

E.F. SPENCE--A MONROVIA PIONEER

W.N. Monroe, Monrovia's founder, had three partners when the Monrovia Townsite Company was formed for the purpose of developing a town to be called Monrovia. His partners were E.F. Spence, J.D. Bicknell and J.F. Crank.

In this series of short biographical sketches the contribution of each will be examined together with additional services they performed in getting the new town "off the ground."

E.F. Spence came to California in 1852 and for several years was engaged in mining and banking in the northern part of the state. In 1882 he went to San Diego where he, with others, organized the Commercial Bank of San Diego. A few years later he came to Los Angeles and became one of the organizers of the Commercial Bank of Los Angeles which, in 1880, became the First National Bank of Los Angeles. In 1881, following the death of J.E. Hollenbeck, its first president, Mr. Spence became president of that institution and held this position until his death September 19, 1892.

Mr. Spence's contribution of land for the townsite was the tract lying between Foothill and Colorado and between Magnolia and Mayflower in the present city.

He was among the first to build a palatial mansion which was located on the north side of Prospect avenue midway between Canyon and Grand avenues. He and his family began their residence there early in November 1888. The handsome house by Newsome Bros. and the beautifully landscaped grounds made it one of Monrovia's showplaces for several years.

In March 1887, Mr. Spence was one of a group of stockholders which formed the Granite Bank of Monrovia, capitalized for \$200,000. and became its first president. Its bank building was constructed of native granite and was situated on the southwest corner of Palm and Myrtle avenues. Later it became Monrovia's first city hall and served as such until the present city hall was built in 1954.

In 1887 Harvard University was looking for a suitable site for an astronomical observatory and Mr. Spence took an active part in promoting Monrovia Peak for its location. However, the decision went to Wilson's Peak above Pasadena, but he made a personal contribution of \$50,000 toward such an observatory.

Mr. Spence was one to the original stockholders and president of the San Gabriel Valley Rapid Transit Railway connecting Monrovia and Los Angeles, which was opened for business August 28, 1887.

In 1889, following the death of Gen. W.A. Pile, Mr. Spence was appointed to fill the vacancy on the board of trustees and was made chairman of the board. (Mayor)

After W.N. Monroe resigned as mayor of Monrovia on April 4, 1889, he left Monrovia to engage in railroad construction work again. At the instigation of Mr. Spence and Judge Bicknell a proposal to use "The Oaks", Mr. Monroe's residence as a college for young ladies. This was done and under the auspices of the University of Southern California it was formally opened January 15, 1890. It had a short life and by the end of the year it was closed.