

The 150 Year History of

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

April, 1850  George T. Burrill	September, 1851  James R. Barton	January, 1856  David W. Alexander	August, 1856*  C.C. Hale	January, 1857  James R. Barton
January, 1857*  Elijah Bettis	September, 1857  William C. Getman	January, 1858*  James Thompson	September, 1860  Thomas A. Sanchez	September, 1868  James J. Burns
September, 1872  William R. Rowland	September, 1876  David W. Alexander	September, 1877  H. M. Mitchell	September, 1879  William R. Rowland	November, 1882  Alvin C. Currier
November, 1884  George E. Gard	November, 1886  James C. Kays	November, 1888  Martin G. Aguirre	November, 1890  E. D. Gibson	November, 1892  John C. Cline
November, 1894  John Burr	November, 1898  William A. Hammel	November, 1902  Will A. White	November, 1906  William A. Hammel	November, 1914  John C. Cline
March, 1921*  William J. Traeger	December, 1932*  Eugene W. Biscailuz	December, 1958  Peter J. Ditchess	June, 1982*  Sherman Block	December, 1998  Leroy D. Waca



Los Angeles County Sheriffs since 1850

*Appointed to fill the unexpired term of his predecessor.

The 150 Year History of The County of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department

~ Los Angeles County, 1849 ~

"There's gold in California!"

THIS CRY WAS A CRY HEARD AROUND THE WORLD. ALMOST OVERNIGHT CROWDS FLOCKED TO LOS ANGELES BELIEVING GOLD WAS WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED BY MEN WILLING TO WORK HARD AND SACRIFICE.

FOLLOWING THIS LURE OF EASY MONEY, EVERY TYPE OF CRIMINAL DESCENDED ON LOS ANGELES. ESCAPED CRIMINALS, FUGITIVES, CARD SHARKS, HORSE THIEVES, ROBBERS AND MORE WAITED TO VICTIMIZE THE UNSUSPECTING. STREET



Los Angeles circa 1870

CRIME GREW SO RAMPANT THAT LOS ANGELES BECAME KNOWN AS THE MURDER CAPITAL OF THE STATE.

TO DISSUADE THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT, JUSTICE HAD TO BE SWIFT AND SEVERE. "LYNCH LAW" WAS A NAME MOST FREQUENTLY APPLIED TO MINERS' COURT. PUBLIC WHIPPINGS ON THE BARE BACK, BRANDING ON THE CHEEK

WITH THE LETTER "R" (RENEGADE), AND SHAVED HEAD AND EYEBROWS WERE OTHER FREQUENTLY USED MODES OF PUNISHMENT.

Here are a few highlights from that time period:

1850 In response to lawlessness, the Sheriff's Department of Los Angeles County was formed in April, 1850. Elected to office for one year, the first Sheriff was George T. Burrill. His staff consisted of two deputies for the entire area.

1852 The Los Angeles Rangers were organized. The Rangers were a posse of a hundred men, ready to ride on a moment's notice. Taking orders from the office of the Sheriff, they were perhaps one of the most colorful law enforcement bodies to be organized in California. Combining both Mexican and American influences, mounted and uniformed, the Rangers formed a stalwart, handsome troop, giving off an aura of romanticism. The *Southern Californian*, a local newspaper of the time, remarked, "We are proud to think that the Los Angeles Rangers have the full confidence of our whole communi-



Sheriff David Alexander
1856 & 1876-1877

ty." The *Los Angeles Star* praised the Rangers as a step toward improving matters in the area.

1857 Three weeks after being elected to a second term, Sheriff James Barton and several members of his posse were killed:

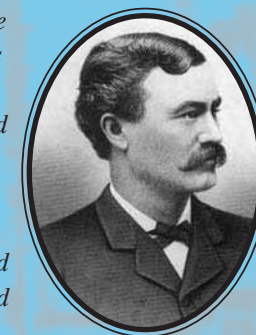
"On a tip, Sheriff Barton and his posse set out to capture a group of bandits. On the morning of January 23, 1857, they encountered the outlaws. In the ensuing fight, the Sheriff and all but two of his men died, and three of the bandits were killed. The Sheriff and his dead companions were carried home. Immediately after the funerals, another posse took up the chase. A total of 52 bandits were captured, 11 of whom were hanged at Fort Hill--a rise of ground behind the jail--where a temporary gallows was constructed."

Fort Hill, today, is north of Los Angeles and Aliso Streets.

1858 On January 7, 1858, after serving only seven days in office, Sheriff William C. Getman (once Lieutenant of the Rangers) was killed while attempting to arrest a "maniac."

The incident was reported as follows:

"The maniac was hiding at the Monte Pico, a pawn shop near Los Angeles and Aliso Streets. There the Sheriff found the suspect locked and barricaded in a room. While the Sheriff tried to force entry, the suspect threw open the door, ran out and, to the dismay of all, pulled a pistol from his pocket, discharged the weapon, and Sheriff Getman dropped on the spot. The suspect then retreated into the pawn shop and fired at the crowd which had gathered. A deputy finally killed the desperado, but not before the desperado fired 20 or 30 shots, four or five of which passed through the deputy's clothing."



Sheriff Martin G. Aguirre
1888-1890

Courageously, Sheriff James F. Burns confronted the crowd and called on "all good law abiding citizens" to quell the hanging and shooting. Sheriff Burns hastily formed a posse of 25 deputies and restored order. The story of the massacre was heard around the world. The United States government subsequently made an official apology to China for this outrageous act. The Sheriff obtained 150 warrants against known mob members and arrested them, one by one.

The word was out. The courageous former school teacher, Sheriff James F. Burns, had shown that law and order would prevail, and taught the wild frontier town a lesson it would not forget.

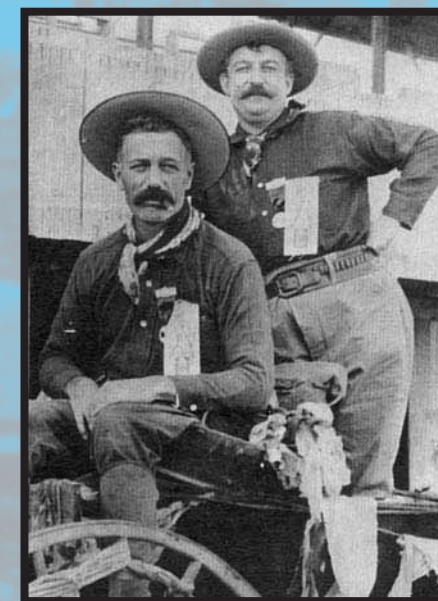
25 men have served Los Angeles County as Sheriff since 1850. 19 were elected and six were appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve the unexpired terms of their predecessors. Two were killed in the line of duty. Of those appointed, four were re-elected to the office. The youngest man ever elected to the office of Sheriff was

1871 The culmination of the lynch law period occurred quickly and unexpectedly. On the afternoon of October 25, 1871, Los Angeles burst into madness, and a drama unfolded which was to sicken participants and bring about the realization that law and order must prevail.

A tong war among local Chinese resulted in the arrest of one of their leaders. The next day, a deputy sheriff accompanied the leader, supposedly to obtain money for his bail. A fight started and the deputy was killed. The citizens, hearing of the deputy's death, began a riot against the Chinese which included lynchings and shootings.



Sheriff James F. Burns
1868-1872



Sheriff Will White (left) & William Hammel
Sheriff White served 1902-1906 and
Sheriff Hammel served 1898-1902 and again 1906-1914.



Margaret O. Adams

In 1912, Sheriff Hammel appointed her as a deputy, the first woman in the U.S. to hold this position.

William B. Rowland, who was sworn in when he was 25 years old (in 1871), and was re-elected three times. The record for the longest consecutive service goes to Sheriff Eugene Biscailuz, who completed 51 years with the Department: from deputy in 1907 to Sheriff in 1932, with retirement in 1958. The present Sheriff, Lee Baca, joined as a deputy sheriff in 1965 and continued up through the ranks until he was promoted to Chief in 1992. Lee Baca was elected Sheriff of Los Angeles County in November 1998.

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The County of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department

Important Dates & Developments

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| <p>1907 • The Department purchased its first automobile for use by the Sheriff.</p> <p>1912 • Mrs. Margaret Q. Adams was sworn in as the first woman deputy in the United States.
• Local constables were absorbed into the Department as deputies.
• Deputies first assigned to night duty.</p> <p>1913 • The fee system of compensation was abolished and the Civil Service merit system was installed. This was one of the most important steps toward modernizing the Department.</p> <p>1915 • The Bureau of Identification was established and the fingerprint system was used.</p> <p>1921 • The first Sheriff's Department Detention "Honor Camp" was constructed and the "Chain Gang" system was abolished.
• The Record Bureau was formed.
• The Homicide Detail was established.</p> <p>1922 • The Robbery, Narcotic, Auto Theft and Liquor Details were established.</p> <p>1924 • The first sub-stations were completed. They were the Florence (became Firestone Park Station in 1955) & East Los Angeles Stations.</p> <p>1926 • The Hall of Justice Jail was completed.
• Completion of Vermont (became Lennox in 1948), Norwalk, Temple City & Newhall Stations.</p> <p>1927 • The Altadena and San Dimas Stations were dedicated.</p> <p>1928 • The Crime Laboratory and the County-wide teletype system were developed.
• The Fairfax Station was completed (became West Hollywood Station in 1957).</p> <p>1931 • The Aero Squadron was created.</p> <p>1932 • The marked car patrol system was inaugurated.</p> <p>1933 • The Silver Mounted Posse was formed, marking the beginning of the Sheriff's Reserves.</p> <p>1934 • The Malibu outpost was completed.</p> <p>1937 • The Montrose and Lancaster (became Antelope Valley Station in 1961) Stations open.</p> <p>1938 • Wayside Honor Rancho was completed.</p> <p>1959 • Lakewood Station was completed.
• First composite drawn for the Sheriff's Department by artist Jack Moffett.</p> <p>1963 • Sybil Brand Institute for Women opened.</p> <p>1964 • City of Industry Station was completed.</p> <p>1966 • "Sky Knight" helicopter patrol was initiated.</p> <p>1970 • Special Enforcement Bureau and Emergency Services Detail facilities were completed.</p> <p>1972 • Automated Index System was initiated with instant access to criminal records from finger-prints from other justice agencies & summary probation sentences from County courts.
• Santa Clarita Valley Station was dedicated, replacing the old Newhall Station.
• The first female deputy assigned to patrol.</p> <p>1973 • Communications Center began operations with high-speed dispatch facilities.</p> <p>1974 • Carson Station was completed.
• New Montrose Station was completed and renamed Crescenta Valley Station.</p> <p>1975 • Lomita Station was completed.</p> <p>1976 • Crime Laboratory moved to expanded new facilities that accommodate the latest scientific equipment and techniques.</p> | <p>1977 • Lynwood Station opened when that City contracted with the County for law enforcement.</p> <p>1978 • After incorporation, Lancaster became the 32nd city to contract for the Sheriff's services.</p> <p>1979 • Canine program uses dogs for searching and bomb detection.</p> <p>1980 • "Cops Love Kids" program establishes a firm relationship of mutual trust between children and deputies.
• First full-time female law enforcement helicopter pilot in the nation's history.</p> <p>1983 • Marina Del Rey Station was completed.</p> <p>1984 • Dedication of the Sheriff's Training and Regional Services (STARS) Center in Whittier.</p> <p>1985 • New Avalon Station dedicated.</p> <p>1986 • Substance Abuse and Narcotics Education (SANE) Bureau created.</p> <p>1987 • Opening of Pitchess Detention Center, North Facility.
• New Walnut Station dedicated.</p> <p>1988 • Beretta 9mm semiautomatic pistol became official duty weapon.
• High-Tech Mobile Digital Communications System for dispatching calls implemented.</p> <p>1990 • Transit Services Bureau formed for law enforcement on the new Metro Blue Line trains.
• North County Correctional Facility opens.
• Bomb robot "ANDROS" was dedicated.</p> <p>1991 • New Lost Hills Station dedicated.</p> <p>1993 • Hall of Justice Jail closes.
• Sheriff's Headquarters moves to Monterey Park from the Hall of Justice.</p> <p>1994 • Marshal's Department merged with the Sheriff's Department.
• Lynwood Regional Justice Center (including the Century Station and Century Regional Detention Facility) dedicated.</p> <p>1995 • Promotion of first woman, Helena Ashby, to the rank of Division Chief.</p> <p>1996 • Dedication of new Lancaster Station.
• "MAX" BR-100 mini-bomb robot introduced.</p> <p>1997 • Twin Towers Correctional Facility opens.</p> <p>1998 • On December 7, 1998, Leroy D. Baca became the 25th person to serve Los Angeles County as Sheriff.</p> <p>1999 • The Asian Crime Task Force was established.
• The Deputy Leadership Institute was established.
• The Vital Intervention and Directional Alternatives (VIDA) program for "at-risk" youth expanded Department wide.
• After 44 years of being one of six contract cities utilizing Lakewood Station, Cerritos Station became an autonomous command.</p> <p>• Compton Station, opened when that City contracted with the County for law enforcement.
• The Community Transition Unit was established to provide inmates with the tools and life-skills for a successful reintegration into the community.</p> <p>• LASD2, a thirty-year vision for the Department, was established.</p> <p>2001 • The Office of Independent Review was established to provide an independent critique of the Department's internal administrative and criminal investigations.
• The Los Angeles Community College District contracted with the County for law enforcement.
• The Hate Crimes Task Force was established.</p> |
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