

Thieves Beware

For the preservation of law and order, voluntary associations have been organized by the people of many communities in Iowa whenever necessity has required. Though extralegal in character, these spontaneous agencies of self-government have been scrupulously formal in organization and procedure, as the Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand River Vigilance Committee will indicate. This document is reprinted in THE PALIMPSEST from a vest-pocket copy published at Leon in April, 1876.—THE EDITOR.

PREAMBLE.

We, whose names are annexed, desirous of forming a society to shield us from the depredation of thieves and robbers, counterfeiters, incendiaries and all other criminal acts, and to afford mutual aid in reclaiming stolen property, and arresting thieves, &c., &c., do pledge ourselves to be governed by the following Constitution and By Laws.

CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE 1.

This association shall be known by the name and style of THE GRAND RIVER (DECATUR COUNTY, IOWA,) VIGILANCE COMMITTEE.

ARTICLE 2.

The officers shall consist of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Door-Keeper, and to be elected at their regular meeting in December, annually.

ARTICLE 3.

SECTION 1. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all the meetings of the Company, enforce a due observance of the Constitution and By Laws, to see that all the officers perform their respective duties, appoint all committees and officers not otherwise provided for, and call special meetings in case of an emergency.

SEC. 2. It shall be the duty of the Vice President to render such aid as the President may require of him, and in the absence of the President, perform his duties.

SEC. 3. The Secretary shall keep a correct record of every meeting of the Company, receive initiation fees, register the names of members, credit

the amount paid in, and pay the same over to the Treasurer, and take his receipt therefor.

SEC. 4. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to pay all orders drawn on him by the President and none others; he shall receive all moneys of the Company and hold the same until the expiration of his term, unless otherwise ordered by the Company; he shall keep a full and correct account of all moneys received and expended; he shall give the Company a quarterly statement of the funds, and deliver up, when legally called upon, all moneys, books and papers, pertaining to his office, to his successor in office.

There shall be a standing committee of five, who shall be elected annually, whose duty it shall be to meet and consult with the President and Vice President, at such time and place as they may designate, and in the absence of the President and Vice President, the committee, or as many as may be present, shall have power to transact such business as they may deem of importance to the welfare of the Company, and one of their number shall act as President.

ARTICLE 5.

The President, with the consent of the standing committee, shall appoint twenty men of the Company, whose duty it shall be when ordered by the

President, Vice President, or three or more of the standing committee to pursue, (according to their instruction,) and use their utmost exertion to apprehend such person or persons who may be thought guilty of theft, or any other crime enumerated in the preamble, and all persons so engaged for the Company, shall be allowed a reasonable compensation for their service, out of the funds of the Company.

ARTICLE 6.

In case the Treasury becomes exhausted, the President and Standing Committee shall have power to levy a tax on all the personal property of every member.

ARTICLE 7.

Any person wishing to become a member of the Company, shall make application to one of its members, accompanying the application with fifty cents, after which the name of the applicant shall be presented to the Company at its next regular meeting, as a proper person to become a member; whereupon the members present shall take a vote, and if three black balls are cast against said applicant, he or she shall be declared not a member.

ARTICLE 8.

This Company shall hold its meetings with

closed doors, and none but its members, and members of similar companies shall be permitted to be present.

ARTICLE 9.

This Company shall meet regularly at one o'clock p. m., on or before the full moon on Monday, in December, March, June and September, of each year.

ARTICLE 10.

It shall be the duty of every male member to attend the regular meetings of the Company, and any member who shall fail to attend without a reasonable excuse shall be fined fifty cents for each non-attendance and three failures in succession shall suspend the person so failing to attend until all his arrearages are paid.

ARTICLE 11.

The benefits of this Company shall descend and entail upon the widows, minors, heirs of deceased members, by them paying the usual assessments of the Company.

ARTICLE 12.

It shall be the duty (after being notified) of every able bodied male member to attend the call of the President or Standing Committee, and to obey their orders and instructions which may be

given for the recovery of the thief and stolen property, and any member failing to attend or obey instruction shall be subject to a fine of not more than five, nor less than one dollar for every such offence.

ARTICLE 13.

Any member who shall knowingly aid or protect thieves, robbers or counterfeiters shall be expelled.

ARTICLE 14.

Any member suspected of playing cards for money or gambling, or giving aid or countenance to persons engaged in stealing and robbing, shall be duly examined, and if found guilty shall be expelled, and at every annual meeting the character of every member shall be examined.

ARTICLE 15.

It shall be the duty of the Secretary, at each meeting, to make out a list of the delinquents of the preceding meeting, and deliver the same to the President for collection.

ARTICLE 16.

This Constitution shall not be altered or amended, except at the annual meeting in December.

BY LAWS.

ARTICLE 1.

Whenever a horse or other property shall be stolen from any member of this Company, he or she shall report the fact immediately to the President or Standing Committee; whereupon he or they shall call a meeting and adopt such measures as they may think proper to recover said property and apprehend the thief.

ARTICLE 2.

There shall be at the regular meeting in December a door-keeper elected, who shall take charge of the door and enforce the eighth article of the Constitution, and suffer none to withdraw without leave of the President.

ARTICLE 3.

If any member is found guilty of having divulged or revealed any matters or proceedings of the Company, that may have been declared *private* by the President, he shall be expelled.

ARTICLE 4.

No frivolous excuses, such as forgetting the time, attending to ordinary business, &c., will be received from any member for not attending to the regular meeting of the Company, and any member coming in after roll has been called shall be considered delinquent.

ARTICLE 5.

Nine [later changed to seven] members shall constitute a quorum to do business at a regular meeting.

ARTICLE 6.

There shall be a pass word and countersign given by the President whereby a person can obtain admittance into our order.

ARTICLE 7.

The President shall open the regular meeting at one o'clock p. m., by calling the Company to order, after which the following shall be the order of business to wit:

1. Calling the roll.
2. Reading minutes of previous meeting.
3. Reception of visiting members.
4. Receiving proposition for membership.
5. Receiving reports from committees.
6. Attending to unfinished business on the journal.
7. Miscellaneous business.
8. Treasurer's and Secretary's report.
9. Has any member anything to offer for the benefit of the Company.
10. Adjournment.