

at the Houston Public Library as the Schlueter Photographic Collection.

Two additional Texas oilfield photographers were F. (Frank) G. Allen (1881-1921) and L. (Lester) L. Allen (1875-1949). These contemporaries are not thought to be related. Frank, formerly a New York newspaper photographer, photographed scenes in Goose Creek, West Columbia, Damon Mound, Hull, Blue Ridge, and Pierce Junction oil fields including the destruction at Goose Creek caused by a May 24, 1919 “cyclone”. Frank may have had a studio for a brief time in Shreveport, Louisiana where he produced and sold photographs of the nearby Caddo Lake and Homer oilfields. Like Schlueter, Frank Allen produced some stunning panoramic photographs. L. L. Allen captured images in the 1920s of Raccoon Bend, Orange, West Columbia, and Spindletop (second boom) oil fields. On the back of some of L.L. Allen’s postcards, the cities of Houston, Galveston, or Texas City are stamped. He also ventured a very short distance into Louisiana, capturing scenes at the Hackberry oilfield. Census records list him living in Houston in 1910 where he maintained a studio, at least during 1912. Census records have L.L. later living in the Texas oilfield towns of West Columbia (1920) and Orange (1930).

Ralph R. Doubleday (1881-1958) is known for his rodeo photography, earning him the title, Rodeo Postcard King. Doubleday began his photographic career with Underwood and Underwood, producers of stereoviews. Throughout his career, he produced over 30 million postcards, many sold at Woolworth Five and Dime stores. Though he is generally not known for his oilfield photography, he produced many excellent postcards from west and north Texas oilfields and boomtowns, including Burk Burnett, Ranger, Breckenridge, Yates, Pecos, Texon, and Pioneer. He also visited east Texas and photographed some of that area’s boomtowns and oil-fields.

GREETINGS FROM THE OIL COUNTRY POSTCARDS OF FRANK ROBBINS

Jeff Spencer
675 Piney Creek Road, Bellville, TX 77418
spencerj320@gmail.com

POSTER PRESENTATION

Frank Robbins (1846? – 1924) documented the emerging Pennsylvania and New York petroleum industry with his photographs. He was one of the most prolific producers of stereoscopic views of oilfields near Oil City and Bradford, Pennsylvania and Olean, New York in the late 1800s. Many of his photographs were used in early twentieth century postcards.

Robbins’ oilfield-related postcards include scenes from the Bradford and Olean area. The postcards are in both black and white and also in color. Greeting from the Oil Country appears on the front of some of the earlier black and white postcards. The postcards are of both the undivided back (1901-1907) and divided back (1907-1915) varieties. Some of the postcards show copyright dates of 1906 or 1907.

The original photograph of a burning 35,000 barrel oil tank, captioned on postcards in five different states (New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Texas), is thought to be a Robbins’ view from near Olean. This oil tank fire image is probably from one of several Olean-area oil tank fires in the late 1800s, including ones in 1882, 1884, and 1897. 1904 is the earliest postmarked postcard located of this burning oil tank view. In addition to oilfield-related postcards, there are Robbins postcards of Bradford town views, the Bradford Theatre, Edgewood Club, Bradford hospital, Solomon Dresser home, Rock City, and the famous Kinzua railroad bridge.