



**ARCADIA PUBLISHING**  
Laurie D. Butcher, Publicity Manager  
224 State Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
Phone: (603) 436-7564  
Fax: (603) 436-7611  
lbutcher@arcadiapublishing.com  
www.arcadiapublishing.com

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## **An Interview with the Author of *York***

### **How did you come up with the idea for the book?**

I was writing another book, *York's Historic Buildings*. As my first draft was nearing completion, I looked into publishing options. In my local bookstore I found over 20 Arcadia titles and researched the company's Web site. After obtaining the Writers' Guidelines, it was clear that the business model wouldn't work for the architecture book. However, I've been collecting postcards of York for several years and when I learned about Arcadia's Postcard History series, a new book idea was born!

### **How long did the project take?**

This book was on the fast track from its inception. Other than the sample captions included in my book proposal, I did not begin writing the book until the book proposal was accepted. I received notification that my book proposal was approved on January 31, 2005. My cover materials were due 11 days later. The completed text and scans (I did all the scanning myself) were delivered on March 8, 2005, so the project took about five weeks.

### **What new things did you learn about your subject from researching the book? (Did anything surprise you? Did you uncover any lost hidden treasures or secrets?)**

I've been photographing and writing about York for much of the past decade. Still, there is always something new to learn. The vast majority of my research and writing has been about architecture, and postcards of older (or long-gone) buildings have made up the bulk of my collection. Much of my newfound knowledge relates to York's parks and the Codorus Creek. For instance, I knew nothing of Highland Park. This park was a major attraction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was owned by the local streetcar company. Originally a picnic grounds, it grew into a full-fledged amusement park with roller coaster, carousel, live theater and "moving picture" theater, and more. Yet I never even knew it existed until I began this project.

I also learned much about Penn Park. Unfortunately, the Penn Park of today bares little resemblance to the Penn Park of 100 years ago. Picturesque fountains, lush landscaping, and an attractive bandstand once made Penn Park the center of recreation in the City of York. But the fountains and bandstand were removed several decades ago. Interestingly, while working on this project a local group approached me to learn of any postcards I may have come across featuring Penn Park. I had quite a few and provided them for use at a workshop on the park. These images provided inspiration to the attendees for what the park can one day become again!

Likewise, I was very surprised about the number of published postcards that featured the Codorus Creek. I learned that "boat clubs" were very popular in early 20th-century York. I learned of boat parades – primarily decorated canoes – through downtown York. It has been

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both entertaining and interesting sharing these stories with people. Most have never heard of Highland Park or the existence of boat clubs along the Codorus, so it is nice to share my newfound knowledge.

#### **Why do you think people will enjoy the book?**

*York* provides a wonderful glimpse into York's past. For older residents, it will be a trip down memory lane. These are the people who lived in the York depicted in the postcards. For younger residents, it will provide an education of sorts. Some people really don't know what York once was. They may work in a downtown office building not even realizing that it was once a popular department store. For anyone interested in redevelopment, it will provide a "roadmap." York has experienced much recent success with downtown redevelopment, but there is much more to be done. The images in these postcards will provide inspiration and motivation, as well as new (and old) ideas.

I've had the opportunity to speak with some building owners of sites and properties featured in the book. One couldn't wait to get a copy of the book because he had renovated a building back to its original appearance – that of the building featured in the postcard. Another building owner was so excited to learn what had stood on the site of his present building.

#### **What will the media find most interesting about the book?**

York is fortunate in that there have been many books written about its history, but the books have been text-heavy, or focused on a certain period (for instance, York was Capital of Revolutionary America and the largest northern town occupied in the Civil War). But *York* is unique for two reasons: first, it is a visual history. Second, it focuses on York in the early-to-mid-20th century – a period that hasn't been heavily covered in books.

The book also ties in with a lot of the current "redevelopment energy" in central Pennsylvania. Local papers and business journals are constantly reporting about various initiatives and projects: redevelopment of long-vacant sites, renovation of historic buildings, and return of public spaces to their original splendor.

#### **Please feel free to add anything else you think is pertinent for readers to know.**

I'm a buff of historic architecture. That is one of the great things about living in York – the Pennsylvania Deutsh (Dutch) can be stubborn people, and that stubbornness has resulted in a "slow to change" mentality. In the case of local buildings, this has preserved buildings that might otherwise have fallen to development. Most towns and cities in the northeast and mid-Atlantic have lost much of their historic architectural fabric due to aggressive development. York is remarkably well-preserved. Almost every style of historic American architecture can be found in the greater York area. One that can't, however, can be found in the pages of *York*. The High Victorian Gothic York City Market is no longer standing, but its memory is preserved. I truly hope that readers of *York* will be inspired to save and restore our architectural gems. My wife jokingly calls me "Mr. York" – even the basement of our house is filled with York photographs, posters, books, and memorabilia. So perhaps it is destiny that I married a two-time Miss York County!