

Marcus Ward & Co.

Marcus Ward and Co had its beginnings back in 1802 with a partnership between John Ward, James Blow and Robert Greenfield. By the 1820s they owned paper mills in Belfast, Comber and Coleraine which operated under the company name of John Ward and Sons. It was in the early 1830s that Marcus Ward (son of John Ward) took over the running of the Belfast paper mill. Then in the mid 1830s Marcus formed a new company called Marcus Ward & Sons based in Belfast. Marcus gave the company a new direction in stationary and general publishing. Marcus Ward and Sons soon became very successful in the area of colour lithography winning a medal at the Great Exhibition of 1851. By the time Marcus died in 1847 his three sons Francis, William and John had successfully taken over the running of the business.

In the 1860s Marcus Ward & Co began mass producing calendars and greeting cards. Initially they printed cards for other publishers such as Goodall and Charles Bennett. By the late 1860s they began printing greeting cards under their own name. This venture turned out to be very successful, the company engaging Thomas Crane as artistic director and talented artists such as Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane as illustrators. In the early years of card production they marked the reverse with their trademark. In later years the company name was printed on the front side of their greeting cards.

Marcus Ward continued publishing cards up until 1899 by which time they were finding it hard to keep up with technology and cheap mass produced German cards. In 1900 McCaw, Stevenson & Orr, one of Marcus Ward and Sons competitors acquired the rights to the Marcus Ward name and continued publishing under the name up until the 1940s.