



Anna Roesiger, wife of Richard Roesiger, near the lakefront cabins her husband built, taken around 1945. Courtesy of Granite Falls History Museum

‘Immortalized’: Lake Roesiger pioneer’s journals published

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By Kari Bray

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LAKE ROESIGER — Richard Roesiger’s grandson once said his grandfather’s journals would make a good movie script.

There were deadly property disputes, brutal winters and romantic tangles. Fires blazed in dense undergrowth, and settlers toppled behemoth trees for log cabins. A once-remote lake transformed into a fishing hub with the arrival of electricity, telephones and roads.

One man was there to see it all, taking pivotal roles in the evolution of the lake that bears his name.

Roesiger's life story is a Wild West adventure and a tale of changing times. It's chronicled in neat script in the German immigrant's journals and letters.

One hundred and thirty years after Roesiger homesteaded in the unforgiving wilderness of Snohomish County, his great niece, Monika Teuscher-Schramm, has compiled his story into a 500-page book.

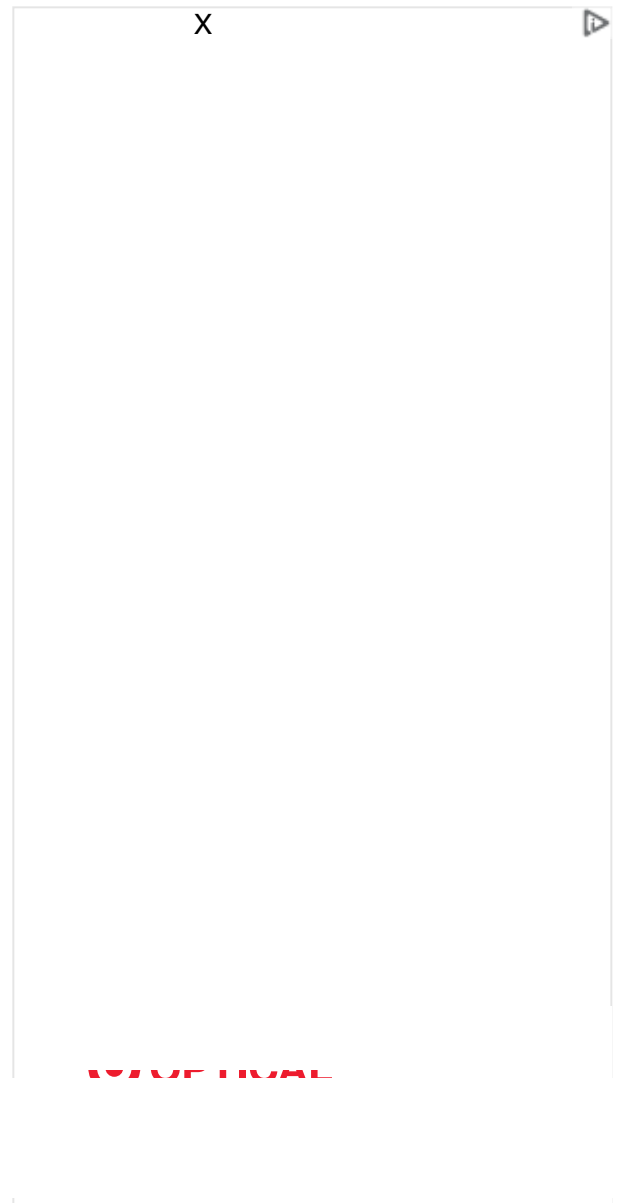
The author grew up in Germany and now lives in Switzerland. She plans to visit Granite Falls on July 15 and 16 for signings of her book, "On the Trail of Richard Roesiger: A pioneer's life in the Pacific Northwest."

She visited Lake Roesiger in 1999, 2002 and 2005. Lake Roesiger Park used to be part of the homestead and, later, a resort he ran into his 80s. Her great uncle picked a beautiful home, Teuscher-Schramm said in an email.

She spent more than a year researching and another two-plus years writing. She's grateful for help she received.

Elsie Sorgenfrei, of Lake Roesiger, preserved the journals. When Sorgenfrei died in [2013](#), she left them to the [Granite Falls Historical Society](#). Fred Cruger, with the society, helped Teuscher-Schramm publish the English translation of her originally German book. A portion of sales support the Granite Falls museum.

Roesiger kept detailed journals for decades. His writings offer a glimpse into early Snohomish County. He sold milk and butter in Snohomish, boated on Lake Stevens, mined at Monte Cristo, bought piglets in Monroe, and traded



produce for medicine with Dr. Chappell in Granite Falls. X

“It’s amazing that someone had the patience to write everything down,” Cruger said. “We’re so lucky there are people like that. People who record what seems like their mundane, daily life become informational treasures.”

Roesiger was born in Ortrand, Germany, in 1862. He moved to the U.S. at age 20. Around 1887, he homesteaded on a lake not far from Snohomish. He grew produce and fished, and cursed the mosquitoes and mice. Roesiger battled loneliness, illness and injuries.

He dedicated much ink to lamenting the weather. Storms would swell “Pill Chuck Creek” so it washed out trails, and felling massive trees was a daunting task when rain came down in gray sheets.

“To be sure building with these materials is very inconvenient, like Nature delivers it,” he wrote in a letter home. “But that’s the way it goes in the West.”

Roesiger meticulously tracked expenses: five pounds of coffee for \$1.25; 10 pounds of ham for \$1.75; five pounds of lard for 65 cents.

He trekked to Snohomish for provisions. His trails became wagon routes, then roads still used today. The pioneer dreamed the railroad would come to his lake, but that never happened.

When times were tough, Roesiger worked in timber and mining. The stubborn man was respected around the lake, if not always liked. He helped build a 12-desk school and served as clerk and postmaster.

As more people arrived, he asked surveyors to draw property lines. There was debate about the lake’s name. Surveyors chose Lake Roesiger over Chain Lake.

“My name is immortalized,” Roesiger wrote. “Hip, hip, hurrah.” His friends and relatives would be thrilled, he noted, while his enemies would be “fuming green and blue.”

Anna, a maid in his grandfather's manor, moved to the U.S. to be his wife. They had four children: Bruno, Liska, Solon and Hilda. Hilda had one son, and no other descendants are known, according to Teuscher-Schramm.

Roesiger stayed when neighbors sold to logging companies. After the logging boom, the lake became popular for fishing and summer homes.

Around 1912, Roesiger began removing stumps and hauling in dirt to expand his waterfront. He built a boathouse and guest cabins. It became a tourist destination. Selling hard cider to fishermen got him into trouble with the law.

Roesiger didn't want electric lights or a phone. He reportedly told a guest that his home would not be "spoiled by civilization."

He died in 1946 at age 84.

At least one of his journals is missing, leaving gaps in information.

Today, Roesiger's homestead is a busy, beloved park. People swim, boat and sunbathe there with no knowledge of the history. Teuscher-Schramm said she wants them to know where the lake got its name, and the hard life her great uncle and his neighbors lived. Their courage and willpower laid the foundation for what the lake, and the region, have become, she said.

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Meet the author

"On the Trail of Richard Roesiger" book signing and meet-the-author event 2-6 p.m. July 15 and noon-5 p.m. July 16 at Granite Falls Museum, 109 E. Union Street. No cost to attend. Copies of the book can be reserved by calling 360-691-2603.

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A view of the cabins that Richard Roesiger built on his lakefront property and turned into a resort, taken around 1950. Courtesy of Granite Falls History Museum.

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