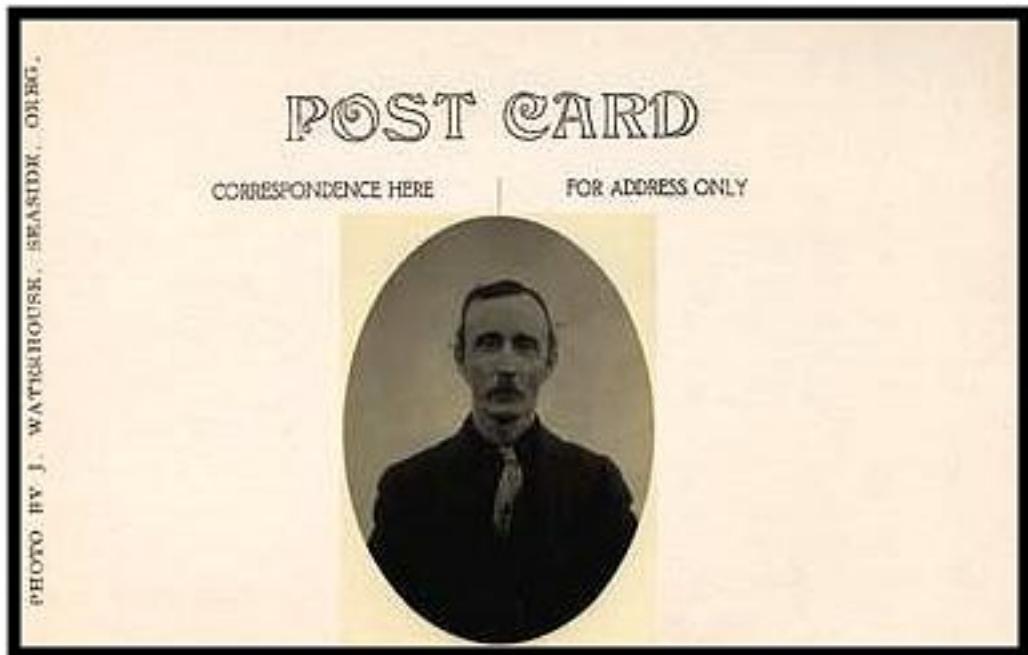




WEBFOOTER EXTRA

May 2014

MY FAVORITE SEASIDE PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES WATERHOUSE BY DAVE ELSTON - PG. 3



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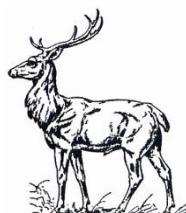
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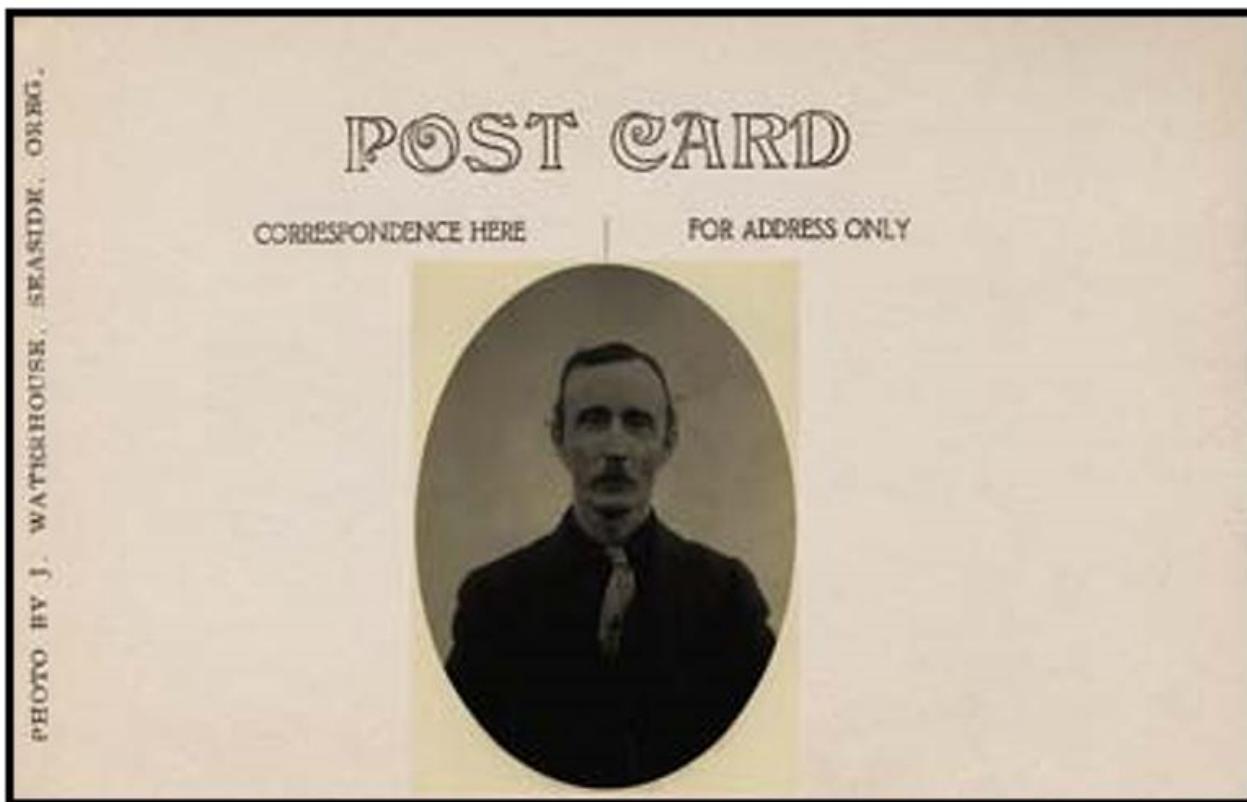
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MY FAVORITE SEASIDE, OREGON PHOTOGRAPHER:

JAMES WATERHOUSE BY DAVE ELSTON



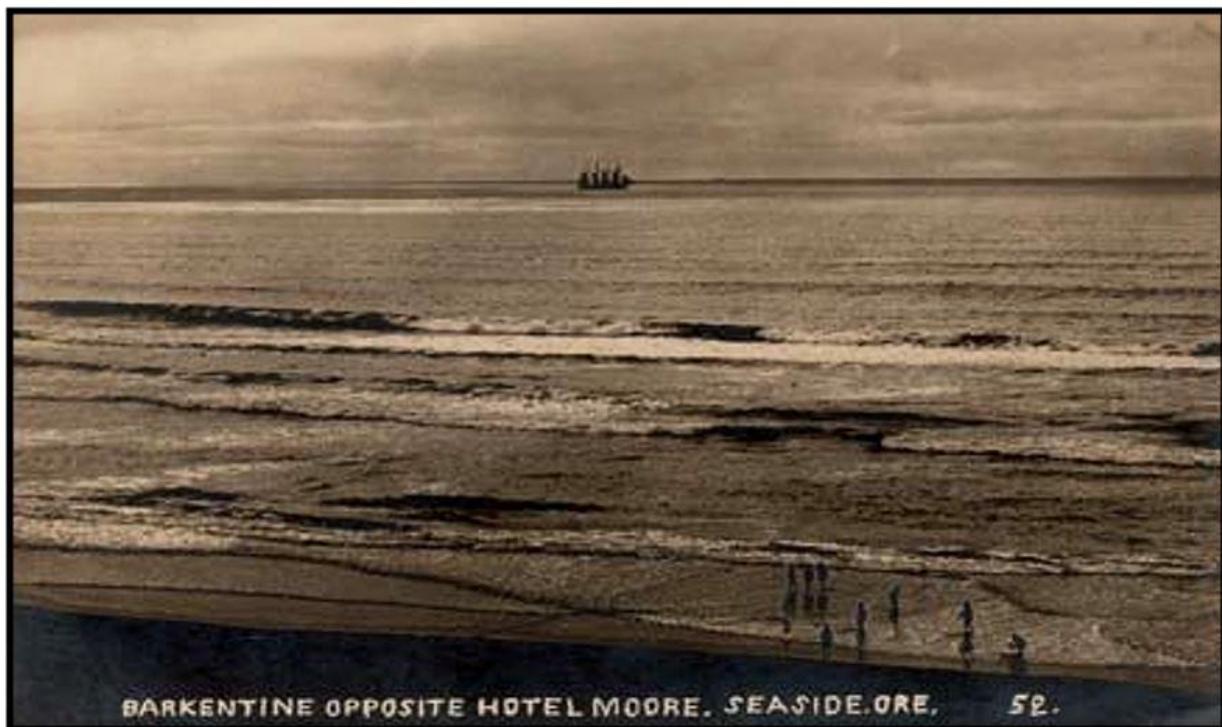
James Waterhouse was born in 1866 and emigrated from England to the United States in about 1887, when he was a young man. He may have settled in the Seaside, Oregon area (year unknown) due to the possible presence of a family member, or of other English immigrants living in the area during that time. There is written evidence, taken from messages on postcards he sent to his relatives in England, that at some time during his stay he "spent a few years" in a cabin in a rural setting. At the cabin site he "cleared land for one year."

He was listed as a boarder at "McGuires" (possibly The McGuire Hotel on then-Main Street) in Seaside at the time of the 1900 U.S. Census. The earliest dated photo postcard that I have personally seen of his is a self-portrait postmarked from Astoria, Oregon on October 14, 1904. On a postcard image he took of the Astoria City Hall under construction in 1904, he noted: "this is one of my first pictures taken with my first camera, a 3 1/2 x 3 1/2 box camera." He was listed in the 1910 U.S. Census as a single man, self-employed "Photographer-Commercial," and living on Spruce Street (Seaside) in a rented house.



One of my first pictures.

This RPPC was recently purchased on eBay from a seller who had acquired an album that contained some Waterhouse postcards, which James had personally sent from Bend, Oregon to a friend in Pennsylvania during the 1930s. Waterhouse, in his characteristic script (with his T's flagged on the mast, rather than crossed) wrote: "One of my first pictures."



Text taken from Museum Waterhouse card # 53, a very similar image from that seen here on this card (#52), sent by Waterhouse to his relatives in England: "This is a Barkentine that drifted close to shore in a calm in July, I was the only one got it and sold about 250 postals. It is the first time one was so close as the water is shallow a long ways out."

Waterhouse sent numerous of his 'stock' postcards while living in Clatsop County to relatives in England, many with personal notes about his work and information having to do with the images he had captured. The Seaside Museum and Historical Society was contacted by a descendant of his 10-15 years ago and they donated about 150 Waterhouse RPPCs to the Museum. Unfortunately, he apparently enclosed most of the photos in postal wraps so that dating of the material is subject to conjecture, and the opportunity for an exact dating of some of those images may have been forever lost.

James often used a plain numeral (1-100 for Seaside images) with a caption on the front of his postcards; at times he had his printed name (James or Jas. or J. Waterhouse) on the backside and on occasion used blind stamp identification on the lower half of the card's image side (PHOTO BY J. WATERHOUSE. SEASIDE. ORE.).

Unnumbered and otherwise unidentified (as to photographer) images can often be attributed to him by observing his typical blocky-letter caption style and by noting his quirk of often forward-slanting the second "S" in "SEASIDE," while attempting to caption photo negatives using 'backward' lettering. Postcard images that use none of the usual identification methods sometimes just look like a Waterhouse, with their subject content from a certain time period, their paper type (frequently a sailboat in the stamp box) and a somewhat characteristic photographic finish.



The RPPC shown above is one of the first Waterhouse RPPCs that I bought about 12 years ago. I was taken by the clarity of the image (the focus seems to be on every rock on the shoreline) and his sense of photo composition.



Waterhouse's geographic range for capturing images seems to have been fairly small....His RPPCs of Astoria, Gearhart, Seaside, Cannon Beach and Arch Cape appear to encompass the entire scope of his work. However, recently I found this image of his (shown above) of "The Landing at Catalamet, Wash." (obviously Cathlamet, Washington, just across the Columbia River from Oregon).

He also, likely towards the end of his stay in Clatsop County, used some of his images of Seaside and Gearhart river scenes and re-captioned them: "A BEND OF THE NECANICUM. SEASIDE, ORE." became "A BEND OF THE RIVER. TILLAMOOK, OREG." Probably, like many other photographers of the day who used this same 'trick,' he was merely trying to broaden his commercial appeal.

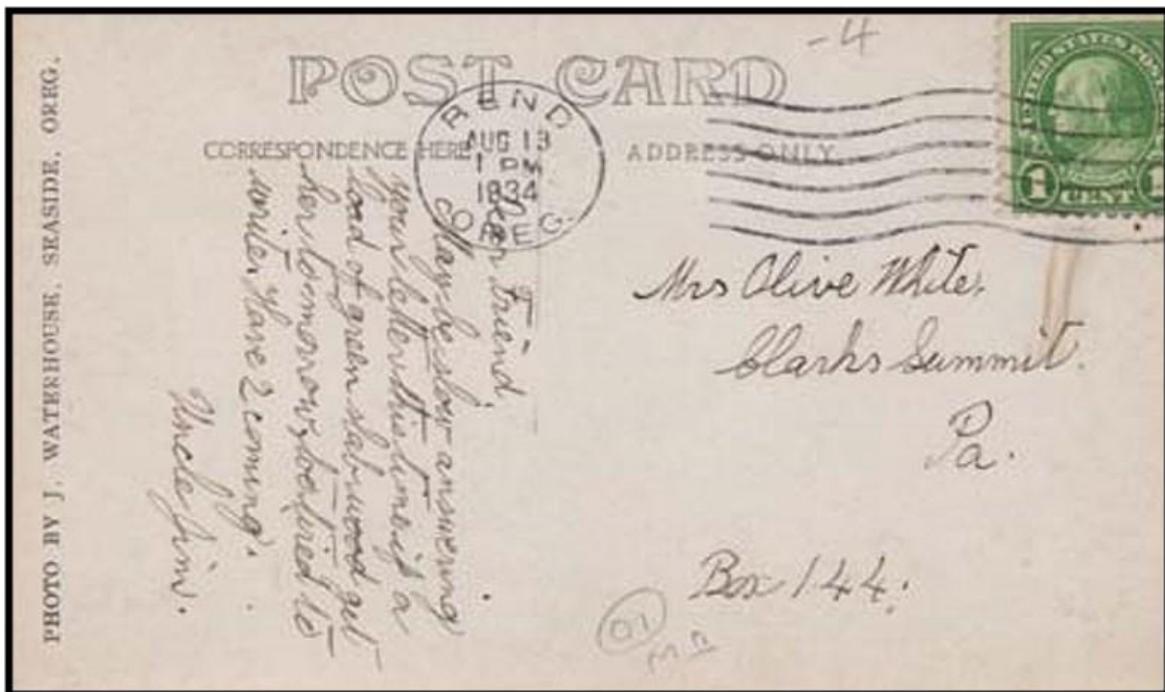


Message on this card sent by Abraham Lincoln Bailey to his sister, Nellie, in Lockport, Maine on May 20, 1912: "In 2 1/2 hours it looked like this....it was the quickest and hottest fire I ever saw."

Waterhouse's photographic work of the Clatsop County area seems to have ended shortly after the extensive Seaside fire of May, 1912. Like his contemporaries (Woodfield, Montag, Frost & Son), he produced a number of photo postcards of the destruction resulting from that fire and some that depict rebuilt businesses.

When I was researching Waterhouse years ago using a friend's genealogical website subscription, it seemed that the James Waterhouse appearing in the 1920 and 1930 census as living in Bend, Oregon: "laborer, lumber mill" was "Clatsop County's Waterhouse." I was skeptical--what would a talented photographer from a moist, verdant green Clatsop County be doing working in a lumber mill in arid, pale-green foliaged Bend, Oregon??

And what had become of his photography pursuits? With my recent acquisition of postcards sent by James to his friend in Pennsylvania, I lost my skepticism. It seems that 'Uncle Jim' had been up to his old habit of sending groups of his postcards (albeit from his old stock) to 'distant' lands:



"Dear Friend, May be slow answering your letter this time if a load of green slab wood get here tomorrow, too tired to write. Have 2 coming. Uncle Jim"

In my opinion, James Waterhouse is an under-appreciated early 20th century Oregon photographer. Information about his life and the details of his work methods appears to be somewhat limited. The search continues...James Waterhouse feels like an old friend to me.