

# Postcards from Boylston and Beyond

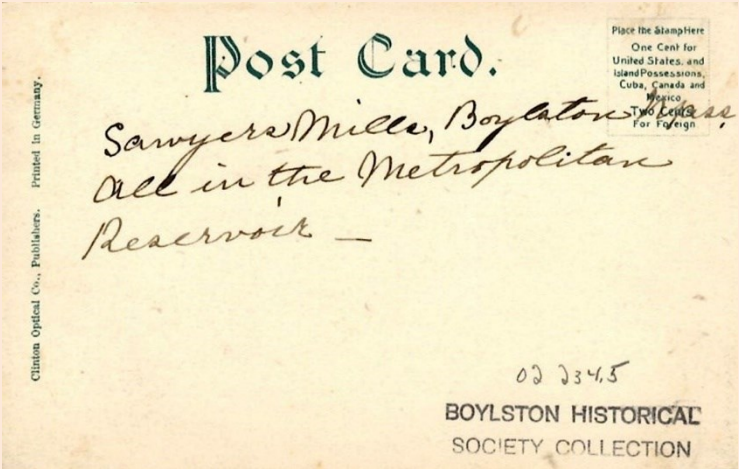
By Inga Milbauer

Postcards from the 1900s can be categorized in five main periods: the “Undivided Back Period”, “Divided Back Period”, “White Border Period”, “Linen Period”, and “Photochrome Period”. Postcard types produced in one period could also be produced in another, but were not produced in the same quantity as other postcard types typical of the period.<sup>1</sup> The postcard periods described below are based on the Smithsonian Institution Archives publication “Postcards History”.



**UNDIVIDED BACK POST CARD**  
*(frontside)*  
**A View of Nashua River, near Clinton, Massachusetts**  
Sawyer’s Mills area, it is now part of the Wachusett Reservoir.  
*BHSM Archives Collection*

**UNDIVIDED BACK POST CARD**  
*(backside)*  
**Reserved for Recipient’s Name & Mailing Address & Postage Stamp**  
Printed in Germany  
*BHSM Archives Collection*



Postcards from the Undivided Back Period (1901-1907) were designed so the front of the postcards would have an image and message, and the entire back was reserved for the recipient’s address and the postage stamp. It was not until mid-1907 when the postcard format we are familiar with today, with the image on the whole front and the divided back for both text and address, was used in the United States of America. This change to the backs of postcards initiated the “Divided Back Period”, which covers the period from 1907 until 1915. Because of the immense popularity of the postcard during this time, it is also known as the “Golden Age of Postcards”. Postcards were used as business advertisements, vacation souvenirs, as greeting cards for the holidays, and to easily communicate with friends and family. For more information about postcards from the early 1900s and images of Boylston sites from this era, please read the article “Greetings from Boylston”.<sup>2</sup>

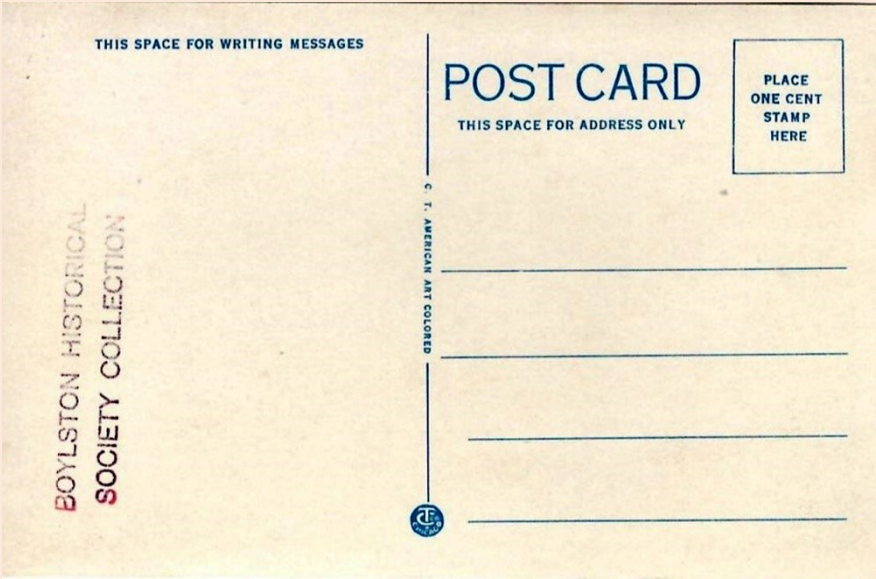
The postcard manufacturing business in the United States was dominated by German printers until 1909. At that time, the enactment of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff effectively cut off low-cost importation of postcards, along with many other goods.<sup>3</sup> Most American printers at the time did not have the advanced technology as the German printers, and could not match the high quality of German lithography. This and other factors led to the deterioration of the quality of postcards. At the beginning of World War I, American printers saved ink by not printing to the edge of the card, leaving a white border around the image.<sup>4</sup> The period of 1915-1930 is therefore known as the “White Border Period”.

**WHITE BORDER POST CARD**  
*(frontside)*  
**Wachusett Power House and Dam**  
**Clinton, Massachusetts**  
A Curt Teich American Art Colored postcard (circa 1908)  
*BHSM Archives Collection*



**WHITE BORDER POST CARD**  
*(backside)*

**Wachusett Power House  
and Dam**  
**Clinton, Massachusetts**  
(circa 1908)  
*BHSM Archives Collection*



From the 1930s onward new printing processes allowed printers to produce postcards with a high rag content. This gave the postcards a look and texture resembling linen, hence the name “Linen Period” for postcards produced during 1930-1945. “The most notable printer of this period was Curt Teich & Co., which printed its first linen card in 1931, and whose postcards became popular around the world. Teich’s process allowed for quicker production and brighter dyes to be used to color the images.”<sup>5</sup> The back of these postcards remained divided and usually contained printed information about the image on the front.

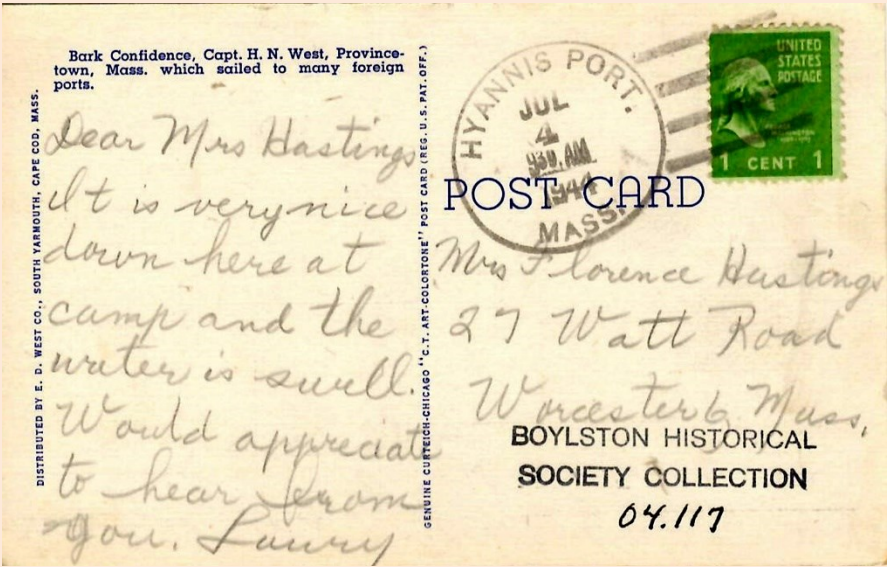


**LINEN PERIOD POST CARD**  
*(frontside)*

**All Sails Set, Cape Cod,  
Massachusetts**  
A Curt Teich & Co.  
produced Postcard (1939)  
*BHSM Archives Collection*

**LINEN PERIOD POST CARD**  
*(Divided Backside)*

**All Sails Set, Cape Cod,  
Massachusetts**  
Postmarked July 4, 1944  
*Curt Teich & Co. Art-1939*  
*BHSM Archives Collection*



**LINEN PERIOD POST CARD**  
*(frontside)*

**U.S.S. Constellation**  
**Newport, Rhode Island in 1937**  
*Postcard sent to R.G. Hastings,*  
*postmarked Newport, RI*  
*on August 6, 1943*

Curt Teich & Co. American Art  
Colored postcard.  
*BHSM Archives Collection*

Although photochrome postcards were first printed in 1939, linen postcards continued to be produced for over a decade after the arrival of photochrome postcards. The postcards from the Photochrome Period (1945 - present) are glossy images in color which closely resemble photographs.

The Boylston Historical Society and Museum Archives Collection has over 100 postcards depicting various Boylston scenes, please stop in to browse through this wonderful collection next week Monday -Wednesday from 8am to 12 pm. In the meantime, here are a few special ones for you to enjoy today.

**WHITE BORDER POST CARDS**  
*(frontside)*

**Wachusett Reservoir Dam  
Promenade Clinton, Massachusetts**  
*A Curt Teich & Co.. American Art  
Colored postcard  
BHSM Archives Collection*



**WHITE BORDER POST CARDS**  
*(frontside)*

**Wachusett Dam Fountain  
Clinton, Massachusetts**  
*A Curt Teich & Co. American Art  
Colored postcard  
BHSM Archives Collection*



This postcard depicts the interior of the Red Barn Grain Bin Restaurant. It was a popular Boylston restaurant in the 1930s and 1940s. The building was situated between the Boylston Center Store (now the Boylston Deli Café and Catering) and the Historic Town Hall (currently the home of the Historical Society and Museum).

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## Acknowledgements

<sup>1</sup> <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/postcard-history>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.boylstonhistory.org/images/Postcards07072022.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/msscfa/qc16510ess.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/postcard-history>

<sup>5</sup> <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/postcard-history>

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<https://historicgeneva.org/communication-and-technology/p-s-wish-you-were-here-a-brief-history-of-postcards>

[https://www.newberry.org/sites/default/files/researchguide-attachments/Teich\\_Postcard\\_Dating\\_Guide\\_2016.pdf](https://www.newberry.org/sites/default/files/researchguide-attachments/Teich_Postcard_Dating_Guide_2016.pdf)

<https://postcardinspirations.com/a-history-of-the-postcard>

<https://worldpostcardday.com/history>

*Wish You Were Here - a pictorial journey through early twentieth century Boylston, Massachusetts*, compiled by Frederick G. Brown, William O. Dupuis and Norman H. French, published by The Boylston Historical Society, 1995