

# San Francisco Bay Area Post Card Club

April 2010

**Next Meeting: Saturday, April 24, 12 to 3 pm**

Vol. XXV, No. 4

Fort Mason Center, **Room C-260**

Laguna Street at Marina Boulevard, San Francisco

*Monthly meeting schedule on back cover.*

*Visitors and dealers always welcome.*

**IN • TRANSPORTATION AND THE PPIE  
THIS • VISITING OPIUM DENS  
ISSUE • STORIES FROM THE BACKSIDE**

**PROGRAM NOTES:** Gary Doyle will return to speak on the Dornier Do-X seaplane. Made in Germany, the Do-X was the world's largest, heaviest, and most powerful flying boat when it first flew in 1929. In 1930 the colossal 12-engine airship undertook a round-the-world publicity tour arriving in New York in 1931.

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

**PARKING:** Car pool, take public transit or come early as parking can be difficult; park in pay lot within the Center gates (\$10 for three hours or more!), upper free lot on Bay Street or along Marina Green; and enjoy the stroll by Yacht Harbor.

## COVER CARD

This vehicle, parked in front of the famed Sutro Baths and Museum a few yards up the street from



the Cliff House, was possibly a hired touring car. It seems a tad more exclusive than the charabancs, the large tour buses whose Cliff House-bound passengers were recorded on group real photo postcards. A horse and buggy can be seen in the background, on the left; to the right of the entrance to the baths is an enormous cross-section of a redwood tree.

The card was unsent, but one of the passengers wrote "Artell & us in California" on the back. Note the gas lanterns on either side of the windshield and the toolbox on the running board. Could it have been an on-site professional photographer who snapped the picture?

—KATHRYN AYRES

## CLUB OFFICERS 2009-2010

### President:

ED HERNY, 510 428-2500  
edphemra(at)pacbell.net

### Vice President:

KATHRYN AYRES, 415 929-1653  
piscopunch(at)hotmail.com

### Treasurer/Hall Manager:

ED CLAUSEN, 510 339-9116  
eaclausen(at)comcast.net

### Editor:

LEW BAER, 707 795-2650  
PO Box 621, Penngrove CA 94951  
editor(at)postcard.org

### Recording Secretary:

Secretary needed

### Webmaster:

JACK DALEY: daley(at)postcard.org

**Newsletter Deadline: 5th of each month**



### MINUTES, MARCH 27, 2010

Bright and beautiful, the bay and city exploded into view as we came out of the Waldo Grade tunnel and descended toward the Golden Gate. Surprise! In spite of the Rhone Rangers wine festival alert, the FMC parking lot was empty. The oenophiles were setting up on Saturday; the uncorking would be the next day.



In C-260, the room was abuzz. Cards were brought for sale or trade by Sue Scott, Joseph Jaynes, Ed Herny, Dave Parry and Ted and Arlene Miles for the



Western Railroad Museum. PPIE exhibitors included Laura Ackley, Corey Cate, Dave Parry, and George Epperson—with Drake and plate of brass mementos. The astounding PPIE exhibit, as usual, was Jay Stevens' framed and fiber optics illuminated display of Tower of Jewels jewels, some of which were sold as souvenirs at the fair, others, slightly chipped and worn relics, actually dangled on the Tower in 1915. WOW!

We were called to order by President Ed Herny. Guests were introduced, including our newest member, Nancy Russell; Jack, a City Guide; Gary Parks, resident theater historian and May speaker; two students from UCB doing archival research on



the PPIE; Grant Ute, one of the day's speakers who confessed that he collects "too much"; and Hester Lox, a professional organizer and often a member.

**Announcements:** Nancy Redden told of the new film out on "Remembering Playland at the Beach" that was at the Balboa and of which there is a DVD, (available in mid May; info: [www.novemberfire.com/creaturefeatures/Playland.html](http://www.novemberfire.com/creaturefeatures/Playland.html) or November Fire, PO Box 6490, Albany CA 94706); the film will play again for a week beginning on April 23. ... Laura Ackley revealed that she will be speaking to the SF History Association at Mission Dolores School auditorium on "People at the PPIE." ... Lew Baer told that the next issue of "Postcard World" magazine will have an article on the SFBAPCC. ... Joseph Jaynes reminded us of the Santa Cruz show to be held in two weeks and that club members are admitted free. ... Mr. Pearson, a guest, told that he grew up in the city and remembers buying linens, 6 for 25¢, at the Cliff House.

**Drawing:** Many items, among them a souvenir plate of the completion of the Panama Canal with all presidents up to Wilson. Many happy winners.

**Old Business:** Ed Heryny talked about the proposed MidWinter Fair postcard stroll to be held in the museum complex of Golden Gate Park. It is a construction zone at the moment but should be ready for strolling by June. Stay tuned. Restorers working there need images of the fountains by the Music Concourse. If you can help them, please let Kathryn Ayres know.

**Show & Tell:** Darlene Thorne brought an oversize lucky penny from the 1915 fair and a real photo of the first building on the expo grounds — an outhouse! Ha ha. ... Chuck Banneck told that panorama postcards are wonderful; often they are 2-fold, occasionally 3-fold; the one he showed is 7-fold [!] with 11 different views, published by the Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway. ... PPIE collector and scholar Paul Robertson told of what he learned from researching the fair during a visit to Iowa [!]: Herbert Hoover was the spokesperson for the fair in Europe; Germany and England did not take part in the PPIE, not — it turns out — because of WW I which had not yet started, but because of prewar disagreements and the cost of

participation, £100,000, during tight economic times. Paul did show a souvenir spade from the PPIE ground breaking... in 14 carat gold [!]; they sold for \$10 at the fair and is the only one Paul has ever seen in the 30 years he's owned his. ... Jim Caddick showed his Mike Roberts mystery card of an all-American family with no info, front or back. Who is it? A political campaign card? Jim also showed a chauffeur permit to bring a car onto the PPIE fairgrounds and a receipt for cash fare during the post exposition period, 50¢ for vehicles, 45¢ for bicycles or horses.

Jack Hudson showed an RP of a farmer in a buck-board drawn by pigs; "Frisco or Bust" with an ad for a pig farm on the back. ... Jay Stevens asked if anyone had seen TOJ jewel hangers other than brass ones. [Heads shook; none nodded.] He then told of the steel hangers, perhaps prototypes, that he recently came across. ... Lynn Sears showed a card of a restaurant at LAX, through the window was a jet laying a huge stream of black exhaust. George Epperson gave out copies of a Mike Roberts card he made years ago of Nova Albion, Sir Francis Drake's "true" landing spot; the photo by George shows where he is convinced the brass plate had been originally mounted; he maintains that the captain did not come ashore where "so called experts" say he did. ... Joseph Jaynes told a Red "Skeleton" story and showed a circa 1910 Auburn Mfg. advertisement for postcards: 50 for 30¢, \$5 for 1000, and another card telling what was needed to make postcards.

—NOTES TAKEN BY LB

### TREASURER/HALL MANAGER REPORT

As of April 7, 2010 .....\$4487.76

The date for our October meeting has been changed. Fort Mason Center has rented the entire complex for the weekend of October 23-24. Celebrating its centennial year, Star of the Sea School is not available. Other venues were considered but deemed unsatisfactory. After much hand-wringing, many phone calls and untold e-mails, it was decided to change to October 16, the only suitable date available at Fort Mason. This will require a program change for that month (apologies to our Vice President and our speaker), but we do look forward to a great meeting and an interesting presentation.

—ED CLAUSEN, TREASURER/HALL MANAGER



## TRANSPORTATION AND THE PPIE

PRESENTED BY JOHN FREEMAN AND GRANT UTE



John began, as the computer projector flared, by explaining the transportation challenges of locating the Panama Pacific International Exposition along the northern end of the San Francisco peninsula. Using an 1869 topographical map, he pointed out the geographic

obstacles. The tall hills—more than the apocryphal seven—ringing a muddy lagoon, were a particular problem. Cable cars could crawl over hills but could never carry huge crowds of riders. Golden Gate Park, one potential site, was easy to get to by trolley, but it had no access from the Bay. Existing transportation franchises had come under the monopoly of United Railroads (URR) in 1902 which served Market Street entirely by cable cars. The earthquake had destroyed much of the rails and power houses. It was a golden opportunity for the URR to expand and modernize.

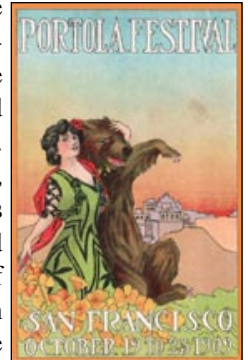
Graft greased the new rails. Abe Ruef, administrative officer for Mayor Schmitz, was given two shirt boxes filled with cash—the equivalent of \$2 million today—by the railway operators, to expedite the project. The existing cable system was ripped out and trolley lines were constructed. Postcards showed the remaining cable service on Market Street and crews removing rails and cables along Sutter.

The devastation of 1906 led to instant urban renewal and to a new image for San Francisco as a



REMOVING CABLES AND INSTALLING TROLLEY TRACKS ON SUTTER

tourist town. As early as 1904, once Teddy Roosevelt committed to completing the Panama Canal, San Francisco business interests saw the city as a hub for Asian trade, and the site for a major celebration. The new city would be worldly and modern, no longer a far off backwater. In 1908, the Great White Fleet's visit boosted SF's maritime image. The 1909 Portola Festival declared the end of Reconstruction. The Festival, on a small scale, demonstrated San Francisco's capability for hosting a world fair, and within six weeks of its close, the campaign to win Congressional approval for the 1915 PPIE was underway. A week later, a special bond election authorized building the first municipally owned trolley line—on Geary Street. The URR and the *Chronicle* opposed the plan. The *Examiner* and the *Call* favored developing Geary which was to



CABLE CARS WERE RUNNING A FEW DAYS AFTER THE '06 QUAKE



RECONSTRUCTION AT GEARY AND STOCKTON STREETS

have a profound effect on transportation throughout San Francisco and especially for the PPIE.

Congress approved San Francisco as the site for the 1915 World's Fair on January 31, 1911. The next hurdle was where to have it... Islais Creek? Lake Merced? Golden Gate Park? The Harbor View [Marina, see p. 15] mud hole? The waterfront? Tanforan...? The Marina was favored by the *Examiner*; Michael DeYoung of the *Chronicle* preferred Golden Gate Park. After a year and a half, they compromised: *Let's do both!*, and the "whole city" plan was unveiled.



PROPOSED FILLMORE TUNNEL

President Taft came to San Francisco in October 1911 for the PPIE ground breaking held in the polo field of Golden Gate Park. The first phase of the



"whole city plan" called for massive dredging and filling at the Harbor View mud flats. At the same time,



SUCTION DREDGING AT HARBOR VIEW

the new Municipal Railway would be laying plans to open up the Richmond District and also the west of Twin Peaks with a tunnel. The idea of using Golden Gate and Lincoln Parks as part of the fairgrounds was soon dropped as time and money were needed to develop the Harbor View site.

Now that Harbor View was the sole site, how would public transportation reach it? Four tunnels were proposed for passenger service: Fillmore Street, Divisadero, Broadway (which did materialize in 1952), and Stockton Street (the only tunnel completed for the Fair—and still in use).



Grant Ute took the floor and reiterated how lots of money "lubricated" the transportation system and had cars running within 300 hours of April 18, 1906. The Portola Festival had promoted San Francisco as the most modern city in the world, and crowds came. But how many times that number of visitors will be traveling to the PPIE, and how will they get through the city to reach the fair? Once at it, how will they get around the fairgrounds?

Transport to San Francisco was already in place by boat, ferry and railroad.



The new Muni Rwy was up and running and we saw a 1912 view of the first Muni car at Geary and Jones loaded with passengers. The Muni was taking over transportation franchises as soon as they expired, and in the rush, safety became a greater problem. New "Eclipse Fender" style cowcatchers were put on trolley cars to sweep pedestrians up and out of



THE EXPOSITION LOOP, NOW GALILEO HIGH SCHOOL SITE

the way of the wheels.

The Muni authorities wanted to build infrastructure that would be of service after the PPIE. The new Fillmore Street line went to the main entrance of the fairgrounds. The Union Street line had been destroyed in 1906. The Larkin-Polk line came close to the fair's location. The O'Farrell Street cable line was too far from the entrance. Working with existing trolley and cable lines, the Muni established a six-line system to the northern part of the city to serve the fair.

The two blocks dropping from the crest of Fillmore Street towards the fairgrounds were an engineering headache. An ingenious counterbalance system was developed for the 25% grade. Cars would raise and lower simultaneously. It was cumbersome and slow... but it worked!

The Southern Pacific terminal at Third and Townsend was built to serve the many trainloads of cross-country tourists who were coming West for the PPIE and the concurrent California-Pacific Exposi-



PPIE OPENING DAY ON VAN NESS AVENUE

tion in San Diego. Eight trains filled with fairgoers arrived daily. A loop system was developed to bring people to the expo terminal where Galileo High School is now located. Fare: a nickel.

NWP ferries from Sausalito docked at the fair pier. The Monticello Steamship Company brought people from the north bay regions. Oakland Key System ferries brought passengers from the Alameda Mole direct to the Expo terminal at the fairgrounds. Western Pacific and SP ferries docked at the Ferry Building. At the "Ferry Loop" there were several choices for transport to the PPIE: cab, URR, Muni, double deck buses (not successful), touring cars. We saw an expo motor coach that had been T-boned by a trolley car. The Key System (named for the shape of its pier) tied in with interurban lines that brought people to Oakland from the north and east.

A railroad freight tunnel from Van Ness Avenue to the fairgrounds was vital as all of the construction materials had to come by rail. The tunnel is unused at present, but plans are being considered for running Muni service through it.

Sixty-five thousand or more people went to the

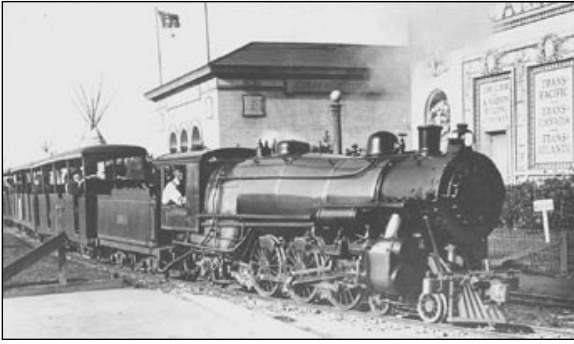


THE FERRY LOOP



AUTO TRAIN AT THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC BUILDING





OVERFAIR RAILWAY

PPIE each day! Transit service had to be speedy. URR and Muni Fare Loaders could herd 65 people aboard in 15 seconds at the Ferry Loop and other choke points.

Nickel jitneys were another option for fairgoers. They used private autos and ran in competition with URR service. This was not considered a problem until they began competing with the Muni lines. Personal auto traffic was not a major consideration.

San Francisco was a city of 485,000 people and no traffic signals. There were plenty of accidents and crossing busy streets was near impossible.

We saw a view of the Union Street line which had been bought by the Muni in 1913 and came to the Presidio gate [see p. 15], the western end of the fairgrounds. Next, a photo of the J car on Columbus Avenue. [Many of the nonpostcard images are from the archives of the Muni Rwy and the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association. Thanks!]

Inside the gates, the fairgrounds were a sea of people. The grounds stretched for 2.2 miles. Two and 3-car elephant trains ran continually. The SP building was especially popular; it offered free toilets!

Louis MacDermott used family fortunes to build the



FOG ENGINE BEHIND SCINTILLATOR



Overfair Railway, a state-of-the-art, one-third scale steam railroad that hauled visitors around the fair. It was a money loser even at 10¢ a ride; its engines are still in use elsewhere.

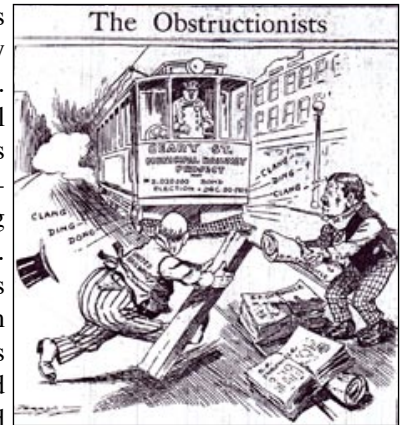
On Solano County Day, crowds from Napa and Vallejo aboard the *General Frisbee*, were “shipwrecked” when the vessel ran aground on a cruise to view the nightly light show. There were no injuries. Steam to

create the “fog” for the Scintillator light shows was made by an SP locomotive that had been camouflage painted to make it less noticeable.

As the fair’s run drew to a close, transportation companies offered special rates for latecomers.

We saw a Christmas cartoon, of Santa giving the Geary Street Muni line to the city, as Grant explained that the fair had provided many benefits to San Francisco. Eighteen million visitors brought money and reason for developing tourist services. The Civic Auditorium was

a gift to the city from the PPIE. The Municipal Railway was firmly established during the PPIE era. Expansion was completed on schedule; profits went to build more lines and pay down debt.



DEFEAT OF OBSTRUCTIONISTS MADE MODERN TRANSIT—AND THE PPIE—POSSIBLE

House lights and window shades rose, and much applause filled the room!

The program ran over an hour, longer than our usual schedule. But no one, save one person who *had* to leave, stirred. It was fascinating and informative, and for me, clarifying, as the presentation put separate facets of the pre-quake, reconstruction and PPIE eras into a seamless continuum.

—NOTES BY LB

## POSTCARD CALENDAR

Apr. 23-25, Fri-Sun, **SF AIRPORT** Mariott, 50th Anniversary WESTPEX, info: [www.westpex.org](http://www.westpex.org)

Apr. 23-25, Fri-Sun, **SAN MATEO**, Hillsborough Antique Show, San Mateo Expo Fairgrounds, Fri. 11am-7pm, Sat. 11am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm\*

**Apr. 24-25, Sat-Sun, SAN DIEGO Postcard & Paper Show, 5440 Kearny Mesa Rd., 10am-4 and 5pm+**

May 7-8, Sat-Sun, **GRASS VALLEY**, Old West & Antique Show at the Fairgrounds, 10-5, 9-4\*

**May 8-9, Sat-Sun, REDDING, Postcard and Paper Show, 2290 Benton Drive, 10am-6 and 4pm+**

**May 15-16, Sat-Sun, SAN FRANCISCO, Vintage Paper Fair, Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue & Lincoln, Sat. 10am-6 and 4pm\*+ Free Admission!**

**May 22-23, Sat-Sun, GLENDALE, Vintage Paper Fair, 1401 N. Verdugo Rd., 10am-6 and 4pm\*+ Free Admission!**

May 30, **HEALDSBURG**, Outdoor Antique Faire on the Plaza, 8am-4pm. Free.\*

**Aug. 14-15, Sat-Sun, SAN FRANCISCO, Vintage Paper Fair, Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue & Lincoln, Sat. 10am-6 and 4pm\*+ Free Admission!**

Aug. 21-22, Sat-Sun, **SAN RAFAEL**, Antique/Collector Fair, Civic Center, 10am-6 and 5pm\*

**Aug. 28-29, Sat-Sun, SACRAMENTO, California's Capitol Postcard Show, Masonic Hall, 6151 H Street, 10 am-5 and 4pm\*+**

**Sept. 11, Sat, SANTA CRUZ, Central Coast Postcard & Paper Show, UCSC Inn, 611 Ocean Street, 10am-5pm\*+**

**Sept. 25-26, Sat-Sun, GLENDALE, Vintage Paper Fair, 1401 N. Verdugo Rd., 10am-6 and 4pm\*+ Free Admission!**

Oct. 9, Sat, **WALNUT CREEK** Railroad, Mining & Western Show, 1475 Creekside Drive, 9am-3pm\*

**Nov. 20-21, Sat-Sun, CONCORD, Vintage Paper Fair, 5298 Clayton Rd., 10am to 6 and 4pm\*+**

**Bolded entries are produced by club members.**

\* Ken Prag will be there; let him know what to bring; 415 586-9386, [kprag\(at\)planetaria.net](mailto: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

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Nancy Russell, she collects images of how babies are swaddled, carried, pushed in prams and so on; families; Japan.

David Goya, a collector of the PPIE.

Larry Pettinger—Larry looks for cards of UC Berkeley, the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, Yosemite, Monterey and San Benito Counties.

Stephen Powell, his interests are “eclectic,” which means he likes good cards that appeal to him.

It was puzzling. Two of our newest membership applications, both from the East Coast, came within hours of each other as did an order, also far from the West, for copies of *FACING DISASTER*, the club-published account of the 1906 earthquake and fire. What was up? I asked Steve Powell and learned that our web site, [www.postcard.org](http://www.postcard.org), had been selected as Web Site of the Month by the American Philatelic Society as announced in the monthly emailed newsletter. Wow! (Again.) Kudos to the club and to each of us—especially Web Master Jack Daley! —Ed.

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CHINESE OPIUM DEN, 614 JACKSON STREET, CHINATOWN. SAN FRANCISCO; THE CAT HAS BECOME ADDICTED TO THE FUMES OF THE DRUG. BRITTON & REY NO. 512





## Into a Den of Iniquity? Our guide, Kathryn Ayres

*“Guide took us through the building and we saw how they lived in this little room – He led us through dreadful dark smelling alleys. We saw them fill and smoke their opium pipes and the whole thing.”*

Those are the words written on the back of this unsent postcard. The caption reads, “Underground Opium Den, Chinatown”; it was published by the Galloway Lithographing Co., San Francisco.

In his 1943 book, *SPEAKING FOR MYSELF*, Stewart Edward White described the Chinatown tours that were formerly available to San Francisco tourists:

“By night, small, select, and shuddery parties got themselves a ‘detective’ by way of protection, and were led into awesome places, culminating in gambling hells and opium dens and cellars that went down three or four stories underground.... These alleged underground works were amusing. The illusion was perfect—for it was an illusion. You entered from the street; you went down a flight of steps into a cellar full of smoke and gamblers; you went down another flight of steps into a subcellar full of smoke and opium fiends; you went down another flight of steps into a subsubcellar full of smoke and sinister hatchet men; and so on, if your ‘detective’ was a good thrill picker and had the proper connections; until, with a shudder of ecstasy, you realized you were four, five stories deep in the bowels of the earth—with, probably, secret passages extending in all directions! You climbed back up all those stairs and wrote postal cards on which you used the phrase, ‘a veritable rabbit warren.’ Two facts escaped your notice—that, invariably, you made these subterranean visits at night, and that even in the lowest story the air was passably breathable.

“The explanation is simple. San Francisco’s



Chinatown is built on a steep side hill. The story which is the third or fourth when viewed from the downhill side of a building becomes the ground floor when entered from the street above. After dark this fact is not apparent. All the ‘detective’ has to do is to take his ‘tourist’ in at the upper street level. From that nethermost ‘four stories underground’ he could have let them out directly on the level of the alleyway below, but that would never have done. It was a neat trick, loyally sustained by all true Californians. The fire and earthquake of 1906 were supposed to have filled all these underground works, and the modern guides to the modern Chinatown have not dared revive the hoax.”

Hmmm. Perhaps this was true. But if so, where did the “detective” dig up all the opium smokers, gamblers and so-called hatchet men? Was there really enough of a profit from these tours to pay an entourage of actors? White dutifully admits that the tourists “had seen nothing—they could see nothing without credentials—of the beautiful upper-story homes and charming family life of the great merchants, or even the sober social clubs, where, beneath portraits of the President and the Emperor, men sat quietly at ebony-wood tables shuffling the mah-jongg tiles.”



An email came from John Freeman in February:

*I find that sheet music is an area of social commentary in the time period between about 1900 and about 1940 that gets ignored. I collect San Francisco-related items, and so, am always looking at everything, sheet music included. The cover might be the best feature or the lyrics. I particularly enjoy the ridiculous rhyming and egregiously inaccurate historical or physical statements about San Francisco, California or the West.*

*I remember that at a club meeting a couple of years ago, someone brought a piece of sheet music with “postcard” or “postal” in the title, but I never payed enough attention to it to remember who brought it or what it said. I would love to know more about sheet music that used the lowly postcard in the title or lyrics.*

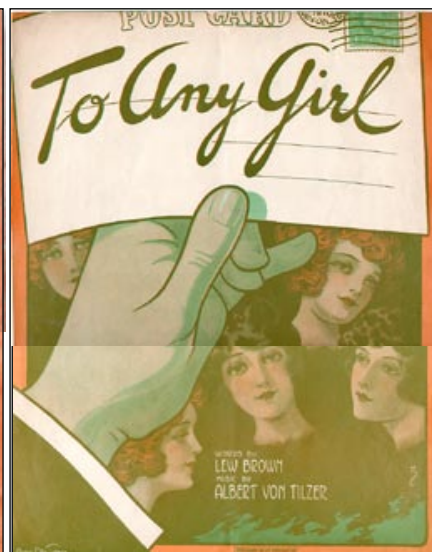
As Editor, messages like John’s delight me. A new and interesting twist on postcards... grist for the never resting mill. And, best of all, I knew just whom to turn to for knowledge and imagery.

Michael Seaman is a postcard friend, who lives in Albany, New York and collects and deals in sheet music. The surrounding images were sent by him and “pasted” together from partial scans by me. The comments are Mike’s, too.

## POSTCARDS ON SHEET MUSIC

by MIKE SEAMAN, g20470(at)yahoo.com

The golden age of sheet music publishing, from 1892 with the publication of the five million selling “After The Ball” until the 1920s and 30s when the popularity of the phonograph and radio meant less music sheets were being sold, coincided with the most popular era for postcards. Song writing and publishing was a big and competitive business in which everyone was always looking for a new hook. Besides songs of love lost or won (of which there were thousands), there were songs about almost every aspect of life, social movements, for example — prohibition,

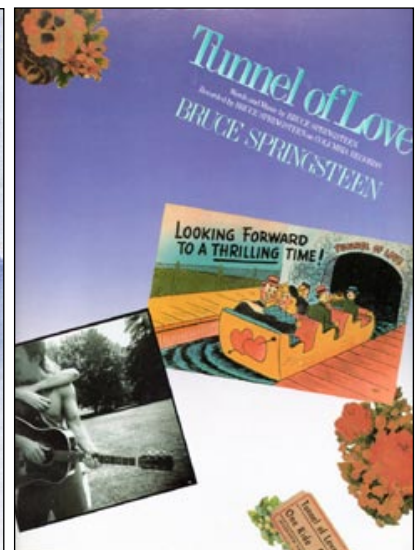
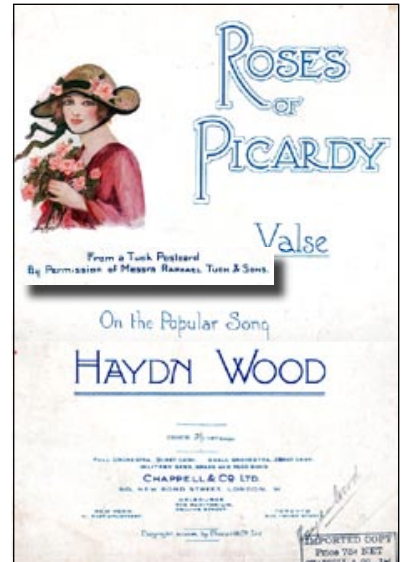




suffrage, political candidates, also sports, animals, transportation and so on.

Most of these will be familiar to postcard collectors who have looked through topical boxes as almost every topic that is collected in postcards has a corresponding topic in sheet music.

It seems inevitable that sheet music and postcards would take notice of each other, which they did. Many songs directly referenced postcards while others relate to postcards in an indirect manner. In the song, "I Want a Postal Card From You," a young girl berates her would-be boyfriend for giving her candy and apples but no postal cards. The cover also is adorned with some facsimile postcards. "General Delivery" has no lyrics but shows a Cupid mailman delivering a mail item. It is left to the viewer's imagination to determine whether it is a letter or a postcard. The song "To Any Girl" has a large image of a postcard on the cover, and the lyrics describe the sad story of a guy who can not find a girlfriend and in desperation writes a Post Card addressed to any girl. The song "Roses of Picardy," published in London, is not directly related to postcards but the cover illustration has the credit "From a Tuck Postcard." "Meet Me Next Sunday" had another cupid mailman who is handing a postcard to a young lady. The lyrics of the song do not mention a postcard so it was the cover artist who assumed the message would be delivered in postcard form. "Having a Good Time, Wish You Were Here" is the classic postcard message. The cover shows a postcard (seemingly postmarked from Albany, Georgia) and the lyrics are all about sending the card to a missed loved one. "Just a Little Penny Post Card" is a patriotic WWII song which reminds people to send postcards to the men in uniform. ("A letter would be better, But if it's too much for you, Why, just a little penny post-card will bring joy to a boy that's blue.") Lastly, is a song by Bruce Springsteen which reproduced a comic linen on the cover. The lyrics do not mention postcard but, the piece is about a Tunnel of Love which is illustrated by the postcard. (con't) ▶





## NOTES ON THE MUSIC SHOWN:

“I Want a Postal Card from You,” Words: Thomas J. Gray, Music: Fred Fischer, Cover art: Gene Buck, 1908

“General Delivery,” Music: Jacob Henry Ellis, Cover art: E. Pfeiffer, 1911

“To Any Girl,” Words: Lew Brown, Music: Albert Von Tilzer, Cover art: Andre C. DeTakacs, 1917 (This is not a scanning problem, it is printed so that the top of the POST CARD, the postmark (Hudson Terminal in NYC) and stamp are cut off.)

“Roses of Picardy,” Music: Haydn Wood, Cover art:

Dorothy Mostyn (as credited on the cover From a Tuck Postcard), 1919

“Meet Me Next Sunday,” Words and Music: Jack Snyder, Cover art: Al Barbelle, 1922

“Having a good Time, Wish You were here,” Words: Al Dubin and Irving Kahal, Music: Sammy Fain, Cover art: uncredited, 1932

“Just a Little Penny Post Card,” Words and Music: Charles O’Flynn and Herbert Dittmer, Cover art: uncredited, 1944

“Tunnel of Love,” Words and Music: Bruce Springsteen, Cover art: uncredited, 1988 (#8 top 40 hit)

## STORIES LIFTED FROM THE BACKS OF POSTCARDS

by ART SOMMERS

The images on the front of some postcards may be nondescript and uninteresting; however, the stories on the backs of those same cards can be thought provoking and tell of events of the time. I have acquired a few postcards solely because of what is written on them, not caring too much about their images. Other times, cards that I have bought for the image I’ve later come to realize have intriguing stories on the back. A clear and bold postmark helps in discovering the time lag between an event and its recognition by the author of the postcard message.

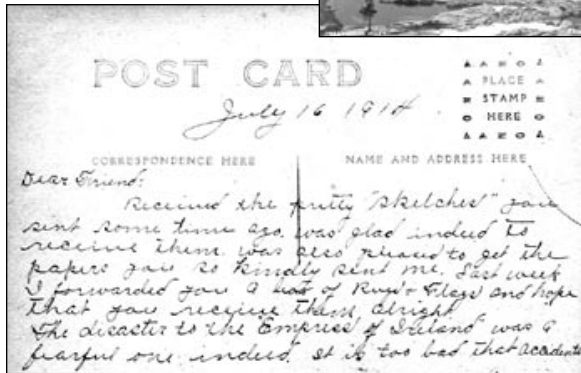
Misfortune is often the subject of the stories. There can be mention of major events, and reading the short notes on old postcards provides insight into our ongoing fascination with the tragedies and scandals of the day. This prurient fixation is longstanding, not just a contemporary phenomenon. Sometimes, the simple personal story of an injury or death in the family is the reason for sending a card. Besides commenting on great and small happenings, postcard stories most often tell of day-to-day events. One postcard message cited here talks about the poor housing market of a century ago. For students of social history, a postcard sender’s choice of images gives a glimpse of that person’s world view. Notice the card dealing with the theory of evolution. I was surprised that people would openly mail evolution themed cards to friends and relatives in the 20th century. This public ridicule of evolutionary theory culminated in the Scopes

“monkey” trial of 1925.

**SINKING OF THE TITANIC:** Looking through a dealer’s cards that were alphabetized by postal cancel with no regard to the image on the front, I was checking out cards mailed from my hometown of Auburn and found one that had a typical story about an ailing friend. The last sentence on the card, though, was about the sinking of the *Titanic*. I looked at the cancellation again — April 18, 1912 — only three days after the ship went down. I paid the dealer’s asking price of \$3.00 and told him about the note on the back that mentioned the *Titanic*. His eyes opened wider at this news. He obviously had not read the message and had missed an opportunity. This was soon after the release of the movie “Titanic”; had he noticed, the dealer could have asked several times more for this common greeting card.



**SINKING OF THE EMPRESS OF IRELAND:** I had bought a scenic view of Desolation Valley, a remote wilderness area heavily used by hikers on a plateau above Lake Tahoe. In the years I had it, I had not paid attention to the writing on the back as the card had not been mailed. Recently, while looking through my cards to help with the SFBAPCC book on Northern California photographers, I pulled out the Desolation Valley card and read the back more carefully. The note mentioned the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland*. A little research revealed the sad history of the ship, an ocean liner built in 1905 for a Canadian company. At 570 feet long, she was steaming through fog on the Saint Lawrence River and was struck amidships by a Norwegian coal tanker on May 29, 1914. The *Empress* was fatally damaged and sank quickly taking the lives of 1,024 passengers—the deadliest maritime disaster in Canadian history. Unlike the *Titanic* postcard with just a three day gap between the event and its recognition by the sender, this card was dated July 16, 1914, a good month and a half after the accident.



is of a later view.) The June crossing of the Atlantic Ocean was just a month after her maiden voyage. The *SS Normandie* was built for the French Line, Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, and at that time, she was the largest and fastest passenger ship ever built. When France fell to Germany in 1940, the United States seized the *Normandie*, and, in 1942, renamed her the *USS Lafayette* and set about converting her into a troopship. Sadly, the *Lafayette* caught fire in February of 1942 during refitting. So much water was poured into her hull to fight the fire that she rolled over and sank in shallow water at the New York Passenger Ship Terminal, Pier 88. The burned and flooded ship lay on her side for about a year before being salvaged at great expense. Restoration was then deemed too costly, and she was scrapped in October 1946.



**SUICIDE BY KNIFE:** I bought a real photo card showing three young children in a wagon pulled by two donkeys. It was postmarked in May 1908, and it had a place in my collection as it is a rare view of



**SINKING OF THE NORMANDIE:** A friend was cleaning closets and gave me a box of World War II era postcards. None of the images interested me, so I spent some time reading the backs. One card mentioned a transatlantic crossing on the *SS Normandie*. The note on the card, postmarked June 1935, told how wonderful the trip to France had been and how exciting it was to have taken a tour of the *Normandie*'s engine room and to have met the ship's captain. (This image



the small community of Westville on the Foresthill Divide in Placer County. It was the only card I had ever seen of Westville; I may not have even looked at the back—except for the price. Well, the story the message tells made my purchase ever so much better. There is one shocking sentence in the rambling note on back of card. It reads, “W. McCall tried to commit suicide here last night by stabbing himself all through the body.” Was he successful? Further research will tell.

**THE MOVIE CRITIC:** Although it was not a scene from Placer County, I liked the image on a card with a view of a railroad steam shovel at work. Reading the long note on both sides of the card, I discovered that the writer was playing the role of film critic in June of 1910. Movies had not



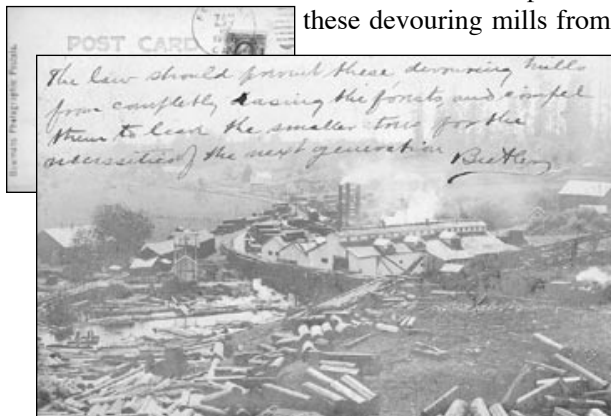
been around all that long, yet his comments seem so modern: “...went to the moving pictures last Sunday evening and saw about the worst lot of pictures I have yet had the misfortune to see.”

**THE MOVIE STAR:** Another card I have was sent by a woman who had moved out to California from Georgia. She jokingly revealed that she was not yet



a movie star. Well, I think she was joking because the postcard is postmarked San Diego 1943, and she mentions returning to Palm Springs, both of those places being a distance from Hollywood. A great number of people moved to California in search of work during World War II. Maybe she came West to get a defense job and was hoping to land an acting gig as well.

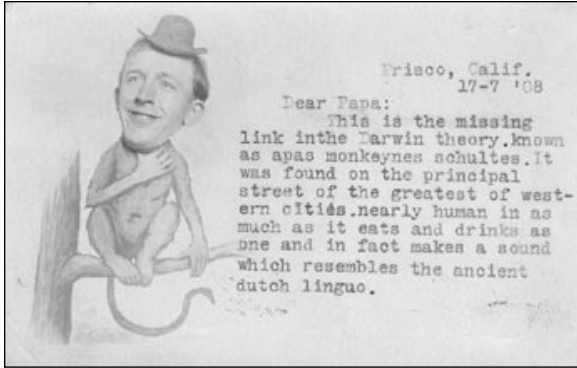
**GREEN LOGGING:** This undivided back postcard required that the message be on the front, the view side, and it is apropos to today’s ecological concerns. The sender wrote: “The law should prevent these devouring mills from





completely (er)asing the forests and compel them to leave the smaller trees for the necessities of the next generation."

**DARWINIAN THEORY:** This card was intriguing by its having been made before the 1925 Scopes "Monkey" Trial in Tennessee. It was surprising to read how bold the senders were in divulging their position on the



subject. The card seems to

John M. Schultz,  
Crawfordsville  
Ind.

make fun of the concept of evolution but doesn't necessarily deny the theory.

**BURST HOUSING BUBBLE:** Our current recession and associated housing crisis is not a unique event. Bad housing markets have agonized earlier Americans. The message on the back of this card reads, "If we could sell this 'hut' we would start for Calif as soon as

we could pack our trunk, but we couldn't give it away now. Hope both you



and Mr. Nelson are well." I don't know if the writer is serious or not. The house seems far from being a hut. Was he being sarcastic by emphasizing the word with quotation marks and underlining it to point out that he should be able to sell his house as it is a very fine home indeed... or was he just boasting and perfectly content to remain in his comfortable "hut"?

Certainly, readers of this SFBAPCC newsletter also have interesting stories on the backs of their postcards. [Let's read about them! —Ed.]

### MORE FAIR AREA IMAGES

Harbor View, a resort area at the foot of Lyon Street, deserves more research. This card from the Baths appears to be from about 1912—after trolley service began and before the PPIE.



*I walked out here & took sea bath yesterday*

## Harbor View Park

Terminus of Union Street Electric Road

PORCELAIN BATH TUBS	<b>Hot Salt Water</b> ::: Baths :::	PURE OCEAN WATER
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A SURE CURE FOR RHEUMATISM

The Fillmore and Folk Street Cars and all car lines running north crossing Union Street transfer to Harbor View Hot Salt Water Baths. Union Street Cars with Blue sign go directly to the Baths. Please keep this card for reference. Come and examine, and try these Baths. Fresh Crabs and Clam Chowder daily.

**R. Herman Company**  
Telephone West 748

HANSEN CO.

*Opposite angle to the left*

Muni Union Street trolleys at the Presidio gate.



**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA POST CARD CLUB**

**APPLICATION FOR NEW MEMBERSHIP**

RENEWALS: List changes only

Individual/Family \$15 [ ]

Supporting \$25 or more [ ]

Out of USA \$25/35 [ ]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Family members: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Collector [ ]

Dealer [ ]

Approvals welcome: Yes [ ] No [ ]

Collecting interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Join online at [www.postcard.org](http://www.postcard.org) and remit by PayPal or...

send membership info and your check payable to SFBAPCC

to PO Box 621, Penngrove CA 94951

4/10

P.O. BOX 621  
PENNGROVE CA 94951



**2010 MEETINGS**

April 24

May 22

June 26

July 24

August 21 **change**

September 25

October 16 **change**

November 27