Improvement the Order of the Age': Historic Advertising, Consumer Choice, and Identity in 19th Century Roxbury, Massachusetts.

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Abstract
During the mid-to-late 19th century, Roxbury, Massachusetts experienced a dramatic change from a rural farming area to a vibrant, working-class, and predominantly-immigrant urban community. This new demographic bloomed during America's industrial age, a time in which hundreds of new mass-produced goods flooded consumer markets. This thesis explores the relationship between consumption patterns and historic advertising in 19th-century Roxbury. It assesses the significance of advertising within households by comparing advertisements from the Roxbury Gazette and South End Advertiser with archaeological material from the Tremont Street and Elmwood Court Housing sites, excavated in the late 1970s, to determine the degree of correlation between the two sources. Separately, the archaeological and advertising materials highlight different facets of daily life for the residents of this neighborhood. When these two distinct data sets provide a more holistic snapshot of consumer choice. Specifically, I examine the relationship between consumers and how tangible goods served as a medium of communication for values, social expectations, and individual and group identities.

Ultimately, this study found that there is little direct overlap between the material record from the Southwest Corridor excavations and the historic Roxbury Gazette advertisements. The most prevalent types of advertisements from an 1861-1898 Roxbury Gazette sample largely did not overlap with the highest artifact type concentrations from the Southwest Corridor excavations. This disconnect may be the result of internal factors, including lack of purchases or extended use lives for certain objects. External factors for disconnect include archaeological deposition patterns, as well as the ways in which the archaeological and advertising data is categorized for analysis. Most importantly, this study emphasizes that the lives of Tremont Street and Elmwood Court's residents cannot be neatly summed up by the materials they discarded. Only through the consideration of material culture, documentary resources, and other historic information can we begin to understand the experiences these individuals endured.

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