

Daffodils and Postcards

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By Jan Dalton

It is quite apparent when you compare the number of members the Daffodil Society has, to how many that exhibit at our Annual Show each year, that there is a large discrepancy. In truth probably just over 50% of the total membership actually exhibit daffodils, either locally or nationally. So what about the 'silent minority' of members, and what is their interest? There are, no doubt, many reasons why people join the Society but the one factor common to all, is the love and enjoyment of the daffodil in all its many forms. If there are people who love the daffodil for its beauty and freshness at a time of year when bright pretty flowers are few and far between, then there must be others who love the daffodil for other reasons. I am fortunate in having loved daffodils in all of these guises. Whether on the show bench, in the wild or in art, photography and literature, I have marvelled at their beauty. It was this all-encompassing love of daffodils that led Lynne and I down the path of collecting daffodils, or more precisely "daffodilia" (my own word for any item or object that illustrates or bears the image of daffodils).

Our collection is vast and covers virtually every medium or *objet d' art* you can think of. One of the most fascinating items we collect is a "collection within a collection" so to speak. Daffodil postcards are an intriguing subject in their own right; they are not only colourful and pretty; they also document social history and are educational.

Brief History.

As if by coincidence, the history of the postcard almost parallels that of the modern hybrid daffodil, as we know it. The first ever postcard was issued by the Austrian postal service in 1869, the year that pioneer daffodil breeder William Backhouse passed away and the year J G Baker of the Royal Herbarium at Kew reviewed and modified the classification of the genus. Only 5 years after this Peter Barr "The Daffodil King" of Covent Garden who was instrumental in saving the collection of hybrid daffodils raised by Edward Leeds of Manchester when he and his syndicate raised £100 to purchase Leeds' entire collection saving them from inevitable destruction..

In 1870, Britain and Switzerland followed Austria by issuing their own postcards. These early editions were not illustrated but were simply a cheaper form of letter writing, the postcard costing half the one old penny (1d) postage rate of that time! Messages were only allowed to be written on the front of the card and the back

was for the address and pre-printed postal rate. Later, small adverts and illustrations were approved on the front of postcards and by 1899 several countries were producing illustrated cards. Then in 1902, a German firm Hartmann's, introduced the "divided back" postcard we are all familiar with today, where the message and address could both be written on the same side (back), leaving the other side (front) of the card available for full illustration and printed pictures.



*Hartmann' s divided back design
on rear side of Postcards*

Amongst the many, Raphael Tuck & Sons became one of the most famous postcard printing firms. Their "Oilette" range of postcards copied original artist's paintings and was instrumental in the encouragement of deltiology (postcard collecting) as many of their postcards were issued in numbered sets that people could collect.

Many other firms joined this extravaganza of postcard production and names like Valentines, Judges, Friths, Salmon, A&C Black, Bamforth, Abrahams, Dennis, J Arthur Dixon etc. etc. became famous in their field. In addition to these British publishers the following Swiss card firm also produced some spectacular cards and designs, Jullien Freres, Gyger & Klopfenstein, Stehli, Perrochet-Matile, Guggenheim & Co, Photoglob etc. and the very prolific firm Wildt & Kray of Bavaria also produced huge quantities of postcards, many of which, fortunately, depicted daffodils.

As photography and printing techniques gradually became more advanced, then 'real photo' cards became more colourful and reflected a wider range of subjects. It is in this field of 'modern' postcards that one range of cards has been introduced that depicts rural or 'pastoral' scenes but I will expand on that later.



*Swiss card by Gyger & Klopfenstein.
The Mountain Flower Series - Circa 1940' s*

Daffodil Postcard Subjects.

As I mentioned earlier, the introduction and development of postcards mirrored that of the development of the modern hybrid daffodil and throughout this period, images of daffodils have been produced by all of the aforementioned firms as well as by many more private and localized publishers. Daffodil postcards vary

from portrait pictures of individual cultivars, to pictures of mass plantings, right through to modern artistic impressions of daffodils. Equally, there are many beautiful cards showing "real photo" images of subjects like daffodils harvesting on the Isles of Scilly, Wordsworth's daffodils by Ullswater in the Lake District, Yorkshire's famous wild daffodils in Farndale on the North York Moors. Daffodils growing in Lincolnshire, Spalding Horticultural Society Gardens and Flower Parade plus cards of many other locations throughout the world where daffodils can be seen.



Champs de Narcisses an early card

Swiss cards are a particularly good collecting area for daffodil postcards, especially the Fields of Narcissus - Champs de Narcisses that illustrate the wild (*N poeticus*) in the Alps around Montreux and surrounding area. There has been a Narcissus festival - Fete des Narcisses held in Montreux since 1897- One year longer than our own Society has been in existence!

There are also many individual cards with daffodils from a large set of alpine and mountain flowers issued by Gyger and Klopfenstein. These are wonderfully coloured cards and date from around 1938-1940.(see previous page)

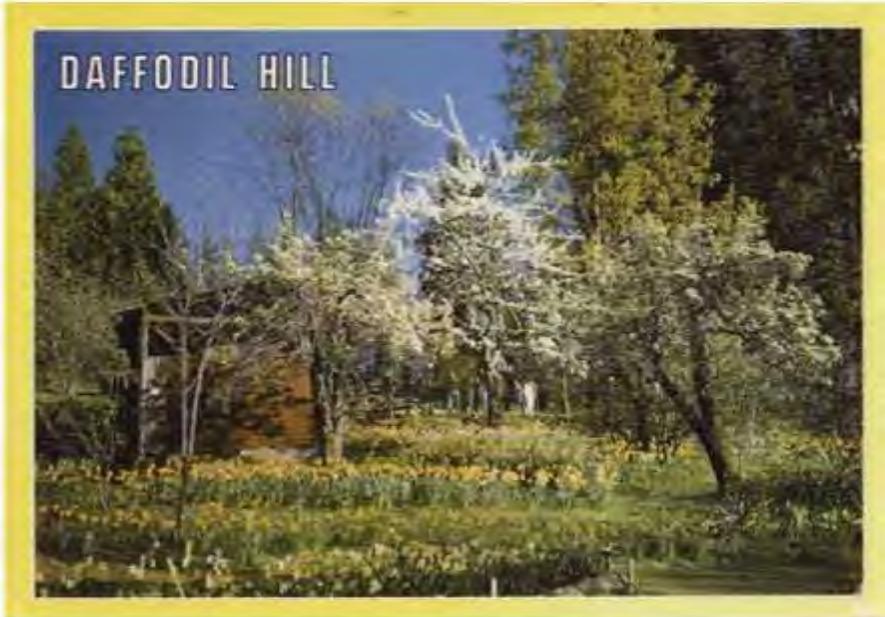


*The vast Daffodil and Tulip fields in Western Oregon.
From the Union Oil Company ' Natural Colour Scenes of the West'*

America is also a good collecting area as many of their greetings/holiday cards are heavily embossed, making the daffodil designs stand out in relief. As with the UK, America also has bulb-growing areas where commercial production of daffodil flowers and bulbs is carried out for the home market. Here, the Puyallup Valley in Pierce County, Washington State is the Lincolnshire of America. Under the shadow of Mount Rainier vast fields of daffodils are grown in the fertile soil of the glacial valley.

At one time over a thousand acres were planted but more recently, with the large increase in the local population (50% in the last 10 years) and the consequent use of land for building, this has reduced by more than half. Today, approximately 400 acres are cultivated in 250 varieties, producing up to 100 million blooms! There are a number of postcards that have been issued over the last 60-70 years that show the fields of daffodils and the costumed ladies.

In addition to the Washington State daffodil industry, which is responsible for approx 20% of the American market, the following states also have large daffodil plantings for commercial production: - Oregon, North Carolina, Virginia and California. All of these are illustrated on postcards.



One daffodil outpost worthy of mention is Daffodil Hill, Nr. Volcano, Amador County, California. Here the McLaughlin family have created a daffodil haven over the last 100+ years. Open free to the public, Daffodil Hill boasts a varied planting of over half a million bulbs and 250 named varieties of daffodils. There have been a number of postcards issued over the years, all with views of the daffodils.

Calendar Girls.

Another section of particular favourite postcards, comes from a most unusual source, namely the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Not only did they produce a memorable calendar of note but also individual members from many of the W.I. Regional Groups have been responsible for producing hundreds of "real photo" postcards of views throughout the UK. Many of these "views" were taken in spring and show daffodils growing in a multitude of situations. Apart from the beauty of the daffodils, the locations and often, famous buildings that appear alongside the flowers, highlight the huge popularity of daffodil plantings in these places. Dunley Hall (John Lea's daffodils), Highdown (Sir F C Stern's daffodils), Edinburgh Botanical Gardens, Springfields (Spalding) and Fosbury Manor, Wiltshire to name but a few of these lovely daffodil cards.

Collecting Postcards.

Postcards enjoy worldwide popularity and there are few countries that have not

issued postcards depicting our favourite flower. From Russia to USA and from Scandinavia to New Zealand daffodil postcards are a joy to collect. Save for the very early cards depicting social history, which can reach prices in the tens of pounds each, the majority of postcards cost between 10p and £2 and can be acquired at Postcard Fairs, charity shops, on eBay (internet) and in most places in the country where daffodils make a display that attracts photographers. There are also postcard "Clubs" where members can sell or exchange cards at reasonable prices and family or friends can be persuaded to send or bring home cards from overseas holidays. At present, our postcard collection numbers almost 3,000 different cards and yet, it is nowhere near complete yet! There are lots more "out there" so see what you can find. I am sure you will be pleasantly surprised just how quickly you can build up a collection.



*Left -
A postcard -*

*commissioned by
the Tenby Museum
Displaying a beautiful and detailed
illustration*

*by Helen Hayward
of the Tenby Daffodil - Narcissus
obvallaris*

More Information

This article hopefully will be the first of a series on collecting "Daffodilia". Your current Chairman Jackie Petherbridge is also a collector like us and I know that Jackie has a very good daffodil thimble collection, as well as her own extensive

daffodil postcard accumulation. I believe she will pen a few words on her own collecting themes in a future publication as Part 2 of this series. That said, we sincerely hope this "expansion" of information about daffodils is both interesting and informative and adds to our society's desire to encompass all aspects of our flower, not just the cultivation and exhibition of daffodils?

At the risk of making our own hobby even more competitive and consequently more expensive (supply and demand), collecting "daffodilia" is a wonderfully therapeutic and educational pastime and one I can thoroughly recommend to anyone. As the collecting field is so wide, it is not necessary to spend a fortune on getting together a representative collection. Postcards are a good starting base that offers hours of enjoyment and the thrill of finding a new card or cards for the collection.



*Chinese Postcard Illustrating ' Bulb Carving' of Tazetta Bulbs
Entitled—Waterfall Welcoming Spring.*

In 1998 when the Society celebrated its centenary, Lynne and I staged a display of our "daffodilia" at the Centenary year show in Solihull. This display included some of our postcard albums, which attracted the attention of many members, especially our overseas visitors from the world's Daffodil Societies. At that time, I was the Society's editor and a number of postcards from our collection were pictured in the Centenary yearbook "100 Golden Years" I produced that year. I have subsequently displayed many of our postcards on two other exhibits staged at our annual show, and I am sure these exhibits have stimulated the interest of a number of members who have gone on to collect "daffodilia" for themselves.



*Postcard by the Gloucestershire Women's Institute showing -
Daffodils Near Newent*



Postcards don't all have to be totally serious, we do like to enjoy our hobby and have fun. as per the example shown Left -

A postcard from the Bamforth - Comedy Daffodil Series



Modern postcard issued by the Victoria & Albert Museum

As you can see from the prints included in this article, they demonstrate the wide range of postcards produced from the 1890' s to the present day. I hope you enjoy them as much as we do and would love to hear from anyone who is interested in this area of “ daffodilia” or requires more information.

Happy collecting!
Jan Dalton