

NEARBY HISTORY:

Old city ordinances

*Have a dog? Pay \$2. Avoiding street duty? Pay \$3.
Don't forget to store gun powder outside city limits.*

Compared to the county seats of York, Chester and Lancaster, the town of Rock Hill was a late-comer of more than a half century.

A check of the leadership of each town shows Rock Hill leaders as younger, and perhaps more important, because they were not natives but came from different towns in the Carolinas, they were able to accept new ideas.

Whatever the reason, by the 1900s, Rock Hill was widely recognized as more progressive.



Louise Pettus

In 1914, when the city council published its "Codification of Ordinances of the City of Rock Hill," the city had a mayor, a city council, police and fire departments and appointments such as city engineer, a city attorney, a medical officer and three commissioners of public works along with other city officers. The first 24 pages of the city code spelled out the functions and responsibilities of each department.

Page 25 through Page 191 are spelled out in remarkable detail city codes that governed the daily life of the ordinary resident.

Admittedly, by choosing those ordinances that are most different, or even laughable, we are presenting an extreme view but still, they show us the differences that time has wrought.

In 1914, by ordinance, each Rock Hill downtown business was required to erect at least one iron hitching post in front of its business. To each hitching post there must be a chain less than 18 inches in length.

No wooden building could be erected within 100 yards of the business section (no doubt a reaction to several disastrous downtown fires).

There was a dog tax of \$2 per year. When the tax was paid, the dog's owner received a dog collar that the dog must wear. All captured dogs without collars would be auctioned. If there was no bid, the dog was destroyed.

The wood-chopping ordinance stated that it was unlawful for any person to cut or saw firewood on any Rock Hill

street.

No automobile (and there were few in 1914) was to exceed 8 mph when driving through a crossing or over a bridge or while driving on a sharp curve.

No home was to have pigs or hogs unless each had 40 square feet and not more than one in each 10,000 square feet. Also, each hog had to have a ring in the nose.

The city built a "powder magazine" (a place to store gun powder or dynamite). Any person who had 50 pounds or more had to store it outside the city limits (the limits were 2 miles in all directions from a spot on Main Street downtown).

There was a nine-page list of license taxes for various occupations. This included annual fees for salesmen of sewing machines, \$5; street peddler of ice cream, \$20; broker of stocks and bonds, \$25; lawyer, first year of practice, \$10, after first year, \$15; penny slot machines, \$5 a year each; and the topper - clairvoyant or palmist (fortune teller), \$10 per day or \$50 per year.

No gate could open outward if fronting a public street.

No chicken fighting was permitted.

Druggists were required to keep books on physician's prescriptions. Specifically, this was applied to cocaine and eucaine, which were illegal unless prescribed.

There was a fine of \$5 or 10 days imprisonment for spitting or throwing of fruit peelings or rinds on the pavement and a fine of \$100 or 30 days in prison for anyone who produced or exhibited moving pictures of prize fights.

Those who couldn't pay fines became labor for the city. The most common labor was street cleaning.

The city recognized that, in any case, the streets had to be kept clean and safe. So, the town could require all male inhabitants of the city, except firemen, to work on the streets up to four days a year or pay \$3 per year. If the \$3 was not paid, the man was imprisoned for a period not to exceed 30 days (and during that time be compelled to work on the streets.)

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