

Oxford Clerk's Association — Annual Meeting.

The sixth annual meeting of the Municipal Clerk's Association of the County of Oxford was held at the court house at Woodstock on September 2nd. The meeting was attended by every municipal clerk in the county, including Mr. James White, the county clerk. The president, Mr. A. McFarlane, of South Norwich, opened the meeting with an address, in the course of which he called attention to the principal changes made in the statutes affecting municipalities at the last session of the Legislature, as well as other matters which he thought should be dealt with by the association.

The county clerk delivered an address in reference to the election of county councillors in January last, and expressed satisfaction with the manner in which the election was conducted. He thought the understanding arrived at at the last meeting of clerks had greatly assisted in securing uniformity throughout the county in conducting that election. He asked that before next election the association prepare and adopt a form of election notice, and attend to some other details that were not foreseen before last election.

Mr. Cody, of Embro, read a very interesting paper on "The Preparation of the Voters' List," which was fully discussed by the meeting, and drew out many and varied notions regarding voters and voters' lists. Mr. Cody's suggestions for improving the Voters' Lists Act in particular provoked much discussion.

Mr. John Peers, of East Oxford, read a paper on the Municipal Amendment Act, 1897, in which he not only noted the changes made, but also showed their bearing upon the act amended. This was a carefully prepared paper, and while discussing it the amendments were pretty well threshed out. During the discussion it was suggested that each council should procure for its clerk a copy of the *Ontario Gazette* containing the amendments of the Municipal and Assessment Acts as soon as possible after adjournment of the Legislature. The usefulness of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD in this respect was noted and commended.

Mr. M. F. Ainslie, of Blenheim, read a paper on "The Assessment Amendment Act," which treated the changes made in that line in very much the same manner as the last paper dealt with those made in the Municipal Act. Mr. Ainslie congratulated his fellow clerks upon the few important changes made in the assessment laws at last session of the Legislature, and expressed the hope that a precedent had been established that would influence the Legislature in its future dealings with this and the other municipal laws.

Mr. W. G. Francis, of West Oxford, read a paper on "Cattle By-laws," which provoked a long and interesting discussion of the principle and practice of selling cow-tags. In four townships of the county a cow-tag by-law is enforced, and although

some legal authorities doubt their legality it has not been necessary to defend the by-law in the courts. In fact, in those townships in which the by-law has been in operation for two or more years the rate-payers are generally well satisfied with it. The discussion resulted in the association adopting a resolution approving of the principle of the cow-tag by-law.

The election of officers resulted in A. McFarlane, of South Norwich, being elected president for the sixth time, and William Fairley, of Norwich village, was elected secretary for the fifth time.

This concluded a busy and most interesting meeting.

Mr. Cody's paper in reference to voters' list was as follows :

At our last annual meeting your humble servant was assigned the very difficult task of preparing a paper on how best to prepare a voters' list, and also suggest some improvements in the present act. My system of preparing a voters' list is to



MR. A. McFARLANE,  
President Oxford Clerks Association.

Mr. McFarlane was born in the village of Waterford, County of Norfolk, forty-five years ago, but has lived in Otterville for over forty years. He was elected Councillor for South Norwich in 1878, as Deputy-Reeve in 1881, and Reeve in 1882-3-4. He was appointed Township Clerk in 1885, and is well informed in the working of the Municipal, Drainage and Assessment Acts, and particularly the Local Option Act, as his township defended the celebrated case of Huron vs. South Norwich. Mr. McFarlane is also Police Magistrate for Otterville. He takes an active interest in the Oxford Clerks' Association, of which he has been president since its formation.

take a copy of the previous year and carefully go through it, striking off the names of persons since deceased, and of those since disqualified from various reasons, and in the blank spaces between alphabetical sections insert the names of all persons who have since become qualified, as found upon the last revised assessment roll. I then revise the numbers where necessary. As to my suggestions of im-

provement or amendments to the act I know there will be honest differences of opinion, as no two municipalities are alike in every respect, and all officials and judges administer the act from their standpoint of interpretation. Hence, it becomes me, "unlearned in the law," to be very diffident in offering suggestions. However, I will submit a few for your consideration and for the purpose of provoking discussion. I would make it necessary for each would-be voter to make personal application to have his or her name entered upon the voters' list, and not through another person or agent. I would make clerk's notice to all parties concerned as obligatory to attend all sittings of a court of revision as the subpoena now issued by the County Judge or the Clerk of the County Court. It is often very inconvenient for the complainant to be compelled to travel to the county town for a subpoena when he should get it from the local municipal clerk. The assessment roll should be final and conclusive after being confirmed by the court of revision and the time for appeal to the County Judge has elapsed, so far as the voters' list is concerned. There should be a change in the act whereby the local council could form into a court of revision on the voters' list, similar to that on the assessment roll, and enter upon the voters' list all persons who have been omitted, wrongfully or otherwise, who are at that date duly qualified, or strike from the list those who are not legally qualified. This plan would save a good deal of expense, and often a great amount of irritation and ill-feeling, and any person who felt they were not receiving fair play or justice from said court could have the same right to appeal to the County Judge as they now have. This would be a great boon to the hundreds of ministers assuming new charges every year, who lose their franchise because there is no such simple and cheap way of getting their names on the list the first year, and they do not like to apply to the Judge. They usually move to a new charge after the lists are made out. I consider it a useless waste of lists, under section 6 of the act, where we are required to send each year ten copies of the voters' list to each of the following persons: Reeve of the municipality, member of the House of Commons, member of the Legislative Assembly, and to each of the defeated candidates of both houses for the riding. I would make it compulsory for all freeholders to have their deeds of qualification registered before being allowed to vote. My last suggestion may be thought rather conservative, but I have always held this view, and think it would be a great improvement in the act, namely: I would withdraw the franchise from all tenants for municipal purposes. I think it a great injustice that a tenant should have the power of neutralizing the vote of the bona fide freeholder, perhaps his own landlord in many cases. I might suggest several further changes in the act, but think these will suffice for the present.