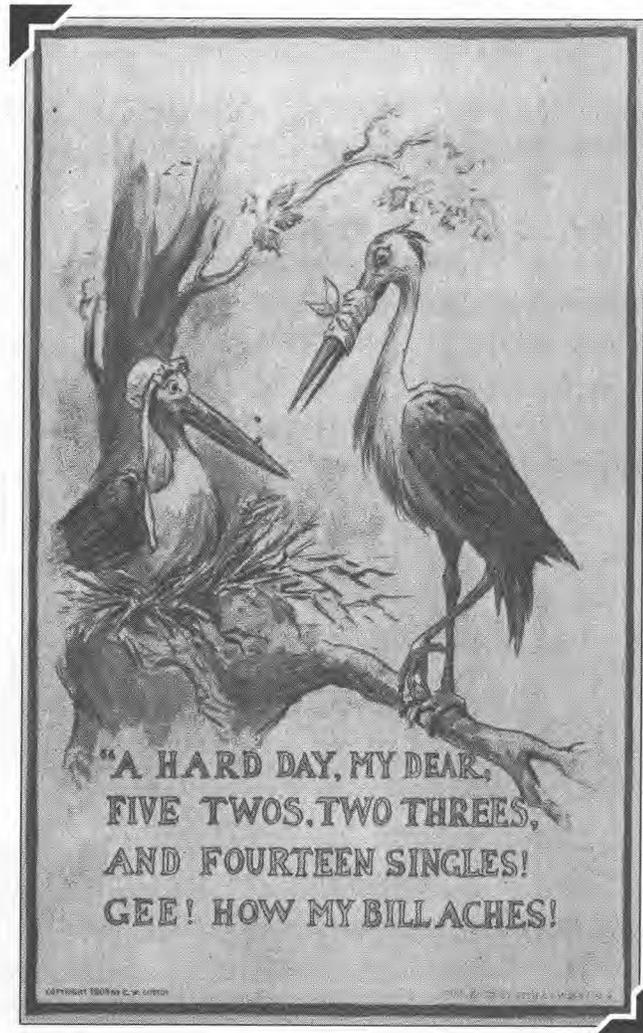

NUGGETS OF HISTORY

VOLUME 41 SPRING 2003 NUMBER 1

HUMOROUS VINTAGE POSTCARDS

By Mary Lou Yankaitis



HUMOROUS POSTCARD USED IN 1910.
From personal collection of Mary Lou Yankaitis

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This article was contributed by Mary Lou Yankaitis. Mary Lou is an avid postcard collector and one of the categories she collects is humorous postcards. It is interesting to see how humor has changed over the last century. Several of these cards date from the first two decades of the 20th century. Others date from the 1930s to the 1950s. There is a wide range of topics. Some of them would be considered in poor taste by today's standards, but bear in mind that the world was a very different place when they were used.

The author of this article, Mary Lou Liebich Yankaitis is a native of Rockford. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Rockford Historical Society, a veteran Board member of the Graham-Ginestra House and a member of the Rockford Writers' Guild. Her interest in history was stimulated by a course in Rockford history given by Jon Lundin and her friendship with Rockford Historian Lyle Baie. Mary Lou has seen many changes in our community and she admits she longs for the small-community, caring, sharing Rockford she once knew. The postcards are from Mary Lou's private collection.

WE NEED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

If you have a subject that you have researched, or an idea for an article that you would like to pursue, give me a call. I would like to encourage original research into some aspects of local history that have not been adequately pursued.

Do you live in a small town, or a rural township, or a neighborhood in the city? Write about its history. You might be surprised about what you find out if you research it. What about the company you worked for or the social club you belong to? History is all around us. It just takes a little digging to find out a lot about an area that interests you. Share your interest with the rest of us.

I can be reached at 885-1740.

Thomas Powers, Editor

HUMOROUS VINTAGE POSTCARDS

Old postcards, with their myriad subjects, reflect history, giving glimpses of the past. They were printed on everything from cardboard to linen to leather and even come in different sizes. Known even today, when it costs 23 cents to mail a postcard, as "Penny Postcards," they really originally cost two cents to mail. It was in 1898 that Congress decreed they could be mailed for a penny. This remained the price until mid-1917 when it became, once again, two cents. (And then, in 1919 once again a penny until 1952, 2 cents again. From there, onward and upward...10 cents in 1978, 15 cents in 1988, 19 cents in 1991, and up until today's 23 cents.)

Communication, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, relied heavily on the written word. (Even ballpoint pens, replacing ink pens, came much later.) This was to change, with Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone in 1876 (with the first real telephone message to his assistant, "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you.") It was four years later, on April 9, 1880 when telephone service first came to Rockford. But very few individuals had telephones until much later. Postcards not only were the favorite way for America's new immigrants to keep in touch with family left behind in Europe, but to say Hello to friends living in the same town. Delivery was expedited, of course, since mail was delivered twice a day every weekday and once on Saturdays.

Postcard collectors, today, usually specialize in certain subjects; humor, holidays, ladies by certain artists, trains, main streets, exaggeration, animals, schools, other public buildings, disasters, advertising cards, flowers, children, and countless other types. Many collectors specialize in postcards of their own hometown.

Concentrating solely on Humor cards, it is soon evident how different "humor" was in the beginning of the twentieth century. Some subjects, now taboo, or at least politically incorrect, then were evidently considered humorous. Throughout the cards, however, there is a gentleness, a wry sense of humor with the knowledge that people would not take offense and realize the cards wished no disrespect but merely sought to entertain.

Courtship features in many cards, with one card portraying a very skinny man with his arm (almost, as far as it would reach) around a very large woman. The caption is "I must try to get around."

Another card shows a scene at a beach with a man bumping into another large lady. "As I floated, I closed my eyes, and wished that you were here; And then I thought I hit a barge, But it was just her rear!"

In one of a series of stork cards, a stork is standing outside a church where a bride and groom are entering. "Business is going to boom!" Another in the series shows a stork, with long beak bandaged, telling another stork, sitting on a nest, "A hard day, my dear, five twos, two threes, and fourteen singles! Gee! How my bill aches!"

One very simple card does not even have a picture; simply an ornate "W" and border with the message, "We feed the baby garlic so we can find him in the dark."

One card shows a very large, Milwaukee burgher, beer stein in hand, being served by a pretty waitress. "A hot bird, a pretty maid and a cold stein, Makes life worth living, all of the time."

A rather sad father is depicted holding two small babies. "Two little darlings! The die is cast. Happy they now are,--how long will it last?"

One card, in three sections, contains the three acts of courtship, marriage, and parenthood: "Grins....Wins...Twins."

A little Dutch boy tells his girl, "But for you would I be a bachelors."

One poor, obviously hungover man is clinging precariously to a tree. "I know where that lobster came from and I remember drinking that Manhattan, but I can't just place the dog."

A similar scenario shows three passengers on a cruise ship hanging over the rail: "Everything going out--nothing coming in."

Ethnic humor is represented on a card (with an actual swatch of cotton on the card) "Greetings from 'De Lan' ob Cott'n"

Another shows a little Black boy and girl, "Can you TIE this one? They say things are pickin' up all over the country!"

A poor little dachshund, with his tail caught in a door as a little boy closes it, simply says, "Stung."

There even was a card for lazy writers-all you had to do was check off what you wanted to say.

One card has an irate wife and her husband, arms upraised as a masked robber holds a gun on them, with the wife saying, "DO SOMETHING!" and the husband replying, "I THINK I HAVE."

A card with a pelican is shown with the ocean in the background: "Greetings from California. A Gorgeous Bird is the Pelican, Who's Beak can Hold more than his Bellican. He can put in his Beak, Food enough for a week. But I'll be D---D if I can see how in Hellican."

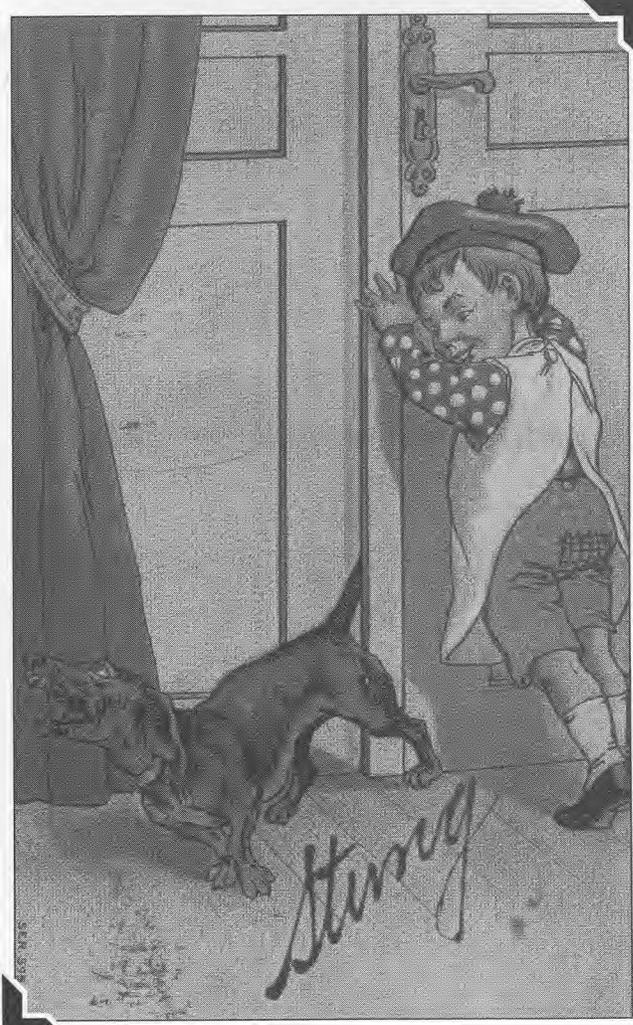
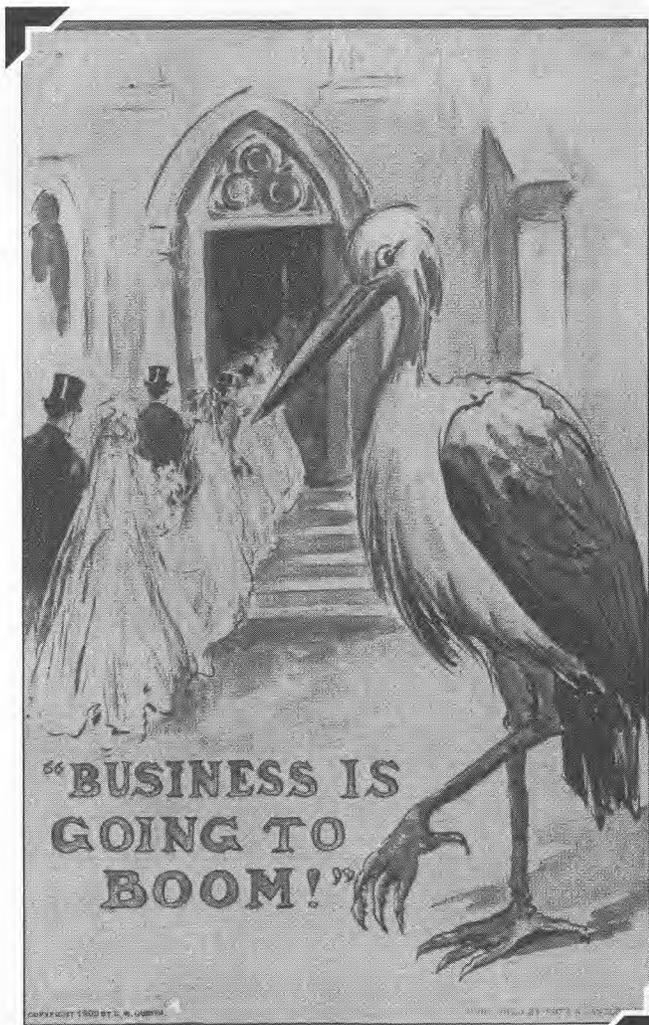
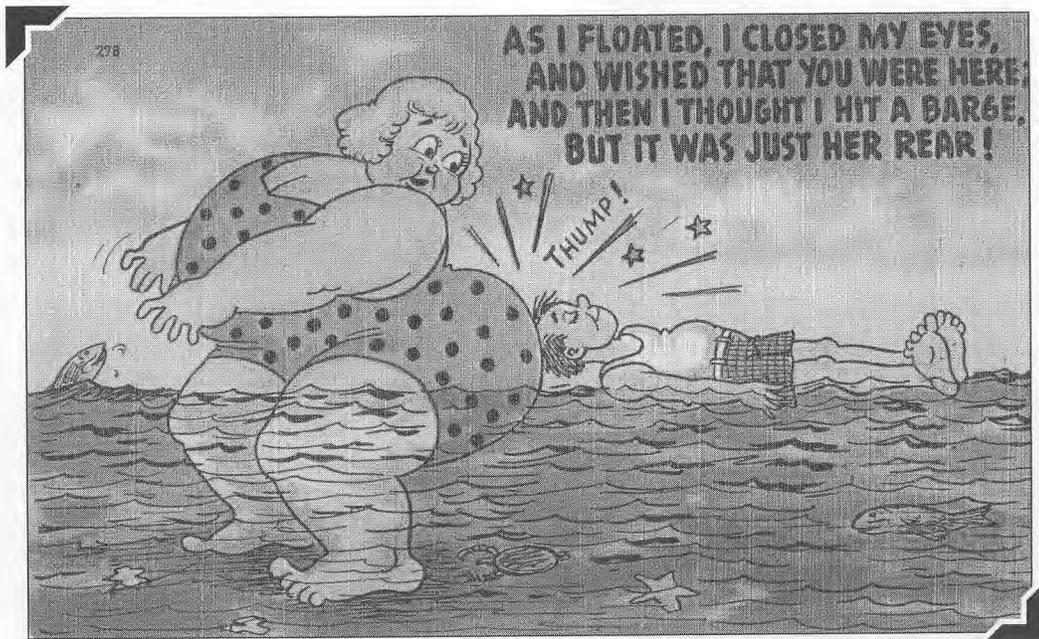
Another card shows a cow with a calf nursing, a woman standing at the cow's head, evidently speaking into its ear and a man "listening" at its tail. "Hello, Central! Give me Main 3534. Is this Dow. B. Lewis, 96 Dearborn Street, Chicago?" and the calf saying, "Ring Off--the Line is busy."

A privy (an outdoor toilet, for those unfamiliar with this unique – and essential structure in days gone by,) has this: "I cannot boast of my Aroma--Nor do I issue a Diploma. But it's a lot of Fuddle-duddy That there's a Better Place to Study." (It might be noted that before indoor plumbing, no house was without a privy!)

One card just has to be mentioned: a white cat sitting in a wicker basket. No caption, but when you press on the card, it squeaks. Yes, after more than fifty years, it still squeaks.

The last card is of a large black cat. This is not a funny card, Neither is it a view--It's just a spot of REAL GOOD LUCK With my best wishes, Too!"





HOME WAS NEVER LIKE THIS.

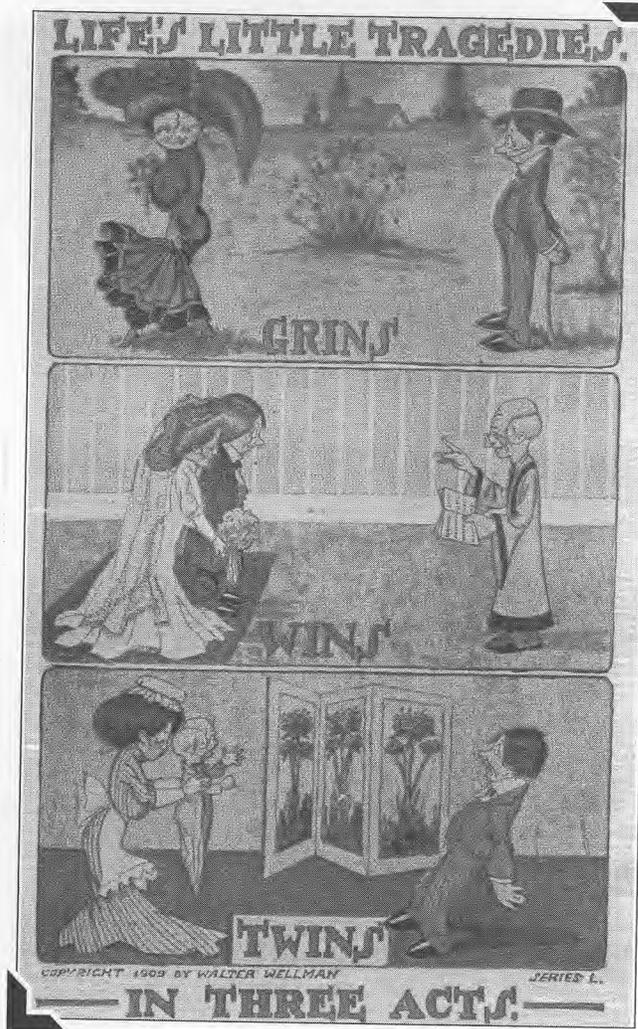


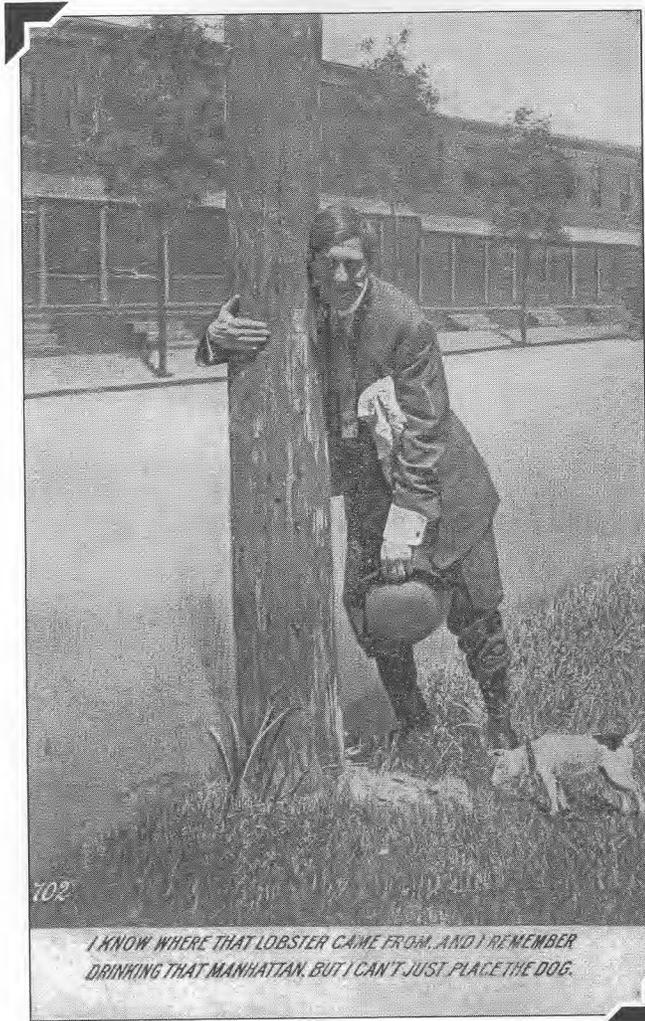
*A hot bird, a pretty maid and a cold stein,
Makes Life worth living, all of the time.*

*Little darlings! the lid is cast,
Happy they now are, — how long will it last?*



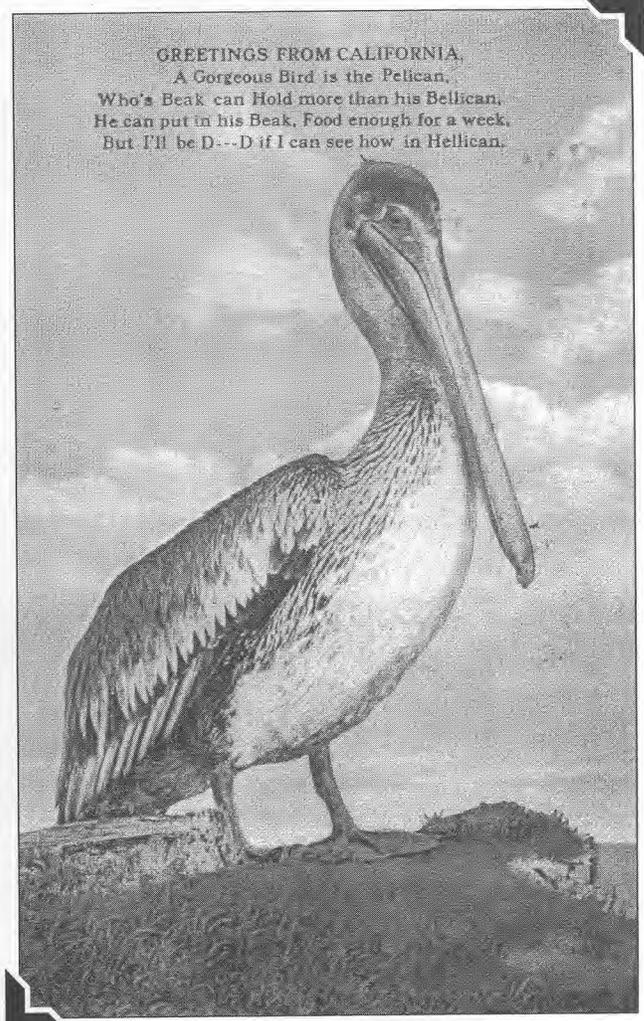
WE feed the baby
garlic so we can
find him in the dark.





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I KNOW WHERE THAT LOBSTER CAME FROM, AND I REMEMBER DRINKING THAT MANHATTAN, BUT I CAN'T JUST PLACE THE DOG.



GREETINGS FROM CALIFORNIA,
 A Gorgeous Bird is the Pelican.
 Who's Beak can Hold more than his Bellican.
 He can put in his Beak, Food enough for a week.
 But I'll be D--D if I can see how in Hellican.



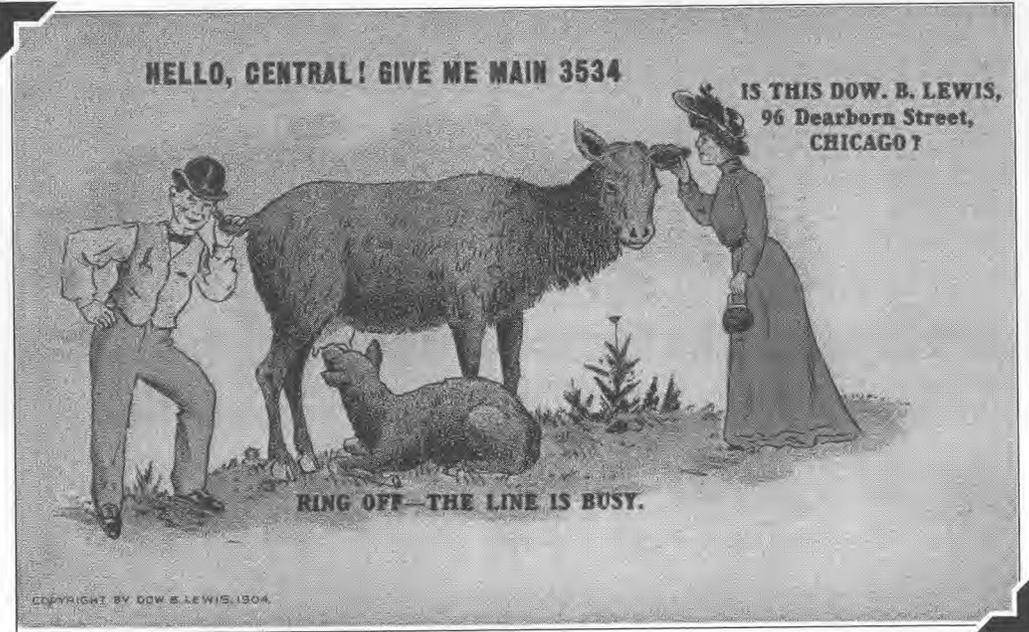
Patsy

Jim Crow

Greetings from "De Lan' ob Cott'n"

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 Plo-R.

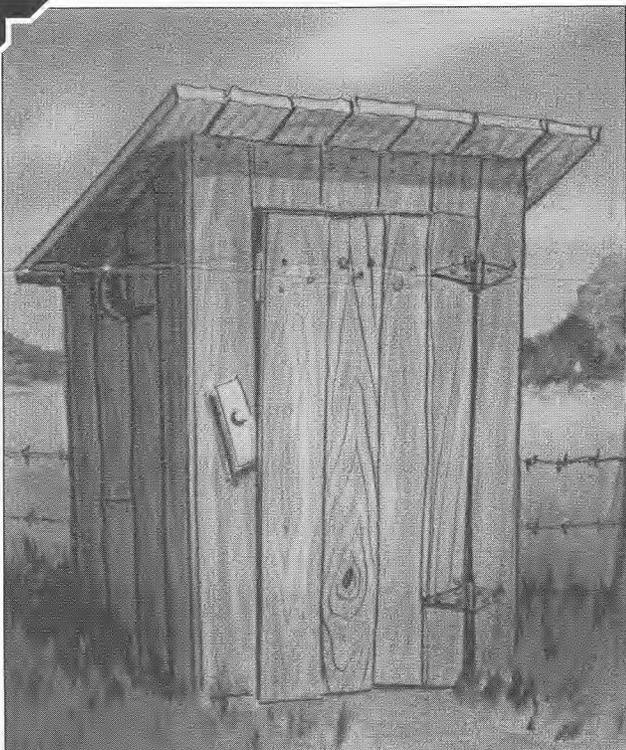
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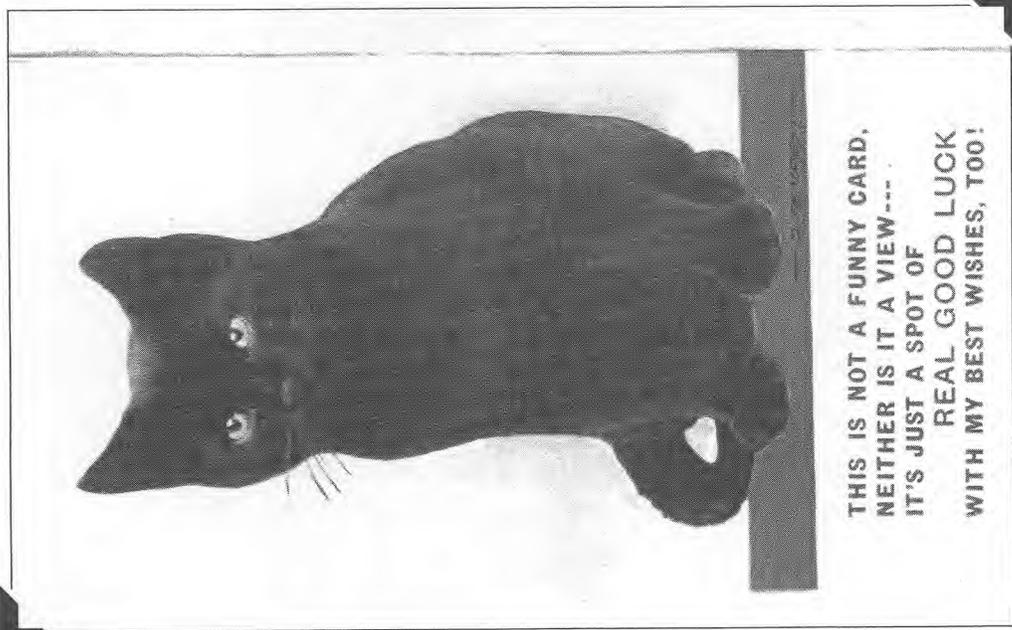
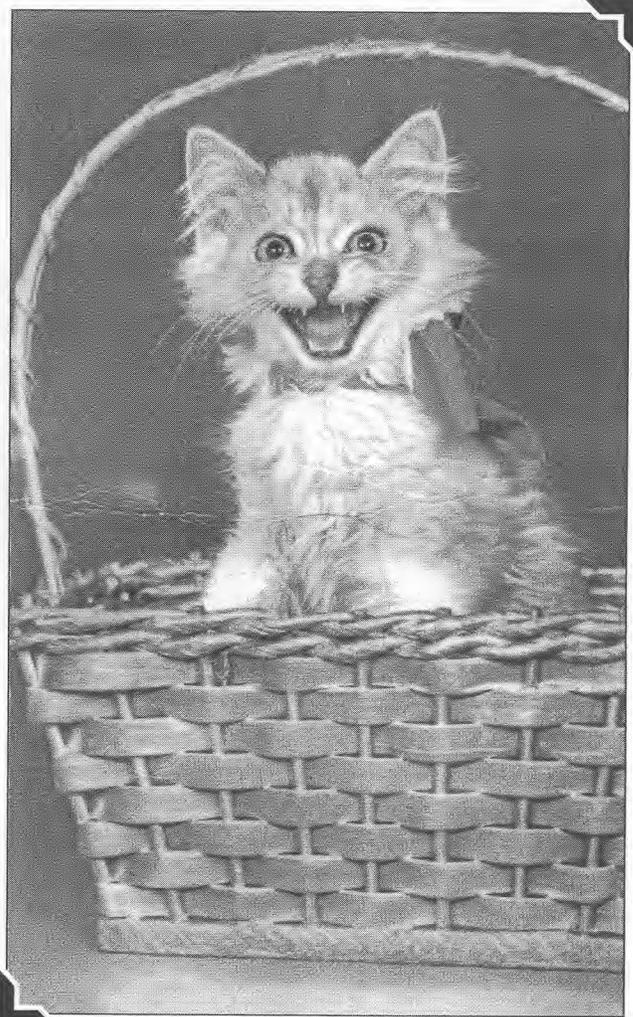
How I wish you were with me here!

TIME SAVERS—EASY CORRESPONDENCE CARD

PLACE _____		DATE _____	
DEAR _____			
HOW ARE YOU? I AM		HERE IT IS	
ENJOYING		HOT	COLD
LONESOME		DELIGHTFUL	
BROKE	HAPPY	BONE DRY	WET
REDUCING		PEOPLE HERE ARE	
GETTING FAT		CATTY	DUMB
HERE I ENJOY		POLITE	
GOLFING		ACCOMMODATING	
BATHING	FISHING	INTERESTING	
SIGHTSEEING		BUSINESS IS	
THE MOONSHINE		GOOD	PLUNK
I NEED		I DON'T FISH MUCH	
MONEY	A DRINK	BUT LANDED	
LOVING	SLEEP	A BEAUTY	
SYMPATHY	YOU	IN A PRETTY MESS	
I SPEND EVENINGS		SOME GAME ONES	
TALKING BUSINESS		BOTTLE BASS	
MAKING WHOOPEE		MY NEXT STOP IS	
STEPPING OUT		EXPECT ME HOME	
PETTING	DANCING		
SPOONING			
THINKING OF YOU		YOURS	
WITH THE BOYS		SINCERELY	
WITH THE GIRLS		LOVINGLY	



I cannot boast of my Aroma-
Nor do I issue a Diploma
But it's a lot of Fuddle-duddy
That there's a Better Place to Study



THIS IS NOT A FUNNY CARD,
NEITHER IS IT A VIEW---
IT'S JUST A SPOT OF
REAL GOOD LUCK
WITH MY BEST WISHES, TOO!

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Statement of Purpose: To enlighten and to educate people about their place of residence, to entertain with stories and fact, and to enrich lives regarding what is available to enjoy, to treasure and to honor.

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