

The 1920's

The 1920's decade of rum runners up and down the coast brought with it some new problems—or better put, some old problems. These problems increased with the advent of the automobile. In 1908 Henry Ford invented and began producing the model T. Speed was the name of the game and San Luis Obispo went along with everyone else in trying their wings or wheels. Besides the usual speeding up to 30 mph in 15-20 mile zones, Chief Duddleson and his officers were struggling with car theft, failing to hand signal when turning, blown head lamps, and parking violations.



As stated in the Tribune of that time, "...the streets of Higuera, Garden, and Marsh looked more like public garages than roads that traffic could travel on." Warnings were issued and the response was nil. Finally an article of May 24 1925 read:

"No more warnings will be given for violating traffic laws in San Luis Obispo.' This was a statement made today by city Traffic Officer Gene Roberts who has returned from a short vacation. Today he arrested seven drivers for various violations of traffic laws. The officers are to work nights in a drive to eliminate those needing to be arrested. Especially to be suppressed are:

mufflers' noises where baffler plates are not used, failure to give arm signals, defective lights, and general laxness. Gradually order began to return though the struggle continues to this day with motorists pushing the envelope."

Vice also was noted, albeit very carefully in the Tribune, especially on Sycamore Street. Headlines on May 1, 1925, state, "Police Will Watch Night Life of City." Subtitles state, "Special Patrol will be put on in Sycamore Street to end law violations there. Prosecutions to be Filed Where Evidence Warrants." The article is very carefully phrased. The reason I chose this article is that it deals with the issues of the day and also explains what the Chief and officers were up against with funding. Some things never change.

"The arrest of two women in the Sycamore Street district last night and their discharge this morning on promises to leave the city marked the first steps in the crusade by the local police department to rid San Luis Obispo of undesirables. A more strict patrol of the district was asked for yesterday. Chief Duddleson said that he would rearrange his patrols to comply with the order for an immediate stationing of a special officer in that area. Persons now residing in that quarter who are suspected of violations are apprised of the situation and evidence has been collected that could be used in prosecution. It has been decided first to watch, rather than prosecute.

"Police Commissioner Carpenter said that the department found itself handicapped in such instances by lack of men and funds. He said that in his judgment a proper regard for the policing of the city against moral delinquencies required appropriation of added funds to enable the department to add an officer for that duty without weakening the general police service. He was going to do the best he could with the means now at hand, and hopes for the sanction of the Council to expend some additional funds. The present funds available were not sufficient to justify any evidence gathering or other work that has to be done by men not known to be connected with the police.

"Since Chief Duddleson took his position as head of the department much has been done to improve conditions in San Luis Obispo and the lack of crime or disorder has been both marked and continuous. Even the policing of the Sycamore

district, handled with inadequate manpower and without any of the funds usually allotted for work in such situations, has been thorough at all times."

