



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

SUPERVISOR THOMAS BURDICK

Term: 1855-1857
District: Not Applicable
Date of Birth: ~1795
Death: ~1877

Thomas Burdick served as county supervisor for two terms, in 1855 and again in 1856. In 1855 he was temporarily replaced by John G. Downey, prominent businessman and future governor of California.

Burdick was born in 1795 in Canajoharie, N.Y. His father was a veteran of the Revolution and he served in the War of 1812.

He became a farmer and married Anna Higley in 1828. Together they had seven children - five boys and two girls.

In 1836 Burdick was appointed recording clerk for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. One year later he became a school teacher, justice of the peace, and member of the Kirtland high council.

In 1846 Burdick and his family moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he became the town clerk, postmaster and the first judge of Pottawattamie County.

Between 1846 and 1852, Council Bluffs, then known as Kanesville, was the headquarters for a substantial Mormon population in western Iowa. Kanesville was one of the main stopping-off points for thousands of Mormons on their trek to the West. During this time Brigham Young was named president of the church and Burdick was assigned by church elders to help to supervise the movement of these early settlers to the West as quickly as possible.

At one time as many as 31 small encampments were clustered in and about Kanesville. At its height, Kanesville consisted of 350 log cabins, two log tabernacles, a post office, and numerous shops, stores, and other business establishments. Wheat, corn, and many vegetables thrived then, as they do today, in the rich riverbed soil near the bluffs. The town's most pressing problem, to provide adequate food, shelter, employment, and wagon outfits for large numbers of poor immigrants "passing through," was made easier by the California Gold Rush of 1849-1851, which resulted in a boom for Kanesville and other towns. The gold rush greatly expedited the migration while transforming Kanesville from a Mormon into a "non-denominational" town. By the summer of 1852, more than 12,000 Mormons - 6,100 from Great Britain alone - had traveled West via Kanesville, ending the period of concentrated

Mormon presence in the area.

In 1853 Burdick and his family headed West, leading a company of more than 100 wagons to San Bernardino, Calif., and soon thereafter to Los Angeles.

Only two years later he was elected county supervisor. His son Cyrus was a co-founder of the city of Pomona.

In 1877 Burdick died of apoplexy (internal bleeding). He was 82.

Source: Los Angeles County Records; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints History; Kaneshville, Iowa Historical Records; L.A. Express Obituary, 1877.