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Article Summary: Postcards written between 1908 and 1949 feature pictures of Nebraska's Carnegie libraries and messages that suggest the concerns of Nebraskans of that time.

Cataloging Information:

Names of Recipients of Postcards: J V Brown, Horton, Kansas, Mrs Lola Colburn, Omaha, Nebraska; Miss Elizabeth Ringo, St Francis, Kansas; Mr H M Horn, Alma, Nebraska; Miss "Daisy" Hrikes, Wakefield, Nebraska; Mr R T Smith, Lynden, Washington; Flora Leonard, Salem, Oregon

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Photographs / Images: inset postcards including a view of the city library, Lincoln, Nebraska, and the library at Peru State Teachers' College, Peru, Nebraska



Writes Soon

SMALL STORIES FROM PENNY POSTCARDS

By Oliver B. Pollak

*Dearest Mother and Dad,
Received your letter this a.m. and was glad to hear from
you. Well we are going out to the Bandits cave to chase them
out & have a weenie roast & marshmello toast tonight. Hope
to have a nice time. Don't know exactly when we can start
but will not be long I think. Havent heard from Mr. Ledford.
Well will write a letter later. So goodbye with oceans of love.*

Claire and Virgil

Mailed from Lincoln to
Indianapolis, Indiana, 1920

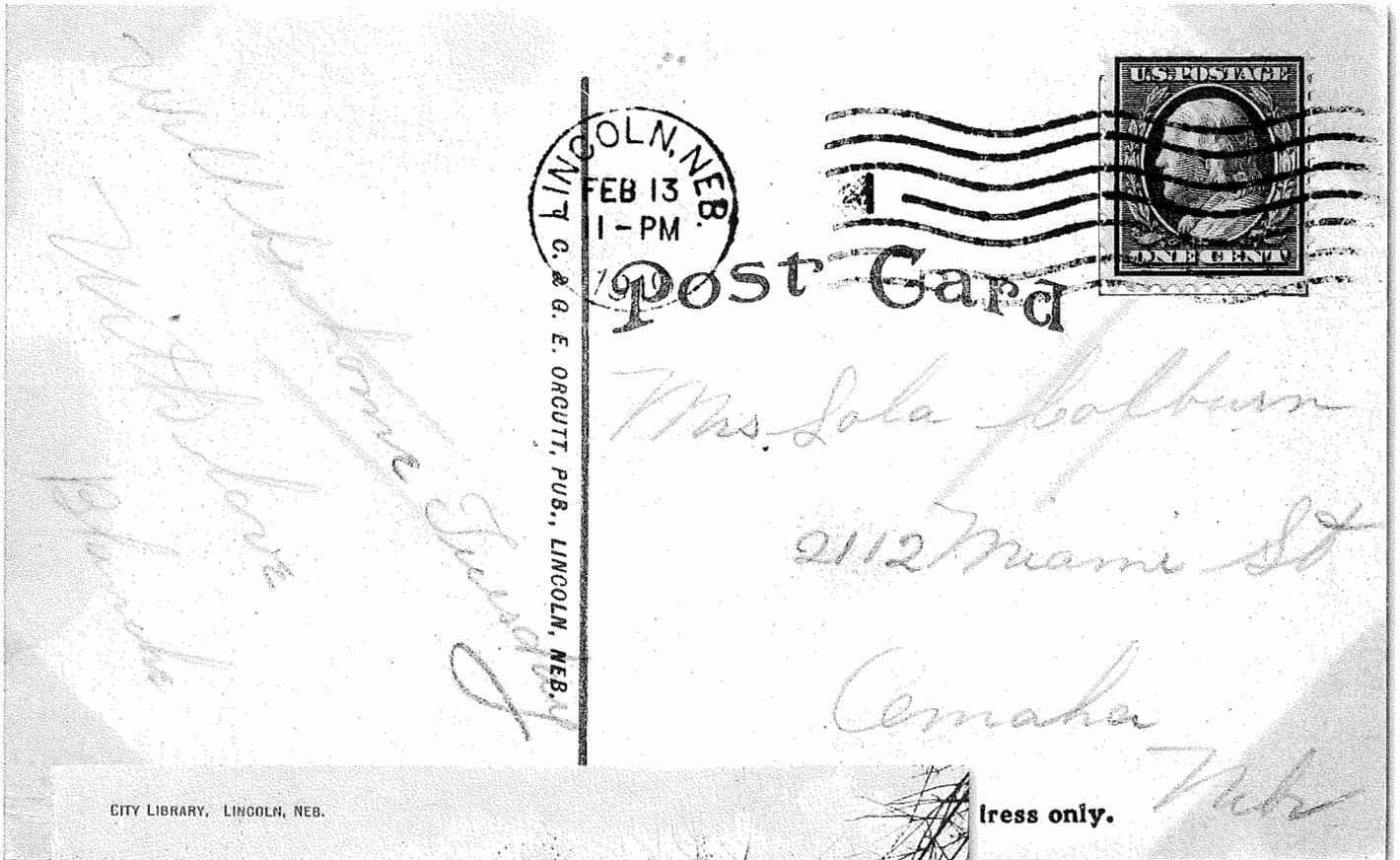


Turn the clock back. Forsake the multi-story, multimillion-volume collections of the Library of Congress in our nation's capital, the British Library in London. Focus instead on what Nebraskans wrote between 1908 and 1949 on the back of postcards depicting Nebraska's libraries.

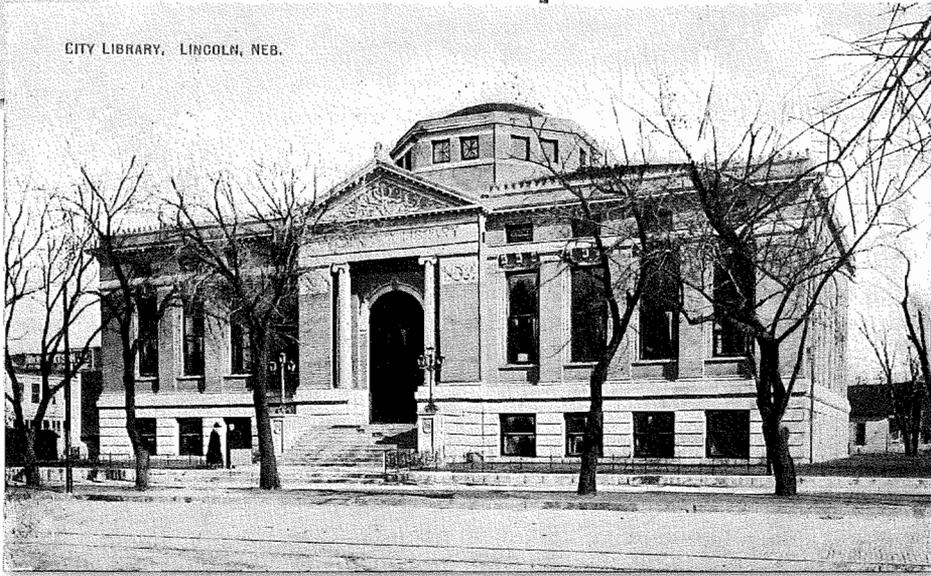
Why libraries, when postcards from that forty-year span depict everything from prize hogs to somebody's top-hatted great-uncle sitting in a cutout crescent moon? The choice is arbitrary, admittedly, but explainable: I've been working on a book about Nebraska's sixty-nine Carnegie libraries, and in addition to archival research, I've looked at hundreds of images of Carnegie libraries in the state.

The cards are from the collection of Burnice Fiedler of Omaha, Nebraska's "First Lady" of postcards. Besides providing period images of Carnegie libraries, the cards reveal the interests of three generations of Nebraska families—children, parents and grandparents, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles.

Mail service in the period was very efficient. Next-day delivery was common, facilitated by an efficient railroad system. The postcards generally do not carry birthday, condolence, Christmas, or New Year's greetings. These were the realm of the greeting card. Messages with personal details of romance and finance usually were sent in envelopes. The postman could—and probably did—read postcards, and no doubt postcard messages could



CITY LIBRARY, LINCOLN, NEB.



Address only.

I don't know where I'm going but I'm on my way.

Returning to Nebraska City from South Omaha in 1910 a friend wrote,

I got home all right and found everything.

A salesmen who stayed in hotels wrote in 1912 from Grand Island to Fremont,

be a window into a larger, revealing analysis of life and semi-private communication in the period, but that's for someone else to undertake.

Before public telephones and cell phones the penny postcard let people know where you were and when you expected to arrive. A 1908 message from Beatrice to Horton, Kansas, announced,

*Dear sir,
Please send any mail that comes to me at your place to me at Denver Col. To be called for and oblige.*

Postcards were used to announce itineraries, as in a 1913 card:

Stopped in Omaha and Lincoln, going to York.

Perhaps the most welcome was the 1910 message from Lincoln to Omaha,

Will be home Tuesday, with love Blanche.

In 1915 “Dear Jo” in Leavenworth, Kansas, was informed from Fairbury,

I am coming so as to get in to L. on the Missouri Pacific from Pierce Junction. I believe it gets in about 2 P.M. Be sure to meet me if possible. Ruth may come too. Love from Rebecca.

Francis wrote in 1924 from Lincoln to Axtell,

Will be home Monday on #5 for a couple of days. First town is Benkelman Nebr and second is Stamford.

The weather and the season, cold, heat, rain, and drought were common topics, and the writers were not simply searching for something to write. It was an agricultural society. Air conditioning, central heating, and double-glazed windows had not been invented, and roads were sometimes impassable.

Sude wrote in 1908 from Pawnee City to Delta, Colorado,

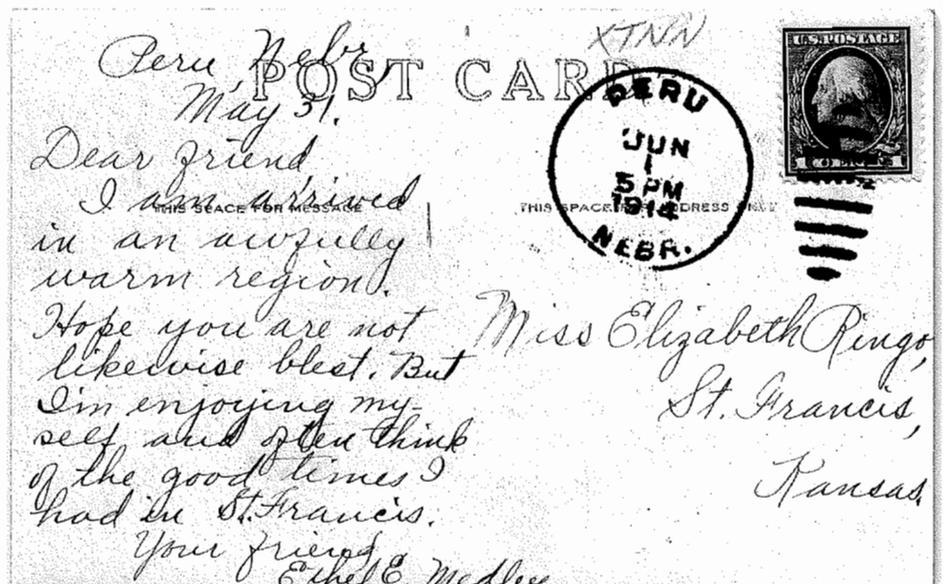
It is too hot & dry here to do much of anything but gossip.

A Unadilla, Nebraska, writer in 1909 asked his friend in Syracuse, about six miles away,

How do you like the winter.

Writing in 1912 from Peru to “Dear Papa and Ma” in Alma, their daughter observed,

Yesterday was quite warm—and it made the snow look sick the water was running over the walks as I came home but their [sic] is still plenty of snow.



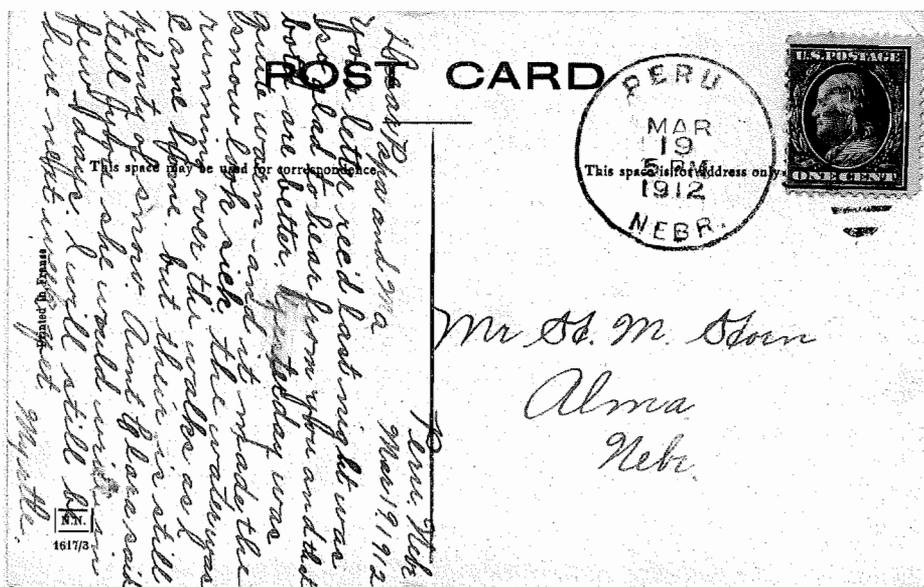
In 1912 a message from Nebraska City stated, *Having a good time. Plenty of rain. Hear it is warm at home.*

The heat could be oppressive—May 31, 1914, from Peru, Nebraska, to St Francis, Kansas:

I am arrived in an awfully warm region. Hope you are not likewise blest.

Jennie wrote in 1916 from McCook, Nebraska, to Mrs. Grace W. in Stanton,

Oliver B. Pollak is a practicing attorney and professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. A previous contributor to Nebraska History, his recent book, Nebraska Courthouses: Contention, Compromise, and Community, was published by Arcadia Press in 2002. All postcard images courtesy of Burnice Fiedler of Omaha.



Dear Friends,
 Well how are you folks anyway. We are awful busy. Victor is plowing and I have sewed all the morning. I have forgotten whether or not I wrote a letter last. Will write, when I get more time. You write soon and tell me all the news. We are all well. Come to see us. Yours as ever, Betty.

Hope you are all getting along fine. We are having a very interesting meeting here but it is still dry and dusty. Tell Helen to keep on caring for the plants and chickens. It is cooler today. Perfect to go to Ravenna tomorrow. Jennie.

A message on May 15, 1930, from Pawnee City to Sutton announced,

No rains so far. Was cloudy this A.M. but sun is coming out now. Not at all wet down here.

An early fall cold snap occurred on September 29, 1926. Irene from David City wrote to her grandparents in Howe,

Just a line to tell you that the sun has decided to shine at last. Surely has been cold, dreary & rainy but acts like its going to warm up again. Frosted both Sun & Monday night. Killed all the flowers. Do you have your heater up. Bill put ours up Sunday and we've surely enjoyed toasting our selves around it. We wished for your stove (in the store) a good many times from Thurs until Sun.

A card from Bennet to York hinted at the farming cycle of plowing, planting, cultivating and harvesting:

Postcards could bring relief or anxiety about health. Myrtle wrote in 1912 from Peru to Alma,

Dear Papa and Ma

Your letter rec'd last night was so glad to hear from you and that both are better.

While most postcards carried the sentiment, "I am fine, I hope you are too," or something much like it, some indicated serious health issues. In 1909 Zoe wrote from Nebraska City to Wakefield,

How do you like tulip salve?

Sometimes the problem was temporary, as in 1926, when a child wrote from David City to her grandparents in Howe,

Dearest Grandma and Grandpa,

Hope you are all well. We are feeling real good again. We ate something that did not agree with us we're eatin prunes. Love from Irene.

Health news could be more ominous, as in 1908 when Sue in Pawnee City wrote her sister in Ohio,

I suppose you are anxious to hear from Milt. Well he is not much better work part time when

able take med all time. Dr said it was something like catarrh of the stomache yes and it may be cancer. Never told him I thought so but we don't know I tell you it seames [sic] blue to me you don't know how I feel but I never let on when he is here I dare not eggs are 26 here Milt dont eat meat drink coffee or tea he drinks cocoa lots eggs, baked potato and apples
Yours Sue write soon.

A brother in Lincoln wrote to his sister in St. Paul in 1909,

Dear Sis,

Rec'd your letter yesterday. You folks will have to find something for Carin there. Plan on coming here Sat. are you going to Omaha? Elmer & some boys were playing & he got pushed into a little ditch & that is how he got hurt. Suits are from 6.50 and up. Write soon.

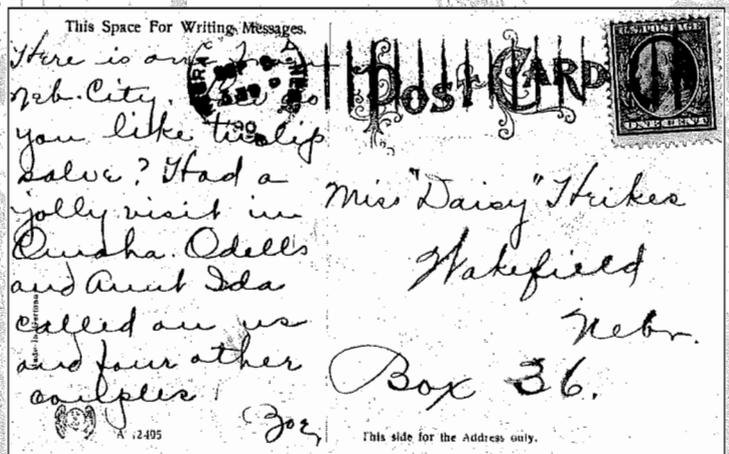
Several of the postcards were written by college students. Bessie, attending Kearney Normal College (now the University of Nebraska at Kearney) wrote in 1914 from Arnold to Orleans,

Dear Mother. We arrived O.K. Sat a.m. Went out to Myette's folks in P.M. am just ready to start for school. Hope you are well.

A tinge of homesickness colors Laurence's 1913 message from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln to his physician father in Wahoo,

Am all o.k. enjoy my work better this week & the time passes much faster. Everything in fine shape. Wish you could come down fri with the folks will be up sat. With love.

Teachers remembered their graduates. Daisy Nettleton of Peru Normal College



POST OFFICE
SEP 14
12 M

CARD



This Space May Be Used for Message

This Space for Address Only

Dear friend: I am
thinking of the seniors
of last year as they
enter upon their
work this fall and
send this to wish
you a successful
& pleasant year.
Sincerely Dany Nettleton

Mr. R. J. Smith
Lynden
Washington

(now Peru State College) wrote on a Peru card in 1908 from Lincoln to Lynden, Washington,

Dear Friend: I am thinking of the seniors of last year as they enter upon their work this fall and send this to wish you a successful & pleasant year.

A few of the postcards referred to the library pictured on the other side. Miss Jane A. Abbott, librarian of the South Omaha Carnegie Library, wrote in 1908 to Miss Charlotte Templeton, the head of the Nebraska Library Commission in Lincoln,

This is a better picture of my 'shop' I think. It is one I took myself.

In 1913 a card sent from Lincoln to Bingham, Utah, announced,

Carnegie donated this library to Lincoln, I read

lots of fiction from here. I like to read novels.

In 1942 "Grandpa" in Blair wrote Sandra in Minden, Iowa,

I room beside this library to the left Blair.

Jim in Peru wrote in 1949 to Salem, Oregon, *Well, this is it. Hope you know each other some day. It is a very fine collection, although maintained in a somewhat old-fashioned manner. Love, Jim.*

Expressions of guilt about not having written opened many messages, and almost invariably, the card closed with the injunction, "write soon." Indeed. Write soon.

*Love,
Jim*



MEN
 POST CARD
 POST CARD
 Well, this is it
 you know each
 some day. It is
 very fine collection
 although maintained
 in a somewhat old-
 fashioned manner.
 Love,
 Jim
 Dora Leonard
 1096 N. Capital Street
 Salem, Oregon
 JUN 13 1914
 1 CENT
 UNITED STATES POSTAGE
 17071