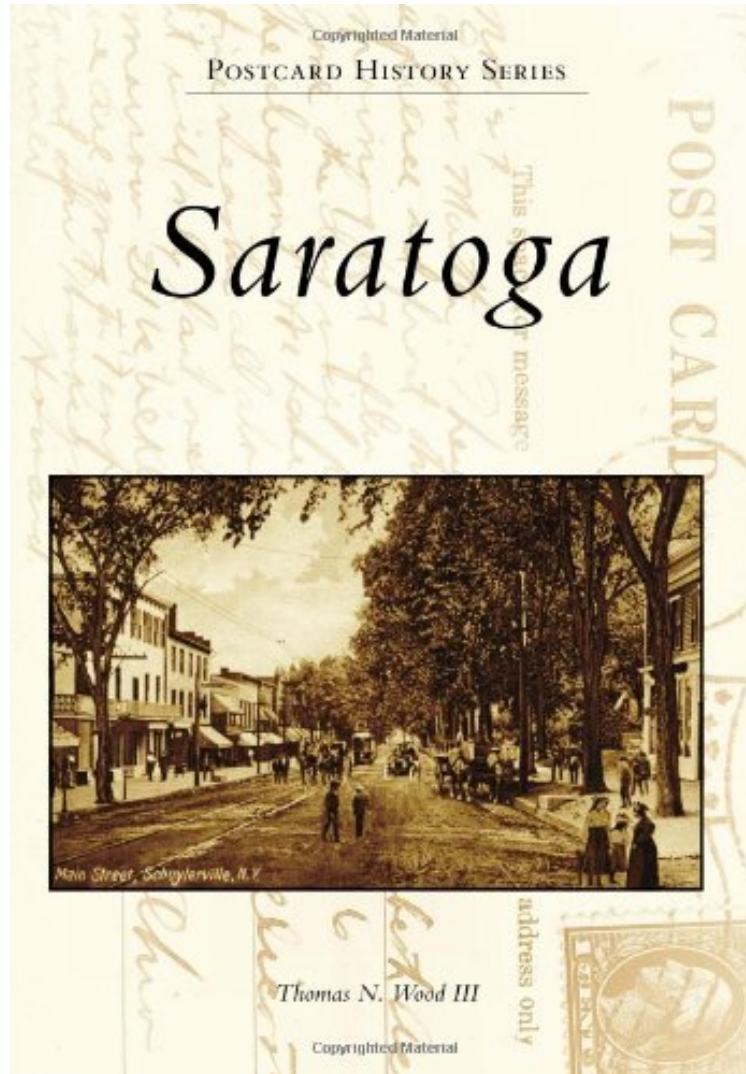


Saratoga (Postcard History)

Thomas N. Wood III

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Thomas N. Wood III : Saratoga (Postcard History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Saratoga (Postcard History):

Because of its strategic location, throughout the years Saratoga has been the site of numerous warring parties and battles, transportation links, industrial development, agricultural pursuits, recreational activities, and residential growth. Before it became a part of Saratoga County in 1791, the town of Saratoga belonged to Albany County and was much larger than its current size. Although rural in character, the town is composed of a number of hamlets and

villages that have played an important part in Saratoga's development.

Title: History in Postcards Author: Yael Goldman Publisher: Simply Saratoga Date: 1/1/2011 Town of Saratoga Supervisor, Thomas N. Wood III, recently published his second book: Saratoga, the newest addition to Arcadia Publishing's postcard history series. A compilation of snapshots, original correspondences and informative captions, Saratoga tells a unique history from an unassuming source: postcards. Each page is a slice of history - a moment at a glance in the evolution of these small communities from both the local and outsider's perspective. "It's a good depiction of what life was like back then," Wood said. From its Native American heritage to the first Dutch settlers in the 1680's, and the turning point of the Revolutionary War, the Town of Saratoga and Villages of Victory and Schuylerville staged America in its infancy. Through the ages, and still to this day, Americans frequented these quaint communities to connect with and experience its powerful history. These tourists, relatives and casual visitors sought a token to mark their travels - and for those Saratoga outsiders, who stop for a moment to consider their historic surroundings, a postcard is just the thing. For Wood, the same postcards that mark an individual's journey are an ideal medium for telling the story of Saratoga. "I realized we could help further promote the history of the area by sharing the postcards [made] here," he said, indicating that the souvenirs were unique to Saratoga and each of the surrounding towns. Wood explained that the title Saratoga covers a larger group of villages and towns, as boundaries formed and changed from the region's first settlements to the present day. Saratoga was much larger, originally encompassing the areas now designated as Northumberland, Malta, Moreau, Stillwater, Wilton and Saratoga Springs. And it's most important to note that parliamentary freedom and the tangible right to Americanism were achieved before these lines could be drawn. "As early as 1684, a group including Peter Schuyler obtained the Saratoga Patent, the first title to the land. Bartel Vroman became the first settler in 1688," he writes. In 1702, Albany Mayor, Johannes Schuyler settled along Fish Creek where he established a fort and farms, "erected mills and other buildings," and "named the place Saratoga." Life in this area had begun and the community quickly grew. Open land, navigability, water and the security promised by Schuyler's "military stores" attracted a number of farmers and settlers who established themselves as Saratogians by the mid-1700's. The early community included "some 30 dwellings with granaries, pens, gristmills, stores and blacksmith shops, as well as the garrison (the troops stationed in town)." But as this settlement bloomed, so did the French and Indian War. Conflict between France and England took charge of North America, and in 1754 a "fierce attack" swarmed Saratoga. The fiery massacre destroyed the fort and settlement; many of the first residents were taken prisoner or killed, including Captain Peter Schuyler who lost his life in the massacre. In its prosperity Saratoga experienced setbacks and great loss. By the mid 1760's the warring "foreign" countries ameliorated their differences and Saratoga was reborn. "The settlement was revived." "In 1767, Philip Schuyler erected a flax mill, reported to be the first in the American colonies. In 1770, the Saratoga Reform Church was organized," Wood writes. But it wasn't long before the community was, once again under attack. "As the country struggled for independence from the British, Saratoga once again became a focal point of warring activities," Wood delineates in his Introduction. Patriots and loyalists set up camps, forts and headquarters within town. American General, Phillip Schuyler's troops were up against the British army led by General John Burgoyne and referred to as the "mightiest in the world" After the British defeat on September 19 and again on October 7, 1777, Burgoyne retreated to what is now known as Schuylerville where he surrendered to General Horatio Gates less than two weeks later on October 17. This event inspired France to ally with the patriots, marking the turning point in the war. "Saratoga suffered through the war," and reconstruction was gradual, but by the early 1820's growth was back on track. In the years that followed the war, monuments were erected to honor the lives lost and triumphant heroes in the Saratoga battles. Celebrations, parades and landmarks were coined and a second, more prosperous, life began and thrived. "During the first half of the nineteenth century, two villages were incorporated within the town of Saratoga: Schuylerville, named after the Schuylers who were responsible for developing the area in 1821, and in 1848 Victory, named - as were its mills - in recognition of the American victory during the Battles of Saratoga." With boundaries changing and new towns developing, roads, schools, churches, family-run businesses and agriculture also grew, as gristmills, linen mills, paper mills and saw mills were constructed. Wood explains that during the 19th and 20th centuries, mills "thrived as a result of abundant water power and good transportation." By the early 1900's, with the local industry at its prime, a new attraction was en vogue and the "tourist" notion was born. "Across the country and state, there was a great interest in history, in particular the Revolutionary war, and obviously the most significant events occurred right here," Wood said. "Transportation had improved: passenger trains, trolley lines, as well as the canal and early automobile access made Saratoga somewhat convenient to get here." As accessibility improved, so did the attractions. Not only did tourists come to visit the battlefield and monuments, but they came to enjoy the local communities - the shops, restaurants, hotels and the spirited, patriotic people whose lifestyle mirrored their ever-ignited celebration of America. "If you have tourists, you're going to have souvenirs," Wood added. "Tourists like to buy mementos, and at the time those commemorative things were in the form of postcards. Postcards were mass-produced in local print shops and by local publishers, "entrepreneurs who saw an opportunity to make some money by selling a product in such a high demand." Eventually, the area's "relative abundance" of postcards became a part of its history." Wood's short but sweet snap-shot history of

Saratoga is illustrated and depicted with examples of these simple souvenirs. Postcards from local stops such as W.H. Alsvor's Point Breeze general store, located on the north end of Saratoga Lake, and the Glass Restaurant and Lodge, located on South Broad Street in Schuylerville provide a taste of what the area had to offer tourists. Other relics and samples of the area's architectural gems take part in the telling of Saratoga - Images of the ornate Union Free High School, which was fireside razed in 1934; the Hotel Schuyler, which was "built in 1868 and stood until it was destroyed in a fire on March 22, 1997;" and a handful of other churches, hotels and homes that were either demolished or tragically lost. As a lifelong member of the Schuylerville community, Wood was familiar with these local monuments and historic treasures. He started collecting postcards to preserve pieces of the history he grew so passionate about, many of which were used in his book. Samples from fellow locals and historical enthusiasts helped Wood fill in the blanks. The majority of the depictions in Saratoga came from Dan and Maggie Chiperno, whose personal collection alone could tell the history of the region. Born and raised in the area, the Chiperno's interest in local history inspired them to open their own antique shop as retirees. During their time in the business, running Moongate Antiques, which was located on Ferry Street in Schuylerville, the pair acquired an extensive collection of postcards and local lore. Maggie and her late husband Dan came across Saratoga postcards in their travels out of state and to auctions all over the Northeast. Their collection adds a more personal touch to Wood's book, as a portion of their postcards are impressed with handwritten notes and dedications from afar. "If you look closely, you can actually see and occasionally read what was written by the sender. I think it adds another dimension to the story," Wood said. Flipping through the pages and glancing at each unique snippet of Saratoga - of the lake, the towns, the celebrations and tourism - it's like taking a hundred-year stroll down Broad Street in Schuylerville. "I think his book is marvelous, Maggie said, adding that, even though not everyone has an interest in history, for someone whose own heritage is tied to Saratoga, a book like Tom Wood's is priceless." "It's so important for preserving this history," she said. About the Author Thomas N. Wood III is a lifelong resident of Saratoga and a retired schoolteacher and administrator. He has served as the town historian for 18 years and currently serves as town supervisor. His hope is that the collection of vintage postcards found in Saratoga will expand and promote the knowledge of the history and development of the town.