



Greeting Card Association

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BACKGROUNDER

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION KEEPS GREETING CARDS FRONT AND CENTER AS AMERICANS' COMMUNICATIONS OPTIONS GROW

Throughout the years, the practice of sending and receiving greeting cards has been an integral source for people to express love, friendship and warm thoughts to show someone they care. In fact, greeting cards have been helping friends and family connect since the 13th century. The modern custom of sending greeting cards can be traced back to the Chinese who celebrated the advent of the New Year with messages of good will and good cheer. The Germans printed New Year's greetings from woodcuts as early as the year 1400.

In the United States, the greeting card industry was formalized in 1941 with the creation of the Greeting Card Association (GCA). The GCA was formed to preserve the tradition of sending and receiving greeting cards, representing greeting card and stationery publishers. In 1941, there were about 100 card publishers with approximately \$43 million in wholesale card sales. Today, the mission of the GCA has grown to promote the tradition of sending greeting cards, to represent the industry before government and regulatory agencies, to serve as a membership information center, and to monitor trends and developments that may impact the industry.

Following is a glimpse into the history of the GCA and how it has worked to help preserve the time-honored tradition of sending greeting cards:

1941

- **Greeting Cards Are Almost a Casualty of the War:** The GCA was formed in response to a United States War Department order to reduce paper use by 25 percent. The GCA successfully fought the possible elimination of paper used for greeting cards during World War II by launching "Defense Stamp Christmas Cards" and V-Mail greeting cards to help promote defense stamps and war bonds.
- **Greeting Cards Help Friends and Family Connect During Wartime:** Another effort – "Greeting Cards in Wartime" – showed how greeting cards helped keep families in touch and boost the morale of soldiers fighting abroad. Millions of greeting cards were provided by GCA through the Red Cross to wounded servicemen.

1943

- **The GCA Helps People Connect On Time For The Holidays:** The GCA cooperated with the Post Office on the first "Mail Early" Christmas campaign.

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1947

- **How Much For a Stamp?** The GCA successfully fought a postal hike of the three-cent first-class stamp.

1976

- **The GCA Relocates:** The Association moves its headquarters from New York City to Washington, D.C. to reinforce its strong ties with the U.S. Postal Service.

1984

- **Joining the National Stationery Show:** The GCA participates as an exhibitor at the **National Stationery Show for the first time.**

1988

- The GCA initiated the **LOUIE Awards to celebrate creative excellence** in the greeting card industry.

TODAY

- **Greeting Card Giver Growth:** Since 1993, the number of U.S. households purchasing greeting cards has grown more than six percent, with retail growth driven primarily by sales of cards for everyday occasions versus holidays and by individual cards rather than from packaged or boxed cards.
- **Industry Expansion:** There are more than 3,000 greeting card publishers in the U.S., ranging from major corporations to small businesses. GCA members account for approximately 95 percent of the industry market share. Many GCA members are sons and daughters of those who pioneered the Association more than 60 years ago.
- **Greeting Cards and Technology:** Internet and mobile phones have enabled a whole new generation to expand its network of family and friends it wishes to stay in touch with over time. This increased number of relationships is good news for the traditional greeting card market as people still look to greeting cards when they want to make someone feel special.

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