

## EDITING NATURE IN GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK POSTCARDS\*

YOLONDA YOUNGS

**ABSTRACT.** This research takes a critical look at the interplay of vision and the production of knowledge in the context of cultural constructions of nature and environmental perceptions. The basis for this work is an exploration of the manufacturing process and subject matter in 259 Curt Teich Company postcards of Grand Canyon National Park manufactured from 1936 to 1955. Through a content analysis and interpretation of the postcards, four themes emerge—scenery, vegetation, water, and animals—that reveal the structure of Curt Teich Publishing Company’s representation of the Grand Canyon environment. The company employed a printing technique known as “color embellishment” that allowed the manufacturer to alter the postcards with each reprinting and, in the process, create an edited view of nature at the Grand Canyon. This visual shorthand equated a series of selective and repetitive subjects and locations with ideas of scenic, wild, and grand landscapes. *Keywords:* *environmental perceptions, Grand Canyon, national parks, postcards, Curt Teich, visual representations.*

Nature is commonplace. Imitation is more interesting.

—Gertrude Stein, 1932, quoted in  
P. Adams Sitney, 1992

Visual representations of nature influence our expectations of scenic beauty and dramatic vistas in national parks. Representations embedded in popular media often serve as the primary source of information for park visitors. Before making the journey to Grand Canyon National Park, tourists probably have seen the canyon in movies, in television commercials, in magazine photographs, or at Internet Web sites. These easily accessible visual encounters are part of a larger cultural practice; they are a “medium in which lines of power organize and propagate themselves” (Dorst 1999, 97).

Applied to national park landscapes, popular visual representations shape environmental policies and management schemes as they inform our expectations of nature in these protected lands. An exploration of the social, cultural, and historical contexts that created, manufactured, and disseminated popular visual representations of national parks enhances our understanding of how places become inscribed with meaning.

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✉ DR. YOUNGS is a visiting assistant professor of history at Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8079; [younyolo@isu.edu].

In this article I explore ideas of cultural landscapes, environmental perceptions, and visual representations of nature in national parks through a content analysis and an interpretation of 259 Curt Teich Publishing Company postcards manufactured from 1936 to 1955.<sup>1</sup> Four themes emerge—scenery, vegetation, water, and animals—that reveal the structure of Curt Teich Company’s visual representation of the Grand Canyon environment. Citing archival purchase and work orders, I go behind the postcard scenes to assess and interpret the social and cultural influences that shaped the creation and manufacturing of these images. Additionally, through a combination of archival evidence, extensive fieldwork, historical landscape interpretation, and the results of the content analysis, I suggest some symbols and meanings embedded in the postcard representation over time.

There are multiple ways to approach postcard research (DeBres and Sowers 2009). Some scholars consider postcards to be factual representations of landscapes and environments. Other scholars assess postcards as landscape representations created through complex and contested social and cultural processes (Isenberg 2004). In this article I blend aspects of both interpretive approaches to postcard analysis.

This work draws on archival research supplemented by long-term fieldwork and personal observations. Standing at a Grand Canyon location comparing the postcard in my hands to the rim, trail, or river scene before me revealed valuable insights into the images that are overlooked in other studies that rely solely on archival or secondary sources. Additionally, these assessments inform a deeper understanding of the dialectical relationship between “actual landscapes” and symbolic landscapes in popular visual representations (Meinig 1979, 175).

#### CULTURE, VISION, AND NATURE

National parks are landscapes invested with conflicting meanings of nature and culture. In one sense, national parks are wilderness preserves often viewed as pristine nature, devoid of human modification. This nature-culture dichotomy is a staple of National Park Service (NPS) and concessionaire promotion, although interpretation is changing on this front. Ever since 1872, when Yellowstone, the first national park, was created, boosters and managers have constructed and commodified parks as artifacts of national pride and wilderness monumentalism (Runte 1997). Yet national parks are also cultural landscapes replete with a rich array of significant themes, ideas, events, individual personalities, and group identities that have created the fabric of America as a nation (Cronon 1996, 2003; Nash 2001).

A cultural landscape is a physical articulation of multiple, sometimes competing discourses about nature and culture as well as a symbolic medium that is in a constant state of revision, negotiation, and contestation. Donald Meinig encouraged geographers to explore how “actual landscapes” become symbolic landscapes, noting that the sources of information for this work must consider a broad range of materials, including “landscape depictions in all kinds of literature and other

visual media” (1979, 175). Building on this groundwork, Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels extended the idea of cultural landscape, suggesting that it can be a “cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings” (1988, 1). The Grand Canyon, in other words, “may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces—in paint, on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth stone, water and vegetation on the ground” (p. 1).

Visual media offer a rich portal for exploring ideas and values invested in places (Schein 1997; Lippard 1999; Goin 2001; Rose 2001; Schwartz and Ryan 2003; Cosgrove 2008). Photographs, paintings, films and advertisements can be used to provide insights about popular social and cultural values (Starrs 1988; Hausladen 2003). These pervasive and easily accessible images inform environmental attitudes and perceptions (Lutz and Collins 1993; Dunway 2005). Assessing variations in subject matter and locations represented in popular imagery over time provides insights into broader social, cultural, and historical trends that have shaped a location or region (Francaviglia 1994; McGreevy 1994; Hoelscher 1998; Blake 2002; DeLyser 2003; Krim 2005; Larsen and Brock 2005).

Postcards are the subject of renewed interest and discussion, evident in the surge of recent scholarship on the topic (Arreola 2001, 2006; Bell and Lyall 2002). Geographers and historians explore and analyze postcard representation of urban environments (Jakle 2003; Larson and Swanbrow 2006; Arreola and Burkhart 2010). Postcards are equally valuable sources of data for tracing changes in vegetation, landforms, and other environmental aspects of rural scenes (Sawyer and Butler 2006; Thornbush 2008). In the context of national parks, some scholars employ popular visual media, including postcards, to critique and discuss the broader social and cultural implications of these representations (Wyckoff and Nash 1994; Neumann 1999; Lippard 2000; Nye 2003; Cronin 2011; Patin 2012).

#### THE CURT TEICH PUBLISHING COMPANY

During its years of operation, 1898–1978, the Curt Teich Publishing Company established itself as the leading printer of view and advertising postcards in the world (LCDM 2012). Curt Otto Teich, a German immigrant and dedicated entrepreneur, started a printing business in Chicago in 1898. Over the years he manufactured postcards for several publishers and distributors.

At the Grand Canyon, the Fred Harvey Company emerged as the prime distributor of Curt Teich Publishing Company postcards. Beginning in 1905, Fred Harvey served as a hospitality counterpart to the Santa Fe Railroad, operating dining rooms, lodges, and shops at the canyon and throughout the western United States along the Santa Fe Railroad’s tracks. At the South Rim the company managed overnight facilities, served meals at cafeterias and restaurants, and sold souvenirs in gift shops. The hospitality concessionaire also ran camps at inner-canyon sites deep within the gorge along the Colorado River and offered guided automobile tours of the South Rim, the North Rim, and the nearby Hopi villages (Anderson 2000, 14).

Most of the Fred Harvey Company's and the Santa Fe's operations and infrastructure concentrated on South Rim and inner-canyon developed areas. The commercial dominance of these two companies solidified after 1916 with the transfer of Grand Canyon administration from the U.S. Forest Service to the newly created NPS. This shift in administration confirmed powerful political and commercial relationships as the NPS developed a "commitment to monopolies and multi-year contracts" enticed by "the promise for greater business volume through advertising, access, zoning, and building standards" (Anderson 2000, 14).

Soon after the postcard-manufacturing giant Detroit Publishing Company went out of business in 1924, Fred Harvey opened a large direct account with the Curt Teich Company. Under this agreement, the Curt Teich Company manufactured postcards that the Fred Harvey Company then published and distributed (Werther and Mott 2002). This exclusive distribution contact with the Curt Teich Company, combined with Fred Harvey's ubiquitous presence at the South Rim and throughout the Santa Fe Railroad empire, ensured a wide distribution of postcards to a steady stream of tourists eager to purchase and send inexpensive visual mementos of their travels.

The Curt Teich Company created postcards that advanced manufacturing techniques using international talent pools and technological advances. So-called White Border postcards featured an image on the front of the card with a white, undecorated border framing the scene. These cards emerged as the core of the profitable Curt Teich Company business from 1915 to 1930. Company managers countered increasing competition after World War I and tough economic conditions during the Great Depression by developing new products and cutting-edge production methods.

The Curt Teich Company hired skilled German printmakers to operate high-speed presses at the company's Chicago-based manufacturing center. The presses required a novel card stock, one that could allow more air space on the card for the impressed ink to dry. The solution to this seemingly minor technical problem fueled Curt Teich Company's rise to prominence. The company broke away from the pack by manufacturing a novel type of product, the linen postcard. This new, textured stock provided an absorbent base for a wider range of colored inks and a distinctive card with an easily recognized look and feel. From 1931 until well into the 1950s, Curt Teich was the "largest and most prolific" producer of high-quality linen postcards (Werther and Mott 2002).

#### EMBELLISHING MORE THAN COLOR

Curt Teich prided itself on its "color embellishment" (Werther and Mott 2002, 13–18), a manufacturing process that added eye-catching colors to the textured linen cards. During the manufacturing process, last year's postcard scene could be updated with a different palette of colors and subjects, thereby creating a "new" postcard with each printing. This process not only extended the use of a relatively small set of images, it also met the demand for new products. Today, computer

programs distill this manufacturing process down to a few clicks of the mouse through photograph-editing software such as Photoshop. In the early-to-mid-twentieth century, however, the process could take weeks to finish and required the labor of numerous artists and printers.

In factories such as that of the Curt Teich Company, artists retouched photographs, workers transferred the revised images from paper to stone blocks, and printers ran modified postcard-printing presses. The consequences of this manufacturing process and editorial color embellishment were far-reaching. The Curt Teich Company manipulated visual representations of nature at the Grand Canyon in the name of business competition. In the process, the company created a visual dialogue that shaped popular expectations and perceptions of the canyon's environment, geography, and visitor experiences.

#### DOMINANT THEMES AND LOCATIONS OF GRAND CANYON POSTCARDS

The Curt Teich Postcard Archives at the Lake County Discovery Museum in Wauconda, Illinois, contain the largest publicly accessible collection of postcards produced by the Curt Teich Publishing Company. Within this collection, I identified an initial group of 800 postcards catalogued under the subject and geographical heading "National Parks, Grand Canyon." This initial group, however, required pruning. It included postcards produced by other manufacturers across a wide range of historic periods as well as a mixture of locations such as Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, and the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. After eliminating all postcards produced by other manufacturers or displaying other locations outside Arizona, I chose a sample of 259 postcards that represents all postcards manufactured by Curt Teich Publishing Company from 1936 to 1955, a time period defined by the massive popularity of linen postcards and the apex of Curt Teich's production output. Additionally, note should be made that variations may be found in other sets of Curt Teich postcards held in private collections; the set referenced here is publicly accessible and includes all of the Grand Canyon, Arizona, postcards catalogued and held by the Curt Teich Postcards Archives.

After I assessed the postcards for environmental subject matter and location, I assigned each postcard to one or more of four major subject categories (Table I). In addition, based on the content analysis, I assigned each postcard to one vertical location and one horizontal location (Table II). Sixteen percent of the postcards, such as those that depicted building interiors, do not include any view of the canyon. Two percent of the postcards display multiple locations at the canyon. Many of the 259 postcards contain multiple subjects. Although I discuss the changing subject matter in postcards with each successive reprinting, I assessed each postcard only once for content, no matter how many versions of the postcard appeared in subsequent reprintings.

The subject matter and locations present in Curt Teich postcards guided the development and assessment of the four environmental thematic categories dis-

TABLE I—SUBJECTS REPRESENTED IN CURT TEICH COMPANY  
GRAND CANYON POSTCARDS, 1936–1955<sup>a</sup>

SUBJECT	TOTAL NUMBER ( <i>n</i> = 259)	TOTAL PERCENTAGE
Scenic	194	75
Vegetation		
Green shades	178	69
Brown shades	9	3
Water		
Colorado River	45	17
Streams, lakes, waterfalls	4	2
Animals		
Mules	25	10
Deer	6	2
Total subjects represented	471	

Source: CTPA 1936–1955.

<sup>a</sup>Some of the 259 Curt Teich Company postcards depict multiple subjects.

TABLE II—LOCATIONS REPRESENTED IN CURT TEICH COMPANY  
GRAND CANYON POSTCARDS, 1936–1955

LOCATION	TOTAL NUMBER ( <i>n</i> = 259)	TOTAL PERCENTAGE
Vertical locations		
River	43	16
Midcanyon	1	3
Rim	164	63
Aerial	4	2
No view	42	16
Multiple views	5	2
Total vertical locations represented	259	
Horizontal locations		
North Rim	25	10
South Rim	162	63
Midcanyon	39	15
Unknown location	26	10
Multiple locations	7	3
Total horizontal locations represented	259	

Source: CTPA 1936–1955.

cussed in this article. For the Curt Teich Company, these representations defined Grand Canyon's scenic and tourism appeal. Scenic themes dominate the postcard representations (see Table I). Significantly for a park situated in the arid U.S. Southwest, water is a key subject in many postcards, favoring the Colorado River more often than lakes, waterfalls, or other streams at the canyon.

In addition to these prominent themes, Curt Teich postcards display “geographical biases” or a tendency to feature a select and limited number of places

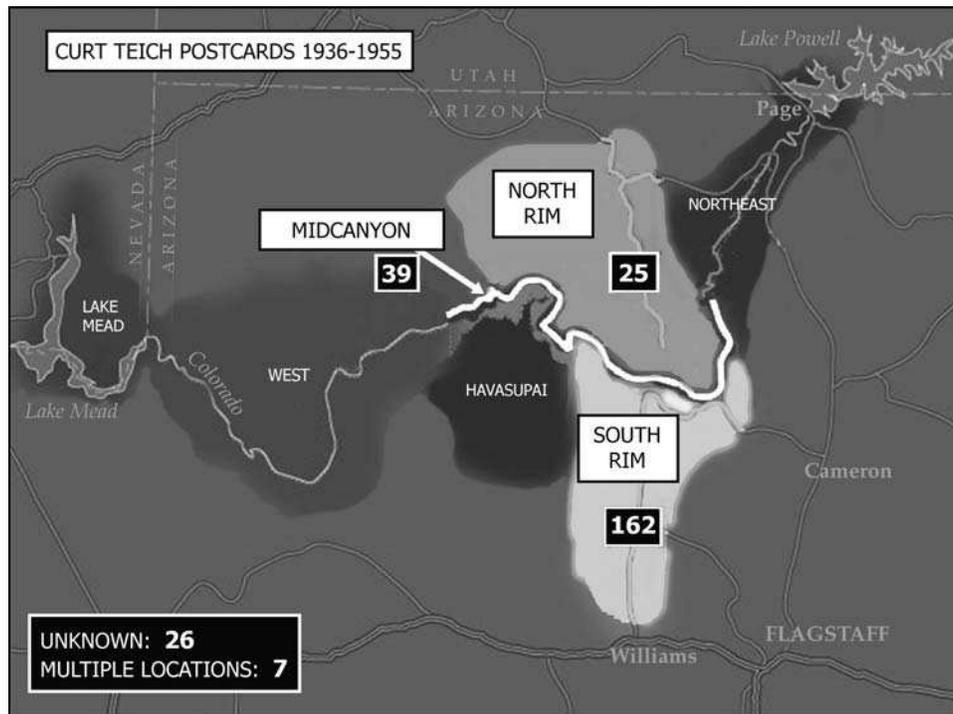


FIG. 1—Horizontal locations represented in Curt Teich postcards, 1936–1955. The numbers in the boxes represent the number of postcards counted in the set for that area of the canyon. The shading on the map delineates the different subregional areas of the South Rim, North Rim, West, Lake Mead, Midcanyon, Havasupai, Northeast, and West referred to in this article. The South Rim and the midcanyon areas were the most common locations depicted in Curt Teich Company postcards. *Source of data:* NPS 2001. (Cartography by Robert Edsall, Carthage College, and by the author)

(Wyckoff and Dilsaver 1997, 8). In a park defined by striking differences between horizontal and vertical locations—distinct rim, inner-canyon, and river environments—Curt Teich postcard manufacturers emphasized rim and midcanyon locations. Rim scenes account for 63 percent of the locations featured on the postcards, a frequency unsurpassed by other locations (Figure 1). Midcanyon scenes typically feature trails leading into the canyon set amid the dramatic inner-canyon environment of cliffs, side canyons, and expansive plateaus.

#### A VIEW FROM THE CANYON'S RIM

Grand Canyon National Park's administrative past and development history influenced Curt Teich's selective and fragmentary representations of the canyon's environment. The postcards feature the mid-twentieth-century Grand Canyon National Park, a protected area that differed in both administrative boundaries and spatial context from the 1,904-square mile contemporary version of the park (NPS 2012). Indeed, during the height of Curt Teich's postcard production—from the 1930s to the 1950s—Grand Canyon National Park, established in 1919, encompassed only 958 square miles, an area mostly carved out of its eleven-year-old

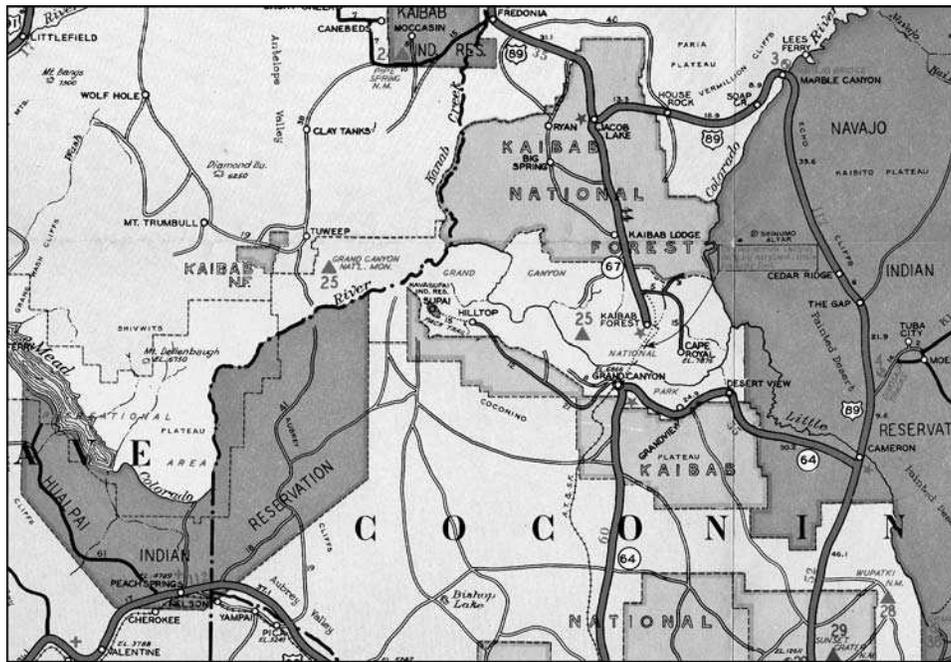


FIG. 2—A detailed excerpt from a 1946 1:1,500,000 (original scale) *Road Map of Arizona* reveals Grand Canyon National Park's diminished administrative boundaries during the era of Curt Teich Company postcards. The South and North rims are marked by the gap in the roads between the abrupt ending of Highway 67 at the North Rim and Highways 64 along the South Rim. Grand Canyon Village is noted simply as "Grand Canyon" at the South Rim terminus of Highway 64. *Source:* ASHC 1946. (Reproduced from the collection of the author)

predecessor, the 1,279-square-mile Grand Canyon National Monument (Anderson 2000, 56).

Curt Teich postcards capture the Grand Canyon during a time of administrative transition: Grand Canyon National Monument, managed by the U.S. Forest Service, bordered Grand Canyon National Park, a unit of the NPS. The Curt Teich Company postcards exclusively portrayed subjects and locations within the national park, particularly rim locations accessible by established road networks (Figure 2). Grand Canyon National Monument continued to share the western boundary with the park until 1975, when the Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act expanded the park's boundaries to the northeast along the upper Colorado River corridor and to the west, enveloping national monument lands (Anderson 2000, 56). Curt Teich's narrow geographical range in the historic national park entailed excluding some of the environmental diversity in the Greater Grand Canyon region that the later legislation protected.

Administrative boundaries explain only part of the geographical bias and selective subject matter found in Curt Teich postcards. Guided by Fred Harvey Company purchase orders and reprint requests, the postcards tended to represent locations that overlapped with the greatest investment by park concessionaires.

The South Rim, a center of Fred Harvey and Santa Fe operations, outpaced other areas of the canyon in terms of commercial development and access to regional transportation networks.

The groundwork for the South Rim's commercial prominence began in the late 1800s with mining and frontier settlement, followed by Santa Fe Railroad investment, NPS management, and Fred Harvey concessions in the early twentieth century. Starting in 1905 the Santa Fe Railroad, in partnership with the Fred Harvey Company, began a vast remodeling project at Grand Canyon Village on the South Rim, expanding the quantity and quality of services available to the ever-growing number of tourists.

Curt Teich 1936–1955 postcards portray the canyon during an era of rising automobile travel and an accompanying expansion of park development, particularly at the South Rim's Grand Canyon Village. By the 1930s the village functioned as the principal hub of tourist services and as the site where most visitors spent their time at the national park. Park visitation dwindled throughout the Great Depression and World War II; however, an influx of federal labor and spending during that time heralded "Golden Years" of road and trail expansion along the South and North rims, connecting the park with regional and national highways (Anderson 2000, 25–40).

The locations represented on the Curt Teich postcards communicate more than just pretty views or popular tourist destinations; the imagery reinforces the "spatial and visual strategies" of the cultural and commercial tourist landscape at the Grand Canyon (Schein 1997, 664). Richard Schein suggests that a cultural landscape can be interpreted as a "tangible, visible articulation of numerous discourses" (p. 660). These "discourses materialized" may "present competing social and visual disciplines or *strategies* that combine to constrict or limit human action within and interpretation of any particular landscape" (p. 663; italics in the original).

In the context of the Grand Canyon, social and cultural discourses among park concessionaires, NPS managers, and visitors materialized in the cultural landscape at Grand Canyon Village and other locations throughout the park as roads, lodges, shops, and restaurants. Decisions about the construction, expansion, and placement of these material features, in other words, not only involved an investment of capital but also guided ideas about what the canyon meant and what parts of the canyon were valuable.

Curt Teich manufacturers selected areas of the park—Grand Canyon Village, the South Rim, midcanyon trails—to represent ideas of scenic, wild, and grand nature; other parts of the canyon played peripheral roles. The majority of visitors flocked to the South Rim. Limited-access roads and visitor services, on the other hand, stymied the North Rim's popularity. Foot traffic, airplanes, or mules provided the only passage to the canyon's rugged interior. The Colorado River corridor remained a remote place to all but a few intrepid river pioneers. The mimetic, naturalizing capabilities of Curt Teich's colorful, popular, and widely distributed postcards presented the new spatial

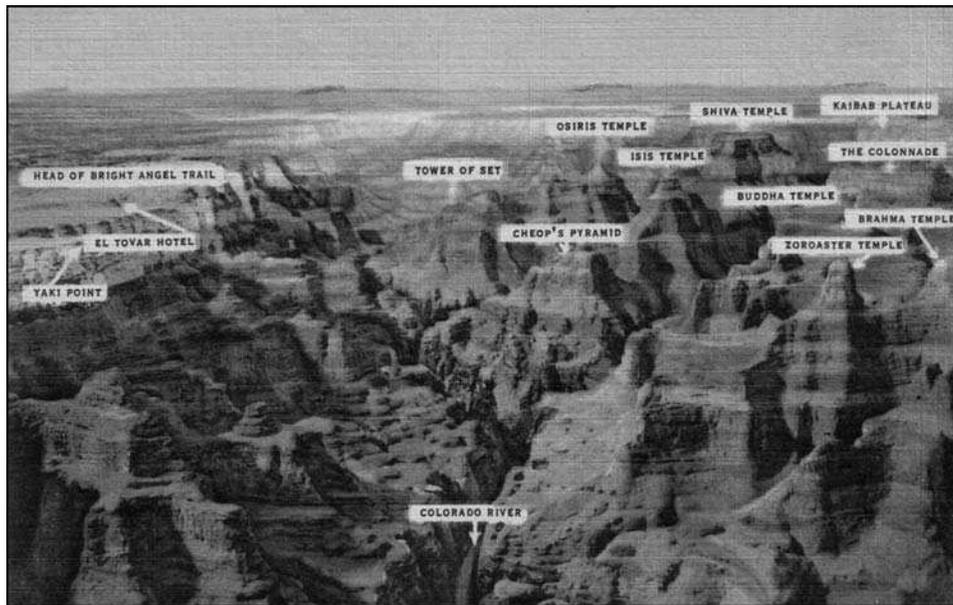


FIG. 3—"Air View of Grand Canyon, Arizona," 1938. (Reproduced from the collection of the author)

order of Grand Canyon's expanding midcentury tourist landscape at the South Rim as the given order, ensuring the success of these modern developments and their place in canyon iconography.

#### EDITING NATURE

The white-border postcard format endemic to Curt Teich proved to be an effective medium for tethering ideas of scenic, grand, and wild landscapes to specific places and subjects. For example, the border provides just enough space to print a title under the image on the front of the card. Some postcards of South Rim or North Rim views, simply titled "Grand Canyon," circumvent more specific location information. This practice blurs the exact location of the postcard scene while simultaneously promoting the South Rim and North Rim over other locations.

A 1938 "Air View of Grand Canyon" postcard provides an example of Curt Teich's spatial and visual strategies (Figure 3). This postcard features a view from a slightly elevated location, looking west across the midcanyon and rim environments. The size and slope of the inner-canyon buttes and plateaus are vertically exaggerated and painted in a wash of deep red, orange, and pink shades. Certain locations, such as the Tower of Set, Bright Angel Trail, El Tovar Hotel, Yaki Point, and the Colorado River are labeled. Representing the Grand Canyon's physical geography in this colorful view of exaggerated proportions and labeled scenery proved an effective way to clearly affix prominence to certain locations. In Curt Teich's Grand Canyon, this method also transformed the environment into a commodity that tourists could memorize and visually consume.

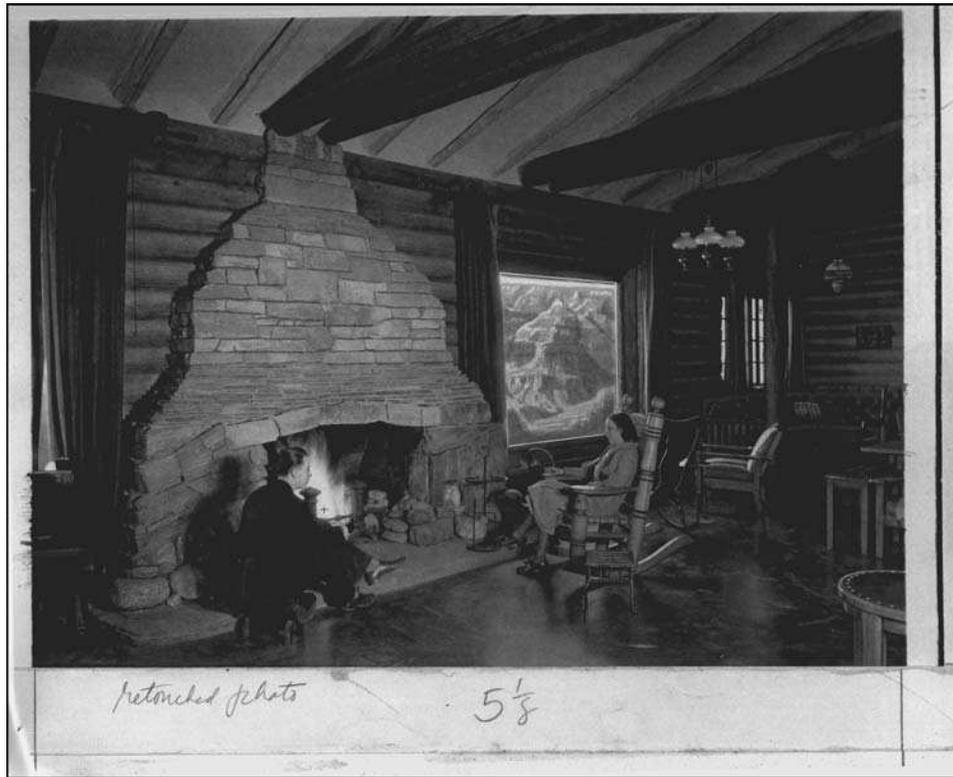


FIG. 4—A Fake Canyon View. A retouched postcard entitled “A Corner in the Lounge, Bright Angel Lodge, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona,” 1937. The unfinished postcard reveals editing marks by postcard artists as they altered the color and positioning of the image. (Reproduced courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum / Curt Teich Postcard Archives; #7AH895)

#### THE COLORFUL CANYON

Curt Teich representational strategies transformed selective Grand Canyon features into a visual shorthand for dramatic and attractive scenery. Most of the scenic views represent the canyon from the rim looking across the vast canyon below. Sunny days and blue skies occupy the distant horizon on many of these postcards. Curt Teich Company artists often retouched postcards through the reprinting processing by adding clouds, brightening the blue shading of the sky, or removing trees and other features along the rim to create a simplified horizon line.

“A Corner in the Lounge, Bright Angel Lodge,” printed in 1937, provides additional insight into the mechanics behind Curt Teich’s visual strategies (Figure 4). The postcard features an interior scene at the South Rim, a room quietly inhabited by two visitors and a crackling fire. Where is the Grand Canyon? Tucked into the corner of the room, a vivid canyon view looms just outside the building, a voyeur of the cozy lodge scene. This brief glimpse of the canyon is a visual cue card, prompting the postcard viewer’s recognition that this is no everyday cabin, this is no everyday scene; this is the Grand Canyon.

NO. 7A-8095  
ORDER No 69747  
DATE 3-17-1937

FRID HARVEY,  
KANSAS CITY, MO.

**6 M ART COLORTONE POST CARDS, WHITE BORDER**

(ALL OF THIS ON THE PICTURE SIDE) (ALL OF THIS ON THE ADDRESS SIDE)

PLACE OF TITLE: UPPER, LOWER, CENTER - BORDER. FRONT NO. 18 R. M. YES

TITLE (IN FULL): A CORNER IN THE LOUNGE, IMPRINT TRADEMARK

BRIGHT ANGEL LODGE, GRAND CANYON  
NATIONAL PARK, ARIZONA

PRIVATE NO. BEFORE TITLE: ~~109~~ H-4459

PUT PLATE NO. ON FRONT AT BOTTOM

PHOTO PROPERTY OF CUSTOMER

COLOR DESCRIPTION  
FAKE CANYON VIEW IN WINDOW AS PER MAGAZINE ILLUSTRATIONS ATTACHED.

SUBMIT: RET. PHOTO  B. L. & W. PROOF  HANDCOLOR PROOF  RETURN PHOTO

**CURT TEICH & COMPANY, INC., CHICAGO**  
PHOTO TICKET

MAY 1937 (1937) © W. L. M. 176.75

Estimated by [Signature] Cost Dept. Checked [Signature]  
By [Signature] **ESTIMATE** By [Signature]  
Date MAR 18 1937 AND WORK SCHEDULE Date MAR 13 1937

OPERATION	EST. TIME (Hours) (Days) (Weeks)	DATE ENTERED DEPT.	DATE COMPLETED
COMPOSING, TYPE SET UP			
SKETCH			
RETOUCHING	<u>6</u> <u>4</u>	<u>3-19</u>	<u>3-19 50</u>
PHOTO-LITHO			
BLUEPRINT STRIPPING, OPAQUEING	<u>65</u>	<u>3-20</u>	<u>3-20 44</u>
ENGRAVING			
HAND COLOR PROOF	<u>163</u> <u>1/2</u>		<u>3-23</u>
ARTIST DEPT.	<u>34</u> <u>11</u>	<u>4-9-37</u>	<u>4-12-37 F.W.</u>

DATE BLUEPRINT OK'D \_\_\_\_\_ DATE Filed JUL 22 1937  
By \_\_\_\_\_ By [Signature]

DATE HAND COLOR PROOF OK'D \_\_\_\_\_ DATE Photo Returned to Customer \_\_\_\_\_  
By \_\_\_\_\_

FIG. 5—Photo ticket and work-schedule order for “A Corner in the Lounge, Bright Angel Lodge, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona,” 1937. Note that the color-description section describes the addition of the “fake canyon view” to the image. The work schedule details the time and date that the postcard moved through each Curt Teich department, including “retouching, blueprint stripping opaqueing, hand color proof, and artist department.” (Reproduced courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum / Curt Teich Postcard Archives; documentation for #7AH895)

The Bright Angel Lodge postcard scene is spectacular, colorful, and synthetic. During a field trip to the lodge, I compared the postcard with the sights visible through the windows in that same room (now reincarnated as a compact Fred Harvey museum). The postcard features an exaggerated, enlarged, and elevated image of the canyon's interior as seen from the South Rim; no contortion or adjustment to viewing angles will result in that specific view of the canyon from that particular window.

The editing process for "A Corner in the Lounge" can be traced through Curt Teich Company's production records (Figure 5). A reprinting order placed by the Fred Harvey Company for the postcard includes a "retouching" request: insert a "fake canyon view in window per magazine illustration attached" (CTPA 1937). This photo ticket and work-schedule documentation reveal that Curt Teich artists cut part of the image from a magazine illustration of the Grand Canyon and pasted it into the square window behind the woman in a rocking chair.

This mimetic illusion appears frequently in Curt Teich images, an outcome realized through revision and reprinting techniques common in the postcard-manufacturing industry. In-demand postcards served as templates for future reprintings; each printing offered opportunities for subtle adjustments. Elements such as colors, subject matter, and framing could be changed, a process that created a new product for the Curt Teich Company to sell, refreshing the postcard stock of distributors like Fred Harvey while sidestepping the costly trip of a photographer to the field site or additional staging of the image.

Color plays an important role in Curt Teich's postcard representations of nature at the Grand Canyon. The company's cards regularly depict the canyon's geological layers with an emphasis on red, tan, and pink shading of the rock layers. A distinctive orange band around inner-canyon mesas and buttes draws the viewer's gaze into the gorge's depths.

The documentation for a South Rim scenic postcard provides an example of intentional color selection. A reprint order for "A Sheer Wall along Desert View Drive" states that the postcard "shows too much green and yellow. There should be more red shown" (CTPA 1936). The Fred Harvey Company, a major distributor of Curt Teich Company postcards, requested the color changes in the specifications for a reprinting order. Curt Teich artists applied color to the postcard proof and reprinted the image with the new color. This arrangement created a new product for the Curt Teich Company to sell to the Fred Harvey Company and a novel postcard for the Fred Harvey Company to stock in its Grand Canyon shops. In the process the postcard manufacturer, guided by the directives of the Fred Harvey Company, created a distinct view of the Grand Canyon's coloring scheme, one that rarely swayed from sunset hues.

#### WILD, GREEN, AND ABUNDANT

Vegetation plays a central role in Curt Teich scenic views. In 69 percent of the postcards I sampled, green shrubs and trees cling to steep canyon walls, sprout

along the edges of the canyon, and blanket the inner-canyon plateaus. In contrast, only 3 percent of the postcards depict a less-verdant Grand Canyon, with brown, wind-twisted trees perched on narrow ledges and wilting shrubs scattered along the canyon's rim.

Green vegetation became a reliable element in the Curt Teich Company's scenic canyon formula, but, as with colorful stratigraphy, it represents the canyon's environment only selectively. The monochrome assigned to a majority of the canyon's flora overlooks the spring blooms of cacti and the autumn brilliance of aspens and cottonwoods. Although these floral hues appear on a few postcards, they are the exception, not the rule. The postcards are not entirely inaccurate representations. Common and native flora populate Curt Teich Company's postcards; however, the plants depicted in the postcards represent only a handful of the canyon's 1,750 vascular plant species that extend across the canyon's varied and extensive topography, which ranges from 2,400 feet (the Colorado River) to 8,000 feet (the North Rim) (NPS 2012).

Many Curt Teich postcards portray abundant flora in the canyon environment. Green shading applied liberally along the tops of plateaus, mesas, and smaller canyons blurs the unique and diverse inner-canyon floral communities into one large, indistinct, but plentiful feature. In some postcards, prodigious trees and shrubs, wild and unruly, crowd or partially obscure the other subjects in the image. For example, in a postcard of the "Wayside Museum" (1937) along the South Rim, large juniper and pinyon trees block a clear view of the stone building. The museum is secondary to the vibrant green trees that bustle around the building and tower over its rustic stone walls (Figure 6). Pinyon-juniper woodland is a native vegetation zone along the South Rim. The Curt Teich Company embellished the color, dominance, and density of these native plants, however, adding a lush appearance to this otherwise arid region.

The Curt Teich Company portrayed vegetation as a benign and attractive ornament in the canyon's scenic vistas and commercial hospitality development. Along the South Rim, juniper and pinyon, for example, frame the left and right margins of numerous scenic cross-canyon views. At the North Rim, dense stands of spruce, fir, aspen, and ponderosa pine trees line the edges of roads and nestle around the Grand Canyon Lodge and cabins.

Plants are not simply decorations; they symbolize plentitude, recreation, and wild nature. Wishing to lure tourists more familiar with broadleaf maples than with wiry junipers, Curt Teich made a visual appeal to visitors' sense of scenic beauty by embellishing and editing the canyon's environment. A common thread in each of these images is the brilliant green of the vegetation that captures viewers' attention and confirms their expectations of a verdant park experience.

Curt Teich's imagery portrays human-induced management of the canyon's vegetation as well. During the 1930s and 1940s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers completed road-construction, stonemasonry, and landscaping projects across the country in national parks and recreation areas. At the Grand Canyon,

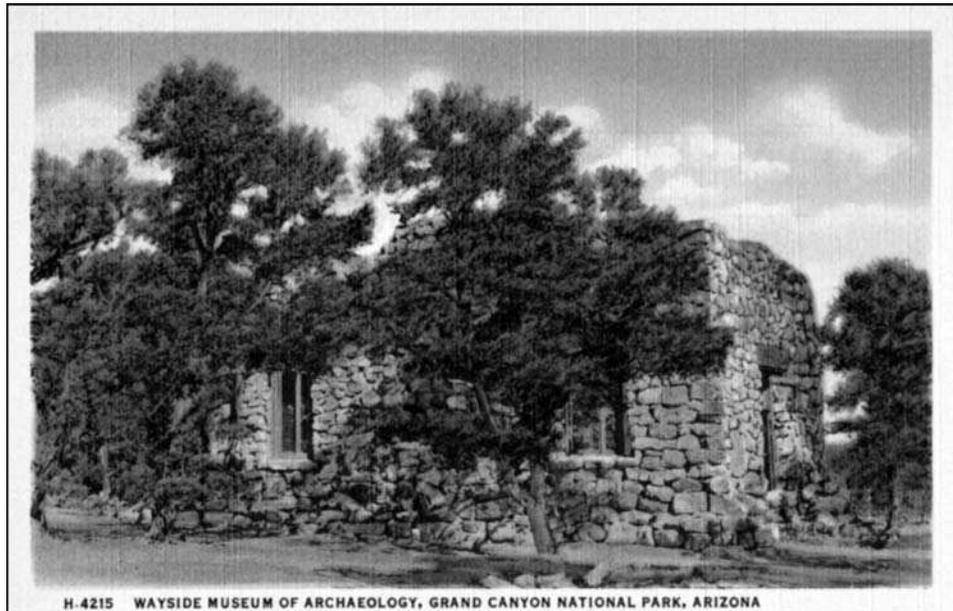


FIG. 6—Abundant Vegetation. “Wayside Museum of Archaeology, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona,” 1937. Dense and verdant representations of juniper and pinyon trees obscure this South Rim building, later known as the Tusayan Museum. (Reproduced courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum / Curt Teich Postcard Archives; documentation for #7AH3919)

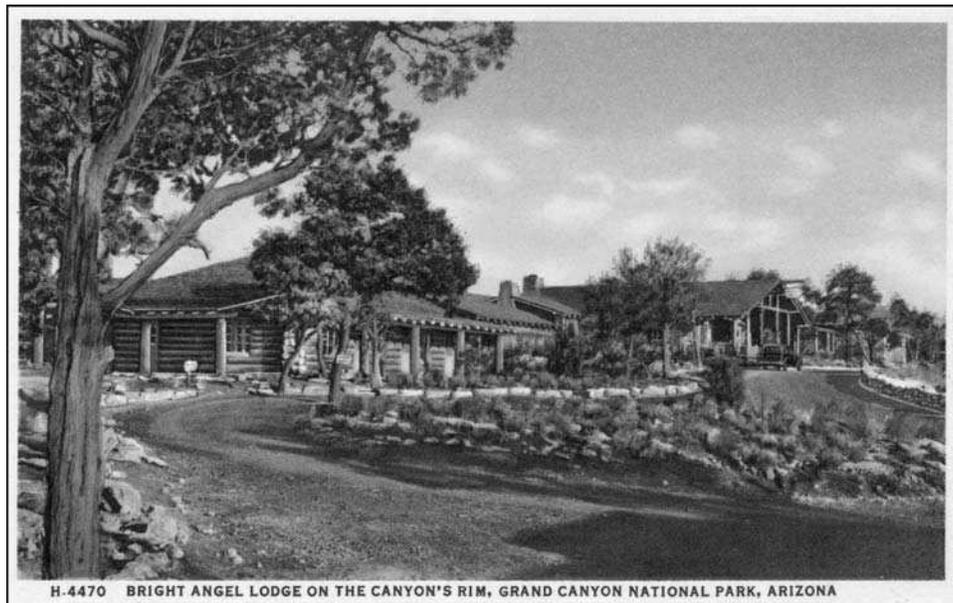


FIG. 7—Verdant Vegetation. “Bright Angel Lodge on the Canyon’s Rim, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona,” 1939. (Reproduced from the collection of the author)

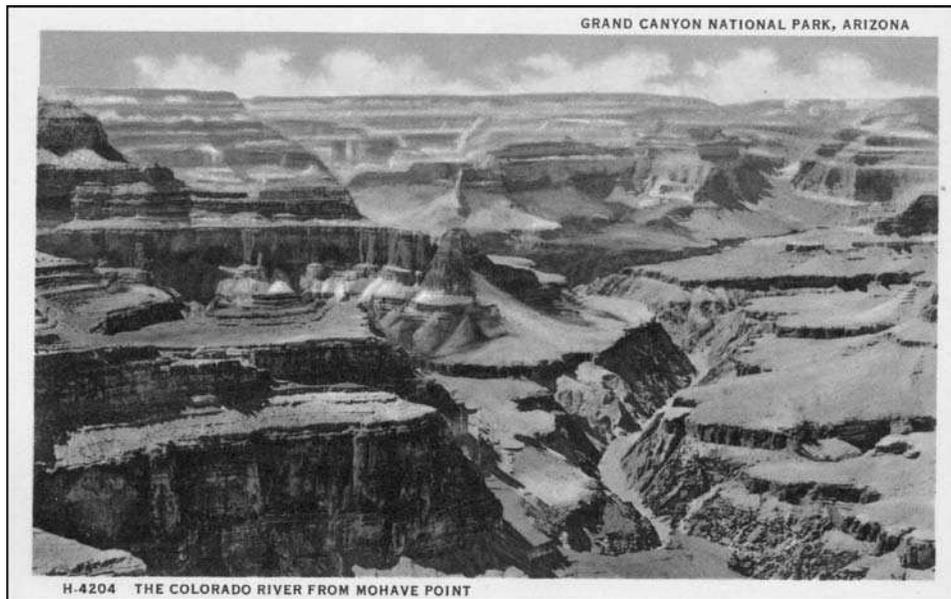


FIG. 8—Sapphire Blue Waters. “The Colorado River from Mohave Point,” 1937. (Reproduced courtesy of the Grand Canyon Museum Collection, Grand Canyon National Park; #GRCA22312)

the CCC influence is discernible in a 1935 postcard of Bright Angel Lodge on the South Rim (Figure 7). The log frame of the lodge stretches across the image but serves only as a backdrop for the dominant subject of the postcard: the well-tended and organized array of bright green trees, shrubs, and grasses. In coordination with expansions of the lodge and driveway in the 1930s and 1940s, the CCC arranged native plants and rocks to match contemporary aesthetics of resort culture (Anderson 2001, 25). Curt Teich manufacturers added their own flourish to the scene, embellishing this image with the addition of a tri-tone pattern of bright green foliage, brown lodge and tree trunks, and a cerulean sky.

The Bright Angel Lodge postcard served as a showcase for CCC talent and an effective advertisement for the Fred Harvey Company’s concessions. Curt Teich Company’s handiwork, through color enhancements and framing of the lodge, effectively equates the modified landscape of planted shrubs and neatly arranged stone walls around Bright Angel Lodge with wild juniper at the Wayside Museum and thick aspen forests near the North Rim lodge. As Lucy Lippard asserted, “perceptions of nature are constantly being reinvented and often reflect the values and ideas of society itself” (2000, 5–6).

#### SAPPHIRE BLUE WATERS

Water, especially the Colorado River, became a common feature of Curt Teich Company’s Grand Canyon environment. In most of the water-themed postcards a sapphire blue Colorado River threads its way through the deep contours of the canyon (Figure 8). The contrast between the bright blue river and orange canyon

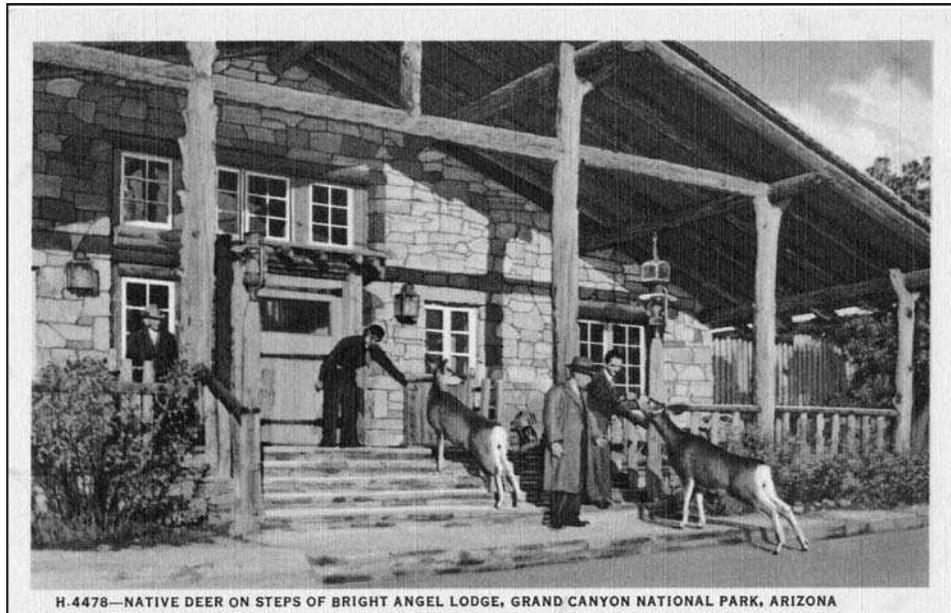


FIG. 9—Benign Wild Nature. “Native Deer on Steps of Bright Angel Lodge, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona,” 1938. (Reproduced courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum / Curt Teich Postcard Archives; documentation for #8AH1584)

walls creates drama in the imagery and draws the viewer’s eye toward the inner canyon; however, orange, yellow, or pink Colorado Rivers occasionally appear on postcards as well. This rainbow treatment may have been a strategic move on Curt Teich Company’s part to create new inventory and fulfill escalating distributor orders. The color change could be conjured in a brushstroke, applied by postcard artists who likely never ventured from the company’s Chicago base to see the muddy waters of the Colorado River for themselves.

Alternatively, realism may have been out of reach or undesirable for the postcard artists. Through numerous field excursions into the Grand Canyon—from the rim, along trails, and down the river—I can attest that the Colorado River is chromatically dynamic. It may appear muddy and orange after a heavy rain, sparkling and silver from the rim on a sunny day, or dark green flecked with white foam near a rapid’s edge. The contemporary Colorado River differs significantly from the waterway depicted in Curt Teich’s 1936–1955 imagery. Notably, the enormous Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell reservoir, constructed between 1955 and 1966, altered the river’s size, flow, and appearance. The dam measures and releases cold, clear water from the depths of Lake Powell and, in the process, creates white-water thrills downriver that fuel the commercial river rafting industry and its appeal in popular geographical imaginations. The historic Colorado River, in contrast, flowed with far more fluctuation, carrying warm, muddy water toward the Gulf of California.

As with representations of scenic landscapes and vegetation, water imagery communicates diverse meanings. For mid-twentieth-century audiences, the Colorado River in Curt Teich postcards symbolized wilderness. The postcards portrayed a wild river at the bottom of the canyon that few tourists would know or experience until the boom of commercial river rafting enticed boatloads of visitors down the Colorado River in the 1970s. The brown and muddy Colorado River surrounded by a windswept canyon and spindly juniper trees conveyed an exotic environment to mid-twentieth-century postcard audiences who were more accustomed to seeing ocean scenes from Cape Cod or azure lakes of mountain parks such as Crater Lake. Curt Teich Company postcard artists, guided by notes sent from field photographers and work orders placed by the Fred Harvey Company, altered the canyon's color scheme to fit contemporary images of ideal resort settings. In the process, they created a highly stylized and idealized view of nature at the Grand Canyon.

#### THE CALL OF THE DOMESTIC

Of the hundreds of species that fly, swim, crawl, gallop, and slither in the Grand Canyon, only two species of mammals appear in Curt Teich postcards: mules and deer. This simplification is striking. A plethora of nonhuman residents populate the Grand Canyon: 91 species of mammals, 17 species of fish, 57 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 373 species of birds (NPS 2012).

Curt Teich Company's limited representations of animal life symbolized dual elements of nature present at many park sites: wild and native (deer) juxtaposed with domestic and introduced (mules). As with representations of vegetation, deer represented wild yet benign nature. Deer nursed their young or nibbled at food offered from tourists' hands, often within a few steps of South Rim hotels and lodges (Figure 9). Mules, on the other hand, became accessories to the scenic and colorful Grand Canyon stratigraphy (Figure 10). The long mule trains lumbering up and down the canyon trails provided a sense of scale and perspective to the canyon's immense size; the bodies of the mules and riders seem diminutive compared with the steep terrain of the midcanyon.

Repetitive and abundant postcard scenes of mule trains in the Grand Canyon have fused images of the mules and the canyon into one entity. As evidence of this unflinching association, many midcanyon postcard scenes feature mule trains, although the postcard titles often lack reference to the animals' presence, opting instead to focus on the trail names (see Figure 10). Conversely, some postcards highlight the mules but dismiss the canyon in their titles. The postcard titled "Kickapoo, A Veteran of the Trails" (1940) features an eerily disembodied mule's head superimposed on a scenic image of the canyon (Figure 11). The mule is not wild; the animal's working attire of bridle and reins is clearly visible in the image.

Curt Teich manufacturers "retouched" the Kickapoo postcard proof by striping the blueprint, then reassembling the scene with various images of the mule and canyon pasted into one frame. They finished their project with a hand-drawn

application of color. The resulting postcard imposed a mule's head in the foreground and a scenic canyon view in the background of the image. Through this revision and editing process, Curt Teich produced fresh imagery for distributors' postcard racks and, in the process, created an enduring icon of nature at the Grand Canyon.

Postcard representations of animals at the Grand Canyon also reveal fading ideas about the bounty of wildlife in the American West. Curt Teich Company postcard makers restricted their canyon wildlife representations to the docile native mule deer; predators and other wild animals are absent from the imagery. A complex and conflicted narrative of animal management and native-species control underlies this representational strategy and rendered mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, and other predators nearly extinct at the canyon (Anderson 2000, 70). Without their natural control mechanisms, deer populations multiplied and threatened to overwhelm the canyon's fragile and limited resources. Park game-management policies and visitors' preferences, however, overlooked this imbalance and favored the deer. From 1927 to 1931 NPS administrators transplanted sixty "tourist favorites" of deer by "truck and air to the South Rim" to maintain "a number considered optimal for visitor enjoyment and range conditions" (p. 70).

Mules are not native to the Grand Canyon, but their history is no less contentious than that of the deer. Since their introduction to the canyon in the late 1880s, mules have provided labor for Anglo settlers and miners as they carried heavy

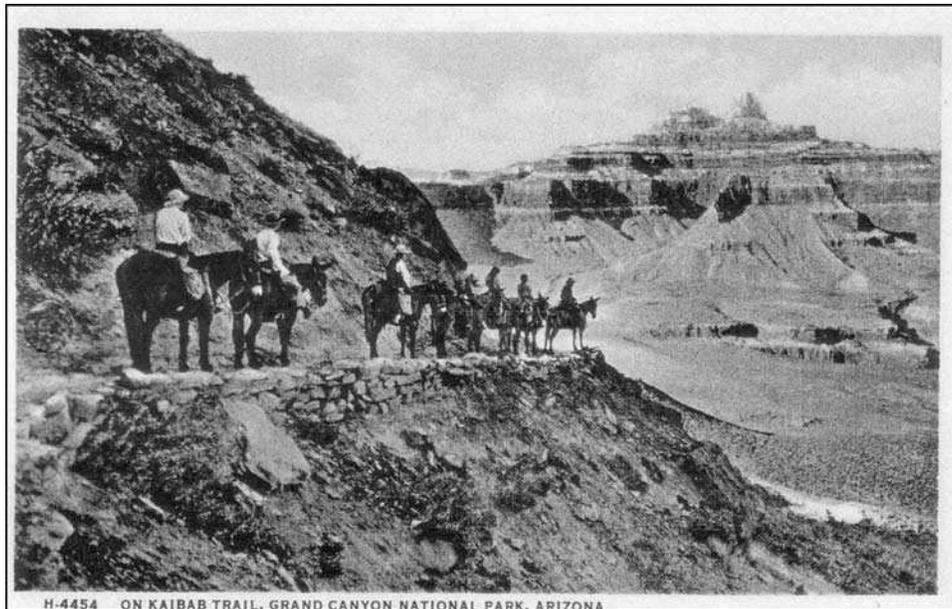


FIG. 10—The Call of the Domestic. "On Kaibab Trail, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona," 1937. This postcard of mules and riders taking a break from the steep descent into the canyon is an example of a midcanyon vertical representation. (Reproduced courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum / Curt Teich Postcard Archives; documentation for #7AH688)



FIG. 11—A Steady Companion. Published postcard of “Kickapoo, Veteran of the Trails,” 1940 (on left) and retouched photograph with editorial markings created during the publishing process (on right). (Reproduced courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum / Curt Teich Postcard Archives #1BH72)

loads of supplies along steep canyon trails. As miners turned to tourism instead of prospecting in the 1890s and early 1900s, they repackaged and successfully sold a mule ride as a quintessential Grand Canyon recreational experience. Some miners released their mules to roam the canyon freely. These feral mules populated the Grand Canyon, competing with desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, and other native ungulates for the precious little forage and resources available in the range. By the 1930s, bighorn sheep numbers plummeted, bringing the animals close to extinction at the Grand Canyon (Chesher 2003, 13–14). The Curt Teich images disregarded the feral mules at the canyon, favoring instead their domestic counterparts.

Domestic mules also symbolize industriousness. As one of the few modes of transportation into the depths of the Grand Canyon, mules provided a vital link for the tourist industry and mid-twentieth-century development along the rims and inner-canyon environments. In the Curt Teich postcards, hardy mules carry people, food, equipment, and building materials into and out of the canyon. Rare images reveal idle mules without riders, grazing in their corrals or milling about in the sizable barn located just a short walk from the El Tovar Hotel on the South Rim.

## BEYOND THE CANYON'S RIM

The Curt Teich Publishing Company visually (re)created the Grand Canyon's environment, one brushstroke, one reprinting, and one purchase order at a time. Color played a significant role in the manufacturer's visual strategies for communicating the canyon's environmental context; orange and red became signature hues for the canyon's geological strata, vibrant greens enlivened rim-side junipers and pinyon pines as well as inner-canyon plateaus, and bright blue signified the Colorado River. This manufacturing and reprinting process transformed a selective and limited set of Grand Canyon subjects and locations into a visual shorthand: colorful geological features, lush landscaping, sapphire blue water, and friendly animals became easily identifiable signifiers of the canyon's wild, scenic, and grand nature.

Postcard manufacturing was a social as well as technical process. Numerous artists, photographers, and printers contributed hours of labor to creating and reproducing postcards, making decisions along the way concerning the application of color, the framing of views, and the representation of subject matter. The Fred Harvey Company exerted a powerful editorial influence on the content of the postcards through purchase orders that explicitly requested color changes, subject removal or addition, reframing of images, and reprinting of certain cards. Often the postcards featured developed tourists services, such as Bright Angel Lodge, that were built or financed by the Santa Fe Railroad and operated by the Fred Harvey Company. These actions transformed the Grand Canyon into a scenic commodity packaged in the inexpensive and portable postcard format that also promoted concessionaire's services at the canyon.

In addition, Curt Teich Company manufacturers and producers reveal a geographical bias in their Grand Canyon imagery toward rim and midcanyon locations (Wyckoff and Dilsaver 1997). This approach promoted a select and fragmentary geography of the Grand Canyon. The dominance of South Rim representations bolstered visitors' expectations of the Grand Canyon as a rim-side attraction featuring colorful views of canyon stratigraphy within easy access to lodging, restaurants, and shops. Building on Schein's 1997 article, this study suggests that Curt Teich's visual strategies for representing the canyon had a mimetic, naturalizing capability that presented the new spatial discipline of Grand Canyon's expanding midcentury tourist landscape at the South Rim and Grand Canyon Village as an objective given. Curt Teich's postcards legitimized the centrality, value, and importance of the canyon locations administered, operated, and financed by the triumvirate of the NPS, the Fred Harvey Company, and the Santa Fe Railroad. This geographical bias persists; the South Rim continues to be the most visited site at the Grand Canyon. Areas of the Greater Grand Canyon region, such as the Havasupai, the Northeast, and the West regions, that share many environmental and visual characteristics with the South Rim, are peripheral locations for visitor contact and concessionaire investment, effectively positioned as the "other" Grand Canyon (see Figure 1).

Curt Teich's postcards shaped popular environmental perceptions of the Grand Canyon's environment. The colorful, widely distributed, and accessible imagery created a visual argument that equated scenic beauty exclusively with rim-side overlooks and inner-canyon trails. Curt Teich Company's postcards also disregarded the vast diversity of wildlife at the Grand Canyon, instead favoring representations of only two animals: docile native deer and domestic mules. This visual strategy effectively declawed the canyon, stripping it of any threatening or unruly creatures such as predators, arachnids, feral mules, or reptiles.

The overall impact of Curt Teich Company's editorial actions and resulting visual representation of the Grand Canyon's environment reached beyond the canyon's rim. The postcards created a visual dialogue that shaped popular expectations and perceptions of the canyon's environment, geography, and visitor experiences. In the process, Curt Teich postcards have contributed to building an iconographic arc of the Grand Canyon, creating an evocative but highly edited view of nature at the canyon (Krim 2005).

#### NOTE

1. The formal name of the postcard manufacturer discussed in this article is the "Curt Teich Publishing Company." The first time the company is mentioned, it is noted by this full formal name. Subsequent discussions of the company refer to the shortened version of this name as the "Curt Teich Company."

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