



By Dave Bowers

## Reflections on Two Postcards

FOR ME IT IS OFTEN FUN TO COLLECT "GO-withs" in addition to coins, paper money, tokens, and other items. In some hobbies—bottle collecting is an example—"go withs" are an important part of the buying and selling scene. Similarly, those interested in old motion pictures often aspire to own old posters, lobby cards, movie star memorabilia, and the like.

In numismatics this course is not often followed, although many opportunities beckon. In the field of National Bank notes, nearly every such bank in existence promoted itself in one way or another—by giving out calendars, checks, stock certificates, pens, money bags, postcards, and more.

I especially enjoy old postcards depicting National Banks during the currency-issuing period and have accumulated more than 3,000 different. However, picture postcards did not come into wide use until the early 20th century, and thus the 1863-1900 era is not represented.

The other day I was sorting through some cards and came across two from Freeburg, Illinois, a little town of which I do not know much. However, the internet beckons, and I know that with a few key words entered into Google I can probably find where the best Mexican restaurant in the area is now located (if they have one), or how the high school chess club (if they have one) has done in competition, and so on.

I don't own any currency from the First National Bank of Freeburg, but thanks to the works of Messrs. Hickman, Oakes, and Kelly, from my armchair, and no need to consult Google, I have learned that this particular institution was chartered in October 1905 as No. 7941, in time to issue a bunch of large-size bills and some (but not many) small-size versions, to the total amount of \$269,800—most of which have disappeared in the years since they were used. No doubt an attractive Freeburg National Bank bill would be a nice thing to own, and if I see one at a convention I might ask its price.

Now, if this were an obsolete note, say from the era of the early 19th century, I could go to my library and, given some time, extract information from various issues of *Banker's Magazine*, *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Hunt's Merchants Magazine*, and various town and county histories. However, my holdings of such stuff drop off sharply around 1900, and I have nothing on Freeburg banking.

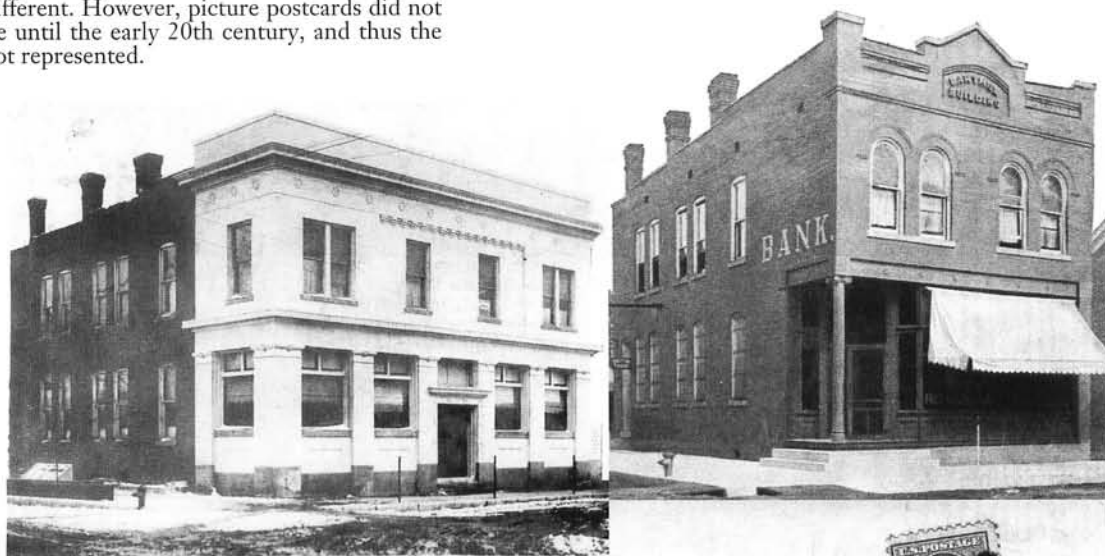
That said, all I know is from my two postcards.

The first is postmarked 1912 and shows the First National Bank situated on the ground floor of the Harthel Building, a two-story brick edifice heated, it would seem, by a half-dozen fireplaces.

On the wall of the building, "BANK" is boldly lettered. This would suggest that no other name is needed, and that at the time this was the one and only bank in the town. A check with the aforementioned paper money books verifies this. Two signs at the back of the building indicate a door leading to offices upstairs, one for a doctor.

The second card, of which both sides are shown here, invites the recipient to visit "our new Banking Home" and inspect the new vaults and the proudly capitalized Electrical Burglar Alarm System just installed. The building is shown with traces of snow out front, apparently taken not long before the March 24, 1920, postmark. A comparison of both postcards seems to indicate that the "new" home is a makeover or rehabilitation of the old, including extensive widening of the front.

As to other information about the bank I know nothing, except that if I owned a piece of paper money from the First National Bank, these "go with" postcards would certainly add to my interest and appreciation. Perhaps the peripatetic Mark Hotz, who last year traveled through Illinois and visited some old bank buildings, might on his next excursion check out Freeburg. ♦



POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE

We invite you to attend the "Open House" given by us in our new Banking Home Saturday, March 27th all day from 9 A. M. to 9 P. M., also to inspect our new vaults and witness demonstration of the new Electrical Burglar Alarm System just installed.

Come visit us, even though it is just for a friendly talk, and to meet your friends here. We'll be glad to see you.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK,  
FREEBURG, ILLINOIS



Mrs. J. H. Batdorf

Freeburg,

Ill.