

1880

Sheriff William R. Rowland (third term) March 1880 – December 1882

Sheriff Rowland had an extra two months tacked on to his term as Sheriff when the legislature adjusted the voting date from September to November.

The Board of Supervisors authorized Sheriff William Roland to purchase new badges for his deputies at a cost of \$5 each. These sterling silver badges read: DEPUTY L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF.

Law enforcement began looking for better ways to identify suspects. Criminal science was still in its infancy, but more attention was being paid to human physical characteristics. Features such as foot size, length of limbs, distance between joints, size of skull and other distinguishing marks developed a new relevance. French Criminologist Alphonse Bertillion had incorporated these physical traits into a system to help officers identify suspects. The Bertillion System was widely used until the advent of fingerprint identification.

Los Angeles County was beginning to make progress when they installed their first telephone in the courthouse. All court business had previously been done by mail or in person. Now court cases could be scheduled over the phone within minutes.

1883

Sheriff Alvin Tyler Currier 1883 – 1884

Sheriff Currier appointed former Sheriff James Thompson as jailer.

Unfortunately Sheriff Currier's main focus was on politics and personal financial gain. The day-to-day business of enforcing the law was left to Deputies George Gard and Adolfo Celis

On April 18, Deputies Adolfo Celis and George Gard took a wagon and were on their way to recover some stolen livestock about a quarter of a mile from the San Fernando Mission. As Deputy Celis was adjusting the wagon seat, his rifle accidentally discharged striking him in the chest, killing him instantly.

1885

Future Sheriff Martin Aguirre was elected as a Los Angeles Constable in 1885. One evening he arrived home from work and heard an old man calling for help. Aguirre yelled, "Hold on I'm coming!" and ran to the sound of the man's voice. Encountering two robbers accosting the elderly man, he subdued them with his bare fists. The handcuffed outlaws were tied to a tree. After taking the victim home, he came back and hauled the two bandits off to jail.

Sheriff George E. Gard January 1885 – December 1886

Sheriff, Gard recruited Martin Aguirre and William Hammel as his deputies. These men would later become Sheriffs themselves.

1886

On January 19, Deputy Martin Aguirre rushed to Los Angeles only to find it inundated by flood waters. There was so much water that levees were carried away and the Los Angeles River was overflowing and still rising. Deputy Aguirre rode all night warning everyone who lived by the river to evacuate. The next morning Aguirre spent rushing into deep waters to rescue the helpless victims who ignored his warnings. After it was over, Deputy Aguirre had saved the lives of nineteen people, some of them children. Many were amazed at the deputy's courage and physical endurance.

Deputy Aguirre attempted his last rescue where First Street ran into the river. He swam out and pulled Mrs. Whitney's little girl, Theresa, from the window of her house. The little girl was lost under the turbulent water when Aguirre's horse stumbled. The Mother of the little girl had been rescued by others, but her daughter was lost forever. The deep regret Martin felt for not being able to save Theresa haunted him for the rest of his life. The Los Angeles County Bar Association recognized Deputy Aguirre's bravery and valor. They presented him with a gold watch, a prized possession which he always carried with him.

A modern lockup called the "New High Street Jail," was built. Overcrowding and other problems with the brick jail compelled Sheriff Gard to transfer the inmates to the New High Street Jail in December before it was even complete. The Sheriff directed Deputy Sheriff Hammel to supervise the move

A trapdoor was built on the second floor of the New High Street Jail for the purpose of executions. In 1891, the responsibility of executions was transferred to the state. Because of this, no executions were ever conducted in this jail.

1887

Sheriff James C. Kays January 1887 – December 1888

Sheriff Kays appointed Henry Mitchell as his Undersheriff.

Kays instituted a new policy where each of his eight deputies was required to post a \$5,000 personal bond. This bond was to ensure the "faithful performance of their duties."

Sheriff Kays hired Juan Murrieta as a deputy. Murrieta became a legend, retiring in 1927 after forty years as a deputy sheriff. Juan was highly respected by every Sheriff who met him. All of them considered Murrieta a friend, counselor and advisor and he became known as the "Father of Sheriffs."

Sheriff Kays appointed former Sheriff James Thompson as jailer. Thompson was not very efficient in this role. He was getting older and not paying attention to detail. In January of 1887, two escapes occurred within a week because of Thompson's carelessness.

In April 1887, the largest escape in the history of the Los Angeles County Jails occurred. Assistant Jailer Bob Clark was lured into a hallway where a gang of prisoners was waiting to attack him. The deputy was overpowered, his keys were taken and several of the inmates made a hasty escape. A jail cook known as "Joe" heard the commotion and confronted the remaining criminals with a meat cleaver. This prevented further escapes and rescued jailer Clark from harm. Clark called for help and the jail was secured, but not before fifteen people had gotten away. Despite Sheriff Kays efforts, only five were recaptured.

1889

Sheriff Martin G. Aguirre January 1889 – December 1890

When Martin Aguirre was a child, he and his cousin were practicing with bows and arrows. Martin was accidentally struck in the eye which left him blind in that eye for life. Today, that same disability would prevent him from becoming a law enforcement officer, but in the 1880's there were no restrictions.

A former prisoner who had been arrested by Martin Aguirre two years earlier tracked the lawman to his home. When Martin answered the door, the man fired the gun just as Aguirre slammed it. The bullet was deflected into the constable's arm. This made Aguirre mad. He tackled and arrested the assailant for attempted murder. The outlaw returned to prison to serve a life sentence.

While on patrol, rather than carrying a gun, Aguirre preferred to carry a razor-sharp Bowie knife in a sheath under his arm. He told a friend, "I don't know where a bullet will go but I always know where this knife is going." His friend said, "Aguirre could throw a knife fifty feet and pin the spot on the ace of spades." When he did carry a gun, he carried a Remington six-shot revolver that had been given to him by Sheriff Gard. The gun had been given to Gard by condemned murderer Billy McDowell.

After becoming Sheriff, Aguirre appointed A.M. Thornton as his Undersheriff and seven other trustworthy men as deputies. He told his deputies, "Bring back your man. I don't want a report." The Sheriff was tight-lipped about investigations. He knew they could easily be jeopardized if too much information was shared with the press.

While Martin Aguirre was Sheriff, the Los Angeles County Jails housed 250 to 300 prisoners on a daily basis.

One of the major problems confronting Sheriff Aguirre was appropriate medical care for the prisoners. As he explained to the Board of Supervisors and the news media, the county hospital refused to treat jail inmates, so he was doing his best to care for them.

Jail security was one of the Sheriff's greatest challenges. During one attempted jailbreak, fourteen prisoners tried to escape. The Sheriff was forced to fire a gun over their heads. The inmates reconsidered as bullets ricocheted off the bars. After assistance arrived, the jail went back to normal.

On March 11, 1889, the California Legislature allocated a portion of L. A. County to create Orange County.

On May 2, 1889, Deputy Constable Dawes went to serve an arrest warrant on Benoir Renault for the rape of Mary Simmons. As he approached the house, shots rang out. He immediately pulled his pistol and returned fire. When Dawes requested help, Undersheriff Thornton arrived along with deputies Kemp and Brady. Sheriff Aguirre, accompanied by deputies Kearny and Dorsey, also responded to the scene. Sheriff Aguirre entered the house and approached the door where he thought the suspect was barricaded. As he slowly turned the knob, suspect Renault fired through the door striking Aguirre's left arm. A second shot would have killed him if it weren't for the half dollar he carried in his vest pocket. The bullet struck the coin and the force caused the sheriff to stumble backwards. Outside, the deputies tended his wounds. As they were patching the Sheriff up, Benoir escaped out the back. The next day, officers found Renault hiding behind a coal bin in the Bunker Hill section of town.