

WHO WAS THEODOR KREH?

Many years ago a collector friend from southern Germany gave me a handful of early US postcards he thought I would find interesting. Most showing views from the bigger cities on the East Coast, all addressed to friends and relatives over here, correspondence in German language.

The address sides showing imprints like **POSTAL CARD**, **SOUVENIR CARD**, **PRIVATE MAILING CARD**, all done in distinctive decorated design. Postally used between 1898 to about 1903. Most bearing publisher imprints, names I wasn't familiar with: eg. Detroit Photographic Company, Edw. H. Mitchell, Arthur Livingstone, Franz Huld, E.P. Branning and also a C. F. Th. Kreh, New York. Many of the views done by letterpress but others also by lithographic processes including chromolithography. Rarely any information on the printers found. Cards showing not the later typical country of origin imprints.

When looking for more information on early US cards I was recommended to obtain a copy of Jeff Burdick's book "Pioneer Postcards". This turned out to be difficult back then, and I put the cards aside.

Not long ago, I got hold of the illustrated Washington view with publisher rubberstamp imprint of **Theodor Kreh**, New York and I became interested in the topic again. Unfortunately there was only little information on this publisher found on the internet. Unusual family name, likely with German roots. Found in Hestia and farther south. What was this Washington view (quality lithography) good for addressed to Miss Helene Krage in Quedlinburg? Guess she did not enjoy the rubberstamp imprint on picture side much.

Kreh is found mentioned occasionally in old issues of "Deltiology" (published/edited by James L. Lowe, USA – my copies donated by Bob Conrich) as early publisher, to have published some 200 views at least. Believe Th. Kreh was also wholesaler in ppc's. Earliest business mention is the copyright 1897 imprint actually. Then I discovered an interesting advert in "**Die Illustrierte Postarte**", published in Vienna. Photocopies of this publication kindly shared by Omar Khan, USA. The illustrated advert appeared in issue 7 (July), 1898.

"*American Picture Postcards. 50 different, in colour and collotype. Special novelty: views from the American Civil War. I offer these single addressed for 2 Marks per set of 10 cards. Orders please directly (to NY) and remittance to be transferred to Lahrer Creditbank/Baden state. Wholesale lists available. Th. Kreh.*"

Amerikanische Ansichtskarten.
50 verschiedene, colorirt und Lichtdruck. Besondere Neuheit: Ansichten aus dem amerikanischen Krieg. Ich offerire solche einzeln zu-adressirt für Mk. 2.- pro Satz à 10 Stück. Ordres erbitte hieher; Geldbeiträge gleichzeitig an Lahrer Creditbank, Lehr in Baden. Engrosliste steht zu Diensten.
Th. Kreh, New York 231 E. 13th.

That might be the answer what Miss Helene received. Cards addressed to order from abroad. Something quite popular with postcards collectors back then prior to/around the turn of the century.

In "The Postcard Price Guide" 2nd Edition, published by J.L. Mashburn/Colonial House 1995, a helpful, short description of early US postcard periods is found:

PIONEER ERA (1893-1898) The Pioneer Era began when picture postcards were placed on sale by vendors and exhibitors at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, May, 1893. These were very popular and proved to be a great success ... Pioneer cards are relatively scarce. They can be identified by combinations of the following: All have undivided back | None show the "Authorized by Act of Congress" byline | Postal cards will have the Grant or Jefferson head stamp | Most, but not all, will be multiple view cards | The words "Souvenir of..." or "Greetings from ..." will appear on many. Postage rate, if listed, is 2 cents | The most common titles will be "Souvenir Card" or "Mail Card" | Appeared mostly on the big Eastern cities.

PRIVATE MAILING CARD ERA (1898-1901) The government, on May 19, 1898, gave private printers permission to print and sell postcards. The cards were all issued with the inscription "Private Mailing Card," and today they are referred to as PMC's. ... It may be noted that many of the early Pioneer views were reprinted as Private Mailing Cards.



Souvenir of Washington - The Capitol, Washington. Card no. 103 but no publisher mention. Rubberstamp imprint of Theodor Kreh, Publisher of Souvenir Cards with full address on picture side. Mailed under Printed Matter rate from New York to Germany on 24 May 1898.



Newspaper Row - New York. A '2' in circle and "Copyright 1897 by C.F. Th. Kreh". Pioneer card address side layout with imprinted "Jefferson", but mailed on 23 August 1898 when PMC rates/regulations were effective.





New York - Brooklyn Bridge. Card/design no. 5 inside circle. Chromolithography. Mailed to Switzerland in 1898 (most of postmark illegible), Kreh copyright 1897. Promotional imprint offering cards postpaid/addressed to order. Ruberstamp imprint with different Kreh office address. Address side layout different, too. This card comes from the collection of the late Gerhard Stumpp.

Forgotten Places on old PPCs

Dutch collector Gilbert Deraedt kindly sent me these two cards which are a perfect example that old ppc's often document places who have completely disappeared.

Greetings from the Schnupftabaks-Mühle bei Schwelm. Schwelm is a city in the Ruhr-Ennepe district, North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany. The original (tobacco) snuff mill was erected in 1781 on the grounds of the medieval estate Döinghausen.

The mill with ponds was converted into an amusement location/restaurant in 1886. Soon becoming a very popular location in the region, with some 3,000 seats at best times. A special attraction was the boat carousel which was patented as D.R.P. No. 86291. After the turn of the century the number of regular visitors began to go down. In 1906 the snuff mill park was closed and the city of Schwelm bought the entire area. They planed the first municipal sewerage system and the former snuff mill amusement park with ponds became a sewage works. The old original mill buildings said to have survived until the early 1970's.

Local publisher Friedrich Wortmann issued the monochrome collotype printed postcard of the snuff mill restaurant/water amusement park. We see a busy day from better times. The previously mentioned boat carousel can be seen in the background. No idea what made it so special to be patented. The card has an undivided address side, was produced prior to February 1905. However, it was postally used late April 1909, years after the snuff mill had closed down. As far as I can make out the writer does not mention the snuff mill.



Above **Greetings from the Snuff Mill** card was likely published by the company operating the amusement (water) park. P/u late May 1898. Typical chromolitho printing with carefully arranged details. Lithography/printed by L. Schwarze & Oberhoff from the city of Barmen. A company I have not heard of before. Set up by Leo. Schwarze and Friedr. Wilhelm Oberhoff on 12 December 1892. Besides general printing for the trade the 1898 Klimsch edition lists also ppc printing as speciality. The writer of this card (Fritz) mentioned the D.R.P. of the boat carousel in his message addressed to Miss Else living in Frankfurt/Main.

