



Longtime Santa Cruzans will remember this scene, taken in 1883. The large building is the red brick courthouse constructed in 1867 and destroyed in 1894 by fire. The present courthouse was erected on the site of the one pictured here. On the corner may be seen the present Hall of Records, while the building on the left with the bell tower is the old city hall, which also contained the fire equipment. The original Seaside store can be seen on the extreme right of the picture, facing Pacific avenue.

Operations Courthouse

BACK IN THE FIFTIES TAXES WERE 25 CENTS

It Was 95 Years Ago When Board Of Supervisors Met For The First Time

By Jane Haas

Last week we told of some of the duties of the supervisors, which is the governing body of Santa Cruz county. Some of those duties were touched upon only lightly, others not at all.

A resume of their remaining duties, which are numerous, will be made this week in order to lay the foundation of county government and so be able to deal with the separate offices of the county in subsequent articles.

Each county must have five supervisors, not more than three of whom shall be elected at the same general election. Each supervisor must be an elector of the district he is named to represent and must have lived in the district for at least one year prior to the election.

By a two-thirds vote of the supervisors, they may change the boundaries of any or all supervisorial districts, providing the population remains more or less equal and natural geographic features and the like are adhered to.

Any vacancy occurring on the board is filled by an appointment made by the governor, with the new supervisor holding office until his

successor is named in the next general election.

This situation will arise here in the near future when the resignation of Supervisor George Morgan becomes effective April 1. As soon after he leaves the board as Governor Earl Warren sees fit, a successor will be named by him to replace Morgan from the Soquel district.

Immediately upon members of the board assuming their duties following a general election, a chairman is chosen from their number.

Frank Clement was selected to replace Morgan as chairman of the Santa Cruz county board of supervisors.

According to state law, all meetings of the supervisors must be kept public and books, records and accounts must be kept at the office

of the county clerk, open at all times for public inspection.

A room in the old courthouse building to the left of the main entrance has been set aside for board meetings, with accommodations for visitors during any of those meetings.

Probably one of the most satisfactory ways of learning how your county business is conducted is to visit one of the sessions of your board of supervisors. They convene on the 7th and 23rd of each month, holidays and Sundays excepted. If a meeting date falls on one of those days, the supervisors attend the following day.

In addition to the sessions being kept public, the minutes of each board meeting must be signed by the clerk and the chairman of the board.

The county clerk is the ex-officio clerk of the board and a deputy clerk usually attends the meetings of the supervisors.

Mrs. Emma Rodhouse, deputy county clerk, has served as clerk to the board since 1928 and is probably one of the best informed persons in the county regarding board business.

Special meetings may be ordered by the majority of the board and the order must be signed by those members calling the meeting and entered in the minutes. Books required by law which must be maintained by the board include those of the minutes, ordinances passed, an allowance book, relating to money from the county treasury, and a warrant book to be kept by the auditor.

Powers of the supervisors include the jurisdiction to make and enforce rules and regulations as may be necessary for the government of the county. It is their duty to supervise the official conduct of all county offices and officers of the districts and other subdivisions of the county; to examine and audit the books of county officers who deal with money, once each year; to examine, settle and allow claims; to establish a salary and other funds; to fill vacancies in appointive and elective offices with the exception of the superior judge and the supervisors themselves; and to equalize the assessments.

Theirs is the power to levy taxes upon property for county purposes; and for roads, highways and other district purposes, provided the voters in the districts in the majority approve the issues.

Special taxes may be levied by them within limitations for county advertising, comfort stations, or a county war history.

They may appropriate money from the general fund for flood control, reforestation, conservation of flood waters, surveys and the like, when indicated as necessary.

And so it goes, as section after section within the political code sets forth the duties and powers of the governing body.

The supervisors of Santa Cruz county include Frank Clement, chairman of the board, from the San Lorenzo district; Mrs. Rose Rostron, Branciforte supervisor; Philip Rowe, representing the Pajaro district; Alvin Gregory from the Seaside district, and George Morgan, retiring board member, from the Soquel district.

For their services, the members of the board are paid \$150 a month as regulated by the legislature, each particular county of the

Because his duties are heavier, the chairman of the board receives \$200 compensation a month.

Each supervisor is bonded according to a figure set forth by the judge of the superior court. In Santa Cruz county the board members are bonded at \$10,000 apiece.

Less Complicated In Past

Government here was not always as complicated as it is now.

Things were comparatively simple when Peter Tracy, first clerk to the board, reported that the auditor had presented a statement placing the county's indebtedness at \$5588.71. That was on July 1, 1852.

In those days the board found it necessary to post meetings to examine assessment rolls both in English and Spanish and the group sat for the first time as the board of equalization July 26, 1852.

In August of the same year, the board amended the order of the court of sessions (replaced now by our superior court) to read that taxes in the county be levied at the rate of 25 cents on each \$1 of real and personal property to be used for the erection of county buildings. At the same time, a special tax of 12½ cents was placed on property within the county and the tax collector was instructed to accept county script in lieu of money.

In those days the treasurer's salary was fixed at five per cent of all license fees and taxes collected by him and the clerk of the board received the munificent salary of \$500 a year.

A good deal of the business of the supervisors in the formative days of the county related to roads or more properly, the lack of roads. In the first years of the body politic, eight road districts were formed, with supervisors for each district.

Petitions were constantly before the board asking that roads be built, accepted or repaired. Bridges, too, came in for their share of attention.

Other business which concerned the members of the governing body was the formation of school districts and buildings to house students.

Rural problems were many, attested by the fact that Antonio Castro appeared before the board one day to protest his assessments. Castro claimed that he had been assessed for 90 cows, one horse and one yoke of oxen, more than he actually owned. The board, after careful discussion, removed \$10.91 from his assessments.

Because of the road problem a poll tax was levied in Santa Cruz county for many years on every able bodied male between the ages of 18 and 45, requiring three dollars.

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