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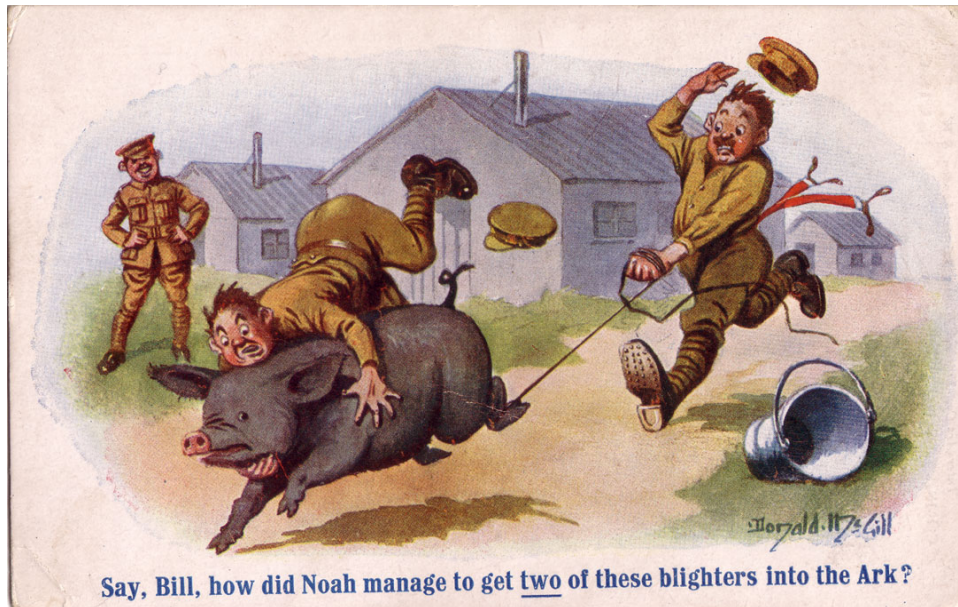
### Saucy Seaside Postcards – Research Paper

Two things indistinguishable from one another are saucy postcards and British seaside tourism. Our special exhibit in the Moments to Remember Museum will feature the first part, Donald McGill's popular collection of saucy seaside postcards. In the 1930s and 1940s, these cards were considered very popular but were targeted by the government in the 1950s finding him guilty of damaging the country's moral. There were more lewd postcards published at the time, but McGill was the focus of authorities because of his incredible popularity. McGill's postcards mostly related to sex were innocent and humorous, capturing travel and culture during the seaside tourism. The culture of witty postcards is declining and threatened because it's so much quicker to send a text or email message so the special exhibit is meant to capture a small part of history. Understandably considered saucy and dangerous at the time of its publication, English Seaside postcards became deeply relatable and recognized as extraordinary works that captured familiar themes like marriage and culture. Donald McGill's Seaside postcards contain cartoonish work, which are highly collectible, but while the visuals are about sex, the themes are in relation to everyday life, which is why they're still very popular today.

Development of the Penny Black stamp and railway expansions during Britain's Victorian era (1837 – 1901) contributed to the quick rise of British seaside tourism, souvenir industry and particularly seaside postcards. The first ever-adhesive postage stamp, Penny Black, was released in Great Britain in 1840. During that same year, Theodore Hook sent himself the

first and oldest known postcard. Theodore, a writer and practical joker, sent himself a postcard with cartoonish images of postal workers on the front of the card. Railways were built before the Victorian Era; however, during the beginning years of Queen Victoria's rule there was a transformation with the process of extending railway lines across the entire country. These railways provided access for travel and were immediately favored. Steam trains weren't just for rich people; it was affordable, comfortable, fast and made it possible for ordinary people to take trips to the seaside towns of Scarborough, Blackpool, and Portsmouth. What followed next was the rise of the seaside souvenir industry and "the picture postcard was, and is, an essential staple of this industry" ("History of Postcards"). Saucy seaside postcards immortalized seaside holidays and were considered an important part British tourism.

Donald Fraser Gould McGill, an English graphic artist, born in London in 1875, transformed the postcard experience when he began to capture colorful cartoonish images of real life and became known as "king of seaside postcard" ("Donald McGill 'king of saucy postcards' Celebrated"). In 1904, McGill began to create drawings, which were replicated and sold as postcards. Well-educated liberal with eloquent artistic abilities, he didn't mind people disagreeing with him and his images and words evoked thought and laughter. He drew postcards that were against German propaganda during the Great War but he gained popularity after the end of the war. These early cards were always humorous and reflected his opinion of men away at war and families at home. In below postcard, McGill raises the question given how animals behave, it's very unlikely that Noah was able to get two of every kind of animal into the ark.



Mostly humorous, some of his drawing captured the complex art of double entendre. For anyone who is young and lacks real life knowledge, the alternative meaning will be missed but they can still enjoy the colorful pictures. In below postcard, McGill features older women as he often does, in red dresses with huge bottoms, stating that ladies after twenty-five lose sex appeal.



There's also a phrase visible on the card that's directly linked to the picture; all of it relating to everyday living situations but with hidden meaning. McGill wanted the postcards to be interesting and to echo real life topics and opinions. These postcards "feature cartoon images, typically set on the beach or nearby, accompanied by a joke" ("The Saucy Seaside Postcard a History"). McGill in below postcard expresses the idea that ladies after twenty lose sex appeal and forty year old women aren't good looking.



Donald McGill created comic artwork for over 12,000 postcards and managed to capture part of history. Some of the images were described as "thick with double entendres, busty bathing belles, naughty vicars and henpecked husbands" (Harris). He truly enjoyed designing postcards and his work was very popular in the 1930s and 1940s as it displayed "stereotypical characters; vicars, large ladies, and put-upon husbands in the same vein as the Carry On films" ("Daily Image | Saucy Postcard"). His postcards are very clever, witty and sometime offensive with the narrative exposing real feelings. Donald later explained that he "ranked his output according to their vulgarity as mild, medium, and strong with strong being much the best sellers" (Cohen). The postcards are still alive today, considered a novelty, sold for top dollars at auctions

and considered part of Great Britain's culture just like royals and kings. McGill's postcards sold in the range of 16 million a year, but he wasn't a great businessmen and received only a flat rate for each design leaving the publisher to reap royalties from the thousands of copies reproduced from his original creation.

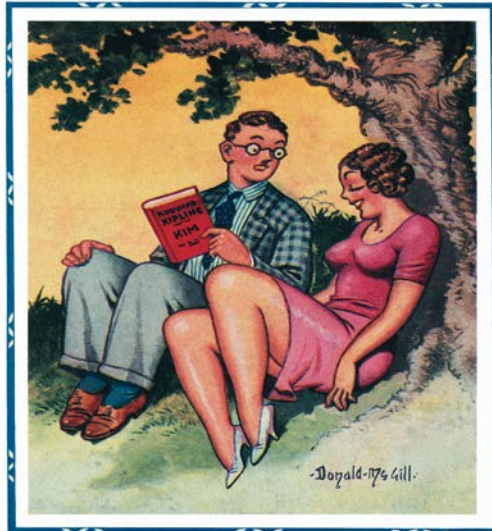
In 1953 there was a systematic clean up in Great Britain and McGill's troubles began in 1954 when the Conservative government became increasingly concerned about the declining morality and decided to target his artwork. In 1951, "a new exhibition displaying 1,300 titillating postcard, seized by police" (Harris) which was held at the University of Kent. In 1954, censorship committee held a trial charging McGill with breaking the Obscene Publication Act of 1857. The following year, at the age of 79, he pleaded guilty, four of his cards were banned and agreed to not publish 17 of his cards. The cards didn't have to show woman's cleavage "for the censors to get offended" ("Saucy seaside postcards banned"). Donald McGill was "found guilty of violating obscenity laws and made to pay a £50 fine plus £25 costs" (Harris). The police soon raided the shop and "seize(d) offending stock" (Harris). The owners of the shop went to court and "if the courts were persuaded that the postcards were obscene, they would be destroyed" (Harris). Retailers cancelled orders and companies went bankrupt. In late 1950s, censorship lightened and in 1957 McGill went in front of the House of Commons Select Committee to amend the 1857 Act. Even though the postcards were not destroyed, this still left an impact on the way postcards were viewed. In *The Michael Winner Collection of Donald McGill*, McGill "felt aggrieved that something so essentially innocent as a slightly smutty double entendre should call down on its head the full wrath of the law" (McGill 9). As they became more popular and were selling at around 16 million cards per year, the government created the Postcard Censor and "were concerned at the apparent deterioration of morals in Britain" ("24 x Donald's Banned!

Postcards”). An article states, “These postcards, as bizarre as it might seem today, were deemed a threat to the very fabric of British decency” (“The Saucy Seaside Postcard a History”). McGill was the main target of these aggressive campaigns and the state declared his postcards obscene. After years of success it was troubling for McGill to be censored and he wasn’t allowed to draw people with red noses, women in bathing suits with their cleavage so he resigned. The postcard industry saw a decline as more people started to visit other destinations and the last McGill card was printed in the 1970s.

The witch hunt of the 1950s targeted Donald McGill, but “in the more liberal 1960’s the saucy postcard was revived and became to be considered, by some, as an art form” (“24 x Donald’s Banned! Postcards”). The curator of British Cartoon Archive, Nick Hiley, put into perspective the ways cards have changed by stating, “What is interesting is that at the time the authorities thought they were a door opening into hell and a slippery slope to degradation. But when you look at the postcards today, they look so innocent and people get nostalgic about them” (Harris). In Hiley’s opinion, cards have “quickly been redefined as art and something to celebrate and preserve” (Harris). Hiley states, “Not only are many of the cards still amusing, but they represent a landmark in social and legal history” (Harris). Hiley’s perspective on the cards is that “they are vivid illustration of how our notion of obscenity has changed over time” (Harris).

Our special exhibit will feature reprints of original card and includes the postcard that has the world’s record for number of copies sold: “Do you like Kipling?” / “I don’t know, you naught boy, I’ve never kippled!” McGill often showed married couples as unhappy but in below postcard he shows unmarried men often try to seduce women while women look for marriage.

**“Do you like Kipling ?”**  
**“I don’t know, you naughty boy,**  
**I’ve never kippled !”**



The Kipling joke is used in a 1962 episode of the *The Beverly Hillbillies* and in the *Muppet Show* and below “five seaside postcard cartoon were used on Royal Mail’s 1994 stamps celebrating 100 years of the picture postcard” (Duell).



Today his works are collected and enjoyed for his skill and sense of humor. In *The Michael Winner Collection of Donald McGill*, “McGill captures a forbidden world of British humour in an age of family values and comparative innocence, when sex was seen as naughty” (McGill 7). Original pieces are worth thousands of dollars today, but reprints can now be bought over the Internet and featured and republished by museums. McGill was a reputable man even though most of his humor included sex by use of double entendre. Other topics that McGill captured were couples, hospitals, married couple, clergymen, milkman, were funny, surreal and pass the test of time. Donald McGill died at the age of 87. He was paid a few pounds for each of his pieces but his original pieces are sold through Sotheby’s auction house for thousands of pounds. In the end Donald had created 12,000 cards with 200 million cards sold to the public during his career that lasted over 60 years.



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