

Collecting Mining Postcards

by John Pawloski

Actual historical photographs of mines and mining activities are difficult to find. There are, however, numerous postcards available to illustrate nearly every activity a collector could want from the late 1890's to the present. Postcards provide a relatively inexpensive and very informative visual means of learning about our mining heritage. The types of scenes covered include mining towns, exterior and interior operations from drilling, mucking and blasting to hauling and disasters. Quarrying, processing, and transportation are also related topics, and cover virtually every mining district.

From an historical perspective, postcards were officially authorized by an Act of Congress in 1898 as a private mailing card. This inexpensive form of postal communication rapidly grew in popularity. Card companies sent photographers all over to capture interesting scenes, businesses, and events. Many local photographers had cards printed of their area. Even the British card manufacturers were quick to speculate on the American market.

Quantitatively you will find the majority of the postcards date back to the early years between 1898 and 1912. The initial collecting spree was nearly dead by World War I, even though the cards were still produced in substantial numbers.

No inventory of the number of mining related post cards is known, but judging from the number in the author's collection and those seen elsewhere, over 3,000 different cards exist.

There are four basic types of postcards. One type is the business advertising card, having only printed information and lacking illustrations. These are relatively scarce since they were not kept by collectors as frequently (see fig. 1).

A second type of card has a simple black and white sketch of a mining scene. Occasionally hand coloring added a little zip to the card. This type of card is also scarce (see fig. 2).

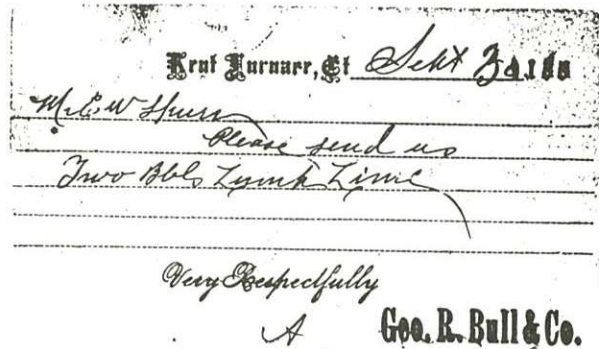


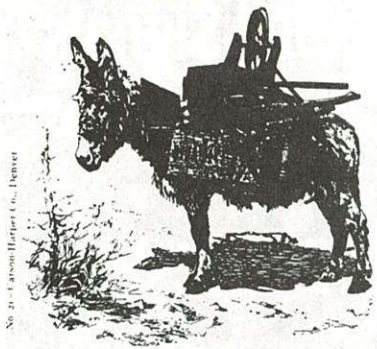
FIGURE 1

The third, and very common type of card, is the hand colored print made from converted photographs. Figure 3 illustrates this type.

The fourth is the most common type of post card printed. This type of card is machine color printed based on a converted photograph (see fig. 4).

The last type of post card, and most sought after and most expensive, is the card which was individually printed from the photographic negative (see fig. 5).

THE PROSPECTOR'S AUTOMOBILE



No. 21 - Carson Harper Co., Denver

*from
Claymore
2/20*

FIGURE 2



MINER, DRILLING COAL TO PREPARE FOR BLAST.

FIGURE 3

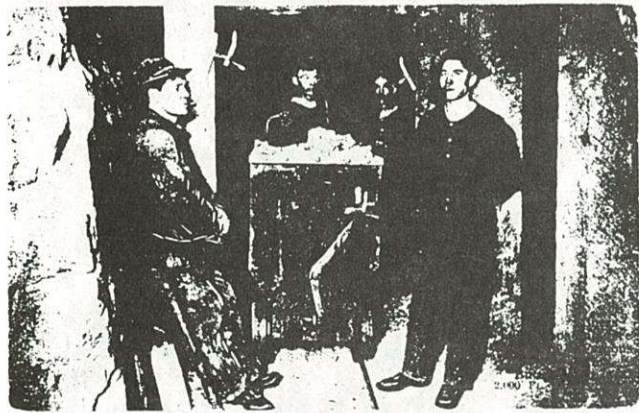


FIGURE 4

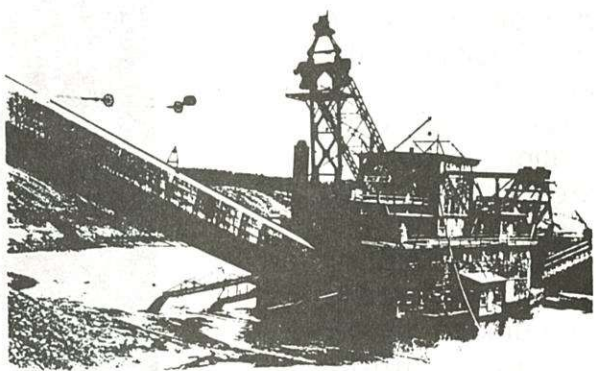


FIGURE 5



ABANDONED MINE EXPLORATION IN ARIZONA

Summer 1990.
Mine exploring
trip in Arizona.
Found only
rattlesnakes on
this trip. L to R:
David Bobrink,
Ted Bobrink,
Dave Thorpe.
Photo by Bob
Schroth.

