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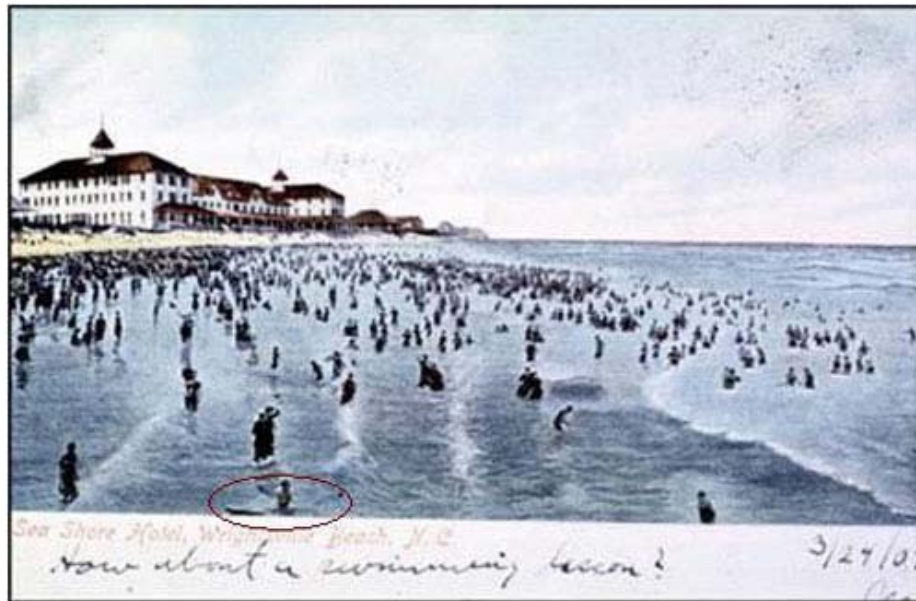


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Postcard find shows stoked North Carolina circa 1907..



1907 postcard with Wrightsville surf-bathers

Surf Culture

Does postcard shows a surfer on a Hawaiian styled bodyboard?

Surfersvillage Global Surf News, 12 January, 2010 : - - East coast USA surfing history has been changed...again! Joseph 'Skipper' Funderburg, author of *Surfing on the Cape Fear Coast*, has been conducting further research on older images in his book. The December 25, 2009 discovery of the 1907 Wrightsville Beach vintage picture postcard is really going to help change the way early surfing history is written about on the American East Coast...it is Ginormous News for North Carolina.

The postcard is a photographic view of a large crowd of people surf bathing on the ocean side of the Sea Shore Hotel. The 1907 postcard clearly shows a surfer on a Hawaiian styled body board!

The postcard illustrates the earliest image of a surfer & surfboard on Wrightsville Beach. Note surfer above the word Wrightsville. The newly discovered 1907 postcard reads, "The Sea Shore Hotel, Wrightsville Beach, NC." The author wrote "How about a swimming lesson?" The postcard is hand dated March 24, 1907." Based on the date, it's pretty obvious the photo was taken during the summer of 1906 or before.

According to Steve Massengill, author of *A North Carolina Postcard Album*, "I am delighted to be able to support Funderburg in his effort to add to, and alter the history of surfing in the United States." Steve Massengill continues, "Regarding the 1907 postcard, it was not uncommon for postcard manufacturers to use the same negative when printing new postcards." "One will see the same scene on various postcards with different dates and used on different style cards – undivided back and divided back, ect."

"The companies would use different coloring and sometimes add small details and crop out others." "The transcription of the message on the front of the postcard was published in 1907, but the photograph could date a year or more earlier." "Funderburg's research and statements upholds the accuracy and authenticity of the postcard." Steve Massengill is an expert on the history of picture postcards, having worked in the field of non-textual materials as a public historian and having published several works in the field.

Prior to the days of automobile access, the location is on the old railroad line at Station Three. The Sea Shore Hotel had a magnificent view out to sea and a gently sloping beach leading to the roaring surf. The hard packed

sandy beach between the island & the sea, provided the opportunity for guests to bath in the surf. Without question, the hoopla in the surf invariably crystallized around the nucleus of the oceanfront of the grand hotels, clubs and bathing establishments.

We do not know exactly when surf bathers began to clutch wooden planks to their bodies and hold them before a breaking wave to hitch a ride to shore. We do know surfing in its earliest form was obviously occurring at this location. The wooden planks in the image confirm surfing was occurring on Wrightsville Beach in 1907, but more likely 1906 or before.

The importance of the site of the Sea Shore Hotel, Wrightsville Beach is indicated by the number of structures that have occupied the space. The structures on the favorable location have been impacted by civilization, commerce, fires and hurricanes. An approximate history follows.

Undocumented shanties, shelters, tents or camps, Pre 1850 – Circa 1888

The Browns Bath House, Circa 1888

The Sea Shore Hotel built in 1892, with the addition of a steel pier built in 1910

The Ocean Terrace Hotel was built in Circa 1934

Town of Wrightsville Beach acquired the property in Circa 1954 – Circa 1962

The Blockade Runner Motor Lodge was built in 1962

The Blockade Runner Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach

Picture postcards are interesting, both as art and as historic photography. An antique postcard can be a snapshot of history...a historic treasure to future generations. A photo of surfing at the turn of the century is not only a pretty picture, but also a relic of a time past and of the scenery that has since changed greatly. Diligent surf historians, like Skipper Funderburg are among the lucky historic researchers that discover photographs of early wave riding activity on a regular basis. Celebrate and enjoy the new historic 2007 Wrightsville Beach surfing image.

Authentication and validation

The Dr. Robert M. Fales Photo Collection is comprised of thousands of 35 MM slides, plus an index catalog that contains slide numbers and brief descriptions. Dr. Fales did not photograph the backs of postcards or photocards. Unfortunately, a photograph of the back of the 1907 postcard is currently unavailable, and the location of the postcard itself is currently unknown. The State of North Carolina provided a grant to digitize Dr. Fales invaluable photographic collection.

"I really enjoy learning about the history of surfing from Joseph "Skipper" Funderburg and the history of postcards & postcard art from Steve Massengill." "The Dr. Robert M. Fales Photographic Collection is indeed wonderful, and I love the State of North Carolina grant program that paid for the digitations."

Kim Cumber, Non-Textual Materials Archivist, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina

According to Funderburg, Wrightsville Beach postcards have always been popular among collectors and usually command decent prices. Postcard companies would hire photographers, either local or itinerant, to take pictures of tourist spots.

Then the companies would produce multiple printed cards of photos in hopes of cashing in on tourists and vacationers mailing cards back to loved ones. North Carolina postcards were not prevalent until after 1906, and postcards prior to 1912 were printed in Germany. After 1912, postcards were printed in England and the USA, because of broken ties with Germany.

Antique or penny postcards, evoke memories of the past and provide an interesting glimpse into social, cultural and material history of the time. Historians use real photo postcards and their postmarks, to document local historical events. Vintage waterfront postcards, in particular, are prized by seaside historians. Postcard collecting is surpassed in popularity, only by coin and stamp collecting. The Golden Age of postcards is 1898 – 1913.

Funderburg's research & postcard work is validated and authenticated by North Carolina Division of History & Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. "Courtesy, New Hanover Public Library, Robert M. Fales Collection"

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Joseph 'Skipper' Funderburg

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