

SMALL FORMAT, BIG VIEW:

Curt Teich Postcards of Minnesota

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Take a trip, send a postcard” has been a ritual ever since the American picture postcard made its debut in 1893 at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. As a communications innovation, a souvenir, and, above all, a collectible, postcards were an immediate success. Thousands were bought, sometimes mailed, but overwhelmingly saved during the collecting craze that continued through the First World War. In Minnesota, a local writer reported in 1905, “A conservative estimate places the number of cards that will pass thru the city mails during Christmas week at 120,000. These, if laid end to end in line, would stretch from the Journal office to the capitol at St. Paul.”¹

A grant from the Minnesota Historical Society funded research at the Curt Teich Postcard Archives, Lake County Museum, in Wauconda, Illinois. Curator Katherine Hamilton-Smith and staff members Christine A. Pyle and Debra Gust contributed generously with their time and knowledge. Additional information came from the Otter Tail, Anoka, Douglas, and Freeborn County Historical Societies.

¹ See Gordon Bleuler and Jim Doolin, “World’s Columbian Exposition—1893: Official and Unofficial Souvenir Postal Cards,” *The American Philatelist*, Aug. 1980, p. 713–26; *Minneapolis Journal*, Nov. 26, 1905, mag. sec., 6.

Moira Harris, Ph.D., is an art historian who wrote on murals in the summer 1993 issue of Minnesota History. Her most recent publication is a guide to the art collection at Hazelden Foundation in Center City. Her interest in postcards was sparked by a family postcard collection, begun by Bonnie Harris at the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893 and expanded by her daughter, Eleanor. This article is dedicated to these two true deltiologists.



The Foshay Tower dominating Minneapolis's skyline, a card from the "City of Lakes and Parks" series, 1935

Whereas blank cards with postage printed on them and finely printed European “gruss aus” or “greetings from” cards had been issued before the exposition, the trend-setting new cards featured small, colored lithographs of exposition buildings on one side, with the other reserved for a stamp and an address. Senders of these cards with undivided backs were forced to relegate any message to small areas around the picture. (Only after 1907 did the post office allow cards to carry a message space next to the address.) The glossy black-and-white photographic cards, first introduced in the 1880s and called “real photo cards,” were exceptionally difficult to write on. They are very popular among deltiologists, or postcard collectors, however, who consider them highly authentic representations of the past. Sharing this viewpoint, documentary photographer Walker Evans described postcards as “folk documents” and wrote that “on their tinted surfaces were some of the truest visual records ever made.”²

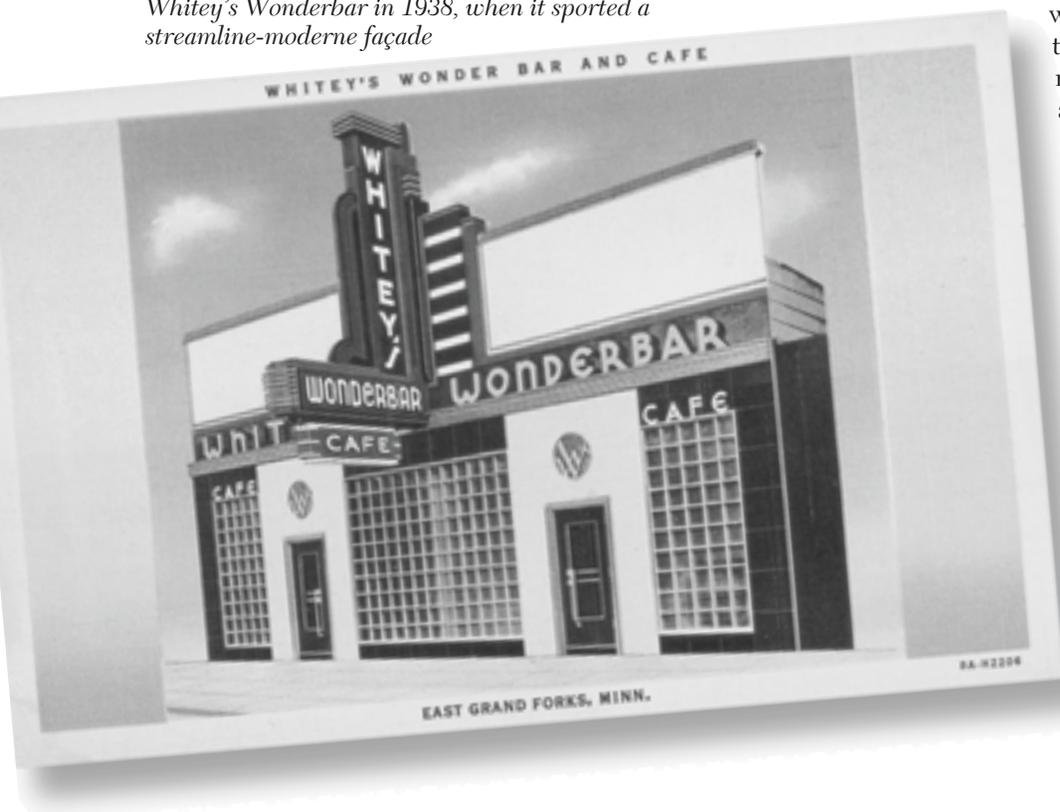
For viewers interested in the American commercial landscape, postcards offer a rich source of information about cities and their major hotels,

restaurants, other businesses, parks, and railroad stations. Documenting change as well as continuity in the urban scene, they show a new hotel entrance, a brash skyscraper erupting above a field of downtown buildings, and statues and fountains now vanished from city parks. Similarly, cards from small towns reveal what was once considered significant, attractive, and worth promoting. Repeated images of the same business or townscape also suggest a card’s popularity.

Postcards narrow the focus of the once-popular nineteenth-century bird’s-eye views of entire towns.³ In these earlier lithographs, also produced for promotional reasons and saved as collectibles, settlements appeared neat and prosperous. Hotels and businesses are easy to spot. Postcards, based on photographs rather than drawings, present clean, thriving, and modern portions of a city, its neighborhoods, and buildings. The vast numbers, low cost, and wide availability of postcards in public and private collections make them a valuable tool for studying Minnesota history.

In order to compare and contrast images, researchers need to know when the cards were issued. While copyright dates and postmarks yield dates, most cards were never mailed. In the case of one card manufacturer, however, accurate dating is possible. The Curt Teich Printing Company of Chicago not only numbered its cards and proofs but did so in systems that reflected production years and printing methods. Teich’s job-order packets from 1926 to 1960 have been preserved intact, enabling the finished cards to be compared to the photographs and color guidelines supplied by clients. Because Teich was the largest printer

Whitey’s Wonderbar in 1938, when it sported a streamline-moderne façade



² Walker Evans, “Nostalgic Picture Postcards Recall an Earlier American Scene,” *Fortune* 37 (May 1948): 104; Walker Evans, “When ‘Downtown’ was a Beautiful Mess,” *Fortune* 65 (Jan. 1962): 101.

³ See John W. Reps, *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984).

of view postcards in the United States, its archives, housed since 1982 near Chicago in the Lake County Museum in Wauconda, Illinois, is increasingly valuable.

Other printers—Detroit Publishing Company, Albertype Company of Brooklyn, Rotograph Company and Illustrated Postal Card Company of New York, the English firm of Raphael Tuck, and E. C. Kropp and its successor firm, L. L. Cook, of Milwaukee—also published Minnesota view cards, and V. O. Hammon of Minneapolis and Chicago printed several hundred Minnesota cards between 1900 and 1920 that are highly valued by collectors for their aesthetic quality. Teich's longer history, larger number of cards, and preserved records, however, make its archives the most interesting and productive.



Curt Teich, born into a family of printers in Greiz, Germany, in 1877, followed a brother to Chicago. In 1898 Teich opened his own firm, which remained a family business until after his death in 1974. Competition was strong among newspaper and magazine printers in Chicago, and following a visit to Germany in 1904, Teich decided to specialize in postcards. On his first American cross-country sales trip, he photographed and solicited orders at the price of one dollar per thousand cards. By the end of his journey, his sales book contained \$30,000 worth of orders.⁴

As Teich recalled in a family history published in 1958, his “C. T. American Art” process of color-postcard lithography, perfected before 1907, was so cumbersome that he did not bother seeking a patent for it. His competitors, however, imitated the process, and imported European postcards showing American scenes continued to flood the American market. Only a duty imposed on foreign cards in 1908 and Teich's own ability to fill orders quickly helped the company find and maintain its niche in the view-card market. By 1909 Teich had installed a fast, new offset-lithography press that printed four colors over black halftone impres-

sions in sheets of 32 images. This investment helped him retain his share of the market.⁵

Teich's company reached its greatest fame in the 1930s and 1940s as a publisher of “linen” cards. These four-color cards were printed and then run through a machine which embossed texture lines. While their rag paper is poor in quality and their inks are gaudy, the cards preserve images and invaluable information about the look of America in these decades.

In 1949 Curt Teich Jr. perfected another offset-printing method named “Curteichcolor,” which brought the company continued success. Images printed from color transparencies were coated with plastic, yielding bright, crisp views. These “chrome” cards, plain or rough edged, continue to be widely available.

In the Teich archives, volumes of handwritten ledger sheets list card production by state and town or city. The sheets indicate dates and clients and lead researchers to job-order packets, which give more information. In addition, 600 albums contain pasted-down examples of each card, and file drawers house other samples.

These remarkably detailed records reveal that Teich produced 6,500 cards with Minnesota images representing some 170 towns. Major cities and resort communities such as Bemidji and Brainerd have the most cards, while some places, Lindstrom and Chisago City, for example, have none, perhaps because local photographers were already supplying the tourist market. In addition, the archives has many generic views of lake cabins and wildlife, scenes of hunting and fishing, and a few portraits of Native Americans.⁶ Cards in which the oversized letters of a town name contain small images of local buildings and monuments exist for 20 Minnesota communities. (Some appear in the Minnesota Historical Society's “Home Place Minnesota” multimedia production at the History Center.) Teich's large-letter cards are mostly linens from the 1930s through the 1960s.

For most towns, the first Teich postcards listed are views of Main Street taken from the middle of the roadway or from the nearest elevation (producing a bird's-eye view). Courthouses, city

⁴ Ralph Teich, “A Son Remembers Curt Otto Teich Sr.,” *Postcard Journal* 1 (Summer 1984): 1.

⁵ Curt Teich, *The Teich's Family Tree and History* (Chicago: Curt Teich and Company, 1958), 30, 31; Kim Keister, “Wish You Were Here: The Curt Teich Postcard Archives Depict Americans as They Saw Themselves Through the First Seven Decades of the Twentieth Century,” *Historic Preservation* 44 (Mar./Apr. 1992): 54–61.

⁶ See Patricia C. Albers and William R. James, “Images and Reality—Postcards of Minnesota's Ojibway People, 1900–1980,” *Minnesota History* 49 (Summer 1985): 229–40.



Minneapolis's Hiawatha and Minnehaha statue, a linen card from 1942. The statue first went on display in plaster in front of the Minnesota building at the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

halls, parks, churches, residences, and significant monuments all appear in the early views. For larger cities the earliest Teich images vary, ranging from Duluth's harbor, Minneapolis's Nicollet Avenue, and St. Paul's state capitol building to Winona's Riverside Park and Rochester's now destroyed statue of Abraham Lincoln.

Wholesalers ordered and distributed city views to drugstores, newsstands, and dry-goods and five-and-dime stores. As early as 1906 the

green logo of Bloom Brothers of Minneapolis began appearing on the cards.⁷ Other wholesalers soon followed, including R. Steinman and St. Marie's Gopher News of Minneapolis. Northern Minnesota Novelties of Cross Lake in Crow Wing County also distributed Teich cards before becoming a publisher in the 1980s.

Teich views were typically taken on sunny spring or summer days. Lawns are green, flowers bloom, and tiny wisps of clouds dot blue skies. (A former employee of another card publisher noted that blue skies and clouds were usually added to the printing plate.) Postcard views were intended to attract tourists, and the term "postcard perfect" naturally went along with the words "Wish you were here!" For senders stumped by what to write, manufacturers offered ready-made messages. St. Paul printer Brown & Bigelow, for example, published a card with this poem:

Well, here I am in St. Paul, Minn.,
 Enjoying its sights and cheer.
 Everything's great and I'm feeling first rate,
 But, O, how I wish you were here!⁸

At the Teich archives, the elements needed to create postcard perfection are in the job-order packets. Accompanying the black-and-white photograph is the text for the front or back of the card and notes about colors for the printer. Elements to be emphasized or deleted are sometimes marked on a tissue overlay. As described by a sales and promotion director, customers were sent a numbered color chart so that they could mark the correct choices. Clients who wanted to ensure that their wallpaper, carpeting, or upholstery fabric would be accurately shown often sent small samples, which remain in the job packets. The customer later received press proofs of both sides of the card.

Job-order packet for card promoting St. Paul's Prom Ballroom, including samples of interior furnishings, about 1960



⁷ *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 19, 1959, p. 1, 5.

⁸ John Fagan, interview by author, Milwaukee, Mar. 6, 1994; Brown & Bigelow card no. 1224, copyright 1903, Frank Harris Collection. The card's image of strawberries, from a painting by C. P. Ream, was the company's first colored lithograph.



A view of the interior of Whitey's Cafe, with its celebrated stainless-steel bar, about 1944

Among Teich's customers were owners of businesses, distributors or jobbers, and individual photographers such as Bemidji's Hakkerup Studio.⁹

Typical Minnesota subjects range from small businesses and tourist attractions to large hotels. In 1935, for example, the owner of Whitey's Wonderbar restaurant in East Grand Forks ordered 6,000 cards of its interior. On the tissue overlay in the job-order packet, the following details were noted:

Fans and light fixtures are chrome nickel

Venetian blinds are white

Shelves on post are silver

Sand boxes are black and chrome

Drapes are blue and white

Booths are trimmed with silver

Ceiling discs are dark blue and ochre

Bottled goods—well above average.

The card's focal point was the horseshoe-shaped stainless-steel bar with brass rail and mahogany counter top.



According to owner Edwin Larson, who approved the printing colors, his was the second stainless-steel bar in the country.¹⁰

Three years later, Whitey's ordered 12,500 more cards, this time of the restaurant's streamline-moderne façade. This number might have been sufficient, had not a fire started by hot grease destroyed the building in 1942. Two years later, when the business reopened and the owner ordered more postcards, Whitey's Wonderbar had become Whitey's Cafe and Lounge. Instead of a vertical neon marquee, cast-stone pilasters enhanced the glass-block exterior. The celebrated

bar was rebuilt, but the bottled goods were not on display, at least not in the new postcard view. The ceiling fan had been replaced by air conditioning, concealed by a canopy.¹¹

Just as the owners of Whitey's proudly displayed their refurbished bar, the proprietors of an automobile service station in Fergus Falls ordered Teich cards to advertise its uniqueness. While national companies eventually established uniform architectural styles, individual owners found a variety of designs to house their pumps and supplies. Students of gas-station architecture have identified a series of basic stylistic categories, including house-like structures for businesses in residential areas. Depending on the region, a station might resemble an English cottage, a Spanish mission, a Dutch windmill, or a Japanese teahouse. In Fergus Falls in 1925, one owner chose a log cabin. Built and operated at the corner of Lincoln and Vine Streets until 1946 by Charles G. Lindquist, who lived next door, the Log Cabin Service Station had a first story of logs, topped by

⁹ Warren Watkins, "How Curt Teich Postcards are Produced," *Deltiology* 14 (1974): 4.

¹⁰ Job order 5A-H2039, card 5A-H2039, Curt Teich Postcard Archives.

¹¹ *East Grand Forks Weekly Record*, Nov. 6, 1942, p. 1; cards 8A-H2206, 4B-H227, 4B-H228, Teich archives.

a half-timbered square tower and gable in the craftsman style. Until demolished in 1963, the building was a popular tourist attraction.¹²

The Teich job order for a card ordered on February 10, 1930, reveals detailed instructions for rendering the subject at night and in winter:

- Put clouds in sky
- Take out wires, roof, and chimney
- Put in windows night effect
- Red windows (with stars)
- White roof snow
- Concrete for tower
- Concrete between timbers
- Timbers are brown
- Take out post (in foreground)
- Take out rack and put in trees.¹³

W. T. Oxley, a local photographer who probably took the photograph, ordered the card. A year later a new order from Co-Mo Co., a Minneapolis postcard distributor, requested a view of the log-cabin station on a sunny day with flowers blooming near the gas pumps. Cards from 1925 and 1931 show the station from the same angle but with new floral displays and signage.¹⁴

Tourist attractions, however short lived, were prime candidates for the postcard publisher's art because cards—whether mailed or saved—offered a

A view of Fergus Falls' Log Cabin Service Station, the "most artistic in the U. S. A.," about 1928

simple and effective means of advertising. One Minnesota attraction in the Teich archives is Santa Claus Town, Bernard Swanson's response to his children's questions about where Mr. Claus spent the summer. Designed and built mainly by Swanson, the Anoka site was part amusement park with rides and games and part roadside attraction with large talking and moving statues. Jonah and the whale joined Mistress Mary Quite Contrary, the Old Woman in the Shoe, and Santa and his helpers on the eight-acre site along Highway 10. Two Teich cards from 1954 feature scenes of the treasure-chest-shaped souvenir shop and the entrance guarded by Frosty the Snowman and Santa. When Cletus Dunn bought Santa Claus Town in 1960, he moved many of the figures to Cottage Grove along Highway 61, where they remain today.¹⁵

Among Curt Teich's 68 cards featuring Minnesota roadside sculpture are a dozen of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. These incidentally record changes in the sculptures and their setting on the shore of Lake Bemidji. The earliest card,

¹² Daniel Vieyra, "Fill 'er Up"—*An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1979); John Jakle, "The American Gas Station, 1920–70," *Journal of American Culture* 1 (Spring 1978): 520–42; *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, Aug. 21, 1963, p. 1, Mar. 6, 1965, p. 7.

¹³ Job order 609-30, Teich archives.

¹⁴ Cards C6-2165 and 1A-697, Teich Archives.

¹⁵ *Anoka Union*, June 12, 1953, p. 1; cards 4C-K9344 and 4C-K9343, Teich archives.



from 1938, emphasizes Paul's height by including a man next to him. By 1940 Babe has joined the lumberjack, who is identified by a log signpost. Cards from the 1950s show the addition of an ax, bell, and tall rifle, as well as changes in Paul's shirt. The distant shoreline reveals a few houses and a farm with silos, while in a 1951 image, Teich's retoucher has eliminated the buildings in a swash of green.¹⁶

Rock gardens or grottos represent another class of attraction popular in the Midwest during the 1920s and 1930s. Minnesota postcards document the Vogt brothers' Ak-sar-ben Gardens near Bay Lake in Crow Wing County, John Christensen's rock garden in the village of Itasca, north of Albert Lea, Louis Wippich's Molehill in Sauk Rapids, and P. J. Noonan's Little Bit O' Heaven in Alexandria. The Teich archives reveals that local stores and distributors were as likely to order cards for sales as were the attractions' owners.¹⁷

It was bees that caused John Christensen to begin his rock garden in 1925. Seeking a place to

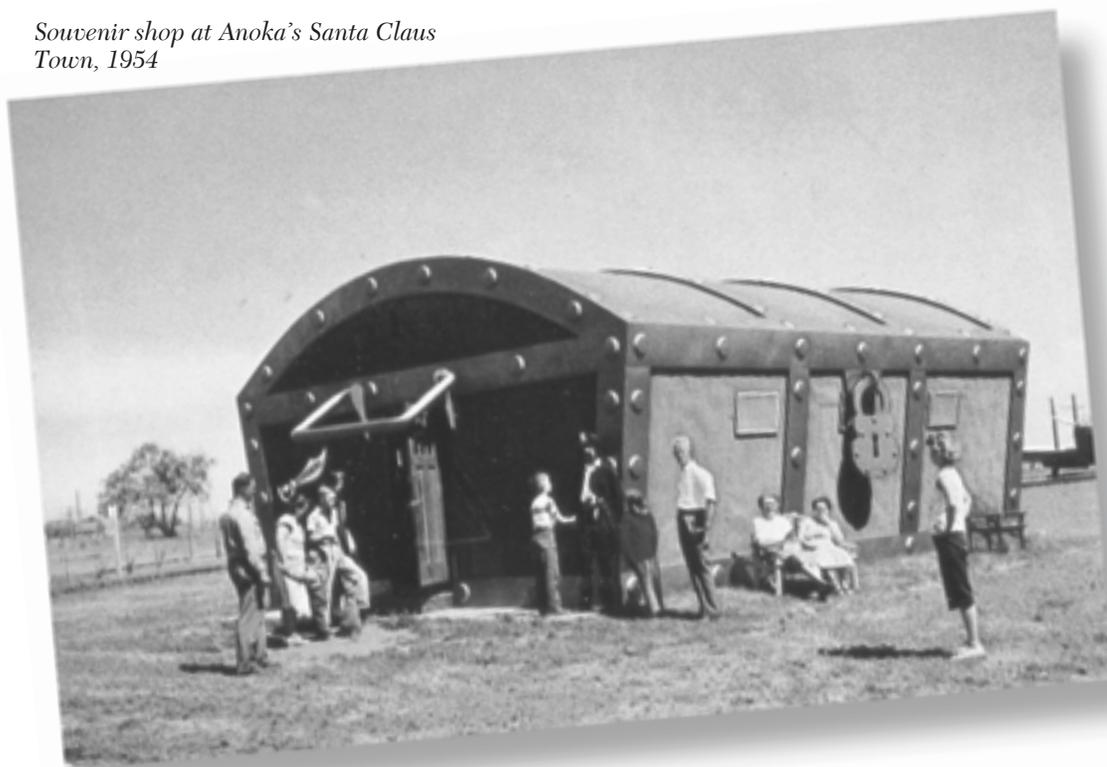
¹⁶ Cards 8A-H2965, 0B-H662, 1C-P1802, 3C-K917, and 4C-K1508, Teich archives.

¹⁷ See Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *Sacred Spaces and Other Places; A Guide to Grottos and Sculptural Environments in the Upper Midwest* (Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago Press, 1993). For information on Ak-sar-ben Gardens and Molehill, see the author's *Monumental Minnesota: A Guide to Outdoor Sculpture* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1992), 88–91.



Bemidji's Paul Bunyan, 1938

Souvenir shop at Anoka's Santa Claus Town, 1954





Little Bit O' Heaven, a popular Alexandria tourist attraction, 1931

store his hives, he built one structure, then another, following rock castles with bridges, caves, winding paths, and niches for statues, usually gnomes. Three Teich cards show his efforts, the first ordered in 1934 by F. W. Woolworth and Company, the other two in 1940 by the Valley News Company, a Mankato wholesaler. Job orders for the 1940 cards, a year after Christensen's death, read, "Rocks are all dull colors with exception of castle which has yellowed red rock." Anticipating a change, however, someone added, "The cement border on the pool in the foreground will be lined with rock as the border in the background is, so touch up accordingly." The site can still be viewed, although repairs are needed.¹⁸

Little Bit O' Heaven was a different sort of rock garden, conceived by wealthy Alexandria businessman Phil Noonan, who hired others to design and construct his dream. Next to the Noonan home on Kenwood Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, the site originally was devoted to vegetables and flowers, but by 1930 it boasted a formal garden with a fountain, pergola, and small crowd of cement figures—dwarfs, frogs,

and storks—inside a white picket fence. Gus Nestel of St. Paul's Holm & Olson florists designed the attraction.

Most rock gardens feature interesting rocks, and Noonan's was no exception. He trucked in moss-covered boulders from the St. Croix River valley and 700,000 pounds of limestone from Minneapolis's Pillsbury B mill for the walls, wishing well, and brook bed.¹⁹

One of the first groups to visit the Noonan garden upon its completion in 1932 was the Minnesota Historical Society, whose members were attending the annual meeting held that year in Alexandria. Notes in the society's magazine conclude: "So picturesque was the garden spot which Mr. Noonan has painstakingly developed that the visitors wished for more time to tarry among the varied attractions." After the death of Noonan in 1945 and his wife in 1964, the garden was razed, but its pagoda birdhouse, built by Richard Bergstrom of Miliona and repainted in Mandarin yellow, Peking red, and dragon green, now stands in Noonan Park near formal plantings that suggest the original garden.²⁰

¹⁸ *Albert Lea Tribune*, June 15, 1986, p. 3; cards and job orders 4A-650, 0B-H2546, and 0B-H2545, Teich archives.

¹⁹ *Alexandria Park Region Echo*, Dec. 3, 1986, p. 8.

²⁰ Donald E. Von Kaughnet, "The State Historical Convention of 1932," *Minnesota History* 13 (Sept. 1932): 277-94; *Alexandria Press*, June 11, 1993, p. 1; cards 1A-H175 and 2A-H960, Teich archives. A small exhibit on the Noonan garden opened in June 1994 at the Douglas County Historical Society, Alexandria.

Just as proprietors of tourist attractions hoped that postcards would bring more visitors, land developers used them to interest prospective buyers. Real estate firms today send cards announcing sales, and W. A. Spurrier Jr., a developer in Pine River, did the same thing more than 75 years ago. Spurrier cards in the Teich archives feature black-and-white photographs of farmhouses or farm fields with captions identifying the scene. The Gulicks, Brobsts, Jake Stanleys, Hoffmans, and J. R. Pounds obligingly posed for Spurrier or Pine River's first professional photographer, Glen Glover, on their new farms, and identical texts on the card backs read:

Pine River . . . is located in Cass County, just a few miles north of the dead center of the state. . . . It is surrounded by a vast rich country—new, yet not raw—where the greatest agricultural and dairying opportunities in the world are situated. A tremendous wave of development is sweeping over this entire section of Minnesota.

For further information write W. A. SPURRIER, JR., & CO. Des Moines—Minneapolis or Pine River.²¹

In 1919 the Pine River newspaper reported that Spurrier “came up from Des Moines the latter part of last week chock full of business. He is now busy getting out some new advertising matter for his company and has promised to give us some good information in the near future as to what his company is going to do.” The new advertising matter was postcards, and their success may perhaps be measured by reports of farms being sold for as much as \$125 per acre. By the 1920s, however, the rush was over, and Spurrier died in a dynamite explosion. A half-dozen Teich postcards are evidence of his plans to encourage settlement in Cass County.²²

More long-lasting Minnesota businesses also turned to Teich for advertising. For more than a century travelers to Minneapolis could find lodging on Washington Avenue between Nicollet and Hennepin Avenues, first at the nineteenth-century Nicollet House and then, beginning in 1924, at the new Nicollet Hotel. Eleven Teich postcards celebrate virtually every aspect of the impressive, modern hostelry. One card shows the red-brick façade of the 14-story

²¹ Cards 54322, 54319, 54320, 54317, and 54323, Teich archives.

²² Norman F. Clarke, ed., *Logsleds to Snowmobiles: A Centennial History of Pine River, Minnesota, 1873–1973* (Pine River: Pine River Centennial Committee, 1979), 156–57; “Local News,” unnumbered supplement, *Pine River Sentinel-Blaze*, Apr. 18, 1919.

Card promoting farm sales around Cass County's Pine River, 1919





Minneapolis's new Nicollet, the "Northwest's finest hotel," about 1925

Stations, Retail and Wholesale Centers." A series of Teich cards highlights the hotel's lobby, dining room, cigar store, and barbershop.²⁴

More recent postcards tell the rest of the tale. By 1956 Teich was requested to "remove the flagpoles from top of hotel and fade out buildings to right

building from the northeast, so that it looms over the small Gateway Pavilion across the street; another concentrates strictly on the "New Nicollet," which is clearly the "in" place to be. Both Washington and Hennepin Avenues are crowded with cars and pedestrians, local clubs are headquartered in the hotel, and radio station WCCO occupies the upper-floor studios. Then known as WLAG, the station had broadcast the hotel's grand-opening events, briefly gone off the air, and returned under new ownership and call letters as a tenant of the hotel.²³

The text on the address side of the Nicollet cards proudly proclaims: "The Northwest's Finest. . . . A new \$3,500,000 Hotel, 600 rooms with Bath or connecting, 3 Blocks from

and left of hotel." The view reveals that the pavilion has been wrecked, but Charles Wells's marble fountain, later moved to the Lake Harriet Rose Garden, is still operating. On the Nicollet's façade is the sign and Hawaiian logo for a popular new dining spot, the Waikiki Room. This card was one in the "City of Lakes and Park" series of Minne-

The Nicollet's finely appointed barbershop, about



²³ Bob Williams and Chuck Hartley, *WCCO: Good Neighbor to the Northwest, 1924-1974* (Minneapolis: WCCO Radio, 1974), 80; George S. Hage, "Evolution and Revolution in the Media: Print and Broadcast Journalism," in *Minnesota in a Century of Change: The State and Its People since 1900*, ed. Clifford E. Clark Jr. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 301-02; cards 98592, A99432, Teich archives.

²⁴ Cards 100813, 100814, A30946, 101047, and 109218, Teich archives; *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, June 15, 1924, sec. 12, p. 8, sec. 16, p. 1-8.

sota scenes ordered by St. Marie's Gopher News Company.²⁵

By 1966, when the next Teich card appeared, the hotel was renamed the Pick-Nicollet. Empty streets are visible, suggesting that the center of downtown activity had shifted south from the Gateway urban renewal area of the 1960s. Patrons could still dine in the Jolly Miller, the Mocha Room, or the Waikiki Room, but within several years the Nicollet closed its doors.

A wrecker's ball leveled it in 1991.²⁶

Minnesota hotels were important clients for Teich, grand ones such as the Nicollet, Duluth's Spalding, and Rochester's Zumbro, with views of lounges and barbershops, and small inns such as



The handsomely furnished lounge at Duluth's Spalding Hotel, about 1927

Bemidji's Birchmont, with only a view of the building and beach. Teich cards showing Minnesota hotels number 544, and one of the company's last major accounts was Holiday Inn motels.

From grand hotels to gasoline stations and tourist attractions, every postcard captures a past moment that may or may not exist in other visual and written sources. Referring to postcards of the so-called "golden age" (1893–1918), historians George and Dorothy Miller observe, "View cards . . . hold the literal portrait of the era." They offer us, as the Curt Teich archives demonstrates, a wealth of irreplaceable information about the way we were.²⁷

FOR DELTIOLOGISTS ONLY

The earliest Curt Teich cards, published from 1900 to 1908, bore only numbers; from 1908 until 1928 each card's number began with the letter "A." In the 1930s a new system was launched, wherein each decade's cards were indicated by a letter, preceded by a number for the year within the decade. Thus, the first card for 1931 was 1A-1. "B" cards were printed in the 1940s, "C" cards in the 1950s, and so on until 1978.

The third character within a card's number was a letter indicating the printing process. "H" stood for C. T. Art-Colortone and Colorit cards. (Both were linen-process cards, but Colorit cards were straight edged, while Colorit cards had deckle or uneven edges.) Cards marked "K" were printed by the "Curteichcolor" chrome process based on color transparencies.

The names of various printing processes usually appeared on the message side of cards, often joined by a credit, logo, or line of text as the separation on divided-back cards. Linen cards frequently carried titles, slogans, and card and series numbers on the picture side in the cream or white border.

Source: Barbara Andrews, "History of Curt Teich & Company," *Deltiology* 14 (1974): 3; Curt Teich Archives, *Guide to Dating Curt Teich Postcards* (Wauconda, Ill., n.d.).

²⁵ Job order 6C-H39, cards 2B-H1191, 0B-H2443, 5A-H1892, 7A-H2979, 2B-H1197, Teich archives.

²⁶ Card 6D-K1199, Teich archives; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 14, 1991, sec. 1B, p. 1.

²⁷ George and Dorothy Miller, *Picture Postcards in the United States 1893–1918* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976), 144.

The postcards on p. 305, 308, and 314 (top) are from the author's collection; all others are from the Lake County (Ill.) Museum, Curt Teich Postcard Archives.



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