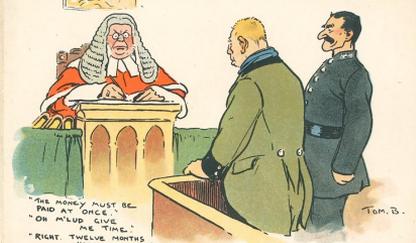
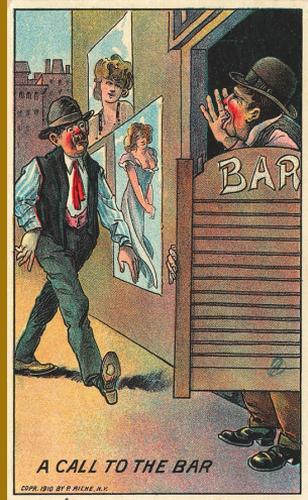


Plaidoerie



# The Law in Postcards

Boston College Law Library  
 Daniel R. Coquillette Rare Book Room  
 Fall 2014

# **The Law in Postcards**

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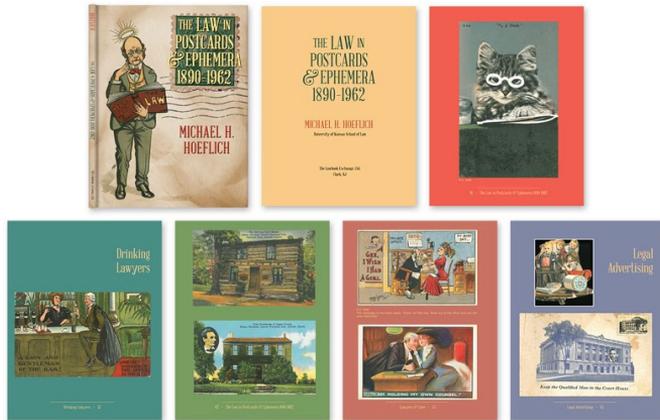
This exhibit was curated by Laurel Davis and features selections from a generous gift from Michael H. Hoeflich, John H. & John M. Kane Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Kansas.

All of us at the Boston College Law School and Law Library are profoundly grateful to Professor Hoeflich for his generous donation of this entertaining and illuminating collection. His support of our special collections is invaluable.

Many thanks to Lily Olson and Nick Szydowski for their guidance and advice in the creation of the exhibit and surrounding materials; much gratitude to Alexa (Lexy) Bader, BC Law Library intern, for her help in mounting the exhibit.

~Laurel Davis, Curator of Rare Books

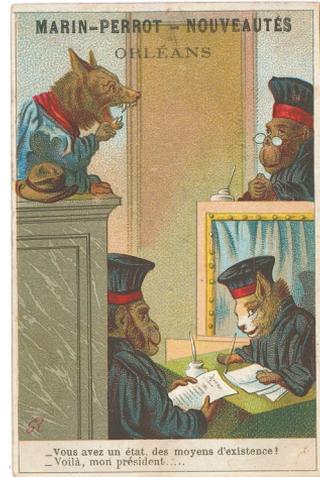
# The Law in Postcards



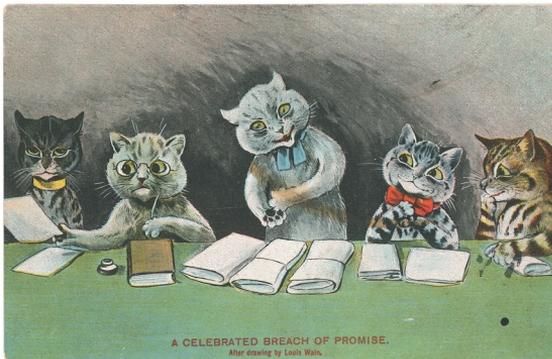
The cards in this collection were the focus of Professor Hoeflich’s book, *The Law in Postcards and Legal Ephemera 1890-1962* (The Lawbook Exchange, 2012). In that book, he pulls out certain themes and trends that manifest themselves in the collection—cards involving animals and kids, holidays, love, money, advertising, etc. Many of those categories are reflected in our exhibit. Regardless of the subject matter and tone, Professor Hoeflich notes that the cards provide “a rich source for understanding the role of lawyers, the courts, and the law in popular culture” (ix).

# ANIMALS

This trade card is an advertisement for a French department store. The content (and this is common) has nothing to do with the product; it catches one's attention with its vivid colors and humorous content. The judge asks the wolf defendant or witness if he has means of supporting himself, and the wolf responds by pointing to his teeth.



Other examples include illustrator Louis Wain's depiction of a cat accused of breach of promise and a Dutch card featuring a parrot judge shaming a monkey defendant.



# KIDS

Cute kids, like cute animals, were often used in these postcards and trade cards to draw in an audience.

This postcard, a favorite, depicts a little girl lawyer apologizing to her young love for it taking her three days to get him out of jail; she's offering a kiss in compensation for the wait. She's clearly been doing some research in her Code Civil!



*Je ne pourrais jamais me consoler de savoir  
que vous étiez à votre prison !!!  
Il y a des compensations, cher Maître...*

Several trade cards place children in a legal setting and use that legal theme explicitly to make a point about the product; the same trope of products on trial is still used today.



# MONEY

Law students and attorneys constantly dodge jokes involving greedy lawyers just out to make money. There certainly are examples of this type of lawyer. However, it can be exhausting to defend the many attorneys who diligently work to serve their client's interests, do pro bono work, teach, mentor, and/or work in government or non-profit organizations!

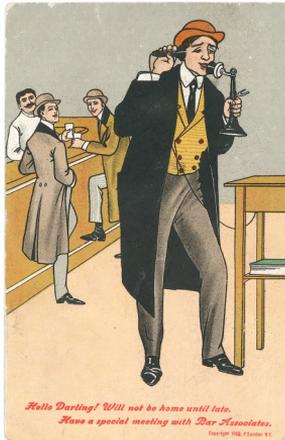
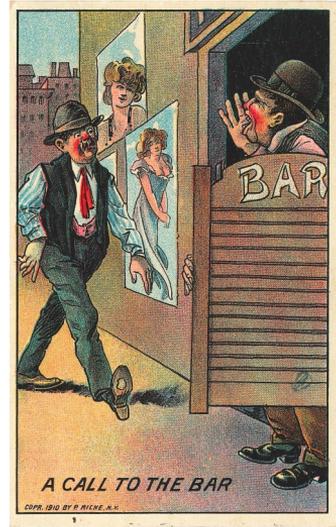
The jokes clearly are not a new phenomenon—the card on the left (4th in a series) dates from 1902. Again, we see the use of kids to help play out the scene. The child attorney scoffs at her client's inability to pay a hefty sum for the handling of her case. The expressions? Priceless.



# BARS

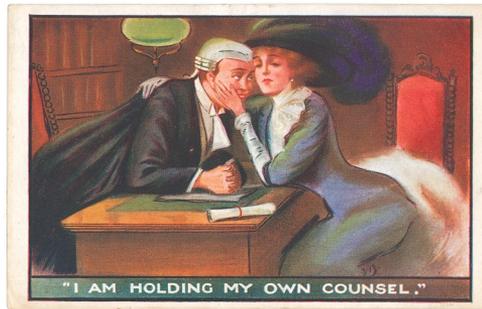
These postcard and trade cards designers loved a pun. One of the recurring ones involves a play on “bar” as a term specific to the legal profession and as a place to grab a drink and socialize.

As with so many of the tropes that appear in the exhibit, this one continues to be used today. For example, law students take bar review courses to prepare for the bar exam, but they also host social events called bar reviews and put on shows called bar revues!



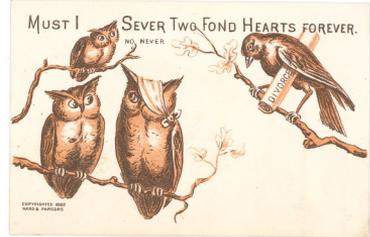
# LOVE

The theme of romantic love—or at least attraction—pops up frequently in the postcards. Many feature wordplay involving legal terms. Several suggest a relationship between lawyer and client. Watch out for those ethical rules! Due to concerns involving the exploitation of clients by lawyers in fiduciary roles, such relationships are now barred in many jurisdictions under rules modeled after ABA Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.8(j).

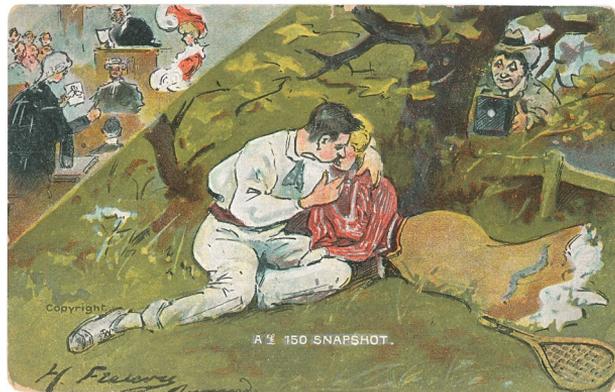


# DIVORCE

The flip side of love? In the law, divorce. Many cards in the collection address issues around the demise of a marriage. Some are amusing; others, such as the owl divorce, are more poignant.

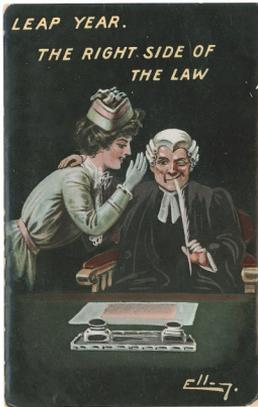


One interesting theme is the idea of securing evidence in order to obtain a divorce. Until recently, most jurisdictions required some sort of fault—such as adultery—by one of the parties. This led to all sorts of shenanigans, including the hiring of private investigators to capture evidence of infidelity. Fault-based divorce is still the norm in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, a 2007 Guardian article claimed that private investigators are still used in about 50% of divorce cases in Britain.



# HOLIDAYS

Cards for Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, and even Leap Year appear in the collection with legal themes.



The Leap Year card seems to reference an old-fashioned bit of folklore that deemed it appropriate for women to propose to men on February 29th. The legend, stated differently depending on the source, still gets press! See (or perhaps don't...) the 2010 movie *Leap Year* starring Amy Adams.



# LA FEMME AVOCAT

Many cards in the collection feature female attorneys in a variety of contexts—some serious, some silly and outdated, and some rather mysterious. In that latter category lies a series of fifteen French postcards. It appeared in 1900, the same year that women were finally admitted to the bar in France. Onlookers have disagreed on the message. The woman stands before the court and discusses the shortcomings of men in the profession and in government. She argues that women can positively contribute to the better functioning of the justice system and government. Interestingly, in the middle of her speech, her baby starts crying and she asks the court for a recess in order to nurse him.

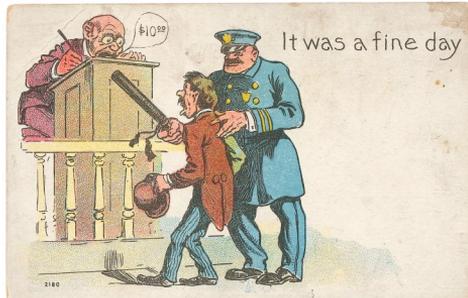
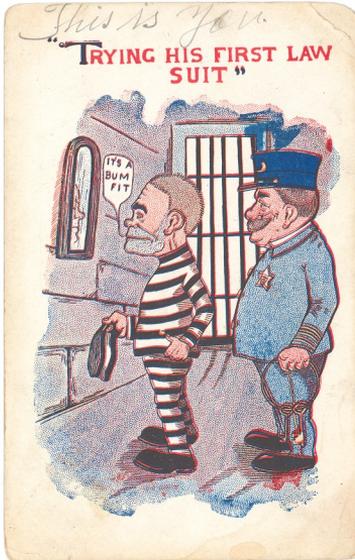
Is it a sincere feminist manifesto? Is it a satirical attack on the entry of women into the legal profession? Is it just about attacking men? For one perspective, translations, and more, scan the QR code!



# HUMOR

And the puns continue! Suits, fines, trials, briefs, bars—the list goes on. Legal terminology provides a rich source of material for a playful word-smith, and the creators of these cards definitely mined it.

The card reproduced on the left below is a favorite, not so much for the joke itself but for the “This is you” note at the top. Assuming that the Mississippi sender (circa 1908) wasn’t comparing the card’s recipient to the officer, one has to wonder about the comparison to the prisoner. It is hard to imagine him appreciating the humor behind the postcard!



# ABOUT THE CARDS

Many of the cards have no discernable information about the illustrators or companies behind their creation; a majority have no direct indication of the date, either via a postmark or dated message. Some have interesting stamps, messages, or information on the back that clearly cannot easily be shared in the exhibit. Cards featured in the exhibit that do feature such information (usually sparse) are listed below. An asterisk indicates cards that are in the exhibit but not the catalog.

Researchers are always invited to call the Boston College Law Library at 617-552-4434 if interested in making an appointment to use the postcards and trade cards or other special collections.

“De Advocaat” [parrot judge]. Illustrator: Lindenberg. Dutch.

“A Celebrated Breach of Promise” [five cats]. Illustrator: Louis Wain.

[Two foxes playing chess]. Illustrator: A. Paul Weber; Die Beiden Anwalted; Nr. 188. Postcard dated 1976.

[Little girl lawyer researches the Code Civil and frees boy]. Illustrator: I. Gougeon; R. Hamel, Paris.

[Child dressed as a lawyer with hat and glasses]. BNK Postcards.\*

[Breach of promise series featuring little girl lawyer]. D & Co., Copyright; J. Beagles & Co., London.\*

“Chocolat Guerin-Boutron.” Trade card dated 1889.\*

“The Lawsuit.” Robinsons Bristol; jokes from Skidmarks.\*

[French series with child lawyer and client]. R.P.I; A.N. Paris. Message dated 1902.

“The Lawyer [-] Where there’s a Will there’s a lawyer.” GF; Reliable Series, WR&S; No. 255.

“Skinnem & Bilk Lawyers.” Illustrator: [J.J.?] Marks, New York; "Comics" Series Number 16.\*

“Call to the Bar.” Illustrator: P. Riche. Copyright 1910.

“Hello Darling!” Illustrator: P. Sander, New York. Copyright 1908.

“I am holding my own counsel.” Inter-Art Co, Southampton House, London; "Pastel" Series, No. 161. England.

“Serious business.” The “Gibson” Post Cards; No. 794. Copyright James Henderson & Sons. Ltd, London.

“A Trial Balance.” Theochrom Serie 1225-21.

“Must I Sever Two Fond Hearts Forever.” Hard & Parsons. Copyright 1882.

“It is my duty to see that your wife recieves [sic] \$50.00 a month.” Illustrator: R. Seale; Baxter Lane Company, Amarillo, Texas.

“A £ 150 Snapshot.” Illustrator: H. F[...]; The Sar Series--G.D. & D., London. Postmark 1920.

"In the Divorce Court" [compromising snapshot]. Illustrator: F. Macleod; trademark HGL; British.\*

"Act 6. The Divorce." Postmark 1911.\*

"Leap Year. The Right Side of the Law." Illustrator: Ellay [?]; the Philco Publishing Co., Holborn Place, London WC; Series 4030. Postmark 1908.

"May [...] your worries be brief this Christmas." Illustrator: Tom B.; Davidson Bros...from originals by Tom Browne; England; Series 9016.

"Why don't you give me a fair trial? Be my Valentine!" Carrington Co., Chicago.

"Valentine's Greetings." Raphael Tuck & Sons. Copyright 1906.\*

"Trying His First Law Suit." Postmark 1908.

"This will of your late husband...." Illustrator: D. Tempest.

"The money must be paid at once...." Illustrator: Tom B.; Davidson Bros.' Pictorial Post Cards, from Originals by Tom Browne R.I., R.B.A. Series 2544.\*

[Dentist got on my nerves]. Illustrator: Trow; published by C. Richter, Publishers Ltd., London.\*

"La Femme Avocat" [15 card French series]. Cliche A. Morinet -- Imp. - Phot. J. Royer, Nancy. Postmark 1901.

# POSTCARD

THIS SPACE CAN BE USED FOR A WRITTEN MESSAGE,  
USING ONE-CENT STAMP

B  
2 24  
7 PM  
1910  
MO.



*[Faint, illegible handwriting in pencil or light ink, possibly a recipient's address or name, is visible across the page.]*