

**In compliance with the  
Canadian Privacy Legislation  
some supporting forms  
may have been removed from  
this dissertation.**

**While these forms may be included  
in the document page count,  
their removal does not represent  
any loss of content from the dissertation.**





VISUALISING THE HISTORY OF WOMEN AT EATON'S,  
1869 TO 1976

Lorraine Frances O'Donnell  
Department of History  
McGill University, Montreal

November, 2002

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

© Lorraine Frances O'Donnell, 2002



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file* *Votre référence*  
*ISBN: 0-612-88543-7*  
*Our file* *Notre référence*  
*ISBN: 0-612-88543-7*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this dissertation.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de ce manuscrit.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the dissertation.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

**Canada**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....vii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....ix

LIST OF TABLES.....xi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....xii

INTRODUCTION.....1

The Eaton's company records

Parts and chapters of the thesis

Literature review

Conclusion: Contribution of the present dissertation

PART I: EATON'S ABROAD

CHAPTER

1. THE EATON COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES ABROAD.....52

The development of foreign buying under Timothy Eaton, 1869-1907

Expansion of the foreign buying system under John Craig Eaton,  
1907-1922

Changes and constrictions in R. Y. Eaton's era, 1922-42

A new period of expansion under John David Eaton, 1942-1969

*PART I: EATON'S ABROAD (CONT'D)*

CHAPTER

2. NO PLACE FOR ITS WOMEN? EATON'S, JAPAN AND  
THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE.....77
  - Developing contacts in Japan: The 1890s to the 1910s
  - Displacement in Japan: Effects of the 1923 earthquake and the  
Second World War
  - Uneasy reconciliation with Japan: The post-war period
  
3. EATON'S IN EUROPE: A MODERN MIDDLE SPACE FOR MEN  
AND WOMEN.....137
  - The Nineteenth Century: Timothy Eaton and the Masculinity of  
Foreign Enterprise
  - European buying becomes systematized, 1907-1940s
  - Gender and modernity during and after World War II
  
4. CLOSE TO HOME: THE LURE OF THE UNITED STATES AT  
EATON'S.....199
  - Managing a business: Ideas and imports from the United States from  
Timothy Eaton's era until World War II
  - Eaton's men and women engage with the American  
spectacle of consumption, 1939-1959

PART II: EATON'S IN CANADA

CHAPTER

5. EATON'S OPERATIONS IN CANADA.....251  
    The First Fifty Years  
    The Next Six Decades

6. EATON'S STORES AND CATALOGUES: A WOMEN'S  
Spectacle.....297  
    The Stores  
    The Catalogue

7. A SMALL WORLD: THE REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN  
IN CANADA ON THE EATON'S CATALOGUE COVERS.....352  
    1. Women were the main customers of Eaton's  
    2. Eaton's was a main engine of Canadian development  
    3. Women were key actors in developing Canada

8. EATON'S REPRESENTS THE FOREIGN WORLD AND ITS  
PRODUCTS.....398  
    Eaton's represents foreign places and products  
    Messages about women in the marketing of foreign places and  
    products  
    Messages about Eaton's in this marketing material

CONCLUSION.....	438
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	451
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	468
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	469

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the place of female customers and employees at the T. Eaton Company of Canada between 1869 and 1976. The central argument is that the word “witness” conveys well the nature of their place in this, one of the most important retail firms in Canadian history. Women were witnesses *for* the Eaton's and its development. They attested to and consolidated the company by collectively supporting it in huge numbers, whether as customers or personnel. Women were also key eyewitnesses *of* Eaton's, of its merchandise and marketing, its stores and catalogues. As the word “witness” suggests, *visuality* was central to women's central place. Women bought into the Eaton's buying and selling strategies that privileged appearances, and the company assumed and fostered this visually-centered role, helping to construct it and encouraging women to adopt it. The Introduction to the thesis reviews the substantial literature on the company's history. The main body of the thesis is divided in two. Part I examines the company's foreign activities and the role of women therein. Following a description of the firm's foreign buying system is an examination of three of its main regions: Japan, Europe and the U.S.A. The closer the region was to Canada, the more familiar it was to Eaton's, the more female Eatonians were employed there, and the more these women were able carve out a niche for themselves as expert witnesses like fashion buyers or fashion reporters. Part II discusses the place of women in the company's activities within Canada. First, it outlines the history of and tensions between the company's two main retail sites: stores and catalogues. While run by men, these sites were “spectacles of women” including salesclerks, mannequins and customers. Examples considered in depth are Eaton's catalogue covers and store displays for foreign goods and places. They privileged female imagery, a strategy meant to add value both to the merchandise and the public reputation of the company.

\* \* \*



Cette thèse examine la place des femmes, clientes et employées, à la compagnie Eaton entre 1869 et 1976. L'argument central est que le mot « témoin » exprime bien la nature de leur place dans cette compagnie de vente au détail extrêmement importante dans l'histoire canadienne. Les femmes étaient témoins *pour* la compagnie et son développement. Composant la majorité de ses clients et aussi une grande partie de son personnel, elles ont attesté pour Eaton tout en la consolidant. De plus, les femmes étaient les témoins clés *de* la compagnie, sa marchandise, sa publicité, ses magasins et ses catalogues. L'aspect visuel était une caractéristique importante de la position des femmes. Les femmes ont adhéré aux principes de stratégies d'achat et de vente privilégiant les apparences ; Eaton a encouragé et renforcé ce rôle centré sur les apparences. La compagnie a alors participé à la construction d'un rôle « visualisé » pour les femmes, et aussi à son adoption. L'introduction de la thèse analyse la littérature substantielle sur l'histoire de la compagnie. Le corpus central de la thèse se divise en deux. La première partie examine les activités étrangères de la compagnie et le rôle des femmes au sein de ces activités. Après une description de l'histoire du système d'achat à l'étranger suit une étude de trois de ses régions principales : le Japon, l'Europe, et les États Unis. Plus la région était proche du Canada, le mieux était-elle connue, et le plus de femmes étaient employées dans cette région. Quelques femmes se sont créés une niche spéciale comme « témoins expertes » de la mode, soit comme acheteuses ou reporters sur les tendances. La deuxième partie de la thèse examine la place des femmes chez Eaton au Canada. D'abord on discute de l'histoire de ses deux sites de vente principaux : magasins et catalogues. Dirigés par les hommes, ces sites étaient des « spectacles de femmes » incluant les vendeuses, les mannequins et les clientes. On examine ensuite les couvertures des catalogues et les étalages de marchandise importée. Ces couvertures et étalages privilégient l'imagerie féminine pour ajouter à la valeur de la marchandise, mais aussi à la réputation publique de la compagnie elle-même.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Timothy Eaton and Son John Craig Eaton in the Private Office, 1899.....	475
2. Yokohama Buying Office Staff, 1919.....	476
3. Yokohama Buying Office, 1919.....	477
4. Mrs. Doreen Day of the Montreal Fashion Bureau, c. 1943-1953.....	478
5. Housefurnishings Office Staff, Including Bob Hill, Sadie Heatrick and Miss Stagg, 194_.....	479
6. Male Eaton's Buyers in Switzerland Inspecting Watches, 196_.....	480
7. New York Buying Office Building, 1929.....	481
8. Crowd of Shoppers outside of the Toronto Store, 1913.....	482
9. Shoppers Viewing Exhibit of "Bluey" the Kangaroo, May-June 1947.....	483
10. Women in Cash Office, ca. 1904.....	484
11. Barbara Duckworth of the Public Relations Office with Fashion Model Veruschka at a Press Conference, Royal York Hotel, Toronto, 14 March 1968.....	485

12. "Eaton's Mail Order System Covers Canada from Sea to Sea," Toronto Catalogue Cover, Spring-Summer 1904.....	486
13. Crowds looking at Coronation Window Display, Toronto, 1937.....	487
14. Window Display of Women's Clothes including Kimono, 1962 or 1963.. ..	488
15. "From the Markets of the World Comes Merchandise to Eaton's of Canada," Display at Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, 1947.....	489

LIST OF TABLES

1. Number of Female and Male Staff Members in London Buying Office, ca. 192_.....	158
2. Toronto and Hamilton-Based Women and Men on European Buying Trips, 1927-40. ....	160
3. London, Manchester and Paris Buying Office Employees in the Military during World War II: Dates of Enlistment and Employment after the War.....	168
4. Purchases for 1955, Toronto Chinaware and Glassware.....	185
5. Female and Male Employees Travelling to the U.S.A., 1895-97. ....	209
6. Number of Female and Male Staff Members in New York Buying Office, 1913 to 1917.....	214
7. Women in Senior Positions in the New York Buying office, 1930s to 1950s.....	237
8. Subjects of the 14 Male-Centred Covers of the Eaton's Toronto Catalogues .. ....	360
9. Subjects of the 63 Female-Centred Covers of the Eaton's Toronto Catalogues....	361

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was fortunate to have excellent collegial and professional support as I worked on this dissertation. My first thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Andrée Lévesque, whose unflagging wisdom, good humour and interest sustained me throughout. The warm support and intelligent feedback of André Drainville, who read a draft of the dissertation, eased the whole process. My colleagues affiliated with the Montreal History Group at McGill University, especially Donald Fyson, Tamara Myers, Mary Anne Poutanen, Jarrett Rudy and Brian Young provided me with a friendly community of scholars. Also, Kathryn Harvey of this group provided research assistance in the form of collecting advertisements of Eaton's in Montreal newspapers and notes on various archival fonds in the National Archives (Ottawa) with information on Eaton's. My brother Gerry O'Donnell kindly read through and edited a draft of the dissertation. Cheryl Moore edited the footnotes expertly. At the Archives of Ontario, staff members Karen Bergsteinson, Carolyn Heald, Mary Ledwell, Christine Bourolias, Janice Simpson, Rick Stapleton and Larry Weiler were always accommodating. Graduate Secretaries Mary McDaid and Colleen Parish in McGill's History department went beyond the call of duty on my behalf.

My family and friends have been a constant source of help. Special thanks go to the O'Donnells: my parents Marcie and Gerry; sisters Maureen and Susan and brothers Brian, Paul and especially Gerry, whose editorial assistance was not only very valuable but also relieved the solitude of my work. I am most grateful to my aunt Joan O'Donnell for her hospitality during my many visits to Montreal, and to friends Linda Cobon, Carolyn Heald and Greg Brown for the same in Toronto. Friends Louisa Blair, Rose-Anne Chabot, Sovita Chander, Sonia Dubé, Christine Penner and Elana Szelkowicz were always understanding. Ahmed Khonni helped by believing in me. Yvonne Jones ensured I stayed healthy throughout. Thanks, finally, to my son Ben O'Donnell for being himself.

I also gratefully acknowledge financial assistance from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Government of Ontario (Ontario-Québec Exchange Doctoral Fellowship), the McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women and the Department of History at McGill University.

## INTRODUCTION

In the pivotal pages of his 1981 autobiographical poem, George Morrisette describes how, following the death of his adoptive mother, he made contact with his birth mother whom he had not seen in many years. He spoke to her over the telephone and she agreed to meet him at “the Eaton’s statue at quarter to five.”<sup>1</sup>

The statue in question was that of Timothy Eaton, who in 1869 opened a dry goods store which grew, in the words of one admirer, into the “greatest of all Canadian department stores and perhaps the third greatest in the world.”<sup>2</sup> Under the founder’s hand, a mail-order department was created and another store was constructed in Morrisette’s home town of Winnipeg; after Eaton’s death in 1907, his successors built up the company even more. By mid-century, it was the country’s third largest employer, after the railway companies and the federal government.<sup>3</sup> At the time of Morrisette’s story, Eaton’s was a retail empire mailing catalogues to millions of Canadians and running a legion of department stores from coast to coast.

The appointed day and hour found Morrisette in the Winnipeg store;

Timothy in Bronze  
was sternly watching  
me wait for my mother.

---

<sup>1</sup> George Morrisette, *Finding Mom at Eaton's* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1981), pp. 27-29.

<sup>2</sup> Augustus Bridle, “Sir John Eaton,” in *Sons of Canada: Short Stories of Characteristic Canadians* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1916), p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Eileen Sufrin, *The Eaton Drive: The Campaign to Organize Canada’s Largest Department Store, 1948 to 1952* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982), p. 14.

Eventually,

A short blond prim lady  
came up to me. "You must be George..."

She was all that I ever wanted her to be.

The great fame and importance of Eaton's; the founder's stern, paternalistic presence pervading the company long after his passing; the assumption, related to these other points, that Eaton's was a place for women, indeed one of *the* places to which they could turn at key moments of their lives; and the belief, linked to the previous one, that a person could learn a lot about a woman, in this case that "she was all that I ever wanted her to be," simply by looking at her: Morrisette, a gifted poet, manages to convey these large themes in a few short lines of verse.

They are also the main realities to be considered in the present dissertation because they help us to understand the history of the T. Eaton Company of Canada as a whole. The subject of the dissertation is the place of women at Eaton's. The period covered is from the company's nineteenth-century origins until the key year of 1976, when Eaton's shut down its mail-order operations and stopped producing its famous catalogue. Company operations in both mail order and stores, and in both Canada and abroad, are examined. The women to be discussed are the two main groups of them associated with Eaton's: employees and customers. It is a wide-ranging exposition which, as a subsequent section of this introduction indicates, covers a longer period, a larger territory, more company operations and more people than do the other accounts of Eaton's, whether popular or scholarly. Valuable in its own right, this breadth of coverage is also useful because it allows important insights to come into focus. One of the most significant of these (and one that Morrisette implies) is the simple, and perhaps obvious one that nonetheless deserves being clearly stated: that for all the eminence of the men who ran Eaton's, the company obtained its greatness and fame, its wealth and meaning, from the many ordinary women, customers and employees, who found a place for themselves there.



The word “witness” conveys what these ordinary women represented for Eaton's. Women *witnessed* the making of Eaton's.<sup>4</sup> They were witnesses *for* the company and its development, that is, they helped establish the company as a fact, they attested to it and consolidated it by their enormous collective support for it, making up as they did the bulk of its millions of customers and much of its personnel too. In both these roles of customer and employee, women were also key eyewitnesses *of* Eaton's and its merchandise. Women were the key spectators viewing its merchandise and marketing, its stores and catalogues; they were onlookers of the company's growth, sometimes witnessing it from up close, as employees, and describing what they saw.

As the word “witness” suggests, -- and as George Morrisette implies in his description of his mother's appearance -- visibility was central to women's central place at Eaton's. In supporting the firm's growth by frequenting its stores and ordering from its catalogues, women literally bought into its buying and selling strategies that privileged appearances. Very often, and right from the start, Eaton's goods were selected and marketed according to their looks. This was especially true of fashionable goods, whether cloth (in the early decades) or ready-made clothing or household goods; fashion, by definition, was (and is) the business of modelling and remodelling appearances so that an item looked like “the latest.” The goods that Eaton's sold were very often intended for women: not only dresses for them to wear, but also the dressers for them to store the clothes in, items for them to work in or decorate their homes with, and so on. Many of these goods aimed at women encouraged them to engage in the act of displaying, both the goods and themselves. Thus, women shoppers were thought by Eaton's managers to have an interest in appearances and to define themselves and their activities through looks, and the company invited and indeed aimed to educate women to develop this interest and identity. Moreover, displays of women, live or in images, were central to the company's own merchandising tactics. This was true from early on, for both mail order and store divisions, and increasingly so over

---

<sup>4</sup> This is a re-working of the famous point made by historian E.P. Thompson in his *The Making of the English Working Class* (Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books, 1968 ed.), that the English working class were present at their own making.

the years, both in an ever-widening range of forms and in absolute amounts. Live women, too, often served as display items: they were part of the look of the stores. There was also a small but significant number of female employees of Eaton's who were specialists in sending and interpreting visual messages, for instance as buyers or reporters expert in dealing with the fashions so important to company sales.

Strategies centred on women's looks and women looking were key to Eaton's development, and the company both assumed and fostered women's sensitivity to appearances. Thus, it was not just that women were witnesses to the making of Eaton's; it was also that the company, out of self-interest, actively helped construct this role of witnessing and encouraged women to adopt it. This is the guiding statement and organizing principle of my dissertation.

It is a point that has sometimes been assumed in the substantial body of scholarly and popular writing on Eaton's, as Morrisette's subtle poetic suggestions attest to, but not one that has been explored in detail or put at the centre of these other works. That is the broad ambition of my thesis.

The next section of this introduction will present the Eaton's company records, the source of my idea for the thesis and the evidence to back up the main argument it presents. After that is a section outlining the thesis parts and chapters in which my guiding statement is elaborated. Finally, I situate my efforts in relation to the other writing on Eaton's. To start with, I present a review of this other material; this has not been done before and thus represents in itself an original contribution to the historiography. After that, I discuss how else the thesis contributes to both the writing on Eaton's and the broader branches of historiography in which it is situated.

### The Eaton's company records

Generating and then developing the argument about Eaton's and women as witnesses was possible for me because of both the impressive scope of the Eaton's archives, and my involvement in organizing them. Originally preserved in the company's Toronto office, the records were transferred to the Archives of Ontario in 1988.<sup>5</sup> The considerable task of dealing with the fifteen hundred linear feet of historical material required the work of at least ten archivists in the textual, iconographic, audio-visual and architectural records divisions there. Between 1988 and 1990, I personally worked in the first two of these divisions, beginning as one of the team arranging and describing the Eaton's textual records and moving on to coordinating and carrying out these activities, mostly alone, for the graphic materials, work that in both cases involved contributing to the printed finding aids.<sup>6</sup> My direct and protracted contact with the reams of "correspondence, memoranda, minutes, ledgers, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, subject files, magazines, index cards, and posters"<sup>7</sup> in the textual archives, and with the tens of thousands of photoprints, negatives, slides, transparencies and other graphic records, gave me a privileged understanding of the nature and scope of the actions carried out at Eaton's, and of the places, things and above all people, including women, associated with the actions.<sup>8</sup>

The range of document types itself, with its accompanying range of forms of information configuration (eg., word-based or graphic), media (photography, drawing, printed word,

---

<sup>5</sup> Linda Cobon, Lorraine O'Donnell, Tim Belton, Carolyn Heald and Larry Weiler, "Preliminary Inventory of the T. Eaton Records." 6 vols. (Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1990), vol. I, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the volume of the records, see *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 10. For the reference to the textual records finding aid, see *ibid.* For the graphic records, see: Lorraine O'Donnell, Jan Rollins and John Dirks, "Inventory of the T. Eaton Records, F 229. Volume VII: Graphic Material" (Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Cobon et. al, "Preliminary Inventory," vol. I, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Note that not all pictures from the T. Eaton Records are housed in the graphic records division, and not all written documents are in the textual records division. For instance, the catalogue covers, being printed on paper, are filed with textual records, while the graphic records contain photographic slides of written presentations

handwriting) and information supports (paper, film, etc.), contributed significantly to my growing understanding of the company's history. For one thing, being able to see items on the same subject in several formats meant having access to the different data captured therein: access, for example, to both the personal thoughts and feelings of buyers in Europe, laid out in shakily-written manuscript letters, and the appearance of buyers and their wives and friends, preserved in tourist snapshots. For another thing, as this example indicates, in their ensemble, different document formats tended to emit different overall messages. Most striking for me (having a background in women's history) was how women's presence in the bulk of the written documents was muted, but in the graphic ones it was so distinct. In both cases, women were usually objects rather than subjects, that is, they were the customers or salesclerks being discussed or pictured, not the records creators.<sup>9</sup> However, whereas in the written documents they were often invisible, in the pictures they regularly took centre stage, being the key subject matter. In the Eaton's records, women were seen much more than they were heard (that is, read). Only rarely is there a written document authored by a woman. Often, it is different in tone and even in appearance; regardless, it stands out.<sup>10</sup>

On returning to the Eaton's records for the current research project, I considered the T. Eaton Records in all their variety to allow the emergence of these different kinds of information, especially as it pertained to women. The findings presented in the following chapters are based mainly on this primary research. I consulted fifty series of textual records, eleven of graphic records, and two of audio-visual materials.<sup>11</sup> All in all, this

---

<sup>9</sup> After completing my work at the Archives of Ontario, I explored in detail the question of different document types, forms, media etc., and the different kinds of information likely to be preserved in different kinds of photographs: Lorraine O'Donnell, "Towards Total Archives: The Form and Meaning of Photographic Records," *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 115 n. 30.

<sup>10</sup> This point will be discussed in subsequent chapters, especially Chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> The number of series in the Eaton's *fonds* (record group) housed at the Archives of Ontario continues to grow. It totals approximately 260 series, ranging from small (a few files) to very large (dozens of boxes).

represents documents that ended up in the filing cabinets of some thirty offices within the complex and shifting Eaton's corporate structure, located in the head company centres in Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal. The records were actually generated by more administrative units than these, however, including a variety of offices, stores and catalogue sales offices across Canada, and a number of facilities abroad.

### Parts and chapters of the thesis

Determining the place of women at Eaton's required looking into the places in which the company itself operated. These can be divided into two main territories: abroad and at home in Canada. The structure of this thesis reflects that division. Part I examines the Eaton company's foreign activities and the role women occupied in them. The firm's domestic operations, and women's part in them, is the subject of Part II.

#### *Part I: The place of women in Eaton's operations abroad*

Eaton's always prided itself on its imported goods. In addition to obtaining this merchandise through local firms, Timothy Eaton and his staff made many voyages overseas and south of the border to buy it directly at the source. By the end of the nineteenth century, Eaton's copywriters were boasting about the firm's superior method of obtaining European merchandise: Eaton's buyers visiting Britain and the continent were now assisted by staff in London and Paris company buying offices, and the goods were rushed back to Canada by steamship. Early in the twentieth century saw the opening of new European bureaux as well as ones in the United States and Japan so that by mid-century, between its visiting buyers and its foreign office staff, Eaton's employees travelled much of the globe.

A few Eaton's workers went abroad for purposes other than buying. Mainly, it was in search of new ideas, essential for a company in the business of selling ever-changing clothing and home fashions. Some Eatonians went to the world's style centres – London,

Paris, and New York – in order to see and report on what was new. Others went down to the U.S.A., particularly New York and Chicago, to observe the latest trends in merchandising such as window display or mail order catalogue design, as well as in fashions.

Part I discusses these company operations abroad with a focus on where women fit in. Chapter 1 gives a historical overview of the Eaton's foreign buying set-up, the corporate system within which most staff travelling or living abroad was positioned. The elite members of this system were the Canadian-based buyers; these were merchandise department heads who made their own purchases for their departments. The relative freedom and power of buyers made them privileged observers of foreign realities, and the steady effort by top Eaton's managers to curtail their autonomy, through a series of administrative controls and reorganizations of the buying system, are described. Also discussed is the number of women in the foreign buying system and the nature of their work. Relatively few of them made the elite rank of buyer; most were rank-and-file foreign office workers. There were, however, significant exceptions and these are discussed in the next chapters.

The rest of Part I is devoted to different areas in which Eaton's operated abroad, starting with the farthest from Canada and ending with the closest. Chapter 2 looks at company activities in Japan, a source of goods ranging from novelty items to furniture. It relates the story of the firm's early, fraught relationship with foreign purchasing agents, followed by an equally-difficult period of establishing its own offices in the country in the face of natural and human-made disasters. Eventually, the offices closed; there were decades of limited contact and then a new period of direct buying starting in the 1950s. One constant throughout these changes was a conviction held by many Eatonians that Japan was quite thoroughly foreign: not just different but, often, backward, sometimes to the point of perilousness. As such, Japan was seen back in Canada as a suitable destination only for a few hardy employees: in particular, *male* employees. Female Eatonians from Canada simply did not go there until the 1960s and thus did not witness up close company development in this country. The exception to what appears to have been a rule was

Lillian Cabeldu, the wife of a Japan-based employee; her tragic tale of the country's great 1923 earthquake served as a potent testament to the apparent company belief that Japan was not safe for Eaton's women.

In the Eaton's corporate culture, therefore, meanings of foreign places were constructed alongside meanings of masculinity and femininity. This point is developed in Chapter 3, which gives the history of Eaton's operations in Europe. Relatively and generally speaking, Eatonians understood Europe as being at the same time quite up-to-date, especially in clothing fashions and business behaviour, and an acceptable place for its women. Even during the nineteenth century, one or two women visited there on the company's behalf; after the European buying offices were opened, many more went, either to staff the offices or, occasionally but notably, to tour, observe and, with increasing frequency, to buy. A small but influential group of women took responsibility for purchasing or reporting on high fashion. In Europe, therefore, some female Eatonians turned their skills as observers to company profit as style specialists. However, the European territory was covered mostly by male employees, whether as visiting buyers or foreign office heads. It was men who most benefited from the scope for independence and entrepreneurial self-development that Britain and the continent represented to Eaton's.

For Eaton's, Europe was a middle ground, literally and imaginatively, between far-away, foreign Japan and close-by, forever current America. As Chapter 4 explains, it was the geographic and cultural proximity of the United States to Eaton's that opened up new possibilities for the company's female employees. Eatonians travelled to this country much more frequently than to other foreign lands, to get both merchandise and ideas. In many cases, buying merchandise and borrowing ideas had to do with understanding and interpreting *looks* – of fashionable clothes, of display techniques, and so on; Eaton's acknowledged Americans as the leader in managing appearances. It was in this realm that Eaton's women found their special niche. Even though, as in the other foreign spaces, male employees made up the majority of visitors to the U.S.A. and held the most important jobs, quite a number of women did go, some in prominent positions requiring a

keen sensitivity to appearances and changes to them: buying trendy apparel like dresses, and reporting on the spectacular American consumer culture of fashion and display.

Part I brings to light important ways that women were witnesses at Eaton's. Although their numbers varied considerably according to the foreign land in question, in every case, women were present and thus they served, first of all, as testimony or proof of company activities and development abroad. Secondly, female Eatonians often had the particular role of observers or eyewitnesses of what Eaton's itself did, sometimes, as in the case of Lillian Cabeldu, recording these actions; they also observed and reported on styles, refining their aptitudes in this field and developing a special role for themselves at Eaton's in this domain.

*Part II: The place of women in Eaton's operations at home*

The second part of the thesis draws on this latter insight -- that the visual component to women's role at Eaton's was significant -- in order to approach the much bigger topic of the place of women in the company's domestic activities. Many more women interacted with the company within Canada than outside of it. For one thing, there were vastly more people employed at home than abroad and a greater proportion of those in Canada were female; they numbered in the tens of thousands towards the end of the period considered in this thesis. For another thing, it was in Canada that Eaton's had its customers and the majority of these, eventually totalling millions of people, were women. Keeping the visuality of women's place in the company as an organizing principle helped guide me through this otherwise almost infinite topic.

The aim of Chapter 5 is to outline the story of the company's business operations in Canada. It describes the development of Eaton's from one Toronto store to a retail giant with Store and Mail Order divisions. The chapter's particular focus is on the relationship between these two divisions, which involved considerable competition between them almost from the start, leading, over the decades, to duplication of certain activities -- for instance, Mail Order eventually operated its own store-like catalogue sales offices -- and a



lack of coordination of others, such as buying. The dual system was wasteful and contributed to the company's decision to close down the catalogue in 1976. Virtually all of the department and division heads participating in this intra-division competition were men. Female employees are conspicuous in their absence at this level and, therefore, in this chapter, even though they made up a large proportion of the store and mail order staffs.

The subsequent three chapters explore how women *were* present in Eaton's operations in Canada and here, I return to the theme of "witnesses" to organize and explain my findings. Chapter 6 is a wide-ranging examination of the "spectacle of women"<sup>12</sup> encountered in Eaton's stores and the Toronto catalogues, from the late-nineteenth to the late-twentieth centuries. At almost every turn in these venues, a visitor confronted some kind of display of women, be it female salesclerks groomed to company standards, mannequins, or the female customers themselves, present in person in the stores and catalogue sales offices or imagined and reproduced in marketing material such as the catalogues. Ubiquitous and conspicuous, the women's spectacle was a central element of the company's merchandising strategy.

Next, I turn to a much smaller but also significant site of this spectacle: the Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers. They were eye-catching publicity tools present in many Canadian homes for months at a time. Chapter 7 shows how often the covers presented a word-and-picture argument for the importance of women to the development of Canada. On the surface, this seemed to exalt females as strong national economic and political actors. However, a closer examination reveals that the covers' ultimate message was of a passive and even submissive femininity privileging looks, not actions. It was Eaton's itself that the covers portrayed as the truly central, dynamic creator of the nation.

Finally, in Chapter 8 the thesis returns to its starting point of the world abroad, but this time as a place imagined and represented from the vantage point of Canada. The chapter

---

<sup>12</sup> I am borrowing this term and idea from Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987).

discusses the depiction of foreign regions and foreign merchandise at Eaton's, especially in its marketing material. Whether it was the "exotic" Orient or "glamorous" Paris, foreignness was deliberately and consistently portrayed as an exciting element that added value to goods. Women were, once again, called upon by Eaton's to display and embody this message either by appearing tantalizingly foreign themselves, or by wearing or using the imported goods. And, once again, Eaton's used the opportunity of representing space to promote its own key role as the needed organizer, developer and, as was often necessary in the case in dealing with foreignness, interpreter.

Part II adds a new element to the idea that women were in the role of witnesses at Eaton's. It was not only that, as Part I showed, women observed and testified to Eaton's development and served as evidence of its existence by being present where Eaton's operated. It was also that women were *in themselves* evidence of Eaton's operations, being as they were a main "sight" on display in the company's grandiose store and catalogue spectacles. Thus objectified, women embodied (or "witnessed," in the sense of "evidenced"<sup>13</sup>) what Eaton's did, which was to market objects for profit. What Part II indicates is that although witnessing was a crucial role, it was also a subordinate one.

### Literature review

This thesis covers a lot of time and space -- more than one century and three continents -- and it touches on a range of fields including the history of women and femininity; of consumer culture especially in its visual manifestations; of business practices and culture; of the meanings of different places; and of labour. The project of indicating the contribution made by this thesis, therefore, could potentially involve comparing it to and locating it within an enormous and ever-growing body of Canadian and international historical literature. However, doing so in the present constrained context (of one section

---

<sup>13</sup> An archaic use of the word "witness" is as a transitive verb, as in the sentence, "A deathly pallor witnessed his agitation." *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. "witness."

of this introductory chapter) would be, in my opinion, superficial, akin to flying over a huge territory with rather arbitrary landings along the way.

There is, however, a relevant group of writings for which such a project is feasible: the writings on the Eaton's company itself. This latter group is contained and distinct, like an island; obviously, this is the material to which the thesis relates the most directly, so the position of the thesis vis-à-vis the group and its contribution to the group can be stated clearly. But aside from being practicable, the project is feasible because as it happens, the writings on Eaton's cover almost the full range of the academic fields mentioned above. Describing the Eaton's literature and the place of the thesis is the aim of this section. It will therefore have the value inherent in engaging with the broad range of academic approaches relevant to the present study, but more depth than would be possible in a brief world-wide travelogue. (From time to time this discussion will, nonetheless, make references to the relevant "outside" literature in order to orient the reader to the larger fields of study in which the Eaton's literature is situated.) Another, final benefit accruing from surveying the Eaton's literature is that despite its magnitude and quality, it has not been assembled together and reviewed like this before. It is a discovery, so to speak.

### *Introduction*

What I am calling "the Eaton's literature" is printed material dedicated in whole or in part<sup>14</sup> to describing and analyzing aspects of the T. Eaton Company and the family that founded it. It includes both scholarly works – theses, peer-reviewed articles and books – and popular non-fiction written for a variety of purposes, ranging from expose<sup>15</sup> to education<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> These are works with chapters or main sections having to do with Eaton's or the Eaton family. They were located by research in bibliographies and citations indices.

<sup>15</sup> Rod McQueen's *The Eatons: The Rise and Fall of Canada's Royal Family* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998) is a very critical biography of the Eaton's family written by a reporter for the *Financial Post* (Toronto).

<sup>16</sup> John M. Bassett's *Timothy Eaton* (Don Mills, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975), is part of a series called "The Canadians" and appears to be aimed at children.

to eulogy.<sup>17</sup> A few literary works are also discussed. Primary sources like contemporary newspaper and magazine articles are excluded,<sup>18</sup> as are most of the short historical pieces from these sources. All told, it adds up to approximately fifty items that can be classified into three groups according to their subject area: business-biographies, workers and commercial culture.

1) *Histories of the Eaton's business and its founding family*

The oldest and smallest grouping within the Eaton's literature is the material providing an overview of the Eaton's enterprise and the entrepreneurial practices of the family that ran and owned it. Although the studies in this group are heterogeneous, having been published over a long period, covering different times and subjects and speaking to different kinds of audiences ranging from academics to company customers, they share a similar point of view and purpose. All of them express fascination with the Eaton's business, especially its founder Timothy, and aim to explain some of the secrets of its success.

The earliest of these works demonstrate this tendency the most clearly. As the title would suggest -- *Sons of Canada: Short Stories of Characteristic Canadians* -- Augustus Bridle in his 1916 book sets out to sing the praises of important national actors and the clues to their genius. In this he succeeds by focussing on the Eatons' aptitude for harnessing the power of key traditional values of family and church (Methodist) with equally important modern ones like "a genius for organization," a knack which allowed them to shower fortunate Canada with "argosies of goods from all quarters of the earth" at a decent but not unfair profit.<sup>19</sup> Three years later, Eaton's hired "The Scribe" to write a thorough

---

<sup>17</sup> For example, see the company-commissioned anniversary book: "The Scribe" (pseud.) called *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited*, (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co., Limited 1919), p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> However, I do include some primary source material which devote significant amounts of space to reviewing Eaton's history.

<sup>19</sup> Bridle, *Sons of Canada*, pp. 132-34.

company history and contemporary description on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. In a light and lively manner, it outlines the founding of the Toronto store and the commercial innovations Timothy Eaton introduced there (including fixed prices and a guarantee that money would be refunded for goods found unsatisfactory by customers); the development of the mail order service and the Winnipeg store; the biographies of Timothy Eaton and his son Sir John C. Eaton and the company's structure and policies as of 1919, including employee working conditions, the company factories, catalogue, and buying organization including the foreign offices, and store services and activities such as its advertising team. Predictably, given its provenance, this publication was as flattering as its briefer predecessor.<sup>20</sup> In 1923, a new biography of Timothy Eaton by George Nasmith was published; it was dedicated to Eaton's wife, Margaret Beattie. Both of these latter volumes continued to promote the theme of the company founder as the wholesome, efficient entrepreneur that Canadians deserved. Nasmith, for one, declared that Eaton "had in mind a nobler object than the mere acquisition of wealth for 'Service to the people' was his ideal."<sup>21</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that these early histories of Eaton's are breathless in their praise of its powerful founder. After all, they were writing relatively soon after Timothy Eaton's death in 1907, and still within that pivotal half-century after Canadian Confederation, "when the foundations of state and nation, economy and society were laid in place."<sup>22</sup> These writers were clearly excited about Canada's development and its promoters. However, the same tone prevailed some half a century later, when three new books on Eaton's came out. Two of them, published in 1963 and 1975 respectively, do not appear to have been commissioned by the company. Nonetheless, they share with a new volume that was, William Stephenson's *The Store that Timothy Built* (released in 1969, the centenary of the company's establishment), the same popular and uncritical tone of the

---

<sup>20</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*.

<sup>21</sup> George Nasmith, *Timothy Eaton* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1923), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> R.T. Naylor, "Trends in the Business History of Canada, 1867-1914," in *Canadian Economic History: Classic and Contemporary Approaches*, eds. M.H. Watkins and H.M. Grant (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), p. 127.

earlier works.<sup>23</sup> For instance, John Bassett, in his short book written for the children's series called "The Canadians," presents a simple tale, based on information already familiar from the earlier publications, of Timothy Eaton's rise from his hard and humble childhood as an apprentice shopkeeper in Northern Ireland. Bassett indicates that it was possible due to Eaton's warmly supportive wife, his principles and his outlook: an "ability to adopt new ideas when they had merit," for instance by eliminating "the wasteful and time-consuming customs of barter and credit."<sup>24</sup>

These works focus a lot of attention on Timothy Eaton who was, primary research confirms, a principled person guided in his actions by his love of God, of his family and at least to some extent of his employees.<sup>25</sup> It is unfortunate that the full character of Eaton, a man of action, is difficult to glean from his terse business missives and other records. Joy Santink attempts to do so in her book *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (1990), which is based on her doctoral thesis and thus, in contrast to most of the earlier works, makes extensive use of the primary sources.<sup>26</sup> Although David Monod

---

<sup>23</sup> Mary-Etta Macpherson, *Shopkeepers to a Nation: The Eatons* (Toronto : McClelland & Stewart, 1963). According to Cynthia Wright, this book was "a popular account" and serialized in the Canadian women's magazine *Chatelaine*. (Cynthia Wright, "Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); reprinted in *Constructing Modern Canada: Readings in Post-Confederation History*, ed. Chad Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), p. 30); Bassett, *Timothy Eaton*, William Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1969).

<sup>24</sup> Bassett, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 54, 43, 21.

<sup>25</sup> This will be discussed in subsequent chapters, especially Chapter 3.

<sup>26</sup> Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Joy Lilian Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of the Department Store* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1989). Note: subsequent references to Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, are to Santink's book, not her thesis.

criticizes her for not treating Eaton “as a rounded personality,”<sup>27</sup> she does, nonetheless, break new ground in presenting some of his less positive traits such as a tendency to emotional coldness. In the end, though, her view of him is appreciative. Even while indicating that there were outside circumstances contributing to the remarkable success of Eaton's company, such as foreign innovations in department stores -- an argument that leads Santink to introduce much new material to the now-growing body of Eaton's literature --, she concludes that it was “the character of the man himself that ha[d] much to do with this.”<sup>28</sup>

Even in Rod McQueen's recent critical exposé *The Eatons: The Rise and Fall of Canada's Royal Family* (1998), the patriarch's standing escapes unscathed.<sup>29</sup> McQueen, a business reporter for the *Financial Post* (Toronto), supplemented his secondary-source research with numerous interviews with employees, associates and family members. Armed with insider knowledge, he presents fresh information about the company in the twentieth century, delving into details about corporate culture (such as management philosophies) and practices (such as problems in the catalogue division). However, as his ironic title indicates, it is the successive generations of Eatons that are his primary interest and the target of his mordant wit. He paints an unflattering portrait of them growing increasingly wealthy, self-indulgent and, by the 1930s, out of touch with modern business thinking so that the family business became “The Firm that Time Forgot.”<sup>30</sup> They would intervene in it now and then in what McQueen portrays as an arbitrary and sometimes disastrous fashion; eventually, the in-house management culture was one of “fear,” “arrogance,” and “contentment.” He even recounts employees' stories of managers running what he calls “harems” and stealing.<sup>31</sup> The author contrasts this later period with Timothy's, that “glorious past.”<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> David Monod, review of *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store*, by Joy Santink, in *Canadian Historical Review* 72 (March 1991): 108.

<sup>28</sup> Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 238-39 and passim.

<sup>29</sup> Rod McQueen, *The Eatons*.

<sup>30</sup> This is the title of McQueen's chapter on John David, grandson of Timothy Eaton.

<sup>31</sup> McQueen, *The Eatons*, pp. 80, 116, 161.

There are two points in particular to be made about these business history/biographies. First, they are strikingly pro-Eaton's and, more generally, pro-business. Central to all of them, McQueen's included, is the assumption that Eaton's was good for Canadians as long as it was run according to its founder's standards. Old-fashioned values like honesty, hard work and self-sacrifice, coupled with modern commercial approaches -- new techniques and ideas -- would be sufficient to make the capitalist enterprise fill the nation's needs. Those values and approaches were all Timothy Eaton had needed to sweep away the "wasteful and time-consuming customs" of the nineteenth century, as Bassett put it; had his successors possessed them, they might have continued the company's role throughout the twentieth century as a commercial leader and, writes McQueen, "maybe, just maybe, Canadian shoppers would have responded."<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, these works represent a relatively narrow spectrum of styles of Canadian business historiography. On one end of the spectrum represented in the Eaton's material would be popular writing in the manner of Peter C. Newman, whose multi-volume *Company of Adventurers* on the history of another great Canadian retailer, the Hudson's Bay Company, loosely weaves the story of the firm within a colourful tissue of anecdotes and biographical sketches.<sup>34</sup> On the other end would be the more scholarly but still picturesque approach of Michael Bliss's *Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries of Canadian Business* which presents a "cavalcade of rising and falling enterprises."<sup>35</sup> Outside of this spectrum represented in the Eaton's literature is the more thorough and specialized academic scholarship on the history of business that emphasizes "economic,

---

<sup>32</sup> McQueen, *The Eatons*, p. 71.

<sup>33</sup> McQueen, *The Eatons*, p. 258.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance Peter C. Newman, *Merchant Princes: Company of Adventurers Volume III* (Toronto: Viking, 1991).

<sup>35</sup> H.V. Nelles, "Commerce in a Cold Climate: Bliss on Canadian Business History," *Business History Review* 62 (1988), 310-16, cited in Graham D. Taylor and Peter A. Baskerville, *A Concise History of Business in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. xvi.



organizational and technological influences shaping the evolution of businesses.”<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that Joy Santink, who wrote the most scholarly history of the Eaton's business to date, was supervised by Michael Bliss and has been criticized for what amounts to her non-academic approach, that is, her failure to contribute to the scholarly literature on business, economic and social history;<sup>37</sup> in other words, she, too, falls within rather than outside the spectrum described above.

## 2) *Histories of Eaton's workers*

A second group of Eaton's literature looks at the history of the company's working-class employees. This group is on the whole more scholarly in tone than the business studies discussed above, consisting mostly of peer-reviewed academic articles, books and graduate theses. There is also one book written by a former union activist.<sup>38</sup> The works in this group are also more recent, all of them having been published after 1982, with the bulk of them being produced from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s.

Given its timing, this literature serves as a sign of the rise in Canada, starting in the 1970s, of what academics Gregory Kealey and Peter Warrian call “working class history.”<sup>39</sup> Most of it, however, does not really fit into their definition of this kind of historiography as “a new social history” looking at the “totality” of the lives of working people including their social and cultural experiences. Instead, the subject matter of most of the Eaton's literature on workers is more in line with what these two authors call “labour history,” a field with older roots whose focus is strikes, militant union leaders, and industrial

---

<sup>36</sup> The point about business histories ranging from popular to scholarly with Bliss's work falling in the middle is made in Taylor and Baskerville, *Concise History*, p. xvi. The quotation is from Nelles, “Commerce in a Cold Climate,” in *ibid*, p. xvi.

<sup>37</sup> David Monod, review of *Timothy Eaton*, p. 108.

<sup>38</sup> This is Eileen Sufrin, who wrote *The Eaton Drive*.

<sup>39</sup> Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warrian, “Introduction,” in *Essays in Canadian Working Class History*, eds. Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warrian (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 7.

relations.<sup>40</sup> There are, though, some crucial differences. Unlike the older Canadian labour history, which focussed on men,<sup>41</sup> the Eaton's studies mostly examine women workers. Also, as this would suggest, most of the authors of the Eaton's material indicate, either explicitly or implicitly, that they are feminists, and use tools used by feminist scholars, including the concept of patriarchy and methods such as oral history.<sup>42</sup>

Leftist, mostly feminist and focussing on humble workers, on first glance these writings would appear to have little in common with the liberal, often elitist Eaton's business history/biographies already described. However, the two groups share a couple of key interests. One is the role and power of the Eaton family and company leaders in running the firm. Another is a present-minded concern for lessons history can provide on achieving economic and social goals. Ironically, then, although the histories on Eaton's workers generally criticize the company's capitalist leadership and practices, they do substantially contribute to the available information on them and together they serve as a kind critical anti-business history.

Below, these workers' histories are discussed in order of the chronology of the strike and labour actions they examine, followed by a description of one last contribution, a more general labour study. This section is quite detailed because (as indicated at the end of this section) the present thesis does not contribute much to this literature, but is indebted to its discoveries and approaches.

---

<sup>40</sup> Kealey and Warrian, "Introduction," p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, "Introduction," in *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History*, eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> This is not to say that people using oral history are necessarily feminists, but that it has often been used by feminists and is identified as a feminist historical method. For an example of the latter point being made by a Canadian women's historian, see Joan Sangster, "Oral History," in *Teaching Women's History: Challenges and Solutions*, eds. Bettina Bradbury et al. (Athabasca, Alberta: Athabasca University, 1995), pp. 229-31.

The first event singled out for detailed treatment<sup>43</sup> by the labour histories is a 1912 strike of Eaton's garment workers which started in one of the company's Toronto factories and spread to another one in Montreal. The majority of workers involved were men, but historian Ruth Frager teases out elements of the strike relating to women, including the fact that they made up a third of the Toronto strikers, that a key cause of the strike was male machine sewers refusing to obey a new work order that would have resulted in female hand-sewers losing jobs, and varying levels of support for the strike by women's groups. She concludes by reflecting on "the potential for working class power" revealed in this event, in light of solidarity displayed by the local Jewish community in support of the strikers, most of whom were also Jews, and between men and women workers. She also assesses divisions among Jews, the working-class and women during the strike. In Frager's opinion, the relative success of the strike was due to a widespread desire among many people to punish proud Eaton's. Even though conditions in the company's factories were "better than most," the workers' action "dramatically dispelled the idyllic image that was so carefully crafted by the Eaton family and their public relations experts."<sup>44</sup> Susan Gelman has also written on this strike; her focus is on Jewish militant labour traditions, which in part she unearthed through oral history interviews. She too notes how John Craig Eaton, who headed the company in 1912, was dubbed "false" and "hypocritical"

---

<sup>43</sup> There were other, earlier labour actions at Eaton's. These include an 1899 cloak-workers' strike and a 1901 printers' strike, which are briefly covered in, respectively, Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 201, and Angela E. Davis, "Brigden's and the Eaton's Catalogue: Business and Art in Winnipeg 1914-1940," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Society Conference, Winnipeg, 1986, pp. 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> Ruth Frager, "Sewing Solidarity: The Eaton's Strike of 1912," *Canadian Woman Studies* 7,3 (Fall 1986): 96-98, and Ruth Frager, "Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Eaton Strikes of 1912 and 1934," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 189-228. Quotations are from the 1986 article, p. 97 and the 1992 article p. 191.

because he promoted himself as a friend of labour but the strike revealed otherwise.<sup>45</sup>

Also, she, like Frager, gives credence to these anti-Eaton sentiments by providing details of poor working conditions at the company's factories.

Twenty years later, the heads of Eaton's endured a much more thorough and humiliating public examination of their labour practices. The cause was the 1934 Royal Commission on Price Spreads and Mass Buying, instigated by H.H. Stevens, a federal government minister under Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, in order to uncover reasons for the difference between the costs of producing and selling goods. Stevens's target was "big business," especially department stores. He carefully considered the case of Eaton's, which at this point had operations in 170 cities,<sup>46</sup> by interviewing both company labourers, who revealed serious hardships including debilitating wage cuts and exhausting work speed-ups, and company leaders who admitted that despite the hard economic times, Eaton's had managed to average three million dollars of profits annually during the previous decade.<sup>47</sup> Ruth Frager relates some of this evidence and explains how a small group of Toronto women dressmakers, "emboldened" by it as it emerged and by widespread public dismay in reaction to it, went on strike over their low pay. This time, though, the strikers were not Jews and support by the local International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, run by Jewish males, was lukewarm. Despite enthusiastic endorsement by other groups including feminists and social democrats, the strike failed.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Susan Gelman, "Anatomy of a Failed Strike: The T. Eaton Company Lockout of Cloakmakers, 1912," *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 9, 2 (1985): 101.

<sup>46</sup> In 1934, Eaton's had 13 large department stores, 5 mail order distribution centres, 32 small department stores, 57 groceterias, 3 creameries, 112 Mail Order Offices, 7 factories and 9 buying offices. Source of this information: McQueen, *The Eatons*, p. 77.

<sup>47</sup> Frager, "Eaton Strikes of 1912 and 1934," p. 207. The Royal Commission on Price Spreads is discussed in detail in McQueen, *The Eatons*, pp. 76-79, and in Sandra Elizabeth Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy: Women, Work and Trade Unionism at Eaton's (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1991), p. 105.

<sup>48</sup> Frager, "Eaton Strikes of 1912 and 1934," pp. 213-7.

Like Gelman and Frager, Eileen Sufrin is also interested in complex social relationships affecting labour action. This is because, she frankly admits in her book *The Eaton Drive: The Campaign to Organize Canada's Largest Department Store, 1948 to 1952*, her aim is to provide a record of the problems involved in one effort at unionizing, so that they may be avoided in the future.<sup>49</sup> Having been one of the key organizers of this initiative of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union among Eaton's workers in Toronto, Sufrin draws upon a rich archive of memories and union material as well as oral history interviews to provide data, analysis and insiders' anecdotes. Her chronicles of workers' grievances are vividly detailed, as is her accompanying information about the union using the stories to increase its own membership and the company tactic of responding to, without acknowledging, negative union publicity by offering new advantages such as an equitable pension plan.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, despite serious employee complaints about "a pay policy that discriminated by age, sex and marital status"<sup>51</sup> and which she exposes as having been at times exploitative, arbitrary and hypocritical, the union drive, which did gain considerable momentum with thousands of employees signing RWDSU cards, failed when the union lost the certification votes. Sufrin provides many reasons for this. Some are simply tactical, such as Eaton's dawdling in carrying out legal obligations to provide information, which dampened the sign-up momentum, or economic, such as employee fear of reprisals from their employer.<sup>52</sup> However, her recurring explanation has to do with social ideology. She outlines an ongoing and losing battle between an underdog vision of a "real business partnership between employees and employer," promoted by the union, and a more powerful and ultimately successful vision, which she dismisses as "maudlin sentimentality," of "one big happy family" at Eaton's.<sup>53</sup> The latter "fantasy" was tacitly supported through a "conspiracy of silence" among the local press dependent on the substantial advertising revenues they obtained from Eaton's. It was also, according to Sufrin, directly promoted both by Eaton's own propaganda campaign during the drive, and

---

<sup>49</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> For example see Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, pp. 129-30, 163.

<sup>51</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 48.

<sup>52</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, Chapter 18 and p. 56-57.

<sup>53</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 104.

by the “Loyal Eatonians,” an employee group that was headed by a fascist sympathizer and that was warmly supported by John Craig Eaton’s influential and conservative widow, Flora McCrea, who wanted to keep the company a “family affair.”<sup>54</sup>

Sufrin pinpoints a disappointing “lack of acceptance of unions among white-collar workers, particularly women and part-time employees” as the deciding factor.<sup>55</sup> She contrasts their faint-heartedness with the militance of company blue-collar workers (such as warehouse staff).<sup>56</sup> Thus Sufrin, although clearly aware of the special problems facing female employees,<sup>57</sup> reveals herself to be unsympathetic and uncomprehending of their attitudes towards Eaton's that echoed, at least to some extent, the loyalists’ idealizations of family. She concludes that to explain “why white-collar workers are so difficult to unionize,” sociologists would be needed.<sup>58</sup>

Sociologist Sandra Aylward does just that in her 1991 doctoral thesis entitled “Experiencing Patriarchy: Women, Work and Trade Unionism at Eaton's.” After reviewing nineteenth- and twentieth century evidence of working conditions and worker activism at Eaton's,<sup>59</sup> Aylward moves onto a detailed analytical history of two RWDSU drives, that of the 1940s-'50s and a second one in the mid-1980s. In the latter case, the Ontario union did obtain certification but failed to obtain its contract demands, even after employing the pressure tactics of a prolonged strike in six Ontario stores and a call for a

---

<sup>54</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, pp. 192, 138, 173-5, 171. The citation of McCrea is from Flora McCrea, *Memory's Wall: The Autobiography of Flora McCrea Eaton* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1956), p. 150-51, cited in Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 171.

<sup>55</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 204.

<sup>56</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> For instance, she provides a lot of information on women in the retail sector in *Eaton Drive* pp. 18-21.

<sup>58</sup> Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 180.

<sup>59</sup> In addition to the strikes and union actions, Aylward looks at the Stevens inquiry and an earlier Royal Commission, that of 1889 on Capital and Labour. Aylward, “Experiencing Patriarchy,” *passim*.

boycott of Eaton's.<sup>60</sup> Armed with evidence from oral history interviews and with fellow academic Sylvia Walby's theoretical model of patriarchy, Aylward identifies at Eaton's an exploitative environment of "paternalistic dominance."<sup>61</sup> Women workers were hired and treated better if they exhibited a "subservient character" and had an attractive exterior; they were often subject to sexual harassment, and, crucially, were especially susceptible to believing the company promise to offer protection, security and support in return for their subordination. It is this last insight that affords her the explanatory power about Eaton's women's attitudes to unions that Sufrin misses. Aylward finds that the women "had their own personal issues that shaped and guided their actions – not the traditional ones of money and benefits, but rather trust, honour, status, respect."<sup>62</sup> In other words, just as Sufrin feared, they believed more in the corporatist "happy family" model than the union's "business partnership" one.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Aylward's interviewees told her directly that they were hurt if their bosses did not behave like family, and she concludes that their motive in joining the union in the 1980s was less economic than emotional: it was a desire to "hurt back."<sup>64</sup>

Aylward nonetheless sees in this decision a move away from subservience towards militancy. The same point is made by Patricia McDermott in her examination of the 1980s action. Even though the strike failed and the union was eventually decertified at Eaton's, ultimately the actions were, for McDermott, a success. Because of them, the firm's "social reputation" was tarnished; Eaton's could no longer maintain its image, to her a false one of

---

<sup>60</sup> For contemporary views on this latter drive, see Suzy Goldenberg, "Eaton's Strike and Boycott," *Canadian Dimension* 19, 2 (1985): 23-25, and Errol Black, "The Struggle against Eaton's Moves to Manitoba," *Canadian Dimension* 20, 1 (1986): 9-11.

<sup>61</sup> Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy," p.153.

<sup>62</sup> Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy," pp. 166,142-49,117-18, 177-78, 309.

<sup>63</sup> These terms are from Sufrin, *Eaton Drive*, p. 104.

<sup>64</sup> Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy," pp. 255-69.

being a caring family, and its female workers in Ontario stores became more critical of their employer in the process.<sup>65</sup>

Susan Leslie Forbes explores the roots of this familial corporate culture in her 1999 doctoral thesis on the impact of the early-twentieth century Canadian social reform movement at Eaton's. Forbes, a kineseologist, is interested not in strikes or worker-management relations per se, but in the leisure activities such as sports clubs and choirs that Eaton's provided for its female workers in Toronto in the 1920s-'30s. In aiming to trace the factors that led Eaton's to involve itself in its employees' leisure time, she examines the overall treatment of women workers at the company including wages, benefits and welfare programs. Forbes presents a more sympathetic view of the Eaton's heads than do the labour historians. On the one hand, she observes that the "happy family" rhetoric within Eaton's, and the practical benevolence such as leisure and welfare efforts underscoring it, served the company's interests. It helped keep female employees loyal, fit for work, and under management's watchful eye, and it softened the effect of the firm's hard habit of systematically discriminating against women in wages paid and hiring practices. On the other hand, she also argues that the Eatons, especially Timothy, had a genuine "commitment to improving humanity's lot." This reflected the influence in the company of social reform thinking in general and the Methodist Church, to which the Eatons belonged, in particular.<sup>66</sup> Forbes, unlike the labour historians including Aylward, believes that although patriarchy can be oppressive, it can also be "positive...a caring and/or attempt to help others based on the 'patriarch's' values and beliefs."<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Patricia McDermott, "The Eaton's Strike: We Wouldn't Have Missed It for the World!", in *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy and Militancy*, eds. Linda Briskin and Patricia McDermott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), passim, especially pp. 25, 40.

<sup>66</sup> Susan Leslie Forbes, "The Influence of the Social Reform Movement and T. Eaton Company's Business Practices in the Leisure of Eaton's Female Employees during the Early Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1999), pp. 100, 112, 148-49.

<sup>67</sup> Forbes, "Influence of the Social Reform Movement," p. 127 n. 13.



Even though the period she covers is after Timothy Eaton's death, Forbes, like the others looking at the history of Eaton's workers, ends up focussing attention on him, a true patriarch.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, then, virtually this whole body of literature pays tribute to the company founder, more critically but not entirely differently than the business/biographies do.

### 3) *Cultural histories*

The third and last group of Eaton's literature to be considered here is the biggest and, at first glance, the least unified, not only having been produced over some thirty years but also reflecting various schools, styles and trends in historiography and covering a wide variety of subjects. Nonetheless, the group does have coherence. Despite the diversity of the articles, books and theses it comprises, they all could be said to fall under the rubric of cultural history. This point can be justified in several ways.

For one thing, the subjects they cover -- merchandise, advertising, shopping behaviour and shopping outlets in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canada -- are among the "cultural practices"<sup>69</sup> and "cultural products"<sup>70</sup> on which scholars who have been dubbed "cultural historians" since at least the mid-twentieth century focus. As Jacques Barzun put it in a 1956 description of the field, cultural history runs "a middle course between total description (which is possible only to the anthropologist working on a limited tribal

---

<sup>68</sup> See especially Forbes, "Influence of the Social Reform Movement," pp. 91-103.

<sup>69</sup>This is the term Linda Hunt uses to identify the interest of certain historians working in the Annales school tradition in the mid-twentieth century. Linda Hunt, "Introduction," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Linda Hunt (Berkeley, California: University of California Press), p. 7.

<sup>70</sup>This is the term used by Jacques Barzun in "Cultural History as a Synthesis," in *The Varieties of History from Voltaire to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York: Vintage Books, 1956, rev'd. ed., 1972), p. 400.

culture) and the institutionalized products of culture (such as poetry or metaphysics or old silver)."<sup>71</sup> This applies to the material in this third group of the Eaton's historiography.

Secondly, the interest in consumer culture central to this group of Eaton's histories is shared by numerous other cultural historians. There is a growing body of literature that examines this subject from many angles. An early and influential writer in this field was Rosiland Williams, who in her 1982 book *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* examines the development of a "consumer revolution" which created a new culture, in which life became "a medium where people habitually interact with merchandise." She traces the history of elite and mass "consumer lifestyles," the latter involving the rise of new sites like cinemas and department stores, and various theories and actions observing and critiquing this culture, such as cooperative movements.<sup>72</sup> The field of the history of consumer culture has developed extensively in the intervening two decades. As well as asking what the field represents for the study of history itself,<sup>73</sup> writers have explored dozens of specific sub-topics including the relationship of the culture of consumption and the construction of subjectivity,<sup>74</sup> of class,<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup>Barzun, "Cultural History as a Synthesis," p. 400.

<sup>72</sup> Rosiland Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

<sup>73</sup> For instance, see Lauren J. Cook, Rebecca Yamin and John P. McCarthy, "Shopping as Meaningful Action: Toward a Redefinition of Consumption in Historical Archaeology," *Historical Archaeology* 30, 4 (1996): 60-66; Ann Smart Martin, "Makers, Buyers and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework," *Winterthur Portfolio* 28 (Summer/Autumn 1993): 141-57.

<sup>74</sup> James Livingston, "Modern Subjectivity and Consumer Culture," in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Jutd (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 413-29.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew Hilson, "Review Article: Class, Consumption and the Public Sphere," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, 4 (2000): 655-66.

of citizenship<sup>76</sup> and of gender.<sup>77</sup> Canadian historians have addressed some of these topics as well; for instance, several studies have investigated consumer culture as related to the history of women<sup>78</sup> and men.<sup>79</sup>

Thirdly, many of the works in this group of Eaton's histories use approaches associated with the "new cultural history"<sup>80</sup> A number of them employ gender analysis, looking, like some of the labour historians already discussed, at "distinctions between men and women" to bring new understandings of past cultures, but going further than the labour historians discussed above do, by treating gender as a discourse or "system of cultural representation

---

<sup>76</sup> Charles McGovern, "Consumption and Citizenship in the United States, 1900-1940," in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judd (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>77</sup> This field alone is quite vast. An early contribution is William Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," *Journal of American History* 71, 2 (September 1984): 319-42; Leach later (as will be mentioned below) wrote an important book on consumer culture in the U.S.A. See also a recent review article by another influential historian, Mary Louise Roberts: "Gender, Consumption and Commodity Culture," *American Historical Review*, 103, 3 (June 1998): 817-44.

<sup>78</sup> This is the topic of a special issue on "Femmes & consommation: 100 ans d'action," *Gazette des femmes* (January 2000); see also Eileen O'Connor, "Gender and Dress: Exploring Processes of Change through a Consumer Model," paper presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association, St. Catherines, June 1996.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see Robert Rutherford, "Framing Fatherhood in Transition: Domesticity, Consumerism and Resistance Narratives," unpublished paper presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association, Quebec City, June 2001.

<sup>80</sup> This is the term used by Lynn Hunt in *The New Cultural History*. She does not provide a date for when the "new" cultural history period began but does say that "the turn toward culture" was "already present" in E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Hunt, "Introduction," p. 4.

that is at once social, literary, and linguistic.”<sup>81</sup> They include an early (1977) article on representations of women in the Eaton's catalogue by Anne Lambert and recent works by Cynthia Wright on women and shopping.<sup>82</sup> Another way they are distinct from the labour studies is that most of the works in the third group, gender studies included, show the ‘new’ cultural historian’s interest in non-verbal sources in addition to verbal (textual or oral) ones. Many look at graphic records (photographs and advertisements, for instance<sup>83</sup>) which are commonly used in works reflecting the “cultural turn.”<sup>84</sup> Others consider physical objects such as clothing<sup>85</sup> and thus fit into the definition of a sub-field of cultural history Canadians call “material history,”<sup>86</sup> which is an “evolving area of historical enquiry

---

<sup>81</sup> Hunt, “Introduction,” pp. 18-19.

<sup>82</sup> Anne Lambert, “Images for Sale: How Eaton's Saw Us,” *Branching Out* 4 (Mar.-Apr. 1977), pp. 30-33; Cynthia Jane Wright, “‘The Most Prominent Rendezvous of the Feminine Toronto’: Eaton's College Street and the Organization of Shopping in Toronto, 1920-1950” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992); Wright, “‘Feminine Trifles.’”

<sup>83</sup> These will be discussed below. For examples, see Katherine B. Brett, “Notes on Fashion in Costume,” in *A Shopper's View of Canada's Past: Pages from Eaton's Catalogues, 1886-1930* by G. de T. Glazebrook, Katherine B. Brett, and Judith McEvel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Katherine Irene Bosnitch, “A Little on the Wild Side: Eaton's Prestige Fashion Advertising Published in the Montreal 'Gazette', 1952-1972” (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 2000).

<sup>84</sup> Raphael Samuel, “Reading the Signs: Part II,” *History Workshop* 33 (Spring 1992), p. 226. For examples of this trend, Samuels cites studies into the history of female suffrage, the Reformation, Louis XIV and childhood in France.

<sup>85</sup> Janice Smith, “Content Analysis of Children's Clothing in Eaton's Catalogues and Selected Canadian Museums 1890-1920” (M.Sc. thesis, University of Alberta, 1991).

<sup>86</sup> According to Thomas Schlereth, “material history” is the term used only in Canada for a field that elsewhere is called by different names including “artifact studies” and “material culture.” The term “material history” was popularized by the Canadian periodical *Material History Bulletin*. Thomas J. Schlereth, *Cultural History & Material Culture:*

which uses artifact analysis in exploring cultural themes.”<sup>87</sup> Historians of consumption have been especially interested in exploring the possibilities of material history.<sup>88</sup>

To the extent that the Eaton's material histories focus on the appearance of objects, they, along with those using graphic sources, contribute to our understanding to a specific aspect of Canadian cultural history: its visual products and practices. The question of how things looked in the past has long concerned historians of Canada, of its regions and of its groups. In the 1940s and '50s, for instance, C.W. Jefferys published a three-volume *Picture Gallery of Canadian History* in which he argues for the importance of taking “pictorial records” into account in order to know the full “record of our development as a nation.”<sup>89</sup> Likewise, historians of Canadian women were curious, as they started to develop their discipline in the 1970s, about how their subjects had appeared, as well as in questions of practice including how women had been visually represented or had produced images of their own.<sup>90</sup> This was a sign of their commitment, already mentioned, to using a range of source material in order to fully explore their subject of inquiry. The editors of a seminal early work in the field of Canadian women's history, *The Neglected Majority* (1977), acknowledge “the richness of the sources available” and chose for their book a

---

*Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), pp. 18-19.

<sup>87</sup> Anne Hayward, “Mail-order Catalogues: Research Tools for Material History,” *Alberta Museums Review* 12, 2 (Fall 1987), p. 9. Note: while this article is not exclusively about the Eaton's catalogue, most of its examples and its three illustrations are for Eaton's.

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of this question see Martin, “Makers, Buyers and Users.”

<sup>89</sup> C.W. Jefferys, *The Picture Gallery of Canadian History*, Vol. 3: 1830 to 1900 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950; reprint ed., 1970), p. vii.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Mary Vipond, “The Image of Women in Mass Circulation Magazines,” *Modernist Studies* 1 (1974-75), pp. 5-13, reprinted in Trofimenkoff and Prentice, eds., *The Neglected Majority*, pp. 116-124. There are fifteen 1970s articles or books on the subject of women and visual representation listed in the section on “Culture” in Diana Pedersen, comp., *Changing Women, Changing History: A Bibliography of the History of Women in Canada* (Toronto: Green Dragon Press, c. 1992), pp. 100-107.

piece on female imagery in magazines.<sup>91</sup> In the second volume of this title, (1985), the editors specifically mention the value of using photographs.<sup>92</sup> Canadian women's history continued to delve into the subject of appearances in the 1980s and '90s,<sup>93</sup> a period when historians studying other Canadian subjects, such as working-class history, started demonstrating a similar preoccupation.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Trofimenkoff and Prentice, "Introduction," in *The Neglected Majority* (1977), p. 12.

The article on visual practice is Vipond, "Image of Women."

<sup>92</sup> Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, "Introduction," in *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History Volume 2*, eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> Fifteen such works from the 1980s and 1990s are cited in the section on "Culture" in Pederson, comp., *Bibliography*, pp. 100-107. Later additions to this subject area include Frances Rooney, "Edith S. Watson: Photographing Women in Rural Canada" *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 11 (Spring 1995): 195-94 and Karen Dubinsky, "Niagara through Women's Eyes: Gender, Race and the Traveller," paper presented at the 18th International Congress of Historical Sciences, Montréal, August, 1995.

<sup>94</sup> With some exceptions, such as Bryan Palmer in his article "Discordant Music: Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 3 (1978): 5-62, historians of the Canadian working class did not focus as much on visuality as historians of women did in the formative decade of the 1970s. Unlike the *Neglected Majority* volumes discussed above, for instance, the introductions to two volumes on working-class history, published around the same time as the women's series and by the same company, do not mention or show an interest in visual sources or for that matter mention the question of sources at all; see Kealey and Warrion, "Introduction," and Bryan D. Palmer, "Introduction," in *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History*, ed. Bryan D. Palmer (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), pp. 9-14. This topic was addressed in the Canadian archives journal *Archivaria* in the late 1980s, however. See Rosemary Donegan, "The Iconography of Labour: An Overview of Canadian Materials," *Archivaria* 27 (Winter 1988-89). Some 1990s working class histories discussing visuality are Craig Heron and Steve Penfold, "The Craftsmen's Spectacle: Labour Day Parades in Canada, the Early Years," *Histoire sociale/Social*

By the 1990s, visual subjects were regularly covered in the important *Canadian Historical Review*<sup>95</sup> and its editors confirmed their interest in 1999 by creating a new section called “Visual History Review” in which topics such as “Women’s History on Film” are covered.<sup>96</sup> Other signs (among many) of the growing popularity of Canadian visual history was its appearance as a theme in academic history conferences<sup>97</sup> and the prizes accorded to H. V. Nelles’s 1999 book on the tercentenary celebrations of Quebec City. An economic and social historian, Nelles found he needed to look at public culture and memory to understand this important event which “seemed to have been built on the dual propositions that history would make a nation and that history could best be understood in

---

*History*, 58 (November 1996): 357-90 and David Frank, “The Labour Stamp: The Image of the Worker on Canadian Postage Stamps,” *Labour/Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997).

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Graeme Wynn, “Maps and Dreams of Nationshood: A (Re)View of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*,” *Canadian Historical Review* 76, 3 (1995): 482-510; Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, “Spectacular Justice: The Circus on Trial and the Trial as Circus, Picton, 1903” and Robert Rutherford, “Canada’s August Festival: Communitas, Liminality and Social Memory”, both in *Canadian Historical Review* 77,2 (June 1996), and E.A. Heaman, “Taking the World by Show: Canadian Women as Exhibitors to 1900,” *Canadian Historical Review* 78, 4 (December 1997).

<sup>96</sup> This section was established in the March 1999 issue. Cathy L. James, “Women’s History on Film: Requiem for Studio D,” pp. 93-96, and Ken Cruikshank and Nancy B. Bouchier, “‘The pictures are great but the text is a bit of a downer...’ Ways of Seeing and the Challenge of Exhibiting Critical History,” pp. 96-113, both in *Canadian Historical Review* 80, 1 (March 1999).

<sup>97</sup>For instance, the department of history at York University, Canada, sponsored “Spectacle, Monument and Memory: A Historical/Interdisciplinary Conference” in April, 1995 which included sessions on Spectacles of Empire, of National Identity, of Local Identity, of Labour and Dissent.

performance.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, the histories pertaining to appearance and representational practices at Eaton's, the earliest of which (as the discussion below indicates) were published in the 1970s, have both reflected and contributed to a broad and growing tendency among Canadian historians to explore aspects of this particular cultural subject.

A related field of study, also relevant to this third group of Eaton's histories, has emerged recently and internationally: visual culture studies, also called (depending on the practitioners, and reflecting further sub-groupings) visual communication studies and visual anthropology.<sup>99</sup> Of course, like any other academic field, this one<sup>100</sup> does not have formal membership criteria and its practitioners may not clearly identify themselves as such; nonetheless, it does have distinguishing characteristics. Following in the critical tradition of earlier writers such as British art critic John Berger and Canadian communications theorist Marshall McLuhan,<sup>101</sup> its practitioners prioritize the specific question of the meaning and the social, political and economic effects of “visuality.” Recently, one such scholar described their theme in the following terms: “the social context of both the ‘seeing’ and the ‘seen’” and “the intentionality of the practices that relate these two moments,” that is, the “strategies for knowing, for desiring and for the

---

<sup>98</sup> H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 11. This book has won several prizes including the Canadian Historical Association's Clio award.

<sup>99</sup> A sign of the growth of visual culture studies include the VISCOM (Visual Communications Discussion) electronic mailing list and the many academic conferences on visual communications, visual anthropology, etc. that are announced on this list.

<sup>100</sup> Note: although it could be argued that visual cultural studies, visual anthropology, visual communications studies, etc., make up several fields rather than one field, I am treating them together here, given that they do share certain basic approaches and objects of study.

<sup>101</sup> Seminal works by these two writers include John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972) and Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951; reprint ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).



exercise of power” that lie behind the production and consumption of “tangibly ‘visual’ cultural forms.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, visual cultural studies practitioners politicize the cultural historian’s project of investigating cultural practices and products. They ask how and why and in what contexts certain such practices and products emerge, dominate, are repressed, and so on, for instance through their links with prevailing structures such as race, class and gender. These scholars hail from many disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, women’s studies, film and media studies and communications, among others.

Non-Canadianist historians within the school of visual culture studies, especially art and design historians, have explored many topics of inquiry relevant to the study of Eaton’s, such as modern visibility,<sup>103</sup> display practices,<sup>104</sup> commercial photography<sup>105</sup> and iconography and gender.<sup>106</sup> Most pertinent of all are the studies on spectacular aspects of consumer culture such as advertising and visual merchandising, including, among dozens of works, some superb general books<sup>107</sup> as well as examinations of a number of smaller subjects, including one that has now been treated in great depth, the issue of how the products of this culture including fashion and mass media, including magazines and

---

<sup>102</sup> Chris Jenks, “The Centrality of the Eye in Western Culture: An Introduction,” in *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> For example, Johathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990).

<sup>104</sup> See Lynn Cooke and Peter Wollen, eds., *Visual Display: Culture beyond Appearances* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).

<sup>105</sup> For example, Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>106</sup> See, for instance, Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>107</sup> Especially impressive are two American studies: Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, BasicBooks, 1994) and William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

advertisements, contributed to the social construction of gender and race.<sup>108</sup> What unites visual culture histories is a conviction that visibility was a central aspect of the history of modern (capitalist, industrial, imperial, mass, consumer) culture(s), being both sign and site of some of its most important developments. Consequently, its practitioners who are historians feel that their findings should be integrated in the mainstream of history-writing.

---

<sup>108</sup>See, for instance, William M. O'Barr, *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (N.p.: Virago Press, 1985; reprint ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Christian Breward, "Femininity and Consumption: The Problem of the Late Nineteenth-Century Fashion Journal," *Journal of Design History* 7, 2 (1994): 71-89; Valerie Steel, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Shane Adler Davis, "Fine Cloths on the Altar: The Commodification of Late-Nineteenth Century France," *Art Journal* 48 (Spring 1989): 85-89; Janice McCullagh, "Image to Collage, Part Two: Fashion," *Arts Magazine* 60, 5 (January 1986): 74-77; Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1994); Susan Sellers, "How Long Has This Been Going On? Harper's Bazaar, Funny Face and the Construction of the Modernist Woman," *Visible Language* 29, 1 (1995): 13-35; Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: Esquire Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, 1 (Autumn 1994): 1-22; Benjamin Orlove, ed., *The Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), Elise Salem Manganaro, "When Foreign Sells: Exotica in American TV Ads of the Eighties and Nineties," in *Advertising and Culture: Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Mary Cross (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996), pp. 11-27; Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," in *Travellers Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, eds. George Robertson et. al. (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 131-54.

This is especially clear with historians of foreign visual culture. Maud Lavin, for instance, argues that in order to understand Weimar-era German mass media culture, one must consider the visual images of the “new woman” disseminated therein; “these social phenomena have generally been regarded separately, but they are connected,” she writes.<sup>109</sup>

Within Canada, on the other hand, the fields of “history” and “history of visual culture” generally remain separate along disciplinary lines. A 1995 conference at McGill University on “The Female Body in the Mind’s Eye,” for instance, featured introductions by historians from that university but it was scholars in other disciplines including comparative literature, philosophy and law, not history, who presented the papers.<sup>110</sup> For another example, a textbook by an art historian published in 2001 and subtitled “Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture” keeps its narratives and timelines of these two fields distinct, with “Canadian history” consisting of main political and economic events, and (the history of) “Canadian visual culture” referring to developments in art and architecture. The message in this book is that visual culture is something that can be added on to (or, potentially, omitted from) a more basic structure.<sup>111</sup>

Nonetheless, there are some scholars focussing on points of intersection between “history” and “the history of visual culture” in Canada. Many are art, design and architecture historians. Art historian Karen Stanworth, for instance, looks at “visual politics of 19th century Canada... with an emphasis on issues relating to visual rhetoric, nationalism and identity formation.”<sup>112</sup> Within the Eaton’s literature there are also scholars making similar

---

<sup>109</sup> Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, p. 1.

<sup>110</sup>The historians making introductions were Carman Miller and Desmond Morton. Programme for “The Female Body in the Mind’s Eye,” conference presented by The McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women, November, 1995.

<sup>111</sup> Robert J. Belton, *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture* (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2001), Chapter 4.

<sup>112</sup> Description of Karen Stanworth’s research interests is from the York University Department of Visual Arts webpage

links, such as architectural historian Delwyn Higgins who looks at connections between art deco styling and merchandising strategies in the company's department stores, and art scholar Raymond Idoux, who argues that the very designs of the company's catalogue were physically structured to encourage viewers to buy, and thus influenced them to participate in a consumer economy.<sup>113</sup>

Outside of art and architectural history, there are a few historians approaching Canadian subjects from within the approach of visual culture studies, adopting its critical language and concepts, referring to key cultural studies theorists such as Gramsci and Habermas<sup>114</sup> and studying topics popular among its foreign practitioners. They include Keith Walden, E.A. Heaman and Paige Raibmon, all of whom study Canadian industrial exhibitions and argue for their centrality in local, Canadian and international politics and society.<sup>115</sup> In so doing, they show the influence of historians who conceive of foreign exhibitions as spectacular sites that embodied and reflected key elements of "Western modernity"

---

(<http://www.yorku.ca/finearts/faculty/profs/stanwort.htm>) July, 2002. These interests are explored in her article "The Politics of Display: A 'literary and historical' definition of Canada in 1830s British North America", M. Pointon, ed., *Art Apart: Artefacts, Institutions and Ideology in Britain and North America from 1800 to the Present* (Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 120-141.

<sup>113</sup> Delwyn Higgins, "Art Deco, Marketing and the T. Eaton Company Department Stores: 1918-1930 (M.A. thesis, York University, 1991); Raymond Idoux, "Marchandises en vedette: Eaton et l'imagerie commerciale," *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 48-51.

<sup>114</sup> Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas are identified as "influential cultural studies theorists" in Arthur Asa Berger, *Cultural Criticism: A Primer of Key Concepts* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Heaman, "Taking the World by Show;" Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Paige Raibmon, "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World's Fair," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 2 (June 2000).

including global imperialism and consumer culture.<sup>116</sup> Another Canadian subject that has been discussed in terms of its historically-situated visibility is how the meaning of geographical spaces has been constructed visually.<sup>117</sup> Within the Eaton's literature, there is Cynthia Wright who has written two pieces in which a similar visual cultural studies approach may be detected. Although her main area of interest is women's and gender history, she incorporates information of the styling and spatial organization of the company's famous art deco store on College Street in Toronto in her broad discussion of Eaton's, gender and consumption because, she argues, understanding architecture (and using non-traditional sources to uncover its history) is a necessary step to understanding consumer culture, which in turn "is a key component of understanding the reorganization of class and gender relations in the twentieth century."<sup>118</sup>

Now that the main kinds of historiography to be found among this third group having to do with culture have been sketched out, their subjects and approaches will be briefly described. The discussion below looks in turn at the two main so-called cultural products they cover -- the company's catalogues and stores -- and the cultural practices that scholars have identified in association with each.

i) Literature on the Eaton's catalogues and mail order

---

<sup>116</sup> Curtis M. Hinsley, review of *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*, by Keith Walden, in *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (December 1998): 746.

<sup>117</sup>For instance, see Wynn, "Maps and Dreams of Nationhood;" Gillian Poulter, "The Construction of 'Official' History in *The Canadian Pictorial and Illustrated War News: 'A Complete Letterpress and Illustrated History of the Late North-West Rebellion,'*" paper presented to the annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association, August 1995.

<sup>118</sup> Wright, "Prominent Rendezvous," p. 304; see also Wright, "Feminine Trifles," Chapter 4: "Shopping Staged in Art Moderne: The Architecture and Spatial Dynamics of College Street."

This section addresses the literature specifically on the Eaton's catalogues and mail order. It excludes the writing on the whole Eaton's business or on labour, even though, as has been mentioned above, some of it does discuss catalogues and mail order; for instance, Joy Santink interweaves their history with that of the company's department stores for the period of Timothy Eaton's life.<sup>119</sup>

Collectively, the literature devoted to the Eaton's catalogues substantially advances knowledge of a subject that has received surprisingly little attention in Canadian historiography. Although, as the works on Eaton's themselves indicate, catalogues have had an important impact on national, regional, and gender cultures, there is as yet no scholarly book on the history of either the Eaton's catalogue or Canadian catalogues in general.<sup>120</sup> In contrast, much information is available on mail-order books and culture in other countries, notably the U.S.A. and England.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*. There is no separate chapter on the catalogue or mail order in her book.

<sup>120</sup> There is a book with facsimile pages from another Canadian catalogue: Alison Adburgham, *Yesterday's Shopping: The Army & Navy Stores Catalogue 1907; a facsimile of the Army & Navy Co-operative Society's 1907 issue of Rules of the Society and price list of articles sold at the stores* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1969).

<sup>121</sup> On English catalogues, see Gaye Smith, *Trade Catalogues: A Hundred Years, 1850-1949: An Exhibition Catalogue* (Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University Library, 1992). Literature on American catalogues includes Lawrence Romain, *A Guide to American Trade Catalogues, 1744-1900* (New York: Dover Publications, 1990 (reprint of 1960, New York, R.R. Bowker); David L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days: A History of American Morals and Manners as Seen through the Sears, Roebuck Catalogs 1905 to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940); Margaret Culbertson, "Mail-Order House and Plan Catalogues in the United States, 1876-1930," *Art Documentation* 11, 1 (Spring 1992): 17-20, and Phil Patton, "The Big Book: Put out to Pasture," *I.D. [Industrial Design]* 40, 3 (May-June 1993): 21.

The specific contribution made by the Eaton's catalogue literature is to reveal and appraise its value as a source of both information and merchandise. All the writers agree that it was an significant source, given that, as creative writer Fredelle Maynard notes in leafing through an old issue, "like the *Book of Knowledge*, it was encyclopedic; like Dickens, it brought the world to my door."<sup>122</sup> Equally enthusiastic is costume historian Miaso Batts, arguing that Eaton's catalogues "are a faithful record of social life in Canada and a valuable source for the history of fashion, furniture, and other aspects of social history. They also record economic changes...."<sup>123</sup> Batts was the first and most optimistic of several academics writing articles assessing the book's usefulness as a historical source for their branch of cultural history-writing. Other costume historians have analysed its contents, finding that it showed more boys' than girls' clothing, which makes it useful for scholars using museum collections which tend to have more of the latter, and more thrifty women's clothes than expensive ones, which reminds us to use it with "rigour" instead of making unfounded assumptions about how it appealed to customers, something which can only be fully understood by referring to outside sources.<sup>124</sup> Material historian Anne Hayward likewise warns of the its limitation as a source. Even though the catalogue, a useful graphic and written source, provides much data about merchandise, design and printing history as well as about the company and society producing it, discerning its full meaning requires going beyond the artifact, and speaking directly to its users.<sup>125</sup>

Most historians take the catalogue's value as a source for granted, and aim to uncover its socio-cultural effects. Some historians study the merchandise it pictured, noting that that

---

<sup>122</sup> Fredelle Bruser Maynard, "Satisfaction Guaranteed – The 1928 Eaton's Catalogue," in Maynard, *Raisins and Almonds* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1972), p. 40.

<sup>123</sup> Miaso Batts, "Eaton's and Its Catalogues: An Expression of Canadian Social History," *Costume* 7 (1973): 68.

<sup>124</sup> Janice Smith, "Content Analysis of Children's Clothing in Eaton's Catalogues and Selected Canadian Museums 1890-1920" (M.Sc. thesis, University of Alberta, 1991), and Catherine Cole, "Caveats in the Use of Corporate Literature by Costume Historians," *Material History Review* 34 (Fall 1991): 1-12.

<sup>125</sup> Hayward, "Mail-order Catalogues."

it included both practical and luxury products in a variety of price ranges as desired by Canadians of all income levels. Three writers make the claim -- based, as Hayward feared, on little outside research<sup>126</sup> -- that the catalogue was a useful instrument of progress for many including farmers, especially Western immigrant settlers, in making a range of implements and household goods available, and women, in introducing the advantages of ready-made fashions.<sup>127</sup> It should be noted that two of these three writers published their pieces in a book commemorating the Eaton's company centenary (1969); this celebratory context might account for some of their enthusiasm.<sup>128</sup> The same might be said for the latest and broadest argument in this vein made in the chapter on mail order catalogues in Chantal Amyot and John Willis's upcoming book on the history of Canadian postal service. Willis and Amyot, who work for the Canadian Postal Museum, give "pride of place" to Eaton's mail order catalogues, which, they show, were the most important in terms of both the number produced and influence. They go on to sketch the emergence of a Canadian "catalogue culture" as new products transformed rural people's work and leisure habits.<sup>129</sup>

Other historians are less sanguine about the catalogue's perceived effects. A special "department stores" issue of a popular Québécois history magazine features two articles which portray the Eaton's catalogue as infiltrating the province's fragile traditional culture.

---

<sup>126</sup> Cole singles out an article by Thelma Dennis ("Eaton's Catalogue: Furnishings for Rural Alberta, 1886-1930," *Alberta History* 37, 2 (Spring 1989): 21-31) as an example of unfounded conclusions about the catalogue's reception by readers. Cole, "Caveats," p. 7 and p. 12 note 11.

<sup>127</sup> G. de T Glazebrook, "Introduction," in de Glazebrook et. al., eds., *A Shopper's View*; Brett, "Notes on Fashion in Costume;" Dennis, "Eaton's Catalogue."

<sup>128</sup> de Glazebrook et. al., eds., *A Shopper's View*. Judith McEvel, one of the book's editors, was an archivist at Eaton's in Toronto.

<sup>129</sup> Chantal Amyot and John Willis, "Purchasing by Mail: The Mail Order Catalogue." Chapter 3 (unpublished draft manuscript) of their forthcoming *Country Post: The Rural Postal Service in Canada, 1880 to 1945*, Mercury Series CPM no. 1 (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2003), pp. 2-6, 27-29.



One, for instance, narrates at length the fantasies the catalogue's fancy articles like fine lingerie inspired in a simple rural family, none the less because the book was in English and the family spoke only French.<sup>130</sup> A third article (already mentioned above) in the magazine, by Raymond Idoux, focusses on the catalogue's form rather than its merchandise to make a similar point.<sup>131</sup> In another venue, a women's historian self-identified as "a struggling feminist" traces with a kind of horrified fascination the changes over the years in the book's verbal and graphic portrayals of women and their role as consumers. She concludes that they were not real, but ideal images "which influenced the self-image of many readers:" that is, ideals of "youth, slenderness, femininity, happiness or wise housewifery."<sup>132</sup> In assessing the catalogue's virtues as a source of both goods and historical information, the Eaton's literature reveals the complexity of changes wrought by mass consumerism.

One final entry in the catalogue literature is Angela Davis's study of Brigden's, a graphic arts company, which from 1893 until at least 1970 produced many of the pictures for the Eaton's book.<sup>133</sup> Her particular interest is to present a social history of the graphic arts workers at Brigden's,<sup>134</sup> but Davis also discusses the relationship between this company and Eaton's. She finds that although heavily reliant on Brigden's, Eaton's did not acknowledge Brigden's in its own corporate literature, a sign, she feels, of how "large

---

<sup>130</sup> Michel Lessard, "3e étage! Manteaux et accessoires pour dames! L'ère des grands magasins au Québec," pp. 10-16, and Andrée-Anne de Sève, "Hourra! Le catalogue Eaton est arrivé!" pp. 18-21, both in *Cap-aux-Diamants*, special issue on "Les grands magasins: Un nouvel art de vivre," 40 (Winter 1995). The article on the rural family is de Sève's; she does not mention the fact that the catalogue was produced in French at one point.

<sup>131</sup> Idoux, "Marchandises en vedette."

<sup>132</sup> Lambert, "Images for Sale," p. 32.

<sup>133</sup> Angela E. Davis, "Brigden's."

<sup>134</sup> Angela Davis develops this theme in a book: *Art and Work: A Social History of Labour in the Canadian Graphics Arts Industry to the 1940s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

companies play down buying from others.”<sup>135</sup> Here, a study of a cultural product, the catalogue, is in the end revealing of the corporate culture that produced it.

ii) Literature on the Eaton's stores

Eaton's stores are a more complex subject than the catalogues. The latter were issued from only a few cities (Toronto, Winnipeg, Moncton and Montreal), changed only subtly over time and place, and were consulted more or less the same way regardless of the consumer: that is, a person or people holding the book and leafing through its pages, looking at representations (verbal and visual) of goods. The stores, on the other hand, came in many shapes and sizes, sprang up in Canadian cities from coast to coast, and offered a wide range of products for consumption: aside from the goods themselves, there were various kinds of packaging -- wrappings, cabinets, displays and other merchandising tools in the stores; show windows visible on the street; the store architecture itself; advertisements in various media -- and a host of events produced by the stores but sometimes spilling onto the streets, such as fashion shows and parades.

It is not surprising, given the richness of what could be called store culture, that the literature on Eaton's stores covers more ground than that on the catalogues. It investigates several aspects of the Montreal store (built in 1925), including its Santa Claus Parade, established the same year, its 1920s in-house exhibitions of fine art, the art deco architecture of its restaurant, built in 1931, its effects on the city's consumption habits, and its "prestige" high-fashion advertisements, created by prominent female as well as male artists and published in the *Gazette* between the 1950s and the 1970s.<sup>136</sup> The two studies

---

<sup>135</sup>Davis, "Brigden's," p. 20.

<sup>136</sup> Michelle Comeau, "L'Enfant courtois: Santa Claus entre le commerce et la magie;" pp. 22-25, H  l  ne Boily, "Art, artisanat et exotisme: Magasiner des expositions;" pp. 31-33, and   lizab  th Naud, "Pour oublier la crise: le 9<sup>e</sup> chez Eaton," pp. 42-44, all in *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995); Michelle Comeau, "Les grands magasins de la rue Sainte-Catherine    Montr  al : des lieux de modernisation, d'homog  n  sation et de diff  renciation

devoted to Toronto are by Cynthia Wright. One is her dissertation on bourgeois consumption habits in that city between 1920-50, with a focus on shopping at the luxurious College Street branch (opened in 1930). The other is an article which looks at the same store in the same era as a kind of case study to support her argument in favour of “writing gender into the history of consumption.”<sup>137</sup> There are also three works within the fields of architectural and art history covering more than one city: one is on art deco architecture of the Toronto and Montreal stores between 1918-30, and the other two look at nation-wide architectural competitions for house designs for the middle-class, sponsored by Eaton's in 1936.<sup>138</sup>

Despite their variety, these histories share striking similarities. The years they cover all fall between 1918-72, the company's second half-century. The main or sole focus of all of them is Canada's two biggest cities, Toronto and Montreal. And -- with the exceptions of, first, Michelle Comeau's important articles on the parade and the changing consumption habits in Montreal, both of which emphasize how Eaton's catered to working-class people, and one of which shows that the company's clientele was actually more varied by class and

---

des modes de consommation,” *Material History Review* 41 (Spring 1995): 58-68; Bosnitch, “Prestige Fashion Advertising;” Shona McKay, “A Little on the Wild Side: The Sixties Advertising of Eaton's Montreal” *Applied Arts* 8, 4 (November-December 1993): 26-28. Note: Boily's article and Comeau's “Les grands magasins” are about several Montreal department stores, not just Eaton's, but each devotes considerable attention to the latter's store there.

<sup>137</sup> Wright, “Prominent Rendezvous,” Wright, “Feminine Trifles.”

<sup>138</sup> Delwyn Higgens, “Art Deco, Marketing and the T. Eaton Company Department Stores: 1918-1930 (M.A. thesis, York University, 1991); Susan Haight, “Machines in Suburban Gardens: The 1936 T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs,” *Material History Review* 44 (Fall 1996): 23-44; Karen R. White, “Emerging Modernism in Canadian Domestic Architecture: John M. Lyle's Drawings for ‘Highfields’ and Their Context in the Development of the Idea of the Modern House in Canada, 1935-1936” (M.A. thesis, York University, 1995).

ethnicity than that of two other main Montreal stores,<sup>139</sup> and, second, the occasional concession in the other works that high culture could be enjoyed by any shopper<sup>140</sup> -- they focus on aspects of bourgeois culture: the fine-art market; cutting-edge commercial and architectural design; the look of the shopping sites of the wealthy. What emerges is a picture of roughly mid-twentieth-century, big-city consumer culture. It is a portrait of modernity; one after another, the store histories refer to the word modern as a process ("modernisation"), as an aesthetic ("European Modernism," "Moderne") and as a general way of thinking and acting, that is, as a culture (thus, a reference to Eaton's "commitment to modernity").<sup>141</sup> It is, truly, a portrait, a picture of a spectacular new consumer culture whose meaning and impact can only be understood with reference to its visuality.

The literature on Eaton's stores is recent, having been published within the last decade, and represents a contribution to a growing body of histories, both popular and academic, of contemporary urban consumer culture. There are other Canadian studies which, like the Eaton's literature, emphasize visuality and modernity in stores, including their architecture, window displays, and shopping culture.<sup>142</sup> The Canadian material, in turn, fits into an

---

<sup>139</sup> On the popularity of Eaton's with different social classes see Comeau, "Grands magasins," pp. 61-2, 66. The other two stores she discusses are Morgan's and Dupuis Frères. See also Comeau, "L'Enfant courtois," passim.

<sup>140</sup> For instance, Higgens makes this point in "Art Deco," p. 26.

<sup>141</sup> Quotes are from Comeau, "Grands magasins," title; Haight, "Machines "Machines in Suburban Gardens," p. 41, Wright, "Prominent Rendezvous," Chapter 2; Higgens, "Art Deco," p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, David P. Monteyne's argument that Hudson Bay stores were built in an "opulent style" to serve "as key cultural institutions and as palaces of consumption," in "The Construction of Buildings and Histories: Hudson's Bay Company Department Stores, 1912-26" (Master of Advanced Studies in Architecture thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995), abstract. Store windows are discussed in Keith Walden, "Speaking Modern: Language, Culture and Hegemony in Grocery Window Displays, 1997-1920," *Canadian Historical Review* 70, 3 (September 1989): 285-310. Modern Montreal

international literature on department store culture. Scholars of Europe and the United States have been especially active in exploring this subject.<sup>143</sup>

Taken together, the store and catalogue histories provide a great deal of information and insight about the rise and appearance of Canadian consumer culture in the century after Confederation.<sup>144</sup> They show that millions of Canadians, rural and urban, male and female, of all cultures and classes were touched by Eaton's and the shopping spectacles it created.

### Conclusion: Contribution of the present dissertation

In light of the above discussion on the existing Eaton's literature, the contribution that I hope to make through the present dissertation will be presented with reference to business, labour/working-class and cultural history.

In terms of business history, the dissertation provides a considerable amount of new material about the structure, methods and operations of the Eaton's company. Most of Part I, on the company's set-up, staff and activities abroad, represents an original contribution. Aside from Joy Santink's coverage of some of the foreign buying trips and offices during Timothy Eaton's lifetime (to 1907), and a short chapter on the buying organization in the company's *Golden Jubilee* book, there exists in the remaining literature

---

shopping culture was a theme of an exhibit at Centre d'histoire de Montréal entitled "The Department Stores: Cathedrals of Modernity" from May, 1995 to April, 1996.

<sup>143</sup> For instance, there have been conferences on the topic, such as "The Department Store in European Society 1850-1939: Business, Consumption, Towns and Consumption," Colloquium at Université Libre de Bruxelles, September, 1995. The scholarly literature in this field is vast. Some key books include Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, and Leach, *Land of Desire*. An example of a smaller study is John Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Aug. 1991): 211-24.

<sup>144</sup> Canada's Confederation was in 1867; Eaton's was founded in 1869.

only passing reference to this subject.<sup>145</sup> In contrast, many aspects of the story covered in Chapter 5, on the development of the company's store and mail order divisions in Canada, has been related before in both the popular histories (including ones commissioned by Eaton's) and in Rod McQueen's exposé. However, my approach is more detailed than these, relying as it does mostly on primary sources, and its particular focus, the relationship between the two divisions, has received little attention so far. In particular, my examination of tensions and duplication of activities among the two divisions, including my brief comments on the rise of catalogue "stores," is new.

Many important aspects of the history of Eaton's as a business are left out of the dissertation, including, to name but a few, details of its early decades (the 1860s to '80s); its activities outside the big cities of Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal; the changing corporate structure over the years and details on foreign activities after around 1960. Nonetheless, even though it represents a relatively brief overview rather than a thorough business history, the dissertation provides, I believe, the fullest picture to date of the Eaton's business in Canada and abroad during the century after its establishment. Finally, there is one further way that these chapters contribute to the historiography on Eaton's as a business. Its approach and subject matter is in line with two of the three themes Graham Taylor and Peter Baskerville develop in their *Concise History of Business in Canada* -- the "changing pattern of business organization" and "the international setting of Canadian business" -- and, as such, brings the Eaton's business historiography more in line with contemporary academic approaches in this field.<sup>146</sup>

The dissertation's contribution to labour and working-class history is more modest. Most of the people discussed in the dissertation were directors, managers or senior staff. I feel that uncovering their shared culture within Eaton's and their individual stories, especially those of the women who worked abroad, often specializing in roles requiring visual acuity,

---

<sup>145</sup>Santink, in *Timothy Eaton; The Scribe, Golden Jubilee*, pp. 160-170.

<sup>146</sup> The third theme Taylor and Baskerville say they will focus on is "the particular character of Canadian business arrangements." Taylor and Baskerville, *Concise History*, p. xv.

are important not only to the history of the company – and this is something that has received only a small amount of attention within the literature on the company<sup>147</sup> -- but also for their contribution to our knowledge of the history of management personnel in Canada, including its female members.<sup>148</sup> However, by definition, their stories do not denote working-class history. Likewise, labour issues, such as strikes and the 1934 Stevens Commission, are not examined. What is covered of working class employees is only a segment -- female store workers -- and only with reference to how the company tried to manage their physical appearance (Chapter 6). Nonetheless, I develop this point more fully than the other labour historians who, as I mentioned above, did remark on it;<sup>149</sup> by tying it into a larger argument about the Eaton's merchandising strategy of making their shopping environments a "spectacle of women." In so doing, the dissertation makes a new link between the histories of working-class women and of visibility, perhaps, in so doing, presenting a new avenue for Canadian women's historians to consider exploring.<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup>Of course, as the discussion above on the business histories of Eaton's indicated, there is plenty of information on the Eaton family members who were directors. Aside from them, however, senior staff (directors, managers) are rarely discussed in the literature, aside from Santink (in *Timothy Eaton*) who talks about a number of managers (including, as mentioned above, foreign buyers) for the period up to 1907, and Rod McQueen who does focus on both corporate culture and some individual managers and directors throughout his book *The Eatons*.

<sup>148</sup>There has been little written on the history of Canadian management-level workers, including women. For a few exceptions see David Monod, "Bay Days: The Managerial Revolution and the Hudson's Bay Company Department Stores 1912-1939," *Historical Papers* (Canadian Historical Association) 1996: 173-224; Gladys L. Symons, "Ethnicity, Career and Gender: Managerial Women in France and Canada," *Etudes canadiennes/Canadian Studies* 21, 2 (December 1986): 137-46; Graham Lowe, "Class, Job and Gender in the Canadian Office," *Labour/Le travail* 10 (Autumn 1982): 11-37.

<sup>149</sup>For example, see Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy," pp. 142-49.

<sup>150</sup>Some historians have done likewise. See, for example, Tickner, *Spectacle of Women*, pp. 174-82, and McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, Chapters 2 and 3. I have discussed McClintock's view of representations of working-class women in a review of this book.

The rest of chapter 6 and the last two chapters (7 and 8), which discuss the richly visual, largely feminized shopping environments found in many Eaton's stores, catalogues and advertisements, represent a further contribution to the history of the company's visuality, and, as such, to the broader field of Canadian cultural history. These chapters develop the point made previously in some of the other literature about the great significance of women at Eaton's. To date, labour historians have demonstrated the centrality of women to the company's workforce; they and cultural historians have also remarked upon the fact that women's appearances (whether in life or in representations) were a managed element of the stores' visual environment; and cultural and business historians have commented on the fact that as the absolute majority of Eaton's customers, women were its main source of revenue. Chapters 6 to 8 (building upon the evidence presented in earlier chapters on the visual nature of the work of some of the senior women workers abroad) contribute the point that an important site of women's significance was in the realm of appearances: how women looked (or tried to look) as customers, models, workers and images, and the objects women looked at: merchandise, shopping environments, advertisements, and their own objectified selves. As source and site of much of the Eaton's visual merchandising strategies, then, the significance of women was more than the sum of the parts that had been identified by previous historians. These three chapters show how women's looks had everything to do with the success of this Canadian commercial colossus.

At the same time, as these and the other chapters of the thesis show, even though women were essential to Eaton's, it was in a subordinate role. It was men who led Eaton's, dictating its messages, orchestrating its movements of buying, selling and merchandising and, as the majority of company proprietors, benefiting from its profits as well. If the dissertation, through its focus on the centrality of women at Eaton's, makes a contribution to the growing field of the history of visuality, and in particular the place of women in the highly visualised nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canadian consumer culture, it is through the exposition of this idea: that women were more witnesses than prophets (or profitters) in this spectacular new world.

---

See Lorraine O'Donnell, review of *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* by Anne McClintock, in *Labour/L Travail* 40 (Fall 1997): 310-12.



PART I  
EATON'S ABROAD

## CHAPTER 1

### THE EATON COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES ABROAD

#### Introduction

This introductory chapter to Part I of the dissertation presents a chronological overview of the Eaton company's foreign buying operations. It lays out the context for the more detailed subsequent chapters which trace Eaton's activities in Japan, Europe and the United States. For the period under the firm's founder, Timothy Eaton, and that of each of his successors until 1969, an effort is made here to assess the relative importance of imports to domestic merchandise owned or made by Eaton's.<sup>1</sup> Also presented is the structure of company activities abroad: travelling buyers, the foreign buying offices, gender divisions among both, and the place of foreign bureaux and travellers within the whole corporate organization.

Taking a preliminary look at the records by or about buyers working abroad provides a first clue about the place of women in the company's foreign activities. Both early on, under Timothy Eaton's personal supervision, and later as the company became larger, more impersonal and more bureaucratic, foreign buying was made out within Eaton's to be an act requiring initiative and independence. These skills, meant to benefit both the company and the buyers themselves, were associated mainly with men. Men made up the

---

<sup>1</sup>Only a few figures are provided in this chapter on the relative importance of imports. A proper assessment of this would require an analysis of the company's account books, which number 767 volumes and take up 470 linear feet of shelving space. See the description of series 127: "[Bookkeeping]: Bookkeeping Records, in Linda Cobon, Lorraine O'Donnell, Tim Belton, Carolyn Heald and Larry Weiler, "Preliminary Inventory of the T. Eaton Records" (Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1990), vol. 2, p. 187.

vast majority of travelling buyers and senior buyers stationed in the foreign buying offices. The language used to communicate with or about them brought home this point, for instance through referring to buyers as a group as men. Male buyers, for their part, tended to write missives in a relaxed, personal tone that emphasized their confidence and independence; this tradition carried on even as their supervisors tried to otherwise engage them in a formalized and centralized system of records-keeping, and thus, eventually, the buyers' writing habits served as a sign of their continued ideal of autonomy in the face of tightening bureaucratic controls.

Women were present among the ranks of travelling buyers although they made up a small minority overall. Their "outsider" status was likewise underlined in the records, for instance in the convention of adding the prefixes of Miss or Mrs. to female buyers on a list that otherwise only mentioned the employees by their last names, therein underscoring their difference from the male norm. It was only around the mid-twentieth century, when women began to occupy new positions as expert observers rather than buyers of fashions, that a female voice began to be heard more loudly in the corporate documentation.

#### The development of foreign buying under Timothy Eaton, 1869-1907

From the time Timothy Eaton founded his Toronto retail store in 1869, he relied a great deal on imported dry goods and used various methods to obtain them. His first advertisement for the store boasted that its fine haberdashery, dress fabric, and women's apparel were available due to "excellent facilities for the importation of their Goods from the British and Foreign Markets."<sup>2</sup> At this point, however, his main "facilities" were actually local suppliers; Eaton was merely selling off stock he had bought from another Toronto merchant who was going out of business. And, for several years to come, Eaton

---

<sup>2</sup>*The Globe*, 1869-12-08, advertisement reprinted in "The Scribe" (pseud.), *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited* (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co. Limited 1919), p. 31.

would obtain most of his stock from a local wholesaler. By the 1870s, however, Timothy Eaton and an associate of his were making buying trips abroad.<sup>3</sup> They probably did most of their buying from foreign wholesalers and commission agents,<sup>4</sup> one of whom Eaton told “to do your best to see that our orders are placed in proper hands and at the best prices...”<sup>5</sup>

The scope and scale of the company’s foreign activities grew in the 1880s. By the 1890s, it was heads of merchandise sales departments who travelled abroad; they were responsible for purchasing the goods for their section, which they ran like stores-within-the-store. Their activities abroad were quite varied; when Margaret Smith (née Stephenson), the head of the fancy goods department,<sup>6</sup> and W.F. Smith took a buying trip to Europe in 1890, for instance, they not only visited commission offices in London, Vienna, Dresden, and Berlin, but also obtained samples and gathered information about production techniques relevant to the drygoods trade there.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, as subsequent chapters will show, Timothy Eaton thought it important that his employees gather not only the latest goods but also the newest information in the course of their travels. This was especially true for the United States, where Eatonians sometimes went only for ideas.

---

<sup>3</sup>Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 71-72.

<sup>4</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>5</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, file “Buying - General,” letter from T. Eaton, [Toronto] to George Merz, Berlin, of ca. 1891-03, in reply to a letter from Merz of 1891-03-13.

<sup>6</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers’ Records), file “[Correspondence - Mr. & Mrs. W. F. Smith - buyers for Eaton’s], card with information from Miss Daisy Smith (of the Recreation Office at Eaton’s).

<sup>7</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers’ Records), file “[Correspondence - Mr. & Mrs. W. F. Smith - buyers for Eaton’s],” various correspondence.

Eaton himself eventually stopped travelling abroad because there was simply too much to keep track of; he wrote in 1892 that “for years I have not dared personally to assume the position of buying goods simply because I am not conversant with present values and would not think of such a thing as pretending to know values of goods all over the house.”<sup>8</sup> The company was obtaining this wider range of lines from more places than ever. It now had many domestic suppliers, including Eaton’s own factories<sup>9</sup> as well as, in 1891, 177 Canadian companies, both manufacturers and wholesalers.<sup>10</sup> In the same year, the company also had accounts with 36 American companies<sup>11</sup> -- it was now sending buyers to the United States<sup>12</sup> -- and did business with a Yokohama firm, as well as requesting information about Japanese trade from a minister visiting the country.<sup>13</sup> Eaton’s also had 88 European accounts in 1891. The latter, especially British firms, accounted for around 60 per cent of the money Eaton’s owed for orders in 1891.<sup>14</sup> Historian Joy Santink, who compiled these statistics, argues that rising sums of customs duties owed by Eaton’s in that year indicates rising amounts of imports. Santink also points out that almost a third of this 60 per cent was owed to only three wholesale houses, all of them based in London.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, file “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank [McMahon], London [Eaton’s of London], and Edward [Eaton], 1892-11-17.

<sup>9</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 147.

<sup>11</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>14</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 147-48.

Throughout the 1890s, the firm continued to buy a lot of foreign merchandise. This included traditional dry goods. Fabric was a very important item Eaton's sold; through just one shipping company operating out of London, it bought fabric from many firms including the Brookfield Linen Company, the Broadway Damask Company, the York Street Flax Spinning Company, the Greenmount Spinning Company, and the Castleisland Linen Company.<sup>16</sup> In this decade, Eaton's also sold a growing range of imported men's hats, collars and ties, haberdashery, parasols, handkerchiefs, gloves, and electric lamps.<sup>17</sup> By 1899, the list included bronze goods, rubber goods and bone rattles from Paris, china flowers and felt dogs from Berlin, crackers from Norwich, tin trains from Nuremberg, and music boxes from Leipzig.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, a Londoner urged the company to trade in drugs and chemicals.<sup>19</sup> Eaton's was clearly developing into a "departmental store."<sup>20</sup> Although Timothy Eaton dismissed as "twaddle" a local wholesaler's use of this term to describe his establishment -- as well as the man's accusation that Eaton's did not buy enough locally<sup>21</sup> -- the fact was that Eaton's was purchasing both a widening range and increasing amount of imports.

---

<sup>16</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Freight Book 'I'," p. 47, list of Belfast Steamship Co., Claim for Rebates.

<sup>17</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, file "Buying and London Buying Office."

<sup>18</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), file "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," notebook from 1899.

<sup>19</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, file "Buying and London Buying Office," letter from H. Meyer, H. Maynright Meyer & Co., London, to Mr. [Frank] McMahon, [n.p.; possibly Eaton's of London], 1896-06-10.

<sup>20</sup> On the development of the store in this early period, see Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, Chapter 8.

<sup>21</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, file "Buying - General," letter from H.S. Howland, Sons & Co, Wholesale Hardware, Toronto, to T. Eaton, 1897-03-22, and reply by T. Eaton, 1897-03-23.

To cope, Eaton's needed to enlarge its foreign buying set-up. Many company buyers travelled to Europe and the U.S.A. throughout the 1890s, and one also went to Japan. A momentous step was taken at Eaton's in 1892 or 1893<sup>22</sup> when the firm opened a buying office in London, the source of so many of its goods. The London office became responsible for a huge territory; during the winter of 1897-8, for instance, it dealt with shipping companies in Portland, Southampton, Hamburg, Switzerland, Antwerp, and Paris.<sup>23</sup> Then, in 1898, Eaton's established a second buying office, in Paris;<sup>24</sup> this bureau also developed its own extensive list of suppliers.<sup>25</sup> Company literature "closely identified" the opening of these foreign offices with Edward Y. Eaton, the founder's son and company vice-president at the time.<sup>26</sup> Timothy Eaton himself remained concerned with the foreign offices, however, for instance complaining in 1898 that the unavailability of qualified staff prevented Eaton's from opening more.<sup>27</sup>

The qualifications he had in mind, as the subsequent chapters will show, were ambition, autonomy and adventurousness. Eaton wanted his employees going abroad to seize not only the latest goods, but also the newest ways of thinking, acting, and seeing that were advantageous to the business. He did what he could from Canada, for instance by closely supervising personnel activities via correspondence, to foster a model of modern

---

<sup>22</sup>Note: Santink *Timothy Eaton*, records the date of the opening of the London office as 1892 (p. 154), which my view of the early records corroborates. The company's fiftieth anniversary book records it as 1893: The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 164.

<sup>23</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Freight Book 'H'," for winter 1897-98.

<sup>24</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 154; The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 164.

<sup>25</sup>See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S56 (General Office - Miscellaneous Records), files on early Paris and London offices for list of companies there dealt with.

<sup>26</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 98.

<sup>27</sup>Eaton's Shareholders Meeting, 22 Feb. 1898, cited in Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 155.

businessmen learning to master foreign material for the good of themselves and the company. As he put it in a letter to his representative in London: the object was that the men abroad grow "big and useful."<sup>28</sup> The men, for their part, appeared to accept both the supervision and the model. It was a corporate arrangement that had little to do with women, few of whom went abroad for the company at this time.

#### Expansion of the foreign buying system under John Craig Eaton, 1907-1922

There were important changes in the Eaton's company early in the twentieth century. Timothy Eaton's son Edward, who had been groomed as heir to the company, died in 1900 at the age of 37. His brother, John Craig, was named the new vice-president. J.C. Eaton was a dynamic man who loved sports, owned the first automobile in Canada, and in 1905 convinced his father to open a second store in Winnipeg<sup>29</sup> (see Illustration 1 for a photograph of Timothy and John Craig Eaton). It was he who took over as president of the company when Timothy passed away two years later, a position he held until his own demise in 1922.

During J.C. Eaton's period as president, the Eaton's foreign buying set-up grew. At first, the company continued to maintain just the two foreign offices. In 1911, however, their reach became so vast -- the Paris staff looking after orders from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and countries to the west, and London's covering "the rest of Europe and the east"<sup>30</sup> -- that new offices in Manchester and Berlin were opened to cope with

---

<sup>28</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Buying and London Buying Office," letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London [Eaton's of London], 1892-08-29. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 102-07.

<sup>30</sup> According to the notice in which this information is found, it was undecided at that point which office was to look after silk. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 61 (Superintendent's



European trade. These were followed by offices in the European cities of Zurich (1912), Belfast and Leicester (both in 1913). Eaton's also established an office in New York for American goods in 1911. After disruptions due to the Great War, Eaton's expanded abroad again, this time into Japan, which had long been an important source of silk and other merchandise. The offices were in Yokohama and Kobe (opened in 1918 and 1919 respectively).<sup>31</sup> Eaton's offices now spanned much of the globe.

Foreign office staff made their premises look "Eatonian." Leicester office employees, for instance, hung a Golden Jubilee banner inside their cozy office.<sup>32</sup> In windows and over entrance doors of the various offices, the company name was displayed, either by simple lettering or rectangular signs indicating the official company logo applicable in that region and period. The Paris office, meanwhile, was inscribed with "J.C. Eaton" in 1909, "The T. Eaton Co. Limited (Toronto and Winnipeg)" in 1919, and "The T. Eaton (France) Co."

---

Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, vol. for 1909-1913, p. 81, 1911-12-7.

<sup>31</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 164. Berlin is not mentioned, presumably because of the recent First World War. Regarding the opening of this later office, see the photograph in S35 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section - Early General Files) box 5, file "Berlin Office - Agreements."

<sup>32</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F229-308-0-667 "Buying Offices," Leicester [ca. 1919].

later in the same year.<sup>33</sup> In Japan, meanwhile, the company offices had Eaton's banners and photographs of important people and properties.<sup>34</sup>

While the actual signs and office decorations helped to identify Eaton's spaces for both employees and outsiders abroad, they served a further purpose of reinforcing the corporate image back home as well. Partly, this was for the benefit of Eaton's employees themselves. At the very least, they were useful documentary evidence; for instance, pictures of the Berlin building housing a company office in the 1920s were marked with an "x" on each window of the office.<sup>35</sup> But more generally, photographs of foreign holdings -- all the information in the paragraph above was obtained through them -- were sent to Canada where they were circulated, reproduced, and put in albums for safekeeping (these were eventually stored in the company archives, founded in 1956). Therefore, the foreign buying offices not only contributed to the growth of the company as a commercial venture, but also enhanced its developing corporate culture. Photographs helped the increasingly-important company know and define itself.

In the 1919 *Golden Jubilee* volume marking fifty years of Eaton's operations, "the Scribe" described the role of the company's foreign offices as follows:<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F229-308-0-667 "Buying Offices," Leicester and file F229-308-0-670, "Buying Offices," Paris. The office was still run by the T. Eaton Company of France in 1956; see, for evidence, S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices," letter from ?, T. Eaton Co. of France, Paris, to T. Eaton Co. Limited, Toronto, 1956-09-12.

<sup>34</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F229-308-0-675, "Buying Offices" for Yokohama, 1919, [index no 571].

<sup>35</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F229-308-0-671 "Buying Offices," Berlin, photograph with index no. 551.

<sup>36</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 164-65.

To act as an alert 'on-the-spot' representative of the various managers at home -- to buy for them, to advise them of new styles, new tendencies, etc., and when the managers themselves appear at regular intervals for the purpose of doing the bulk of their buying in person, to acquaint them with local conditions, to direct them on their purchasing tours, and to serve, if need be, as interpreters.

To settle all accounts for merchandise purchased within the territory covered by this or that particular office.

To speed up deliveries on ordered goods and supervise all details contributing to their quick transportation to Canada.

To undertake the packing and shipping of small orders and any, large or small, which are not shipped direct to Canada from the manufacturer.

Although Canadian-based buyers (described here as "managers") continued to travel abroad to purchase goods for the merchandise departments they headed, they were now inserted into a much more developed and tangible company system abroad.<sup>37</sup> Eaton's had precisely determined the function of its ten buying offices, having to do with advising, guiding and otherwise keeping in close contact with visiting buyers; these offices were functionally and visibly tied into the whole company organization. Thus, as the scale of the company's operations grew, so did its capacity to keep within its physical and administrative reach the growing number of Eaton's buyers abroad.

Subsequent chapters will indicate how travelling buyers, however, tended to continue to view themselves as independent, an attitude they manifested in their letters home. At Eaton's, like in American department stores, there was thus a struggle between the buyers

---

<sup>37</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," notice BO267 from H.M. Tucker to Mr Tucker 1914-08-20.

who “presided over their own little fiefdoms” (that is, their merchandise departments) and “the other managers who represented the interests of the store as a whole.”<sup>38</sup>

The next chapter will also describe how a rising number of the growing ranks of foreign buying office personnel were female. Even in Japan, for instance, four of the 14 Yokohama office staff members by were women in 1919.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, there was more room for women in this more systematised, settled foreign buying system.

#### Changes and constrictions in R.Y. Eaton’s era, 1922-42

In 1922, R.Y. Eaton became president of Eaton’s. He was the company founder’s nephew, had been first vice-president since 1907, and was designated to lead the company until one of J.C. Eaton’s sons would be chosen to take over in 1942.<sup>40</sup> It was in R.Y. Eaton’s era that the firm went through its most important and uninterrupted period of expansion in Canada, with many new stores and catalogue order offices being opened.<sup>41</sup> This was not the case abroad, however. On the one hand, much of Asia, America, and virtually all of Europe was mapped out into buying office “territories.”<sup>42</sup> However, a disastrous Japanese earthquake in 1923 led the company to close its offices in that country

---

<sup>38</sup> Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 10, 48-50. Benson dates this struggle between managers and buyers in American department stores between approximately the 1920s and early 1940s.

<sup>39</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 169.

<sup>40</sup> Linda Cobon et. al, "Preliminary Inventory," Vol. I, pp. 2-3.

<sup>41</sup> This is discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>42</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Vol: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," notice D248 from General Office, 1929-07-27

and return to less efficient methods of buying. In Europe, meanwhile, although the offices did maintain their vast reach for over a decade,<sup>43</sup> the onset of the Second World War severely disrupted the continent's trade with Canada, forcing Canadian-based Eaton's merchandise department heads to stop going there to buy. The company also decided to close several of its European bureaux. Only in the U.S.A. did the Eaton's foreign buying operations expand during R. Y. Eaton's era. Employee visits there increased without interruption, to the point that the company outlined policies to regulate the traffic. There was also an increase in the number of New York office personnel.<sup>44</sup>

Despite these fluctuations, the place of the Eaton's foreign buying offices in the company's overall organization remained stable. The Eaton's staff abroad were, after all, Eatonians, and their connections to the company were strong. They continued to have the roles of processing orders and acting as liaisons, guides and assistants to Canadian-based company buyers. Their official place in the Eaton's hierarchy was clarified in the 1938 company Management List, which unlike its predecessors indicated that the foreign offices were the responsibility of the Toronto-based branch of the company, rather than of the branches in Winnipeg or the East.<sup>45</sup> Eaton's leadership also continued to value the offices overseas. When Mr. P. Portlock, head of European offices, argued in 1941 that the foreign offices benefitted the whole Eaton's organisation because they were "necessary to the company's prestige and institutional standing" and they "assure[d] company leadership in the general

---

<sup>43</sup> In 1929, they covered Western Europe as well as Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Hungary, Greece, "Russia," Jugoslavia and Turkey. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Vol: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," notice D248 from General Office, 1929-07-27.

<sup>44</sup> Details of Eaton's company operations in Japan, Europe and the U.S.A. are provided in the three subsequent chapters.

<sup>45</sup> S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, file 13, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1938," new sections in list for Toronto (typescript).

import field...,"<sup>46</sup> a company director agreed, writing, "...the buying offices serve a general purpose...."<sup>47</sup>

Canadian-based buyers travelling abroad continued to experience both liberty and containment there. On the one hand, as of 1923, Eaton's directors told them they were "free to purchase goods in any country where it is to the company's advantage."<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, they remained tied to a larger company system of foreign buying offices closely watched by senior Eaton's managers. It is into this system that larger numbers of females made their way, both as foreign buying office personnel and travelling buyers. In the 1930s, for example, about one fifth of the Toronto-based buyers going to Europe were women.<sup>49</sup>

#### A new period of expansion under John David Eaton, 1942-1969

It was John David Eaton who was chosen to take over as president of Eaton's in 1942, a post he held until 1969. As Chapter 5 will indicate, the company continued to grow at home during these years through the creation of many new stores and other outlets.

---

<sup>46</sup>Portlock is being cited in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", letter from A.E. Smalley, Secretarial Office, to J. Vaughan, 1941-12-08. The context of these comments was a question which arose of which part of the company should pay what proportion of buying office expenses. Mr. P. Portlock argued that individual departments should not be able to put into question the costs of the offices, which were of benefit to the whole organisation.

<sup>47</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", letter from J.J. Vaughan, Executive Offices to A.E. Smalley, Secretarial Office, 1941-12-24.

<sup>48</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," notice from E. Fretwell to Heads of Departments 1923-07-04

<sup>49</sup>See Table 2 in Chapter 3 for details.

Abroad, company buying increased to supply customers' needs; it picked up in Europe in the late 1940s and thereafter, as it did in Japan in the 1950s, and became more important than ever in the United States. The Eaton's foreign buying system adapted to handle the growth. European offices reopened at the end of World War II and company records discussing the offices, although unfortunately scarce for the period after the mid-1950s, indicate that the foreign offices remained open at the end of the 1950s.<sup>50</sup> In the company's centennial year, 1969, it had foreign buying offices in London, Belfast, Leicester, Paris, Frankfurt and Florence, agents in Korea, Hong Kong, India, Taiwan, and Japan, and "offices or agents" in Spain, New York and Los Angeles.<sup>51</sup>

Eaton's dealt with more foreign suppliers than ever now, in relative and absolute terms. Whereas, as had been indicated above, in 1891 the company dealt with 171 Canadian companies and its own factories, with 36 American companies, and 88 European ones, in 1952, the suppliers that Eaton's dealt with numbered "approximately 3000 Canadian, 1500 American, and 1300 overseas."<sup>52</sup> Thus, while foreign suppliers had made up 42 per cent of all suppliers (excluding the Eaton company's own factories) in the late nineteenth century, the proportion had increased to 48 percent by the mid-twentieth century.

---

<sup>50</sup> For example, there is correspondence of Paris office staff in 1958 in the Eaton's archives: see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, file 100, "Paris Buying Office,") . Also, there are pictures of the Belfast office in 1959 -- see F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F229-308-0-673, "Buying Offices"), as well as of an office in Frankfurt in the same year: F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F229-308-0-672 "Buying Offices," Frankfurt.

<sup>51</sup> William Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 205.

<sup>52</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 142, "Customers' Comments on President's Message on Cover of Catalogue, Fall and Winter 1952-53" letter from J.A. Brockie, Public Relations Office to O.D. Vaughan, Executive Office, 1952-09-30.

However, imports accounted for a far smaller proportion of actual merchandise for sale in 1969 than they had in 1891. Whereas European accounts alone had made up some 60 per cent of the money Eaton's owed for orders in 1891, as had been mentioned above, in the company's centennial year, foreign purchases combined amounted to less than 15 per cent of the total.<sup>53</sup>

In J.D. Eaton's period, managers in the company's Canadian headquarters clarified the direction of foreign buying. As of 1944, the Toronto-based General Merchandise Office supervised all European buying offices, as well as those in New York, Montreal and Toronto.<sup>54</sup> In 1945, the "GMO" was given a separate page on in-house management lists, a sign of its increased size and, possibly, status; previously, it had simply been indicated on the lists as one Toronto expense department among many others such as accounting. The GMO was at this point responsible for supplying goods to both stores and mail order operations throughout the company. In 1946, the company created the new position of "Principal Company Buyer," a job requiring "initiative and leadership in all buying to be done on a Company-wide basis." Principal Buyers were required to partake in every overseas trip, on which they would look after all the paperwork and reports that various branches of the company required. The idea was to "facilitate Company-wide uniformity in the selection of merchandise."<sup>55</sup> This description was in line with the older company requirement that buyers abroad be free to move about and exercise their judgement. But now, buyers' autonomy was to be manifested bureaucratically, by keeping records and

---

<sup>53</sup> Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built*, p. 206.

<sup>54</sup> See the Toronto lists in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, file 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939" to Box 2, file 19 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1944."

<sup>55</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), box 44, file "Travelling - European," letter (copy) from C.M. Leishman, General Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Toronto Merchandise Office, of - 1946-12-14.



planning, and to benefit the whole company equally, rather than just the individual departments with which the buyer was associated. Moreover, designating some buyers as Principals diminished the status of the others, who were now expected to subordinate their own strategies to those of the new elite.<sup>56</sup> The company's General Office communicated the new buying hierarchy to other departments at Eaton's.<sup>57</sup> The General Office also expended a great deal of effort creating a new, detailed list of senior buyers.<sup>58</sup> Both travelling buyers and the foreign buying offices were through these changes more clearly linked to a centralized and rationalized Eaton's operation.

The buying system was further clarified during the 1950s through a series of new documents. In 1953, Eaton's began distributing a list laying out its buying system. The list indicated that there were at this point thirteen full-time Principal Buyers as well as seven Principal Buyers who also were responsible for particular departments in Toronto like "Sportswear" or "Refrigerators and Sewing Machines." The work of these top employees fostered purchasing uniformity in the firm's operations from coast to coast. The Principals were supported by other highly-ranked buyers including Senior Mail Order Buyers and buyers sitting on committees which served departments without Principal

---

<sup>56</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), box 44, file "Travelling - European," letter (copy) from C.M. Leishman, General Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Toronto Merchandise Office, of 1946-12-14.

<sup>57</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, file 22 "Signatures - Managers List, 1947" letter from E.C. Bourke, Correspondence Section, General Office to W.A. McNaught, Winnipeg, 1947-02-14.

<sup>58</sup> This buyers' list involved a lot of work. Within the files containing correspondence about the preparation of the larger Managers List, large sub-sections dedicated to lists of buyers were created. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 3, file 23 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1948."

Buyers.<sup>59</sup> Lowest on the hierarchy were the regular buyers who purchased narrower ranges of goods out of individual buying offices within Canada (either in Montreal, Toronto, or Winnipeg) and abroad. The latter still included the office in New York as well as the five in Europe at this time (Belfast, Leicester, London, Manchester, and Paris).<sup>60</sup> Rounding out the buying system were the agents buying on the company's behalf abroad. Their offices were located in Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Japan, and Spain.<sup>61</sup>

It was a complex system that took the company some time to work out on paper; not until 1954 was Eaton's ready to include a finalized buyers' list in its annual printed List of Management.<sup>62</sup> That year, beside the columns listing the head managers, department managers, and so on responsible for each merchandise department in the various stores and mail order divisions, was a new column listing which Principal Buyer was responsible

---

<sup>59</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, file 30 "List of Management, 1953," list attached to letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to A.E. Smalley, General Office, of 1953-12-15.

<sup>60</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, file 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.

<sup>61</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, file 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.

<sup>62</sup> A note inside the file folder containing correspondence regarding the 1953 Management List indicates: "List started in 1953 showing Principal Buyers opposite departments -- This was not completed until 1954 -- therefore no list was sent out in 1953." On the inside of the binder containing the 1954 Management List is written, "First list to show new ranks, i.e. Manager, Dept Mgr. Assistant, and 1st list to show Principal Buyers." Source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, file 30, "List of Management, 1953," and file 32, "List of Management, 1954..."

for the department.<sup>63</sup> The same Principal Buyers were also listed among the General Merchandise Office staff.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the process of clarifying the relative power and responsibility of Principal Buyers within the Canada-wide organisation involved representing them graphically in the chart-like management list. Big binders containing the list were distributed to every main office in the huge company.

The position of the foreign offices within the Eaton's hierarchy was likewise underlined during the production of the 1950s management lists. Although their staffs were named in these lists, most of them were not actually at the management level. An employee of the office that produced the lists explained, "we do not consider these [registers of foreign buying office employees] part of the List of Management, the sheets being placed in the List of Management Binder for information purposes only."<sup>65</sup> After all, although foreign buying offices were important, they were functionally subservient parts of the buying system whose head buyers operated out of Canada. Their role was to assist representatives of the organization from home. This was true even of the London Office,

---

<sup>63</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, file 32, "List of Management, 1954..."

<sup>64</sup> I noticed this in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), file 34, "List of Management, 1955 [Part II]" draft list for 1956. For 1956, the draft list is structured as follows: Board of Directors; Head office and Miscellaneous departments; General Merchandise Office (i.e., Principal and Mail Order buyers); Dominion-wide Mail Order operations (with subsequent pages giving the head appointments such as Executive office; Divisional heads for Maritimes, Central, Western and Pacific divisions; Mail Order buyers [same names as GMO list]; Mail Order Central Division: Merchandise Departments [again, Principal and Mail Order buyers listed, same as prev pages]; Ontario Order Offices; Quebec Order Offices under the Eaton's of Montreal Limited; then Western Division; then Maritimes Division.)

<sup>65</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), file 33, "List of Management, 1955 [Part I]", letter from H.B. Halliday, General Office, Toronto to S.R. Martin, Executive Offices, 1955-03-25.

which alone among the foreign offices now covered an enormous territory: parts of England as well as Germany, Scandinavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Jugoslavia, Greece and Turkey.<sup>66</sup>

Buyers going abroad -- aptly referred to in this era as "travellers"<sup>67</sup> -- not only had more to purchase in this period, given the company's growth. They also had easier and faster access to foreign space; by the late 1940s they were voyaging by airplane as well as by ship.<sup>68</sup> Senior management at Eaton's, in addition to the above-mentioned efforts to clearly insert the travellers into a rationalized and codified in-house hierarchy, also turned their attention to tracking the buyers' on-the-road behaviour through new record-keeping procedures. Starting in 1946, buyers on the job overseas were required to fill out new composite travel sheets and requisition forms, intended "to establish uniformity and facilitate the authorization of merchandise purchases to be made by Eaton buyers for departments other than those under their personal supervision."<sup>69</sup> This would among other things alleviate the not-infrequent situation which arose when buyers saw goods that would benefit another department than their own, but lacked the authority to purchase

---

<sup>66</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, file 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.

<sup>67</sup> This is the word used for instance in the records of the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office in the 1940s and 1950s. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69, box 44.

<sup>68</sup> See the references to plane travel in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), box 44, file "Travelling - European," and file "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," for instance in the letter from D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office (Toronto) 1952-12-29.

<sup>69</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from W. Park, Merchandise Office, to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1946 - 09-12.

them.<sup>70</sup> And in 1950, the company started paying close attention to the buyers' travel expenses. They were limited to fixed amounts of money to spend on accommodation: \$24.00 per day in Europe, for example. Cheaper ocean liner fares, while not insisted upon, were also "drawn to [their] attention" as was the fact that entertainment expenses were for business-related activities only, not personal ones. Business entertainment expense sheets now had to say "who was entertained, and [the] nature of the entertainment." Finally, all travel sheets now had to be signed by the supervisor, who sometimes had not done so in the past.<sup>71</sup>

Buying abroad as defined by the company heads had changed since Timothy Eaton's time. The father figure coaxing along his protégés had been replaced by central offices dictating through notices; the early buyer, bound by the intense private relationships fostered within a single store, had been replaced, at least on paper, by a bureaucratic collaborator. On the other hand, the re-worded company expectations of buyers -- to entertain appropriately; to keep track of expenses and to do whatever else the head offices required of them in the way of self-discipline for the good of the organization -- were not new in their intent. Buyers were still meant to develop themselves and their company by showing "initiative and leadership."

Eaton's travellers did not necessarily welcome such post-war corporate initiatives. One complained that when a buyer who was not a Principal travelled abroad, he had no real

---

<sup>70</sup> For example, a Toronto Department 277 buyer overseas was at one point not authorized to buy for Department 367; see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1947-05-09.

<sup>71</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Other than Overseas," document entitled "Travelling expenses," 1950-04-28.

work to do or meaningful responsibilities; he would be simply an “observer.”<sup>72</sup> And the buyers, in their correspondence among themselves and their peers back home, continued to show that they clung to the corporate construction of themselves as independent. Unceremonious and personal, their letters were quite different than the typical company documents which were increasingly formal. At least in writing, buyers resisted the constraints of carbon copies. They seemed to have, in the words of department store historian Susan Porter Benson, a “grip” on their traditional individualistic work culture which they intended to conserve.<sup>73</sup>

Women rarely wrote home with this kind of autonomous authority, given that not many of them were senior Eaton’s buyers. Relatively few Canadian-based women buyers went abroad in the late 1950s. There is a list of buyers who went overseas for many Toronto and Montreal lines of goods including clothing and housefurnishings for the Spring trips of 1958 and 1959. None of the 64 names on it are indicated to be women through the courtesy titles of “Miss” or “Mrs.” as was the company custom, although one, “North,” was probably Miss North buying for the Toronto Sportswear department. Among the names proposed for the upcoming Fall, 1959 overseas trip, the General Merchandise Office recommended only one woman, Miss North, and 18 men, while the Divisional suggestion was for 7 men and one woman, Miss Stagg.<sup>74</sup> In Japan, where Eaton’s had

---

<sup>72</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), box 44, file “Travelling - European,” letter (copy) from C.M. Leishman, General Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Toronto Merchandise Office, of - 1946-12-14, annotations describing telephone call by G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, of 1946-12-18.

<sup>73</sup> Benson uses this term to describe saleswomen consciously aware of their own work culture. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, p. 293.

<sup>74</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, file “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” undated and untitled document listing buyers for 1958-59.

not had an office since the 1920s, women had little role to play at all; it seems that no female Eatonians went on business there until 1965, when two did.<sup>75</sup>

There were also few women among the senior buyers based in foreign bureaux. In 1949, for instance, none of the top managers in the European or New York offices were female, and nor were any of the senior personnel below management level in Europe women, either.<sup>76</sup> Women made a similar small showing among the ranks of Principal Buyers who, as was indicated above, were stationed in Canada. In 1953, there were no women among either the thirteen full-time Principals, the seven Principals working out of Toronto merchandise departments, or the twenty-three Senior Mail Order buyers. Only one of the twenty-four people on buyers' committees serving departments without principal buyers was a woman.<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, there were now a number of women among the lower-ranking buyers in Europe. Of those working out of the foreign offices in 1953, there was a woman filling

---

<sup>75</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>76</sup> Five of the 20 names for the Montreal buying office were women -- four were assistants - - and one of the thirteen "in charge" of a Toronto merchandise department was female. NOTE: the numbers given are not in exact proportion of the *number* of women among the senior personnel, because in some cases, the same name was listed as in charge of two or more departments. Instead, the numbers indicate how many departments were looked after by women. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 3, file 25, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1949" - in file is "List of senior personnel, by classification, of buying offices under supervision of General Merchandise Office," 1949-06.

<sup>77</sup> The lone woman was Mrs. C. Atkinson of the Candy department. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, file 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to A.E. Smalley, General Office, of 1953-12-15.

one of eleven positions in London<sup>78</sup> and one of five in Paris.<sup>79</sup> None of the six Manchester buyers were women. Belfast and Leicester did not have buyers. Thus, approximately nine per cent of the rank-and-file Europe-based buyers were female, a figure comparable to the situation within Canada.<sup>80</sup> In New York in 1949, meanwhile, five of thirteen people heading departments were women. The proportion of women managers or assistants in Canada in that year was lower than in New York but higher than in Europe, a sign of their favoured status in the U.S.A.<sup>81</sup> Four years later, in 1953, nine of the 17 sections of the New York buying office had women buyers, including one woman who headed two.<sup>82</sup> There is little information available on the female foreign-office staff not engaged directly in buying, or indeed on the male staff either.

---

<sup>78</sup> This was Miss A.K. Blackman in the section uniting Books, Candies and similar low-priced lines.

<sup>79</sup> This was Mlle. C. Magdelain, assistant in the important department buying women's wear, children's wear and furniture.

<sup>80</sup> In Canada, six of the 41 departments had women buyers. None of the seven departments in the Winnipeg buying office of the General Merchandise Office had women buyers; five of 20 in Montreal did have women, and one of 14 in Toronto. Whether any of these women went to Europe is not indicated in the source. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, file 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.

<sup>81</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 3, file 25, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1949" - in file is "List of senior personnel, by classification, of buying offices under supervision of General Merchandise Office," 1949-06.

<sup>82</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4 file 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.



Preserved in the company records, however, are letters by Canadian-based managers on some of their female buying colleagues who did go to Europe. As chapter 3 will show, these managers, who were male, and among whose numbers were some senior travelling buyers, did not hesitate to make comments on the aptitudes of the women travellers. While they did recognize the women's skills, particularly in the area of buying refined articles like antiques, the latitude the men used in their assessments of the women was most unusual in the otherwise impersonal corporate records. This suggests that while the women were mostly mute in the company records, the men used their power as records-creators to assert their own superiority.

It was in the role of taste-makers, not travelling buyers, that women at Eaton's found a special niche for themselves and made themselves heard as a group. It became fairly common for female employees to go abroad for professional development in this period. One or two went to Europe in special fashion consultant capacities, and some new positions in the New York office like Fashion Reporter were occupied exclusively by women. Chapter 4 will show that females were getting a reputation within the company as gifted interpreters of American modernity. And, in the documents they themselves created, they developed a distinctive tone. Thus, it was in the end on the outside of the foreign buying system, rather than inside of it, that female Eatonians could take more place for themselves in the vast space of the world abroad.

### Conclusion

When Eatonians went abroad, the professional baggage they brought and unpacked included corporate culture as well as order-books. In turn, they sent home not just merchandise, but also ideas: opinions of the stores, factories, and sights they visited; reactions to people they met in the course of business and leisure activities; and

impressions of daily life. The international transactions made by Eatonians were, in other words, cultural as well as financial; there was, then, a “business culture” inside Eaton's.<sup>83</sup>

It was also a businessmen's culture. The company consistently expressed its expectations about how its senior employees would undertake this task in terms of more-or-less-rugged autonomy, self-development and initiative, terms that were associated in-house with men. The men's superior position was gendered; at Eaton's, like in the American case, “maleness coincided with higher levels of authority in the department store.”<sup>84</sup> Even though there were from very early on some women working abroad for Eaton's, including as travelling buyers, it took decades for women to claim their place in this male realm. As subsequent chapters will show, this was in the roles of interpreting and communicating new styles that were known beforehand to be modern and easily accessible; for instance, it was women who occupied the position of New York Fashion Reporter. Thus, within Eaton's, finding valuable goods and ideas abroad involved a hierarchical sexual division of labour. The men discovered and brought home the bounty from even the most frighteningly non-modern frontiers, sometimes setting up outposts -- company foreign buying offices -- to facilitate the process. They held the most authority, as well as the purse-strings. The women went to places already known to possess foreign abundance; once there, they used their (female-) intuition, sensitivity and good taste to observe and explain it in their own words.

---

<sup>83</sup> Here I am using culture in the sense that Susan Porter Benson uses it in her study of the behind-the-scenes life in department stores: as “the set of frameworks, attitudes, and accepted standards of behaviour that one draws upon in dealing with society.” Benson identifies separate interacting cultures in department stores: among managers, salesclerks, and customers. She also uses the expression “business culture” to describe the particular management culture that developed in department stores in the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth U.S.A. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>84</sup> Benson, *Counter Cultures*, p. 266.

## CHAPTER 2

### NO PLACE FOR ITS WOMEN?

#### EATON'S, JAPAN AND THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE

##### Introduction

Eatonians were not confident when they went to Japan. Starting in the nineteenth century and continuing, with a few breaks, right through the 1960s, they tended to be suspicious of its people and things. Japan usually meant different, "other:" other than what Eatonians knew; often, other than what they respected. From their perspective, it was fraught with obstacles, difficulties, and even peril; they could not move through it masterfully.

At first, especially, they found Japanese business, banking and marketing obscure and unpredictable, contrary to the styles they knew and which they deemed more up-to-date. The country was not the source of ideas on business and consumer culture that Europe, for example, was to Eaton's. Furthermore, Japan was rarely a source of goods that Eatonians felt to be fashionable. They valued the merchandise enough to set up formal buying arrangements through commission houses and foreign offices, but felt compelled to do extra work so it would have the kind of style they valued, for instance by trying to control its design and production.<sup>1</sup> The mistrust grew, predictably, during World War II, when the Japanese became the ultimate "others," the enemy, but also lingered in later decades when Japan's economy, methods of production and business methods changed and looked more like the American ones Eatonians venerated. How, then, can the

---

<sup>1</sup>This is not to mention the marketing strategies the company employed to make Japanese goods seem fashionable to customers, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

mistrust be explained? It was because some Eatonians at least, like many Canadians,<sup>2</sup> saw the Japanese as being different: belonging to a different race, and having a culture arising from their race. Eatonians were for much of the period struck by the traditional aspects of Japanese culture -- customs and artifacts, for instance -- and blind to the modern ones.

It is not surprising, in light of these experiences and attitudes, that the movement of Eatonians through the space of Japan was uneven. The present chapter will show that they in effect lurched through the country from one predicament to the next, their buying system often reduced to crisis management.

Given this construction of Japan as a potentially perilous place, the buyers and office staff sent by Eaton's to work there found plenty of situations in which they could develop the fortitude and autonomy so highly valued and encouraged within the company. They construed work there as an activity suited for men, not women. Did they believe that Western women did not belong in the country? While this may seem to be an exaggerated claim, it appears to have been the case for decades. Very few female Eatonians went over to Japan. There were some Japanese women as well as a local woman of European descent in the Eaton's offices in the early decades. The wife of a Canadian-based Eatonian had a brief, harrowing stay in the 1920s. It was not until the 1960s, however, that the first female Eatonian was sent there as a buyer.

#### Developing contacts in Japan: The 1890s to the 1910s

##### *Early company representatives*

Eaton's began doing business in Japan just as that country's economy changed significantly, late in the nineteenth century. Even before the end of the Tokugawa regime

---

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Peter W. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), which discusses anti-Japanese sentiment in British Columbia.

(1600 -1867), the old Japanese feudal system had eroded. The economy had been money-centred for some time, with rural wage-earning and commercial farming increasingly common.<sup>3</sup> The retail industry had already developed, with shops appearing early in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Small-scale, rural domestic production was already thriving, with the domestic producers supplying goods such as textiles (including silk) and paper products to urban merchants.<sup>5</sup> The pace of change escalated during the Meiji period (1868-95). Western ideas and methods were studied enthusiastically by members of the country's business and intellectual elite, who preached an "ideology of progress."<sup>6</sup> The national government became involved in directing the economy, to the point of creating and owning industrial enterprises in sectors requiring big investments and technological innovation, such as heavy industry like mining and light industry like silk spinning.<sup>7</sup> The government also encouraged the old feudal leaders to become business people, either as rural producers of goods such as tea and silk worms for example, or as urban merchants.<sup>8</sup> In these ways, Japan's economic and social climate approached that of parts of the West: the country was experiencing an industrial revolution.

Japan was increasingly open to foreign traders. Special institutions like the Yokohama Specie Bank were established to accommodate foreign exchange.<sup>9</sup> Through intermediary commission houses, foreign exporters (alongside some large Japanese merchants), supplied capital to silk reelers to buy cocoons at harvest time.<sup>10</sup> Also, foreigners in port

---

<sup>3</sup>G.C. Allen, *A Short Economic History of Modern Japan 1867-1937, with a Supplementary Chapter on Economic Recovery and Expansion 1945-1960*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev'd. ed., (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Johannes Hirschmeier and Tsunehiko Yui, *The Development of Japanese Business 1600-1973*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 75.

<sup>7</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 53, and Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 183.

<sup>10</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 69.

cities looked after most of the international trade until the end of the century.<sup>11</sup> Their knowledge of and good relations with markets and suppliers abroad meant they dominated this field for decades.<sup>12</sup>

Foreigners also demanded Japanese goods, which affected the country's production. At first, they demanded agricultural products like raw silk and rice as well as, to a lesser extent, manufactured goods such as lacquer-ware and pottery.<sup>13</sup> Silk was especially important after a silkworm disease occurring around the time that Japanese trade opened up diminished European production of the popular commodity. During the Meiji period, Japan officially limited the expansion of foreign trade.<sup>14</sup> However, it was in order to produce "the standardized qualities of silk demanded abroad" that the Japanese government constructed the highly-capitalized silk-reeling factories during this era.<sup>15</sup> By 1893, although hand-reeling of silk remained important and indeed increased, more reeling was done by machines until by 1903 the latter process accounted for 72 per cent of the total output,<sup>16</sup> a sign of the relative importance of the foreign market. This being said, foreign trade remained an insignificant element of the Japanese economy until the late 1890s, after the Meiji era, when it began to grow in importance.<sup>17</sup>

The Japanese economy of the late nineteenth century is often characterized as a "dual-character" or "dual-structure" system because it blended new and old components.<sup>18</sup> Traditional Japanese ideals and arrangements persisted. This was true of the silk industry, for instance. Modern entrepreneurs organized it, but they dealt mainly with small

---

<sup>11</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 28. Johannes Hirschmeier and Tsunehiko Yui single out raw silk and tea as the most important exports until the 1890s. *Japanese Business*, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, pp. 33, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>17</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 61; and Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 115.

producers from the old textile sector who needed little capital to produce their wares, and thus remained simple “one-man enterprises.”<sup>19</sup> Businesses tended to remain family-run and owned; old-fashioned values of honour and honesty continued to dictate merchandising practices.<sup>20</sup> Former feudal lords-turned-merchants were so old-fashioned that “their unbusinesslike behaviour made them proverbial.”<sup>21</sup> At the same time, a successful school of business thought emerged based upon this group’s “code of ethics;” it promoted principles of “honesty, independence, co-operative spirit, and social responsibility.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, many Japanese opposed the influx of new “Western values”<sup>23</sup> they believed contrary to their own traditional ones. As historians Johannes Hirschmeier and Tsunehiko Yui have written, “Japan took over the forms, but...very little of the ‘spirit’ of capitalism.”<sup>24</sup>

Eaton's was establishing its business in Japan in this period of great economic change.<sup>25</sup> One early contact, a Mr. D. Macdonald in Tokyo, promised Eaton's in 1891 to “distribute your Catalogues & Fashion plates where they will likely get attention;” furthermore, he regretted not having been able to find a catalogue from any local supplier. He offered to buy a few “Japanese notions” but worried about disproportionately high mailing expenses.<sup>26</sup> Eaton's replied that no goods were being sought by the company at that point, only “information...regarding Japanese Notions.” The distributed publicity “will

---

<sup>19</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 77, and Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 112.

<sup>20</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>21</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 125.

<sup>23</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 167.

<sup>24</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup>One other relevant early document is an 1891 list of outstanding accounts of the Eaton company at the time of its incorporation, which names a Yokohama wholesaler or commission agent. Source of this information: Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p 146.

<sup>26</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying - General,” letter from D. Macdonald, Tokyo, to T. Eaton, Toronto, 1891-04-09.

give Merchants an idea of the class of goods we sell. After having done this, your duty has been discharged.”<sup>27</sup> It seems, then, that Macdonald was hired to work temporarily for the company at a very early stage of its Japanese venture.

The letter from Eaton's addressed Macdonald as “Rev” and talked about his Methodist missionary work in Japan as well.<sup>28</sup> Given its tone, content and appearance, the writer was surely Timothy Eaton himself, a devout Methodist known to bring his religious principles to work.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of its provenance, it certainly reveals three important characteristics of the Eaton Company’s early view on Japan: that it was an unknown territory, that seeing it through the filter of a Western churchman’s eyes was deemed not only acceptable, but desirable, and that the Eaton’s brand of business was understood as functionally and philosophically compatible with religious missionary work -- Macdonald and his colleagues were said to possess qualities like “liberty” and “aspirations” and his students complimented for being “enterprising.” It seems that people at Eaton’s were as hesitant as the Japanese in the face of a foreign culture, and as eager to cling to their own values.

By the mid-1890s, Eaton’s sent its own secular missionary to Japan: company buyer J.A.C. Poole. In 1896 he went from Toronto to Vancouver, then to Japan, where he

---

<sup>27</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying - General,” letter initialled by [? T.] E. to Rev D. Macdonald, Tokyo, 1891-05-04. NOTE: the letter appears to be by Timothy Eaton.

<sup>28</sup>The letter writer, undoubtedly Timothy Eaton himself, says, “No doubt you have some enterprising young “Japs.” [sic] in your College who are seeking Christian instruction so you are at liberty to use [five pounds sent to Macdonald previously] in this way....” The letter writer indicated he regularly funded another man of the cloth to send “five copies of the Methodist Quarterly to men of this kind”, and had heard from a third, “Bishop Newman of the United States”, who, having visited Japan, was able to provide “a graphic description of the aspirations of some of your young Missionaries.”

<sup>29</sup>Timothy Eaton’s strong religious values are often mentioned in his biographies. See, for instance, Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 23-4.



visited Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki, then on to other points in Asia and Europe.<sup>30</sup> This was a point at which foreign trade with Japan was growing but it was still unusual in Canadian retailing; Poole acted as purchasing agent for Quebec and Montreal merchants James Ogilvy and Robert Simpson in a 1904 buying trip.<sup>31</sup> He dealt directly with manufacturers, and worked with a number of independent agents responsible for obtaining and shipping goods in return for a commission.<sup>32</sup>

Despite his evident autonomy, Poole kept close contact with Eaton's. The last city Poole visited on his 1896 trip was London, where the company had a foreign buying office

---

<sup>30</sup>They included Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Colombo, Adin, Suez, Port Said, Brindisi, Malta, Gibraltar, and Plymouth. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903". Notebook for Japan, Spring 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated.

<sup>31</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebooks 3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," Notebook for Japan, Spring 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated. Entries for: 1904-10-15, 1904-10-24, 1904-11-01, 1904-11-07, 1904-11-09.

<sup>32</sup>Both manufacturers and agents are mentioned in the 1896 section of AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," Notebook for Japan, Spring, 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated.

There is a note of ca. 1918 in the Eaton's correspondence on Japan indicating that "The three ways in which a Canadian Company can do business in Japan, and the circumstances attending each" were: 1. "Appoint an individual as agent for the Company in Japan," 2. "As a Branch office," 3. "Incorporate under Japanese law." Each way entailed for the company specific rights and requirements regarding registration, land ownership, taxation, etc. Source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S36 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section - General Files), Box 3, File J1-0-1/2 "Japan - General Correspondence," unsigned and undated note. Surrounding material in the file indicates the note was probably written by F. Gee of the Legal Section, Secretarial Office, ca. 1918.

which, by 1911, was officially responsible for company operations in “the east.”<sup>33</sup> Aside from London, Poole’s trips were bracketed by contact with Canadian colleagues; his 1903 trip to Japan started and ended with friendly get-togethers by colleagues.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the company’s view of Japan had been filtered through Methodism, now its view was informed by the developing corporate culture of Eaton's itself.

Poole and his London colleagues shared some anxieties about doing business with the Japanese. A London office employee wrote in 1902 that “it is a very risky thing to pay Japanese Manufacturers before you receive the goods...we do not think it would be safe.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, when Poole recorded the various transactions he undertook to exchange money before going to Japan, he commented that “no body keeps any more money out here than they can help. Banks [aren’t] much good.”<sup>36</sup> His disposition was not improved by the language barrier. He systematically recorded whether English was spoken and whether there were English people in the different centres he visited, marking

---

<sup>33</sup>According to the notice in which this information is found, which office was to look after silk was undecided at that point. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, vol. for 1909-1913, p. 81, 1911-12-7.

<sup>34</sup>When he left, colleagues Messrs. Lowry, McGee, Boothe, Botton, and Dean, as well as family members and friends, “went as far as Parkdale [near Toronto] and then went to Bob Eaton’s;” it ended when he was “met a lot of folks at station” on his return. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers’ Records), File “Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903,” Notebook for Japan, Spring, 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated. Entry for 1903-04-06.

<sup>35</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S56 (General Office - Miscellaneous Records), Box 1, File “[Financial Department – Notes, re: Payment from London and Paris - 1902]” letter from J. McGillivray, London Office, to Financial Department, Toronto, 1902-09-10.

<sup>36</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers’ Records), File “Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903,” Notebook for Japan, Spring, 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated.

"No English" in his notes for Seko, and for Hokadate (north Japan), "English 63. Pop. all told 66,333."<sup>37</sup>

Poole's description of Japan was a report of opportunities to consume. Sometimes, his prospects were purely visual; he described Miyajima, identified as a "famous temple between Kobe & Nagasaki," as "about the nicest place a man could live." The sights of Juikko held no such appeal to Poole, given that there was "nothing here but temples and a little wood carving. No English People."<sup>38</sup> Other times, he described cities purely in terms of their products, such as "Akayama or Fukuyama where matting is made... Jima where bamboo baskets are made, Kanazawa, the celebrated Diktani where porcelain is made..." On this and other visits, Poole managed to buy a dizzying variety of Japanese goods. Silk was of prime importance -- striped, plain, inlaid -- but also acquired lacquer ware, porcelain, paper fans "and fancy things," such as paper lanterns and napkins; cloisonné, beaded curtains, bronze goods, grass goods, toys, basket and bamboo ware, folding screens, embroidery on satin, hairbrushes, rugs, table mats, lacquer box sets, wood trays, work boxes, writing desks, china, Satsuma ware, silk screens, pieced silk, dolls, cheap vases, bronze, cotton rugs, and matting.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Opening a foreign buying office*

---

<sup>37</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," Notebook for Japan, Spring, 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated. Entries for 1896.

<sup>38</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," Notebook for Japan, Spring, 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated. Entries for 1896, for page after entry of 1904-04-23.

<sup>39</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," Notebook for Japan, Spring 1896 and 1903-4. Unpaginated.

It was undoubtedly to facilitate such purchases as well as to minimize barriers that Eaton's announced its intention of opening a buying office there.<sup>40</sup> Thomas P. Douglas was chosen to lay the groundwork.<sup>41</sup> Eaton's picked a good time and place for this move. Yokohama, the "natural port" of Tokyo,<sup>42</sup> was designated as the site of the new office. This city, along with Kobe, was a center of both exporters and silk testing and conditioning.<sup>43</sup> From this vantage-point, Eaton's could exploit an exporting environment that was increasingly favourable to its needs. Starting around the turn of the century, England and other countries had revised their unequal treaties with the country, and Japan stopped imposing export taxes.<sup>44</sup> More Japanese companies were exporting,<sup>45</sup> many of them large, modern and possessing plenty of capital and entrepreneurial spirit--<sup>46</sup> that is, not unlike what Eaton's itself aspired to be. Foreign trade grew in relative significance within the Japanese economy right up until World War I,<sup>47</sup> when there was an export boom with Japan supplying goods to countries at war.<sup>48</sup> There was a surge in production of semi-manufactured products including raw silk and manufactured goods like handicrafts and cotton and silk fabric.<sup>49</sup> Interested in all of these, Eaton's benefited from Japan's prosperity.

---

<sup>40</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," Notice of 1917-12-10 by J.J. Vaughan.

<sup>41</sup>Charles Whitehead was assigned to Japan in 1914. Source of information: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice NS274 from J.E. Robertson, Winnipeg, to Mr. E. Fretwell, 1914-11-20 indicating Charles Whitehead had gone to Japan; previously he worked in the Contract Office.

<sup>42</sup>*Japan Chronicle*, 1923-09-09.

<sup>43</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>44</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 95.

<sup>46</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 146.

<sup>47</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>48</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, pp. 145, 148.

<sup>49</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, pp. 93-4.

The correspondence on Douglas's activities reveals much about the nature of the Eatonians' foreign buying culture,<sup>50</sup> as alongside its purchasing operations the company developed an "esprit de corps" and a clearer sense of their ideal business behaviour. Going abroad and encountering difference thus helped them develop a sense of self.

*1) Breaking relations with the agents Patten, Mackenzie & Company*

Douglas saw his new job as a challenging opportunity for manly self-development. When at the beginning of his stay R. Y. Eaton sent encouraging advice about how to face future difficulties, Douglas replied,<sup>51</sup>

I have always found that after a fellow gets a real good bump or two and gets time to straighten up and shake himself after the first shock, that he learns something to his advantage, and they say that a person has to get a reasonable amount of bumps properly placed to wear off all his rough edges, so I will look on them in this spirit

---

<sup>50</sup>Still, the records that do exist were those generated in the Toronto office on the subject of Japan rather than those created by either Eaton's or local businesses in Japan. A letter written by a Japanese businessman in the 1960s provides one reason for the absence of Japanese company correspondence on Eaton's, World War II destruction. He wrote of one such company, for instance, that "Nagoya city was air raided by B29 American bombers many times, so that if Nagoya Seitoshō was burnt to the ground they would be in difficulty to find such old copies of documents." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -162-0- 3, "Accidents and Disasters - Japanese Earthquake," letter from Hachizo Yagi of Silk Kingdom Co. Ltd of Kamakura, Japan, to Mr. G. Carlson, Co Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1968-02-07.

<sup>51</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-01-12 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton in Toronto.

and furthermore follow your advice and feel that they are not meant to be as stiff as they are handed out.

A month later, he wrote, "with all the drawbacks of doing business in Japan we must say that the work is very interesting, the harvest is great and all we have to do is to 'wade in' and 'go to it.'"<sup>52</sup>

Similar enthusiasm and confidence characterized Douglas's initial view of the Japan he encountered outside of work. He made an effort to learn about the country's natural and cultural offerings, enjoying his try at the national passion of golf,<sup>53</sup> and obtaining and mailing home images of "fisherman life" and "general views" of Japan, as well as books of colour pictures of Japanese silk and tea industries.<sup>54</sup> He sent samples of Japanese flower seeds to his company superior Charles Boothe to plant in his summer house.<sup>55</sup> He relished Japan's winter climate, when roses still bloomed and it was "no colder than October at home,"<sup>56</sup> thus making sense of the foreign by comparing it to the familiar. Boothe did the same, regaling Douglas with stories of the playoff hockey games he had been attending,

---

<sup>52</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

<sup>53</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-01-12 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton in Toronto.

<sup>54</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

<sup>55</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to C. Boothe of 1918-02-26.

<sup>56</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-01-12 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton in Toronto.

noting, "I suppose you have no hockey matches in Japan, you certainly have missed some of the greatest games that have ever been played in Toronto...."<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps Douglas felt confident about his place in Japan because he viewed it from a position well grounded in his native culture. He rented a room in a house of a Union Church minister, for example.<sup>58</sup> He kept informed and was concerned about the well-being of colleagues, at one point writing sympathetically about an Eatonian suffering from "nervous trouble." He added that he himself had had the same problem.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, he was able to keep in touch directly with some company comrades, being visited regularly by Eaton's buyers. At one point, he sent a "snap-shot of a lot of Gordon Stanley's [a company buyer] friends at the Nagoya Hotel,"<sup>60</sup> at another, he fondly described his hard-working visiting colleagues as "the boys."<sup>61</sup> Douglas was confident of his place not only in Japan, but also in the Eaton's brotherhood.

At first, early in 1918, Douglas included the Eaton Company's commission agents in Yokohama, Patten, Mackenzie & Co., in this friendly embrace, reporting he had "never

---

<sup>57</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from C. Boothe to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office of 1918-03-22.

<sup>58</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-01-12 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton in Toronto.

<sup>59</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-01-12 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton in Toronto.

<sup>60</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to J.A. Livingstone, 1918-06-27 reference no. 297.

<sup>61</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter [unsigned but clearly from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office] to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-08-06.

worked with finer men." The feeling seems to have been mutual as Mackenzie Company felt "our concern in their estimation is the best account they have on their books, also our Buyers are a lot easier to handle, more considerate, and genial to get along with than any others they come in contact with."<sup>62</sup> Later in the year, though, the relationship soured. Douglas started hiring his own clerical staff, thus making the agents worry about the security of their contract with Eaton's.<sup>63</sup> During "a heart to heart talk," Eaton's staff explained that the company did intend "to open up for [themselves] in the future" but only in three years or so, and on a year's notice. Mackenzie was reportedly satisfied with this news.<sup>64</sup> The company was less sure than it seemed, however; its senior staff had been privately wondering about Douglas's actions, and having disagreements on how it had formulated and explained its intentions in Japan to the agents.<sup>65</sup> Then in May, Eaton's

---

<sup>62</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

<sup>63</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-03-19 from S. Wilson of Winnipeg to C. Boothe of Toronto.

<sup>64</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

<sup>65</sup>Eaton's executives had been privately wondering why the company bothered to employ the Patten-Mackenzie firm to provide similar services and later Charles Boothe asked Douglas exactly when he planned "take over the business [him]self," information that would allow Eaton's to give Mackenzie the promised notice. Boothe was reporting on a conversation he had had with Mr. Stanley. In-house documents disagreed over the timing of the eventual transfer of exporting operations from Patten-Mackenzie to Eatons, varying from one to several years, while a report of February, 1918 by Douglas indicates that Eaton employees Messrs. Stanley and Forster had told Patten Mackenzie that the takeover of exporting operations "would probably be a matter of about three years" and on "a year's notice, before so doing." By March of 1918, Eaton's executives were debating whether notice should be given immediately, as for instance R.Y. Eaton recommended, or in a few



announced plans to open its own Japanese office.<sup>66</sup> By the summer, Douglas and another Eaton's man, E. Jones, met with Mackenzie on the topic of a settlement. Mackenzie reportedly felt that in the absence of a written contract, their "honorable understanding" should be respected, and Jones replied that his company "did not wish to do anything that would not be fair."<sup>67</sup> Mackenzie later declared his belief that "Eatons will not suffer an injustice to be done if they know it," and that "I have always taken Eatons on perfect trust;" its word had always been "Gospel." He felt that Eaton's had exploited this trust.

---

years, as Charles Boothe advised. The decision hinged on determining exactly what had been promised to Patten Mackenzie, as well as whether or not Douglas felt ready to carry out all the company business.

Sources: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letters of 1918-03-19 from S. Wilson of Winnipeg to C. Boothe of Toronto; from C. Boothe to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office of 1918-03-22; from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg of 1918-02-23; from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto to S. Wilson, Eaton's, Winnipeg, of 1918-03-22; from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto to Mr. Tucker, 1918-04-29.

<sup>66</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from R.Y. Eaton to Tucker of 1918-05-30, which the latter was to use as a model in writing a letter to Patten Mackenzie company. Douglas was given "full authority to settle the matter". (This was reported in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office", letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto to Tucker, 1918-05-2) and another Eaton's employee, Mr. E. Jones, was sent to Yokohama to inquire about banking and taxation legalities involved in setting up an office. (AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office", letter from R.Y. Eaton to Tucker of 1918-05-30).

<sup>67</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from E Jones, Yokohama, to R.Y. Eaton, 1918-07-06.

Eaton's now spoke of financial interests, not brotherhood. In July, Jones was instructed to "settle making severance earliest possible" with Mackenzie.<sup>68</sup> R. Y. Eaton felt the latter had been "careless" in examining goods, probably silk.<sup>69</sup> The problem with this was that

---

<sup>68</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," cable from "Eaton" to "Etonian Yokohama", 1918-08-01 tells Jones to settle. This was the code that had been agreed upon in a letter of 1918-07-06 to R. Y. Eaton, to settle with Mackenzie.

A letter from E. Jones of July indicates that he had arrived in Japan and that he and Douglas had been having problems with Mackenzie. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from E. Jones, Yokohama, to R. Y. Eaton, 1918-07-06. For Mackenzie's reply, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from D. Mackenzie to H.M. Tucker, Winnipeg, 1918-07-10.

However, at Eaton's it now felt that with Douglas and its buyers now knowledgeable enough about Japanese markets and trading, and a hired bookkeeper, its Yokohama office could manage without the agents. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from R. Y. Eaton to Tucker, 1918-08-01.

<sup>69</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from R. Y. Eaton to Mr. Tucker 1918-08-01; letter from R. Y. Eaton to Mr. Jones of 1918-08-02.

Note: Objections within Eaton's about receiving orders of silks that were spoiled from spotting were probably the source of these comments. Eaton's took silk very seriously. Soon after arriving in Japan, Douglas had forwarded to his home office photographs of the silk industry. Charles Boothe fretted in April, "we are in very bad shape for a Silk man," presumably referring to a lack of a suitable buyer. Those buyers who were available to leave for Japan during the summer aimed to ensure that the lines of silk Eaton's ordered were impeccable, before the company branched out into other lines of silks as well as into other kinds of Japanese goods such as musical instruments.

Sources: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letters from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Mr.

"the silk business runs into much more money than anything else;"<sup>70</sup> letting it spoil would be tantamount to betrayal. R. Y. Eaton wrote, "there seems to be no advantage in dealing through *these people* any longer. As to our obligations to them in the way of information, the chances are that they learned more from us than we learned from them."<sup>71</sup>

Consequently, R. Y. Eaton decided to terminate his company's business completely with the agents.<sup>72</sup> In September, 1918, Douglas made final arrangements for Eaton's to handle future shipping orders, leaving Patten-Mackenzie the role of following through on the \$250,000 of orders it had already placed. He also obtained temporary offices elsewhere so physical separation also occurred. When he declared, "it will be much better for all concerned when we get our own organization going,"<sup>73</sup> Douglas expressed his detachment from those he had once called brothers. The Patten-Mackenzie company had thus moved from favoured to foreign status at Eaton's. In dealing with the agents, moreover, Eatonians clarified their own company ethos.

Douglas, for one, was busily affirming his own allegiance to Eaton's values. For one thing, by October, he reported proudly that after a month of independent operations, his

---

Tucker, 1918-05-20; from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22; from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Mr. Tucker, Winnipeg, 1918-04-29; from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office of 1918-05-20.

<sup>70</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office 1918-07-10.

<sup>71</sup>My italics. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from R. Y. Eaton to Jones of 1918-08-02.

<sup>72</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from R. Y. Eaton to Tucker, 1918-08-01.

<sup>73</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R. Y. Eaton, 1918-09-18

new office had taken in orders worth ¥85 000.00.<sup>74</sup> Another opportunity to demonstrate allegiance to the company came when he was called up for military service. Boothe advised him that "if you have to report and pass the Doctor there is no way that you can escape Military duty, so our advice for the present is for you not to come to Canada."<sup>75</sup> Douglas apparently took this advice, for he did not return home for the military call-up.

## 2) *Setting up Eaton's offices*

Douglas and other Eatonians seemed to believe that people were either on their side, sharing their interests and culture, or on the outside. This was true of the Japanese as of Patten-Mackenzie. The Eatonians' occasional admiration of Japanese culture did not diminish their underlying sense that it was deeply foreign.

Of course, the fact that Douglas arrived in Japan during the Great War added to the strangeness of what he described encountering there, since normal trade conditions were upset, shipping was expensive and unpredictable, and future trade between Japan and Canada seemed imperiled. Shipping uncertainties led Douglas to decide to ignore planned shipping dates and send off goods as soon as they were ready for export.<sup>76</sup> The silk market was "acting like a Grass Hopper on a hot day, jumping here and there, and all

---

<sup>74</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-10-22.

<sup>75</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, 1918-08-07.

<sup>76</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R.Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

over."<sup>77</sup> Douglas also worried about the on-going availability of merchandise lines Eaton's dealt with.<sup>78</sup>

He, as well as his colleague Charles Boothe, objected to the effects of these unusual conditions on Japanese businessmen, with Boothe noticing that some of them exploited war conditions<sup>79</sup> and Douglas similarly complaining when weavers sold silk at inflated wartime prices rather than honouring their old contracts.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, Douglas fretted that because current conditions forced Eaton's to accept such behaviour, the Japanese might assume it was acceptable. He wrote, "it leaves a bad impression on their minds relative to our way of doing business." He believed that "if times were normal we could be more independent, but the manuf'er [sic] at the present time has the 'whip hand'...."<sup>81</sup> Boothe agreed. He wrote, "it seems to be Japan needs a racking over the coals. The manufacturers are not very reliable and it is very unsatisfactory for people doing business with that class of man. In past years if the Company could not rely on a manufacturer we

---

<sup>77</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-10-22.

<sup>78</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-10-22.

<sup>79</sup>Boothe conveyed an early rumour that clerks in the Japanese shipping offices were buying shipping space and then selling it off at higher rates. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1917-12-06 from Charles Boothe to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office.

<sup>80</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter [unsigned but clearly from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office] to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-08-06.

<sup>81</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

refused to do business with them a second time, even if we had to pay more money some other place."<sup>82</sup>

Boothe attributed the behaviour of Japanese businessmen to elements of Japanese business culture as much as to current opportunities for profiteering. Likewise, Douglas gave examples of what he wryly called "the business system of this country."<sup>83</sup> suppliers only grudgingly providing samples, which Eaton's requested before placing final orders,<sup>84</sup> and manufacturers ignoring deadlines and selling one company's orders to another.<sup>85</sup> Boothe made sense of Japanese practice by comparing it to the Eaton's ideal, found in the U.S.A. and aspired to in his own company. He wrote to another colleague that "I would like to see Mr. Douglas come to Canada for a month at least as I understand a man has got to get away from that country quite often to be able to keep up with American ideas."<sup>86</sup>

Douglas did not indicate much awareness of usual Japanese business practice. He certainly did not acknowledge how it could resemble Eaton's: both in general values of honesty and integrity, as was discussed above, and in specifics that will be discussed in

---

<sup>82</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, 1918-11-22.

<sup>83</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R.Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

<sup>84</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to R.Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

<sup>85</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

<sup>86</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Tucker, 1918-05-20.

subsequent chapters, such as being family-oriented and linking its success with national development.<sup>87</sup> Douglas was equally unaware that differences in business culture he encountered could be rationally explained. Unlike in the West, retailers, not manufacturers, looked after marketing in Japan; manufacturers were thus ill-equipped to deal with exporting or foreign buyers. There were large Western-style Japanese exporting firms dotting the country's port cities that were expert at dealing with foreigners.<sup>88</sup> However, it seems that Douglas did not deal with those firms, only with manufacturers. Their lack of skill and interest in marketing their goods, bemoaned by Douglas, was due not to inherent unprofessionalism, but simply to a different commercial system in Japan.

Douglas, like Poole had, emphasized that the Japanese were fundamentally different, and that this was because of their different "race." He defended his shipping problems as being caused partly by the fact that he was not operating "from a White country," as well being caused by the war.<sup>89</sup> Douglas used the terms "Coolies" and "huskies" to designate Chinese labourers;<sup>90</sup> these words likewise emphasized Asian difference.

Douglas thus found himself trying to make a name for Eaton's within a business environment he did not respect, a position he evidently found humiliating. For example, he had to seek from the Japanese consulate in Canada a letter of introduction he could use in Japan to notify business institutions of the advantages of dealing with a company of Eaton's size and worth. His desire for the letter made him vow, "when the writer goes back to Canada, he will make it his business to interview this Gentleman, and if I do not

---

<sup>87</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, pp. 206, 170.

<sup>88</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, pp. 179-83.

<sup>89</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to R.Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

<sup>90</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, Head Of Yokohama Buying Office, to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

get some kind of letter from him I will eat my shirt."<sup>91</sup> The telling slip from third to first person here revealed the personal chagrin of a proud company man in a place where the company was unknown. He complained in August, 1918 that even after he obtained a letter of credit, as Japanese banks requested, they were "not anxious to do business," which was a problem since he needed loans to cover exports.<sup>92</sup> In order to obtain shipping space, he had to promise a shipper that "we intended to stay here after the War was over, and it was our intention to assist the Japanese Manufacturers in every respect to turn out goods that would be suitable to our market... that if he saw his way clear to give us space, he would never regret the move."<sup>93</sup> Put simply, Douglas was in the unusual position, for an Eaton's man, of having to beg.

Pride and prejudice defined the spirit animating Douglas's task, towards the end of 1918, of setting up an Eaton's office in Japan. Perhaps it was not surprising, then, that he created virtually a miniature version of the parent company. Of course, the more the office was like one of Eaton's at home, the more efficient would be Douglas's work. For instance, similar records styles allowed for efficient communication with his colleagues in Canada. As well, the more it conveyed to the Japanese about Eaton's, the more the Japan could appreciate the company's wealth and power, thereby strengthening Douglas's position. However, he went to such lengths to fashion the office in the familiar Eaton's model that it seems possible that it fulfilled more than his business needs. It appears that he wanted it to function as a refuge in the wilderness of Japan. An office, unlike

---

<sup>91</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to J.A. Livingstone 1918-06-27, reference no. 297.

<sup>92</sup>He was relieved to finally make arrangements with the Taiwan Bank, but worried about their impermanence. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to R.Y. Eaton, 1918-09-18.

<sup>93</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.



foreigners, war, and weather, could be controlled; it could be a visible sign of familiar order. Thus, looking at Douglas's priorities in setting up the office reveals what he felt was important to Eaton's.

One priority was to staff the Yokohama office with people he evidently believed fit the Eatonian mold. Although the man Douglas chose for an assistant was not fluent in Japanese and lacked relevant experience, he was "British born," "married with family," and "ambitious." Douglas described him as "31 years of age and therefore not too old to learn. His record in reference to honesty, uprightness, and morals is O.K." Douglas similarly emphasized the appropriate background of his stenographer, a foreigner to Japan whose parents lived in the city.<sup>94</sup> The one office boy he mentioned was a "young Japanese Banto who speaks English very well."<sup>95</sup>

Strikingly, there was no mention of the Japanese women who were employed, or of their Eatonian qualities. However, in a 1919 photograph of the Yokohama office staff, along with several white and East Asian men wearing Western-style suits, and a Miss King (presumably the stenographer) also wearing a suit, there was an unnamed Japanese woman in a kimono (see Illustration 2).<sup>96</sup> Another picture, published in the same year in an Eaton's *Golden Jubilee* book, showed three white men in suits, one white woman (barely visible) wearing a white blouse, and eleven East Asian men, five in suits, four in kimonos, and two whose clothes cannot be seen. All four of the Asian-origin women

---

<sup>94</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

<sup>95</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to R.Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

<sup>96</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-675, "Buying Offices" for Yokohama, 1919, print no. 571 and corresponding original negative.

pictured wore kimonos. The caption of the latter photograph said, "Japanese women are not behind their Canadian sisters in entering business life."<sup>97</sup>

Douglas tried to reproduce Eaton's staffing traditions in a second office he set up. Located far from Yokohama in a shipping port, Kobe, the office was meant to save the company freight expenses and travelling time.<sup>98</sup> Douglas delayed the Kobe opening until he could "educate some help here for that Office."<sup>99</sup> He chose for that purpose a Mr. Edgar, whose name indicates a male of European origin.<sup>100</sup> The office was rented and running by 1919.<sup>101</sup>

Nineteen-eighteen documents from Douglas were numbered and stamped "The T. Eaton Co. Limited Yokohama Office,"<sup>102</sup> thus crudely conforming to the parent company's tradition of printed letterhead. (Letterhead listing all Eaton's foreign buying offices including the one in Yokohama had been available to Douglas since his arrival in 1917.) Moreover, the Japanese offices themselves resembled those in Canada. In its first year the

---

<sup>97</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 169.

<sup>98</sup>According to the *Japan Chronicle* of 1923-09-09, Kobe business people had ambitions for their city to share the silk business with the leader in that industry, Yokohama.

<sup>99</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-10-22.

<sup>100</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto 1918-10-23.

<sup>101</sup>See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-674, "Buying Offices" for Kobe, Japan, 1919, photograph index number 556.

<sup>102</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, to R. Y. Eaton of 1918-02-22.

Kobe office had a Japanese look,<sup>103</sup> being sparsely furnished with few wall decorations other than a map and a simple rug on the floor, but it also had European or North American-style furniture.<sup>104</sup> A 1919 photograph of the older Yokohama office shows a wall calendar featuring Japanese-style art, but also Western furniture, an Eaton's Jubilee banner, a photograph of Timothy Eaton, and pictures of the interior of an Eaton's store (see Illustration 3).<sup>105</sup> Douglas also displayed standard Eaton's signs outside of the offices. As early as February of 1918, he had erected a company sign on the exterior of the office building in Yokohama, and mailed a photograph of it to his colleague H.M. Tucker in Winnipeg.<sup>106</sup> It is probably this same photograph which was reproduced in the company's *Golden Jubilee* book in 1919, accompanied by the caption, "the square lettering of the familiar sign is like a glimpse of home to the Canadian who catches sight of it in Kobe or Yokohama."<sup>107</sup> In October 1918, he proudly sent to Eaton's photographs of "our first shipment in Godown [warehouse] being stencilled."<sup>108</sup> The snapshot shows a

---

<sup>103</sup>On traditional Japanese style, see Susan Slesin, Stafford Cliff, Daniel Rozensztroch and Gilles de Chabaneix, *Japanese Style: A Little Style Book* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1987).

<sup>104</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-674, "Buying Offices" for Kobe, Japan, 1919, photograph index number 556.

<sup>105</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-675, "Buying Offices" for Yokohama, 1919, photograph index number 571.

<sup>106</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-02-23 from Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg.

<sup>107</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 168..

<sup>108</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letters Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office to Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1918-10-23, and to R.Y. Eaton, 1918-10-23. Quotation is from the latter letter.

man marking a shipment of talcum powder with the company symbol of an "E" in a diamond.

Emblems of Eatonia visible to employees, clients and outsiders, including letterhead, office photographs, and building signs, operated like flags. They rendered the spaces familiar, and marked them as possessed. They not only communicated the strength of the Eaton's culture, they also consolidated it. The photographs Douglas sent home served both as visual documentation about company operations abroad, and as a "vision" of what Eaton's was. Douglas put up pictures of other company holdings in his Yokohama office. Colleagues in Canada assembled his pictures and others together in the Eaton's *Jubilee* book,<sup>109</sup> which served, like family photographs would, to visually construct an impression of strength and unity out of far-flung elements.<sup>110</sup>

Moreover, like many family pictures, the Eaton's ones hid behind-the-scenes anxiety or divisions. Douglas's struggles for independence from Patten-Mackenzie, for instance, were not captured in pictures. Also, the company was not as centralized as its shared signs would suggest. Douglas corresponded extensively with H.M. Tucker of Winnipeg as well as with Charles Boothe of Toronto, an indication of the separation and sometime rivalry between the company's central and western divisions.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, by 1919, possibly earlier, the Winnipeg division was sending out its own buyers who purchased goods on behalf of several departments there.<sup>112</sup> There was a third, legal aspect of disunity in the company's Japanese business. Although the operation was to all appearances a branch of Eaton's, as late as 1920 it was not officially registered under the Eaton's name in Japan,

---

<sup>109</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*.

<sup>110</sup>This point has been made in Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977), pp. 8-9.

<sup>111</sup>This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>112</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice from S. Wilson to Buyers, 1919-01-26, says they need to give enough information on Japanese so buyers in Japan can "place orders intelligently" especially since the latter "is buying goods for other than his own departments."

which freed it of potential tax obligations but left it unprotected legally.<sup>113</sup> The office itself was leased in the name of an individual employee, probably Douglas. It was not until 1920 that the Eaton's name itself was officially recorded on the lease, and even then, company men at home disapproved of this action because they feared expenses that would result if taxation laws changed.<sup>114</sup>

In 1920, Douglas left Japan and went on to take other positions in the company.<sup>115</sup> At this point, the business climate in Japan was changing. The spending boom witnessed

---

<sup>113</sup>The question was also raised of whether the company should be registered in its own name or under that of an individual; the latter choice was company practice in other foreign countries. For information on this practice and its advantages and disadvantages in Japan, including taxation implications, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter from H. McGee to Mr. Vaughan, 1920-06-02, letter from H. McGee to Mr. Foster, 1920-06-17, letter from H. McGee to [J.A.] Livingstone, 1920-06-17, and notes to file from J.A. Livingstone of 1920-09-21 and 1920-10-05. For more discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of having the office legally registered in Japan, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S36 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section - General Files), Box 3, File J1-0-1/2, "Japan - General Correspondence", letter from T.P. Douglas, Eaton's, Yokohama, to J.E. Dodds, Eaton's, New York, 1920-01-12, letter from J.E. Dodds, Eaton's, New York, to J.A. Livingstone, Eaton's, Toronto, 1920-02-10, and note to file by H.F. Gee of 1920-04-08.

<sup>114</sup>On Douglas's reasons to take out the office lease in the name of the company rather than his own, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S36 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section - General Files), Box 3, File J1-0-1/2 "Japan - General Correspondence," letters from T.P. Douglas, Eaton's, Yokohama, to J.E. Dodds, Eaton's, New York, 1920-01-12 and 1920-02-15. On company consternation with Douglas's action, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S36 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section - General Files), Box 3, File J1-0-1/2 "Japan - General Correspondence," letter from J.E. Dodds, Eaton's, New York, to J.A. Livingstone, Eaton's, Toronto, 1920-02-10.

<sup>115</sup>Douglas went on to make European buying trips in the new decade, and then moved to the company's Halifax division in the 1930s. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S87 (Sales

during the Great War was over, leading to a depression that was to last, with only a few moments of remission, throughout the new decade.<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless, the Eaton company operations continued and even consolidated for several years. The new Yokohama office manager was L.B. Stiles.<sup>117</sup> Like his predecessors, Stiles went on sight-seeing trips and took snapshots of the events.<sup>118</sup> Another snapshot shows Stiles with Yokohama office employees wearing traditional Oriental clothes.<sup>119</sup> In 1923, Arthur Cabeldu was assigned to the Yokohama office on a temporary basis.<sup>120</sup> A list of the staff of the Japanese offices indicates that there were still more male than female employees of Asian descent.<sup>121</sup> The

---

and Expense Office- Sales Journals and Miscellaneous Sales and Expense Records) file "European Buying Trips, Expense Records, 1928-46," and F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 5 "Signatures - Managers' Lists, 1932" for Halifax.

<sup>116</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 145.

<sup>117</sup>A notice of 1920-08-31 indicates Douglas was returning to Canada and that Stiles was now to be "in charge of the Yokohama and Kobe Office." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice 18, 1920-08-31, from E. Fretwell to Department Heads.

<sup>118</sup>This picture was taken in 1921. There is also a picture of Stiles in Beijing in File. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-676, "Buying Offices - General - Mr. Stiles' trips and employees."

<sup>119</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-676, "Buying Offices - General - Mr. Stiles' trips and employees", photo of Yokohama buying office staff, 1921-03.

<sup>120</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -162-0- 3, "Accidents and Disasters - Japanese Earthquake," letter from Hachizo Yagi of Silk Kingdom Company Limited of Kamakura, Japan, to Mr. G. Carlson, Company Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1968-02-07.

<sup>121</sup>These included Messrs. Watanabe, Fung, Satoh, Kagawa, Nashimoto, Numabe, and Yawata and a Miss Hanabusa. I do not have a complete staff list. These are among the employees listed in a letter describing an earthquake in the city. AO, T. Eaton Records,

merchandise these employees handled now included sets of porcelain, porcelain toys, pop-guns and thermos bottles as well as silk cloth and made-up goods. Quality control of silk goods was rigidly maintained in both Japan and Canada.<sup>122</sup> Run by white male Canadians, staffed by a mix of native and European-descent underlings, increasingly subject to company standards, the Japanese offices began to resemble the European company offices.

### Displacement in Japan: Effects of the 1923 earthquake and the Second World War

Nonetheless, Canadian Eatonians still felt profoundly displaced in Japan and events of the next two decades were only to increase this sentiment. They continued to see the country as perilous, and, at the same time, not a place for Canadian-based women to work.

#### *The earthquake of 1923*

On the first of September, 1923, Japan experienced a huge earthquake centered in Tokyo and Yokohama. The *Japan Chronicle* noted, "...there is nothing in history to compare with this disaster that has come upon the political capital of a great Empire, with millions of inhabitants, and its greatest port."<sup>123</sup> The damage was made much worse when fire broke out, a situation especially devastating for vulnerable traditional Japanese houses. Indeed, it was easier to list the buildings left standing than those ruined.<sup>124</sup> The *Chronicle*

---

F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>122</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -162-0- 3, "Accidents and Disasters - Japanese Earthquake," letter from Hachizo Yagi of Silk Kingdom Company, Limited of Kamakura, Japan, to Mr. G. Carlson, Company Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1968-02-07.

<sup>123</sup>*Japan Chronicle* 1923-09-04.

<sup>124</sup>*Japan Chronicle* 1923-09-11.

stated, "there is the wilderness. There is the scene of recent terror and hideous death -- death to men and death to things."<sup>125</sup>

According to the *Chronicle*, the foreign business population suffered great losses from the quake. Yokohama, first of all, had only one firm left of any importance,<sup>126</sup> and Eaton's in Yokohama was not spared. Fortunately, its staff was on holiday the day of the quake; otherwise, they probably would have all been killed since the company's office was one of the first to collapse during the fires. However, two members of the office, Arthur Cabeldu and "a Mr. Lau (Chinese)," perished outside of the office.<sup>127</sup> The Eatonian B.G. Walker discovered Cabeldu's body and reported that "we all felt very cut up when we found him in that condition, more especially as we have always found him such a nice man to work for." Walker also lost a son and a brother to the quake, and got sick himself. The company *godowns* were also destroyed. Nine office staff lost their homes to fire.<sup>128</sup> As for Kobe, the *Chronicle* reported that it stood to gain from the quake because its business community planned to take over Yokohama's silk business.<sup>129</sup> However, the Eaton's office there was "discontinued," consumed by the quake.<sup>130</sup> The company's fire insurance

---

<sup>125</sup> *Japan Chronicle* 1923-09-09.

<sup>126</sup> *Japan Chronicle* 1923-09-09.

<sup>127</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>128</sup> Their names were Messrs. Watanabe, Fung, Satoh, Kagawa, Nashimoto, Numabe, Yawata and Misses Andresen [sic] and Hanabusa. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>129</sup> *Japan Chronicle*, 1923-09-09.

<sup>130</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -308-0-674, "Buying Offices" for Kobe, Japan, 1919, photo index no. 556.



did not cover earthquakes so its losses were unrecoverable.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, with the exception of some out-of-town engagements, all its Kobe and Tokyo orders were not to be filled.<sup>132</sup> The human and material resources Eaton's needed in Japan were terribly diminished.

How did Eatonians deal with this horrible crisis? The company's first direct report of it came from the American widow of Cabeldu, Lilian Cabeldu. Feelings and needs she communicated in her letters were similar enough to those of the Canadian Eatonians in Japan to indicate that she shared some of their attitudes about being there. The sympathetic response of company employees back in Canada, furthermore, indicates that she shared important aspects of their culture too. Juxtaposing the emotional, even desperate letters from those in Japan, including Lilian Cabeldu, with the calm and efficient ones from employees in Canada, thus brings important characteristics of both groups into relief. It is a method that helps us understand more about the Eaton company's structures, procedures and culture.

Lilian Cabeldu's first letter recounts her experiences of surviving the earthquake, escaping from her house which was subsequently destroyed by fire, finding out that her husband had been fatally injured, and, finally, her flight to safety and friends in Kobe.<sup>133</sup> In narrating her harrowing story, she tended to portray the Japanese in terms of a mass, indeed a barely human one. She wrote, for instance, that during the fire "I was caught, the

---

<sup>131</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-06.

<sup>132</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-18.

<sup>133</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," letter from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, Japan, to Mr. Stiles [Eaton's, New York City], Shioya, Japan, 1923-09-12. Cabeldu wrote care of the *Japan Chronicle* in Kobe.

only foreigner among hundreds and hundreds of Japanese like rats in a trap.” She did observe Japanese generosity and family ties when noting how one native person helped her survive the first night by “wrapp[ing] one of those thick padded sleeping kimonas around me and his old Mother.” The next day, however, upon surveying the ruined city, she again set the local people apart from her own kind, commenting that there was “not a soul in sight *except a few dazed Japanese....*”<sup>134</sup>

Both Cabeldu and Walker differentiated between what was indigenous to Japan (unfamiliar to them) and what was Western (familiar). Cabeldu, for instance, was acutely aware when at one point a non-Japanese she encountered was “the first I had seen since 12:30 the day before.” She remarked about “the Chinese bookkeeper Fong,” “you know how keen they are on figures.”<sup>135</sup> When Walker witnessed some Japanese civilians killing Koreans they identified as looters, he wrote that “all Japanese men seemed to be out of their right senses and it was indeed dangerous for any foreigners to wander from his [sic] locality alone until the soldiers arrived....”<sup>136</sup> A rift between visiting and native business people was typical in this period. A local newspaper called for more cooperation and respect between the two groups,<sup>137</sup> generally appealing to “human brotherhood”<sup>138</sup> “between nationalities and races.”<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup>My italics. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," letter from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, Japan, to Mr. Stiles [Eaton's, New York City], Shioya, Japan, 1923-09-12.

<sup>135</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, to Mr. Eaton, 1923-10-02.

<sup>136</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>137</sup>*Japan Chronicle*, 1923-09-09.

<sup>138</sup>*Japan Chronicle*, 1923-09-04.

<sup>139</sup>*Japan Chronicle*, 1923-09-11.

Eaton's men who had not experienced the earthquake were more squarely faced with the paradoxical situation of trying to respond to a tragedy among people whose very humanity was difficult for them to grasp. Charles Boothe of Toronto captured the dilemma when he wrote to J.R. Harper, his colleague who had been sent to Japan to help the Eatonians after the earthquake. He remarked, "the boys in Toronto... often wonder how you and the Japs are hitting it. But I am quite sure that in the circumstances they will have a lot of your sympathy." He also used the letter as an opportunity to be friendly, advising Harper on how to take a proper vacation and describing recent hunting and fishing trips taken by his company friends in Canada.<sup>140</sup> Harper expressed his alienation differently, complaining to "Charlie" Boothe about Japan's "atrocious" weather and the "peculiar ways in business in this country."<sup>141</sup> He thankfully recalled something familiar, how Boothe other executive friends had seen him off on his voyage to Japan.<sup>142</sup>

Likewise, Eatonians in Japan spent time excusing the appearance of their letters at this time. Harper apologized for his scrawl, noting to Boothe, "I feel my neck writing you like

---

<sup>140</sup>Boothe wrote, one lasting only "two or three days ...is really no way for a man to have a holiday, as three days only starts him off and the next day in business he loses what he has gained, and more. We poor mortals seem to feel that when we go away the wheel will stop going around, but we are very foolish because it is not so by any means." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to J.R. Harper, Kobe, 1923-10-31.

<sup>141</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-22.

<sup>142</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," note from "Jack", i.e. J. Harper, at Hotel Vancouver, to "Charlie", i.e., Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, 1923-10-23.

this but it cannot be helped,"<sup>143</sup> while Walker pleaded, "please excuse erasures, have had to type this on an old Remington pretty near falling to pieces."<sup>144</sup> Walker also apologized for the time it took for him to write home about the earthquake, saying it was "absolutely beyond my control."<sup>145</sup> These men appeared to believe that the information they conveyed lost some of its impact and meaning because it did not respect company protocols on letter form and transmission.

It seems to have been useful for everybody when, stumbling for a means to express their confused horror in the face of an enormous foreign tragedy, both the Eatonians and Lilian Cabeldu turned to images. Cabeldu sent pictures of the aftermath to company executives, who circulated them in Canada and New York.<sup>146</sup> Likewise, B.G. Walker sent home photographic postcards showing shattered cityscapes and human bodies, some charred and mutilated.<sup>147</sup> If they believed that their experiences could be more fully communicated with reference to what they saw, they appear to have been correct. Charles Boothe, who

---

<sup>143</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-22. The letter is hand-written.

<sup>144</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>145</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>146</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," letter from L.B. Stiles, N.Y., to J.A. Livingstone, 1923-10-16. The letter acknowledges the writer's receipt of the pictures from Livingstone.

<sup>147</sup>Some of these cards were banned in Japan AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

saw Walker's pictures, indicated that they affected him a lot when he wrote, "they really are too terrible to talk about."<sup>148</sup>

Life had to go on, however. Cabeldu coped by making things as normal as possible after the quake through re-establishing contact with material things representing "home." Her first concern was to see her husband properly buried. In a poignant testimonial of her feeling of alienation on Japanese territory, she reported that she had his ashes "buried in the compound of the British Consulate - on British soil - and marked with a wooden cross." Thus, "his poor body has been properly laid away."<sup>149</sup> Her second priority was her wardrobe. Kobe was sold out of clothes, the nightgown she had worn since the day of the quake was "absolutely black," and all she had managed to get since then was a kimono and some other article from the refugee center. Uncomfortable wearing foreign clothes, she sent to Mr. Stiles a precise list of clothing that was presumably to serve as her mourning outfit,<sup>150</sup> and was happy to receive them the following month.<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to J.R. Harper, Kobe, 1923-10-31.

<sup>149</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, to Mr. Eaton 1923-10-02.

<sup>150</sup>Her request was for:

- 1 Three piece Autumn weight black dress. 38
- 1 - 1 piece dress 38
- 3 prs black silk stockings No.9
- 2 " gloves - size 6 (1 pr. fabric & 1 pr kid, - long ones if the dress has short sleeves)
- 1 black winter coat.

Source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," letter from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, Japan, to Mr. Stiles [Eaton's, New York City], Shioya, Japan, 1923-09-12.

Cabeldu also paid attention to Eaton's affairs, thus directly sharing concerns with Eaton's employees who made enormous efforts to protect the company records and interests. Her letters reported on the state of the Yokohama office's bank balance, that the company safe there was being guarded,<sup>152</sup> and that B.G. Walker had opened an office in Yokohama where he along with his Japanese and Chinese staff assistants were "opening up the charred bundles of books and papers to try to get some order out of the chaos..."<sup>153</sup> At least they were intact; the bank's copies had been lost. Walker, who arranged for staff to guard the safe containing them, reported that he was eventually forced by martial law to leave Yokohama for Kobe, but that he had gone to the trouble of ensuring the staff would stay on guard, and of trying to return as soon as possible in order to open the safe. When his return was delayed, staff members took thirteen hours to open the safe themselves, and gave the records to a brother of the deceased Mr. Cabeldu, who took them to Kobe where they were deposited in the safe of another company.<sup>154</sup> The financial books of the destroyed Kobe office were lost.<sup>155</sup> Harper, who had gone there from Toronto to evaluate

---

<sup>151</sup>Harper reported her gratitude on receiving the clothes in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to Charles Boothe, 1923-10-22.

<sup>152</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," letter from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, Japan, to Mr. Stiles [Eaton's, New York City], Shioya, Japan, 1923-09-12.

<sup>153</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from Lilian Cabeldu, Kobe, to Mr. Eaton, 1923-10-02. Cabeldu is reporting on the activities of Walker and the Yokohama staff after the earthquake.

<sup>154</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-05.

<sup>155</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from B.G. Walker, Kobe, to R.Y. Eaton, 1923-10-07.

company losses and sort out business, arranged to get signing authority at the bank,<sup>156</sup> and opened temporary offices where he verified the status of orders.<sup>157</sup> He requested that company head offices in Toronto, Moncton and Winnipeg send copies of invoices, probably to recover order information missing in Japan.<sup>158</sup>

The earthquake led Eaton's to return to its old arrangement of working through outsiders in Japan. By October, 1923, company Directors wondered whether to re-open an office or to go a commission house.<sup>159</sup> A few weeks later, J. Harper reported that he was looking for a representative for the company and that he thought "this is better as I do not speak Japanese."<sup>160</sup> Harper planned to close the Kobe office for "regular business" by mid-November. A small staff would be kept on temporarily to complete any unfinished affairs. Nonetheless, new silk orders were being placed and new business was actively being sought; he intended to look into ordering other lines of goods like porcelain.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-18.

<sup>157</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-22.

<sup>158</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-22.

<sup>159</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J.J.V., to J.E. Dodds, Paris, 1923-10-08.

<sup>160</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-10-22.

<sup>161</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from J. Harper, Kobe, to C.B., 1923-11-09.

Although Eaton's still deemed Japan to be a valuable source of merchandise, the company had stopped seeing it as a good place to have an office.

*Before and during World War II*

This was unfortunate, given that Japan was becoming increasingly appealing as a source of merchandise. The country's economy was weak in the 1920s and the price of its merchandise sharply decreased.<sup>162</sup> By 1931, the yen depreciated in value and exports rose again. While exports of silk plummeted due to the rise of the rayon industry,<sup>163</sup> cheaper goods like cottons, pottery and toys, took their place.<sup>164</sup>

Eatonians now had little opportunity to observe developments in Japanese consumer culture. When in 1928 the company received information on the Takashimaya Department Store in Osaka, a picture of which revealed a building not unlike that of Eaton's and thus presumably of some interest, it was not obtained by employees who had seen it, but by a Japanese man. He had received a tour of Eaton's and sent the information from Japan.<sup>165</sup>

As in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Eaton's was now relying on outside firms to look after its interests in Japan. In 1928 the company dealt with just six firms there (two with Japanese names), most if not all of whom were commission agents; in

---

<sup>162</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, pp. 148-49.

<sup>163</sup>Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 146.

<sup>164</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 150.

<sup>165</sup>Lewis also received information on Yokohama department stores the following year, for the same reason. See -AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -162-0-1416, "Stores Outside - Miscellaneous" letter from K. Kawakatsu to Ivor Lewis, Eaton's, Toronto, 1928-09-20, and 1929 correspondence.



contrast, the lists of suppliers in other foreign countries were often several pages long.<sup>166</sup> L.B. Stiles, the former Yokohama Office manager, was company buyer for China and Japan. He revealed the extent to which he depended on the agents when, in a 1931 letter, he called them "our various Offices out here in the Far East." He was referring to James McMullan & Co. in Shanghai, Berrick & Co. in Yokohama and Jarmain, Davis & Co. in Kobe. As Stiles's letter revealed, relying on outside companies could be problematic. He was writing to request current copies of the company management lists for the agents, who could not identify which departments the various Eaton's managers were placing orders from.<sup>167</sup>

Stiles was called "Oriental Buyer" by 1938.<sup>168</sup> It looked as though Eaton's had established a new stable buying system in Japan, but events proved otherwise. Existing mistrust of Japanese business people would have been heightened with Japan's alliance with Germany and Italy in the 1930s.<sup>169</sup> By 1940 -- that is, after the outbreak of the Second World War but before Japan had entered it -- Stiles's position was changed from Oriental Buyer to a member of the Montreal Buying Office responsible for women's lingerie (including

---

<sup>166</sup>The Japanese suppliers were: Berrick & Co., Hamilton Bessie, Harrison & Crosfield Limited, Harrison Davis Company Limited, Magoya Seitoshō Limited, and Tashiro & Company Limited, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S56 (General Office - Miscellaneous Records), Box 1, File "Reference Lists of Ledger Accounts" contains lists of Ledger Accounts for 1928-12.

<sup>167</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 4 "Signatures - Managers' Lists, 1930-1931", letter from L.B. Stiles out of the office of James McMullan & Company, (Shanghai), Limited, to T.A. McCrea, Superintendent Office, 1931-05-29.

<sup>168</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 13, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1938"; List for 1938; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939"- list for Toronto of 1939-05.

<sup>169</sup>For instance, Japan joined these two countries in the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936-37.

kimonos, presumably Japanese), as well other departments "when not engaged on matters pertaining to Chinese and Japanese Buying."<sup>170</sup> The following year, he oversaw the departments of Lingerie and of "Chinese and Japanese Buying and all matters pertaining thereto," until the end of the war.<sup>171</sup> Both changes suggest that he spent relatively less time dealing with merchandise from the East than he had in 1938. Regardless of the arrangement of his workload, however, it is clear that Eaton's was not putting much manpower into its Japanese buying.

In terms of marketing, certainly, Eaton's now faced a dilemma. On the one hand, it had a buying system in place that procured all manner of Japanese goods. A 1940 list of departments (probably Toronto's) carrying merchandise marked as being from Japan included Gloves, Children's Wear, Cameras, Groceries, Negligee Shop, Rugs, Chinaware, Silver and Watches, Gift Shop, Sundries, Drugs etc., Piece Goods, Notions, and Toys, and they carried merchandise whose total at cost value was \$23 627. Of this, Japanese "Chinaware" was by far the most important, valued at \$12 500.<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, "the Canadian Buying Public who now have many more relatives and friends in uniform are likely to feel resentment against goods being exposed for sale which are marked as coming from these countries - Germany, Italy and Japan."<sup>173</sup> Thus, the company was in the awkward position of trying to sell goods that it believed the public might not want.

---

<sup>170</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 2, File 15 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1940" list for Toronto of 1940-03-21.

<sup>171</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 2, File 16 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1941", list for Toronto, 1941. For 1942-44, see files 17 to 19.

<sup>172</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," document entitled "Merchandise Marked with Country of Origin, As at August 1st, 1940."

<sup>173</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" memo from R. Y. Eaton to I. W. Ford, of 1940-08-01.

Company directors responded to the dilemma with two strategies. The first involved minimizing the negative message Eaton's might send in selling Japanese produce, by emphasizing the company's involvement with Canada's allies. Company directors asked the departments to sell goods like these alongside comparable goods from "friendly or neutral countries" to give customers the choice. They also warned them that "it is illegal to remove any identifying marks."<sup>174</sup> A notice to this effect added, "in addition to the fullest use of products of the British Empire which we have already been buying, it is of great importance that we seek Empire substitutes for merchandise previously bought from enemy countries, or those countries now closed to us."<sup>175</sup> Thus, in order to prevent having customers "annoyed by seeing the 'Made in Japan' label," Eaton's planned to sell higher priced Empire goods that would be in competition with the "Jap goods" [sic] still sold by competitors.<sup>176</sup> Secondly, Eaton's eventually established, in late 1940, what it called an "embargo" on Japanese goods, to be waived only in exceptional cases and then only for merchandise not stamped to indicate its country of origin.<sup>177</sup> At this point, departments identified what they considered to be essential items available through Canadian suppliers,

---

<sup>174</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" Letter from I.W. Ford, Toronto, to R.S. McCordick of Winnipeg store of 1940-08-16.

<sup>175</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" Notice from W. Park, Merchandise Office, to department heads etc of 1940-09-06.

<sup>176</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" letter from R.Y. Eaton to I.W. Ford, no date but notations and place in file indicate = [1940-10].

<sup>177</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S195 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Sales and Expense Office - Stock Audit Files), Box 1, File "Japanese Merchandise," memo signed by R.M. Pinfold of 1940-10-24 describing phone conversation between Pinfold and C.A. Stuart of Toronto of same day.

and thus potentially exempt from the restriction. The list included fabric, insect powder, tea, and violins.<sup>178</sup>

Eventually, however, it was not up to Eaton's to decide whether or not to restrict sales of Japanese goods, because laws compelled it to do so. In September of 1941, the Canadian government prohibited imports of goods from "Japan, the Japanese Empire, or Manchuria."<sup>179</sup> After Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, Eaton's requested that its outlets list and evaluate their goods of Japanese origin and withdraw them from the shelves. In Winnipeg alone, the Mail Order and Store goods included fabric, brushes, ash trays, Christmas tree lights, and items made with Japanese zippers; they were worth over \$36,000. With the silk goods, outlets faced the loss of their 60 per cent mark-up after laid-down cost.<sup>180</sup> Toronto, meanwhile, reported that "fortunately there was little left in the Store, except some Chinaware, and consideration is being given to clearing all these lines to employees at special prices."<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S195 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Sales and Expense Office - Stock Audit Files), Box 1, File "Japanese Merchandise," letter from Mr. St. John, Stock Audit, to Pinfold, Winnipeg, 1940-10-26.

<sup>179</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" memorandum from Canada, Department of National Revenue (Customs Division) of 1941-09-25.

<sup>180</sup>See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S195 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Sales and Expense Office - Stock Audit Files), Box 1, File "Japanese Merchandise," notice from Mr. St. John, Stock Audit, to Mr. Pinfold, Merchandise Office Winnipeg of 1941-12-15, notice from Mr. St. John, Stock Audit, to Mr. Pinfold, Merchandise Office, Winnipeg, of 1941-12-12.

<sup>181</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S195 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Sales and Expense Office - Stock Audit Files), Box 1, File "Japanese Merchandise"-letter from H. Knapp, no office indicated [copy], Toronto, to R.M. Pinfold, Merchandise Office, Winnipeg, 1941-12-10.

### Uneasy reconciliation with Japan: The post-war period

Regardless of in-house opinions, however, Eaton's made amends with Japan after the war when the country's economy not only recovered but grew and developed to become a major source of consumer goods. This last section of the chapter discusses the ambivalence the company's employees felt about re-entering the Japanese market. On the one hand, they felt that Japan was becoming modern according to their own standards of production and supply methods, and even in terms of style. This belief was strengthened by their awareness of the growing American involvement and interest in Japan. An interesting byproduct of this development was that for the first time there was some opportunity for women employees to assess these advances, because their access to the United States consumer culture was relatively good. Yet, on the other hand, Eatonians did not really believe that Japanese culture itself, including its business behaviour, was modern. Once again, they found opportunities to assert their view that the Japanese were in many ways different, complicated, and even backward. Although Japan was no longer seen as exotic, it remained in this sense a doubtful space from which Eaton's Canadian-based women were mostly shielded.

#### *The decade following the war*

After the war, Eaton's once again adapted its buying system to opportunities presented in Japan. However, the company seems to have done so only hesitantly, and by following the lead of the United States. The Japanese were experiencing a revival and a modernization of their industrial economy under American tutelage. This was the beginning of the Cold War era, and the United States government believed that strengthening the Japanese economy was in its own interest.<sup>182</sup> By 1945, Eaton's adjusted the position of L.B. Stiles to the new reality, adding to his old job title of "Chinese and Japanese Buying and all matters pertaining thereto" the new phrase "Contact Man for all War Assets Business."<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> Allen, *Modern Japan*, p. 172.

<sup>183</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 2, File 20 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1945" List for

A style change in the management lists led Stiles to be omitted in 1947-48,<sup>184</sup> and when he reappeared in 1949 he was restricted to Lingerie and related lines for the Montreal Buying Office. He was no longer listed as looking after either Japanese, Chinese, or War Assets business, nor was anyone else.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, a 1948 letter omitted Japan entirely from a discussion of an Asian trip for floor coverings<sup>186</sup>

Eaton's established more contact with Japan in the early 1950s. In 1953, two female employees visiting New York reported a rising popularity of furniture from or in the style of "the Orient." Indeed, one woman, Lorraine Simmons, complained that the current fad was "Oriental to excess, papier mache and lacquer."<sup>187</sup> That same year, the company again

---

Toronto, 1945, hand-written annotation. This was confirmed in print in the list for the following year; see Box 6, File "[Amalgamated List, June, 1946]," list for Toronto, page dated "Received June 11".

<sup>184</sup>Starting in 1947, the lists are briefer and list only office heads, not department heads like Stiles. See the lists in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 22 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1947.

<sup>185</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 3, File 25, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1949", document "List of senior personnel, by classification, of buying offices under supervision of General Merchandise Office," 1949-06.

<sup>186</sup>It stated, "Trip into the Far East not advocated as Mr. Mercer states our Company is covered for Indian merchandise until September or October, 1949." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions) - letter from G.W.B. to W.P., 1948-10-13.

<sup>187</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," documents "Report re: New York trip" of 1953-10-19, by Doris Thistlewood, Staff Training Department, (Toronto), and report of 1953-10-05, "New York Trip", by Lorraine Simmons, Interior Decorating Bureau. Quotation is from Simmons.

had an agent in Japan. Dodwell & Co. represented Eaton's in Kobe (as well as Hong Kong) and, by 1954, in Tokyo.<sup>188</sup> Japanese goods comprised up to eight per cent of the chinaware and glassware bought for the Eaton's Toronto stores in Spring of 1955.<sup>189</sup> At this point, the Toronto housefurnishings division began planning some buying trips for 1956, the first to be discussed in the records since the post-war period.<sup>190</sup>

This coincided with a period of tremendous developments in the social and industrial foundations of the Japanese economy. The Japanese imitated and revered Western business methods.<sup>191</sup> 1955 marked the beginning of a great economic boom, when the government centered its economic efforts on increasing the Gross National Product, for instance by supporting both development of heavy industry and encouraging higher standards in production of electronic goods like radios.<sup>192</sup> The business climate was one of investment and innovation.<sup>193</sup>

*Direct contact re-established, 1956-1959*

---

<sup>188</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953", "List of Management, 1953" and File 31, "Proposed Set-Up for 1954 List of Management".

<sup>189</sup>This and related statistics are discussed in Chapter 1. Source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1955-10-31.

<sup>190</sup>See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)."

<sup>191</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese*, p. 228.

<sup>192</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, pp. 243-44.

<sup>193</sup>Hirschmeier and Yui, *Japanese Business*, p. 251.

When it came to clothing, at this point in time Eaton's acknowledged not only that Japan had improved, but that it represented competition. This is suggested in records from 1956 for the Eaton Knitting Co. Limited, a subsidiary factory in Hamilton, Ontario. The knitting factory's director, Noel B. Eaton, admitted that there were some goods that the Japanese could produce and the knitting factory simply could not because of costs. Moreover, whereas previously Japanese underwear and knitwear had been deemed inferior, some samples were now equal in quality to goods produced by the Canadian concern. Noel Eaton wrote that they "doubtless will give us considerable trouble unless we do something about it."<sup>194</sup> Another employee was blunter, noting at a Directors' meeting that Japanese industrial growth meant there was "handwriting on the wall for certain Canadian items."<sup>195</sup>

The Eaton's retail company did not seem to know what to do in the face of Japanese competition. It did not yet have garment buyers going to Japan because Eatonians "were not qualified to control the manufacture technically and felt the matter presented considerable risk..."<sup>196</sup> Yet when Noel Eaton proposed having personnel from his factory go to Japan and supervise production of knit goods there, Eaton's rejected the idea.<sup>197</sup> The company also declined to develop other plans for joint import arrangements by Eaton's

---

<sup>194</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S30 (Secretarial Office - Eaton Knitting Company Limited - General Files) File J1, "Japanese Business, 1956" letter from Noel B. Eaton, Eaton Knitting Company Limited, to H. Brooke Belle, of Beaton, Bell & Leake, Toronto, 1956-02-23.

<sup>195</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S30 (Secretarial Office - Eaton Knitting Company Limited - General Files) File J1, "Japanese Business, 1956," document labeled "Notes made re discussion of Japan business at E.K. Company. Directors Meeting of Feb. 29/56."

<sup>196</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S30 (Secretarial Office - Eaton Knitting Company Limited - General Files) File J1, "Japanese Business, 1956" letter from Noel B. Eaton, Eaton Knitting Company Limited, to H. Brooke Belle, of Beaton, Bell & Leake, Toronto, 1956-02-23.

<sup>197</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S30 (Secretarial Office - Eaton Knitting Company Limited - General Files) File J1, "Japanese Business, 1956" note to file by F.W. Murch of 1956-03-07.



and American traders; to send samples for Japanese manufacturers to copy; and to import semi-processed goods and finish them in the Hamilton factory.<sup>198</sup>

With regards to housefurnishings, correspondence concerning the Japanese buying trips of early 1956 reveals the daunting work involved in returning to the country so changed by the war. When the trips were still in the planning stage, a divisional manager said his office was "completely in the dark" as to how much requisition money to provide to its buyer.<sup>199</sup> A colleague of his knew that the Japanese Chinaware available in the United States, for instance, was "designed and made to American specifications," and that Eaton's would have to go and find its own sources in Japan.<sup>200</sup> This turned out to be the case. One buyer of insulated teapots had not only to arrange for factories to design the pots according to Eaton's requirements, but also to find manufacturers for the corresponding aluminum covers and felt.<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>198</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S30 (Secretarial Office - Eaton Knitting Co. Limited - General Files) File J1, "Japanese Business, 1956", various documents.

<sup>199</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions," letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1955-12-23, and File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," Extract from memo from W.C. Weber [Housefurnishings Merchandise Office], to M.A. Robinson [Merchandise Office], 1955-11-17.

<sup>200</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions," letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1955-12-23, and File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," extract from memo from W.C. Weber [Housefurnishings Merchandise Office] to M.A. Robinson [Merchandise Office], 1955-11-17.

<sup>201</sup>Buyer Derrington is being discussed. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Office - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions" letter from H. Kenndy, General Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1956-03-07.

Eatonians could no longer complain of Japan's business backwardness. Clearly, they recognized that its manufacturers were capable of executing and delivering precise orders according to Western standards. Moreover, as Eatonians learned about Japan's enhanced productive capacities, they compared it to Europe, a site of business practices they admired. Before the 1956 trips, housefurnishings staff expressed their sense that Japanese merchandise was now similar in quality to European products and could "replace" them. For this reason, they wanted the two men travelling to Japan to also do the buying in Europe to compare goods and avoid duplications in purchasing.<sup>202</sup> The report of buyer W.F.R. Smith indicated, indeed, that some Japanese goods were starting to look like the latest European merchandise. On his inventory of purchases, alongside the type of goods Eaton's was long accustomed to obtaining in Japan are listed "New Handpainted Modern Shape Dinner Ware" and "New Modern Earthenware."<sup>203</sup>

If, in the past, Japan had supplied Americans with "cheap wares," it was because that is what the latter had demanded. Now Americans (and Smith) were requesting and obtaining "higher quality lines." However, Smith suggested that the reason Japanese goods were improving was not simply that Japan had improved facilities; it was because "Japan can produce fine china....The type of porcelain used by the Japanese themselves is much

---

<sup>202</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Office - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions," letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1955-12-23, and File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," extract from memo from W.C. Weber, [Housefurnishings Merchandise Office], to M.A. Robinson, [Merchandise Office], 1955-11-17.

<sup>203</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions," letter from W.F.R. Smith in Hong Kong, to Mr. Mercer, General Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1956-02-21.

superior to that made for export.”<sup>204</sup> As we have seen, Eatonians had at times admired signs of Japanese traditional culture such as its temples. What was different was that now, they extended this awareness to consumer culture and native-use merchandise. Eatonians were acknowledging that these aspects of Japan, too, were not inherently backward.

This change of attitude was evident in a 1958 report from New York. Patricia Doran, a reporter for the New York Buying Office, wrote a long description of the opening of Takashimaya,<sup>205</sup> the first Japanese department store in the United States.<sup>206</sup> She emphasized, on the one hand, its foreignness, “the staff is Japanese and they will wear oriental costumes on special occasions;” the building was “oriental in design;” and there were “exotic oriental foods,” “oriental dolls” and furniture in “oriental woods” for sale. However, Doran understood that Takashimaya was selling a particular look. She used “Oriental” not only to indicate foreignness, but also to designate a style, one among many in the worlds of housefurnishings and dress. Doran was also struck by the high quality and prices of the furniture and decorative objects available at the store. They were, she noted, “certainly quite distinctive from the type of Japanese souvenirs or cheap merchandise we have become accustomed to seeing with a ‘Made In Japan’ label.”

---

<sup>204</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions,” letter from W.F.R. Smith in Hong Kong to Mr. Mercer, General Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1956-02-21.

<sup>205</sup>229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” report by Patricia Doran, Reporter, New York Office, 1958-10-20.

<sup>206</sup>229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” published document by an outside firm, entitled “Homefurnishings Memo: A weekly digest of Trends, Items and Ideas,” no date.

Eatonians were at this time acknowledging “the increased demand for Japanese goods” by their own customers<sup>207</sup> and devoted more time and energy to obtaining them. The question in the company was if it needed its own buyers in Japan to do so. On the one hand, when it came to furniture, Eaton’s worried whether its local suppliers of Japanese goods had good prices but lacked “sufficient requisitions” to send its own buyer to Japan to find out.<sup>208</sup> On the other hand, by the spring of 1958, Mr. G. Carlson of the Toronto Buying Office bought over \$500,000 worth of goods on a trip there.<sup>209</sup> That same year, Japanese capacities to produce soft floor coverings were said to be growing quickly, and an employee urged Eaton’s to explore this market soon so as not to lose the best produce to middlemen. For this reason, a principal buyer (Mr. S.K. McBirnie) was committed to visit Japan in the fall.<sup>210</sup> Likewise, Carlson returned to Japan in spring 1959 when he again spent over \$500,000 worth of goods ranging from housefurnishings to clothing and accessories. He was now working out of the General Merchandise Office as well,<sup>211</sup> and

---

<sup>207</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions” letter from W.C. WEBER, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1958-01-03. Weber refers to a meeting of December, 1957.

<sup>208</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions” letter from R.H. Forester, Furniture Office, to W.C. WEBER, 1958-12-17.

<sup>209</sup>The goods probably included both housefurnishings and clothing. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” undated and untitled document listing buyers for 1958-59.

<sup>210</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions” letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1958-07-28.

<sup>211</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” undated and untitled document listing buyers for 1958-59.

made purchases for Eaton's stores across the country, as well as the Mail Order division.<sup>212</sup> In fall of 1959, Mr. R.J. Henderson went to Japan to buy housefurnishings, and Carlson returned in early 1960.<sup>213</sup> The frequency and scale of these buying trips indicates that Eaton's once again believed it needed direct access to Japan.

Company reports for these years confirm that Eatonians now considered Japan to be a modern business space. For one thing, like the women reporters based in New York, the Eaton's buyers clearly understood that the Japanese could produce all manner of goods, and thus that the so-called Oriental style was just one of the many they produced according to prevailing fashion. In 1959, for instance, Carlson reported obtaining Scandinavian style chairs and Early American Maple finish furniture as well as "Japanese style furniture" in Japan.<sup>214</sup> With Chinaware, Carlson indicated that Eaton's was going to have to change the form of the goods it was ordering because they were so close to European ones that English potteries had complained, and that there was a Japan Design Bureau in place to help prevent such copying.<sup>215</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions", document entitled "Oriental Trip Report - 1959", by Mr. G. Carlson, Toronto Buying Office. The report is undated but is stamped as received in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office on 1959-04-09.

<sup>213</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions" various documents.

<sup>214</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions", "Extract from G. Carlson's report on Oriental trip, Spring, '59"

<sup>215</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions", document entitled "Oriental Trip Report - 1959" by Mr. G. Carlson, Toronto Buying Office. The report is undated but is stamped as received in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office on 1959-04-09.

Furthermore, Eatonians believed that they were witnessing, and indeed participating in, the development of a great economy. McBirnie, for instance, explained that although the companies taking orders for Wilton carpets had relatively few looms, they managed to meet the demand through an extensive and effective sub-contracting system. Moreover, growing demands by North American buyers including retail firms meant that the manufacturers were planning to improve their equipment and increase production. He concluded, "with their low cost of labour and their undoubted manufacturing efficiency, they, and their market, will bear careful watching in the time ahead."<sup>216</sup> Carlson was in a position to make a more general comment that "the Oriental market" as a whole was improving. He cited not only better quality and "new ideas," but also the impact of "more American buyers...making more definite commitments." He added confidently, "it was my feeling that business is on the upswing."<sup>217</sup>

Equally confident was the way Eaton's buyers appraised and entrenched their position in this up-to-date place of industry. Carlson, believing that Japanese furniture production was especially promising, "tentatively tied up 4 of the manufacturers in Japan" for his company.<sup>218</sup> He was also grateful to the Dodwell agency whose Japanese purchases

---

<sup>216</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," document entitled "The Japanese Fall Trip, 1958, Floor Coverings," [by S.K. McBirnie].

<sup>217</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions", document entitled "Oriental Trip Report - 1959" by Mr. G. Carlson, Toronto Buying Office. The report is undated but is stamped as received in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office on 1959-04-09.

<sup>218</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions" note to file by R.J.B. dated 1959-03-06.

helped him “cover that market.”<sup>219</sup> McBirnie, meanwhile, was pleased to have negotiated deals with mills he praised as trustworthy and “aggressive.” He explained that he made an important order with Choshi & Co. of Kobe because it “knew our needs, insisted upon rigid standard of quality, and above all, would be in a position to ‘jam’ our delivery if we should switch suppliers.”<sup>220</sup> Possibly, the desire that both of these buyers expressed for predictable relationships in Japan betrayed some of the company’s old anxieties about Japanese business practices. Overall, though, the buyers clearly felt that Japan had become familiar trading territory where they felt they could have some control over their deals.

The documentation concerning these buying trips does not speak of the strangeness of the country or its people and it appears that unlike many of their predecessors, the Eaton's buyers of the late 1950s simply no longer held this view when it came to Japan. However, they did for another country: China. Several buyers’ documents betray fear, misgiving and outright mistrust when they went there in this period. Thus, it appears that by the late 1950s, it was China that had become the foreign Far East for these Eaton’s buyers.<sup>221</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions”, document entitled “Oriental Trip Report - 1959” by Mr. G. Carlson, Toronto Buying Office. The report is undated but is stamped as received in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office on 1959-04-09.

<sup>220</sup>The mills he was referring to were Kamei Textiles and the Suminoe Textile Company of the Osaka area. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” document entitled “The Japanese Fall Trip, 1958, Floor Coverings,” [by S.K. McBirnie].

<sup>221</sup> S.K. McBirnie in particular went to some length to explain how different and odd China was. In his hotel room, “the hooting and noise...beggar description, and made sleep in my room, quite impossible to indulge in.” He was more stunned, however, by how China looked. He remarked on the spectacle of the busy people: the “astonishing sight of massed effort,” the “teeming” streets, the “seething, streaming mass of people,” the “packed streams” of pedestrians. In language reminiscent of Mrs. Cabeldu’s in describing the 1923

They were conscious that China was a land of fabulous opportunity, producing “just about everything one could name.”<sup>222</sup> However, they sometimes found its foreign business practices impenetrable and produced descriptions of them reminiscent of those written by their predecessors about Japan decades earlier.”<sup>223</sup> At the huge Canton Fair, for instance, they found representatives of different manufacturers refusing to give fixed prices or

---

earthquake scene, he said that Canton was like “an ant hill. Everyone is pulling, or lifting, or carrying, or pushing something, or seemingly just rushing about.” The explanation he received from people there was that ““this was the New China and that everybody worked.”” Women made up part of this industrious scene. Along with the men, they pulled and pushed lorries or otherwise shouldering “formidable” and “staggering” loads; they toiled in fields, docks, construction sites. “Astonishing” numbers of them had babies which they carried or had minded by old women while working. McBirnie particularly noticed their clothing: whereas the men wore a variety of garments, “the women workers...all seemed to be dressed alike in black trousers and black smocks.” He felt that consequently “there was a sort of drabness about the whole scene.”<sup>221</sup> Unfashionable, unfeminine, unprotected by virtue of their sex from rude labour, women above all seemed to contribute to McBirnie’s sense of China as a place his eyes told him was foreign.

AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” document entitled “The Canton Autumn Fair, 1958,” by S.K. McBirnie. Undated.

<sup>222</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” document entitled “The Canton Autumn Fair, 1958,” by S.K. McBirnie. Undated.

<sup>223</sup>For example, R.H. Forster wrote that in Hong Kong, “the origin of manufacture is difficult to learn, outside of the fact that we know it is manufactured on the Mainland in Red China and is shipped by boat to the Port of Hong Kong, where it is received by these Companies. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions” letter from R.H. Forster to W.C. WEBER, 1959-12-19, refers to “Oriental Trip” made in Fall by R.J. Henderson. In a report on the trip, R.J. Henderson indicates he visited Hong Kong as well as Japan. In document by H. called “Hong Kong Market-Fall 1959.”



delivery dates; “they would not be pinned down.” In comparison, Japan was now seen as a model, at least when it came to hand-hooked rugs; whereas Chinese producers asked for very large minimum orders; the Japanese set no minimum and also had “more suitable” designs.<sup>224</sup> By the end of the 1950s, then, Japan and its products were both better understood and better appreciated at Eaton’s.

### *The 1960s: Women and Japan as Oriental*

Despite their acceptance and even admiration of the Japanese business climate, Eatonians continued to perceive of Japan and its people as different from themselves. Their contradictory attitudes to Japan were often expressed, negotiated and entrenched in their use of the term “Oriental.”

Female Eatonians were more important than in early periods in helping to construct the company understanding of Japan. Because Eaton’s valued retail trends in the United States, its numerous female employees there were well-positioned to do so. They also promoted the reputation of Americans, especially New Yorkers, as arbiters of cutting-edge taste. Miss Phyllis M. Stagg, who worked in the Toronto store’s Gift Shop, emphasized the need for buyers in Japan to pay attention to “quality and design” as well as price. She wondered if before leaving on their trips, company buyers should not visit the American stores and “base future purchases on this well selected merchandise.”<sup>225</sup>

The following year, buyer C.F. Symonds did just that. He preceded a trip of East Asia with a tour of Lord and Taylor’s in New York and Jordan Marsh in Boston. He

---

<sup>224</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” document entitled “The Canton Autumn Fair, 1958,” by S.K. McBirnie. Undated.

<sup>225</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar,” letter from Miss P.M. Stagg, Dept. 818- Gift Shop, to F.J. Carter, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1963-10-09.

commented on the importance these companies accorded to their East Asian buying -- the President of Jordan Marsh travelled there to make "an extensive survey" -- and concluded on the importance of "Oriental accessories in homefurnishings," especially "the better and unusual type of merchandise." For Japan, he learned, this meant "in addition to the proven items of stainless steel, toys, electronics, cameras, piece goods etc. this is an important market for giftware and artware such as hand painted prints, scrolls, painted screens etc."<sup>226</sup> Symonds concluded, as Stagg had, on "the importance of having only experienced giftware buyers visit these markets, preferably buyers with some decorator background..."<sup>227</sup>

Women helped make the word "Oriental" common currency within the company. When they classified many Japanese goods under this rubric, it was meant to be complimentary, for they appreciated how both old and new Oriental-style merchandise suited North American tastes. In 1963, Mary T. Walsh, another reporter for the company's New York office, greatly admired Lotus Land, a new gift shop in Altman's which presented a pastiche of goods from Japan, mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan as offerings from the exotic Far East.<sup>228</sup> Walsh singled out the "beautiful old obis...made up into conversation piece toss pillows" as well as the "plastic ware in lacquer colours" for sale. Stagg, whose opinion on the matter was sought by the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office on receipt

---

<sup>226</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," report entitled "Information concerning Oriental merchandise." by C.F. Symonds, [Montreal?] Merchandise Office, to J.W. Eaton, Executive Office, 1964-02-28.

<sup>227</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," document "Overseas Market Report," by C.F. Symonds, Spring, 1964.

<sup>228</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," Report No. 35 of the New York Office, 1963-09-12, by Mary T. Walsh.

of Walsh's report,<sup>229</sup> agreed. Stagg also noticed how well Oriental goods suited Western lifestyles: "the collection at Altmans was functional and very carefully selected and...could be easily adapted to our modern way of life in either a contemporary or traditional style."<sup>230</sup>

These women understood that "Oriental" was a clever marketing strategy. Walsh described the purchasing process for Lotus Land as follows: "the excitement and intrigue of the noisy market places, the open air bazaars, the alleys and the streets are well known to travellers in the Orient....In 'Lotus Land,' Altman's has taken the work, the fatigue and the hours out of shopping and has created for its customers an exotic bazaar loaded with much of the best the Orient has to offer." In this construction, the company buyers were doing first-level purchasing in order to make shopping safe and easy for shoppers at home. This made sense somewhere like China, perhaps, or India which Symonds indicated "must be very carefully shopped."<sup>231</sup> The thing was, though, that as Walsh knew, buying in 1960s Japan was different. She wrote that it meant visiting "factories and shops," whereas buyers had to go to "areas high in the hills of Taiwan island" or "the narrow alleys

---

<sup>229</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," Report No. 35 of the New York Office, 1963-09-12, by Mary T. Walsh. On the report are annotations from W.C. Weber and F" C. Carter asking to have Miss Stagg's comments.

<sup>230</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," letter from Miss P.M. Stagg, Dept. 818- Gift Shop, to F.J. Carter, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1963-10-09.

<sup>231</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," report entitled "Information concerning Oriental merchandise." by C.F. Symonds, [Montreal?] Merchandise Office, to J.W. Eaton, Executive Office, 1964-02-28.

of Hong Kong.”<sup>232</sup> Presenting Japan as Oriental was now, in the 1960s, a way of elevating the appeal of the country’s goods.

Some Eatonians still felt that the Japanese failed to meet their standards, however. Symonds, for one, wrote that buyers of everything from Sporting Goods to Stationery should arrive in East Asia with their own designs and specifications because “the Oriental skill is copying rather than originating.”<sup>233</sup> And although he recognized that in comparison to the “back-alley factories” he encountered in India and Hong Kong, with their samples “dusty, piled haphazardly here and there,” Japanese factories were “very clean,” he also complained about the time he “wasted” there “removing shoes, bowing, having tea, etc.”<sup>234</sup> Also, he included Japan in his report on “the ‘Lands of the East’” which “came up fully to expectations in the range of exotic, fascinating merchandise available, and in the color and excitement of their customs and cultures that are so different and appealing to western eyes.”<sup>235</sup>

While they may have had misgivings at some levels, Eatonians finally understood Japan to be a safe place for business. This may explain why at this point, in the 1960s, the company finally allowed some of its women to go there on a buying trip. In 1965, both the

---

<sup>232</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar,” Report No. 35 of the New York Office, 1963-09-12, by Mary T. Walsh. On the report are annotations from W.C. Weber and F.C. Carter asking to have Miss Stagg’s comments.

<sup>233</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar,” document “Overseas Market Report,” by C.F. Symonds, Spring, 1964.

<sup>234</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar,” document “Overseas Market Report,” by C.F. Symonds, Spring, 1964.

<sup>235</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotions- Oriental Bazaar,” document “Overseas Market Report,” by C.F. Symonds, Spring, 1964.

Montreal and Toronto store divisions decided to mount special Oriental promotions like the American ones company employees had been writing about, and to send employees to buy merchandise for them.<sup>236</sup> Significantly, two of the five Montreal employees undertaking the trip were women, Mrs. C. Mueller of the Gift Shop and Mrs. A. LaFleche of Fashions. The rough itinerary of the trip indicated that four days were to be spent in Japan, two in Taiwan, ten in Hong Kong, three in the Philippines, 2 in Bangkok, and eight in India.<sup>237</sup> Four days was not a long time, and the two women made but a small proportion of buyers. Nonetheless, their visit to Japan marked a significant change in the Eaton company's policy on Japan. Finally, it had become a place for their women.

### Conclusion

The Eatonian understanding of Japan and its people had changed over the years. Elements of traditional culture were admired in some periods, the source of annoyance at others; its business climate was alternately criticized and envied. What remained stable, however, was that Eatonians organized their understanding of the country, its people and goods around a developing sense of what they themselves valued culturally and economically. It was thus through the *process of comparing* -- Western business methods to Japanese, "White" to "Jap" -- that Eatonians learned. Eatonians produced the meaning of the world they encountered through constructing dualities like these.

Moreover, the Eatonians came out on top in comparisons they made between themselves and the people they encountered in Japan (both the Japanese and the Patten-Mackenzie

---

<sup>236</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," document "Report on Mr. F.J. Carter's trip to New York, November, 1964," by F.J. Carter, n.d..

<sup>237</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Promotions - Oriental Bazaar," untitled and undated handwritten document, stamped as received on 1964-12-30.

firm.) These Others thus assumed an important function in the construction of Eaton's corporate culture: they were in a position of what Anne McClintock has called "abjection." Like slaves, domestic workers, or the colonized in imperial Britain, the Japanese were "marginalized but completely depended upon." It was in defining Japanese business behaviour, particularly the transgressions they saw everywhere in the early decades, that the company's employees found out or re-confirmed what they believed in: honesty, forthrightness, reliability, creativity, which were, in Japan, linked consistently to Western, male business behaviour. Japan thus helped Eaton's constitute itself.

Identifying and proclaiming masculinity, modernity, and Western "White" values was partly a visual undertaking. It involved seeing how things looked, such as recognizing or dictating "Oriental" merchandise styles and making sense of New York's way of presenting them. It also involved proclaiming mastery of space through signs and letterhead, and expressing ideas and communicating actions through appropriate business forms and graphic records like photographs. In these ways, they sought to interpret and express their complex inner experiences.

## CHAPTER 3

### EATON'S IN EUROPE:

#### A MODERN MIDDLE SPACE FOR MEN AND WOMEN

##### Introduction

At Eaton's, the world of foreign merchandise stretched from the distant land of Japan to Canada's next-door neighbour, the United States. In between these two points, both literally and figuratively, sat Europe. The history of Eaton's and Europe is the subject of this chapter, which moves chronologically through three periods: when Timothy Eaton himself oversaw company activities there; the growing scope and orderliness of company operations in Europe during the decades following his death; and the reconstruction of this order following the Second World War. Evidence from each of these periods indicates that paradoxical though it might seem, it was this in-between, neither here-nor-there status that was in fact the key to Europe's particular and indeed important position at Eaton's. Being in the middle of the Eaton's world meant being central.

The fact that Europe was situated in the middle geographically had a big impact on both which company employees would go there and what the nature of their stay would be. Like Japan, Europe was far enough away from Canada that going there was a serious undertaking requiring a lot of time, money and effort. Thus, temporary trips across the Atlantic were usually for the serious business of buying. This in turn meant two things: first, that (as in Japan) most Eatonian voyagers to the continent were men, making up as they did the majority of company buyers, and second, that the voyagers had a lot of mobility once they got there, because buying, unlike office work, required freedom to travel around to find merchandise wherever it was available. Yet Europe was of course much closer to Canada than Japan. Like the U.S.A., Eaton's could afford to dispatch quite a few employees there, not only to serve in the firm's well-staffed foreign buying offices

but also, on occasion, just to look around. This explains the presence of a relatively high number of women Eatonians in Europe. Most of them held junior positions in the buying offices, but a few had more prominent positions, for instance as visiting buyers or as fashion reporters. Thus, Europe was at a mid-point both on the Eaton's globe, and in terms of the gender ratio of its employees. It sat between Japan, where there were few women, and the U.S.A., where, as the following chapter will demonstrate, there were many. There was also something unique about Europe at Eaton's: a small number of women not in the employ of the company went there as tourists, in the company of male relatives who were Eatonians. These few females revealed that Europe, exotic yet accessible, also had the special status of desirable holiday destination.

Europe's reputation within Eaton's was likewise in the middle. Eatonians saw it as mostly, but not always and not entirely, modern: somewhere in between Japan, which they tended to see as backward, and the U.S.A., which they consistently viewed as very progressive. On the one hand, it was (in the Eatonians' view) a continent capable of producing the latest styles, using up-to-date techniques, within a respectably progressive business environment. On the other hand, at times European styles could be inaccessible due to differences in culture, language, or working habits, or because of special circumstances like war. In these cases, Eatonians felt that personal traits their corporate culture encouraged, such as courage, ingenuity, or know-how, were required to identify, name, obtain and transmit European styles so that they could be acknowledged as stylish in Canada. From this point of view, when it came to Europe, the work of physically procuring its goods had, on occasion, to be accompanied by the productive cultural labour of rendering its foreign meanings recognizable back home.

From the start, when Timothy Eaton did his own European buying, and then when he handed the task over to the London buying office head, this work of transporting and transmitting European style tended to be classed at Eaton's as male. This is not to say that the work required in Europe was identified beforehand as masculine, and then men were chosen to do it. It was more a matter of men going to Europe and doing what work was required, and that work being conceived of and described in masculine terms, a



simultaneous process of constructing masculinity and of the meaning of a place. Whereas the buying work of senior men was often thought of in terms of *producing* value, what women did tended to be understood as *reproducing* or *reinforcing* it: a role less active, but equally essential. We see this in the company descriptions (by men) of women buyers as possessing “taste” -- evidently seen as the useful, if less generative, skill of distinguishing between goods *already acknowledged* as being valuable. Women were seen less as “buyers” than as “shoppers:” they were choosing between a series of pre-selected goods. This sexual division of labour having to do with value was particularly evident after the Second World War. While men ventured into the devastated economies and identified what European countries had to offer in terms of products, one or two women went to Paris and other capitals to report on products known beforehand to be chic, such as the Dior “New Look” dress.

Thus, the evidence on Eaton's in Europe reinforces the argument made in the previous chapter on Japan: that there was a close connection between the access Eatonians of either sex had to a foreign place, their sexual division of labour once they got there, and ideas circulating in the company *about* the place. Yet the point above about buying-versus-shopping shows that once again, Europe was unique and so looking at Eaton's there will bring something new and important to light. Specifically, the case of Europe reveals how the sexual division of labour of Eatonians abroad was manifested in ways of seeing. This was revealed and reinforced in company records: Eaton's male buyers assumed and reinforced their power in Europe by looking at the landscape, at women, or at fashion in a masterful way that has been called by some historians “gazing:” that is, a particularly “masculine view” of the world from a superior position that entitled some men to help define and construct the things they were looking at.<sup>1</sup> At Eaton's, the male buyers wrote

---

<sup>1</sup> The “gaze” has been discussed by many historians of visuality. See, for instance, Chris Jenks, “Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the *Flâneur*,” in *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 150-51; he argues that so powerful was the male gaze that it “has been formative of the cultural products and traditions of modernity.” See also Griselda Pollock, *Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 159.

formal reports and personal letters stating and strengthening this superior position. Women's looking -- whether professionally, as fashion reporters or buyers, or personally, as tourists -- was more about observing, discerning and knowing about products, that is, showing good taste (being good shoppers). I would call this latter kind of looking "witnessing," because it involved women bearing evidence of European style, being spectators at its show, serving as "testimony *to* or proof *of* it."<sup>2</sup> Because European style was in the first instance identified and named by Eaton's men, moreover, what the women did supported and validated the men and their work. The women were witnesses to the power of their male colleagues and relatives as well as of the style the men identified and produced.

Nonetheless, working as observers of the European fashion scene provided some women associated with Eaton's with the opportunity that the company's mostly-male travelling buyers enjoyed: to have new experiences, to interpret them on their own terms, and to describe what they underwent in expressive records. Indeed, some of the women's documents such as their fashion reports were notable for their innovative, informal tone. Witnessing European style provided for some women, at least, with a privilege enjoyed by many of their male colleagues abroad: to develop themselves, including their own subjectivity, as they helped to develop the company.

In this capacity, Europe could be identified as one of the "in-between' space[s] in which cultural change may occur, ... in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated," which have been labelled "liminal" or "threshold" spaces.<sup>3</sup> This was another, final example of how being in the middle gave the space of Europe meaning and function at Eaton's: both women and men used the exceptional opportunity of going there to create new kinds of culture, both personal and gender-based.

---

<sup>2</sup>*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (1982), s.v. "Witness."

<sup>3</sup>Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 130.

## The Nineteenth Century: Timothy Eaton and the Masculinity of Foreign Enterprise

Europe was the foreign place most important to Timothy Eaton's business. Partly this was because it was familiar to him; he came from Ireland (near Ballymena, County Antrim) and apprenticed to a shop-keeper there before immigrating to Canada West. But it was also because the continent produced a huge range of marvelous, appealing merchandise. His first advertisement for the store referred to its superior capacity to import British goods, and by the 1890s, his company bought everything from felt dogs to tin trains on the continent.

It was, consequently, in Europe that Eaton established his first foreign buying offices -- London in 1892, and Paris in 1898 -- and that he and his envoys did the most buying. Around the turn of the century, his company was receiving dozens of loads of goods, totaling thousands of tons, from regions across Europe including Liverpool, Hamburg, Bremen, and Switzerland, as well as the two foreign-office cities.<sup>4</sup> This meant very frequent shipments. For example, in its dealings with just one company, Dominion & Allan, for just one month, December 1899, the London office sent out shipments to Eaton's on seven separate days.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Eaton company's imports from Europe were increasing. At Richards Mills & Co. of Liverpool, for instance, the number of packages sent on behalf of Eaton's rose from 1 088 in the winter of 1892-93 to 5 791 in the winter of 1899-1900.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Shipping Book 'M' for Winter, 1899/1900".

<sup>5</sup>The days are December 8, 9, 14, 22, 23, 28, and 30. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Shipping Book 'M' for Winter, 1899/1900."

<sup>6</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Shipping Book 'M' for Winter, 1899/1900" p. 51.

*Timothy Eaton: Self-development in London*

Timothy Eaton plainly understood Europe to be more developed than Canada both in terms of goods produced and business culture. Consequently, he saw buying European goods as providing the opportunity to develop himself as well as his company. For one thing, it allowed him to become more autonomous. In a letter of 1874, he revealed he was thinking about bypassing Canadian wholesalers and ordering directly from British suppliers: this would represent, for him, a “first step out” and “a strike for liberty.”<sup>7</sup> Joy Santink interprets this language as a sign of Eaton’s personal ambitions, an effort to “do what others had done and...make a bid for greater success.”<sup>8</sup>

Specifically, these “others” were of course businessmen and Eaton's found models for good behavior in Europe. One such exemplar was George Merz, who worked for the company’s Berlin commission house. In 1891, the latter wrote Eaton’s regarding an unpaid account, excusing his “open and straightforward manner...” regarding the amount owing but adding, “I consider myself a warm & true friend of Yours and thought it better and more like a man, to talk openly with You....”<sup>9</sup> Timothy Eaton appreciated this approach, replying that he was “hoping to receive another long letter from you and say just what you think, we won’t be offended.” He further enthused, “you speak so nice, and level, and straight and candid, and plain....”<sup>10</sup> He and Merz were personal friends; their correspondence also spoke of their families, mutual friends, and visits. But Merz clarified

---

<sup>7</sup>Eaton’s archives, letter from Timothy Eaton to James Eaton of 1874-06-24 , cited in Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 74-75.

<sup>8</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 76.

<sup>9</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, “Buying - General,” letter from George Merz, of R.D. Warburg & Company., Commissions Branch, Berlin, to T. Eaton Company, Toronto, 1891-03-13.

<sup>10</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying - General,” letter from T. Eaton, [Toronto], c. 1891-03 or 1891-04, to George Merz, Berlin, reply to letter from Merz of 1891-03-13.

the nature of their relationship when he in turn replied, "I did know, that I could talk to you openly & plainly because we are businessmen who are looking out [sic] how a certain business can be done to the best advantage."<sup>11</sup> For Timothy Eaton, then, Europe was a place to learn and practice proper businessman's behaviour.

*Developing the London office and its staff*

Eaton hoped that his employees would likewise benefit from their exposure to the European business milieu. He made this clear to the head of the new London office, Frank McMahon. For one thing, London was in Eaton's mind a centre of new looks in clothing and household goods. Thus, he charged McMahon with spotting not only good deals, but good ideas: it was for the good of Eaton's.<sup>12</sup> He wrote, "information which you can gather in England is what we are after, so keep Miss Brown [a Toronto employee] posted in anything that comes in the market that is likely to sell in Toronto."<sup>13</sup> In particular, Eaton requested that the London office send news, preferably along with visual representations, of London trends, whether newspaper clippings about new hats or periodical lithographic drawings of electric lamps. Samples were also desirable.<sup>14</sup> At this point in the company's history, its president believed that superior style was there to be discovered in London: one just had to open one's eyes to see it. What the company needed, therefore, was employees capable of developing their visual acuity.

---

<sup>11</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Buying - General," letter from Geo. Merz, of R.D. Warburg & Company, Commissions Branch, Berlin, to T. Eaton Company, Toronto, 1891-04-16.

<sup>12</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, also makes this point, p. 84, although she does not discuss it in terms of gender construction.

<sup>13</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Buying and London Buying Office," letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London, [Eaton's of London], and Edward Eaton, 1892-11-17.

<sup>14</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Buying and London Buying Office," letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London [Eaton's of London], 1892-03-17.

They also had to be able to grow and mature as businessmen. In letters that were alternately encouraging, supportive, directive, cajoling and chastising, Timothy Eaton tried to steer McMahon to places in London that would allow him to thus develop. Eaton reminisced how “I always found when I was buying” that Cook’s of London was the best place for parasols, adding bossily, “any time you are in Cook’s on any other business, dont [sic] fail to call in the parasol dept. And say ‘good morning, Mr Wilcox’ and pass on.” Indeed the whole of this letter, written early in the year, has the fussy tone of a parent (father) anxiously hovering around a growing son: “I have been thinking of you, and think you are old enough, big enough and wise enough to go into Hope Bros.,.....and see the ties they sell there for 6 1/2d.” And again: “If you should happen to make any mistakes and anybody finds fault with you as regards the samples, send them to me. Send the samples direct to me also. Should you require any information in that way which I can give you, ask for it.”<sup>15</sup> In a similar vein, he wrote to McMahon that “I hope your little assistant is growing big and useful.”<sup>16</sup> The overall tone of Eaton's letters was familiar, fatherly, “typical ... of Victorian paternalism,” according to Santink.<sup>17</sup> Timothy Eaton seemed to conceive of the challenge before him -- of developing his company through negotiating the huge, shifting environment that was London’s retail industry -- in terms of a relatively contained, comprehensible struggle of shouldering responsibilities, of becoming an adult: a man.

Eaton and McMahon apparently agreed that the latter ultimately had to make *himself* a man by plunging himself into the crucible of business, or, as the president put it, by

---

<sup>15</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London [Eaton’s of London], 1892-03-17.

<sup>16</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London [Eaton’s of London], 1892-08-29

<sup>17</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p 187.

“moving around and aiming to be somebody.”<sup>18</sup> First of all, this involved providing himself with the proper base from which to conduct business. Eaton encouraged McMahon to change or renovate the London office until it suited him; “then we will be able to put into motion a department where you can discharge your duties to your own, and to our satisfaction.”<sup>19</sup> McMahon went ahead and had a back office, ventilators and an elevator installed.<sup>20</sup> But more importantly, according to Eaton, McMahon would become mature through taking the responsibility for making good deals. The president expressed the satisfaction of the store employees with choices McMahon made in ribbons and handkerchiefs, and their “hopes that as you continue to grow older you will get wiser and send them still better values when you get them.”<sup>21</sup> Later that year, though, McMahon made some unpopular purchases and Eaton took away his buying privileges, restricting him to arranging shipping and so on.<sup>22</sup> Company buyers were now to do all the

---

<sup>18</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London [Eaton’s of London], 1892-03-17.

<sup>19</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London, [Eaton’s of London], 1892-04-27. Eaton asked McMahon about changes to the office again in *ibid*, letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London, [Eaton’s of London], 1892-08-29.

<sup>20</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from Frank McMahon, London office, to T. Eaton, Toronto, 1894-09-08.

<sup>21</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London, [Eaton’s of London], 1892-08-29.

<sup>22</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from Frank McMahon, Eaton’s, London, to T. Eaton, [Toronto], 1892-12-03.

procuring.<sup>23</sup> It was up to McMahon to take responsibility for these bad purchases, and he did, writing he was “sorry for the Depts. and Miss Brown, not to mention myself, that the goods turned out so badly.”<sup>24</sup> Two years later, Eaton was able to inform McMahon that the store departments now felt they could depend on the London office to do their buying again, and the question of taking responsibility arose once more. Eaton wrote that “I try to impress the buyers here that you are in a position to see a hundred bargains during the year where we can only see one here. Rise to your position and dip in.”<sup>25</sup>

McMahon took the plunge. In 1895 he wrote to Toronto about an idea that occurred to him when he considered the problem of having ordered too many gloves. He believed that fellow employee Mr. Lowry’s “idea of finding out which are the best selling prices and classes of goods that the customers want, and then arranging to have these come in regular, will be a better system.”<sup>26</sup> Growing more confident in the London business milieu, he was now able to send advice back to his fatherly boss back in Toronto. Timothy Eaton wrote back to McMahon that he wanted better-quality gloves to be sent, “and every pair must have a good house at the back of it.”<sup>27</sup> He appears now to have believed McMahon

---

<sup>23</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London, [Eaton’s of London], and Edward [Eaton], 1892-11-17.

<sup>24</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from Frank McMahon, Eaton’s, London, to T. Eaton, [Toronto], 1892-12-03.

<sup>25</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, [Eaton’s London Office] of 1894-09-24.

<sup>26</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from Frank McMahon, T. Eaton Company Limited of London, to T. Eaton, Toronto, 1895-05-01.

<sup>27</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton to Frank [probably Frank McMahon of Eaton’s London], 1895-05-08.



able to recognize good quality and good companies when he saw them. No longer was it simply a matter of McMahon sending back news of what was current in London. Having received fatherly advice, transformed the office to his needs, plunged into the city's retail business, made mistakes and taken responsibility for it, he was now worthy of his boss's confidence. He was now capable of truly taking advantage of the riches London had to offer.

*Developing differently: Canadian-based buyers travelling in Europe*

There was little room for women in the masculinized space of the London office. The same could be said for the whole of Europe under Timothy Eaton's reign; almost all of the Canadian-based Eaton's buyers going to Europe on buying trips were men.<sup>28</sup> There was one exception, however: Margaret Smith (née Stephenson), who headed the fancy goods department and who was identified by her daughter as one of the first female buyers for

---

<sup>28</sup>The men included a Mr. G.H. Pack who went to Europe in 1893, (see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S35 [Secretarial office - legal section - early general Files] Box 1 File 19, "G.H. Pack settlement"), and eleven others: N.E. Bolton, Charles Boothe, W.G. Dean, J.C. Eaton, J.B. Hayes, W.J. Keen, J.S. Lowry, H.M. McGee, J.A.C. Poole, W. Rogerson, and J. Whittaker, who travelled there between July 1895 and January 1897 (see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S127 (Bookkeeping Records), Vol. 1, General Ledger, 1895-97 pp. 445-6).

Other records in the Eaton's archives on men travelling for the company to Europe include notebooks for A. McPherson's 1899 trip, which register the many linen dealers he dealt with in Europe, especially Ireland; J.A.L. Poole's notebooks documenting his travels there over several years starting in 1895; and notebooks for J.H. Forster's trip of 1901. See: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78, General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records, Files "Notebooks (2)-A. McPherson 1899, "Notebooks (3) - J.A.C. Poole 1895-1903," and "Notebook - Mr. J.H. Forster, 1901."

the company, possibly the very first. She went to Europe in May, 1890 along with her husband W.F. Smith, a shoe buyer.<sup>29</sup>

Like McMahon, visiting buyers were expected to use the opportunity of foreign travel to learn and display proper business behaviour for their own benefit as well as for their company's. They could learn from foreign businessmen like George Merz; when the latter wrote to Timothy Eaton in 1891 that he had given Eaton's buyer Mr. Poole advice on amounts to purchase,<sup>30</sup> far from taking umbrage, Eaton thanked him for providing "wise and judicious counsels."<sup>31</sup> Or they could learn from their superiors within the company. In 1901, that is, towards the end of the Timothy Eaton era, John Forster went to several cities in England as well as Paris, Munich, Grenoble, Prague, Belfast, and Dublin.<sup>32</sup> Alongside this buyer's neat and detailed jottings in the notebook about orders, contacts, and so on are careful instructions written in another hand by an unnamed supervisor, probably Timothy Eaton himself.<sup>33</sup> One such instruction is for Forster to bring English

---

<sup>29</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "[Correspondence - Mr. & Mrs. W. F. Smith - buyers for Eaton's], card with information from Miss Daisy Smith (of the Recreation Office at Eaton's).

<sup>30</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Buying - General," letter from George Merz, of R.D. Warburg & Company, Commissions Branch, Berlin, to T. Eaton Company, Toronto, 1891-03-13.

<sup>31</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Buying - General," letter from T. Eaton, [Toronto], to George Merz, Berlin, c. 1891-03 or 1891-04,

<sup>32</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebook - Mr. J.H. Forster, 1901."

<sup>33</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebook - Mr. J.H. Forster, 1901." The instructions are under the letter "H" in the notebook. By the time John Forster's son, also eventually an Eaton's buyer, inherited the notebook, its travel instructions were read not for edification but with "fond amusement," wrote the son. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File "Notebook - Mr. J.H. Forster, 1901," letter from

samples to the London office “for Comparison;” the satellite bureau thus served to support and guide him, in effect to serve as the supervisor’s proxy abroad. Other directives provided guidelines for Forster’s conduct as he moved through a vast foreign terrain; they dictated how and when to buy goods abroad -- never on the Sabbath -- as well as how to get to the boats, what to do once on board, tipping etiquette, and what to do on arrival. These latter instructions also aimed to ensure that the buyer would remember that he represented Eaton’s, and that he put the company in the best possible light; this was explicit in another memo that read: “pay for all your own dinners....Our firm is as able to pay for our dinner as any firm you are doing business with.” It was as if the supervisor was worried that Forster would lose his bearings as an Eatonian businessman as he navigated through Europe. He urged Forster to above all “Be careful and dont lose your book dont leave it on the table anywhere keep it in an inside [breast?] pocket.”

This apparent worry on the part of the supervisor about his underling being beyond his control in Europe appears to have been well-founded. Travelling buyers did escape many of the controls imposed on McMahon and presumably the other settled foreign office workers, and the records the buyers produced speak of this freedom. This was true for William and Margaret Smith, whose 1890 trip to Europe was also their honeymoon.<sup>34</sup> The fact that they were celebrating their marriage would of course explain some of the jauntiness of their correspondence with colleagues back home, such as the letter joking about seasickness and “doing homage to old father Neptune.” But the fact that the letters refer to colleagues by nicknames like Will and Jim, and give chatty news about others like E. Y. Eaton, hints not only at the genuine friendships that existed among Eatonians, but also that Eatonians considered the letters an acceptable place to manifest friendly feelings.

Buyer J.A.C. Poole and his wife (unnamed), who travelled to Europe in 1891, appeared to have shared the Smiths’ relaxed approach. Mrs. Poole went along on the trip as a tourist.

---

Mrs. Rex Forster, Toronto, to Mr. Eaton of 1969-02-15, in which the old notebook was enclosed.

<sup>34</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers’ Records), File “[Correspondence - Mr. & Mrs. W. F. Smith - buyers for Eaton’s].”

She attended entertaining events such as concerts, and visited tourist spots along their route through Germany and England. Generally, she experienced Europe as lovely and friendly. She expected it to be a source of pleasant sights; she was disappointed with Stoke, England for having “nothing to see,” despite the fact that she had spent the day there visiting the Wedgewood, Doulton and other factories with her husband. On other days the Pooles went together to sample rooms and stores, sometimes also in the company of other men, probably Eaton's employees, whom Mrs. Poole called “Gordon” and “Bob” and “the boys.”<sup>35</sup> She received gifts from his clients, and wrote letters on his behalf to Toronto. Mr. Poole, for his part, accompanied his wife on pleasure excursions. The Pooles did not seem to share the view of Timothy Eaton that working in Europe had to be viewed as a serious challenge best faced by serious men.

Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Poole's presence in Europe signalled that continent's status as somewhat more accessible to women than Japan was at Eaton's. Nonetheless, the freedom and pleasure of European travel was mainly a male privilege in this period. The lighthearted and friendly tone found in foreign buyers' correspondence was also, by extension, mostly a male prerogative. Furthermore, Margaret Smith and Mrs. Poole's own interpretations of their travels do not appear to have circulated within company records; there are no letters from Margaret Smith in the archives, and Mrs. Poole's diary of course did not circulate within the company (it was sent to the Eaton's Archives decades later). Therefore, both the experience of travelling around Europe to buy goods and the representations of this experience were mostly men's and to this extent they did conform with Timothy Eaton's assumptions.

---

<sup>35</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S78 (General Merchandise Office - Foreign Buyers' Records), File “Notebook - Mrs. J.A.C. Poole, 1901.” The notebook was sent by her daughter to the company in 1961, regarding the mention of “boys.” Nothing in the notebook indicates she brought children on the trip, so, presumably, these were men.

### European buying becomes systematized, 1907-1940s

The records on Europe for the period between the end of Timothy Eaton's era as company president (on his death in 1907) and the beginning of his grandson John David Eaton's (starting in 1942) are mostly dry notices, accounts and lists. Not surprisingly, and in marked contrast to Timothy Eaton's letters, they provide much information on the development of the company's operations in Europe but little direct evidence of how working there was perceived, or indeed how Europe itself was seen. Nonetheless, they do provide enough information to show that the access employees had to the continent continued to be structured along gender lines. Again, women were present, including as tourists, but men had most of the authority; Europe continued to be a middle ground.

In the early years of J.C. Eaton's reign as company president, Eaton's demonstrated its on-going and growing confidence in goods available in Europe by greatly expanding its operations there. The first step was expanding the buying territories of the company's existing offices in London and Paris. Secondly, five new offices were opened (Belfast, Berlin, Leicester, Manchester and Zurich) in the short span of three years, 1911-1913.

This great growth ground to a halt with the Great War. Suddenly, key sources of goods dried up or soured. German goods -- the company's confidence in which had been demonstrated by its opening of an office in Berlin but a few years previous -- were prohibited. In 1915, after considering the idea of buying German-made cowhair merchandise in the United States or England, Eaton's directors instructed that goods from enemy countries bought after the outbreak of war "were not to be purchased directly or indirectly through the United States or any other country." This was in accordance with a Canadian Customs regulation requiring importers to sign a declaration that German goods being imported had been sent from Germany and paid for before the war. Eaton's also decided not to buy from allied countries goods made mostly of materials originating in

enemy countries.<sup>36</sup> Even the humble Hohner mouth organ, which bore a German label, was banished from the shelves of Eaton's.<sup>37</sup> English products, always so important within the company, were suddenly less reliable. The Bradford Dyers' Association, for example, indicated that during the war, the Association would be forced to use inferior dyes that faded. This caused an Eaton's manager to recommend his company "protect its reputation and the customers' interests" by being clear that wartime conditions made buying "such doubtful goods" a risk.<sup>38</sup>

Under the circumstances, Eaton's turned to more dependable sources of merchandise. The president requested that departments buy goods in Canada as much as possible,<sup>39</sup> and in Winnipeg, a manager recommended that given the "uncertainty of delivery of English and European goods on order," only domestic and American merchandise be catalogued, and North American raw materials be substituted for European ones in the company factories. Uncertainty was also cited as the reason for the decision made in Winnipeg to transfer store merchandise originating from Europe to Mail Order to serve as a reserve.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," Extracts from Minutes of Directors' Meetings of 1915-02-09, 1915-02-15 and 1915-02-23.

<sup>37</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" notice of 1915-04-03 from J.J. Vaughan to various heads of departments.

<sup>38</sup>The letter was sent to the Manchester Office, which sent it to Canada. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice BO291 from J.B. Gould, Winnipeg, to Mr. Tucker, Department 100, 1915-07-22.

<sup>39</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" "Extract from Minutes of Directors' Meeting" of 1914-12-22.

<sup>40</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice 206 from H.M. Tucker to Mr. Tucker 1914-08-04 and Notice [IPS?] 262 from E. Fretwell, Winnipeg to Mr. Tucker 1914-08-12.

Even an Eaton's catalogue blurb, while boasting that "THIS YEAR OUR BUYERS HAVE ACCOMPLISHED WONDERS... in maintaining our high standard of quality for goods selling at the unusual EATON bargain prices," did admit to "the tremendous difficulties that war conditions have placed in the way of obtaining goods."<sup>41</sup>

However, after the war the company buying operations were revived in Europe as were the firm's positive attitude towards Europe as a source of goods and ideas. Eatonians were if anything increasingly appreciative of the design and display of Europe goods. New French styles was shown in Eaton's stores; for instance, in 1928 the Montreal store featured Art Moderne furnished rooms.<sup>42</sup> The company hired French architect Jacques Carlu to design art deco restaurants in the elegant Toronto College Street and Montreal stores in the mid- to late-1920s<sup>43</sup> Around this time several Eaton's stores also exhibited a "House of Today" which had been designed by René Cera, a French artist and designer. He was hired by Eaton's for this purpose in 1928,<sup>44</sup> went on to work in the College Street

---

<sup>41</sup>Catalogue insert dated 30 December, 1915, probably included in the Toronto Spring & Summer 1916 catalogue, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-479, "Catalogue – Advertising."

<sup>42</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-2056, "Merchandise - Housefurnishings - Furniture - Rooms - Art Moderne by Emile Lemieux."

<sup>43</sup> This is discussed in detail in Delwyn Higgins, "Art Deco, Marketing and the T. Eaton Company Department Stores: 1918-1930 (M.A. thesis, York University, 1991), pp. 19-26.

<sup>44</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-2016, "Merchandise - Housefurnishings - René Cera Designs; file F 229-308-0-2044, "Merchandise - Housefurnishings - Furniture - Model Homes - René Cera's House of Today." and File F 229-308-0-2045, "Merchandise - Housefurnishings - Furniture - Model Homes." Cera is called an architectural designer and artist in an obituary of his wife, Elizabeth Hay Trott Cera, see *Globe and Mail*, 1999-05-14, p. A 20.

store in the 1930s to help the company sell modern furniture<sup>45</sup> -- in which capacity he took at least three European trips which were charged to the Merchandise Display department<sup>46</sup> -- and was eventually named Manager of Design.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, Eaton's highly valued European goods and ideas at this time.

After the Great War, Paris and especially London retained their status as the most important of the Eaton company's European buying offices.<sup>48</sup> Most of the newer European offices had relatively small territories; for instance, in 1929, Leicester's office looked after just a few local cities. London, in contrast, was responsible for eleven

---

<sup>45</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-2016, "Merchandise - Housefurnishings - Rene Cera Designs." See also Cynthia Jane Wright, "'The Most Prominent Rendezvous of the Feminine Toronto': Eaton's College Street and the Organization of Shopping in Toronto, 1920-1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992), p. 160.

<sup>46</sup>Cera took trips to Europe in April to June 1931, March to May 1935, and May to July 1937. File AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S87 (Sales and Expense Office - Sales Journals and Miscellaneous Sales and Expense Records), File "European Buying Trips, Expense Records, 1928-46."

<sup>47</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), File 34, "List of Management, 1955 [Part II]," information from the 1956 draft list. Cera's portrait is available in AO, T. Eaton Records, F 229-300-2, "Managers' Portraits - Photoprints," File F229-300-2-65.

<sup>48</sup>A sign of the continuing importance of the two older offices was that only they were specified in a new plan announced that year to provide travel assistance to Eaton's customers travelling abroad. The Paris and London offices were to provide advice, reservations and tickets for train and ship transport, theatre and other events, as well as information on entertainment, shopping, and local travel. These two offices were also to serve as the forwarding address for the customers. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F503 from Superintendent's Office [their no. 157-6-34] to Supervisor, Group Manager, Head of Department, 1934-06-13.



countries, and Paris for six,<sup>49</sup> then eight when the Zurich office closed in 1934 and its Swiss and Italian business was handed back to the French office.<sup>50</sup> The sole European buying office of comparable significance was Berlin, which covered six countries by 1929,<sup>51</sup> and took over four more from London in 1935.<sup>52</sup> German was the only foreign language (printed alongside English and French) on the forms used by Canadian-based staff to place orders with European suppliers in the 1930s.<sup>53</sup> The Berlin office was closed with the onset of the Second World War, however. The London bureau took over its incomplete orders,<sup>54</sup> a sign of its continuing strength.

The London office also continued to play an important role assigned to it by Timothy Eaton: outpost of company culture and regulations guiding the experiences of Eatonians in

---

<sup>49</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39" Notice D248 from General Office, 1929-07-27.

<sup>50</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39" Notice F535 from General Office, 1934-11.

<sup>51</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39" Notice D248 from General Office, 1929-07-27.

<sup>52</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39" Notice F560 from General Office, to Supervisor, Group Manager, Head of Department, 1935-02-02.

<sup>53</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F657 from General Office, Toronto, 1937-08-19.

<sup>54</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", abstract from letter from Mr Portlock, [London office] to R.Y. Eaton, 1939-09-08; letter from R.Y. Eaton, Georgian Bay, Ontario, to [J.J.] Vaughan, 1939-07-17; letter from I.W. Ford to R.S. McCordic, Winnipeg store, 1939-09-14.

Europe. Evaluations were made of staff working in the London office, and a number were found to not be up to their tasks; an employee list for 1894 to 1921 indicates that aside from those who left the company on "own accord" or "to be married," there were many others "sent away" or deemed not "ok to re-engage."<sup>55</sup> As well, London office staff were often transferred to company offices elsewhere in Europe. This would suggest that the London office functioned as a kind of training centre to provide the foreign buying expertise,<sup>56</sup> indeed, the head of Eaton's European offices, Mr. P. Portlock, had his headquarters in the London bureau for many years.<sup>57</sup> The London office was thus both site and source of careful supervision at Eaton's.

Foreign buying office staffing changed somewhat as Eaton's expanded in Europe. For one thing, people with non-Anglo-Celtic names -- otherwise a rarity at Eaton's outside of Quebec -- were hired, including N. von Struve, W. J. Fernau, and W. Euen in the Berlin office and J. Gutnecht and R. Chavance in Paris.<sup>58</sup> Some of them probably came from the

---

<sup>55</sup>A number of them were recognized for their long service, earning coveted "Quarter Century" watches or other gifts. Some even marked their thirtieth anniversary at Eaton's. For instance, Edward J. Jones was engaged in the London buying office in 1914 and retired from there in 1951, over thirty-six years later. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 170 (Company Personnel Office - General Files), Box 1, File 17.01/3: "Q.C. [Quarter Century] & Long Service - Buying Offices, Foreign."

<sup>56</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Employees, 1894-1921), document: untitled employee list with salaries and details of engagement, ca. 1894-1921.

<sup>57</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 13, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1938," new sections in list for Toronto (typescript). See also AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", letter from AE Smalley, Section Office, to J. Vaughan, 1941-12-08.

<sup>58</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939," list for Toronto of 1939-05.

host countries in which the offices were located; Mr. von Struve, for one, was identified in company records as a naturalized German.<sup>59</sup>

For another thing, there were now many women in the offices. At the London office and its Leicester, Belfast and Manchester satellites, 43 percent of the employees (26 of the 61) were female in 1918;<sup>60</sup> this proportion went up to 52 percent (27 of 52) in the 1920s (see Table 1).

---

<sup>59</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", abstract from letter from Mr. Portlock, [London office] to R.Y. Eaton, 1939-09-08; letter from R.Y. Eaton, Georgian Bay, Ontario, to [J.J.] Vaughan, 1939-07-17; letter from I.W. Ford to R.S. McCordic, Winnipeg store, 1939-09-14.

<sup>60</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Employees, 1894-1921), document "London office salary list from December 1918," shows that for all the offices under the London office jurisdiction, including London, Leicester, Belfast, and Manchester, there were 61 employees in total, of which 26 were women.

TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF FEMALE AND MALE STAFF MEMBERS IN LONDON BUYING  
OFFICE, CA. 192\_

<u>Section</u>	<u>Number of females</u>	<u>Number of males</u>
buyers	0	5
shipping department	1	3
general office	0	1
financial department	3	1
files	0	2
typing room	7	0
comptists	3	0
filing	0	1
telephone	1	0
post	0	1
commissionaire	0	1
packers	0	2
Leicester office	1	2
Belfast	1	2
Manchester	9	13
Yarn department	1	1
<b>TOTAL: 62</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>35</b>

SOURCE: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Employees, 1894-1921), document "London office salary list," c. 192\_.

However, the presence of women did not alter the fact that, just as in McManon's time, male Eatonians had most of the responsibility for buying. In the London bureau and its satellites, for instance, all five buyers listed in 1924 were male.<sup>61</sup> This was still the case fifteen years later when only one woman, London office cashier Miss C.H. Berkeley, was entered in the company management list alongside the men holding head positions in the European offices.<sup>62</sup>

The same point can be made about the travelling done in Europe by Canadian-based Eaton's buyers in this period: there were more women involved than earlier, but men still did most of it. Between 1927 and 1940, some 151 different buyers from Toronto and Hamilton made European trips. Twenty-nine of them, about a fifth (19 per cent), were women (see Table 2).

---

<sup>61</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S185 (Buying Offices - London Buying Office Records), Box 1, File "Employees, 1894-1921), Document "London office salary list", c. 1924.

<sup>62</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939," list for Toronto of 1939-05.

TABLE 2  
 TORONTO- AND HAMILTON-BASED WOMEN AND MEN ON EUROPEAN  
 BUYING TRIPS, 1927-40<sup>a</sup>

<i>(i) Names of women buyers and numbers of trips</i>		
Name	Year(s) of trip(s) <sup>b</sup> – number of trips each year	Total number of trips
- Abercrombie, Miss Ethel	1930-1,	1
- Black, Miss L.	1939-1,	1
- Brooks, Miss E.	1937-3, 1938-1, 1939-2,	6
- Brown, Miss G.	1927-1,	1
- Campbell, Miss L.	1927-1, 1928-1,	2
- Campbell, Mrs. (of Hamilton) (Mrs. L.R.)	1935-1, 1936-1, 1937-1, 1938-1, 1939-1,	5
- Colwill, Miss M.B.	1929-1,	1
- Gilbert, Mrs. A.	1937-1,	1
- Greenlee, Miss N.	1927-1, 1928-2, 1929-2, 1931-1, 1932-1, 1933-1,	8
- Hammond, Mrs. N.	1929-1,	1
- Heatrick, Miss A.	1928-1, 1932-1,	2
- Henry, Miss	1929-1	1
- Hourigan, Mrs.	1929-1, 1930-1, 1932-1, 1938-1, 1939-1, 1940-1,	6
- Kane, Miss L.	1928-2, 1929-1,	3

TABLE 2—continued

Name	Year(s) of trip(s) <sup>b</sup> -- number of trips each year	Total number of trips
- Kent, Miss E.	1933-1, 1934-1, 1935-1, 1936-1, 1937-1, 1938-1, 1939-1,	7
- Lefebvre, Mrs. L.G.	1927-1, 1929-2,	3
- McDonald, Miss (Miss E.M.)	1928-1, 1929-1, 1930-1,	3
- McGregor, Mrs.	1927-1, 1928-1,	2
- McNulty, Miss (Miss M.)	1928-1, 1930-1, 1931-1, 1932-1,	4
- Nadeau, Mrs. P.	1935-2, 1936-2,	4
- Rowntree, Miss.	1927-1, 1928-2,	3
- Simmons, Miss Jean	1933-1, 1934-2,	3
- Thompson, Miss (Miss N., Norah, Miss M. )	1927-1, 1928-2, 1929-2, 1930-1,	6
- Todd, Miss O.	1928-2,	2
- Torr, Miss E.	1928-1, 1929-1,	2
- Ward, Miss	1928-1, 1929-1,	2
- Weaver, Miss I.	1928-2, 1929-3, 1931-2, 1932-2, 1933-2, 1934-2, 1935-2, 1936-2, 1937-2, 1938-2, 1939-2,	23
- Williams, Miss Mary B.	1927-1, 1928-2, 1929-1, 1930-1,	5
- Wilson, Mrs. E.	1935-1, 1936-1, 1937-1,	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRIPS, WOMEN		111

TABLE 2--continued*(ii) Names of men listed (parentheses indicate approximate spelling)*

1) W.C. Alexander	42) John Greer	83) E.O. Pethick
2) D.M. Allan	43) J.A. Haines	84) L.E. Porter
3) W.G. Allen	44) A.E. Hardy	85) W. Potts
4) G.H. Armstrong	45) Ford Harvey	86) C.F. Prudhomme
5) W.H. Anderson	46) W.H. Hemphill	87) I.[or T.] Pryce
6) E. Ashby	47) R.J. Henderson	88) Charles Quarrington
7) A.E. Apted	48) W.J. Herod	89) [M. Ritaine]
8) C.S. Ballard	49) R. Hogarth	90) [I. or T.] S. Robinson
9) J.W. Barber	50) Mr. House	91) George M. Roberts [McRoberts?]
10) J. L. Bennett	51) H.E.D. Irvine	92) J.H. Rogers
11) J.B. Biddle	52) Jackson	93) R.H. Rooney
12) P.E. Bishop	53) A.C. Jamieson	94) J.L. Savage
13) W.J. Blois	54) E.E. Jones	95) A.J. Shirley
14) A.E. Boothe	55) H.E. Johnston	96) F.A. Simpson
15) H. Bracken	56) Louis Keene	97) N.B. Sinclair
16) N.W. Bradley	57) W.J. Kernohan	98) F.U. Slater
17) J. Browne	58) H.H. Kirk	99) C.D. Smart
18) A.R.L. Carroll	59) J.E. [K]nott	100) E.G. Smart
19) René Cera	60) H.J. Lamont	101) Smith
20) R.H. Clendining	61) H. Leaney	102) F.L. Snow
21) H.A. Collins	62) Charles Leishman	103) H.D. Somerville
22) J. Cromi[s]	63) S. Leith	104) J.G. Stanley
23) Cutts	64) F. W. L[orie]	105) C.H. Stevenson
24) Mr. Dawes	65) L. O. Lundihn	106) L.B. Stiles
25) J.S. Doupe	66) J. McKee	107) W.J. Strongitharm
26) V.H. Dennis	67) J. McKinnon	108) Stuart
27) G.A. Derrington	68) M.A. McLachlin	109) T.D. Switzer
28) F.W. Doran	69) T.F. McMorrان	110) J.W. Tafts
29) T.P. Douglas	70) McPherson	111) E.J. Taylor
30) W.J. [Du]ggett	71) A.W. Mason	112) R.D. Thomas
31) R. Durham	72) N.C. Maynard	113) G.H. Thompson
32) F.W. Eaton	73) W. Millar	114) C.W. [Treleasen]
33) J.W. Eaton	74) Mr. Milner	115) R.F. Unsworth
34) Thos. Fairley	75) J.R. Moore	116) O.D. Vaughan
35) M.R. Friend	76) J. Mo[ssop]	117) Mr. Watson
36) J. Frith	77) Joseph Nash of Hamilton	118) A.J. Watson
37) J. Foster	78) H. Nixon	119) H.I. White
38) W.A. Garrett	79) H. O'Reilly	120) J.D. Whinton
39) J.A. Goodearle	80) W.G. Pace	121) M.B. Williams
40) C.L. Gray	81) C.D. Palmer	122) D.M. Wood
41) J.D. Green	82) J. Parke	



---

TABLE 2--continued

---

*(iii) Employees for whom gender is unclear from document handwriting*

---

1) S.E. Heatrick	2) E. [or E.H.] Hourigan
------------------	--------------------------

---

*(iv) Summary statistics*

---

- number of employees listed: 153
  - number of employees for whom gender is clearly indicated in document: 151
  - number of men listed: 122 (81 percent of those for whom gender is clearly indicated)
  - number of women listed: 29 (19 percent of those for whom gender is clearly indicated)
  - number of married women listed (identified as "Mrs.")<sup>c</sup>: 8
  - number of trips made by married women: 25
  - number of trips recorded: 677
  - number of trips made by women: 111
- 

SOURCE: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S87 (Sales and Expense Office - Sales Journals and Miscellaneous Sales and Expense Records) File "European Buying Trips, Expense Records 1928-46" (manuscript).

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup> General notes:

- I compiled these statistics myself from this record; I may have made errors of interpretation due to the fact that the record is composed in cramped handwriting.
- The opening date of the information available in the record 1927, not 1928 as the file title indicates.
- This information probably pertains to Toronto employees only (one Hamilton-based woman is listed; no listings mention Winnipeg or other Eaton's centres).
- About twenty names (for 1928-29) are partially unreadable and have been omitted from the statistics

<sup>b</sup> Year of trip listed here is the year of departure (some returned the following calendar year).

<sup>c</sup> Regarding the figures on married women: given that women are consistently identified in Eaton's records by Miss or Mrs. and as many women are thus identified in this record, I assumed that this is the case for all women in this document. One exception is E. Hourigan. There is a Mrs. Hourigan identified in the records and the E. Hourigan listed in this table under the section on unclear gender may be the same person, or a man.

---

Of the total of 671 buying trips listed in the long expense record providing this information, female employees took 111 (one sixth, or sixteen percent) of them. An even smaller proportion of the travelers were married women. Eight buyers (five percent) were identified as "Mrs.;" they took twenty-five trips (four percent) in total. Moreover, whereas the male buyers took on average of 4.7 trips in this period, women took 3.8 (married women took 3.1 trips).

Another way that women associated with Eaton's continued to have a different kind of access to Europe was as tourists. The most famous example was Lady Eaton, wife of Sir John Eaton and eventually a Director of the company. She took numerous, well-publicized trips to Europe, eventually conveying her memories in the autobiography *Memory's Wall*.<sup>63</sup> There was also at least one instance of a woman accompanying her male-buyer relative to Europe: in the 1930s, company toy buyers from Montreal, Winnipeg and Toronto, all men, visited the sights of Germany in the company of the sister of one of them. They took carefree tourist snapshots.<sup>64</sup> The book and pictures served as reminders that as in the earlier period, European trips continued to be construed within the company as opportunities for pleasure, especially if women were present.

### Gender and modernity during and after World War II

The records having to do with Europe remaining in the Eaton's archives for the 1940s and later are richer and more plentiful than those for the earlier periods. They reveal the persistence of an old arrangement: that of male Eatonians having more access to Europe

---

<sup>63</sup>Rod McQueen, *The Eatons: The Rise and Fall of Canada's Royal Family* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), pp. 127-129.

<sup>64</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0- 1382, "Employees - Department Groups - Toys". In the file are snapshots from the Toronto toy buyer, F. Slater, which are hand-annotated in unclear handwriting but which seem to indicate that a woman in the photos was his sister.

and more power there, with females occupying a specific but small place. This was true even in the chaotic years following the Second World War, when Europe's economy and productive capacity were in a shambles and the company's own foreign buying offices in the continent were shakily reestablishing themselves. Women continued to be employed by Eaton's in Europe, in the offices as well as in special new positions like fashion reporter. The war thus heightened Europe's "in-between" reputation within Eaton's: foreign, sometimes even alien, but nonetheless safe enough for Canadian-born female employees.

Also, the records on Europe show *themselves* to be a site where the meaning and authority of the two genders was constructed. This was especially evident where the records touch on questions of visual style. After the war, Eatonians came to question the European capacity to design and produce superior merchandise. Senior male buyers were seen -- and presented themselves in the records they produced -- as the Eatonians most able to manage in these new conditions, because they knew how to spot quality merchandise regardless of chaotic surroundings. At the same time, there were one or two female Eatonians creating bright, informal new kinds of company reports, intended to convey their uniquely "feminine" appreciation of European style. These latter documents were read and circulated by the women's colleagues back in Canada. Europe had previously harboured women associated with Eaton's and afforded them opportunities for self-expression; more of them than before now entered the official company discourse. A liminal or "'in-between' space in which cultural change may occur,"<sup>65</sup> Europe provided the opportunity for the culture of Eaton's itself to change, with more accommodation than before for women's voices.

### *World War II*

The pillars on which Eaton's European buying rested -- a neat map dividing the continent into foreign office territories; an orderly routine of Canadian-based buyers taking trips there; and, above all, a treasure-trove of European merchandise -- these were severely shaken during the Second World War. Once again, as had happened during the 1914-18

---

<sup>65</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts*, p. 130.

conflict, the company stopped buying goods from enemy countries: Germany and Italy in Europe, and, as already noted in the previous chapter, Japan. This led to two problems at home in Canada. First, the Eaton's directors had to decide what to do with the merchandise foreign buyers had purchased in these countries before the outbreak of hostilities. As of August, 1940, Eaton's stocked dozens of lines of goods from Italy and Germany, ranging from gloves to radios.<sup>66</sup>

The directors decided that the company would sell the goods, given that "since the merchandise had been bought and paid for before the outbreak of War, the only result of destroying it now would be to cause financial loss to the Company and would not affect Germany in any way."<sup>67</sup>

Secondly, with German and Italian goods suddenly unavailable at their source, Eaton's had to seek alternatives. This meant, in some cases, finding German and Italian goods in other countries. For instance, after Czechoslovakian gloves and German musical instruments were found to be available wholesale in Canada, Eaton's bought and listed them in the Fall 1940 catalogue.<sup>68</sup> (However, by 1943, the German mouth organ was once again banned from the pages of the catalogue.<sup>69</sup>) Early in the war, at least one Eaton's employee "wished to go out and buy up whatever he could find in the market of good German

---

<sup>66</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," document "Merchandise Marked with Country of Origin," [1940-08-01].

<sup>67</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," memo from I.W. Ford to various 1940-11-12. This memo refers to a discussion held during a Directors' meeting on that day.

<sup>68</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," memo from I.W. Ford, Executive Office, to J.J. Vaughan, 1940-03-15.

<sup>69</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," memo from I.W. Ford to A.N. Sands of Mail Order Office of 1943-05-04.

cameras"<sup>70</sup> -- probably because of bargain prices on unpopular goods. But more often, the solution at Eaton's was to find replacement merchandise made in allied regions, including the United States and the British Empire.<sup>71</sup> In 1941, purchases from the European buying offices in friendly countries included men's clothing, thread, tea and coffee and knitted underwear for the Eaton's factories, miscellaneous goods including chinaware, cutlery, clocks, dress goods, draperies and rugs for the company stores, and, for mail order, jewelry, dress goods, linens, tires and bicycles.<sup>72</sup>

By this point all purchasing was done through the European buying offices because the company's Canadian-based buyers had stopped travelling to the continent. Toronto expense records listing European buying trips have no entries at all for the years 1941 to 1945 inclusive.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, there were fewer people in the European offices to do the work. For one thing, a number of male personnel left to serve in the military (see Table 3).

---

<sup>70</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries" memo from I.W. Ford, Executive Office, to J.J. Vaughan, 1940-03-15.

<sup>71</sup>Buying from Britain and its Empire was the June 1940 recommendation of company executive W. Park. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 335, "Purchase of Merchandise from Alien Countries," Notice from W. Park Merchandise Office to department heads, 1940-09-06.

<sup>72</sup>The factories also bought some unidentified goods for "Eaton Knitting Spinning." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", undated document entitled "Purchases through buying office," for period ending 1941-07-03.

<sup>73</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S87 (Sales and Expense Office - Sales Journals and Miscellaneous Sales and Expense Records) file "European Buying Trips, Expense Records, 1928-46."

TABLE 3  
LONDON, MANCHESTER AND PARIS BUYING OFFICE EMPLOYEES IN THE  
MILITARY DURING WORLD WAR II: DATES OF ENLISTMENT AND  
EMPLOYMENT AFTER THE WAR

<p><u>LONDON OFFICE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Frost, J.S. Returned to work December 1945.</li> <li>▪ Gudgeon, D. Enlisted 1940-08-17. Returned to work 1947-06-25.</li> <li>▪ Hodges, George G., Jr. Clerk. Born 1916. Single. Hired 1924. Returned to work 1946-03.</li> <li>▪ Mason, S. Returned to work (no date).</li> <li>▪ Middleton, Basil. Born 1896. Father Sir John Middleton. Single. Hired 1926. Enlisted 1940. Returned to work 1947-06-25.</li> <li>▪ Mceachran, I. Returned to work 1945-09.</li> <li>▪ Quinton, Alan E., Jr clerk. Single. Hired 1938. Accepted permanent commission in R.A.F., 1947.</li> <li>▪ Rideal, Leonard C., Buyers assistant. Hired 1926. Married. Returned to work 1945-09.</li> </ul>
<p><u>MANCHESTER OFFICE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Storey, F.D. Hired 1931. Single. Returned to work 1946-03-04.</li> </ul>
<p><u>PARIS OFFICE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gutknecht, Julien., Pa. Goods buyer. Single. Enlisted 1940-02-07. Returned to work 1947-06-25.</li> <li>▪ Van Roomen, Jack W.. Single. Returned to work 1947-06-25.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 184 (Staff Superintendent's Office - Employee Military Service Records), Box 3, File "Toronto (Foreign Offices)."

### *The late 1940s*

Secondly, Eaton's directors took the drastic step of closing several of the offices. The first to close was the Berlin bureau in late 1939. Its incomplete orders were handed over to the London office for processing, its accounts were held in abeyance until the end of the war, its Canadian staff was sent home to avoid internship, and its one naturalized German staff member, Mr. Von Struve, was kept on to look after the remaining details of the closure.<sup>74</sup> The Paris office was shut down when the Germans occupied France.<sup>75</sup> And finally, Eaton's "discontinued" the Leicester office in 1942.<sup>76</sup> Eaton's now listed only London, Manchester and Belfast offices in its records for Europe. This was a sharp drop from the seven (Belfast, Berlin, Leicester, London, Manchester, Paris and Zurich) which had operated in the booming 1920s. The remaining three continued to operate throughout the war.

---

<sup>74</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices," abstract from letter from Mr. Portlock, [London office] to R.Y. Eaton, 1939-09-08; letter from R.Y. Eaton, Georgian Bay, Ontario, to [J.J.] Vaughan, 1939-07-17; letter from I.W. Ford to R.S. McCordic, Winnipeg store, 1939-09-14.

<sup>75</sup>Only the London, Manchester, Belfast, and Leicester offices are listed in this year's management list. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 16 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1941" - Toronto list for 1941.

<sup>76</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 17 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1942," list of 1942-04 for Toronto.

### *European buying offices*

In the five years following the war, the Eaton's European operations were returned to pre-war state. First, the Paris and Leicester offices were re-opened.<sup>77</sup> Second, most of the European office staff on military leave returned. These included, starting in 1945, eight from the London office, one Manchester employee in 1946, and two Paris office men in 1947.<sup>78</sup> Third, European-based staff were also re-integrated into the greater Eaton's family, sometimes at considerable expense. For example, the personnel office in Toronto went to great lengths to provide Miss Hicks of the Manchester buying office with the Quarter Century watch she had earned during the war, when conflicts and high taxes on jewelry entering Britain had made sending it impossible.<sup>79</sup> And top foreign office staff members Messrs. P. Portlock, head of all the offices, and C. Rideal of the London Office, visited Canada in high style in 1949.<sup>80</sup> It appears that these efforts to include Europe in

---

<sup>77</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 2, File 20 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1945."

<sup>78</sup>The ninth London office employee who had been on leave accepted an army commission. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 184 (Staff Superintendent's Office - Employee Military Service Records), Box 3, File "Toronto (Foreign Offices)."

<sup>79</sup>In 1948, the personnel office asked Miss Doreen Day, who was travelling from her Toronto office, to bring the watch to London; when her supervisor objected to this, the personnel office asked a General Merchandise Office man to do so. He presented Hicks with the watch in January, 1949. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 170 (Company Personnel Office - General Files), Box 1, File 17.01/3: "Q.C. [Quarter Century] & Long Service - Buying Offices, Foreign," Letter to file by J.G. [Jean Godfrey], [Staff Superintendent's Office, Toronto], 1946-01-31; letter from M.S., no full name, [Staff Superintendent's Office], to Miss Godfrey, [Jean Godfrey], [Staff Superintendent's Office, Toronto], 1948-06-17; handwritten note by J.G.; letter from N.B. Smith, c/o Manchester Office, to Ivor Lewis, Executive Office, Toronto, 1949-01-14.

<sup>80</sup>They stayed at top hotels including the Empress in Victoria, the Ritz Carleton in Montreal, and the Royal York in Toronto. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S19 (Secretarial



Eaton's fold worked. When the Toronto-based man in charge of the company's Christmas Parade sent a film of the 1950 Santa Claus Parade to the Paris Office, Mr. H.E.R. King from the latter bureau observed, "this sort of thing helps to bring us closer together."<sup>81</sup>

Foreign offices were re-assigned their pre-war buying responsibilities. At first, in 1945, this included filling orders sent by mail from Canada, by Toronto's Housefurnishings Merchandise Office for instance.<sup>82</sup> By 1946, however, Canadian-based company buyers started returning to Europe,<sup>83</sup> and the European offices again turned to "prepar[ing] the ground for a visiting buyer" by making advance visits to manufacturers on his behalf.<sup>84</sup> More followed in the next few years, and their pre-eminent place within the buying system was revived; like in the old days, they were supported and assisted by their colleagues in the foreign buying offices.

---

Office - Accounting Section - C.M. Beattie's Files), Box 3, File B-4, "Buying Offices", expense sheets of 1949 for P. Portlock and C. Rideal.

<sup>81</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, "Paris Buying Office," letter from H.E.R. King, Paris Buying Office, to J.A. Brockie, Merchandise Display, 1951-01-02.

<sup>82</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from W.C. Weber, Department 270 (Furniture), to A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-05-29.

<sup>83</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S87 (Sales and Expense Office - Sales Journals and Miscellaneous Sales and Expense Records) File "European Buying Trips, Expense Records, 1928-46". The men travelling to Europe from Eaton's Toronto were N.B. Sinclair, W.G. Allen, G.H. Thompson, D.M. Allan, L. Keene, all of whom had gone over before the war, plus one man not listed for previous years, B.E. Mercer.

<sup>84</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from S. Grant, London Office, to P. Portlock, London office, 1947-05-08.

*Visiting buyers: The example of Housefurnishings Merchandise Office travellers*

To obtain information on how Eaton's visiting buyers experienced, displayed and maintained their preeminence at Eaton's, it is worth consulting the records of the Toronto-based Housefurnishings Merchandise Office. For one thing, the office was very important; it oversaw the buying of key merchandise -- furniture, appliances, gift ware, china, and other household goods -- for key stores including Toronto's College Street outlet. This was especially significant now that Canadian servicemen were returning home, starting new families, moving to new houses in the suburbs, and buying quantities of such merchandise.<sup>85</sup> For another thing, several long-serving buyers, including C.L. Gray, R.S. Henderson, and George M. Roberts, reported to this office; these men travelled to Europe both before and after the war and thus were in a position to experience and comment on changes first-hand.<sup>86</sup> And finally, this Office's files merit our attention because they were very detailed and well-maintained, and are thus a convenient and rich source.

The records reveal that after the war, the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office was slow to resume the old habit of sending buyers twice a year to Europe. The first few to go were from the Electrical Department; they left in Spring, 1947.<sup>87</sup> In May of that year, a Furniture Department man worried that because his department's buyers had still not gone to Europe since the war, "our company will be losing it's [sic] position in this market." He noted that Eaton company rival Simpson's had been purchasing furniture in Europe for over a year, and he recommended that a trip be taken during the upcoming fall to explore

---

<sup>85</sup> Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60" *Canadian Historical Review* 72, 4 (1991): passim; on consumption of furniture and other merchandise, see especially p. 492.

<sup>86</sup> These three buyers were active after the war and are also listed as travelling to Europe before it (see Table 2).

<sup>87</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, of 1947-12-31.

the post-war furniture markets.<sup>88</sup> This suggestion was followed and other Housefurnishings buyers followed suit the next spring. However, even in the late 1940s, many within this office wavered on the merits of trips to Europe. One buyer suggested that for spring, 1948, the office post orders to the offices in Europe instead;<sup>89</sup> a survey in mid-1948 revealed only one of the office's seven merchandise departments favourable to the idea of even a short fall trip,<sup>90</sup> and although a number of the departments sent over buyers the following spring, relatively few did so in the fall of 1949.

Given the long-standing importance of European merchandise at Eaton's, this foot-dragging required an explanation. One simple reason was obstacles to obtaining goods. The new balance of power on the continent caused buyers to question, in 1946, whether they could enter countries like Finland, now "under Russian influence;"<sup>91</sup> they also learned that in both Finland and Poland, "furniture production [was] required for the rehabilitation of their own people."<sup>92</sup> There were other restrictions on European exportations as well. In 1947, for instance, mirror-glass and oil paintings were ruled "OK" but crystal lamp

---

<sup>88</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from W.C. Weber, Department 270 (Furniture), to A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-05-29.

<sup>89</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office, 1947-10-29.

<sup>90</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European", letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office, 1948-05-19.

<sup>91</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to P. Portlock, staying in Montreal, 1946-11-09.

<sup>92</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from S. Grant, London, to P. Portlock, staying in Toronto, 1946-12-03.

fixtures and unframed picture prints were not.<sup>93</sup> Stationery, cameras, electrical appliances and fixtures, furniture, soap, perfume and jewelry were all “Items on Prohibited List Which May Alter Plans For European Trips.”<sup>94</sup> Some merchandise actually bought by Eaton’s in 1947 was not allowed to be sent to Canada when a new embargo prohibited European furniture exports.<sup>95</sup> The following year, all furniture (except antiques) as well as paint, wallpaper, wax, and polish were still restricted.<sup>96</sup>

Even when European goods were available, moreover, Eatonians were disenchanted with the way they were being traded. They gave high prices and poor choice of merchandise as reasons not to send buyers over.<sup>97</sup> And those who did go over were dismayed with the scarcity of factory supplies and high prices of goods, not to mention the food shortages and signs of devastation.<sup>98</sup> At the end of 1946, for instance, an employee complained

---

<sup>93</sup>Many references are made to prohibited housefurnishings goods in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European.” The citation given is from this file, handwritten note, no author or date, c. 1947-12-30.

<sup>94</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” document dated 1947-11-22.

<sup>95</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from W.C. Weber, Department 270, to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-12-03.

<sup>96</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling – Overseas (Except Requisitions),” letter from G.W. Barber to W. Park, 1948-10-13.

<sup>97</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European”, letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office.

<sup>98</sup>There are numerous such references in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European.”

about basic distribution problems arising in Finland and Poland, and that London buying office orders sent to these countries as well as to Czechoslavia and Sweden were being turned down.<sup>99</sup> Others criticized producers in Britain and France, traditionally such important sources of company merchandise. They found curtain and drapery prices in these countries very high;<sup>100</sup> they judged France as “very disappointing” because of its poor-quality merchandise and its tardy deliveries; and they castigated Manchester in similar terms. They even found London “difficult.”<sup>101</sup>

Not only did Housefurnishings Office buyers find European goods hard to come by, but they were newly critical of the merchandise and its makers. They were especially severe about outdatedness. British products, once the company standard-bearer as we have seen, were now singled out as inferior. They labelled British wallpaper “outdated, poorly styled” and “all wrong for this market,”<sup>102</sup> for instance, and said that Manchester drapery

---

<sup>99</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from S. Grant, London, to P. Portlock, staying in Toronto, 1946-12-03.

<sup>100</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas” (Except Requisitions), letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1948-10-13, and File “Travelling - European,” letter from G.M. Roberts, Drapery Department, to J.M. Fitzgerald, General Merchandise Office, 1949-01-10.

<sup>101</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from G.M. Roberts, Drapery Department to J.M. Fitzgerald, General Merchandise Office, 1949-01-10.

<sup>102</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” report on meeting of 1949-09-21.

suppliers “seem quite unaware that our market has changed.”<sup>103</sup> In the same vein, despite their initial optimism in 1947 over European electrical appliances,<sup>104</sup> the following year the person responsible for vacuum cleaners grumbled,<sup>105</sup>

All European manufacturers visited indicated a surprising degree of self satisfaction with their existing products, none of which had been improved either mechanically or in design since the War. Further, none of the manufacturers had developed plans for alterations and improvements... In fact, at least one manufacturer persisted in his view that the oldfashionedness of his models might be an advantage in that all customers would not like to buy such equipment styled in the modern manner.

The modern manner: Eatonians now felt that some Europeans did not have it and, worse, did not want it.

In short, post-war conditions led key Eaton’s buyers to topple Europe off its pedestal. Its goods were hard if not impossible to come by, and those available were often over-priced, lacking in variety, or out-of-date. Eatonians, or at least those in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, no longer saw Europe as a dependable source of the best merchandise or, for that matter, of the best retail-business practices. What Europe meant to them had changed: it no longer represented a stable source of modernity. Significantly, they now gave that distinction to the United States. When it came to draperies, for instance, the Office decided to buy American first, and then to “fill in” any gaps with European

---

<sup>103</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from G.M. Roberts, Drapery Department, to J.M. Fitzgerald, General Merchandise Office, 1949-01-10.

<sup>104</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling – European,” letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, of 1947-12-31.

<sup>105</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling – European,” document entitled “European Trip: Electric Vacuum Cleaners”, 1948-11, p. 1.

goods.<sup>106</sup> Some of the Office's enthusiasm for the U.S.A. was due to temporary post-war circumstances: in some lines it had better prices<sup>107</sup> or better production facilities. However, Housefurnishings Office buyers also identified superior styling as a factor; for example, one buyer praised "the higher performance and modern design" of American vacuum cleaners."<sup>108</sup> American appliance design was indeed rapidly advancing in this period as industry leaders attempted to have consumers pay more attention to the appearance of this line of merchandise.<sup>109</sup>

This being said, buyers associated with the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office did feel that some parts of Europe were worth longer visits. Significantly, they were countries previously overshadowed by England and France but now seen by the buyers as possessing new potential. They said that Italy, for one, not only had reasonably-priced drapery fabric

---

<sup>106</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1948-01-15. See also the letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office.

<sup>107</sup>For instance, in 1948 a curtain buyer observed that "British prices stiffening; on the other hand there is a tendency for U.S.A. prices to soften." At a meeting of the Housefurnishings Department, it was reported that "American prices have been very attractive to this department." Sources: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1948-10-13; and report on meeting of 1949-09-21.

<sup>108</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European" document entitled "European Trip: Electric Vacuum Cleaners", 1948-11, p.1.

<sup>109</sup>Shelley Nickles, "Detroit Envy: Style Obsolescence in the Household Appliance Industry," Research Seminar Paper #41, Center for the History of Business, Technology, and Society, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, Feb. 13, 1997.

but also “very fine” lamp bases and ceramics.<sup>110</sup> And they identified the Nordic countries as sources of modern design. After Swedish furniture sold well on its arrival in the Toronto furniture department in mid-1946, buyer W.C. Weber asked the company’s London office “to investigate thoroughly the furniture markets in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.”<sup>111</sup> London also requested offers from furniture makers in Finland.<sup>112</sup> On the basis of information he received from London, Weber proposed he make an exploratory trip to Europe which would include two days in Finland because “there have been interesting designs created there,” and “plenty of time to make a thorough study of the Swedish market.” Strikingly, Weber admitted that in his opinion, “there may not have been enough time left for France.”<sup>113</sup> He and his colleagues were not only reconstructing their understanding of Europe, they were also remapping their visits there.

---

<sup>110</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices – Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling – European,” letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office, 1948-05-19, and letter from G.M. Roberts, Department 267, (Draperies), to J.M. Fitzgerald, General Merchandise Office, 1949-01-10.

<sup>111</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from W.C. Weber, Department 270 (Furniture), to A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-05-29.

<sup>112</sup>The office also requested offers in Poland and Czechoslovakia. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling – European,” report entitled “Furniture Continental Summary Spring, 1947,” by London [office?], 1947-05-08.

<sup>113</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” W.C. Weber, writing from the London Office, to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-08-27.



The Housefurnishings buyers spent a lot of money; on one trip in 1948, the Drapery buyer alone had a budget of \$160 000.<sup>114</sup> The popularity of their purchases determined the profitability of the departments they headed. Thus on this concrete level their ability to locate and name the best merchandise, and in particular, to master the new look of “modern,” was very important for Eaton's, and the source of their authority.

While they did not say so explicitly, the buyers implied that this was truer than ever after the Second World War because now, Europe's modernity could no longer be taken for granted, as it had been in Timothy Eaton's time, when Britain's business savvy went without saying, or in the 1920s, when French design was automatically cutting edge. Now, much of Europe's modernity had moved or become muted; now, it was up to the buyers to find it. Post-war Europe was in this way understood within Eaton's like Japan had been in earlier times: disrupted, somewhat obscure, and in need of the guidance of experienced buyers who could find or even make meaning out of the merchandise. The buyers clearly did not shy away from exercising this power, not only re-drawing their travel plans to reflect their remapping of modern Europe, but also using the medium of company records to record their views and actions. Eaton's buyers freely judged and discerned, decided what was valuable --tasteful, good-quality, worth buying, worth visiting – and explained to those back home why this was so.

Buyers' reports and letters from Europe were often talkative, introspective, intimate, and inconclusive, a cross between personal diary and phone call. Witness W.C. Weber's enthusing about Paris: “as this is our first visit here, you can well imagine that we are most impressed wherever we go in this city, which is undoubtedly the finest we have visited.”<sup>115</sup> Similarly, George M. Roberts described a plane trip abroad: “I never saw such a sight as

---

<sup>114</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1948-01-15.

<sup>115</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from W.C. Weber in Paris to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-10-07.

going over the alps.... It was eerie looking down on such monsters, white snow and black rock awesome and grand....”<sup>116</sup> Travel, with its enforced idleness and separation from the Eaton’s framework, left the buyers time to think without acting, to observe without buying, and, it seems, to emote without being embarrassed. Far from home, they were frank about their fondness for colleagues. Roberts, for instance, addressed his letter to G.W. Barber, “Dear Gerald,” and noted cosily, “I should have written to you from the boat and just did not do so! I hope it will find you well....” It concluded with best wishes for the Barber family.<sup>117</sup> In turn, home-bound colleagues also took the opportunity to unbend a bit when writing to buyers abroad. Barber sent a chatty letter to another buyer which relayed wishes for good weather and general news about sales before admitting, “I have not a great deal to say at this writing.”<sup>118</sup> These were relaxed, relatively expressive company documents.

From the time of Timothy Eaton on, Eaton's buyers abroad and their correspondents back home had often written with such an informal style and tone. These documents had obviously always been different from other company records like account books. But the European-buying documentation was all the more striking after the war, as records-keeping became increasingly bureaucratic at Eaton's and, as Chapter 1 showed, as

---

<sup>116</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from George [M. Roberts], in Milan, to Gerald W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, [1948]-10-02.

<sup>117</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from George [M. Roberts], in Milan, to Gerald W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, [1948]-10-02.

<sup>118</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - European,” letter from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to B.E. Mercer, c/o London Office, 1948-03-08.

increasing restrictions were being placed on travelling buyers.<sup>119</sup> There were now more records and these were more than impersonal and straightforward declarations of actions taken, decisions made, or data needed or compiled, making them fairly direct representations of corporate interests. Typical was a 1946 Merchandise office directive, requiring that buyers going to Europe fill out new forms:<sup>120</sup>

Applicable only to Overseas Buying, a new 'European Travel Requisition' and a new 'Composite European Travel Sheet' have been developed so as to establish uniformity and facilitate the authorization of merchandise purchases to be made by Eaton buyers for departments other than those under their personal supervision.

Even the buyers' records now *looked* more formal, usually being produced on company letterhead and typewritten. Exercising, in this cramped context, their right not only to identify and describe what was really modern, and to map Europe accordingly, but also to express their feelings and in the language of their choosing, these Eaton's buyers, even more than their predecessors, were using company correspondence as a place to both record and solidify their power and independence. Articulating their subjectivity was a way of subverting Eaton's regulations.

It was, apparently, an exclusively male privilege at this point. None of Toronto's Housefurnishings Merchandise Office buyers on record as going to Europe in the late 1940s were women. Similarly, I found no record of female buyers from any Eaton's

---

<sup>119</sup>This contrast is especially evident in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European."

<sup>120</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European," letter from W. Park, Merchandise Office, to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1946 - 09-12. It appears that these forms were created because of complications arising from fact that buyers crossed departmental boundaries. See letter from A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1947-05-09.

department travelling to Europe at this time. All six of the people from the Toronto and Hamilton offices who went to Europe in 1946 were men.<sup>121</sup> And according to personnel records, in 1948 there was just one female Eatonian who went overseas and she was not a buyer.<sup>122</sup> This is scanty evidence, but it suggests that senior managers at Eaton's did not feel it appropriate to send women buyers to post-war Europe. Just like in Japan after the 1923 earthquake, post-war Europe, with all its disruptions and uncertainties, was seen as a risky place for their women employees to forge new purchasing pathways.

### *Women*

Mrs. Doreen Day, head of the Montreal store's Fashion Bureau, was the lone female European traveller in 1948 (see Illustration 4).<sup>123</sup> Day's job involved hosting fashion shows, meeting with representatives of sectors of the clothing industry, and generally staying abreast of trends in the world of *la mode*. This would probably have been the reason for her regular trips to Europe and other foreign places including Peru and Mexico in addition to Italy, England and France.<sup>124</sup> It is likely that one of her responsibilities was

---

<sup>121</sup>They were: N.B. Sinclair, W.G. Allen, G.H. Thompson, D.M. Allan, L. Keene, and B.E. Mercer. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S87 (Sales and Expense Office - Sales Journals and Miscellaneous Sales and Expense Records) File "European Buying Trips, Expense Records, 1928-46."

<sup>122</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 170 (Company Personnel Office - General Files), Box 1, File 17.01/3: "Q.C. [Quarter Century] & Long Service - Buying Offices, Foreign," letter from M.S., no full name, [Staff Superintendent's Office, according to other correspondence in file], to Miss Godfrey, [Jean Godfrey], [Staff Superintendent's Office, Toronto], 1948-06-17.

<sup>123</sup>Unfortunately, very few records for Eaton's of Montreal are available in the company archives and none of Doreen Day's correspondence appears to have been preserved. Captioned photographs and newspaper clippings stored in the Eaton's graphic records collection, provide some clues to her position, however.

<sup>124</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1663: "Fashion- Quebec - Fashion Bureau - Montreal, 1943-1953;" File

to report on the fashion scene abroad, just as other female colleagues did in New York at this time,<sup>125</sup> and that in this way she, like her counterparts in Eaton's and in American retail houses, would have had some influence on buyers.<sup>126</sup> At the very least, she had, relative to other Eaton's women, considerable independence, authority in style matters, and freedom to see the world. However, she was still closely supervised. When the Personnel Office staff wanted to send the Quarter Century watch to Miss Hicks of the Manchester Buying Office, they asked Day to bring it over: it appears that in identifying her as "the only woman going overseas this year," they had in mind for her to wear the watch as she passed through customs, thus avoiding high customs duties. In the end, however, her supervisor disapproved of the plan and did not allow her to take the watch.<sup>127</sup> Evidently, despite her autonomy, Day was not as free as the senior buyers were to determine the details of her travel plans.

### *The 1950s*

#### *1) The European buying system*

During the 1950s, Europe's economy was stabilizing and strengthening, and Eaton's looked on with interest. Within the company, Paris was recognized once again for being a

---

F 229-308-0 –1664: "Fashion- Quebec - Fashion Bureau – Montreal, 1954-57;" and File F 229-308-0 –1677, "Fashion - Fashion Shows – Quebec – Montreal, 1936-1953."

<sup>125</sup>See Chapter 4 for details.

<sup>126</sup>In *Counter Cultures*, Susan Porter Benson notes that in the U.S.A., this involved the fashion reporters persuading buyers about what was best in the new styles. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 59.

<sup>127</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 170 (Company Personnel Office - General Files), Box 1, File 17.01/3, "Q.C. [Quarter Century] & Long Service - Buying Offices, Foreign", letter from M.S. no full name, [Staff Superintendent's Office] to Miss [Jean] Godfrey, [Staff Superintendent's Office, Toronto], 1948-06-17; handwritten note by Jean Godfrey.

world leader in fashion; this is clear, for instance, by the way the Merchandise Display department in Toronto closely followed Parisian dress, coat and hat trends.<sup>128</sup> And Europe, including Britain and the continent, was hailed anew as a key source of housefurnishings. For instance, in the mid-1950s, about half of the goods in Toronto Chinaware and Glassware departments was imported from Europe, the other half coming from Canada, the U.S.A., and Japan (see Table 4).

W.C. Weber recommended that on the basis of these impressive figures for chinaware and glassware, the buyers responsible for these goods make another trip to Europe in Spring, 1956.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, the Toronto Drapery department argued in favour of a European trip because over half of the company's drapery purchases in Europe were made on behalf of the Toronto store. Indeed, the department had a higher proportion of European stocks than did the big New York retail houses.<sup>130</sup> Housefurnishings departments outside of Toronto were also interested in what 1950s Europe had to offer and sent buyers there accordingly. For instance, in 1953, Mr. F. Andrews from Montreal went to Europe to buy furniture for the Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver branches of Eaton's.<sup>131</sup> Thus, increasing interest in European goods led more buyers to go to Europe than had done so in the previous few years.

---

<sup>128</sup>For evidence of this, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, "Paris Buying Office."

<sup>129</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices – Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," extract from memorandum of W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, of 1955-11-17.

<sup>130</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1955-05-25.

<sup>131</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),"

TABLE 4  
PURCHASES FOR 1955, TORONTO CHINAWARE AND GLASSWARE

<i>(i) Purchases made for Spring 1955, Toronto Chinaware and Glassware</i>					
<u>Department</u>		<u>percent</u>	<u>Department</u>		<u>percent</u>
Dept. 252	<b>London</b>	<b>40.6</b>	Dept. 352	<b>London</b>	<b>43.5</b>
	<b>Paris</b>	<b>.4</b>		<b>Paris</b>	<b>(no figure)</b>
	<b>Continent</b>	<b>9.2</b>		<b>Continent</b>	<b>3.5</b>
	Canada	25.8		Canada	41.5
	U.S.A	18.4		U.S.A	11.0
	Japan	5.6		Japan	.5
<i>(ii) Expected purchases for Fall 1955, based on orders placed</i>					
<u>Department</u>		<u>percent</u>	<u>Department</u>		<u>percent</u>
Dept. 252	<b>London</b>	<b>46</b>	Dept. 352	<b>London</b>	<b>50</b>
	<b>Paris and</b>			<b>Paris</b>	<b>(no figure)</b>
	<b>Continent</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>Continent</b>	<b>5</b>
	Canada	17		Canada	30
	U.S.A	10		U.S.A	10
	Japan	8		Japan	5

SOURCE: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1955-10-31.

Correspondingly, the Eaton's European offices regained some of their former scope and size. The London office, for one, again covered an enormous territory including parts of

---

document "European Trip - Spring 1953," no date. Author is not indicated, but surrounding documentation indicates the author is Mr. F. Andrews of Montreal.

England as well as Germany, Scandinavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, "Jugoslavia", Greece and Turkey.<sup>132</sup> At this point, there were five foreign offices: London, Paris, Manchester, Belfast and Leicester.

In short, Europe was thriving again and Eaton's was restoring the continent to its central place in its buying system. An abundance of company records created during the 1950s and preserved in the archives permits us a privileged glimpse into the social relations structuring and animating the system. They indicate that on the one hand, male buyers were more subject than before to the opinions and controls of others. There were more women, both as buyers and as fashion experts, who had the opportunity to influence their decisions. Also, there was more company bureaucracy to contain or even constrain their movement. On the other hand, company documentation makes it clear that overall, male buyers continued to direct and dominate the buying operations in Europe, even more perhaps than in the pre-war decades. Indeed, the records themselves continued to be one of the places they maintained and boosted their power.

## *2) The place of women in the system*

There were a few more women than before in positions of responsibility in the European buying offices. Whereas in the 1920s and 1930s there had been no women holding the position of buyer in them, by 1953, as Chapter 1 indicated, one of the eleven such positions in London was held by a woman (Miss A.K. Blackman in the section uniting Books, Candies and similar low-priced lines), as was one of the five in Paris (Mlle. C. Magdelain, assistant buyer in the important department of women's wear, children's wear and furniture). None of the six Manchester buyers were women. Belfast and Leicester did not have buyers. Thus, approximately nine per cent of the rank-and-file European buyers

---

<sup>132</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to Notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.



were female, a figure somewhat smaller than that for Canada where fifteen percent of the departments (six of 41) had women buyers.<sup>133</sup>

Chapter 1 also mentioned that both male and female buyers stationed in the European offices remained subordinate to the Canadian-based Principal Buyers who were, in 1953, all men. The role of those in Europe was limited to preparing the ground for the visitors; the extent of their autonomy was revealed by one London-based buyer who made himself helpful by suggesting he purchase goods himself, but within price and style guidelines set by a Montreal-based buyer.<sup>134</sup>

Another advisory position in Europe, new after the war, was that of fashion expert. It was known to be reserved for a female: in 1949, Jack Brockie, head of the Merchandise Display Office in Toronto, asked his colleague Harold King in Paris, "By the way, who is the new girl in the Paris Office who is going to cover the fashion news? No one seems to know her name here, although they know she is in existence. Perhaps this is a confidential

---

<sup>133</sup>None of the seven departments in the Winnipeg buying office of the General Merchandise Office had women buyers; five of 20 in Montreal did have women and one of 14 in Toronto. Whether any of these women went to Europe is not indicated in the source. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953," list attached to Notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.

<sup>134</sup>A suggestion to select items within price and style guidelines set by the Canadians was made by a London Office buyer to a Montreal-based one on the latter's European trip in 1953. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," document "European Trip - Spring, 1953," no date, page 10. Author is not indicated, but surrounding documentation indicates the author is Mr. F. Andrews of Montreal.

matter as yet, and if so, just put me in my place.”<sup>135</sup> Whether or not this “girl” was ever hired is unclear but a year later, Mrs. Dora Matthews was in Paris observing and reporting on the fashion scene there and in London. She had gained her expertise in Canada where, like fellow fashion maven Doreen Day, she hosted fashion shows in the 1940s and ‘50s.<sup>136</sup> Once in Paris, in addition to reporting she also had the unusual task of helping to make a movie about the fashion scene.<sup>137</sup>

There is a striking contrast between Matthews’s account of the film-making process and Harold King’s. He wrote a letter to “Jack” Brockie which, although friendly, was formal; regarding the film, it noted that it “comprises views of Paris, Mrs. Matthews and myself leaving or arriving at [the clothing houses of] Balmain, Jacques Fath and Dior....At Balmain we went to his Boathouse and the model appears in the middle of the River Seine and comes towards Pierre Balmain, who is awaiting her on his Boathouse...”<sup>138</sup> Matthews’s version is much breezier.<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, “Paris Buying Office” letter from J.A. Brockie, Merchandise Display, to “Harold” [H.E.R. King], Paris Buying Office, 1949-10-28.

<sup>136</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-1679, "Fashion - Models and Show – British Columbia - Vancouver," of show of 1949-03-28 or 1949-03-29. See also File F 229-308-0-1682, "Fashion - Fashion Show – Ontario – Toronto - 1958."

<sup>137</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, “Paris Buying Office,” cable copy by Dora Matthews from Paris of [1950]-08-07, and Report of 1950-08-03 entitled “Paris,” by Dora Matthews.

<sup>138</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, “Paris Buying Office” letter from H.E.R. King, Paris Buying Office, to J.A. Brockie, Merchandise Display, Toronto, 1950-08-10.

<sup>139</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, “Paris Buying Office,” Report of 1950-08-03 entitled “Paris,” by Dora Matthews.

I hope Jack Brockie is pleased with the movies. Every spare moment is occupied with them, not that we have not enjoyed it. One day we went to Pierre Balmain's House-Boat up the Seine. The party consisted of Fred Wicks, Harold King, Pierre Balmain, a model, three movie men and yours truly. We had the poor model scrambling in and out of boats in an evening gown. It seems she will appear to rise from the Seine into Balmain's arms or sketch book. We have done the routine things of going in and out of places and being photographed in showrooms. It has certainly added variety to the trip.....

Matthews's comments on the fashion scene were equally spontaneous. She wrote, for instance, that "the models [at Dior] wore their hair in buns, coronets, etc., all untidy to my eyes, and generally topped by a tiny hat. One...was no more than six inches across, twisted up to a little peak and worn dead centre like a little clown's hat. Oh dear!"<sup>140</sup> Her writing style is similar to that used by the female Fashion Reporters working out of the Eaton's New York Office in these years. Together, these women were developing a new mode of expression in the narrow confines of company correspondence: serious about fashion's details and techniques, but remarkably light-hearted in tone.

While most of Matthews's time appears to have been spent reporting and making the film, she also did some buying in Paris. In this latter role, she enjoyed considerable latitude in making her choices. When she wrote, "I hope you will all like the things I have bought. I have set a new pattern, I have cheerfully changed colors and fabrics on almost everything," she was probably referring to having bought samples in one style but ordering modified versions for the selling floor back in Canada.<sup>141</sup>

Whether buying or reporting, Matthews, like Doreen Day before her, dealt with what she and her colleagues already knew was the latest in fashion's leading centres. Neither of these women indicated that they thought they were *discovering* or *producing* fashion, a claim made by some of their male colleagues in Europe in the post-war decades. Rather,

---

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

the women's work was seen as interpreting and deciphering fashion, and, in advising the male buyers who do not appear to have been bound to accept their suggestions, supporting the production of fashion.

Some women did go over solely as buyers. They were few in number, however, especially in comparison with the pre-World War II decades. Then, as we have seen, women made up about a quarter of the European travellers; after the war, there were only one or two. Even by the end of the 1950s, there were still relatively few women travelling abroad for many Toronto and Montreal lines of goods including clothing and housefurnishings. For the Spring trips of 1958 and 1959, none of the 64 names were indicated to be women through the courtesy titles of "Miss" or "Mrs.," as was the company custom, although one, "North," was probably Miss North buying for the Toronto Sportswear department. Among the names proposed for the upcoming Fall, 1959 overseas trip, the General Merchandise Office recommended only one women, Miss North, and 18 men, while the Divisional suggestion was for 7 men and one woman, Miss Phyllis Stagg.<sup>142</sup>

One woman buyer who went to Europe in 1950 was Miss Heatrick (see Illustration 5). That year, she decided to take holidays in Great Britain, France, Switzerland, and Italy. A Quarter-Century employee who had been making buying trips to Europe since the 1920s, Heatrick had several weeks of holidays to use up before her retirement later in the year. She accepted a suggestion on the part of the company that she move up the planned departure date and take extra time there buying on its behalf fine lamps and lamp bases (including antiques to be used for this function).

As visiting buyer, Heatrick had freedom and prestige. She had decided on her own to spend extra time making company purchases and at times J.E. Lucas, the Principal Buyer for lamps who accompanied her on part of the trip, did not have "any knowledge of her

---

<sup>142</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," undated and untitled document listing buyers for 1958-59.

movements.”<sup>143</sup> Her expertise was acknowledged; one colleague noted that “she could contribute a good deal of value to our buyers in [the lamp] market, having a very broad experience in it,”<sup>144</sup> and even Principal Buyer Lucas noted he “made full use of Miss Heatrick’s suggestions and experience,” especially on antiques, since “this type of buying was new to us and...we acknowledge learning much about this phase of merchandising.”<sup>145</sup>

However, Heatrick was watched and judged to an extent unheard of for her male colleagues of the era. This became evident when, returned from her trip, she claimed that since she had spent more time than planned on business, a total of 44 of the 75 days away, she should be reimbursed on expenses accordingly and receive extra holiday time.<sup>146</sup> The company, which at first offered her less money in keeping with an earlier arrangement, eventually agreed,<sup>147</sup> but not before a flurry of letters circulated between the Expense

---

<sup>143</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” letter from B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office, 1950-05-25.

<sup>144</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” letter from G.W. Barber, Department 277, Toronto, to J.E. Lucas, Department 277, Montreal, 1950-01-18.

<sup>145</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” letter from J.E. Lucas, Department 277, Montreal, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1950-05-31.

<sup>146</sup>This narrative is gleaned from various documents in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions).”

<sup>147</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” letter from B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to J.E. Hodgson, Expense Office, 1950-07-06.

Office, the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, the Merchandise Office, and the Toronto and Montreal departments responsible for lamps on the issue. In reviewing her claim, men working out of these offices took the opportunity to make personal, sometimes even patronizing comments about her. One man advised that given Heatrick's long service and imminent retirement, the company "might prefer to take a lenient view of the matter."<sup>148</sup> Lucas in turn commented that "she was thoroughly co-operative and worked conscientiously," even if she had spent "rather a long time" at it. He added, "if comments from the undersigned might make the exchequer more generous, then perhaps, consider an elderly lady-buyer, in the twilight of employment, having to advance an Irish holiday trip to the inclement month of March."<sup>149</sup> This kind of commentary was unusual now at Eaton's where the presiding tone in records was formal and cool; it harkened back to Timothy Eaton's paternalism decades earlier. However, it seems that when it came to "an elderly lady-buyer," it was still acceptable at Eaton's.

Another Canadian-based woman in the documentation on Europe, and one subject to similar scrutiny, was Phyllis Stagg (see Illustration 5). In 1950, Stagg worked in the Toronto Gift Shop and Thrift House departments, where she was in a position to make suggestions on selections to a buyer going overseas. Her advice reveals a keen awareness of her clientele's modest budgets and modern tastes: "Price should be kept in mind. I believe so many houses to-day run between \$18 000 and \$25 000. That medium price lines would be most suitable for us."<sup>150</sup> And, "I feel if we have a selection of merchandise

---

<sup>148</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office, 1950-05-25.

<sup>149</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from J.E. Lucas, Department 277, Montreal, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1950-05, 31.

<sup>150</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas - Requisitions," document, no

which is suitable to the house being built to day from \$15 000 to \$30 000 that it will be very suitable for our clients. Modern pottery, crystal, wooden ware, ... etc., of modern colour and functional.”<sup>151</sup> Like her male colleagues, therefore, Stagg used company missives to communicate her knowledge of the value and look of modern styles.

Nine years later, Stagg was being considered to travel to Europe to buy gift lines. At this point, her abilities were subject to comment by male colleagues like Heatrick’s had been. W.C. Weber recommended she be chosen with the remark,<sup>152</sup>

Miss Stagg has not made a European trip before. On a number of her trips into the New York market she has brought back new ideas which have been incorporated successfully into our operation. She has proven to have excellent taste in the selection of this type of merchandise, and it is expected that she would find new lines which could be purchased in future by the parent departments.

Explicit appraisals of a buyer’s merits were very rare in the dry company documentation on buying. It is striking that the two such exceptions I came across were reserved for women. It appears that they did not fit the 1950s expectations Eatonians had of buyers. Their male colleagues clearly felt the need to justify the women’s inclusion in that rank, and also to display their own superiority both in rank and in the ability to assess valuable merchandise. In this way, despite their relatively senior position of travelling buyer, both Stagg and Heatrick were reduced to a secondary role, like their fashion-reporter colleagues.

---

author [information in files indicates it is by Miss Phyllis Stagg of the Toronto Gift Shop and Thrift House] to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1950-04-28.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions),” letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1959-01-30.

### 3) *Male travelling buyers*

This is not to say that the male buyers escaped scrutiny. In this period, as Chapter 1 indicated, buyers of both sexes were subject to closer control by the company's Toronto headquarters than their predecessors had been. The city's Expense office, for instance, became more serious about controlling travel costs, at one point asking the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office to "take the matter up with" two errant buyers -- Lucas and another man, Mr. McIntosh -- who had exceeded their \$24.00 per diem.<sup>153</sup> The Toronto Merchandise Office, for its part, issued statistics on the performance of certain buyers, indicating the length of their European trips and the relatively small amount of goods they purchased in these periods, and went on to ask whether, in light of these figures, buyers should not shorten their trips.<sup>154</sup>

Nonetheless, male buyers of the 1950s were bolder than their female counterparts in asserting their power, including in company records. We have seen it in the evaluations of Heatrick and Stagg by buyers including Lucas; it was also true of another man, F. Andrews. Andrews used his report on a 1953 European trip as a forum to develop and proclaim his ability to know and to judge: in this case, the worth of products he found, the establishments that produced them, and the people responsible for them.<sup>155</sup> In so doing, Andrews, like buyers of the previous decade, elaborated a kind of evaluative map of

---

<sup>153</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from J.E. Hodgson, Expense Office, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1951-07-19.

<sup>154</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office (Toronto) 1952-12-29.

<sup>155</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," document "European Trip - Spring 1953," no date. Author is not indicated, but surrounding documentation indicates the author is Mr. F. Andrews of Montreal.



Europe indicating the buyer's discoveries. Whereas Matthews aimed simply to report on modern trends, Andrews was implicitly claiming to unearth them and make them available.

One thing Andrews considered when assessing a product's value was whether it was up-to-date, which is perhaps the simplest meaning of "modern." It was on this basis that he evaluated European merchandising practices. He dismissed Spain's stores with the line "nothing much of interest," and Harrod's of London with "nothing of any particular note was seen," and revealed his objectives when he wrote that the Walther May retail house in Germany "should be watched as he is very progressive."

When it came to the merchandise itself, sometimes "modern" meant "innovation" to Andrews. In his comments on England, for instance, Andrews attempted to appraise furniture production methods on this basis. He praised innovations in materials -- such as "a new rubber furniture webbing" -- and in function, like the new "'Put-U-Up' convertible settee." Overall, he bestowed upon England its pre-war status as an innovative producer worth visiting.

In particular, Andrews enthused that England showed "some of the cleanest contemporary furniture at present available." This was his more usual way of assessing the value of goods: according to their surface appearance. He was especially interested in whether they were styled to *look* sufficiently and appropriately modern. On this particular trip, he was interested in goods with the so-called Modern look: a 1950s-era configuration of simplified, "clean" "contemporary" lines, often rendered in wood used in new ways, such as moulded plywood or novelty materials like plastics.<sup>156</sup> Some of England's merchandise was so styled, as were much of the wares that he saw in Scandinavia. In Sweden, for instance, where he started his trip, he simply accepted that the styling of furniture *was* modern. With little explanation of his use of the term, he mentioned he bought a "modern bedroom," and a "Modern dining room...in walnut," his use of the upper-case M

---

<sup>156</sup> On Modern-style furniture, see Michael Collins, *Towards Post-Modernism: Decorative Arts and Design since 1851* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), chapter 3, "Form without ornament: The Modern Style," and chapter 4, "Free flow: The 1950s."

confirming he was referring to the design trend of that name. Denmark had “very smart modern chairs” and “new chairs with plastic covered legs, beech seat and back.” In contrast, in Spain, where he went next, Andrews found a lot of good furniture, including “Italian type Louis frames” and other old-fashioned styles, but he judged most of them “not of interest” or “not suitable for Canada.” In Italy, there were “new and very interesting items found,” and numerous orders placed, while in Switzerland the furniture was “excellently made, but not suitable for our trade, a little modern shown but not comparable to American, Danish, etc.” Belgium had “modern copies of Scandinavian furniture. Prices too high.” In France, aside from the antique mirrors and Louis XV pieces he ordered, his sense was that the furniture-makers produced “nothing of interest to Canada.”

In his report, Andrews claimed the ability to assess the use value of furniture, due to his understanding of construction techniques, and its exchange value or social meaning, due to his awareness of prevailing opinions about places and styles and his own good taste. But he also went further than that. Picking through Europe’s varied offerings with such assuredness, declaring with such confidence which styles were the cleanest, the smartest and, crucially, the most comprehensible and worthwhile to Canadian customers, and thus to Eaton's, Andrews was, in a sense, presenting himself as more than an interpreter or reporter, as a producer of sorts: a producer of meaning, and thus of exchange value. Moreover, his emphasis on the surface style of furniture implied that this was what was most important about it. Through his European buying, Andrews, like his 1940s predecessors, used reports to produce knowledge about the meaning of Europe and its merchandise, and in so doing, about buyers themselves. Producers of profits, buyers were, in these documents, powerfully important at Eaton's.

### Conclusion

After the mid-1950s, few Eaton's records on European buying are available to researchers, and those for the 1970s and later are closed. There is evidence that the buying system

remained intact with a few alterations, however. Paris staff were corresponding in 1958,<sup>157</sup> and there are pictures of the Belfast office in 1959,<sup>158</sup> as well as of an office in Frankfurt in the same year.<sup>159</sup> In the company's centennial year, 1969, the Eaton's centennial book reported that the company had buying offices in the European cities of London, Belfast, Leicester, Paris, Frankfurt and Florence.<sup>160</sup> Another photograph, this time from the 1960s, is a posed glossy picture probably prepared for a company publication. It shows male buyers in Switzerland examining watches;<sup>161</sup> some are engaged in intense discussion, another is carefully inspecting a sample and another is taking notes; all are encased in sleek modern suits (see Illustration 6). In this image at least, mastery of European buying continued to be considered and constructed as male.

The relative positions of male and female Eatonians were reflected and embodied in company records having to do with Europe. The men used them to state and strengthen their superior position: to resist the power of company bureaucrats and to assert their own individual wills. We see this most clearly in the formal reports and letters men wrote recording and reinforcing their primary, productive role in Europe. We also see it in the documents they sometimes wrote in a distinctly personal, even intimate voice. Such a tone pervaded the letters Timothy Eaton wrote to his representative in the London office. It also characterized the correspondence between Canadian-based buyers abroad and their

---

<sup>157</sup>There is correspondence from Paris for 1958 in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, "Paris Buying Office."

<sup>158</sup>There is a 1959 photograph of the Belfast office in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -673, "Buying Offices."

<sup>159</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-672 "Buying Offices," Frankfurt.

<sup>160</sup> William Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 205.

<sup>161</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-664 "Buying [trips] - Eaton's buyers inspecting watches" Switzerland, 196-.

colleagues back home, where references to the pleasures of touring Europe or the camaraderie of colleagues were quite common. On the other hand, there were company bureaucrats attempting to contain the autonomy of male buyers by forcing them to fill out certain forms and to adhere to the regulations inscribed therein. And the records written by women about Europe, although few in number and not much circulated, did represent a distinct voice, one that was distinct from the men's. It was first spoken in private, in diaries, but then, by the mid-twentieth century, came out clearly in the corporate channels too.

Far enough away to require frequent letters and reports home, close enough to send some women to do so; foreign enough to need interpreters, familiar enough to also require fashion reporters: Europe, as the documentation on the continent within Eaton's demonstrates, was an in-between place where women had a bit of room, and a few pages on which to express what that might mean.

## CHAPTER 4

### CLOSE TO HOME: THE LURE OF THE UNITED STATES AT EATON'S

#### Introduction

Eaton's buyer George M. Roberts was discouraged and wrote to a Toronto colleague of his about it.<sup>1</sup> It was 1944, and he was travelling in Central America to buy housefurnishings, but was finding few things he wanted to purchase. In Mexico, where he was staying, he had gotten homesick and a "tummy" ailment. He was also upset by the country's capital city, remarking that "the business sections...are very conglomerate, smells are peculiar and the people of all races" -- although, he had to admit, "everyone is most kind." Most of all, Roberts was impatient to get things done. The problem was, he explained, "we are not in N.Y. and work very slowly as things and people are different." He added, "I find the attitude a bit trying" and concluded, "I can truly say, I shall be glad to get to U.S.A. And dear old Canada." To Roberts, Mexico City, with all its peculiarity and difference, felt foreign, strange. The United States clearly did not feel foreign to him in this sense at all. He was anxious to get back there, where he could work in the way he wanted; it was, apparently, a refuge, a place to be mentioned in the same breath as home.

In the year Roberts was writing, 1944, Eatonians were uncomfortable with both Japan and Europe because of the Second World War. It is not surprising that the U.S.A., an ally far away from the hostilities, seemed more attractive. However, Roberts's comfort with the U.S.A. was typical for any Eatonian of any period. Within Eaton's, the U.S.A was

---

<sup>1</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - General," letter from George M. Roberts, writing from Mexico to Gerald [G.W.] Barber, House Furnishings Merchandise Office], 1944-10-11 and 1944-10-28.

consistently seen in a positive light; this made it different than Japan, which was usually seen negatively, and Europe, whose reputation at Eaton's went up and down. As the first part of the chapter covering Timothy Eaton's era to 1939 shows, Eaton's directors actively sought American products and practices out, in ever-increasing amounts, by importing them into Canada and by sending employees down to the U.S.A. to obtain them. Once received, the products were sold and the ideas were considered and often copied. In short, Eaton's was, from early on, quite Americanized and willingly so. It is no wonder that to some Eatonians at least, the U.S.A. felt like home.

Many female Eatonians were among this number. A lot of the employees working for Eaton's in the U.S.A. were women. The convenience and importance of the U.S.A. meant that the absolute number of employees sent there was higher than for overseas; decision-makers chose relatively high numbers of women to be included in their number, probably in part because of its reputation within the company as being familiar and unthreatening. Many of the women worked at the company's New York office. It was usually in low-level office jobs, but by around the time of the Second World War, a few women began to occupy senior positions as buyers or fashion reporters in New York. There were also, from early on, a few women department heads based in Canada who traveled to the U.S.A. on buying trips. Among the senior women were several who wrote confident communiqués about their work. In so doing, they helped further familiarize their colleagues in Canada with the U.S.A., and thus they made them feel even more comfortable – more at home -- with the latter country.

The women's communiqués home (letters, reports, and bulletins) highlighted what Eatonians had long appreciated: the American genius for the visual aspects of retail. Quite simply, American commodity culture, as manifested in the country's products and business practices (that is, ideas, behaviour, "know-how") consistently captivated Eatonians. How Americans designed goods and then displayed them to advantage in stores, catalogues and advertisements was of great interest to Eatonians from the start and, as Chapter 6 will show, they freely copied, borrowed and otherwise adapted it to their use. Constantly new

and fresh, the U.S.A. was the home-away-from home where Eatonians went to replenish themselves.

By the 1940s, when there were female Eatonians both buying and reporting on fashions in clothing and housefurnishings, New York visual merchandising had become such an art that the women, dazzled, sent home rave reviews. As the second part of the chapter (on 1939 and after) shows, the confidence with which these women made their observations, and the seriousness with which they were received in the company, tell us something else about Eaton's and American visual culture. It appears that by the 1940s, at Eaton's some women were credited – and credited themselves -- for having an expertise in understanding and communicating this culture, especially where it pertained to the field of “home fashions.” These women did not just feel at home in the U.S.A., then, but they made room for themselves there: they made themselves at home.

For the U.S.A., then, just as for Japan and Europe, the attitude towards the place within Eaton's was linked to the role of company women there. The fact that “America” had a consistently more favourable reputation than the other places appears to have been related to the fact that more female Eatonians were sent there. Eventually occupying a relatively wide range of jobs, some of these women became specialists and were recognized and acted as such. At Eaton's, allowing the corporate in-house culture to become Americanized also meant allowing it to become a little bit feminized.

Managing a business: Ideas and imports from the United States from Timothy Eaton's era until World War II

In 1897, Helen Hallister, who worked for a New York State dry goods firm, wrote to Eaton's that<sup>2</sup>

knowing that your house has been notably successful in this field, anything you might send us in the way of circulars, catalogues, special advertisements, etc., as showing your methods of reaching the public ear, would be most gratefully received.

This is one piece of evidence suggesting that some American firms were interested in Eaton's expertise. Another, dated some forty years later, suggests that this continued to be true in the twentieth century. It is a company notice referring to an apparently common practice of representatives of American stores coming up to "to call on us" for a visit.<sup>3</sup>

Far more common in the Eaton's records, however, are signs of influence in the other direction: that is, from the U.S.A. onto the Canadian company. Indeed, as this part of the chapter shows, Eaton's sought it out. Between the 1890s and the 1930s, Eaton's employees actively obtained both goods and expertise from the U.S.A., either by bringing them up to Canada, or by going south of the border to obtain them directly. Women were involved in this process, but mostly in support roles. In these decades, therefore, the Americanization of Eaton's was orchestrated mostly by men.

*American retail comes up to Eaton's*

---

<sup>2</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File "Miscellaneous," letter by Helen Hallister of D.M. McCarthy & Company Dry Goods, Syracuse, New York, to T. Eaton Company, 1897-01-08.

<sup>3</sup> A 1936 Notice required visits from American representatives to be reported to the Executive Office. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F598 from Executive Office, 1936-02-28.



Eaton's company records brim with evidence of the efforts made within the company to import American business expertise. One simple way was through American publications. A great many of them were read at Eaton's, especially in the 1920s and early 1930s, when the company was expanding and Eaton's management needed to direct and manage the change. The General Office subscribed to American journals with titles like *System*, *Factory*, and *Journal of Accountancy*, and kept records on which staff members consulted them.<sup>4</sup> The company's Statistical Insurance office requested clippings on subjects such as taxation, merchandising and "large Stores" from American periodicals including *Printers Ink Monthly* (from New York).<sup>5</sup> The Executive Office, for its part, loaned to interested employees its copies of volumes from the Alexander Hamilton Institute (New York) on Business Organization, Corporation Finance, and so on.<sup>6</sup> The company president of this

---

<sup>4</sup> Eaton's also subscribed to British and Canadian business periodicals. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S56 (General Office - Miscellaneous Records), Box "Record of Rates, Counts, Reports etc." In the section of this binder called "Financial" are lists of 1920s publications with relevant articles for employees to consult; the names of which employee read which article are written in. The publications include: *System* (Chicago), *100 %* (did not locate publisher), *Industrial Management* (Britain), *Factory* (Chicago System Company. 1907 ff); *Business Methods* (publisher not located); *Office Appliances*, (publisher not located), *Journal of Accountancy* (New York, 1905 ff); *Canadian Chartered Accountant*, *Industrial Canada*, *Wall St. Journal*, *Monetary Times*, (Montreal), *Independent Journal of Commerce* (journals of this name were published at this time in New York and in Gardenvale, Québec).

<sup>5</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice C155 from Insurance Office to Mail Order Advertising, 1925-09-01.

<sup>6</sup> The complete list of the subjects of the volumes is: Business Organization, Marketing, Corporation Finance, Advertising Principles, Advertising Campaigns, Office Administration, Salesmanship, Sales Management, Real Estate, Insurance, Factory Management, Inland Traffic, Foreign Trade, Cost Finding, Banking, Financial & Business Statements, Budgetary Control, Corporate Consolidations & Reorganizations, Financial &

era, R.Y. Eaton, also looked to Americans for inspiration. A 1925 photograph of his Private Office furnishings reveals a number of American works on the bookcase, including Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, Norris A. Brisco's *Fundamentals of Salesmanship*, and Walter Dwight Moody's *Men Who Sell Things*.<sup>7</sup> By the first third of the twentieth century, therefore, the American business culture as expressed in publications had percolated up to Eaton's.

Eatonians were also great readers of American mail order catalogues. Various departments would request samples of catalogues directly from firms in the U.S.A. including Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, National Cloak & Suit and Charles Williams, or the departments would ask staff at the Eaton's New York buying office to

---

Business Forecasting, Commercial Law. Source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice D323 from Executive Offices, Toronto, 1930-10-02.

Three more volumes were added in December 1930: Accounting Principles, Investment and Speculation, and Marketing Geography. Source: Ibid, Notice D 332 from Executive Offices, Toronto to H. Lee, 1930-12-22.

In 1931, the new subjects of Business Correspondence, Credit and Collections and Personnel Management were added. Source: Ibid, Notice E356 from Executive Offices, Toronto to H. Lee, 1931-05-21.

<sup>7</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-2210- "Offices - Private Office - Furnishings" photograph no. 1577. The books are: George G. Nasmith, *Timothy Eaton* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1923), Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character, Conduct, and Perseverance*, (Chicago: Bedford, Clarke, 1884); Norris A. Brisco, *Fundamentals of Salesmanship*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1916); Walter Dwight Moody, *Men Who Sell Things: Observations and Experiences of over Twenty Years as Travelling Salesman, European Buyer, Sales Manager, Employer*, (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1908).

obtain them. By 1926, such requests were so frequent that the company's Mail Order Merchandise Office decided to compile the orders and make a single centralized one.<sup>8</sup>

American catalogue workers also appeared in person at Eaton's. In order to carry out its first contracts in the 1890s, Brigden's, the Canadian commercial art firm that Eaton's engaged for catalogue work, hired "a New York artist with experience in fashion drawing." A later president of the art company remembered that although "the results were indeed primitive" in comparison with later catalogue art, the early efforts "produced results." In 1914, Eaton's opened a Winnipeg studio to produce art for that city's catalogue and Brigden's opened a new branch there to work for Eaton's. The man engaged to manage the office was hired away from a large New York firm, and artists were recruited in New York and Chicago to replace Brigden's men gone during the 1914 war.<sup>9</sup>

The American influence on the Eaton's catalogue was immense. Some of the minor Americanisms Eaton's used in its book included American spelling (right up until 1949)<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice C 175 from Mail Order Merchandise Office 1926-06-01.

<sup>9</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-514, "Catalogue - Printing," letter from Fred H. Brigden of 1955-03-31 to John David Eaton, President, Eaton's, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> In 1949, British (Oxford Dictionary) spelling replaced the American (Webster) in the Eaton's catalogues. This was in the Mid-Winter Sales book of 1949. Source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-011-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," untitled document probably written by Eaton's archivist, p 37.

and American-style product order numbers.<sup>11</sup> A flashier American catalogue marketing idea Eatonians emulated was celebrity endorsements. During the 1930s, American lingerie and children's hats, dolls and dresses were all made to seem lovelier, cuter, spunkier -- in a word, more desirable -- when they were associated with familiar American faces.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, at Eaton's there was little hesitation about importing and copying precise aspects of the southern neighbour's mail order operations. The result, as Chapter 8 explains, was that the Eaton's catalogue ended up looking quite American. This involved, as the example of the movie stars suggests, an increasingly heavy reliance on the marketing tool of using attractive images of women, whether it was movie stars or just models.

The same can be said about the look of the Eaton's stores, which showed the influence of American display and marketing aesthetics.<sup>13</sup> Again, Eaton's did not just import American ideas; the firm also occasionally hired special American workers for its stores. When the Eaton's Toronto store hosted a fashion show in 1908, for instance, the manager responsible hired New York models to present the French gowns.<sup>14</sup>

#### 1) *Eaton's goes down to the U.S.A.*

Eaton's employees also came into contact with ways of the U.S.A. by travelling there directly. Sometimes, it was in search of ideas. The employees would bring these back home, thereby serving as yet another source of American expertise in the company's Canadian offices. These employees were mostly or all men. The person who looked after

---

<sup>11</sup>In 1893, Eaton's copied American mail order giant Montgomery Ward's technique of using order numbers for individual catalogue goods. Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990), p.155 -6.

<sup>12</sup>This will be discussed in Chapter 8.

<sup>13</sup>The American influence on the look of Eaton's stores will be discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 226.

mail order in 1896, Frank Beecroft, visited Montgomery Ward (established in Chicago in 1874<sup>15</sup>); mail order sales rose thereafter in relation to store sales at Eaton's, which suggests that he implemented improvements learned from the American firm.<sup>16</sup> Charles Band, the man chosen to get the company's Winnipeg art studio going in 1914, visited Montgomery Ward and Sear's in Chicago for information on mail order business operations. Afterwards, he could "to talk with the authority of one who had been in the business all his life," even though up until that point he had had no catalogue or art experience whatsoever.<sup>17</sup> This is not to deny the capacity of Eaton's to innovate when it came to catalogue operations. The company opened Mail Order Offices several years before Montgomery Ward's and Sears Roebuck did, for instance.<sup>18</sup> Overall, however, the influence of American ideas was strong and ongoing.

Eatonians travelling to the U.S.A. were often quite taken with the visual side of merchandising there. The Minit-gram advertisement (it looked like a telegram), for example, was unabashedly described in a company letter as "an American idea which Mr. Lee [of the Eaton's Mail Order Office] picked up on one of his recent visits." Notified that "a number of the American catalogue houses had tried this out with marked success,"

---

<sup>15</sup> Dates and places here were obtained from AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), Box 12, F229-162-0-481, "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics, undated document headed "First Store" [undated].

<sup>16</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp.155-56.

<sup>17</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-514, "Catalogue - Printing," letter from Fred H. Brigden of 1955-03-31 to John David Eaton, President, Eaton's, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research," document "First Store" [undated].

Mr. Lee bought 50,000 of them for Eaton's to use.<sup>19</sup> When senior executive Harry McGee went to Macy's in 1932, he inspected its basement-level merchandise and displays and then described them in detail to the Eaton's Architectural Office.<sup>20</sup> The admiration that was felt in Eaton's for the appearance of American commercial culture was expressed very concretely. As subsequent chapters will show, the company's stores and advertisements, just like its catalogues, often looked very similar to American ones.

The most official reason for most visits by Eatonians to the U.S.A., though, was to buy goods. Timothy Eaton bought substantial amounts from New York wholesalers<sup>21</sup> and by 1891 had accounts with 36 American companies.<sup>22</sup> His ongoing search for new suppliers and ideas led him to send company representatives to the 1893 Chicago World Fair.<sup>23</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century, he had employees making dozens of trips to the United States, especially to New York.<sup>24</sup> Like the travellers in search of ideas, the

---

<sup>19</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-505, "Catalogue - Company Memos & Correspondence, re: Christmas Catalogue [1928-1930]", letter from "R.D.", no office given, to H.P. Parkes, Moncton, 1930-11-06.

<sup>20</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1415, "Stores Outside - Macy's." The file includes advertisements, information on store appearance and goods, e.g.: letter from H. McGee, Executive Offices to A.E. Stuart, Architectural Office, 1932-03-17.

<sup>21</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 75, 77.

<sup>22</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 148.

<sup>24</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S127 (Bookkeeping Records), Volume 1, General Ledger, 1895-97, pp. 449-52. The actual number of trips is unclear because of the way the ledger was filled in and because multiple entries were made in the ledger for each trip to the U.S.A. (for instance, for cash and for tickets), but without an indication of whether these

buyers were usually men. Males made up the majority --16 out of 18 -- of the employees in a 1895-97 list of Eaton's travellers to the U.S.A. (see Table 5).

TABLE 5  
FEMALE AND MALE EMPLOYEES TRAVELLING TO THE U.S.A.,  
1895-97

Women	Men	
Miss A.S. Brown	A. Boothe	J.S. Lowry
Miss L. Halden	W.G. Dean	Lubresky
	J.E. Dodds	H. McGee
	R. Eaton	Thos. Millar
	(also listed as Bob, R.W., Rob)	J.A.C. Poole
	W.V. Ecclestone	W. Rogerson
	Lawrence	W. Tummond (sp.?)
	C. Lewis	J. Whittaker
	W.J. Lewis	
Total: 2	Total: 16	

SOURCE: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S127 (Bookkeeping Records), Volume 1, General Ledger, 1895-97, pp. 449-52

---

expenses refer to one trip made by one person, or several trips. Regarding European travel, see Chapter 1, and the same ledger, pp. 445-6.

Two of the 1895-97 travellers were women: Misses L. Halden and A.S. Brown. Although small, this number does compare favourably to the situation of Europe in these years<sup>25</sup> where, as Chapter 3 indicates, only one female Eaton's buyer went during Timothy Eaton's time. However, it appears that the low ratio of women travellers to the U.S.A. continued in the early twentieth century; it was men who were specified in the company Notices about buyers; one in 1914, for example, complained "that the Chicago Mail Order houses feel that the calling of Eaton men has been overdone in the past."<sup>26</sup>

Buying trips were more than simple commercial transactions, however. As common situation was one "where our Buyer calls on the [American] Buyer of the same line of merchandise to discuss matters of mutual interest."<sup>27</sup> In other words, ideas were also being exchanged and, inevitably, brought back to Canada along with the goods. Whatever the purpose of the visit, it appears that by the first decades of the twentieth century, Eaton's men were present at the making of a continental business culture in the making at Eaton's, or more precisely, a continental businessmen's culture.

---

<sup>25</sup> Moreover, these two women each took four or five trips, more than some of their male colleagues did.

<sup>26</sup> The same Notice was distributed in the Toronto and Winnipeg divisions. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume: "Incoming Notices 1912-1916," Notice number 91, 1914-4-30, from [McGee?] and AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices) Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]," Notice of 1914-04-23, from H.M. Tucker, Assistant Manager, Winnipeg, to Mr. Robinson, Department 114, Winnipeg.

<sup>27</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F691 from I.W. Ford, Executive Secretary, Executive Offices, to Supervisor, Group Manager, Head of Department, 1939-03-08.



Eaton's executives attempted control the nature and appearance of their staff's contacts with American business people; this is another clue of how important they felt the contacts to be. Various Notices told Eatonians not to leave for visits to American mail order houses or stores without letters of introduction from the company Private (head) Office; to adhere to strict rules in corresponding with their American peers, in order to "avoid duplication and the making of unnecessary inquiries;" to forward letters and travel plans for the U.S.A. to Executive Office for approval; and, last but not least, if they received help from American firms, to write thank-you notes.<sup>28</sup>

## 2) *The New York Buying Office*

A final, important indication of the Eaton's company's efforts to obtain American goods and ideas was its New York buying office. First established in 1911,<sup>29</sup> the office was relocated in 1929 to a striking, staggered skyscraper similar to the building being planned

---

<sup>28</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume "Incoming Notices 1912-1916," Notice number 91, 1914-4-30, from [McGee?], and AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]," Notice of 1914-04-23, from H.M. Tucker, Assistant Manager, Winnipeg, to Mr. Robinson, Department 114, Winnipeg; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39." Notice F598 from Executive Offices, 1936-02-28, and Notice F691 from I.W. Ford, Executive Secretary, Executive Offices to Supervisor Group Manager, Head of Department, 1939-03-08; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice E374 from Superintendents Offices, [their no 36-7-31], to Supervisor, Group Manager, Head of Department, 1931-07-23.

<sup>29</sup>"The Scribe" (pseud.), *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited* (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co. Limited 1919), p. 164.

around this time for the Eaton's Toronto College Street store (see Illustration 7).<sup>30</sup> This change was a concrete sign of the growing importance of American trade and ideas (and the diminishing influence of Europe, especially Britain) at Eaton's after the First World War. In this, the company was in line with a general trend seen in Canada after 1918, in which "American influence has waxed while British influence has waned."<sup>31</sup>

The New York bureau shared with the other foreign offices the role of arranging for, and supporting the purchasing of, merchandise from its host country. As discussed in Chapter 1, this involved not only providing services like handling accounts and overseeing deliveries, but also representing the interests of Canadian-based department manager-buyers, for instance by providing them with news on trends, and assisting them with information and advice on sources when they came to New York themselves. Like the other offices, too, the New York bureau had buyers on its staff who worked to support the Canadian department-head buyers.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, it had a few special responsibilities, confirming the growing importance of the U.S.A. and the New York office for Eaton's. In the 1920s, the office obtained and sent out American mail order catalogues to interested Eaton's offices,<sup>33</sup> while in the

---

<sup>30</sup> However, the skyscraper part of the College Street building was never built, due to the depression. See picture index no. 567, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -678 "Buying Offices - And staff."

<sup>31</sup> Mel Watkins, "Canadian-American Economic Relations," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 66 (1967).

<sup>32</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 164-65.

<sup>33</sup> The Mail Order Merchandise Office took over this role in June of 1926. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice C 175 from Mail Order Merchandise Office, 1926-06-01.

following decade it made arrangements for the many company employees visiting New York.<sup>34</sup> (At the same time, the office employees were given strict orders not to sell Eaton's merchandise to Americans. They could let Americans consult their company's catalogues, but they could neither solicit sales nor take orders; these were to be sent by the customers to Canada.<sup>35</sup>)

Given its important role, the New York office was a training site for Eaton's employees. In 1930, the company even went to the trouble of furnishing five-hundred-dollar bonds to for two of its employees who were to receive training there and were only allowed in when they obtained student visas.<sup>36</sup>

A number of the New York office employees were women. In fact, females were in the majority during the First World War, making up between eight and nine of the staff there, as opposed to between four and seven men in these years (See Table 6). These figures are in great contrast with those for the other company foreign offices, where women constituted only 26 of the 61 of the employees in the London office in 1918,<sup>37</sup> and four of the 14 Yokohama office staff members by war's end.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F691 from Executive Offices to Supervisor, Group Manager, Head of Department, 1939-03-08.

<sup>35</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "[Head Office/Sales Office Notices, Winnipeg]," Notice of 1936-02-28 from W.H. Milner, Winnipeg, to Supervisors.

<sup>36</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 37 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section -Miscellaneous Files), File ", Box 10, File "Labour - Regulations - Foreign [legislation passed in other countries]," letter from I.R. Lewis, Employment and Wages Department, to J.A. Livingstone, Executive Offices, 1930-04-12.

<sup>37</sup> See Table 1 in Chapter 3.

<sup>38</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p 169.

TABLE 6  
 NUMBER OF FEMALE AND MALE STAFF MEMBERS IN NEW YORK BUYING  
 OFFICE, 1913 TO 1917

<u>Date</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>Number of females</u>	<u>Number of males</u>
1913-10-04	9	4
1914-10-03	9	5
1915-10-02	8	5
1916-10-07	9	7
1917 <sup>b</sup>	13	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>30</b>

SOURCE: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S127 (Bookkeeping Records), Volume 207: Wage Book - New York Buying Offices.

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup> The month of October was chosen at random.

<sup>b</sup> The 1917 statistics in these lists are unclear; numbers provided here are approximate.

Whether it was by sending staff down or bringing publications or workers up, obtaining American ideas and goods was clearly a priority at Eaton's. It was equally evident that some company employees held the belief that women, even if it was just a few, could help the company realize this goal.

Eaton's men and women engage with the American spectacle of consumption, 1939-1959

Both the U.S.A. and the role of Eaton's women there took on an added significance within the company during and after World War II. This part of the chapter will look at some of the factors behind these changes, and their impact on in-house company culture.

*The rise in the importance of the U.S.A. to Eaton's*

There were three key reasons that the U.S.A. became more important to Eaton's in these decades. The first was that the country was supplying more of the company's goods. Previous chapters have described how the coming of the Second World War ended Japan and Europe's ability to do so. Eaton's therefore turned to its southern neighbour for merchandise; the U.S.A. quickly became its most important foreign supplier. American goods were all the more important after mid-1941, when Canadian production of many items such as household appliances was severely restricted under the orders of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. However, half a year later after the attack on Pearl Harbour, the U.S.A. entered the war and its government imposed similar restrictions on production.

American production of goods, and Canadian importation of them, picked up dramatically with the end of the war.<sup>39</sup> This was true of Eaton's as well: while for a few years after the war, the company's buyers continued to confront restrictions on the availability of certain goods,<sup>40</sup> by this point they were nonetheless finding much there to buy. For a company as

---

<sup>39</sup> Restrictions on American goods are discussed in Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 23-24, 30.

<sup>40</sup> The restrictions are mentioned but not explained in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - European", letter from A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Offices, to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1947-11-24.

big as Eaton's, possessing such a huge, dispersed and complex buying system, it is difficult to ascertain the exact overall importance of American (or any other country's) goods at any one point. On the one hand, it is clear that the U.S.A. did not provide the majority of imports in every department. When it came to chinaware and glassware in Toronto, for instance, American goods accounted for between 10 and 18 percent of these lines in 1955, more than Japan or the European mainland were providing (between .5 and 8 percent and 3.5 and 19 percent respectively) but much less than London, which supplied between 40 and 50 percent of the goods.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, Eaton's clearly did a huge amount of business with American firms. In 1952, for another example, the company had approximately 1 500 American suppliers as opposed to a total of 1 300 overseas ones. The company also had 3 000 Canadian suppliers in that year.<sup>42</sup>

A second reason for the growing place of America at Eaton's was that one of the country's most important retail firms, Sear's, Roebuck and Company, moved up to Canada. In 1953, Sear's acquired the catalogue operation of Simpson's Limited, a Toronto-based retail firm that had long rivalled Eaton's in both mail order and department stores. The new company was called Simpsons-Sears. Suddenly, Eaton's lost the luxury of simply learning from American cataloguing know-how. Now, the company had to compete with it in its own territory, Canada.<sup>43</sup> As Chapter 5 will indicate, Eaton's had reason to worry. Simpsons-Sears proved to be a very important rival; its catalogue outsold that of Eaton's from the start, earning \$89 000 000 more by 1968.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> See Table 4 in Chapter 3 for more information.

<sup>42</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 142, "Customers' Comments on President's Message on Cover of Catalogue, Fall and Winter 1952-53" letter from J.A. Brockie, Public Relations Office, to O.D. Vaughan, Executive Offices, 1952-09-30.

<sup>43</sup> This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>44</sup> This will be discussed in chapter 5.

In the decade or so following the war, a third reason linked to the first two emerged for the increasing importance of the U.S.A. at Eaton's. Eatonians were becoming conscious of a change in American retailing practices, which made them more attractive and successful than ever. Noticing and admiring this change, and acknowledging its potential for their own company, Eatonians wanted more than ever to learn from their southern neighbours.

Alice Burrows, Fashion Co-ordinator at the New York office, put her finger on the nature of the change in 1945 when she reported on the New York Fashion Group moving towards a "fashion approach" to home furnishing. The Group supported the creation of an institute for the coordination of the activities of carpet, drapery, and furniture manufacturers and stores, for instance by encouraging the sharing of colour cards, to promote colour coordination, or by providing information about design.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, four years later, A.Y. Eaton remarked after visiting New York on how the American Home Fashion League was promoting "fashion in the home."<sup>46</sup> In the U.S.A., as in Canada, the end of World War II marked a whole chain of events -- the return of many servicemen to their homeland and of many women to full-time "homemaking," the development of new suburbs, and a baby boom, to name but a few -- that fuelled a rising public demand for homes and items to furnish them.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the "home fashion" movement marked a response on the part of the American retailing sector to these important social and economic changes.

---

<sup>45</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from Alice Burrows, [Fashion Co-Ordinator, New York Office], to G.W. Barber, Department 277, [Housefurnishings Merchandise Offices, Toronto], 1945-03-03.

<sup>46</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," letter from A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Offices, to B. E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Offices, 1949-05-10.

<sup>47</sup> A brief discussion of this phenomenon is provided in George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History* Vol. 2 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), pp. 1240-41.

Making household goods fashionable involved a whole range of efforts. It meant putting emphasis on styling and design of individual goods;<sup>48</sup> a system of re-designing them every season or so; and, finally, presenting the finished products in sophisticated new ways. In particular, Americans were putting more emphasis on good display for housefurnishings in their stores. Shopping in American stores was almost like going to the theatre; store retailing now had a lot to do with show business, just like catalogue retailing had done in the 1930s.

In the 1940s, some Eatonians believed that their company had a long way to go in order to catch up with this showy fashion-in-the-home approach. Just before the end of the war, Mr. F. Carpenter, the Merchandise Manager for housefurnishings in Toronto, noticed the American trends and advised his colleagues to follow suit. Eaton's, like the Americans, should continually show new and better merchandise, he urged. This provided shoppers "incentive to make a change," which he frankly called "a condition of obsolescence." But just as importantly, the firm should also train staff to properly display the goods like the Americans did. His dream was for housefurnishings at Eaton's to become "every bit as dramatic and glamorous to our customers as our fashion departments." Enthusiastic about what he had learned, Carpenter thus proposed that Eaton's prepare a post-war plan so the company could "lead the field -- as we should -- or we are going to find someone else doing it instead."<sup>49</sup> It was probably in this spirit that the company decided to borrow the

---

<sup>48</sup> For example, Joy Parr notes that while Canadian appliance production simply decreased during World War II in order to limit the use of materials needed for the war effort, American producers, while also having to limit overall use of metals and so on, were allowed to keep the numbers of units produced relatively high by redesigning lighter models that used less materials to produce. The result was that American producers became more innovative, while their Canadian counterparts did not. Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods*, p. 24.

<sup>49</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-



American Home Fashion League's idea of a Home Fashion Promotion, which Eaton's developed in 1949.<sup>50</sup>

(This is not to say that Eaton's display men happily received criticism from the U.S.A. In 1949, the American magazine *Coronet* criticized the Eaton's display department in Toronto. The man responsible for the department, J.A. Brockie, who was otherwise open and interested to American display ideas, was outraged. He protested, "I cannot accept the blame of the cheap reference to the Display Department here. We have not the best displays according to American standards - we have the displays which are best suited to Eaton's merchandising plan. I hasten to explain this, as I do not wish to be held responsible for the statement." So upset was Brockie that he added, "Someone must have inoculated the writer with 'marijuana' or 'cocaine.'"<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, Brockie was generally open to finding out about New York trends, ordering decorative items like red straw pompoms from a store there<sup>52</sup> and obtaining relevant written and photographic information from the company's office there. For instance, he asked for literature from a Brooklyn

---

1948," report of 1944-05-09 by F. Carpenter, Merchandise Manager, Home-Furnishing Divisions.

<sup>50</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," extract of Housefurnishings Committee meeting of 1949-09-09.

<sup>51</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 100, "Paris Buying Office" unsigned letter (internal evidence in file indicates it is by J.A. Brockie, Merchandise Display) to Ann Buckley, Paris Buying Office, 1949-09-16.

<sup>52</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 96, "New York Trip & Orders, 1945," list "Goods on Order Fall 1945."

Museum exhibit on textiles in hopes it would “lead to an idea.”<sup>53</sup> America’s offerings remained potent, even to this critic.)

Brockie notwithstanding, however, 1950s records indicate other Eaton's employees finding their company's buying system more or less in order, but its presentation skills still lacking.<sup>54</sup> Senior Housefurnishings Merchandise Office manager W.C. Weber got straight to the point in a 1957 report on a New York visit. After viewing Macy's, Gimbels, and other large stores, he concluded, “I felt that the selection of merchandise that we have in our Toronto departments compared favourably with any seen in any one New York store. However our displays and display areas could definitely be improved.”<sup>55</sup> The same year, a Gallery of Fine Furniture employee similarly remarked that<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 94, “New York Office Correspondence, 1945” letter from J.A. Brockie to Miss Alice Burrows, Fashion Coordinator, New York Office, 1946-01-28.

<sup>54</sup> This is not to say that all the learning went only in one direction. American designers were “very favourably impressed” when they visited the company's College Street premises in Toronto in 1945. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948” letter [to file?] from “BWS”, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1945-03-10.

<sup>55</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” “Report on Mr. Weber's New York Trip, December 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, 1957.”

<sup>56</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” report of 1957-04-05 entitled “Report on New York Trip - 1957” by V.W. Clarke, Gallery of Fine Furniture (Eaton's).

...in New York, housefurnishings fashions very closely parallel our own, and it is reassuring to see that, in traditional furniture design, we are entirely abreast of the times. It should however, be emphasized again how badly we are lagging in the matter of display. Proper backgrounds, lighting and accessories do so much to enhance furniture of this quality that any adequate expenditure for this purpose could be looked upon with certainty as a profitable investment.

In short, these employees felt that the Americans were still the masters of the fashion-in-the-home trend, and that the U.S.A. was as important as it had ever been as a source of ideas.

The continued Eatonian admiration of America was revealed during the rapid rise and fall of the Takashimaya store, which had been mentioned in Chapter 2. Located in New York, this was the first Japanese department store to open in the United States; its specialty was "Japanese art goods and exclusive oriental wares."<sup>57</sup> Patricia Doran, a reporter working out of the Eaton's New York office, described the store's 1958 opening in enthusiastic and positive words.<sup>58</sup> She thus reiterated the prevailing tendency at Eaton's and in the U.S.A. to market Japanese objects and culture as exotically different, so unlike familiar Americana. When the store was reported to be losing money just a few months later, however, the negative possibilities of emphasizing Japan's foreignness were revealed: still different, the Takashimaya venture was now portrayed as inferior and ignorant. A document, apparently a clipping from an unidentified American source, reads as follows:<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> 229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959." document to W.C. Weber entitled "Extract from Retail News Bureau dated September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1958."

<sup>58</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report by Patricia Doran, Reporter, New York Office, 1958-10-20.

<sup>59</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,"

### No Tickee This

Japan's first dept. store entry on Fifth Ave is reported to be in the oh so red. Said to be losing at a \$5 000 per month rate, and seeking new auspices, the Ginza unit is suffering from lack of U.S. merchandising know how, saleable assortments and realistic pricing. If the store folds, it will prove nothing but dubious judgement.

In the end, then, it was "U.S. merchandising know how, saleable assortments and realistic pricing" that were needed for a business to succeed.

### *Eaton's increases its American contacts*

Because of these changes during and after the war, Eaton's wanted and needed to improve its access to the United States. Better access would facilitate buying, foster the creation of business networks, and permit the gathering of information the country's increasingly-important consumer culture, both behind-the-scenes and on the public stage.

There were two sets of initiatives within Eaton's to increase its access to America during and after World War II. One was to expand the mandate of its New York bureau to reflect new priorities of company business to the south. Its original mandate, to serve as a liaison between the Eaton's offices across Canada and businesses in the USA, remained intact. Thus, in the 1940s, it still "attended to" company buyers visiting locally or in transit on European travels<sup>60</sup> including making appointments for them with American

---

unidentified document entitled "No Tickee This," received in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office on 1959-03-31.

<sup>60</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from H.L.K. (no full name) General Merchandise Office to W.C .Bores, New York City Office, 1945-06-06.

firms,<sup>61</sup> and it continued to provide information about materials of which the company factories might make use;<sup>62</sup> in the 1950s, the office dealt with American goods directly, forwarding shipments of goods to Toronto by trunk in 'emergency' situations<sup>63</sup> and providing information to Montreal and Toronto about New York City bargain goods available.<sup>64</sup> The office also provided information about trading, yarn suppliers, and used machinery for the Eaton Knitting Company.<sup>65</sup>

What changed in the New York bureau was that more of its resources were dedicated to observing and interpreting local and American-wide merchandising trends and communicating these home. Whether done informally and occasionally, through brochures and clippings discussing innovations like the 1958 Design Center for Interiors -- touted as

---

<sup>61</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from H.G.L. [no name or office] to W.C. Bores, New York Office, 1947-07-11.

<sup>62</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S154 (Manufacturing Head Office -R.H. Clendining Files), Box 2, File "New York Office", letter from H.D. Loudon, New York Office, of 1941-02-12 to R.H. Clendining, Manufacturing Head Office, Toronto.

<sup>63</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from D.M. Allan, Merchandise Office to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1952-09-29.

<sup>64</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from B.E. [Mercer] Housefurnishings Merchandise Office to W.C. Bores, New York Office, 1953-01-14, and other correspondence in file.

<sup>65</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S30 (Secretarial Office - Eaton Knitting Company Limited - General Files), Box 11, File F18, "New York City, General Business and Financial Tax," letter from F.W. Murch, Eaton Knitting Company Limited, to H.I. Kellond, Eaton Knitting Company Limited.

"America's first permanent exhibition hall for the decorative world"<sup>66</sup> -- or more formally, through occasional reports on subjects like American taste<sup>67</sup> or plans for V-Day issued by the American Chamber of Commerce,<sup>68</sup> or in a structured, organized way, as in its regular digests on "Current Market Conditions,"<sup>69</sup> the New York office staff ensured that their

---

<sup>66</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," contains undated document (ca. 1958-09) sent by W.C. Bores, New York Buying Office, re: this Center.

<sup>67</sup> For instance, see the reference to a report by W.C. Bores of the New York office on "America's Taste in Decoration" in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from B.E.M. [Mercer], Housefurnishings Merchandise Office to W.C. Bores, New York Office, 1951-09-17.

<sup>68</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," "Special Report on V-Day Plans in New York and the Nation," by W.C. Bores, New York Office, no date, received by Housefurnishings Office 1944-08-22.

<sup>69</sup> See the reference to these reports in S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, to W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1954-04-30. Another regular feature from the New York office was a weekly bulletin entitled "General Information - Gathered from Several Sources Regarding American Business from ... to ... dating inclusive". Reference is made to these bulletins in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," from G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W.C. Bores, New York Office, 1948-10-13. Furthermore, correspondence in this file and in another of the same series (and Box number) entitled "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," indicates that the New York Office in the 1950s had a numbered bulletin with news from New York.

Canadian colleagues were kept up to date. This continued right into the 1960s, when reports entitled "General Information Gathered from Several Sources Regarding American Retail Business," discussing topics such as sales trends and volume and News from Chicago, were issued every four days from the office.<sup>70</sup> It also continued to send out separate reports on special store promotions.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the New York bureau had a crucial new role: as reporter on American retail, especially, and crucially, in its spectacular visual manifestations.

Eaton's managers in Canada took the New York office's news very seriously. For instance, after reading one of its 1952 bulletins, Mr. M.A. Robinson of the Merchandise Office (Toronto) quoted from it extensively in a letter to a colleague in the city's Housefurnishings Merchandise Office. The quotations had to do with the decision at Bloomingdales (a big department store) to adopt a new merchandising approach, one emphasizing higher profits and dollar sales. Bloomingdales was moving away from the approach Eaton's used of aiming for high volumes of sales, which involved offering a wide range of merchandise and developing branded lines. As the bulletin had put it, "Success ... will depend upon how much you make, not how much you sell." On the basis of what he had read, Robinson indicated his intention to call a meeting "to fully discuss the pros and cons of this method of merchandising."<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Copies of these reports are available in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, File "Merchandising - New York Buying Office."

<sup>71</sup> Examples are available in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, File "Merchandising - New York Buying Office."

<sup>72</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," letter from M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1953-01-13; letter takes quotations from a 1952-11 bulletin from the New York Office.

The second Eatonian initiative to increase company access to the U.S.A. involved sending more company employees, from more sectors of the firm, to visit the country. To New York and Detroit, Chicago and Minneapolis, went all kinds of employees: buyers, of course, but also people responsible for the appearance and administration of the stores and their products, including representatives from the Toronto Interior Decorating Bureau, City Advertising, Merchandise Display, the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, and various store merchandise departments.<sup>73</sup> They toured businesses and shops, department stores and 'merchandise marts,' room by room, floor by floor, commenting on the colours, styles, prices, methods, operating procedures, and types of customers and employees they found there. Then they wrote reports whose style and function ran the gamut from official Buyer's Report Sheets with sections dedicated to "Market conditions and other items of interest" to narrative travel descriptions in letters. Many of their documents, bulging with attached photographs and clippings, brochures and floor plans, ideas and admiration, remain in company records, particularly for the merchandise and archives offices.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> A number of such reports are located in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, File "Merchandising - New York Buying Office", as well as in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69, (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948" and File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959."

A letter from B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to A.W. Russell, Contract Sales Office, 1951-08-27 in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," indicates that in at least one case the initiative for sending down a company visitor-reporter came from the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office. I do not know how the expenses were divided between the various offices and departments benefitting from the reports.

<sup>74</sup> For many examples of such travel reports see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948" and Box 44, File "Travelling - Other than Overseas." Another site for such material is the records of the company archives.



Clearly, the company was making it a priority to have its employees learn first hand the American skill of making goods sell.

*Involvement of Eaton's men in these changes*

With these changes, Eaton's men continued to be privileged in their access to the United States. The simple fact that they continued to make up the majority of the company's department heads and managers meant that males continued to be the most frequent travellers south of the border. Thus, naturally, there was a continuation of the pre-war tradition of male managers from the two countries meeting to discuss merchandise and merchandising, and thus of company men obtaining "insider" information as a result. This held true for the mail order business. Two Eaton's men visiting Montgomery Ward in 1941, for example, reported a warm reception by the company's President.<sup>75</sup> He and other senior men from the latter firm helped the Eatonians gather facts and figures for a survey of the firm covering topics ranging from staffing to catalogue production.<sup>76</sup>

Eaton's men continued to have special access to American stores, too. In 1952, for instance, when Mr. W.F. Walls of the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office visited the H.L. Hudson Company of Detroit, his hosts there let him look right into its operating

---

See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-1669 "Fashion - Not Eaton's 1913-1924," and File F 229-162-0-1415, "Stores Outside - Macy's."

<sup>75</sup> F 229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), File "[Report on Montgomery-Ward] 1941-44", letter of 1944-10-10 from H.G. L[ee?], Merchandise Office, to J.W. Scott, Research Bureau, and letter/report from W.H.M[axwell], Department F-7, to J.G. McKee, Merchandise Office, "Re: Montgomery-Ward," 1941-04-03

<sup>76</sup> F 229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), File "[Report on Montgomery-Ward] 1941-44", letter of 1944-10-10 from H.G. L[ee?], Merchandise Office, to J.W. Scott, Research Bureau, and letter- report from W.H. M[axwell], Department F-7, to J.G. McKee, Merchandise Office, "Re: Montgomery-Ward," 1941-04-03.

methods, such as the weekly bulletins its Interior Decorating Department issued to its employees. (This opportunity allowed him to make the astute observation that the bulletin served to “keep individualists from wandering too far from system.”<sup>77</sup>) On returning home, Walls sent information on Eaton's administration of interior decorating sales back to one of the Hudson Company men.<sup>78</sup> Another visitor to Detroit, this time Eaton's buyer Mr. G. Phibbs, casually commented that he too had been given an in-depth tour of the Hudson store, because its manager was a friend of another Eaton's buyer, Mr. Forster. Phibbs reported that his visit was a success because of “the co-operative willingness to oblige on any enquiry” displayed by the “Senior Men.”<sup>79</sup> Confident and with plenty of contacts, Eaton's men were well-supported in their work abroad.

These men clearly continued to feel quite at home in the U.S.A. Their very rare mentions of differences encountered there, such as the school children and “negroes” working at Ward's during the Second World War<sup>80</sup> or the “uncertain climate of a cold war” in the

---

<sup>77</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” report “Notes on Trip to the J.L. Hudson Company Detroit, November 11, 1952” by W.F. Walls, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office.

<sup>78</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” letters from W.F. Walls, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to Mr. Dexter H' Ware, H.L. Hudson Company, Detroit, of 1952-11-14 and 1952-11-18.

<sup>79</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” report of 1958-10-03 by G. Phibbs, ” Trip to the J.L. Hudson Company, [Detroit].”

<sup>80</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File “Mail Order,” (Box 25), memo from A.N. Sands, to Mail Order Office, 1943-09-27.

1960s, were exceptions proving this rule.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, even the latter climate did not intimidate the Eatonian reporting on it; he or she concluded that “cris[e]s have a tendency to be overplayed.”

The reports the Eaton's men made on their visits to the U.S.A. were circulated, annotated, and commented upon within the company. Often, extracts were taken and distributed to each related merchandise department. Clearly, then, American ideas on business continued to be heeded at Eaton's, and Eaton's men continued to be their main messengers.

The same was true when important American retailers came up to Canada. In 1944, A.N. Sands of the Eaton's Mail Order Office received a visit from Albert Halstead, “a leading expert in printing matters in the United States.” They had a discussion about the advisability of retail companies printing their own catalogues and Halstead told Sands why both Sear's and Montgomery Ward had started contracting the job out instead. On the basis of this talk, Sands advised his company to follow suit, given that the situation of the American firms was “almost identical to our own.”<sup>82</sup>

Having special access to American retailing information gave senior Eaton's men opportunities to see the visual elements of American retailing up close. One thing they were interested in was the behind-the-scenes systems making the spectacle so successful. The men surveying Ward's mail order in 1941, for instance, were able to uncover what the company did to ensure visual coherence. This included developing “labels, containers, lettering and color schemes which will make Ward's products easily recognized by

---

<sup>81</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, File “Merchandising - New York Buying Office” report no. 62/44, “general information gathered from several sources regarding American retail business October 22nd to October 25th inclusively,” New York Office, 1962-10-30.

<sup>82</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S20 (Secretarial Office - Accounting Section - General Files), File F229-20-0-22, “Catalogue Cost Adjustments” letter from A.N. Sands Mail Order Office to J. Elliott, Secretarial Office, of 1944-03-25.

customers everywhere,” inspecting merchandise before it was sent out to ensure it met the appearance of in-house samples, and centralizing the design of catalogue order office window dressings so that “show windows in all stores are exactly alike.”<sup>83</sup>

Beyond the knowledge and status arising from their privileged position as insiders, however, male Eatonians also learned a lot just from being regular onlookers to the American shopping spectacle. Something that struck the men in the Eaton's Toronto Housefurnishings department was how the American stores made shopping such an *event*. Even the humble warehouse sale, a new American trend in the 1950s, stimulated shoppers through throngs of people and cars.<sup>84</sup> (Similarly, A.J. Wells from Eaton's Interior Decorating Bureau commented that out-of-store events like the 1950 National Home Furnishings Show in New York “could attract enormous crowds of prospective customers.”<sup>85</sup>) Stores also drew crowds with special integrated exhibits like Sloane's House of Years (“Your Wartime Home”) which in 1943 presented modest suggestions for decor during this period of shortage, Macy's Kitchen of Tomorrow (a “Post-war peek into

---

<sup>83</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), File “[Report on Montgomery-Ward] 1941-44”, letter of 1944-10-10 from H.G. L[ee?], Merchandise Office, to J.W. Scott, Research Bureau, and letter/report from W.H. M[axwell], Department F-7, to J.G. McKee, Merchandise Office, “Re: Montgomery-Ward,” 1941-04-03.

<sup>84</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” report of 1958-10-03 by G. Phibbs, “Trip to the J.L. Hudson Company, [Detroit]”; letter from H.D. Loudon, New York Buying Office, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1951-08-20; letter from B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W.C. Weber, Dept 270, Furniture, 1950-05-23.

<sup>85</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” letter from A.J. Wells, Interior Decor Bureau, to A.W. Russell, Contract Sales, 1950-09-20.

a kitchen designed with glass for Better Living!") in 1944, and exuberant extravaganzas like Wanamakers's Home of Vision and Macy's House of Glass displays in 1945<sup>86</sup> (Eaton's rented the latter exhibit after this positive review<sup>87</sup>). Eaton's men also excitedly proclaimed the value of post-war marketing trends like the display, in 1949, of built-in televisions in showrooms.<sup>88</sup>

The men also paid attention to display techniques contributing to this commercial theatricality. F. Carpenter, for instance commented approving on the Dayton store's use of colour, remarking "in a business which depends to such an extent on selling colour it seems reasonable that an atmosphere of colour be provided for its sale."<sup>89</sup> He, along with

---

<sup>86</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948," File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959."

<sup>87</sup> In 1945, the College Street Store paid to exhibit the Libby-Owens-Ford Glass Company's "Kitchen of Tomorrow" previously viewed at Macy's. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948" sub-file of correspondence re: "Kitchen of Tomorrow".

<sup>88</sup> In 1949, a Housefurnishings Merchandise Office employee indicated that in a recent New York trip, he saw a display featuring television sets built into various rooms; later, he spoke to a vice-president of the of Victor Company who predicted that the Canadian government would open television stations in Toronto and Montreal by June 1 1950. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," letter from C.L. Gray, Department 360, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1949-08-05.

<sup>89</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-

other Eaton's men visiting the U.S.A., also analyzed the "furnished rooms" in American stores. Here, furniture and home decorations were grouped in settings to suggest actual living arrangements: they were a kind of stage set imitating real life. F. Carpenter carefully determined the cost of the decorated backdrops for the Dayton's furnished rooms.<sup>90</sup> G. Phibbs observed how those of a Detroit store presented goods just as they would appear in a house: departmental barriers were ignored as goods from all over the store were displayed together; he noticed, too, how the word "home" was emphasized in marketing material.<sup>91</sup> Mr. A. Fellows was interested enough in theatre to include in his 1951 report on a trip to New York the comment that in the play *The King and I*, the "use of colour and fabric plus the use of technical lighting is beautiful."<sup>92</sup>

Even as regular observers on the outside looking in, however, the Eaton's men remained relatively privileged, because, as Chapter 6 will show, they stood outside and above the shopping spectacle in which women were commonly constructed as sights to be seen. This

---

1948" report of 1944-05-09 by F. Carpenter, Merchandise Manager, Home-Furnishing Divisions.

<sup>90</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948" report of 1944-05-09 by F. Carpenter, Merchandise Manager, Home-Furnishing Divisions.

<sup>91</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report of 1958-10-03 by G. Phibbs, "Trip to the J.L. Hudson Company, [Detroit]."

<sup>92</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," Report "New York Trip Report, July 17<sup>th</sup>" from A. Fellows, no department, copy to B. Mercer, 1951-07-24. This writer was also sensitive to aspects of New York culture other than their appearance, for instance in recommending that the Eaton's Auditorium try to book the leader singer Tiana Lemnitz, who was coming to the U.S. the following year.

was certainly true at Christmas time in the Bonwit Tellers shop for men in 1951. A. Fellows noted that<sup>93</sup>

The shop is well staffed, spacious, private and decorated quiet [sic] and in good taste. Models displayed lounge pyjamas, negligees but not lingerie. Runners wore black dresses with green sheer cocktail aprons trimmed with tiny bells as did the salesgirls throughout the store, only in red. This gave quite an added Christmas touch....

In this case, I would suggest that the Eatonian did not only observe the reduction of women to objects but, in his own description, contributed to it, and in so doing affirmed his own superiority. His description of one of the store's elaborate windows featuring "a male mannequin lying prone on the floor and a sales girl in black with red apron spraying perfume" – in other words, one featuring a male sex object as well as a female one – stood out in its rarity. Other Eaton's men likewise observed and reproduced visualized sexual power structures. W.F. Walls noticed how the Hudson store attended to the appearance of its staff members in its Decorating bureau; staff was "staff predominantly women. Only masculine type of man is employed by Decorating Bureau -- as unaffected as possible."<sup>94</sup> Even when they were mere onlookers, then, Eaton's men were always *men* -- usually, no doubt, of what they would have considered the "masculine type" – and as such, they were often in a dominant position socially vis-à-vis women.

*Involvement of Eaton's women in these changes*

---

<sup>93</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report "New York Trip December 10th to December 15th 1951" by A. Fellows.

<sup>94</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report "Notes on Trip to the J.L. Hudson Company Detroit, November 11, 1952" by W.F. Walls, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office.

Nonetheless, even if the Eaton company's operations and culture continued to be dominated by business men, including in the U.S.A., women occupied more space there between 1939 and 1959. At this point, it was not only that the U.S.A. was home to a number of Eaton's women; it was also that several of these took active steps to make themselves at home, especially after the end of World War II in 1945.

*1) Women occupying more senior positions*

Partly, it was because women Eatonians began to occupy relatively senior positions based in the U.S.A. In 1939, there were two of them: Mrs. Jean Belle Hamilton and Miss K. Knapp, both clothing buyers. Women this high up in the company hierarchy were a rarity. Miss S. Doyle, of the Montreal buying office, was the only other woman buyer to be named on the Toronto expense department management list that year (in other words, the only buyer at the management level).<sup>95</sup> Ten years later, women made up a full five of the thirteen people listed as "in charge" at the New York office. This was exceptional for the company's foreign buying offices. None of the five people in charge of departments in the Eaton's London office were women in 1949; this was also the case in Manchester (with six men in charge), Leicester (one man in charge), Belfast (one man in charge), and Paris (five men in charge).<sup>96</sup> In 1953, nine of 17 buying sections in the New York office were headed

---

<sup>95</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939"- list for Toronto of 1939-05.

<sup>96</sup> This proportion was high when compared to the number of senior women in Canadian offices of Eaton's, as well. One of the thirteen buyers and three administrators were women in the Toronto buying office, while five women (four in assistant positions) were in charge of the twenty various posts in the Montreal buying office.) Please note that the numbers given do not indicate the exact proportion of women on staff, since sometimes the same name (female or male) was listed in more than one "in charge" position. I also did not include the senior managers in the numbers; as mentioned, none of these were



by women (including one woman who headed two), which was again a much higher proportion than in the other foreign and domestic buying offices at Eaton's.<sup>97</sup> The position of women in the New York Office should not be overestimated. In 1953, just like in the other company buying offices, both domestic and foreign, there were no women listed for the senior management positions of Supervisor, Head of Department, or Assistant in New York.<sup>98</sup> However, relative to the other foreign offices, there were many women in the lower "in charge" ranks in New York.

These latter women had important responsibilities. Mrs J.B. Hamilton was the office dress buyer in 1939, while Miss K. Knapp looked after coats, suits, furs, knitted sportswear and blouses.<sup>99</sup> The following year, Knapp's name was removed from the Management List and Hamilton was in charge of her section as well as Dresses.<sup>100</sup> By 1943, Hamilton's

---

women. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 3, File 25, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1949", document "List of senior personnel, by classification, of buying offices under supervision of General Merchandise Office," 1949-06.

<sup>97</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953", list attached to Notice no. 223 from A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1953-04-08.

<sup>98</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, File 30 "List of Management, 1953", list attached to letter from H. Kennedy, General Merchandise Office, to A.E. Smalley, General Office, of 1953-12-15.

<sup>99</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939"- list for Toronto of 1939-05.

<sup>100</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, file 15 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1940" list for Toronto of 1940-03-21.

responsibilities had expanded to include head skirt buyer, as well as assisting the buying of millinery, children's wear, and lesser items like aprons. Another woman, Miss H. Biggar, was an assistant in the section that bought china, glassware, handbags, and other items.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, starting in 1940, a couple of new positions were opened in the New York bureau which were apparently designated as women's work in the company: these were the positions of Fashion Reporting and Fashion Coordinating. Miss L. Dunkel, Mrs Hamilton (who moved to reporting from buying around 1943) and Miss Alice Burrows were some of the women occupying these posts in the 1940s and '50s (See Table 7.) In the 1960s, Mary Walsh appears to have held a reporting position as well, for she sent out regular accounts from the New York office on the New York retail scene.<sup>102</sup> Thus, women were central to the expanded mandate of the New York office, which, as has been mentioned above, involved paying more attention to American consumer culture and retail tendencies.

---

<sup>101</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 20 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1945".

<sup>102</sup> For examples, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, File "Merchandising - New York Buying Office".

TABLE 7

## WOMEN IN SENIOR POSITIONS IN THE NEW YORK BUYING OFFICE, 1930S TO 1950S

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Position</u>
Miss Alice Burrows	1945	Head, Fashion Coordinator department
	1953	Fashion Coordinator
Miss H. Biggar	1945	Assistant buyer, China and Glassware, handbags, etc.
Miss K. Knapp	1939	Buyer for coats, suits, furs, knitted sportswear and blouses
Miss L. Dunkel	1940	Fashion Reporting
Mrs. Jean Belle Hamilton	1939	Buyer for dresses
	1940	Buyer for dresses, coats, suits, furs, knitted sportswear and blouses
	1943	Fashion Reporting
	1945	Buyer for dresses, coats, suits, furs, knitted sportswear, blouses and skirts; assistant buyer for millinery, children's wear, aprons, etc.
Patricia Doran	1958	Reporter

## SOURCES:

- F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1939"- list for Toronto of 1939-05; Box 2, File 15 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1940" list for Toronto of 1940-03-21; Box 2, file 18 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1943"; Box 2, File 20 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1945"; Box 3, File 25, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1949"; Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953"
- F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report by Patricia Doran, Reporter, New York Office, 1958-10-20.

## NOTE:

<sup>a</sup>There is no information for buyers for 1943.

In associating women and the fashion industry, Eaton's was, once again, merely following American trends. Women were at the forefront of the "home fashion" movement in the U.S.A., for instance. When A.Y. Eaton visited New York in 1949, he identified the members of the American Home Fashion League, who were New York-based interior decorators, as women.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to those stationed in New York, relatively high numbers of Eaton's women based in Canada continued to go on business to the United States. Some were buyers; given that the post-war period was a time of expansion for Eaton's, and that more buying was being done in the U.S.A., they were more numerous than before the war. One was Miss Phyllis M. Stagg, who worked in the Toronto store's Gift Shop and visited New York in the 1950s and '60s. Another category of women touring the U.S.A. for Eaton's were employees in positions of responsibility travelling for meetings and information-gathering. They included Claire Drier of Eaton's Toronto Wedding Bureau, who went to Chicago in 1943, and Mary Prud'homme of the Toronto Staff Training Department, who travelled to the same city 15 years later. Women visitors of both of these categories created and circulated documents within Eaton's containing information on the American retail scene. Therefore, like their New York Office colleagues, these women helped to meet the company's increased need for information on American consumer culture. In so doing, they increased their own visibility and prestige.

## 2) *Women asserting themselves in the U.S.A.*

The records left by these women indicate that they actively made more room for themselves in the United States. One way they did so was by helping to build a community of North American businesswomen. Phyllis Stagg, for instance, was "planning to go by

---

<sup>103</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," letter from A.Y. Eaton, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to B.E. Mercer, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1949-05-10.

motor with some women representatives of Canadian Homes & Gardens” to the American Interior Decorators Convention.<sup>104</sup> When Claire Drier went to Chicago, she visited Edith Grimm, Director of Personal Services at a store there.<sup>105</sup> Mary Prud’homme, for her part, met with other female staff trainers working in Chicago stores.<sup>106</sup> The Eaton’s New York buying office supported such efforts. The office’s Fashion Coordinator Alice Burrows, for instance, provided a positive character reference for New York City businesswoman Isabel Barringer (“practical, and sound”<sup>107</sup>) for the information of a Toronto office. Another time, she provided the name of a woman (Miss Morgan) who was in charge of Marshall Field’s housefurnishing advertisements, which were in a style she recommended to Eaton’s own Housefurnishings Merchandise Office. As that office noted, if they were to contact Miss Morgan, they “could, of course, mention her [Burrows’s] name.”<sup>108</sup> As well, she

---

<sup>104</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File “Travelling - Other than Overseas,” letter from B.W.S. [sic], Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W. Park, Merchandise Office, 1951-04-26.

<sup>105</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings from Edith Grimm, Director of Personal Services of Carson Pirie Scott & Company (Chicago) to Miss Claire Drier, Wedding Bureau, Toronto, 1943-02-19. See annotations on letter.

<sup>106</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” report dated 1958-02-12 by Mary Prud’homme, Staff Training Dept., College Street, entitled “Report of visits to the Chicago Furniture Markets [etc.].”

<sup>107</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948,” memo from A. Burrows, Fashion Coordinator, New York, to various in Merchandise Offices in Toronto and Hamilton, 1945-01-26, re: Mrs. Isabel Barringer of New York City, formerly of Dorothy Draper Incorporated and now with Theodore Muller.

<sup>108</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York Office,” memo [to file] by B,M,

facilitated travel arrangements by female Eatonians visiting from Canada. When Toronto Staff Training employee Doris Thistlewood went to New York to visit the National Housefurnishings Show, for instance, she was able to attend Press Breakfast Meetings because Burrows had made the necessary prior arrangements.<sup>109</sup> Thus, Burrows took advantage of the liaison function of her office in order to set up contacts for and between businesswomen.

In so doing, of course, Burrows also demonstrated her own mastery and familiarity with the American business scene. Hand-in-hand with the female Eatonians' networking efforts went an increased assertiveness on their part in the venue of company records. Drier, for instance, circulated to senior men in two Eaton's offices a letter from Edith Grimm that was complementary about herself.<sup>110</sup> Prud'homme reported on both her meetings with female American colleagues and the consciousness she shared with them of having to defend the very existence of their profession in a male-run milieu. They kept being asked, "What could a trainer...tell a furniture salesman about furniture?"<sup>111</sup> Burrows, for her part,

---

[probably B. Mercer of Housefurnishings Merchandise Office], 1945-03-07, containing report of a visit by Alice Burrows.

<sup>109</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," "Report re: New York trip" of 1953-10-19, by Doris Thistlewood, Staff Training Department (Toronto).

<sup>110</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948" from Edith Grimm, Director of Personal Services of Carson Pirie Scott & Company (Chicago) to Miss Claire Drier, Wedding Bureau, Toronto, 1943-02-19. See annotations on letter.

<sup>111</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report dated 1958-02-12 by Mary Prud'homme, Staff Training Department, College Street, entitled "Report of visits to the Chicago Furniture Markets [etc.]."

was consistently straightforward and authoritative in providing prescriptions for Eaton's on the basis of her observations of the American scene. At one point, she visited the Eaton's Toronto Main and College Street stores and then wrote a candid and critical report of what she had seen. Indeed, she used the opportunity to recommend that Eaton's change its entire merchandising strategy. As she confidently put it, "In addition to the acceptance of Eaton's as a volume store, the two factors in merchandise of quality and taste should be emphasized constantly.... Quality might well be made as synonymous with Eaton's as the wide selections [already emphasized in company marketing]." The practical virtue of this strategy would be that after the war, when more high-end goods would be available, "they will be accepted at once."<sup>112</sup>

In creating networks for themselves, and in asserting themselves with confidence, these women were following in the footsteps of their male colleagues. In addition, though, some of the women made strides on their own, by adopting a new way of expressing themselves in company records. As Susan Porter Benson has found for another group of women retail workers, salesclerks, these Eatonians were developing their own, distinct work culture; in both cases, "sex segregation [could] provide a space where self-respect and initiative [could] grow."<sup>113</sup> Specifically, a number of the Eaton's women in contact with the U.S.A. communicated in a breezy, familiar style. In some cases, the women's style was something like that of their male colleagues gone abroad and writing to colleagues with whom they were chummy back home: friendly and informal. In these instances, the women were simply applying an acceptable style to new kinds of records or circumstances. This was true, for instance, when Claire Drier circulated Edith Grimm's letter, which opened by saying "thanks loads" for help she had received from the Eatonian and

---

<sup>112</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," "Toronto Report," by Alice Burrows, Fashion Co-Ordinator [New York Office], 1945-03-19.

<sup>113</sup> Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 266.

concluding, “keep me posted on anything different you’re doing and I shall always be glad to do the same for you. Sorry I didn’t see you in New York but I was so busy that I couldn’t get away. I think everybody gets busier every day and this is the way it’s bound to be.”<sup>114</sup> In other cases, however, the Eaton's women were definitely advancing a new style that I would call “corporate confidential:” it was a sprightly, personal tone but clearly meant for broad in-house consumption. All in all, a distinct, feminine fashion began to appear in company records after World War II.

The first to use this “corporate confidential” style were the women fashion reporters working out of the Eaton's office in New York. The style appeared in a series of reports on the merchandising scene in that city issued by Jean Belle Hamilton and Alice Burrows starting in the early 1940s.<sup>115</sup> Bursting with information on fashion trends gleaned from visits to stores and other sites, trade journals, and so on, the one- or two-page bulletins were short and snappy. Hamilton, for instance, who otherwise adopted a sober bureaucratic style when corresponding on mundane topics,<sup>116</sup> embellished her New York

---

<sup>114</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948” from Edith Grimm, Director of Personal Services of Carson Pirie Scott & Company (Chicago) to Miss Claire Drier, Wedding Bureau, Toronto, 1943-02-19.

<sup>115</sup> The earliest numbered bulletin that I located was #27, that of September, 1945. Given that they were issued roughly every week or two, it is likely that they started being formally numbered around 1944, or a year after the position of Fashion Co-ordinator was established with Burrows holding the position. A similar-looking report, unnumbered, was issued by J.B. Hamilton in 1943. The last numbered bulletin I located was #65 of March 3, 1948. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948.”

<sup>116</sup> See, for instance, her letter regarding the distribution of one of her reports: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -



reports with purple prose, such as when she deemed one decorated room she saw at Macy's as "divinely pale and lusciously pink."<sup>117</sup>

A similar tone permeated Naomi Gibson's report on her 1948 tour of New York's stores. Gibson worked at the Eaton's advertising department in Toronto and it showed. Bristling with exclamation points and superlatives, her report dedicated the following panegyric to Altman's master bedroom:<sup>118</sup>

delectable, delicious and delightfully 'dated'! (A lot of 'd's' for what I'd rate a decidedly A-class room). It had a definitely Victorian air about it - yet Grandma must have been quite a girl - for it literally sang with modern colour!

In contrast, a male colleague of Gibson's who went on the same trip, Mr. V. Melhuish of the Eaton's Interior Decorating Bureau, wrote short, sober descriptions of each store. His appreciation of the city's commercial marvels was dry and direct: "I derived a two-fold benefit from the tour; firstly, by seeing the accepted stylings of the day at their source; secondly, ...by being impressed with the fact that moderately spectacular effects can be

---

General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," letter from J.B. Hamilton, New York Office, to J. Wylie, Central Buying Office, Toronto, 1944-03-06.

<sup>117</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," Report entitled "Fashion Research: Flowers and Colorings Enliven Arrangement of Gay Furnishings," by (Mrs.) Jean Belle Hamilton, [New York Buying Office] of 1944-02-21; it was received by the Merchandise Office.

<sup>118</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948," "Memos from New York Trip - March, 1948" by Naomi Gibson, City Advertising, College Street.

achieved in spite of existing limitations.”<sup>119</sup> The great contrast in styles might be explained partly by levels of experience; Melhuish’s document had been prepared by a typist and had formal, tidy formatting while Gibson’s, typed by herself, was full of corrections. This suggests that the latter had a relatively junior status and, as a result, had had less exposure to the business communications style that was the norm at Eaton’s. Indeed, she admitted that some accessories “may be ‘old-stuff’ to others but they were NEW to me and I haven’t seen any at Eaton’s.” Also, of course, they were from different offices and Gibson’s report read like copywriting, unsurprising given that she was from the Advertising department. Another factor, though, might have been that Gibson was a *woman*, and that as such she had some license, due to the pioneering efforts of the New York-office based female reporters.

It was certainly in this tradition that Mary T. Walsh wrote when she prepared regular and special reports from the same office in the 1960s. Her description of Mary Quant – as “founder of the ‘Kooky School’ of design. ‘Kooky’ in case you are not up in your hepology are clothes that seem ‘beat’ or eccentric to ‘Beats’ or eccentrics”<sup>120</sup> -- was as iconoclastic as the clothing designer herself. Once again, a woman Eatonian extended the limits of company norms of expression.

A final way that some of these women made room for themselves was to advance company thinking on display. Alice Burrows, for one, shared with both her female and male colleagues observing the American merchandising scene a special interest in its appearance. Like them, she wrote reports home abounding with descriptions of colours,

---

<sup>119</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File “New York and Other American Stores, 1943-1948,” report for 1948-03, “Re: New York - Mr. V. Melhuish” of Interior Decorations Bureau, dated 1948-03-11.

<sup>120</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, File “Merchandising - New York Buying Office”, report “J.C. Penney Confidential,” by from Mary T. Walsh, New York Office, of 1962-08-16.

spatial arrangements, the look of different textures; the underlying structure of a piece of furniture, say, or the way a fabric felt or smelled, received virtually no notice at all in their missives. Indeed, Mr. J.A. Brockie, the Eaton's display manager, recognized that Burrows shared his mission of engaging with and improving visual culture when he playfully signed off a letter to her with, "Yours, for Bigger and Better Paint Boxes."<sup>121</sup> What was new in Burrows's analysis of the American "home fashion" retail scene was her interest in the stories inherent in its dramatic visuals. She wrote in 1945 that good displays paid "especial attention to the *story* told by the merchandise in its arrangement."<sup>122</sup> As one of her colleagues noticed, Burrows emphasized "the effectiveness of grouping merchandise in place of the 'row method' of selling,"<sup>123</sup> with the latter involving simply lining up goods by type, while "grouping" meant putting goods in arrangements to represent rooms, themes, moods, and so on. In being thus arranged, goods were related to each other, to accessories, and to display materials such as backdrops; thus placed in new contexts, that is, in "stories," they obtained new meanings above and beyond their strict use value. In addition, Burrows stated that descriptive "cards throughout the store ought to tell the fashion story, and act as silent salesmen to help the selling force along."<sup>124</sup> This was another way that displays could tell tales.

---

<sup>121</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 94, "New York Office Correspondence, 1945" letter from J.A. Brockie to Miss Alice Burrows, Fashion Co-Ordinator, New York Office, 1946-01-28.

<sup>122</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," "Toronto Report," by Alice Burrows, Fashion Co-Ordinator, [New York Office], 1945-03-19.

<sup>123</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," memo [to file] of B.M, probably B. Mercer of Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1945-03-07.

<sup>124</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York Office," "Toronto Report," by Alice Burrows, Fashion Co-Ordinator, [New York Office], 1945-03-19.

Lorraine Simmons of the Eaton's Interior Decorating Bureau was another female Eatonian interested in New York stories. She reported that in the city's Furniture Show of 1953, a printed description of material on display was available to visitors. Her impression was that "the little story seemed to convey more to the public than just looking did.... The customers were definitely interested in reading and seeing just what the individual pieces were." Like Burrows, she recommended that Eaton's adopt the idea. If used at the Eaton's House of Trends, for instance, "customers will have an inkling as to the types of people the house would interest."<sup>125</sup> Both these women seemed to feel that when inserted in stories, merchandise would spring to life; they attributed to good display, that visual art, a powerful vitality that would lead shoppers to envision how merchandise would enrich their own lives. In other words, Burrows and Simmons were sensitive to the capacity of image and sign to create meanings that went far beyond the surface.

At Eaton's, there had been displays of furnished rooms with explanatory written descriptions for decades.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, merchants had long been aware of the importance of inserting goods into bigger pictures. Émile Zola's description of masses of brilliant umbrellas decorating the store at the centre of his novel *Au bonheur des dames* shows that store displays had used effective groupings to make goods seem fresh and alluring in the nineteenth century;<sup>127</sup> the rise of comic-strip advertisements in the 1930s was another way

---

<sup>125</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," report of 1953-10-05, "New York Trip", by Lorraine Simmons, Interior Decorating Bureau.

<sup>126</sup> For photographs of early furnished room displays, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-2033, "Merchandise - Housefurnishings - Furniture - rooms on display at C.N.E.," 1915-09.

<sup>127</sup> Émile Zola, *Au bonheur des dames* (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1990).

of inserting merchandise into stories.<sup>128</sup> Burrows and Simmons helped to inform their colleagues at Eaton's how this old method was being used to effect in the new "home fashion" marketing environment. In this way, asserting their special insights of the developing American visual culture, they made themselves at home in the U.S.A.

### 3) *Eaton's men evaluate their female colleagues*

What did the Eaton's men make of these female colleagues working in the U.S.A. after 1939? They certainly paid attention to the New York office bulletins some of the women wrote in the 1940s; initials and other marks accompanying the early bulletins indicate that men in Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg saw and circulated them. In the 1950s, Phillis Stagg's superior highly appreciated her work; Mr. W.C. Weber, a manager in the Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, noted she brought back from New York "new ideas which have been incorporated successfully into our operation," and that in purchasing she had "excellent taste."<sup>129</sup> Mary Walsh's 1960s communications were equally welcomed. Senior buyer F.C. Carter, for instance, evaluated them with phrases like "excellent job" and "well described."<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> These are discussed in Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, BasicBooks, 1994), pp. 330-33. For a discussion of Canadian advertisements aimed at women and examples of comic-strip style ones, see Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books, 1988), pp. 85-6, and illustrations between pages 112-13.

<sup>129</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 44, File "Travelling - Overseas (Except Requisitions)," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office, 1959-01-30.

<sup>130</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, "Special Promotions - Far East Prom. - Oriental Bazaar," F.J. Carter, [Merchandise Manager, Group D.], "Report on Mr. F.J. Carter's trip to New

This raises the question, more difficult to answer, of how Eaton's men reacted to the livelier writing style that some of these women used. Male manager W.C. Weber indicated his awareness of the value of one woman's different approach when he prepared a covering letter for the 1958 report by Mary Prud'homme, of the Toronto Staff Training Department, on the Chicago furniture market. What Prud'homme described, he said, "was all new to her" because it was the first time she saw it; furthermore, "her views are those of a young person...." Weber contrasted this with "our buyers, who have been in the market in previous years" and "may not have been as excited about certain things as she was."<sup>131</sup> Weber's letter, which was circulated in his Housefurnishings Merchandise Office along with Prud'homme's report, thus implied that readers would partly judge the report according to its form. They would notice the "excited" tone of her writing, which was presumably as much a sign of Prud'homme's junior status as the fact that she typed it herself.<sup>132</sup> Weber thus neatly clarified the contrast between the new Eaton's woman and the old Eaton's norm -- the experienced, world-weary male buyer, adept in negotiating all the avenues of male-dominated corporate culture, including its preferred style of communicating. Nonetheless, Weber did appreciate Prud'homme's insights and encouraged his colleagues to do the same. He indicated that she was "vitally interested in the promotion and sale of home furnishings, and aware of new trends in design, styling and colour. She was most interested in the various lines displayed as they compared to

---

York, November 1964," to W.C. Weber, Executive Office, no date. He is commenting on Walsh's report no. 71.

<sup>131</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 28, File "New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office to various employees, 1958-02-21, re: a report of 1958-02-12 entitled "Report of visits to the Chicago Furniture Markets [etc.], by Miss Mary Prud'homme, Staff Training Department, College Street, regarding her visit to Chicago and Grand Rapids furniture stores and merchandise markets.

<sup>132</sup> I am making this assumption because no typist's initials appear at the end of the report, as they do consistently in company correspondence.

offerings in our departments.” He acknowledged, in other words, that Prud’homme was offering her male colleagues not only a new language, but also a new perspective.

As these examples show, senior Eaton's men were appreciative of the efforts made by their female colleagues in the U.S.A. At the same time, the fact that this appreciation has been preserved in the historical record is a sign that they reserved their right to evaluate the women, and in regular company correspondence that would be read by other employees. As the chapter on Europe indicated, they rarely used this forum to evaluate their male subordinates. Thus, just as the records were a place for the women to advance their expertise, they were also where company men defended their continued predominance.

### Conclusion

From quite early on in the history of Eaton's, company leaders and employees looked on the U.S.A. as a good source of ideas and merchandise selections. Virtually all references in the corporate records to American products and practices were favourable, and very often admiring; the country south of the border enjoyed a consistently positive reputation in the company.

Eatonians saw the U.S.A. as familiar and rejuvenating, their home-away-from home. It is not surprising, then, that the records also indicate managers consistently willing to have female employees like Patricia Doran go there. Whether it was as junior secretaries or senior buyers, Eaton's women worked and visited the U.S.A. in higher numbers and proportions than the other foreign places in which the company operated. And indeed it was in the post-World War II period, when “home fashion” became the watchword of the booming American retail industry, that Eaton's women became more important than ever to the firm’s activities there in their role as expert observers of this new scene. In numbers and significance, therefore, the company’s female employees were active agents of its “Americanization.”

PART II  
EATON'S IN CANADA



## CHAPTER 5

### EATON'S OPERATIONS IN CANADA

#### Introduction

Part II of this thesis is about the Eaton's retail operations in Canada. The present chapter provides a chronological history of them, thus providing the context for the following chapters that explore certain aspects of the company's store and catalogue environments.

Just like the world abroad, for Eaton's, Canada represented a territory to be exploited. The company set up two sales divisions in the country in order to fully profit from it. There was the store division, often just called "City," which as this name indicates catered to urbanites, and there was "Mail Order" which, for most of its history, was aimed at people outside of the cities.

The chapter starts by tracing chronologically the development of this dual structure in the company's first half-century. First, Timothy Eaton established his store and, then, fifteen years later, he printed a catalogue to advertise it. Later, his son John Craig opened a new store and catalogue in Winnipeg and oversaw the development of systems to manage them. Even in this early period, having the two kinds of sales outlets -- stores and catalogues -- had its drawbacks for Eaton's. Of course, it did provide the company with the enormous advantage of being able to sell merchandise to all kinds of Canadians, across much of the country. However, it was also costly. Quite often, the City and Mail Order divisions and their employees competed or even conflicted with each other and this could go against the company's financial interests. This was particularly the case for Toronto City staff.

Next, the chapter turns to the question of how these tensions played out between 1922 and 1976. In this period, Mail Order became much stronger within the company: bigger, more unified, and more autonomous. On the one hand, the Eastern and Western catalogues became increasingly alike, and this caused tension between Toronto's and Winnipeg's buyers. On the other hand, the Mail Order division became more and more separate from the Store. It obtained its own buyers and set up its own sales outlets. While these developments increased the division's ability to reach its targeted clientele, they also led to costly duplications within Eaton's, to the point that they were a key reason the company president cited in ceasing catalogue operations in 1976.

Looking at the history of the complex relationship between Mail Order and City brings to light the negative side, from the company perspective, of model male employees. As Part I of the thesis indicated, at Eaton's, male employees were encouraged to develop themselves and the company simultaneously by moving through any territory, however hostile it might be, where they could trade goods for the good of the company, and they appeared to have acted accordingly. In Canada, the problem was that employees were placed in a *bounded* space, alongside other like-minded employees. This led them to compete with each other for "territory" in ways that could be to the detriment of both their colleagues and the company as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

### The First Fifty Years

#### *The Toronto Store and Catalogue under Timothy Eaton, 1869 to 1907*

---

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Susan Porter Benson found that in American department stores, "battles over territory" occurred among buyers (department heads) over space in the stores themselves. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 46.

Timothy Eaton was first and foremost a shopkeeper. Both his apprenticeship in Ireland and his first business experience in Canada West were in this field.<sup>2</sup> After a brief, unsuccessful venture into wholesaling in Toronto in 1869, he returned to the retail trade, opening a dry goods store in the city the same year. He started another wholesale operation in 1881, but the local economy was as unfavourable to the wholesale trade as it had been in 1869 and he closed the operation in 1883. He returned his full attention to retail, and to his store.<sup>3</sup>

For Eaton, in other words, “retail” meant “store sales” at first. Eaton’s shop grew quickly and he soon assigned men to head up the various sales departments he established, giving them quite a free hand and encouraging them to be independent. Departments were like little stores unto themselves and many employees felt more loyal to their department than to Eaton’s as a whole; Eaton’s nephew John James claimed that in 1884 there was “a constant quarrelling between departments and no harmony throughout.”<sup>4</sup>

At first, Mail order was a minor part of this whole. Eaton provided a mail order service simply in order to expand the store’s territory. Although little information is available in the company archives about the beginnings of the service, we do know that by the late 1870s, one stop on the store delivery route was the train station, so that merchandise could be forwarded to customers outside the city. As Santink has noted, the service was probably used both by people who had shopped in the store and requested home delivery, and by those familiar with the store who had requested goods by letter.<sup>5</sup> An Eaton’s archivist noted that this informal system was “thriving” well before the first Eaton’s

---

<sup>2</sup>Eaton was born near Ballymena, Ireland in 1834 and apprenticed with a general store in that country. After immigrating to Canada, he and his brother James operated small stores in Kirkton and in St. Mary’s, Canada West. Santink, Joy L., *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>3</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 58-60, 92-94.

<sup>4</sup>T. Eaton’s Records, Memorandum of John James Eaton, 1884-85, cited in Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 123.

catalogue was printed.<sup>6</sup> The Eaton's catalogue, which first appeared in 1884 in the form of a little pamphlet<sup>7</sup> distributed at Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition,<sup>8</sup> simply expanded on the mail order operation and, like it, aimed to increase sales of Eaton's store goods. The 1884 version simply listed them; later ones described at length the store and the experience of shopping there. The Spring 1885 catalogue, the first to be distributed by mail, was probably sent not only to known customers but also to postmasters, who were asked to distribute them to people in the area. These latter potential customers would not necessarily have heard of Eaton's and thus needed some information about the company if they were to entrust their money to it.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the catalogue started out as just one of Eaton's many undertakings intended to increase the success of his store in these years. Another example was his factories, which he established to make store merchandise, including clothing and household goods.<sup>10</sup> Catalogue operations remained a branch of overall store administration for some time, and a minor one at that. One person -- a young woman from the store's hosiery department -- was given the task of writing addresses on the first catalogue sent directly to known customers (Spring-Summer 1885); another, a store clerk named Miss Arnold, received and filled orders.<sup>11</sup> Even as catalogue business grew, its operations remained closely tied to the store system. More clerks were hired, but throughout the 1880s they continued to

---

<sup>6</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research," undated note entitled "In the Beginning" [archivist's notes].

<sup>7</sup>Thus, even though it was just a humble pamphlet it was still a catalogue, simply defined by one specialist as "promotional material which describe a product or variety of products." Gaye Smith, *Trade Catalogues: A Hundred Years, 1850-1949: An Exhibition Catalogue* (Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University Library, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p 123.

<sup>9</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 124.

<sup>10</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 82, 107.

<sup>11</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 123-4, 126.

fill the mail orders directly from the various store merchandise departments.<sup>12</sup> The Mail Order Office did move several times as its business increased but it remained located in the store,<sup>13</sup> physically part of its larger operations.

By the 1890s, however, catalogue sales had grown enough that the Mail Order Office required a fair amount of separate attention within the company. For one thing, company leaders began wondering if the office should pay a portion of store operating expenses like the other store departments did. Although that idea was put into practice only decades later, as we shall see, it did lead to a useful study of company accounts in 1895. They revealed that the catalogue was responsible for around a fifth of the overall sales increases, with the store pulling in the rest.<sup>14</sup> Mail Order sales continued to increase in absolute value and in relation to store sales in following years.<sup>15</sup> For another thing, Eaton's managers started developing new procedures just for Mail Order. Catalogue orders were increasing, and its staff too: by 1890, there were more than one hundred clerks filling mail orders.<sup>16</sup> It was essential to streamline their activities to keep them cost-effective. To do so, managers implemented new procedures, some imported directly from abroad. For instance, Frank Beecroft, who headed the Mail Order Office, copied several catalogue innovations from the American firm Montgomery Ward.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 156.

<sup>13</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue – Research," note by archivist, no date, entitled "Mail Order History."

<sup>14</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 155-6.

<sup>15</sup>Santink points out that by January 1897, they accounted for a quarter of total sales at Eaton's. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 156.

<sup>16</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 156.

<sup>17</sup>These included providing order numbers for each item, clear images of goods, and detailed order forms to ensure customers received exactly what they wanted. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 156.

Beecroft also brought to Eaton's the Ward idea of using purchase slips to communicate mail orders to the store departments. The goal was to allay department managers' objections over the clutter of mail order clerks swarming the store to pick up merchandise.<sup>18</sup> Thus, some of the efficient new ideas were intended to regulate the points where Mail Order and City operations intersected. In 1900, for instance, Store Superintendent J. Poole described "a great deal of confusion caused by Mail Order Buyers and City Customers being waited upon at the same time and at the same counter" to buy books during the holiday season. (Apparently, the purchase slip system was not being implemented.) He suggested setting up a separate book stock room which would serve both Mail Order and City.<sup>19</sup>

From the point of view of upper management like Poole, Mail Order and City continued to be two parts of one whole retail system. Managers encouraged customers to make purchases in whatever way was most convenient to them, by catalogue or store or both. The store accommodated out-of-town customers by providing long-distance deliveries of their purchases. In 1900, those customers not covered by the regular store wagon-delivery service<sup>20</sup> could get long-distance delivery by railway and freight service through the store's Transfer Office or by mail through its Postal Department.<sup>21</sup> And store

---

<sup>18</sup>Beecroft borrowed the idea from the American company, Montgomery Ward. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 156.

<sup>19</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume for 1900-1902 (Early Notices to R.W. Eaton), p.21, 1900-06-22, from J. Poole. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, also remarks upon this Notice, p. 157.

<sup>20</sup>Wagon service consisted of three deliveries a day to what was called the "city," two a day made to nearby "suburban" areas like the Toronto Junction, one a day to outlying suburbs such as Humber Bay, and thrice weekly to districts further afield such as Richmond Hill and Downsview. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1900-1902, p. 20, no date [c. June 1900].

<sup>21</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1900-1902, between pp. 57-58,

shoppers, whether from the city or outside of it, were encouraged to use the catalogue. They could receive it at home, even if they lived in Toronto,<sup>22</sup> and they also had easy access to the catalogue within the store itself. After 1903, when the Mail Order office had grown so big that it was moved to a separate building on Albert Street,<sup>23</sup> there was a Mail Order Inquiry counter in the store, and samples of mail order goods were kept on hand in the store departments.<sup>24</sup> Catalogue customers were further accommodated by being able to use Mail Order credit vouchers as cash towards in-store purchases.<sup>25</sup> What mattered was not *how* one bought one's merchandise, but that one bought it at Eaton's.

Lower-level company employees did not necessarily see things the same way. A series of 1902-03 Notices suggest that store personnel resented, and even resisted, their responsibility to help out with Mail Order. One such Notice decreed, "we want the co-operation of every Department to get the Mail Orders filled and sent off on time."<sup>26</sup> Another threatened merchandise department heads with fines if goods were not ready for transfer to Mail Order by the time indicated on the Mail Order check. Still others called

---

[1902]-07-02, "Special Instructions to Salesclerks." Sometimes, customers slid from one delivery-category to another; for instance, Eaton's discontinued deliveries to some west-end suburban areas in 1901, leaving people living there to choose between long-distance shipping through the store, or Mail Order. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1900-1902, p.46, 1901-10-30, from "N.J.B."

<sup>22</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 158.

<sup>23</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p 227.

<sup>24</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1903-1904, 1903-10-22, from W.V. Ecclestone, (Superintendent).

<sup>25</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1903-1904, 1904-06-23, from R.Y. Eaton, Secretary, to Heads of Departments.

<sup>26</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1902-1903, 1902-12-16.

on department heads to receive orders from Mail Order only when items were actually available in stock; to deliver merchandise to Mail Order by the time they had promised; to have plenty of clerks on hand in the evenings during the Christmas rush, because this was when Mail Order had to order its merchandise; and to properly fill out business forms coming from Mail Order.<sup>27</sup> It is very possible that the store employees were putting the needs of their own merchandise departments first, ahead of Mail Order.

For the men running Eaton's, this was a problem. In 1905, R.Y. Eaton complained about store merchandise department heads not always having catalogued goods available for Mail Order. This obliged their departments to provide a higher-quality substitute for the same price, resulting in a loss for the company.<sup>28</sup> Eaton wanted his staff to act as if the fortunes of the Toronto store and Mail Order were as one. As things stood, however, "orders are not being filled according to customers [sic] wishes which is undoubtedly detrimental to future business of the whole store...."<sup>29</sup>

R.Y. Eaton concluded this notice on Mail Order storage with the point that healthy Toronto-based catalogue sales were "a thing we need now that Winnipeg store is now the

---

<sup>27</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1900-1902, p. 71, 1902-10-29, from J. Poole; p. 47, 1901-11-8, from J. Poole; and volume for 1902-1903, Notices of 1902-12-12 and 1902-12-15, from Manager's Office to Heads of Departments. Also: S 61, Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1903-1904, 1903-09-29, from W.V. Ecclestone, (Superintendent).

<sup>28</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1903-1904, 1905-05-18, from R.Y. Eaton, Secretary.

<sup>29</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1903-1904, 1905-05-29, from R.Y. Eaton, Secretary.



eve of opening."<sup>30</sup> This great event occurred on July 15, 1905. It involved the launch of a new catalogue which, although produced in Toronto, was made according to the Winnipeg staff's specifications, in order to serve the needs of settlers and other Westerners. These customers had previously been served from Toronto, but now Canada had been divided into two sales territories at Eaton's. R.Y. Eaton was worried because the Toronto catalogue office was about to lose a great deal of business. His Notice indicates that he felt the Toronto store staff should be aware that the real competition was not their city's Mail Order, but Winnipeg.

With the establishment of the Winnipeg store and catalogue, the last great change that Timothy Eaton made to his company before his death in 1907, there were more opportunities than ever for one group of employees to have loyalties in conflict with another group's. Those in store sales had an allegiance to their particular department -- shoes or corsets or furniture -- that sometimes made them antagonistic to their colleagues selling the same items by the mail order method, or to their peers in the rival company region. Within each region, the City and Mail Order divisions were in effect in competition with each other, selling within the same geographical market. Between regions, the competition was not so much over markets, since their territories were mutually exclusive (except for the rare cases, like the one mentioned above, of customers from one region using Eaton's services in another region), but over control. As R.Y. Eaton realized early on, the men looking after the whole company would continually compare the cost-effectiveness of the two regions. The one that lagged would often have the methods of the other imposed upon it. The men who headed Eaton's, in other words, kept the interests of the whole company in mind and took the steps they thought necessary for it to be the most rational and effective as possible. Sometimes this involved centralizing functions, and at other times it meant recognizing regional needs.

---

<sup>30</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1903-1904, 1905-05-29, from R.Y. Eaton, Secretary.

*The company under John Craig Eaton, 1907-1922*

John Craig Eaton, Timothy's enthusiastic and energetic son, is regularly credited with the idea of opening a store in Winnipeg.<sup>31</sup> Company publicity material described it as an opportunity for the successor to prove himself, in passages such as: "It was an epoch in his career. The Winnipeg Store was the first large business venture for which he assumed sole responsibility. This was the point where his father put him to the crucial test."<sup>32</sup> He responded to this challenge, and the larger one of overseeing the whole company on his father's death in 1907, by initiating up-to-date retail methods at Eaton's.<sup>33</sup> One example, often mentioned in company literature, was introducing prices requiring pennies to be used (a twenty-one cent gadget, for instance) and thus bringing the penny into common use in Winnipeg;<sup>34</sup> this was something American stores were also proud to have done in the U.S.A.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 288, "The Scribe" (pseud.) called *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited*, (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co., Limited 1919), p. 107.

<sup>32</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1118, File "Merchandise - Advertising, Catalogue, Brochures etc.", "news release" created by Mail Order Advertisement Office, Winnipeg, entitled "When Eaton's Opened in Winnipeg," c. 1924.

<sup>33</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, emphasizes this point, p. 107-08.

<sup>34</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1118, File "Merchandise - Advertising, Catalogue, Brochures etc.", "news release" created by Mail Order Advertisement Office, Winnipeg, entitled "When Eaton's Opened in Winnipeg," c. 1924.

<sup>35</sup>For example, the Chicago store called The Fair, State, Adams and Dearborn Company, brought what it called "broken nickel" prices to the American west. Forrest Crissey, entitled "Since Forty Years Ago" (Chicago: The Fair, State, Adams & Dearborn, 1915), located in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1407, File "[Stores Outside - The Fair, State, Adams and Dearborn Company - 1915].

In particular, J.C. Eaton was known to have been “systematic”<sup>36</sup> and many aspects of the company operations were made more orderly under his helm. The company had an important impetus to be well-organized. Like its American counterparts, until around the turn of the century, Eaton's had grown simply as a result of expanding the range of its merchandise. Because this process could not continue forever, the company began to try to generate growth through increased sales volume.<sup>37</sup> Operating as it did on the principle of making profits through fast turnover rather than high markup, Eaton's was compelled to carry out huge numbers of transactions quickly, and to do so, its senior staff attempted to rationalize the procedures necessary to do so. This only heightened the competitive atmosphere that had characterized the company in Timothy Eaton's time.

The impact of this new approach was especially apparent with the Winnipeg Mail Order department which, in contrast to the rather halting, ad-hoc early development of Toronto's, was closely and methodically managed from the start. Less than a year after it opened, for instance, its staff was made to respect a time limit for filling orders.<sup>38</sup> In 1913, the small departments in Winnipeg's Mail Order section were organized into larger function-based groupings.<sup>39</sup> There was also a Winnipeg committee “to rectify troubles in connections with mail orders,” such as enforcing quality control.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, 108; p. 110 emphasizes his “powerful sense of logic and... penetration.”

<sup>37</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p 227.

<sup>38</sup>This Notice was repeated in subsequent years. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices) Box 1, File “[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]” Notice of 1909-12-17.

<sup>39</sup>Each grouping was to be assigned a department head; thus, the Mail Order Advertising, Mailing List, Samples, and Prices & Enquiry departments were to be assembled under the heading “Getting Business,” the various merchandise departments to be united under “Merchandising,” and the rest of the sections were slotted into Clerical, Assembling, Packing & Shipping. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of

Another set of initiatives in Winnipeg aimed at clarifying the relationship of Mail Order and City. Sometimes they were at odds; if so, they were told that "should any question of difference arise between the departments concerned, the matter shall be settled by a Committee appointed to take charge of this matter."<sup>41</sup> Notices instructing store departments to stock catalogued lines as much as possible, to appoint salespeople to learn about all Mail Order lines and to try to serve out-of-town visitors rather than direct them to the Mail Order Waiting Room<sup>42</sup> all serve to indicate that the store employees did not always take the time to accommodate customers who normally made their purchases by mail, or, for that matter, to try to sell Mail Order's lines at all. Senior managers wanted store employees to put company business ahead of competition with Mail Order, telling them, "you will find it is greatly to your own advantage to take care of these customers."<sup>43</sup>

Faced with a drop in sales due to the new Winnipeg catalogue, senior Toronto men also took steps to systematize their own mail order service but in a stricter spirit of discipline

---

Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice of A.M. Gilroy to Mr. Gunn, Mail Order Office [Winnipeg], c. 1913-01.

<sup>40</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices) Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]" Notice of 1913-12-09 from E. Fretwell.

<sup>41</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices) Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice Mail Order 146 from J.B. Gould of 1913-02-17.

<sup>42</sup>The only other time out-of-towners were to be directed to Mail Order was if they had a list of catalogued goods they did not want to select themselves. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices) Box 1, File "Head Office Notices," Notice of 1910-11-24. Winnipeg managers also worked out procedures for "Goods bought in the store and returned through the Mail Order." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice CN273 from E. Fretwell to H.M. Tucker 1914-11-16).

<sup>43</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices) Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]" Notice of 1915-03-23 from J.B. Gould, Winnipeg.

than used out West. They urged employees to fill mail orders faster,<sup>44</sup> sometimes even the same day.<sup>45</sup> They founded a Sub-Committee on Mail Order Methods,<sup>46</sup> and improved procedures for handling mail orders and returns.<sup>47</sup> They also clarified faults and assigned blame, one stating bluntly that "the individuals who are slow could be either hustled or replaced."<sup>48</sup> In 1907, for instance, if Mail Order mistakenly sent to an order to a wrong

---

<sup>44</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices) Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 15, 1905-10-02, from R.Y. Eaton. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 16, 1905-10, [no day].

<sup>45</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 41, 1906-05-22, from R.Y. Eaton. Furniture orders were the exception to this rule: more time was allowed for them. See *ibid*, p. 59, 1906-10-10, from H. McGee (Director).

<sup>46</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 16, 1905-10, [no day].

<sup>47</sup>The improvements were made to procedures for processing mail orders that customers picked up in the store; for multi-department orders requiring one or more "To Follows;" and for tallying the expenses to Store and Mail Order for returned goods. Another Notice specified that within two hours of receiving a mail order, a merchandise department had but three options: to fill it, to respond to it without filling it (through a substitution, cancellation, or the dispatch of a To Follow slip) or to request another two hours from a special body called "Mail Order Fix-Up." Sources: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 38, 1906-05-12, from R.W. Eaton, (Superintendent); *ibid*, volume for 1905-1909, p. 54, 1906-09-13, from R.Y. Eaton, p. 78, 1907-04-05, from R.Y. Eaton, and p. 77, 1907-04-04, from R.Y. Eaton.

<sup>48</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 16, 1905-10, [no day].

department to fill it, Mail Order was fined,<sup>49</sup> if a store department was slow to fill a mail order, "the M.O. is put to the extra expense of holding part orders, chasing up balance and finding room for new orders, which expense the Departments eventually pay for."<sup>50</sup>

Eventually, though, the Toronto managers' answer to the complexities of handling the two divisions was to move Mail Order stock and personnel outside of the store<sup>51</sup> and R.Y. Eaton, now First Vice-President of the company, acknowledged that negative competitiveness was a factor. He wrote that a benefit of the move was that it would result in "less interference with City business."<sup>52</sup> Accompanying this change was the creation of separate Mail Order expense forms and departments,<sup>53</sup> which, by 1912, were

---

<sup>49</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 74, 1907-03-20, from R.Y. Eaton. See also *ibid* p. 75, 1907-03-27, from R.Y. Eaton, which indicates the fine for above changed to 10 cents.

<sup>50</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 76, 1907-03-28.

<sup>51</sup>Mail Order was moved to buildings on Louisa Street.

<sup>52</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 167, 1909-06-03, from R.Y. Eaton.

<sup>53</sup>New transfer books for listing goods moved between City and Mail Order were created, and old ones such as stocktaking books or expense forms were separated and even colour-coded to end overlap between the parallel departments. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-504, "Catalogue - Company Memos, Notices, etc. - Confidential [1905-1968]", memo from J.J. Vaughan, Secretary, 1910-07-20. A few departments remained under the supervision of City, including D5, F1, 2 and 3, and the Drug Company. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1909-1913, p. between pp. 100 and 101, 1912-6-20, from J.J. Vaughan (Secretary).

numbered completely differently than the Store's.<sup>54</sup> City and Mail Order did continue to interact; for instance, some City departments still sold "General Merchandise" which they were asked to catalogue.<sup>55</sup> However, this was but a remnant of the former interweaving of store and catalogue business. By the 1910s, then, Toronto's Mail Order was separate in terms of its departments, lodgings, personnel, responsibilities, and records. The two did continue to be part of the same overall operation, of course. The Toronto Merchandise Office managed the merchandise departments in both; most of these merchandise departments were run by assistants--for instance, there would be one assistant looking after Mail Order bicycles and another handling City bicycles – and these shared the same department head.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, one Superintendent's Office managed the non-sales staff for both divisions (including elevator boys and delivery men), issues related to all employees like leaving times, and building displays and decorations.<sup>57</sup>

Competition existed not only between Mail Order and Store within each of the two regions, but also between the two regions. Just as R.Y. Eaton had predicted in 1905, clerks in the Toronto store were clinching sales to visiting Western customers by telling them that the Winnipeg store prices were higher. Eaton forbade the practice, remarking that "such statements are apt to be wrong as right. If questioned, clerks should reply that prices in general are the same but they don't know about the particular article in

---

<sup>54</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1909-1913, p. between pp. 100 and 101, 1912-06-20, from J.J. Vaughan (Secretary).

<sup>55</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume "Incoming Notices 1912-1916," Notice number 17, 1912-08-29, from J.J. Vaughan to R.W. Eaton (Superintendent).

<sup>56</sup>See, for instance, the typewritten notation at the end of the following Notice, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1909-1913, p. 116, 1912-12-24, from J.J. Vaughan.

<sup>57</sup>This is apparent from the information in Series 61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), for the period 1902-16.

question."<sup>58</sup> This was no doubt true; achieving perfect conformity within such a vast and quick-moving business was a complicated and never-ending task, especially for the far-flung stores.

Efficient coordination between Toronto and Winnipeg catalogues was more feasible, given that they were more stable and controllable selling tools than salespeople. The company intent was simple; R. Y. Eaton said it plainly in 1910: "aim at uniformity in Toronto and Winnipeg catalogues." Putting the same merchandise in the two catalogues would reduce the expense of cataloguing it, because they would share pictures and copy, as well as of buying it. The catalogues should be as alike as possible because "people should know from the catalogue that both stores are one Company."<sup>59</sup> The disadvantage of producing both books out of Toronto was that detailed information about the merchandise Winnipeg sold, in response to local demand, had to be sent back and forth between the cities. Eaton's managers tried to find a balance by setting up a new catalogue artwork section in Winnipeg.<sup>60</sup> As of 1914, the plates for the Western catalogue would be prepared in Winnipeg according to the requirements of departments there and then sent on to Toronto for printing.<sup>61</sup> In the name of efficiency, then, a major company activity was duplicated.

---

<sup>58</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R. W. Eaton, volume for 1905-1909, p. 42, 1906-05-28, from R. Y. Eaton.

<sup>59</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R. W. Eaton, volume for 1909-1913, p. 43, 1910-10-15, from R. Y. Eaton.

<sup>60</sup>Angela E. Davis, "Brigden's and the Eaton's Catalogue: Business and Art in Winnipeg 1914-1940," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Society Conference, Winnipeg, 1986, pp. 8ff.

<sup>61</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice 170 from H.M. Tucker to Mr. Tucker of 1913-12-18.



The First World War was hard on Eaton's. It was difficult during the war years to get some merchandise for stock,<sup>62</sup> European suppliers were canceling orders.<sup>63</sup> For both regions in 1918, City business was only "fair" and Mail Order was "not... any too brisk."<sup>64</sup> Stores were advised to buy "hand to mouth" and not stock up,<sup>65</sup> while for the catalogue, in order to boost sales, the company instituted a new policy of free delivery of orders worth over \$5.00.<sup>66</sup> Under these conditions, in-house competition did not diminish. In Toronto, the question arose of which division had the right to exploit Toronto's suburbs and outlying regions. The regular Mail Order catalogue continued to be sent to these

---

<sup>62</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office, 1918-08-07.

<sup>63</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, "Japanese Buying Office," letter from C. Boothe to Thomas P. Douglas, head of Yokohama Buying Office of 1918-03-22; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice [IPS?] 262, from E. Fretwell, Winnipeg, to Mr. Tucker 1914-08-12.

<sup>64</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File "Japanese Buying Office," letter of 1918-03-19 from S. Wilson of Winnipeg to C. Boothe of Toronto.

<sup>65</sup>Reference to a Directors' meeting in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice 296 from W. Wilson, Winnipeg, to E. Fretwell, Department 101, 1916-12-29.

<sup>66</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research" note by archivist, no date, entitled "Mail Order History." Company Directors also sought strategies in the post-war depression "to avoid giving the impression that there is a general increase in prices in our catalogue." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice, Extract from Directors Meeting 1919-03-06.

areas,<sup>67</sup> but at the same time, the store's presence there was strengthened by the establishment of Suburban Order Offices selling store merchandise in Oakville (1916) and Brampton (1917).<sup>68</sup> This was an indication of ongoing competition between City and Mail Order; another sign was that store sales clerks had to be reminded once again to allow "Mail Order and Suburban Customers" to buy and exchange catalogued goods in the store, and generally to be as attentive to them as "City Customers."<sup>69</sup> This, despite the fact that Mail Order and City departments selling the same lines of goods – such as toys or women's dresses – were supervised by the same department head in Toronto.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume "Incoming Notices 1912-1916," Notice 134, 1915-04-28, from J.J. Vaughan, to R.W. Eaton (Superintendent).

<sup>68</sup>Other Order Offices were opened in Hamilton and Oshawa in 1926. It was not until 1927 or 1928 that precedence was given to Mail Order goods in the Order Offices. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue – Research," document "Early Order Offices. NOTE: Eaton's archivists' research was not always consistent. For instance, the Brampton Order Office is not listed at all in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," page headed "Store openings."

<sup>69</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume "Incoming Notices 1912-1916," Notice number 171, 1916-7-8, to department heads.

<sup>70</sup>This, despite the fact that the Mail Order and City departments covering the same lines (such as women's dresses) were assigned different numbers. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice from H.M. Tucker, Assistant Manager, [Winnipeg] of 1915-10-01.

In Winnipeg, the same supervisory structure<sup>71</sup> brought about better coordination between City and Mail Order. For supplies, arrangements were made to transfer store stocks of catalogued European merchandise to Mail Order, so that the latter could have a reserve in times of uncertain supplying,<sup>72</sup> and a war-time buying plan for both divisions was articulated early in 1916.<sup>73</sup> Sales people were moved from one division to the other in rush periods like Saturday afternoons and Christmas.<sup>74</sup> However, the relative harmony and effectiveness within Winnipeg's operations only served to fuel competition between that city's Mail Order division and Toronto's. John James Eaton (Timothy Eaton's nephew) toured Winnipeg's and found it superior to his native Toronto's because customers made far fewer complaints. He protested that in Toronto, "enough attention is not paid to the primary operations in connection with the entering of these orders into the System and consequently they do not get off to a good enough start to enable us to intelligently carry out the wishes of the Customers, which in itself is the fundamental principle of Mail Order Business."<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice from H.M. Tucker, Assistant Manager, [Winnipeg] of 1915-10-01.

<sup>72</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice [IPS?] 262 from E. Fretwell, Winnipeg, to Mr. Tucker, 1914-08-12.

<sup>73</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice BO209 from S. Wilson, Winnipeg, of 1916-03-10.

<sup>74</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196, (T. Eaton Company Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]", Notice of 1917-10-09 from E. Fretwell to A.H. Robinson, Mail Order Carriers, and *ibid*, Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice MO299 from J.B. Gould, Winnipeg, 1915-11-12.

<sup>75</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-480, File "Catalogue - Analysis" [documents from the files of John James Eaton, Toronto] letter to Mr. Bowman from John James Eaton, Toronto, 1917-06-12.

In 1919, Eaton's marked its fifty-year jubilee with special store events, a special catalogue cover, and a commemorative volume singing the praises of the company as "a colossal modern industry."<sup>76</sup> Underneath these declarations of unity, however, the old tensions between regions and divisions continued to exist. And, as the following section indicates, they went on to shape the development of Eaton's during the company's next six decades.

### The Next Six Decades

Eaton's became much bigger and developed a much more complex administrative structure between the 1920s and the 1970s.<sup>77</sup> Through all the changes, however, one constant was the growing strength and autonomy of Mail Order, both in its own right and relative to the Store within Eaton's. This section documents three aspects of these developments in Mail Order. The increasing similarity of the Toronto and Winnipeg catalogues in both merchandise and appearance, the increasing separation of Mail Order and Store buying, and the establishment of new and more elaborate Mail Order Offices all indicate that Mail Order was becoming a sales outlet rivaling City's, not only in importance but also in administrative structure and even in appearance. In the end, however, Mail Order fell victim to its own success. By 1976, company directors concluded that they could not afford two separate store-like systems and they shut down the whole catalogue operation.

The focus on this section will continue to be on the Toronto-Winnipeg relationship. Eatonians in other Canadian cities were involved in the production of catalogues,

---

<sup>76</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 284.

<sup>77</sup>A sign of the company's growth and complexity was the establishment of Management Lists. Simply compiling the names of the people in charge of the various sections, branches and divisions of the company, and reflecting the company's complex structure on paper, ended up being a big job handled by the General Office. The lists and correspondence about their compilation are located in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists).

however. A Moncton book was produced starting in 1920, following the construction of a new mail order building there in 1919.<sup>78</sup> These books were prepared in Toronto, with Moncton staff providing input that appears to have been limited to validating its contents and sometimes requesting price adjustments for their local book, a process which stopped with only occasional exceptions after 1944 when prices became mostly mutual.<sup>79</sup> A French catalogue was produced by Eaton's in Montreal between 1928, which was two years after the company opened a store in that city, and 1931. After that, a French book was produced out of the Eaton's Toronto offices where staff simply translated the English version.<sup>80</sup> Thus, it was the Winnipeg catalogue operations which posed the biggest and longest-running challenge to Toronto's Mail Order.

### *Growing mutuality between the Toronto and Winnipeg catalogues*

Production of the Eaton's catalogue itself was rationalized and centralized in these years. The most significant steps in this development occurred between the 1920s and 1940s, when R. Y. Eaton, now company President, carried through the desire he had expressed in 1910 to make the Winnipeg and Toronto books as uniform as possible.

---

<sup>78</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 159; description for series 3 of T. Eaton Records in Linda Cobon, Lorraine O'Donnell, Tim Belton, Carolyn Heald and Larry Weiler, "Preliminary Inventory of the T. Eaton Records." 6 vols. (Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1990), vol. I, p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39" Notice F476 from Mail Order Office, 1934-06-01; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0--481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," p. 28 verso.

<sup>80</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0--481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," pp. 4, 6; and file F 229-162-0-514, "Catalogue - Printing," document of 1963 headed "Eaton catalogue - modern."

In the 1920s, the emphasis was on uniformity of content, not appearance. Buyers from the two regions were instructed by Eaton in 1921 to look through samples together and choose as many of the same lines of goods as was practicable,<sup>81</sup> so that Eaton's could place bigger orders with manufacturers and thus obtain lower prices "to undersell competition;" the buyers were free, however, to have the merchandise described and pictured in the catalogue as they wished.<sup>82</sup> They were told to keep their joint buying sessions short in order to keep their travelling costs down, however.<sup>83</sup> In the mid-1920s, then, the Winnipeg catalogue was produced separately from Toronto's; employees from the two regions' printing departments exchanged letters about ink and paper matters but then did their work independently.<sup>84</sup> Winnipeg's methods of handling orders also remained different from Toronto's and as in earlier years the two were compared for cost efficiency.<sup>85</sup>

In the subsequent decade, more stress was laid on uniformity of appearance of the Toronto and Winnipeg books. Men in the Executive and Merchandise offices argued in 1930 that ordering identical stock should allow the regions not only to carry out mutual

---

<sup>81</sup>Westerners needed some lines of goods to be different than Easterners; for instance, the West needed heavier hosiery and gloves for cold winters.

<sup>82</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) volume 1919-23, Notice B108 from R.Y. Eaton to Heads of departments, 1921-09-16.

<sup>83</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39", Notice C208 from A. McP[herson] {Merchandise Office?} to Mr. Lee, Mail Order Advertisement, 1927-12-14.

<sup>84</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-514, "Catalogue - Printing." letters between E.R. Tennant, Winnipeg Printing Department, and A. Pudsey, Toronto Printing Department, of 1925-01.

<sup>85</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 53 (Mail Order Office- Procedures Files (General), OS Box, File "[Mail Order Systems, Toronto], 1920-26," document from Toronto comparing Winnipeg and Toronto Mail Order Departments; c. 1926-05-18.

buying, but to have mutual pages in the catalogue. A manager in Winnipeg's Executive Office declared, "we want to assure you that we will co-operate with Toronto in every way to get both catalogues as nearly alike as possible."<sup>86</sup> Four years later, the two regions arranged to have a regular "mutual exchange of Mail Order information" regarding advertising, display and printing.<sup>87</sup> The dress department was "completely mutual" for the first time in the Spring-Summer 1938 catalogue.<sup>88</sup>

Under John David Eaton's presidency (1942-69), the two catalogues looked increasingly alike. By 1944, three-quarters of the pages of the Winnipeg and Toronto catalogues were identical in appearance, both pictures and copy;<sup>89</sup> they also featured identical department prefixes and used the same photographs of millinery.<sup>90</sup> This was now being justified within Eaton's as not only cost efficient, but in line with a cultural change out west:

---

<sup>86</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-505, "Catalogue - Company Memos & Correspondence re: Christmas Catalogue [1928-1930]". Letter from S. Wilson, Executive Office of Winnipeg, to V.H. Dennis of Mail Order Department in Toronto, 1930-12-06; letter from V.H. Dennis of Mail Order Office [Toronto] to J.E. Robertson of Merchandise Office in Winnipeg, 1930-12-27.

<sup>87</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F530 from Mail Order Office to Head of Department 15, 1934-11.

<sup>88</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-011-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," untitled document probably written by Eaton's Company archivist, p. 13.

<sup>89</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings, [1901-1970]", article from *Contacts*, 1944-07, called "Planning that Western Institution: The Eaton Catalogue," p. 35.

<sup>90</sup>This was in the 1944 Spring-Summer catalogue. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-011-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," p 27.

fashions were said in 1946 to be "identical" in both catalogues "for the very good reason that women throughout Canada have very similar tastes in clothing."<sup>91</sup> A Westerner explained that this was because Western women were becoming more "sophisticated."<sup>92</sup> The Spring-Summer 1949 catalogue was "the first 100% mutual Big Book produced under one central control." Although some of the smaller sale catalogues of subsequent years were not entirely mutual,<sup>93</sup> by 1963, books for the three Catalogue regions – Maritimes, Central and Western<sup>94</sup> -- were printed in Toronto and with only occasional and slight differences between them. No longer used for printing, the Winnipeg Mail Order building was now simply a distribution centre for merchandise.<sup>95</sup> "Uniformity" had truly arrived.

---

<sup>91</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970]", article "The Invisible Customer," *Contacts* 1946-07, p. 24, adapted from article by Robert McKeown, "The Farmer's Bible," *Canadian Business*, 1946-03.

<sup>92</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-514, "Catalogue - Printing," letter from Fred H. Bridgen of 1955-03-31, to John David Eaton, President, Eaton's, p. 10.

<sup>93</sup>For instance, the January Sale book of 1950 had the same cover but some differences on the inside pages. In 1955, there was a mutual Spring Sale book but with different expiry dates, and the Summer Sale book included supplementary pages for Winnipeg. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-011-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," untitled document probably written by Eaton's Company archivist, pp. 36, 37, 47, 48.

<sup>94</sup>The naming of these regions, as well as the official name change from Mail Order Division to Catalogue Division, occurred in 1961. See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-504, "Catalogue - Company Memos, Notices, etc. - Confidential [1905-1968]", memo from A.E. [Smalley] General Office, number 801, Toronto, 1961-03-03.

<sup>95</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research", document "Some information regarding Eaton catalogue – April, 1963."



More mutuality meant that buyers for the regions had to work ever more closely in concert, which, as an employee magazine put it in 1944, required "a great deal of discussion and conference" between them.<sup>96</sup> This was putting things gently; indeed, the same author privately described buyers' meetings as "contentious."<sup>97</sup> Such was certainly the case for drapery buying in that year. According to the Winnipeg Housefurnishings Office, its drapery buyers had in the past decided upon the way drapes would be portrayed in the catalogue.<sup>98</sup> (At this point, the responsibility to prepare catalogue page layouts for the various merchandise departments was divided between Toronto and Winnipeg.<sup>99</sup>) In 1944, however, Winnipeg's layouts, which its buyers had used to guide its purchases, were rejected in favour of Toronto's. Winnipeg's buyers did not feel that Toronto's pages gave "an adequate showing" of the drapes they had already purchased.<sup>100</sup> The

---

<sup>96</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970", Moray Sinclair, "Planning that Western Institution, The Eaton Catalogue," *Contacts*, 1944-07, p. 35.

<sup>97</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from M. Sinclair of Winnipeg, Mail Order Advertisement, writing from Toronto Mail Order Advertisement, to Frank Carpenter, Eaton's Company, Winnipeg, 1944-06-28.

<sup>98</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from F. Carpenter, Housefurnishings Department, Winnipeg, to O.D. Vaughan, Executive Offices, 1944-04-11.

<sup>99</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from O.D. Vaughan, Executive Offices, to Carpenter of 1944-04-19.

<sup>100</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from F. Carpenter, Housefurnishings Department, Winnipeg, to O.D. Vaughan, Executive Offices, 1944-04-11.

Toronto drapery buyer saw things differently. He said that when he showed his Winnipeg peers his attempts to “tone up” the way the drapes were shown in the catalogue, they did “not agree to this without considerable argument.” From Toronto’s point of view, “it seems that Winnipeg wants to dominate, and unless they are given their way, will never be completely satisfied.”<sup>101</sup> Company executive O.D. Vaughan called for a truce on the matter and urged the departments concerned to be more cooperative and to create more mutual pages, therein keeping catalogue costs down.<sup>102</sup> His efforts notwithstanding, however, Winnipeg buyers refused a suggestion that it attend subsequent meetings with their own tentative catalogue page layouts to show Toronto what they wanted.<sup>103</sup>

Later in the 1940s, similar problems in other departments led the two cities’ Merchandise Offices to develop better procedures to keep records of joint buyers meetings, in the hopes of reducing the number of misunderstandings.<sup>104</sup> There was also a bigger, more significant initiative undertaken at Eaton’s: to coordinate Mail Order buying by centralizing it. In 1939, a new General Buying Office was created in Toronto.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File “Mail Order,” letter from G.M. Roberts, Department 267, Draperies, to O.D. Vaughan, Executive Offices 1944-04-28.

<sup>102</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File “Mail Order,” letter from O.D. Vaughan, Executive Offices to Carpenter of 1944-04-19.

<sup>103</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File “Mail Order,” memo from E.G. Smart, Mail Order Office, to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office of 1944-07-03, and annotation by Barber.

<sup>104</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File “Mail Order,” correspondence [3 letters, one e.g. 1949-12-17] between B.E. Mercer, Toronto and D.S. McKellar of Winnipeg.

<sup>105</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 14 “Signatures - Managers' List, 1939” - list for Toronto of 1939-05.

Renamed the General Merchandise Office in 1943,<sup>106</sup> it consisted of various “Coordinators with the rank of Supervisor” who, working out of Toronto, were in charge of purchasing for specific lines of goods. (The “GMO,” as it was known in-house, also supervised the European buying offices, as Chapter 1 indicates.)<sup>107</sup> By 1947, some of these Coordinators oversaw buying of Mail Order lines for the whole country. Radios were bought this way, for instance. However, at this point, Winnipeg still had its own “Merchandise Office Representatives,” as well as a Western Buying Office.<sup>108</sup> Yet as has already been mentioned, by 1949, the main catalogue became fully mutual East and West. By the end of 1953, there were Senior Mail Order Buyers in the GMO;<sup>109</sup> they would have looked after the national coordination of mail order buying required by this truly national catalogue. These buyers had “full responsibility for the Mail Order operation.”<sup>110</sup>

A staff magazine article on the preparation of the Eaton's catalogue indicated that in 1969, finally, choosing merchandise for the book now started with “buyers get[ting] together with the appropriate Catalogue Merchandise Planning Manager to develop plans for the following year.” Each buyer was allotted a certain amount of space in the book. This implied that there was only one buyer per line of goods, not, as in the past, Eastern and Western buyers meeting and agreeing on their shared line of goods. Indeed, the article did not mention regional buyers at all. The only input mentioned in the article from the

---

<sup>106</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 18 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1943.

<sup>107</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 20 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1945".

<sup>108</sup>See in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 22, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1947" for Toronto/Winnipeg.

<sup>109</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), File 34 for 1956; and Box 6, “Amalgamated list, 1958”.

<sup>110</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File “Mail Order,” letter from Robinson to W.C. Weber, 1954-03-08.

separate Winnipeg, Toronto and Moncton catalogue regions was their checking over sales estimates for their respective areas; at that point, "orders are sent to the suppliers with specific delivery dates." Just where the orders were placed was not indicated; it is possible that they were placed regionally. However, as the article makes clear, actually choosing and buying a line of goods was a task shared by one buyer and one Merchandise Planning Manager.<sup>111</sup> By 1969, then, there was thus just one catalogue and one set of goods, East and West.

### *Decreasing mutuality between Mail Order and Stores*

As the Mail Order division became more harmonized between the Toronto and Winnipeg regions, the long-standing differences between it and the Store divisions grew. This was reflected in company management lists outlining the organization of merchandising at Eaton's. In Toronto in the 1920s, for instance, while buying for the two divisions did continue to be managed jointly -- corresponding merchandise departments of Mail Order and City continued to be headed by the same person (for instance, C.F. Prudhomme was head of City and Mail Order hosiery),<sup>112</sup> and the department heads, in turn, were overseen by Group Supervisors and Group Managers<sup>113</sup> -- a separate Mail Order Merchandise Office and store Merchandise Office was set up.<sup>114</sup> By 1936, these latter offices were

---

<sup>111</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-498, "Catalogue - Clippings 1970's on," article entitled "It takes teamwork to merchandise a 'best seller,'" *Eaton Quarterly*, Summer, 1969, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 3 "Signatures - Managers' Lists, 1918-1929", lists for Toronto for 1923, 1925, 1926.

<sup>113</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 3 "Signatures - Managers' Lists, 1918-1929" lists for Toronto for 1927, 1928.

<sup>114</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 3 "Signatures - Managers' Lists, 1918-1929",

supervised by a Mail Order Superintendent and a Store Merchandise Manager respectively.<sup>115</sup> A further sign of the separation of Mail Order and City merchandising in Toronto was the creation, in 1930, of a Central Merchandise Office<sup>116</sup> to coordinate buying and selling activities for the stores under Toronto's jurisdiction, that is, stores in Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.<sup>117</sup> The idea behind it was that group buying for stores would "make use of the combined purchasing power... in securing outstanding values"<sup>118</sup>

The 1953-54 list of buyers at Eaton's<sup>119</sup> indicates that this confusing arrangement of joint-but-separate merchandising continued to exist three decades later. On the one hand, there was coordination of Store-Mail Order buying. Both Toronto and Winnipeg had a

---

lists for Toronto for 1923, 1925, 1926. NOTE: These separate sections were later more explicitly named in management lists as Store Merchandise and Mail Order Merchandise sections; see *ibid*, list for Toronto for 1929.

<sup>115</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 9, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1936," letter from J.A. Livingstone [Executive Offices] to R.D MacLean, Winnipeg, of 1936-01-14.

<sup>116</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 4, "Signatures - Managers' Lists, 1930-1931", list for Toronto for 1930.

<sup>117</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 6, "Signatures - Managers' List, 1933".

<sup>118</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39" Notice D245 from A.M. McPherson, Merchandise Office to Supervisors/Group Managers/Department Heads of 1929-06-24.

<sup>119</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953," list for 1953. A note on inside of file folder says "List started in 1953 showing Principal Buyers opposite departments -- This was not completed until 1954-- therefore no list was sent out in 1953."

Buying Office, each under the supervision of one person, who oversaw buyers looking after *both* Mail Order and Store merchandise, be it toys or jewelry (with an exception: in Toronto, there was one buyer looking after Store women's wear, and another buyer looking after Mail Order women's wear). There were also, at the very top of the buying hierarchy, the new Full Time Principal Buyers who oversaw purchasing of some, but not all, lines of goods for the entire company, across divisions and regions. The Principals were "not directly responsible to the management of any one Division."<sup>120</sup>

On the other hand, under the Principal Buyers were Senior Mail Order Buyers whose role was to oversee mail order buying across the country (because the catalogue was at this point mutual, East and West). This meant, Toronto employees slowly came to realize, quite a bit of autonomy for Mail Order buying. A Mail Order merchandise department whose lines of goods had been assigned a Senior Mail Order Buyer, but not a Principal Buyer, was no longer responsible to the corresponding Store merchandise department in any way; the corresponding Store Buyer was limited to the role of "co-operation," for instance by giving tips on goods he saw that Mail Order *might* want to sell.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, if there was both a Principal Buyer and a Senior Mail Order Buyer appointed to cover the same line of goods, the latter still had a lot of autonomy from the Store. A senior housefurnishings merchandise manager explained the set-up as follows:<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 4, File 30, "List of Management, 1953, list or 1953, letter from D.M. Allen, Merchandise Office, to A.E. Smalley, General Office, 1954-01-04.

<sup>121</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from Robinson to W.C. Weber, 1954-02-08.

<sup>122</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to D.S. McGiverin, Merchandise Office, 1954-09-13.

Under the present arrangements... the [Senior] Mail Order Buyers are not responsible to the Toronto retail departments for the purchase of goods and the pricing of the items in the catalogue. There is even less connection between the Mail Order Buyers and the Toronto retail departments in those departments where there is no Principal Buyer appointed in the General Merchandise Office.

His letter did not elucidate what the difference between “not responsible to” and “even less connection between” actually meant. However, the letter does make it clear that by 1953, a good deal of Mail Order buying was in fact directed by the Senior Mail Order Buyers who were in no way responsible to the Store departments.

At this point, the only reason buyers of the two divisions had to take each other's requirements into consideration was the one senior Eatonians had long given: loyalty to Eaton's as a whole. As one man put it in 1954, "...it is absolutely essential that the Store and Mail Order men continue to cooperate in the future as they have in the past regarding the buying, pricing and general merchandising in their respective departments in the best interests of the Company."<sup>123</sup>

The question, however, was what cooperation meant in practice. When it came to joint pricing, managers kept changing their minds. In 1954, the policy was to have mutuality of Store-Mail Order prices: “Store Management should compare Store prices with those in the Mail Order, and where differences occur a satisfactory price should be agreed upon which will be in the best interest of our Company.”<sup>124</sup> In 1956, however, the two divisions were allowed to establish prices independently of each other in order to “compete with

---

<sup>123</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File “Mail Order,” letter from M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office to W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1954-03-18.

<sup>124</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File "Mail Order," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, to W.S. Laidley, Drapery Office, 1954-02-09.

items offered by Simpsons and ... Simpson-Sears Mail Order items.<sup>125</sup> The following year, the 1954 policy of joint pricing was reinstated,<sup>126</sup> and company branded lines were singled out: they were to be sold at identical prices in stores and the catalogue,<sup>127</sup> at a price given by Principal Buyers.<sup>128</sup> In 1958, the policy of allowing price differences between stores and the catalogue, "providing such prices are competitive with their own separate competition," was reaffirmed.<sup>129</sup> Later in the year, a committee was formed to "to recommend ways and means for satisfying the Store and Mail Order where there is confliction [sic]" over prices.<sup>130</sup>

"Confliction" did not seem to be a problem in Winnipeg, whose Executive Office reported that even though the in-house policy was to "be competitive," in practice almost all goods

---

<sup>125</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," Extract from minutes of Mr. Weber's Group, 1956-02-08.

<sup>126</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," letter from D.M. Allen, Executive Office, Central Division, 1957-03-08, to W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office (Toronto).

<sup>127</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office (Toronto), to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office (Toronto), 1957-09-27.

<sup>128</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order", draft policy statement titled "Re: Store and Mail Order Prices," Merchandise Office, 1958-10.

<sup>129</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order", draft policy statement titled "Re: Store and Mail Order Prices," Merchandise Office, 1958-10.

<sup>130</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," Extract from Merchandise Managers Meeting, (Toronto), of 1958-12-06.



had the same price in the store as in the catalogue.<sup>131</sup> It was an issue in Toronto, however. Although the Store occasionally undersold the catalogue in response to "terrific competition from local cut-rate houses,"<sup>132</sup> its managers were more often concerned about the opposite situation of the catalogue underselling the Store. The Store's Furniture department head was unhappy in 1954, for instance, when the Punkinhead crib mattress was \$3.00 cheaper in the catalogue than in the Store. His concern was that the Store could not "afford to cut our price in order to meet Mail Order competition."<sup>133</sup> This put him and other Store retail departments in a weak position because Toronto-area customers could easily visit or phone the store to check its prices, then compare them to Mail Order's, either by consulting the catalogue -- over two thousand of them were distributed in April, 1957 in the Metropolitan area alone<sup>134</sup> -- or by telephoning the Mail Order Office. Ordering over the phone was by now so common that the expression "Mail Order Telephone Sales" was commonly used, without any apparent irony, in company correspondence.<sup>135</sup> At the same time, telephone ordering from the Store was

---

<sup>131</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," telegram from R.M. Pinfold, Executive Office, Winnipeg, to D.M. Allen, Executive Office, Toronto, 1958-08-29.

<sup>132</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," letter from J.E. McIntosh, 277 Department, to W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office (Toronto), 1956-02-28.

<sup>133</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), File "Mail Order" (Box 25)] letter from D.I. MacLean, Department 271, Furniture, to B.W. Smith, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office, 1954-09-02.

<sup>134</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," letter from R.J. Henderson, Furniture Office (Toronto), to W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office (Toronto), 1957-06-10.

<sup>135</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," letter from W.C.

decreasing.<sup>136</sup> Store managers admitted they were "receiving strong competition from the Mail Order in this field."<sup>137</sup>

In their correspondence about prices, Store employees revealed that the two divisions were barely communicating, let alone cooperating. Toronto Store department heads concerned about potential price differences during the Fall of 1954 revealed that they had heard a "rumour" that a special catalogue was being planned for September, and that "we really cannot do anything about the dates of the Mail Order Catalogue."<sup>138</sup> In 1957, in order to find out whether their prices would harmonize with Mail Order's during an upcoming sale season, Store managers had to send a delegate to the General Merchandise Office to find out what goods Mail Order was planning to feature in its next catalogue.<sup>139</sup>

As this latter action indicates, moreover, the two divisions were not buying in concert. A 1956 inquiry revealed that Toronto Store housefurnishings departments did not often have to lower their prices to meet the catalogue's, for the simple reason that they did not carry much catalogued merchandise in the first place. In May of that year, the only household goods duplicated in the catalogue and the Toronto store were one chair, a dining room

---

Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office (Toronto) to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office (Toronto), 1957-06-27.

<sup>136</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," Extract from minutes of Merchandise Managers' Meeting of 1957-01-22.

<sup>137</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," Extract from minutes of Merchandise Managers Meeting of 1957-02-12.

<sup>138</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," Memo to file by B.W. Smith, Housefurnishing Merchandise Office, 1954-09-20.

<sup>139</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," Extract from minutes of Merchandise Managers' Meeting (Toronto), 1957-00-26.

set, and some metal-ware.<sup>140</sup> Some so-called bulked orders were placed by Mail Order and Store divisions together around this time, for instance in floor coverings.<sup>141</sup> However, this does not seem to have been common practice. By the 1970s, the merchandise featured in the Stores was generally of a higher quality than the Catalogue's. Only about 15 per cent of the two divisions' merchandise was mutual in 1976.<sup>142</sup> Even if there was only one "Eaton's of Canada," there were actually two sets of Eaton's merchandise for sale.

### *Separate stores for Mail Order*

In 1954, an Eatonian complained about Mail Order competition, arguing,<sup>143</sup>

This situation is much more serious in Toronto than nearly anywhere else. Mail Order Offers

---

<sup>140</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order," letter from W.C. Weber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office (Toronto) to M.A. Robinson, Merchandise Office (Toronto), 1956-06-04.

<sup>141</sup>In the fall of 1958, for instance, a Floor Covering Buyers' meetings noted that Mail Order Buyers and Principal Buyers were to "review all lines and decide on those suitable to be placed as common stock lines. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order, "Extract from minutes of Floor Coverings Buyers' Meeting of 1958-09-26."

<sup>142</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]", article in *Monday Report on Retailers* [Toronto] 1976-01-19.

<sup>143</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 30, File "Pricing - Store and Mail Order, "Comments re: TACA vs. M.O. Prices," handwritten document, [1958]-04-24, signed "B." (Possibly G. W. Barber).

- Same telephone service
- Same opportunity to see the goods (Showroom & Oshawa)
- Same delivery schedule (on the same trucks)
- Same convenience of opening a Budget Account. (through showroom)
- etc. etc.

With one serious disadvantage to the store the M.O. sells it at less mkg. [mark-up] & for a 5 month period.

As he indicated, from the point of view of the Store, the problem was not only that Mail Order had lower prices; it was also that Mail Order offered similar services and facilities. Perhaps most problematic was the "same opportunity to see the goods" that Mail Order provided in its showrooms and order offices. Between the 1920s and 1970s, a whole range of outlets was created for the sale of Eaton's catalogued goods. This was the third and most concrete sign that the company Mail Order was becoming autonomous.

In 1927-28, Eaton's opened new Mail Order Offices in the Ontario cities of Guelph, Galt,<sup>144</sup> Brantford, Chatham and Stratford. Unlike in the Oakville and Brampton Order Offices, which had been opened in 1916-17 to sell Toronto Store goods, these new bureaus were to receive their merchandise primarily from the Mail Order division.<sup>145</sup> A number of Store-supplied Order Offices were placed "under Mail Order supervision" in 1933<sup>146</sup> and in this and the following decade, new Mail Order Offices were opened. There

---

<sup>144</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research," document "First Store..." [undated].

<sup>145</sup>This information is from a note in the Eaton's archivists' files. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research," document "Early Order Offices" [undated].

<sup>146</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 6 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1933" letter from A.H. Ireland, Order Office Supervision, to Mr. Chambers, General Office, of 1933-03-03.

were 188 of them across the country by 1947,<sup>147</sup> 101 of these being located in Ontario.<sup>148</sup> By 1975, there were 239 Mail Order Offices.<sup>149</sup>

These offices were Mail Order's contribution to the great wave of expansion at Eaton's between the 1920s and the 1960s. The company also opened a variety of new stores in these years ranging from simple "Teco" outlets in smaller cities like Brandon, Manitoba (1937) to a fabulous Art Deco department store in Montreal (1925).<sup>150</sup> By 1949, there were Eaton's stores from coast to coast, in Brandon, Calgary, Dauphin, Deep River, Edmonton, Gander, Halifax, Hamilton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Moncton, Montreal, Moose Jaw, New Westminster, Oshawa, Port Arthur, Red Deer, Regina, Saskatoon, Toronto (including a second store on College Street), Winnipeg and Vancouver. The company had also bought twenty-one Canadian Department Stores across Ontario in 1928, which it ran under this name for two decades. They were given the Eaton's title in 1949.<sup>151</sup> In subsequent decades, Eaton's turned more to suburban development, opening

---

<sup>147</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-496, "Catalogue - Clippings 1940's & 1950's," clipping from *Maclean's*, 1947-01-01 p. 22.

<sup>148</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," minutes of Adjusters' meeting of 1947-03-18, copy sent to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office.

<sup>149</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]," untitled document from company, no date (c.late 1975 or early 1976), section "Activités du catalogue," p. 2.

<sup>150</sup>New stores included Information on the structure and management of the stores for this period is located in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists).

<sup>151</sup>In AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists); see also Cobon et. al., Archives of Ontario, *Preliminary Inventory of the T. Eaton Records*, Volume I, pp. 2-3.

stores in suburban malls such as Yorkdale, north of Toronto. By 1975, more than 60 per cent of Canadians lived within a thirty-minute drive of an Eaton's store.<sup>152</sup>

Aside from the exception of Toronto, however, where there was competition between City and Mail Order for the same clientele, for the most part, the Mail Order Offices did not present much of a threat to the Eaton's Stores or their managers. They were usually in places where there were no Eaton's stores to compete with, such as Granby, Shawinigan, Sorel, or Ste-Hyacinthe in Quebec,<sup>153</sup> or Stettler, Cardston, Blairmore and Wetaskiwin in Alberta.<sup>154</sup> As a sympathetic colleague noticed, the people running the Mail Order Offices were:<sup>155</sup>

the sole representatives of The T. Eaton Co. in their locality, and one needs only to stand behind the partitions in an Order Office and hear the various questions that Order office clerks are asked, to realize the importance of keeping the Order Offices informed, especially of delays in filling orders....Order Office clerks...do not have an easy time.

---

<sup>152</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]," clipping from *The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15.

<sup>153</sup>For details on the Québec Mail Order Offices, see the leases and related documents in F 229 S201 (T. Eaton Company Limited of Montreal - General Records), Box 1.

<sup>154</sup>For pictures of these, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-92, "Building and Expansion - [General] - Order Offices..." (Alberta).

<sup>155</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," minutes of Adjusters' meeting of 1947-03-18, copy sent to G.W. Barber, Housefurnishings Merchandise Office.

Humble outposts, the Mail Order Offices were, company photographs reveal, mostly quite small and plain-looking.<sup>156</sup> In the early 1940s, for instance, those in the British Columbia towns of Penticton, Kelowna and Cranbrook were simple affairs with some furniture on display, a counter, and posters with just text; others in Prince Rupert and New Westminster were bigger, and had more housefurnishings on show, but were still not at all flashy.<sup>157</sup> All in all, their status was low in the Eaton's hierarchy.

This low standing was underlined in company correspondence about the people running the Mail Order Offices. In the 1930s, they were named in Eaton's management lists under the heading "Clerk in Charge."<sup>158</sup> However, given that the lists were meant to indicate the "titles to the senior men of the Company at all our places of business," several managers made the point in subsequent decades that the people running the Mail Order Offices, being mere clerks, should not be included in them. Having a list of these clerks was handy, though, and thus it was decided that the Mail Order Office clerks would be included, but not as "In Charge" of a "location," as the managers were.<sup>159</sup> The reason

---

<sup>156</sup>There are many pictures of Mail Order Offices filed under the "Building and Expansion" heading in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records].

<sup>157</sup>1941 AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-137, "Building and Expansion - [General-] Mail Order Offices (British Columbia).

<sup>158</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 2, File 13 "Signatures - Managers' List, 1938" listing Order offices, 1938-10-25.

<sup>159</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 1, File 10 "Signatures - Standardization of Signature Lists - Titles"---memo from T.R. Houston and James Turner of General Audit Department to I.W Ford, Executive Offices, 1948-03-04. This concern over including Mail Order Office clerks was expressed regularly. See, for instance, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 3, File 29,

these people stood out on the lists was not only because they were clerks, however. It was also because they were female. Managers discussing their inclusion in the lists underlined their junior status by consistently referring to the clerks as “girls.”<sup>160</sup>

With Mail Order becoming more centralized and autonomous as of the 1950s, however, both its status and its stores improved. A sign of change was a 1961 company memorandum announcing that "the term 'Mail Order' is now replaced by the term 'Catalogue' in organizational description from this point forward."<sup>161</sup> “Mail order” was indeed misleading, given that in one year, thirteen percent of all orders were by mail, while walk-in and phone-in orders accounted for twelve and seventy-six percent respectively.<sup>162</sup> But changing the division’s title was significant for another reason. The old term "mail order" had referred to a method of distribution, as if this was what distinguished the division. The new term, “Catalogue,” formally acknowledged what was already a fact: that cataloguing was at Eaton's a separate merchandising operation, with its own buyers, sales books, and outlets. Another sign of change occurred in 1964, when Eaton's announced a new style of Catalogue Sales Office in Cobourg, Ontario. It represented "a completely new concept in catalogue shopping," namely, it was really a small department

---

“Signatures - List of Management, 1952”, letter from H.B. Halliday, General Office, Toronto to B. Sutherland, Sales Office, Winnipeg , 1952-05-29.

<sup>160</sup>For instance, one letter complains that “the girls in charge of Order Offices” were in the Management lists. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/ Management Lists), Box 3, File 29, “Signatures - List of Management, 1952” letter from H.B. Halliday, General Office, Toronto, to H.B. Tait, Moncton Store, 1951-10-19.

<sup>161</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-504, "Catalogue - Company Memos, Notices, etc. - Confidential [1905-1968]", memo from A.E. [Smalley] General Office, number 801, Toronto, 1961-03-03.

<sup>162</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]," clipping from *The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15



store with goods on display by department. The experiment was popular enough for Eaton's to renovate forty older offices in its image, "particularly in areas where the Company had closed or sold branch stores."<sup>163</sup> This last fact was significant. No longer an adjunct or representative of the Stores, the catalogue and its sales outlets were in some cases actually replacing them. By 1966, catalogue sales were almost double what the largest Eaton's store sold and its overall percentage of sales was growing.<sup>164</sup> When the company closed several small branch stores that year, Executive Vice President David Kinnear said that the continued existence of the catalogue was a sign that "the company has no intention of abandoning its position as department store to the nation."<sup>165</sup>

This was the context in which the catalogue division opened a new kind of store: bargain outlets. Disposing of surplus catalogue stocks had been a point of contention between Store and Mail Order in Toronto in the 1950s. Store Merchandise Managers were responsible for trying to sell them, because Mail Order had few ways of doing so.<sup>166</sup> It involved large amounts of goods; in May of 1959, for instance, Toronto's Mail Order had

---

<sup>163</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970]", article: "Now They've Citified the Country Catalogue," *Eaton News Quarterly*, 1967 Winter, pp. 8-10.

<sup>164</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's", article by Walker, Dean, "How they've citified the old country catalogue," *Chatelaine* 1966-07.

<sup>165</sup>Quoted in *Globe and Mail*, 1966-07-26, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's."

<sup>166</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File "Mail Order" (Box 25), Minutes of Merchandise Managers Meeting, 1959-12-08.

\$749,915 worth of merchandise to dispose of.<sup>167</sup> However, the straightforward plan for Mail Order to indicate to the Store those surplus goods that needed to be sold, and for the Store division in turn to request to have all goods it was capable of selling transferred over to its shelves, did not work out. Mail Order, for its part, sometimes neglected to send a list of surplus goods to Housefurnishings,<sup>168</sup> or offered its surplus to the Toronto bargain store ahead of the regular retail departments.<sup>169</sup> On their end, Store merchandise departments showed little interest in helping out Mail Order by disposing of its goods. In 1958, for example, the Toronto Store accepted only \$20,971 of the \$327,855 worth of goods Mail Order offered, and refused to sell them until after the Christmas rush.<sup>170</sup> It seems that cooperation between Mail Order and Store never improved on this issue

---

<sup>167</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," minutes of Merchandise Managers Meeting, 1959-05-20.

<sup>168</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," minutes of Management Group Meeting, 1959-02-20.

<sup>169</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), File "Mail Order" (Box 25), correspondence between R.J. Butler of Housefurnishings Merchandise Office and R.W. McCabe of Mail Order Divisional Office, 1959-07-15 and 1959-08-05.

<sup>170</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), Box 25, File "Mail Order," letter from R.W. McCabe, Divisional Office, Mail Order Central Division to D.M. Allen, Executive Offices, 1958-12-17.

because Mail Order began to hold its own Warehouse Sales in 1963,<sup>171</sup> and later opened its own bargain stores, which numbered nineteen by 1976.<sup>172</sup>

Conclusion: Closing down the catalogue, 1976.

In 1974, an Eaton's newsletter remarked that "although definitely an integral part of Eaton's, the Catalogue Division is, in many ways, an entity of its own." With its own choir, entertainment, and activities, the Division's staff was "a very involved and lively group."<sup>173</sup> The division's independence -- the fruit of years of increasing autonomy in terms of buying and pricing goods, representing them jointly in a nation-wide book, and showing them in separate stores -- was, however, soon to be destroyed. On January 14, 1976, Eaton's closed down its catalogue operation. Having started up in the 1880s, it was now almost a century old. The effect of the decision was immense. There were 4,500 full-time and 4,500 part-time employees laid off, including 2,872 in Toronto, 1,600 in Winnipeg, and 977 in Moncton.<sup>174</sup> Ceasing to operate were 239 catalogue offices, 31

---

<sup>171</sup>These occurred in Hamilton in 1963. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-504, "Catalogue - Company Memos, Notices, etc. - Confidential [1905-1968]", letter from C.V. Pickett of Store Managers Office, Hamilton, Executive Office, Central Division, Toronto, 1963-04-16, and letter of 1963-04-02 to S.R. Martin, Head Office.

<sup>172</sup>*Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]".

<sup>173</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970]", article: "Plowing matches reap rural recognition," *Eaton News*, March, 1974.

<sup>174</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]."

furniture stores, 70 in-store sales counters, 323 telephone sales services, 144 sales agents and 19 bargain centres.<sup>175</sup>

Eaton's explained it as a financial decision.<sup>176</sup> For one thing, Eaton's had fierce competitor in the Simpsons-Sears catalogue that, since its creation in 1953 (when the American company Sears, Roebuck and Company bought the Robert Simpson's company catalogue), had badly outsold the Eaton's book. The latter earned \$89M less than the Simpsons-Sears catalogue in 1968 alone: \$156M, as opposed to \$245M.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, despite earlier company denials to the press,<sup>178</sup> Eaton's did admit that it the Catalogue

---

<sup>175</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]", untitled document from company, no date (c. late 1975 or early 1976), section "Activités du catalogue," p. 2.

<sup>176</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]." *The Globe and Mail* added its own explanations, for instance that Eaton's should have made "cost-saving economies" in the catalogue division. Although 'hard goods', such as heavy appliances, sold especially well overall, they were not given enough priority in the catalogue, where their sales were weak. The article also argues that in this period of inflation, fixed catalogue prices were a disadvantage; there were "severe cost control difficulties;" and finally, that an idea of a joint catalogue venture with J.C. Penney had foundered.

<sup>177</sup>The Simpsons-Sears catalogue earned \$245M to Eaton's \$156M. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-504, "Catalogue - Company Memos, Notices, etc. - Confidential [1905-1968]", note to file of 1968-10-25.

<sup>178</sup>Eaton's had denied rumours of catalogue losses in 1966; see *Globe and Mail* 1966-06-14 p B5, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's."

Division had been losing money for a decade. The shortfall was \$18M in 1973<sup>179</sup> and \$17M in 1975.<sup>180</sup> For these reasons, said company president Earl Orser, if Eaton's wanted to preserve the rest of its business, "there was no practical alternative" to closing down the catalogue. The company acted with the "greatest reluctance."<sup>181</sup>

In explaining the closure, Orser singled out among other factors the cost to create and produce the catalogues and the fact that only 15 per cent of the catalogued merchandise were available in Eaton's stores. He noted that at Simpsons-Sears, catalogued and store merchandise was identical,<sup>182</sup> with, according to other sources, as much as 90 per cent overlap.<sup>183</sup> In other words, the separation between Eaton's store and catalogue operations, which had been increasing for decades, sought after by many employees and and with senior management consent, was in the end a factor in the decision to discontinue the latter of these divisions.

---

<sup>179</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-480, File "Catalogue - Analysis" document "Catalogue - Sales Statistics" [1975-04].

<sup>180</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]".

<sup>181</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]".

<sup>182</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]".

<sup>183</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]", article in *Monday Report on Retailers* [Toronto] 1976-01-19.

Orser added, "we see our big future and our destiny in the classic department store business."<sup>184</sup> Thus, Eaton's was returning to its roots: store retailing. After a humble birth as an advertisement to this store in the 1880s, the catalogue had developed into a separate system for Eaton's to buy and sell goods; it had represented an alternative, not only to customers but also within the company itself. This had been acceptable until the 1960s, even though it had often been the source of irritating complaints, both in-house and in public, about the confusion of different prices, deliveries, and so on. But when the catalogue began to lose money in the 1960s, the difference it represented no longer seemed reasonable. Suddenly, long-standing realities of the catalogue -- that it featured different merchandise than the stores and that it was costly to create and produce -- were used, in 1976, as reasons to shut it down.

---

<sup>184</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 1976-01-15, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]."

## CHAPTER 6

### EATON'S STORES AND CATALOGUES: A WOMEN'S SPECTACLE

#### Introduction

As the previous chapters have shown, Eaton's did not make much room for women in many of the places it considered important: in most of the lands abroad, except those times and places the company considered safe, and in most of the senior positions at home, except in one or two areas the company considered best-suited to females. There were, though, two crucial company sites reserved for women: its Canadian shopping outlets, that is, its stores and catalogues. Here, women were not just tolerated, they were wanted, needed, and actively solicited; here, women were, very often, the whole point.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the nature of these women's places and the methods used at Eaton's to make them so. Its focus is the Toronto-area stores (with references to outside stores as the records permitted) and the catalogues produced from Toronto.

These Eaton's stores and catalogues were women's places in two ways. First of all, they were venues arranged *for* women: their services, rhetoric, and so on were explicitly aimed at them, and they were the people most likely to shop there. Women were the targets of Eaton's as it went about the "rebuilding of an observer fitted for the tasks of 'spectacular' consumption," to borrow the phrase of a scholar of the formation of modern visuality.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, and related to the first point, the stores and catalogues under consideration were organized as places *of* women: on entering these environments, one was confronted with visions of women everywhere one turned. Indeed, a great deal of company resources – including new technologies, methods of display and management directives -- were used to ensure that women were on show in its shopping environments and, moreover, in ever-changing, ever more exciting ways. By the late nineteenth century, indeed, both catalogue and store were quite showy, even spectacular at times, and women served as a key object

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), p. 19.

on view. "Starring" women, hosting huge numbers of women spectator-shoppers, these Eaton's stores and catalogues could truly be called "women's spectacles."

What follows, then, is a study of these women's places. The chapter begins by considering the stores, which came first. After reviewing their impressive visual atmosphere created through their adoption of modern merchandising methods, it looks at how this atmosphere was not only created mainly for females, but also put three groups of them on display: shoppers, employees, and "model women." Next, the chapter discusses the Toronto catalogue and its evolution from humble pamphlet to glossy fashion magazine. Showcasing women in its pages, and eventually its points of sale, had an effect that went beyond allowing Eaton's to appeal to its female clientele. The focus on women actually drove the direction of this catalogue's appearance; it was a force behind the book's increasingly eye-catching look. Thus, if the stores and catalogues can be called women's spectacles, this chapter can be said to provide a review of what went on on-stage and behind the scenes.

In so doing, the chapter also lays the groundwork for subsequent chapters that examine in more detail some of the messages about women contained in these scripts.

## The Stores

### *The changing form of selling*

Joy Santink has documented in detail how Timothy Eaton rejected older customs of selling -- which involved a slow process of negotiating, between sales staff and customer, a price and payment through credit -- in favour of the new customs of offering goods with fixed prices on a cash basis only. There were important advantages to these new practices. Selling for cash eliminated the risk of offering credit to city people that Eaton did not know, and also provided him with money to make his own purchases. Fixed prices allowed him to engage in vigorous, attention-getting price skirmishes with his competitors, seen most obviously in the duel between Timothy Eaton and Robert Simpson for the lowest-cost goods placed at the doorways of their neighbouring Toronto stores.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>The Scribe" (pseud.) *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited* (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co., Limited 1919), p.



This was part of Eaton's effort to appeal to the waged working class whom he observed “seem to get their pay every week and spend as they get the next.”<sup>3</sup> Santink notes that Eaton “was not ashamed to make price a selling point,” a fact made clear in the many newspaper advertisements he took out. Furthermore, fixing and marking prices meant that he had less need to employ mature, experienced workers to negotiate prices with customers. Instead, he hired mostly unskilled adolescent girls and boys, at much cheaper rates.<sup>4</sup> Thus, as Santink argues, Eaton's selling practices made good sense financially. Although they attracted attention for being innovative (Eaton himself made the claim), in fact, as she also points out, they were already widespread in a number of Canadian cities by the 1860s, having become standard in British and American department stores since around the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

For Santink, this represented “an environment of highly impersonal competitive trading that was in striking contrast to the earlier close traditional personal relationship that had existed between merchant and customer.”<sup>6</sup> Before the advent of department stores, selling was centered on a highly personalized, carefully cultivated relationship between client and merchant or clerk. The customers’ access to goods was mediated through this relationship. Prices were arrived at jointly through bargaining or haggling. Thus, the salespeople’s training and social skills, particularly their ability to persuade through speech, affected both the understanding customers would obtain of goods, and the price eventually agreed upon.<sup>7</sup> Printed advertisements, the appearance of goods and tasteful display<sup>8</sup> were all factors affecting sales but they were subordinate to these other, social ones.

With the rise of Eaton's and other department stores, there was a great shift in what might be called the form of selling, that is, the means used to communicate the value of

---

41; Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>Letter of Timothy Eaton to James Eaton, 1870-05-17, cited in Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>5</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 48, 50, 63.

<sup>6</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 251-52.

<sup>7</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, chapter 3, outlines the nature of the old style of selling.

<sup>8</sup>Santink notes that as early as the fourteenth century, Piers Plowman refers to tricks of draping linen to make it look longer. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 45.

merchandise and thus to clinch its sale. Salespeople did continue to have an important role in the department store. This was certainly the case for the United States; Susan Porter-Benson has described in great detail the centrality of saleswomen to American stores, how carefully they were trained and how highly they were valued until the end of the period she studies, 1940, when selling remained an active job, a “drama of persuasion.”<sup>9</sup> It was also the case at Eaton's; detailed training manuals for salespeople that were produced at least until the 1960s are just one sign of the resources management expended to direct how salespeople represented the company.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in 1934, Eaton's management asked salespeople to alleviate the anonymity of the modern stores in which they worked. A management Notice requested sales staff to use the names of customers when possible, because<sup>11</sup>

good will is built on personal service. Therefore, if we can keep before us the thought that each customer is our guest and endeavour to treat our customers as guests would be treated in our homes, a more gratifying and friendly feeling can be developed between our customers and staff.

This way, the notice continued, Eaton's stores would have the personal touch found in small shops.

Yet in the modern department store, the process of selling went far beyond salespeople. Right from the start, as we have seen, customers could get a clear sense of the quality and appearance and prices of merchandise, and decide to make purchases, without coming into contact with Eaton or his employees at all. They were free to peruse detailed advertisements, window shop, and look at what was marked down outside the front of the store where, company literature proclaimed, “at all times price tickets were a prominent

---

<sup>9</sup>Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), especially chapter 6; quotation from p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>For examples of sales training booklets, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 162, “Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Offices - Subject Files, files headed “Employees - Manuals – Sales” dated from the 1930s until the 1960s.

<sup>11</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume “Notices to Departments: 1925-39,” Notice F464 from Superintendent’s Office to Supervisor, Group Manager, Head of Department.

feature.”<sup>12</sup> As another company document noted, advertisements “will bring people to the store,” windows were “the card on the front door that says ‘Please step inside,’” and tickets were “silent salesmen – always on the job.”<sup>13</sup> In the early years, this private experience of goods ended when customers crossed the threshold of an Eaton's store because upon entering, they were greeted by floorwalkers who assigned sales clerks to accompany them throughout the building.<sup>14</sup>

In later years, however, the customers' private experience of merchandise could continue inside, because they were freer to browse on their own. Until after the Second World War, much of the merchandise was stored in glass-topped cabinets and in order to actually handle it, the customers had to enlist a salesperson's help. Eventually, though, self-service areas were set up at the Eaton's stores, with merchandise being laid out in the open on shelves and counters or on hangers.<sup>15</sup> For instance, in the Toronto Yonge Street store, self-service was introduced in the “smallwares” and toy departments in 1952.<sup>16</sup> Now, customers had even more unimpeded, private access to goods and thus more time and information to decide on what to buy on their own. A consequence of this was a reduction in both the number of sales clerks in the self-service areas, and of the need for their skills at persuading and informing customers.<sup>17</sup>

Browsing, reading advertisements and price tickets, and window shopping were not simply private aspects of shopping; crucially, they were also visual. In other words, what is important is not just that Timothy Eaton and his successors took a lot of the selling

---

<sup>12</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 1, File 2/4, “Advertising & Display Conferences, Jan. & June 1947,” 27-page draft book for new display and advertising staff, no date, document titled “The aim of this book,” pp. 21, 22, 26.

<sup>14</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup>Early photographs of store interiors show many goods in glass display cases. Later pictures document the change over to self-service. For examples, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records] under the heading “Merchandise.”

<sup>16</sup>Eileen Sufrin, *The Eaton Drive: The Campaign to Organize Canada's Largest Department Store, 1948 to 1952* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982), p. 194.

<sup>17</sup>Sufrin, *The Eaton Drive*, pp. 20-21, 194.

process *from* the realm of the salesperson-shopper relationship, where so much of the communication was verbal and personalized. It is also that they moved it *to* the realm of signs and appearances and looking. It was very often in these forms that selling occurred at Eaton's.

It is in within this context that we can understand the Eaton company's engagement with contemporary North American commercial visual culture. William Leach has documented in fascinating detail the emergence, starting around the 1890s, of what he calls "new visual media" – ranging from new forms of advertisements to electric signs – which were exploited by retailers in the U.S.A. to update store environments. Thus arose a new American commercial aesthetic that exploited light, glass and colour -- elements that had traditionally been used by the state and organized religion to highlight the power and prestige of their regimes – to promote a dream of a "*this* -worldly paradise" centered on the store.<sup>18</sup> Evidence from company records shows that Timothy Eaton and his successors likewise exploited modern technologies in an effort to make its stores glistening, magnetic showplaces of colour, glass and light. Thus, the form of selling at Eaton's was not simply visual (communicated through the sense of sight through ticketed prices and so on); it was also spectacular. This meant that Eaton's stores were not simple stages for selling, but were part of the selling act itself. A 1940s company manuscript for employees working in visually-oriented departments was explicit about this: it said that with effective merchandise display, there was "no need for a 'sales talk;' just exhibit the goods and let human nature do the rest."<sup>19</sup> Eaton's stores therefore could be called an example of what has been called "consumerist architecture," which is the "manipulative exploitation of forms for commercial purposes."<sup>20</sup>

Light was a fundamental component of store environments and Eaton's invested money and effort to make sure it was effective. The Yonge Street store in Toronto had a light-

---

<sup>18</sup>William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 9, 40.

<sup>19</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 1, File 2/4, "Advertising & Display Conferences, January & June, 1947," document titled "The aim of this book," no date, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> John Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Aug. 1991), p. 211.

well<sup>21</sup> and in 1893, Timothy Eaton invested in the latest styles of skylights and electric illumination when he opened his new store on the same street.<sup>22</sup> The Winnipeg store, opened twelve years later, was likewise designed to dazzle; a promotional book indicated its power plant was capable of generating “sufficient current for 36 800 lights.”<sup>23</sup> Careful photographs of electric lighting arrangements in various store interiors for later years suggest that this subject was a widespread and continued concern within the company.<sup>24</sup> In-house documents also indicate that the technology represented a considerable amount of trial-and-error work for its employees. Company notices for the recently-opened Winnipeg store, for instance, spelled out careful instructions on when to turn them out, why not to break their wires, the difference in regular lighting and “illumination in connection with special decoration,” and what they cost.<sup>25</sup> At best, as this differentiation between regular and decorative lighting indicates, these lights would create an ambiance that was always bright and on occasion dramatic. Hundreds of photographs from the company archives indicate that the stores strove for both effects over the years. Store displays often employed lighting as an element of their design; there was, for instance, a “giant Easter egg which contained an orchestra (8 pieces and piano)” measuring 21 feet by 14 in the central lightwell of the Toronto store in 1906,<sup>26</sup> and, to take just one of many other examples, flamboyant spotlighting of the Montreal store to dramatize the exterior Coronation decorations in 1937.<sup>27</sup> At worst, lighting could go wrong and cause disorder and fear. A Winnipeg Notice instructed staff that “in the event of arc lights going out or

---

<sup>21</sup>There are pictures of it in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0-399, “Building And Expansion - Main Store - Light-well and organization [ca. 1889]”.

<sup>22</sup>The new store was at 190 Yonge St. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pg. 180.

<sup>24</sup>See, for instance, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 307: Company Development Office – Company Property Photographs – Photoprints.”

<sup>25</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File “[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg],” Notices of 1906-01-12, 1910-02-01, 1911-12-29.

<sup>26</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 1075, “Display - Special - Easter - early.”

<sup>27</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 1709, “Historic Events - Coronation – George VI – Exteriors, picture no. 2104.

sprinkler pipes leaking or any other contingency arising which would cause the Customers to feel uneasy, do not be alarmed but assure those near you that there is no cause for alarm....”<sup>28</sup> Clearly, lighting technology had to be handled carefully if it was to serve the function of making shopping more pleasant and thus aiding sales.

The second key element of what Leach identified as the heavenly store environment was colour. Like light and glass, colour became more scientific as it became a tool of the new visually-oriented retailers. Around the turn of the twentieth century, there were many technical advances in colour dye production, which affected the hue of clothes and other merchandise, and in coloured lighting, photography and printing (colour lithography, for instance).<sup>29</sup> Colour was vital in professional styling, a field emerging in the 1920s; its practitioners were interested in “the surface, shape, design – and above all, the colour – of machine-made goods.”<sup>30</sup> Alongside stylists worked display artists who accessorized and “enssembled” clothes, cosmetics and housefurnishings, often on the basis of their colour, in order to make the component goods more appealing and meaningful.<sup>31</sup> Thus, colour was central to these new visually-centered disciplines of describing and representing goods (in print) as well as exhibiting them (in displays). Eaton's stores showed the effects of all of these developments. For instance, the appearance and name of the hues given to merchandise was carefully controlled, and their drawn or photographic representations in advertisements were printed in colour as early as was feasible, as the section below on catalogues will indicate. Control over print dyes also allowed the stores to offer colour-coordinated shopping bags, price tags and so on, and also to ensure that the company name would be written in the same colour ink on letterhead and signs, so that there was a unified effect within and among its stores.<sup>32</sup> One company display book outlined the effects that different colours had on customers’ perceptions of merchandise and their

---

<sup>28</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File “[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg],” Notice of 1910-02-01.

<sup>29</sup>Leach, *Land of Desire*, p. 50.

<sup>30</sup>Leach, *Land of Desire*, p. 312.

<sup>31</sup>Leach, *Land of Desire*, pp. 317-18.

<sup>32</sup>Many Notices to this effect are present for instance in the company Notice books for the 1920s and 1930s; see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume “Notices to Departments, 1925-39.”

moods, and concluded frankly that “the appropriate colour setting can actually improve the appearance of the merchandise, and therefore increas[e] its sales value.”<sup>33</sup>

Glass was the third of the “new visual media” in which Eaton's invested. It was everywhere in the stores. Early photographs show that mirrors, and glass display cases for neat rows of small goods like hats, were central elements of the young Toronto store's decoration.<sup>34</sup> Probably the most spectacular place that glass appeared was in show windows. Sixteen-foot-square plate glass windows graced the 1893 Toronto store.<sup>35</sup> Thirty years later, they were upgraded with the installation of new double windows.<sup>36</sup> The Winnipeg building, meanwhile, had fifty show windows in 1906.<sup>37</sup> Archival photographs indicate that all the later company stores were likewise fitted with enormous plate glass show windows.<sup>38</sup>

Light, glass and colour came together with persuasive and often sensational effect in Eaton's store displays. Here, the appearance of the store was explicitly orchestrated to serve the selling function. Eatonians used the word “display” to describe a wide range of things. There were *merchandise displays*, consisting of simple or elaborate arrangements of goods, enhanced by various props like “handkerchief cabinets” or other special equipment, printed signs and tags and tickets, and decorative items.<sup>39</sup> There were *exhibits* of materials other than merchandise on themes as varied as British heraldry, children's art,

---

<sup>33</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 1, File 2/4, “Advertising & Display Conferences, January & June, 1947,” no date, document titled “The aim of this book,” no date, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup>There are dozens of examples of photographs like this in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], under the heading “Merchandise.”

<sup>35</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, File “Japanese Buying Office,” letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's, Toronto, to Mr. Tucker, 1918-05-20.

<sup>37</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File “[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg],” Notice of 1911-01-11.

<sup>38</sup>See for instance AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 307: Company Development Office-Company Property Photographs - Photoprints.”

<sup>39</sup>Information on these is available in the AO, T. Eaton Records, in various Merchandise Display offices series, as well as in Series 151, “Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files.”

architectural drawings for a "Canadian Small Homes" competition, and model homes.<sup>40</sup> There were so-called "*special displays*," which involved decorating both the inside and outside of stores, for big events like the Armistice, wars, and coronations. When applied to the outside of the stores, as in the case of the coronation of George VI (marked in company stores from the Prairies to the Maritimes), these could be quite spectacular, featuring colossal festoons of coloured bunting, stunning spotlighting, and window after window of slogans, pictures, and ornaments. When special displays were accompanied by sales of related merchandise -- as for Queen Elizabeth's coronation, which was accompanied in the Toronto store by a Pageant of English Fashions -- they overlapped with another category of display at Eaton's, *sales promotions*. These were marketing campaigns centered on a particular theme such as "Empire Shopping Week," "Maid of Cotton," or "Eaton's Uncrates the Sun."<sup>41</sup> Promotions could be mounted on a very large scale within one store or across several. They involved grouping goods related to the theme, plus decorations and events to enliven the sale. Over the years, the Toronto stores for instance were graced with a flight-simulator to mimic travel to southern sun destinations, a live baby elephant, many fashion shows, and a "Parisian café."<sup>42</sup> Even the famous Eaton's Santa Claus Parade was a kind of display, being, in Toronto at least, the responsibility of that city's Merchandise Display Office for many years.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Eaton's

---

<sup>40</sup>For information on the art exhibits, for instance, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, Series 142: "Fine Art Gallery – Artists' Biographies." which presents information on the artists whose works were presented at the company's College Street store in Toronto.

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, for the late 1960s, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 188, "Public Relations/Community Relations – Sales Promotions Committee Minutes."

<sup>42</sup>Images of Eaton's store displays are located in many of the photographic records series in AO, T. Eaton Records. The examples cited here, and many more, can be found in the files headed "Display" and "Merchandise – Housefurnishings - Furniture - Model Homes" and "Fashion - Fashion Show" in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records]. For "Maid of Cotton," see File F 229-308-0 –1671, "Fashion – Fashion Show - "Maid of Cotton." For "Pageant of English Fashions," see File F 229-308-0 –1719, "Historic Events - Coronation - Elizabeth II - Display," 1953-06 for Toronto.

<sup>43</sup>See the description for the Series 81, "Merchandise Display – Santa Claus Parade Files," in Linda Cobon, Lorraine O'Donnell, Tim Belton, Carolyn Heald and Larry Weiler, "Preliminary Inventory of the T. Eaton Records," 6 vols. (Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1990), vol. 1, p. 128.



stores displays could be called works of commercial visual art, incorporating elements of sculpture, design, arrangement, lettering, drawing and even drama and pageantry in order to make Eaton's products and the company itself seem more attractive, interesting and worthy of a customer's patronage.

The first-seen and most public site for Eaton's store displays were in the show windows. Like electric lighting, use of the windows was carefully developed and monitored in the company for effectiveness. As soon as the Winnipeg store was built, management established six price ranges for departmental use of the show windows and insisted that they be dressed and emptied by certain times of the day.<sup>44</sup> In Toronto, management explored new ideas like "putting some good 'Specials' in some of the windows" on slow days in the hopes of luring shoppers into the building; at least, said executive Charles Boothe, "that is how we figure the thing out; whether it will work out or not we are not sure."<sup>45</sup> When the new windows were installed after World War I, Boothe wrote that "we are all very anxious to see how these are going to look -- and how it is going to work, as it is quite a big change from anything that has ever been done, and in such a large way."<sup>46</sup> Ideally, he remarked to a company representative in Kobe, Japan, they would "make a wonderful showing to have three tiers of windows. A great number of people say that window space is more valuable than even newspapers. If that is so we should get great publicity from our new style of windows."<sup>47</sup>

Even though company employees in Japan could not see these windows, they were involved in their success. Among the merchandise they purchased in 1923 were hundred-dollar embroidered silk kimonos destined to be displayed in the Toronto, Winnipeg and

---

<sup>44</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]," Notices of 1906-06-11, 1910-11-30, 1911-01-11.

<sup>45</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 139, "Japanese Buying Office," letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's Toronto, to Mr. Tucker, 1918-05-20.

<sup>46</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140, File "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," from Charles Boothe, Eaton's Toronto, to J.R. Harper, Kobe, 1923-10-31.

<sup>47</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 140. "Japanese Buying Office Destroyed by Earthquake," letter from Charles Boothe, Eaton's Toronto, to J.H. Harper of Eaton's, Kobe, 1923-12-10.

Montreal show windows,<sup>48</sup> a sign of the amounts store managers were willing to invest in order to make the windows attractive. A promotional booklet made it clear what they aimed for: "Window shopping at EATON'S big glamorous Stores in the larger cities is a liberal education in fashions, house furnishings, and the decorative and utility products of foreign and domestic craftsmen."<sup>49</sup> But of course, as another book explained, their ultimate purpose was to draw customers into the store: "varying from week to week, often from day to day," the company's *Jubilee* book boasted, "the windows are a perpetual panorama of the Store's activities, indicating in condensed form the styles, the values and the special features" to be found therein.<sup>50</sup> Part of an overall display strategy, Eaton's show windows, like American ones, were dramatic, "a kind of public performance." Educational and entertaining, they were part of the move towards what by the 1940s was called "visual merchandising." It, like self-service in the stores, was "a substitute for personal salesmanship."<sup>51</sup>

### *A spectacle for women*

Eaton's constructed these elaborate visual environments for its shoppers to look at, and from the start, the company – again, like its American counterparts<sup>52</sup> -- assumed that most of them would be women. Joy Santink observes, for instance, that in an 1877 flyer for the store, only one of the ten departments listed therein catered to men's goods, since "it was taken for granted that women – or 'the ladies' as Timothy Eaton called them – comprised the largest proportion of the shopping public.... Eaton's efforts, therefore, were directed

---

<sup>48</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0- 3, "Accidents and Disasters - Japanese Earthquake," letter from Hachizo Yagi of Silk Kingdom Company Limited of Kamakura, Japan to Mr. G. Carlson, Company Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1968-02-07.

<sup>49</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1335, File "Public Relations - Booklets - Story of a Store," booklet "Eaton's of Canada," 1949, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 220.

<sup>51</sup>Leonard S. Marcus, *The American Store Window* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1978), pp. 13, 42.

<sup>52</sup>Benson makes this point especially in Chapter 3, where she discusses department store managers' strategies to deal with customers. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, Chapter 3.

almost totally to women's needs and desires."<sup>53</sup> The company's catalogue, moreover, which (as will be discussed below) served in its first three decades as guide and advertisement to the store and its merchandise, was also aimed at women. From its earliest issues, it addressed its chatty editorials directly to female readers. The Fall-Winter 1886-87 book commiserated with the out-of-town shopper: "Ladies, you come off the train, you are covered with dust, begrimed with smoke, you feel unrefreshed...." It went on to describe some of the services available to them in the store including a parcel check and a waiting room where they could wash and relax, concluding, "Wash as often as you please – wait as long as you like – get thoroughly refreshed before you start your shopping. This is all we can say, we give you the invitation and will be delighted with your acceptance."<sup>54</sup>

The assumption that it was women who did the shopping continued to guide the Toronto store operations as they developed and expanded in the twentieth century. It determined most of the various aids Eaton's developed for customers, such as the "Frolic Park" supervised play area where they could drop off their children,<sup>55</sup> or the Shopping Service, described as<sup>56</sup>

...a woman's Second Self, always there when circumstances prevent her own bodily appearance on the scene; ever ready, in the person of the Shopper, to flit higher and thither from one department to another, picking out the things that she – the woman in Guelph, Chatham, etc. – would like to have purchased for herself, her family, or her dwelling place.

(The Service office was, in turn, staffed with female employees, "women of good taste and good judgement."<sup>57</sup>) Eaton's also directly appealed to females in a number of special initiatives such as its Eaton's Business Girls' Council and its Mother's Forum meetings in

---

<sup>53</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>54</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue for Fall-Winter 1886-87, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup>Frolic Park was in the Toronto store c. 1913-25. There is a photograph of it in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0- 953 - "Customer Services - Frolic Park."

<sup>56</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 195, 198.

<sup>57</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 195, 198.

the 1940s, its Women's Council in the 1950s, its Career Club in the 1960s,<sup>58</sup> and consumer advisory committees of female customers in the 1970s.<sup>59</sup>

Other large stores opened by Eaton's operated on the same presupposition about the sex of its patrons. The Winnipeg outlet, opened in 1905, was a place a shopper could "betake herself in surety of finding the atmosphere of home."<sup>60</sup> In-house documentation in this city routinely used the feminine pronoun in its references to customers.<sup>61</sup> The Winnipeg store was also the site of courses designed to appeal to women, such as a cooking school in the 1930s<sup>62</sup> and, fifty years later, seminars for "on Women Who Want to Deal Successfully with Life."<sup>63</sup> In Montreal, similarly, 1925 advertisements in *La Presse* for the new Eaton's store there appeared to assume the readers were women making purchases for themselves and family members. They consistently labeled certain merchandise as "pour hommes" and "pour enfants" but did not signal the women's merchandise, which invariably took up the bulk of its space, as "pour femmes," simply labeling them as hats, shoes, etc.<sup>64</sup> The other, smaller company stores across the country had the same kinds of merchandise and service departments, centered on and catering to women, and thus reflected the same assumption

---

<sup>58</sup>There is documentation on these in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1318, "Promotions - Women," press release from Sales Promotion Office, Western Division, 1980-10-08.

<sup>59</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1318, "Promotions - Women," article from *Toronto Star*, 1974-09-25, p. C10.

<sup>60</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 180.

<sup>61</sup>See, for example, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice 160, 1915-03-31.

<sup>62</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1319, "Promotions - Women - Winnipeg - 1935 - Cooking School Recipes."

<sup>63</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1318, "Promotions - Women".

<sup>64</sup>This observation is based on a sample of advertisements from 1925-6 in *La Presse*. The sample was obtained on my behalf by Kathryn Harvey, a researcher for the Montreal History Group of which I am also a member. Her sample included advertisements for the month of June in 1925, 1927 and 1927.

that women were the shoppers.<sup>65</sup> As the Eaton's centennial book put it in 1969, women "make up some 75 per cent of the customers and do perhaps 85 per cent of the buying. A department store is therefore a woman's world, where she reigns supreme."<sup>66</sup>

The 1970s gave rise to a new New Woman and new language to describe her, but an unchanged assumption on the part of the company that she was still their most important client. Thus, whereas Eaton's television advertisements from the period did celebrate emancipatory transformations – a 1970 promotional song asked, "What will the '70s bring? A chance to discover your thing. And what will the '70s show? Catch a ride on a brighter world," and a television commercial of 1972 was called "Female: Freedom" – it certainly did not put into question the company's old conception that woman's place was in the store. The 1970 song concluded, "Where will you go?" -- "Eaton's, the new way of life. There's a new lifestyle at Eaton's," and the commercial showed a woman shopping, among other activities.<sup>67</sup> There was a nod in this decade to a modern category of discriminating male customer in the "First Class Male" promotion, produced in Montreal in 1973 (and then in Toronto two years later, at considerable expense<sup>68</sup>). Even this publicity, though, addressed itself at least as much to the first class male's companion, called "Feminova," as it did to the man himself. Feminova, a jingle explained, was "the woman who knows what

---

<sup>65</sup>On the structure, management and operations of the other Eaton's stores, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists).

<sup>66</sup> William Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 142.

<sup>67</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229-414 (Commercials: Theme Promotions), 2-2, "What will the '70s Bring" [audio tape], 1970 (produced by Cockfield Brown & Company Limited, Toronto) and 1-1, "Female: Freedom" [film, 1972].

<sup>68</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 205 (Commercial Studio - Studio Files) indicates the "First Class Male" promotion required a lot of time for just one advertisement. The Commercial Studio photographer required 35 takes to render the action of male models golfing (modeling golf pants). See File F229-205-2-8, "First Class Male" promotion catalogue, 1973-05.

First Class Male is all about;” she would recognize and procure fine clothes “for the man in her life.”<sup>69</sup>

The First Class Male promotion revealed an ambiguity in the Eaton's marketing strategies aimed at men. On the one hand, it was clear that some men did shop, especially for men's clothing and accessories and merchandise traditionally used by men, like tools. On occasion, Eaton's stores featured special promotions aimed at men, like the World War II-era exhibit of Model Aircraft in the boys' departments in the Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton stores. It displayed gun turrets, slides, movies, and live Air Cadets in uniform.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, men were never fully identified as shoppers at Eaton's. In 1893, more than two decades after the Toronto store first opened, a copywriter admitted that while “many gentlemen” did enjoy shopping for clothes there, the idea remained “new to some men.”<sup>71</sup> Some sixty years later, one of the boutiques within the Toronto College Street store was a Stag Shop “Reserved Exclusively For Men to solve their feminine shopping problems” (it featured gift items for women but was aimed at a male clientele).<sup>72</sup> In general, as the First Class Male jingle made clear, Eaton's advertisement creators assumed that men did go shopping but only intermittently and probably awkwardly; it was an unwanted duty, to be dispatched efficiently. This message was in line with that of American media which, until later in the twentieth century, only very rarely targeted males as shoppers or consumers.<sup>73</sup>

Many documents confirm that Eaton's managers were correct in assuming that most of its customers would be women. The dozens of photographs of store crowds almost always

---

<sup>69</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, AO, F 229-414 (Commercials: Theme Promotions), 1-4, “Feminova,” [audio-tape, advertisement], 1973 - produced by Eaton's of Canada, Montreal, at Les Studios Marko Inc., Montreal, in both English and French.

<sup>70</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229, S 151 (Public Relations - J.A. Brockie Files), Box 3, File 90, “Montreal Correspondence, 1945,” letter from J. Clifford, Advertising Department, Montreal, to J.A. Brockie, Merchandise Display, Toronto, 1945-04-28.

<sup>71</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue for Fall-Winter 1893-94, p. 62.

<sup>72</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-16, picture 35574-1, (1950), and File F229-303-1-19 (1952).

<sup>73</sup>Kenon Breazeale, “In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, 1 (Autumn 1994), passim.

show women in the great majority.<sup>74</sup> Only certain merchandise, like bicycles, or targeted special events, like a 1929 display of a Moth airplane, seem to have drawn large crowds of unaccompanied men and boys.<sup>75</sup> We can clearly see the gender gap in a photograph of crowds viewing Toronto store windows decorated for King George's coronation in 1937. One display about the coronation itself attracted adults of both sexes. Only women crowded around the window next to it, though, showing women's clothes for sale.<sup>76</sup>

### *A spectacle of women*

What did Eaton's arrange for its female clientele to see in the rich visual environment of its stores? Merchandise, tickets, props and exhibition artifacts, certainly, but also, crucially, it had them looking at *women*. Real women, both shoppers and workers, and representations of women, pictured and sculpted and photographed: these were key elements of the look of Eaton's stores. Thus, women were both witnesses *to* the Eaton's store spectacle and it was witnessed *through* them. The spectacle was both for and of women.

The section below will look at the three groups of women on display at Eaton's stores. It will show how Eaton's managers and directors controlled, when they could, the appearance of these women, just as they did the other visual elements to be found there.

#### *1) Shoppers*

---

<sup>74</sup>See, for instance, the pictures from 1919 and the 1950s and '60s in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F229-308-0 - 947, "Crowds - Shoppers," F229-308-0 -948, "Crowds - In Store" and F 229-308-0 -949, "Crowds - Christmas."

<sup>75</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1096 "Display - Special - Moth Aeroplane," shows a display in Hamilton, 1929-05-25 to 1929-06, of this plane; and F 229-308-0 -949, "Crowds - Christmas," 949 negative #12 shows many men and boys around bicycles for sale.

<sup>76</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0 -1702, "Historic Events - -Coronation - George VI - Crowds of Toronto 1937."

In addition to being onlookers at the Eaton's stores, shoppers were one of the groups of women on display. Just entering a store could sometimes mean partaking in a kind of public spectacle. Eaton's managers regularly organized special sales to start first thing in the morning and invited its customers to appear early to take advantage of them. Thus were *La Presse* readers told that for "Un grand solde de soie lundi à 9 A.M.," "il serait préférable de choisir de bonne heure" and during a special sale of men's overcoats, there were only 77 available so "naturellement, le premiers arrivés auront le plus beau choix."<sup>77</sup> Sometimes, tactics like these were so successful that huge groups of customers arrived at a store before opening time. Photographs from the company archives, aptly filed under the heading "Crowds," attest to this fact. One picture from 1913, for instance, captured a throng of shoppers, the majority of whom were female, pressing into the entrance of the Toronto store while many passers-by look on.<sup>78</sup>

Once inside, a woman's movements continued to be choreographed by Eaton's management. In the early years, a floorwalker would greet her and assign a salesclerk to accompany her,<sup>79</sup> and thus her movements would be affected to some extent by this employee's presence. By the 1910s, there were aislemen present to direct customers.<sup>80</sup> Also, managers – sometimes in staff groupings designated for the purpose, such as the Space Committee of the early twentieth century<sup>81</sup> -- carefully planned the layout of the store in order to direct shoppers to certain areas. In Toronto, they aimed to put the Radio

---

<sup>77</sup>“Translation: “For the big sale of silks on Monday at 9:00,” “it would be best to take your pick early.” For the overcoats, “naturally, the first to arrive will have the best choice.” *La Presse*, Montreal, 1926-01-23, p. 32, and 1926-01-08, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -947, “Crowds - Shoppers,” picture 529, also marked 1125.

<sup>79</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 49.

<sup>80</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Volume "Incoming Notices 1912-1916," Notice 164.

<sup>81</sup>The Space Committee looked after layout of the Toronto store during at least the 1910s to the 1930s. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1404, File "Store Description – Toronto," includes documents relating to space committee. A Notice in this file of 1930-05-29 from J.A.L.[ivingstone], Assistant Secretary, indicates that moving departments within just the Main Store was estimated to cost \$499,000.00.



department in a busy area where it could lure in customers with the sound of broadcasts,<sup>82</sup> and they designated the basement to sell bargain merchandise that would attract a different “class of trade” than the one shopping upstairs.<sup>83</sup> Men, meanwhile, did not have to face the discomfort of having to venture upstairs into the “women’s areas” of the stores. At Eaton's, men’s clothing and accessories departments were always located on the ground floor (this is still the case today in Canadian department stores). This allowed men to breeze in, pick out what they needed, and leave.<sup>84</sup>

Another way that managers aimed to move customers was with elevators and escalators. An elevator was installed in the Toronto store in 1886 and according to a company advertisement, it only took passengers up, in the hopes that they would be seduced by “the various displays while walking down.”<sup>85</sup> The immediate goal of these practices was to maximize the flow of customers to areas of interest to them in order to maximize sales, and as early as 1892, re-arranging departments and installing a new elevator were credited with doing so.<sup>86</sup> But the practices also fit into the managers’ efforts to make the store environment an exciting place to behold, where not only merchandise, displays and

---

<sup>82</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1404, File “Store Description - Toronto,” letter from W. Kernohan to H. McGee, Executive Offices, 1930-12-17.

<sup>83</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume 1919-23, Notice [B122] from R.Y. Eaton dated 1922-09-20. Cynthia Wright makes the point that the space of the Eaton's College Street store was, similarly, organized according to social constructions of social class. Cynthia Jane Wright, “The Most Prominent Rendezvous of the Feminine Toronto’: Eaton's College Street and the Organization of Shopping in Toronto, 1920-1950” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992), p. 131.

<sup>84</sup> Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built*, pp. 172-73; see also Wright, “Prominent Rendezvous,” pp. 198-200.

<sup>85</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1118, File “Merchandise - Advertising, Catalogue, Brochures etc.,” “news release” created by Mail Order Advertising Office, Winnipeg, entitled “The Beginning of Many Things,” 1924.

<sup>86</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S6 (Private Office - Correspondence), Box 1, File “Buying and London Buying Office,” letter from T. Eaton, (Toronto), to Frank McMahon, London [Eaton's of London], 1892-03-17.

equipment, but also shoppers themselves were part of the show. Thus, when the elevator was installed in 1886, the advertisement notes that "it was treated for some time as a sight rather than a convenience. With wax figures as passengers, it was run up and down throughout the first day for the benefit of the large crowd of onlookers."<sup>87</sup>

Clearly, crowds added to the special atmosphere that Eaton's managers wanted to promote in its stores. The growing importance of public dining facilities in the company stores indicates that they were one source of crowds. Timothy Eaton opened first a coffee room and then a restaurant in 1887;<sup>88</sup> his successors moved the latter from the basement to the more visible third floor in 1901.<sup>89</sup> By 1919, Eaton's publicity was billing the Winnipeg store's Grill Room as "a popular rendezvous for tourist and citizen alike"<sup>90</sup> and when the Montreal store opened in 1925, its ninth-floor restaurant was promoted as the centerpiece of the Art Deco building.<sup>91</sup> Another way that Eaton's managers tried to create crowds was through the special store events and exhibits. Archival photographs show the great success of some of these efforts. Especially popular were demonstrations of products ranging from the Roboff dry cleaner in 1910<sup>92</sup> to cooking implements and ingredients in the 1960s,<sup>93</sup> and live animals like Bluey the Kangaroo (1947).<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1118, "Merchandise - Advertising, Catalogue, Brochures etc.," "news release" Mail Order Advertising Office, Winnipeg, entitled "The Beginning of Many Things," 1924.

<sup>88</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 98.

<sup>89</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 224.

<sup>90</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 180.

<sup>91</sup>A postcard distributed from "Le 9è" dining room in the Montreal store, c. 198\_, bills it as "North America's Art Deco Masterpiece in fine dining." In possession of the author.

<sup>92</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1084, "Display - Special - Ruboff," Toronto.

<sup>93</sup>F 229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), File F 229-304-1-36, ["Miscellaneous Promotions]" pictures no. 69178-4 and 69178-6.

<sup>94</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1114 "Display - Special - 'Bluey' the Kangaroo...," 1947-05-28 to 1947-06-05.

Eaton's made it clear to women that they should prepare for this highly-visible role accordingly. An 1886 text explained that the "nicely curtained" ladies' waiting room was a place for her to freshen up and "arrange [her] toilet."<sup>95</sup> The implication was that the private act of resting existed so that a woman could prepare to look her best for the public performance of shopping. A 1951 publicity shot of a doorman helping a glamorous, made-up female "customer" (probably a model) out of her car indicated that the company continued to promote this idea many decades later.<sup>96</sup>

Underlying this message was a more general assumption at Eaton's that its female customers put a lot of emphasis on their looks. This assumption drove many of the company advertisements, displays, and other forms of marketing. The New Woman-themed promotions of the 1970s were but one small sign of this presupposition. The 1975 "March is Woman's Month" event, and its reincarnation two years later under the name "Woman Alive," did recognize a broad range of female interests ranging from karate to gardening and even included a feminist lecturing on the role of television in "woman's evolution." However, most of the focus of these events had to do with the art of cultivating one's appearance: there were included Diane von Furstenberg fashion shows, wardrobe planning information, and cosmetic demonstrations.<sup>97</sup> Underlying the assumption that women were image-conscious was a related one that they were, ultimately, there to be looked at. Perhaps the 1976 "Attitude Woman" jingle put it most plainly. Behind the assertive-sounding new label for the new woman was an old idea: "Attitude woman: take a look at her now. Attitude woman: 'cause the ladies're wow."<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue for Fall-Winter 1886-87, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0- 957 - "Customer Services - Doorman - for parking," Man., c. 1951.

<sup>97</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1312, "Promotions - Storewide - Montreal - 1975-77," "March is Woman's Month" promotion. The event was re-named "Woman Alive" - "Feminine present" in 1977. Document "Programmes des Thés-Causeries" indicates that the program of talks included "L'enfant et son Environnement," Vos Affaires Bancaires," and, by Mme Solange Chaput-Rolland, "Le Rôle Social de la Télévision dans L'évolution de la Femme."

<sup>98</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 -414 (Commercials: Theme Promotions), 2-20, "Attitude Woman" [audio tape; produced by Terry Bush Productions, [Toronto], 1976.

## 2) *Employees*

A second group of females on display at Eaton's was the employees. Sales clerks, professional shoppers, travel agents, cashiers and others worked directly in the public eye making them, as Santink has noted, "highly visible."<sup>99</sup> Right from the start, women and girls made up a substantial proportion of such workers. One account of the first years of the store states that Timothy Eaton's only help was a female clerk<sup>100</sup> although Santink documents one female assistant and three males in its first year of operation, 1869.<sup>101</sup> By 1881, there were thirty-six sales clerks and other workers in the store, a majority of whom were probably adolescent boys and girls.<sup>102</sup> In 1896, females made up between 43 and 60 percent of the total sales staff which now numbered almost 800 people.<sup>103</sup> This proportion remained high in the twentieth century. Between 1929 and 1933, women made up between 55 and 59 percent of the total number of Eaton's Toronto employees, for instance.<sup>104</sup> Photographs of company store interiors for this century show mostly women workers,<sup>105</sup> which is in accordance with general statistics for the Canadian retail sector.

---

<sup>99</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 197.

<sup>100</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 142, "Customers' Comments on President's Message on Cover of Catalogue, Fall and Winter 1952-53," letter from Mrs. Edith J. Parkin of Rowassan, Ontario, to J.D.Eaton, 1952-08-15, says "My mother, who came from Scotland in 1868, used to tell us of your Grandfather's store, two counters, with himself and one clerk, a woman who was with him for many years."

<sup>101</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 247.

<sup>102</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 83.

<sup>103</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton* found that there were 250 females and 330 males on the sales staff in April 1896 and 463 females to 308 males in the busy month of December. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 191.

<sup>104</sup> I compiled these statistics from Susan Leslie Forbes, "The Influence of the Social Reform Movement and T.Eaton Company's Business Practices in the Leisure of Eaton's Female Employees during the Early Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1999), table 3.2, p. 109.

<sup>105</sup> See, for instance, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0 1254 - "Employees - At Work." Boxes 461-62 of this series include pictures of many departments with a lot of women visible such as restaurants and sales departments.

By just before World War II, two thirds of workers in Canadian department stores were women; by the early 1980s, women outnumbered men by about two to one in the stores.<sup>106</sup> In the position of sales clerks, women made up 41 per cent of them in 1941 and 59 per cent in 1981.<sup>107</sup>

Their presence alone was enough to ensure that increasingly over the years, female employees contributed to the feminized visual environment characterizing Eaton's stores. Early on, Eaton's managers, like their American counterparts,<sup>108</sup> attempted to control the impact they would make on the eye by regulating female workers' clothing. A 1906 Notice for the new Winnipeg operation called on females "to dress in black or black skirt with white waist,"<sup>109</sup> the same was required of Toronto staff in 1909.<sup>110</sup> In 1935, a much more elaborate Notice regarding women, especially salespeople or those whose jobs took them into sales floors, made the same request, although now navy blue and all-white were allowed as long as it was "*businesslike*." Forbidden styles were sleeveless, transparent, brightly coloured, or otherwise "conspicuously unsuitable for business."<sup>111</sup> Evidently, by specifying "businesslike," the managers had in mind the saleswomen stepping out of what Anne Hollander called the "unserious" realm of fashion, and to dress "soberly and similarly," like successful men did<sup>112</sup> -- indeed, as the managers themselves did.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Sufrin, *The Eaton Drive*, pp. 18, 20.

<sup>107</sup> Sandra Elizabeth Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy: Women, Work and Trade Unionism at Eaton's (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1991), p. 126.

<sup>108</sup> Susan Porter Benson found that saleswomen had to go to considerable effort and expense to dress according to company standards in late-nineteenth to mid—twentieth century American department stores. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, p. 194.

<sup>109</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "[Head Office Notices, Winnipeg]," Notice of 1906-02-19.

<sup>110</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 233.

<sup>111</sup> F 229 S196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "[Head Office/Sales Office Notices, Winnipeg]," Notice of 1935-06-07 from B.C. Scrivener, Superintendent's Office, Winnipeg to Department Heads.

<sup>112</sup> Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp. 11, 68.

<sup>113</sup> This is amply demonstrated in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S300, "Managers' Portraits."

Male Eatonians were much less subject to these kinds of company policies. Dress regulations for men only appeared in the 1920s, decades after the ones for females. Susan Forbes, who studied employee training documentation for Eaton's, finds that overall, "little if anything was said about male deportment and appearance, and when a statement was made, it was brief and bland." She speculates that one reason for this was simply that the men tended to dress like managers (that is, in suits) and thus were beyond their criticism.<sup>114</sup>

In the 1935 Notice providing the policy on women's dress, colours other than black, white, blue and navy were permissible "where it is desirable to have special colours worn to advertise materials" on the selling floor. Thus were store employees occasionally relieved from looking businesslike, but in so doing they had to serve the business even more directly by serving as visual display props. Photographs indicate that in later years, dress regulations relaxed and a wider variety of clothes were allowed, but sales staff continued to be called on to wear special colours or even costumes for special events. For instance, on the occasion of the Hamilton Centennial, both staff and display mannequins were garbed in nineteenth-century-style dresses.<sup>115</sup>

It was not just the female employee's clothing that was taken into account by her employer, but also her general grooming and, in the end, her basic physical appearance. Sandra Aylward, in her study of women workers at Eaton's, cites a 1940s booklet for saleswomen at Eaton's called "How does your appearance rate?" It suggested that they have weekly shampoos and manicures, wear correct make-up and be seen in "clothes 'in perfect order.'"<sup>116</sup> Moreover, Alward discovered that in the 1980s, younger and what were deemed to be prettier female Eatonians were placed in the most visible positions such as on the cosmetic counters in the Toronto stores while older, larger and non-white women were assigned to upper floors. Aylward concludes that women were more or less openly selected for their tasks according to how they "reflect[ed] the image and customer profile being attracted by the merchandise sold."<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Forbes, "The Influence of the Social Reform Movement," pp. 143-45.

<sup>115</sup> F 229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), File F 229-304-1-2, "[Hamilton Centennial, 1946.

<sup>116</sup> Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy," pp. 142-44

<sup>117</sup> Aylward, "Experiencing Patriarchy," p. 142.

Eaton's managers also exerted some control over the public appearance of behind-the-scenes employees. Early in the twentieth century, for instance, they developed a system by which the hundreds of mail order employees were to exit the building at the end of the work day, with a first bell signalling buyers to leave, the second bell for filers, bookkeepers and others, and so on. All employees were "to walk as quietly and orderly as possible."<sup>118</sup> Photographs from this decade show crowds of employees from Mail Order and other buildings exiting in groups of females and males. It was a parade of workers onto the street, watched by crowds of women, men and children.<sup>119</sup>

Another way that Eaton's regulated how its employees appeared was in representations of them in published materials. Images of workers in many areas of company operations were published in the catalogue,<sup>120</sup> pamphlets<sup>121</sup> and books<sup>122</sup> that were handed out to or otherwise available to store customers. Though the content of these images was quite varied, many of them shared a distinct look: drawn or photographed from a distance, they

---

<sup>118</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 61 (Superintendent's Office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, volume for 1900-1902, p. 70, "Special Notice" from H. McGee, (Director), 1902-10-22.

<sup>119</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -943, "Crowds - Employees - Mail Order Building," catalogue 1906-07, and F 229-308-0-944, "Crowds - Employees leaving - Louisa St.," Toronto, 1908-08-02.

<sup>120</sup>In its first fifteen years or so, there was a chatty introductory section in the catalogue, which sometimes included pictures of people and places associated with Eaton's. For example, the Fall-Winter 1894-95 book (Toronto), p. 4, included pictures of the pneumatic cash system, delivery wagons and mail order office. Exceptionally, in the Spring-Summer 1915 book (Toronto) this tradition was revived with drawings of the inside of an Eaton's factory including descriptions of work done on each of its twelve floors and another describing factory work on p. 52.

<sup>121</sup>Many of these were produced over the years. They include the following, available in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), Files with names starting "Public Relations - Booklet:" an undated Souvenir booklet, c. 1905, booklet "The Evolution of a Store," 1911; booklet "The Store and Some of Its Manifold Interests," c. 1920-21; booklet "Facts of interest about Eaton's" c. 1924; and the booklet "The Story of a Store," which was issued and reissued in the years between the 1920s and 1960s.

<sup>122</sup>For example, *The Scribe*, *Golden Jubilee*.

portrayed neat lines of busy employees in tidy rows of looms, desks, or store counters.<sup>123</sup> They presented a modernist, specifically a realist, vision of calm, managed order. Commercial photography often presented such an idealized view, which one scholar has labelled the “industrial reverie.”<sup>124</sup> Its aim, in the words of a cultural historian, was seemingly to “celebrate the rhythmic beauty of modern technology and deny the possibility of inefficiency in this visually harmonious, light-filled world.”<sup>125</sup> While these authors focus on photography of the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries, Eaton's continued to produce pictures of this type, and thus to promote an idealistic image of itself as an employer, right through to the 1970s.

Like other company publicity,<sup>126</sup> these photographs glossed over hard and documented realities of store, factory and office work at Eaton's, realities that government inspections and investigations,<sup>127</sup> and the press<sup>128</sup> periodically brought to the public's awareness, particular during strikes of company employees. Thus, just as the company hired on more female workers and developed management practices to regulate them, it also developed a visual aesthetic that enabled it to represent the women (and men) to the public in an

---

<sup>123</sup>For examples of drawings in this style, see the catalogues (Toronto) of Fall-Winter 1894-95, p. 4 and of Spring-Summer 1915, p. 1. For photographs, see The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 136-39, 146-47; later images of women in rows of desks or sorting tables and so on are to be found in “The Story of the Store” booklets produced in subsequent decades.

<sup>124</sup>Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992 p. 150, cited in John Taylor, *A Dream of England: Landscape, Photography and the Tourist's imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 44.

<sup>125</sup>Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 211.

<sup>126</sup>See, for instance, the chapters on “The Early Closing Movement,” “The Eaton Factories,” and “Welfare Work” in The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, Part V.

<sup>127</sup>Including an inspection of the store in 1890 by government officials (Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 196) and the investigations made by the Royal Commission on Price Spreads, 1934.

<sup>128</sup>Examples of critiques of Eaton's by the press during strikes are given in Ruth Frager, “Sewing Solidarity: The Eaton's Strike of 1912,” *Canadian Woman Studies* 7,3 (Fall 1986): 96-98.



idealized, self-serving manner. A 1924 company news release on the Eaton's factories used words to paint the image.<sup>129</sup>

Windows on four sides letting in floods of daylight. Drinking fountains supplying cooled and filtered water. Machinery rendered as noiseless, dustless and dangerless as modern invention can render it... And at the designing boards, the cutting tables, the sewing machines, the printing presses, the binderies, up and down the aisles, here, there and everywhere, men, women, girls and boys who look healthy and happy.

They made working at Eaton's, and Eaton's itself, look good. And, furthermore, they flattered viewers sympathetic to the Eaton company's point of view. As art historian John Taylor has noted, this style of commercial photography seemed to depict a natural order with workers in their "proper place;" its effect was thus to affirm the power of the manager and owner who put them there, the photographer who pictured them, and, ultimately, the "eyewitness" who looked at the pictures of them.<sup>130</sup> In this analysis, the way managers (including those at Eaton's) regulated workers and the way they observed and represented them were simply different aspects of a single disciplinary regime. At Eaton's, managing the appearance of workers was part of a broader discourse on women, their work and their place.

### *3) Model women: pictures, display mannequins and fashion show models*

The last and most obvious way that women starred in the Eaton's stores spectacle was as models: that is, represented or real females used as display objects.

For one thing, Eaton's published many thousands of newspaper advertisements for its stores across Canada during its years of operations and a large proportion of these centered on drawn, photographed or filmed representations of females (or parts of them, such as their heads). Even before entering the stores, therefore, a customer would

---

<sup>129</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1118, File "Merchandise - Advertising, Catalogue, Brochures etc.," "news release" by Mail Order Advertising Office, Winnipeg, entitled "Human Side of Eaton Factories."

<sup>130</sup>In John Taylor, *A Dream of England*, pp. 47, 176.

associate these places with images of women. Timothy Eaton began taking out advertisements in the *Globe* as soon as he opened his Toronto store in 1869; by the early 1900s, there were daily full-page advertisements for Eaton's in the *Toronto Daily Star*.<sup>131</sup> In 1919, Eaton's took out two pages a day in three evening papers and one page a day in two morning papers.<sup>132</sup> While the evening paper advertisements focussed on bargains, the morning paper had specifically to do with women's interests and images; as the company's *Golden Jubilee* book put it, "what's new, what's authentic, what's interesting in anything from frocks to refrigerators, it seeks to present to its readers in word and in picture."<sup>133</sup> The main Toronto papers -- the *Telegram*, the *Star*, the *Globe* and the *Mail* (eventually these last two became the *Globe and Mail*) -- continued to carry regular Eaton's advertisements between the 1920s and the 1960s.

The company also advertised in the Montreal papers of *La Patrie*, *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* after opening its store there in 1925.<sup>134</sup> In the mid-1920s, advertisements in the latter paper took a full page, came out every few days and were thoroughly feminized. Three advertisements chosen at random from June of 1925, 1926 and 1927 had a total of 27 drawings of girls and women. There were less than half as many (twelve) images of males. Also, in a sample of these advertisements and in the others papers for these years, the images of females tended to be clustered in the top and centre parts of the layout, and were therefore not just more numerous, but also more prominent.<sup>135</sup>

These advertisements had a place within the stores themselves, moreover. Early in the century, framed copies of the *Star* advertisements were placed around the Toronto store for shoppers to consult.<sup>136</sup> Many other representations of women also graced this and later Eaton's stores, so that their designation as "female space" was unmistakable. Even

---

<sup>131</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p 226.

<sup>132</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 204.

<sup>133</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 205, 207.

<sup>134</sup>Many of these advertisements from Toronto and Montreal are preserved in the Eaton's archives, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 Series 91, "City Advertising and Art: Toronto and Montreal Advertising Books."

<sup>135</sup>The numbers were as follows: 1925-06-23, p. 12, five females and no males; 1926-06-17, p. 12, twelve females and five males; 1927-06-03, p 12, twelve females and seven males.

<sup>136</sup>Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 226.

parts of the store set aside for men were incorporated into this overarching meaning. A photograph of the boys' and men's clothing department from around this era reveals that in the middle of counters where male clerks helped boys and men with their purchases was a long aisle studded with statues of mythical female figures.<sup>137</sup>

Window and in-store displays featured many more representations of women in the form of mannequins. Their most common use was to model clothing, but they were also regularly placed in arrangements of housefurnishings, especially "furnished rooms" displays. The exterior and interior of any given Eaton's store was thus likely to have dozens of such "model women" on display at any given time; thousands of photographs attest to this for the Toronto stores. Mannequins representing every period of life and every stage of the life cycle were used in both kinds of displays. Combined, these displays showed much of a woman's life as being lived in a context of clothes and commodities. Between the 1940s and the 1960s, the Toronto College Street store, for one, had numerous displays with mannequins representing feminine life-stages: schoolgirls in back-to-school wear;<sup>138</sup> teenage girls lounging in lingerie and talking on a phone in a pink bedroom;<sup>139</sup> co-eds modeling "bright new fashions for classes, dates, campus capers;"<sup>140</sup> young women accompanied by young men wearing their Easter finest,<sup>141</sup> brides; mothers putting babies in cribs<sup>142</sup> or stepping out with their families,<sup>143</sup> women in the home

---

<sup>137</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1074, "Display - Special – Various, " photograph of department E3: Boys & men's clothing, c. 1910-1920.

<sup>138</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-23 picture 42227-2, c. Summer, 1954.

<sup>139</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-38, 1963, picture 57595.

<sup>140</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-26 picture 45909-1.

<sup>141</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-17 picture 36071-10, Easter, 1951.

<sup>142</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-39, picture 58688-6, 1963 or 64.

<sup>143</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-22, picture 41580-1.

vacuuming,<sup>144</sup> and mature women in their homes or out on the town, wearing the latest styles. Even old women were not immune from the cycle of consumption: one display featured a carving of an elderly woman with old-fashioned hairstyle and glasses as a backdrop for its suggested Mother's Day gifts of stationery, jewelry and perfume.<sup>145</sup>

Merchandise displays, like advertisements, used far fewer representations of men and boys. A smaller number of show windows and store displays were on male fashions, and thus there were a smaller number of male mannequins used to model them. Rare was the special display centered on males, unless it was for an occasion like Father's Day.<sup>146</sup> Eaton's enthusiastically took advantage of marketing opportunities that did arise, such as the "Do It Yourself" trend of the 1950s.<sup>147</sup> The "First Class Male" promotion of 1973 was a startling departure, not only because it identified men as consumers and thus indicated a new marketing strategy on the part of Eaton's, but also because it temporarily dedicated some of the company's prime retail space to them: a whole aisle of the Toronto Queen Street store was taken over by displays and ceiling-hung signs devoted to this idealized man.<sup>148</sup> Likewise, it was fairly unusual for a furnished room to show a man or a boy "living" in it. If they were, it was often in the company of their "wives" or "mothers," or to bring attention to something unusual such as a sauna that was on sale in the Montreal store in the 1960s.<sup>149</sup> Another exception was the window display of "Rooms for a man

---

<sup>144</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-18 1951 or 1952, picture 37774-2.

<sup>145</sup>Woman (AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-18, 1951-52, picture 37774-3.

<sup>146</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-13, picture 32163-2, June, 1949. It shows a display for Father's Day featuring clothes, cufflinks, ties and the slogan "It's a Great Day for Dad!"

<sup>147</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-23, picture 42498-8, c. 1954, shows a display featuring tool benches and a drawing of a man, with a card proclaiming: "Learn to Do It Yourself at Eaton's."

<sup>148</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), File F 229-304-1-18, 'Miscellaneous,' picture 75168.

<sup>149</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, Queen Street Store), File F 229-304-1-27, "Montreal Store," includes many pictures of a "Scandinavian Adventure," no date but c. 1960s.

and his hobby” in 1948.<sup>150</sup> Overall, then, it was not until after World War II that male mannequins were used on their own in displays and even then, it was rare.

In-store exhibitions of objects other than sale merchandise also usually relied on female rather than male mannequins. When the Queen Street store’s display staff dressed its show windows with old clothes and goods alongside examples of shiny new ones to celebrate the company’s one hundredth anniversary, they put female mannequins in eight of them. There was a woman clad in a long dress standing between an antique wood stove and a modern stove, for instance, and an old-fashioned phonograph placed between women in red dresses from the 1900s and 1969. Only two of the windows used male mannequins to thus embody the passage of time and progress.<sup>151</sup>

Joining the drawn, photographed and sculpted “model women” turning Eaton's stores into sites of feminized visual culture were live girls and women employed for fashion shows. From the start, Eaton's fashion shows could be real extravaganzas, making them flashy showcases for the models. Indeed, some of them were mounted like plays. A staff member recounted the story-line of the Toronto’s 1915 “Pageant of Fashion” show as follows:<sup>152</sup>

The country girl is discovered singing on the threshold of the new season, she sings of the flowers and birds, the country and all out-of-doors. As she sings of the woods and blossoms, our imagination quickens and we recall the old stories of the wood nymphs, Pan and the little elves. Gradually the picture comes to view. Pan the God of the woods, so the story goes, played upon his pipes of reed and as he played, all the flowers blossomed, the birds sang, the nymphs danced for joy and all nature awoke. The nymphs discovered, in the bower of blossoms, the fairy spirit of Spring and all danced, scattering flowers -- the whole affair being symbolical of youth, joy, newness and beauty.

---

<sup>150</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-9, picture 28094-9.

<sup>151</sup>F 229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, Queen Street Store), File F 229-304-1-3, “Eaton 100’ Centennial Photographs.”

<sup>152</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1673, “Fashion - Fashion Show - Place de la Concorde,” letter from Eugene L. Beaupré, City Advertising, Toronto, to Miss Marjorie Hewer, 1915-03-11.

He was recounting this to the girl who played the nymph, and expressed his hopes that she would return to play this "part." In 1919, fashion shows in the Toronto store commonly featured 50 models together on stage, plus performances of plays or music,<sup>153</sup> while in 1927, the same store put on the equally elaborate "Masque of Fashion." On an extravagant art deco set, women modeled luxurious flapper clothes to the rhythm of a long narrative poem.<sup>154</sup>

Not all of Eaton's fashion shows were so spectacular – humble ones of home sewing were put on in store basements, for instance<sup>155</sup> -- but Eaton's staff did continue to mount ambitious productions in subsequent decades. During the Second World War, Eaton's staff in Toronto developed their expertise by lending a hand to local charity organizations putting on benefit shows for the war effort.<sup>156</sup> Post-war events included a 1948 "Overture to Fashion," featuring a huge backdrop reminiscent of contemporary film musicals<sup>157</sup> and a glittering 1949 fashion parade with a live orchestra at the Hotel Vancouver, marking the company's purchase of the local Spencer store.<sup>158</sup> This show, like a 1963 one staged at

---

<sup>153</sup> The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, p. 215.

<sup>154</sup> Photographs, a program, and sketches of the set are available in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1675 "Fashion - Fashion Show and Merchandise Album, 1927."

<sup>155</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 – 1678, "Fashion - Fashion Show – Ontario – Toronto - '194-" shows a much humbler fashion show in what looks like a basement, presented between 1948-10-13 and 1948-10-15. It was called "Paris-Prompted Fashions-Butterick Pattern Company".

<sup>156</sup> These shows are mentioned in a note pasted on the back of a photograph in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1680, "Fashion –Ontario - Toronto - Shows and Costumes."

<sup>157</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File 229-308-0 – 1678, "Fashion - Fashion Show – Ontario – Toronto - '194-," "Symphony Fashion Show" "Overture to Fashion" (held 1948-09-27 to 1948-10-02), Commercial Studio negative no. 2814-1.

<sup>158</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1679, "Fashion - Models and Show – British Columbia - Vancouver" of show of 1949-03-28 or 1949-03-29.

the Sept-Îles Royal Canadian Air Force station,<sup>159</sup> and like some of the wartime benefit events before it, was not put on inside an Eaton's store. However, the off-site events nonetheless helped cement the company's reputation as a source of large-scale spectacles.

The fashion shows used striking visual designs which had the effect of putting the models, as much as the clothes, on display. The earliest one in the company's photograph archives, dating from 1910, featured liveried boys opening a set of doors to reveal a female model in white, sharply outlined against a black backdrop.<sup>160</sup> These techniques of silhouetting<sup>161</sup> and visually framing models – in one case, in actual giant picture frames – were used in later decades.<sup>162</sup> In a 1953 Montreal show of "French Original Hats," the women stood in enormous hat boxes,<sup>163</sup> they, as much as the headgear, were commodified and packaged for the viewer's visual delectation.

Starting with the girls aged about three to thirteen years old in the 1910 Pageant of Fashion,<sup>164</sup> most of the Eaton's fashion show models were not named in the photographic

---

<sup>159</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1687 "Fashion – Quebec – Montreal – R.C.A.F. Station, Seven Islands, 1960-04-29.

<sup>160</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1672 - "Fashion - Fashion Show," Pageant of Fashion of 1910-06-21, negative/index no. 574 and X1169.

<sup>161</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1677 "Fashion - Fashion Shows – Quebec – Montreal, 1936-1953," snapshot of 1936 show.

<sup>162</sup>See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 - 1678 "Fashion - Fashion Show – Ontario – Toronto - '194-," show of spring 1948 in College Street store auditorium, as well as picture of Vogue Fashion show, 1948-02, Commercial Studio number C25238-8. In File F 229-308-0 - 1685, "Fashion - Fashion Shows - Spring & Fall – Ontario – Toronto - 1959" is another example of this with original negative available in File no. 49808-3.

<sup>163</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 –1677, "Fashion - Fashion Shows – Quebec – Montreal, 1936-1953," has picture of "French Original Hats" from Spring Fashion Show, 1953.

<sup>164</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 –1672, "Fashion - Fashion Show," negative/index 576, X 1171.

records. By the late 1950s, however, some of them had obtained celebrity status. In 1957, Eaton's hired Miss America to model home-sewing fashions on the reasoning that "association with outstanding personalities in the news keeps our thinking modern and up-to-date."<sup>165</sup> By now, moreover, modelling had become a high-profile profession in its own right. "Parisienne mannequins" were flown to Toronto to animate Eaton's shows of Pierre Balmain's fashions in 1960 and Pierre Cardin's in 1969; they were accompanied by the designers themselves.<sup>166</sup> Another fashion show in the '60s featured huge pictures of waif-like Twiggy,<sup>167</sup> and cover-girl Veruschka appeared in person to inject glamour in an Eaton's fashion show at Toronto's Royal York hotel in 1968.<sup>168</sup> The new popularity of modeling was also reflected in a trend around this time for ordinary girls who were members of the company's Business Girls' Council and Junior Council to parade on the runway for special fashion shows for their peers.<sup>169</sup>

There were limits to the way women were put on display in the Eaton's fashion shows. Organizers of the fashion show for the 1975 "All Woman" promotion in Montreal refused

---

<sup>165</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1681, "Fashion - Fashion Show," Toronto, 1957; quotation is from a caption on the back of a photograph in this file.

<sup>166</sup>Luxury-AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1661, "Fashion- Pierre Balmain, "Le Festival de France," 1960, held at the College Street store. Quote is from document accompanying pictures in file, and File F 229-308-0 -1697, "Fashion - Fashion Show with Pierre Cardin, Royal York Hotel," Toronto, 1969-10-07.

<sup>167</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1695, "Fashion - Fashion Shows - Publicity Stills" Montreal, shows pictures of Twiggy fashion show, 1967-08.

<sup>168</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1696, "Fashion - Fashion Show, Auditorium - Press conference, Royal York Hotel [with model] 'Veruschka'," 1968-03-14; picture with the Commercial Studio no. 66154 shows Barbara Duckworth of Public Relations and Veruschka.

<sup>169</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1681, "Fashion - Fashion Show" [including] view of Eaton's auditorium" Toronto - picture captioned "Business girls from all over Toronto...", 1957, and File F 229-308-0 -1683, "Fashion - Fashion Shows - Junior" negative, Box A-402; Commercial Studio no. 44274-3, of four Eaton's Junior Council girls, 1959.



to include underwear in the event, leading a certain Mr. Winn to have a "girl" stand and model it in the store. The Chairwoman of the event fumed that "it is generally considered to be in extremely bad taste to show panties and bras on the runway in a store of our reputation.... We discovered that this sort of modeling is not done in any Eaton's stores in Canada, nor do we intend to do so." She concluded, "Next time - as much fun and entertainment oriented to FASHION as possible."<sup>170</sup>

A few fashion shows featured males but they tended to occupy supporting roles, a status underlined visually. They opened doors or wore quaint not-for-sale costumes, adding flair to the females wearing fashions that were the *raison d'être* of the show.<sup>171</sup>

Probably the most striking male models hired by Eaton's were the ones who accompanied Pierre Cardin to Toronto in 1969, sporting shiny, futuristic clothes.<sup>172</sup> However, they were outnumbered by the female models and thus served as exceptions proving the rule: fashion was a woman's show at Eaton's. The point was brought home visually when Cardin himself appeared on stage in classic tailored clothes. The effect was like the one that Anne Hollander describes in her study of Western modern dress: it displayed the "collective certainty that powerful men must dress soberly and similarly;" men could be "still quite comfortable ignoring 'Men's Fashion'... and feeling that it [was] not actually available to them nor even aimed at them." Fashion, that is, "the currency of variation" in clothes, was at Eaton's, like in most other places, a women's realm.<sup>173</sup>

Eaton's female customers clearly agreed. Young and old, in humble attire or glittering gowns, in good weather and bad: Canadian women from across the country flocked to the

---

<sup>170</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1312, "Promotions - Storewide - Montreal - 1975-77," "March is Woman's Month" promotion, document "All Woman Wrap-Up," by Ms. Joan M. Aird, Chairwoman, no date, [c. 1975], pp. 2, 4.

<sup>171</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1673, "Fashion - Fashion Show - Place de la Concorde" picture negative/index 569/ X1164, shows Pageant of Fashion in Toronto, 1914-09.

<sup>172</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 -1697, "Fashion - Fashion Show with Pierre Cardin, Royal York Hotel," Toronto, 1969-10-07.

<sup>173</sup>Hollander, *Sex and Suits*, pp. 68, 10-11.

company's fashion shows.<sup>174</sup> Many photographs have captured their rapt expressions as they gaze up at other, more elegant women on the runway.<sup>175</sup> At these moments, it is clear that women were willingly serving as witnesses of and to the modern visual spectacle of merchandise sales.

### The Catalogue

The Eaton's Toronto catalogue serves as a clear example of the depth and evolution of the role women played in the construction of the company's spectacular shopping environments.

#### *"Fe-mail"*

The Toronto catalogues shared something important with the stores: they were designed to appeal to women, and for the same simple reason that women made up the majority of their customers. Like the stores, these catalogues did make efforts to reach men, always selling men's wear and goods like heavy tools; they also exploited certain trends such as the 1950s and 1960s "do it yourself" one when suburban men built themselves basement

---

<sup>174</sup>Good pictures of crowds can be found in files of AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], as follows: young women: File F 229-308-0 – 1678, "Fashion - Fashion Show – Ontario – Toronto, '194-," pictures of Spring 1948 show in College Street, Commercial Studio negative C25345-5; older women: same file, for 1948 show, Commercial Studio negative no. 28142-2; dressed up: File F 229-308-0 –1677, "Fashion - Fashion Shows – Quebec – Montreal, 1936-1953," 1950-09, Fall Fashion Show, ], File F 229-308-0 -1685, "Fashion - Fashion Shows - Spring & Fall – Ontario–Toronto, 1959," negative available in File [no. 49808-7], File F 229-308-0 -1697, "Fashion - Fashion Show with Pierre Cardin, Royal York Hotel," Toronto, 1969-10-07, Commercial Studio no. 68608, and File F 229-308-0 –1693, Fashion - Fashion Shows-Princess Borghese," Quebec, Montreal, 1964-03.

<sup>175</sup>See, for example, AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], File F 229-308-0 –1671, "Fashion - Fashion Show - Maid of Cotton" in Dress Goods Department, [195-], wedding dress show.

workrooms.<sup>176</sup> However, the Toronto catalogue was always intended primarily for women. This explains the frequency with which its text addressed itself explicitly to women. In the catalogue's first decade or so, for instance, it used terms such as "the lady readers," "the women of Canada," and so on; the catalogue, then, was "woman's news."<sup>177</sup> Many issues addressed themselves to "you" and the context of the copy indicated that this meant the female reader. The Spring-Summer 1915 catalogue, for instance, pictured women and girls in underwear beside the company facilities for manufacturing it, under the heading "From Our Factory to You."<sup>178</sup> The female orientation of the catalogue did not waver over the years. A company news release made things explicit in 1924. It stated, "a favorite mail order house pun is that instead of mail it should be called 'fe-mail,' since women do most of the buying."<sup>179</sup> Outside sources reiterated this point. In *Anne's House of Dreams*, for example, L.M. Montgomery has Mrs. Lynde saying with dismay that the Eaton's catalogue was "the Avonlea girls' Bible now... They pore over them on Sundays instead of studying the Holy Scriptures."<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup>This trend is discussed in several sources including AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-482, File "Catalogue - Articles," typed article "Eaton's Largest Fall and Winter Catalogue...Now in the Hands of Customers," unsigned, from Mail Order Advertising, 1954-07-19; File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58," untitled document [by Eaton's archivist], p 45; and File F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue-Clippings, 1960's," article by Beryl Oxley, "Eaton's of Canada...Selling building supplies to suburban families by mail," in *Building Supply Dealer*, 1965-10.

<sup>177</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogues Fall-Winter 1890-01, p. 1; Spring-Summer 1893, p. 20; Spring-Summer 1896, p. 98.

<sup>178</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1915 p. 110. Another example is the Fall-Winter 1892-23 book which boasted of being able "to show you what London and Paris and Berlin are doing in headwear," p. 8.

<sup>179</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-1118, File "Merchandise - Advertising, Catalogue, Brochures etc.," "news release" by Mail Order Advertising Office, Winnipeg, entitled "Little Stores of Real Life," c. 1924. Quote is from a reprint of an article from *Farmer's Advocate*, Winnipeg.

<sup>180</sup>Cited in AO, T. Eaton Records,, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research".

### *Overcoming the catalogue's limitations*

The challenge of the catalogue was thus the same as the store's: to appeal to women shoppers. The obvious, enormous difference, of course, was that the former was a publication, not a physical place, and thus greatly limited in the kind of shopping experience it could provide for customers. It was by nature inert and flat, its communications reduced to two-dimensional print and image, all in all a far cry from the rich and vibrant store milieu.

#### *1) Creating points of sale for catalogue goods*

People at Eaton's were frustrated with these limitations and attempted to overcome them in two main ways. First, there was the creation of separate points of sale for the catalogue where customers could order catalogue goods or buy them directly.<sup>181</sup> These included catalogue furniture stores, catalogue bargain stores,<sup>182</sup> and, most importantly because they were the most widespread and the longest lasting, Order Offices. First built in 1916, five of them began to distribute Mail Order merchandise in 1928,<sup>183</sup> and there were 188 of them across the country by 1947.<sup>184</sup> There were 239 of them by the time Eaton's closed down its catalogue operations in 1976, as well as 31 furniture stores and 19 bargain stores.<sup>185</sup> These catalogue sales venues reproduced important elements of the department

---

<sup>181</sup>Here I am not including the sales counters in stores because these were part of the in-store experience.

<sup>182</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing [1976]," untitled document from company, no date [c. late 1975 or early 1976], section "Activités du catalogue," p. 2.

<sup>183</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research," document "Early Order Offices."

<sup>184</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-496, "Catalogue - Clippings 1940's & 1950's," clipping from *Maclean's*, 1947-01-01, p. 22.

<sup>185</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-499, "Catalogue - Closing 1976," untitled

store experience. This was clearly the case with the catalogue stores but was also true of the Order Offices. Even in the early years when they were plain places boasting little more than counters and a few posters, Order Offices provided customers with that key ingredient of the store environment, contact: with staff members, in the form of female clerks in charge of the Offices;<sup>186</sup> with other catalogue shoppers, most of whom were women as well; and, to a limited extent, with merchandise, in the form of swatch books of fabric used for some of the goods on sale.<sup>187</sup> This way, customers could, for example, see for themselves some of the new ways in synthetics (such as Terylene) and finishing processes (like Sanforized, Wrinkl-Shed, Dri-Don) making fabrics "easy-care."<sup>188</sup> Shoppers could now actually see the goods and the people. Even the women who took catalogue orders by phone were on display in a way because they were urged in training manuals to "let your tone show you up as the pleasant person you are!"<sup>189</sup>

All such contact increased greatly with the conversion of a number of Order Offices into "Catalogue Sales Offices" starting in 1964: these, as Chapter 5 indicated, were larger (and

---

document from company, no date [c. late 1975 or early 1976], section "Activités du catalogue," p. 2.

<sup>186</sup>As the Chapter 5 demonstrated, documents in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S59 (General Office - Correspondence Section - Signature/Management Lists) indicates that women ("girls") ran these offices at least between the 1930s and the 1950s.

<sup>187</sup>An Eaton's archivist's note indicates that the practice of having swatch books was revived during the spring or summer of 1941 (AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0--481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics, 1927-58," p. 17. See also pp. 19, 21 regarding later in 1941-42). This may have been a direct result of a report of April 1941 by an Eaton's staff member on the Montgomery Ward company in the U.S.A., which noted among other things that swatch books were prominent in that firm's Order Offices.

<sup>188</sup>See F 229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), File "[Report on Montgomery-Ward] 1941-44," letter from W.H.M., Department F-7, to J.G. McKee, Merchandise Office, "Re: Montgomery-Ward," 1941-04-03. The practice continued in the 1960s and '70s: see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S102 (Mail Order Office/Catalogue Office - Catalogue Store Sample Books).

<sup>189</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-945, "Employees - Staff Training - Phone Selling - Catalogue," c. 1960.

thus had more staff members), presented many goods on display, arranged them into department-like sections, and generally presented a “department store image.”<sup>190</sup> Display features in the various kinds of Order Offices included window and wall posters, merchandise on the floor and in showcases and clothing on wall-mounted pegboards.<sup>191</sup> Thus, from 1928 on, some catalogue shoppers, at least, could experience aspects of store shopping including, crucially, looking at women.

## 2) *Changing the appearance of the Toronto catalogue*

The second way that Eatonians tried to surmount the limitations of catalogue shopping was in making changes to the book itself.<sup>192</sup> As the following brief history of these changes will show, the creators of the Toronto catalogue gradually became aware over the years of the possibilities inherent in its pages and turned it into an attractive shopping site in its own right. An important aspect of these initiatives was to put women’s wear and its models on display. Indeed, many of the refinements in its reproduction, design and copy first occurred in this context. A company official seemed to voice the opinion of the catalogue creators when he said that “a catalogue without women's wear would be a dull, static thing.”<sup>193</sup> Thus, like in the Eaton's department stores, the effort to enhance catalogue shopping *for* women went hand in hand with making it a spectacle *of* them.

The 46-page Fall-Winter catalogue of 1886-87 laid bare the limitations of its medium, particularly where women customers were concerned. There were no pictures, just prose

---

<sup>190</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings, 1901-1970," article: "Now They've Citified the Country Catalogue," *Eaton News Quarterly*, Winter 1967, pp. 8-10.

<sup>191</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-912, "Employees - Staff Training - Catalogue, 1968," (material from a binder).

<sup>192</sup>Most of the examples below are taken from the first twenty years or so of the Toronto catalogue, widely available on microfilm, starting with the Fall-Winter 1886-87 book.

<sup>193</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-496, "Catalogue - Clippings 1940's & 1950's," article from *Style Fortnightly* of 1954-03-17, p.12, entitled "Eaton's Catalogue To Be Microfilmed...".

explicitly aiming to provide "a plain and faithful description." The most expressive copy was reserved for women's goods, although even then it was limited to phrases like "a very fine lesse ruffling." Words could not convey the grandeur of the silk department, on the other hand; one really had to experience it in the store, "*for to see it is to be convinced.*" Besides, the catalogue admitted to providing only a partial listing of the store contents. The catalogue creators appeared to accept that the book was but a homely vehicle for bringing the customer as directly as possible to the store, either literally, by encouraging her to go there (to this end, the catalogue listed every department and provided a drawing of each floor), virtually, through descriptions, or via Eaton's representatives, the "lady clerks" on the Mail Order staff. These women were "wholly independent of our regular selling force" and selected for their attention to detail and good judgement. The catalogue did not try to *sell to* -- in the sense of persuade -- the shopper. This, the catalogue implied, was up to the store, which could provide a full visual and tactile experience and thus cater to a shopper's every need and desire. In this "excellently lighted and well-ventilated building," every effort was made to make "ladies" comfortable with rest rooms, parcel checking, and so on.<sup>194</sup>

The next few years' catalogues reiterated this contrast between straightforward catalogue shopping and sophisticated store shopping. Staff shoppers who helped Mail Order customers select goods were "experts as shoppers, not sellers of goods" and had "a most thorough knowledge of the store and the goods."<sup>195</sup> By implication, then, the job of in-store "sellers" was to use fantasy or exhortation, not facts, to convince customers. The store went far beyond these hard realities: with its facilities for shopping, resting, writing and dining, with its electricity that was but "another step in advance,"<sup>196</sup> it was "complete in every particular."<sup>197</sup> Store shopping was a full sensory experience because "every part [was] adapted to seeing things that have to be seen to be sold, and for touching things that have to be touched;" the catalogue, however, engaged only one's dry reasoning: thus, "what is necessary is to use intelligence in describing what you want."<sup>198</sup> Underlying this store-catalogue contrast was an old dichotomy: the abundant city versus the deprived countryside. For people living in the country, the catalogue meant "bringing to their

---

<sup>194</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1886-87, pp. 2-8.

<sup>195</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1889-90, p. 9.

<sup>196</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1889-90, p. 4.

<sup>197</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1890-01, p. 4.

<sup>198</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1890-01, p. 1.

doors, as it were, and placing at their command all of the many advantages of extensive stocks, wide assortment of goods, and low prices, that are possessed by the residents of our large cities."<sup>199</sup>

However, "through long experience and exact observation,"<sup>200</sup> during the late 1880s Eaton's staff were also taking steps to make the catalogue an effective and attractive sales environment in its own right, by developing new ways to convey information both more realistically and more persuasively. To do so, they turned to new verbal and visual effects. The Fall-Winter 1887-88 book attempted to persuade in presenting some attractive pictures of what I have been calling "model women:" beautiful young ones wearing fashionable clothes. This book also aimed for realism, providing plain drawings of men's overcoats.<sup>201</sup> Likewise, the Spring-Summer 1888 book featured five detailed, realistic drawings of items such as baby carriages, giving readers a new form of information about these items.<sup>202</sup> However, it also carried on earlier lamentations about the limitation of images, once again in the context of women's wear: "we cannot paint on paper... the beauties of the flowers that are a prevailing and striking feature of this season's

---

<sup>199</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer, 1888, p. 4.

<sup>200</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1888-89, p. 4.

<sup>201</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1887-88, pp. 43, 67, shown in G. de T. Glazebrook, Katherine B. Brett and Judith McErvel, *A Shopper's View of Canada's Past: Pages for Eaton's Catalogues, 1886-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 4.

<sup>202</sup>There is disagreement over the first date the catalogue featured drawings in its inside pages. Angela Davis says that the first year the catalogue had illustrations was 1893. G. de T. Glazebrook says it was 1886, and that the pictures were of women's clothing and interiors of the store. Angela E. Davis, "Brigden's and the Eaton's Catalogue: Business and Art in Winnipeg 1914-1940," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Society Conference, Winnipeg, 1986, p. 5; G. de T. Glazebrook, "Introduction," pp. iii-ix in Glazebrook, Brett and McErvel, *A Shopper's View*, p. vi. NOTE: on page 2 of this latter book is a picture of drawings of boys modeling boys' wear and it is dated Fall-Winter 1886-87. However, I did not see this image in my look through the microfilmed catalogue; possibly the page was missing from the microfilm version. Joy Santink says the earliest illustrations in the catalogue are of boys' suits and silverwear and were produced by John L. Jones, a wood engraver; she is probably referring to the pictures mentioned by Glazebrook. Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 126.



millinery."<sup>203</sup> The next season's book included drawings to illustrate specific text, rather than just as decoration,<sup>204</sup> and giving longer descriptions of mail order than of the store. Catalogue creators were generally trying to make their medium more effective and this involved using graphics to inform and delight.

Catalogues of the 1890s contained more pictures for both of these purposes. On the one hand there were plain, detailed item-by-item drawings of merchandise which could only be known by its minutiae, such as silverware and window shade fringe.<sup>205</sup> The first photographs I have identified in the catalogue, in 1893, continued this function, providing stark white-on-black images of lace curtains and other household goods.<sup>206</sup> Eaton's was the first Canadian company to use photographs in catalogues, and in so doing was following the example of American Mail Order firms.<sup>207</sup> Both of these developments showed the catalogue creators' growing faith in the adequacy of images to convey information to customers. Thus, an 1890 book remarked about its drawings of the store that "the work is generally accurate admitting of no exaggeration. The 'cuts' will speak for themselves."<sup>208</sup> Other systematizing efforts in the 1890s included rationalizing the catalogue by introducing item order numbers and order forms.<sup>209</sup> On the other hand, there were increasingly large, attractive drawings of expensive women's clothes meant to highlight and dramatize the beauty of one or two styles rather than provide detail. For

---

<sup>203</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1888, p. 7.

<sup>204</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1888-89. See, for example, the pictures of men's collars, (p. 57) or mourning stationery, (p. 66). This development was not always adhered to in later books. For instance, the pictures do not correspond to the text in the Fall-Winter 1892-93 book, while some of them in the Spring-Summer 1893 book do correspond to the text.

<sup>205</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1889-90, pp. 54, 70ff.

<sup>206</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer, 1893, pp. 81-92.

<sup>207</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970," article: "'Model' Girls," *Contacts*, 1936-11. This article notes that the Brigden's company, which was already in charge of engraving of catalogue, bought the necessary equipment and then located models, sometimes finding appropriate models in Eaton's stores themselves.

<sup>208</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1890-01, p. 4.

<sup>209</sup> Santink, *Timothy Eaton*, p. 156.

instance, a full-page drawing of a woman in a beaver jacket in the \$3.50 to \$20.00 range stood out as the only portrayal of a person in the Fall-Winter 1889-90 book.<sup>210</sup>

The latter picture was all the more prominent because it was near the front of the catalogue; evidently, Eaton's staff was discovering the potency of pictures of women's wear. Now and right until the 1970s, the first pages of the Toronto book were usually dedicated to such pictures along with more or less detailed written descriptions, and eventually this technique extended to catalogue covers.<sup>211</sup> Although the Toronto catalogues contained a huge range of items ranging from nails to saddles, they consistently gave priority to images of women's clothing and provided more of the images,<sup>212</sup> in many of these, the clothes were pictured worn by models. At first, the pictures at the front of the catalogue had been of women's millinery and bolts of dress goods,<sup>213</sup> but by the 1890s they included ready-to-wear, which provided the opportunity of a much broader range of graphics. As the Fall-Winter 1892-93 book explained it, detailed drawings of ready-made women's underwear would help a woman wavering between store-bought and home-made to decide "by the looking."<sup>214</sup>

As Katherine B. Brett has noted, "considerable persuasion was needed to induce the customers to break with tradition" in this regard.<sup>215</sup> To this end, the Fall-Winter 1892-93 catalogue said that the turn to ready-to-wear was inevitable: "women will come to it, sooner or later. There's no good reason why costumes and wrappers shouldn't be bought ready-made and worn satisfactorily."<sup>216</sup> This was attended by a growing endorsement in

---

<sup>210</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1889-90 p. 18.

<sup>211</sup> "Another site of idealized images of women was the catalogue covers. This will be discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>212</sup> See for example the Eaton's Toronto catalogue of Fall-Winter 1906-07, where virtually all the women's clothes are illustrated and far fewer men's are. Even the men's expensive fur-lined coats on p. 11 receive only three illustrations.

<sup>213</sup> See, for example, Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1889-90.

<sup>214</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1892-93, p. 14.

<sup>215</sup> Katherine B. Brett makes the point that "Considerable persuasion was needed to induce the customers to break with tradition" with regards to ready-mades in the Eaton's catalogue. Katherine B. Brett, "Notes on Fashion in Costume," pp. x-xiv in Glazebrook, Brett and McErvell, *A Shopper's View*, p. x.

<sup>216</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1892-93, p. 12.

the catalogue of "fashion." Whereas earlier catalogues had called fashion a "myth"<sup>217</sup> or limited the use of the word to foreign styles (usually French millinery),<sup>218</sup> by 1893 the catalogue argued that a woman's "bonnets must be modish and to a certain extent dress and hat and parasol are expected to match."<sup>219</sup> And by the following season, "the idea [was] to keep Toronto in close touch with the fashion centers of the world; or better yet, to make it one of them."<sup>220</sup> Eaton's management was willing to invest in these images; they had called in "an artist from New York with experience in fashion drawing" to do the early ones, and he drew them direct from the clothes.<sup>221</sup> Thus, techniques to visually represent women's clothes were developed alongside ones to design, produce and promote them: at Eaton's, like elsewhere, the modern "fashion industry," centered on women, was taking off. As Hollander notes, this was the culmination of a centuries-old link between clothing and pictures of it: "the swift spread of printed images after 1500 could set visual standards for dress, and support the idea that an actual clothed figure is most desirable when it looks like an ideal realistic picture."<sup>222</sup>

Hollander also remarks that fashion depended on *ideal* pictures. The Eaton's Toronto catalogue did have such pictures of men; in the 1890s, for instance, it showed men as stiff, straight and massive, an iconography of strength which as Hollander notes had "its own strong sexual appeal."<sup>223</sup> Photographic techniques of the time could express this ideal well. The first photographs of people that I identified in the Eaton's catalogue were in 1893, and they were pictures of men.<sup>224</sup> The following year there were photographs of women: rather stiff, stately full-length ones of live models wearing bulky straight cloaks.<sup>225</sup> But for decades afterwards, Eaton's catalogue creators used straight photography only

---

<sup>217</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1886-87, p. 17.

<sup>218</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1888-89, p. 19; Fall-Winter 1892-93, p. 8.

<sup>219</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1893, p. 10.

<sup>220</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1893-4, p. 7.

<sup>221</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-514, "Catalogue - Printing," letter from Fred H. Brigden of 1955-03-31 to John David Eaton, President, Eaton's.

<sup>222</sup>Hollander, *Sex and Suits*, p.28. She adds that this was a modern "process that has finally put all modern clothing into the representational mode" (p. 27).

<sup>223</sup>Hollander, *Sex and Suits*.

<sup>224</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1893-94, p. 36 ff.

<sup>225</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer, 1894, pp. 34-35.

sparingly to represent women.<sup>226</sup> Instead, they tended to rely upon other methods that better conveyed the curvy, enormous shoulders, large bosom, and wasp waists that were the epitome of the era: drawings, photographed heads with drawn clothes,<sup>227</sup> or dramatically retouched photographs.<sup>228</sup> As an insider put it, the early fashion drawings “were indeed primitive compared to the realistic figures appearing in the catalogue today.”<sup>229</sup> They did, however, convey a simple erotic energy that made up in vitality what it lacked in authenticity.<sup>230</sup>

Between the early 1890s and the mid-1910s, catalogue creators were becoming more confident in the potential of their medium. They seemed to have come to terms with the limits and possibilities of copy-writing, for one. In 1894, while they aimed high in describing “the softness and delicacy of twilight” of silk, they also declared they were against “exaggeration” and for “sticking to the truth.” They dreamed of “an advertising phonograph -- something that would give the types and the great cylinder presses an opportunity to capture, control and give forth human speech with its personality and force.”<sup>231</sup> A decade later, though, they seemed less frustrated, not only indulging in chirpy

---

<sup>226</sup>Even in 1916, the first 23 pages of women’s wear were illustrated by drawings, in this case of fur coats; these were marketed as being both stylish and serviceable. Only on the following two pages were there photographs, of cheaper women’s cloth coats. Ostrich neck ruffs, Marabou stoles, and veils, all of which had very fine details, were also photographed in this book. Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1916-17, pp. 1-25, 108, 150.

<sup>227</sup>For example, see Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer, 1901, example, p. 6.

<sup>228</sup>For example, see Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer, 1903, p. 6.

<sup>229</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-514, “Catalogue - Printing,” letter from Fred H. Brigden of 1955-03-31 to John David Eaton, President, Eaton's.

<sup>230</sup>David Cohn makes a similar point about the American Sears catalogue. He notes how photography can have the unwanted effect of “underplaying” reality so that “merchandise will look flimsier than it actually is.” Thus, he finds, goods for which the retailer desires to communicate “strength and massiveness,” for instance tires and furniture, were drawn, not photographed, until the period of his writing, 1940. David L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days: A History of American Morals and Manners as Seen through the Sears, Roebuck Catalogs, 1905 to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p.549.

<sup>231</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1894-95, pp. 1, 5.

words like “natty” and “jaunty” but also commenting that the illustration of a skirt gave “but a slight idea of [its] beauty,” and then using words to provide information that it lacked.<sup>232</sup> They were also making the catalogue more visually attractive, by varying layouts and the number of pictures per page, adding more white space, fancy borders and lettering, and so on, especially in the women’s pages.<sup>233</sup> They were developing techniques to make it easier to use, such as clearly matching each picture to a text description that referred back to its “cut”<sup>234</sup> and eventually linking them with numbers.<sup>235</sup>

In the same period, the catalogue creators diminished the extent to which they presented the catalogue as an appendage to the store. In the mid-1890s, they were still referring to the store very often, providing not only detailed descriptions but also pictures.<sup>236</sup> Many of these showed women customers<sup>237</sup> and employees,<sup>238</sup> and thus added these to the model women more often on display in the catalogue pages. However, by about 1903, the catalogue did not refer to the store much at all,<sup>239</sup> which is perhaps not surprising given that, as the previous chapter explained, Mail Order operations were becoming increasingly autonomous from the store’s in these years. But they also expressed far more confidence about the possibilities of catalogue shopping. With “better and quicker” communications, “shopping by mail has been reduced to a science,”<sup>240</sup> it was “a modern idea,”<sup>241</sup> that

---

<sup>232</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1904-5, p. 18.

<sup>233</sup>See, for example, the first pages of Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter, 1906-7.

<sup>234</sup>For example, see Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1894-95.

<sup>235</sup>See, for example, Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1905.

<sup>236</sup>For example, the Spring-Summer 1896 book included an insert called “A Visit to the T. Eaton Company Limited; Leaves from an artists [sic] sketch book,” and provided photographs and drawings of the store as well as other company operations. This catalogue also indicates, p. 2, that “the best catalogue of the store is a walk through.”

<sup>237</sup>For example, drawings of the store interior of the Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1895-95, emphasize the presence of female shoppers. See, for instance, pp. 5-6 showing customers gazing at merchandise including works of art and wallpaper, and p. 7 which show single women in the lunchroom.

<sup>238</sup>For example, there is a drawing of women working the pneumatic cash system in the Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1894-95, p. 4.

<sup>239</sup>There were few references to the store after the Eaton's Toronto catalogue of Spring-Summer, 1903.

<sup>240</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1893-94, p. 1.

allowed Eaton's to go beyond the "merely local" to the whole country,<sup>242</sup> "it's only a question of knowing each other, and a postal card does that."<sup>243</sup> By 1915, indeed, they ventured the opinion that shopping by catalogue was actually better than in stores, for "you can buy at your leisure all your needs, without any undue influence, and in the quiet of your own home."<sup>244</sup>

The Toronto catalogue continued to be refined throughout the twentieth century. For one thing, Eaton's still needed to convey information, whether written or graphic, accurately, unexaggeratedly and fairly, and also very simply through an easily-comprehensible layout. To this end, the company's catalogue creators tinkered with things like methods of numbering departments<sup>245</sup> or wording of delivery policies.<sup>246</sup> There were clear "Rules, Policies, Definitions" for copywriters, guiding everything from how to describe fibers to why not to use too many exclamation marks.<sup>247</sup> These were on file with the Research Bureau, which tested and analyzed products and whose work was deemed "necessar[y] for the protection of the Company's good name."<sup>248</sup> When it came to writing, a 1916 Notice bluntly said that "CATALOGUE DESCRIPTIONS MUST MEAN WHAT THEY SAY

---

<sup>241</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Christmas 1894, p. 17.

<sup>242</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1895, p. 1.

<sup>243</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1895-96, p. 92.

<sup>244</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1915, inside front cover.

<sup>245</sup> This was also for in-house efficiency; see, for example, a Notice regarding the need to ensure that the catalogue had the new Mail Order department numbers. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 61 (Superintendent's office - Outgoing and Incoming Notices), Early Notices to R.W. Eaton, Vol. for 1909-1913, page located between pp. 100 and 101, Notice of 1912-6-20 from J.J. Vaughan (Secretary).

<sup>246</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F549 from Executive Office to E.E. Jones, 1935-06-12.

<sup>247</sup> F 229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), File "Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)," n.d. [ca. 1940-1949], pp. 24, 21

<sup>248</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Vol: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice C219, 1928-04-14. Regarding the Bureau's work, see for instance, in this same Volume, Notice F578, 1935-09-14, and Notice F592, 1935-05-25.

AND SAY WHAT THEY MEAN.”<sup>249</sup> This was for the benefit of all customers, including immigrants who had difficulty with text<sup>250</sup> and people on small budgets who had to be made to understand that lower-priced goods were not the same quality as more expensive ones;<sup>251</sup> everyone benefitted if the catalogue was an easily-used, fair and effective sales tool. It was also good for business. Disappointed customers would return goods, and so using the right size, amount of white space, and number of images affected an advertisement’s ultimate selling effectiveness.<sup>252</sup> But also, it was to satisfy the law on false advertising.<sup>253</sup> Laws also dictated that certain information like fiber content be conveyed to customers,<sup>254</sup> and how metal goods were to be described.<sup>255</sup>

The frequency with which Eaton's managers reminded their staffs of the need for to make the catalogues clear and straightforward suggests that artists and copywriters regularly did not do so. Thus, around 1908, one man observed which catalogued goods were being

---

<sup>249</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume 1919-23, Notice B66 from R.Y. Eaton, 1916-10-21.

<sup>250</sup> This point was made in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), file “Mail Order,” letter from F. Carpenter, Housefurnishings Department, Winnipeg, to O,D Vaughan, Executive Office, Toronto, 1944-04-11, as well as in G. de T. Glazebrook, “Introduction,” in Glazebrook, Brett and McErvel, *A Shopper’s View*, p. vii.

<sup>251</sup> This point is made in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume “Notices to Departments: 1925-39,” Notice C176 from Executive Offices, Toronto, 1926-06-08.

<sup>252</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file “An Analysis of Advertising and its Problems as Gathered Over a Period of Under Three Months, 1942,” document by Dorothy A. Homuth, Research Comparison Office, of 1942-09-08, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>253</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume for 1919-23, Notice from R.Y. Eaton, 1916-10-21. The Notice refers both to keeping business and to statute Chapter 24- 4-5 Geo. V.

<sup>254</sup> F 229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files) file “Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide),” n.d. [ca. 1940-1949]: p. 73.

<sup>255</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume “Notices to Departments: 1925-39,” Notice C209 1926-01-16; Notice F474, 1934-04-28.

exchanged and found that items which had been pictured or described misleadingly -- his examples were of women's hats, some of which were made to seem more "beautiful" than they really were -- were most likely to be exchanged by disappointed customers.<sup>256</sup> After all, as another man put it, "it was the only thing mail-order customers had to go by."<sup>257</sup> The 1916 Notice on false advertising was repeated, with increasing severity, throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>258</sup> In varying forms, it was reiterated in the 1940s, in the Research Bureau's copy-writing manual,<sup>259</sup> and in the 1950s, when photographs were seen as a boon because they were so realistic.<sup>260</sup> But even then, goods could be misrepresented either

---

<sup>256</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-480, File "Catalogue -- Analysis," document from the files of John James Eaton, entitled "Exchanges--Their Causes and Remedies" [n.d.; c. 1908 or 1909]. This is an address given before the Eaton's Advisory Committee by Mr Gunn; it quotes his son as saying "You had to have everything just so for the catalogue, because it was the only thing mail-order customers had to go by."

<sup>257</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-498, "Catalogue - Clippings 1970's on," article in *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* .1985-06-20 p. 12. The quotation is from the son of H. Eric Bergman, who was an artist for Winnipeg catalogue. He also noted that "If a single button or detail was wrong, you'd get complaints from all over."

<sup>258</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume 1919-23, Notices from R.Y. Eaton of 1925-04-15 [C142], of 1930-06-23 [D285]; also, Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice E333 from R.Y. Eaton, 1931-01-26, Notice E378 from Secretarial Office, 1931, 08-20, Notice F577 from Secretarial Office, 1935-09-06.

<sup>259</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files) , file "Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)," n.d. [ca. 1940-1949]. For instance, it says p. 37 " Where dining room suites show more pieces than are included in the display price, the latter must be qualified definitely, as 'Table and six chairs'...If low price impression is desired, we can show the lower price in big display providing it is properly qualified but we must show immediately beneath it the price for the higher priced item illustrated."

<sup>260</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-496, "Catalogue - Clippings 1940's & 1950's," article in *Style* of 1958-09-24 called "Catalogue Is up to Date." The article quotes an Eaton's spokesperson.



through altering or stuffing them to look better before the camera, as a teenaged girl model revealed,<sup>261</sup> or retouched after the picture was taken. This on-going practice by some Eatonians to alter the reality of merchandise and models was one sign of the second parameter guiding the appearance of the Eaton's catalogue: to make merchandise, especially women's wear and their models, as attractive as possible. The challenge at Eaton's was to find a balance between clear information, so that it was easy to make sense of the catalogue, and a "true fashion presentation" which in 1969 was said to account for "about 85 per cent of [Eaton's] selling impact."<sup>262</sup>

The continuing desire within Eaton's to display women's merchandise and its models appealingly, prominently and in new ways drove some important changes to the appearance of the Toronto catalogue. While some innovations first appeared with men's wear (such as three-colour images), more of them, such as new ways in colour (such as "pastel tints" and two-colour gravures), attractive paper (such as "super roto white,"), and photography (such as a "special process for patterned items"), including the use of New York models, appeared first in the women's goods pages.<sup>263</sup>

Photographing female models became especially important. This was not only due to the possibilities offered by technological advances; as a 1936 company magazine article explained it, it was also driven by a combination of consumer demand for realistic

---

<sup>261</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's", article by Barry Conn Hughes, "Starting on page two," *Canadian Magazine* 1967-01-13, p.6; it quotes teen model Darlene Ballis.

<sup>262</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-498, "Catalogue - Clippings 1970's on," article "It takes teamwork to merchandise a 'best seller,'" *Eaton Quarterly*, Summer 1969, p. 6.

<sup>263</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58;" these examples are taken from the 1930s to the 1940s, pp. 11-27. Also, file F 229-162-0-516, "Catalogue - Research", document "In the Beginning" [archivist's notes, no date] indicates that the "First time full colour used for illustrations inside book" was for six pages of fashions;" this was the Spring-Summer 1902 book. G. de T. Glazebrook indicates that these were of dresses as well as curtains and rugs. Glazebrook, "Introduction," in iii-ix in Glazebrook, Brett and McErvell, *A Shopper's View*, p. vi.

representations and the rise of modeling as a profession for young women.<sup>264</sup> By the late 1930s, female fashions were often photographed and in 1940, all women's dresses, suits, coats and blouses were.<sup>265</sup> In a 1947 catalogue, all women's wear was photographed (much of it in colour) except for goods for which drawing could add to their cachet, such as "lovely lingerie" or "Full-Fashioned Glamour" in nylons; in contrast, some of the teens' and girls' wear and most of young men's wear were drawn.<sup>266</sup> By the 1960s, it was cheaper and faster to photograph merchandise than to draw it, so virtually all catalogue goods were pictured this way. Nonetheless, photographing models meant investing much time and money: they had to be booked long in advance<sup>267</sup> and it was a considerable amount of work to photograph them, sometimes on location, to choose the best proof, and so on.<sup>268</sup> Clearly, the company felt it was worth the cost to appeal to its female customers.

So oriented were the Toronto catalogue creators towards fashion that by mid-century they prepared the women's wear pages last, so they would be the most up to date.<sup>269</sup> At this point, the effect was such that Eaton's could boast that the catalogue looked like "a slick

---

<sup>264</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970]," article "'Model' Girls," *Contacts*, 1936-11.

<sup>265</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-516, "Catalogue - Research" note of 1968-08-14 entitled "Research done regarding the use of photographs in the catalogue."

<sup>266</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1947. Lingerie is on p. 9; nylons on p. 78; drawn teens/girls wear on pp. 92 ff.

<sup>267</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue - Research," letter from W. E. McMurray, Catalogue Advertising, to Mrs. C. Chapman, Manchester, England [not of Eaton's], 1963-09-19.

<sup>268</sup> For examples of work by Eaton's's own Commercial Studio (for store advertising, not catalogue work) which shows the photography process from beginning to end, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 205 (Commercial Studio - Studio Files).

<sup>269</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-496, "Catalogue - Clippings 1940's & 1950's," article called "Catalogue Is up to Date," from *Style*, 1958-09-24.

fashion magazine.”<sup>270</sup> In the 1960s, the catalogue was “re-vamped” again to have “a modern, ‘high-fashion’ look” both through its production (such as page size) and better-quality merchandise.<sup>271</sup> These changes were made in the context of the Eaton's catalogue generally becoming more like a store: bigger; more colourful; more realistic (through photography),<sup>272</sup> brighter (through the use of better-quality glossy paper)<sup>273</sup> and more

---

<sup>270</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-503, article from *Flash*, 1949-08-15.

<sup>271</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970," article "Eaton's 1966 catalogue reflects our new approach," *Eaton News*, Winter 1966.

<sup>272</sup> For brief, incomplete notes on the history of photography in the Eaton's catalogue, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-516, File "Catalogue – Research," note of 1968-08-14 entitled "Research done regarding the use of photographs in the catalogue." There are many other documents in this series with information on catalogue production, including photography. For instance, file F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's" includes an article by Barry Conn Hughes called “Starting on page two,” which discusses the use of photogravure for the catalogue.

<sup>273</sup> On the size of the book and the quality of paper used, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-481, File "Catalogue - Analysis & Statistics 1927-58." The catalogues tended to have decreasing numbers of pages during the Second World War, however; see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S163 (Staff Superintendent's Office and Publicity Office - Ivor Lewis' Files) file 1.02/14, Advertising - Mail Order Catalogue," letter from H.W. Lee, Mail Order Advertising, to A.N.Sands, Mail Order Office, 1943-12-03. After the war, the catalogue got bigger again, weighing in at between 2-3 pounds (source: AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's", article by Barry Conn Hughes, "Starting on page two," *Canadian Magazine* , 1967-01-13, p.6) Regarding the use of colour in the catalogue, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-480, File "Catalogue – Analysis," document of 1962-11-14 for the number of colour pages in the Toronto-Moncton catalogue in the 1920s-1940s.

oriented to city-dwellers, who had become the majority in Canada.<sup>274</sup> Outsiders noticed the change; in the 1960s, for instance, *Canadian Magazine* said they helped to compensate for the fact that customers could not touch or try on the goods,<sup>275</sup> while *Chatelaine* said that it had become “citified”<sup>276</sup> -- although, as another journalist noticed with relief, the models were still “hardy” looking, not thin like *Vogue*’s.<sup>277</sup> Clearly, permeating the catalogue with improved views of women was a key element of this evolution.

### Conclusion

From the later nineteenth century right until the 1970s, Eaton's created and developed a range of sales outlets that were visually oriented, often showy, and sometimes spectacular. They were, in a word, “consumerist,” in which “the act of acquiring the product and the associations of the products advertising and marketing become as or more important than the product itself.”<sup>278</sup> At centre stage in these consumerist spaces, in many of the stores, Order Offices, catalogues and advertisements, were women: “model women,” in the form of dress dummies and live fashion mannequins, as well as ordinary female employees and shoppers. This meant that first in one store, then in the store and a modestly-distributed

---

<sup>274</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970," article: "Now They've Citified the Country Catalogue," *Eaton News Quarterly*, Winter 1967, pp. 8-10.

<sup>275</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's", article by Barry Conn Hughes, "Starting on page two," *Canadian Magazine*, 1967-01-13, p.6,

<sup>276</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-497, "Catalogue - Clippings 1960's," article by Dean Walker, "How they've citified the old country catalogue," *Chatelaine*, 1966-07. The article refers to Canadian catalogues including the Eaton's book.

<sup>277</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-482, "Catalogue - Articles" transcript of broadcast by Jean Sangwine, "Mail Order Catalogue Goes 'High Fashion', Morning Comment, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Winnipeg, 1965-05-17, regarding the 1964 catalogue.

<sup>278</sup> Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," p. 212.

catalogue, and eventually in millions of homes, hundreds of Order Offices, and dozens of stores across Canada, there were women looking at other women, whether real or represented, as they carried out the basic task of procuring goods for themselves and their families at Eaton's. It also meant that women on display were an important and ever-increasing sight in city and town public places — in show windows visible on the streets, inside these venues themselves, in publicly available documents like newspaper advertisements and, eventually, on television. Women also made up the majority of onlookers of this vision, being both the ones to whom the company geared most of its marketing and who did most of the shopping. It might have been mainly men who produced the show but it was women, as actresses and audience, who allowed the show to go on.

## CHAPTER 7

### A SMALL WORLD: THE REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN CANADA ON THE EATON'S CATALOGUE COVERS

#### Introduction

##### *Eaton's, women and Canada on the catalogue covers: an example from 1952*

One day in 1952, a Mrs. Cherry from Port Perry wrote to John David Eaton, President of the company bearing his family name, to say, "it is wonderful to know the T. Eaton Company intends to remain 'Canadian,' as I feel we have the greatest future here in this Canada of ours."<sup>1</sup> This was a company that had grown by the 1950s into a colossal nation-wide enterprise with dozens of stores and hundreds of catalogue order offices from coast to coast. How was it that Mrs. Cherry would come to write to one of the richest and most powerful men in the country in order to chat about Canada? The short answer is that she was replying to a letter she had received from him. In it, he had talked about the "visions and ideals" of his grandfather, company founder Timothy Eaton, which he believed reflected the values both of the Eaton's company and of Canadians at large. The letter had not been sent to her personally, though. It had been pictured on the cover of the company's Toronto Fall-Winter 1952-53 catalogue, under the heading "A Personal Message from the President."

The long answer is that it was only natural that Mrs. Cherry would respond to such a letter, because for many years, Eaton's had been encouraging women to think of the firm

---

<sup>1</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 142, "Customers' Comments on President's Message on Cover of Catalogue, Fall and Winter 1952-53," letter from Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Port Perry, Ont., to John David Eaton, 1952-08-25.

as *the* place for them to feel and act Canadian. The company's Toronto catalogue covers were a key source of this message. Taken together, the covers submitted what amounted to an argument, presented in words and images, about the role of women in modern Canada. The argument stated, first of all, that women were the main customers of Eaton's. Secondly, the argument identified Eaton's as a key engine of Canadian development. It concluded, thirdly, that women were, therefore, key agents of Canadian development. This was, the covers collectively implied, due to the interceding factor of Eaton's itself; the company was a conduit for women to express their Canadianness. Through the medium of its covers, therefore, Eaton's proposed ways of seeing the female customers to whom it appealed, the country in which it operated, and itself: the meanings of all three were mutually constructed through this popular, powerful medium.

In this chapter, both my argument and that of Eaton's will be elucidated through a content analysis of 167 Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers dating between 1886 and 1975.<sup>2</sup> The analysis is structured in three parts, following the order of the three propositions of the Eaton's argument as outlined above. As this would suggest, instead of employing the historical method of focussing on nuances and changes over the years, the chapter presents a more literary approach consisting of identifying and analyzing a multi-part but essentially stable text. This is because although it was presented in many pieces over many years, the argument was consistent and ubiquitous. Sometimes the gist of it was captured on one cover. At other times, a cover would be printed with only one or two of the three elements mentioned above, but the third was sure to follow soon. This was true regardless of who ran the company or who created the covers. More significant than any variations on the argument over time, therefore, was its essential constancy and coherence. To underline this truth, in the present chapter references will be made to the text's single overall producer -- "Eaton's."

---

<sup>2</sup> The following catalogue covers are excluded from the survey because they were not present in my source: Spring-Summer 1887, Fall-Winter 1887-88, Spring-Summer 1888, Spring-Summer 1890, Spring-Summer 1891, Fall-Winter 1891-92, Spring-Summer 1892, Fall-Winter 1898-99, Spring-Summer 1905.

Even though it is presented ahistorically for the most part in the present chapter, the argument was an important historical fact. The catalogue was very popular from the start, quickly growing from its 1884 status of “a little pink paper booklet containing thirty-two pages of Store values,” with one woman back at Eaton's filling orders, to a colossus. By the 1920s, it was a book hundreds of pages long, overseen by an operation possessing its own building, merchandise and a staff of over two thousand, and read by millions of customers.<sup>3</sup> Eaton's published two main catalogues from Toronto per year, one for the Spring-Summer period and one for Fall-Winter. For months at a time, then, any particular issue was to be found in millions of Canadian homes. The catalogue was, in a word, a superbly visible and long-lasting publicity vehicle, and the cover was its most conspicuous feature. Many Canadians over several generations therefore had the opportunity to repeatedly see and receive the Eaton's argument on the important role of Canadian women and how the company itself helped them fulfill it.

As a significant historical actor, Eaton's, not surprisingly, constructed its argument deliberately and knowingly. Within a year or two of establishing the catalogue, the company designed its covers to catch and please the eye, with fancy typefaces, snappy slogans, appealing pictures, and carefully crafted statements. According to a company director, the company specifically designed the 1952 cover to which Mrs. Cherry responded, for instance, in order to send “a timely message” to customers about the company's Canadian roots in the face of a new competitor in the country, Simpson's-Sears.<sup>4</sup> Although incorporated in Canada, this latter company had American roots, having

---

<sup>3</sup> “The Scribe” (pseud.), *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited*, (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co., Limited 1919), pp. 152-60; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), File F 229-162-0-503, “Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970”, article: “Now They've Citified the Country Catalogue,” *Eaton News Quarterly*, Winter 1967, pp. 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the cover message was meant “to allay rumours that the Company is being purchased by outside interests.” AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 142, “Customers' Comments on President's Message on Cover of



been created when the American firm Sears, Roebuck and Company bought the mail order operations of Simpsons Limited, an old Toronto-based retail house. The design Eaton's settled on was meant to demonstrate to customers how personal and familiar Eaton's was; it featured a picture of an actual letter, fold marks, manuscript signature and all.

The publisher of the *Vancouver Sun* appreciated the design, declaring to John David Eaton,<sup>5</sup>

Bless you, my friend, what a beautiful counter-puncher you are! It's many a moon since my sad eyes have been treated to such a lovely, finished artistic job as the one you uncoil on the cover of your impressive catalogue...[,] the clean, clear effectiveness of the whole message presentation, your easy, convincing wording, your sincerity, your unanswerable finesse with coup de grace at the end. I salute an artist.

Evidently, the publisher was referring to a *commercial* artist, one who knew how to use words and images to influence, even manipulate, consumers. Creating covers that were calculated in appearance, omnipresent and powerful, Eaton's, as the 1952 cover makes clear, could fairly be called a producer of "commercial propaganda."<sup>6</sup>

---

Catalogue, Fall and Winter 1952-53," resumé of telephone conversation between O.D. Vaughan, Executive Office, and R. Pinfold, Eaton's Winnipeg, c.1952-09. Regarding the purpose of the cover, see also in this file a letter from J.D. Eaton to Charles Lloyd Jones, Sydney, Australia, 1953-03-20.

<sup>5</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 8 (Executive Office - General Files), File 142, "Customers' Comments on President's Message on Cover of Catalogue, Fall and Winter 1952-53," letter from Office of the Publisher of *The Vancouver Sun* to J.D. Eaton, 1952-08-14.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976), p. 190.

*Eaton's: Canada's "Captains of Consciousness?"*

The phrase "commercial propaganda" is from Stewart Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (1976). The broad question that Ewen addresses in this book is the nature of political, social and cultural changes that swept through industrializing 1920s America. One way he attempts to answer it is to look at public constructions of gender and nationhood, particularly as developed in the advertising media. What Ewen finds is that in this era of "expanding commodity market," women in advertisements and other public media "were invested with a high degree of political and social determining power."<sup>7</sup> This was a significant change. As Ewen noted, it represented a departure from older, more restrictive notions of women's roles; it was one facet of the emerging image of the New Woman. However favourable was this new construction of womanhood, though, Ewen proposes that its real function was not to advance any feminist cause. Instead, he interprets it as one example of the propaganda deployed by an emerging new elite of advertisers and merchandisers, the "captains of consciousness," whose primary interest was to augment their own wealth and power.

The same point can be made for the argument presented on the Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers. While it seemed to be mainly about the ascendancy of Canadian women, what it ultimately had to do with was expressing and reinforcing the influence of Eaton's itself. Once again we see, as previous chapters also showed, that Eaton's, a most Canadian company, was actually very close to its American peers in its deployment of merchandising techniques. In this case, Eaton's was using weapons popular in America to fight a competitor with American origins. This chapter will present a number of points of similarity between the very-Canadian Eaton's argument and those put forth in American advertising arguments, as laid out by Ewen.

What the Vancouver Sun publisher appreciated more than Ewen, however, was the *appearance* of this propaganda: the 1952 cover was, as he wrote, an "artistic job."

---

<sup>7</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 168.

Catalogue covers were graphic as well as verbal documents conveying their message via the eye: that is, visually.

Acknowledging the visuality of modern advertisements is especially important to fully understanding their messages about women. While Ewen draws extensively upon advertising images, especially pictures of women or aimed at them, and he acknowledges that the appearance of beauty was central to the emerging construction of women as consumers,<sup>8</sup> he does not explore the connection of women and looks any further. He thus shows, but does not much discuss, the fact that it was commonly in the visual medium of print advertisements that women were encouraged to define themselves visually; that, in the famous phrase of Ewen's contemporary Marshall McLuhan, the medium was the message.<sup>9</sup>

It was, indeed, the visuality of the Eaton's catalogue covers that made their messages about women so potent. The covers conveyed the notion that it was through consumption that women fulfilled themselves, and that for women, consumption was an economy of looks. Looks were key to Canadian women's worth: to how they appeared, which was presented as very important, and to how they beheld merchandise. The catalogue, as a visual medium, did not just portray these realities but actually helped consolidate them.

What the covers represented, crucially, was a particularly passive relationship between women, looking and consuming. Being looked at was something women were shown to do quietly, while not doing much else; looking at goods, while acknowledged on the covers as requiring the skill of discernment, was *shown* as requiring little energy. Overall, women's relationship with looking, supposedly the key to their worth as women and as

---

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Ewen indicates that one advertisement message to women was that they had to be beautiful – achieved by consuming commodities such as makeup – in order to get and keep husbands. Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> McLuhan explores representations of women in advertisements in *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951; reprinted ed., Boston: Beacon, 1967).

consumers, and thus as participants in the Canadian economy, was portrayed as quiescent and receptive rather than active or energetic. The same was true of how the covers showed women directly “acting” as Canadian citizens: it was more in a passive than an active role, by holding a flag, rather than, say, going out to vote.

Eaton's reserved the powerful position of dynamic actor for a few men, who from time to time graced the catalogue covers, and, especially, for itself. One cover after another implied that it was Eaton's, rather than women, who could directly affect change; the way for women to have access to this power, then, was through buying into the Eaton's role for them, of passively engaging in the economy of looking. In producing such an important print advertisement as the catalogue covers, then, Eaton's was a Canadian captain of consciousness, acting, like Ewen's American examples, to augment its own ascendancy.

#### 1. Women were the main customers of Eaton's

The first proposition made through the Eaton's catalogue covers, as part of their overall argument on the role of women in modern Canada, was that women were the company's main customers. One simple way that Eaton's made this point was by dedicating many of the pictures on the covers to women and girls, far more than it did to men and boys. Out of the 167 covers surveyed from Fall-Winter 1886-87 to Spring-Summer 1975, 105 featured people as main elements of the images of their design.<sup>10</sup> (The others showed a variety of subjects ranging from stores to maps. Many of these will be discussed below.) Twenty-eight of these, or just over a quarter of the 105, showed both males and females in equal numbers or equally prominently. Of the remaining 77 covers featuring human figures, 58 (55 percent) showed females without males and another 5 (5 percent) have women or girls in the foreground and relegate males or people of both sexes to the background, for a total of 62 covers (that is, 60 percent of the covers featuring people)

---

<sup>10</sup> This is leaving out some five or six covers showing remote groups of people, for instance in bird's-eye-views showing company stores with crowds on the surrounding streets.

accentuating women and girls. In contrast, only 13 of the 104 covers feature men or boys exclusively, and there was only one showing males in the foreground with others (both men and women) in the background, for a total of 14 covers with males as a central focus: 13 percent of the 105. Thus, there were over four and a half times as many female-centred covers than male-ones. It is clear that Eaton's was singling out females through this publicity vehicle.

Numbers tell only part of the story. The rest is told by the content of the images. Table 8 below indicates the subjects of the 14 male-centred catalogue covers, which I have divided into ten groups.

TABLE 8  
 SUBJECTS OF THE 14 MALE-CENTRED COVERS  
 OF THE EATON'S TORONTO CATALOGUES

<u>Group #</u>	<u>Image #</u>	<u>Subject of image(s) in this group</u>	<u>Number of covers in group</u>	<u>Catalogue covers(s) on this subject (SS = Spring-Summer FW = Fall-Winter)</u>
1	1	Eaton's delivery men with wagons.	1	SS 1909
2	2	Man on dogsled loaded with Eaton's parcels.	1	FW 1921-22
3	3-5	Farmers.	3	SS 1918 FW 1920-21 FW 1939
4	6	A commercial exchange between a white trader and an Aboriginal man, under a caption "The First Sale;" in background were ghostly modern buildings.	1	SS 1921
5	7	Timothy Eaton.	1	FW 1934-35
6	8	John David Eaton.	1	FW 1953-54
7	9	Jacques Cartier landing on the shore of Canada, being greeted by Aboriginal men, in the water a ship; in background were ghostly modern train and boat, under the caption "400 years of Canadian progress."	1	SS 1934
8	10	A male hand holding a torch with company slogan "The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number" written in the flame.	1	FW 1935-36
9	11	A montage of various scenes including an Aboriginal man in a headdress, a totem pole, wheat fields, men at work in resource industries such as mining, a woman baking, etc.; at the center of the picture was a male officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.	1	SS 1960
10	12-14	Men or boys playing sports.	3	FW 1948-49 FW 1957-58 FW 1958-59

SOURCE: Eaton's Toronto catalogue

These covers portray men and boys involved in quite a variety of pastimes, sending out messages about males in two ways. One way was affirmative: what they *did* show men doing. Eaton's catalogue covers showed men in a variety of pursuits including delivering, farming, trading, mining, discovering and playing. Some implications of these portrayals will be discussed below. The other way the covers sent out messages was negative: what they did *not* show men and boys doing. Among other things, they did not show them consuming, at least not directly. Thus, although males are portrayed in these covers, it is not as consumers *per se* -- that is, it is not directly as Eaton's customers. In this negative message, the Eaton's catalogue covers were similar to contemporary American publicity, which only very rarely targeted males as shoppers or consumers.<sup>11</sup>

This was very different from the way women and girls were shown in the 63 female-focused covers, as Table 9 indicates.

TABLE 9  
SUBJECTS OF THE 63 FEMALE-CENTRED COVERS OF THE  
EATON'S TORONTO CATALOGUES

<u>Group #</u>	<u>Image #</u>	<u>Subject of image(s) in this group</u>	<u>No. of covers in gp.</u>	<u>Catalogue covers(s) on this subject</u>
1	1-10	Women buying, looking at, ordering otherwise consuming Eaton's merchandise.	10	FW 1925-26 FW 1928-29 SS 1942 SS 1944 FW 1951-52 SS 1959 SS 1961 SS 1962 SS 1968 FW 1972-73
2	12	Girls wearing old-fashioned hooped dresses.	1	SS 1925
3	13-15	Young, pretty female faces.	3	FW 1913-14 SS 1916 FW 1917-18

<sup>11</sup> This was discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 9 (Cont'd.)

<u>Group #</u>	<u>Image #</u>	<u>Subject of image(s) in this group</u>	<u>No. of covers in gp.</u>	<u>Catalogue covers(s) on this subject</u>	
4	16	A prize-winning photograph entitled "Bereft," which shows a shepherd girl finding a dead sheep.	1	SS 1914	
5	17-52	Women sitting or standing or walking, usually with a background showing the outdoors. The background might be a decorative garden or an urban street. The women are dressed in contemporary clothing, usually garments listed as for sale within the catalogue.	35	SS 1900 FW 1900-01 SS 1902 FW 1902-03 FW 1904-05 SS 1906 FW 1906-07 SS 1907 FW 1916-17 SS 1917 SS 1919 SS 1922 FW 1922-23 SS 1923 FW 1923-24 SS 1924 FW 1924-25 SS 1936	FW 1940-41 SS 1947 FW 1949-50 FW 1961-62 SS 1963 FW 1964-65 FW 1965-66 SS 1966 FW 1966-67 SS 1969 FW 1969-70 SS 1970 SS 1971 SS 1972 SS 1973 FW 1973-74 FW 1974-75
6	53	Female mannequins in an Eaton's store window.	1	FW 1908-09	
7	11	A montage of six pictures, accompanied by quotations, of Maureen Kennedy, a model, wife and mother.	1	SS 1965	
8	54-57	Women engaged in patriotic acts such as waving flags.	4	FW 1944-45 SS 1945	FW 1945-46 SS 1967
9	58-63	Statuesque figures, used as part of a design incorporating symbolic elements; most of these show the women wearing flowing "ancient-style" robes and some show the figures in allegorical roles.	6	FW 1890-91 SS 1898 SS 1899	SS 1904 FW 1912-13 SS 1913

SOURCE: Eaton's Toronto catalogue



Only groups 8 and 9, for a total of 10 covers, showed women in non-consuming contexts. All the rest of the covers linked women to Eaton's via consumption. This was obviously the case with group 1, whose 10 covers, dating between the 1920s and the 1970s, showed women and girls shopping for Eaton's merchandise and thus directly identified females as customers. This message also emanated from American merchandisers, economists and magazine writers as of the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> In all of these sources, "the encoding of modern female identity has everything to do with attempts to construct women as consumers."<sup>13</sup>

Groups 2 to 6 link women and consumption in a different way. The 41 covers in these five groups showed women doing little more than being attractive. Indeed, groups 2, 3 and 4 used images of women purely as decoration. They were beautiful objects, meant to be consumed by the eye. These representations fit into an old and central tradition in Western art of showing women, their faces and bodies, as beautiful objects; in paintings, sculpture, and sketches, the body of "woman" has long been the "thème par excellence" of both male artists and the viewing public.<sup>14</sup> The tradition is rooted in a much broader one in Western society of emphasizing the importance of women's appearance and valuing their beauty, and it is reflected in commercial art, films, and other products of mass culture. As advertising historian James B. Twitchell put it: "Cinderella, Cleopatra, Helen of Troy—I rest my case. The face of a woman has been a commodity for some time."<sup>15</sup> Group 5,

---

<sup>12</sup> Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, 1 (Autumn 1994): 2-4. This is also the decade identified by Ewen.

<sup>13</sup> Breazeale, "In Spite of Women," p. 1. This phenomenon is discussed by Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, Part III chapter 4.

<sup>14</sup> Georges Duby, "Images de femmes," in *Images de femmes*, under the direction of Georges Duby. ([Paris:] Plon, 1992), p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> James B. Twitchell, *Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 125, cited in Anthony J. Cortese, *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 76.

likewise, showed good-looking female forms not doing very much, but most of these also had the additional consumption-related function of modelling clothes on sale in the catalogue.<sup>16</sup> It was not just that the women portrayed here were meant to be consumed visually, in other words, but also that their clothes were meant to be admired, desired, and *bought*. The same went for the female figures in the single cover making up group 6, which made the link between clothes and clothes-wearer clear. The “women” it featured were mannequins in a shop window, purchased store dummies whose clothes were also available to buy. These were thorough-going examples of what art critic Griselda Pollock calls the “commodified female body.”<sup>17</sup> In groups 2 to 6, therefore, the Eaton's catalogue cover women were not presented as consumers, but as the consumed.

The “consumers” for groups 2 to 6 would have been the Eaton's customers looking at the pictures on the catalogue covers. In some cases, the onlookers were males engaged in “gazing.” This word, as Chapter 3 has mentioned, is used by scholars to designate a dynamic and hierarchical social process of looking. Strong words are used by Pollock, for instance, who refers to “an active mastering gaze subjecting the passive image of woman, fragmented, or dismembered, fetishized and above all silenced.”<sup>18</sup> As this citation indicates, Pollock, along with other scholars, pinpoints men as the chief gazers and women as one of the key objects of their scrutiny. In the case of the Eaton's catalogue, generations of boys and men have admitted to reading the book for the pleasure of looking

---

<sup>16</sup> See for example the Eaton's Toronto catalogue of Fall-Winter 1916, in which a woman's upper body and face are featured, and the clothes she is wearing are listed as catalogue merchandise for which prices are given.

<sup>17</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 159.

<sup>18</sup> Pollock, *Vision & Difference*, p. 159. Pollock is discussing a pioneer work on the concept of the gaze, Laura Mulvey's “Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema” (*Screen*, 1975).

at the women on its pages, especially those devoted to lingerie.<sup>19</sup> In putting pretty women on display, then, the Eaton's catalogue did what men's magazines like *Esquire* did: it "promoted the normalcy of what Freud clinically termed *scopophilia*, that is, the voyeuristic gaze."<sup>20</sup>

When the people looking at the catalogue covers were women, they were not likely to be gazing in this sense of mastering, as much as learning to judge other women – and, by extension, themselves -- according to their looks. Eaton's was interested in encouraging them to do this; the more they felt their looks mattered, the more they were likely to desire the clothes, make-up, hair accessories, mirrors, and other merchandise the company sold. Portraying pretty women on the catalogues, representing and constructing femininity visually, was, as a general approach, simply good business. This was because, as Stuart Ewen observed, "it was more efficient to endow [people] with a critical self-consciousness in tune with the 'solutions' of the marketplace than to fragmentarily argue for products on their own merit."<sup>21</sup>

In the end, showing women as objects on display (the consumed) and as subjects shopping (the consumers) were linked; one led to the other. Looking at other women, a catalogue-viewer would, in a culture of gazing, learn to judge herself by her looks and thus to shop for goods that she thought would enhance her own display value. This entire process was encapsulated on the single cover of group 7 which presented "Lovely Maureen Kennedy who pursues an active TV and modeling career in addition to managing a home and raising four children," and gave, in her own words, her reasons for shopping at Eaton's. In all, then, groups 1 to 7, or 52 of the 63 Eaton's covers portraying females (83 percent) depicted them consuming or being consumed. The company started producing these images at the turn of the twentieth century, two decades before the appearance on the

---

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Max Haines, "Sex and single school teacher," *Toronto Sun* 1982-01-21, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-498, "Catalogue - Clippings 1970's on."

<sup>20</sup> Breazeale, "In Spite of Women," p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, pp. 38-39.

catalogue covers of the more explicit pictures of women consuming (those in group 1), and continued doing so right until the catalogue ceased to be produced, in the 1970s. It was a repetitive, long-lasting message that, like the group 1 covers, identified women, not men, as the company's likeliest customers.

Twenty-one of the 28 covers featuring male and female figures more or less equally present a similar vision, because they too had to do with women and consuming. Once again, it is useful to divide them into groups according to the subject of their images. One group of nine covers had images of people in various family/couple arrangements, either shopping from the catalogue in their homes, or in their homes with the catalogue on display.<sup>22</sup> A typical example of this group, dating between the 1920s to the 1940s, was the Spring-Summer 1926 cover representing a farmhouse with a girl and her mother welcoming home other family members bearing Eaton's parcels (which the latter had, presumably, picked up at the post office).<sup>23</sup> Another example, from the following catalogue (Fall-Winter 1926-27), displayed an older couple sitting inside, with an Eaton's catalogue lying on their table.<sup>24</sup> Two of the covers from this group were slightly different in that they showed parents engaged in productive activities: one portrayed a mother looking at the catalogue on the porch with her children while the father hoes the field; the other showed a mother knitting while looking at the catalogue with her children.<sup>25</sup> In all nine of this second group, a woman was present and somehow involved in the shopping act. A tenth, striking cover on the subject of consuming was published for the Fall-Winter 1939-40 catalogue. It pictured several children playing outside; most of them were busy making a snowman but one, a girl, was looking at a catalogue, leaving her doll in the snow.<sup>26</sup> An eleventh catalogue from the mixed male-female-themed covers featured a

---

<sup>22</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Spring-Summer 1926, Fall-Winter 1926-27, Spring-Summer 1928, Spring-Summer 1929, Fall-Winter 1930-31, Fall-Winter 1931-32, Fall-Winter 1936-37, Spring-Summer 1937, Spring-Summer 1943.

<sup>23</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1926.

<sup>24</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue. Fall-Winter 1926-27.

<sup>25</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Spring-Summer 1928; Spring-Summer 1943.

<sup>26</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1939-40.

street scene in front of an Eaton's store. In this 1910-11 image, most of the women in the picture were waiting to get into the store, while the men were simply passing by. There was only one exception: the uniformed male employee, presumably there to open the door.<sup>27</sup> Finally, there were ten covers, from catalogues dating between 1901 and 1975, which showed people not in the act of shopping, but in the related activity of wearing stylish clothes, many of which were on sale in the catalogues. These pictured people were in couples (seven covers), adult-child combinations (two covers), or a group of one man and two women (one cover).<sup>28</sup> The only one from this group of ten covers not to feature an adult woman was that of the Spring-Summer 1931 catalogue, featuring a man and a girl with a montage of products. The effect of these 21 covers was to make shopping, fashion and displaying oneself as an object to be looked over appear normal and wholesome, part of everyday family life and every period of the life cycle. And because all of these except one featured women either actively consuming or wearing the consumer product of fashionable apparel, they reinforce the message obtained from the female-only covers: that shopping was a way of life for women, in particular.

In these mixed male-female covers, men and boys were pictured as being somehow involved with or connected to the act of consumption. Nonetheless, as the above descriptions indicate, the visual suggestion made on these covers was that the males' involvement arose in the context of relationships with women and girls, especially through family and love relationships. Thus, the men were assigned a subordinate place in the job of consuming. An analysis made of the American catalogue of Sears, Roebuck could be applied to the Eaton's book as well: the men featured therein were not advanced consumers; "when compared with women, [they] seem like primitives, still in a primitive

---

<sup>27</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1910-11.

<sup>28</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Spring-Summer 1901, Fall-Winter 1901-02, Spring-Summer 1903, Spring-Summer 1931, Fall-Winter 1933-34, Spring-Summer 1964, Fall-Winter 1970-71, Fall-Winter 1971-72, Spring-Summer 1974, Spring-Summer 1975.

state of development.<sup>29</sup> The message about in these 21 covers was therefore quite different from the male-only covers described above, in which the men did not shop and in which they looked like strong leaders.

Of the remaining seven of the 28 covers showing both males and females, only two offer something new and interesting for our eyes:<sup>30</sup> post-war couples looking towards the future. One, dated 1919, showed a Victorian duo gazing at a twentieth-century city; the other, from 1946, featured a picture of a couple striding over a map of Canada, and the slogan, "the future is ours."<sup>31</sup> Upholding progress, these two covers also related to the topic of shopping, but less directly than those discussed so far. How this was so is the subject of the next section.

## 2. Eaton's was a main engine of Canadian development

The second proposition made in the catalogue-cover argument had to do with links between Eaton's and Canada. After 1955, the firm's name alone -- Eaton's of Canada -- already made the link explicit on the covers. But there were also 49 covers whose pictures or slogans made further, more detailed reference to the country or to its inhabitants as a collective. This was a significant number of covers. It accounted for over a quarter (29 percent) of the 167 covers surveyed.

---

<sup>29</sup> David L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days: A History of American Morals and Manners as Seen through the Sears, Roebuck Catalogs, 1905 to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p. 429.

<sup>30</sup> The five Eaton's Toronto catalogues which are (in my analysis) less interesting show: (1) a montage of Eaton's produces and various urban and rural settings with people doing various activities in these settings (Fall-Winter 1929-30), (2, 3, 4): children (and in one case an adult) playing in the snow or sleighing (Fall-Winter 1899-1900, Fall-Winter 1950-51, Fall-Winter 1963-64), (5) a boy and girl selling lemonade for the Red Cross (Spring-Summer 1941).

<sup>31</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1919-20; Spring-Summer 1946.

These allusions to Canada or Canadians took a variety of forms. Nineteen of the 49 covers, appearing in every decade between the 1890s and the 1960s, made their references through text alone: that is, they might have also had pictures of one thing or another, but the pictures were not “of” Canada.<sup>32</sup> Some of these brought up “Canada” or “the nation” in slogans, several of which, for example “Canada’s Greatest Store”<sup>33</sup> and “The Price Guide of Canada,”<sup>34</sup> were repeated over a number of years. Even if these references to Canada or Canadians occurred through words alone, they often had a strong visual impact. For instance, in the 1890s there were several covers published with no pictures, just words; the Fall-Winter 1895-96 one had just an ornamental border around text which included two slogans: “The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number” and “Canada’s Greatest Store.” In a context like this, the word “Canada” was not just a cluster of letters meant to convey a meaning, but a significant element of the overall graphic design. Other covers in this group of 19 mentioned the country in captions accompanying eye-catching pictures. The Fall-Winter 1921-22 cover, for instance, portrayed a man on a dogsled loaded with Eaton’s parcels along with the words, “Service to the most distant parts of Canada.” In the examples cited so far, the verbal mentions of “Canada” were short and straightforward; they took for granted the existence of this nation-state and its citizenry and simply referred to it. Other covers did so in the context of more substantial written messages, which had more to say about Canada or Canadians. For instance, three of 19 featured messages from the company President mentioning one aspect or another of the

---

<sup>32</sup> I am not including in this figure the covers that contained the company name, i.e. Eaton’s of Canada. The Eaton’s Toronto catalogue covers which made verbal reference to Canada were: Fall-Winter 1895-96, Fall-Winter 1896-97, Spring-Summer 1897, Fall-Winter 1899-1900, Spring-Summer 1900, Fall-Winter 1900-01, Fall-Winter 1921-22, Fall-Winter 1927-28, Fall-Winter 1930-31, Spring-Summer 1931, Fall-Winter 1931-32, Spring-Summer 1940, Fall-Winter 1946-47, Fall-Winter 1951-52, Fall-Winter 1952-53, Spring-Summer 1955, Spring-Summer 1958, Fall-Winter 1959-60, Fall-Winter 1962-63, Spring-Summer 1965.

<sup>33</sup> This slogan was used on most covers between 1895-1900.

<sup>34</sup> See Eaton’s Toronto catalogues, Spring-Summer 1930, Fall-Winter 1931-32.

firm's relationship with the country.<sup>35</sup> Some of these longer references will be discussed below.

The other 30 covers actually *showed* Canada graphically. Portraying something as vast as a country through a visual representation was a challenge that the Eaton's graphic artists met in a number of ways. One simple means was cartographic. Nine of the 30 covers used maps and globes:<sup>36</sup> these were pictures *of* Canada, literally showing the whole of the geographical territory at once.

Three of the nine covers with maps or globes, along with the remaining 21 covers picturing Canada, represented the country in another way: they visually evoked Canada at a symbolic level. The company's earliest efforts to do so were busy mish-mashes, piling one symbol on top of another and rounding out the picture with maps and complementary slogans.<sup>37</sup> A good example was the Spring-Summer 1899 cover, featuring three slogans including a large "CANADA'S GREATEST STORE," a coat of arms with a beaver on top, and, underneath all of this, a drawing of the Toronto store with a fainter drawing of the city behind it. A later example with the same saturation effect was the Spring-Summer 1948 cover. It depicted a map of Canada, the national colours of red, white and blue, a text about Eaton's service across the country, and the slogan, "CANADA WIDE-CANADA WISE!" The usual approach in later years, however, was to evoke Canada through more focussed visuals. One technique was to highlight individual symbolic elements that were meant to stand in for all of Canada. Thus, covers included official emblems<sup>38</sup> of Canada: maple leaves were shown early in the twentieth century,<sup>39</sup> coats of

---

<sup>35</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1931-32; Fall-Winter 1952-53, Fall-Winter 1959-60.

<sup>36</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1890, Fall-Winter 1897-98, Fall-Winter 1903-04, Spring-Summer 1904, Spring-Summer 1946, Spring-Summer 1948, Spring-Summer 1949, Spring-Summer 1950, Fall-Winter 1953-54.

<sup>37</sup> Spring-Summer 1898, Spring-Summer 1899, Fall-Winter 1903-04.

<sup>38</sup> In his article on Canadian emblems, Bruce Peel identifies the coat of arms, the flag, and emblems including the beaver and the maple leaf. All of these were in use by the time of



arms in a 1934 cover,<sup>40</sup> and flags in the two World War eras.<sup>41</sup> A number of covers also included as key graphic elements the red, white and blue of the Canadian flag<sup>42</sup> (whether it be the Union Jack or the Red Ensign, both used for the country until the maple leaf design was accepted in 1965<sup>43</sup>). These were printed between 1941 and 1955, and their frequency can probably be explained, first, by the Second World War and, second, by the mid-1950s threat of competition felt at Eaton's with the coming of the Sears company to Canada. Other visual symbols meant to call the whole country to mind were the Confederation proclamation, Canadian war posters (pictured plastered on a wall), a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer, and the national Parliament Buildings.<sup>44</sup> Once again, these covers were published in periods of heightened national feeling: sixtieth and hundredth anniversary of Confederation, the Second World War, and the centennial of the R.C.M.P. A further refinement in visually communicating "Canada" was the technique, used by a few artists, of lining up in a row several images meant to represent different regions, so that in the ensemble they symbolically represent Canada from coast to coast. An early example, mentioned in section one above, was the Spring-Summer 1904 cover featuring allegorical female figures representing Halifax and Vancouver. Later, mid-century ones were the

---

the establishment of Eaton's. Bruce Peel, "Emblems of Canada," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985), vol. 1 p. 555-57.

<sup>39</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1905-06, Fall-Winter 1908-09.

<sup>40</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Spring-Summer 1934.

<sup>41</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1918-19, Spring-Summer 1942, Spring-Summer 1945.

<sup>42</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1941-42, Fall-Winter 1942-43, Spring-Summer 1943, Fall-Winter 1943-44, Fall-Winter 1945-46, , Spring-Summer 1953, Fall-Winter 1954-55.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Peel, "Emblems of Canada," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985), vol. 1 p. 556.

<sup>44</sup> Respectively, in the Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers of Fall-Winter 1927-28, Fall-Winter 1944-45, Spring-Summer 1960, and Spring-Summer 1967.

provincial coats of arms, and drawings of economic-transportation activity in the West coast, the prairies, and the Maritime regions.<sup>45</sup>

These were the verbal and visual forms Eaton's employed to refer to Canada. What remains to be discussed is the content of the references and the context in which they were shown: in other words, what the Canada-themed covers were actually about.

What these 49 covers were about, in a word, was progress. Progress was represented in three main ways, a kind of triptych on the altar of advancement. The first way was a vision of Canada as a bountiful natural space being benignly exploited for the common good. This was the vision promoted in covers linking depictions of tamed nature with national symbols. One in 1918, for instance, showed a flag in a wheat field;<sup>46</sup> it was an example of what Michael Bunce has called "the North American countryside ideal ... [of] the settled rural landscape... as a symbol of agricultural progress."<sup>47</sup> Another example, already mentioned, was a montage featuring wheat fields, miners and other images, placed around a central picture of an RCMP officer.<sup>48</sup> Eaton's further underlined the message that Canada was a natural environment by its repeated use, already discussed, of nature-based national emblems: the beaver and the maple leaf.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1947-48; Spring-Summer 1952.

<sup>46</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1918-19.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape*. (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1960. The same point was in the cover, already mentioned, of a man in the wilderness delivering Eaton's goods by dogsled with the caption, "Service to the most distant parts of Canada" (Fall-Winter 1920-22).

<sup>49</sup> It is worth adding here that for the whole period they were published, many other catalogue covers not containing specific references to Canada also had as backdrops pastoral, rural or wilderness scenes: a kind of paradise landscape, outside of time. This is particularly true of the earlier catalogues, including for instance most of those between 1914 and 1920, as well in the 1960s-'70s.

Eaton's thus idealized nature and country life – a common enough trait in American and English landscapes but relatively rare in Canadian ones, according to cultural geographer Bunce – but this did not lead to the company presenting a correspondingly negative view, equally common in Western culture, of the man-made and the urban.<sup>50</sup> On the contrary: Eaton's positively glorified these, too, especially improvements in technology and systems. This second message about progress came through in the Eaton's covers celebrating a hundred years of developments at Canada Post (in 1951),<sup>51</sup> and, a decade later, praising the telephone, which allowed clients to phone in catalogue orders: "the easiest, most modern approach to all your shopping requirements."<sup>52</sup> Four covers featuring images of trains and other means of transport were equally glowing.<sup>53</sup> For instance, the Spring-Summer 1934 cover commemorating Jacques Cartier's landing in Canada juxtaposed renderings of the 1534 event with a modern train and boat, and featured the slogan, "400 years of Canadian progress."

The third manner in which Eaton's represented progress was by showing the nation and its citizens maturing by way of its political engagements. An example of this was the Spring-Summer 1946 cover showing a man and woman striding over a map of Canada under the slogan, "The future is ours;" implied here was that the country grew up in the crucible of the Second World War. Canada's on-going political development was also the theme of the cover celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation (Fall-Winter 1927-28).

---

<sup>50</sup> Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal*, especially pp, 3, 19, 206. Bunce, p. 208, finds the following common trait in English and American landscapes: "the countryside... becomes a symbolic landscape because it conveys meanings which speak of the very associations which urbanism and modernism have broken, and which our nostalgia drives us to restore."

<sup>51</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1951-52.

<sup>52</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1962-63.

<sup>53</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogues, Fall-Winter 1897-98, Spring-Summer 1934, Spring-Summer 1952, Fall-Winter 1959-60.

Why did Eaton's construct these particular images of Canada? Had the company's goal been the straight consumerist one of adding value to goods<sup>54</sup> through associating the goods with the country, presumably any image of Canada would have sufficed, as long as it was appealing. This was, in fact, the approach that Eaton's used in marketing its imported merchandise: it promoted precise, often quite arbitrary images of Paris or "the Orient" so that the goods in question might seem more chic or mysterious or otherwise more enticing.<sup>55</sup> Yet when it came to Canada, the Eaton's images, however varied they might have been, were not arbitrary; they were consistently related to these three perceptions of progress. I propose that Eaton's promoted these particular meanings of "Canada" in order to set forth a related and very favourable image of itself, one cementing a positive association between the company and the country. On its catalogue covers, Eaton's defined itself, like Canada, as progressive and, as such, as a key engine of national development. The covers about Canada were, in other words, an extended ode to Eaton's itself. They served as a decades-long institutional advertisement.

Eaton's directly inserted itself in each of the above three visions of Canadian progress. First of all, when it came to the image of Canada as a rich and vast territory, Eaton's boasted that it was as big as the land itself. It made brave claims such as the 1904 one that 'Eaton's Mail Order system covers Canada from sea to sea'<sup>56</sup> (see Illustration 12) or, in 1921, "Service to the most distant parts of Canada." The latter slogan appeared on a cover showing a man on a dogsled loaded with Eaton's parcels.<sup>57</sup> In 1953, there was a cover with a four-directional weathervane topped by a tri-colour company flag<sup>58</sup> and a message about how Eaton's bought much of its merchandise from Canadian suppliers -- "thus helping to maintain our Country's healthy economic state" -- which underlined the firm's role in exploiting the territory it covered. According to the logic of these catalogue

---

<sup>54</sup> This definition of consumerism is developed in John Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Aug. 1991), p. 211.

<sup>55</sup> This is discussed in Chapter 8.

<sup>56</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1904.

<sup>57</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1921-22.

<sup>58</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1953.

covers, Canada was a colossus whose energy Eaton's channeled commercially for "the greatest good to the greatest number;" Canada needed a "greatest store," and luckily for Canada, Eaton's was there to fill this role. It was as if they had been made for each other.

Aside from one 1904 cover mentioning the company's foreign buying offices,<sup>59</sup> the covers did not refer directly to its economic interests abroad. This, despite the fact that, as Part I showed, Eaton's bought huge amounts of foreign-made goods. Information on foreign buying did appear in the catalogues, but only on their inner pages in which the company emphasized its great familiarity with its foreign buying territories and their latest fashions, especially those of Paris and London.<sup>60</sup>

Eaton's also related the second view of Canadian progress -- material signs of the machine age such as the modern city skyline, technology and systems of communication -- with its own history. Numerous covers featured prominent pictures of its enormous Toronto store.<sup>61</sup> Many others explained how a colossal catalogue service not only depended on, but also promoted, the modern tools of rapid mail delivery, railway, and telephone. The

---

<sup>59</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1904.

<sup>60</sup> For example, in the Spring-Summer 1907 Eaton's Toronto catalogue (p. A3) was the information that "Our numerous expert buyers make frequent visits to every known market in the world where required goods may be found, getting as near as possible to the place of production and buying in the best way the best goods that can be had -- the whole output of cotton and tweed and linen mills and carpet and glove factories in Canada or Europe; the pickings of tea and coffee and spice crops in Ceylon, China, Japan and the Indies; the production of a raisin plantation in Spain, and so on wherever the most and best is produced, always selecting the finest quality. After the quality is selected price arrangements are made. As our orders are so large we are enabled to keep the price away down, and sell to you at prices that make your dollar buy much more than if we bought in small quantities and through importers and other dealers--*and the goods are backed by our broad guarantee.*"

<sup>61</sup> Most of the covers between the 1890s and the 1910s have images of the store, including the covers with some "Canadian content."

1960s cover about telephones had a picture of an old-fashioned model accompanied by a long passage, which read in part.<sup>62</sup>

To-day, from nearly every corner of Canada you can shop by phone through EATON'S Catalogue Order Offices--the easiest, most modern approach to all your shopping requirements. *Since 1869 EATON'S has been the leader in providing the best in Service, Value and all-round Satisfaction that up-to-date and practical innovations can provide.*

The telephone, just like the railway or mail, was used by Eaton's in the same way American artists used images of roads: to show, Jean Arrouye has explained, a country coming into its own through the process of its wilderness being settled and inhabited.<sup>63</sup> Eaton's may have had links to Canada's past, these covers implied, but it was just as connected to the country's present and future.

In the third view, that of Canadian progress through politics, Eaton's likewise inscribed its own history over that of the country's. Some of the early catalogue covers literally wrapped pictures of the company in the emblems of the state, placing images of the Toronto store at the center and surrounding them with trappings of Canadian history like coats of arms and union jacks, all within the frame of "classical" women gracing the pictures in flowing robes.<sup>64</sup> In these views, the country's history *was* the company's history. A similar message was expressed verbally on the Fall-Winter 1952-53 cover. It stated that "Timothy Eaton founded his company two years after Confederation; it was a Canadian company, built by Canadian effort to meet Canadian needs. That, too, remains as it was. The Company's Directors are all Canadians, dedicated to maintaining the founder's visions and ideals." World War II was a high point for covers linking the two

---

<sup>62</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1962-63.

<sup>63</sup> Jean Arrouye, "L'imaginaire de la route américaine" *Revue française d'études américaines* 48-49 (April-July 1991), pp. 328 and 321.

<sup>64</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1898, Spring-Summer 1899, Spring-Summer 1904.

histories. In these war years, one cover after another spoke of the company's "service," of the availability of its merchandise to "war workers of every province," and of the company's own war efforts, such as reducing waste and costly mistakes in the mail order division. In effect, Eaton's proposed itself as a key actor helping the country realize its political obligations through responsible economic behaviour.

Considered together, therefore, these 49 Canadian-themed covers showed a country rendered coherent, organized and modern through a company, that is, realizing its progress *through* a company. Maybe the strongest visual proof of this was in the covers with maps. Time and again, Eaton's showed itself as a key feature on maps of the country: around the turn of the twentieth century by placing a picture of the store where the United States should be (right under, and almost as big as, the map of Canada) or showing a globe with Canada in the center and Toronto marked prominently, indicating that the catalogue network blanketed the country "from sea to sea;"<sup>65</sup> around mid-twentieth century, by dotting the maps with symbols of its own holdings from coast to coast.<sup>66</sup> It appeared, by these images, that Eaton's provided structure and focus -- meaning -- to the land in between. Overall, Eaton's organized its cover designs to send out the message that it was a cross-country company run by Canadians, selling Canadian merchandise, for the good of Canadians: it was an instrument for the expression of Canadian interests and will, and indeed of Canadianness itself. An admirer of the firm described the company in 1916 as "this greatest of all Canadian department stores and perhaps the third greatest in the world," adding that it had "become almost as much common property as the C.P.R. [Canadian Pacific Railway]"<sup>67</sup> Or, as Eaton's itself proclaimed on a 1948 cover, the company was "Canada wide, Canada wise!"<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1897-98; Fall-Winter 1903-04.

<sup>66</sup> See Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1948, Spring-Summer 1949, Spring-Summer 1950, Fall-Winter 1953-54.

<sup>67</sup> Augustus Bridle, *Sons of Canada: Short Stories of Characteristic Canadians* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1916), pp. 131, 135.

<sup>68</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1948.

This not only served Eaton's generally, by improving its popular reputation; it had at least three other positive marketing effects. For one thing, describing itself as profoundly and positively Canadian had the effect of "Canadianizing" all goods and services on offer by the company, which was appealing to patriots. It also allowed Eaton's to give itself an aura of power and prestige due to sheer size. This gave it another advantage.

Emphasizing the beneficial effects of its national stature was useful to Eaton's which, like other nation-wide companies, was resented and resisted by many of the smaller, local firms with whom the company competed in hundreds of towns and cities across the country.<sup>69</sup>

Nationalist rhetoric was useful to Eaton's in another, more general way. According to the logic of the company's catalogue covers, going into any Eaton's store or order office gave one access to all of Canada; buying something at Eaton's meant both expressing one's Canadianness and developing Canada. The covers represented consuming as an act with important national economic, social and political implications. Thus, the Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers did for Canada what American capitalists did in their country: they helped create a national culture of consumption, or, in the words of Stuart Ewen, "a national, unified culture around the social bond of the consumer market" and "an economic nationalism which signified the inviolate sanctity of the world of goods."<sup>70</sup> Ironically, therefore, although Eaton's claimed to be saving its customers from American retail companies, it shared and promoted this central element of their message.

---

<sup>69</sup> There is a lot of documentation on the resentment of local firms to national mail order operations. In Canada, it was an important topic during the Stevens Commission of 1934. On this subject, see Rod McQueen, *The Eatons: The Rise and Fall of Canada's Royal Family* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), p. 76. On Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward see Margaret Culbertson, "Mail-Order House and Plan Catalogues in the United States, 1876-1930," *Art Documentation* 11, 1 (Spring 1992) p. 20, and David L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days: A History of American Morals and Manners as Seen through the Sears, Roebuck Catalogs, 1905 to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), chapter 28. Cohn identifies an unsuccessful "war" waged by local storekeepers against Sears, peaking in 1916-18 (pp. 512, 517).

<sup>70</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, pp. 54, 211.



### 3. Women were key actors in developing Canada

So far, this chapter has discussed two key propositions made over the years in the catalogue covers: that women and girls were the main customers of Eaton's, and that Eaton's was an important engine of Canadian development. The logical conclusion of these propositions was also expressed in the covers: that women and girls were key actors in developing Canada.

#### *Acting through consumption*

Women and girls were pictured prominently or equally prominently<sup>71</sup> in 20 of the 49 covers referring in some way to the country.<sup>72</sup> They showed females as acting to develop Canada in several ways. Eight of them used symbols, emblems and other token representations of the country. Of these, four covers showed women engaged in patriotic activities: viewing war posters, waving flags and ribbons, and standing over a "miniature land" including a model of the Canadian Parliament buildings.<sup>73</sup> The other four were of statuesque figures (some styled in their dress and posture to look like classical statues) pointing to or otherwise revealing pictures of that company symbol of modernity, the

---

<sup>71</sup> See the discussion in section 1 on the covers featuring females only or females/males equally prominently.

<sup>72</sup> This includes pictures of women or girls only as well as in pictures showing women and men. Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1890-91, Spring-Summer 1898, Spring-Summer 1899, Fall-Winter 1899-1900, Spring-Summer 1900, Fall-Winter 1900-01, Spring-Summer 1904, Fall-Winter 1908-09, Fall-Winter 1930-31, Spring-Summer 1931, Fall-Winter 1931-32, Spring-Summer 1942, Spring-Summer 1943, 3, Fall-Winter 1944, Spring-Summer 1945, Fall-Winter 1945-46, Spring-Summer 1946, Fall-Winter 1951-52, Spring-Summer 1965, Spring-Summer 1967.

<sup>73</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1944-45, Spring-Summer 1945, Fall-Winter 1945-46, Spring-Summer 1967

Toronto store. On two of these latter four covers there were emblems of Canada (beaver, coat of arms), and the slogan "Canada's Greatest Store."<sup>74</sup> On a third was an angel in classical garments sitting on a globe on which was written the name of the company; she was pointing to the text, "An exposition of the world's industries;" under the globe is the further explanation, "The mercantile heart of the Dominion."<sup>75</sup> The fourth cover had the figures of two women labeled "Halifax" and "Vancouver" respectively, and text noting that "thousands of families all over Canada send to Eaton's regularly for their household and wearing needs."<sup>76</sup> Here, women stood in symbolically for the very land itself, from sea to sea.

Through these eight covers, Eaton's was assigning to women a role that was both extremely important and severely limited. On the one hand, females occupied the considerable job of conveying and endorsing key symbols and signs of Canadianness. There was only one catalogue cover associating a male with a symbol of nationhood: the one showing Jacques Cartier and the Canadian coat-of-arms. Adding to the importance of the eight covers with females was that they were released during three periods of high nationalist feeling in Canada: the Boer War, the Second World War, and the Centennial celebrations of Confederation. On the other hand, the covers did not show women engaged in powerful, active public activities such as serving in the military or voting.<sup>77</sup> Rather, the women were shown as quiescent vessels validating pre-made signs of Canadianness. These eight covers showed citizenship as spectacle, centred on pretty images of female passivity. They provided more examples of women as objects to be consumed.

---

<sup>74</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1898; Spring-Summer 1899.

<sup>75</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1890-91.

<sup>76</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1904.

<sup>77</sup> The one exception I have found, which does not have direct "Canadian content," was a cover showing a girl and boy selling lemonade for the Red Cross: Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1941.

Only one of the 20 covers featuring images of females and references to Canada showed an active female citizen. This was the 1946 cover with a drawing of a man-woman couple striding over a map of Canada under the slogan, "the future is ours."<sup>78</sup> Even here, though, although shown as dynamic, the woman was not actually portrayed as doing something with definite political effects.

The ten other covers worth mentioning<sup>79</sup> in this collection of 20 covers featuring females (or females with males) and Canadian content, were more typical of the Eaton's covers picturing girls or women: they showed them shopping for, wearing or otherwise showcasing the company's merchandise, especially clothes. In part one of this chapter, these ten covers have already been discussed as part of the general point that Eaton's identified females as its main customers.<sup>80</sup> What needs to be added here is the significance of Eaton's explicitly linking references to shopping and Canada on ten of the "female" covers. In so doing, Eaton's introduced a new element to its proposition, discussed in in part two above, that consuming was extremely important, affecting not only a particular

---

<sup>78</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1946

<sup>79</sup> The nineteenth cover is simply a picture of a store plus children and an adult in horse drawn sleigh and girl running alongside (Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1899-00).

<sup>80</sup> The ten covers are:

- Two of women sitting or standing or walking wearing fashionable clothes (that is, as noted in Part I, as consuming merchandise) (Spring-Summer 1900, Fall-Winter 1900-01);
- One of female mannequins in an Eaton's store window (Fall-Winter 1908-09);
- Two of women buying, looking at, ordering otherwise consuming Eaton's merchandise (Spring-Summer 1942, Fall-Winter 1951-52);
- Three of people catalogue-shopping at home, in various family/couple groupings (Fall-Winter 1930-31, Fall-Winter 1931-32, Spring-Summer 1943);
- One of a girl and a man (her father probably) with a montage of products (Spring-Summer 1931); and
- One cover featuring six pictures accompanied by quotations from Maureen Kennedy who discusses her reasons for shopping at Eaton's (Spring-Summer 1965).

individual or family, but also the collectivity; that consuming was, in short, a means of contributing to the economic development of Canada and of Canadians. These particular ten covers made clear what the whole group of female-consumer covers implied: that the female job of consumption was central to the Canadian economy.

Indeed, the covers suggested that when they engaged in consumption, women had moral and cultural as well as economic influence. Just like their American sisters, in the emerging corporate culture Canadian women “were invested with a high degree of political and social determining power.”<sup>81</sup> The cover with Maureen Kennedy spelled this out: it quoted her many reasons for shopping at Eaton's, including confidence in the quality and selection of its merchandise – she said that Eaton's Branded Lines were “Canadian Standards of Value” -- and appreciation for the convenience of telephone ordering. Shopping at Eaton's thus allowed her to come into contact with and promote both Canadian values and modern forms of technology and communication in the country.

However, the “Canadian content” covers portraying consumption were like the ones portraying women and citizenship: even though they credited the women's great power, they did not show them wielding it directly. The covers on consumption implied that women and girls needed the galvanizing presence of Eaton's itself to be such dynamic and powerful actors in Canada. It was on looking at the company's merchandise in store windows or catalogue pages that women and girls entered the national commercial space; it was on spending their dollars at Eaton's that they entered into relationships with Canadian producers like farmers and miners; it was in accepting the company's skimpy war-time catalogues and merchandise that they did their part for the cause; it was in endorsing the company's pricing policies that they promoted Canadian values: in short, it was via Eaton's that they entered Canada's economic, political and moral spheres. The company provided a forum for females to express themselves and to act as Canadians. The *company* turned the girls' and women's role of consuming into the larger one of developing a nation.

---

<sup>81</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 168.

### *Eaton's on shopping*

In this logic, if shopping was the means for women to have an important public role, then it was crucial for women to learn how to shop properly. Eaton's, like contemporary American magazine publishers, promoted the idea "of 'educated shopping' as a sign of responsible femininity."<sup>82</sup> The inside pages of the early catalogues were especially explicit about the need for shoppers – that is, women -- to know how and what to buy. They should know, for instance, how to detect when wool flannel was adulterated with "shoddy" (cotton); the 1889-90 Fall-Winter catalogue exhorted them to "Test what you buy" and offered to send them instructions so they could do so.<sup>83</sup>

As this latter example also indicates, the company promoted itself as the authority that would educate women as shoppers, and its catalogue as their primer. The Spring-Summer 1893 catalogue put it explicitly: "it's worth a good deal to know how to shop by mail successfully." The passage continued, "We're teaching it to some thousands at the present time, and would like to include you among them."<sup>84</sup> For Eaton's, therefore, positioning women consumers at the center of the growing Canadian economy went hand in hand with exalting its own pivotal importance: the source of the information and goods women needed to exercise this power.

The catalogue covers taught women to learn three main shopping habits. First, there was cultivating and exercising good taste or "style." This required an ability to negotiate ever-changing fashions and to make appropriate aesthetic choices. Only one cover, that of the Spring-Summer 1938 volume, was devoted to stylishness in housefurnishings. It showed a decorated room in a suburban home under the slogan "Picture this charming corner in *your* home." Just three other covers, also from the 1930s, showcased housefurnishings, and

---

<sup>82</sup> Brezeale, "In Spite of Women," p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1889-90 p. 39.

<sup>84</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1893 p. 19.

most of these were plain goods plainly rendered.<sup>85</sup> Much more common in the Eaton's catalogues were covers featuring clothes. Starting at around the turn of the century, many catalogue covers bore pictures of figures in contemporary dress,<sup>86</sup> thus giving shoppers information they needed to keep abreast of what was considered stylish, both in the sense of being in good taste and of being up-to-date. In particular, as has already been mentioned, there were 36 covers showing women or female mannequins simply standing or walking – in effect, modeling -- contemporary clothes (see Table 9, groups 5 and 6) and ten more in the same vein with females and males together. Thus, a full 46 covers (28 percent of the 167 covers surveyed) were centred on ever-changing clothing fashions, especially women's. These were published regularly between 1900 and 1975, a testimony to the point made by a scholar of the American scene that corporations “evolved the logic (still in place today) that real profits lie in constantly organizing taste in new ways.”<sup>87</sup>

So important did images of female fashion become at Eaton's that almost every Toronto catalogue cover from 1963 to 1975 was centred on it: an increase, seen as well in American women's magazines of this period, of images of women less involved in domestic tasks and more self-centred and independent.<sup>88</sup> These covers featured the clothes prominently with bright colour photographs. Strikingly, the only text for most of these latter covers was the identification of the company and the date, thus underscoring a general truth of the Eaton's covers on fashion: imagery was very central to how they communicated. More generally still, imagery was a key element of company's efforts at

---

<sup>85</sup> A few covers showed household objects, tools, and the like but these appear to have been designed more to show an array of merchandise than to hone in on what was fashionable: see Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1929-30, Spring-Summer 1931, Spring-Summer 1932.

<sup>86</sup> The Eaton's Toronto catalogue Spring-Summer 1899 cover shows a woman in fancy contemporary dress.

<sup>87</sup> Breazeale, “In Spite of Women,” p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Linda J. Busby and Greg Leichty, “Feminism and Advertising in Traditional and Nontraditional Women's Magazines” *Journalism Quarterly* 70, 2 (Summer 1993), 247-264.

promoting clothing fashions and, by extension, to educate women about style. This made sense because exercising good taste and differentiating between new and old styles required a finely-honed ability to tell different looks apart. According to the Eaton's covers, then, for women to develop the nation, they had to develop their own acumen in reading pictures. Eaton's advocated its own book as the place they could do so; as the Spring-Summer 1912 cover boasted, the catalogue was "the most welcome publication of its kind in the home, showing the latest style creations and profusely illustrated."

This passage added that the catalogue was popular because of "the opportunity it offer[ed] to live better and at lower cost." As this suggests, alongside good taste, the second important shopping habit that Eaton's attempted to instill in women through its catalogue covers was good sense. This was the capacity to assess quality and prices and thus furnish one's home and clothe one's family according to social circumstance and, above all, budget. As an article in *Eaton News Quarterly* observed, until the 1940s, the Eaton's catalogue "flourished by selling low-priced, basic merchandise items" to rural people,<sup>89</sup> and Eaton's frankly acknowledged that price was a particular preoccupation for many of its customers.

Eaton's dedicated many of the passages on its catalogue covers to the subject of thrift and the company's role in assisting women in developing and applying this skill. Thus there were a number of covers – around 18 – verbally expounding the ways Eaton's provided good value for the money. A spate of them early in the twentieth century was quite explicit, explaining that "our own factories connect the consumer with the producer thus saving you all middlemen's profits" and thus there was "one profit only from manufacturer to wearer." Another added: "one of the many savings: our own teams transferring freight shipments from the Mail Order Building to the railway thus saving our customers the

---

<sup>89</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0-503, "Catalogue - Company Clippings [1901-1970]", article "Now They've Citified the Country Catalogue," *Eaton News Quarterly*, Winter 1967, pp. 8-10.

cartage.”<sup>90</sup> A second group of covers about thrift was printed in the Depression years. One after another explained how Eaton's would help women help themselves and their families live cheaply. For instance, the Fall-Winter 1932-33 cover proclaimed, “your dollars buy more at Eaton's,” and “it *pays* to buy from Eaton's... The Double Guarantee Protects your Dollars.”<sup>91</sup> A few of the Second World War-era issues also referred to thrift, but now in the context of explanations of how the company's pricing and merchandising policies changed in response to government controls on prices and materials.<sup>92</sup> There were also three mid-1950s covers featured slogans on savings to be realized through catalogue shopping.<sup>93</sup>

Eaton's published few pictures of women being thrifty, in conspicuous contrast to both the many verbal representations of this virtue, and the many pictures of women being stylish. Indeed, it is striking that for the covers published during the Great Depression, when frugality was required of so many Canadians, the text messages were central to many of the designs; this had not been the case with the Eaton's catalogue covers since 1914. One, the 1932-33 issue cited above, had no imagery at all. The others did have pictures, but they were different than those of other years. Some portrayed basic, plain household necessities like hoses and tires.<sup>94</sup> Another, the Spring-Summer 1930 issue, was purely decorative, featuring a pretty drawing of a vase of flowers, but nothing for sale.

---

<sup>90</sup> These quotations are from Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1904, Fall-Winter 1907-08, and Spring-Summer 1909. Another from this period uses the slogan “Eaton Service -- Quality and Matchless Values” (Spring-Summer 1912).

<sup>91</sup> See especially Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1929, Fall-Winter 1930-31, Spring-Summer 1931, Fall-Winter 1931-32, Fall-Winter 1932-33, Spring-Summer 1933, Spring-Summer 1935, Fall-Winter 1937-38.

<sup>92</sup> See Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1940, Fall-Winter 1942-43, Fall-Winter 1946-47.

<sup>93</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1956, Fall-Winter 1956-57, Spring-Summer 1957.

<sup>94</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1929-30, Spring-Summer 1931, Spring-Summer 1932



Strikingly, most of them had no pictures of women.<sup>95</sup> In short, the covers of this period deviated from the pattern in other decades, in which pretty women were repeatedly shown wearing fancy clothes. A few times in these years women were featured but it was in modest clothes, in comforting farm or domestic scenes; this was done in 1928 and again in 1936.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps Eaton's felt that repeated representations of women being frugal would have been depressingly realistic for its customers at this point, or too drab, and that showing them being stylish would have been frustrating for them instead of a pleasing fantasy. The only picture of a thrifty urban housewife in the early 1930s was the Fall-Winter 1931-32 one showing a woman catalogue shopping, which was, as the covers themselves repeatedly reminded readers, a most economical act.

As this last example indicates, just like good taste, good sense was presented in the Eaton's covers as a skill women developed visually: thrifty shopping meant catalogue shopping. Nine of the ten covers with images of women shopping (group 1 of the female-centred covers in Table 9) showed women catalogue shopping, sometimes by browsing through the book's pages and other times through ordering (by writing or over the phone). The mental labour involved in catalogue shopping, such as comparing descriptions to detect different qualities, determining household priorities, and so on, was not conveyed in these serene images. The tenth cover on shopping showed a mother and her daughter walking by an Eaton's store and looking at the company sign.<sup>97</sup> Dynamic aspects of shopping when it was carried out in a store, such as bargaining or assessing the physical quality of an item through handling it, were likewise not conveyed here or on other covers. Moreover, when the covers pictured women using merchandise, it was generally just by wearing fashion in different settings, not by putting products to some energetic use like hanging up a new set

---

<sup>95</sup> There are no women pictured on the following Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers: Spring-Summer 1930, Spring-Summer 1931, Spring-Summer 1932, Fall-Winter 1932-33, Spring-Summer 1933, Spring-Summer 1934, Fall-Winter 1934-35, Spring-Summer 1935, Fall-Winter 1935-36, Fall-Winter 1937-38 to Spring-Summer 1940.

<sup>96</sup> For instance, Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1928 and Fall-Winter 1936-37.

<sup>97</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1942.

of curtains, caring for a child while wearing a new house dress, or baking in a new oven. In a word, the covers reduced the work of consumption to something easy and requiring little energy: it was a combination of low-key mental tasks, being looked at and looking. The female consumers on the Eaton's catalogue covers looked little different from the female citizens who, as the section on the Canadian-themed covers explained, were portrayed passively, as bearers of pre-made symbols like flags and ribbons.

At this point it is instructive to return to the portrayal of men and boys on the Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers because it was so dramatically different. It has already been mentioned that the 14 covers showing males only (listed in Table 8) did not refer to their role as consumers. What needs to be added is how these covers actually emphasized the males' independence and vigour. As such, they matched Stewart Ewen's findings for the U.S.A., where advertisements tended to portray men as young and vital.<sup>98</sup> All 14 of the covers portrayed males in the public sphere, outside of the home. Six (groups 1 to 4 of Table 8) showed them in economic roles of distributing, producing, and trading goods, making them what Ewen would call "citizens of a new industrial civilization,' rather than merely 'wheelhorses' in the productive process."<sup>99</sup> Two more covers (groups 5 and 6) named men embodying economic leadership, Timothy Eaton and his grandson John David. The ninth was of Jacques Cartier, fifteenth-century explorer and discoverer of Canada, a person, obviously, of even greater historical significance. These covers conveyed an impression of male potency and capacity to provide. This latter quality was surely the point of a tenth male-only cover, a large (strong) man's hand bearing a flame along with the message of "The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number." And it was reinforced again in the montage on the eleventh cover, featuring miners and a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Tellingly, Eaton's often chose to publish such covers in times of difficulty, namely war and economic depression. The dates of the two covers with the Eaton men corresponded to periods of internal stress within the company: 1934 was the year Eaton's was being investigated in the Royal Commission on Price Spreads, while 1953 marked rising competition from Sears. It was not just that the men portrayed as

---

<sup>98</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 153.

<sup>99</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 14.

providers, then; they were shown as being present especially in times of distress. Even the last three covers, dedicated to the light-hearted theme of sports, showed males active in the public sphere outside of the home. They were portrayed as strong and dynamic, outside and beyond the realm of Eaton's.

The "female" covers, when considered together and especially when compared to the 14 "male" ones, conveyed a mixed message. On the one hand, they suggested that women as shoppers were central actors in the Canadian public sphere. On the other hand, they were not *active* in it, either in the immediate sense of being dynamic or mobile, or in the larger sense of shaping and creating their own roles, their tools and resources, or the public sphere itself. To become true actors, these covers implied, women needed Eaton's. It was the company that determined the terms of their engagement with Canada, and that turned their quiet pastimes into actions. Conduit and catalyst, Eaton's emancipated women from passively consuming or being consumed, and enabled them to be fully rounded, effective and dynamic individuals.

### *Eaton's on itself*

Ultimately, then, Eaton's using its covers to pronounce on women's centrality to the Canadian economy was a way for the company to promote its own, primordial importance. Not surprisingly, then, the company called on women consumers to develop a third skill in addition to those of good taste and good sense, a necessary mental disposition accompanying and sometimes outweighing the other two: trust in Eaton's. Maureen Kennedy had it, apparently. She was quoted on the Spring-Summer 1965 cover as having put her faith in the company's branded lines, which were "always so reliable," and its testing laboratory, the Research Bureau, which "Eaton's tells me has been in operation since 1917."<sup>100</sup> Once again, in this as in so many of its communications, Eaton's was like many American companies because they too asked for their customers' confidence.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1965.

<sup>101</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, pp. 97-109. Ewen notes the several aspects of "trust-me" type campaigns that were also to be found at Eaton's, and which will be

If one trusted Eaton's, its catalogue would naturally be, as the 1912 cover claimed, "the most welcome publication of its kind in the home." The Spring-Summer 1898 catalogue cover said so graphically: it showed a table with a vase of flowers, a parcel from Eaton's, a calendar, an Eaton's catalogue, and a pen and paper. On the wall behind was a framed drawing of the company's buildings in Toronto. It was a sober still life, attesting to the passage of time and Eaton's role in it: this cover, like many others discussed above, sold the idea of the company belonging in the intimate spaces where women lived out their lives.<sup>102</sup> Ultimately, Eaton's promoted itself as a normal, helpful and trusted presence belonging in every Canadian home, and thus in every Canadian woman's life.

In order to foster this kind of trust, Eaton's used many of its catalogue covers to assure its customers that it was trustworthy. For one thing, the firm assured them that it actually *was* the place to practice their skill at finding good values. Eaton's repeatedly explained how it obtained the lowest prices; this was part of a broader campaign to assure customers that it had control over its merchandise, in many cases from its inception -- for the firm also produced goods -- right to the point of sale: "from factory to the home."<sup>103</sup> This allowed Eaton's to boast about the quality of its merchandise. The Fall-Winter 1907-08 book declared, "You can have every confidence in our goods and prices. We have. We pay charges on most goods both ways if not satisfactory." Indeed, this point was made consistently on the covers starting in 1897, when the cover reproduced Eaton's famous

---

discussed below: the message to trust the corporation over oneself; institutional or "good-will" advertising "locating stability and reliability within the corporate walls" and "nurturing image of permanence;" the image of the "sustaining *father* figure;" the idea that social progress "depended on adherence to the authority of capitalistic enterprise."

<sup>102</sup> For another example of this, see Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1926-27 which shows a catalogue on a table in the room where an old couple sit.

<sup>103</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1903-04. A similar phrase is used on the Fall-Winter 1907-08 cover.

money-back guarantee.<sup>104</sup> Like other companies,<sup>105</sup> moreover, Eaton's backed up the point about its own honesty with references to its Research Bureau. This company office, which tested and approved merchandise sold by Eaton's, was founded in 1916 and had long been vaunted on the inside pages of the catalogue as well as in other marketing material.<sup>106</sup> A reference to the bureau emerged on a cover with Maureen Kennedy's testimony to it in 1965, as mentioned above. Finally, the entire cover of the Spring-Summer 1967 book was dedicated to it, showing an image of a Research Bureau stamp with the slogan, "Guardian of Quality."

The covers also attempted to familiarize customers with how this enormous company looked and operated. Again, this was especially the case in the first few decades, when Eaton's was establishing its reputation. Between 1905 and 1910, for instance, there were a number of covers picturing various company sites, including "One of our three factories," "One of the main aisles of the store," "One of our store windows," "One of the many savings: our own teams transferring freight shipments from the Mail Order Building to the railway," and "A Yonge St. entrance," as well as renderings of the company's store,

---

<sup>104</sup> The guarantee was that Eaton's would return a customer's money if s/he was not satisfied with the quality of a product. It was printed on many covers starting with that of Spring-Summer 1897.

<sup>105</sup> Ewen discusses testing laboratories in *Captains of Consciousness* p. 97.

<sup>106</sup> For instance, a 1928 company notice indicated that the Executive Office recommended that a full page of the catalogue be used "to tell customers in simple understandable language of the work of the Research Bureau, and how it safeguards the customers' interests by seeing that the merchandise conforms to what we say about it." AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39m" Notice C215 from Executive Offices to Mail Order Office, 1928-03-08. Pamphlets, reports and other Research Bureau documentation are available in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149, Product Research Bureau, General Files.

factory and warehouse buildings in Toronto.<sup>107</sup> Interestingly, some of these pictures were photographs, used for the first time on the covers, and rarely printed on them again until the 1930s.<sup>108</sup> As has been noted in Chapter 6, photographs had a reputation for being truthful and thus heightened the message of transparency and honesty that Eaton's was trying to convey.

Pictures of the store tended to show scads of people flocking into it, which was an added benefit from the company's point of view. Many other covers emphasized that shopping at Eaton's was a popular, normal thing for Canadians to do. There was the Spring-Summer 1904 cover sharing the fact that "thousands of families all over Canada send to Eaton's regularly for their household and wearing needs" and the one for Spring-Summer 1940 referring to "the nation's ever growing response" to its merchandise. There were also slogans printed on many of the early covers, such as "Canada's Price Guide" and "The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number,"<sup>109</sup> which inserted shopping at Eaton's into Canadian mass culture.

At the same time that Eaton's identified itself as a modern, efficient enterprise on the cutting edge of production, quality control and distribution, the company also attempted to inspire trust by emphasizing its history and roots. When it wrote its own history into that of Canada's, as has been discussed above, that was just one part of the company's more extended campaign to dress up its lineage. There were 19 covers with content on company history. Between 1898 and 1913, seven of them featured images of the store and other company buildings surrounded by allegorical figures and columns and other

---

<sup>107</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1905-06, Fall-Winter 1907-08, Spring-Summer 1908, Fall-Winter 1908-09, Spring-Summer 1909, Fall-Winter 1909-10, Spring-Summer 1910, Fall-Winter 1910-11.

<sup>108</sup> There are photos on the covers of Spring-Summer 1914, possibly Fall-Winter 1916-17 and Spring-Summer 1923, and then regularly for the periods 1936-53 and 1961-75.

<sup>109</sup> These are seen on many of the early catalogues; a variant, "The Price Guide of Canada," is found on 1930-31 covers.

“classical” symbols<sup>110</sup> in an apparent attempt to imbue the company – in its third to fifth decades of operation – with a feel of great age and permanence. Two other covers, those for the Fall-Winter periods of 1919-20 and 1934-35, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the store and mail order operations respectively. Seven covers referred more generally to the company’s long history of good prices and good values,<sup>111</sup> some of these smoothly linking the “history” and “modernity” themes with statements like, “since 1869 EATON'S has been the leader in providing the best in Service, Value and all-round Satisfaction that up-to-date and practical innovations can provide.”<sup>112</sup>

In effect, Eaton's said through these latter covers that rapid social changes did not need to feel like a threat to women when they were experienced via Eaton's. Eaton's presented itself as a kind of home away from home, one of the “safe spaces” women could go. Not surprisingly, then, another theme found in the catalogue covers referring to Eaton's itself was the merit of the Eaton family.<sup>113</sup> This went beyond highlighting the Canadianness of the Eatons; it extended to emphasizing that they were a *family* with roots and traditional values. This fact, implied the covers, made their retail operation familiar, safe, reliable, trustworthy. Hence the Fall-Winter 1952-53 catalogue cover cited at the beginning of this chapter, presenting a letter from John David Eaton explaining how his grandfather Timothy founded the company on decent values. He went on to note that Eaton's remained a family-run operation relying on this same principle; its directors were “dedicated to maintaining the founder's visions and ideals.”

---

<sup>110</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1898, Spring-Summer 1899, Spring-Summer 1904, Fall-Winter 1911-12, Spring-Summer 1912, Fall-Winter 1912-13, Spring-Summer 1913.

<sup>111</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1938-39, Fall-Winter 1946-47, Fall-Winter 1948-49, Fall-Winter 1953-54, Fall-Winter 1954-55, Spring-Summer 1958, Fall-Winter 1962-63.

<sup>112</sup> Fall-Winter 1962-63.

<sup>113</sup> Three Eaton's Toronto catalogue covers describing Eaton family history are Spring-Summer 1949, Fall-Winter 1952-53, Fall-Winter 1959-60. As has already been mentioned in Part 2, the Fall-Winter 1931-32 cover also refers to the Canadianness of the directors.

Timothy Eaton was a company icon and often featured in Eaton's marketing material. His bust dignified the Fall-Winter 1934-35 cover dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the firm's mail order operations. Also, much more frequently, his name was featured in many of the company slogans and catch-phrases, notably that of the Eaton Guarantee that the customer would be satisfied or her money refunded. The company appeared to have wanted its clients, that is, women, to feel that another reason to trust the Eaton's enterprise was because it was a family-run "house," watched over by a strong but fair father. The company said that it was Timothy's "visions and ideals" which had been passed onto his male descendants. These, the covers said, gave the whole company its integrity. These allowed Eaton's to judge what was good merchandise and good prices and thus to guide and support women as they realized their destiny as good shoppers. Once again, this key Canadian firm echoed a message found in its American counterparts which, as Ewen has observed, offered consumers a new authority structure in a "reconstituted patriarchy."<sup>114</sup>

The firm did recognize traditional sources of female knowledge and culture. Various catalogue covers showed, as has already been described, women walking, having tea, or otherwise relaxing with other women as well as with male friends and family members. However, when they portrayed women actually communicating and sharing knowledge with other females, for instance by transmitting skills, it was inevitably in the context of shopping, and of course this was specifically shopping at Eaton's. One 1920s cover presented a young woman displaying to her mother or possibly grandmother the coat she just received through mail order, while another one from the same decade showed two girls poring over a catalogue together.<sup>115</sup> There were also covers from the 1920s to the 1940s showing mothers looking through the catalogue with their children<sup>116</sup> and another, from 1942, of a mother pointing out the Eaton's store to her daughter as they walked

---

<sup>114</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 129.

<sup>115</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1925-26, Fall-Winter 1928-29.

<sup>116</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1928, Spring-Summer 1929, Fall-Winter 1930-31, Fall-Winter 1936-37, Spring-Summer 1943.



down the street.<sup>117</sup> In these images, Eaton's literature and merchandise were a medium for feminine culture, providing the material and moral framework required for attaining maturity.

If in these 1920s to early 1940s covers Eaton's proposed itself as a site for the ancient tradition of women's creating a communal culture in the home, later covers implied that the company was a replacement or substitute for it: that ultimately, a girl or woman could learn what she needed from Eaton's alone, and did not need her female kin or friends for help. A watershed cover with this message was the 1939-40 one showing the girl turning her back on childish activities (making a snowman with her little friends and playing with her doll) and looking at the catalogue instead.<sup>118</sup> Starting in 1944 and every few years thereafter until the 1972-73 Fall-Winter book, a cover was published showing a girl and or woman reading the catalogue or ordering from it by herself.<sup>119</sup> Eaton's was on these latter catalogues showing itself to be not just *a* company, but *company*, that is, a companion to replace the female companionship of earlier eras.

Once again, an observation of Stewart Ewen about the American merchandising environment applied to Eaton's as well: that corporations developed a "*mass culture* to displace earlier forms" -- in this case, the older culture of female domestic culture. Other names Ewen uses for this new mass culture being promoted by advertising were "the modern consumer culture," or, more generally, "capitalist culture."<sup>120</sup> Innocuous and gentle-looking, Eaton's covers nonetheless packed a similar punch. They suggested that Eaton's was the male-run authority that Canadian women could trust: a firm but helping male hand, giving "The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number."<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1942.

<sup>118</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1939-40.

<sup>119</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1944, Fall-Winter 1951-52, Spring-Summer 1959, Spring-Summer 1962, Spring-Summer 1968, Fall-Winter 1972-73.

<sup>120</sup> Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, pp. 18, 189, 194.

<sup>121</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1935.

## Conclusion

Eaton's sketched out the nature of women's work in its Toronto catalogue cover pictures and graphic slogans. According to the company, women's most important activities centred on consuming, consuming centred on mental skills and attitudes, and these in turn centred on one's ability to interpret and negotiate visual messages and then display them through managing the appearance of oneself, one's family, and one's home.<sup>122</sup> Thus, at Eaton's, the method of constructing women's role went hand in hand with the nature of the role therein constructed: both were essentially visual. The content of the message put out by Eaton's was expressed in, and constituted by, its form: the visual medium was the message.

To act, women had to develop their vision, a sense that does not involve physical contact with the object being sensed. Ultimately, they were to look for meaning not inward, according to subjective experience, or close around them, to family and female culture, but outward, to an external source, to see what Eaton's, the expert, had on display.<sup>123</sup> Ultimately, therefore, to describe the role that Eaton's outlined for women on its catalogue covers, a more precise word than *consumer* is *witness*, because what women consumed and how they were in turn consumed had to do specifically with witnessing in the different senses of this visually-oriented word. Testifying their trust in the company, displaying its goods, being its main customers, women bore witness *to* Eaton's: they confirmed and manifested its values and vision and the fact of its leadership. They were also the eyewitnesses *of* Eaton's, the ones viewing its windows and catalogues and generally serving the role of spectator that the company required for its visual regime of fashion and spectacle to succeed.

---

<sup>122</sup> Stewart Ewen calls it freedom reduced to "consumption, passivity and spectatorship."  
Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*

<sup>123</sup> Stewart Ewen calls this "the organization of objects and the dissolution of the subject."  
Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, p. 61.

This was the position Eaton's assigned to women in Canada: as essential to the development of the country and the company, but as onlookers and conveyors, that is, as witnesses, rather than creators or direct developers. Eaton's promoted a view of women as passive, dependent, needing energy, organization and support; indeed, as needing development, just like Canada. The real creator, according to the covers, was Eaton's itself: through its modern, dynamic incursions across the whole map of the country, in boardrooms and factories and delivery wagons, it developed the economic infrastructure; it expanded and rationalized national means of production, distribution and consumption. And through its friendly visits into millions of private homes, it developed that key group of economic actors, the consumers. Shopping at Eaton's, according to the catalogues, gave girls and women not only the merchandise but also the information, opportunities and guidance they needed to develop as daughters, wives, mothers, friends, individuals and citizens.

This formulation was, of course, entirely self-serving of Eaton's. It was in fact the company that needed women, and not the other way around; Eaton's needed customers, and most of them were women, so Eaton's needed women. However, this was not the message on the 167 catalogue covers. Even those purporting to refer to women and Canada ultimately had to do with promoting and developing the role and power of Eaton's itself.

## CHAPTER 8

### EATON'S REPRESENTS THE FOREIGN WORLD AND ITS PRODUCTS

#### Introduction

Eaton's was long involved in projecting images to the public about the world abroad and the products created there because so much of the company's merchandise was imported or reflected foreign style influences. It was essential to Eaton's, if it was to succeed in selling these goods, to ensure that its customers were interested in the goods and felt comfortable buying them.

This chapter discusses some of the strategies employed at Eaton's to market the foreign. It first looks at the different kinds of company marketing material including advertisements, displays and exhibits, whose function ranged from selling single import items to a attempting to convey considerable amounts of information about an entire national culture. It then shows how these sales strategies were developed consciously within the company, sometimes furnishing messages about places and their products that were in contradiction with in-house understandings of them. And finally, it indicates how such messages also communicated ideas and information about some of those who interacted with the products. These included women, who in representational form were used to help sell them and who were also the company's main group of customers. It also included Eaton's itself, who procured them and made them available back in Canada.

This chapter, like the previous one, does not emphasize changes that occurred over time within the messages about foreign places and products. This history does emerge, at times, in some of the sections to follow; for instance, developments in the size of displays are discussed. The main focus, though, is on the strength and continuity of certain of the messages that tended to be quite consistent. Thus, Eaton's visual merchandising,

especially displays, are read as texts that can be read and interpreted, in the manner of Keith Walden whose study of Canadian grocery store window displays treats them as “a series of texts in a discourse about the character of modern life.”<sup>1</sup> In this way, new nuances can emerge to themes already present in the dissertation: namely, the role of women as witnesses at Eaton's and how, once again, the company tried to develop this social construction in order to achieve its own ends of power and profit.

The predominant message Eaton's sent out about the world abroad was that it was a place of fabulous abundance. Its key method was to present and promote specific, positive aspects of the cultures of individual nations. Eaton's thus provided an example of a phenomenon that has been observed to occur on a broad scale and over the past two centuries: “that the sphere of consumption... is one of the key contexts in which national identities were stated, contested and affirmed.”<sup>2</sup> In particular, Eaton's regularly tried to determine the meaning an imported item would have to a customer through its status as a product of a specific foreign country. A country's culture thus became an ingredient in the consumerist cultural work Eaton's itself carried out: that is, of constructing the meaning of material places and things, imbuing them, in the words of a scholar of consumerism, with “magical transformational powers.”<sup>3</sup> Through advertisements, exhibitions, displays and promotions, Eaton's sought to transform its shopping environments, especially the stores, into exciting and exotic realms. The company aimed to appeal to customers' fantasies, so

---

<sup>1</sup> Keith Walden, “Speaking Modern: Language, Culture and Hegemony in Grocery Window Displays, 1997-1920,” *Canadian Historical Review* 70, 3 (September 1989): 286. Similarly, William M. O'Barr treats twentieth-century American travel advertisements as a “continuous discourse.” O'Barr, *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Orlove and Arnold J. Bauer, “Giving Importance to Imports,” in *The Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America*, ed. Benjamin Orlove (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> John Chase, “The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Aug. 1991): 217.

that they would believe that they were “not an integral part of life; rather, they must be purchased.”<sup>4</sup>

Just like in the case of Canadian goods, women were often used to promote these fantasies centred on foreign products and places. Once again, then, they served as evidence of the company’s efforts, they “witnessed” it, literally embodying what it had to say about the world abroad. And, once again, serving in this role meant that how women themselves were portrayed by the company was affected. When it came to foreign goods, they might represent modernity or exotic tradition, for instance. Either way, they were employed to clarify, enrich or otherwise express more intensely the positive meanings about foreign place Eaton’s tried to convey, particularly visually – in the words of film critic Laura Mulvey, they were thus employed as “bearer of meaning.”<sup>5</sup> In the marketing materials on foreignness, however, their meanings had to do not just with gender and place, but also, explicitly, with race, especially the “Oriental.”<sup>6</sup> Now, company hierarchies of gender and race intersected in representational practice; they were clearly, as theoreticians have often argued, “interactive systems of stratification.”<sup>7</sup>

These elements of the social construction of womanhood, place and race at Eaton’s went hand in hand, again, with the company’s ongoing efforts to construct its own image favourably. Eaton’s used the opportunity of selling imports and describing foreign culture to vaunt its own capacity to understand and take advantage of these riches. This involved

---

<sup>4</sup> John Chase, “The Role of Consumerism,” p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 6 (1975), cited in Nicole Cooley. “Ideology and the Portrait: Recovering the ‘Silent Image of Woman’ in the Work of Julia Margaret Cameron,” *Women’s Studies* 24 (1995): 370-71.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Walden also finds that grocery window displays elicited messages about gender, nation and race and thus “affirmed the existence of social order.” Walden, “Speaking Modern,” p. 299.

<sup>7</sup> This is the expression used by Susan Stanford Friedman in “Beyond White and Other: Relationality and Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse,” *Signs* 21, 1 (Autumn 1995):

emphasizing the efficiency and excellence of its foreign buying system and the employees engaged in it, including, at times, one or two women employees whom Eaton's chose to represent aspects of this competency.

Taken together, these messages emerging about women, place and race allowed the company to articulate a particular and, not surprisingly, very self-serving vision of foreign places and products. What Eaton's marketing material suggested was that in its very abundance, the foreign world was so enormous and complicated, full of difference and details, that ordinary Canadian women ought not venture there on their own. That was a job for well-equipped Eaton's. In shopping the wide world, Eaton's saved women from having to do so; and in providing the best goods in the most fabulous commercial settings, the company gave women access to foreign abundance, but filtered so that only its most pleasant and interesting features remained. In effect, Eaton's proposed to make the world safe for women by keeping them secure at home, consuming in Canada.<sup>8</sup>

#### Eaton's represents foreign places and products

Store windows, floor displays and other public messages emanating from the various Eaton's establishments presented the following message: the world abroad consisted of a series of regions -- usually countries, but also smaller areas (like cities, such as Paris or Hollywood) and larger ones (like "the Orient") containing unique, special cultures. The world was a glittering theatre, a rich spectacle in which every region and country was a

---

<sup>8</sup>Thus, Eaton's continued a Victorian tradition of constructing such visions of home and away. Antoinette Burton has briefly explored the idea of "home" as a Victorian idea in binary opposition to the idea of "away" which, she argues, was used by elites to support their superior position, for instance "to justify certain kinds of national identities and racial supremacies." One element of this "home myth" is the idea that it is a secure and "safe space." Antoinette Burton, review of *Imperialism at Home* by Susan Meyer, and *The Politics of Home*, by Rosemary Marangoly George, in *Social History* 23, 1 (Jan. 1998): 122, 126.

star. The special spirit of each foreign place, continued this message, was captured in the commodities which the people belonging to each culture produced, or, to a lesser extent, in styles which could be copied by producers elsewhere. Every foreign country or region was equal in its position as a producer of fabulous, desirable treasures and styles.

*The Eaton's message: the abundance of the world abroad*

The message about the world abroad was one particularly enthusiastic way that Eaton's participated in the rich rhetoric of the retail trades developing after the mid-nineteenth century, a visual and verbal language emphasising abundance, variety, and novelty.<sup>9</sup> Over and over, in different venues and for many years, Eaton's communicated this message by showcasing objects in visual and verbal settings emphasizing the wonder and beauty of the area with which the objects were associated. It did so through displays, defined by an American designer as "'a bridge from the seriousness of museums to the paper and string of everyday life.'"<sup>10</sup> At Eaton's, the very variety of its displays reinforced one key point: that the world abroad was a place of plenty.

*1) Informational exhibits and displays*

One way that Eaton's conveyed such a message was by presenting displays and other materials which were not actually devoted to selling goods, but rather to conveying lore about interesting and appealing aspects of foreign culture. Early in the twentieth century, for instance, there was a store display featuring a serene Japanese garden hosted by what appeared to be Japanese people in traditional clothes;<sup>11</sup> then in 1924, a "Fete Espagnole" display presented female mannequins wearing flamboyant hooped dresses, masks, and

---

<sup>9</sup>Jackson Lears discusses this extensively in *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, BasicBooks, 1994). See, for example, p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> Unnamed designer, cited in Leonard S. Marcus, *The American Store Window* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1978), p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0 -1074, "Display - Special – Various."



mantillas;<sup>12</sup> replicas of the fabulous Crown Jewels were shown in 1935.<sup>13</sup> In 1941 there was a display of "Britain in Heraldry" featuring dashing shields and decorative panels,<sup>14</sup> and seven years later, Eaton's exhibited "Swedish Homecrafts" include furniture and housefurnishings.<sup>15</sup> Some outside groups with access to Eaton's spaces contributed similar exhibitions. The auditorium of Toronto's College Street store was used by groups like the Japanese Canadian Centre which showed Japanese films in the 1950s and '60s<sup>16</sup> and the Peruvian embassy which in cooperation with Eaton's put on a display of art, textiles and costumes from that country in 1955.<sup>17</sup> Together, the Eaton's and outside groups' exhibits highlighted the cultural specificity and difference of foreign lands. By housing them, Eaton's became a source of highly-visible, publicly available information on the world abroad. Thus, the firm's stores, like other important department stores in Canada and United States, had a museum-like function, albeit in a commercial setting.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1093, "Display - Special". See print no. 870.

<sup>13</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F229-308-0-1097 "Display - Special - Replicas of the Crown Jewels" (1935), photoprint no. 37973.

<sup>14</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1055, "Display - Exhibit - 'Britain in Heraldry.'"

<sup>15</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-7: Pictures of "Swedish Homecrafts Exhibition of Furniture and Home Furnishings," summer 1948.

<sup>16</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S134 (Auditorium - Performance Files Correspondence), Box 8, File "Toronto Japanese Canadian Centre - J. Ohori [1959]."

<sup>17</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1122, "Display - Special - - Peruvian Art." See especially Commercial Studio pictures with numbers 44293 and 44310.

<sup>18</sup> On Eaton's of Montreal and other department stores in that city which featured exhibition-like displays on aspects of foreign culture, see H el ene Boily, "Art, artisanat et exotisme: Magasiner des expositions," *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 31-33. On the United States, see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of*

Although not directly meant to sell goods, these exhibits did help Eaton's achieve that end. Selling was the company's *raison d'être*, after all, and it was in the company's interest to promote the idea that foreign cultures were fascinating. This exaltation supported the claim, made in so much of Eaton's marketing, that the products associated with these foreign cultures were (equally) fascinating and desirable. Thus, the museum-like exhibitions to be found at Eaton's were linked functionally with its merchandising campaigns. A smooth sign of the link was the company's 1919 *Golden Jubilee Book*, which in one chapter features written and graphic information about both the places where the company had foreign buying offices, and some of the wonderful products from these places available at Eaton's.<sup>19</sup>

## 2) *Mixed informational-sales displays*

The *Jubilee* book serves as an example of how the two functions of providing information on foreign places and selling imported goods were, at times, combined at Eaton's. For instance, there were many exhibits at Eaton's featuring both information and products on single countries. Great Britain was often highlighted in this kind of marketing event. On occasions such as the royal visit of 1939, the company went to great lengths to decorate its outlets with British regalia, emblazoning its stores and catalogues with tri-colour bunting, flags, coats of arms, and portraits of kings and queens,<sup>20</sup> which the company carefully

---

*a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 167-72. Also, Leonard Marcus notes a rise of informational displays in American show windows starting in the 1920s. Marcus, *The American Store Window*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> "The Scribe" (pseud.), *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co. Limited*, (Toronto, The T. Eaton Co., Limited 1919), pp. 162-67.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding decorating the Toronto College Street store for this event, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office - General Files), box 31, files on Royalty and Royal visit.

checked for accuracy (for instance, ascertaining that Queen Mary's eyes were dark blue<sup>21</sup>) and obtained permission to show in this commercial context.<sup>22</sup> Naturally, though, the goal was not just to offer information but to profit from it; as one notice frankly stated, like other stores Eaton's wondered "how they can best use the opportunity presented by the Royal Tour."<sup>23</sup> In this spirit, its Western stores offered for sale a bevy of souvenirs made up for the event: berets with specially-made badges, Gob Caps, Emond Blankets "with likeness of King & Queen woven in," Silk Lapel Pennants, and Car Stickers, to name a few.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, British millinery and fashion were featured in window displays of the 1937 coronation of George VI (see Illustration 13),<sup>25</sup> and during Queen Elizabeth's coronation of 1953, the Toronto Eaton's stores promoted merchandise like British crockery beside symbols like Beefeater figures.<sup>26</sup> The zenith of this type of promotion

---

<sup>21</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 37 (Secretarial Office - Legal Section -Miscellaneous Files), Box 21, file "Royalty - Coat of Arms", letter from H.M. McLean to H.F. McMullen [offices not indicated] of 1939-05-03.

<sup>22</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F686, from Merchandise Office, to Supervisors, Group Managers, Heads of Departments, 1939-01-19.

<sup>23</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices) Volume: "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F685, 1938-12.

<sup>24</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S195 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Sales and Expense Office - Stock Audit Files), Box 1, File "Miscellaneous," letter from Stock Audit to Mr. Tucker, 1939-06-12, and letter from Stock Audit to Mr. Young entitled "Royal Visit Merchandise," 1939-05-31.

<sup>25</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0 -1702, "Historic Events - -Coronation - George VI - Crowds of Toronto 1937," picture 2076.

<sup>26</sup>Regarding crockery, see the colour negative (unnumbered) of a Coronation-theme window in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1721, "Historic Events - - Coronation - Elizabeth II - Display windows - Source: Harold Hundert Comm. Studio [sic]," 1953-06.

occurred in 1951, when Queen Mary came to visit the Eaton's British Industries Fair and thus was herself visible to the public, in effect on display.<sup>27</sup>

Large-scale, store-wide promotions devoted to the products and culture of individual nations became increasingly popular in the post-World War II decades, both at Eaton's and other North American stores. Eaton's staff observed and reported on similar events in the U.S.A., such as Carson Pirie Scott's 1962 "Scandinavia Promotion" in Chicago, which involved selling clothing and furniture alongside "exhibits depicting history, culture, industry etc."<sup>28</sup> In turn, the company put on a number of ambitious promotions on countries including France (1960), Mexico (1966) and Italy (1964 and 1975).<sup>29</sup> The 1975 "Italian Affair" promotion, for instance, featured performing chefs, a show of Italian fabrics, a display called "The Medici Wedding - Costumes, artifacts and sculptures from 'The Wedding of Cosimo de Medici,'" a fashion show, officers from the Florence tourist bureau, a plaster reproduction of Michelangelo's head of David, posters in the aisles, merchandise displays and wine sampling. As a press release explained, the promotion was devoted to "highlighting the age-old culture and contemporary flair of a beautiful

---

<sup>27</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1063, "Display - Exhibit - Queen Mary at British Industries Fair," 1951-05.

<sup>28</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S186 (Don Mills Store - Store Management Files), Box 2, file "Merchandising - New York Buying Office," document "Scandinavia Promotion of Carson Pirie Scott, Chicago,...1962" by Messrs. F.J. Carter and J.D. Green.

<sup>29</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-33, picture no. 52267 of "Festival de France, 1960; F229-303-1-45, picture no. 64233 of "Eaton's flies to the Mexican Sun" promotion, 1966 or 1967; AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), file F 229-304-1-34, "Festa Italiana", 1964; F229 S 205 (Commercial Studio - Studio Files), File F229-205-2-66, "Italian Affair" (1975, Toronto).

country.”<sup>30</sup> Photographs of this and other national promotions reveal store exteriors and interiors transformed by a flurry of flags, bunting and posters for the occasion; for the 1964 “Festa Italiana” promotion, even the elevators were decorated.<sup>31</sup> Thus did foreign lands and their cultures become spectacular display elements, contexts for the selling of consumer items.

In these settings, cultures of other countries, as conveyed through displays and produce, looked as enticingly foreign and fascinating as they did in the museum-like displays. The difference was that now, placed more directly in a commercial context of selling goods, it was in the interest of Eaton's to emphasize their trustworthiness. This message came through in the Eaton's displays. A spectacular example was the mammoth Commonwealth promotion of 1961 in which exhibits and merchandise from the Commonwealth countries were put on display. Among other feats for this event, Eaton's orchestrated the importation of a live baby elephant from India. After serving as a sensational attention-getter in the basement the Toronto store, the huge animal was donated to the Toronto zoo.<sup>32</sup> In this context, the baby elephant, like the merchandise on sale throughout the promotion, looked not fearfully alien but manageable and domesticated. Scholar John Taylor has remarked upon a similar phenomenon in English mid-twentieth-century representations of Empire: it “was no longer the site of adventure and conquest, but had simply become 'abroad', remaining 'exotic whilst at the same time being reassuringly familiarised.”<sup>33</sup> Commodified, rendered tangible and, in part, tradable in the form of

---

<sup>30</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 205 (Commercial Studio - Studio Files), File F229-205-2-66, “Italian Affair” (1975, Toronto). Quotation is from press release headed “The Italian Affair”, from Jane Campbell, Public Relations office.

<sup>31</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), file F 229-304-1-34, “Festa Italiana”, 1964.

<sup>32</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1125 “Display - Special --Elephant”, Commercial Studio pictures numbers 54182-11 and 54182-12, dated 1961-10.

<sup>33</sup>Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), p 90, cited in John Taylor, *A Dream of England:*

visible objects, including, of course, merchandise, foreign countries and their cultures appeared in these exhibits eminently safe and accessible.

### 3) *Sales-oriented displays*

The third, most common forum in which Eaton's presented the abundance of the world abroad was simply in marketing imported goods. The displays and advertisements serving this function were about the goods, not their country of origin, but this latter subject did inevitably get treated indirectly, adding, in the words of an advertising critic, a level of "secondary messages" to the marketing.<sup>34</sup> Varying greatly in size, scope and sophistication, these marketing efforts shared an important assumption: that, through words or visual images or other display elements, the meaning of foreign nations or regions -- and, by extension, of their products -- could be captured in a few friendly commercial clichés.

Sometimes, these were simple and cheerful, as in the 1964 "Pride of Ireland" fashion show in Montreal presenting tweedy clothes before a backdrop of shamrocks and Irish sheet music.<sup>35</sup> At other times they were potent references to glamour, beauty and modernity. Eaton's, like other retailers, consistently referred to French, especially Parisian, products this way.<sup>36</sup> Eaton's emphasized how novel they were: the 1888-89 Fall & Winter

---

*Landscape, Photography and the Tourist's imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> O'Barr, *Culture and the Ad*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1694, "Fashion - Fashion Shows - 'Pride of Ireland' promotion."

<sup>36</sup> A commentator has noted that early in the twentieth century the Sears catalogue in the U.S.A., for instance, referred to cosmetics and perfumes in French in order, wrote one commentator, to "titillate the consumer's vanity with the implication that she understands the language of fashion -- French." David L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days: A History of American Morals and Manners as Seen through the Sears, Roebuck Catalogs, 1905 to the*

catalogue offered women's hats ranging "from the quietest styles to extreme French effects;"<sup>37</sup> a 1914 bulletin board display in the Toronto store carried the label "Gallery of Fashion: These are Photos of New Fashions Actually Worn and Are Direct from Our Paris Office;"<sup>38</sup> a modest 1948 fashion show in a Toronto store basement promised women access to the same if they sewed "Paris-Prompted Fashions" by the Butterick Pattern Company;<sup>39</sup> Hubert de Givenchy's designs were "so new and original" that they were donated to the Royal Ontario Museum.<sup>40</sup> And they were glamorous: in 1960, the company described couturier Pierre Balmain's clientèle as "royalty, celebrities and women known for their beautiful clothes."<sup>41</sup> So dense with positive meaning was the French capital in particular supposed to be that for a 1946 Montreal store fashion show, display staff could keep the set very simple: a glittering curtain with a single word in elegant script: Paris.<sup>42</sup>

---

*Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p.270. On store Parisian-style fashion shows see Leach, *Land of Desire*, pp. 101-04.

<sup>37</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1888-89, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1654- "Fashion- Ontario - Toronto - 'Gallery of fashion' - photos of Paris fashions", negative no. 239, 1914-10-1.

<sup>39</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0- 1678 "Fashion - Fashion Show – Ontario – Toronto - '194-," fashion show from 1948-10-13 to 1948-10-15.

<sup>40</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1659.

<sup>41</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1661- "Fashion- Pierre Balmain - 'Le Festival de France' 1960," held at the Toronto College Street Store.

<sup>42</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1677 "Fashion - Fashion Shows - Que. - Montreal 1936-1953," picture of fashion show set from 1946.

After World War II, Eaton's also marketed Italian goods like this. The company's 1952 "Italian Glass" event in Toronto's Seven Seas Gift Shop, for instance, featured an exhibit to which the owner of the Murano glass factory, Paulo Venini, was invited. Company photographs show the suave, impeccably-dressed man inspecting one of the smooth glass objects it produced, for an overall message that Italy's goods, like Italians themselves, represented sleek style.<sup>43</sup>

*The Eaton's message about abroad: a deliberate marketing strategy*

The sheer longevity and frequency of the Eaton's public message about the wonderful abundance of the world abroad would suggest that deploying it was a conscious marketing strategy. In-house documents confirm that that this was the case. Eatonians carefully elaborated policies about exploiting the "foreign" theme in an attempt to fix the meanings of products to render them appealing to their customers.

One brief but revealing record is an in-house Notice from 1927.<sup>44</sup> It requested that buyers keep notes on what inspired them to purchase specific items, and then provide this information to the Advertising Office so that copywriters could convey it in their publicity. The Notice commented that price alone would not sell products; advertisements must "arouse interest in the goods and create a desire for them. It is not enough merely to tell what are the materials, colors and styles. The vital information is what idea or event inspired the manufacturer to adopt the style or other attractive feature."<sup>45</sup> The role of

---

<sup>43</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1116, "Display - Special - Italian Glass," Commercial Studio picture no. 37480.

<sup>44</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice C193 from Charles Booth [Advertising Office ] to Mail Order Office, 1927-01-10.

<sup>45</sup>See Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).



advertising was, evidently, to infuse things with appealing meanings. The Notice went on to explain that one such way was to identify them with the wondrously exotic:

a lady's hat might be a thing of beauty, but if it has no connection with any other hat or influence, it will not arouse as much interest as if the statement were made that the hat contained the features of a Reboux or carried the colors of some Indian Rajah visited by the Prince of Wales.”

Here, then, was explicit evidence that Eaton’s copywriters consciously evoked foreign places as part of a sales strategy.

Indeed, Eaton’s writers were provided strict guidelines by their superiors on how to represent the foreign. The company’s Research Bureau, responsible for quality control and truth in advertising, obtained a copy of the Sears *Advertising Guide* and adapted it, for Eaton's own needs, into a book of rules for the company’s copywriters.<sup>46</sup> Among other topics, it contained many precise protocols for language having to do with goods coming from, or associated with, foreign places. As a general rule, the *Guide* stipulated, “misrepresentation of the city, state or country of origin or manufacture of a product constitutes an unfair trade practice.” (Canada had similar regulations. For instance, a 1921 Dominion Law required retail companies like Eaton’s to label imported goods. An Eaton’s Notice of this year described the legislation and requested department heads to list all imported goods in their sections that should be thus labelled.<sup>47</sup>) The *Guide* indicated

---

<sup>46</sup> The evidence for this statement is that the *Guide* was hand-annotated with corresponding Canadian information where required (for instance, on legislation); it had “Sears” crossed out and “Research” written in; and it was filed under the heading “Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions” in the Eaton's Product Research Bureau. AO, T. Eaton Records, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file “Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)”, n.d., probably ca. 1940-1949. For examples of corrections, see pp. 2, 5, 10, 25.

<sup>47</sup> A 1921 Notice indicates that as of 1921-10-01, where possible, goods are to be labelled in English or French with their country of origin. The Notice also requests departments to

that there were some product names, like Spanish Net and English Spurs, that could be used regardless of provenance, because they referred to processes or styles. However, explanatory words like "type" or "design" were required to make it clear that the item was not actually from England or Spain. A few terms, for instance Japan Finish, were well enough known by customers to refer to how the product was fashioned, not its provenance, that they did not require any such modifiers. As a rule, however, naming a product after a foreign place was permissible only if it came from there. A fur could be called a "Parisian Creation" if the claim was true; this was also the rule for Irish Linen, Dutch Silver, English Broadcloth, Italian Pumicestone, and all manner of goods from France, such as French Bevel Glass and French Pearl Handle Razors.<sup>48</sup>

Why might copywriters have been tempted to falsify provenance? One reason to be gleaned from the *Guide* was that a foreign place-name sometimes directly designated a product's material quality. For instance, its nomenclature might refer to the item's composition -- India Cotton was "a poor quality cotton grown in India," while Canton Crepe was made of pure silk -- or to the level of craftsmanship in its making -- for instance, French Kid Gloves had an especially luxurious finish. In other words, foreign place-names sometimes served as straightforward conveyers of practical information. They gave shoppers a way to calculate exchange value according to use value. This was what might lead dishonest copywriters to falsely associate a product with a place known to produce high-quality versions of it. They might also unfairly impugn the quality of other producing regions; to this end, the *Guide* prohibited "expressions which reflect on

---

list all imported merchandise lines and whether it will be possible to so label them. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 196 (T. Eaton Co. Limited of Winnipeg - Notices), Box 1, File "Store Notices," Notice 88 from E. Fretwell, Winnipeg, to Department Heads, 1921-05-31.

<sup>48</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file "Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)", n.d., probably ca. 1940-1949, pp. 63, 30.

[domestic] products in favor of imported ones, as 'Not to be confused with coarser, skimpier domestic yarns.'"<sup>49</sup>

But there was another way place-names could affect a product's value: customers might have, or develop, an opinion about the *place itself* -- not about the real quality of goods the place was known to produce -- that would affect their desire to possess a product associated with it. The *Guide*, just like the Notice cited earlier, acknowledged this fact, as well as that copywriters might influence or even create such opinions. A general rule in the *Guide* suggested that shoppers might have valued imported merchandise just because it was imported, and that, as a result, copywriters sometimes falsified provenance in order to appeal to this prejudice. This rule forbade "representations, through use of symbols, picturizations, words of any foreign language, or in any other manner, that domestic articles are produced in any foreign country...." A simple word like "French" or "Parisian," for instance, was not a transparent carrier of information about physical composition or styling. As copywriters knew, and the *Guide* implicitly recognized, it was freighted, and could mean something much more to shoppers familiar with the richly-developed lexicon of consumerism: things like "luxury" and "glamour" that were unrelated to weave, fibre and so on. This is undoubtedly why the *Guide* had to restrict the use of terms like Paris Models,' 'French Models,' and 'Parisian Creations.'<sup>50</sup>

Another indication that the public messages emanating from Eaton's about foreignness and the world abroad formed a deliberate marketing strategy at the company is that they sometimes contrasted with the company's private ones. A comparison of the two sets of records, in-house and public, reveals important differences. In the former, Eatonians often acknowledged and described shortcomings or signs of superiority in foreign cultures, and

---

<sup>49</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file "Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)", n.d., probably ca. 1940-1949, pp. 45, 9, 63.

<sup>50</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file "Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)", n.d. [ca. 1940-1949], pp. 45, 30.

the staff members' resultant worries and insecurities in the face of them, whereas in the latter, they presented a uniformly positive vision of the world. Yes, the message went, foreign products might be different from domestic ones; but still, they were safe, appealing, desirable. In effect, they sublimated in-house fears or other negative feelings into expressions that were more culturally acceptable in their commercial universe. This section of the chapter will return to the examples of Japan and the United States to explore how Eatonians marketed their alarm about abroad.

### 1) *Japan*

Chapter 2 revealed how Eatonians had difficult feelings when dealing with Japan, including fear, anger and frustration. The reactions arose in the face of important cultural, economic and racial disparities that Eatonians tended to interpret as signs of Japanese inferiority and backwardness. When their colleagues developed marketing strategies for Japanese goods, however, they exploited these differences and turned them to their advantage.

One simple strategy was to sell Japanese goods as “novelties.” This strategy involved bringing attention to the fact that Japanese goods were foreign, but then smoothing over any resultant anxiety a customer might have felt by presenting the goods in reassuring contexts. The 1894 Christmas catalogue, for example, indicated that “grotesque and unique novelties from Japan” were for sale; items listed as from Japan in the catalogue included chinaware, “fancy silk embroidered Japanese scarfs,” and Mikado Ornaments. However, the catalogue made them seem whimsical, not weird, when it marketed them alongside an array of baubles from elsewhere: “dolls from France, Germany and Bohemia; ...fine china and bric-a-brac from England and Germany, and the best of everything from everywhere.” The blurb continued, “like the ever-changing wonders of a Kaleidoscope, stocks present newness and novelty at every turn.”<sup>51</sup>

The “novelties” strategy was deployed visually as well as verbally. One example was in their marketing of paper napkins. The 1905 Spring & Summer catalogue sold them with

---

<sup>51</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Christmas 1894, pp. 2-3.

various printed designs including flowers and flags,<sup>52</sup> while they were clearly identified as Japanese, the drawing of them was crowded onto a page showing mostly handkerchiefs from Europe as well as Japan. Once again, the strangeness of the Japanese goods was alleviated by juxtaposing them with more familiar things. The following season's book took this strategy a step further. On the one hand, the napkins were not only identified as Japanese but they were shown in boxes featuring Japanese-style writing; on the other hand, one of the styles available, featuring an ivy plant in a container, was identified as "an 'All Canadian' Design Napkin, produced by our designers and confined strictly to The T.Eaton Co. Limited." The All Canadian napkin, at least, was safely domesticated.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the catalogue of 1915 reassured readers that the cotton kimonos for sale were like the other garments shown "made in Canada in our own factories."<sup>54</sup>

A second, quite different strategy through which Eatonians belied possible in-house anxieties about the foreignness of Japan over the years involved emphasising that very foreignness. This entailed relaying the message that Japanese people and goods were *exotic*, that is, exciting and mysterious. Japanese goods and people could be made to seem exotic by marketing emphasizing their difference from matter-of-fact, ordinary goods. What was "normal" or Western was a safe foil, a dun-coloured backdrop highlighting exotica's brilliance.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1905, p. 100.

<sup>53</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1905, p. 131.

<sup>54</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1915, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Anne McClintock documents a similar process, which she labels "commodity racism," in late-nineteenth century British advertising. In commodity racism, British imperial power was consolidated through marketing strategies emphasizing the safety and familiarity of home, in contrast to the primitive strangeness of the colonies. Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," in *Travellers Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, eds. George Robertson et. al (London: Routledge, 1994).

Japanese people themselves tended to be portrayed as exotic, but non-threateningly so. In 1893, when Japan was a barely-known territory at Eaton's and representatives acted on the company's behalf there, a catalogue picture showed a cartoon-like drawing of a droll Japanese man (or possibly he is Chinese, but the point remains), dressed in traditional garb and wearing a long braid, straining to pull down a roll of intricately-patterned carpet or oilcloth.<sup>56</sup> Here, great difference in appearance -- and, by extension, culture -- was equated to quaintness: it was charming. By the early twentieth century, when Eaton's was sending its own agents to the country, staff members were saying in private that the Japanese were frustrating because of their so-called backward business practices. In public, however, Eaton's conveyed the message that the Japanese were quaint, docile, helpful. "Old-fashioned" was thus given a positive "spin." There were several catalogue images around this time of Japanese men that, like the one already mentioned, emphasized their desire to be useful. In the 1902 book, the page for Japanese matting and rugs featured one drawing of a Japanese or Chinese man with a braid and non-Western outfit showing a roll of matting to a Western man, presumably a buyer; both his stance -- bent, one hand pointing to the matting and the other on the shoulder of the buyer -- and the picture's design emphasized the power and centrality of the latter in the transaction. Another drawing showed a man in a kimono holding up for the onlooker a carpet on which "'Jap' [sic] rugs" is written.<sup>57</sup> The following year, the page devoted to matting featured a drawing of a man walking barefoot and carrying a big load over his shoulder; his sack had Chinese-style script on the back.<sup>58</sup> Whether these were authentic images is, perhaps, beside the point; they were not so much Japanese as "Japanesey," to borrow the expression of Daniel Boorstin.<sup>59</sup> What is more significant is that the very "backward" qualities, highlighted by frustrated Eatonians in their letters home from the region, were

---

<sup>56</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1893-94, p. 108.

<sup>57</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Summer 1905, p. 73.

<sup>58</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1903, p. 22.

<sup>59</sup>Daniel Boorstin, "From Traveler to Tourist: The Lost Art of Travel," in his *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), cited in O'Barr, *Culture and the Ad*, p. 106.

now being used to sell goods in the catalogue. In this discourse, Japanese men were serviceable; they did not pose a threat even if they were exotic.

A refinement on the “exotic” marketing theme for Japan was the “Oriental” one. Inside the offices at Eaton’s, the word “Oriental” had a few straightforward meanings. For one thing, it referred to specific styles. This was the sense used in the 1902 catalogue when Japanese rugs were sold in “Oriental designs and colours.”<sup>60</sup> In 1950s, likewise, a mention of the rise of an “oriental influence” in housefurnishings being sold in New York<sup>61</sup> referred to Chinese-inspired style: colours like deep red and materials like bamboo, for instance. At other moments, the word was simply short-hand for a geographical area that could include as much as the whole of the Middle East and Asia or be fairly limited; the *Advertising Guide* often uses Orient and China interchangeably, for instance.<sup>62</sup> A third, more complex and open-ended meaning of the word Oriental was also used by Eaton’s staff, a meaning that could include the first two but went beyond them. It called forth a pastiche of cultural clichés about “the East” having to do opulence and luxury, even decadence, and a mysterious “feminine” quality blending sophistication and primitiveness. Edward Said calls this complex process of constructing meaning about the East “Orientalism,” which he describes as a “male power fantasy.”<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup>For example, see Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Summer 1902, p. 73.

<sup>61</sup>For example, see AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S69 (Merchandise Offices - Housefurnishings Merchandise Office -General Files), Box 28, file “New York and Other American Stores, 1948-1959,” “Report re- New York trip” of 1953-10-19, by Doris Thistlewood, Staff Training Department (Toronto).

<sup>62</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file “Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)”, n.d. [ca. 1940-1949], p. 62: “Oriental or Chinese: If describing a reproduction, the words design or pattern must be accompanied by words indicating that only the surface design is a likeness of an Oriental or Chinese type...”

<sup>63</sup>Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 207m cited in ; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 14. McClintock focusses on the gendered aspects

A number of scholars have shown how Orientalism pervaded late-nineteenth and twentieth-century retailing.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, William Leach calls the oriental theme “perhaps the most popular of all merchandising themes in the years before World War I” in the U.S.A.<sup>65</sup> It was certainly a popular theme at Eaton's as well. The company deployed the Oriental theme to market goods of Eastern provenance whose forms and methods of production could be represented to bear meanings of opulence and pleasure, especially feminine pleasure. Consider, for instance, the beautifully worked and finished luxury products for women that were literally called Oriental: these included the Oriental Pearls and Oriental Lace<sup>66</sup> cited in the *Advertising Guide* and the Oriental Satin listed in the catalogue.<sup>67</sup>

The deliberateness of the “Orientalizing” process at Eaton's was the most obvious when the company used the theme in conjunction with goods that were not actually very different or exotic. One example of this was the company's marketing of its Oriental Coffee Shop in the Toronto store. The restaurant's menu for 1928 featured a drawing of a young black woman wearing a veil, harem pants, and a fitted top leaving her arms and midriff exposed; she was wearing jewelry on her ears, arms and hips and bore a tray with a

---

of Orientalism in advertising, in which a “feminized Orient” emerged. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 122

<sup>64</sup>See, for instance, O'Barr, *Culture and the Ad*, p. 93; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 122; Elise Salem Manganaro, “When Foreign Sells: Exotica in American TV Ads of the Eighties and Nineties,” in Mary Cross, ed., *Advertising and Culture: Theoretical Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Leach, *Land of Desire*, p. 104.

<sup>66</sup>T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files), file “Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)”, n.d., probably ca. 1940-1949.

<sup>67</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1916-17, p. 235



coffee service on it.<sup>68</sup> She, like the Japanese people discussed above, appeared to be offering her whole self to the viewer in an effort to serve completely; here, gender (femininity) was brought to bear on racialized images for a potent “exotic” message. The food listed inside -- potato salad, bran muffins and the like -- was hardly Oriental, though, either in provenance or style.

An example of Eaton’s “Orientalizing” Japanese goods was to be found in the Oriental Bazaar promotions held in Montreal and Toronto Eaton’s stores in 1965. By then, Japan was known by company representatives to have both “very clean” small handicraft factories and large, modernized, Western-style factories.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, in the Oriental Bazaar promotions, Japanese goods, many of which, such as pieces of rattan furniture, would have been familiar to Canadians by then, were included in a sales event aiming to produce the feeling of a different kind of sales environment. One was a bazaar designed, in the words of one company buyer, “to create great excitement and fill the store with all the atmosphere of mystery and intrigue of both the Near and the Far East.”<sup>70</sup> The marketing material pushing this message was extensive and carefully planned. Drawing upon the literature and displays of similar events held at Altman’s and Jordan Marsh stores in the United States<sup>71</sup>, the Montreal promotion warranted advertising in the *Gazette* and *Dimanche Matin*; the Toronto event entailed a *Globe and Mail* full-page advertisement

---

<sup>68</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F229-162-1372 “Restaurants - Toronto - General - Oriental Coffee Shop Menu,” 1928.

<sup>69</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotion - Oriental Bazaar,” document “Overseas Market Report,” by C.F. Symonds, Spring 1964.

<sup>70</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotion - Oriental Bazaar,” document “Overseas Market Report,” by C.F. Symonds, Spring 1964.

<sup>71</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotion- Oriental Bazaar,” various documents.

and setting up a “bazaar-type presentation” on the seventh floor foyer of the College Street store.<sup>72</sup>

These different marketing techniques were woven seamlessly together when Eaton’s sold silk. As has already been discussed, around the turn of the twentieth century silk was the most important product that Eaton’s imported from Japan; naturally, great efforts were made to sell it with skill and subtlety. In the early years of the catalogue, when women were buying fabric rather than ready-made clothing, whole sections of the first few pages were devoted to Japanese silk yardage. On the one hand, catalogue copy acknowledged and defused any concerns women might have had about buying something so foreign. For example, the acceptability of Coloured Japanese Silk fabric was guaranteed when the catalogue noted that it was “dyed in Lyons, France, a fact that insures satisfaction.”<sup>73</sup> Here we see a variant of the “novelty” technique: a message that foreignness, which had the potential to generate fear, could be appealing if it was turned into a curious but harmless new thing to be consumed. On the other hand, the catalogue emphasized that silk fabric was of high quality, a luxury item: the 1895 book listed “real Japanese Habutai silk,”<sup>74</sup> thus suggesting that it being from Japan was a good thing. There was also a fabric called “Jap [sic] taffeta finish wash silk;”<sup>75</sup> apparently, a Japanese finish was to be desired. Japanese silk became so desirable that company managers issued at least two notices forbidding display staff from writing the words “real silk” in “so-called Japanese characters or letters;” presumably, they wanted to prevent advertisements from misleading consumers

---

<sup>72</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 187 (Company Merchandise Office - Sales Promotion Files), Box 2, File 13, “Special Promotions - Far East Promotion - Oriental Bazaar,” document of 1965-06-29 entitled “Far East Promotion” and letter from F.J. C[arter], Toronto, to W.E.C. Weber, Executive Office, 1965-10-18.

<sup>73</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1915, p. 157.

<sup>74</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1895-96, p. 49.

<sup>75</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1916-17, p. 235.

about silk that actually came from somewhere other than Japan.<sup>76</sup> Emphasizing the luxury and desirability of real Japanese silk, the Eatonians thus embedded it in an Orientalist discourse.

Ready-made silk clothes from Japan were also available at Eaton's and they too received a variety of marketing treatments. Sometimes just a minimum of attention was brought to the fact that they were Japanese, presumably to exploit whatever status this fact could bring in terms of quality or novelty value. The 1905 catalogue, for instance, sold silk baby caps that were drawn just like the other caps on the page, thereby appearing simply normal, but that were identified in the copy as being Japanese.<sup>77</sup> The same is true for 1916 catalogue representations of other Japanese silk items including waists (blouses), vests (undershirts) and kimonos.<sup>78</sup> Other times, silk clothes were Orientalized, that is, they were promoted as being specialty luxury items redolent of the East. Eaton's was willing to pay dearly to do so. In the 1920s, the company purchased from the Silk Kingdom Company not only the regular embroidered silk kimonos, but also some special high-quality ones that cost the "very high price" of one hundred dollars. A staff member from the Japanese firm recalled that these luxury items had been purchased in order to be displayed in the windows of the Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg stores.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup>This notice of 1929-09-05 is referred to in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F466 from Secretarial Office, 1934-03-01.

<sup>77</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1905-06, p. 58. An apparent exception was in the Fall-Winter 1903-04 catalogue representations of short quilted Japanese House Jackets (p. 40); they were drawn as stiff, squared, and flat, in contrast to the curvaceous ones elsewhere on the page and one wonders if the artist drawing them believed them to be strange and did not know how to render them.

<sup>78</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1916-17, pp. 76-77, 82.

<sup>79</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S162 (Public Relations/ Community Relations - Archives Office - Subject Files), file F 229-162-0- 3, "Accidents and Disasters - Japanese Earthquake," letter from Hachizo Yagi of Silk Kingdom Co. Ltd of Kamakura, Japan to Mr. G. Carlson, Company Merchandise Office, Toronto, 1968-02-07.

Sometimes, silk clothing was sold at Eaton's and simply associated with Japan to obtain Oriental cachet. For instance, in the early 1960s, Toronto's College Street store had a window display showing six "white" female mannequins wearing silk dresses; in the middle of them was a Japanese-looking female mannequin in a kimono (see Illustration 14). There was no indication that either the dresses or the fabric from which they were fashioned were from Japan, however. Display elements included elaborate tiered parasols and delicately painted screens. The display card at the foot of the Japanese mannequin read, "Eaton's accents the infinite beauty of SILK."

## 2) *The U.S.A.*

Eatonians had, in general, very different attitudes towards the United States than they had towards Japan, as a previous chapter has shown. Eatonians very often felt that their American counterparts were their superiors in the realm of retail. On the one hand, then, they greatly admired their southern neighbours, buying or borrowing many of their business ideas obtained through visits, correspondence and trade publications. On the other hand, Eatonians did have negative feelings about the United States. They were anxious about being so dependent on Americans, worrying, for instance, about company representatives making nuisances of themselves during their repeatedly going south to learn about the latest trends. And they sometimes felt envious and competitive. Portraying things American in company marketing material thus required of Eatonians an effort similar to the Japanese one. Once again, in the public realm of displays and advertisements, Eatonians usually succeeded in masking any anxieties and presented a positive, unproblematic image.

Eaton's gave plenty of public space to their admiration for America. For instance, there is a large body of Eaton's marketing material promoting American fashions and furniture very favourably. New York, in particular, was singled out as a source of beautiful and trendy merchandise, a style capital to rival Paris. The 1907 catalogue, for instance,

featured two pages of fashion representing the "Latest New York Styles."<sup>80</sup> A 1935 Toronto brochure raved about the appeal of Modern-style furniture being produced in London, Paris and New York: "But it is a NEW MODERN! It has added the dignity and graciousness of Classic design to the gay simplicity of the earlier modern."<sup>81</sup> After the Second World War, indeed, New York's reputation as a fashion capital increased in comparison to war-ravaged Paris. A 1949 Toronto window display featured "Christian Dior's New York Original" women's wear, which, as the display card indicated, was "created in America for the women of this continent."<sup>82</sup> A 1951 Montreal fashion show at the Dorval airport emphasised modernity once again; it featured a backdrop of modern planes and ocean liners behind a display of clothes from New York, London, Switzerland and Canada.<sup>83</sup>

Between the two World Wars, Eaton's publicized Hollywood as another American style mecca.<sup>84</sup> The company's Advertising Guide restricted the use of the term "Hollywood Models"<sup>85</sup> to fur coats actually from that city, which suggested that the company feared its copywriters might be tempted to use its name to inflate the value of apparel in the minds of

---

<sup>80</sup> Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1907, pp. 6-7.

<sup>81</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0 -1054 "Display - Exhibit - C.N.E.," brochure handed out at the 1935 Canadian National Exhibition.

<sup>82</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-9, picture no. 28930, for 1949-02.

<sup>83</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0 -1677 "Fashion - Fashion Shows - Que. - Montreal 1936-1953," picture of Spring Fashion Show of 1951-02.

<sup>84</sup> David Cohn notes whereas in 1905 it was Paris that was promoted as the fashion leader in the American Sears catalogue, in 1935 this position was attributed to Hollywood. Cohn, *The Good Old Days*, p.351.

<sup>85</sup>T. Eaton Records, F229 S149 (Product Research Bureau - General Files) , file "Advertising Rules, Policies, Definitions (Taken from Sears Advertising Guide)", n.d. [ca. 1940-1949], p. 30.

customers. Other signs were the many pages in the 1930s Eaton's catalogues presenting clothes named after or worn by Hollywood icons, including Charley McCarthy and the Lone Ranger,<sup>86</sup> just as the American Sears catalogue did.<sup>87</sup> Eaton's also sold products associated with two Canadian-born Hollywood movie stars, Mary Pickford<sup>88</sup> and "Teen Age" Deanna Durbin.<sup>89</sup> In so doing, the company showed how Hollywood could be accessible to Canadians.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Notices sent to the Catalogue Advertising Office indicate the company conducted careful enquiries into the legality of marketing these two figures. AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F659 from Secretarial Office [their no. 342] to H. Lee Mail Order Advertising, 1938-06-06, and Notice F667, "Excerpt from letter to 'The Harmony Company,'" 1939-04-21.

<sup>87</sup> David L. Cohn notes that the Sears catalogue promoted Claudette Colbert cosmetics in 1935, for example. Cohn, *The Good Old Days*, p.283.

<sup>88</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F663.

<sup>89</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F664, from Secretarial Office to H. Lee Mail Order Advertising, 1939-03-23. Eaton's looked into whether its repeated use of the words 'Teen Age' in their advertisements for Durbin fashions encroached upon Nadler Bros. Ltd. of Montreal, which had registered the phrase "with respect to feminine outer wearing apparel." (See AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 98 (Mail Order Office - Catalogue Advertising - Incoming Notices), Volume "Notices to Departments: 1925-39," Notice F 648, which was a letter from Eileen-Joy Fashions, Inc. to Eaton's in New York City, 1938-11-23.) For more on Deanna Durbin, see Notices F684 and F653.

<sup>90</sup> However, the Sears catalogue in the U.S.A. also marketed Deanna Durbin goods, which David Cohn explains as a tribute to youth, not Canadianness. Cohn, *The Good Old Days*, p.308.

This was perhaps one way of the company addressing the envy and sentiment of inferiority felt by employees behind the scenes, and possibly by other Canadians too, in the face of American culture. Or, perhaps, it was a sign of increasing confidence within the company as it greatly developed its own capacity in merchandising and trading. This is what is suggested in some other displays at Eaton's, ones emphasizing the strong bilateral relationship between Canada and the U.S.A. In 1941, Eaton's had a "Good Neighbour" promotion in Montreal emphasizing their alliance.<sup>91</sup> Then in 1959, there were displays including a company float in a Toronto parade celebrating the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, a joint American-Canadian engineering feat linking the Great Lakes, shared by both countries, to the Atlantic Ocean and thus greatly facilitating commercial traffic for both.<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, Eaton's often emphasized its own "Canadianness." Sometimes, as the example of the cover of the company's 1952-53 Fall-Winter catalogue showed, this was an indirect means for the company to denounce American hegemony. As Chapter 7 indicated, the cover was deliberately conceived to distinguish Eaton's from Simpsons-Sears, a creation of the American Sears, Roebuck and Company of Chicago whose catalogue was soon to appear in Canadian homes. The cover emphasized that Eaton's was Canadian-owned and would remain that way, which enabled the company to be faithful to the tradition started by its founder, an immigrant to Canada, and responsive to the needs of its customers, with whom the company had dealt with for over eighty years.<sup>93</sup> This was a sign of anxiety within Eaton's in the face of a new competitor and, presumably, an effort to acknowledge similar attitudes on the part of its customers.

---

<sup>91</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-2228 – Promotion - Que – Montreal - Special - "Good Neighbour" booth.

<sup>92</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-2220 – Parades – Ontario – Hamilton and Toronto – "...Eaton's of Canada float..." (1959).

<sup>93</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1952-53.

More often, however, in producing public images of the U.S.A., Eaton's aimed not at soothing latent fears, but at something much more simple and positive: the unabashed celebration of American genius. A simple, final example is the 1957 fashion show in the Toronto store's fabric department featuring clothes made from sewing patterns available for sale. A photograph of the event shows an audience of girls and women of all ages looking, rapt, at a beautiful model; the accompanying caption (probably used in a staff magazine) identified her as Miss America. It also outlined the Eaton company's thinking in hiring a celebrity from south of the border: "Association with outstanding personalities in the news keeps our thinking modern and up-to-date."<sup>94</sup>

#### Messages about women in the marketing of foreign places and products

Miss America embodied the America that Eaton's wanted to associate with: modern, up-to-date, attractive. Very often in its marketing material, Eaton's used a strategy of showing women to be the bearers, the material manifestations, of meanings about abroad. Thus did the innocuous, omnipresent element of modern marketing images -- female mannequins and models and movie stars -- come to have, at Eaton's, as at other stores, an important ideological role. They carried, in their very countenance, comportment and clothing, the company's foreign clichés.

These female ambassadors of abundance were virtually unassailable. Who could resist their banal attractions? Their shapely shoulders could support a burden of meaning with style and grace; they could thus insinuate into the familiar sphere of catalogue and store culture a set of complex, freighted messages about other ethnicities and cultures and races. In this sense, women served the interest of Eaton's in reassuring its customers that foreignness was familiar, appealing, and desirable. They helped Eaton's make the foreign world and its products seem safe.

---

<sup>94</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1681 - "Fashion - Fashion Show," Toronto 1957.



In most cases, female figures were simply forms depicted as wearing or using or otherwise interacting with imported merchandise. Here, it was the merchandise, not the female figure, that Eaton's attempted to imbue with certain meanings; the figures served to make the merchandise look utilizable. 1960s window displays of "Eastern" furniture featured female mannequins "living" in the furnished rooms;<sup>95</sup> of White mannequins holding fans and parasols presided over displays of silk "fashion fabrics;"<sup>96</sup> and of a teenaged girl-mannequin lounging on the floor of her "Spanish Look" bedroom, which had a picture of a Spanish girl around the same age on the wall,<sup>97</sup> were all examples of this.

These examples serve as a reminder of the point, made in previous chapters, that much of what Eaton's sold, whether foreign or domestic, was intended to be consumed by women. In effect, the message sent out by the company in its marketing of foreign or foreign-style goods was that a function of the world abroad was to produce goods for women. Consider, for example, the point conveyed in the Eaton's Toronto store in 1927 during a Fashion Tea event entitled "A Masque of Fashion." While nibbling Assorted Sandwiches and Chocolate Cream Cake, customers were treated to a fashion show animated by Marceline D'alroy, Fashion Interpreter. She read a poem that was an ode to foreign places and people; their reason for existence, the poem blithely suggested, was to make fancy goods whose purpose was to adorn Eaton's shoppers. Thus, said the narrator in the poem, who called himself (or herself) the Magician of the Mode, "The mines of farthest Ind/Yield of their treasures rubies, roseate, rare." He then commanded his "blackamoors" to travel the world in search of more lovely things; "To Egypt, Persia, distant Hindustan--

---

<sup>95</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-40 1964 , picture 59853 of window displays with a card in the window reading, "East meets West in the Young World Look."

<sup>96</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-37, 1962 or 1963, picture 56845, of window display. Note that although the cards in the display do not mention the East they say, "Eaton's accents the infinite beauty of SILK Fashion Fabrics",

<sup>97</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-41, 1964 or 1965, picture no. 60887-4.

/Gathering of their art in bold design,/in weaving, color--clever fingers make the fabrics for Milady's gown." He concluded, "You have all seen/ How from Earth's limits I have gathered here/Furs, Fabrics, Ribbons, Lace and Pearls--Perfumes. All these Milady graciously accepts."<sup>98</sup>

Sometimes this message was carried to its logical conclusion and female figures actually stood in for the foreign product or place. Their very traits *were* the meaning. In the *Masque of Fashion* poem, for example, there were verbal images of women virtually identified with the foreign products, such as the Lady of Laces.<sup>99</sup> Italian promotions featured representative females including a mannequin in traditional Italian peasant clothes standing behind a donkey-driven wagon, and others in "Lovely regional costumes."<sup>100</sup> Miss America was in herself described as representative of American modernity. Likewise, the rare examples of images of Japanese women that Eaton's emanated showed that they, too, could be interpreted as saying something about Japan itself, in this case, about how it was *not* modern. One was a 1905 catalogue illustration of a fan for sale on that was painted the picture of a lovely Japanese woman, traditionally dressed, and herself holding a fan.<sup>101</sup> Another was from a decade later, when a catalogue page selling Japanese matting featured a picture of a Japanese woman in kimono bearing another appealing, gentle

---

<sup>98</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1675 "Fashion - Fashion Show and Merchandise [Album] 1927," pamphlet entitled "A Masque of Fashion with Marceline D'alroy, Fashion Interpreter" (1927).

<sup>99</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1675 "Fashion - Fashion Show and Merchandise [Album] 1927," pamphlet entitled "A Masque of Fashion with Marceline D'alroy, Fashion Interpreter" (1927).

<sup>100</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), file F 229-304-1-32,"Italy via Eaton's," picture no. 49250; file F 229-304-1-34, "Festa Italiana", 1964, picture 59976-19.

<sup>101</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1905-06, p. 159.

object, a child.<sup>102</sup> Much later, in the 1960s, was the silk fashion fabrics window display already mentioned, which also included an Asian-featured mannequin in a kimono standing among the White ones;<sup>103</sup> and in the same decade, Eaton's displayed photographs of "Miss Asia" in the course of its World Import Fair promotion.<sup>104</sup> Here, Japanese womanhood was represented as docile, beautiful, and non-threatening; even if "backward," things Japanese need not cause Canadians concern.

Displays and advertisements of foreign goods featuring females as display or design elements helped Eaton's further one of its most important marketing messages: that its goods were available to and suitable for its female customers. Over and over, they attempted to communicate the idea that Eaton's provided women with the opportunity to have access to the world abroad, but in the fun and familiar setting of its stores and catalogues. Sometimes, this was literally the case; in 1960, for instance, Eaton's actually installed a sidewalk café for its "Festival de France" promotion and photographs of the installation show throngs of female customers sitting at the little tables sipping coffee.<sup>105</sup> Here, as in many other displays, advertisements and exhibits, Eaton's announced that it was enabling women to consume the cultures of the world.

#### Messages about Eaton's in this marketing material

Thus, at the same time as it marketed foreign places and products, Eaton's also emitted a positive message about itself: that if the purpose (so to speak) of the foreign world was to

---

<sup>102</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1915, p. 174.

<sup>103</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-37, 1962 or 1963, picture no. 56845.

<sup>104</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), file F 229-304-1-3, "Eaton 100 Centennial Photos", pictures 68631 of Eaton's World Import Fair.

<sup>105</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S304 (Merchandise Display Images, [Queen Street Store]), file F 229-304-1-33, "Festival de France," picture "sidewalk café #3," 1960.

supply fabulous merchandise, then a key reason for Eaton's own existence was to make foreign goods accessible to Canadians, especially Canadian women. Eaton's, the company itself suggested, was equipped to do so properly. It possessed the elaborate infrastructures necessary to procure the goods abroad in the first place, and to distribute them in Canada; it also had the required intellectual resources to make these goods comprehensible and desirable. Once again, as in its catalogue messages about Canada, Eaton's used the opportunity of selling to sell itself.

### *The Eaton's foreign buying system*

Central to this argument was the point that Eaton's had what was needed to exploit the world abroad. Public literature and displays explained, first of all, the company's foreign buying system. In the exuberant editorial introductions to the early catalogues, pamphlets handed out to store customers explaining the company, and special books like the *Jubilee* volume, Eaton's gave its foreign buying offices a glowing write-up. The *Golden Jubilee* book, for instance, devotes a whole chapter to describe them and crowns, "the Sun never sets on the Eaton Buying Organization."<sup>106</sup>

Eaton's also boasted about the number of buyers it could dispatch abroad. As the Fall-Winter catalogue of 1894-95 explained, "instead of dealing through commission houses our imperial position enables us to send buyers to Europe continually...." The transportation systems in place to bring foreign merchandise to Canada were likewise extolled for their frequency and speed. The same catalogue stated proudly that the weekly express service by steamer between Liverpool and Toronto took "a record of only twelve days." Moreover, it added that Eaton's, with its cash-only policy, was equipped to use the money thus amassed to manoeuvre a better position for itself as a buyer, for "Ready cash is King in the markets of the world. Selling as we do, for cash only, and at one price, gives us a tremendous advantage in the race for trade."<sup>107</sup> The picture thus emerging was of a super-power among retail operations. As another 1890s catalogue explained: "The power

---

<sup>106</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 161-70.

<sup>107</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1894-95, pp. 2-3.

of collection has much to do with success or failure in dry goods merchandising. In this respect the big store has the decided advantage, because it knows and is known, the world over."<sup>108</sup>

In the twentieth century, Eaton's stepped up the message about its ability to exploit foreign markets. A 1930 brochure for another Canadian National Exhibition display, for instance, said the following about Eaton's Paris fashions; "we would emphasize the fact, that only through special and unprecedented effort of the couture, were we able to secure Autumn models so early."<sup>109</sup> Transportation methods changed, but Eaton's continued to boast that it was set up to bring things home in time. The caption of a 1946 window display in Toronto read: "Again the Paris Openings: Eaton buyers were there...selected Original Models...shipped them to Canada by air...for a notable first-since-the-war Exhibition of Spring Fashions from the leading French Couturiers."<sup>110</sup> In 1960, a window display for the Festival de France promotion featured fabric that a card indicated was "imported from France to fashion exciting clothes for Canadian women."<sup>111</sup> And in the company's Centennial book *The Store that Timothy Built*, a whole chapter is devoted to the wonders of Eaton's foreign buying. After explaining about the foreign buying offices and their roles in helping Eaton's procure "the best the world has to offer," it relayed various adventures (and misadventures) of Eaton's foreign buyers past and present. Author William Stephenson stressed the exceptional qualities they needed:

---

<sup>108</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Fall-Winter 1893-94, pp, 2-5.

<sup>109</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1054, "Display - Exhibit - C.N.E.," brochure for the 1930 Canadian National Exhibition.

<sup>110</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1670 "Fashions- France- Paris- Paris fashions," information taken from picture with Commercial Studio no. C-12534-1.

<sup>111</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-33, 1960, pictures no. 52267.

Away from North American success in obtaining unique, exciting, saleable merchandise may depend on a buyer's flair for developing a product, his readiness to adapt to strange surroundings or mores, or his expertise in handling unexpected complications in transportation, customs, food and language.

This added up, he noted, to "a degree of skill almost uncalled-for in domestic buying."<sup>112</sup>

This message of company capabilities was supported and enriched visually in pictures and displays. Quite often, for instance, the early descriptions of the foreign buying system were accompanied by sober black-and-white photographs of the offices and people it depended upon. Documentary images like these managed to suggest, through their natural-looking, direct mode of representation, that the objects therein pictured were thoroughly captured and comprehended: in a word, colonized. The images were at once a product, an expression, and a tool of mastery and scientific control. They thus partook in a powerful realist visual discourse, already discussed in Chapter 6, that emerged in late nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western culture. The *Golden Jubilee* book, for instance, included a two-page pictorial spread of all the company foreign buying offices as of 1919. They are arranged in a neat pattern and labelled, the very image of a tidy collection.<sup>113</sup>

The company also used various more obviously interpretive means of visually representing its foreign buying, such as maps and flags and other symbols. One particularly rich display was the company's presentation at Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition in 1947. Along with the legend, "From the markets of the world comes merchandise to Eaton's of Canada" stood a large lucite globe, around which sat icons representing various nations: Dutch windmills, the (French) Eiffel Tower, and so on, as well merchandise including

---

<sup>112</sup>William Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1969), pp. 203, 211.

<sup>113</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 169-70.

modern furniture, glassware and clothing in national groupings (see Illustration 15).<sup>114</sup> The world so recently decimated by a brutal war was shown intact, productive, healed by the balm of Eaton's benevolent business. The following year, the Winnipeg Eaton's store staged a display which an informal note called the "World Markets to Eaton's" promotion; it may well have been the same one as was displayed in Toronto, for the company was in the habit of circulating its big displays. Similar to this was a Winnipeg promotion tied into World Trade Week in 1948, which featured "posters and a representative collection of merchandise from the countries from which we buy."<sup>115</sup> These books and displays were seen by tens of thousands of people. For example, there were 29 438 visitors to the Winnipeg promotion between March 20 and April 4, 1948.<sup>116</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, then, Eaton's presented an image of itself as the centre of an enormous marketing circuit. On top was a giant network of productive nations, busily producing goods; at the bottom was a crowd of millions of Canadians, busily consuming them; in the middle, tying the two webs together, was Eaton's, busily viewing, buying, and

---

<sup>114</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1059 "Display - Exhibit - CNE," picture of the 1947 Canadian National Exhibition. For the goods on display, see files F 229-308-0-1056 to F 229-308-0-1058 and F 229-308-0-1060, especially negative no. 24378 in the latter file.

<sup>115</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 193 (T. Eaton Co. Limited Of Winnipeg, Store Superintendent's Office And Public Relations Office, Correspondence Files), Box 1, file "World Trade Week" in Bonspeil Week section, letter from W.L. P[alk], Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent's Office, of 1948-05-13, to Mr. H. Carson, Display Department, and letter from L. Scott Brewster, Mdse Display Department, Winnipeg, of 1948-06-01 to W. Palk, Superintendent's Office, with attached note from the Superintendent's Office, Winnipeg, indicating the count.

<sup>116</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 193 (T. Eaton Co. Limited Of Winnipeg, Store Superintendent's Office And Public Relations Office, Correspondence Files), Box 1, file "World Trade Week" in Bonspeil Week section, note from the Superintendent's Office, Winnipeg; also, letter from L. Scott Brewster, Merchandise Display Department, Winnipeg, to W. Palk, Superintendent's Office, 1948-06-01.

shipping home the goods from abroad, then storing, selling, and delivering them back out to consumers. This message came through in symbols like globes showing the world and Eaton's place in it, as in the 1957 International Bazaar event which featured a poster proclaiming: "Eaton's Shops the World for *You!* See the Exhibits throughout the Store." Another example was the sale of housefurnishings from the same decade which included regionally-organized window displays with themes such as "The Brilliance of the South" and "The delicate serenity of the East." These were tied together by the slogan, "From the Points of the Compass...The Four Faces of Fashion for Lovelier Canadian Homes."<sup>117</sup>

Equally important, Eaton's emphasised that it had the right staff abroad, people who exploited and managed foreign abundance. The introductory sections of the early catalogues emphasized this fact. One of them verbally situated individual (male) buyers, masters of taste, within a company that had effectively mastered foreign space: "We've our own buyers -- men of experience and careful judgement, and what they choose you're almost sure to want. It used to be that we had to take what wholesalers happened to have. Now we buy when and wherever we please, with a sole regard to this business, which means to your interests."<sup>118</sup>

### *Eaton's women abroad*

Until around the 1950s, Eaton's suggested in its public communications that the people best suited to negotiate its large spaces and complex markets were company men like these; that these men shopped the world so that Canadian women would not have to.

A rare exception was an image in the *Golden Jubilee* book of Japanese women working in the company's offices there. They were pictured in their kimonos and described as being

---

<sup>117</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1- 28, pictures 47167-1 and -2; File F229-303-1-32 series 51431 pictures [c. late 1950s].

<sup>118</sup>Eaton's Toronto catalogue, Spring-Summer 1894 .



“employed with marked success. They work with speed and accuracy.”<sup>119</sup> Any foreignness they represented (kimonos) was thus softened, because the women fit into the Eaton’s ideal of effective efficiency.

In the 1950s, however, a new female face changed this predominantly masculine message. She was Doreen Day, head of the Montreal store’s Fashion Bureau from the 1930s to ‘50s. In the latter decade, Eaton’s provided many photographs of Day for publication in the local press. The *Montreal Gazette* featured pictures of her choosing an air travel wardrobe, when this means of transportation was still an expensive novelty.<sup>120</sup> Other press pictures show her on a ship, alongside its captain, and in Paris, comfortable and smoking a cigarette, surrounded by company men.<sup>121</sup> In every case she appeared poised and impeccably dressed, quite at ease with the challenge of venturing into foreign spaces. She did not, in my opinion, look like an ordinary Canadian woman, such as Eaton’s portrayed in its catalogues, but more of an ideal: a sophisticated career woman. In these visuals, Day was smoothly integrated into the image Eaton’s created for itself, of an enterprise uniquely positioned in the global market because of its superior human resources, material infrastructure and business systems.

#### *Eaton’s Canadian infrastructure to manage foreign products*

If we look further at the example of Doreen Day, we see another point Eaton’s made in its marketing material on the subject of making imported goods accessible to Canadians: that its excellent business system abroad was backed up by a complementary one, equally good, in Canada. After all, there was no reason for the company to buy goods abroad unless it could sell them at home. Eaton’s conveyed this message in several ways.

---

<sup>119</sup>The Scribe, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>120</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, 1951-06-08, filed in AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton’s Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1663- "Fashion- Que- Fashion Bureau- Montreal 1943-1953."

<sup>121</sup>F 229-312, “People” series [graphic records,], AO, T. Eaton Records, F229-312-0-32 “Day, Doreen”. Pictures are from 1950, 1953.

In the case of Day, this point was made in a number of other photographs showing her special ability to make fashion comprehensible to Canadian customers. One of Day's main jobs was to narrate fashion shows, including ones featuring foreign goods, in order to explain what it was the audience was seeing. There are a number of photographs of her presiding over fashion shows attended by hundreds of customers. She was, in other words, an *interpreter* to the Canadian public; this brings to mind the fact that the title given to Marceline D'Alroy at the 1927 Fashion Tea featuring imported clothes, an event already mentioned above, was just that: Fashion Interpreter.<sup>122</sup>

Day's fitness to make foreign goods accessible to Canadians was thus attributed to her personal, *individual* qualities of stylishness and strength. In the Eaton's archives are many pictures showing her facility in negotiating the retail business in Canada. She appeared as a strong figure, possessing authority and high style, sitting in her own Fashion Bureau office (see Illustration 4), attending a Maid of Cotton coronation, and looking entirely at home among a group of men at a Mink Breeders Association event. Like the pictures of her travelling, these ones showed her as a glamorous public person, wearing perfect outfits and smoking cigarettes from an elegant holder. Indeed, the *Montreal Gazette* described her as a "well known Montreal fashion figure," and even pictured her on equal terms with a very famous foreigner: "chat[ting] with the Duchess of Kent, who has something of a reputation herself for her chic clothes."<sup>123</sup> The fantasy aspect of her public image was enhanced by portraits retouched to make her figure look slimmer and curvier. A woman, a consumer of clothes and adept among those who made fashions, Doreen Day was

---

<sup>122</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1675 "Fashion - Fashion Show and Merchandise [Album] 1927," pamphlet entitled "A Masque of Fashion with Marceline D'alroy, Fashion Interpreter" (1927).

<sup>123</sup>AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records], file F 229-308-0-1663- "Fashion- Que- Fashion Bureau- Montreal 1943-1953. The *Gazette* article cited is in the file; it is dated around Aug. 1954.

portrayed through images as the ideal person in Canada to interpret styles, including foreign ones, to the Canadian female consumer.

### Conclusion

Implied in most of the marketing messages Eaton's sent out about itself, foreign countries and foreign goods, then, was that the most feasible way for ordinary women to obtain access to foreignness was not by coming directly into contact with it themselves, but by going to Eaton's. In the company's catalogues and stores, the foreign was interpreted, picked through, rendered safe and accessible. Through their visual marketing strategies, these cultural spaces offered women a virtual view of abroad.

Thus, in its marketing of the foreign world, Eaton's sketched out a role for Canadian women in it. They made up the bulk of the company's customers; it was, then, on their behalf that foreign housefurnishings and fashions were tracked down, brought home, and marketed by Eaton's. In the company's discourse, Canadian women's job vis-à-vis international commerce was to be consumers *in Canada*, in Eaton's stores and catalogues. Once again, women were called upon to be witnesses, in this case to first be spectators to its presentations of foreign places and products, and then to consolidate the company's development by consuming its products.

It was only with the advent of relatively affordable air travel that Eaton's began to devote more of its marketing resources to selling foreign countries themselves as things safe to consume. The Festival de France promotion of 1960, for instance, included a window display of tourist brochures for the country and a model of an Air France plane.<sup>124</sup> However, the company continued in this and later decades to put on exciting promotions offering an experience of foreign culture on store terrain. Eaton's did not relinquish its own role as foreign visitor and shopper on women's behalf.

---

<sup>124</sup> AO, T. Eaton Records, F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), File F229-303-1-33, picture 52267-19, 1960.

## CONCLUSION

One cannot shop at Eaton's any more. Two decades after shutting down its catalogues in 1976, the company was faced, once again, with sharply declining sales. It was also heavily in debt. In February of 1997, Eaton's took the drastic measure of seeking bankruptcy protection. The company received a half-billion dollar refinancing loan and announced a four- to six-month restructuring phase, during which its directors would consider the future of its 87 stores across Canada.<sup>1</sup> Rumours soon circulated that some or all of the stores would close. For instance, some people guessed that the landmark Montreal downtown building was losing money and would be shut down, unlike the prosperous-looking company stores in the city's suburban malls.<sup>2</sup>

As in 1976, the business press was quick to analyze the causes of this corporate catastrophe. Journalists lay some of the blame on general economic trends. Major Canadian department stores as a group had a decreased market share (from 56 percent of the market in 1992 to 44 percent in 1996) in the face of competition from deep-discount chains like Wal-Mart and large specialty stores like Canadian Tire.<sup>3</sup> Canadian consumers, for their part, were more cost-conscious and sought bargains elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> A *Globe and Mail* editorial put it bluntly: "we abandoned the department store for the megastore.... Times change"<sup>5</sup> However, the press also castigated Eaton's for having

---

<sup>1</sup> The company was reported to be \$310 M in debt. Sales in 1996 were \$1.69 billion, down \$500 million from their 1992 figure. *The Gazette* (Montreal), 1997-02-28, pp. A1, A9.

<sup>2</sup>*Gazette*, 1997-03-01, p. D4.

<sup>3</sup>*Gazette*, 1997-02-28, pp. A1, A9, D1.

<sup>4</sup>*Gazette*, 1997-03-01, p. D4.

<sup>5</sup>*Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 1997-07-21, p. A16.

brought its failure on itself. The stores were criticized for their “staidness, staleness” and particularly for putting on lacklustre promotions, following an even worse period starting in 1990 of having banned special sales events at all, in favour of so-called everyday value pricing.<sup>6</sup>

The *Globe and Mail* editorial added that even so, Canadians should not just forget about Eaton's. Accepting that times change “doesn't deny us the right to memory. That an establishment loses appeal doesn't mean it never had one. It had a place and a time and a purpose, and it served us well.”<sup>7</sup> And, indeed, the company's bankruptcy announcement elicited a flood of nostalgia among customers. Montreal shoppers noted sadly that Eaton's was “part of your life;” “Eaton was just another word for shopping.” One woman remembered a special coat she had gotten at the Montreal store as a girl and said “I really hope they don't close it; it's a part of my youth.”<sup>8</sup> In turn, Eaton's itself reminded customers of its more glorious past. In a full-page “Open Letter to Canadians,” company president George Eaton, Timothy's great-grandson, promised customers that they would continue to get the quality merchandise and service to which they were accustomed, including the company's “famous Guarantee” to refund unsatisfactory goods; they would not be let down by “Canada's favorite department store.”<sup>9</sup> George Eaton's brother Fredrik even went to the Montreal store to greet customers,<sup>10</sup> in an apparent effort to rekindle appreciation for his famous family.

Though premature, this nostalgia over Eaton's was prophetic. Declaring bankruptcy was the first step of the company's slow, unsteady collapse. For the next two and a half years,

---

<sup>6</sup>*Gazette*, 1997-02-28, pp. A1, A9; 1997-03-01, p. D4; Rod McQueen, *The Eatons: The Rise and Fall of Canada's Royal Family* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), p. 228.

<sup>7</sup>*Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 1997-07-21, p. A16.

<sup>8</sup>*Gazette*, 1997-02-28, pp. A1, A9.

<sup>9</sup>*Gazette*, 1997-02-28, p. A11.

<sup>10</sup>*Mirror* (Montreal), 1997-03-06, p. 9.

Eaton's would stagger a few steps forward then fall backwards, further behind than ever. The company's creditors announced a \$419M restructuring plan in September 1997,<sup>11</sup> and in June, 1998, it went public for the first time, making an initial public offering (with the family keeping a majority of shares); within a year, however, the shares had lost a disastrous 80 percent of their value.<sup>12</sup> Eaton's hired an outsider, George Kosich, as its new president, in 1997, but he quit after eighteen months.<sup>13</sup> During the summer of 1998, the company invested \$27M in overhauling the downtown Montreal store to make it more "upscale,"<sup>14</sup> part of a general change in orientation for the stores in which their heavy appliance departments were closed, and fashion and home décor became their focus;<sup>15</sup> but these efforts were found to be disorganized and confusing to customers.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, they were in vain. In the fall of 1999, the company went into bankruptcy protection and closed its doors, shutting down its stores.<sup>17</sup> The old Eaton's was finished.

There was a final, surprising last chapter to its story. Sears, the company's old rival, acquired all of the Eaton's common shares at the end of 1999, which included sixteen Eaton's stores and the company name and trademarks. Eaton's and Sears amalgamated under the name of the latter company and the Eaton's shares were delisted from the Toronto Stock Exchange.<sup>18</sup> In July 2000, Sears announced its intention to hire 4 000 people, preferably former Eaton's employees, to staff seven downtown "Eatons" stores

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, 1998-10-11, p. D4.

<sup>12</sup> *Report on Business Magazine*, May, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> *Gazette*, 1998-11-21, p. F1.

<sup>14</sup> *Gazette*, 1998-11-21, p. F1.

<sup>15</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 2000-07-25, pp. B1, B4.

<sup>16</sup> *Gazette*, 1998-11-21, p. F1.

<sup>17</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 2000-07-25, pp. B1, B4.

<sup>18</sup> Information from the Sears company website, August 2002:  
<http://www.sears.ca/e/info/profile.htm>.

(this was the new spelling for the company). It aimed to remodel and reopen them as “full-line” department stores complete with “spas, entertainment, food and personal shopping assistants.”<sup>19</sup> This seemed to promise a return to the old, luxurious downtown Eaton's stores. The seven stores were relaunched in November, 2000. Located in Toronto (two stores), Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary, Victoria, and Vancouver,<sup>20</sup> they had a new look including a new signature Eatons colour, aubergine.<sup>21</sup> Sears also created an on-line Eatons catalogue and issued a new 100-page paper one.<sup>22</sup> The new Eatons did not live long, however. In February 2002, Sears announced that it was going to close the stores that July, and relaunch them as Sears outlets.<sup>23</sup>

Eaton's now exists only as traces, memories and artifacts. Searching on the internet<sup>24</sup> exposes a link to the company's old home-page (last updated October 8, 1996) and a reference to the now-nonexistent online catalogue.<sup>25</sup> There is information on various court cases in which the Eaton's company was once involved.<sup>26</sup> Old Eaton's catalogues are for

---

<sup>19</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 2000-07-25, pp. B1, B4.

<sup>20</sup> *Shopping Centers Today*, 2000-11-01. (From the internet: <http://www.icsc.org/srch/sct/current/sct1100/01conb.html>).

<sup>21</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 2000-10-27, p. M1.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding the paper catalogue: *Globe and Mail*, 2000-10-27, p. M1. Regarding the on-line catalogue: its trace can be found at the following website address: [www.sears.ca/ea](http://www.sears.ca/ea); it states, “Since the Eaton's website no longer exists, you will automatically be redirected to sears.ca in a few seconds.” Internet research, August, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Information from the internet in August, 2002: “Save the Eaton's building coalition” website (<http://www.saveeatonsbuilding.ca/backgroundtime.html>), and Sears Canada website ([www.sears.ca/e/info/profile.htm](http://www.sears.ca/e/info/profile.htm)).

<sup>24</sup> Search carried out with the Google search engine, for the subject “T. Eaton Company,” August, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.sears.ca/eatons/eatonsre.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, a site with information on a 1990s wrongful dismissal suit: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/6174/eatons/case6.html>.

sale.<sup>27</sup> The Save the Eaton's Building Coalition presents its case for preserving the Winnipeg landmark store.<sup>28</sup> A "Memories of Eaton's" page has been set up<sup>29</sup> and Findagrave.com provides information on Timothy Eaton's burial place.<sup>30</sup> And there is news on the transfer of important Eaton's archives and objects to various cultural institutions including a historical collection to the City of Toronto and a fonds of Toronto-store advertising artwork to Ryerson University.<sup>31</sup> Another acquisition was of the Toronto store's bronze statue of Timothy Eaton by the Royal Ontario Museum. The ROM's November, 1999 press release states, "Over the years, Timothy Eaton's statue has become popular with Eaton's shoppers, who stopped to rub the toe of his shoe for good luck -- a tradition that the ROM will continue. ... [T]his will be one of the few items that visitors will be actively encouraged to touch."<sup>32</sup> Till the end, then, the company founder's statue in Toronto, like the one in Winnipeg described by George Morrisette in his poem cited at the beginning of this dissertation, continues to be a sought-out symbol of a powerful patriarch.

The Royal Ontario Museum also declared that "the statue is an important symbol of Canada's rich material culture and will help to increase public awareness of this aspect of our heritage."<sup>33</sup> As it has done since its founding in 1869, Eaton's continues to affect the way the country looks. When, for many decades, it was one of the most important

---

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.addall.com/Browse/Detail/0773759239.html>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.saveeatonsbuilding.ca/backgroundtime.html>.

<sup>29</sup> This is part of the Friends of the Archives of Ontario website (<http://www.archivesontariofriends.com/sitearchive.html>).

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=5513>.

<sup>31</sup> For the City of Toronto collection, see [http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/culture/historical\\_collection.htm](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/culture/historical_collection.htm). For the Ryerson collection, see <http://www.ryerson.ca/archives/new.html>.

<sup>32</sup> News release by the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto) of 1999-11-04, at <http://www.rom.on.ca/news/releases/public.php3?mediakey=xs7tabdckx-statue>.

<sup>33</sup> News release by the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto) of 1999-11-04, at <http://www.rom.on.ca/news/releases/public.php3?mediakey=xs7tabdckx-statue>.



national retail operations, the company created richly visual cultural spaces. Eaton's catalogues were densely packed with photographs, drawings, lettering and graphics; its stores, carefully-designed architectural environments in themselves, were the sites of promotions and displays, fashion shows and exhibitions, descriptive posters and cards; and the stores' visual messages spilled onto streets and into homes through their window decorations, parades and advertisements. For one hundred and thirty years, Eaton's invaded Canada's domestic, downtown and suburban spaces through these assertive commercial campaigns. Remaining in the public eye through its buildings, artifacts, archives and other remnants seems appropriate for a company that has been so active in contributing to Canada's visual culture.

\* \* \*

The subject of the present dissertation was the history of the place of women in the commercialized visual culture of Eaton's. In it, I argued that this history can be better understood if we use the word "witnessing" to describe the women's position.

The first part focussed on the Eaton company's operations abroad and women's role in it. Looking at the overall structure and gendered nature of these operations revealed a correlation at Eaton's between the perceived modernity of a place and the number of women who went or worked there on behalf of the company. Travelling buyers, the elite corps of the company operations abroad, were mostly men; their work, especially in so-called dangerous or backward areas like Japan (for much of the time Eaton's had operations there) and post-war Europe, was understood as requiring adventurousness and independence, traits that were, perhaps predictably, deemed to be masculine. Thus, men were mostly responsible for observing and obtaining the home and clothing fashions to be sent back for Canadian customers. Women buyers and foreign workers were mostly to be found in parts of the world that within Eaton's were understood to be safely up-to-date, including parts of Europe and the U.S.A., and to concentrate on obtaining merchandise already considered to be modern and thus desirable. Generally speaking, then, it was men,

who “shopped” the wide world, sparing women (whether workers or customers) from having to come into contact with its backward places and products.

There was, therefore, a link between in-house attitudes towards a region and women’s roles in it, or, to put it another way, between company constructions of the meanings of place and gender. Japan, for one, was considered for many decades to be frustratingly, sometimes frighteningly backward. For approximately the same period, women from Canada were not sent to work there. It was men who ran the Japanese offices and travelled the country, choosing from the (to them) confusing array the goods they would be comfortable calling valuable to Canadians. The presence of a few female Japanese office clerks and of Lilian Cabeldu who recorded her observations of the tragic 1923 earthquake confirmed the notion that Japan was not an appropriate place for Canadian women. It was only in 1965 that Eaton's sent female buyers to Japan, a sign, it seems, of how Eatonians had come to recognize that Japanese production methods had been modernized, in ways that they recognized, after World War II.

The links at Eaton's between perceptions and experience of place and gender were particularly evident when it came to the company’s specialized visually-oriented jobs abroad. In Europe, while male Eatonians continued to occupy most of the head buying and office positions in that continent, a noticeable number of women were also involved in the company operations there; when not in humble clerical positions (the majority), they tended to occupy jobs having to do with selecting and reporting on refined female and gift fashions: that is, merchandise *already considered* valuable (stylish, fashionable, in touch with modern trends). Europe was thus a mid-point between Japan and the U.S.A., not only in terms of its geographic position but also with regards to the numbers of women workers there; a liminal space, it provided special opportunities for women to develop this calling. This was also the case in the United States. Closer and consistently seen as safer and more modern than either Japan or Europe, America was long the site of frequent visits by company workers in search of ideas and goods, and it became the workplace of a significant number of female Eatonians. In mid-twentieth century America, some senior

women workers had carved out a niche for themselves as specialists of fashions most subject to frequent minor alterations, like hats, dresses and trendy home decor.

There appears to have been a belief within Eaton's, one more clearly articulated and growing after the Second World War, that some women were able and appropriate workers in areas (especially Paris and New York) where sensitivity to subtleties in styling was required. At Eaton's, then, women were recognized as being visually sophisticated and this was a key to their making inroads abroad. If company men were the masters who could make their way through any foreign area and locate saleable goods in any setting, women were expert witnesses: in the face of objects said to be stylish, they could spot the truly authentic ones and even, in the case of the fashion reporters, give their own style of written testimony of them.

The second half of the dissertation turned to Eaton's operations on its home terrain in order to consider the question of the relationship of gender, place and visibility in domestic consumer culture. First, it sketched out the history of the company's store and mail order operations and traced the difficult, competitive relationship between these increasingly separate divisions. Mail Order became increasingly autonomous, eventually developing its own sales offices whose environment offered a visual experience approaching that of the Eaton's "City" stores. Tension between the Mail Order and City divisions was fostered and experienced mostly by senior male workers; women, therefore, had little to say in the decisions having to do with the direction of the company's two main types of cultural spaces, stores and mail-order outlets.

However, women were everywhere to be seen within these commercial sites. Very often, the department stores and "wish books" were organized to privilege glimpses of women, whether workers, models, mannequins or graphic images. Females were the stars in the spectacles that Eaton's presented to the public. They were also always targetted as the main audience to this show, that is, as the company's most important customers. In Canada, then, women "witnessed" Eaton's in two senses of the word: their very-visible presence in the company stores and catalogues, as workers, images and even as customers

more or less on display, served as testimony or proof *of* Eaton's and its power to provide. And their position as the audience, the people consuming the spectacle, made them eyewitnesses *to* Eaton's.

Putting the spotlight on some of the main stages of the spectacle – a number of catalogue covers, stores and advertisements – we returned, finally, to the theme of how Eaton's constructed social meanings of place and gender. However, the focus was now on the company's public rhetoric: in other words, on how Eaton's represented women rather than, as in the first part of the dissertation, what women actually did. The Toronto catalogue covers presented a visual argument that women were central agents in Canadian economic development. At the same time, whether shown as shoppers or national symbols, the women were ultimately represented as passive rather than active contributors to national growth. This latter, powerful role of active development was attributed, on the covers, to Eaton's itself. Eaton's promoted itself as a creator and bearer of technological and even political progress from coast-to-coast. And, significantly, Eaton's tended to represent itself as a paternalistic protector of women. Thus, the company's catalogue covers proposed that alongside merchandise and shopping opportunities, Eaton's provided women with a sheltered, structured means of helping to develop Canada. What women had to do in return was to put their faith in Eaton's, witnessing its superior strength.

There was a similar sexual division of labour laid out in the Eaton's marketing material and exhibits having to do with foreign places and products. Whereas women were consistently represented as offering, sometimes through their own bodies, the fabled foreign abundance, and women were also supposed to make up the key customer base, it was Eaton's itself who obtained in this visual discourse the status of the dynamic locators and transporters of this bounty. Women might represent the exotic or modern beauties of abroad but Eaton's, especially its male buyers, were the ones who actually brought it to Canadian women. In its stores and catalogues, Eaton's saved women from the trouble of having to go abroad and, what is more, allowed them to take little "virtual visits" to it through its displays, promotions, exhibits and advertisements highlighting the look of foreign spaces. Again, we see Eaton's as a provider, and women witnessing this in two

ways: serving as both testimony of what Eaton's could get, and onlooker to what Eaton's could give.

In both its actual operations and its public messages, Eaton's offered women a secure but subordinate position. The company recognized and fostered women's abilities to be good shoppers, whether as buyers for a few but important lines of goods, or as the store and catalogue customers upon whose patronage the company depended. In both cases, the firm recognized women's shopping as a skilled and greatly important activity. At the same time, Eaton's reserved for itself, and in particular its elite male staff, the primary role of provider of things it encouraged women to need: of goods from all over, that would allow women to fulfill their roles as mothers, housewives, attractive people on display; of shopping experiences that allowed them to participate, safely, in the national and world economy; of advice, of protection. Generally speaking, women witnessed men's more active achievements in this rhetoric. In the spectacular realm of consumer culture, therefore, the company created a drama of mutual interdependence, structured by unequal gender constructions and played out on stages abroad and at home in Canada. The aim of this dissertation was to recount some of its scenes.

The main contribution of the thesis, therefore, was to present aspects of the consumer culture at Eaton's. Culture has to do with the meanings, of what a scholar of commodities has called the "social life of things."<sup>34</sup> Eaton's created meanings not only of things, however, but also of people and places. Whether consciously, as in its marketing strategies, or less consciously, as in its in-house views of abroad, the company's workers absorbed and generated many understandings of domestic and foreign spaces, understandings that were often conveyed through appearances. Likewise, Eaton's also constructed meanings of the sexes, especially women, that had a lot to do with looks and looking. In both cases, these sets of meanings shaped the way the company made business

---

<sup>34</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

decisions: where to set up operations, who to send to do what work. It also shaped the way Eaton's marketed its merchandise, embedding them in "regimes of value"<sup>35</sup> that very often made visual reference to true Canadianness, foreign riches, and, above all, ideals of womanhood.

Culture has been defined as "a system of understanding and behaviour and, simultaneously, as an expression of personal experience and character."<sup>36</sup> Did women associated with Eaton's, in their personal experience, accept the company's "system of understanding," these "regimes of value?" It would be instructive to know if, when they bought and used goods as consumers, they altered, resisted or ignored the meanings Eaton's tried to impose on the merchandise.<sup>37</sup> For instance, one may question if as shoppers they read Eaton's advertisements as the company intended them to.<sup>38</sup> Equally important would be to explore whether women, whether as shoppers or employees, adopted the feminine identities the company promoted,<sup>39</sup> if they "consumed" identities, as a way of

---

<sup>35</sup> Appadurai, "Introduction," p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Howard S. Becker, *Exploring Society Photographically* (Evanston: Mary and Leigh Black Gallery) 1981, p. 12. Becker is defining culture as understood by anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson.

<sup>37</sup> Questions of how commodity values are exchanged, resisted, and so on are discussed in Appadurai, "Introduction," passim.

<sup>38</sup> Guy Cook makes the point that advertising discourse is very complex, and that consumers read them differently than their creators intend them to. Guy Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising* (London: Routledge, 1992), cited in Charles Forceville, review of *The Discourse of Advertising*, by Guy Cook, in *Word & Image* 11, 1 (Jan. -Mar. 1995): 104.

<sup>39</sup> This subject is of growing interest to feminist scholars looking at female subjectivity and identity. See, for instance, Hilary Radner in *Shopping around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

transforming and even “transcending self.”<sup>40</sup> We do not know if for Eaton's customers, for instance, making purchases was mostly an individualistic self-indulgence, or an act of love, a “devotional rite” through which they developed and confirmed their roles as lovers, wives and mothers.<sup>41</sup> Did women, in brief, feel themselves to be witnesses to the authority of Eaton's, or did they lay claim to other, perhaps more powerful roles for themselves? These crucial questions have not been answered in the present dissertation that focussed, instead, on women's position in the company, and Eaton's representational practices of women, rather than on their own experiences.

Answering these questions would be an important complement to the present study. It would probably involve, as a material historian has suggested, meeting with former Eaton's customers to elicit their understandings of catalogues,<sup>42</sup> as well as of stores, merchandise, and shopping at Eaton's in general. Likewise, it would require meeting with women who were formerly the company's employees, so often mute in its records. And it would certainly involve asking questions about their visuality, in particular, their roles as observers:<sup>43</sup> the importance they accorded to “looks,” of things and places but also of

---

<sup>40</sup> This is one of the effects John Chase ascribes to “shopping in a modern consumer society.” John Chase, “The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Aug. 1991): 212.

<sup>41</sup> This is the question posed by Daniel Miller in his ethnographic research on shopping in a contemporary London neighbourhood. Daniel Miller, *A Theory of Shopping* (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Anne Hayward, “Mail-order Catalogues: Research Tools for Material History,” *Alberta Museums Review* 12, 2 (Fall 1987).

<sup>43</sup> “Observer” is the word Jonathan Crary uses to describe the perceiver of representational practices; he argues that studying both the practices and the observers is necessary for a full history of visuality, because “Vision and its effects are always inseparable from the possibilities of an observing subject who is both the historical product *and* the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of

themselves, the degree to which they accepted Eaton's attempt to have them orient themselves this way. In short, it would be another research project to complement the one at hand.<sup>44</sup> It would be another important installment in the story of women at Eaton's, part of the larger history of Canada's gendered, commercialized visual culture.

---

subjectification.” Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> I am currently considering developing an oral history project focussing on the experience of female former Eaton's customers.

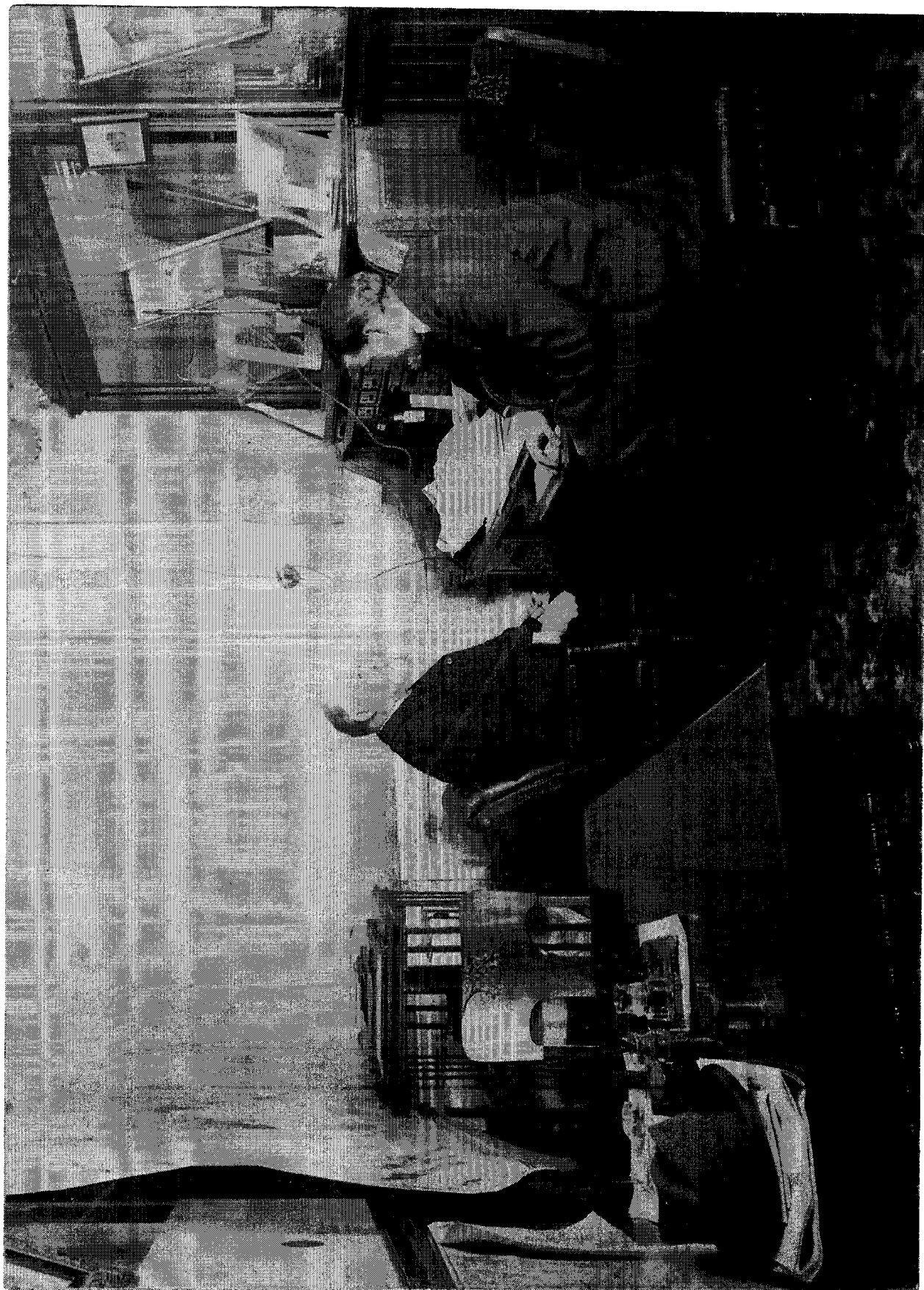


## ILLUSTRATIONS

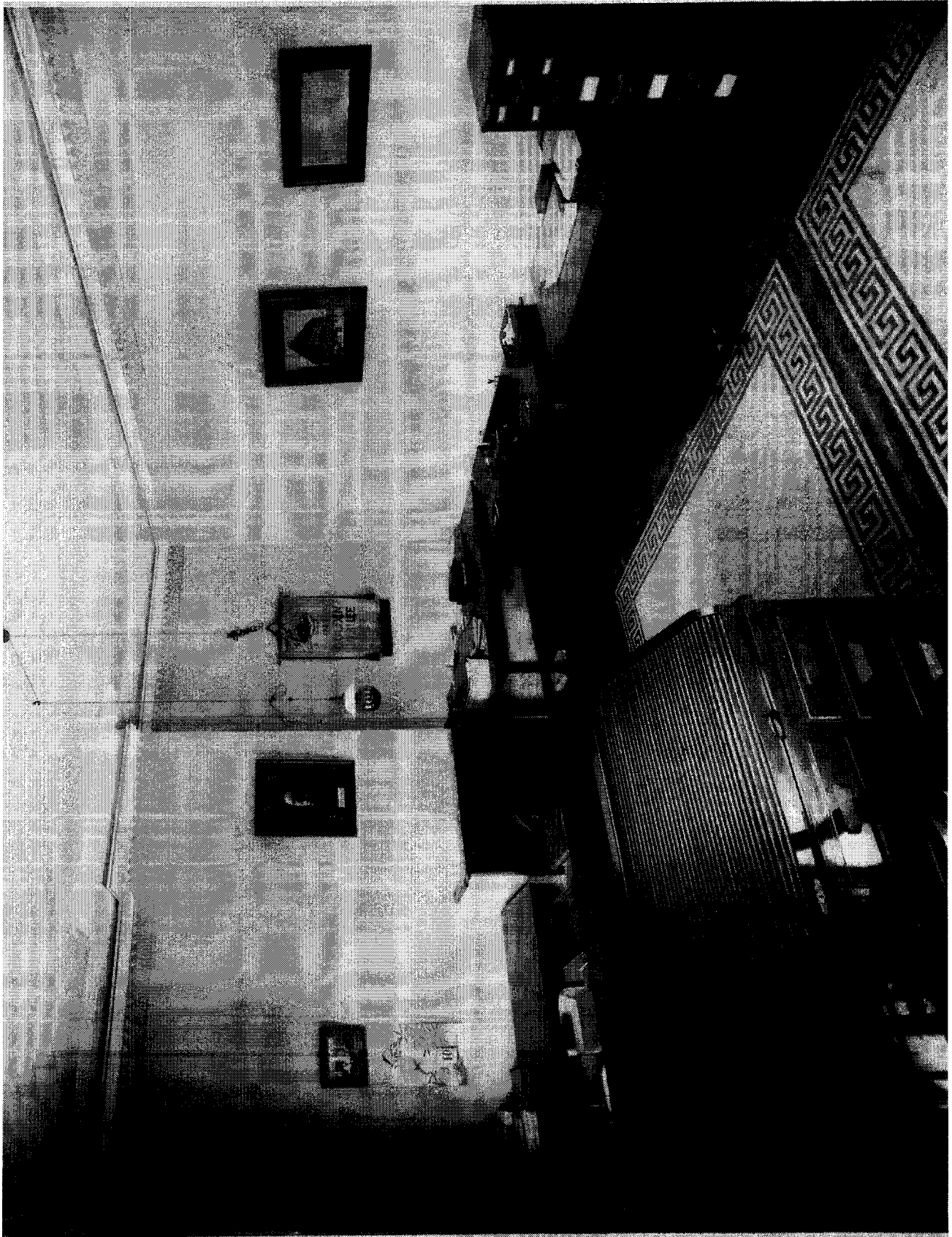
All the photographs are from the Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Records. Unless otherwise indicated, they are from files in the following series: F229 S308 (Eaton's Archives Subject Files) [graphic records]. The photographs are reproduced with the permission of Sears Canada Inc.

1. Timothy Eaton and Son John Craig Eaton in the Private Office, 1899, from file F 229-308-0-2209 (Box B-559).....453
  
2. Yokohama Buying Office Staff, 1919, from file F 229-308-0-675 (Box B-442).....454
  
3. Yokohama Buying Office, 1919, from file F 229-308-0-675, "Buying Offices" for Yokohama, 1919 (Box B-442).....455
  
4. Mrs. Doreen Day of the Montreal Fashion Bureau, c. 1943-1953, from file F 229-308-0-1663 (Box B-528).....456
  
5. Housefurnishings Office Staff, Including Bob Hill, Sadie Heatrick and Miss Stagg, 1940s, from file F 229-308-0-1360 (Box B462).....457
  
6. Male Eaton's Buyers in Switzerland Inspecting Watches, 196\_\_, from file F 229-308-0-664 (Box B-422). ....458
  
7. New York Buying Office Building, 1929, from file F 229-308-0-678 (Box B-422, picture 567).....459

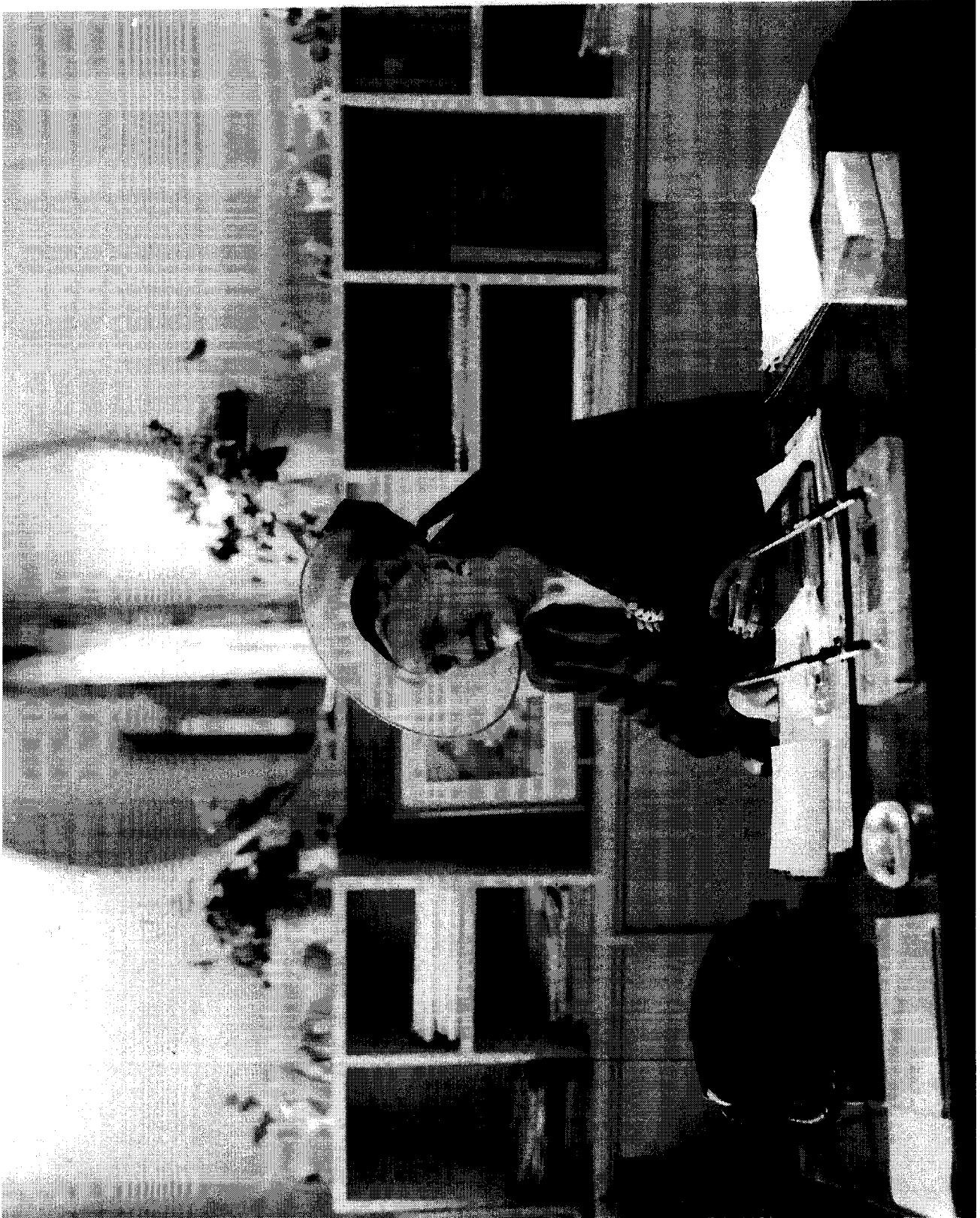
8. Crowd of Shoppers outside of the Toronto Store, 1913, from file F 229-308-0 -947 (Box B-442, picture 529; also marked 1125).....	460
9. Shoppers Viewing Exhibit of “Bluey” the Kangaroo, May-June 1947, from file F 229-308-0 -1114 (Box B-449, picture 23938-1).....	461
10. Women in Cash Office, ca. 1904, from file F 229-308-0-2191 (Box B-558).....	462
11. Barbara Duckworth of the Public Relations Office with Fashion Model Veruschka at a Press Conference, Royal York Hotel, Toronto, 14 March 1968, from file F 229-308-0 -1696 (Box B-530, Commercial Studio no. 66154).....	463
12. “Eaton's Mail Order System Covers Canada from Sea to Sea,” Toronto Catalogue Cover, Spring-Summer 1904, from F229 S1 (Mail Order Office/Catalogue Office, Catalogues – Toronto).....	464
13. Crowds looking at Coronation Window Display, Toronto, 1937, from file F 229-308-0 –1702 (Box B-530, picture 2076).....	465
14. Window Display of Women’s Clothes including Kimono, 1962 or 1963, from F229 S 303 (Merchandise Display Images, College Street Store), file F229-303-1-37 (Box B-31, picture 56845-10).....	466
15. “From the Markets of the World Comes Merchandise to Eaton's of Canada,” Display at Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, 1947, from file F 229-308-0 -1059 (Box B447, picture 24378A-13).....	467



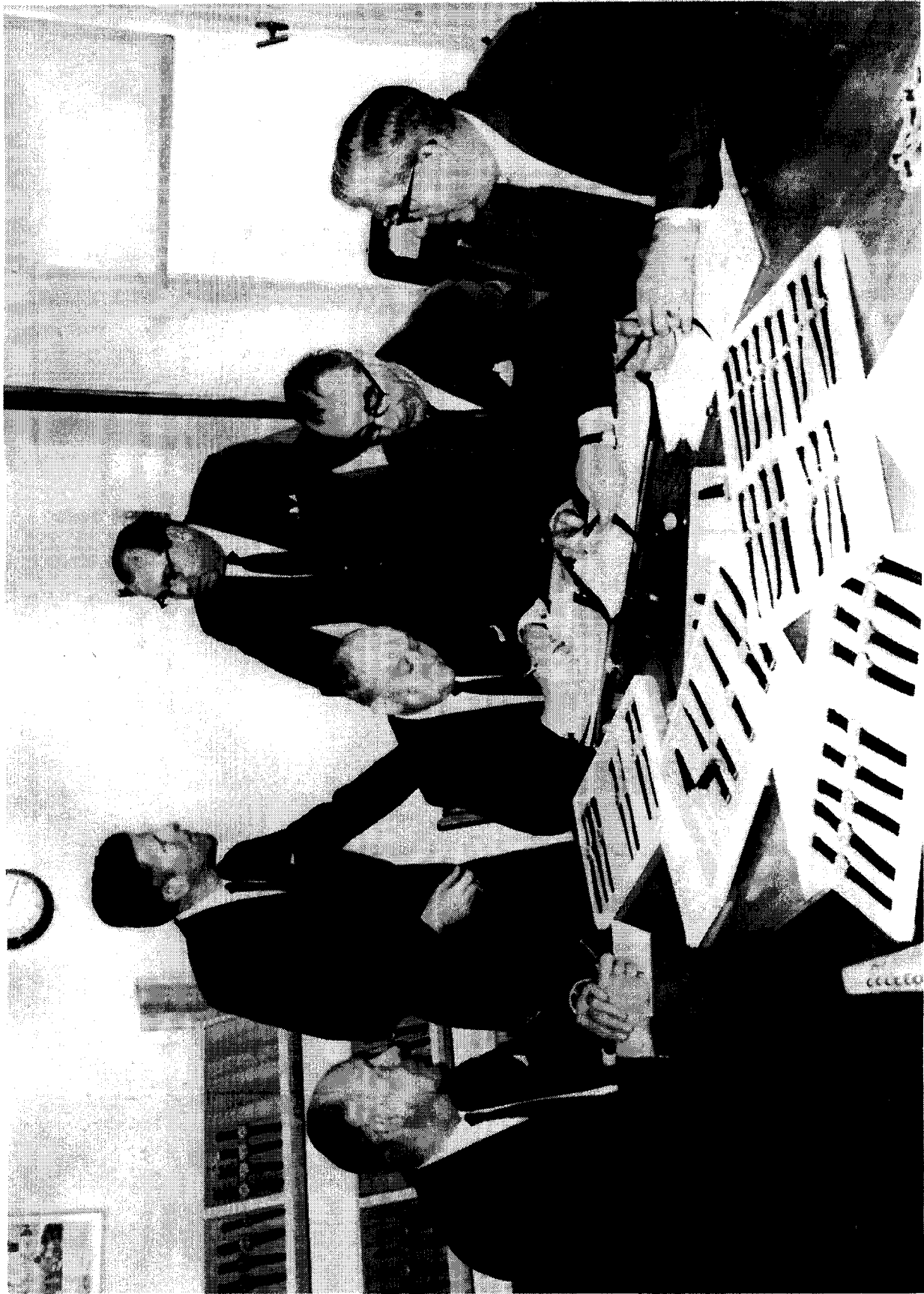




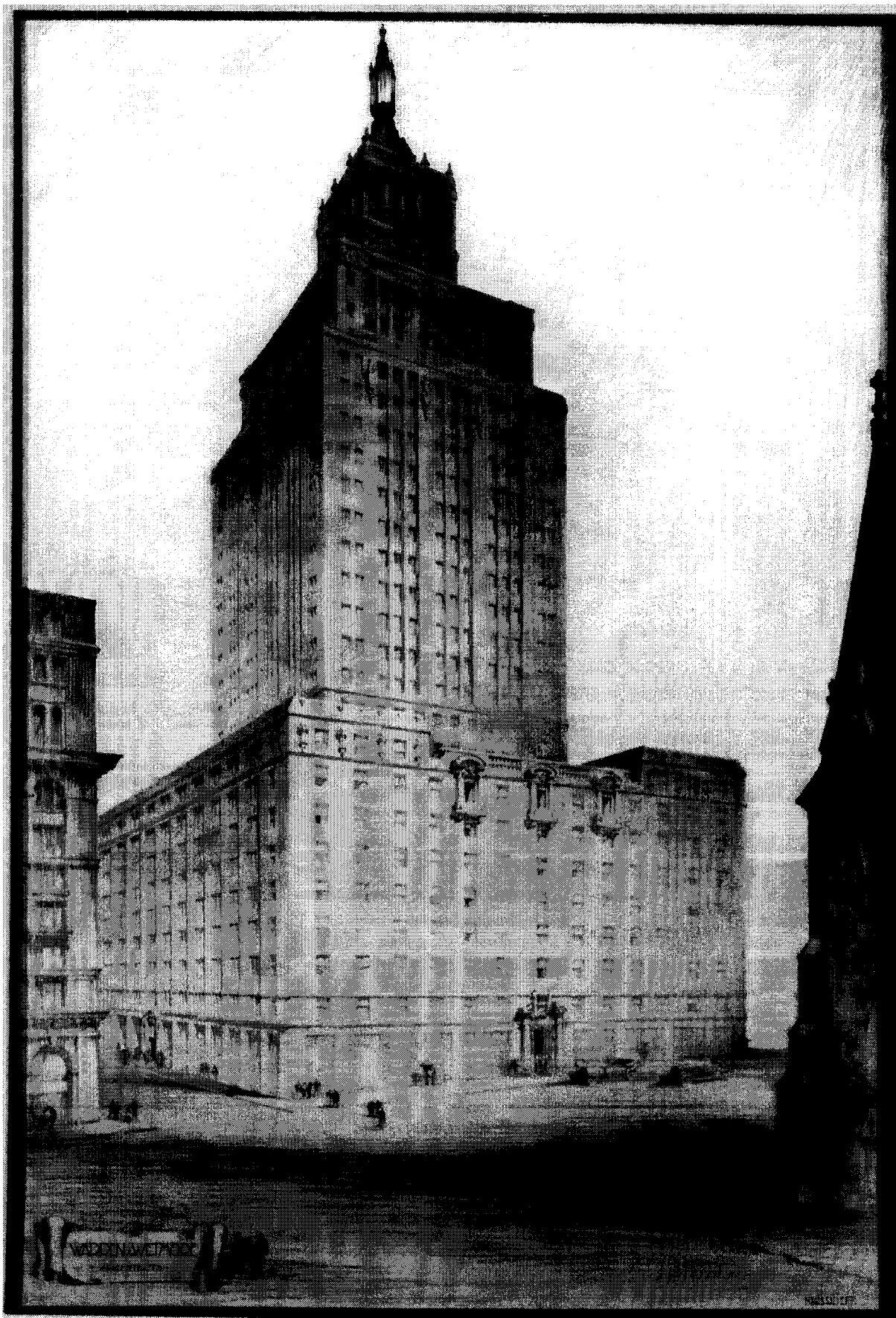


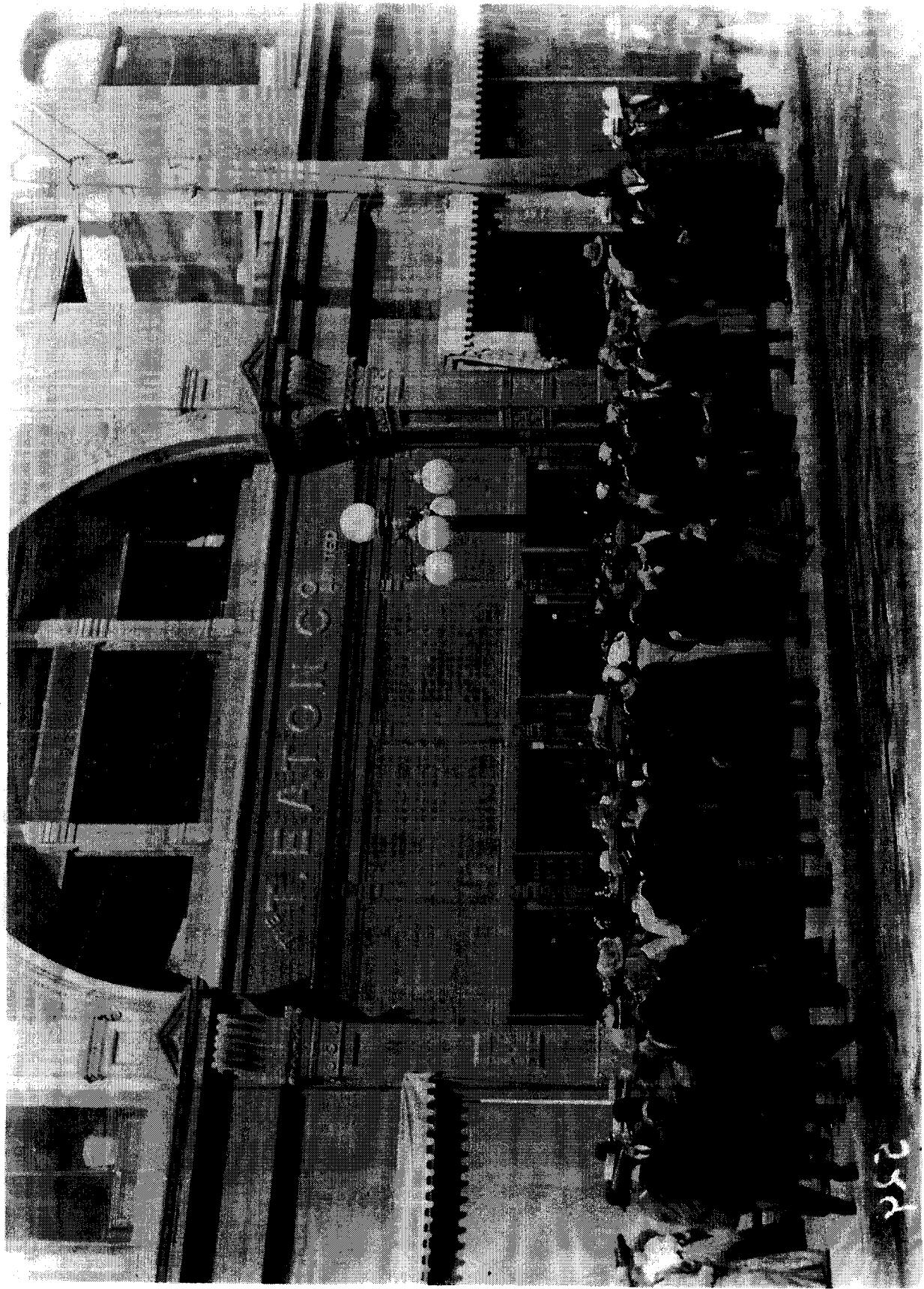




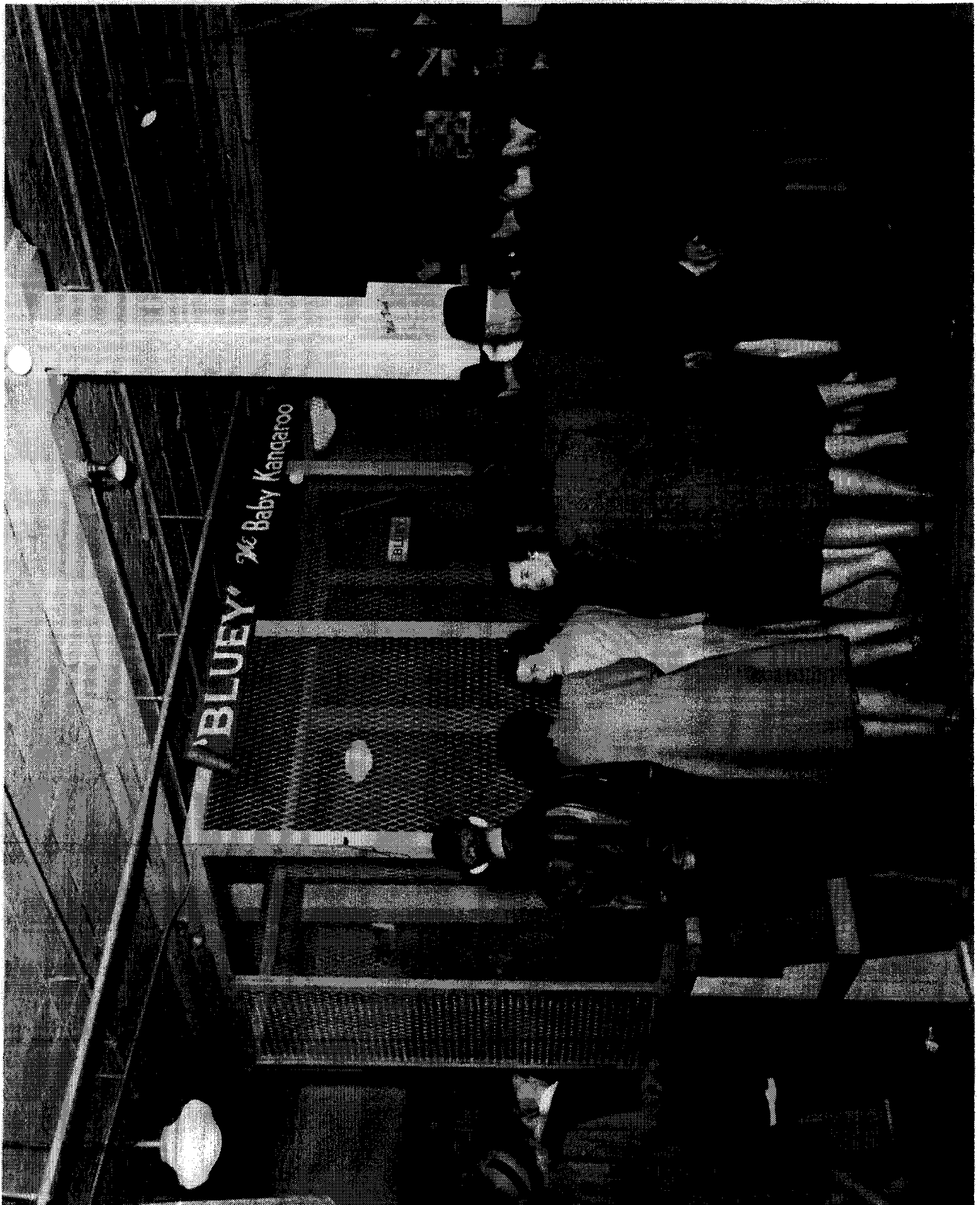






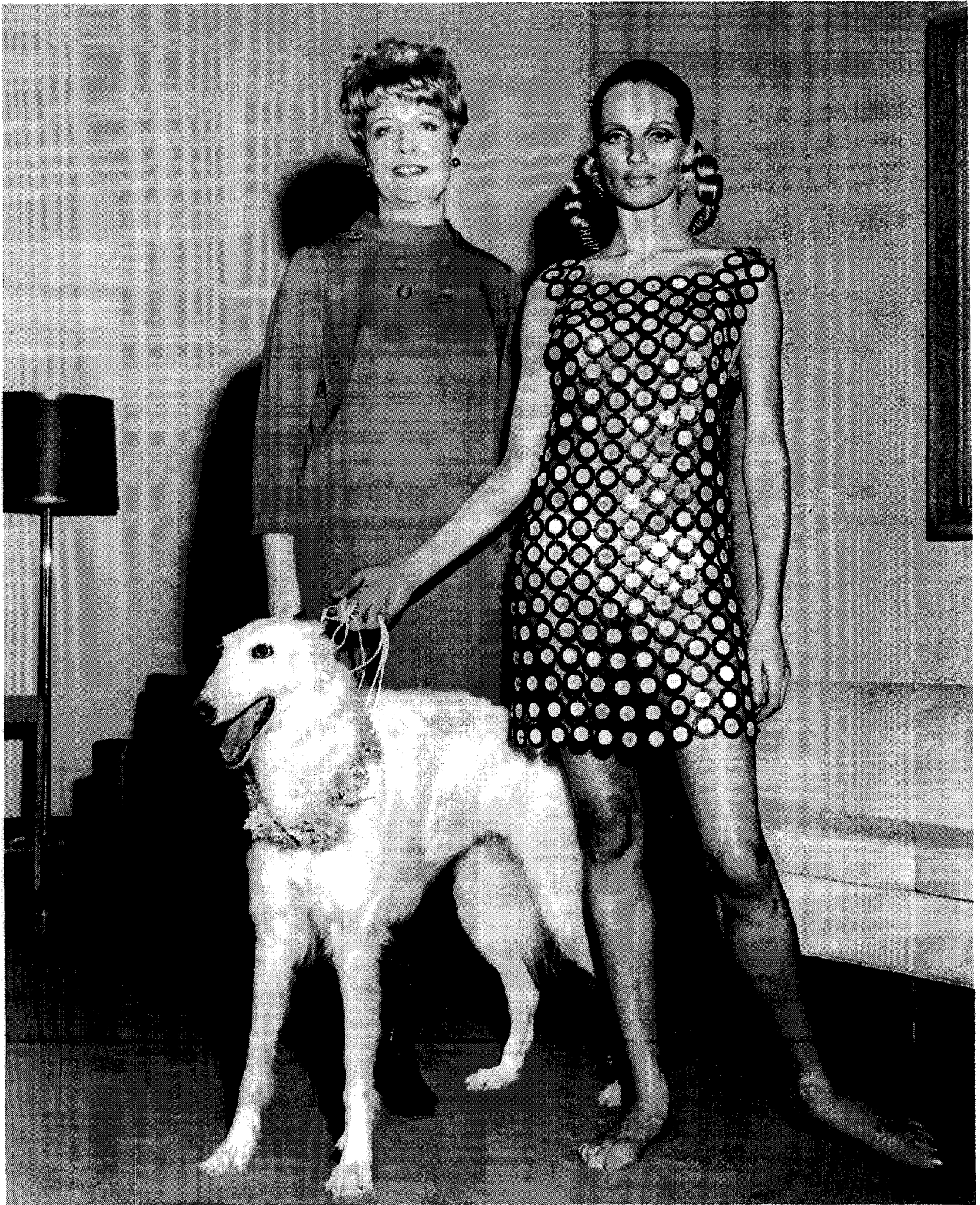


254









SPRING & SUMMER CATALOGUE

1914

No 62



THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES ALL OVER CANADA SEND TO EATON'S REGULARLY FOR THEIR HOUSEHOLD AND WEARING NEEDS

OUR OWN FACTORIES CONNECT THE CONSUMER WITH THE PRODUCER THUS SAVING YOU ALL MIDDLEMEN'S PROFITS

OUR MOTTO THE GREATEST GOOD TO THE GREATEST NUMBER

VANCOUVER, B.C.

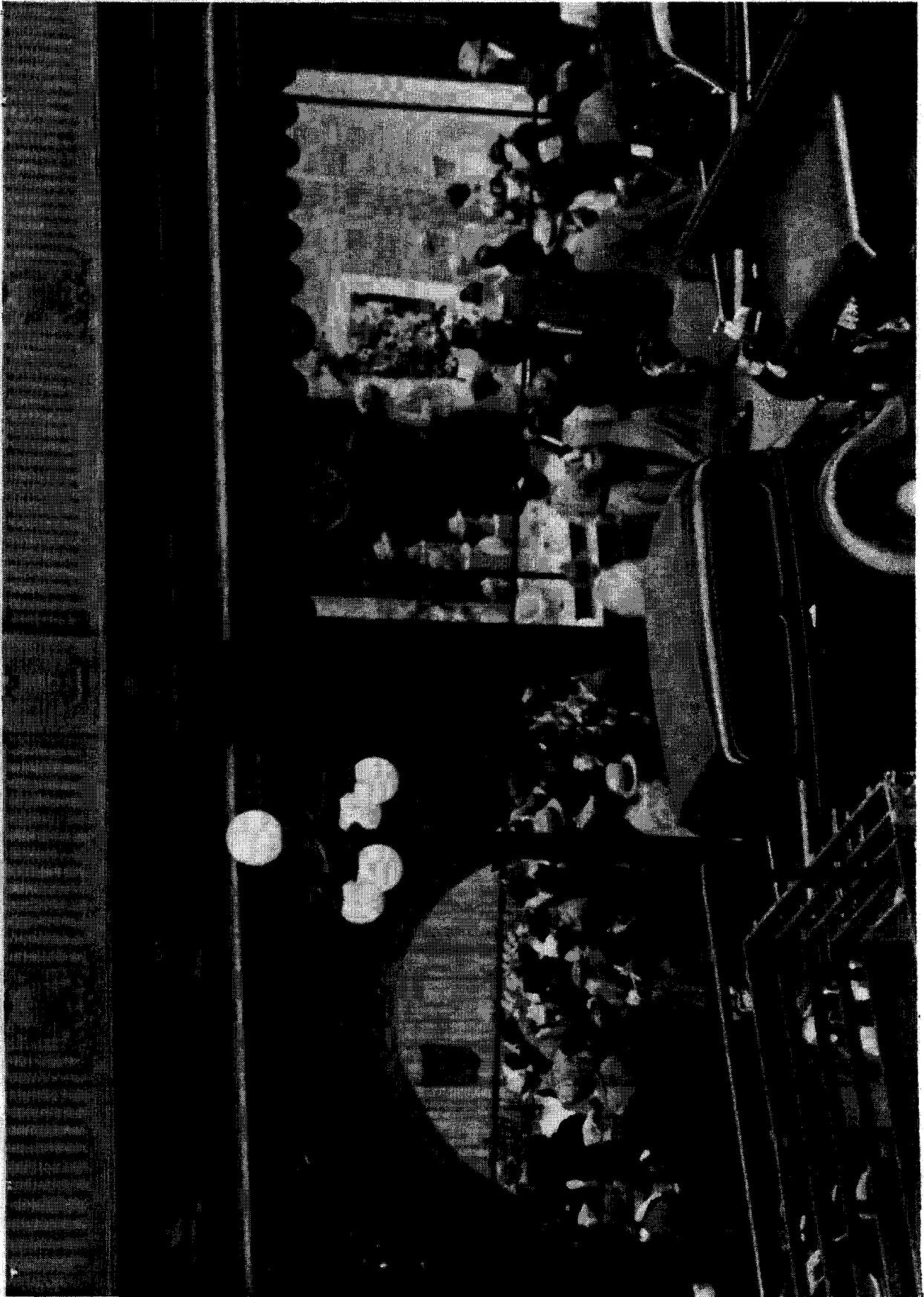
HALIFAX, N.S.

EATON'S MAIL ORDER SYSTEM COVERS CANADA FROM SEA TO SEA

THE T. EATON CO. LIMITED.

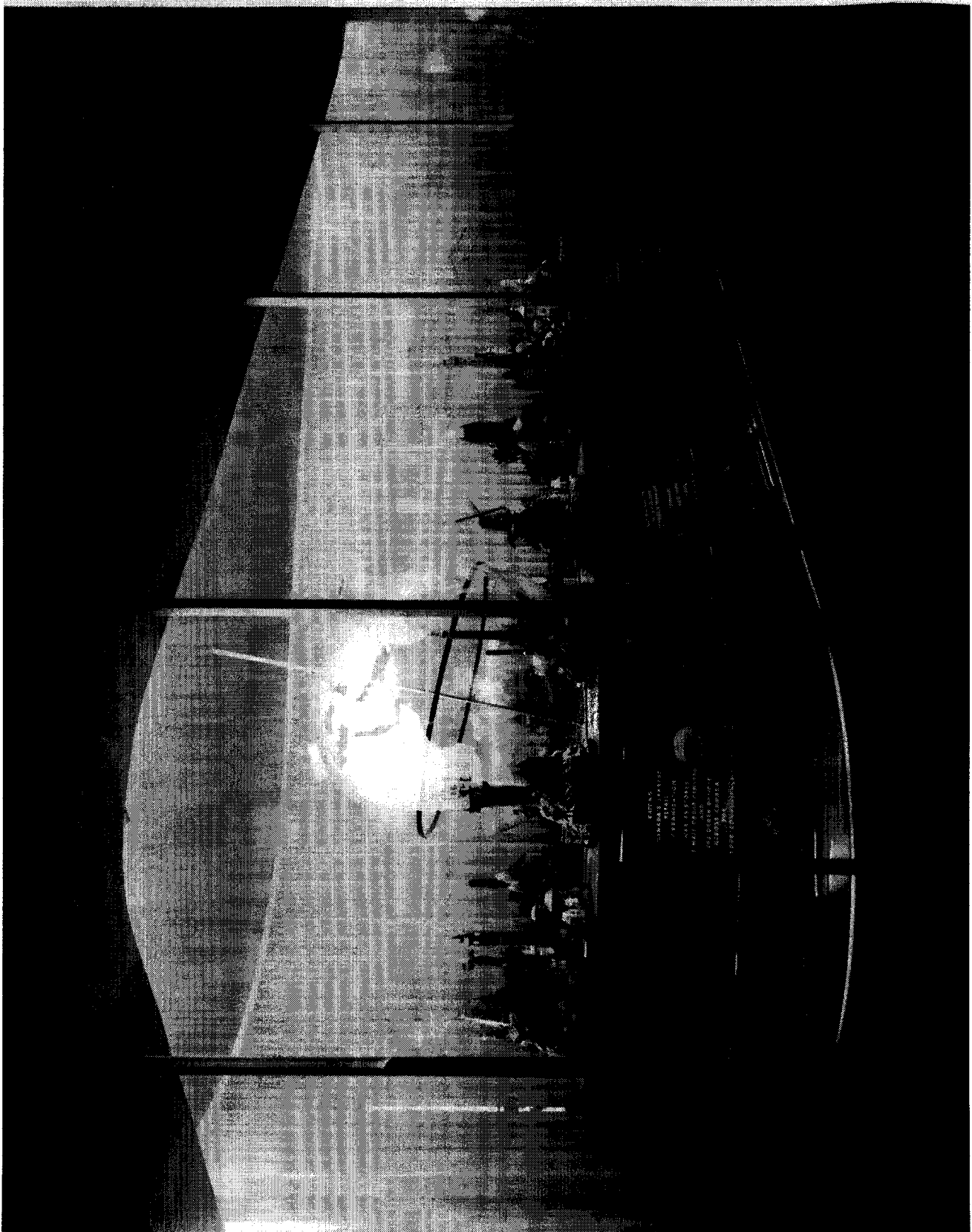
190 YONGE ST. TORONTO, CANADA

Our Buying Offices in London & Paris keep us supplied with the latest and most approved styles. Money returned if the goods are not perfectly satisfactory. That guarantee covers every mail order purchase you make.









## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations were used in the endnotes:

- AO: Archives of Ontario
- F: Fonds (unit of archival material, in this case, the T. Eaton Records Fonds)
- S: Series (sub-unit of archival material)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. Archives and newspapers

Archives of Ontario, Toronto. T. Eaton Records (Fonds 229).

*The Gazette* (Montreal)

*The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

*Mirror* (Montreal)

*Ottawa Citizen*

*La Presse* (Montreal)

### 2. Books, articles, and unpublished manuscripts.

Adburgham, Alison. *Yesterday's Shopping: The Army and Navy Stores Catalogue 1907; a facsimile of the Army & Navy Co-operative Society's 1907 issue of Rules of the Society and price list of articles sold at the stores.* Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969.

Allen, G.C. *A Short Economic History of Modern Japan 1867-1937, with a Supplementary Chapter on Economic Recovery and Expansion 1945-1960.* 2<sup>nd</sup> rev'd. ed.. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962.

Amyot, Chantal and Willis, John. *Country Post: The Rural Postal Service in Canada, 1880 to 1945.* Mercury Series CPM no. 1. Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2003 (forthcoming).

Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

- Arrouye, Jean. "L'imaginaire de la route américaine." *Revue française d'études américaines* 48-49 (April-July 1991): 321-30.
- Ashcroft, Bill; Griffiths, Gareth; and Tiffin, Helen. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Barzun, Jacques. "Cultural History as a Synthesis." In *The Varieties of History from Voltaire to the Present*, pp. 387-402. Edited by Fritz Stern. New York: Vintage Books, 1956, rev'd. ed., 1972.
- Bassett, John M. *Timothy Eaton*. Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975.
- Batts, Miaso. "Eaton's and Its Catalogues: An Expression of Canadian Social History." *Costume* 7 (1973): 68-69.
- Becker, Howard S. *Exploring Society Photographically*. Evanston: Mary and Leigh Black Gallery, 1981.
- Belton, Robert J. *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture*. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2001.
- Benson, Susan Porter. *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Cultural Criticism: A Primer of Key Concepts*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 1995.
- Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Random House, 1980; reprint ed., New York, Vintage International, 1991.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972.
- Black, Errol. "The Struggle against Eaton's Moves to Manitoba." *Canadian Dimension* 20, 1 (1986): 9-11.

- Boily, H el ene. "Art, artisanat et exotisme: Magasiner des expositions." *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 31-33.
- Bolton, Richard, ed. *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989.
- Bosnitch, Katherine Irene. "A Little on the Wild Side: Eaton's Prestige Fashion Advertising Published in the Montreal 'Gazette', 1952—1972." M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 2000.
- Breazeale, Kenon. "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer." *Signs* 20, 1 (Autumn 1994): 1-22.
- Brett, Katherine B. "Notes on Fashion in Costume." In *A Shopper's View of Canada's Past: Pages from Eaton's Catalogues, 1886-1930*, pp. x-xiv. By G. de T Glazebrook, Katherine B. Brett, and Judith McEvel. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969.
- Breward, Christian. "Femininity and Consumption: The Problem of the Late Nineteenth-Century Fashion Journal." *Journal of Design History* 7, 2 (1994): 71-89.
- Bridle, Augustus. "Sir John Eaton." In *Sons of Canada: Short Stories of Characteristic Canadians*, pp. 131-37. Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1916.
- Bunce, Michael. *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Burton, Antoinette. Review of *Imperialism at Home*, by Susan Meyer and *The Politics of Home*, by Rosemary Marangoly George. *Social History* 23, 1 (Jan. 1998):126.
- Busby, Linda J. and Leichty, Greg. "Feminism and Advertising in Traditional and Nontraditional Women's Magazines." *Journalism Quarterly* 70, 2 (Summer, 1993): 247-264.
- Chase, John. "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture." *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Aug. 1991): 211-24.

- Cobon, Linda; O'Donnell, Lorraine; Belton, Tom; Heald, Carolyn; and Weiler, Larry. "Preliminary Inventory of the T. Eaton Records." 6 vols. Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1990.
- Cohn, David L. *The Good Old Days: A History of American Morals and Manners as Seen through the Sears, Roebuck Catalogs 1905 to the Present*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940.
- Cole, Catherine. "Caveats in the Use of Corporate Literature by Costume Historians," *Material History Review* 34 (Fall 1991): 1-12.
- Collins, Michael. *Towards Post-Modernism: Decorative Arts and Design since 1851*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987.
- Comeau, Michelle. "Les grands magasins de la rue Sainte-Catherine à Montréal : des lieux de modernisation, d'homogénéisation et de différenciation des modes de consommation." *Material History Review* 41 (Spring 1995): 58-68.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "L'Enfant courtisé: Santa Claus entre le commerce et la magie." *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 22-25.
- Cook, Lauren J., Yamin, Rebecca and McCarthy, John P. "Shopping as Meaningful Action: Toward a Redefinition of Consumption in Historical Archaeology." *Historical Archaeology* 30, 4 (1996): 60-66.
- Cooke, Lynn and Wollen, Peter, eds. *Visual Display: Culture beyond Appearances*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995.
- Cooley, Nicole. "Ideology and the Portrait: Recovering the 'Silent Image of Woman' in the Work of Julia Margaret Cameron." *Women's Studies* 24 (1995): 369-84.
- Cortese, Anthony J. *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990.

- Cruikshank, Ken and Bouchier, Nancy B. "The pictures are great but the text is a bit of a downer...' Ways of Seeing and the Challenge of Exhibiting Critical History." *Canadian Historical Review* 80, 1 (March 1999): 96-113.
- Culbertson, Margaret. "Mail-Order House and Plan Catalogues in the United States, 1876-1930." *Art Documentation* 11, 1 (Spring 1992): 17-20.
- Damon-Moore, Helen. *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910*. Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1994.
- Davis, Angela E., "Brigden's and the Eaton's Catalogue: Business and Art in Winnipeg 1914-1940." Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Society Conference, Winnipeg, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Hothouse of Canadian Art." *Beaver* 68, 1 (1988): 37-46.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Art and Work: A Social History of Labour in the Canadian Graphic Arts Industry to the 1940s*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.
- Davis, Shane Adler. "Fine Cloths on the Altar: The Commodification of Late-Nineteenth Century France." *Art Journal* 48 (Spring 1989): 85-89.
- de Sève, Andrée-Anne. "Hourra! Le catalogue Eaton est arrivé!" in *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 18-21.
- Dennis, Thelma. "Eaton's Catalogue: Furnishings for Rural Alberta, 1886-1930." *Alberta History* 37, 2 (Spring 1989): 21-31.
- Ditchett, S.H. "Eaton's of Canada: A Unique Institution of Extraordinary Magnitude." New York: *Dry Goods Economist* (1923).
- Donegan, Rosemary. "The Iconography of Labour: An Overview of Canadian Materials." *Archivaria* 27 (Winter 1988-89): 35-56.

- Dubinsky, Karen. "Niagara through Women's Eyes: Gender, Race and the Traveller."  
Paper presented at the 18th International Congress of Historical Sciences,  
Montréal, August, 1995.
- Duby, Georges, and Perrot, Michelle, eds. *Images de femmes*. Under the direction of  
Georges Duby. Paris: Plon, 1992.
- Duby, Georges, and Perrot, Michelle, gen. eds. *A History of Women in the West*. 5 vols.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Eaton, Flora McCrea. *Memory's Wall: The Autobiography of Flora McCrea Eaton*.  
Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1956.
- Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the  
Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976.
- Forbes, Susan Leslie. "The Influence of the Social Reform Movement and T.E.  
Company's Business Practices in the Leisure of Eaton's Female Employees during  
the Early Twentieth Century." PhD Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1999.
- Forceville, Charles. Review of *The Discourse of Advertising*, by Guy Cook. *Word &  
Image* 11, 1 (Jan. -Mar. 1995): 103-05.
- Fox, Bonnie J. "Selling the Mechanized Household: 70 Years of Ads in Ladies Home  
Journal." *Gender & Society* 4, 1 (March 1990): 25-40.
- Fragar, Ruth. "Sewing Solidarity: The Eaton's Strike of 1912." *Canadian Woman Studies*  
7,3 (Fall 1986):96-98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Eaton Strikes of 1912 and 1934." In  
*Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, pp. 189-228. Edited by  
Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde. Toronto: University of Toronto Press,  
1992.
- Frank, David. "The Labour Stamp: The Image of the Worker on Canadian Postage  
Stamps." *Labour/Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997): 179-94.



- Gannon, Martin J. and associates. *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 17 Countries*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994.
- Gelman, Susan. "Anatomy of a Failed Strike: The T. Eaton Company Lockout of Cloakmakers, 1912." *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 9, 2 (1985): 93-114.
- Glazebrook, G. de T., Brett, Catherine, and McEvel, Judith, *A Shopper's View of Canada's Past*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1969.
- Goldenberg, Suzy. "Eaton's Strike and Boycott." *Canadian Dimension* 19, 2 (1985): 23-25.
- Goodrum, Charles, and Helen Dalrymple. *Advertising in America: The First 200 Years*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990.
- Green, Archie. "Labour Landmarks." *Labor's Heritage* 6,4 (Spring 1995): 26-53.
- Haight, Susan. "Machines in Suburban Gardens: The 1936 T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs." *Material History Review* 44 (Fall 1996): 23-44.
- Harris, Cole. "The Historical Mind and the Practice of Geography." In *Humanistic Geography*, pp. 123-137. Edited by D. Ley and M.S. Samuels. London: Methuen & Co., 1978. Reprinted in *Historical Geography: A Methodological Portrayal*, pp. 285-298. Edited by D. Brooks Green. Savage, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991.
- Hayward, Ann. "Mail-order Catalogues: Research Tools for Material History." *Alberta Museums Review* 12, 2 (1987): 9-11.
- Heaman, E.A. "Taking the World by Show: Canadian Women as Exhibitors to 1900." *Canadian Historical Review* 78, 4 (December 1997): 598-631.

- Heron, Craig and Penfold, Steve. "The Craftsmen's Spectacle: Labour Day Parades in Canada, the Early Years." *Histoire sociale/Social History* 29, 58 (November 1996): 357-90.
- Higgins, Delwyn. "Art Deco, Marketing and the T. Eaton Company Department Stores: 1918-1930." M.A. thesis, York University, 1991.
- Higonnet, Anne. "Femmes et images: Apparences, loisirs, subsistance." In *Histoire de femmes en occident*, vol. 4: *Le XIXe siècle*, pp. 249-276. Series edited by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot; vol. 4 under the direction of Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot. Paris: Plon, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Femmes et images: Représentations." In *Histoire de femmes en occident*, vol. 4: *Le XIXe siècle*, pp. 277-340. Series edited by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot; vol. 4 under the direction of Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot. Paris: Plon, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Women, Images, and Representation." In *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 5: *Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 343-396. Series edited by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot; vol. 4 edited by Françoise Thébaud. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Hilson, Matthew. "Review Article: Class, Consumption and the Public Sphere." *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, 4 (2000): 655-66.
- Hinsley, Curtis M. Review of *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*, by Keith Walden. *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (December 1998), p. 746.
- Hirschmeier, Johannes and Yui, Tsunehiko. *The Development of Japanese Business 1600-1973*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Hollander, Anne. *Sex and Suits*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

- Hooper, Barbara. Review of *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, edited by E. Carter, J. Donald and J. Squires. *Gender, Place and Culture* 2, 1 (March 1995): 121-23.
- Horowitz, David A.. Review of *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939*, by David Monod. EH.Net (electronic list), Sept., 1997.
- Hunt, Linda, ed. *The New Cultural History*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989.
- Idoux, Raymond. "Marchandises en vedette: Eaton et l'imagerie commerciale." *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 48-51.
- James, Cathy L. "Women's History on Film: Requiem for Studio D." *Canadian Historical Review* 80, 1 (March 1999): 93-96.
- Jefferys, C.W. *The Picture Gallery of Canadian History, Vol. 3: 1830 to 1900*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950; reprint ed., 1970.
- Jefferys, James B. *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
- Jenks, Chris. "The Centrality of the Eye in Western Culture: An Introduction." In *Visual Culture*, pp. 1-25. Edited by Chris Jenks. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the *Flâneur*." In *Visual Culture*, pp. 142-160. Edited by Chris Jenks. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Kappeler, Susanne. *The Pornography of Representation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Kealey, Gregory S. and Warrian, Peter, eds. *Essays in Canadian Working Class History*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.

- King, Anthony D. "Cultural Hegemony and Capital Cities." In *Capital Cities: International Perspectives*, pp. 251-270. Edited by John Taylor and Jean G. Lengellé. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993.
- Kracauer, S. *Jacques Offenbach, ou Le secret du second empire*. Translated by Lucienne Astruc. Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1937.
- Labidi, Lilia. "Circulation des femmes musulmanes dans l'espace public et politique formel: Le rôle « Capitale » de Tunis." In *Capital Cities: International Perspectives*, pp. 173-188. Edited by John Taylor and Jean G. Lengellé. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993.
- Lambert, Anne. "Images for Sale: How Eaton's Saw Us." *Branching Out* 4 (Mar.-Apr. 1977):30-33.
- Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism*. New York: Warner Books, 1979.
- Laver, James; concluding chapter by Christina Probert. *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*. New ed. London: Thames and Hudson, 1982.
- Lavin, Maud. *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Leach, William R. "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925." *Journal of American History* 71, 2 (September 1984): 319-42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
- Lears, Jackson. "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930." In *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, pp. 1-38. Edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears. New York, Pantheon Books, 1983.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. New York, BasicBooks, 1994.
- Lessard, Michel. "3e étage! Manteaux et accessoires pour dames! L'ère des grands magasins au Québec." *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 10-16.
- Livingston, James. "Modern Subjectivity and Consumer Culture." In *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 413-29. Edited by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judt. Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Longhurst, Robyn. "The Body and Geography." *Gender, Place and Culture* 2, 1 (March 1995): 97-103.
- Lowe, Graham S. "'The Enormous File': The Evolution of the Modern Office in Early Twentieth-Century Canada." In *The Development of Canadian Capitalism*, pp. 256-72. Edited by Douglas McCalla. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Class, Job and Gender in the Canadian Office." *Labour/Le travail* 10 (Autumn 1982): 11-37.
- Macpherson, Mary-Etta. *Shopkeepers to a Nation: The Eatons*. Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1963.
- Manca, Luigi and Manca, Alessandra, eds. *Gender & Utopia in Advertising: A Critical Reader*. Lisle, Illinois: Procopian Press, 1994.
- Manganaro, Elise Salem. "When Foreign Sells: Exotica in American TV Ads of the Eighties and Nineties" In *Advertising and Culture: Theoretical Perspectives*, pp. 11-27. Edited by. Mary Cross (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.
- Marcus, Leonard S. *The American Store Window*. New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1978.
- Martin, Ann Smart. "Makers, Buyers and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework." *Winterthur Portfolio* 28 (Summer/Autumn 1993): 141-57.

- Maynard, Fredelle Bruser. *Raisins and Almonds*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1972.
- McCalla, Douglas, "Introduction." In *The Development of Canadian Capitalism*, pp. 1-9. Edited by Douglas McCalla. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1990.
- McCann, L.D. "Heartland and Hinterland: A Framework for Regional Analysis." In *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada*, pp. 3-35. Edited by L.D. McCann. Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1982.
- McCauley, Elizabeth Anne. *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994.
- McClintock, Anne. "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising." In *Travellers Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, pp. 131-54. Edited by George Robertson et. al. London: Routledge, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).
- McCullagh, Janice. "Image to Collage, Part Two: Fashion," *Arts Magazine* 60, 5 (January 1986): 74-77.
- McDermott, Patricia. "The Eaton's Strike: We Wouldn't Have Missed It for the World!" In *Women Challenging Unions*, pp. 23-43. Edited by Linda Briskin and Patricia McDermott. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993
- McGovern, Charles. "Consumption and Citizenship in the United States, 1900-1940." In *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judt. Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- McKay, Shona. "A Little on the Wild Side: The Sixties Advertising of Eaton's Montreal." *Applied Arts* 8, 4 (Nov./Dec. 1993): 26-28.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1951; reprint ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

- McQueen, Rod. *The Eatons: The Rise and Fall of Canada's Royal Family*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1998.
- Miller, Daniel. *A Theory of Shopping*. Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Miller, Michael B. *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Monod, David. Review of *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store*, by Joy Santink, in *Canadian Historical Review* 72 (March 1991), p. 108.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ontario Retailers in the Early Teentieth Century: Dismantling the Social Bridge." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association New Series* vol. 4 (1993): 207-227.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Bay Days: The Managerial Revolution and the Hudson's Bay Company Department Stores 1912-1939." *Historical Papers* (Canadian Historical Association) 1996: 173-224.
- Monteyne, David P. "The Construction of Buildings and Histories: Hudson's Bay Company Department Stores, 1912-26." Master of Advanced Studies in Architecture thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995.
- Morrisette, George. *Finding Mom at Eaton's*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1981.
- Nasmith, George. *Timothy Eaton*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1923.
- Naud, Élizabéth. "Pour oublier la crise: le 9<sup>e</sup> chez Eaton." *Cap-aux-Diamants* 40 (Winter 1995): 42-44.
- Naylor, R.T. "Trends in the Business History of Canada, 1867-1914." In *Canadian Economic History: Classic and Contemporary Approaches*, pp. 127-40. Edited by M.H. Watkins and H.M. Grant. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993.
- Nelles, H.V. *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

- Newman, Peter C. *Merchant Princes: Company of Adventurers Volume III*. Toronto: Viking, 1991.
- Nickles, Shelley. "Detroit Envy: Style Obsolescence in the Household Appliance Industry." Research Seminar Paper #41, Center for the History of Business, Technology, and Society, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, DE. Feb. 13, 1997.
- O'Barr, William M. *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994.
- O'Connor, Eileen. "Gender and Dress: Exploring Processes of Change through a Consumer Model." Paper presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association, St. Catherines, June 1996.
- O'Donnell, Lorraine. "Towards Total Archives: The Form and Meaning of Photographic Records." *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 105-18.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Review of Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (Routledge, 1995), in *Labour/Le travail* 40 (Fall 1997): 310-12.
- O'Donnell, Lorraine; Rollins, Jan; and Dirks, John. "Inventory of the T. Eaton Records, F 229. Volume VII: Graphic Material." Toronto: Archives of Ontario, 1991.
- Orlove, Benjamin, ed.. *The Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
- Orlove, Benjamin and Bauer, Arnold J. "Giving Importance to Imports." In *The Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America*, pp. 1-30. Edited by Benjamin Orlove. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Palmer, Bryan. "Discordant Music:" Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America." *Labour/Le Travailleur* 3 (1978): 5-62.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction." In *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History*, pp. 9-14. Edited by Bryan D. Palmer. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986.



- Palumbo-Liu, David and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. *Streams of Cultural Capital: Transnational Cultural Studies*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Parr, Joy. *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Patton, Phil. "The Big Book: Put out to Pasture." *I.D. [Industrial Design]* 40, 3 (May-June 1993): 21.
- Pedersen, Diana, comp., *Changing Women, Changing History: A Bibliography of the History of Women in Canada*. Toronto: Green Dragon Press, c. 1992.
- Pedersen, Diana and Martha Phemister. "Women and Photography in Ontario, 1839-1929: A Case Study of the Interaction of Gender and Technology." *Scientia Canadensis* IX, 1 (June 1985): 27-52.
- Peel, Bruce. "Emblems of Canada," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985), vol. 1 pp. 555-57.
- Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Missing Women: Rethinking Early Thoughts on Images of Women." In *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, pp. 202-219. Edited by Carol Squiers. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Painting, Feminism, History." In *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, pp. 138-176. Edited by Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- Porteous, J. Douglas. *Landscapes of the Mind: Worlds of Sense and Metaphor*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Viking, 1985.

- Poulter, Gillian. "The Construction of 'Official' History in *The Canadian Pictorial and Illustrated War News*: 'A Complete Letterpress and Illustrated History of the Late North-West Rebellion.'" Paper presented to the annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association, August 1995.
- Prentice, Alison; Bourne, Paula; Cuthbert Brandt, Gail; Light, Beth; Mitchinson, Wendy and Black, Naomi. *Canadian Women: A History*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988.
- Radner, Hilary. *Shopping Around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
- Raibmon, Paige. "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World's Fair." *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 2 (June 2000): 157-90.
- Rapport, Nigel. Review of *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain*, by Frank Mort. H-SAE (electronic list), April, 1997
- Roberts, Mary Louise. "Gender, Consumption and Commodity Culture." *American Historical Review* 103, 3 (June 1998): 817-44.
- Romain, Lawrence. *A Guide to American Trade Catalogues, 1744-1900*. New York: Dover Publications, 1990 (reprint of 1960, New York, R.R. Bowker).
- Rooney, Frances. "Edith S. Watson: Photographing Women in Rural Canada." *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 11 (Spring 1995).
- Rutherford, Robert. "Canada's August Festival: Communitas, Liminality and Social Memory." *Canadian Historical Review* 77,2 (June 1996): 221-49.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Framing Fatherhood in Transition: Domesticity, Consumerism and Resistance Narratives." Unpublished paper presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Historical Association, Quebec City, June 2001.

- Sack, Robert David. *Place, Modernity, and the Consumer's World: A Relational Framework for Geographical Analysis*. 1992.
- Samuel, Raphael. "Reading the Signs: Part II." *History Workshop* 33 (Spring 1992): 220-51.
- Sangster, Joan. "Oral History." In *Teaching Women's History: Challenges and Solutions*, pp. 229-31. Edited by Bettina Bradbury, Ruby Heap, Franca Iacovetta, Kathryn McPherson, Bina Mehta, Cecilia Morgan and Joan Sangster. Athabasca, Alberta: Athabasca University, 1995.
- Santink, Joy Lilian. *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of the Department Store* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1989).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- Schlereth, Thomas J. *Cultural History & Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990.
- Sellers, Susan. "How Long Has This Been Going On? *Harper's Bazaar*, *Funny Face* and the Construction of the Modernist Woman," *Visible Language* 29, 1 (1995): 13-35.
- Shields, Rob. *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Slesin, Susan, Cliff, Stafford, Rozensztroch, Daniel and de Chabaneix, Gilles. *Japanese Style: A Little Style Book*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1987.
- Smith, Gaye. *Trade Catalogues: A Hundred Years, 1850-1949: An Exhibition Catalogue*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University Library, 1992.
- Smith, Janice. "Content Analysis of Children's Clothing in Eaton's Catalogues and Selected Canadian Museums 1890-1920." M.Sc. thesis, University of Alberta, 1991.

- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977.
- Stanford Friedman, Susan. "Beyond White and Other: Relationality and Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse." *Signs* 21, 1 (Autumn 1995): 1-49.
- Steel, Valerie. *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Stephenson, William. *The Store that Timothy Built*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1969.
- Strange, Carolyn and Loo, Tina. "Spectacular Justice: The Circus on Trial and the Trial as Circus, Picton, 1903." *Canadian Historical Review* 77,2 (June 1996): 159-84.
- Strong-Boag, Veronica. *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939*. Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60." *Canadian Historical Review* 72, 4 (1991): 471-504.
- Sufrin, Eileen. *The Eaton Drive: The Campaign to Organize Canada's Largest Department Store, 1948-1952*. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982.
- Symons, Gladys L. "Ethnicity, Career and Gender: Managerial Women in France and Canada." *Etudes canadiennes/Canadian Studies* 21, 2 (December 1986): 137-46.
- Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Taylor, Graham D. and Baskerville, Peter A. *A Concise History of Business in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Taylor, John. *A Dream of England: Landscape, Photography and the Tourist's imagination*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.

- The Scribe [pseud.]. *Golden Jubilee, 1869-1919: A Book to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of The T. Eaton Co., Limited.* Toronto and Winnipeg: The T. Eaton Co. Limited, 1919.
- Tickner, Lisa. *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1987.
- Tindall, George Brown. *America: A Narrative History* Vol. 2. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984.
- Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann and Prentice, Alison, eds. *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.
- Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann and Prentice, Alison, eds. *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History Volume 2.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974.
- Vipond, Mary. "The Image of Women in Mass Circulation Magazines in the 1920s." In *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History*, pp.116-124. Edited by Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.
- von Werlhof, Claudia. "The Proletarian is Dead: Long Live the Housewife!" In *Women: The Last Colony*, pp. 168-81. Edited by Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof. London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1988.
- Walden, Keith. "Speaking Modern: Language, Culture and Hegemony in Grocery Window Displays, 1907-1920." *Canadian Historical Review* 70, 3 (September 1989): 285-310.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

- Ward, Peter W. *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978.
- Watkins, Mel. "Canadian-American Economic Relations." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 66, 3 (Summer 1967): 382-94.
- White, Karen R. "Emerging Modernism in Canadian Domestic Architecture: John M. Lyle's Drawings for 'Highfields' and Their Context in the Development of the Idea of the Modern House in Canada, 1935-1936." M.A. thesis, York University, 1995.
- Williams, Rosiland. *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. N.p.: Virago Press, 1985; reprint ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Witkowski, Terrence H. Review of *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, by Grant McCracken. *Winterthur Portfolio* 24 (Spring 1989): 79-81.
- Wright, Cynthia. "'The Most Prominent Rendezvous of the Feminine Toronto': Eaton's College Street and the Organization of Shopping in Toronto, 1920-1950." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption." In *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, pp. 229-60. Edited by Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. Reprinted as pp. 288-310 in Chad Gaffield, ed., *Constructing Modern Canada: Readings in Post-Confederation History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994).
- Wynn, Graeme. "Maps and Dreams of Nationshood: A (Re)View of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*." *Canadian Historical Review* 76, 3 (1995): 482-510.