

placing it in context with other collections of Osgoode correspondence. These letters were presumably all part of one larger collection later dispersed by sale, eventually becoming gifts to the three archives that now hold Osgoode correspondence — the National Archives of Canada, the Archives of Ontario, and the Law Society of Upper Canada Archives. Publication of these letters renders them more accessible for reference purposes as researchers use the larger collections at these archives.

The major portion of this correspondence was bound into volumes organized alphabetically by correspondent; the letters are published in that order. This arrangement, although initially disconcerting to the chronologically minded reader, makes good sense within the context of referring these letters to the other collections of Osgoode correspondence. The addition of a chronological index at the end of the correspondence helps to establish signposts as needed for the reader.

Some final comments worth noting about this publication include the following: the correspondence is published on acid-free paper in accordance with ACA guidelines on archival publications; the method of citing the Osgoode correspondence at the Archives of Ontario is a warning to my institution to prepare a standard citation guide for researchers; and, finally, thank you for the ‘elegant renderings’ of curious French verse discovered by young Oxford graduates on tour and recorded now for posterity in published form.

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Archives of Ontario

Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store. JOY L. SANTINK. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. xii, 319 p. ISBN 0-8020-2720-2 \$35.00.

The time is ripe for a new and scholarly history of Eaton’s. With the exception of Eileen Sufrin’s *The Eaton Drive* (1982) which deals specifically with the attempt to unionize Eaton’s in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the last comprehensive history of “Canada’s Department Store” was written over twenty years ago, a story frustrating to read with neither footnotes nor index. William Stephenson’s *The Store That Timothy Built* was produced for the company’s centennial celebrations in 1969 more as a catalogue of anecdotes and great accomplishments than as an erudite study of the company’s operations. Several other biographies of Timothy Eaton and historical sketches of the company were published before mid-century, but again these were written from a whiggish perspective showing the inevitable progress of the store.

Joy Santink’s book examines the early years of the department store beginning with Timothy Eaton’s emigration from Ireland to Ontario. The youngest child in a family of nine, Timothy was apprenticed to a shopkeeper in Ballymena, County Antrim, before emigrating in 1854 first to Glen Williams northwest of Toronto, and then to Kirkton, a tiny hamlet about ten miles west of St. Marys in rural Perth County. It was in Kirkton that he established his first dry goods business in partnership with his brother, James. After four years there, he moved on to St. Marys where another brother, Robert, had already established a dry goods business several years earlier. By 1869 Timothy’s growing ambition carried him off to Toronto, then a burgeoning metropolis of nearly 70,000 people, where he founded his famous store on Yonge Street. Santink traces the development of the store through its early years from a small operation selling about a

quarter of a million dollars worth of merchandise in its first year to a major employer of nearly seven thousand people selling twenty-two million dollars worth of goods by the time Timothy died in 1907. She looks at the gradual departmentalization of the store and the resultant bureaucratization and decentralization of authority.

The last chapter is a consideration of the factors responsible for Timothy Eaton's phenomenal success in the retail trade. Was it Timothy's own business acumen, or was it simply a matter of circumstances? Santink argues both. Late nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization improved the standard of living and increased the number of people earning a regular wage. These changes resulted in the "democratization of luxury," one of the primary motifs developed throughout Santink's book. The new urban consumers wanted to spend their money on cheap, quality merchandise; Timothy Eaton was one of the first businessmen to gear his business specifically towards this emerging, urban working class. His ability to adopt innovative ideas in merchandising, such as the mail order catalogue and bargain Fridays, for example, and his meticulous accounting practices resulted in his continued success when so many others failed.

That Frederik S. Eaton, chairman of the company, wrote the foreword to this book might lead one to prejudge Santink's work to be of little investigative consequence. However, Santink dislodges some old myths that have followed the company around for generations. For starters, she avoids repeating the old fable that Timothy Eaton was a refugee from the great Irish potato famine. One glimpse at the photograph of his family's substantial two-storey Ulster home belies that inaccuracy. Like many Irish, his emigration was likely spurred on by the earlier presence in Canada of friends and relatives. As well, the old fabrication that Timothy Eaton was the first merchant to sell for cash only at one fixed price is completely discredited. Other retailers in the United States and Canada had already adopted this policy and certainly were not motivated by altruism as Stephenson and others maintain. Furthermore, despite his strong Methodist convictions, usually recited as the source of his admirable business ethics, he practised "mild deception" (p. 134) in his advertising. For example, he announced that he purchased and sold on a cash basis only; in fact, Santink draws upon the papers of Hamilton wholesalers, the Buchanan family, to show that he purchased like his competitors on credit.

Despite the somewhat surprising deflating of Eaton mythology, anyone looking for a condemnation of the company's labour practices will not find it in this book. Instead, Santink attempts to put the situation into context by highlighting similar practices in other stores such as Simpson's, Macy's, and Wanamakers, and rather understatedly sums up by remarking that "Timothy Eaton manifested some of the typical attitudes of Victorian paternalism" (p. 187).

Many archivists will find the lack of detail regarding the administrative history of Eaton's somewhat disappointing; however, the author's purpose is "to lift this study above the level of institutional history" (p. 4) by focusing on the economic and social context, and this she does very well by drawing upon newspapers and retail journals, municipal records, official government documents and a fairly limited secondary literature. As well, there is little new information on Timothy Eaton himself; Santink is dependent upon previous biographies. However, her use of the details contained therein is somewhat arbitrary. Why does she discredit a likely apocryphal story, recounted in

G.G. Naismith's 1923 biography, that Timothy was forced to sleep under the counter of the Portglenone shop where he apprenticed in Ireland, and then proceed to repeat Naismith's unsupported claim that he often walked the nine miles home to his mother's house in Clogher while the shopkeeper drove by in his carriage?

The appearance of Santink's book coincides with the publication of the inventory to The T. Eaton Records following the donation of these papers to the Archives of Ontario. Santink is the first historian to draw and quote extensively from the Eaton's Archives which were still in the company's hands when she did her research. Accordingly, it must have been a disappointment for her to learn that there were more papers available at the Archives of Ontario than what she examined at Eaton's. Most series of administrative records now available were warehoused in dead storage at the time.

Not only does Santink miss some early material now at the Archives of Ontario (although, to be fair, her conclusions are still valid), but her citations are no longer accurate given that the papers are now organized into proper series. The former Eaton's Archives consisted mainly of items the company archivists regarded as interesting and worthy of keeping in their idiosyncratic subject files, and the result is some rather cryptic citations in Santink's notes. Where the Eaton's archivists could readily have laid their hands on an item such as "Timothy Eaton, Memorandum 1857-1866" or "Bank reference from the Commercial Bank of Canada, 1864-7," the archivists at the provincial archives responsible for the papers now organized into 228 series may have some digging to do. Of course Santink cannot be blamed for such shortcomings. Her research was carried out several years ago for the preparation of a doctoral thesis. It is hardly her fault if the administrative responsibility shifted just at the moment when her work was brought before the public. Indeed, more problems are created for the Archives of Ontario and its clientele than for the author.

Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store is worthy of attention and one can only hope that someone will tap the resources of the T. Eaton Records to carry the story through to the present.

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Archives of Ontario

Discerning Tastes: Montreal Collectors, 1880-1920. JANET M. BROOKE. Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1989. 254 p. ISBN 2-89192-123-2 \$40.00.

This handsome catalogue was published to accompany an exhibition by the same title which took place at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts from December 1989 to February 1990. Its main thrust was an examination of the collecting of nineteenth-century European painting in Montreal, between 1880 and 1920. R.H. Hubbard's study of collecting in Canada, published in 1962, has already covered the same material but in less detail (*European Paintings in Canadian Collections II: Modern Schools*). The present in-depth study has been long overdue and serves not only to give us an excellent picture of this era but also to remind us of the misconceptions that have been repeated. The most commonly held opinion of turn-of-the-century Montreal collections was the one pronounced by A.Y. Jackson in his autobiography:

Instead of purchasing Pissarros, Sisleys, Manets, Cezannes, and Renoirs, they [Montreal collectors] played safe and bought Dutch paintings at high prices.