

A Guide to the Historical Postcards, 1900-1980

Historical Postcards 1900-1980

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A Collection in the Thomas Balch Library VC 0004

Thomas Balch Library

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History

Processed by: Emily E. Holmes

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

VC 0004

Language

English

Abstract

The primary subject matter of the postcards is scenes from around Loudoun County, although there are images from surrounding Virginia counties and several cards related to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Buildings, images of nature, and well-known streets figure prominently. Leesburg is the location most covered, including many images of Market Street, King Street, and the Loudoun County Courthouse.

Collector

Thomas Balch Library

Extent

.15 cu. ft.

Repository

Thomas Balch Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open for research.

Use Restrictions

No physical characteristics affect use of this material.

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Ethel Littlejohn Adams, Leesburg, VA; Emory Plaster, Leesburg, VA; unknown.

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Bibliography

American Postcard Art.Com Inc.: About Postcards by Phil Neigh.

The History of Postcards by Vivian Krug

Postcards: Penn College Girls.

A Brief History of Postcard Types

A Brief History of the Postcard

Other Finding Aid

None

Historical Information

Postcards developed out of the complex tradition of nineteenth-century printed calling cards, beginning with the advent of the *Cartes-de-Visite* in France. In the 1850s, Parisian photographer Andre Adolphe Eugene Disderi invented a photographic process involving egg white, albumen, and silver nitrate to create inexpensive portraits on paper cards. These photographic *Cartes-de-Visites* were 2 1/2 by 4 inches and became a popular, collectable form of "visiting cards" world-wide. Photographers would reprint portraits of famous individuals they had taken at their studios or during travel and sell them as collectable cards. Public figures such as European royalty, military generals, doctors, and businessmen would pose for *Cartes-de-Visite* portraits that were used as trading cards, business cards, and advertisements. During the American Civil War such cards were taxed, with revenue stamps affixed to the back.

Postcards as we know them now first began in 1861 as cards mailed by private post, invented by American John P. Charlton of Philadelphia with the patent later transferred to Philadelphian H. L. Lipman. Prussian postman Heinrich von Stephan advocated government-issued postcards in 1865. In 1869 the first government-created postal cards were printed in Hungary and the first cards for private post were printed in

Austria. In the 1870s picture postcards grew in popularity throughout the United States, Britain, Europe, and Japan. China created regulations for postcards in 1896 and began printing them in 1898.

In 1873 the United States Government began to issue the only postal cards legal in the U.S., of plain card stock with no artistic design on the front. On 19 May 1898, Congress passed the Private Mailing Act, which allowed the mailing of privately printed post cards marked "Private Mailing Card." Only this designation, the address, and the stamp were permitted on the back; any message had to be written over the artwork which publishers printed on the front of the card. The Act also reduced the postage rate for the cards from the two cent letter rate to one cent. Beginning on 24 December 1901, relaxed regulations authorized private printers in the United States to drop "Private Mailing Card" in favor of "Post Card" or "Postcard."

During the "Undivided Back" period printers began to leave white space on the front of the card where the sender could write a message without spoiling the artwork (see VC 0004_3000). Cards were first permitted to have a "Divided Back," with text written on the left half of a dividing line and the address on the right half, beginning in England in 1902. France switched to a divided back in 1904, Germany in 1905, and the United States on 1 March 1907 (VC 0004_3025).

Around 1900 the first postcards made of "Real Photos" rather than artwork began to circulate, aided in by advances in amateur photography equipment by companies such as Kodak. Kodak also introduced postcard paper for photographic development and photography studios began to offer portraits printed as postcards (see VC 0004_2504). Many local town, countryside, and architectural images were captured during this period by local photographers, then printed and sold as postcards (see VC 0004_1708).

The loosening of government regulation, lowered costs, and advances in amateur photography all contributed to a postcard craze that lasted from 1900 to the First World War. Postcards were the preferred means to send a quick note, whether across town or across a continent. U.S. postal records for fiscal year 1907-1908 indicate over 677 million postcards mailed.

German printers' fine artwork and superior processes allowed Germany to dominate the market until the outbreak of war in 1914 (see VC 0004_3017). European printers opened offices in the United States and postcard artists moved to Germany. When war halted the flow of high-quality German cards, English and American producers attempted to fill market demand. Their processes, however, resulted in cards of inferior quality. From the War to 1930 cards were printed with a white border around the edge to bring down high printing costs by saving ink (see VC 0004_3038). Lower quality contributed to the demise of postcard mania.

Although new linen paper processes in the 1930s resulted in better quality, more brightly colored card art (see VC 0004_3037), the postcard industry continued to decline. After 1939, new Photochromes, color photo postcards, began to replace both linen and black and white photo postcards (see VC 0004_0200). By the end of World War II these "Chromes" had completely replaced other card forms. The widely available telephone replaced the postcard for sending short messages and postcards became largely confined to the realm of souvenirs (see VC 0004_0600). Though postcards continue to be produced, they would never regain the enormous popularity of the early twentieth century.

Scope and Content

The majority of the approximately 170 postcards in the collection fall between 1901 and World War I and are Undivided Back or early Divided Back cards. The bulk of the remaining postcards fall between World War I and the end of World War II, including several examples of linen paper cards. The remaining postcards are Photochrome cards from the 1970s or 80s.

The primary subject matter of the postcards is scenes from around Loudoun County, although there are images from surrounding Virginia counties and several cards related to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Buildings, images of nature, and well-known streets figure prominently. Leesburg is the location most covered, including many images of Market Street, King Street, and the Loudoun County Courthouse.

Arrangement

Geographic

- 0100 Ashburn
- 0200 Ashby's Gap
- 0300 Berryville
- 0400 Bluemont
- 0500 Charles Town, WV
- 0600 Dulles
- 0700 Elvan
- 0800 Georgetown
- 0900 Hamilton

- 1000 Harpers Ferry, WV
- 1100 Hillsboro
- 1200 Lexington
- 1300 Lincoln
- 1400 Luray
- 1500 Natural Bridge
- 1600 Paeonian Springs
- 1700 Purcellville
- 1800 Red Hill
- 1900 Round Hill
- 2000 Ryan
- 2100 Shenandoah Valley & National Park
- 2200 Staunton
- 2300 Waterford
- 2400 Historic memorabilia
- 2500 Portraits
- 2600 Lucketts
- 2700 Middleburg
- 3000 Leesburg

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Item 0004_0200: View from Ashby's Gap, 1980 C

Item 0004_0300: Abbey Guesthouse, 1980

Item 0004_0301: Air View Holy Cross Abbey, 1980

Item 0004_0400: U.S. Weather Bureau, Bluemont, VA [text on front], n.d.

Item 0004_0500: John Brown Wagon, 1950 C

Item 0004_0600: Washington's Dulles International Airport is an international gateway to this country through Washington, our nation's capital. It is a jet airport of both beauty and efficiency, offering the most modern facilities to all its visitors. 1970 C

Item 0004_0700: Mt. Olivet M.E. Church, Elvan, VA [text on front], 1907

Item 0004_0800: Gen. George Washington's Headquarters, M St between 30th & 31st St NW, DC, 1910 C

Item 0004_1000: John Brown's Fort, Harper's Ferry, W. VA, 1910 C

Item 0004_1001: John Brown's Monument and War Tablets from B. & O. Station, 1922

Item 0004_1002: Looking Towards the Junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, 1920 D

Item 0004_1003: Harper's Ferry, W. VA, from Loudoun Heights on Main Line--Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 1920 D

Item 0004_1004: Jefferson Rock, Harper's Ferry W. VA. [text on back], 1900

Item 0004_1005: The Harner House Built 1780 by Robert Harner the

Item 0004_1005: The Harper House, Built 1788, by Robert Harper, the Founder of Harpers Ferry, 1900

Item 0004_1006: View of the Gap from Hill Top House, 1900

Item 0004_1007: Looking Down the Gap from Marist Hill, 1900

Item 0004_1200: Gen. Robert E. Lee on "Traveler." Gen. E. Lee on Traveler was taken by Miley of Lexington, Va. At Washington & Lee College in 1869. Lee was born Jan. 19, 1807 and died Oct. 12, 1870, age 63 years, 8 months, 23 days. 1920 C

Item 0004_1300: High School Building, Lincoln, VA, 1910 C

Item 0004_1301: Lincoln High School, 1930 C

Item 0004_1302: The former Lyceum Hall, lincoln, Loudoun County, Virginia. Built in 1874, this building now houses A.M. Janney & Son - the finest store in town. 1980 C

Item 0004_1400: The Road to Stony Man Mountain Shenandoah National Park. THE MIMSLYN, Hotel of Distinction near Shenandoah National Park and Beautiful Caverns Luray, Virginia, 1915 C

Item 0004_1500: Natural Bridge Hotel, Natural Bridge, VA, 1920 C

Item 0004_1501: Fan Tail Falls, Southwest Virginia [Poem: "In Old Virginia"], 1920 C

Item 0004_1600: Paeonian Springs, Virginia. The Paeonian Springs Academy held classes from 1903 until 1930. Begun by John Simpson as a private school, it joined the public school system in 1910. The building, located along Rte. 9, is now a private residence. 1930 C

Item 0004_1601: Paeonian Springs, Virginia. In the early 1900s, the Paeonian Springs Depot bustled with activity as the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad provided train service to this quaint resort village. 1900 C

Item 0004_1602: Paeonian Springs, Virginia

Item 0004_1700: Purcellville, VA [copy of postcard of downtown Purcellville, c. 1909], 1900 C

Item 0004_1701: [Buggies, woman, and power lines in front of J T Cornwell Groceries & Meats & Purcellville Pharmacy], 1900 C

Item 0004_1702: Main Street. Residential Section, Purcellville, VA [copy of postcard], 1900 C

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Item 0004_1704: Bank Block - Purcellville VA, 1911

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Item 0004_1708: School Fair Parade, Purcellville, VA, 1915

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Item 0004_1901: Lovers' Retreat At Bear's Den, Near Round Hill, VA, 1920 C

Item 0004_1902: The Village Brook Round Hill, VA, 1910 C

Item 0004_1903: Will Be Looking For You At Round Hill Station. 1910 C

Item 0004_2000: Greetings from RYAN, VA [man and wagon in hay field], 1920

Item 0004_2001: Greetings from RYAN, VA [cows in field], 1920

Item 0004_2100: Apple Blossom Time in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, 1920 C

Item 0004_2101: Panoramic View, from Buck Hollow Overlook. Shenandoah National Park, Virginia, 1970 C

Item 0004_2200: Birthplace of Woodrow Wilson, Staunton, VA. Woodrow Wilson, son of Rev. Joseph R. Wilson, Staunton Presbyterian minister, was born in Staunton Dec. 8, 1856, at the Presbyterian mass. World War President 1912 to 1920. 1920 C

Item 0004_2201: Barracks, Augusta Military Academy, Fort Defiance, Near Staunton, VA, 1920 C

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Item 0004_2301: Friends Meeting House, Waterford, VA. Built 1775. 1906 C

Item 0004_2302: Lower Main Street, Waterford, VA, 1907

Item 0004_2303: The Old Mill-- Waterford, VA near Leesburg, Virginia, 1950 C

Item 0004_2304: An Old Street In Waterford, VA, 1911

Item 0004_2305: Main Street, Waterford, VA, 1950 C

Item 0004_2306: [Post Office, Waterford, VA], 1988

Item 0004_2307: [Country Store, Waterford, VA], 1974 C

Item 0004_2308: Waterford Mill, Waterford, VA

Item 0004_2400: Washington The Father of his Country [Washington with leaves & cherries], 1910 C

Item 0004_2401: Washington The Father of his Country [Washington portrait with flag], 1910 C

Item 0004_2402: Washington The Father of his Country [Washington portrait], 1910 C

Item 0004_2403: Washington Febr. 22d 1732 Dec. 14th 1799 [Washington portrait], 1910 C

Item 0004_2404: Flags of the Confederacy "And twill live in song and story, Though its folds are in the dust" [information about flags on lower face], 1930 C

Item 0004_2405: John Campbell, 4th Earl of Loudoun

Item 0004_2406: "The World Must Be Made Safe for Democracy . . ."

Item 0004_2407: The Nations Choice

Item 0004_2409: Our Choice

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Item 0004_2500: Lucy Wering McCabe. Age 5 years. 1900 C

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Item 0004_2502: [Mary Kate Beamer], 1910 C

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Item 0004_3007: Old Court House where President James Monroe presided

as Justice, Leesburg, VA, 1910 C

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Item 0004_3011: Confederate Monument, Leesburg, VA, 1908

Item 0004_3012: Confederate Monument, Leesburg, VA, 1908

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Item 0004_3021: "BELMONT", Near Leesburg, VA. Residence of the Hon. Patrick J. Hurley, Former Secretary of War. This Mansion Was Built in 1800 by Ludwell Lee, Son of Richard Henry Lee, Signer of the Declaration of Independence. 1938

Item 0004_3022: "BELMONT", Near Leesburg, VA. Residence of the Hon. Patrick J. Hurley, Former Secretary of War. This Mansion was Built in 1800 by Ludwell Lee, Son of Richard Henry Lee, Signer of the Declaration of Independence. 1955

Item 0004_3023: "Belmont" near Leesburg, VA. Residence of George C. Clarke, Hotel Owner and Lawyer, Washington, D.C. This Mansion was built in 1800 by Ludwell Lee, Son of Richard Henry Lee, Signer of the Declaration of Independence. 1950 C

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Item 0004_3037: The Inn Leesburg, Virginia Located on Routes 7 and 15. 37 Scenic Miles from Washington, D.C. Very Reasonable Rates Fine Southern-cooked Food S. W. Keesee, Owner. 1940 C

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Item 0004_3044: Old Methodist Church, Leesburg, VA, 1900 C

Item 0004_3045: Old Stone Church Built In 1785. The First Conference of the Methodist Church in Virginia was held in this old building at Leesburg, VA. 1900 C

Item 0004_3046: Old Stone Church, The first Conference of the Methodist Church in America was held in this old building in Leesburg, VA. Built in 1785. 1900 C

Item 0004_3047: The Old Stone Church Where The First Methodist Conference Held In America Assembled. 1905 C

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Item 0004_3059: Springwood Home of Mr. S. S. Lutz. Waverly Home of Mr. Robt. T. Hempstone, 1900 C

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Item 0004_3075: Thompson-Plaster X Ray Co., King and Loudoun Streets

Leesburg, VA], 1926

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Item 0004_3078: Washington's Headquarters, Leesburg 1930 C

Item 0004_3079: The Worsley and Alexander Houses on Loudoun Street. Leesburg, VA. Where Washington was entertained, also Lafayette on his return visit August 9th, 1825. 1930 C

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Item 0004_3090: Greetings from Leesburg, VA [cows in field], 1920 C

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Item 0004_3095: Balls Bluff Cemetery is located on Rt. 15 two miles north of Leesburg, Virginia. It is the site of the only major battle of the Civil War in Loudoun County and one of the smallest National cemeteries. 1980 C

Item 0004_3096: Big Spring, Leesburg, VA, 1907

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Item 0004_3108: R.V. Brundage - Rental - Contract - 3/4 yd. Shovel - Crane - Clam - Backhoe Phone 99 Leesburg, VA, 1960 C

Item 0004_3109: Loudoun Museum and Log Cabin, n.d.

Item 0004_3110: Oatlands, n.d.

Item 0004_3111: White's Ferry, n.d.

Item 0004_3112: Town Hall and Parking Structure, Leesburg, VA, n.d.

Item 0004_3113: Col. John Singleton Mosby, n.d.

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Item 0004_3115: Thomas Balch Library, photo courtesy of Jim Hanna Photography, n.d.

Item 0004_3117: Winter comes to the Xerox International Center for Training and Management Development, 35 miles northwest of Washington D.C., near Leesburg, Virginia. n.d.

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