

EARLY VILLAGE ORDINANCES

The following is not intended to be a comprehensive list of pre-1926 ordinances, but hopefully includes the most important local laws. Note that most of these ordinances were repealed with the recodification of Village ordinances in 1926.

The first six ordinances were passed by the Village Council on April 6, 1887. Considering that there were only 350 people in the community and most of them were farmers, it is quite a remarkable list of can't-dos.

The **first ordinance** was far-reaching:

- Provision was made for a Justice of the Peace.
- The constable was empowered to arrest people for intoxication or any disturbance of the peace or violation of the law. The constable also had the power to command any citizen to help him in his duties, with a \$10 fine if you refuse.
- Outlawed was breach of the peace and disorderly conduct, lurking, lying in wait to pilfer, sweeping empty railroad cars, noise, riot, disturbance, improper diversion, open or notorious drunkenness or intoxication.
- It was also against the law to appear in a state of nudity, or in a dress not belonging to his or her sex; indecent exposure; obscene or filthy acts; lewd, indecent, immoral, or insulting conduct; exhibiting or offering to see indecent, obscene, or lewd books, pictures; performing in any indecent, immoral or lewd play.

Hard to know what to make of this: the **second ordinance** continues, outlawing disorderly houses, houses of ill fame, madams, and common prostitutes, disorderly or ill-governed houses, dishonest conversation, assignation, tippling, revelry, rioting, or disturbance. Madams would be fined \$25 to \$100 or up to 90 days in jail. Johns were to be fined \$5 to \$10 plus costs, 30 days, or both. Landlords of such houses were subject to fines of \$25 to \$100 or 90 days in jail.

The **third ordinance** went after gaming and gamblers, outlawing cards, dice, gaming tables, and gaming devices, subject to a \$100 fine or 90 days in jail.

The **fourth ordinance** of the new village outlawed loitering about saloons, taverns, dramshops, or houses of ill fame, with a fine of \$30 plus costs or 30 days in jail.

The **fifth ordinance** was about contracts and contractors working for the village.

The **sixth ordinance** had to do with nuisances. Anyone engaging in trade that is dangerous, hurtful, unwholesome, offensive, or unhealthy had 48 hours to get out of town. People with infectious diseases were included in the list of nuisances.

1891: Minneapolis Land and Investment Co.

On April 8, 1891, an ordinance was passed Authorizing and Regulating Street Railways in the Village St. Louis Park. This ordinance gave the Minneapolis Land and Investment Co. (T.B. Walker, President) the right to construct, operate, and maintain a street railway. The franchise specified that the line must be built within two years and was to use no steam for locomotion. It was to haul no freight trains and was to charge only five cents per ride for fares, and free transfers were to be provided. After dark the trolley was to carry lights and was not to travel faster than 25 miles per hour. It was to run a sufficient number of cars to take care of passengers. The ML&I accepted the grant on June 6, 1891.

On July 3, 1891, the council passed two ordinances regulating the provision of electricity and gas. One authorized, permitted, and regulated a plant for providing electric light, heat and power, to be provided by the Minneapolis Land & Investment Co. ML&I was granted the right to string wires for carrying and transmitting electric currents for the supply of light, heat, and power. Apparently only the streetcar was wired at that time. In 1911 the electricity franchise was given to Minneapolis General Electric Company.

The other July 3 ordinance regulated the manufacture and supply of gas by granting the Minneapolis Land & Investment Co. the right to manufacture gas, to be made from coal and other materials. ML&I was also granted the right to lay gas mains and pipes. But a 1927 ordinance grants the right to manufacture, sell and/or distribute gas for heating, illuminating and other purposes in the Village and to use the streets, avenues and alleys for that purpose.

1892

Ordinance No. 15 dated February 5, 1892 requiring a license in order to “sell, barter, give away or otherwise dispose of spirituous, vinous, fermented, malt, or intoxicating liquor.” The ordinance did not apply to druggists or licensed pharmacists.

An ordinance dated September 2, 1892 regulated peddlers and hucksters. This was apparently an ongoing problem, as several similar ordinances were subsequently passed on the same topic.

On December 5, 1892, the Village Council passed an ordinance prohibiting “the erection or maintenance of hospitals or pesthouses within St. Louis Park for the treatment, harboring, or care of persons sick from infectious or contagious diseases and prohibiting the sending, bringing or coming into [SLP] of persons so afflicted.” This amounted to closing the barn door after the cows got out, as the notorious Minneapolis Pest House had come to town in 1884.

1894

Section 14 of the Village ordinance states: “While cars are turning corners or crossing bridges, the horses or mules attached shall not be driven faster than a walk.”

1898

A July 3, 1898 ordinance regulated billiard rooms. A license was \$5/year, and poolhalls had to close at midnight and all day on Sunday.

A July 1898 ordinance required peddlers to register.

On August 5, 1898, the St. Louis Park Village Council passed an ordinance authorizing the construction of bicycle paths/roads on South Lake Street and South Minnetonka Blvd. The speed limit was 10 mph, with fines of \$10 to \$50 or up to 30 days in jail. On May 23, 1899, St. Louis Park passed an ordinance prohibiting bicycle riding on the sidewalks (which were probably boards). Another ordinance passed on June 11, 1900 also provided for the construction and maintenance of cycle paths and required riders to obtain a 50 cent license.

1902

On August 1, 1902, a law was passed preventing animals and poultry from running at large, providing for the impounding of such animals and establishing a dog pound. The ordinance also prohibited horses, sheep, goats, swine, mules, geese, or poultry from herding or grazing in the streets. Owners would be fined 50 cents for each animal impounded. The pound keeper was to hold an animal for four days, and if not redeemed, authorized to sell the animal to the highest bidder.

On August 1, 1902, the Park Village Council passed an ordinance regulating the speed of “automobiles, autocars, or other vehicles of pleasure or burden propelled by electricity, steam, gasoline, compressed air, or other similar motive power.” The 10 mile speed limit was enforced with a \$50 fine or up to 30 days in jail.

Ordinances were also passed regarding the licensing and regulation of intoxicating liquor and the speed of automobiles. Ordinances regarding these two issues were passed and amended often.

1904

In April 1904, an ordinance was passed to license dogs: \$2 for dogs and “spladed bitches,” and \$4 for “non-spladed bitches.” The Council was to appoint a dog catcher each May. It would cost the owner \$1 to retrieve his dog, with the fees going to the dog catcher. If the dog was not retrieved after 3 days, it would be sold or put to death by chloroform.

1909

An ordinance was passed punishing vagrants and street beggars, which may or may not give us some indication of conditions in the Park.

1911

In March 1911, the Village Council passed an ordinance granting permission to the Minneapolis General Electric Company “to erect and maintain poles, wires, masts, and other fixtures in streets, alleys, and public grounds in the Village of St. Louis Park for the purpose of furnishing light, power, and heat by the means of electricity.” The 30-year franchise was to provide electric streetlights and to wire private homes with power generated by coal at its Riverside power plant. The Council had voted to discontinue all street lighting in May 1910.

1912

A need was identified for a new ordinance dealing with peddlers. The idea was to get them registered and keep them moving, hopefully out of town.

1917

On February 2, 1917, an ordinance was passed “providing for the manner of holding and conducting village elections in the Village of St. Louis Park and providing for the use of the so-called ‘Australian Ballot System,’ penalties for the violation thereof and duties of candidates and providing for the manner of holding an conducting village elections in the Village of St. Louis Park and providing for the use of the so-called ‘Australian Ballot System,’ and penalties for the violation thereof and duties of candidates, and registration days.”

On July 18, 1917, the Village Council passed “an ordinance defining and punishing vagrancy.” Instead of being a loafer with no money, this political definition of a vagrant was anyone who taught or advocated “crime or violence as a means of accomplishing industrial or political ends.” The same goes for anyone teaching or advocating the violation or disregard of any duty or obligation imposed by any statute of Minnesota or the U.S. In the third section, a vagrant was one who taught or advised citizens that they “ought not aid or assist in the United States in prosecuting or carrying on war with the public enemies of the United States.” These were the days after the Russian Revolution, and fear of communism made people a little crazy. This culminated in 1919 with the "Palmer Raids," which generally deprived a lot of people of their civil rights. Punishment for violating this ordinance was no more than 90 days.

1918

On May 16th, the Village Council passed an ordinance “relative to Fire Works and Discharge of Fire Arms Within the Limits of the Village...” No person shall...explode, burn, or fire off, any rocket, firecracker, roman candle or other species of fireworks or pyrotechnic display.... Nor shall any person fire off, discharge or explode any gun, pistol, or other weapon within the Village limits.” Special permission could be granted to fire a salute or display of fireworks. The ordinance made it clear that the use of a gun in defense of person, property, or family was exempt.

An ordinance passed on January 16, 1918, set poolroom hours at 8 am to 11 pm, closed on Sunday.

1919

On August 21, 1919, an ordinance was passed “prohibiting persons under 16 years of age from being on the streets, alleys or public places in the Village of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, at night, after the hours of 9:00 pm, standard time. The Village Marshal, Constable, or policeman were there to enforce it, and violations brought a fine of \$10 plus costs.

1920

On August 5, 1920, the Village passed a comprehensive ordinance that spelled out the rules of the road. It required mufflers and turn signals, and required the use of dimmer lights. Speed limits were 10 mph on built up portions of the village or where traffic was congested; 15 mph in residential areas, and 25 mph for highways. Doctors on call were exempt. The ordinance included horse-drawn buggies, carts, drays, wagons, hackney coaches, omnibus, taxicabs, carriages, buggies, motorcycles, automobiles, tricycles, bicycles, or other vehicles used, propelled or driven upon the streets of the village. Excluded were street cars and baby carriages. Equestrians were instructed to raise their whip or hand to signal that they were slowing or stopping.

1922

On March 2, 1922, the St. Louis Park Village Council passed an ordinance "to regulate the operation and use of vehicles on the streets, avenues, alleys and public places of the Village of St. Louis Park and the maximum weight, width, height and length of such vehicles."

An ordinance passed on October 25, 1922 controlled the building or remodeling of existing buildings.

1923

On September 6, 1923, an ordinance was passed to protect life and prevent damage to persons and property..” It prohibited the use of any machine, auto, or other mechanical appliance as to endanger his own life or limb or the life or limb of others. Fines ran from \$5 - \$100 or 5-90 days in the county jail.

1924

An ordinance passed on July 18 limited the speed of automobiles on Excelsior Blvd. and Minnetonka Blvd.

On April 14, 1924, an ordinance granted permission to Northern States Power Co....to erect, enlarge, operate and maintain..a high power electric transmission line, with the necessary poles, towers, masts, wires, and all fixtures for the transmission of electric current into and through [the Village], and to use the streets, alleys, avenues and public grounds.. for such purposes.”

1926

Over the course of several months in 1926, the all-encompassing Ordinances A1-31 were passed. On November 17, 1926, these ordinances repealed most of the ordinances listed above, with the particular exception of the 1891 ordinances regarding the Minneapolis Land and Investment Co. These new ordinances basically re-wrote the laws of the Village; highlights include:

A-1: Sidewalks

A-2: Restaurants, cafes, dining rooms and eating houses

A-3: Location, construction, and operation of soil absorption systems for the disposal of human excreta – privies, septic tanks and cesspools

A-4: Nuisances; public health:

- Decayed or unwholesome food
- Diseased animals and carcasses not buried within 24 hours
- Stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed
- Milk not tested for TB
- Privy vaults and garbage cans not fly-tight
- Water pollution by sewage, creamery or industrial wastes
- Noxious weeds and other rank growths of vegetation
- Dense smoke, noxious fumes, gas and soot or cinders
- Persons with contagious diseases
- Use of common drinking cup or roller towel
- Distribution of drugs to children

A-4: Nuisances; morals and decency

- Gambling
- Prostitution
- Copulating animals
- Liquor
- Vehicles used for immoral or illegal purposes
- Indecent or obscene pictures, books, pamphlets, magazines and newspapers
- Profane or obscene language
- Betting, bookmaking, prize fighting
- Expectoring

A-4: Peace and safety

A-5: Keeping of domestic animals

A-6: Registration and licensing of transient merchants (selling anything from a building), hawkers (selling food from a cart), and peddlers (selling non-food items from a cart).

Prohibited crying out, blowing a horn, or ringing a bell

A-7: Soft drink parlors

A-8: Dog tax; \$1.00 for male dogs, \$2.00 for female

A-9: Planting a care of shade and ornamental trees and grass plots along public streets

A-10: Dangerous liquids: carbon bi-sulphide, gasoline, naphtha, benzole, collodion, hydrocarbon, liquefied petroleum gas, acetone, alcohol, amyl acetate, toluol, kerosene, amyl alcohol, turpentine, distillate

A-11: Billboards and signs

A-12: Moving houses, buildings, derricks and other structures

A-13: Burning of trees

A-14: Intoxicating liquor, including ethyl alcohol and any distilled, fermented, spirituous, vinous, or malt liquor

A-15: Cutting of pavements

A-16: A sweeping ordinance “defining certain misdemeanors and prescribing a penalty for violation thereof:”

Public Justice: much to do about escaping from jail, helping prisoners escape from jail, harboring an escapee from jail

Public Peace, including unlawful assemblage

Public Health and Safety: outlawed are

- Itinerant carnivals
- Offenses against morality, decency, etc.
- Tobacco use under age 18
- Employment of minors other than between the hours of 7am and 6pm; cannot be employed as a rope or wire walker, dancer, gymnast, contortionist, rider, acrobat or delivery boy to a brothel.
- Cohabitation; man and woman not married to each other, who shall abide and co-habit with each other
- Immoral shows
- Publicly exhibit or exercise or let to any animal of the opposite sex, and stallion, jackass, bull, board, ram or bill boar
- Joy riding
- Barb wire fence adjacent to public property
- Hitching an animal to lamp post, trees, hydrant, water trough, drinking fountain
- Cruelty to animals, including cock fighting
- Adulterated cigarettes with anything but tobacco
- Vagrants: drunks, prostitutes, fortune tellers, pickpockets, thieves, burglars, “yeggmen” or “confidence man.” Also anyone wandering about and not giving a good account of himself
- Beggars
- Ticket scalping

A-17: Animals running at large

A-19: Snow and ice

A-20: Billiard Halls and pool rooms

A-21: Fireworks

A-22: Disposal of garbage

A-23: junk shops, pawnbrokers (with a sign of 3 gilt or yellow balls generally used by pawnbrokers), second hand dealers

A-24: Explosives

A-25: Contracts

A-26: Offensive trades

A-27: Milk

A-28: Creating a local board of health led by a physician to handle quarantines, infectious diseases; pay \$60/year