



Cali turns 175

Tuesday, September 9.
Happy Birthday!!



BEAUMONT LIBRARY DISTRICT

a California Special District,
independent of both city and county
government, providing library services
to Beaumont and Cherry Valley



September 2025

Here Is How Beaumont Library's History Compares With 175-Year-Old California

by Luren Dickinson, Director Emeritus

California became a state on September 9, 1850. Its first governor, Peter Burnett, was a former slaveholder from Missouri, who would be considered a racist and white supremacist today. But his six successors, all Democrats like him, were a rogue's gallery of similar characters.

When Burnett resigned under pressure in 1851, John McDougall became governor until 1852. McDougall suffered from depression, attempted suicide a few times, and died an alcoholic. His successor, John Bigler, was another racist who was anti-Chinese. Bigler was followed by Neely Johnson, at 30 the youngest California governor ever, who left the state and died of sunstroke in Utah years later.

(continued inside)

The fifth governor of the state, John Weller, authorized an Indian tribe massacre. He was followed by Milton Latham who served only five days, before replacing a man in the U.S. Senate who had been shot and killed in a duel. John Downey, California's seventh governor, was the first born outside the U.S., in Ireland, and was the first from Southern California. Downey was pro-slavery but stayed with the Union during the Civil War.

Leland Stanford, 1862-1863, the first Republican governor, sided with the Union, but was considered one of the "robber barons" of the time. He founded Stanford University in 1885, a year after his only son died.

The governors who served from the time of the Civil War to the early 20th century were less controversial, founding the University of California, setting up the Bureau of Highways (now Caltrans) as well as the state highway system, and creating Yosemite National Park.

Perhaps the most notable were Romauldo Pacheco, the first and only Hispanic governor, in 1875; Civil War General George Stoneman, from 1883-1887; and Washington Bartlett, the first Jewish state governor.

Beaumont Library District was founded by a public vote in August 1911 when the state of California was still only 60 years old. Hiram Johnson, California's 23rd governor, had just taken office in January. He ran for U.S. Vice President in 1912 with Teddy Roosevelt who failed to regain the Presidency with the Progressive "Bull Moose" Party.

Beaumont Library, originally located in rented space in October 1911, opened its Carnegie facility to the public in June 1914. Mrs. C.J. Miner was the first Librarian and was succeeded in 1913 by Miss E. Browning Stafford, the first to attend "Librarians School," who served until 1920.

Of the Governors who served between World War I and World War II, the 26th, Clement Young, in office from 1927 to 1931, is notable. A former teacher, he once gave a speech entitled "The Use of a Library" at the National Education Association's conference in Los Angeles!

After 1920, there were several Librarians, including Pearl Kohler, Irene Evans Lardner, Janet Strickland Austin (who later went to the "School of Librarianship at the University of California"), and Mary Elizabeth Bond.

Earl Warren served as the 30th governor from 1943-1953, after which he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court where he served as Chief Justice until 1969. A few years after Warren left the governorship, two of California's most impactful Governors presided over the state. Pat Brown was in office from 1959 to 1967, and he was followed by Ronald Reagan who served until 1975 before becoming U.S. President in 1981.

Overlapping this time period were two of Beaumont Library's longest serving Librarians. Miss Helen Clapp ran the institution from 1936 until her retirement in 1962. Shortly thereafter, she was succeeded by Mrs. Gwen Bronson who retired in 1981.

Pat Brown's son, Jerry, was the 34th and 39th governor of California. In between, Arnold Schwarzenegger was the 38th governor, from 2003 to 2011, prior to our current governor, Gavin Newsom, taking over.

Since 1981, four people, all still living, have served as Library Director for the Beaumont Library District: (clockwise from the lower right) Rhea McLaughlin, who served from 1981 to 1990; Clara DiFelice, the longest serving from 1990 to 2017; Luren Dickinson, who served from 2017 to 2024; and current Library Director, Kelly Van Valkenburg, whose tenure began on January 1, 2025.



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Beaumont Library District

125 East Eighth Street

Beaumont, CA 92223

951-845-1357

mybld.org

Library Hours During Construction

Sunday—1 to 5 p.m.

Monday—10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday—10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday—1 to 5 p.m.

Thursday—10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Friday—10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday—1 to 5 p.m.

Bookmobile Stops

Wednesdays—11 a.m., Chatigny—Storytime

Thursdays—11 a.m., Beaumont Presbyterian Church—Storytime

Saturdays—9 a.m., Mickelson Park

1:30 p.m., Liberty Village

2:30 p.m., Blossom Apartments

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