



Postcard America: Curt Teich and the Imaging of a Nation, 1931-1950

Jeffrey L. Meikle

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From the Great Depression through the early postwar years, any postcard sent in America was more than likely a “linen” card. Colorized in vivid, often exaggerated hues and printed on card stock embossed with a linen-like texture, linen postcards celebrated the American scene with views of majestic landscapes, modern cityscapes, roadside attractions, and other notable features. These colorful images portrayed the United States as shimmering with promise, quite unlike the black-and-white worlds of documentary photography or *Life* magazine. Linen postcards were enormously popular, with close to a billion printed and sold.

Postcard America offers the first comprehensive study of these cards and their cultural significance. Drawing on the production files of Curt Teich & Co. of Chicago, the originator of linen postcards, Jeffrey L. Meikle reveals how photographic views were transformed into colorized postcard images, often by means of manipulation—adding and deleting details or collaging bits and pieces from several photos. He presents two extensive portfolios of postcards—landscapes and cityscapes—that comprise a representative iconography of linen postcard views. For each image, Meikle explains the postcard’s subject, describes aspects of its production, and places it in social and cultural contexts. In the concluding chapter, he shifts from historical interpretation to a contemporary viewpoint, considering nostalgia as a motive for collectors and others who are fascinated today by these striking images.

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