



Los Angeles County
Sheriff's Department

**HISTORY OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT (1849-1871)**

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEVELOPMENTS - 1907 to present

1849 One of the first consequences of the unprecedented immigration rush from all parts of the world into this almost unknown and semi-primitive part of the country was to render law and order virtually extinct.

Enthusiastic men left their responsibilities at home with their families and came to California expecting to go into the gold fields, pick up a fortune and return home. This air of adventure and uncertainty as to California's status as a territory, made conditions so chaotic that lawlessness was the rule, rather than the exception.

Over one hundred thousand men from all quarters of the globe were suddenly thrown together in a new land that was without established government.

Was ever the stage better set for such lawlessness?

Yet, law and order did develop. Severe verdicts were the rule:

For stealing . . . "Should in one hour be hung by the neck until dead."

Lynch law was a name most frequently applied to miners' court. "A jury of eight American citizens, unless the accused desire a jury of twelve persons, who shall be regularly summoned by the Sheriff and sworn by the Alcade, and shall try the case according to the evidence."

Whipping on the bare back was common, culprits were often branded on the cheek with the letter "R" (renegade). Their hair and eyebrows were frequently shaved.

When lynch law prevailed, it often struck terror in the heart of the evil-doer. There was no hazy, undefined view of his ultimate fate in the distant future, but a vivid picture of the sure and speedy consequence to the crime.

Escaped criminals, fugitives from justice, scoundrels from hard bitten communities below the border, and ruffians of every sort who Northern Vigilante committees had "encouraged" to move South, congregated in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County, which at this time also included the present counties of Kern, Orange, San Bernardino and Ventura, was the natural rendezvous point for a large part of this diversified criminal element. In a modest way Los Angeles boasted of more murders annually, in proportion to its population, than any other community in California - not a healthy environment to establish a law enforcement agency!

1850 The Sheriff's Department of Los Angeles County was formed in April, 1850. Elections for the office of Sheriff were held annually until 1882, when the term was increased to two years; in 1894 the term



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was increased to four years.

The first Sheriff of Los Angeles County was George T. Burrill and his staff consisted of two Deputies.

- 1852 The local newspaper, Los Angeles Star, reported that in 1852, the Los Angeles Rangers were organized. The Rangers were actually a posse, ready to ride, taking orders through their Captain 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 the unit of 100 men an aura of romanticism.

The Southern California, another local newspaper of the time, remarked, "We are proud to think that the Los Angeles Rangers have the full confidence of our whole community." The Los Angeles Star praised the Rangers as a steptoward improving matters in the area.

- 1857 In 1857, the outstanding crime was the murder of James Barton, Sheriff of Los Angeles County, and several members of this posse. (Only three weeks after he was elected to his second term.)

"On a tip, Sheriff Barton and his posse set out to capture a group of bandits. They traveled south toward San Juan Capistrano. On the morning of January 23, 1857, Barton and his posse encountered the bandits. In the ensuing struggle, the Sheriff and all but two of his men were shot. Three of the bandits were killed. Immediately after the funerals another posse gave pursuit to the villains. In all, fifty-two bandits were captured, eleven were hanged. They were hanged at Fort Hill - a rise of ground behind the jail - where a temporary gallows had been constructed." Fort Hill was located north of Los Angeles and Aliso Streets.

- 1858 On January 7, 1858, Sheriff William C. Getman (once Lieutenant of the Rangers), was killed, after serving only seven days in office, 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 was endeavoring to force an entrance, 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 twenty or thirty shots, four or five of which passed through the Deputy's clothing."

- 1871 The culmination of the lynch law period occurred quickly and unexpectedly. On the afternoon of October 24, 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:

On Monday, October 25, a tong war among local Chinese resulted in the death of a white rancher named Robert Thompson. A riot broke out immediately and a massacre of Chinese people began. Sheriff James F. Burns addressed the crowd, commanded the peace and called upon all good law abiding citizens to quell the hanging and shooting. Sheriff Burns hastily formed a posse of 25 Deputies and regained order. The story of the massacre was heard around the world and the U.S. government made an official apology to China. Sheriff Burns obtained 150 warrants against known



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mob members and one by one arrested them. The word was out. Los Angeles was no longer a privileged sanctuary. 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 never forget.

Twenty-four men have served Los Angeles County as Sheriff since 1850: nineteen were elected and six were appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve the unexpired term 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 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 in the department, from deputy in 1907, to being appointed Sheriff in 1932 and then retiring in 1958. Our previous Los Angeles County Sheriff, Sherman Block, entered the department as a Deputy Sheriff in 1956 and continued up through the ranks until he was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to succeed Sheriff Pitchess in 1982. In June of 1982, Sheriff Block was elected to a full four year term as Sheriff of Los Angeles County.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEVELOPMENTS:

1899 – First African American Deputy Sheriff, J.B. Loving, hired by Sheriff William A. Hammel.

1907 -The Department purchased its first automobile for use by the Sheriff.

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 Sheriff's Deputies. Deputies first assigned to night duty.

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.

1915 -The Bureau of Identification was established and the fingerprint system was adopted.

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.

1922 -The Robbery, Narcotic, Auto Theft and Liquor Details were established.

1924 -The first sub-stations were completed. They were the Florence (became Firestone Park Station in 1955) and East Los Angeles Stations.

1926 -The Hall of Justice Jail was completed. The Vermont (became Lennox Station in 1948), Norwalk, Temple City and Newhall Stations were completed.

1927 -The Altadena and San Dimas Stations were completed.



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1928 -The Crime Laboratory and the County-wide teletype system were developed. The Fairfax Station was completed. (Became West Hollywood Station in 1957).

1931 -The Aero Squadron was created.

1932 -The marked car Patrol system was inaugurated. Uniforms were adopted. Prior to this time, all Departmental personnel wore civilian clothes.

1933 -The Silver Mounted Posse was formed. This year marked the beginning of the Sheriff's Reserves.

1934 -The Malibu outpost was completed.

1935 -The Sheriff's School of Instruction, now known as the Sheriff's Academy, was opened.

1937 -The Montrose and Lancaster (became Antelope Valley Station in 1961) Stations opened. Two-way radio service was instituted.

1938 -Wayside Honor Rancho was completed.

1959 -Lakewood Station was completed.

1963 -After 179 years of private police patrol, Catalina Island contracted with Los Angeles county. Men's Central Jail was completed. Sybil Brand Institute for Women was completed.

1964 -City of Industry Station was completed.

1966 -"Sky Knight" helicopter patrol was initiated.

1970 -Special Enforcement and Emergency Services Bureau facilities were completed.

1972 -Automated Index System was initiated with instant access to criminal records and fingerprints from other justice agencies and summary probation sentences from county courts. Santa Clarita Valley Station was dedicated, replacing the old Newhall Station.

1973 -Communications Center began operations with computerized high speed dispatch facilities.

1974 -Carson Station was completed. New Montrose Station was completed and renamed Crescenta Valley Station.

1975 -Lomita Station was dedicated.

1976 -Crime Laboratory moved to expanded new facilities that accommodate the latest scientific equipment



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and technique.

1977 -Lynwood became the 9th Sheriff's Station when that city contracted with the County for law enforcement.

1978 -After incorporation, Lancaster began operation as the 32nd city to contract for the Sheriff's services.

1979 -Canine Program uses dogs for searching and bomb detection.

1980 -"Cops Love Kids" program establishes a firm relationship of mutual trust between children and deputies.

1981 -First full-time female law enforcement helicopter pilot in the nation's history.

1982 -For the first time in over 23 years, a new Sheriff, Sherman Block, was given the oath of office.

1983 -Marina del Rey Sheriff's Station was completed.

1984 - Dedication of S.T.A.R.S. Center in Whittier.

1985 - Avalon Station, on Santa Catalina Island, dedicated.

1986 - Department unveils Mobile Entry Device.

1987 - Walnut Station dedicated.

1988 - Beretta 9mm semi-automatic pistol became Department's official sidearm. Gang Enforcement Team (G.E.T.) was created.

1989 - Department began transmitting radio calls on new portable 480 Radio Systems. Sheriff's Museum dedicated.

1990 - Transit Service Bureau formed. North County Correctional Center dedicated by President George Bush and Sheriff Block.

1991 - Office of Professional and Ethical Standards created. Mobile Digital Communication System dedicated. Lost Hills Station dedicated.

1992 - Metro Vice Bureau created. Palmdale Station dedicated. Risk Management Bureau created.

1993 - Universal City Substation opened (formerly located in a trailer). Professional Standards & Training Division created. Biscauiluz Center closed. Hall of Justice Jail closed. Headquarters moved to Monterey Park.



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Mira Loma Jail Facility closed.

1994 - Marshal's Department merged with Sheriff's Department. Lynwood Regional Justice Center dedicated.

1995 - Construction completed on \$373 million Twin Towers Correctional Facility.

1996 - Lancaster Sheriff's Station dedicated. First Regional Civilian Academy graduation ceremony.

1997 - Consolidation of Custody Divisions North and South into a single Custody Division. Twin Towers Correctional Facility Grand Opening. Restoration of Pico Rivera Station to full service. Mira Loma Detention Center re-opened to house Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detainees.

As of December 31, 1995, a total of 2,557,754 citizens in an area of 3,171 square miles received direct law enforcement from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

With 8,028 sworn personnel and 4,377 civilian employees (as of December 1, 1996), the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is the largest Sheriff's Department in the world.

1998 - On December 7 Leroy D. Baca was sworn in as Los Angeles County's 30th Sheriff. Sheriff Baca commands the largest Sheriff's Department in the world and supervises more than 13,000 sworn personnel and professional staff.

1999 - Creation of the Deputy Leadership Institute, Asian Crime Task Force, and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Bureau. Expanded the Vital Intervention and Directional Alternatives (VIDA) program, the Town Sheriff program, and other mentoring programs. Opened the Biscailuz Recovery Center and restored the San Dimas and Marina Del Rey Stations to full-service status. Formed the LASD Charitable Committee, a year-long program to fund the first-ever float in the Tournament of Roses Parade and to raise funds for the Department's youth programs. Scientific Services Bureau is now using the most advanced DNA testing procedure utilizing STR (short tandem repeats) technology. STR technology enables personnel to conduct "cold searches" from biological evidence collected at crime scenes to identify possible suspects.

2000 - After 44 years of being one of six contract cities being serviced from Lakewood Station, the City of Cerritos became under autonomous command and began law enforcement services from their new Cerritos Station. On September 17, the City of Compton began contracting services with the Sheriff's Department. The Community Transition Unit was established to provide inmates with the tools and life-skills to successfully reintegrate into the community. Scientific Services Bureau had three cold hits and zero case-to-case hit using CODIS (Combined DNA Indexing System).

2001 - A new Mobile Recruitment Center was put into service, allowing personnel to administer entrance examinations for prospective deputy sheriffs at community events, college campuses, and job fairs. Formalization of the Department's 30-year strategic plan, known as LASD2. Establishment of the Office of Independent Review, which oversees internal investigations and citizen complaints. The security and law



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enforcement services for nine campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District became part of the Sheriff's Department and became the Community College Bureau. Creation of the Hate Crimes Unit and In-Court Release Program. Scientific Services Bureau had six cold hits and one case-to-case hits using CODIS.

2002 - Formation of the Office of Homeland Security, this Division will be responsible for the coordinated strategy of preparedness for Los Angeles County's first responders. The Sheriff's Communications Center was remodeled. Los Angeles Sheriff's Department University (LASDU) was created making educational opportunities available for Department personnel. Scientific Services Bureau had nine cold hits and four case-to-case hits using CODIS.

2003 - The contract for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) was expanded to include the entire transit system, making the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department the second largest transit policing agency in the nation. Aero Bureau received shipment on seven new American Eurocopter A-STAR helicopters to upgrade the Bureau's aging fleet. Cargo Criminal Apprehension Team (Cargo CATs) was resurrected by funding provided by the City of Los Angeles Port and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. A new Emergency Services Detail rescue boat was provided by special grant funding from the California State Department of Boating and Waterways, and motors donated by Honda Motor Corporation. Five new search and rescue equipment trucks were obtained with drug asset forfeiture funds. A new bomb detection canine "Simba" was gifted to the Department by the Foundation to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Crime. Scientific Services Bureau had 29 cold hits and 18 case-to-case hits using CODIS.

2004 - The Rowland Heights Service Center was opened to better serve the community. A new neighborhood Sheriff's Office was opened for business in the Athens area of unincorporated Los Angeles. Compton Sheriff's Station received a free refurbishment from the television show "Monster House." Scientific Services Bureau had 61 cold hits and 18 case-to-case hits using CODIS.

2005 - Construction began on the new state-of-the art Los Angeles Regional Crime Laboratory which will be located on the California State University, Los Angeles campus. Scientific Services Bureau to date has 24 cold hits and 10 case-to-case hits using CODIS.