

The 1910's

On Friday night, May 26, 1911, the San Luis Obispo City Council met at 7:00 PM to conduct some very important business. Here is an excerpt from that meeting:

"Ordinance #5, New Series, establishing the police department, providing for its organization and its appointment of its officers was read. Moved by J. C. Hill, seconded by Pastarata, that Ordinance #5, News Series be adopted. Motion was carried by the following vote: Ayer, Luchessa, Pastarata, J. C. Hill, and Geo Hansen.

On the same night in history

"The application of A. Thompson and W. F. Cook for the office of Chief of Police was read. Commissioner of Public Health and Safety placed in nomination Mr. W. F. Cook for Chief of Police. There were no further nominations. Nominations were closed. Moved by A. Luchessa, to appoint W. F. Cook Chief of Police by the council. Motion carried."

Thus the department and chief were appointed and a new era of law enforcement began.



Chief William Franklin Cook, 1911

During the early 1900's, while the suffrage movement made headlines almost every day and women were advised not to get too used to modern conveniences, Chief Cook had some interesting experiences. The saloons continued to be a source of contention and many were trying to close them down because of how they corrupted genteel society.

To show an example of the new Chief's adventures (or misadventures), one article in the Daily Telegram in August 1911 sums it up. It's titled, "Police in Fast Tussle." The subtitle is, "Belligerant (sic) Dishwasher Runs Amuck and Injures Chief's Proboscis."

"A bloody nose received by Chief of Police Cook, a lively tussle on Higuera Street in front of the city hall, and the furnishing of considerable amusement to numerous pedestrians were the features of the capture of Fonta Felicia, a dishwasher in Chiesa's Restaurant during the noon hour today. Felicia, who was wrestling under the overpowering influence of a supercargo of alcohol, was apprehended by Cook for fast riding and his subsequent attempt to escape from the clutches of the law precipitated the melee in which the Chief's nose was injured.

"The dishwasher, an old offender, was riding a horse bareback up and down Higuera Street at break-neck speed, in a most approved Wild West fashion, at the risk of his own neck and to the jeopardy of passersby, when commanded to halt by Cook. He paid no attention to the order but fortunately, or unfortunately, his horse slipped and threw him. He was immediately taken into custody by the Chief.

"Then the fun started. While Cook was unlocking the rear door to the city jail, his prisoner twisted from his grasp and made a run for it, closely pursued by Cook. He was headed off in front of the building by Kirk Hardie, driver of the chemical wagon (Ed. Note: the hose and chemical wagon used to combat fires), and the two officers and their prisoner rolled over the sidewalk in a heap, much to the entertainment of a rapidly gathering crowd. In the fracas, Mr. Cook encountered Mr. Hardie's elbow with his nose, badly damaging that organ.

"After being safely lodged behind the bars, Felicia hurled an impersonal challenge at the officers in general, for which he was promptly collared by Hardie and locked in a dark cell. The man is an old offender, having been arrested on August 8th by Hardie for threatening to 'clean out' the local creamery force. He was released on this occasion by the payment of a \$5 fine."

