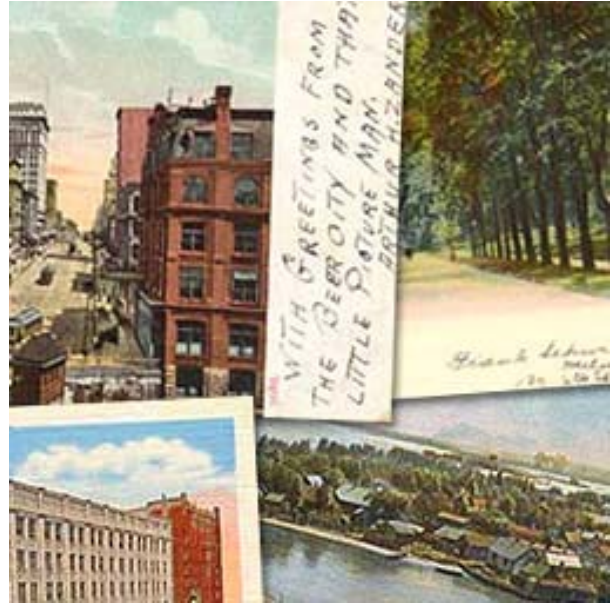


A vintage Milwaukee postcard is worth a thousand words

By [Andy Tarnoff](#)

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They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and long before e-mail and cell phone cameras, postcards were the way you let the folks back at home know you were alive and well, and wished they were here. A century ago, postcards weren't the tacky prints you find at the mall today. They were small works of art - hand colored photographs or detailed illustrations - and they captured just about everything a city had to offer. Local historian and writer Larry Widen gathered 250 of his favorites in his new book, "Vintage Milwaukee Postcards." It's a collection that Widen has been accumulating for 25 years.



"I used to find them at Rummage-O-Rama," says Widen. "Now there's Maxwell Street Days in Cedarburg."

Narrowing down his selections into just one book (two, actually - there's a color and a black and white version being sold), was tricky, says Widen, a life-long Milwaukeean. "I picked the ones that I thought, for a volume of 250 images, were the most representative of some of the more familiar areas of the city, so that if someone lived here it would have almost as much relevance as someone who had visited."

"I didn't make it such an arcane book with references that only people who had been here their whole life would get," says Widen. Each photo comes with a short caption, and the research Widen did is obvious. Widen says there are about 2,500 vintage postcards out there, so a sequel is imminent. His book focuses on images printed between 1898 and 1920.

"I envision it as a set or maybe even as a trio," says Widen. "I do have another one already planned."

Along with the postcards of architecture, breweries, street scenes and nature, Widen provides a 14-page introduction -- a history of Milwaukee to set the scene. The final few pages contain transcripts of the messages from the back of the cards the reader doesn't see. Widen says the project came together quite quickly, and he spent 12 weeks of "intensive caption writing." "Vintage Milwaukee Postcards" is being sold at area Harry W. Schwartz book stores and online at www.lulu.com/larrywiden. Widen will attend a book signing at the Brookfield Schwartz location on Jan. 19. His Web site is www.widenonline.com.

