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‘A Fine Tourist Lure’: Canadian Nontheatrical Cinema and Tourism Promotion at the New York World’s Fair, 1939-1940

ABSTRACT

Using archival research, this essay examines the use of motion pictures as a nation branding strategy at international exhibitions, focusing on Canada’s participation at the 1939-40 New York World’s Fair (NYWF). At the time, corporations, industries, nations, and non-profits sponsored the production of ‘useful films’ as a storytelling device to create meaning without appearing as blatant advertising or propaganda. With their throngs of consumer- and travel-minded visitors, world’s fairs were key nontheatrical exhibition sites for these productions. The essay traces the evolution of the Dominion’s exhibition practices from displaying staple resources and recruiting British and American immigrants to tourism promotion. Meanwhile, Canada had become a pioneer in the use of film technology to publicise itself as a modern vacationland for American tourists. The combination of exhibition and film practice as tourism promotion converged at the NYWF. With the pressing need for US currency to succour Canada’s war effort, government officials wagered that adding a stand-alone film auditorium to the Canadian Pavilion in 1940, primarily screening tourism films, was the most effective way to construct a recognisable national brand aimed at fairgoers.

Keywords: tourism promotion; film; Canada; world’s fairs; Second World War; nation branding

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Introduction

In 1939, J.R. Dickson of the Dominion Forest Service returned from the New York World’s Fair (NYWF) expressing his disappointment with Canada’s pavilion. He observed that ‘many of the national and large industrial exhibitions’ kept ‘a moving picture theatre in operation where special entertaining, informative, or propaganda films were run’. Canada, however, ‘had none of these things’. He recommended the

installation of ‘a good-sized auditorium, with comfortable seats’. This, he argued, would be ‘a most useful and valuable medium of securing desired advertising through selected films’.[1] Here, Dickson was not suggesting that Canada use film necessarily to sell ‘raw wood material’ to industry nor to inform visitors how the Dominion ‘protects and renews her forests’. This was the *old* model of how nations presented themselves at world’s fair. Nowadays, the goal is to appeal to ‘the tired-business-men’s idea of seeking relaxation and recreation, rather than the locating of a new business across international frontiers’. Canada should portray itself ‘as a place to play in rather than to work in’, thereby mirroring the broader shift in US-based world’s fairs from emphasising industrial production to celebrating consumer culture during the interwar period.[2]

Dickson was not alone in viewing the NYWF as an opportune venue to stimulate tourism through motion pictures. For the fair’s second year, the Department of Trade and Commerce (DTC) established an auditorium in a neighbouring building formerly occupied by Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) during the 1939 season. There, short subjects produced by the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau (CGMP), the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the Canadian National Railways (CNR), the National Parks Branch, and the recently founded National Film Board (NFB) were exhibited. These productions emphasised Canada’s scenic beauty and recreational opportunities alongside accessibility and a modernised tourism infrastructure. Writing to D. Leo

[1] Dickson would later oversee the Exhibit of the Forestry Service, part of the Department of Mines and Resources, at the Canadian Pavilion in 1940, replacing Roy Watt. J.R. Dickson, ‘Report’, 24 November 1939, RG39 Vol. 389 File 49427, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (LAC).

[2] J.R. Dickson, ‘Dominion Forester’, 17 October 1939, RG39 Vol. 389 File 49427, LAC.

Dolan, Director of the Canadian Travel Bureau (CTB), Dickson later praised 'our splendid Cinema', pronouncing that this well-equipped theatre was 'a fine tourist lure', which encouraged visitors to 'spend their play-time with us in search of fun, beauty, sport and good health'.[1]

Using Canada's participation in the 1939-40 NYWF as a case study, this article demonstrates that stakeholders in governmental tourism agencies leveraged film exhibition at world's fairs as an innovative medium for constructing and communicating a national brand identity. International exhibitions provided nations with a unique platform to advance their cultural, economic, or political agendas. Fairs also offered opportunities for nations to learn from one another – to discover what works and what does not. Inspired by the successful cinemas in other foreign pavilions, the Canadian Pavilion thus installed a motion picture theatre for its second year at the NYWF. Government officials designed the film programme to promote Canada's destination brand to the predominantly American fairgoers, who were already in a consumption-driven mindset. As a superior form of storytelling and showmanship, motion pictures could convey dull facts and figures or complex concepts into engaging, digestible content to fairgoers, who largely visited the fair to enjoy themselves. The urgent need to promote Canada to prospective American tourists stemmed from both a decade of downturn in tourism revenues resulting from the Great Depression, as well as and the pressing need for US dollars to support Canada's war effort.

While scholars have explored the phenomenon of film- or media-induced tourism, much of the focus has been on the influence of feature films or television

[1] 'J.R. Dickson to D. Leo Dolan', 30 August 1940, RG39 Vol. 389 File 49427, LAC.

programmes as a motivators for recreational travel to specific locations.[1] Similarly, although there is a rich body of work on international expositions, the role of film exhibition in these contexts has been largely overlooked.[2] Drawing on archival research, this article focuses on nontheatrical cinema, which encompasses advertising, educational, industrial, and tourism pictures. These are typically small gauge (16mm) films, normally lasting between ten and thirty minutes (or one to three reels in length). They are produced for distribution outside the commercial theatre system, in venues such as classrooms, churches, clubs, community halls, factories, libraries, and museums, as well as exhibitions and fairs. The nontheatrical productions shown at the Canadian Pavilion were 'useful films', which Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson define as 'a body of films and technologies that perform tasks and serve as instruments in an ongoing struggle for aesthetic, social and political capital'.[3] Sponsored by various government agencies, the pavilion and its film programme was primarily aimed at branding Canada as a modern vacationland for American tourists.

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[1] Although the literature on film-induced tourism is too large to go over here, some key works are Sue Beeton, *Film-Induced Tourism* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005); Roger Riley, Dwayne Baker, and Carlton S. Van Doren, 'Movie Induced Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research* 25, no. 4 (1998): 919-35; and Rodanthi Tzanelli, *The Cinematic Tourist: Explorations in Globalization, Culture, and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[2] Some exceptions include: Monika Gagnon and Janine Marchessault, eds. *Reimagining Cinema: Film at Expo 67* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2014); Sarah Nilsen, *Projecting America, 1958: Film and Cultural Diplomacy at the Brussels World's Fair* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014).

[3] Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, *Useful Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

World's Fairs, Nation Branding, and Film

Beginning with London's 1851 Great Exposition, international exhibitions, colloquially referred to as world's fairs in North America, are mega-events akin to the Olympics or FIFA World Cup, and central to the formation of public cultures.[1] During the height of the exhibition movement, between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, these spectacles predominantly took place every few years, typically in major European and US cities and lasted an average of six months. Host cities organised these mega-events around a specific theme, and featured amusement zones (midways) and exhibits/pavilions touting accomplishments in art and consumer culture, industry, technology, and science. Requiring extensive planning and investment, these extravaganzas attracted millions of visitors and media attention. Despite their transitory nature, world's fairs were aspirational and bequeathed longstanding legacies. Boosters promoted international exhibitions for their professed ability to generate long-term economic growth, urban/regional development, and prestige.[2]

This utopian vision belies their dark underside. International exhibitions functioned as occasions for elites to promote imperialist and settler colonial agendas. Exotic displays of colonised subjects functioned as transnational spaces to exchange contemporaneous colonialist, pseudo-scientific, or Orientalist discourses surrounding

[1] Maurice Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[2] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

race and evolution.[1] As an exercise of 'soft power', pavilions also served as venues for cultural diplomacy, as well as to promote tourism and trade. Nations and cultural groups consciously used world's fairs as occasions to express themselves on the global stage through various modes of presentation - architecture, art and design, entertainment, food, and manufactured goods, as well as film.[2]

World's fairs, along with museums, can be understood as part of a wider visual 'exhibitionary complex', beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. A phrase coined by sociologist Tony Bennett, it describes 'the increasing involvement of the state in the provision of such spectacles' as a way to communicate power.[3] Since Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where photographer Eadweard Muybridge presented illustrated lectures on the science of animal locomotion, moving pictures have been a prominent feature of international expositions.[4] Unlike traditional commercial cinemas, world's fairs typically functioned as multisensory and immersive

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[1] Timothy Mitchell, 'The World as Exhibition', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 no. 2 (April 1989): 217-36.

[3] David Raizman, Ethan Robey, and Jørn Guldberg, eds., *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851-1915* (London: Routledge, 2018); Elfie Rembold, 'Exhibitions and National Identity', *National Identities* 1, no. 3 (1999): 221-25; Katherine Smits and Alix Jansen, 'Staging the Nation at Expos and World's Fairs', *National Identities* 14, no. 2 (2012): 173-188.

[3] Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', in *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Jeannene M. Przyblyski and Vanessa R. Schwartz (New York: Routledge, 2004), 122.

[4] Marta Braun, *Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 229. Ottomar Anschütz also demonstrated his Tachyscope (Schnellseher), a coin-operated disk that projected moving sequential images onto a small screen, in the Electricity Building.

environments providing opportunities for innovation and interaction. Appearing as a film programme in dedicated auditoriums or continuously projected amidst various other physical or visual displays, film exhibition ranged from simple portable projectors and screens to experimental installations, including colour, IMAX, multi-screen, three-dimension, and 360-degree presentations. In these alternative screening spaces, in which the fairgoer becomes both spectator and participant, film presentation was thus highly flexible and adaptable making it a popular choice for a wide range of exhibitors.

Film at international expositions provided corporations, educational institutions, governmental agencies, and non-profits with a powerful storytelling tool to publicise various products, services, and ideas to visitors in an educational yet entertaining manner. As a 'short cut to knowledge', film instructed fairgoers on advancements in such diverse areas as civics, health and cleanliness, physical culture, schooling, and science.[1] Corporate exhibits presented motion pictures not as advertising per se but rather as a publicity medium to create meaning - to convey the brand's identity and express its values and purpose. 'The motion picture *is* the exhibitor's ace drawing card', noted *Business Screen Magazine*, and is of key importance in sending the visitor away with a memorable experience associated with the exhibit'.[2] Films at the NYWF would

[1] New York Museum of Science and Industry, *Exhibition Techniques: A Summary of Exhibition Practice* (New York: New York Museum of Science and Industry, 1940), 25.

[2] 'The World's Fair Survey of Motion Pictures and Slidefilms at the Fairs', *Business Screen Magazine* 2, no. 1 (1939), 22.

consequently 'play a pre-eminent part in enhancing the story-telling technique of the respective exhibits'.[1]

Nations recognised that film, in conjunction with surrounding displays, was a cutting-edge branding tool, offering an effective way to project core identities and images on an international platform without appearing as blatant propaganda.[2] In this cordial yet competitive environment, national exhibitors surmised that motion pictures could actuate recreational travel by distinguishing their brand from other destinations. This could be accomplished, for instance, by promoting narratives that highlighted the distinctiveness of a particular nation's culture, history, or scenery. The power of tourism films lay in their ability to inspire travel, while concomitant brochures, maps, and other tangible promotional materials, alongside conversations with informed exhibitors, could help seal the deal. Providing opportunities for direct interaction with a mass audience of locals and visitors, world's fairs were themselves tourist attractions that provided an ideal intermedial environment to encourage fairgoers to plan future travel.

At American world's fairs, national pavilions, that is, ones officially sponsored by the country's government as opposed to the commercial ethnographic/cultural villages in amusement zones, began to incorporate motion pictures as a form of tourism promotion as early as the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San

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[1] 'Moving Pictures at the Fair', n.d., Box 147, Folder 6, Motion Pictures A-I, *New York World's Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, 1935-1945*, New York Public Library (NYPL).

[2] On nation branding see Wally Olins, 'Branding the Nation - the Historical Context', *Journal of Brand Management* 9, no. 4-5 (2002): 241-49.

Francisco.[1] Argentina, Cuba, Guatemala, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden each included tourism films in their buildings. The international drive to stimulate tourism from the United States deepened during the interwar period. By the 1920s, the size and diversity of American tourists expanded as a greater number of lower-wage workers, immigrants, and people of colour joined the ranks of middle-class and elite vacationers. This is largely due to a combination of factors, including the rise in paid vacations, the reorientation of American culture around leisure and consumption, and an expanding tourism infrastructure.[2] While the bordering nations of Canada and Mexico attracted the bulk of tourists from the United States, the number of American vacationers overseas also increased this period. Despite the financial hardships of the Great Depression, Americans continued to travel both at home and abroad, though the numbers did drop in the initial years following the stock market crash of October 1929. By the early 1930s, various New Deal initiatives and corporate welfare programmes, such as expanding paid vacations to industrial labourers, further stimulated tourism.[3]

By this time, nations throughout Europe and beyond reckoned that a robust tourism industry presented an economic panacea due to its potential to generate wealth

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[1] Dmitrio Latsis, 'Films at the Fairs: Cinema at the San Francisco and San Diego International Expositions of 1915', *Canadian Review of American Studies* 52, no. 2 (2022): 241-52. National pavilions were first introduced at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867.

[2] Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 207.

[3] Aron, *Working at Play*, 237-57; Michael Berkowitz, 'A 'New Deal' for Leisure: Making Mass Tourism during the Great Depression, in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America,* ed. Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 185-212.

with minimal outlay. In his 1933 statistical analysis of tourist expenditures, economist Frederick W. Ogilvie argues that modern nations appreciated how 'the great moving markets of tourists' was 'an important factor in many of the balances of payments in international trade'.[1] Recognising the importance of US dollars to their economies, Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Japan, to name a few, invested in official bureaus to solicit tourists from the United States.[2]

In addition to circulating print advertising in newspapers, magazines, posters, and brochures, tourism boosters produced or sponsored motion pictures 'to stimulate foreign interest in their respective countries'.[3] This occurred partly because of the emergence of a transnational film culture in the 1920s wherein the medium began to be 'taken seriously as an aesthetic object and social force'. Moving into the decidedly nationalist atmosphere of the 1930s, state officials increasingly embraced nontheatrical film as an effective instrument to educate or influence society 'by way of guiding the

[1] Frederick Wolff Ogilvie, *The Tourist Movement; an Economic Study* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1933), vii.

[2] US tourists would presumably pump much-needed American currency into European economies following the First World War. This pattern repeated after the Second World War. See Sara Fieldston, ''Our Dollars Are Celebrities Abroad': American Tourists, Consumption, and Power after World War II', *Journal of Tourism History* 11, no. 2 (2019): 187-207.

[3] Herbert Max Bratter, *The Promotion of Tourist Travel by Foreign Countries* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1931), 5.

individual (or groups) towards desired behaviour and reaction'.[1] This resulted in a new direction in the travelogue genre.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, spectators in the United States had largely encountered travel films produced by such illustrated travel lecturers as Burton Holmes or Lyman H. Howe. By the early 1930s, Hollywood-produced series, most notably James A. Fitzpatrick's TravelTalks for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer or Universal's Going Places, became key components of a balanced programme of entertainment in theatrical cinema, which included one or two feature films alongside various short subjects such as travelogues, newsreels, and cartoons.[2] Meanwhile, the Eastman Kodak Company had introduced a combination camera and projector that used 16mm safety reversal film stock in 1923. Relatively inexpensive and accessible, this became the standard for nontheatrical cinema exhibition and distribution. With the wide availability of 16mm, nations increasingly began to invest in the production of their own tourism films thereby seizing the narrative of how they presented themselves to the American tourism market and beyond.

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[1] Malte Hagener, 'The Emergence of Film Culture,' in The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building, and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945', ed. Malte Hagener (New York: Bergahn Books, 2014), 1-2.

[2] On the history of travelogues in the United States, see X. Theodore Barber, 'The Roots of Travel Cinema: John L. Stoddard, E. Burton Holmes and the Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Travel Lecture', *Film History* 5, no. 1 (1993): 68-84; Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Jeffrey Ruoff, ed., *Virtual Voyages Cinema and Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

As ‘global platforms of exchange’, and with their throngs of potential holidaymakers, American world’s fairs emerged as key venues to display these productions and provided a potentially lucrative avenue for brand recognition and tourism promotion by the 1930s.[1] As the depression hit its arguable nadir, Chicago’s 1933 A Century of Progress Exposition emphasised corporate pavilions, alongside exhibit halls devoted to science and technology. The Travel and Transport Building showcased achievements in automobiles, aviation, railroads, and ships, and included Canadian tourism displays. China, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Italy, Japan, Spain, and Sweden erected stand-alone pavilions.[2]

Foreign participation was much more prominent at the NYWF, which officially opened on 30 April 1939 in Flushing Meadows Park in the Borough of Queens, and extended into a second year before closing on 26 October 1940. Promoted as ‘The World of Tomorrow’, the fair exuded optimism for the future in the face of the lingering financial crisis and growing hostilities in Europe and Asia. Corporations, industries, and nations endeavoured to craft representations of themselves that served this forward-

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[1] Eric Storm and Joep Leersen, ‘Introduction’, in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851-1958*, ed. Eric Storm and Joep Leersen (Leiden: BRILL, 2022), 1-2. Although below the peak year of 1929, expenditures by American tourists abroad began an upward trend beginning in 1934 - going from an estimated 71 million in 1933 to 156 million in 1937. United States, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *The Balance of International Payments of the United States* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 1941), 31.

[2] Century of Progress International Exposition, *Official Guide: Book of the Fair* (Chicago: A Century of Progress, 1933), 92-94; Cheryl R. Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair: A Century of Progress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 123-36.

looking vision of consumer abundance and technological innovation. With NYWF President Grover Whalen promising an estimated 61,000,000 paid admissions, the exhibition presented a golden opportunity for nations to showcase what they had to offer to potential tourists.[1] According to Whalen, sixty nations (including the League of Nations) exhibited at the fair, 'intent on advancing self-interest by furthering the sum total of international understanding'.[2]

Locations around the Lagoon of Nations, an oval-shaped water feature with lighted fountains and night-time fireworks, were reserved for official foreign exhibits. Fair organizers also provided space, free of charge, in the Hall of Nations, a group of eight buildings flanking the Court of Peace. Several Latin American countries, including Columbia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala, set up in the Pan-American Union Pavilion. About thirty nations (including Canada) erected stand-alone pavilions at their own expense, and most of these maintained an in-house tourism or information bureau devoted to assisting prospective travellers. Of these, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Czechoslovakia, France, Japan, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom (including Australia, New Zealand, and the British Colonial Empire), and the USSR/Russia maintained film auditoriums. While at the Hall of Nations, Cuba, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Finland, Iceland, Iraq, and Siam (Thailand) regularly screened motion pictures. Roughly 75% of films in the Government Zone were in 16mm, and exhibitors were required to adhere to specific

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[1] 'Fairs Await Vacation-Period Lift', *Barron's*, 19 June 1939, 10.

[2] William Bernbach, Clarence Pearson Horaung, and Herman Jaffe, *Book of Nations, New York World's Fair* (New York: Winkler & Kelmans, 1939), 7. Edward F. Roosevelt was Director of Foreign Participation for the NYWF.

regulations governing unionised operators, the construction of proper booths, equipment, lighting, aisles, ventilation, seating, and storage of film stock.[1]

During the fair's first season, the British Pavilion screened the most films with a total of 141. Brazil, with 82 films was second, followed by France, which screened 72 motion pictures. According to Claude Collins, Director of the NYWF Newsreel and Film Department, 'almost every foreign nation represented' employed films 'to carry the message of their national progress to the vast audience'.[2] By and large, this message was tourist-oriented. As one contemporary observer notes, 'The foreign film shows are virtually all of a travelogue character ... These are for the most part of eight or ten minutes duration, and are screened with greatest turnover possibilities in mind'.[3] According to the NYWF Motion Picture Index for 1939, approximately 400 motion pictures screened by foreign exhibitors were categorised as biographic, documentary, educational, historical, industrial, miscellaneous, natural history, scientific, and sport. Tourism films made up nearly half of this total.[4]

Certainly, foreign nations, as well as commercial and educational exhibitors, utilised film to an unprecedented extent in the NYWF's first season. More than 600 motion pictures were exhibited free of charge to an estimated audience of 20 million. As

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[1] E.F. Roosevelt, 'Films', 6 March 1939, Box 1488, Folder 3, NYPL; 'Official Interpretations of World's Fair Building Code,' 1 February 1939, Box 1488, Folder 3, NYPL; 'Instructions and Regulations Concerning the Use of Motion Picture Apparatus and Film at the New York World's Fair 1939', n.d., Box 1488, Folder 3, NYPL.

[2] Claude Collins, 'Survey of Films Foreign and US Government Bldg.', 3 February 1940, Box 398, Folder 10, NYPL.

[3] Leonard Weisberg, '52,000 Amusements Seats at New York Fair', *Boxoffice*, 11 May 1940, 26.

[4] 'Motion Picture Index for 1939', n.d., Box 1983, Folder 7, NYPL.

Haidee Wasson articulates, the 'film screen' at the NYWF was a 'technological tapestry exulting the virtues of corporate innovation, efficiency and benevolence'. Some exhibitors made use of screen technology in very creative ways, including television (RCA), 3-D (Chrysler), stop-motion animation (Petroleum Industry), and panoramic images (Kodak's Cavalcade of Color). Most exhibitors, including foreign nations, employed transportable and small-screen technologies to show educational, industrial, and, above all, tourism films.[1] Whether it was promoting the automobile industry or branding a tourist destination, motion pictures at the fair had one important task - to attract 'the largest possible percentage' of fairgoers and hold 'their attentive interest for the longest possible time'. An investment in film exhibition, in turn, would pay dividends in 'more sales or an improvement in the public's attitude toward his product or service'.[2] Modern, air-conditioned theatres also offered weary fairgoers with a cool and comfortable place to rest their tired feet, thus providing exhibitors a captive audience.[3]

For the 1940 NYWF season, several foreign exhibitors pulled out of the fair, most notably the USSR, which had boasted one of the largest film theatres with seating for 350. These absences enabled other exhibitors to expand into those vacated spaces. Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), a self-governing colony, which joined Great Britain's

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[1] Haidee Wasson, 'The Other Small Screen: Moving Images at the New York World's Fair', *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 82.

[2] 'The World's Fair Survey of Motion Pictures and Slidefilms at the Fairs', *Business Screen*, 2 no. 1 (1939), 21.

[3] 'New York Fair Films', *Business Screen*, 2, no. 3 (1940), 34; 'Films at the New York World's Fair', *National Board of Review* (September 1940), 9.

war effort, was the first 'war casualty', announcing on 11 September 1939 that it had shuttered its doors for the remainder of the year and would not return.[1] Located next to the Canadian Pavilion, separated by a partition, the Dominion would refurbish this small building and install an air-conditioned cinema in the spring of 1940. In this 205-seat-auditorium, Canada, which had officially entered the war on 10 September 1939, would advertise that it was still open to 'His Majesty, The American Tourist' and his 'coveted' US dollar.[2]

Exhibiting Canada: From Promoting Settlement to Tourism

Beginning with London's 1851 Crystal Palace, Canada has been an active participant in international expositions recognising that these transient mega-events proffered long lasting promotional value. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, exhibits focused on showcasing manufactured goods and staple products from agriculture, the fisheries, forestry, and mining to encourage foreign investment (particularly in mining), immigration (especially agricultural), and favourable trade relations. The goal was 'to convince people that it was a Canadian exhibit and not a gathering of separate provinces', presenting Canada as a young self-governing land of wealth and opportunity within the British imperial family of nations.[3] This cultural and

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[1] *New York Times*, 12 September 1939, 22. Southern Rhodesia maintained its concession in the amusement area, a replica of the famous Victoria Falls.

[2] Roger Lane Parker, 'His Majesty, the American Tourist', *Travel* (November 1939): 40.

[3] Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, 'Report of the Minister of Agriculture for the fiscal year ended 31st March, 1909 (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1909), 98. Between 1841 and 1867 the Province of Canada comprised what is now Ontario and Quebec. In 1867, the Province of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia joined through Confederation to form the Dominion

nationalist strategy perpetuated a dominant, settler colonial narrative with its logic of assimilation and dispossession. Ranging from timber, sheaves of grain, and minerals to pianos and paintings, these objects offered a 'peculiar single vision on the transformation of Canada from colony to nation', one that was contingent upon the ongoing removal of Indigenous communities.[1] Canada's story at these early exhibitions was one written and narrated by the government and illustrative of its contemporaneous priorities, policies, and practices.[2]

In 1901, the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission (CGEC) was established within the Department of Agriculture, with William Hutchinson appointed as Exhibition Commissioner. Hutchinson oversaw a small staff charged with collecting, installing, and maintaining official exhibits. Prior to the end of the First World War, advertising Canada as a tourist destination (primarily for fish and game enthusiasts) was secondary to characterising the nation as hospitable for permanent settlers. The Department of the Interior supplied immigration officers while the Department of Agriculture furnished brochures and pamphlets, primarily targeting potential farmers from the United Kingdom and the United States, encouraging them to settle in the Canadian Northwest. As Hutchinson writes regarding the Dominion's participation at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, 'Canada being at a very

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of Canada. Over the next century, the country expanded to include a total of 10 provinces and 3 territories.

[1] Stuart Murray, 'Canadian Participation and National Representation at the 1851 London Great Exhibition and the 1855 Paris Exposition Universelle', *Histoire Sociale* 32, no. 63 (1999), 2.

[2] Elsbeth Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society During the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 142.

important stage of her national development, and having entered upon the highway of an unprecedented prosperity, the opportunity of bringing her natural resources and her broad areas of fertile lands awaiting settlement more conspicuously before the eyes of the world, was not to be lost, and the government of the Dominion among other foreign countries, decided to participate'.[1]

The importance of recruiting settlers, mainly at state and county fairs in the United States, trade fairs in Western Europe, and imperial exhibits in the United Kingdom, became clearer when the CGEC became part of the Department of Immigration and Colonization as of 1 July 1918, with A.W. Tolmie as the new commissioner. By investing in 'striking and attractive' exhibits, Tolmie's directive was twofold: first, to 'impress the name "Canada"' on the minds of American and British farmers to encourage settlement; and, second, to remind 'capitalists' that 'Canada has something to offer'.[2] Gradually over the next two decades, exhibits embraced a more contemporary style to conjure a post-Victorian identity. A streamlined, smooth, and shiny look, part of a wider aesthetic shift associated with modernism, contrasted the older model of static and object-heavy displays. Exhibitors turned to mechanical movement, symptomatic of the machine age, in their increasingly sophisticated presentations; changing lights, automatic lantern slides, and motion pictures provided visual appeal to entice and engage fairgoers. Incorporating film would thus become

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[1] Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, WM. Hutchinson, 'Report of the Canadian Commission to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, U.S.A., 1904' (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906), 54.

[2] Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, A.W. Tolmie, 'Report of Canadian Exhibition Commission' (Ottawa: n.p., 1921), 35. The Department of Immigration and Colonization was in existence between 1917 and 1936.

central to this modernisation project and would help forge a new brand for the Dominion, that of an accessible, friendly, and up-to-date tourist destination.

In 1918, spurred by a wave of wartime nationalism, the Dominion formally established the Exhibits and Publicity Bureau (EPB) within the DTC. Under the leadership of B.E. Norrish, its mandate was to publicise Canadian products and destinations abroad through displays of trade items, photographs, lantern slides, and, above all, motion pictures. Based in Ottawa, this was the first known state-sponsored organization designed to manufacture and distribute useful films explicitly to attract external trade and tourist traffic.[1] In addition to its own productions, the EPB would also produce and release films for such federal agencies as the departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Immigration and Colonization.

Prior to the formation of the EPB, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), in collaboration with US-based commercial film companies (Biograph and Edison), spearheaded films promoting colonisation and/or tourism. For example, L.O. Armstrong, official lecturer of the CPR, planned a series of moving pictures 'of all parts of Canada that are likely to attract tourists and settlers' at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exhibition in San Francisco.[2] Upon the recommendation of J. Murray Gibbon, General Publicity Agent of the CPR (1913-45), in 1916 Trade and Commerce Minister Sir George Foster (1911-21) engaged Essanay, a Chicago-based film company, to produce a collection of industrial and scenic (tourism) pictures. Recognising the value of this publicity scheme, government officials ultimately reasoned that a centralised film plant

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[1] Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 131-33. The EPB unofficially began in January 1917.

[2] *Moving Picture World*, 2 January 1915, 107.

housed within the DTC would be more cost effective and would provide more control over national publicity efforts.[1]

Beginning in 1918, the EPB launched *Seeing Canada*, a series of silent, black-and-white, short films to spread 'the Gospel of Canada' throughout the world. The EPB, renamed the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau (CGMPB) in 1923, produced for domestic and worldwide distribution educational, industrial, and tourism films on a bi-weekly basis to be screened in such nontheatrical settings as churches, clubs, fairs, and schools, where they were frequently accompanied by a lecturer. According to Raymond S. Peck, who became director of the EPB/CGMPB in 1920, film represented a cutting-edge way to brand the Dominion. 'In days gone by tons of immigration literature and propaganda in all forms have been scattered over the Seven Seas - but now', he writes, 'the narrow strip of celluloid film, barely more than an inch wide, is winding itself round and round this old globe of ours ... Canada is taking a prominent part in getting a strangle-hold on the world's attention by means of motion pictures!'[2]

Canada's government-sponsored film production agenda was in step with broader movements in visual education and cinematographic publicity. Beginning in 1910s, progressive educators and social reformers embraced film as an innovative pedagogical tool to facilitate learning and retention both within and outside of the

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[1] 'B.E. Norrish to F.C.T. O'Hara', 19 February 1918, RG20 107 2489 Vol. 1, LAC. Norrish had overseen the Essanay film unit while they were filming in Canada.

[2] Raymond S. Peck, 'Advertising Canada in Motion Pictures,' *Industrial Canada* (December 1919), 60-61. Norrish left the EPB to head Associated Screen News (ASN), which mainly produced travelogues (Kinograms), newsreels, and other film shorts for its largest shareholder, the CPR.

classroom, including world's fairs.[1] At the same time, industries, companies, and tourism promoters recognised that film could also market an array of products and services. As British journalist Ernest A. Dench argues, 'if done on the right lines', a film encouraging tourism 'does not appear to be an ad. Motion-picture fans ... have become so accustomed to seeing scenics and educationals that they would not realise the true object of city boosters and Chambers of Commerce'.[2] Under the aegis of education, *Seeing Canada* functioned as subtle advertising that graphically illustrated 'its national attractions, agreeable climate, historical associations, up-to-date cities, big-game hunting possibilities, unrivalled fishing resorts and unsurpassed scenery'. Moreover, these publicity films would (hopefully) correct any false impressions that Canada was a barren land of perpetual ice and snow, a visual representation popularised in contemporaneous Hollywood feature films set in the imaginary Canadian Northwest, which could negatively impact tourism.[3]

By the 1920s, the DTC recognised that tourism could be classed as the nation's 'Fourth Industry', and that CGMPB films played 'a crucial part in helping to develop and maintain this lucrative trade'.[4] The primacy of tourism promotion over immigration recruitment in exhibition practices was equally made clear on 1 December 1927 when

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[1] Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

[2] Ernest A. Dench, *Advertising by Motion Pictures* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1916), 97.

[3] Raymond S. Peck, 'Publicity Pictures as Used by the Canadian Government', *Educational Screen* (January 1926), 45-47.

[4] Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers* 'Report of the Deputy Minister, 14 August 1924 (Ottawa: n.p., 1925), 30.

the CGEC was transferred to the DTC.[1] Recognising that much of the CGEC's exhibition work took place in Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, most of its materials and staff moved from Ottawa to London, England, which had become a centre for 'avant-garde and modern trends' in exhibition display.[2]

After a decade or so of expansion in the tourism industry, Canada's tourist trade 'showed a marked contraction' during the first years of the depression. In 1933, the total expenditure of foreign (mostly American) tourists had only been $117,124,000 compared with $309,379,000 in 1929, the peak year before the crash.[3] Recognising the economic significance of a robust tourist trade to Canada's international balance of payments, the 1934 Senate Committee on Tourist Traffic recommended creating a centralised bureau. It also recognised the promotional power of tourism films and

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[1] The CGEC geared its activities to assist Canadian producers and manufacturers 'to direct attention in overseas markets to the variety and merits of their products'. Canada, Department of Trade and Commerce, *Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Department of Trade and Commerce for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1938* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938), 42.

[2] The Canadian Manufacturer's Association and the Trade Commissioner Service, which had developed close relationships with the CGEC in the 1920s, suggested this transfer. F.P. Cosgrove was placed in charge of the Ottawa office of the CGEC. Alexandra Marie Mosquin, 'Advertising Canada Abroad: Canada on Display at International Exhibitions, 1920-1940' (PhD Dissertation, York University, 2003), 6, 83.

[3] Canada, Department of Trade and Commerce, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 'Weekly Bulletin' no. 77 (7 April 1934), 4, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/statcan/11-002/CS11-002-77-1934-eng.pdf (accessed 31 October 2023).

nontheatrical distribution.[1] Beginning in August 1934 under the directorship of D. Leo Dolan, who remained in this position until 1957, the Canadian Travel Bureau (CTB) henceforth coordinated the activities of public and private tourist agencies throughout the provinces. The CGEC (exhibition), CGMPB (film), and CTB (tourism) were now all under the same DTC umbrella, facilitating the coordinated promotion of Canada as a tourism destination through motion pictures at world's fairs. This consolidation of bureaucratic administration was characteristic of the settler state's biopolitical mechanisms of power as theorised in Michel Foucault's concept of 'governmentality'.[2]

Thanks to the CTB's ardent promotion of Canada as a friendly neighbour to American tourists, and under the leadership of Capt. Frank C. Badgley (1927-1941), the CGMPB's circulation of roughly 1,800 'propaganda films of Canadian scenery', tourism revenues began to rise by 1936.[3] Yet Canada's entry into the Second World War in the summer of 1939 once again threatened its tourism industry, as the nation devoted its resources to the war effort. Government officials nevertheless understood

[1] Canada, Senate, Report and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Tourist Traffic (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1934). Dominique Brégent-Heald, 'Vacationland: Film, Tourism, and Selling Canada, 1934-1948, *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 21 no. 2 (2012): 27-48.

[2] Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

[3] 'Press Release', 12 December 1936, MG 30 E259 Vol. 1, Minister Folder 2, D. Leo Dolan Fonds, LAC; Paul Rotha, *Celluloid: The Film to-Day* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931), 63. Badgley became director of the CGMPB after Raymond Peck died suddenly in 1927.

that ongoing overtures to the lucrative American tourist market was a matter of fiscal necessity.[1]

During meetings of the Economic Advisory Committee, Clifford Clark (committee chair and Deputy Minister of Finance) noted that 'the tourist trade was an important factor and probably represented the easiest way of expanding our receipts of United States dollars'. Speaking before the advisory body, Dolan argued that the most pressing issue was 'to inform the tourists that war conditions would not interfere with their traveling and vacations in Canada'. Specifically, he wanted to convince American tourists, who normally vacationed in Europe, but were prevented due to unsettled conditions overseas, to come to Canada.[2] In less tangible terms, a thriving tourist trade could also foster mutual understanding and deepen the social and cultural bonds between Americans and Canadians during wartime. With its crowds of consumer- and travel-minded fairgoers, the Dominion's continuing participation in the second season of the NYWF would thus provide a great opportunity to broadcast that it was business as usual in the Canadian vacationland. Film, in conjunction with exhibit displays, would be the medium to convey this message.

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[1] Dominique Brégent-Heald, '"Come to Canada": Wartime Tourism Promotion and the Amateur Film Movement', *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 31, no. 1 (2022): 23-48.

[2] Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King appointed the advisory body, consisted of ranking government officials and senior deputy ministers, in September 1939 to provide guidance on economic policies related to Canada's war effort. 'Minutes of the Economic Advisory Committee on a discussion concerning the Tourist Trade', 16 March 1940, Tourism, Suggestions and General Correspondence Re: Committee on Travel and Tourist Industry, RG20-A-5 1563 T3200-75, Vol. 2, LAC.

Visualising the Canadian Vacationland at the NYWF

Building on the successes of the CGEC at trade fairs and empire exhibitions in the United Kingdom during the 1920s and early 1930s, Exhibition Commissioner J.O. Turcotte ramped up the Dominion's participation in international exhibitions, 'where the enhancement of national prestige was the major objective'.[1] The Canadian Pavilion at the Paris 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, however, was mostly disappointing. The Canadian architect John M. Lyle called the exhibit 'unbelievably bad'.[2] Emphasising advancements in science and technology alongside artistic achievements, the Paris exhibition was in line with late 1930s modernity. But Canada's building appeared out of step with this vision. Designed by Quebec-based sculptor Émile Brunet, the edifice, which sat under the shadow of the Eiffel Tower (itself an international exposition artefact), 'symbolically represents the Dominion's greatest grain storage elevators'.[3] Spanning approximately 8,000 square feet, the indoor exhibits featured handicrafts, canned fruit, wood, fur, and mineral specimens, while the CNR and CPR advertised the Dominion's tourist attractions.[4]

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[1] Mary O. Hill, *Canada's Salesman to the World: The Department of Trade and Commerce* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1977), 377. J. Oscar Turcotte, a civil servant turned chief of the designing and decorative division of the CGEC, became Exhibition Commissioner in 1926 after Tolmie resigned. R. (Robert) L. Greene became Chief Decorator and Designer upon Turcotte's promotion.

[2] John M. Lyle, 'The Paris Exposition of 1937', *Journal, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 14, no. 10 (October 1937), 202.

[3] *Toronto Daily Star*, 2 July 1937, 2.

[4] David Cloutier, 'Le Canada et l'Exposition universelle de Paris 1937, une occasion manquée?' *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 20, no. 1 (2011): 54-59.

Although one could argue that the streamlined and unadorned concrete grain elevators represented a type of modernist aesthetic, as Guillaume Evrard contends, government officials concluded that the pavilion and its exhibits were 'dull and old-fashioned'. The upcoming NYWF would provide an occasion to demonstrate that Canada was actually a 'young and virile country full of opportunities and prospects'.[1]

This confidence aligned with the NYWF's 'world of tomorrow' theme and its utopic dreams of prosperity, innovation, and efficiency. Canada would stand alongside other nations, each functioning as 'dramatic displays of their own national versions of modernity'.[2] Incorporating Canadian materials and furnishings wherever possible, the pavilion was 'modern in every respect'.[3] W.F. Williams, whose proposal won a Dominion-wide competition, designed the sleek, white stucco building, which stood in

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[1] Guillaume Evrard, 'Producing and Consuming Agricultural Capital: The Aesthetics and Cultural Politics of Grain Elevators at the 1937 Paris International Exposition', in *Culture, Capital, and Representation*, ed. Robert J. Balfour (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 148-68; 'Showmanship', n.d. R214-232-5-E Vol. 389 File 49427 -1, LAC; 'Memo', Department of Trade and Commerce, Publicity Branch, 16 September 1938, R214-232-5-E Vol. 389 File 49427 -1, LAC.

[2] Robert H. Kargon, Karen Fiss, Morris Low, and Arthur P. Molella, 'World's Fairs, Modernity, and the Demand for Authenticity', in *World's Fairs on the Eve of War: Science, Technology, and Modernity, 1937-1942*, ed. Robert H. Kargon, Karen Fiss, Morris Low, and Arthur P. Molella (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 1.

[3] 'Department of Trade and Commerce, Publicity Branch', 16 September 1938, RG39 vol. 389 file 49427, LAC; Elspeth Cowell, 'The Canadian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair and the Development of Modernism in Canada', *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 19, no. 1 (1994): 13-20.

sharp contrast to two colourful 17-foot tall totem poles commissioned from Kwakwaka'wakw artist Mungo Martin of Alert Bay, British Columbia.[1] Contrasting the agrarian feel of the grain silos in Paris two years earlier, according to Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce J.G. Parmelee, the department 'ventured on a radical departure from the customary standards of exhibition work', which he considers 'one of the higher types of advertising'.[2]

The building's interior was an open hall divided into exhibition spaces coordinated and executed by James Crockart, a Montreal-based commercial artist and architect, and Robert L. Greene of the CGEC. Their design approach stressed 'modern showmanship' - a buzzword of the period. Dioramas, murals, sculptures, large silk transparencies, and photomontages graphically highlighted Canada's seemingly unlimited natural resources in agriculture, hydropower, forestry, and mining. Rather than looking to the past, exhibits aimed to epitomise life in the present day, as well as the promise of tomorrow. To that end, the pavilion placed 'special emphasis' upon 'the tourist and recreational possibilities of the Dominion', as seen in the CTB and National Parks Branch exhibits. Nova Scotia, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward

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[1] This indicated a shift in government policy to 'revive' Northwest Coast Indigenous arts particularly aimed at settler tourists. Leslie Dawn, 'Cross-Border Trading: Mungo Martin Carves for the World of Tomorrow', *BC Studies* 159 (Autumn 2008), 4.

[2] J.G. Parmelee, 'Canada's Participation in the World's Fair', *Canadian Geographical Journal* 19, no. 1 (1939): 87-93. A.T. Seaman was appointed commissioner general for Canadian participation. After he suffered a heart attack in January 1939, Parmelee became largely responsible for coordinating the Canadian effort. The DTC budgeted $400,000 for the Canadian Pavilion and its government exhibits. Canada, House of Commons Debates, 18th Parliament, 4th Session, Vol. 4, 25 May 1939, 4579.

Island, along with the CNR and CPR, also set up exhibits within the pavilion 'to enable a comprehensive picture of tourism and travel'. The CPR booth, for example, displayed tiny trains and automobiles traveling through a diorama of Banff Springs, Alberta, complete with miniatures of its luxury hotel and points of interest in the Bow Valley, creating a three-dimensional effect.[1]

Describing the pavilion, the Commissioner General for Canadian Participation stated that the exhibits tell Canada's story, and make 'a direct appeal to all types and all classes of visitors' by appealing to 'the tired business man as well as the vacationist seeking new territories to visit'.[2] In what we would refer to today as a branding strategy, the displays conveyed idealised representations of Canada to attract prospective visitors from the average 20,000 daily sightseers during the fair's first season. Through 'the brush of the painter, the tools of the sculptor, and the camera of the photographer', fairgoers encountered Canada's beauty spots from coast to coast, as well as summer and winter sports, wildlife, 'and the comforts and conveniences of various types of travel'. By presenting its 'outstanding tourist appeal', the Dominion positioned itself as 'a young and progressive country'.[3]

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[1] 'Canadian Pavilion', n.d., Box 303, Folder 7, NYPL. Federal government exhibitors at the Canadian Pavilion were the National Parks Branch, Department of Mines and Resources (Forestry Service; Mines and Geology Branch; Water and Power Bureau), Department of Fisheries, Department of Agriculture, and the CTB – the latter exhibit was overseen by Chas. W. Barry. See 'Exhibitors at Canadian Pavilion World's Fair, N.Y.', 27 October 1939, Box 303, Folder 1, NYPL. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick did not participate in 1940. There were no private manufacturing or industrial concerns in the Canadian Pavilion.

[2] 'Statement of A.T. Seaman', n.d., Box 303, Folder 7, NYPL.

[3] Parmelee, 'Canada's Participation in the World's Fair', 85, 87, 92.

Initial feedback was positive. After the fair's first six months, R.M. Watt, who was overseeing the National Parks Exhibit within the Canadian Pavilion, observed that 'the American people' were 'most generous in praise'. It was 'apparent', he added, that by 'featuring displays with a common interest', the pavilion 'captured the imagination of the visiting public and won its approval'. Conversely, he added, other foreign exhibits 'featured too many manufactured products, and gave no idea of the ordinary everyday life'.[1] However, there were detractors who criticised the pavilion for what they called an 'unimaginative presentation of toy railways, mines and stage scenery, divorced altogether from people, government and national culture'.[2] Acclaimed Canadian architect and urban planner Humphrey Carver called the pavilion a 'scene of humiliation' for its reliance on a 'profusion of publicity clichés'. While other nations 'speak', he claimed, the Dominion 'stutters'.[3] Would the addition of a cinema enable Canada to have a voice? Could the addition of motion pictures provide a way for the Dominion to balance the goal of expressing national identity while recognising that tourism promotion was a way to solicit much-needed US currency during wartime?

Like Carver, John Grierson, an originator of the British Documentary Movement, had been publicly critical of Canada's reliance on staid tourism tropes in its film productions. In the spring of 1938, he had visited Ottawa to survey the Dominion's governmental film activities resulting in the NFB's establishment a year later. While he

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[1] R.M. Watt, 'Some Observations Made at the World's Fairs, 1939 with Special Reference to National Parks and Travel,' n.d., 2-4, RG39 vol. 389 File 49427-2, LAC.

[2] 'Editorial', *Journal, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16, no. 8 (August 1939), 180.

[3] Humphrey Carver, 'Canada at the Fair', *Journal, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16, no. 8 (August 1939), 184, 192.

admired the CGMPB's expansive nontheatrical distribution network, Grierson observed that the bureau did not live up to its creative potential in production. He advocated using film to propagandise national prestige instead of appealing exclusively 'to moneyed people with a passion for trout fishing'.[1] This did not mean that Grierson opposed using film to promote Canada's scenic beauty; rather, he advocated for a realist approach to tourism films – one that depicted daily life and stirred the public conscience. Appointed the NFB's first commissioner, a position he sustained throughout the war, Grierson set out to apply to Canadian films his principles of documentary - a 'new and vital art form' that embraced 'the cinema's capacity for getting around, for observing and selecting from life itself'.[2]

Prior to assuming NFB leadership, in July 1939 Grierson briefly visited the NYWF.[3] He had been outspoken regarding the type of films selected for the British Pavilion, which was calculated to nudge the United States away from its official stance of neutrality and deepen the Anglo-American relationship.[4] Instead of picturing Britain

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[1] *The Citizen* (Ottawa), 3 June 1938, *The Citizen* (Ottawa), 4 June 1938, R202-28-3-E CGMPB Scrapbook, LAC.

[2] John Grierson, 'First Principles of Documentary', in *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), 100-101. Most likely, Grierson envisioned promotional screen representations of Canada using the innovative documentary style pioneered during his tenure at the Empire Marketing Board (1927-33) and the General Post Office (1933-37), as seen in Basil Wright's *Windmill in Barbados* or *Song of Ceylon* (1934).

[3] Forsyth Hardy, *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography* (Boston: Faber, 1979), 98.

[4] The brief stopover of King George V and Queen Elizabeth to the NYWF on 10 June 1939, including a visit to the Canadian Pavilion, during their tour of the Dominion was an important symbol of Anglo-American solidarity. Nicholas J. Cull, 'Overture to an Alliance: British

as a 'functioning democracy', with strides made in bettering social conditions, Grierson was dismayed that the film programme ultimately centred upon pageantry and scenic views of the United Kingdom and its colonies, including Canada.[1] Sir Louis Beale, director of the British Pavilion, had offered its use to the Canadian government for the exhibition of its films. Douglas S. Cole, Canadian Trade Commissioner, recommended to Parmelee that they 'accept this generous offer' as 'means of advertising Canada, both from an industrial and tourist point of view.'[2]

During the 1939 season, the British auditorium, which seated 225, scheduled Canadian motion pictures on Tuesdays and Fridays between 11 AM and 8:30 PM. These were mostly tourism films from the CGMPB's *Seeing Canada* series, sound versions of National Parks films produced by Associated Screen News (ASN), and ASN productions for its parent company, the CPR. The Little Theatre, located in the located in the Hall of Science and Education and with a seating capacity of 253, also routinely screened Canadian tourism films, namely *Among the Clouds* (CGMPB, 1934), *Gem of the Rockies* (CGMPB, 1933), and *Quebec* (CGMPB, n.d.), as part of its 'Pan America' cultural programme.[3]

Propaganda at the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940', *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 3 (1997): 325-54.

[1] Philip Guedalla chaired the British Council's Film Committee, responsible for selecting the films. John Grierson, 'Propaganda for Democracy', *The Spectator* (11 November 1938), 799-800.

[2] 'Douglas S. Cole to James G. Parmelee', 22 March 1939, RG 72 Vol. 170 30831 16, LAC.

[3] 'Survey of Films Foreign and U.S. Government Bldg (1939)' and 'Motion Pictures in New York World's Fair Focal Exhibits', Box 398, Folder 10, NYPL. The Canadian films in the British Pavilion were: *After Fifty Years* (CGMPB, 1937); *Algonquin Waters* (CGMPB, 1933?); *Big Timber* (CGMPB, 1935); *Grey-Owl's Little Brother* (ASN/National Parks, 1932); *Hiking on*

The main purpose of the Little Theatre was to showcase documentaries. Under the leadership of Philip McConnell, the auditorium committee in cooperation with the Association of Documentary Film Producers, the American Film Center, and the British Film Center, assembled a continuously changing programme of films 'to show how deeply the documentary medium has penetrated into national life'.[1] In addition to its focal presentation - *The City*, an urban planning documentary directed by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke - the committee selected subjects on education, housing, medicine, and social problems. Several of the films were created by prominent figures of the American documentary film movement, including Robert Flaherty, Joris Ivens, and Pare Lorentz, as well notable British documentarians like John Grierson.[2] Would the new Canadian cinema at the 1940 NYWF follow the tourism model of the British Pavilion or the documentary-focus of the Little Theatre?

By the end of 1939, the DTC began to make plans for the Canadian Pavilion's cinema. Grierson was initially enthusiastic, recognising 'it is important that we have a

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Top of the World (ASN/CPR, 1935); *Let's Go Skiing* (ASN/CPR, 1932/1933); *Modern Eden* (CGMPB, 1937); *Mountain Magic* (CGMPB, 1938); *Return of the Buffalo* (ASN/National Parks, 1934); *She Climbs to Conquer* (ASN/National Parks, 1932/1933); *Ski-Time in the Rockies* (ASN/CPR, 1937); *Ski-Trails of New France* (ASN/CPR, 1938); and, *Where Champions Meet* (CGMPB, 1937). The CGEC had also explored the possibility of exhibiting motion pictures at the NYWF Music Hall, which seated 2,500. 'A.T. Seaman to Admiral W.H. Standley', 13 June 1938, Box 303, Folder 6, NYPL.

[1] 'Press Release', n.d., Box 2107, Folder 7, NYPL.

[2] See Richard Griffith, 'Films at the New York World's Fair', *Documentary News Letter* (February 1940), 3; 'World's Fair Films', *Film News* (July 1940), 2-3.

show window in the United States'.[1] In January 1940, the DTC announced that its new film theatre, equipped with both 35mm and 16mm projectors, would present 'typical Canadian programs to be produced by the national film board of Canada. These films and the pictures dealing with Canada's part in the war are on the schedule of the new board under the direction of John Grierson'.[2] Ultimately, screenings of *Canada Carries On*, the NFB's monthly wartime documentary series that launched in early 1940, did not occur at the pavilion. The same went for two new Canadian documentaries produced by the CGMPB/NFB, which were occasionally exhibited in the Little Theatre. *The Case of Charlie Gordon* (1939), sponsored by Department of Labour's Youth Training Division and directed by British documentarian Stuart Legg, whom Grierson had recruited just prior to the founding of the NFB, demonstrated how an apprentice programme forestalled juvenile delinquency in the coal town of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. *Heritage* (1939), sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and directed by J. Booth Scott, publicised the activities of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration to relieve regional drought.[3]

The Canadian Pavilion's cinema doubled down on tourism propaganda in harmony with other foreign exhibits that remained for the second season, which 'appeared increasingly as halcyon dreamworlds disconnected from the realities of the

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[1] 'J.G. Parmelee to W.D. Euler', 23 November 1939, RG 72 Vol. 170 30831 16, LAC.

[2] *Boxoffice*, 6 January 1940, 113.

[3] See Blaine Allan, 'Canada's *Heritage* (1939) and America's *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936)', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 19, no. 4 (1999): 439-72; Blaine Allan, 'A National 'As Distinct from Departmental' Film Board, and the Case of *Heritage*', *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 30-54.

bloody conflict abroad'.[1] As the construction of the auditorium neared completion in March 1940, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Committee maintained that a robust tourist trade would go a long way in providing its war effort with 'an ample supply of United States exchange'.[2] Film exhibition at the 1940 NYWF would, therefore, succour this tourism promotional work as a matter of national concern. As Grierson later wrote in an eight-page memo outlining the advantages of 16mm films in this endeavour, nontheatrical showings in the United States at such educational and cultural venues as world's fairs offered targeted publicity to a specialised audience of tourist potentials.[3]

Hence, every day between 2 in the afternoon and 8 in the evening, the Canadian cinema exhibited a programme of two dozen short subjects produced by the Dominion, such as the *Seeing Canada* series, or the railroads.[4] Even before entering the theatre, Canada's branding as a vacationland for American tourists was clear. Visitors encountered a giant, curved mural in the foyer painted by the Swiss-born industrial artist Carl Mangold, depicting Canada at play.[5] The Exhibition Branch also purchased a

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[1] Marco Duranti, 'Utopia, Nostalgia and World War at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 4 (2006), 664.

[2] Minutes of the Economic Advisory Committee on a discussion concerning the Tourist Trade', 16 March 1940, Tourism, Suggestions and General Correspondence Re: Committee on Travel and Tourist Industry, RG20-A-5 1563 T3200-75, Vol. 2, LAC.

[3] John Grierson, 'Memorandum', 12 November 1940, Tourism, Suggestions and General Correspondence Re: Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourist Industry, RG20-A-5 1563 T3200-75, LAC.

[4] 'R.L. Greene to F.P. Cosgrove', 30 April 1940, RG 72 Vol. 170 30831 16, LAC.

[5] 'Carl Mangold to F.P. Cosgrove', 22 April 1940, RG 72 Vol. 170 30831 16, LAC.

three-dimensional Polaroid projector, costing $2,000, to show Kodachrome transparencies of Canada's 'scenic wonders and general countryside' to promote tourist travel. A cinema operator was hired, who had previously at the Chrysler Pavilion, where a three-dimensional film was also shown.[1]

Within the auditorium, spectators mostly experienced tourism films, all with sound and about half in colour, emphasising scenic destinations from coast to coast, and promoting such leisure activities as fishing, camping, tennis, golf, and trail riding. Emphasising good roads (and the new convenience of air travel), high-quality accommodations, and recreational facilities alongside sequences celebrating manufacturing and industry, the film programme collectively relayed a picture of the Dominion as a technologically and industrially advanced settler nation.[2] Positioning leisured mobility as a part of modern life, this vision shifted away from traditional depictions of Canada as a rugged destination for the gentlemanly hunter/angler or an elite destination for the well-heeled CPR traveller.[3]

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[1] 'J.G. Parmelee to Walter Lown (Polaroid Corporation)', 11 June 1940; 'Walter Lown to J.G. Parmelee', 22 May 1940; R.L. Greene to J.G. Parmelee, 7 May 1940, RG 72 Vol. 170 30831 16, LAC.

[2] These themes are explored more fully in Dominique Brégent-Heald, *Northern Getaway: Film, Tourism, and the Canadian Vacation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 146-49.

[3] List of films on regular rotation at the Canadian cinema (the eight motion pictures previously screened in 1939 are indicated with a *): *Alaska, the Last Frontier* (ASN/CPR, n.d.); *Alaska and the Yukon* (ASN/CPR, 1939); *Algonquin Waters** (CGMPB, 1933); *The Banff-Jasper Highway* (National Parks/CGMPB, 1939); *Big Timber** (CGMPB, 1935); *Canada's Cozy Corner* (National Parks/CGMPB, 1938); *Canadian Rockies Holiday* (CNR, 1937); *Gaspe* (n.d.,

After each film programme, a recording invited patrons to visit the pavilion next door to book a trip. There, fairgoers faced a massive road map showing the main roads and airways lit with neon tubing into Canada from the United States reinforcing the filmic message. There was also a conspicuously large sign indicating that 'American Tourists Require NO PASSPORTS for travel to Canada' to counteract any notion that wartime conditions had created this perceived inconvenience. Descriptive literature and information, such as brochures and road maps, were made freely available. Courteous staff were present to answer questions and assist prospective tourists in making plans to tour Canada, 'either during their vacation or on their way home to Western and Southern United States'. Anyone concerned that Canada was a 'somewhat remote country' and 'too far' were reminded that 'they were only one day's drive from the Fair to the Canadian border'.[1]

Epilogue

The NYWF was arguably 'the greatest concentration of historical, educational, travel, scientific and miscellaneous assortment of socalled [sic.] documentary and non-

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CPR or CNR?); *Gem of the Rockies** (CGMPB, 1933); *Grey Owl's Little Brother** (ASN/National Parks, 1938); *The Inside Story, Salmon Industry in British Columbia* (CGMPB, 1936); *Jasper* (n.d., CPR or CNR?); *A Modern Eden** (CGMPB, 1937); *Mountain Magic** (CGMPB, 1938); *Ottawa, Canada's Capital City* (n.d., CGMPB); *Quebec** (n.d., CGMPB); *Radiant Rockies*. (ASN/CPR, 1940); *The Return of the Buffalo** (ASN/National Parks, 1934); *Roof of the World* (?); *Swift Family Robinson* (NFB/Trans Canada Airlines, 1940); *Saga of the Silver Horde* (CGMPB, 1935); *She Climbs to Conquer** (ASN/National Parks, 1932/1933); *Sky Fishing* (ASN, 1933); *Trail of the Great Divide* (CNR, n.d.); *Triangle Tour* (CNR, n.d.); *Voyageur Trails* (CGMP, 1933). See *Film News* (July 1940), 5-6.

[1] 'C.W. Barry to D. Leo Dolan', 12 November 1940, RG39 Vol. 389 File 49427, LAC.

theatrical subjects'.[1] Participating nations incorporated thoughtful film programmes into their exhibits, which provided clear, modern, and sophisticated means of branding. By focusing on the Canadian Pavilion, this study offered insight into how one nation employed film as a branding strategy to promote tourism, and hopes to spark further interdisciplinary investigations into film and destination branding at international expositions. Although it arrived late to the proverbial film party, Canada's fairground cinema furnished a well-rounded tourism sales story that complemented the physical exhibits and printed materials. This did not mean that the Dominion abandoned its traditional displays of staple products, mounted specimens, and stuffed animals, but rather that government officials privileged the tourism film to render a more contemporary view of Canada to visitors.

Between May and October 1940, nearly 300,000 fairgoers visited the Canadian Cinema at the NYWF.[2] At a time of reduced staff and minimal funding due to the war, the promotion of Canada's destination brand through official screenings at the NYWF was a cost-effective way to encourage the (mostly) American attendees to not only become conscious of the Dominion as a place of accessible, modern, and scenic beauty but also to actuate travel. Although they could not provide concrete data as to whether the film programme produced these tangible results, government officials concluded that the cinema achieved two goals. First, Canadian participation at the NYW overall extended 'feelings of friendship' between these neighbouring countries during wartime. Secondly, tourism promotion at the fair yielded 'prized and precious pecuniary

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[1] *Motion Picture Herald*, 14 October 1939, 34.

[2] Attendance in the Canadian Pavilion was 2,602,066; attendance in the cinema was 282,528. 'F.P. Cosgrove to D. Leo Dolan', 4 November 1940, RG39 Vol. 389 File 49427, LAC.

dividends' in the form of much-needed US dollars and cents.[1] Although they did not know this yet, Canada's robust showing at the NYWF also likely planted the seeds for a major cross-border tourism boom in the post-war period.

When the NYWF closed in the fall of 1940, the CGEC terminated its international activities and closed its London office. In 1946, the commission was revived with its headquarters returned to Ottawa. Canada's investment in the governmental production and nontheatrical distribution of tourism films surged in the 1950s until superseded by television programming. Meanwhile, the NFB remained committed to the production and distribution of documentaries, while also continuing to produce tourism films for various government agencies. Although the heyday of the world's fair movement in the United States subsided after the 1964 NYWF, the NFB at Montreal's Expo 67 began a tradition of 'representing the nation through images and sounds' in ways that pushed the boundaries of creativity and innovation in large-scale cinematic experiences at international exhibitions. This was evidenced with *Traces* the most recent NFB installation (in collaboration with Global Affairs Canada) in the Canadian Pavilion at the 2020 World Expo in Dubai (held in 2021-22 due to the Covid-19 pandemic).[2]

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[1] 'Robert J.C. Stead to D. Leo Dolan', 29 November 1940, RG39 Vol. 389 File 49427, LAC.

[2] See Getty Flahive, 'The National Film Board Shows Canada to the World', https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/nfb-onf/documents/pdfs/expositions-universelles/Expanded%20Visions%20-%20NFB%20at%20Worlds%20Fairs.pdf (accessed 27 November 2023).