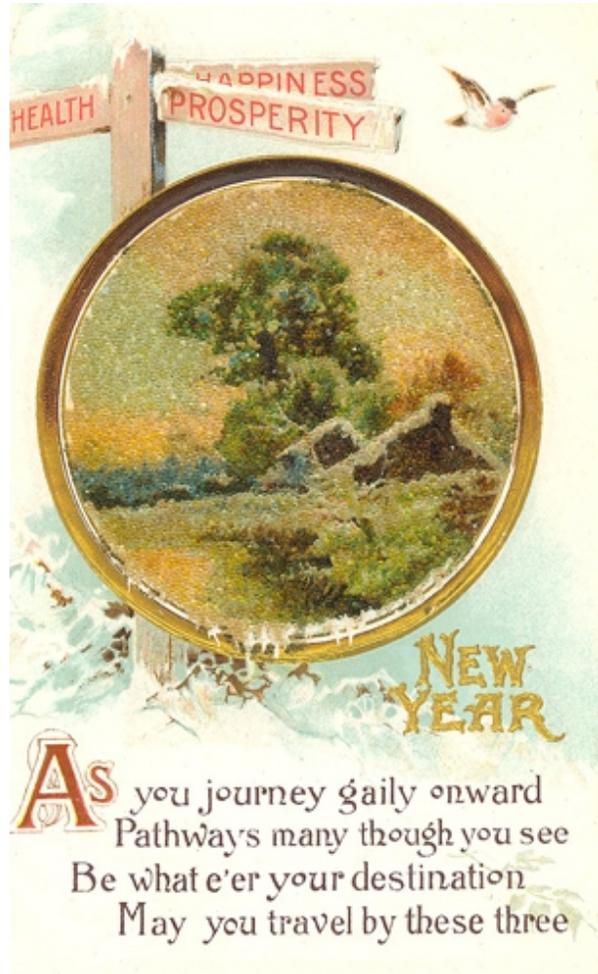


# Donation of the Month

## New Year Postcard



New Year Postcard  
1992.29.285,  
donated by Bea Wardlaw

Postcards haven't changed much in the last 100 years. We still send postcards of places we've been to family and friends and we buy postcards to keep as souvenirs of our vacations. But we may not realize when or why postcards became such a popular way of sending greetings.

At the turn of the 20th century, postcards were at their most popular. In 1913, Americans alone bought over 900 million postcards! How did this postcard mania start? Postcards first appeared around 1869 but varied depending on what country they were mailed in. Mail services regulated postcards and as a result, different countries had different types of postcards.

Early commercial postcards appeared by 1870 in Europe and in 1873 government-published postal cards were available in America for a penny. Privately printed cards needed a two-cent stamp but private companies discovered they could buy penny postcards and print their own messages on them. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago helped usher in the golden age of the picture postcard. Sets of

ten postcards dated with the year showed attractions from the Exposition and were sold as souvenirs.

Postcards were printed with a vast array of subjects including humorous illustrations, travel scenes, series and holiday messages like this New Year's card from the early 1900s. Cards were sometimes made from more than paper. This card has tiny beads in the center that make up the wintry scene. Some were even made out of copper, silk, or leather. Some showed new-fangled inventions like flying machines or exaggerated pictures of giant fish or fruit.

Postcards were so popular because they were a cheaper way to send holiday and personal greetings to family and friends far away. As traveling long distances became easier, postcards became a perfect way for people to share their experiences. Postcards with actual photographs on them also became extremely popular as photography developed. By World War I, however, the postcard lost much of its popularity as new greeting cards and other means of communication became available. In later years, the telephone may have played a role as well; people could call each other rather than write.

Today, postcards are still mailed around the world although they certainly cost more than a penny! The next time you decide to send a postcard while you're on vacation, think about how travelers a century ago might have done the very same thing.

**For more information:**

*The Encyclopedia of Collectibles* by Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia, 1979.

*History of Postcards: A Pictorial Record from the Turn of the Century to the Present Day* by Martin Willoughby, 1992.