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## WHAT HAPPENED IN OLYMPIA AND STATE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

From The Washington Standard For September 13, 1889. Vol. XXVIII. No. 42.

The enrollment of pupils at the public schools is about 370, which is an increase of about 60 per cent over the enrollment last year at this time.

The first regular meeting of the Didescalion association was held last night, in the assembly room of the Collegiate institute. The following officers were elected for the ensuing term: W. C. Hazard, Chehalis, president; Preston Troy of New Dungeness, vice president; Miss Amy Bucklin of Port Blakely, secretary; W. N. Williams of Honolulu, sergeant-at-arms; Charles Seeley of Napavine, doorkeeper.

The Woman's Club of Olympia, to the number of 30 or 40, held one of their anniversary festivals on Friday evening last.

The delegates have returned from Walla Walla and universally express the opinion that Olympia's chances for the retention of the capital are far ahead of the competing cities, although much work is being done to defeat Olympia.

St. Peter's hospital, which is now being enlarged, will be completed about the 1st of October. Its origin dates back to the year 1887 and was brought about through the instrumentality of Father Classens, Sister Benedict and many of our prominent citizens, including A. H. Chambers, T. I. McKenney and others.

## TELLS WHERE TAX-PAYERS' MONEY GOES.

(Continued from page 6.)

contracts for the so-called O'Connor bridge and the Gibson bridge, both on the Skookumchuck river, the Prather bridge on the Chehalis river, and the Ruth bridge. All these were contracted under the emergency clause and all the contracts went to the same company. This same matter has been commented upon in connection with another examination of county affairs, relative more particularly to the commissioners' office. I call attention to it again as one of the facts in connection with our road and bridge system.

Our statutes provide for the erection of bridges, the estimated cost of which is more than \$500.00, by contract based upon bids secured by advertising for three weeks, save in the case of an emergency. Here contracts for all the bridges built in 1913 were let as emergency contracts, and the aggregate of the contracts was \$28,900.00. Either no emergencies existed, or the engineer or commissioners had failed to properly inspect the bridges. Such hasty methods do not make for the best results. It would seem that bridges of the value of those mentioned should be built after more careful consideration.

By examination of the commissioners' minutes for 1913, I find that only an insignificant portion of the work done during that year was done on contract, other than the bridge contracts above referred to. I find mention of a contract for 125 rods of clearing, for the building of some fence and for the widening of a certain fill. This last contract was for the sum of \$212.50. I do not have the amounts involved in the other contracts. I found no record of any other contracts let for road work, though I looked carefully through the minutes twice. This means that of the total of more than \$66,000.00 spent in 1913, by far the larger portion was spent on work done under the supervision of the road supervisors, on the day labor plan. Whether any large job could be, or rather, would be, handled as cheaply under that plan as under contract, is questionable.

### How Work is Done.

Considerable sums were spent on certain of the roads. For example, on the so-called Morris road, more than \$1,075 in four months, and on the Centralia road, more than \$4,725 in eight months, both exclusive of the cost for gravel etc., and the salaries or per diem of the supervisors. The sums mentioned were warrants paid for labor only. Persons living in the vicinity of roads whereon day work is being done say that a vast amount of time is wasted. It is common to see two or three men riding back and forth the entire distance of a long haul on a gravel wagon, drawing pay for a full day when, as a matter of fact, very little of their time is really spent in productive labor. Also, in many cases teams stand for long periods of time doing absolutely nothing. This would not be tolerated by a contractor.

The practice of doing a large amount of road work under the supervision of the supervisors of the various districts by day work, also tends, without doubt, to the practice of letting the work to persons favored for political reasons, regardless of efficiency.

### The 1915 Budget.

The commissioners have just completed their budget for 1915, and it might be well to call attention to some of its features at this time.

The first thing that appears is that the current expense fund has been reduced by about ten thousand dollars, as against the 1914 budget. By a careful examination of the details of the budget, it will appear that in most cases the offices to which special attention has been given in this report are allowed as much or more than formerly. The total of the 1914 budget was \$92,488; the total for 1915, \$82,609. The difference, or \$9,875, is more than made up by the one item of interest on bonds and sinking fund, which fund requires \$10,500 less for the ensuing year, there being very little interest to pay. The funds depending on office management are larger. I shall mention certain cases in point.

### Auditor's Office for 1915.

The appropriation for the auditor's office for the year 1914 was \$6,913; for 1915, the estimate is \$8,375. As shown elsewhere in this report, it cost \$5,798 to run this office in 1913, and that was a high cost rate, as compared to other counties in the state. The cost for 1914 is not yet known, but the estimate has been stated. An explanation is offered that extra expense of \$500 has been added by the new system of the bureau of inspection, and that the creation of the office of sealer will add expense.

The estimate exceeds the 1913 expense by about \$2,600, and admitting

the \$500 and allowing the 1913 cost to be O. K., there is still \$2,100 to be accounted for. The actual cost of the duties of the sealer in 1913 was \$315.64. The office was created by the legislature of 1913, and under the law creating the office, it is made possible for two or more counties to combine as to this office and thereby use the services of the same person. If the office need be so costly as the estimate indicates, I should recommend that our county combine with Mason in securing the services of a sealer.

Since the city also has the services of a sealer, and in view of the small size of the county, it would seem eminently practical to me, to appoint one of the deputies or clerks in one of the offices for this position, and require the performance of the duties of sealer during the times when his services are not required in the office. More help is required in certain of the offices at some times than at others, and rather than to keep idle clerks in the offices during the slack times, why not put them to work on this job?

I do not think that the increase in the auditor's office is justified.

### Treasurer's Office in 1915.

The estimate for the treasurer for 1914 was \$5,800; for 1915 it is \$6,300. As compared to other counties, the treasurer's office cost too much in 1913, when it cost \$5,457.18. This is increased by \$850 in the estimate for 1915. I do not believe this to be justified. The facts on which I base my judgment are before you, and every man must judge for himself in this, as in all other cases. The commissioners, in fixing the estimates, had more before them than I have at this time, and may have been fully justified. From what appears, however, the estimate is too high.

### Clerk's Office in 1915.

The estimate for the clerk for 1915 is cut from \$3,700 in the 1914 budget to \$2,730 in the 1915 budget. This is about what it costs to run the office, from the experience of former years, and about the cost of the office in other counties of like size. The reduction of one thousand dollars in the total of the budget helps the appearance of the whole, but as to this item, this is really actual cost this time. In 1914 more was provided for than could legitimately be used. The 1915 estimate is the proper one, I think.

### Engineer's Office 1915.

The estimate for this office for 1915 is the same as that for 1914, \$4,100; \$2,454 was spent by this office in 1913, and less in 1912. Not being able to compare this office with others in the state, and having no standard of expense, I hesitate to offer any criticism. I have no means of knowing how much the engineer's office ought to cost. Unless a vastly increased amount of work is to be done by that office in 1915, the amount spent in 1913 should be ample, however. I think the recommendations made elsewhere in this report ought to be considered in connection with the expenditure of this office.

### Attorney's Office in 1915.

The estimate for this office for 1915 is about \$300 less than the actual cost of running the office in 1913, and also less than the cost for 1912. The amount seems to be about right. If the attorney does not require the county to pay for assistants he can well remain within it.

### Commissioners in 1915.

The estimate for the commissioners' salary, or rather per diem, for 1915, is \$3,000. They drew \$3,260 in 1913, as before stated, and the reports from other counties indicated to me, at least, that they had collected very much more than they should have received. I should think \$2,000 ample for per diem of commissioners. The law allows commissioners in counties other than the first class, having township government, \$5.00 per day for time actually spent in county business, and limits the total to \$1,000 each. We have "gone the limit" under a \$4.00 per day rate.

### Road Funds in 1915.

The budget calls for a considerable increase in road expenditures for 1915. Whether or not that is wise is a matter of individual opinion. We can only concern ourselves with the matter of securing the proper expenditure of the amount, for results accomplished are the only means of judging road expenditures.

### Summary and Recommendations.

This report has omitted many details of the three funds investigated; it has not been concerned with the state funds, the school funds, or the funds for cities and towns. The funds dealt with cover about one-fourth of the total expended by the county. To acquire a complete knowledge of the disposition of all taxes would require an examination into the other funds mentioned.

The facts disclosed in connection with certain items of the current expense fund indicate to me that in this department certain service is costing the county more than it

should.

The auditor's office is costing more than it formerly did and by comparison with other offices in the state, it is costing more than they. I do not know of any other tests to apply than those which I have applied in this examination. I think the method used a fair means of testing the matter of reasonableness of cost and think the facts disclosed bear out the conclusion I have reached. My opinion is that the auditor's office is costing too much. I do not think that the increase in the estimate for that office for 1915 is justified.

As indicated elsewhere, I think the evidence shows that the office of the county clerk is costing about what it should. This is borne out by the comparisons made with other offices and my knowledge of the actual work to be done by that office.

The comparisons made as to the treasurer's office, both from year to year and with other offices, indicate that that office cost too much in 1913—that more was spent per hundred dollars collected than should have been. The cost was higher than in other counties collecting lesser sums, per hundreds dollars collected. Also, the cost of collecting a much smaller sum was greater in 1913 than in 1912.

I am not familiar with the workings of the assessor's office and have not the means of making the comparisons made as to others of the offices. I cannot say at this time whether the cost there was reasonable or not. It seemed to me that the cost of the office should have been less, and not more, in 1913, when real property was not re-assessed. It may be that the method of doing business is such that the amount of work is the same in either case. The assessor can make that clear to you.

Unnecessarily Duplicate Inspection. As for the office of the engineer, it is impossible to state from the available records whether the money expended by that office was the proper sum. That depends upon the work done, and what was expended in one county is no criterion for another. However, if the county is to spend \$2,400 or more each year for an engineer, some final responsibility should rest upon him. From report, personal observation, and the size of the commissioners' per diem bill, it appears that the commissioners are exercising some of the functions of

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an engineer and duplicating his work. The engineer should be, as he doubtless is, competent to pass upon the needs of a particular road or bridge, at least to the extent of ascertaining the need for repairs, his conclusion should be final, and a trip of inspection by the entire board unnecessary.

I think, also, for the price, we should get such inspection of bridges as would prevent the necessity of building new ones under the emergency clause of the statute pertaining to such matters.

Whether or not the work to be done in a county of this size requires the services of the commissioners for so many days per year as in 1913, is a matter for each of you to say from the facts submitted. I think, as before stated, that the comparisons indicate that our commissioners cost too much in 1913.

As to the superior court, the figures read speak for themselves. As to the judges, the legislature made the law requiring two judges for the district and that is not a matter which the county can avoid at this time. The judges are, or have been, busy with state cases this summer, owing to the new legislation of 1913. It may be that the future will show that two judges are absolutely necessary in this district.

As for the road expenditures, it seems to me that in the present state of human nature it would be better for the county if road jobs of any great size were performed by contract instead of under the present method. Also, I think the method of letting bridge contracts is not the best. If money is to be spent for highways, the thing to do is to get as large results as possible out of the given expenditure. That can be done best, it seems to me, by making it to some one's interest to hustle, and to see that others hustle. And in letting a contract, competition is a good thing.

Results Depend on Officers. The cost of a given job may be kept down by competition, where that is possible, but in the case of elective offices, it is up to the man on the job whether results are accomplished or not. If an officer has ability and the desire, he can cut his office expenses to the lowest possible point; if he is lacking in either of these qualifications he will not do so. The county should put a premium on efficiency, and get rid of those who are either intellectually unable or somehow disinclined to do the best that can be done.

Respectfully submitted,

GEORGE F. YANTIS.