

SYNOPSIS

RANCHING AND FARMING IN CANADA'S PRAIRIE PROVINCES BEFORE WORLD WAR I

PURPOSE OF EXHIBIT:

Immigrants from many nations thronged to western Canada before World War I, drawn by the fertile soils, rich prairies and the Canadian government's offer of free land to homesteaders. This exhibit focuses on ranching and farming in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as the former District of Assiniboia.

World War I was chosen as the terminus of the exhibit since the tide of immigration into the West all but stopped at that time.

TREATMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE:

The evolution of farming is shown from horse-drawn plows to steam-powered threshing machines. The routine activities of ranch and farm life are developed through views of roping, branding, plowing, seeding, reaping and threshing, all unusual topics on early Canadian postcards.

Most Canadian picture post cards printed before 1907 have undivided backs. Cards with divided backs were permitted in the domestic mails as early as 1904. However, such cards could not be mailed to international destinations until 1907. Thus, most publishers continued to print cards with undivided backs in the interim.

The exhibit identifies many publishers of Canadian picture postcards, though the producers of several cards remain unknown.

CHALLENGE FACTOR:

Many early Canadian picture postcards depict street scenes, historical monuments or buildings such as hotels and courthouses. Agricultural scenes are uncommon, in my experience, and represent but a fraction of the total picture postcards printed. Especially difficult to find are views of branding, seeding and plowing, all of which are in the exhibit. This exhibit presents the results of several year's searching for such postcards. Of importance are the patriotic and heraldic cards, i.e., those with borders of flags and national emblems or with coats of arms. Such cards are unusual with agricultural scenes.

PRESENTATION:

Cards of special importance or with unusual views are matted in blue.

Historical and social information is given in Roman type. *Deltiological data, such as publishers and countries of origin, are in italic type.* Cards have divided backs unless stated otherwise. Also, the cards are printed in Canada unless otherwise indicated.

ORGANIZATION:

The exhibit first presents cards showing horse, sheep and cattle ranching with their attendant activities. The farming section then traces the growing season from plowing to threshing wheat, concluding with the grain being carried to the elevator and a rare early view of a flour mill.

REFERENCES:

There are relatively few books on Canadian picture postcards compared with the literature on U.S. cards. The books listed below may be helpful, but do not include most of the cards in the exhibit. Also, the prices and rarity factors in these references are unrealistic in my experience. The Steinhart reference uses the terms "postcard" and "postal card" interchangeably.

Guzman, W. 1992. *The Canadian Picture Postcard Catalogue*, 2nd ed. Unitrade Press, Toronto.

Smith, M. J. 2001. *The Canadian Patriotic Postcard Checklist. 1898-1928*. Published by the author.

Smith, M. J. 2006. *The W. G. MacFarland Picture Postcard Handbook. 1902-1910*. Published by the author.

Steinhart, A. L. 1979. *The Postal History of the Post Card in Canada. 1871-1911*. Mission Press, Toronto.