ring any bell, or make any bonfire with a view of creating or causing any false alarm, or shall in any way aid or abet in so doing, he shall be liable to a fine of not less than one nor more than five dollars.”
- HEDGES: “It shall not be lawful for any person to set a thorn hedge within two feet of the line of any sidewalk within the corporation.”

- GRAZING ANIMALS: “It shall be unlawful for any person to permit any horse, mule, colt or hog to graze on any of the sidewalks or highways of the Town ... or for any ox, bull, or young cattle to graze or run at large on any portion of the improved limits of this Corporation.”
  
- SWINE AND DANGEROUS ANIMALS: “The keeping of swine and the keeping of animals of a wild and dangerous nature, such as lions or tigers, is prohibited with the town.”

Now let’s all hop on our mules and meet at the Depot for a game of bandy!

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*About this column: “Remembering Herndon’s History” is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon’s past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of “Remembering Herndon’s History” columns is available on the Historical Society website at [www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org).*

*The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society’s website at [www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org), and the Historical Society’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.*

*Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact [HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com).*