

Synopsis

A Postcard Tour of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition

1. Scope of the Exhibit:

This exhibit is composed of lithographs, chromolithographs, collotypes, half-tones, and real photo postcards featuring images of monumental features, main buildings, midway attractions, and advertising cards from various vendors and exhibitors.

An introduction on postcard printing provides a background on the process, paper, size, examples of the two main types of cards presented (collotypes and lithographs), and conservation.

Information addressing the principal methods of transportation used by visitors arriving at the Exposition and while traveling around the city of Buffalo is provided. Period postcards displaying these modes of transportation are shown.

Viewers are taken a tour around the Exposition grounds in chapters 6 through 11. Each chapter has a small map of the Exposition grounds with a "You Are Here" indicator. This allows the viewer the opportunity to visualize where they are while wandering the 350-acre fairgrounds.

There are more than 400 different postcards associated with the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, more are discovered every year. Within this exhibit, over 230 different postcards, from the 30 known sets are displayed. Of the 30 known sets, 23 contain six or more cards. The remaining seven sets contain six or fewer cards. Eight complete sets of ten or more cards, and six complete sets of six or less cards are displayed in the exhibit. Many examples of single cards and real photo cards that are presented that are not included in a specific known set.

2. Material Organization:

The material is thematically organized. The first few pages provide the viewer with information related to the Exposition. Basic information relating to the history of postal cards, printing processes, type of paper used, paper size and weight, as well as problems associated with the high acid content of the paper are included. Additionally, information on the different modes of transportation used by visitors arriving at the Exposition is provided.

Chapter 6 focuses specifically on cards with panoramic views of the fairgrounds; this gives the viewer an idea of the scope of the extensive fairgrounds. Chapters 7 - 10 focus on cards featuring images of specific monumental features, buildings, and Midway attractions. Chapter 11 displays commercial advertising cards provided by various vendors or exhibitors.

3. Collecting Challenges:

The material presented here was accumulated from auction houses, on-line sellers, private sellers, postal history dealers, stamp dealers from around the world, and members of the Buffalo Pan-American Collectors Club.

Locating quality items is difficult as Exposition visitors retained the material as souvenirs without consideration to the proper preservation and care of the same. Postal cards were sent around the world and encountered damage due to poor handling during their travels.

The high acid content of the paper stock used in printing early postal cards creates an additional hazard. Without proper preservation techniques the postcards will degrade, turn yellow or brown, become brittle, and eventually fall apart.

Research material for this subject is limited. The few books related to Exposition postcards are contradictory.

There is no standard numbering system, perhaps Megson is the most common numbering system used by collectors, but the listings are incomplete.

Postcard printer information is sometimes provided; other times it is up to the reader to research and determine which company printed which cards or sets of cards.

The plethora of commercial advertising cards from vendors and exhibitors makes the task of identifying the printer impossible at best, most cards do not contain identifying printer information. Smaller companies commonly sent their work to the larger printing companies (Niagara Envelope Manufactory and The Albertype Company) and identifying information was rarely included.

In many instances, the only way to identify a printer is to compare similar types of cards, communicate with other collectors, research the available material, and then attribute the card to a specific printing company. There are many cards where the printer information remains unknown, more than 120 years after the Exposition.

4. Completeness of the Subject:

There are more than 400 different postal cards recorded for the 1901 Pan-American Exposition. This exhibit features more than 230 representative examples of postal cards, from 30 different sets of cards, and from fifteen major printers.

Included in this exhibit are eight complete sets with 10 or more different cards, and seven complete sets of six or less cards. Many single examples of cards from smaller printers, real photo post cards, and advertising cards from vendors and exhibitors are included in this exhibit.

Collecting the post cards from the Exposition is a continuing life-long pursuit. The quest for new material, improving on the condition of specific items, and discovering something new and never recorded is the ultimate goal.

5. Exhibit History:

The material presented was accumulated over an extended period of time. It has never been shown to other collectors, nor has it been shown in public. This is my first attempt at creating a deltiological exhibit. I believe this may be one of the most comprehensive displays of post cards from the 1901 Pan-American Exposition outside of the 100th anniversary of the Exposition, in 2001, held in Buffalo, NY.

6. Resource Materials:

Preparing for this exhibit I used multiple books, fellow collectors, societies, as well as internet resources. The published resources for Exposition post cards are limited at best. The few published books related to exposition postcards provide little useful information. Most resources have incomplete listings with frequent misidentification between the different sets of cards.

The most comprehensive source of information on this subject is contained in the self-published book *Panorama of the Pan-AM*, by Fred Lavin, president of 100th anniversary of the Pan-American Exposition. Lavin's book details all manner of collectibles and souvenirs related to the 1901 Pan-American Exposition and contains the most complete listing of individual postal cards and sets related to the same. The book was available in limited quantities, the only way to obtain the book is to find another collector willing to part with their copy.

7. Material Rarity:

There are a number of rare postal cards presented in this exhibit, these cards are identified by a red background:

a. There are 17 real photo postcards related to the Exposition within this exhibit. Kodak did not develop a commercially viable method of printing photo cards until 1903, two years after the Exposition. Many examples found in auctions and online sales are reprints.

1. Photo postcards are found on pages: 3, 16, 38, 49, 54, 57, 66, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77.

2. The Propylaea and Colonnade real photo postal card (page 16) is an original VELOX paper card. C.D. Arnold took the photograph, official photographer for the Exposition, and the image is featured in his "photo-view" book "*The Pan-American Exposition - Illustrated.*"

b. The Niagara Envelope Manufactory, Set #5, is a set of seven jumbo cards (6" x 9").

1. Six of the seven cards are on display (pages 10, 22, 23, 42, 46, and 56).

2. These cards are difficult to find in good condition due to their larger size, extra postage costs, and being banned by the Post Office due to the glitter. The size of the cards jammed the sorting machines.

c. Two examples from the set of ten Brinkworth cards are displayed (page 34 and 43). These cards are highly sought after by collectors for their ornate designs and unusual coloring. The cards are prized items in any collection.

d. Five of the eight known State Building postcards are found in Chapter 9 (New England States Building, New York State Building, Ohio State Building, the Pennsylvania State Building, and the Ecuador Pavilion).

e. Spaulding multiview cards, specifically from Set #2 and Set #3, printed in black are considered rare, multiple examples are found throughout the exhibit.

1. Cards printed on pastel colored card stock (green and pink) are considered "mythical" or extremely rare.

2. The exhibit contains an example of a card printed in black on green card stock (page 68).

3. There are two examples of cards printed in black on pink card stock (page 16 and 51). The card on page 51 is a discovery piece; no other examples have been previously recorded.

f. The Tiffany Jewelry company published a set of eight postal cards and were only available at their exhibit. A single card from the set is included in this exhibit (page 79). It is the only card from the set that I have located in more than 20 years of collecting.

8. Expertizing Specific Items:

No items within this exhibit have been expertized.

9. Quality and Condition:

Due to the high wood pulp content and chemicals used in the sizing process acid hydrolysis is common in early post cards. The paper yellows or turns brown, becomes brittle, and eventually falls apart. Archival quality (acid-free) paper was not standardized until the 1980s. Nearly all postcards from the 1900s are considered acidic, requiring proper archival storage to prevent further deterioration.

The majority of the cards presented are in fine to very-fine condition. Examples of early cards with writing over the front image are quite common. This was the only portion of the card the sender was permitted to write a message. If a card with writing appears in this exhibit it is because a better, unused, example was unavailable for display.

There are a few items with small tears or creases. In these instances, a better-quality example is unavailable due to the rarity of a particular card.

The quality of the material, specifically postally used materials, is subject to the conscious efforts to preserve the items by previous owners. Postal cards may show small creases, bends, or stains, but nothing that significantly detracts from the overall presentation quality of the exhibit.

10. Inclusion:

The exhibit features lithographed cards, chromolithographs, collotypes, and half-tones. There are cards of various sizes, coloring, and printing methods on display. A single example of a leather postcard and a heliotype are included in the exhibit.

Found throughout the exhibit are a number of real photo postal cards with images of various buildings and attractions. Kodak printed the majority of these cards; there is a single example of a Velox photo paper card (page 16).

I included all manner of material as much of the common material tells a greater part of the story of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition. Again, I believe this to be one of the most comprehensive displays of postal cards exhibited from the 1901 Pan-American Exposition. This exhibit represents a fraction of the material within my personal collection.

11. References (deltiology):

A. Panorama of the Pan-AM, an Illustrated Guide to Souvenirs from the Pan-American Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, NY, compiled by Frederick M. Lavin and Michael L. Lavin, self-published, 2010.

B. American Exposition Postcards 1870 - 1920, A Catalog and Price Guide, by Frederic and Mary Megson, Gotham Book Mart & Gallery, Inc., 41 W. 47th St., New York, NY, 10036, 1992.

12. Additional References (1901 Pan-American Exposition):

A. Official Catalog and Guidebook to the Pan-American Exposition (With Maps of Exposition and Illustrations), Buffalo, NY, USA, May 1 - Nov 1, 1901, Charles Ahrhart, Buffalo, NY, 1901, Geis & Co., Printing and Engraving, Buffalo, NY.

B. The Rainbow City, Celebrating Light, Color, and Architecture at the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901, by Kerry L. Grant, The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, University at Buffalo, Canisius College, and Crowley Webb and Assoc., published by Joseph F. Bieron, Canisius College Press, Buffalo, NY, 2001.

C. Symbol and Show, The Pan-American Exposition of 1901, by Austin M. Fox and Lawrence McIntyre, published by Meyer Enterprises, P.O. Box 733, Ellicott Station, Buffalo, NY, 1987.

D. The Pan-American Exposition - Illustrated, C.D. Arnold, Buffalo, NY., copyright 1901.

E. Glimpses of the Pan-American Exposition, by C. D. Arnold, Official Photographer, copyright 1898 by J. A. Rudolph, Courier Company, Buffalo, NY.

F. Official Views of Pan-American Exposition, by C. D. Arnold, Buffalo, NY, 1901.

G. Souvenir of Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, May 1 - November 1, 1901, publisher Robert A. Reid, Buffalo, NY, 1901.

H. Snap Shots on the Midway of the Pan-AM Expo, by Richard H. Barry, trade supplied by the American News Company and Buffalo News Companies, publisher Robert A. Reid, Buffalo, NY, 1901.

I. Bennitt Illustrated Souvenir Guide, Pan American Exposition, edited by Mark Bennitt, copy right 1901, The Goff Company, Buffalo, NY.



The “Golden Age” of postcards began in the late 19th century and ended in the early 20th century. The availability of high-quality, inexpensive postcards, depicting local landmarks and scenic views, enabled people to share news while on vacation and update relatives on family matters. The “penny postcard” was the most popular form of communication during this period.

The 1901 Pan-American Exposition was an opportunity for the United States to advertise the cultural, and technological advancements of the United States to the world. Covering nearly 350 acres, the Exposition grounds included 20 main buildings and 80 minor buildings which provided space for over 4,200 exhibitors. From May 1, 1901, through November 1, 1901, more than 8,000,000 visitors attended the Exposition.

Upon arrival in Buffalo tourists took the opportunity to visit landmark buildings in Buffalo as well as Niagara Falls. A number of postcards featuring Niagara Falls and Buffalo city scenes are included in the exhibit.

The viewer is taken on a grand tour of the 1901 Pan American Exposition using the images featured on postcards. A majority of the main buildings, monumental features, and Midway attractions are presented. Commercial advertising cards were available at various exhibits, vendors, and retail outlets in the city of Buffalo.

The postcards in this exhibit number include over 250 of the approximately 410 known cards. The most prominent local and regional printers, engravers, and lithographers, produced multiple sets of cards. Lesser-known companies prepared material and contracted with larger firms to print their cards. A number of “real photo postcards” are featured in the exhibit, these cards are exceedingly rare. It was not until 1907, six years after the Exposition, that Kodak began to offer their “real photo postcard” service enabling any customer to create a postcard from any picture they took.

Title: Untitled - Panoramic View of the Exposition.
Printer: H. G. Breed Jr, copyright, Charles Graham, artist, Gies & Co., Lithographers, Buffalo, NY.
Card Type: Chromolithograph.
Card Number: Card one of one.

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Legend

Rare postcards are outlined in red.

Real Photo Postcards are outlined in green.

Discovery items are outlined in blue.

*Personal research
and comments are
annotated in italics.*