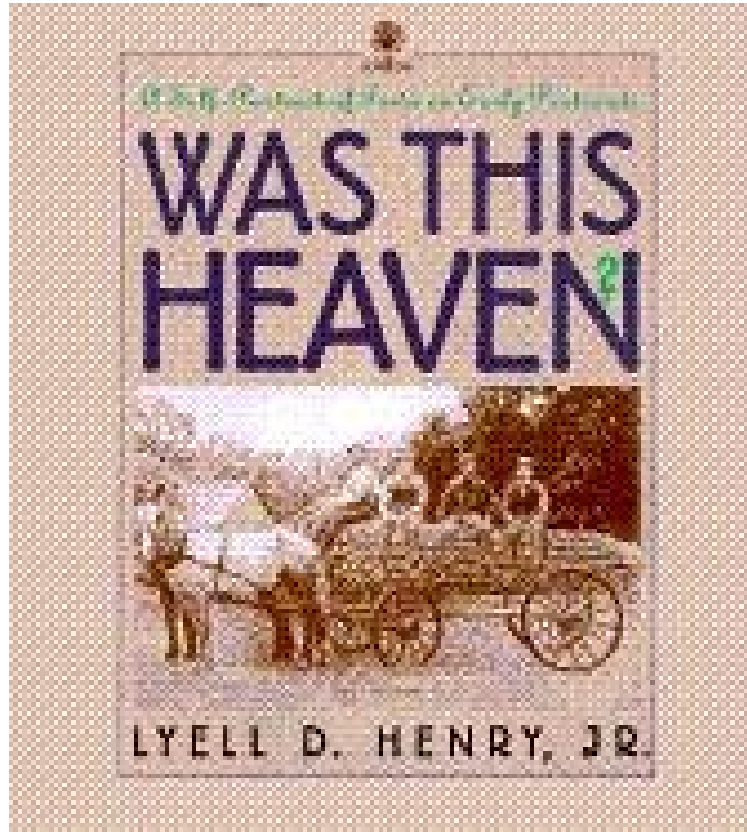


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## Was This Heaven?: A Self-Portrait of Iowa on Early Postcards (Bur Oak Book)

Lyell D. Jr. Henry

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**Lyell D. Jr. Henry : Was This Heaven?: A Self-Portrait of Iowa on Early Postcards (Bur Oak Book)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Was This Heaven?: A Self-Portrait of Iowa on Early Postcards (Bur Oak Book):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful Look at Early Iowa By Patricia Cummings I love Lyell Henry's book, "Was This Heaven?". There is no better way to tell a story than to add photos. Gathered in one volume is a wonderful collection of approximately two hundred old, black and white postcards from the first decades of the twentieth century that offer up a slice of Americana and a whimsical look at Iowa's rich past. Naturally, there are images of cows. Perhaps one of my favorite postcards depicts a prize hog. The reader sees marching bands, words of songs, a rack of chickens being loaded onto a railroad car and people engaged in the usual hometown activities such as Sunday school and Memorial Day services, but so much more! History is delivered up, postcard by postcard. Interspersed throughout the book are essays that place these objects of material culture within a greater context. The entire book is delightful and one that is fun to read whether one is an Iowan or just someone who appreciates American history.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Iowans all across the Hawkeye State succumbed to the nationwide craze for exchanging photographic postcards, mailing each other thousands of images—serious and whimsical—of Uncle Bob and Baby Dora, the Sunday school outing, train wrecks, the Fourth of July celebration, the merchants' carnival, the record-setting blizzard following the bin-busting harvest, the new courthouse, Ackley's Sauer-Kraut Band. Now, thanks to the generosity of David A. Wilson, whose ample collection of photographic cards would be the envy of those early Iowans, Lyell Henry has organized more than two hundred postcards into eight reflective chapters that create a beguiling collective portrait of Iowa life and culture from 1905 to 1919.

From the Back Cover *Was This Heaven?* provides detailed depictions of homes and clothing and hairstyles, of celebrations and ceremonies, of church, school, and social activities, of farm animals and city streets, of the multitudinous ways of living full and satisfying lives. Lyell Henry wisely gives priority to people over place, shortchanging public buildings in favor of cards that cast a more direct light on early Iowans' lives and minds. Last spring's flood, the Christmas tree in the parlor, high school graduation, the annual family picnic, the whistle-stop visit of President Taft, and true-life encounters with gigantic hogs and outsize ears of corn all combine to form a pleasantly rich visual record of the mental and physical worlds of the many Iowans featured. These postcards convey images of people who found great joy in their daily lives. With the publication of *Was This Heaven?* Iowans at the end of the twentieth century can look back across the decades and recapture that same joy in these fresh and effervescent images.