

1870

A large lynch mob descended on Wilmington to seize one of the Sheriff's prisoners. The crowd backed down when Sheriff Burns arrived with a heavily armed posse. It was the beginning of the end for vigilantes.

After a Chinese girl was kidnapped and was being transported to San Francisco, Marshal Warren, who was the grandfather of future Sheriff Gene Biscailuz, followed the trail from Los Angeles. Officer Joseph Dye, who was one of Warren's officers, telegraphed the Santa Barbara Constables' office to arrest the kidnap suspects and hold them for Marshal Warren. The constable held the suspects until Marshal Warren arrived to take them back to Los Angeles. Upon returning to L.A., Marshal Warren collected the reward. Feeling that he deserved a part of the reward, Officer Dye confronted Warren but was told that he didn't deserve anything.

On October 31 during the kidnapping trial, Marshal Warren was again confronted by Officer Dye. Warren turned him away but Dye followed him and continued asking Warren for his share of the reward. A confrontation followed by a hail of gunfire wounded Dye and Warren along with several bystanders. After Marshal Warren died the next day, Officer Dye was tried and found not guilty.

It wasn't until the 1870's that the use of gallows and a trap door became popular. This method produced a calculated "drop," which caused the neck to break and, if the person was lucky, instant death.

The reliable center-fire cartridge and bored-through cylinder technology of the 1870's greatly increased the speed with which revolvers could be loaded. It also protected gun powder from the elements.

Michael Lachenais murdered Jacob Bell during an argument over water rights. Lachenais had already killed five or six men and been charged twice with murder. The vigilance committee decided he had gone free one time too many times and were not going to take another chance on the justice system. On December 17, 300 armed men marched on the L.A. County Jail and demanded the keys. Sheriff Burns refused. He tried, but could not stop, the hostile mob who took half an hour to smash through the two heavy portals and jail gate which had been reinforced because of previous lynchings. They took Michel Lachenais from his jail cell and hanged him.

The legislature passed a law authorizing the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to issue bonds in the amount of \$25,000 to either build or purchase the building currently rented and used as a courthouse. (History of Los Angeles County, Thompson & West, page 100)

1871

In the winter of 1871, twins Oscar and Henry Bilderbeck were murdered by notorious criminal Buckskin Bill and two other outlaws.

Sheriff Burns and his posse tracked Buckskin Bill, along with his squaw and her infant, into Mexico. A smaller party was formed of four Mexicans and two Indian guides. These men were promised fifty dollars apiece if they brought back evidence that the outlaw had been slain.

It was common knowledge that Buckskin Bill had six toes on his left foot. Four days later, the group returned with a six toed foot in their possession. The men received their reward and another vicious outlaw was removed from society.

Sheriff Burns returned to Los Angeles with the foot preserved in mescal. He applied for the reward from the state, presenting the foot as evidence. Ten days later he received the reward money.

October 24, a white man was shot by a Chinese man which ignited violence causing a Chinese massacre. After 4 hours of violence, 19 Chinese residents had been killed. Everywhere you looked one could see bodies hanging from makeshift gallows.

1872

The law of posse comitatus, which allows a deputy to deputize average citizens, was enacted and is still in effect today.

Sheriff William R. Rowland March 1872 – February 1876

In order to better restrain suspects, the county provided the Sheriff with money to buy three pairs of new handcuffs. Other than badges or weapons, this was the first documented purchase of “modern” law enforcement equipment.

The Sheriff and his deputies continued using the cuffs until they were misplaced eleven months later. The Board of Supervisors verbally admonished them before obtaining replacements.

1874

The last man to be lynched in Los Angeles County was named “Romo.” He had seriously injured a shopkeeper and his wife during a robbery in June. Romo gasped his last breath while dangling from the end of a rope provided by a crowd of angry El Monte residents. Vigilantism in Los Angeles County had finally come to an end.

Tiburcio Vasquez was a ruthless desperado who terrorized people while committing murder, robbery and other vicious crimes. Vasquez had several hiding places in northern Los Angeles County, including his brother’s place in Soledad Canyon. The rugged rock formation in Southern California where Vasquez and his gang used to hide was named after the outlaw. Sheriff Roland spread the word that the state was offering a reward for the capture of Tiburcio Vasquez: \$6,000 dead and \$8,000 alive. The Sheriff was notified that Vasquez was staying at the house of Greek George. This was near Santa Monica Blvd. and La Cienega Blvd in what is now the City of West Hollywood. Undersheriff Albert Johnson along with Deputies Henry

Mitchell and D.K. Smith, Constable S.J. Bryant, Chief Benjamin F. Hartley, Officer Emil Harris, Palace Saloon owner W.E. Rogers and George Beers from the San Francisco Chronicle surrounded the house and when Vasquez attempted to flee, he was shot. Tiburcio Vasquez and Librado Corona were deposited in the Los Angeles County Jail where Vasquez became an instant celebrity

Sheriff Rowland sent a telegram to the governor notifying him that Vasquez had been captured but was injured. As soon as his wounds healed he would be transported to Monterey County and turned over to the Sheriff.

1875

The Tax Collector's Office was formed and took over the responsibility from the sheriff of collecting taxes.

The Los Angeles City Marshal's Office was disbanded and replaced by the Los Angeles Police Department. Even though the City now had its own police force, the Sheriff's workload was unaffected. The City Marshal became the Los Angeles Police Chief and the title of the employees changed from Marshal to Police Officer. The number of officers and their jurisdiction remained the same.

1876

Sheriff David W. Alexander (second term) March 1876 – February 1878

September 5, the first train pulled into Los Angeles traveling from Northern California. During that time, smallpox had spread so quickly in the area that it wiped out most of the Indians in Los Angeles County. Because of this smallpox epidemic, travelers arriving on trains from San Francisco refused to disembark.

1878

Sheriff Henry Milnor Mitchell March 1878 – February 1880

On June 17, Sheriff Mitchell received word that Miguel Sotelo, a member of the bygone Tiburcio Vasquez gang, was hiding out in Verdugo Canyon. Sheriff Mitchell along with Deputy Adolfo Celis, rode out to serve a warrant on the desperado. As Sotelo was being chased by the Sheriff and his deputy, gunfire was exchanged for over two miles. Sotelo was struck several times and arrested. The next day he succumbed from his wounds.