

2nd

(Camp 1)

Military crimes

HERMISTON, CRIME, GROWTH, PAYROLL

2/15 SPRAGUE



CONTRACTORS FOR  
UMATILLA ORDNANCE DEPOT,  
HERMISTON, OREGON

(CONTRACT NO. W6974 QM-6)

LCS:h

## J. A. TERTELING & SONS

CONTRACTORS

HEAD OFFICE: BOISE, IDAHO

PLEASE ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS  
TO THE FIRM AT HERMISTON, OREGON

October 3, 1941

Hon. Governor Charles A. Sprague  
State of Oregon  
Salem, Oregon

Dear Sir:

We invite your attention to the enclosed edition of The Hermiston Herald, dated October 2nd, and the various stories describing three major crimes, all within a period of approximately a week in Umatilla County, and two within the city limits of Hermiston.

Obviously, it is necessary to take immediate steps to prevent recurrence of such crimes.

For your information, the rate of construction progress of the Umatilla Ordnance Depot has been increased by the Federal Government officials so that the major features of construction will be completed by Thanksgiving Day, sixty days ahead of required completion date. This stepped-up rate naturally required greater labor output and at this date, more than 6,700 men are now on our payrolls, besides the employees of several sub-contractors, architect-engineers, and Government personnel on the project, or a total of approximately 7,500 men employed on the project.

Our own payroll, as prime contractor, for current pay week is approximately \$340,000.00 and this sum of money is placed in circulation weekly, approximately 80% of which is handled by Hermiston business houses and the bank there.

Hundreds of these pay checks are taken to the various places of business in Hermiston, and nearby towns, where the checks are cashed and perhaps a minor purchase is made. Many checks are taken directly to the Hermiston bank for cashing or deposit.

The balance of these checks are mailed by employees to their families.

The sudden presence of over a million dollars in payroll per month in this community certainly requires the constant vigilance of all local law enforcement officers on duty and, it is our opinion that the State Police force should be augmented here immediately for at least ninety days. We appreciate the fact that your State Policemen are now including the Hermiston area in their work; however, it is our belief that a special squad of not less than six men should be assigned to duty at once in order to prevent further outbreaks of crime in this vicinity.

October 3, 1941

Yesterday we were advised that the recent mail and service station robberies in Hermiston have resulted in the cancellation of hold-up and robbery insurance policies previously carried by certain merchants of Hermiston by the insuring companies. Various business men of Hermiston have expressed themselves unwilling to accept and cash employees' checks, according to information given to us, and this simply transfers the burden of paying additional payroll checks to the one bank, which is already extended to the limit of its building and personnel facilities in this respect weekly.

We are advised from reliable sources that there is a definite increase in the daily number of strangers in Hermiston streets, not the working man type, but more of the questionable variety, all interested in the details of what is taking place here and for how long, and there is apprehension regarding their intentions. Frankly, some of the business men are of the opinion that the place is a good spot for a hold-up or robbery of some proportion sooner or later.

Also, of more or less importance is the highway recently completed, between the Butter Creek Road and the entrance of the project, over which heavy car traffic exists practically 24 hours per day. It is believed that a police officer ought to patrol this road during most of each day and night to insist upon proper observance of state traffic regulations as well as any incidental infractions of law.

We shall be glad to furnish you with any additional information you may require on this subject and assure you of full cooperation with your officers in the satisfactory solution of the problem described.

Respectfully submitted,

J. A. TERTELING & SONS

By:

  
Project Manager