

## Photographers of the San Gorgonio Pass

One of the earliest photographers we can account for in Banning was Hugh W. Allen. His stamp is printed on several of the early photographic postcards we have in the library's photograph collection. We were unable to determine the exact location of his studio but Mr. Allen was evidently one of the principal photographers in early Banning, responsible for several important photographs taken of the Father Hahn funeral and burial at the St. Boniface Indian/Industrial School in 1916. The photographs are historically significant because of the setting of the photographs and the individuals captured in the photographs. Prominent Banning and Morongo Reservation leaders are participating in the ceremonies.

Leonard McCulloh is the most prolific photographer associated with the Pass. Often called the "Ansel Adams of Banning", like Adams, the majority of McCulloh's photographs were black and white. Leonard McCulloh was born in 1915 and lived in Banning for 57 years, arriving in town from Long Beach, California, about 1940. His interest in photography began at a college newspaper in Long Beach. He credited his success in photography to "picking it up in books, practice and trial and error."

McCulloh began his photography career when he was about 25 years old and established his studio at 660 W. Ramsey Street. In the first decade of his store he mainly did portrait and commercial photography. He married his wife, Barbara, in 1947. They expanded their business in 1954, by building a new photography studio, and used the old studio as a store to sell cameras and photography supplies.

McCulloh provided photographs for the Banning Record Gazette, and both Banning and Beaumont High School annual yearbooks. He also taught photography for a few years at Mt. San Jacinto College. It would be difficult to find many Pass area residents during his years in Banning who did not have family or business photographs made by Leonard McCulloh.

Mr. McCulloh remained in Banning until his death in 1995. His wife, Barbara McCulloh is currently a resident of Whittier, California.

Another important Pass photographer was Glen Miller. Miller's studio was originally located at 61 S. Second Street, and later at 49 N. San Gorgonio Avenue. The Banning Public Library is in possession of an important aerial photograph taken by Mr. Miller of downtown Banning in 1951, prior to the construction of the I-10 freeway. The photograph was donated to the library by Patrick (Corky) and Laura Irwin.

According to Banning native, Bill Evans, Glen Miller sold his photography equipment to photographer Bruce Lane, who continued with his own studio, Lane Studios, at 1035 W. Ramsey Street. A Banning High School graduate, Bruce Lane opened the studio in about 1962, specializing in weddings and portraits. Lane was a graduate of Riverside City College and attended Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California. Mr. Lane later moved his studio to 34 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

Bruce Lane passed away in 1977, at the age of 39, and his photography studio was re-opened the next year under the name, Studio Art, owned by Art Stockdale. The photography business remained at the same address on N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street and later became the Paul E. Meeks photography studio.

Long-time Pass resident, Alta May Rutherford, was a free-lance photographer and writer who contributed newspaper columns to the Record Gazette, The Press Enterprise and the San Bernardino Sun, in addition to several magazines. Mrs. Rutherford was born in Portland, Oregon and came to the Pass area in her teens. Along with her photographic talents she contributed to the community in numerous ways. She was a member of the Edward Dean Museum, the Gilman Ranch Hands, the Playhouse Bowl Association, and the Banning and Beaumont Woman's clubs. Alta May Rutherford was also the organist for several Pass area churches. She remained in the Pass for 60 years and until her passing in 1989, continued to share her time, energy and photographs with the community. Many of her newspaper columns and photographs are available in the Banning Public Library Local History Collection.

The San Geronio Pass owes an enormous debt of gratitude to these pioneer photographers. Their lenses captured the history of the Pass in ways our words could never approach. Who are the new Allens, Millers, McCullohs, and Rutherfords among us who can document our history through their images? The photographs we take today may not seem historic to us, but years from now they will be. Please document your photographs with names and dates! Today's history should be treated with equal respect and preserved accordingly for future generations of the San Geronio Pass.

Many of Hugh Allen's, Glen Miller's, and Leonard McCulloh's photographs can now be accessed online. Search under the **Online Archive of California, Banning Library District**, or through the Banning Library District's own website under the Local History heading. The original photographs can be viewed by appointment at the library. Thanks to Virginia Mills, Todd Rutherford and Bill Evans for their contributions to this article. (Banning Record Gazette, August 5, 2011, by Bill Bell)

**Photograph Captions for Article:**

#1 –“ Leonard McCulloh in action in 1952.”

#2 – “Aerial photograph of downtown Banning taken by Glen Miller in 1951.”