



**California Polytechnic State University  
Special Collections & Archives**

**City of San Luis Obispo Police Department Ledgers  
MS0188**

**Collection ID:** MS0188

**Title:** City of San Luis Obispo Police Department Ledgers

**Dates:** 1881 - 1978

**Creator:** City of San Luis Police Department

**Extent:** 36 bound ledgers

**Abstract:** Records of the City of San Luis Obispo Police Department, including affidavits, letters, summons, and arrest records relating to the Police Courts, Recorder's Office, and jail of the City of San Luis Obispo.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** California Polytechnic State University  
Robert E. Kennedy Library  
Special Collections and Archives  
1 Grand Avenue  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407  
Phone: 805-756-2305  
Email: [archives@lib.calpoly.edu](mailto:archives@lib.calpoly.edu)  
URL: <http://www.lib.calpoly.edu/specialcollections/>

**Provenance:** Donated by the City of San Luis Obispo Police Department

**Accessions:** 2014.0022

**Processed by:** Berlin Loa and Kaylee Scoggins Herring, 2016

**Preferred Citation** City of San Luis Obispo Police Department Ledgers, Special Collections and Archives, California Polytechnic State University



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**Historical Note:**

San Luis Obispo was formally recognized as a township in the State of California by a legislative act in February 1856. Since 1852 county law enforcement officers, including a Sheriff and County Judge, had been appointed bi-annually as the township experienced a slow transition from Spanish-Mexican law and traditional Western-settler customs to the newly adopted state and county procedures. Law administration, previously afforded by Spanish-Mexican law, by settler community consensus, and by groups known as “vigilance committees” (self-appointed enforcement committees) was still widely practiced throughout the state during the transition. Between 1856 and 1876 local practice shifted to officially elected and appointed law enforcement positions per California State and Federal procedures. The new roles included a Justice of the Peace, Marshal, Sheriff, Police Judge, Night Watchman, and Constables.

In March of 1876 the town was officially incorporated as the City of San Luis Obispo and soon after City Council approved an ordinance creating the Board of Police Commissioners (May 15, 1876). The Board, consisting of the Mayor, Police Judge, and City Marshal, was responsible for appointing and governing a small police force consisting of a marshal and two officers.

The first official Police Department was established with City Ordinance 31 approved on 1 November 1877. Ordinance Number 5, which had established the Board the year before, was repealed and superceded. The new ordinance included, among other changes, a statement in Section 6 requiring the marshal to “keep a register of arrests” detailing the suspect, the accused crime, and the location of the incident.

**Scope and Content:**

The City of San Luis Obispo Police Department Ledgers collection contains the court dockets, arrest records, jail records, complaints and affidavits occurring in the City of San Luis Obispo. The records reflect the years of 1881 to 1978 and in many cases contain the names of the arresting officers, the accused, the plaintiffs, and judges. Records also reflect sentencing as assigned by the court.

**Arrangement:**

The collection is arranged chronologically as a single series. Original organization of the records has been preserved where possible. Materials may have been reorganized or rehoused for preservation and access purposes.

**Related Collections:**

F869.S35 C48, City Ordinances Scrapbook  
MS 036, Sinsheimer Collection 1868-1997  
MS 107, Sheriff Ledgers



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**Sources:**

Angle, Myron. *History of San Luis Obispo County, California; with illustrations and biographical sketches of its prominent men and pioneers*. Oakland: Thompson & West, 1883. Print.

Carrigan, William D., and Clive Webb. *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Print.

Carotenuti, Joseph. *General Information / History: Articles by Joseph Carotenuti*. City of San Luis Obispo. City Clerk Public Access. Web. 5 July 2016. (<http://opengov.slocity.org/weblink/1/fol/18119/Row1.aspx>)

Fitzpatrick, J.H. *Incorporation Document of the Town of San Luis Obispo 1856 certified 1975*. City of San Luis Obispo. City Clerk Public Access. Web. 3 July 2016.  
(<http://opengov.slocity.org/weblink/1/doc/18091/Page1.aspx>)

U.S. Department of the Interior. *Geographic Names Phase I data compilation (1976-1981). 31-Dec-1981. Primarily from U.S. Geological Survey 1:24,000-scale topographic maps (or 1:25K, Puerto Rico 1:20K) and from U.S. Board on Geographic Names files. In some instances, from 1:62,500 scale or 1:250,000 scale maps*. U.S. Geological Survey. Web. 6 July 2016.  
([http://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=gnispq:3::NO::P3\\_FID:1652788](http://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=gnispq:3::NO::P3_FID:1652788))

**Access:**

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- Item 35      Police Department, Monthly Reports Master Copies, January 1966 – December 1966
- Item 36      San Luis Obispo Police Department Evidence Manual, December 1978