

CCHS Heritage Notes for 2-18-14

The Vermillion Civic Federation, headed by C.E. Prentis, had over 100 members in 1896- including nearly every local businessman. The group continued its uncompromising stand against licensed saloons, and began to show an increasing interest in the community's physical appearance. There was growing popular support for park and street improvements.

The Civic Improvement League formed during the early 1900's and was headed by Dean Thomas Sterling of the University School of Law. They were definitely committed to support of the temperance movement and were successful in defeating every proposal that came up for the licensing of saloons. They also drew attention to the town's laxness in enforcing its curfew ordinance.

In the spring of 1903, Mayor W.C. Bryant (a member of the Improvement League) announced strict enforcement of the curfew law, which required all minors under sixteen to stay off the streets after nine pm. As part of the enforcement program, the City Council created the position of Police Matron, to which Mayor Bryant appointed Mrs. Edward D. Brookman. Her position included the power to make arrests.

Plans were also underway for the further development of Austin Park. The grounds comprised an entire block lying between Clark, Dartmouth, High and Washington Streets which had been deeded to the City in 1893 by Rachel Ross Austin as a memorial to her husband Horace J. Austin. The square remained a park in name only until spring 1905, when concerted efforts were made by some of the town's leading women to improve the grounds.

Hitching posts that lined both sides of Main Street also became a concern for those interested in making the town more attractive. Agitation for their removal began in May 1903 with the Improvement League in full support. Strong opposition to the removal led by A.E. Lee in September 1906 halted the proposed City ordinance indefinitely.