

THE 800 SERIES – MITCHELL'S PRE EARTHQUAKE VIEWS OF NEVADA

by Robert Stoldal

As the Comstock silver bonanza of 1860s Nevada faded into history, prospectors were combing the state for the next mother lode. They found it on the southwest edge of Nevada in 1901, and by 1904 mining camps like Tonopah and Goldfield were boom towns on the cusp of becoming cities. Less than 30 miles apart, the two towns would become the largest population center in the state. With millions in funding, primarily from San Francisco banks and the sale of stock, money was to be made there, even from the lowly penny postcard. From printers to wholesalers, postcard producers were quick to cash in on the boom, among them was San Francisco based printer-publisher, Edward H. Mitchell.

In late December of 1905, Mitchell sent his "expert photographer" Harvey Lear Christiance to Nevada. Up to that time, with the exception of two postcards from the extreme southern tip of the state, Mitchell had all but ignored Nevada. Those two cards, #20, *Scene in the Meadow Valley Wash, Nevada, Salt Lake Route*, and #22, *Caliente, Nevada, Salt Lake Route*, helped mark the opening of the new railroad line running from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles through the new town of Las Vegas. Source photographs were taken by pioneer photographer, Charles R. Savage of Utah; and both postcards were on sale by the time Mitchell sent his staffer to Nevada. Christiance, according to Mitchell's announcement, was on his way "to visit all the new mining camps of Nevada, in order to get choice photographs of mining scenes throughout that country." Railroads, like postcard producers, were making their way to the mining towns; and to get there, Christiance boarded the new "Tonopah Express" in Oakland, climbed over the Sierra to Reno, and arrived in southern Nevada 24 hours later. From Tonopah another train would take him 26 miles south into Goldfield and a meeting with P.E. Larson, the town's leading photographer and postcard merchant. Larson had come to Goldfield in 1905 from Dawson City, Yukon Territory where he had worked under his Swedish name, Per Edward Larss.

In addition to Larson, several other photographers were already producing and selling their own photographs and postcards. Christiance likely met with two other pioneer photographers, Herbert T. Shaw and Emory Willard Smith, both based in Tonopah. The work of all three men shows up in Mitchell's 800 series. On his way back to San Fran-



804 – FIRST OF THE NEVADA SERIES

cisco, Christiance gathered postcards and photographs of Carson City, Virginia City, and Reno, as well as one particular Native American postcard that would cause Mitchell headaches. In late January 1906, the public was informed Christiance was back in San Francisco "with about 150 splendid mining scenes which will be reproduced in colors on fancy

postcards," and that Mitchell was "booking advance orders for these cards."

A story in the *American Stationer* detailed Mitchell's operation in early 1906 as doing "a very extensive fancy postcard trade, having nearly a thousand Pacific Coast subjects alone on fancy postals. Since the first of the year he has added a full floor to his establishment, making an increase of half his previous floor space." At the same time, Mitchell reported he had added a "department to turn out tinsel postal cards." He believed "the fad will last long enough to warrant this new outlay in machinery." Mitchell's San Francisco business was then located at 144 Union Square Avenue (now Maiden Lane).

Of the 150 photographs Christiance brought back from Nevada, 35 were selected for postcards. More than half were from Tonopah and Goldfield. Tens of thousands of the Nevada postcards were printed in February of 1906. With all of his increased production, by March 3rd Mitchell was reported to have "two forces at work, running the machinery night and day." Based on his comments at the end of the first quarter of 1906, no less than 5000 of each of the 35 Nevada postcards were produced. On March 24, Mitchell was quoted, "we anticipate an unusually good year. Our business has been nothing short of phenomenal." He added, "we have refused all orders for postcards for less than five thousand of one kind in color against one thousand last year."

By mid-month, at least 175,000 postcards in the 800 series were headed to Nevada, and it is possible that even more Nevada postcards were printed in late March. Mitchell commented, "We have been running 10,000 of a subject and will soon start to run 20,000... the color postcard has come to stay, and is not a mere fad. The history of the pictorial card shows this plainly. It will eventually take the place of the ordinary government postal."

Three weeks later, on Wednesday, April 18, 1906, with the Mitchell press working at top speed, the cataclysmic earthquake and fire hit San Francisco. Mitchell reported,

“Our entire plant was destroyed...Most firms, including ourselves, have saved their books, and our first necessities will be ready money to enable us to rebuild our business individually, and our beloved city collectively. We trust that you will not consider it amiss on our part to suggest that the best contribution to our needs would be the prompt remittance of all amounts due.” Christiance was quickly sent to New York, and orders were placed for new printing equipment. In late May, Mitchell announced, “A complete outfit of new and modern machinery is on its way. By the time it arrives we shall have new buildings constructed on our own ground, and built to suit the peculiar requirements of our particular line of work.” Wasting no time, Mitchell would start producing postcards in a temporary structure ten weeks after the earthquake.

It is likely that most, if not all, the 150 Nevada photographs Christiance purchased, took himself, or “borrowed” were destroyed on April 18. Mitchell acknowledged as much saying, “We shall sincerely appreciate the cooperation of our customers in renewing our line of postcards.” But, in order to do that, he asked customers to “send us sample sets of the subjects we have published of their cities and vicinities.”

One of the pre-quake 800 series of Nevada views that Mitchell would not get an order for was #847, *Piute Indian Papooses, Nevada*. The image used for that postcard had been “borrowed” from well known Reno commercial photographer Fred P. Dann. Dann had already issued his own postcard of the two Indian children when Mitchell’s version hit the Nevada market. A month after the earthquake, Dann went public with his story: “The papoose picture is the best seller I have.” He wanted Mitchell to pull all the postcards of the stolen image and “make restitution.” It is not known what legal action, if any, Dann took or if Mitchell paid him for the use of his photo, but unlike most of the 800 series, Mitchell did not re-issue 847.

A year later, an interview with E. H. Mitchell revealed, “The firm’s presses were started July 1, a trifle over two months after the fire. They have been run day and night since, with the results that out of 1,000 subjects carried in colored postcards before, about 700 have been republished.”

Known Nevada 800 series postcard views account for only six of the 700. Those images, with the new UN3 backs, were ordered by P.E. Larson in Goldfield. While five of the cards are of the same topics and numbers, Larson sent new photographs for all but one. Over the next decade, as the lights faded on Tonopah and Goldfield, E. H. Mitchell would focus his attention on Reno. When the Post Office Department changed the rules to allow messages on the back of postcards in 1907, several of the 800 series wound up with Mitchell’s T1 and T2 divided backs.

Under his own name, Mitchell also published a series of

sepia postcards of Reno. The same cards—using the same numbers—were also printed by Mitchell for the California Sales Company. Mitchell also printed a third sepia set of Reno cards for the Rand Brothers of Oakland, California. This series focused on educational institutions, from elementary schools to the University of Nevada. Mitchell went on to publish the Reno 5000 series in 1910, with 29 known borderless postcards.

There is likely a thirtieth, an unnumbered introductory card for the series. Of the 29 cards, two, 5028 and 5032, used the same photograph to represent day and night scenes. Two other images were previously issued by Mitchell—#5030, *Group of Piute Indian Women, Reno, Nevada*, is also seen on Mitchell 2906, and the image on 5031, *Piute Papooses, Reno, Nevada*, is on card 2907.

The image Mitchell used for cards 5031 and 2907 was taken by Nevada photographer Esther L. Linton (1866-1954). It is not known if Mitchell ‘borrowed’ this image as well, or if he purchased the rights from Linton. He did, however, change the location of the little natives to “Reno.” The Linton image is one of a series she took while living in Goldfield, and identified herself as the photographer when she published her own postcards.

It appears the Reno 5000 series starts with 5002, however, there is a Mitchell card with the same DH1 back as the others in the series, titled “Greeting from Reno Nevada.” The hand drawn image, is of a bridge across a river, likely to represent the Truckee River and the Virginia Street Bridge. On the lower right is a baby holding a document reading “Decree.” The full hand lettered text reads, “Greetings from Reno Nevada, the land of the decree and the home of the free.” The signature in the lower right corner is that of Nevada Wilson, a well known artist born in Tuscarora, NV and teaching art in Reno at the time the card went into production. She later moved to California for a career of teaching and painting flowers and desert scenes.

There are 23 other Nevada views scattered through Mitchell’s restart of his numbering system in the divided back era. The majority in this group, from card number 75 to 3300, are of Reno and Carson City.

Of the estimated 193 Nevada views Mitchell printed, his initial foray into Nevada in late 1905 stands out as the high point for several reasons—from the quality of the printing to the rarity of the views. Despite turning the brown tones of the desert into lush green grass and creating cloudless turquoise skies, the visual detail in the postcards printed in early 1906 have depth and a natural feel to the image. These pre-quake Nevada views freeze time in the life of Goldfield and Tonopah with images that are not to be found elsewhere. It is clear from comparing cards printed before and after the quake that Mitchell was using different presses, and the Mitchell team was still learning how to fine tune them for those early runs on UN3 backs, but

another reason for reduced quality may be that copy negatives were made from surviving pre-quake cards.

Conclusions and Calculations

Two key discoveries emerged from review of the Nevada 800 series of Mitchell postcards.

- All 35 Nevada postcards in the 800 series were printed with UN1a backs shortly before the April 1906 earthquake and fire.
- The 800 series of Nevada views that were reissued with divided T2 backs were printed before those with T1 backs. This conclusion is based in part on postmarks. The earliest postmark seen on a T1 Nevada 800 series is May 16, 1908. The earliest postmark seen on a T2 Nevada is April 17, 1907.

A second reason to regard T2 as the earlier back is title transition. As a general rule, the earlier undivided back cards have longer titles, while the T1 titles with the same image are much shorter. T2 titles are closer in length to undivided back titles. For example: UN1 title for 812 in two lines, *The House That Made Tonopah Famous / Built of 10,000 Beer Bottles, Tonopah, Nevada*; and likewise the T2 title for 812 is *Bottle House Built of 10,000 Beer Bottles, Tonopah, Nevada*; the T1 title for 812, however, reads simply, *The Bottle House, Tonopah, Nevada*.

The third reason centers on the battle U.S. postcard producers were having with foreign competitors, particularly lower cost manufacturers in Germany. In 1908 San Francisco printers including Mitchell called on the federal government to impose “on all imported picture postal cards a duty of ¼ cent per card.” Mitchell signed a letter sent to Congress stating, “there is no good reason why every card used in America should not be manufactured here, and that can be done if the American manufacturer is given reasonable protection.” To prove his position, Mitchell added “Printed in the United States” to his postcards, on what we call the T1 back, and inserted American flags into designs of two of his Nevada 800 series: #813 The Can House, and #845 State Capital. Based on the combined weight of these three observations, I propose that Mitchell’s divided T2 back preceded use of the T1 back.

Other determinations from the Nevada 800 series:

- Only one of the original 35 images used in the first printings was reprinted after 1906 with an undivided back. The card, #810 Combination Mine, has a UN3 back.
- Only five of the 35 postcards in the original series were reissued with the original photograph in some form: #810 with a UN3 undivided back; and four others with divided backs: 813, 815, 816 and 849.
- Only six of the 35 cards were produced after the 1906 earthquake with UN3 backs. Those six are all from the Goldfield-Larson series. Of the six, #810 retained the same, yet significantly retouched image. Existing numbers were reused for the other five postcards, with four displaying

the same subject but using different source photographs: 806, 807, 809, 811. Number 808, however, transitioned from picturing the Florence Mine to the Mohawk Mines in Goldfield.

Ignoring comic cards, and counting only scenic views, the estimated total number of Mitchell Nevada postcards stands at 193. This number can be further broken down to identify the number of views in various categories. Mitchell printed the same image for different customers with different and sometimes incorrect titles.

- 2 Salt Lake Route views by C.R. Savage.
- 35 different views for first run of the Nevada 800 series.
- 6 new images added to the Nevada 800 series.
- 30 images for the Reno 5000 series.
- 47 Reno sepia views.
- 73 additional views of Nevada with divided backs.

Comparisons

What follows are the most recent notes on postcards in the Nevada 800 series, numbered 804 to 849. The term *face* will mean the image side, and *back* will be the address side. Titles are stated as they are on the postcards, in most instances all upper case. Unless noted, all postcards were printed in color.

804 MAIN STREET, GOLDFIELD NEVADA.

Photographer – attributed to P.E. Larson. (See page 9.) 804 UN1a is a view of Columbia Street, a wide dirt road, in the fall of 1905, with Columbia Mountain in the distance. A Mitchell artist added a U.S. flag to the pole atop an unidentified two-story building at center left of the postcard. This is one of the cards in the 800 series not reproduced following the 1906 earthquake.

805 FIRE COMPANY, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.



Photographer – P.E. Larson.

805 UN1a shows the Goldfield Volunteer Fire Department hose and ladder cart standing in front of the State Bank and Trust Company building. This image was not reproduced after the earthquake, and no other Nevada image was issued as 805.

806 NIXON BLOCK, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.



Photographer – attributed to P.E.Larson

The earlier version, 806 UN1a, pictures the three-story stone building built by U.S. Senator George S. Nixon and Nevada banker George Wingfield that opened in September 1905. The photograph was taken shortly after the building opened and shows the entire building with about 20 men standing near or walking towards the building. The second version, 806 UN3, titled “NIXON BLOCK AND MINING AND STOCK EXCHANGE, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA,” shows three-quarters of the building with a crowd of about ninety people. A man is sitting on the window ledge of the third floor, and a woman is looking out next to him. A telephone pole is on the right side of the building. The photograph used for 806 UN3 was made by Larson who used the same photo for his own undivided back black-and-white postcard. No printer is listed on 806 UN3, but Larson’s negative No. 105 is on the lower right corner.

Based on Larson’s photograph several changes were made before the Mitchell card was printed. Among them, a phone pole on the left covering part of the “Del Monte” sign was removed.

807 GENERAL VIEW OF GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.

Photographer – P.E. Larson

Taken from Malpais Mesa, this view shows Goldfield’s main street, buildings and tents spread out over a green colored desert with volcanically formed Columbia Mountain looming in the background. Before ordering postcards from Mitchell in late 1905, Larson had used American News Company in NYC to supply his cards (manufactured in Germany). Larson ordered more than a dozen different views in both black-and-white and color from ANC, including the same 807 image ordered from Mitchell. Of these, color card 6331 is titled, “Bird’s Eye View. Goldfield, Nev.” The black and white card, 1405, has a hyphen in “Bird’s-Eye.” Mitchell’s art department changed the desert landscape from brown to lawn green. When he made his post-quake order, Larson sent along a new photograph similar to the first but with a more populous Goldfield. For this UN3, the mountain is centered in

the background, and green is the dominant color of the ground cover. The same image, with the same colors and title was issued with a T2 divided back.

808 FLORENCE MINE, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.



Photographer – attributed to P.E. Larson

Two different subjects were used for Mitchell undivided back postcards numbered 808. The earlier photograph, for UN1a, shows the Florence Mine (Larson negative #414). In traditional Larson style, 22 people are posed throughout the image, including 17 men, four women and one young boy. Several of them are standing in front of hundreds of sacks of gold ore. The photo is the left half of a two-panel panorama of the mine. The right side was never released as a postcard.

Notes from an article written by Stewart Luce, “The Florence Mine, King of the Hill”: Charlie Taylor arrived in what is now Goldfield in 1902 and staked a claim on what he called the Florence. On October 20, 1903, Goldfield became an official mining district. Over the next year thousands of mining claims were staked, and by 1905, Goldfield was moving from a boom camp to a boom town. People wanted to buy shares in the most valuable mines. The Combination, Florence, Jumbo, Red Top, January and Mohawk were names on everyone’s lips. ... Tom Lockhart at that time was working a claim in Tonopah. He hit paydirt, sold it and moved to Goldfield where he met Taylor. The pair eventually gained control of the Florence and pulled millions from the mine.”

Today, the claim, having been passed down and worked by family and friends, is controlled by Jon Aurich who would like to see the Florence become a national treasure. (<http://www.goldfieldhistoricalsociety.com/featured-story-TheFlorenceMine.html>)

The second 808 postcard, with UN3 back, is a completely different view titled “MOHAWK MINES, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.” Across the center of this image are eight railroad cars; seven are connected; the eighth is sitting on a spur at left. Gold discovered in the Mohawk Mine generated much excitement and boom in the area in 1906.

Two 808 T1 cards, color and black-and-white, feature

the same image as 808 UN3 except the rail car and hills on the left side are cropped, and the clouds in the UN3 version are gone on both T1 reissues.

In 1907, D.C. Heath & Company used 808 UN3 Mohawk Mines as a sales tool. A Massachusetts text book publisher, Heath printed on the back of the cards, "We are pleased to announce that the State of Nevada has just adopted the following text-books for exclusive use for the next four years." Several elementary school book titles were listed. One example of the card was mailed from Berkeley, California on July 2, 1907. Another Larson photograph taken the same day, but with fewer of the same people posed, was used for Dennison News Co. postcard #6 titled, *The Florence Mine, Goldfield, Nevada*. The 808 UN3 image was also used for H.G. Zimmerman & Co.'s "ZIM" black-and-white printed postcard #A921D10, titled *Mohawk Mines, Goldfield, Nev.*

809 RED TOP MINE, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.



Photographer – P. E. Larson

Mitchell used two photographs taken within minutes of each other to produce different undivided back versions of 809. The earlier, 809 UN1a, shows 12 men, with one standing on top of hundred sacks of ore, holding his hat aloft.

The second photograph, used for the post-quake UN3 version, has the same dozen men in their same positions, but the man standing on the bags at right center is now reclined on the sacks holding his hat. Standing in UN1a, the man casts a shadow on the miner to the left. In UN3, the man on the left is now in the sun.

Another major change is on the UN1a version the ore sacks are a natural light brown, while in the post-quake version they are bright pink. "Stand-up guy" or "Laying down on the job" which was more popular? Which photo was taken first? Did Larson tell the miner to stand up or lay down? Mitchell's is the only known postcard with the miner standing up. Larson's stand up negative would have been lost in the 1906 quake, and the heavily retouched image on UN3 suggests the image was copied from an existing Larson card. P.E. Larson's laying down version, titled "Red Top Mine, Goldfield Nev., Larson Photo No. 488."

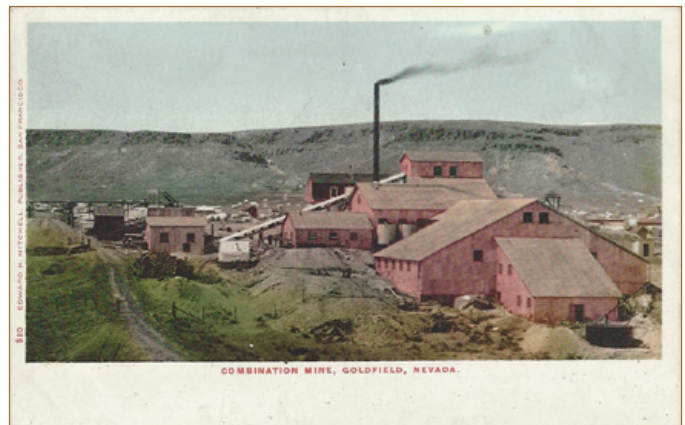


LARSON ORIGINAL UN3 "RECLINING MAN" PHOTO

was used by the photographer as part of his own Nevada postcard series printed by the Denver Engraving Company. He also used the 'laying down' image when he ordered a series of thirty views of Goldfield from the Newman Post Card Company of Los Angeles. These divided back cards were printed in Germany and went on sale in the fall of 1907. This view titled "Red top mine, Goldfield, Nev." is number 134/13.

Also noted, a post-quake card on UN3 back was produced with glitter on the mine frame, building and sacks of ore.

810 COMBINATION MINE, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.



Photographer – attributed to P. E. Larson.

The same image and title were used on both undivided back versions of 810. The major variations are colors. The ground on the UN1a is green, while in the second undivided version it is a more natural brown. The sides of the mine buildings on UN1a are pink, the roofs are light brown, and the sky is cloudless. On the UN3 version the buildings are a more realistic gray metal color, the roofs are red-brown, and clouds are visible across the horizon.

811 A NATIVE OF THE DESERT- THE JOSHUA PALM.

Photographer – P. E. Larson

Postcard 811 UN1a shows a deep green palm with a nar-

row trunk base and green scrub brush covering the desert floor. A different photograph was used for 811 UN3, printed after the quake.

The title also changed for the UN3 version, “A NATIVE OF THE AMERICAN DESERT—THE JOSHUA PALM, “ and the trunk is three times the size of UN1a. While it is likely Larson took the photograph for UN1a, it is confirmed that he took the photograph appearing on the UN3 back. He first used the latter image when he ordered postcards from the American News Company in New York—#6344, a “Poly Chrome” card printed in Germany. Interestingly, the ANC postcard, titled “The Yucca Palm on American Desert,” is of a winter scene with the tree and the ground covered with snow. On all versions printed by Mitchell, including UN3, T2, and DV3, backs, the white snow is converted to brown sand, and the snow on the tree is made to look like the brown sand sitting behind.

Larson used the 811 image on several cards including his own leather version, “THE YUCCA PALM ON THE AMERICAN DESERT. P. E. LARSON PHOTO, GOLDFIELD, NEVADA.” Larson also included the photograph on 811 UN3 in the series of undivided back cards printed by the Denver Engraving Company, titled “THE YUCCA PALM ON AMERICAN DESERT” with the credit line “LARSON PHO. GOLDFIELD, NEV. NO. 534.” Joshua Palm v. Yucca Palm: All yuccas are not Joshua trees, but I suspect that all Joshua trees are yuccas. With Goldfield on the northern edge of the Mojave, the ‘tree’ shown could be *Yucca schidigera*, commonly known as the Mojave yucca.

812 “THE HOUSE THAT MADE TONOPAH FAMOUS.” BUILT OF 10,000 BEER BOTTLES, TONOPAH, NEVADA.



Photographer – unknown, possibly Emory Willard Smith

Several postcards were produced in the early days of Tonopah that featured the 320 sq. ft. house constructed of bottles by William F. Peck in October 1902. The original house had two windows facing downtown, one on either side of the front door. When it was built, light green bottles were used for the front and west wall, while dark amber bottles were used for the back and east wall. The

structure was dismantled for its bottles in the mid-1960s. The photograph for the first Mitchell printing was taken in late 1905 after Peck and his family had left.

812 UN1a is the only undivided back of the Tonopah bottle house produced by Mitchell. His T1 and T2 versions carry a different photograph that shows two dogs on the left side of the house. Adding dogs to a scene was an informal trademark of long time Tonopah photographer Emory W. Smith. The newer photo also reveals the screen doors have been removed, and a tall smoke stack is visible on the right side of the roof.

The photograph with dogs was also used on Dennison News Company postcard #1 *Bottle House, Tonopah, Nevada. Built of 10,000 Beer Bottles*. An earlier version of the bottle house, showing what it looked like in 1903 is found on a “ZIM” postcard #A921B10 published by H.G. Zimmerman & Co. of Chicago. This black-and-white card shows Peck’s two children, Wesley, age 3, and Mary, 7 standing in front, but locates the dwelling in Goldfield!

813 THE CAN HOUSE (BUILT OF COAL OIL CANS), TONOPAH, NEVADA.

Photographer – Herbert T. Shaw

The can house, along with the bottle house and the barrel house are three of Tonopah’s popular historic postcards. The builder of the can house is unknown.

The photo used for 813 was made by Herbert T. Shaw who operated the Florentine Art Studio in the very early days of Tonopah. Shaw, in addition to his work as a photographer, was president of the Tonopah branch of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Whether Shaw saw the can house merely as an interesting image or use it to portray the living conditions of miners, the photograph was one of his best sellers. Shaw’s real photo postcard displays the same image used by Mitchell, as well as for Newman Post Card Co. #A.J.16. Mitchell printed the image over the years in a variety of different colors and backs. 813 UN1a was followed by T1 and T2 backs with significant design changes. A small U.S. flag above the door in the Shaw photograph is gone in UN1a, but reappears in the divided back versions. Other notable changes: The parenthetical phrase is dropped from the divided back titles. A wooden pole on the left side of UN1a and T2 is missing in T1. The front window panes change from gray on UN1a to green on the divided backs. The Mitchell artists improved detail of the man’s clothing in the T2 version. Clear skies inhabit UN1a and T1, but clouds have formed in T2.

814 THE BARREL HOUSE, TONOPAH, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown, possibly Emory Willard Smith

This innovative home was built, according to stories passed down from the early days of Tonopah, by a person identified as “Mr. Dyke” who arrived in 1901 when



the town was no more than a camp. Dyke had no tent, no building materials and little money, but nevertheless was fed up with communal living. He found a spot next to a ledge at the north end of town, and started building a hut-like structure from discarded wooden barrels and packing crates. The first course of barrels were filled with rocks and soil, others were stacked on top and likewise filled with dirt. With a few other scavenged odds and ends like flattened oil tins covering the door, Dyke formed a rustic enclosure—his new home.

The UN1a version shows the barrel house surrounded by green grass and small patches of snow. A small smokestack clears the roof.

Divided back versions of 814 were produced with a different photo that shows a dog by the door, and behind it barrels showing signs of stress. The dog was “Shep,” owned by Tonopah photographer, E. W. Smith. Placed for perspective or as a trademark, the Border Collie appears in many of Smith’s images. Although the second photograph was taken from the same angle as UN1a, it is a tighter image with the smokestack and peak of Mt. Oddie eliminated from the background. More naturally colored rocks and ground cover surround the dwelling. One divided back version was produced in black-and-white collotype on a T1 back.

Zimmerman published the image in black-and-white, erroneously titling the card, *House made of Barrels, Goldfield, Nev.*

815 NYE COUNTY COURT HOUSE, TONOPAH, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown

Mitchell’s 815 features a photograph of the Nye County courthouse shortly after it was completed in August 1905. Until February 1905 the county seat was located in Belmont, but following lobbying by the citizens of Tonopah, Governor John Sparks signed the law that transferred county government to their town. Money was raised, a site was selected on Gold Hill, and designs were submitted. J. C. Robertson, described as “one of the best architects on the Pacific coast” was awarded the contract. Work began

in May, and the sturdy structure was completed in the fall of 1905. Ron James, in his 1994 “Temples of Justice, County Court Houses of Nevada,” describes the building as having “a moderately pitched pyramidal roof...crowned by a dome and eaves that include a classical, molded cornice dressed with dentils. Clustered columns support round arches making this the only county courthouse in Nevada with substantial Romanesque elements.”

Mitchell printed two different postcards with this title, first with a UN1a back, later with a T2 back. While each features a different photograph, they were taken within a short time of each other and before the building was entirely finished. A pole for electric power and telephone lines was installed on the right side of the building in August 1905, several weeks after the photos were taken. Note the jail wing extending from the back of the courthouse is still a single story, not expanded to two-stories until 1906.

815 T2 shows a flag flying from the dome while UN1a has no flag. More of the undeveloped courthouse grounds can be seen in UN1a; clouds were added on the T2 as well as terra cotta color to the tile roof and the dome.

816 MIZPAH SHAFT OF THE TONOPAH MINING COMPANY, TONOPAH, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown

The same photograph was used for undivided UN1a and divided T2 version backs, but a new title for T2 reads, “MINING SHAFT, TONOPAH MINING CO., TONOPAH, NEVADA.” Large cumulus clouds were added for the divided back. Comparison of details such as window and ground color will show variations.

817 TONOPAH EXTENSION MINE, TONOPAH NEVADA. (THE SCHWAB-MCKANE SYNDICATE’S PROPERTY.)

Photographer – unknown

Different photos were used for the UN1a and T2 versions, and for the T2 back, the parenthesized statement in the title was deleted. The two photos of the mining works were taken from the same general angle, but composition and coloring are vastly different.

818 MONTANA-TONOPAH MINE, TONOPAH, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown

While the title is the same on both undivided and divided back cards, different photographs were used. The views of the mine are similar, but it appears the divided back version was made from an earlier photo. For example, there are more buildings in the UN1a, plus there are two tall smoke stacks and an ore car trestle and tracks not seen on the later T2. The T2 version shows men working on the tracks, while the earlier UN1a shows the rails in place. Both cards utilize some green ink to freshen the ground

cover; and like Mitchell's other divided back versions, clouds have been added to the sky.

**819 TONOPAH & GOLDFIELD R.R. CO. DEPOT,
TONOPAH, NEVADA.**



Photographer – unknown

This Tonopah depot was built in 1904, and by November 1905 shipments from Goldfield could be made through Tonopah to San Francisco via SP's new "Tonopah Express." The depot building survived until 1960 when an arsonist burned it to the ground in less than thirty minutes.

Only the pre-quake image of the depot was printed by Mitchell on UN1a. Number, 819 was used again, however, for a different view on T1 and T2 divided backs titled "GENERAL VIEW OF TONOPAH, NEVADA." The later photo was taken from a nearby hill looking down at the town with mines in the background. Half a dozen gray roofs on the T2 become pinkish on the T1 printing.

Images of Reno in the Nevada 800 series

Photographer for the six postcards in the Reno series cards is unconfirmed, but is likely William Cann who took the photograph used for #825.

**820 VIEW ON COMMERCIAL ROW,
RENO, NEVADA. (UN1a)**

**821 OVERLAND TRAIN AT SOUTHERN
PACIFIC DEPOT, RENO, NEVADA. (UN1a)**

822 PUBLIC LIBRARY, RENO, NEVADA.

The building pictured on the postcard was Reno's Carnegie Library which opened June 4, 1904, the state's first public library, made possible by a grant of \$15,000 from industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Located across Virginia Street from the Riverside Hotel, the growing collection was relocated to the Nevada State Building in 1930 and the Carnegie structure was demolished the following year, replaced by a new post office building.

The UN1a printing is the only version of #822. Mitchell did picture the south façade of the building in his scenic view #139 titled "Masonic Temple and Public Library, Reno, Nevada" on T1, T2 and T3 backs.

823 ELK'S HOME, RENO, NEVADA.

The building at 50 North Sierra Street was dedicated on April 23, 1904. It burned on February 5, 1957, victim of a disastrous downtown gas explosion.

Based on the leafless trees the UN1a photo was made in late 1904 or 1905. With Mitchell artists' help, 13 red and white stripes, and 22 of 45 stars on the large flag flying atop the building are visible. A different view of the Elks Home appears on a T2 back titled "ELKS' HOME, RENO, NEVADA."

**824 VIRGINIA STREET, LOOKING NORTH,
RENO, NEVADA.**

The view on the UN1a postcard shows the Gray, Reid, Wright Co. department store on the northwest corner of First and Virginia Streets at left.

**825 NEVADA STATE UNIVERSITY,
RENO, NEVADA.**

Photographer – William Cann

Mitchell printed the same image with the same title, on a UN1a back but without the "825," for the Cann Drug Company in Reno. Wm. Cann's credit line along with Mitchell's is on the left edge of the postcard.

At first glance it appears different photographs were used, but the 825 UN1a has far fewer bushes and trees than the Cann version, plus it shows a U.S. flag fully flying, while Cann's flag pole has only a wisp of a flag. Mitchell's artist was clearly at work on the 825 version, deleting some trees and adding another small one off to the right. The university pond is visible in Cann's rendition, but disappears under green ground cover in Mitchell's. The road approaching the school in Cann's card becomes more of a walking path in 825. The 825 UN1a is one of only a few postcards that refer to the college as "Nevada State University." Interestingly, the unnumbered Cann image was later published as Mitchell 142 on both T1 and T2 backs, titled "UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO, NEVADA."

Images of Virginia City in the Nevada 800 series

**826 VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA, AND
MT. DAVIDSON.**

Photographer – unknown

This UN1a view shows the California Pan Mill in right foreground. The stamp mill, owned by the Bonanza Firm of Mackay, Fair, Flood and O'Brien, was the largest ever built on the Comstock.

827 OPHIR MINE, VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown

This UN1a is a full frame view of the Ophir's shaft house. The same photograph and title were used for Mitchell #106 on T2 back that features the addition of clouds and less desert greenery.

828 WARD SHAFT, VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown. (UN1a)

Same view of the slight gambrel-roofed shaft house was printed on a T2 back and given the number 98.

829 C. & C. SHAFT, CON. CAL. & VIRGINIA MINE, VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown.

The UN1a view of the California & Consolidated Virginia shaft house was reissued as Mitchell 97 on a T2 back and titled with the transposed, “CONSOLIDATED CAL. & VIRGINIA SHAFT, VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA.” A U.S. flag was added to the main building, clouds in the sky, and more smoke issuing from one of the five stacks.

One example of 829 UN1a has been seen overprinted “Comstock Golden Mining Jubilee, July 2, 3, 4, ‘06” above the buildings.

830 “POGONIP” (LAND FOG), VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA.

Photographer – possibly Walter X. Osborn

The 830 UN1a image was not reissued by Mitchell. A sketchy reproduction, however, bearing the same title was published by Richard Behrendt of San Francisco for Harry P. Beck of Virginia City. The divided back postcard was numbered 841, printed and handcolored in Germany.

840 CAVE ROCK, LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA

Photographer – Raper J. Waters

This vertical image on UN1a shows the northern side of a huge rock formation, skirted by a road supported by stonework and a wooden trestle. The view shows an outcropping just below the road known as “The Lady of the Lake,” which in silhouette looks like a woman wearing a hat. The image was created by photographer R.J. Waters circa 1880 when he

lived in Gold Hill, Nevada; and in his *Lake Tahoe Series* he titles the photograph “Cave Rock.” It is unfortunate that Mitchell’s postcard indicates the attraction is in California when in fact it sits on the eastern shore in the state of Nevada. And other views by Mitchell—648, 1818 and 2524 stubbornly perpetuated the same geographic error in each title. When a tunnel was bored through Cave Rock in 1931, the cliff road was closed.

845 STATE CAPITOL, CARSON CITY, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown

The photograph used for 845 UN1a shows the upper levels of the state capitol, with the ground floor of the building engulfed in a sea of green trees. A U.S. flag flies from a pole atop the cupola against a cloudless sky. A different photo was used for T1 and T2 versions. Still surrounded by greenery, the artist applied a brownish color to some of the trees to convey an autumnal look. For the divided back images, no flag has been hoisted over the dome on T2 backs, but is clearly flying on T1. Spots on the T1 flag may have been an attempt to improve shadowing.

846 PIUTE INDIANS, NEVADA.

Photographer – unknown

846 UN1a is a posed photo of two Native Americans playing cards. The man on the left, with a smile on his face, is holding six cards in one hand. His friend on the right is looking down at his own two hands with a look on his face like, “what happened to my cards?” as his hands are empty. Did the photographer pose them this way, or did Mitchell’s artist manipulate the humorous touch?

Number 846 was used again for a T2 back titled, “STATE ORPHANS’ HOME, CARSON CITY, NEVADA.”

847 PIUTE INDIAN PAPOOSES, NEVADA.

◀ MITCHELL 847 DANN 3868 Δ

Photographer – Fred P. Dann

The image used for 847 UN1a was registered by Reno photographer Dann as a 1906 copyright and illegally used by Mitchell. When Mitchell’s cards went on sale in Nevada, Dann was shocked. He had not been asked nor did he authorize the use of his image that featured two children in cradleboards. Dann had published his photo as a postcard titled “Piute Papooses in Nevada,” and in May 1906 he stated to the *Reno Evening Gazette*, “The papoose picture is the best seller I have and my business has been seriously damaged by its duplication. I can’t understand the unfair methods of the Mitchell people. My pictures were copyrighted and the word ‘copyright’ appears plainly upon the Indian picture which they appropriated...I not only intend to make them stop all their sales and recall the

pictures they have sent out but will compel them to make restitution.”

The earthquake hit San Francisco not long after the Nevada 800 series went on sale. It is not known if Dann followed up on his threat or if Mitchell pulled the cards from retail outlets. Fred Dann did continue to sell his postcard of the two Indian children. Known examples bear the number 3868, printed in Germany for the publisher M. Rieder of Los Angeles.

848 FIRST HOUSE BUILT IN NEVADA, NEAR CARSON CITY

Photographer – unknown

The photographic image used by Mitchell for his UN1a printing was popular with many other postcard publishers during the 1906-10 period. The picture of the weathered dwelling was printed in Austria, by T. Schwidernoch; published by Richard Behrendt of San Francisco as #1366 for “Mrs. K. A. Raftice, Arlington Block, Carson City, Nevada;” and by Newman Post Card Company of Los Angeles as number 133/19. An unattributed photo postcard was also released.

The house was built in the 1851 Mormon settlement known as Genoa, pronounced “juh-NO-ah,” 12 miles down river from a trading post that ten years later became the state capital. On June 28, 1910, half the town was destroyed by fire, including the old house and a piano. The *Reno Evening Gazette* reported, “In this house is a piano which was brought over the mountains from California in an old stage and is the first piano ever brought into this state.”

849 TRUCKEE RIVER AT RENO, NEVADA.

Photographer unconfirmed, possibly William Cann

849 UN1a was not re-released until 1907 when it was printed under the same title on divided backs. For the T1 version, the two men in the row boat and the homes on the bluff appear closer to the viewer since the image was cropped and enlarged. On the UN1a and T2, ten trees are seen on the bluff at extreme left. In the improved version only one tree of that group is visible, and more color has been added to the houses on the bluff. This is yet another example suggesting T2 divided backs preceded appearance of the T1.

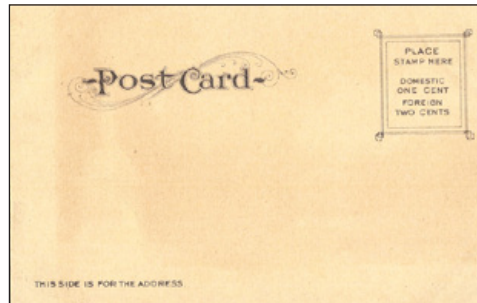
Contributor: FRANK STERNAD

MITCHELL BACKS

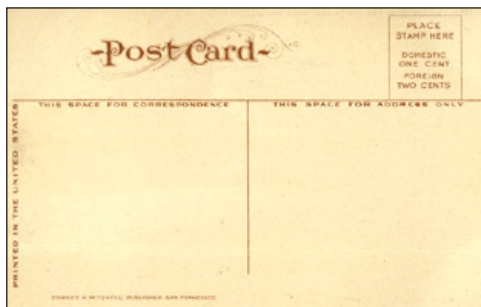


UN1a

Undivided Back Era – Before 1907



UN3



T1

Divided Back Era – After 1907



T2

AUTHOR'S REQUEST

Bob asks that we write to him with corrections, comments, and cards for sale not shown here. He is an eager collector of all things Nevada. When you write add a note of congratulations and gratitude for this *magnum opus*.

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RESEARCH SOURCES

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