Caveats in the Use of Corporate Literature by Costume Historians

Résumé

Cet article décrit certaines des caractéristiques et fonctions des publications d'entreprises et suggère d'établir des liens entre l'étude de ces publications et celle du costume. L'auteur de l'article soulève de nombreuses questions et souligne des difficultés qui se posent aux historiens du costume, affirmant que, même si les chercheurs y ont toujours amplement puisé, ces publications n'ont jamais fait l'objet d'une évaluation adéquate. Non seulement chercheurs et chercheuses doivent-ils bien se garder d'accepter telles quelles les données de ces publications mais ils doivent s'interroger sur leur contexte, leur but et leur public lecteur.

Catherine C. Cole

Abstract

This paper identifies some of the characteristics and functions of corporate literature and suggests relationships between the study of corporate literature and the study of costume. It poses many questions and challenges to costume historians asserting that while corporate literature has been used extensively by researchers, it has not been adequately assessed. Researchers must be careful not to accept the data at face value but to question its context, purpose, and intended audience.

Costume and other material historians are continually identifying new sources which enable them to interpret historical events and trends through an understanding of the material world. A growing interest in studying the recent past has resulted in the need for researchers to come to terms with sources and media which are unavailable to those studying earlier periods. The volume of data alone, available to historians studying the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is overwhelming. Academic training prepares researchers to examine, question and interpret historical documents and archival records but rarely addresses the need to utilize other sources such as oral interviews, photographs, television, artifacts, or corporate literature much less provides any training in how to interpret the sources.

Corporate literature is an umbrella heading given to a number of sources, similar in that they were generated by companies: corporate records, advertisements, mail-order catalogues, almanacs (which often also served as catalogues), patents, trademarks, and registered industrial designs, photographs, and giveaways (Fig. 1). Whether the question is one of date, availability, taste, style or materials, this data is referred to on a regular basis both by researchers working in museums and by other material historians. However, little work has been done to define the characteristics and functions of corporate literature and to determine its relationship to the objects themselves.

Researchers must remember that when this material was initially produced, its primary purpose was to promote a company and its products. It was therefore a form of propaganda, an advertising and marketing tool. As such, it documents a company’s self-image more so than the values of society. While corporate literature can be used effectively in the study of costume, and other artifacts, it must be interpreted carefully, keeping in mind its original purpose. A failure to understand the context of these sources, and the terminology used within them, can lead material historians to draw inaccurate conclusions. This paper will identify some of...
Edmonton Firm Believes in Using Edmonton-Made Products

The above illustrations are reduced reproductions of a set of five hanger cards in four colors that are just completed for the Great Western Garment Company, Ltd. The order comprises 10,000 copies, 13x17 inches, and they are reproduced in what is known, technically, as the four color process. This is the largest exclusive color job ever placed in the city of Edmonton.

It might be interesting to note that the G.W.G. overalls have the largest sale, in Western Canada, of any overalls, and the extensive and aggressive advertising campaign promoted by the Great Western Garment Company is largely responsible for this volume of sales.

The color drawings and color plates are the work of the McDermid Engraving Company, Ltd., and the color printing was done by Esdale Press, Ltd. Both are Edmonton firms.

The Great Western Garment Company are to be complimented for their confidence in local firms and their loyalty to Edmonton-made products in placing this large order locally instead of sending it East.

the characteristics and functions of corporate literature and determine the relationship between the study of corporate literature and the study of costume.

Scope of Study
Research for this paper was undertaken between 1983 and 1990 when the author was first curator of Interpretive Collections for Historic Sites Service (1983–1986), then curator of Western Canadian History for the Provincial Museum of Alberta (1989–1991). Both agencies fall under the Historical Resources Division of Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and in both cases curatorial responsibilities included costume collections. The Eaton’s catalogues were used by settlers in the west and continue to be used by historians and curators attempting to understand the material history of the period. Also during these years (1985–1988) the author completed her master’s thesis on the history of the garment manufacturing industry in Edmonton, centred around the early development of the Great Western Garment Company (GWG), the largest garment manufacturing firm in the west. The examples chosen reflect the sources used for this research; however, the thesis could easily be supported by examples from other firms, or indeed from other industries.2

Corporate Records
Corporate records for manufacturing firms producing articles of costume, and for retail or wholesale outlets, are often of great value to costume historians. The category “corporate records” includes any documentation held in a company’s archives. Archives is in this context a generous word, meaning anything from a professionally run archives with staff and research facilities to perhaps a closet in an underground parking lot, or a drawer in the president’s desk. If a researcher is fortunate, companies have retained some information about their own history. However, one of the limitations of this source is that whether due to lack of interest in their own past or due to factors such as fires, frequent moves, insufficient space, takeovers and mergers, or the present and future oriented thinking of businesses, the records of many firms have been obliterated over time, and exist neither in public archives nor in company offices.

Even when records have been retained in company hands, there are a number of difficulties in accessing and utilizing them. First is their inconsistency. The “hit and miss” nature of retaining archival records has resulted in a situation where one firm may have interoffice memos, order books, dated garment labels, samples, annual reports, correspondence, etc., spanning its entire history of operation, while another firm may have an insurance appraisal from one year, and two or three photographs (Fig. 2). It is therefore impossible to attempt any sort of meaningful comparisons between the two firms on the basis of data compiled from these sources. Second, they may not have been organized

Fig. 1
Giveaways such as these hanger cards were one means that companies used to keep images of their products in front of their customers. Alberta Labor News, 22 January 1921. (Photograph courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) A19000)
in a way that is useful to researchers. Researchers interested in corporate history often would benefit from training as archivists because it may be necessary to do a considerable amount of sorting and filing before being able to seriously analyse the data. Researchers interested in corporate history often would benefit from training as archivists because it may be necessary to do a considerable amount of sorting and filing before being able to seriously analyse the data.

Once the data has been identified and sorted it should be treated with the cautions identified further below. An annual report then as now served several functions: it recorded the major achievements of a given year and provided financial statements. However, it may also have been used to "sell" the company to shareholders, government officials, or in some cases, staff or unions. An understanding of the operation of a garment manufacturing firm or of a retail or wholesale business, which may be obtained from annual reports, may improve one's understanding of the garments themselves and how they were interpreted at the time in question. For example, the Emery Manufacturing Company began operation in Edmonton in 1912 as a manufacturing firm supplying Ramsey's department store, a local shop interested in providing Edmontonians with locally produced clothing with "New York styling" (both because of a desire to initiate and support local industry and because of the firm's ability to acquire and therefore market clothing at lower prices). In 1914, Emery's became independent of Ramsey's...
sort of material can be used to determine what was sold and, sometimes, how well it was received. Unfortunately, financial records contain little information about styles, materials, etc., so the price lists and sales figures may mean very little without further illustration of what was actually being accounted for. Ideally this information should be compared to advertisements and catalogues to enable both sets of data to be more accurately interpreted. All too often only one set of data is extant.

Advertisements
Advertisements can be very useful in documenting style, construction and fit. However, they should not necessarily be interpreted literally. Researchers, in common with today's consumers, must be suspect of a firm's claims. Costume illustrations may exaggerate features; written description may omit essential details. The actual product may not have been exactly as the advertisement suggested. Some advertisements from the period have a comical appeal which may overshadow our ability to examine them objectively (Fig. 3). These points will be discussed further under mail-order catalogues, which are a specific form of advertisement.

Aspects of costume as social history are also revealed through close scrutiny of advertisements. For example, an advertisement for GWG's "Blue Diamond" overalls in Alberta Labor News describes a unique relationship between the GWG firm and railwaymen that evolved because of requests for particular features in the design of overalls (Fig. 4).

...a committee of railroad men, in conjunction with our designing department, were responsible for the production of our new high back overall.

When the design was finally decided upon we submitted samples to the various railwaymen's locals throughout the West for their approval...

The name selected, "Blue Diamond," was suggested by Local No. 715, B. of L., at Saskatoon.4

These overalls had a number of special features which were patented. The patent records support the claims about the unique features of these overalls. Unfortunately there are few overalls extant in museum collections and it has not been possible to compare the garments to the advertisements. In terms of the costume itself, therefore, it has not yet been possible to determine whether or not the claims made in the advertisements are true.

Of perhaps greater interest to social historians is the fact that the advertisement describes an effective, collaborative relationship that existed between the consumer and the manufacturer. Critics of high fashion complain that designers pay little attention to their consumers, yet here, apparently, is an example of occupational clothing being designed in concert with the people who would eventually be wearing the clothes. Researchers should be able to verify this claim through inquiries among railwaymen of the period. They could then pursue the ideas suggested by this relationship, consider to what extent it was developed by others in the industry, and perhaps why it was not developed further.

One feature, common in advertisements in this period, was the promotion of the firm as stable and prosperous, a part of the

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4 A Commodity as Staple as the Agriculture of Western Canada

The wise investor will place his money in an industry where returns will be sure in hard times. Almost any business can earn a profit for a while, or during an era of prosperity, but it is when hard times come that interest on our investments is needed most.

Before investing, it is well to ask whether there is a permanent demand for the product of the industry. Many factories making specialties or fashionable goods do well for a time but find themselves out of business because of a change in fashion, or because the market for the specialty is filled and there are no repeat orders. Such businesses have no chance to build up an army of loyal customers, who keep coming back regularly for new supplies.

No such danger exists in the business of making workingmen's clothing. Such staple-clothing must be replaced at frequent intervals and a company that establishes a reputation for satisfactory goods will enjoy the regular patronage of pleased customers.

The Great Western Garment Company Limited, has succeeded in placing itself in the leading position for the manufacture and sale of workingmen's clothing in Western Canada. In ten years their sales have increased from $48,000 in 1911 to $1,500,000 in 1920.

The reason for this success is that the business was founded and is managed by western men who know the needs of the country because they live in it.

An opportunity to invest in this established Western industry is now open to you. Owing to the growing demand for their products, the Company is increasing its capital, and a block of first preference shares is now offered at $10.00 per share, with a bonus of 25% in participating second preference shares.

Selling Agents

North West Securities Corporation, Limited

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

PHONE 3180

Kimly permit us to send a man to you who will explain the details without obligation on your part.

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Fig. 3

There were numerous advertisements featuring the caption "They wear longer because they're made stronger," often showing men in ridiculous positions. The advertisements have an immediate visual appeal but one questions whether in fact you would be able to hold up a 180-pound man with one leg of a pair of overalls. Alberta Labor News, 9 April 1921.

(Photograph courtesy PAA A19002)

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growth of the western frontier. Company plants were frequently photographed at an angle intended to accentuate this impression. An advertisement in Farm and Ranch Review shows the GWG building from the corner and the perspective makes it look larger than it really is (Fig. 5). The view of a strong man in the foreground and various settlement images in the background (breaking the land, a train, a grain elevator, etc.) was intended to make one proud to be a Westerner and to encourage men to buy GWG goods. Consumers were buying the image as much as they were buying the product. It was effective but not entirely accurate.

Mail-Order Catalogues

Mail-order catalogues are a popular source for material historians studying the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike some of the other sources under discussion, they are easily accessible. Catalogues are readily available on microfilm, a limited number of reproductions exist, and many museums have collections of original catalogues for reference purposes. They are useful because they contain numerous line drawings, often some colour plates, pricing information, written descriptions, etc. They give an immediate, visual image of the range of goods that was available to customers through mail order.

Because they were aimed at families in the lower economic brackets, they provide examples of garments that can only rarely be found in museum collections. Everyday clothing is generally not preserved either by individuals or by institutions, a situation which museums have recognized and addressed since their attention to social history was reawakened in the 1960s. Mail-order catalogues therefore help to provide a balance to the better quality garments in museum collections.

One method of examining catalogues to determine what information they can reliably provide, which has recently gained popularity, is to undertake a content analysis. As a case study, women’s garments on the pages of the Eaton’s Spring and Summer Cat-

**Fig. 4** “Blue Diamond” overalls, illustrated in Alberta Labor News, 8 March 1924. (Unaccessioned photograph courtesy PAA)
analogue for the years 1920, 1923, and 1926 were analysed and compared (Fig. 6). Few construction details were included in the descriptions so some features were analysed based upon visual examination of the illustrations. For example, the location of garment fastenings was usually inferred from the illustration and previous knowledge of period construction techniques. Descriptions occasionally specified that garments “fastened at the side” but the type of fastening used was not mentioned. The information provided in the catalogues is much more fragmentary than a superficial glance suggests. Researchers studying the pages of catalogues for purposes such as costume reproduction are left making of number of suppositions on the basis of their own expertise.

Generally the intended occasion of use for dresses was not mentioned. Occupational clothing of any form was rarely mentioned. One dress was referred to as “very suitable for maids’ or nurses’ wear.” The vast majority of dresses appeared to be either house dresses or afternoon dresses. Perhaps the reason that fewer distinctions were made was related to the increasing number of washable dresses as well as to a less rigid social climate which no longer dictated that a woman had to change her clothing half a dozen times a day. But it is also clear from a close examination of these pages that Eaton’s was not trying to appeal to the fashionable set.

Dresses were available in a broad price range, although the majority of them were under $15.00. The least expensive dresses were wash and morning dresses under $5; only a couple of dresses were available in the most expensive price range ($25–$29). Eaton’s sold fewer expensive dresses as the decade progressed. Although there was a correlation between occasion of use and price, there was no similar relationship between occasion of use and length. One might expect the most fashionable dresses to be either all longer or all shorter but there was quite a variation of length, particularly at the beginning of the decade.

A number of the less expensive models were produced by Eaton’s but Eaton’s did manufacture garments in all price ranges. Although Eaton’s had a large garment factory, which has gained notoriety because of labour disputes, relatively few of the ladies dresses in the catalogue were identified as having been made by Eaton’s. In 1920, only 15 of the 76 dresses available were identified as “Canadian Made/Eaton’s,” suggesting that the remaining 61 were imported, probably from the United States. In 1923, they did not specify the number of Eaton-made dresses and in 1926 only five dresses were identified as Eaton-made. However, what this means is unclear. It may reflect the marketers’ concept of the value of such forms of boosterism rather than the actual number of Eaton-made dresses. If this is true, it suggests another limitation of the value of mail-order catalogues as a source.

The data compiled through this systematic approach amounts to dozens of pages of minute detail. Included among the findings were a number of important observations.
For example, although the text in 1920 referred to round necklines as being the most fashionable, in fact there was little difference between the number of round necklines and the number of square necklines—33 to 29 respectively. There were noticeably fewer V necklines—only 14. This supports the idea that the claims made in the catalogues may not be substantiated.

Another observation is that the questions asked of the catalogues must be carefully developed. For example, in trying to determine the most commonly available colours of the period, if one listed all of the exotic names given for basic colours (i.e., “Copenhagen,” “cadet” and “sky” for blue), the sampling would be too small to identify trends clearly. By combining them under headings of common colour names, it is possible to determine the most frequently used colours.

When considering the usefulness of this information it is important to remember that a content analysis of data from mail-order catalogues only indicates the range of material that was available from this supplier. It does not necessarily indicate what was the most popular style, colour or fabric. Unfortunately, records of purchases from Eaton’s during this period are unavailable for comparison.

The illustrations can be considered within the context of the history of fashion design to determine to what extent high fashion filters down to the average person. For example, the 1920s are thought of in terms of flappers and beaded dresses but the author’s content analysis of Eaton’s catalogues from 1920, 1923 and 1926 showed that very few dresses with any applied beaded decoration were available through the catalogues. The content analysis does allow researchers to state, with confidence, views that a more subjective or cursory examination of the catalogues might have suggested. It could also provide contradictory evidence to previously held suppositions.

Although historians are quick to point out what can be gleaned from the pages of catalogues, few have addressed the question of their limitations. The fact that most of the reproduction catalogues have been sponsored by the companies themselves inhibits objective assessment in introductions. In discussion of goods purchased by mail order, material historians have erroneously referred to them as “the arbiters of good taste.” Although some of their users may have felt that through mail-order catalogues they had access to some of the finer goods available to city dwellers, our interpretation of what the catalogues meant to customers is largely speculation. The typical catalogue shopper of the early twentieth century has not been identified although some tentative efforts in this direction have been taken. For example, the archives of Sears, Roebuck and Company are rich in data that have been used to interpret the significance of the catalogues to its users. Their popularity in the early twentieth century was popularized recently in a docu-
mentary which aired on the Public Broadcasting System. The approach has been largely nostalgic rather than scientific.

Robert D. Watt, in his introduction to *The Shopping Guide of the West: Woodward’s Catalogues 1898-1953*, includes a number of personal comments from Woodward’s catalogue shoppers from the 1920s to 1940s, which provide insight into the value these catalogues held for them but, unfortunately, he does not provide any quantitative information. Although not limited to costume, his comments are useful particularly in placing catalogues within the context of their times, relating the catalogues to the events which fostered their rise and fall. Further work needs to be done to determine who used catalogues (gender, income level, occupation, region, ethnic background), what they purchased from the catalogues (finished garments versus materials, quantities of ladies wear, children’s wear, menswear), how mail-order goods related to those available in general stores, how availability changed over the years, etc. Unfortunately, the raw data required to answer these questions does not exist in the Eaton’s archives so it must be compiled by other, less reliable, means such as oral interviews with a large sample of informants.

Large numbers of people relied on Eaton’s to bring them current fashions; the catalogues featured garments consistently and would not have done so if it had not been profitable. A better understanding of who used the catalogues would enable costume and social historians to interpret them more accurately. While a formal series of interviews specifically concerning the use of Eaton’s catalogues has not been completed, the author has, in recognition of this problem, routinely asked questions about their importance during the course of interviews related to recent museum acquisitions for Alberta Culture. Women have discussed various means of earning their own money (selling butter and eggs, etc.) to enable them to purchase dresses or other personal items from Eaton’s. They expressed excitement in occasionally being allowed to purchase a garment from Eaton’s rather than having to make all of their own clothes. They have described efforts to make clothes, without a purchased pattern, based upon illustrations in the Eaton’s catalogues. This data is entirely subjective and remains to be verified by a systematically addressed questionnaire.

Another source that is useful in providing a context for interpretation of this data is written records from the period (letters, journals, etc.). For example, in letters written to her mother and sister in England, between 1912 and 1914 when she was living in Windermere, British Columbia, Daisy Phillips frequently commented about the variety, quality and price of goods available by mail order through Eaton’s. To her sister Freda she wrote,

*I expect I shall always be writing home for small things, for instance, all the lace. If one wants any for toilet covers, etc. it is quite impossible sort of stuff. The very commonest and cheapest stuff like you see on the very cheapest underlinen at home is all you can get, and I have got the various catalogues from Pryce-Jones and Eaton.*

A few weeks later she wrote to her sister that,

*The Madras muslin from the Stores has arrived. It cost 2/- by parcel post, but we had to pay $2.85 duty, which is about 5/- in the £. But Timothy Eaton or Pryce-Jones are no good for anything like Madras muslin. The Canadians are evidently not people of taste, and all the old rubbish from England is shipped out to the Colonies...*16

The “Stores” referred to here by Daisy is the Army and Navy Stores. The Army and Navy Stores in England, in contrast to the Army and Navy Stores in Western Canada, were considered comparable to Harrods and “although they had very comprehensive stocks, were supplying wealthy purchasers and were not used by the vast majority of people.”17 The Army and Navy Stores have been addressed by British historians and should be considered in comparison with early catalogues from Woodward’s, the Hudson’s Bay Company and Eaton’s. Researchers focus upon Canadian catalogues forgetting that, depending upon where one emigrated from, other catalogues may have been used as well.

Middle-class English immigrants like Daisy Phillips may have been disappointed by the quality and selection of goods available through Eaton’s but in interviews, Eastern-European immigrants, unable to read the English descriptions or to afford to purchase finished garments, said that they were inspired by the illustrations; illustrations
were in many cases more important than the descriptions. It is difficult to compare the descriptions and illustrations with the actual goods to know how accurate they are because there are few known examples of garments purchased through Eaton’s in public collections. Many of the items sold by Eaton’s were not produced in their own factories or labelled with Eaton’s labels. Accession records rarely indicate where the owners purchased their clothing. The few garments with Eaton’s labels that have been found in collections have not been identified in the catalogues. One man’s shirt in the collection of the Provincial Museum of Alberta was selected for reproduction for use at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village a number of years ago. However, in preparing the pattern for the shirt it was discovered that the sleeves were cut in a very unusual fashion, raising the question of whether the shirt was a “second,” and whether it had survived because it was uncomfortable and therefore rarely if ever worn. Unfortunately, the data which is usually collected with museum artifacts is rarely detailed enough to answer questions such as these.

A systematic study of mail-order catalogues is required, which would compare the catalogues to extant artifacts and information obtained through oral interviews and written documents such as journals and letters. Until this is completed, researchers should be careful in assumptions regarding this material. The fact that a particular style, colour, or material was available in the catalogues does not mean that a given person would have worn it; there are many other factors that need to be taken into consideration. A comparison with catalogues from other firms and with popular ladies magazines provides a price scale for costume of the period. Quantitative analysis of the catalogues clearly points out that Eaton’s only featured garments from the lower end of the scale, primarily house dresses and day dresses, not particularly fashionable clothing.

**Almanacs and Household Handbooks**

Initially, GWG produced an illustrated catalogue which was sold to merchants for distribution to their customers. It was a form of joint advertising as the merchant’s name, as well as the manufacturer’s name, appeared on the front cover. Some firms introduced al-

manacs and household handbooks, a form of enlarged catalogue which, as GWG explained, aimed

...not only to display some of the most popular of GWG’s garments, but also to put into your home a book you will want to hang up and keep because of all the valuable information it contains.

The idea was to produce a catalogue that was useful so that as well as providing information about the company’s products, it provided additional information that would ensure that customers held on to it for future reference. The firm could include photographs of its premises and the costume being produced, as well as detailed information about advances in product development, thereby educating customers.

The almanacs were issued annually and featured a calendar which encouraged customers to retain their copies. They included household hints, first aid, gardening, laundry and cleaning information alongside horoscopes, tea cup reading and stock breeding records – truly something for everyone. The company’s logo and brief claims about various product lines appear on almost every page. Inserted between recipes for Liver in Gravy and Liver Casserole was a description and illustration of a Women’s Wool Plaid Sports Jacket. Caveats associated with the interpretation of almanacs are essentially those of mail-order catalogues. In addition, researchers should understand that almanacs, unlike other forms of catalogues, did not include the complete line of garments manufactured by a firm, simply a sampling of some of the more popular styles.

**Patents, Trademarks, and Registered Industrial Designs**

The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in Hull, Quebec houses a valuable collection of patents, trademarks and registered industrial designs. Unfortunately, the material is difficult to access. All files are organized chronologically but are indexed inconsistently. For example, several attempts to develop a comprehensive list of patents issued to the Great Western Garment Company proved unsuccessful because some features were patented by principals in the firm rather than under the company’s name. These patents only turned up during an ex-
haustive search through all patent registrations for the period. Similarly, it is impossible to develop a list of all items patented by inventors from a given province because the material is not indexed by address. The material is organized for the use of contemporary inventors interested in finding out whether or not they have come up with a new idea.

Although not organized or indexed in a way that is easily accessible for historians it would be fruitful to develop a complete index of costume and textile registrations by Canadians. Some of the types of features registered include: jewellery designs for items inspired by the Klondike gold rush, colour variations in knitting patterns, various types of pockets and fastenings, innovations such as pre-shrunk fabric, labels, applied decorative features, etc. If the material was properly indexed, costume historians would find it useful for a number of purposes, including the dating of garments in their collections and as a record of inventive activity in costume and textile manufacturing.

As with other corporate records, researchers must be cautious about the use of this data. The fact that a design was registered does not mean that it was ever actually put into production. Many ideas were registered on speculation and once the inventor tried to develop a prototype they were abandoned as impractical. Similarly, claims made by manufacturers in patent applications can not always be supported by further research into a company’s products. This data must be substantiated by documentation from directories, advertisements, catalogues, and most importantly, extant garments. Many of the claims made in patent applications can best be measured by an examination of the items or features being patented. Do they in fact live up to their claims?

Photographs
As is discussed further in Theresa Rowat’s paper elsewhere in this issue, photographs are frequently misinterpreted by researchers who do not understand the context in which they were taken. One example in terms of corporate photographs, is of a series of photographs of the Great Western Garment factory in Edmonton in the 1910s. Found by researchers in the files of the Glenbow Archives and the Provincial Archives of Alberta, these photographs have twice been used to document problems in working conditions in the garment manufacturing industry. In fact, this was one of a series of photographs taken on behalf of the firm to document the clean and orderly working environment in the plant. Even before finding an advertisement highlighting this photograph in Alberta Labor News, a costume historian would sus-

Figs. 7 and 8
Two views of the Great Western Garment workroom in 1916: notice the flowers the workers are wearing, the men and women lined up across the back of the photograph and the generally neat appearance of the factory. These were obviously posed for promotional purposes. (Photographs courtesy Glenbow Archives NC-6-66520 and NC-6-66519)
pect that the photographs had been staged because of the way the workers were dressed. Their white, neatly pressed dresses and perfectly placed hairdos are not what one would expect in a factory. Furthermore, there are two views of one photograph with subtle changes in composition (Figs. 7 and 8). Locating the advertisements was simply confirmation of what had been observed.

The Alberta Labor News states that this photograph "illustrates the progress of industry developing hand in hand with labor in the service of the great masses of the people" (Fig. 9). The photograph was also used in an advertisement, in Farm and Ranch Review and the Farmer's Almanac and Home Journal, contrasted with a photograph of the first factory. This advertisement states that "Quality and Service were alone responsible for what is said to be the greatest stride ever made by a manufacturer in Canada." GWG's standards were beyond those required by Alberta's labour legislation at the time. These photographs were used to advertise the benefits of supporting unionized occupations. Many of the workers wearing GWG clothing were unionized and would support a unionized firm over a non-unionized firm.

Conclusion

This paper has posed many questions and challenges to costume historians. Rather than providing answers, the author intended to provoke costume historians to reconsider their underlying assumptions about corporate literature. Corporate literature, while used regularly by researchers, has not been assessed with the sort of rigour and objective analysis that it requires. It is a valuable research source, yet also fraught with potential for abuse and misinterpretation. Researchers must be careful not to accept the data at face value but to question its context, purpose, and intended audience.
NOTES

1. The literature search for this paper did not reveal any material that had specifically addressed this issue. While some authors have examined mail-order catalogues to a limited degree, the author was unable to locate any references questioning sources in corporate history or the use of corporate literature.

2. For example, during this period, the author directed an ongoing research project examining product packaging and labelling from the early twentieth century. Dozens of letters of inquiry were sent to manufacturing firms; the responses were inconsistent at best. Some firms sent examples of period labels, or names of individuals working in the firm at the time; perhaps more did not reply at all.


5. Farm and Ranch Review, 21 April 1919.

6. This question has been addressed many times in Material History Bulletin as well as other sources. See Volume 8 of Material History Bulletin for papers addressing this subject.

7. This technique is used extensively by graduate students in the Department of Clothing and Textiles at the University of Alberta, see Catherine Roy's paper in this issue; see also Janice I. Smith's "Content Analysis of Children's Clothing in Eaton's Catalogues and Selected Canadian Museums 1890-1920," unpublished M.Sc. thesis (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1991).


12. Watt, pp. xii-xiii.

13. The author began a series of interviews with donors about their purchasing habits, specifically focused upon their use of the mail-order catalogues.


21. Ibid., 5.

22. The registered industrial designs are physically housed at the National Archives and may be seen by advance request of specific volumes, however the finding aids are on microfiche at Consumer and Corporate Affairs in Hull.

23. ACCESS television's film "The Person's Case" opens with photographs of GWG workers and features a fictitious garment worker who was poorly treated by her employer, suggesting that GWG abused its staff. Paul Voisey's article "The 'Votes for Women' Movement," Alberta History 23, no. 3, (Summer, 1975): 20, also features one of these photographs within the context of a discussion of women's entry into the workplace.


25. Farm and Ranch Review, 21 June 1920.