

Auburn Government

Where did the City Trustees meet?

Auburn was founded in 1848 and early government was in the hands of the miners who flocked to this area searching for gold. There are records of miners courts being held to bring justice to the Gold Rush camps. Often times, a lawyer or a judge from the East would volunteer his services to help with the procedures. Sometimes, the miners would democratically elect an Alcalde, a type of judge based on the Mexican government model. *Reminiscences of Samuel Holliday*

When Placer County was formed in 1851, the county sheriff was in charge of law enforcement with the Justice of the Peace and the Court of Sessions as the ruling bodies. Public works, like the early volunteer fire fighters depended upon subscriptions/pledges for contributions from the townfolk to buy buckets and ladders. Often times, balls, socials, and concerts were held to raise money. *10-30-1852 Placer Herald*

When Auburn incorporated in March 1860 the legislature required the citizens to elect a board of trustees. The stated powers of the first trustees were, (1) To incur no debt unless by vote of the legal voters of the town, (2) shall have a Board of Trustees that consists of a Clerk, Treasurer and Assessor and the Trustees have the ability to appoint other officers, (3) the Trustees will pass ordinances to prevent and remove nuisances, to license theaters, menageries, and shows, (4) the Board shall enact ordinances to prevent and punish breaches of the peace and disorderly conduct, (5) the Board shall have the ability to alter and keep open, grade and repair and lay out streets, alleys and sidewalks, (6) the Board has the right to collect annually a tax on all the property in the town, (7) the Board shall pass all ordinances necessary for the protection of the Town against fire. *March 31, 1860 Placer Herald*

After the Board of Trustees passed the very first ordinance laying out their meeting times (the first Wednesday each month), the second ordinance was to regulate stove pipes on any non-fire proof building in the city limits, no doubt as a result of the fire of 1855 that wiped out almost the entire town. The next ordinance put a tax on "every circus, caravan or menagerie exhibiting or performing within the town limits to pay a license tax of five dollars." Ordinances regarding streets followed, as did ordinances prohibiting swine and dogs from running loose in town. *Nov. 29, 1862 Placer Herald*

The early Board of Trustees met in various places including the 1854 courthouse, shown here with the jail next door. *June 6, 1874 Placer Herald*



The town incorporation didn't last long as the \$50,000 bond measure for the hoped for Sacramento, Placer and Nevada Railroad in which the Trustees invested in was coming due but the railroad line never made it all the way to Auburn. To compound the problem, the Central Pacific transcontinental Railroad had made it to Auburn in 1865. For the complete story of the Placer County Railroad Wars see Historical Society member Kevin Kraus' fine article called *The Railroad that Broke Auburn* on his website at insuremekevin.com To avoid the troublesome bond issue, the town disincorporated in 1868 by an act of the Assembly. insuremekevin.com & Thompson & West p. 367 & 142.

During the unincorporation period, the town was governed by the County Board of Supervisors and law enforcement was provided by the County Sheriff's Department until it reincorporated in 1888. After the reincorporation, the Board again met in various rooms and halls. For a time, they met in the Ball building at 812 Lincoln Way. In 1909 the newly relocated building that Mayor Morgan moved from the intersection point of High and Railroad (now Lincoln Way) was "overhauled and fitted up" for use by the Chamber of Commerce, the City Trustees, the City Clerk, the City marshal, a records room and the Tahoe Club rooms. There was a reading room and a billiard, smoking and lounging room. Everything a city father might want! *Feb. 27, 1909 Placer Herald*



By 1916 the Board was meeting in the Carnegie Library on Almond Street. *Dec. 9, 1916 Placer Hera*



Finally, by 1937, the Board of Trustees had an actual City Hall in which to hold their meetings. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) initialed by the Roosevelt administration to help mitigate the tremendous unemployment of the Depression years was busy in Placer County. They hired men and women to put in new sidewalks, rock walls, a sewage treatment plant, the Cooper amphitheater, the Fairgrounds building that once housed the Placer County Museum, McCann Stadium at the High School as well as the Art Deco style City Hall/Fire Department/Chamber of Commerce building at 1103 High Street. *June 24, 1939 AJ & livingnewdeal.org*



The Board met in the combined use building for many years but finally outgrew the space. In 1990 the opportunity to move into the Auburn Grammar School opened up as the building was deemed no longer safe for use as a school. In 1987, the citizens passed bond Measure A that enabled the city to purchase both the brick grammar school and the wooden Lincoln Way school next door. The Measure provided for remodeling and earthquake retrofitting of the brick building. The extensive work was finished in 1990 and the old grammar school became the Auburn Civic Center/City Hall and the wooden school building became the Police department. March 9, 1987 AJ, City Records



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