



# NEW YORK IN POSTCARDS

1880–1980 The Andreas Adam Collection

Scheidegger & Spiess

# Skyline

The Manhattan skyline “is the product of insane politics, greed, competitive ostentation, megalomania, the worship of false gods. Its by-products, in turn, are traffic jams, bad ventilation, noise, and all the other ills that metropolitan flesh is heir to. And the net result is, illogically enough, one of the most exaltedly beautiful things that man has ever made.”

John Atlee Kouwenhoven,  
*What's “American” about America, 1956*

## 1917

The USA enters World War I. The resulting economic boom, fuelled mainly by the arms industry, has a knock-on effect on New York's skyline. The tallest of the new buildings drive speculation to such heights that new zoning laws have to be passed.

## 1932

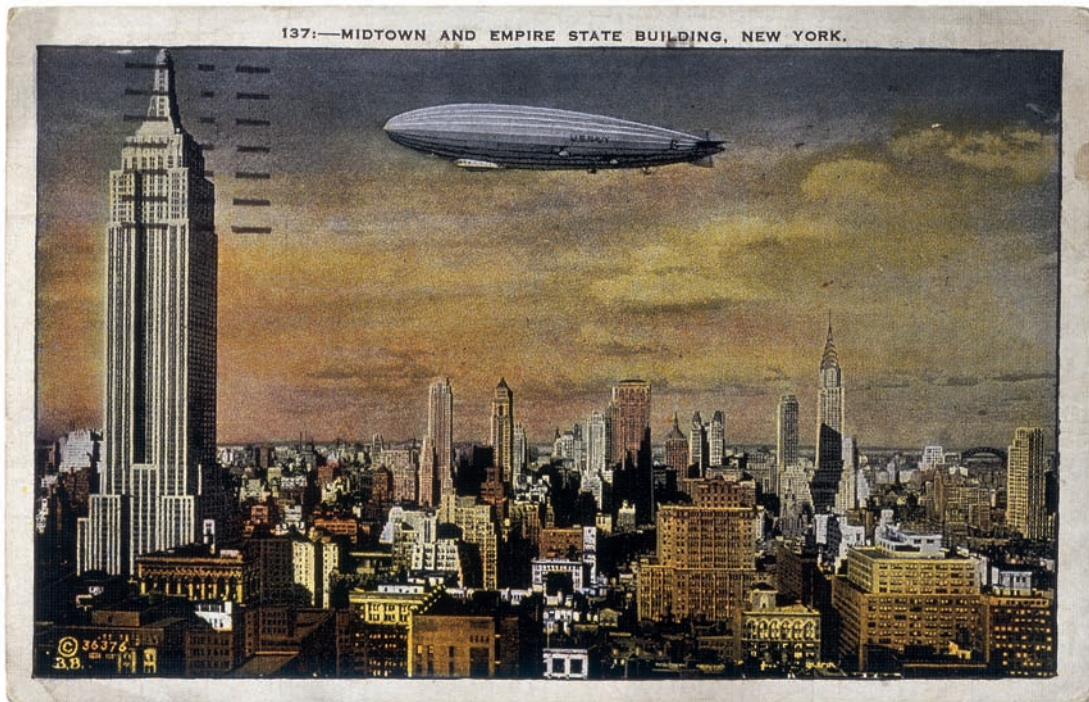
The Manhattan of 1917 has already been overshadowed by the Wall Street banking giants spawned by the growth of the 1920s. Yet they signal both the apogee and the end of an era: The Wall Street Crash sends the world economy into a spin. It will be another thirty years before there are any important new additions to New York's skyline.

## 1963

By the late 1950s, America's business capital is booming all over again. The Chase Manhattan Bank of 1961 ushers in what will be a radical transformation of the skyline.

## 1974

The capital generated by continued economic growth translates into buildings so mighty, they make those of the twenties look modest by comparison. The trend is clear: Viewed as no more than containers or oversized boxes, buildings are no longer designed; what counts is a speedy return on investment.



1937



c. 1945

Midtown Manhattan



George Tooker: *The Subway*, 1950. Postcard c. 1980



c. 1910



**ROCKEFELLER CENTER, N. Y.** . . . a "Radio City" skyscraper, 70 stories high, pierces the blue.

1939



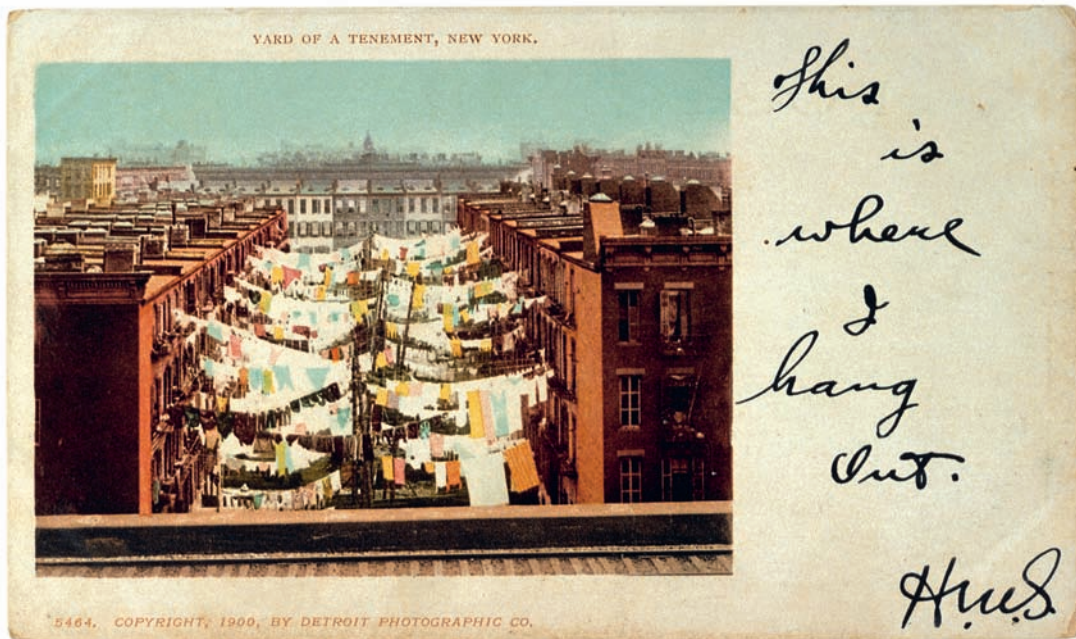
**RCA BUILDING, ROCKEFELLER CENTER, AT NIGHT, NEW YORK CITY 67**

PHOTO WENDELL MCRAE

c. 1940



1908



1900



c. 1905

# NEW YORK IN POSTCARDS 1880–1980

## The Andreas Adam Collection

Edited by Thomas Kramer

With Essays by Andreas Adam, Paul Goldberger, and Kent Lydecker

New York is a global icon—the quintessential metropolis. Over three centuries it has morphed from the colonial fur trading hub of New Amsterdam into one of the most vibrant and exciting cities on earth. The history of the Big Apple—the City that Never Sleeps, the City So Nice They Named It Twice—has been documented many times over in many diverse ways, including books, photographs, and songs. But in this lavish, beautiful volume, Thomas Kramer offers a new perspective, telling the story of New York through Andreas Adam’s vast collection of rare picture postcards that recount the city’s changing identity and culture over the last century.

The nine hundred well-preserved, vintage cards in *New York in Postcards 1880–1980* bring to life the look and feel of their eras in concise visual statements. The cards’ striking prints, organized by subject and geographic area, vividly depict every aspect of New York City over the centuries: the Native American village that became Manhattan; nineteenth-century street scenes; famous architectural landmarks such as the Chrysler Building and Empire State



Building; lush gardens; cars and trains; and historical events. The images themselves are a fascinating mélange of artistic media. There are archival photographs, as well as paintings and drawings that represent a range of styles, from art nouveau to neo-objectivism, naturalism, and pop art. The book is rounded out with essays by Paul Goldberger, the *New Yorker’s* renowned architecture critic, and art historian Kent Lydecker on the visual narrative and the architectural history of New York and the cultural history of the picture postcard.

An opulent and unparalleled collection of vintage art, *New York in Postcards 1880–1980* reveals unexpected facets of Gotham’s history and how America is reflected in its triumphant tale.

Photo credit: Lewis W. Hine: *Italian Family Seeking Lost Baggage*, Ellis Island, 1905. Postcard c. 1970

**Thomas Kramer** is managing director and chief editor of Scheidegger & Spiess. He is the author or editor of several other books on the history of film and architecture.

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