

ABOVE: Native New Zealand Birds P3715 Tikkard © Pictorial Publications now The New Zealand Souvenir Co. Ltd. Hastings.

BELOW: The Bell Fall, Wanganui River N.Z. No.59 Protected Aug. 1st 1906 by Muir & Moodie, Dunedin, N.Z.



## NEW ZEALAND MODERNS "nothing but blue skies all day long"!

The postcard featuring the Native Birds stamp series has been sitting on my desk for some time now, waiting an opportunity for me to publish it for its link with the past. By that I mean the Muir and Moodie stamp card editions which leap to mind when you clap eyes on this card from the Hastings firm of Pictorial Publications.

However I have no intention of using it in this fashion. Perversely I want to use it to illustrate an interest which has captured my imagination. Namely New Zealand "Moderns". For those unfamiliar with this term it's a category of postcard collecting which deals with everything after the so called "Golden" age of postcards. In actual fact I received this card from my wife nearly ten years ago in 1993 when she was on a trip to Auckland and I have blissfully held onto it ignorant of some of the circumstances which now loom large in my interest as a postcard collector.

That said, let me explain why I'm ducking the obvious in favour of a more esoteric if not obscure connection.

I suppose it all started about a year ago when I began to get rather irritated by the fact that I was finding it hard to add to my postcard collection because of the financial outlay it required.

### Modern postcards

Cards don't have to be a century old to be collectable. Those published since the Second World War are generally referred to as 'modern', though up to 50 years old! Street scenes from the 1950-70 period can be just as fascinating as Edwardian cards, and reveal almost as many changes. Events covered in the past two decades include the miners' strike, Falklands War, and the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, and relevant postcards are already forming part of contemporary collections. Picture postcards of sports, music and cinema stars also appeal to a wide range of people today, and are saved in a replica of the first 'Golden Age' of postcard collecting a century ago.

*From a pamphlet produced by the British Postcard Traders Association.*

Taking out my frustration on this state of affairs I began looking through boxes of 50 cent bargains which most dealers seem to have. I was surprised to find that these mainly contained modern foreign cards. When I asked where the equivalent New Zealand cards were I got a blank look. At first I thought it might have been because dealers quite frankly didn't want to know

anything about New Zealand postcards after WW2. While there was support for this from off-hand comments made to me by those in the trade, I've now come to the realise that the fall off of sending postcards to one another in New Zealand is perhaps the main contributor to this dearth of material. That, and the fact that most dealers could not see their way clear to labour away at pricing and putting on display cards which nobody wanted, sums it up succinctly.

Determined I wasn't going to be put off lightly, I began to look around to see how this problem could be remedied. First of all I looked into my own collection. Some years ago I took up an offer from a friend in Dunedin, Hardwicke Knight, to accept a pile of black and white real photo postcards by H & G.K. Neil. To them I added a bundle of cards from the Seaward Studios of Broad Bay, also of



Dunedin. These cards roughly covered the years from the 1930s to the 1960s with a bit of a gap during the war years. To these I acquired about a dozen black and white real photo postcards by Gladys M. Goodall of Kilmore Street in Christchurch. These took me back to my student days at Canterbury University in the 1950s.

I then asked some collectors what they thought of this period it was revealed that none of took "Moderns" seriously. It then dawned upon me that I had hit on something which would allow me to indulge myself on an aspect of collecting New Zealand postcards without breaking the bank.

In order to put a respectable face on what I was about to launch into, I began to ask about firms which dealt in this sort of material from the 1930s to the 1990s. Some senior collectors thought A.H. and A.W. Reed and the now defunct Government Tourist Bureau might be a good prospect to start from but apart from that they weren't sure of any major company concerning themselves in this important industry. Surely I reasoned our tourist industry would see to it that there was something to catch the eye and pocket. So I took myself off to my nearest post shop and after spending about \$12 returned home with about 2 dozen cards that I thought were attractive and worthy of a place in any collection of New Zealand postcards. When I examined them on the back I discovered they came from Pictorial Publications of Hastings, the same company that produced the postcard that started me off!

Then came the big test for my research. I desperately needed access to a huge number of cards to lay the foundation for a study to see who were the important publishers and photographers. Luckily it didn't take me long in acquiring a monumental pile of cards from an out-of-town dealer. My tentative inquiry saw me acquire a box of approximately 1,000 cards. After I took delivery of them I discovered enough to give me a grounding of what went on during the "dark ages" of postcard manufacture in New Zealand - all for 5 cents a card!

For the first few weeks after I received my first pile of "Modern" cards, I hardly had time to look at the picture side other than to check it wasn't duplicated against others in the same series. Finally when things sorted themselves out, I began to note what the cards depicted. I came up with some interesting observations.

What I found is that there is a big difference on what appears on the picture side of a card between the "Golden" and "Modern" groupings. For a start there were no cards which record topical events like RP cards we've grown to admire from photographers like Zachariah, S. C. Smith or F. N. Jones. At the time these filled a void by the inability of contemporary publications to carry a daily photo reportage of events as we know it today.

Then there was the shift of emphasis concerning subject matter from city and street scenes to miles and miles of cards glorifying New Zealand's natural beauty. This trend was easy

to understand because of the demands made by tourists and the lure of coloured depictions of clean green vistas set against an impeccable blue sky hence the reason for my sub title to this article.



An example of composite cards. Colour view postcard TE 9261 © Photography and printing by Colourview Publications Ltd. Oamaru.

single card with the name of the venue blazoned across the composition.

If you've ever had to look through a 1,000 of natural beauty postcards it all becomes very boring after a while and I almost gave up on this study then and there. The saving grace for me was to strike a small but select group producers who lifted themselves above what is an unashamed commercial tread mill. As I began to isolate the companies whose cards went beyond the boring and mundane or gave a different aspect to certain tourist Mecca's, I noticed works by some photographers I'd known during my days as Director of the New Zealand Centre for Photography. This analysis of camera techniques led me eventually to a photographer who underwent the transition from supplying black and white studies to those in full colour. This was Gladys M. Goodall who featured in our last issue of *Postcard Pillar* and was the keynote speaker at our Christchurch AGM.

To highlight what I felt was a weakness in these city selections, I nominated topics from the four main centres to see what a search would reveal. In Auckland I chose the harbour bridge and turned up two cards. In Wellington I nominated Oriental Bay and found five which filled this category. In Christchurch I picked the Cathedral to discover eight views, while in Dunedin I broadened the quest to anything from the central business district to find only two cards.

Stepping aside from subject weaknesses and stylistic tendencies for a moment, it soon became obvious that my initial sampling of 1,000 cards had serious limitations. Therefore all of the foregoing must be read in the context of a very small segment of what has been produced over the last 50 years. A much larger cross section will be required before any hard and fast characteristics can be determined. But as it stands at the moment there are some yawning gaps that need explanation. Noticeable by their absence so far are cards that depict perennial topics like Railway, Post Offices, and self promoting activities from our manufacturing industries. Then there has got to be cards that take in our seasonal farming activities like shearing, dairying or our burgeoning wine indus-



An example of comic cards. Tiki Postcard P3447 © The New Zealand Souvenir Co. Ltd. Hastings



An example of glamour cards. 'Maori Maiden N.Z. Series MDP' Photography T. Winkworth.



try! These sorts of cards must surely exist, but none came before my eyes during this initial toe dipping ceremony! How you get access to them without travelling vast distances to specialised outlets is something of a mystery to me.

What's all this got to do with the price of fish I hear you say? Well if I'm to going to openly campaign for a resurgence of interest in this neglected corner of postcard collecting, I need to have some facts at my fingertips and experience at the very work face of collecting these reflections on New Zealand society over the last 40-50 years.

As you read on I'm finding it very hard to justify a mass exodus towards "Moderns" without some glimmer of light. If you try to channel your interest around some of the old themes of collecting postcards then you're stumped before you even begin. Apart from some rather wonderful postcards of aeroplanes with propellers that came with my initial pile, there was nothing to dwell upon. Perhaps some of these missing topics got siphoned off before I got my hands on them. None the less it was disturbing yet sobering to see chestnuts of postcard collecting like Post Offices and Railway Stations relegated to the nostalgia category. I did find shots of Dunedin's magnificent station and New Plymouth's Post Office featuring prominently in a couple of cards. But when it came to old war horses like Glamour and Comic situations it was a pretty barren exercise. However I did locate a token effort on the part of Pictorial Publications with an impish reference to New Zealand/Australia relations. Similarly, Glamour took a back-seat with only two cards by a photographer friend Trevor Winkworth redeeming things slightly with two very tasteful studies featuring a bare breasted

Maori woman by a stream (see illustrations previous page). So where do you go if you want to collect "Moderns".

I think there is considerable merit in starting with certain features or landmarks that you can make direct comparisons with using cards from the "Golden" period. For instance I gathered together all my Oriental Bay postcards and put them alongside my newly acquired "Moderns" of the same location. While that might start the ball rolling, it probably has limited applications and doesn't exactly see "Moderns" put on a pedestal. A supporting role or measuring stick might be more correct.

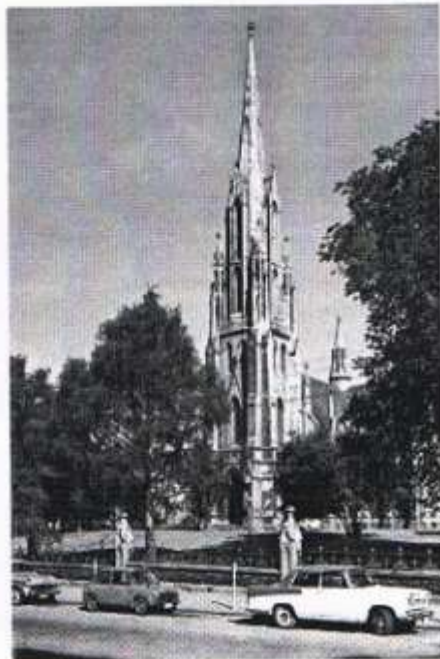
Then again from an environmental point of view "Moderns" can take on a special significance. For instance compare the resurgence of vegetation along the Rimutaka Railway incline - now a walkway - can prove an interesting study if issues like that take your fancy. Documenting expansion in some of our metropolitan suburbs would be another worthwhile study if sufficient postcards from the modern period can be found. Of course, you can always make your own postcards with a camera but would that be cheating! I don't think so. Remember the countless "Golden" cards that are made by unknown amateurs which command attention at sales and the like and take pride of place in our specialist collections. So the precedent is there - if that's any consolation.

In my next article on "Moderns" I will list some of the major players in New Zealand pictorial postcard production from the 1950s to the present.

Bill Main



Four 1960s  
Colourchrome Series  
Postcards by Gladys M.  
Goodall. Clockwise -  
Durie Hill, Wanganui  
WT10. Hutt City Post  
Office & High Street  
WT85. First Church,  
Dunedin WT281. Mt.  
Maunganui Wharves,  
Bay of Plenty WY 649.





# NEW ZEALAND MODERNS

## A TENTATIVE LOOK AT DOCUMENTING THOSE WHO FEATURE IN THIS IMPORTANT PERIOD OF POSTCARD PRODUCTION IN NEW ZEALAND

by BILL MAIN

After I was the recipient of a rather large collection of modern postcards, I began to formulate an alphabetical listing of the major picture postcard producers that were involved in this trade as far back as the 1950s. In my way of thinking, the firms listed below are worthy of serious consideration by virtue of the quality of their cards and the solid representation which emerged as I worked my way through an accumulation of 1,500 postcards. I only included cards in this survey that measure 6 x 4 inches. Cards larger than this were excluded; as were cards issued for self promoting purposes as they were probably never put on general sale. Companies whose pictorial content didn't extend beyond local boundaries were also ignored as I thought it important in this stage of my study to deal exclusively with those who had a larger geographical representation in mind. These smaller more localised companies may be the topic of a further study at a later occasion.

Some rather ironic conclusions can be drawn from this study. The most persistent theme unifying all the pictorial postcards produced in the last fifty years show New Zealand under perfect Cobalt Blue skies and virtually devoid of any actual human presence. If people are shown, they are seldom represented in the foreground and only appear more or less accidentally in the picture. More amazingly perhaps is the fact that less than 10% of the cards surveyed were postally used or had messages on the back.

Although at this stage it would hardly be appropriate for me to urge collectors to take a serious interest in this period of picture postcards production in New Zealand, the cards do document so many changes that have occurred in New Zealand in the last fifty or so years. So anyone interested in this progress(?) should take note and start asking dealers and other collectors if they have anything to trade or exchange from this period. When they set out against picture postcards from the so called 'golden period' they make a very striking if not colourful impact.

**BASCANDS** M prefix to numbered series with deckle edges. Called Microtone cards. p.u. 1973 - 1980s. Mainly South Island views Company operated out of Christchurch.

**COLOURCHROME SERIES** Prefix W.T. & F.C. to numbered series printed by Whitcombe and Tombs. Ltd. for the Felicity Card Co. Ltd. p.u. 1967 - 1980s Scenic cards by Gladys M. Goodall and others. Some drop the M. in Goodall's name using both undivided and divided backs with distinctive green type on the back of the card. Other photographers include R. Sinclair, R. Morrison, Vic Butler, Kirk -Tauranga photo centre, RNZAF, Norm Pubfleet, N.P.S. Robin Smith, Cayton Photos - Whakatane & G. Mason acknowledged in green type. n.b. Many Goodall images reprinted with different number.

**COLOUR VIEW** Two initials preface series number (these could indicate the initials of the photographers concerned? These coded series have a map of NZ with words Colour View divided by map. Other variations to the backs include an address box with rounded corners and a Tiki emblem in stamp box. Address Friend Wholesalers PO Box 1834 Rotorua.

**COLOURVIEW POSTCARDS** Resemblances to COLOUR VIEW are noted. This series includes the use of initial in front of series number and Tiki in stamp box. 1970s p.u. 1975-1979 Photography and Printing by Fotocentre Ltd., Oamaru.

**DOW PRODUCTIONS - BATLEY OFFSET PRINTERS** p.u. dates 1962-1982 Mainly North Island Views supplied by Lyric Studios, Auckland, Joan Willis and E.H.Davies.

**GLADYS M. GOODALL** Black and White real photos with white border and with captions written in by hand using an oblique pen along bottom edge. Late 1950s early 1960s Views of Christchurch and District. Address 73a Kilmore Street. Christchurch.

**JOJA CARDS** J prefix with caption in English and Japanese? Mainly South Island views by John F. Allen. Address PO Box 19675, Woolston, Christchurch.c1980s.

**LOGAN PRINT LTD.** Gisborne. Besides local views the company seems to have produced a number of cards for the Hospitality trade. p.u.1972-1979.



**PICTORIAL PUBLICATIONS LIMITED** PO Box 558 Hastings. Colour cards from white border with plain back to composite scenic views. Some comic cartoons. Latter series have distinctive Wood Pigeon backs with Tiki in stamp box. (see Tiki cards below for further products) Prefix P. First series numbered in bottom right of image side. Highest number seen 3909. These cards were in production from the 1960s to 1990s.

**A.H. & A.W. REED** Various formats and prefixes before card number from colour with white border to composite cards. Zenith would have been the 1970s. Distinctive Kiwi emblem throughout series. All photographers acknowledged. Originally began producing colour postcards 5 1/2 X 3 1/2 inches with white border 1960s -1970s.

**G.B.SCOTT PUBLICATIONS LTD.** Auckland. No prefix numbering like some other companies. General views of N. Z. vieww composites quite common. South Island representative sited as Rae Clayton of Christchurch on some cards. p.u.1968 -1988.

**N. S. SEAWARDS** Broad Bay, Dunedin. No numbering. Scenic black and white real photo New Zealand series rubber stamped on plain back. Title printed with oblique pen on white border. Cards measuring 5 1/2 X 3 1/2 inches. 1950s -1960s.

**TIKICARD** Copyright The New Zealand Souvenir Co. Ltd. Hastings. Bar code in stamp area and Tiki emblem top centre. Kiwi in background. Cards distinguished by black border with fernleaf bottom right corner. These purchased Wellington 2002 in a N. Z. Post outlet. Selection shows some cartoon comic situations.

**TANNER COUCH LTD.** Fold away black and white views of various New Zealand locations like Auckland Beaches, New Zealand Maoris and Beautiful South Island etc.1950s - 1960s.

**D. I. THERKLESON**, Rotorua. Colour cards with white border. D prefix to numbered series. Some links evident with Pictorial Publications noted. Therklson known to have been in partnership with Butler in the 1980s.

A much smaller component in this collection of moderns was a handful of cards which seemed to date between the 1930s and 1940s. Producers noted were...

**BRETT PRINTING & PUBLISHING CO. LTD.**

**COULL SOMMERVILLE & WILKIE** (Wellington & Dunedin)

**DAWSON PRINTING COMPANY**

**G. B. S. NEW ZEALAND POSTCARD**

**HARRY H. TOMBS**

**TANNER COUCH PRODUCTIONS**

**WHITCOMBE & TOMBS**

... it is my intention to concentrate on this period in the ensuing months, anyone with cards from these and other companies of the 1930s and 1940s, are requested to get in touch with me so we may combine our knowledge to the benefit of all.



PRINCES STREET, DUNEDIN, New Zealand

K.A.L. HASTINGS, P.001

When I began to look around for a suitable illustration to fill this space I was attracted to this Pictorial Publications Limited 1960s view of Dunedin. For me this has all the ingredients that make the hunt for good 'Modern' postcards worth while. First and foremost, this is a genuine colour photo made with colour film as opposed to a hand coloured monochromatic view as was the case with some companies during this transitional phase. Secondly and more importantly it blends the old with the new. To the left is the old Exchange Building (now demolished) and a good assortment of vehicles and people in the foreground to give it a good sense of time and occasion. Note the bunting and time 8.23am. Obviously a mid summer photograph. Men in shirtsleeves and a woman in a light coloured floral frock. Superb!



# IS THERE LIFE AFTER MODERN POSTCARDS?

The simple answer to the question above is yes! In this article I will attempt to explain the term 'modern' in postcard collecting and venture the next period might well be called 'post-modernism'. As well I will endeavour to explain \* how all this impacts on the sale and production of postcards up to the present and how we might expect it to impact upon the future.

First of all let us define the meaning of the term 'modern' and how it crept into postcard collecting terminology.

Generally the term modern refers to those postcards that fall outside the period known as the Classic Period, roughly anything up to and including the first World War 1914-1918. In artistic circles the word modern was applied to ideas and concepts which defied the accepted traditions of realism in painting, sculpture and the other visual arts. Some historians have also correctly correlated the impetus of this movement to the tremendous social impact of the first World War. By the time of the New York World's Fair which was held shortly before the commencement of the second World War 1939-1945, the modern movement had had an effect on the applied arts, where curved or rounded lines denoted a new range of automobiles, commercial and domestic architecture and other consumer goods like toasters and electric jugs. While most of the visual arts responded to these changes, postcard producers weren't troubled by these new trends. For instance, how do you modernise a traditional postcard view of London, Sydney or Wellington? Or a Bamforth 'Wish you were here'? The answer of course lay in featuring new architecture or ever changing social conditions brought about by the radio and television. Postcard producers were slow to adapt to these changes and as a consequence they appear to have lost a lot of the entrepreneurial flair of previous generations.

While it is apt to dwell on the top end of Art and how it might have influenced postcard production between the two World Wars, there were other more significant things occurring which hit trade hard like the great depression and a more unstable political situation.

Because of New Zealand's isolation, modernism took a little longer to make itself known in our midst. However in 1939 the Centennial Exhibition in Wellington gave a wonderful platform for New Zealanders to get an eyeful of what this movement offered. In postcard terms, this was the first indication that something different was on the way through the very modernistic buildings that were designed by Edward Anson in the Centennial grounds at Rongatai. These epitomised a new direction and were featured on many souvenirs and postcards. Then the second World War took over and everything was put on hold. War artist Peter McIntyre's series of sepia drawings of New Zealander's in the Middle East and the Italian campaign certainly

signalled some awareness of and reaction to the new as regards his stylistic studies which followed a new style of drawing and painting. But as can be imagined, these didn't make much of an impression on the public who had other more urgent things to consider as shortages of all sorts hit home. When postcards were required, the public got badly hand-coloured photographs or worse still, horrid three or four colour superimpositions on a monochromatic study which bore little resemblance to the original scene.

As things began to pick up again in 1945/6 things carried on as they had before. Scenic views were supplied by a bevy of photographers who used black and white film to do the bulk of their work. Artists were then employed to render them suitable for colour reproduction in a printing press. As colour film finally became accessible in the late 1950s and early 1960s, new requirements relating to a postcards commercial potential became paramount. Blue skies were a golden rule. To give the card a greater shelf life, people it seems were excluded from any street scenes, at least that is the impression I have gained, having looked at countless cards that came out during this period. Supplementing a rather miserable range of postcards, fold-outs and other tourist novelties gradually filled the niche left by the restraints of the war. New off-set lithographic presses gradually came into the country and standards of reproduction improved dramatically.

In a country where it is rare for anything of any consequence to happen from one decade to another, Royal tours became almost the only exception to the traditional scenic view. Commercial concerns like Hotels and Airlines (NAC) did relieve the monotony of river, mountain and lake syndrome a little, but generally the average picture postcard fare was pretty mundane.

However by the 1970s, the quality of New Zealand scenic postcards had improved dramatically. Better trained photographers with a new awareness were able to meet the demands made upon them by their employers and at the same time get interesting views of our growth and development as a nation. Larger more elaborate cards also made their appearance before a public who were becoming more discerning when it came to selecting a card for a friend or relative.

All this resurgence crystalised in the 1990s when racks of some of the first giveaway postcards began to appear in cafes and trendy coffee lounges. As companies accepted the challenge that this form of advertis-

\* Since joining the Postcard Society in 1996 I have read many books on postcard collecting. But in old timer views, I'm still wet behind the ears. Therefore if my interpretation of the last 50 or so years of postcard development in New Zealand by referencing my views to what happened in the rest of the world is out of kilter with established theories, then please write and let me know.



ing offered with clever graphics and catchy phrases, they became a very lively and entertaining adjunct to traditional aspects of collecting postcards. All this despite the fact that they are a difficult subject to collect because of their transitory nature. None the less they are an exciting prospect and one upon which will surely see postcard collecting persist well into the new century.

As for the future, it is hard to postulate on this without taking into account the devastating impact which electronic imaging has had upon traditional means of communication. Faxed messages and email fill a very important part of our daily life. Then again there are those who still value something material that is passed from hand to hand as against a soulless expression of pressing a button to send a message. I don't doubt for one moment that there will be a continued flow of picture postcards for years to come with their personalised messages and images which bring pleasure to the recipient. However, postcard producers will have to be sensitive to market trends, more so than in the past as our population develops a sophisticated visual awareness at an ever-increasing rate.

Bill Main.

Below: Fairy Springs, Rotorua, N.Z. Unnamed monochrome postcard, m.o.b. dated 16th May 1943. From the cards overall dimensions there is some doubt if this card has been trimmed). Top right: Blue Baths, Rotorua, N.Z. Unnamed coloured postcard, m.o.b. dated 28/1/41. A good example of colouring a monochrome photograph.

Remaining cards: Greetings from Dunedin, N.Z. - Coloured front and back fold out, with The City's Modern Bus Terminal shown as a typical illustration from the contents.



The City's Modern Bus Terminal.