

San Francisco Bay Area Post Card Club

July 2009

Next Meeting: Saturday, July 25, 12 to 3 pm

Vol. XXIV, No. 6

Fort Mason Center, Room C-260

Laguna Street at Marina Boulevard, San Francisco

Meetings are usually held the fourth Saturday of every month except December.

Visitors and dealers are always welcome.

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PROGRAM NOTES: Ted Miles spends his working days at the San Francisco Maritime Museum and his weekends improving his postcard collection and volunteering at the Western Railroad Museum at Rio Vista in the Sacramento River delta. At the club meeting he'll be wearing a conductor's cap—not the captain's—as he shows and tells us about interurban rail service in the Bay Area and of how retired cars have been rescued, refurbished and put in motion by enthusiasts of the Bay Area Electric Railway Association. Come and learn about our local lines, such as the Key System, Southern Pacific Red Cars, and the Sacramento Northern. N.B.— One of our East Coast dealer members will be setting up.

SHOW & TELL: Collector's choice—three item, two minute limit.

PARKING: Come early; park in pay lot, upper free lot on Bay Street or along Marina Green.

COVER CARDS



Mods as cover cards were found at the book store at Lassen and I bought some contemporary designs of all they had. They are original commissioned by the National Parks. For info on the 24 postcards, plus notecards and posters: www.rangerdoug.com or 888.972.7678. They are a fine tribute to our National Parks and to postcards.

cards? You Bet! the book store at Lassen of all they had. They are original commissioned by the National Parks. For

These, and other National Park, WPA poster art and info on the 24 postcards,

—LB

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Newsletter Deadline: 5th of each month


MINUTES

May 30, 2009

Cool—make that cold—and gray, a Mark Twain summer day.

Cards were brought for sale or trade by Marie Grbac, Lynn Sears, Henry Michalski, Ed Herny, Sue Scott, Dave, Lauren and Sophia Parry, Bob Bowen.

One person paid renewal dues; two others joined.

We were called to order at one o'clock by President Ed Herny. Guests were welcomed: Sherry Webster, a lifelong collector of Gas, Food and Lodging, LLS and much more; several guests of the Bowens.

Announcements: Ed Herny told of the death of Randy Stehle, a familiar face at all postcard shows and, very briefly years ago, a club member. Randy, only fifty-five, collected and traded postmarks and postal history, had articles published in *La Posta* and on his genealogical research. He was well liked by many in the postcard world and will be missed.

Drawing: Over 30 lots including donations by the Diggelman Family and Mike Wigner.

Old Business: None. New Business: Should the club consider purchasing a PowerPoint projector, and, if so, where can we get a good deal?

Show & Tell: Jim Neider found eight cards, all made from the same negative of Seal Rocks in San Francisco. Publishers were E.H. Mitchell, Tammen, Pacific Novelty, Souvenir, and Zimmerman. ... Ed Herny showed and read a postcard message written in a spiral. ... Jack Hudson brought two framed groups of cards—real photos and colored

prints—of Chinese children and adults; all were by the same photographer, John Frederick, in 1902. ... Sue Scott told of cards given to her from her aunt's collection and showed an RP, "On the Zone," SF 1915. ... Shirley Bittancourt read a shopping order from a postal card mailed to Louisville, Indiana in 1888: "Please send eggs, sugar, rice, soda, wrapping paper, muslin...."

June 27, 2009

Mid-year doldrums: warm and breezy, bicycles-built-for-two for rent, coffee bar closed, plenty of parking. Over 30 in attendance, 25 signed in. Cards were brought for sale or trade by Ed Herny, Ken Prag, Sue Scott, Marie Grbac, Lynn Sears and a couple of vest pocket dealers.

Called to order at 1 o'clock by President Ed Herny. Announcements: Lew Baer told that he had two extra sample packets from www.4by6.com for those who have thought of publishing their own postcards.

Ed Herny reminded us that we'll meet at Fort Mason in July; the three meetings after that will be at Star of the Sea School on 8th Avenue near Clement.

Drawing: Several cards and books were included, contributed by Bruce Diggelman's family.

Old Business: Jim Caddick spoke about the club's Postcard Photographer Survey Project. Our researchers are still requesting photographers' names for study. Any personal information about the photographer that might be found on a card is of greatest interest to the project. Please forward any and all details to our Editor. Are you interested in writing

a biography of any Northern California postcard photographers? If so, let the Editor know. We would like to have all the information in by October so that writing and production can begin.

New Business: None.

Show & Tell: Darlene Thorne told about learning to make PowerPoint shows; her first is on Santa Clara County. ... Jack Hudson is looking for a piecrust or Art Nouveau frame, large enough for two postcards; he showed a real photo of an old car in front of a store—Buffalo Bill and friend in a White Steamer—

May Program:

BOB AND BRENDA BOWEN ON CHINATOWN

As an 1897 undivided back multiview of Chinatown appeared on the screen, Bob explained that this is the first joint presentation he and Brenda have made since their book, *SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN*, appeared recently. Brenda, in an elegant embroidered silk robe, told that Bob has been collecting postcards of Chinatown for 30 years, that she grew up in the close packed and colorful community and that they collaborated on their book for Arcadia's *Postcard History* series.

Chinatown was well documented by photographers from the beginning, Bob said, as there has



TRADITIONAL COSTUME, EXCEPT FOR MIDDLE BOY IN OVERALLS

South Dakota, 1909. ... Andy Stewart came to postcards through his interest in photography; he showed a photo and the cabinet card that led to discovering the photo was by a Berkeley photographer. ... Lynn Sears brought a rodeo RP from her sales table—a cowboy on a bucking bronco. ... Ed Herny brought a large framed photo of a tumbledown adobe building for our expertization; could it be the Petaluma Adobe? Ed also showed two RPs from eBay, one of the ostrich farm at the 1894 Midwinter Fair.

—NOTES BY LEW BAER

always been fascination with the foreign community. I. W. Taber made photos there, for example, and



STORE INTERIOR REPRINTED OFTEN WITH CHANGED COSTUMES AND PEOPLE

there were stereo views in the 1880s, cabinet photos and books. Almost all the images in their Arcadia book are from their 1000 card collection.

San Francisco's is the oldest Chinatown in the U.S., Brenda revealed, and its small area is densely populated. In the 1890s there were 72,272 Chinese living in California, one-third of them were in Chinatown and 96% were males.

Another multiview, *A Glimpse of Chinatown, San Francisco* appeared. The black and white image on



DAILY STREET SCENE



COVER PHOTO ON BOWENS' BOOK—AS A RESULT, TWO BOYS SHOWN CONTACTED THEM



NIGHT CLUB ADVERTISING

this Private Mailing Card from 1898 had been recycled in the 1920s, '30s and '40s in more modern style cards. Publishers used whatever images they could, including ones by Genthe and Taber.

Another card, a colored one of kids and a vegetable vendor. Using a magnifying glass, Brenda could pick out foo qua (bitter melon), lop chong (dried pork sausage) and other comestibles.

More vegetable peddlers, these with their large baskets suspended from poles across their shoulders, bringing produce from truck gardens in the Marina area. (The Bowens saw similar sights in China.) An 1870 anti Chinese act banned the use of poles.

More postcard views: sidewalk merchant with a 24 foot stand... scribe... funerals... a rarely seen print view of an altar in the street and colorful procession...



AD FOR SING CHONG CO.

group shot with lots of men, one woman with children... an early card of the telephone exchange with male operators who spoke multiple dialects... The Quartette from Chinatown for Livingston's Pictures of America series. Then a photograph taken at Sutro Heights by Cliff Photo Gallery (Billington) that was reproduced as a

postcard many times with different captions. Very early cards were produced in Germany from black and white photos, hand colored and then photographed again using filters to make printing plates for colored postcards. Making the plates and printing the cards in several runs were lengthy processes.

Next came two cards with similar images inside a curio filled store—images of people had been cut out and pasted in. The original monotone card by Goldsmith was altered and reprinted in color. Alterations were seen in many cards; people were removed or added, backgrounds were changed, and some images were used from 1900 through the 1940s.

Chinatown was devastated by the 1906 earthquake and fire, and a view by Kytka, promulgated by the Wong Sun Yue Clemenses, is the iconic image: rubble and remains of buildings cover the slopes of Nob Hill, and atop all is the white empty shell of the Fairmont Hotel; in a lower corner are vignettted the



DIAMOND JUBILEE FLOAT WITH DRAGON

two tragedy wracked faces of Mr. and Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens. Camps were opened for the Chinese survivors—one at Fort Scott where it was bitterly cold, the other at Lake Merritt in Oakland that jibed with the one-time plan to relocate the Chinese out of downtown San Francisco.

After the 1906 disaster, Chinatown became a tourist attraction. New commercial buildings rose quickly, many designed in Occidental architects' conception of "Chinese" style. Postcards changed, too. Now they were published by Chinatown merchants. Children, Chinese, of course, were a popular theme. A colorful card of kids at a Chinese festival showed them dressed in "typical" clothing, except for one boy in overalls. He had forgotten to "dress up" for the photo, as Brenda had once done.

More kids, on a Fred Harvey card this time, photo taken on Stockton Street. Next, a 1912 RP of a kindergarten class with U.S. and the new Republic of China flags. Then a card of kids singing: an ad for a singing school.

The Immigration station at Angel Island was open from 1912 to 1940 and served as a quarantine station and interrogation facility. Few women were allowed entry.

A real photo with corners damaged by tack holes showed a Chinese woman. Can you imagine the man who put it on his wall... or the wife he left behind?

Brenda's family took root in Chinatown when her maternal grandparents arrived in the 1890s. Her grandfather had learned tailoring and made shirts for Chinese, Caucasian and Filipino clients. A photo showed Brenda's mother and aunts with huge bows on their heads. Her grandparents and their five children lived in a small apartment with communal kitchen and toilet; they used public baths. Securing

their own private apartment with full plumbing was a major upscale move.



ELAINE IN WESTERN GARB

A trimmed real photo of Brenda's father and grandfather dated 1923 lit the screen. To Brenda's surprise, she had learned that it was her great uncle.

More postcards: the Chinese dragon from the 1909 Portola Festival; next, the 1913 Portola parade with Uncle Sam portrayed by a Chinese man. The dragon represents "old" China, so it was not used for several years but reappeared in 1925 for the state's Diamond Jubilee. Ching Wah Lee, a local art dealer turned Hollywood supporting actor, reprinted and autographed movie stills as postcards.

A few more family real photos: A young girl on a Christmas greeting with backdrop from Mei's Studio. Elaine in cowboy dress-up.



BRENDA'S FATHER AND GREAT UNCLE

An advertising card for the Forbidden City night club featuring entertainers who were given western names: the Chinese Sophie Tucker, ditto Fred Astaire, etc. A 1902 printed view of two children in the Bowens' book brought word from a fellow who identified one of the kids as his grandmother,

Marie Chung. She had been rescued from a brothel in Manila, brought to San Francisco and lived at the Methodist Episcopal home at 940 Washington Street. To raise funds she toured the U.S. singing and performed at the White House for Teddy Roosevelt,

The book's cover also brought a response: Lauren Gee emailed that one of the boys shown was her grandfather.

The program ended with a view of the cover of SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN, thanks to Dan Saks and Kathryn Ayres for their expertise in preparing the images for showing, and hearty applause.

—NOTES BY LEW BAER

June Program:

JACK DALEY: THE COLUMBARIUM—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Shades were drawn, and the projector flared under the command of our Web Master, Jack Daley. We saw a highly professional show with fades, expanses and disappearing and reappearing details that brought life and clarity to the old images.

The Columbarium, designed by architect Ber-

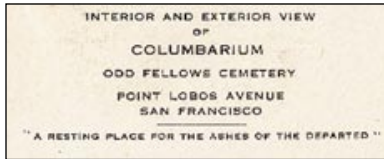


DOUBLE-FOLD POSTCARD VIEWS C.1900 ▲

nard J. S. Cahill, is one of the most beautiful—and except for the past few months—one of

the least noticed structures in San Francisco. It was erected in 1897 and opened the following year as a repository for ashes at the Odd Fellows Cemetery, that was established in 1865. Jack posed questions concerning the building and gave us an 1898 virtual tour of the adjoining cemetery. Are there tombs under the Columbarium? Why was the original dome replaced? Why build a dome level gallery without a stairway for access? Why has the original stained glass in the windows been altered? How did visitors reach the Columbarium from Geary Street in the 19th Century? Was the building totally neglected after 1934? What is currently happening with the demolition of the Coronet Theater and the building of a highrise next door? There was an aura of compelling mystery that presided over the whole presentation.

Jack began by explaining a key factor in exploring these topics was the real photo Columbarium exterior/interior postcard that Glenn Koch and Dan Saks



each have in their collections. These images answered some questions, but also presented new ones.

Using an 1898 panoramic photo taken from Lone Mountain and a 1904 San Francisco street map, Jack was able to take us on an 1898 walking tour of the Columbarium's original setting at the Odd Fellows



▼ BROCHURE, 1899



Cemetery, which was bounded by contemporary Geary, Arguello, Turk and Parker Streets. The cemetery was dedicated in 1865.

Each image of the tour was accompanied by an inset from the 1898 panoramic photo. We saw a monument maker's business, the Main Lower Gate for carriages, the Main Gate, the Administration Building, the Columbarium, the DeYoung Monument, the Crematorium (inside and out), the Grand Army Plot (for Civil War veterans) and several views toward Lone Mountain.

The city of San Francisco passed a law in 1900 forbidding cemetery burials after 1901, and by 1910 cremations were no longer permitted in San Francisco. A number of the cemetery monuments were jumbled in the 1906 earthquake. Wanting land for urban expansion, the city forced the cemetery to leave town, and the 28,000 graves of the Odd Fellows Cemetery were moved to Colma between 1929 and 1934. The Crematorium was demolished and the removed gravestones were used for a breakwater and other undignified construction projects. Today,



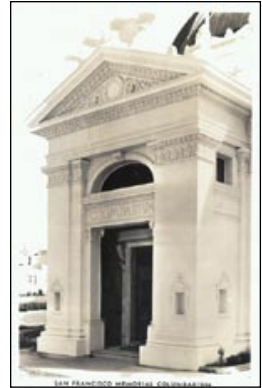
INTERIOR POSTCARD VIEW



MASS GRAVE MARKER



DOME DETAIL



POSTCARD: FRONT ENTRANCE

PHOTOS: JACK DALEY

pictures of the Colma Odd Fellows Cemetery (now supposedly called “Greenlawn Memorial Park”) show an unkempt field between Home Depot and Best Buy where a small monument with broken top marks a mass grave for 28,000 people. The marker simply says, “Odd Fellows Cemetery, Established 1865.” Given the grandness of the original cemetery, the Colma site evokes feelings of sadness.

The grounds of the former cemetery in San Francisco were transformed into a modern urban landscape. The Columbarium kept its contents of cremated ashes (but no coffins, as far as we can see) and survived any plans to demolish the building. The Columbarium was run by Cypress Abbey from 1930 to 1980 and, over time, was allowed to deteriorate. Cared for by the Neptune Society since 1980, the building has been beautifully renovated.

An 1898 San Francisco Camp Merritt panoramic photo in the collection of the San Francisco Public

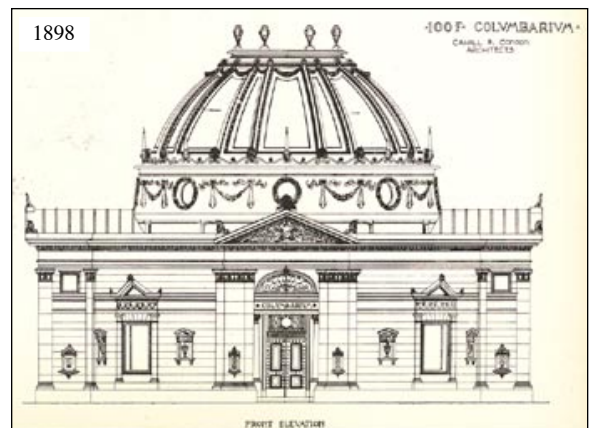


1897 RENDERING SHOWING BELOW GROUND ACCESS

Library History Center was explored for the location of the Columbarium. Dazzling PowerPoint effects allowed the audience to draw upon the 1898 virtual tour of the cemetery to find the Columbarium in the large and detailed panorama. A zoomed PDF image of the panorama scrolled across the screen and wowed the audience. It gave a detailed view extending from Mt. Sutro to Lone Mountain.

This view led Jack to question why and when the original Columbarium dome was replaced. Photographic evidence shows that it was done before the end of 1905. A drawing of the dome published in 1898 displays the dome we see today. Was the short lived original dome only temporary? Perhaps the original was covered with copper sheeting when more money for the project became available and/or the metal work could be made to fit.

Also, two prominently visible rooms at dome level were added before 1905. Why? The east room



provides a stairway to the dome level gallery. Another drawing published in 1898 shows the gallery, but without stairway access. Perhaps this gallery was built as an option for expansion, and the option was exercised before the end of 1905. Were the new dome and the two dome level rooms added at the same time? Apparently not, according to an undated photo.

Are there any sealed tombs underneath the Columbarium? This is very possible. An 1897 architectural rendering depicts an outdoor stairway leading under the building. Recently, an elderly visitor told Emmitt Watson (of the Neptune Society) that he visited tombs beneath the Columbarium when he was a child. He said the tombs extend all the way under the building.

As the Columbarium sits on sandy soil, it must have a huge foundation. Why not add tombs as part of the foundation? If so, why would the access be sealed? That may have been done when the cemetery was moved to Colma. Prohibition was in effect, and bootleggers often used cemeteries as quiet sites to make illegal booze. Sealing the underground entrance would eliminate that possibility. Today, there

is a mysterious piece of concrete exactly where the stairs are depicted in the 1897 architectural rendering.

However, there is no photographic evidence of a stairway leading to tombs under the building at that spot or anyplace else.

A detailed comparison of circa 1900 and contemporary images was shown—both outside and inside views. Included was an interior postcard view taken from the second floor

looking onto the first, second and third floor rotunda area. A postcard of the exterior entrance shows nicely kept gardens, the Columbarium looking good (with the spear points still visible on the dome) and houses built in 1939 and 1940 in the background.

In another image, it appears that the Odd Fellows Cemetery's Main Gate was moved from Geary Street to Loraine Court. Strangely, the gate (as it is seen today) is lined up with the houses on the end of Loraine Court (not with the Columbarium).

Photo comparisons between 1898 and today indicate that stained glass windows in the Columbarium have been altered. For example, the French Memorial Window has had its Masonic symbol replaced with the initials "MB" (or BM). Other windows have also been altered. Why? (The answers await discovery.)

The Coronet Theater was built on Geary Street next to the Columbarium in 1949. It went dark in 2005 and was demolished in 2007. The Goldman Institute on Aging is constructing a highrise building on the site that is due to be completed in 2010. The Columbarium, visible from Geary Street since 2007, will disappear from view again soon. But, the Columbarium building will continue to survive and serve as a resting place for its permanent residents.

Jack Hudson posed an interesting question: why weren't WPA workers used to move the graves? Plans for the move were made in the 1920s, before the Depression, and the move was completed by



1906 QUAKE DAMAGE BY COLUMBARIUM, CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



CHEVALIER MAP, SAN FRANCISCO 1904

1934. The WPA, created in 1935, built infrastructure—buildings, roads, bridges, dams and parks. The unifying idea seems to be “building” not “moving.” One of the WPA’s first projects in 1935 was building the Rossi Recreation Center on the site of the former Odd Fellows Cemetery.

The projector dimmed, applause filled the room, and the presentation was described as “one of the club’s finest ever!” Jack’s remarkable use of PowerPoint (he has taught classes on it professionally) was equalled by his impressive research skills. He shot over 50 digital pictures with his Nikon camera for the program and showed 95 slides over 40 minutes with time for questions at the end. Since his presentation, Jack has uncovered stunning new information about the Columbarium. It seems that every puzzle that is solved leads to more questions that are even more intriguing. Stay tuned!

Thanks to club members John Freeman, Glenn Koch, David Parry and Dan Saks for their valuable assistance with this project!

—NOTES BY LEW BAER AND JACK DALEY

TREASURER/HALL MANAGER REPORT

As of July 7, 2009 \$4023.55
Next month, and again in September and October, we will be meeting at Star of the Sea School on 9th Avenue between Geary and Clement. Full details will be in the August newsletter. There is ample parking accessible from 8th Avenue, and the area is served by several Muni lines. There are also many dining and snacking opportunities in the neighborhood.

—ED CLAUSEN, TREASURER/HALL MANAGER

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Lynne Poulson

Sherry Webster; Sherry’s main interests are gas, food and lodging, but she is easily attracted to other categories.

Lauren Gee

A. Moy, a collector of San Francisco history.

POSTCARD CALENDAR

Aug. 8-9, Sat-Sun, SAN FRANCISCO, Vintage Paper Fair, Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. & Lincoln, FREE admission; Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10-4*+ Now three times a year.

Aug. 22-23, Sat-Sun, SACRAMENTO, Capital Postcard & Paper Show, 6151 H St., Sat. 10am-5pm, Sun. 10am-4pm*+ Always fun and friendly plus dealers not seen in the Bay Area.

Aug. 30, Sunday, **HEALDSBURG**, Antique Show on the Square, FREE Admission! 8am-4pm*

Sept. 18-20, Fri-Sun, GLENDALE, Vintage Paper Fair, 1401 N. Verdugo Road, Glendale, Fri. 1-7pm, Sat 10am-6pm, Sun (FREE entry)10am-4pm+ Early bird 11am Friday.+

Oct. 3, Saturday, SANTA CRUZ, Postcard & Paper Show, University Inn, 611 Ocean Street, 10am-5pm; Free Entry for club members *+

Oct. 9-10, Fri-Sat, **SANTA ROSA**, Old Bottle & Postcard Show, Sonoma County Fairgrounds, Fri.\$10 admission, 12-5pm, Sat. Free entry 10am-3pm*

Oct. 25, Sunday, SAN FRANCISCO, Golden Gate Park Book Fair, Hall of Flowers, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Way, 10am-5pm; free entry, of course. A new show brought to us by Hal Lutsky; info: ggpbbookfair(at)yahoo.com

Nov. 6-8, Fri-Sun, **SAN MATEO**, Hillsborough Antique Show, Expo Fairgrounds, from 11am, Sun. 10-5*

Nov. 14-15, Sat-Sun, CONCORD. Vintage Paper Fair, 5298 Clayton Road, 10am-6 and 4pm*+

Dec. 12-13, **SAN RAFAEL**, Antique & Collectors’ Fair, Civic Center, 10am to 6 and 5pm*

Bolded entries produced by SFBAPCC members.

* Ken Prag will be there; let him know what to bring:

415 586-9386, kprag(at)planetaria.net

+ R&N will have cards and supplies

See cards on sale at SF Antique and Design Mall, 701 Bayshore Blvd.; 415 656-3531.

AUTHOR! AUTHOR!

From Arcadia come two new books by club members: Peter Linenthal and Abigail Johnston’s **POTRERO HILL** is in the *Then & Now* series and uses current photos to contrast with vintage views. Postcards also join historical photos in Gary Lee Parks’ *Images of America* volume, **THEATRES OF SAN JOSE**. Through his preservation of Bay Area theaters, Gary became... a postcard collector.

Find’em; buy ’em! CongatZ to all!

The Oriental board game of Go is older than chess and is considered the national game of Japan and is played extensively in Japan, Korea, and China. Go has a few simple rules, and once they are understood, the game is relatively easy to play. But mastering the game is not so easy. Go is a game of skill; there is no luck involved.

The game is played by two contestants. A regulation sized board has 19 lines running along the X and Y axes to form a simple grid with three hundred and sixty-one points of intersection. The players use white and black stones which are placed on the intersections of the lines, not in the empty squares formed by the lines. Players take alternating turns by placing a single stone on the board. Go boards are purposefully made to be not quite square. The black and white stones are also made purposefully just a little too large so that when placed on the board, they tend to butt up against each other.

The Western game of chess can be compared to a single tactical battle conducted between opposing armies with the whole gamut of the feudal world participating: common soldiers, priests, knights, and even the Queen and King. The game of Go is more

of a strategic game with many battles going on, all over the board, at the same time. Another interesting feature of Go is the handicapping system which allows a much weaker player to realistically take on a much superior player and have a chance at victory.

The goal of the game is to end up controlling more territory than one's opponent. Stones are placed on the board to surround empty line intersections. Each of these intersections is counted as a point. Play can result in stones being removed from the board if they are surrounded with no escape. As with chess, Go can be played quite quickly, or two opponents can take several hours to complete a game.

Like many things in East Asia, the game of Go originated in China and spread from there to Japan and Korea. The Japanese have been playing Go in its present form for over 1,000 years, but the beginnings of the game can be traced back to China over 4,000 years ago. By the thirteenth century, the samurai class in Japan were playing Go, and there are stories of warriors breaking out a board and stones to compete immediately after real life battle.

In the United States, there is an American Go As-



A TYPICAL VIEW OF TWO MEN PLAYING GO



MEN AND WOMEN PLAYING AGAINST EACH OTHER IS LESS COMMON



JAPANESE SCENES ON A WALL HANGING—GO PLAYERS AT FAR LEFT

sociation (AGA) with members spread out across the US. There are Go clubs in many states, typically in communities with sizable Oriental populations, and clubs are also formed in university and college towns. In the San Francisco Bay Area, clubs exist in Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley, Palo Alto, and San Jose. Consult the AGA web site, www.usgo.org/, for these clubs' meeting times and go check out a game of Go. You might get hooked.

From what I have seen, men seem to make up the larger pool of Go players. For some reason unknown to me, however, most of the postcards I have show women playing the game.



TWO GEISHA PLAYING GO

The Airvia Mystery and My Ten Year Quest to Solve It

by DANIEL SAKS

It may not look exciting, but I was immediately captivated by this postcard when I found it. I recognized the seaplane but nothing else. I hoped that one of my aviation books would shed some light on Airvia Transportation Company, but, if not, certainly the all-knowing Internet would solve the mystery of how an Italian military seaplane came to be used by an American passenger airline. That was about ten years ago and finally, this year, the mystery was solved, albeit partially.



THE MYSTERY: AIRVIA TRANSPORTATION CO. INC.. WATERWAY THE SAFE WAY

I was familiar with the unusual looking wooden seaplane. The Savoia Marchetti S.55 was first built in 1925 to be used as a torpedo bomber by the Italian navy. The plane then became world famous in the 1920s and 1930s as Italian aviators used it to set 14 endurance and distance records.

The pilot of Airvia's plane sat in an open cockpit in the wing between the twin hulls. The hulls provided room for passengers and light cargo. The twin engines sat atop the 78-foot wingspan in a push-pull configuration, and triple fins rose at the end of the

plane's 54-foot length. Several variants of the S.55 were made to improve performance. The early model flown by Airvia cruised at 100 mph and had a range of 500 miles. Later models flew at 150 mph and could go over 2,000 miles before refueling.

Chronologically, my collection starts with several artist drawn postcards showing S.55's serving their original purpose, attacking enemy ships, although the plane was retired from service before the start of World War II.

I also have postcards from 1927 showing the S.55's used by Italian aviator Francesco de Pinedo. He used two planes that year on his six-continent 30,000 mile worldwide tour. (His first plane was lost in a refueling accident.)

The majority of my S.55 collection consists of postcards related to Italian General Italo Balbo's mass formation flights from Rome to Rio de Janeiro in 1930 and to the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. Balbo led 12 planes to Rio and 24 planes to Chicago.

But in my collecting history this postcard was the first time I'd seen an S.55 being used in the United States by an American airline. What was an Italian seaplane doing flying for something called the Airvia Transportation Company?

Over the years, my effort to solve the mystery of Airvia and its S.55 had produced very little information. I found no mention of it in any book and even the omniscient internet had nothing about it. The postcard's seller believed that the photo was taken somewhere on Long Island, New York. It was disappointing that even under magnification, the signage on the fuel barge doesn't mention a location or name.

Eventually, I found a brief mention of Airvia in a 1930s aviation magazine. It confirmed the Long Island locale, and added that the airline had started flying between New York and Boston in 1929 and was out of business before the year's end. Being in existence for only several months in 1929 seemed to have cast the airline into information oblivion. I also acquired an 8"x10" photo showing the same image. Even though larger, the fuel barge's signs offered no more information.



DE PINEDA TRIBUTE

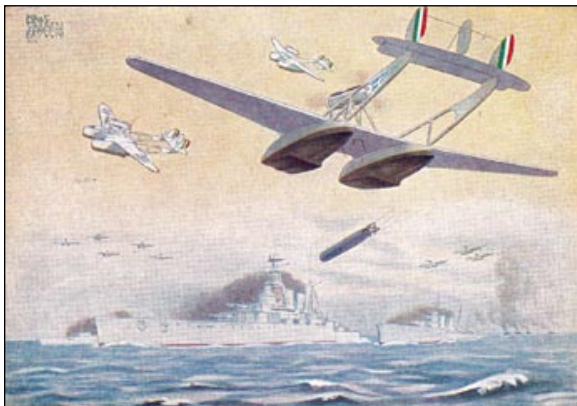


S.55'S... BOUND FOR BRAZIL

The postcard and Airvia remained a mystery until a few months ago. This past May, at Hal Lutsky's Golden Gate Park Vintage Paper Fair, I happened upon a 2007 issue of *Skyways*, a quarterly journal about old airplanes. The inside back cover listed the contents of previous issues available from the publisher. In the description for a 2006 issue I saw the holy grail of my postcard search—the words, “Airvia 1929 flying boat shuttle.” I eagerly sent off for the issue.

The 2006 article stated that Airvia had been incorporated in March 1929 and had bought two S.55's. My postcard shows the plane based at Long Island's North Beach. It flew a daily round-trip to Boston with room for 14 passengers. The second S.55, based in Boston, made the reverse round-trip. The flight between the cities took two hours, compared to five hours by train or eight hours by car.

This early attempt at commuter service was not destined to survive. The one-way fare was \$30, which the article's author estimated to be the 2006 equivalent.



...AT WAR



...AND VISITING CHICAGO

lent of \$300. And unlike downtown train depots, Airvia's passengers still had to get to and from the planes' water based terminals.

Airvia didn't have to wait for the October stock market crash to be in trouble; one month after operations began in July 1929, the airline was being investigated by U.S. postal inspectors for illegally selling \$350,000 worth of stock. One month after that several Airvia officials were arrested.

Airvia tried merging with another New York based

airline which offered seaplane flights to Albany, but the combined operation declared bankruptcy before the end of 1929. To the best of my knowledge neither Airvia plane, nor any other S.55, exists today.

While it was great to finally learn more about Airvia, I still have questions. Does this one image constitute the entire photo history of Airvia? Could there be a postcard of the Boston based plane? And finally, when is Hal's next show?

POP'S STREAMLINED TANK

by GEORGE EPPERSON

In 1935, my Pop and I were in the shampoo business manufacturing Viteen Treatment Supreme for hair and scalp. Most of the Bay Area beauty shops used it. Streamlining was all the rage, and Pop decided to streamline his old 1925 sturdy Dodge sedan. We removed the original body and built a plywood modern body on the chassis. He put on a Windfield racing carburetor which increased the speed from 60 to 120 miles an hour. One day, as Pop was starting it, the carburetor flooded over onto the generator causing a fire that wrecked the engine compartment. He let my twin brother John and me fix it up so we could use it for school. John took it to the Cal-Stanford Big Game once. On the way home the Stanford Band was thumbing a ride, so he picked them all up. The "Tank," as we called it, only had two wheel brakes. The traffic stopped suddenly, and John skidded into the car ahead. It could have been bad, so my Pop



THE TANK IN FRONT OF BILTMORE HOTEL COFFEE SHOP (WHERE?). INSET SHOWS GEORGE'S SISTER WITH THE SHIRLEY TEMPLE DO.

asked us to get rid of it. We sold it to a fellow from LA for \$5.00, provided we never see it again. And that was the last we ever saw of our beloved "Tank."

RECENT FINDS



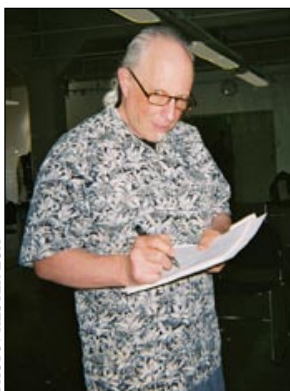
▲ MARKET STREET, C. 1915

ARNOLD, IS THAT YOU? ►



EDITORIAL WHEE!

PHOTO: HESTER LOX



Whew, Quite an issue! Here we are with 14 down and two to go. No sweat! There's lots for show and tell. This issue, however, is unusual, because three of the major stories revisit old topics with new discoveries. The club has taken walks in Chinatown which were reviewed here; and we've seen the

Wong Sun Yue Clemenses and read their story, but this month—as at the May meeting—we're given an inside-outside view that opens new vistas, both myopic and wide ranging. The Columbarium has graced these pages several times, and well it should. It is strikingly lovely as well as resolutely enigmatic—until now. Jack Daley's research, electrifying visuals, and hard copy recap will be recognized as the primary source for historical reference on this San Francisco landmark. Aeronautical aficionados googling the 'net for salient data on seaplanes will now have two references from www.postcard.org, the club's web site. The recap of Gary Doyle's April program on Pan American World Airways and its PanAm Clippers has been on line for several weeks now and has received numerous hits. Reading Dan Saks' Airvia mystery tale, with its Italian twist, will undoubtedly excite other fact searchers. Is *mind boogling* the proper term for being awestruck by the powers of the Internet?



While on vacation last month I did very little postcarding, aside from the National Park cards. I came across only two cards that struck my fancy. The first was a message written in a slightly snooty tone about going to visit the *Queen "Marie."* A few minutes later this card with its neat postal markings appeared. It's the *Queen Mary* again, on the high seas and with a *paquebôt* cancel on the back.

The next card, grotesque as it may be, is fun and timely again. Published years ago as a poke at the USPOD for a raise in rates, it's a real photo of a larger design, some of which still rises from the bottom margin. Sent by Dave Parrish, who found it in a 25¢ box, it is much appreciated.



I've shared some of my Mount Rushmore cards here before, but this newest addition to my category is my only mod. I noticed it in a spread on dentist cards in the exchange copy of the Washington Crossing (PA) club newsletter. I emailed the Editor then



called the contributor, Don Wayne, and he graciously sent me a duplicate. This is a fun hobby! —LB

P.S. LESS EGOCENTRICALLY, but just as excitedly, there is lots going on postcard club wise. The Northern California Postcard Photographer Survey researchers continue at their labors, ferreting out information, online and at libraries, for identifying and fleshing out the hundreds of names of photographers gleaned from thousands of postcards. A deadline has been set, October 2009, and at that time energies will be shifted from research to manuscript. Biographies, both personal and commercial, will be written, images will be selected, and a published volume will be close to reality. You can participate. Before October send photographer names found on postcards made in Northern California to the Editor. Volunteer to write one or several photographer biographies.

A MORE IMMEDIATELY PROACTIVE PROJECT was initiated by an email from Suzanne Dumont. She was sad...surprised...aghast to learn that the city would like to convert the boat house at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park into a “destination” restaurant in hopes of enriching the civic coffers. Yikes! Suzanne suggested that the boathouse manager, in protest, display postcard images of the building. An email went out to the club and several members responded, most notably Dennis O’Rorke who sent scans of dozens of vintage cards. They were printed out and have had the initial effect of bringing the *SAVE THE BOATHOUSE!* campaign to the *Chronicle’s* readership through columnist Leah Garchik on July 9. The story begins, “The San Francisco Bay Area Post Card Club, not usually associated with political action....” See for yourself: search *boathouse* at www.sfgate.com.



THE LATEST ADDITION to Larry Fulton’s postcard lineup is The Supremes, featuring Ginsburg, O’Connor and Sotomayor, the distaff trio at or near the highest bench in our land. See (and purchase) it and more (such as the LL Swat Valley, Pakistan) at www.postcardjourney.com.

THE RECENT FINDS on page 13 deserve comment. *Bigfoot* is a super postcard poke at our current governor—insignia ring, state flag lapel pin and cigars, included. Designed by Sean Koskela for Bishop Custom Products of Orland. The Market Street view is a favorite of mine. So much going on: The Hayes Street car stopped on one of the four tracks to load passengers, pedestrians threading their way across the dirt packed street between racing horse drawn fire engine and horseless carriage. The PPIE promo logo on the back tells us that the card is pre-1915, and the lack of two branched Path of Gold lighting standards dates Market Street in its early reconstruction days. The Call Building with its original pine cone dome towers in the back. There’s a lot of darkroom creativity evident here. Anyone know of an RP?

—LEW

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FREE TO MEMBERS AS SPACE PERMITS

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2009 MEETINGS

July 25

August 29*

September 26*

October 24*

November 28

*Aug., Sept., and Oct. at
Star of the Sea School