## Roughing It in the Suburbs

### Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties

Chatelaine, originally launched in 1928, had, by the fifties and sixties, nearly two million readers each month for its eclectic mix of traditional and surprisingly unconventional articles and editorials. At a time when the American women's magazine market began to flounder thanks to the advent of television, *Chatelaine's* subscriptions expanded, as did the lively debate between its covers. Why?

In this exhilarating study of Canada's foremost women's publication at mid-century, Valerie Korinek shows that the magazine, though filled with advertisements that promoted household perfection through the endless expansion of consumer spending, contained fiction, feature articles, letters, and editorials that subversively complicated the simple recipes for affluent domesticity. Articles on abortion, spousal abuse, and poverty proliferated alongside explicitly feminist editorials. It was a potent mixture, and the mail poured in – both praising and criticizing the new directions at the magazine.

Chatelaine's highly interactive and participatory nature encouraged what Korinek calls 'a community of readers' – readers who, in their very response to the magazine, led to its success. Chatelaine did not cling to the stereotypical images of the era, but forged ahead, providing women with a variety of images, ideals, and critiques of women's role in society. The magazine's dissemination of feminist ideas laid the foundation for feminism in Canada in the 1970s and after.

Comprehensive, fascinating, and full of lively debate and history, *Roughing It in the Suburbs* provides a cultural study that weaves together a history of *Chatelaine's* producers, consumers, and text. It illustrates how the structure of the magazine's production, and the composition of its editorial and business offices, allowed feminist material to infiltrate a mass-market women's monthly. In doing so, it offers a detailed analysis of the times, the issues, and the women and, sometimes, men who participated in the success of a Canadian cultural landmark.

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