

FRANCIS ENSOR PRENDERGAST, M. Am. Soc. C. E.*

DIED DECEMBER 7TH, 1897.

Francis Ensor Prendergast, was born at Dublin, Ireland, October 28th, 1841. He was the only son of John P. Prendergast, Barrister, of Dublin, author of the "Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland," and other Irish historical notes. He came of a very old family that can be traced back to an ancestor who came over to England with the Normans at the time of the Conquest, but he was too modest ever to refer to this himself, thinking that as an American citizen all pride of ancestry should be buried; the family has, however, in fact, held high social position for centuries. He was graduated in Arts and from the School of Engineering of the University of Dublin in 1863. After graduation from college he traveled quite extensively in Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy, and, owing to his keen observation and judgment, his travels were very profitable to him in his professional career.

In 1864 he commenced his engineering practice, after the English fashion, as an apprentice, being articled to the engineer in charge of the Coalbrookdale Railway and Craven Arms Extension Railway, in Shropshire, England. In 1865 he was Assistant Engineer of the City of Glasgow Union Railway, Scotland, and in 1867 Division Engineer on Construction.

He first came to this country in November, 1868, and brought letters of introduction to some of the best people of Boston and New York. He accepted a position as Locating Engineer of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Iowa. In 1870 he was engaged on the preliminary surveys of the Oregon Central Railroad from Astoria to Portland; in 1871, Engineer in charge of construction of the Oregon and California Railroad, between Harrisburg and Pass Creek, 44 miles; in 1872, Locating Engineer of the Oregon Central Railroad, from Forest Grove to Junction City, 100 miles. In 1873 he was Resident Engineer on the construction of the Chicago and Northern Pacific Air Line Railroad, from Geneva Lake to Jefferson, Wis., 35 miles; in 1875, Chief Assistant Engineer of the Chicago and North Eastern Railroad, from Flint to Lansing, Mich. In 1877 he was engaged on surveys for monumenting the City of Omaha. In 1878-79 he was Locating and Resident Engineer on the construction of the Republican Valley Railroad, in Nebraska.

* Memoir prepared by David W. Cunningham and H. N. Savage, Members, Am. Soc. C. E.

In 1881-82 he was Assistant Engineer on the New York and New England Railroad; in 1884, Locating and Constructing Engineer of the Mahopac Falls Railroad, N. Y. In 1885-86 he was engaged on the Chicago, Burlington and Northern Railroad, as resident engineer of the Galena River Drawbridge, and from East Dubuque to Glen Haven, Wis., 37 miles. In 1887 he was Locating Engineer in Iowa for the same railroad.

He was Assistant Engineer with the New York and New England Railroad, in 1887 and until August, 1888, when he went to Sault Ste. Marie as Resident Engineer for the St. Mary's Falls Water Power Company, remaining until November, 1889, when work was stopped for lack of funds.

In the winter of 1889 he accepted a situation with the San Diego Land and Town Company as Horticultural Superintendent, in which capacity he developed the pioneer details of soil preparation, selection of trees, contour arrangement, setting out and care for the first citrus groves of any magnitude in San Diego County, Cal. In this field, as in all other work undertaken by him, his natural ability and foresight has been highly exemplified; the pioneer methods introduced by him at that time are the universal practice and the most successful at present.

Failing health necessitated a change in residence, and in 1893 he resigned his position and moved to Redlands, Cal., where he resided until his death, his time being taken up with the care of his extensive citrus groves.

Mr. Prendergast was a very attractive writer, and found time from his exacting duties to be a frequent writer for the press, contributing valuable technical papers to the engineering and literary magazines. His work on the details of Railway Construction, published serially in the *Railroad Gazette*, is well known and highly appreciated. He was also a correspondent of Dublin and Belfast, Ireland, newspapers, and contributed three very excellent articles for *Harper's Magazine*, on "Railroads in Mexico," in July, 1881; "The Canadian Pacific Railroad and the New Northwest," in August, 1882, and "Transcontinental Railways," in November, 1883.

He was very careful and accurate in all his work, and his judgment, in all matters that came under his investigation, was of the best. He never gave an opinion that was not carefully considered, and his statements were generally correct; he was, therefore, an excellent adviser. He was respected and beloved by all who knew him for his genial manner and sterling integrity. He was modest and unassuming, and but for his retiring disposition he might have risen to greater distinction.

Mr. Prendergast married Mary A. Childs, of Henniker, N. H., on August 20th, 1873, and leaves his widow and seven children, five boys and two girls.

He was elected a Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, March 7th, 1888.