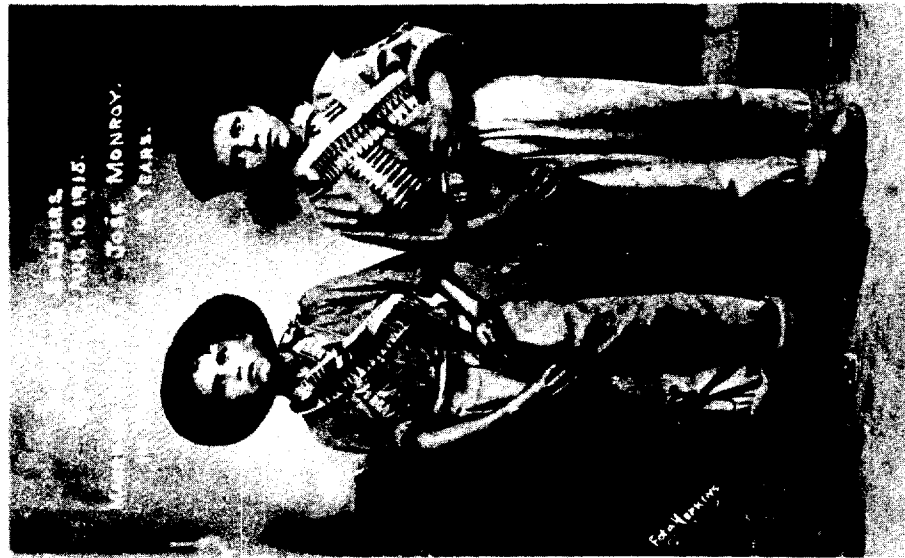


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BORDER FURY

A Picture Postcard Record
of Mexico's Revolution
and U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917

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The Picture Postcard Craze and Mexico's Revolution

The sequence of events that produced a frenzied interest in collecting picture postcards in the United States by the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century began many years earlier in Europe, where the first postal card was produced. To the uninitiated, the distinction between a postal card and a postcard may appear inconsequential, but collectors and historians recognize its significance. The older postal card is issued by government postal authorities and sold prestamped. Its purpose is strictly utilitarian. The privately manufactured postcard requires that the correct postage be affixed at the time of mailing and is often imaginative as well as useful. What we today call postcards have in the past been referred to as souvenir cards, private mailing cards, and view cards. The words *post card* only became legal in the United States by virtue of postal regulations issued in 1901.¹

The Austro-Hungarian Empire issued the first postal card on October 1, 1869, stamped with the likeness of Emperor Francis Joseph I. A young Austrian professor, Dr. Emanuel Hermann, borrowed the concept from Dr. Heinrich von Stephen of the Germanic Postal Union.² The postals won immediate popularity because people found them cheaper and more convenient than letters for brief personal and business messages. Within a few years most European countries followed the Hapsburg Empire and produced their own postal cards.

The United States Congress also recognized the potential of the new form of communication and on May 1, 1873 authorized the Post Office Department to begin issuing postal cards to postmasters throughout the nation. The cards were sold for a penny each to facilitate short printed or written communication that met the needs of business and

social life.³ Americans loved the postals as much as Europeans; within six months, sixty million cards had been purchased.⁴

Wily entrepreneurs on both sides of the Atlantic assessed this popularity and concluded correctly that good money could be made producing their own cards—with pictures on the front. The earliest surviving example of this important new genre is the work of August Schwartz, a German printer whose woodcut scene from the Franco-Prussian War adorned cards that were purchased by soldiers and mailed home.⁵ Other German postcards of the same period pictured resorts, hotels, and restaurants in one corner, but there were also holiday greeting cards, sentimental postcards, and ones with patriotic themes. Once whetted, the European appetite for pictorial cards grew rapidly, and steadily increasing numbers were manufactured and sold. By the 1890s collecting postcards had become a popular hobby. The appearance on drawing room tables of special albums in which postcards could be conveniently viewed and preserved became quite fashionable. Even Britain's Queen Victoria was an avid collector.⁶

Where the Europeans led, the Americans soon followed with their own special enthusiasm. Publishers in the United States began printing holiday greetings and advertisements on the backs of government postals in the 1870s.⁷ But privately produced picture postcards did not come into general use until 1893, when thousands were sold as souvenirs of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. These postcards and others published privately before the landmark congressional legislation of May 19, 1898 are called "pioneer cards." Most peo-

ple bought them as souvenirs of a visit to some city or resort. With interest in view cards still relatively new, sales remained limited. No large publishers yet marketed the product on a national or even on a regional scale.⁸

The 1898 postal law boosted the popularity of view cards because it granted them the same mailing privileges as government-issued postals. The legislation cut the two-cent fee for mailing privately manufactured postcards by half and required that the postcards have approximately the same physical characteristics as government postals and contain the phrase *Private Mailing Card-Authorized by Act of Congress, May 19, 1898*.⁹ After December 24, 1901, newly revised postal regulations gave manufacturers the option of omitting that rather cumbersome phrase as long as they printed the words *Post Card* in its place.¹⁰

The reduced mailing cost was only one factor in the meteoric nationwide increase in demand for picture postcards by the middle of the first decade of the new century. The post office also began rural free mail delivery for farmers who petitioned their congressmen for the service. Before the advent of the R.F.D. system, free home mail delivery had been available only to approximately 25 percent of the population, those living in towns of at least ten thousand people. Farmers and others who did not qualify for the service had to go for their mail to the nearest post office, often many miles from home. The delivery system for small town and rural America took several years to complete, but by 1906 most of the routes had been established, and isolated homes and farms across the country received mail on a daily basis. The change affected vast num-

bers of people. In 1900 the Census Bureau classified 60.3 percent of the population as rural, or not living in communities of at least 2,500 inhabitants. The total farm population stood at 29,875,000. While rural Americans accounted for only 54.3 percent of a growing national population in 1910, the number of people living on farms actually increased to 32,077,000.¹¹

Daily delivery encouraged new and different uses for mail service that brought the world a little closer. Rural daily newspapers increased in numbers and enjoyed a large growth in circulation. At the same time, Americans living outside of cities and large towns began to send and receive many more picture postcards.¹² Postcards announced a birth or a wedding or invited friends to Sunday dinner. They were cheaper to send than letters and much less expensive than phone calls, that is, if one had access to a telephone. In an era when few people traveled very far from home and few small town newspapers carried news photographs, buying a postcard depicting an event of local, national, or even international interest was a special and affordable treat, for oneself or to send to someone else.

The easy availability of postcards picturing a wide range of subjects stimulated interest in collecting as well as mailing them. Because collecting postcards had become extremely popular in Europe by 1900, several big firms turned them out to meet the demand. European manufacturers, particularly the Germans, produced high-quality lithographic cards in large volume before any comparable American firms came into existence. As a result, German manufacturers captured a major part of the American market at the beginning of the postcard era. They

established efficient networks of wholesalers and jobbers throughout the United States to handle their diverse lines of view cards and retained a large market share until the outbreak of World War I.¹³

Despite the Germans' initial competitive advantage, demand for postcards in America expanded so rapidly that new domestic companies won a substantial share of the market. By 1905 a number of large American manufacturers sold their products nationally, and even more medium-size manufacturers did business on a regional basis. Like the big German companies, these concerns made printed postcards in relatively large quantities. To make printed or photochemically reproduced cards by the processes of photoengraving, photogravure, colotype, or photolithography required a substantial capital outlay to equip a print shop, but once the necessary investment had been made, large numbers of postcards could be turned out at a small cost per unit. For example, halftone images made from photographs were printed on large sheets with postcard backs. Then each imprinted sheet was cut by machine into twenty or thirty individual postcards, depending on size.¹⁴ Firms using these mass production techniques, whether foreign or domestic, acquired a dominant position in the growing market for postcards.

Still, the large manufacturers did not monopolize the market; ample opportunity existed for the small entrepreneur. Thanks to George Eastman, one of the authentic geniuses of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, an individual could go into the postcard business on a shoestring. Many relatively inexpensive cameras began to appear on the American market in the 1880s. The one that

soon became by far the biggest seller was invented and manufactured by Eastman and put on sale for the first time in 1888. Eastman called his product the Kodak, a name which he coined himself because he thought it short, pronounceable in any language, distinctive, and easily remembered. The original Kodak box camera measured three and one-half inches three and three-quarters, by six and one-half inches and cost twenty-five dollars, including film and processing. It had a fixed-focus lens of 57 millimeters focal length and an aperture of *f*/9. A new Kodak came with enough factory-loaded film to take one hundred pictures. After shooting the initial roll of film, the photographer sent the camera back to the manufacturer in Rochester, New York, where the film was removed and developed. The prints were returned to the owner with the camera, which for an additional ten dollars was reloaded with fresh film. With his motto "You press the button, we do the rest," Eastman made amateur photographers out of hundreds of thousands of Americans by the 1890s.¹⁶

George Eastman's enormously creative mind continued to churn out ideas. Within the first few years of the new century his technological and marketing advances made it possible for individuals of modest means to make their own photographic postcards. By 1899 he had refined the technique for developing film to the point that interested amateurs easily processed their exposures in their own home darkrooms. In 1902 the Eastman Kodak Company capitalized on the emerging postcard fad by issuing postcard-size photographic paper on which images could be printed directly from negatives as easily as on regular paper. But the most dramatic step fol-

lowed in 1903: the Kodak 3A camera swept the market. The new \$2.00 camera put photography within the reach of virtually every American. The folding bellows camera, equipped with an *f*/6.8 lens, had a top shutter speed of one one-hundredth of a second. Its 122-millimeter film had a speed equivalent to an ASA value of about nine, and the negatives were exactly the right dimensions to make postcard-size contact prints (three and one-quarter by five and one-half inches).¹⁶

Because Eastman's innovations made possible the low-cost production of what collectors today call real photo or photographic postcards, several manufacturers began to market contact printing paper with preimprinted postcard backs. Not surprisingly, the Eastman Kodak Company's Velox and Azo brands emerged as the biggest sellers, but the Defender Photo Supply Company's Argo, Ansco's Cyko, and the Artura Paper Company's Artura all captured significant shares of the market.¹⁷

The ever-resourceful Eastman devised yet another way to enhance his firm's profits. In 1906 Eastman Kodak offered to print on postcard-backed paper the rolls of film sent to Rochester for processing. Soon parents were mailing postcards to all the relatives with pictures of the children. Of course, one still could go to the local professional photographer's studio to have a family portrait made in postcard format, but if one were so inclined, it was a simple matter to take one's own pictures and send them off to the Kodak plant to be made into postcards.¹⁸

Americans were manufacturing, buying, mailing, and collecting picture postcards in huge quantities by 1907, when Congress passed postal

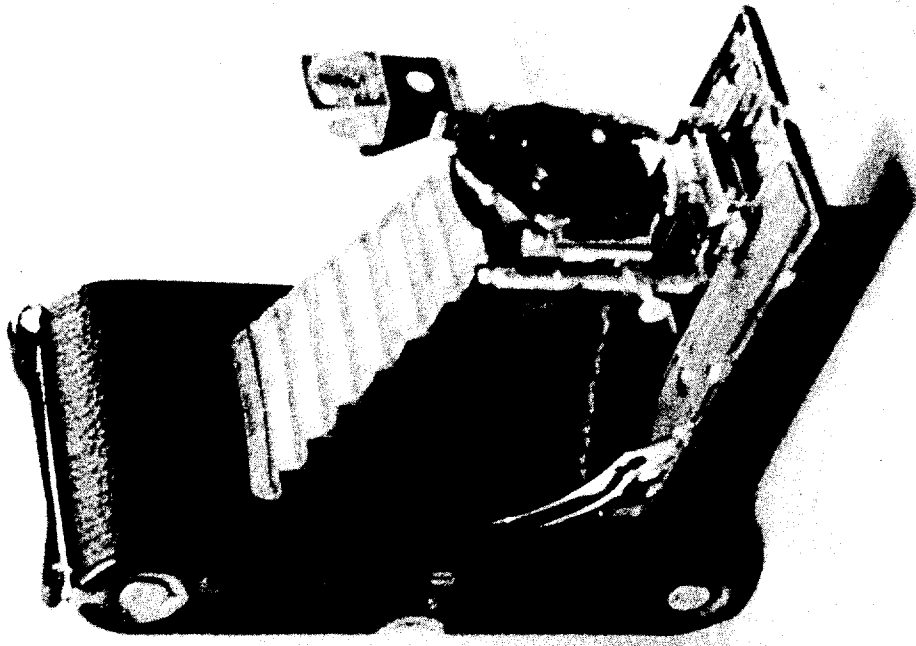


Figure 1. An early model of the Kodak 3A. Ease of operation as well as low price accounted for the immediate popularity of this camera. A novice could learn to load and unload the 3A and take pictures with it in only a few minutes. (Photograph by Frank N. Samponaro.)

legislation that further intensified the craze. Before March 1 of that year, the U.S. Post Office Department required that any messages on cards be written on the picture side, often defacing the picture itself. Only the address was permitted on the undivided back. After March 1, however, postcards with divided backs became legal, and cards with the message written on the left side and the address on the right could be mailed.¹⁹ The fact that it became possible to write more than the briefest of messages on picture postcards made them more popular than ever.

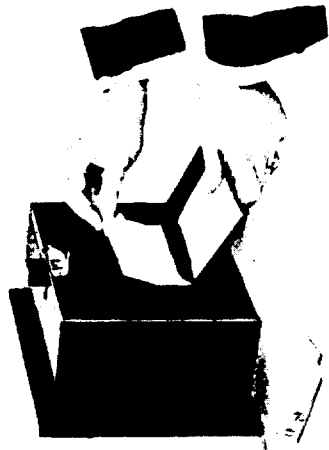
By the time the divided-back card appeared, producers of real photo cards had already found an important niche in the rapidly expanding picture postcard business. Small town portrait photographers sought to supplement their incomes by selling view cards with scenes of their towns and villages in the local drugstore.²⁰ Other individuals, attempting to better themselves financially, went to work with their cameras on a part-time basis. When anything unusual happened—a flood, a fire, a hanging, the visit of a circus—they appeared to record the event with their cameras. They immediately printed their negatives on postcard stock and sold their work to anyone who wanted an “instant” photographic record of the event to keep or to mail to someone else. Since the local newspaper did not print pictures and the larger postcard manufacturers scorned views of purely local interest and limited sales potential, small postcard producers played an important role in capturing America on film during the first and second decades of the twentieth century.²¹

A few small postcard makers with exceptional entrepreneurial skills and the luck to be working in

locations where major news events occurred managed to sell substantial numbers of cards and make very good money. Most sold relatively few postcards and earned only modest incomes from their businesses. Nevertheless, several thousand of them lived and worked in communities throughout the nation by 1910, when George Eastman manufactured a product especially tailored to their needs. The new piece of equipment was a printing box designed for 122-millimeter film and made by the Rochester

Optical Company (an Eastman Kodak subsidiary) specifically to produce postcards. The *Kodak Trade Journal* of May 1910 announced, "The R.O.C. Post Card Printer is made for the man who desires an inexpensive, yet rapid and trustworthy machine for printing developing-out post cards." The postcard-backed contact printing paper fitted into place against the negative and a small hand lever closed the frame. With exposure completed, the same lever opened the frame and the postcard emerged ready for the developing, stop bath, fixer, washing, and drying stages of the processing cycle. The printer sold for \$7.50, but with a generous 40 percent discount for professional photographers. Eastman knew his marketing. Once he sold his printer, he gained steady customers for Kodak postcard-backed paper and processing chemicals.²²

Whether made by small, one-person operations producing photographic cards or by medium-size and large manufacturers turning out printed ones, the picture postcard business grew at a rapidly accelerating pace after 1905. Sales soon reached immense proportions. Official post office figures for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1908 put the number of cards handled by the department at 667,777,798. By



In Operation.

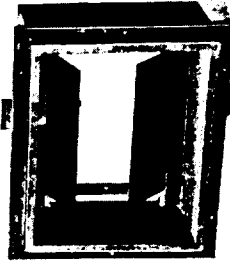
THE R. O. C. POST CARD PRINTER.

The R. O. C. Post Card Printer is made for the man who desires an inexpensive, yet rapid and trustworthy machine for printing developing-out post cards.

The R. O. C. Post Card Printer may be used with either artificial or daylight, but the use of artificial light is recommended owing to its greater uniformity.

The operation of the R. O. C. Post Card Printer is similar to that of an ordinary hand-printing press, as shown in the accompanying illustration. Drop the card into place against the negative, close the frame by means of the small hand lever; at the expiration of the exposure pull back on the lever, which opens the frame and drops the exposed card. The action of closing the frame automatically opens

the exposed shutter, and opening the frame closes it. Every mechanical feature is positive in action, and practically impossible to get out of order. The negative is placed in position by removing the front



Showing Interior Construction With Shutter Partly Opened.

of the printer, and lifting out the spring retained back as shown in the illustration page 8. The printing opening is made full cabinet size, and a cut-out is furnished for post card size,

Figure 2. Advertisement for the Rochester Optical Company postcard printer in the *Kodak Trade Journal*, May 1910.

1913 that total increased to 968 million.³¹ Frantic public demand for picture postcards encouraged retailers to put them everywhere: bookstores, drugstores, hotels, department stores, and cigar stands. Pushcart vendors sold them. Shops specialized in postcards, and racks filled with them stood on street corners in most cities and larger towns. Merchants eagerly purchased frames of various designs to organize as many cards as possible in eye-catching displays. Some of the earliest vending machines were made to sell postcards. Enthusiasts established clubs throughout the United States to promote “philocart” or “cartephilia,” as they termed postcard collecting. Manufacturers of cards and other firms enticed collectors with albums in a variety of sizes with precut slots to hold postcards.³²

Some observers have argued that postcards changed the writing habits of the American people.³³ The long, descriptive phrases and lengthy expressions of endearment that had been common in letter writing gave way to the few terse phrases or sentences required for postcards. Brevity seemed in harmony with a people increasingly in a hurry to keep up with a rapidly changing world. One contemporary pundit lamented, tongue-in-cheek, that the art of letter-writing was being threatened with extinction. He wrote:

Like the heaven-sent relief, the souvenir postal card has come to the man of few ideas and a torpid vocabulary. . . . From jails they carry appeals for bail to faithful friends. The traveler marks his trail as if with confetti by hastily scribbled notes consisting of “Wish you were here, All well.” “This is so beautiful. All well.” When mother decides that she will stay all night with her daughter in the next town, she sends word

home to the family on a souvenir card of the Carnegie Library. When father’s dry goods store burns down, he photographs the catastrophe, prints a souvenir card from it and requests the insurance adjuster to drop into town immediately. . . . Baby’s arrival, his first tooth, his first trousers, his first bicycle, his first girl, and his first baby all go to the family circle by souvenir postal, for anyone with a camera can make a card these days.³⁶

Picture postcards had their heyday in the decade preceding World War I, when a variety of commercially produced cards sold well. Cards commemorated major regional expositions of industry and commerce, as well as less important local conventions and festivals. Advertising cards stimulated sales of a wide range of products and services. Postcards promoted politicians running for elective office and marked important achievements in their careers. While some cards contained views of the major armed conflicts around the world, others showed the signing of peace treaties ending them. Postcards provided a glimpse of the women’s suffrage crusade and documented many major and minor news stories. Cards followed the expedition of Commodore Robert E. Perry to the North Pole and the completion of the Panama Canal; they chronicled the opening of county fairs and even small town bowling alleys. Postcards showed common people at work and recorded their leisure time spent at social gatherings, sporting events, parties, and fraternal clubs. There were comic cards and ones with pictures of pretty girls, American presidents, state capitols, trains, ships, dogs, and cats. Some manufacturers made postcards with blatantly racist caricatures of minority groups; others issued ones with macabre scenes like hangings. Cards with

views of important landmarks in cities and towns and at resorts always sold well. While spectacular natural or man-made disasters often provided a quick profit for card manufacturers, patriotic and holiday greeting cards remained staples of the business.²⁷

Despite this enormous popularity, public interest in picture postcards eventually declined. The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909 heralded the end of the postcard era. Large American manufacturers of printed cards argued that protection was necessary for the survival of their industry because of the higher wages paid to American workers. As a result of their lobbying efforts in Washington, the new tariff law significantly increased the duty on imported postcards. On the eve of the effective date of the legislation, most major American importers of German postcards took what appeared to be a prudent step and began to stockpile large quantities of cards, but this action proved to be a serious miscalculation. The postcard supply line became dangerously overloaded; importers provided jobbers with more cards than they could sell to retailers, and retailers became seriously overstocked, some with a full year's supply of cards. Price-cutting began in an effort to reduce inventory. By 1913 one American postcard publisher advertised two million view cards at one-half their production cost. In the increasingly cut-throat environment, fifty large and medium-size postcard manufacturers ceased production in 1913, when the glut of cards plunged prices to the all-time low of five cents a dozen on retail racks. By 1914 the prospects for the recovery of the business appeared so bleak that the National Association of

Post Card Manufacturers cancelled that year's convention for lack of interest.²⁸

With the domestic printed postcard industry still reeling from the unanticipated repercussions of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, the outbreak of World War I in 1914 resulted in the almost complete cessation of imports of the German dyes and lithographing equipment that many American firms used to produce printed postcards. The disruption of the supply link from Germany further weakened an already depressed industry.²⁹ Most important of all, however, the enthusiasm of Americans for picture postcards waned, and they bought fewer of them. Like other fads, the craze for postcards was temporary. Albums that formerly enjoyed a place of prominence on the living room coffee table were consigned to the attic. Postcards no longer served so well the wide number of purposes they once had. Technological innovations were changing people's lifestyles. More of them had telephones and lived in urban areas with access to newspapers printing at least some news photographs. Residents of cities and large towns also had the opportunity to see moving pictures, including newsreels, on a regular basis. People living in rural areas became less isolated as paved roads made travel by automobile more common. All of these factors combined to bring about a substantial decline in postcard sales. Although this decline began gradually, by 1915 the golden age of the picture postcard in the United States had passed.³⁰

At least one notable exception countered the decreasing interest in postcards. Sales of cards with views of the Mexican Revolution and of the Ameri-

can military response to Mexico's struggle continued to grow even after 1915. Graphic violence of the revolution occurred close to the United States border. Colorful, swashbuckling revolutionary leaders and U.S. forces, deployed along the frontier and even ordered into combat in Mexico, fascinated the public as they appeared on a virtually limitless number of extraordinarily dramatic and unusually marketable postcards. The demand for cards picturing the Mexican Revolution began in late 1910 and rose until it reached its peak in 1916. Although interest in the postcards waxed and waned, reflecting the intensity of interest in events related to the revolution, the general trend moved steadily upward. When a postcard photographer captured a truly spectacular incident, sales of view cards rose sharply. This pattern was, as might be expected, most pronounced when the incident directly involved Americans.

Although the Mexican Revolution dates officially from 1910, discontent with the government of President Porfirio Díaz had been smoldering for years. A rash of violent labor disturbances, for example, started in June 1906 with the strike at the Consolidated Copper Mining Company in Cananea, Sonora. An extremely rare series of twenty undivided-back postcards depicts incidents that took place during the Cananea strike, which resulted in the loss of twenty-three Mexican and American lives. On one card the unknown photographer has provided posterity with a remarkably clear shot of Colonel W. C. Greene, the American mine manager, addressing a crowd of his restless Mexican workers. The Cananea postcards were the forerunners of hun-

dreds of thousands of cards that recorded the border's history over the next decade.

Following the outbreak of full-scale rebellion against Díaz, picture postcards of the violence in Mexico and of the leading revolutionary personalities became increasingly common in the United States. The initial cards included rather unimaginative and staid portraits of General Díaz and the leader of the insurrection against him, Francisco I. Madero, but postcard photographers soon located some real action. The first noteworthy battle of the revolution along the United States-Mexican frontier took place at Agua Prieta, Sonora, in April 1911. Just across the border the residents of Douglas, Arizona, stood on the roofs of their homes and watched the fighting through binoculars. The following month, El Pasoans discovered that they were in an ideal location to view the combat raging in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. During and immediately following both battles, obscure local photographers crossed the international boundary and recorded on film the fighting, the bodies of the dead, and the badly damaged buildings. These entrepreneurs then made and sold real photo postcards to a public anxious to have a souvenir of the carnage and destruction in Mexico. This first flurry of sales convinced many photographers that such events, particularly the more violent ones, could make the postcard business quite profitable, and as the revolution intensified, they began to turn out postcards in towns all along the border.

By the spring of 1911 increasing numbers of Americans had become aware of the major uprising in progress in Mexico and learned the names of the

prominent military chieftains. Some were even willing to spend an occasional nickel to get a glimpse of the military action across the border or to find out what Pancho Villa really looked like. Sales increased steadily in the period through the battles of Ojinaga and Ciudad Juárez in 1913, but the market for Mexican Revolution postcards remained limited primarily to border areas. Small-scale local photographers filled most of the still modest demand; the larger producers of printed cards did not yet consider public interest in the revolution to be great enough to make a major commitment in the national market.

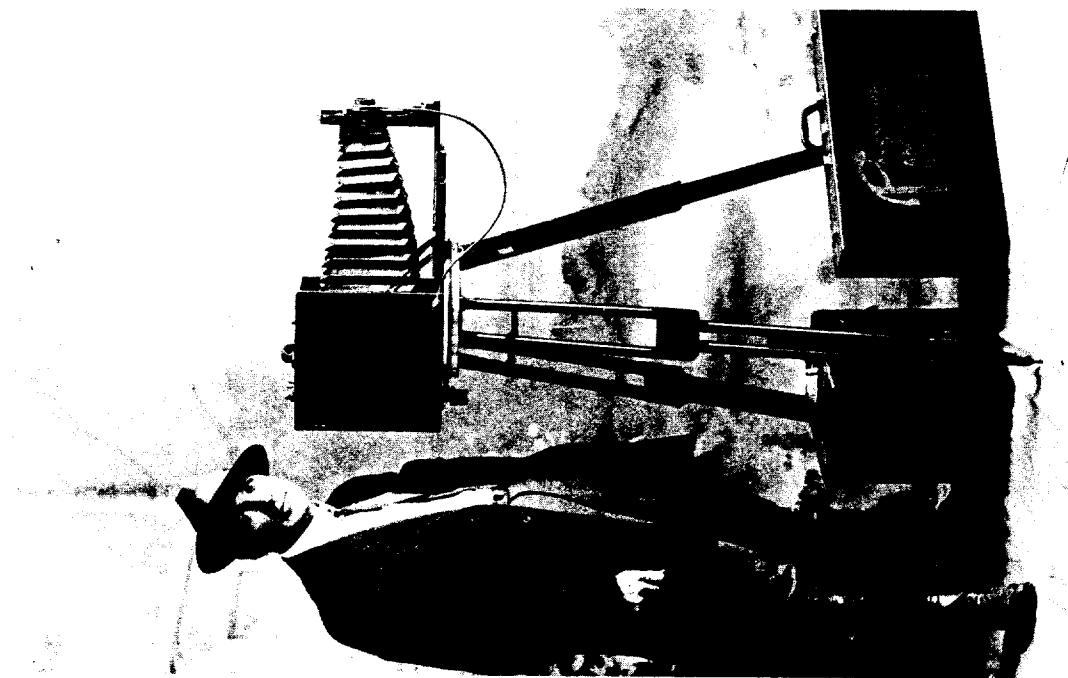
This situation changed dramatically in April 1914 when American sailors and marines, acting on the orders of President Woodrow Wilson, invaded and occupied the city of Veracruz. Banner headlines in newspapers across the United States announced the assault on the Mexican port, and news stories carried details of the fighting and the casualties. Major postcard manufacturers immediately took advantage of the average American's desire to see for himself what was going on in Veracruz. The W. M. Prilay Post Card Company hurried into production with three "Mexican War Series" of cards featuring the U.S. armed forces. Another large postcard publishing concern, the Max Stein Company of Chicago, was soon selling images of the action in Veracruz. Tichnor Brothers, Incorporated, of Boston rapidly followed suit.

Despite the serious interest of large manufacturers in Veracruz, the landing there offered the small postcard producer plenty of opportunity as well. Charles C. Cushing of Brooklyn found a market for cards imprinted with a poem entitled "In

Memorium. Vera Cruz," in honor of the American servicemen who had fallen in combat. Among the most interesting postcards depicting the American military operation in Veracruz were the U.S.S. *New Jersey's* landing battalion cards. They were taken by the ship's photographers, two sailors named Cruise and Shaw, between April 22 and April 30, 1914 and processed in the dark-room on board ship to be sold to crew members at a nominal sum. These cards, like those made for the men of other ships involved in the same operation, were produced exclusively for the crew and were not intended for commercial sale. On a postcard that a young ensign on the *New Jersey*, George W. Hewlett, sent home to Connecticut, he proudly identified his fellow junior officers who also participated in the landing. Hewlett told his family, "This picture was taken on the lot of the filtration plant. My company at this time were in sand hills outpost."³¹ While Hewlett did not reveal his feelings about being in Veracruz, a card dated October 21, 1914 and mailed by an unknown serviceman along with others in an envelope to "Miss Annie B," did: "And we get more pay than we get in the States, so that is a little inducement to want to stay here, and to tell the truth I do believe I like it here."³²

After the Americans withdrew from Veracruz in November 1914, public interest in Mexican affairs declined temporarily as did the sale of postcards. Although a good, steady market continued for cards picturing the revolution, no boom in sales developed in 1915 comparable to the demand of 1914. That would change in 1916 when events of the Mexican Revolution directly involved the United States. On March 9, 1916 forces acting

Figure 3. Formal portraits of postcard photographers are extremely rare. Lee Passmore, a flamboyant San Diego professional, used this postcard for advertising purposes. It shows him standing beside the Circuit camera that he used to photograph panoramic scenes. On the back of the card is his slogan: "You may pass more photographers but none more like Passmore." For some time after he began his career in commercial photography in 1909, Passmore continued to work part time as a guide on a sightseeing boat that operated out of San Diego harbor. Although he did a lively business turning out postcards of troops stationed on the California-Baja California border during the Mexican Revolution, he concentrated on scenic, panoramic prints. Later in life he became famous as a naturalist photographer, specializing in insects. (Courtesy San Diego Historical Society—Ticor Collection.)



under the orders of Mexican rebel leader Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico, killing seventeen American soldiers and civilians. By March 15, the lead elements of a force of more than twelve thousand United States Army regulars under the command of General John J. Pershing had crossed the border with orders to mount a "punitive expedition" into Mexico.

Then on May 5, Mexican Villista "bandits" raided Glenn Springs and Boquillas, Texas. Two days later President Wilson ordered a partial mobilization of the National Guard; a total of 5,260 officers and men from units in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona answered the call to active service. Wilson assessed the situation and concluded that these guardsmen and the regular troops already on duty

were insufficient in number to protect the long border from attack by forces loyal to Villa and Venustiano Carranza, rivals for leadership of Mexico's Revolution. On June 18, he ordered the mobilization of the National Guards of the remaining states to implement his policy of "watchful waiting." By early September nearly 200,000 guardsmen and regulars were on active duty at strategic points from Texas to California. Forty thousand troops camped in the El Paso region alone—the largest concentration of American military personnel in a single area since the Civil War.³⁵

The Columbus raid, the Punitive Expedition, and the subsequent mobilization of large numbers of National Guard troops led to an enormous growth in postcard sales. Two principal sources created this demand. For one, people all over the United States suddenly became captivated by affairs on both sides of the border, and postcards breathed life into the events there. But the most intense demand came from the 184,000 National Guard troops on duty in camps from Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego, California.

Contrary to what many guardsmen expected when they left home with their units, they never entered the actual combat. No general order moved them to march south into Mexico, nor did occasional border skirmishes escalate into full-fledged battle. The men drilled and dug trenches and became increasingly bored and disgruntled; most had plenty of time on their hands and at least some money to spend. Very few could not afford the price of a picture postcard to give loved ones and acquaintances a first-hand look at life along the border. A soldier had no trouble buying a card to prove

to folks at home that he was at least near the action. Postcards available in YMCAs and post exchanges at camps and in stores and on street corner racks in nearby towns showed scenes of the fighting in Mexico.³⁶ A guardsman named Roy, stationed near Douglas, Arizona, sent home a card with a picture of Mexicans killed in an unknown battle and asked bluntly: "How do you like this?"³⁷ Another on duty in San Benito, Texas, mailed a view of what were supposed to be "Typical Mexican Soldiers" to his mother in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and inquired plaintively: "Why don't you write to me. I haven't heard from you or dad in a coon's age."³⁸ Cards catalogued the exotic plants and reptiles of the Southwest so a soldier could impress his sweetheart in the North. Lonie, assigned to Camp Leon Springs, Texas, sent his girl friend, Cornelia Hiscock, in Syracuse, New York, a postcard picture of a small rattlesnake and told her: "If you would like one of these just let me know and I will bring one Xmas."³⁹

Most guardsmen stationed near the border in 1916 loved to buy and send home cards made by enterprising local photographers showing themselves and their buddies on duty or during their free moments at the camps. But an occasional soldier with a camera acted as his own photographer. One of them wrote on the back of a postcard that he mailed to his family: "All of the boys marked is in my squad. I took the picture but will send some of the whole bunch soon. . . ."⁴⁰

Among the most unique and charming cards mailed during the military buildup were those of Mineral Wells, Texas, guardsman Jodie P. Harris, assigned to duty in the Big Bend country of Texas.

Harris drew cartoons on the backs of penny postal cards and sent them to the drugstore in Mineral Wells for everyone to see. His hand-drawn bored, homesick enlisted men, with no fighting to do, reluctantly carry out make-work tasks assigned to them by their officers. One of his cards complains:

The border raid, that called out the militia
Was American made, and sounds mighty fishie,
No bandits now in sight, why should we fear?
There is no one to fight, but still we are

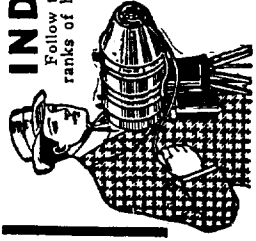
HERE.³⁹

With large potential profits from sales to troops along the border and civilians throughout the United States, at least one hundred firms and individuals produced postcards related to the Mexican Revolution by the summer of 1916.⁴⁰ Those in the business included the owners of tiny, one-person operations in little towns near the smaller National Guard camps, some of them working only part time with inexpensive photographic equipment to turn out a mere handful of cards. At the opposite pole, large manufacturers, like the International Film Service and the Max Stein Company, made postcards by the hundreds of thousands. In between were the medium-size concerns like the Mexican War Photo Postcard Company and Kavanaugh's War Postals. The market for what the trade referred to as Mexican War postcards reached its peak during 1916, as indicated by the sales figures of Walter H. Horne of El Paso. Horne, who previously had manufactured and sold only a moderate number of photographic cards, proudly informed his mother and brother in a letter on March 21 that his postcard output that day reached 2,700.⁴¹ Only a short time earlier he would

Our New Invention Will Make You

INDEPENDENT

Follow the creed of your calling. Join the ranks of big money makers. Be independent. Get out of the salary rut, piling up money for the capitalists. Get into a business of your own, where you can easily make \$25.00 a day and . . . up. Hundreds of fellows just like you have joined the ranks of big money makers by becoming the operator of a



DIAMOND Post Card Gun

A wonderful photographic studio complete in itself, that takes post card pictures direct on the positive paper in four sizes. Also photo lanterns at the rate of 5 to 8 clear sharp pictures per minute, finished on the spot. Post cards sell at 10c. each and you make

8c NET PROFIT ON EVERY DIME

It's the biggest money maker you ever heard of at Bathing Beaches, Ball Parks, Circuses, Fairs, etc.

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED—NO FILMS—NO DARK ROOM
Pictures are taken developed and finished in one room. No special equipment. The Diamond, only one solution used. Write us today, at once, for full particulars, free illustrated booklet and our special offer to you. Address

**International Metal & Ferrotype Co., D-752
Chicago, Ill.**

Figure 4. Even the Communists endorsed the idea of the self-made picture postcard and encouraged people to get into the business. Why make money for the capitalists when you can pile it up for yourself? This advertisement appeared in the July 1914 edition of *The Masses*.

have regarded that total as astronomical; however, by early August he could report a daily production rate of 5,000 cards.⁴²

During the boom days of 1916 a wide variety of Mexican War postcards sold well. Besides the photographic cards made by small and medium-size producers and the printed cards turned out by their larger rivals, cards with poems on them allowed inarticulate guardsmen to convey to loved ones their feelings about their experiences on the border or about being so far from home on Thanksgiving.

Cards with obviously posed "action" shots proved popular, and scenes photographed some time previously (even during another war) were reprinted, often with a new caption. A big favorite was the reissue of a postcard with a portrait of the notorious Pancho Villa on horseback, now entitled "Gen Francisco Villa the cause of it all." Cards showing the regular army troops of the Pershing expedition on the march in Mexico sold well, as did those purporting to depict the way Mexican people lived. At a time when postcard photographers lacked adequate copyright protection, some card makers pirated potentially popular images.⁴³ On some occasions a publisher tried to hide the fact that he borrowed someone else's work by touching up his copy negative to remove people, trees, or buildings. On others he substituted a new caption, but often he did neither.

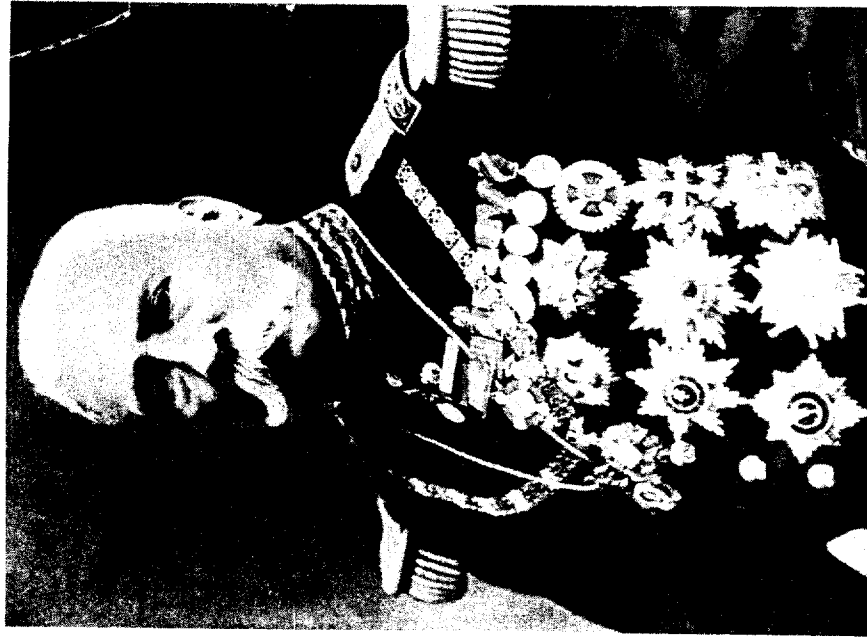
Although postcards with pictures related to the Mexican Revolution sold at record levels in the summer and fall of 1916, a sharp decline in demand occurred by the end of the year. Not only did Americans grow tired of what seemed to be General Pershing's futile pursuit of Villa, but it also appeared that the National Guard forces on the border served no useful purpose. Meanwhile, the ominous situation in Europe drew public attention away from Mexico. President Wilson, concerned about the possibility of war with Germany, ordered Pershing to begin withdrawing his troops from Mexico no later than January 31, 1917. By the end of the first week in February, nearly all the forces participating in the Punitive Expedition were back in the United States.⁴⁴ Simultaneously the demobilization of National Guard units on duty in the

Southwest began, and by April 6, when the United States declared war on the Central powers, a large majority of the guardsmen had returned home.⁴⁵ The intense preoccupation of the American people with events in Europe after the formal declaration of war eclipsed public interest in anything having to do with the Mexican Revolution, including postcards.

Moreover, the rebellion and the U.S. diplomatic wrangling with Mexico that accompanied it moved toward an uneasy conclusion. Neither the fighting nor the verbal maneuvers stopped, but both diminished decidedly. Their decline meant that the dramatic pictorial possibilities—the kind craved by the American public and eagerly exploited by the postcard producers—all but disappeared. Singularly striking events, such as the assassination of Pancho Villa in 1923, still attracted the attention of postcard buyers, but the boom days of 1916 were definitely over. Although the fad ended, the postcards themselves remain to provide collectors, scholars, and interested readers with an invaluable record of the era.



Postcards picturing the violent strike of June 1906 at the Consolidated Copper Mining Company in Cananea, Sonora (just below the Arizona border) greatly stimulated U.S. public interest in Mexican affairs. Among the series of twenty "undivided back" postcards of the events at Cananea, this one taken near the conclusion of the labor disturbance shows Colonel William C. Greene, the American manager of the mine, backed up by a group of rifle-toting gringos, laying down the law to his Mexican employees. (Courtesy U.S. National Archives.)



This official portrait of General Porfirio Díaz in full dress uniform appeared as a postcard in the United States in 1911 and indicates the awakening interest of the American postcard industry and public toward the Mexican Revolution. At the time, most Americans presumed that the aging dictator would have little difficulty suppressing the rebellion against his regime. (Courtesy El Paso Public Library.)



A Mexican photographer took this picture of the leader of the revolution, Francisco I. Madero, his right arm in a sling as a result of a bullet wound received during the battle of Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, on March 6, 1911. An enterprising photographer, Walter H. Horne of El Paso, reissued the image in postcard format immediately after the assassination of Madero in 1913. (Courtesy John Hardman Collection.)



The first significant combat between Mexican federal troops and rebel forces along the border occurred at Agua Prieta, Sonora, in April 1911. Scores of amateur "Kodak fiends" crossed the line from Douglas, Arizona, after the battle to take pictures. They were accompanied by a few professional photographers who turned their negatives into postcards and put them on sale. This card shows two Americans, a few rebels, and some Mexican civilians viewing the remains of victims of the fighting. It was among the first of thousands of postcards sold in the United States over the next several years that depicted graphic scenes of death and destruction along the border. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society.)



The first battle of Ciudad Juárez in May 1911 attracted the avid and lurid interest of many El Paso residents. While some viewed the combat from the comparative safety of roof tops, others wanted a closer look. Despite Mayor Charles E. Kelly's warning that Mauser bullets would "rain on the banks of the Rio Grande," downtown streets had to be roped off to limit the number of sightseers on the river front. (Courtesy El Paso Public Library.)



The invasion and occupation of Veracruz by United States military forces in April 1914 was the first event of the revolution that attracted the serious interest of large American manufacturers of printed postcards. The W. M. Prilay Post Card Company sent retail merchants one of its cards with a sales pitch printed on the message side: "This is a sample of the Mexican War Series. They come in 24 different designs and we supply agents at 50¢ per 100. We also enclose sample of Men and Lions Puzzle. How many of each shall we send you?" (Courtesy John Hardman Collection.)



The crisis resulting from the Carrizal incident made Americans more curious about Venustiano Carranza, so the Max Stein Company of Chicago reissued this postcard originally marketed in 1914. The caption incorrectly referred to him as a general. A civilian, Carranza took the title of First Chief of the Constitutional Forces. (Courtesy John Hardman Collection.)



GEN. FRANCISCO VILLA



GEN. FRANCISCO VILLA
MARCHED AT 4 A. M. TO AUSTIN, TEXAS, NEW MEXICO
THE PAID THE BODIES ARE HEADY FOR SHOOTING HOME
VILLA KILLED MEN AND WOMEN AND BURNED THE TOWN
A SOLDIER HOSTED HIM THE LINDS OF HIS BANGLES BORN
NO. 4-7. 7/5
US. PHOTOGRAPHIC
DULLES, ARIZONA

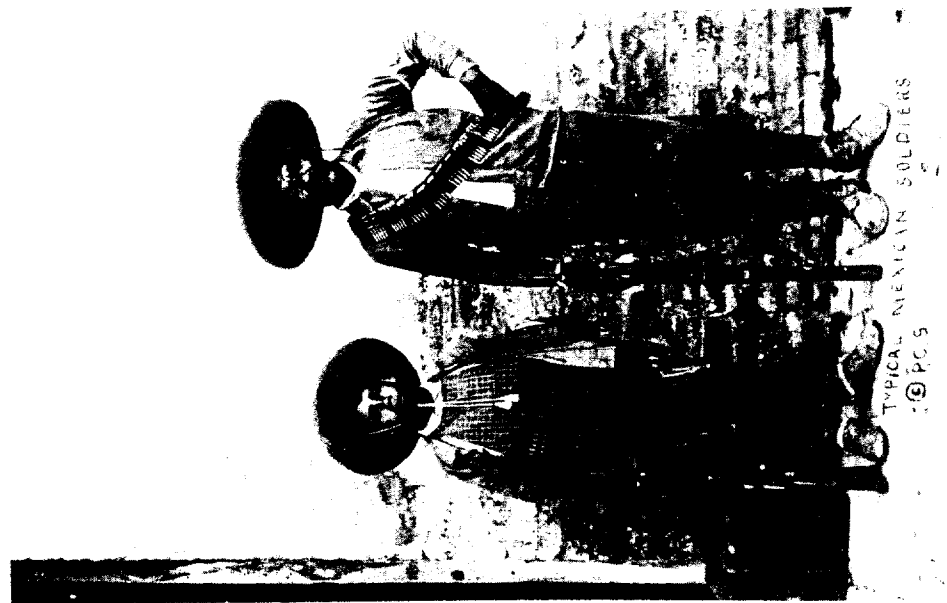


Gen. Francisco Villa
the cause of it all
POSTCARD
WAR

Even though the failed military campaign in northern Mexico frustrated many Americans, it hardly diminished their interest in "Gen. Francisco Villa the cause of it all." Postcard manufacturers touched up pictures that they already had of Villa and made new postcards to capitalize on public demand. (Both courtesy John Hardman Collection.)



Members of the Third Oregon Infantry, stationed at Camp Tecate, California, pose for the camera on the border with their rifles at the ready, as if they expected an attack by Mexicans; at least that is what they wanted folks at home to believe. (Courtesy D. J. Sobery Collection.)



These two individuals, labelled "Typical Mexican Soldiers," conformed to (and even helped to strengthen) the stereotypical American image of Mexicans as a violent people. (Courtesy John Hardman Collection.)