

# CULTURAL VALUES REFLECTED IN BUSINESS ARTIFACTS: A REDISCOVERY OF OUR HISTORICAL PAST

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## RÉSUMÉ

*Cet article examine la complexité des objets commerciaux canadiens. En recherchant et en analysant ces objets commerciaux, il nous est possible de percevoir le passé de façon nouvelle et de mieux comprendre le présent. On retrouve parmi ces objets, recouvrant une période de 115 ans, un macaron, des cartons d'allumettes, une étiquette de boîte à cigares, des cartes de commerce, des paquets et des calendriers. Ces objets reflètent les systèmes raciaux, sociaux, économiques, politiques et culturels de notre société.*

Historians are gaining greater appreciation for the utility of business artifacts in their study of society's material culture. In rediscovering business objects, long-lasting and ephemeral, we cannot allow these valuable items to go unnoticed and untapped. These resources can further illuminate, enhance, modify, or even contradict existing written records.

The business object can stimulate new ways of our perceiving the past and our understanding of the present. Researchers, whatever their ilk, must endeavour to delve deeper to understand not only the more obvious meanings of the surface data (identification, description and authentication) but also the deeper qualities (evaluation, interpretation, significance, and the historical context) of the material objects.

By examining the complex layers of meanings "thick" within material objects, we can attain a fuller understanding of our past. Material culture studies continue to add completeness to the written and pictorial descriptions of historical facts. The items themselves are primary resources, not "footnotes to the historical record." Emphasis must be placed on the importance of interweaving find-

ings from original objects to existing information. Dr. Brooke Hindle, former Director of the National Museum of History and Technology, recently stressed the importance of the original object, the source, as a part of our collective memory. Hindle said:

As a source material, the objects of material culture as well as all available information about them must be preserved. They have to be regarded in the same light as archives or manuscript sources ... (Mayo, 2).<sup>1</sup>

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss a number of Canadian business objects that span approximately one hundred years. Analyzed as symbolic presentations used by local and national companies, these artifacts can explain much about society: for example, the level and sophistication of technology, the structure of the economy, the degree of acceptance of racial minorities and, finally, images that reflect the popularity of a topic, subject, and image.<sup>2</sup>

Ames (1984) believed nonverbal communication involved a complex, interacting set of factors; much more than body language, *per se*. Such communication included a broad range of natural, kinetic, and material culture signs and symbols. They consistently and repeatedly played important roles in people's cognitive and affective lives. In his analysis, their communicational roles impacted upon, and influenced, our social roles and our human/interactional tendencies and outcomes. Ames described three identifiable functions related to any business object. (1) The technical function referring to the utilitarian or physical use of the object; (2) the ideotechnic function describing the use of the object in religious and psychological contexts; (3) the sociotechnic function involving the item's use in contexts of social interaction. For example, late nineteenth century business trade cards usually included the name and address of the merchant (utilitarian function). The image used on the card, for example, an image of a rat-eating Chinese male (a psychological function—Chinese eat vermin, they are not like "us") and the item, the advertising trade card, reinforced society's "them" and "us" dichotomy (the sociotechnic function). All three functions, then, were performed by a small giveaway retail trade card.<sup>3</sup>

Marchese (1984) defined material culture as all non-perishable physical objects or non-biodegradable garbage man produces.<sup>4</sup> These material objects, (business items in the present context), are all capable of yielding a considerable amount of information about our present and our past society.

A listing of just a few of the business material objects in the

Echenberg Collection would include containers of various materials, sizes, and uses; in-store and outside signs; catalogues, flyers, posters, countertop displays, bookmarks, blotters, postcards, rulers, measuring cups, labels, button hooks, shoehorns, wall calendars, calendar plates, cigar and cigarette boxes and tins, trade cards, display cabinets, bottle openers, fans, knives, trays, coat hangers, key tags, pencils, pens, swizzle sticks, thermometers, matchbooks, paper bags, ice picks, buttons and toys. Many of the items in the Echenberg Collection and displayed in this exhibition would be categorized as advertising specialty items, giveaways, or business ephemera. These items, usually imprinted with the name and the message of the advertiser, are given away free without any (overt) obligation on the part of the receiver. They were items of some value. Many objects were kept and used over a considerable period of time and the quality and utility of the object could not be too low. As well, novelty, or specialty, items could not be too unusual. Frequency and continuity of the item's use was most desirable in order to build goodwill and to imprint the logo, the brand or company's name into the consumers' minds. The business axiom in all cases where such business items were used was to give the recipient a sign (the company's advertisement) and something of value. With a gift calendar as a giveaway promotional item, the firm obtained exposure for the year.

In 1890s North America, the free calendar, nicely illustrated, became incredibly popular because of the paucity of magazines and the almost complete lack of colour advertising, especially in Canadian periodicals. This new medium, the advertising calendar, was created by Osborne and Murphy in 1889, in Red Oaks, Iowa. An issue of 1 000 copies of the town's new courthouse with boxed advertisements around the picture sold immediately. Herbert H. Bigelow, an Osborne and Murphy calendar salesman, started his own calendar company with partner Hiram D. Brown, in 1896. The rest is history—Brown and Bigelow became the world's largest calendar and specialty advertising company.<sup>5</sup>

In what follows, a few specific examples will help illustrate the potential amount of information "contained" within commonly used business-related products: the giveaway commercial lapel button, the match book cover and the cigar box label.

### **The Lapel Button**

The following example, a lapel button, will help illustrate the potentially deeper and richer meanings and information contained within what most consumers may view as an item of throwaway trivia.

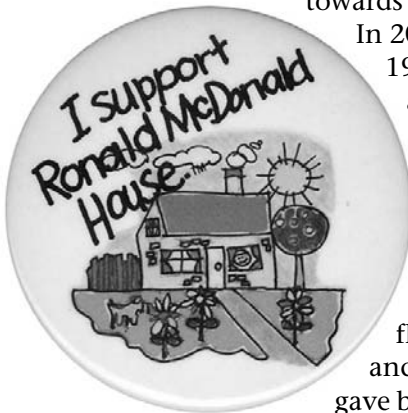
McDonald's "I Support Ronald McDonald House"—the house that love built—reflected one of the business world's most successful charities. Ray Kroc, owner of McDonald's Corporation, believed in giving back to the local communities who bought their french fries and hamburgers at his outlets. In the 1950s the McDonald's "Santa Wagon" toured the Chicago Loop dispensing coffee and hamburgers to the street-corner Santas of the Salvation Army. Locally, he suggested to his franchise operators that profits from hamburgers should go to support local school bands. This kind of charity should appeal to family-oriented markets. The famed "Orange Bowl" charity dispensed free orange juice at millions of local events. Kroc's basic philanthropic philosophy was:

It gives individual operators a sense of personal identity in a business where identity can easily be lost. By getting involved in a community charity, an operator can get individual recognition and become Mr. McDonald's in his hometown (Love 213).

Since 1974, McDonald's most widely recognized and powerful charity has been the Ronald McDonald House. The idea was conceived by Elkman Advertising of Philadelphia in 1974. The concept came as a response to a plea from former Philadelphia Eagles linebacker, Fred Hill. Hill's daughter Kim had leukemia, and had been hospitalized. The ex-footballer realized the hardships on families with hospitalized children and he was seeking support to build a "home away from home." The local McDonald's operator raised \$50 000 towards the first Ronald McDonald House.

In 2000, there were 200 such houses in 19 countries. Twelve of the houses are in Canada. Major corporations, politicians, celebrities, dignitaries, and ordinary people all donate time and money and contributions to a widely recognized excellent business charity.<sup>6</sup>

The McDonald's button is a fleeting manifestation of the ethics and the morality of the company as it gave back to many worldwide communities in a most meaningful manner. The lapel button is much more than a giveaway, throwaway, item. It can be a rich, historical and momentary reflection of a firm and its place within a society.



### **The World's Smallest Billboard—The Match Book**

The first known commercial advertising match book was created in 1895. It was distributed by the Mendelson Opera Company. The message read, "A Cyclone of Fun – Powerful Cast – Pretty Girls – Handsome Wardrobe – Get Seats Early."

Henry C. Traute, a salesman with the Diamond Match Co., came up with the idea of placing the match striker on the outside. For further customer protection he convinced his company that the phrase "Close Cover Before Striking" be printed on the front flap. Pabst Brewery was his first major order; 10 million match books would advertise Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer. Shortly thereafter, a one billion match book order was placed by Wrigley's Chewing Gum. By the late 1920s, tens of thousands of advertisers made this medium the most powerful form of advertising in America and Canada.

Advertising expenditures were drastically cut during the dark days of the 1930s Depression and the match book all but disappeared. A saviour appeared early in 1932, "the silver screen," when Diamond Match Company issued its first set of collectible movie stars. The initial set of ten stars included George Raft, Katherine Hepburn, Gloria Stuart, Constance Bennett, Irene Dunne, Francis Dee, Zazu Pitts, Slim Summerville, Richard Arden, and Ann Harding. The film-going public in both countries responded most positively. The sets sold for one penny and many more sets followed. The outbreak of World War II changed the commercial images to patriotic causes, efforts, and issues of the conflict.

In 1945, free match books were given with every pack of cigarettes. Why not? A match book cost one fifth of a cent and vendors thought that they were giving the match books away as a favour to their customers.

As the world's smallest billboard, match covers were the most popular form of advertising in Canada for over 40 years. Advertisers used match covers to promote every aspect of Canada including airlines, banks, beer, cigars, cigarettes, fairs, fraternal organizations, hospitals, retail outlets, gas stations, restaurants, hotels, motels, movies, political candidates, railroads, sports, soft drinks, and more. Businesses promoted everything from "A to Z" on match book covers to get their word out.<sup>7</sup>

Two Quebec companies who used this medium included la Sociétés des Tabacs du Québec Inc., and Jean Coutu, the pharmaceutical giant. An analysis of the two advertising messages clearly highlights the ideological differences between two Quebec entrepreneurial ventures.

The Jean Coutu Group (PJC), Inc., is inextricably linked to Quebec's growing business spirit. In 1969, Jean Coutu and his associate, Louis Michaud, opened their first discount pharmacy in Montreal. Thirty years later, PJC, Inc., had 255 franchised establishments and 242 corporate pharmacies in America employing over 16 000 employees and with a business volume of \$2.6 billion. This successful giant corporation continues to advertise on match book covers in 2001. The front cover includes the company's logo, PJC, Jean Coutu, and the message "7 jours, 7 soirs, tous les week-ends" (7 days, 7 nights, every weekend); the reverse side shows a red heart on a black background with the words "On trouve de tout...même un ami" (You can find everything...even a friend). This message could be interpreted in a number of ways and the reader will draw his own conclusions.

Also in the 1960s, a major theme of Quebec's Quiet Revolution was modernization and the economic expansion of Quebec-owned firms. One major indication of the times was the adoption of signs, symbols, and brand names that affected the ever-growing nationalism in Quebec. Perhaps the strongest and the most direct attempt to capitalize on this nationalistic movement was the 1960s advertising campaign of the cigarette La Québécoise. The brand name and advertising slogans were inspired by one central idea: "to bring together in Quebec economic and political support of French Canadians." Several advertising slogans were "Fumez Canadienne-Française, Fumez La Québécoise," and "Les Québécoises aiment La Québécoise." Initially, support for the purchase of the provincially owned and manufactured cigarette was widespread. For example, a church publication from Sherbrooke had this message for its parishioners:

Insist then, at all times, on Québécoise. And you ladies, buy your families' cigarettes and be sure they are Québécoise. Who knows? This may be the only way you can assure that in the future your son or one of your family can hold a first class job in the province, which one day must be ours alone, but whose riches are still in foreign hands (Elkin, 176).

*La Revue Populaire* (1962) went even further, stating:

Offer a Québécoise ... not only from your desire to give pleasure, but also to affirm the ties that bind together the French-speaking citizens of Quebec, to assert the pride of our nationality, to dedicate a symbol, everywhere a rallying sign for our common purpose of throwing off the yoke of servitude which has lasted all too

long ... the appearance of a new brand of cigarette is an everyday affair. But the appearance of La Québécoise viewed as a symbol of the liberation of an entire people, an act of defiance in an outdated suppression, takes on national significance ... Long live La Québécoise (Elkin, 178).<sup>8</sup>

The match book cover had the name La Québécoise on the front and reverse side and a political slogan on the inside flap: "La Québécoise une présence qui s'affirme!" (La Québécoise a presence that affirms its identity). The cigarette did not succeed.

Here you have two Quebec commercial examples. One, PCJ, is an extremely profitable company which instills much social pride within Quebec's society. It uses humour, presenting an open-ended idea with the implication that the pharmacy can be your friend, or possibly that you would find romance whilst shopping. Jacques Hurtubise, on the other hand, organized the company la Sociétés des Tabacs du Québec Inc. to market the cigarette La Québécoise. Sales success was mainly based on a nationalist, political and economic ideology that would rally Quebeckers to "Buy Quebec Products." The brand name, the slogans, the advertising were all very evocative political and nationalistic symbols which emerged unsuccessfully in the midst of a sea of other commercial brands of cigarettes. As an integral factor in both advertising campaigns, both companies used match book cover advertising to promote themselves and their products.

### **The Patriotic Cigar**

Echenberg (1982) discussed the history of cigar making in Quebec's Eastern Townships (see p. 63 of this issue). Rather than present the history of cigars and cigar boxes, which has been extensively researched, here I will analyze a Canadian cigar box label and how its artistic presentation was an element, an input, to late Victorian imperialist propaganda in the Canadian colony.<sup>9</sup>

From the mid 1850s until the early part of the twentieth century, the cigar industries of Canada and America produced some staggering statistics. At one time, more than 200 000 cigar factories combined to sell 10 billion cigars. To do so, more than 2 million different combinations of labels and boxes were tried. No other product in history has been packaged and labeled in more different ways than the cigar. Variability in art due to national, regional, and local demands added to the almost unlimited number of artistic conditions.

The DARGAI cigar was made and packaged by G. Kelly and Co., of London, Ontario, at the turn of the century. The illustrated lid panel showed one of many celebrated military incidents that occurred in “Queen Victoria’s Little Wars.” The artwork showed Piper George Findlater, Victoria Cross, of the Gordon Highlanders Regiment, sitting on a rock playing his bagpipes at the Battle of Dargai. On 20 October 1897, in North-West India, the British army’s progress was halted at Chagru Valley, near Dargai. Alikhel tribesman decimated the initial charge of the Dorset and Derbyshire and Gurkha regiments. The Gordons were then ordered to the front. Shot through both ankles, Piper Findlater propped himself against a rock and played a quick strathspey “The Haughs o’Cromadale” to quicken the charge against the enemy. His unselfish bravery was recognized by Queen Victoria who offered him a resident piper position at Balmoral Castle. He declined and died in 1942 working his farm at Cairnhill, Scotland.



Findlater has been immortalized in numerous artistic renditions of his act. This example was included because it was produced at a time when Canada was asked to participate militarily in Victoria’s imperial-colonialist war, the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902. When the viewer deconstructs the cigar box label, the piper is framed by not only part of the battlefield, but also, more importantly, a Scottish national flag and the Canadian national flag of that date, the



Red Ensign. The Lion Rampant and the Red Ensign pictorially represented a joining, an intersecting, of both countries. The imagery of the flags indicated a bond, a recognition of bravery and success between the Scots of Canada and their compatriots of their ancestral homeland, Scotland. The storming of the Heights of Dargai occurred on 20 October 1897; less than two years later Canada was at war with the Boers of South Africa.

Wars are known to provide heroes and symbols that become central to propaganda and the fuelling of a nationalist ideology. The Kelly cigar box label was indicative of such an ideology. Young Canadians rushed to be part of this country's contribution to the deadly confrontation.

Throughout Canada images of British nationalism and Canada's responsibility to the call of the "Mother Land" were interwoven in newspapers, sermons from the pulpit, speeches by politicians, poems, and commercial advertising. To many Canadians of British stock, the "call to arms" was heard as a plea from the royal family in dire need. A verse of the time said:

O brother beyond the sea,  
Hark to thy brother's vow,  
Thou has fought for us when we needed thee,  
We'll stand at thy shoulder now.

Nothing less than familial obligation dictated Canadians should answer the call. The British family called, the Britons in Canada answered.<sup>10</sup>

### **Racist Imagery of Commercial Objects**

Stereotype imagery has been an important area of concern in the study of interracial relationships. These images presumably reflect prevalent attitudes, feelings and inherited or irrational fears. In Canada, racist imagery of the Chinese and blacks was used in various forms of business objects: trade cards, bottles, packaging, advertising, catalogues and novelty items.

One common theme was the Chinese laundryman, and this ubiquitous stereotype (in advertisements and product packages) was best illustrated by the product "EMPOIS CHINOIS," (CHINESE STARCH). Such images appeared for at least thirty years. Another recurring theme was "pigtail pulling" where the queues of Chinese males were cut off by whites in public degradation rituals. A French language trade card showed a Chinese boy's queue pulled so hard he was decapitated over a sharp rail. Another offensive image portrayed the

Chinese as eaters of vermin, rats and mice. Several brand names, "Rough on Rats" and "Chinese Rat Destroyer," were still sold at the turn of the century. In such images, the Chinese became part of commercial imagery, powerfully reinforcing the dominant culture's "making alien" this marginalized group within Canadian society.

As we know, Chinese workers in the late 1800s and early 1900s were seen as exploitable cheap labour. The Chinese in Canada were inevitably viewed as "an inferior species." In British Columbia and Ontario, especially, the Chinese were victims of violence, exclusion, and extremely negative stereotyping by major Canadian institutions. Publications like *Maclean's Magazine*, *Saturday Night*, *Jack Canuck*, and numerous labour publications all carried sensationalistic anti-Chinese articles. Most of the articles reveal a dread of "coolie labour." The Chinese were referred to by slang names like "Yellow Peril," "Celestials," "Sojourners," "Chinks," "Pigtails," and "The Menace." They were seen as ravishers of white women, and as inscrutable, evil, sinister, yellow-skinned, filthy, rat-eating, opium fiends not assimilable into mainstream Canadian society. Between 1885 through 1923 severe measures were taken against the Chinese in Canada, such as the \$500 Head Tax. In 1923, Ottawa imposed the Chinese Exclusion Act which was not repealed until 1947. Between 1923 and 1947 only 16 Chinese were permitted to enter Canada.<sup>11</sup>

Blacks were also commercially exploited via prejudicial stereotypes. A soft drink produced in Quebec had the brand name "Mammy." The bottle was embossed with an obscene depiction of an aproned black mammy, complete with bandana and sweeping brush in hand. The French language trade card showed a white male child kicking a black child and a First Nation child off an escalator. The caption under the images said "TROP LAID" (Too Ugly) and indicated that both the First Nation and the black child were not allowed to be with whites. The Cookshire Flour Mill Co., of Cookshire, Quebec, gave away hand-held fans to its customers. As well as listing its products, address, and promotional slogans on it, it also used stereotypic, prejudicial anti-black humour. Three cartoons and captions showed the black male as a buffoon who does not get cover from the rain, allows the flour to cover him and turns into a loaf of bread as the hot sun appears. The language used also marginalized the black from mainstream English users—it shown as inferior:

Caption (1) Land 'er goodness it's beginnin 'ter rain.

Caption (2) Dis bag am bust an de Flour jes is turin ter dough.

Caption (3) Dat hot sun am jes bakin chile inter delicious bread





**L'Empois Chinois**

est l'Empois le plus populaire utilisé dans les familles.

**Pourquoi?** Parce qu'il produit le plus beau linge et avec la plus grande facilité. ESSAYEZ-LE.

En vente chez tous les épiciers à 10 cts le paquet.

MOULIN OCEAN, MONTREAL.

ROUGH OR RATS

THEY MUST GO!

15 CTS PER BOX

As we can see, material objects, promotional material, trade cards, and advertising were integral factors in commercial communication in Canadian society at a particular time. Scrutinizing, analyzing, and understanding these representational images require that we anchor all these communicational ideas, signs, and symbols within the sponsoring institutions and society. In Canada, these racial minority images portrayed Chinese, blacks, and other groups as inferior, marginalized, and less than equal to white Canadians.

### Commodification of Children: The Dionne Phenomenon

On 28 May 1934 a biological miracle happened when the Dionne quintuplets were born in the small Franco-Ontarian village of Corbeil. As a result of this miracle the most powerful and influential companies in North America—Colgate, General Motors, Carnation, Quaker Oats, Corn Products Refining, Aluminum Goods Manufacturing, McCormick's Biscuits, Canada Starch Company—paid royalties to the Dionnes' Trust Fund for exploitative use of the quintuplets' images for commercial purposes. Pathé News paid royalties for short news films made about the children. Substantial revenues were also received from Hollywood. Three films were made about the famous "quints": *The Country Doctor*, *Reunion*, and *Five of a Kind*.

On a local level, Sherbrooke Pure Milk Company Ltd. used a portrait of the babies to promote milk in their advertising wall calendar of 1936. Similarly, a 1937 advertising calendar showing the quintuplets was used by Crown Laundry of Sherbrooke, Limited.



Milk became a commercial battlefield with the little girls in the middle. Carnation Milk Company got a remarkable bargain when, for just three thousand dollars, it secured all rights in its field to the exclusive use of the quintuplets' names and pictures. The advertisements of Carnation Milk and the babies were everywhere. The inference from the advertisements was that the quints bathed in milk

“from contented cows.” Supposedly, the Dionnes had consumed 2 600 tins of Carnation Milk in their first eighteen months. This testimonial was in fact false; the children hated the milk and refused to drink it. A false advertising claim lawsuit ensued. Since cancellation of the Carnation contract with the Dionnes’ Trust Fund would have affected the price of milk in Ontario, government officials, lawyers for the children, and Carnation Milk Company resolved the issue quietly.

Advocates of the use of mother’s breast milk used the miraculous survival of the babies to promote their cause. From day four to when the children were five months old, they consumed five thousand ounces of breast milk, or one gallon, a day. Chicago, Toronto, and Montreal were centres of supply, with Toronto eventually becoming the major location. The local Junior Leagues boiled, pooled, bottled, and refrigerated the milk ready to be shipped North. Women who donated their milk received ten cents an ounce. In other health-related causes, a photograph showing the quintuplets receiving a diphtheria shot resulted in the heaviest attendance in the history of Toronto clinics. When images of the Dionnes helped launch the Adopt-a-Child Campaign, 800 Ontario orphans found homes in three weeks.

Shortly after the birth of the babies, the public was entertained by the Great Corn Syrup lawsuit. Both the Canada Starch Company, maker of Crown Brand Corn Syrup, and the St. Lawrence Starch Company (the Beehive Brand) claimed the Dionnes were given their syrup first. The power of the quintuplets as an advertising instrument, however, was shown by the starch company’s testimony. Beehive sales doubled in the first year and Corn Brand lost one hundred thousand dollars as a result of Beehive’s aggressive promotion.

The Ontario government had legal guardianship of the children for nine years. It viewed the five babies as a natural resource requiring nationalization and commercialization. It has been argued that the quintuplets saved an entire region from economic collapse. During the nine-year period when the girls were most popular, they represented a \$500 million asset, an asset at the time greater than the gold, nickel, or pulpwood of Northern Ontario. During that period more than 3 million visitors made the trip to “Quintland.” The most graphic evidence of the Ontario legislators’ perception of the girls as a bonanza for provincial coffers was their efforts to have the federal government pass a special trademark law. Queen’s Park wanted to copyright the word “Quintuplet” for the government’s exclusive use; their efforts failed.

A number of factors coalesced to bring a loss of interest in the five miracle children. World War II started, the babies were growing up, and they refused to speak English. The language issue had been hotly debated for years. There had been an on-going struggle between English and Franco-Ontarians concerning the education of the children. Eventually French Quebec interests started to be actively involved in the case. By 1941, French women's groups, religious leaders, and Quebec politicians reacted against the biased stereotypes that surrounded the children's parents. They were shown as uneducated rustic simpletons with low intelligence levels. The racist, ethnocentric attitudes that prevailed against Mr. and Mrs. Dionne caused growing tensions between the two major language groups. The pro-French language groups saw French and Catholicism (language and religion) as "la langue gardienne de la Foi." Language was seen as the most potent cultural factor.

On 11 May 1941, the language tension came to a head. The Dionne quintuplets were to appear on CBS Radio's Mothers' Day programme. The broadcast was to be done live in the CFRB studio in Toronto. Americans were invited to "come and see [them] this summer." As a gesture of goodwill, the girls were asked to sing "There'll Always Be an England." The quintts refused to sing in English and they sang in French. With World War II raging in Europe, and Britain standing alone against the Axis Forces, a huge public outcry followed this incident. A storm of public indignation was levelled by Canadians and Americans alike.

Knowingly or not, the Dionnes were highlighting one of the major conflicts in Canada. This national division included French language rights in Canada, the rejection and denial of basic cultural rights of French Canadians outside Quebec and the division of the country, during wartime, along linguistic lines. The language issue was a major factor in "toppling the temple of Dionne."

In 1994, CBC television aired a special documentary on the Dionnes called *Million Dollar Babies*. In the winter of the same year the *Journal of Canadian Studies* devoted an entire issue to the quintuplets, in which Wright (1994) gave a broad overview of the state's commercialization of a private family into a vastly successful marketable commodity. Valverde (1994) discussed Ontario's interference with the autonomy of families. Welch (1994) placed the Dionnes in the context of their own evolving ethnocultural community—the Franco-Ontarian society of the 1930s and the 1940s. His major objective was illustrating and discussing the interactions between the family and the French-Canadian communities within Quebec.

Arnup (1994) approached the miracle babies and their subsequent progress as a model of child-rearing for Canadian mothers to follow. Delhi (1994) explored scientific discourses about the Dionne quintuplets and how they were brought up in a completely controlled and regimented environment which excluded the babies' natural mother. Finally, McKay (1994) placed and discussed the children within two philosophical reference points: liberal-utilitarianism (the public good), and Kant's Categorical Imperative (the rights of the individual child). He concluded that when the quintuplets themselves resisted commercial manipulation, human resistance to powerful interests was not only possible, but, more importantly, effective.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusion

A study of the mass of business objects and all material related to the Dionnes' era has not yet been completed. For instance, the debate over mother's breast milk versus cow's milk so passionately discussed in the 1930s continues no less seriously today. The deeply-rooted emotional subject of symbols between Quebec and Ottawa continues incessantly. The "battle of the flags" which is reflected as elements in business objects and products clearly indicates the importance of material items' place and prominence in the cultural transmission of ideologies.

Trade cards, in addition to reflecting the political and nativist sentiments of the time period, also reflected some of the hostility (emotional and physical) that white people directed at Chinese Canadians. Historians and others can gauge racist sentiment toward Chinese Canadians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through trade card depictions as well as visual representations in other forms of business objects.

The study of material objects may allow researchers to answer specific and descriptive explanatory questions about the behavioural and organizational properties and actions of past economic, political, social, and cultural systems. The Echenberg Collection clearly and graphically reflects this cultural transmission and evolution of business history of the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Whether intended to or not, these materials reflected and upheld the racial, class, social and economic systems of the culture that they served. Embedded within many of items were the blueprints of the dominant cultural ideology that was transmitted to the users and viewers.



## NOTES

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