



THE HOMESTEAD BLOG

CREATING ADVOCATES FOR HISTORY THROUGH THE STORIES OF GREATER LOS ANGELES.



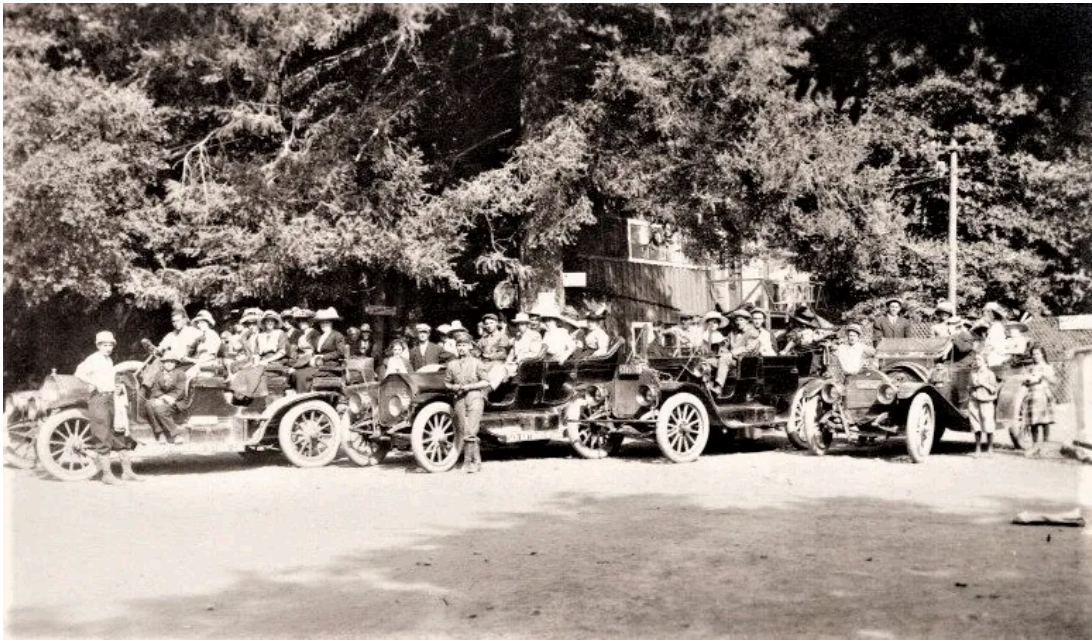
A(r)t Our Leisure: A Donation of Camp Baldy Real Photo Postcards Purchased by Artist Albert Clinton Conner, August 1920

BY HOMESTEADMUSEUM | AUGUST 27, 2022

by Paul R. Spitzzeri

Along with the Arroyo Seco, Big Santa Anita Canyon and San Gabriel Canyon, one of the most popular and picturesque locales in our local mountains is San Antonio Canyon above Claremont and Upland where Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties meet. Near the largest peak in the San Gabriels, Mount San Antonio (better known as Baldy because of its smooth summit) and not far from Icehouse Canyon, where F.P.F. Temple built a sawmill in the 1870s, was Camp Baldy.

In 1906, Charles Baynham established a resort that, three years later, was acquired by the San Antonio Water Company, which renamed the establishment **Camp Baldy**. For many years, the official photographer there was **Daniel P. Alexander**, who, along with Ernest B. Gray, left a great portfolio of images highlighting the natural beauty of our mountains, as well as the resort.



We were fortunate this week to receive a donation of 9 real photo postcards issued by Alexander of the camp and its environs from Jill Hilts, whose great-great grandfather, Albert Clinton Conner, purchased the set when staying there in August 1920 and then mailed three of them home to his wife Viola. This post, while sharing six of the nine images showing the camp and its beautiful scenery, largely focuses on Conner, a musician, teacher and band leader who was also one of greater Los Angeles' best-known landscape painters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As to the photos, they include the hotel and restroom, with Conner writing his wife "this is where we eat & they sure know how to feed us;" a row of white canvas tents stretched out on simply wood frames with him noting "this is the street on which I am now living;" another shot of a "Tent Street;" a "Greeting from Camp Baldy" involving several of the "Auto Stages at Camp" that ferried guests to and from the flatlands to the resort; and a pair of views of the crystalline stream running through thick groves of trees and between boulders and rocks of many sizes.

Dependable Furniture at a Fair Price.



Thanksgiving Proclamation

The president has proclaimed that next Thursday shall be the day set apart for giving thanks and partaking of the usual Thanksgiving dinner.

This is the day of all days when the spirit of hospitality is most in evidence. It is the day that we are all desirous of having the family board well provided with the festive turkey and the many accessories so necessary for correct table service. We all wish to have everything in keeping with the occasion—the furniture, the carpets, the draperies must look their very best.

In our show window we have arranged a dining room setting which may serve to give you a helpful hint regarding the preparation of your dining room.

We are here showing an old Colonial set in the genuine mahogany. It is plain and simple but rich and effective.

In this connection we wish to also call attention to a very creditable oil painting showing the Grand Canyon of Colorado which is also on display in this window. It is the work of Mr. A. C. Conner.

• 439 •
• 441 •
• 443 •
South
Spring
Street.

Our Store Will Be Closed All Day Thanksgiving Day

Niles Pease
Furniture Co.

LOS
ANGELES
CAL.

Los Angeles Herald, 26 November 1905.

One of these latter shows some folks on a rough wood bridge crossing the watercourse, while the other three include a duplicate of the hotel, a shot of a fountain and flume already featured on this blog, and a photo of a divided stream. The half-dozen examples shown here definitely

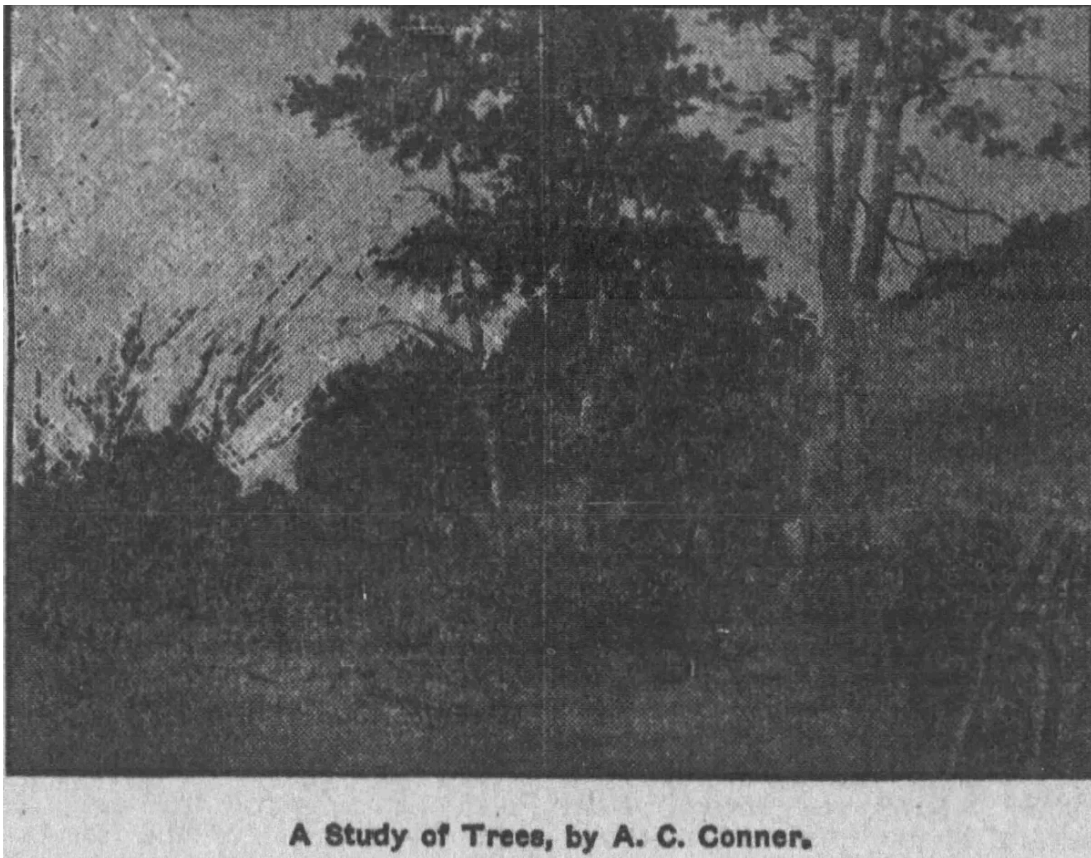
provide an excellent portfolio of Alexander's work and of the beauty that was readily in evidence at Camp Baldy just over a century ago.

Conner was born in September 1848 in Fountain City, Indiana, in the eastern part of the state near the Ohio border, but he spent much of this first forty or so years to the south in Richmond, which is directly between Dayton and Indianapolis. As a young man, he was a carpenter and then a pattern maker for his profession, but was always interested in drawing and painting, especially landscapes, though he also did portraits.



Yet, the multi-talented Conner also was an excellent musician, playing and teaching piano and violin, and serving as a bandleader. But, he and several other Richmond artists, including his younger brother Charles, formed the Rambler's Sketch Club in 1881 and this evolved into the Richmond Art Association.

In fall 1887, Conner, his wife Viola Davis and their five children made the move to Los Angeles, perhaps for health reasons, as so many people did, though it was also the peak of the great Boom of the Eighties that brought hordes of new residents to the region from all over the country.



Los Angeles Times, 11 March 1906.

Whatever the situation, Conner was best known as a music teacher and, having settled in the Los Angeles neighborhood of East Los Angeles, now Lincoln Heights, led the East Side Orchestra. He, however, had an art studio at his residence and began to gain notice for his work not long after settling in the Angel City.

It was in the first decade of the 20th century, however, that he became better known as a painter than as a musician, bandleader and teacher. For example, in 1905, he was among a group of artists featured in a show at the Ruskin Art Club where Conner's "Duarte Oaks" was given favorable notice.



Later that year, his large-scale representation of the Grand Canyon was displayed at the Niles Pease Furniture Company and then shown at the local headquarters of the Southern Pacific Railroad. It was later said that a painting of the Grand Canyon, considered his masterpiece and likely the same work, was long shown at the Chicago station of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad.

In March 1906, the first art critic to write for the *Los Angeles Times*, Antony E. Anderson, in his "Art and Artists" column, devoted significant space for

a detailed discussion of Conner and his work. Anderson noted that the Ruskin show led visitors, impressed by the artist's work and "its truth, its sincerity and simplicity," to ask about Conner. The critic continued:

Those who inquired soon found out that he was a painter, no longer young in years, who throughout a busy career as a teacher of the violin and piano, had used his scanty spare hours in sketching the charming California landscape that greeted him on every side as he journeyed to his pupils . . . The inquirers perhaps found out, too, that he loves the paint brush much more than he does the violin bow and the piano pedal, and that a high sense of duty alone has kept him from handling it for twenty hours out of the twenty-four.

Anderson was allowed to peruse the painter's sketchbook of oils and pronounced that the contents "show a firm, assured technique that gives never a hint of the amateur or the dilettante." They were sketches or nature studies, because "Mr. Conner has not yet found the time to paint pictures in the usual sense," but, when such time was available, "then—well, then he will paint!"

The Painters' Club.

A number of the painters of Los Angeles have formed an association for mutual betterment in their craft and for good-fellowship. They will meet every fortnight, and their meetings are to be the occasion of discussions on every topic that may be of practical interest to the painter in oils or water colors. Each member of the club will bring a sketch, study or picture to every meeting, and all the other members will play the parts of critics, sitting on it, tearing it to pieces and playing football with it—metaphorically speaking, of course, and of course always in a friendly spirit.

There can be no doubt that such an organization as the Painters' Club has long been needed in our midst. Many artists of the town are utter strangers to one another, though they may have sent pictures to the same exhibitions and lived across the street from each other for years. This is sad, but true—and it shouldn't be.

The Painters' Club intends to change all this. It means to show the scoffers that there is a real spirit of fraternity among painters, notwithstanding the hue and cry of jealousy, and in spite of the fact that they have hitherto been too shy to exchange smiles across the street.

In fact, smiles have already been exchanged, and hands have even been heartily shaken, and the Painters' Club has been formed. Big painters and little ones are to be in the club, those who have "arrived," and those who are on the way, and those who have more recently taken up their brushes with the fell and full determination of learning to paint.

Some day the Painters' Club may hold an exhibition of its own—but it will not be in April, and it may not be in December—and it certainly will never be in a spirit of opposition to other clubs who want to have exhibitions. The Painters' Club will be its own jury, however, and only members of the club will be given a show in its exhibits—if there are any.

The present membership of the Painters' Club is as follows: Hanson Puthuff, Carl Oscar Borg, David Dunn, William Swift Daniell, Frank Conner, A. C. Conner, George T. Winterburn, Frank Elwin Evans, Antony E. Anderson, Frank R. Liddell and

William H. Cole. The president of the club is A. C. Conner.

Times, 25 March 1906.

As Anderson went into some detail concerning the work, he observed “they had all the qualities of [the] most excellent pictures of the naturalistic school, save that Mr. Conner had not taken thought for composition.” After noting the substantial exhibitions of the Richmond association, the critic noted that Los Angeles was seven times larger and “many of our people have education and refinement, and not a few have money,” but there was no similar organization, which, he concluded, was badly needed.

Just two weeks later, however, Anderson’s call was answered as he reported that “a number of the painters of Los Angeles have formed an association for mutual betterment in their craft and for good-fellowship.” The Painters’ Club, as it was denoted, was to meet every two weeks with members bringing pictures, sketches or studies for others to critique, but it was also intended to show that, rather than “the hue and cry of jealousy,” the organization would “show the scoffers that there is a real spirit of fraternity among painters.”

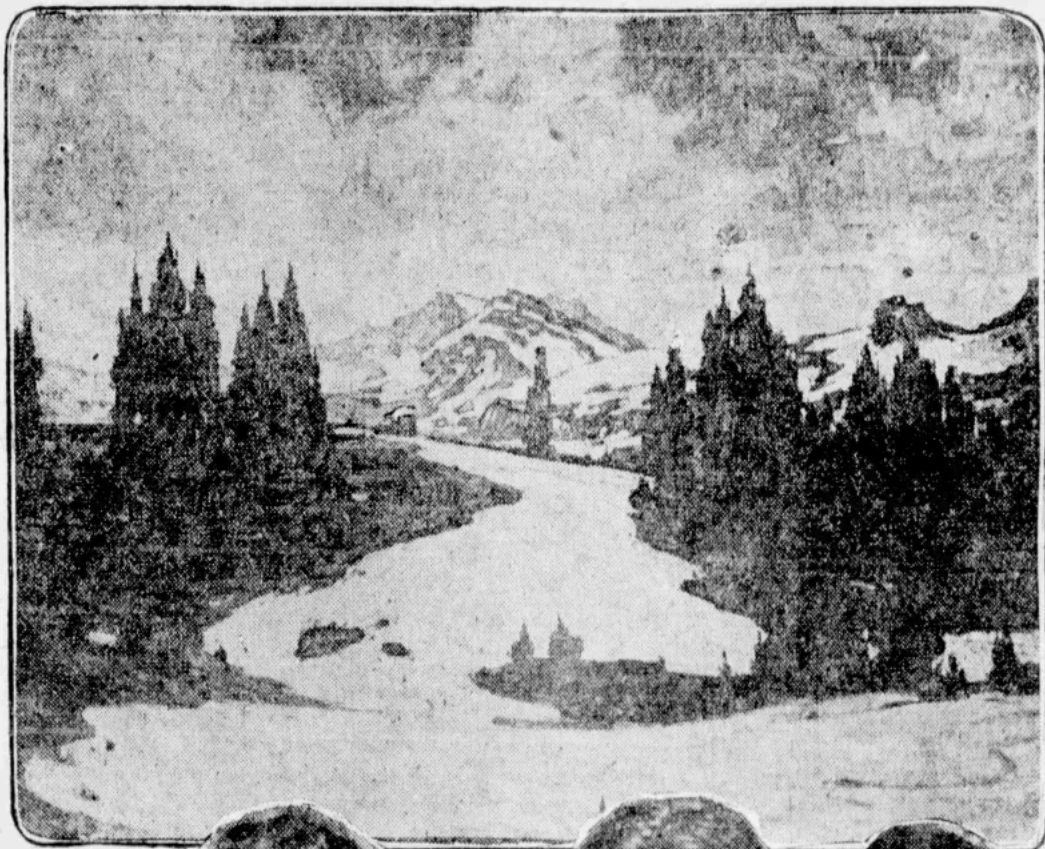


It was anticipated that an exhibition would be held in the not-too-distant future with only members’ works shown and a jury from its ranks to weigh in on the quality of the pieces. Among its inaugural members were Carl Oscar Borg, Conner and another brother Frank, Hanson Puthuff,

gallery owner William Swift Daniell, and Anderson, who was secretary and treasurer while Conner became president.

The establishment of the club was another landmark in the gradual development of the arts in Los Angeles, which was growing by leaps and bounds during the first years of the century, as music, drama and the visual arts garnered more attention. For the latter, there were more galleries, the Otis Art Institute and, soon, the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, and more, to demonstrate how much was changing in the Angel City's art scene.

ART EXHIBIT WORTH WHILE



Below (Left to Right)—A. C. Conner, Honorary President; William Wendt, President; Benjamin Brown; C. P. Austin, Secretary; Jack Smith, Second Vice-President. Upper—Painting "Lingering Snow," by William Wendt

Los Angeles Express, 11 October 1913.

In January 1907, an exhibition of the Painters' Club was held at the Ford, Smith and Little Gallery and among the ten artists whose work was shown were Conner, Borg, Charles P. Austin and stage actor Hobart Bosworth, who specialized in desert scenes and who went on to be one of the early big stars in the motion picture industry when it debuted locally two years later. Shortly afterward, Conner held his own solo exhibit at his East Los Angeles (Lincoln Heights) residence, not long before he moved to Manhattan Beach, where he had a house and studio.

In subsequent years, with the regular attention paid by Anderson in his column, Conner and The Painters' Club continued exhibitions with other well-known artists like William Wendt, Franz Bischoff, Elmer and Marion Wachtel, Benjamin Brown, J. Bond Francisco, and Louise Pinkney. By 1910, it was decided to merge the organization with the new [California Art Club](#), which extended membership to those working in other disciplines, such as sculpture, and outside of Los Angeles.



In May 1911, there was a reunion of the Ramblers Sketch Club from Richmond, save Conner's brother, who died several years earlier, and Anderson noted that "they rented a bungalow at Manhattan Beach, and every day sallied forth to sketch together, as they used to do thirty years ago." One of their favored spots "was the beach and hills two miles

beyond Port Los Angeles," which sounds like the end of San Pedro or elsewhere on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, while other jaunts included Monrovia, Santa Monica, Topanga Canyon and north to Sespe and Santa Ynez. Conner told his artist pals that the folks back home "wouldn't believe that we travel twenty-seven miles to sketch, and return on the same day," emphasizing the difference between California and Indiana.

Anderson featured Conner's work again that September and lauded the 62-year old's paintings as "well considered, faithful studies of nature in her quiet every-day moods by one who loves her more than passing well . . . done with a fine simplicity that gives charm to every canvas." His move to the coast means that there were, obviously, more subjects relating to the sea, coves and other locales near Manhattan Beach, though Conner "has not forgotten the hills and the mountains, and all the colorful valley vistas." Recent works shown at a club his wife belonged to included a view of Mt. Wilson from Duarte, the Monrovia Canyon Road, and a springtime scene at Duarte.

Royar Gallery Presents Interesting Work by Numerous Artists, Many of Whom Are New as Contributors of Sketches

By Alma May Cook

Just where the dividing line between a sketch and a picture comes is a question that is being asked by almost every person who visits the thumb box exhibition in the Royar gallery—and artists are asking it quite as much as the layman, for it is a much mooted question.

There are small canvases in this exhibition that have all the finish of a larger canvas, and again you will find just a few strokes go to make a sketch. And in the end it is largely the temperament of the artist what means a sketch, for a few strokes may serve to visualize a scene for some artists, while copious ones are necessary for other artists to make any adequate use of the sketches for larger paintings.

Nearly 200 Sketches Shown

But whether it is the one method or the other, the exhibition is proving particularly interesting to the public. With nearly 200 sketches, all small in size, the problem of the hanging has been well met and the sketches show off to their best advantage, despite the fact that a judicious selection would have been just as repre-

sented. The artist's work, and a North sea net-mending scene.

New Artists Work Seen

Ward Winchell is among the new exhibitors who has three sketches which should prove a successful introduction. W. V. Cahill, recently from New York, is making his local debut with a charmingly poetic snow scene in the Catskills; and another winter scene, while perhaps stronger, does not have the charm of the first. Benjamin Chambers Brown, who has been among the most active of the season's exhibitors, has two or three small sketches principally in the open country of the Arroyo. His little sketches have all the charm of his larger work and these are typical of Mr. Brown at his best.

A. C. Conner has an early spring sketch that is one of the sprightliest canvases that he has shown and Charles Rogers is one of the surprises of the exhibition with his Catalina sketch, so unlike his usual pictures.


A. B. Dodge has three tiny little sketches, the marine being particularly interesting. And near by, John Donovan has two breezy studies of the sea and a moonlight landscape.

Express, 29 August 1914.

In October, Daniell's gallery featured a solo exhibition of Conner's paintings and Anderson wrote that

Albert Clinton Conner is a painter who for many years has made Southern California landscape the subject of loving and conscientious care. The scenes he depicts are the simplest bits of nature . . . intimacies that touch the heart and kindle the imagination.

These charming little pictures are the records of a true artist's daily impressions of nature . . . Conner paints because he must—and first, last and all the



time to please himself. Nevertheless, it enchants him to know that you are pleased, too, for in him dwells the eternal child, even though he is affectionately known to many of his fellow painters as Papa Conner.

In October 1913, Conner was part of a group of artists affiliated with the California Art Club who exhibited works at the Blanchard Gallery in downtown Los Angeles and he was pictured, as honorary president of the organization, with Austin (secretary), Brown (vice-president), Wendt (president) and Jack Smith (second vice-president.)



One of the artist's late contributions to shows was in late August 1914 when Conner exhibited at the Royar Gallery. The *Los Angeles Express'* Alma May Cook wrote, "A.C. Conner has an early spring sketch that is one of the sprightliest canvasses that he has shown," but his output appears to have slowed considerably after that period.

He did, however, take a very active role in the government of Manhattan Beach, which incorporated in 1912, as he became its first city treasurer and retained that role into the 1920s, while his wife was a long-time

librarian in the city. When Conner died of a stroke at age 80 in April 1929, the *Times* noted that he was “widely known as a painter of western scenes until his advancing age compelled him to abandon his art.”



The Manhattan Beach news notes of the *Times*, 29 August 1920, just happened to note that city treasurer was at Camp Baldy “enjoying a few days’ vacation,” during which he purchased the nine donated Alexander real photo postcards and sent three of them to his wife, Viola.

The obituary recorded that his Grand Canyon painting, displayed in Chicago as noted above, “has been pronounced one of the finest pictures of its kind ever put on canvas.” He left his widow, who lived to be in her mid-90s, two sons and three daughters. The City of Manhattan Beach has [recognized Conner’s contributions](#) to its founding as an artist and treasurer, while his descendants have a [website devoted to his life and work](#).

The Homestead is grateful for Jill’s donation both because of the subject matter of Camp Baldy and its picturesque setting of natural beauty, as well as the connection to Conner, who was enamored with that scenery

as he was with much else in our area during his years as a prominent landscape painter.

POSTED IN BIOGRAPHIES, OUTDOORS, PLACES & COMMUNITIES • TAGGED A.C. CONNER GRAND CANYON PAINTING CHICAGO, A.C. CONNER PAINTER LOS ANGELES MANHATTAN BEACH, ALBERT CLINTON CONNER ARTIST LOS ANGELES MANHATTAN BEACH, ALMA MAY COOK LOS ANGELES EXPRESS HISTORY, ANTONY E. ANDERSON ART CRITIC ARTIST LOS ANGELES HISTORY, ARTISTS LINCOLN HEIGHTS LOS ANGELES 1900S, ARTISTS LOS ANGELES HISTORY EARLY 20TH CENTURY, AT OUR LEISURE, BENJAMIN BROWN PAINTER LOS ANGELES HISTORY, BLANCHARD ART GALLERY LOS ANGELES HISTORY, CALIFORNIA ART CLUB HISTORY LOS ANGELES, CAMP BALDY HISTORY 1910S, CARL OSCAR BORG PAINTER LOS ANGELES HISTORY, CHARLES P. AUSTIN PAINTER LOS ANGELES HISTORY, CURATED POSTS SUMMERTIME, DANIEL P. ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHER CAMP BALDY, ELMER WACHTEL LOS ANGELES PAINTER HISTORY, FORD SMITH AND LITTLE GALLERY LOS ANGELES 1900S HISTORY, FRANZ BISCHOFF LOS ANGELES PAINTER HISTORY, HOBART BOSWORTH ACTOR PAINTER LOS ANGELES HISTORY, J. BOND FRANCISCO LOS ANGELES PAINTER HISTORY, LANDSCAPE PAINTERS LOS ANGELES HISTORY, LOS ANGELES EXPRESS HISTORY 1913, LOS ANGELES HERALD HISTORY 1905, LOS ANGELES TIMES HISTORY 1906, LOS ANGELES TIMES HISTORY 1920, LOUISE PINKNEY LOS ANGELES PAINTER HISTORY, MANHATTAN BEACH CALIFORNIA HISTORY CONNER, MARION WACHTEL PAINTER LOS ANGELES HISTORY, NILES PEASE FURNITURE COMPANY LOS ANGELES HISTORY, PAUL R. SPITZZERI, PHOTOS CAMP BALDY 1910S HISTORY, RAMBLERS SKETCH CLUB RICHMOND INDIANA HISTORY, RICHMOND INDIANA ART ASSOCIATION HISTORY, ROYAR ART GALLERY LOS ANGELES HISTORY, RUSKIN ART CLUB LOS ANGELES HISTORY, SAN ANTONIO CANYON HISTORY CAMPS RESORTS, THE PAINTERS' CLUB LOS ANGELES 1900S HISTORY, WILLIAM SWIFT DANIELL ART GALLERY LOS ANGELES HISTORY, WILLIAM WENDT PAINTER LOS ANGELES HISTORY

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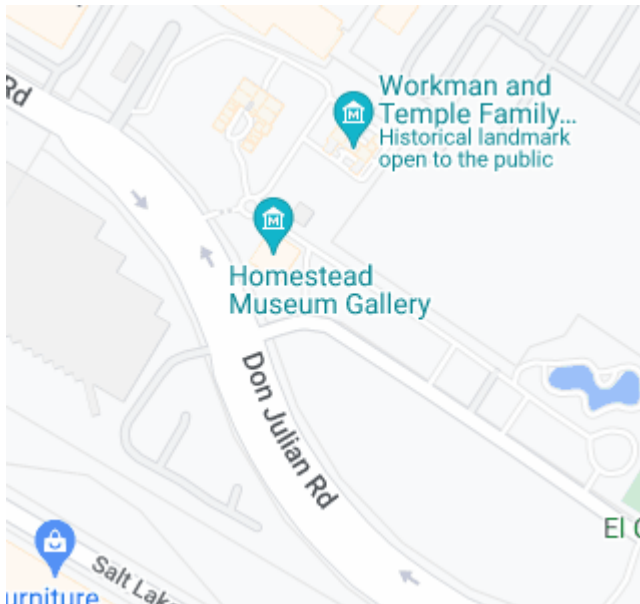
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