

The Exciting World of Postcard Collecting

On July 30, 2006, at HMPF, Gary Frederick, our new program chairman, presented an enlightening and enjoyable program on the fascinating hobby of postcard collecting. Gary is not just a collector of postcards and Americana, he is really a student of the many things from the past in which he has an interest. What follows is a copy of the notes that Gary prepared for his program on postcards:

Welcome, and thank you for coming to today's program on the Exciting World of Postcard Collecting.

First of all, I feel that I should tell you a little about myself, and how I became interested in collecting postcards. I was born and raised in Manheim and as a young boy I went to antique sales and saw some nice paper items (trade cards, postcards, photos, etc.). I found paper items to be very interesting and historically significant. I started buying some Manheim photo cards and trade cards because I found them neat to see how local buildings and street scenes had changed since the card was made. One day a friend of mine got a call from a woman who had a quilt and some other items for sale. So, I tagged along and the quilt was not that great and my friend was not interested in buying it. While my friend was looking at other items, I was busy getting up the nerve to ask the woman about postcards. I figured the worst thing she could say was no. "Say, you wouldn't happen to have any postcards to sell would you", I said. The woman thought for a minute and her eyes lit up as she said yes- I do believe there are some up in the attic. After about five minutes the woman emerged with a brown paper bag full of various kinds of postcards, bathing beauties, holiday greetings, etc. I ask her how much she wanted and she said make her an offer. After talking it over with my friend, seems how I didn't have any money. I offered her \$25.00 for the bag. A silence fell on the room; the lady smiled and said you'll give me \$25.00 for that bag, DEAL - I wish that I had more up there to sell to you. That made two of us! Right around that time through Jim, I met an upstart postcard dealer by the name of Dan Good from Columbia, Pa. So I had an outlet for the postcards that did not interest me-which was most of the cards in the bag. This was not a problem, because Dan would let me take postcards out of his stock in a trade for the contents of the bag. That bag was worth about \$200.00 in sets of cards from Mr. Good. I got Sunbonnet Babies and Busy Bears days of the week sets, and a little cash to pay back my friend. I was really hooked after that, and continued to buy at sales and go up Chickies hill with my 1972 Ford Pinto floored to trade with Mr. Good, who stated paying a lot less by then. Anyway, Mr. Good learned a tremendous amount by buying and selling postcards, and I learned through research books and auctions.

I continued to collect postcards all through High School and built up an impressive collection of 53 Manheim photo cards and sets of postcards – Schmucker Halloweens, a rare macerated paper money postcard, a nice Mack Truck postcard showing the new beer barrel truck from their Allentown plant. Anything Mr. Good got and if I was at the right place at the right time, I would have a crack at buying it before he put it at his stand. After serving in the U. S. Army and my personnel problems that followed it my collection was not expanded and eventually was sold off at about cost. Twenty years

later, I re-entered the postcard hobby in an almost similar manner. After going out to eat at Hoss's in Annville, I talked my girlfriend into going to check out an auction next door at the Antique Depot. I had happened to see a listing in the newspaper – Trust me there's a method to my madness. We ate first and went over to the auction, and they had a dealer's stock for sale. Anyway, I bought a small album with 10 St. Louis World's Fair postcards in mint condition and some Jewish New Year cards for \$57.00, and a wonderful cardboard box full of nice postcards for \$100.00. When it was all said and done, I got \$400.00 worth of postcards for my new collection and about \$600.00 from selling the rest. Once again I was hooked, but this time for good.

The following is a little history of postcards:

The Pioneer era - 1893 to 1898

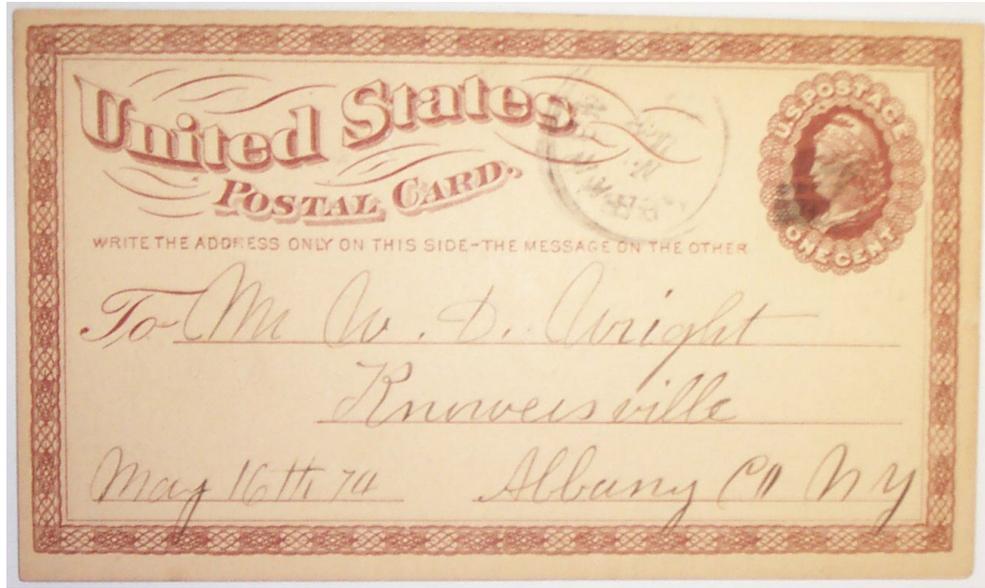
In 1873 the U. S. Government authorized the use of a postal card – nothing fancy – the address on the one side and a message on the other side with a stamp printed on the card (**see the example**). Then a year or two later the style of stamp was changed but the postal card remained the same for 20 years. The card was used for brief messages and receipts before widespread use of the telephone or telegraph. Then in 1893 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago oversized postcards were issued by exhibitors and advertisers and a few litho companies (**see the example**). The cards showed images of the fair's buildings, grounds and exhibits on the front side and the back was for the address only. Consequently, a lot of postcards of this fair have writing on the front next to the images. These postcards were a big seller and started to catch on and become popular – nice scenes instead of plain dreary postal cards. A couple of other firms started to print multi-views of cities like Boston and Philadelphia after the fair was over.

The Private Mailing Card era - 1898 to 1901

On May 19 1898, the government gave private printers permission to print and sell postcards. The cards were all issued with the inscription, "Private Mailing Card", and are called PMC's by collectors and dealers. Most of the cards are multi-view and have decorative backs.

The Undivided Back era – 1901 to 1907

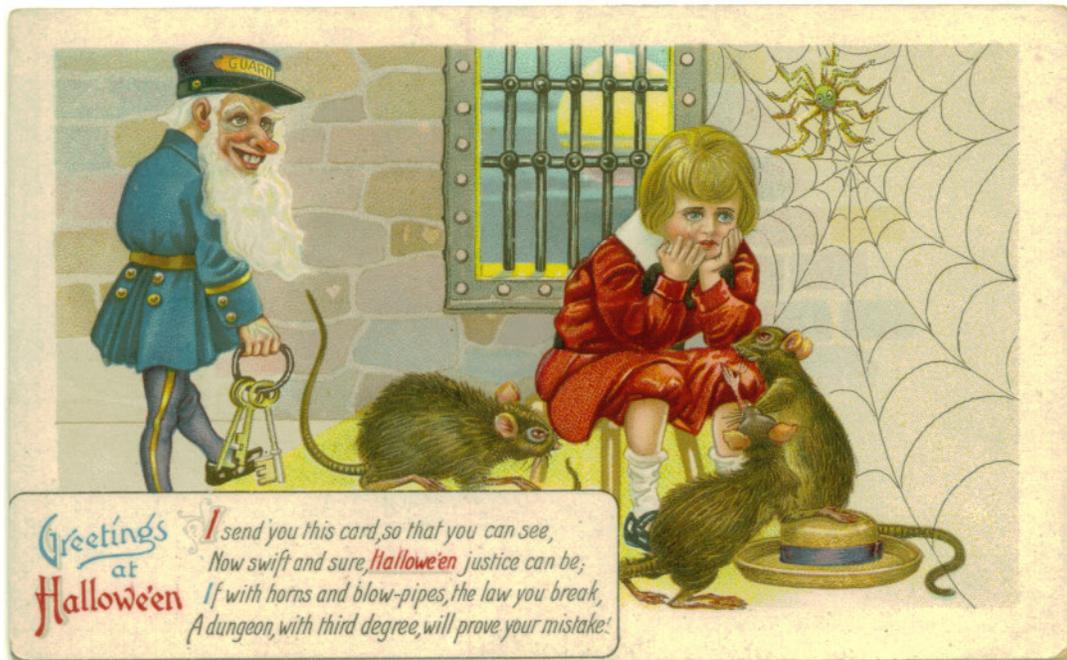
On December 24, 1901 permission was given to use the wording; "Post Card." on the back of printed mailing cards. The new wording helped from a stand-point of promotion and use, but, by law the back was just for address and any message had to be on the front with the image. This is why a lot of cards from this time have writing on the fronts, causing some collectors to shy away from that particular postcard. However, in terms of collectables and value it is becoming more acceptable.



1873 Government Authorized Postal Card



1893 World's Columbian Exposition Card



Very Unusual Halloween Cards