

CHRISTINA BROOM, HER WORK AS A PHOTOGRAPHER

SYNOPSIS

THEME:

This thematic postcard exhibit shows life in London, England from 1903 to 1939 as photographed by a very remarkable lady working in a male dominated society. Christina, who was completely self-taught had started to take pictures at age 40, sold many of her photos to newspapers and magazines. Turning these pictures into postcards and publishing them herself enabled her to support her family. Of the more than 2,500 pictures that Christina took in this time period with her standing ¼ plate box camera, than a ½ plate box camera many have been printed as postcards. The production amounts of postcards range from one up to unknown at this time. She printed as postcards the images that would sell well to the tourists. She is considered to be Great Britain's first female press photographer.

TREATMENT:

This exhibit incorporates postcards, both mint and used, showing pictures from early street scenes, Royalty, military, portraits and boat races. When she first printed her postcards in her coal cellar, Christina used the name "Broom" before 1912 and changed it to "Mrs. Albert Broom" after 1912. She had set up her booth in front of the Royal Mews and very quickly became known to members of the Household Brigade. After becoming the Household Brigade's official photographer, a position she held from 1904 to 1939, she was also introduced to King Edward VII and he gave her special facilities at the Royal Mews to print her postcards as a small recognition for her services.

When the nation went to war, Christina was called upon to record the preparations. For many young men her postcard was the last picture taken to send back home to their families. The soldiers were charged a tuppence (two Pence) per postcard. During one night in 1914 she and her daughter printed 1,000 postcards for the soldiers shipping out the next day.

KNOWLEDGE, STUDY AND RESEARCH:

Christina is known to have taken 106 pictures of the Suffragette Movement starting in 1908 and up to the outbreak of WWI. She was a sympathizer but never showed it as she was very conscious of her connections to the military and the Royal Family. Consequently her Suffragette postcards are very hard to get outside of England. Many dealers have told me that they have a short list of names of Suffragette collectors and the postcards never get a chance to leave England. They also indicated that the postcards cost 300 – 600 GBP each depending on the persons in the image. Collecting Suffragette postcards is very popular in Great Britain. One day I hope to have a Suffragette postcard.

RARITY AND CONDITION:

The 100th anniversary of World War One has caused Christina Broom's once forgotten pictures to be exhibited in the Museum of London where the world's largest collection is held. Relatively few are found in private hands as the Guards Museum, London; the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Imperial War Museum, London; the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Royal Maritime Museum, Greenwich; and several other museums have collections of her pictures. I have put red borders around the postcards that are considered to be significant.

PRESENTATION:

I have put this exhibit on light blue paper as this color brings out the material.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Book, "Soldiers and Suffragettes: The Photography of Christina Broom" by Anna Sparham, Philip Wilson Publishers, London 2015; companion to "Christina Broom, Free Exhibition at Museum of London Docklands June 19 – Nov 01, 2015.

"Christina Broom" & "Mrs. Albert Broom": information and images on the Internet.