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## COUNTY FINANCES

ARTICLE NO. 8.  
(The Colville Examiner Series, Oct. 3, 1914.)  
County Clerk

The name county clerk is generally used to designate that important individual who sits at the left of the judge and listens to all the woes of the people when brought into the limelight of the superior court. But this clerk is officially designated as the clerk of the superior court, he having little to do with the routine of general county affairs.

His duties are to record all the proceedings of the court, take charge of court trust funds, record marriage licenses, keep in custody all papers and files dealing with court matters, register jurors, witnesses, bailiffs, etc., and see that the court orders are properly executed. When he has nothing else besides his regular work to do, he can impart the intricacies of securing admission to citizenship to the aliens who apply for naturalization—and this matter is a big study in itself, being government work.

The clerk's vault is the repository for full official details of all the iniquities, shortcomings and frailties of that portion of humanity which has sought or received justice from our superior court. The affidavit which your friend made against your neighbor is there, and the details of every estate which has been settled in court are there. If you charged your enemy with being a horse-thief, your affidavit is there. And it is always up to the clerk to find them if necessary. For this purpose he has a double index system of reference to all cases, and each case with all its papers is neatly enclosed in an envelope and filed in its particular place.

There used to be a time when lawyers took out papers and forgot to return them, but now the lawyer must sign a receipt for each paper he takes out for reference, and this receipt is inclosed in the case envelope, showing just who is responsible for any papers not returned.

The present clerk, at the beginning of his term of office last year, also adopted a duplicate system of receipts for cash paid for filing fees, and these receipts are checked daily and monthly. The result for 1913 was that no discrepancies occurred in the matter of fees.

Practically all papers filed in any civil case are charged a certain fee for filing. Each new case filed must pay a \$4 fee, and all judgments require a fee of \$2 to \$8. The use of the court seal for private parties requires a fee, and in four years of the county's history the clerk's office has thus been self-supporting.

Outside of his own office expense, a capable county clerk can be of great financial saving to the county if he possesses the ability to keep up his office work and expedite court business. If the clerk is not of trained clerical ability, he could hinder the progress of a case by failing to find a certain paper, information, warrant, court order, decree, or whatever it might be. And when 40 or 50 witnesses are in court on pay from the county, a ten-minute delay means real money to the taxpayer.

A good clerk is of infinite value to the judge, for the routine order of court settings is not a subject which the judge can carry in his head—not in Stevens county at any rate, and the clerk must look after the court calendar (settings of cases) and keep the lawyers and even the judge informed. A large part of the clerk's work is in dealing with lawyers, and when three or four lawyers are each looking up the

papers in different cases the clerk needs a pair of roller skates to cover the ground.

The salary of the clerk is \$1500 a year; deputy \$90 a month. The present clerk has a stenographer as his deputy, thus saving the county the cost of any stenographic work in the office. All recording in the office is done by typewriter, except the record in the court docket in the court room.

At the beginning of 1913 there was a quantity of work left undone, some of it from the November term of court, and the jury list had not been revised in some years. At the suggestion of the county commissioners the former deputy was retained two weeks to clean up the work, which increased the salary cost of the office \$36 more than it will be for 1914.

Following is a list of the expenses and receipts of the clerk's office:

Year	Salaries	Total Cost	Fees Received
1899	\$1244	\$1251	\$1065
1900	1231	1275	1245
1901	1344	1393	1398
1902	1418	1444	1517
1903	1430	1456	1234
1904	1422	1441	1794
1906	1500	1507	1813
1907	2268	2280	1774
1908	2487	2521	2463
1909	2545	2642	3035
1910	2702	2989	3679
1911	2648	3675	3749
1912	2989	3347	2932
1913	2616	3064	3568

Previous to 1910 the cost of supplies and printing was not included in the office, but bunched under the name of county supplies, and not charged to any office.

From the above table it is seen that the clerk for the year 1913 did the most business for the least proportionate amount of salary expense of any clerk in the history of Stevens county, the clerk for 1910 coming a close second.

The state tax levy for 1914 (taxes payable in 1915) has been fixed by the state board of equalization at the rate of 8.07 mills, which will raise \$8,327,447.

This is a reduction from the state tax levy of 1913, which was 8.81 mills, raising \$8,937,525. It is the first reduction in state taxes since 1910.

The reduction was attained by lowering the general fund levy, which last year reached the statutory limit of 3 mills, to 2.45 mills, and by lowering the public highway levy, last year 1.25 mills, to 1 mill. The state school levy was increased slightly, being raised from 1.9 mills to 1.96 mills. This was necessary to provide for an increased school population of more than 9800, shown by the last school census, the "barefoot boy" school law providing that the state shall raise \$10 for each child of school age.

The 10 separate levies going to make up the state tax levy, the purpose of each and the amount of money to be raised by each levy, are as follows:

General fund levy, for support of state institutions, state departments, and general expenses, 2.45 mills, raising \$2,528,159, a reduction of \$515,266 from last year.

State school levy, state aid to schools, 1.96 mills, raising \$2,022,528, an increase of \$95,025.

Public highway levy, for state road work, 1 mill, raising \$1,031,902, a reduction of \$236,192.

Permanent highway levy, for surfaced roads, to be spent under direction of the counties, \$1,547,853, an increase of \$26,141.

Military levy, for support of militia, construction of armories, etc., 11-100 mills, raising \$113,509, an increase of \$1,917.

Combined levies for higher educational institutions, 1.05 mills, raising funds as follows: University of Washington, \$490,153; state college, \$335,368; Cheney normal, \$92,871; Bellingham normal, \$92,871; Ellensburg normal, \$72,253.

Of the total taxes of \$8,327,447 it will be noted that the state school money and the permanent highway money, totaling \$3,570,381, or more than 45 per cent of the total levy, will be returned to the counties for expenditure. Last year only 39 per cent of the state levy went back to the counties.

The reduction in the general fund levy this year has only been made possible by the fact that state departments will at the end of the present biennium, March 31, 1915, be able to return unused to the state treasury, a sum estimated at between \$600,000, saved from the appropriations of the 1913 legislature. Of this total departments under Governor Ernest Lister will return between \$300,000 and \$400,000, or approximately 10 per cent of the total general fund appropriations for these departments, the office of secretary of state expects to return about \$200,000 of the appropriation made for initiative and referendum expenses, while other departments will also show smaller savings.

Judge W. W. Black of Everett was declared by the state canvassing board Tuesday to be the democratic nominee for U. S. senator, having received 15 more first and second choice votes than George Turner of Spokane. Black's vote was 5503 first, 7047 second; Turner 8642 first, 3893 second. Turner scouted the idea of a contest, and stated he would support Black for the senate. Judge Black was the democratic nominee for governor two years ago, but was put out of running by the supreme court. He is an aggressive campaigner, a strong speaker, and has the united support of the party for senator.

We notice that the Statesman-Index is opening the campaign by taking a flying leap at the progressive candidates for senator and treasurer, W. L. Sax and F. A. Savage. It is well. Go after them, Dane!

A man like Savage who will wilfully desert a sinking ship without saving more of his companions, deserves to be rebuked by those who are submerged, and we don't blame the republicans who have been without bread and water for some days for feeling a bit miffed at him.

As for Sax, he is an old-time bad one—he has been both democrat and socialist, and ought to know better than to seek a questionable honor in a republican legislature; the fact that he might want to follow the dictates of his own conscience in changing parties could make no possible difference.

With the dogs of war let loose in Europe, the real species of rabies is now in search of its discoverer.

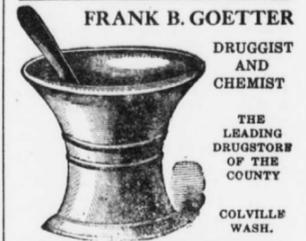
A real meaning of democracy to this country is exemplified in the wholesomeness and humanity of President Wilson's actions during the last six months. We are not a nation at war—but we are at peace with the world.

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