

Angela M. Blake. *How New York Became American, 1890–1924*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Pp. xi, 242. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$55.00; Paper, \$25.00.)

In this monograph Angela M. Blake embeds a fascinating exploration of the ways in which New York was marketed to tourists within a nebulous set of contentions about the meaning of Americanness and the centrality of establishing New York's status as the "American" metropolis for assuring the United States' domestic development and international power. Blake's working definition of "American" is native-born, white, Protestant, middle-class citizen-consumers. By tracing the evolution of strategies that proponents of various views of New York used to expound the city's meaning, Blake argues in essence that New York became American through the process of being successfully promoted to such consumers as an exciting but still safely familiar place to visit. Thus, while Blake engages broad questions about American identity, she concentrates on a narrow measure of New York's Americanness.

Blake investigates representations of New York from the 1890s to the mid-1920s. Her first chapter, the weakest in the book, posits a competition between 1890s' reformers and boosters over the city's defining image and then presents her distillation of the reformers' view of New York. Blake's depiction of reformers oversimplifies the city's complex and dynamic reform climate in a way that is symptomatic of her schematic methodological approach. She deploys types—for example, "reformers" and "boosters"—who contest over meanings to be pitched to "the public." Consequently, while Blake does acknowledge some participation in the branding of New York by people from an array of backgrounds and some heterogeneity within her types, on the whole she situates her investigation of representations of New York's meanings as a dialogue within the cultural group initially presumed to be "American." Thus, most of the members of New York's diverse population play roles as objects to be depicted rather than as actors who helped shape New York's versions of Americanness. Second, while 1890s' New York showcased a plethora of realities, including ostentatious opulence as well as squalor, Blake focuses on a subset of reformers' efforts to document the city's social ills. While Blake makes telling points about the innovative

communication techniques employed by those reformers, her objective is to show them as projecting an image of New York as a site of dire poverty and foreignness. On the whole, the first chapter presents a simplified version of New York's reputation in the 1890s as a foil for the argument Blake makes throughout the rest of the book.

In chapters 2 through 5, Blake lays out an intriguing exploration of the marketing of New York as a tourist destination. The second chapter focuses on two approaches used by New York's boosters in the 1890s to counter impressions conveyed by reformers' detailed studies of the conditions endured by immigrants and their children in the city's congested tenement districts. First, boosters used photographs taken from the rooftops of tall buildings to offer a panorama of the city, which placed impoverished areas in perspective as merely a part of the whole. Second, guidebooks highlighted a wide variety of pleasant and engaging sights for tourists to view. In particular, the guidebooks' suggested itineraries downplayed areas associated with hardship and ethnic/racial subgroups and highlighted enjoyable attractions instead. Blake's extensive research shows that promoters produced postcards, photographs, guidebooks, maps, and other ephemera to sell New York as a tourist destination for the middle class. The third chapter focuses on the early 1900s and demonstrates that promoters likened New York's skyscrapers to the West's mountain landscapes in a bid to reinforce an image of New York as an authentic "American" place.

The last two chapters focus on the 1920s. The fourth shows how image-makers sought to neutralize the anti-immigrant tenor of the times by commodifying New York's ethnic/minority enclaves as picturesque. By the 1920s guidebooks had embraced the obvious: the city was multicultural. But guidebooks commercialized and packaged that reality by promoting a visit to New York as an exciting but safe way to experience the exotic. The final chapter traces ways in which businessmen and city officials cooperated in the 1920s to establish Midtown, with its theaters, stores, restaurants, and other attractions, as the premier tourist destination in the city.

As a cultural historian, Blake is at her best when offering perceptive readings of visual and textual representations of New York's meanings. Her analysis would have benefited if she had not suggested it was possible for any interest group to impose a coherent meaning on New York and if she had not cast her work as an exegesis on Americanness. On the other hand, Blake's elucidation of the tourist industry's promotional materials is very well done. None of her readers will ever be able to unself-consciously enjoy following a

tourist itinerary again. *How New York Became American* is a well-written and engaging book that offers readers an insightful overview of how the city was marketed as a tourist destination from the 1890s to the mid-1920s.

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William C. Kashatus. *Dapper Dan Flood: The Controversial Life of a Congressional Power Broker*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. Pp. xiii, 350. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$29.95.)

Historians often relate tales of bizarre organizations and individuals who tried to restrict their access to archival documents. Until I read *Dapper Dan Flood*, however, I never imagined a situation in which witnesses to historical events were reluctant to speak because they feared criminal prosecution by the U.S. Department of Justice. It is a tribute to William Kashatus's perseverance that he soldiered on to chronicle the career of one of America's most ethically flexible twentieth-century politicians.

To a generation schooled in the 24/7 news cycle of corrupt politicians, Congressman Dan Flood's alliances with mobsters, and his ardent pursuit of questionable pork barrel projects for his eastern Pennsylvania district, would seem mundane. Indeed, to callow youths the only remarkable aspect of Flood's life would be the fact that he avoided sexual scandals. The historian, however, realizes that former Democratic vice-presidential nominee John Edwards is irrelevant. Studying Dan Flood, the "Grandfather of Congressional Pork," is the true path toward understanding the socioeconomic crisis of postindustrial America. Flood's life also illuminates the pressures that a growing public sector has placed on business and the federal budget in the twenty-first century. Kashatus's saga begins in a Pennsylvania congressional district that used federal projects to make up for the lack of a viable private economy, and ends decades later with entire states—such as West Virginia, Illinois, New York, and California—following suit.

Flood represented a coal-mining district that encompassed Wilkes-Barre. Ironically, while the national economy rebounded from the Great Depression