

# Old ledgers offer arresting look into Toledo's past

## Toledo police records back in Safety Building

3/5/2017

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Toledo Police Officer Phil Carroll looks over the 256 police blotters that he helped transport into the attic of the Safety Building. ‘Anyone ever arrested is listed here. It’s probably the only place you will find them.’

THE BLADE/DAVE ZAPOTOSKY

On July 7, 1895, Detroit Avenue resident William Styts, listed as a bicyclist by trade, was stopped by a Toledo police officer and arrested on a charge of Fast Driving.

Arresting officers Geiger and Crowley confiscated from his person a whip, blanket, and a revolver, and locked him in one of a dozen or so cells on the fourth floor of the Safety Building, then the location for male suspects to be lodged after an arrest. Mr. Styts was later released after paying court costs.

It's all logged, in near-perfect penmanship in blue ink on the yellow, weathered pages of a 19-by-21-inch ledger, one of 256 arrest-log books that span 100 years. The large books recently were turned over to the city by the Bowling Green State University Jerome Library's Center for Archival Collections, where they likely were stored since the 1970s.

“There’s a lot of history here,” said Officer Phil Carroll, 62, who physically helped transport the books to the attic of the Safety Building, where they



Toledo police Officer Phil Carroll reads the blue inked cursive that is found in an old police blotter in the attic of the Safety Building in downtown Toledo.

librarian and university archivist.

The police department has almost every ledger from April 1, 1872, through Dec. 15, 1971.

No evidence of any records could be located for the police department's first five years, which started April 27, 1867, Mrs. Thieman said.

Nor were there any arrest logs from 1972 to 1977, when the city contracted with Lucas County to house prisoners in the newly built county jail that closed the city jail on the fourth and fifth floors of the police department, she said.

"That's kind of frustrating," Mrs. Thieman said. "If anyone knows, it would be great to complete the collection."

### A look inside

Inside each bulky book, a jail matron on the fifth floor where women were held, or a male turnkey on the fourth floor, would chronicle each person's arrest with such general information as their names, age, the charge, and in some cases, the court disposition.

The books are also filled with additional insight into the suspect, details that today would not be offered after an initial arrest.

Aliases were a normal part of the crime scene then. Matrons and turnkeys chronicled what perpetrators did for a living, their ethnic background, what they had in their pockets that day, and sometimes what they ate.

Prisoners emptied their pockets for the arresting officers, and that too was tediously logged with ink: pocket watches, photographs, sundries, knives, the occasional handgun.

Occupations were chronicled: wagon maker, sailor, blacksmith, saloon keeper, laborer, carriage painter.

Occasionally, the not-so-subtle editorial comment was part of the narrative.

"Dead drunk" was written in perfect cursive next to a suspect charged with causing a drunken disturbance on May 27, 1891. High school students were listed as "school boys." A man arrested for drunkenness in 1891 was described as an "old soldier," and another described as a "negro."

"They would come up with these terms back then, but they were terms that were accepted," said retired Toledo police lieutenant Shirley Green, now the director of the Toledo Police Museum, who likened the physical descriptions used by police to how military personnel kept records back in the revolutionary era.

"[As an officer] you had to have a general understanding about what those terms meant, whether or not people appreciated them," she said.

### Evolution of law

have been organized and labeled by date on shelves in the attic for research purposes. "Anyone ever arrested is listed here. It's probably the only place you will find them."

### **PHOTO GALLERY: Old ledgers offer arresting look into past**

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The logs offer a glimpse into the changing law enforcement landscape over a 100-year period, including the identification of arresting officers, types of charges that society today would no longer tolerate, and fun facts such as what a suspect turned over from his or her pockets before jailed.

"People who dig their teeth into their roots, this would appeal to them," said Officer Beth Thieman, who oversees planning and research for the police department. "Back in those days we didn't have anything that traces their actions [except these books]."

The books likely came to the BGSU library in the 1970s, during the launch of a program to store state and local government records by the Ohio Historical Society and other organizations, said Michelle Sweetser, head

## TPD OLD ARREST LOGS

**Below are the top charges police arrested Toledo residents for on the same date in select decades.**

### July 1-2, 1895

- Drunkenness
- Suspicion (of committing a crime)
- Violating a Street Ordinance
- Vagrancy
- Assault/Battery

### July 1-2, 1925

- Drunk and Disorderly
- Suspicion
- Liquor in Possession
- Visiting a House of Ill Fame
- Neglecting Children/Trespassing (tie)

### July 1-2, 1955

- Drunk and Disorderly
- Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence
- Suspicion
- Assault/Battery
- Vagrancy

### July 1-2, 1999

- Burglary
- Robbery
- Assault
- Breaking and Entering
- Theft/Felonious Assault (tie)

### July 1-2, 2015

- Theft
- Burglary
- Breaking and Entering
- Robbery
- Felonious Assault

SOURCE: Toledo Police Department

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Ms. Green remembers the huge binders as a valuable resource when she first came on the force in 1976. She saw them again after retirement while she was getting her PhD in history at BGSU in 2006 and was given a tour of the library.

"We were walking down an aisle, and I said, 'Wait a minute, I know these books,'" Ms. Green said.

She and Mrs. Thieman returned several years later and inquired about bringing them home to the department. The books are now the official property of the police museum, even though they are housed at the police department for space reasons.

The books also give researchers a look at the evolution of criminal law.

In the early and mid-1900s, perpetrators were commonly arrested on a charge of suspicion and held in a cell while the officer investigated the case further.

"You couldn't hold anyone today like that," said Toledo defense attorney Bobby Kaplan, who has been practicing law since 1955.

"You would have to get an affidavit and swear that certain acts occurred, acts that were tantamount to the commission of a crime."

"It would be shocking [today] to have those designated crimes that were very vague," Mr. Kaplan said.

Other routine arrests in the late 1800s and early 1900s included drunkenness, begging, vagrancy, and safekeeping, a charge used by officers to hold an individual suspected of mental illness in a jail cell until they could be evaluated by a medical professional.

In 1978, then-police chief Corrin McGrath changed the protocol for suspected mentally ill individuals to be consistent with state law, Ms. Green said.

"You see the fact that you treat mentally ill people differently now, than we did before. You went from not having domestic-violence laws to then having laws about domestic violence, and it being a topic that we are still focusing on today," Ms. Green said. "I think these logs would be a great tool ... by just allowing us to look at our history and make comparisons to how things were done then and how things have changed — and sometimes not changed — from the 20th century into the 21st century."

Much of the time when a suspect was arrested, officers walked them to one of the stations downtown or on the east side. Occasionally, in the late 1800s, they would wait for the station's horse and buggy to come by to assist them.

If the suspect was too drunk to walk, the patrolman might borrow a wheelbarrow from a nearby neighbor, load the person in, and push them to jail, Mrs. Thieman said. Sometimes, individuals hid near the jail, waiting to ambush police and free their family member or friend, she said.

### Shifting focus

In the 1920s, law enforcement fought to enforce the law governed by Prohibition. Police who lay in wait for an individual trying to flee police could expect the vehicle they would pursue to be a horse and buggy.

In the 1930s, the focus was on bringing down the heavy mob presence in Toledo. Like the descriptors of a good suspense novel, there was gambling, bootlegging, and sometimes cold-blooded murder.

At 3 p.m., March 8, 1934, a turnkey logged into the arrest ledger that mobsters Thomas Licavoli, whose alias was Yonnie, and Jacob Sulkin, alias Firetop, were booked into the former Toledo City Jail, on the fourth floor of the current Safety Building. They were charged with murder in the first degree for the death of nemesis Jack Kennedy in Point Place.



In this log book from 1891, ‘dead drunk’ described a suspect charged with causing a drunken disturbance. Another man arrested for drunkenness was called an ‘old soldier.’

They were taken down by Capt. Timiney, and officers Brennan, Fielding, Tafulski, McCarthy, Brown, and Michalak, part of an investigative group organized by the Toledo Police Department specifically to fight Licavoli and his gang.

In 1953, after Toledo purchased its first drunkometer, a device that measured a person’s alcohol content from their saliva gathered inside a balloon, drunken driving charges skyrocketed. On two consecutive days in 1955, 18 people were charged with operating a motor vehicle while under the influence; 35 others were charged with drunk and disorderly conduct.

“The clothes change, the mannerisms, the rules,” Mrs. Thieman said of her fellow officers’ past. “But the job doesn’t. The men and women who walked before us, we all did the same thing.”

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Published on March 5, 2017

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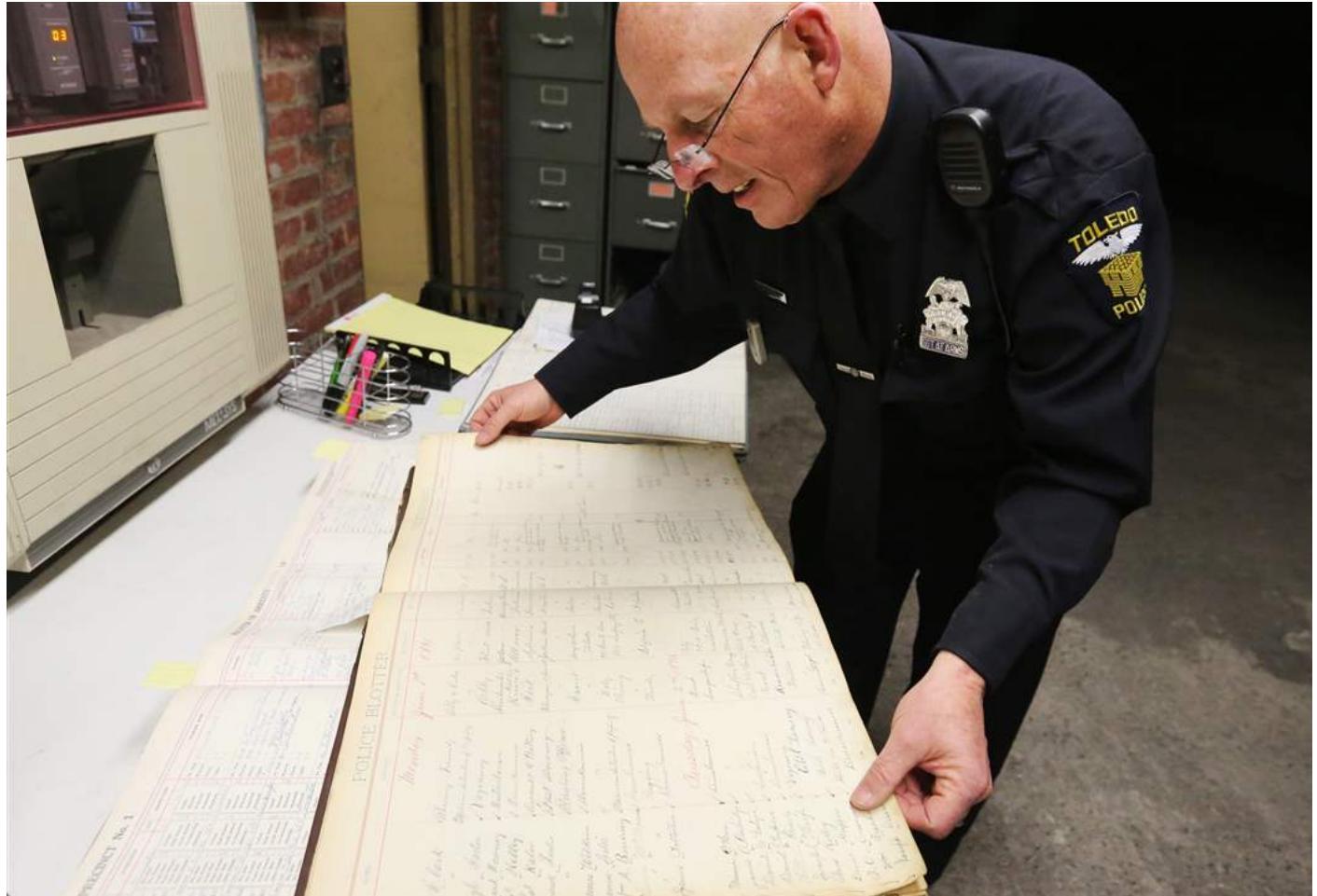
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Toledo Police Officer Phil Carroll reads the blue inked cursive that is found in an old police blotter in the attic of the Safety Building in downtown Toledo. The arrest logs, spanning a time period of about 1863 to the mid 1970s, had been at the Jerome Library's Center for Archival Collections Bowling Green State University.

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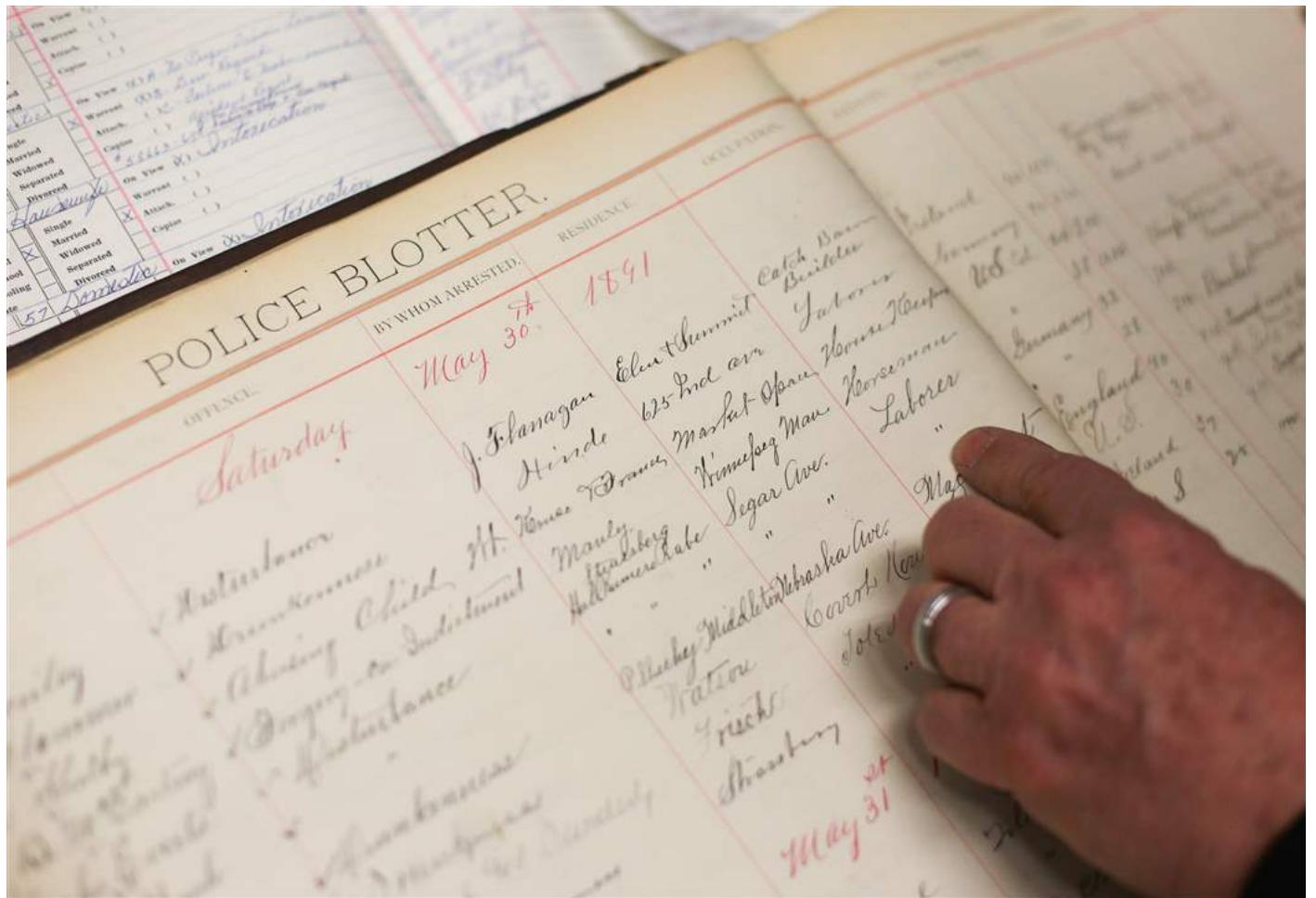
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In this log book from 1891, 'dead drunk' described a suspect charged with causing a drunken disturbance. Another man arrested for drunkenness called an 'old soldier.'

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**POLICE BLOTTER.**

| NAME            | OFFENCE                      | BY WHOM ARRESTED | RESIDENCE    | OCCUPATION                          |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
|                 |                              |                  |              | Wednesday May 27 <sup>th</sup> 1891 |
| George Homen    | Suspicion                    | Maloney          | Pittsburg    | Cone Maker                          |
| Hermann Seymour | Assault & Battery At         | Casey            | Auburndale   | Grinder                             |
| J. Krausch      | Violating Sidewalk Ordinance | Brout            | 406 Adams St | Clerk                               |
| John Wachter    | "                            | "                | East Toledo  | School boy                          |
| John Brown      | Drunkenness                  | Schultz          | Trenton Mich | Cabinet maker                       |
| Nos             | Drunk & Disorderly           | Strasburg        | Toledo O     | " "                                 |
| Dorn            | Drunkenness                  | Brout            | Holland, O   | Laborer                             |
| Ker             | Drunk & disorderly           | Bowles           | Toledo       | Fra.                                |
| Consign         | "                            | Sgt Marker &     |              |                                     |
| Y               | Suspicion                    |                  |              |                                     |

An 1891 Toledo Police blotter is pictured in the attic of the Safety Building.

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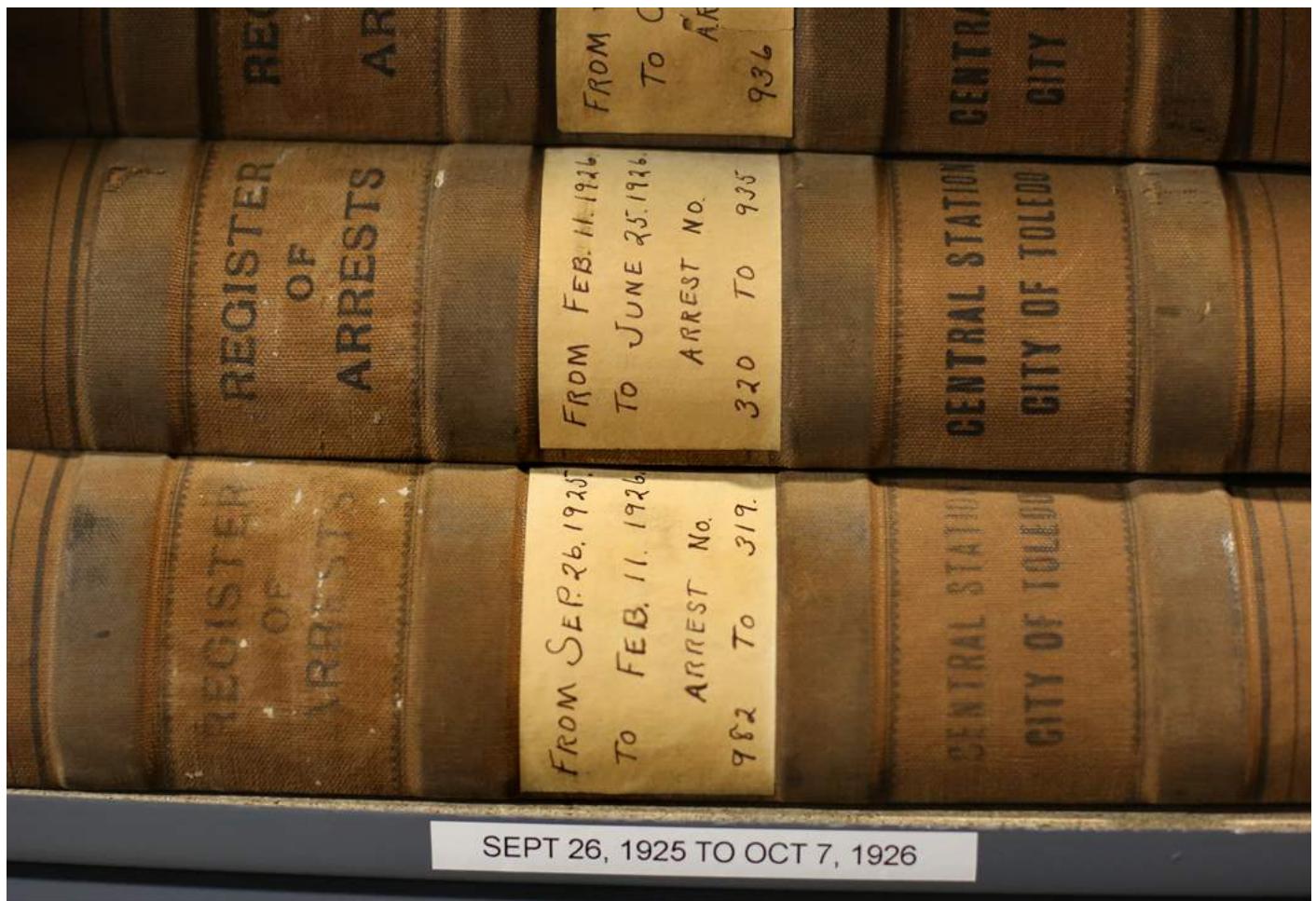
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|                 |                              |                         |                      |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| John Crook      | ✓ Drunkenness                | Cooper                  | Toledo               |
| Thomas Henry    | ✓ Disturbance                | Ashby & Powder          | Toledo               |
| "               | ✓ Assault & Battery          | Powder & Ashby          | Caston               |
| James Dorn      | ✓ Disturbance                | "                       | "                    |
| William Murphy  | ✓ Petit Larceny              | Brown                   | Neollow              |
| John Gavin      | Suspicion                    | Streiter & Kenny        | 67 Syc               |
| John Hallet     | ✓ "                          | "                       | 53 Wm                |
| Ezra E Bear     | ✓ Peddling without License   | McLaughlin              | Milwaukee            |
| John Hallet     | ✓ Begging                    | M Flanagan              | Water &              |
| Frank Mcholahan | ✓ Petit Larceny              | McLaughlin              | Milwaukee            |
| Maurice McCabe  | ✓ Interfering with Constable | Norman (Haleman) Nebras | Rue Weiss Wash & Sup |
| Frank Smith     | Violating Sidewalk Ordinance | Hall & Kummer           | Hall & Kummer        |
|                 |                              | Schultz                 | Wood Co              |

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