

Eagle Rock Artist's Love of Southwest Evidenced in Current Exhibit of Work

Back from a visit in Switzerland with the glory of the Alps impressed upon his mind as a subject for a series of paintings, Conrad Buff did a few and then discarded the project in favor of the mountains and deserts of America's Southwest.

That perhaps best explains the way the famed Eagle Rock artist feels about the country he has made a part of himself since he left his native Switzerland when a young man. And that, too, is why lovers of fine art are finding so many studies of the scenic beauty of the Southwest among his works currently on exhibit at the Pasadena public library.

The exhibit, which opened last week and will continue through April 30, also includes children's books illustrated in the inimitable Buff manner and written by the artist's equally talented and prominent wife, Mary Buff.

The Buff story begins in a small village near Lake Constance in Switzerland, birthplace of the local artist. Carefully saved scraps of paper and cardboard or an old slate were the earliest canvases on which Buff did his drawing. When 14 years of age he was apprenticed to his uncle, a baker-confectioner, and that training taught him to be an expert baker although the talent now is but a hobby. His brother, Ernest, continued in that trade and now is a baker and cake decorator in Los Angeles.

Buff later took up lace designing, one of the chief skills of Switzerland, but he found little use for his creative imagination in an industry where quick imitation of traditional patterns was preferred to slow creation of new ones. He went to Munich to study art, but when his money began

to run out he looked toward America for opportunity.

The west drew him seemingly by instinct, and even the ruggedness of pioneer life failed to dim his love of the country. Between brief periods of painting he drove mules, cooked in cafes, washed dishes, painted and decorated houses. At last, when in his forties, he began to reach the top of the success ladder in the world of art and for some 15 years now has been able to devote all of his time to painting.

Buff's murals are found in banks, schools, libraries, clubs, commercial buildings and private homes including the Edison building in Los Angeles, the Santa Monica high school library, the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Los Angeles and the National Bank of Phoenix. He is represented in art collections of numerous museums including the British Museum in London, Metropolitan in New York, the National Gallery at Washington, D. C. as well as the Encyclopedia Britannica collection of contemporary American painting, 1945, and many public school and private collections.

His awards include the Huntington Prize (1925), the Fine Arts Prize of San Diego museum (1925), First Museum prize of the Los Angeles museum (1937) and many others.

He has explored two mediums of printing, lithography and silk screen printing, and two of the books he has done with his wife were illustrated in color lithography.

Mrs. Buff's delightful books are an innovation in the field of children's writing. She and her husband go directly to the source of their material, studying their story settings at first hand. Their first, published about 10 years ago, was "Dancing Cloud," the

story of a Navajo boy, and its immediate success launched a series of stories.

Working with children in a progressive school in Hollywood, Mrs. Buff began to write after finding a lack of authentic material in children's books. Her stories are based on facts, truth and reality, instead of following the pattern of the romantic tales usually written for children.

Among the books is "Big Tree," with its setting in Sequoia National park, "Dash and Dart," a story of Yosemite National park deer, and "Kobi," the tale of a Swiss boy which was the result of the Buffs' trip to Switzerland last summer. The couple now is at work on a new book, "Peter's Pinto," the experiences of a wild horse in Utah.

The Buffs have one son, Conrad Buff II, a Navy veteran who now is studying architecture at the University of Southern California. He and his wife, the former Elizabeth Evans, live in apartments at the rear of the charming Buff home at 1223-25 Linda Rosa avenue.

An individualist in every respect, Artist Buff shows that trait in the paintings which he is exhibiting this month, each of which has its own particular characteristics. His style conforms to no set art patterns and his technique appears to differ with each painting.

His exhibit, which may be seen from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily except Sundays through this month, features a four by six foot study of "The Mittens," intriguing rock formations in Monument Valley. Also on display is his "Jungfrau," a painting of the famed Swiss mountain, and several portraits include one of his mother, Anna Buff, done in Switzerland last year, and one of his gardener, Spencer Johnson.