

# ROBERT CONWAY

Robert Conway bought and lived in what is now called the Conway House. The Green Street house still has some canvas cover left on one side of the building. Hops grow on the picket fence of the front porch, and used to grow half way up the canvas side. In the winter of 1943, he was one of only three people to live in Bodie, along with fellow caretakers Martin Gianettoni and Spence Gregory.

Thomas Robert Conway was born in East Hawkesbury, Ontario, on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1875, and immigrated to the United States in 1898. He used the name for his official papers in Bodie, but was called Robert or Bob.

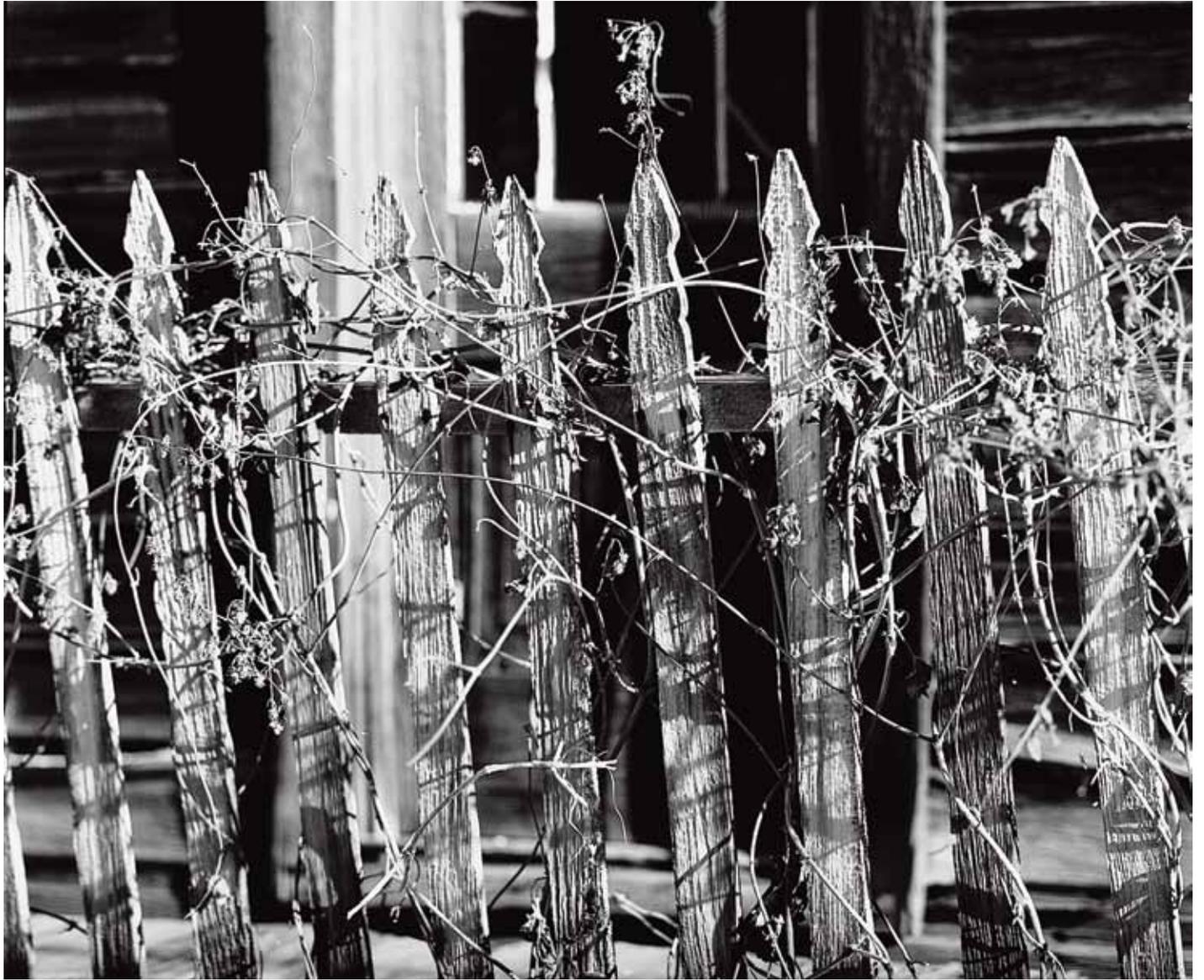


*Todd and Conway Houses*

When Bob first arrived in Bodie, he worked on his older cousin Paddy's ranch. Bob's diaries indicated he did not like ranch work. By 1899, he joined the union and worked "in cyanide" at the Standard Mill.

In 1903, Bob went back to Ontario to marry Elizabeth Ann McLaughlin on February 17<sup>th</sup>. In March, Bob and Annie Conway arrived in Bodie. They bought a house in August of 1903, from W. H. Osmun, a house painter, for five hundred dollars in gold. The house was on Green Street across from what would later become known as the Conway House, and is now called the Todd House. The Todd House collapsed in the winter of 1973-1974 and was reconstructed in 1999. In December of 1903, the *Chronicle Union* reported:

"DIED, In Bodie December 10, 1903. The infant son of Robert and Annie Conway. -Aged 10 days  
DIED, In Canada, Nov. 26. 1903, Andrew Conway, aged 70 years. Father of Robert Conway of this city.  
Mr. Conways cup of sorrow is indeed full to overflowing losing in such a short space of time his father and his child.  
We tender to both he and his wife our condolence in their sad bereavement."



*Dried Hops, Conway House*

According to Canadian records, Robert's father Andrew was actually eighty years old when he died, Andrew and his older brothers, Gregory and John emigrated from Ireland to Ontario, Canada, and were farmers as was their father Gregory.

The same 1903 *Chronicle Union* newspaper reported that John Conway, Bob Conway's older cousin, and his family were leaving Bodie for a visit to Canada. John had just bought James Sturgeon's ranch for three thousand dollars in gold and would move his family to what would be called the Conway Ranch in the spring of 1904. The ranch, over a thousand acres on the northwest side of Mono Lake below what is now called the Conway



*Conway Bedroom*

Summit, was used to raise cattle and horses. The ranch remained in the family until the late 1970s, and later was bought by Mono County.

John's older brother Patrick, known as Paddy, owned a ranch in Sweetwater, Nevada, and was a partner with Johl and Donelley. He supplied livestock for their Bodie butcher operation. John and Paddy were also from East Hawkesbury and immigrated in 1878.

John Conway ran a blacksmith and wagon maker shop on Mill Street by Boone's Corral in Bodie. After moving back to Ontario and buying a farm there, his wife Catherine died during childbirth of their second child. He sold his Ontario farm, and moved back to Bodie. He married Catherine's older sister Mary back in Ontario in 1899 while he was visiting his first son. They moved back to Bodie. John and Mary's one year old child, George Washington Conway, died

in 1901 of scarlet fever during the epidemic at the turn of the century, and is buried in Bodie. John was known as quite a dancer. He won a waltz contest in Bodie by dancing with a glass of water on his head (Kelsey). John died during the great influenza pandemic of 1918, and Patrick, who owned six thousand acres died in 1925. They made their money initially as teamsters in the freight business, and left large estates. Another pioneer in Yosemite, named John Conway came from Pennsylvania was apparently not directly related.

Robert and Annie had three children: Dorothy Claire, born on December 17th, 1904 in Bodie, Charles Harold born on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1907 in Bodie, and Mabel Margaret born on October 27th, 1911 in East Hawkesbury, Ontario.

Bob worked for the Standard Consolidated Mining Company in Bodie as a surface labourer and in the cyanide plant. In 1906, he worked in Manhattan, Nevada for six months. After moving back to Bodie, he worked



*Conway Porch*

as a machinist helper and pipe fitter until 1912. In Bodie, Bob enjoyed a good celebration as the May 20th, 1911, *Bridgeport Chronicle-Union* reported:

“Bodie, May 19.—The Tommy Miller wedding last week was the occasion for the boys who believe in having a noise with their good time. Three battalions, in charge of Colonels Dick Hitchens, Frank Dolan and Bob Conway captured the town as neatly as Madero’s insurrection took in the federals. The thirst quenching emporiums supplied joy water galore for the victors and all of them had a great time. “

In 1912, Bob worked in Calgary, Canada for several years where he did structural, concrete, and foundry work. He moved back and worked in Bodie and in the Nevada towns of Aurora, Wabuska, and Mason, and moved to Tonopah in 1920 where he worked as a blacksmith and machinist helper for several years.

An article appeared in the newspaper titled “A Farewell Surprise”, which told of a surprise party for Annie Conway and her children that was organized by Catherine Frack and Annie Miller. A luncheon was held at the Miners Union Hall which included dancing with piano and accordion music. The article stated “The party was the most enjoyable held in Bodie for a long time”, and that Annie and her children would go to Tonopah to join Bob, while Dorothy would attend the excellent high school there.

Bob and Annie moved to Los Angeles where they bought a house in 1924, and sold their Bodie house and furniture to Ella Cain on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1925. Bob worked as a pipe fitter there.

By 1927, Bob moved back to what he called “God’s country”, while Annie stayed in Los Angeles. Annie and her daughters attended a annual picnic in Long Beach for over sixty former Mono County residents. Bob worked on the Bodie roads, and as an election clerk for most elections. In 1930, Bob was living in Annie Miller’s boarding house, and by 1931 he started paying taxes on the Conway House. Family notes indicate that the Conway house was a shell with no windows when he bought it.

Annie died on September 12, 1941 in a sanitarium in Los Angeles after living with her daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Daugherty. In his later years, Bob would winter in Bridgeport, Gardnerville, and other area hotels, and moved back to Bodie when the weather improved. In 1955, Bob was admitted to a sanitarium, and died in Los Angeles at the age of 81 on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1957.

In 1967, the California Department of General Services contacted the heirs of Robert Conway regarding the transfer of their property in the Township of Bodie to the state. A Judgment of Condemnation was prepared and signed by Dorothy after an appraisal was conducted. The appraisal consisted of engineering, surveying, and inspecting. They requested permission from property owners to make the studies. The independent appraisers were hired to make an unbiased opinion of property value. Once the appraisal was completed they contacted the owners with a compensation amount. They determined that Dorothy and Harold, the living children and heirs of Thomas Robert Conway, would be compensated \$250. The Judgment in Condemnation provided that all personal property must be removed within 90 days. Dorothy was unable to return to clean the rest of Bob’s personal items from the house due to her husband’s health, but most of his property was already cleaned out when it was evident that he was not returning to the house. The current contents of the house are the items left by Bob or the family.

Thomas S. Conway employment record

1903	Bodie	surface laborer	
1904	Bodie	surface laborer	Standard
1905	Bodie	surface laborer / structure	
		Cyanide plant	
		Miner	
1906	Mantattan Nevada	miner	
1907		surface laborer	
1908	Bodie	Machinist	
1909	Bodie		
1910			



1911  
1912  
1913  
1914  
1915  
1916  
1917  
1918  
1919

Co. 4 mo.  
Co. 3 mo.  
1 mo.  
1 mo.  
1 mo.  
1 mo.

Robert Conway Family Items