



City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402

LIBRARY NEWS DECEMBER 2011

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

This month we have an article by Nick Cataldo, a long-time member of our Society, whom I am sure most of you know. Nick is the author of several history books and writes a column on local history for the *San Bernardino Sun*. He has contributed stories to our Society's publications, *Odyssey* and *Heritage Tales*, and has written for the *Tombstone Epitaph*, a newspaper that publishes articles on Wyatt Earp, among others of his time, and in whom Nick has a special interest. He also has an avid interest in Cajon Pass, where he often conducts tours for a class at Cal State San Bernardino. The Cozy Dell Ranch in Cajon Pass is where the subjects of this month's article lived for many years, and where the Roesch bus lines began.

JACOB AND MELISSA ROESCH A DYNAMIC DUO

By
Nicholas R. Cataldo

All parents wish for a positive educational experience for their children as they mature into adulthood. They also wish for a safe and efficient way to get to school. And in San Bernardino during the first half of the 20th century, there was a husband and wife team who fulfilled both of these wishes. The names of this dynamic duo were Jacob and Melissa Roesch.

A native of Lee County, Illinois, Melissa Abigail Blair (May 2, 1890—May 24, 1982) came to Los Angeles with her family when she was only six months old. Following her completion of high school, Melissa graduated from Los Angeles Normal School and continued on with her postgraduate education at the University of California and at Claremont College.

In 1912, Melissa married Jacob Anton Roesch (September 29, 1884—July 13, 1973), a native of Erie, Ohio...and the legacy of this dynamic duo was about to begin.

After teaching a year in Fairmont and a year in Long Beach, Melissa and "Jake" fell in love with a 160-acre ranch in the middle of the Cajon Pass whose history as a welcomed rest stop for people passing through dated back to the 1870's. Philip Hanf, owner of the ranch since the turn of the century, had been running "Hotel Cajon," and was ready to sell out. Jake and Melissa purchased a majority of the ranch in 1919 while Hanf kept just enough land to live comfortably and raise a few hogs.

The new owners discontinued the hotel scene, changed the name of the ranch to Cozy Dell, which is what it had been known years earlier as, and settled in as small-time ranchers—raising chickens, a few

milking cows, growing apples and grapes—and ran a service station and garage for a while to accommodate the increasing automobile traffic following the National Old Trails Road and later, Route 66. One of the buildings was also converted into a fairly successful restaurant. Cozy Dell would be the Roesch family's home until selling their property to Bill Hubbard in 1963.



Jake Roesch with children Elizabeth and Jack — circa 1925



Jake Roesch at the Cozy Dell Garage — 1930's

The late Jack Roesch, who eventually took over the family business, recalled during an interview in 2000 that after his parents moved to Cozy Dell, Melissa was putting together a well-distinguished 30-plus-year teaching career in the San Bernardino area while Jake began driving the scattered farm kids to school—the prelude to what became the Roesch Transportation Company.

During the next three years, Melissa taught at Clear Springs School, a one-room school near a long-since abandoned rail depot in the Cajon Pass, while Jake started transporting students.



Clear Springs School class at abandoned depot in Cajon Pass. Santa Fe cars in background — early 1920's.



Melissa Roesch, one right of center, with Clear Springs School class — circa 1920

Jack Roesch described his father's first "bus":

My father's first bus was really a truck with a trolley-type body with an entrance in the center at the rear. The driver [was] separated from the passengers, which was probably a pretty good arrangement. His next bus was a 1926 REO chassis with a bus body built in Los Angeles.



Courtesy of Lawrence Meyer family

Roesch's 1926 REO chassis school bus

Then when Clear Springs consolidated with three other one-room schools in 1924, Melissa began a 16-year tenure at a brand new two-room native rock constructed Cajon School near the corner of Cajon Blvd. and Devore Road (Glen Helen Parkway) in Devore.



Interior of Cajon School — 1927

When the new Cajon School opened, the first teachers were Nellie Palmer, the principal and teacher for grades one to three. Melissa educated the fourth through sixth graders. A few years later, Mabel Brush replaced Palmer.



Melissa Roesch, center, with students from Cajon School — 1935

**GLASS SLIDES PROGRAM BY STEVE SHAW
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2011**

We have scheduled another Saturday afternoon program for the Society. This one will be presented by President Steve Shaw and will be held at the Heritage House meeting hall, 8th and D Streets, at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 10, 2011. As usual, admission and parking are free.

Like our November program, this presentation will feature early San Bernardino photographs. Steve has collected a series of colored glass slides, called lantern slides, depicting local scenes and dating to the early 1900s.

Lantern slides actually precede photography and date back to the 17th Century. They were images painted on transparent glass that were placed in a projector which cast the image on a wall or other surface. A Philadelphia daguerreotypist first used glass plate photo negatives in the 1840s, which he transferred to another sheet of glass, thus producing a positive image. Thus could the small photograph be turned into a large, even full scale, image, which could be enjoyed by a large audience.

The photographs were hand-painted on the glass, and a very colorful program was thus available with low technology requirements. The end product of these photographs is somewhat reminiscent of post cards of the period, although the processing was entirely different.



A glass slide from Steve Shaw's collection

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN CONAWAY

I recently discovered a drawing of San Bernardino photographer B. F. Conaway in the June 18, 1894, issue of the San Bernardino *Daily Times-Index*. As readers of the *Library News* are aware, I have been featuring in this newsletter the photographers of San Bernardino, especially those of the 19th Century. Our two deceased members, historian Arda Haenszel and genealogist Mary Lewis, compiled a list of early local photographers. All they had on Conaway was that he was active from about 1894 until 1905. He appeared in some city directories and he also signed the Great Register so that he might vote.

Besides this sketch on the right, which was in a paid advertisement, there was a short paragraph under the personals column announcing that Conaway, who had "...for years been the leading photographer of Santa Ana," had refurbished a gallery on Third Street on the ground floor for the convenience of elderly people.



Sketch of B. F. Conaway

One of the attendees at Phil Nathanson's program on pioneer photographer W. A. Vale was Phil Brigandi. Phil, a former archivist at the Orange County Archives and a researcher and author of local history, happened to be quite knowledgeable concerning Conaway. Phil is currently working with Cal State Fullerton to identify landscape locales and persons in a cache of some 270 glass slide negatives in Fullerton's collection of B. F. Conaway's work. He says the collection appears to be all, or nearly all, of the Santa Ana area.

Conaway began his photography business in 1887, and, as previously stated, moved to San Bernardino in 1894. He last appears in a San Bernardino Directory in 1905. His daughter, Estelle Marguerite Conaway, married a Santa Ana farmer by the name of Albert Birch in 1899. Birch was active in many endeavors besides farming, including the search for oil. Oil had been discovered in the Olinda area in Orange County, and Birch created the Menges Oil Company to look for it. In 1911 he hit it big with Well No. 5, a real gusher. He became quite wealthy, as did B. F. Conaway, who owned 20,000 of the 90,000 shares which made up the Menges Oil Company.

Albert Birch built a big house in South Pasadena, and he and his wife and in-laws all moved in. B. F. Conaway bought a 20,000-acre ranch up in Yolo County, although he continued to reside in South Pasadena. He passed away in 1935.



Santa Ana street scene taken in 1889 by B. F. Conaway

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