



A Somewhat Abbreviated History of the Denver Postcard Club

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The Early Years [1978-1979]

The Denver Postcard Club had its embryonic beginnings in 1978, when many postcard clubs were being formed across the United States. In that year, Hazel Graves and Judy McDowell bought their first large collection of cards while vacationing in Arizona. They attended their first Wichita Postcard Club show as new collectors. There they met Bernie and Mildred Lackey, who were also living in Denver. The three of them decided to meet when they all got back in Denver.

Bernie Lackey was an experienced California dealer and he and his wife had moved to Denver a couple of years earlier. A group of eight people informally met in a small commons area of the Lackey's high rise apartment building, Park Mayfair. In April 1979, they decided to start the Denver Postcard Club. In early September, Bernie sent out postcard invitations to collectors in the Denver area and the first "formal" meeting of the Club convened in September 1979.

The First Decade [1980's]

In early 1980, Bernie organized a postcard display at the Central Denver Public Library which greatly increased awareness and increased club membership. About the same time, the manager of the Park Mayfair apartments closed the meeting area to the Club and monthly meetings were temporarily suspended. By mid-1980, Hazel and Judy found a larger location for approximately 50 members in the basement community meeting room of the Capital Federal Savings Bank building (201 Wadsworth Boulevard, now the Colorado State Bank and Trust). By 1982 there were over 80 members.

During 1980's, traveling dealers from other states would either set-up their boxes of cards at a club meeting or—more commonly—set up their boxes in their motel rooms at the Kipling Inn (now the site of Lakewood Fordland). A couple of weeks before the dealers arrived they would send out postcard notifications to Club members announcing their Denver visits. These dealers were the major sources for buying new cards and they brought club members together. Collectors and dealers joined the Club in large numbers with the idea that Club would put on a postcard show.

During these years, the Club was an informal group of collectors and local and out-of-state dealers, but had no elected officers. Key members set up the meeting room, wrote a newsletter and led the meetings. Dues covered the cost of mailing the newsletters that now carried featured articles written by Club members.

By mid-1986, after research and many extended discussions about a sponsoring a show, Club members decided not to do so. Membership plummeted as local and out-of-state dealers dropped their membership. The Club moved the meetings to the Brentwood Tower apartments (3130 Louisiana Avenue), where one member lived. Attendance continued to decline to about six members until the meetings stopped in 1988.

A New Beginning [1988-1990]

The winter of 1988-1989 was a turning point for the club, when a couple of respected traveling dealers encouraged some remaining members to reconstitute the Club and put on a local postcard show. In April 1989, a few members met and committed to staging a show in 1990. Importantly, the decision was made to organize formally as a Colorado not-for-profit organization with elected officers. The reorganization was completed in August 1989.

Thus began ten months of preparations for the Denver Postcard Club's first postcard show, called the "Colorado Classic Postcard Show." Club members divided into task groups to handle the show's planning and execution. The club produced its first national postcard week postcard in support of the new show. The show was held in July 1990 at the Denver Plaza Hotel (7251 E. 49th Avenue, Commerce City, which eventually went bankrupt and is now home to the Stout Street Foundation). By all accounts the show was a great success. Numerous out-of-state dealers showed their inventory and Club membership subsequently swelled to 115 people. Member enthusiasm was high once again.

Finding New Stability [1990's]

The first half of the 1990's was a difficult transition period. In 1991, the Club sponsored the second "Colorado Classic Postcard Show". It was held at the Continental Hotel (2601 Zuni Street, Denver, now the Ramada Denver Mid-Town motel). Although the show was successful, it was difficult to get help from club volunteers to run the show. The following year, 1992, Club members decided not to sponsor a show—and has not sponsored a show since. That year, two Club members decided to host the show themselves, and in 1993 changed the show's name to the "Rocky Mountain States Postcard Show." Those two members organized and ran the show for the next 20 years (1992—2012).

During the early 1990's, the Club had no permanent meeting place and moved to five different meeting sites with attendance that varied from 10 to 15 members. With an independently-operated postcard show, traveling dealers no longer attended meetings and no longer sold out of their hotel rooms. Times were changing for the club.

In 1993, the Club produced the second Club card for National Postcard Week. This card honored founding member Bernard Lackey, who had served as guide and mentor for the club's original organizers for first two years (until he moved back to California) and who had recently died.

The year 1995 was a milestone for the Club. A new club president was cultivated from among the Club's new members, and issues and relationships that permeated the club through the 1980's and early 1990's began to fade. The decision to meet at the Englewood Library (3400 S. Elati Street, Englewood, now a parking lot) established a central and stable place for monthly meetings. In July 2000, the Club's meetings moved to the new Englewood Library (1000 Englewood Parkway).

In 1999, a small group of Club members started a January postcard show unaffiliated with the Club called the "Postcard and Paper Odyssey." One of the group members subsequently took over leadership for that show and added a May show. Thirteen years later, in 2012, the same club member took over a long running July show. All three shows continue to the present time as the "Denver Postcard & Paper Show". These three events provide club members with opportunities to learn about postcard collecting and acquire card every year. At each show, Club members sponsor a table that promotes the hobby and aims to attract new Club members.

Over the decade of the 1990's, the Club established an identity and stability that it did not previously have. Contributing to this was a central and "permanent" meeting location, new members—some of whom were elected to club office, a functioning constitution and bylaws, regularly issued newsletters, and a consistency in monthly meetings that included a business portion, club and guest presenters, invited dealers and club cards.

Building towards the Present [2000's]

Much of what was established by the late 1990's carried over and was improved upon during the first decade of the 21st Century. As with many collecting hobbies, postcard sites and auctions opened up on the Internet and E-Bay began to change the collectibles market, bringing a mixed bag of challenges and opportunities to the club and the hobby. Toward the end of the first decade, the Club expanded its communications avenues to reach out to new audiences and members. One club member developed a Facebook site as the Club's first online presence. Other members established a Pinterest site and a website. A 10-12 page colorful electronic newsletter began monthly publication with articles and images on the art, history, and topics of postcard collecting. The lively issues have received many accolades from readers.

In 2010, the Club moved the meetings to the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library (2038 S. Pontiac Way, Denver), the second largest philatelic library in the U.S. Although the current location is less centrally located, membership continues in the range of 70 to 90 members. Between 22 to 28 members attend monthly meetings. It was a great boost to postcard collecting that American Philatelic Society came to recognize postcard collecting during this period as part of philatelic (stamp) collecting. The Club keeps a good working relationship with the Library president and philatelic volunteers.

Many experts and guests are invited to the Club's monthly meetings to give informational programs on a range of subjects that relate to postcards. These presentations are open to the public. In 2014 the Club attained Federal non-profit status as a 501(c)(3) corporation. In support of this designation, the Club conducts a service project with Colorado Children's Hospital and two Ronald McDonald Houses. This project provides a packet of six postcards, colorful stamps, and instructions that explain how postcards can be enjoyed by residents of these facilities.

Since 2010, the Club has commissioned the design and printing of a postcard for National Postcard Week for its members, and has sold additional cards to members and other collectors. In 2015, the Club contracted with a Denver graphic artist to create a special colorful postcard for marketing the Club around the metro area. The Club maintains an inventory of postcards for purchase by members. The 20,000+ cards are regularly rotated so that new stock is continuously available. The Club's finances have remained stable during this recent period.

Looking Ahead [2015 and Beyond]

As is the case for many collecting clubs, attracting new members is a continuing challenge that will persist in the coming years. Postcard collectors today can go online and buy cards and research postcard information from the convenience of their homes and offices. Many do not see a need drive across town to attend a meeting. For others, collecting particular postcards supports another hobby; for example, doll collectors look for postcards with dolls in the cover image. Our Club provides opportunities for these collectors to learn more about the hobby and to locate collectibles they may not find online, but some are unable or unwilling to dedicate the time for travel, meetings, and socialization.

Even more challenging for collectors of print postcards and the future of the Club is today's widespread use of smart phones, mobile devices, and cloud computing that lend themselves to virtual collections. Online personal collections appeal to people who do not want to haul around or protect the physical objects, and have begun to mirror the online collections now maintained by museums and libraries. This approach may satisfy many collectors, but puts the identification, preservation, and cataloguing of the paper artifacts at risk as fewer individuals seek or are willing to purchase and preserve the original objects.

How the Denver Postcard Club adapts to these challenges will determine how well it does as an active club in the long term. Based on the Club's current activities, its immediate future is bright. The club has lively meetings, plenty of good camaraderie, thousands of club cards, club dealers bringing in new finds, and an audience in a growing metro area. Our goal is to use our collective enthusiasm to find ways to adapt successfully to long term collector trends.