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aediles Originally (494 BC), two PLEBEIAN MAGISTRATES in charge of the TEMPLE (*aedis*) where ARCHIVES recording concessions made by PATRICIANS were kept. By the time plebeians had access to the highest magistracies (367 BC), two new 'curule' aediles were created to take over some of the CONSULS' powers, especially aspects of municipal administration (FIRE-FIGHTING, SANITATION, law and order, public morality), the organization of public GAMES (often the cause of their subsequent popularity) and the FOOD SUPPLY. Each was assigned to one of the city neighbourhoods (*regiones*); he was vested with police powers and had limited civil and criminal jurisdiction (*potestas*) in connection with public works, MARKETS, and public establishments. Aediles issued edicts outlining their policies, co-operated with the CENSORS in letting out public contracts, and were assisted by junior magistrates, public servants and their own private staffs. Six in number since AUGUSTUS, they gradually lost their powers to newly created officials. They are known to have acted forcefully on occasion, like Pythias, who had his assistant trample some fish whose freshness was in doubt at Hypata in THESSALY (APULEIUS, *Golden Ass* 1.24–5). They could be held personally responsible for poor performance: while aedile, the future EMPEROR VESPASIAN was publicly humiliated by CALIGULA's soldiers upon the emperor's order, having mud stuffed down his garment in retribution for allowing dirty streets (SUTONIUS, *Vespasian* 5). Not long before the magistracy ceased to exist in the 3rd century AD, the Severan jurist Callistratus suggests that aediles had lost much of their impact: he reports that shopkeepers shamelessly beaten up by the officials once regarded as protectors of the urban PLEBS experienced no socio-political demotion as a result. JJA

See Robinson, O. F. (1992) *Ancient Rome*.