

Postcards Issued by the BSA: Sets and Series (Part 1)

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This guide shows how to identify postcards and their variations that belong to each of the sets and series issued by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) from its inception in 1910 until 1970.

For information on other cards see:

[Collecting Boy Scout Postcards From the United States](#)

The difference between a set and a series is subtle. A set of postcards, either numbered or unnumbered, was originally sold together: individual cards were not available separately. A series of cards numbered or not, is a group of postcards with a common theme that are sold individually. Since it may be difficult today for a collector to find either complete sets or complete series, this guide will treat them together.

From 1910 until 1970 the BSA issued 11 different series of postcards.

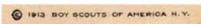
(01) The Scout Law set of 1913. (27 different cards)



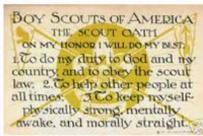
In 1913 the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America copyrighted and published a series of twelve cards. Each heavily ornamented colorful card contained the full text of one of the points of the Scout Law: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent. The fronts of the cards bear a copyright notice in a blue circle in the lower right hand corner. (12 cards with the circle copyright)



In 1916 the cards were reprinted using a different printer and the copyright notice was changed to a straight line.



Within two years, two additional cards were added to the set, one with a summary of the twelve points and one with the Boy Scout Oath. (14 cards with the straight line copyright)



The summary card is known to exist without any copyright mark. (1 card with no copyright mark)

[Search eBay for Boy Scout Law Postcards](#)

(02) First Activity Cards: 1913 ♦ 1916. (91 cards)

The BSA published a series of 30 numbered black and white postcards showing scouting activities. Each is clearly marked Official Boy Scout Postcard. The photographs used to produce the cards were contributed from all over the country. Notable are several that show Dan Beard who introduced Scouting at the Culver Military Academy during the summers of 1911 and 1912.



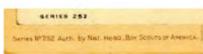
Schlesinger Brothers and Company of New York City did the printing by photo offset. Their postcards are all easily recognized by their distinctive logo in the form of a stag's head on the upper left of the back of the cards.



The company produced three printings of the cards: the order in which they first appeared is unknown.

Type I cards have a blank back with no series number. (30 cards)

Type II cards are marked in the lower left corner of the back: "Series No. 252 Auth. by Nat. Head. Boy Scouts of America." The series number was assigned by Schlesinger Brothers and had nothing to do with the Boy Scouts of America. (30 cards)



Type III cards are marked "SERIES 252" in approximately the same position as the markings for Type II. (30 cards)

T. Fridy of Lancaster, PA. reprinted card #2 in the form of a "real photo" on Kodak paper. It does not have a Schlesinger Brothers back and the chance of confusing it with an original card is minimal. (1 card)

[Search eBay for the first and second activity series.](#)

(03) Boy Scout Christmas Postcards: 1914 (31 cards)



In 1914 the BSA copyrighted and published a series of ten Christmas postcards.

The copyright notice is on the back of the card at the base of the trees, just over the word Correspondence. The very distinctive backs show a small group of Scouts and a leader hiking over the crest of a wooded hill. Immediately above the spine, in a box clearly reserved for the purpose, is the Quality Cards trademark of the A.M. Davis Co. of Boston, Massachusetts who printed the cards. (10 cards)



Consistent with the practice of asking printers to remove trademarks after receipt of the BSA Congressional charter in 1916, the A. M. Davis Co. mark is missing in the second printing. There were several subtle design changes as well. (10 cards)

Between the second and third printings, all cards underwent design changes. The most consistent and obvious was a uniform update. The earlier versions of the cards showed Scouts wearing the original uniform with campaign jackets and puttees, but no neckerchiefs. In the third printing the Scouts are wearing long summer socks, knickers, shirts, and neckerchiefs. (10 cards)



In the 1970's an unknown publisher reproduced one of the cards. The border is more of a yellow-orange, the print is in green, and the "B" is filled in the color of the border. The back is plain and there is very little chance of confusing this card with one of the originals. (1 card)

[search eBay for Boy Scout Christmas postcards](#)

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Stan Lipson

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