
BROWN, DONA. *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995. Pp. ix, 253. Notes, illustrations, index. \$29.95 cb.

In this book, Dona Brown adds to the emerging literature of historical tourism in the United States, which notably includes works like John Sears's *Sacred Places* and Arm Hyde's *An American Vision*. By means of *five* case studies, *Inventing New England* chronicles the development of tourism in New England. But Brown goes further and argues that the emergence of the region as a defined place, characterized by attributes such as virtuous simplicity and flinty rural independence, can also be ascribed, at least in part, to tourism. Her case for this, while sketchy, is intriguing.

Brown's introduction notes that tourism has shaped New England's landscape, influenced (and to some extent, invented) its culture, and played a crucial role in its economy. Tourism was part of the market economy, yet it was also an activity that enabled participants to fancy themselves cultivated and sensitive travelers. The economic relationships between buyers and sellers was obscured by the intangible nature of the products—such as fresh air, scenery, and historical atmosphere—that were consumed in leisure pursuits (p. 6).

The nature of those products changed over time. In Brown's first chapter, "On the Grand Tour," she observes that early nineteenth-century travelers were, perforce, members of the gentry class who had sufficient money and leisure to travel for pleasure. These tourists sought to replicate the social experiences they enjoyed at home. Only in the 1820s did scenic tourism begin to develop, moving outward from New York City along the Hudson River Valley. Facilitated by better transportation, fashionable hotels, and guidebooks, this new tourism focused on scenery rather than on urban centers of culture and commerce (p. 33).

The White Mountains, covered in chapter 2, were an early focus of this scenic tourism, enjoying immense popularity between 1830 and 1860. Romantic associations were promoted by means of an invented history, as new names were devised for familiar places, Indian legends created or embellished, and guidebooks published. By the Civil War, the promotion proved so successful that tourists overwhelmed the White Mountains.

Brown's third chapter focuses on Martha's Vineyard. Its origins as a popular summer resort lie in the Methodist camp meetings that were held there beginning in 1835. By the 1850s some families set up private tents and cottages, and Martha's Vineyard began to enjoy a popular reputation as a summer destination for middle-class families.

Nantucket, by contrast, was prized for its quiet and solitude. In reality a decaying whaling port, the town was recast for tourists as a "living museum, a storehouse for cherished ways of life that no longer seemed to exist in the cities" (p. 108). Tourists anxious to avoid the anxieties of industrial society could seek solace in the ancient, stately homes that remained "untouched" largely because their owners could not afford the costs of modernizing them. By the 1880s, Brown argues, Nantucket was marketing itself in accordance with tourists' notions of its intrinsic quaintness.

Similarly, Vermont in the 1890s embarked on a campaign to save its agricultural economy by promoting farm vacations for weary city residents. Associating the farm with childhood nostalgia and Anglo-Saxon purity, farm writers marketed the experience to urban families who came seeking wholesome food and clean country air. They often proved a mixed blessing to the farm families, however, who had to cater to their guests in addition to performing the normal work on the farm.

Brown's final nineteenth-century case is the development of southern Maine as a summer destination, beginning in 1890. Maine and the Piscataqua River towns became popular as part of the colonial revival of that period (an antiquarian revival that Jane Nylander has discussed in terms of material culture in *Our Own*

Snug Fireside). In the frenzy of restoration and re-creation that ensued, urban refugees from a chaotic realm of class and racial conflict revelled in “fantasies of an aristocratic colonial world where harmony and stability had prevailed” (p. 189). In their literature and their rituals, these temporary sojourners created a past that residents of the towns did not necessarily share.

In her epilogue, Brown suggests that transportation developments of the twentieth century changed tourism again, as the automobile replaced the railroad. Mobility, informality, and a search for privacy now characterized the tourist experience, while recreational choices broadened to include winter sports and foliage tours. Nevertheless, Brown argues, it was in the nineteenth century that New England’s tourist industry created the image of the region that is still marketed to eager consumers. Her work encourages further scrutiny of similar processes elsewhere and reminds us that tourism has genuine ideological, as well as economic, consequences for the places it touches.

—C. Elizabeth Raymond
University of Reno, Nevada