



Lydia Pinkham: The Face That Launched a Thousand Ads

Sammy R., Danna

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Lydia Pinkham was one of the 19th century's most remarkable businesswomen, her influence spreading beyond the late 1800s and her native New England. A champion of equal rights for women and blacks at a time when such causes lacked widespread support, Pinkham was ahead of her time on other issues. Chief among them was the well-being of women struggling with serious health issues related to their menstrual cycles and other so-called "women weaknesses." But as the teetotaling Pinkham and her namesake company soared to entrepreneurial heights by selling her patient relief in the guise of an alcohol-laced potion known as the Vegetable Compound, generations that followed have been left to wonder: Was she worthy of her female customers' trust or just an opportunist?

In *Lydia Pinkham: The Face That Launched a Thousand Ads*, historian Sammy R. Danna offers the latest book-length biography that explores all sides of the Lydia Pinkham phenomena. Danna illustrates how remarkable an American historical figure she was, who with associates masterfully used and reinvented the marketing tools of her day, while battling the misogyny of the medical establishment. But Danna also asks whether she was just a grandmotherly version of the pitchmen who roamed from town to town with their snake oil elixirs. Students and scholars in the fields of women's studies, American culture, and the histories of medicine, advertising, and business will see Lydia Pinkham in a new light.

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