



**City of San Bernardino  
Historical and Pioneer Society  
P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402**

**LIBRARY NEWS JUNE 2009**

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

**LIBRARY ACTIVITY**

**PROJECTS**

In last month's issue of the Library News I mentioned various ongoing projects being undertaken for our library. Many of these involve amassing data in our computer. There are thousands of documents, reports, files, photographs, maps, etc., that need to be in our collection, or are needed as a backup for other libraries, but, as nice as our library is, it is limited in space. Transferring the data to disc helps resolve the space problem, and accordingly we purchased two scanners that can process this information.

One of our projects has been completed: tens of thousands of pages containing information of local interest have all been scanned. Special thanks to Deanne La Cava for helping to start the program last fall. More recently (since January), Gerry and Linda Brassfield have been very active in the scanning project. As fast as our ScanSnap scanner may be, it took the Brassfields and me several months to finish the project. We worked two and three days a week, five and six hours a day.

No sooner had we completed that project, than we began a new one of large scope: the scanning of the negatives contained in the Donaldson Report. In 1989 the city hired architect Milford Wayne Donaldson to do a report on the historic districts of San Bernardino. Using a 35mm camera, Donaldson took about 7,500 photographs of structures, mostly residences, but there are also a number of commercial buildings. He enlarged and developed a few of the photographs, those of the more important structures, but the vast majority of the photos remain undeveloped. He did photocopy the negatives so that you can get an idea of each photo's contents, but the negatives need to be preserved by digitizing them. The job is huge, yet the Brassfields jumped right in and began working on it.

For his report, Donaldson had cut the 35mm rolls of negatives into strips of six frames each, and these had been placed into pages with protective sleeves. An 8½" x 11" page holds six strips of negatives, so there are 36 photographs to a page. Steve Shaw started the project two years ago and did about 35 pages of negatives. The Brassfields have brought the total up to 62 pages, which means that 2,232 photographs (62 x 36) have been saved for posterity. The Society, and posterity, are indebted to Steve, Gerry and Linda for the time and effort they give to preserving history.

## DONATIONS

### Neil Gilbert Oehl

Neil donated a box of his mother's photographs, along with some ephemera. Neil's mother, Bonnie F. (Holmes) Oehl, graduated from San Bernardino High School in 1916, and the major item in the collection is a scrapbook entitled, "The Girl Graduate: Her Own Book." The book was intended to be filled by a high school girl with mementos of her senior year, and Bonnie went at the project wholeheartedly. There are many, many photos, some in the style shown below on the left, made to look like a photo torn out of a scrapbook. She saved the dedication program for the new high school (October 1915), a reception booklet for a social affair held at the Arrowhead Springs Hotel (many events were held there), dance cards, commencement programs, and all manner of printed items and ephemera numbering in the hundreds.



There are more than one hundred photographs separate from those in the scrapbook. These were printed on rectangular cards measuring about 2¾" x 6" and were taken by photographer W. W. Daimwood. Bonnie's photo above on the right is an example.

### Mrs. John Williams

John Williams' widow brought in some memorabilia for the Society. There are photographs and news clippings from both the Williams and Heap families. Also included is another "The Girl Graduate: Her Own Book" kept by John's mother Arthurine Heap, SBHS Class of 1920.

We now have three wonderful scrapbooks, those of "The Girl Graduate" by Bonnie Holmes and Arthurine Heap, and a different style of scrapbook kept by Janet (Mills) Miles, Class of 1919. A search on the Internet reveals that there are 175 hits for old collectible copies of "The Girl Graduate" scrapbooks from various locales, but none called "The Boy Graduate: His Own Book".....Hmmm, what does that tell us? These keepsakes will be placed in archival boxes in order to preserve them for future generations.

### Al Cole

Al donated a box of files from Norma Lee Cole (1922-1989), his former wife. Mrs. Cole was a third-grade school teacher at Warm Springs Elementary School in the 1950s and '60s. The files consist of lesson plans, newspaper clippings on various subjects she intended for use in class, books, and ephemera. There was nothing particularly unusual about the contents, but I found it interesting to see what materials a teacher used in those days. And what made it even more interesting to me, on a personal level, is that she was *my* third-grade teacher.

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## **SHERIFFS OF SAN BERNARDINO 1853-1865**

Around this time last year I was doing research on Eli Smith, the sheriff of San Bernardino County in 1861-62. I have not written about Smith as yet because there are too many gaps in the story. While doing this research it became clear that there was a large turnover of sheriffs in the years 1857 to 1863. Even though the term of office was only two years, no one made it that long. I've decided to record what information I've found, since the subject is so esoteric that nobody else is likely to research it.

The Office of Sheriff is an elected position, and the primary source for determining who occupied elected offices is the Minutes Book of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. The board called for the elections, set the dates, identified polling places, appointed election officials, canvassed the results and declared the winning candidate for each office. The board also had the authority to name a replacement in case something happened that kept the elected official from completing his term of office. Elections of county officials took place in odd years, and elections of national and state candidates took place in even years.

San Bernardino County was created in 1853 following a legislative act approved in April of that year. A special election was called in June to elect county officials, and Robert Clift was the successful candidate for sheriff. He was reelected in the regular election in September 1853. He won the office again in 1855, and served until 1857. I have not checked the Minutes Book for these particular elections, but have relied on George and Helen Beattie's book, *Heritage of the Valley*.

In the election of September 5, 1857, James H. Rasor was the winning candidate. Election results appear in the minutes of September 14, 1857, although the spelling of the last name is questionable. The last vowel appears to be an “i,” albeit without a dot, or perhaps an “e.” Shortly afterwards, on December 5, 1857, the minutes show that J. H. Rasor “tendered his resignation,” which was accepted by the board. This time when the clerk entered the sheriff’s name in the book, he wrote the second vowel more like an “e.” In writing about the events of this period in the local newspapers, Judge Horace C. Rolfe (who was the district attorney for the period in question), used the “Rasor” spelling, as did Edward “Leo” Lyman in his book, *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a Community*. We may never know how Rasor’s surname actually is spelled, but at least my research uncovered his hitherto unknown first name.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The one on the left is 'County Judge' and the one on the right is 'James H. Rasor'. Both signatures are written in dark ink on a light background.

Is it spelled Raser, Rasir or Rasor? I suspect the clerk did not know.

According to Horace Rolfe, Sheriff Rasor did not actually tender a resignation. Rolfe claims that Rasor, who was the ex officio tax collector, simply abandoned his office—without submitting any tax-collection records—and returned with the Mormons when they were recalled to Utah. This caused some serious accounting problems; it was not known who, if anyone, had paid their taxes during Rasor’s brief time in office. This was the beginning of some economic turmoil, which continued for the next few years.

At their meeting on December 5, 1857, the Board of Supervisors appointed replacements for the sheriff and other abandoned offices. Joseph Bridger was named to replace Rasor. Instead of the usual two-year term for these offices, the appointments were scheduled to end with the 1858 elections, when the resigned, or abandoned, local offices would be added to the slate of state and federal offices.

The 1858 election results were given in the September 13 minutes (Minutes Book A, p. 10). The winner of the race for sheriff was James W. Mitchell. Trouble was brewing, however; about five months later, on February 8, 1859, the following was written in the minutes in a dominant hand: “Ordered that the District Attorney Commence Suit against James W. Mitchell, Sheriff and his sureties for the amount of delinquent Taxes.” (Minutes Book A, p. 24)

**OFFICERS.**

Office.	Name.	Residence.	Term Expires	Salary.
County Judge . . . .	A. D. Boren . . . . .	San Bernardino . .	Ap'l, 1863	\$500
District Attorney .	A. H. Clark . . . . .	" . . . . .	Oct'r, 1860	400
County Clerk . . . .	J. M. Greenwade .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	Fees . .
Sheriff . . . . .	James W. Mitchell	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .
Treasurer . . . . .	Marens Katz . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .
Assessor . . . . .	U. U. Tyler . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	P'r d'm
Surveyor . . . . .	C. E. Foster . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	Fees . .
Coroner . . . . .	J. T. Harvey . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .
Pub. Administrator	James W. Waters .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .
Supt Com. Schools	J. A. Freeman . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .
Supervisor . . . . .	E. H. Thomas . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	P'r d'm
" . . . . .	George Garner . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .
" . . . . .	C. Jansen . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . . .	" . . . .

Chart from “The State Register and Year Book of Facts, for the Year 1859”

Note in the chart above that only two officials received a salary, and those figures were for the entire year, not monthly. The other officers subsisted on fees, and these were grudgingly given.

A special meeting was called for the purpose of appointing a replacement for Mitchell, and on February 26, 1859, V. J. Herring was named to be sheriff of San Bernardino County (Minutes Book A, p 27).

Herring served until the election of 1859, which was held on September 7th. Successful candidates were declared in the minutes of September 19, 1859 (Minutes Book A, p 51). C. W. Piercy was the winner for the Office of Sheriff, but he would not fulfill his two-year term. In the November 1860 state election, Piercy ran for assemblyman and won the seat.

Piercy had to resign as sheriff in order to run for the Assembly, and William Tarleton was appointed to take his place. This selection was announced in the October 27, 1860, minutes (Minutes Book A, p 99). Tarleton evidently already had been associated with the office, as he had received warrants in the previous months for services as sheriff (probably undersheriff) and for boarding prisoners.

The 1860 election included the Office of President of the United States, and it took place in November. The results were announced in the minutes of November 12, 1860, and Anson Van Leuven won the sheriff's slot. Van Leuven served out the remainder of what originally was Piercy's term.

The 1861 election results appear in the September 15 minutes (Minutes Book A, p 156-160). Eli M. Smith, the focus of my research, was elected sheriff (page 157).

The December 5, 1862, minutes included the following statement: "Ordered by the board that Eli Smith Sheriff of San Bernardino file a new bond within ten days from the date of this order for the reason that John Rains, one of his sureties, died." (Minutes Book A, p 200)

The minutes of December 22, 1862, stated that it was "Ordered by the board that J. A. Moore be appointed Sheriff of San Bernardino County to fill the vacancy of E. M. Smith." (Minutes Book A, p 202)

On July 11, 1863, the clerk wrote: "To A. J. McKenney County Clerk of San Bernardino County. You will please enter an order and notify the board of supervisors to meet on the 22nd of July for the purpose of appointing a Sheriff to fill the vacancy of J. A. Moore resigned." (Minutes Book A, p 211)

However, on that same date, July 11, 1863, something took place to change the board's decision to delay the designation of a sheriff, because they appointed one that day. Another entry on July 11th reads: "Whereupon it is ordered by the board that Henry Wilkes be apptd Sheriff of San Bernardino County to fill the vacancy of J. A. Moore resigned." (Minutes Book A, p 213)

The contest for sheriff in the September 1863 election was a spirited one, and Benjamin F. Mathews won by a very close margin. The minutes for September 14, 1863, carry the results of the race: Benj F Mathews (306), W. H. St. John (303), Henry Wilkes (66) and David M. Cole (38). (Minutes Book A, pp. 221-224). Mathews completed his term of office, breaking the long chain of sheriffs who served less than two years..

Benjamin F. Mathews was a charter member of this Society, and the first member to die (from an accident in 1888 in Devil Canyon, CA). He was well liked and considered to be very brave and honest.

Below is a list of the first 12 sheriffs of San Bernardino County. Their term of office normally began on the first of October, or perhaps the first Monday in October, following the September election. You will notice that there were 10 sheriffs within a six-year period, 1857-63, who did not serve a full term.

1.	Robert Clift	June 1853 – October 1857
2.	James H. Razor	October 1857 - December 5, 1857
3.	Joseph Bridger	December 5, 1857 - October 1858.
4.	James W. Mitchell	October 1858 - February 26, 1859.
5.	Valentine (Rube) J. Herring	February 26, 1859 - October 1859.
6.	C. W. Piercy	October 1859 - October 27, 1860.
7.	William Tarleton	October 27, 1860 - November 12, 1860.
8.	Anson Van Leuven	Nov. 12, 1860 - October 1861.
9.	Eli M. Smith	October 1861 - December 22, 1862.
10.	J. A. Moore	December 22, 1862 - July 11, 1863.
11.	Henry Wilkes	July 11, 1863 - October 1863.
12.	Benjamin F. Mathews	October 1863 - October 1865.