

John Drake Mercereau



John Drake Mercereau, was born at Union, N. Y., November 6, 1862, and was educated in Kingston Seminary at Wilkesbarre, Pa.

His first employment was with the Paterson Bridge Company, at Paterson, New Jersey, as assistant superintendent, where he remained for eight years, following which he was a few years associated in the leaf tobacco business with his brother, Henry C. Mercereau, at Waverly, New York, where he amassed a sizeable fortune.

On first coming to Los Angeles, in 1887, he invested his money in oil and land with the intention of retiring from active business life, but lost heavily in his investments. He then went into the bridge contracting business, which he later incorporated under the name of the Mercereau Bridge and Construction Company.

When the City of Pasadena advertised for bids for the Colorado Street Bridge, Mercereau submitted the low bid and was awarded the contract with the stipulation that he attempt to reduce the cost, which was estimated by the design firm of Waddell and Harrington to be \$241,640, about \$6,000 more than the city had anticipated.

Before starting work on the foundations, Mercereau, with the assistance of Waddell & Harrington's resident engineer, C. K. Allen, performed a series of exploratory drillings to assess the condition of the bedrock in the area of the proposed bridge alignment and discovered an area nearby where the bedrock was much more uniform and of better bearing capacity. By realigning the bridge on a curve to take advantage of the better conditions, foundation costs could be reduced substantially.

Allen then coordinated with Waddell & Harrington's design engineers to redesign the alignment on a curve. The eastern 813 feet of the bridge was placed on a center line curve with a 915.97-foot radius, and the central angle of the curve was 51 deg 24 min 15 sec. The revised plans called for a uniform grade of 2.655% descending from east to west, less than was originally planned.

The final construction cost, as reported in the [HAER CA-58 report](#), was \$235,430. Other sources report a different amount.