



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

LIBRARY NEWS OCTOBER 2011

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

Following is the second article by Mark Landis, freelance writer for the San Bernardino *Sun*. As in the case of last month's story, this feature has pictures he submitted to the *Sun* that did not make it into the newspaper.

“No Scene Twice Seen”

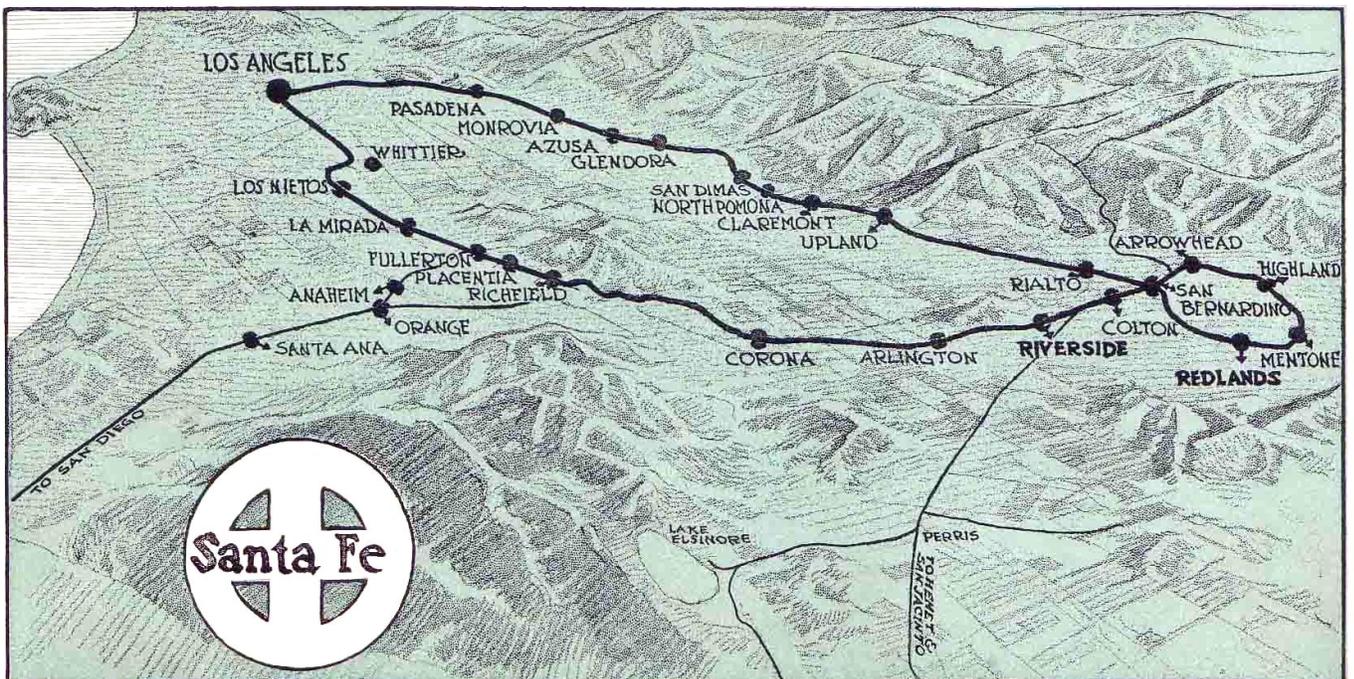
On The Santa Fe Railroad’s Splendid “Kite-Shaped Track” Excursion

By Mark Landis, Correspondent

IN the days of the great westward migration of the late 1800's, California was promoted with splendid images and accounts that frequently exaggerated the truth. Southern California's mild climate and diverse landscapes were regularly touted as a virtual paradise by land developers, business promoters, and especially the railroads.

The railroads were the main beneficiary of the westward movement since they owned huge tracts of land and provided transportation for the migrants and their new products. In 1892, the Santa Fe Railroad began promoting the real beauty and diversity of Southern California with a special tourist route they called “The Kite-Shaped Track.”

FRED S. LANG CO. LOS ANGELES



From the collection of Lee Gustafson

Relief map from a Santa Fe brochure showing the route of the Kite-Shaped Track

The “Kite” name comes from a figure-eight style horse racing track that was popular during the era. A map of the Kite Track route looks something like an elongated figure-eight, lying horizontally. The small end of the “eight” was at the eastern end of the route known as “the Loop.” The station at San Bernardino was at the crossing of the figure eight and was the beginning and end of “the Loop.”

Originally called “The Belt Line,” the Southern California Railway (owned by the Santa Fe) began operating the 166-mile tourist route in January of 1892. Instead of simply going to a destination, the Kite-Shaped Track immersed the rider in the region and provided a first hand perspective of the land and the lifestyle.

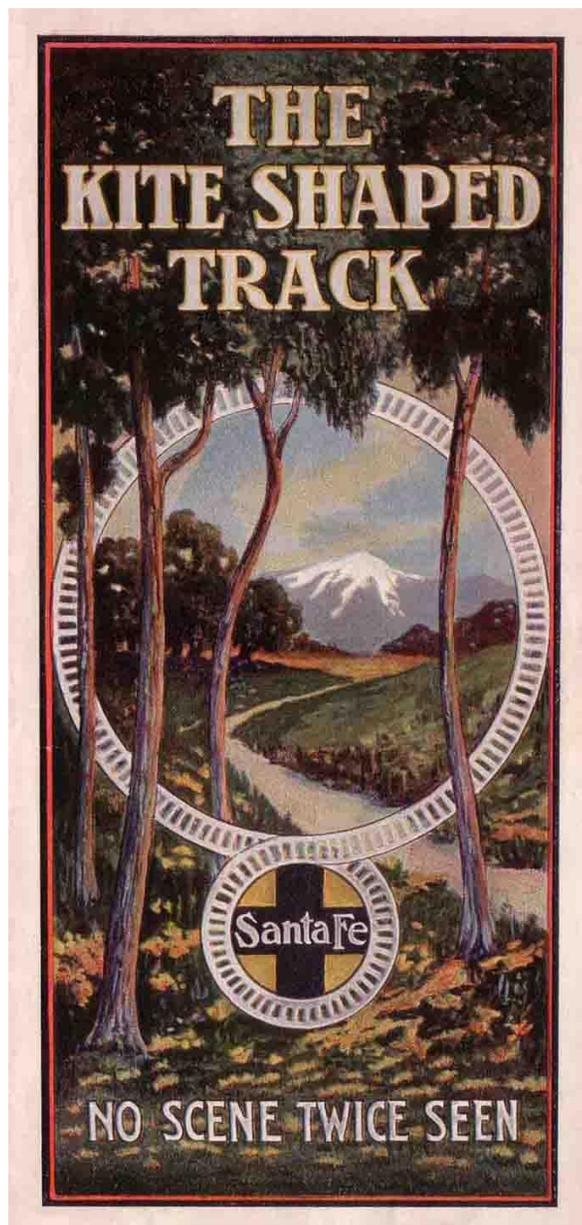
All the elements of good timing and fortunate routing came together for Santa Fe’s Kite excursion and the railroad went to great lengths to promote the route. According to Lee Gustafson, author and railroad historian, the Santa Fe incorporated the figure-eight logo into literature and even their architecture. “When Santa Fe opened their new La Grande Station in Los Angeles on July 29, 1893, the walkways in the park next to the depot were laid out in the pattern of the Kite-Shaped Track” said Gustafson.

The first excursion of the day left Los Angeles at 8:30 am and tourists could make the complete trip in a single day for only \$3.65. The railroad boasted “free reclining chair cars and luxurious observation cars” for passengers taking the excursion.

The Kite route rambled through some of the most picturesque sections of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange counties. Other railroads shared some of the Kite’s trackage, but none had the complete figure-eight route that allowed Santa Fe to boast that there would be “no scene twice seen.”

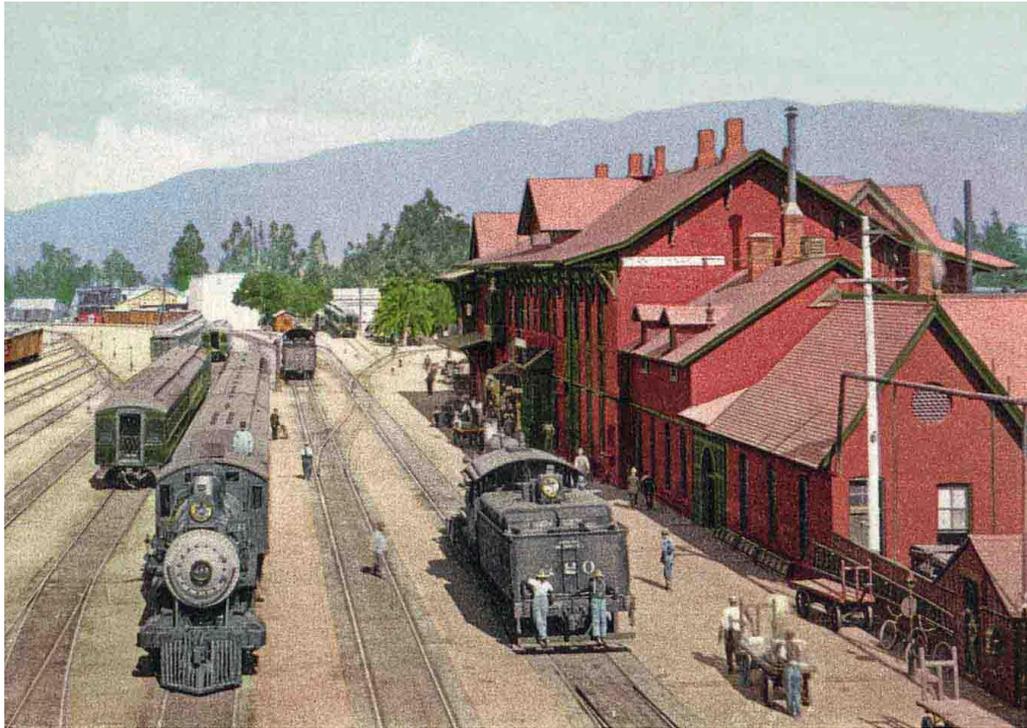
Thousands of people were first introduced to Southern California by the Kite Track tour and as a result, many chose to stay on and become part of the California dream. The tour was a major benefit to the cities along the route as visitors disembarked and took side trips through the towns and marveled at the diverse landscapes.

The Loop in the San Bernardino Valley had some of the most unique sights on the tour. Riders from the eastern states were amazed by the sight of oranges growing in the shadows of 10,000-foot-high snow-covered mountains. Citrus packing plants stood along the tracks, busy with the task of sorting and packing the fruits for shipment all across the country.



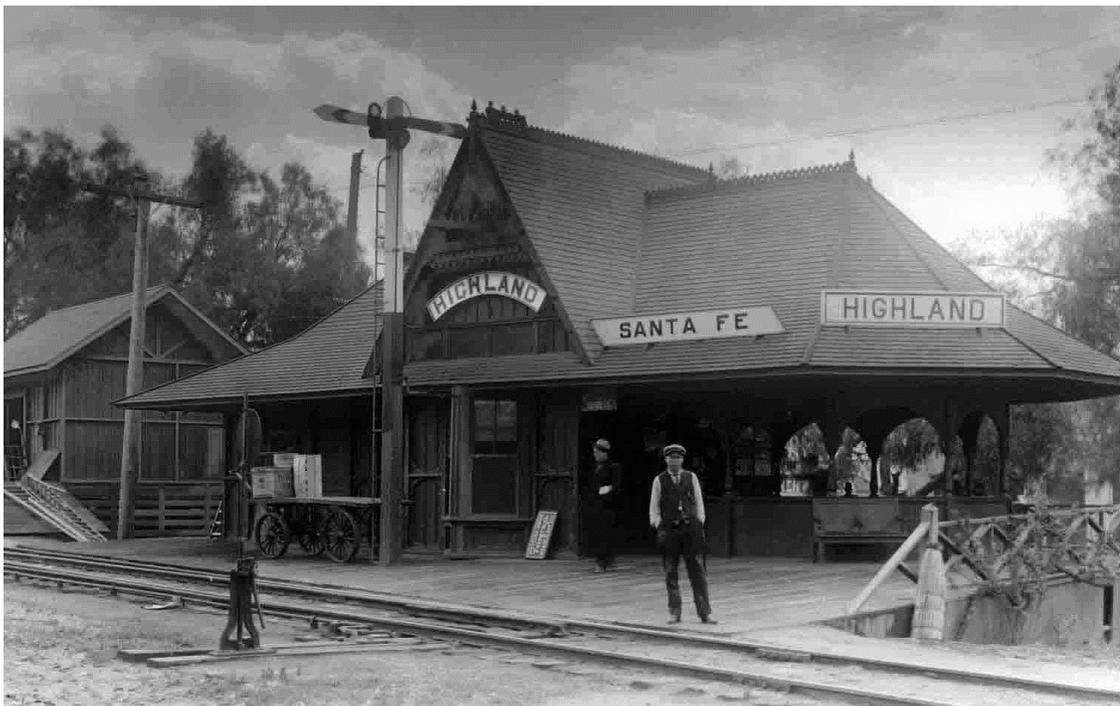
Lee Gustafson Collection
Beautifully illustrated materials like this brochure and timetable were part of the Santa Fe’s successful promotion of the Kite excursions

The architecture of many of the depots along the Loop was diverse and unique to the area. The depot at East Highlands was built from river rocks gathered locally by farmers and the station at Patton was a stately brick structure styled after the huge state asylum nearby.



From the collection of Mark Landis

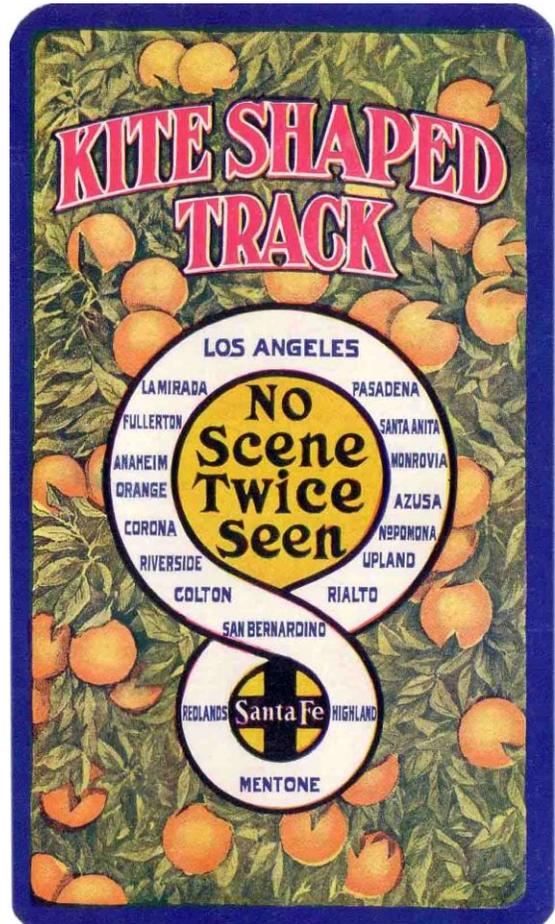
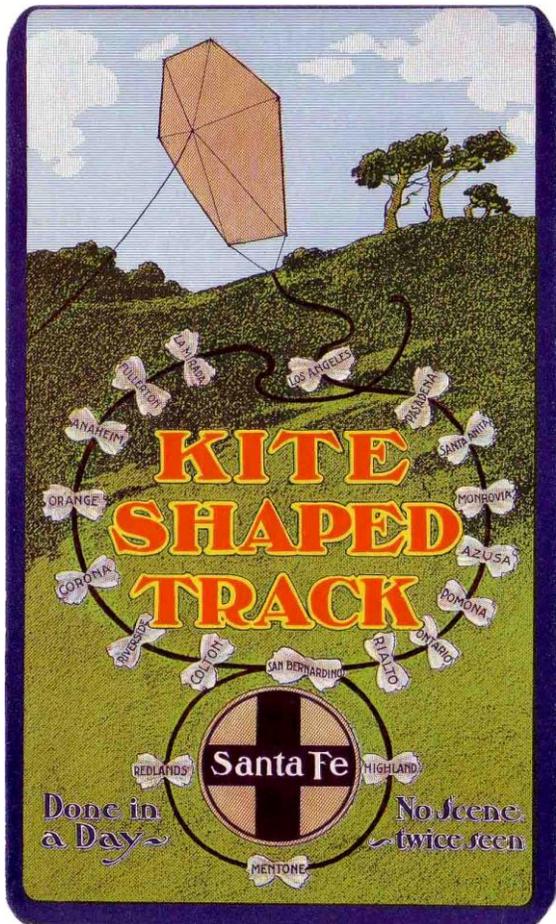
The old Santa Fe depot at San Bernardino was built in 1883, and served as the center of the Kite route. The old depot burned in 1916 and the current depot was built as the replacement in 1918.



From the archives of the A.K. Smiley Public Library

The Highland depot circa 1910, with its high-peaked roof and gingerbread trim was one of the unique sights of the eastern “Loop” of the Kite-Shaped Track excursion

At the north end of the Loop, riders could get off at the Arrowhead station and take a short buggy trip up to the beautiful Arrowhead Springs Resort at the foot of the San Bernardino Mountains. In San Bernardino, the huge rail yard and crowded engine shops presented riders with a view of the city bustling with commerce and growth.



Lee Gustafson Collection

These colorful wallet-sized timetables are typical of the eye-catching advertisements for the Kite route

The cities of Redlands and Riverside were showcase attractions on the Kite excursions. In a brochure for the Kite-Shaped Track, the Santa Fe gives a lofty description of Riverside and Redlands:

The hotel accommodations at Riverside and at Redlands are excellent, and these two places will be found to hold varied charms that can not be realized in the hasty trip of a day. At both places, there are many beautiful and attractive homes, surrounded by parks and gardens not excelled in the world; there are clubs and recreation grounds and a highly refined society.

As trolley lines extended eastward and roads were improved, the popularity of the Kite-Shaped Track waned. The Kite excursions ended around the beginning of World War I. In 1956, the loop was broken, and today only a few miles of track remain between San Bernardino and Redlands.

Southern California's phenomenal growth had been helped at least in part by the beautifully promoted Kite-Track excursions. Some of the towns along the route have grown into the region's most prosperous cities and many of the striking sights of the Kite excursions still exist today.

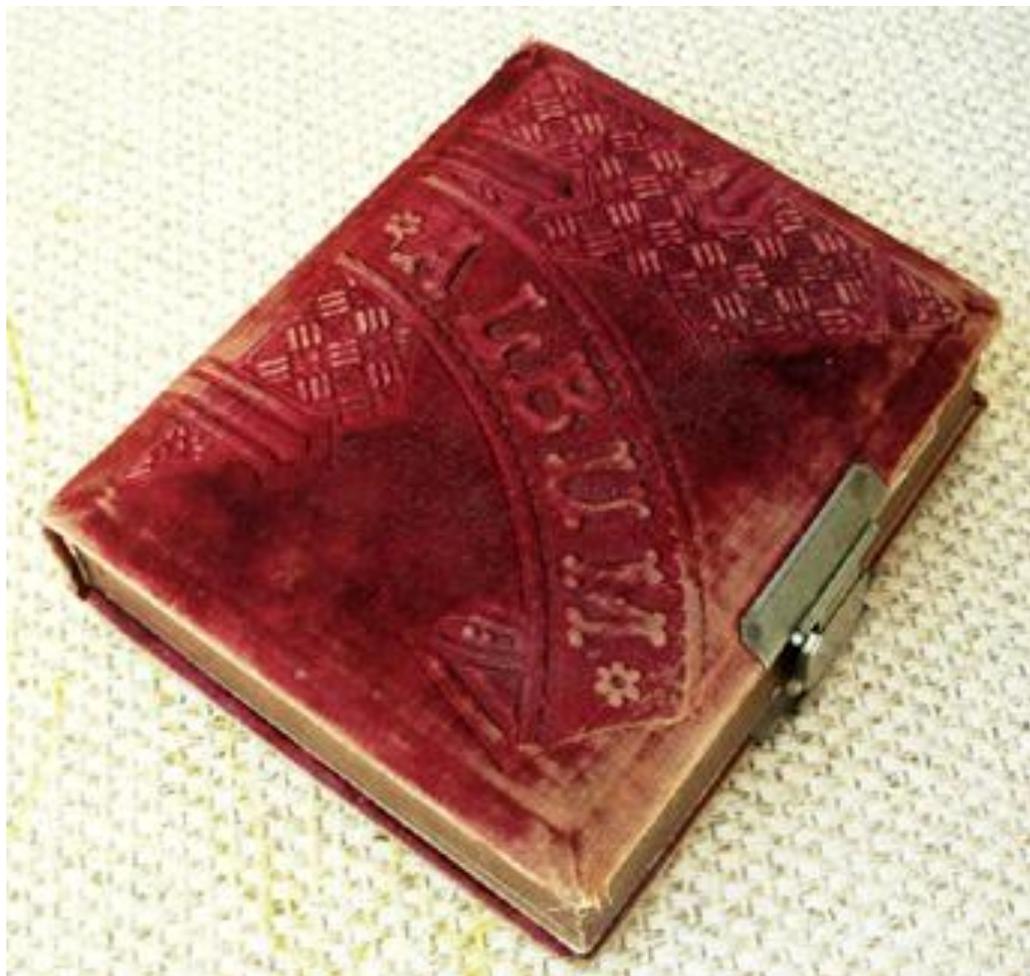
LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

Beall Album

A photograph album came up for bid on Ebay, and the description said that although there were no names on the photographs, one or more had a San Bernardino photographer's name printed on the mount. We took a chance and won the bid. It turns out that three of the photographs were by San Bernardino photographer Conaway (1894-1900), however one was a duplicate and another was of a baby. It is possible we will identify the family, but even if we do not, it is still nice to have examples of this photographer's work. We do have some smaller photos by him, but these will be the first cabinet-sized photos with the Conaway mount.

Contrary to the Ebay description, four of the photographs are identified. Lee S. and Della Beall of Fresno are named, as well as Lee's brother, James. They were important pioneers in Fresno County, and Lee was a Justice of the Peace, and thus is correctly identified as Judge Beall.

The album is approximately 8" x 10-1/2" x 3-1/2". There are 12 pages of fairly thick cardboard with pre-cut space sized to insert 24 cabinet cards (roughly 4-1/4" x 6-1/2"), and three pages for 24 *carte de visite* photos.



Judge Lee S. and Della Beall's photograph album



Conaway photograph. Unidentified couple. Probably was taken in the mid to late 1890s.

The following two pictures from the album were taken by photographers in the Los Angeles area, but some San Bernardino residents did frequent their studios.



Unidentified photographs. Picture on the left is by Golsh, Plaza Printing Gallery. On the right is a photo by photographer Wesner.

Photographer G. A. Neth

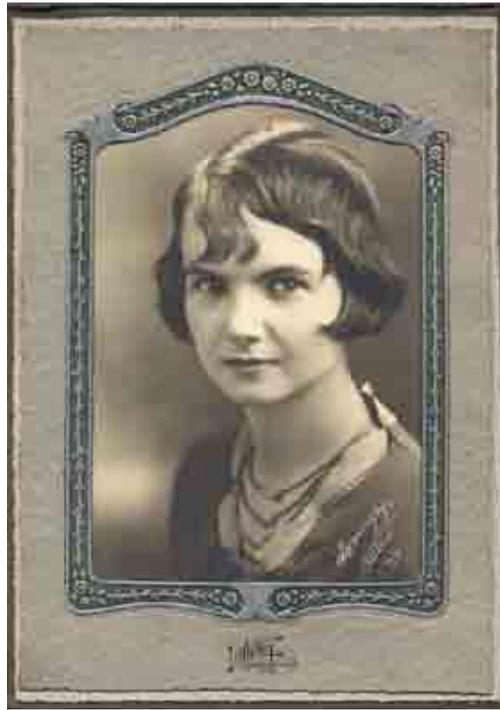
President Shaw purchased the following cabinet card photo because it was taken by a San Bernardino photographer. We are trying to get examples of the work of all early San Bernardino photographers and this is one we did not have. Neth is on the Mary L. Lewis list of photographers from which we have been working. Based on the Lewis list, Neth was active only in the year 1900. We would like to have photos of known people or of street scenes, but in their absence we obtain what is available.



Unidentified children. Photo by photographer G. A. Neth

Helen Probst Garver Collection

Recently the University of Loma Linda fell heir to some memorabilia, mostly family photos, of two San Bernardino residents. One of the university employees felt that it would be a shame to throw away the photographs, so she donated them to our Society. The picture below is of Helen Probst about the time she got married.



Helen Probst 1929. Photographer Littlefield

Helen married Del Garver and they ran a photographic supply house on E Street just above Marshall Boulevard. George Webster's two-story building that sat at the northwest corner of Marshall and E can be seen on the left.



The Garver photo supply house on E Street

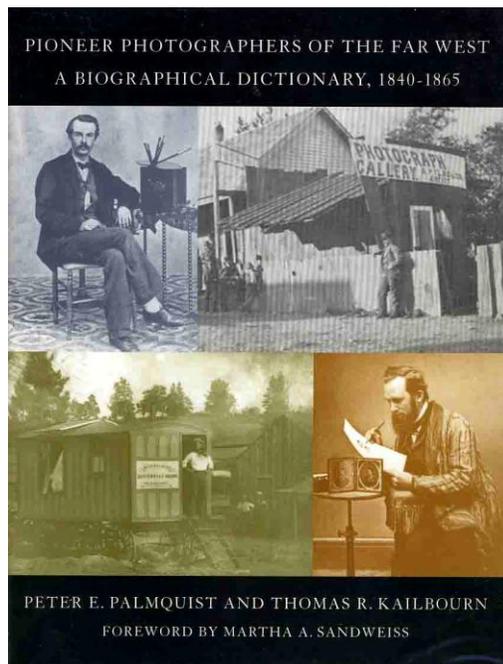
One of the unusual photographs (shown below) is of a man known professionally as Lock Martin, Jr. He lived from 1916 to 1959 and was 7'7" tall. He was on television quite a bit during the 1950s and was called "The Gentle Giant." Martin was a public relations cowboy for both Knott's Berry Farm and Arden Dairy. Here he is dressed in his cowboy costume, and the name "Arden" is on his tie. He is standing next to Helen, who, even in high heels, barely clears his waist.



Helen with Lock Martin, Jr.

Pioneer Photographers biographical dictionary

Readers of the Library News will recognize this book by Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: A Biographical Dictionary, 1840-1865*. This is a most important work for those who would deal in pre-1865 photographs, which we are interested in doing. President Steve Shaw donated the book, which is about 9" x 11-1/2", and 2 inches thick. A heavy tome. There are not many San Bernardino photographers included because of the 1865 cut-off date, but it is an important reference nevertheless. This is a welcome addition to our library. Thank you, Steve.



Book of pioneer photographers

Saving The Past For The Future Since 1888