



# American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context

*Daniel Gifford*

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In the early 20th century, postcards were one of the most important and popular expressions of holiday sentiment in American culture. Millions of such postcards circulated among networks of community and kin as part of a larger American postcard craze. However, their uses and meanings were far from universal. This book argues that holiday postcards circulated primarily among rural and small town, Northern, white women with Anglo-Saxon and Germanic heritages. Through analysis of a broad range of sources, Daniel Gifford recreates the history of postcards to account for these specific audiences, and reconsiders the postcard phenomenon as an image-based conversation among exclusive groups of Americans. A variety of narratives are thus revealed: the debates generated by the Country Life Movement; the empowering manifestations of the New Woman; the civic privileges of whiteness; and the role of emerging technologies. From Santa Claus to Easter bunnies, flag-waving turkeys to gun-toting cupids, holiday postcards at first seem to be amusing expressions of a halcyon past. Yet with knowledge of audience and historical conflicts, this book demonstrates how the postcard images reveal deep divides at the height of the Progressive Era.

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