

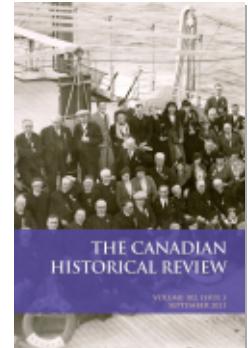


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Canoe and Canvas: Life at the Encampments of the American Canoe Association, 1880–1910 by Jessica Dunkin (review)

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Canoe and Canvas: Life at the Encampments of the American Canoe Association, 1880–1910. Jessica Dunkin. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019. Pp. 312, \$67.00 cloth

Canoe and Canvas is a social history of the annual campouts held by the American Canoe Association (ACA), a cross-border organization that provided a focus for settler canoeing enthusiasm in the eastern United States and Canada at the turn of the century. Jessica Dunkin's analysis focuses on the lived experience of the attendees: the way in which place was constructed and policed at campsites in northern New York and at the border and "how gender, class, and race shaped the social, cultural, and physical landscapes of the ACA encampments" (6). Dunkin draws on a wealth of materials available in the papers of the ACA, including personal scrapbooks, administrative documents, and photographs as well as supplementary materials at the Canadian Canoe Museum, the Archives of Ontario, and private collections. Her analytical approach, based on Foucauldian ideas of the archive and Henri Lefebvre's narrative of the construction of place, is both revelatory and readable.

Dunkin points out that she is "less interested in the representational qualities of the canoe" than in "the social formations that have emerged in and around the canoe" (9). This approach allows her, as she says, to challenge the nationalist narratives of the canoe common in Canadian scholarship. Instead of emphasizing the Indigenous origins of the canoe, ACA members "whitened" (12–13) it by emphasizing its association with the popular journey across Europe by "Rob Roy" MacGregor, whose 1866 book *A Thousand Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe* is frequently credited with founding the sport of canoeing in the United Kingdom. They also embraced the supposed improvements achieved by modern construction techniques (rib and batten and lapstrake) and materials (wood, tin, copper) as well as innovations like enclosed decks and purpose-built sailing apparatuses. While ACA members may have been motivated by anti-modernist ideas of a restorative adventure in the wilderness, they had little interest in being reborn as their primitive selves. Instead, they were looking to socialize with like-minded middle-class urbanites and to compete for honours in amateur races.

Dunkin describes how careful planning in the off-season created memorable experiences for the attendees of the annual encampments. Some participants paddled to the meet, but, more often, they shipped their canoes by rail, with an unlucky member of the group assigned to sit in the baggage car and guard against any rough handling of the fragile boats by the porters. Steamships and carters ferried the baggage from the train station to the campsite, where paddlers were greeted at a formal registration tent, with flags flying. Club uniforms were de rigueur, and canvas tents were set up on raised platforms with cots, rugs, and blankets. Paddling excursions to local beauty spots and canoe parades were popular parts of the program, and evening entertainment was sometimes provided in the mess tent. The races were limited to members (to discourage professionals) and took place in the second week of the gathering, with events for women taking their place among the novelty races.

The ACA yearly encampments took place at fifteen different sites between 1880 and 1910, eventually settling at a permanent site on Sugar Island in the St. Lawrence River. Locations were chosen to provide easy access by rail or steamboat, privacy, prepared camping sites, an appropriate canoe racing course, and ample space for over four hundred attendees. A separate “ladies camp” for female canoeists and married couples was provided at a distance from the “main camp,” as if to reinforce women’s status as “associate,” rather than full, members of the association. Dunkin also describes the way in which the campsite was “policed” in order to enforce rules against drinking, quiet hours, and other middle-class norms of “respectability.”

While poor, Black, and Indigenous canoeists were excluded from membership by both the application process and the yearly fees, they frequently attended the encampments nonetheless as servants, chefs, carpenters, and labourers. As Dunkin relates, the work of these people was mainly invisible to the attendees, who nonetheless depended upon it. The exceptions, including a “coon band” that appeared as entertainment, ensured that marginalized peoples appeared in roles that reinforced existing social and racial hierarchies.

This book is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship that reconsiders the history of sport and recreation from critical anti-colonial and anti-racist viewpoints. Dunkin’s work is carefully researched, intelligently presented, and a pleasure to read.

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A Hotly Contested Affair: Hockey in Canada. The National Game in Documents.
Andrew C. Holman, ed. Toronto: Champlain Society, 2020. Pp. 381, \$99.00
cloth, \$34.95 paper

Given the significant amount of time, energy, capital, media attention, and community investment that surrounds sport in contemporary life, it is gratifying that Canadian historians over the last few decades have carefully analyzed and documented sport’s place in our lives over time. Among the major team sports, hockey in Canada has received special attention from scholars through numerous hockey conferences and publications of various sorts, including Andrew Holman and Stephen Hardy’s magisterial *Hockey: A Global History* (University of Illinois Press, 2018), a synthesis of hockey’s development and place on the international sporting stage. This impressive scholarly output has facilitated the introduction of university courses on the game across a number of disciplines and in the fields of cultural and sport studies. Until now, however, there has been not just a limited number but also a complete absence of document collections that would serve as a useful tool for classroom use and provide a provocative introduction to the major issues surrounding hockey’s shifting and contested character. Look no further. *A Hotly Contested Affair* does just that! This collection is a thought-provoking and artfully crafted *tour de force*. The documents range in nature from the earliest origins and evolution of the game to more recent ruminations on its racialized and gendered