



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors



SUPERVISOR WILLIAM H. SPURGEON

Term: 1877 - 1878
District: Fourth
Date of Birth: Oct. 10, 1829
Death: 1915

William H. Spurgeon served as county supervisor for less than one term. He assumed office in 1877 and resigned on May 6, 1878. Spurgeon was replaced by James D. Ott.

Spurgeon was born Oct. 10, 1829 in Henry County, Ky. When he was 12, the family moved to Clark County, Mo. Spurgeon's father put him to work in a dry-goods store, where young Spurgeon learned about business at an early age.

In 1852 California's gold rush was in full swing and Spurgeon headed West in search of fortune and opportunity. At age 23, he arrived in San Francisco, but soon afterward proceeded to Oregon. For the next four years, he spent his time divided between mining for gold, ranching and running a trading post.

In 1856 he headed home to Missouri, where he opened a general store. In 1864 he sold his business and returned to Northern California. In 1867 he moved to Los Angeles, and two years later moved to what is now Santa Ana after the death of his wife. In 1869 Spurgeon purchased 74.2 acres of land for \$595 and built a city encompassing 24 blocks of about 10 lots each and named it Santa Ana. The boundaries were: First Street to the south; West Street (now Broadway) to the west, Seventh Street to the north, and Spurgeon Street to the east. He opened a general store on the corner of Fourth and Sycamore streets, and it became a central part of the growing town.

Spurgeon laid out the town's public transportation system with the building of a road through the mustard fields to allow for easier access to the town and to meet the Wells Fargo stagecoach with its mail and passengers. In 1874 Wells Fargo opened an office in Santa Ana. By 1887-88 the Santa Fe trains reached Santa Ana.

The town's water supply also began with Spurgeon. In 1869 his artesian well and small water tower supplied the residents' water. Today, from the I-5 Freeway the historic Santa Ana water tower can be seen.

In 1870 Spurgeon became postmaster, followed by his election to the Los Angeles County supervisorial seat in 1877.

He became the first mayor when Santa Ana incorporated on June 1, 1886. The population was 2,000. The following March the city was reincorporated under the Municipal Corporation Act; it had already increased by 500 residents.

Santa Ana had always been the principal administrative and political center of Orange County. After several unsuccessful attempts to separate from Los Angeles County, Orange County was finally formed in 1889, and Santa Ana was chosen as the county seat. William H. Spurgeon was elected chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

He spent the rest of his life in active service for what became his city.

Business credits included being president of the Santa Ana Valley Irrigation Company, director of the Santa Ana Land and Improvement Company and the Newport Wharf and Lumber Company, and one of the incorporators of the Santa Ana & Newport Railroad Company. He was also president of the First National Bank of Santa Ana.

In 1915 Spurgeon died. He was 86, and was survived by his second wife, Jennie, and their five children -- Grace, Lottie, Mary, William H., Jr., and Granville.

Sources: An Illustrated History of Southern California: Embracing the Counties of San Diego, San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Orange; The Peninsula of Lower California; <http://www.santaanahistory.com/history.html>.