



WISTARIAHURST MUSEUM ARCHIVE

Holyoke Postcard Collection,

1876 – 1990 (Bulk 1905-1915)

Approximately 1,900 postcards in 3 boxes (2.5 linear ft.)

Postcard Collection

ABSTRACT

The city of Holyoke was originally a part of West Springfield called Ireland Parish. Ireland Parish officially became the town of Holyoke in 1850 and separated from West Springfield. In 1873, the town of Holyoke petitioned to become a city, which was granted. The Holyoke Postcard Collection reflects the diverse history of this immigrant, industrial city, telling the story of the city and its people. Of particular significance are the postcards pertaining to Mountain Park, one of several “trolley-car amusement parks” built adjacent to American cities just before and after the start of the twentieth century, until it closed in 1988. Its classic Merry-Go-Round now has a downtown home at Holyoke Heritage Park.

The collection contains three series, the first consisting of the Mountain Park and Mount Tom collection. The second series, Holyoke Landmarks, houses all of the postcards of city buildings such as banks, churches, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, and schools, in addition to streetscapes. The third series, Holyoke Views, houses a variety of postcards from Holyoke’s industrial history to its surrounding natural beauty, in addition to many other postcards which illustrate historical daily life in the city. Approximately sixty percent of the postcards are in color, the remainder in black and white. Almost all of the postcards are the standard 3.5” x 5” size.

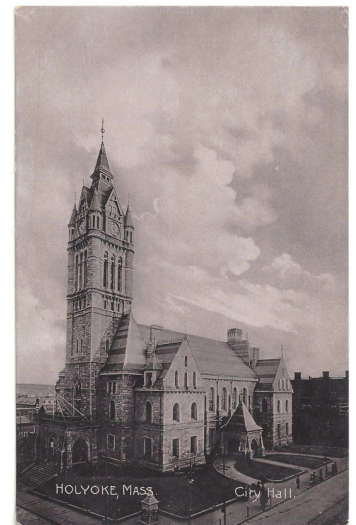
Terms of Access and Use: The collection is open for research. It can also be accessed electronically on the Wistariahurst Museum webpage at <http://wistariahurst.org/postcard-collection/>.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Holyoke thrived as an industrial city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Holyoke's water power canal system, the largest in New England, carried water from the river to drive the turbines in the mills. The present stone dam was built in the 1890s, replacing the older wooden dam, and began service in 1900. The stone dam has had major repairs once, after the flood in 1936, which sent 14 feet of water over its top. Otherwise the dam has functioned unchanged since its construction.

Holyoke's fame as "paper city" arose in the 1880s when it became the world's largest producer of fine writing papers. In 1899, 16 mills formed the American Writing Paper Company, a price-controlling trust, or coalition. Parsons Paper Company was the first established paper mill in 1853 and was the last mill in Holyoke to manufacture paper, closing in 2004. There are still several "paper converting" companies manipulating paper that is made elsewhere.

Holyoke mills excelled in the manufacturing of high-quality spool thread for sewing. The Skinner Silk Mills, in operation from 1874 to 1963, produced silk thread, bridal satin and silk and nylon for parachutes used in World War II. Lyman Mills, named for a Boston investor, opened in 1854, made quality cotton fabrics, and employed 1500 people at its peak in the 1890s. It closed in 1927 as textile industries moved south. Germania Mills opened in 1865 to make heavy woolens for overcoats and suits. Their reputation was built on fashionable



woolens, but innovations in home and auto heating swayed fashions to lighter suits and coats. The mill closed in the 1960s. Farr Alpaca used llama wool to develop Holyoke's largest textile company. In 1910 its 4,000 employees produced mohair and cashmere cloth. The company's security rested on its manufacture of quality alpaca wool linings and its adaptation to changing fashions, but it finally closed in the 1930s.

While only a small proportion of the postcards pertain to the dam, canals, and mills, this collection provides information as to what the City of Holyoke was like in terms of key buildings, in addition to recreational venues such as the aforementioned Mountain Park series. These images and captions of the postcards bring this industrial city to life.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The Holyoke Postcard Collection consists of materials primarily dated in the twentieth century. Most of the postcards do not have postmarks date stamped on them. Out of those with this information, the oldest postcards are dated from 1904, and a majority of them range from 1905 to 1915. Some postcards appear to be from the late 20th century; examples include the Mount Tom Ski Area, The Log Cabin Restaurant, Wistariahurst Museum, and Holyoke Heritage State Park.

In addition to postcards, there are several private mailing cards and postals in this collection. Although private mailing cards date from around the turn of the 19th century, the postals pre-date the twentieth century. The oldest postmarked postal is from 1876; however, most of the postals with date identifying information appear to be much closer to the start of the twentieth century. While private mailing cards are spread throughout the various subseries in the collection by their appropriate subject matter, postals are contained in a separate subseries (Series 3, Subseries 18).

The collection includes twenty subseries from Mountain Park and Mount Tom (Series 1), thirty-two subseries of city landmarks (Series 2), and twenty-five subseries of the rest of the collection, referred to as "Holyoke Views" (Series 3). Subseries are arranged alphabetically within each Series. The postcards within each subseries are arranged by object ID number, in chronological order. Object ID numbers, from oldest to newest, consist of 77.8.3, 77.9.3 through 77.9.6; 88.101 through 88.114; 96.2.6 through 96.2.18; 2007.4.1 through 2007.4.1568; 2010.16.1 through 2010.16.3; 2011.27.02.1 through 2011.27.02.14; and 2014.FIC.PC001 through 2014.FIC.PC257.

The conditions of the postcards greatly vary. Many of the postcards have handwritten greetings or notes. Additionally, there are many postcards for which there are multiple copies. While the electronic collection only has one example of each of these, researchers may utilize the handwritten language throughout different samples as a historical resource.

The Collection has been arranged in the following 3 series (boxes):

SERIES (BOX) 1. Mountain Park and Mount Tom (20 subseries, 9 linear in.)

SERIES (BOX) 2. Holyoke Landmarks (32 subseries, 11 linear in.)

SERIES (BOX) 3. Holyoke Views (25 subseries, 10 linear in.)

INFORMATION ON USE

Terms of Access and Use

The collection is open for research – No restrictions. It can also be accessed electronically on the Wistariahurst Museum webpage at <http://wistariahurst.org/postcard-collection/>.

Preferred Citation

Cite as: The Holyoke Postcard Collection, Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke, Mass.

History of the Collection

The contents of the Post Card Collection have been acquired over the years through in-kind donation from a variety of donors.

Processing Information

Processed by Matthew Sheehan, Volunteer, under the direction of Penni Martorell, Curator/Archivist from June 2014 to (end date to be determined).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Languages: English

Separated Materials: Nothing has been removed from the collection.

RELATED MATERIALS

Dawson, Devon. *Holyoke*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2004. Print. Postcard History Series.

Della Penna, Craig P. *Holyoke*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 1997. Print. Images of America.

Ducharme, Jay. *Mountain Park*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2008. Print. Images of America.

Thibodeau, Kate Navarra. *Holyoke: The Skinner Family and Wistariahurst*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2005. Print. Images of America.

CONTENTS LIST

Series (Box) 1. MOUNTAIN PARK AND MOUNT TOM

Subseries 1: Amusements

Subseries 2: Ballroom

Subseries 3: Casino & Rustic Arch

Subseries 4: Deer Park, Bear Cage, Zoo

Subseries 5: Kenilworth Castle

Subseries 6: Lily Pond

Subseries 7: Lower Station

Subseries 8: Mountain Park – Miscellaneous

Subseries 9: Mt. Tom Golf Club

Subseries 10: Mt. Tom State Reservation

Subseries 11: Outdoor Pavilion

Subseries 12: Railroad

Subseries 13: Reservoir

Subseries 14: Restaurant

Subseries 15: Ski Area

Subseries 16: Summit House

Subseries 17: Trolley Station

Subseries 18: Upper Station

Subseries 19: Views from Mt. Tom

Subseries 20: Views of Mt. Tom

Series (Box) 2. HOLYOKE LANDMARKS

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Subseries 1: Armory | Subseries 2: Buildings |
| Subseries 3: Catholic Churches | Subseries 4: City Hall |
| Subseries 5: City Hospital | Subseries 6: Fire Department |
| Subseries 7: Greetings - City Landmarks | Subseries 8: High Street |
| Subseries 9: Holyoke High School | Subseries 10: Holyoke National Bank |
| Subseries 11: Holyoke Public Schools | Subseries 12: Holyoke Savings Bank |
| Subseries 13: Hotel Hamilton | Subseries 14: Hotels & Motels |
| Subseries 15: La France Hotel | Subseries 16: Library |
| Subseries 17: Nonotuck Hotel | Subseries 18: Old Post Office |
| Subseries 19 Post Office | Subseries 20: Protestant Churches |
| Subseries 21: Providence Hospital | Subseries 22: Railroad Station |
| Subseries 23: Restaurants | Subseries 24: Schools |
| Subseries 25: Skinner Memorial Chapel | Subseries 26: Soldiers' Home |
| Subseries 27: Streets | Subseries 28: The Log Cabin |
| Subseries 29: The Yankee Pedlar Inn | Subseries 30: War Memorial |
| Subseries 31: Wistariahurst Museum | Subseries 32: YMCA |

Series (Box) 3. HOLYOKE VIEWS

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|---|---|
| Subseries 1: Advertising | Subseries 2: Anniversary |
| Subseries 3: Bridges | Subseries 4: Canoe Club |
| Subseries 5: Country Club | Subseries 6: Dam |
| Subseries 7: First/Upper Canal | Subseries 8: Greetings |
| Subseries 9: Hampden Park | Subseries 10: Hampton Ponds & Pequot Park |
| Subseries 11: Holyoke Heritage State Park | Subseries 12: Houses |
| Subseries 13: Mills | Subseries 14: Miscellaneous |
| Subseries 15: Parades & Events | Subseries 16: Parks |
| Subseries 17: People | Subseries 18: Postals |
| Subseries 19: Prospect Park | Subseries 20: River |
| Subseries 21: Second/Middle Canal | Subseries 22: Souvenir |
| Subseries 23: Third/Lower Canal | Subseries 24: Transportation |
| Subseries 25: Views – City of Holyoke | |