



Down the Ocean: Postcards from Maryland and Delaware Beaches

Professor Bert Smith

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In this companion to his book *Greetings from Baltimore*, Bert Smith takes us on a tour of summers past in Ocean City, Maryland, and the nearby Delaware beaches, where vacationers have been going for more than a century to find sun, surf, and souvenirs. *Down the Ocean* offers a wonderful selection of charming postcard scenes of the early days of these resort towns, when visitors held tight to safety lines and bravely entered the water dressed in heavy woolen bathing suits. It also takes us through the decades that followed, when automobiles and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge made jaunts to the ocean more convenient and brought changes that transformed the mid-Atlantic coast.

Accompanied by Bert Smith's engaging account of local history and lore, the images assembled here document not just the appearance of beach towns but also the feel of beach life from years gone by. Some postcards from the first half of the twentieth century were individually hand colored, and many display photographic tricks, illustrated embellishments, humorous cartoons, or unique design elements -- making them far more evocative than mere snapshots.

These postcards capture views of Ocean City's grand hotels of the past, such as the Atlantic, the Plimhimmon, the Stephen Decatur, and the Commander, as well as smaller cottages, motels, and boardwalk businesses. Many of these structures have been destroyed by fires, storms, or the ravages of time; others have been altered beyond recognition or replaced by condominiums. Whether you seek saltwater taffy, a carousel ride, a moonlight stroll on the boardwalk, or a quiet view of a historic lighthouse, you'll find it all, then as now, "down the ocean."

"Some of the happiest postcards are those saved or sent from our summer vacations at the ocean. With bright or faded images of the beach and sun and short messages like 'the weather's hot,' 'the water's cold,' and 'the fish are biting,' these colorful souvenirs can instantly take us back to warm breezes, hot sand between our toes, and the smell of french fries and fresh saltwater taffy... You can almost hear the ragtime pianos of the pre-World War I years as you turn over a softly colored card of the old Atlantic Hotel and read the greeting put down in an elegant, flourishing hand, in real ink that flowed from a fountain pen in 1910, or imagine crowds jitterbugging to the joyful jive and swing of the big bands in the 1940s when you see a glowing technicolor linen-textured card of Rehoboth Avenue, with its wartime message hurriedly scribbled in pencil."
-- from the Introduction

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