

# January Story – The Post Card

1965

“How great is this?” Dawn said as she took down the Christmas cards that had been stapled to the long ribbons of red crepe paper decorating the living room. She looked again at each painted scene and read every word inside and out, while sitting on the floor near the piano.

“We are never going to finish if you spend an hour on each card,” her older sister said shaking her curly head. “Let’s finish this chore. There are adventures calling us in the back yard. That is a lot more interesting than a lot of people we don’t even know.”

“Mom & Dad know them all,” Dawn countered as she carefully put the next card into the pile for this past year.

“But what point is it to get a card just once a year. Who really cares?”

“Obviously, Mom & Dad or they wouldn’t put them up each year. It adds to the fun of the season. They come from all over the world.” Dawn looked up and said, “I wonder who they all are.”

“Ok, we are so done with this.” Darcy started to drop the latest batch of snow pictures into the box when something at the bottom of the old cardboard box caught her eye.

“Dawn, look here,” she said dropping the pile on the floor instead. The box was about waist high to Darcy when she was on her knees and her curls disappeared into the box while she moved the old drawings and art projects aside. Her muffled voice came back over her shoulder, “There is one old card stuck under the bottom flap. All I can see is the word Post.” Darcy pulled the top edge of the box down to her lap and was only halfway inside now.

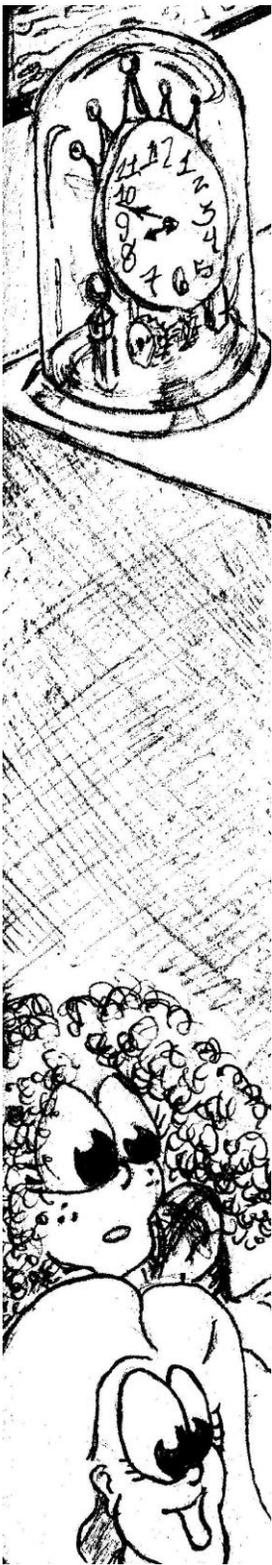
“How can I help?” Dawn asked trying to look over Darcy’s shoulder.

“I just about have it.”

“Careful, it could be a deed to a gold mine, and it was to be ‘posted,’” Dawn thought out loud.

“Or it could be a ‘post’ as in where to put a hole in the ground,” came the voice in the box. “Wait. Let me wiggle it just a little bit this way.” The rumbling continued and the box moved this way and that. Then Darcy disappeared.

“Darcy? Darcy,” Dawn said crawling into the box herself. Every time she thought she was reaching the bottom flap she had to reach one more step, and then another. Then, ‘poof’ the bottom of the cardboard box pushed open and Dawn tumbled onto the floor next to her sister.



“Are we in a train car?” asked Dawn looking around at the long, tan room with built in racks of small boxes and slats along the top half of each side with envelopes peeking out of each one.

“Yep,” Darcy said reading their postcard and scanning the names over the big brown canvas bags hanging down in their own square racks, part of the 3 deep and 20 squares secured to the wall on one side. “One of these must say ‘Campo’, like it says on the postcard.”

“What is it? Let me see,” said Dawn. “Is it a treasure map?”

“Just an old oval picture of a lady in tan and brown. It says ‘Post Card’ on the back and that is all that I could see. There is something familiar about her,” Darcy’s voice drifted away as she examined the picture.

Dawn looked a little longer at the picture of the lady with the dark hair in a big bun under the back of the hat and the puffy white sleeves. “You have that same smile Darcy. Even the same curls at the edge of your face.”

“Nope, I don’t see it,” Darcy said turning it back over to the printed side.

“Is there a date or anything?” Dawn said trying hard not to grab it out of her sister’s hands.

“There is some really faint handwriting on one half that says, ‘Merry Christmas’, I think, a stamp in the corner and a last name and town on the other half.”

“Who is it from?” Dawn was so happy when Darcy handed the postcard to her.

“NED. Who’s NED?”

A pear-shaped man dressed in a black uniform wearing a round, flat-top hat with a shiny black bill shading his eyes walked slowly into the car reading a pile of mail in his hands. He selected a couple of envelopes and naturally reached up putting them into their proper slot. After a moment, he noticed the girls.

“Hmm. What would you be doing in the mail car this beautiful morning? You know, no one is allowed in here, except officials like me.” He leaned over as if to tell them a secret. “It is a very important job watching over the precious mail people send to each other.” He winked at them and waited for them to exit.

“Excuse me sir,” Dawn said carefully showing the postcard to the Postmaster, “Could you help us figure out who NED is?”

The man in black with the brass buttons on his coat gently lifted the card, with the picture of a lady in the oval, closer to his nose trying to read the very light writing. "Ah, this is an old one, dated 1906," he said showing them the postmark.

"I can't answer who NED is, but I can tell you that the address matches that of the old Davies Ranch right here in Campo. I think they have their family names on the flat bricks just outside of the Train Depot, through that open warehouse and down the steps on the other side of the little yellow building where folks would buy a ticket. You can't miss it under the big Oak tree.

"Thank you, sir," Darcy said as the Postmaster handed the card to her as she passed by on her way out the door.

"That is very helpful. Thank you again," Dawn said smiling at him as she too passed by.

"Certainly, my pleasure." He nodded, then chuckled quietly, "Certainly a great quest those two girls are on. 1906, eh? Well, you don't see that every day."

Down the steep metal steps they went, and dropped onto the dirt alongside the railroad tracks. Following the instructions, they ended up in front of a shady tree, looking all around at the stones that made the pathways.

"I found it," called Dawn as she got down on her knees brushing the dirt away. "The center block says Chase & Davies."

Darcy joined her looking at the blocks from the top. "There it is. It looks like Norman. Norman Davies," she said jumping back up and bowing to an invisible crowd. "Problem solved."

"I don't think so," Dawn said studying each block. She carefully laid the postcard in the center of the block and noticed the lady in the picture looked at her and smiled. "Darcy." Dawn turned back to the picture as her sister was still taking bows. The photo now showed the lady with her hand pointing down instead of being on her lap.

"Darcy," Dawn tried again to get her sister's attention. "Look. This name is Ella Edna 'Nellie' Davies."

"So, what am I looking at then," Darcy said joining her sister at the bottom of the blocks.

"Didn't Deanna say that Nellie was a nickname for Ellen? What if she used these initials for 'Nellie Edna Davies'?" Dawn asked.

"'N.E.D.' Brilliant, Dawn. You have cracked the case of the mystery lady's postcard! Hello Nellie."

The two girls got up grinning at each other.

“Another ‘missing persons’ case solved Dawn said handing the postcard back to her sister.

“I still think she looks familiar,” Darcy said as they walked back to the mail car.

They saw the portly man walk behind the car and they quietly climbed in. Pulling themselves up on the edge of a bin, Darcy pushed open the cardboard flaps in the ceiling with Dawn at her heels. They crawled through the square tube of light brown and back onto the living room floor.

Darcy got up and walked over to the shelf of family pictures and took down the brown and tan photo of the families in the mountains. “Dawn, I knew she looked familiar. Look at the lady in the back of this picture.”

Dawn brought over the postcard and held it along side of the group picture. “Yes, I think you’re right. Who knew how important a postcard could be?”

“Or anything someone wrote and mailed to another.”

“It is pretty neat to be holding something she actually held and to see her handwriting... more than 100 years later!”

“Someday, they may not even have writing taught in school. You’ll just say something, it will fly through the air and be received on the other end by the right person,” Darcy said imagining a cartoon image of words floating across the skies.

“But then it could never be held by someone generations later,” said Dawn carefully putting the two pictures back on the shelf, side by side.

“You’re right, no one would ever know you sent anything minutes later much less years later.”

“So maybe this isn’t such a bad chore after all,” Darcy said. The two girls laughed and continued boxing up the Christmas decorations.

By D A Chase

