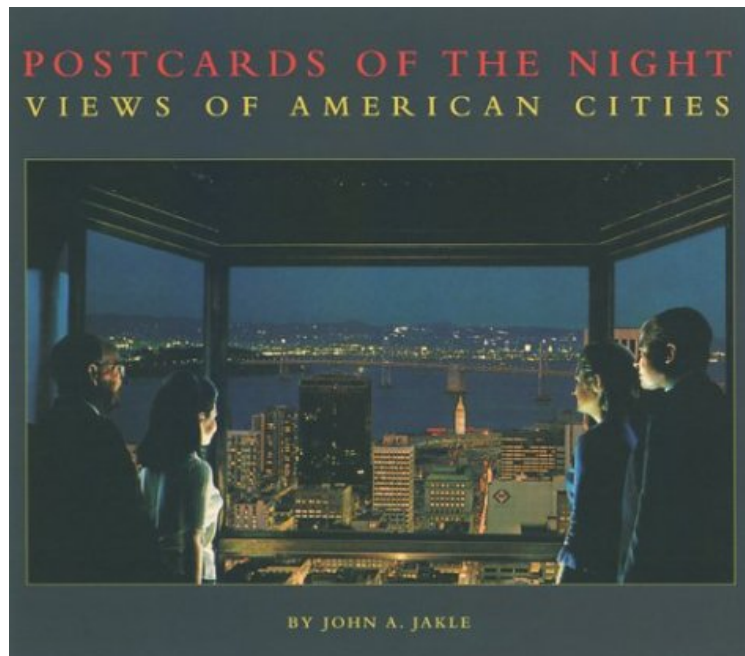


Postcards of the Night: Views of American Cities

John A. Jakle

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John A. Jakle : Postcards of the Night: Views of American Cities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Postcards of the Night: Views of American Cities:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Insights into the American landscape.By Gary SprandelThis book is a step above the normal postcard book, by providing social interpretation of the scenes depicted. Through 82 postcards published from 1905 - 1975, Dr. Jakle offers insights into the American view of the city at night. At the start of the period this was an era when lighting became prevalent, and saw a transition of a view point of the "the observing walker in the city ("flaneur") to the anonymous automobile. Postcard publishers may also had a viewpoint "Postcards necessarily supported booster agendas that saw a city as improved and improving, following the dictates of society's elite", so present a "selected, attenuated, but highly amplified impressions of city life". He offers some insight into the tricks of the postcard trade to achieve these ends, such as framing and retouching in a dramatic moon or sky, or removing overhead wires. My favorite cards included a Gary Indiana night scene of Mah 20th 1910, showing Halley's comet, and a 4th street in Louisville from 1920 (and I have the same scene from 1943. The most educational was and a series of 3 from Los Angles starting with a 1912 Broadway with a crowd pedestrian street with a street sweeper, to a 1940 linen, with a mix of cards and pedestrians, to a 1955 chrome with "homogenized nighttime space. Perhaps a thematic or chronological arrangement of the cards would have been better than alphabetically by city name.7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Night light.By RobinYou might think that the humble postcard is just a piece of printed cardboard but just read John Jakle's fascinating book and discover there is a lot more behind these colorful images. The eighty-two cards in the book, dated from 1900 to 1977, show a selective view of cities at night, as Jakle explains (in a very comprehensive introduction) the card publishers, at least in the early years of the last century, were quite happy to add a row of street lights if none existed and city fathers frequently felt pressure to then

put them up. Before the introduction of fast film most night-time postcards were day-time photographs and illustrations with a black sky added or maybe a moon with a cloudy sky painted in and street lights made to glow, some of these do look rather crude though. New film and cameras in the thirties allowed postcard photographers to be more creative, with strobe effects for instance and the old favorite, the time-lapse. Though most cards from the thirties onwards are photographs many were still heavily retouched to give even more sparkle to the image, page 107 shows a looking down view of San Francisco with searchlights in the background and streets of the city just dazzling with light, it was taken in 1940. A slightly different view is of Capitol Street, Jackson, Mississippi in 1955 (page 67) here the street lights are strangely dim but the sidewalks are aglow with light from shop windows and plenty of neon, a positive reflection of the city as modern and progressive or as the author says 'Postcard views were expected to celebrate cities and do so in ways that would preserve, if not strengthen, the social status quo'. The production and design of the book is first-class, landscape in format, to compliment the typical postcard shape, each card has a page to itself with a long caption. The back of the book has an appendix about collecting these interesting postcards and a bibliography. Another book (also beautifully produced) of city postcards that I have enjoyed is 'American Architecture: a vintage postcard collection' by Luc Van Malderen (ISBN 1864700785) which has 625 mainly illustrative images and includes several night-time views. Both books will interest anyone who wants to learn more about how cities were presented to the public.***FOR AN INSIDE LOOK click 'customer images' under the cover.

Illustrated with eighty vintage city postcards made between the turn of the twentieth century and through the 1970's (with the emphasis on the first four decades), historical geographer, John A Jakle turns his attention to early-twentieth-century nocturnal views of America's cities and to the role of the picture postcard in popular culture. 'Postcard images', the author writes, "offered important visual 'fixes' -- mental templates for visualising cities -- the vista of a downtown street at night, or a bird's eye view of a vividly lit downtown, or the dramatic lighting of monuments and other architectural landmarks. As a result, the popularity and proliferation of the penny postcard influenced how Americans thought about cities as landscape displays."