

1921

TO THE HONORABLE, THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF JEFFERSON COUNTY:

Under the provision of Section 192 of the Election Law, we as Commissioners of Elections, herewith transmit our annual report. Further information relative to the affairs of the office than is contained in this report is to be found in the daily record which has been kept.

By reason of the so-called Nonpartisan Primary Act, which relates to the City of Watertown only, under our office, the first Primary of the kind was held one week preceding the Official Fall Primary. Such Primary was held on separate days due solely to the fact that after the annual date for the Fall Primary was advanced one week, that there was no opportunity for the local legislators to change the date for the Nonpartisan City Primary. Other than this Primary and the two special days for Registration in the City of Watertown, the work in the office was the same as in the past.

Every effort has been made to reduce the expense but conditions over which we have had no control have made unnecessary expense. Particularly is this true with reference to the re-printing of all of the amendment ballots for Jefferson County, due to an error in the Office of the Secretary of State in Albany, whose first certified copy of amendments received September 1st, for the ballots was incorrect and correct copy

was not received until October 22d. No intimation had come to our board or any other board throughout the state that there was an error until the day before when a telegram was received from the Secretary of State advising us to hold up the printing and that letter of instructions followed.

We understand that it is the intention of the other counties of the state where these ballots were printed sometime before the receipt by the boards of Elections of a change in the matter for Amendment Number Three, to put in a bill to the state of New York for the unnecessary expense for re-printing the ballots. It is also understood that some of the legislators will endeavor to enact legislation which will make this printing a charge against the state. Acting on definite information which we have, we would suggest that action be taken by your Honorable Body for making this a charge against the state. Under the provision of the Nonpartisan City Primary Act, referred to above, your Honorable Body should make the cost of this Primary in so far as the Board of Elections' expense for supplies in the way of ballots, stationery &c., which we have figured and estimated to be \$ 123.13, a charge against the City of Watertown.

The commissioners believe that there will be many changes in the Election Law, the coming year, and that a revision of the law in accordance with the views of Election Commissioners from all over the state will be drawn, wherein considerable red tape and unnecessary expense incident to the holding of Primaries and Elections will be eliminated. The two commissioners from this county with commissioners from all over the state met in Syracuse last June with a special committee of the legislature to revise the Election Law, and suggestions were offered by all

the commissioners and from the expression of members of the legislative committee and from correspondence with the attorneys in the bill drafting department at Albany, who are drafting the revision of the Election Law, the local commissioners believe that a large expense will be saved to the county and to the state.

The identification cards which inspectors have been obliged to make out for a number of years will be done away with, and it is certain that the expense of the town clerks in mailing amendments to every registered voter will be wiped out. Either no copies of the amendments will be provided in so far as the towns are concerned, or else this duty will be delegated to the inspectors on the last day of Registration.

Senator George R. Ferron of Syracuse will probably introduce a bill providing for the examination of all inspectors of election. With such proposed legislation, we are heartily in accord. In many instances inspectors are appointed because they are good fellows or have performed some political service. To illustrate one man in the City of Watertown was appointed who could hardly read or write his own name. In another district in the city, the board of inspectors turned in their returns showing that practically 150 more votes had been cast for the office of judge of the court of appeals than there were ballots in the box. From one district in a town in the northern part of the county, came returns on the seven amendments, showing a total of 411 votes, yet in no instance would the totals given begin to equal the grand total for each amendment. Every effort has been made to have the inspectors do the work properly, but some of them, because of age, and possibly a disposition on their part that they know it all, have not increased the efficiency of the boards in a number of districts, while the great majority of them have showed great improvement.

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During the past year, many changes were made in the enrollment, and the callers at our office on business incident to the Primaries, application for absentee ballots, and general information were more numerous than ever. We have been called upon by many state departments, persons and concerns outside of the county to look up records and furnish information and the office has been utilized by the public generally to a greater extent than heretofore. We have been ready at all times to serve anyone seeking information, which was in our possession. We sincerely believe that the public has appreciated our efforts for we have heard no unfavorable criticism.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

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Commissioners

Dated December 10, 1921.