

Penny Postcard Project

The "penny postcard," long gone from the communication scene, is now a collectors' item, and two extensive collections exist in Santa Cruz at UCSC and at the main Public Library.

The picture postcard collection of the late Preston Sawyer of Santa Cruz was bought jointly by Santa Cruz public library and the main University of California Santa Cruz Library in 1962.

For the past five years the collection has been catalogued and sorted by two volume volunteers, Mrs. John Byrne and Harold van Gorder, who had assistance from time to time by other interested volunteers.

This week Santa Cruz public library received its postcard collection from UCSC library which has retained a duplicate collection, under a reciprocal agreement. The portion of the collection catalogued up to the present time includes 4500 California picture postcards, covering the first half of this century. 500 cards feature scenes of Santa Cruz County, 900 show San Francisco sites, 500 from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, and 300 views of the California Missions. The remainder depict miscellaneous California tourist spots.

Santa Cruz Librarian Charles K. Atkins received the collection. Assistant Librarian Wendell Simons of UCSC made the presentation.

The cards were assembled over the years by Sawyer, who worked as a proofreader at The Sentinel and who also wrote a series of historical columns for the paper under the title "Santa Cruz Yesterdays."

Following his retirement to a convalescent home, Sawyer's accumulation of postcards, photos, books, negatives, magazines, papers and general oddments — from milk bottle caps to campaign buttons — was purchased jointly by UCSC and Santa Cruz libraries.

Resource materials were divided between the two institutions with the public library receiving all printed matter and UCSC library receiving the photographs, and exchanging duplicates.

The postcard collection contains a rich variety of scenes, and some bear one-cent stamps. One of the cards, showing the Santa Cruz County Courthouse and post-



Mrs. John Byrne and Harold van Gorder (right), postcard researchers, with Wendell Simon of UCSC Main Library.

marked August 12, 1907, is inscribed cryptically, "Dear Vera-Saw this building today-(signed) Clarence." On another is a scene of the Sea Beach Hotel, now demolished overlooking Monterey Bay. This card, dated August 17, 1907, informs the recipient that "Harry got us a big Japanese umbrella, and we stuck it in the sand to keep off the wind." Huge paper umbrellas, printed with gigantic flowers in a palette

of colors, were apparently the Seaside accessory of the day; another card in the Sawyer collection shows them in abundance, covering the beach like mushrooms from one end of the Boardwalk to the other.

The oldest postcard so far identified in the Sawyer collection is dated 1898. Among the most recent is one from Santa's Village, near Scotts Valley, printed in the early 1960's.