

The Gradual Demise of Postcards
by Liz Gibbons

The last time I remember writing and sending picture postcards to family and friends was when I visited London in 2004. In fact, I set aside an hour or more one morning to write them before I headed out to get an early lunch at a unique restaurant in the meat market section of London. It was far from other tourist attractions I wanted to see, so it was a good time to stay at the Bed and Breakfast and use that time to write many postcards. I had found some nice postcards 4 1/2 X 6 1/2 with a larger picture in the middle and 12 small pictures of tourist sites around the edges. A lot on one card and much better pictures than I could take.

On our long summer vacations when I was a child we often looked at the postcards in tourist shops if we stopped in one. My Mother sent picture postcards to her parents and brother to keep them abreast of where we were. I may have written a few postcards to friends, but I did not see the need to correspond a lot when we were away. When we were clearing out my dad's study we found an interesting stack of picture post cards about 3 inches thick. They were quite old having been received or purchased between 1900 and 1930. There was one valuable postcard related to the Wounded Knee Massacre. Actually the golden age of picture postcards was 1890 to 1915. After World War I their use diminished with the increased use of the telephone. In fact, postcards were referred to as the "poor man's telephone." They began to rebound with the advent of Photochrom cards (spelled without the "e" on the end) which were first produced in 1939 and became very popular by 1950.

Now smart phones are used to share pictures of people's travels or by posting pictures on Facebook so there is not much need for picture post cards anymore. I have the simplest of cell phones. It does take pictures, but I have no idea how to send them and don't feel a need to learn to do so.

Now the only postcards I receive are advertisements, some of them very large. They immediately head for recycling