

Frank Jacob, Mark D. Van Ells

A Postcard View of Hell

One Doughboy's Souvenir Album of the First World War

SERIES IN CRITICAL MEDIA STUDIES

Summary

For many the postcard may seem trivial, little more than a mundane souvenir or a way to keep in touch with friends and relatives while on vacation. But if we look carefully, postcards offer valuable insights into the time periods in which they were created and the mentalities of those who bought or sent them. Frank Marhefka, while serving in the U.S. Army Motor Transportation Corps during the First World War, amassed a collection of more than 150 postcards and photographs while in France, and bound them into a souvenir album. Marhefka's collection provides a diverse and vivid look into a period of history that – in many soldiers' accounts – is not usually visualized with all its cruelties. Emphasizing the pictorial turn of the Great War, this album offers personal insight into a conflict that caused so much death and destruction. The book begins with an introduction providing a history of postcards and their extensive use by soldiers during the Great War. Then, after a biography of Marhefka, his postcard collection is presented in its entirety. Accompanying the images are brief texts that place them into historical context, as well as suggestions for further reading.



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As a visual artifact of the First World War and the perspective of one U.S. soldier, this book is aimed at students, scholars, postcard collectors, and general readers alike who have an interest in military history and popular culture.

About the author

Dr. Frank Jacob is Professor of Global History at Nord University, Norway. His main fields of research are Japanese and Military History. His recent books include *Japanese War Crimes During WWII* (Praeger, 2018) and *The Russo-Japanese War and Its Shaping of the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, 2018).

Dr. Mark D. Van Ells is Professor of U.S. and Military History at Queensborough Community College (CUNY). His books include *America and World War I: A Traveler's Guide* (Interlink Books, 2015), *The Daily Life of an Ordinary American Soldier during World War II: The Letters of Wilbur C. Berget* (Edwin Mellen, 2008), and *To Hear Only Thunder Again: America's World War II Veterans Come Home* (Lexington, 2001). Dr. Van Ells also served as Archivist and Historian at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

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