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Ephemera as a Versatile Primary Resource: A Case Study of the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection

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ABSTRACT

Ephemera are rich primary sources too often overlooked within archival materials and at collecting institutions. This case study argues that archivists and librarians should recognize ephemera, specifically postcards, as powerful historical documents worthy of scholarly investigation. By analyzing a sample set of digitized postcards held at the New Mexico State University Library, we show how scholars can use postcards to develop evidence-based arguments. Through the images, printed texts, and hand-written inscriptions found on these early 20th century postcards, we demonstrate how researchers can examine the pro-development messages found in southern New Mexico postcards.

Traveling by rail through the Pecos Valley of eastern New Mexico and west Texas in the 1910s, visitors encountered a mostly flat, arid landscape punctuated by islands of greenery only made possible by a recently constructed system of irrigation works and drilled wells. The region's ranches, farms, and orchards, marketed since the early 1890s as a prosperous "fruit belt," relied on this harnessed water to harvest crops and fatten livestock.[1] The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway penetrated the valley from Clovis, New Mexico southward to Pecos, Texas. The newsstand sitting trackside of the Santa Fe Depot and the Gran Quivira Hotel in Clovis, a famed Harvey House, offered travelers newspapers, magazines, postcards, and other items for purchase.[2]

1. Pecos Irrigation and Improvement Company, *The Pecos Valley: The Fruit Belt of New Mexico* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Co., 1891), https://www.loc.gov/item/2010586024.

2. Rosa Walston Latimer, *Harvey Houses of New Mexico: Historic Hospitality from Raton to Deming* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2015), 73. The Harvey Houses along the Santa Fe railroad in the American Southwest offered travelers high quality accommodations, meals, and first-class service. Fred Harvey's visionary marketing innovations, notably accomplished by "Harvey Girls," are still employed by select hospitality enterprises to this day. See also: Stephen Fried, *Appetite for America: How Visionary Businessman Fred Harvey Built a Railroad Hospitality Empire That Civilized the Wild West* (New York City, NY: Bantam Books, 2010).

While these printed ephemeral items reported on the Southwest's abundant economic opportunities, they also served a dual purpose as a promotional product marketing the region to those living elsewhere. One Harvey postcard then for sale pictured farm workers packing harvested peaches "under sunny skies" in Carlsbad, New Mexico (see Fig. 1). The text on the card's verso boasted of the superior quality of the valley's fruit crop as a testament to the region's ideal climate, soil, and water.[3] The salubrious scene and glowing appraisal of New Mexico printed on the postcard was clearly meant to be mailed far and wide. Recipients of the postcard might have found it compelling and informative, particularly as the state, just recently granted statehood, likely proved an unknown, distant, and exotic locale.

Figure 1. "Packing Peaches Under Sunny Skies. Carlsbad, New Mexico," RG2005-028-164, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

3. "Packing Peaches Under Sunny Skies. Carlsbad, New Mexico," RG2005-028-164, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, accessed August 2024, https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ntpostcards/id/574/rec/1.

Postcards proved a popular means of communication in the United States with billions printed, collected, and mailed in the early 20th century. This form of correspondence, often viewed as a more trivial primary source and thus, underutilized, in fact holds deep insights into an American society undergoing rapid transformation.[4] The act of a sender inscribing a postcard with their thoughts provides a window into how the printed pictures and words on the published card were viewed.[5] This plays out on the postcard pictured above. Having purchased the Harvey postcard depicting the peach harvest in Carlsbad, our traveler mailed the card to a friend in Toledo, Ohio. Postmarked in 1916, Jim, whose last name remains unknown, included a scrawled note to Miss Sarah:

> *This is the way they work right out in the open. Will hit El Paso tomorrow. A house every 20 miles. This is a lonesome country*.[6]

After examining this postcard, one could argue that two competing visions of the Pecos Valley and Carlsbad, New Mexico, now emerge from the same mailer—either a garden of plenty or a lonely landscape. The clear disappointment of the sender, who perhaps purchased the postcard before traveling through the area, became disconcerted by the markedly different reality between the collectible card and what he saw. It was either the valley's stark landscape when compared to the greenery of Ohio where he perhaps lived, or the lack of dense settlement that anchored Jim's assessment. This mailed postcard serves as an informational medium, however incomplete, by occupying a role as a primary source that apprises historical narratives and provides insight into the past. Indeed, postcards are a primary source that can help historians gain a deeper understanding of the Pecos Valley's history.

Primary sources are most often embodied in archival materials. Historians mine diaries and journals, correspondences, first-person accounts published in newspapers, governmental reports, maps, and photographs to create credible narratives of our past. Yet often overlooked is a category of archival materials whose very name, ephemera, calls into question their long-term presence. Generally, these printed paper items are designed to be read, used, and enjoyed once, or for a brief period, and

4. Sandra Ferguson, "'A Murmur of Small Voices': On the Picture Postcard in Academic Research," *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005): 167-184, https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12520/13654; and Carmen Nigro, "Using Postcards for Local History Research," New York Public Library Blog, December 4, 2015, https://www.nypl.org/blog/2015/12/04/postcards-local-history-research.

5. Brook Baldwin, "On the Verso: Postcard Messages as a Key to Popular Prejudices," *Journal of Popular Culture* 22, no. 3 (Winter 1988): 15-28, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1988.2203_15.x.

6. "Packing Peaches Under Sunny Skies. Carlsbad, New Mexico," Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection.

then discarded.[7] The ephemeral nature of pamphlets, brochures, ticket stubs, receipts, trade cards, ink blotters, advertisements, coupons, junk mail, etc., means they are usually not intentionally retained for the historical record. Save for being glued into scrapbooks, if they do find their way into an archive via other means, it is often an afterthought. Still, printed ephemera's ubiquity and the sheer volume produced each year means these items are scattered throughout archival collections and repositories. Even so, in our experience, this type of primary source is generally under-described by archivists and consequently, underutilized by researchers.[8] Perhaps ephemera's "one-noted" character, omnipresence, and utilitarian and promotional nature plays into being undervalued and unaddressed by those plying the library, archival, and scholarly trade. Additionally, the tradition of archival description, with its priority on series- and folder-level notations rather than at the item-level, makes the discoverability of ephemera within manuscript materials a challenge unless it is donated as its own discrete collection.[9] Ephemera collectors are known to deposit their curated materials to archives, particularly postcards, which have a long history as both a form of correspondence as well as a collectible rich in visual content. With its printed message, value-added inscribed messages of senders or collectors, attached postage stamp, and postmark, the ephemeral postcard is a versatile primary resource. Therefore, it can be powerfully mined by the historically inclined. As we will demonstrate in this case study, understanding and

7. "The Mission of The Ephemera Society," The Ephemera Society of America, accessed August 2024, https://www.ephemerasociety.org/mission/: "a non-profit organization formed in 1980 to cultivate and encourage interest in ephemera and the history identified with it." Their website, www.ephemerasociety.org, offers an introductory essay on the definition of ephemera along with visual examples.

8. Archival professional literature generally only addresses postcards when considering its description and preservation needs, and even then, it is usually lumped in with correspondence or ephemera generally, and pictographic materials specifically. For example, see: Rebecca Altermatt and Adrien Hilton, "Hidden Collections within Hidden Collections: Providing Access to Printed Ephemera," *American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 171–194, https://meridian.allenpress.com/american-archivist/article/75/1/171/24210/Hidden-Collections-within-Hidden-Collections; Jim Burant, "Ephemera, Archives, and Another View of History," *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 189-198, https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12105/13098; and Elizabeth K. Freyschlag, "Picture Postcards: Organizing a Collection," *Special Libraries* 71, no. 5-6 (May 1980): 258-264, https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/sla_sl_1980/5.

9. On the challenges of curators and archivists to make the postcard collections in their repository's care more discoverable, see: Jeremy Rowe, *Arizona Real Photo Postcards: History and Portfolio* (Nevada City, CA: Carl Mautz Publishing, 2007), 2; and Barbara M. Jones et al., *Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers: Creating Access to Unprocessed Special Collections Materials in North America's Research Libraries* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries Task Force on Special Collections, 2003): 3-4, https://www.arl.org/resources/hidden-collections-scholarly-barriers-creating-access-to-unprocessed-special-collections-materials-innorth-americas-research-libraries. Respected Special Collections Librarian Gary Kurutz, a passionate collector himself, encourages libraries to catalog their ephemera holdings, long hidden to researchers due to lack of discoverability in institutional catalogs and finding aids, as today's scholars are beginning to see their documentary value. See also: K.D. Kurutz and Gary Kurutz, *California Calls You: The Art of Promoting the Golden State, 1870 to 1940* (Sausalito, CA: Windgate Press, 2000): 11, 17-19.

acknowledging the value of ephemera unlocks a postcard collection's full potential as a multi-faceted historical resource.[10]

Postcards as Historical Medium

Postcards are generally defined as a commercially produced rectangular-shaped piece of stiff paper (commonly near a 3.5" x 5.5" ratio) designed to transmit simple correspondence through a postal system. With their introduction to the world in the late 1800s and subsequent rapid evolution in form, postcards proved an extremely popular and efficient way to send short messages to family, friends, and business associates. In the United States, this type of analog correspondence evolved as the government maneuvered to expand the reach of its postal system into rural areas and to offer customers cheap and effective ways to communicate. These pieces of paper transformed from exclusively-produced government "postal cards" to congressionally-approved mailers envisioned to carry short messages similar to a telegram in the 1870s, and on to the privately printed cards with colorful designs and photographs that became popularized and collectible in the 1890s and onward. With the authorization of non-governmentally produced postcards into the postal system, customers soon had a wide array of privately printed cards to select from as their mood, aesthetic preferences, and souvenir-acquiring tastes dictated. Printers produced cards that offered holiday greetings and campy humor, patriotic and religious messages, the work of well-known artists and poets, commemorated national events or personal anniversaries, and colorized photographic scenes of historical events and exotic landscapes. Developments in photography soon allowed those with a camera the means to produce their own "real photo postcards," whether professional or vernacular photographs, setting off another round of postcard creation in the early 1900s.[11]

10. The Council of Library & Information Resources' Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplified Unheard Voices (https://www.clir.org/hiddencollections/) funded 128 digitizing projects (2008-2014). An analysis of the $27.4 million effort looked at cataloging outputs as well as the newly discoverable materials impact on research. Of the six million items freshly exposed, including nearly five million photographic images, postcards accounted for only 8,000 items of the overall total. It would appear that librarians, archivists, and curators consistently place greater priority on photographic prints, slides, and negatives than they do on postcards, even though most of the latter held by cultural heritage institutions are pictorially printed versions of the former. See also: Joy M. Banks, *The Foundations of Discovery: A Report on the Assessment of the Impacts of Cataloging Hidden Collections Program, 2008-2019* (Alexandria, VA: Council on Library and Information Resources, September 2019), 10, https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub177.

11. For further details on the history of postcards, see: Marian Klamkin, *Picture Postcards* (New York City, NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1974), 24-37; and Robert Bogdan and Todd Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 1-29.

While primarily a vehicle to transmit messages, postcards became a sought-after souvenir or artifact of collectors around the world.[12] Their simple form and ubiquity during the era, coupled with the diversity of subject matter printed onto the cards, made building a collection rather simple to undertake and easy to maintain. These philocartists, as they were initially called, later deltiologists, sought out postcards for reasons as diverse as the artifacts they collected. Some collectors privately held onto cards they received in the mail to memorialize a note sent from a distant significant other or an ailing family member, while others took to building curated albums of cards to be shared with visiting parlor guests or rival collectors. A postcard showing a birds-eye view of a city that included a postmark from that same city might be sought by one collector, while another may focus on only collecting cards produced by a noted designer or artist. Those with the collecting bug created organizations, published guides and newsletters, and held events dedicated to the hobby. With billions of cards having been produced and mailed over the last 150 years, the pastime continues to this day as there are still large stocks of new and old cards to be sorted through.[13] Across the United States, the archival records of a few major postcard producers and the collections of many deltiologists have found new homes in museums, libraries, and archives to be used by researchers of all types.[14] As historian Lydia Pyne notes, "Postcards have been printed, sold, mailed, and received on a scale that makes them, historically, the largest class of artifacts that humankind has ever exchanged."[15] While metal and paper currency might challenge that assertion, it is nevertheless true that postcards as artifacts can tell historians, anthropologists, cultural geographers, genealogists, and other researchers much about regional histories.[16]

12. For a detailed account of the early postcard collecting craze in the United States, see: George and Dorothy Miller, *Picture Postcards in the United States, 1893-1918* (New York City, NY: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976), 15-32.

13. The Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York City (https://metropolitanpostcardclub.com/), founded in 1946, is the oldest continuously run postcard club in the United States.

14. Notable examples of postcard collections include those at the Newberry Library (https://www.newberry.org/collection/subjects/postcards), the Leonard A. Lauder postcard collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (https://collections.mfa.org/search/objects/*/lauder%20postcards), and the Institute of American Deltiology materials at the University of Maryland (https://www.lib.umd.edu/institute-american-deltiology).

15. Lydia Pyne, *Postcards: The Rise and Fall of the World's First Social Network* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2021), 11.

16. For an example of how scholars are using postcards to engender new historical understanding, see: Ana Stevenson and Kristin Allukian, "The Suffrage Postcard Project: Feminist Digital Archiving and Transatlantic Suffrage History," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 8, no. 1 (May 2021), https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol8/iss1/8.

When we examined the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, an archival collection of mainly southern New Mexico agricultural scenes held by the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Library, we noted similarities in messaging throughout the 431 postcards, primarily as a land of plenty and prosperity. These postcards offer extensive data to consider, an informationally rich medium that supports scholarly discovery. Interestingly, postcard popularity among consumers coupled with the low production and mailing costs of the paper item ensured that the format was used not only for correspondence, but also to promote economic opportunities, market new enterprises, and extoll the virtues of reliable trade networks to whomever viewed the printed card.[17] In the American West in particular, railroad companies and land development corporations produced postcards, maps, brochures, and other ephemera to encourage the settlement of remote corners of the developing nation and later entice Americans to travel and visit the stunning landscapes and indigenous cultures.[18] Indeed, the history of the postcard and its heyday closely follows the tail-end of the era of Manifest Destiny (roughly 1812-1867, coined in 1845) and the bordering of the American frontier. In particular, postcards produced about New Mexico, one of the last territories granted statehood (1912), focused their marketing of the state toward fellow Americans. Those who lived along the more densely populated east coast and agriculturally-oriented Midwest learned of New Mexico through postcards as a place where one could enjoy a tri-cultural (Anglo, Spanish/ Mexican, and Indigenous) society ripe for commercial and individual success. This consistent message of prosperity, opportunity, modernity, and sophistication is clearly articulated in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection.

Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the close of the Mexican-American War brought New Mexico into the United States in 1848, the territory would not gain statehood until January 6, 1912, when it became the 47th state. Many scholars have written on the reasons for the 64-year delay, with most concurring that racial and ethnocultural prejudice against the majority population of the territory who were Catholic, Spanish-speaking, and of Mexican heritage, coupled with many self-serving partisans in both Santa Fe and Washington, D.C., led to the lengthy political

17. Maurice Rickards, "Postcards," in *Encyclopedia of Ephemera* (New York City, NY: Routledge, 2000), 249-250.

18. Besides postcards, railroads produced blotters, calendars, timetables, maps, luggage stickers, menus, passes, route guides, rulebooks, tickets, and brochure, to name a few. For further reference and examples of railroad ephemera, see: Brad S. Lomazzi, *Railroad Timetables, Travel Brochures & Posters: A History and Guide for Collectors* (Spencertown, NY: Golden Hill Press, 1995); and Carlos A. Schwantes, "Publishing the Railroad: The Ephemera Bonanza," at The Ephemera Society of America, accessed August 2024, https://www.ephemerasociety.org/publishing-the-railroad-ephemera. On the use of ephemera by land developers, see: John Miller Morris, *Taming the Land: The Lost Postcards Photographs of the Texas High Plains* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

decision.[19] New Mexicans also had to contend with their fellow Americans' limited knowledge of the state and perceptions of the region as an isolated backwater where the Wild West still played out amidst a harsh environment. In an area with a large indigenous population of Apache, Navajo, and Pueblo peoples, tribes mythologized as often as demonized in the Wild West ethos, and an expansive border that saw periodic episodes of lawlessness and full-scale military operations into Mexico, it is not hard to understand why those with a stake in developing the state felt the need to combat negative stereotypes by educating and promoting the state through a campaign of printed ephemera.

To market New Mexico to investment capitalists and potential settlers, an informal coalition of private boosters and governmental jurisdictions jointly campaigned to produce visually arresting printed ephemera and then worked to get it into the hands of possible converts.[20] Local commercial clubs, chambers of commerce, and businesses printed brochures that extolled the opportunities for investment. Farm bureaus, agricultural cooperatives, and ranching interests produced free maps identifying inexpensive land with great agricultural potential for row crops and livestock. Land and irrigation developers made pamphlets charting the beautiful climate and stable weather, in locales seemingly never short on sunshine or water, nearly free from pests and predators. Railroads handed out timetables and shipping rates documenting the transportation networks, making for reliable travel and consistent trade. Sporting organizations published slick leaflets noting the abundance of seasonal fish and game. Local and state governments produced reports on the modern and cultured cities and counties with requisite good roads, bridges, churches, schools, hospitals, libraries, theaters, and sound government—all harbingers of a serious society under development in the United States. Many of these groups also produced postcards with idealized representations of their messages and saw that they were distributed far and wide. Local New Mexico businesses like the Corner Drug Store in Alamogordo and the Ingersall's Book Store in Roswell published

19. For recent scholarship on the place of New Mexico in the United States' westward expansion and the fight for statehood see: David Van Holtby, *Forty-Seventh Star: New Mexico's Struggle for Statehood* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); and William S. Kiser, *Coast-to-Coast Empire: Manifest Destiny and the New Mexico Borderlands* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018).

20. Ree Sheck, *Agriculture Made New Mexico Possible*, rev. ed. (Las Cruces, NM: New Mexico State University College of Agriculture and Home Economics, 1992), 20. For examples of New Mexico-specific marketing ephemera produced during the era see: Bureau of Publicity, *New Mexico: Its Resources in Public Lands, Agriculture, Horticulture, Stock-raising, Coal, Copper, Gold and Other Minerals; Its Attractions for the Tourist, Homeseeker, Investor, Sportsman, Healthseeker and Archaeologist* (Santa Fe, NM: New Mexico State Land Office, 1916); Chamber of Commerce, *Roswell, New Mexico* (Roswell, NM: Roswell Chamber of Commerce, 1929); Elephant Butte Water Users' Association, *Agricultural Opportunities in Connection with the Rio Grande Project* (Las Cruces, NM: El Paso Printing Company, 1908); Rock Island Lines Passenger Traffic Department, "New Mexico: The Land of Sunshine," *The Southwest Trail: Agricultural Develop*ment 35, no. 11 (November 1915); and A.J. Wells, *Deming, New Mexico and the Mimbres Valley* (San Francisco, CA: Sunset Magazine Homeseekers' Bureau, c.1910).

postcards to sell in their storefronts to locals proud of their hometowns and the agricultural efforts underway in their community.[21] As large infrastructure projects rose on the landscape of southern New Mexico, they too, were featured in the postcard campaign to document the industrialization and commercialization of the region. Postcards aplenty featured the branch lines of Southern Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway; the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in Las Cruces; the Elephant Butte Dam near Hot Springs; and the Pecos River Flume in Carlsbad.

Review of the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection

In this case study we demonstrate that postcards, with their refined images and confident captioning, represent a targeted effort by postcard producers to create not only a usable and collectible item but also a narrative of economic prosperity. The Rio Grande Historical Collections at the NMSU Library houses numerous large ephemera collections in its manuscript holdings including the Amador family broadsides and trade catalogs, the Thomas K. Todsen collection of postcards and stamps, and the Armer-Reid family sheep-raising ephemera.[22] As previously noted, the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection is a significant archival collection that features 431 commercially produced postcards circa 1900-1930s that heavily promote the development of New Mexico.[23] Tucker collected postcards that depict early scenes of regional farms and

21. See: "'Home on the Range.' Great Southwest Land of Sunshine," RG2005-028-236, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ntpostcards/id/568/rec/2; and "Irrigation Canal, Roswell, New Mexico," RG2005-028-427, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ntpostcards/id/624/rec/10.

22. See the: Amador Family Correspondences, 1856-1949 (https://nmsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma9972344934038 56&context=L&vid=01NEWMEX_INST:NMSU_LC&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&tab=Everything&lang=en), Thomas K. Todsen Collection (https://nmsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma9918561583403856&context=L&vid=01NEWMEX_INST:NMSU_LC&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&tab=Everything&lang=en), and Armer-Reid Papers 1884-1982 (https://nmsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma9996601534038 56&context=L&vid=01NEWMEX_INST:NMSU_LC&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&tab=Everything&lang=en), all part of Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, accessed August 2024.

23. After retiring from a journalism career, Nancy Tucker moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2004, a city she had formerly lived in as an Air Force brat. Passionate about postcards, she has collected them for over 20 years, donating many to libraries and museums around the state, thereby becoming known as the "postcard lady." See Albuquerque Historical Society, "Nancy Tucker – 'Postcard Lady,'" Albuquerque History Accolades, accessed August 2024, https://www.albuqhistsoc.org/accolades/nancy-tucker-postcard-lady.

ranches with their crops and livestock, along with the recently built irrigation delivery and storage systems. Donated to NMSU in 2005, the entire collection was digitized in 2022 and made available for public use through the library's digital platform, CONTENTdm.[24] Focusing on this collection as a sample set for this case study, we examined the promotional messages and pro-development themes used in particular by southern New Mexico businesses and groups who published postcards for public distribution. This analysis does not seek to determine if these postcards were explicitly produced solely as a marketing tool, but rather to say that they can be seen to ably serve in that role. By viewing them through that lens, we seek to introduce avenues of inquiry that researchers can potentially pursue when using postcards as a primary source.

The analysis of the 431 images in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection is broken down into the following thematic categories based on the printed image found on the postcard's recto (front or image side):

- Water Resources – 141 postcards showing natural and manmade water features for agricultural and recreational purposes.
- Agricultural Products – 170 postcards showing the planting, harvesting, and yields of crops, fields, and orchards.
- Agricultural Operations – 110 postcards showing agricultural environments, infrastructure, livestock, and practices of farms and ranches.
- Agricultural Research – 10 postcards showing the campus and resources of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, the state's land-grant institution established to provide science-based support to local farmers and ranchers.

Each category plays an important part in a marketing campaign to appeal to potential settlers and investors who would seek their agricultural fortunes in New Mexico after the turn of the 20th century. All demonstrate a systematic effort to present the dry lands of the state as rich in sunshine and water, fertile, with great potential when actively managed. Indeed, many of these postcards are in line with the statewide effort to brand New Mexico as the "Sunshine State," whether outright using the phrase in captioning or photographically showing and describing the effects of numerous sunny days on the state's agricultural output. The Zia symbol, a sacred indigenous symbol of the sun often illegally appropriated for marketing, can also be

24. The collection can be viewed at https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ntpostcards. The digitization of the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection was made possible by the NMSU COVID-19 Performance Fund granted to the NMSU Library by the U.S. Department of Education, Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) in December 2021. The grant gave student employees hands-on experience in digitizing and curating archival materials.

found in the collection, furthering the notion of the desert sun as an ally in prosperity rather than a torment.[25] The analysis also includes the commercially printed (or captioned) and inscribed text, whether found on the recto and verso (back or inscription side), and selected examples from the digitized collection that highlight specific language and imaging used by postcard producers to market southern New Mexico. The geographic boundaries of the sample set are settlements roughly south of Socorro, New Mexico, primarily in the Tularosa Basin and the Hatch, Mesilla, Mimbres River, and Pecos River valleys.[26]

Since water is a fundamental element for an economy centered on raising crops and livestock, we start our case study with a review of postcards depicting rivers, irrigation canals, reservoirs, and artesian wells, before discussing the cards depicting crops, farms, ranches, and livestock. We end with a look at the images portraying the campus of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, a keystone institution vital to supporting agricultural enterprises throughout the state.

Water Resources

Many of the commercially-produced postcards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection convey the importance of water resources to the development of New Mexico. These water postcards can be subdivided into two categories: first, depictions of natural water sources of lakes, rivers, streams, springs, and artesian wells; and second, images of engineered hydraulic works like reservoirs and irrigation conduits, canals, flumes, and siphons. Regardless of category, the postcards overwhelmingly share the same overarching theme, that is, a strong implication to potential investors and settlers that the state held plentiful and dependable water sources despite the arid and semi-arid climates of the pinyon-juniper woodlands, Chihuahuan Desert, and Llano Estacado that dominate the landscape of the state's southern half.

Several subthemes also emerge in the water-focused postcards. The cards, particularly those showing artesian wells, routinely focus on the amount of water available and under production to users, highlighting a powerful and seemingly endless resource. The artesian well, a well that brings groundwater to the surface

25. Since the 1990s, the Pueblo of Zia (https://www.ziapueblo.org/) has worked to protect its cultural property and heritage from non-sanctioned uses. The Pueblo uses a voluntary system where those wishing to use the symbol for any purpose, commercial or not, can request permission. To read more on the history of the Zia, see: Kate Nelson, "Favorite Sun," *New Mexico Magazine*, January 8, 2019, https://www.newmexicomagazine.org/blog/post/favorite-sun.

26. While most of the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection adheres to this geographic boundary, a few cards from locations farther north—Aztec, Belen, Clovis, Farmington, Fort Sumner, French, Isleta, Las Vegas, Mountainair, Portales, Sandia, Santa Clara, Santa Fe, Taos, and Tucumcari—can be found within the digitized collection. The subjects of these cards are similar in nature and messaging as those produced for southern New Mexico, although they tend to thematically focus on tourism as often as agriculture. They have been excluded as examples in this study.

without the use of mechanical pumps and a common source of water in the Pecos Valley, was widely featured in printed ephemera of the era.[27] The appealing example below depicts an artesian well found in the valley at Roswell, New Mexico (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2. "Largest Artesian Well in the World, on Oasis Ranch, near Roswell, New Mexico," RG2005-028-385, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

27. In the 1912 *Pecos Valley Fair Yearbook*, the title of one brochure article, "Investigate Land in the Artesian Belt – Level and Easy to Irrigate," informed readers on how ubiquitous the wells were in the region; see: *Pecos Valley Fair Yearbook* (Roswell, NM: Press of the Roswell Printing Co., 1912), 1. The postcards included in the current study focus on southern New Mexico and, when filtered in a query by location in the NMSU Library's digital repository, reveal that nearly a third of the postcards document the Pecos Valley. The region, also labeled as the "Artesian Belt," includes the towns of Roswell, Carlsbad, and Artesia, a city named for the area's large artesian aquifer. These Pecos Valley postcards consistently capitalize on the artesian well as a source of the region's wealth.

The marketing strategies of such ephemera emphasize the volume of water being pumped through eye-catching images and figures thereby validating the amount of water accessible for agricultural purposes. The image is aptly captioned, divulging to readers the number of gallons produced daily by the well, a miraculous 13 million, along with an aggrandizing label as the largest well in the world. Even the name of the ranch where the producing well was found, Oasis Ranch, provided evidence of the magnitude of water easily reached and harnessed for use. Incredible images along with eye-popping statistics were commonly found on these postcards, printed with the hope of catching people's attention and perhaps enticing new settlers to the region. The plentiful and reliable artesian wells in the valley provided a potential advantage to new water seekers. According to these postcards, New Mexico had a wealth of untapped water resources and supply to match the vast amount of open land available for use.

In highlighting the abundant water supply, the postcards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection consistently feature expressive language and dramatic prose to match the colorful imagery as another means to entice individuals to migrate to the region. Positive and active words printed on both sides of the postcards suggest success to those agriculturalists willing to take up residence in the region. Targeted words such as water, irrigation, flowing, fertile, plenty, pure, harvest, bloom, famous, largest, and transformed are commonly used in the published postcards to subtly reinforce the potential for success. Several postcards claim to show "typical" scenes of irrigated fields and harvested crops, the product of a healthy and fertile landscape made possible by the region's seemingly plentiful water resources.

To emphasize the healthy terrain and apparently diverse water landscape, natural sources of water are presented and illustrated on many postcards. Despite New Mexico being situated in the parched American Southwest, a region where moisture falls primarily during the winter and summer monsoon seasons, postcard producers still chose to showcase natural sources of water like lakes, rivers, streams, and springs, likely in an attempt to combat the idea of the state being primarily a desert. By illustrating the variety of water sources, however adequate for agricultural needs in reality, the producers of the postcards relayed a positive message of New Mexico as a locale with sustainable conditions for farming. Additionally, these postcards conveyed to individuals that they could enjoy recreational activities through the region's natural water features. The Black River near Carlsbad, New Mexico (see Fig. 3), provided a place for swimming and soaking in the sun. The river's waters were also put to use by local irrigators of the Carlsbad Irrigation District via the Black River Canal to supply nearby fields and orchards. The dual purpose of this natural feature, a working river, further communicates a commitment to the utmost development of the region's water resources.

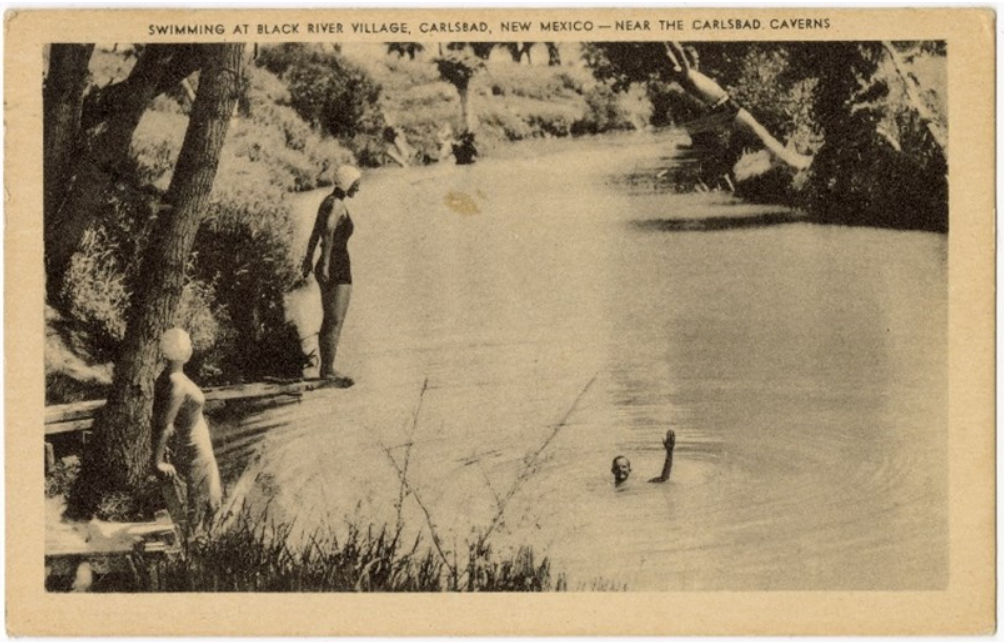

Figure 3. "Swimming at Black River Village, Carlsbad, New Mexico-near the Carlsbad Caverns," RG2005-028-309, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library

The bulk of the water-related postcards found in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection consists of manmade water features for irrigation and reclamation. The water infrastructures featured on postcards include dams for impoundment and diversion; irrigation conduits such as canals, flumes, and siphons; and wells powered by wind and gas. In order to reach the region's agricultural potential, investment in irrigation works became a necessity. With private, state, and federal dollars all contributing to the building of water storage and delivery systems, primarily along the Rio Grande and Pecos rivers, southern New Mexico boosters methodically sought out investors and homesteaders to aggressively develop its agricultural potential as well as speculate in land values.[28] That many of the water-related postcards showcase

28. Douglas R. Littlefield, *Conflict on the Rio Grande: Water and the Law, 1879-1939* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 148-151; Elephant Butte Water Users' Association, *Agricultural Opportunities in Connection with the Rio Grande Project* (Las Cruces, NM: El Paso Printing Company, 1908); Arthur Gross, *The Value of Rio Grande Water for the Purpose of Irrigation,* Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 12 (Las Cruces, NM: New Mexico College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, November 1893), 54-58, https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/AgCircs/id/15559/rec/1; and C.A. Hundertmark, "Reclamation in Chaves and Eddy Counties, 1887-1912," *New Mexico Historical Review* 47, no. 4 (October 1972), 300-316, https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol47/iss4/2.

the development of irrigation infrastructure further demonstrates the role this type of ephemera played in publicizing the region's commitment to creating a water empire in the desert. These postcards reassured investors and settlers that southern New Mexico was dedicated to investing peoplepower and technical resources necessary to build a suitable foundation of water resources. Thus, the motto, "Water is King", as seen below in the multi-view postcard, validates this considerable investment in water resource development, one designed to attract likeminded financial backers and residents. This modern and scientific approach to aridity allowed settlements, like those in Deming, New Mexico, to quickly grow from the Chihuahuan Desert and produce healthy harvests amid their fields and orchards using water pumped to the surface from large aquifers.

Figure 4. "Water is King and We have plenty/Irrigated Orchard near Deming, New Mexico," RG2005-028-250, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

In order to capture the flows of natural water courses, several regions of the state received assistance from the federal government to aid in developing appropriate water infrastructure. These government funded irrigation projects feature heavily in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, depicting the construction of large dams, the opening of flumes and siphons, and the utilization of reservoir spillways. These impressive views epitomize the largescale investment in the western United States by the federal government to dam nearly every major river system to fully develop agricultural lands, combat seasonal drought and flooding, and build a network of hydroelectric generating stations. This epic reengineering of the country's western rivers is the story of the modern American West and the agricultural empire it enabled. In southern New Mexico on the Rio Grande, a site was selected by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to build what would be, for a short time, the tallest irrigation dam in the world when completed in 1916. This massive infrastructure project, a key piece of the state's drive to modernization, featured heavily in the offerings of local postcard producers. Even before construction had started, a photographer visited the site at Elephant Butte, near the railroad stop at Engle, New Mexico, to capture the free-flowing Rio Grande. The resulting hand-colored postcard, c.1910, seen below (see Fig. 5), includes a caption noting the $7 million investment by the federal

Figure 5. "Dam Site at Elephant Butte on Rio Grande near El Paso, Texas," RG2005-028-366, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

government, an impressive amount to be sure. The other seven postcards focus on the Elephant Butte Dam and its massive reservoir. They capture the scale of the completed dam, standing at 301 feet high and 1,674 feet long, and the structure's surprisingly elegant architecture.

The verso of the second Elephant Butte Dam postcard (see Fig. 6) informs readers of the measure of the federal government's investment in western states to spur development:

> *Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, Philadelphia, PA, 1926, U.S. Department of the Interior, The Bureau of Reclamation organized under the Reclamation Act of June 17, 1902, is engaged in the investigation, construction, and operation of irrigation projects in the 17 arid and semi-arid States of the West. Twenty-four projects are under construction or operation by the bureau or the water users. The funds for the construction work come from the sale of public lands, from leasing and other mineral operations. The money is repaid to the Government by the settlers in graduated payments over a period of years, and is re-expanded for the* construction of additional projects.

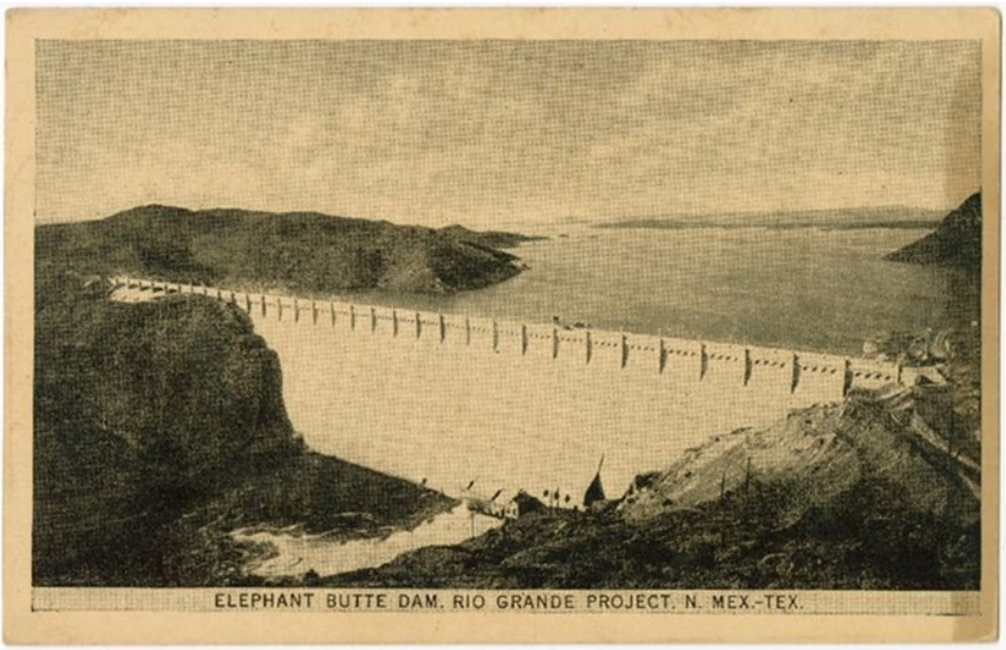

Figure 6. "Elephant Butte Dam. Rio Grande Project, New Mexico, Mex.-Tex.," RG2005 -028-368, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Thousands of postcards of the Elephant Butte Dam were produced and mailed, a testament to its importance in the expansion of agricultural undertakings in both New Mexico and neighboring Texas.

Not all water projects involved such massive construction feats. The earliest irrigation efforts constructed by Spanish colonizers of New Mexico featured a system of irrigation ditches known as acequias, some going back 400 years. Built and maintained by the local communities they served, these conduits, as seen in the postcard below (see Fig. 7), diverted water from larger rivers for use in households and small farms. This bucolic acequia in Las Cruces carried Rio Grande water through town and past idyllic farms, while also supporting a lush, green landscape featuring carpet-like grasses and mature cottonwoods. The framing of this scene and its hand-coloring by the publisher, the Las Cruces Drug Company, evokes a more midwestern feeling than one set in the heart of the desert. Clearly the intent of the postcard producers was to showcase a scene of verdant abundance and water aplenty, ignoring that the vast majority of lands found in Doña Ana County did not present similarly.

Figure 7. "Acequia Scene in Las Cruces, New Mexico," RG2005-028-352, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Agricultural Products

Postcards depicting the agricultural output of southern New Mexico show mature farms, fertile land, and a diversity of crops under cultivation, all conveying a clear message of abundance. Agricultural yields captured in the postcard collection include seasonal crops of alfalfa (hay), beans, cabbage, celery, corn, cotton, oats, sugar beets, sweet potatoes, and watermelons, along with perennial crops of apples, grapes, peaches, pears, pecans, and plums. Chile, a cash crop synonymous today with New Mexico's agricultural industry, was surprisingly not featured among the Tucker postcards, rather only shown as ristras, a string of dried chilies hung for storage or decoration. Postcards showcasing "traditional" adobe structures with hanging ristras implied that producers of the cards viewed the crop as one with local flavor only, possibly unknown to those outside the region. Thus, the postcards in the Tucker collection focus on agricultural products familiar to those back east. The eventual transition away from the crops featured on these postcards, whether due to climate or economic realities, provides insight into the development of the state's agricultural economy.[29]

Over two dozen postcards in this case study's sample set feature alfalfa, a vital forage crop raised to feed the livestock herds found on the region's dairy farms and ranches. The largescale farming of alfalfa was only made possible by the construction of intricate irrigation works, most prominently in the Mimbres and Pecos River valleys. Many of these postcards focus on the interdependent relationship of alfalfa and stored water by including the flowing ditches and laterals that supply the thirsty hayfields in the published image. Among these cards are scenes of the crop being harvested in several steps. To produce hay, the alfalfa must first be mowed, dried, and stacked or bailed. The harvested fodder was routinely pictured in massive piles, showcasing the bountiful yields possible in New Mexico. Other cards provide a printed narrative highlighting the cuts yielded and tonnage produced during a single growing season. The green, luscious, and hearty alfalfa played well on postcards that captured vivid scenes of the harvest. One Fred Harvey-produced postcard, seen below (see Fig. 8), summed up (on recto/back side) the importance and lucrative nature of alfalfa to Pecos Valley farmers:

> *Of the many profitable crops of the Pecos Valley, alfalfa is the mainstay. It is not unusual to cut five crops in a season and the yield is six tons to the acre in a year. It is fed not only to cattle and horses in the valley, but is shipped as there is always a heavy demand for it.*

29. For insight into how New Mexico's farming economy matured and refined its cultivated output, in particular how the chile pepper became an agricultural icon synonymous with the state itself, see: William R. Carleton, *Fruit, Fiber, and Fire: A History of Modern Agriculture in New Mexico* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 121-160.

Figure 8. "Stacking Alfalfa in the Pecos Valley, New Mexico," RG2005-028-042, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Another prized crop under cultivation in southern New Mexico was cotton. Requiring ample sunshine and an extended frost-free growing season to mature the drought tolerant shrub, the area made for an ideal crop in the arid yet irrigated valleys. The plant produced a boll of useable fibrous material that could be turned into thread and cloth. A labor-intensive harvest and a ginning process that required additional capital investment before the cotton bales could be shipped to distant textile centers meant the industry did not expand as rapidly as it had in neighboring Texas. Still, postcards boasted production numbers on bales per acre of the cottonfields. Of note is a c.1910 postcard, seen below (see Fig. 9), documenting a Mesilla Valley field of cotton plants ready to harvest. The hand-colored image includes a farm laborer standing amidst the cotton bolls in the foreground, while in the distance rises a green berm followed by the nearly 5,000 feet Picacho Peak. The volcanic mountain, a striking quartz and feldspar superstructure approximately 35 million years old, sits in odd juxtaposition to the cotton field, particularly with the pastel colors the postcard producers used to highlight the sky and landscape. While the card makes no mention of the volcanic dome in its captioning, the subtle implication to card viewers seemed to be that even this primordial landscape could produce a bounty.

Figure 9. "Mesilla Valley Cotton, 3 bales to acre, Las Cruces, New Mexico," RG2005-028-120, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Other postcards in the collection lacked subtlety in favor of directness. A real photo postcard from Artesia leaves viewers with little doubt about the region's agricultural potential. The image, seen below (see Fig. 10), captures a reportedly 11-pound sweet potato with a 12" ruler placed underneath for scale. The photo caption on the recto informs viewers that P.C. Kepple, a farmer who lived east of Artesia across the Pecos River, harvested the immense vegetable.[30] The proprietors of the nearby Grennan Studio found the sweet potato postcard-worthy, selling the image to interested local buyers. The card's verso provides additional insight into the mailer's purpose and journey eastward through the postal service. On February 2, 1913, Tippy (last name not stated), penned a brief note to Roscoe Campbell of Wellington, Ohio, including the following lines: "We can't raise very good Irish potatoes here. But we can sweet potatoes." While the use of the pronoun "we" could imply that Tippy had a part in raising the pictured sweet potato, it is more likely she felt pride in the locally grown giant vegetable and wanted to share the achievement and inform her friend, over 1,500 miles distant, that Artesia held agricultural prowess.

30. "Bridge Talk Hot," *Pecos Valley* (Artesia) *News*, April 1, 1915, 1.

Figure 10: "Weight 11 pounds, Sweet Potato Grown By P. C. Kepple Artesia, New Mexico," RG2005-028-151, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Similarly direct is another Fred Harvey-produced postcard showing towering corn stalks in a Pecos Valley field ready for harvest. While maize was first grown in the Permian Basin around 2700 B.C. after its domestication in southern Mexico, most nonresidents would not readily associate New Mexico with commercial production of the crop.[31] As such, the Harvey company aimed to develop a new correlation. The postcard, seen below (see Fig. 11), shows a man in shirt and tie fully extending his left hand to its upper limit to grab ahold of a stalk of corn that appears to be well over ten, perhaps even twelve, feet tall. This agricultural output rivals scenes found in the corn belt of the American Midwest, a comparison that the card producers likely had in mind when selecting the image for mass production. While the picture may be subtle, the caption on the verso made clear the message being communicated:

> *Under the direction and with the assistance of the United States Reclamation Service, changes in the productiveness of the soil in the Pecos Valley have been made which seemed almost impossible. Thousands of acres have been transformed from arid and semi-arid lands into fertile soil.*

31. Suzan Granados, "An Investigation of Maize at Four Sites (La 20241, La 38597, La 112766, and La 131202) in Eddy County, New Mexico," (master's thesis, University of Maryland, 2022), 80.

Figure 11. "Corn in the Pecos Valley, New Mexico," RG2005-028-092, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

While the height of the stalks may not equate to yield, the card attempts to answer doubters by using words like "productiveness", "impossible", and "transformed" along with summoning the track record of the federal Reclamation Service, today's Bureau of Reclamation, who had unquestionably altered the agricultural output of hundreds of thousands of acres across the west with its modern irrigation works.

Irrigation also made possible the cultivation of vineyards and orchards on scales previously unknown in the state. In particular, Deming, New Mexico farmers in the Mimbres Valley carefully planted rows of grape vines, while to the east, thousands of acres of apple, peach, and pear orchards transformed the irrigated Pecos Valley. The

view of fully mature orchards in springtime blossom created a heretofore unknown spectacle in southeastern New Mexico. The scale of the flowering trees and fragrant scents they produced, along with the acres of greenery they created—a stark contrast to the brown and gold colors normally seen regionally in the late summers—cemented the region's "fruit belt" moniker into a reality worth marketing. Postcards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection feature orchards in Artesia, Carlsbad, Hagerman, Lake Arthur, and Roswell showing their highly organized and engineered rows of equally spaced trees fed by flowing irrigation water, all clearly communicating the scientific efficiency of the enterprise. The "Apple Orchard in Bloom, Roswell, New Mexico" postcard, seen below (see Fig. 12), epitomized the New Mexico fruit belt collectible cards.

Figure 12. "Apple Orchard in Bloom, Roswell, New Mexico," RG2005-028-074, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

As we have argued in this case study, the messages conveyed by these postcards often focus on economic themes. One group included in this messaging of opportunity are itinerate, migratory laborers seeking seasonal work. Agricultural economies cannot function without these skilled seasonal workers and several cards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection showcase their backbreaking work,

primarily during planting and harvest periods. Like the initial postcard mentioned in this study, "Picking Peaches at Carlsbad, N.M.", seen below (see Fig. 13), captures a clearly staged scene in the orchard. Two men, one sitting high on a ladder near a tree pregnant with ripening Elberta peaches snatches its fruit, while his companion sits on the ground next to several wooden crates and baskets full of already harvested product ready for transport. While the card presents an idyllic if not contrived scene, purposely not depicting the difficult labor required to harvest and package fruit, it nevertheless indicates employment possibilities in southern New Mexico's fruit belt.

Figure 13. "Picking Peaches at Carlsbad, New Mexico," RG2005-028-160, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Agricultural Operations

To document how agricultural enterprise was practiced in the region, postcard producers showed not only the broader landscape in which farms and ranches were established and set, but also featured the built environment of agrarian operations and those that occupied the space. Dozens of cards in the sample set demonstrate how farmers and orchardists built productive cultivated grounds, cowboys-tamed horses and herded cattle to market, and shepherds carefully moving sheep and goat herds between pasturages. To capture the scale and methods of the region's farms and ranches on postcards, photographers used elevated vantage points from structures and hillsides, and artfully framed the scenes using graded roads, ever straight fence-lines and irrigation canals, and the geographic features of the surrounding slopes, mountains, and valleys. These cards spoke of the significant human undertaking of successfully taming the imposing, dangerous, and unforgiving landscape through the application of modern techniques. A promise of prosperity awaited those willing to come to New Mexico.

The postcard pictorials of ranches routinely emphasize the vastness of properties operating in the state. Whether raising Angus or Holstein cattle, Debouillet sheep, or Angora goats, ranches required large spreads for livestock to forage and find reliable sources of water and shelter. An example of the physical setting of a ranch, the postcard shown below (see Fig. 14) showcases Southworths Ranch near Roswell, New

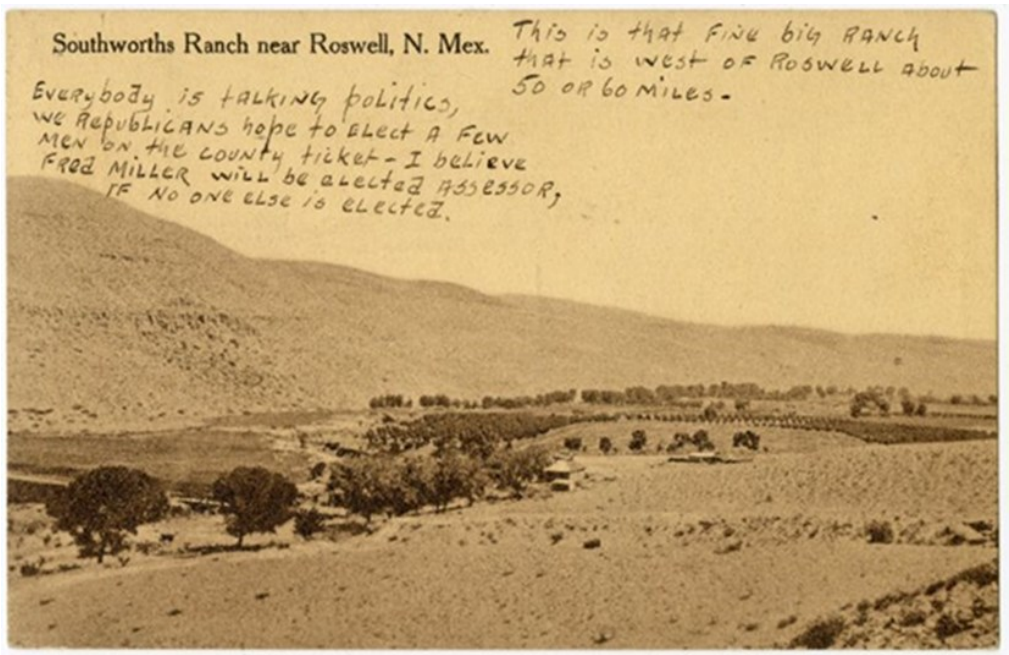

Figure 14. "Southworths Ranch near Roswell, New Mexico," RG2005-028-271, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Mexico. Against the backdrop of a rocky and slopping hillside is a verdant valley full of sheltering trees and sturdy ranch structures. The wide perspective seen on the postcard clearly portrays the size and presumed value of the ranch land. Indeed, the card includes an annotation on the recto affirming the quality of the operation: "This is that fine big ranch that is west of Roswell about 50 or 60 miles." For those with the pioneering spirit, the pristine setting appeared to be a place where nature could provide for settlers and their domesticated animals. The postcard implied that living off of the land on New Mexico's extensive acreages likely meant a profitable living.

Postcard producers also foregrounded the extensive size of ranch buildings, corrals, barns, sheering and milking sheds, and fenced enclosures. The Mesilla Valley sheep ranch, shown below (see Fig. 15), had the capacity to raise and process the wool of thousands of sheep each year. This elevated view provided evidence of the built environment crafted by the rancher while also displaying the unfenced land in the background and adjacent flowing water, essential elements for raising large flocks. The postcard's verso informed readers that the American Southwest was home to some of the largest sheep ranches in the world because of the vast ranges available to ranchers and their livestock.

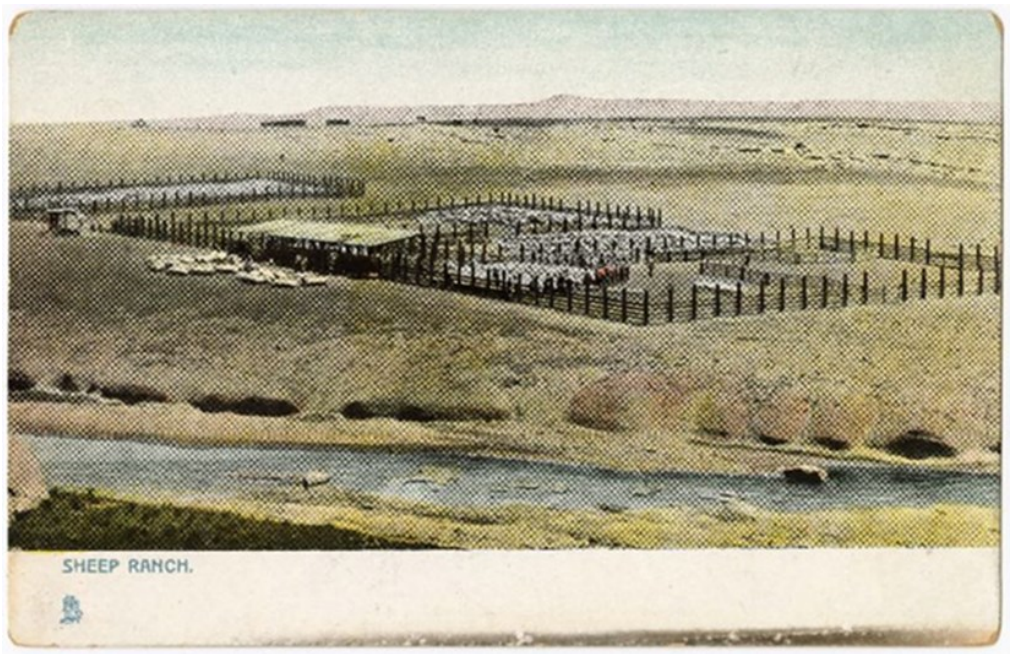

Figure 15. "Sheep Ranch, 'Ranching in the West'," RG2005-028-230, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Focusing directly on the buildings and domiciles of southern New Mexico ranches and farms, the postcards showed how modern, stylish, and functional the structures could be in the remote west. While the traditional building material of the region during the Spanish colonial and independent Mexican governing periods was adobe bricks, the postcards largely showed wooden New England and Prairie-style structures often accented with wooden shingles, brickwork, and wraparound porches. The grounds of featured properties included lush lawns and flower gardens, decorative fencing, windmills, and mature landscaping. The elegant property of Joseph M. Conn of Artesia is viewed in two images that horizontally split one postcard, seen below (see Fig. 16). Seen from two angles, the farm included a fenced driveway to a home with a full-length back porch and two large barns. Called "Rosedale", the property featured vineyards, orchards, and the region's finest rose garden.[32] A real estate agent himself, Conn very likely played a part in the production of this postcard. The whole agricultural enterprise seemed to call into question the very idea that New Mexico's geography fell squarely in an arid region, likely the point when marketing to an east coast audience.

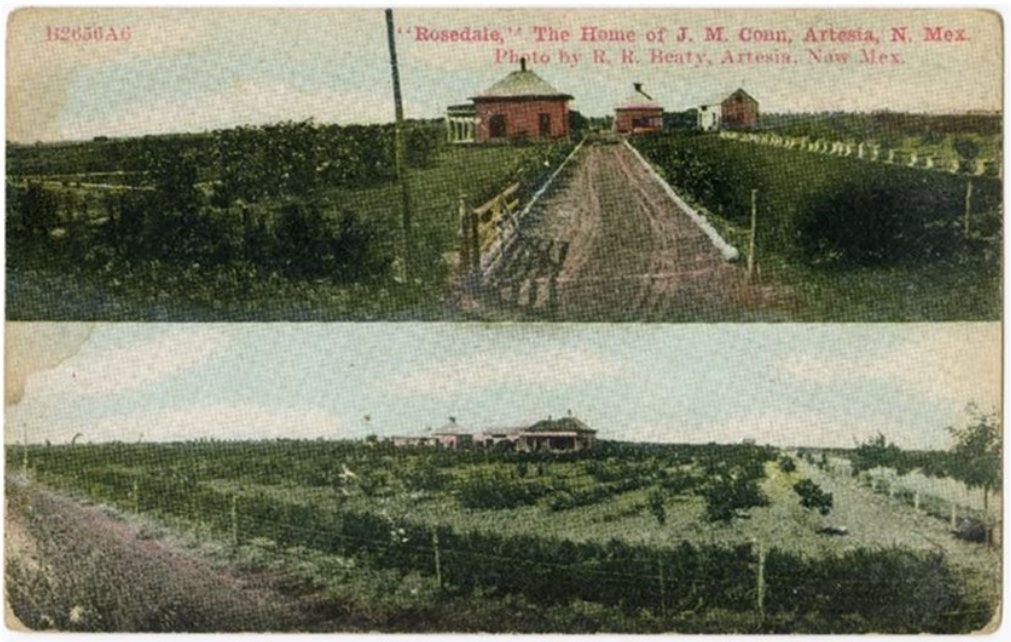

Figure 16. "'Rosedale,' The Home of J. M. Conn, Artesia, New Mexico," RG2005-028-284, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

32. "Bailing Pecos Valley Roses," *Pecos Valley* (Artesia) *News*, June 15, 1915, 8.

For those who worked the ranches of New Mexico, none seared a deeper impression into the American consciousness than the cowboy. The spectacularly multicultural tradition of this rugged and courageous laborer dates back to Spanish vaqueros who herded livestock over the vast land grants and haciendas in the Nuevo Mexico territory of colonial New Spain. Later, the US territory of New Mexico produced arguably the most infamous young man to continue the vaqueros or cowboy tradition, Billy the Kid, a sometime ranch hand though turned outlaw and participant in the Lincoln County War. The Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection includes postcards that show the tediousness of ranchers' work in branding and castrating cattle, building and repairing fencing, and driving livestock to market in year-round operations. Demonstrating an understanding of animal behavior and the dangers of the trail, skill and agility in horsemanship, and a willingness to work in varying weather conditions, the position was not for everyone. In the postcard below (see Fig. 17), five cowboys and their chuckwagon were photographed with a heard of horses in the foothills of the Sacramento Mountains near Alamogordo, New Mexico. This postcard exemplifies the mythos of the unrestrained American West symbolized by the cowboy's maverick lifestyle and the untamed stallion.

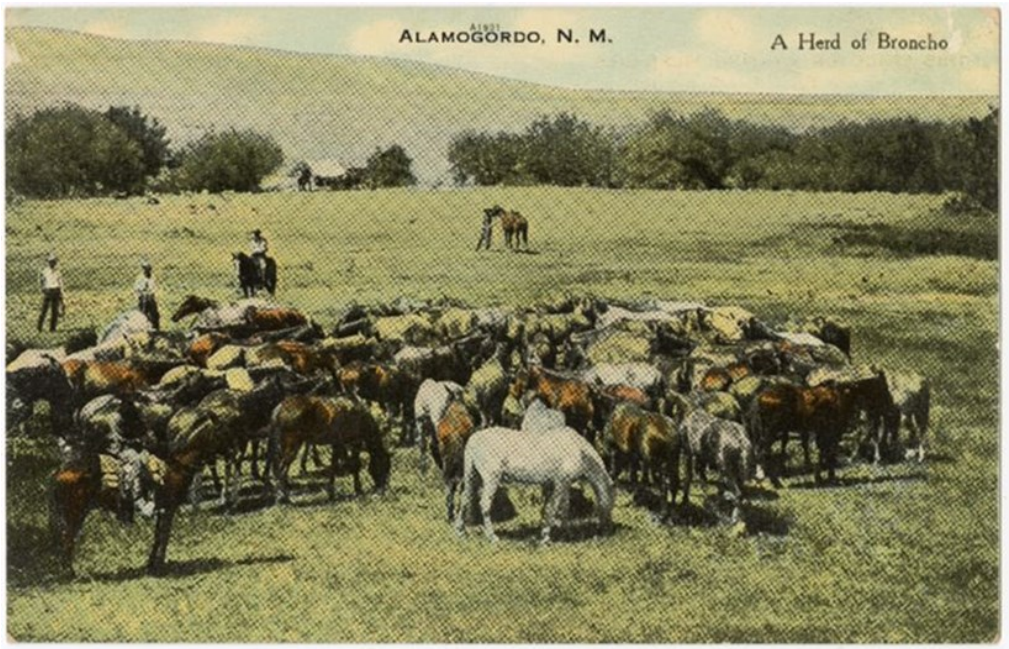

Figure 17. "Herd of Bronchos, Alamogordo, New Mexico," RG2005-028-212, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Also emblematic of cowboy culture is the rodeo, a competitive event whose roots can be traced to the vaqueros who plied their trade on cattle ranches in the early 1800s in what eventually became the American Southwest. Testing their abilities at roping and riding livestock, cowboys showed off the skills they had acquired on the job in spirited contests held between ranches or at the end of cattle drives. The first organized rodeos took place in the 1870s and included several crowd-pleasing events, including one that pitted ranch hands against unbroken broncos. Persuading a formerly wild horse to accept a halter or saddle and a rider is a dangerous process that took many weeks to accomplish on the ranch. During a rodeo, cowboys tested their prowess at staying aboard a violently bucking horse in the hopes of earning prize money. The contest mimicked the work of taming wild broncos, a task cowboys were often called upon to undertake on a ranch. In the scene below (see Fig. 18) at the fairgrounds in Silver City, New Mexico, a bronco rider attempts to stay in the saddle as the horse bucks emphatically. The background displays a packed grandstand of rodeo attendees cheering on the brave cowboy.

Figure 18. "Broncho Bustin, Silver City, New Mexico," RG2005-028-210, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

New Mexico farms and ranches, just like their eastern competitors, invested heavily in infrastructure, time, and money to raise livestock for market or to monetize their byproducts. Judging from the number of postcards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection spotlighting these animals—cattle (43), sheep (18), donkeys/mules (12), goats (10), horses (6), pigs (4), and oxen (3)—all played a vital part in generating profits for ranching and farming enterprises, a success story worthy of a marketing campaign.

When Spanish colonizers pushed through the Paseo Del Norte in 1598 and trekked northward along the Rio Grande, they brought cattle to sustain their efforts. This animal remains an important part of the regional economy, as can be seen in dozens of postcards showing how cattle are raised and cared for. Scenes of stout cattle foraging on rangeland or alfalfa fields, slaking their thirst in irrigation waterways or troughs of pumped well-water, and undergoing branding demonstrate the region's ranching operations. This is epitomized in the Long S Ranch postcard, shown below (see Fig. 19). Purebred Hereford cattle stand amid the tall grass of their pasture, just outside Deming near the Florida Mountains. The sky above is full of clouds, suggesting impending rain and water security. It is a message that might prompt a postcard producer to artistically enhance the clouds, as seems to be the case

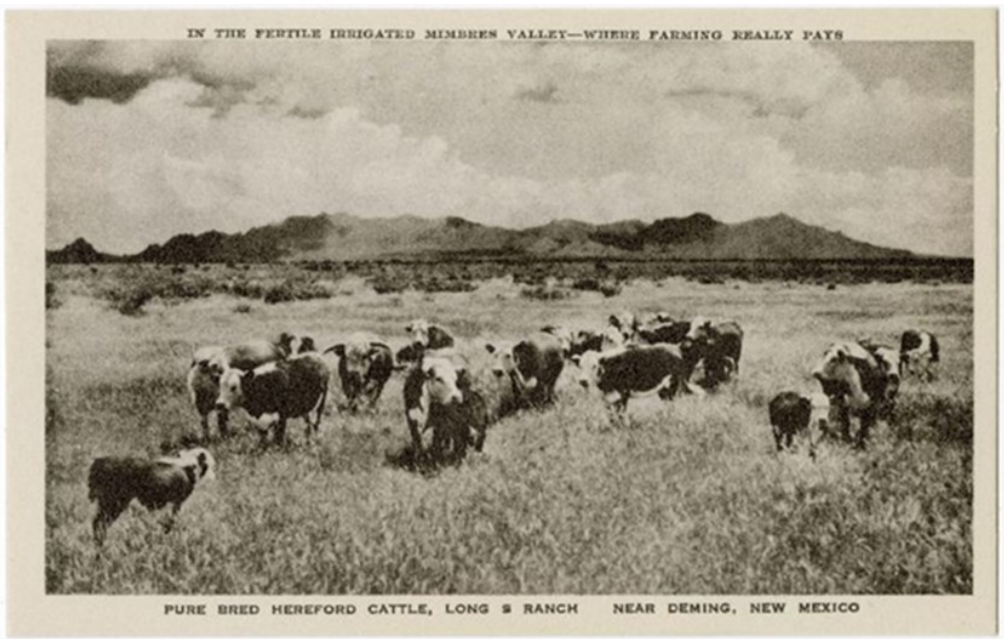

Figure 19. "Pure Bred Hereford Cattle, Long S Ranch near Deming, New Mexico," RG2005-028-193, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

here, in an effort to downplay the reality of the desert locale. Rounding out the idyllic scene are the contented heifers and their calves, all well-formed and fed. Printed on the card's recto is a statement, "In the Fertile Irrigated Mimbres Valley—Where Farming Really Pays." The postcard projects a confident and stylistically composed message regarding an economic opportunity.

The raising of sheep and goats in the American Southwest has a nearly identical origin to that of cattle. Since colonization, the size of the herds grew rapidly and by the late 19th century, the soon to be state of New Mexico was home to the largest sheep ranches in the west, becoming a national leader in expanding the industry.[33] Although there are similarities between these postcards and the ones that feature cattle ranching, one distinction is the size of the herds shown in the images. The example below (see Fig. 20) shows a large herd of Angora goats near the Big Burro

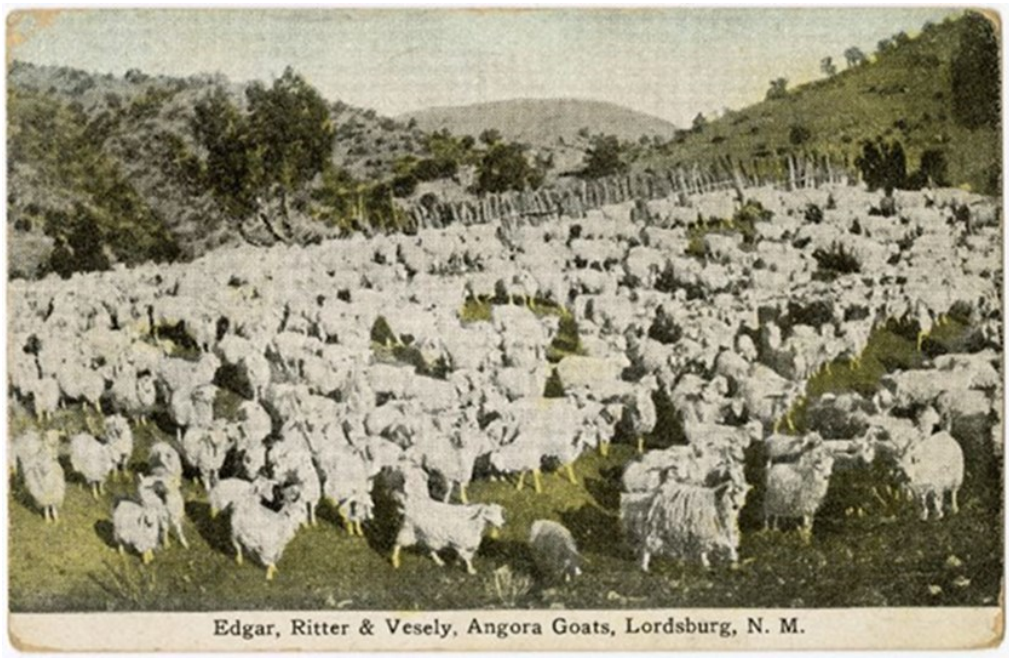

Figure 20. "Edgar, Ritter and Vesely, Angora Goats, Lordsburg, New Mexico," RG2005-028-215, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

33. Alvar Ward Carlson, "New Mexico's Sheep Industry, 1850-1900: Its Role in the History of the Territory," *New Mexico Historical Review* 44, no. 1 (January 1969): 25-49, https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol44/iss1/3.

34. "Sheep on the Range, 3000 in the Herd," RG2005-028-225, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, accessed August 2024, https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ntpostcards/id/687/rec/1.

Mountains of southwestern New Mexico. The Edgar, Ritter & Vesely goat ranch operated on the Gila River in Redrock, raising the Turkish breed of goats prized for their extremely profitable mohair fiber and lean meat. Other postcards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection (not shown here) showed herds of over 3,000 sheep grazing in green mountain pastures, declaring on the verso that "sheep ranching has been one of the best means of accumulation of wealth, in the west."[34] This growing affluence is found in yet another Tucker postcard of at least eight wagons parked on a city street in Carlsbad stacked high with bales of sheered wool ready for processing, circa 1910.[35] The messaging was clear—New Mexico afforded ample opportunity for those wishing to get into the sheep trade.

Honeybees are another species whose work and byproduct are essential to an agricultural economy. Some farmers turned to beekeeping to provide income through the sale of honey, an important sweetener before reliable sources of refined sugar became available in the region, and beeswax. The honeybee also proves pivotal as a

Figure 21. "Money Markers, Roswell, New Mexico," RG2005-028-208, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

35. "Marketing Wool, Carlsbad, New Mexico," RG2005-028-220, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, accessed August 2024, https://nmsu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ntpostcards/id/590/rec/2.

pollinator that ensures fruit and nut orchards, along with field crops, will reach maturity and yield a harvestable product. Commercial beekeepers were in demand by agriculturalists who supplemented the work of wild hives and other pollinators with rented apiaries placed on their properties at critical stages of the growing season in the hopes of increasing yields. One postcard, seen above (see Fig. 21), from Roswell labelled the apiaries as "Money Makers." An apiarist stands confidently with his arms folded, surrounded by over 40 bee colonies, each housed in movable wooden boxes and available for rent. Just another way to make a successful living in New Mexico.

Agricultural Research

The final section of this case study looks at how the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, the state's land-grant institution established to provide science-based support to local farmers and ranchers, was portrayed in postcards of the era. Established in 1888 as Las Cruces College, the school took on a larger role when the Territorial Assembly designated it as New Mexico's agricultural college and agricultural experiment station in 1889. Under the federal Morrill Act, the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts received funding from the sale or leasing of federal lands to be used to educate the "industrial classes" in agriculture and the mechanic arts of engineering and applied sciences.[36] Since that time, in addition to the university-based curriculum taught on campus, the now New Mexico State University (renamed in 1960) has conducted useful agricultural research and distributed those findings through educational publications for use in New Mexico's farms, ranches, and homes.

In postcard views of the campus, two themes dominate. The first highlights the architectural aesthetics of buildings and the school's lavish and manicured landscaping to demonstrate the quality of the academic environment found on the Las Cruces campus, and the other stresses a range of approaches to agricultural studies and research. The postcard below (see Fig. 22) presents the university's two-story Science Building with its arched entryway and cupola-capped exterior surrounded by flowers in bloom, clinging wisteria, and trees with broad canopies. Once again, the location is presented in a pastel color palette suggesting an ideal place to be engaged in educational study. The building, built in 1897, and the grounds surrounding it appear to be a setting where loftier principles can readily be applied. It projects as a sanguine, peaceful, and inspirational locale.

36. It should be noted that the lands subject to the Morrill Act (more information, see: https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/morrill-act) were often obtained from indigenous tribes through treaty, cession, or seizure. For an overview of this important topic, see: Tristan Ahtone and Robert Lee, "Land-grab Universities: Expropriated Indigenous Land is The Foundation of The Land-grant University System," *High Country News* 52, no. 4 (April 2020): 32-45, https://www.hcn.org/issues/52-4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities. For the indigenous lands received by NMSU, see https://www.landgrabu.org/universities/new-mexico-state-university.

Figure 22. "Science Building, Agricultural College, State College, New Mexico," RG2005-028-004, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

The second example (see Fig. 23) frames a scene that belies the school's Chihuahuan Desert location. The Main Walk on campus is shown with its path surrounded by lush and colorful plant life, most of it not native to the region but rather transported from other climates. The shrubs, flowers, and bushes are nevertheless thriving in Las Cruces, perhaps testament to the horticultural knowledge and care found at the school. In viewing the postcard, the viewer is immediately drawn to the columned archway, partially covered with climbing vines, reminding one of former great centers of learning in ancient Athens or Rome. Although the scene is sans occupants, it nevertheless projects as a serene outdoor space to enjoy. An idyllic setting on school grounds to learn, exchange ideas, and discover worldly truths.

Figure 23. "Main Walk, Agricultural College Campus, State College, New Mexico," RG2005-028-003, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

A broad educational offering coupled with well-equipped classrooms and labs creates an environment where learning can take place. The following postcard (see Fig. 24) of black and white photographs uses multiple vignettes to showcase campus initiatives directly related to the modern practices of farming and ranching, including cultivating new plant breeds through advanced genetics, breeding heartier animals, and developing industrial technology to advance agricultural production. The card's recto includes a caption voicing the school's mission, "An Institution where theory and practice go hand in hand; where students learn to DO as well as THINK." The on-point messaging suggests the card was likely produced by the school as an inexpensive marketing mailer.

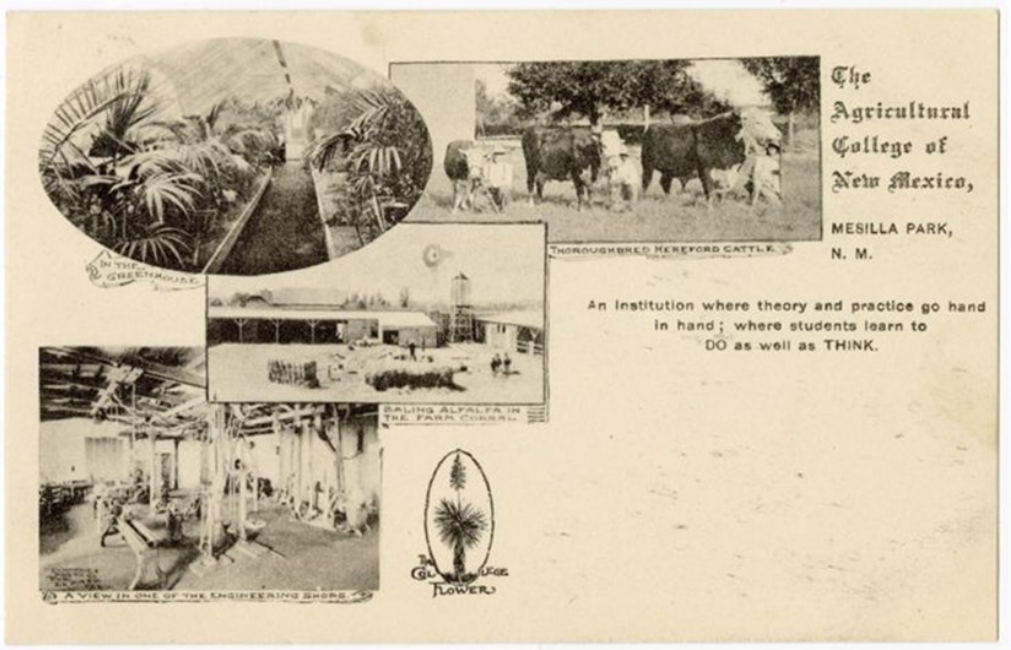

Figure 24. "The Agricultural College of New Mexico, Mesilla Park, New Mexico," RG2005-028-005, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

The final postcard in our case study, shown below (see Fig. 25), presents multiple views of the Girl's Dormitory located on the campus.[37] An elegant building, with a spacious dining room and cozy reception parlor equipped with a piano, suggests an adequately resourced facility to provide a well-rounded education to female students. The added inscription on the recto interestingly stresses in the first sentence that all college programs are open to women, while the following sentence focusses exclusively on domestic science course offerings. On one hand, traditional women's role as homemakers were being recognized and validated by introducing a scientific approach to running a household. On the other, women's role remained strongly associated with the domestic realm.

37. The University is listed on some postcards as being located in Mesilla Park and in others as State College. While the campus is today noted as being in Las Cruces, it is actually outside the city proper although physically bounded by it. Today, the unincorporated census-designated place where the campus sits is called University Park.

Figure 25. "The Girl's Dormitory at the New Mexico Agricultural College, Mesilla Park, New Mexico," RG2005-028-006, Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, 1900-1935, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

Conclusion

The postcards in the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, circulated by collectors and mailed through the postal system, carry themes of stability, surplus, prosperity, modernity, and resource development. These pieces of ephemera reveal an organized marketing strategy by New Mexican interests. Through carefully designed postcards that communicated, via printed pictures and direct messaging, potential farmers, ranchers, and settlers alike could envision budding economic opportunities awaiting them in the Sunshine State.[38]

This case study documents the productive lines of scholarly investigation made possible by ephemera in general and postcards specifically. By examining the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, a historical narrative on the agricultural development of

38. Those motivated to come to the Southwest, perhaps persuaded by postcards, helped to transform New Mexico into today's "Land of Enchantment." This phrase became the succeeding marketing motto, emerging in the 1930s and deployed in full color advertisements in serial publications, on roadside billboards, and graphic-heavy mailers and brochures, tools employed as mass marketing efforts exploded post-World War II.

southern New Mexico was uncovered, leading to further investigation into the use of ephemera resources. Regularly impressed by the information and patterns of thought uncovered through analyzing the Nancy Tucker Postcard Collection, bringing these postcards to the online public was justified in our selection decision amid a large pool of potential candidates and limited funding.

The archival craft as commonly practiced at institutions of higher education has generally developed to favor manuscripts, yet other types of robust materials are found within these repositories.[39] In processing and digitization collections holding ephemera, postcards, equal parts photographic and manuscript, were shown to provide a data-rich category of ephemera worthy of our efforts to preserve, process, and make accessible. This case study hopes to encourage archivists and scholars to not overlook ephemera when undertaking their research, but rather focus on and utilize them.

39. Richard C. Berner, *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1983), 1-10.