

“increasingly convinced that the tourism effort was an industry itself ... and more conscious of the need to produce a tourism product that would not disappoint people” (p. 156). The means through which this was achieved was the commodification of history for both international and domestic consumption. If current advertising is any indication, this situation predominates in the industry today.

As fine as Dawson’s analysis is, the reader is left with a number of questions unanswered. While Dawson clearly states in his introduction that his study is not intended “to provide a comprehensive history of tourism in British Columbia” (p. 12), and he recognizes the limitation on his sources, it would have been interesting to see what, if anything, oral history could bring to the discussion (either that of tourists or some former tourism promoters). There is also a question of the role of film in Dawson’s thesis. While he does briefly discuss the British Columbia Tourist Bureau films of 1942 and 1964 and how they demonstrate the growing commodification of Native culture, these could have been explored in greater depth and the discussion expanded to include earlier attempts by provincial and federal motion picture bureaus.

These minor criticisms aside, *Selling British Columbia* will no doubt spur a plethora of further studies on the development of tourism in Canada and the relationship between mass consumerism and the commoditization of leisure.

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ELVINS, Sarah — *Sales & Celebrations: Retailing and Regional Identity in Western New York State, 1920–1940*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. Pp. 222.

This imaginatively conceived work sets out to explore a question that may appear “deceptively simple”, as the author playfully acknowledges. The answer is anything but. “How national was the national market of the 1920s and 1930s?” Sarah Elvins asks in her important study of mass consumption and consumerism in early-twentieth-century America that invites us to rethink the power of the local in mediating the pressures and allures of mass culture (p. xiii). Turning her critical lenses to two medium-sized cities in western New York State — Buffalo and Rochester — Elvins uncovers the story of independent merchants and department store owners who did not simply succumb to the homogenizing force of a national market, but rather embraced it selectively and on their own terms. Adopting “a language of localism”, retailers in Buffalo and Rochester insisted that they alone could understand local needs and desires. While Elvins acknowledges the mercenary quality of such assertions that fashioned local identity into yet another “powerful selling tool”, she demonstrates — in a richly textured narrative — how and why place continued to matter, for retailers and consumers alike. The department stores that dotted the central business districts of Rochester and Buffalo, she argues, shaped their cities’ cultural and physical landscapes “in ways that their New York and Chicago counterparts did not” (p. xv) and acted as local boosters, cultural brokers, and sites of entertainment and education.

In vivid prose, the author evokes the glamour of early department stores in Buffalo and Rochester whose innovative lighting and communication systems made them models of modernity, while marketing strategies remained finely attuned to the needs of the local community. Local icons such as Mr. Brigham of the toy department at Barnum's sold rocking horses to generations of Buffalo boys, while Cy — the famed delivery horse of Sibley's in Rochester — trotted the city's streets until 1938. To make the experience of shopping both personal and memorable, local department stores featured restaurants and tearooms, housed public library branches on their premises, arranged social appointments for out-of-town visitors eager to reconnect with local friends and relatives, and offered full delivery service three times a day.

In championing a new ideology of consumption, department stores in Rochester and Buffalo shared in a nation-wide trend. Yet, as Elvins suggests, unlike their big-city counterparts, merchants in western New York State framed their contributions to their local communities in a specifically local way. Eschewing the grand rhetoric of progressive business practices, they committed themselves to local causes. A "Soldiers' Picture Window" at Sibley's in Rochester paid tribute to the young men fighting abroad in 1917 and 1918, while retailers in Buffalo coordinated the commemoration of Armistice Day. Stores sponsored local charity events and took the lead in promoting local industries, as Sibley's did in 1927 with its theme week "What Rochester Makes — Makes Rochester" that became an annual tradition.

In probing the commercial spaces of the early-twentieth-century urban landscape, the author travels territory previously charted by William Leach, Susan Porter Benson, Kathy Peiss, and Lizabeth Cohen (although her study adds many a charming example to earlier works that instructors in American history will hasten to add to their lecture notes). It is in her close reading of national trade journals, her nuanced examination of the arrival of chain stores at the local scene, and her analysis of the "language of localism" in the era of the Great Depression that Elvins makes her most original contributions.

Trade papers such as the *Dry Goods Journal*, the *Merchandise Manager*, and the *Department Store Buyer*, Elvins asserts, "aimed for a truly national perspective on the retailing industry" and "featured sales ideas from every part of the nation" (pp. 48–49). Although smaller stores were advised to adopt modern management techniques and systematize their merchandising strategies, they were also counselled to remain true to their own "personality". The dynamic tensions between hub and hinterland came to the fore in a piece of satire that evoked the golden days, just out of reach, of a close, personal relationship between Buffalo stores and customers that no modern retailing methods could possibly match. But if there existed an undercurrent of resistance to the trend to rationalization, retailers in Buffalo and Rochester also took advantage of modern channels of communication, such as the flourishing women's magazines that brought the latest styles and fashions to medium-sized cities.

Rather than fostering a dependence on the nation's centres of fashion, the author argues, these magazines allowed local department stores to bypass New York and go straight "to the source of fashion". In Paris, specially employed buyers bought clothes and fashionable goods and shipped them directly to the clothes racks of Buffalo's and Rochester's department stores. The relationship between the local and the

national thus worked both ways, Elvins suggests. While local fashions came to be modelled after national trends, local department stores carved out their own spaces of modernity, “taking the best of what the mass market had to offer but presenting themselves as the old-fashioned remnants of a bygone retail era” (p. 76).

So deeply engrained was the “language of localism” in Buffalo and Rochester that chain stores, too, adopted it as a successful marketing device. The Loblaws grocery chain, which expanded to Buffalo in 1925, took pains to point out that it was “contributing to the success of Buffalo as a city” and employed “Buffalo workmen, in the erection of stores”. Local stores, in turn, portrayed the unwelcome competitors as “foreign interlopers” whose loyalty was owed to “far-off bureaucracies” (pp. 97, 105). In the era of Depression, then, the rhetoric of local sentiment and community service was used to bolster local consumption. A “Pledge for Prosperity” in Rochester and a city-wide “Buffalo Day” portrayed consumption as a civic duty and urged local citizens to spend their way out of the Depression.

Tightly argued, this study seamlessly integrates findings from Buffalo and Rochester sources into a persuasive narrative. If the author occasionally seems to overstate her case, as in her discussion of the advantageous alliance between national brands and local department stores in chapter 4, this is a minor quibble, as is the observation that the fine photographs and illustrations could have been usefully integrated throughout the book. In timely fashion, Sarah Elvins has reminded us that “the local continued (and continues) to matter” (p. 172), be it the age of nationalism or the global pressures of our own times.

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EPP, Marlene, Franca IACOVETTA, and Frances SWYRIPA, eds. — *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Pp. 418.

This is a highly informative collection of essays. Conceived as a response to and continuation of sociologist Jean Burnet’s pioneering volume on ethnic women’s history that appeared in 1986 (*Looking into My Sister’s Eyes: An Exploration in Women’s History*), this new book seeks to go beyond the female immigrant experience in Canadian history and ask new questions. As the title suggests, the main question addressed is the degree to which marginalized immigrant women may be portrayed as sisters to their white Canadian female hosts in Canada’s past. Inspired by feminist scholarship and critical race studies, the book includes essays on Japanese, Chinese, Black African, Aboriginal, British, Irish, Finnish, Ukrainian, Italian, Jewish, Mennonite, Armenian, and South Asian Hindu women. This diversity of subjects and the long period covered by the articles are among the book’s strengths, yet, as is often the case in such collaborative efforts — a total of 19 female scholars contribute to the 17 essays — the articles are of varying quality.

The book is loosely organized into six parts, which, taken together, span a period