**James Henry Lawson**

1859- April 1925

James H. Lawson was born in 1959 in Kentucky. While it is uncertain as to when he came to Yellow Springs, we do know that in January of 1883 he married Tinna (Lucinda) Newsom of Spring Valley, Ohio and raised their family in Yellow Springs. They had four children: James Jr., Elmer, Albert, and Jennie. James Jr. would die in 1905 at the age of 22 from lung problems.

In 1906 he entered into a contract with the Village of Yellow Springs to light the street lamps. Per the terms of the contract he was to be paid an annual amount of $8.50 per post. This contract also required him to provide the fuel and mantel and clean and repair each post as needed. The contract also mandated that each post be painted annually and he had to supply the paint. James maintained this contract with the village until 1910 when Village Council decided to abandon these lights as construction was beginning on the new electric street light system.

Owing to his honesty and dependability, and in no small part likely due to the relationships he established making his rounds lighting and extinguishing the street lights, James was elected Marshall in 1913 by a very wide margin. He would later be re-elected and served in this capacity until 1920.

One of the more interesting and widely reported arrests he made occurred in 1919. Dr. Laura May had arrived in town and her business partner had circulated flyers advertising her availability to see patients. Acting on a complaint filed by the State Board of Medical Examiners, Marshall Lawson placed the doctor and her associate under arrest for practicing medicine without a certificate.

James H. Lawson also performed other work for the village such as working on the streets and clearing land at the cemetery. It was not uncommon for council minutes to record multiple disbursements for he and other elected officials. For example the council minutes of March 16, 1915 show a disbursement of $25 as his Marshall salary from the Safety Fund. But also shows a payout of $29 from the Health Fund for work that included the killing of ten dogs (possibly rabies?).

His work for the village and commitment to the village created a legacy that his children and grandchildren would continue.

Elmer Lawson would head up the street maintenance and later serve on the village council that wrote the charter under which the village currently operates.

Albert Lawson would return from France after World War I and work for the Yellow Springs School System.

Albert’s son James Elliott Lawson would serve on village council and as mayor for nearly 10 years.

Albert’s son Nathanial Lawson would work for the Yellow Springs School System after retirement from Morris Bean

Albert’s son Reginald would serve on the fire department

Albert’s daughter Phyllis would co-chair the movement to get the Women’s Park, work for the Senior Citizens, and be one of the founding members of the Yellow Springs Historical Society.

*Kevin Jackson*

Sources:

Village of Yellow Springs Roll #2 Council Minutes Vol. 5-8 1900-1937, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio; The Xenia Evening Gazette April 3, 1919 p.8