

In 1850, when California was admitted to statehood, Los Angeles was incorporated as a city with a population of 1,610 people. The task of maintaining law and order fell to the City Marshal, one Samuel Whiting, who thus became the first paid peace officer of the City of Los Angeles.

The creation of what loosely may be called the City's first Police Department resulted from an 1853 murder. The victim was Jack Whaling, the community's second City Marshal. His killer met death at the hands of a bounty hunter. This prompted the City's first "Chief," Dr. A.W. Hope, to organize "The Los Angeles Rangers," who volunteered to assist the beleaguered County Sheriff and Marshal. The Rangers were identified by a white ribbon bearing the imprint in both English and Spanish "City Police - Authorized by the Council of Los Angeles."

"The Los Angeles City Guards," who, during their short-lived career, were attired in the City's first official police uniform, succeeded the Rangers. Like the Rangers, their effectiveness was questionable. Murders were occurring at the rate of one a day, many resulting from differences of opinion voiced within the City's 400 gambling halls.

During the period of 1850 to 1870 Los Angeles had a reputation of being the toughest town in the entire nation. When the vigilance committees of San Francisco and the northern mining camps drove their criminal characters out, Los Angeles became the haven for thieves, cutthroats, murders and other undesirables.

The lawless period culminated with the infamous Chinese Massacre in 1871.

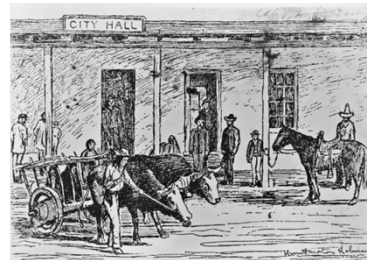


William C. Warren

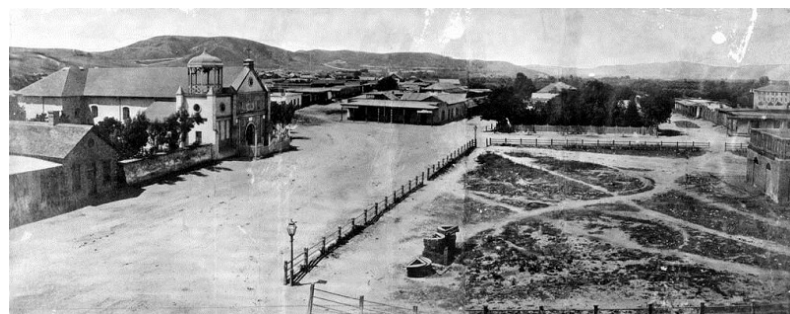
In 1869, the first paid police force made up of six officers, assigned to two shifts, served under the City Marshal William C. Warren.

1869

The population of the City reached 5,000. A visitor to Los Angeles in 1869 noted that: "There are many foreigners living here, ... but principally German and German Jews."

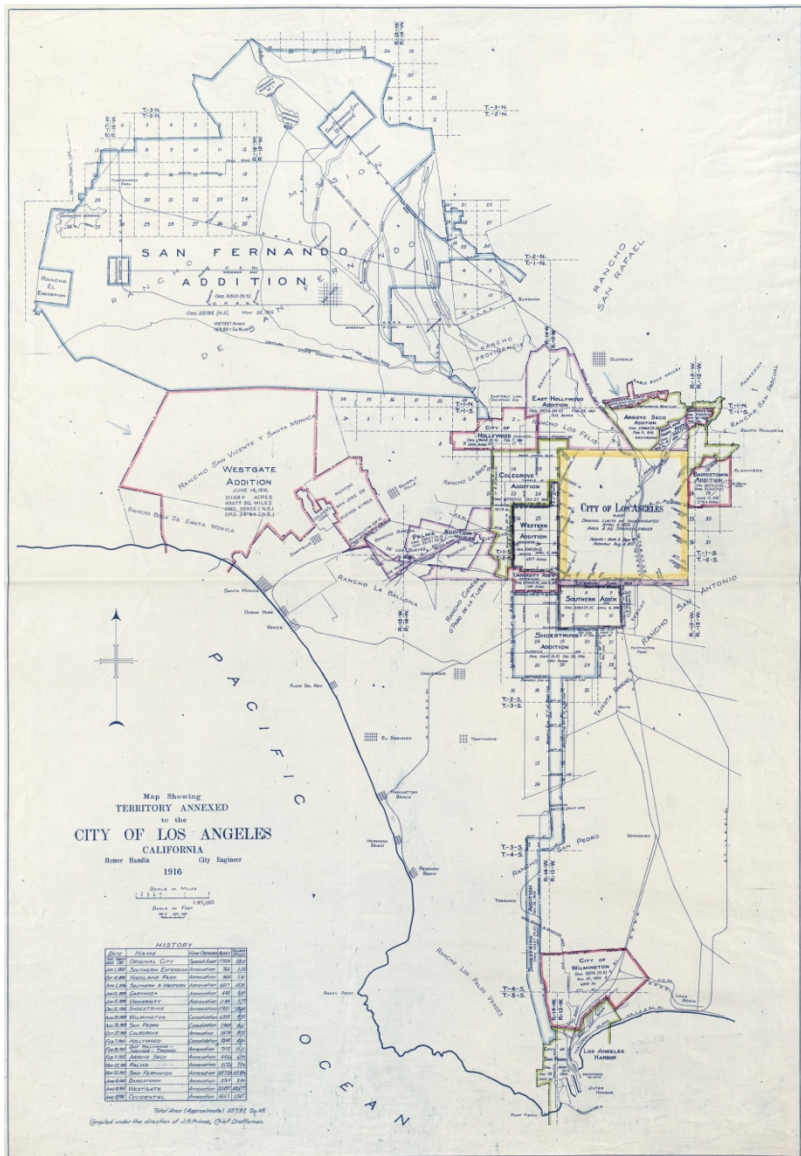


Adobe City Hall and Jail, c. 1858



Panoramic view of the Plaza and 'Old Plaza Church' (Mission Nuestra Senora Reina de Los Angeles) with bare hills in the background. Chavez Ravine, over the church, is where Dodger Stadium is now. The two gas lamps seen on the corners of the Los Angeles Plaza were the first streetlights installed in Los Angeles.

c. 1869



The City of Los Angeles mostly remained within its original 28 square-mile (73 km²) land grant (yellow square on map above) until the 1890s.