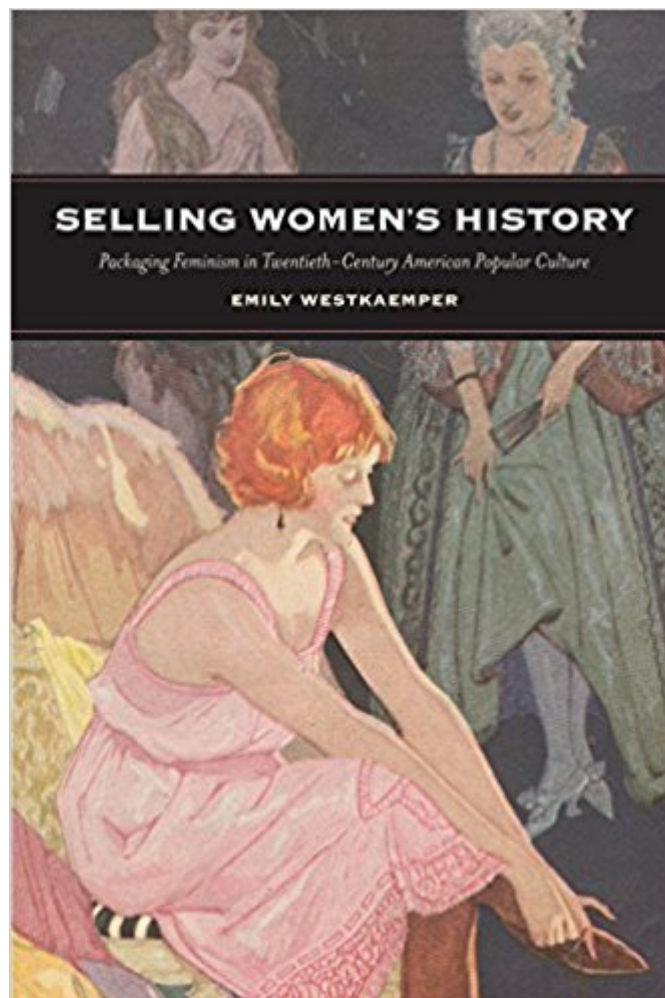




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Selling Women's History: Packaging Feminism In Twentieth-Century American Popular Culture



Synopsis

Only in recent decades has the American academic profession taken women's history seriously. But the very concept of women's history has a much longer past, one that is intimately entwined with the development of American advertising and consumer culture. *Selling Women's History* reveals how, from the 1900s to the 1970s, popular culture helped teach Americans about the accomplishments of their foremothers, promoting an awareness of women's wide-ranging capabilities. On one hand, Emily Westkaemper examines how this was a marketing ploy, as Madison Avenue co-opted women's history to sell everything from Betsy Ross Red lipstick to Virginia Slims cigarettes. But she also shows how pioneering adwomen and female historians used consumer culture to publicize histories that were ignored elsewhere. Their feminist work challenged sexist assumptions about women's subordinate roles. Assessing a dazzling array of media, including soap operas, advertisements, films, magazines, calendars, and greeting cards, *Selling Women's History* offers a new perspective on how early- and mid-twentieth-century women saw themselves. Rather than presuming a drought of female agency between the first and second waves of American feminism, it reveals the subtle messages about women's empowerment that flooded the marketplace.

Book Information

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"This original work considers the advertising women and historians who encouraged modern

American culture to continually embrace real and imagined historical women, not just as actors, but as heralding feminism." (Katherine Parkin author of *Food is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America*) "Before Women's History became an academically recognized pursuit, it developed in the marketplace. Westkaemper presents a fascinating and trenchant account of how women toiled across multiple popular sites to make history." (Nan Enstad Professor of History, University of Wisconsin, Madison) "Westkaemper argues convincingly that the very assertion that women had a history was a feminist message, and that public history could build feminist community. This book is a valuable and beautifully researched addition to an underwritten period in U.S. women's history." (Mary Trigg author of *Feminism as Life's Work: Four Modern American Women through Two World Wars*)

EMILY WESTKAEMPER is an assistant professor of history at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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