

**Sturgis Library Archives
Town and Local History Collection**

Cape Cod Trade Cards and Advertisements 1888-
MS. 121

Extent: 1 box

Scope and Content Note: The collection consists of trade cards, advertisements, and other ephemera from Cape Cod businesses, primarily from between 1888 and 1912, with a few from the 1950s and 60s.

Historical and Biographical Information: *[The information in this section is excerpted in part from the WGBH History Detective's website].* Trade cards were used primarily during the late 19th century to advertise all manner of products, services, and businesses. A cheap and effective way to reach consumers, their heyday was between 1876 and 1904. Druggist's and other merchant's counters often had a number of different trade cards displayed on them, in the hopes of encouraging patronage. Trade cards often featured beautiful illustrations, humorous cartoons or worthy sayings, and they captured the imagination of the Victorians who became keen collectors of them. The Victorians would compile their collections in scrapbooks, and it became a popular pastime.

Current collectors classify the trade cards into two categories:

- **Stock cards** are generic cards with interesting images that could be personalized and applied to any product. Backs were left blank so a local advertiser could include his own message and information. **Most of the cards in this collection fall into that category.**
- **Custom cards** were produced specifically for a product or company, and thus typically have unique designs and feature the product being advertised.

By the turn of the century, trade cards were on the wane, as magazine ads became more popular, and postcards became the new collectible.

Trade cards offer a unique window into the social history of nineteenth century America.

Access: Unrestricted. Credit Sturgis Library Archives for publication purposes.

Acquisition: Purchase at Eldred's Auction House, Dennis, Massachusetts, 2013.

Processed by: Lucy Loomis, January 2015.

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