

# **DATING YOUR POSTCARDS**

(Source: The Postcard Price Guide by J. L. Mashburn, ©1997)

## **Pioneer Era (1893-1898)**

In May 1893, postcards were placed on sale by vendors and exhibitors at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. They are identified by having combinations of undivided backs, multiple scenes/views, no "Authorization by Congress" byline, say "Greetings from..." or "Souvenir of...", postal rates of 2 cents (if listed), and most commonly listed as "Souvenir Card" or "Mail Card." These cards, which appeared mostly in big Eastern cities, are relatively scarce.

## **Private Mailing Cards (1898-1901)**

May 19, 1898, private printers were granted permission by Congress to publish and sell cards. The cards carried the inscription "Private Mailing Card" (PMC) and carry a byline of "Authorized by Act of Congress." Many Pioneer Cards were reprinted as PMCs.

## **Post Card Era (1901-1907)**

December 24, 1901, Congress authorized the use of the words "Post Card" to be printed on the backs of privately printed cards. These types of cards had undivided backs -- only the name and address were permitted on the back of the card. Any message had to be done on the front of the card.

## **Divided Back Era (1907-1915)**

March 1, 1907, Congress permitted the printing of Divided-Back cards, permitting the sender to use the back for both the name/address and message. These cards had no white borders around the image.

**NOTE:** Pre-WWI postcards were printed mainly in Europe -- Germany being the greatest source because of the quality. With the advent of World War I and the high tariffs, importing cards from Europe was stopped.

## **White Border Era (1915-1930)**

With imports from Germany ceased, U.S. publishers began producing postcards. Usually reprints of Divided-Back cards, these pieces have a white border around the image and are considered of poorer quality from their predecessors.

## **Linen Era (1930-1938)**

Card quality is improved as a result of technological advances in the printing industry. Publishers began using a linen-like paper and printed the images using very cheap ink.

## **Photochrome Era (1939-present)**

These cards have very beautiful chrome colors produced by publishers such as Dexter Press, Mike Roberts, Curt Teich and Plastichrome.