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## Route 15 postcards make up book ABOUT THE BOOK

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BY DONNIE JOHNSTON

Josie Ballato, always a student of local history, began collecting old postcards of Culpeper in 2003 as a means of taking her mother back in time.

“Using these cards, I was able to show my mother images that she could tell me stories about,” says Ballato, a 1977 Culpeper High School graduate who has worked in Washington for the Patent and Trademark Office for the past 18 years.

Ballato, who now lives in Falls Church, says it is unfortunate that her mother, Madge, who died last year, didn’t live to see her daughter’s postcard collection made into a book titled “Along Virginia’s Route 15.”

The 128-page softcover edition hits bookstores and online outlets today, just in time for the Christmas season. It contains more than 200 vintage postcards that cover U.S. 15 from the Maryland state line to Albemarle County.

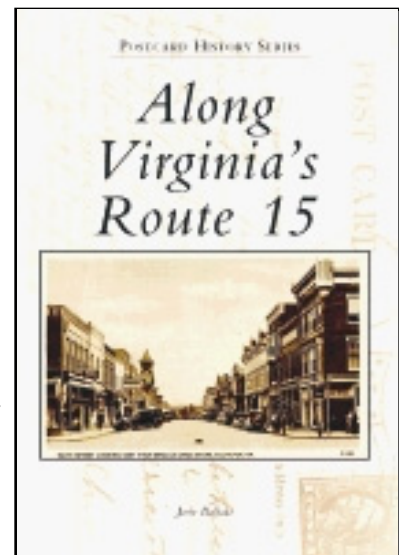
“The book is designed to encourage tourism in the Virginia Piedmont with particular emphasis on the counties of Loudoun, Fauquier, Culpeper, Orange and Albemarle,” Ballato says.

The first-time author says she became interested in the project when she became involved in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area movement.

“It was something I thought was a really interesting topic,” the Air Force Academy graduate explains.

But her publisher was not interested in a postcard book that traced U.S. 15 from Pennsylvania to Charlottesville, which the Hallowed Ground movement seeks to promote and protect. A Loudoun-to-Albemarle route, however, was doable and Ballato got the go-ahead.

Since the author’s original postcard collection had focused on Culpeper, Orange and Madison counties, she was now faced with the challenge of finding postcards from Fauquier and Loudoun and digging up their associated history.



This book by Josie Ballato grew out of her collection of old postcards.

First there was the search for postcards, both in antique shops and on the Internet. Then came the long hours of research.

“I really didn’t know much about Leesburg when I started,” she admits, recalling numerous weekend trips to study the spots where postcard photos were taken. “I learned so much by doing that. I could bring the story together in my own mind.”

Ballato’s book takes a few side trips off U.S. 15 with old postcards from historic communities such as Waterford, Middleburg and The Plains.

The author says she has a strong interest in the vintage postcard era, roughly 1890 to 1930.

“Postcards of that era show the last moment in time before the big highways and interstates came along and you still had a truly rural society,” she says.

Many of the postcards in Ballato’s collection are of the “linen” variety. Although they all appear in black and white in the book, original black-and-white photographs appeared in color on postcards.

“They were sent to either Baltimore or to Germany, hand-colored and given the linen effect,” she says.

During the early part of the 20th century, almost every community had postcards of its prominent landmarks, and they were usually on sale at every restaurant and drugstore in that town.

Ballato says she didn’t plan to embark upon a writing career until after she retired, but her postcard collection opened the door six years sooner than she expected.

And she is happy with confining her book to Virginia’s U.S. 15 corridor.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed the project,” she says.

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TITLE: “Along Virginia’s Route 15” DETAILS: 128-page softcover edition with more than 200 vintage postcards of scenes along U.S. 15 from the Maryland state line to Albemarle County  
AUTHOR: Josie Ballato PUBLISHER: Arcadia Publishing PRICE: \$21.99 AVAILABILITY: Being released today in bookstores and online. To order directly, contact Arcadia at 888/313-2665 or visit the Net at [arcadiapublishing.com](http://arcadiapublishing.com).

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