

“Man-Dig those crazy Los Angeles Freeways”: The Changing Image of Southern California Freeways in The Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection

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Los Angeles Freeway System, Mitock & Sons, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California.

The Lore of Los Angeles Freeways¹

Los Angeles Times journalist Patt Morrison writes in her forward to the 2021 book *Freewaytopia*, “It’s Los Angeles, not Rome. Here, all roads lead to ... more roads. Our lore and stories speak of the beach, of Hollywood, and of that other constant on our landscape - freeways.”² The lore of Southern California freeways is present in everything from movie sets like *Speed* and *La La Land*, noir fiction, memes about the 405, lyrics in Lana Del Rey’s music, to the series of *Saturday Night Live* skits, “The Californians,” which mock the way Angelenos talk about freeways, drama, and traffic.³ The “City of Angels” is synonymous with sprawling highways and the accompanying record levels of pollution and environmental harm from the accompanying automobile traffic. The lore of freeways is a constant part of how Angelenos market the city and understand their relationship with the urban environment. One unexpected place this lore manifests is postcards from the mid-20th century.

This paper explores the history and image of Southern California freeways as seen on postcards located in the Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection. Freeway-themed postcards demonstrate the perceived and produced novelty of freeways in Los Angeles and the ways in which these massive structures dominate the urban landscape. Through an exploration of thousands of postcards in the Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, I uncovered a manufactured portrayal of freeways as wonderful, novel, efficient, and a magnificent feat of man-made engineering.⁴ At the same time, the freeway postcards’ personal messages also show the frustration and dissatisfaction experienced by some mid-twentieth-century drivers. Each postcard could individually tell its own history of development, conflict, and change; however, this paper is concerned with how examining the collection of cards together shows the interactions between freeways, Angelenos, and the Southern California basin. Freeway-themed postcards from the 20th and 21st centuries depict freeways as a novel, efficient, and a magnificent achievement of man-made engineering in Southern California. This portrayal contradicts the reality of freeways as an environmental hazard and physical barrier.

¹ I would like to acknowledge and thank my research mentor Dr. Amy Woodson-Boulton, the Department of History at Loyola Marymount University, and the University Honors Program for their support of my research. I would also like to thank the Department of Archives and Special Collections at the William H. Hannon Library, including support from Cynthia Becht, Head of Archives and Special Collections, and Jessica Guardado, Library Assistant.

² Paul Haddad, *Freewaytopia* (Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2021), 10.

³ The opening scene of *La La Land* was shot in one take on the interchange between the 105 and the 110 freeway. My favorite examples of memes about Los Angeles freeways are created by @americanatbrandmemes. Lana Del Rey sings in the song *The Next Best American Record*, “It’s true-all the roads lead to you, like the 405 I drive through.” SNL’s, “The Californians” was a series of skits produced in 2012 through 2018 that turned driving directions into a soap opera parody.

⁴ Over summer 2024, I went through more than fifteen different postcard boxes in the archive, each containing approximately 500-800 cards.

Why Postcards? Why Freeways?

The Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection is part of the Department of Archives and Special Collections in the William H. Hannon Library at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. The collection, named after the primary benefactor, Werner Von Boltensern, contains more than one million postcards from across the 155-year history of postcards.⁵ Boltensern spent decades collecting postcards from all over the world and produced an impressive and vast personal collection. Boltensern achieved this massive undertaking through personal and professional travel as well as connections with postcard clubs. Boltensern was a member of the Southern California Postcard Club before he dropped out and formed his own club, the International Postcard Collectors Association, in 1969.⁶ His involvement with postcard clubs allowed him the ability to trade and buy postcards from other deltiologists. After failing to create a postcard museum, Boltensern donated his personal collection to Loyola Marymount University in 1967, so students and researchers could have access to continue postcard exploration and research.⁷ The collection has continued to grow through donations, even after Boltensern's passing in 1978. Now the collection is one of the largest publicly accessible postcard collections in the world.⁸ Since Boltensern spent the second half of his career in Los Angeles, one of the strengths of the collection is the quantity of cards related to Southern California.⁹ This makes the collection a valuable resource in my own research due to the depth and reputation of the archive.

Postcards offer extraordinary views of the ordinary and everyday occurrences of a place. Postcards preserve specific images that were captured with the sole intention of being shared and bought. Each card can offer a visual, and if you are lucky, a written record of a place. Collections of postcards show how a place was marketed, but also how that location evolved over time.¹⁰ In a 1972 interview with journalist Nancy Smith from the Santa Monica *Evening Outlook*, Boltensern said "You can find anything and everything that can be illustrated on a postcard."¹¹

The history of postcards began in the late 1800s; however postcard production took off in 1901 in the United States when the words "Post card" could be on the back instead of "Private Mailing Card."¹² This was one of the first legislative changes that increased the usability of postcards. The history of postcards includes the white border period from 1915-1930, the linen

⁵ "Collections," Loyola Marymount University, accessed June 2024, <https://library.lmu.edu/archivesandspecialcollections/collections/>.

⁶ Lewis Baer, "Having a Great Time with Postcards," *Barr's News* (Lansing, Iowa), July 29, 1996.

⁷ Baer, "Having a Great Time with Postcards."

⁸ "Collections," Loyola Marymount University.

⁹ Peter Fish, "Wish you were here," *Western Wanderings*, August 8, 1996.

¹⁰ "Using Postcards as Historical Evidence," Eastern Illinois University, accessed July 2024, <https://www.eiu.edu/localite/postcardshisthome.php>.

¹¹ Nancy Smith, "Post Card," *Evening Outlook* (Santa Monica, California), October 21, 1972.

¹² "Greetings from the Smithsonian, A Postcard History," Smithsonian Institution Archives, accessed March 2024, <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/postcard-history>.

period from 1930-1945, and lastly the photochrom period from 1945 to present day.¹³ The majority of freeway-themed postcards are from the later linen and photochrome periods.

Postcards follow a standard format that separates them from other forms of mail. The image goes on the front, and the back of the postcard often includes a short description of the photo, a place to write a personal message, the stamp, the publisher, occasionally some clipart, and a place for the address of the person who is going to receive the postcard.¹⁴ The back of card descriptions help show what the producer thinks is important to highlight. The postcard is sent without an envelope. One of the limitations of postcards is determining the exact date of production. However, postcards follow certain production trends that one can use to approximate the date including location and stamp cost, size, and linen material.

Author Monica Cure in her book, *Picturing the Postcard: A New Media Crisis at the Turn of the Century*, explains how postcards became places for shorter, less dense messages than letters.¹⁵ Several of the postcards I explored in the collection contain short messages, often about the weather, simple activities, and get straight to the point. Other cards in the Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection contain no message, and might have been purchased just for collecting, which Cure explains was a common practice during the 20th century.¹⁶

In the Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, there are plenty of typical postcards of beaches and piers, Hollywood movie stars and palm trees, everything that one might expect to find in a box about Southern California. Additionally there are dozens of cards in which the sole focus of the image are freeways. One of the main goals of postcards is to depict landscapes, and part of the landscape of Southern California is the man-made sprawling freeways that cover the basin and criss-cross around the county. Author and Los Angeles freeway expert, Paul Haddad, writes “they [the freeways] seem to exist merely as fixed parts of the local landscape, like the Santa Monica Mountains, the marine layer, or taco trucks- just always there, taken for granted and inviting little scrutiny.”¹⁷ Driving on freeways is such a fixed part of daily Los Angeles life that it is easy to miss how truly wild and weird these structures are, when you are constantly exposed to them. When driving on a freeway, you are cutting through communities on your own separate paved road for staggering amounts of time isolated from other drivers. INRIX, a transportation firm responsible for creating a Global Traffic Scorecard reports that Los Angeles drivers lost over eighty-nine hours during 2023 just from sitting in traffic congestion.¹⁸ In 2023, Los Angeles placed 7th in global cities with the worst congestion city worldwide.¹⁹ The amount of time drivers spend sitting in traffic has huge economic, environmental, and social costs.

¹³ “Greetings from the Smithsonian, A Postcard History,” Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁴ “Anatomy of Postcards,” Eastern Illinois University, accessed July 2024, <https://www.eiu.edu/localite/postcardsanat.php>.

¹⁵ Monica Cure, “Introduction: The Frankenstein Postcard,” in *Picturing the Postcard: A New Media Crisis at the Turn of the Century* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 11.

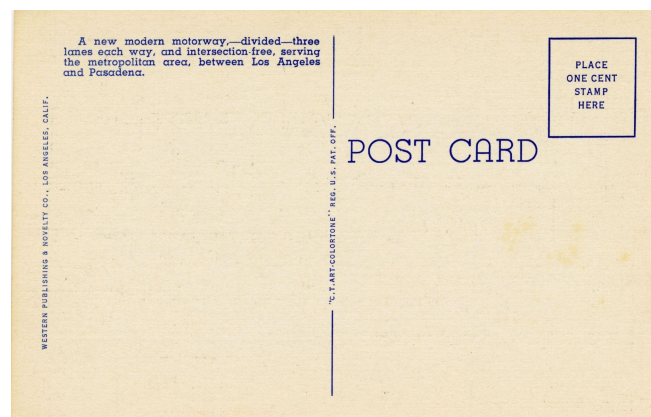
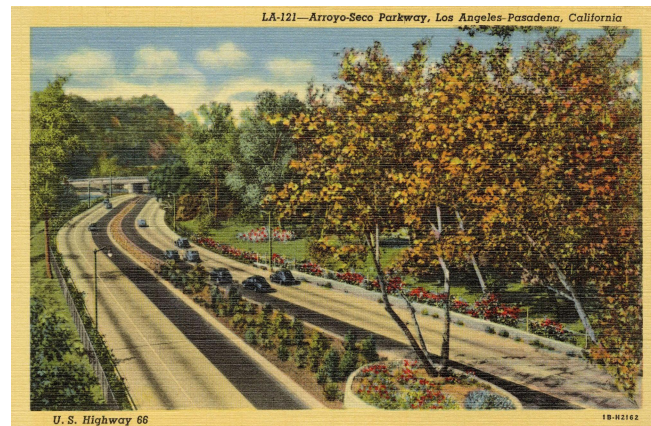
¹⁶ Cure, *Picturing the Postcard*, 20.

¹⁷ Haddad, *Freewaytopia*, 15.

¹⁸ “Los Angeles CA #7 Inrix 2023 Traffic Scorecard Report,” Inrix, accessed September 2024, <https://inrix.com/scorecard-city-2023/?city=Los%20Angeles%20CA&index=6#form-download-t%20he-full-report>.

¹⁹ “Los Angeles CA #7 Inrix 2023 Traffic Scorecard Report,” Inrix.

Romanticization of the Potential of Freeways



Arroyo Seco Parkway, Western Publishing & Novelty CO., postcard, Box P-6, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

Several postcards in the Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection focus on the possibility of Los Angeles Freeways to provide easy access across the city, while also depicting an image of freeways as integrated with nature. These types of cards romanticize the relationship between the infrastructure, the driver, and the Southern California Environment. One example includes the postcard, “Arroyo Seco Parkway” distributed by Western Publishing & Novelty CO. This card shows off the beautification of early freeways, including the addition of a median strip between lanes filled with plants and trees.²⁰ The rest of the freeway is surrounded by greenery. These design principles, and the attempt to integrate the infrastructure with nature, were quickly

²⁰ *Arroyo Seco Parkway, Western Publishing & Novelty CO., postcard, Box P-6, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.*

replaced by a priority of speed and efficiency as planners strived to add more lanes and move more cars through.²¹

The card “Arroyo Seco Parkway” from Western Publishing & Novelty CO contains a spot on the back for a one cent stamp. Therefore, this card was presumably produced before August 1958, before postage rates changed from one cent to three.²² Additionally, the card is made from linen material and has a border around the image, suggesting that this card was produced during the linen period of 1930-1945.²³ However, since the freeway on this card was not opened until December 1940, I can conclude that this postcard was produced between approximately 1940 and 1945.

In addition to the postcard images, the back of the card description chronicles the message the postcard sender was supposed to share. The back of the “Parkway System near Civic Center Los Angeles,” manufactured for Longshaw Card Co, read, “Fascinating curves and ramps of part of the 630 miles of parkways, locally called ‘freeways,’ to be built in the metropolitan Los Angeles area. The four lanes each way speed three times the traffic with much less accident risk.”²⁴ The photo of the freeway on the front shows very few cars driving. The freeway is surrounded by greenery, an image inconsistent with today’s modern freeways. This postcard promises less traffic and easy movement; however, Los Angeles freeways will instead be known for the opposite.

The focus of these types of freeway-related cards is possibility, because the freeways were still a new phenomenon. These postcards show the freeways as aesthetically and socially valuable. The emphasis on these cards is what the freeway will provide and how it will improve transportation.

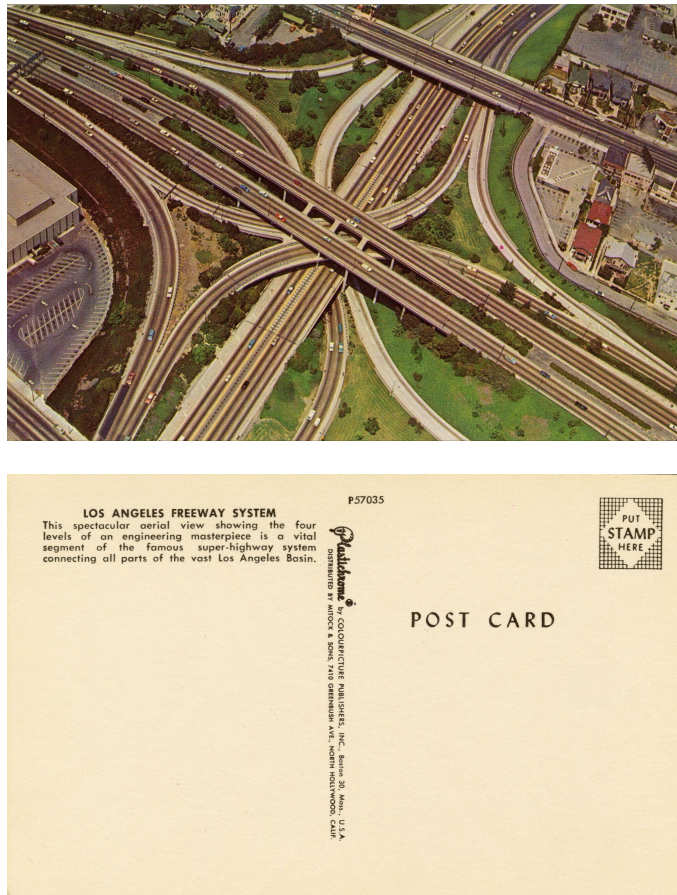
²¹ Haddad, Freewaytopia, 38.

²² “Dating Postcards,” Smithsonian Institution Archives, accessed August, 2024. <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/postcard/dating-postcards>.

²³ “Dating Postcards,” Smithsonian Institution Archive.

²⁴ *Parkway System near Civic Center Los Angeles*, Longshaw Card Co., postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

Celebration of Man-Made Infrastructure



Los Angeles Freeway System, Mitock & Sons, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

The majority of the freeway-related cards in the Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection focus on freeway interchanges and overpasses. These massive junctions are displayed on the postcards as impressive accomplishments of human engineering. In these postcards, the freeway takes up the entire front image; there is no longer any sort of attempt to integrate the freeways with the natural environment. The descriptions on the back of these cards boost the Los Angeles Freeways. Again, using examples of stamped cards as guides, this genre of freeway related cards was produced roughly between the late 1950s to the 1970s.²⁵

²⁵ *Los Angeles, California, Mitock & Sons, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.*

One card produced by Columbia Wholesale Supply showcases “The Stack,” an area that has over four freeway overpasses on top of one another. The description on the back of the postcard reads, “An outstanding job of modern highway engineering. Located near Civic Center in Los Angeles, this hub of major Freeways permits the steady flow of traffic.”²⁶ The emphasis on “outstanding” and “modern highway engineering” further displays the attitude and excitement around the novelty of freeways. There only appears to be one car on the postcard, creating the illusion that this area is easy, carefree, and fast to drive through. Today, these freeway junctions are places of huge amounts of traffic and congestion, with hazardous environmental consequences for the residents who live in their shadow. The creation of a county wide freeway system required the destruction of communities, especially targeting poor communities of color.

In the card, “Los Angeles Freeway System” distributed by Mitock & Sons, the front image gives an impressive aerial view of the interchange between the Harbor, Hollywood, Pasadena, and Santa Anna freeways. The description on the back of the card says, “This spectacular aerial view showing the four levels of an engineering masterpiece is a vital segment of the famous super-highway system connecting all parts of the vast Los Angeles Basin.”²⁷ Once again, this card emphasizes the freeways as an “engineering masterpiece.” These types of cards are consistent with an overall excitement for freeways as a form of man-made brilliance. The construction of freeways boomed post-World War II and created employment in a changing economy.²⁸ The freeways served as a statement of superiority for the city of Los Angeles, embracing the auto culture that boomed, as well as increasing the oil economy, despite the physical consequences to less fortunate Angelenos.

²⁶ *The Stack*, Columbia Wholesale Supply, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

²⁷ *Los Angeles Freeway System*, Mitock & Sons, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

²⁸ The Regional Planning Commission. *Freeways for the Region*. (Los Angeles, CA), 1943, 11. This report served as the blueprint for the Los Angeles Freeway system. This more than 60 page report outlined the entire goals of the freeways and the proposed plans that would later be enacted by city planners.

Images of Constant Movement



Los Angeles, California, Western Publ. & Nov. CO., postcard, Box L-22, Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

The last type of freeway-related postcards in the Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection feature aerial time lapse photos that aim to show the constant movement of freeways. These images are different than the previous types of postcards that had a lack of cars, and only promoted travel on freeways instead of showing it.

In the card "Harbor Freeway at Dusk" distributed by Mitock & Sons and stamped in March of 1970, the image shows cars traveling and all lanes are full of lights of lines across the freeways.²⁹ Another example includes the "Night view of the Harbor Freeway Los Angeles, California," published by Mitock & Sons. This card also shows the movement of one of the

²⁹ *Harbor Freeway at Dusk, Mitock & Sons*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

busiest freeways through a time lapse image.³⁰ These types of cards are very different from their predecessors, given the explicit view of cars driving. These postcards closely relate to the reality of freeways in 2024.

³⁰ *Night view of the Harbor Freeway Los Angeles, California, Mitock & Sons*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

Messages of Dissatisfaction



Freeway Interchange, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

The intended use of postcards is to invite the sender to promote and advertise the image on the front. Postcards are a “visual promotion of tourism” and can even serve as a promotion of new infrastructure and modern cities.³¹ For example, when you send a postcard you are in essence sending a message of encouragement to visit the place from the card. However, the postcards I studied contained messages of dissatisfaction and frustration that explicitly contradicted the image on the front. I found no positive messages about freeways on postcard messages. Instead the selection of personal messages focused on the burdens, challenges, and overwhelming nature of freeways.

³¹ Jordan Girardin, “Rise and fall of the postcard: a history of visual culture in modern tourism,” The University of Edinburgh Centre for the Study of Modern and Contemporary History Blog, October 15, 2017, <https://research.shca.ed.ac.uk/csmch/2017/10/15/rise-and-fall-of-the-postcard-a-history-of-visual-culture-in-modern-tourism/>.

Buried on the backs of some freeway-themed cards are messages of dissatisfaction and frustration with the freeways themselves. These written messages question the practicality of freeways and the validity of images on the front of the postcard themselves. One card stamped in 1964 of the interchange of the Hollywood, Pasadena, and Harbor freeways has a typed message that reads, “I can't guess what time of day they took this picture. Each time I saw this section it was the scene of a rat race which gave me the shivers. I much prefer taking a road with a slower pace.”³² This author shows that even in 1964, the image of the empty quiet freeway on the postcard is inaccurate, instead he describes it as a “rat race,” implying chaos and an activity that creates exhaustion. The author also expresses their support for slower paces, arguing that the freeways are moving too fast, despite that being a prominent and important feature of them, and a feature that city and regional planners regularly emphasized. Another message on a postcard stamped in 1970 of freeways by Union Station distributed by Mitock & Sons asks, “Did you think we got lost in this maze? It's easy to do.”³³ This driver is showing that the freeways are a maze and are not following through on the idea of ease and uninterrupted travel. Similarly in a card stamped on the “Harbor Freeway Looking North From Sixth Street, Los Angeles California” distributed by Western Publishing & Novelty Co, the author writes, “Do you think you could drive here?”³⁴ This message acknowledges that it is not easy to drive on these roads, and instead is something that requires effort. These personal messages show that driving on the freeway itself can be a confusing hassle, not the carefree experience that was advertised. Additionally, these individual messages support my argument that the portal of freeways in postcards contradicts reality.

Finding Freeways in Unexpected Places

In addition to the postcards explicitly about freeways, it is easy to see the impact these structures had on Southern California through other, non-freeway-related postcards. Postcards of Dodger Stadium emphasize its location relative to the newly built freeway system. In a Dodger Stadium postcard distributed by Mitock & Son's the description on the back says, “The magnificent \$18,000,000 structure features 56,000 unobstructed view seats, seven multi-colored levels, and terraced easy access parking for 16,000 cars - and just freeway minutes from everywhere.”³⁵ This is an example of how locations began advertising themselves in relation to the freeways, something that is now common practice.

³² *Freeway Interchange*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

³³ *Los Angeles, California, Mitock & Sons*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

³⁴ *Harbor Freeway Looking North From Sixth Street, Los Angeles California, Western Publishing & Novelty Com.*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

³⁵ *Dodger Stadium - Los Angeles, Calif, Mitock & Sons*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

Another example includes the clipart on the back of a Union Station postcard. The card includes a small icon of the Hollywood Bowl, a woman on a beach, a baseball stadium, city hall, and a freeway interchange.³⁶ These icons show how freeways are seen as an important and unique part of Los Angeles. Postcards from Disneyland show the ride Autopia and the excitement around having a freeway-themed attraction that allows young drivers to experience the thrill of a freeway.

Lastly, postcards advertising for restaurants, hotels, and destinations in Southern California include on the back the location of the place in relation to the freeways one would travel on to visit that business. An example from the “Holloway Motel” distributed by Dexter Color California, Inc, even has a map showing the Golden State, Ventura, and Hollywood freeways with a description reading, “Close to Freeways leading to the many attractions of Southern California.”³⁷ These additional postcards show how freeways start to impact and emerge in the everyday life of Angelenos.

Los Angeles Postcards in 2024

It is difficult to find souvenir postcards in Southern California in 2024. Preliminary research shows that postcards are just not being used or collected as much as they had been in the past. This is consistent with an overall decline in the quantity of postcards that are being sent in the United States.³⁸ It appears that postcards have disappeared from the places that used to sell them such as drugstores, convenience stores, and tourist shops.³⁹

The postcards I encountered in Southern California are cheaper looking photochrom postcards, slightly more blurry and poorer quality images, than their predecessors located in the Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection. In Hollywood souvenir shops in July 2024, it was difficult to find postcards. Some tourist shops, like Hollywood Souvenir Land and Paradise Hollywood did not even sell any postcards. These shops are located on the corner of Hollywood and Highland, one of the most tourist-heavy spots in Los Angeles. La La Land Souvenirs, which has over 30,000 ft of retail space filled with every imaginable plastic souvenir (fake oscars, mugs, shot glasses, cowboy hats, movie posters, etc) only had two postcard racks.⁴⁰ There is an overall lack of variety in shops across Southern California and I would often encounter many shops selling the same mediocre cards. Occasionally, I would encounter postcards for places as far away as Las Vegas. Barnes and Noble in Manhattan Beach off of Rosecrans Ave has one

³⁶ *Union Station*, *Western Publishing & Novelty Com.*, postcard, Box L-27, Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

³⁷ *Holloway Motel*, *Dexter Color California, Inc.*, postcard, Box H-8, Werner von Boltensstern Postcard Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

³⁸ Mark Jenkins, “Are postcards obsolete?,” *The Washington Post*, February 26, 2015.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/are-postcards-a-thing-of-the-past/2015/02/26/a243909a-b945-11e4-aa05-1ce812b3fdd2_story.html.

³⁹ Mark Jenkins, “Are postcards obsolete?”

⁴⁰ “La La Land,” The Hollywood Partnership, accessed July 2024, <https://hollywoodpartnership.com/go/la-la-land>.

postcard stand located in a back corner that was easy to miss, and that I was surprised to find at all. Stores along the Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, and Manhattan Beach Piers sell the same unaesthetic cards. At The Original Farmers Market, the shop Sheltam's Fine Periodicals, sells the same repetitive cards seen at other locations. Copies of "vintage" postcards are sold at LAX's Tom Bradley International Terminal. These cards are poor quality reproductions of mid-20th century postcards of Dodger Stadium, University of Southern California, and Union Station. These "vintage" cards aim to sell a nostalgic image of Southern California.

Despite the lack of new high quality and creative postcards, there are still postcards that emphasize Los Angeles freeways. Some modern postcards that have maps highlighting important freeway routes, like the 405 and the 10. However, these cards are different from the ones found in the boxes which emphasize the freeway as the whole landscape rather than just a part.

Additionally, a couple of modern postcards highlight the freeways through physical techniques. On a modern photochrome card of Hollywood produced by Smith Novelty Company, the freeway is slightly elevated and covered in a glitter texture. This immediately brings the viewer to the freeway by being visualizing and physically appealing. In an overall limited collection of LA postcards, freeways are still a part of the sale and creation of the landscape. Tourists can still buy postcards that celebrate the novelty of freeways.

Significance

Freeways are a huge environmental problem that disproportionately harm marginalized communities, an issue that was not brought up in a single freeway themed postcard I encountered. While all Angelenos live with the negative effects of pollution and poor air quality, communities of color have experienced the consequences of Los Angeles's sprawling highways system even more significantly. Boyle Heights, a primarily Latino neighborhood in East LA, has a disproportionately high amount of land covered by freeways. Professor of History, Dr. Gilbert Estrada writes "within the City of Los Angeles, freeways account for about 4 percent of the total land surface of streets and highways ... In Boyle Heights, over 50 percent of the area is utilized for freeways and industrial zoning."⁴¹ The overwhelming burden of freeway-covered land means that residents are more exposed to the physical consequences of freeways, such as smog and noise pollution. This is one of many examples of how freeways continue to be an environmental justice problem.

These postcards romanticize freeways as modern, man-made, famous, and efficient, when they would be better described as places of hazard. People bought, collected, sold, and sent these freeway-related images, and continue to do so. This research fits into a larger historical narrative on freeways as part of the built environment and shows one example of the cultural work that

⁴¹ Gilbert Estrada, "If You Build It, They Will Move: The Los Angeles Freeway System and the Displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles, 1944-1972." *Southern California Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (2005): 287-315.

promoted freeways. Freeways do not provide ease and uninterrupted travel, like these postcards suggest but instead continue to be places of traffic, pollution, and injustice.

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