

A Pilgrimage to Mount Rainier - Synopsis

General Approach: The exhibit presents the narrative of a pilgrimage along a specific route, beginning at Tacoma, the closest city to Mount Rainier, and ending at the summit of the Mountain. This is an exhibit in which the picture post cards support the story rather than one in which the story has been constructed to show a collection of cards.

Cards Chosen: The cards have been chosen from a extensive collection of picture post cards of Mount Rainier, selecting those that best illustrate the stages of the journey and the sights seen along the way. Scarce cards have been preferred, including cards showing special features, such as manipulated images, wrong inscriptions, and private photos. Only early card styles, Private Mailing Cards through White Border Cards, published 1902 to 1930, are shown.

Because this exhibit does not present a general tour of the Mountain, cards illustrating other locations on Mount Rainier which do not relate to the pilgrimage route, no matter how beautiful or famous, were not used. For this reason neither Mirror Lake, Scott 742, nor Tipsoo Lake, Scott 2404, appear.

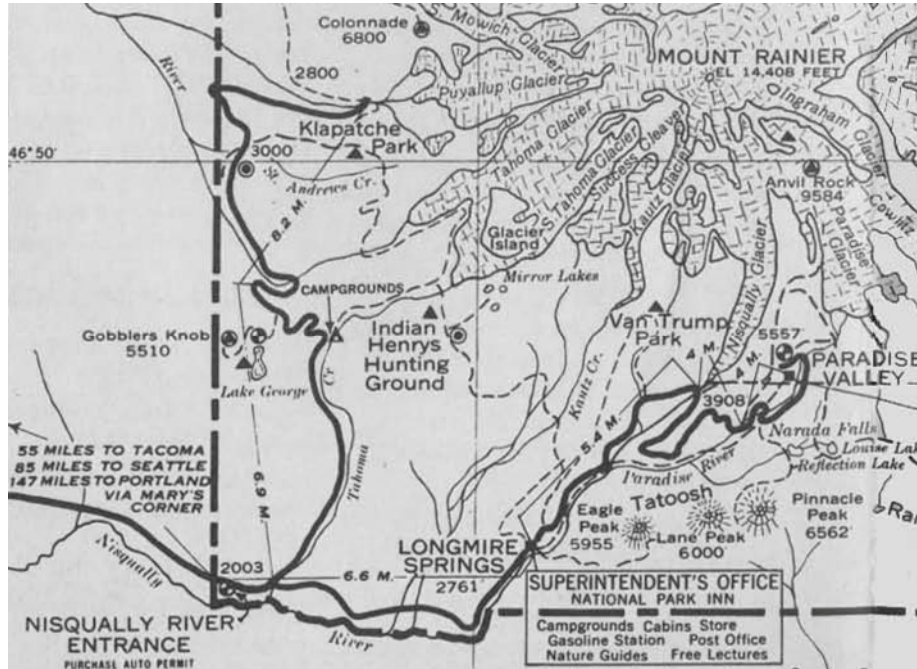
Narrative Technique: The entire narrative text was written before the pages were created. Each page was constructed using one line of the narrative text at the top of the page to advance the story, with cards below to illustrate that narrative text. Within each stage, or chapter, of the overall story these top narrative lines work together to tell the story of that stage. For example, a paragraph made up of the narrative lines extracted from the individual pages of Stage 3.0, "Along the Road to Paradise" shows, despite the simple sentence structure, that a natural and credible story line has been created.

On the third stage of our pilgrimage we set out on a wonderland journey to Paradise. We motor along the Nisqually River and see its source within the Nisqually Glacier. We stop and approach the terminus of the gigantic river of ice. Some of our party ascend the treacherous surface of the glacier. We depart from the glacier and move into higher country beyond. Delightful sounds of rushing mountain cascades greet us along our way. Many of the park's finest waterfalls sweep over the steep sides of the glacier-carved valleys through which we are traveling. Narada Falls is the most popular and most photographed waterfall in the park. We cross the upper Paradise river as it flows down from Paradise Glacier. We pause at Ricksecker Point to view a deep glacial valley below us and the great mountain rising above. Van Trump Park gives us a foretaste of the spectacular views awaiting us at Paradise. We switchback ever higher until our road enters the Paradise Valley.

Similar paragraphs were constructed from the top narrative lines of the other six chapters and reviewed for coherence and continuity by a non-collector. These methods of developing and verifying exhibit narrative are original and experimental for this exhibitor.

Sources: General references on the history of picture post cards have been used, since here are no publications specific to cards of Mount Rainier. For the Mountain itself I have relied on several books detailing the history and natural history of the park, plus a wide variety of contemporary pamphlets and brochures. Much of this information is now available on Wikipedia. Some of the otherworldly concepts embodied in the final three stages of the pilgrimage are based on ancient and medieval mystical sources and dream visions. My specific knowledge and strong feelings about Mount Rainier stem from forty years of hiking among its multitude of wonders.

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Map showing the pilgrimage route
Nisqually River Entrance - Longmire Springs - Paradise Valley - Summit of Mount Rainier