

**ANDREW BERIG JACOBSEN**  
**"MR. MONTEREY COUNTY"**  
**1890 - 1955**

*(revised November 2004)*

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Jacob Berg Andreas Jacobsen was born on July 28, 1890 in Dwight, Livingston County, Illinois, a small railroad town located about 60 miles southwest of Chicago. He was the oldest of three children born to Niels Jacobsen and Mettesina Laurine Petersen, two Danish immigrants who had recently arrived in America. Jacob Berg Andreas was named partly in honor of his paternal grandfather, Jacob Berg Madsen. This was a traditional naming practice for a Danish family. The origin of the Andreas part is not known. His siblings, Marie Amalia (1892-1980) and Gustave Adolph (1895-1947), were given lofty royal names after the queen of Portugal and the king of Sweden, respectively. In later years, Jacob Berg Andreas Jacobsen changed his name to Andrew Berig Jacobsen, no doubt to appear less "titled" amongst his peers. It is not known how or when the "Berg" evolved to "Berig" in Andrew's middle name.

Mettesina died not long after Gustave was born. Sometime before her passing, the family left Illinois. They first moved to Minnesota (where Gustave was born), then to British Columbia, and finally to San Francisco. It is said that the family arrived in San Francisco when Andrew was six years old (about 1896). Because the children were so young, Niels was forced to farm them out to ranches in order for them to be properly cared for. It was a sad and difficult time for the family. Andrew grew up in San Francisco, and attended grammar school at Alvarado. Later, he attended the Polytechnic school in Oakland and took a commercial course at Heald Business College. The latter gave Andrew the business skills to work as a bookkeeper for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company for a time.

Andrew's father was a farmer by trade, and he worked as a dairyman in the city. In 1906 the Great Earthquake and fire destroyed much of San Francisco, including everything that the Jacobsen family had. It was then that Niels Jacobsen resolved to enter the plastering trade. Andrew was attending Oakland Polytechnic at the time of the earthquake. When his father established his plastering and general contracting business, Andrew left school to join him as an apprentice. For four years, Andrew worked under his father, helping to rebuild the "City That Was." In the latter part of his apprenticeship, he helped his father plaster the Palace of Fine Arts structure for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. He also assisted with the original plaster work on the Mount View Hotel in Calistoga in the 'teens.

Sometime around 1914, Andrew met Dagny Louise Bergersen. Dagny had graduated from Fabiola Training School for Nurses in Oakland in 1913, and had been working at the Southern Pacific Hospital in San Francisco for about a year. She was a native of Jolon in southern Monterey County, California. Andrew met her during a time when he frequently traveled to southern Monterey County to check on his sister, Marie. When in the Jolon area, he would hunt with the Blomquist family who were related by marriage to the Bergersens. As a couple, Andrew

and Dagny seemed like an unlikely pair. She was a straight-laced farm girl. He was a fast-paced city boy. Even Dagny's mother didn't think much of Andrew! In spite of this, Andrew and Dagny enjoyed each other's company. The two fell in love, and were married on March 27, 1915. The ceremony took place in San Francisco, and was presided over by A. H. Jensen, a Lutheran Clergyman.

In their first years together, the newlyweds lived in the upstairs section of a two-story apartment owned by Andrew's father. Niels lived in the lower section. The house was in the "Avenues" section of San Francisco, and although the arrangement wasn't perfect, it was adequate for their circumstances. Andrew was working for his father at the time, still specializing in plastering. On December 15, 1918, the cozy living arrangements were made somewhat cozier by the addition of a new member of the family; Madeline Augusta Jacobsen, Andrew and Dagny's first child. The conditions of Madeline's arrival were not ideal. It was wartime, and the influenza epidemic was raging through the region. It is said that Madeline was "almost born on the train," but that Dagny was finally able to check into St. Mary's Health before the arrival! St. Mary's wasn't the best of hospital facilities, but it was the only choice under the circumstances. Andrew was unable to be with Dagny at the time, but his brother, Gus, stepped in to give support.

In 1921, Andrew and Dagny decided to move to Los Angeles to establish a business there. On their journey southward from San Francisco, they stopped at the Monterey Peninsula. They were so enamored with the spot, that they decided to alter their plans and establish themselves there. Their decision was no doubt influenced by the proximity of Dagny's sister, Ragna, who lived in Monterey with her husband, Hubert Cairns. There was also a thriving construction industry in that area, which added to its attraction for Andrew. They settled in the little town of Pacific Grove in a house on 430 Pine Street. By 1922, Andrew had established a plastering and general contracting business in the area. The business grew rapidly, and by 1926, it was producing \$200,000 worth of general construction annually. Countless private and commercial properties were built or renovated by Andrew in these boom years. Among his projects were many elegant homes in Pebble Beach, the Golden Bough Theater in Carmel, and thirteen houses in Pacific Grove (each built by Andrew with a different theme). Of the latter, one was constructed by Andrew as a home for his own family. This house, which was built in a Pueblo style, was located at 915 Del Monte Boulevard. They moved into this house sometime in the mid-1920's. The 915 Del Monte house was one of several that Andrew built for himself in the "Beach Tract" of Pacific Grove. Another was located at 921 Ripple.

The boom years were not to last, however. Andrew had been riding a wave of success with the building boom on the Monterey Peninsula. The bubble burst when the Great Depression hit. Suddenly, Andrew found himself without much work and financially overextended. To make ends meet, they worked for a time on the old Bergersen ranch in Jolon. Andrew was not much of a farmer, and eventually they found other means of getting by. A financial boost came when Dagny sold her interest in the Jolon ranch for about \$1,000. This was big money in the Depression. Seizing on an opportunity, they invested much of this money in a local Texaco Company oil and gasoline distributorship in Monterey. Andrew maintained this distributorship for more than 23 years. Andrew also operated several service stations with his partner, Carl Cope. Later in the 1930's, Andrew added to his business enterprises by going into partnership

with Tinsley C. Fry. Their partnership was in the Padre Tire Company in Monterey, a tire and appliance business that specialized in recapping tires during World War II.

Andrew believed in an "early to bed, early to rise" philosophy. He would get up early in the morning to tend to the books of the Texaco distributorship, usually getting to work around 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. Early each evening, not long after 6:00 p.m., Andrew would go to bed like clockwork. He occasionally surprised some evening guests, when he would abruptly announce, "well, good night," and retire to bed without further adieu. His early-morning schedule freed Andrew to pursue other tasks throughout the day. Most notable of these pursuits was Andrew's rise in public office. His first step was to be elected to the board of trustees of the Pacific Grove Unified School District on September 18, 1929, eventually becoming chairman. He served on this board until July 1, 1938. He was also a member of the Exchange Club and Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce, and served as president of each (including several terms for the latter). In later years, he was also a member of the National Association of County Officials. Fraternally, he was a member of Grove Lodge #331, Free & Accepted Masons; Monterey Lodge #1285, Benevolent Protective Order of Elks; and the Knights of Pythias.

In the early 1930's, still in the heart of the Great Depression, Samuel F. B. Morse and Allen Griffin convinced Andrew (or Andy, as he was popularly known) to run for supervisor (5th District) of Monterey County. Known to his friends as "the great Dane," his popularity and strong work ethic won Andrew the vote. He was elected to the Board in 1932, and began his term of office in January, 1933. In 1934, Andrew was made chairman, which position he held until his resignation in 1955. During his record term of office, Andrew established himself as a beloved community leader, even being called "Mr. Monterey County" by some! It was said that Andrew was outstanding among supervisors in California for his visionary approach to county planning. Andrew was considered a moderate in his viewpoints, believing that change should be maintained at a reasonable pace. His moderate outlook and friendly personality caused him to be one of the most sought-after unofficial conciliators in the Monterey area. Andrew's style in resolving disputes was legendary. In one particular instance, while listening to heated arguments over a particularly contentious issue, Andrew began to wiggle his ears as he pretended to listen intently. The disputing parties were so distracted by his antics, that they all broke out laughing. Such, was his ability to lighten the mood of all concerned, even in the most serious of squabbles.

Another pastime of Andrew in the Depression was his brief thespian endeavor. Perry Newberry and Arthur Searle convinced him to co-star in a play called "Wild Oats," to be staged at the Little Theater in Carmel. Andrew enjoyed this introduction to the stage, and proceeded to act in other local plays. One of his more humorous experiences occurred in the Serra Pageant, where he participated in the play, "Rose of the Rancho." In one scene, Andrew was supposed to fall backwards after being shot off a ten-foot-high wall. To assist with the stunt, several of his "brawny plasterers" were positioned to catch Andrew in a blanket as he fell. The first night, Andrew fell right through the blanket, while on the second night he bounced a few times. On the third night, the crew was distracted by a passing girl, and neglected to spread the blanket as he fell. He landed with a thud, but survived! His acting career didn't, however. Dagny was not impressed with the acting business, and advised him, "If you want to go to Broadway, you go right ahead, all by yourself. I don't want an actor as my husband!" That ended the colorful, but brief, acting career of A. B. Jacobsen.

Andrew and Dagny raised a family of three children. The oldest, Madeline, was two years old when they moved to Pacific Grove. A sister, Lucille Adele, was born on January 22, 1923, while the family was still living on Pine Street. A brother, Neil Andrew, was born on December 15, 1930, after the family had moved to Del Monte Boulevard. All three children attended Pacific Grove schools.

In April 1949, Andrew and Dagny decided to purchase some land in San Luis Obispo County as a get-away retreat. The parcel they chose was about two miles southeast of Bryson near the Monterey County line. The property had been used as a hunting camp, with several cabins and a shallow well. It was remote and just what they were looking for to get some solitude from the burdens of public life. How they came to discover this ranch is not known. The Jacobsens were very fond of their little retreat, affectionately calling it "The Cabins." Every chance they could get was spent fixing up the place and entertaining friends there. Andrew plastered and/or grouted everything in sight, including the sidewalks down to the well and out to the oak tree where his barbecue was built. Andrew frequently invited friends from near and far to come out to be entertained at The Cabins, much to Dagny's dismay. Mr. Hayes Perkins, of Perkins Park fame in Pacific Grove, and other friends from the Peninsula frequently visited. Colorful neighbors, including "Fancy Bill" and Walter Harris, were also regulars.

As the 1950's approached, health problems began to creep up on Andrew. He had known that he had a heart ailment since the mid-1940's. At night, he would sleep sitting upright in bed to allow himself to sleep in comfort. His affliction didn't slow him down until he experienced a mild heart attack early in January of 1955. Realizing that he couldn't maintain his level of activity with the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, Andrew decided to relinquish his chairmanship. On January 3, 1955, he turned over the gavel to his successor, William Redding, after twenty-one years as chairman. Andrew continued to serve as a member of the Board, but with less responsibility, until his death.

The end came for Andrew B. Jacobsen shortly after midnight on June 6, 1955. He died of a massive heart attack at about 1:00 a.m. in the morning at his home on Del Monte Boulevard in Pacific Grove. Dagny was awakened by his distress, and was with him as he passed away. Before help could be summoned, he was gone.

A private funeral service was held for Andrew at the Little Chapel-by-the-Sea in Pacific Grove on Wednesday, June 8, 1955 and his cremated remains were buried in the family plot in section "J" of the nearby El Carmelo Cemetery on Asilomar Avenue. A bronze plaque was placed in the lawn at his grave, reading, "Andrew B. Jacobsen, Beloved Husband, 1890 - 1955."

News of Andrew's unexpected death spread quickly, and numerous news articles appeared in local papers. In his honor, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors entered the following resolution and declared a recess on the day of his death:

It is with profound sorrow that the board of supervisors of Monterey County has received the announcement of the sudden death of their distinguished colleague and beloved friend, Andrew B. Jacobsen.

He began his term of office as a supervisor January 1933. In 1935 he was elected chairman of the board, a capacity in which he served with honor and distinction until January 1955, when he requested his fellow members to elect another as chairman.

He spent a lifetime of devotion to the interests of the county and time will not claim a more inspired citizen than Andy Jacobsen. Few will know the good work he accomplished far beyond the call of duty. His accomplishments and activities are far too numerous to set forth in this resolution.

Suffice it to say that the records of the county are overflowing with deeds of his good work. There was scarcely a movement of importance throughout the county, and perhaps the state, in which he did not have an active part, and upon which he did not exert a tremendous influence.

The members of the board are too shocked by his death to do more at this time than express their deep sorrow.

They realize that his strong guiding hand and genial personality will be sorely missed.

He occupied in their hearts a place which can never be filled.

To his grieving family the board extends sincere sympathy.

They have lost a devoted husband and a loving father, whose first thought was always of them.

Similar complimentary statements were publicly offered on June 6, 1955, by California Governor Goodwin J. Knight, and the mayors of Monterey, Seaside, Carmel, and Del Rey Oaks. On June 7, 1955, a resolution was offered by Senator Fred Farr, 25th District, and passed by the California State Senate to honor in the public record Andrew's service to Monterey County.

Shortly after Andrew's death, a portrait was commissioned to honor his service to the Monterey County. On March 5, 1956, at a ceremony held in the supervisors' chambers in the Salinas Courthouse, the portrait was unveiled. The portrait, painted by Frank H. Myers, a noted Pacific Grove seascape artist, was received by the county and placed on permanent display in the courthouse. A family story relating to this portrait is often told: The artist had difficulty completing the details of Andrew's hands in the portrait because his work was commissioned after Andrew's death. The hands as finally depicted, were actually those of Andrew's son, Neil, who posed to complete the project. Four versions of the Andrew Jacobsen portrait were prepared by Myers. The three companion portraits (two charcoal sketches, and one small oil version of the presentation piece) were presented to the Jacobsen family, in whose care they still remain.

Other honors to Andrew Jacobsen included memorial sites in both Monterey and Pacific Grove. The Pacific Grove site was authorized by the Pacific Grove City Council on February 1, 1956. The City of Pacific Grove contributed \$650 for the project, and an additional \$100 donation was provided by the Monterey Peninsula Garden Club. This site, formerly known as Prospect Park, and located at the corner of Ocean View Boulevard and 7th Street (near Lovers Point) was planted with ornamental shrubs and landscaped with locally-collected granite boulders. A bronze plaque mounted on a large granite boulder reads, "In Memory of Andy Jacobsen, County Supervisor 1932 - 1955." A sign identifies the park as "Jacobson Park." A

bench placed near the plaque is an inviting stop for visitors to pause and look out over Monterey Bay.

The second site that commemorates Andrew was constructed in downtown Monterey. Located on Munras Street, near the Stevenson House, the site consists of a park bench and commemorative plaque. The massive bench, built of basalt blocks and wood, was placed by the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce in 1955. The bronze plaque, mounted on the side of the bench reads, "Dedicated to the Memory of Our Friend A. B. 'Andy' Jacobsen -- Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce 1955."

It can be said that Andrew Berig Jacobsen left his mark during his lifetime. Although his childhood was difficult, he rose to become a beloved member of his community and his family. At a toast in his honor in 1953, Andy reflected on his years in county government. His words equally apply to his life:

*We have lived through the most interesting period of the world. We have come from the horse and buggy to the atom bomb and we have survived because we have been right. When you are right, you are bound to come out on top.*