LASD Timeline

1850 – 1859

By Chris Miller

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**LASD History Video**

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is the largest Sheriff's Department in the world; an innovative leader in law enforcement training, community policing and implementation of advanced technologies. The professionally uniformed deputies and black-and-white patrol cars seen today are actually descendants of the horse-mounted lawmen of yesteryear.  Over the past 160 years, the Sheriff and his deputies have protected citizens, kept the peace and captured criminals who preyed on innocent victims.  Meeting this challenge took courage, dedication, and often personal sacrifice, by heroic deputies.

**SACRAMENTO**

Swiss Emigrant John Sutter arrived in California in 1839, and in 1840 received a land grant of 50,000 acres. Deciding to start a lumber business, in 1847 he hired carpenter James Marshall to build a mill.  While completing work on the mill, Marshall made a surprising find which he presented to Sutter...several lumps of glistening, yellow gold.

**1850**

Once word of the discovery got out, people caught “Gold Fever” and flocked to California from every corner of the country in hopes of striking it rich. Their imaginations ran wild, expecting to find rivers overflowing with gold but, in reality, the only thing most of them found were trampled muddy riverbanks crowded with prospectors.

Gold seeking immigrants poured in from around the world. Harbors were packed with hundreds of ships which had transported the new arrivals across the ocean. There were not enough hotels to accommodate the overwhelming influx of humanity, so makeshift settlements were erected on any property that was available. Those who made the arduous journey overland experienced great difficulties.  Wagons baked in the summer heat and when the autumn rains came, their wheels sank to the hubs in the thick mud.

Living in tents was not easy.  Rain made trying to sleep on the cold, wet ground an exercise in misery and if it wasn’t raining, the prospectors were attacked by vermin and fleas.  The noise was often unbearable with people talking and laughing late into the night. When very little gold was found, frustration, disappointment and anger caused the workers to lose their tempers. What began as small arguments would often erupt into violence.

Many of the people hoping for quick wealth with little work became drifters; unemployed and desperate. The rare few who had been fortunate enough to actually discover large amounts of gold lived in constant fear of being robbed by those who had discovered nothing more than hardship.

**LOS ANGELES**

Down in Los Angeles, hundreds of miles from the gold fields, escaped criminals, robbers, card sharks, and horse thieves were descending on the pueblo. For years Mexican Banditos moved freely between the borders of Mexico and California robbing, stealing and threatening the unprotected inhabitants.  When the Mexican War ended, armed men, unemployed and desperate for money, also began roaming the secluded valleys and rolling hills. The residents of Los Angeles County became the focus of many of these desperados who targeted them as easy and vulnerable prey.  These criminals prowled the streets of Los Angeles, committing crimes and then spending their ill-gotten gains at the many saloons and bordellos which lined the streets for blocks.  It wasn’t long before Los Angeles became one of the most dangerous towns in the country.  With little to no law enforcement in place, nights were filled with fear. Crime was so rampant that Los Angeles became the murder capitol of California. In an attempt to deter the criminal element, vigilante justice emerged. Punishment was swift and ranged from public whippings to hangings by hostile crowds.

**Los Angeles County is Formed**

Although California was not officially admitted to the Union until September, 1850 desperate times called for desperate measures and the pueblo was in urgent need of strong leadership. An election was held in Los Angeles County in April. Out of a population of 2500, only 377 votes were cast.   This historic vote resulted in the selection of a Sheriff, along with a three-person “Court of Sessions,” which became the first governing body.  The court was tasked with handling the day-to- day business of the county and presiding over lesser crimes.

The lowest position in the judicial system was the Justice of the Peace. It was their duty to fill the county treasury by charging fines, fees and court costs.

During that time, towns, homes and businesses were spread out for miles. To travel between them, the only mode of transportation was by horseback or horse drawn wagon. Horses were not only critical for everyone’s transportation but also for businessmen to transport their products and for farmers to plow their fields. Because of the reliance on horses, stealing a person’s horse was the most severe crime you could commit, punishable by hanging. It was considered worse to take someone’s horse than to take their life since murder was ranked 5th in seriousness.

**Wooden County Jail**

At the end of the war, the U.S. Military was responsible for maintaining order and arresting suspects. Once arrests were made, an old guardhouse was used to confine the prisoners. After Los Angeles County was formed, it inherited the old guardhouse from the military and quickly replaced it with a wooden structure jail. The one room structure was built of logs with no jail cells. Prisoners were chained by a wrist to a heavy log that was placed in the center of the room.

One night, a short time after the jail constructed of wood was built; a sentry confronted a would-be intruder outside the jail. When the intruder failed to respond, the sentry fired his weapon striking the aggressor. Once he approached and looked down at the dead aggressor, he realized that the intruder was a local cow. After hearing the gunshot, a near-by sentry sprung into action. He lit a fuse and prepared to fire a canon if they came under fire from a group of accomplices. Once the artilleryman realized the other sentry’s mistake, he threw the fuse away in disgust. It landed in a chest of ammunition which exploded, knocking down the walls of the jail and raising the roof. Four men were killed and twelve others were wounded.

The destroyed wooden Jail was rebuilt using the existing floor plan but instead of logs, the second jail was constructed of adobe.

**Sheriff Burrill April 1850 –September 1851**

George T. Burrill, tall, lean and dignified, had the distinction of becoming the first Sheriff of Los Angeles County.  Clean shaven except for a flowing moustache, he insisted on strict observance of ceremony and form.  When on duty, he always wore his infantry dress sword, maintaining that it added to the dignity of his office.

Sheriff Burrill’s duties included not only enforcing the law, but collecting taxes.  Tax money was necessary to fund the local government. At that time, the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Office included the territories that are now Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange and Kern Counties. Since he had such a huge area to cover, the Court of Sessions felt an incentive would encourage the Sheriff to go out and collect taxes.   Their incentive allowed the Sheriff to keep a “fee” from each tax bill he collected.  The job of tax collector continued to be performed by the Sheriff until the tax collector’s office was established in 1875.

Sheriff’s in California were paid using a fee system that paid them for every arrest and each legal task they performed. Most of the early Sheriff’s were so industrious that they almost bankrupted their counties. In 1851, the Court of Sessions reduced the fees paid to Sheriff Burrill to prevent the county from running out of money. Although the fees were reduced, Sheriff Burrill was still well paid. The Sheriff was responsible for a jurisdiction that covered thousands of square miles. He was on-call around the clock. For this, he was substantially rewarded with a salary of $10,000 a year. This is equivalent to $230,000 today.

George Burrill’s first year as Sheriff was fraught with problems. The area that had become his responsibility was full of bandits and criminals. Crime and lawlessness was running rampant. Public drunkenness, gambling, and vice were commonplace. The murder rate was out of control. Disreputable characters forced to leave Northern California cities like San Francisco and Sacramento often worked their way south to Los Angeles County. After committing crimes in Los Angeles, some desperados found it necessary to flee justice. Since Los Angeles was only four or five days hard ride from Mexico, criminals would often head for the border, thus eluding their pursuers. In a one year period starting in September of 1850, 31 people were murdered in Los Angeles. Out of a population of only 2,500, this is by far the highest homicide rate in American history. This does not include the murder of Indians, Blacks, Asians and Mexicans which were not considered crimes, or, the murders that nobody ever knew about in the vast California wilderness.

During Sheriff Burrill’s year and a half in office, hundreds of crimes occurred, including at least 31 murders. A double homicide called “The Lugo/Irving Party Incident” was a case that proved to be the most challenging and controversial as well as an example of the prejudice, racism and violence of those times.

**(Sven Crongeyer, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

*In January 1851, a band of 30 Ute Indians raided the immense Rancho San Bernardino and stole several hundred horses. The owner of the rancho and the horses, Don Antonio Maria Lugo, hired a band of friendly Cahuilla Indians to pursue the rustlers. The Cahuilla Indians joined forces with Antonio’s son, Jose Maria and his grandsons, Chico, age 18 and Benito, age 16. The group trailed the bandits into the Cajon Pass where they ran across two teamsters. The teamsters, Patrick McSwiggin and “Sam,” a Creek Indian mistakenly told the Lugo grandsons that the thieves were lightly armed with bows and arrows. When the Lugos and their party of Indians caught up with them the next day, they were surprised to discover that the bandits were heavily armed with rifles. The Lugos were defeated in a deadly shootout. One of their men was killed as the Ute Indians escaped with the stolen horses.*

*The exhausted and demoralized group of Cahuilla Indians returned to their ranchos. The Lugos were reported to have lagged behind the rest of the group. They were extremely angry at what they believed to be a deliberate attempt by the teamsters to get them killed. On the trail back home, they came across McSwiggin on a mule and “Sam,” the Indian driving a wagon. Ysidro Higuera, who accompanied the Lugos, later testified that he observed Chico pull out one of his pistols and shoot Sam in cold blood as he engaged him in a conversation. McSwiggin dismounted his mule and hid behind the wagon. The Lugos grabbed McSwiggin and shoved him out into the road where Chico shot him with his other pistol. Tying the Indian’s feet together with a rope, they ordered Higuera to do the same to the white man. Both bodies were dragged for some distance off the road.*

*Three days after the murder, a troop of U.S. soldiers from Company A, 2nd Infantry were traveling through the Cajon Pass where they discovered the bodies of the victims.*

*When confronted with the accusations, the Lugo brothers denied committing the crime. On their side, they had twenty witnesses who testified that they had nothing to do with the murders.*

*A coroner’s jury presided over by Justice of the Peace Jonathon R. Scott indicted the Lugos for murder. The Lugos were outraged since Judge Scott had taken the word of a thief over that of a respected California family. Further testimony revealed that prior to the murders, Jailer George Robinson’s wife had been a guest at the Lugo residence. During that visit, Robinson had stopped by and become involved in a physical altercation with his wife. Don Lugo and Chico had broken up the fight by separating the couple. The jailer was humiliated and because of this, developed a deep-seated hatred for the Lugo family. The Lugos believed that in order for Robinson to get revenge, he persuaded Higuera to lie about the murders. The Lugo brothers were arrested. A while later; Ysidro Higuera was arrested for horse theft and brought to the L.A. County Jail. Higuera made a deal with the prosecutor and turned state’s evidence against the Lugos. The whole community was in an uproar, divided along racial lines. Ultimately, the Lugos were released due to lack of evidence and tensions eased for the time being.*

**Hangings**

In the Old West, justice was often swift. Vigilante groups, acting both as judge and jury, often saw to it that miscreants they felt went unpunished for their crimes found themselves dancing at the end of a rope.  The election of a Sheriff did not change this much. Many times vigilante groups were so determined that they overpowered the Sheriff who could only watch helplessly as prisoners were forcibly taken from his custody. At times, citizens who were popular in town and were liked by a jury, were found innocent when they were actually guilty. If a jury didn’t care for the victim who was killed, their killer many times walked free. Other times, people who were not liked by members of the jury were found guilty when they were actually innocent. Sometimes the citizens disagreed with the decision of the court, and a person who was released due to lack of evidence was hung anyway.

Prior to 1891, when an official death sentence was passed by the court, carrying out the execution became the Sheriff’s responsibility.  Since skill as an executioner was not a requirement for the Sheriff, he simply did what was standard practice.  Generally a rope was thrown over a corral gate cross post with the condemned man standing in a wagon or sitting on a horse.  Once the horse or wagon was pulled away, the offender’s neck was quickly compressed in the noose, causing the person to strangle to death.  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.

Legal hangings were conducted throughout the country on a regular basis.  The most publicized execution involved the conspirators who were found guilty of killing President Abraham Lincoln in 1865, just days after the end of the long and bloody Civil War.

These legal hangings became public spectacles, often taking on a festival type atmosphere.  Families, brought picnic baskets, vendors sold souvenirs and photographers took multiple photos of the event.  Many of the pictures ended up on postcards that were sold for a penny.  It wasn’t until 1936 that public executions were discontinued.

**(Sven Crongeyer, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

*One of the difficult situations Sheriff Burrill faced while in office involved a Texan named John “Red” Irving. Red was the leader of a gang of 25 desperados known as the “Irving Party.” Irving hatched a plot to liberate the Lugo brothers from the L.A. County Jail. In exchange, he hoped to receive $10,000 from the boys’ relatives. Irving decided his best chance to free the prisoners from the custody of the Sheriff was while they were being transferred from the jail to the courthouse.*

*Hearing about the plan, Sheriff Burrill approached Major E.H. Fitzgerald who was in command of a detachment of United States troops temporarily encamped near the city. On the day of the trial, John Irving marched in with his gang of men to await the arrival of the Sheriff. As Burrill brought the Lugo brothers into the courtroom, a platoon of soldiers immediately rode up behind him. Irving and his gang could probably have overpowered the civil authorities, but not the strength of the U.S. military. The rescue attempt was aborted and the gang was politely but firmly asked to leave the area immediately. The Lugos, who were on trial, were later released on bail.*

*Irving and his confederates started towards Mexico, but just couldn’t resist the temptation to rob and pillage along the way. They went directly to a rancho thirty miles from Los Angeles where they tied up the residents and stayed the night. In the morning, they took with them horses, saddles, blankets and other provisions.*

*Once the victims freed themselves, they fled to a nearby rancho and alerted Juan Antonio, the Chief of a local tribe of Cahuilla Indians. Juan Antonio wasted no time in assembling several of his warriors. The Native Americans proceeded to San Gorgonio Pass where they took up positions and waited. Their patience was rewarded when they successfully ambushed John Irving near Yucaipa, wiping out the entire gang.*

**1850’s**

The 1850’s were a lawless and dangerous time in Los Angeles.  Some desperados were so dangerous it was not safe for the Sheriff to search for them by himself. Before pursuing hostile criminals, the Sheriff would often enlist the help of the City Marshal, the Town Constables, the U.S. Army or a mounted posse called the Los Angeles Rangers.  These groups often combined forces not only to combat large criminal gangs, but for their own safety.

When the Sheriff’s Office was first formed, it covered an area that is now five counties.  With such a vast region, it was impossible for one Sheriff and a few deputies to respond to the needs of the entire jurisdiction in a timely or effective manner.  As the population expanded, officers were needed in local towns throughout the county to enforce the law. Many towns elected Township Constables to control the violence and protect the citizens.  Constables were not only responsible for local law enforcement duties but they also collected fines, served warrants and assisted the Justice of the Peace. The constables reported directly to the Sheriff and when necessary, provided him with additional support.  In 1912, to better coordinate criminal investigations and standardize policing, the town Constables were absorbed by the Sheriff’s Department.

In the 1860’s many Los Angeles residents were transplants from the southern United States. These citizens were sympathetic to the rebel cause and U.S. politicians worried that they might start a revolt in the west. To ensure that California remained part of the Union, the U.S. Army stationed troops at Wilmington Drum Barracks where they remained from 1861 until 1871.

**The First Criminal Court Judge**

The first criminal court judge in Los Angeles was Augustine Olvera, who had a thorough knowledge of law and justice. His command of the English language was lacking, however, which required Sheriff Burrill to act as the court interpreter. This assignment paid the Sheriff an additional $50 a month. Since Los Angeles didn’t have a courthouse at that time, Judge Olvera’s home doubled as a courtroom. The well known tourist attraction, Olvera Street is named in Judge Olvera’s honor.

In 1850, the Bella Union Hotel was the only hotel in Los Angeles. Once Los Angeles County was formed, the hotel was rented to the county as a courthouse. This allowed Judge Olvera to move the courtroom from his personal residence to the Bella Union.

**First Deputy Sheriff**

Sheriff Burrill appointed Elijah T. Moulton as his first deputy.  Deputy Moulton was directly subordinate to the Sheriff and was sometimes referred to as Undersheriff.  Elijah served with George Burrill the entire time that the Sheriff held office.   Moulton Avenue in East L.A. is named after this first deputy.

**Adobe County Jail**

If criminals weren’t hung by vigilante groups or if they did not flee the county, they would be confined to the Los Angeles County Jail. The adobe jail was located west of Main Street and south of Arcadia Street on a hill above the Lafayette Hotel. The first documented escape from the adobe jail was by inmate, Matias Cortaza. Citizens were outraged that an escape had occurred. In order to calm the upset citizens, six additional jailers were assigned to a variety of shifts to help secure the inmates. After the commotion died down the extra jailers were let go and the one jailer who was left was required to secure the inmates by himself.

**(John Stanley, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

In October of 1850, the Grand Jury released this report:

*“Upon a personal examination of the jail, we find it entirely unfit for the purpose for which it is used, the walls are constructed of adobes which are of so frail a nature, that they may be easily pierced in any part with a knife or sharp stick, the roof is composed of pitch and earth, supported by reeds which can easily be cut with a knife, no other resistance being offered to the exit of prisoners at the top; it seems it is entirely unventilated, all the prisoners for whatever cause imprisoned are crowded together in a vitiated atmosphere destructive of health, more suitable to the dark ages.”*

To prevent future escapes, this one-room adobe building was fitted with a heavy log in the center of the room. Chains anchored by thick, iron staples traversed the huge log. These chains were shackled to the wrists of the inmates who were unfortunate enough to have been caught.  The only thing separating these prisoners from the outside world was a simple rawhide curtain. Indians who were taken into custody were considered inferior to other prisoners so they were chained to a log outside the building.

**Jail Escapes**

It was said that for the right amount of money a guard would look the other way during an escape.  The recurrent escapes from the adobe jail caused townspeople to feel that the jails couldn’t contain the desperados who were preying on citizens. This gave rise to vigilante activity and the formation of a vigilance tribunal.

In July of 1852, 3 inmates escaped from the Los Angeles County Jail. Two of them fled to San Juan Capistrano where they robbed and murdered two American cattle buyers. The pair then fled to Santa Barbara where they were arrested along with a horse thief. A detachment of volunteers rode to Santa Barbara and transported the prisoners back to L.A. When they arrived in town, instead of returning them to the L.A. County Jail, they were placed in the custody of a citizen’s committee. A jury of twelve held a trial on the spot, convicted and then hanged all of them.

Recognizing the gross inadequacy of the adobe jail, the Board of Supervisors began accepting bids for the construction of a new jail.

**First Jailer**

The Sheriff’s first jailer was Samuel Whiting. He was responsible for the security of prisoners as well as their care and feeding. Whiting was paid $7.50 a day. When he required a relief, such as when he was sleeping, he paid his replacement out of his own pocket. The going rate was $3.00 a night. The care and feeding of inmates also came out of the jailers pay. He was responsible for incidental costs for articles and provisions such as candles, wood, water, blankets, rawhides and lanterns. He was also directed to feed each prisoner at 50 cents a day or 25 cents for Indians. The meal was required to include 12 cents worth of bread or rice and beans. The remaining 38 cents was to be spent on “good meat.” The amount allotted to feed each inmate increased from 50 cents to 75 cents in 1854 and from 75 cents to a dollar in 1857. Although the money allotted to feed all prisoners increased, the gap between the money allotted for whites and Indians continued for a number of years. Eventually the gap between the amount paid to feed white inmates and minorities was eliminated and all inmates received the same amount of food. By 1894, the amount of money allotted for inmate’s meals was reduced down from a dollar to only thirty cents. By 1905, that amount was reduced further to 11 cents.

In 1851, Sam Whiting left his job as county jailer to become the City Marshal. George Robinson was offered the position as his replacement. Within a short time, the mayor, city marshal and jailer of Los Angeles were all indicted by the grand jury. They were accused of selling the services of Indians arrested for minor offenses and dividing the funds. Jailer George Robinson was also charged with negligence for allowing prisoners to escape.

**Sheriff’s Badges**

During the Wild West years of the 1800’s, the Sheriff and his deputies did not wear uniforms, but dressed like everyone else.  The only visible means of identifying a lawman was by his badge.   Since everyone in town knew who he was, the Sheriff generally chose not to display his badge openly.  Instead, it was worn inside the lapel, allowing him to reveal his identity only if it became necessary.  When a stranger came into town, he could observe the person without drawing attention to himself, covertly determining if the newcomer was a law abiding citizen or an outlaw.

When groups of lawmen gathered to pursue and apprehend an outlaw, they wore their badges openly for easy identification, which prevented them from shooting each other during a gun fight.

When a posse was needed to hunt down criminals, they were chosen from townspeople. Any person who was willing to help and who looked trustworthy was deputized on the spot as the Sheriff pinned a badge on them. The law of posse comitatus, which allows a deputy to deputize average citizens, was enacted in 1872 and is still in effect today.

During the 1800’s, there was no standard badge for the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department.  The badges worn by early deputies were made of sheet silver and hand engraved with the words:  L.A. COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF or DEPUTY L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF.   The badge issued to the Sheriff was gold and engraved:  L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF.

During the first 50 years of the Sheriff’s Department the appearance of the badges varied, some were shaped like a star, others like a shield.  The badges were made by local jewelers and each deputy had to pay for his own.  The more a deputy paid, the more elaborate the badge.

In 1880, 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.

After the turn of the century, the design of the badge was again altered slightly.  Ball-tips were added to the points of the star so that deputies were not injured when involved in a physical altercation.   Ranks such as Sergeant and Lieutenant were not stamped on the badges until the 1930’s.

The current badge was designed in 1947 by Deputy Bob Brown and approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1948.

In 1999, Sheriff Leroy D. Baca, along with the Board of Supervisors, authorized sterling silver badges to be manufactured as part of a special sesquicentennial celebration.  These commemorative badges were somewhat larger, but still emulated the style of the originals. Deputies were allowed to purchase these “millennium” badges, but they could only be worn during the year 2000.   Because of a statute stating that a deputy may only possess one badge at time, the standard-issue badge was returned to the department for safe keeping. At the end of that year, the “millennium” badge was exchanged for the standard-issue badge.  The “millennium” badge was then encased in Lucite and given to the deputy as a permanent keepsake.

**Firearms**

When Los Angeles was first established, almost every prospector, settler, hunter and gambler carried a firearm.  Many carried not only a revolver, but also a Bowie Knife and either a rifle or shotgun for hunting.  These Wild West beginnings made it necessary for the Sheriff and his deputies to carry firearms for protection.

The first Sheriffs of Los Angeles County used cap and ball black powder revolvers exclusively.  By the late 1850’s, cartridge-style rim-fire ammunition became available.  This type of ammunition was ideal for small, lightweight and easily concealable derringers.  These weapons were popular for gamblers who wanted to get the jump on their opponent or ladies of the evening dealing with aggressive clients.  They were also a perfect back-up weapon for lawmen.

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.

In addition to their handgun, many law enforcement officers also carried a rifle or shotgun.  The rifle allowed for better accuracy at a greater distance.  Many of these rifles were old, dating back to before the Revolutionary War.  In the mid 1800’s these outmoded flintlock rifles were upgraded to percussion-style weapons.  Shotguns were also very popular since they were easy to use and, when fired, the buckshot spread allowed even the worst shooter to hit his target.  When someone was struck at close range by buckshot, it meant almost certain death.

The weapons utilized by deputies changed over the years.  Keeping pace with modern technology was imperative when faced with the often overwhelming firepower encountered from heavily armed suspects.

Top of Form

**Sheriff James Barton**    **September 1851 – October 1855**

The early Sheriffs of Los Angeles County were elected for one year terms of office.  In September of 1851, after George T. Burrill’s term ended, James Barton was elected as the second Sheriff of Los Angeles County.  Barton was re-elected six times during his career, which sadly ended with his murder on January 23, 1857.

William B. Osburn was selected by Barton to be his undersheriff.

**(Sven Crongeyer, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

*One of Sheriff Barton’s earliest challenges occurred on November 12, 1851 when a new judge revoked the Lugo Brother’s bail and issued a warrant for their arrest. Upon hearing that they were wanted men, the Lugo Brothers decided to go on the lam. They figured that surviving as fugitives was much better than waiting to be lynched by vigilantes. They immediately joined up with the notorious outlaw, Salomon Pico.  At that time, Pico was one of the most infamous desperados in California.  When he was younger, he had lost his land to the “Yanquis” and afterward vowed to kill every American falling into his hands. Pico was known for cutting off his victim’s ears which were then placed like a necklace around his horse’s neck.  He was not bashful about showing off his trophies.*

*The Lugo brothers complained to Pico that they were being railroaded by the white lawyers in Los Angeles.  Pico sympathized with the brothers and devised a plot to help them out.  The trio rode into Los Angeles and approached the judge’s office.  Inside, County Attorney Benjamin Hayes, who was helping prosecute the Lugos, heard the riders dismount.  Going outside to see who had arrived, Hayes was confronted by the bandits.  Pico fired a round that blew off the attorney’s hat.  Benjamin ran back into the office and slammed the door.  When the trio approached, Hayes pushed hard on the door which gave way with a crash.  This panicked the desperados causing them to flee.*

*Sheriff Barton formed a posse and immediately set off in pursuit of Pico and the Lugos. When they caught up to them ten miles from the pueblo, a ferocious gun battle ensued.  Even though one of the Sheriff’s bullets struck Pico in the arm, the odds were still not in their favor. Realizing that continuing the fight against the more heavily armed outlaws would mean certain death, Barton ordered the posse’s immediate and full speed return to Los Angeles.  Pico chased the Sheriff for half a mile, firing continually the entire time.  It wasn’t until the posse reached the pueblo that the three outlaws broke off the chase.*

**July 4, 1852**

Sheriff Barton was called to the “Higuerra House” Saloon in the crime ridden Calle de Los Negros area regarding a disturbance.  Soon after arriving, the Sheriff got into an altercation with gambler Joseph Caddick and several others.  Instead of backing off and going for help, Barton provoked the troublemakers by asking them to step into the street.  Caddick told Barton that he had better defend himself as he simultaneously pulled his gun and fired at the Sheriff.  Barton returned fire and at least 3 or 4 shots were exchanged.  One of Barton’s rounds pierced Caddick’s right lung, nearly killing the gunman. Judge Mallard acquitted Barton, saying that the Sheriff had acted in self-defense.  This incident was one of several that caused many Angelenos to call Barton “brave but reckless.”

**(Sven Crongeyer, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

*Salomon Pico was emboldened by his victory against Barton’s posse and their success triggered a crime spree that continued through the fall of 1852.  Pico, the Lugos and the rest of their band of desperados ravaged Southern California ranches. They stole horses and cattle at will.  It was impossible for the Sheriff to apprehend the Lugos because they were hidden by family and friends.  Since Judge Olvera dismissed the charges against them for “lack of evidence,” the Lugos were never brought to trial for the murders of Patrick McSwiggin and Sam the Indian.  The charges were also dismissed for the attempted murder of County Attorney Benjamin Hayes and the shootout with Sheriff Barton.  This greatly incensed the Anglo community, who felt that the legal system was inadequate and an insult to their sense of justice.*

**1853**

In 1851, a colony of Mormons moved from Salt Lake to what is now the City of San Bernardino. They purchased land from the Lugos and in 1853 they petitioned the legislature to create San Bernardino County from a portion of Los Angeles County. The act dividing the county was approved on April 26, 1853. Sheriff Barton lost 20,000 square miles of his jurisdiction when San Bernardino County was carved from Los Angeles County.  Since the new county was sparsely populated and mostly desert, its loss was not a concern to the Sheriff or the Board of Supervisors.

**Brick County Jail**

During this same year, a new Los Angeles County Jail was constructed.  This two story brick building was occupied by city prisoners on the first floor and county prisoners on the second floor.  The city jail on the first floor was divided into two apartments, one for males and one for females.  The county jail on the upper floor was built to prevent escapes.  Strong iron bars spaced six inches apart, traversed the joists supporting the floor.  Thick planking was laid down on top of these bars followed by a covering of sheet iron.  On top of that, wooden planks formed the floor foundation.  This floor was impossible to cut through without detection.  The large room that made up the second floor was well ventilated and contained six cells constructed of partitions of heavy lumber secured by iron clamps.  The doors were made of massive iron gratings.  Although there were attempts to escape from this jail, there is no documentation that anyone actually succeeded.

**First Legal Execution**

Los Angeles County held its first legal execution at the brick jail on February 13, 1854.  As hundreds of citizens watched this historic event, Ignacio Herrera was hanged for killing a young man involved in a love triangle. Between 1851 and 1874, Los Angeles witnessed 40 legal hangings, 38 lynchings and 32 executions by vigilance committee.

**Joaquin Murrieta**

Joaquin Murrieta was, to some extent, the inspiration for the fictional character of Zorro.  His name symbolized resistance against the Anglo-American economic and cultural domination in California.  He wanted to reclaim the part of Mexico that had been lost in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.  In 1852, Joaquin Murrieta joined his brother-in-law Claudio Feliz and his gang of banditos robbing and terrorizing settlers in Northern California.  Late that year, Claudio was gunned down by a sheriff’s posse.  The reins of leadership were passed on to Joaquin Murrieta.  Joaquin and his desperadoes met with “Three Fingered Jack” Garcia, and together they went on a bloody, nine month rampage.  Murrieta was one of the so-called “Five Joaquins” listed on a bill passed in the California state legislature in May 1853.  The bill authorized the hiring of 20 rangers over a three month period to hunt down Joaquin Botellier, Joaquin Carrillo, Joaquin Ocomorenia, Joaquin Murrieta and Joaquin Valenzuela, along with their gangs.

**The Los Angeles Rangers**

In June of 1853, in order to gain control of the rampant lawlessness by Joaquin Murietta and his gang, the City Council formed the Los Angeles Rangers. This elite posse was ready to ride at a moment’s notice to assist lawmen in tracking down dangerous outlaws.  The group was composed of 100 volunteers who enrolled but only 60 members were active. They took orders from the Mayor and the Sheriff.  The members were issued Spanish lances and wore badges made of white ribbon with the words, “City Police” in both English and Spanish.  The Rangers were the forerunners of today’s Reserve Deputy Sheriff’s.

The Rangers placed scouts at prominent places throughout the county to observe movements of bands of thieves. When they observed a band of criminals, the scouts would ride to Los Angeles to inform the Rangers. The Rangers would immediately respond and capture the thieves.

The Rangers efficiently arrested many bandits during the four years they were active until they were disbanded. (History of L.A. County page 126)

The California Rangers hired to track down the Joaquins were paid $150 a month along with a chance to share the $1,000 governor's reward if they were successful.    On July 25, 1853, a group of Rangers encountered a band of armed Mexican men near Pacheco Pass.  A confrontation took place and two of the Mexicans were killed. One was claimed to be Murrieta, and the other was thought to be Manuel Garcia, also known as Three-Fingered Jack, one of Joaquin's most notorious associates.

The Rangers severed Three-Fingered Jack's hand and Murrieta's head as proof of the outlaws' deaths, and preserved them in a jar of alcohol.  The jar was displayed throughout California where spectators could pay $1 to see them. Seventeen people, including a Catholic priest, signed affidavits identifying the head as Murrieta's, enabling the Rangers to collect the reward money.  The preserved head was destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake.

**1854**

Late in 1854, Sheriff Barton unwittingly set into motion a series of events that would eventually lead to his untimely death.  Barton lived in an illicit relationship with an Indian woman.  There were reports that he was mistreating the woman who left him and moved in with her family on the east side of the river.  Barton went to bring her back, but when she refused, he violently seized her and dragged her away.   Andres Fuentes happened to be riding by and intervened on the side of the woman.  A few days later, at Barton’s insistence, Andres was arrested, convicted and sent to San Quentin Prison.  Andres threatened to return after his prison sentence was up in two years and kill Sheriff Barton. Several months later, Barton arrested a notorious and dangerous criminal named Juan Flores for stealing horses in Los Angeles.  Flores was convicted and sentenced to three years in San Quentin.  While in prison, Flores met Andres and together they plotted to seek revenge against the Sheriff.  Just after Andres was released from prison, Flores escaped, but Sheriff Barton was too busy dealing with murders to worry about escaped horse thieves.

On October 13, 1854, the Sheriff and his deputies arrested Dave Brown for murdering Pink Clifford.  Dave Brown was a notorious criminal who used to be a member of the Los Angeles Rangers.  Brown was intoxicated and had gotten into a fight with Pinckney Clifford in one of the pueblo’s livery stables.  Brown won the fight by stabbing Pinckney to death.

As Brown was arrested and taken to the jail, an angry crowd gathered outside to lynch him. Mayor Stephen C. Foster appeased the crowd by promising that, if the courts did not find Brown guilty, he would resign and lead the lynching himself.  A month later, Judge Hayes convicted Brown for murder and sentenced him to hang on January 12, 1855 along with Felipe Alvitre, another murderer.  The men appealed to the California Supreme Court in Sacramento.  Alvitre and Brown both received stays of execution from the court.  Unfortunately for them, the mail was slow and inefficient.  Some mail took 52 days to travel from Sacramento to Los Angeles. Brown’s reprieve arrived, but there was nothing for Alvitre.  The Hispanic citizens became outraged when they thought that white men were being treated differently from them.  They felt that if Brown and Alvitre were both found guilty of murder and sentenced to death, then they should both live or die together.

On January 12, more than 2,000 armed men gathered around the gallows.  Sheriff Barton asked some of the good citizens in town to assist in guarding the jail. Most of them refused, but a few did step up to help.

At 3 PM, Barton attempted to hang Alvitre before a crowd of angry spectators.  The inadequate rope snapped when Alvitre’s weight was placed on it.  The murderer fell to the ground, writhing in pain. The crowd’s anger exploded and they began to stone the guards.  Barton hurriedly placed Alvitre back into a noose and hung him.  The spectators were stirred to a frenzy, chanting that Brown be hung.  Everyone turned toward the Mayor, who did not have to think very long about his decision.  He resigned his position on the spot and agreed to head the mob.  The angry horde stormed the jail doors, smashing them in.  Brown was dragged to the nearest corral gateway where a rope was quickly strung. Forced to stand on a chair, a noose was placed around his neck.  He was allowed to say a few final words to some of his friends in the crowd.  Once his statement was completed, he jumped off the chair, ending his own life.

A few days later, Alvitre’s stay of execution arrived, but Mayor Foster didn’t really care.  He was soon re-elected in a landside vote and there was nothing the Sheriff could do about it.  Barton was so angry that he refused to run for re-election as Sheriff.  He did, however, run for a position on the Board of Supervisors, and won.

 After a year of not being Sheriff, it appears Barton missed working outdoors and the excitement of tracking down and arresting outlaws.   Eventually, he would be re-elected and began his second period as Sheriff in November of 1856.

**Sheriff David W.Alexander  September 1855 – August 1856**

David Alexander was a charter member of the Los Angeles Rangers. J.Q. Stanley, who was also a ranger, ran against Alexander for Sheriff.  Stanley conducted a poll to determine how many people would vote for him.  The majority of people he talked to indicated that he would get their vote.  When it was all over, Alexander won the election.  Stanley’s only comment was “I didn’t know there were so many damned liars in the county!”   Sheriff Alexander began his term in September 1855.

Sheriff Alexander’s undersheriff, William Peterson, gained fame for his arrest of the notorious gambler and cutthroat, Henry Talbot, alias Cherokee Bob.  Cherokee Bob had recently escaped from San Quentin and was hiding out in San Gabriel.  Several old gambling buddies recognized him and notified Undersheriff Peterson.  On December 21, 1855 when Peterson confronted the bandit, Bob reached for a pistol.  The lawman was faster and Bob was taken into custody without a fight.

**Constable William Jenkins**

On July 19, 1856, Constable William Jenkins was sent to the home of Maria Candelaria Pollorena. He presented a writ to seize a guitar from Antonio Ruiz, who owed another man $50.  Jenkins took the guitar and left.  As soon as he was gone, Maria realized that she had placed a personal letter in the guitar, so she sent Antonio to ask Jenkins to return it.  Jenkins thought it would be funny to give Maria a hard time about the letter.  He returned to her house, but would not to give up the note.  Antonio asked Jenkins to return the letter but he still refused.  Maria was frustrated and grabbed the guitar.  A struggle took place and Antonio grabbed the constable’s arm from behind.  Jenkins panicked, pulled out his revolver, aimed it over his shoulder and shot the unarmed man in the chest.  Antonio died the next day.

Jenkins turned himself into the Sheriff after realizing what a grave error he had made.  Pending trial, Constable Jenkins was released on bail by Judge Benjamin Hayes.  Many townspeople were outraged and wanted to lynch Jenkins.  Sheriff Alexander realized the danger that Jenkins was in and jailed him for his own protection.  The constable was eventually tried for murder and acquitted.

At Antonio’s funeral, red-bearded Frenchman, Fernando Cariergue, urged the crowd to attack the town.  The next day, Cariergue took a group of 300 to a Catholic priest’s house where they found guns and an old brass cannon left from the Mexican-American War.

Sheriff Alexander organized the citizenry into platoons in order to protect the town.  City Marshal Billy Getman took one of his officers, William Peterson, along with six other riders, up to an observation post near the Priest’s house. This vantage point allowed them to observe Cariergue’s band of men. At midnight, the gang began heading toward the town.  The Marshal attempted to have his people fall back so they could go alert the Sheriff.  But it was too late.  The angry mob charged the Marshal’s men. They exchanged gunfire and Cariergue’s party backed off.  Getman yelled at the others to ride into town and notify the Sheriff. He would stay and cover their retreat.  Four riders from the angry mob charged the Marshal who stood his ground and returned fire.  One of the attacker’s bullets struck Getman in the face, knocking him from his horse. The other riders fired at the defenseless lawman while he was lying on the ground. Getman rolled as bullets exploded in the dirt, just missing him by inches.

The Marshal’s men arrived in time to warn the Sheriff about the impending attack.  Quick mobilization of the platoons prevented Cariergue and his thugs from destroying the town.  Cariergue fled the pueblo and hid out in San Gabriel.

Andres Pico supported Sheriff Alexander by forming a posse of twenty vaqueros who rode out and captured Cariergue.  Now Cariergue was in jail with Jenkins, the man he was going to lynch for killing his friend.  The Sheriff and the Judge tried to find a way to bring lasting peace to the town.  An Anglo jury found Jenkins not guilty and in return, the grand jury refused to indict Cariergue for the attempted murder of Marshal Getman.  Both men were released from jail and the Angelenos went about their business.

Stressed from the incident, Sheriff Alexander went to his friend, former Sheriff James Barton.  Barton told Alexander that he would much rather be Sheriff than County Supervisor.  Alexander said that he was through chasing down criminals. Resigning as Sheriff, Alexander took over the remainder of Barton’s term as County Supervisor.

**Sheriff Charles E. Hale  August 1856 – November 1856**

After Alexander resigned as Sheriff, the Board of Supervisors appointed Charles E. Hale as interim Sheriff until elections could be held.  Not a great deal is known about Hale’s background, but an incident in 1854 records a great deal about his character.

**(Sven Crongeyer, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

*On Sunday evening last March 4th, an affray occurred at a Mexican dance house in this city.  A Sonorian who kept a butcher’s stall in Negro Alley, was stabbed by another and mortally wounded, so that he died almost instantly.  Our vigilant Constable Hale promptly arrested the murderer, and was conveying him to jail assisted by Mr. Pancho Johnson, when four men overtook them on horseback and commenced firing, probably with the intent of rescuing the prisoner.  Mr. Johnson and the prisoner were severely but not dangerously wounded.  Mr. Hale promptly returned the fire of these desperadoes, wounding one of them so severely that he died the next morning of his wounds.  The man that Mr. Hale shot is recognized by some of our citizens as Dionicio Garcia who killed the Sheriff at Monterey County last summer.*

**James R. Barton November 1856 – January 1857 (Second Term)**

Barton served as Sheriff for six years before deciding not to run again.  However, after a one year absence, he couldn’t wait to once again take up the reins of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department and was reelected as Sheriff defeating interim-Sheriff Hale.  This time Barton selected Elijah Bettis as his deputy.

Sheriff Barton had no idea that his life was in danger when Juan Flores broke out of prison on October 8, 1856. The escaped convict assembled a group of outlaws. They called themselves “Las Manillas” meaning “The Handcuffs” gang.  Andres Fuentes, who felt that Barton had unjustly sent him to prison, joined Flores with the avowed purpose of killing Sheriff Barton.

Fuentes rode to Los Angeles as a spy for the gang while the rest of them bypassed the city and continued south to San Juan Capistrano.  Flores wanted to meet up with his Indian girlfriend, Martina Espinoza, who lived in the area.  On January 21, 1857, some of the Manillas outlaws entered Michael Kraszewski’s store. They stole a gun and started to ride off.  Kraszewski rode after the bandits and caught up to one of them.  He grabbed the horse’s bridle in an effort to stop him.  The outlaw broke loose and headed back to their camp.  Flores became enraged when told about Kraszewski’s daring act.   He declared that no one would challenge his gang and headed back into town to teach the residents a lesson about resisting.

 When they arrived in town, Kraszewski saw them and ran into a saloon.  He and another man hid in a nearby room and bolted the door.  One of the outlaws yelled at them to come out. When they refused, he fired through the door.  The bullet hit the other man in the wrist.  The bandits finally left, but not before ransacking Kraszewski’s store and shooting an unarmed man to death. Messengers immediately rode from San Juan Capistrano to notify the Sheriff in Los Angeles.  Sheriff Barton quickly assembled a posse consisting of Deputy Frank Alexander, Constables William H. Little, and Charles Baker, blacksmith Charles F. Daly and teamster Alfred Hardy.

Fuentes saw the posse forming and slipped out of town to warn Flores that the posse was coming for him.  
  
The posse left L.A. on January 22 and rode to Santiago Creek.  After spending the night, they continued on to Rancho Sepulveda. There they learned that the Manillas numbered at least fifty men. The posse was told that they should call for reinforcements before engaging this sizeable gang of outlaws.  Sheriff Barton dismissed this information thinking it was erroneous and exaggerated.  He had never heard of such a large band of desperados.  The Sheriff and his posse galloped off towards San Juan Capistrano.

When the posse was 15 miles north of the San Juan Capistrano Mission, they saw a lone rider coming in their direction.  Constables Little and Baker rode ahead to intercept him. When they reached the top of a hill they saw the entire gang emerge from the lowlands around them.  The desperados each carried shotguns and dual or triple sets of revolvers with extra barrels for quick reloading.  These two lawmen quickly realized that their two guns were no match for the more than fifty guns that surrounded them.  Juan Silvas gunned down Constable Little and Flores killed Constable Baker.  Even though they were outnumbered and outgunned, the Sheriff and his posse did not back down.  They charged forward to engage in one of the greatest gun battles ever fought on horseback.  The lawmen shot three of the renegades off of their mounts.  As Sheriff Barton battled his way towards Pancho Daniel, the bandit yelled at him, “God damn you, I have got you now!”  Pointing his pistol at the outlaw, Barton yelled, “I reckon I have you too!”  With their pistols now aimed at each other, the Sheriff and the bandit fired simultaneously.  Daniel’s bullet was on the mark, striking Barton in the heart.  Barton’s aim was off and he missed.  The Sheriff toppled off his horse and, in a final act of defiance, hurled his empty revolver at Fuentes.  Deputy Alexander, Blacksmith Daly and teamster Hardy fired until their guns were empty.  As a last resort they used their pistol butts as clubs.  Realizing that the situation was hopeless, they turned their horses around and raced back towards Los Angeles.  The gang chased them at full speed.  After traveling three miles, they caught up to Charles Daly and gunned him down.  Deputy Alexander and Alfred Hardy barely escaped with their lives as they dodged bullets for over twelve miles.

Arriving at Rancho Sepulveda, the exhausted remnants of the posse obtained fresh horses and rode in separate directions to alert other lawmen. Alexander took off at full speed towards El Monte as Hardy headed to Los Angeles.  In Los Angeles, citizens panicked when they thought a race war was breaking out. City Marshal Billy Getman arrested forty townspeople whom he thought might join forces with the Manillas gang.  He then formed four companies of militia and deployed them to protect the perimeter of the town.

After the town was secured, Marshal Getman assembled forty rangers and led them towards the scene of the gun battle.  On the way, they came across the body of blacksmith Charles Daly who had valiantly joined the posse to apprehend the ruthless outlaws.  Daly had bullets in his body and mouth.  His face had powder burns, indicating that he was shot at close range. Traveling down to the site of the gun fight, they located the bodies of the Sheriff and two constables.  Marshal Getman peered down at Sheriff James Barton, realizing that his long time friend and colleague was the first Los Angeles County Sheriff killed in the line of duty.   Sheriff Barton had been shot three times in the heart and once in the right eye.  Constable Little had bullet wounds in his right eye, head and body.  Constable Baker had been shot three times in the head.  All of the men had been shot additional times after they were already dead.  Their bodies had been stripped of valuables and personal effects.

As the lifeless bodies were loaded onto the horses, these lawmen had no idea that this was the first in a long string of Deputy Sheriffs who would be killed in the line of duty over the history of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department.  A small group of men returned the bodies to Los Angeles for burial.

The Manillas gang rode through San Juan Capistrano bragging about their gun battle.  Even though they gunned down the lawmen, they did give Barton’s posse credit for fighting bravely to the end.

After searching for four days without finding the killers, Getman and the rangers returned to Los Angeles to attend a solemn funeral procession for the four lawmen.  Citizens from all around came to pay their respects as the men were laid to rest at the Campo Santos Cemetery.  During the funeral, a somber group of pallbearers removed Barton’s badge and then placed him in the ground.

One of the greatest manhunts the Wild West had ever seen began immediately after the Sheriff’s funeral.

**The Hunt for Sheriff Barton’s Killers**

General Andres Pico and future Sheriff Tomas Sanchez were worried. They had to prove that Juan Flores and his Manillas gang did not represent the Californios who had inhabited this area since long before the Americans came.  The future of their ranchos depended on convincing the Americans that they wanted peace and justice.  Pico and Sanchez assembled fifty one vaqueros and left Los Angeles for San Juan Capistrano in search of the Manillas gang who killed Sheriff Barton. At the same time, another posse of twenty six Anglo men left from El Monte and teamed up with the posse from Los Angeles.

Believing that Flores and his gang were heading toward Mexico, Sheriff Bettis sent word to the U.S. Military in San Diego.  Troops were placed along the border to prevent the outlaws from leaving the country.

Apache scouts led by Geronimo, and Navajo scouts led by Manuelito, joined in the massive hunt. They searched throughout the mountains for the ruthless killers.

Future Sheriff Jim Thompson gathered twenty seven men to block the Northern escape routes.  Assisted by troops from Fort Tejon, he rapidly deployed soldiers to close off all roads heading towards Northern California. The troops and lawmen spread out, shutting down the passes at Simi Valley, San Fernando, and Calabasas, as well as the coastal route to Santa Barbara.

Andres Pico asked the San Luis Indians to post lookouts in the mountain passes south and east of San Juan Capistrano to watch for the notorious gang.  On January 29, an Indian scout spotted the outlaws riding through Santiago Canyon in the Santa Ana Mountains.

Andres Pico and Tomas Sanchez knew Chino Varelas, a member of the Manillas.  They were convinced that if they got word to him, he could be persuaded to provide information on the plans of the gang.  An Indian runner was sent to offer him a deal.  If he gave up the information they wanted, they would spare his life.

Once they located the Manillas’ encampment, the Los Angeles posse approached from the south while the El Monte posse approached from the north.  The outlaws saw the lawmen approaching and fled as the posse gave chase. Several gunshots were exchanged, but the heavy brush and rough terrain made it easy for Flores and his compadres to escape to higher ground.  This rugged landscape also provided the cover necessary for Chino Varelas to elude the gang and surrender to Tomas Sanchez.

Some of the gang was able to evade the posse by climbing up a hill and then down a steep cliff.  A number of the slower members, however, were easily captured.  From their prisoners, General Pico learned that Pancho Daniel, Andres Fuentes and several others had left for Los Angeles early that morning.

The next morning, the El Monte posse picked up the trail of Flores, Espinoza and Lopez.  As the lawmen approached, the outlaws began firing at them.  One of the posse members received a minor bullet wound but no one else was injured.  Being outgunned, the bandits made a hasty retreat into a nearby cave.  The posse blocked the cave entrance and continued firing into the dark opening.  Realizing that there was no way out, the trapped criminals surrendered.  In their possession was Sheriff Barton’s gold watch, two Colt Navy revolvers, a Colt pocket five-shooter, two double-barrel shotguns, one musket and two Bowie knives.  The prisoners were taken to Rancho Yorba and placed under guard in a small adobe house.  At midnight, when the guard fell asleep, the three escaped.  The darkness made it impossible to find them.  The embarrassed posse was forced to ride back to General Pico and explain to him what had happened.  A furious Pico vowed that the two criminals in his custody would not get a chance to escape.  Taking them to a nearby tree, he quickly strung up some ropes and hung them. Their reign of terror was over.

After escaping, Flores continued running.  Stealing a horse in Santa Ana, the felon headed toward Ventura. He carefully avoided going through Los Angeles.  General Pico picked up Flores’ trail and pursued him.  Flores rode so fast and so far that he wore out his horse.  At Mission San Fernando, he stole another horse and continued on towards Simi Pass.  On February 3, he was making his way through the pass when two soldiers stopped him for questioning.  Flores tried to slip past by telling them he was a weary rancher named Juan Gonzales Sanchez who was looking for stray horses. The soldiers noticed his injured arm and promptly took him to their camp where he was recognized by one of the men.

Two other outlaws, Jesus Espinoza and Leonardo Lopez, had accompanied Flores. They showed up an hour later with fourteen horses in tow.  When the soldiers ordered them to stop, they hurriedly rode away.  A sergeant fired at the men, knocking one of them off his horse.  He scrambled to his feet and they both managed to escape. Several posse members proceeded to Mission San Buenaventura and set a trap for the two bandits.  They had a local man go out and lead the outlaws into an ambush.  As the two bandits rode up on a single horse, the posse members opened fire.  Both men jumped from the horse and ran.  Espinosa was immediately captured, but Lopez got away.

A vigilante trial was held. Espinoza was found guilty and sentenced to hang.  He was brought to the Mission San Buenaventura where Father Domingo Serrano prayed for him and received his confession.  Espinoza was then taken out and summarily hanged.

Even though they had just hung a man, the posse was still enraged over the death of Sheriff Barton.  Outlaws or any suspicious persons in town became the focus of their anger. They were told about a man named Encarnacion Berreyesa who, it was rumored, had given safe passage to Juan Flores and his gang.  Berrevesa carried a scar on his neck from a botched hanging attempt.  Some townspeople said he was respectable. Others revealed that he had recently stabbed two men, robbed another and stabbed his wife.  That was all the information the posse needed.  Berreyesa was hunted down and lynched on the spot.

The manhunt continued back down south in Los Angeles.  William Stockton, a wine merchant, was being robbed by two members of the Manillas gang.  Cyrus Sanford and two friends happened upon them and interrupted the crime in progress. The robbers fled with Sanford and Stockton in pursuit.  A running gun battle took place on horseback until Stockton’s mount was hit.  One of the bandits escaped.  The other jumped off his horse and ran into a swampy marsh.

A posse from El Monte arrived and set fire to the brush around the swamp.  The robber was smoked out but refused to surrender.  A member of the posse shot the robber with his rifle, killing him. They cut off the bandit’s head and took it to El Monte for Deputy William Peterson to identify.  Peterson recognized the face as that of Miguel Soto.  Sheriff Barton’s pistol was still in Soto’s possession.

Tempers in Los Angeles continued to flare from the Sheriff’s murder. Vigilantes, bent on revenge, began rounding up every suspect that might in any way be associated with either the Stockton robbery or Flores and his Manillas gang.  They arrested Pedro Lopez who was never known to work but, it was said, got his money from cock fighting and cattle rustling.  Juan Valenzuela was arrested on suspicion of stealing sheep. Diego Navarro was also taken into custody, despite the fact that he claimed he had nothing to do with the robbery. Although the three men were not involved with the killing of the Sheriff, the *Los Angeles Star* newspaper claimed that they were the banditti who had murdered Sheriff Barton and his associates.

 The vigilante trial was described as follows:

**(Sven Crongeyer, Sergeant, LASD Historian)**

We met near the veranda of the Montgomery saloon and Judge Jonathon R. Scott having been made chairman, a regular order of procedure, extra-legal though it was, was followed: after announcing the capture and naming the criminal, the judge called upon the crowd to determine the prisoner’s fate.  Thereupon someone would shout, “Hang him!” Scott would then put the question, “Gentlemen you have heard the motion: all those in favor of hanging so and so will signify by saying Aye!” And the citizens present unanimously answered Aye!”

During Navarro’s execution, the noose broke and he fell to the ground.  While he lay squirming, he was shot to death.

Since Chino Varelas had cooperated with Tomas Sanchez and Andres Pico, he was allowed to go free

Juan Flores had been held in the Los Angeles County Jail for just over a week.  On February 14, an angry vigilante mob approached the jail. Deputy Peterson and Sheriff Bettis, also wanting revenge, offered no resistance.  They knew that attempting to stop the group was futile. They would either be brushed aside or killed. Juan Flores was marched to Fort Hill with two priests at his side.  A crowd of 3,000 people were present, including the posse that hunted him.  After the priests took his confession and administered the last rights, Flores said he was ready to die. A lariat belonging to one of Barton’s murdered deputies was made into a noose and placed around the outlaw’s neck.  His arms and legs were tied with rope and he was swung off to hang. The rope was too short causing Flores to slowly strangle and choke. The condemned man managed to get his hands free and tried to pull himself up the rope.  Several people struggled with him to release his hold.   Eventually he quit fighting and ultimately became still in death.

**Sheriff William C. Getman  - September 1857 – January 1858**

Getman chose his best friend, Eli Smith, as his deputy.  Since he was also budgeted for an additional deputy, he selected future City Marshal, Frank Baker.

Four months after assuming his new post, Sheriff Getman left his rented office in the Bella Union Hotel to walk over and see the judge.  He wanted to discuss a man named Reed, who had recently arrived from Texas.  Reed was mentally ill and was causing trouble in town.  The judge ordered the Sheriff to bring Reed in along with two doctors so they could evaluate his condition.  Sheriff Getman and Deputy Baker, along with Officer Hester, began searching the town for Reed.  While the lawmen inspected each building, Reed entered the Monte Pio pawnshop and handed the owner, Mr. Cohn, a pistol.  He begged Cohn to shoot him since he was tired of life.  The proprietor was scared, so he turned his back and asked Reed to leave.  Reed exited the shop and was approached by the three lawmen.  Getman told him, “I want to speak to you.”  As Reed drew his derringer, he said, ”Keep away from me, don’t come near me!”  The Sheriff replied, “You don’t want to shoot me!”  Reed suddenly stepped back and fired point blank at Getman.  The Sheriff gasped as he said, Boys, I’ve been shot!” He then fell to the ground dead!

Reed ran back to the pawnshop and barricaded himself inside the store.  A crowd gathered outside as Deputy Baker and Officer Hester began to approach the business.  Seeing the lawmen drawing nearer, Reed began firing at the crowd.  Everyone ran except for the deputies who engaged the suspect in a gunfight.  Reed fired twenty or thirty rounds.  Hearing the gunshots, Officers Peterson and Jenkins ran to the assistance of the deputies.  Realizing that Reed was well shielded, Jenkins climbed up on top of the building and shot through an opening in the roof.  Reed returned fire, wounding Jenkins severely in the leg.  Jenkins continued shooting, grazing Reed’s head.  This caused the mentally ill man to run out of the store.  Peterson, Hester and Baker all fired repeatedly at the crazed gunman.  Reed was struck by ten bullets and knocked backwards.  He fell dead on the spot. Deputy Baker stared down at his coat in disbelief, counting five holes from the bullets that missed him.  The deputy’s emotions changed from just being happy to be alive, to sorrow for the loss of his long-time friend and former boss lying lifeless a few feet away.

The day of Sheriff Getman’s funeral, all of the buildings in town were draped in black and all of the Saloons were closed.  The whole town watched as the funeral director reluctantly removed what was the symbol of a hero, Sheriff Getman’s badge.

Sheriff Billy Getman was the first law enforcement officer in the nation killed by a mentally deranged person.  His death was also one of the earliest documented cases of what has become known as, “Suicide by Cop.”  This syndrome is characterized by a mentally ill person provoking the police into killing him since he is not willing to do it himself.  Billy Getman was the second and last Sheriff killed in the line of duty in Los Angeles County.

**Sheriff James S. Thompson – January 1858 – August 1859**

Two Sheriff’s had now been killed within the last year. No one but James Thompson was bold enough to step forward and volunteer to take the job.  The Board of Supervisors appointed Thompson to serve the remainder of Getman’s term.  Thompson selected William W. Jenkins as his deputy.

James Barton was Sheriff when Leonardo Lopez, along with fellow Manillas gang members, ransacked Kraszewski’s store and killed an unarmed man in San Juan Capistrano.  Sheriff Barton was responding to this incident when he was killed. During Sheriff Thompson’s term, Lopez was put on trial and found guilty.  On February 16, 1858, Lopez was taken to the gallows in the L.A. County Jail Yard. Despite being identified by, and testified against, by several witnesses, he maintained his innocence right to the end.

In Northern California, Sheriff John Murphy of Santa Clara County captured Pancho Daniel.  He tracked Sheriff Barton’s killer to a farm and found him hiding in a haystack. At the time of his arrest, Daniel still had Barton’s gun belt in his possession.  He was returned to Los Angeles to stand trial.  Kimball H. Dimmick, Daniel’s attorney, argued that his client could not get a fair trial in Los Angeles. Dimmick insisted that Sheriff Thompson, who had led the manhunt, and all potential jurors, were biased. The judge agreed and transferred the venue to Santa Barbara.  Angelenos feared that if Daniel was moved, justice would not be served. He might be acquitted in Santa Barbara County, or escape from their “leaky” jail that was too weak to hold him.  Just prior to Daniel’s transfer north, Sheriff Thompson heard a rumor that Andres Fuentes was on the edge of town.  Two hundred vigilantes waited patiently for the Sheriff to leave town to investigate. As soon as he left, they overpowered the jailer and dragged Daniel out of his cell.  The mob propelled this ruthless outlaw into the jail yard and hung a rope over the crossbeam of the jail gate.  Daniel was forced to stand on a stool as the noose was placed around his neck.  When asked if he had any last words, he started blubbering.  Once he regained his composure, he said, “Tell my wife good-bye.”  With that, the stool was kicked out from under him, sealing his fate.

Andres Fuentes, one of the few Manillas gang members left, fled south to Baja California. There he met a Los Angeles renegade named Manuel Marquez. Fuentes and Marquez banded together with two other desperadoes, Chino Varelas and Salomon Pico.  They took jobs as bodyguards for Mexican General Jose Castro.   After Castro was killed in a drunken brawl his successor, General Esparza, ordered the desperadoes to be shot.   In 1860, all of the outlaws except Chino Varelas were executed by firing squad.  Varelas had been spared before in San Juan Capistrano. That time he made a deal with the lawmen hunting for the killers of Sheriff Barton, betraying the Manilas gang in exchange for his freedom.   Now he was being spared once again, but this time it was because of his family’s wealth and good name.

Varelas returned to Los Angeles, where he was killed in an altercation. His death brought to a close one of the bloodiest gang rampages in California history. Juan Flores and his Manillas gang were cold-blooded robbers and killers.  The murder of four peace officers in one incident would not occur again in California until the shootout in Newhall, north of Los Angeles, in 1970.

After finishing Getman’s term of office in August 1858, Thompson ran for Sheriff and was easily re-elected.

**Sheriff Tomas Sanchez   September 1859 – February 1868**

When Tomas Sanchez took over as Sheriff in 1859, rampant crime continued to plague Los Angeles.  Because of the high crime rate, vigilantes determinedly carried out their own brand of speedy justice to rid society of desperados and cut-throats.  Sheriff Sanchez selected Andrew King as his deputy.  Sanchez developed a program to earn additional income for the Sheriff’s Department when he created the first “Licensing Detail.”  He convinced the Board of Supervisors to let him handle all county business licensing for a fee of 10% per license.

During his time in office, Sanchez was able to ease racial tensions and prevent many conflicts.  One of his first challenges as Sheriff occurred during a celebration of the Mexican national holiday.  Several revelers had raised the Mexican flag over the U.S. flag.  The Mexican supporters didn’t think much of it but the whites were very offended.  Sanchez realized that a riot was ready to break out, so he walked over to the flag pole and ordered the flags to be reversed.  The Mexican’s were not upset by the Sheriff’s actions.  Everyone returned to their celebration.

 Many of the old traditions in California disappeared when a depressing mixture of taxation, crime, drought, small pox and high interest rates destroyed the powerful land-owning dons.  Sanchez was affected too.  He, along with many other land owners, was forced to divide his land and sell it off to pay debts and liens.  By 1900, all of the beautiful large ranchos like Sanchez’s were gone.

Sanchez was the first Mexican American Sheriff in Department history. He had to run for election every year and was reelected Sheriff seven times. No one in LASD history won that many elections to the office. That was a testimony to his political skill and grit.