

CIGARETTE CARDS

Displayed throughout the lobby of the Yosemite View Lodge in El Portal, CA is a large collection of cigarette cards. Originally placed in cigarette packages as "stiffeners" to protect cigarettes from being crushed, cigarette cards initially carried advertising messages on them, but then the notion of collectibles came into being and cigarette, coffee and tea producers soon realized that a series of sought-after cards placed in their packages would increase sales, as consumers sought to collect them.

The card industry began in the United States in the 1870s and then spread to Great Britain in the late 1880s. Subject matter on cigarette cards varied greatly, from military equipment, to sportsmen's activities, to golf, to bicycles and every other form of transportation known to man. In addition, British cards featured an incredible range of floral motifs, historical buildings and personalities, as well as entertainment and musicians. In short, anything was a potential subject!

The Yosemite View Lodge's collection reflects that incredible range of subject matter. It dates from the early 1900s to the 1940s and was begun a decade ago when the company's managing partner, Jerry Fischer, traveled to the United Kingdom to promote the "Yosemite Motels" to European tour operators. On one such trip, he purchased three collections as a gift for his wife. From this modest start, the View's collection has grown to literally cover several walls at the lodge.

Highlights of the collection include hand-gilded silk floral prints that date from the 1930s that were used to promote coffee and tea. There is a Peter Scott water fowl collection from 1937. Three sets include signatures of the featured subject: a set of Victorian figures includes Queen Victoria's signature, Dickens figures are accompanied by Charles Dickens' signature and – our favorite – British monarch King George V's signature heads up a military accounting of expenditures dating back prior to the American Revolution.

Several of the collections are available for purchase in the Yosemite View Lodge store, though all of them are displayed for guest viewing and enjoyment. Similarly, at the View's sister property – Cedar Lodge – also in El Portal, a large collection of carved wooden bears, many in whimsical poses and placed throughout the property and along foot paths, provides entertainment and diversion for Cedar's guests.

