

RAWVISION

THE WORLD'S LEADING JOURNAL OF OUTSIDER ART, ART BRUT AND CONTEMPORARY FOLK ART



SAM DOYLE

Haints and Saints

Myrtice West
visions of
revelation

Mexican
migrant army

Vintage
postcards
of Outsider Art

Romanenkov
Russian
spiritualist

RV61

WINTER 2007

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LOST IN TIME

Two collectors of rare vintage postcards share their thoughts and images of visionary environments.

A visit to Ferdinand Cheval's Palais Idéal in 1992 turned Jean-Michel Chesné's interest towards *Art Brut* and marked the beginning of his research into early-20th-century postcards depicting works and environments by self-taught, Outsider and folk artists. He currently has almost 2,000 postcards in his collection. He is also an artist and builder in his own right, having constructed, in 1999, a 'grotto' at the end of his garden (see RV# 31).

Cynthia Elyce Rubin is a writer and lecturer on folk arts, art, and visual culture, who lives in Orlando, Florida. She is currently working on a book about a vernacular photographer who lived in South Dakota in the early 1900s.

right and opposite page bottom left
L'Eglise Vivante et Parlante de Mesnil-Gondouin (The Living, Speaking Church of Mesnil-Gondouin) (Orne, France)

This church in a small Normandy town was decorated by Father Paysant at the beginning of the 20th century. As did his predecessors in the Middle Ages, he believed in the power of the image, and in his wish to impart the tenets of the Catholic faith he had both the interior and the exterior of the building covered with Biblical quotations, images of the apostles, naive sculptures and moral dictums. When Father Paysant died in 1921, his successors, who considered the paintings and inscriptions to be in very poor taste, had them removed. Recently, in the face of objections by purists, an association has begun to restore them.

J-M C



Clement Delannay, édit. - Chiché Ch. S. - Reproduction interdite

Les Anglais vaincus par Jeanne d'Arc

de MESNIL-GONDOUIN

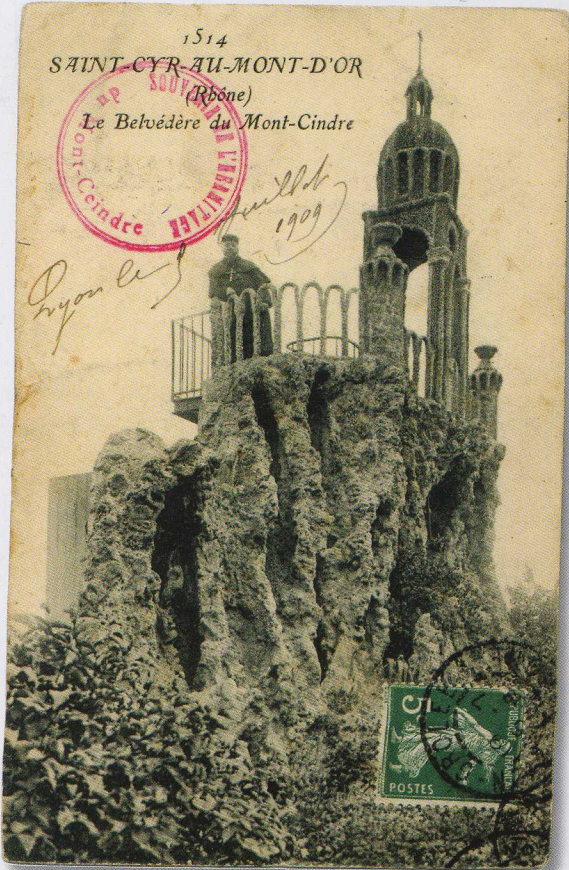
Eglise vivante et parlante

the late nineteenth century onwards meant that for the first time ordinary people could commission a visual record of themselves and their family in the same way as only the wealthy had been able to do before. The combination of this with the introduction of universal postal services and widespread railway travel resulted in photographs of every day scenes,

popular figures, important events and local curiosities being printed and widely distributed as picture postcards. These postcards were produced in their millions but were some of the the earliest records of what are now termed as Outsider Art or Visionary Environments. Many of them have survived over the years and portray a variety of long lost creations with others that still exist to this day.

top left
L'Ermitage du Mont-Cindre
(Mont-Cindre Hermitage)
(Rhône, France)

In 1870 Emile Damidot (Brother François) took up residence in this former hermitage which had stood empty for many years. The buildings were dilapidated and the gardens overgrown. Over a period of thirty-two years, with exceptional energy Brother François restored and laid out the site again. Like postman Cheval, he used stone and pebbles found at the roadside. He built a viewing tower forty feet (twelve metres) high, surrounded by five rock-work chapels with steeples and stained-glass windows, and embellished the whole construction with hundreds of niches and statues of saints. The site is still standing, but it has been vandalised and is now closed for safety reasons.
J-M C

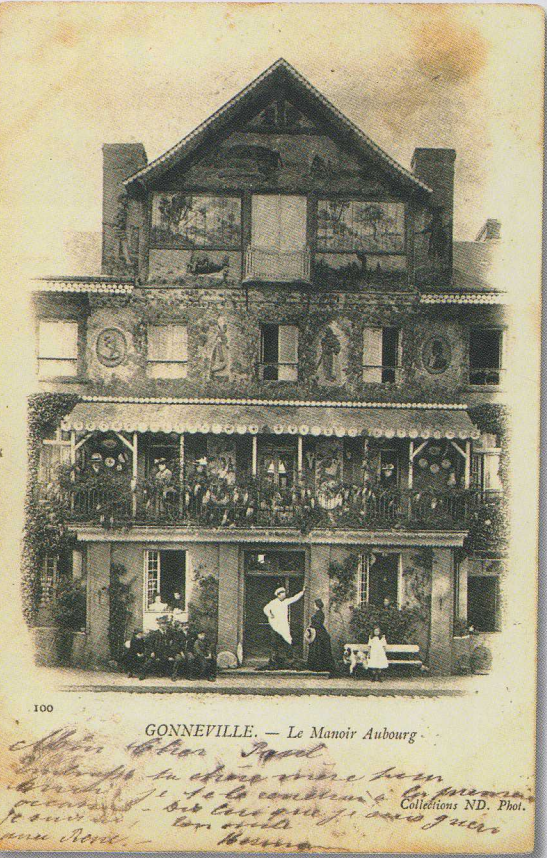


top right
La Tour du Mont-Cindre
(Mont-Cindre Tower)
(Rhône, France)

Like the Hermitage, this curious rock-built structure, whose proper name is The Nesme Tower, is situated in the commune of Saint-Cyr, but it is not attributed to Brother François. Numerous postcards show it to be a popular place for a walk which probably attracted visitors because of the superb views it commands. It was apparently used at one time for sending communication signals using light.
J-M C

bottom right
L'Hôtel des Vieux Plats
(Hotel of Old Plates)
(Seine Maritime, France)

The front of this old house in Gonnevillle was decorated from top to bottom in 1860 by its owner, a chef named Edmond Aubourg, who was a great lover of pottery. The façade is still covered with mosaics made from broken crockery, pebbles, cement figures and whole plates. In the mid-19th century this hotel-restaurant was very popular with the political, artistic and literary world.
J-M C



Agnes Jones' Boneyard (Florida, USA)

Between 1915 and 1920 Agnes Jones, who lived alone on land beside Lake Desoto, built assemblages of wood and the bones of animals, including horses, deer and cattle, which she gathered in the area around her home. She was always happy to receive visitors and would tell them about her Native American childhood as she proudly showed them around her sanctuary with its extraordinary and unique collection of funerary art.

J-M C

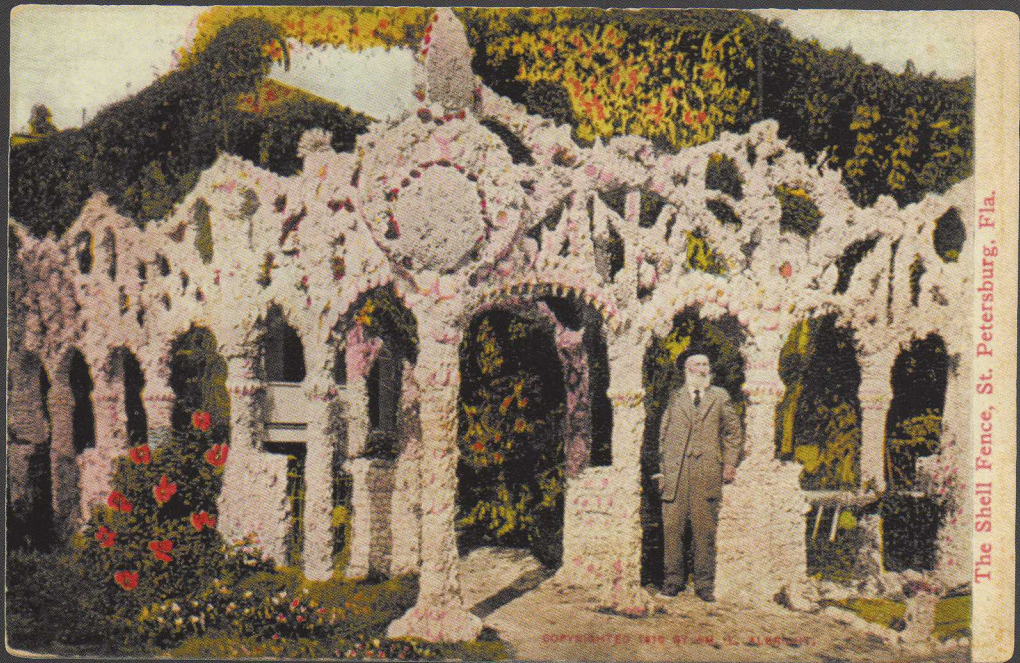


Lake City, Fla. The Arch in The Boneyard.

The Shell Fence (St. Petersburg, Florida, USA)

In 1892 the Florida community, having grown to a population of 400, incorporated itself as St. Petersburg, a name selected to honour the Russian birthplace of Peter Demens, an exiled Russian nobleman and railroad pioneer. By the 1920s it was a popular destination on the Gulf Coast for both permanent settlers and winter visitors who returned annually for sun and recreation. It became known as the 'Sunshine City', and developers filled their bayfront with a landscaped, bench-lined system of parks and promenades. The Shell Fence with its grotto was a major tourist attraction. Built by shell collector Owen Albright on the north-west corner of 2nd Avenue North and 1st Street, it was destroyed by a hurricane in 1921.

C E R



The Shell Fence, St. Petersburg, Fla.

The Antler House (Mammoth, Yellowstone Park, USA)

A further example of the reclamation of animal bones, in this case antlers of the deer and oryx which are to be found in this national park. Although perhaps less inspired than Agnes Jones' Boneyard, this cabin is no less original or attractive.

J-M C



©28162—HOUSE OF ANTLERS AT MAMMOTH, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

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6A-1779



VILLAGE OF TRAVEL MEMORIES IN MINIATURE

58-H887

Designed and constructed of cement, rock and metal with embedded lighting, the Village of Travel Memories was the brainchild of Leopold M. Lux, owner of the Lux artificial limb company. Situated behind Lux's home at 3715 West Woodlawn Avenue in San Antonio, Texas, it was a home-grown rendition of his birthplace of Lindenthal, Germany. It covered thirty-five square feet and consisted of forty-six buildings including two castles, a cathedral, a monastery, a mill and a drawbridge, as well as a waterfall, a river, fourteen additional bridges and byways and two hundred trees and shrubs. This postcard, published in 1945 by the Curt Teich Company of Chicago, is the only known image of the environment. An article in the March 1949 edition of *Express Magazine* mentioned the Village, so it outlasted its maker, who died in February 1948.

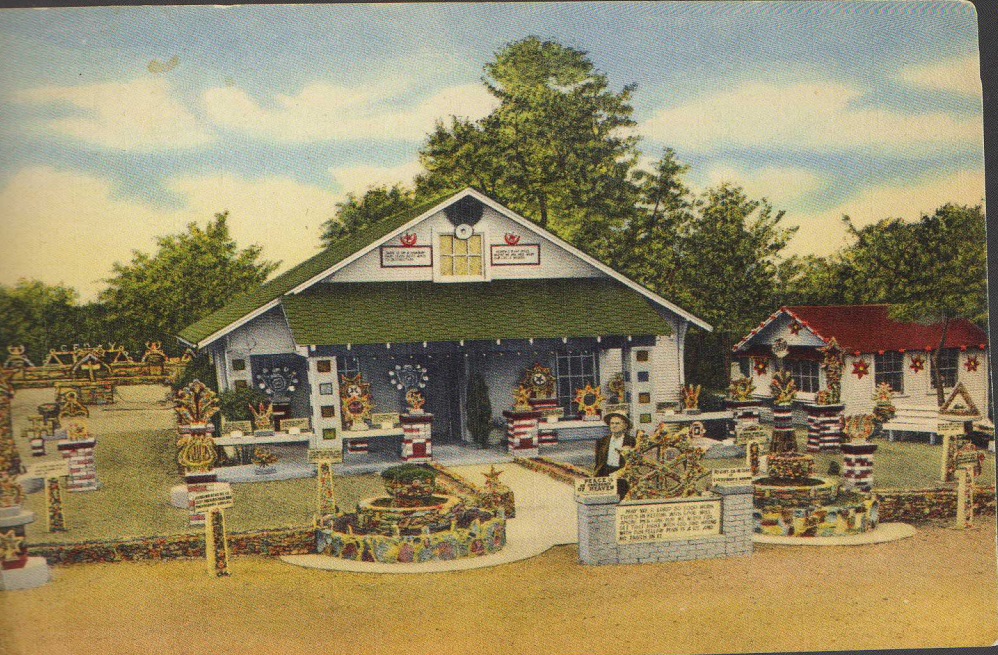
C E R



Roadside America (Shartlesville, Pennsylvania, USA)

As a child Laurence Gieringer spent many nights staring from his bedroom window at a hotel perched high on a distant mountain top. He loved that 'toy' building and when he later became a carpenter, his hobby of building miniatures turned into a life's work. From 1903 onwards he crafted hundreds of 'toy' buildings spanning American architectural history, and in 1941 he opened 'the largest indoor miniature village', in Shartlesville, Pennsylvania, covering 8,000 square feet with 300 structures, 10,000 trees and 4,000 people as well as streetscapes, rivers and streams, trains and special effects. Roadside America is open to the public today exactly as Gieringer left it when he died in 1963.

C E R



Ray's Ornamental Garden (Stephenville, Texas, USA)

This space was laid out by George Ellis Ray at the beginning of the 20th century. A recent report indicates that nothing is left of this environment, which featured on many postcards in the 1940s. What few fragments of stonework might remain appear to have been covered by the rampant vegetation. The garden contained fairly geometric sculptures in reinforced concrete covered with coloured mosaics representing religious or decorative symbols, and was perfectly aligned and ordered. Small signs planted in the earth amongst the flowerbeds proclaimed Peace on Earth and bore religious exhortations.

J-M C

La Villa des Fleurs (Flower Villa)
(Montbard, Côte d'Or, France)

This brick cottage was decorated in a popular, naive style by a doctor named Chevreux, who covered the façade with a harmonious mixture of sculptures and bas-reliefs in terracotta and cement. The garden was adorned with many totems and statues of both sacred and secular inspiration. After slowly falling into disrepair this beautiful place was eventually demolished about ten years ago.

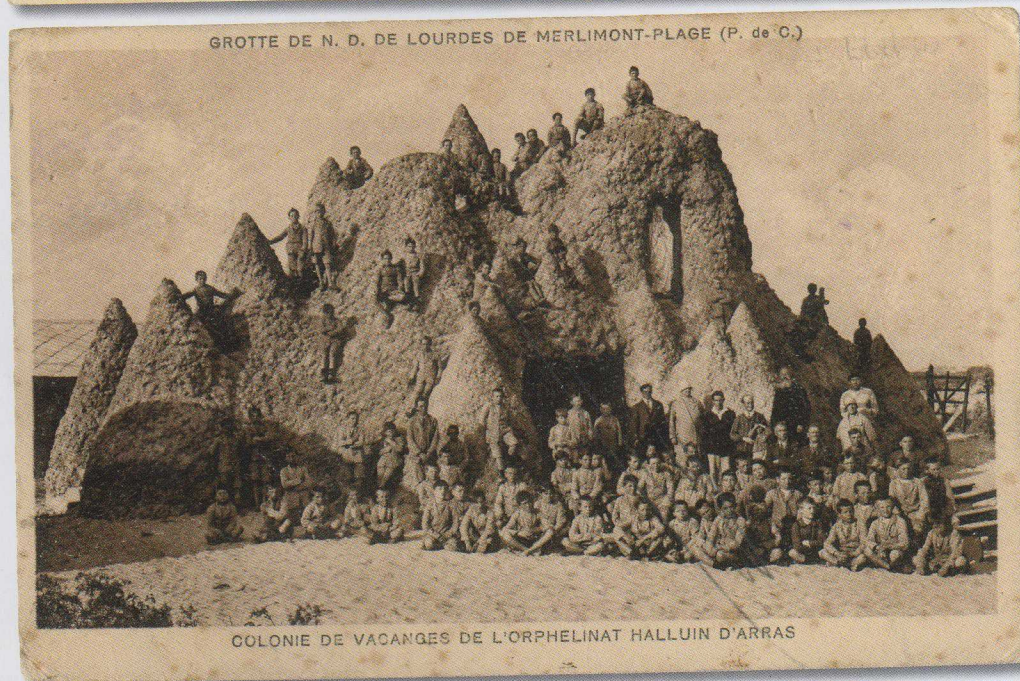
J-M C



La Grotte de Merlimont (Grotto of Merlimont)
(Pas de Calais, France)

In 1860 Father Halluin founded an orphanage in the town of Arras. Various difficulties caused his successor to move the institution to Merlimont in 1939. A holiday camp already stood on the site. There this grotto, known as Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, was built, and mass used to be celebrated there for the orphans. It is most unusual and original in appearance, consisting of a collection of small pointed mounds of reinforced concrete built to resemble the artificial stone-built grottos of the turn of the 20th century. The grotto still exists but the site is now occupied by a non-religious holiday centre.

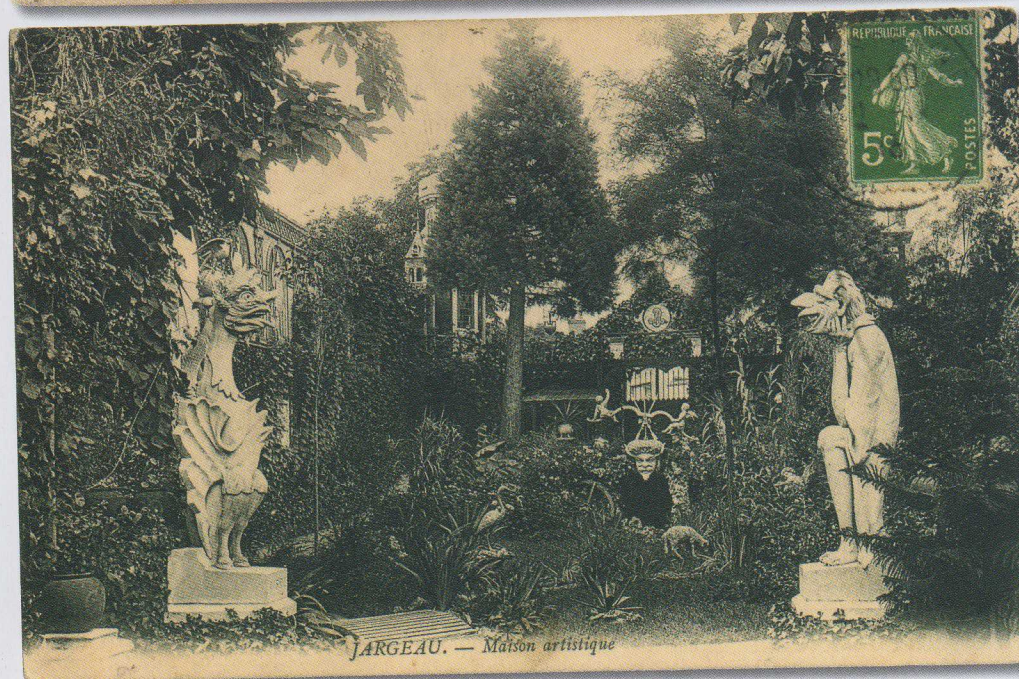
J-M C



La Maison Artistique de Jargeau (The Artistic House of Jargeau)
(Loiret, France)

This site was laid out in about 1900 by Marcel Lambert, who purchased the house and subsequently acquired a section of the old adjoining fortification wall of the town. He transformed it by installing a collection of grotesque figures similar to those at the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. A Greek temple, a grotto, a small belvedere and a tower topped by large figures also stand in the garden. The place is now in private hands and is not open to the public.

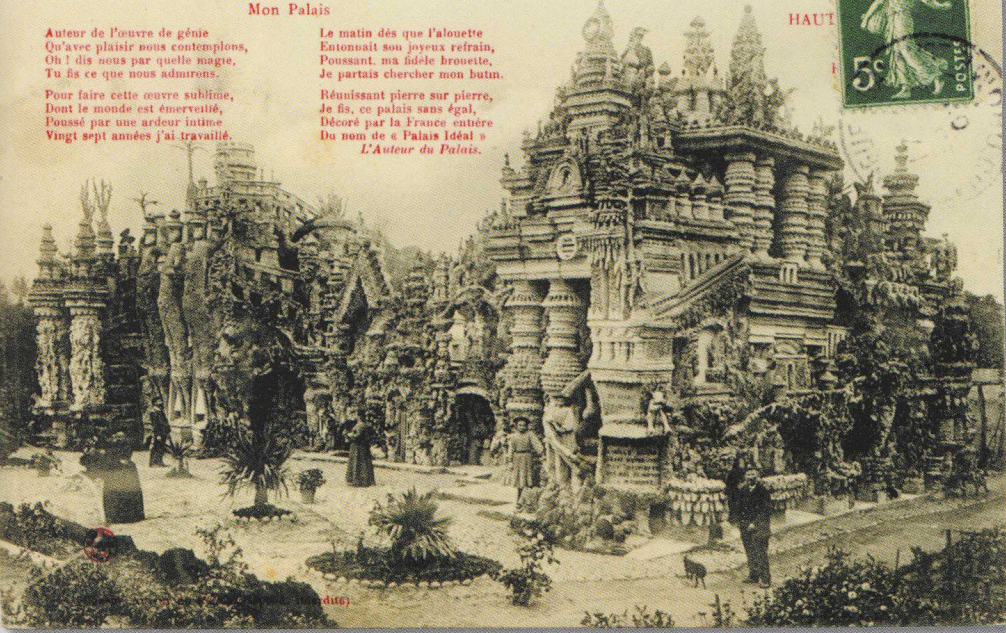
J-M C



Auteur de l'œuvre de génie
 Qu'avec plaisir nous contemptions,
 Oh ! dis nous par quelle magie,
 Tu fis ce que nous admirons.
 Pour faire cette œuvre sublime,
 Dont le monde est émerveillé,
 Poussé par une ardeur intime,
 Vingt sept années j'ai travaillé.

Mon Palais

Le matin dès qu'alouette
 Entonnait son joyeux refrain,
 Poussant un fidèle brouette,
 Je partais chercher mon butin.
 Réunissant pierre sur pierre,
 Je fis, ce palais sans égal,
 Décoré par la France entière
 Du nom de « Palais Idéal »
 L'Auteur du Palais.



Drôme, France)

Without doubt one of the world's great environments, the Palais Idéal (Ideal Palace) is the creation of Ferdinand Cheval, a country postman who, while making his rounds south of Lyon, France one day in 1879, came across a 'wondrous' stone, the discovery of which prompted him to fulfil a dream. He began to collect more stones as he walked the lanes of the area, and over the next 34 years he worked tirelessly to incorporate them into a 'fairy-like palace beyond imagination that all the genius of a humble man could conceive with grottoes, towers, gardens, castles, museums and sculptures trying to bring back to life all the ancient architectures and primeval times' from the Bible to Hindu mythology. Thanks to photographer Louis Charvat, who produced postcards from 1902 for sale near the Palais, Cheval can be viewed at work. In 1969 André Malraux, Minister of Culture, declared the Palace a cultural landmark, and today it is open to the public.
 C E R



1084. - JALLIEU-BOURCELAS. — La Tour

La Tour de Bourgoin-Jallieu (Tower of Bourgoin-Jallieu) (Isère, France)

Two neighbours in the town of Jallieu built this tower at the end of the 19th century after returning from an expedition to Indo-China. Sometimes nicknamed 'The Eiffel Tower of Bourgoin-Jallieu', it sheltered several tiers of rabbit hutches and pigeon boxes. It was constructed from earth, bricks, wood, pebbles and straw and had simple embellishments here and there. Of particular note was the figure that stood on the top, a clear reminder of the two adventurers' travels in the Far East. This unusual structure was demolished in 1987.
 J-M C

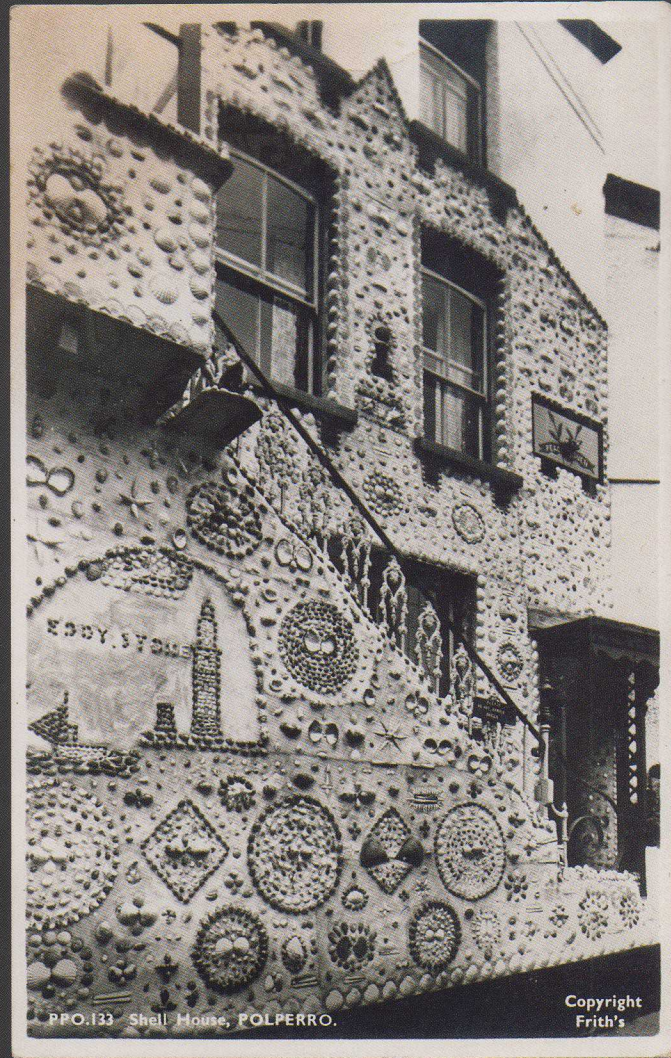
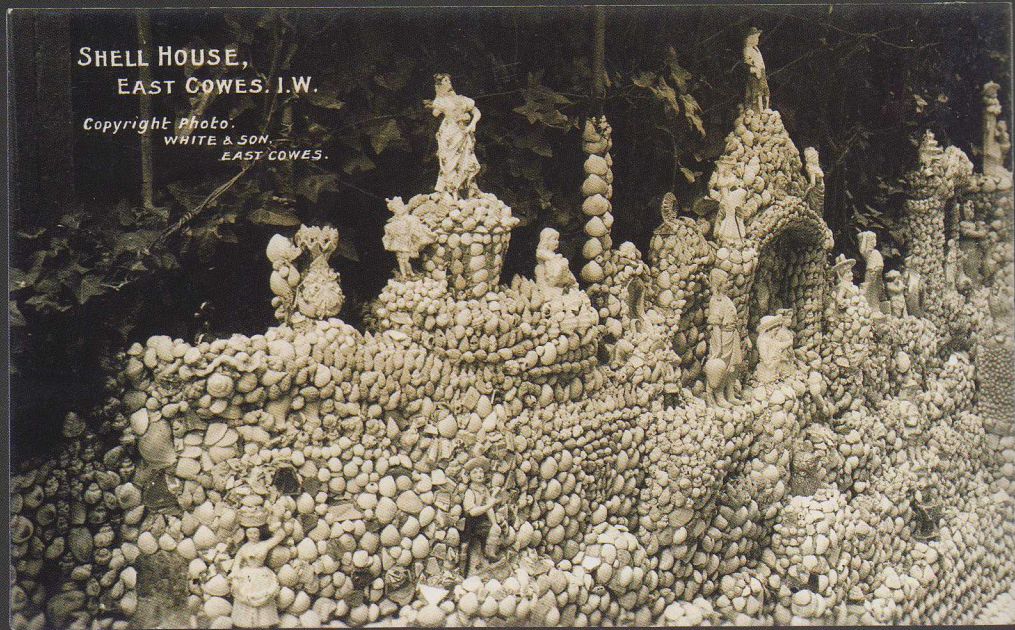


The Totem Tree (Cayuga County, USA)

This tree-trunk was carved in 1911-12 by George E. Carr, a former soldier in the 1861 Civil War. This highly original piece stands twenty feet (six metres) tall and has forty representations of people and animals worked all around the trunk and the upper branches. Like the Native American totem poles which Carr would have seen only in pictures, the sculptures evoke ancient Iroquois myths. At the top of the tree are tiny houses which must have served as shelters for birds. The whole is painted in various colours. After completing this major piece, Carr went on to carve more tree-trunks and logs which he displayed in his garden.
 J-M C

right and below
The Shell House (East Cowes, Isle of Wight, UK)

This magnificent structure is the work of Frederick Attrill, who spent the last ten years of his life building and embellishing it. Right up until his death in 1926 at the age of 88, he would walk many miles collecting thousands of shells to incorporate in the decoration.
J-M C



The Polperro Shell House (Cornwall, UK)

This house was decorated in the 1950s by a retired naval officer. The shell mosaic is relatively simple in design but the general appearance is of a fine example of popular, naive and touching art. The house is still standing and has even been let out to holidaymakers.
J-M C