

**Carson City Mint Postcards:
“Wish You Were Here”
By Hal V. Dunn
#CM-0005**

In the previous issue of *Curry's Chronicle* my article discussed Carson City Mint documents and letters. This article is an extension of collecting paper from that mint – postcards.

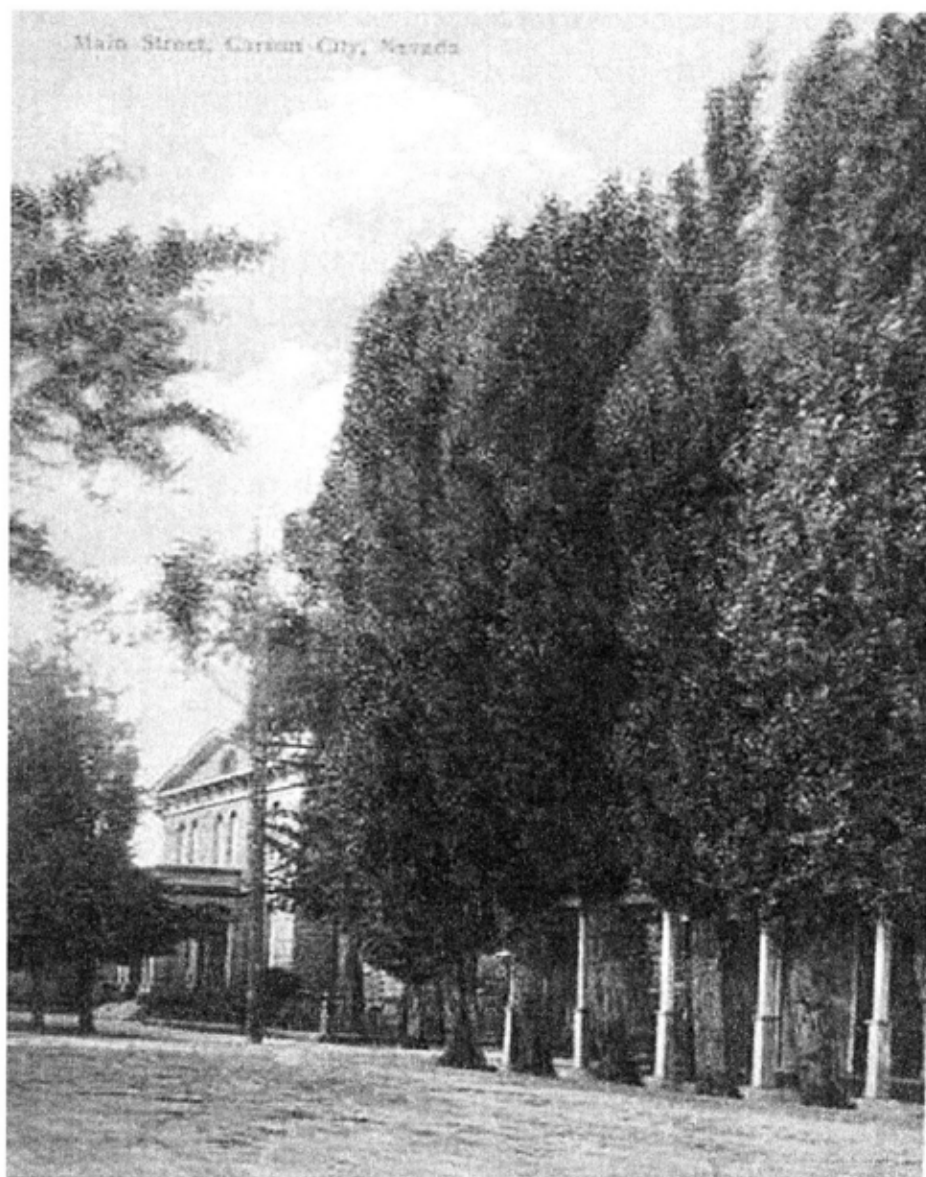
The Carson City Mint was a popular subject for the producers of early *real photo* and printed postcards. A conservative estimate would be at least 75, and perhaps as many as 100 varieties. Many are merely a slight change in the obverse inscription or use of different paper or processes during subsequent printings. Other changes are “zooming in” or “zooming out” on the mint building. They provide a photographic record as the building aged: When trees on the grounds grew to maturity and reflected the change of seasons, and when they were later removed; when weeds grew on the property; when a “For Sale” sign appeared on this great treasure of the west that the Federal



Dated 1875, this is the earliest known photographic view of the Carson City Mint reproduced as a “real photo” postcard. This card was published c.1906-08.

government wished to be rid of; and finally the early years of the Nevada State Museum. Although most show only the mint, there are a number of highly desirable *real photo* and printed postcards that include the mint in a much larger view of the immediate area.

Picture postcards first appeared in Europe in 1869 and in the United States a few years later. The earliest postcards were printed. In 1902 postcard production took a dramatic turn when Eastman Kodak intro-



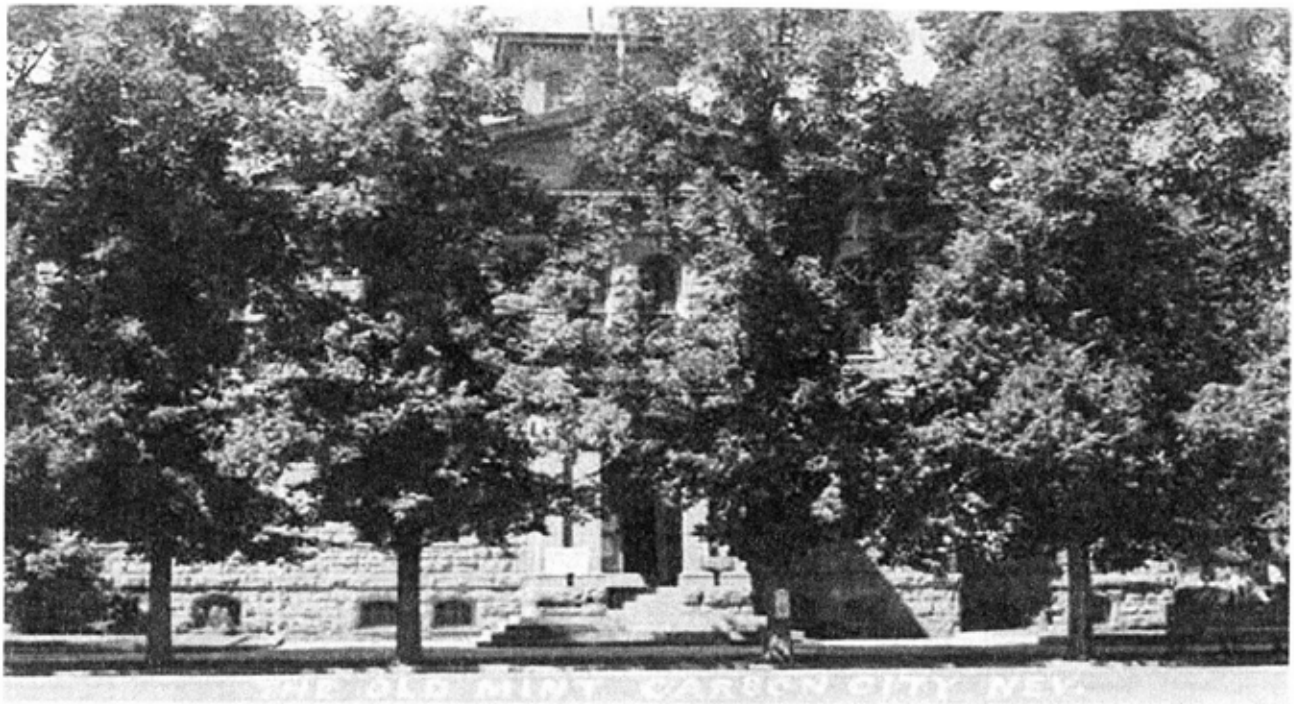
Vertical postcards of the Carson City Mint are rarely encountered. This card imported by C.E. Wheelock for Mrs. K.A. Raftice is of German origin. The trees to the right obscure the Toscano Saloon. This photograph has been used for both real photo and printed postcards with a horizontal format and a variety of inscriptions.

duced a “postcard” camera and photographic paper cut to postcard size with printed postal legends on the reverse. Anyone could become a *real photo* postcard producer. Later other photographic paper producers supplied postcard stock. The postcard craze had begun; travelers sent cards home to family and friends, often with only the brief message, “wish you were here.”

Commercial photographers took high quality photographs reproduced as *real photo* or printed postcards. Generally their photographs will appear on a run of several hundred cards. Frashers, Inc., advertising as the providers of “scenic photos of the west,” were the leaders in supplying the public with *real photo* postcards.

Itinerant photographers wandered the country taking photographs and producing a few dozen postcards for local merchants before moving on. These photographers rarely stayed the winter in locations with harsh conditions, preferring to head south to warmer climates. Hence, the rarity of Carson City winter scenes.

Amateur photographers generally limited their photography to their own town. Like their commercial and itinerant counterparts they produced many interesting postcards, sometimes no more than a dozen, and on occasion fewer. The amateur photographers were often the first - and perhaps the only photographers - on the scene to record a planned event, a horrible conflagration or some other disaster. A *real photo* postcard, produced by an amateur or itinerant photographer may provide the only photographic record of some short-lived mining camp. Perhaps the place was nothing more than a Tent Town; or one with a few hastily constructed false front buildings on a dusty street that speculators were passing off as a future metropolis. Because any photograph, including those not intended for sale, could be printed on postcard stock, many *real photo* postcards are extremely rare or unique.



Mint for Sale.

This is the scene encountered by Judge Clark J. Guild on a Sunday morning in 1938. The sign to the right of the front door proclaims the facility to be a "U.S. Mint." The larger sign to the left is a "For Sale" sign. It was this latter sign that caused the judge to begin his crusade to save the mint for the citizens of Nevada.

In Carson City, Mrs. K.A. Raftice on the Arlington Block, The Emporium, and A.A. Stafford, were the principal sellers of Carson City Mint postcards and other views of the city. These sellers contracted with Richard Behrendt of San Francisco for high quality color printed postcards printed in Germany. They also sold under their respective names, as well as cards from other suppliers; some identified, some anonymous.

Whether early Carson City Mint postcards are collected in depth, or just one or two are added to a collection of material from this great mint, they capture wonderful visual remembrances of times past. The value of these cards range from a few dollars for the majority, to in excess of two hundred dollars for some cards seldom encountered. As with everything, have fun with your collecting interests. Enjoy!

Illustrated postcards are from the author's collection.