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U. S. Navy Record History of L.A. Harbor area  
In Roman - Calif. Local Hist. # 1411

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# ✧ San Pedro ✧

Its History

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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The object of presenting this little history of San Pedro at this time is to meet a growing demand for accurate information concerning a city and harbor that are attracting widespread interest, not only on the Pacific Coast but throughout the entire country.

Great care has been exercised to make the book accurate in every detail, and while an attempt has been made to faithfully recite every event in the early history of the place that can be of interest, it will be found that the past has been treated in as brief a manner as possible in order to make room for the present.

The writer has enjoyed unusual opportunities for becoming familiar with the business

## INTRODUCTORY.

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and social conditions of San Pedro, and is thus able to present a volume of statistics bearing on the commerce of the port not to be found in tabular form elsewhere. A full faith in the future greatness of San Pedro as a commercial city has not been allowed to color, even to the slightest degree, a truthful, impartial recital of the conditions that now exist.

A. BERT BYNON.

SAN PEDRO, APRIL 26, 1899.





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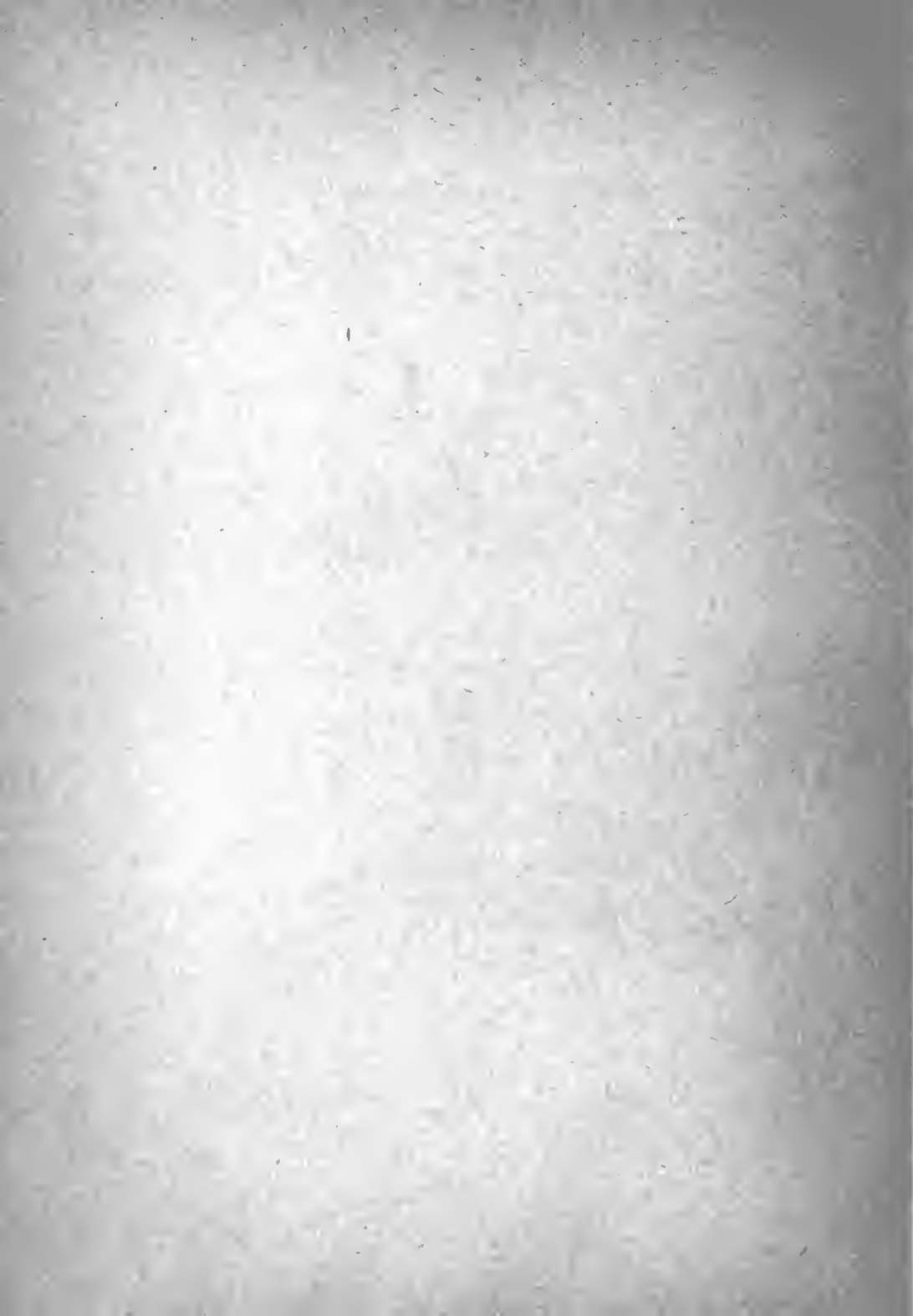
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## CHAPTER I.

### Discovery of San Pedro.

**F**IFTY YEARS, almost to a day, after Columbus first set foot upon the territory of the western world, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a daring and experienced Portugese navigator sailing under the banner of Spain, dropped anchor in the harbor of San Pedro. Under commission from Fernando Cortes, who had completed the subjugation of Mexico and was ambitious to further extend his conquests, Cabrillo had been placed in charge of two vessels and had sailed north from Mexico on a voyage of discovery along the California coast. No other vessel had ever ventured as far north on the western side of the continent, and the

progress of the adventurous captain along an unknown coast was of necessity slow. Although the expedition had left Mexico in June, it was not until September 28th that Cabrillo dropped anchor in what he described as a "land-locked and very good harbor." The earliest records of all discoveries are more or less inaccurate, and in this instance there is a question as to whether the harbor thus described by Cabrillo, and by him named San Miguel, was San Pedro or San Diego. Certainly his description fits one place equally as well as the other. His account of the shelter offered by the harbor from the great storm encountered indicates nothing, for here again are the two harbors very similar. Bancroft, in his history of California, refers to the discovery of San Pedro in the following words: "On the 28th day of September, 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, coming from the South in command of two Spanish exploring vessels, discovered a 'land-locked and very good harbor,' which he named San Miguel and located in 34° and 20'. The next day he sent a boat 'farther into the port, which was large;' and, while anchored here, 'a very great gale blew from the west-south-west and south-south-west; but the port being good they felt noth-

ing.' There is no further description; the latitude is wrong; and the port must be identified, if at all, by its relation to other points visited by Cabrillo. It has usually been identified by those who have followed Navarrete, the earliest investigator, with San Diego; but recently by Henshaw and Taylor with San Pedro further north, San Diego being in that case Cabrillo's San Mateo." Further accounts of Cabrillo's voyage, however, make it almost certain that San Miguel was the present San Diego, for on October 6th, after a three days' cruise north from San Maguel, Cabrillo discovered a large island inhabited by Indians, who received him kindly and directed him to a safe and commodious harbor on the mainland, which was visible from the island. This bay was visited and Cabrillo confirms the description of the bay given by the natives. He named the harbor Bahia de los Fumos on account of the many fires noticed along the shores of the bay. It is altogether likely that the island referred to was Santa Catalina and that Bahia de los Fumos, or Fuegos, (bay of fires) was San Pedro bay. As at all other points touched at by Cabrillo along the coast, the islands and the mainland were solemnly claimed in the name of the Spanish crown, but

no settlement of any kind was made to notify all navigators that the places had been visited. Cabrillo never had an opportunity to correct any errors he may have made in the record of his discoveries, for three months later he died while pursuing the investigation of the northern coast.

Sixty years later, in 1602, Vizcaino, another Spanish explorer, followed Cabrillo's course along the coast and renamed the various harbors and islands with as much freedom as if he had been the real discoverer. This captain christened the islands of San Nicolas, Santa Catalina and San Clemente, and gave to this harbor the name of San Pedro, all of which names remain to this day.

From 1602 until the early part of the present century San Pedro was totally unsettled by the Spanish, although held in high favor as a harbor of refuge by all navigators and gradually becoming the most important trading point on the coast.





## CHAPTER II.

### Location and Description.

**S**AN PEDRO is situated on the western side of the bay of the same name, in latitude  $33^{\circ} 42' 14''$  north, and longitude  $118^{\circ} 17' 41''$  west. The city is distant about twenty-four miles from Los Angeles in a southerly direction, and is connected with the outside world by two lines of railroad and two steamship lines, beside irregular vessels that carry passengers up or down the coast.

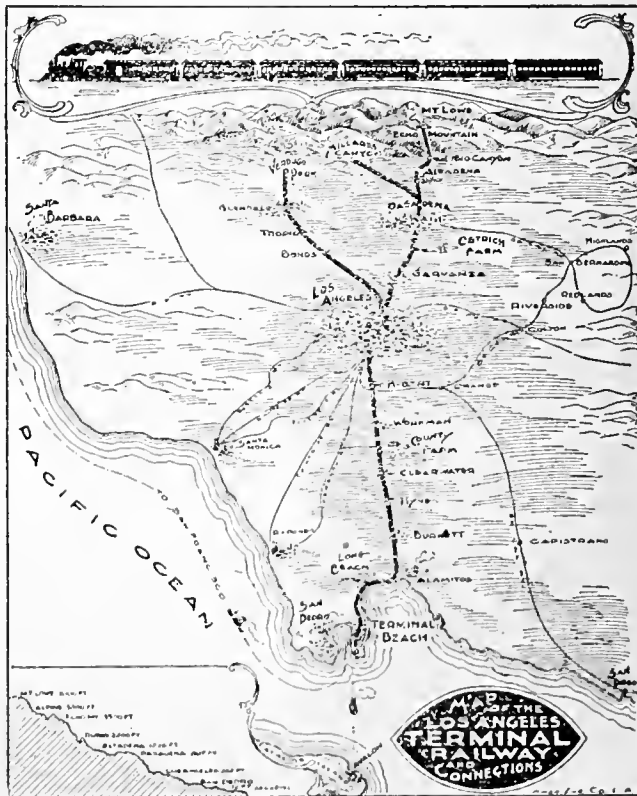
While San Pedro does not present an imposing appearance from any point of view, the fault can hardly be ascribed to the natural features of the site nor to the general topography of the surrounding country. The business portion of the city is confined to a low, narrow

and unprepossessing flat, but the residence districts are situated on a broad mesa or tableland, which slopes gently back from the bay and ocean to the stately Palos Verdes hills, affording ample room for as handsome and as large a city as providence and the growth of Southern California, and the consequent increased importance of San Pedro, may decree. It is not difficult to understand why there has been such a marked disregard of the beauties of other—and at present, obviously more suitable—sites for a city than the original site on the little flat by the side of the inner bay, on the part of the founders of the town, when it is remembered that no idea of the present importance of the port could have crossed their minds, and it was natural that such business as gradually came to be needed in the little harbor town should select a location more for its convenience to the fishermen and shipping than for any consideration of beauty of situation. Nor until recent years has the class of people living in and about San Pedro been other than seafaring men or laborers with few exceptions, and careless of their surroundings, but latterly the residence portion of the city has been almost entirely removed to the beautiful uplands.

It does not require a prophetic foresight to discern or to understand the ultimate location of San Pedro's mercantile establishments and office blocks upon the higher ground that encompasses the "flat" upon every side except that occupied by the inner harbor. The "flat" will, however, congested as it is, continue for years to come the head center of the seafaring interests, and it is particularly well adapted to that purpose.

On the eastern side of the bay, and dividing it from the ocean, is a low, narrow peninsula called Terminal Island. Here is located East San Pedro, the terminus of the Los Angeles Terminal Railway. Aside from the large warehouses of that company and the extensive sardine cannery of the California Fish Company, the buildings of East San Pedro are of the cheapest character, consisting almost entirely of laborers' and fishermen's huts, generally built on piles driven into the bay or perched upon the government seawall that runs from there to Dead Man's Island and forming a portion of the eastern confine of the bay. About a mile farther north on this peninsula is situated Terminal Beach, one of the most popular and interesting resorts on the coast. At this resort are many elegant cot-

tages occupied during the summer and, in many instances, all the year round by some of the wealthiest people of Los Angeles. A fine



pleasure wharf has been built at Terminal Island and the bathing and fishing are unexcelled. The map here published will give a very correct idea of the relative location of

other cities in Southern California, and is used through the courtesy of the Terminal Railway. San Pedro has no such beach as is found at Terminal Island or Long Beach, but it is the head and front of the boating and yachting of Southern California. Some of the finest power yachts on the coast belong to this port, while its fleet of sail vessels of all sizes is immense.



## CHAPTER III.

### Trade And Commerce.

**T**HE INDUSTRIES of San Pedro may be divided into two general classifications: lumber\* and fishing. No clearer idea of the volume of business done annually at this port can be obtained than by a careful perusal of the following statistics, which have been compiled from the most reliable sources for this book, and through the courtesy of those gentlemen who have charge of the various institutions referred to, the tables here given are unusually full and reliable.

The receipts of lumber at this port, given in figures, enormous as they are, will not give the reader unfamiliar with lumber, as good an

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\* See note on Wages in appendix.

idea of the immensity of the traffic as to know that more lumber is received at the port of San Pedro than at the ports of Santa Monica, Redondo, Newport and San Diego combined, yet such such is a fact, as the records of the Custom House will show.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1898, the United States Custom House records at San Pedro show the following imports of lumber of all kinds :

	LUMBER	SHINGLES	SHAKES	LATH	TIES	POLES
1898						
July	— 6,443,000 ft	1,000,000	250,000	—	38,000	—
Aug.	— 8,562,000	5,000,000	—	—	11,000	700
Sept.	— 5,427,000	7,390,000	1,122,000	—	—	—
Oct.	— 7,345,000	6,815,000	139,000	—	38,000	592
Nov.	— 10,164,000	10,090,000	407,000	491,000	36,000	683
Dec.	— 8,981,000	4,723,000	218,000	234,000	18,000	351
1899						
Jan.	— 13,000,000	—	535,000	421,000	14,000	—
Feb.	— 9,000,000	—	—	—	17,900	—
Mar.	— 8,089,000	2,606,000	64,000	179,000	345	317
Apr.	— 4,752,000	2,310,000	114,000	—	—	—
May	— 3,548,000	2,500,000	25,000	—	20,000	400
June	— 5,886,000	1,544,000	30,000	—	57,000	—

From the foregoing table it will be seen that the lumber business of San Pedro is not of a nature sporadic, but to the contrary is carried on with equal volume and vigor throughout the full twelve months of the year.

During that same period the amount of other freight received at the port and recorded at the Custom House is as follows :

Merchandise.....	5,534 tons.
Wine.....	3,109 gals.
Lime.....	5,385 bbls.
Sheep.....	6,140 head.
Cattle.....	842 head.
Calves.....	1,012 head.

The fleet of vessels engaged in handling this vast amount of lumber and freight was of necessity large, and the Custom House records are again levied on for a list of the number and character of the vessels which entered San Pedro bay during the fiscal year referred to, to take or discharge a cargo:

Steamers	Schooners	Barks	Brentines	Brigs	Sloops
226	154	8	14	3	1

From the standpoint of employment furnished and wages paid out for the handling of the lumber received, the figures given in the table of lumber imports should be doubled, as all but a very insignificant portion is stowed away in the yards and from there re-shipped to the retail yards of Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico, thus affording the same employment that double the amount



handled directly from the vessel to the cars would give.

Another item of considerable importance in the line of ocean traffic not recorded by the customs authorities is the freight and passengers carried between San Pedro and Santa Catalina Island. The Wilmington Transportation Company furnishes the following figures in regard to this matter. For the sake of uniformity the twelve months ending December 31st, 1898, are taken, and the figures represent the freight in tons and number of passengers carried for each of the twelve months:\*

Month	Passengers	Tons Freight
January.....	507	43
February.....	1,576	57
March.....	2,348	103
April.....	1,314	64
May.....	1,092	86
June.....	1,644	140
July.....	5,764	291
August.....	11,453	426
September...	3,320	155
October.....	878	139
November....	378	52
December....	490	58
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>30,784</b>	<b>1,614</b>

\* See note on Catalina in appendix.

The fishing industry ranks next to lumber as a provider of profitable employment, both as to numbers engaged and remuneration. Without attempting to give accurate figures of the amount of fish handled by individuals who supply local markets, the exports through Wells, Fargo & Co's Express, the Los Angeles Terminal Railway and by steamer are given because accurate accounts of all shipments by these carriers are kept, and furnish in themselves a very creditable showing. The year of 1898 is taken, as before that time no distinct record has been kept of shipments of fish from this port. In the first table will be found the amount of fresh fish shipped. San Pedro supplied markets in sixteen states with fresh fish in 1898 and the demand is constantly growing. The varieties of fish caught in the waters of San Pedro bay and farther out to sea are innumerable, but those principally shipped for the inland trade are halibut, barracouta, yellow tail (silver salmon), bass, cod, whitefish, smelt, mackeral, surf fish, and fresh lobsters. A large fleet of boats are engaged in the business, many of them being power vessels. In the neighborhood of two hundred men are engaged in the fishing industry at this port.

The aggregate of each month's shipment in 1898 was :

Month	Pounds
January . . . . .	108,310
February . . . . .	145,715
March . . . . .	182,595
April . . . . .	154,755
May . . . . .	126,910
June . . . . .	135,950
July . . . . .	92,490
August . . . . .	93,270
September . . . . .	100,000
October . . . . .	112,510
November . . . . .	104,810
December . . . . .	106,890
Total . . . . .	1,463,205

It is not generally known that on San Pedro bay is located the only cannery of genuine sardines in the United States, yet such is the case. There are many canneries along the eastern coast where small fish of various kinds are put up under the name of sardines and in packages similar to those employed by the sardine-packers of France and Italy, but these fish are not to be confounded with the sardines that are caught along the southern coast of California. Professor Jordon writes of the California fish: "This species is everywhere known as the sardine, or by the Italians as 'sardinea.'

It is in fact almost identical with the sardine of Europe."

Five years ago the California Fish Company began the packing of these fish and the business has grown with wonderful rapidity, until, from a very modest beginning, the output of the cannery is now distributed in every part of the country. The sardines are packed in three sizes and in six different styles. Mr. J. H. Lapham, president of the company, has furnished the writer with the following interesting statistics concerning the industry :

Value of plant, vessels, etc.	\$ 28,000
Monthly pay-roll . . . . .	3,000
Capital invested . . . . .	100,000
Number of employes . . . . .	85
Output 1898 (cases) . . . . .	19,000

By way of comparison the output of the five years during which the cannery has been in operation is given: In the year 1894, 4,000 cases ; 1895, 7,000 cases ; 1896, 11,000 cases ; 1897, 15,000 cases ; 1898, 19,000 cases. In addition to sardines, this company puts up mackerel in various shapes. California olive oil is used almost exclusively, and the boxes are made at San Pedro from American tin-plate. As far as facilities for such institutions and the quantity of fish to be obtained are con-

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cerned there is no reason why twenty more sardine canneries should not be in operation at San Pedro.

The Terminal Railway, beside handling the output of this company, amounting in the aggregate to over a million and a half pounds, carried in 1898 434,257 pounds of fresh fish to Los Angeles from San Pedro. Wilmington, a town of several hundred people, located at the head of the bay, also ships large quantities of fresh fish.

The canning of lobsters is becoming an important feature of the fishing industry. The Catalina Conserving Co. has a large cannery here, with a capacity of two tons per day. The demand for canned lobsters is such that this company is unable to meet it, the product of the cannery being engaged for three years ahead.

In a small way shipbuilding is carried on at this place and there is in operation a marine dry-dock and repair plant owned and operated by the Banning Company, on Mormon Island, a small island situated about two miles up the bay from the city. At present the contractors of the harbor improvement have a large though temporary shipyard on the east side of the bay.

Here the barges, derricks and other like adjuncts of the work are being built, the workmen thus engaged being, the majority of them, skilled in this especial employment and for a period of years in the service, at other points, of the harbor contractors. Their presence in San Pedro is not only a gain to the population of the place but a positive impetus to the business of its retail establishments.



## CHAPTER IV.

### Early Harbor History.

**D**URING the latter years of the last century and until the wonderful growth of San Francisco during the halcyon days of the gold excitement, San Pedro was the most important port on the western coast of what is now the United States. The principal exports in the early years of the port were hides and tallow, gathered from the large ranches of the interior and brought on clumsy ox-carts to San Pedro for shipment. The method of loading and unloading cargoes at that time was most arduous, essentially Mexican in the calm acceptance of existing conditions, without any attempt to improve them. During all the years

of San Pedro's importance as the seaport of the metropolis (which distinction was held by Los Angeles at that time) and most wealthy section of the coast not a house was built nor an improvement of any kind made about the port, save one little adobe warehouse built about 1833 on the mesa about a mile from the present townsite and directly above the old landing place. Until within twenty years all shipping at San Pedro was conducted by light-erage, the vessel lying off shore about three miles, the cargoes being taken to or from the vessels either on lighters or, in the earlier days, in the ship's boats, while all the labor of transferring the freight from the boats to the land across a wide rocky beach, fell on the ship's crew, for the paisano of early days was too indolent to engage in the heavy work of lading ship. In his interesting book, *Two Years Before The Mast*, published about 1835, Richard H. Dana gives a very readable sketch of the loading of a cargo of hides at this port, but his description of the harbor, however accurate it may have been at that time, is grossly inaccurate to-day.

During the Mexican war San Pedro was a point of much importance and was twice taken



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by the Americans. In October, 1846, Captain Mervine landed a body of troops at San Pedro and marched against Los Angeles. He was met at Dominguez Ranch by the Californians under General Corrallo and defeated with a loss of seven or eight killed and as many wounded. The Americans withdrew to their ship, carrying their dead with them. Mervine caused the dead soldiers to be buried on Dead Man's Island, a small and barren pile of sand and clay that stands just off the mainland and now marks the entrance to the inner harbor. This little island received its gruesome name from the fact that early in the present century the captain of an English merchantman lying in the harbor, died (tradition says poisoned) and was buried on the island.

Notwithstanding the notoriety or fame which the little port of San Pedro had attained within the first three hundred years of its history it was woefully deficient in its material growth and improvement during all of that long period of its existence, as is evidenced by the following brief but authentic paragraph taken from Major Horace Bell's *Reminiscences of a Ranger*: "San Pedro was at the time referred to (1853) a great place; it

had no streets, for none were necessary. No prison admonished the evil-doer to give San Pedro a wide berth. No church invited the piously-inclined to seek religious consolation at the lively port. No! there was nothing of that sort, but the author solemnly asseverates that there was a liberty-pole at San Pedro, from which proudly floated the flag of freedom. That there were two mud-scows, a ship's anchor and fishing-boat, a multiplicity of old and broken down Mexican carts, a house, a large hay-stack and mule corral."

Barren of improvements as San Pedro evidently was in the early days, the trade through the port was enormous. In 1834 the yearly shipments averaged 100,000 hides, 2,500 centals of tallow and several cargoes of soap. In 1840 the exports from San Pedro exceeded \$100,000 in value as against \$80,000 from San Francisco, \$25,000 from Santa Barbara, \$20,000 from Monterey, \$10,000, \$10,000 from San Diego and and \$6,000 from San Luis Obispo; nearly double the commerce of the latter four ports. In 1858 a lighthouse was authorized by the government at Point Firmin, but it was not until 1875 that one was actually established, at a cost of about \$4,000. In 1865 San

Pedro was the second harbor in importance on the coast, with an outward tonnage equal to all other harbors in California combined, save only San Francisco. In 1831 a small trading schooner called the *Refugio* was built at San Pedro by Friar Sanchez and Wm. Wolfskill, and was the first vessel ever built on the coast, if not the first seagoing vessel owned in California. In 1855, Abel Stearns, who as far back as 1835 owned the one little adobe warehouse at San Pedro, owned the clipper ship *Arcadia*, which was engaged as a trader between this port and Atlantic coast cities. J. J. Warner, a pioneer of California, writes: "The first steamer that visited San Pedro was the *Gold Hunter*, in 1849—a side-wheel, which made the voyage from San Francisco to Mazalan, touching at way ports." In 1858 General Phineas Banning and Governor Downey established the town of Wilmington,\* four miles up the bay from San Pedro, and erected commodious wharves and warehouses at that point. From that time events calculated to detract from the commercial importance of this city followed in quick succession. Telegraphic communication between Los Angeles and Wilmington was established in 1859; in

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\* See note on Wilmington in appendix.

1861-2 the government built extensive barracks at that place, and, as all transportation of freight was done by team and Wilmington being four miles nearer Los Angeles than San Pedro, shipping naturally centered at the new town.

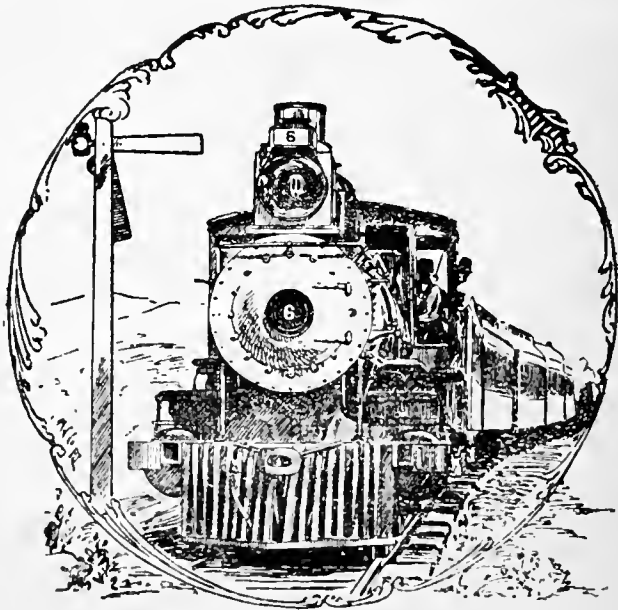
In 1863, on Monday evening, April 27, (by peculiar coincidence the identical day of the month on which the harbor jubilee of the present year is to terminate) there occurred in the harbor at Wilmington a disaster which cost the lives of twenty-six people and resulted also in the maiming of several others. This appalling catastrophe attracted at once the attention and sympathy of the entire coast and later on, notwithstanding the alarms of war that filled the air at that time, excited the commiseration of almost the entire country. The boiler of General Banning's little steamer *Ada Hancock* exploded while on its way with fifty or more passengers for the *Senator*, a vessel lying outside of the harbor and on the eve of departure for San Francisco. Among those of the prominent people who lost their lives on this occasion was Albert Sidney Johnson, jr., a son of the Confederate chieftain who gave up his life on the bloody field of Shiloh in the

commencement days of the nation's great internecine strife. In this connection one cannot but revert to the date of this dread occurrence thirty-six years ago — at that time the people of Southern California had cause to mourn deeply, while on the same date this year their joy is be unbounded.

In 1868 the people of Los Angeles county voted \$225,000 to build, or assist in building, the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad, which was opened for traffic on October 26, 1869, This road terminated at Wilmington and still further increased the importance of that place, and in 1872 it was transferred to the Southern Pacific Co. in consideration of that company building other lines in the county. During 1869 General Banning established a shipyard on Mormon Island and several steam vessels were built.

In 1874 Congress passed an act changing the name of the harbor from San Pedro to Wilmington, which is still the official name of the inner harbor. From 1858 to 1881 Wilmington flourished, while San Pedro remained as dead commercially as before its discovery three hundred and fifty years before. But in that year (1881) the railroad was extended

from Wilmington to San Pedro, and fickle fortune again threw around the historic site of Old San Pedro the bustle and confusion of a busy port. Wilmington may trace its rise and fall, and San Pedro its fall and rise to the onward march of the iron horse.



## CHAPTER V.

### **San Pedro of 1899.**

**I**N THIS CHAPTER the writer has endeavored to draw as impartial a picture of San Pedro of to-day as possible, both for the information of strangers and as a souvenir for the citizens of the town—a reminder of the old place after it has outgrown its present conditions and assumed the proportions and importance of a city of many thousands of people, stretching along the shore of the beautiful bay and crowning the gently rolling hills upon the west. In the preceding chapters has been given a conservative account of the commerce and

principal industries of the port; the struggle and triumph of the people in securing government aid to improve the harbor has been treated at length. With these facts at hand, with the past steady growth of San Pedro harbor from the importance of a mere open roadstead to that of its present commercial character, and the equally rapid growth of the territory of which it is the seaport, before him, the reader is left to judge for himself of the reasonableness of the expectations of most people who have studied the situation that the future growth of San Pedro will be as steady and substantial as in the past.

San Pedro has a population of about 1,900 people and is incorporated as a city of the sixth class, governed by a board of five trustees. The present board consists of Dr. W. A. Weldon, president; M. J. McDermott, Ernest Gilstead, John M. Mallgren and T. G. Schulze. The other city officers are J. D. Connor, clerk; Joe A. Weldt, treasurer; J. H. Dodson, marshal and tax-collector; H. Stieglitz, attorney; Henry C. Downing, recorder; Lester E. Rogers, superintendent of streets.

Two railroad systems terminate at this point—the Southern Pacific Co., which was



built from Wilmington in 1881, along the west shore of the bay and within the city limits, and the Los Angeles Terminal Railway, which was built by way of Long Beach in 1891, and which has its terminus at East San Pedro directly across the bay from the business center of the city. Passengers are transferred across the bay to and from the Terminal road in a small power ferry, without extra charge. During 1898 the Terminal road carried 220,372 passengers over its San Pedro division, an increase of 45,000 over the preceding year. During the larger portion of the year three trains each way are run over both roads between Los Angeles and San Pedro, but in summer the train service varies according to the travel, sometimes twelve trains being required. Figures of the Southern Pacific travel would, if available, probably exceed the record of the Terminal road.

The present city has an area of between seven hundred and eight hundred acres, the western boundary running along West street almost parallel with the shore of the inner harbor and about half a mile distant, while the eastern boundary follows the center of the channel for nearly two miles. An election has

been called to annex an equal amount of territory lying along the west side of West street that has recently been subdivided into building lots and is in reality already a portion of the city. The city has two well equipped and managed public schools, Catholic, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Methodist churches, an efficient volunteer fire department, a public library, a chamber of commerce with a large membership, and a slightly park. The streets, stores and a number of private residences are excellently lighted by electricity by the Long Beach and San Pedro Electrical Co., which institution furnishes lighting to Long Beach, San Pedro and Terminal Island. The city has a fair sewer system, but its water supply is inferior. There are two companies engaged in supplying the city with water, the Wilmington Water Co. and R. D. Sepulveda. The water from the Sepulveda system is sweet and pure, but that furnished by the Wilmington Co. is impregnated with sulphur and is nauseous to the taste and smell until exposed to the air, although analysis by competent chemists shows that it is not unhealthful. The business houses of San Pedro embraces all branches of trade usually found in a city of its size and character, and,

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as regards capital invested and stocks carried, are by no means discreditable to the city.

As a class the people of San Pedro are law abiding and intelligent. In former years the town was considered rough and disorderly and this reputation was doubtless deserved, but of late years the population has undergone a marked change and the lawlessness of earlier days no longer exists. While the fact remains that San Pedro is a seaport town and like other cities of that character has its rough spots,\* it is a fact that the general behavior of the citizens and the enforcement of law and order is on a par with older and larger communities.

When Dana saw San Pedro in 1835 it was a dreary place. "The land was of clayey quality, and, as far as the eye could reach, entirely bare of trees and even shrubs; and there was no sign of a town, not even a house to be seen," If Dana could see the town to-day the one thing that would surely strike him would be the groves of trees that are scattered over all parts of the city. The clayey soil that looked so desolate to the sailor-writer waited only for the advent of American husbandry to blossom as the rose.

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\* See note on Happy Valley in appendix.

The climate of San Pedro is very similar to that of other localities along the Southern coast of California. The cool sea breezes temper the heat of summer and the protecting hills of the Palos Verdes range and Santa Catalina Island break the bleak winds that occasionally sweep the coast in winter. No severe heat or cold is known. Like the bay and harbor, the climate is as near perfection as can be imagined. What else can be said?

Two miles and a half southwest of San Pedro, on the mainland, is situated Point Firmin Lighthouse, a picturesque structure presided over by the genial veteran Captain Geo. N. Shaw. This place is reached by the numerous people who visit it from time to time by way of an excellent driveway leading from the town along the coast and in unobstructed view of old ocean for the entire distance.

And still another attractive site to people sojourning in or near San Pedro is located a mile or more farther west than the lighthouse and known as White's Point, a body of land standing boldly to sea and from whose crest can be had a splendid view of the water and a comprehensive glance at the rugged aspect of Catalina Island more than twenty

miles away. This Point, which is becoming quite popular as a resort, is on the land of Roman Sepulveda, a pioneer of San Pedro, and a son of the original grantee of the Palos Verdes ranch, upon which this city is located.

A point of interest to tourists is the Palos Verdes Hill, the foot of which is but a step from the western boundary line of San Pedro, and whose tufted crest mounts to the height of 1475 feet above sea-level. From the top of old Palos Verdes, which is reached by an easy slope, is afforded a view of both land and sea which is incomparable.

San Pedro of 1899 has reason to be proud of the fully two miles of substantial and continuous wharfage that skirts her inner harbor completely on either side — so completely, indeed, that the board of trustees of the place have appealed to the courts to establish the city's right to extend one or more streets to the water's edge. These wharves are the property of the several lumber companies and railroad corporations operating there, and are a source of wonderment if not of admiration to all who visit them.

San Pedro's telephone service is equal to that of other towns of much larger growth,

and her postal service is very satisfactory, there being several mails daily.

There are three weekly newspapers published in San Pedro and named respectively "The Times," "News" and "American;" the first mentioned is the oldest and the second the youngest; the first is democratic in politics, the second independent, the third republican; the first is edited by E. B. Scott, the second by J. W. Davis and the third by W. L. Jones. The "American" is the official paper of the city, and the patronage received by either or all of them is fairly characteristic of the liberality of the town in which they are published, and, too, they are the equals in mental strength and journalistic enterprise of any of the newspapers published in the smaller cities of California.

Any attempt to describe San Pedro of to-day would be incomplete without a mention of the beautiful tracts of land which have been subdivided into town lots and placed on the market. These tracts are adjoining the city on its western border and scarcely a quarter of a mile from the water's edge. It is in no sense in advertisement of any of these tracts that the statement is made, that they offer

the most picturesque and sightly residence sites in or about the city. The class of buildings now erected on these tracts is of a character that would do credit to any city, and it will be but a short time before this will be the most aristocratic portion of San Pedro. Steps have been taken to extend the city boundaries to include these tracts. An attempt to locate oil to the west of this city on the Rudecinda Tract in 1896, by H. J. Muller, M. Mayer and others proved unsuccessful owing to the breaking of the drill in the well at a depth of over fifteen hundred feet, although excellent indications of the presence of oil were encountered by these gentlemen.



## CHAPTER VI.

### Struggle For A Free Harbor.

**W**HEN the first rock shall have fallen in the waters of San Pedro bay in the construction of the great breakwater that means so much to the entire Southwest, it will mark the close of a struggle unique in the history of this nation; it will announce in no uncertain manner, accompanied by joyous demonstrations and festivities on the part of all classes, the final triumph of the people over a corporation whose history is a synonym for corruption and whose ambition has ever been to hold in vassalage the business and farming interests of the great state of California; it



will be the dividing line, sharp and distinct, between the old and new order of things, when freed from the rule or ruin policy of the Southern Pacific Company the Southwest awakens from a lethargy superinduced by railroad freight rates that discourages if not precludes the fullest development of the resources of the country, and the absence of necessary water competition.

The history of San Pedro's harbor improvement is a story of determined effort on the part of the people of this section to obtain from the government the recognition and assistance due to a section which, in the matter of growth and development, has no parallel in the annals of American history, and an equally determined effort on the part of the Southern Pacific Company to retain a monopoly of the carrying trade of that section. As long as this company had complete control of the harbor, San Pedro was most satisfactory to it, but when in 1890 the Los Angeles Terminal Railway began to build to tide-water at San Pedro and threatened to compel the Southern Pacific to divide the business of the port, that company foresaw that with the inevitable growth of Southern California would come a

demand for a deeper and better harbor, and knowing the well-grounded bitter feeling entertained by the people of the state against it, and foreseeing the danger to its business if brought into competition with a carrier that had not aroused the hatred of the business and agricultural classes by years of oppression and extortion, began to cast about for a harbor site where competing lines could not come, trusting to the great influence of tools and allies in congress to divert the government appropriations for the deep-sea harbor to that site, leaving San Pedro unimproved and only capable of handling the lumber and lighter coasting trade, while the foreign commerce would still remain in the grip of the Southern Pacific Company. With this end in view that company selected a site on the northern side of what is called Santa Monica bay, the company securing the right of way along the beach for over two miles and terminating its road on an immense pier, effectually preventing competition at that point, for it would be impossible for any other road to build to Santa Monica bay, so thoroughly has the Southern Pacific Company entrenched itself by rights of way, greatly assisted by the inaccessibility of

the country adjacent to the bay. But this is getting ahead of the story.

In 1871, after a board of government engineers had made a critical examination of the different harbors and roadsteads along the Southern California coast and had unanimously agreed that San Pedro was the most available from every standpoint, an appropriation of \$200,000 was made for the deepening of the bar at Dead Man's Island from eighteen inches to fourteen feet. In the following year \$75,000 was appropriated, and in 1873 \$175,000. With this money and half a million dollars appropriated by succeeding congresses, the present breakwater has been built and the harbor deepened until it is possible for a vessel drawing twenty feet to enter the harbor at high water. In 1890, in response to the demand of the growing commerce of this section, congress directed that a commission of army engineers be appointed to examine the ports of Los Angeles county with a view of locating a deep-sea harbor. This board, like its predecessor, reported unanimously in favor of San Pedro, but no action was taken by congress, owing to the misrepresentations of the Southern Pacific Company, which favored

Santa Monica. Again in 1892 another board, composed of capable army engineers, reported for a third time in favor of San Pedro as a site for a government deep-sea harbor, recommended the construction of such a harbor, and estimated the cost at \$2,885,324. In its report this board said :

“Having made careful and critical examination for a proposed deep water harbor at San Pedro or Santa Monica bays, as required by law, the board is unanimously of the opinion that the location selected by the board of 1890, at the present anchorage at the westerly side of San Pedro bay, under Point Firmin, is the more eligible location for such harbor in depth, width, and capacity to accommodate the largest ocean-going vessels and the commercial and naval necessities of the country.”

Again the influence of the Southern Pacific Company was brought to bear to prevent legislation authorizing a harbor at San Pedro. In 1894 Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. H. Benyaurd, corps of engineers, at the direction of the Secretary of War, furnished an estimate amounting to \$392,725 for further improvements of Wilmington harbor. These further improve-

ments contemplated the gaining of a depth of eighteen feet at mean low tide at the entrance, with greater depths inside, and the people of Los Angeles worked to get the appropriation.

It was the supreme moment in the struggle between the two harbors — one endorsed and demanded by the people for the increasing requirements of commerce, the other championed by one corporation for purely selfish ends. The ability of the railroad and its allies to coerce or bribe congressmen in this matter had become a national scandal, and the wily manipulators saw that the people could not longer be put off. Hence they conceived the idea of making one final, desperate stand and risk everything on another commission. And to prevent further improvement of San Pedro, and in the hope that a new commission might decide in favor of the Southern Pacific's private harbor at Santa Monica, the railroad had a bill introduced that provided for a new commission to locate definitely the site of a deep-sea harbor, and providing the sum of \$2,900,000 to carry out the provisions of the act. The remarkable feature of the request for \$392,725 being sidetracked and an appropriation of nearly three millions being substituted in its place is

that it was done without the request or sanction of the representatives of the state in congress. The influence that secured this large appropriation and again called into question the relative merits of the two contesting ports, also changed the character of the commission which was to decide the matter. Since three boards of army engineers had unanimously reported in favor of San Pedro, the railroad interests decided to have a majority of the commission appointed from private life.

On June 3d, 1896, congress passed a bill providing "for a deep water harbor for commerce and of refuge at Port Los Angeles, in Santa Monica bay, California, or at San Pedro, in said state, the location of said harbor to be determined by an officer of the navy, to be detailed by the Secretary of the Navy, an officer of the coast and geodetic survey, to be detailed by the superintendent of said survey, and three experienced civil engineers, skilled in riparian work, to be appointed by the President, who shall constitute a board and who shall personally examine said harbor, the decision of a majority of which shall be final as to the location of said harbor. It shall be the duty of said board to make plans, specifications and

estimates for said improvement." \* \* The board as constituted under this act consisted of Rear-Admiral J. G. Walker, A. F. Rogers, W. H. Burr, George S. Morrison and R. P. Morgan. This board met in Washington, D. C., and organized on Nov. 16, 1896, Rear-Admiral Walker being elected chairman.

Soon after the organization of this board the gentlemen came west to Los Angeles, where they established their headquarters, and in pursuance of their duty they made frequent visits to both San Pedro and Santa Monica and made, also, exhaustive soundings of the water and examination of the land beneath the water contiguous to both of these ports. Extensive borings were made under the personal supervision of members of the board, the action of storms and their results at both points were carefully noted, a large number of experienced seafaring men and others were called before the board and questioned closely and critically as to the relative merits and demerits of the two proposed harbor sites; investigated the quarries located at Catalina, San Clemente, and on the different railroads where suitable rock for the work is found—indeed the board did its whole duty faithfully

and finally returned to Washington, where, on the 1st day of March, 1897, a majority report of the board, favoring San Pedro, was submitted to the Secretary of War, Russell A. Alger. There was a minority report, favoring Santa Monica, made by a single member of the board, R. P. Morgan. Among a vast mass of phraseology strongly impregnated with technical terms relating to depths, currents, anchor-holdings, soundings and what not, which embodied the board's report to the honorable Secretary the following comprehensive paragraph was inserted:

“Considered as a deep harbor for international and foreign trade, the advantages which San Pedro has for handling foreign traffic and for approaches by land are great; considered as a harbor for the coasting trade, the facilities for handling outweigh the disadvantages of greater distance from northern ports; considered as a harbor of refuge, the location at San Pedro is likely to be used more than the other, though the difference may not be great; considered with reference to future enlargement and extension, San Pedro offers much greater possibilities than Port Los Angeles. These advantages mean that a deep-



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water harbor at San Pedro would be more useful than a deep-water harbor at Port Los Angeles." In the report of this board the breakwater recommended was to be 8,500 feet in length, with a depth of from 24 to 52 feet, according to the contour of the bed of the bay, and a width of 150 feet on the bottom, 90 feet twelve feet from the bottom and 20 feet on the top, which was to be 14 feet above mean low tide. A single block of cement forty feet square and projecting twenty feet above mean low tide water was to be placed at each end of the breakwater to strengthen it and protect it from the action of storms. Upon the receipt of the news that the board had decided in favor of this harbor, thus assuring the consummation of the much-needed and long-worked-for improvement, the citizens of San Pedro prepared a barbecue and celebration, the like of which had never been seen in Southern California. This celebration took place in the month of April and fully 15,000 people were the guests of the city on that occasion. Later on, in the same year, congress appropriated \$400,000 as the first yearly installment on the work, and following this, after several weeks of undue delay, after his duplicity in the mat-

ter had been exposed by the press and public opinion had asserted itself in no uncertain way in regard to him, Secretary of War Alger advertised for bids for construction of the break-water. The bids were opened in San Francisco by Major C. E. L. B. Davis and the lowest bidder announced. The firm declared to be the best and lowest bidders was Heldmaier & Neu, of Chicago. After the Secretary of War had finally passed on the bids and confirmed the finding of Major Davis, Messrs. Heldmaier & Neu filed the necessary bonds and began the preliminary preparations for carrying out the contract. In the fall of '98 Peter W. Neu arrived in San Pedro and established headquarters, and from that time until the present date the preliminary work, such as the construction of stone-barges and the selection and development of stone quarries, has progressed steadily.

Aside from the opposition of the Southern Pacific Company and its faithful friend, the Secretary of War, death also asserted its monstrous self as if to injure the interests of San Pedro. In January, 1898, Peter W. Neu, a member of the contracting firm, who had come from his home in Chicago to person-

ally supervise the work on the harbor, was instantly killed by the overturning of a tally-ho coach upon which he was riding with some friends in Los Angeles. This accident, most untimely and distressing as it was, did not seriously delay the advancement of the great undertaking in the harbor, however, as Mr. Heldmaier, the head of the firm, came west at once and assumed the duties of his unfortunate partner.

As an indication of the feeling the business interests of Southern California entertained toward the corporate enemies of the proposed harbor improvement it is proper to state just here that in the spring of 1884 the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, despite the greatest exertion put forth by the representatives of the Southern Pacific Company, passed a resolution strongly favoring San Pedro by a vote of 328 to 131. A Free Harbor League was formed and organized effort to secure the needed improvement was made. In 1896 the Free Harbor League published a memorial to congress condemning the attitude of the Southern Pacific and urging the carrying out of Col. Benyaard's plans.

## CHAPTER VII.

### **As To San Pedro's Future.**

**I**T IS NOT within the province of this book nor is it the desire of its author to indulge in "boom" talk in connection with his recital herein of matter pertaining to the past, present and future of San Pedro, yet the following excerpt from an article written by Hon. John T. Gaffey, president of the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce, while it may appear to the uninformed as tinged with fiction, is in reality so truthful as to justify fully its reproduction as a part of this chapter: "No point on the Pacific coast of the United States today," says Mr. Gaffey, "is attracting as much attention from capitalists and investors as San

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Pedro ; and the reason for this is obvious to those who have followed the long struggle for the location of the government deepwater harbor of Southern California at that point. \* \* If the construction of a deepwater harbor at San Pedro was of "high national importance," as suggested by the board of government engineers in 1892, how much more so has it now become since the United States has gained a foothold in Asia by the acquisition of the great Philippine archipelago and the annexation of Hawaii? The late war has demonstrated the necessity of constructing the Nicaragua canal, and its accomplishment is an assured fact in the near future.

"Possessed, then, of the great advantages over its commercial competitors on the Pacific coast, as pointed out by the government engineers, where is there a more inviting field for investment than San Pedro and vicinity? The work on the harbor, for which the government has appropriated \$2,900,000, has already commenced, and the harbor itself will be completed in three years. In addition to the above appropriation the Secretary of the Navy, in his last report to congress, recommended the construction of a government

dry-dock at San Pedro, to cost \$1,000,000, when the harbor construction had progressed far enough to give it protection.

“Real estate in the vicinity of San Pedro has not as yet been affected by any boom, although prices have naturally advanced and become firmer since actual work commenced on the harbor, and considerable building is now under way.

“The growth of the town has so far been a healthy one, and those most deeply interested hope that it will continue so and that nothing in the nature of a boom will take place. It is expected, however, that in the spring of 1899 there will be a very large accession to our present population of 2,500, and it is safe to anticipate that the population of San Pedro will be over 10,000 before the completion of the breakwater; and, if it keeps pace with the future growth of American commerce in the Pacific, 50,000 is a moderate estimate within the next ten years.”

That Mr. Gaffey's estimate of the commercial advantages and prospects of San Pedro is conservative those familiar with “the lay of the land” will freely testify, and that his computed increase of population with-

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in the next few years is grounded in reason and moderation is too plainly apparent to be gainsaid by those who understand the propensity of the average American to gravitate toward a good thing when he sees it or is informed of it reliably. Indeed Mr. Gaffey has neglected to do San Pedro exact justice in his prophesy concerning her future. He has modestly refrained from mentioning several most important advantages that are to accrue to San Pedro through the improvement of her harbor. He has not mentioned the prospect if not absolute certainty of the early coming of the Utah Railway, by which San Pedro will be placed many hours closer to the eastern market than she is to-day. Mr. Gaffey does not even hint at the cheering probability of the construction of an electric line from Los Angeles to San Pedro, of the almost certain advent into that port of the great Santa Fe system, nor of the eventual establishment of a modern-armored and equipped fort on the government reservation situated to the south of the town. One need not allow his imagination free rein while writing of the future of San Pedro—the truth, plain and unvarnished, is sufficient in her case, for her prospects are

real, tangible, there is life in them. It is a positive fact that she is soon to have one of the greatest and grandest harbors on the Pacific coast, she now has excellent and increasing railway communication with the interior of the country and, by these signs, all things else she may require to make of herself a flourishing city will come as surely as night follows day, and come, too, in time for her present generation of citizens as well as friends abroad to glory in her greatness.





## APPENDIX.

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### SANTA CATALINA.

Santa Catalina is an island twenty-two miles in length and from one to ten miles in width lying about twenty-five miles south of San Pedro, in the Pacific Ocean. It is probably the most romantic and beautiful spot along the coast of California, and is famous as an all-the-year-round resort on account of its magnificent scenery, salubrious climate and the wonderful fishing and hunting it affords. Since the island was purchased by the Banning Co., in 1892, it has become the fashionable resort of Southern California and a number of first-class hotels have been erected at the beautiful little city of Avalon, which is located on the shore of the chief harbor of the island, and is reached

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by the steamers of the Wilmington Transportation Co. from San Pedro. This company has carried passengers to the island since 1881, at first using sail-boats for that purpose, but later the old side-wheel steamer Amelia, formerly a Sacramento river boat, was put on, and since that time nothing but steam vessels have been employed. A steamer makes a round trip daily throughout the year and in summer it frequently requires three daily steamers to handle the daily traffic. Catalina, when discovered in 1542, was inhabited by indians in large numbers, but during the intervening three hundred years they have all disappeared. There seems to be no account of their extermination, but between a probable plague and a few known visits of Spaniards it is easy to reconcile the facts that they were there and are not there now. A peculiarity of Catalina, on the northern shore at least, is the remarkable translucency of the water. By means of glass-bottomed boats the ocean bed is plainly visible at a depth of from forty to sixty feet, at times even deeper, and affording a sight most marvellous in its display of animate and inanimate objects peculiar to the waters of that quarter;

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indeed it is not within the province of this book nor within the capacity of its author to offer a description that would do justice to the wonderful and entrancing visions of submarine life to be observed through the bottoms of those boats. A reference to the volume of trade to and from Catalina is made on page 13.

### HAPPY VALLEY.

Within the corporate limits of San Pedro, and yet a little world by itself, is Happy Valley. The name is somewhat of a misnomer to an ordinary observer, for from this district comes most of the city's criminal court business. "The Valley," as it is called in San Pedro, is headquarters for the sailor element and here unfettered by hollow conventionalities and outside interference "Jack ashore" shows a startled and often unappreciative world how to be happy. The day in the valley begins with the setting of the sun and ends only when Jack is broke or in jail—or more often both. In the earlier years of the town's existence the valley was infested with dance halls and gambling dens of the lowest sort, but now nothing of the kind is tolerated, and as a result it takes much longer for the sea-

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farer to squander his hard-earned money than formerly. As it is at present, however, it is a lively place and while there are a few respectable families living in the valley, the majority of the residents, male and female, are more frequently met with in the justice's court than at church.

### WILMINGTON.

This quiet little town at the head of the inner harbor, four miles north of San Pedro, was for many years the main point on the bay. From its establishment in 1858 until the extension of the railroad to this city in 1882, it was one of the most important towns in the southern part of the state. In 1871 the town was incorporated and a board of town officers elected. The place has lost all of its old-time importance since the improvement of the present entrance to the harbor and now does no shipping business at all where once it did all that was done through the port. From a population of over a thousand in 1880 the town has retrograded steadily until to-day it cannot muster many more than a quarter of that number. Wilmington was in former years the home of many of the older citizens of this city,

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and there is a deep-rooted regard for the old town among them, although they have moved away from it to share the fortunes of another and more prosperous place. Wilmington has the machine shops of the Wilmington Transportation Co., and the stone cutting and polishing works of the Banning Co., where the beautiful Catalina serpentine stone is prepared for use in fine buildings and interior ornamentation. In the general upbuilding of the harbor Wilmington will doubtless again come to the front as an important city, but never as a rival of San Pedro.

### LUMBER YARDS.

There are four lumber companies with yards and offices at San Pedro, viz: the San Pedro Lumber Co., the Kerckhoff-Cuzner Mill and Lumber Co., the Southern California Lumber Co., and the W. H. Perry Mill and Lumber Co. Of these the Southern California Lumber Co. is located at East San Pedro, and the San Pedro Lumber Co., the most important and largest of any company in Southern California, has its main offices in this city, besides operating one of the largest planing mills in the entire country. There is also a small

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planing mill run in connection with the Southern California company.

### THE MATTER OF WAGES.

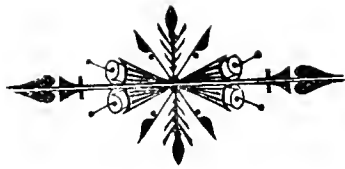
The wages paid for labor in the lumber yards and on the wharves are 22½ cents per hour, nine hours constituting a day's work. In the canneries the work is paid for according to the amount of work done by the workmen, except in few instances. This system of course makes it impossible to give any set figures, as in the lumber business, but the wages are much higher than for similar labor elsewhere in this country or Europe. Skilled mechanics receive from \$2 to \$5 per day, according to the character of the work performed.



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THE BOYLE HEIGHTS PRESS  
1899

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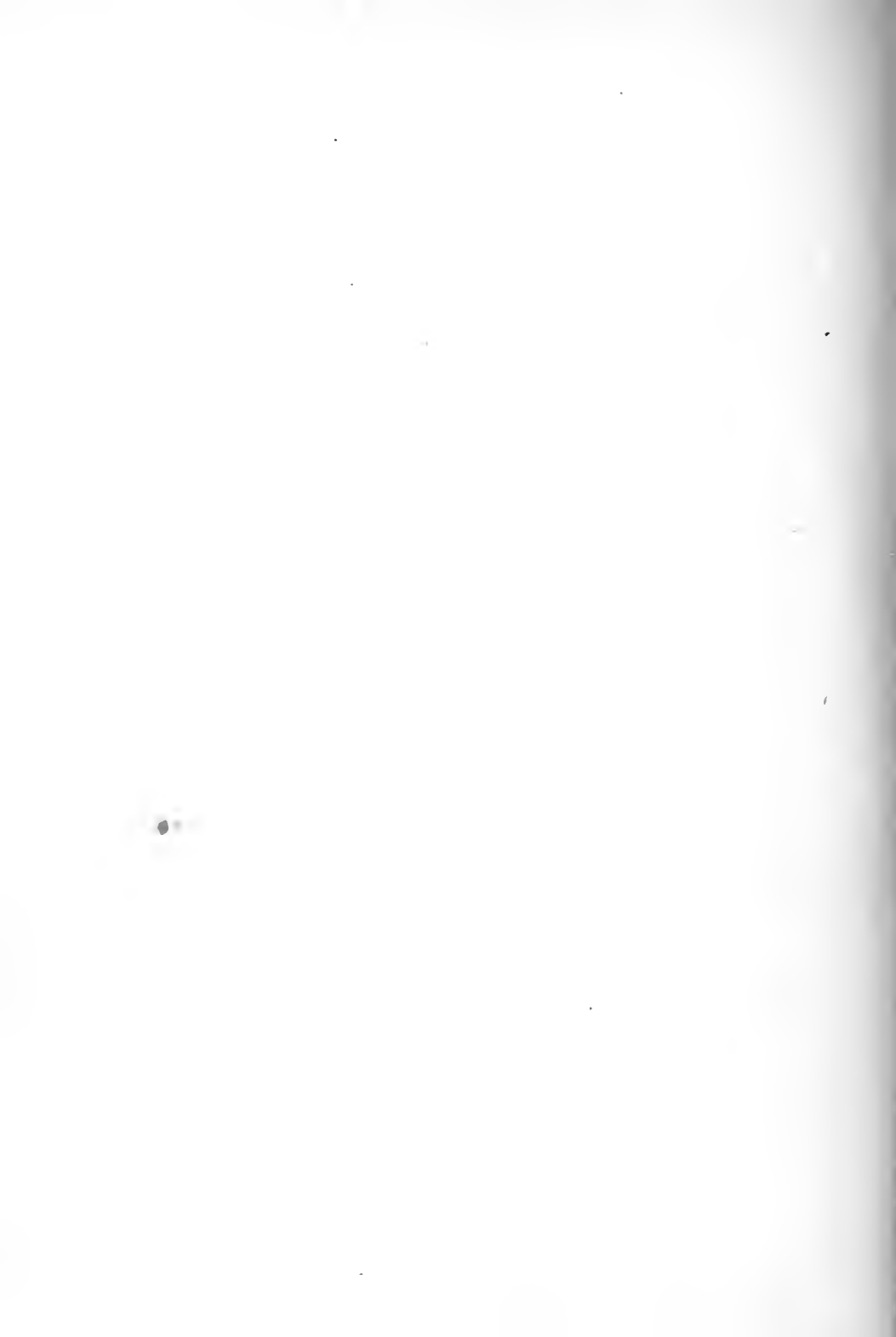
















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