

# YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Saturday, March 30th, 2019 - 1:30 p.m.**

Grace United Church, Zion Hall, 116 Woodstock Street South, Tavistock

**Calling All Deltiologists\*** Keynote address by Paul Bartlett

\*Deltiologist: Someone who collects postcards as a hobby

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# Putting a date to Tavistock Postcards

By Paul Bartlett

There was once a “Golden Age” of Postcards. In 1903, the Dominion Government of Canada introduced the “Divided Back Postcard”. This law allowed the sender to write a message on the back of the card beside the address. Prior to this only the address could be written on the back. The price to mail one of these new cards was only one cent which was half of the regular mail rate. The cheap mail rates and the frequent mail service resulted in a postcard boom. In a time before access to the telephone and before easy travel by automobile, the postcard was the way to keep in touch with your friends. The postcard was the Facebook of the early 1900’s. In the US in 1908 alone, more than 677 million postcards were sent.

This postcard boom ended with the outbreak of World War I. Most of the high quality postcards were printed in Germany and with the war, access to these printers was denied. As well, a war tax of one cent was added to the cost of mailing both a postcard and a letter and that made sending a postcard a little less attractive. This Golden Age of the postcard which began around 1903 ended in 1915. Most of the postcards therefore in the collection of the Tavistock

and District Historical Society date to between 1908 and 1912.

There is much more to a postcard than just a pretty picture. The production of a postcard requires the involvement of a publisher, a photographer, and a printer. The publisher takes the photographs of either a local photographer or one of his own photographers and arranges to produce a series of postcards of an interesting subject. The actual production of the cards, often 1,000 at a time, is done by a printer. The best quality postcards produced during the “Golden Age” were printed in Germany. People who collect postcards are called “deltiologists”, a word based on *deltion* which is Greek for tablet or letter. Most collectors of postcards focus on a specific theme or subject. It could be their local community or steam trains or greeting cards or novelty cards and so on. Some collect the cards of a specific photographer, some of a specific publisher, some of a specific printer. In Tavistock, we are fortunate to have the Lemp Studio Collection of photographs because the majority of postcards of Tavistock are based on photographs by John Lemp.

Besides knowing the photograph on which a postcard is based, it can also be helpful to

know something about the publisher and the printer. As an example, we can look at two postcards that show the same view of the east end of Tavistock taken from the water tower. One might ask: when were they produced? What is the difference in time between the two?

The first postcard (#1 on cover) is postmarked December 1915 and has on it two cents worth of stamps indicating it was mailed after April 1915 when the war tax came into effect. On the left hand side of the back is written “Rumsey & Co., 1528 Queen St. West, Toronto, Canada.” Rumsey & Co. was one of the largest publishers of postcards in Canada starting in 1909 and published well past the end of World War I. Usually when a publisher makes a postcard of a locale, not just one card is made but a whole series is made. It turns out that another postcard (#2 on cover) in our collection, that of the “Linden”, the Lutheran Church parsonage in Sebastopol, has the same style back as the tower view and so must be in the same series. The Linden postcard does not have a stamp on it and is not postmarked but in the stamp box on the back there is a number—24118. Another postcard with the same style back (not shown) is a view of Tavistock north from the tower, not east, and has the number 24113 where the stamp should be. That means therefore that there must be at least five postcards in this series and our postcard looking east (which has a stamp obscuring the number) must be one in the series.

Most of the postcards produced by Rumsey & Co. were printed in Germany by

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**VILLAGE PANORAMA FROM THE WATER TOWER - 1923:** J.E. Evans, Port Rowan, Ontario - 4 postcards in one



**CARNEGIE LIBRARY:** J.E. Evans, Port Rowan, Ontario

**WOODSTOCK STREET N. LOOKING NORTH - 1923:**  
J.E. Evans,  
Port Rowan,  
Ontario



the C. G. Roeder Company of Leipzig in Saxony. This company recorded in the stamp box the number of every postcard it made. It also kept meticulous records of the dates its cards were produced. It turns out that cards numbered between 1 and 35,000 were

printed in 1911. From this fact we know therefore that this series of cards which includes the view east from the tower published by Rumsey is dated 1911. That just happens to be the same year that the water tower was constructed!

The second postcard showing the view east from the water tower (photo above #4, right quarter) also has the publisher's name recorded on the back. It is "J. E. Evans, Manufacturer and Dealer in Pictorial Post Cards, Port Rowan, Ontario. Made in Germany." The Port Rowan Historical Society has no information about Mr. Evans but there are a number of other postcards in the Archives Collection with the same style of back and the same style of colouring as the one in question. That postcard too is part of a series of cards. The view to the east itself is part of a four card panoramic view of Tavistock from the tower (see above #4). We also have a view of the centre of town from Woodstock Street South and a view of the five corners of town, each of which is a double postcard two cards wide (#3 on cover). Another card is a view of the Carnegie Library (left #5) and the pump station. On closer inspection of that card, there is beside the pump station the trench mortar that was presented to the town after the first war. We know therefore that the Evans series of postcards was printed after World War I ... but exactly when? Read on!

There is another postcard in this Evans series and that is a view of Woodstock Street North taken from the centre of town (left #6). In that card can be seen workmen digging by the side of the road. On the other side of the road are seen newly constructed curbs. A quick search of the digitized copies of the Tavistock Gazette discovered that the curbs were being constructed in June 1923. The Evans series of postcards, then, was printed in 1923. The photographs of the town from the tower therefore were taken 12 years apart.

One can spend a lot of enjoyable hours delving into the story of the publisher of a postcard or of its photographer or of its printer. That is what collectors do. Or one can simply sit back and enjoy the postcard for what it is, a beautiful work of art.



# A trip to the patent office

A truly interesting item in the Tavistock and District Historical Society collection comes from the Estate of Oscar Wettlaufer who had lived in the family home on the northwest corner of Sebastopol Road. Mr. Wettlaufer passed away in March of 1992 in his 94th year.

Upon his passing, Oscar's niece, Doris Grassick of Kitchener, collected the contents of the house. Local history buff Tim Mosher later acquired a copy of the patent for a new and improved cider mill. The patent, dated November 2, 1898, was granted to Eckhardt Wettlaufer, Oscar's grandfather.

The Wettlaufer's property in Sebastopol was famous for its cider mill which was owned and operated for several generations. It was located just north of the family's brick home which was built c. 1877.

The patent contains two pen and ink drafting sketches of the operational mill parts (see below) as well as a typed description of its operation.

Imagine what it was like for Mr. Wettlaufer to make the long trek by train to the patent office in London to apply for his patent.

Looking through old copies of the Tavistock Gazette we can find references to the cider mill's operation. In September of 1903 it states: "Mr. Wettlaufer, Sebastopol, wishes to announce that he intends starting his Cider Mill on Thursday, Sept. 24, and will run every Tuesday and Thursday thereafter, or every day if necessary, and continue throughout the season. Apple butter and Jelly boiled for patrons. 3-to-5"

Then in October of 1912 we read: "Wettlaufer's cider mill at Sebastopol is a veritable hive of industry these days. On Monday afternoon there was a very large number of teams waiting their turn. It's that way nearly every day."

The original pattern for the cider mill wheel which was patented in 1888, can be viewed in Old Joe's Room at Quehl's Restaurant.



PHOTO BY BILL GLADDING / TAVISTOCK GAZETTE

**OSCAR WETTLAUFER** with the cider mill wheel pattern of his grandfather.

