

# Greetings from Boylston!

By Inga Milbauer

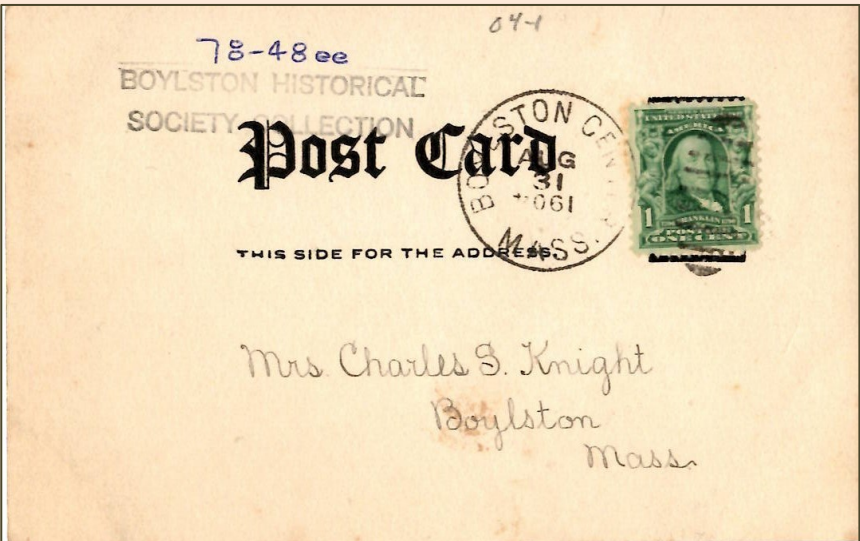
Oftentimes we think of postcards as a method of communicating and sharing images of our destinations during vacations to our loved ones or friends at home. Postcards first became popular during the late 1800s and early 1900s. These simple cards for communication evolved in the United States of America after the U.S. Congress passed an act on February 27, 1861 allowing privately printed cards to be sent in the mail. The weight restriction of the card was one ounce or less.<sup>1</sup> John P. Charlton, a printer from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, patented the first postcard in America in late 1861. He sold the rights to his friend Hymen Lipman who marketed the postcards as “Lipman’s Postal Card”.<sup>2</sup> These postcards had a decorated border without images, the entire front of the card was reserved for the message and the back for the destination address and the postage stamp.

It was not until 1870 when the use of postcards actually increased. On May 1, 1873, the first government-produced “*Postal Card*” was produced. The design was still the same, with one side of the card designated for a message, and the other side for the recipient’s address. However, only the government-produced cards could use the term “postal card” which were pre-stamped and cost one cent to mail. Private companies could still produce postcards, but the postage for these cards was two cents.

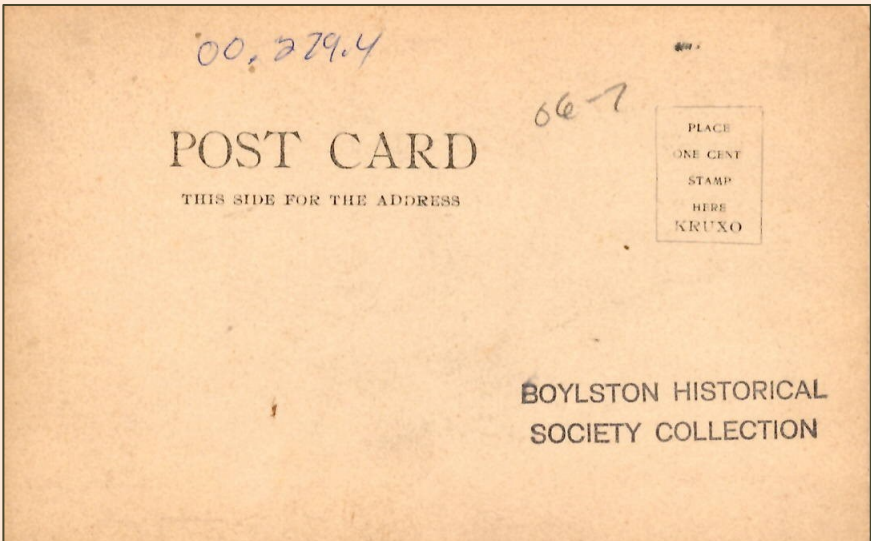
This changed when the U.S. Congress passed the act “Private Mailing Card, Authorized by Act of Congress of May 19, 1898.” The words “*Private Mailing Card*” distinguished privately printed cards from government printed cards, and both now cost one cent to mail. By that time, postcards with printed images had become fashionable, especially after the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 had popularized the idea of picture postcards with its line of “Official Souvenir” postcards.<sup>3</sup> In December 1901, the Postmaster-General issued Post Office Order #1447 which allowed the term “*Post Card*” on the back of the card instead of the longer term “*Private Mailing Card*”. It was still not allowed to add messages on the address side of the postcard. Therefore, postcards from this period are known as postcards from the “Undivided Back Period”.<sup>4</sup>



**UNDIVIDED POST CARD**  
Depicting a Boylston home.  
(frontside)  
BHSM collection



**UNDIVIDED POST CARD**  
Postmark August 31, 1904  
(backside)  
BHSM Collection



**UNDIVIDED POST CARD**  
Early 1907  
(backside)  
BHSM Collection

**UNDIVIDED POST CARD**  
This postcard depicts the 40-foot waterfall named “Dinner Pail Falls” which was located west of the Main Street Circle. It is now part of the Wachusett Reservoir.  
(frontside)  
BHSM Collection



It was not until 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. On March 1, 1907, Congress passed an act allowing privately produced postcards to include a message on the left half of the card’s back. Soon after, on June 13, 1907, the Postmaster-General issued Order No. 539 which allowed government-produced postcards to do the same. These



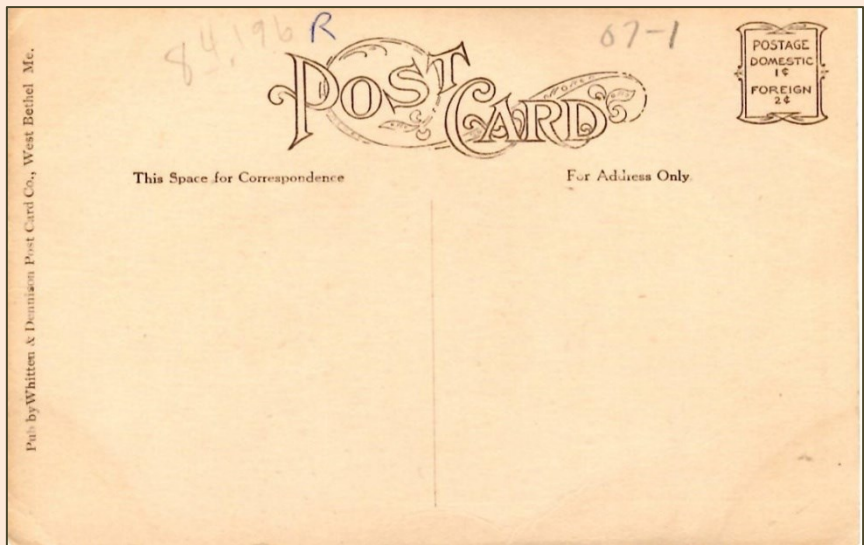
changes to the backs of postcards initiated the “Divided Back Period”, which covers the period from 1907 until 1915. Because of the immense popularity of the postcard during this time, it is also known as the “Golden Age of Postcards”. Postcards were used as business advertisements, vacation souvenirs, as greeting cards for the holidays, and to easily communicate with friends and family.

The Center Store was built in 1813 by Deacon Jonathon Bond. At the time of this postcard, it was owned by George Hastings & Son. This building burned in 1929 and was replaced by the New Center Store.



Store of G.R. HASTINGS & SON, Boylston Center, Mass.

**DIVIDED POST CARD**  
Circa 1907-1909  
*(frontside)*  
BHSM Collection



**DIVIDED POST CARD**  
Circa 1907-1909  
*(backside)*  
BHSM Collection

The period of 1915-1930 is known as the “White Border Period” as postcards produced during that era had a white border around the picture on the front. From 1903 until the 1930s the “real photo” postcards were popular. “Real photo” postcards were first produced using the Kodak “postcard camera.” The postcard camera could take a picture and then print a postcard-size photo, on a card with a divided back and place for postage.



Boylston Center Store and Post Office

**WHITE BORDER PERIOD POST CARD**  
**THE NEW CENTER STORE**  
THE STORE WAS RE-BUILT IN 1929. IT HOUSED THE BOYLSTON CENTRE POST OFFICE  
FOR MANY YEARS  
BHSM COLLECTION

The following additional photographs show some of the black-and-white postcards in the Archives Collection of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, all depicting scenes from Boylston in the early 1900s.



Greetings from Boylston, Mass.

View of Main Street, looking north. The house on the left was located on 723 Main Street, but destroyed by a fire in the 1900s. The trolley is visible on the right.

**UNDIVIDED POST CARD**  
View of Main Street  
BHSM Collection





**DIVIDED POST CARD**  
**View of the Wachusett Reservoir with Tower Hill in the foreground**  
*BHSM Collection*



Greetings from Boylston, Mass.

**UNDIVIDED POST CARD**  
**Early 1907**  
**A Rural Road in Boylston**  
*BHSM Collection*

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Acknowledgements:

- <sup>1</sup> <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/postcard-history>  
<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_P.\\_Charlton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_P._Charlton)  
<sup>3</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcard>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/postcard-history>  
Editor, Nancy A. Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Massachusetts  
<https://historicgeneva.org/communication-and-technology/p-s-wish-you-were-here-a-brief-history-of-postcards>  
<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