



# WEBFOOTER EXTRA

October 2012

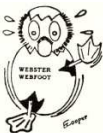


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## WEBFOOTERS POST CARD CLUB

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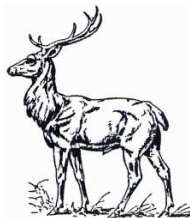
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# MY US SERIES POSTCARDS: HOW A COLLECTION KEEPS GROWING

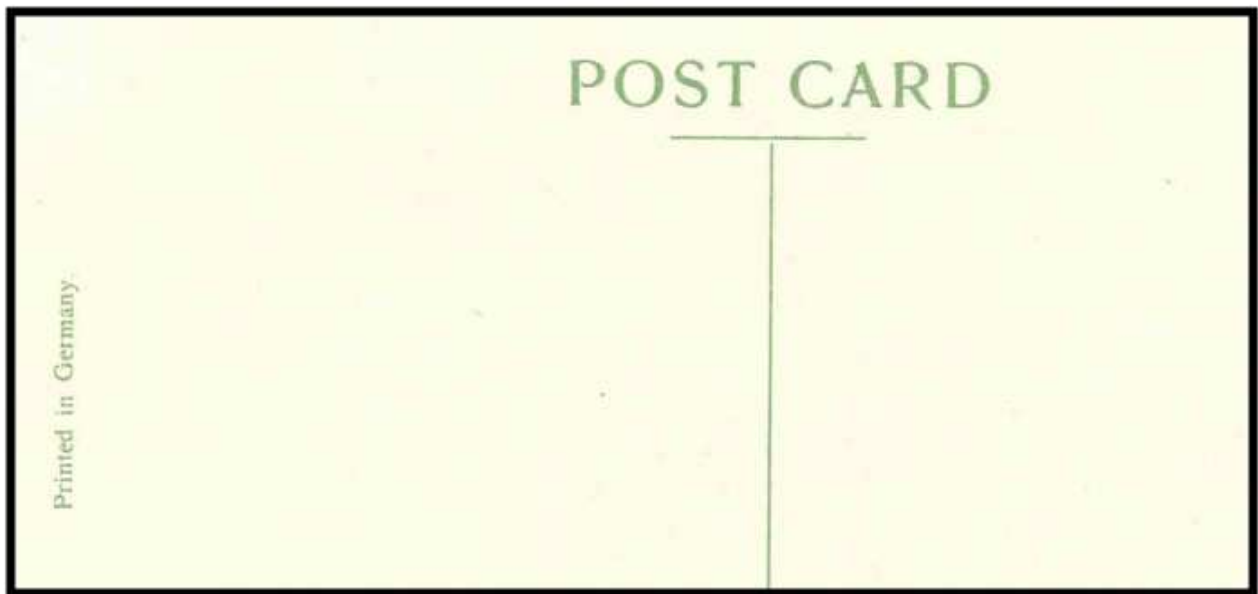
By Walter Fortner, Webfooter no. 1702

Many of you may have noticed that I collect "US Postcards," amongst other themes, and wondered what I mean by that. This article will attempt to answer that question and provide examples of how a collection can grow.

I lived in Terre Haute, Indiana for more than 40 years before moving to the great Northwest. It is logical that I would collect postcards of Terre Haute, and I was bitten by the bug for real sometime in the mid 1980s. (There is a Postcard History book for Terre Haute and Vigo County, similar to mine for *Portland*.) As I accumulated cards for Terre Haute, I found several like this one:



The card is titled "U. S. 438. Terre Haute, Ind. Vigo County Court House." I figured there must be other locations with cards in this series – certainly there were not 400 postcards of TH in this series! Through local antique shops and eBay, I was able to locate several Terre Haute cards numbered 438 through 446 and 498. But I had no clue where else these cards might be found.



The back of the card was absolutely no help. How do you search for that on eBay? Millions of cards were printed in Germany before World War I. Dates I had on my cards were all in the early divided-back era, so pre-white border was the proper time frame.

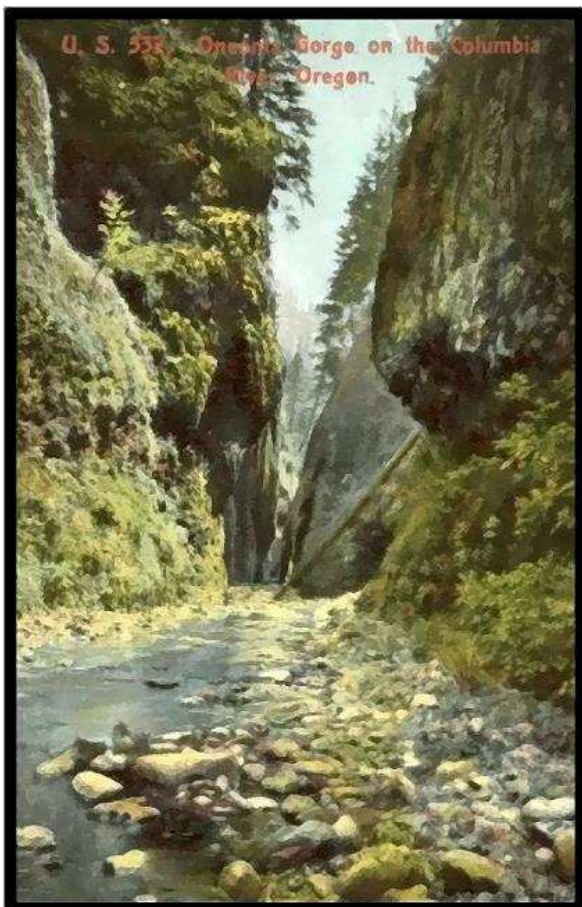


When I moved to Milwaukie, Oregon I started collecting Portland area postcards. Soon I came upon a card like this one. Finally, I had a second city for the set! The back was the same as the Terre Haute cards, so no new help there. Soon I had cards numbered 504, 506-519, and 521-528.



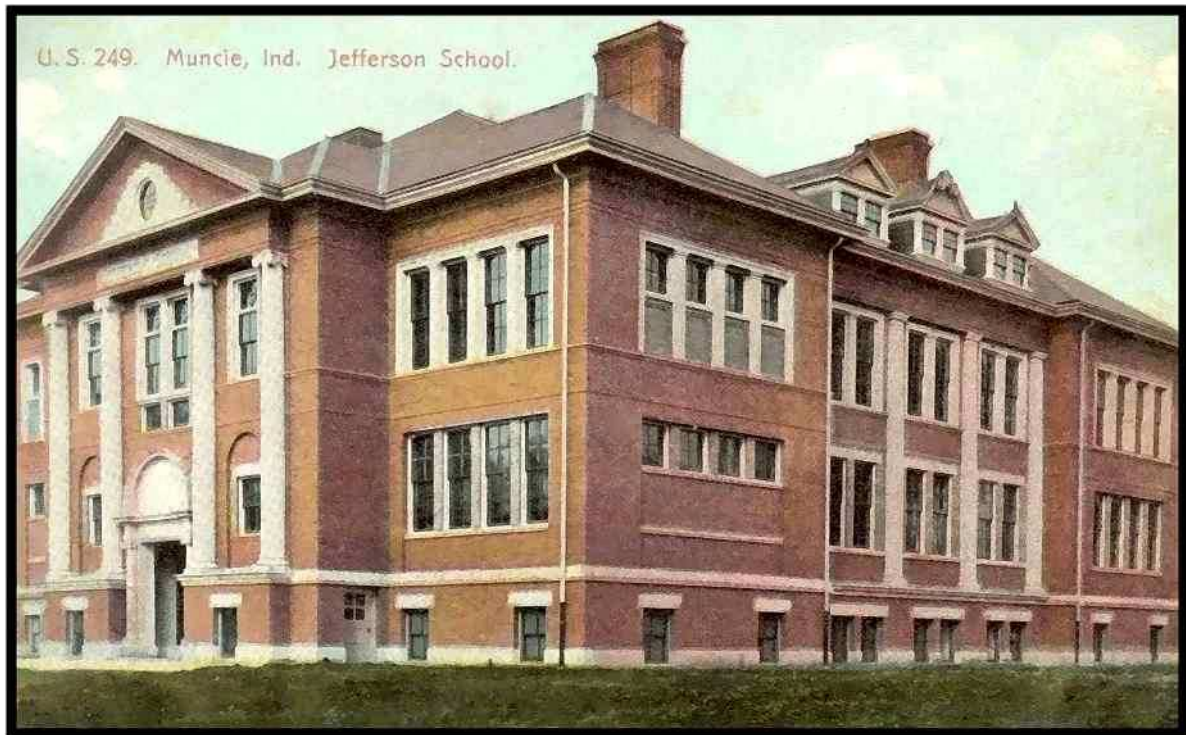


EBay sellers sometimes help you by mentioning cities their cards are near, and I found that the missing cards did not mention Portland: US 520 - Mount Hood, Oregon and US 505 - Castle Rock, Columbia River, OR. I added this card and I now had a full run from 504-528.



One day as I was leaving the Webfooters meeting, I passed a dealer with a box of cards in rigid plastic sleeves. Curious, but not wanting to spend any more time that day, I idly pulled one card out of the box to see what kind of cards he had. As luck would have it, I pulled out the card on the left, US 537 Oneonta Gorge on the Columbia River, Oregon.

Here was an extension: Cards might be identified by searching on "Columbia River". (I don't know why I didn't think that with the Castle Rock card, and no, I could not stay to check the rest of his cards.) Within a few months, I had located other cards numbered 529, 530, 531, 533, 535 and 536.

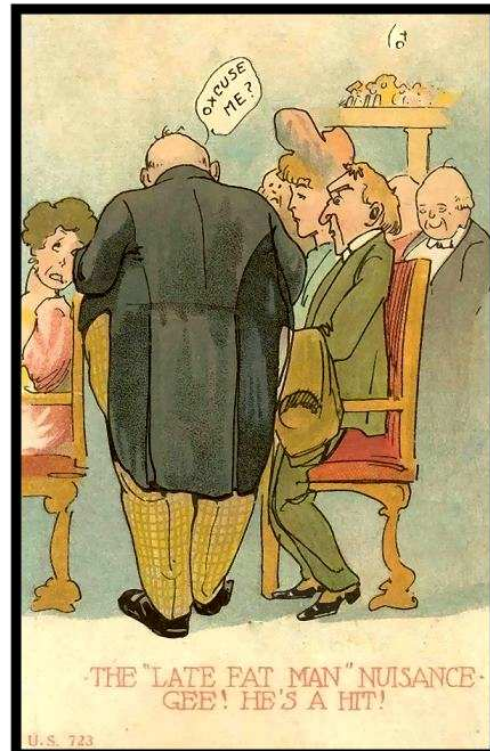


At the April 2011 Webfooters Post Card Show, I was checking a handful of Indiana cards when this one caught my attention. Another city! I just KNEW there had to be more. Even allowing the 200 series numbers for Muncie, the 400s for Terre Haute, and the 500s for Portland still didn't make any sense. Especially since Muncie and Terre Haute cards didn't appear to start anywhere near the beginning of their hundreds. The jury was still out on Portland – what are cards 501, 502 and 503?



Even more important, the back of this card was different: Here was a name! Baron Fritz von Bardeleben was a German businessman with his hands in many enterprises, including the printing of postcards. He was probably more famous for his short-lived marriage to Fritzi Scheff, a leading American opera singer.





Fritzie dropped the "e" soon after this postcard was produced. The Baron's businesses failed sometime after 1910 and would have probably been lost to World War I, in any case. This gave me a new search keyword. Von Bardeleben did put his name on a number of his cards. Some of them were not even in the US series. I also found that he printed cards in the US series that were not buildings or street scenes. This led my search to cards from Toledo, Ohio and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

My collection was growing, and I had information and pictures (from eBay) on cards not in my possession. About this time, eBay began to include a picture of each item with the search results. This made it MUCH easier to pick out potential Bardelebens than having to look at each listing. From these searches, I also found that a number of these "US" cards depict places outside of the United States. There are several series of undivided back cards set in Great Britain and Ireland. Here is a card from Dublin, Ireland, US Series 139/4.





I discovered that a slash (/) was added to the numbering when the back was undivided.

Fast forward to the 2012 Webfooters Post Card Show. After two days of not finding anything for this series, the last stop yielded three new cards. There was a card depicting the building of skyscrapers in New York, Series 108/5, the Crocker Art Gallery in Sacramento, CA, US 499, and Main Street in Springfield, Ohio, US 572. The first card gave me another break, the back of the first card gave the name of another printer: Aristophot.

Three offices were given for Aristophot: New York, Tascha and Saxony in England. Since this is in the undivided period, I presume von Bardeleben's business empire was already shrinking by time the divided back era began.

With another keyword to search on, my records of available cards began to explode. Sometimes I could find one card, and by checking the seller's other items, I would find several more. I found cards from White Plains and Chautauqua New York and Easton, PA.

Each new city also gave me a new search keyword, which led to other cards from the same place. I found undivided back cards from Newport and Providence, RI, Williamsport and Philadelphia, PA as well as New Rochelle and Mount Vernon, NY. I found divided back cards depicting Youngstown, Ohio, Omaha, Nebraska, San Francisco, CA, Salt Lake City, UT, and Detroit MI.

A big find was a series from Highland, NY which extended the series past U. S. 1000 (the highest number is now 1030). Yes, the irony was not lost that I had started with "Terre Haute" and had now come to "Highland."

Recently, I checked "Columbia River" again, trying to find the missing cards (532 and 534). I failed at that but found US 539 Bridal Veil Falls, Columbia River, Oregon and added that to my watch list (it was a bit more than I wanted to pay). I then checked "Portland," as I do every day and there was a group of three cards – including 539 – for less than \$1.00: I only wish I'd had it in April to show the Bridal Veil Post Office.

A number of printers seem to have contracted to have the cards printed by Bardeleben. The cards have the same look, but are credited to different sources (and do not include any reference to Bardeleben or Aristophot). There seems to have been some confusion in these contracts, as some numbers are used for more than one card. The Youngstown, OH cards reuse numbers from Chautauqua, NY and Eagles Mere, PA. Washington, DC crashed the Portland party when US 525 was reissued depicting the US Pension Office in the nation's capitol.

Since the April Show, my list of cards in this series has grown from around 100 to more than 270. I have some 110 of these cards in my collection, and am always on the lookout for more. I have identified 23 different backs for these cards.

To show how fast this series is expanding, when I wrote this article in May, the numbers were 170 cards known and 70 in my collection. Cards 501 and 502 have now been found, and depict Sacramento, CA. Card 503 is still unknown. Scans of all my cards are on my Facebook page (accessible from the Webfooters Facebook page). If you have any information about other cards in this series please pass it on.