ICELAND PHILATELIC MAGAZINE

An independent journal for collectors of Iceland stamps and postal history



Exploring Icelandic Postcards

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Exploring Icelandic Postcards

By Mike Schumacher

The purpose of this article is to explore early Icelandic postcards. Icelandic postcards from the late 19th and early 20th centuries are not merely souvenirs – they are among the most revealing visual documents of Iceland's transition from an isolated agrarian society to a modern nation. They capture urban growth, social identity, technological change, and the emergence of a national visual culture.

Why Icelandic Postcards Matter Historically

Early Icelandic postcards are globally recognized as powerful historical evidence documenting social conditions, landscape, architecture, infrastructure and cultural identity. They often preserve details not found in other records. Historical postcards are cultural documents which show what a society wanted to present about itself – its pride, its aspirations, and its sense of place. They show Reykjavik's early streets, harbors, civic buildings, rural settlements, the people who inhabited them, living conditions, means of transportation, economic development, expansion of postal routes and infrastructure, as well as national imagery. They are not neutral records, but are curated visions of Iceland's past. They are the earliest widely distributed photographic record of Icelandic towns, landscapes and people, thus they document and represent a national visual archive of Icelandic identity, formation, modernization and cultural memory. Obviously, this article will only begin to cover a very limited number of the hundreds of existing Icelandic postcards – information related to what is depicted and touch on some of the early postcard publishers.

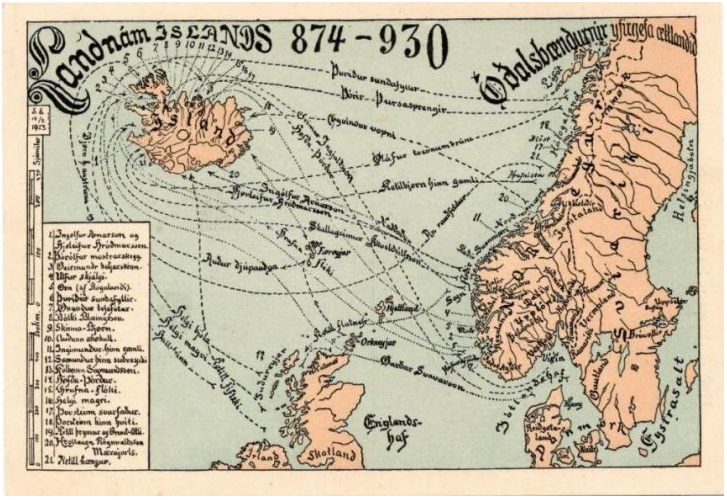
What Icelandic Postcards Reveal

1. **National Imagery & Landscape**
   Postcards helped define Iceland's visual identity; waterfalls, mountains, villages, farms, turf houses, farming activities, and horses. These images shaped how Icelanders saw themselves – and how the world saw Iceland.

2. **Social Identity & Everyday Life**
   Postcards depicting Iceland and Icelanders: Business leaders, Politicians, Poets, Actors, & other local characters and eccentric personalities. Postcards of daily activities – national costumes, fish drying, horse riding.

3. **Urban Development and Technological Change**
   Postcards showing evolving development of towns, harbour's, infrastructure, transportation, mail service.

I hope you enjoy this brief journey through an exploration of Icelandic postcards. There is truly much to be learned about Iceland from its postcards and they are an important component of philately.

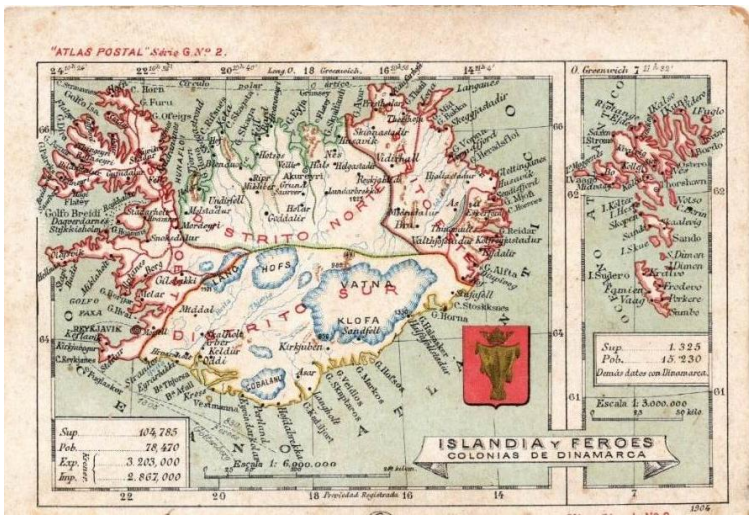


National Imagery & Landscape
(Map postcards)

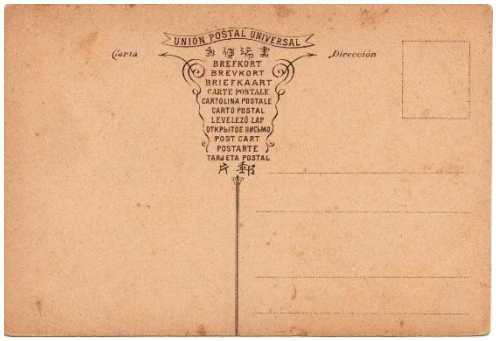
Sailing Routes of the Norsemen postcard by Samúel Eggertsson, Rvk. Nr. 25 - divided back, unused
Postcard publisher Samúel Eggertsson operated in Reykjavik in the early 20th century and published a range of

postcards that focused on Icelandic National symbols, Patriotic themes intended to educate or promote knowledge of Icelandic history and culture including Historical & educational Maps of Iceland.

Iceland postcard ("Iceland & the Faroe Islands, Colonies of Denmark) (Atlas Postal Série G. No. 2. 1904) – divided back, unused, Spanish language



Copy of reverse side (below) UPU

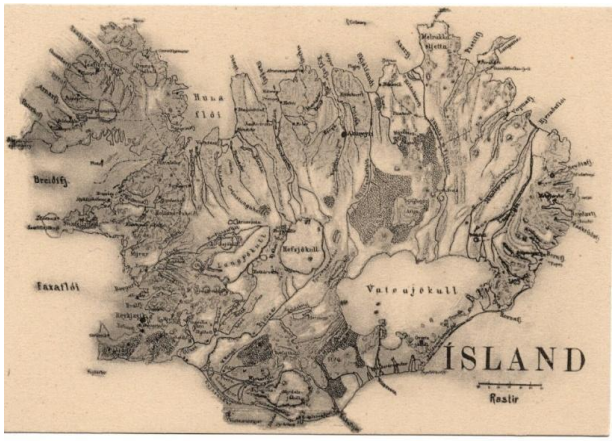


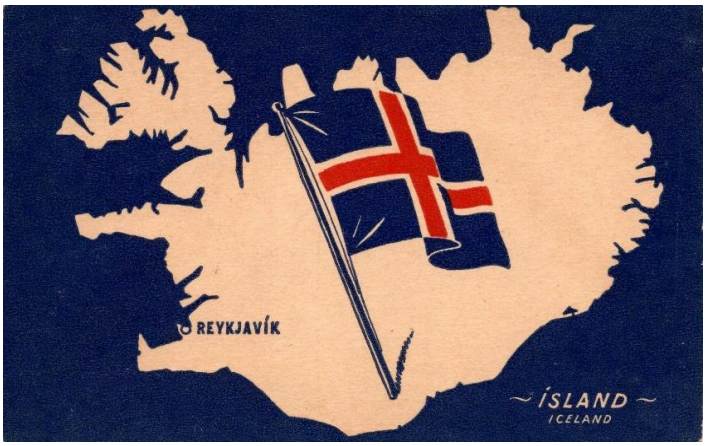
multilingual reverse 1898-1906 era

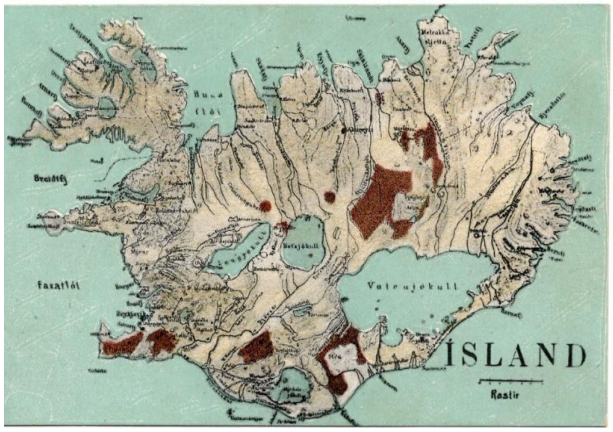
Iceland & National Flag motif postcard by B. Sv. (likely an individual publisher rather than a printing firm) - divided back

Patriotic tourist type postcard from the period 1925 - 1935

Iceland adopted this version of the flag in 1915







Both map cards are divided back postcards – black & white one unused & has no publisher information on it.

The color tinted postcard is by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavik – used 16.1.15

Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavik operated as a commercial partnership publishing and distributing postcards. Their postcards typically featured town scenes, waterfalls, rural landscapes, fishing and maritime subjects, horse transport, travel scenes, Þingvellir and other tourist destinations. Most cards were printed as monochrome collotype or photo type, hand-colored views and tinted photographic cards.



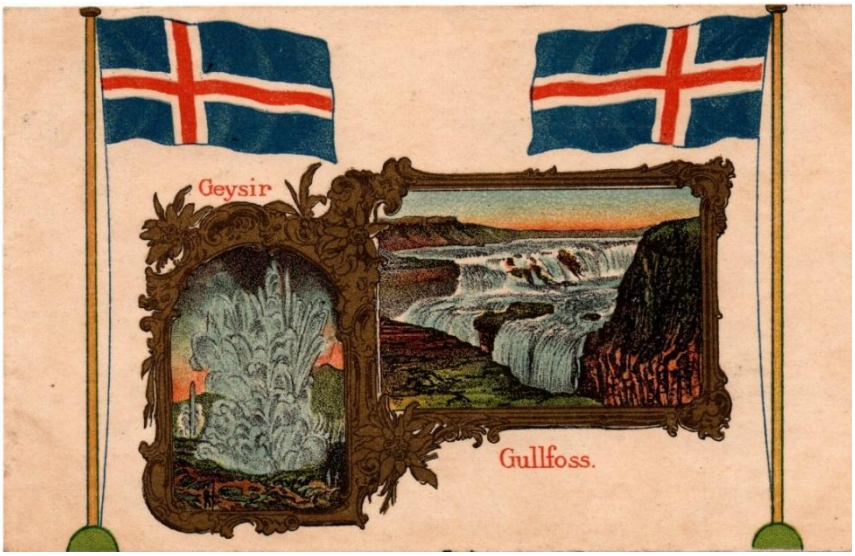
Þingvallavatn postcard by Einar Gunnarsson, Reykjavik – divided back, unused

Þingvallavatn is the largest lake in Iceland located within the historic Þingvellir region approximately 40 km northeast of Reykjavik. The lake lies in the rift valley formed by the separation of the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates.

The area is historically significant because the AlÞingi was established there around 930 AD (one of the world's oldest parliaments.

Einar Gunnarsson was an early 20th century Icelandic postcard publisher of topographical cards depicting notable national leaders, poets, locations & rural agricultural life.

(Waterfalls)



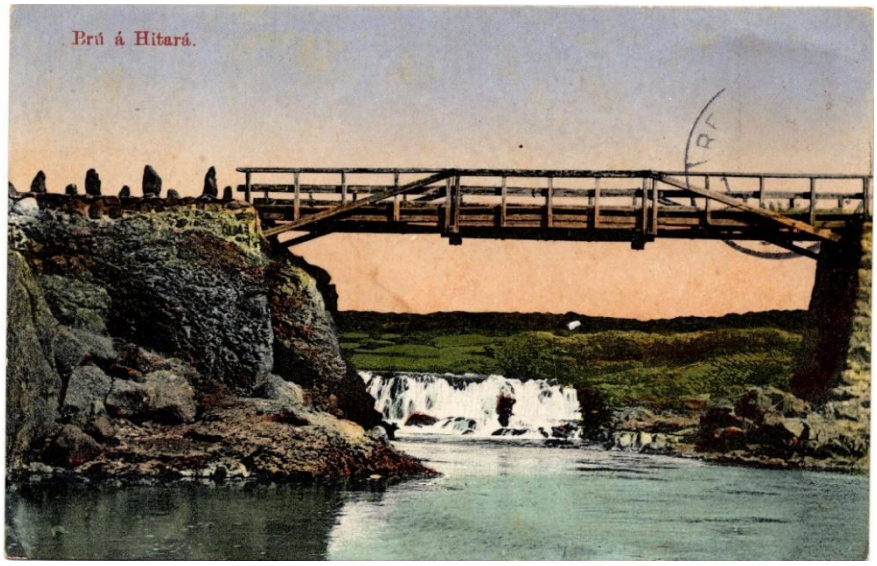
Patriotic postcard with Geysir & Gullfoss - by Helgi Árnason, Rvik. – used 1.1.1909

Helgi Árnason operated in Reykjavík during the early 20th century & was one of the more significant Icelandic postcard publishers covering a wide range of Icelandic topographical, cultural and tourist postcards. Subjects include: street scenes, historic national sites, national costumes, rural settlements, Royal visits, cultural and patriotic subjects. Most cards are monochrome or sepia photographic views.



Dettifoss by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavik – used 16.6.1927

Dettifoss is located in north-east Iceland on the Jókulsá á Fjöllum river which flows from the Vatnajökull glacier. Second largest waterfall in Iceland in terms of volume discharge.

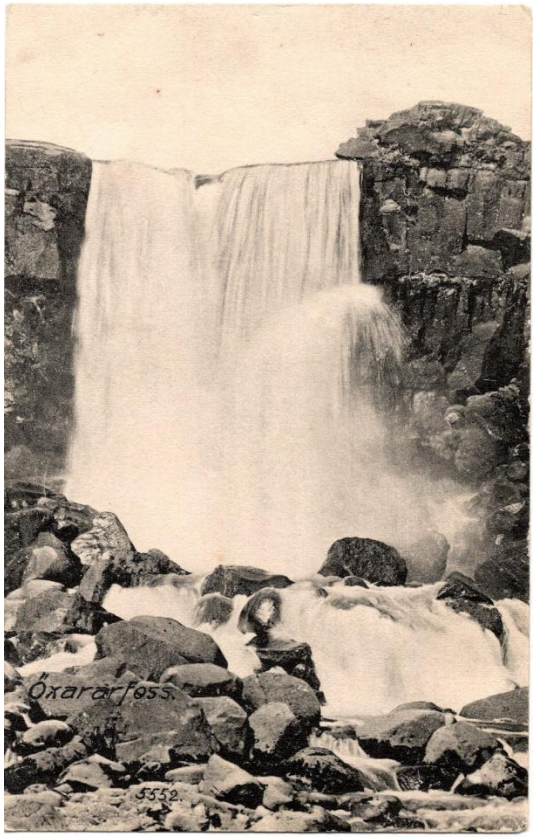


Brú á Hítará postcard is by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavik – unknown date used as stamp & postmark date have been removed

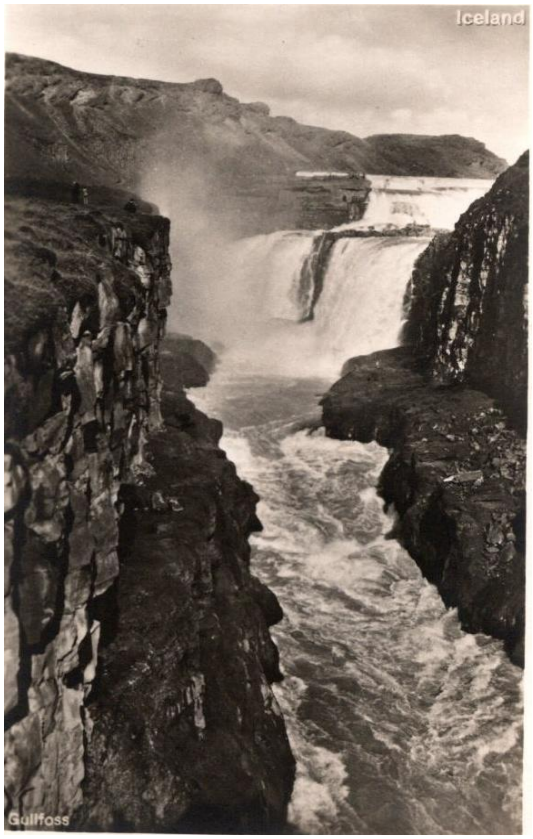
The Hítará is a mountain river in west Iceland about a 90 minute drive from Reykjavik. It originates from the serene Hítarvatn & gracefully traverses the verdant expanses of the Hítardalur valley before emptying into Akraós.



Goðafoss postcard by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavík – used 1.11.12
Goðafoss is located on the Skjálfandafljót river in northern Iceland about 45 minutes from Akureyri.



Oxarárfoss postcard
by Gunhild Thorsteinsson, Reykjavík
used 21.5.1910
Oxarárfoss is located within Thingvellir National Park in Southwest Iceland.



Gulfoss postcard by Baldvin Pálsson, Reykjavík
Gulfoss is on the Hvítá river which originates from the Langjökull glacier. It is a two-tiered cascade plunging 32 meters into a canyon.



Kirkjubæjarklauster by Helgí Árnason, Rvik – used 1.12.1927

Kirkjubæjarklauster is a village in southern Iceland on the Ring road between Vík and Höfn. Kirkjubæjarklauster means “church farm cloister” and the name of the waterfall is Systrafoss “waterfall of the sisters”.

(Mountain postcards)



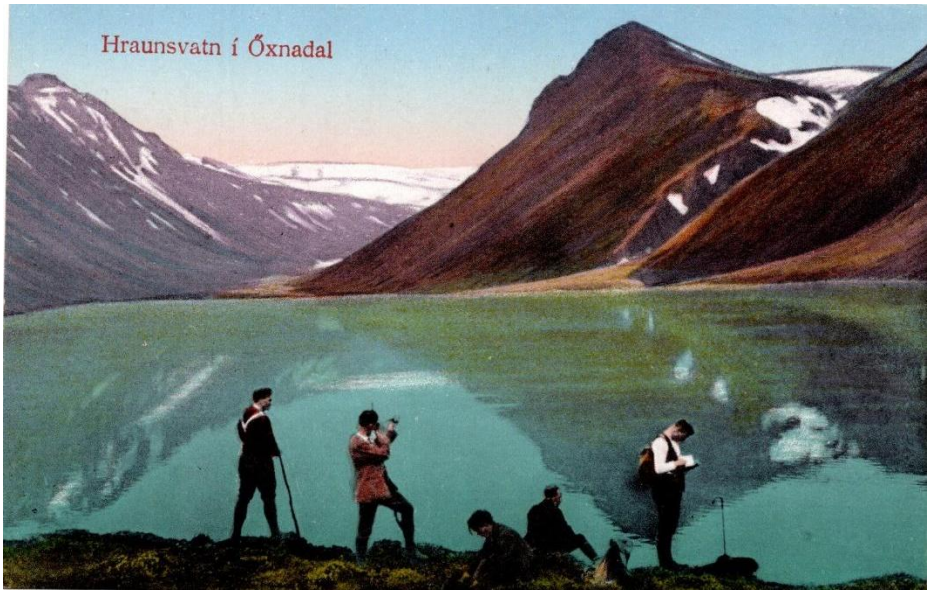
Hekla postcard by Finsen & Johnson, Reykjavik # 5963 - undivided back & undated

Hekla is an active stratovolcano approximately 1491 meters above sea level & is considered one of the countries most active volcanoes – having erupted more than 20 times since Iceland’s settlement.

Finsen & Johnson, Reykjavik were one of the earliest and most important postcard publishers in Reykjavik during the first decade of the 20th century. Their postcard themes included Iceland’s most scenic, cultural and ethnographic subjects. Their postcards were generally collotype.

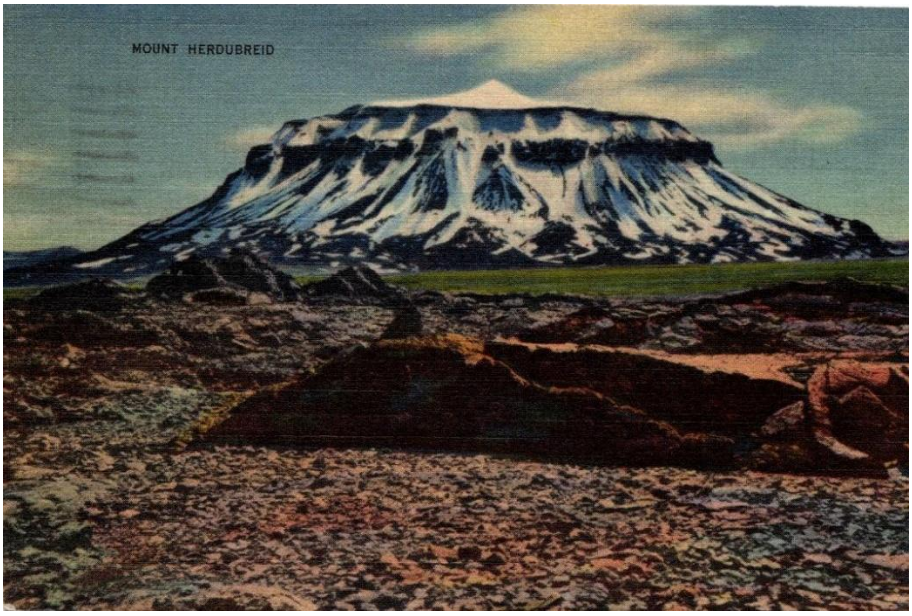


Eruption of Hekla in 1918 by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavík – divided back, unused



Hraunsvatn í Óxnadal postcard by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavik – divided back, hand tinted, unused

Hraunsvatn í Óxnadal is a scenic mountain lake in north Iceland west of Akureyri beneath the dramatic peak Hraundrangur.



Herðubreid mountain postcard by the Icelandic Commission of the N. Y. World Fair 1938 – postmarked Lowell, Mass. Oct. 21, 1940

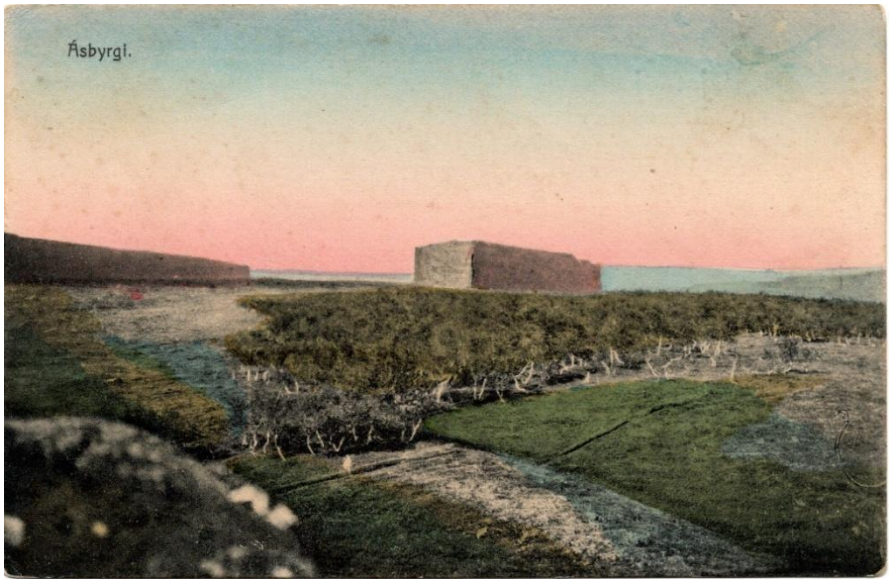
Herðubreid is a 1682 meter tall flat-topped tuya (table mountain) formed in a subglacial eruption during the last Ice Age. It is located in the northern part of Vatnajökull National Park close to Askja volcano.



Belgjarfjall við Mývatn postcard by H. Eínarsson, Akureyri – dated 31.12.1914 & postmarked Akureyri 3.1.1915

Belgjarfjall við Mývatn is a mountain by Lake Mývatn in northern Iceland – the lake and surrounding wetlands provide a habitat for water fowl.

Hallgrímur Eínarsson, Akureyri was one of north Iceland's most important early photographers & postcard publishers. He established a photography studio in Akureyri in 1903 & was active in documenting life across northern Iceland during the period 1900-1930.



Ásþyrgi postcard by O. Johnson & Kaaber, Reykjavik #16741 undated but indicates "Christmas Greetings" sent to Hvanneyri. Hvanneyri has been an agricultural education center since 1889.

O. Johnson & Kaaber, were one of the most important early Icelandic postcard publishers and commercial firms in Reykjavík during the first decades of the 20th century. They produced a large and geographically diverse series of postcards using real-photographs or photo-based topographical and cultural views – scenery, rural life, historic sites & emerging national consciousness.

Ásþyrgi is a horseshoe-shaped canyon in northeastern Iceland in the region of Vatnajökull National Park. According to Icelandic folklore the canyon was created when Sleipnir, the eight-legged horse of the Norse god Odin touched one hoof to the earth while carrying Odin across the sky. Geologists figure it was created by catastrophic glacial floods thousands of years ago.

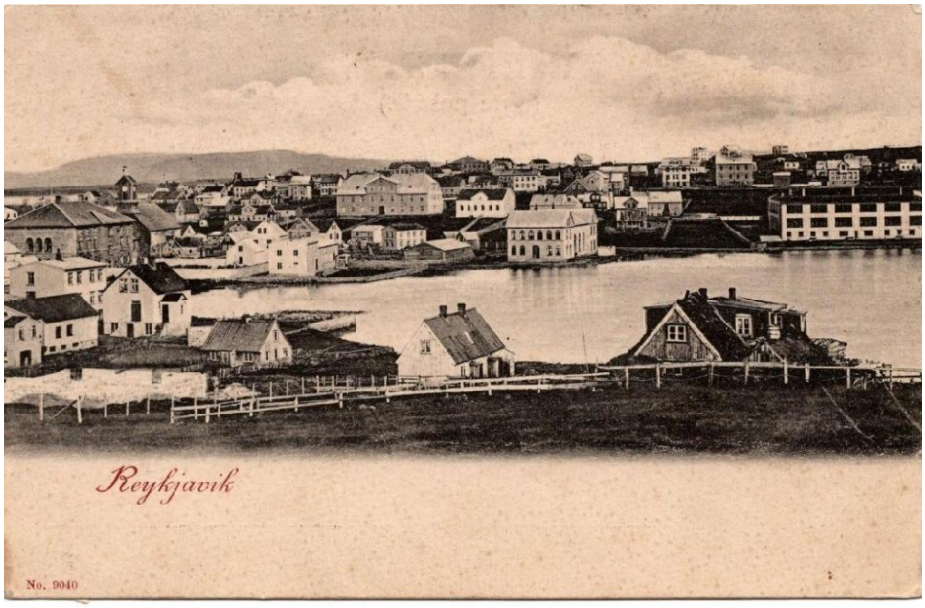
(Towns/Villages)



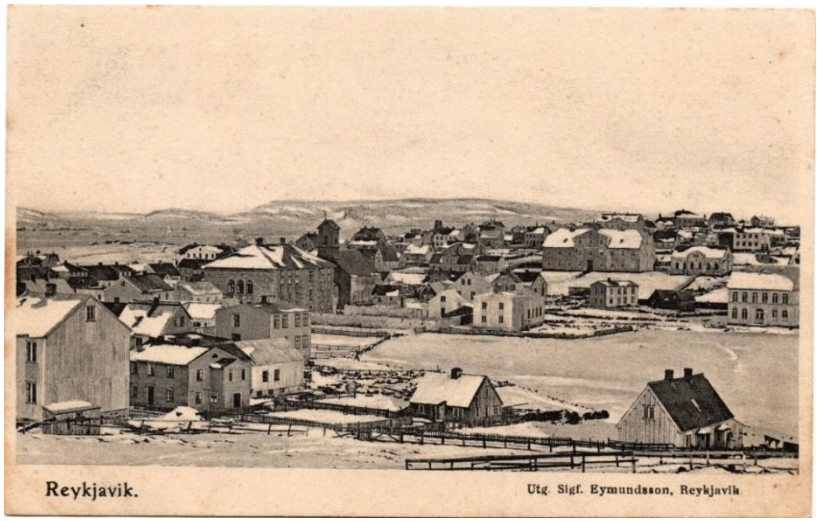
Reykjavík (1780-90) postcard by Helgi Árnason, Reykjavík # 15566 – undated, divided back

Reykjavík is the capital & largest city in Iceland, and generally regarded as the site of the first permanent Norse settlement. It is believed that Norwegian chieftain Ingólfur Arnarson arrived around 874 and established a farm where Reykjavík now stands. He named the area Reykjavík

(meaning Smoky Bay) after observing the steam rising from nearby geothermal hot springs. In the 1700s Skúli Magnússon promoted industry and trade transforming the settlement into a growing commercial center.



Reykjavík postcard # 9040 – no publisher identified, undivided back, unused



Reykjavík street scene by Sigfús Eymundsson, Reykjavík – divided back dated 4.6.1907 mailed to Denmark



Sigfús Eymundsson one of the most important individuals in Icelandic photography and postcard history. Regarded as Iceland's first professional photographer and a pioneer bookseller, publisher and postcard producer. He was born in Vopnafjörður in 1837. He opened the first commercial photography studio in Reykjavík in 1867 and in 1872 founded Sigfús Eymundsson's bookstore which became one of the country's most influential publishing enterprises. His postcards used his own photographic images.

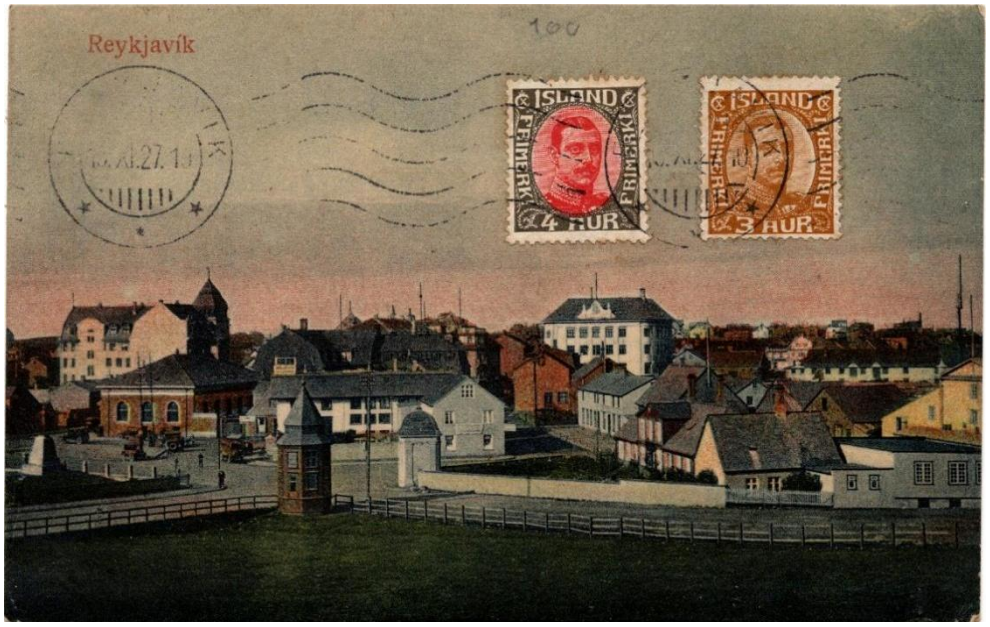


Reykjavík postcard # 68 by Thomsens Magasin, Reykjavík – divided back, postmarked 10.06.1908 mailed to France

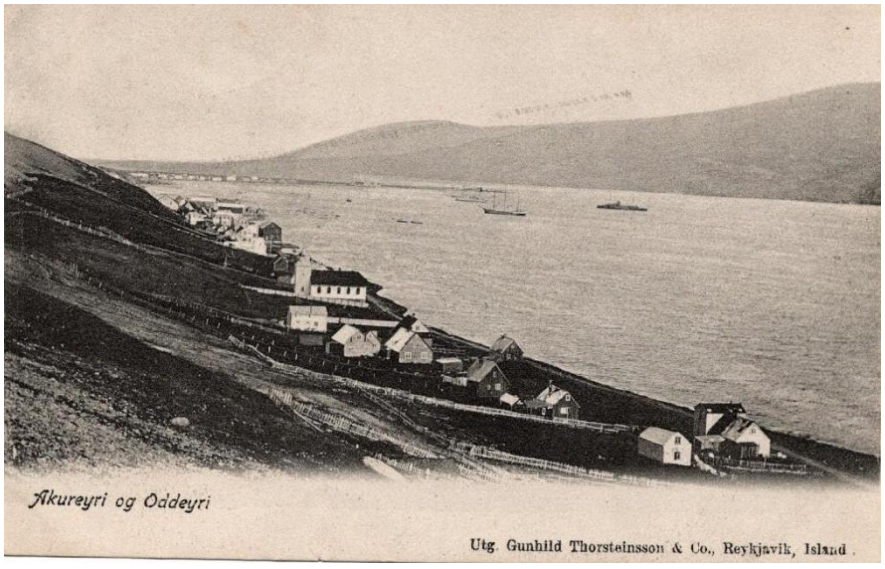
Thomsens Magasin ranks among one of the most notable and important early commercial firms and postcard publishers in Reykjavík during the first decade of the 20th century. They operated a large retail store in central Reykjavík (H. Th. A. Thomsen a prominent Danish-Icelandic trading enterprise) and issued an extensive series of postcards coving such subjects as Reykjavík, Icelandic towns, landscaped, transportation, rural life and national themes. Their cards are typically monochrome or tinted collotype.



Greetings from Iceland postcard – showing a church, the post office and parliament buildings divided back – no publisher information indicated on the card – postmarked 14.9.1904 mailed to England.

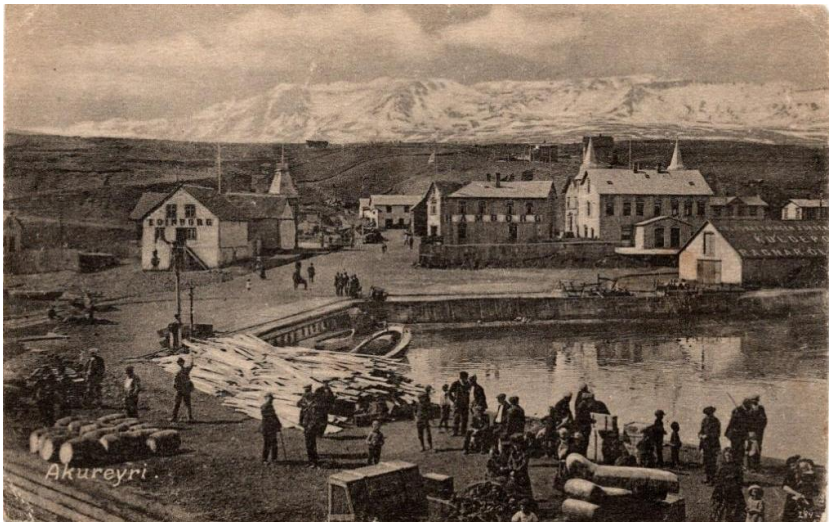


Reykjavík street scene by Egíll Jacobsen & Björn Krístjansson, Reykjavík – divided back dated 10.11.1927 mailed to Algeria, Africa (a very rare destination for Icelandic philately of this period)



Akureyri postcard by Gundhild Thorsteinsson & Co., Reykjavík - undivided back, dated 16.9.1911 mailed to Reykjavik

Gundhild Thorsteinsson & Co. was one of the early 20th century pioneering Icelandic publishers of monochrome photographic picture postcards documenting Iceland during the formative years of the picture postcard era (1900-1905).



Akureyri postcard by C.S.F. (likely a Scandinavian publisher or printer mark from the period 1905-1920) divided back, mailed to Akureyri, but undated.

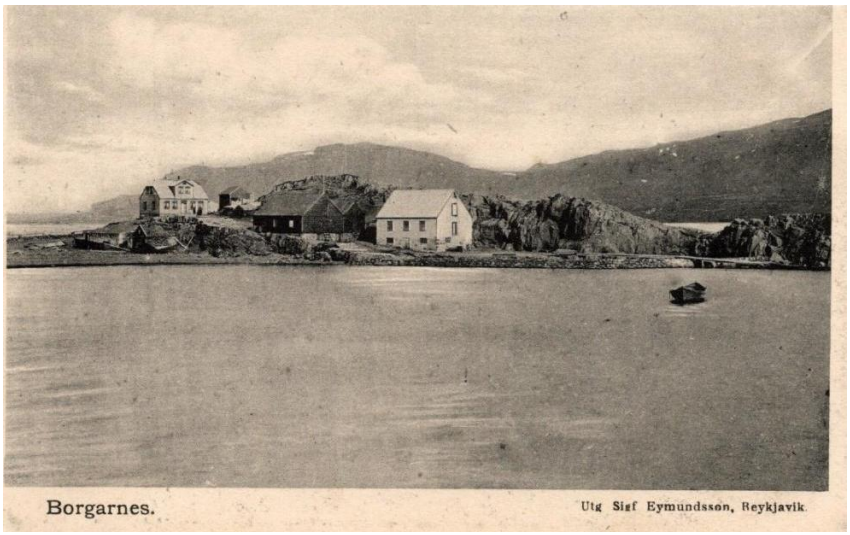
Akureyri was settled during the Viking era by Helgi Magni Eyvindarson and has grown into an important port and fishing center. During the 17th century Danish merchants set up trading operations there because of the natural harbor and fertile lands. Currently the largest town in northern Iceland.





Blönduós postcard by unidentified publisher – divided back, dated 22.12.1917 sent to Bjarnstaðir, Vatnsdalur

Blönduós small village on the glacial river Blanda in north western Iceland. Kvennaskólinn (upper right) indicates shown in the photo is the “Women’s School” which was one of the most important institutions for women in northern Iceland. Blönduós is also known for its connection to textiles (wool).



Borgarnes postcard by Sigfús Eymundsson, Reykjavík – divided back, unused

Borgarnes one of western Iceland's most historically significant towns located on the peninsula extending into Borgarfjörður, about 75km north of Reykjavík. The area was settled in the late 9th century by Norwegian chieftain Skallagrí mur Kveldúlfsson, whose son Egill Skallagrímsson became the central figure of Egil's Saga.



Einarsstaðir postcard # 37 by
Sigfús Eymundsson - divided back

Einarsstaðir an agricultural settlement in east Iceland. The name means "Einar's farm. The church was built around 1907.



Einarsstaðir color-tinted version by Helgi Árnason, Reykjavík - using photo in above photocard by Sigfús Eymundsson

Based on my research & collection of Icelandic postcards this practice seems to be somewhat common.

- In some cases, I have found 5 & 6 versions using the same photo by 5 & 6 different postcard publishers.

Dyrafjörður is a narrow Westfjords fjord, home to Þingeyri village, one of the oldest settlements in the mountainous peninsula Westfjords, continually inhabited since 1787. It was a significant fishing center. The salt house warehouse was built in 1732.







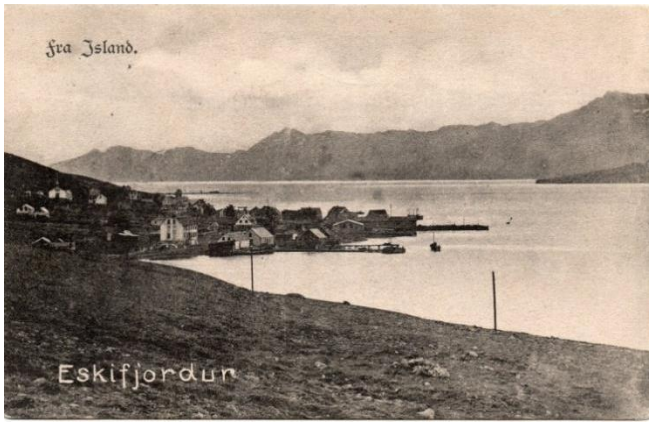
Eskifjörður postcard by unidentified publisher – undivided back, unused from the period prior to 1905.

Eskifjörður small fishing village settled during Iceland's settlement period but sparsely populated due to its remote location in eastern Iceland. In the late 18th century a trading station was established there by the Danish trading company, Órum & Wulff. In the early 20th century Eskifjörður experienced significant growth to the arrival of Norwegian herring fishermen. Eskifjörður is surrounded by mountains with Hólmatindur being the most prominent peak at 985 meters.



Eskifjörður postcard Nr. 35 by H. Werner, Trondheim 1905 – divided back, unused

Eskifjörður postcard by Bechs Forlag – divided back, mailed to Nyboder, Copenhagen, Denmark postmarked 27.6.1919



Bechs Forlag was a Danish postcard publisher of topographical cards during the period 1900 – 1920. Most cards belong to the divided back period after 1904 & are typically in monochrome or hand-tinted photographic style.

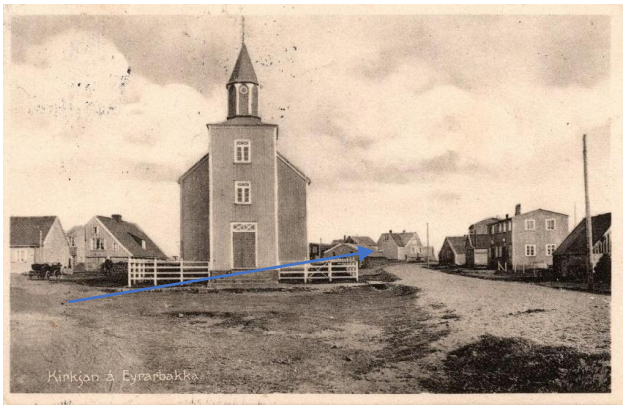


Eskifjörður postcard by Helgi Árnason, Rvík. – divided back, unused, color-tinted

In the early 1900s, Eskifjörður had a population of about 400 inhabitants.



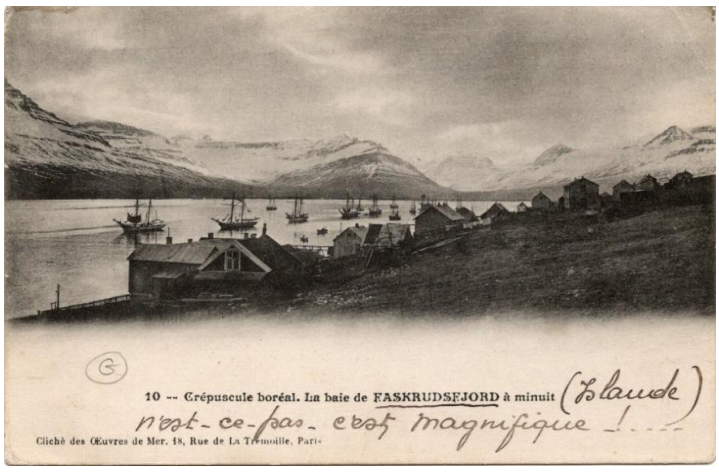
Eyjafjörður postcard by C. S. F. (likely a Scandinavian publisher or printer mark from the period 1905-1920)
Eyjafjörður was settled by Norse settlers at the beginning of the settlement age around 870. It had fertile agricultural valleys for productive farming and rich fishing waters. Located in north central Iceland.



Eyrarbakka postcard (church on main street) by Stenders Forlag # 27111 – divided back, mailed to Reykjavík & postmarked 2.1.1913 > >

(port & trading center on the south coast, the church was built in 1890 & the altarpiece was painted by Queen Louise of Denmark, the wife of King Christian IX.)

Stenders Forlag based in Copenhagen, Denmark was formally known as Carl Stenders Kunstforlag A/S & was one of the most important Scandinavian postcard & art-print publishers during the late 19th & early 20th century.



Fáskrúðsfjord postcard by Oeuvres de Mer. 18, Rue de La Tremoille, France – divided back, used but undated but likely from the 1904-1907 period

Fáskrúðsfjord was a small fishing village in the Eastfjords of Iceland. During the 19th century it was a principal French fishing station. In 1903 a French hospital was built there to care for injured and sick fishermen.

Œuvres de Mer (Société des Œuvres de Mer) was a French maritime charitable organization founded in 1894 that issued postcards to raise funds for humanitarian aid and social assistance to French fishermen.



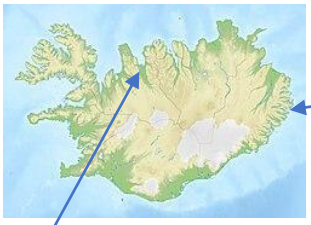
Hafnarfjörður postcard by Finsen & Johnson, Reykjavik – undivided back mailed to Bogense, Denmark 29.9.1906 & transit & arrival cancels in Kjobenhavin & Bogense on 12.10.06

Hafnarfjörður (means Harbor Fjord) was one of Iceland's principal fishing & commercial centers. It is often called "Elf Town" as local folklore holds that many lava rocks there are inhabited by "huldufölk" (hidden people – elf like beings).

Norðfjörður is a major fjord in Iceland's Eastfjords region & home to the fishing village of Neskaupstaður. Its settlement dates back to the 9th & 10th century.

Postcard by O. Johnson & Kaaber, Reykjavík # 11012 – divided back, unused





Two views of Sauðárkrökur

Sauðárkrökur was settled in the Viking era by Norse settlers & developed into a commercial trading center by 1857. It lies in one of Iceland's most productive farming regions & the surrounding district is especially famous & important for horse breeding.



Published by Gunhild Thorsteinsson, Reykjavík undivided back, unused



Published by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristjansson, Reykjavík – divided back, color tinted & unused

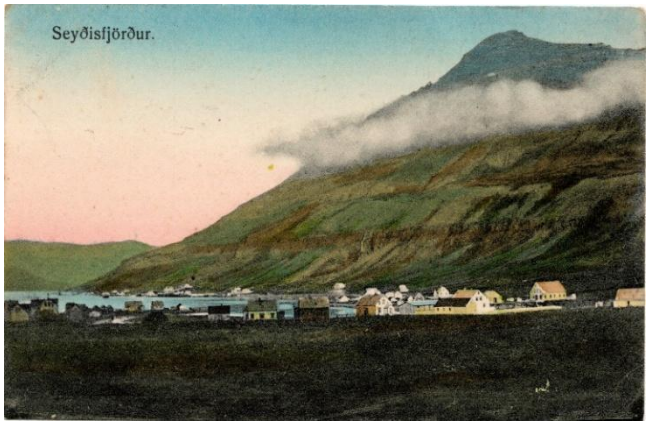




Seyðisfjörður postcards by unknown Danish publisher – divided back, unused (first two cards – back of both cards appear as shown below)

Seyðisfjörður is located on the east coast of Iceland & was first settled by Bjólfur during the Viking Age. In the 1800s, Norwegian fishermen & merchants were attracted to the area. In 1906, Seyðisfjörður was connected to Europe by the first underwater telegraph cable to Iceland. In 1913, it became home to Iceland's first Hydroelectric Power System. During WW II the town was strategically important for the British & Allied forces. At times as many as 2000 troops were stationed in the area.





Seyðisfjörður postcard by O. Johnson & Kaaber, Reykjavik – divided back, unused color-tinted about 1910 period

(obviously color-tinted on a different day than the card on previous page!)

Seyðisfjörður postcard by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristjánsson, Reykjavik – divided back, unused different type of production >

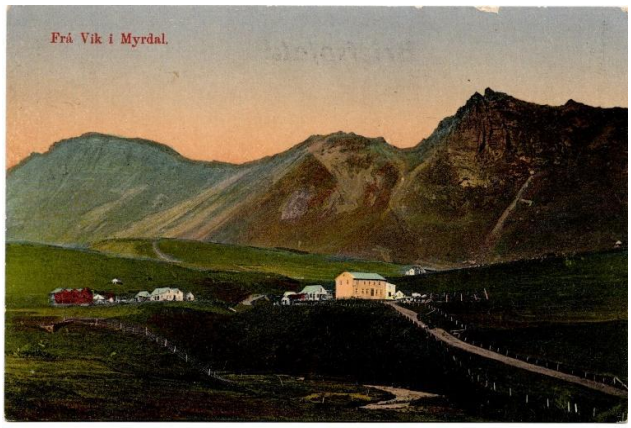
Thus, perhaps you can now see the challenges of collecting Iceland postcards. Three other versions are also in my collection.





Vik í Mýrdal postcard by Gisli & Frimann (Gisli & Friðmann), divided back, unused 1910

Gisli & Frimann likely a small local publisher - cards are quite limited compared to larger publishers. Cards are typically black-and-white or sepia photographic images.



Vik í Mýdal (also known as Vik) is located on the south central coast of Iceland about 180 km southeast of Reykjavík, directly south of the Mýrdalsjökull glacier which covers the top of Katla volcano.



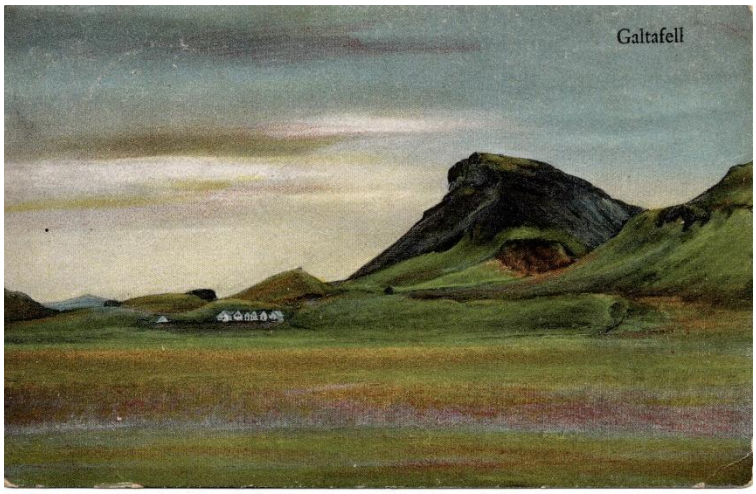
Vik í Mýdal postcards by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristjansson, Reykjavik – both are divided back, first one is mailed to Reykjavik 9.12.1913, & the second one is unused. Both are color tinted but obviously on and at different times of the day.

Vopnafjörður postcard by Thomsens Magasin, Reykjavík & printed by an unknown Danish printer – divided back, unused (below)

Vopnafjörður is located on a fjord in northeastern Iceland. The name translates to “Bay of Weapons” & was settled by the Vikings in the late 9th century. One of the early settlers was Eyvindur Thorsteinsson (Vopni). Due to the major 1875 Askja volcanic eruption many Icelanders emigrated to America (including my great-grandparents Einar & Ingaborg Olafsson) during the later years of the 1800s & early 1900s.

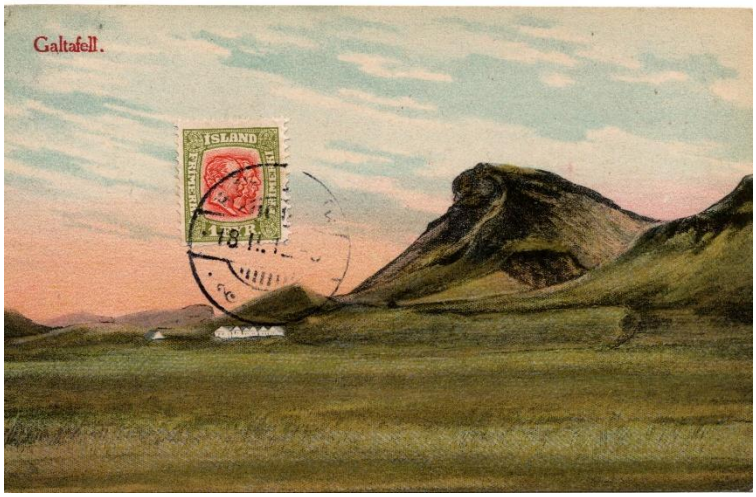


(Farms)



Galtafell hand-colored collotype postcard probably by a German manufacture during the period 1905-1911

Galtafell is an isolated farm in southeastern Iceland near the glaciers & coastal plains of the Őræfi region. It is best known as the birthplace of Þórbergur Þórðarson, one of Iceland's most celebrated writers & essayists. He immortalized the area in his autobiographical works, especially *Steinarnir Tala* (The Stones Speak).



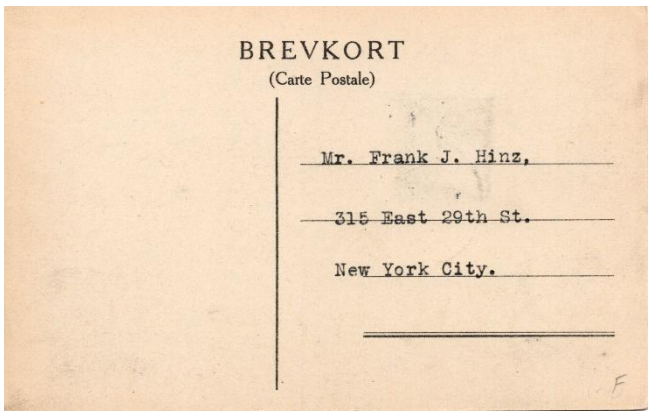
Galtafell – Icelandic topographical postcard by an anonymous Danish-printer during the 1905-1912 period.

Clues to the possible postcard printers are derived from the style and information on the reverse of the cards. See below

Cards are quite differently color tinted.



Reverse of the upper Galtafell card

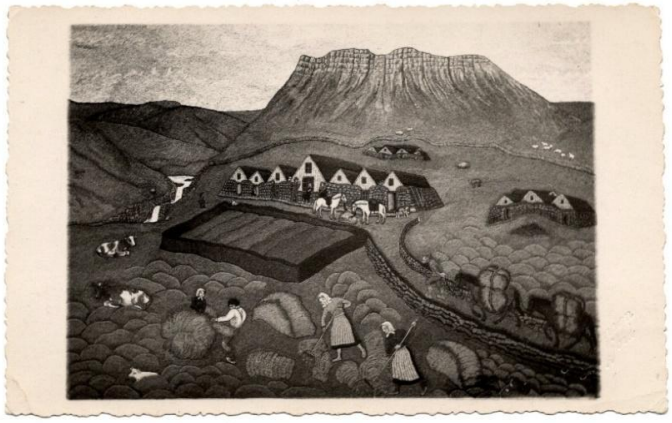


reverse of the lower Galtafell card



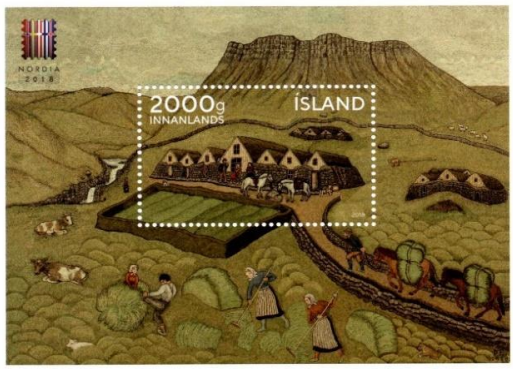
Krýsuvik postcard by unknown publisher, undivided back, unused

Krýsuvik is a historic geothermal area & farm settlement on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwest Iceland directly within the active rift zone where the North American & Eurasian tectonic plates are gradually moving apart. Krýsuvik was settled during the Medieval period. The most significant part of Krýsuvik is Seltún (geothermal field with boiling mud pots, steam vents, sulfur deposits & multi-colored hills with various minerals.



Sveitabær Icelandic farm postcard by M. Limson, Ísafjörður.
– local publisher or retailer in the Westfjörður region.

Sveitabær means “rural homestead”. Image contains several generalized features of an Icelandic farm – cluster of connected turf-roofed farm buildings, separate turf outbuildings, haymaking activity, pack horses carrying loads, & sheep grazing.



NORDIA 2018 – NORRÆN FRÍMERKJASÝNING GARÐABÆ

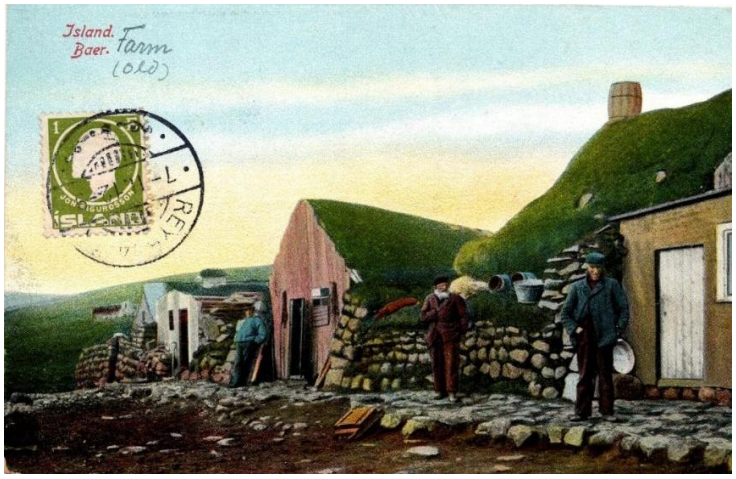
Sveitabær mini stamp sheet issued in 2018 and was featured as the theme at Nordia Stamp Exposition with the same image as the postcard.

The Sveitabær image was a drawing by Rikharður Jónsson & Gunnar Klængsson at the direction of Þórdis Egilsdóttir from Ísafjörður, who then created a large woollen embroidered picture (from her own yarn) that was displayed at the 1939 World Exhibition in New York. The embroidery was later purchased by the Icelandic state and currently hangs at Bessastaðir (premises of the Icelandic President).



Bessastaðir postcard by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristjansson, Reykjavík – divided back, unused

Bessastaðir is one of Iceland's most historically significant sites & is located about 15 km southwest of Reykjavík. It was settled around the year 1000 & later the estate became associated with the medieval chieftain, historian and saga writer Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241). In 1241 the property passed to the Norwegian crown and it became Iceland's first major royal estate. In 1805, Bessastaðir became home to Iceland's principal school where many future leaders, scholars & independence advocates studied. After that the farm changed hands a few times before being purchased by businessman, Sigurður Jónasson who donated it to the Icelandic state. In 1944, following the establishment of the Republic of Iceland it became the official residence of the President.



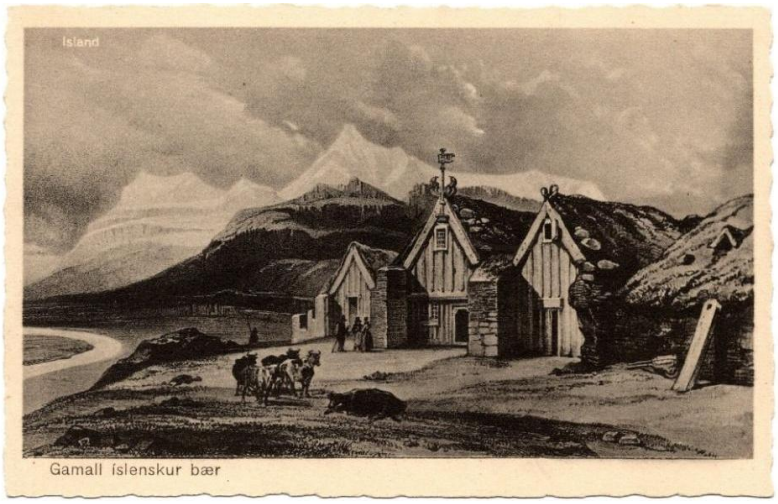
Iceland farm – turf roofed by Brauns Verzlun "HAMBURG", Reykjavík - divided back, color tinted & mailed to New Haven Conn. & postmarked 7.11.1912

Brauns Verzlun "HAMBURG", Reykjavík refers to a merchant business in Reykjavik who published postcards in the early 20th century.



Grund í Eyjafirði postcard by Helgi Árnsson, Reykjavík – divided back, color tinted & unused.

Grund í Eyjafirði – a historic church & farm estate on the western edge of Eyjafjörður in northern Iceland. A church existed at Grund from at least 1106 & the estate played an important role in both religious and local community life. The current church was built in 1905 by the farmer Magnús Sigurðsson & designed by master carpenter Ásmundur Bjarnson.



Gamall Íslenskur Bær (Old Icelandic Farm) postcard by Baldvin Pálsson, Reykjavik.

Baldvin Pálsson was a notable postcard publisher during the mid 20th century of Icelandic views, real photo & souvenir cards.

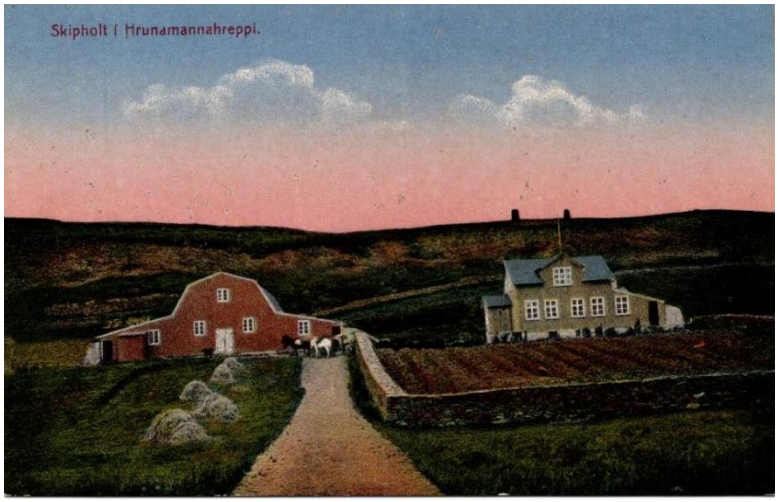
Characteristics of typical farms: thick turf walls built from sod & stone, timber frameworks, cluster of connecting buildings & grass-covered roofs.



Saurbæjarkirkja (Saurbær Church), Eyjafjörður postcard by Balduin Ryal, Akureyri - divided back, unused real photocard

Balduin (Baldvin) Ryal of Akureyri was a regional Icelandic postcard publisher in the surrounding Eyjafjörður district of northern Iceland.

Saurbæjarkirkja was built in 1858 by Ólaf Breim who studied woodworking in Denmark. From 1903 to 1930 Saurbær church was a receiving mail office & used the # 71 number cancel.



Skipholt I Hrunamannahreppur postcard by Helgi Árnason, Reykjavík – divided back, unused card

Skipholt I Hrunamannahreppur is located in southern Iceland's & is one of the most important farming districts – sheep farming, hay production, cattle husbandry, horse breeding & greenhouse horticulture aided by geothermal resources.



Hlíðarendi í Fljótshlíð postcard by Helgi Árnason, Rvík. – divided back, unused.
Hlíðarendi í Fljótshlíð postcard by Helgi Árnason, Rvík. – divided back, unused

Hlíðarendi í Fljótshlíð ("the end of the slope") historic farmstead in southern Iceland at the base of the hills beneath Eyjafjallajökull (glacier). It was the home of Gunnar Hámundarson (hero of Njáls Saga).

Hvanneyri card # 10914 by Colorpicture Cambridge, Mass. For the Icelandic Commission to the New York 1939 World Fair.

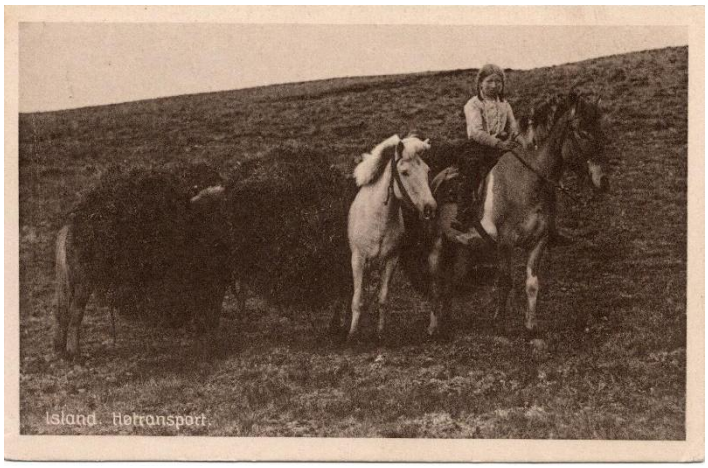


Hvanneyri is a village farm in western Iceland that dates back to Grímur hinn Háleyski in the late 9th century. A prosperous & fertile agriculture region the developed & transformed into a nationally significant Agricultural Institution by 1890.

(Farming activities) Hay making



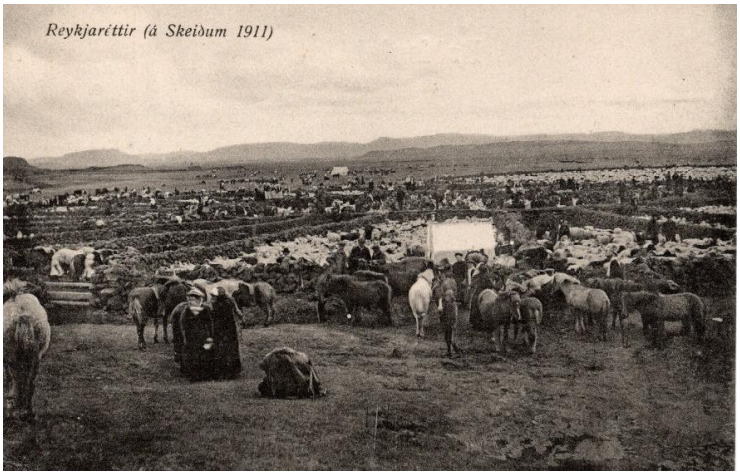
Hay Harvest by E. & S. Copenhagen – divided back.



Hay Harvest by Egill Jacobsen, & B Björn Kristjánsson, Reykjavík – divided back. (Postcard sold for the benefit of the deaf fund). Sigfús Sigurðsson published the first Icelandic finger spelling book in 1857.

"Fonden til Hjælp for Døvstumme" inscription on

Sheep farming



Annual Sheep round-up (1911) by Kjartan Guðmundsson, Reykjavík divided back & made in Norway.

Sheep round-up (réttir) district wide organized gathering of the sheep from the mountain pastures to sort them by owners. An important social gathering for rural farmers – renewing friendships, exchanging news, conducting business, arranging marriages & celebrating the successful completion of the farming season.



Færikviar. Postcard (sheep pen) by Sigfús Eymundsson, Reykjavík – divided back dated 11.12.1906 mailed to Gilsbakki.

Gilsbakki is an ancient farmstead, church site & former chieftain's residence in western Iceland. The farm is associated with Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu.

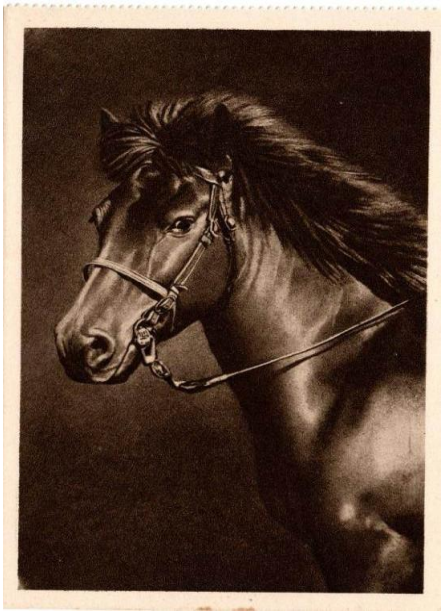
Horse breeding



Íslenzkur Hestur (Icelandic Horse) by Sigfús Eymundsson, Reykjavík – divided back, unused

Card is not typical of Sigfús Eymundsson's postcards as it appears to be made from an artist's drawing of a livestock illustration.

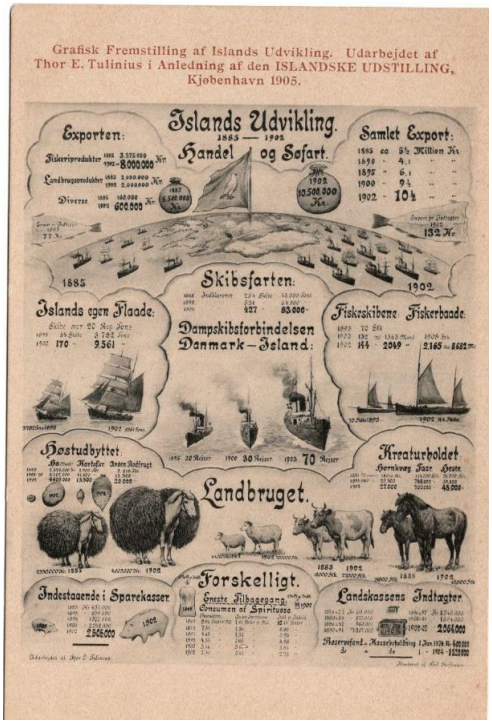
The Icelandic horse is one of the strongest national symbols. It is a purebred since 984. It was also essential to the development and survival of Iceland and its people.



Íslenzkur Hestur (Icelandic Horse) by Ólafuf Magnússon, Reykjavík – divided back, unused (artistic equine portrait)

Ólafuf Magnússon one of Iceland's most important 20th century photographers & postcard publishers, known for portrait photography, Icelandic landscapes & Nationalistic and cultural imagery.

The first published essay on better breeding practices was by Ólafur Stephensen in 1788. He urged Icelanders to improve their horses through deliberate selection & planned breeding practices (preferences for well-conformed horses with an emphasis on strength, soundness & functional utility).



Icelandic economics 1905 published by Thor E. Tulinius, Icelandic ship owner & merchant who established the steamship line A/S Thore in 1903 enabling year-round shipping to Iceland for the first time.

Postcard produced for the Icelandic Economic Exhibition in Copenhagen (1905). > >



Horse supply train postcard by Finsen & Johnson, Reykjavík – divided back, postmarked 12.2.1907 & mailed to Sweden printed matter rate.

The horse was the major means of travel & transportation of supplies and mail.
* There are six varieties of this postcard by six different publishers known using the same photo just slightly different format and different color variations.

Social Identity & Everyday Life (Icelanders)



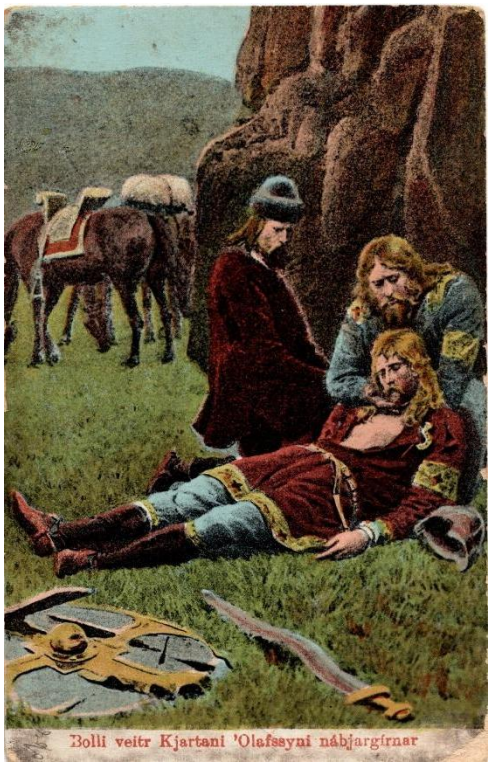
Norwegian Viking ship by Sigurjón Jónsson – divided back, unused, color lithographic between 1905-1915

Illustration shows an artist's rendering of a Viking longship under sail with crew & shields.

Card sent to Ingibjörg Nilsen in Búðareyri, Seyðisfirði (the historic commercial district in one of Iceland's most important eastern ports.



Gunnar fra Hlíðarenda (Njáls Saga warrior/hero) both cards by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristjansson, postmarked 26.6.1912 mailed to Denmark



"Laxdæla Saga" characters postcard (1913) (story about friendship & conflict)



Ízlenzk brúður (Icelandic bride)
by Finsen & Johnson, Reykjavik # 5959
undivided back, unused



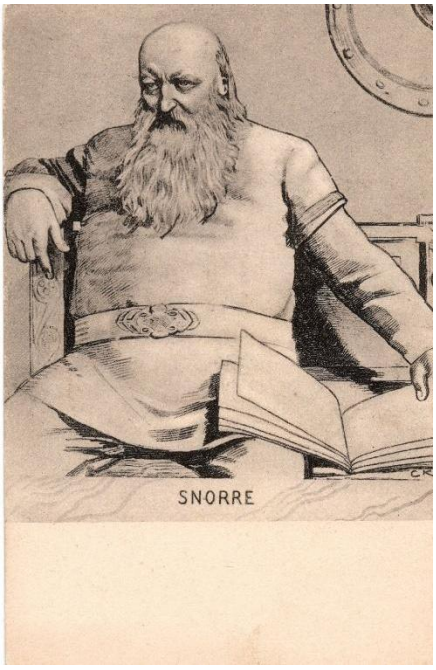
Children in Icelandic Costume photocard by
unknown publisher, divided back, 9.XII.12
Reykjavík postmark to New Haven, Conn.



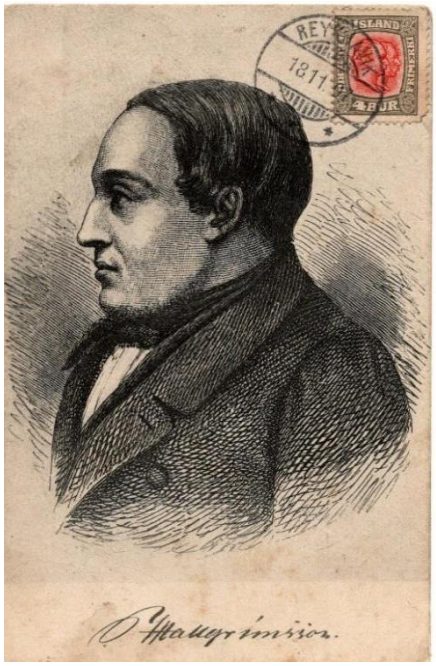


Additional Icelandic ethnographic & cultural postcards depicting traditional clothing.
Danish postcard, undivided back
Danish postmark 7.5.11 HOBRO

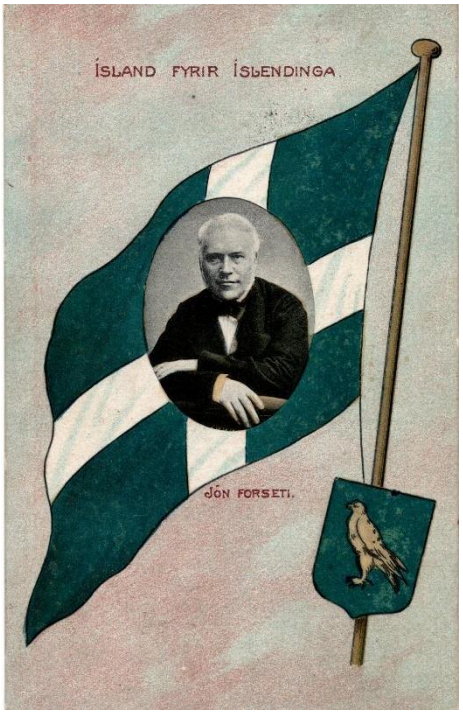
by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristianson, Reykjavík
printed matter rate to Boston, Mass. 1921



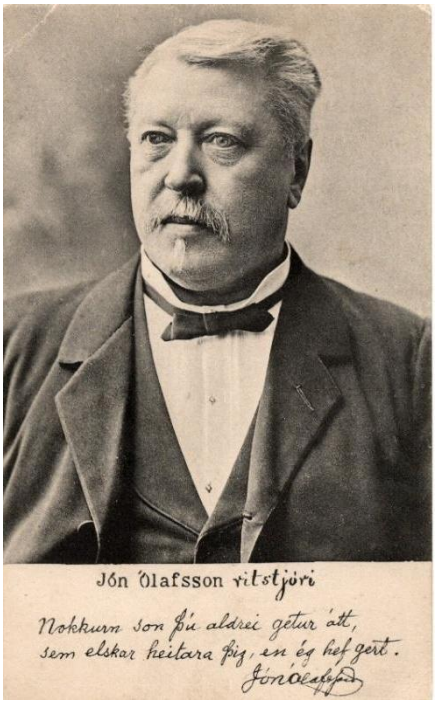
Snorri Sturluson by Stenders Forlag
(chieftain, historian, poet, politician)



Jónas Hallgrímsson by O. Olafsson, Reykjavík
(poet, writer, scientist & naturalist)

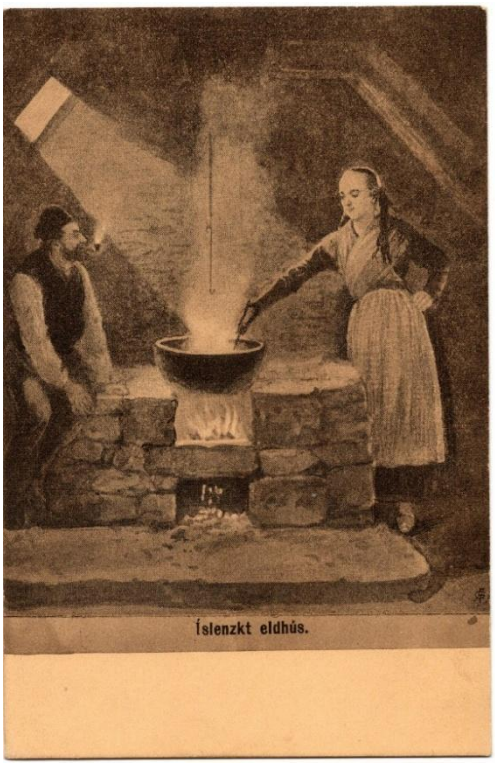


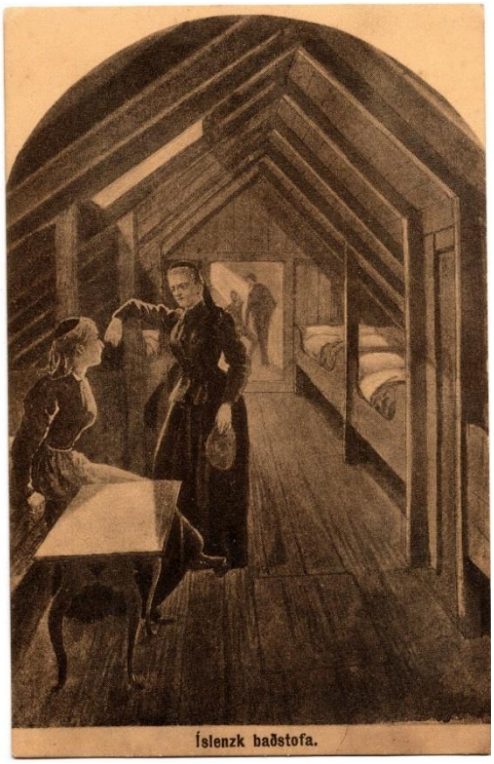
"Iceland for Icelanders" postcard 1908
Jón Sigurðsson (politician, President)
symbolizes constitutional & political
independence



Jón Ólafsson (journalist, author & politician)
by Gunnar Þorsteinsson, Reykjavík
advocate of public debate & liberal reform

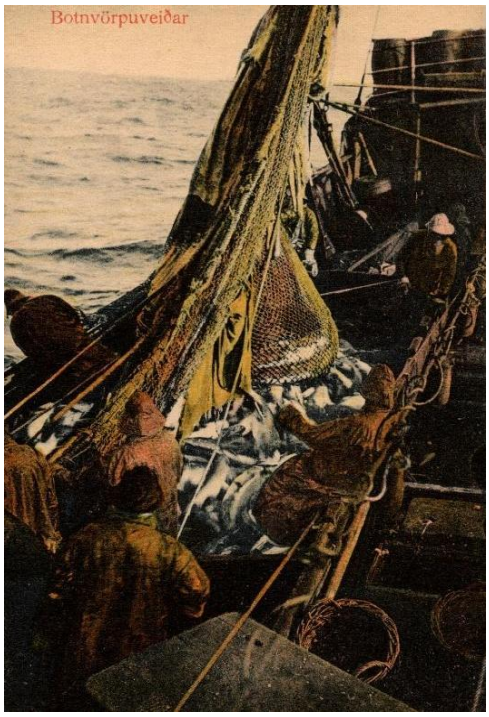
(Daily living)





Íslenzkt eldhús (Icelandic Kitchen) Íslenzk baðstofa (Living room/sleeping loft) both cards by Sigurjón Jónsson – divided back, first one dated 23.12.1915, second one undated Ethnographic series (S 48) illustrating traditional Icelandic life.

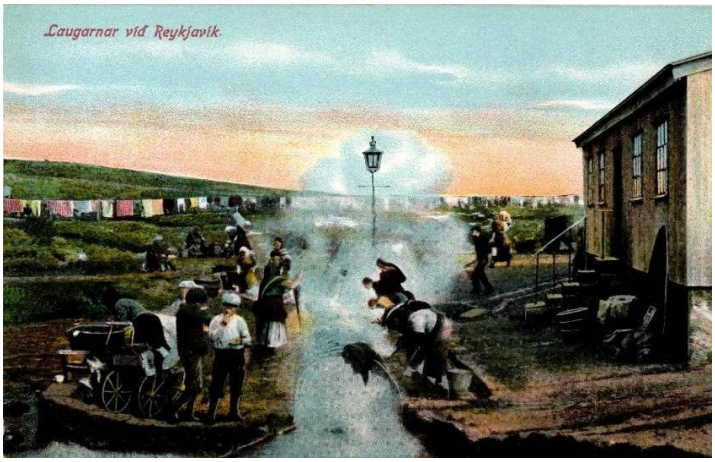
Fishing postcards by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristiansson, Reykjavik - divided back, unused





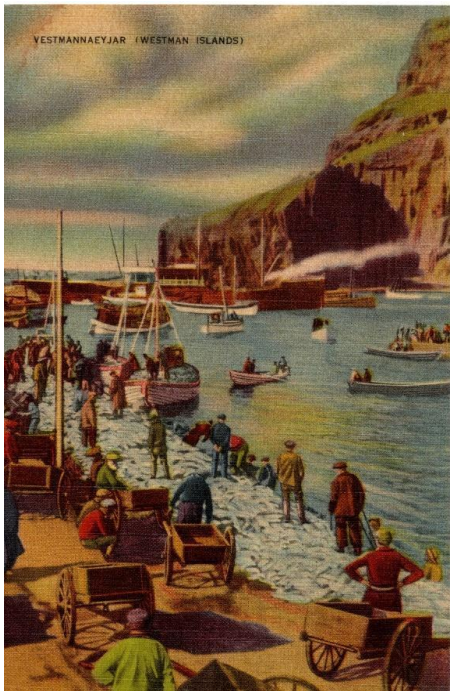
The fishing industry was the foundation of Iceland's survival and economy for centuries. The fish were dried on gravel beaches, lava rocks & drying racks. Properly dried fish could be stored for years without refrigeration foundation of Iceland's survival and economy for centuries.

Laundry washing Reykjavik by “HAMBURG”, Reykjavík - divided back, unused



Activities at the Harbor in Vestmannæyjar by Colourpicture Cambridge, Mass. for the Icelandic Commission to the N.Y. World Fair 1939 – divided back, unused

Vestmannæyjar is an archipelago (cluster of 15 islands) off the south coast of Iceland, with the largest and only inhabited island being Heimæy. Vestmannæyjar - one of Iceland’ most important fishing communities. The scene illustrates the economic importance of the Iceland’s fisheries & preserves a view of the harbour decades before the famous 1973 Eldfell volcanic eruption.



Caring for the livestock postcards



By H. Einarsson, Akureyri # 54619 – divided back.



Einar Gunnarsson, Reykjavik –back, unused Reykjavik postmarked 23.IV.1914 sent to Fljót

Lagarfljótsbrü postcard by Einar Gunnarsson, Reykjavik – divided back, unused.

Lagarfljótsbrü – long timber bridge over the Lagarfljót river/lake system in eastern Iceland. Image documents important infrastructure & the reliance on horses for transportation. Prior to construction of the bridge crossing the area was difficult & dangerous.





Ferðalest (Pack Train) postcard by Egill Jacobsen & Björn Kristiansson, Reykjavik – divided back mailed to France date unclear.

Image documents transportation by horses laden with travel packs for hauling supplies, trade goods, belongings & mail over rugged lava fields & mountain terrain.

Horse & Carriage Photocard by unidentified publisher, divided back, dated 9.9.1910 addressed to Reykjavik.

Image documents horses were essential for transportation & roads were primitive.





Ísland 1930 – 1000th Anniversary of Alþingi postcard by Helgi Árnason, Reykjavik – divided back, unused

Hopefully you have enjoyed this exploration of Icelandic postcards. The nearly 100 cards featured in this article represent far more than picturesque views of a bygone era. They form a remarkable visual record of Iceland during a period of profound transition and national awakening. Their images document towns, villages, people, daily life, transportation, and the landscapes that has long defined the Icelandic experience.

Viewed individually, each postcard captures a moment in time, but viewed collectively, they reveal the story of a nation shaping its identity while opening itself to the wider world.

The Golden Age of postcards left Iceland with an extraordinary pictorial legacy. Whether studied for their historical content, postal history, publishers, printing methods, photographic significance, or artistic merit, these postcards remain as invaluable windows into the Iceland of more than a century ago. Hopefully this brief exploration encourages collectors, historian, philatelists and enthusiast alike to examine more closely Icelandic postcards for their rich and enduring record of Iceland's people, landscapes and national heritage.

Hope you enjoyed the scenery!



Ölfus postcard by Thomsens Magasin, Reykjavik – divided back mailed to Norway 12.12.1906
The image is a color tinted landscape of the region in southern Iceland east of Reykjavik.
It was an important farming region with extensive grazing lands and sheep farming.