

“GOOD MORNING, JUDGE”

The keen police court magistrate, a mighty man is he, And, as for being wise, he is as wise as he can be; He's wiser than King Solomon, and he is faster, too, For he has more to worry him than Sol could ever do.

Comedies and tragedies unroll in Omaha's police courts—Peculiarities of women are revealed—Some "characters" know the judge well.

By JACK LEE.

Solomon's reputation as a wise judge was established by a decision emanating from his court in a well known baby case.

In a present-day court, especially a police court, such as is conducted every day in Omaha and in South Omaha, Solomon would have to show more speed than he did in the good old days.

Take for instance the time when two women, furious as only women can be, claimed the same dog.

After listening to the claims of both women Judge Foster ordered the woman to let the dog down on the floor.

"The dog belongs to this woman," the judge said. The woman who had held the dog finally confessed that she had found the dog, taken it home with her and had become so attached to it she didn't want to give it up.

It doesn't take much law to make a good police judge. This statement is made on the authority of two police judges, an ex-police judge and numerous attorneys.

To be an efficient police judge, a man must throw all knowledge of the law to the four winds and just depend on the good old common sense with which he has been endowed," says Judge Wappich.

Practically all cases coming into my court settle themselves. There is no great demand for legal ability. Of course one must know the law and stay within bounds but in the ordinary cases, old-fashioned horse sense comes in handier than all the law in Blackstone."

Police courts as they are conducted now are little different than those of 40 years ago, a pioneer attorney of Omaha, the ex-police judge, told me.

One day when Judge Will Leane was presiding a man charged with being drunk was brought before him.

"You're charged with being drunk, disorderly and refusing to fight."

"It's all a lie," the prisoner declared.

"All right," said Judge Leane. "I'll fine you for fighting."

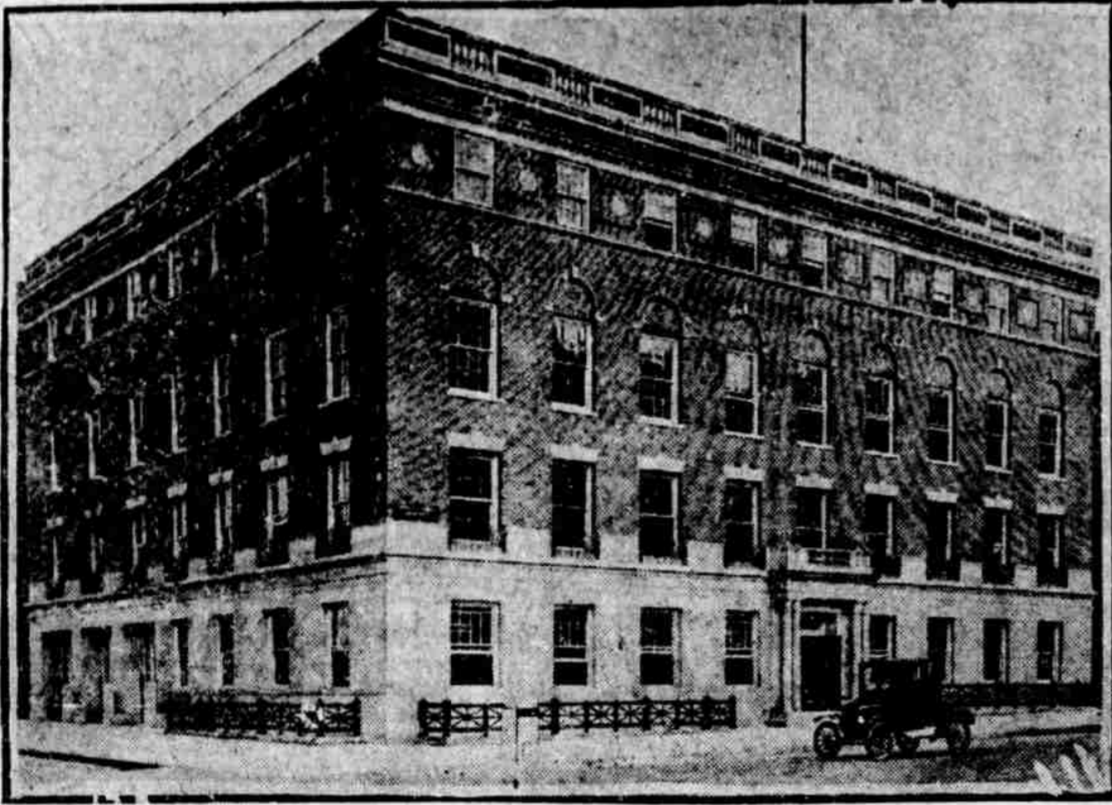
The tell one on the present Police Commissioner Henry W. Dunn when he was a police judge. A drunk was brought before him.

"Where did you get that snootful?" the judge queried.

"On my eye," the prisoner replied.

"You've run foul of a skirt!" the muscles of his shoulder rippled under my hands and he met my eyes squarely.

"I sure have," he affirmed. "Oh! I ain't never been much on the flowerly word stuff, but I know a thing or two about the prize ring, and they had me covering the big fights for them. I'd hustle back to the office after a scrap and tell a rewrite man how it all happened, and then he'd write it into shape so's the public could read it intelligently, and my name would be stuck over the top."



The new city jail at Eleventh and Dodge streets where police court patrons, before and afterwards, often are furnished meals and lodgings.

"There's just as much lawbreaking as when I came here 30 years ago, only the misdemeanors have changed."

A Sharp Wit.

Judge Wappich lives up to his rule of throwing the law out the window and using common sense in disposing of his cases. He has a sharp wit which comes in handy at all times.

Recently a drunk came before the judge. "Good morning judge," was the salutation.

"Good morning, you're charged with being drunk."

"Well your honor, I'm down and out," and then the prisoner went on to tell a long tale of woe.

The judge listened very carefully and when the prisoner finished he said:

"You may be down, but you're not out. You won't be out for 30 days."

Trial By Jury.

In the early days of the Omaha police court law was almost unheard of. Anybody could run for the office and it depended on the number of votes he got whether he was qualified to fill the position or not.

Whenever a man demanded a jury trial a jury was impaneled. This jury usually stayed in until the cases for that day were disposed of.

Some years later the Shoemaker bill stopped the trial by jury and the cases were settled by the police judge. When cases before the court were of serious nature, they were held to the district court, and the practice continues.

Going or Coming.

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There were no automobile police patrols in the old days. A vehicle pulled by horses served to haul in those arrested.

One time a fellow was arrested and carried here to some nearby drug store. After receiving a few ministrations Bertha would recover.

"Take him out," cried the judge. "I don't want him to die in here."

"Fainting Bertha" was another one who got by with a lot of clever stuff before she was found out.

Bertha used to select some prominent corner of the city on which to throw a faint. Of course men would rush to her rescue and carry her to some nearby drug store.

There are "attorneys" who practice only in the police court. Recently a fellow was arrested and on his person was found an attorney's card which had been slipped him by the attorney as he was being led into the police station.

The present court in the new Central station is a great improvement over the court at the old engine house. That place was a disgrace to the city.

To clear up this evil Judge Foster advocates a rock pile where men may make "little ones out of big ones," the crushed rock to be placed on boulevards and roads in the city needing repairs.

"Others not in favor of this scheme say there should be a work house. To erect a decent work-house where any trades could be applied it would take \$56,000.

In the court room the men and women are segregated and there is plenty of fresh air and light. The judge and city prosecutor, Frank M. Dineen, prosecute the cases.

There are police characters, men and women, who have been in police circles for years. When they are arraigned they greet the judge with great familiarity, just as an old friend would greet another.

As the old characters die off or move away, new ones take their places.

One time several men in jail refused to take a bath. It was known they were "inhabited," Judge Foster ordered some of the officers to get some sheep dip from the stock yards in South Omaha.

There are cases calling for tears in police court and often times words of kindly admonition from the judges have turned boys and girls from the downward path to the straight and narrow.

One young lad, now a prominent business man in an Iowa city, was saved from disgrace by a few kind words from Judge Foster.

Family disputes are common and here a knowledge of family life is necessary.

One of the strange incidents in police court cases is that in which a wife has her husband arrested for beating her. It is a rare instance when the wife appears to prosecute her charges.

Just now Omaha is overrun with "moochers," "panhandlers," "con" men and others of the same ilk. The reason as explained by Judge Foster:

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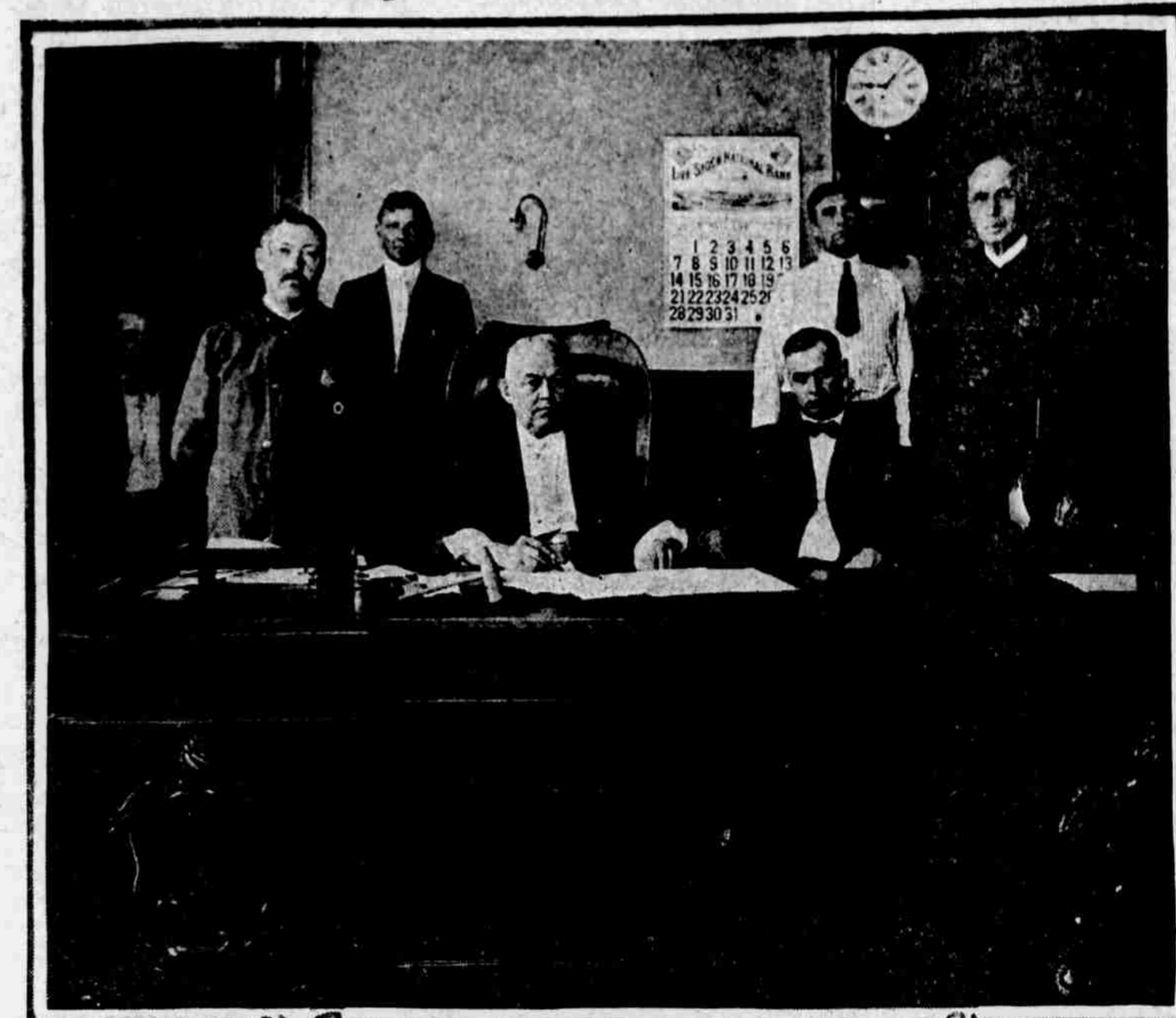
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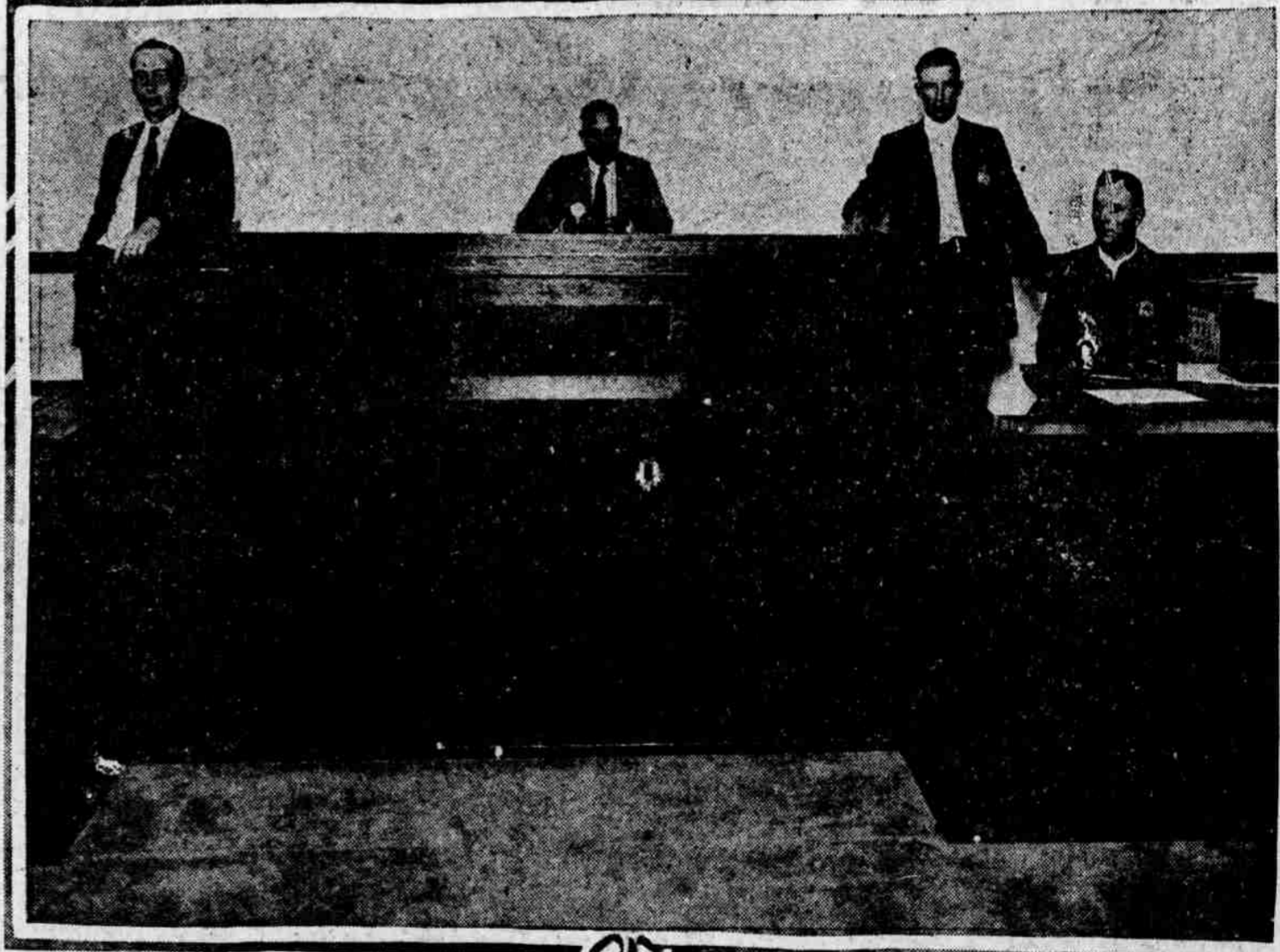
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At the South Side police court. Left to right: Sergeants James Sheahan, Judge W. F. Wappich, Prosecutor John Marcell and Court Officer James P. Grace. In the rear: Officer Joe Potach, left, and Captain John Briggs.



"Bring 'em on." The Central police court force ready for action. Left to right: Prosecutor Frank Dineen, Judge Charles E. Foster, Officer C. M. George and Court Sergeant Johnny Holden.

In 1880 the police court was located in the basement of the county and city building located where the Paxton block now stands. Pat O. Hawes, was the judge.

From there the court was moved to the northwest corner of Thirtieth and Harney streets over a saloon. It remained there only three weeks.

Later rooms were fitted up in the place on Sixteenth street now occupied by the Lincoln cafeteria. From there it was moved to the Exposition building on Fourteenth and Davenport.

All city officers were in the building. Judge Louis Berka presided. At that time the city was paying \$1,000 a month rental for its offices.

Many Moving Days. Attorney Ed F. Morearty, then city attorney, introduced a resolution in city council declaring that the rent was too high.

The following men have been judges of the Omaha police court: Patrick O. Hawes, 1880; Gustave Bencke, 1882; A. M. Stenburg, 1885; Louis Berka, 1907; Lee Helley, 1890; S. I. Gordon, 1896; Bryce Crawford, 1906; Charles E. Foster, 1912; J. M. Fitzgerald, 1921.

When South Omaha was taken in as a part of Greater Omaha the South Side police court was included in the transaction. Police judges alternate between Omaha and South Side court every month.

THE CRACK OF THE WHIP By OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

I WILL admit that the Kid broke it to me gently. He slid into the room, shut the door, and blushed. Then he asked me if he might have \$250.

Mr. Joe, just wait'll you meet her. She's the grandest dame. An'—well, I guess I should've told you before, but it seemed kinder funny me having to run to you before I'd ever said a thing to her.

I called him aside and asked him about it. That boob explains that he'd made his start at the Southside and that even after he got into the finals he had to get a little extra.

"I got them in once in a while for making liquor, or drinking too much. Once in a while they fight, but as a whole there are few very serious cases."

"I ain't never been much on the flowerly word stuff, but I know a thing or two about the prize ring, and they had me covering the big fights for them."

"You need a manager," I says, "the worst way. I'll act on a fifty-fifty basis if you want. But Kid—I'll have to be your guardeen, too. You let me arrange your fights and handle your money—and I'll make you rich."