



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with
Bertrand Graham Cozens, 1892-1980

May 18, 1961

This interview was conducted by: Edgar F. Hastings

COZENS, BERTRAND GRAHAM

Interviewed at his residence in Encinitas, California, on May 18, 1961, by Edgar F. Hastings for the San Diego Historical Society.

Note: Such extraneous matter as the interviewer's comments and questions and material of no local interest, etc., has been omitted. The complete interview is on Dictaphone Belt No. 156.

My grandparents on my father's side came to California in the early days and they ended up in Stockton where my father Thomas W. Cozens was born in 1863. I'm not sure but I think my grandparents were born in England. Father went to school in Stockton and grew up there. When he was about nineteen years old he came down alone to Encinitas where he had an older brother, Billy Cozens, who had come down earlier to Encinitas and had taken up land and had a ranch.

My mother and her parents were born in England. Her father was named Edward Hammond. My mother, Annie Elizabeth Hammond, was thirteen years old when she came to this country with her family. They went to St. Louis first for a year and then about 1884 they came to Encinitas. Mother was living in Encinitas when she met my father.

Father worked on his brother's ranch for awhile and when he left the ranch he started in working as a clerk in Marsh's Drug Store in Encinitas. It was along about that time he met mother and they were married in Encinitas. There were just three children in our family. We were all born in Encinitas. My brother Harold is two years older than I am and then after me came my sister Kathryn Jane, who later became Mrs. Young.

My father had another brother who came to Encinitas, Charlie Cozens and he did different work around. I don't know what all he did but later on he was in the store.

After working in the drug store my father eventually bought it -- a combination drug store and grocery store -- and he ran it for years until he retired. The store is still there. Father was also in the real estate business in Encinitas for a while.

I grew up and went to grammar school in Encinitas and then I went to high school in San Diego in the old Gray Castle on the hill. The old wooden building was over across the street in back of it. I didn't go any further than high school because I went to work.

I started in first working with the Kessler Machine Company in San Diego located down at 416 Sixth Street. They had an automobile repair place and general machine work. There weren't so many cars in those days, but they also had a branch for tire repairs and I branched off into that eventually and I learned the business and specialized in the repair of tires. I worked down there about two years and then I came back to Encinitas and went to farming.

We bought a ranch out in Green Valley and planted fruit trees. We had fifty-four acres and had thirty-five to forty acres in fruit -- mostly apples. Apples did well over there because it was cold over in Green Valley. We raised grain and just the stock that we needed to farm with -- cows, chickens, pigs, etc. -- just a regular farm. We stayed on the ranch until about 1922 or 1923 and then we came back to Encinitas.

After I was at the machine shop I had married Grace Van Antwerp who had come out here from Michigan. We met in Encinitas and were married in 1915. Our oldest boy was Tom who was born in 1916, next Robert born in 1919, next Richard born in 1922 -- they were all born in San Diego. Then, Edward was born in 1926 and we finally got our daughter Ann who was born in 1931 -- they were both born in Oceanside. The children grew up in Encinitas and went to school here and in Oceanside and in San Diego. They all went further than high school.

Tom went to school in Encinitas and to the District High School in Oceanside and then to San Diego State College for three years. When World War II came along he joined the Air Corps and not very long afterwards while he was in training he was killed. Bob went to grammar school in Encinitas and then he went to Oceanside High School and then to Black Foxe Military Institute in Hollywood for a semester. He went to San Diego State College for three years and then he went into the Army Air Corps. He went over to England and flew B-24s and B-17s bombing over Germany. He came back all right from the war.

Next was Richard and by that time there was a high school here and he went to the San Dieguito High School. He went to Washington State for a couple of years. Then he went into the Air Corps and was killed while in training in this country. Edward went to school in Encinitas and to San Dieguito High School and then he went up to Cal Tech in Pasadena for one year and then he went into the Navy. He got through the war ok and came back. Edward married a girl from Mexico City -- Guadalupe Vascos del Machado.

Ann went to school here in Encinitas and then she went to San Diego State where she finished and then she went to UCLA for postgraduate work for a couple of years. She taught at Grossmont High and then went over to Europe and taught for three years in the Army Air Corps school in Germany. Now she is back and is teaching at Grossmont. She is not married. I remember when my dad was in the grocery and drugstore business here in

Encinitas. When I was a boy going to school, my mother worked in the store and my brother and I did the housework after school -- we trimmed lamps, cooked, and did the dishes.

My aunt was my first teacher. My mother's sister Belle Hammond taught school here in Encinitas. She taught in a little grammar school -- a one room school with about fifteen pupils. I was only four years old when I started to school -- I started early -- maybe mother wanted to get rid of me. Miss Reese was one of the real early teachers. Then later there was Mr. R. N. Bird who taught when we were in the eighth and ninth grades. We had two teachers at that time, and we were down in the old hotel building before they built another school. When it got too big for the one room school they had moved into the old hotel building on the corner. They had the ninth and tenth grades here then. I went to the ninth grade and then to the tenth grade in San Diego and then I quit school and went to work.

Swimming and playing at the beach was about the biggest recreational thing that we had in those days. Swimming in the surf down on Moonlight Beach -- it was just called the beach in those days. They had a little board and batten bathhouse down at the beach. It was quite an affair with a lot of different rooms -- it was all wooden. The recreational part of it had a ceiling but no walls and the rooms didn't have any ceilings -- just the walls of the room, a door, and a little bench to sit on to change clothes. I would say there were about two dozen of the little rooms. There were locks on the doors but most of them were broken.

We also did a lot of surf fishing. I went out sometimes in the boats with the commercial fishermen. They did quite a lot of fishing for lobsters here in the early days. They didn't have any big boats -- just good size rowboats -- sixteen to twenty foot rowboats. They would launch the boats through the surf and go out and put the lobster traps out around the kelp. When they got the lobsters ashore they put them in sacks and shipped them by express to Los Angeles.

We always played a lot of baseball. I was on the team and I played catcher. We played places like Oceanside, Escondido and other places that had teams in those days. I don't think Carlsbad had a team -- it wasn't very big -- but Encinitas had a team and later on there were some more teams. The older people played too and there were also school teams. We used to have Saturday night dances. We had a hall at Encinitas and we went to Oceanside and to San Marcos. We also went to Carmel Valley -- they just had a hall down there. Our music was usually a violin and guitars. We didn't use pianos much for dancing. We used to have the all night dances. We would drive out in a buggy and dance till daylight -- about five o'clock in the morning. At twelve o'clock we had a big supper that they served right there in the hall -- there were cooking facilities there. It wasn't pot-luck because you paid a dollar a couple to go to the dance and that included your supper. Sometimes they would have a turkey supper or sometimes chicken. I guess the ones putting on the dance would cook the supper and maybe the food was donated.

Another place that we used to dance a lot was over at Olivenhain at the Owls Club. I believe it is still in existence. They had a little hall at first and then the local residents of Olivenhain built quite a good sized hall. Olivenhain was settled by Germans. I understand the German people came from Chicago. There was quite a bunch of them -- maybe thirty or forty families. I think they came out here together mostly. Somebody bought that whole valley and then they divided it up for farms. They established a colony and I think it was entirely German at the start. They were very nice people. They did mostly farming -- grain and hay -- and later on beans and corn. Some of them worked into dairying.

We planted the fruit orchard in 1913 and the trees started bearing in 1916. There were trucks about that time and we marketed the fruit down in San Diego. I used to take the apples down to San Diego in what they called a screenside Dodge panel truck. We sold the apples to the wholesalers -- Leo Greenbaum, Adolph Levil, Nason and Barnes -- there was a bunch of them. The market was down in the vicinity around Sixth and J. We did pretty good on the apples -- it wouldn't be money nowadays, but it was money in those days. We had Pearmain, Pippin, Bellflower and Gravenstein apples.

We had to spray for worms. That's one thing we had to do more of here than you would up in the colder country because in the colder country the ground freezes and kills the worms off, but here they just go down below in the ground a little bit and then come right back up again.

After I left the farm and came back to Encinitas I started doing subdivision work and grading. My cousin Sam Hammond was with me then and we brought in the stock we had on the ranch and used them in our work. We had sixteen head of horses and two wheel tractors -- they weren't much good in the subdivision but we used them some and a little later we got Caterpillar tractors. The first work we did was at Seaside Gardens over near here. We graded the streets in Seaside Gardens. We did a little ditching, but mostly just grading. We did lot leveling, street and work on the roads -- we didn't do any paving. We are still in the business. We have quite a bit of modern equipment now with tractors and graders and bulldozers. We cover mostly the northern part of the county -- Oceanside, Carlsbad, Vista and around -- and just down to Del Mar. We don't do any big highway jobs but we have helped some on small roads. We take sub-contracts, etc. Besides the grading business we went into the rock and sand business. We owned five acres cut in the Olivenhain riverbed and we dug up our own sand and gravel. We didn't do any rock crushing -- just screened the gravel. When we had the business we had a power shovel -- a dragline -- and loaders and dump trucks. We sold sand and gravel all over the northern part of the county. We are out of that business completely now and we just sold the last dump truck last month. We used the trucks just for moving dirt around town recently.

The 1916 flood was just soon after we were married and we were living on a ranch out east of Cardiff on the San Elijo Slough. We were farming beans. I don't remember what the date was in January in 1916 but we had one week of steady rain and that filled up all the dams. We didn't have many dams then but everything was filled up and water was running all over the place. Then we had about a week of clear weather and then we got another full week of rain and that's what did the damage -- that second week is what broke everything up. It took nearly all the bridges out -- it washed our fields and bridges and everything down in the valley. It was too early for the crops -- we hadn't put the beans in yet for you don't plant them until spring -- but it washed the fields away. We were living just about a mile east of Cardiff and for two weeks the only way you get up from the ranch was on horseback. We had some food there on the place and we came out on horseback. They had quite a time then because they couldn't get food at the store. But in those days people were more self-supporting than they are now and they didn't have to run to the store every day like they do now and they had cows, chickens and things like that right at home.

During the rum running days I remember one time that a whole bunch of five-gallon cans floated in with the tide, or they came in some way or other, and all over town everybody tried to pick up the cans. The cans were full of some kind of alcohol -- I don't know just what it was -- I don't go for it myself so I didn't try any of it. I think maybe some ship offshore threw the cans overboard when they were being chased by the Revenuers during Prohibition. Later they probably expected to pick the cans up here, and they did get some, but I think the townspeople beat them to pretty near all of the cans.

I don't remember any particular trouble with the trains -- they were just what the trains were in the olden days and they just took their time of course, and they got there eventually. I don't belong to any lodges. I have no church affiliations. Mother's folks were Unitarians. We went to the Presbyterian church but I didn't belong to it. When I was on the farm I used to belong to the Farm Bureau, but I don't any more. I do belong to a statewide organization -- EGCA -- the Engineering and Grading Contractors Association of California.

END OF INTERVIEW
