

CARDtalk

The Official Newsletter Of The Toronto Postcard Club

Volume 41 Number 2

Fall 2020



POSTCARDS FOR THE BLIND

Norman Ball looks at French technology that helped the visually impaired write their own cards.

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PIGEON RIVER: STORY OF A BORDER TOWN Page 5

OLD ALBUMS: TURN OF THE CENTURY SWEDEN Page 11

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- * Bob Atkinson Finally Lands The Big One (While Stuck Indoors!) *
- * Andrew Cunningham Takes Us To Europe's Oddest Neutral Territory *
- * The TPC Zooms Into the Future *

CLUB EXECUTIVE – 2020

George Sachs, President
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Win Boyd, Treasurer (also Show Chair)
Barbara Henderson, Membership Coordinator (also Website)
Andrew Cunningham, *Card Talk* Editor (also Blog Editor)
John Sayers, *Card Talk* Assistant Editor

JOINING THE CLUB

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in postcards. Dues for the current year are \$22 in Canada, \$22 (U.S.) in the U.S., and \$25 (U.S.) in all other countries. The dues listed include all members at a single address, who will receive one copy of each edition of *Card Talk* (additional copies require an additional payment and should be requested from the Membership Coordinator). For further information, see the Membership section of the TPC website or email the Membership Coordinator at membership@torontopostcardclub.com. Enquiries may also be sent to the Club's postal address:

Toronto Postcard Club
PO Box 47538 Don Mills
Toronto, ON M3C 3S7

OUR MEETINGS

The Club generally meets monthly, other than in the summer months. Some meetings feature speakers from the TPC or invited guests, while others are more informal in nature. For the duration of the pandemic we are planning to meet via ZOOM. For more information, see page 23 of this issue (the inside back cover).

OUR NEWSLETTER

Card Talk is published three times per year – generally in April, August and November. It is the official newsletter of the Toronto Postcard Club and has been published without interruption since January 1980. Contributions are welcome but should be discussed with the Editor in advance of submission. Submissions and Letters to the Editor should be emailed to editor@torontopostcardclub.com. Please ensure that scanned images are scanned at 300 dpi or higher – they cannot be reproduced otherwise. If contributions are mailed, please send them to the Editor at the TPC's postal address as noted elsewhere on this page. Please note that we do not reproduce images of recent postcards unless the consent of the copyright holder has been obtained.

ON THE INTERNET

Our website is www.torontopostcardclub.com. The site includes features on postcard history, a blog and updated information about meetings and events. We are also on Facebook under the name Toronto Postcard Club – please stop by and give us a “like”!

AUCTION

Barb and Win have been putting their Covid-19 down time to good use and, at last report, had around 800 postcards scanned and described for the next auction. Now we just need the auction software update to be completed. We're hopeful of a later fall auction. We'll keep you informed.

UPCOMING SHOW STATUS REPORT

We are sorry to have to report the unsurprising news that the **Eastern Ontario Postcard & Ephemera Show** at Merrickville, which would have been held on 19 September 2020, has been cancelled.

At press time, we had not heard anything official about the **Golden Horseshoe Postcard Club's** sale at Dundas, which is scheduled for 27 September 2020. Please see our website for further information.

Eastern Ontario Postcard Show and Related Paper Ephemera
Saturday, September 19, 2020
9am to 4pm

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

During the last few months I've had time to mull over many things. One of the things I've thought about is, why in the world would I collect postcards from the early part of the last century. It's more complicated than I thought. It started not with marbles but with used comic books. I was in grade 2 or 3 when I saw two brothers selling comics, close to the southwest corner of College St. and Spadina Ave, for a penny each. Since I had been saving my pennies for a long time, I bought as many as I could. I had them for a year or two, until my mother tossed them out during spring cleaning. Their value today is rather unfathomable. However, from reading comics, I went on to read books voraciously.

History and historical fiction became my favourite reading topics. When I moved from Toronto to Midland, Ontario, I was surrounded by history. Fort Ste. Marie, just outside Midland, was established in 1639 by the Jesuits together with the Indigenous Wendat people who had been in the area for centuries, along the bank of the Wye River just inland from Georgian Bay. Samuel de Champlain had already been in the area, of what today is Penetanguishene, in 1615 and before him, the explorer Étienne Brûlé had been in the area. The Martyrs' Shrine, dedicated to the Jesuits who had died there in the 1640s, was completed 1925 and overlooks the present day re-creation of Fort Ste. Marie.

I did not start collecting postcards until the early 1990s. Because of my love of history and because I lived in Midland from my late grade school years through to my high school graduation, the collection of the postcards from this area was quite natural to me. I joined our club in the late 1990s when my friend Norman Gordon, a member, introduced me to the club.

I was poring over some photos and postcards of the area recently, and I wondered *what I was missing?* Or rather what I would like to still obtain for my collection. There is/was a train trestle over the Wye River almost adjacent to Fort Ste. Marie. I've seen a photo of a train bellowing smoke and tearing over that trestle and the frozen river below, the Martyrs Shrine on the hill in the background. And I wonder, is there a postcard depicting that scene? Or how many different postcards are there of the old GTR station in Midland? As a collector, I never stop wondering about what cards I can still discover.

I ponder, should I still be collecting? In the time of Covid-19, one wonders about that!

Well, enough of my questioning why! The club will soon be having a Zoom meeting as our first meeting in September – see page 23 for more information about our whole fall schedule.



George Sachs (TPC #1284)

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Well, we here at *Card Talk* are now into the “new normal” and, on the whole, have adjusted well. Thanks to the efforts of many, *Card Talk* is still coming out like clockwork. On that note, the eagle-eyed among you might have noticed a small change to our cover design – the number “132” that you see in relatively large type. What’s that for, you ask? Well, I’m hoping that it will solve a small problem I’ve noticed, which is that it’s cumbersome to refer to a past issue of *Card Talk*. Whether you’re asking us for a back issue in an email or referring to a past article that you yourself wrote, there’s little choice but to say something like “In Volume 34, Number 2” or “In the Spring/Summer 2007 issue”. Wouldn’t it be a lot easier, I thought, if we’d just numbered the issues from “#1” on up, right from the very first issue in 1980? While we can’t rewrite history, I’ve gone back and counted and this issue is indeed issue 132. So from now on, at least, there will be an easy way to refer to each issue. Making this “whole number” fairly conspicuous should also make it easier for the increasingly hard-of-seeing among us to keep our loose issues in the right order, rather than having to squint at each issue in the pile to determine which “volume” and “number” it is.

In totting up the old issues, I found that in our 40+ years we’ve never missed a single number. For the first ten years, back in the 1980s, there were 4 issues per volume (which makes 40), at which point the frequency was reduced to 3 per year (which, over 30 additional completed volumes, makes 90). That adds up to 130, to which we can now add the 2 issues we’ve published so far in Volume 41, for a grand total of 132. Well done, past and present editors and contributors!

It seems that the hobby is doing well from the “pause”. I’m sure a lot of us are like Bob Atkinson, who notes in his article in this issue that he has finally had time to sort his cards into boxes, by county and province. The auction sites seem to be as busy as ever – I can report a very high price that I recently observed for a very fine railway station card from the village of Sinclair, Manitoba. I forget the exact figure, but the real photo card made around \$600 after some determined bidding (none of which was by me!). The card ticked every conceivable box for a “depot” ... small town, now virtually a ghost town, excellent image quality, card in perfect shape, showing a locomotive at the platform, and also the water tower and other buildings – plus (the coup de grâce) a couple of perfect strikes of what must be an exceedingly rare SINCLAIR STATION, MAN. splitting cancel. It was a pleasure to see, but for \$600 the buyer deserves some exclusivity for his/her image, I think, so I didn’t make a copy of it. I have to say I daydreamed a bit about my box of mostly less-auspicious railway RPPCs and did a bit of multiplying by 600 ... but I soon came back to earth as I had to admit the Sinclair card tops the best of mine.

Anyway, enjoy the issue ... there is a nice variety of content this time. Hope to see as many of you as possible at our ZOOM meetings this fall.

Andrew Cunningham (TPC #1424)

Pigeon River: The History of Ontario's "Do-It-Yourself" International Border Crossing

By Jeri Danyleyko (TPC #1502)

Pigeon River was a small roadside border hamlet located in northwestern Ontario. It had a unique and interesting history, which can be covered almost entirely in postcards. On Saturday, March 7, 2020, Jeri Danyleyko (TPC #1502), an aficionado of ghost towns, gave a presentation to club members at our usual meeting place at the Ontario Historical Society offices in North York. The following is a version of her presentation.

Pigeon River's story began in 1915 when the Rotary Club in Duluth, Minnesota sponsored a new branch in the city of Fort William (now Thunder Bay). At that time there was no easy means of transportation between the two cities. Roads and railways were non-existent. The only option was waterways. The Rotarians were determined to change that.

In 1916, the Rotarians put together a proposal that called for the widening and realignment of two logging trails on each side of the border. The proposal was enthusiastically embraced by the provincial, state and county authorities all of whom provided funding to complete the project.

Missing from their proposal was a bridge to cross the Pigeon River, an international waterway that divided the two countries. Since such matters were under federal jurisdiction, building a bridge would require a bilateral agreement between Canada and the United States, a lengthy and time-consuming process under the very best of conditions. The middle of World War I was definitely not the best of conditions. To get around that, the Rotarians came up with an unorthodox approach. They decided to raise the money themselves, build the bridge at cost, and then present it to their respective federal governments as a "fait accompli."

A wooden bridge was hastily constructed and opened on August 17, 1917. The opening celebrations were well attended. They began with a motorcade travelling from Thunder Bay to Grand Marais, Minnesota, a distance of just over 125 km. The festivities included 65 cars carrying 240 people, a pipe band, and a much-needed mobile motor and tire repair shop.

Upon arrival, they were greeted by approximately 250 Rotarians from Duluth as well as by provincial and state dignitaries, including Howard Ferguson, Minister of Transportation, who arrived with a cheque for \$768 to cover the final amount owing. Not surprisingly, federal authorities were excluded from the guest list but they made an appearance anyway. According to the *Cook County News-Herald*, total cost for construction was \$4,801.78. The bridge quickly became known as the "Outlaw Bridge."



Figure 1. Outlaw Bridge, ca. 1918 (Lovelady Bros., Port Arthur)

Commercial business and traffic began expanding in the early 1920s. The first business to open was the Pigeon River Hotel, built in 1923 by Max Hurtig, a Port Arthur businessman and hotelkeeper. The business grew rapidly. Following the repeal of the Ontario *Temperance Act* in 1927, the hotel's offerings were quickly expanded to include beer sales, undoubtedly a big attraction to thirsty Americans still in the grips of Prohibition.

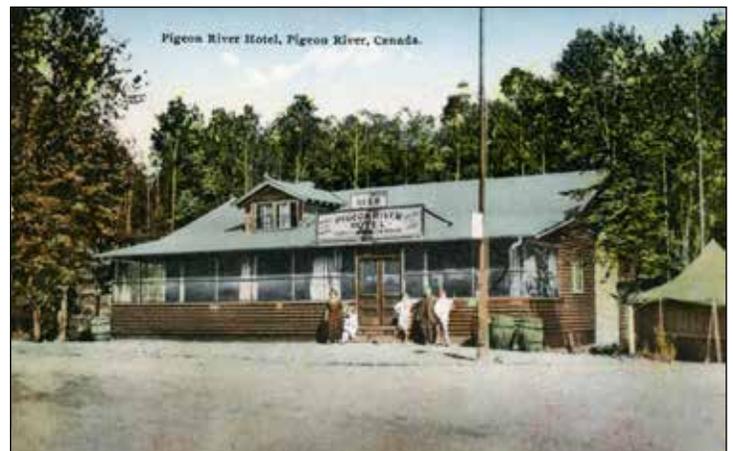


Figure 2. The Pigeon River Hotel, ca. 1927 (Novelty Mfg. & Art Co.)

In addition to beer drinkers, the hotel focused on hunters, fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts. By 1930 it had more than doubled in size with the addition of a second storey, a large addition on the south side and a group of small housekeeping cabins. In 1926, Hurtig established the International Transit Co., the first commercial bus service in northern Ontario. It served communities such as Kenora, Red Lake and Pigeon River, with the hotel being used as one of the depots.

In 1918, following the success of the new road and bridge, Minister Ferguson promised northern residents a new park in an effort to boost tourism. During the 1920s, the Middle Falls Park was established by the Department of Highways. A small building, located beside the Pigeon River Hotel, served for a period of time as the park booth. Finally, in 1930, the rickety wooden bridge was replaced with a sturdy new steel span, the result of a properly negotiated agreement between the U.S. and Canada.



Figure 3. The hotel, park booth and bus depot, ca. 1930 (Novelty Mfg. & Art Co.) – Note the bus to the left of the hotel and also the small park booth



Figure 4. The new bridge from the American side, looking northwest towards Canada, ca. 1930 (Novelty Art & Mfg. Co.)

Pigeon River continued to thrive and grow throughout the '30s. The community and hotel were superbly marketed with an endless series of postcards showing the hotel, the wildlife, the townsite and staged special events. By the late 1930s, the community included a post office, an ESSO station, a tourist information centre, and a number of dwellings.



Figure 5. The hotel, facing south, ca. 1938 (The Camera Shop)



Figure 6. The townsite, looking south, mid-1940s

The end of World War II brought newfound prosperity and an increasing love for the automobile. North Americans took to their cars in unprecedented numbers and began exploring every nook and cranny of their countries.

The Middle Falls Park had adapted to change over the years. By the mid-1940s it offered a store, rental cabins, a lookout over the falls, and a large recreation area that included a wading pool for the kiddies.



Figure 7. Middle Falls Park, store and signage, ca. mid-1940s



Figure 8. Middle Falls Park, recreational area, mid-1940s



Figure 9. The Middle Falls, late 1940s (Harold's Studio, Fort William)

The community of Pigeon River had also changed. A new hotel building was added and the old hotel was turned into a gift shop, ably managed by Gladys Hurtig, who was married to Max's son Harry. Gladys was an experienced retail buyer who sold everything from inexpensive souvenirs and trinkets to fine English bone china, sweaters and snugly outdoor wear. Over time the gift shop grew to eclipse the hotel.



Figure 10. The new hotel building and gift shop, ca. late 1940s (The Camera Shop)



Figure 11. Pigeon River Gift Shop, 1950s (The Camera Shop)

During the 1950s, the government began making a careful study of increasing traffic patterns. Records show that from 1951 to 1958, the number of American tourists using the Pigeon River crossing had increased by 11,000 per year. It was becoming clear the old highway was no longer adequate.



Figure 12. The bridge and townsite, looking north, early 1950s (The Camera Shop)



Figure 13. The townsite, looking south, early 1950s. (The Camera Shop) The new hotel and gift shop are on the left.

In 1960, government officials called a meeting of all of the local business owners. In attendance were seven officials from the Ontario Department of Highways, five officials from the Minnesota Highways Department, along with other representatives from the federal levels of both the U.S. and Canadian governments. It was then that they unveiled their final decision.



Figure 14. Customs building, ca. late 1950s (Western Smallware) – see this in full colour on the back cover.

The roadway was to be completely realigned bypassing the old border town by 11 km downstream, where a new bridge and customs office were to be erected. It was the end of the line for the small townsite. The new road was opened in August 1963. Much of the townsite, including the hotel and bridge, was dismantled shortly after that.

The park lasted much longer. In 1963, it was upgraded to a provincial park and renamed the Pigeon River Provincial Park. It was a popular tourist destination for many years. During the 1990s, the Ministry of Natural Resources compiled a study indicating there was serious ecological damage to the delicate ecostructure surrounding the Middle Falls. In 2002, a decision was made to close the park to all vehicular traffic.

Today a few remnants of the old Pigeon River townsite still stand. The original customs building, tourist information centre and several of the small cabins remain in use as seasonal residences or for storage. The townsite can still be accessed. It can be found on Old Border Road, 68 km southwest of Thunder Bay. The park has been reclassified as “non-operating” but is open to the public for exploration and hiking. Information can be found on the Ontario Parks website.

Postcards Written by the Blind

By Norman Roger Ball (TPC #1351)

It's always great to get a completely “new” take on the history of postcards. In this article, Norman Ball leads us into a very interesting and long-forgotten byway in the world of postcards past. – ed.



Two of my treasured possessions are gifts from Mireille Duhon, a dear friend, colleague and collector of artifacts and documentation relating to the history of blindness. One is a postcard written in 1933 by a blind woman we know only as Rosa of Naples. The other is a German *guide-main*, a writing frame or guide, designed specifically to help the blind write on postcards.

The card in photo 1 shows the work of two different hands. The address in flowing inked cursive script is clearly the work of a sighted person. The florid script on the left hand edge reads “*stampa dei ciechi*” – that is, printing of the blind. The block-letter message is from the hand of a blind person using a pencil and a writing frame.

The Italian message is straightforward. “*Ho ricevuto il vaglia ringrazio molto Rosa di Napoli*” means “I received the money order and I thank you very much, Rosa of Naples.” (Thanks to a friend, Pippa Kilbourn, for the translation.)

The postcard is postmarked in Naples and was sent to Francavilla, province of Potenza, in the southern Region of Basilicata. The card arrived at its destination 29.XII.33 (29 December 1933), which explains why the picture side bears a cheery image and “*Buon Anno*” (Happy New Year).

Figure 1. Postcard with hand-printed message using pencil and writing frame.

Rosa wrote her message using a *guide-main*, a hand guide or writing frame. As explained on the website of the Perkins School for the Blind, these are “tools designed for aiding in handwriting without sight.” They come in a variety of designs. To see some of these, Google “Perkins Archives writing frames” and then click on the link in the Abstract.

The writing guide in my collection is a rarer type designed specifically for writing on postcards. It is German, ca. 1910.



Figure 2. Guide-main or writing guide, 15.8 x 11.8 x 1.3 cm.



Figure 3. Writing guide with postkarte but not attached to locating pins.

Figure 2 shows the writing guide, looking like a wooden book with hinged front and back covers and only one leaf. The single leaf is a thin piece of plywood with pins in both upper corners to hold the postcard firmly. The frame of the writing guide is robust and skillfully executed in hardwood. It is likely that the maker was also blind.

Figure 3 shows the postkarte in position. Each hinged cover consists of a wooden hardwood frame with movable softwood slats: the two frames offer three different configurations.



Figure 4. Postkarte seen through writing opening.

Figure 4 shows the cover closed over the postcard. The writing openings are clearly visible for the address and the message. The movable slats are also clearly visible. On the left side are the message slats, which are at right angles to the address slats. On the card shown in Photo 1, the address was written by a sighted writer and only the message slats were used by the blind writer.



Figure 5. Writing frame with third set of slats for longer lines.

The slats in this view traverse the entire width of the card. Perhaps they were used to write a message the full width of a postcard, which would then be mailed in an envelope.

Operation was quite straightforward. After writing one line between two slats, one moved the lower slat upwards to prepare for the next line. The movable guide slats are somewhat fragile and a metal pick attached to a piece of string, shown in Figures 3 and 5, repositioned the slats. The other string might have held a pencil at one time.

Did the blind write many postcards? The short answer is: we don't know. Nor do we know if many postcard collectors would even recognize one upon seeing it. However, there are some facts to consider. Many, if not all, students at schools for the blind would have been introduced to writing guides

and taught to print letters that the sighted could read. Such writing was often called “noir”, meaning black, as in the ink used in writing.

The 1829 Braille system of writing with raised dots was an extraordinary technological innovation. It allowed blind-to-blind communication without the aid of the sighted. However, blind-to-sighted communications were also important. The First World War left a legacy of many thousands of blinded soldiers and civilians, more in France than in any other combatant nation. To deal with this legacy the French created 19 new rehabilitation schools for the blind. One report written by a member of the French Academy stressed that “these men should be taught without delay the use of the devices which will enable them to write in black [usually pencil], without any help to their family.” Such writing was important for maintaining family ties. Braille for communicating with other blind people came second.

The Golden Age of postcards and the ensuing decades were a time of monumental technical innovation in the field of communications. The blind avidly adopted and adapted many signature nineteenth-century technologies – bicycles, sewing machines, typewriters, stenographic machines, stereoplate printing, telegraph, telephone and amateur (“ham”) radio operation. There is no reason to believe they ignored postcards.

Postcards tell stories and postcards written by the blind are part of the larger story of the quest to communicate with, and participate in, the sighted world and to share some of the excitement previously reserved for the sighted. We need to scan our collections more carefully, keep an eye open at sales, and share what we find.

I would like to acknowledge my debt to Mireille Duhon, friend, researcher and collector of devices of the blind. All photos were taken by Mireille. Those wishing to communicate with the author may do so by email at normanrogerball@outlook.com .

Ontario Institution for the Blind, Brantford.



Founded in 1872 and now known as the W. Ross Macdonald School, the K-12 school is reportedly the only academic institution in the province that is specifically for the blind. Among its alumni was the late musician Jeff Healey, who lost his sight in infancy. Numbered “140”, the postcard was one of the earliest offerings of Warwick Bros. & Rutter, dating from early 1904, and may have been the first by that publisher to be “co-branded” with another seller, in this case W. J. F. Mallagh of Brantford.

What Albums Teach Us: A Swedish Collection (1901-05)

By Andrew Cunningham (TPC #1424)

Always looking for new ideas (or any ideas) for *Card Talk*, I came up with the idea of occasionally featuring a single, intact postcard album that has survived from the distant past. This would be a valuable exercise, I think, because old postcard albums tell us how the original collectors of postcards thought about the hobby – which cards they actually collected, how they acquired them and how they organized them.

Albums

Fifty or sixty years ago, when the postcard hobby was still young, postcard albums from the pre-1920 “Golden Age” were in plentiful supply. That’s because it was around that time that the estates of many of the original collectors – people born in the 1880s and 1890s – came on the market. Naturally enough, collectors and dealers of the 1960s and 70s tended to disassemble these albums, keeping the cards that would sell easily and putting the others aside or even discarding them. The winnowing process that began way back then has continued as postcards cycle through generations of collectors. The result is that the boxes in our postcard shows are filled with a non-representative sample of what was in those old albums. In other words, our dealers’ inventory tends to contain a lot more town views, railway stations and RPPCs than would have been found in most of the original albums, and many fewer Easter and St. Patrick’s Day designs, monochrome images of famous paintings, scenes from forgotten stage plays, and so forth.

The Jonsson Album

While the aim of preserving old albums is laudable, it’s hard to do, since intact albums are now hard to come by and, obviously, a lot more valuable broken up. Nevertheless, I’ve managed to find two or three such albums in my time, of which the one that I will present here was the first, and my personal favourite. It’s a great album because it:

- Comes from an early period of postcard collecting;
- Has as its theme something that I’d otherwise know little about; and
- Represents a very broad range of the types of postcard that relate to that theme.

The album was assembled by a young woman – most likely a teenager – named Maria (or “Mia”) Jonsson, who lived in Stockholm’s Gamla Stan (“Old Town”), at 28 Skomakaregatan. That address, which today is in the city’s most popular restaurant and tourist district, is shown in the Streetview image in Figure 1. I acquired the album five years ago from a collectibles dealer in Winnipeg. Because the dealer didn’t

specialize in postcards, he may have been less inclined to disassemble the album for individual sale (and even more so because the cards, being Swedish, would be difficult to sell in Canada). So it survived.



Figure 1. No. 28, Skomakaregatan today.

Anyway, whoever Mia Jonsson may have been (more on that later), she was a careful and methodical collector of postcards in the first years of the twentieth century. I say that because the album is laid out logically in sections that cover a broad range of cards that would have been popular in Sweden at the time. The cards cover a span of years from about 1901-05, with the largest number dating from the year 1904, when Mia must have been telling all her friends to send her as many cards as possible.

The album starts off, quite properly, with Sweden’s national flag and its royal family. Dated in 1904, the card in Figure 2 presents a fine image of King Oscar II (1829-1907) over the royal motto “Brödralfolkens väl” (loosely, “[For the] welfare of the brother nations”). As you’ll have noticed, the royal portrait is flanked by the flags of the “brother nations” of Sweden and Norway, for at the time the Swedish Kingdom included Norway. King Oscar, a man of great intellectual talents, was fluent in Norwegian and generally treated the country with more respect than it was accustomed to receiving from its Swedish overlords. However, that did not help him much when, in 1905, a referendum was held on whether to remain in the union with Sweden. In one of history’s great cliffhangers, the results were 368,392 votes to leave the union with Sweden and 184 votes to remain.

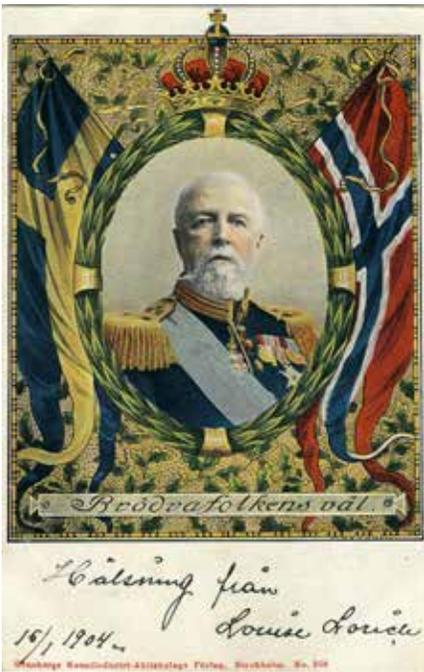


Figure 2. King Oscar II (Granbergs Konstindustri-AB, no. 268)

King Oscar was succeeded by his son Gustav V. Another of his sons, Prince Carl, is shown in Figure 3 with his wife, Princess Ingeborg, and their young daughters Margareta and Märta



Figure 3. Prince Carl and family (Axel Eliasson, no. 1873).

The album also contains a number of postcards of castles, including the sixteenth-century Gripsholm (Figure 4) in the town of Mariefred, which is now home to Sweden’s National Portrait Gallery.

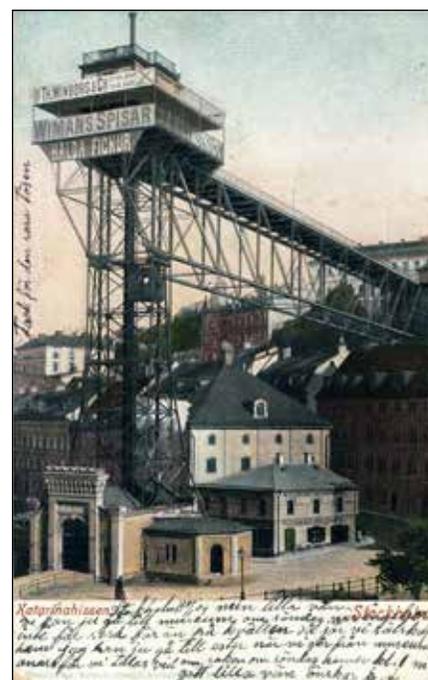
One of the largest sections of the album is devoted to the city of Stockholm itself. In Figure 5, we see an elegant winter scene on the grounds of the Kunglige Sjökrigsskolan (Royal Swedish Naval Academy) on Skeppsholmen, one of the islands that are included in the city of Stockholm. The Academy remained there until 1942.



Figure 4. Gripsholms Slott (Axel Eliasson, no. 3130, posted 1904)



Figure 5. The Royal Swedish Naval Academy (Axel Eliasson, no. 3581, posted 1904)



In January 1904, Mia received the postcard in Figure 6, depicting the Katarinahissen (Katarina Lift), an elevator in the district of Södermalm in Stockholm. Opened in 1883, the Katarinahissen eliminated the need

Figure 6. Katarinahissen, Stockholm (Granbergs Konstindustri-AB, no. 220, posted 1904)

for an arduous climb to the higher section of Södermalm. A similar elevator that replaced this one in the 1930s is still in place today. At the time of the postcard, the lift was powered by steam, but a few years later it was electrified.

Other Swedish cities are the next subject in Mia's album. Figure 7 is an unusual example: rather than monuments and castles, it shows a residential district of the city of Örebro, which is to the west of Stockholm, on the road to Oslo. The sender begins by thanking Mia for "the card" she had sent, which tells us that Mia was contributing to the albums of her friends and relatives as she built her own collection. The card is a real standout; a beautiful winter scene from a local publisher in Örebro.



Figure 7. Choicie, Örebro (Örebro Konstindusti AB, no. 2099, posted 1904)

The album does not neglect Sweden's natural wonders, including its many waterfalls. Figure 8, showing Tännforsen in north-central Sweden (just inland from the Norwegian port of Trondheim), is one of several postcards of this type. For reference, Tännforsen lies north of the 63rd parallel, just about as far north as Dawson City, Yukon.



Figure 8. Tännforsen (Granbergs Konstindusti-AB, no. 7)

Returning to what we were saying about how old postcard albums reveal the true interests of early twentieth-century collectors, we next find dozens of postcards showing generic domestic scenes, including children, pets, old-fashioned grandmothers, quaint country cottages, etc. Because there are few collectors for these cards, they tend to be ignored and lost, but at the time they were clearly very popular. Some, such as the charming "Först en kyss" (Figure 9) are still very appealing.



Figure 9. Först en kyss (A.E. [Axel Eliasson?], no. 795)

As we turn the album's pages, the images of children become those of young lovers, with a series of romantic cards. Figure 10 is of that nature and features a poem. I couldn't discover any reference to the poem, but it seems to translate very loosely as follows: *In late summer it is so lovely to be out on the lake. There I will dream and forget the world with the true heart that has swept me away.*

Moving from fantasies to the real world, Mia Jonsson next presents us with some figures from Swedish history. Three of these are similar to the postcard in Figure 11, respectively showing the Swedish-speaking Finnish poet Zakarias Topelius (1818-98), composer Karl Mikael



Figure 10. A romantic moment (A.E. [Axel Eliasson?], no. 703)

Bellmann (1740-95) and (in the example shown) writer and educator Ellen Key (1849-1926).

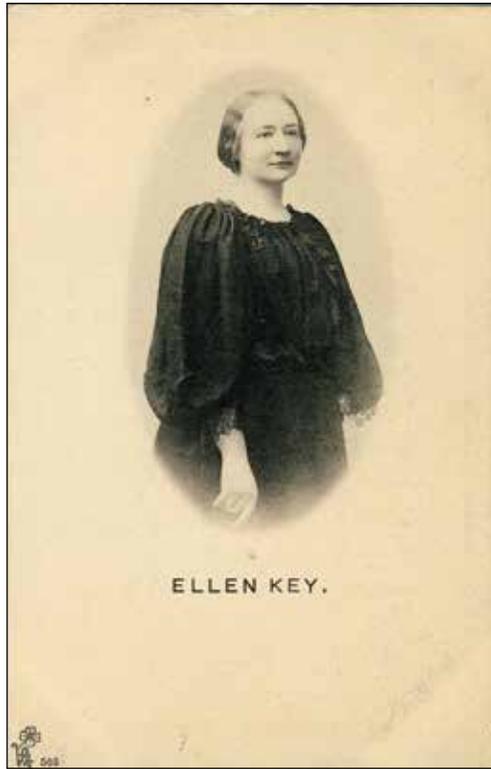


Figure 11. Ellen Key (pronounced “Kay”), Swedish author and suffragette (P.E., no. 503)

Finally, uniting the themes of female empowerment and mythology, we come, at the very end of the album, to the patriotic postcard in Figure 12, which shows Svea, the legendary female personification of the Swedish people. Depicted here as a Valkyrie or sword-maiden, and with gold accents on her clothing, shield and sword, the figure of Svea would have represented the military history of the kingdom, which tends to be overlooked after a century in which Sweden has been more closely associated with neutrality, multilateralism and pacifism. (But that was all in the future when Mia was collecting these cards).

Maria Jonsson, Woman of Mystery

So who, then, was the young lady who collected and arranged all these cards? Unfortunately, beyond the name I do not know. The only hints are that the album was sold to me by a dealer in Winnipeg and, as many albums do, had a couple of other keepsakes stuck into its empty slots over the years, long after the postcards had been inserted. The first of these was no help: a grainy photo of a group of young men who could have been anywhere, but the second was a little more useful. It was a yellowed newspaper clipping of a photo of two horses – a 67-pound Shetland and a 2,300-pound Percheron – standing side by side at the Iowa Agricultural College in Ames, Iowa. On the back of this clipping is a part of another article that suggests that the newspaper was the *Farmer’s Advocate*. The *Advocate* was published in London, Ontario beginning in the 1870s, with a

Winnipeg-based western edition from 1893 to 1934. This clipping was likely from the western edition and strongly suggests that Maria may have spent her Canadian life on a farm in Manitoba or one of the other Prairie provinces. Beyond that there is little to go on.

Concluding Thoughts

Maria Jonsson thought enough of this album to bring it with her on emigrating to Canada, and a century later, perhaps after the estate sale of a descendant, it ended up in a junk shop in Winnipeg. I was delighted to be able to buy it and its 191 cards as a “pig in a poke” from an eBay seller who clearly had no idea how to describe postcards. It made a nice addition to my tiny collection of preserved albums and began what has grown into a nice little collection of Swedish postcards.

I would add that I agonized about whether to leave the cards in Maria’s original album from Sweden. In the end, I decided that it would be better to remove them and put them into a modern binder with plastic sheets, while maintaining the original 4-per-page arrangement and keeping all the cards in their correct order. The old album was of the type that holds its contents in place with four little corner “straps”. While few, if any, “album marks” had developed in the cards’ first 110 years in the album, I decided that it was best to play it safe. In other albums that I have purchased more recently, I have taken what is perhaps the better approach of putting the cards back into the original album after removing them, scanning them, and inserting each one into a protective plastic sleeve.

Anyone with thoughts on postcard albums, or who owns one that he or she might like to share in Card Talk in a similar way, can get in touch with me anytime.



Figure 12. Svea (Axel Eliasson, no. 594)

What Postcards Teach Us: The Strange Story of Neutral Moeresnet

By Andrew Cunningham (TPC #1424)



Figure 1a. Soldiers of the three powers that controlled the area. As noted, numbers 1, 2, 5 and 7 are German, while 4 and 6 are Dutch and 3 and 8 Belgian.

Collectors of postcards of the “Golden Age” know things about that period (roughly 1903-1912 in Canada) that most academic historians would never know. Through their postcards, collectors can experience a period of history almost as if they were there. They join in its parades, enter into its homes, work its ploughs, build its bridges, gawk at its burning buildings and share in its joys and sorrows. Often, collectors learn things about the world that they would not have known otherwise.

The postcard in Figure 1a/b is an example of that. I don’t recall why I bought it – just that it seemed interesting and probably didn’t cost much. It also deals with an international border – borders being a topic I’ve looked for over the years. Of course, unlike most of my other “border” postcards, this one doesn’t show the Canada-U.S. frontier but, rather, a point in Europe at which three countries met (and still do): Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Now it so happens that in the town of Vaals, in the far south of Holland, where this postcard was mailed, there is a tower that offers the visitor an outstanding view of the surrounding lands. As noted on the postcard, this is called the “vierländerblick”; literally, the “Four Country Lookout”.

But wait? *Four* country lookout? Belgium ... Holland ... Germany ... that’s just *three*. Well if you look at the little map on the card, you might notice that, wedged between “Belgien” and “Deutschland” is another territory, labeled “Neutrales Gebiet” (“Neutral Area”). It turns out that, for over a century, from 1816 to 1920, this triangular parcel of



Figure 1b. Reverse of the card, posted (it appears) on 12 October 1906 at Vaals.

land – known as “Neutral Moresnet” (Mor-uh-NAY) – was jointly administered by Prussia and the Netherlands (upon Belgium’s independence in 1830, the Belgians replaced the Dutch). Figure 2 is an even larger map from a 1908 postcard that I found online.

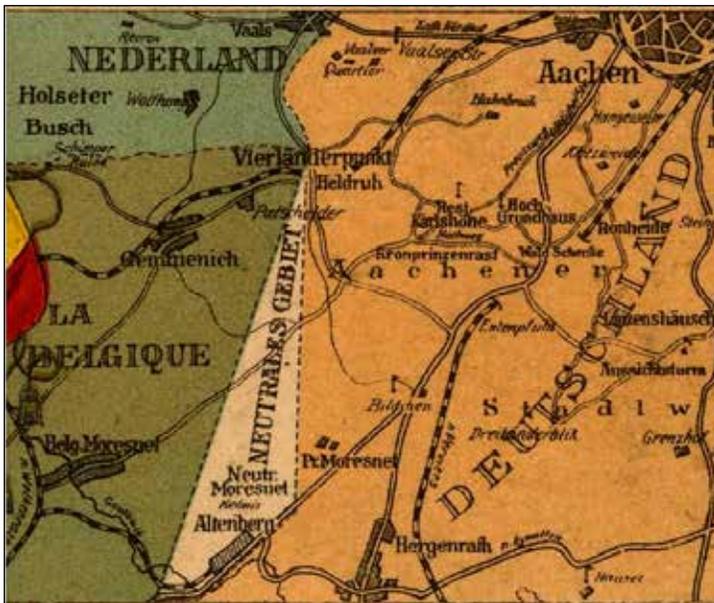


Figure 2. The map, showing the location southwest of Aachen.

The story of Neutral Moresnet emerges from the dissolution of Napoleon’s empire as negotiated at the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15. This established the modern boundary between Germany and the Netherlands, about which there was generally little dispute, with the exception of an area near the tiny village of Moresnet, which while otherwise unremarkable happened to be continental Europe’s only significant source of zinc ore, which was essential for the production of brass (and zinc, obviously).

So, a “condominium” was established, under which the tiny Moresnet district – only 900 acres; a square mile and a half, give or take – became an entity unto itself, with its own flag (a black, white and blue horizontal tricolour) and its own governing council. It was also an early version of a tax haven. After the mine closed in 1885, a local leader named Dr. Wilhelm Molly (1835-1919), a philatelist, attempted to issue postage stamps for the territory, presumably to fill the economic void, but was stopped by the Belgian authorities, who cancelled the unused stamps as “not valid”. Needless to say, these stamps are scarce and much valued (if apparently little known) by collectors today. Figure 3 is a postcard image (not my own) that shows the territory’s stamps.

Another aspect of Moresnet’s history, also a product of the enterprising Dr. Molly, was an attempt to establish it as the homeland of Esperanto, under the name “Amekijo”. Esperanto, of course, is the universal language that has a



Figure 3. A postcard showing the short-lived 1886 edition of Moresnet postage stamps.

certain relationship with the history of postcards (see *Card Talk* 38:2 and 38:3 for more).

Any grandiose dreams the residents of Neutral Moresnet – who appear to have numbered only a few hundred – might have harboured were interrupted forever by the Great War. Bearing that in mind, the image in Figure 1a, with its friendly meeting of local constables, is rather ironic given that, only a few years later, Germany was treating Belgium in a markedly less congenial manner. This included annexing the Moresnet territory, which annexation was reversed by the Treaty of Versailles, whereupon the lands became Belgian and its chief town was renamed “Kelmis”. This was again reversed in the Second World War although Germany returned Moresnet to the Belgians in 1944.

It’s appropriate, perhaps, that we write about Moresnet in 2020, as it was actually just this past February that the last living former Neutral Moresnet “citizen”, Catharina Meessen, passed away. Born in 1914, she was 105 years of age.

In Figure 1a, you can see a circular ink-stamp reading “Aussichtstum Vaals”, which refers to the Lookout Tower at Vaals where you could contemplate the historical accident that was Neutral Moresnet. Happily, you can do exactly the same thing today at the modern Tower at what is now known more sensibly (in Dutch) as the *Drielandenpunt* (i.e. the Point where *Three Countries Meet*), with what, for more than a century, was the fourth “country” having been reduced to a few sleepy hectares in the German-speaking margin of Belgium.

For those in the philatelic world, if collecting Dr. Molly’s Moresnet stamps is a little too daunting a challenge, I did notice that Belgium issued an attractive sheet of Moresnet commemorative stamps in 2019, the 100th anniversary of the territory’s incorporation into their Kingdom. – ed.

St. Jacobs, Ontario: Yesterday and Today

By Joe Rozdzilski (TPC #644)

The village of St. Jacobs is located in Southwest Ontario, north of Waterloo in Woolwich Township. In 1848, Jacob Snider (grandfather of E.W.B. Snider) bought a farm at St. Jacobs on the Conestogo River. He built a dam, sawmill and flour mill. When the settlement became a village, it was named Jacobstettel (Jacob's Village) in his honour. In 1852, the name of the village was changed to St. Jacobs. "Saint" was added "for the sake of euphony".

Another prominent Canadian was E.W.B. Snider, father of hydro power and the son of Jacob Snider. After learning about flour milling at his father's mill, E.W.B. Snider bought a flour mill from Benjamin Snider. He introduced the roller process of flour milling and by replacing stones and reels he revolutionized the art of flour milling.



Figure 1. Main Street.

Although a successful businessman, E.W.B. Snider was still thinking about the possibility of bringing electricity from Niagara Falls. At a board of trade meeting he urged a committee made up from Berlin, Waterloo and Galt to study how feasible it was to harness the power of Niagara Falls to produce electricity. The committee came back with a report, which was favourable to the idea of developing the potential of Niagara Falls for electricity production.



Figure 2. 1970s postcard showing the town.

In 1906 The Ontario Hydro Electric Commission was formed and the rest is history.

St. Jacobs is a popular tourist destination due to its traditional architecture, farmers' market, stores and Mennonite heritage. The St. Jacobs Farmers' Market is the largest of its kind in Canada. There are many attractions, such as boutique shops offering crafts, antiques, clothing, jewellery, souvenirs etc. There are many restaurants that would suit every palate.



Figure 3. Mennonite church.

One of the most exciting attractions in St. Jacobs is the Waterloo Central Railway ("WCR"). It is operated by the Southern Ontario Locomotive Restoration Society (SOLRS). It started operation in 2007 and is open from May to October. Beginning at St. Jacobs Farmers' Market, it offers exciting passenger train rides to the village of St. Jacobs and Elmira. It also features theme events such as The Polar Express, Santa Claus Train, Sugar Bush Breakfast Tour, Waterloo Mennonite Farm Tour and more. SOLRS is a registered charity and all ticket proceeds go towards restoration and education programs.



Figure 4. WCR locomotive (photograph).

St. Jacobs is also the main headquarters for Home Hardware and its 1,100 independent dealers. The village has three mainline churches.

St. Jacobs is a thriving and prosperous community and has a very promising future. It is well worth a leisurely drive.

Thank you, Joe, for this short history of a popular Ontario summertime destination, and for the accompanying postcard views – ed.

A Great Lakes Seaman's Postcards to His Son, 1947

By Andrew Cunningham (TPC #1424), with a contribution from Don Kaye (TPC #297)

Don Kaye (TPC #297) sends three Photogelatine Engraving Co. (PECO) postcards of Midland, Ontario that together tell a nice story. The cards are nos. 7, 10 and 28 of a series and were purchased on 5 September 1947 by a sailor on the S.S. Yosemite (Figure 2) who was the father of the recipient, a lad named Billy Sheridan. The address is 19704 Riverwood Avenue in Rocky River, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland.

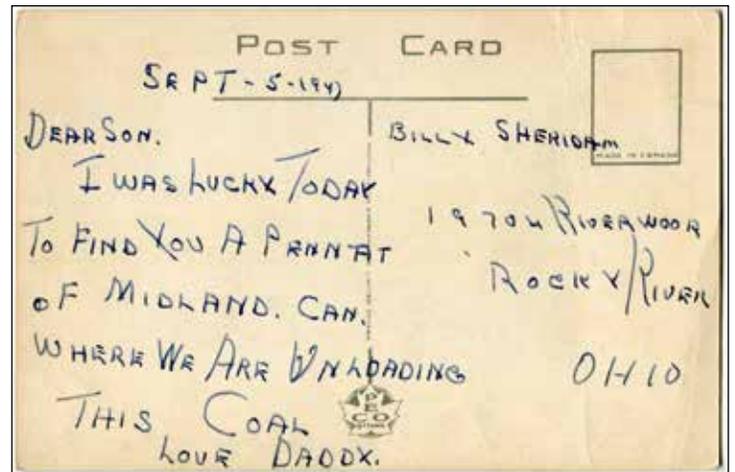


Figure 1. Aeroplane View of Michigan (Arnold Transit Co.). This rare postcard is a great illustration of the places that Billy's dad and the Yosemite were visiting that autumn, with Cleveland at upper left, the Soo Locks at the bottom and Lake Michigan at right, stretching southward to Chicago.



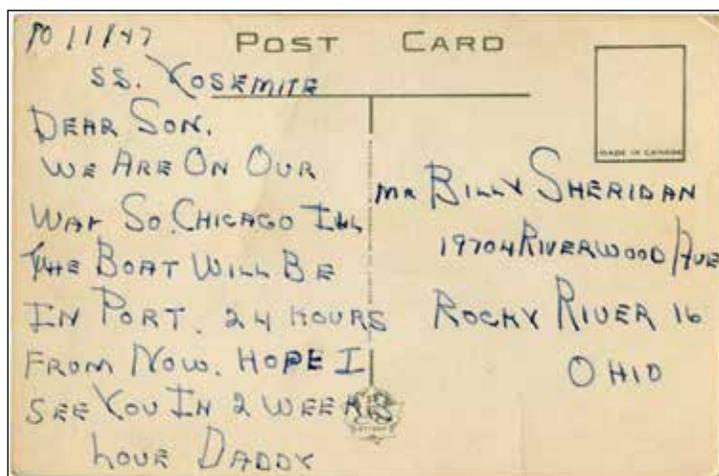
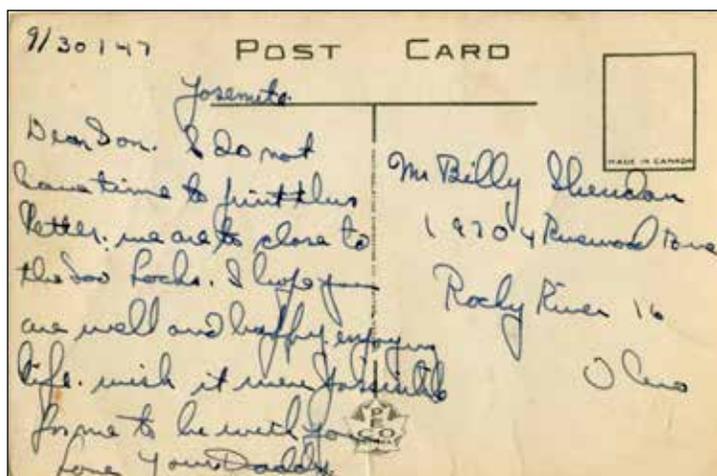
Figure 2. The Yosemite

On 5 September the Yosemite was delivering coal (from Ohio or West Virginia no doubt) to Midland, as the message on the first postcard states (Figure 3b). You might notice that the first and final postcards are printed in a rather awkward hand – for some reason Billy's father found printing to be laborious. As he notes in the second postcard, a handwritten one posted 3½ weeks later on 30 September, "I do not have time to print this letter" (which is all of 40 words long). No doubt Billy has not yet learned how to read handwriting and has (or his mother has) requested that the cards be printed, rather to his dad's annoyance. But Billy has little reason for complaint as he is getting postcards as well as a Midland pennant. At this point the Yosemite is heading toward the Soo Locks.



Figures 3 and 3a. Main Street, Midland (PECO, no. 28)

The final postcard, which there was sufficient time to print, is dated 11 October. By this time the Yosemite was proceeding south into Lake Michigan, 24 hours from a stop in Chicago. At that point it must have headed back to Cleveland, as the writer tells his son that they'll be together again, in their very nice house, in just two weeks' time – which makes sense as the shipping season would be winding down by the end of October.



Figures 4 and 4a. Main Street and Post Office, Midland (PECO, no. 10)

Figures 5 and 5a. Main Street from Harbour, Midland (PECO, no. 7)

Pandemic Postcard Reunion: Or, What A Difference A Century Doesn't Make!



Our layout guru, Bill Anderson, points us to the interesting story of a Massachusetts man who was recently reunited with a 1918 photo postcard of his grandfather, who had just gone through a long bout of Spanish Flu. What was really interesting was that, when he received the card, the grandson was himself emerging from an equally difficult bout with COVID-19.

Read the fascinating story in the Worcester (Mass.) Telegram by Googling its headline **“Postcard from 1918 brings Spanish flu account to COVID-19 descendant from Worcester”**.

Thanks to Bill for the tip -- we were in need of at least a little bit of “pandemic content”!

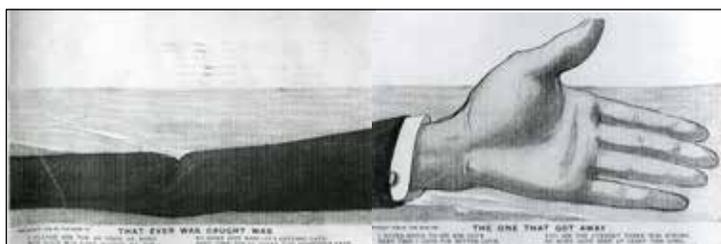
Cleaning Up Loose Ends While “Confined to Barracks”

By Bob Atkinson (TPC #12)

As were millions of people around the world, I too was “confined to barracks” in the spring of 2020 by COVID-19. I soon realized that, with extra time on my hands, I could finally tidy up a few matters in my “hobby life”. Initially, I organized all my postcards – just like the dealers – in boxes identifying them by province, counties (in Ontario), large cities, subjects, etc. Once things were in order, it occurred to me that I was still “on the hunt” for one particular card. Three years ago, *Card Talk* (38:3) published an item indicating that I was trying to find the first and key card in a three-card set: “OH! THE BIGGEST FISH / THAT EVER WAS CAUGHT WAS / THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY”. Having met Susan Brown Nicholson, an Illinois postcard dealer and author at a postcard show in York, Pa., in November 2017, I decided to contact her, hoping she could help. Lo and behold! Susan did have the missing card and sent it to me in July. Didn’t even have to get out my fishing pole to land it!



Figure 1. Oh! The Biggest Fish (the missing link in the series)



Figures 2 and 3. The other cards in the “fish story”

Another search began in mid-February, when I received a letter from my cousin Alan Edgar from Edinburgh. As part of my genealogical research of the Atkinson family, I wanted details of voyages across the Atlantic in the early 1900s as

our family settled down in Hamilton, Ontario. Alan was able to provide me with details of key crossings made by family members – dates of departure, names of people and names of ships. When I attended our annual TPC show on 23 February, I was able to acquire postcards of four of the ships (S.S. Tunisian, R.M.S. Baltic, R.M.S. Mauretania and S.S. Alaunia). A month later, John Sayers (TPC #560) was able to provide me with details of the S.S. Lake Simcoe, which transported my grandfather in 1903 from Liverpool to Montreal. The S.S. Lake Simcoe was part of the Beaver Line, formed in 1867 as The Canada Steamship Company. In 1903, the ships were taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway for their Canadian Pacific Line.

The sixth and final ship, which is eluding me, is the S.S. Cairnross, actually a cargo ship. In 1932, my father (a newly graduated doctor) travelled to Britain to visit relatives. After his visit, he returned from Leith, Scotland to Montreal on the S.S. Cairnross, with only a few other passengers. Soon he began his career – his first posting as doctor was in New Liskeard, Ontario.



Figure 4. The S.S. Mauretania; one of the cards that Bob managed to find at the TPC show.

If anyone can help Bob in his quest for an S.S. Cairnross postcard, please get in touch with him directly! But we have to say that five out of six ain’t bad... In our next issue, if all goes according to plan, Bob will have a very interesting and very old card to show us. It’s of an age, in fact, that will be very hard for any of us to beat. Stay tuned!

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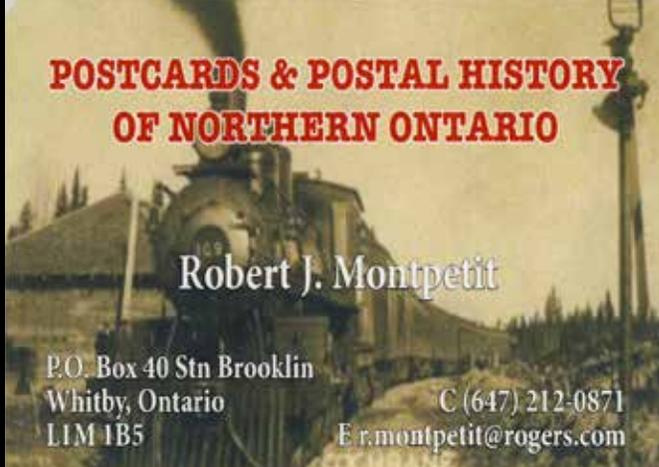


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SEPTEMBER 20

OUR ANNUAL SHOW AND TELL

What's your new great acquisition? What did you unearth as you finally tackled that pile of postcards on your desk during your isolation? Scan it, picture-file it or PowerPoint it so we can all see it.

OCTOBER 18

THE STEDMAN BROTHERS STORY

TPC #940 **Mike Smith** and the **Stedman Brothers Story**. Incorporated in 1908 to trade, manufacture and publish books, magazines and postcards, and with branches in Brantford, Toronto and Winnipeg, they were one of Canada's most prolific, early postcard publishers. The firm was so prolific, in fact, that Mike has created an all-colour *Stedman Bros. Picture Postcard Handbook 2nd Edition*. Get Mike's updates on this important Canadian postcard manufacturer & order a book!

NOVEMBER 15

PHOTOGRAPHIC METHODS IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF POSTCARDS

TPC members #1569 **Celio Barreto** and #1444 **Victor Caratun** discovered postcards while pursuing their other hobby, photography. Taking us back to the early 1900s, they'll tell us about the equipment and methods used by the photographers of the day – the very men and women who took the pictures that are the vintage views of our postcard collections.

DECEMBER 20

HOLIDAY POSTCARDS, OF COURSE

What's the oldest Christmas, Hannukah or New Year's card in your collection? The oldest ever? What's the difference between Krampus and Santa? Let's talk holiday greetings. Make sure to have your seasonal beverage at hand for a farewell to 2020.

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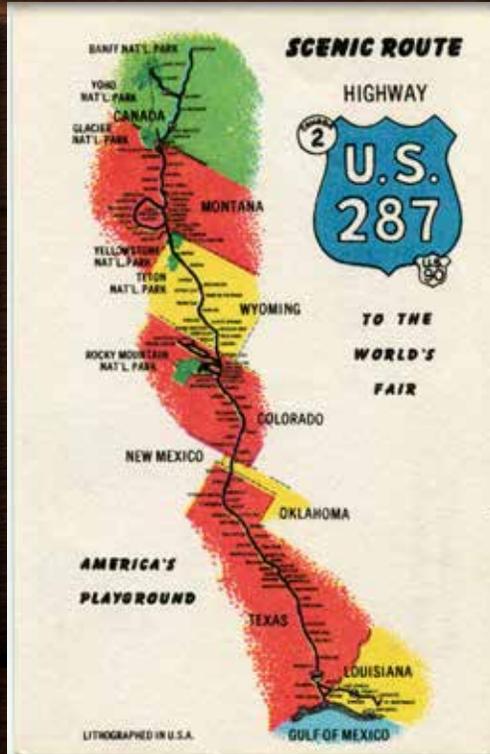
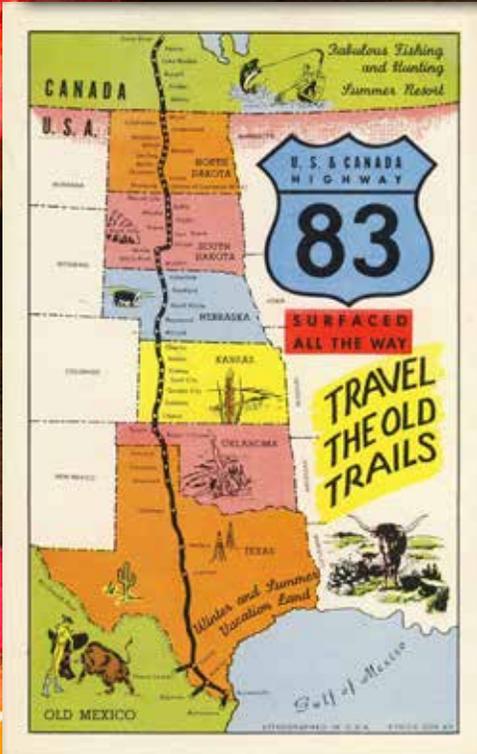
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REMEMBER CROSS-BORDER ROAD TRIPS?



This issue has a "border" theme, with Jeri Danyleyko's article on Pigeon River and Andrew Cunningham's take on "Neutral Moresnet". That's a topical theme right now with the U.S. border being closed to most vehicular traffic. The top postcard above is the image of the Pigeon River customs station from Jeri's article – a great "period piece" of a postcard that deserved to be shown in full colour. The other two are promotional cards for U.S.-Canadian highway corridors. The first is for Highway 83, which stretches from the Texas-Mexico border near Brownsville all the way to Swan River, Manitoba. The second shows the route from Edmonton and Banff down to New Orleans – mainly U.S. 287 but also U.S. 90 in Louisiana and "Canada 2" (Alberta 2, really) north of the international boundary. A fun reminder of the days when no-hassle trips on the open road between our two countries were taken for granted!