

WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM

30 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES

Leather Postcard
Collection

1998.72

Processed by William F. Carroll, C.A.
March, 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

series		page	box
	Collection Information	3	
	Historical Background	4	
	Scope and Content	5	
	Series Descriptions	6	
1	Worcester	7	1
2	Boston	8	1
3	Other Massachusetts localities	9	1
4	Other localities/Miscellaneous	10	1
	Bibliography	11	

Collection Information

Abstract: Leather postcards first appeared some time around 1900 as a novelty item. They were designed to be used in the same manner as conventional paper postcards, and were a novelty item produced by various postcard publishers to increase business. Changes in postal regulations after 1907 required they be mailed in an envelope or other enclosure, and their popularity waned.

Finding Aids: Finding Aid in print form available at the Worcester Historical Museum Library and Archives.

Preferred Citation: Worcester Historical Museum Archives, 30 Elm Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance: Donated by Lawrence and Barbara MacAlister, May 1998.

Access: The Finding Aid is cataloged in MARC under the following subject headings (LCSH, AAT, TGM, GMGPC)

Leather goods.

Novelties.

Postcards – United States.

Novelty works – United States.

Worcester (Mass.) – Views.

Boston (Mass.) – Views.

Massachusetts – Views.

New England – Views.

Historical Background

The postcard craze which had begun in Europe around 1880 reached a peak in the United States between 1900 and 1920. The public demand for postcards was a result of several causes – in part, technological advancement in photographic and printing processes reduced the cost of postcards to a pittance. Changes in postal regulations allowed non-government postcards to be mailed at a cheaper rate than that for letters. Improved working conditions in business and industry allowed the general public more leisure time to pursue other interests.

During the early years of the 20th century printers and publishers were in close competition in the postcard market. Shortly after 1900, novelty postcards were developed by many publishers in an effort to attract attention to their company and capture a larger share of the market. Postcards were produced in leather, wood, tin, other metals, peat, shingles, and a wide variety of other materials. Most of the novelty cards were designed to be mailed, to be used in the same manner as the more conventional picture postcards.

Novelty postcards presented problems for the post office, as many of the materials were difficult to read or to process, and potentially dangerous to postal handlers. Changes in postal regulations were made which required novelty postcards – leather, metal, wood, etc. – to be placed in envelopes in order to be sent through the mails. The novelty postcard fad faded soon after 1907, perhaps at least in part because of the change in regulations.

Scope and Content

The Leather Postcard Collection consists of some fifty leather postcards. The face carries a usual postcard appearance, with lines and spaces for address and message. The reverse of each carries a simple print of buildings and views in a number of New England localities. The bulk of the collection consists of views in Worcester, Boston, and other Massachusetts localities. The postcards in the collection picture other northeast localities.

Three postcards in the collection have been sent through the mails. Cancellation marks are legible on two and indicate mailing in 1907.

About half of the postcards indicate publisher's name: Hy-Sil Manufacturing Co., Boston, Mass.; and Robbins Bros. Publ., Boston, Mass. are the two indicated.

The Collection has been arranged in four series geographically.

Series Description

Series 1. Worcester, Massachusetts views. Buildings and structures in Worcester, Mass., line drawings ca. 1900. 7 items, 6 views.

Series 2. Boston, Massachusetts views. Buildings and structures in Boston, Mass., line drawings ca. 1900. 8 items.

Series 3. Other Massachusetts views. Buildings, structures, scenes, cartoon from other Massachusetts localities, line drawings ca. 1900. 18 items, 16 views.

Series 4. Other localities/Miscellaneous. Buildings, structures, scenes from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and an illustrated verse. Line drawings, ca. 1900. 13 items.

Leather Postcard Collection
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Series 1, Worcester, Massachusetts

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	1998.72.1.1	Post Office, Worcester, Mass.
1	1	1998.72.1.2	Holy Cross College, Worcester, Mass.
1	1	1998.72.1.3	Odd Fellows' Home, Worcester, Mass.
1	1	1998.72.1.4a-b	Clark University, Worcester, Mass. 2 items
1	1	1998.72.1.5	City Hall, Worcester, Mass.
1	1	1998.72.1.6	Bancroft Tower, Worcester, Mass.

Leather Postcard Collection
1998.72
Series 2, Boston, Massachusetts

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	2	1998.72.2.1	Art Museum, Boston.
1	2	1998.72.2.2	Old South Meeting-House, Boston.
1	2	1998.72.2.3	Boston State House.
1	2	1998.72.2.4	Public Library, Boston, Mass.
1	2	1998.72.2.5	South Station, Boston.
1	2	1998.72.2.6	North Union Station, Boston.
1	2	1998.72.2.7	Harvard Bridge, Boston.
1	2	1998.72.2.8	Park St. Church, Boston.

Leather Postcard Collection
1998.72
Series 3, Other Massachusetts Localities

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	3	1998.72.3.1	“This shoe comes from Lynn, Mass.” cartoon.
1	3	1998.72.3.2	State Normal School, Salem, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.3	First Church, Salem, mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.4	F. W. Smith Silver Factory, Gardner, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.5	Post Office, Gardner, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.6	Haywood Bros. & Wakefield Co. Plant, Gardner, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.7	Plymouth Rock Canopy and Coles Hill. [Plymouth] A.S. Burbank [ill.]
1	3	1998.72.3.8	National Monument to the Forefathers, Plymouth, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.9	The Old Town House, Marblehead, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.10a-b	“Old Brig” Birthplace of Moll Pitcher, Marblehead, Mass. 2 copies.
1	3	1998.72.3.11	Lee Mansion (Built 1762) Marblehead, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.12	Fort Sewell, Marblehead, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.13a-b	“Old Powder House,” (1755), Marblehead, Mass. 2 copies.
1	3	1998.72.3.14	Steamer Uncatena of the Martha’s Vineyard & Nantucket Steamboat Co.
1	3	1998.72.3.15	Landing, Oak Bluffs, Mass.
1	3	1998.72.3.16	The Jettiers, Oak Bluffs, Mass.

Leather Postcard Collection
1998.72
Series 4, Other Localities/Miscellaneous

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	4	1998.72.4.1	High School, Burlington, Vt.
1	4	1998.72.4.2	Medical College, Burlington, Vt.
1	4	1998.72.4.3	Van Ness House, Burlington, Vt.
1	4	1998.72.4.4	Shoe Factory, Norway, Me.
1	4	1998.72.4.5	High School, Norway, Me. (postmarked 1907)
1	4	1998.72.4.6	Elm St School and Conway Memorial Boulder, Camden, Me.
1	4	1998.72.4.7	Spring Point Light, Portland, Me.
1	4	1998.72.4.8	County Building, Auburn, Me.
1	4	1998.72.4.9	Mt. Washington House, N.H.
1	4	1998.72.4.10	Chiswick Inn, Littleton, N.H.
1	4	1998.72.4.11	Middle Campus, Providence, R.I.
1	4	1998.72.4.12	Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pa.
1	4	1998.72.4.13	Verse and drawing. (postmarked 1907)

Bibliography

Miller, George, 1976. Picture postcards in the United States, 1893-1918: New York, Clarkson Potter, 1976.