**Postcards**

**The camera never lies**

My name is Ray Thomas and I work as a web designer at Indiana State University. I’ve been collecting postcards for around 10 years and I’d like to show you some of my collection.

I started off collecting postcards of Terre Haute and as with most postcard collectors my collection started to grow and include other topics. For example, I’ve got postcards of the flood and tornado that hit Terre Haute on 23rd March, 1913. I started reading about that started collecting postcards just about the March 1913 floods that left almost around a quarter of a million people homeless and left around 1,000 people dead across the mid-west.

Among my postcards of Terre Haute were images of the Wabash River. So I decided to try and find all the postcards I could from the source of the Wabash in Grand Lake, Ohio to where it drains into the Ohio River at Mount Vernon.

This postcard dates from about 1930.

Everyone knows the camera never lies, but a lot can happen to a photograph before you see it printed.

Photography started in the 1820’s but by 1860 photographs like this were being made. This portrait of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln is a composite of Lincoln’s head and the Southern politician John Calhoun’s body.

In 1917, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who was a spiritualist as well as the creator of Sherlock Holmes was convinced the Cottingley Fairy photographs were real.

Things also work the other way around. This isn’t a photograph at all but an image made with Adobe Illustrator.

The first real postcards appeared in 1870 and they took full advantage of the available photographic and printing processes. They weren’t averse to distorting the truth a little at all.

These images might not even be of the Wabash!

Postcards captured events of the time. Take these two of the Hotel Roy in Fonda, New York. The hotel was built in 1836 and destroyed by a fire, that apparently started in the laundry room, on January 25, 1909. The second postcard used the same photograph but added the flames and fire engines.

The original photograph used for a postcard could be in use for around 20 years. These postcards of Union Station, Terre Haute date from 1906 to 1910 and depending on how much they wanted to spend or how long the publisher wanted the postcards produced all sorts of retouching could be done to the original photograph.

Of course, images can be doctored for comedic effect such as this one.