

SYNOPSIS

POSTALS – THROUGH THE LENS OF PAUL YATES

This exhibit is a study of the postals that Paul Yates created from his scenic photography. All are real picture postcards except those on pages 3 and 4. These include his scenic views, Digby town views, a disaster, prominent buildings, oxen, hotels and views of tourist attractions. Unable to make a living from producing his scenic views he augmented his income with the sale of postals (an early term for postcards that Yates used in his ledgers), portraits many of which were visiting tourists including passport pictures and soldiers identification for both wars and commercial work throughout the area.

Paul Yates (1864-1946) came to Annapolis Royal Nova Scotia from Philadelphia, Pa. opening a photographic studio there in 1906. In 1908 he moved his family to nearby Digby and opened a second shop there calling it "The Little Art Gallery" on Water Street. His specialty was scenic photography. **Among Nova Scotia photographers whose work can be found in tourism promotion material after 1900 his name ranks highly and could be found all over North America.** Some of his work is quite collectable, a book put out by the Kedgemakooge Rod and Gun Club of Nova Scotia, Ltd. c. 1910 with 27 pages illustrated from photographs taken by Paul Yates recently sold for \$720.

The ledgers from the Digby Store (The Annapolis Royal shop was closed after a fire in the early 1920's.) are now the property of the O'Dell House Museum at Annapolis Royal and exhibitor was able to read and study them. He had one ledger that listed his mail order sales and he sent his work all over North America.

The **Advertising cover with the postals** shown on Page 2 of the exhibit were only obtained in the past twelve months and have never been seen before by this exhibitor and exhibitor has been collecting these postals for over 25 years and they were not known at either the museum in Annapolis Royal or the Admiral Digby Museum in Digby.

It is not common to find postals done by Yates postally used as most were taken home with the visitors as keepsakes of where they had been or where they had stayed and since most visitors were from the United States most went there. Those that are postally used that exhibitor has been able to locate are all in the exhibit and outlined in blue and those items that are more rare and unusual are also bordered in blue.

It is very hard to date the time when the photographs for the postals were taken. Early ones had his name and sometimes Digby Nova Scotia right in the negative. Frame 1 Page 7 has a postal signed on the front by Yates and there is also a similar postal with printing on the back signifying a later printing. There is another example in Frame 3, Page 9. Some can be dated when one knows when the events took place. The ship the S.S. Rupert stopped service in 1916 and the S.S. Empress stopped service in 1930. It is known when the hospital was built and The New Pines Hotel. Also the date of the big storm that caused the damage is known.

Exhibitor looked at trying to date the photographs by looking at the printing on the back of the postals, but these were printed and reprinted at differing times and it is impossible to tell which was the earliest printing. An example is shown on the second page of Frame 3 where the photo appears to have been an early one, but in this case reprinted a little differently two more times. Exhibitor has noted 10 different identification markings on the back of the postals and his name on the front is found in different places on the bottom.

Frame 1 Page 8 has postals from Kejimkujik and the postals on Page 13, Frame 3 from Grand Pre and those on Page 14 Frame 3 from Peggy's Cove are quite uncommon photographs to appear on Yates' postals as these are some distance from the Digby and Annapolis area.

Frame 1 Page 10, the top postal has "The Little Art Gallery" Paul Yates' studio in the background of the photograph and it is the only Digby postal that exhibitor has seen with the shop visible and the exhibitor has a thousand different Digby postcards.

Paul Yates sold his photographs as prints, framed prints, tinted framed prints and postals as evidenced in Frame 2 with the beautiful signed tinted print and the postal of the same view. His ledgers listed the sale of this view a number of times. He sold his work in the local hotels and guest houses, local garages and local stores as well as his shop in the summer months and travelled to the United States and Toronto to promote his work in the winter months. He was very much an entrepreneur.

The Scenic Views shown in Frame 2, Pages 9-16 and Frame 3, Pages 1-4 are all located near the town of Digby and would have been places tourists were familiar with. Point Prim was the first thing tourists saw in Nova Scotia as it guarded the waters of the Digby Gap. Smith's Cove had many hotels and guest houses for the tourists as well as the Digby Neck area particularly Sandy Cove. These photographs would have been familiar sights to the tourists who might purchase them to keep as remembrances of their time in the area.

The tinted postal in Frame 3 Page 1 is the only tinted postal that exhibitor has seen done by Yates and could not readily identify the location until it was identified by someone at the Admiral Digby Museum. Locations for postals in Frame 2 bottom postals on Pages 4 and 14 and Frame 3 page 1 both postals were also identified with help from the museum staff.

It is the belief of this exhibitor that when these postcards were found in homes in later years they were discarded as they very seldom had captions and why keep a black and white postcard of someplace that was not recognised by the viewer. In fact the exhibitor who is from the Digby area had to have help in identifying the location of some of the views. Frame 2 Page 6 has two postals that exemplify this. If you did not know the area you would probably not keep them even though the picture is beautiful as there are absolutely no reference points.

It is known by looking at the ledgers that he sold a large number of postals – 824 in one period in 1937 from the News Stand at The New Pines alone. So it is not surprising that he took a great number of pictures of The Pines over the years as this is where he sold the majority of his work. From his ledgers he also was the photographer that the hotel called upon when they had a function like a convention, meeting, dance or anything that could be recorded and used in their advertising. His ledgers list that he sold many copies of group pictures to those who attended these functions.

Well over half of the postals shown are not listed in Ken C. MacDonald's publication *POST CARDS of DIGBY COUNTY (Second Edition)*. Only a handful of the postals are found in the museums in Annapolis Royal and Digby.

His second wife continued in the business after his death, not doing the scenic photography, but portrait work. She took wedding pictures of my sisters and indeed took my graduation photograph (hope that doesn't give my age away) and exhibitor's name is in the last ledger.