

T.P.C. Matters

The newsletter of the Taconic Postcard Club
New York's east-of-the-Hudson postcard club

Volume 2, Issue 6

June 2003

A SPAIN GONE FOREVER

BY PILAR DOWLE

Over many years of collecting postcards one thing has become evident to me: streets remain more or less the same – give or take a few billboards - but the characters who filled these streets one hundred years ago are gone forever.

One of the most prized sections of my collection of regional Spanish cards has to do with occupations and events that have long gone, never to be seen again unless it is at a local “fiesta” or pageant that recreates the past. These cards offer a truly insightful glimpse into a way of life we would now find totally unacceptable. Selling water out of barrels in the middle of the town square? What for? Just turn on the tap! Or packing sardines into barrels in the middle of the street on a hot sunny day, how unhygienic! What about food poisoning?

To me these cards are historically as important as those celebrating great military victories or international exhibitions and in some cases they are the only record of such a way of life. Any great event will have been thoroughly documented, however these were ordinary, everyday occurrences, people going about their work just as we go to the office or the shopping mall every day. We would not expect these coming and goings to be recorded for posterity.

The purpose of these cards was not to record the past but to offer a cheap and easy way for people to keep in touch. The subjects would have been chosen not because they would appeal to us one hundred years in the future but because it caught the photographer's eye. Some are what the French call “tres posé” (very posed) and these are not as appealing to me; however, there are some where, although the people in the photograph are aware of the presence of the photographer, are by and large natural and not posed.

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Membership dues for 2003 – Last call for renewals

2003 dues are \$15 per individual or \$25 for a family membership.

Dues may be paid in the form of check or cash at TPC meetings
or by check mailed to:

Taconic Postcard Club, P.O. Box 173, North Salem, NY 10560

Next Taconic Postcard Club meeting

The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. (trading, selling session at 6:30 p.m.) on Tuesday, June 24th at the

Yorktown Community & Cultural Center
(Nutrition Room, ground floor)
1974 Commerce Street
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598

PRESENTATION

Joyce Granger, postcard dealer and collector, will speak about the evolution and belief in psychic phenomena and psychic readings in New York State during the 19th century in her postcard program on Postcards & Spiritualism.

ROUNDTABLE

Parades, Parties and Celebrations

Postcard of the Month



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**Minutes of the TPC Meeting
of Tuesday, May 27th
at the Yorktown Museum**

BY MICHAEL FRANK

Our May meeting was held in the Yorktown Museum because of easy access to audiovisual equipment. Susan Lane called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM with 23 present. New members, guests and returning snowbirds were introduced.

New member Larry Laliberte collects Poughkeepsie and Hudson Valley RR stations. Guest Janet West collects real photo postcards, and Joan collects large letter cards. Maureen Hogan continues to remind us that she enjoys looking at her husband's cards, but she is not yet a collector.

Peter Peloquin collected dues for 2003 membership. David Bisbee outlined several programs for the remaining year and announced July plans for an outing at Oscawana Lake with food and a boat ride around the lake as part of that evening's activities.

Tom Casey was our speaker. His presentation was on Freedomland, USA. This amusement park in the Bronx was a big attraction from 1960 to 1965 and was unusual for its day in that it was designed as both an educational and amusement area. It took one year to build on what was formerly a swamp area, but an area with significant historical presence beginning with the days of Ann Hutchinson.



The 1964 World's Fair in near by Queens was one of the contributing factors to the demise of this enterprise, but other issues were brought up by Tom indicating that the area was already being considered for residential construction, a plan that would be hastened if a pre-existing structure existed on the land. Coop City in the Bronx now stands on this site.

Tom offered many stories of his own youthful experiences at Freedomland and showed us several postcard series, other memorabilia and a narrated videotape of the rides and attractions.

Adele Hobby was able to close the doors by 9:30 PM. Many thanks again to the Yorktown Museum for hosting us. ◇

**Deltiology Part V:
Lithography and Chromolithography**

BY DENIS CASTELLI

Until the turn of the 19th century, printing processes were limited to several versions of relief or intaglio techniques.

In all forms of relief printing, the background material is removed and the image to be printed remains the highest portion of the plate.

In the various intaglio printing methods, the area of the image to be printed is recessed into the surface of the printing plate and the recessed areas are filled with ink before the press is used to transfer the image to the paper.

In contrast to both of these techniques, the lithographic process, invented by Alois Senefelder ca. 1796, was neither a relief nor an intaglio process. In lithography, the image areas and non-image areas exist in the same plane on the printing plate.

Designs were applied using greasy inks onto special water-absorbing limestone plates. The non-image areas were treated with Gum Arabic and saturated with water. When oily ink was applied with a roller, it adhered only to the greasy image area and was repelled by the non-image area. Paper was laid over the inked stone and a scraper bar was drawn across it using a special press designed for the process.

Because lithographic stones were heavy, fragile, unwieldy and difficult to register they were eventually replaced with lighter, less expensive plates made of zinc. Because these were thin and flexible, zinc plates could be curved around a cylinder. Later presses eventually took on the shape of a drum.

It was decades before zinc-plate lithography was thoroughly refined and, throughout the second half of the 19th century and well into the 20th, nearly all high-quality lithographers continued to use stone plates.

Chromolithography was a natural extension of the original process using a series of stones, each coated with a separate ink color. By 1870, fine color images were being produced using chromolithography in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Color plates appearing in books of the second half of the nineteenth century used this process as the only high quality alternative to hand coloring.

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This is a selection of some of my favourites.

(Fig. 1) One of the cards which I have had the longest, and the one that perhaps sparked my interest in the subject, is this card of an *espadrille* (sandal) maker in the Basque Country published around 1910. His tools are simple - a makeshift trestle table - and his raw materials a simple ball of string just out of sight behind the table. He is making the soles of the *espadrilles* and later the canvas will be hand stitched on top, and although he is remarkably well dressed, he is wearing them himself.



(Fig. 2) Another card from the Basque Country; this time the view is of a group of women packing sardines in wooden barrels. Fishing and the sale of fish, both to the domestic market and for export, have always been and continue to be one of the principal occupations in all the coastal regions of Spain.



Of course the methods used today are quite different - industrial scale fishing and the freezing of fish on the ships themselves has taken over from the packing of salted fish in

barrels we see in the card. Interestingly, here in Spain we can still buy in markets and supermarkets salted fish packed in miniature wooden barrels; they are considered a delicacy and priced accordingly. This card has an undivided back, published before 1906.



(Fig. 3) This next card is from the French Basque Country. This is not a Spanish card, but both the Catalan and the Basque people on both sides of the Pyrenees share a common way of life and cards from both sides of the border are included in my collection. What hard work! A group of women - they don't look young either - descending from the mountain loaded with wood. I cannot begin to imagine what life in rural areas was like at the turn of the 20th Century but find this card distressing nevertheless, the third figure in the image, with the walking stick, looks so doubled over with her load that I fear she will not make it home! A fantastic card postally used in 1907.



(Fig. 4) One of my most recent acquisitions is this card of charcoal makers in Catalonia. The card shows two men sitting in front of a shelter made of stones and fronds. In the forests of central Catalonia the charcoal industry served as supplementary income for the farmers of the region during

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the winter months. Groups of men would camp out in the woods, in huts like the one shown in this postcard, while the wood slowly burned and turned into charcoal. In a visit to a local museum some years back, we saw numerous photographs taken in the area this postcard comes from, showing the remains of the kilns and huts, however totally devoid of people, making this postcard even more special. It is dated 1907.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th the textile industry took off in Catalonia and it was to become one of the most important resources of the entire country. With plenty of rivers generating the energy necessary to run the machines 24 hours a day and 7 days a week a social phenomenon – known as *Colonias Textiles* – was born. These “Textile Colonies” were small villages, purpose built around a big factory, and often incorporating a small elementary school, general store and chapel. Here entire families worked and lived, quite often several generations – both men and women – of the same family would be employed in the factory. The *colonias* were run like ancient feudal estates, with the owner of the factory taking on the role of the baronial lord of antiquity and the workers being totally dependent on him. The two cards that follow show two aspects of this phenomenon.



(Fig. 5) This card is a general view of one such *colonia*; the building on the right is a partial view of the factory, the offices and storerooms. The large house towards the left of the picture would belong to the owner. Out of sight behind where the photographer stood there would have been rows of tiny tied cottages that housed the families of the workers. This particular *colonia* functioned until the early 1970's, one of the last to disappear. The card probably dates from around 1920.



(Fig. 6) The card above shows a typical spinning room inside one such factory, this particular one is the Provincial Workhouse in Barcelona. Note the figure of the “overseer” standing by the door, making sure there were no slackers!! Probably dating to around 1910.



(Fig. 7) Another fascinating card is this street water seller from Galicia. This is an early undivided back postcard published before 1906. It was published by a local printer and does not seem to be part of any large series, again making the image more unique as the number printed would have been quite small. I would imagine this photograph may have been taken at some local event, the water seller being the equivalent of the modern “coca cola” stand!

What makes this card even more interesting is the location – Vigo in Northern Spain. Postcards of water sellers are known for the provinces of Andalusia, where the terrain is arid, temperatures in summer soar to 45° degrees in the shade (110 Fahrenheit for Susan Lane who is still

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struggling with Celsius) and water scarce. In the north this is not the case and the card is the more unusual for this.



(Fig. 8) Here's another street vendor, this time in the southern city of Cordoba in Andalusia. The door to door milk seller has been represented several times on Spanish postcards, another one of the cards in my collection shows a girl milking a nanny goat in the street while the customer waits (more fresh than this you won't get!) and yet another has the seller standing behind a trestle table with a couple of milk churns on it and the inevitable goats just behind him. Of the three this one is my favourite. He looks so solemn and important atop his donkey, who can resist him! The photograph was taken by a local photographer and is printed in Spanish and Esperanto. Probably published around 1910.



(Fig. 9) This card is from the tiny Principality of Andorra, high in the Pyrenees and one of the most beautiful little countries both in winter when the whole landscape is permanently covered in snow, and in summer, when everything is green and luscious and the hills and valleys

are a haven of peace and tranquility – that is, if you can ignore the thousands of tourists milling about looking for duty free goodies. The view shows a typical farmhouse with a group of men and boys standing by the sheep they are shearing while the women look on from the balcony. A lovely card published in Spain by a local printer. All early cards of Andorra are scarce and quite often when you find one it's a totally uninteresting view of the mountains (reasonably so in my opinion as at the time there were more mountains than inhabitants in Andorra) so finding cards of social interest is a real bonus.



(Fig. 10) Last of all the man no one can do without, even at the turn of the 20th century. This card of a “street sanitation engineer” in Cordoba is unfortunately not all that well printed. It is part of a large series of postcards of Granada, published by a local editor and I would imagine aimed at foreign visitors, however this is the only card I have ever seen of a trash collector and therefore a favourite. The card has a divided back so it was printed after 1906 although the photograph could have been taken earlier.

I hope you have enjoyed this small selection of Social History cards. I love them and every time I look at them I get two separate thrills, the first is because visually they are stunning images of the past, a record of times gone by never to return, the second is the thought that my car is in the garage, water comes out of a tap, the central heating is working and my groceries are delivered to the door after I order them on the internet!

Editor's note: *The author is a native of Spain married to a native of the United Kingdom. Pilar and her husband moved to Spain about two years ago after living in England for more than 25 years. They now live in a small village 40 miles north of Barcelona with pet dogs and a cat. Pilar enjoys taking the dogs for long walks in the woods and scouring the flea markets looking for old postcards.*

The Bronx Postcard Club



TPC Member (and Recording Secretary) Thomas X. Casey formed the Bronx Postcard Club for collectors of Bronx postcards. He has generously offered to provide one year of free membership and newsletters to members of the *Taconic Postcard Club*. If you are a member and are not yet receiving your copy of the newsletter, please contact him at **The Bronx Postcard Club – Post Office Box 358 – Bronx, New York 10471** or by email at: ThomasXCasey@Yahoo.com

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The process of chromolithography allowed a wide range of colors to be used, from delicate to deep shades. A separate stone had to be drawn for each color, and as many as twenty stones were used at times.



GRUSS AUS, MUNCHEN – SIGNED KLEY - 1899

After the illustration was drawn, each stone was inked in an appropriate color on a press. The print paper was then passed from stone to stone to pick up the various colors. Of course, the paper had to be aligned exactly right on every stone or the resulting print was spoiled.

Currier and Ives popular prints and famous calendars became world renowned for their high quality chromolithographic images.

By the twentieth century, the world's premier postcard publishers produced at least some of their cards by the chromolithographic process. ◇

***Postcard Display at the Hendrick Hudson
Free Library - Month of July***
***On exhibition will be patriotic postcards from the
collection of Susan Lane
of the Taconic Postcard Club***

STATEN ISLAND

In Old Post Cards



BRIAN MERLIS and BOB STONEHILL

**SPECIAL OFFER -----
(FOR TPC MEMBERS ONLY)**

Staten Island in Old Post Cards
by Brian Merlis and *Taconic Postcard Club* member Bob Stonehill. "This hardcover, beautifully bound, book shows uncommon as well as RARE postcard views of small Staten Island towns to the most populous communities."

This book features 270 views from 39 communities culled from over 1000 postcards of old Staten Island from approximately 1905 to 1930. The book also features two maps that will help the reader to locate these towns and communities. It has a nice solid hardcover and is printed on 100 lb. heavyweight stock that brings out the detail of each view. The books list on eBay for \$29.99 + \$3.40 S&H using the "Buy-It-Now" feature.

Co-author Bob Stonehill has generously offered the book to TPC members at \$20.00

The Taconic Postcard Club Newsletter

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