



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors



SUPERVISOR TOMAS AVILA SANCHEZ

Term: 1857 - 1859
District: Not Applicable
Date of Birth: 1826
Death: June 23, 1882

Tomas Avila Sanchez served as county supervisor for three terms. He was elected in 1857, 1858 and 1859.

Sanchez was born in 1826 in Los Angeles, where he grew up. The family was one of the first to settle in the town, and his father became a prominent politician, serving as “alcalde” (mayor) of the pueblo in 1830-31 and 1845. Sanchez followed in his father’s footsteps by pursuing a career in civil service.

In 1843 Sanchez became the tax collector of Los Angeles. In 1846 he served in the “Californio” (Spanish Californians) forces during the Mexican-American War. After the American conquest of California, Sanchez remained active in politics under the new government.

In the 1850s he was a staunch Democrat and strongly favored confederate causes and the secessionist movement. During that time, Los Angeles was a dangerous place to live. Averaging about one murder per day, it had one of the worst murder rates in the country for a town of its size. Sanchez was instrumental in helping to create a volunteer group of vigilantes known as the City Guards. It was the first organized police force in Los Angeles. His efforts led to his three terms as a county supervisor.

In 1860 Sanchez was elected the sheriff of Los Angeles County and served until 1867. He was the primary law enforcement agent in a lawless land. In addition to his duties of tracking down criminals, he had to seek out and return Union army deserters from Camp Drum in Wilmington. He was also in charge of seizing properties in the county from owners who were delinquent in paying their creditors and held public auctions to sell those properties.

After retiring from public office, Sanchez spent most of his time at one of his many ranches, his favorite being “Rancho San Rafael” in what is now Glendale. He and his wife built an adobe home which still stands today at 1330 Dorothy Drive.

In 1882 Sanchez died. He was 56, and was survived by his wife, Maria, 19 sons, and two daughters.

Source: Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County; Glendale Area History; Los Angeles Times, June 25, 1882; Genealogy.com.