

## Fred Wilson Potts

This is the biography of Fred Wilson Potts, the husband of Ella Holton Walker. These two were the second generation of the Walker family to live in the old family home at 121 N. San Dimas Ave.

Fred Wilson Potts was the son of Andrew Wilson and Amelia Sherrard Potts. He was born March 1, 1862, in one of the old hotels facing the Plaza in Los Angeles, Calif. He was one of the first Anglo-American children born in Los Angeles.

He attended a private school operated by a Professor Lolar during his younger years and then became one of the first graduates of Los Angeles High School. Two of his classmates were Miss Mary Foy who for many years was head of the Los Angeles City Library and John Cline, who became Sheriff of Los Angeles County. He graduated from High School about 1879 and then enrolled at the Sackett School which later became the University of California at Berkeley. He graduated from there in 1883 and was valedictorian of his class. While at the University, he was very active in athletics; he played first base on the baseball team, he pulled stroke oar on the Varsity Crew, and was also on the boxing team.

When quite young he was baptised into the Church and a Captain Timm, an old German Sea Captain was named as his Godfather. Captain Timm had a fleet of about six schooners that traded up and down the Coast from San Diego to San Francisco. They were based at Timm's Landing, which later became Wilmington. When Fred was about 13 or 14 years old, Capt. Timm gave him a job working on his ships every summer. He was given a thorough training in seamanship and when 16 years old he was put in charge of one of these ships.

On a trip returning from San Francisco, they came upon a U. S. N. Destroyer in difficulty in the Catalina Channel. They took this ship in tow and towed it all the way to San Diego. The Admiral of the Fleet based there was very pleased that his ship had been saved and as a result told Fred when he finished college to contact him and he would give him a chance to become an officer in the Navy.

On his graduation from California in 1883, he took an entrance examination against two Annapolis Cadets and beat them both out for a position here on the Pacific Coast. He served about twelve or thirteen years in the Navy and retired as a Captain about 1896.

During his time in the Navy he served for two years on the Revenue Cutter Bear and patrolled the Alaskan Coast to keep Japanese and Russians from slaughtering seals around the Pribiloff Islands. He spent another two years on the Revenue Cutter Rush, patrolling the coast of Mexico to keep out Chinese that were being smuggled into Mexico and then into the United States. He served one year on the Atlantic Coast where he was Captain of President Grover Cleveland's Presidential Yacht, the Dolphin. He was then sent to Guatamala in Central America where he served as Naval Attache for two years. In 1896 he came home on leave for two months and during this time his mother, wife, and daughter talked him into resigning his commission.

He married Ella Holton Walker in 1885 after a whirlwind courtship. They met by accident at Navy Officers Club in Santa Monica and were married in her family home in Covington, Kentucky. She had been on vacation with her family in Southern California when they met.

After leaving the Navy the family moved to San Dimas, California, and they lived there the rest of their lives. He engaged in the Citrus industry and helped his father-in-law J. W. Walker set out several of the first groves in the San Dimas area. He later managed the shipping departments for the R. M. Teague Citrus Nursery which grew to be the largest Citrus nursery in the world.

In 1924-25-26 he managed the Tamarack Lodge at Twin Lakes in the Mammoth area and then managed the Barbara Worth Hotel at El Centro, Calif., from 1927 to 1929.

He was a great story-teller and could keep people entertained for hours with stories of early days of Los Angeles and California. He knew personally many of the Spanish families of early California.

Fred and Ella Potts had one child, born in Los Angeles May 16, 1886. Her name was Rowena Potts.

Transcript from Tape made by Jack Carruthers, April 21, 1980.