

PASADENA STAR NEWS Auld Lang Syne July 5, 1963. C.F. Shoop  
JAMES F. CRANK CREDITED WITH LINE'S DEVELOPMENT.

Seventy years ago next month, Pasadena's first railway was incorporated. The line was known as the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley RR Co., and capitalization was \$450,000. The line was completed through Pasadena in September, 1885, but incorporation papers attest the starting date, August 30, 1883. James F. Crank was the master mind back of that railroad, and it is his story which is told today in the "running history lesson" on pioneer days in the Crown City.

It was in 1882 that the idea of connecting the San Gabriel Valley with Los Angeles by rail was broached to James F. Crank, then vice-president of the First National Bank of Los Angeles, but who lived on Fair Oaks Ranch, Pasadena (now Crary St. just east of Pepper Drive). The one who offered the suggestion to Mr. Crank was Stanley P. Jewett, a young Los Angeles engineer. Through Mr. Crank, E.F. Spence, J.E. Hollenbeck and C.H. Simpkins were induced to consider the project. After several meetings, all except Mr. Crank withdrew. Fired by the enthusiasm of Mr. Crank and Engineer Jewett, local capital was interested

Sherman Washburn, A. Brigden, W.R. Davis and W.P. Stanley agreed to engage in the undertaking and arrangements were made for preliminary work, discovering the best route and right-of-way all of which required time and money. The necessary money for beginning the work was raised among them selves. First officers included James F. Crank, president; S.P. Jewett, vice-president; S. Washburn, treasurer; W.P. Stanley, secretary. Stanley shortly withdrew and was succeeded by J.D. Bicknell of Los Angeles. In July, 1884, the first contract was let for building the road from its starting point in Los Angeles to Pasadena.

The original plan was to build from Los Angeles northeast only as far as Raymond Hill, but committees were organized in Pasadena to see to it that the line came through the center of town. In fact, a mass meeting was held May 27, 1885, and a committee named to purchase a right-of-way through Pasadena proper where a free right-of-way could not be obtained.

The line was built to Pasadena, (Colorado St.,) whistle of the first locomotive being heard on September 2, 1885. That was the signal for all the towns folk to celebrate the coming of the iron horse and a gala holiday it was, with most of the celebration on the grounds of Central School, just west of the tracks. The line was extended east to Lamanda Park by November 7 the same year and extension was suspended for about a year. Then it was completed to "Mud Springs" (now San Dimas), a total length of 28 miles.

Mr. Crank played an important part, too, in determining whether his 28 mile railroad would become a part of the Southern Pacific or the Atlantic & Pacific, the name before it became the Santa Fe. In his History of Pasadena (1917), John W. Wood tells just what did happen, as related to him by Mr. Crank: (pg. 336).

One day while Mr. Crank was in New York on business, he received separate invitations from Senator Leland Stanford, then president of the Southern Pacific, and president Strong of the Santa Fe to call upon them. Strong was in Boston on business and Stanford was

attending to Congressional matters in Washington. Crank surmised that the invitations had something to do with the purchase of his 28 mile railroad by one of these two big competing railroad companies. He remembered the many obstacles the Southern Pacific had placed in his way while building his line (and afterwards, when freight cars from his line would get "lost" and would be found at New Orleans or Timbuctoo, neatly side-tracked). Now, Crank

Now, Crank thought, was a chance to get even. He ignored Stanford's invitation and went, instead, to Boston. Within an hour after meeting President Strong, Crank had sold the San Gabriel line to the Santa Fe. This is how little San Gabriel Valley railroad became the "Southern California Railway," as it was at first called by the Santa Fe for certain business reasons, and, ultimately the terminal link in that splendid system.

Rate wars between the two systems stepped up tourist business here for the next few years, the result being that the East really "discovered" California--thanks largely to Mr. Crank.

From Mrs. Mildred Crank we have secured the pictures used on this page, and these and several others she is contributing to the Pasadena Historical collection. Mrs. Crank is the widow of Albert F. Crank, son of James F., and a well known artist and engineer, who died here in 1933. Modestly disclaiming glory for the Crank's contribution to Pasadena's success, because she did not come here until 1915. She lives quietly at 328 N. El Molino avenue and is on the staff of the Pasadena Playhouse.

Mr. Crank was born at Genesco, N.Y. November 7, 1842, and early engaged in promotion and finance becoming one of Los Angeles early day bankers. He purchased Fair Oaks Ranch here in 1877, three years after Pasadena was founded. He bought it (500 acres) from Judge Benjamin S. Eaton who lived there before him.

After selling out to the Santa Fe, Mr. Crank continued civic activities here and in Los Angeles. He became a member of the State Legislature and built the second street car system in Los Angeles (a cable road). Later he retired to a corner of the old Fair Oaks which he recovered in a singular manner as told in Wood's History.

T.M. Hotchkiss  
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