

chapter nevertheless raises many more questions than it answers because, unlike that of earlier chapters, the analysis is at a much higher level of abstraction. Clearly, the idea of citizenship as rights-based does not necessarily render micro-level practices more humanitarian and compassionate. Even the stark statistics on child poverty tell us that, as far as children are concerned, rights to safety do not necessarily coincide even with their access to basic necessities of life. This concluding chapter also leaves one wondering: what has happened in between? What were the key turning points of knowledge and practices? What genealogical moments shaped the more recent setting? What points of contestation and resistance did they encourage? This chapter is very much a call for more research to fill these gaps. In *Tending the Gardens*, Chen has provided researchers with powerful and innovative tools to build upon and extend this important contribution to knowledge.

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DAWSON, Michael — *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890–1970*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004. Pp. 274.

With the academic year over, I figured I was due for a brief vacation before the summer research season began. I surfed the web and began to see what Canada could offer. I was soon inundated, regardless of region, with slogans such as “It’s All in Our Nature”, “Escape Everyday”, and other assorted promotions assuring me that nature, urban escape, and history were all packaged in only this (or that) destination. Even historical sites attempted to lure me with a combination of world-class re-creations of the fur trade and a rock concert featuring April Wine, Glass Tiger, and Honeymoon Suite. These were not the types of vacations I remember from childhood, or were they? They also begged the question: how often do we really think about the origin or reason for these advertisements and when did leisure become such a commodity?

In *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890–1970*, Michael Dawson provides a stimulating exploration of exactly these questions in his examination of how tourism promotion in British Columbia developed between 1890 and 1970. The purpose of the book is simple, yet compelling: “examine and explain the transformation of tourism promotion from a specialized form of civic boosterism to an economic strategy geared to the provision of mass-produced goods and services that are fully enmeshed with a culture of consumption” (p. 10). Dawson’s exploration of trade magazines and the records of individuals and government agencies involved in tourism promotion goes beyond being a chronicle of an industry’s development to make a valuable contribution to the growing discourse on the culture of consumption and the commodification of leisure in Canada.

By means of introduction, Dawson provides an in-depth examination of both tourists and tourism promoters to demonstrate that, while tourism today is driven and measured by the amount of money spent, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century its rationale was very different. Early tourism promotion, according to

Dawson, was tied closely to issues of modernity and anti-modernity, but largely driven by civic boosterism. His examination of promoters in Victoria and Vancouver reveals that the central message promised both modernity and the escapism of travel. But, Dawson suggests, “feelings of awe toward the sublimity of nature also engendered a desire to conquer the very topography that produced these feelings” (p. 21).

This changed shortly after the First World War. The interwar years, Dawson demonstrates in his analysis, “ushered in a new era of tourist travel in North America as railway transportation and hotel accommodation yielded pride of place to the automobile and the auto camp” (p. 43). He ably shows through his scrutiny of promotional material that civic boosterism gave way to “a more urban approach to advertising” (p. 43). This change, Dawson argues, was in keeping with continental trends of tourism promotion that moved away from written description to more visual displays. Perhaps most interesting is Dawson’s discussion that, in contrast to today’s embrace of images and other “things native”, tourist promoters in the first decades of the twentieth century shunned such images. In addition, in contrast to what previous studies have suggested, while tourism declined slightly during the Great Depression, it did not disappear.

Selling British Columbia explores the establishment and activities of the British Columbia Government Travel Bureau between 1935 and 1939 and convincingly argues that “the advent of large-scale government intervention in the tourist industry would confirm a transformation in the nature of tourism promotion — from a variant of boosterism to a crusade in pursuit of a direct cash infusion on the part of consumers” (pp. 78–79). While in part recognizing tourism’s importance to the provincial economy, promoters during the period were mainly not those profiting directly from increasing levels of tourism, but “were primarily civic-minded politicians and business leaders imbued with a more organic conception of their place within society” (p. 81). In essence, tourism became for many the answer to economic difficulties and one largely geared to attracting Americans north.

Like other aspects of the Canadian economy, the tourism industry in British Columbia was not spared from the upheaval and changes that followed the Second World War. According to Dawson, the post-war period brought new challenges and new approaches to promoting the tourist industry in British Columbia. In fact, *Selling British Columbia* argues that two distinct phases emerged in the immediate post-war period. The first phase represented an attempt by tourism promoters to “sustain earlier levels of tourist travel in the province”. The second was “marked by a concerted attempt to inculcate in American soldiers and civilians a desire to visit British Columbia once the war was over” (p. 120). Through his examination of the central role of the British Columbia Government Tourist Bureau, Dawson shows how the tourism industry was further commodified through the classification and cataloguing of the province’s attractions. Promoters essentially looked to the future, saw the potential for a post-war boom in tourism, and attempted to put themselves into a position to capitalize when it occurred.

What, exactly, was being promoted? This became increasingly an issue in the post-war period. Tourism promoters between 1956 and 1970 sought to differentiate themselves from efforts south of the border. In addition, tourism promoters became

“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.