

The multifaceted Mr Kij and his Guadalajara postcards

by Tony Burton

Published at <https://tonyburton.ca/guadalajara-history>

The Life of Kij	1
Kij's Guadalajara postcards	4

Several series of early postcards of Guadalajara were published by 'A. Kij.' One series features black and white photographs surrounded by a frame, while others are colorized images, some with numbers, and some with full frame images. Was Kij a photographer, a publisher, or perhaps both? Kij is not a common surname, so what's the story behind A. Kij?



Fig 1. Typical 'A. Kij' postcard (Electric tram station). ca. 1907.

The Life of Kij

It turned out to be tougher than I thought to unravel his story, partly because his surname at birth was not Kij but Quijano. We know this because he is recorded on an immigration form, when he entered the U.S. at the port of New York on 10 August 1893, as "Antonio Quijano (Professionally known as Kij)... aged 27... a citizen of Colombia... in transit to Cuba." He had arrived in the U.S. on the SS Ailsa from Cartajena, via Kingston, Jamaica.¹

Antonio Quijano was born in Bogota, Columbia, in about 1867, to Pedro Quijano and María de los Angeles Rodríguez.² In addition to adopting Kij as an alternative surname, he was known, at different times, by several variants of his first name, including "Antony," "Anthony," "Tony" and "Ant."

In 1896, on 11 June, Kij arrived back in New York, aboard the SS Hevelius, coming from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as "Professor Ant. Kij"... aged 29... "electrician." He arrived on that occasion with 14 pieces of luggage, an unusually high number compared to most other passengers on that ship.

¹ Landing records seen via Ancestry.com

² On his marriage registration in 1907, Kij gave his parents' names as Pedro Kij and María de los Angeles Rodríguez.



Fig 2. 1904 advertisement, *La Gaceta de Guadalajara*.

While in Mexico, he appears always to have used the surname Kij, never Quijano. The earliest trace of Kij in Guadalajara is in 1904, when "A. Kij and Company" advertised the sale of phonographs at Calle de la Maestranza 1, Guadalajara.³ As exclusive agents for Columbia Phonograph of New York, and with direct imports from Europe and the U.S., the company claimed to have the widest range of "talking machines," priced for all budgets, and "the best entertainment for the home."

In April 1907, "Don Antonio Kij" married Colima-born Maria de las Mercedes Soto (or Maria Mercedes Soto) in Guadalajara.⁴ The couple had three children: Antonio Guillermo Kij (1908-1936), Anna Rose Kij (1911-1943) and Mary Carmen Kij/Quijano (1912-2004).

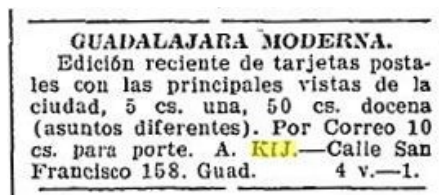


Fig 3. 1907 advertisement, *La Gaceta de Guadalajara*.

By 1907, Kij was advertising postcards of "Modern Guadalajara", available at Calle San Francisco 158. Small display advertisements offered a "recent edition" of postcards showing the "main views of the city," priced at 5 cents each, or 50 cents a dozen, with 10 cents for shipping if ordered via mail.⁵

The wording of a larger display advertisement (Fig 4) the following year shows that Kij was still marketing, wholesale and retail, Edison phonographs as well as illustrated postcards and other select items.⁶ Similar ads appeared regularly in the newspaper for many months.

³ La Gaceta de Guadalajara: 5 June 1904, 6.

⁴ La Gaceta de Guadalajara, 21 Apr 1907. Their civil marriage was on 18 April 1907.

⁵ Example wording of advertisement (La Gaceta de Guadalajara, 7 July 1907): - "GUADALAJARA MODERNA. Edición reciente de tarjetas postales con las principales vistas de la ciudad, 5 cs. una, 50 cs. docena (asuntos diferentes). Por correo 10 cs. para porte. A. Kij - Calle San Francisco 158, Guad."

⁶ La Gaceta de Guadalajara, 6 September 1908, 11.



Fig 4. 1908 advertisement, *La Gaceta de Guadalajara*.

In the early years of the Mexican Revolution, the anti-American sentiment in Guadalajara caused many foreign business owners to flee the city and the country. Even those who had initially believed they could see out the unrest, counting on the support of Mexican friends, were faced with tough choices.

Serious disruptions to everyday life in Guadalajara in 1913-1914 led many desperate foreigners to head for Manzanillo or Tampico to escape. (Some idea of the problems Guadalajara residents faced during this period can be gleaned from the diary of Bertha Kaiser, the wife of Swiss publisher Juan Kaiser.⁷)

Responding to a U.S. Census employee in 1930, the Kij family claimed they had arrived in the country in 1913. However, immigration records reveal that the family moved to the U.S. in 1914. "Mrs A Kij and three children, Colombian family"⁸ were among the hundreds of passengers who escaped Mexico aboard the German steamer "Marie," which left Manzanillo at the end of April 1914, and reached port in San Diego at the start of May.

Antonio joined them a month later, having traveled overland to Laredo, Texas. He crossed the border on 30 June 1914, as "Antony Kij... aged 44... "artist"... carrying US \$100.00, stating he was coming from Guadalajara and have never previously been in the U.S. Interestingly, the immigration agent who admitted Kij appended the following note on the form: "Is not alien's correct name. Was suggested he return to New Orleans and take up with Imgn. there."

In the U.S., Antonio Kij struggled to find suitable employment, and the family moved several times before eventually settling in New Orleans.

Kij was living in Oklahoma City in 1918, where he advertised his sleight-of-hand skills as "T. Kij," the "Brazilian Wizard," and performed tricks involving disappearing heads. Simultaneously, he advertised as "Prof. Antonio Kij, teacher of French, Spanish, Italian languages; best methods, best references." Kij was briefly detained by police when a pro-German letter was mailed to him, but quickly released when he was able to show he had no knowledge of the sender.⁹

⁷ Verena Kaiser-Ernst. 2012. *Tagebuch Von Bertha Kaiser-Peter Fur Ihren sohn Hans Paul Kaiser*. Stuttgart: T H Schetter. (<https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=12271>)

⁸ The Fresno Morning Republican (California), 2 May 1914, 3.

⁹ The Daily Oklahoman, 14 October 1918, 8; Oklahoma City Times, 15 Oct 1918, 9.

In 1919, the family was living in St. Louis, Missouri, where "Antonio Kij, a South American and teacher in Brazil for many years" taught a course in Portuguese at the local YMCA night school.¹⁰

By 1927, "Anthony Kij" and his family were living in New Orleans, where he worked as a clerk for Williams-Richardson Co., probably specializing in handling international correspondence for the wholesale mercantile business.¹¹

In 1938, both Antonio and his wife revisited Mexico. First, Antonio, then aged 71, returned via Laredo at the end of June 1938. Then, a few months later, a week before Christmas, both Antonio and María reentered the U.S. at Laredo, perhaps after visiting her mother, Altagracia Vidriales in Colima.

When the 1940 U.S. Census was conducted, Antonio stated that he had completed four years of high school, and was an independent instructor and translator of languages. He lived with his wife, who had completed Grade 8, and with their daughter Anna Rose, who was not working and had completed Grade 5. Antonio also claimed to be a naturalized citizen of the U.S. at the time of the census. Again, he seems to have stretched the truth slightly. Perhaps he had begun the process by 1940, but he and his wife were both formally granted US citizenship via naturalization in September 1942.

Antonio Kij died in New Orleans at the age of 96 on 23 September 1956, and his wife died there in May 1963.

Note: No copyright is claimed for the postcard images in this article. Some are cards in the author's collection, others are lightly edited versions of photos uploaded to a public Facebook group by Eduardo García Ramírez.

Kij's postcards of Guadalajara

Several Kij postcards (such as Fig 1) provide unusual glimpses into Guadalajara life, perhaps because they were taken by Kij himself, and he was looking at the city through the lens of a relative newcomer.

At least two images can be positively identified as photographs by 'Bolaños', and it seems probable that Kij also published photographs by other, as yet unidentified, photographers.

All Kij postcards have divided backs, and therefore date to 1907 or later. Captions on all Kij postcards refer to 'Guadalajara-Mexico' or 'Guadalajara-Mex' without any state-level identifier. The caption on at least one Kij postcard also omits any indication of country.

Almost all Kij postcards are of Guadalajara. A very small number depict nearby places, such as Zapopan or the Juanacatlán Falls. There are no known Kij postcards of Chapala.

¹⁰ St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 10 Sep 1919, 20.

¹¹ US City Directory for New Orleans, 1927.

Kij postcards can be classified into at least four distinct series, though their chronological order is unclear.

- A. Black and white photos, unnumbered, in textured mock-wood frame, with captions in black. Reverse side has Kij details, and 5-digit identifier.
- B. Colored photos, no border, unnumbered, with captions in black.
- C. Colored photos, white strip for caption, numbered, with captions in red.
- D. Colored photos, no border, numbered, with captions in red.



Fig. 5. Kij postcard, type A. ca 1907. Black and white photos, unnumbered.



Fig. 6. Kij postcard, type B. ca 1907.
Colored photos, no border, unnumbered, captions in black.



Fig. 7. Kij postcard (photo by Bolaños), type C. ca 1907.
Colored photos, number and caption in red on white strip.



Fig. 8. Kij postcard, type D. ca 1907.
Colored photos, no border, number and captions in red.

In some cases, the same photo was used in more than a single series. For example, Fig 9 is the Type D version of the Type C card shown as Fig 7.

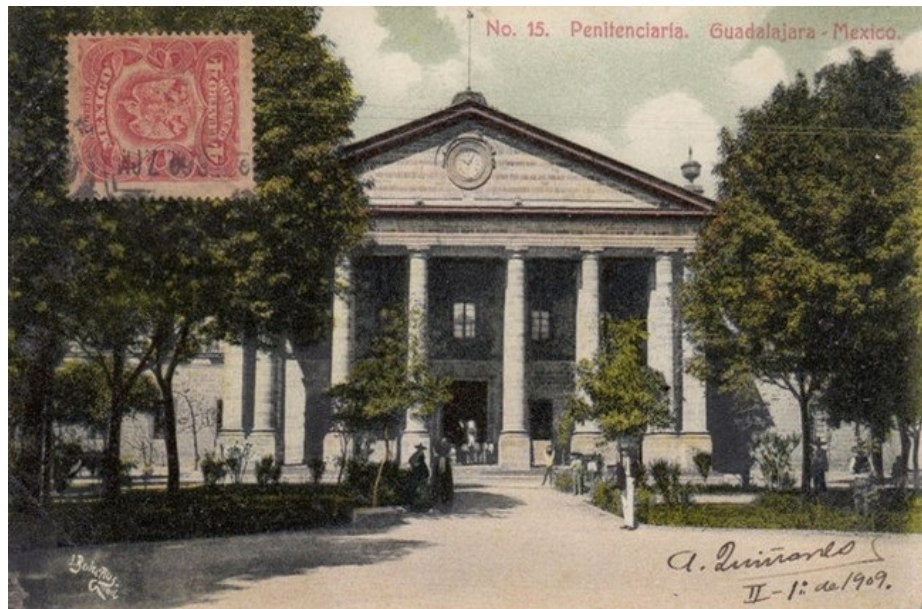


Fig. 9. Kij postcard, type D. ca 1907.
Unlike Fig 7., this card includes a photographer credit (Bolaños).

Another example (Fig. 10) is a photograph of the main seminary, used for both a Type A card (left) and colorized for a Type D card (right).

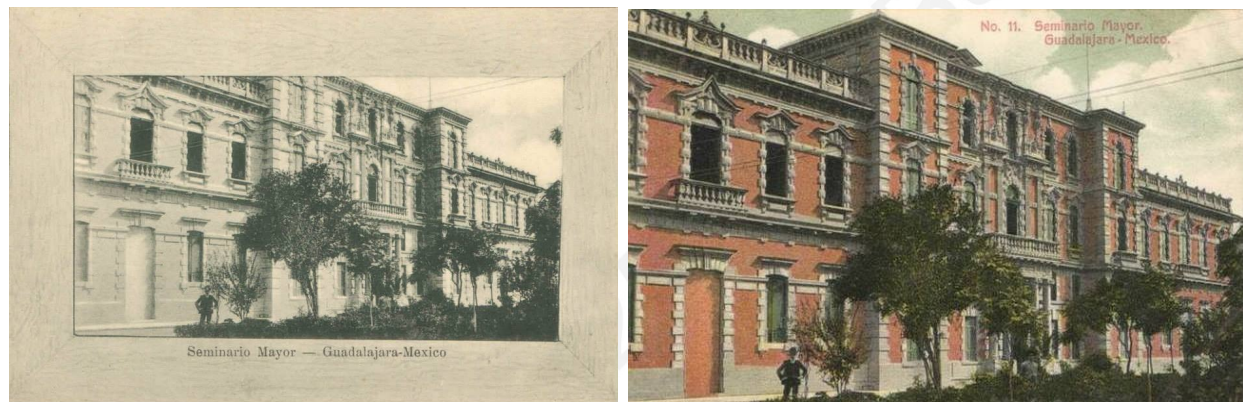
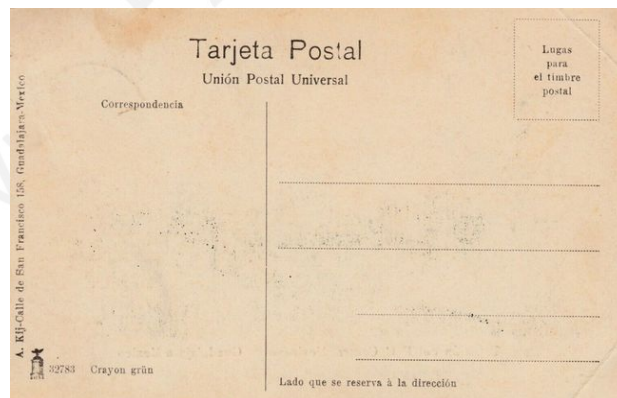


Fig 10. Type A (lt) and Type D (rt) images of main seminary, Guadalajara. ca 1907.



The reverse side of a Type A Kij postcard.