



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors



SUPERVISOR DAVID W. ALEXANDER

Term: 1853 -1854
District:
Date of Birth: June 22, 1812
Death: April 29, 1886

David W. Alexander was elected county supervisor in 1853 and re-elected again the following year.

Alexander was born in Ireland on June 22, 1812, and immigrated to the United States with a brother when he was 20. After spending time in Philadelphia and Rocheport, Mo., he moved to Santa Fe, N.M. in 1837. He started a trading company with a partner and began buying and selling goods and liquor.

In 1841 Alexander moved to California. He came by what was known as "the old Mexican trail" via the Wasatch Mountains and Little Salt Lake, the country along that route being at that time entirely uninhabited except by Indians. Alexander settled and lived for some time on "the Rincon" Rancho, or farm, in what is now San Bernardino County. He then went to San Pedro and eventually established a successful freight and shipping business at that port and in Los Angeles from 1844 to 1855.

Along with being a successful businessman and farming pioneer, Alexander also began getting involved in politics. In 1846, prior to California attaining statehood, the Mexican government appointed him collector of customs for the Port of San Pedro. When the Americans took over, he continued in that position for the United States government.

From 1850-1852 county affairs were administered by the Court of Sessions, composed of the county judge and two associate justices. Los Angeles County at the time of Americanization was as first created by Spain and Mexico, embracing the entire present county, San Bernardino, and Kern counties. It was not until elective citizen boards took over administration of the county that development of its resources was begun.

In 1851 Alexander was elected first president of the first Common Council of the City of Los Angeles. He was elected to serve as county supervisor in 1853 and again in 1854 and was president of the board both terms. He was a charter member of the volunteer police force, known as the "Rangers," consisting of about 100 men whose job was to protect the city and county from freebooters and assassins. In 1855 the citizens of the county elected him sheriff. The duties of the office did not seem to appeal to Alexander, and after only a few months he resigned the office and returned to run his private businesses. He was re-elected sheriff again in 1876-1877.

During all of Alexander's public office jobs, he maintained his extensive trading and shipping operations. The firm of Alexander & (Francis) Mellus, located in a two-story adobe at the juncture

of what is now Spring and Temple streets, carried on general merchandising and a considerable trade in hides.

In 1858 Alexander and Mellus dissolved their partnership. He continued in business alone, and invested heavily in real estate.

In 1864 Alexander married Dona Adalaida Mellus, widow of his former business partner. He made his home in Wilmington and they had three children, Martha, Joseph and Samuel.

On April 29, 1886, Alexander died at his home. He was 73.

Source: Los Angeles County Records; History of Los Angeles County, Vol. 1; Historical Sketch of Los Angeles County, 1876; Federal Census of Los Angeles City and County, 1850.