



Katharine R. Mahar, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

KATHARINE (REDDY) MAHAR WAS BORN IN LONE PINE, Inyo County, California, a small community about 200 miles north of Los Angeles, on April 16, 1876. Her father was a native of Rhode Island and her mother of Ireland.

She became a schoolteacher in San Pedro, California and in 1908 married Edward J. Mahar. Their only child, a daughter, was born the next year.

San Pedro is a neighborhood in the harbor area of Los Angeles. Once an independent community, it was annexed to Los Angeles in 1909.

Edward J. Mahar was born in Washington State in 1863, but moved to San Pedro as a young man. He became an important businessman in the area, and in January 1919 was elected president of The First National Bank of San Pedro. The bank had been founded in 1903 with charter #7057.

After a period of declining health, Mahar died in the family home in San Pedro on March 3, 1925. The next week, the bank board met and elected his widow, Katharine, as their next president. At that time the local newspaper headlined her appointment as, "First Woman President of Local Bank." The article went on to say that she was one of the principal stockholders in the bank and that it was not yet known how active a president she would be.

She served for three years, before the bank merged into the Bank of Italy (soon to be renamed the Bank of America) on December 8, 1928. At that time the bank had deposits of three million dollars.

She died in Los Angeles nearly exactly a decade later, on December 9, 1938, and was buried in Calvary Cemetery, Los Angeles.

Series 1902 National Bank Note of The First National Bank of San Pedro with the signature of Katharine R. Mahar as president. (Courtesy Lyn Knight Currency Auctions)

Sources and Acknowledgements

Articles on Edward Mahar's failing health and death are found in the *San Pedro Daily Pilot* for March 3, 4 and 5, 1925. An article on the election of Katharine R. Mahar as president of the bank is found in the same newspaper for March 14, 1925. Her obituary is in both the *San Pedro News-Pilot* and the *Los Angeles Times*, for December 10, 1938. The assistance of Cheryl Bryan of the San Pedro Bay Historical Association is gratefully acknowledged. ♦