

Postcards: Sharing Art *and* a Message



Alice T. Miner Museum
Chazy, New York

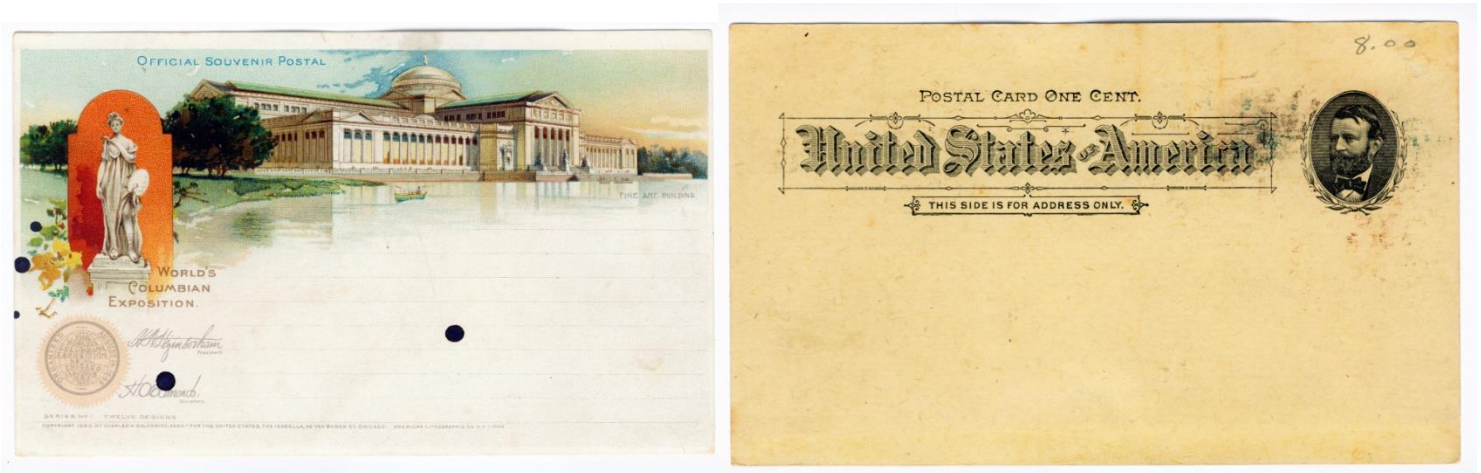


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Alice T. Miner Museum

A Quick History of Postcards

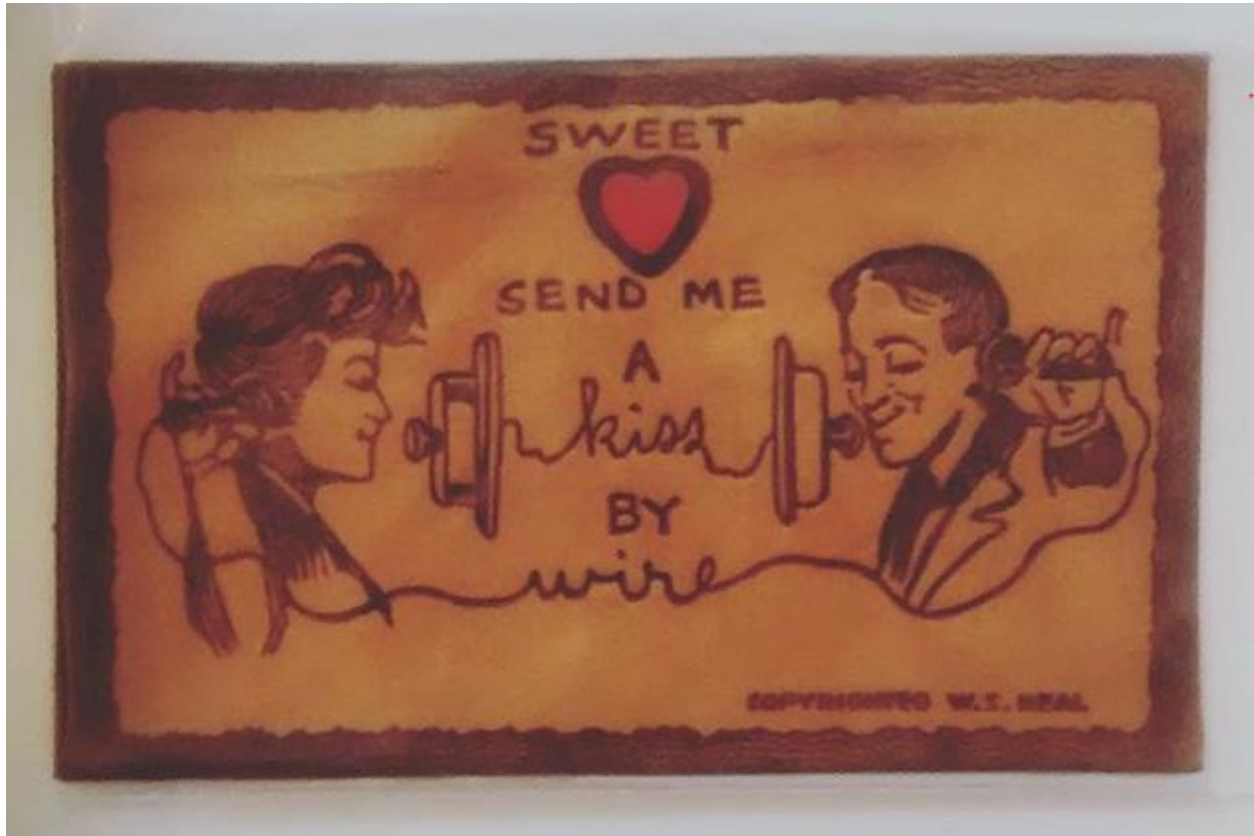
In the late 1800s, although telephones and the telegraph had been invented, a lot of day-to-day communication still took place by mail. Writing a formal letter to conduct a business deal or keep up with your family was certainly possible—and very common—but what if you just needed to send a quick note? The Postal Service, and private card manufacturers, stepped in by producing “Post Cards” and “Private Mailing Cards” that could be mailed cheaply without an envelope. While very early cards were blank, postcards were soon produced that showed local landscapes, government buildings, or fairs and attractions—one place early postcards became especially popular was at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, with its elaborate, newly-constructed buildings and distinct architecture.



Postcard depicting the Fine Arts Building, 1893 World's Columbian Exposition
(from the [Chicago Postcard Museum](#))

(information primarily drawn from the Smithsonian Institution Archives, “[Postcard History](#)”)

By the early 1900s postcards were a tourist phenomenon as well as a convenience, and people collected postcards, sent and unsent, from around the world. As photography became more and more popular, photos were often turned into postcards as well. For a few years between 1903 and 1907, there was even a fad for postcards made of leather—a few of which the Alice has in its collection.



From the Clark collection at the Alice T. Miner Museum

Postcards today are made with all kinds of pictures, from photos of tourist attractions to prints of fine art to jokes and cartoons to abstract patterns. Making your own postcards can be a great way to give someone else a small piece of your one-of-a-kind art!

Make Your Own Postcard

To make your own postcard, you'll need card stock or heavy paper to cut into rectangles, colored pencils or markers to design and decorate, and a person to send your card to!

While of course you can mail your postcard to a friend or loved one far away, if you're at home with your whole family you can still exchange cards—just address them and slip them under a bedroom door, or leave them someplace else they'll be found by the person they're for.

To start, cut out a rectangle of card and copy the address field onto the back:

Once you've made your postcard template, add whatever art you want to the reverse side. Try drawing a self-portrait, or your dream vacation, or what you see outside your window. If you want to add stickers, go ahead. You can also use pictures from a magazine or newspaper or collage your own shapes from colored paper: cut them out and glue them on (make sure they're glued down *flat*!) Now is the time to let your creativity run wild.



After your art is finished, write your message in the blank half of the template side, address it on the lines you drew, and add a stamp if your postcard is going into the mailbox. We hope you're able to reach out to your friends and family—but if you want to send us a postcard, too, we'd be happy to receive it!

