



**Greeting Card Association**

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## **ABOUT THE GREETING CARD ASSOCIATION**

The Greeting Card Association (GCA) is the U.S.-based trade organization representing greeting card and stationery publishers, and allied members of the industry.

The Association's principal objectives are to promote the tradition and cultural value of sending greeting cards; to represent the industry before government and regulatory agencies; to serve as an information service center for its members, and to monitor trends and developments that may impact the industry.

GCA was formed in **1941**, when a small group of greeting card publishers met under the leadership of card publisher George Burkhardt and established "The Greeting Card Industry," the predecessor of today's Greeting Card Association. Burkhardt and his colleagues formed the industry coalition in response to a War Department order to reduce paper use by 25 percent.

Fearing the possible elimination of paper for greeting card use, the newly-formed group quickly launched a successful counter-offensive, creating "Defense Stamp Christmas Cards" and V-Mail greeting cards to promote the sale of defense stamps and war bonds.

This was rapidly followed by a "Greeting Cards in Wartime" campaign to help keep families keep in touch and to boost the morale of U.S. troops. Working through the Red Cross, the industry group provided millions of greeting cards for wounded servicemen to write home. Two years later, in **1943**, the association undertook a cooperative effort with the Post Office to promote the first "Mail Early" Christmas campaign.

Immediately following World War II, GCA turned its attention on postal issues. In **1947**, the Association successfully fought a proposed postal hike of the 3-cent first-class stamp, marking the beginning of GCA's commitment to protect the rights of citizen mailers, and to represent the interests of consumers on postal costs.

Postal issues and rate hikes remained the primary concerns of the GCA membership throughout the **1950s and 1960s**. In 1957, a five-cent First Class stamp was proposed and defeated; in 1958, the industry fought a government plan to standardize all envelope sizes. In 1963, the cost of a First Class stamp was

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increased to five cents, and in 1968, it was increased to 6 cents. In 1969, the association strenuously opposed and beat back a rate increase to 7 cents.

In the summer of **1970**, President Richard Nixon signed legislation creating a separate Postal Service that was to be run in a business-like manner. First-class rate hikes quickly followed – to 8 cents in 1972, to 10 cents in 1974, and to 13 cents in 1975. In **1977**, the Greeting Card Association moved its headquarters from New York City to Washington, DC., largely to improve its interaction with and proximity to the U.S. Postal Service.

In **1984**, GCA participated for the first time as an exhibitor at the National Stationery Show, launching what would become a major presence for the Association at the Show. The spring meetings of the GCA are now always held in New York City in conjunction with the Stationery Show, a key sales venue for card publishers and suppliers.

In **1988**, GCA launched the International Greeting Card Awards Competition, known as the LOUIEs (after German-born lithographer Louis Prang, who is credited with the birth of the U.S. greeting card industry). The annual LOUIE competition, which recognizes creative and publishing excellence within the industry, today draws entries from publishers around the world and is perhaps the most coveted honor among greeting card makers.

In **1995**, the explosive growth in electronic technology and consumer use of the Internet introduced the first new greeting card medium since the 1400s: the E-card. The innovation quickly introduced scores of new “publishers” and millions of consumers to this fun, casual and instantaneous type of greeting. Contrary to the predictions of many, the popularity of both E-greetings and traditional greeting cards continued to grow

By **2005**, “niche” cards appealing to very tightly-defined consumer psychographics (lifestyle preferences, attitudes and beliefs), soared in popularity and drew many first-time and small-scale publishers to the industry.

**Today**, the Greeting Card Association consists of approximately 300 national and international publishers and suppliers, accounting for approximately 95 percent of all greeting cards sold in the United States. Consumers can find virtually any kind of greeting card imaginable, for any occasion or relationship, featuring the exact sentiment and style they’re seeking, in more than 100,000 retail outlets around the country.

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