

**Postcards and the Importance of Their Role in Arizona Around the Time of Statehood**  
**READING EXCERPT FOR STUDENTS**

The following story is designed to get students thinking about the role of the postcard as a form of communication. It also helps students develop an understanding of how communication was not instantaneous like it is today. There are comprehension questions at the end of the excerpt.

**Vocabulary**

Postcard-a personal way to send a message, postcards typically made from a thick piece of paper or thin cardboard. When mailed, it's common to write a brief message on one side along with the delivery address while the opposing side draws the eye to a pretty or interesting image.

Collectible-an item worth collecting and keeping safe. Items are of interest to the collector.

Images-a representation of a person or thing in art.

Historical resource-means any resource possessing historical, cultural, archaeological significance including structures, objects, associated with earlier people, cultures and human activities.

Authorized-having official permission or approval.

Communication-exchange of information or news. Sending or receiving information, such as using a phone or computer to exchange information.

Souvenir-a thing that is kept as a reminder of a person, place, or event.

Condition-the state of appearance of something. Does it still work that way it was designed to?

Rarity-the quality of being rare or having particular qualities or value.

Congress-our national legislative body which meets at the capitol in Washington D.C. to make decisions.

Legislation-preparing and enacting laws by a legislative body through the lawmaking process.

Telegraph-an apparatus for communicating at a distance by coded signals.

Privacy-the state of being free from being observed or disturbed by other people.

Sender-an individual, group, or organization who initiates the communication.

Recipient-the individual, group, or organization that receives messages sent by the sender.

Reliable-consistently good in quality or performance, able to be trusted.

Congress passed legislation on June 8, 1872 that authorized government production of postal cards. The concept of the individual postcard as we know it today was invented by Dr. Heinrich von Stephan in Prussia in 1865. Prussia is now known as Germany. Some historians recognize the value of postcards as historical resources. In 1861, John P. Charlton of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania copyrighted the postcard here in America. He then transferred the copyright to H.L. Lipman began producing and selling postcards.

Postcards serve many purposes in the past compared to today. Today they are collected while traveling or to send short messages about a place that you are visiting. In the past, one side of the postcard was left blank for a message and the other side for the address and stamp. Businesses used to put illustrations or messages on them for advertising. In 1873, the United States issued governmental penny postal cards. During the 1893 Columbian Exposition - Chicago World's Fair, picture postcards with images of the exposition became a popular travel souvenir. Over the decades, the practice of sending vacation postcards to friends and family evolved and continues to be popular.

Postcards are used to convey clear messages, ideas or communicate with other people in a short, eye-catching way. Another use for a postcard is as a souvenir. Around the time that Arizona became a state in 1912 there were few phones or internet. 1 in 10 households may have had a phone in Arizona. The best way to get a message to someone at that time was to use the telegraph. The telegraph was invented in the 1830s by Samuel Morse. The telegraph revolutionized long-distance communication.

Telegraphs work by transmitting electrical signals over a wire laid between stations. The message would be relayed station by station that allowed communication over vast distances for the first time in human history. It expanded business possibilities and expedited the work of professions like banking, lawyers, and hotel proprietors. The impact of the telegraph on the United States made communication between states easier. The speed of a telegraph message from the sender to the recipient

could be a matter of hours, not days or weeks, but the cost of sending a telegraph message was expensive. The cost was based on the number of words as well as the distance the message was going to have to travel. Telegraph messages tended to be short and concise.

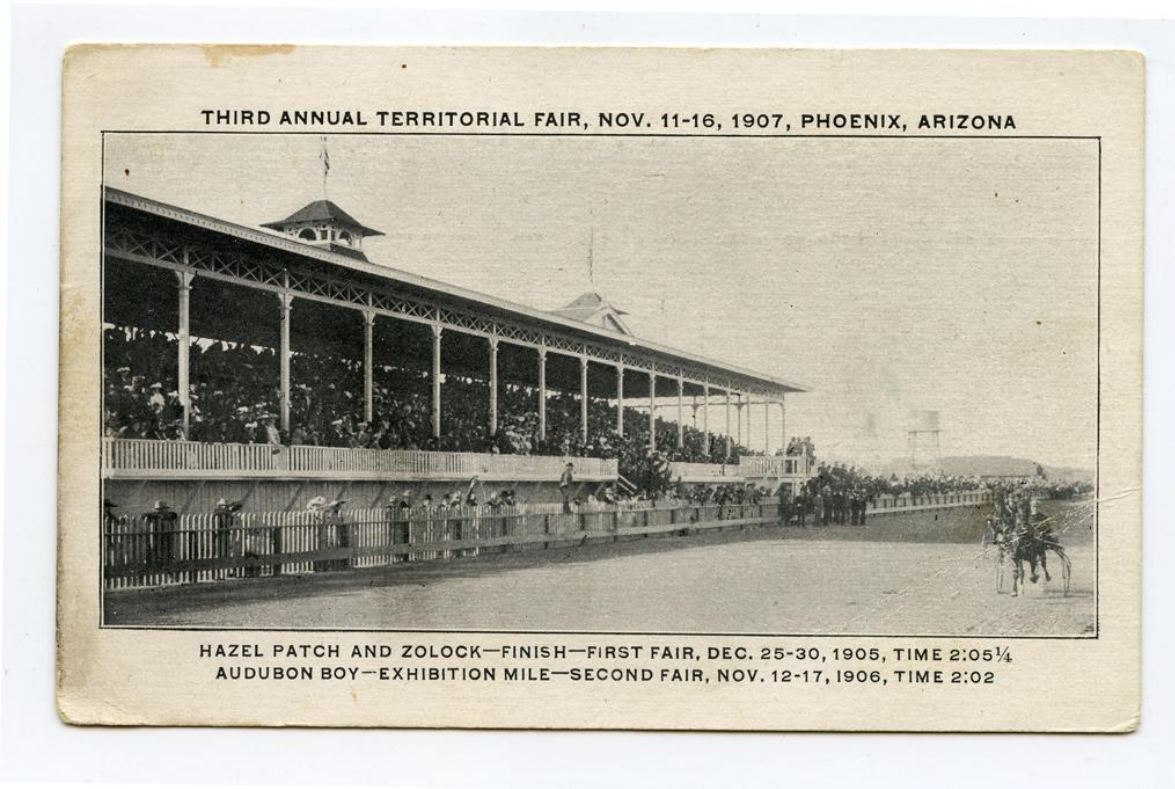
Postcards offered a cheaper version of communication to get a message to someone, although it was not as fast as using the telegraph. They cost 2 cents to send through the mail. The message was like a telegraph message because the limited space kept the message short, there was no privacy as anyone that handled it could read it. Like the telegraph, a postcard message usually passed through many hands between the sender and the receiver.

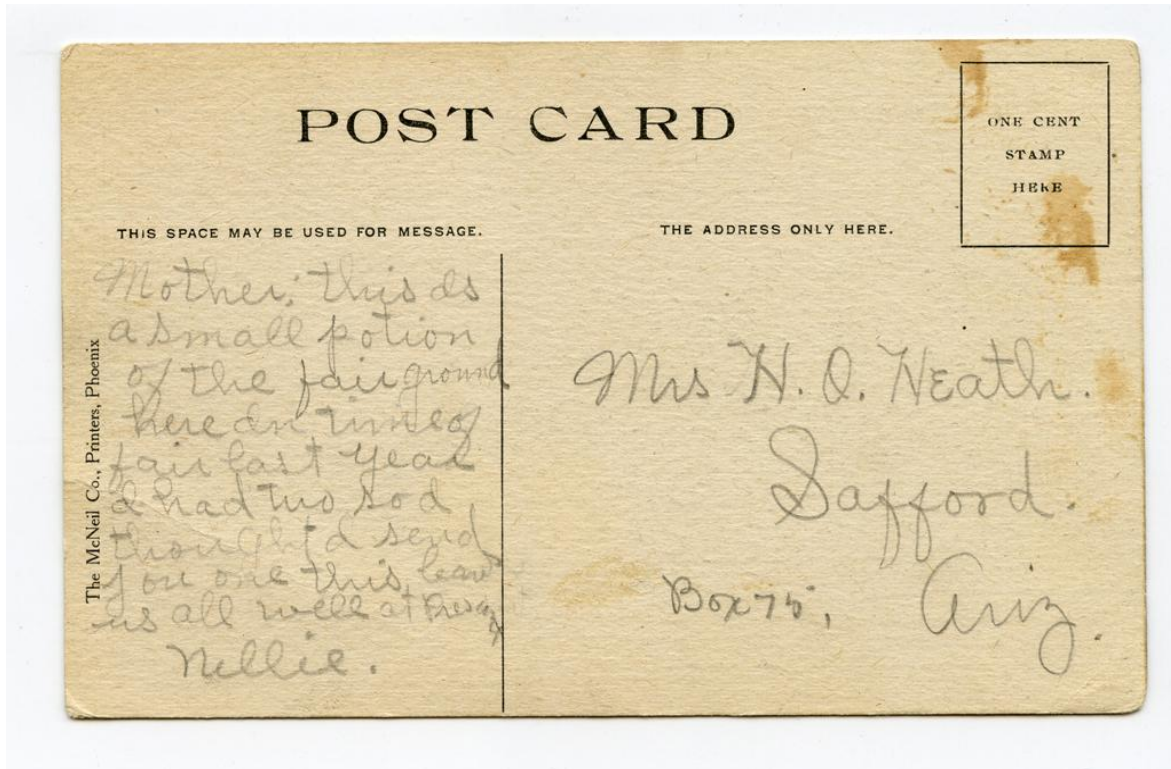
In the days before telephones were popular, affordable, and in everyone's homes a postcard was a cheap way for friends and family to keep in touch. Businesses could advertise their items or sales through a postcard. Children kept grandparents informed of their daily lives by writing them using a postcard. Sweethearts could profess their love for each other when they were apart.

In the late 1880s telephones and the telephone system began to link our country. The cost of a call was still high and there was not one phone system, but many so it was difficult to use and not always reliable. By the year 1900, only one in thirteen homes in the United States had access to a telephone. Postcards still proved to be the best mode of communication for most people at that time in Arizona.

Another factor in the rise of postcard popularity was that Americans were becoming more mobile and traveling more. In Arizona, people flocked to the growing new communities that were popping up around the state. There were business opportunities that brought young men and women to the area. They wanted to share their experiences with friends and family back home so sending a postcard was the popular and affordable way to keep in contact.

With the popularity of postcards a special stamp was introduced costing 1 cent. Postcards showed pictures on the front and messages and the recipients mailing address on the back. Here is an example: What do you know about this postcard using clues from the photo and text what does this postcard tell you?





This postcard is written in cursive. Can you decipher what is being said and by whom?

The postcards were kept and collected. Arizona's population grew 66% between 1900 and 1910 from 123,000 people to over 204,000.

## Estimates by County

| County               | 1910 Population | Estimated Postcards Sent |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Apache County        | 9,196           | 80,005                   |
| Cochise County       | 34,591          | 300,942                  |
| Coconino County      | 8,130           | 70,731                   |
| Gila County          | 16,348          | 142,228                  |
| Graham County        | 23,999          | 208,791                  |
| Maricopa County      | 34,488          | 300,046                  |
| Mohave County        | 3,773           | 32,825                   |
| Navajo County        | 11,471          | 99,798                   |
| Pima County          | 22,818          | 198,517                  |
| Pinal County         | 9,045           | 78,692                   |
| Santa Cruz County    | 6,766           | 58,864                   |
| Yavapai County       | 15,996          | 139,165                  |
| Yuma County          | 7,733           | 67,277                   |
| Arizona Totals       | 204,354         | 1,777,880                |
| United States Totals | 92,000,000      | 800,000,000              |

\*Data for Greenlee and La Paz Counties not available.



Here are some examples of postcards sent around the time that Arizona became a state.



At Home June 9-17

Dear friend,

Received your letter yesterday will answer maianad I wanted last night and again today, so I am too tired and sleepy to write. The weather is so hot and windy that it almost kills my face. You can see from this picture how hot it is. Gee! How I do wish I could get some of those nice cold beers I used to get in Fresno. It costs a dollar per pint here.

Ad ever your friend  
R.B.J.

146  
JUNE 14-17

POST CARD

U.S. POSTAGE  
ONE CENT

JUN 10 1917 7AM  
ARIZ

NAME AND ADDRESS HERE

Miss Maude Crawford,  
c/o S.J. L. & P. Co.,  
Fresno,  
Calif.

500

On February 14 Arizona will celebrate its statehood. Our state has many interesting people, things, communities and natural wonders. Using what you have learned about the State of Arizona, its people, its history and amazing facts you can create a postcard front that would tell someone who has never been here something great about our state. Use your creativity and imagination to draw your postcard. Your postcard may be selected to be sent to The Arizona Historical Society to be judged in a competition. All 3rd graders in the State of Arizona are invited to participate. If you are selected you could win your class a PIZZA Party! Also prizes will be awarded to the winners AND your postcard drawing will be made into a real postcard! Your teacher can access more information by going to <https://arizonahistoricalsociety.org/n> to access the contest rules. Good luck, let's show people how The Great State of Arizona looks through the eyes of you, an Arizona 3rd grader.