THE HISTORICAL RECORDS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN CALIFORNIA

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National Historical Publications and Records Commission

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As the constitutional officer responsible for the management of the State Archives, I am pleased to present this manual to assist counties in the identification and preservation of their own valuable historical records. Since the publication of the manual twenty-three years ago, we have received numerous comments about its usefulness to local officials and the general public. A reprinting of this important resource has been long overdue.

The manual also represents the implementation of one recommendation that emerged from the California Historical Records Advisory Board's strategic plan completed in 2002. In its final report, *Historical Records in the Golden State: A Strategic Plan for Preserving California's Documentary Heritage*, the Board encouraged the State Archives to publish a new version of the manual. In addition to a limited distribution of printed copies of the manual, the publication will be available on the State Archives web site. (www.ss.ca.gov/archives/archives.htm)

The manual offers assistance to county administrators and staff who face the difficult task of evaluating records for historical content. I hope that counties will give serious consideration to the permanent preservation of the records described as these documents contain a large part of the remarkable history of our state. In addition, the manual serves as a research guide to the use of county records. These records, largely untapped, illuminate significant aspects of California history now little understood and may help point us toward solutions to the bewildering array of contemporary problems we all face.

This new edition has been made possible with help from the California State Genealogical Alliance. Representatives from the organization spent many hours converting the original manuscript to an electronic format. We are grateful for their assistance.

In 2000, a Local Government Records Program was established within the State Archives to provide assistance to cities and counties in the management of their records. The completion of this new edition is a vital first step in meeting the program's mandate.

Kevin Shelley
Secretary of State

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Introduction to the 1981 Edition

Certain records have a value that extends far beyond the period during which they served some legal, financial or administrative purpose. This secondary, or historical, value of records provides us with a “window through time” with which we may attempt to gain a better understanding of people and events in the past, and thus a better perception of our present and future. Without proper care and handling of historical records, however, the “window” and the information it makes available can be lost forever. It is only through the preservation and study of historical records that we know anything about, for example, the euphoric yet grinding existence of gold miners in the California of the 1850s. Equally important, these records provide essential information for the study of vital contemporary issues.

Historical records of county government are useful for a variety of reasons. They may contain valuable sociological data about people, where they lived, who they married and what they thought. They help explain the court system and the administration of justice. Certain records may reveal information important to genealogists and political scientists. Others contain financial statistics necessary for studies of basic fiscal activities. A significant segment of records provides information on land values and ownership, transfer of titles and encumbrances of real property. Still others are vital to administrators as evidence in matters of litigation or as keys to the interpretation of public policy and planning.

The manual is based on two factors that should be understood by the reader. First, despite differences in local development, geography and population, county government in California has been fairly uniform over time in its organization, functions and services. Second, because of this uniformity, the records created by county government are generally similar in title, information, use, arrangement and even format. For those reasons, it was possible to collect information, past and present, about the types of records created and maintained by counties, and to identify and describe historical records common to most counties.

Although fifteen agencies, representing the core of county functions, are included, other arms of county government go unmentioned, such as departments of general services or personnel offices. These agencies have few historical records. Indeed, the manual reveals that the offices of county clerk and recorder together contain over seventy per cent of the records listed. In counties with a combined clerk-recorder function, the official in charge may truly be called “Keeper of the Archives”.

In order to maintain the publication’s focus as a guide to historical records common to most counties, records not common to a majority of counties do not appear even though they may have significant historical value. Such is the case with “Records of Chinese Birth” (Alameda), and “Indian Indentures” (Humboldt). These records, and others like them, should be permanently preserved.

The author of this manual put considerable research into the selection of records that do appear. Extensive use was made of Owen Coy's *Guide to the County Archives of California* (1919), the last complete survey of county records. Coy and his staff visited all fifty-eight counties to inspect storage conditions and to list current and non-current records in the custody of the clerk, recorder, assessor, auditor, tax collector, treasurer and superintendent of schools. A careful examination of the lists revealed records common to most counties, and Coy's discourses about the records of each office helped clarify administrative changes in record-keeping practices as well as highlight documents of historical value.

In addition, the volumes of the Works Project Administration's (WPA), *Inventory of the County Archives of California* (late 1930s-early 1940s), were consulted. The inventories provided a breadth of information founded on solid research that is not duplicated elsewhere. Not only do the volumes list all records maintained by agencies and give full descriptions of the information contained in each record series, but they also furnish detailed histories on the organization of county government. Nine volumes of the WPA series were used: Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Mono, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo and Santa Clara.

To bring the information from these two sources up to date, recent inventories and records manuals were examined. Data extracted from manuals of Alameda and San Bernardino counties, and from recent inventories in Yolo, Stanislaus and Sonoma counties proved most useful. The Sacramento History Center, repository for the non-current records of the city and county of Sacramento, also provided helpful information. Finally, an on-site survey of Napa County records was conducted in late October-early November 1981 as a test case for the data obtained elsewhere. In nearly every instance, the Napa results closely matched the information obtained from the other sources. The research seemed to be both reasonable and valid.

Many people contributed time and effort to the creation of the manual. Laren Metzer did a superb job as author, and his supervisor, Chuck Wilson, carefully reviewed the work for accuracy and made helpful suggestions for improvement. Rick Castro, Manager of Record Services, Alameda County; Gay Blake, Supervisor, Central Microfilm Services, San Bernardino County; Sandra Walton, University Archivist, Sonoma State University; John Caswell, Emeritus Professor of History, California State College, Stanislaus; and Susan Hawthorne, formerly of the Yolo County Library, all generously supplied information or copies of record inventories and manuals. Susan Searcy, Archivist at the Sacramento History Center, shared her knowledge and made records from that repository available for examination.

The on-site survey in Napa County was made possible only by the support of the following officials and their staff: Albert Haberger, County Administrator; George Abate, Assessor; James Marek, Auditor-Controller; Florence Cunny, Clerk; Stephen Hackett, County Counsel; James Hickey, Planning Director; Harry Hamilton, Public Works Director; Eleanor Kimbrough, Recorder; Phillip Stewart, Sheriff-Coroner; Floyd Seifert, Superintendent of Schools; and Isabelle Burrell, Treasurer-Tax Collector. Jess Doud,

Director of the Napa County Historical Society, helped to establish contact with Napa officials. Lili Ann Metzer assisted in the work as a volunteer surveyor, thus hastening the completion of the survey and stretching a finite dollar amount that much further. To all the above individuals go our very special thanks.

To the National Historical Publications and Records Commission also goes our gratitude. As the funding agency for costs involved in the production of this manual, their support was essential. The Commission's records grant program made the entire California Historical Records Educational and Consultant Service possible. They have been instrumental in assisting us to identify and preserve California's irreplaceable local history resources and we are deeply appreciative.

As a final note, please contact us if you have any questions regarding the identification or appraisal of historical records. Counties often have unique historical documents that are not listed in this manual. We will be happy to advise you as to the potential historical value of records you may be considering for disposition. It is our belief that, working together, we can select and preserve those vital historical records that constitute not only the story of our past, but also the foundation of our future.

John F. Burns
Chief of Archives
California State Archives

User's Guide

The format of the manual is straightforward and consistent. At the beginning of each section, the user will find a short essay on the functions of the office or agency. Following that, each record series* is listed in alphabetical order by the series title. For the clerk's and recorder's offices, because so many entries are involved, the records have first been divided by categories and then listed alphabetically. Furthermore, court records have been divided into the separate jurisdictions represented. Throughout, each series has been numbered consecutively for ease of reference. This updated version of the manual offers an improved format with headers on each page, photographs (not provided on the PDF version) and an improved index. In addition, several new record series have been added and a number of the research notes have been revised.

Information has been provided for each entry using the following format and order:

SERIES TITLE (ALTERNATE TITLE) [in bold and upper case]. Inclusive dates [in bold] If the record is still current, no ending date is given.

Identification of the series, i.e., what it is or does. Types of record materials included in the series. Specific information contained in the series. Related historical and administrative information. Indexing information [for a separate index series]. Accessibility, i.e., whether the series is closed or confidential.

Arrangement information with common alternatives. Indexing information [for indexing within a series].

Research Note: [in bold and italics]. Suggested research uses of the series.

Two areas require clarification: indexing and arrangement information. Indexing information usually refers to separate indices in which case a separate entry for the index series will immediately follow the series to which it relates. The absence of a separate index is so stated. If an index is provided within the series, i.e., for each volume, the information will immediately follow the statement about arrangement. In some cases, both a separate indexing series and indexing within a series may occur for a single entry.

Arrangement information is always first about the series as a whole, then about a discrete segment (volume, file) within the series. For example, judgment dockets commonly are arranged alphabetically by names of plaintiff and defendant and then chronologically by date of hearing. This means that for the series as a whole, the arrangement is alphabetical, A-Z. Once the appropriate docket has been located (J for Jones for example), the arrangement within the docket is chronological by date of hearing.

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* A record series is a unit of records arranged in accordance with a particular filing system or created, maintained and disposed of together as a unit because the records relate to the same subject or function, result from the same activity or have the same form.

As an example, entry #88 is produced below.

88. CORONER'S REGISTERS, 1883-

A register of all inquests conducted by the coroner. Contains name of deceased, date and cause of death, date of inquest, names of witnesses and jurors, case number, description and identification marks, disposition of personal property and verdict of jury.

In addition, since 1914, the register contains sex, race, residence, age, marital status and occupation of deceased, place of burial, name of undertaker and history of case. Original inquests are filed with the clerk. Separate indexes are common.

Arranged chronologically by date of inquest or, since 1914, numerically by case number. Indexed alphabetically by name of deceased.

Research Note: **Source of genealogical and social information; useful guide to inquests.**

As indicated in the main body of the entry, separate indexes to coroner's registers are common. Thus, entry #89 is **INDEXES TO CORONER'S INQUESTS**, and provides information on the content and arrangement of the indexes. However, it is also common for a coroner's register to be indexed within each register. This information is indicated after the arrangement data.

To further assist the user in gaining access to the information in the entries, a subject index with cross-references is provided at the back of the manual. The index is arranged alphabetically by topic and keyed to page numbers.

Also at the back of the manual are three appendices. Appendix A, "A History of the Organization and Functions of County Government", and Appendix B, "History of the Court System", help set the records contained in the manual in a proper historical context and provide information useful to an understanding of the entries. Appendix C, "Disposition of County Records", summarizes sections of the California Codes that govern disposition at the county level. It is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the subject and should not be used as such. It is up to date through 2004.

In revising this manual, I received valuable insights from Charlene Noyes, archivist, California State Archives, Hynda Rudd, archives and records management consultant, and Teena Stern, California historian. All photos are courtesy of the California State Archives.

Laren W. Metzer
Deputy State Archivist
California State Archives
November 2004

San Francisco after the great earthquake and fire, April 1906

"These records are created in connection with the day-to-day functions of public offices, but many of them . . . have value for purposes for which they were never intended . . . Records of local government constitute America's cupboard of unspoiled goodies . . . the richness of which is concealed by their classification as simply 'old records'. These hundreds of millions of documents have suffered in varying degrees – from natural deterioration, from the elements, from vermin, from theft, from human neglect or deliberate destruction – but those that remain in the county courthouses and city, town, and village halls of the nation conceal the unwritten and unknown history of America."

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ASSESSOR

The principal function of the assessor is to evaluate all property in the county for the purpose of taxation. Both real and certain types of personal property are assessed. Some assessable property, such as schools, churches, federal, state, and county buildings, is tax exempt. It is the assessor's responsibility to grant exemptions and to keep a record of them.

During the early years of statehood, the assessor had other duties, including ex-officio superintendent of schools (1853-1855), assistance in voter registration, collection of the poll tax, and preparation of the militia rolls.

1. ASSESSMENT ROLLS, DELINQUENT, 1850 –

Record of delinquent assessments. Contains name of assessee, description and value of real estate and personal property, date, and amount of delinquency.
No separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of assessee.

Research Note: Source for study of types and value of property held in delinquency.

2. ASSESSMENT ROLLS, SECURED, 1850 –

Record of assessment on real property for purposes of taxation. Contains names of assessee and address, date, tax rate area, parcel number, acreage, land valuation, value of improvements, exemptions, and net total assessment. The assessment rolls are prepared by the assessor who then delivers them to the clerk for review by the Board of Equalization (Board of supervisors). After adjustments by the board, the equalized rolls are delivered to the auditor who computes the amount of taxes due and sends the rolls on to the tax collector. At this point, the equalized rolls become tax rolls, are duplicated, and retained by the tax collector. The assessment rolls return to the assessor's office, though originally, and for many years after, they remained usually in the custody of the auditor. Older assessment rolls may still be found with the auditor or even the tax collector.
Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by year and then numerically by parcel number. Prior to use of the parcel numbering system, the secondary arrangement was usually alphabetical by name of assessee.

Research Note: Source for tracing land values, property ownership, tax rate patterns and development.

ASSESSOR

3. INDEXES TO ASSESSMENT ROLLS, SECURED, 1850 –

Indexes to records of assessment on real property. Contains name of assessee, tax rate area, parcel number, reference to map book and page number and year in rolls. An alternate system of indexing assessment rolls is to compile separate indexes by type, i.e., situs index (alphabetical by city, street/road name and number), name index (alphabetical by name of assessee), numeric index (numerical by parcel name).

General indexes are arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of assessee.

4. ASSESSMENT ROLLS, UNSECURED, 1850 –

Record of assessment on certain types of personal property. Contains the name and address of assessee, valuation, date, tax rate area, description of property, value of improvements, exemptions, and net total assessment. In early days, assessments of real and personal property were sometimes combined.
Separate indexes uncommon.

Arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of assessee.

Research Note: Source for study of tax rates and types of personal property included in assessment. Early records provide list of material possessions of residents and help to reveal wealth as well as offering glimpses of pioneer lifestyles.

5. MAP BOOKS (PLAT BOOKS), 1850 –

Map books compiled from reports and field notes by staff of the assessor's office. Contains date of map, block and lot numbers, township and range numbers, name of city/town, name of owner, amount of holding, subdivision and street names, property boundaries, footage, and estimated value of land.
Indexes uncommon.

Arranged alphabetically by township and range numbers.

Research Note: Similar in content to recorder's map books, these records are a source of study of land development and ownership, urbanization, and property values.

6. PARCEL MAPS, 1850 --

Maps of land parcels within county. Contains date of map, parcel book number, block and parcel numbers, tax area code, property boundaries, and street names. No indexes.

ASSESSOR

Arranged numerically by book number and then parcel number.

Research Note: Useful for locating any piece of property in county.

7. POLL TAX ROLLS, 1850 – 1913

A record of taxes levied on all males between certain ages regardless of wealth or property. Contains name and residence of assessee, amount of tax, and date paid. Poll taxes were abolished in 1914 with the passage of Proposition 10.
No index.

Arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of assessee.

Research Note: Source of study of poll tax as county revenue. Provides useful genealogical information in absence of more frequently used records.

8. REPORTS, STATE BOARD OF EQUALZATION, 1860 -

A copy of the annual report prepared by the assessor to the State Board of Equalization. Contains lists of property exempt from taxation, description and location of property, name of owner, and date of report. Also, lists county statistics for number of livestock, fruit-bearing trees, total acreage under cultivation, bushels of grain harvested, gallons of wine and liquor processed, and related agricultural information.
No index.

Arranged chronologically by year.

Research Note: Source of information on variety and development of county agriculture and industry. Provides summary of assessment exemptions.

AUDITOR

As the Chief accounting officer, the auditor has the key position in the county's financial system. County funds may be received or disbursed only on the authorization of the auditor. Through the preparation and control of the budget, the auditor estimates and regulates the expenditures of all county offices, agencies, schools, and special districts. In the levying of taxes, the auditor takes the rates established by the Board of Equalization and other tax levying bodies, and lists the amounts of taxes due for each taxpayer. The taxes collected are then apportioned by the auditor among county funds. The auditor controls the accounts of all county officers handling county monies, conducts regular audits, maintains an inventory of county property, serves as paymaster for county employees, and administers the county insurance and retirement programs.

No provision was made for an independent auditor until 1860 and the office, usually separate today, was sometimes combined with the duties of recorder and/or clerk even in later years.

9. BOND REGISTERS, 1880s –

A register of all bonds issued by county for revenue purposes. Contains name of fund, bond number, name of purchaser, amount of bond, date paid, rate of interest, and date of maturity. Registers for districts are usually maintained separately from general construction and improvement bond registers.
Separate indexes uncommon.

Arranged numerically by bond number.

Research Note: Source for study of bonds as revenue source, types of construction projects supported by residents, urban planning and general state of county finances.

10. BUDGETS, ANNUAL (BUDGET FILES), 1927 –

Draft and final, annual county budgets prepared by auditor and county administrator and presented to the Board of supervisors for review and approval. Contains budget totals for each office and agency, amount of funds requested and proposed budget history information, salary ranges for county positions, summaries of budget by fund, and of estimated revenues and fiscal requirements. Copies are distributed to most offices and agencies with working files maintained by auditor and county administrator.
No separate index.

Arranged chronologically by fiscal year.

AUDITOR

Research Note: Source of study of variety of revenue sources, growth of county government, individual agency requests over time, patterns of administrative support for certain programs, and rising salary needs.

11. GENERAL LEDGERS, 1850 --

A record of all funds and accounts, receipts and disbursements, for all county agencies. Contains fund number and name, fiscal year and date, date of transaction and codes, list of debits and credits, transfer of funds, and balances. Majority of older records in auditor's office have been destroyed in many counties. Many recent records duplicate information found in treasurer's office. Currently, most counties have supplemental ledger (revenue ledgers, expenditure ledgers) in addition to general ledgers. No index.

Arranged chronologically by fiscal year and then numerically by fund number.

Research Note: Source for study of finances in general and for specific investigations of agency expenditures and revenues, purchasing patterns, and rising cost of goods and services.

Harvest time near Santa Ana, Orange County, 1915

CLERK

An elected official in all but three counties, the clerk has a wide range of responsibilities. The clerk served as ex-officio clerk of the court of sessions until this court was abolished in 1863, and as clerk of the district, county and probate courts until 1860. Since 1880, the clerk has performed the duties of clerk to the board of supervisors and through the board, as clerk of the board of equalization. In many counties, the clerk also acts as the register of voters.

The clerk has been charged from time to time with the duties of other offices, including the sealer of weights and measures (1850-1858, 1860-1891), the recorder (several times since 1851), the auditor, and the treasurer (1893-1911, collection of inheritance taxes). Today, the office of county clerk is often combined with the office of county recorder.

The clerk's numerous duties require the creation or maintenance of diverse and important records, including court records, files of the board of supervisors, election records, naturalization records, marriage certificates, register of licensed professionals, and business records.

Records of the Board of Supervisors

The board of supervisors is the legislative and executive body of the county. Board members, totaling five, are elected by voters from the district that the member represents (except in San Francisco). The supervisors, acting as the corporate authority of the county, have the power to sue and be sued, to purchase and dispose of land, to make contracts, to deal with claims made upon the county, and to perform all executive duties in county government. In addition, the board has authority over the conduct of county officials, the enforcement of law, the expenditure of funds, the administration of education, the conduct of elections, the creation and regulation of systems for public works, health, and welfare, and the disposition of records.

Wide power has been given to the board in its control over political subdivisions such as municipalities, townships, and special districts. The board works in close cooperation with the county administrator (executive, manager) in counties that have this form of government.

As clerk to the board, the county clerk maintains custody of the all the records created by the supervisors.

CLERK

12. ALLOWANCE BOOKS (REGISTERS OF CLAIMS, CLAIMS ALLOWED), 1850 –

Records of allowances made by a board of supervisors for claims against county funds. Contains claim number, dates received and filed, amounts allowed, name of fund, name of claimant, materials or services provided, and fund totals. Separate indexes uncommon.

Arranged numerically by claim number.

Research Note: Source for information on early government needs and planning, on wages and prices for goods and services, and on local business.

13. APPLICATIONS FOR RELIEF, 1860s – ?

Applications for adult and orphan aid. Contains name of applicant, age, residence, marital status, number, names and dates of birth of children, name, address, and relationship of person with whom children reside, reason for request, amount and description of property, habits of sobriety, and date filed. No separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date of filing. Indexed alphabetically by name of applicant.

Research Note: Useful to an understanding of early system of social services and source of study of welfare patterns, aid amounts, and reasons for relief request. Provides some genealogical information.

14. BUDGETS, ANNUAL (BUDGET FILES), 1927 -

Draft budgets and final, annual county budgets, prepared by auditor and county administrator and presented to the board of supervisors for review and approval. Contains budget totals for each office and agency, amount of funds requested and proposed, budget history information, salary ranges for county positions, and summaries of budget by fund, of estimated revenues, and of estimated fiscal requirements. Copies are usually distributed to most offices and agencies with working files maintained by the auditor and county administrator. No index.

Arranged chronologically by fiscal year.

Research Note: See entry #10.

15. CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS, 1850 –

Original contracts and agreements approved by the board of supervisors for the conduct

of county business. Includes franchises, bonds, plans and specifications, bids, reports and studies, correspondence, maps, memoranda, and printed materials. Basic contract or agreement contains name of contractor, contract number, date filed, description of work or service to be provided, and signatures of chair of the board of supervisors, county clerk, and contractor. No index.

Arranged numerically by contract number.

Research Note: Source for study of public works and construction projects. Provides visual evidence of architectural designs and mechanical devices.

16. CORRESPONDENCE (ADMINISTRATIVE FILES), 1850 –

Correspondence to and from the board of supervisors on a wide range of subjects relating to county affairs. May also include maps, memoranda, clippings, plans, photos, reports, speeches, unpublished writings, printed materials and ephemera. Contains date, text of subject, and names of correspondents. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by subject or chronologically by date written.

Research Note: Correspondence can be a misleading term as it often includes all sorts of other records that are of little historical value. Still, certain items are worth preservation for the light they shed on administrative opinion and organization, the concerns of constituents, and patterns of agency response and reaction to issues of the day.

17. MINUTES (MINUTE BOOKS), 1850 -

Minutes of the proceedings of the board of supervisors, including ordinances and resolutions, appointments and resignations of county officers and employees, statements of election results, lists of claims made against the county, and budget information. Contains date, time, and place of meeting, names of members present and absent, nature of business, actions taken, and recorded vote of members.
Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date of meeting.

Research Note: Minutes, in effect, provide a summary of the history of county government, administrative structure, issues important to residents, actions taken in response to needs, and changes in society.

CLERK

18. INDEXES TO THE MINUTES, 1850 -

Indexes to the minutes of the proceedings of the board of supervisors. Contains date of session, subject and description of business, and reference to volume and page numbers in minutes.

Arranged alphabetically by subject and then chronologically by date of recording.

19. MINUTES, BOARD OF EQUALIZATION, 1852 -

Minutes of the board of supervisors acting ex-officio as the board of equalization. The sole function of the county board of equalization is to decide on matters of adjustment of property assessments prior to the computation of property taxes. Contains date and place of meeting, names of property owners affected, location and description of property, nature of changes and corrections in assessments, and names of members present. May include applications for reduction in tax assessments. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of meeting.

Research Note: Source for tracing tax base of county, development of land use policies, types of issues by board, and patterns of revised assessments.

20. ORDINANCES (ORDINANCE BOOKS), 1850 –

Original ordinances as adopted by the board of supervisors. Contains title, number, and text of ordinance, dates passed and effective, and votes for and against by individual supervisor. Maps may be included with zoning ordinances. Separate indexes.

Arranged numerically by consecutive ordinance number.

Research Note: Source of legal and administrative history. Ordinances reveal concerns of residents, issues of the day, and growing complexity of county government. As such, they reflect the evolution of values within the locality.

21. INDEXES TO THE ORDINACES, 1850 –

Indexes to the ordinances of the board of supervisors. Contains title, number, and subject of ordinance, date adopted, and reference to volume and page numbers in ordinances.

Arranged alphabetically by subject of ordinance and then numerically by ordinance number.

CLERK

22. RECORDS OF BURIAL OF EX-UNION SOLDIERS, 1889 – 1920s

Records of burial of Union Civil War veterans made at county expense. Contains name, rank, company, civil occupation, and nativity of soldier, date of entry into service, date of discharge, dates and places of death and burial, affiliation with Grand Army of the Republic, and amount of burial expenses. Late 19th and early 20th century record now obsolete. No separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date of filing. Indexed alphabetically by name of deceased.

Research Note: Source of genealogical information.

23. REGISTERS (RECORDS) OF ORPHANS AND HALF-ORPHANS, 1907 – ?

A record of applications for county aid for needy children. Contains date and number of application, name, sex and age of child, name, address, birthplace, and relationship of person caring for child, reason for request, and amount of property owned. Early 20th century record now obsolete. No index.

Arranged numerically by application number.

Research Note: Useful for understanding treatment of needy children in early 20th century, for study of welfare system and reasons for applications. Provides some genealogical information.

24. REPORTS, OFFICIAL, 1850 –

Official reports received by the board of supervisors relating to the administration of county offices and agencies. Includes annual reports required of most county officers. Subjects include administration of justice, health and welfare, public works, planning, agriculture, and finance. Some material may be duplicated in files of the county administrator. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Research Note: Reports are often condensed sources of information on the subjects covered. They provide summaries of agency activities that, taken together, offer insights into the conduct of county affairs.

25. RESOLUTIONS, 1850 –

Original resolutions passed by the board of supervisors. Contains date passed, number

and subject of resolution, names of interested parties, names of members voting, and nature of action. Separate indexes.

Arranged numerically by consecutive resolution number.

Research Note: Although not having as much weight as an ordinance, a resolution is evidence of the formal opinion or determination of the board and thus is an important record in understanding public opinion. Collectively, they can illustrate changes in societal attitudes to a wide range of local, state and national issues.

26. INDEXES TO THE RESOLUTIONS, 1850 –

Indexes to the resolutions of the board of supervisors. Contains number and subject of resolution and date passed.

Arranged alphabetically by subject of resolution and then numerically by resolution number.

27. ROAD BOOKS (ROAD RECORDS, ROAD ACCOUNTS, ROAD PROCEEDINGS, ROAD REGISTERS), 1850 – 1930s

Records of the board of supervisors' actions and deliberations on the planning, construction, and maintenance of county roads and related public works. Contains date of meeting, orders and resolutions presented and approved, names of supervisors present, and actions taken. May include original maps and surveys, field notes, and other topographical documents. Road books are generally a 19th century record now obsolete. Road books were maintained separately from minute books. Early volumes may have a separate index. Later volumes are usually indexed in indexes to the minutes of the board of supervisors.

Arranged chronologically by date of meeting.

Research note: Source for study of the development of county transportation system.

Court Records

To avoid repetition, a general summary of the historical uses of court records is provided at this point for all court jurisdictions (district, county, court of sessions, probate, and superior courts). An individual research note is provided for those entries having particular research value.

CLERK

Research Note: Court records, largely overlooked by researchers, form a body of materials unmatched by any other source for the range of subjects treated. Within the records created by the courts, a careful reader may gain valuable insights necessary for a proper understanding of the social, political, economic, and legal history of California.

Although the large volume of court records preserved in the counties presents a challenge to a user, especially in the absence of subject indexes, this same bulk, when taken as a whole and used in conjunction with other documentation, offers a rather accurate compendium of local thought and action, of social injustice and attitudes, of economic growth and malaise, of political ingenuity and discontent, and of other evidence of the human condition.

The wealth of material is indeed impressive. For the student of the economy, court records may be keys to an historical interpretation of the banking industry, local business cycles, mining activities, and the rise of ranching and farming. The political historian may find sources for a study of the growth of local government, urbanization of the Southland, and progressive legislation. Local as well as statewide social trends in the treatment of the ill, poor, elderly, and outcast may be reflected in court cases. Records from the courts are obvious sources of legal history, the procedures and organization of the pioneer courts, and of changing functions of and societal attitudes toward the justice system. Researchers interested in ethnic studies and genealogy will also be rewarded by a patient and critical search through original court documents.

The individual types of court records common to California counties include case files, sometimes referred to as judgment rolls, execution books, judgment books and dockets, minutes, and registers of actions. Each has a particular research value.

Of greatest value are the case files and the minute books. Case files contain a number of different records, but taken together, they provide the core of social, political, and economic information available in court records. Minutes are useful not only for the evidence they provide about the cases, but also as sources for the study of court operations, legal procedures, and judicial organization. Other court documents are of value as supplementary material to the case files. Execution books, for example, offer corroboration to court verdicts. Judgment books are a source for the study of the relationship between crimes and punishments. Judgment dockets serve as indexes to the judgment books. Registers of actions are guides to other court records, especially if no indexes to the case files exist, and provide useful summaries of case proceedings.

A concrete examination of the historical value of court records is offered by W.N. Davis, Jr. in "Research Uses of County Court Records, 1850-1879, and Incidental Intimate Glimpses of California Life and Society," *California Historical Quarterly*, v. LII, nos. 3-4, Fall/Winter 1973.

CLERK

District Court Records

28. CASE FILES (PAPERS IN CAUSE), 1850 - 1879

Original papers filed in civil cases of the district court, and often mixed with criminal cases as well. Includes complaints, summons, affidavits, memoranda of costs, pleadings, orders, verdicts, decrees, judgments, depositions, and executions. Criminal cases include same plus warrants, subpoenas, writs, and commitments. Contains date, case number, names of parties, nature of court actions, names of attorneys and judge, and disposition of case. Separate index.

Arranged numerically by case number.

29. INDEXES TO CASE FILES, 1850 – 1879

Indexes to case files of district court. Contains case number, names of plaintiff and defendant, date of filing, and judgment. In larger counties, separate indexes may exist for plaintiffs and defendants.

Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and then chronologically by date of filing.

30. EXECUTION BOOKS, 1850 – 1879

Records of executions of judgments handed down by district court in all cases. Contains date of hearing, case number and title, certified text of judgment, acknowledgment of sheriff, receipt for payment of judgment, names of plaintiff and defendant, and description of execution. Separate execution dockets uncommon.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

31. JUDGMENT BOOKS, 1850 – 1879

Recorded judgments, decrees, and orders issued by district court in all cases. Contains case number, names of plaintiff and defendant, date, nature of judgment, and signature of judge. For separate index, see judgment dockets.

Arranged chronologically by date of judgment. Often indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

CLERK

32. JUDGMENT DOCKETS, 1850 – 1879

Record of judgments issued by district court in all cases and index to judgment books. Contains date of hearing, names of plaintiff and defendant, nature of judgment, case number, date of appeal and name of appellate court, date of satisfaction, and reference to volume and page numbers in judgment book.

Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant and then chronologically by date of hearing.

33. MINUTES (MINUTE BOOKS), 1850 – 1879

Minutes of proceedings in civil and criminal cases presented in district court. Contains dates of hearings, names of judge, plaintiff, defendant, and attorneys, number and nature of case, and description of actions.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

34. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, 1850 – 1879

A register of all actions taken and papers presented in civil cases of district court. May show information for some criminal cases in earliest volumes. Contains case number, names of plaintiff, defendant, and attorneys, date, nature, and number of each paper presented in case, description of each proceeding, and amount of fees due.

Arranged numerically by case number and indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff.

County Court Records

35. CASE FILES (PAPERS IN CAUSE), 1850 - 1870

Original papers filed in civil cases of the county court, and often including criminal case files. Includes complaints, summons, affidavits, pleadings, orders, verdicts, decrees, judgments, depositions, and executions. Criminal cases include same plus warrants, writs, subpoenas, and commitments. Contains date, case number, names of parties, nature of actions, names of attorneys, and disposition of case. Separate index.

Arranged numerically by case number.

CLERK

36. INDEXES TO CASE FILES, 1850 – 1879

Indexes to case files of county court. Contains case number, names of plaintiff and defendant, date of filing and judgment. In larger counties, separate indexes may exist for plaintiffs and defendants.

Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and then chronologically by date of filing.

37. EXECUTION BOOKS, 1850 – 1879

Records of executions of judgments handed down by county court in all cases. Contains date of hearing, case number, certified text of judgment, acknowledgement of sheriff, names of plaintiff and defendant, description of execution, and receipt for payment of judgment. Separate execution dockets uncommon.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

38. JUDGMENT BOOKS, 1850 – 1879

Recorded judgments, decrees, and orders issued by county court in all cases. Contains case number, names of plaintiff and defendant, date and nature of judgment, and signature of judge. For separate index, see judgment dockets.

Arranged chronologically by date of judgment. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

39. JUDGMENT DOCKETS, 1850 – 1879

Record of judgments issued by county court in all cases and index to judgment books. Contains date of hearing, names of plaintiff and defendant, date, nature, and amount of judgment, case number, date of appeal from justice court, date of satisfaction, and reference to volume and page numbers in judgment book.

Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant and then chronologically by date of hearing.

40. MINUTES (MINUTE BOOKS), 1850 – 1879

Minutes of proceedings in civil and criminal cases heard in county court. Contains date of hearing, names of judge, plaintiff, defendant, and attorneys, number and nature of case, and description of actions.

CLERK

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

41. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, 1850 – 1879

A register of all actions taken and papers presented in cases of county court. Separate registers for civil and criminal cases may be present in larger counties. Contains case number, names of plaintiff, defendant, and attorneys, date, nature, and number of each paper presented in case, description of proceeding, and fees due.

Arranged numerically by case number and indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff.

Court of Sessions Records

42. MINUTES (MINUTE BOOKS), 1850 – 1863

Minutes of the proceedings in criminal cases heard in the court of sessions. Contains number and nature of case, names of plaintiff (State of California or People), defendant, and attorneys, date of hearings, name of judge, and description of actions. Also includes minutes of the court acting as the county administrator prior to the genesis of the board of supervisors. Other early court records (registers of actions, judgment books and dockets, execution books, and case files) seem to have been lost or destroyed in most counties. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing.

Research Note: Source of legal, social, and administrative history. Useful for study of early court procedures and organization, and only source of administrative records for county before the functioning of the board of supervisors.

Probate Court Records

43. CASE FILES, 1851 – 1879

Original papers in probate court cases. Includes inventories, petitions, orders, letters, affidavits, wills, settlements, bonds of administration, and decrees of distribution. Contains date and nature of hearing, case number, names of testator, attorneys, heirs, guardians, minors, incompetents, and nature of paper. Other probate records (registers of actions, minutes, wills, letters, and bonds) date from early 1850s, but usually were continued in same volumes after creation of superior court in 1880. They can be found with the section Superior Court, Probate Records. Separate index in general indexes, probate.

CLERK

Arranged numerically by case number.

Research Note: Excellent source for information on genealogy, biographies and socioeconomic studies.

Superior Court, General Records

44. ADOPTION CASE FILES, 1930s –

Original papers in adoption cases heard in superior court. Includes petition for adoption, consent of parents, notification of pendency, probation officer's report, agreement, judgment of adoption, notification of adoption, and court report. Contains names of child, natural parents and adoptive parents, date of adoption, date of hearing, and case number. Closed and confidential records. No index.

Arranged numerically by case number.

Research Note: Source for study of adoption procedures and patterns. Adoption files are likely to remain closed indefinitely.

45. EXECUTION BOOKS, 1880 –

Record of executions of judgments rendered in superior court. Contains date of hearing, title and case number, certified text of order, acknowledgement of sheriff, receipt for payment of judgment, names of parties, and description of execution. Execution dockets uncommon.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by names of plaintiff and defendant.

46. JUDGMENT BOOKS, 1880 –

Recorded judgments, decrees, and orders for all cases heard in superior court. Contains case and department numbers, names of plaintiff and defendant, date and nature of judgment, final disposition of case, and signature of judge.

Arranged chronologically by date of judgment. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

CLERK

47. JUDGMENT DOCKETS, 1880 –

Record of judgments issued in cases heard in superior court and index to judgment book. Contains date of hearing, names of parties, nature of judgment, date of appeal, name of appellate court, date of satisfaction, and reference to volume and page numbers in judgment book.

Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant and then chronologically by date of hearing.

48. ORDERS OF COMMITMENT (INSANITY COMMITMENTS, COMMITMENTS OF INSANE PERSONS), 1880 –

Original papers in cases brought before superior court dealing with insane persons. Includes affidavit of insanity, warrant, orders, judgment of insanity, orders of commitment, statement of financial ability, and certificate of medical examination.

Contains date and case number, name of alleged insane person, nature of charge, date and place of hearing, personal and family statistics, place of commitment, amount of property and income of family or guardian, amount of payment ordered by court to support patient, and signatures of judge and medical examiners. No index. Closed and confidential records.

Arranged numerically by case number.

Research Note: Source for study of the treatment of psychopathic patients and the history of mental illness, especially for the 19th century.

Superior Court, Civil Records

49. CIVIL CASE FILES, 1880 –

Original papers filed in civil cases of superior court. Includes complaints, summons, affidavits, memoranda of costs, pleadings, orders, decrees, judgments, executions, and jury verdicts. Contains date, case number, names of parties, nature of court action, and names of attorneys and judge. Separate indexes may appear as a general index, plaintiff and general index, defendant for civil case files only, or as a general index to all civil case records. See entry #52.

Arranged numerically by case number.

CLERK

50. MINUTES, CIVIL (MINUTE BOOKS), 1880 –

Minutes of proceedings in all civil cases heard in superior court. Contains case number, names of plaintiff and defendant, date of hearing and description of proceedings. May be indexed in general indexes, civil or separately in each volume.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by names of plaintiff and defendant.

51. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, CIVIL 1880 –

Registers of papers and proceedings for all civil cases heard in superior court. Contains case number, names of plaintiff, defendant, and attorneys, date of filing, nature of instrument, court dates, and costs. May be indexed in general indexes, civil or separately in each volume.

Arranged numerically by case number. Indexed alphabetically by name of plaintiff.

52. GENERAL INDEXES, CIVIL, 1880 –

A general index to civil case records, including case files, minutes, and registers of actions. Contains case number, names of parties, date of filing, judgment, and reference to appropriate record.

Arranged alphabetically by names of plaintiff and defendant and then chronologically by date of filing.

Superior Court, Criminal Records

53. CRIMINAL CASE FILES, 1880 –

Original papers filed in criminal cases heard in superior court. Includes indictments, complaints, writs, subpoenas, warrants, judgments, executions, transcripts, depositions, instructions, jury verdicts, and commitments. Contains case number and title, name of defendant and plaintiff, dates of trial and filing, nature of instrument and charge, nature of judgment, and final disposition of case. Separate indexes may appear as a general index, plaintiff, and general index, defendant for criminal case files only, or as a general index to all criminal case records. See entry #56.

Arranged numerically by case number.

CLERK

54. MINUTES, CRIMINAL (MINUTE BOOKS), 1880 –

Minutes of proceedings of all criminal cases heard in superior court. Contains case number, date of hearing, names of defendant and judge, and description of proceedings. Indexed by name of defendant in general indexes, criminal or separately in each volume.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing. Indexed alphabetically by name of defendant.

55. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, CRIMINAL, 1880 –

Registers of all papers and proceedings for criminal cases heard in superior court. Contains case number, names of defendant, plaintiff, and attorneys, date and nature of hearing, nature of paper, disposition of case, and court costs. Indexed by name of defendant in general indexes, criminal or separately in each volume.

Arranged numerically by case number. Indexed alphabetically by name of defendant.

56. GENERAL INDEXES, CRIMINAL, 1880 –

A general index to criminal case records, including case files, minutes, and registers of actions. Contains case number, names of parties, date of filing, judgment, and reference to appropriate record.

Arranged alphabetically by name of defendant and then chronologically by date of filing.

Superior Court, Juvenile Records

57. JUVENILE CASE FILES, 1880 –

Original papers in juvenile cases heard in superior court. Includes report and recommendations of probation officer, petitions, citations, subpoenas, court awards, judgments, commitments, and related reports. Contains date and number of case, nature of proceedings, name, age, and address of juvenile, and names and address of parents or guardians. Indexed in juvenile indexes (see entry # 60). Closed and confidential records.

Arranged numerically by case number.

Research Note: Source for study of patterns of juvenile behavior and treatment of youthful offenders.

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58. MINUTES, JUVENILE (MINUTE BOOKS), 1880 –

Minutes of proceedings in juvenile cases heard in superior court. Contains case number, date of hearing, names of juvenile, judge, reporter, and petitioner, description of proceedings, and nature of actions taken. Indexed in juvenile indexes. Closed and confidential records.

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing.

59. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, JUVENILE, 1880 –

A register of all proceedings and papers in juvenile cases heard in superior court. Contains date and number of case, nature of action, date and title of each paper and proceeding disposition of case, and name of juvenile. Indexed in juvenile indexes. Closed and confidential record.

Arranged numerically by case number and then chronologically by date of action.

60. JUVENILE INDEXES, 1880 -

Indexes to names of juveniles in case files, minutes, and registers of actions. Contains case number, name of juvenile, disposition of action, date of filing, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Closed and confidential records.

Superior Court, Probate Records

61. PROBATE CASE FILES, 1880 -

Original papers in probate department of superior court. Includes letters of administration, bonds, orders, inventory and appraisements, decrees of distribution, petitions, affidavits, and settlements. Contains date and nature of paper, name and number of case, names of testator, heirs, guardians, minors, incompetents, and attorneys. Separate index in general indexes, probate. See entry #65.

Arranged numerically by case number.

62. MINUTES, PROBATE (MINUTE BOOKS), 1851 -

Minutes of all proceedings in probate cases heard in probate court, 1851-1879, and superior court, probate, 1880 - . Contains name of estate, case number, date of hearing, names of testator, attorneys, judge, witnesses, and legatees, nature of proceedings, and date of settlement. For index to names of estates, see general indexes, probate.

CLERK

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing.

63. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, PROBATE, 1851 -

A register of papers and proceedings in all cases presented to probate court, 1851-1879, and superior court, probate, 1880 - . Contains name of estate, case number, names of testator and legatees, date and title of each paper and proceeding, dates of filing and final settlement. For index to names of estates, see general indexes, probate.

Arranged numerically by case number and then chronologically by date of action.

64. WILLS (RECORDS OF WILLS), 1851 -

Copies of wills entered in probate court, 1851-1879, and superior court, 1880 - . Contains dates of will and recording, names of testator, heirs, and witnesses, description of bequests, and signature of testator. Copies are also filed with the recorder. Indexed in general indexes, probate.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording and indexed alphabetically by name of testator.

Research Note: Source for study of settlement of estates. Provides genealogical information about subject and relatives.

65. GENERAL INDEXES, PROBATE (PROBATE INDEXES), 1851 -

Indexes to names of estates in case files, registers of actions, minutes, and wills. Contains case number, name of estate, name of administrator, executor, or guardian, nature of proceedings, date of filing, and reference to volume and page numbers in records.

Arranged alphabetically by name of estate and then chronologically by date of action.

Superior Court, Naturalization Records

66. CERTIFICATES OF NATURALIZATION, 1850 - 1950

Stubs of naturalization certificates granted by district, county, or superior court and filed with clerk. Contains certificate number and name of court, date of issue, declaration of intention and petition for naturalization numbers, name, age, and residence of wife and children, name, age, and residence of holder, and date of order granting citizenship. Original certificates were given to those going through naturalization process and

represented the final or "second papers" required. The federal government, through the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, assumed sole responsibility for keeping naturalization records in 1950. May be separately indexed in entry #70.

Arranged numerically by certificate number.

Research Note: Source of genealogical information, especially in absence of original certificate, declaration of intention, or petition for naturalization.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTENTION, 1850 - 1950

Original sworn declaration of intention to become a U. S. citizen. Contains declaration number, name of court, name, nativity, oath, address, and signature of declarant, date of filing, method of entry into U. S., country of emigration, last foreign residence, name of vessel and port of arrival, marital status, renunciation of allegiance to foreign power, and statement of intention to become citizen. Additional information is recorded on more recent forms, especially about declarants' wife, children, and personal characteristics. Declarations were completed by aliens and filed with clerk under the jurisdiction of the appropriate court (district, county, superior). After payment of fees, the alien received "first papers", the initial process in obtaining citizenship. Separate index.

Arranged numerically by declaration number.

Research Note: Along with petitions for naturalization, declarations are the most important naturalization records. They provide a wealth of genealogical information as well as insights into naturalization procedures and patterns of emigration.

68. INDEXES TO DECLARATIONS OF INTENTION, 1850 - 1950

Indexes to original declarations of intention to become U. S. citizens. Contains name of applicant and date of declaration.

Arranged alphabetically by name of applicant.

69. PETITIONS FOR NATURALIZATION (PETITIONS AND RECORDS), 1850 - 1950

Original petitions for naturalization filed in district, county, or superior court and maintained by clerk. Contains date and number of petition, name, address, age, birthplace, marital status, race of applicant, names of spouse and children, dates and places of birth and residences of children, last foreign residence, place of emigration, oath of allegiance to U. S., renunciation of allegiance to foreign power, affidavits, names and

addresses of two witnesses, and signature of applicant and clerk. May include copy of declaration of intention. Separate index.

Arranged numerically by petition number.

Research Note: Useful source of genealogical information. Provides data for study of emigration patterns and procedures.

70. INDEXES TO NATURALIZED CITIZENS, 1850 - 1950

Indexes to petitions for naturalization and, in some cases, to certificates of naturalization (stubs). Contains name and nationality of applicant, name of court, date of order granting citizenship, and reference to volume and page numbers in petition records.

Arranged alphabetically by name of applicant.

Other Records

71. AFFIDAVITS OF REGISTRATION, 1895 -

Original affidavits of registered voters in county. Information changes over time, but, in general, contains precinct number, name, address, occupation, nativity, height, and party affiliation of registrant, naturalization information, and voting record information. Filing of affidavits by eligible voters began in 1895. From the data in the affidavits, printed copies of the great registers were compiled. Later, the affidavits supplanted the great registers entirely. A separate index was required beginning in 1899. Confidential.

Arranged chronologically by year of registration and then alphabetically by name of precinct and name of registrant.

Research Note: Source of genealogical data and only current source, together with indexes, of voter registration.

72. INDEXES OF REGISTRATION, 1899 -

Indexes of affidavits of registration. Contains name, address, precinct number, affidavit number, and party affiliation of registrant. Confidential.

Arranged chronologically and then numerically by precinct number and alphabetically by name of registrant. For recent years, arrangement within each bound index may be alphabetical by street name and address.

CLERK

73. ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION (INCORPORATION FILES), 1850 –

Original articles of incorporation for firms conducting business in county. Includes certificates of amendment, decrees of dissolution, affidavits of publication of notices, certificates of reviver, changes in amount of capital stock, and change in board of directors. Articles contain name of corporation, nature and place of business, names of officers and stockholders, number and value of shares of stock, date of filing, and term of existence. Articles date from 1850 and since 1872 must be filed with both the clerk and the Secretary of State. Separate index.

Arranged numerically by certificate number.

Research Note: Source for business history and study of corporate financial conditions.

74. INDEXES TO ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION, 1850 -

Indexes to original articles of incorporation. Contains name of corporation, file number, and date of filing.

75. CANDIDATES' STATEMENTS OF EXPENSE (CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS), 1893 -

Original itemized statements of campaign contributions and expenditures of candidates for county office filed with clerk and Secretary of State. Contains name of candidate, title of office sought, date and type of election, names of contributions, description of expenditures, names of payees, total receipts and disbursements, and date filed. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date filed and then alphabetically by name of candidate.

Research Note: Source for study of financial contributions to candidates, growth of lobbying activity, and election procedures in California.

76. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENTS (STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTEREST), 1974 -

Recent records required by state law through a program administered by the California Fair Political Practices Commission under the County Conflict of Interest Code. Statements are filed with clerk and Secretary of State and include statements of economic interest, initial reports, annual statements, and statements on leaving office. Basic statement contains name, address, status (incumbent, candidate, appointee, leaving office)

of declarant, period covered, date filed, list of investments with name of company, address, type of business, and amount of investment, list of real property investments with location and value of property, list of income, loans, and gifts with name and business type of income source or contributor, and list of employment with name and type of business, address of company, and position held. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date filed and then alphabetically by name of declarant.

Research Note: Source for study of political participation by organizations and useful guide to financial conditions of declarants.

77. CORONER'S INQUESTS, 1850 –

Files of coroner's inquests, including proceedings of inquests, testimony of witnesses, verdicts of juries, warrants issued in criminal cases, summons for jurors, and subpoenas. Contains date and number of inquest, name of deceased, names of witnesses and jurors, date and place of hearing, names of officials presiding, cause of death, affidavit of reporter as to accuracy of papers, signature of coroner, and date filed. Inquests are filed with the clerk with the coroner retaining a copy. Separate indexes. Confidential.

Arranged numerically by inquest number.

Research Note: Useful source for investigation of patterns in causes of death. Provides some genealogical information.

78. INDEXES TO CORONER'S INQUESTS, 1850 –

Indexes to coroner's inquests. Contains date and number of inquest, name of deceased, and date filed with clerk. Confidential.

Arranged alphabetically by name of deceased.

79. GRAND JURY REPORTS, 1850 –

Final reports of the grand jury filed with the clerk. Includes information on county affairs, judicial matters, indictments, fiscal activities, and related data. Contains date, nature of report, description of action or recommendation, and amount of expenses. Copies filed with board of supervisors. Since 2000, civil reports have also been filed with the Secretary of State-State Archives. No index. Criminal reports are closed and confidential.

Arranged chronologically by year of report.

CLERK

Research Note: Source for study of political and legal organization of county, of types of cases brought before the grand jury, and of cases of malfeasance involving county officials.

80. GREAT REGISTERS, 1866 -1920s

Official registers of all voters qualified to vote in county. Contains registration number, name, age, address, sex, nativity, occupation, political affiliation of registrant, date of registration, naturalization information, and precinct name and/or number. Compiled every two years from precinct lists. Registers originated in 1866, replacing "poll lists", and were in turn supplanted by affidavits of registration. Usually no index.

Arranged chronologically by year of registration and then alphabetically by name of registrant. In some cases, secondary arrangement is alphabetical by precinct name and name of registrant.

Research Note: Useful source of basic genealogical information.

81. MILITARY ROLLS, 1850 – 1921

Lists of male residents within county subject to military service. Contains name and address of man, and township of residence. Rolls, compiled by the assessor and filed with the clerk, were used to assess taxes for men not part of a volunteer military company or exempt from service. No index.

Arranged chronologically by year of roll, then by township and alphabetically by name of man.

Research Note: Source of social history providing evidence of local concern with military service and ability of county government to raise revenue through use of discriminatory taxes. Provides some genealogical data.

82. NOMINATION PAPERS, 1891 –

Includes nomination petitions, sponsor's certificates, appointment of verification deputies, and declarations of candidacy filed with clerk to document eligibility and desire of candidates to run for county office. Documents contain date of filing, name, address, and occupation of candidate, title of office sought, names of sponsors and verification deputies, names of petitioners, and certification of clerk. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of filing and then alphabetically by name of candidate.

CLERK

Research Note: Source for study of political development in county.

83. PRECINCT MAPS

Large-scale maps of precincts showing precinct number, boundaries, and street names. Separate maps are made for larger cities in county. New maps are made for each election. Maps are held for a short period by the clerk and then filed with the Secretary of State.

Arranged numerically by precinct number.

Research Note: Useful in studying voting patterns by area within county and in tracing changes in precinct boundaries.

84. REGISTERS OF DENTISTS, 1885 –

Registers of professional certificates issued by the State Board of Dental Examiners to dentists practicing in county. Contains name, age, address of dentist, number of certificate, address of office, name of school issuing diploma, and date of registration. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by name of dentist.

Research Note: Source for study of the development of county health resources.

85. REGISTERS OF FICTITIOUS NAMES, 1874 –

Registers of persons and partnerships authorized to conduct business under a fictitious name. Contains filing number, fictitious name, name of owner, date of filing of certificate of fictitious name, and affidavit of publication of certificate. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by fictitious name.

Research Note: Source for business history.

86. REGISTERS OF MEDICAL CERTIFICATES, 1876 –

Registers of professional certificates issued by the State Board of Medical Examiners to all persons practicing a medical occupation in county except those recorded separately. Contains name of practitioner, type of profession (usually physician), name and address of school, date of diploma, names of examiners, number of certificate, and date filed. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of registration of certificate and then alphabetically by

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name of practitioner.

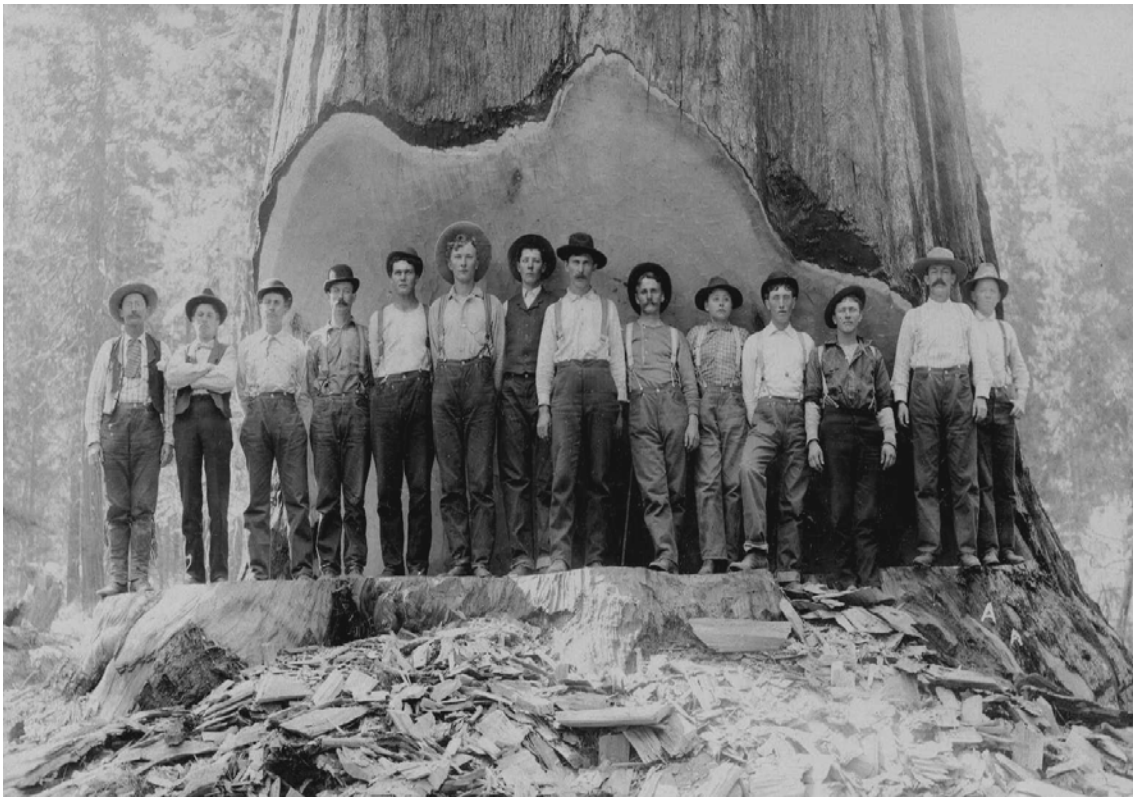
Research Note: Source for study of the development of county health resources.

87. REGISTERS OF PARTNERSHIP, (REGISTERS OF CO-PARTNERSHIP), 1874 –

Registers of businesses in county conducted by partnership. Contains name of business, names of partners, kind and place of business, and date of filing of certificate of partnership. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by name of business.

Research Note: Useful source for business history, especially for early years.



Logging in the Sierra, ca. 1890s

CORONER

The coroner is the officer charged with the responsibility for determining the cause of death of persons for whom a physician is unable to provide a death certificate. In addition to the investigatory nature of the office, the coroner conducts autopsies, performs embalming, provides for the internment of the indigent dead without heirs, and keeps records of these activities. At the coroner's discretion, a jury may be called to hold an inquest into deaths caused by a criminal act or suicide. The coroner has the authority to subpoena witnesses, disqualify jurors, to hold witnesses, and to issue warrants. Because of the technical aspects of the office, the coroner usually has medical experience, especially in pathology. In smaller counties, the office is often combined with the office of public administrator or the sheriff's department.

88. CORONER'S REGISTERS, 1883 –

A register of all inquests conducted by the coroner. Contains name of deceased, date and cause of death, date of inquest, names of witnesses and jurors, case number, description and identification marks, disposition of personal property, and verdict of jury. In addition, since 1914, the register contains sex, race, residence, age, marital status, and occupation of deceased, place of burial, name of undertaker, and history of case. Original inquests are filed with the clerk. Also see entry nos. 77-78. Separate indexes common.

Arranged chronologically by date of inquest or, since 1914, numerically by case number. Indexed alphabetically by name of deceased.

Research Note: Source of genealogical and social information; useful guide to inquests.

89. INDEXES CORONER'S REGISTERS, 1883 –

An index to coroner's registers. Contains name of deceased, case number, and reference to volume and page numbers in records.

Arranged alphabetically by name of deceased.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR (EXECUTIVE, MANAGER)

Appointed by the board of supervisors in all counties where the office exists, the county administrator is the chief executive officer of county government. An office of recent origin, the administrator is usually a professional trained in public management. As a full-time official, the administrator works closely with the board of supervisors in the direct supervision and coordination of county offices and commissions, in the appointment of officials, in the enforcement of ordinances, and in the preparation of the county budget. The growth of the office has been of great assistance to the board in the planning and day-to-day administration of government.

90. ADMINISTRATIVE FILES, 1950s –

Basic files of the county administrator touching all aspects of county government. Materials include agreements, charts, maps, contracts, correspondence, directives, drawings, printed materials, legal documents, memoranda, minutes, clippings, photos, plans, plats, reports and studies, speeches and writings. Subjects include agriculture, air pollution, airports, budgets, CETA programs, criminal justice, sanitation, environmental quality, finance, safety, fire and police protection, flood control, health services, personnel, and roads and highways. Access to the files is restricted as some subjects are sensitive in nature. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Research Note: The files of the county administrator are useful sources for studies of many aspects of county government. They provide an inside perspective on the development, organization, and maintenance of county programs and services.

COUNTY COUNSEL

A relatively recent office and one now common to a majority of California counties, the county counsel acts as the legal representative of the county in civil matters and in the defense of the county or county officials in litigation. In addition, the county counsel prepares legal opinions and represents the county before the State Legislature. The position is filled through appointment by the board of supervisors. The genesis of the office sprang from a desire to decrease the wide responsibilities of the district attorney.

91. ADMINISTRATIVE FILES (CASE FILES), 1950s –

Administrative files of county counsel concerned with legal issues affecting county government and county officials. Includes correspondence, minutes, reports, ordinances, and court records, i.e., depositions, attorney's statements, and associated materials. Closed and confidential records. Separate indexes uncommon.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Research Note: Case files of the county counsel include information not found elsewhere, especially about legal concerns and litigation involving county government.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The district attorney is the public prosecutor and, depending on the case, is considered an agent of the state or county government. Specific duties include the prosecution of all felonies in the county, the prosecution of all misdemeanors in the unincorporated areas of the county, defense of suits brought against the state in the county or against the county wherever brought, providing legal advice to county, district, and township officers, the review of certain claims, and the preparation of legal opinions. An elected official, the district attorney is required to be qualified to practice law in the state. In smaller counties, the functions of the public administrator may be handled by the district attorney.

92. CIVIL CASE FILES, 1850 –

Papers on file in civil cases heard in district, county, and superior court. Includes complaints, summonses, demurrers, answers, briefs, and correspondence. Contains case number, names of plaintiff and defendant, date recorded, and nature of action. Separate indexes. Closed and confidential.

Arranged numerically by case number and then chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: A source for the study of legal and social history. Much of the material in the case files is duplicated by the respective court case files.

93. CRIMINAL CASE FILES, 1850 –

Papers on file in criminal cases heard in district, county, and superior court. Includes charge and information, subpoenas, correspondence, investigatory reports, criminal records of defendants, FBI and state police reports, photographs, fingerprint cards, statements, and related materials. Contains case number, name of defendant, nature of charge, nature of action, and date filed. Separate indexes. Closed and confidential.

Arranged numerically by case number and then chronologically by date filed.

Research Note: A source for the study of legal and social history. Much of the material in the case files is duplicated by the respective court case files or records from the sheriff's office.

94. GENERAL INDEXES TO CASE FILES, 1850 –

A general index to case files, civil and criminal, in district attorney's office. Contains names of plaintiff and defendant, case number, nature of action, and filing date. Separate indexes, one to civil cases, the other to criminal cases, may be found in larger counties. Closed and confidential.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Arranged alphabetically by names of plaintiff and defendant.

95. OPINIONS OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, 1850 –

Copies of opinions provided by the district attorney to county officials. Contains names of official and district attorney, filing date, subject, and text of opinion. No index. Closed and confidential.

Arranged chronologically by filing date.

Research Note: Useful source for a study of legal positions as a basis for county policy and for analysis of types of issues brought to district attorney's office for evaluation.

Canning peaches, San Joaquin Valley, ca. 1920s

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Public planning departments in California are administrative creations and are the result of a need to harmonize the requirements of modern society with the demands of private citizens. The planning department, under a director and working through an appointed planning commission, has the responsibility to develop a master plan that indicates the future directions of the county in specified areas such as agriculture, land use, industry and commerce, housing, transportation, recreation, environmental protection, health, and others. In the process of preparing a master or general plan, the department produces maps, statistics, and reports as required.

96. BASE MAPS, 1960s –

Maps prepared by planning department staff to indicate basic boundaries for zoning purposes. Contains date of map, zoning boundaries and designations.

Arranged by a numeric-alpha system that corresponds to a specific geographical area.

Research Note: A useful supplement to other zoning records. Graphic illustration of zoning changes over time.

97. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS, 1970 –

Copies of final environmental impact reports prepared by consultants and filed with planning department. Contains project name and description, project impact and mitigation measures, location and historical background of affected area, physical, biological, and human environmental information, soil, geology, water quality, air quality, noise, vegetation, wildlife, traffic, health, communications, and historical and archaeological resources, impact review, recommended alternatives, comments on draft EIR, responses to comments, and accompanying maps. No index. Confidential information included.

Arranged alphabetically by project name.

Research Note: Source for study of affected areas, and for county development and its impact on the environment.

98. GENERAL PLANS (MASTER PLANS), 1960s –

Final plans approved by the board of supervisors that describe all nine elements of county planning mandated by state law. Contains section on land use, transportation, traffic, housing, noise, conservation and open space, seismic safety, recreation, and construction. In reality, few county plans cover all areas with land use, transportation, housing, and

conservation receiving the most attention. One plan may serve county's needs for many years. No index.

Arranged chronologically by year of plan.

Research Note: Useful source for study of basic planning policies. Each section studies an element in detail and outlines future county policy. This provides a user with a summary of long-range projections, major concerns of residents, and county government's response.

99. LAND USE MAPS, 1960s --

Maps prepared by planning department staff to indicate use of land according to zoning regulations. Contains date of adoption, index to land use (color-coded), boundaries of land use areas (residential, non-residential, commercial, industrial, public), open space designations (agricultural, agricultural resource), and transportation information. Land use maps are also contained in county general plans. No index.

Arranged by a numeric-alpha system that corresponds to a specific geographical area.

Research Note: Supplement to other zoning records. Source for study of land use patterns over time.

100. MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION, 1927 -

Minutes of the proceedings of the planning commission. Contains date of meeting, names of commissioners present, motions made and passed, record of votes, description of business, and action taken. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of meeting.

Research Note: Source for the study of basic policy formation for numerous county programs, in particular, land use elements.

101. REZONING APPLICATIONS, 1960s -

Applications filed with planning department to change zoning requirements for property. Contains file number, date of filing, date of planning commission meeting, name of zoning district, change requested, applicant's name, address, owner's name and address, assessor's parcel number, legal description of property, and reason for request. Also includes ordinances and minutes of planning commission meetings for some applications. No index.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Arranged alphabetically by name of applicant.

Research Note: Useful source for study of land use policies and patterns of rezoning requests.

102. USE PERMITS, 1960s -

Permits required to use property in accordance with zoning regulations. Includes correspondence with applicant, maps, sections of environmental impact reports, negative declarations, applications, photos, ordinances, environmental assessment forms, and minutes of the planning commission. Permit contains date filed, names and addresses of applicant and owner, name of zoning district, zoning designation, description of property, and assessor's parcel number. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by name of applicant.

Research Note: Source for study of land use policies and urbanization. Includes information on land development by local businesses.

San Fernando Valley, ca. 1950s

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The public works department, under the management of a director, is responsible for providing services formerly carried out independently by the road commissioner, county engineer, and county surveyor. Although recent in origin, public works departments are now common in most counties of the state. The director, in conjunction with state authorities, oversees the construction, maintenance, and improvement of all county roads, highways, bridges, sewer and water systems, and other public works, prepares accurate maps, charts, plans, specifications, and reports necessary for the work of the department, and conducts surveys to determine proper boundaries for county lands and individual claims. Many of the department's records may also be found in the offices of assessor and recorder, and the board of supervisors.

103. RECORDS OF SURVEYS, 1850 -

Records of surveys conducted by the department of public works or, in earlier years, county surveyor. Contains date and number of survey, location and description of survey, survey map number, authority from board of supervisors, filing date, sketches of survey, and reference to volume and page numbers in recorder's map books. No index.

Arranged numerically by survey number.

Research Note: Useful supplement to survey maps and source for a study of the development of construction projects in county.

104. REPORTS AND STUDIES, 1850 -

Reports and studies created by various sections within public works department. Includes reports and studies on flood control, water supply and irrigation, water quality, roads, construction projects, buildings, bridges, and sewage systems. Depending on type of report, contains date of report, name of compilers, title of report, and text. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Research Note: Source for study of particular projects. Includes statistical and engineering information about public facilities.

105. SURVEY MAPS, 1850 -

Maps of surveys conducted by public works department staff (county surveyor in earlier years). Includes maps of roads, bridges, subdivisions, parcels, buildings, and construction sites. Depending on type of map, contains date of survey, name of surveyor and physical description of subject. No index.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No universal arrangement system is employed. Commonly, maps are grouped by type and given a numeric code.

Research Note: Useful source of cartographic information on department activities. Helpful in understanding reports and studies. Also provides information about property boundaries.

Japanese residents of Los Angeles County board a bus for a relocation center, 1942.

RECORDER

The recorder is the officer charged with keeping and preserving full and accurate records relating to real and personal property, vital statistics, and other legal and administrative documents as required. The law requires that the recorder's records be open to the public and that certified copies be provided upon request. The recorder not only files records and prepares indexes to them, but also endorses the documents when received and makes notation of any apparent erasures or changes.

The duties of the recorder have changed little since 1850. By the Torrens Land Registration Act of 1897, the recorder became county registrar of land titles, but this law was repealed in 1913. In 1905, with the creation of the State Bureau of Vital Statistics, the recorder became county registrar of vital statistics. Today, the office is commonly combined with the office of county clerk.

Along with the county clerk, the recorder is by far the most important custodian of historical records.

Property Records

106. ABSTRACTS OF MORTGAGES, 1850 - 1880, 1917 -

Recorded abstracts of real property covered by mortgages and trust deeds, prepared annually by the recorder for the assessor. Contains names of mortgagor or trustor and mortgagee or trustee, location and description of property, original and assessed value, amount of encumbrance, date of recording, lot and block numbers, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Maintained by assessor from 1880-1917. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by name of mortgagor or trustor and then chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of early property values and land ownership.

107. ASSIGNMENTS OF MORTGAGES, 1850 - 1920

Recorded transfers of real property encumbrances from old to new holders. Contains date of assignment, names of assignor and assignee, location and description of property, and date of recording. Early years may be combined with mortgages. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of land ownership and incidence of land transfers.

RECORDER

108. INDEXES TO ASSIGNMENTS OF MORTGAGES, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to recorded transfers of real property encumbrances. Contains recorder's number, names of assignor and assignee, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Early years may be combined with indexes to mortgages. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of assignor and Assignee.

109. DECLARATIONS OF HOMESTEAD (HOMESTEADS), 1850 - 1920

Recorded declarations, and usually abandonments, of homestead indicating intent to use property as a place of residence. For declarations, contains name of homesteader, statements on marital status, residence on property, and intent to use property as a homestead, description and estimated value of land, date recorded, and signature of homesteader. Abandonments include statement of voluntary release of homestead rights, date of homestead, and signature of homesteader. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Research Note: Source of genealogical information and for study of land settlement patterns.

110. INDEXES TO DECLARATIONS OF HOMESTEAD, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to recorded declarations, and usually abandonments, of homestead. Contains name of homesteader, dates of declaration and recording, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of homesteader.

111. DECREES OF DISTRIBUTION, 1850 - 1920

Recorded orders and decrees from probate (until 1880) or superior court for final settlement of estates entered in probate court. Contains names of deceased and executor, date and number of estate, statement of executor as to final accounting of estate, settlement of all claims, payment of inheritance taxes, description of distribution of estate to heirs, and date recorded. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Court record useful in a study of probate procedures and settlement of estates. Contains some genealogical information.

RECORDER

112. INDEXES TO DECREES OF DISTRIBUTION, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to recorded decrees from court for final settlement of estate. Contains recorder's number, names of deceased and legatees, date of decree, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of deceased.

113. DEEDS, 1850 – 1920

Recorded deeds to real property. Contains nature and terms of document, recorder's number, description and location of property, names of grantor and grantee, date recorded, and fee. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of land development. Legal documentation of land ownership.

114. INDEXES TO DEEDS, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to transfer of title to real property. Contains recorder's number, names of grantor and grantee, date and nature of document, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of grantor and grantee.

115. LEASES, 1850 – 1920

Recorded leases of real property. Contains names of lessor and lessee, terms of lease, location and description of property, amount of rental, date of recording, and volume and page numbers in map books. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of real property leasing. Legal documentation of land ownership.

116. INDEXES TO LEASES, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to recorded leases of real property. Contains date and number of document,

names of lessor and lessee, date of recording, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of lessor and lessee.

117. MAP BOOKS, 1850 –

Recorded and official maps of county property. Includes maps of subdivisions, tracts, surveys, blocks, lots, and parcels. Contains map number, name of survey, date of filing, geographic features, names of street, block and lot numbers, name of person requesting recording, affidavit of auditor that no liens are held on property, approval of map by board of supervisors, title of map, and name of surveyor. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Important source for tracing land development, property value, and ownership.

118. INDEXES TO MAP BOOKS, 1850 -

Indexes to recorded maps of county property. Contains title of map, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in map books.

Arranged alphabetically by title of map. May be arranged chronologically by date of filing, then alphabetically by title of map.

119. MARKS AND BRANDS (BRANDS, BRAND RECORDS, BRAND BOOKS), 1850 - 1920

Recorded notices of use of livestock brands. Contains name and address of owner, description and drawing of brand and ear marks, date recorded, and signature of owner. An actual sample of the brand on leather is often found along with brand records. After 1920, marks and brands were recorded in the official records. No separate index.

Arranged alphabetically by name of owner.

Research Note: Guide to types of brand and ear marks. Source for study of livestock industry, especially in early years.

120. MINING CLAIMS, ca. 1860s-1920S

Claims to land for purposes of mining. Includes notice and date of claim, name of

claimant, and location, description and size of land claimed. In counties with major mining activity, claims may be divided by type of mining (quartz, placer). Later years are often found in the Official Records beginning in 1920. Separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Useful for research into mining history and migration studies. Some counties also have retained district mining records, which were formed by groups of miners to police particular areas.

121. INDEXES TO MINING CLAIMS, 1850-1920

Indexes to mining records. Includes claimant's name, name of claim and corresponding volume and page number in mining claims.

Arranged alphabetically by claimant or sometimes by name of claim.

122. MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS, 1850- 1920

Recorded miscellaneous documents not required by law to be kept in separate volumes. Includes declarations of trust, military discharges, enlistment records, bills of sale, wine certificates, tax sales, official bonds, mining locations, candidates' statements, and separate property of married women. Contains names of grantor and grantee, nature of instrument, and date recorded. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Source for study of property transactions, early business history, mining activities, agriculture, and history of women.

123. INDEXES TO MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to miscellaneous records not required to be kept in separate volumes. Contains names of grantor and grantee, type of instrument, and date recorded. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by names of grantor and grantee and then chronologically by date recorded.

124. MORTGAGES, 1850 - 1920

Recorded mortgages of real property. Contains names of mortgagor and mortgagee, date,

amount, and terms of mortgage, date recorded, location and description of property, and signature of mortgagor. In early years, may be combined with releases of mortgages and assignments of mortgages. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of ethnic history and mortgage rates and their affect on land development and ownership.

125. INDEXES TO MORTGAGES, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to mortgages of real property. Contains recorder's number, names of mortgagor and mortgagee, date recorded, and reference to volume and page number in records. In early years, may include index to releases of mortgages and assignments of mortgages. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of mortgagor and mortgagee.

126. NOTICES OF ACTIONS (LIS PENDENS), 1850 - 1920

Recorded notices of pending civil court actions involving property. Contains names of plaintiff and defendant as grantor and grantee, date of notice, purpose of action, location and description of property, date recorded, and signature of attorney for plaintiff. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Legal record useful for tracing property ownership.

127. INDEXES TO NOTICES OF ACTION, 1850 - 1916

Indexes to recorded notices of actions concerning civil cases affecting property. Contains names of plaintiff and defendant, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

128. NOTICES OF ATTACHMENT (ATTACHMENTS), 1850 - 1920

Recorded writs and notices of attachment of property affected by civil court cases. Contains date of notice, names of plaintiff and defendant, amount and reason of attachment, location and description of property, date recorded, and notice to sheriff to

hold property pending outcome of case. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Source for study of land ownership.

129. INDEXES TO NOTICES OF ATTACHMENT, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to recorded notices of attachment of property involved in court proceedings. Contains names of plaintiff and defendant, amount of attachment, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of defendant.

130. OFFICIAL RECORDS, 1920 –

Recorded instruments previously kept in separate volumes, but combined since 1920. Includes miscellaneous records, powers of attorney, sole trader and separate property of married women, deeds, patents, mortgages, leases, pre-emption claims, homesteads, mechanics liens, brands, attachments, transcripts of judgments, wills, orders, notices, decrees, indentures, satisfactions of judgment, certificates of tax sales, trust deeds, contracts, releases, easements, notices of action, and stipulations. Contains name of grantor and grantee, type and text of instrument, and date recorded. Separate indexes. See entry nos. 129-130.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Valuable source of information on property transactions, probate matters, local business activities, agriculture, women, land development and ownership, settlement patterns, and urbanization. Also provides significant genealogical data.

131. GENERAL INDEXES, GRANTEES, 1916 –

Indexes to official records and to separate volumes of instruments that existed prior to the consolidation of the recorder's documents into the official records in 1920. Contains recorder's number and title of instrument, names of grantee and grantor, reference to volume and page numbers in official records, and date recorded. In smaller counties, combined general indexes, grantors-grantees, may be common.

RECORDER

Arranged alphabetically by name of grantee and then chronologically by date recorded.

132. GENERAL INDEXES, GRANTORS, 1916 –

Indexes to official records and to separate volumes of instruments that existed prior to the consolidation of the recorder's documents into the official records in 1920. Contains recorder's number and title of instrument, names of grantor and grantee, reference to volume and page numbers in official records, and date recorded. In smaller counties, combined general indexes, grantors-grantees, may be common.

Arranged alphabetically by name of grantor and then chronologically by date recorded.

133. PATENTS, 1850 – 1920

Recorded land patents, authorized by federal and state land offices, granting transfer of title to real property. Contains name of grantee, location and description of land, amount

of fees due, date recorded, proof of claim, and map of property. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Source for study of land development through government grants.

134. INDEXES TO PATENTS, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to land patents granted by federal and state government. Contains names of land office and grantee, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of grantee.

135. PERSONAL PROPERTY MORTGAGES (CHATTEL MORTGAGES), 1850 – 1920

Recorded mortgages of personal property. Contains names of mortgagor and mortgagee, date of instrument, location and description of property, amount of mortgage, rate of interest, terms of agreement, date recorded, and signatures of parties and witnesses. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

RECORDER

Research Note: Useful source for study of business history, patterns of usury, mortgage rates, and, especially in early years, possessions of residents.

136. INDEXES TO PERSONAL PROPERTY MORTAGES, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to recorded mortgages of personal property. Contains names of mortgagor and mortgagee, dates of mortgage and recording, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of mortgagor and mortgagee.

137. PETITIONS FOR RECLAMATION OF SWAMP LANDS, 1860s-1930s

Transcripts of requests to form and organize reclamation districts from swamp lands. Petition includes description and location of land, method of reclamation, name of owner, transcript of notice of public hearing, notice of approval by board of supervisors, date of petition and district by-laws. Occasionally, an index is included within the volume.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Source for study of agricultural development.

138. PRE-EMPTION CLAIMS (POSSESSORY CLAIMS), 1850 – 1920

Recorded pre-emption claims of 160-acre tracts of land allowed to claimants under federal law. Contains name of claimant, location and description of land, statement of originality of claim, diagram of land, and date recorded. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Source for study of land ownership and impact of federal laws on patterns of settlement, mobility, and county development.

139. INDEXES TO PRE-EMPTION CLAIMS, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to claims to real property allowed under federal law. Contains name of claimant, dates of receipt of claim and of recording, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of claimant.

RECORDER

140. RECORDS OF SWAMP AND OVERFLOWED LANDS, 1855-1930s

Records of sales made to individual parties of swamp and overflowed lands made possible by act of September 1850. Includes name of applicant, date of petition, location of land and survey conducted by county surveyor. No separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date of petition.

Research Note: Useful for study of land development and urban growth.

141. RELEASES OF MORTGAGES, 1850 – 1920

Recorded releases of mortgages of real and personal property. Contains names of mortgagor and mortgagee, dates of mortgage, release, and recording, location and description of property, and reference to volume and page numbers in mortgages. Early years may be combined with mortgages. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of land ownership, especially in absence of mortgage itself.

142. INDEXES TO RELEASES OF MORTGAGES, 1850-1916

Indexes to releases of mortgages of real and personal property. Contains recorder's number, names of mortgagor and mortgagee, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Early years may be combined with indexes to mortgages. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of mortgagor and mortgagee.

143. SEPARATE PROPERTY OF MARRIED WOMEN, DECLARATIONS OF, 1850-1920

Recorded declarations by married women of separate ownership of property. Contains dates of declaration and recording, names of husband and wife, location and description of property, means of acquisition, and signatures of woman and witnesses. May be combined with sole trader records in early years. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

RECORDER

Research Note: Useful source for study of women's history and land development and ownership. Illustrates an early example of women's rights.

144. INDEXES TO SEPARATE PROPERTY OF MARRIED WOMEN, 1850-1916

Indexes to declarations of married women of separate ownership of property. Contains name of woman, date of recording, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of woman.

145. SOLE TRADERS, APPLICATIONS OF, 1850-1920

Recorded applications of married women to engage in business in their own names and for and by themselves. Contains name and address of applicant, dates of application and recording, type and location of business, amount of capital invested, and name of court granting application. May be combined with declarations of separate property of married women. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes uncommon. Indexed in general indexes after 1916.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Source for study of women's history and business history in general.

146. TRANSCRIPTS OF JUDGMENTS, 1850 – 1920

Recorded transcripts of civil judgments from district, county, or superior court in cases involving property. Contains date, nature, and amount of judgment, case number, name of court, names of plaintiff and defendant, location and description of property, name of judge, and date recorded. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date of recording.

Research Note: Legal record useful for tracing property ownership.

147. INDEXES TO TRANSCRIPTS OF JUDGMENTS, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to transcripts of civil judgments in cases involving property. Contains names of plaintiff and defendant, date and amount of judgment, date recorded, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.
Arranged alphabetically by name of plaintiff and defendant.

RECORDER

148. WILLS, 1850 – 1920

Recorded wills of deceased persons. Contains names of testator and beneficiaries, date and number of will, nature and amount of bequests, date admitted to probate court, name of executor, date recorded, and signature of testator. Copies maintained in clerk's office with probate records. Recorded in official records after 1920. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Useful source of genealogical information and for study of settlement of estates.

149. INDEXES TO WILLS, 1850 – 1916

Indexes to recorded wills. Contains date and number of will, name of testator, date of admission to probate, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Supplanted by general indexes in 1916.

Arranged alphabetically by name of testator.

Vital Statistics

150. BIRTH CERTIFICATES (REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, RECORDS OF BIRTHS), 1850 –

Copies of original birth certificates filed with the recorder. Contains name and sex of child, date and place of birth, names, ages, nativities, races, and occupations of parents, weight at birth, length of pregnancy, signature of physician, date recorded, and certificate number. Recording of vital statistics became a state function in 1905. Certificates continued to be filed with the county as well. Form changes over time. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded, and then numerically by certificate number. Indexed alphabetically by name of child.

Research Note: Source of genealogical and social information.

151. INDEXES TO BIRTHS, 1850 –

Indexes to birth certificates (registers of births). Contains name of child, date and place of birth, certificate number, and reference to volume and page numbers in records.

Arranged alphabetically by name of child.

RECORDER

152. BURIAL PERMITS, 1889 –

Copied and original burial permits. Contains name of deceased, cause of death, name of medical examiner and undertaker, birthplace and occupation of deceased, date and place of burial, and date recorded. Since 1889, permits have been filed with the recorder and, since 1905, the recorder has had authority to issue permits. However, in counties with a health officer, permits have been issued under that jurisdiction since 1914. No indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded.

Research Note: Useful source of genealogical and social data. Alternate source of information in absence of death certificate.

153. DEATH CERTIFICATES (REGISTERS OF DEATHS, RECORDS OF DEATHS), 1850 –

Copies of original death certificates filed with the recorder. Contains name, residence, sex, race, date of birth, age, occupation, marital status, and birthplace of deceased, names and birthplaces of parents, date and cause of death, date recorded, physician's or coroners signature, and certificate number. Recording of vital statistics became a state function in 1905. Certificates continued to be filed with the county as well. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded and then numerically by certificate number. Indexed alphabetically by name of deceased.

Research Note: Source of genealogical and social information.

154. INDEXES TO DEATHS, 1850 –

Indexes to death certificates (registers of deaths). Contains certificate number, date and place of death, name of deceased, and reference to volume and page numbers in records.

Arranged alphabetically by name of deceased.

155. MARRIAGE LICENSES AND CERTIFICATES, (RECORDS OF MARRIAGES, REGISTERS OF MARRIAGES), 1850 –

Copies of original licenses and certificates filed with the recorder. Contains date and place of marriage, names, addresses and ages of parties, signature of officiator, date recorded, names of fathers and mothers, birthplace of mother, previous marital status and occupations of parties, and certificate or license number. Recording of vital statistics became a state function in 1905. Certificates continued to be kept by the recorder as well. Form changes

over time. Originally, a license was received from the clerk to authorize a marriage while a certificate was filed with the recorder to document the ceremony. Currently, the two functions are combined into a “Certificate of Registry of Marriage” which is issued by the clerk and filed with the recorder. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded and then numerically by certificate number. Indexed alphabetically by name of parties.

Research Note: Source of genealogical and social information.

156. INDEXES TO MARRIAGES, 1850 –

Indexes to marriage licenses and certificates (registers of marriages). Contains names of parties, date and place of marriage, certificate number, and reference to volume and page numbers in records. Some counties may have separate indexes for men and women.

Arranged alphabetically by name of groom.

SHERIFF

One of the original county officers created by the State Constitution of 1849, the sheriff is the officer responsible for the administration of justice and the enforcement of law in the unincorporated areas of the county. As an officer of the court, the sheriff has particular duties in criminal and civil matters as regulated by statute. The sheriff provides suitable attaches to the superior court, serves required legal papers, coordinates the activities of county marshals and constables, issues warrants, cooperates with other law enforcement agencies, administers special programs for crime detection and apprehension, promotes training for staff, issues licenses for concealed weapons, and, in all but two counties, provides for prisoner custody through the operation of the county jail system.

At various times from 1851 to 1868, the sheriff served as tax collector. Today, the sheriff is usually a law enforcement professional. In smaller counties, the office may be combined with that of coroner.

157. APPLICATIONS TO CARRY CONCEALED WEAPONS, (CONCEALED WEAPON PERMITS), 1923 –

Applications for licenses to carry concealed weapons. Contains name of sheriff, county, and state, description of weapon, name of manufacturer, serial number, caliber, name, age, residence, and physical description of applicant, reason for carrying weapon, signature of applicant, and, if issued, date and place of issue, license number, and date of expiration. Closed and confidential records. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by name of applicant.

Research Note: Source of social history and for study of use of weapons.

158. CRIMINAL CASE FILES (CRIMINAL RECORDS), 1850 –

The criminal files of the sheriff's office. Includes warrants, reports, correspondence, news clippings, court transcripts, probation statements, booking sheets, and identification records such as photographs and fingerprint cards. Contains case or booking number, type of crime, name, address, and phone number of injured party, method and object used in assault, date and place of crime, name and address of person making report, name of investigating officer, name of person arrested, date of arrest, physical description of prisoner, details of crime, and description and value of property involved. Identification records are usually maintained separately. Closed and confidential records. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by date recorded or numerically by case number.

Research Note: Useful source for legal and social history.

SHERIFF

159. INDEXES TO CRIMINAL CASE FILES, 1850 –

Indexes to criminal records in sheriff's office. Contains case number, name of parties, type of crime, name of arresting officer, and date recorded. Closed and confidential.

Arranged alphabetically by names of parties.

160. JAIL REGISTERS, 1850 –

A record of all prisoners received at and discharged from county jail. Contains date received and discharged, name, age, sex, residence, place of birth, and occupation of prisoner, offense charged, case number, sentence, name of judge, and reason for release. No separate index.

Arranged chronologically by date received and then numerically by case number. Indexed alphabetically by name of prisoner.

Research Note: Source of legal and social history. Contains some genealogical data.

161. MONTHLY REPORTS

Monthly reports prepared by the sheriff for the Federal Bureau of Investigation of offenses committed within the county. Contains date of report, name of city, town, or place of offense, month and year, type of offense, number of offenses of each type reported, including unfounded cases, false complaints, number of offenses cleared by arrest, and grand total of all offenses. Similar reports are delivered to state authorities and to the board of supervisors. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of report.

Research Note: Useful source for study of criminal activity in county.

162. PHOTOGRAPHIC FILES (MUG FILES)

Files of prisoner's photographs. Contains name, date filed, and identification number of prisoner. Sometimes filed with case files. No index.

Arranged numerically by identification number or alphabetically by name of prisoner.

Research Note: Source of genealogical information, criminal history and clothing styles.

SHERIFF

163. REGISTERS OF ACTIONS, 1850 –

A register of records and proceedings for criminal cases involving the sheriff's office. Contains date and title of court action, case number, title of court, name of attorney, description of case, names of plaintiff and defendant, and amount of sheriff's fees.

Arranged numerically by case number and then chronologically by date of action.

Research Note: Supplement to case files and a source of legal and social history. Provides useful summary of court proceedings in a given case.

Farm labor camp, Fresno County, ca. 1960s

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The superintendent of schools is an administrative agent of the state responsible for providing supervision and services to school districts within the county. An elected officer in all but three counties, the superintendent's duties, since the creation of the office in l855, have never been merged with another office. Prior to l855, the assessor acted as ex-officio superintendent of schools.

The superintendent, acting within statutes, has control over the formation of school districts, the appointment of teachers and trustees, inspection of schools, care of school property, coordination with the board of education, control of school funds, and preparation of required reports.

164. GRADUATION RECORDS, 1880s -

A record of all students graduating from schools in county. Contains names of school district, school, and student, and date of graduation. No index.

Arranged alphabetically by school district and school, and then alphabetically by name of student.

Research Note: Source of genealogical information.

165. MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, 1880 -

Minutes of the proceedings of the county board of education. Contains date and time of meeting, names of members present, description of actions taken, motions made, and results of votes. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of meeting.

Research Note: Important source for study of county education system.

166. RECORDS OF OFFICIAL ACTS, 1855 -

A record of all official acts of the superintendent of schools in the performance of duties. Includes appointment of teachers, plans for school construction, apportionment of funds to school districts, list of expenditures for supplies and services, and related acts. Contains date, nature of action, and name of superintendent. No index.

Arranged chronologically by date of entry.

Research Note: Source for study of school system and functions of superintendent.

167. REPORTS, ANNUAL (COMMON SCHOOL REPORTS), 1855 -

Annual report by superintendent to state superintendent of public instruction. Contains

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

date of report, name of school district, number and sex of students in each grade, number of full-time and part time teachers, amount of funds apportioned to each school district, record of expenditures, assessed value of real property within school district, and related information. No index.

Arranged chronologically by year.

Research Note: Supplement to other school records. Useful source for a study of the development of county schools and school conditions. Provides some genealogical information.

168. TEACHER'S CONTRACTS

Original contracts signed by teachers to teach in county school. Contains name of teacher, conditions of contract, name of school, subject, grade taught, term of employment, amount of salary, and signature of teacher. No index. Closed and confidential records.

Arranged alphabetically by name of teacher.

Research Note: Source for a study of teacher's wages and a history of teachers in general.

TAX COLLECTOR

The tax collector is the county officer charged with the function of collecting taxes. Originally, this duty was given to the treasurer and later to the sheriff, but since 1861 it has fallen to the tax collector. All county taxes are collected by the tax collector except inheritance taxes. This includes taxes on real and personal property, schools and special districts, and business licenses.

The office of tax collector has, in the past, been combined with the office of county treasurer and sheriff. Today, it is almost always combined with the treasurer's office.

169. TAX ROLLS, SECURED, 1861 --

A record of all taxes levied on real property. The tax rolls are duplicates of the assessment rolls except for the information provided on taxes. Contains date, tax rate area, parcel number, land valuation, value of improvements, exemptions, total net assessment, name and address of assessee, total tax due, dates due by first and second installment, and when paid. Before tax rolls became common, taxes due were indicated on the assessment rolls. Separate indexes.

Arranged chronologically by year and then numerically by parcel number.

Research Note: Source of information on tax rates, land values, and property ownership.

170. INDEXES TO TAX ROLLS, SECURED, 1861 --

Indexes to records of taxes levied on real property. Contains name of assessee, tax rate area, parcel number, reference to map book and page number and year in rolls. Alternate indexing system uses three separate indexes by type, i.e., situs index (alphabetical by city and street name), name index (alphabetical by name of assessee), and numeric index (numerical by parcel number).

General indexes are arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of assessee.

171. TAX ROLLS, UNSECURED, 1861 --

A record of all taxes levied on certain personal property. Contains name and address of assessee, tax rate area, date, value of property and improvements, description of property, exemptions, net total assessment, total taxes due, and special assessments. Separate indexes uncommon.

Arranged chronologically by year and indexed alphabetically by name of assessee.

Research Note: Source for study of tax rates on personal property. Provides summary of certain possessions of residents.

TREASURER

The treasurer acts as the chief banker of the county. All money belonging to or in possession of the county is required to be deposited with the treasurer. The treasurer pays out from county funds all warrants authorized by the county auditor. In addition, the treasurer is responsible for receiving payments on all bonds and for making payments to bond holders, collects inheritance taxes, takes inventory of safe deposit boxes of deceased persons, and administers the investment program of the county.

This office is almost always combined with the office of tax collector.

172. FUND LEDGERS (GENERAL LEDGERS), 1850 --

A monthly record of receipts and expenditures for all county accounts. Contains fund number and name, date of transaction, date of report, deposit or warrant amounts, transfer of funds, balances, and name of payer and payee. Majority of treasurer's older records have been destroyed; most recent records are often duplicated by auditor. No index.

Arranged chronologically by month.

Research Note: Source for study of county finances.

APPENDIX A

HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT

On December 15, 1849, the first Legislature convened in San Jose as provided by the State Constitution. The committee on county organization recommended that the state should have authority to control and regulate the structure of the county government "which should be as nearly uniform as practicable throughout the State." [1]

County government in California was modeled after the old English county system and as modified by the experiences of eastern states. All the powers and functions of county government directly carry out the general policy of the state; that is, the county is purely an agent of the state. For example, originally, the Legislature had authority to shift the boundaries of a county, to consolidate two or more into one, to divide or create new counties out of existing territory, or to dissolve a county altogether (as happened to Klamath County in 1874). In addition, the state may delegate certain responsibilities to a county and recall others. Administrative control by the state over county functions has been well established in the areas of finance, law enforcement, and education in particular.

Within county boundaries, county governments contend with municipalities and townships for the exercise of political power. The division of authority between county and municipal government has not always been clearly defined. The law, in some cases, has allowed for an overlapping of functions. Although a county board of supervisors has the power to execute orders declaring the establishment of a municipality and to determine municipal boundaries, cities provide for the welfare of their citizens through the creation of police and fire departments, schools and libraries, and public utilities.

The State Constitution of 1849 provided for the creation of a court system, for the offices of clerk, district attorney, sheriff, coroner, and others deemed necessary, and for a board of supervisors empowered with duties as described by law. [2]

Substantial changes in the form and powers of county government were brought about by the State Constitution of 1879. The most important revision was the direct grant of police powers to counties. [3] The legislature's desire to establish a uniform system of county government throughout the state resulted in the adoption of county and township government acts (1883, 1891, 1893, and 1897), which were later amended and incorporated in the *Political Code* to form the basis of county government. In addition to the offices noted above, the 1879 Constitution required or allowed the creation of a grand jury, superior court, justices of the peace, superintendent of schools, board of education, board of equalization, treasurer, recorder, tax collector, license collector, assessor, auditor, public administrator, and constables.

In time, however, the uniform system of county government became the subject of heated debate until 1929 when a special commission was created to investigate and report on home rule for counties. The commission recommended the adoption of freeholder charters for counties that would enable them to meet specific needs and problems. [4] A charter

secures to a county some measure of independence and flexibility. It allows for the consolidation of offices, the creation of a county manager form of government, the provision of a short ballot, the appointment of certain officials, the fixing of salaries, and the creation of a civil service system. General law counties have, over time, obtained many of the same features through permissive state statutes. In general, charters have been adopted by the larger and more populous counties that have a greater need for authority tailored to fit particular circumstances. [5]

The institutions of county government have undergone considerable changes since the creation of the original twenty-seven counties in 1850. As the population of the state has increased, counties have had to provide services for more people and, as a result, government has become larger, more specialized, and complex. In 1850, counties performed twenty-two basic functions. By 1909, this number had increased to 167 in larger counties, and in 1958 it was estimated that well over 900 separate functions were administered by county government. [6]

The unprecedented growth of special districts and accelerated cooperation with cities, especially in heavily urbanized areas, have significantly altered county government. Despite its growing complexity and shrinking financial base, however, it seems fair to suggest that county governments in California will continue to have a major influence on the people they serve.

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1. *Constitution*, 1849, Article XI, Section 4.

2. *Constitution*, 1849, Article VI, Sections 1, 7-8; Article XI, Section 5.

3. *Constitution*, 1879, Article XI, Section 11.

4. *Report of California Commission on County Home Rule*, Sacramento, 1930, pp. 1-3. Charters had first been authorized by a constitutional amendment in 1911.

5. *County Government in California*, County Supervisors Association, Sacramento, 1958, pp. 29-31. Eleven counties have opted for charters since 1911.

6. *Ibid*., p. 2.

APPENDIX B

HISTORY OF THE COURT SYSTEM

From the inception of statehood in 1850 and for thirty years thereafter, the judicial affairs of the county were administered by four, and later by three, separate courts: the district court, county court, probate court, and the court of sessions.

The highest of the four was the district court. By the 1849 State Constitution, the state was divided into judicial districts, one judge per district. The jurisdiction of the court was original in all cases of law and equity, civil cases involving large sums of money, criminal cases not otherwise provided for, all issues of fact in probate, all cases affecting real property, and all naturalization matters. The court had appellate jurisdiction over the county court and court of sessions in criminal cases. The district court was dissolved under the provisions of the 1879 State Constitution.

County courts, one per county, were created by an act of the first Legislature in 1850. Under the supervision of a county judge, the court had authority over appeals from justices of the peace and in special cases pending, issued all writs and processes known to law, had jurisdiction in all lesser civil cases (except probate matters which were given to the probate court in 1851) and, as conservator of the peace, exercised all the powers of the justices of the peace. With the termination of the court of sessions in 1863, the county court assumed some jurisdiction in criminal cases. The county court was abolished in 1879.

In 1851, a probate court was created in every county with the county judge presiding. The court exercised control over all probate cases, i.e., the administration of matters concerning the estates of deceased persons, minors, and incompetents. All appeals were heard in district court until 1864 when a law allowed appeals to be taken directly to the state supreme court. Although a separate probate court ceased to exist in 1879, probate records have continued to be handled apart from other judicial documents and, in more populous counties, probate matters are the responsibility of a separate division of superior court.

A court of sessions was established in every county in 1850. The court was composed of the county judge and two justices of the peace and had the authority to conduct two separate and distinct kinds of business. First, the court acted in lesser criminal matters including assault and battery, breach of the peace, riot, petty larceny, and small misdemeanors. Second, the court carried on the administrative affairs of the county, including the power to raise necessary funds by taxation, to audit accounts, to manage public works, to divide the county into townships, to create election precincts, and to erect public buildings, until supplanted by the board of supervisors. Since the two areas were so different in scope and purpose, the clerk of the court was required to keep separate minutes and other records, but in reality, the minutes in most counties were combined. The court of sessions was discontinued in 1863.

The current judicial structure dates from 1880 when a superior court was created for each county to conduct the matters previously handled by the district, county, and probate courts. In many counties, the superior court has been divided by function into departments: civil, criminal, probate, and juvenile, with a separate set of records maintained for each department. In addition, superior court, since its inception, has regulated the grand jury.

As part of the judicial system, the grand jury originated early in California's history, having been created by the 1849 State Constitution. It is a judicial body acting as part of the court and serves as an inquest between the state-county and the citizens in public matters. From 1850 to 1863 it was administered by the court of sessions, and from 1863 to 1880 it was controlled by the county court. The grand jury has two functions: it investigates misdemeanors and felonies within the county and lays these before the court, either by presentment or indictment; and it audits the accounts and inspects the conduct of county officers to determine any misappropriation of funds or malfeasance of duty.

The history of the court system in California helps to explain a researcher's confusion in correctly identifying and using court documents. Over the years, case files, as well as other records, have been destroyed, lost, misfiled, and neglected. Fortunately, from the beginning of statehood, the county clerk has acted as custodian for most of the county's court records and, thus, in one source may be found a wealth of information important to an understanding of the law and its relationship to society.

A good summary of the development of the court system in California is found in Owen Coy's *Guide to the County Archives of California*, Sacramento, 1919, pp. 16-20.

APPENDIX C

DISPOSITION OF COUNTY RECORDS

While no information is provided in the manual about the retention and disposition of county records, this is an issue of broad concern for local officials and the general public alike. Several state statutes regulate the disposition of certain groups of records and are summarized below

The disposition of trial court records is governed by *Government Code*, sections 68152 and 68153. 68152 provides detailed information about court records and is divided into subsections relating to civil, criminal, juvenile and probate matters.

All records of the recorder's office, at the request of the recorder and with the approval of the board of supervisors, may be destroyed if the record has been reproduced on a film, optical disk or other medium meeting certain standards, if the medium accurately and legibly reproduces the original, if the medium is made accessible to the public, and if a copy of the medium of archival quality is stored in a separate and safe place. (*Government Code*, section 26205.5). Prior to the destruction of any handwritten records, the recorder must give notice of intent to destroy to the Secretary of State, who shall have ninety days to request transfer of the records. (*Government Code*, section 26205.7).

All other county records, except as specifically provided for by state law, may be destroyed at the request of the county officer concerned and with the approval of the board of supervisors or by resolution of the board of supervisors if the record has been reproduced on a film, optical disk or other medium meeting certain standards, if the medium accurately and legibly reproduces the original, and if the medium is made accessible to the public. (*Government Code*, section 26205 and 26205.1).

Access to public records, state and local, is regulated by *Government Code*, Chapter 3.5, sections 6250 et. seq., commonly called the California Public Records Act. In general, the act provides for the inspection of all public records, except as specifically noted, at all times during the office hours of the state or local agency. The user is referred to section 6254 for exemptions. Unless exempted, the agency must demonstrate that, on the facts of the case, the public interest served by not making the record open to inspection clearly outweighs the public interest served by disclosure of the information (section 6255).

Accessibility to records differs in each county with the officer concerned often the final authority in each case. Within the manual, series known to be closed or confidential are so indicated.

It is important to note that laws regulating the retention and disposition of records change over time. The reader is advised to consult the latest edition of the appropriate section of the *California Codes* to insure that all current legal requirements have been met.

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