

Ask the Chief.....

Is it true that Ohio once had a law that it was illegal to be arrested on Sunday?

Yes. As well, it was illegal at one time to fish for whales in Ohio on Sunday. In Cleveland you could not catch mice without a hunting license. Toledo declared it against the law to teach your pet to smoke cigars. In Columbus it was once illegal to sell Corn Flakes on Sunday. In Cleveland women could not wear patent leather shoes "lest one see the reflections of their underwear".

Such laws are referred to as the "Blue Laws" which date back to the 1700-1800's that were once on the books, or which are still on the books but not enforced. Blue laws were originally religious laws passed to prohibit activities that prevented people from attending Church on Sundays. In our nation such Blue Laws were reflected in laws that once prevented the sale of alcohol on Sunday, as well as requiring department stores and auto dealerships to be closed on Sundays as well. The term Blue Law began as a disparaging term referring to the moral codes insisting on sexual and moral virtue passed in England by Oliver Cromwell's supporters known as the blue stocking circle.

Every State in the Union once had or still has "Blue Laws". Such laws include: In Detroit it was once against the law to destroy your old radio. In Alabama it was not only against the law to have an ice cream cone in your back pocket at any time, it was equally illegal to "flick boogers into the wind". In Idaho residents could not fish from a Giraffe's back. In Pennsylvania women could not sweep dirt under the living room rug. In Oklahoma dogs had to have a permit to congregate in groups of three or more. In Kentucky a man could not purchase a hat without his wife present. In Massachusetts all men had to carry a rifle to church with them on Sundays. And in Iowa horses were forbidden from eating fire hydrants. And in Montana "worrying squirrels" were not to be tolerated.

Such laws are comical as we reflect on them today, but some now seen as absurd have a sound basis. In San Gabriel, California bees may not live within the city limits. This did not mean that police carried very small handcuffs to arrest violating bees, but rather too many bee keepers in the city limits created a bee problem and so such bee hives were forced to be placed outside the city limits. Many such laws were created because people actually did absurd acts that required absurd laws to be passed. One such law in one State declares it is against the law to have sex in the back of an ambulance when it is responding to an emergency. Obviously it happened and the law was created as a reaction.

It is a crazy world and often our civil and criminal laws reflect our changing and sometimes regressing society.

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