

## THE FIRST RAILROAD IN ARIZONA.

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In the spring of 1879 - I think it was early in May - the Southern Pacific Railroad from Los Angeles to Maricopa Wells, Arizona, was completed - the first railroad ever built in the State of Arizona.

To celebrate the great event the Southern Pacific Company ran an excursion train from Los Angeles to the end of the track at Maricopa Wells, about four miles west of the present town of Maricopa. The train consisted almost entirely of sleeping cars, which I think were owned by the Southern Pacific Company and which they called "The Silver Palace Cars". I thought the cars very comfortable although they were not as handsomely furnished as the Pullmans of today.

I believe that the tickets for the round trip cost twenty dollars which was less than the amount of the fare one way. This price included the berth. I gave my return ticket to a boy who wanted to go home. I don't remember much about the trip but I know that after we reached Maricopa Wells a sale of town lots was held by the Southern Pacific Company who had brought an auctioneer with them for that purpose. \* Quite a number of lots were sold at high prices, one bringing \$2000.00 although on every side was an apparently endless stretch of desert. Not long after that the town was abandoned and Casa Grande became the terminal.

The end of a new railroad in the desert, especially in summer, is not an attractive place to live, Maricopa Wells was a very busy, dusty place with quite a number of tents and shacks, for stores, saloons and eating houses were all doing a big business.

Big freight teams were hauling everything one could think of, from a quartz mill to a lady's dress. At that time Maricopa Wells was the nearest railroad point to Tucson, Phoenix, Florence, Globe, Silver King and Tombstone. Although Tombstone was a very new mining



camp millions of feet of mining timber were already being hauled for the big silver mines - a distance of nearly 200 miles over the worst kind of road.

The next morning after I arrived in Maricopa Wells I took the old Overland Stage for Tucson, via Florence. Among my fellow passengers was William Trumen, who stopped at Florence and is still living there. He has held many important public offices in Pinal County.

There was also a young Canadian by the name of Holmes. The next time I met him he was at Pantano with Tully Oshea & Company. After that he came to Tucson and with another man, opened a store on West Congress Street where Martin's Drug Store now stands. The name of the firm was Lonigan & Holmes. At that time Church Street was pretty well east of the business section.

Another passenger on that Overland Stage was Eugene Germain who was afterward sent by the U. S. Government as American Minister to Switzerland. Before we reached Tucson he had offered me a good job. I was to start a general merchandise store at Tombstone. He offered to ship goods in at wholesale prices and we were to divide the profits. I was to tend store and handle all of the money. His proposition was a good one but I am afraid I never cared enough for store keeping to make a success in that line.

At that time the Germain Company handled groceries and their stores followed the railroad east as it advanced across the desert. They were the first to ship California oranges, etc, to the East in car loads. The firm is now known as The Germain Seed Company.

The principal things that I remember on that stage ride to Tucson were the cottonwood trees at Florence and the Pima Indian farms along the Gila river near Sacaton. I thought that I had never seen anything so green as those trees and that wheat. The



wheat was headed out but had not commenced to ripen. The crop was a fine one and a great contrast to the vast desert over which we had travelled so far.

I arrived in Tucson about midnight, rather tired and very dusty. Coming along the Santa Cruz, where the Silver Bell Road is now, I remember I thought that the big mesquite trees looked like apple trees. It was moonlight and I could not see them very distinctly.

We changed horses at Desert Station (Nelson's Ranch) and also at the Nine Mile Water Hole. I landed at the Cosmopolitan Hotel - now the Orndorff. The next day I found a barber-shop and paid a dollar for a bath in a tin tub.

I liked Arizona and Tucson from the day that I arrived. At that time Tucson was a real Mexican town, but there were many educated Americans here and all were very cordial and hospitable to the tender-foot who came here to live. Almost all of the business was down on Main, Meyer and West Congress streets. Mexican money was the medium of exchange and if you had gold you got a premium for it.

Big freight wagons were still coming into Tucson from the western end of the Santa Fe Railroad, somewhere in New Mexico with merchandise that had probably been bought in New York or Chicago six months or a year before. The old Overland Stages were still running, carrying mail and the Wells Fargo Company's Express, and a treasure box that sometimes made the stage robber so generous that he would tell the driver to go on - without molesting the passengers.

The drivers of the Overland Stages had a dangerous job, and some of them were killed by Indians and outlaws. Many of them were wonderful drivers, I saw one of them turn a stage and six horses on lower Congress which was then so narrow that he had to keep his team going fast enough to slide the hind wheels several feet in order to



make the turn. The street has since been widened, but at that time - according to an old map of the City which is now in the office of the City Engineer - Congress Street, at the Corner of Maine, was just nineteen feet between the curbs with sidewalks seven feet wide.

In 1880 the railroad reached Tucson and things began to change rapidly.