Dear Uncle,

I suppose you recognize this building. This is a beautiful town. … M.A.C. [Michigan Agricultural College, later Michigan State University] football game Sat. … Alfred sent the postcard to Mr. Edward J. Myers of Bucyrus, Ohio, on October 18, 1919, and invited his aunt and uncle to come up for a visit. On the front was a painted photograph of the old law building on the northwest corner of the Diag.

Myers was a 1905 graduate of Michigan Law, but we don’t know much else. Did Alfred go to the football game and watch legendary coach Fielding Yost lead his team to a 26-0 victory? Did Mr. and Mrs. Myers return to Ann Arbor for a visit? And how did that postcard eventually make its way to Jack Hunter, ’61, and his collection of Law School postcards? Who knows?

Decades before email became the most efficient way for people to stay in touch, postcards provided friends and family members quick glimpses into one another’s lives. Dash off four sentences, write the address (even shorter in the pre-ZIP code era), adhere the one-cent stamp, and done.

Today, these postcards are compact pieces of history beloved by collectors for the notes on the back and the often-beautiful artwork on the front (though it wasn’t always attractive; scalloped edges? Really?). “Postcards are good for memory, reaching back for history, nostalgia,” says Karen Jania, head of reference at the Bentley Historical Library at U-M, which possesses a vast collection of vintage postcards. “Not everyone took photographs back then, so postcards are a great way for us to see how things used to look.”

As Michigan Law’s landscape changes with the new Aikens Commons and South Hall academic building, we thought it was a good time to look at a visual history of the school, through the lens of postcard artists from long ago. Enjoy.

For a future issue of the Law Quadrangle:
Please send us a photo and caption information from your days as a law student—you and your roommates studying on the Quad, you and a favorite professor on Senior Day, or anything else you would like to share with fellow alumni. Send to LQNGeneral@umich.edu or to Editor, Law Quadrangle, 701 South State Street, Ann Arbor, MI  48109-3091. We will return photographs back then, so postcards are a great way for us to see how things used to look.”