Guide to the Beatrice Litzinger Postcard Collection, 1900-1990

NMAH.AC.0530

Ray Mellett

December 1999
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Beatrice Litzinger Postcard Collection
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0530
Date: 1900-1990
Extent: 2.75 Cubic feet (8.5 boxes)
Creator: Litzinger, Beatrice
Litzinger, Joseph
Language: English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
Gift of Joseph Litzinger in memory of his wife, Beatrice Litzinger.

Related Materials
Materials at the Archives Center

Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, ca. 1724-1977 (AC0060)
Victor A. Blenkle Postcards, 1880 - 1975 (AC0200)
Susie Paige Afro-American Greeting Card Collection, 1918, 1960s (AC0263)
Hoffman/Boaz African American Postcard Collection, 1900-1933 (AC0281)
Rocky Herosian Postcard Collection, 1910-1943 (AC0295)
Washington Postcards, ca. 1906, (AC0413)
Archives Center Scrapbook Collection (AC0468)
Archives Center Postcard Collection, (AC0483)
Miscellaneous Postcards (AC0497)
Lou Newman Collection of Baseball Memorabilia (AC0696)

Processing Information
Collection processed by Ray Mellet, December 1999.
Preferred Citation


Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

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Biographical / Historical

This collection of postcards and other ephemera was assembled by Beatrice Litzinger who lived her entire life in and around Baltimore, Maryland. The collection is particularly rich in view cards from both Baltimore and Maryland. The collection also has a large number of greeting cards from the "golden age." It was acquired by the Archives Center in February, 1997 from Joseph Litzinger, the widower of Beatrice Litzinger who died in 1995. We know little about Mrs. Litzinger or how she acquired her collection as it came to the Archives Center after she died by way of a nun with whom she had become friendly and was returning to Ireland. Her husband was quite elderly and had moved to California though he indicated that Mrs. Litzinger had wanted her collection to come to the Smithsonian. The collection was donated by him to the Smithsonian in memory of his wife.

It is believed that Mrs. Litzinger started to collect postcards when she was young. She continued to collect throughout her life. She purchased some of the postcards, and others were mailed to her or given to her by friends. A large portion of the modern geographic postcards came by way of an extended family of friends and neighbors who traveled extensively. Mrs. Litzinger was deeply religious and a devout Catholic and the collection has a substantial number of religious postcards including some sent to her by a writer we believe was her parish priest on trips to Rome.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of seven series, the largest, Series 1, being the postcards. The largest categories in this series are the geographic, both United States and foreign, and greeting cards. The most important and probably the most interesting of the geographic cards are from Maryland as they give us an historic view of the state. This is particularly true of the large number of cards depicting Baltimore and its buildings, parks, schools, etc. There are several cards showing the Great Fire of February 7, 1904 and postcards such as this are a valuable historic resource.

The greeting cards are primarily from the "golden age" of postcards and were sent or given on many occasions. There are large numbers of Christmas, Easter and Valentines Day cards, but there are also substantial numbers of cards for days that we no longer associate with card giving such as Decoration Day (now known as Memorial Day) and Washington's Birthday (though these cards are included under political figures in Box 8).
There are a number of postcards depicting various Popes and other religious themes such as the Lord’s Prayer. Some of the postcards of Rome have cartouches of a Pope in the center of the pictures and were sent by a monsignor to someone in Baltimore.

Many cards show various means of transportation such as airplanes, boats and ships, and railroads and streetcars. Another interesting category is “novelty” with a number of postcards with pictures of women with real hair. Throughout the collection there are other novelty cards on wood and leather.

The other series are smaller, though all consist of ephemera collected by Mrs. Litzinger. Series 2, Oversize Postcards, and Series 3, Greeting Cards are the largest and those most directly related to the primary collection. These series are organized in the same manner as Series 1.

Series 4 consists of paper dolls, another popular collectible in the early part of the century. Series 5 consists of scraps which were chromolithographed pictures which were either cut out of printed sheets of pictures and designs or punched out of die cut sheets. The designs were then used to make early greeting cards or were placed in albums called scrap books. Sometimes scraps and postcards were included in the same album. Series 6 consists of trade cards which were used to advertise various businesses. Sometimes these were in the form of postcards and sometimes the designs were cut out to make scraps, so it is easy to see how these various types of ephemera are inter-related. Series 7 consists of a small number of miscellaneous items such as metal prints the size of postcards, religious cards, political birthday cards, magazine clippings, plastic cards, invitations and bicentennial souvenirs.

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**Arrangement**

Collection arranged into seven series.

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**General**

Picture postcards were immensely popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. They were a novelty at a time when large numbers of people of moderate means began to travel. They became souvenirs of trips and an easy way for travelers to communicate with friends and relatives left behind. At the same time, the low cost of stamps and postcards combined with colorful and imaginative pictures and greetings made them a convenient way to send greetings at holidays and for other special events such as birthdays. Postal regulations did not allow private postcards until the 1890’s. Though the dates varied from country to country, in the United States these were first allowed in 1898. The period 1901-1907 is known as the undivided back era. Until 1907 the picture or design was on the front and only the address was to appear on the back, forcing the message to be written on or around the image. On March 1, 1907 postcards with divided backs for address and message were allowed in the United States, though they had been permitted in England as early as 1902. This was the beginning of the divided back era and the “golden age” of postcards which continued until 1915.

During this period, collecting postcards and other ephemera became a very popular pastime. Often they were placed in scrapbooks and albums. The subject range of postcards is almost limitless and various categories, such as view cards, greeting cards, humor or novelties, were collected. Often the postcards were printed in sets or series and many were designed by famous artists. Postcard collecting in the United States was given the name deltiology and is still a popular hobby.

Most of the postcards during the “golden age” were printed in Europe, primarily in Germany, where the printing technology was considered the best. The start of World War I ended this importation and from 1915 printing was concentrated in England and the United States. White border cards were developed at
this time and they were popular until 1930, though greeting card publication declined and only view cards remained popular. From 1930 until 1945 (or, variously, 1955 or 1960) linen postcards were published, using a type of paper that had the look and uneven feel of linen. Photochrome postcards, which tend to be slick and glossy, were introduced in 1939 and are still in use today. During the entire period, starting around 1900, real photographs, which could be matte or glossy, color or black and white, or hand tinted, were used.

View cards have been the most popular type of card collected. In addition to being souvenirs of places traveled, they offer historic references to buildings and places which have changed or may no longer exist.

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Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
- Fires -- Maryland -- Baltimore
- Greeting cards -- 20th century
- Holidays -- 1900-1990
- Paper dolls
- Valentines -- 1900-1990

Types of Materials:
- Birthday cards
- Clippings -- 20th century
- Ephemera -- 20th century
- Lenticular processes
- Parallax panoramagrams
- Parallax stereographs
- Photographs -- Photomechanical prints
- Picture postcards -- 20th century -- United States
- Stereoscopic photographs -- 1950-2000
- Trade cards -- 20th century
- Xographs
Container Listing

Series 1: Subjects

Box 1, Folder 1   Airplanes
Box 1, Folder 1   Animals
Box 1, Folder 1   Bears
Box 1, Folder 1   Camel
Box 1, Folder 1   Cats
Box 1, Folder 1   Cats and Dogs
Box 1, Folder 1   Chipmunk
Box 1, Folder 1   Deer
Box 1, Folder 1   Dogs
Box 1, Folder 1   Horses
Box 1, Folder 1   Prairie Dogs
Box 1, Folder 1   Rabbits
Box 1, Folder 1   Art Examples
Box 1, Folder 1   Birds
Box 1, Folder 2   Birds
Box 1, Folder 2   Boats and Ships
Box 1, Folder 3-4  Boats and Ships
Box 1, Folder 5   Boats and Ships
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<td>Box 1, Folder 7</td>
<td>Dolls and Toys</td>
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<td>Fairy Tales</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 1</td>
<td>Arizona - Other Cities</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 1</td>
<td>California - San Francisco</td>
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Box 2, Folder 1 Colorado - Parks and Vistas
Box 2, Folder 1 Delaware
Box 2, Folder 1 District of Columbia
Box 2, Folder 2 District of Columbia
Box 2, Folder 2 Florida
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Box 2, Folder 2 Daytona Beach St. Petersburg
Box 2, Folder 2 Walt Disney World
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Box 2, Folder 3 Walt Disney World
Box 2, Folder 3 Scenic Views, Ocean, Palms and Plants
Box 2, Folder 3 General
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Box 2, Folder 4 Parks and Vistas
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Box 2, Folder 4 City
Box 2, Folder 4 Indianapolis
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Box 2, Folder 5 Baltimore and Ohio Bldg Bridges
Box 2, Folder 5 Bromo Seltzer Tower
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Box 2, Folder 6-13  Buildings
Box 2, Folder 6-13  Churches and Religious Buildings
Box 2, Folder 6-13  City Hall
Box 2, Folder 6-13  Country Clubs
Box 2, Folder 6-13  Court House
Box 2, Folder 6-13  Dams
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Birth General

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