The journey of sixteen Canadian women journalists to cover the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis provides the central narrative for Linda Kay's history of the formation of the Canadian Women's Press Club. From archival documents and the journalists' own newspaper reports, Kay pieces together a fascinating, and previously untold story of their train journey through Canada and the United States—a journey that, for the first time, brought together experienced, inexperienced, French, and English women journalists. The journey is a key moment for Canadian journalism, a moment when women journalists came together as a group, and an adventure that sparked an almost century-old press organization.

The book effectively weaves together personal details about the women with historical and political context of the period. At the turn of the century, women journalists were few but still influential. Kay's deft storytelling and extensive detail from a wide range of primary sources make this book read like a page-turner novel. What will happen between these women on the train and at the fair? Can they handle the assignment? Will the differences of experience and language bring these journalists together or reinforce divisions?

The book introduces the journalists with short biographies, though not lingering too long on this topic before moving to the journey itself: boarding the train in Montréal and Toronto; the trepidation of meeting other women journalists; the encounter of French and English women; the experiences at the Fair; and the unusual time at a Republican convention on the way home. Sweet Sixteen relates the successes and failures—personal and professional—of these writers, building a detailed and complex human portrait. Tales of life on the luxurious train car, with complimentary food and drink provided by Canadian National Railway, an experience none of the women had known before, adds levity and atmosphere to the story.

As the train rolls through each chapter, Sweet Sixteen relates anecdotes of life in this period, adds American and Canadian social and political context, and describes the developing relationships between the women. We follow them through the train stations, over the border, and into the World's Fair site. Divisions exist onboard—some women choose to stay in the on-site hotel while others remain in the well-appointed train car; English stay with English, French with French. But the women seem friendly and recognize the pioneering nature of the trip. Using the women's own reports, Kay shows us the buildings and exhibits, including the well-regarded Canada House, and we feel the joy and sorrow of their adventure: racism and xenophobia lurk in some exhibits, but the fairground amusement park raises spirits.

As an illuminating and well-written story, Sweet Sixteen succeeds completely. However, as a work of journalism history, the book is less satisfying. Journalism history in Canada was, until only the past few decades, populated by straightforward narrative accounts of institutions and great men. While Sweet Sixteen sheds light on these im-

---

portant female journalists, it tends to do so with the same traditional approach of straight narrative with little explicit connection to previous writing in the field.

While the book does provide historical context, particularly about the role of women in the period, *Sweet Sixteen* rarely connects with nor builds on the media and journalism history literature. In particular, the story of George Ham—CN’s friendly public relations official who organized the trip—would remind journalism history scholars of the literature on the close connection between newspapers, the telegraph, and the railway. Similarly, journalism education is mentioned occasionally in *Sweet Sixteen*—some of the women thought of themselves as educators. This could have been an opportunity to connect the book to the literature on the rising professionalization of journalism around this time. Of course, the book does touch on the opportunities women received thanks to the rise of newspaper advertising and the “women’s page,” but this is not fully developed. Similarly the growing literature on women and newspapers in early Canada is not explicitly discussed, although it occasionally finds a place in the notes. Such connections could have answered important questions such as: how does this journey, and how do these women fit into, or change, previous thinking on the rise of professional journalism in the age of the commercial newspaper?

Admittedly, such connections may have disrupted or delayed the narrative. For example, would some readers prefer to follow the French journalists driving around downtown St. Louis and becoming disappointed at finding few traces of French history among the dominant German influence? Or would they prefer asides that stop the story to describe how George Ham’s public relations work fits into or modifies the literature on the railway-newspaper relationship? This editorial decision is a difficult one. However, for a monograph from a scholarly press, these omissions reduce the value of the book to scholars of media and journalism history. Others will have to investigate and make those connections for themselves.

*Duncan Koerber*, York University

---

**We have some excellent books awaiting your review to be published in CJC.**

Click on the Books for Review tab on cjc-online.ca’s home page, choose your book, and follow the online instructions. Reviewers can be either faculty members or graduate students. Or, if you are keen to review a particular title that you have encountered and feel would benefit other readers, our Book Review Editors can request a review copy for you from the publisher. They also want to hear from authors. If you have a publication that you think the CJC should review, please contact either *Penelope Ironstone-Catterall* at review_editor@cjc-online.ca or *François Yelle* at redacteur_revue@cjc-online.ca.