Reading the ‘Retailscape’:
Examining the Art of Advertising in the Urban Northeast, 1830-1860

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On July 5th 1808, Ebenezer Clough, a paper stainer from Boston, wrote out a bill for customer William Merriam.[1] [Fig. 1] When he received it, Merriam's first concern would surely have been the $9.95 he now owed Clough for his purchases. But he must also have noticed the elaborate imagery that adorned the top of his invoice. Clough's headed notepaper featured a beautiful frieze, detailing the several stages of paper staining and printing. No less than eight individual workers were depicted, pulling the long rolls of paper through wooden frame presses. The fragile drape of the paper and the detail of the wall-hanging's design all suggested the great skill involved in this kind of manufacturing. On top of this illustration there was an American eagle, clutching a streamer in his beak that read "Protection." Underneath this patriotic image lay the legend: "Americans, Encourage the Manufactories of your Country, if you wish for its prosperity." Clough, advertising his business under the shadow of the embargo, was keen to promote both the importance of American production and its great advantages.

Forty-one years later, Finn and Burton's pictorial advertisement for their Philadelphia wallpaper store, located at 142 Arch Street, made no such reference to artisanal skill.[2] [Fig.2] Instead, this advertisement was a study of consumer desire. Four shoppers stood at the windows, entranced by the paper illusions on offer. Two of these figures were children, reminding the viewer of this advertisement that the shop and its product inspired a childish delight. At the centre of the image, three more shoppers sat in rapt attention, their gaze turned inwards, absorbed by the pictorial daydreams that Finn and Burton had on sale. The clerk, in the pose of a showman, was only too happy to indulge their desires. His gesture was one of pride and invitation, one that encompassed both the shoppers around him and the viewer of the advertisement itself. Indeed, in direct contrast to Clough's bill-head, this masterful image catered entirely to the consumer: indulging their longings and encouraging their gaze.

There are many differences a historian could point to when comparing the advertising of the 1800s and the advertising of the 1840s, but putting these two particular pieces of commercial ephemera side by side certainly illustrates one significant shift. During this period, artists, engravers and printers along with their retail clients decided to emphasize depictions of consumers in their promotional material. A survey of a broader range of materials across this same time period suggests that this shift was not limited to one genre of

[1] 'Ebenezer Clough, Paper Stainer' July 5th 1808, Bill Heads Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, American Antiquarian Society (hereafter AAS), Worcester, Mass.

[2] W.H Rease, "Finn & Burton's paper hangings warehouse No 142, Arch St. Phila. [graphic] / W. H. Rease No. 17 So. 5th St." (Philadelphia: F. Kuhl, April 1849), Print Department, Library Company of Philadelphia (hereafter LCP).

advertising. Looking at large printed lithographs, trade cards, receipts, bills heads, envelopes and catalogues it is possible to see how commercial artists moved away from advertising that depicted production or mercantile trade and towards an experiment with a new kind of image that featured consumers in prominent ways.

The depiction of consumers in nineteenth century advertising was quite different from what it would ultimately become in the twentieth. Advertising between 1840 and 1860 did not feature consumers using the goods in their homes, at work or on holiday. There were no housewives holding cleaning products or families sitting in shiny new vehicles. Instead, the predominant motif that retailers and print artists used to promote sales was an image that can best be summed up as a retailscape.[3] [Fig. 3] As a genre, the retailscape encompassed both shop interiors and exteriors and lavished particular artistic attention on the goods that a store had to offer. In many images, store frontage and signs were especially visible and some even included the store owners and employees. Images varied in size and detail but despite these variations, all retailscapes were united by the fact that they depicted shop and shopper in an attractive and elegant configuration. Among the many other kinds of urban scenes that were on sale in the mid-nineteenth century, the retailscape represented a particular vision of the antebellum city's shopping districts and the Americans who inhabited those sidewalks and stores.[4] These images represented shopping as leisure and consumption as pleasure. Focusing for the first time on the habits and activities of consumers, laying bare the dynamics of desire embedded in the act of shopping, the appearance of the retailscape in the 1840s marked a transformation of both American advertising and American attitudes to consumers themselves.

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[3] Warne, Cheever & Co., *Catalogue of House, Hotel and Steamboat Furnishing* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck and Thomas, 1859); Jones, Ball and Poor, "Jones, Ball & Poor, silversmiths and jewelers. No. 226 Washington Street…Boston" (Boston: s.n, between 1851 and 1860), Box 'Early Trade Cards A-Lawrence,' Early Trade Card Collection. AAS
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[4] A sample of the literature on emerging urban views includes *Prints and Printmakers of New York State, 1825-1940*, ed. David Tatham, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), John Reps, *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America: Lithographs of Towns and Cities in the United States and Canada, Notes on the Artists and Publishers, and a Union Catalogue of their Work, 1825-1925,* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984) Jonathan Prude, 'Engaging Urban Panorama: City Views of the Antebellum North' *Commonplace* vol. 7, no. 3 (April 2007), Nicholas B. Wainwright, *Philadelphia in the Romantic Age of Lithography* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1958), Gloria Gilda Deák, *Picturing America, 1497-1899: Prints, Maps, and Drawings Bearing on the New World Discoveries and on the Territory that is Now the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), Peter B. Hales, *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

While many historians, most notably William Leach, date the emergence of a powerful, visible consumer in American culture to the late 1880s, the developments of the 1840s and 50s suggest that the modern retail culture Leach described had earlier beginnings.[5] By mid-century, retailers in large urban centres believed that they had to attract a more sophisticated and discerning consumer than ever before. Shop-keepers deliberated over how to catch this consumer's attention. As a result, they developed new strategies to court the consumer, including innovative techniques of display, fresh methods of providing shoppers with information about their stores and products, improved service and above all new methods of advertising. But for all this innovation it is important to note that the mid-century retail culture remained centred around the goods themselves. While the consumer culture of the 1890s revolved around building a fanciful world for consumers that offered up goods as a path to fulfilling personal desires, retailers and advertisers at mid-century worked to elevate the merchandise as aesthetic object, not physical manifestations of fantasy. Retailers' efforts to capture consumer attention and harness consumer desire though new techniques of display and service did change commercial and political understandings of the consumer. Certainly, their efforts helped to position consumption as a means through which Americans could pursue social status. But the act of shopping in the nineteenth century was not the transformative act of self it would become in the twentieth. Instead, nineteenth century retail culture provided the crucial step between the late eighteenth century mistrust of consumption

[5] William Leach's path breaking book was in many ways a model for this paper, but as my research suggests, by starting in the 1880s Leach overlooks the rich and sophisticated culture of retail and advertising that dates back to the 1840s. See William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993). Leach's periodization has been reinforced by a number of other excellent works. It starts with Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: MacMillan, 1899); on consumers see Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers: Design and Innovation from Wedgewood to* Corning (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Blaszczyk highlighted the importance of Josiah Wedgewood in the eighteenth century as a model but focuses on the post-1865 period in the remainder of the book. On advertising see Jackson T. Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream, Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1985), and Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Pamela Walker-Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). On stores and shopping practices see Susan Porter-Benson, *Counter Cultures. Saleswomen, Managers and Customers in American Department Stores 1890-1940* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986) and Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Even comprehensive surveys of consumption tend to gloss over the early and mid-nineteenth century, see for example, *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980* ed., Richard Wightman Fox and T.J Jackson Lears, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods, 1880-1920* ed., Simon J. Bronner, (New York: Norton, 1989) and *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* ed., Lawrence Glickman, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

and the twentieth century's embrace of consumption as a defining act of individual expression and personal fulfilment.[6]

Yet this moment in the development of America's consumer culture is often overlooked. Indeed, many historians still see the *end* of the nineteenth century as the moment at which America's consumer culture began to take shape in earnest. The histories of department stores, mail order catalogues and advertising agencies begin in the 1880s and 1890s.[7] For many scholars, the arrival of these institutions heralds the inception of a new era of consumption. Tracking the rise of both mass production and mass consumption, historians of consumerism have directed scholarly attention towards the twentieth century.[8] Conversely, scholars who have studied consumption in the colonial period, with a focus on the American Revolution, have tended to concentrate on the important moments of non-consumption in American history. As such, we have excellent work on the ways in which a refusal to consume became part of the social and political landscape of the United States but much less on the ways in which consumption was rendered unproblematic by citizens who had once staked their national identity on a refusal to buy luxury goods.[9]

Here the legacy of T.H. Breen's important work on consumption during the Revolution has been more of a hindrance than a help. Breen has made the case that the act of non-consumption turned American consumers into independent liberal subjects, who imagined their consumption as an assertion of their economic and ultimately political selves. Indeed, Breen has called the Revolution a "key moment in the history of liberal thought" and the dramatic displays of consumer defiance an instance when Americans embedded a liberal subjectivity and discourse about rights into the new egalitarian consumer marketplace.[10] Yet the complete nature of this transformation is belied by an examination of American

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[6] This shift in retail culture was part of a broader economic shift in the 1840s which was characterized by new technologies of production and distribution and hence an expanding market in the United States. See Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), in particular 7-8, 13-122. See also Philip Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism*: *Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia 1800-1885* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 42-47, Walter Licht, *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), Diane Lindstrom, *Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810-1850,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

[7] See footnote 2 above.

[8] Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), Richard S. Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Knopf, 2003).

[9] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumption Shaped American Independence* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Dana Frank, *Buy American: The Untold Tale of American Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

[10] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution,* 23-25.

consumers and the practice of consumption in the post-war nation. As several historians have argued more recently, far from being a powerful political and cultural figure in the post-colonial political economy, the identity and role of the consumer was by no means self-evident and the place of consumption remained contested well into the nineteenth century.[11]

By reading the retailscapes of the 1840s and 1850s, this paper argues that it is possible to see one of the ways in which commercially minded Americans defined a new role for consumers, one where the pleasure of shopping was acknowledged and legitimated. In these images, consumers were freed from the restrictions placed on shopping by moralists. There were no warnings against luxury or penny pinching. The disapproving tone that pervaded many household manuals, etiquette books and didactic works was not present here. Moreover, in these images consumers were liberated from the functions that political economists attributed to purchasers. They were no longer, as Eli Heckscher has put it, "a means of guaranteeing a market for the country's products."[12] Leaving behind the frameworks offered by authors such as Adam Smith, Charles Ganilh and Henry Carey, retailers and commercial artists depicted consumers not as actors in the utilitarian exercise of accomplishing national prosperity, but as individuals who took pleasure in the art of consuming for leisure.

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Americans were of course familiar with graphic advertising by the nineteenth century. Following English and French commercial practices dating back to the seventeenth century, colonial Americans used printed images on wrappers, labels and above all on bill heads to advertise their establishments.[13] [Fig. 4] Indeed, by the mid-eighteenth century, customers would have expected their tradesmen to send invoices or receipts on this headed notepaper, like the kind used by Ebenezer Clough. Moreover, by the 1750s, shoppers might also have expected to receive trade cards from their tailors, milliners, storekeepers or shoemakers.

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[11] See Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), Linzy Brekke, "'To Make a Figure': Clothing and the Politics of Male Identity in Eighteenth-Century America" in *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006), 225-244, Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism. Gender, Commodity Culture and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000) and Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men's Dress in the American Republic, 1760-1860*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[12] Quoted in Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* 1987, repr. (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 30.

[13] Wrapper and possible Receipt for Playing Cards Made by Charles Poisson, Playing Card Manufacturer, France 1694 accession no. 3686.1.4.6; Trade Card of Vauquer, Textile Merchant, Au Cerceau d'Or, France, 1725-1750 n.d. accession no. 3686.3.70.153. Both from the Rothschild Collection, Waddesdon Manor, http://www.waddesdon.org.uk [accessed 10/9/2010].

Often the same design as the bill head, but printed on to a smaller piece of paper, shopkeepers intended these cards to help consumers familiarize themselves with a specific shop sign as well as promote business.[14] Shopkeepers did not design these images themselves. In urban areas, where such services were available, they commissioned copper-plate engravers to create and reproduce a variety of promotional images for their stores and services. In more remote areas, shopkeepers were more likely to rely on wood engravers as the cheaper and speedier option. Engravers often used the same designs on the trade cards they offered, changing the writing to suit the merchant. As historian Robert Jay has noted, designs were often unspecific enough to be used for multiple businesses. Presumably savvy engravers would not use the same design too often in one city.[15]

By the mid 1820s, copper engraving was superseded by lithography as the primary technique used in commercial artwork. Lithography was the practice of drawing a design straight onto a stone using acid. Unlike the traditional copperplates or woodblocks, the stone block lasted much longer and was not worn down in the process of printing. Thus lithographic imprints proved particularly durable, enabling printers to dramatically increase their output. Among the earliest commercial lithographers were the Pendleton brothers, who opened up a business in Boston in 1825. The Pendletons trained men who would go on to be some of the most influential American print makers in the nineteenth century including Nathaniel Currier and John H. Bufford. John Pendleton also travelled to Philadelphia in 1828, where he worked with Francis Kearney and Cephas P. Childs at their newly established firm. Pendleton finished his career in New York, where he owned a lithographic business between 1828 and 1834. Pendleton's career in particular demonstrates the ways in which the practice of lithography spread quickly across the eastern United States. By 1854, New York had over sixty lithographic firms, including the highly successful Sarony, Major and Knapp, who were especially accomplished printers of pictorial advertising.[16] In Philadelphia, a similar expansion in lithographic printing occurred. By 1856 the firms of Wagner and McGuigan and Peter S. Duval both reported forty presses in operation.[17] These large firms were supplemented by smaller specialty houses, like that of Frederick Kuhl. Occasionally

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[14] Robert Jay, *The Trade Card in Nineteenth-Century America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 4-5.
[15] Ibid., 14.
[16] Ibid., 20-22. See also John Carbonell, 'Anthony Imbert: New York's Pioneer Lithographer' in *Prints and Printmakers of New York State*, 11-41 and Georgia Brady Baumgardner, "George and William Endicott: Commercial Lithography in New York, 1831-51" in *Prints and Printmakers of New York State,* 43-65.
[17] Jennifer Ambrose, "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Advertising Prints," *Magazine Antiques*, vol. 170, (Aug. 2006), 97-98. See also Erika Piola et al. "Philadelphia on Stone: An Online Exhibition," http://www.librarycompany.org/pos/exhibition/ [accessed 9/9/2010].

lithographic artists, like the prolific William H. Rease, creator of the Finn and Burton advertisement, might set up on their own.[18] In short, there was a proliferation of lithographic artists and workshops that retailers could turn to if and when they decided to advertise.

By the 1840s, lithography had developed to the point where printers could offer their clients the option of coloured images, which many retailers found appealing. But if colour was too expensive, lithography still allowed for tonal depictions, rather than line drawings, so an artist's impression of a street or city could go directly onto the stone and did not need to be translated into a line drawing by an engraver. A further innovation of the 1840s was the invention of the electrotype – a machine which could print type metal replicas of finely engraved woodblocks in a cylinder press – again permitting printers to run off thousands of impressions.[19] This sea change in printing practices paved the way for a flowering of commercial artwork. As the Finn and Burton advertisement from 1849 suggests, the pictorial advertising of the 1840s became more sophisticated and elaborate. A level of detail appeared that American print consumers had not seen before.

It is also likely that the price of commissioning and printing these images became more affordable. Historian John Reps' work on the cost of lithographed urban views notes a number of factors which would have defined the price of a job. Variables included the size of the print, the size of the run and of course the use of colour or other embellishments such as gilt, although the latter was less common in advertising material. Nonetheless, prints sized between 11x14 inches and 14 x17 inches cost customers anywhere from \$1.50 to \$3.50 in 1830. By the end of the century the cost was nearer to a dollar per print. However, Reps also concluded it cost about half that amount to actually produce the views.[20] Thus popular printers could be assured a hefty profit. Given this fact, it is unsurprising that commercial artwork blossomed in the way it did. Growing out of the trade built up by copperplate and wood engravers, lithographic artists found there was a great deal of work to be had in creating graphic advertising for merchants, artisans and retailers. Thus, American graphic advertising did not begin as a distinct professional endeavour. Rather it emerged as a collaboration between storeowners and professional artists, engravers, lithographers and printers.

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[18] Ambrose, "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Advertising Prints," 98.

[19] *Prints and Printmakers of New York State,* ed. Tatham, 4-6 and Carbonell "Anthony Imbert" in *Prints and Printmakers of New York,* 11-41.

[20] Reps, *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America,* 47-51. Reps was looking more specifically at commissioned urban views not commissioned advertising. Nonetheless, although runs might be smaller other costs would be comparable.

The early results of this collaboration was an array of pictorial advertising which focused a great deal of attention on production. Some, like Ebenezer Clough's bill head, were a loving display of artisanal skill. Here the emphasis was on the craftsmen themselves. But in other images, the focus was the finished product and the specialized tools of the trade. In a trade card for the Boston Glass Manufactory, dating from around 1825, a shimmering array of glassware stands behind the paddles, picks, blowpipes and pliers used to blow and shape American glass. In the background, further emphasizing the effort of production, the smoke from the fully stoked glass kilns churns up into the sky.[21] [Fig. 5] Any person who received this trade card could be in no doubt that it was the skill of production that made these goblets, jugs and decanters a valuable commodity. Other advertisements trumpeted the transformation of raw materials into finished product by placing the two side by side. John Bordman, a furrier and purveyor of hats in Boston, commissioned a highly detailed trade card of this sort in the 1820s.[Fig. 6] On the left, a Native American, emerging from primeval forests, holds aloft a dead animal, its pelt clearly for sale. On the right, Bordman himself, in workman's apron and cap, holds the finished hat in his hand. Blessing this prosperous exchange and Bordman's good fortune to be a free artisan of the new republic is the figure of Liberty herself, guarded by the American eagle.[22] Read as a commercial rebus it is a celebration of Americans' abilities to exploit natural resources to productive ends.

Commerce was also well represented in pictorial advertising between 1800 and 1830. The most common mode for representing trade was to feature ship, wharf and warehouse in an eye-catching composition. Tanner, Vallance, Kearney & Co's trade card for the Wholesale and Retail Grocery firm of Alexander and Carstairs is the perfect example of this.[23] [Fig. 7] Drawn between 1815 and 1817, this detailed image of several three-storey stone warehouses, reinforced the merchants' claims of safe storage inscribed on the left of the card. The prosperous nature of the business is also highlighted by the two ships anchored at the dock. Dwarfing the small wherry bobbing in the choppy waters of Philadelphia's harbour, the schooners signalled the volume of trade and possibly the range of goods available from the firm's well stocked shelves. It is a quiet and self-confident promotion of the business. Other advertising relied less on realism and more on symbolism. Callender and Jenkin's bill head

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[21] J. R. Penniman, "Boston Glass Manufactory, [graphic] J.R Penniman del. et scrip. W.B Annin Sc."(Boston; s.n, 1825 or 1826) Early Trade Cards Collection, Box A-Lawrence, AAS.
[22] John Bordman, "John Bordman hat & fur store no. 56 Cornhill Boston," (Boston: s.n, 1820 or 1821) Early Trade Cards Collection, Box A-Lawrence, AAS.
[23] Tanner, Vallance, Kearny & Co., "Alexander & Carstairs, Wholesale and Retail Grocery Store," (Philadelphia, s.n. 1817-1819) Early Trade Cards Collection, Box A-Lawrence, AAS.

dating from 1813 showed a statuesque female.[24] [Fig. 8] In her hand she held an unfurling banner that read 'superfine cloths, cassimeres and waistcoats.' Her other arm rested on an anchor and at her feet was a depiction of a three-masted schooner. Callender and Jenkins used this icon to remind their customer – in this case John Hancock - of their connection to the trans-Atlantic dry goods trade, a connection that in 1813 intimated high quality goods, since Americans could not yet produce high quality cassimeres or superfines. This letter head thus reassured Hancock that he had bought the best sort of goods available.

Callender and Jenkin's use of an allegorical figure was common in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. So too was the use of patriotic imagery, such as the flag or the American eagle. This may have been in part due to the tensions created by the commercial restrictions that Republicans laid on the American public starting in 1806 and culminating in the War of 1812. Manufacturers were quick to see the commercial possibilities of limited maritime trade, as Ebenezer Clough's bill head suggests. But the trend of claiming American manufacturing was patriotic did not end with the War of 1812. On the contrary it persisted into the 1820s and 1830s, reflecting and perhaps intensifying the debates over the tariff that took place in both Congress and the public sphere at large.[25] [Fig. 9] Although fewer merchants attempted to claim patriotism for their trade during the key period of 1806-1815, after the war, some commission merchants did try and promote the patriotic aspects of free trade. Archibald Watts was particularly brazen: "commerce" he stated "promotes the arts and sciences." The barefoot figure of America, depicted at the front, seemed to endorse his view.

The advertising of the early republic thus reflected the predominant commercial debates and political themes of the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The persistent anxiety among "infant" manufacturers that they could not survive unprotected manifested itself in an array of iconic imagery. Similarly, merchants' fears that first Jeffersonian Republicans and later Whiggish protectionists might disrupt their trade, filtered through into American advertising. Broadly speaking these advertisements reflected the arguments over tariff and free trade that were being conducted in the United States between

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[24] Callender, Jenkins & Co. Feb 18th 1813, Bill Heads Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, AAS.

[25] I. Ives & O. White, "Ives & O. White, 83 Chatham Street & 144 Water Street, New York," (New York: s.n. between 1820 and 1829), Early Trade Cards Collection, Box A-Lawrence, AAS; Archibald Watt, "Commerce promotes the arts and sciences Archibald Watt. New York," (New York: s.n, between 1825 and 1835), Early Trade Cards Collection, Box Learned-Z and unidentified, AAS.

1800 and 1830, reflecting in non-expert terms, both sides of the debate.[26] Political economists of this period focused on the delicate balance of economic power between merchants, manufacturers and farmers: the productive trinity of the early republic.[27] It was arranging and maintaining the balance of power between these three great productive forces in American life that consumed most citizens. The consumer barely featured at all.[28]

By the mid 1840s this was no longer the case. Indeed, the content of graphic advertising shifted dramatically. Store buildings and in particular their glass windows became a particular feature. Signage was of course carefully delineated, sometimes showing the great letters across the sides of the building and in other cases focusing on the neatly lettered boards hung atop the doorways. Artists were careful to make sure the goods in the window were easily visible, whether those goods were easy to display, such as hats, or like mattresses, slightly more challenging to put on elegant show.[Fig. 10] Shopkeepers and their clerks also assumed a prominent place in these images. Many were depicted standing at doorways, arms clasped behind their backs observing the traffic on the street and looking for likely customers. Other figures were shown ushering clients into the shops, or sometimes gesturing to attract attention. Exterior views of stores also made interiors visible, where clerks could be seen, waiting on their new clients with avid attention.[29] [Fig. 11]

Above all these images featured the customers of retail stores. In some cases it was simply a case of showing these figures strolling down the street, glancing at the merchandise or perhaps, more clearly absorbed by the displays in the windows.[30] [Fig. 12] Other images included consumers entering into the stores, their backs turned to the hustle and bustle of the street as they made their way into the quiet sanctum of the store. Some images even showed the customer in the store – perhaps sampling the retailers' wares.[31] [Fig. 13] Later

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[26] F.W Taussig *The Tariff History of the United States* (1892 reprint: New and London; Knickerbocker Press, 1923), Lawrence A. Peskin, *Manufacturing Revolution. The Intellectual Origins of Early American Industry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), *Free Trade and Protectionism in America, 1822-1890*, ed. Lars Magnusson, vol. 1, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

[27] This division of the economy into three major sectors is discussed in Peskin, *Manufacturing Revolution*; Cathy Matson and Peter Onuf, "Toward a Republican Empire: Interest and Ideology in Revolutionary America" *American Quarterly,* 37 (Autumn, 1985): 496-531. See also Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

[28] With all rules there are some exceptions. There are a few examples that I have found of pre-1840 advertising where the artist has experimented with depicting shop fronts, proprietors and a consumer but these images are relatively rare.

[29] Ellwood D. Long, "J. C. Jenkins & Co. grocery and tea store, S.W. corner of Chestnut and 12th Streets, Philadelphia [graphic] / Desnd. & drawn by Ellwood D. Long," (Philadelphia: W. Stott's Lith Press, No. 97, Chesnut [sic] above 3rd Sts August 1847), LCP.

[30] Robert F. Reynolds, "C. F. Mansfield. Paper hangings. Wholesale and retail, 275 South Second Street, Philadelphia" (Philadelphia: F. Kuhl, c. 1845), LCP.

[31] James Fuller Queen, "Eugene Roussel's celebrated mineral water in glass bottles for hotels, families & shipping, [graphic] / Drawn on stone by J. Queen." (Philadelphia: P.S. Duval, ca. 1843), LCP.

lithographs, dating from the 1850s, took depictions of the consumers even further. Detailed and elaborate images of store interiors showed shoppers engaged in the act of browsing and being waited on by assiduous clerks. These advertisements seemed to emphasize the tactile experience of shopping. Goods were examined, textiles touched or gift books leafed through.[32] [Fig. 14] Where once depictions of shops had featured a counter that separated goods from customers, these images emphasized how consumers were invited to interact with the objects they desired.

The retailscapes of the mid-nineteenth century appeared in several forms. One especially impressive form was the large poster, similar in dimension to the broadside. However, unlike the broadside, these images did not generally appeared plastered on already cluttered hoardings or alley walls. Storekeepers usually kept these prints to give to their distributors, the buyers who came in from the hinterlands to stock and supply general stores in the small towns of the Western frontiers. They might also be handed out directly to customers. Closer to home, these beautifully executed prints might also be framed and displayed at railway stations, hotel lobbies or perhaps in the store itself as a means of promoting the store to local shoppers and raising the shop's prestige.[33] Smaller versions of the retailscape were reproduced on the front covers of catalogues. These catalogues were usually not intended for individual consumers. Instead, storekeepers in Boston, New York and Philadelphia commissioned catalogues and sent them to retailers in small towns and villages across the US, hoping to garner new commercial business.[34] [Fig. 15] But individual consumers would most likely have seen retailscapes reproduced in exquisite details on the bills, receipts and envelopes that shopkeepers sent to their customers.[35] [Fig 16] On these documents shoppers could see elegant consumers depicted as tiny reflections of themselves, an aspiration borne out by the fact that the bill or receipt recorded their own activity in this realm of commerce. The viewers of these images were thus a mixture of commercial agents,

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[32] Edward Sachse, "Interior view of George G. Evans' original gift book establishment. 439 Chesnut [sic] Str. Philadelphia. [graphic] : Taken from nature and drawn on stone by E. Sachse." (Baltimore: Coloring print of E. Sachse & Co. Sun Iron Building, 1859), Historical Society of Pennsylvania, (hereafter HSP.)

[33] Ambrose, "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Advertising Prints" pp. 97-98. Piola et al. "Philadelphia on Stone: An Online Exhibition," http://www.librarycompany.org/pos/exhibition/ [accessed 9/9/2010].

[34] Glenn & Co., Catalogue of London, Paris, Leipsic, Vienna and other Fancy and Useful Articles Imported by Glenn & Co. and for sale at their great depot, No. 180 Chesnut Street, Opposite the Masonic Hall, Philadelphia. (Philadelphia; T&G Town, Printers, No 120 Chestnut Street, 1853), AAS. In this example. addresses in Philadelphia, Springfield (Mass?) and Westfield, Mass. are handwritten on the front endpaper.

[35] Wm. P. Lyon *William P. Lyon & Son. manufacturers & wholesale dealers in envelopes & writing papers. No. 25 Beekman Street New-York* (New York: s.n, 1859), Early Trade Cards Collection, Box Learned-Z and unidentified, AAS.

urban dwellers and individual consumers. None of these groups would have been used to seeing consumers depicted in graphic advertising – it was an innovation for all.

Nearly every branch of the retail trade at mid-century had a retailer who commissioned a retailscape of some kind. Clothing merchants were well represented, including hats and shoe stores. Household furnishings retailers also commissioned images: stove stores, lamp shops, bedding stores, furniture warehouses and of course wallpaper stores were all businesses that were depicted in retailscapes. Fancy goods stores and book shops were also represented, as were grocery stores, including a particularly beautiful image featuring a Chinese mannequin placed outside to attract customers into the precincts of the store.[36] [Fig. 17]. All in all, retailscapes became the predominant genre of graphic on mid-century pictorial advertising. They were so sought after that some stores, like Bennett & Co's Tower Hall Clothing Bazaar, had two separate images made over the course of five years. Bennett – a particularly successful and wealthy merchant was lucky enough to have two of Philadelphia's most accomplished artists draw his emporium: William H. Rease in 1853 and John Magee in 1858.[37] [Fig. 18]

Of the two, Rease was the virtuoso. Despite a plethora of artists working in this genre, not one could compete with Rease and the lively scenes he created. His focus on shopkeepers, clerks, draymen, and above all consumers lend his images an unrivalled vitality. Certainly his contemporaries and clients thought so. Rease was by any measure a successful businessman. Between 1856 and 1861, arguably the height of his productivity, Dun and Bradstreet believed him to be good for $2000 of credit and in 1870 his personal estate was valued at $4000. This alone suggests how well Rease was able to do as a result of his skill in rendering retailscapes.[38] Although a creative man, Rease was not dreaming up these retailscapes wholesale. Instead, Rease and other artists like him were responding the changing retail landscape of the 1840s and the storekeepers' experiences and perceptions of consumers' desires and needs. Tracing the ways in which the physical spaces of consumption

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[36] Ellwood D. Long, "J. C. Jenkins & Co. grocery and tea store, S.W. corner of Chestnut and 12th Streets, Philadelphia [graphic] / Desnd. & drawn by Ellwood D. Long," (Philadelphia: W. Stott's Lith. Press, No. 97, Chesnut [sic] above 3rd Sts August 1847), LCP.
[37] W. H. Rease, "Bennett & Co. Tower Hall, clothing bazaar No. 182 Market St, between Fifth & Sixth. Philadelphia. [graphic] / Executed, by, W. H. Rease No. 17 So. 5th. St.," (Philadelphia: F.Kuhl, 1853) and John L. Magee, "Bennett's Tower Hall, clothing bazaar, no. 518 Market Street, bet[ween] 5th & 6th, Philadelphia. [graphic]," (Philadelphia: John L. Magee, 1858), LCP.
[38] "William H. Rease," *Philadelphia on Stone,* Biographical Dictionary, Library Company of Philadelphia, http://www.lcpdigital.org [accessed 7 September 2010]. Also Ambrose, "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Advertising Prints," 98.

and market practices were changing can thus help explain why this shift in advertising took place.

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The consumers of the 1840s and 50s encountered a quite different commercial landscape from that of their grandparents. Since the early 1800s, a slow but significant change had worked its way through the cities, towns and villages of New England and the mid-Atlantic. Americans' consumption suggested a steady but growing engagement with the marketplace, both on a local and trans-Atlantic scale. A persistent decline in household manufacturing meant that between 1840 and 1860 most residents of New England, the mid-Atlantic and the Northwest Territories had stopped producing their own textiles and household furnishings. Instead they chose to buy factory and mill-made goods of all kinds.[39] Similarly, technological innovations in other lines of production meant that traditionally expensive items became more widely available. Carpets, stoves, pianos, household textiles, cutlery, mantel clocks and crockery were all examples of goods that became easier to reproduce in large quantities in the 1840s and 50s, and accordingly became more obtainable by mid-century.[40] Yet these items simply provided more variety in homes that were already furnished with looking glasses, grandfather clocks, earthen ware ceramics, books and candlesticks.[41] What white middle-class American consumers were experiencing for the most part at mid-century was a wider variety of items on sale and a higher likelihood that they would be able to afford them.

These purchases could be made from a range of places. Most Americans in the 1840s still lived outside large cities such as New York and Philadelphia. For them, the main source of consumer goods were the dry goods stores in their local town.[42] These ubiquitous

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[39] On household manufacturing see Rolla Tryon, *Household Manufacturing in the United States, 1640-1860* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1917), 372-3.

[40] Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (1998, reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 140; Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States*, 147; David A. Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 51-65. As Hounshell makes clear these developments were not yet "mass production" as they were not goods assembled out of identically made interchangeable parts. However, the industrialization of many manufacturing techniques in textile, metalwork and woodwork contributed to goods being made in factories and workshops in larger batches by the 1840s. The exception was perhaps the clock, see Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production,* 51-60.

[41] Paul G. E. Clemens, "The Consumer Culture of the Middle Atlantic, 1760-1820" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (Oct. 2005) http://www.historycooperative.org/journal/wmq/62.4/clemens.html [accessed Jan. 27 2009]. For an overview of this process see Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Knopf, 1992).

[42] Fred Mitchell Jones, "Retail Stores in the United States, 1800-1860," *The Journal of Marketing* 1 (Oct. 1936): 134. Although this paper does not examine the South, the same pattern of retail held true there. See Lewis E. Atherton, *The Southern Country Store 1800-1860* (1949, reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 63-86.

establishments were supposed to sell everything an individual could need or want. By 1840, just over 8,500 retail stores existed in the state of New York, excluding those stores in New York County, and in Pennsylvania there were 4,400 beyond Philadelphia County. For the most part, these stores were likely non-specialized and sold something for everyone.[43] Retailers in these local establishments would stock their shelves with the goods they purchased from wholesale or retail merchants in the big eastern cities.[44] Indeed, proprietors were accustomed to making at least two big trips a year to obtain their stock. However, local store owners were not the only consumers on the move by mid century. The expansion of transportation networks across the United States made shopping excursions by non-commercial consumers more likely by mid century.[45]

Whereas wealthy shoppers in the early 1800s had expected to spend a whole season in New York, shoppers in the 1840s would have been more used to the idea of making a trip that lasted a few weeks. In fact, depending on a shopper's distance from large cities like New York or Philadelphia, individuals might even plan excursions designed to last no more than one or two days. Already by the late 1820s, retailers were hoping to entice these rural shoppers to the city in order to expand their customer base. Josiah Bonfanti, owner of a fancy goods store in New York, attempted to encourage out-of-town shoppers to make the trip, with an elaborate broadside that featured the verses of a song. Meant to be sung to the tune of Yankee Doodle Dandy, this catchy ditty might have spread well beyond the corner or city wall it was posted on, urging young shoppers to make the trip to New York. The song began,

Sal and I came down to York,
The curious things to see, sir
For darn it, who the deuce would work
ON FREEDOM'S JUBILEE sir?
I sold our peas and everything
To market women aunties,
Then went with Sal to buy a ring,
At Mister JO BONFANTI'S

[43] These figures come from the 1840 decennial census. See *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States* (Washington: Thomas Allen, 1841) 121, 133. The precise number for New York is 8,587 and for Pennsylvania 4,456.
[44] See John Beauchamp Jones, *Life and Adventures of a Country Merchant: A Narrative of his Exploits at Home, During his Travels and in the Cities* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854), 14-17. I thank Paul Erickson of the American Antiquarian Society for directing me to this reference.
[45] George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart, 1951). See for example Eleanor Huse Ames, *Diary*, vol. 2 (Oct. 8, 1846), AAS.

There's his number on the sign
In Broadway, very handy
It is two hundred seventy nine,
Sing Yankee-doodle dandy.[46]

While Bonfanti's lyrics might suggest that these kinds of excursions were only for small scale purchases of trinkets, it seems clear that shopping excursions, whether for a few days or weeks, were also used to order and buy larger and more expensive items. For example Caroline Barrett-White, a wealthy married woman from Brookline, Massachusetts made a specific trip into Boston to go with her husband on a "carpet hunting expedition." On another occasion, Barrett-White made the journey down to New York to see friends and engage in a little shopping. As part of her stay, she and her friend Hattie visited the famous department store A.T. Stewart's. A few weeks later when she went into Boston to pick up a silver tea set she and her husband had long since ordered, she discovered to her delight that her husband had also ordered the "heavy curtains" she had seen and admired at Stewart's.[47] It is worth noting that Barrett-White's experience was quite different in nature from the putative Sal. The length of the trip, the shops visited, the items bought all depended on the shopper's wealth and status. But even within these broad parameters, travel to urban retail areas was becoming more common by the 1840s, allowing urban and rural Americans to recognize and covet more new things by mid-century. In short, there were more consumers for retailers to attract.

Perhaps one of the most obvious changes that had coalesced by the 1850s was the emergence of urban spaces entirely dedicated to fashionable shopping. From early on in the nineteenth century, American towns and cities developed retail districts, each with a distinctive reputation for elegance, affordability or cheap bargains.[48] But these distinctions intensified by the mid-nineteenth century. Broadway, perhaps the country's most famous shopping street, was itself divided into a "dollar" side and a "shilling" side; giving customers the chance to choose their price bracket before even stepping into a store. Customers would

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[46] *Brother Jonathan's Second Visit to Jos. Bonfanti's Fancy Store No. 279 Broadway* (New York, N.Y: s.n., between 1824-1839) New-York Historical Society, New York, NY (hereafter N-YHS).

[47] For her description of the carpet expedition see Caroline Barrett-White Papers, *Diary*, vol. 6 (Dec. 10, 1855), AAS. For the trip to Stewarts see Caroline Barrett-White Papers, *Diary*, vol. 12, (Feb. 25, 1869) and (March 8, 1869), AAS.

[48] Thomas David Beal, "Selling Gotham: The Retail Trade in New York City From the Public Market to Alexander T. Stewart's Marble Palace, 1625-1860," (Ph.D. Diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1998), 273-288.

want to make that decision carefully. George G. Foster, author and New York observer extraordinaire commented in 1849 that "none but a well practiced citizen can…regain the fashionable side of Broadway – for you must remember that nothing could more effectually stamp you as vulgar than to be seen stumbling over the crockery-crates and second furniture of the shilling pavement."[49] Foster's observation, originally published in the New York *Tribune*, would have made middle-class readers aware that as customers, they were now participating in a closely observed and keenly analyzed retail oriented market place. Shopping and shopping districts had become a subject of new interest, which commentators discussed extensively in contemporary guidebooks, satires and travelogues. For consumers in New York in particular, it must have been strange to find that their daily promenade down Broadway had been reified by social commentators and was now held up as the very epitome of American shopping culture.[50]

New attention to shopping districts was supplemented by the changing material experience of "going shopping." To begin with, some retailers tried to make the streets themselves more amenable to consumers. In the early 1800s, shoppers had already witnessed the widening of sidewalks, enabling them to stroll with ease past shop windows.[51] By mid-century this impulse had blossomed into something more elaborate. In the early 1850s for example, the notable New York hatter, J. N. Genin, put a bridge across Broadway to save pedestrians from the torrent of carriages and other vehicles that thundered constantly up and down the street. Genin's bridge carefully ushered customers right to his front door.[52] As a contemporary engraving suggests, the bridge was designed to cater directly to consumers and provide some distance from the working hullabaloo of the street below.[53] [Fig. 19] It is notable that the engraver, J.W. Orr, chose to place a cart man, struggling with his load on the edge of the street underneath the bridge, implying perhaps that the bridge and Genin himself

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[49] George G. Foster, *New York in Slices: by an Experienced Carver,* (New York: William H. Graham, 1849), 4. The shilling side was the east side of the street and considered less desirable because of its exposure to the afternoon heat and light. See Jay E. Cantor, "A Monument of Trade: A.T. Stewart and the Rise of the Millionaire's Mansion in New York," *Winterthur Portfolio* 10 (1975): 66.

[50] For just a few examples see Samuel Irenaeus Prime, *Life in New York* (New York: Robert Carter, 56 Canal Street, 1847); E. Porter Beldon, *New York. Past, Present and Future* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849); William M. Bobo, *Glimpses of New-York City By a South Carolinian Who Had Nothing Else To Do* (Charleston: J.J McCarter, 1852).

[51] Beal, "Selling Gotham," 243-253; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham. A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 340.

[52] Ellen W. Kramer, "Contemporary Descriptions of New York City and its Public Architecture ca. 1850," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 2 (Dec. 1968): 269.

[53] J.W. Orr, *Proposed Plan for a Free Bridge Across Broadway, to be erected by J.N Genin at his own expense,* (New York: s.n., [1850?]) Geographic PR 020 Collection, Print Department. N-YHS.

provided only for a genteel class of customer and not the population of New York more generally.

Window displays, particularly in urban stores, also became more elaborate and enticing, as shopkeepers began to compete in earnest for the throngs of customers who flocked past their stores. “Broadway should be visited by the stranger,” wrote Joel Ross in 1851. “The splendid display in the windows of goods, ware and merchandize almost dazzle the eyes of the owners, and if I mistake not, sometimes quite bewilders the brains of others.”[54] The stores’ interiors offered further opportunity for the comfortable perusal of goods in a lavish environment. Glass cases to display items, gas lighting and large showrooms made shopping a quite different experience from purchasing items fifty years earlier, when shopkeepers had kept goods on shelves behind a counter and brought out only what the customer asked for or what the shopkeeper thought the customer could afford.[55] Indeed, Freeman Hunt, the editor of *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine*, advised store owners who wanted to be successful to refrain from displaying goods in a “[h]eap” or in a “heterogeneous mass.”[56] Some stores went far beyond this simple advice. Glenn & Co, a fancy goods store on Chesnut Street in Philadelphia, had “Italian Tesselated [sic] Marble Floors…a Ceiling superbly Frescoed…Magnificent Mirrors…surrounded by a border of richly cut Bohemian Glass [and] …Chandeliers…of the far-famed *Cornelius.*”[57] As a result the store’s interior was a draw, even before customers had seen any merchandise.

These displays also tell us something of how the mid-century retailer imagined the urban consumer. The shop-keepers of New York and Philadelphia believed that their window-shoppers were connoisseurs, who could be enticed with artfully arranged goods in a sophisticated setting. Historian Richard Bushman has argued that the colonial shopper was both served and educated by the urban retailer in the eighteenth century. By mid-nineteenth century a new element had entered that relationship. Retailers who arranged their stores in

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[54] Joel H. Ross, *What I Saw in New York* (Auburn, NY: Derby & Miller, 1851), 176.

[55] On techniques of showing goods in the late 18th and early 19th century see Ann Smart Martin, “Ribbons of Desire: Gendered Stories in the World of Goods,” in *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* ed., Amanda Vickery and John Styles, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 179-200.

[56] Hunt quote in Beal, “Selling Gotham,” 494.

[57] Glenn & Co., *Catalogue of London, Paris, Leipsic, Vienna and other Fancy and Useful Articles Imported by Glenn & Co. and for sale at their great depot, No. 180 Chesnut Street, Opposite the Masonic Hall, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: T&G Town, Printers, No 120 Chestnut Street, 1853). The company was apparently not exaggerating, and to prove their integrity they published a newspaper review of the store in their catalogue. Leach argues that this kind of change in retail environments did not take place until the 1890s. See Leach, *Land of Desire,* 72.

this way hoped also to impress and entice their shoppers, who were no longer innocent of the fruits of commercial culture.[58]

While most retailers stopped at new techniques of display, some went even further. Ahead of his time in this respect was Alexander T. Stewart, whose massive department retail store in New York was a marvel in its own right as well as the exception to the rule in the 1840s. His "marble palace" established in 1846, made Stewart the first "merchant prince of New York." He bought the frontage on Broadway between Chambers and Reade Streets, just north of City Hall. On this lot, he erected a five storey marble building which would become the largest dry-goods store in New York.[59] The store and its gleaming white front, quickly became a phenomenon, employing hundreds of clerks and attracting thousands of eager customers.[60] [Fig. 20] Stewart's was the first structure in New York specifically designed as a retail store and he organized it in a revolutionary way. He divided the store into several different departments, each selling a specialized line of goods. Silks, dress goods, laces, shawls, suits, calicoes and more, all had their own counters made from mahogany and maple, as well as their own specialized clerks, cash boys and porters. As clerks were instructed to allow customers to browse freely, a consumer was at liberty to wander about the store, gazing at the lavish displays of expensive goods.[61] As Stewart's marble emporium suggests, by the 1850s, shops had begun to be designed to tempt consumers to purchase in new ways, once again emphasizing the conceptualization of the consumer as an individual to be enticed and whose desires deserved attention.

As well as altering the appearance of their stores to appeal to consumers, retailers also began to employ personnel to attend more directly to the individual's requirements as a shopper. Clerks moved out of accounting rooms and on to shop floors, where their task was to see to the needs of customers. This new relationship did not always please the impatient young clerks. Henry Southworth Clay, a clerk in Ira Beard's millinery shop on William Street in New York complained bitterly about the time he had to spend in waiting on customers. "Miss Gooden of Bridgeport, Conn[ecticut] came into town," he noted in his diary in June

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[58] Richard Bushman, "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America" in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed., Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 235.
[59] Joseph Devorkin, *Great Merchants of Early New York, 'The Ladies Mile'* (New York: The Society for the Architecture of the City, 1987), 44-45. Note that Devorkin dates the establishment of the store to 1848 but all other sources date it to 1846.
[60] "Broadway, N.Y. A.T. Stewart Dry Goods Store" (New York: Engraved by J.A. Bogert, Drawn by A.R. Waud, 1851) Geographic PR Collection, Print Department. N-YHS.
[61] Beal, "Selling Gotham," 498. See also Stephen N. Elias, *Alexander T. Stewart: The Forgotten Merchant Prince* (Westport, CT: Praenger, 1992), 60, 62-63; Cantor, "A Monument of Trade," 165-168.

1850. "[S]he is quite a troublesome customer occupying about two days in buying about $60 worth of goods, it falls to my lot to wait upon her, but I exercise patience and manage to get along, but I think if I should have to attend upon many such people I should quit the trade in disgust."[62] While clerks like Southworth often complained that customers, particularly their female ones, dithered and wasted time, this new relationship suggests not only that customers were dealing with a greater variety of goods but that shop owners sought to provide more thoroughly for the individual customer's whims.[63]

In part, retailers were responding to customers who had a better knowledge of what constituted good quality, choice and affordability, because customers could simply visit more shops in the 1840s than they could have done thirty years earlier.[64] As the city directories show, retail trade in New York had proliferated. In 1800, for example, the city had only one fancy store listed, by 1845 that number stood at 258. Indeed, retailers recognized consumers as both knowledgeable and discerning rather than bewildered by all this choice. But the retailer's response to the consumer was also conditioned by the commercial lens through which they reconceived of shoppers. Clerks like Southworth were not just dealing with the shopper who came in to the store to buy for themselves but also the client who bought items to re-sell in a variety of different contexts. The amount of goods Miss Gooden bought for example, suggests that she was a milliner, not a woman who planned to finish a single bonnet of her own. Dealing with a growing commercial culture, as well as an expanding print culture that facilitated the spread of knowledge about fashionable new goods, it was easy for store-keepers and clerks to attend to their urban customers assuming that they had a significant level of experience and familiarity with the world of consumption that had to be respected. Indeed, the expanding retail trade now provided something more: an awareness that to be a customer entitled an individual to special consideration. Unlike shoppers fifty years earlier, customers at mid-century could experience their needs being catered to and their desires being validated in new and exciting ways.

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[62] Henry Southworth Clay, *Diary*, vol. 1, (June 3, 1850), N-YHS. See also *New York City Directory,* ed., Rode (New York: Rode, 1851-1852), 48 for the identification of Ira Beard's Millinery store.
[63] See for example William Hoffman *Diary,*(Jan. 7, 1849), N-YHS. Also Asa Greene, *The Perils of Pearl Street Including a Taste of the Dangers of Wall Street, by a Late Merchant* (New York: Betts & Anstice and Peter Hill, 1834), 25-32. See also Brian P. Luskey, *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth Century America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
[64] See Appendices 9 and 10 in Beal, "Selling Gotham." It is worth noting that the retail sector did not grow disproportionately during this time span. Retail and wholesale constituted 17% of all occupations in 1800 and 18% by 1845. Fancy goods retailers did however become a larger proportion of the retail trade, rising from 0.07% in 1800 to 2.23% of all retail trades by 1845.

Retailers were not the only ones paying attention to the consumer. By the 1850s, credit rating agencies watched customers closely to assess the credit worthiness of any given business.[65] In 1841, when Lewis Tappan began his commercial intelligence office, his goal had been to provide trustworthy information on men and their business prospects to any one who needed to know. This could include investors or bankers, both domestic and foreign, who were anxious about lending or investing money with unknown partners. It could include merchants and wholesalers who were unsure as to whether the retailer they wanted to sell to would repay their debt. It could even encompass a retailer worried whether his customer could pay for all the goods he had ordered. At a time when business was becoming increasingly less personal, and introductions and vouchsafes were becoming more rare, Tappan's agency was the answer many were looking for. The testament to its success was its own long life and the large number of competitors that sprang up shortly thereafter.[66]

It was the means of gathering this commercial information that gave the consumer yet further power. By the mid 1850s, R.G. Dun, Tappan's successor, employed hundreds of men to gather information on businesses and record their own observations, as well as document scraps of news and commercial rumors in the company's large red ledgers. Included in these reams of scrutiny were the clerks' and agents' impressions of the class of customers any given business might attract. Thus, an 1854 assessment of Peterson and Humphrey, a company that sold carpets, included the comment, "[they] are a popular house and sell to a fashionable class of customer."[67] This comment, along with others was intended to communicate the relative reliability of this firm for potential investors or creditors. Similarly, a glowing report on the hatters Leary & Co., who occupied retail space in Astor House on Broadway, also included commentary on the type of customer. "One of the most fashionable establishments in this city," noted the Dun & Co. clerk. "Rich and getting more so every year."[68] A report on a jewellers and fancy goods store at 550 Broadway was even more direct. "Doing the leading fashionable retail business with the best kind of customers[,] making money fast." This astute clerk knew what he was talking about. The company in question was Tiffany & Co.[69]

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[65] On the history and role of credit rating agencies in America see Scott Sandage, *Born Losers. A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 99-128.
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] Report on Peterson and Humphrey, New York, vol. 192, p. 569, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Historical Collections, Baker Library, Harvard University, (hereafter Dun Collection).
[68] Report on Leary & Co., New York, vol. 228, p. 423, Dun Collection.
[69] Report on Tiffany & Co., New York, vol. 318, p. 308, Dun Collection.

This kind of surveillance and reporting made retailers aware of how important the right kind of customer could be. By attracting the "best kind of customer" they were not only drawing in wealthy clients, but were also boosting their reputation, increasing their credit-worthiness and sharpening their competitive edge. As shops proliferated and the choice of stores became ever more bewildering, this kind of reputation could make or break a new business. By the 1850s then, the consumer imagined through a commercial lens was not only the centre of attention, but a figure to be courted, attracted, enticed and scrutinized. The consumer was also a figure to be respected, no matter what they demanded or expected. Tales of long suffering clerks and frustrated store-owners abounded, as retailers struggled to accommodate the customer's every whim. A satirical rendering of a shopping trip published in *Harper's Weekly* suggested that women had better pick their items carefully since "the 'establishment' worn down by feminine caprice, has been compelled to announce that it cannot change any 'article' once selected more than *three* times."[70] The clear implication was that retailers were going out of their way to be as obliging as possible, even to the point of absurdity. This long-suffering compliance only increased in times of financial downturn, tipping the scale even more in favor of the consumer. With its usual acuity, *Harper's Weekly* rendered this discomforting dynamic into a succinct cartoon, where even the lowliest of shoppers gained new power in the wake of the Panic of 1857.[71] [Fig. 21]

The growing interest in, and power of the consumer was visible in the retailscapes themselves. Including the consumer in these images was a means of advertising the business' success. As the Dun and Bradstreet credit reports suggested, more consumers of the right kind were an indication of prestige and commercial standing. Adding these figures into the picture was a way of communicating to wholesalers, distributors and individual customers that the store was reliable, stocked excellent merchandise and was in fashion. But with the growing number of stores in the city and the increasing ability of consumers to shop around, these advertisements were also designed to appeal to shoppers and draw them into stores. As dry goods trade journals like *Hunt's Merchants Magazine* intimated when they urged shopkeepers to put on a better display, that meant doing more than stocking excellent merchandise or promising well crafted goods. The two lures of earlier decades were no longer enough. By the 1840s, storekeepers had to promise more than a satisfactory product, they had to provide a pleasurable experience.

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[70] Prattle and Tattle, "A Dry-Goods Store," *Harper's Weekly,* May 23, 1857.
[71] "Before and After the Panic" *Harper's Weekly*, November 14, 1857.

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A careful examination of the retailscapes shows the promise of pleasure embedded into the images. This was primarily achieved by using the composition of the image to identify consumption as a leisure activity. By juxtaposing shoppers with labourers, the images visually rendered the two identities as mutually exclusive. W. H. Rease's depiction of William P. Hacker's Queensware store was a classic example of this dynamic.[72] [Fig. 22] Rease showed viewers that consumption was refined leisure: contrasting the strolling consumers with the hard working carter, who was engaged in unhitching the wagon load from the horse outside the shop. Of course clothing played a roll in distinguishing the shopper from the labourer. Rease was careful to depict the male shopper in a tall dark hat, coat and vest, while the carter wore shirt sleeves and a small cap. But the distinction Rease drew was not just about outerwear. Clothing was a distinguishing feature that was far too unstable. Jacket and hat alone could not signal class or occupation, since clothing could be slipped on and off. Instead, Rease focused on something far harder to fake. He emphasized the leisured nature of consumption by focusing on the fact that shoppers were not engaged in the effort of a wage earning activity; rather they were absorbed in the pleasure of spending.

In contrasting the consumers' habits with the carter, Rease drew on a classic distinction between productive labour and leisured consumption.[73] In these images, shoppers were free from the demands of an employer. Masters and mistresses of their own time, they were at liberty to enjoy an interaction with goods. It is noticeable for example that the carter has his back turned to the goods in the window. It was as if his labour made it impossible for him to enjoy the leisure of looking, browsing, considering and anticipating purchase. In a similar way, Rease's advertisement for George Mecke's Cabinet Ware rooms shows two beshawlled ladies browsing through the showroom.[74] [Fig 23] Their gaze is trained on the objects for sale, while the two workmen at the front cannot even see in the windows. In both these cases the image depicted consumption as the act of leisured looking. Not only was it an indication of class status; it was also a promise that consumption offered individuals a

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[72] W.H Rease, "W.P. Hacker, Importer and Wholesaler of China, Glass, Queensware and Fancy Goods," (Philadelphia: F.Kuhl, 1848), LCP.

[73] This distinction became more important and obvious as upper and middle class men physically moved their families, homes and leisure activities away from the site of production in the first half of the nineteenth century. The classic example was in New York. See Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) and Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860*, 3rd ed., (1982; repr., Urbana and Chicago: Illini, 1987).

[74] W.H Rease, *George Mecke cabinet maker and upholsterer, No 355, North 2nd St. nearly opposite Tammany St.* (Philadelphia: Wagner & McGuigan, 1846), LCP.

pleasurable way to pass the time in the urban sphere.[75] It was not only Rease who used this device. An advertising circular for the Clothes Warehouse of Whiting and Kehoe, located in Boston in 1850 displays a similar dynamic at work, with the carter facing away from the store.[76] This configuration also started to appear in the images in the vastly popular Valentine's Manual, one of the most well known guidebooks to New York of the day. The message of these images was clear. Only those who could afford not to perform manual labour could enjoy the act of browsing. Consumption was thus rendered as refined pleasure.

The emphasis on leisure was even more evident from depictions of the stores' interiors. In these compositions manual labour was entirely erased. The hard work of loading and unloading goods vanished as the figure of the carter was banished from the image. References to production also disappeared. While earlier trade cards might have featured workshops or craft icons such as spinning wheels, these mid-century images only featured the retailers, their clerks and the shoppers themselves. The depictions of the clerks in these interior images functioned in much the same way that the carter or drayman had featured in the exterior depictions. Their attendance on the customers served to highlight the non-labouring status of the consumer, whose only task was to examine the items he or she chose to have brought before them. Over time, these images became more and more like depictions of domestic parlours, with sofas and chairs arranged in neat configurations, designed to facilitate a quiet tete-a-tete, just as one might see in a middle class home. [Fig. 24] Indeed, Grover and Barker, a sewing machine establishment on Broadway, in New York, even called their salesroom, the parlour.[77] In these images, clerks took on the role played by domestic servants at mid-century. In the home, serving girls allowed mistresses to claim an elite and leisured status, despite the fact that in reality middle-class mistresses would still endure a heavy load of housework themselves. In the commercial sphere, the clerk created the counterpoint to the fiction of a life of ease. By working for the consumer, clerks helped patrons assert their leisured state and consequently their elite status. By the 1870s, the identification of consumption with refined leisure was hard to miss.

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[75] The suggestion that historians focus more closely on the place of pleasure in the practice of consumption was originally made by Colin Campbell in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (1987, repr. (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[76] *Whiting & Kehoe wholesale clothes warehouse. Whiting Kehoe & C.W Galloupe Nos. 40 & 42 Ann St Boston,* (Boston?. 1850), AAS.

[77] "Interior View of the Ladies Parlor, or Instruction Room in Grover and Baker's Sewing Machine Establishment on Broadway" *The New-York Illustrated News* August 26, 1860, p 252, Harry T. Peters Collection, N-YHS.

Leisure may be defined as an absence of work. But, it is also an activity intended to produce pleasure. Building on the idea of consumption as pleasure, the artists visually matched consumption with two other pleasurable leisure activities: promenading and the visiting of exhibitions. Allying consumption with these two pastimes allowed artists to portray shopping as the best kind of refined pleasure. The promenade, which had arrived in America via Europe, afforded individuals the pleasure of seeing and being seen in the city's most fashionable places.[78] American visitors to Europe often remarked on the habits and spaces given to promenading in foreign cities. Locations varied. Many promenades were located in bucolic settings; parks, gardens; riversides or piers. But European promenades could also be urban. Visiting Paris in 1830 Emma Hart Willard described her trip to the Palais Royale. Describing the arcades of shops that enclosed the elegant gardens, Willard called her promenade both "brilliant and beautiful." "Such a change comes at once over the senses" she wrote, "from the unsightliness and clamor of the streets, to the beautiful verdure,--the pleasant trees, and shrubs, and flowers, and walks, of this elegant spot, surrounded by all that is dazzling in merchandise, and promenaded by multitudes of the elegant and fashionable."[79]

Willard's description reveals that promenading was not only enjoyable, but also an activity that lent itself to the habit of fashionable shopping. Although not exclusively linked to the practice of examining store windows, in America this connection became cemented early on since spaces for promenading were also identified as genteel shopping districts. This was particularly true of New York. The island of Manhattan, laid out as a grid in 1811, had at first not offered any space suitable for the ritual of promenading. But as the city's commercial district grew, so too did the demand for new areas where fashionable everyday excursions could take place. By the 1820s, New Yorkers started to abandon the parks of the Battery and begin to use Broadway to perform the rituals of polite sociability. By the middle of the century, the practice of promenading and shopping were utterly intertwined.[80] In 1849, E. Porter Beldon told visitors to the city that Broadway was "the great promenade for beauty and fashion." He went on: "it contains the largest and most splendid retail stores in the city. Here may be seen the silks of China and the rich fabrics of India and Thibet [sic]; the manufactories of Europe and our own continent have here poured forth their treasures; the

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[78] David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York" *Social History* 17: 2 (May 1992): 203-227.

[79] Emma Hart Willard, "Letter from Emma Hart Willard to Almira H. Phelps, November 4, 1830," in *Journal and Letters from France and Great Britain.* (Troy, NY: N. Tuttle, Printer, 1833,) 24-46.
[80] Scobey, "The Anatomy of the Promenade," 207-210.

precious metals have been made tributary, and the glittering windows display the ingenuity of art."[81] By the late 1850s and 60s the metropolitan city builders engineered new developments in urban design. Two features stood out in this new expansion. The creation of Central Park, which became a magnet for á la mode promenaders and a "new uptown landscape of elite residence and sociability: a district that ran from 'Ladies Mile', the luxury shopping and amusement zone between Union and Madison Squares, to the townhouses and clubhouses of Fifth Ave."[82]

The retailscapes reflected this great and growing connection between promenading and shopping. Consumers depicted in these images could easily be connected back to earlier representations of fashionable promenading. Some of the earliest American images that depicted the promenade were William Birch's highly popular series *City of Philadelphia* which went through four editions, the first published in 1800 and the last re-issued from 1827 to 1828. Birch's views contained depictions of promenading Americans. In 'High Street with First Presbyterian Church," two women dressed in white gowns carrying blue parasols engage in the classic passing greeting of the promenade, while at the edge of the picture, two female figures stroll arm in arm in elegant dress, passing out of view as they make their way down the High Street.[83] [Fig. 25] Other images, such as his view of the theatre in Chesnut Street, also showed men and women taking a turn on the city's elegant brick sidewalks. The posture, grouping and stylish apparel of these figures was echoed by commercial artists in their advertisements. Transposing the depictions of promenading Americans into their portrayals of fashionable shopping, commercial artists helped to reinforce the connections between the social ritual of the promenade and consumption.[84] [Fig. 26] This association helped to frame shopping as a pleasurable activity. Of course, both promenading and consumption could help to define social boundaries, as historians like David Scobey and Stuart Blumin have pointed out.[85] But beyond this function, both pastimes were counted as a way to spend leisure time for Americans. It was sociable, fashionable, fun and full of great spectacle.

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[81] E. Porter Beldon *New-York. Past, Present and Future,* (New York; George P. Putnam, 1849), 29.
[82] Scobey, "The Anatomy of the Promenade," 208.
[83] William Russell Birch, "High Street with the First Presbyterian Church" from *The City of Philadelphia,* (Philadelphia: William Birch, 1800).
[84] "A Panoramic View of Broadway, New York City, Commencing at the Astor House," from *Gleason's Pictorial Magazine* (1853) Geographic Print Collection, Folder "Fulton Street North to Worth Street," N-YHS.

[85] Ibid. See also Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class.*

If promenading was the way to enjoy the urban outdoors, then by the mid nineteenth century, the visiting of exhibitions was the best way to enjoy the urban indoors. A.H Saxon has argued that proprietary museums, such as P.T Barnum's famous American Museum, were the most popular cultural institutions of their day.[86] Aside from the likes of Barnum's exhibition which featured everything from stuffed animals to statuary, there were a number of other extremely popular exhibition venues that existed in New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Museums featuring scientific curios and natural history objects had been interesting to general public since the end of the eighteenth century, as Charles Wilson Peale's famous museum had demonstrated. Institutes such as the Franklin Institute and the American Institute staged popular exhibitions of domestic manufactures starting from 1824, which attracted thousands of visitors every year.[87] Even more renowned were the exhibitions put on by the American Art-Union. The Art-Union which was situated on Broadway, had attracted half a million visitors in 1848.[88] Comparable art institutions appeared in Boston, Philadelphia, Newark and Cincinnati, proving that the permanent exhibitions of American artwork, featuring landscapes, genre-scenes and history paintings were extremely popular. In all, the act of attending exhibitions, examining tables full of objects and poring over glass cases had become one of the most well known enjoyable pastimes for mid-century Americans.

Placing depictions of exhibitions and retail interiors side by side, it is clear that the artists of the retailscapes imagined shopping as akin to visiting exhibitions. Comparing Max Rosenthal's depiction of the interior of Independence Hall drawn and published in 1858 with his interior view of L.J Levy and Co's Dry Goods Store published a year earlier it is easy to see how the compositional conventions of depicting exhibitions governed representations of store interiors.[89] [Fig. 27] In the exhibitions, a great array of artwork was hung on every wall. Contrary to the current mode of curatorial style, where maybe one or two works are placed on a wall, the mid-nineteenth century mode was to cram the wall full of interest. Statuary was

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[86] A.H. Saxon, "P.T. Barnum and the American Museum," *The Wilson Quarterly* 13:4 (Autumn 1989), p.133.
[87] Joanna Cohen, "Millions of Luxurious Citizens: Consumption and Citizenship in the Urban Northeast, 1800-1865," Ph.D. Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 2009, 178-220.
[88] Rachel N. Klein, "Art &Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union" *Journal of American History* 81:4 (March 1995) p.1547.
[89] Max Rosenthal, "Interior view of Independence Hall, Philadelphia. [graphic] / On stone Max Rosenthal," (Philadelphia: Lith & printed in colors by L. N. Rosenthal, cor. 5th & Chestnut St., 1856), LCP and Max Rosenthal, "Interior View of L. J. Levy & Co's Dry Goods Store, Chestnut St. Phila.: [graphic] : Erected in 1857 by W. P. Fetridge, Esqr. 55 Feet Front & 175 Feet Deep / On stone by Max Rosenthal; John Fraser architect; John Ketcham builder." (Philadelphia: Lith. & Printed in colors by L. N. Rosenthal 5th & Chestnut Sts. [ca. 1857]), LCP.

interspersed throughout, marking small areas where visitors could congregate to observe, discuss and socialize. Similarly, in the store interior, the walls were covered with the objects for sale – in this case the wide array of textiles that covered the right hand wall, making up a mosaic of colourful fabric. More textiles hang from the balustrade, which adds to the sense of spectacle. And just as Rosenthal had depicted the visitors to the exhibition, the interior of Levy's store is full of small groups, observing, discussing and socializing in the store's lavish interior.

It is also striking that the depictions of interior furnishings for museums and exhibitions was so closely echoed by depictions of store interiors. Glass topped counters and glass-fronted cabinets put the objects of consumers' desire on display and artists showed shoppers interacting with the commodities in the same way as frequenters of museums would interact with exhibits. One key difference however, was that artists drawing retailscapes took care to show how consumers could enjoy an added benefit: the advantage of touch. Shoppers in G.G Evan's bookstore for example were depicted as pulling books off the shelf, bringing the bindings close up to the nose and face. Similarly, hat shoppers at Charles Oakford's establishment could enjoy the sensation of holding the shiny black hat in their own hands, stroking the fur and trying it on for themselves.[90] Thus, the pleasures of visiting exhibitions were magnified in the retailscapes by the enjoyment of sensual gratification. Exhibits were a pleasure for the eyes, shopping satisfied smell, touch and even taste.

In all these ways, retailscapes promoted shopping as pleasure. They depicted consumption as leisure, refinement, sociability, visual delight and sensual gratification. Consumers who would have seen these images would have found it hard to resist the idea that shopping constituted one of the great enjoyments of urban life. True, they would have been able to see that shopping offered other things as well: the chance to assert social status, an opportunity to invest their money in objects needed for comfort or necessity in the home and for their families, or even an occasion when they would have to face the challenge of navigating a proliferating array of shops and goods. For those without means or standing, these retailscapes might well have been read as cruel taunts, an invitation in to an urban world of pleasure that was not extended to them. There is no way of knowing how every potential shopper might have read these images. Nonetheless, by examining their

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[90] Edward Sachse, "Interior view of George G. Evans' original gift book establishment. 439 Chesnut [sic] Str. Philadelphia. [graphic] : Taken from nature and drawn on stone by E. Sachse." (Baltimore: Coloring print of E. Sachse & Co. Sun Iron Building, 1859), HSP; Ibbotson & Queen, "Charles Oakford & Sons model hat store nos 826 & 828, Chestnut Street, Continental Hotel. Philadelphia. Hats, caps & furs, wholesale & retail. [graphic] / Lith by Ibbotson & Queen, 311 1/2 Walnut St." (Philadelphia: P.S. Duval, 1860), LCP.

composition closely, by comparing them to other representations of separate activities and by placing them into the context of the burgeoning world of urban retail, it is clear that the artists and shopkeepers themselves were hoping to promote consumption as refined pleasure and in particular compete for the attention of a group of increasingly discerning consumers.

These retailscapes can also be read against a larger backdrop of ongoing discussions in antebellum America concerning both morality and political economy. Advertisements are not generally considered part of either debate. Yet as content in the advertisements from the early decades of the nineteenth century suggested, Americans may have counted them as valid commentary for both subjects. Virtue was clearly at stake in images that featured allegorical representations of Liberty or Justice and given that the ideal republican citizen was an independent artisan or yeoman farmer, depictions of craftsmen clearly had a moral valence. More obviously, trade cards and broadsides that proclaimed the importance of unfettered commerce or the benefits of protection were transparently engaged in a debate over political economy in their own way. Thus scholars should be sensitive to what the appearance of images that featured consumers simply enjoying themselves in shops and stores might have meant to American viewers, both in terms of moral and political economy.

Discussions of consumers before the 1840s had run along two major themes. The first was a practical concern with the moral implications of too much or too little consumption. Of course, discussion over the corrupting effects of luxury consumer goods was a debate that had long antecedents in both classical philosophy and Christian thought. But for Americans, who had a preoccupation with debt and dependence on the one hand and a need to prove refined gentility in their rude republic on the other, the question of exactly how much to spend on non-necessary items (as well as what actually constituted those items) remained a point of contention well into the nineteenth century. Finding the balance between excess and penny-pinching proved agonizing for many individuals. Advice manuals published in the first few decades of the nineteenth century spent pages trying to find the correct balance of expenditure. Urging individuals to neither over-spend, nor skimp on the obligations of hospitality and charity, author Mrs. Taylor wrote,

> "A decent competence, as it exempts from preying anxiety, and from the temptation to mean contrivances and low subterfuges, ennobles the character; and by expanding the heart, promotes feelings of benevolence, and cherishes a variety of Christian virtues; which are blighted and sometimes totally destroyed by pecuniary difficulties."

The rest of this worthy volume was taken up with tips on how to manage accounts, pay bills, look for bargains and teach household economy to daughters and sons. Ultimately, Taylor, defined excessive consumption as that which could not be afforded. Ribbons and lace were perfectly acceptable purchases, providing the household necessities were acquired first.[91]

This didactic tone as regards consumption was echoed in other advice manuals and moralizing tales. On the whole, consumers were discussed in two ways. Either authors described paragons of virtue, spending only what was necessary to keep husband and family in comfort and good standing, or they depicted consumers as immoral and foolish individuals, whose self-indulgence undermined social position and family security. Anecdotal stories often juxtaposed the two and ended the tale with the careless spender in despair, beyond the help of the prudent relative or friend who had witnessed the dramatic descent into debt and destruction.[92] As a result, consumption was an activity fraught with anxiety. Spending was something that had to be done with immense care. All purchases had to be accounted for and justified. As bestselling author Maria Elizabeth Rundell wrote:

> "A minute account of the annual income, and the times of payment, should be taken in writing; likewise an estimate of the supposed amount of each article of expense; and those who are early accustomed to calculations on domestic articles, will acquire so accurate a knowledge of what their establishment requires, as will give them the happy medium between prodigality and parsimony, without acquiring the character of meanness."[93]

With all the attention to economy, household management and reputation, there was little room for any fun.

A second arena for the discussion of consumer behaviour in the early nineteenth century was the great array of texts published on the subject of political economy.[94] Like the advice manuals these works were increasingly popular in the US. Political economy titles, like Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, appeared frequently in booksellers catalogues

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[91] Mrs. Taylor, *Practical Hints to Young Females on the Duties of A Wife, A Mother and A Mistress of a Family,* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1816), 34.

[92] For example see, Anne MacVicar Grant, *Sketches of Intellectual Education and Hints on Domestic Economy, Addressed to Mothers with an Appendix containing An Essay on the Instruction of the Poor*, (Baltimore: Edward J. Coale, 1813), 252-258.

[93] Maria Elizabeth Ketelby Rundell, *A New System of Domestic Cookery: Formed Upon Principles of Economy and Adapted to the Use of Private Families by a Lady* 3rd ed. (Exeter: Norris and Sayer, 1808), 1.

[94] For an overview of when critical works of political economy were reprinted in America see Esther Lowenthal, "American Reprints of Economic Writings, 1776-1848," *The American Economic Review*, 42 (Dec. 1952): 876-880 and Esther Lowenthal, "Additional American Reprints of Economic Writings 1776-1848," *The American Economic Review*, 43 (Dec. 1953): 884.

especially after 1790 and American publishers reprinted popular European works.[95] Newspapers and magazines, such as Hezekiah Niles *Weekly Register* also balkanized pieces of these texts, giving political economy a relatively wide readership. However, unlike the advice literature, these texts were not concerned with the behaviour of individual consumers. Instead they addressed the ways in which the economy functioned as a mechanism, with consumer demand being a key component of that mechanism. As Adam Smith put it so clearly in *The Wealth of Nations*:

> "Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer. The maxim is sp perfectly self-evident, that it would be absurd to prove it. But in the mercantile system, the interest of the consumer is almost constantly sacrificed to that of the producer; and it seems to consider production, and not consumption, as the ultimate end and object of all industry and commerce."[96]

After the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* nearly every other political economist felt compelled to respond, even when their reaction was unfavorable. Charles Ganilh, a French political economist whose work - *An Inquiry into the Various Systems of Political Economy* - was reprinted in America for the first time in 1812, applied a stringent mercantilist critique to Smith's work, but even in his opposition helped to circulate Smithian philosophy. Ganilh's work even conceded that "consumption [was] the measure of production," and that "a produce which finds no consumer, is not long reproduced."[97] Similarly, a more ardent supporter of Smith, Jean Baptiste Say, promoted his colleague's work, particularly in America. Say was a close friend of Benjamin Franklin, and this relationship helped bring the ideas of the Scottish philosopher to the attention of the American statesman.

What emerges from an overview of early nineteenth century writings on political economy is that consumption was imagined as a tool that politicians could use to engineer the growth of their national economies. In many ways this was not new to those who had read the liberal philosophies of Adam Smith. Many mercantilists had been concerned with capturing

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[95] Samuel Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception among the American Founders, 1776-1790," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, 59 (Oct. 2002): 897-924.

[96] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, intro. Robert Reich and ed. Edwin Cannan, (New York: The Modern Library, 2000) p. 715.

[97] Charles Ganilh, *An Inquiry into the Various Systems of Political Economy; Their Advantages and Disadvantages; and the Theory Most Favorable to the Increase of National Wealth*, trans., D. Boileau, (New York: Peter A. Mesier, 1812), 179-80.

and keeping markets for the produce of their empires. Smith's work shone a brighter spotlight on the importance of the consumer but ultimately he too was interested in the consumer's utility to the larger project of wealth creation for nations. As a result, the ideas about free that Smith made a case for, did not produce a real revolution in ideas about consumption or consumers. Instead, authors of works of political economy, whatever their persuasion saw consumers as cogs in the system of national political economy. Small wonder then that early advertising sometimes appealed to consumers using a language of free trade or protection. Accustomed to imagining consumers as part of the national economic machine, some shopkeepers approached their customers as component parts. In this framework, where consumer desire was used to stimulate the economy, there was little room for the idea that a consumer might find pleasure in the practice of shopping.

Read against these two literary backgrounds, the retailscape takes on an added significance. Not only was the appearance of consumers taking pleasure in shopping an innovation in terms of advertising; it also signalled a development in ideas about the identity of the consumer in the United States. By separating the act of consuming from the context of both moral guidance and political economy, shopkeepers and retailers provided an imaginative space for individuals to see shopping as a pleasurable, obligation free, activity. Seeing the images of shoppers promenading through elegant retail districts, and strolling through the lavish precincts of new shops and stores, consumption momentarily ceased to be a household chore demanding constant careful judgement. Moreover, these pictures erased the connotations of national economic responsibilities. As ships and wharves, looms and spindles disappeared, so too did reminders that to consume had implications for the nation's balance sheet. By erasing these responsibilities from advertisements, shopkeepers and artists allowed shopping to become a pleasurable pastime that gratified individuals rather than satisfying households or nations. The importance of this step cannot be underestimated. If nothing else it allows us to see how and when Americans, who had founded their nation on the strength of non-consumption, began to jettison their utilitarian and often uncomfortable attitudes towards consumption in the nineteenth century and embrace the features of a burgeoning consumer culture by the dawn of the twentieth.