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A Builder of San Bernardino

Of the many pioneers who took an active part in the San Bernardino Valley Centennial celebration none has a clearer knowledge of the history of this section than Fred T. Perris, a resident of the valley beginning in 1853 and again in 1874 after an absence of several years in Salt Lake and Europe, and who has done splendid work toward the upbuilding of not only this city and valley, but the entire Southern California as well.

A-side from his busy life as a railroad man he has found time to take a vital interest in his home city's affairs. He was elected to the board of city trustees for several terms and successfully withstood the hammering of people who would have ousted him, not only from the board, but from his high position with the railroad company as well, because he stood firm to his honest convictions and has since had the satisfaction of seeing those who were against him then come around to his way of thinking. At this time he is a valuable member of the city's water commission.

A great deal of the credit for San Bernardino's first railroad is due to Mr. Perris. He blew the whistle on the first engine to arrive in the city from San Diego.

"It was a great event," said Mr. Perris, in recalling the arrival of the locomotive and train from San Diego. "The engine was decorated and there was a big crowd to welcome us in. The Santa Fe's first station in San Bernardino was a single box car. Those were strenuous days in building railroad. The Southern Pacific held us up at Colton for eleven months and Joe Bright and Austin Chute cut the S. P. rails following a condemnation suit. Big time then? I should say there was."

The arrival of the railroad in San Bernardino signalized the opening of a boom followed later by the boom of 1887 and 1888. Our first train over our own rails arrived in Los Angeles June 15, 1887 and property went skyward.

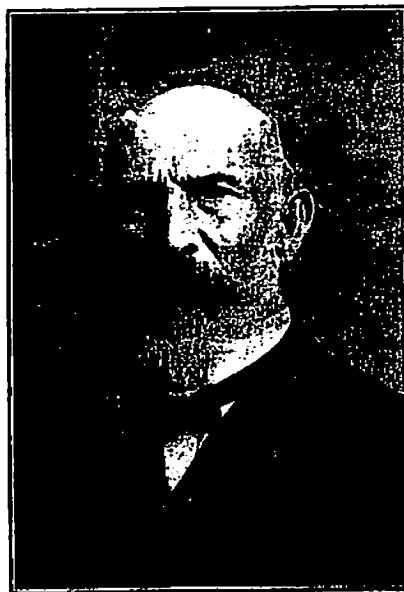
GROWTH OF SANTA FE.

"Yes, the Santa Fe has grown some in San Bernardino since these days. Then our yards ended at Mt. Vernon avenue on the west, I street on the east, Fourth street on the north and Third street on the south and we had room to burn. With the growth of the country the yards have been extended until they are over a mile in length, reaching into Lytle creek on

the west and to Fifth street, north on I street, with double track to Highland junction and double track to Colton. We had to acquire all the ground between Fourth street and Kingman and close the former street on account of the shop enlargement, and now have none too much ground."

Mr. Perris reached up in a map file in his office and took down blue prints which show at a glance the growth of San Bernardino's largest industry.

"You have noticed all these big cuts up in the Cajon Pass," said Mr. Perris. "Well, the enormous amount of dirt taken out of these excavations was moved by Chinamen with handcarts. In those days there were not enough



Fred T. Perris.

white laborers in the country to do the work."

On the Seventh day of July, 1866, an act was passed by congress approving and subsidizing a new transcontinental line, starting from Springfield, Missouri, and thence running by the most direct route to Albuquerque, New Mexico; thence to the head waters of the Little Colorado river and then along the 35th parallel, north latitude, to the Colorado, and thence to tide-water. There was a race between this road and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe for the Pacific coast. San Diego wanted to be the terminus and through the efforts of Kimball brothers, who had invested heavily in National City, two representatives of the

Santa Fe came to this country. G. B. Wilbur and L. G. Pratt of Boston.

When San Bernardino heard that San Diego was to secure a visit from the railway men she was aroused. On October 20, 1879, a mass meeting was held at the courthouse in this city and Mr. Perris, who was then county surveyor, and John Isaacs, editor of the San Bernardino Times, were appointed as a committee to meet the railroad men. By diligent effort a committee appointed for the purpose raised funds amounting to forty dollars, one of which was bogus. When the delegation reached San Diego they found they would have to wait five days, during which time Mr. Isaacs said in his paper, "The committee had ample time to spend its funds and to look over the lay of the land." They found there were opposing interests at work. The San Bernardino delegates soon found that their presence was not considered desirable by one party, at least, and a determined effort to prevent their meeting the railway men when they arrived, was made.

"Messrs. Wilbur and Pratt, however, knocked this plan into a cocked hat when they declined to accept the private hospitality of this individual and went to the Horton house, where the San Bernardino delegates at last secured an appointment. The conference lasted from 8 o'clock p. m. until 1:30 a. m., and Mr. Perris furnished facts and gave topographical data which the other interests were totally unprepared for. At the close of the talk Mr. Wilbur said: "Gentlemen, if you will come for us in two weeks we will go up and see your country."

The two railroad men, with their engineer, Mr. Morley, arrived in due season. Samples of the products and all the statistics available were gathered for the benefit of impressing the visiting directors. Mr. Perris took Engineer Morley over the line from Santa Margarita and through San Geronimo and Moronge passes and also to the summit of Cajon Pass, camping one night in a short piece of tunnel started by the Los Angeles and Inyo line to reach mines in or near Death Valley.

FIRST SURVEYING PARTY.

"The first surveying party left this city in my charge on December 1, 1880, to run the line for the California Southern railroad, which led through Temecula canyon, said Mr. Perris.