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Public Appetite: Dining Out in Nineteenth-Century Boston

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Public Appetite: Dining Out in Nineteenth Century Boston

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M.A., Emory University, 2007

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Public Appetite: Dining Out in Nineteenth-Century Boston
By Kelly Erby

This dissertation explains why and how Bostonians began to eat away from home in commercial dining venues in the 1800s, and provides new insight into the formation of complicated gender, race, ethnic, and class identities in urban America during this period. The nineteenth century witnessed a change in dining habits that was swift and dramatic. Throughout the colonial period and into the early nineteenth century, Americans rarely dined commercially. Then in the late 1820s and 1830s, the processes of industrialization and urbanization, the steady encroachment of the market economy, and, by the 1840s and 1850s, the growing number of immigrants all combined to transform the texture of everyday existence in American cities of the northeast like Boston. As living and working conditions changed, eating meals outside the home became an essential activity for many urbanites. From the eating-houses lining Washington Street that dished up hash at mid-day to hungry Irish laborers to the restaurants specializing in French cuisine and patronized by the elite, Bostonians had a new set of options about where to dine.

The general trend toward increased commercial dining was not distinctive to Boston. On the contrary, the range of dining venues that opened there in the 1800s is illustrative of an American dining landscape that endures even until today. This exploration of dining out in Boston thus lays bare a significant but relatively under-investigated form of space in nineteenth-century America: zones that functioned both as workplaces and retail arenas; and zones that were at once semipublic in the sense of being less than private and yet were also clearly bounded. Above all, this investigation uses commercial eating to illuminate the way American society participated in growing overall consumption and commercialization and yet, simultaneously, demonstrated greater segmentation. This dissertation tells the story of how many different kinds of Americans turned toward restaurants and how dining out reflected and expressed—indeed, defined and affirmed—the differences among them. When Bostonians began to dine out, they also dined apart.

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Woot!

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

List of Maps

List of Tables and Charts

Chapter 1
From Tavern to Luxury Hotel: The Emergence of the Refined Public Table in Boston

On October 16, 1829 the Tremont House on Tremont Street opened in Boston with a celebratory dinner attended by one hundred twenty of the city's most prominent merchants and renowned men. Daniel Webster was there, as was Edward Everett; Mayor Josiah Quincy presided. At the Tremont that evening, the men feasted on a succession of forty-six dishes, each and every one of them "costly delicacies skillfully prepared." The food was provided "in a manner in all respects tasteful and elegant," with a sizeable portion of the menu consisting of French fare, "the perfection of cookery." Dinner was followed by innumerable commemorative toasts, songs, and poems all praising Boston for the civic and cultural achievement it had attained in building the Tremont, the world's first "luxury hotel" and a crossroads in American dining and social relationships.[1]

A wide range of Boston newspapers, including the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, the *Boston Commercial Gazette*, the *Boston Courier*, and the *Weekly Messenger* regaled their readers in the week following the opening dinner at the Tremont with reports of the affair. These papers emphasized that this had been no run-of-the-mill, traditional public banquet like those Bostonians, and, indeed, all Americans, had enjoyed since colonial days. On the contrary, this dinner proclaimed that the Tremont, with its first-class public dining room and French cuisine, would be a new stage upon which Boston's elite residents and visitors could enjoy the luxuries their wealth afforded them. More

[1] *Boston Weekly Messenger,* 22 October 1829.

importantly, the Tremont was a space that, though public, was shielded from the more unpleasant aspects of urban life.[2]

Absent at the opening dinner were the mechanics and tradesmen who had helped to build the Tremont and who otherwise provisioned, clothed, and supplied Boston. On the following night, October 17, one hundred thirty of these men, mostly members of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association, were feted at their own Tremont banquet, which was also presided over by Mayor Quincy. This would probably be the only time the vast majority of these men ever feasted at the Tremont, for its dining room was neither intended nor priced to be visited by a working man. At the dinner on October 17, which was covered with much less fanfare by only one of Boston's newspapers, the working-class *Boston Courier*, the men toasted to the completion of the Tremont House and to the merchants who had financed its construction. It is unknown if they partook of the same French cookery as those at the dinner the night before, but it is doubtful. French food, for reasons that will be explained below, probably did not appeal to these men as it did to the affluent.[3]

When the Tremont opened in 1829, Boston had been an incorporated city for only seven years. In the decades since the Revolution, Boston had experienced many changes that drastically altered the ways in which its people related to it, as well as to each other. The transition in government was one sign of this; the two separate celebratory dinners held at the Tremont in October 1829, as well as the construction and popularity of the Tremont itself, were others. Until the 1800s, an elite, commercial dining venue such as

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[2] The *Boston Daily Advertiser* reported on 19 October, the *Boston Commercial Gazette* on 19 October, the *Boston Courier* on 19 October and the *Weekly Messenger* on 22 October.

[3] *Boston Courier,* 19 October 1829.

the Tremont and the bevy of imitators that opened in its wake both in Boston and in cities across America would not have been necessary or desired. Americans ate at home, or were entertained in the homes of others. Those who braved the arduous process of traveling found themselves at the mercy of a tavern keeper for their sustenance, and from time to time, public banquets in local taverns drew people—typically, male people—together to eat, drink, and celebrate various occasions. The taverns that hosted these events, however, were hardly the elite showplaces the Tremont House would be.

Between 1790 and 1830, this situation changed drastically. As gaps in income distribution in Boston became wider and class lines hardened, Bostonians of varying economic and social backgrounds no longer mingled at neighborhood taverns—indeed, their very neighborhoods had become significantly separated from one another. Bostonians also developed diverse cultural practices that helped to articulate and cement their class identities as well as inter- and intra-class relationships. For a variety of reasons, well-to-do Bostonians were first to make commercial, public dining with one another an important part of these cultural practices. The Tremont House provided the appropriate public dining venue for the elite and became an integral arena for the enactment and communication of its class identity in Boston. The Tremont and the activities that went on there also set precedents for urban social relationships and the use of public space that other socio-economic classes and cities would follow as the century progressed.

The Colonial Tavern

To fully appreciate the departure in dining and social relations the opening of the Tremont in 1829 represented, it is important to first sketch out some of Boston's colonial and late-eighteenth-century social history pertaining to public eating and drinking. By the late 1700s, the history of taverns in American cities such as Boston was long and colorful. For the colonists who had carved out settlements from the New England wilderness, their second priority, behind establishing a meetinghouse for worship, was often the erection of an inn or tavern. Throughout the colonial period, New England taverns provided casual meeting places for male residents, business exchanges, news and post offices, and, finally, room and board for travelers. As more than one historian has noted, colonial taverns were crucial for fostering community and, in some cases, civilization itself. In contrast to some other colonies, however, early Massachusetts' settlers preferred that residents do their drinking in private homes rather than in a public tavern. Usually inspired by religious beliefs, residents of the Bay Colony maintained that a fine but important line existed between partaking of alcoholic beverages in healthy moderation and sinfully drinking to excess. They feared that tavern-keepers, in order to turn a profit, would allow customers to cross this boundary.[4]

Thus, while the earliest Massachusetts settlers recognized the necessity of taverns to provide for the welfare of travelers, they attempted to regulate permanent residents' public imbibing. Colonial legislators required Boston town leaders to exercise strict

[4] For a colorful description of early New England taverns in Massachusetts and elsewhere, see Alice Morse Earle, *Stage Coach and Tavern Days* (New York: Haskell House 1968). On early seventeenth-century drinking laws in Massachusetts, see Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 9.

control over the number of taverns that were permitted to operate there. Massachusetts' legislators also enacted a series of laws between 1637 and 1645 that attempted to limit liquor sales to non-residents. They hoped these restrictions would force locals to remain sober, or, at least, do their drinking at home. Such restrictions, however, proved highly unpopular and impossible to enforce. They were soon modified to allow residents to enter taverns so long as they did not "drink healths" or linger at the bar too long. Public drunkenness was, of course, not to be contemplated. In 1698, another law was enacted that restricted the location of inns to major thoroughfares. Again, this was intended to make taverns available to visiting travelers and less accessible to towns-people. These regulations were only the beginning of the long and complex saga of drinking laws in Massachusetts.[5]

While definitions of "moderation" varied, nearly all colonists consumed some amount of beer, cider, rum, and wine. As one song explained it:

> There's but one good reason I can think
> Why people ever cease to drink
> Sobriety the cause is Not,
> Nor fear of being deem'd a Sot,
> But if liquor can't be got.

These sentiments applied in some measure to most women colonists as well. But unless they were prostitutes, female residents did not frequent taverns to do their tippling during the colonial period; they drank at home. However, many women—particularly widows—did secure licenses to operate a tavern. A woman could appear behind a bar and remain respectable, but her presence in front of it was a sure sign of her impropriety. Taverns

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[5] Perry Duis, *The Saloon*, p. 9. We will return to Massachusetts' drinking regulations for examples of ways in which state and city governments influenced the development of public eating throughout this work.

accommodated female travelers when necessary, but these women were still not welcome to sit at the bar.[6]

Until the late eighteenth century, most taverns were situated in a family's private residence. The space dedicated to public drinking was usually rather cramped. Meanwhile, the atmosphere was more often than not quite rudimentary, consisting of a single barroom where tipplers sat together at one large table and drank out of pewter mugs, sometimes even sharing a communal bowl.[7]

In most of the North American colonies, tavern trade developed quickly due to high demand. The Massachusetts legislature, however, strictly limited the number of taverns it licensed to operate. Of course, there was probably a number of establishments in Boston where alcohol could be procured that were not licensed. The historical record has left little trace of such venues.[8]

In addition to the regulations described above, in order to operate as a licensed tavern in Boston by the eighteenth century an establishment also had to be capable of providing customers with food and lodging in addition to drink. The lodging provided was often quite humble. Guests' beds were typically crowded together in a space not far removed from the bar area and in very close proximity to the tavern-keeper's family's own sleeping quarters. When the number of beds came up short, guests—strangers even—were expected to share. Bed linen—when provided—was often washed only occasionally and guests might be informed that sheets "had been used only a few nights."

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[6] Colonial drinking song quoted in Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Late-Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1999), p. 1.
[7] See Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, pp. 2-3 and Alice Morse Earle, *Stage Coach and Tavern Days*, ch. 2.
[8] Peter Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*, p. 3.

Thus, while colonial Bostonians might have enjoyed getting "bowz'd," or "'top'd," at a local tavern, no one particularly relished boarding in an inn when traveling.[9]

The food provided at taverns could be even more unsavory than the sleeping conditions. In Massachusetts, most tavern keepers did not strive to provide their patrons with a dining experience but rather simply feed them the meals for which they had paid with the price of their lodgings and which they, as licensed tavern keepers, were obliged to provide. This food was often potluck, or whatever the tavern keeper's own family was eating. Visitors ate what they were given when and under whatever conditions it was served. Towns-people may have come to drink, but they were not provided with food unless the establishment was hosting a public banquet. If this was the case, proprietors might supply the fare and necessary dining accoutrements or hire a caterer to do so.[10]

The situation in contemporary London, Paris, and most every other city in Europe, on the other hand, was quite different, for in these settings, purchasing cooked food and eating it in public was common practice for male residents and travelers alike. Historians have identified the medieval cookshop, which existed for centuries in England, as one of the precursors of the modern restaurant. In the cookshops described in accounts of medieval London, residents could bring their own meat to be cooked, or buy a pre-cooked pie, pudding, or joint of meat. As one contemporary described a London cookshop in the late seventeenth century,

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[9] Alice Morse Earle, *Stage Coach and Tavern Days,* pp. 78-9; Quote from Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 276. Peter Thompson has identified one hundred fifty synonyms for inebriation during the colonial period. See Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, p. 1.

[10] Though it describes a scene from the early nineteenth century, an account of tavern food in the New England newspaper *The Yankee* would have rung true in the colonial period as well. See *The Yankee*, 28 May 1813.

> Generally four spits, one over another, carry round each five or six pieces of butcher-meat, beef, mutton, veal, pork, and lamb; you have what quantity you please cut off, fat, lean, much or little done; with this, a little salt and mustard upon the side of a plate, a bottle of beer and a roll; and there is your whole feast.

Poorer people without the means available to own and heat cooking apparatus in their homes especially took advantage of these services. And yet, more well-to-do men also ventured to the cookshop for a bite and, more than likely, some ale and sociability too.[11]

Another option for food and society in many European cities was the coffeehouse, or café, where one paid one or two cents in exchange for a dish of coffee. In Restoration England, the coffeehouse was well known as a center for political discussion; likewise, in Paris, exchanges on literary matters occurred in eighteenth-century cafes. By this date, London coffeehouses had begun serving food almost to the exclusion of coffee. The daily fare such an establishment dished up was known as its "ordinary." Some ordinaries became quite famous for their excellence and highly popular among local residents.[12]

Indeed, in eighteenth-century England, a number of coffeehouses and taverns began to distinguish themselves by the quality of food they served patrons. In the case of taverns, these differences were sometimes accompanied by a change in name. Some proprietors attempted to denote their establishment's gentility by calling it an inn instead of a tavern; however, the distinction between the various business names was not specified consistently and the terms tavern, inn, and alehouse—as well as hostelry—were all used more or less interchangeably. For instance, alehouses supposedly did not serve wine while taverns did. In addition, alehouses were sometimes associated with rural

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[11] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985), p. 136.
[12] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, pp. 136-7.

England and taverns with urban centers. In reality, however, an alehouse was quite likely to be admirably stocked with wine and both inns and taverns served travelers as well as residents. A well-heeled Englishman, such as Samuel Johnson, who, after all, would have paid attention to lexicography and was famously fond of London tavern life, did not expect to find better quality of provisions or of service at an inn than at a tavern. In his eyes, a tavern could be every bit as good as an inn. The same was true in the American colonies.[13]

Indeed, most Boston taverns in the eighteenth century catered to an amalgam of social classes. Boston itself was not yet residentially segregated along class lines to any great degree and it is probable men would have frequented the tavern closest to their home or place of business; in fact, in a town still populated mostly by artisans and tradesmen, home and workplace were often the same. It is unlikely, however, that taverns would have been mixed racially. While the city had yet to experience significant class segregation, Boston's small free black population was quite residentially isolated and economically discriminated against throughout this period. It would have been difficult if not impossible for a black Bostonian to attain a license to sell liquor or even have alcohol served to him. Blacks wishing to tipple would have probably done so in private, or at one of the informal, unlicensed dram shops willing to accommodate them.[14]

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[13] Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, pp. 53-4; Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: a Social History, 1200-1830* (London, 1983), passim; David Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 12-56.

[14] Cindy Lobel, *Consuming Classes: Changing Food Consumption Patterns in New York City, 1790-1860* (Ph.D. dissertation: City University of New York, 2003), p. 123. On mixed clientele of taverns, see Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), pp. 160-164 and, for as an example of a contemporary source, Lyman Preston, *Stories for the Whole Family, Young and Old,*

Overall, Boston's eighteenth-century taverns were centers for drink, easy sociability, and conducting business and political conversation. At the same time, despite official efforts to limit misbehavior, taverns doubtless also housed revelry, drunkenness and vulgarity. These disparate activities all went on under the same roofs as men of high and low rank, as well as high and low character, congregated together at the public bar.[15]

Distinctions in the rank and degree of various Boston inns developed slowly. In 1789, the *Boston City Directory* listed twenty-three licensed, publicly acknowledged inns in the city. The majority of these were probably tiny barrooms inside otherwise private residences; however, increasingly, such humble watering holes were eclipsed by a growing number of larger and more comfortable establishments. As gaps in wealth distribution in Boston grew larger throughout the eighteenth century, many proprietors set up shop in more elegant establishments that sought to cater more or less exclusively to affluent patrons. To do so, they bought up mansions on prominent streets to house their businesses. True, they may have also resided there with their families, but the greater part of the house was given over to the business of provisioning. These businessmen used the impressive architecture of such former homes and the prestige of the departed residents to appeal to an elite clientele. Inside, large rooms accommodated the feasts and celebrations of local Bostonians' clubs and societies.[16]

Male and Female (New York: J.M. Elliott, 1833), pp. 100-105. On blacks inability to attain a license to sell alcohol in Boston, see Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of a Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 7-18. On blacks and public drinking, see Perry Duis, *The Saloon*, p. 158.

[15] For the story of how tavern-going was important to social and political life in one colonial city, Philadelphia, see Peter Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*.

[16] *The Boston Directory, Containing a List of the Merchants, Mechanics, Traders, and others, of the Town of Boston*, (Boston: John Norman, 1789). On the gentrification of

The Green Dragon Tavern, located on Union Street (formerly Green Dragon Lane), was one such noted tavern in Boston in the late eighteenth century. A former private home, the Green Dragon was three stories and, with its large stable and other outbuildings, covered a piece of land fifty feet in length and thirty-four in depth. The lower story was used as the common rooms of a tavern, while the second floor was a large hall dedicated to holding public banquets. The attic provided sleeping accommodations for overnight guests. The inn was known to be "commodious" and "comfortably arranged." Its railed walk and numerous windows, as well as its famous sign, a large dragon, "the wonder of all the boys who dwelt in the neighborhood," announced its suitability for well-to-do transients and locals alike. The tavern did not bar less affluent customers from entering for a drink or two—it merely encouraged the patronage of the well-to-do.[17] [Illustration 1, Appendix A]

As the eighteenth century became the nineteenth, this lightly stratified tavern life still largely fulfilled the needs and desires of Boston citizens and visitors for sociability and refreshment. The rapid changes the city experienced in the next thirty years, however, combined to bring about a revolution in the ways in which Bostonians lived, worked, and related to one another. The use of public space in the city was greatly affected by these transformations and the public dining room—where food rather than

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eighteenth-century taverns, see Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, pp. 160-164.

[17] James Henry Stark, *Antique Views of Boston*, Theodore Thomte, ed. (Boston: Burdette & Co., 1967), pp. 57-8. In Boston, licensed taverns were required to display a sign to alert the public of their hospitality. These signs often became matters of great pride and reflected considerable artistic ability. In particular, higher quality inns often relied on especially impressive insignia to distinguish their businesses from others.

drink was the main focus—soon emerged and eclipsed the tavern as a central stage for the negotiation of social and class relationships in Boston.

Boston and Change in the Early Republic

After 150 years of existence, Boston in 1790 boasted a population of 18,000—up from an all-time low of 6,000 during the period of British occupation, but only a small increase from the 1743 population of about 16,000. The fledgling industries of the young Republic largely overlooked Boston in the late eighteenth century for other localities where the labor supply was more plentiful and, hence, less expensive, and the waterpower needed to fuel manufacturing more readily accessible. European immigrants and migrants from the American countryside generally settled where the economic opportunities were greater, leaving Boston with a slowly growing population comprised mostly of native-born New Englanders. Boston remained a town of artisans and small tradesmen, with a smattering of wealthy merchants.[18]

As a result, in 1790, Boston was still a closely-knit community and easily traversable by foot. Traders lived in close proximity to their counting houses just as mechanics lived close to their workshops; often, places of work shared space with

[18] Compared to such other cities as New York and Philadelphia, Boston is relatively understudied. Two of the most comprehensive works on Boston's history include Thomas O'Connor, *The Athens of America: Boston, 1825-1845* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006) and Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1991).

domestic life. Classes mingled as well with little available room to escape from one another.[19]

At the turn of the century, however, Boston experienced rapid population growth. By 1800, the number of Boston residents had shot up to 25,000, and by 1810, it had grown to 30,000—a fivefold increase in just thirty-five years. While other American cities, such as New York and Philadelphia, were growing even faster than Boston, the consequences of population explosion were probably greater in a community where constricted geography had long forced residents to cluster in densely populated areas.

In addition to population growth, Boston abounded with visitors by the early nineteenth century thanks to the transportation revolution of the early 1800s. New and better roads made travel less dangerous, as well as cheaper, speedier, and, thus, more common. Between 1815 and 1840, the expanding network of canals, steamboats, and railroads made travel yet easier and more affordable. Greater numbers of Americans—both male and female—were venturing away from home more frequently than ever before. At the same time, more Europeans were also traveling to America to witness the "Great Experiment" in democracy. Boston, as one of the country's largest cities and premiere ports, was at the epicenter of this tourism. It was the hub of New England, which was itself the most thickly settled and industrialized region of the country. Boston was typically the first stop in the "Grand Tour" of America. It was also where many Southerners came to sell their cotton and to shop. In addition to a vast number of stage coaches, a steamer line, established in 1825, had cut the traveling time between Boston and New York from four days to twenty-four hours. Railroads, which first crisscrossed

[19] For more on Boston's late-eighteenth-century economy, see Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants.*

Massachusetts and then the eastern seaboard, also carried travelers to town. Although half the size of New York, Boston in the early 1800s probably had a greater number of strangers on its streets.[20]

As the industrial and market revolutions took hold of America in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, new sources of trade and industry brought tremendous wealth to some Boston merchants and businessmen and created greater disparities in income among citizens. Although Boston still failed to develop industries within the city's own boundaries, Boston capitalists used their money to invest in industries and commercial enterprises across Massachusetts, expanding their fortunes and contributing to the young nation's prosperity. These ventures included banks, railroads, and, after the War of 1812, the textile mills of Haverhill, Waltham, Lowell, and Fall River. Such businesses brought great wealth to Bostonians and much of this money went to financing efforts to improve the town itself.[21]

Projects included filling in the pestilent Mill Pond and constructing roads and bridges. But as Boston grew, its limited geography became more of a problem. Boston was quickly becoming a crowded and dirty metropolis. By 1800, the waterfront, Boston's

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[20] Thomas O'Connor, *The Athens of America*, chs. 1 and 2. Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), p. 11.

[21] On the Boston "Associates," a group of about forty Boston families with considerable wealth, power, and prestige by the late 1820s, see Thomas O'Connor, *The Athens of America*, pp. 15-17 and Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, pp. 6-9. Richard Steckel and Carolyn Moehling examined rising inequality in industrializing Massachusetts, including Suffolk County, in Steckel and Moehling, "Trends in the Distribution of Wealth in Industrializing New England," *The Journal of Economic History* 61(March 2001) pp. 160-183. For instance, between 1820 and 1830, Steckel and Moehling found that the share of wealth held by the top 1 percent of the population in Massachusetts increased from about 20 percent to nearly 30 percent. Gaps in wealth distribution among the entire population also increased and continued to do so throughout the nineteenth century. Steckel and Moehling, Ibid., p. 167.

commercial nexus, had become heavily congested as well as smelly. In addition, Boston's growing inequalities in wealth distribution were emphasized in the waterfront, home to drunks and prostitutes as well as prominent merchants, businessmen, and lawyers.[22]

To accommodate newer, finer housing for the well-to-do who wished to escape the waterfront area and its problematic conditions, investors, beginning in the mid- to late-1790s, began undertaking various building projects to create additional living space. For example, a corporation formed in 1792 for building a toll bridge across the Charles River from the west end of Cambridge Street to the opposite shore in Cambridge led to the rapid development of Boston's West End. In addition, in 1795 investors calling themselves the Mount Vernon Proprietors bought up the large expanse of Beacon Hill farmlands belonging to the famous portraitist John Singleton Copley, who had moved to Great Britain by this time, and carefully laid out streets to accommodate blocks of townhouses. In 1799, the Proprietors severed the top sixty or seventy feet from Mount Vernon to make even more living space. The earth lopped off from Mount Vernon was then dumped into the waters at the foot of Charles Street to fill in that area with the help of small gravity cars. These and similar projects in the first decades of the nineteenth century helped ameliorate some of the consequences of population growth in Boston but the city remained densely populated. Only with the massive landfill projects initiated after the Civil War did Boston real estate effectively expand outward.[23]

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[22] Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 13-14 and Thomas O'Connor, *The Athens of America*, p. 4.

[23] Thomas O'Connor, *The Athens of America*, p. 6; on late-eighteenth-century West End building projects, see Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History*

As Boston's population grew in the early decades of the nineteenth century and gaps in income distribution there widened, residential segregation between classes increased as well. Many of the well-to-do merchants, businessmen, and lawyers who had once inhabited the North End moved to the new Back Bay area or to outlying districts like Cambridge, Brookline, Dorchester, and Roxbury. [Map 2, Appendix B] Men who moved to such suburbs left their places of business back in Boston proper, paying between twenty to forty dollars a month to commute every day by omnibus, train, or even boat. At the same time, the middling classes relocated to South Boston, in many cases pushing out the poorer population already there. Meanwhile, the more "humble" classes were left to form enclaves of their own in the North and West Ends close to their places of employment.[24] [Map 1, Appendix B]

Boston by this time still had a small but significant population of black residents that was also increasingly residentially segregated from whites. In 1800, the percentage of free blacks in the population was about five percent. Inspired by the Revolutionary fervor over liberty and freedom, northerners moved by degrees to abolish slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They did not, however, commit themselves to racial equality and justice. African-Americans thus found their economic opportunities limited by long-standing custom and prejudice. In the earliest years of the nineteenth century, the homes of black Bostonians were concentrated in the extreme North End, opposite Charlestown. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, however, the city's blacks had been pushed back to the West End, behind the well-to-do white

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(Cambridge: Belknap, 1968), p. 49; on the Mount Vernon Proprietors, see Ibid., pp. 60-61; on subsequent pre-Civil War land reclamation projects, see Ibid., pp. 73-94.

[24] Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, pp. 14-15.

residences, on the lower slopes of Beacon Hill in what was known as "Nigger Hill," the area bounded by Charles, Pickney, and Hancock streets. This district had originated as servant quarters for the elite families in Beacon Hill, but developed into a vibrant community of its own.[25]

Thus, by the early nineteenth century, a Boston very different from colonial days was emerging. Work and domestic life was steadily diverging. As transportation continued to improve, commuting became easier and less expensive. A number of affluent Bostonians moved to the suburbs, although they retained jobs in the city. Meanwhile, the streets and neighborhoods they left behind became more and more metropolitan and specialized in nature. In the central business district, once residential areas were now left to growing numbers of banks and offices. These in turn attracted newspapers and stores, lending the business district a distinctly "downtown" atmosphere.[26]

In elite areas of Boston, mounting prosperity became visible in many ways. Charles Bulfinch, the architect, designed stately Beacon Hill mansions and added touches of elegance to various other parts of town. He designed the Boston Theatre, opened in 1794, and a gilded and domed State House above the Common, the cornerstone of which was laid in January 1798. Bulfinch also enlarged Faneuil Hall in 1805 and soon built two

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[25] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979). Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) p. 120; Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America,* pp. 251; 17-18 and 71-2.

[26] Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: New York, 1980), p. 29.

additional public markets for a rapidly expanding Boston. Such improvements attested to and accentuated Boston's sense of civic pride.

Meanwhile, other parts of Boston, where less prosperous citizens clustered, remained untouched by Bulfinch and developed a unique character of their own. Abandoned by the upper classes, the waterfront area and the North End in general were inhabited by a class of urban poor. Dirty and crowded, these areas were cluttered by dead cats and other rubbish. Crime, some of it violent, also sullied the streets. Commercial establishments, such as taverns, that remained in the waterfront took on a seedy quality that made them unfit for a decent person to enter. But since no such person would have ventured into these districts of the city in the first place, this hardly mattered.

By the 1820s, Bostonians began to feel that a more modern form of government was necessary to confront the increasingly metropolitan environment Boston had become and tackle such uniquely urban problems as rising poverty, dirt, and crime. Thus, on January 7, 1822, citizens voted to incorporate the town of Boston as a city. The sweeping transformations that had taken place in Boston since the late eighteenth century, the growing gaps in wealth, upsurge in residential segregation between classes—as well as between work and domestic life—and finally, improvements in transportation, made this change necessary. As the new city government organized itself, well-to-do Bostonians got to work modifying the texture of city life and the kinds of spaces considered appropriate for cultivating their social relationships and identities in the growing metropolis.

Refinement and Public Space in a Growing City in the Early Nineteenth Century

The ideology of refinement was one major development in the early nineteenth century that changed the character of everyday life for the affluent in American cities like Boston. The rapid industrialization and urbanization in the first few decades of the 1800s, combined with the expansion of the market economy, caused anxiety in many Bostonians, particularly those at the top of the social and economic hierarchy. They feared the consequences of such change—class differences, unsettled social relations, growing anonymity—in a nation still trying to establish and preserve republican and democratic ideals. The ideology of refinement became a comfort in the face of this unease, providing a means through which well-to-do Americans during this period confirmed and justified their privileged status in the Republic.[27]

The ideology of refinement promulgated a hierarchy of merit rather than the criteria of birth stressed by eighteenth-century gentility. Refinement could be learned and the sincere demonstration of refinement was enough, according to nineteenth-century ideas, to elevate anyone's social status. It was also evidence that those higher up the socio-economic ladder deserved their positions. These beliefs served to legitimize social difference in the young nation, still firmly committed to a concept of democracy shaped by notions of egalitarianism.[28]

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[27] For an explanation of refinement as an ideology that answered these needs, see Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, Introduction.

[28] I am not saying, however, that Americans in any way equated democracy with egalitarianism. Although I differ with all of their authors in some respects, the works that have most informed my thinking on this subject include Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Jonathan Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); and Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow:*

Nineteenth-century refinement called for the division of the city into separate spheres, private and public. The refined home, presided over by a woman and considered female space, supposedly nurtured the republican spirit of all who lived there as a center for teaching refined behavior and tastes. Etiquette guides appeared throughout the nineteenth century and attempted to help Americans learn proper bodily management and values. Mastery of these skills was thought to be far from superfluous. On the contrary, developing and practicing refined behaviors were considered central to the formation of good character required in citizens of the Republic. Finally, the home, stylishly but discerningly decorated, was also supposed to teach family members to undertake consumption, by this time ubiquitous in urban America, judiciously. Thus, refinement not only accommodated market capitalism but also reinforced it.[29]

Refined men and, to some extent, women too, then took the knowledge learned at home into the public sphere, gendered as male space and dominated by men, where they demonstrated the quality of refinement by elaborate rituals of self-possession and social interaction. Success in acting refined—even in the face of the disorderly market economy and chaos of urban life—was thought to prove their good character and worthiness for economic and social eminence. Refinement was regarded not as a product of such privilege; rather it was thought to be the cause. Refinement thus justified hierarchy by providing a means through which all could theoretically improve their positions within it and at least partially resolved the tensions between class distinction and republicanism that troubled nineteenth-century urban Americans.

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the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[29] Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*.

Ideally, public spaces in which all present displayed refined sensibilities were visions of the model republican society Americans might one day achieve. But when well-to-do Bostonians ventured beyond their homes by the 1820s, they increasingly encountered not refinement but rather poverty, disorder, crime, and filth. For refined men and women, contact with these and other realities of common urban life could be deeply disturbing. In fact, such confrontations threatened to weaken confidence in their commitment to democracy and were likely to offend the cultivated, delicate sensibilities of those higher up the socio-economic ladder—particularly women.

As a result, the ideology of refinement soon called for spaces in the city that were public enough for refinement to be meaningfully demonstrated but were also shielded from the disruptions of urban life that might undermine it. To some extent, parks, theaters, and stores all became arenas for the enactment of refinement, but still another kind of space was needed. In the 1820s, the commercial dining room, a unique, semi-public space, emerged to fill this gap. Changing standards of refinement at table during this period ensured that those commercial eateries striving for elite patronage were organized by strict standards of social ritual and tactful consumption, making it the perfect test of refinement as well as the perfect stage on which to enact it.

Changing Ideas about Refinement at the Public Table

In nineteenth-century Boston, inns had particular potential as public stages for the performance of refined social rituals. With certain adjustments, inns could elevate common activities such as eating and drinking to new levels of sophistication and even limit the clientele they permitted access. By the early 1800s, some of Boston's inns had

already stepped up their efforts to meet refined needs and expectations. In 1800, twenty-two inns and taverns were listed in the Boston city directory. The majority of these establishments were traditional taverns like those that had existed since the colonial period. A few, however, now strove to provide spaces that would attract more elite clientele by offering superior decor and refreshments and charging a price that would have eliminated lower-class clientele. Inns that thus courted upper-class patronage often adopted the French term "hotel" to give them added sophistication and distinguish them from more rustic taverns. In early-nineteenth-century Boston, such refined venues included the Green Dragon mentioned above, as well as the Lamb on Washington Street and the Indian Queen on Marlboro Street.[30]

By the early 1800s, the accommodations provided at such higher-quality inns were extraordinary compared to other venues. By stopping at one, guests could be assured clean linen and at least somewhat greater privacy than in traditional inns. Furthermore, these establishments lent guests the prestige of a good address during their visit to Boston. When they told others of their lodgings, received callers, or had their name and temporary residence published in visitors' lists, they could be assured they would be associated with only the best in the city. Local residents also made use of the fine décor and prestige of these "hotels" by using them to host their banquets and assemblies.[31]

As Boston continued to grow and change in the early decades of the nineteenth century, entrepreneurs attempted to capitalize on calls for additional suitably refined

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[30] Of course, deep pocket books did not necessarily mean one was also knowledgeable of—or practiced—refined behaviors. Travel literature from this period is filled with anecdotes about well-off Americans who nevertheless lacked sophistication.
[31] Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, pp. 356-9.

spaces in the city by opening a hotel with even more impressive accommodations that would better serve Boston's wealthy residents and travelers. In 1806, construction began on what became the Exchange Coffee House Hotel, Boston's largest hotel to date. In contrast to most other American inns, the Exchange was to be housed not in a former private residence but in a building that was created specifically to be a hotel. The money for the Exchange—a whopping half million dollars—was raised by a joint-stock company. When the hotel opened in 1808, it was put under the careful oversight of a manager, David Barnum. Located on busy Congress Street, the Exchange was seven stories high—mammoth for its day. The front of the building was ornamented with six marble ionic pilasters, and "crowned" with a Corinthian pediment. In addition to rooms for overnight guests, the Exchange housed a ballroom, barroom, several lounges, billiards, and a large dining room. The Exchange also contained a separate commons room where women travelers were served, for females were denied access to the taproom and the communal table accommodating male guests.[32] [Illustration 2, Appendix A]

In addition to providing for travelers, the Exchange endeared itself to Boston's upper-class residents. Its pretentious architecture and large size provided ideal space for staging business meetings, balls, public dinners, and concerts. When celebrities came to town, or important political figures, they put up at the Exchange. Residents commemorated their visit, as well as made every effort to impress them, by holding banquets at which to toast their guests and demonstrate the growing affluence and refinement of their country. Public banquets—toasting and feasting—had always been

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[32] For descriptions of the Exchange Coffee House, see Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, p. 11; Nathaniel Dearborn, *Dearborn's Reminiscences of Boston and the Guide through the City and its Environs* (Boston: N. Dearborn, 1851), pp. 142-3; Alice Morse Earle, *Stage Coach and Tavern Days*, p. 50.

important to American culture and inns had long hosted these activities, especially in Boston, where they alone could sell alcohol to be consumed on the premises. The Exchange guaranteed that banquets held in its dining room, which was an especially large and high-ceilinged space, took place in a notable environment sure to impress guests. Its manager and proprietors also took care to provide an impressive spread for patrons' enjoyment.[33]

Indeed, at the Exchange and the other better quality inns that opened in American cities in the early nineteenth century, the quantity of food provided not only for public banquets and celebrations but for all meals became critically important in cementing a hotel's elite reputation. Managers of these establishments no longer served guests whatever their own family happened to be eating as in traditional inns but rather dished up a variety of foods prepared specifically for patrons. Most inns during this period operated under what was known as the "American Plan." In contrast to the bulk of European inns, establishments utilizing the American Plan included three to four meals per day in the price of a night's lodging. Food was served at appointed times and patrons who missed these times simply went without but were still required to pay as if they had eaten. The meals a hotel provided were known as its *table d'hôte,* or its "ordinary." At a *table d'hôte*, guests gathered around one large table where the fare—from soup to dessert—had all already been placed on the table. Guests were expected to help

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[33] Regarding banquets at the Exchange, see Nathaniel Dearborn, *Dearborn's Reminiscences of Boston,* pp. 142-3; Alice Morse Earle, *Stage Coach and Tavern Days*, p. 50. For discussion of the importance of public banquets in the young Republic, see Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, p. 158 and David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: the Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) chapters 1 and 2. Bostonians, of course, also had Faneuil Hall to host their banquets and assemblies. See Richard Busman, *The Refinement of America*, pp. 356-7.

themselves to whatever foods they liked. Even in inns like the Exchange the dining service was not typically more elaborate than this because in America, eating habits had yet to really come under the influence of refinement.[34]

Americans were tremendous eaters accustomed to hearty meals and their fertile country provided a wide variety of foods. Americans were particularly—and notoriously—fond of meat. For the most part, Americans in the early 1800s still followed English eating habits and constructed meals anchored by a roasted or boiled animal protein with vegetables and starches as supplements. For desserts, they favored puddings and pies. Foods native to America, or those that grew well in its soils and climates, were firmly established in American diets by the nineteenth century and habitually appeared on tavern tables, including at the Exchange Hotel. Such foods included squashes, beans, watermelons, potatoes, corn meal (also known as Indian meal), and apples—to name only a few. There was also a variety of meats available—from lamb to venison to pigeon. Although most Americans ate relatively well, inns desiring upper-class patronage were expected to go above and beyond everyday standards in providing provisions for guests.[35]

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[34] Michael and Ariane Batterberry, *On the Town in New York: The Landmark History of Eating, Drinking, and Entertainments from the American Revolution to the Food Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 11. Richard Bushman argues in *The Refinement of America* that eating had, in fact, come under the influence of the ideology of refinement by the colonial period. He is pointing, however, to the proliferation of basic dining accoutrements such as chairs and tables, as well as more elaborate items like china and porcelain dishes, in private homes. Bushman also demonstrates that where American families had once shared dining utensils, by the late colonial period, each member of a family typically had his or her own set. I don't dispute Bushman here, but compared to what was going on in Europe by the early nineteenth century and the dining rituals that would soon develop in America, the kinds of practices he points to are not especially refined. Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, pp. 74-8.

[35] Elaine McIntosh, *American Food Habits in Historical Perspective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), p. 93; Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, p. 195.

In fact, early nineteenth-century American hotels staked their reputations on the size of ordinaries they provided. At the Exchange everyday meals became massive affairs. A dinner could, and often did, consist of from twelve to sixteen dishes. These dishes might include venison, bear steaks, wild ducks, wild turkey, lobster, terrapin, oysters, as well as pork, mutton and other, more domesticated, meats. Ten or more desserts might appear as well, ranging from plum pudding to apple pies and cranberry tarts. In general, then, the impressive aspect of meals at the Exchange Hotel was their prodigality and not necessarily their taste or presentation.[36]

Indeed, European visitors to America habitually expressed amazement at the size of American meals but found fault with American cookery even when dining at impressive hostelries like the Exchange. As early as the eighteenth century, perhaps earlier, food had become a matter of national identity throughout Europe and one that, at least in France and England, was a subject of considerable public discussion as well as pride. English people certainly felt they had a culinary identity—partly because they viewed their straightforward roasts as superior to France's complex ragouts and "made dishes." Although American culinary practices were largely inherited from Great Britain, English travel literature, which became a highly popular literary genre in the nineteenth century, repeatedly assessed American cookery as greasy and tasteless and Americans themselves as overly fond of onions. In part, these Englishmen and women used the experience of dining to understand and present "tasting" America to their readers, finding American fare—particularly that at a *table d'hôte*—abundant but not very skillfully prepared or well arranged. The public table thus became a frequently employed metaphor

[36] Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, p. 195.

for the Great Experiment itself. Furthermore, because English cooking had been the subject of French ridicule since at least the early eighteenth century, English visitors to America probably relished finding others on whom to turn the critique. [37]

Between the Renaissance and the French Revolution, the culinary practices of France and England had taken markedly different directions; indeed, cooking in France during this period had begun to distinguish itself from most of Europe. Until then, as in America in the early nineteenth century, status had been conferred throughout most of the continent by quantity of food rather than quality. However, as the regularity, variety, and security of food supplies increased and social competition intensified during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, status instead became associated with the quality of the food prepared. In France, where the aristocracy was centralized in Paris (in contrast to the situation in England where it was decentralized on private country estates) and social competition was especially strong, courtly models of cooking and eating also became highly ritualistic and elaborate. By the 1700s, carefully prepared ragouts and sauces and ornate table decorations had become symbols of rank and eminence in France. This trend intensified as the technology of cooking apparatus became more precise and facilitated more delicate dishes.[38]

In Boston, pockets of similarly refined French culinary ability did exist in the early nineteenth century. By this period, several French immigrants had opened up

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[37] For examples of European travel literature, see Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*; Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the years 1827 and 1828* (New York: Arno Press, 1974); Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968).

[38] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, chapters 3 and 4. French ascendancy in cuisine can be traced, however, to sixteenth-century Italy. Catherine de Medici brought Renaissance culinary artistry with her to France when she arrived in France in the 1540s.

"restorators," one of the few kinds of commercial dining venues in early nineteenth-century Boston not associated with an inn (and thus, in Massachusetts, could not serve alcohol). The first restorator in Boston—in fact, the first in America— opened in 1794 on the northwest corner of Milk and Congress Streets. Its proprietor was the French refugee known simply as Julien. [Illustration 3, Apendix A] A number of restorators like Julien's had opened in Paris in the years before the French Revolution. These early "restaurants"—indeed, the word was derived from "restorator"—had emerged as efforts to evade the strict guild laws regulating French *traiteurs*, a business, in modern terms, somewhat between a caterer and superior kind of take-away (similar to the English cookshop). In Paris, *traiteurs* had the exclusive privilege of selling ragouts, but only in quantities that contained a whole cut of raw meat. A *traiteur* could not sell an individual serving of a dish to be consumed on the premises; it could only sell large quantities to be eaten in the purchaser's own residence. Such guild laws prohibited anyone besides *traiteurs* from selling cooked meat in any quantity and thus retarded the development of establishments in France that fulfilled needs similar to those met by English taverns and cafés. In the 1760s, however, entrepreneurs calling their businesses "restorators" found loopholes in these laws by selling the stock, or bouillon, produced in the cooking of meat. They called this delicacy a "restorative" and marketed it to the Parisian elite as a pick-me-up—something that was healthy for the body. Gradually, French restorators added to the list of foods they served until, finally, the French Revolution swept away the old guild laws and guild privileges altogether. The French Revolution further encouraged many French *chefs*, previously employed by royalty or aristocrats, to cook for the public for the

first time by opening up restaurants where they sold their cuisine. Many also took their talents out of the country to places such as America.[39]

Of the 10,000 to 25,000 French refugees who settled in America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most went to New York, Philadelphia or the West where there was greater economic opportunity than in New England. A few, however, settled in Boston. Julien of Julien's Restorator was one such migrant who managed to create a thriving and novel business. At his establishment on Milk Street, Julien introduced Bostonians to cheese fondue and truffles, and concocted, for the first time, *Consommé Julien*, a clear soup that attracted the praises of a French refugee residing in New York, the famed gastronome Brillat Savarin.[40]

Scant record of Julien's Restaurant exists, but it is likely that the establishment catered to Boston's elite as restorators in late-eighteenth-century France did, selling individual portions of pricey food in luxurious surroundings. French restaurateurs like Julien brought this business model to urban America along with their fricassees and eggs *brouilles au fromage*. At the same time they also established the precedent in America that expensive, refined food was also French food.

French fare, however, was slow at first to catch on in America. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many Americans saw France's revolutionary struggle as akin to their own and developed a greater affinity for French culture (although there was certainly anti-Jacobin sentiment as well). On the other hand, many others found

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[39] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, pp. 138-139; See also Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) pp.9-11.

[40] Oscar Handlin devotes a few words to French immigrants, including Julien, in Boston in *Boston's Immigrants*, p. 28.

imitation of French society as foppish. Why should Americans regard foods once reserved for the French aristocracy as better than their own, native fare? For instance, in 1802 when President Jefferson returned from a trip to France with a taste for French dishes, his critics complained that he had become '"Frenchified, abjuring his native victuals." Others simply did not like French haute cuisine, finding it excessively fussy and unfit for the tables of true republicans; or they had no idea how to cook it. But as members of America's upper class looked for ways to demonstrate and justify their privileged status, they increasingly turned to French standards of good taste as an emblem of refinement. Lacking an aristocratic culture of their own, elite Americans came to feel there was no reason they should not adopt markers of French sophistication. These Americans felt that by appreciating French cuisine, they could demonstrate that they were worthy of their elevated economic and social standing. French food thus became *de rigeur* in urban America by the late 1820s, although tensions inspired by embracing European cultural forms rather than developing uniquely American ones endured. A number of restorators opened in Boston and then other large cities as well.[41]

Around the same time that French cuisine had taken its unique turn in Europe—beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing through the nineteenth—Europe also saw an "extraordinary elaboration" of table manners. Like refined cuisine, dining etiquette originated among the European aristocracy and then worked its way into the middle classes. Individual plates and goblets supplanted communal ones while the fork

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[41]James Trager, *The Food Chronology: A Food Lovers' Compendium of Events and Anecdotes from Prehistory to the Present*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1995), p. 195. On Americans' general embrace of European culture by 1830, see Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: the Formative Years, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) ch. 2, especially p. 52.

slowly replaced the use of fingers and limited the acceptable employment of the knife. Most importantly, diners were expected to strictly regulate their bodily behavior while at the table. By the early-nineteenth century, American dining habits had experienced a similar transformation as upper-class Americans worked dining rituals into their broader practice of refinement. American table manners, however, continued to lag somewhat behind Europe's.[42]

In fact, in the early nineteenth century, Americans still frequently found their dining etiquette—or lack thereof—the subject of European ridicule. Frances Trollope's lampooning of Americans at table in the late 1820s, as well as Charles Dickens' as late as 1842, particularly rankled. But perhaps the most explicit condemnation of American table manners was Magaret Hall's, written in a letter to her sister, in 1827:

> They helped themselves to butter, stewed onions, salt, or potatoes, all with their own nasty knives, with which the moment before they had been eating, and spit to the right and left during their meal. They are a nasty people, the Americans, at table; there is no denying that fact.[43]

Aside from Hall's experience, by the 1820s, upper-class Americans had made definite strides in reforming table etiquette, following the guidelines established for them by Europeans. Although sometimes condemned for its aristocratic pretensions, manners at table quickly became part of the overall ideology of refinement in nineteenth-century America. Proper deportment when dining, combined with elegant tableware and a taste for fine food—particularly, French food—translated economic capital into social and

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[42] Jonathon Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, p. 184. In chapter six, Kasson discusses table manners in Europe and America more generally.

[43] Frances Trollope, *The Domesticated Americans*; Charles Dickens, *American Notes*; Margaret Hunter Hall, *The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written during a Fourteen Months' Sojourn in America, 1827-1828*, Una Pope-Hennessey, ed., (New York: G.P. Putnam's sons, 1931), pp. 112-13.

cultural capital. And yet, in America, such sophistication, supposedly possible, through study, to be practiced by anyone, appeared to be a means for social mobility rather than merely a marker of class distinction as it was in Europe.[44]

To help Americans learn social graces and emphasize that refinement and social mobility were accessible to everyone, plenty of etiquette guides appeared throughout the 1800s. Of course, not all Americans embraced or were even aware of refinement in dining, but among the urban elite and, soon, the middle class as well, knowledge of such behaviors came to be thought of as critical. Manners, like appreciation for French cuisine, also came to be seen as emblems of refinement and thus as causes of class position rather than its products. Refined Americans became eager to demonstrate their knowledge and appreciation of good food and manners in suitable public environments.[45]

The Opening of the Tremont House Hotel: a Refined Urban Outpost with Public and Private Functions

Adoption of European markers of taste and culture had, by the late 1820s, made Boston's well-to-do citizens feel that the currently available public space in their city was outdated and inadequate for its needs. They called for larger, even more refined public environments where they could demonstrate their sophistication for one another while remaining shielded from interruption by the everyday realties of urban life. In addition, as the market revolution continued to transform America from an agriculture-based society to a modern industrial one, Bostonians felt their city deserved an edifice that would be a "larger-than-life" expression of its success and vitality; a place that could provide truly

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[44] On nineteenth-century table manners, see Jonathon Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, ch. 6.

[45] See Jonathon Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, ch. 6 for a reading of nineteenth-century table manners as prescribed by etiquette manuals.

distinguished banquets, host important visitors, and provide entertainments on a grand scale. Further, this new structure would demonstrate Boston's cultural life and refined sensibilities.[46]

The Exchange Coffee House might have continued to meet these needs for Bostonians had it not burned to the ground in 1818. On the other hand, while it was housed in an impressive building, the Exchange was not very different from the better-class of inns that had existed in American cities since the late eighteenth century—particularly in respect to its dining accommodations. Although the dining room and the quantity of its fare were both impressive in size, each was rather outdated regarding its approach to refinement. What elite Boston now clamored for was a new kind of public space, one that combined sophistication and luxury with progress, and that made the public table, by incorporating European-inspired ideas about food and manners, a central stage for refined social interaction.[47]

William Harvard Eliot, a young lawyer from one of Boston's most prominent families, organized the financing and design of what became the Tremont House Hotel, enlisting financial backing and enthusiasm from other wealthy Bostonians. Boston approached the Tremont House as an important civic venture from the very beginning. The laying of the hotel's cornerstone in 1828 was celebrated with pomp and circumstance and noted by Bostonians of all classes. The final structure was of Greek neoclassical

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[46] Molly Winger Berger, "A House Divided: The Culture of the American Luxury Hotel, 1825-1860," *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology*, Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), p. 41.

[47] For details of the fire that burned the Exchange Coffee House in 1818, see, for instance the article in *The Idiot, or Invisible Rambler,* 7 November 1818. The Exchange was rebuilt on a much smaller scale and reopened in 1825. It remained in operation until 1853.

design. It occupied an entire square block on Tremont Street and was three and a half stories high, with four story wings on either end and four portico columns in front. With such classical architecture, the Tremont House announced that it was indeed an important civic building.[48] [Illustration 4, Appendix A]

Built at a cost of $3,000,000—staggering for its time—the Tremont ushered in the era of the modern hotel. One historian has identified the difference between a "modern" hotel and a traditional inn or tavern as the hotel's adoption of characteristics of the changing world around it. For instance, modern hotels like the Tremont were financed by modern corporations—rather than joint-stock or private partnerships—because the corporation limited liability and personal risk, thus encouraging greater investment and mobilizing needed capital for the buildings' impressive style and decoration. These hotels also hired trained architects to design buildings with rooms designated for particular purposes, including the lobby, registration, coat-check, and so on, and professional managers to oversee everything. Most importantly, modern hotels such as the Tremont took special care to utilize the newest technology, justifying expense and even lavishness by appealing to the notion of progress. Accommodations that embodied these traits were not only "modern," they also earned the adjectives "first class," and "luxury" hotels. The

[48] The laying of the cornerstone of the Tremont was noted, for instance, in the diaries of such diverse Bostonians as Edward Savage, a police officer, and G.C. Haynes. Edward Savage, *History of Boston Police from 1631 to 1865, Recollections of a Boston Police Officer* (Boston: Edward Savage, 1865), p. 68. G.C. Haynes, *Diary, 1828-1835*, 11 July 1828, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. On the Tremont's architecture, see *A Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830), pp. 1-7.

Tremont House in Boston was the first of its kind but was soon widely imitated in Boston and in cities throughout America.[49]

When it opened in 1829, much about the Tremont was thoroughly impressive. Its façade was of white Quincy granite, transported from Quincy, Massachusetts, nine miles away, via the newly completed granite railway, one of the first railways in the country. The hotel also boasted gaslight, a call-bell system that permitted guests to signal the front office from their rooms, and—most intriguing of all—indoor plumbing. Guests enjoyed eight water closets located on the hotel's first floor—an unprecedented level of high-tech opulence—and both guests and local Bostonians alike were welcome to patronize the eight bathing rooms in the hotel's basement.[50]

In addition to a coat check and laundry facility the hotel also contained 170 guest rooms, billiard-rooms, public parlors, a barber-shop, reading-room, bar-room, and two dining rooms. Each of these spaces was impressive, but the chamber that drew the most attention and awe was the main dining room, capable of accommodating 200 diners at a single sitting. Seventy feet long, thirty-one feet wide, with a fourteen-foot ceiling, the dining room was ornately decorated in the latest French style. It contained two open fireplaces with marble mantles and a furnace, and the furniture was of carved walnut—much of it imported from Europe. William Harvard Elliott, the hotel's developer,

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[49] The Tremont was designed by noted architect Isaiah Rogers. Molly Winger Berger, "A House Divided," p. 43. In Boston, luxury hotels rivaling the Tremont House included the American House (1835), the Shawmut House (1837), the United States Hotel (1840), the Revere House (1847), and the Parker House (1856). New York City soon boasted a large number of fine hotels as well. Highlights included the Astor House (1836), the Howard Hotel (1839), and the Fifth Avenue Hotel (1859). New Orleans had its St. Louis and St. Charles hotels, opened in the 1840s, and Philadelphia the American House (1845), the Lafayette (1853), and Continental (1860).

[50] Molly W. Berger, "A House Divided," pp. 44-6.

explained, "As the largest and most public apartment of the house, [the dining room] was considered deserving of the most elaborate decoration…."[51]

Four meals a day—breakfast at 7:30 a.m., dinner at 3 p.m., tea at 6 p.m., and supper at 9 p.m.—were served at the Tremont, which continued to operate using the American Plan. In 1830, the cost to stay and dine at the Tremont was two to four dollars per day, making it well beyond the range of common folk. Only males, however, were permitted to eat in the main dining room during these times. Ladies, and ladies accompanied by male escorts or children, took their meals in the hotel's second dining room, especially set aside for their use.[52]

The Tremont was a semi-public building with certain civic and business functions that endeavored to guard its guests from unpleasant realities of urban life that might undermine beliefs in social progress. In particular, it strove to shield women, thought to be especially important to the transmission of refined, republican values but also especially delicate, by dividing them and excluding them from the more obviously public aspects of the hotel. In so doing, the Tremont House incorporated ideas about separate spheres, an integral part of the ideology of refinement, and the associated prescriptions for the construction of gender into its use of space and overall understanding and practice of refinement. Women at the Tremont thus occupied even more protected space in the already protected public sphere of the hotel.

Separate sphere ideology, which developed alongside the separation of work from home, posited a dichotomy between home, private, female space, on the one hand,

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[51] *A Description of the Tremont House*, pp. 10-11. Eliot also quoted in Berger, "A House Divided," p. 50.
[52] Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, pp.17, 15. Molly Winger Berger, "A House Divided," p. 50.

and work, public, male space, on the other. Again, private, domestic space was supposed to nurture family members, instill in them good behavior and character, and provide a bulwark against the encroachment of a self-interested, amoral market economy (even though it was also decorated with products of the mass market paid for with income earned by male participation in this market). Presiding over the home was a female wife and mother who was not to work outside the home and who was to remain above the fray of the marketplace. In order to carry out their protective duties as guardians of domestic virtue, women were also thought to need shielding from the potentially corrupting outside, public world.[53]

To ensure women were thus shielded, the Tremont instituted separate sphere ideals and ensured that gender segregation began at the door. The hotel included a separate female entrance, located at the side of the building, for the use of unescorted ladies. This kept them from having to climb the main steps of the building, which were often occupied by loitering men who might make passing women feel uncomfortable. Inside, the hotel was clearly divided by gender as well depending on the function of a particular room. Those spaces where men congregated were intended to be refined extensions of the public sphere—places where business and politics could be practiced stylishly. These areas were off limits to women. Female spaces were instead those areas of the hotel that were intended to function more like extensions of the private parlor.

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[53] The works that have most influenced my thinking regarding separate sphere ideology are Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18(1966): pp.151-174; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75(1988):pp. 9-39; Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Women's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

They thus permitted women to engage with the public sphere but in a limited, protected way.[54]

Passing through the main entrance of the Tremont and the rotunda and turning to the right was the men's drawing room and bar, followed by the reading room, where males—both guests of the hotel and locals—gathered to read a variety of national and foreign newspapers and periodicals provided by the hotel. At the end of this corridor a staircase led to the bedrooms upstairs that were designated for men traveling alone. The main (men's) dining room occupied the entire first floor of the north wing. Returning to the rotunda and to the left was the ladies' dining room, followed by ladies' parlors. [Illustration 5, Appendix A] Unescorted women, couples, and families were assigned bedrooms on the upper floors of the south wing. Thus, men were not barred from the female spaces of the hotel—including the ladies' dining room—as women were from the men's spaces. As long as a man had female companions he was welcome in the female areas of the hotel.[55]

Again, segregation of space by gender at the Tremont was not arbitrary. The Tremont endeavored to protect its female guests from the vagaries of common urban life as well as the more public and overtly market-driven, political functions of the hotel. On a more practical note, in order to retain its refined reputation and upper-class patrons, the Tremont needed to make absolutely certain that no hint of immorality came to taint it. Female guests were particularly problematic to first-class hotels such as the Tremont

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[54] Costard Sly, *Sayings and Doings at the Tremont House in the Year 1832* (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1833), two volumes, p. 1:176; Molly Winger Berger, "A House Divided," pp. 48-55.

[55] See floor plan in *Description of the Tremont House*, pp. 38-9. Molly Winger Berger provides excellent discussion of gendered space within the Tremont and other nineteenth-century hotels in "A House Divided." See especially pp. 29-31.

because of the difficulty in knowing if an unescorted woman was respectable or if she instead represented that ever-present specter of nineteenth-century urban life: a prostitute. After all, urban anonymity rendered even a fair face and good taste in dress useless in distinguishing between the two. Only by strictly prohibiting unaccompanied women's entry into the areas of the Tremont where males congregated could the hotel be fairly certain prostitutes would keep clear and thus safeguard the reputation of both the hotel and its guests.

On the other hand, women's ability to appear safely in public attested to the level of openness and refinement the young republic had achieved. Female patrons at the Tremont were in delicate tension with these opposing ideas and their movement within the hotel was affected by both. Although segregated, the female spaces of the hotel were as prominently placed as the men's and every bit as nicely furnished. Hotel management was quick to underscore the very fine furnishings with which their ladies' rooms were fitted. Patrons agreed. In fact, some commented on the more pleasant atmosphere of the ladies' quarters at luxury hotels than the men's. For instance, Englishman Charles Murray complained that traveling without female escort in America meant being "shut out from many privileges, deprived of the most agreeable society, and compelled to mourn your lone estate in company with fellows as wretched as yourself." The Tremont desired guests such as Murray to notice its beautifully appointed female spaces in order to court female patronage. The ideology of refinement called for female participation in it. The upper class and the hotels that catered to it were eager to demonstrate the involvement and enjoyment of refined women at these hotels, including the Tremont. Thus, hotel

policy endeavored to both protect women from the public and draw attention to a refined female presence.[56]

Dining at the Tremont in the Antebellum Period

Throughout the antebellum period, dining in both the men's and ladies' dining rooms of the Tremont House involved a level of formality, ceremony, and elegance that was unknown in traditional taverns and on a far grander scale than in most private homes. Tremont dinners thus allowed guests to fully demonstrate their refinement and enjoy the luxury their money could buy—luxury that was justified as an image of the noble society the republic was capable of creating—all while the money-grubbing hustle and dirty, unorganized bustle of city life continued outside. Although few Americans could afford the price demanded to lodge or dine at the Tremont, the fact that there was no overt class barrier to entry permitted the perception of democracy, while faith in refinement and social mobility further assuaged the consciences of the hotel's guests. The Tremont and the many additional luxury hotels that opened in the antebellum years thus became known as "Palaces of the Public," a perfect example of the way antebellum Americans were able and eager to reconcile democracy and luxury within the Republic.[57]

Patrons of the Tremont, whether they were travelers visiting Boston or residents of the city dining with a guest of the hotel or attending a banquet there, participated in a highly ritualized dining performance. Meals were served at specific, pre-arranged times.

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[56] Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: the Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 21-2.
[57] Ibid., pp. 73-74; Molly Winger Berger, "A House Divided," p. 41; Doris Elizabeth King, "The First-Class Hotel and the Age of the Common Man," *The Journal of Southern History* 23(May 1957), pp. 173-88.

Guests waited outside the dining room until a large, Chinese gong rang out that it was the appropriate hour to enter. [Illustration 6, Appendix A] When this happened, hotel servants swung the doors of the dining room open, welcoming patrons into the elaborately decorated space within. As one guest at the Tremont put it, "There goes the *gong*, so, come along." A band of waiters, dressed in dark pants and jackets, then ushered guests to seats around a large damask-covered banquet table that wrapped around the periphery of the room in a U-shape and which was set with china dishes, gleaming glassware, and a varied assortment of silverware. Then the dining performance began.[58] [Illustration 7, Appendix A]

Although the Tremont's diners still gathered around a long, communal table, this table was no longer laden with the entire meal as it would have been in a traditional tavern or even at the Exchange Hotel. Nor did Tremont guests help themselves to food or fill their own wine or water glasses. Instead, the Tremont followed the elaborate "French style" of service. French style was also known as "dining à la Russe" because it was supposedly the Russian ambassador to France who in 1815 first introduced to Parisians the style of serving individual dishes to diners one at a time rather than blanketing the table with the entire meal before the guests' arrival and allowing guests to fend for themselves. Dishes were still pre-cooked and all food was included in a pre-determined cost regardless of how much one ate. However, at the Tremont, patrons chose individual

[58] Charles Dickens, who stayed at the Tremont in 1842, wrote of the use of the Chinese gong: "The advent of each of these epochs [meals] in the day is proclaimed by an awful gong, which shakes the very window frames as it reverberates through the house, and horribly disturbs nervous foreigners." See Charles Dickens, *American Notes*, p. 77; Costard Sly, *Sayings and Doings at the Tremont House*, p. 1:138.

items they would like to eat from a bill of fare and waiters then went to the kitchen, carved and plated the requested items as necessary, and delivered them to each guest.

At the Tremont, there was approximately one waiter to serve every six to eight patrons. Dwight Boyden, the first manager of the Tremont, introduced a kind of military drill for the hotel's waiters that become widely copied at first-class hotels throughout the nation. A headwaiter gave a signal and then all of the other waiters would come marching out in formation to serve the guests. One Bostonian remembered,

> … at the sound of a bell one [waiter] seized upon a quantity of plates, another knives, a third forks, a fourth a lot of large soup spoons, and a fifth the smaller spoons. At the second sound of the bell they moved into line, and at the third marched with sedate steps behind the chairs of the guests and simultaneously the bearers of plates, knives, forks and spoons, with a flourish of the hand, placed the different articles upon the table before the guest, and then gracefully stepped back into line ready to carry out their orders.

Patrons delighted in these performances and the militarization added to the ceremonial nature of the dining experience. As another writer described the scene at an antebellum New York hotel:

> It is one of the most novel signs for a stranger to see in one of those immense dining halls, a whole regiment… waiting for the signal to uncover such of the dishes as are placed on the table before the guests. After all the company are seated, say twenty to thirty of those waiters are ranged, one half on each side of the table, behind the guests, in military line. At a given signal each one reaches over his arm and takes hold of the handle of a dish. That is the first motion. There they all hold for a second or two, when, at another signal, they all at the same moment lift the cover, all as if flying off at one whoop, and with as great exactness as soldiers expected to 'shoulder arms.'

This mustering continued for the duration of the meal, which usually consisted of seven or eight courses, all of which a guest ordered according to his or her preference from a bill of fare. For each course, the waiters also brought new tableware.[59]

The bill of fare itself was another novel and very important prop in the Tremont dining experience. It became necessary once an establishment's offerings were no longer placed in plain sight on the table but were rather kept in the kitchen until a waiter retrieved them as patrons desired. A bill of fare alerted guests to what was available for each course. As one fictional diner at the Tremont, picking up a bill of fare, explained to his friends, "I always run my eye over the list of dishes…and make up my mind which, and how many, of the good things I shall feed upon." After making his selection, the guest then informed a waiter, who brought out the desired dishes in single-sized servings. Because all food at the Tremont was provided for one pre-determined price, guests were welcome to eat as much as they liked. Bills of fare at the Tremont and antebellum hotels like it did not include prices for individual items since everything was included in one set cost. Prices for alcohol, however, not included in the flat rate for room and board, were printed on the bill of fare.[60]

Tremont House bills of fare were mass-produced and printed on a single sheet of paper. Like many other nineteenth-century bills of fare, they were usually ornamented with gaudy borders depicting food, classic Greek themes, or symbols of hospitality such

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[59] Mary Caroline Crawford, *Romantic Days in Old Boston: The Story of the City and of its People During the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1910), pp. 347-8; Scene from New York's Astor House quoted in Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, pp. 195-6.

[60] Nicholas Anderson in *The Letters and Journals of General Nicholas Longworth Anderson*, Isabel Anderson, ed. (New York: F.H. Revell, 1942) notes that room and board at the Tremont ranged from $2.50-$4.00 per day in March 1855.

as beehives and pineapples. Because they were relatively expensive to print, bills of fare were typically used over and over again and thus listed every possible thing the kitchen might ever produce. Seasons and market restraints were often not represented at all on a bill of fare, and instead, the management might go through with a pencil and lightly check items to indicate which were actually available on a particular day. Some menus also included lines at the top for the management or the chef to write in added items or specials.[61]

Not only was the service at the Tremont the height of French style; the food was as well. Although not every item the kitchen produced was French-inspired, a great deal of it was. Consider this bill of fare from the Tremont Hotel in 1843:

Tremont House
Carte Du Diner
June 16, 1843

2 Potages
Le Potage à la Tortue de mer ; La Potage à la Reine
7 Releves
Le Saumon à la Mayonaise
Le Bass, sauce à la Hollandaise
Le Morue, sauce aux buitres,
Le Mouton, sauce aux capres,
Le Dindon, sauce aux huitres
Le Dindon, sauce aux huitres
Le Jambon sur un socle à la moderne
Les Chapons au cochon
15 Entrees
Le Filet de boeuf piqué, garniture d'atelettes
L'Aspic de homard sur un socle de cotelettes de veau en belle vue
… [sic]

[61] This practice is apparent in several of the Boston menus housed by the AAS. According to at least one well-regarded source, albeit from late in the century, there was a distinction between "menu" and "bill of fare"—"The menu is the fare, the bill of fare is to tell what the fare consists of..., as if one should say, 'this is my library; this is the catalogue of my library." See Jessup Whitehead, *The Steward's Handbook and Dictionary* (Chicago: J.Anderson & Co., 1889), p. 47.

Mid-day dinner was the most elaborate of hotel meals, but breakfasts, traditionally hearty meals in America, were also nearly as prodigious as the meal above and evening suppers were only slightly lighter.[62]

Dining at the Tremont thus combined opulence in décor, elaborate service, lavishness in quantity of food, and French culinary sophistication. For their part, guests of both the men's and ladies' dining rooms arrived well dressed and ready to demonstrate their mastery of refined table manners. For instance, Tremont patrons were faced with an array of specialized silverware—including America's first four-tined forks—that became more numerous and more specific as time went on. In the early antebellum period, most Americans ate with forks made of iron or steel that had only two sharp prongs. To use such a fork, one held the fork in the left hand and used it to assist in cutting a piece of food. Then, with the fork still in the left hand, one used the flat, rounded blade of the knife, held in the right hand, to raise the food up to one's mouth. Fine hotels such as the Tremont led the way in making more refined and specific silverware not only available but also necessary for meals. For instance, James Parton remembered in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1868 that "in the United States, as recently as 1835, [the use of four-tined, silver forks] was confined to persons who possessed considerable wealth. They were not common at that time in any but the best hotels, and not one person in ten had ever seen them used." As these four-tined forks became more common, first in fine

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[62] Bill of Fare, "The Tremont House, Carte du diner," The Tremont House Hotel, Boston, MA, 16 June 1843. Ephemera collection, Series I, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. Americans were often quite sloppy with their use of accent marks in writing the French-language bill of fare, as is evident here.

hotels and then, gradually, in private homes, the American habit of cutting one's food with the fork in the left hand, transferring the fork to the right hand, and then using it to carry the food to one's mouth developed. At the same time, as early as the 1830s, eating with the knife became a sign of rusticity and vulgarity. Throughout the nineteenth century, an additional assortment of flatware—dinner forks, dessert forks, fish forks, pastry forks, as well as sundry spoons and knives—became necessary at the refined table as well. Further, the proper use of silverware was but one example of the knowledge of etiquette and strict regulation of the body that the refined man or woman was expected to practice in the nineteenth century and that was constantly on display at Boston's Tremont House.[63]

Conclusion

Beginning in 1829, the Tremont played host to the political, business, civic, as well as personal dinners of Boston's elite. In the ensuing years of the nineteenth century, numerous important men were feted and toasted there, countless civic accomplishments were celebrated, scores of business deals were orchestrated, and a multitude of friendly conversations were shared. At the Tremont, Bostonians and their guests were able to reconcile their privileged position in society with their republican values and enjoy the luxuries their money could buy. They also felt the Tremont was an ideal stage on which to demonstrate their refinement undisturbed by the too-often disconcerting realities of the

[63] On the fine fashion on display at antebellum American luxury hotels such as the Tremont, see, for example, "A Frenchman's Idea of the Astor House," *New York Mirror* 20 (19 August 1843). On forks, see Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, p. 197; Jonathan Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, pp. 190-191; James Parton, "Silver and Silver Plate," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 37 (September 1868), p. 437.

larger urban environment. As time went on, well-to-do Bostonians took advantage of the pleasures of dining at the Tremont with increasing frequency, stopping there not only for special public banquets but also in their daily lives. By the late 1830s, men working in the city with homes in the suburbs often found it more convenient to take their mid-day repast with business associates or friends in the plush surroundings of the Tremont, enjoying the French culinary delights of the hotel's kitchen, than to return home. Likewise, a growing number of women in the city shopping for the day also took advantage of the Tremont's opulent and protected accommodations and began to dine there from time to time as well. The Tremont instituted special pricing for these patrons who wanted only a single meal and not lodging.[64]

Although the Tremont had entertained a group of Boston's mechanics as part of its opening celebrations in 1829, the hotel did not become a haven for this demographic of Boston—nor for any of the city's lower class or ethnic population—as it did for the well-to-do. Indeed, the appeal of the Tremont for its regular clientele was that it filtered urban society through a fine sieve, allowing only those with the proper level of refinement and dedication to elevating the Republic to their own ideal standards to pass through its doors. It was not long, however, before many of the same rapidly changing urban conditions that produced the Tremont House and made dining there a popular activity for Boston's elite also resulted in a spectrum of additional commercial eating

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[64] Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel*, p. 206. Fine establishments were always willing to make special arrangements for guests that desired to dine at the hotel without also sleeping there. In some instances, a hotel might charge such a guest only for the alcohol he consumed since it made little profit on food anyway. The European Plan of service at hotels, in which guests paid for board separate from lodging and could dine at what hours they chose and order *à la carte*, paying only for what they desired, slowly gained in popularity in America beginning in the late 1830s.

establishments that routinely fed both the bodies and the social and cultural needs of nineteenth-century Bostonians from all economic classes and ethnic groups.

Chapter 2
Dining Out in Boston in the Antebellum Period: a Panorama of Eateries

A Friday morning in June 1857 found Benjamin Crowninshield, a Harvard student from one of the most privileged Massachusetts' families, breakfasting at Lyon's oyster saloon in Cambridge, near Boston. It was Class Day at Harvard, a date set aside for recognizing the year's achievements and for enjoying general celebration and merriment near the end of the spring term. After his breakfast of bivalves (a not uncommon morning meal in this period), Crowninshield joined his classmates at the chapel for the day's formal activities. And although he later attended a banquet consisting of a considerable "spread," Crowninshield still met up with two male friends that evening for supper at the Parker House, one of Boston's many elite commercial dining venues that had opened in light of the earlier success of the Tremont House. There it seems Crowninshield enjoyed himself a bit too much. As he confided to his diary, "I ate so much that I had to relieve myself by inserting my fingers in my throat till my stomach came up."[65]

Although the day at Harvard was special and, evidently, Crowninshield indulged himself more than usual, in fact, dining out in the city's variety of commercial eateries was now quite commonplace not only for Crowninshield and other elite young men, but also for all but the poorest of Bostonians. In the antebellum period, a range of commercial eateries catering to the diverse spectrum of income level and social and cultural values of the city's residents emerged and quickly became an integral part of Bostonians' daily lives. By mid-century, Boston guidebooks and its city directory listed

[65] Benjamin W. Crowninshield, *A Private Journal* (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1941), p. 58.

scores of such venues that ranged from the refined style and French cuisine of the Tremont and Parker Houses to tiny storefront eating rooms that dished up "stringy" meat and "tepid" vegetables at mid-day to men who did not even bother to remove their hats let alone pause to think what fork to use. There were also eateries that fell somewhere in between these two and still others earmarked specifically for "ladies."

Boston's commercial eateries all offered refreshment, convenience, and novelty but they were separated by vast distinctions in the kinds of foods they served, the level of service and the quality of decor they offered, the prices they charged, and, finally, the class of patrons they attracted. These differences reflected the wide variations in the values, daily routines, and social networks of Boston's diverging gender, race, ethnic, and class groups. For some residents, taking part in commercial eating was merely more convenient than dining at home. For others it was a new kind of urban recreation. And for still others, it was both. But just as the Tremont House had provided a perfect stage for the enactment of a refined, elevated socio-economic identity (and justification for it), the multitude of additional antebellum commercial eateries in Boston quickly became important arenas for enacting different identities as well. By the mid-1800s, nearly all Bostonians participated in commercial, public dining but certainly not all at the same table.[66]

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[66] While in 1830, there were approximately sixty-seven commercial eateries (encompassing both hotels and stand-alone establishments) listed in the *Boston Directory*, by 1860 there were 133, as well as 91 hotels, many of which were probably also equipped with public restaurants. *The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants, Occupations, Places of Business, and Dwelling Houses* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1830) and *The Boston Directory, Embracing the City Record, General Directory of the Citizens, and a Business Directory* (Boston: Adams, Sampson, & Co, 1860). See also Table I, Appendix C.

Changes in Antebellum Boston

Boston had experienced many changes in the years leading to the opening of the Tremont House in 1829 and it continued to undergo even more vast transformations in the thirty years before the Civil War. Although overshadowed by larger cities like New York and Philadelphia, Boston's antebellum growth was still impressive. Its 1830 population of 60,000 doubled to over 136,000 by 1850 and reached nearly 180,000 just ten years later. Immigrants from across northern Europe, most especially—at least during the 1840s—from Ireland, flooded the city's shores until, by mid-century, the foreign born accounted for fifty percent of all Bostonians. Boston was also the financial, political, social, and cultural hub of a bustling new industrial economy in America. By the late 1830s, masts of ships thronged the city's harbor while docks crowded its shoreline and rail tracks stretched outward toward the north, south, and west.

Indeed, both industry and commercial activity in Boston profoundly quickened during the antebellum years. Boston had always served as a commercial nexus for the eastern region of the country and this activity picked up as the United States devoted itself to manufacturing in the 1820s and 1830s and as new and better forms of transportation took hold. The success of the American textile industry, the heart of which was located only miles away from Boston in originally rural Massachusetts' towns like Newton, Waltham, and then Lowell and Lawrence (all of which soon all became thriving cities thanks to industrial development), infused new prosperity into Boston and brought banking and insurance enterprises to the city as well.

Boston's economy was further stimulated by the arrival of the Irish. Deteriorating conditions in Ireland and British policies toward the Irish people forced many to flee

Ireland in hope of better prospects in America. The dispossessed Irish were desperately poor and facing starvation when they left for the United States. Boston was a primary port of embarkation and Irish funds were so frequently entirely depleted upon arrival that those who made it across the ocean often could afford to go no further. Between 1835 and 1865, Irish immigrants continued to flood Boston's shores. According to immigration records, 3,936 Irish landed in Boston in 1840 and 28,917 in 1849. By 1850, 35,000 Irish lived in the city and only five years later over 50,000 had settled there. [67]

This massive influx of immigrants provided the underclass of unskilled, cheap laborers Boston needed to become an important industrial center. Throughout the 1840s, many large workshops known as factories drew on the services of the Irish newcomers and opened in South and East Boston. These manufactories included sugar refineries, piano makers, iron and brass foundries, shipyards, and shoe and clothing makers. Merchants and bankers continued to form the backbone of Boston's prosperity but the new industries proved profitable as well. In addition, there was also increased demand for services supplied by middle-class doctors, teachers, dry good and clothing stores, grocers, and additional small businesses. In many respects, antebellum Boston was booming. The Irish newcomers, however, unskilled and discriminated against, rarely shared in the city's success. Their work was unsteady at best, often dangerous, and poorly paid. Black Bostonians fared about the same.[68]

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[67] Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1991), ch. 2 especially p. 52.

[68] Ibid.,ch., 3, especially pp. 79-81. See also James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979).

Class distinctions thus became even more firmly pronounced as the rich grew richer while the poor not only remained poor but also significantly multiplied in number with each arrival of yet more Irish immigrants. The antebellum years further witnessed the emergence of a distinct middle class delineated, in part, by the growing separation of manual from non-manual work in production and the rise of white-collar retail and supervisory positions. Middle-class consciousness in Boston and elsewhere, however, was defined less by labor than by a unique domestic strategy that made home the center of middle-class existence and the middle-class wife and mother (who was to remain at home and thus free from the depraving fray of the ever-expanding public marketplace), its moral and cultural arbiter. Working-class women, on the other hand, increasingly labored outside their homes. Domestic servitude was the single largest employer of women in Boston, but many also did home sewing and worked in clothing and millinery factories.[69]

Both the quickening of commerce and growing socio-economic differences influenced the city spatially as well. Boston's geography still hindered significant expansion. But as the city became more industrial, home and work increasingly became distinct spaces while the city's business districts became more differentiated with areas devoted to retailing, wholesaling, heavy industry, banking, insurance, and other services. This meant that men who performed similar kinds of labor were more apt to encounter one another not only at work, but also on the surrounding streets and public spaces. And they were less likely to encounter those outside their socio-economic group. Residential

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[69] Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 5. Virginia Penny, *The Employments of Women: a Cyclopaedia of Woman's Work* (Boston: Walker & Wise, 1863), pp. 350-1.

patterns were affected as well as males settled with their families in areas close to their respective places of labor (or, in the case of the wealthy, in suburbs from which they commuted), leading to neighborhoods organized along class lines. In fact, Boston soon became one of the most economically and residentially segregated cities in the country.[70]

The traditional taverns that had once met Boston's entertainment venue requirements no longer sufficed in the face of these myriad and significant changes. By the 1830s, changes in work and residence patterns that separated home and work led Bostonians to require at least occasional commercial refreshment at mid-day when they could not return home. Meanwhile the growing trend toward socio-economic exclusivity discouraged residents from taking this refreshment around the communal tables of conventional taverns. Instead, Bostonians began to look for distinct public spaces in which they could enact their own unique class identities and dine with others who shared these identities and the values on which they rested. Just as the Tremont House had emerged to fulfill these social and cultural appetites for the elite, a variety of additional eateries opened in the antebellum years to satisfy the working and middle classes. [Table I, Appendix C]

Commercial, Mid-Day Dining Options for Antebellum Men

Men from all economic and cultural backgrounds shared certain reasons for turning to commercial eateries to provide them with at least the occasional meal in the years after 1830 and these reasons primarily had to do with working conditions. By the

[70] On the physical adjustment of the Irish within Boston and how their immigration affected residential patterns throughout the city and its environs, see Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, ch. 4.

antebellum period, work and domestic life generally took place in distinct places for men in Boston. In fact, not only were these spaces separated they were also often located quite far apart from one another. Boston's affluent families generally preferred to live in outlying districts of the city, including the suburbs of Brookline, Cambridge, Charlestown, Chelsea, Dorchester, and Roxbury, in these years. [Map 2, Appendix B] Male heads of households then commuted to their offices in the city each day. The middle class generally did not live so far from their places of work as the more well-to-do; however, the days when Boston's middling class was composed primarily of small artisans and shopkeepers who worked from their homes were fading. In the antebellum period, a new middle class, encompassing merchants, professionals, teachers, clerks, industrial entrepreneurs, and managers, whose home and places of occupation were distinct, was gradually taking its place. For economic reasons, middle-class men usually resided within a relatively short distance of their place of business but home and workplace were still not usually the same. In fact, by the 1850s, increasing numbers of Boston's middle class found homes quite far from the central business district of the city in South Boston and then in certain suburbs as well.[71]

The homes of Boston's laboring class remained close to their workplaces on the docks, and in the growing number of factories and forges in the North and South Ends. In addition, Boston's small but growing black population was still primarily concentrated in what was known as "Nigger Hill" on the lower slopes of Beacon Hill. A certain portion

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[71] Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, ch. 3. Sam B. Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), ch. 2, especially pp. 18-20. Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880*, p. 15.

of it was also scattered in the North and South Ends. But again, the spaces in which working-class males lived and worked in Boston were typically not the same.[72]

Although Boston remained primarily a walking city, once many of these men—regardless of what socio-economic class they came from—ate breakfast and left for work each morning they found it difficult if not impossible to return home at mid-day to join their families for dinner, still the primary, largest meal of the day, and then return to their workplaces once again. For those who lived in the suburbs, their daily commutes were facilitated by new forms of transportation, such as the steam railroad introduced in 1835. But this transportation was still expensive, time consuming, and crowded or otherwise inconvenient. Men were usually unwilling to make the journey between home and work and then back again twice in one day. Even for those who lived closer to their workplaces, walking in downtown Boston was often somewhat hazardous or problematic depending on the distance to be traveled and considering the range of possible obstacles encountered on the way, including inclement weather and throngs of people, carriages, and omnibuses. Working-class men likely received very little time in which to take mid-day refreshment and would have found it similarly inconvenient to return home. For all working men, then, the option to buy their dinner form a commercial eatery close to their place of work was increasingly appealing.[73]

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[72] Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of a Dream* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) pp. 251; 17-18 and 71-2. Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 97. You can also get a sense of the growing separation of home and work from various antebellum editions of the *Boston Directory*, which listed residents' business addresses as well as those of their private homes.

[73] Sam B. Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, pp. 16-7. Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, pp. 61 and 82.

Boston's growing population of male boarders (which rose along with the new work opportunities that drew single young men to the city from the hinterlands and along with rent prices) similarly found it inconvenient to return to their boarding houses at dinnertime. Between 1850 and 1880, 10 to 30 percent of Boston households contained at least one boarder; the percentage was still higher for black and immigrant families. Meals at a boarding house were provided by the landlady at set times and included in the cost of rent. The boarder—or boarders—typically ate all together, along with the household's permanent family members. Boarders were not allowed to cook or eat in their rooms.[74]

Men who boarded encountered the same difficulties at mid-day as other men with jobs in Boston. It was increasingly difficult for them to return to their residences for the mid-day meal. Moreover, if they did return, they had to do so at a time that was determined by their landlady. Many young men resented this restriction, or simply found it inconvenient. Some further begrudged having to gather at the table with other boarders, objecting to the company or to the infringement of their privacy and freedom—sometimes all three. Trading boarding-house meals for those provided by commercial eateries added an additional expense since most landladies still charged for board even if one ate out, but it provided greater independence and convenience.[75]

Although working-class females in Boston also increasingly labored outside their homes in the antebellum period, most of these women were employed as domestic

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[74] Wendy Gamber, *The Boarding-House in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) p. 3; John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930*, Tamara K. Hareven, ed. (New York: New Viewpoints, 1977), p. 165; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians,* p. 16; Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants,* p. 66.

[75] On boarding-house meals, see Wendy Gamber, *The Boarding-House in Nineteenth-Century America,* ch. 4.

servants and took meals in the homes of their employers. Consequently, working-class women did not require commercial dining options. Middle- and upper-class women in Boston did have reason to seek out commercial eateries when their shopping duties kept them away from home at mid-day, but they were unwelcome in the venues that men frequented. Eateries earmarked especially for middle- and upper-class women thus opened to cater specifically to their unique needs, as will be discussed below.

But to at least some extent, men in all occupations and from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds found it increasingly convenient and even necessary to eat their mid-day meal away from home. Some men, most especially the working class, took food from home with them to work from time to time as the most economical solution to their dining needs. This fare was sometimes as simple as a baked potato. Another option was to purchase street food. Since the eighteenth century, hucksters had sold cakes, candies, fruits, and vegetables to passersby from their locations at the public market at Faneuil Hall, around the dock area, and on busy corners in the business district. For some men, ready-made street food was all they could afford to buy to sustain them at mid-day. Others, however, now demanded additional commercial dining options.[76]

Inns remained popular venues in antebellum Boston for obtaining a commercial meal, particularly for the well-to-do. Throughout this period, licensed Boston hotels were

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[76] In Rebecca Harding Davis' fictional account of two Irish workers *Life in the Iron-Mills*, Deb fills a pail with bread and a bit of salted pork and takes it to Hugh at work in the iron-mill. Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron-Mills*, Cecilia Tichi, ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998) p. 44. For examples of antebellum street vending, see Benjamin Crowninshield, *A Private Journal, 1856-1858* (Cambridge, 1941), passim. The journal is full of references to street vending around Faneuil Market. Christine Stansell devotes a few pages to women's role in street vending in antebellum urban America in *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 13-14.

still required to provide board for their lodgers and so were readily equipped to dish up meals to others as well. Moreover, modern, first class hotels, usually financed by corporations, were better able to raise the capital necessary to build and adequately furnish and provision dining rooms in a manner that would attract affluent men at mid-day. A growing number of freestanding restaurants also aiming to provide high-quality service similar to that offered at a luxury-hotel opened throughout this period, but hotels maintained their advantage.

The Tremont House remained one of Boston's most refined commercial eating venues throughout these years. In the years after its opening, however, it was joined by countless imitators. In fact, the concept of the "luxury-hotel" proved highly popular in urban America. In 1830, the Tremont's developers even published an elaborately illustrated book called *A Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations* so that entrepreneurs across the country could build their own first-class hotels, replicating the Tremont's innovative design. Some of the more famous luxury-hotels during this period in Boston, in addition to the Tremont, included the United States Hotel, opened in 1840, the Revere House, opened in 1847; and the Parker House, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and opened in 1856. [77]

These establishments resembled the Tremont House in the kind and style of décor, service, and food they offered. Boston's luxury hotels provided a stage for the performance of refined behaviors and tastes, as well as a suitably genteel space for appearing and mixing with large numbers of other elite people. Dining at the Tremont House, for instance, elevated the act of eating to new heights and was an opportunity to

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[77] *A Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations,* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830).

demonstrate for others one's mastery of refined social rituals. At the same time, however, dining rooms like the Tremont's were still protected space. The cost to dine at such establishments was generally prohibitive to all but the affluent. Thus, these dining rooms were shielded from unwanted intrusions by the lower socio-economic orders as well as from undesirable racial and ethnic groups who were usually also the poorest members of society.

For well-to-do men who worked in the city but might have resided in a suburb, luxury-hotel dining rooms increasingly provided mid-day havens. Hotels like the Tremont, which included both board and lodging in one flat fee in what was known as the "American Plan," made special arrangements for patrons wishing only to dine and who were not interested in overnight accommodations. By the 1850s, most of Boston's elite hotels had done away with the American Plan all together and adopted instead what was known as the European Plan. This change was much more convenient for regular customers. Under the European Plan, room and board were separate charges. Moreover, under the European Plan, meals were served in hotel restaurants at all hours of the day and until as late as midnight instead of only at pre-set times. This allowed a diner to eat whenever he chose. And instead of paying one price regardless of how much one ate, diners instead ordered items from the bill of fare *á la carte* and were charged only for what they desired. These changes further prompted the shift from seating guests at banquet tables to accommodating separate parties at small, individual tables where one could come and go as one pleased. This trend, which also heightened the feeling of

privacy even as eating was increasingly done in public, soon became expected among more affluent diners.[78]

And yet, as stated, well-to-do men were not the only group in antebellum Boston requiring additional commercial dining options at mid-day. Establishments like the Tremont House or the Parker House, where no main course could be purchased for under thirty cents and even a dish of plain celery cost twelve and half cents, were certainly out of the price range of the laboring class, as well much of the middle class. Yet men from both groups, like their upper-class brethren, often desired more at mid-day than what could be purchased from a street vendor.[79]

The number and range of commercial eateries in Boston vastly expanded in the antebellum years due, in part, to new liquor licensing laws. Since the colonial period, only innkeepers in Massachusetts, required to provide both food and shelter, had been permitted to sell alcohol to be consumed on the premises. This put those who would sell prepared food at a free-standing establishment—something similar to an English cookshop for example, or a French restorator—at a disadvantage because they could not also sell alcohol. This changed in 1816 when Boston town law created a new kind of license: the "common victualler." The new law allowed Boston foodshops to sell liquor without the added burden of maintaining rooms for lodging. But, in an attempt to continue to prohibit public bars in Boston, obtaining a license for selling alcohol also required a proprietor to sell food. (Food, however, could be sold without also having to

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[78] *Boston Herald*, 24 April 1856. Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel, an Anecdotal History* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), pp. 207-9.
[79] Charles Wiggin, *Diary for 1859-1860,* 27 July 1859, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. Menu, "Parker House," The Parker House, Boston, MA, N.D., American Antiquarian Society.

sell liquor.) In 1832, the state of Massachusetts followed Boston in widening the liquor retail trade in this way.[80]

The same 1832 Massachusetts state law that allowed "common victuallers" to sell alcohol also abolished the citizenship requirement for obtaining a liquor license, as well as the restriction on the number of liquor licenses the government granted each year. And it likewise made the associated fees in getting such a license negligible. Combined, these decisions resulted in the opening of many more foodshops in Boston in the following years. New establishments—all required to provide food if they wanted to acquire a liquor license—were also finally allowed to open up away from main roads and amidst immigrant and working-class enclaves, in addition to more major thoroughfares in the business sections of the city. The changing needs of working men from all racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds and the new licensing laws thus combined to create a new assortment of commercial dining options in the antebellum period.[81]

Antebellum eating-houses, also known as eating-rooms or eating-saloons, quickly became the most popular new mid-day solution for both working- and middle-class men. Between 1830 and the Civil War, dozens of eating-houses opened in Boston. They were predominately located in the city's commercial district-- "the narrow peripheral strip of piers and the small area on the peninsula proper pivoting about State Street and extending from the water front westward to Washington Street and from Water Street north to Ann"

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[80] New York City's famed Delmonico's was one of the few examples of an elite eatery not associated with a hotel. See Lately Thomas, *Delmonico's: A Century of Splendor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967). On liquor licensing in Boston and Massachusetts, see Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1855* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 41 and Perry R. Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 9-10.

[81] Perry Duis, *The Saloon*, p. 10.

where the "city's most important enterprises, its docks and markets, offices and counting houses, stores and work-shops" existed. Eating-houses were nestled in among the many other kinds of buildings and businesses along these streets. They distinguished themselves by hanging bills of fare outside the door so they could flap in the wind and draw the attention of hungry passers-by. Eating-houses typically operated from early in the morning until three or four in the afternoon. Their busiest hours were between eleven and three—the time of day when hungry males abandoned their labors to find an open table or seat at a nearby eating-house and fill their stomachs.[82]

All eating-houses shared certain characteristics. For instance, no eating-house served dishes inspired by haute French cuisine. On the contrary, eating-house fare was composed of traditional English and American dishes. For instance, at 11 Devonshire Street, one could choose from among roast turkey, roast beef, roast pork, corned beef, boiled turkey, cold corned beef, veal cutlet, and boiled cod. Many of the standards of eating-house menus earned peculiar nicknames that emphasized patrons' familiarity with them and not necessarily their tastiness. Examples included "Boston strawberries" (baked beans), "Cincinnati quail," (pork), and "sleeve buttons" (fish balls).[83]

All food at an eating-house was also ordered *á la carte.* Vegetables, rolls, pies, and puddings, as well as ale, cider, whiskey, and coffee, cost extra. There was no American Plan at these eateries and the modern concept of a fixed meal with entrée,

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[82] The *Boston Globe* described a day in life of an eating-house in 1878 that would have held true in the antebellum period as well. *Boston Globe*, 24 February 1878. Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, pp. 92-3. See the *Boston Directories* between 1830 and 1860.

[83] For the bill of fare at 11 Devonshire, see ad in the *Boston Globe,* 7 March 1878, p. 3. In 1884, the *Boston Globe* listed some of the nicknames for popular eating-house fare that had been around for decades. *Boston Globe,* 25 March 1884.

vegetables and starch all listed together on the menu and served on one plate did not become a feature of commercial eateries until the twentieth century. Sometimes potatoes were included in the price of a dish of roasted meat, but at most establishments potatoes could cost as much as five to twenty cents extra.[84]

Finally, all eating-houses in Boston endeavored to provide meals as quickly as possible at a price their customers could afford somewhat regularly. Dining at any antebellum eating-house, then, was a stark contrast to the ritualized performance of refinement of the luxury-hotel dining room. Eating-house meals emphasized speed and function above style and even taste. As a result, eating-houses, though popular, earned reputations in antebellum America as one of the more unfortunate products of a society focused on moneymaking. They were uniformly criticized by Europeans and even many Americans as venues where sociability and etiquette had been stripped away, leaving only greasy, tasteless foods to be wolfed down in silence. Their male customers were frequently looked down on for eating as fast as they could without any regard for proper digestion, let alone enjoyment, in order to return to the business of the day: business. One urban exposé explained the scene at an eating-house where men ate at a counter,

> standing elbow to elbow, or perched on stools, using knives, and forks, and spoons; talking with their mouths full; gesticulating with their heads, and arms, and bodies; eating as if they were on the eve of a journey round the World, and never expected to obtain another meal.[85]

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[84] C.W. Gesner, "Concerning Restaurants," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 32 (April 1866), p. 592; For more on the transition to a more modern style of restaurant meal, see Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables: American Restaurant Culture and the Rise of the Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Pittsburgh, 2005), ch. 6. Haley observes that the one-plate meal eliminated food waste and offered a more reasonably priced alternative to both the *table d'hôte* and *á la cart service*.

[85] For example, Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828* (1828: reprint New York: Arno Press, 1974), pp. 32-4 and Junius Browne, *The Great Metropolis: A Mirror of New York* (1869: reprint New York, Arno Press 1975), p. 252.

The similarities between antebellum eating-houses, however, were crosscut by important distinctions reflecting the particular class of patrons to which they catered. Some eating-houses drew a working-class clientele, while middle-class businessmen made use of certain other establishments and the aspiring middle class—young clerks and apprentices—frequented still others. Indeed, while a considerable segment of Boston men (women were not welcome at eating-houses in the antebellum period) frequented an eating-house at mid-day, where they went and the experience they had there largely depended on how much they could afford to pay. As *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* explained in an article on eating-houses in 1866, "low-class" establishments ranged in price from 6-10 cents per plate, 30-35 cents for "good class," and 25-65 cents for "best class." But difference in price was not the only distinction between these eateries; indeed, quantity and quality of cookery, cleanliness and arrangement of decor, and the demeanors of the waiters all affected an establishment's reputation and helped to determine the class of patrons that stopped at a particular eating-house.[86]

As the *Boston Globe* later explained,

> There are all grades … [of eating-houses] from the close hash-house, where everything you eat has an eclectic flavor of the whole bill of fare, up to the clean and neat eating-house, with its marble floor, its well-arranged tables, and pleasant pictures upon the walls. In the lowest saloons you will find the advantages of the knife as a conveyancer of food fully appreciated. The patrons here eat with their hats on.…The next grade … presents an air of comparative comfort; the tables are set wider apart; the cloths and napkins are a shade less dingy, and the whiffs of cookery … are not so overpowering.

[86] C.W. Gesner, "Concerning Restaurants," p. 592.

Space and performance were clearly integral in determining the character and quality of an eating-house.[87]

Indeed, in the lowest class of eating-house, there was little or no customer service. Some of these establishments even lacked proper bills of fare but relied instead on chalkboards on which proprietors wrote whatever dishes were available or simply verbally alerted customers as they entered. Those that did have bills of fare usually left it up to patrons themselves to find one, either by plucking one from outside the door or else picking one up, dirty and sticky though it was (and, indeed, as the entire eatery was), from the floor upon entering. If there were waiters, there were very few of them. Customers generally ordered from a counter and then either waited there for their food to be plated and handed to them before taking a seat at a counter or large, communal table (known as a "board") or hoped a passing waiter—said to be a "phenomenon" in these establishments—would eventually bring it to them. Although this fare was priced especially cheap, it also had a reputation as especially bad. "Hash" was a particularly maligned low-class eating-house specialty. It was rumored to be composed of all the uneaten bits left on patrons' plates that had been gathered up, reheated, and served again to someone else. Likewise, the physical environment of these eating-houses was generally regarded as un-kept, even slovenly, as were the sweaty, ill-mannered Irishmen and other workers fresh from the job and '"hungry, *some*!'" who came in at mid-day. Napkins and proper, four-tined forks were each unheard of at such eating venues. In fact, men often brought silverware with them since many venues did not provide it. Those

[87]*Boston Globe,* 24 February 1878.

eateries that did frequently worried that their knives or forks would end up in diners' pockets.[88]

Patrons of these lowest class of eating-houses bellied up to large tables and counters and ate their meals as quickly as possible, often washing the food down with whiskey or ale, in order to return expediently to work. They were unlikely to squander precious time on conversation or table-time pomp. Meanwhile the noise, heat, and smells of the kitchen, located only feet away from their seats, drifted into the dining room where they mixed with other loud voices placing orders, the clanging of knives and forks scraping against plates, and the odor of sweaty bodies taking a break from manual labor. The emphasis at these venues was on function rather than style or pleasure.

At the better class of eating-houses, those that appealed to clerks and other members of the middle class, the conditions were at least somewhat improved. There, bills of fare were readily available, the floors were well swept, and there may even have been pictures hung on the wall for decoration. Waiters passed by "at least occasionally" to bring patrons orders and take further requests from them to the kitchen. The fare was probably not especially good, but at least a diner could find a napkin and perhaps even a seat at a private table or booth instead of a counter or board. The manners observed at these places were also better, although men still ate quickly to get back to their work as soon as possible. Since these eating-houses were a bit larger, they were likely to be slightly less crowded; the kitchen may have even been located in the basement, allowing the smells of frying food to be less distinct in the dining room. While the main emphasis was still on convenience and speed, the men that frequented these establishments would

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[88] George Foster, *New York by Gas-Light and other Urban Sketches*, Stuart M. Blumin, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) pp. 216-7.

have looked down on the cheapest eating-houses and the behaviors that went on there. They might not have been able to afford to go to a more refined restaurant—or been truly familiar with the social codes practiced there—but they felt that the greater attention paid to propriety at the better grade of eating-houses they patronized set their class apart from the lower orders of society. Indeed, it helped to explain their elevated position in the socio-economic order. On the other hand, working-class men would have been uncomfortable in higher-class establishments and the prices attached to the fare they provided would have made these venues out of working-class reach.[89]

Yet another kind of commercial eatery available to antebellum Boston men at mid-day was the oyster saloon, also known as oyster cellars (because they were typically located below street level), oyster palaces, and oyster parlors. An antebellum oyster saloon was generally identified by a red and white striped balloon that hung outside its door. Many were open from early in the morning until late at night. Oysters, briny and plump, happened to be a nineteenth-century American culinary favorite. In fact, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* declared in 1859, "among oyster-eating people the Americans take the lead," and a year later the *Atlantic Monthly* went so far as to call oysters "the universal bond of brotherhood, not only in Boston but throughout this land." In Boston, a man might duck into an oyster saloon on his way to work for a few "salt water vegetables" to begin his morning. He might return for a few more on the half-shell later for some afternoon refreshment and, as the *Atlantic Monthly* reported—perhaps a touch exaggeratedly—he might continue "oystering" throughout the day and "[s]o on till

[89] George Foster, *New York by Gas-Light*, pp. 215-6.

dinner-time, and, after dinner, oysters at short intervals until bed-time." There was no doubt that Bostonians loved oysters, whether raw, fried, broiled, or stewed.[90]

Boston's oyster saloons were thus very popular throughout the nineteenth century. Like the city's eating-houses, they too were crosscut by definite socio-economic distinctions. Some even appealed to the city's elite by being quite fashionable and providing elegant environments ornamented with "long counter[s] gorgeously decked with crystal decanters and glasses, richly carved and gilt…." There were others, however, with shabbier, even dirty, décor that catered to the less affluent members of society. At the cheapest class of oyster saloon, proprietors offered all-you-can-eat oysters for one low price. Proprietors were known to slip a bad oyster to anyone who took too much advantage of the all-you-can-eat offer to let him know he had overstayed his welcome. As might be imagined, the behaviors displayed in these inexpensive establishments were usually far from polished.[91]

Men in Boston, then, had a variety of choices when it came to obtaining their mid-day dinner. It seems white men of all ethnicities made use of these options to some extent; however, the Irish, the poorest residents of Boston, may have done so less often simply because buying commercial meals would have put additional financial strains on them. Black Bostonians, too, were less likely to be able to afford to dine out. In addition, it seems that many proprietors refused to accommodate black men as customers. While there was no specific law in the antebellum period that barred blacks from patronizing Boston's variety of commercial eateries, black men did complain about being refused

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[90] "A Cosmopolite Bill of Fare," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 18(April 1859), p.657; "In a Fog," *Atlantic Monthly* 5(June 1860), p. 652.
[91] George Foster, *New York by Gaslight*, p. 73.

service at some of them. For instance, Frederick Douglass said that he had been told at one Boston eatery in 1846, '"We don't allow niggers in here."' In 1855, the *Frederick Douglass Paper* also reported with outrage the story of a wealthy coffee dealer from San Domingo who was denied a cup of coffee from an eatery in Boston because of his race. Infuriated, the man refused to leave the premises as requested and attendants were forced to send for a police officer to remove him. These anecdotes underscore the fact that despite its reputation for abolitionism, Boston was hardly a paradise of racial equality. On the other hand, Walt Whitman noted during a visit he made to Boston in 1856, "At the eating houses, a black, when he wants his dinner, comes in and takes a vacant seat wherever he finds one—and nobody minds it." Boston's record on integrated public eateries, then, seems to have been mixed. Some eateries, according to the proprietor's discretion, accommodated blacks while others did not. The reluctance of many whites to eat among blacks most certainly affected proprietors' decisions on the matter. By serving blacks, proprietors were likely to lose at least some white patrons. None of the dining rooms of luxury-hotels in the city admitted blacks. (It was unlikely that most blacks could have afforded to eat in any of them anyway. Again, even dining in inexpensive eateries was a stretch for many African-Americans.)[92]

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[92] *Frederick Douglass' Paper,* 14 December 1855. Whitman quoted in Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkin: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 69. The *Christian Recorder* reprinted Douglass' 1846 story on 10 June 1886. Some eateries advertised if they were willing to accommodate blacks. For instance, see ad for A.R. Campbel's Refreshment House in Boston in the *Colored American*, 15 August 1840. On white reluctance to eat with blacks, see the *Liberator*, 22 January 1831.

Commercial Dining at Night

Throughout the antebellum period, afternoon dinner remained the primary meal of the day. It was usually quite large, leaving the evening supper at seven or eight o'clock as a comparatively small meal of cold meats, soup, cheese, bread, and leftovers. Not nearly the same emphasis was placed on supper as on dinner, although some urban Americans slowly began to give more thought to the evening meal as the nature of work changed and became less physically demanding (thus requiring less hearty sustenance) and also required men to be away from their families at noontime. However, not until late in the century did supper really replace dinner as the heartiest and most important of the three daily meals.

While working and living patterns encouraged men to dine out at mid-day, they were still typically able to return home in time for supper. And, in fact, most did. Dining out at night in the antebellum period was not nearly as popular as taking commercial refreshment for convenience at mid-day. Upper-class Bostonians, however, increasingly did combine dining out at night with additional forms of commercial pleasure available in antebellum Boston, such as going to the theater. It was primarily males, able to move about the city and take part in such commercial amusements to a degree women were not, who participated in nighttime dining.

Working-class people could seldom afford to eat out as part of their nighttime leisure activities. As a number of historians have outlined, however, public *drinking* rituals were quite important to working-class male culture. When working-class men did buy prepared foods as part of their commercial, after-dark enjoyment of the city, they typically partook only of a few oysters alongside their drinks at an oyster saloon or some

of the new and more varied kinds of street food available, like ice cream. Similarly, middle-class Bostonians generally refrained from eating out at night both as an effort to economize and because their domestic-centered social activities kept them at home. As a result, the majority of venues that were open at night in antebellum Boston were either low-class oyster saloons that doubled as bars (offering oysters both provided customers solid sustenance alongside their alcoholic refreshments as well as kept the establishments legal under the common victualler law that required food to be served wherever alcohol was available), or they were eateries that catered primarily to the wealthy, including luxury-hotel dining rooms, free standing restaurants, and "oyster palaces." Eating-houses did not keep evening hours.[93]

As discussed above, in the daytime, Boston's commercial eateries were crosscut by the city's hardening class lines. Dining at particular venues became a means to both reflect and affirm class identity. Furthermore, Boston's range of dining venues itself signaled the increasingly segregated and hierarchical arrangement of society. To some measure, nighttime eateries were distinguished by similar class differences. (Although, again, the number of middle-class men who engaged in evening dining was not sufficient to encourage venues to court an exclusively middle-class clientele while working-class establishments were primarily limited to oyster saloons.) But at night, as diners—at least male diners—discovered, available eateries became an instrument through which such socio-economic boundaries could actually become blurred. Free of daytime obligations

[93] On the increasingly popularity and availability of ice cream as street food, see Wendy Woloson, *Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumers in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), ch. 3.

and in the pursuit of pleasure and amusement, males used commercial eateries after sunset both to slum and, sometimes, trespass upwards in socio-economic status.

Bachelors from all class groups were the most likely to take advantage of evening commercial dining options because they enjoyed more disposable income and were more free of familial obligations. They were also more likely to try on different class identities by venturing to a venue earmarked for a social class not their own. To some extent, this was true of middle-class bachelors—although even they, like the rest of their class group, did not participate in dining out at night very often. In Boston at mid-century, it was typical for 40 to 50 percent of men aged twenty-five to thirty-five to be single. Moreover, close to one-third of Boston's adult men of all ages were unmarried in this period. In addition, Boston's close proximity to Harvard and other colleges meant that a number of even younger but nevertheless generally autonomous single men—men like Benjamin Crowninshield whose Class Day festivities opened this chapter—entered into the city on a regular basis.[94]

For adventurous men, regardless of whether they were married or single, oyster saloons at night were one of urban antebellum America's most infamous novelties. While oyster saloons varied in décor, arrangement, and class of clientele, at night they all had the reputation for satisfying tastes besides the desire for bivalves. Oysters themselves might have been the "universal bond of brotherhood," but they were also suspected as aphrodisiacs, and oyster saloons after dark were notorious for the drunkenness and sexual

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[94] Even middle-class bachelors, however, typically made home and visiting the homes of others the center of their social activities. But many also dined out on occasion. See Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, ch. 7, especially pp. 239-40. Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 1999), p. 29.

vice that went on there until the wee hours of the morning. George Foster's popular urban exposé *New York by Gas-Light* described the activities at one urban establishment as the "detestable orgies of these detestable caverns." Foster went on to depict the excessive drinking and liaisons with prostitutes that took place there and disturbed "the whole neighborhood with … obscene and disgusting revels, prolonged far beyond midnight." His description would have been no less applicable to some of Boston's oyster saloons.[95]

In Foster's account, oyster saloons where men and prostitutes ate, drank, and generally made merry together were located not just in the disreputable parts of town, serving the working class, but were also scattered in the most "fashionable" and "aristocratic" neighborhoods. The same was also true in Boston, where oyster saloons dotted streets across the peninsula regardless of whether the overall character of the neighborhood was high or low. Well-off young men, however, like Benjamin Crowninshield and his similarly affluent friends at Harvard, might have enjoyed bypassing the more sophisticated establishments in the more fashionable parts of town to look for fun instead at one of the seedier oyster saloons in the North End. At these venues, the addition of black bodies—apparently fascinating to many whites—and the sound of Irish brogues would have added to the overall novelty of the evening and the available amusements' cheaper price tags would have prolonged their enjoyment of them. But then, quite a raucous time could be had at the more stylish "oyster palaces" as well.

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[95] There is a fascinating literature on "slumming," although much of it focuses on the post-Civil War period. For example, see Chad Heap*, Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) and George Chaucey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). On white voyeurism and black bodies see Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). George Foster, *New York by Gaslight*, p. 73.

According to urban exposés, a young man would have found a "grave functionary of the city" and "reverend judges" as likely to be at these venues as himself, although the women were "all of one kind." Even middle-class clerks occasionally risked their reputations to indulge in the nighttime excitement of an oyster saloon.[96]

The opportunity to leave propriety behind certainly had its allure, but so too did passing into a more elevated social status by dining at one of Boston's refined nighttime eateries. These upper-class establishments, governed by strict codes of behavior and dining rituals, contributed to Americans' beliefs in social mobility by giving the illusion that anyone could join the ranks of the affluent in Boston simply by learning the rules of refined behavior and taste. And so anyone could—as long as they were also able to pay for the tasty dishes and dear wines they called for from the bill of fare.

Boston's high-end dining venues offered fine food and drink in tastefully and luxuriously decorated environments. They also provided excellent and deferential service in the form of waiters ready to fulfill any request. Finally, these establishments presented an opportunity to mix with successful, cultivated people and shut out the poor and the uncouth. It is little wonder that some aspiring men, particularly young bachelors, enjoyed occasionally dining at these eateries even if doing so drained their limited pocketbooks. As *Harper's* surmised in 1857, "There are a great many men in the world whose imagination exceeds their means in the matter of dinner."[97]

In 1857, *Harper's* recounted the tale of a young man, exiled from the home and coffers of his rich father, and forced to make his way in life on his own. Lack of an

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[96] George Foster, *New York by Gaslight*, pp. 70 and 73-4. See *Boston Directories* between 1830 and 1860. I consulted the directories in 5 year intervals.
[97] "Screw Loose," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 15 (October 1857), p. 631.

allowance, however, did not keep the man from enjoying fine suppers in the city at a restaurant where there were "no unadorned beefsteaks" on the menu but instead "*filet de boeuf aux champignons*." Even the knowledge that he would not be able to pay for his meal failed to restrain the man from dining out one last time. As luck would have it, he happened to meet another man on this occasion who not only paid his bill for him but then also helped him obtain his life's fortune. For this fictional, aspiring youth, as doubtless for countless real ones, the city's restaurants contained more than delicious food. They also held out the possibility that by dining among the elite, they would be taken for one of them and, maybe, even made one of them. At the very least, dining out in a refined restaurant and acting the class one desired to be could raise one's spirit and confidence. In a society that believed strongly in social mobility, it did not seem impossible that a positive outlook alone could help one in securing a strong future.[98]

On the other hand, one potential pitfall of attempting to at least temporarily pass into a higher social status by venturing to an elite eatery was the likelihood of embarrassment due to lack of adequate funds or familiarity with the strict dining rituals practiced there. Charles Wiggin, the sixteen-year-old son of a Boston middle-class merchant, experienced such humiliation when he attempted to get supper at Parker's one Thursday evening in July 1859. Wiggin and the friend who accompanied him entered the restaurant "with bold steps" and were shown to a table. But after glancing over Parker's bill of fare they discovered the dishes were all priced well beyond their means. The impatience of their waiter for them to order added to their mortification and as soon as

[98] "Screw Loose," pp. 629-634. See also Costard Sly, *Sayings and Doings at the Tremont House in the Year 1832* (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1833), two volumes, pp. 1:71-4.

the waiter had turned his back, the boys snuck out of the restaurant, "glad to get away." They vowed never to return to Parker's unless someone else was to foot the bill.[99]

Knowledge of refined table etiquette and an ability to decipher a bill of fare containing mostly French terms were additional requisites for dining in Boston's refined eateries like Parker's and the Tremont House. In the antebellum period, even educated Americans were probably unfamiliar with the French language, as it was not typically taught in schools. Thus, only well-traveled individuals or those that dined in refined establishments quite frequently would have been really comfortable with reading a French bill of fare. Some guidebooks published in this period attempted to decipher French terms on menus for their readers and thus teach this emblem of refinement. *The French Cook* published in 1828 was one popular example of such a guidebook. Plenty of additional etiquette manuals included advice on practicing proper table manners, including how to use the growing assortment of silverware one found at refined tables and whether to eat with one's gloves on or off. A few even included suggestions for how to treat the waiters one encountered at restaurants. As *Harper's* noted, "the art of eating… [is] nowadays receiving more than usual attention." Still, even with a guidebook's help, going to an elite eatery posed plenty of potential humiliations for those who were unaccustomed to the social rituals practiced there. Generally, dining out at night was rare for middle-class Bostonians.[100]

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[99] Charles Wiggin, *Diary for 1859-1860,* 27 July 1859, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

[100] Louis Eustasche Ude, *The French Cook* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey, 1828). Ude was a famed cook in France when he moved to England. This book, first published in 1813, was his attempt to popularize French cooking among the British but it served Americans as well. On how to treat waiters, see, for example, S. Annie Frost, *Frost's Laws and by-Laws of American Society: A Condensed but Thorough Treatise on*

For young men with the right combination of riches, knowledge, and daring, however, no commercial eatery in Boston was off limits. For example, the wealthy college student Benjamin Crowninshield habitually enjoyed some of Boston's finest restaurants, including the Parker House and the Revere House. He also "oystered," "aled," and "ice creamed" all over town and at all hours of the day and night. For Crowninshield and his friends, dining out was an integral part of their everyday lives in Boston.[101]

Commercial Dining Options for Antebellum Women

Limited occupational opportunities for women in the antebellum period resulted in a void of commercial dining venues for working-class women in Boston at mid-day. Between 1830 and the Civil War, greater numbers of women in Boston went to work, but the majority of them were employed in domestic service. Domestic servants typically took meals in the homes of their employers and so commercial options at mid-day were not necessary for them. Nor were dining options required for those who worked from their homes doing sewing outwork, another major form of employment for women at this time. Women who worked in manufactories in Boston probably would have found it convenient to eat out at mid-day but they were made unwelcome in working-class men's

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Etiquette and its Usages in America, Containing Plain and Reliable Directions for Deportment in Every Situation in Life (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1869), p. 59. On etiquette manuals and table manners, see Jonathon Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1990), ch. 6. C.W. Gesner, "Concerning Restaurants," 32 (April 1866), p. 591.

[101] Benjamin W. Crowninshield, *A Private Journal,* passim. Crowninshield's journal is full of references to dining out in Boston. See also the diary of another Harvard student, *The Letters and Journals of General Nicholas Longworth Anderson*, Isabel Anderson, ed. (New York: F.H. Revell, 1942), for the years 1855 and 1856.

eateries by proprietors who desired to keep their businesses free from the taint of prostitution and thus refused service to females. It is also unlikely that these women had the additional income necessary to dine out. Instead, they probably carried their mid-day meal with them to work from home, or went without.[102]

On the other hand, antebellum middle-class and elite women whose roles as consumers brought them downtown during the day in order to shop and who enjoyed varying amounts of expendable income did participate in commercial, mid-day dining from time to time. Their options, however, were more limited than men's due to contemporary gender ideals that restricted these women to the private sphere and prevented them from engaging in commercial amusement except when it took place in spaces that were sure to guard them from the potentially corrupting market economy.

As chapter one explained, the ideal of separate spheres, adhered to by both middle- and upper-class Bostonians, divided the antebellum world into opposing public and private realms. The public realm was the world of business and politics, ambition and greed, saloons and eating-houses. The public realm was also a male realm. The private sphere, on the other hand, was a female realm, a world of domesticity and family, selflessness and nurturance. In dividing public from private, antebellum Americans

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[102] Oscar Handlin found that by the end of the Civil War in 1865, even more women were employed in Boston (24,101) than men (19, 268). These women worked mostly as domestic servants. A good many did home sewing. After 1846, there was a gradual shift to factory manufacture of garments. By 1860 there were at least ten such factories in Boston. Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, pp. 81-82. Women's wages, however, were abysmally low. *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXIX(August 1853), p. 253. On the change from female household work to wage labor, see Alice Kessler Harris, *Out to Work: a History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), ch. 2. On female domestic servants in the nineteenth-century, see Daniel Sutherland, *Americans and their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

attempted to curb the socially transformative effects of the market economy without limiting its growth. Moreover, women in the private sphere were charged with upholding the morality of the nation by teaching good character at home that men could then take with them into the public sphere as they made their living and helped to shape the government and its economy into a strong Republic.[103]

Although the antebellum home was supported by and decorated with products from men's participation in this market, it was also supposed to offer refuge from the market. Women, uncorrupted by the public sphere because of lack of participation in it, were supposed to preside over the home and look after the morality of husbands and children. Indeed, so as to remain above the fray of the marketplace, women's lives—at least ideally—were supposed to unfold entirely at home, anchored by familial and household duties.[104]

And yet, women from the middle and upper classes increasingly found themselves pulled into participation in the public sphere throughout the antebellum period for various reasons, including the fact that their domestic duties now included shopping. Shopping took these women away from their homes and into the commercial districts of the city. Soon, women, like men, found they too needed dining options where they could purchase refreshment during the day when these shopping expeditions precluded them from eating

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[103] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) and Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Person's, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992). Several studies have demonstrated that this ideology did not really apply to working-class women. For example, see Christine Stansell, *City of Women*.

[104] In fact, as historian Carroll Smith Rosenberg has shown, women also used the moral authority that separate sphere ideology gave them to expand their roles in public life as reformers. Caroll Smith Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," *American Quarterly* 23(October 1981): pp. 652-584.

at home. It was of the utmost importance, however, that the dining venues these women patronized took special care to provide a shielded environment that would still protect them from the market even as it also facilitated their further engagement with it.

Boston's eating-houses—loud chaotic places—were inadequate to fulfill these requirements for affluent female diners even if they had been welcome there. (They were not.) Oyster saloons—even lavishly decorated ones—were also emphatically off limits to any woman unless she was a prostitute. In fact, the specter of prostitution, representing the market's final invasion into even the most intimate of domestic relations, profoundly shaped women's overall movement in Boston. Urban anonymity made it nearly impossible to know if a woman was respectable from her face or dress alone. Thus, women with reputations to protect had to use extreme caution about where they went in the city and when and proprietors who wanted to keep the taint of prostitution away from their businesses often found it easiest to do so by simply refusing to accommodate women. Since the colonial period, commercial establishments that sold alcohol, such as taverns, theaters, and dance halls, had also been associated with commercial sex. Females with any sense of propriety thus did not enter these venues. Women had to be equally cautious about dining venues that sold alcohol.

Elite women were able to rely on the ladies' dining rooms of luxury hotels to fill their mid-day commercial dining needs. Hotels like the Tremont House, Parker House, Revere House, and United States Hotel all continued to provide a separate ladies' dining room throughout the nineteenth century. Middle-class women, however, usually found these venues beyond their price range. Fortunately, growing numbers of freestanding eateries began to open in this period to cater to middle-class women (there were others

that competed with luxury-hotels for the patronage of wealthy women) and were considered respectable even for unaccompanied ladies to patronize. These new venues followed the model first established by the Tremont House and provided semi-public space allocated specifically for reputable women. They prohibited men from entering unless accompanied by a female and excluded working-class males entirely by the prices they charged and the displays of elaborate social ritual they demanded. Such eateries also refrained from selling alcohol and made themselves further suitable for female patronage by replicating the refined surroundings and social rituals of the private parlor to become a public extension of that private space. Ladies' dining venues thus carved out space within the larger public world of the city that was especially designated as female and safe for females to use.

Confectioneries were the most common examples of antebellum commercial eateries earmarked especially for women. Similar to eating-houses, a range of confectioneries existed to cater both to middle-class women as well as to the more well-to-do. Though the scale varied depending on the socio-economic group the venue was trying to attract, all Boston confectioneries were typically located in fashionably decorated rooms adorned with mirrors, silver paper, and gaudy curtains. Sometimes also known as ladies' lunchrooms, they served sugary treats as well as light fare like sandwiches and oysters that were meant to appeal to women's disinterested appetites and penchant for sweets. One urban exposé described such a confectionery, similar to others in Boston, in the 1850s:

> We pass between two long counters laden with fruits, cakes, confectionery, and all sorts of knick-knackery…. Mounting a couple of steps, we enter a long room,

> filled with little tables, at almost every one of which people are seated, and nearly all of them are ladies. …[105]

Gender segregation at confectioneries and other women's dining venues, however, was far from absolute. The waiters were always males. In addition, as long as he was escorting a female, a man was permitted to dine in both the ladies' dining rooms of luxury-hotels and in confectionaries. Moreover, Englishwoman Marianne Finch recalled a banquet dinner she attended at the Revere House in 1853 where she requested that the door separating the male and female dining rooms be replaced with a Venetian screen so the women might hear the men's speeches. This being done, Finch remarked, "[W]e not only heard the speeches, but became cognizant of all that was passing on the other side of the screen."[106]

Nevertheless, by providing at least partially segregated environments for women to patronize, ladies' dining rooms and confectionaries permitted women greater freedom to move about the city independently. Antebellum etiquette books counseled women who ventured forth into these spaces in the city to use caution, and in any event to avoid such places at night. (Most of them did not stay open after dark, although, as stated, escorted, wealthy women did frequent luxury-hotel dining rooms in the evening from time to time). If appropriate care was taken, however, they assured women it was perfectly acceptable for them to go. As one author advised, women should feel free to take refreshment in

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[105] George Foster, *New York by Gas-Light and other Urban Sketches*, Stuart M. Blumin, ed. (Berkeley, 1990), p. 133. On the supposedly disinterested female appetite in the nineteenth century, see Laura Shaprio, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986), p. 7.

[106] Marianne Finch, *An Englishwoman's Experience in America* (1853: reprint New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 31.

"respectable public restaurants," even without male escort. (Although, as the manual went on to suggest, "[T]wo ladies should if possible be together rather than one.")[107]

In fact, women's patronage of antebellum eateries in Boston increasingly became a cause for celebration. According to the nineteenth-century ideology of refinement, women were the absolute arbiters of respectability. Females presided over the private sphere, protecting the home against the invasion of the market economy and transmitting refined, moral values to family members. At the same time, women were also considered especially delicate and easily corruptible. The presence of respectable women at leisure, unmolested from certain vagaries, in the city's public spaces—including its eateries—signaled the high level of refinement antebellum American society had achieved. Women's eateries thus strove to draw attention to their female clientele. For instance, they advertised their suitability for female patronage in newspapers and outfitted their establishments with large plate glass windows so that passersby would be sure to take note of the refined women enjoying themselves inside. The result was that dining venues catering to women walked a fine line between attempting to guard their patrons from the public sphere and yet draw attention to their participation in it at the same time. In fact, female patronage of refined eateries in Boston became so important to these businesses' success and reputations that in the late 1850s, the city's luxury-hotels even began permitting women to dine in their main dining rooms as long as they had a male escort.[108]

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[107] Etiquette manuals quoted in John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility,* p. 132.

[108] The ladies' dining room at Tremont House was situated on the side of the building that faced busy Tremont Street and contained large windows that allowed the city to view the women inside surrounded by the backdrop of the hotel's fine décor. *A Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations*. Confectionaries were also famous for containing sizeable plate glass windows. Not until the turn of the twentieth century could unescorted women dine in these main dining rooms.

The Commercial Eating Business

The growing popularity of commercial eating in the antebellum period encouraged some Bostonians not only to eat out but also to enter into the restaurant business for a living. As earlier noted, the dining rooms of luxury hotels, massive affairs, were typically financed by corporations and then supervised by a manager the corporation appointed. With this exception, the majority of antebellum public eateries were small-scale, usually family-operated businesses that required little capital to start but held at least the possibility—however difficult—of independence and economic mobility for their proprietors.

For the lowest class of eateries, such as cheap eating-houses and oyster saloons, all that was required to set up shop were suitable rooms to accommodate customers, as well as a small amount of capital to purchase a modest inventory of cooking ware, dishes, and foodstuffs. No license from the city to sell food was required unless one also wanted to sell alcohol. As stated, the sale of alcohol to be consumed on the premises required a "common victuallers'" license in Boston. These licenses cost only a small fee and were relatively easy to obtain until the 1850s. Then in 1852, the state of Massachusetts followed Maine to ban the sale of alcohol entirely, forcing Boston into nearly two decades of statewide prohibition. But despite the popularity of temperance as a general reform movement in Boston, no branch of the city government—not the police, the mayor, nor the courts—proved willing to enforce the ban on the sale of alcohol in dining venues. Commercial establishments thus generally continued to sell as they pleased

throughout the antebellum years with only occasional interference from temperance groups.[109]

In the years before the Civil War, proprietorship of a commercial eatery was one of the few remaining occupations that was still often intimately tied to domestic life and was, in fact, a family business. In fact, judging from the information provided in Boston's city directories, the majority of restaurant proprietors ran their businesses from the same address where they lived (the family might have had private rooms either above or below those used for the business). Often times, running the restaurant was a family affair—a man might have looked after the customers and managed a few employees working as waiters while his wife did the cooking. Children might have also pitched in to help as needed. On the other hand, commercial eating became a popular activity for Bostonians primarily in response to the growing separation of work and domestic life and as a way to reflect and affirm the segregation of the city's population along hardening class and gender lines. This was not a contradiction, but it was certainly a paradox.[110] [Tables V, VI, and IX, Appendix C]

The modest capitalization necessary to launch a commercial eating venue, especially a cheap one, meant that new ones opened every day. But although getting into

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[109] Statutes of 1852, chapter 322. On Boston's evasion of the prohibition see also Roger Lane, *Policing the City,* ch. 6.

[110] I used the *Boston Directories* for the years 1830, 1840, 1850, and 1860 to determine that approximately 85% of restaurant keepers in 1830 had the same business address as their home address. For 1840 this figure was 95%; 77% in 1850; and 71% in 1860. These calculations are really only rough estimates, however. I did not include those restaurant keepers that appeared in the census but not the directory because specifically business addresses were not provided in the census. In addition, I rather forwardly assumed that those who listed only a business address or only a home address instead of two addresses lived and worked in the same building. This is not an outlandish assumption but it is unconfirmed. For additional residency information on proprietors see Tables V, VI, and IX in Appendix C.

the business was relatively easy and involved only moderate risk, making enough profit in order to stay in business was considerably more difficult. Inexpensive eateries in particular typically operated on razor-thin margins that meant they could be dishing up hash one day and gone the next. Many of these establishments probably left no record of their existence at all and the rate of failure for all eateries was very high.[111] [Tables VII and VIII, Appendix C]

Information on some of Boston's antebellum eateries, plebian as well as elite and everything in between, can be found within the records of R.G. Dun & Company, a contemporary credit rating service. The Dun credit reports were filed in cities across the northeast, including Boston, throughout the nineteenth century. They were researched and written from firsthand observation but filed anonymously. The reports habitually noted moral judgments regarding men—sometimes women as well—and the conduct of their businesses in evaluating credit risk. Information on countless proprietors of eating venues was included among the Dun ledgers, which offer insight into the commercial eating business in Boston, as well as what Dun evaluators, at least, believed made certain proprietors more successful than others.

From the Dun credit reports, it is clear that few proprietors of eating venues were considered "guaranteed" when it came to credit risk. The business was highly dynamic and competitive and thus tenuous at best. In general, the Dun records attribute success to

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[111] From information supplied in the antebellum *Boston Directories*, I have determined that between 1830 and 1860, on average, 10 % of eateries remained in business 5 years after opening. 2.5% remained open 10 years after opening. These numbers do not hold true for hotel restaurants, which remained in business in far greater numbers than other eateries. See Table VII in Appendix C. Although published in 1885, an article in the *Boston Globe* explaining the thin profit margins of cheap eateries would have held true in the antebellum years as well. *Boston Globe*, 24 December 1885.

simple hard work. Proprietors doing a good business were described again and again as "upright," and, most especially, "industrious." The class of a venue's customers was considered integrally important in "making it" in the restaurant business as well. Again and again, evaluators described the patrons of successful eateries as "first-class" and "respectable." These descriptions suggest that establishments catering to a wealthier class of clientele, which had larger profit margins because proprietors could charge higher prices and made additional income from the sale of such "extras" as wines and cigars, were more secure than those that served the working class. Finally, the loyalty of customers was also essential to an eatery's success given the highly competitive nature of the trade.[112]

Regardless, though, fortunes could change suddenly and inexplicably. Establishments that were reported to be doing well and "no doubt… [making] money" were sometimes out of business only months later. Moreover, financial panics could prove fatal to restaurant proprietors as urbanites tightened their spending habits to deal with the economic crisis. Judging from the small increase in the number of eateries between 1855 and 1860, the Panic of 1857, for example, put considerable strain on the restaurant business in Boston.[113] [Table VIII, Appendix C]

Even for eateries that succeeded, surviving for years and years, the Dun investigators reported there was often not much profit to be made in the restaurant business. Proprietors were frequently described as "probably not making much over a

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[112] Massachusetts, Vol. 12, p. 262 R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School; for example, see Vol. 12, p. 359; Vol. 12, p. 373; Vol. 12, p. 388; Vol. 13, p. 330; Vol. 16, p. 216.

[113] There was only a 6.7% increase in the number of commercial eateries in Boston between 1855 and 1860. This was considerably less than between previous five-year increments. See Table VIII in Appendix C.

living," or "not supposed to be making much money," or "slowly making a living." "Making a living or more" was another frequent and more encouraging—but hardly ringing—endorsement of some proprietors.[114]

Of course, there was cause for hope. Harvey D. Parker, the name and face of the Parker House, provided one example of such inspiration in Boston. Parker, born in 1805 in what was then the territory of Maine, moved to Massachusetts when he was twenty years old. In Massachusetts, Parker eventually secured employment as a coachman for a wealthy widow in Watertown, located a few miles from Boston. As a coachman, Parker often drove his employer into the city for shopping expeditions. While waiting for his mistress during these trips Parker got into the habit of taking his dinner at a small restaurant on Court Street that was kept by John E. Hunt. Parker enjoyed these meals immensely. He did not desire to be a coachman for the rest of his life and dreamed of becoming an independent business owner. The developing restaurant business seemed as good as any. Parker thus saved every penny of his wages that he could, telling Mr. Hunt that he would buy him out some day. In 1832, seven years after Parker's arrival in Boston, Hunt agreed to sell his business to the young man. Parker closed on the property and its inventory for the sum of $432. Later in life, Parker joked that even one lemon squeezer had been listed in the inventory for the sum of ten cents.[115]

Parker called his establishment on Court Street the Tremont Restaurant in an attempt to capitalize on the notoriety of the Tremont House Hotel, which had opened just two years earlier. His business, however, had none of the physical splendor and

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[114] For example, see Massachusetts, Vol. 16, p. 20 R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Business Library; Vol. 4, p. 254; Vol. 15, p. 511.
[115] James W. Spring, *Boston and the Parker House*, (Boston: J.R. Whipple Corporation, 1927) pp. 140-1.

stateliness of the original Tremont House, but was rather a single room located in a dark and unattractive basement. Despite its humble environs, Parker made a point of providing his patrons with the best quality food and service he could. Over time, Parker's restaurant became quite popular and earned Parker a good living. In 1845, Parker took on John F. Mills as his partner, and on April 22, 1854 the two men bought an old mansion on School Street to open a new venture that would be a combination luxury-hotel and first-class restaurant and a true rival to the Tremont House. They tore down the old building and in its place built a magnificent five-story, marble-covered edifice that they christened the Parker House. The public restaurant quickly developed a reputation as one of the finest in the country and did an excellent business. In fact, when Harvey Parker died in 1884 at the age of seventy-nine, he left behind an estate worth more than one million dollars. Few other Boston restaurateurs were as triumphant as Parker but those who found any success at all seemed to have followed his general model of starting small and moving up to win a higher class of clientele and thus greater profits as their growing business allowed.[116]

In Boston, the overwhelming majority of restaurant owners were native-born white men like Parker. [Tables II, III, and IV, Appendix C] According to the Census of Massachusetts in 1850, 85% of the "restaurant keepers" listed were white men born either in Massachusetts or elsewhere in the United States. Boston's considerable Irish population was definitely underrepresented in antebellum restaurant proprietorship. There do not seem to have been any legal restrictions preventing the Irish from setting up an eating-house or other eatery in these years and, indeed, some existed; however, the

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[116] James W. Spring, Ibid. For example, the soon famous restaurateur Louis Ober, a French Alsatian, also followed this model. He opened his first establishment in a cellar on Winter Place in 1859 but eventually moved into more spacious and elegant space in 1875.

general lack of capital and access to credit of the Irish were probably major factors in restricting them from entering into the restaurant business. Some historians, too, have argued that when the Irish arrived in America after decades of subsisting on little but potatoes in their homeland and then nearly starving due to years of potato blights, they lacked general knowledge about cooking. This may also help to explain the lack of Irish-owned eateries in antebellum Boston.[117]

On the other hand, blacks in Boston were discouraged outright from opening eateries by a range of legal, in addition to economic, barriers. While blacks were able to dine in certain eateries depending on proprietor preference, they were generally prohibited from owning an eatery. In the 1830s, the British visitor Edward Abdy noted that in Boston, "Even a [common victuallers'] license for keeping a house of refreshment is refused, under some frivolous or vexations pretense, though the same can easily be procured by a white man of inferior condition and with less wealth." This was only one of a range of legal obstacles African-Americans in Boston faced throughout the antebellum period that prevented them from improving their social and economic standing. The city seemed to have imposed such restrictions in an effort to both widen the scope of white occupational opportunities by quashing competition from blacks and to discourage black migration to the city.[118]

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[117] Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. On the other hand, only 4.1% of restaurant-keepers had been born in Ireland and only 3.3% were black. For additional information on the race, sex, birthplace, and age of proprietors, see Tables II, III, and IV in Appendix C. On Irish foodways, see Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), ch. 5.

[118] Abdy quoted in Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850,* pp. 19-20. On the limits to blacks' social and economic opportunity, see Curry, Ibid., pp. 7-18.

The generally depressed economic conditions of blacks further curbed the number of black-owned dining venues in Boston. Black Bostonians, at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in the city—could not typically afford to dine out often if at all. Moreover, extreme prejudice—even in a city known for its strong abolitionist leanings—limited the white clientele that would have been willing to patronize a black business. Black proprietors were also frustrated by their limited access to credit. The records of R.G. Dun indicate the small amount of capital available to black Bostonians and their inability to get access to more. These conditions combined to create a lack of black initiative in business in Boston as well as a high rate of black business failures until well into the twentieth century. [119]

Thus, although Philadelphia and New York both boasted black restaurateurs of considerable fame in the antebellum period, Boston did not. The one exception was Joshua B. Smith, a fugitive slave, who had escaped to Boston and managed to become a caterer of some repute there within even the white community by the 1850s. Smith did not hesitate to use his modest success to help Boston's black community as a whole. Throughout the 1850s, Smith provided leadership for scores of anti-slavery causes and even petitioned the state legislature for a monument commemorating Crispus Attucks' role in the Boston Massacre. Smith also served on the business committee of the state-wide meeting of Massachusetts Blacks in 1858. He further offered guidance to blacks during the Civil War and served as a Massachusetts delegate at the National Negro Convention in 1864. During Reconstruction, Smith represented Cambridge as a senator in

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[119] For a more general discussion of black business in America, see Juliet E.K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, and Entrepreneurship* (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1998).

the state legislature from 1873-1874. Indeed, Smith was a strident warrior for racial progress throughout the antebellum years, and his successful catering business also made him a shining example of it.[120]

What about female restaurant proprietors? In fact, there were a small number of females operating commercial eateries in antebellum Boston. [Table III, Appendix C] Indeed, the social codes regulating female ownership of dining venues seem to have been less stringent than those governing their patronage of them. On the other hand, women faced many of the same limitations of access to capital and credit as the Irish and blacks in Boston. The credit evaluations of R.G. Dun reveal that female success in the restaurant business required overcoming considerable odds and prejudices regarding the capabilities of their gender. In general, although Dun evaluators frequently noted the hard work of Boston's female business-owners, they were willing to extend them, at most, only "a very modest credit." As a result, female proprietors faced a higher rate of failure than their male contemporaries.[121]

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[120] Lois E. Horton and James Oliver Horton, "Power and Social Responsibility: Entrepreneurs and the Black Community in Antebellum Boston," *Boston's Histories: Essays in Honor of Thomas H. O'Connor*, James O'Toole and David Quigley, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004) pp. 37-51. Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins,* p. 79. For the text of a "Declaration of Sentiments of the Colored Citizens of Boston on the Fugitive Slave Bill," see the *Liberator*, 4 and 11 October 1850; Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston: Home and Battlefield* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), p. 48 and 243.

[121] The 1850 census did not record occupational information for women and so no female restaurant proprietors appear in its records. See Table III in Appendix C. Similarly, the city directory only recorded information for heads of households (typically males). Nevertheless, seven obviously female names do appear as proprietors in the census. Moreover, the directory often listed only initials of restaurateurs, making it impossible to know if, in fact, the person was male or female. Thus is really impossible to determine the actual total of female commercial eatery proprietors in Boston at mid-century. For an example of a credit report for a female restaurateur, see R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Business Library, Vol. 13, p. 330; Vol. 5, p. 116.

Conclusion

Throughout the antebellum period, Boston continued to experience sweeping changes. The ongoing processes of industrialization and urbanization, inroads of the market economy, and, by the late 1840s, rapid influx of Irish immigrants all combined to widen gaps in wealth distribution and harden divisions among Boston's residents in these years. More narrowly, daily routines changed as well. Work and domestic life became increasingly distinct for Boston males of all socio-economic classes while the public sphere drew more and more middle-class and elite women from their homes too.

Antebellum Bostonians found they needed commercial dining options for various reasons and a wide range of eateries emerged to fulfill these needs and provide refreshment and novelty for antebellum urbanites—and, hopefully, turn a profit for their proprietors as well. These commercial venues catered to the specific requirements and desires across the spectrum of gender, ethnic, race, and class groups in Boston. Indeed, they became important arenas where these distinct identities were practiced and where Bostonians affirmed their place in the socio-economic order. At mid-day, men left their workplaces and ventured to whatever eatery was nearby and capable of satisfying their need for an adequate dinner. These expectations varied depending on the men's level of income and the social codes to which they adhered. In antebellum Boston, both were inextricably linked not only to each other but to race and ethnicity as well. While for some men, Boston's eateries also became spaces where they could try out alternative social identities under the cover of darkness, for women, restaurants earmarked especially

for them confirmed their delicate natures and protected them from the market economy even as they facilitated their engagement with it.

Thus, antebellum Boston's panorama of commercial eateries developed for a variety of reasons and catered to a variety of customers. The city may have experienced growth in the overall phenomenon of public eating during this period, but where, how, and why its residents chose to eat out depended on a gamut of divisions separating not only at the table but also within the city more generally.

Chapter 3
Labor in the Antebellum Commercial Eating Business: the Work of Cooks and Waiters

When Englishman Sir John Acton arrived via steamer in Boston in 1853, he "put up" at the Revere House, which he had been told was a first-rate hotel in Boston. In his journal, he remarked that the waiters who worked in the Revere's public restaurant, as in other commercial eateries in Boston and elsewhere in America, were overwhelmingly black or Irish males. Acton did not comment on the race, ethnicity, or gender of those who labored in the kitchen at the Revere preparing patrons' food. Because the hotel's cooks remained out of the sight of diners, in contrast to its waiters, Acton was probably unaware of who prepared his meals. Had he inquired, however, he would have found that cooks in Boston's growing number of commercial dining venues were also typically black or Irish men.[122]

Cooking and waitering were not the only kinds of work marked by ethnic, racial, and gender distinctions in antebellum Boston. Far from it. As Boston grew and prospered throughout these years and settled into industrialization, the city's changing economy channeled different groups of people into different occupations. Certain jobs were simply off limits to women; and both blacks and Irish immigrants faced fierce discrimination in hiring practices, as well as lack of training and access to capital that would have helped them to improve their occupational prospects and socio-economic positions. As a result, women were generally eligible only for domestic service jobs and some kinds of textile work while both blacks and Irish residents found themselves limited to the most

[122] *Acton in America: The American Journal of Sir John Acton, 1853*, Sydney Jackman, ed. (Shepherdstown, W.VA: Patmos Press, 1979), p. 48.

undesirable and poorly paid employments the city offered—jobs that native-born, white men denigrated and avoided if at all possible.

Meanwhile, the separation of work from home, combined with changes in consumption and residence patterns, encouraged Bostonians from all backgrounds and across occupations to eat out and facilitated the opening of hundreds of commercial dining venues. These eateries, whether they catered to the elite, the working class, or those in between, required staffs to prepare and serve the foods their customers ordered. Consequently, cooking and waitering became two new kinds of antebellum employments that were suddenly disaggregated from the domestic servants once solely responsible for performing these waged jobs.

But while commercial eateries were steadily becoming more important in Bostonians' daily lives, and although their proprietors hoped the business would facilitate their own economic mobility, the status of those who were employed as cooks and waiters in these venues was low and remained low throughout the antebellum years. Even in the city's most refined commercial eateries, both cooking and waitering were occupations that were looked down upon and shunned by native-born whites. As Acton observed, these positions were consequently left to the most disadvantaged members of society—blacks and Irish immigrants—to perform.

Thus, in the antebellum period, Boston's panorama of public eateries became integral parts of residents' social networks and everyday routines and served as unique kinds of semi-public spaces where a wide range of constituencies registered their place in the hardening socio-economic hierarchy of the rapidly changing city. But restaurants functioned further as arenas for the enactment of race, ethnic, and class identities in

Boston through their capacities as workplaces that predominately employed black and Irish males as cooks and waiters. The meanings the men who worked in these jobs assigned to their positions could vary greatly depending on race and ethnic variables. Moreover, commercial eateries were also spaces where the low status associated with these occupations and the men who performed them were contested—however ambiguous the overall outcomes of these challenges.

Cooks and Commercial Cookery

Prior to the 1830s when public eateries became prevalent, most Bostonians employed as cooks labored only in the private homes of the wealthy. Without modern technology, cooking was an arduous, difficult, and time-consuming process and housewives who could afford to were eager to hire help for this task. Entertaining in any kind of grand way most especially required assistance in the kitchen. On the other hand, few traditional taverns employed cooks. In Boston, taverns were obliged to provide food to those who called for it, but most primarily received the patronage of local men wanting only to drink. Travelers requiring meals were not given anything fancy and generally ate whatever the tavern-keeper's own family was eating. Over time, a list of more talented "caterers" emerged in Boston to prepare the required dishes for the public banquets of societies and government. Few of these early caterers owned their own shops but rather simply hired their services to make ready the necessary fare and, sometimes, provide flatware and glassware as well. These early caterers typically prepared and served the meal at whatever private home or banquet hall was hosting the event.

For the most part, then, the occupation of a cook in early America was akin to that of a general domestic servant and, as with servants, both men and women were eligible to perform this work. Cooks labored in private homes and their positions were not any more esteemed than those of other domestics, although some of the especially talented ones may have been more sought after for their services. In republican America, servant was a position fraught with tension and cooks would have known this same anxiety. White, native-born Americans were too fond of the ideals of liberty and freedom to value service occupations, which they believed did not provide workers with satisfactory independence from their employers, or to really respect those who did labor in these positions. Servitude in America was, as a result, an occupation of last resort. Moreover, American servants, or "helps" as they often preferred to be called in an effort to mask the servile status associated with their positions, were typically poorly paid and poorly treated, reflections of their low rank as well as further contributions to it.[123]

By the 1830s, however, there was a great deal more opportunity for cooks to find work in commercial establishments as the number and kinds of such venues expanded rapidly. Proprietors of small restaurants and eating-houses continued to make use of their own culinary abilities and those of their family members in meeting the public's growing

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[123] On republicanism: Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), pp. 95-213; on white, native-born Americans' aversion to the term servant, see, for example, Francis Trollope. *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Penguin Books, 1997) pp. 45-7; *Diary of a Tour in America*, Kate Buckley, ed. (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1886), pp. 172-3; Frances Wright, *Views of Society and Manners in America*, Paul R. Baker, ed. (Cambridge: Belknap, 1963), p. 119; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 45, 47-8,146. On the disadvantages of domestic servitude, see, for example, Daniel Sutherland *Americans and their Servants, Domestic Servitude in the United States from 1800-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 82-102

demand for commercial refreshment, but many also increasingly found they needed to hire assistance to do so. Meanwhile, the growing number of luxury-hotel dining rooms required kitchen staffs of considerable size to prepare the numerous dishes found on their bills of fare.[124]

Although neither the city directories nor federal censuses distinguished between cooks who worked in private homes and those who now labored in public establishments, the jobs were regarded by contemporaries as emphatically distinct from one another. This is clear from the obvious gender division between those who labored as hired domestic cooks and those who worked in commercial eateries: the former were usually female—as were the majority of domestic servants—while the latter were nearly always men. Indeed, cooking in a commercial kitchen—unless they were themselves the proprietor of an establishment (a respectable occupation for females although a difficult one for them to succeed in) or were somehow related to the proprietor—was not typically an occupational option for women in antebellum Boston.[125] [Tables III and X, Appendix C]

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[124] The names of 68 cooks are recorded in the 1850 census. Meanwhile, the city directory for that year lists 100 eating-houses and restaurants and 89 public houses. While the discrepancy between these numbers reflects certain gaps in the collection of census data, it also confirms that many eateries did not employ cooks but rather relied on the labor of family members. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

[125] A later article in *The Galaxy* confirms the impression that cooks in commercial kitchens were male while those working in private kitchens were female. "Nebulae," *The Galaxy* 5 (April 1868): 513-5. In antebellum Boston, there was a small number of exceptions, however. The 1850 Federal Census recorded five female cooks (of 94 cooks total listed in either the census or the directory) in Suffolk County who resided in commercial eating establishments and probably worked there as well. See tables III and X in Appendix C. In addition, it should be noted that census takers rarely listed women's occupations. On the contrary, census takers were instructed to note only the occupations of males over the age of 15. It is not clear why any females' occupations made it into the census at all. And although rarely employed as cooks in public eateries, women were still likely present in commercial kitchens when they themselves were the proprietor of the

There is no definite explanation for why not. Women's absence in commercial kitchens may have stemmed from the fact that cooking in a commercial eatery, where the output was significantly greater than in a private home, was considered too strenuous for a woman to manage. It is also likely that the gender division between hired domestic and commercial cooking was influenced by contemporary ideas about the separation of private and public spheres and men's and women's prescribed roles in each of these worlds. As the expansion of the market economy spurred anxiety in many Americans, gendered ideals that opposed the public, male world of the market to the private, female sphere of the home increasingly associated the tasks of cooking with domesticity and female virtue. Commercial cookery, on the other hand, was a product of the market and, thus, the public sphere. For women to cook food that was then sold to paying strangers (at least a hired domestic cook did not prepare food for strangers) thus uncomfortably blurred the line between private and public. Although some women with unique relationships to the proprietor of a commercial eatery did offer their services as cook in public establishments, female cooks in commercial eateries were, overall, rare.[126]

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establishment or when they were closely related to the proprietor. On women's waged labor, see Alice Kessler Harris, *Out to Work: a History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), ch. 2. On female domestic servants, including cooks, in the nineteenth-century, see Daniel Sutherland, *Americans and their Servants*.

[126] Wendy Gamber has found that the cooking of nineteenth-century boardinghouse-keepers, who were often female, was particularly maligned partly because critics recognized (and were made uncomfortable) by the fact that these women's cookery had strayed from the domestic sphere and become part of an economic relationship. This discomfort was mitigated, however, by the fact that at least such boardinghouse-keepers cooked and served their food in their own homes rather than out in a public eatery. Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), ch. 4. Jennifer Davis' dissertation includes discussion of the fact that *chefs* in nineteenth-century France were always male even though women typically did the cooking at home. Davis points out that while it is possible to overstate

But while cooking in a commercial establishment was now distinct from working as a domestic servant, both forms of employment were seen as lowly and servile. Like servitude, commercial cook was thus an occupation scorned by native-born white men. According to the 1850 federal census, the majority of commercial cooks came instead from the black and Irish populations, both of which had limited occupational options in Boston and were primarily restricted to taking only unskilled, poorly regarded jobs. [Tables III and IV, Appendix C] These men, black and immigrant, worked side by side in at least some commercial kitchens. Meanwhile, the participation of both groups in the occupation further degraded its status and ensured that white, native Americans continued to steer clear of it.[127]

Indeed, the male cooks in antebellum Boston's public eateries, regardless of the rank of the clientele to which the venue catered, received neither high pay, nor good working conditions, nor security of employment. They also had little chance of advancement. Scant record of cooks' wages exist, but information supplied in the 1850 census makes clear that the overwhelming majority of cooks lived in residences that housed multiple families, suggesting that cooks were at the lowest end of the economic

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women's absence in French commercial kitchens, doing so stems from contemporaries' own understanding of a vast gender divide between commercial cookery and domestic cookery and those who prepared each. Jennifer Davis, *Men of Taste: Gender and Authority in the French Culinary Trades, 1730-1830* (Ph.D. diss.: Pennsylvania State University, 2004). Again, see Table X in Appendix C for information on female cooks listed in the 1850 Federal Census.

[127] 59% of cooks, according to the 1850 federal census, were either non-white or foreign-born. Only 32% were native-born, white men. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. Each cook was individually counted. No sampling was employed. These figures are incomplete, however, because race and ethnic information could not be attained for cooks listed in the city directory that do not appear in the census and so those cooks were not included in the above calculations. See Tables III and IV in Appendix C. For information on the age of cooks, see Table II in Appendix C.

spectrum in Boston. [Tables V and VI, Appendix C] Moreover, as late as 1885 the *Boston Globe* reported that cooks "did a man's work for pay that a tow-boy on a railroad would look at with scorn."[128]

A commercial cook's work environment was an eatery's kitchen, all too often a cramped, hot, and poorly ventilated space located in a subterranean basement. The typical cook normally had to share this small area with at least two or three others employed either as fellow cooks or as dishwashers. He worked long hours in grimy clothes (few yet wore uniforms as today), always on his feet in front of burning stoves and ovens that browned his skin as they cooked patrons' food. This fare was then typically brought up to the dining room by dumb waiters so that the cook and his kitchen were never seen by the public—further evidence of the low esteem associated with culinary occupations in antebellum Boston.[129]

Considered unskilled labor in a city overflowing with recent immigrants in search of employment, cooks possessed little bargaining power to achieve better pay or working conditions because they could be replaced so easily. Moreover, under these conditions, few cooks were able to attain sufficient capital to eventually open their own eatery or

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[128] 82% of cooks lived with at least one other family in 1850 and often with many more than one. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. See Table VI in Appendix C. Again, this figure is only partially complete because cooks who appear in the directory but not in the census were not included in its calculation due to insufficient residency data supplied by the directory. For some data regarding how long cooks stayed in the occupation, see the tables in the Appendix. *Boston Globe*, 7 August 1885. In 1867, cooks were reported to make between only fifteen and thirty dollars a month. Pierre Blot, "Modern and Mediaeval Dinners," *The Galaxy* 3(April 1867): p. 723.

[129] Although they describe working conditions later in the century the *Boston Globe* contained several articles in the 1870s that would have held true for the antebellum period as well. See, for example, the *Boston Globe*, 3 February 1878; 24 February 1878; and 7 August 1885. See also *A Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations* (Boston: Gray & Bowen, 1830).

otherwise experience socio-economic mobility. Examined together, the R.G. Dun credit records, federal census, and *Boston Directories* report only rare instances of such cases in nineteenth-century Boston. Evidence also suggests that few stayed in the occupation for long but rather took other work when it became available.[130] [Tables XII and XIII, Appendix C]

Cooking as an occupation was further degraded by the low status commercial cuisine was thought to have compared to food prepared domestically. Again, domestic cookery was increasingly romanticized in these years as an integral part of the private sphere. Women, the moral guardians of the Republic, were also responsible for nurturing the bodies of their husbands and children. The food they cooked and fed their families was thus very important and was even thought to help define the values of the nation. Like those who grew strong from it, this food was to be practical and virtuous. On the other hand, the fare available at most commercial eateries, though convenient, was usually regarded as inferior in quality, nutrition, and taste to home cooking because it was a product of the far less moral public sphere. [131]

In some ways, the French cuisine available in luxury-hotel dining rooms proved to be an exception to the generally low esteem associated with food obtained commercially. As detailed in chapter one, French cuisine, an emblem of refinement, had become the height of fashion in urban America by the 1830s. French fare could be found

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[130] A rare example in the Dun Credit Reports: Massachusetts, Vol. 10, p. 185, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School and Volume 14, p. 398. Tables XII and XIII in Appendix C provide information on cook occupational retention and mobility using information gathered from antebellum city directories and the 1850 Federal Census.

[131] Antebellum comparisons between domestic and commercial cookery will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

on some affluent tables in antebellum Boston; however, given the difficulty of its preparation, French dishes were most commonly available in first-class hotel dining rooms. But though it was thought to be refined, French food was not always considered especially moral. On the contrary, the introduction of French cuisine at the Tremont House in 1829 had touched off a debate regarding whether or not it was proper for good republicans to dine on French food. To some extent, this debate continued throughout the antebellum period. Although the French were now citizens of a republic themselves, many Americans still considered their *en vogue* haute cuisine a product of aristocracy, too fussy for consumption by Americans. Others pointed to the bloody turn French history had taken and suggested that France was hardly appropriate for imitation. These critics insisted that instead of looking to France, or to Europe at all, for advice in cookery, the United States should seek refinement in the culinary arts by further developing its own national menu.[132]

What exactly was antebellum America's existing culinary heritage? For the most part, it had been adopted and adapted from the English. Since the colonial period, Americans had favored roasted or boiled meats for their meals. They supplemented the intake of animal protein with similarly roasted and boiled vegetables as well as breads. Americans also remained partial to pastries, puddings, and pies, both savory and sweet. On the other hand, Americans had access to a broad range of produce and wild game that was unknown in Europe. The very earliest American cookbooks had thus built on an

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[132] James McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 309. Eliza Leslie's *Domestic French Cookery* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1832) attempted to reconcile the debate by emphasizing the use of American ingredients in French dishes. Eliza Leslie, *Domestic French Cookery.*

English culinary repertoire but also included numerous recipes—then known as receipts—to prepare foods indigenous to the New World. For instance, in 1798, the first cookbook written by an American for Americans, Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery…,* contained the earliest written recipes for using cornmeal and suggestions for cooking such North American delicacies as cranberries, wild turkey, and squash. Simmons' book offered receipts for such patriotically named dishes as Federal Pan Cake, Election Cake, and Independence Cake as well. By the antebellum period, ingredients and recipes such as these were common in American cookbooks and on American tables and were, in fact, seen by many as proud symbols of a specifically American culinary identity that was worthy of further development.[133]

Others argued, however, that there was no reason Americans should not also embrace the culinary contributions of the French. French cuisine was steadily becoming recognized throughout Europe—even, somewhat begrudgingly, in England—as preeminent. And elite Americans, in particular, were eager to demonstrate their own refined appreciation for French foods as they were for various other examples of European culture, especially art and music. As a letter in one urban newspaper explained soon after the completion of Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind's fabulously successful mid-century American tour, "this great people, so intent on acquisition, so bewildered at times by the rapidity of their own progress, have not forfeited the capacity of appreciating

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[133] Elaine McIntosh, *American Food Habits in Historical Perspective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), p. 93; Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald, *America's Founding Food: The Story of New England Cooking* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery, or the art of dressing viands, fish, poultry, and vegetables, and the best modes of making pastes, puffs, pies, tarts, puddings, custards, and preserves, and all kinds of cakes, from the imperial plum to plain cake: Adapted to this country, and all grades of life* (Northampton: Hudson and Goodwin, 1798).

excellence." Supporters of French cuisine in Boston and elsewhere argued that recognition and even emulation of the cultural contributions of Europeans in cooking, no less than in other art forms, would demonstrate America's own potential for cultural ascendancy.[134]

Thus, in the antebellum period, Americans' opinions about their food were complicated. Domestic cookery was strongly idealized and considered superior to anything that could be obtained commercially. At the same time, the French fare available in refined eateries like luxury-hotel dining rooms was also venerated as culturally paramount even if it was simultaneously condemned as unpatriotic. But while French fare was certainly esteemed, the actual technique and complexity involved in its preparation generally went unrecognized. In other words, the cooks who labored in hotel kitchens like the Tremont's to prepare French dishes did not earn special recognition or respect for their work. This continued to be the case with other forms of commercial cookery as well.

Antebellum cookbooks and the messages they contained about cookery help to explain Americans' reluctance to value commercial culinary efforts, including French ones. The cookbooks rolling off American presses in these years were part of a more general phenomenon in publishing during the first half of the nineteenth century: the rise of the "how-to" book. This trend reflected Americans' avid belief that all knowledge was meant to be shared and that once information—regardless of the subject—was clearly presented, any American could learn anything. Newspapers, magazines, and even fiction

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[134] Letter to the *New York Tribune* republished in Nathaniel Parker Willis, *Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind* (Philadelphia: Robert E. Peterson, 1851), pp. 144-145. See also Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), ch. 2.

met the resulting national quest for facts with detailed descriptions for carrying out a variety of tasks and minute details of a wide range of subjects. At the same time, such publications were part of a larger effort to celebrate democracy by defying professionalization and professional knowledge and exalting instead natural ability. American cookbooks, which insisted that cooking required only common sense and a few basic techniques, were no different in this respect from other examples of "how-to" literature. Furthermore, by the antebellum period, cookbooks also reflected Americans' growing fascination with science and focused as much and sometimes more on (usually misguided) rules of nutrition as on the development of actual culinary ability. Their authors, men and women with no formal culinary or medical education (although some certainly had plenty of practical experience), nonetheless intended to make available detailed descriptions of the inner workings of the body, as well as all of the instruction required to prepare good, nutritious food for this body. Thus, American cookbooks presented cooking as a relatively straightforward activity that anyone could do rather than a skill requiring special talent. Any distinctive abilities those who cooked for a living may have possessed were, consequently, not usually recognized as noteworthy.[135]

French and French-influenced cookery were not considered any differently. Cookbooks focusing on French cuisine and available in English in antebellum America included Frenchmen Louis Eustache Ude's *The French Cook,* published in 1828, and Utrech-Friedel's *La Petite Cuisiniere Habile*, published in 1846, as well as the American Eliza Leslie's *Domestic French* (1832). Each of these volumes underscored how simple

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[135] Carol Fisher, *The American Cookbook: a History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2006), chapters 3 and 4. For a good bibliography of popular cookbooks, see Mary Anna DuSablon, *America's Collectible Cookbooks: the History, the Politics, the Recipes* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1994).

French dishes were to prepare and minimized discussion of the experience that was usually required to produce good results.[136]

Above all, however, Americans' reluctance to value commercial culinary efforts—including French ones—stemmed from their insistence that in their swiftly changing country, women must remain the "guardians" of both "the diet and the soul." Antebellum cookbooks, aimed at an audience of female domestic cooks, encouraged readers to believe that cooking was a social act for women—a way to shape the republican values of the growing nation—rather than something to fill a mere biological need. According to cookbook authors, proper cooking could encourage morality and even cure disease. In contrast, commercial cooking was assumed to produce inferior food that was a product of the market rather than of a woman's love and virtue. In fact, one of the reasons cookbook authors encouraged women to read their books was to improve their cookery so that their husbands would be less inclined to dine out.[137]

The result of all this was that antebellum cookbooks helped to continue to denigrate the occupation of cook in cities like Boston. They assisted in creating a perception of cooking as a basic task and of commercial cooks as inferior to the home cook. Thus, while food was a matter of interest, sentimentality, and even national pride during this period, laboring as a cook remained an occupation that was poorly esteemed.

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[136] Louis Eustache Ude, *The French Cook* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey,1828). The first edition was published in London in 1813. Eliza Leslie was the first American to adapt French recipes to American ingredients. Eliza Leslie, *Domestic French Cookery.* Louise-Béate-Augustine, *La Petite Cuisiniere Habile* (New Orleans: Nouvelle-Orléans, 1840). An English translation was made available in 1846.

[137] Growing middle-class resentment of commercial eating will be discussed in the next chapter. Quote from Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: a History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), p. 113.

Even those who had learned to execute French dishes for the affluent public were not respected for their skills. This remained true despite the fact that the frequency with which most Bostonians dined out continued to increase.

In contrast, in France—the country that produced the cuisine Americans simultaneously admired and scorned—cooking was seen as an art requiring considerable talent and training. There, commercial cooks were also overwhelmingly male because women, while certainly capable of making simple, domestic meals, were thought to lack the competence (and palette) for creating the kinds of complex and innovative dishes for which French restaurants were now known. Indeed, the cooks at these restaurants endured years of formal, demanding apprenticeships before taking over their own commercial kitchen and receiving the title of *chef de cuisine*, a designation that recognized the trained culinary skills they possessed.[138]

While it may have been advantageous—particularly for luxury-hotel dining rooms specializing in French cuisine—to institute a similar system for training cooks in America, no such system was created during the antebellum years. The few French *chefs* who emigrated to cities like Boston in this period were usually able to find considerable success using their heightened culinary abilities and cultural *caché* cooking for the elite. But the vast majority of those working as commercial cooks remained poorly paid and regarded as lowly and servile even when the experience and ability they had gleaned from years working in commercial kitchens was considerable. Consequently, most of the

[138] Even in France a formal culinary school did not exist during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first, *Le Cordon Bleu*, opened in 1869. See Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd, 1985).

commercial cooks in Boston throughout the antebellum period continued to be black or Irish men who had few other occupational options.

Waitering

In addition to cooks, antebellum eating venues in Boston also employed waiters. Before the 1830s and the phenomenon of commercial eateries, waiters, like cooks, were essentially domestic servants. They worked exclusively in private households. In fact, the term "waiter" was even occasionally used as a euphemism for the more odious word "servant." For instance, in Royall Tyler's 1787 play *The Contrast,* when the English Jessamy refers to the Yankee Jonathan as a servant, Jonathan exclaims, "Servant! Sir, do you take me for a neger,-- I am Colonel Manly's waiter." When asked the distinction between a waiter and a servant, Jonathan explains, "no man shall master me." This exchange again demonstrates the scorn white Americans felt for service occupations, which they believed did not provide workers with the independence necessary to make good citizens. In fact, as is clear in Jonathan's response to Jessamy, many Americans feared the condition of servitude was too similar to a slave's. Immediately after the Revolution, then, the term "waiter," served as a substitute for the word servant that, it was hoped, connoted subservience but not servility; whiteness not blackness. Nevertheless, waitering in Boston during this period was not really different from any other domestic service occupation and was, typically, as poorly regarded.[139]

Beginning in the 1830s, however, as greater numbers of eateries opened in Boston, waitering in a commercial setting, like commercial cooking, increasingly became

[139] Royall Tyler, *The Contrast*, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), pp. 34 and 35.

an occupation in its own right and distinct from domestic servitude. Proprietors of both high-end and low-end eating venues hired waiters to facilitate the transporting of food from the kitchen that prepared it to the customer who called for it. Thus, whereas servants continued to perform a variety of tasks (including waiting on domestic tables) and worked in private homes, waiters now served food in public venues. This was their chief occupational duty. As a result, Jonathan's wordplay in *The Contrast* that substituted "waiter" for "servant" would no longer have worked by the 1830s when a waiter and a domestic servant were two very different occupations.

And, as had been the case with cooks, a gender division between those who were eligible to perform the jobs of domestic servants and waiters registered the new distinction between these occupations. Like commercial cooks, waiters in commercial eateries in Boston throughout the antebellum period were nearly always male; women, though they worked as domestic servants, were not eligible for the occupation of waiter. [Table III, Appendix C] Many eateries were, in fact, off-limits to women even as customers and, besides, waitering was usually considered too physically demanding for a woman to handle. The "waiter girls" who found employment in some oyster saloons, fetching male customers drinks and platters of bivalves, were usually also prostitutes. [Illustration 8, Appendix A] In fact, they were probably prostitutes first and waiters second.[140]

But while now distinct from the occupation of servant, waitering was, nonetheless, still denigrated as lowly and servile and, like cook, was a kind of

[140] As prostitutes, waiter girls became popular subjects in urban exposé. For example, see *Susie Knight: or, The True History of the Pretty Waiter Girl: a Fancy Poem in three Cantos* (New York: C. Mackey & Co., 1863).

employment white, native-born Americans avoided if at all possible. This again left the available waitering jobs in cities like Boston to the black and Irish residents who had few other options. [Tables III and IV, Appendix C] But, unlike what transpired with cooking, the antebellum years did produce a movement to raise the esteem associated with waitering and emphasize the considerable skill good waitering required. And ironically enough, it was black waiters who led this effort.[141]

In the 1830s, black Bostonians flocked to the waitering positions becoming available in the increasing number of commercial eateries in the city because these slots were one of the most desirable occupations of the very limited kinds available to them. Indeed, whether free or fugitive, Boston blacks throughout the antebellum years faced a range of barriers to their economic and social standing that was unknown to whites. All blacks found their economic opportunities limited by long-standing custom and prejudice. Employers excluded black men from what remained of the skilled trades, as well as from working in early industry and manufacturing. Limiting occupational opportunities for blacks was intended first and foremost to widen the scope of such opportunities for whites. It was also intended to discourage further black migration to Boston.[142]

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Boston's blacks all generally worked in low-status employments. The city's 1850 census listed 575 blacks in 46

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[141] Much of the subsequent argument of this chapter was first published as an article. See Kelly Erby, "Worthy of Respect: Black Waiters in Boston before the Civil War," *Food and History* 5(February 2007): pp. 205-18.

[142] Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 120; Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: the Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 7-18.

different occupations. Except for the 2 black doctors, 4 clergymen, and 1 lawyer, all of these jobs would have been considered menial. Much of the work blacks were eligible to perform in Boston was seasonal or irregular. It was also typically low-paying. Blacks were not only excluded from manufacturing and skilled occupations, but were barred as well from many entrepreneurial opportunities. Regarding free persons of color in Boston in 1833, the British traveler Edward S. Abdy noted, "with the exception of one or two employed as printers, one blacksmith, and one shoemaker, there are no colored mechanics in the city." He added, 'Even a license for keeping a house of refreshment is refused, under some frivolous or vexatious pretense, though the same can easily be procured by a white man of inferior condition and with less wealth."[143]

Under these conditions, the job of waiter was comparatively desirable among blacks—even more so than that of cook. Waitering supplied steady, regular work that was not especially dangerous. Evidence of waiters' wages suggest that most waiters earned between ten and sixteen dollars a month, which was probably more than most cooks and provided a better income than the average black worker in Boston received. Furthermore, within Boston's black community, a considerable percentage of which was

[143] Numbers quoted in Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 66-7. See also the *Liberator*, 22 January 1831; Leonard Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*, ch. 2; and James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p. 34. Abdy quoted in Leonard Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*, pp. 19-20. Abdy's observation appears relatively accurate—of 122 restaurant keepers in Boston listed in the Federal Census in 1850, only 4 of them were black. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. See Table in Appendix III.

composed of fugitive slaves, it would have been difficult to confuse the waged job of waitering with slavery. The distinction was only too clear to these men. [144]

Finally, there was also opportunity in waitering for blacks to advance in status and pay. Unlike the job of cook and, indeed, most of the jobs available to blacks, waiters in Boston were ranked and could enjoy greater esteem depending on the quality of the venue in which they worked. Waiters at more prestigious eateries catering to the elite earned more respect and compensation than those who worked in more casual establishments. Moreover, at elite venues, waiters on staff were often also ranked according to their own unique abilities. Those who were especially talented were promoted to "headwaiter" and became responsible for training and managing the other waiters who worked at the restaurant. Few other jobs promised such mobility for black Bostonians. For these reasons, then, blacks prized the opportunity to waiter in a way they never prized the occupation of cook and even as whites continued to scorn and avoid waitering.[145]

As waitering became one of the most sought after jobs for blacks in early antebellum Boston, waiters became regarded as respected members of the black community. There is actually evidence to suggest that waiters comprised a sizeable

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[144] Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, pp. 242-5. Leonard Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*, p. 22. On the number of fugitive slaves employed as waiters in Boston, see John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker*, two volumes (Free Port, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 2:95 and Joseph Willard, *A Half a Century with Judges and Lawyers* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1896), p. 239. Antebellum waiters' retention and upward mobility rates, though not especially high, were still higher than those of cooks. See Tables XII and XIII in Appendix C.

[145] On the disadvantages of domestic servitude, see, for example, Daniel Sutherland, *Americans and their Servants,* pp. 82-102. Tunis Gulic Campbell discusses the ranking of waiters and the ways in which their responsibilities should be distributed accordingly in his book *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide* (Boston: Coolidge and Wiley, 1848), pp. 23-6.

segment of the black middle class in Boston, which, facing limited employment opportunities, was defined less by economic standing than by education level, steady employment, and participation in reform activities. Numerous waiters working on behalf of abolition and general reform can be identified from the historical record. For instance, in 1833, William Lloyd Garrison was honored by Boston activists for his abolitionist work and presented with an inscribed silver cup. The group that presented the cup was comprised of seamen, teachers, ministers, and waiters. Later, among the people listed as vice-presidents of an abolition meeting in 1855, were waiters William H. Logan and Robert Johnson. Thomas Dalton was another black activist who had worked as a waiter, as had the successful caterer and social activist J.B. Smith. Doubtless, there were others. Clearly, black waiters such as these men enjoyed a relatively high social standing within Boston's black community, a position they further cemented through their participation in reform efforts and commitment to racial justice. Moreover, in contrast to whites who feared that service occupations like waitering disqualified them from citizenship, the strong presence of black waiters in antebellum reform efforts makes clear that these men did indeed consider themselves citizens of the Republic, as well as examples of racial progress, and they were willing to work for the further improvement of their country and race.[146]

In the 1830s and 1840s, then, waitering was a job that Boston's black males definitely wanted to perform. This was not the case with those who worked as cooks,

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[146] In *We all Got History: the Memory Books of Amos Webber* (New York: Times Books, 1996), pp. 20-1 Nick Salvatore finds that steady work was often more defining of a black middle class than white-collar work, from which blacks were excluded. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, revised ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999), p. 68; James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color*, pp. 45-6.

which was usually an occupation of last resort even for blacks. As whites increasingly derided waitering and eschewed the work if they could help it, blacks celebrated working as a waiter and eagerly filled the available waitering positions in hotel dining rooms, confectionaries, and eating-houses. Between 1830 and 1840, the overwhelming majority of waiters listed in the *Boston Directory* was black.[147]

By the mid-1840s, though, black Bostonians faced new challenges that affected their clear dominance of waitering and the status they associated with it. Throughout the 1840s, the spectacular growth of the Irish community in Boston put new strains on the resources of the city. For their part, blacks in Boston experienced further curtailment of their already limited job opportunities due to this influx of immigrants. The Irish, too, were restricted to taking mostly unskilled, menial jobs. For many of the same reasons as blacks, the Irish learned to covet positions as waiters as one of the better occupations available to them. The competition for these jobs thus became very fierce. Blacks in Boston now faced chronic underemployment in general, as well as the possibility that they would be blocked from attaining the limited list of more desirable jobs, like waitering, open to them. Furthermore, blacks worried that Irish waiters, who did not esteem waitering as highly as they did and were often willing to work for lower wages, would further degrade the occupation in the eyes of white society.

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[147] *The Boston Directory containing Names of the Inhabitants and their Occupations, Places of Businesses, and Dwelling Houses with Lists of the Streets, Lanes and Wharves, the City Officer and Public Offices and Banks and other Useful Information* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1830); *The Boston Directory…* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1835); *The Boston Directory…* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1840). During these years, the *Boston Directory* included a special section for "colored" residents, which is where this information was found.

In response to the increased competition for unskilled work in Boston and other American cities, black reformer and former Boston resident Frederick Douglass advised blacks that they must "learn trades or starve," warning, "[e]mployments and callings, formerly monopolized by us, are so no longer…. White men are becoming house-servants, cooks and stewards on vessels—at hotels." Douglass further encouraged readers of his newspaper *The Frederick Douglass Paper* to, "Make your Sons Mechanics and Farmers—not Waiters Porters and Barbers." Taking an even harsher tone, David Walker, in his *Appeal to the Colored People of the World,* also encouraged blacks to forget employments like waitering, chiding, "what a miserable set of people we are!" because "we cannot obtain the comforts of life, but by cleaning … [whites'] boots and shoes, old clothes, waiting on them, shaving them." Black abolitionist Maria Stewart echoed Walker's message in her Boston lectures, scolding northern blacks for performing work not very far removed from that of a slave.[148]

Undeterred and insisting on the dignity of their labor, Boston's black waiters tried very hard throughout the remaining antebellum years to defend their waitering positions against the Irish. Beginning in the 1840s, they moved to protect their occupations by insisting on the special skill waitering required—skill, they believed, Irish immigrants simply did not possess. Again, this was in stark contrast to what happened in commercial

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[148] *Frederick Douglass Paper*, 4 March 1853 and 18 March 1853; David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored People of the World*, (Boston: David Walker, 1830), p. 34; Maria Stewart quoted in Stephen Kendrick and Paul Kendrick, *Sarah's Long Walk: The Free Blacks of Boston and How their Struggle for Equality Changed America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), p. 38. See also the minutes from the 1848 meeting of the National Negro Convention and the Report on the Importance of Colored Persons Engaging in Commercial Pursuits from the 1853 meeting of the National Negro Convention in Howard Holman Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 20 of the 1848 meeting minutes and p. 27 of the 1853 meeting minutes.

cooking, which generally remained regarded as unskilled and undesirable—even by blacks and Irish immigrants—throughout the antebellum period. Quite the opposite happened with black waiters who, in fact, strove to build on the esteem already associated with waitering within the black community to advance black waiters' claims to respectability among white society as well.

Tunis Campbell, an African American waiter in Boston, spearheaded these efforts with his book *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide.* [Illustration 9, Appendix A] Published in 1848, Campbell's book, which primarily addressed waitering in elite public establishments but also gave some thought to the position as it existed in affluent private households, carried the message that good waiters were highly skilled and that not anyone could successfully fill this position. Although technically another example of a "how-to" book, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide* was written by a waiter for other waiters and emphasized the special knowledge waitering required. Indeed, according to Campbell, waitering demanded training, discipline, dedication, and, above all, dignity.[149]

For instance, Campbell advised waiters to wear an apron, a national symbol of the skilled male worker, in order to register the respect they felt for their position and which others should hold for it as well. He urged employers not to force their waiters to wear livery, as many male house servants were expected to do, as this was beneath the status a waiter should command. According to Campbell, professional waiters, wearing a clean

[149] Tunis Gulic Campbell, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide.*

apron over their own clothing, demonstrated that they were independent laborers and not unlike a skilled mechanic or artisan.[150]

Campbell further argued that proper table service was a meticulous, even ritualized, endeavor. To get it right, Campbell argued that waiters needed to practice and hone their abilities every day (excepting the Sabbath) through drilling. Campbell offered precise details about what these drills should entail. As he explained, "it will be necessary… that the men should be often on drill, to enable them to understand all the signals [of table-waiting], without making the slightest mistake. Every movement should be carefully explained upon the Drill." In his instructions, Campbell emphasized that since proficient waitering required training and ability, those who possessed these qualities should be treated with respect and paid accordingly. Campbell explained, "I must here mention one great error, and that is, the hiring of cheap help. The very best of help should be procured, and a reasonable compensation paid them for their services." Campbell's book was adamant in extolling the varied skills and discipline required to be a good waiter and the special dedication blacks in particular brought to the job.[151]

Nevertheless, by 1850, the tide was turning against black waiters. The federal census that year revealed that blacks were losing their dominance of the occupation to the flood of Irish immigrants into the city. In fact, 55.5% of the total waiters in Boston were

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[150] Ibid., pp. 31-2.

[151] Tunis Gulic Campbell, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide*, pp. 21; 8; 11-12. Campbell's efforts to secure heightened respect for the occupation of waitering through print culture extolling the skills required to do it properly are similar to the French culinary journal *L'Art Culinaire*'s attempts to raise the social standing of French cooks in the late nineteenth century by emphasizing the achievement of French cookery. Stephen Mennell devotes considerable discussion of *L'Art Culinaire* and the status of French cooks in his study *All Manners of Food*—particularly in chapter two.

now Irish while only 6.7% were black. [Table XI, Appendix C] Thus, blacks' efforts to keep Irish immigrants out of waitering were steadily losing ground by mid-century.[152]

Irish immigrants, like blacks, took jobs as waiters because of the better pay and conditions the position promised relative to the others for which they were eligible. But they never claimed for the occupation the esteem and requisite skill level black waiters did. Nor did they argue that they were better suited to work as waiters or take particular pride in it. But proprietors of commercial eateries may have preferred to hire Irish immigrants over blacks for various reasons. It is probable that Irish waiters, because they did not see themselves as especially skilled, were willing to work for lower wages than black waiters who did. This is certainly what Campbell implied in his book, arguing that customers received worse service when proprietors hired such cheap help. In addition, proprietors may have found that many diners in Boston were made uncomfortable by having a black man serve them their dinner. Indeed, being waited on by a black man may have encouraged analogies to the "aristocratic," slave-owning, planter families of the South that Bostonians especially scorned in these years. In contrast, Irish waiters would not have caused this unfavorable comparison. Finally, black waiters may have been

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[152] Waiters comprised about 2.2% of black males while waiters already made up about 1% of the total number of Irish males in the city. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. See Table XI in Appendix C. The percentages calculated for the black and Irish males who worked as waiters is definitely skewed, however. Because more precise data on the Irish population, including age and sex statistics, was not recorded in the 1850 census, the figures used for the total population of the Irish and black populations in Boston encompass all age groups rather than only those individuals between the ages of 15 and 60—the age parameters of waiters in the city in 1850. In addition, the figure for the Irish male population is only roughly estimated from the total population, as the census for 1850 did not distinguish between the male and female Irish populations. Furthermore, these calculations do not include those waiters listed in the directory but not the census because no racial or ethnic data was given in the directory for 1850.

discriminated against based on racial stereotypes that suggested blacks were more lazy and dim-witted than even the similarly stereotyped Irish. But regardless of the precise cause—undoubtedly all of these factors contributed—the fact was black waiters were ceding their dominance of waitering by the 1850s.[153]

Meanwhile, in New York City, black waiters were also experiencing a downturn in their employment prospects due to the influx of Irish immigrants into that city as well. As a result, in 1853 New York waiters organized to form the First United Association of Colored Waiters. This group was interested in protecting its members' jobs in the city from white immigrants willing to work for lower pay. By 1855, members of the organization determined they would find greater success if they cooperated with their white counterparts and went on strike to raise wages for all waiters regardless of race or ethnicity. As a result, the Waiters' Protective Union Society was born. Composed of both black and white waiters employed in homes, restaurants, and hotels, the union organized a city-wide strike in 1855 that resulted in a desired wage increase to eighteen dollars a month (up from ten to sixteen dollars a month). White participants in the strike expressed amazement at the leading roles blacks played in organizing the strike and in finding support for its cause. More than one of them attributed blacks' prominent leadership to the pride blacks felt for their work. White and Irish men, as one white organizer explained to a newspaper reporter, "are generally driven, by a combination of unfortunate circumstances, to become waiters, and are… ashamed of being so, and are consequently indifferent" to agitating to improve their working conditions. In contrast, the black

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[153] Tunis Gulic Campbell, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide*, pp. 11-12. On Irish waiters being better than black waiters in the years before the Civil War, see, for example *Acton in America*, p. 48; *Diary of a Tour in America*, p. 165.

community in New York, as in Boston, had long felt that the occupation of waiter was a good livelihood requiring skill and dedication and was thus worthy of respect and adequate compensation. They were willing to fight for mainstream recognition of this respect and they urged waiters everywhere to join them, singing,

> Waiters, all, throughout the nation
> Why will you ever be overburdened by oppression
> Overawed by tyranny?
> Wait for the good time coming no longer;
> Claim at once what is your due.[154]

In Boston, where the black population was considerably smaller than in New York, no similar organized labor protest took place on behalf of black waiters during the antebellum period. Still, in 1851, the remarkable experience of Shadrach Minkins, a fugitive slave working as a waiter in Boston, focused the city's attention on black waiters in another, very sensational manner. Minkins, "a stout, copper colored man," had worked as a waiter in his master's hotel in Norfolk, Virginia. After escaping slavery and arriving safely in Boston, he took a waitering job at the Cornhill Coffee House located on Cornhill Court. Minkins was now paid to do what, as a slave, he had been obliged to perform.[155]

In fact, a significant portion of Boston's blacks, including its black waiters, was probably comprised of fugitive slaves like Minkins. Theodore Parker, a white abolotionist and Congregationalist minister, estimated in October 1850 that four to six hundred fugitives resided in Boston. When the second Fugitive Slave Law went into effect in 1850, they all faced a heightened sense of danger as, indeed, did all blacks since any one of them could be accused of being a fugitive (and forcibly taken South) even if

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[154] See Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, pp. 242-5 for more on the 1855 New York City waiter strike. See also the *New York Herald*, 16 April 1853 for full lyrics of the song quoted above.
[155] John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker*, 2:95

they were not. In occupations where blacks concentrated, like waitering, workers developed networks of lookouts to warn them if slave-hunters came to town. In some cases, white employers collaborated to help protect their black employees. For instance, one contemporary remembered that George Young, who kept a popular hotel and dining room in Boston, had

> a great many colored men in his employ, and it was told of [U.S. Marshall Isaac] Barnes that he would go into Young's Hotel and say: 'George, I shall be after some of your d------ niggers, so you had better look out;' and if there happened to be any runaway slaves there they would leave.[156]

But Minkins received no such warning at the Cornhill Coffee House. And in February, 1851 he was apprehended there as a runaway. Minkins had been spotted and recognized while at work by a visitor to Boston from Norfolk; when his master received word of Minkins' location, he dispatched agents to secure a warrant for Minkins' arrest with the intention of forcing the fugitive slave back to the South. On the morning of Thursday February 20, 1851, two deputy marshals walked into the Cornhill Coffee House looking for Minkins. The marshals had to wait to make their arrest until another man who would be able to identify Minkins joined them. While they waited, the men sat down at a table to have a cup of coffee. When their beverages arrived, it was Minkins himself who brought them, followed by their bill. According to newspaper reports, as Minkins headed for the bar to make change for the men, two additional assistant deputy marshals suddenly appeared who identified Minkins, and "each took the negro by an arm, and

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[156] James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color*, p. 28. Parker's estimate is impossible to confirm but immediately after the passage of the Fugitive Slave law, two hundred fugitives fled Boston for Canada. Many of them later returned, however. John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker*, 2:95; quote from Joseph Willard, *A Half a Century with Judges and Lawyers*, p. 239.

walked him out of the back passage way." The waiter was said to have gone with his captors quietly and with dignity.[157]

Minkins was then taken to the courthouse as word of his capture spread throughout the city. Boston newspapers were quick to publish accounts of Minkins' arrest. Their stories remarked repeatedly on the fact that Minkins was still wearing his waiter's apron by the time he reached the courthouse. They all also took care to describe Minkins as a hard worker who had the utmost respect of his employer, as well as of the customers he waited on at the Cornhill Coffee House. The image of Minkins taken from his place of labor against his will, still clad in his workers' apron, was a poignant way to sum up the injustice of this man's plight, as well as make a statement on the greater injustice of slavery.[158]

In the ensuing days, Minkins was widely written about in northern newspapers from Boston to Cleveland. In these accounts, his occupation was presented with the respect said to be fitting of all free labor. Indeed, Minkins became a great rallying point for promoters of free labor ideology and the destruction of racial slavery. In fact, excitement over his arrest ran so high that before Minkins could be returned to his master, an interracial mob of his supporters stormed the courthouse where he was being held,

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[157] For accounts of the arrest, see the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 20 February 1851; *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, 9 February 1886; and other Boston newspapers; see also Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins*, pp. 112-13; quote, Ibid., pp. 112-13.

[158] For example, see the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 20 February 1851; *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, 9 February 1886; and other northern newspapers; see also Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins*, pp. 112-113. On Free Labor ideology and slavery as incompatible with this ideology, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: the Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 11-39 and 301-18.

dramatically carried him off, and then helped him to hide from his pursuers. Unnamed individuals later aided Minkins in escaping to Canada.[159]

In the months that followed Minkins' flight from Boston, newspapers across the North continued to cover Minkins' progress as a free man in Canada. They soon reported joyously back to their readers that he was no longer working as a waiter but had opened his own restaurant in Montreal. In these news stories, Minkins emerged as a proud example of the promise of free labor and the ability of all Americans—even black Americans—to earn their independence and become business owners if given the opportunity. However, in this case, Minkins was only able to "earn his independence" by *leaving* America. Had he stayed in Boston, regardless of the esteem he and other blacks felt the occupation of waiter deserved, or the actual respect afforded them by some of their white employers and customers, it would have been unlikely that Minkins or any other black man would have been able to harness success as a waiter to open his own commercial eatery until well after the Civil War. Blacks, even in the North, continued to be discriminated against and afforded only a fraction of the country's opportunities until long after abolition. This was why so many of them, including Minkins, desired to work as waiters in the first place.[160]

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[159] Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins*, ch. 9

[160] Ibid., ch. 12. Minkins' restaurant soon failed, however. He then opened a lunchroom but it too went out of business. Minkins later found success in Montreal as a barber. Again, in 1850 only 5 black restaurant proprietors were listed in the federal census. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

Conclusion

As commercial eateries became increasingly important in feeding antebellum Bostonians, both cooking and waitering became occupations that were distinct from those of the servants once solely responsible for meeting Boston's hired cooking and waiting needs. But though cooks and waiters laboring in commercial establishments were no longer to be confused with domestic servants, cooking and waitering nevertheless continued to be regarded as lowly and servile, at least by native-born whites, and neither position enjoyed much in terms of compensation, working conditions, or respect. Shunned by those with better occupational options, these jobs were left instead to the black and Irish residents of the city. The meanings these different groups assigned to their respective jobs, however, varied greatly.

Thus, as both dining venues and as workplaces, commercial eateries were integrally tied up with antebellum Boston's gender, race, and ethnic hierarchies. As the antebellum period progressed and the trend of eating out steadily increased, commercial dining soon became a subject of criticism and anxiety. This censure, too, was marked by social distinctions as it was overwhelmingly the middle class who, for various reasons, increasingly found fault with the practice of dining out.

Chapter 4
The Public Table as a Road to Dissolution: Middle-Class Anxieties and Commercial Eateries in the 1850s and 1860s

"Your son!" asked one widely circulated newspaper in 1863, "Where does he dine?" The article continued to describe a situation that was common to many middle-class Boston families: "You live out of town, or in the suburbs. You have a son growing up; say from sixteen to twenty years old. He is in a store in the city. The distance from the store to your house is too great to admit of his going home to dinner." Instead, as the story explained, such young men usually took their mid-day meals at one of the multitude of downtown eating-houses that dotted American cities like Boston. In doing so, they transformed a private, domestic activity—dining—into yet another daily interaction with the market economy. They exchanged familial relationships around the dinner table for commercial ones, buying their meals and eating them among strangers.[161]

As public dining became an increasingly widespread and frequent activity during the antebellum years, it began to make many Bostonians—particularly middle-class Bostonians—more uncomfortable. Participation in commercial dining appeared to many middling people as an infringement on the domestic sphere, the moral center of the nation. By the 1850s and early1860s middle-class reformers at least partially attributed a host of urban problems to the rising trend of commercial eating, including poor health, drinking, and prostitution, and worried that it would eventually contribute to the total erosion of domestic virtue.

Indeed, the heightening anxiety a significant portion of the middle class began to feel about eating outside the home became the dominant theme in middle-class

[161] *Christian Recorder,* 8 August 1863.

discussions of public eating around mid-century, as certain spokesmen projected their own group's worries about the practice across society as a whole. And yet, despite their concerns, middle-class people did not cease to eat out; nor, for that matter, did upper- or lower-class Bostonians whom members of the middle class also criticized for participating in public dining. On the contrary, all residents of the city continued to engage in commercial eating with greater and greater frequency. This suggests how significant the trend had become in the everyday lives of Bostonians across all class groups. It is also likely that sharply criticizing dining out provided one way for those who were anxious about the practice to register their apprehension and yet still participate.

But while the unease dining out triggered did not stop middle-class men and women from eating out at mid-day when various factors made it especially convenient if not necessary, it did tend to make engaging in nighttime commercial dining for pleasure and amusement at mid-century a comparatively rare activity among middle-class Bostonians. This remained true even as nighttime dining became increasingly common for both upper- and working-class residents as the century progressed.

The Middle Class and its Ideologies of Domesticity and Refinement

As numerous historians have argued, one of the most dramatic developments of the antebellum period in America was the emergence of a more distinctively middle-class way of life and consciousness in urban areas. These historians have sketched the numerous trends that converged to define this uniquely middle-class outlook in the first half of the nineteenth century. Changes in work that gestured toward a hardening division between manual and non-manual labor, the emergence of middle-class voluntary

associations and reform efforts, as well as child-rearing practices that helped off-spring to advance further up the socio-economic ladder were all key to defining the middle class. So too were ethnic hierarchies that better positioned white, native-born Americans compared to blacks and immigrants. But, arguably, the most central component of the rise of the middle class in Boston and elsewhere was a strong domestic ideal and an emphasis on home. [162]

Although, importantly, predominately middle-class neighborhoods soon began to appear in Boston where those of similar and economic social backgrounds congregated and where others from outside this socio-economic group were less likely to be encountered, the antebellum middle-class home was much more than a mere domestic dwelling in a more-or-less exclusive setting. For the middle class, domesticity became a way of organizing experience and differentiating that experience from those of both the higher and lower orders of society. Middle-class Bostonians made the home and its affairs sacred and the center of their worlds. Indeed, home became the foundation of their identities as middle-class people.[163]

Though they could not afford residences that were as large or as elaborately furnished—or as far removed from the center of the city—as the wealthy, urban middle-class families still enjoyed considerably better living conditions than the working class.

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[162] For example: Stuart Blumin, "The Hypothesis of Middle-Class Formation, *American Historical Review* 90(1985), pp. 299-338; Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
[163] Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, ch. 3.

Their higher incomes paid for larger housing in less congested neighborhoods and sometimes even supported moves to the suburbs. Middle-class wages could also accommodate the kinds of furnishings that had come to signify respectability in this era. Carpets, wallpapers, and a vast variety of material objects all became middle-class domestic essentials, as were the necessary spaces to store and display them, including additional bedrooms, a formal dining room, and a parlor.[164]

But more important than even space or décor was the role the middle-class home was intended to fill in the lives of the family members who lived there. As work and domestic life steadily diverged in the nineteenth century and as relationships founded in the growing market economy took the place of those based on custom, the home came to be seen as a much needed refuge from the moral ravages that the market could, potentially, inflict—a refuge where traditionally republican values would be upheld. (At the same time, however, the middle-class home also depended heavily on market relations to support and furnish it). To ensure that the home provided these protections, it was the duty of the wife and mother, who, ideally, did not participate in the commercial, public sphere of the world outside the home except—in moderation—in her role as a

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[164] Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 66; Edgar Winfield Martin, *The Standard of Living in 1860: American Consumption Levels on the Eve of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 116; Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, pp. 149-157. Blumin notes that middle-class consumption was, however, kept in check by the refusal to send middle-class women and children to work. See p. 188. On this point, see also Susan Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), p. 65.

consumer and thus remained uncorrupted by it, to preside over the domestic sphere and oversee the moral guidance of her husband and children.[165]

Domesticity became the very foundation of nineteenth-century middle-class identity and daily experience. As one historian has explained, domesticity "expressed the dominance of what may be designated a middle-class ideal, a cultural preference for domestic retirement and conjugal family intimacy over both the 'vain' and fashionable sociability of the rich and the promiscuous sociability of the poor." In fact, in contrast to these other groups, during the antebellum years, the crystallizing middle class combined its private domestic ideals with both its social practices as well as its social aspirations, which, in turn, helped to further facilitate the development of its class identity.[166]

Indeed, the middle class incorporated domesticity into its interpretation of the nineteenth-century ideology of refinement and used this ideology to significantly shape its behaviors and beliefs. As detailed in chapter one, a slightly different strand of refinement was also observed by the wealthy in this period. Like the well-to-do, the middle class saw the performance of refinement as a means by which it could explain and validate its moderately elevated social position in the city. Moreover, middle-class residents looked to the further development of their refinement as the most likely course to continue to work their way up the socio-economic ladder and finally bridge the gap between themselves and the upper-class members of society. But, in contrast to the

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[165] Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class.* Several studies have demonstrated that this ideology did not really apply to working-class women. For example, see Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

[166] See ch. 1 of this dissertation for further elaboration on the upper class and separate spheres. Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, p. 92; Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, ch. 3.

suitably elegant public spaces the rich required to stage their enactment of refinement, middle-class Bostonians understood the properly cultivated home as the primary arena for these performances. Even when devoid of company, the middle-class home and the domestic activities that took place within it were meant to reflect its residents' refined sensibilities. The home also became the characteristic meeting place for middle-class entertainments and socializing. Within the home, the "refined" behaviors the middle-class underscored included, above all, moderation. The middle class further called for the participation of women and children in most of its social activities. Thus, for the middle class, the ideology of refinement consistently reinforced its domestic values.[167]

This emphasis on home and family in middle-class rituals of refinement kept it from merely imitating the upper class in its social customs. On the contrary, middle-class Bostonians saw many of the social practices of the rich as wasteful and, in some cases, as contradictory to the republican values of the nation. The middle class made certain allowances for the fact that what might be excessive for its own income level was not so for the wealthy. But still, cautionary tales about men and women who squandered their fortunes abounded in reading materials aimed at a middle-class audience in Boston as if to provide reassurance that just as its moderate spending habits would help it to advance in status, immoderate ones would eventually lead even the affluent to failure. By the same token, the middle class scorned the domestic and social behaviors of the poor and working-class members of society as rude and wanton. It prescribed its own values as morally superior and potentially uplifting not only for those of its class status but for all

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[167] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) pp. 59-60, 92-123, and 153-90. Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, ch. 3, especially pp. 185-91.

of society as well. As time went on and greater numbers of Bostonians began to eat out regularly, the practice of commercial dining seemed to undermine these domestic values in ways that produced considerable anxiety.[168]

The Virtues of the Domestic Table and the Risks of Mid-day Dining for Men

Much attention has been given to the parlor as the central attraction of the middle-class home, but the dining room was also very important for showcasing domestic and refined ideologies. Mealtime provided a unique opportunity for the middle-class family to come together around the table and appreciate the simple and intimate pleasure of each other's company. In addition, it was a chance to impart to children valuable lessons about manners that would contribute to their future social mobility. Giving small, tasteful dinners for friends was also a favored middle-class entertainment. In other words, gathering around the domestic table was the ideal occasion for the middle class to demonstrate, perfect, and enjoy its own refinement. As one popular antebellum guidebook, penned by Boston resident and *Godey's Lady's Book* editor Sarah Hale, explained, "The table… is the central attraction of the home." [169]

This was most true at dinnertime. Throughout the antebellum period, the afternoon dinner was the largest and most significant meal of the day. The urban middle

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[168] For example: Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* (New York: De Witt and Davenport, 1854), pp. 381-2; Sarah Sidney Ellis, *The Dangers of Dining Out, or Hints to Those who would Make Home Happy* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1843); and H. Hastings Weld, "A Young Man's Temptations," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 5(13 August 1853), pp. 6-7.

[169] Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, *The Ladies' New Book of Cookery: A Practical System for Private Families in Town and Country; with Directions for Carving, and Arranging the Table for Parties, etc. Also Preparations of Food for Invalids and for Children* (New York: H. Long & Brother, 1852), p. iii.

class in cities like Boston considered dinner especially important for male breadwinners whose home and workplaces were now separate because it provided them sustenance to complete their day's labors and—if eaten at home—a domestic respite from their endeavors in the public marketplace. As a man refreshed his body with food and (non-alcoholic) drink, his spirit was also rejuvenated by his mid-day return to the domestic sphere and the time spent there with his family. (It is possible, however, that older children would have been away at school.) As *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* explained later in the century in an article that looked back to earlier times when men ate dinner at home as a matter of course,

> The gathering together of the members of the family, after the morning's separation … re-awakens the domestic sentiment and inclines to social pleasure. The worry of business and the anxieties of personal responsibility yield to the delights of companionship and the soothing effects of mutual sympathy.[170]

Food and diet were also considered quite central to the perpetuation and values of the middle-class family. Indeed, proper cookery was integral to the overall domestic purpose as it was believed to encourage morality and good health and prevent disease, greed, and dissolution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, antebellum cookbook authors made certain American women realized that their culinary efforts were responsible for shaping the bodies and minds of the growing nation. As the century progressed, evolving understandings of nutrition and digestion further contributed to the significance attached to domestic cookery for middle-class families.[171]

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[170] Robert Tomes, "Before, At, and After Meals," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 53(April 1876), p. 731.
[171] Laura Schenon, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), ch. 4.

Indeed, nineteenth-century science gradually expanded knowledge about the body and encouraged Americans to take more interest in its various processes and how they could best be optimized for human health. For instance, Dr. William Beaumont's experiments in the 1820s and 1830s investigated the effects of temperature, exercise, and even emotions on digestion. His observations, published in 1833 in *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion*, proved very powerful among the antebellum middle class as diet reform became an extremely popular middle-class cause.[172]

Beaumont's work argued that proper digestion was a complex process that should not be taken for granted. It emphasized that digestion must be helped along by eating only under certain conditions and after thoughtful consideration of the effects on the body one's meals might have. Reformers who read Beaumont's work urged Americans to stay away from foods and drinks known as "stimulants" because these items were thought to be difficult to digest or to contribute to nervousness and overall poor health. The list of stimulants included especially rich, fatty, sweet, and spicy foods, as well as caffeine and alcohol. There was a moral component to these warnings as well. Overindulging one's appetite was thought to bring out the dark, sensual, and selfish side of human nature. Meanwhile, restraint was a symbol of virtue in antebellum America. Diet reformers believed food should taste adequate but that overly flavorsome dishes that relied on special seasonings and ingredients were economically wasteful and might tempt

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[172] William Beaumont, *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion* (Plattsburg: F.P. Allen, 1833). For an interesting overview of health reform in nineteenth-century America, see Joan Burbick, *Healing the Republic: the Language of Health and the Culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Americans into overeating. Alcohol was especially feared for what it might release in human behavior.[173]

The apparently rampant illness known as *dyspepsia* was yet another contributor to the popularity of diet reform in these years. *Dyspepsia* was the word used to describe indigestion and a variety of other stomach disorders of the time. The shift from physical labor to factory jobs and other more sedentary work was quite possibly the greatest cause of nineteenth-century *dyspepsia*. As metabolism slowed, Americans found the profuse and calorie-rich foods they were accustomed to eating harder to digest. America's natural abundance and high standard of living also encouraged a proclivity to overeat that may have played a part as well. Diet reformers urged that avoiding fried and greasy foods and cutting back on the size of meals would help to eliminate *dyspepsia*.[174]

Diet restrictions are unique to time and place. Surely those of this period at least partly stemmed from discomfort with the rapid democratization of society and expansion of the market economy that occurred in the antebellum years. After all, food reform urged moderation and discipline that also helped middle-class Americans to make sense of their world and place in society. Once learned, the middle class applied such self-denial to other facets of their lives and consumption patterns in order to secure and possibly improve their socioeconomic positions. Although the middle-class was the greatest

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[173] Diet reformer Sylvester Graham is probably most notorious for condemning a wide range of so-called "stimulants," but although much of his advice was scoffed at by the late antebellum period, many more mainstream reformers recommended abstaining from the above-mentioned items as well. Sarah Hale, Catherine Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, and Catherine Sedgwick were some of the many reformers who incorporated these ideas into their writings. See also Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove*, ch. 4.
[174] Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove*, p. 114.

advocate of food reform, it prescribed its own ideas about proper diet across class boundaries as a means to uplift society as a whole.[175]

Thus, middle-class Bostonians considered the experience of dining at home, as well as the quality of the actual food provided in the domestic setting, to be critical not only for those of their class group but for all of society. Nevertheless, the number of men that actually returned home for the mid-day meal declined sharply throughout the antebellum period. As chapter two described, during these years, steadily more men from all socio-economic groups now found it difficult—if not impossible—to leave their work at mid-day, return home to eat their dinner, and then journey back to their place of business to finish out the day's labors. Many men now lived quite some distance from their workplaces and transportation could be expensive and inconvenient. The growing demand for commercial mid-day dining options for men thus encouraged an increasing number and a broad variety of eateries in Boston as early as the 1830s. By 1840, there were 125 places of refreshment listed in the *Boston Directory* and in 1850 this figure had jumped to just under 200. It had reached nearly 300 ten years later. By far the most popular variety of the growing assortment of eateries available for hungry men at mid-day was the antebellum eating-house.[176] [Maps 3, 4, 5, and 6, Appendix B and Tables VII and VIII, Appendix C]

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[175] Joan Burbick, *Healing the Republic*, ch. 1; Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America*: *Sylvester Graham and Health Reform* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Cindy Lobel, *Consuming Classes: Changing Food Consumption Patterns in New York City, 1790-1860* (Ph.D. Dissertation: City University of New York, 2003) ch. 5.

[176] To obtain these numbers, I consulted the Boston City Directories for 1830, 1840, 1850 and 1860. Each eatery listed in the directories was counted. No sampling was employed. See Maps 3-6 in Appendix B and Tables VII and VIII in Appendix C.

Men from both the working and middle classes sought out eating-houses in the city that catered specifically to their particular socio-economic group. Located near middle-class places of business downtown, middle-class eating-houses were marked by higher prices than those allocated to the working class, but also by better quality food and service. They were typically cleaner, larger, and less crowded as well. At these venues, middle-class men would have felt they were dining with at least slightly more decorum on foods that more closely fit their expectations and tastes than what could be obtained from the lower classes of eating-houses. They similarly felt more comfortable there than they would have at the more elegant dining options in Boston, like the public restaurants of luxury hotels. Indeed, in luxury-hotel dining rooms, not only was the food prohibitively expensive for a middle-class constituency but also, at least in the minds of the middle class, the dining rituals observed there were unnecessarily pretentious and unfamiliar. These venues were thus left to the more affluent members of society.[177]

But while middle-class men may have found the dining venues it patronized as superior to others available, the steadily growing trend of dining out at mid-day posed considerable challenges to middle-class domestic ideals. Many middle-class Bostonians found the meals provided in commercial eateries—even in uniquely middle-class establishments—to be inferior to those eaten at home and, quite possibly, harmful to the health and morality of the nation. By the 1850s and 1860s, as more and more men now participated, middle-class Bostonians thus became quite vocal in their condemnation of the practice and they reserved special censure for eating-houses as the most popular kind of mid-day dining venue. A heyday of all kinds of reform efforts—particularly in

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[177] C.W. Gesner, "Concerning Restaurants," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 32 (April 1866), p. 592.

Boston—middle-class reformers now began to urge men to once again make a habit of returning home for their dinners.

Middle-class reformers argued that when a man dined at an eating-house instead of returning to his home, he missed out on a mid-day domestic reprieve from the hectic and corrupting bustle of the market. And if returning home for dinner was a physically and morally rejuvenating experience, then surely not doing so was detrimental to both body and spirit. Indeed, according to reformers, for men to dine out was downright harmful to "bodily energy, a calmness of nerve, and an ease of mind" and could prove "fatal to health or life." These reformers insisted that men needed to eat with their families at the domestic table in order to restore the inner virtue they had expended through their morning's engagement with the market. [178]

Middle-class reformers further claimed that the food eating-houses served was inferior to domestic cooking and egregiously offended diet reform principles. They accused eating-houses of serving greasy, poorly cooked foods like stringy meat and soggy pastries that were heavy and unhealthful. Reformers also maintained that the settings of most eating-houses were all-too-often unsanitary and lacking the aesthetic and physical comforts of home. They believed this even of those establishments that sought a middle-class clientele by providing above average cleanliness and décor. Meanwhile, the conditions at working-class eating-houses were considered far more distressing. [179]

The result, according to reformers, of the eating-house environment was that diners consumed foods that were bad for digestion and, in all likelihood, also indulged in far too much food. Unpleasant environments and company further encouraged customers

[178] Robert Tomes, "Before, At, and After Meals," p. 731.
[179] Ibid.

to eat as quickly as possible (hurried eating was yet another cause of indigestion) before returning to work. Indeed, reformers charged eating-house patrons with "unconsciously gorge[ing]" their stomachs, too quickly "bolting" far more food—and far less nutritious food—than was necessary or healthy to sustain them at mid-day given the kind of labor they were now likely to be doing. On the other hand, had these men only returned home, their loving and virtuous wives would have helped them to practice self-restraint.[180]

The potential consequences of the eating-house on both the health and values of American men seemed daunting to many middle-class people. As *Harper's* later explained, "The chop-house and restaurant systems of dining, which have been adopted to economize time … are responsible for most of the broken-down constitutions and premature deaths of the … people of this country." Eating-houses were said to cause *dyspepsia.* They were also thought to undermine the domestic sphere and contribute to a disconcerting preoccupation with the market that encouraged men to eat as quickly as possible in order to return to work expediently rather than be morally rejuvenated by going home. Moreover, eating-houses were believed to promote over-eating and dangerous self-indulgence.

The fear of self-indulgence was most apparent in middle-class allegations that eating-houses encouraged and even created intemperance in patrons. In antebellum America, temperance was a cause closely linked to middling status and middle-class expectations of respectability and success. It was also a movement especially strong in the Bay State, which, in 1852, followed Maine to ban the sale of all alcohol within its

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[180] Ibid. The reader will, of course, note that many of these same criticisms continue to be used against twenty-first century dining habits, especially reliance on fast food chains. The persistence of these critiques will be addressed in the Epilogue.

borders. But this law was never effectively enforced in Boston's public eateries—a fact which caused spokesmen for the middle class considerable distress. Temperance advocates reasoned that if a man ventured to an eating-house at mid-day instead of returning home to the comforting and virtuous domestic sphere, he was likely to look for relief from his morning's engagement with the market in the alcohol that, they charged, flowed only too freely at commercial eateries. They also believed proprietors were likely to push the sale of liquor on customers in order to make money. [181]

Indeed, reformers worried that while a man might go to an eating-house only for food, he would end up also partaking of liquor that he would not otherwise touch if he dined at home. For example, in the newspaper article about the middle-class son who took his dinner with other clerks in an eating-house that opened this chapter, the writer warned readers,

> What harm in the eating-house, do you ask? … If the eating-house were only an eating-house, it would not be so bad. But it is a drinking-house, too. Side by side with the steaming hot meats and vegetables, which are to tempt your son's palate and fill his stomach, are the showy bottles, containing the fiery hot drinks, with which [your son] is invited to consume body and soul.

As another newspaper complained in 1855, "The facilities with which strong drink may be obtained, the attractive accompaniments of the Restaurant, the delicious flavors of its

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[181] W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Unwilling to do so themselves, Boston authorities put the responsibility for enforcing prohibition on citizens. For instance, the police only censured eating-house proprietors for selling liquor if residents of the city brought a formal complaint against them. Temperance groups were primarily responsible for bringing the few formal complaints against such proprietors in the late antebellum period. See Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 87-9.

preparations, have more to do with the manufacture of drunkards, than our 'bad habits of living' generally." [182]

Of course there were some eating-houses in antebellum Boston that, both to appeal to temperance advocates and obey state law, refrained from selling alcohol. For instance, one proprietor published an ad alerting the public that he had "determined to exclude… ardent spirits," from his establishment, helpfully adding that as a result merchants and others could "safely recommend" his eatery to their clerks and apprentices at mid-day. Evidence suggests, however, that despite the popularity of temperance as a middle-class cause in Massachusetts, dry eating-houses in Boston generally fared far worse than those that made alcohol available and so were rare.[183]

In their critique of antebellum eating-houses, middle-class Bostonians focused on the ways in which these establishments and the dining practices that went on inside them undermined their own domestic ideals. The working class, for example, generally worried far less about upholding the boundary between public and private or about the cause of temperance. And yet, middle-class reformers made it clear that they condemned commercial dining for all Bostonians and not just for members of their own class group. After all, the middle class firmly believed its own values were also best for the nation as a

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[182] *Christian Recorder,* 8 August 1863. *National Era*, 19 April 1855.

[183] *The Temperance Text-book: A collection of Facts and Interesting Anecdotes, Illustrating the Evils of Intoxicating Drinks* (Philadelphia: Brown & Sinquet, 1836) p. 159. This book contains advertisements for antebellum temperance houses in Boston and other major American cities. In 1867 the General Court held a hearing to investigate the social effects of prohibition. Many witnesses came forward to testify that prohibition had done little to curb alcohol use in Boston. As a result, the prohibition law was repealed; however, antiliquor forces won out again the following year and the law was reinstituted and remained in place until 1875. See Perry R. Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 11-12 and *Reports on the Subject of a License Law, by a Joint Special Committee of the Legislature of Massachusetts* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1867).

whole. It worried that Boston's working-class eating-houses, considerably more appalling than middle-class venues (even if working-class patrons did not realize their full horror), were all the more detrimental to the health and morality of the country.

Not even upper-class dining venues were exempt from growing middle-class scorn. On the contrary, middle-class Bostonians accused high-end eateries of providing equivalent moral and physical liabilities for male patrons at mid-day as Boston's less expensive eating-houses and often in a more blatant fashion. Furthermore, while eating-houses were said to encourage men to eat too quickly, more elegant establishments were believed to promote indolence. For instance, middle-class reformers accused patrons of luxury-hotel dining rooms of lingering at the public table, reveling in ostentatious display and eating course after course of rich and fatty (and potentially undemocratic French) food. Reformers also took exception to the fact that these upper-class patrons usually drank wine and, more than likely, harder liquors as well with their meals—although they claimed to do so in good taste rather than in revelry. In fact, middle-class reformers argued that elite dining venues merely provided a refined veneer for wealthy men to engage in rowdy and self-indulgent behaviors that would ultimately lead to their (and the nation's) disgrace and, even, undoing.[184]

The antidote, of course, was for all men in Boston to eat their dinners at home rather than dine out. But as going home continued to become increasingly impossible for many men, reformers also began to suggest that men's wives or daughters prepare them a dinner they could then pack up and take with them to their workplaces as a more

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[184] For example: Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York*, p. 49. H. Hastings Weld, "A Young Man's Temptations," *Gleaston's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 5(August 13, 1853): 106-7.

acceptable alternative to dining out. A "domestic-looking" bundle of "nice hand sandwiches" prepared by some female member of the family, "neatly enveloped in a snow-white napkin" was thought to be "just the thing" to prevent men from venturing to an eating-house or other venue. It was also more economical. If not sandwiches in a napkin, what about a "virtuous looking dinner-kettle" filled with hard-boiled eggs and slices of homemade bread and home-cooked meat? To these writers, the dinner-kettle with its homemade contents was at least a reminder of supposedly more virtuous times when the worlds of work and domesticity were more closely aligned and the market did not play such an integral part of everyday life. But, as even these reformers admitted, the dinner-kettle solution—though practiced by some poorer members of society who could not afford to dine out on a regular basis—proved incapable of reversing the overall trend of mid-day commercial dining. Indeed, while middle-class reformers succeeded in casting dining out, especially in eating-houses, as a morally risky part of modern, urban society, nevertheless, middle-class men continued to dine out at mid-day with growing frequency throughout the nineteenth century—evidence of just how integral to urban life commercial eating had become.[185]

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[185] The *Christian Recorder*, 8 August 1863. Letter to the editor, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 15 August 1867. Dinner kettles, or dinner pails, were at least occasionally carried by the working-class men by the antebellum period. They usually consisted of an actual pail or bucket and were very similar to (or, in fact, the same as) the buckets used as "growlers" to carry beer home from saloons. This may have been yet another reason middle-class men did not like to use them. Moreover, carrying one's own food and eating it either on the street or on the job was not considered genteel despite middle-class efforts to make the dinner kettle an alternative solution to dining out. Katherine Leonard Turner, *Good Food for Little Money: Cooking Among Urban Working-Class Americans, 1875-1930* (Ph.D. diss: University of Delaware, 2008), pp. 183-189.

Middle-Class Women and the Hazards of the Public Table at Mid-day

Men were not the only Bostonians who began to eat their dinners out with greater frequency during the antebellum years. Women did as well. Although the occupations to which working-class women were restricted rarely required them to take commercial refreshment at mid-day, the shopping duties of middle- and upper-class women made at least occasional dining out a convenient option for them too. These women did not frequent the same eateries as their husbands and sons but rather ventured to venues earmarked especially for their use. As chapter two described, ladies' dining establishments—either those located in luxury-hotels or independent confectioneries—provided a semi-public environment that was meant to shield women from the public sphere while at the same time facilitating their further engagement with it. Such eateries prohibited men from entering unless accompanied by a female and excluded working-class males entirely by the relatively high prices they charged. They also refrained from selling alcohol because it might sully female patrons' reputations, since venues that sold alcohol were traditionally associated with commercial sex as well.

But despite these precautions, the growing number of women participating in commercial dining at mid-day engendered anxiety among middle-class Bostonians just as the increasing number of men participating did. Although women practicing refinement in genteel, public surroundings was, on one hand, a sign of progress in the young republic, overly frequent female interaction with the public sphere challenged middle-class domesticity and could prove disastrous to the morals of the country. After all, women were supposed to be the bedrock of the all-important domestic sphere—the guardians of virtue and republicanism. They were thought to provide this leadership

through their lack of involvement in the immoral market economy. For women to expand their participation in the public sphere by treating themselves to dinners out could thus be very disconcerting.

Moreover, while wealthy women typically employed servants to provide domestic assistance, middle-class women's prescribed domestic duties were numerous. And again, one of the most important among them was preparing wholesome meals for their families. Many reformers began to ask what domestic tasks the ladies who frequented public eateries at mid-day were neglecting as they enjoyed refreshment in Boston's assortment of ladies' eateries, spending their husband's money. Why were they not at home, dining with their families and encouraging their husbands to dine at home as well? Reformers feared that these women's dodging of their proper role and space in order to participate in commercial consumption threatened to undermine "the whole edifice of gentility," as one historian has put it, "on which the republic balanced so precariously."[186]

As middle-class unease with women's participation in mid-day commercial refreshment grew with the number of participants, the middle class overall became more condemnatory of the potential harm in ladies' eateries. Indeed, reformers began to charge that such establishments were actually hotbeds of sin and indulgence. For example, one popular theory of authors of urban exposé and sensational newspaper reporters was that dining venues allocated for both upper- and middle-class ladies (usually separate entities), though shrouded in the appearance of respectability and supposedly dry, were—like men's eating-houses—really secret purveyors of alcohol. In fact, these writers speculated that one of the main reasons women of both class groups patronized eateries

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[186] Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 21.

was to obtain liquor in a place where their families were not present to watch and judge them as they drank it. According to one reporter, "[R]espectable women [patronize] the ladies' restaurants… [and] a very large amount of money is spent by women for drink. Wives and mothers, and even young girls, who are ashamed to drink at home go to these fashionable restaurants for their liquor."[187]

The middle class further feared that women used commercial eateries as meeting places to rendezvous with their lovers or have other illicit encounters. Like so much of urban public life, most of the interactions that took place in eating venues were anonymous. Patrons were not typically acquainted with the other diners present, nor were they familiar with the establishment's proprietor or employees. What better environment for a woman to meet a man with whom she was having an affair? There was no way for onlookers to know whether the male who accompanied her during her meal was her husband or not. As one writer explained, "Women of good social position do not hesitate to meet their lovers at such places [ladies' restaurants], for there is a great deal of truth in the old adage which tells us 'there's no place so private as a crowded hall.'" Another writer described the scene of deceit in one urban ice creamery: "Yonder are a middle-aged man and woman in deep and earnest conversation. They are evidently man and wife—though not *each other's*!"[188]

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[187] Edward Winslow Martin, *The Secrets of the Great City: A Work Descriptive of the Virtues and the Vices, the Mysteries, Miseries, and Crimes of New York City* (Philadelphia: Jones Bros., 1868), p. 371. Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn,* p. 221. Sir John Acton also spoke of the drinks he was able to buy at one New York confectioner that, in fact, contained alcohol. *Acton in America: The American Journal of Sir John Acton, 1853*, Sydney Jackman, ed. (Shepherdstown, W. VA: Patmos Press, 1979), p. 51.
[188] Edward Winslow Martin, *The Secrets of the Great City,* p. 208. George Foster, *New York by Gas-Light and other Urban Sketches*, Staurt Blumin, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 134.

Thus, while Bostonians celebrated women's participation in the city's public spaces as an indicator of the level of refinement, the reconciler of capitalism and republican egalitarianism, that the country had achieved in order for respectable women to be able to enjoy civic life, the idea of females engaging too much or too often in society ultimately proved unsettling to the middle class. Many middle-class reformers consequently lashed out at women who joined in the practice of commercial dining, even in venues earmarked especially for them. These spokesmen drew attention to commercial dining's potential to erode women's delicate sense of morality and, by extension, threaten domesticity and the virtue of the entire nation. But even as they acknowledged and critiqued the dangers commercial eating posed, as with men, middle-class women in Boston continued to dine out when it was necessary or convenient for them.

The Middle Class and Nighttime, Commercial Dining

While work and shopping duties often required Bostonians to dine out at mid-day, there were few reasons men and women could not return home by suppertime. In fact, commercial dining after sunset was far less common in antebellum Boston than it was during daylight, as most residents did eat their comparatively lighter evening meal within the domestic sphere. As chapter two explained, however, the trend of dining out at night as a form of commercial amusement grew among male Bostonians as the antebellum period progressed. It would become even more common later in the century. Nevertheless, the middle class continued to refrain from making evening commercial dining a part of its leisure activities in the city. Indeed, middle-class domestic ideology

and consequent anxiety regarding dining outside the home largely prohibited middle-class participation at night even as mid-day, commercial dining remained a criticized but nonetheless frequent middle-class activity for both men and women.

Even middle-class bachelors limited their evening amusements chiefly to the domestic sphere throughout the 1860s, dining and generally spending their free time either at home or in the homes of other middling people. For instance, Henry Pierce, an unmarried clerk who lived in the Brookline residence of his employer, Robert Bacon, took the majority of his mid-day meals in the city—most likely with his fellow clerks at an eatery located close to the shop in which they worked. Brookline was too far to return to for dinner and dining out in the city would have been much more convenient. Pierce's diary, however, contains no mention of suppers similarly enjoyed in restaurants or oyster saloons. Instead, he probably dined with the Bacon family (clerks who lived with their employers usually received board as well as lodging as part of their salaries) before passing the remainder of the evening in friends' suburban parlors rehearsing for music-society concerts, playing whist, or calling on young ladies. Married middle-class men were even less likely to eat supper in a commercial eating venue but rather spent most of their free time at home with their families. Domestic ideals unique to their socio-economic group—offering persistent but ultimately ineffective condemnations of the potential harm in commercial dining at mid-day—largely succeeded in keeping these men within the private sphere for the evening meal.[189]

As stated in chapter two, the fact that the vast majority of middle-class Bostonians did not take part in commercial dining at night in the antebellum period understandably

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[189] Henry Pierce, *Diary*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. Middle-class men did, however, attend public banquets from time to time.

resulted in a paucity of eating venues that looked to cater to this class of clientele after sunset. Eating-houses that middle-class men frequented during the day did not typically stay open after three or four p.m., and ladies' confectioneries similarly closed their doors early. Consequently, when middle-class men sporadically looked for commercial dining options at night—for instance, when a man found he had to work late or wished to attend an evening lecture or organization meeting (the middle class was unlikely to go to the theater) in the city—the options available to him were limited to the public dining rooms of luxury-hotels that kept extended hours and free-standing, first-class restaurants that did as well. There were also oyster saloons and other disreputable nighttime spots available for those who wanted to "slum," but there were no establishments looking to cater specifically to the middle class.

Thus, in the day, middle-class eateries were convenient public spaces within the city for registering middle-class social distinctions even if they did also produce anxiety about health and morality and the erosion of the private sphere among their middling patrons. At night, however, dining out for middle-class Bostonians required venturing to a venue marked for a different social class and thus necessitated the blurring of social categories.

The opportunity to trespass into another socio-economic category by occasionally engaging in public dining at night was a heady prospect for the middle class in Boston, making the activity all the more rare for middle-class people. Reformers and urban exposés alike routinely represented the nighttime commercial dining options that existed as the primary venues where the immorality of the antebellum city took place. Some young men—thrill seekers—may have enjoyed occasionally venturing to such places but

for others it was an awkward, even scary experience. The unclean and uncouth aspects of lower-class venues, like oyster saloons in the North End, offered a chance to leave propriety behind. But the activities that went on in them could also be appalling and, in fact, shocking. At the same time, first-class, fashionable eateries offered an occasion for social climbers to demonstrate their refinement and the possibility, at least, that they could bridge the gap between their middling status and that of the upper-class patrons. On the other hand, the elaborate and often excessive displays on view at elegant public dining rooms like the Tremont and Parker Houses—the profuse number of French dishes, ornate décor, extravagant dress of patrons, and intricate table manners and service—challenged the moderate values of middle-class Bostonians while the price tag that accompanied them was quite hefty. Moreover, it was often the disparities in wealth and behavior between middling and truly wealthy diners that were more evident at these venues than similarities between the two groups—a humiliating realization for middle-class people. Thus discouraged by both their own domestic, moderate ideology and the actual customs observed in available commercial eateries at night, the number of middle-class people who engaged in evening dining remained very small.[190]

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[190] For example: Mary Spring Walker, *Down in a Saloon; or, the Minister's Protégé* (Boston: Ira Bradley & Co., 1870), pp. 6-9; *A Tale of Lowell. Norton: or, the Lights and Shades of a Factory Village: wherein are Developed some of the Secret Incidents in the history of Lowell* (Lowell: Vox Populi Office, 1849), ch. 11; *Susie Knight, or the True History of the Pretty Waiter Girl* (New York: C. Mackey & Co., 1863); Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn*, p. 221; George Foster, *New York by Gas-Light*. For an example of middle-class diners feeling embarrassed in elite eateries, see Charles Wiggin, *Diary for 1859-1860,* 27 July 1859, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Conclusion

Middle-class ideologies of domesticity and refinement largely kept the social activities of this still crystallizing socio-economic group in Boston confined to the private sphere during the 1850s and 1860s. Changing work and consumption patterns, however, encouraged steadily growing numbers of middle-class Bostonians to make an exception to their domestic-centered activities to seek commercial refreshment at mid-day. Dining venues that catered to middle-class men and women created new cultural tensions in Boston in that they simultaneously recognized middle-class values and practices by providing unique dining experiences while also challenging middle-class domestic ideals. Nevertheless, middle-class men and women took advantage of the dining venues in Boston earmarked for them and persisted in eating their dinners out instead of at home even despite the increasingly shrill (and sometimes hysteric) warnings of middle-class reformers. In fact, these warnings may have even served as a kind of jeremiad for middle-class diners, offering them an outlet for acknowledging the potential harm in commercial dining even as they participated anyway—for participate they did. For the most part, however, the middle class did not engage in dining out at night.

Throughout the 1860s, then, the middle class in Boston seems to have looked at commercial dining, at least at mid-day, as a necessary evil—a disparaged but essential part of life in the city. Middle-class men and women looked to commercial eateries to provide their dinners even as they also harshly criticized these venues and worried about the effects of commercial dining on the health and morality of urban society. This would begin to change, however, by the 1880s and 1890s. Then, the mounting level of cohesion and influence of a new middle class in Boston would encourage middling people to

meaningfully amend commercial dining practices to create restaurants that, in the evening, became extensions of domestic space—venues where entire families could dine together. Moreover, these nighttime middle-class eateries even became arenas where middle-class people could safely embrace the many novelties of the late-nineteenth-century city rather than condemn or hide from them.

Chapter 5
Foie Gras on Tremont Street and Chop Suey on Harrison Avenue: Commercial Dining as a Leisure Activity for the Elite and Working Classes after the Civil War

During the last week of August 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, the city government in Boston organized a series of daily afternoon rallies to drum up volunteers to serve the Union Army, which had not yet instituted a draft system and was ever-hungry for new recruits. The state of Massachusetts had been told that summer that it was to contribute 15,000 men to suit up in Union blue for at least three years, as well as an additional 19,000 men to serve for nine months. Boston, like the rest of the Bay State, was eager to help fill this quota and show its dedication to the Union. For five days, shops and eateries were asked to close at two p.m. so that everyone out in the city would participate in the rallies and turn their attention to the matter at hand: enlistment. Those businesses that refused to close, or were a bit tardy in doing so, were rewarded with bricks through their windows and a good deal of heckling.[191]

But whatever inconvenience and hardship the war caused to the Boston home front and its businesses, the war years completed Boston's transformation into a modern, industrial city. The acceleration of northern industry, a legacy of the war, profoundly affected life and labor in Boston. One result was that its residents became even more reliant on the city's range of commercial eateries to provide refreshment, convenience, and, more than ever now, entertainment and sociability too. In order to meet the steadily growing demand for commercial dining options, especially at night as greater emphasis

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[191] Thomas O'Connor, *Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997) pp. 101-2. See also the *Boston Daily Advertiser* for the week of August 24-30, 1862 for descriptions of events. Boston's efforts to encourage enlistment were successful. By the end of the summer, Massachusetts had filled its quota for volunteers.

came to be placed on the evening meal, the number of eating venues in Boston exploded in the post-bellum years. [Maps 7 and 8, Appendix B] At the same time, these eateries grew increasingly different from one another, a reflection of the progressively heterogeneous nature of Boston's expanding population.

Civil War and Consequent Changes in Boston

It became apparent soon after the war ended that Boston's former prominence as a hub in the economic life of the country had faded somewhat. The tremendous corporations being organized elsewhere in America made the more traditional enterprises in Boston insignificant by comparison. Still, Boston's industrial growth had quickened considerably during the war as new factories opened all over New England in order to produce the goods necessary to fuel it. The industrial enterprises in Boston continued to develop after the war was over. Throughout the late nineteenth century, iron foundries, steel works, shipyards, and other forms of heavy industry expanded in South Boston. Meanwhile clothing, shoe, and millinery manufactories elsewhere in the metropolis underwent similar growth, and more efficient, centralized factories soon replaced the isolated homework and sweatshops of the antebellum period. Boston's retailing pursuits thrived, and new enterprises like the photography business also became prominent. Construction in Boston, including the enormous land reclamation project begun in 1858 in what was known as the Back Bay district (along the north side of Boston Neck, just below Beacon Hill), continued unabated as well. Though Boston far from led the national economy, overall, the city prospered. In fact, its post-war economic development was robust enough to sustain it through both the crisis of the Boston Fire that consumed huge

swaths of the commercial district in 1872 and the financial panic that struck a year later.[192]

The expansion in industrial development, modest as it was by national standards, encouraged men and women from around the world to settle in Boston in order to take advantage of the city's widening employment opportunities. So, too, the rapid bureaucratization overtaking American businesses created more kinds of "proletarianized" clerical work in the country's urban areas. While in 1850, Boston had counted 40,000 members of the working-class among its population, by the end of the war 45,000 workers labored in manufacturing alone and another 11,000 toiled as domestics, 9,000 as day laborers, and 7,900 worked as low-level retail and office clerks. Migrations to Boston persisted after the war, although the rate of arrival was smaller than earlier in the century during the height of the exodus from Ireland. Many of Boston's newcomers came from the surrounding countryside but there were also immigrants from far-flung corners of the globe. While the majority of these immigrants still originated from Ireland, mounting numbers of them hailed from other places in northern Europe like Germany. An increasing percentage came from southern and eastern Europe too and a small but growing portion arrived from as far away as China.[193]

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[192] Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston,* pp. 161-3. Thomas O'Connor, *Massachusetts in the Civil War: The Last Trumpet, 1864-1865* (Boston: n.p., 1965), pp. 14 and 32.

[193] Figures taken from Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1991) p. 163. According to Stephen Thernstrom, 68% of the male labor force in Boston in 1880 was Blue-collar. Stephen Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) p. 50. On immigration, see Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, pp. 212-13. In 1880, Boston counted among its foreign-born population 64,793 Irish, 23,156 British-American, 8,998 English, 7,396 German, 1,450 Swedish, 1, 277, and 7,726 from other countries. These figures are also taken from Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, p. 261.

For the Irish, the new economic opportunities in the city helped to improve—at least somewhat—the circumstances they faced. Additional sources of employment provided steady work for most of those who wanted it. Participation in the war effort had also enhanced the group's social standing by the postwar years. The considerable numbers of Irish who volunteered (or were coerced) to fight the Confederacy raised the overall status of the group in the eyes of the native-born. Meanwhile, more exotic, less desirable immigrant groups, including those from southern and eastern Europe and Asia, assumed the place the Irish had formerly held near the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. The shift was far from complete, and the federal censuses of 1870 and 1880 revealed that two thirds of Irish men were still limited to unskilled work while their wives and daughters continued to perform most of the domestic service in Boston. But more social mobility was found in the second generation as immigrants' sons moved into semiskilled and entrepreneurial jobs with growing success. [194]

Ex-slaves from the South also migrated to Boston in considerable numbers during and after the war to seek the expanded labor opportunities and freedoms the city offered. From 1864 to 1868, the Freedman's Bureau provided transportation to former slaves desiring to relocate to Boston. The total number the Bureau sent can only be approximated but the bureau's registers and correspondence confirm that at least 1,083 ex-slaves came to Boston and Cambridge between 1866 and 1868. Even without the Bureau's assistance, the number of black Bostonians doubled between 1865 and 1880.[195]

Jews and Italians came in greater numbers to Boston beginning in the late 1880s and 1890s.

[194] Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants,* p. 216.

[195] Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty, Boston, 1865-1900* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 25-6. The black population of Boston in 1880 was 5, 873.

Boston had long enjoyed certain renown as a "cradle of liberty" and the city had hosted a variety of abolitionist activity and leaders during the antebellum years. In 1854, blacks in Boston even succeeded in integrating Massachusetts' public schools—a major victory for racial justice. But in spite of its liberal reputation, for the most part, black Bostonians throughout the first half of the century had faced intense discrimination that severely limited their opportunities and economic wellbeing. After the Civil War, African-Americans continued to face many limitations to their socio-economic mobility, as evidenced by the fact that they remained overwhelmingly concentrated in low-paying and unskilled occupations and residentially segregated in the area known as "Nigger Hill."[196]

Indeed, while economic development in Boston supplied certain opportunities and encouraged immigration and migration, the prosperity it promoted was by no means pervasive. On the contrary, Boston's industrial and business growth fostered even deeper divisions in wealth and status between residents late in the century. As the city's commercial district continued to expand it infringed upon formerly residential areas where the working-class congregated, further crowding many residents into tenements and dark basements in the North and West Ends and in Nigger Hill. The South End, originally developed as a genteel enclave within the city, was soon abandoned by both the upper and middle classes and became a working-class neighborhood dotted by lodging houses by the 1880s. The word "slum" entered the American vocabulary for the first time in the post-war period and it certainly would have applied to streets in these

[196] Dwight Porter, *Report upon a Sanitary Inspection of Certain Tenement-House Districts of Boston* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1889), p. 7.

areas of Boston where extreme overcrowding and poverty made them home to the highest death and disease rates in the city.[197]

Meanwhile, the growth of the economy that had begun during the war years expanded the wealth of Boston merchants and businessmen, making the rich, in many cases, much richer. While working-class immigrants and blacks faced declining living conditions in certain areas of the North, West, and South Ends and in Nigger Hill, the affluent continued their migrations to the outlying suburbs where overcrowding was not an issue. Facilitated by improvements in transportation options, growing numbers of middle-class Bostonians similarly migrated to the suburbs. In fact, in the years after the war, the city incorporated (as distinct communities) a number of neighboring villages including Roxbury in 1867, Dorchester in 1869, and Charlestown, Brighton, and West Roxbury in 1873. Additional, more distant suburbs included Brookline, Chelsea, and Somerville. Meanwhile, Beacon Hill proved impenetrable to commercial infringement (it even managed to keep out the city's new streetcar system to maintain its relative isolation) and remained a refuge of dignified elegance within downtown Boston. The completed Back Bay became a similar haven for the well-to-do by the 1880s.[198]

In short, Boston, like most American cities, became more and not less divided in the second half of the nineteenth century. There was little that connected the white working-class worlds of the North, West, and South Ends to Boston's small Chinatown, the black world of Nigger Hill, or the more prosperous suburbs, Beacon Hill, or the Back

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[197] Dwight Porter, *Report Upon a Sanitary Inspection*.

[198] Sam Warner found that the percentage of residents living within a two to three mile radius of downtown Boston, which would have included Brookline, Chelsea, Dorchester, and Somerville, increased from 7.3 in 1850 to 17.1 by 1900. Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press , 1962), p. 179.

Bay. In addition, the working-class labor force in Boston—now over sixty percent of the population—stood little chance of occupational or economic mobility. It was also far more fractured by ethnic, race, and gender differences than ever before. Even the kinds of work this labor force performed varied widely, ranging from heavy manual labor that took place in workshops and factories to non-manual but low-paying and dead-end clerical and retail positions.[199]

As the line between rich and poor grew more distinct in post-bellum years, and as the working-class itself became more diverse, Bostonians at each end of the socio-economic spectrum continued to share the experience of dining out. Indeed, while the middle class remained generally critical of the practice, both elite and working-class residents of Boston took advantage of expanding commercial dining options with even greater frequency in the years after the war. Moreover, dining out became more firmly incorporated into these groups' evening social and leisure activities. Of course, rich and poor did not dine at the same venues and, furthermore, the cultural rituals observed in all of Boston's dining establishments continued to vary according to the constituency to which the eatery catered. In fact, the differences between dining venues that fed Boston's increasingly dissimilar residents continued to deepen and multiply late in the century.

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[199] Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*. It remains a topic of debate whether clerks at the bottom of the non-manual hierarchy saw themselves as working-class or as potential members of the middle class. Stuart Blumin, however, argues that by the 1880s many clerks came from working-class families and were more likely to be second-generation immigrants. Unlikely to have been trained in college or to have even finished high school like most managers, their ascent in business was less certain and slower than in the antebellum years. I will return to this subject in the next chapter. See Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) ch. 8.

Elite, Evening Dining in the Gilded Age

By the late 1870s and 1880s, the transformations in life and labor that had begun in the antebellum years in metropolitan areas like Boston and intensified during the war had led to a gradual shift in meal times for urban Americans. The trend of consuming large, heavy dinners in the middle of the workday had given way to eating earlier, lighter "lunches" while evening suppers took on greater significance. Removed from the bustle of midday, evening meals became leisurely affairs that were thought to be more enjoyable, as well as more healthful for proper digestion. This change was so far-reaching that by late in the century it generally affected all classes and ethnicities in Boston. Naturally, commercial eateries continued to serve food at midday and the number of Bostonians seeking at least some refreshment at this time continued to grow with the population and labor force. But dining out at night, as a leisure activity, became an increasingly common way for both upper- and working-class people to procure their evening meal.[200]

For elite men, engaging in elegant evening suppers evolved into more significant opportunities to display wealth and taste. Properly escorted women participated too—even in the same establishments where men dined. Some establishments lengthened their hours to remain open after sunset to accommodate this affluent crowd while others went into business with the intent to draw only an evening business and stayed open late into the night. Wealthy Bostonians often combined dining out with such other nighttime urban

[200] Cindy Lobel, *Consuming Classes: Changing Food Consumption Patterns in New York City*, *1790-1860* (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2003), p. 118.

amusements as going to the theater. Evening commercial dining also became a form of entertainment unto itself.[201]

Whether at mid-day or at night, establishments catering to the dining needs of the elite in the 1870s and 1880s still tended to be associated with luxury-hotels. Respected, long-standing venues like the Tremont, Parker, and Revere Houses all received makeovers late in the century to maintain and freshen their stylish décors while new hotels also opened. Demand for elite eateries was sufficient that there was a steadily growing number of smaller but nevertheless sophisticated (and expensive) freestanding restaurants as well that operated without the added overhead of a hotel. The most famous of these in late-nineteenth-century Boston was probably Ober's Restaurant Parisian, first opened by the French Alsatian Louis Ober in the cellar of a house on Winter Place in 1859 but transformed by 1875 into a larger and more elegant establishment that served "French cooking, par excellence." Ober's was declared by one guidebook in 1883 as "unsurpassed" in the city of Boston.[202]

At elite Boston dining venues like Ober's, French fare remained the rage. In fact, if anything, the popularity of French culture as an emblem of refinement had grown by the post-war years. Cuisine topped a considerable list of Bostonians' fascinations with things French that also included architecture and fashion. Whereas antebellum bills of fare in elite eateries had been a combination of American and French dishes, they now consisted almost entirely of French foods. The growing number of wealthy Bostonians

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[201] Women were excluded, however, from the club-life that increasingly began to occupy wealthy men's time in the Gilded Age. For instance, women were not allowed in the dining room of Boston's exclusive Somerset Club.

[202] Ned and Pam Bradford, *Boston's Locke-Ober Café* (New York: Atheneum, 1978). Edwin Monroe Bacon and George Edward Ellis, *King's Dictionary of Boston* (Boston: Moses King, 1883), p. 407.

who traveled to France in these years further stimulated the interest in French styles and traditions at the refined public table.[203]

In fact, this table had become even more lavish than in the antebellum years, a sign of the growing concentration of wealth among Boston's upper class residents and these residents' desire to display their fortunes. The Gilded Age was notorious for the ostentatious presentations of wealth affluent Americans—many of them *nouveau riche*—exhibited. Grand mansions, sumptuous clothing, extended European vacations, and extravagant entertainment became characteristic of this period. Boston's Old Money elite, commonly referred to as Brahmins, was certainly known to be relatively restrained in its spending. There were other Bostonians, however, who had only recently climbed the socioeconomic ladder and who were especially eager to conspicuously consume.

As in the antebellum period, elite dining venues provided the wealthy with unmatched opportunities to demonstrate and enjoy their wealth. But by the late 1800s, the scale of these demonstrations had become grander. High-end establishments offered even more numerous and more intricately prepared French dishes than ever before—including those containing rare and pricey ingredients like foie gras, truffles, and escargot. In fact, a new culinary press was born in these years that rapidly turned out discussions of the "art" of eating and the pleasures of high-end ingredients. Even society newspapers offered daily epicurean reflections and affluent diners were expected to know what composed (and how to order) a gourmet meal if they wanted to be perceived as culturally savvy. Additional elements of the refined table in this period included choice wines, increasingly elaborate décor and table ornamentation, "menus" (as opposed to the more old-fashioned

[203] Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston*, pp. 169-70.

term bill of fare) now lavishly adorned with gilt and ribbon, select music (another recent innovation of elite eateries), corps of attentive waiters (made even more devoted by a steady stream of tips, a now *en vogue* practice known as "feeing" the waiter), and, most of all, a setting in which to rub elbows with fellow members of high society while dressed in the latest fashions, adhering strictly to the current rules of etiquette, and making obvious one's ease with (and ability to afford) all of the above. In the 1870s and 1880s, it even became popular to give parties at one's favorite restaurant, leaving the details of entertaining to the proprietor, rather than try to match the extravagance these venues were capable of at home. Society and government banquets were also regularly held in the city's high-end dining venues.[204]

At mid-day, affluent women continued to patronize the refined eateries earmarked especially for their use where they could eat a light dinner or "lunch" alone or with friends in between shopping. And although affluent women still rarely ventured out into

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[204] George D. Carroll, *The Art of Dinner Giving and Usages of Polite Society* (New York: Union Square Printing Co., 1880), see especially the introduction. Newspapers in Boston like the *Boston Globe* and *Transcript* frequently included mention of elegant dinners given in local restaurants. For example: *Boston Globe*, 7 April 1889. There was a number of books published during this period about how to live as an epicurean. I was able to consult many of these thanks to the collections of the Schlesinger Library and Longone Culinary Archive. Some of the particularly interesting ones include H.G. White, *The Cuisine* (Boston: Fox & Co., 1872); James Edson White, *Breakfast, Dinner, and Supper* (Kansas City, MO: J.E. White, 1884); George D. Carroll, *The Art of Dinner Giving*; Jessup Whitehead, *The Steward's Handbook and Guide to Party Catering* (Chicago: J. Anderson & Co, 1889). A new culinary periodical trade came into existence in the post-war years as well and included titles like *The Table: A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Refinement of the Table* and *The Cook; American Cookery a Monthly Dining Room Magazine*. The Longone Culinary Archive at the University of Michigan has an unmatched collection of these periodicals. For more titles, see Jan Longone, "*The Cook*: An Early American Culinary Magazine," *Gastronomica* 1(November 2001) pp. 104-7. On the change from "bill of fare" to "menu," Jessup Whitehead reported in 1889 that the word "menu" was now "thought to be the more stylish of the two." Jessup Whitehad, *The Steward's Handbook and Dictionary* (Chicago: J. Anderson & Co., 1889), p. 47.

the city unescorted after dark, more and more of them began to enjoy Boston's nighttime pleasures on the arms of their husbands, brothers, and fathers. In the evening, properly accompanied women were now welcomed to take their suppers in elite restaurants, as well as in the main dining rooms of hotels. In fact, as the assumed archetype of refinement, the patronage of elite ladies was vital to secure a venue's reputation as genteel and fashionable. Thus, women too were present in elegant nighttime eateries and able to partake in the displays of wealth and refinement that went on these spaces. [Illustration 10, Appendix A] For example, in 1880, the *National Police Gazette* described the scene at one urban establishment in which a well-heeled, co-ed theater party enjoyed oysters after a show:

> All the tables are full. Look around. What an array of stylishly dressed people…. What bright eyes, what diamonds trembling at pink ears, glittering outside gloves or upon white, slender fingers….

The women the anecdote described were not prostitutes as would have been likely earlier in the century but rather affluent ladies making the most of their opportunity to see and be seen in the city's elite public dining venues.[205]

Thus, elite commercial dining practices continued into the post-war years much as they had in the antebellum period. For the rich, eating out was still an opportunity to demonstrate and enjoy one's refinement and taste. Women, as the arbiters of refinement, were now welcome participants in these dining performances, which grew ever more elaborate and leisurely as evening events.

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[205] Unaccompanied women, however, were still typically refused service at elite venues because of the specter of prostitution. *National Police Gazette*, 6 March 1880.

Working-class Eateries in Late-Nineteenth-Century Boston

Nighttime commercial dining was no less popular among the working class in the decades after the Civil War than it was for the elite. Of course, the very poor and those raising families on limited resources were far less likely to indulge in a supper out. But for the thousands of young, single men—and women—in Boston, the growing number of working-class commercial eateries with extended nighttime hours became even more central components of their lives late in the century. The establishments that catered to the working class, however, were quite different from the refined showplaces the elite frequented. In fact, a considerable amount of variation existed even among those eateries classified as working-class, a reflection of the kaleidoscopic backgrounds of Boston's blue-collar population.

By the postwar period, it was illegal in Boston for a commercial eatery to refuse admittance to blacks. This was in contrast to the antebellum years when African-Americans had been denied access to certain eating establishments in Boston according to proprietor discretion. In 1865 the Massachusetts legislature passed an anti-discrimination law that expanded blacks' access to public places and made it illegal for proprietors of dining venues to turn someone away based on his or her race. Black-owned eateries, however, remained rare, as will be explained below. And not every perspective black patron in Boston actually gained access to every eatery. Most blacks continued to find their occupational and economic options within the city limited and could certainly not afford to dine in expensive places. Many could only rarely manage to eat out at all. Those who could nevertheless often preferred to eat and entertain at home rather than risk the potential for humiliation, still high, in venturing to a commercial establishment.

Because the fact was that despite the new law, blacks continued to find themselves the target of discriminatory business practices in dining venues throughout the nineteenth century. For instance, one tactic Boston proprietors used to discourage unwanted blacks from patronizing their businesses (while still complying with the law) was to force blacks to order from a separate, considerably more expensive bill of fare than their white customers. Others simply instructed waiters to ignore blacks who entered—likely an uncomfortable situation for many waiters in Boston who were themselves black. In 1866, the state legislature strengthened the enforcement measures of the original anti-discrimination law to discourage such ploys. However, dining venues in Boston only gradually become truly integrated.[206]

For non-black, working-class Bostonians, transformations in living conditions by the mid-1860s greatly encouraged dining out. Limited space and high rents ensured that for much of the lower class, home was likely to be a small, cramped space. Going out for any reason may have simply provided relief in these circumstances. Moreover, the steadily growing number of Bostonians living in lodging houses, where they received only room and not board in return for rent, made dining out further attractive and frequent by the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the number of lodging houses in Boston grew from 289 in 1860 to 741 by 1880. These establishments were particularly prevalent in the working-class South End. In a lodging house, residents were confined to a single room in which cooking was prohibited, thus forcing residents to eat out whenever they wanted something more substantial than, for example, crackers to eat. This system of living

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[206] John Daniels, *In Freedom's Birthplace: A Study of the Boston Negroes* (Boston: Arno Press, 1914), pp. 94-5. See also Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty*, p. 29.

proved appealing, however, because it was typically less expensive than having to pay for board as well as lodging as in a traditional boarding house.[207]

But necessity was hardly the only motive for increased dining out among young working-class residents of Boston. In the late nineteenth century, the working class experienced a general rise in real wages and decline in the length of the workday. Although standards of living varied considerably, most workers now enjoyed a greater possibility for leisure than previously. Commercial dining, which combined the need to procure cheap, sustaining meals with pleasure and leisure, became an increasingly popular recreational activity.[208]

Dining out had long blurred necessity and enjoyment. Throughout the antebellum period, working-class men took advantage of eating-houses that offered convenience, refreshment, and intra-class sociability at mid-day. And by the eve of the Civil War, a range of street vendors vied for customers in the evening and provided an economical source of entertainment. For instance, the declining price of sugar and the introduction of new freezing technologies meant that a dish of ice cream could be obtained by this period for only a few cents. Certain oyster saloons dished up whole platters of this American

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[207] On the other hand, the number of boarding houses remained static during this period. Mark Peel, "On the Margins: Lodgers and Boarders in Boston, 1860-1900," *Journal of American History* 72 (March 1986), p. 818. See also Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), ch. 10, especially pp. 125-7. Although Wolfe published his study in 1913 the information he gives and the sources he uses are pertinent to the late nineteenth century as well. According to Wolfe, there were nearly 2,000 male lodgers in the South End alone by the turn of the century. Wolfe argues there were almost as many females but he lacked statistical data for women. William Dean Howells offers a succinct explanation of the appeal of lodging-house life in *A Modern Instance* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.1910), p. 174.

[208] Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

culinary favorite for mere pennies, while hucksters sold such inexpensive treats as juicy watermelon, tart lemonade, roasted chestnuts, and sticky taffy-apples from their locations at Quincy Market and on busy street corners. This street food provided buyers with affordable pleasure and gratification after a day's labor.

In the years after the Civil War, as emphasis shifted from the mid-day dinner to the evening supper and both income and time available for after-work leisure increased, commercial dining options for the working class changed accordingly. There were still plenty of venues available at mid-day but many of them now offered lighter fare like simple sandwiches. The free lunch counter, where men could get a sandwich or snacks like hardboiled eggs and slices of cheese and cured meats with the purchase of a nickel beer, was now also standard in Boston. Meanwhile, nighttime selections expanded considerably. Cafes and dining rooms, open until past 8 p.m., crowded the streets in working class districts like the South End and provided supper in addition to public space for socializing. Many of these evening venues were located in the basements of lodging houses in an effort to provide added convenience to lodgers as well as refreshment and sociability. One writer described a typical evening scene in this district:

> But when the business day is over and the downtown offices and shops pour forth their living stream of tired humanity, the district assumes a new aspect. … [T]hrough the streets flows a continuous procession of pedestrians, wending their way to rooms or cafes, spreading out through the side streets, filtering into the great lines of lodging-houses as far as Northampton Street, like a river flowing through a delta with many mouths. [209]

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[209] *Boston Globe*, 8 September 1889. Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston*, p. 27 and John Eaton Whiting, *A Schedule of the Buildings and their Occupancy, on the Principal Streets and Wharves in the City of Boston* (Boston: Press of W.L. Deland, 1877).

Not only men but women as well were part of this "procession of pedestrians" that patronized the growing number of eateries in the South End and elsewhere in the evening in Boston. Before the Civil War, working-class women had felt little reason to participate in commercial dining. Those who performed waged labor were overwhelmingly employed as domestic servants or did sewing or millinery out-work at home. Consequently, they did not need commercial eating options. This all changed after the war as the employment opportunities for women expanded considerably. By the 1870s and 1880s, working-class women found work throughout Boston in offices, retail stores, factories and workshops, and, in fact, in eateries themselves. These new kinds of occupations required women to organize their lives more like men. They too left home every morning and labored for a set number of hours before they returned. Going home for mid-day refreshment was often impossible and women began to seek out mid-day commercial options—although more women than men also carried their dinners with them to work or skipped the meal entirely in an effort to economize (women's wages remained low—considerably lower than men's—throughout the nineteenth century). Then, in their after-work leisure time, women similarly looked to commercial eateries to provide the same combination of sustenance and entertainment such venues did for men. Indeed, for working-class women, dining out at night as a leisure activity seems to have been more popular than it was at mid-day for convenience.[210]

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[210] Not only was the number of employed, self-supporting women rising in Boston after the Civil War, most of the workers were young. See Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), ch. 3, especially p. 79. Women working in clerical and retail jobs increased more than tenfold between 1880 and 1890. These women made between $6-8.00 a week, not much more than seamstresses or factory workers, but the new store and office work was considered more desirable. Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter:*

For many of these working women, living conditions encouraged them to take advantage of Boston's nighttime commercial dining options just as for men. More unmarried women lived on their own by the late nineteenth century than ever before. Single women from across rural Massachusetts and New England left their families and homes and came to Boston to seek employment, as did women from around the globe. According to some authorities, by late in the century, these young, working women lived independently in lodging houses in close to the same proportion as men. Even women who resided with their families found that their new occupational options gave them greater autonomy and freedom. At the end of the work day they were now more likely to trade the old familial expectations of unopened pay envelopes and help with evening domestic tasks for the commercial amusements, like dining, the city offered them.[211]

In contrast to patterns characterizing the upper classes, the growing numbers of single working-class women seeking out commercial eateries for nighttime dining in the decades after the Civil War were welcomed in many of the same eateries serving working-class men rather than limited to venues earmarked especially for unescorted females. Particularly among the younger generations of working-class Bostonians, the

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Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930 (Philadelphia, 1982), table 1. According to one source, in the mid-1880s, women workers needed to earn at least $8.00 to support a decent lifestyle and maintain good morals, but most earned less than $7.00. Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1990), 140; 141; 147. See also Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), ch. 2.

[211] *Boston Globe*, 4 May 1890. Albert Wolfe estimated that by the 1890s, approximately one third of lodging house residents were single women. By the turn of the century, he calculated that the number of female lodgers was equal to that of men. Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston*, p. 27. In Massachusetts about 80 percent of girls left school between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. The majority went to work. Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City*, p. 79.

expanding opportunities for leisure became, overall, less segregated along gender lines in the post-war years. And, indeed, part of the appeal of dining out for working-class Bostonians was the opportunity it presented to mix with those of the opposite gender. The practice of "treating" in which a man would offer to buy a young woman's refreshment (possibly with the expectation of sexual favors in return) became central to working-class flirting and courting rituals. Moreover, in the highly competitive restaurant business, proprietors were only too glad to receive female patronage (which often had the added benefit of increasing male clientele as well) and, in some establishments catering to the working class, proprietors actually made a concerted effort to attract it by charging women less than men for the same dishes.[212]

Thus, as the labor force in Boston expanded and as working men and women, for various reasons, increasingly sought seats in dining establishments, the number of such venues grew as well. Indeed, Tremont Street, Washington Street, and Columbus Avenue, as well as certain parts of Dover and Dartmouth Streets and Shawmut Avenue, were lined with commercial eateries by the late 1870s. The traditional low-class eating-houses continued to fill working-class needs at mid-day and received primarily a male patronage. But, in the evening, an assortment of new cafes and dining rooms—many of them with an unmistakable ethnic influence reflective of the city's growing ethnic population—now also fed Boston's working men and women.[213]

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[212] Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston*, p. 48.

[213] Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston*, p. 27 and John Eaton Whiting, *A Schedule of the Buildings and their Occupancy.* Women were generally unwelcome at free lunch counters, which were usually also saloons or public bars. One historian argues that though discouraged from patronizing such venues, working women probably did, in fact, seek the occasional cheap lunch at the free lunch counter. Katherine Leonard Turner, "The Ladies' Entrance to the Saloon: Gendered Working-Class Dining

Dining in a Working-Class Eatery in the Late Nineteenth Century

The eateries in Boston catering to the working class were not only more numerous by the late nineteenth century, they were also far more variegated than in the antebellum period. Again, this was a result of the city's increasingly heterogeneous working-class population and these residents' widely varying requirements and social worlds. Indeed, young, white saleswomen had far different dining expectations than Chinese or Italian immigrants. Thus, a range of cultures and foods was now regularly dished up in Boston's inexpensive eateries.[214]

At the cheap end of working-class establishments, those in the "humblest down-town parts," a full dinner could be obtained for as little as fifteen cents. In fact, proprietors usually walked a fine line between keeping prices low to encourage patronage and charging enough to make ends meet. Working-class eating venues in late-nineteenth-century Boston were still relatively precarious business ventures where profit margins were thin. Although barriers to entering the business were slight, steep competition and frequent failure to turn a profit caused establishments to fail as often as others started. It was not uncommon for low-priced eateries to be located in basements or cellars where the rent was the least expensive for proprietors—particularly if he or she already lived in

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in American Cities, 1880-1930," paper presented at the Thirty-Second meeting of the Social Science History Association, 18 November 2007. Turner's work focuses on women in New York City, however. I have found no evidence of working women patronizing a free lunch counter in nineteenth-century Boston.

[214] In fact, discussing the range of cultures on display at working-class eateries became a favored topic of urban exposé. For example, see Edward Winslow Martin, *The Secrets of the Great City: A Work Descriptive of the Virtues and the Vices, the Mysteries, Miseries, and Crimes of New York City* (Philadelphia: Jones Bros, 1868); Mary Spring Walker, *Down in a Saloon: or, the Minister's Protégé* (Boston: Ira Bradley & Co., 1870) Newspapers like *The National Police Gazette, Daily Advertiser, Boston Globe,* and *Boston Investigator* were also fascinated by the expanding number of ethnic dining venues in urban America.

the building. Places that enjoyed more spacious accommodations were typically called cafés in an effort to recognize their elevated status (and physical condition), as well as their slightly higher prices.[215]

As in the antebellum years, the majority of working-class eateries were unidentifiable from the street except for the placard the proprietor may have placed on the door or in the window (if there was a window) alerting the public that inside was a "dining room" or a "café." Establishments rarely had more creative names. After stepping inside, patrons of such venues still typically found themselves in a relatively cramped and stuffy room where the air was heavy with cooking smells. A long, communal table, known as a board and surrounded by benches and covered with an oilcloth, usually filled the center of the space. In many establishments, the only available bill of fare was painted on a piece of wood and nailed on a wall where everyone might see it. Customers gave their food orders to a waiter (if there was one) or directly to the proprietor. If the customer dined there frequently, he or she might have then gotten up again to retrieve a napkin from the "napkin rack." Indeed, the "napkin rack" seems to have been a common feature of inexpensive eateries in late-nineteenth-century Boston. Under this system, proprietors labeled cloth napkins with numbers and hung them on a wall. Loyal diners were then assigned a number and knew to pick up their designated napkin from the wall each time they visited the establishment. This innovation saved owners from having to regularly wash linens while at the same time encouraged patrons to feel as if they were at home in the eatery.[216]

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[215] *King's Dictionary of Boston*, p. 405. William Dean Howells, *A Modern Instance*, p. 174. Albert Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem*, p. 48.
[216] *Boston Globe*, 7 January 1894. Albert Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem*, p. 50.

On the other hand, by the late nineteenth century, the actual foods working-class establishments served varied considerably more than in the antebellum period when they had mostly consisted of traditionally American dishes like hashes, stews, beef, turkey, chicken, potatoes, and pastries. Establishments serving such foods were still common later in the century. But there were now joined by others in which the fare available reflected the increasingly heterogeneous ethnic origins of Boston's working-class population. Because the commercial dining business continued to require such little start-up capital, setting up an eatery became a favored attempt at social mobility for many recent immigrants. These new proprietors often preferred to serve the food they knew best—the cuisines of their native lands. For example, Italian venues grew to be numerous in Boston's North End, a haven for Italian immigrants by the last decade of the nineteenth century. [Illustration 11, Appendix A] German beer gardens and the sausages and lager they served were quite common in Boston as well. [Illustration 12, Appendix A] The list of ethnic eateries in Boston also included a few Hungarian, Russian, and Polish establishments. By the late 1880s and 1890s, the city even boasted a growing number of Chinese restaurants—particularly in the developing Chinatown located in the South End along Harrison Avenue. These venues all made welcomed tastes of home available to their customers.[217]

At the same time, however, the city still lacked proportional (given the origins of its population) numbers of specifically Irish or Irish-owned restaurants. Black-owned eateries also remained comparatively rare. This was because both groups continued to

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[217] *Boston Globe*, 24 December 1885, p. 4. *Boston Globe*, 24 December, p. 5. *Boston Investigator*, 25 January 1854. *Boston Globe*, 7 January 1894. Dwight Porter, *Report upon a Sanitary Inspection,* p. 7.

face limited resources and hence found it difficult to succeed even in small business enterprises. On the other hand, other immigrant groups, most especially the Chinese, faced similar limitations in Boston and yet their businesses, including commercial dining ventures, had a much higher rate of success than either Irish or black-owned establishments. Why? It seems the Chinese strictly regulated the economic enterprises in their community. Most importantly, they found ways to curtail competition between businesses that provided similar services. They also developed systems of credit and support that were independent of mainstream sources. Black and Irish restaurateurs may have been more likely to find success if they had resorted to a similar formula.[218]

Across Boston's assortment of working-class eateries, dining practices could vary considerably, for most ethnic establishments continued to observe the cultural rituals of home rather than give in to American habits. In traditionally American places patrons continued to order items *á la carte* from a bill of fare. At certain ethnic venues, however—particularly Italian establishments—the *table d'hôte*, which provided an entire meal including small rations of meat and all the spaghetti one could stomach for one low price, and which was often served family-style, was standard. Furthermore, German eateries attracted whole families to dine together while nearly every other kind of working-class venue was patronized by young, unmarried individuals exclusively. There were innumerable additional differences as well. For example, at Chinese restaurants, customers utilized chopsticks to convey food to their mouths while at other

[218] Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty,* pp. 152-7.

establishments the knife—much to the discouragement of experts in etiquette—remained in heavy use. [219]

For the most part, the degree to which cross-cultural interaction occurred in these ethnic, working-class eateries seems to have been minimum. It does not appear that Bostonians who were foreign-born patronized venues that served foods from cultures not their own during this period. (Eateries that served traditional American fare, thought to foster assimilation, received diverse ethnic patronage and were the exceptions.) Moreover, there is little evidence that native-born, working-class Americans dined at ethnic eateries. On the contrary, most instead heaped criticism upon the cuisines of other cultures, calling Italian food "overly spiced" and reeking of garlic, for example, and claiming that Chinese restaurants specialized in such unappealing items as "cat cutlet" and "dog soup." The reasons for this were complex, stemming from xenophobia and competition between groups for the city's socio-economic resources.[220]

Nevertheless, in the vast majority of Boston's working-class eateries during the late nineteenth century, and regardless of each venue's specific ethnic influence, diners met friends and beaus and struck up new acquaintances from across the table. They ate food that was generally cheap and received service that, if not particularly elaborate, was sufficient. Though the table etiquette these diners practiced was probably rudimentary, it

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[219] *Boston Globe*, 19 July 1885 and 7 January 1894. For instance, in inexpensive Italian eateries, the *Boston Globe* reported that "nothing cost over ten cents a plate, and with a glass of wine one can get a very good dinner for 20 cents."

[220] For example: the *Boston Investigator*, 25 January 1854. *Boston Globe*, 12 September 1887 and 23 June 1889. Samantha Barbas explores Chinese food as both a vehicle for expressing xenophobic sentiments toward Chinese immigrants and, eventually, as an agent for promoting cultural interaction. Samantha Barbas, '"I'll Take Chope Suey': Restaurants as Agents of Culinary and Cultural Change," *Journal of Popular Culture* 36(April 2003): pp. 669-686.

was certainly improved compared to antebellum, exclusively male, working-class eating-houses. More importantly, the mere act of dining out became an experience that many Bostonians, no matter their gender, race, or ethnic origin, shared in this period. Drawn to the city for its expanding occupational opportunities, workers found that participating in commercial dining was affordable and convenient, as well as enjoyable. As a result, it became a regular part of workers' lives and leisure in Boston.

Changes in Restaurant Labor in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

In the post-war years, the workforce of commercial eateries—cooks and waiters—continued to be organized according to clear racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies that reflected the opportunities, aspirations, and identities of the city's various social groups. On the other hand, the particulars of who was eligible to work in these positions shifted significantly. In the early antebellum period, waiters in Boston had been overwhelmingly black males. As Irish immigrants flooded Boston's shores in the late 1840s and 1850s, blacks had had to struggle to defend their jobs as waiters in the city's commercial eating venues, which they saw as an attractive form of employment compared to their other options. Although blacks' hold on waitering in Boston appeared bleak at mid-century, they managed to regain their dominance over the occupation in the late nineteenth century. In fact, by 1880, blacks in Boston composed 44.8% of those who listed "waiter" as their employment in the federal census. Meanwhile, those born in Ireland formed 19.9% of the total by this date. The percentage of black males working as

waiters in Boston had grown from 2.1% in 1850 to 12.6% by 1880.[221] [Tables XI and XII, Appendix C]

In some ways, blacks' reprised dominance of the occupation rested on their success in convincing many in the restaurant business that their race was, indeed, particularly suited to work as waiters. For example, trade journals after the Civil War were peppered with voices opining on the superiority of blacks as waiters compared to the Irish and even to native-born whites—particularly in venues where service really mattered, such as fancy hotel dining rooms. Unfortunately, these voices generally backed up their opinions not with appreciation of the skill required to be a waiter and the special effort blacks put into learning these skills—the gist of Tunis Campbell's argument in his 1848 book *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide*—but with racial stereotypes celebrating the "natural" obsequiousness and eagerness to please of African-Americans. These same trade journals further noted that while white men who took jobs as waiters continued to look down on the work and aspire to higher positions, blacks seemed content to remain in the occupation for life. As the journals argued, this may have made blacks better at their jobs. But it was also reflective of African-Americans' continuing lack of occupational options and mobility in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, in Boston, while the Irish were generally able to improve their socio-economic

[221] Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts; the 1880 census has been digitized and is fully searchable online through *Ancestry.com, Library Edition*. See Tables XI and XII in Appendix C.

positions as the century wore on, blacks continued to face racial discrimination that limited their ability to do likewise.[222]

Not everyone agreed that blacks made the best waiters, or, as one voice put it, that a "polished piece of ebony" provided an especially nice visual contrast to the "marble guests" he served. On the contrary, some believed blacks were too slow or dim-witted to make effective waiters. In Boston, there were proprietors who employed both races but there were others who felt so strongly about the particular race or ethnicity of waiters they believed provided the best service that they hired only one or the other. In fact, whether an establishment employed exclusively black waiters or white waiters became a point of pride and comparison among several of the city's leading luxury-hotel dining rooms. For instance, the Tremont, Revere, and Parker Houses hired only white waiters (mostly Irish) while the Adams, Young's, Brunswick, and Vendome Houses favored blacks. Each of these establishments argued that its racial choice of waiters was superior. But these hotels also used the rivalry between white and black waiters in Boston to their advantage when it suited them. For instance, when the white waiters employed by the

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[222] Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts; the 1880 census has been digitized and is fully searchable online through *Ancestry.com, Library Edition*. On Irish economic mobility and black immobility, see Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty*, p. 41. "Hotel Service Papers. Number One," *Hotel World* 2(April 5, 1877): p. 1; *Hotel Monthly* 2(August 24, 1876), p. 6. See also W.D. Holmes, *Their Wedding Journey* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Co., 1872) pp. 93-4. Catherine Cocks devotes some attention to wealthy whites' penchant for black waiters after the Civil War in *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 88-92.

Tremont organized a strike for higher wages in 1889, the hotel's manager hired blacks to replace them.[223]

The debate over white versus black waiters, however, was primarily limited to elite venues that strove to earn a reputation as the best—or among the best—in the city. More plebian establishments hired anyone who would agree to work for the lowest wages. And, increasingly, this proved to be women. Although waitering work had once been considered inappropriate for women, females' willingness to work for cheap late in the century trumped these concerns. Women's admittance into dining rooms in the city probably also lessened the stigma associated with female waiters. In fact, in 1883, the *Boston Globe* reported that women held approximately half of the waitering positions in the city. (Although probably exaggerated, this figure reflects the great influx of females into the occupation.) Proprietors reported that "waiter girls," as they were called, had the added benefit of being generally more obedient than male employees. Female waiters were also thought to encourage loyalty in male customers by making use of their often-honed flirtation abilities.[224]

In working-class eateries willing to hire female waiters ethnic and racial hierarchies played an important role in their selections. Native-born American girls were typically given preference over all others. This was probably tied to contemporary

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[223]E.A. Maccannon, *Commanders of the Dining Room: Biographic Sketches and Portraits of Successful Head Waiters* (New York: Gwendolyn Pub. Co., 1904). Although published after the turn of the twentieth century, this fascinating book includes biographies of black waiters who worked during the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. On preferences of Boston hotels regarding the race of their waiters, see, for instance, the *Boston Globe*, 16 September 1883 and 23 July 1886. On strike at the Tremont, see the New York *Age*, 25 May 1889.

[224]As far as I can tell, "waitress" is a twentieth-century term. *Boston Globe*, 13 January 1883. On the special benefits of employing attractive female waiters, see the *Boston Globe*, 10 February 1883.

standards of beauty. Immigrants from northern Europe also seem to have been favored. On the other hand, it was very rare to find a black woman waiter. Why is unclear. Proprietors may have been influenced by negative racial stereotypes regarding black women. Or, it may have been that black women themselves avoided waitering jobs because of the lingering perception of waitering within the black community as dignified labor for black men.[225]

For working-class white women, waitering could seem a more exciting occupational option than many of those available to them. It was an opportunity to work with the public rather than in a factory, and to flirt with male patrons for both fun and the possibility of additional income in the form of tips. Among female waiters, there was even the often-discussed (if unlikely) prospect that one of these male patrons would marry them and end their days of working altogether. On the other hand, the job was far from glamorous. Female waiters described being on their feet from eight to eleven hours a day. Wages were also particularly low for women waiters, ranging from just $3.50 to $7 per week by late in the century. And while it is likely that some patrons were indeed charming and generous flirts, many more (both male and female) were probably cantankerous and demanding, making the job that much more difficult.[226]

Cooks, by contrast, remained overwhelmingly male throughout the remainder of the century and well into the next. (Women cooking in family-owned ethnic eateries were

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[225] *Social Statistics of Working Women, Prepared by the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor* (Boston: n.p., 1901), pp. 8 and11-13. The *Boston Globe* reported in 1883 that half of the "girls who wait in restaurants" were natives of the United States or of Ireland." *Boston Globe*, 13 January 1883. In 1880 there were only about 4 black female waiters listed in the federal census. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Manuscript Population schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.
[226] *Social Statistics of Working Women*, p. 11 and 13.

exceptions.) Immediately after the Civil War, commercial cooks in Boston also remained poorly paid and overwhelmingly black or Irish, as in the antebellum years. By the late 1860s, however, Pierre Blot, a French refugee who had come to the U.S. ten years earlier, attempted to improve the quality of American cuisine by calling for more culinary education and esteem for those who cooked for a living. Blot's opinions on what he saw as the profession of cooking proved to have enduring consequences on the racial and ethnic composition of commercial cooks late in the century.

After first spending nearly a decade in America perfecting his English, Blot published a cookbook in 1863 that focused on the domestic preparation of French dishes. Unlike most cookbook authors, Blot believed that cookery—especially French cookery—could not, in fact, be learned through reading alone. To provide more adequate instruction, he opened America's first culinary school in 1865. Blot's New York Cooking Academy, located at No. 90 Fourth Avenue in New York City, was—like his cookbook—aimed at an audience of middle- and upper-class "ladies" and not commercial cooks. Domestic cookery was still heavily sentimentalized in America during this period and provided the main focus of food reform efforts. Blot's female pupils would, presumably, use the skills learned at his culinary school to offer their families better food. They would not cook for a paying public.[227]

In his lectures and demonstrations, Blot emphasized the special technique, dedication, and experience required to produce good cookery. This message—and Blot's

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[227] According to one source, in 1867 most cooks still made only between fifty and thirty dollars a month. Another source suggested this was pay that even "a tow-boy on a railroad would look at with scorn." Pierre Blot, "Modern and Mediaeval Dinners," *The Galaxy* 3(April 1867): p. 723. *Boston Globe*, 7 August 1885. Pierre Blot, *What to Eat and How to Cook it: Containing over One Thousand Recipes Systemically and Practically Arranged* (New York,: D. Appleton & Co., 1863).

school in general—were met with wide acclaim in New York. In 1866 he came to Boston and offered a month-long course at Mercantile Hall for a similar audience and it too was quite successful. The lessons Blot gave in Boston were later compiled and published in a book entitled *Prof. Blot's Lectures on Cookery, Delivered at Mercantile Hall*.[228]

Only a few months after his visit to Boston, however, Blot's New York cooking school experienced a precipitous decline in pupils, forcing Blot to close it. The failure stemmed from the fact that the ladies who enrolled in Blot's courses—all responsible for many other domestic duties besides cooking—quickly lost interest in developing the high level of skill Blot believed good cooking demanded, or in learning the complicated and time-consuming French dishes he proposed to teach them. The disappointing experience with his cooking school helped Blot see that the kind of culinary education he advocated would require time and money—resources the average American housewife did not have when she herself was responsible for preparing her family's daily meals in addition to all of her other household chores and responsibilities. These were also resources even wealthy Americans were usually unwilling to spend in training the servants who cooked for them since these servants could quit their employment at any time. Blot concluded that perhaps a more eligible population for culinary training—as in France—might be composed of male cooks working in refined commercial eateries.[229]

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[228] Jan Longone, "Professor Blot and the First French Cooking School in New York, Part I," *Gastronomica* 1(May 2001): pp. 65-71. Pierre Blot, *Prof. Blot's Lectures on Cookery: Delivered in Mercantile Hall* (n.p., 1866).

[229] Albert Rhodes, "What Shall We Eat?" *The Galaxy* 22(November 1876): pp. 665-674. See also criticisms of Blot in "Nebulae," *The Galaxy* 5(April 1868): pp. 513-6. Pierre Blot, *Handbook of Practical Cookery for Ladies and Professional Cooks, containing the Whole Science and Art of Preparing Human Food* (New York: Arno Press, 1868).

As concentrations of wealth deepened in the late nineteenth century, fascination with elite French culture grew. It followed that the affluent public in cities like Boston was more primed to appreciate cooks in high-end establishments who had been specially trained to create the kind of complex "gourmet" and "epicurean" delights that would rival European creativity and sophistication and thus lend a restaurant greater acclaim. Still, there was no system yet in place in America to offer such training or develop culinary talent. Again, food reform efforts in the U.S. continued to focus on improving domestic cooking along with the nutrition and purity of food itself, curtailing more serious discussions about raising culinary innovation and ability. In the regular columns Blot began to write for the periodical *The Galaxy* in the late 1860s, he insisted that, as a consequence, American cookery continued to lag far behind that of France, where commercial cooks had long been required to endure years of formal apprenticeships before assuming the title of *chef* and cooking for a well-heeled, paying public. Furthermore, France's first professional culinary school, the famous *Le Cordon Bleu*, opened in Paris 1869. Blot argued, "It may be pronounced a custom peculiar to this country to pay little attention to the quality and preparation of food…." He also railed against certain cookbook writers who claimed that "French Cookery" could be satisfactorily produced in American kitchens merely through adding "about twenty times too much pepper to their ordinarily too much peppered dishes." On the contrary, Blot maintained that America would never produce cuisine it could really be proud of—the quality of cuisine available, for instance, in restaurants in France—until it first recognized the high level of "chemistry" and "art" involved in cooking and educated cooks

accordingly. To Blot, this meant professional cooks—not domestic ones—must become the vanguard of American cuisine.

Blot never again enjoyed the level of personal popularity he experienced with the initial opening of his cooking school. Nevertheless, his more general message proved highly influential and contributed to a much more rigid ethnic (and gender) divide in American cookery by the 1880s as his ideas about professionalizing cooking caught on. During this period, the expert *chef* became a highly regarded figure in cities like Boston. Superior restaurants all came to employ at least one such figure to oversee their kitchens. Large hotels usually employed several, each of them now clad in a white jacket and tall hat, known as a tocque (a uniform also borrowed from the French), to signal a new, elevated occupational status. [Illustration 14, Appendix A] While black and ethnic antebellum cooks had been hidden from public view, these new *chefs* were celebrated and publicized. Eateries even took out ads in newspapers announcing they had obtained the employment of a *chef*. Most strikingly, in contrast to commercial cooks in the antebellum and early post-Civil War periods when most commercial cooks were black or Irish, late-nineteenth-century *chefs* were always white males who were native-born—unless, that is, they had the great fortune to have been born in France. (A French-born *chef* was virtually guaranteed occupational success and fame in late-nineteenth-century America.) Finally, a *chef* had also received a suitable culinary education in one of the growing number of heavily French-influenced culinary schools opening both in Europe and America. At the very least, he had been trained and tested in a French-kitchen.[230]

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[230] Gwen Hyman, "The Taste of Fame: Chefs, Diners, Celebrity, Class," *Gastronomica* 8(August 2008): p. 42. For example, *Boston Globe,* 23 July 1874.

Meanwhile, non-white cooks were not thought to be capable of developing the skills and talents required to be a *chef*—even though, in many cases, they had been executing the French fare available in luxury-hotel dining rooms for years. Their employment was thus now usually limited to lower-class establishments. Indeed, as the standing of white *chefs* rose, that of black and ethnic cooks declined even further. They certainly continued to earn significantly less than white *chefs*, who were suddenly able to command between sixty and two hundred dollars a month for their abilities.[231]

Also not considered competent to become *chefs* were women, whose culinary pursuits were still thought to be best directed toward nourishing their families at home. Now, however, the concept of the "professional" cook who had learned special training and skills encouraged Americans to believe that culinary expertise and innovation were dished up only in restaurant kitchens where male *chefs* were employed. Thus, when they wanted to taste fine food, Americans began to assume they should dine out rather than attempt to prepare such meals at home. These concepts and biases about cooking endured well into the twentieth and even twenty-first centuries.

Conclusion

The processes of change and modernization that began in the antebellum period quickened considerably in the post-war years. This recasting of life and labor served to widen gaps in wealth distribution and harden divisions among residents throughout urban America. Though Boston was not at the forefront of this dynamic, it too underwent

[231] Pierre Blot, "Modern and Mediaeval Dinners," *The Galaxy* 3(April 1867): p. 723.

drastic changes in the late nineteenth century that affected its citizenry and the texture of everyday existence and social interaction there.

Boston's middle class, thus far left out of this accounting of post-war developments, was the last holdout to embrace the city's post-bellum commercial eating venues, as will be explored next. While both the elite and working classes made dining out a central component of their lives in the city, the middle class remained critical and abstaining throughout the 1870s. They saw in public dining many of the most disconcerting aspects of their modern society: the triumph of the market and compromise of the domestic sphere, challenge of traditional gender roles, widening gaps in wealth distribution, and the increasingly heterogeneous nature of the city's population. The middle class was right to see these developments in commercial dining; for dining out was, indeed, inextricably implicated in each of these developments—if not as a cause than certainly as a reflection of all of them. Though unable to reform urban society, middle-class Bostonians instead soon used the mounting influence of their class to carve out space within the metropolis' assortment of eateries that was more palatable to their own values and tastes and that even helped them to make sense of the growing heterogeneity and cultural segmentation of their city.

Chapter 6
Finding a Seat: The Middle Class Embraces Nighttime Commercial Dining

In William Dean Howells' 1881 novel *A Modern Instance*, Bartley and his new wife Marcia, recently eloped to Boston from the Maine countryside, take a room at Mrs. Nash's lodging house for four dollars a week. Bartley is a journalist and, though currently poor, the pair aspires to the middle class. They cringe at the stigma associated with residing in a lodging house but recognize they can live more frugally there taking meals in the city's inexpensive commercial eateries than would be possible paying for weekly board or keeping house themselves.[232]

For their first dinner out, Bartley and Marcia venture to a place where "a mass of bills of fare" is tacked to the door. Inside, doilies "coarse and red" are laid upon tabletops set with "thick and heavy" plates and "thinly plated" knives and forks.

> The place was hot, and full of confused smells of cooking; all the tables were crowded, so that they found places with difficulty, and pale, plain girls, of the Provincial and Irish-American type, in fashionable bangs and pull-backs, went about taking the orders, which they wailed out toward a semicircular hole opening upon a counter at the farther end of the room; there they received the dishes ordered, and hurried with them to the customers, before whom they laid them with a noisy clacking of the heavy crockery.

Marcia notes that most of the venue's patrons dine on "hulled corn and milk" and baked beans are another popular dish. She does not seem to mind her experience in the eatery but her husband is embarrassed by the venue's low-class character—although clearly,

[232] William Dean Howells, *A Modern Instance* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.1910), pp. 173-4.

with its doilies and silverware, it is better than some others in Boston. Bartley vows that one day soon he will take his wife to the elegant Parker House for supper instead. [233]

Though they never become the archetypal, respectable middle-class family, Bartley and Marcia eventually do improve their circumstances in Boston. Bartley makes enough money that they are able to move out of the lodging house and rent a place of their own. They both take to dressing fashionably and Bartley joins a private club while Marcia and their new baby enjoy vacations in the country to escape the city in the height of the summer heat. But while Bartley still assures Marcia that he will one day take her to the Parker House, he continues to put off doing so because he wants to wait until he can manage it "in style." Bartley realizes that despite his moderate success, Parker's is still beyond their middle-class means and the couple would be at a humiliating disadvantage there compared to wealthier patrons.[234]

In his novel, Howells never mentions whether, before their marriage breaks up, Bartley makes good on his promise to take Marcia to the Parker House for supper. But Bartley's reluctance suggests that it is likely if he and Marica had ever gone to Parker's the two of them probably would have felt as uncomfortable eating there—for reasons both cultural and economic—as they did at the inexpensive dining room with the coarse, red doilies. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, middle-class Bostonians like Marcia and Bartley became more willing to embrace nighttime commercial dining as a kind of leisure activity. They found, however, that most of the venues available did not really fit their expectations or needs. As a result, late in the century, the middle class set about carving out more suitable space for itself within the city's spectrum of evening

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[233] William Dean Howells, *A Modern Instance*, pp. 174-6.
[234] Ibid. Quote on p. 195.

eateries. In doing so the middle class increasingly made evident its cohesion and influence as a socio-economic group as it also confronted Boston's social hierarchies.

A "New" Middle Class Embraces Nighttime Commercial Dining

The massive industrialization and metropolitan development that took place in the decades after the Civil War created a Boston that was increasingly heterogeneous and complex. The middle class, too, was transformed in this process. Industrialization continued to drive many small workshops out of business. The bureaucratization of American business would do the same to smaller firms and companies. At the same time, the expansion of the service sector of the economy had the effect of creating more non-manual jobs but not ones that were necessarily particularly well-paying or that that would allow for social mobility. Thus, the "old" middle class of independent artisans, and businessmen, and the apprentices and clerks who would one day enter their ranks, was dying out.[235]

In its place a "new" middle class composed of salaried, college-educated managers and professionals gradually took shape in Boston in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Members of this new middle class were conscious of their unique skills and training and confident of their abilities. Meanwhile their elevated place in

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[235] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982); Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987); Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 8; Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Timothy R. Mahoney, "Middle-Class Experience in the United States in the Gilded Age, 1865-1900," *Journal of Urban History*, 31(March 2005): pp. 356-366.

society was secured and justified through increasingly formal entry requirements into their occupations and by their possession of college degrees.[236]

For this new middle class, home was still considered the space where its values were best fostered. Such homes were now more often located in Boston's developing middle-class suburbs of Roxbury, Dorchester, and West Roxbury. As perpetuation of middle-class socio-economic position increasingly became formalized through education and other occupational requirements, however, antebellum notions about cultivating inner-virtue as the path to success gave way to a new faith in talent and capability. Consequently, the separation of spheres that lent the antebellum middle-class home its primacy began to seem less important. On the other hand, cultural experiences that allowed a person to navigate the forces of society gained in significance. Thus, the impulse to seek out such cultural experience, combined with the growing divide between work and leisure—and a rise in time available for the latter—made participation in commercial amusements more acceptable for middle-class Bostonians late in the century. It was still crucial, however, that these activities and the spaces in which they took place were freighted with the middle-class values of domesticity, moderation, and privacy.[237]

This transition occurred alongside the shift in meal times in urban areas that privileged evening suppers over afternoon dinners. Though they had been anxious about the growing trend of dining out in the antebellum period, middle-class Bostonians

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[236] Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, ch. 5; Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education* (New York: Norton, 1978).

[237] On middle-class suburbs see Samuel B. Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press). Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, ch. 5; Timothy R. Mahoney, "Middle-Class Experience in the United States in the Gilded Age."

became more inclined to participate in it as a form of evening commercial leisure and an opportunity to engage society by the 1880s and 1890s. Moreover, for the growing number of middle-class residents living in suburbs, dining out in the evening either before or after also going to the theater or some other form of urban amusement proved increasingly convenient.[238]

But a problem remained. Even as eating out became more acceptable to middle-class Bostonians, they found that the dining venues available to them in the evening did not really meet their new needs as patrons. While a selection of eateries, segregated by gender, had catered specifically to middle-class diners at mid-day since the 1830s, the middle class now desired venues where both genders—indeed, where whole families—could dine together after nightfall. The vast majority of existing, post-bellum nighttime eateries accommodated either an exclusively working-class or elite clientele, for there had previously not been sufficient demand among the middle class for proprietors to seek their patronage during evening hours. Most importantly, members of the new middle class expected the dining establishments they frequented with their families and the experiences they had in these venues to reinforce their values and uphold their unique place in society. Lacking such establishments, middle-class Bostonians late in the century set about to modify the city's nighttime dining options and make them more appetizing to their class group.

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[238] On this shift in mealtimes, see the previous chapter. Samuel Warner has found that 167,000 new suburbanites found homes in Boston's emerging middle-class suburbs of Dorchester, Roxbury, and West Roxbury between 1870 and 1900. Samuel B. Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, p. 35.

Elite Dining and Middle-Class Efforts to Reform It

Boston's high-end dining venues had held certain allure for the middle class since the antebellum period. Occasionally, young, middle-class men had ventured to such places in the evening hours when they were free from the constraints of work and everyday associations and wished to experiment in social climbing. Dining in an elite setting was an opportunity for these men to demonstrate they could replicate all of the refined behaviors that justified and explained the more privileged position of certain members of society. After all, the antebellum middle class fully believed the income and prestige gaps between itself and the upper class were traversable and successful imitation of upper-class rituals suggested that the ranks might indeed one day be closed. Moreover, as these refined venues were ostensibly available to anyone who could pay the bill rather than restricted according to birth, all patrons were supposedly equals within the restaurant setting. That said, it was still true that mastery of the elaborate social codes and the high prices such venues charged could prove quite onerous for middle-class patrons.[239]

By the 1880s and 1890s, as middle-class men as well as women and their families looked to eat supper out more regularly, they first tried to blend in within these same elite establishments. But by this time, the differences in income between middle-class and truly rich residents of Boston were growing steeper. Moreover, the dining rituals observed in first-class eateries had become even more elaborate and costly as affluent Bostonians continued to use them to display their deepening concentrations of wealth and *savoir vivre*. The new middle class now began to complain that, more than ever, visiting

[239] Doris Elizabeth King, "The First-Class Hotel and the Age of the Common Man," *The Journal of Southern History* 23(May 1957): pp. 173-88.

these venues only highlighted the widening disparities between the upper and middle classes and put middle-class patrons at a decided disadvantage. [240]

Indeed, Boston's most expensive venues were becoming increasingly inaccessible for the middle class during this period. For instance, entrées at Parker's were now upwards of fifty to sixty cents (around thirteen dollars in today's terms). All side dishes were served *à la carte* and had to be ordered and paid for separately. And so did alcohol. Not a single wine was listed on Parker's menu in the 1880s for less than $1.25 (over twenty-seven dollars today) and most were far more than that. Clearly, a dinner for two could quickly add up to be prohibitive in its cost for middle-class patrons. The additional expense of bringing children (unwelcome in elite venues anyway) was generally out of the question despite the fact that the middle class preferred family mealtimes even when dining out. Newer, more fashionable restaurants like Ober's Restaurant Parisian were even more costly than old stand-bys like Parker's.[241]

Fostered by a burgeoning culinary press, there was also a more focused interest in "the gourmet" within elite circles in late-nineteenth-century urban America that played out in well-appointed commercial dining rooms. No longer was it enough to order items (even expensive ones) indiscriminately from the bill of fare to gain cultural capital; diners

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[240] Stephan Thermstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). Michael Kammen argues that it was in the 1870s that elite Americans began to exclude the masses from "high culture." Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999). Lawrence Levine places the turning point about twenty years earlier. Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in Americ*a (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[241] Butolph Menu Collection. Menu, "The Parker House," The Parker House, Boston, MA, 1887. Digital Image 474285, Locke-Ober bill of fare reprinted in the *Boston Globe*, 2 March 1872, p. 2.

were expected to know how to compose a complete meal that would showcase their epicurean knowledge and good taste. This included selecting proper wine pairings for each course. Thus, for a middle-class couple (or family) to enter a refined restaurant and frugally choose boiled tongue as main entrées, (if such a dish was even available) forgoing wine and sharing dessert, would have been a mortifying experience—even if the couple had otherwise performed all social rituals perfectly—rather than an empowering one.[242]

The middle class was further disadvantaged in the city's formal dining venues by its lack of familiarity with French cuisine and menu terms, both of which were standard in such establishments by late in the century. Given the fact that middle-class Bostonians could afford to dine out in pricey restaurants only infrequently, French food remained alien to most of them. French methods of cooking were typically not employed in middle-class domestic kitchens. And, as the French language was not yet a staple of American schools', a menu written in French would have been completely indecipherable to most middle-class people. Thus, when confronted by a bill of fare consisting mostly if not entirely of French terms, a middle-class diner faced the intimidating prospect of attempting to interpret it, stumbling further over pronunciations, to order dishes he was more than likely unfamiliar with as well. And whether the meal he came up with would

[242] Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables: American Restaurant Culture and the Rise of the Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2005), p. 72. In his dissertation, Haley develops a similar argument about the many ways in which the middle class was disadvantaged in elite urban eateries, although he places his argument somewhat later in time.

be pleasing to his particular appetite—let alone "epicurean" in the opinion of society—was usually left to chance.[243]

On the other hand, affluent Bostonians, who did regularly dine in establishments where French food was the rage and who may have even employed specially trained domestic cooks to prepare this cuisine for them at home as well, were long used to French fare and terms on a menu. (And, even, with pronouncing those terms.) Many had also taken trips to France, further contributing to their comfort level in French restaurants. The possibility they would embarrass themselves was thus far less than it was for the middle class.

As in earlier periods, guidebooks continued to try and teach intricacies of behavior and culture to those unfamiliar with them. Books like *The French Cook*, first published in 1828, and *Menus Made Easy; or, How to Order Dinner and Give the Dishes their French Names*, available in the 1880s, attempted to decode French terms and foods for their readers. A steady stream of newspaper and periodical articles similarly offered advice on the subject of French cuisine in Boston. Meanwhile, numerous etiquette manuals provided information about how to conduct oneself according to the latest standards of fashionable propriety at the public table. Authors warned that elite restaurants adhered to stricter standards and used more complex place settings than most middle-class homes. One guide cautioned ominously, "You are liable, at a hotel, … to be

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[243] Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables*, p. 211. Haley also makes the point that the French used on American menus all too often disregarded accent marks, truncated phrases, combined parts of French words with parts of other French words or American words, and, even made words up entirely. Thus, even familiarity with French was unlikely to help one avoid confusion in reading "menu French" and the only way to really feel confident in deciphering a menu was to have actual experience dining in the venue. See Ibid., pp. 47-8. See also Alfred Hennequin, "Do Americans Need to Speak French?" *Education* 15(1895), p. 171.

placed in a position in which ignorance of dinner etiquette will be very mortifying." The author did, of course, offer suggestions to ameliorate the potential for such humiliation but only practice would truly eliminate it and, again, such practice came with a hefty price tag.[244]

The aspect of refined dining with which the middle class was at the greatest disadvantage compared to more affluent Bostonians was in feeing, or tipping, the waiters. Originally a European custom, Americans had scorned feeing throughout the antebellum period as an aristocratic tradition unsuited for a republican country. But after the Civil War it gradually caught on. A Parker House waiter interviewed in 1884 by the *Boston Globe* reported that a couple from "one of the suburban towns" who dined at Parker's every Saturday evening tipped him, as their regular waiter, at least "half a dollar and often more." The waiter went on to say that while some customers offered tips only at Christmas, … the 'regulars' generally pay their waiters anywhere from $1 to $3 a week."

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[244] Louis Eustache Ude, *The French Cook* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey, 1828). Nancy Lake Clements, *Menus Made Easy; or, How to Order Dinner and Give the Dishes their French Names*, (London: n.p., ca. 1880). Arthur Schlesinger, *Learning How to Behave: A Historical Study of Social Etiquette Books* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 18. His numbers regarding annual publications are undoubtedly incomplete. See also Jonathon Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), ch. 6 for a reading of nineteenth-century table manners as prescribed by etiquette manuals. For contemporary advice for restaurant dining, see S. Annie Frost, *Frost's Laws and by-Laws of American Society: A Condensed but Thorough Treatise on Etiquette and its Usages in American, Containing Plain and Reliable Directions for Deportment in Every Situation in Life* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1869), p. 59; Robert Tomes, *The Bazar Book of Decorum: The Care of the Person, Manners, Etiquette, and Ceremonials….* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1870); Frank Tyron Charles, "Don'ts for the Table," *What to Eat* (February 1897), p. 164. Quote from *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Republican Etiquette and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (New York: Samuel R. Wells, 1872), pp. 83-4.

This comment underscores that those who could afford to eat out regularly could also most afford to tip.[245]

Tipping became popular because of the special benefits it secured the tipper; it was yet another vehicle for the affluent to demonstrate their wealth and prestige. By the late nineteenth century, a steady stream of quarters (or more) ensured customers of elite venues a score of possible fringe benefits courtesy of their satisfied waiter. An article in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* in 1888 recounted a reporter's experience at one of the city's most opulent (though unnamed) hotel dining rooms. According to the reporter, a man, whom the reporter referred to simply as "Moneybags," and his wife entered the hotel's dining room and were greeted by its headwaiter. The man then placed twenty-five dollars in the headwaiter's palm and pointed to the table at which he wished to be seated. Though the table was already occupied, the reporter watched as the waiter coolly walked over to its current inhabitants and informed them he would have to reseat them elsewhere. The reporter went on, "After being seated, Moneybags would send $25 to the head cook and he would send better prepared dainties. ... Of course, one of the best waiters in the room would be detailed to wait on Moneybags and his wife and he, too, must be liberally fee'd…." Though this was an extreme and probably fictional example, countless additional newspaper stories confirmed that tipping secured such benefits as extraordinarily friendly greetings, expedited service, and even superior quality food.[246]

Middle-class patrons who could barely afford the fare at luxury-hotel dining rooms had even more difficulty coming up with extra quarters—let alone twenty-five

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[245] Tipping also gradually caught on in lower class venues as well. *Boston Globe*, 9 February 1884, p. 8.

[246] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 25 September 1888, p. 2. *Boston Globe* 15 March 1885, p. 12.

dollars—with which to tip their waiter. Consequently, the middle class in Boston complained that it not only missed out on the advantages tipping secured, but were also actually discriminated against for failing to tip. As the *Boston Daily Advertiser* surmised in 1886, "the customer who neglects to give a bonus to the waiter who serves him may be well served once, but never again."[247]

Members of the middle class soon came to deeply resent those practices of refined eateries that put them at a disadvantage compared to wealthier patrons. Such rituals seemed, to the middle class that they disadvantaged at least, backward, wasteful, and coercive. Open commercial interactions, the middle class felt, should foster republican values by providing a more equal basis for social interaction. Instead, within the elite restaurant, money conferred power and prestige. Indignant, the middle class led a campaign to eradicate those aspects of high-end dining that they found most challenging to their values and worldview. These included, above all, the widespread popularity of French cuisine and tipping practices.

Thus, middle-class spokesmen ignited an older argument that called French food un-republican and urged once again for the development of a truly American cuisine to replace food with aristocratic origins from Europe. Buoyed by the North's recent victory in the Civil War, and filled with nostalgia for a simpler past, these reformers suggested that, in fact, America already had such a cuisine in traditional New England dishes like baked beans, Indian pudding, and clam chowder. Belief in the North as the cradle of republicanism further fortified their claims. Middle-class writers thus strongly encouraged elite dining venues to abandon what they saw as the pretension and even

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[247] *Boston Globe*, 15 July 1872, p. 10. *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 6 December 1886, p. 4.

immorality of French food and advocated for simple, well-cooked New England dishes. These writers added that such fare would have the supplementary benefit of lowering prices as less expensive ingredients could be used and there would be no need to employ expensive French-trained chefs to do the cooking. These measures would also be less wasteful and, above all, would make the middle class more able to afford to dine in these places as well as more comfortable.[248]

The middle class used Boston's newspapers to vent equally strong feelings and recommendations regarding the tipping of waiters. In fact, middle-class opposition to feeing was only one part of a more complicated tension regarding the relationship between a middle-class diner and his or her waiter. On one hand, most middle-class Bostonians felt embarrassed by and even shame for the degraded position waiters put themselves in when they accepted fees (and, possibly, by waiting in the first place). On the other hand, the middle class also resented the power waiters were capable of exerting over them in refined dining venues. After all, waiters in elite eateries, members of the working class and frequently black, were nearly always below their patrons in socio-economic position. And yet, waiters wielded considerable influence over their middle-class customers. It was the waiter who assigned tables at fashionable restaurants. A waiter could delay in bringing expensive dishes out to patrons until the dishes were cold

[248] On the creation of a "New England" culinary identity, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), ch. 5. For example: *Boston Globe*, 22 November 1885.

and spoiled. Moreover, a waiter could provide polite, deferential assistance and service or he could be extremely rude, embarrassing guests.[249]

Meanwhile, most middle-class people during this period felt that confronting a waiter about his poor behavior and insisting on their advantage over him would only put their own respectability at risk. They thus felt powerless against him. As William Dean Howells explained in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly*, the waiter was "a small tyran[t] … who… bullied … [Americans] fearlessly."[250]

Waiters' power also came from their greater experience with the social rituals of elite eateries (gleaned either from training the proprietor had provided or simply from working there) compared with most middle-class patrons. For instance, despite their lower class status, waiters were usually more familiar with French dishes (and pronunciations). They were also more likely to have learned how to compose a complete supper from first course to last that would win the approval of even the most presuming "bon vivant." And experienced waiters would have felt confident in choosing wine pairings if for nor other reason than they had seen it done again and again, night after night. A kind waiter, or one who felt confident he would earn a good tip, might make his knowledge available to his customers in the form of quiet assistance in translating the bill of fare and offering advice on side dishes and wines. Or, he might choose to withhold it, meanwhile haughtily passing judgment on the foibles his customers made. Lacking coffers deep enough to balance out this power struggle, the middle class lashed out at

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[249] On feeing, see, for example, the *Boston Globe,* 3 August 1884, p. 4.; "Feeing Waiters," *The Cook*, 13 July 1872, p. 10. On the discomfort caused to middle-class patrons by tipping, see the *Boston Globe*, 20 June 1885; the *Christian Recorder*, 24 August, 1882; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 8 December 1884.

[250] W.D. Howells, "By Horse-car to Boston," *Atlantic Monthly* 25(January 1870), p. 120.

waiters of elite venues, making them the butt of numerous jokes and caricaturing them in newspaper columns as foolishly conceited and aristocratic figures. The race of many of the city's waiters further compounded the scorn with which they were held and the "uppity" black waiter became a source of particular middle-class disdain.[251]

Late in the century, middle-class Bostonians began to call for the elimination of feeing waiters altogether, which they hoped would help level the playing field between themselves and wealthier patrons. One authority called tipping "an evil system" as well as "extortion," noting, "first-class" places were the worst offenders, as tipping was the most egregious there. In 1885, a letter to the editor in the *Boston Globe* stated firmly that proprietors of dining venues in Boston should institute policies of '"No feeing allowed."' But the practice continued despite middle-class objections. Likewise, French cuisine remained *de rigeur* in Boston's high-class eateries well after the turn of the century. And so, realizing that despite its protests, refined dining establishments would continue to disadvantage them and undermine their position and values, middle-class Bostonians began to turn elsewhere in the city to have their new evening commercial dining requirements met. [252]

New Dining Options for the Middle-Class

The middle class in Boston had long been critical of working-class eateries, which they considered dirty and believed encouraged slovenly manners and wanton social

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[251] For example: *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 25 September 1888 and 11 August 1891; *Christian Recorder*, 2 February 1888 and 8 July 1886; *Boston Globe*, 10 January 1886 and 24 February 1889.

[252] "Feeing Waiters," *The Cook*, 13 July 1885, p. 10. *Boston Globe*, 20 June 1885, p. 4. The practice probably continued because it benefited both proprietors and affluent customers.

relationships. Since mid-century, the middle class had grown increasingly vocal in its condemnation. Like the upper class, however, working-class residents of Boston generally disregarded middle-class critiques of their eating venues. But beginning in the mid-1880s, middle-class criticism, when combined with growing middle-class willingness to engage in commercial dining as a leisure activity given the right conditions, encouraged more proprietors to take note of exactly what the middle class desired when it came to eating out. Some hoped to court the middle-class as a more profitable source of clientele than their regular customers by sprucing up their eateries to fit middle-class expectations.

Middle-class Bostonians may have felt uncomfortable dining at extravagant upper-class venues. They expected, however, a higher level of service and atmosphere than were available in most working-class dining establishments or than they were willing to tolerate at mid-day, when convenience rather than amusement and pleasure motivated dining out. Venues hoping to draw the middle class needed to be suitable for women to patronize as well as men. The accommodation of children would also become increasingly important to middle-class people looking to preserve the sanctity of the family meal (and unable to regularly afford child care). (Again, elite eateries were typically not suitable for children.) Individual tables and not the communal "boards" and benches that characterized working-class venues were required. Finally, middle-class customers also expected clean tablecloths and napkins (no oilcloths, please), a pleasant, spacious environment, polite service, and good, affordable food.

A number of eating establishments offering exactly these characteristics began to open in Boston throughout the 1880s, 1890s, and beyond. Many were new eateries that

went into business specifically to seek the new middle-class patronage. Many others, however, seem to have been formerly working-class establishments that had undergone various improvements. For instance, some proprietors cleared out boards and replaced them with separate tables bedecked with tablecloths at which middle-class families could dine together apart from strangers. These proprietors often moved their businesses out of basement rooms in out of the way streets into larger, well-lit spaces on main thoroughfares close to additional urban attractions like theaters and shopping districts. They employed more waiters—often young, pleasant-looking, white women—hung pictures on their walls, invested in higher quality tableware, and eliminated the napkin rack in favor of regularly washing their linens. In return, such proprietors were able to raise prices slightly and were often rewarded with a middle-class trade that was far more stable and profitable than that of venues with a working-class patronage.[253]

The most surprising aspect of this development was middle-class Bostonians' willingness and, even, enthusiasm to patronize the city's small but growing number of ethnic eateries, described in the previous chapter, once these venues, too, had made the requisite reforms to reflect middle-class dining expectations. Xenophobic sentiments ran high in the face of expanding immigrant populations in the post-war period. The working classes, for their part, certainly did not participate in cross-ethnic dining. Moreover, middle-class reformers in Boston often attempted to homogenize ethnic newcomers by

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[253] On middle-class insistence on clean linens and tables set wide apart, see the *Boston Globe*, 24 February 1878 and 8 August 1881. An article that appeared in 1882 in the *New York Times* noted that only the cheapest restaurants sat patrons at "boards" instead of tables. "The Restaurant System," p. 3. Proprietors also chose to remove counters late in the century to appease liquor licensing agents that cracked down on "public bars" that did not also serve food as mandated by state law. See the *Boston Globe*, 12 May 1890, p. 8 and Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983) pp. 53-4.

encouraging them to trade their native dishes for traditional American fare. And yet the middle class, overall, proved receptive to ethnic commercial dining venues because these establishments were so willing to cater to its specific needs. Ethnic eateries had the additional benefit of providing exactly the kind of modern, cosmopolitan cultural experiences within the increasingly diverse city that the middle class was hoping to realize by seeking out commercial leisure. Indeed, a number of ethnic eateries in late-nineteenth-century Boston became sites of multi-cultural interaction and acceptance—even appreciation—of cultural difference so long as this difference remained in its proper place.[254]

For instance, German beer gardens where entire families were welcome and where sausages, sauerkraut, and "pungent cheeses" were served up in large, inexpensive quantities had existed in Boston since the antebellum period. But in the last decades of the nineteenth century they became favored middle-class haunts. These venues often provided the added entertainment of a house band that played both German and American songs and tables situated on outdoor patios where children could play as their parents looked on. Beer flowed freely in these establishments but hard liquor was rarely available. Overall, German eateries were known to be decorous spaces where German immigrants and native-born Americans ate alongside one another affably.[255]

Even more unfamiliar Italian fare also steadily gained middle-class acceptance as immigrants from the Sicily and Campania regions of Italy settled in Boston's North End

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[254] Catherine Cocks finds a similar development regarding tourist itineraries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town*.
[255] For a detailed description of a German Beer Garden, see W.D. Howells, *Their Wedding Journey* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Co, 1872), p. 109. See also the *Boston Globe,* 7 January 1894.

in the 1890s and opened dining venues specializing in southern Italian cuisine. Typically, proprietors of these eateries began by depending on the patronage of friends and fellow immigrants, huddled hungrily around one long table, to make ends meet. This early clientele nearly always consisted entirely of men who had come to America alone (in anticipation of sending for their wives later—or eventually returning to Italy) and relied on eateries to feed them. Gradually, though, some venues established particularly good reputations based on the quality of food they served. As business increased, aspiring hosts raised prices, reinvesting profits into their growing business to purchase more tables, linens and silverware. Eventually, they also moved into more fashionable rooms, sometimes leaving the North End entirely—all to encourage a "better class of patrons." If successful, a proprietor would discover that, "the small band of … polyglot intimates who gave him his first 'life'" had been "crowded out by …wealthier persons"—the middle class searching for suitable dining options.[256]

In fact, a number of Boston's Italian restaurants with their lace curtains and display of unusual vegetables in the window became known among the city's middle class as sites that served tasty foods in large helpings and for relatively reasonable prices. Italian eateries became famous by the late nineteenth century for the enormous *table d'hôte* suppers they provided that typically included soup, "small rations of meat and an unlimited supply of macaroni, spaghetti, or risotto" for only 30 cents (approximately $6.50 today) per person. The middle class felt much more comfortable paying these

[256] Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), ch. 3. Quote from "The Restaurant System," p. 3.

prices than those the city's elite restaurants charged and even proved willing to extend to waiters modest tips for good service.[257]

Indeed, the *table d'hôte* tradition (in which an entire meal from soup to dessert was served for one price) favored by Italian and most other ethnic eateries in late-nineteenth-century Boston became extremely popular with the middle class and proved key to winning middle-class patronage. As these eateries practiced it, the *table d'hôte* meal was served any time a customer wanted it (in contrast to traditional American taverns in the early 1800s where the *table d'hôte* was available only at pre-set times) and eliminated the ordeal of ordering. The kitchen simply prepared large quantities of the same dishes and waiters brought out plates loaded with food as patrons were ready for them. Proprietors preferred this approach because it helped them keep costs low and was similar to the way of cooking and serving they knew from home. Meanwhile middle-class Bostonians were especially receptive to it because it was inexpensive and saved them from having to decipher a menu listing foreign foods spelled with "impossible combinations of letters" with which they were unfamiliar anyway. Proprietors were careful to organize previously family-style meals into a succession of courses in order to further appeal to middle-class Americans' modern dining expectations.[258]

Even Boston's small number of Chinese restaurants soon adopted business strategies similar to those at successful Italian venues. By the 1890s, the growing

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[257] "The Restaurant System," p. 3. The middle class remained vocal of its discomfort regarding tipping but the practice only became more widespread. Female waiters were widely known to depend on tips to supplement their wages. For example, *Social Statistics of Working Women, Prepared by the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor* (Boston, n.p., 1901), p. 13.

[258] As one newspaper explained in 1885, the "trouble" of ordering was one that "the average American shrinks from." "The Restaurant System, p. 3. Quote from *Boston Globe*, 7 January 1984.

popularity of Chinese restaurants encouraged a steady stream of middle-class patrons into the city's Chinatown, located in the South End along Harrison Avenue between Essex and Beach. In venturing to Chinatown, middle-class patrons sought both a meal as well as a bit of adventurous ethnic "slumming." This was quite a change. For most of the nineteenth century, Bostonians had been wary of Chinese immigrants, or "the queer people" from the "Central Flowerland," as one popular periodical described them. Native-born Americans often expressed their anxiety with Chinese immigration through harsh condemnation of Chinese foods. The *Boston Investigator*, for instance, once published a bill of fare from a fictional Chinese restaurant in California that included "cat cutlet, griddled rats, dog soup, roast dog, and dog pie." These items would have turned the stomach of any American.[259]

By the mid-1880s, however, Boston's newspapers began to promote Chinese food as well as Chinese eateries making special efforts to please middle-class customers. Writers assured potential white patrons of Chinese restaurants that whatever their initial doubts about Chinese fare, they would in fact find many of Boston's Chinese eateries clean, the service in these venues attentive, and the cuisine tasty. As the *Boston Globe* explained in 1885,

> The average American when he first approaches the Chinese table does so in fear and trembling. Vague presentiments of ragouts and rats, mayonnaise of mice and similar luxuries float

[259] The number of Chinese immigrants that settled in Boston in the late nineteenth century was small. In 1880, the federal census takers recorded the names of only 121 Chinese in the city. Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants 1790-1880* (Cambridge, Belknap, 1990) p. 212. Quote from "Chinese Sketches," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 12(April 18, 1857): p. 244. Fictional bill of fare in *Boston Investigator*, 25 January 1854. For late-nineteenth-century examples, see, for example, "Barbaric Feeding," *The Cook*, 3 April 1885, p. 7; and "A Nightmare of Gastronomic Horrors," *The Cook*, 15 July 1885, p. 9.

> through his mind. Nine times out of ten he leaves the table with the conviction that he has learned something, and that the almond-eyed sons of the queue are the best cooks in the world.

After this enthusiastic endorsement, the reporter continued,

> A plain wood floor, swept and scrubbed hourly till it fairly shines; simple pine or walnut tables, small stools, crimson banners and mottoes on the walls, and a lavish display of curious vessels in racks and stands characterize one and all. …The next moment the attendant has put down in front of you a teapot filled with fresh, boiling tea, … two ebony chop-sticks, a porcelain spoon, a tiny liqeur bowl, and a saucer filled with a chocolate fluid called se-yu. [sic] This is a hybrid between salt and dilute Worcestershire sauce. [soy sauce]

Next, the reporter praised the fare in this venue, served in courses. It included cold roast chicken; fresh fish and rice; chicken soup; roast duck; "chow-chop-sue," [chop suey] described as "a ragout of chicken liver, lean pork, bamboo tip, celery bean-shoots and onion"; dried fish; steamed chopped pork; macaroni and chicken; and "dainty dumplings filled with spiced hashed meats." The writer enthused, "All the dishes are well cooked and served…." He also marveled to his readers that such a large and delicious meal—including wine or ale with each course—cost only $2.48.[260]

Clearly, several of the items this reporter listed were not traditional Chinese foods at all. Instead, they were probably offered to please American customers' tastes. The prodigious size of the meal and its arrangement into courses were likely also calculated appeals to American expectations and customs. Indeed, in the article, the reporter acknowledged that the few Chinese patrons in the restaurant did not partake of the same foods as the "whites," but rather limited themselves to more simple and conventional dishes like rice, a small piece of fish or chicken, and tea.[261]

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[260] *Boston Globe*, 19 July 1885, p. 9.
[261] Ibid.

It was not at all unusual for ethnic eateries in this period to amend their more authentic offerings in order to encourage the patronage of Americans. As another reporter surmised of ethnic eateries late in the century,

> It is a curious fact that, as the quality of the guests… improves, the national dishes disappear and the … cook shows a stronger inclination to a hybrid cuisine than to the unadulterated … dishes of his mother land."

In fact, proprietors' eagerness to please their new middle-class American customers contributed to various late-nineteenth-century culinary innovations as ethnic cooks traded some of the "highly spiced" and "garlicky" (in the case of Italian food) recipes they knew from home for flavors that were more familiar and pleasing to Americans. Sometimes these revisions also arose because of inability to procure authentic ingredients. Spaghetti and meatballs and chop suey—also known variably as "chop sui," "chop sue," and "chow-chop- sue" in Boston newspapers—were two of the most popular (and enduring) American-ethnic hybrid dishes. Thus, instead of "aristocratic" French cuisine, ethnic eateries offered middle-class patrons a taste of more humble immigrant culture but appropriately presented it as in the process of becoming at least partly American. This potential ethnic food exhibited for assimilation made it fit especially well with middle-class values.[262]

Dining in restaurants in Chinatown, or in other ethnic enclaves, then, provided more than good food. In going to Chinatown, for instance, and eating a meal, white middle-class Bostonians more than likely received a sense of superiority about, and

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[262] Ibid. "The Restaurant System," p. 3. On "chop sui," see, for example, the *Boston Globe*, 12 September 1887, p. 2 and 23 June 1889. For more on Chinese-American hybrid dishes, see Samantha Barbas, '"I'll Take Chop Suey': Restaurants as Agents of Culinary and Cultural Change," *Journal of Popular Culture* 36(April 2003): 669-686 and W.E.I. Fales, "Chinese Cookery," *Food* 1(1892): pp. 85-90.

security in, their own social identity. Indeed, this was undoubtedly a major draw of ethnic eateries for the middle class. On the other hand, dining in ethnic establishments was also an opportunity to venture to sections of the city like the South and North Ends that had been abandoned by the more well-to-do. The purpose of these visits was not moral uplift or reform, as it so often was for members of the middle class, but rather pleasure and curiosity. As such, middle-class patrons were able to get a sense of the growing diversity and wonder of their city and to feel that perhaps Boston was not as segmented as they had feared. Finally, these ethnic dining experiences more than likely allowed the middle class at least a small new sense of appreciation for foreign cultures while helping to teach them how to interact with the foreign people who prepared and served the meals they enjoyed.

Conclusion

Given their experiences in Boston's elite dining venues, it is understandable that middle-class residents came to prefer to dine elsewhere. While their inferiority to the wealthy was brought into sharp relief in expensive establishments, eateries that made special efforts to please middle-class customers were careful to honor middle-class values and make middle-class customers feel important and respected. At the same time, such venues—particularly ethnic eateries—provided middle-class patrons with exactly the kind of cultural experience they were seeking in pursuing commercial leisure by helping the middle class learn to navigate within an increasingly heterogeneous society.

Patronizing commercial eateries that sought to appeal to their particular class group became a reassuring activity for middle-class Bostonians—and indeed, for all Bostonians. After all, it allowed them to socialize with others of a similar socio-economic

position who valued similar cultural rituals and shared similar tastes. Moreover, the success of the middle class in carving out such public spaces dedicated to observing its values served to both legitimize and strengthen middle-class group identity. And finally, commercial dining provided an unparalleled opportunity to foster cosmopolitan, commercial relationships that mitigated widening cultural differences in Boston by suggesting that these differences all had a proper place.

Epilogue

In 2009, restaurants in America will provide more than 70 billion meals and snacks. On a typical day, more than 130 million people will rely on commercial dining options to provide at least one of their meals and often more than one. In fact, only 58 % of Americans cook today at all.[263]

Clearly, the scale and frequency of dining out in America has exploded since its nineteenth-century origins. But though they did it far less often, nineteenth-century Bostonians ate out for many of the same reasons Americans today do. Dining out was fast, easy and convenient—certainly more so than cooking. It was also enjoyable and it provided autonomy. Instead of having to go home to eat whatever a mother, landlady, wife, or servant had prepared, by ducking into a dining venue, a man could instead have a meal wherever and whenever he wanted it. And at this venue he could eat whatever he chose, ordering those items from the bill of fare that would satisfy his appetite and fit his pocketbook. For women, participating in commercial dining was even more liberating. Certain eateries provided public space that was safe for even elite women to use—relatively rare in nineteenth-century America. Moreover, dining venues freed women from the obligation to cook, both for themselves, in some instances, and for men who chose to dine out rather than eat at home. By the time of the Civil War and then accelerating in the twentieth century, the expanding percentage of women who worked

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[263] "Restaurant Industry: Facts at a Glance," *Restaurant.Org*, http://www.restaurant.org/research/ind_glance.cfm (accessed 24 August 2009). See also Michael Pollan, "Out of the Kitchen, onto the Couch: How American Cooking Became a Spectator Sport, and What We lost Long the Way," *The New York Times Magazine* (2 August 2009): p. 28.

for a wage would also quickly learn to appreciate the conveniences of eating out—including with their families—compared to cooking.

Thus part of a broad pattern, commercial dining in the 1800s nonetheless also reflected deepening distinctions, especially class distinctions, in society. To be sure, the venues nineteenth-century Americans patronized and the social rituals enacted in these establishments varied greatly depending on the constituency to which a particular venue catered. What is more, Bostonians looked to the eateries one patronized and the behaviors displayed while at table to justify socio-economic differences in addition to experiencing them. A taste for Potage Julienné and Carbonade of veal, dexterity with a four-tined fork, and ease in front of the waiter seemed to explain the accompanying ability to afford to dine in establishments where these customs were important. Meanwhile, the middle class came to find the rituals of high-end restaurants wasteful and, even, coercive, but still shunned the "boards," oilcloths, and hash of the low-class eating-house or dining room. Middle-class people instead looked to develop dining venues where their own values would be observed. Both the elite and middle classes believed that the manners and appetites on display in the eateries they respectively patronized made those establishments—as well as their particular class group—superior to others in the city (at least morally if not economically). For their part, the working class found convenience, fun, and community in lower-end eateries.

It is true that in twenty-first century America, industrial agriculture and a recent fascination with food culture, ironically rising concomitantly with the declining frequency of cooking, have erased at least some of the class distinctions once evident in commercial dining venues and widened the availability of certain foods. Arugula, for

instance, is now present on many salad bars when merely a decade ago, only wealthy Americans would have been able to afford this item and most would not have even known what it was. By the same token, McDonald's now serves not only Caesar Salad, but also *café latte* and balsamic vinaigrette.

Still, commercial dining in contemporary America remains riddled with socio-economic divisions just as it was in the nineteenth century. Americans also continue to believe that such dining habits reflect, as well as help to shape, important features of their society and culture. Perhaps most notably, the shift toward reliance on commercial dining that began in the 1830s and is nearly complete today is often blamed for problems as diverse as soaring obesity rates and the passing of important social and civic values that, some say, were once developed around the family dinner table.

Without question twenty-first century Americans have their own, unique concerns to grapple with when it comes to "food matters." We might all benefit, however, from the realization that at least some of these concerns have nineteenth-century origins. As the story of the rise of commercial dining in urban America demonstrates, eating is very much a practical matter. But it is also a metaphysical one. Indeed, the public appetite for meditation and identity through food and dining has precedents that reach far back into the American past. The increasing numbers of Americans dining out today continue to do so in ways that offer windows into the many differences characterizing their society.

Appendices

Appendix A: Illustrations

Appendix B: Maps

Appendix C: Tables and Charts

Abbreviations used in the appendices:

Antebellum Boston Directories =

1) *The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants, Occupations, Places of Business, and Dwelling Houses* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1830).
2) *The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants, Occupations, Places of Business, and Dwelling Houses* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1835).
3) *The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants, Occupations, Places of Business, and Dwelling Houses* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1840).
4) *The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants, Occupations, Places of Business, and Dwelling Houses* (Boston: Charles Stimpson, 1845).
5) *The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants, Occupations, Places of Business, and Dwelling Houses* (Boston: George Adams, 1850).
6) *The Boston Directory, for the Year 1855: Embracing the City Record, a General Directory of the Citizens, and a Business Directory* (Boston: George Adams, 1855).
7) *The Boston Directory: Embracing the City Record, a General Directory of the Citizens, and a Business Directory* (Boston: Adams, Sampson, & Co., 1860).

1850 Census = Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population Schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

1880 Census = Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Manuscript Population Schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. Available online from Ancestry.com, Library Edition.

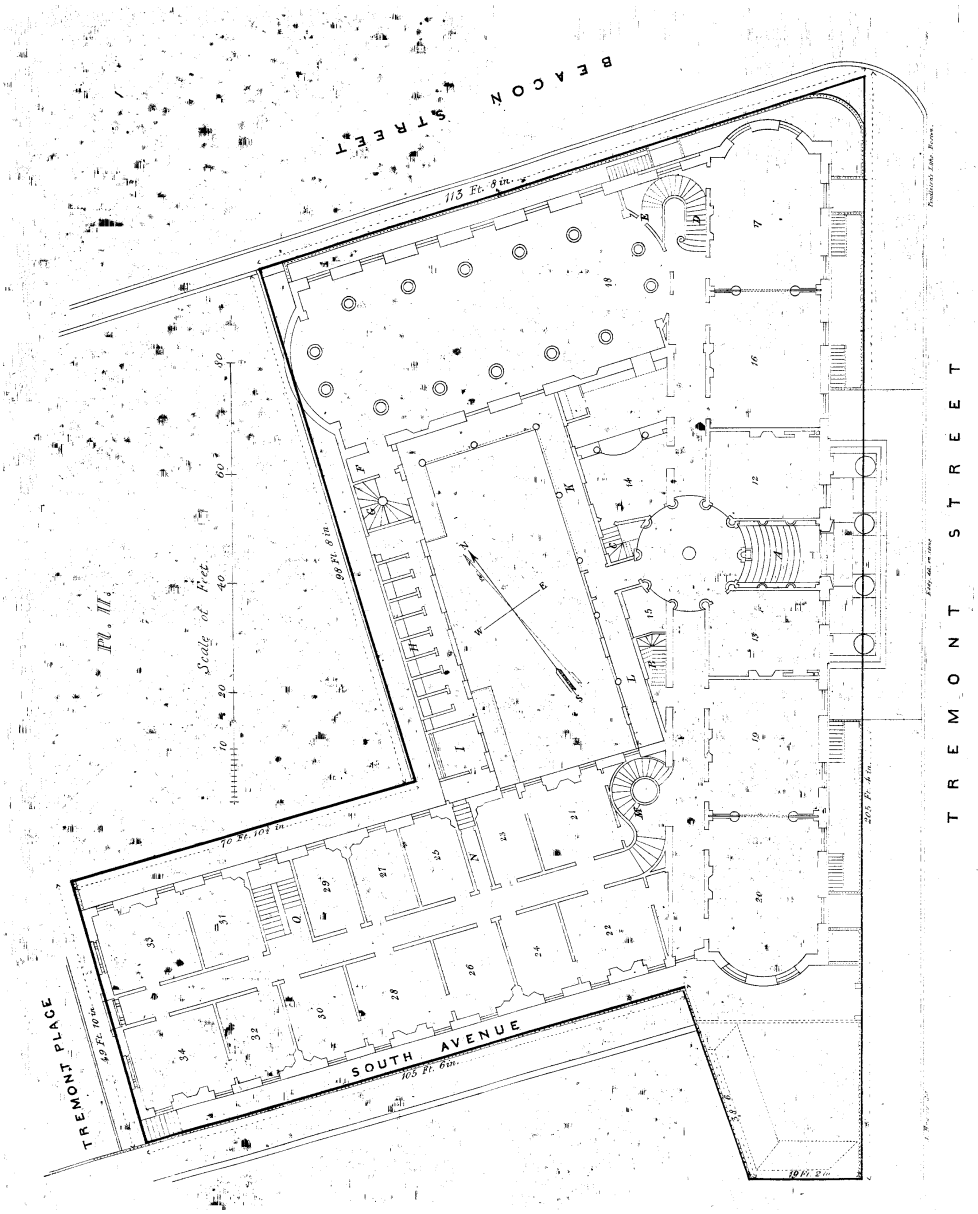
Appendix A: Illustrations

1: The Green Dragon Tavern, a tavern in colonial Boston. Note the sign, a large dragon. Otherwise, there is little to distinguish this building from a private house. From James Henry Stark, *Antique Views of Boston* (Boston: Burdette & Co., 1882).

2: The Exchange Coffee House Hotel opened in Boston in 1808 and was housed in a building designed specifically to accommodate upper-class transients and the banquets of elite Boston society. It burned to the ground in 1818. From James Henry Stark, *Antique Views of Boston*.

3: Julien's Restorator, believed to be the first restaurant in America. It was located on Milk Street in Boston. From James Henry Stark, *Antique Views of Boston*.

4: Tremont House Hotel, n.d.



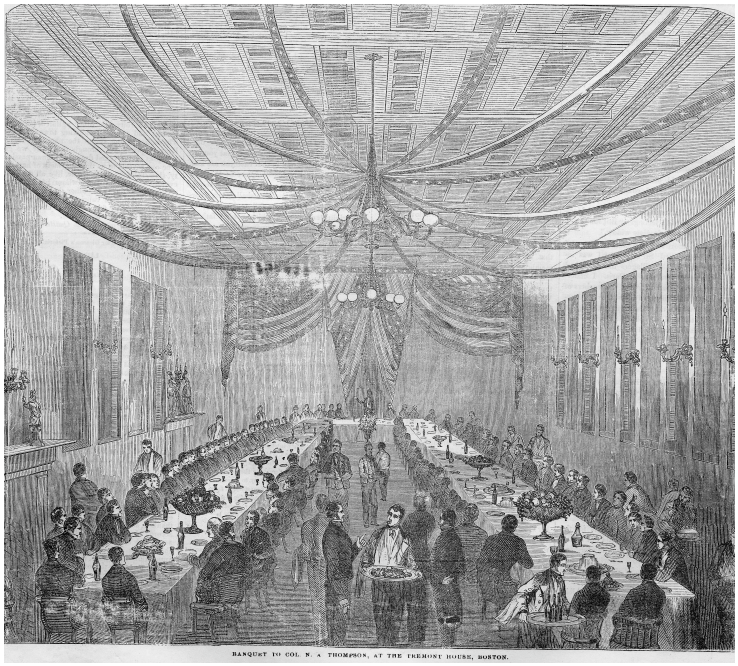
5: Floor plan of the main floor of the Tremont House. From *A Description of the Tremont House*, pp. 38-9. (See "Explanation of Plan of the Principal Floor" on the following page)

Explanation of Plan of the Principal Floor of Tremont House Hotel*

A. The principal entrance or Vestibule.
B. Staircase forming a communication between the basement story and the flat roof over the office and Piazza.
C. Staircase leading from the Office to the Servants' Hall and the wine-vaults
D. One of the principal staircases.
E. China-room.
F. Pantry
G. Staircase between the Dining-room and Kitchen, being one flight of the back stairs of the north wing.
H. Privies.
I. Depôt of table and bed linen
K. Piazza.
L. Part of the Piazza inclosed for a wash-room. [sic]
M. Principal staircase of the south wing.
N. Passage to the privies.
O. Back stairs of the south wing.
12. 13. Receiving-rooms
14. Office or Counting-room
15. Porter's Room.
16. Gentlemen's Drawing-room
17. Reading-room
18. Public Dining-room
19. Ladies' Dining-room
20. Ladies' Drawing–room.
21. 22. 28. 33. 34. Private Parlours
23. 24. 25. 26.27. 29. 30. 31. 32. Chambers.

* From *A Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830), pp. 21-22.

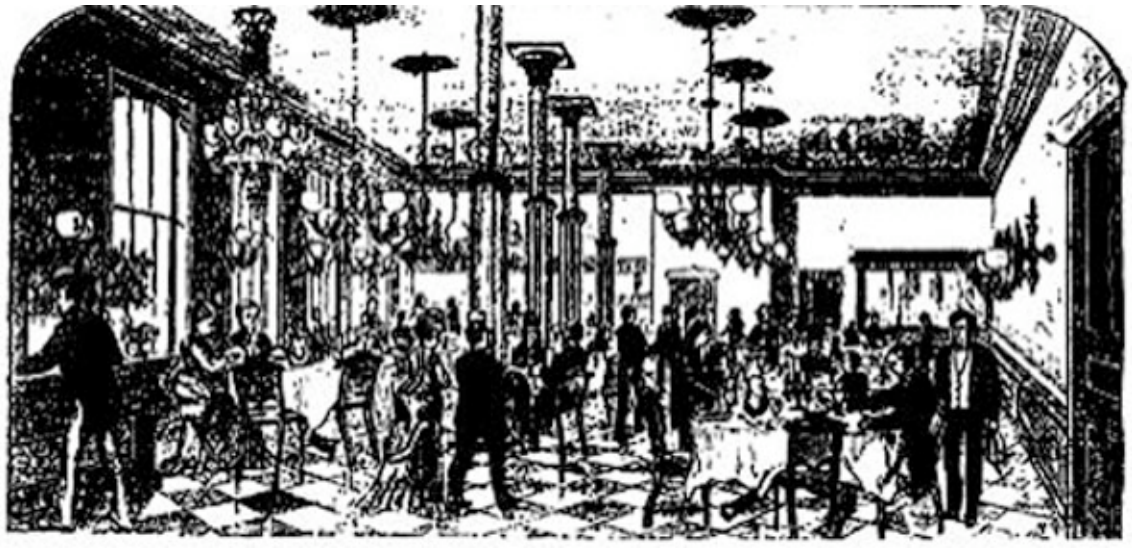
6: A black waiter rings the gong for breakfast in a Thomas Nast cartoon depicting hotel life published in *Harper's* in the 1850s.



7: A dinner at the Tremont House in 1852. *Gleason's Pictorial*, 2(February 1852): 88.

8: Front cover of *Susie Knight: or, The True History of the Pretty Waiter Girl: a Fancy Poem in Three Cantos* (New York: C. Mackey & Co, 1863). The woman pictured suggests that "waiter girls" in oyster saloons were probably prostitutes first and waiters second.

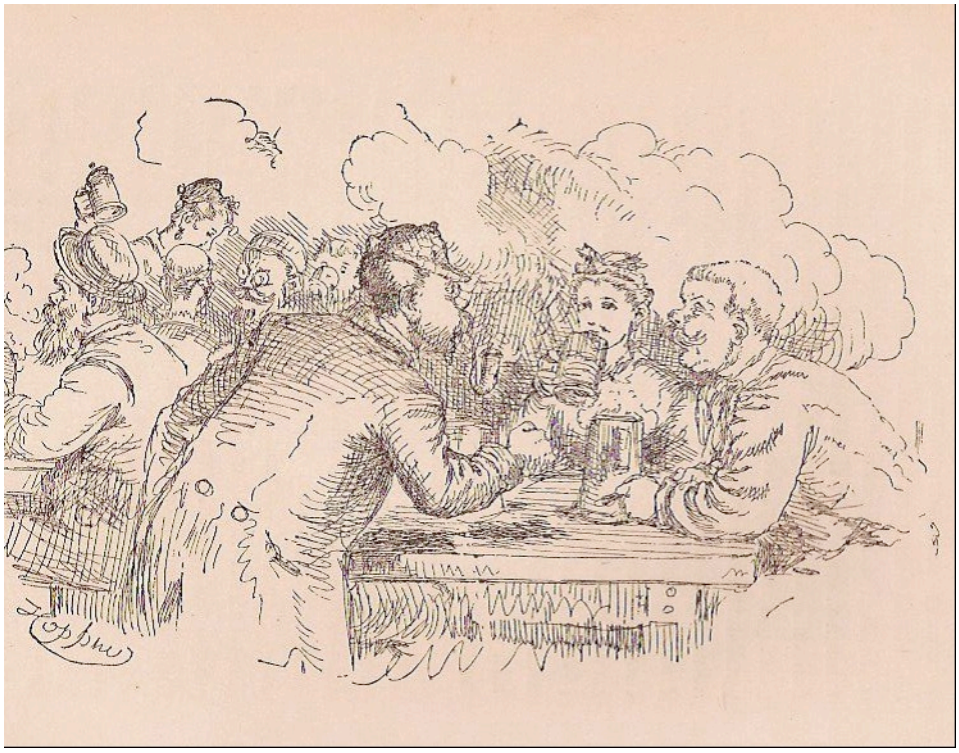
9: Image of Tunis Campbell from his book *Hotel Keepers, Headwaiters, and Housekeepers' Guide.*



10: This image of the interior of the Crawford House, taken from an ad published in the *Boston Globe* on 17 June 1875, shows men and women dining together in the main dining room.

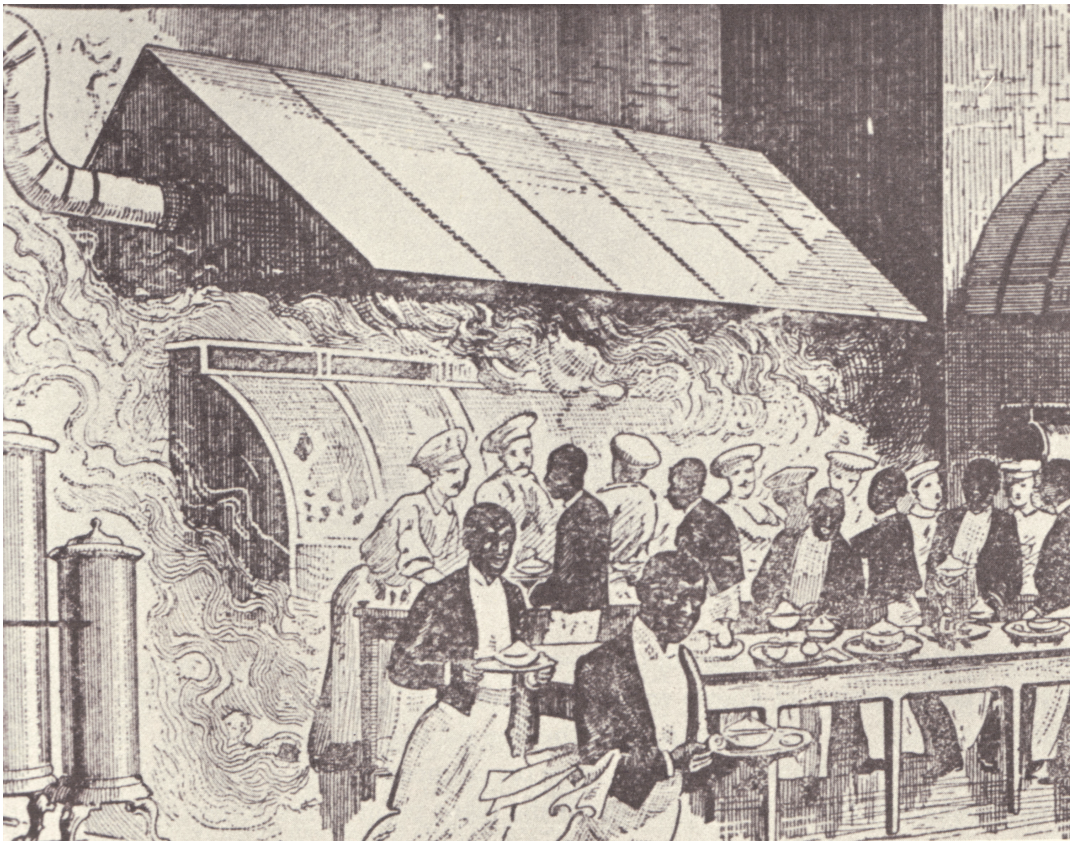
IN AN ITALIAN RESTAURANT.

11: An image of Italian immigrants eating at an Italian restaurant in the North End from the *Boston Globe*



12: The interior of a German Beer Garden published in William Dean Howells' novel *Their Wedding Journey*.

13: A depiction of a black waiter after the Civil War from William Dean Howells' novel *Their Wedding Journey*.



14: A hotel kitchen in the late nineteenth century: black waiters carry food prepared by specially trained white *chefs* to hungry patrons.

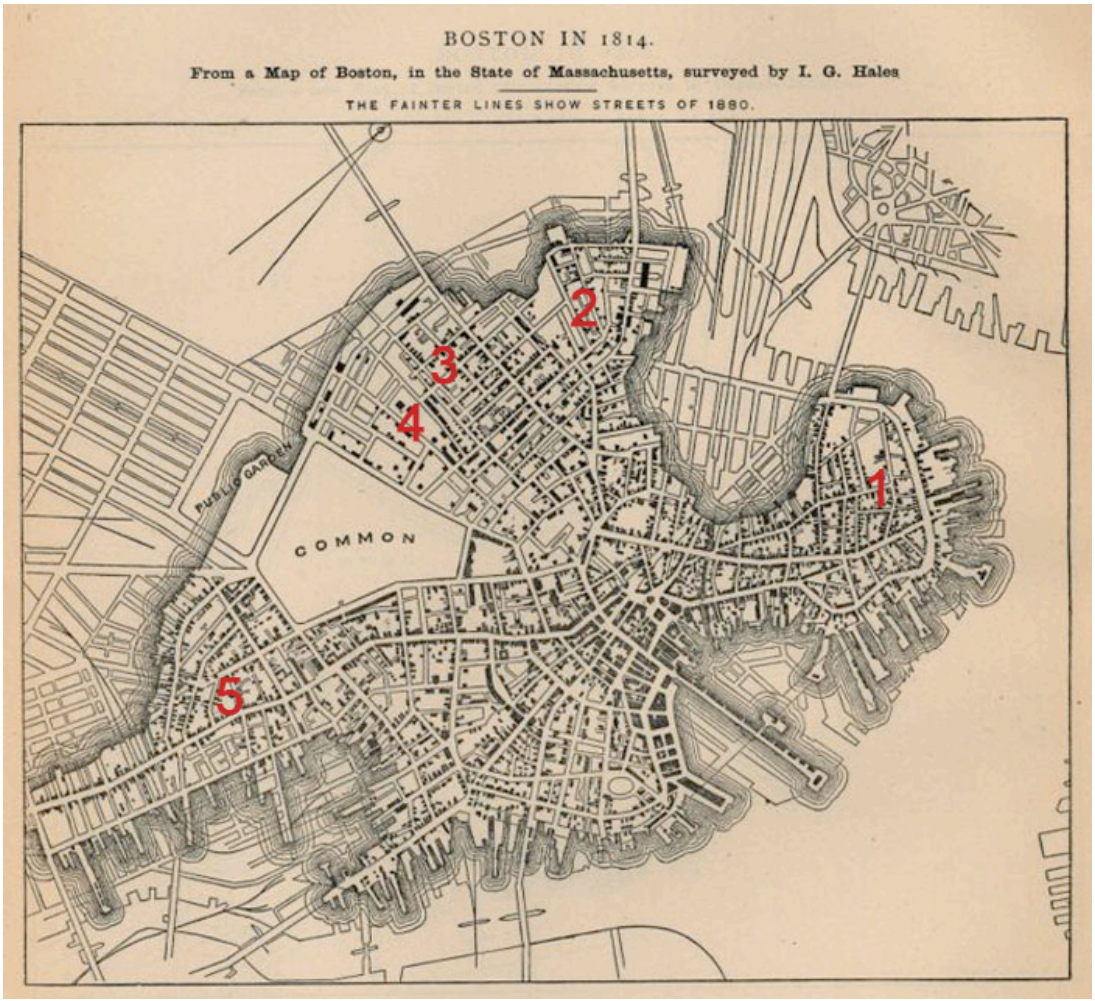
Appendix B: Maps

A Note on the Maps Used in this Dissertation

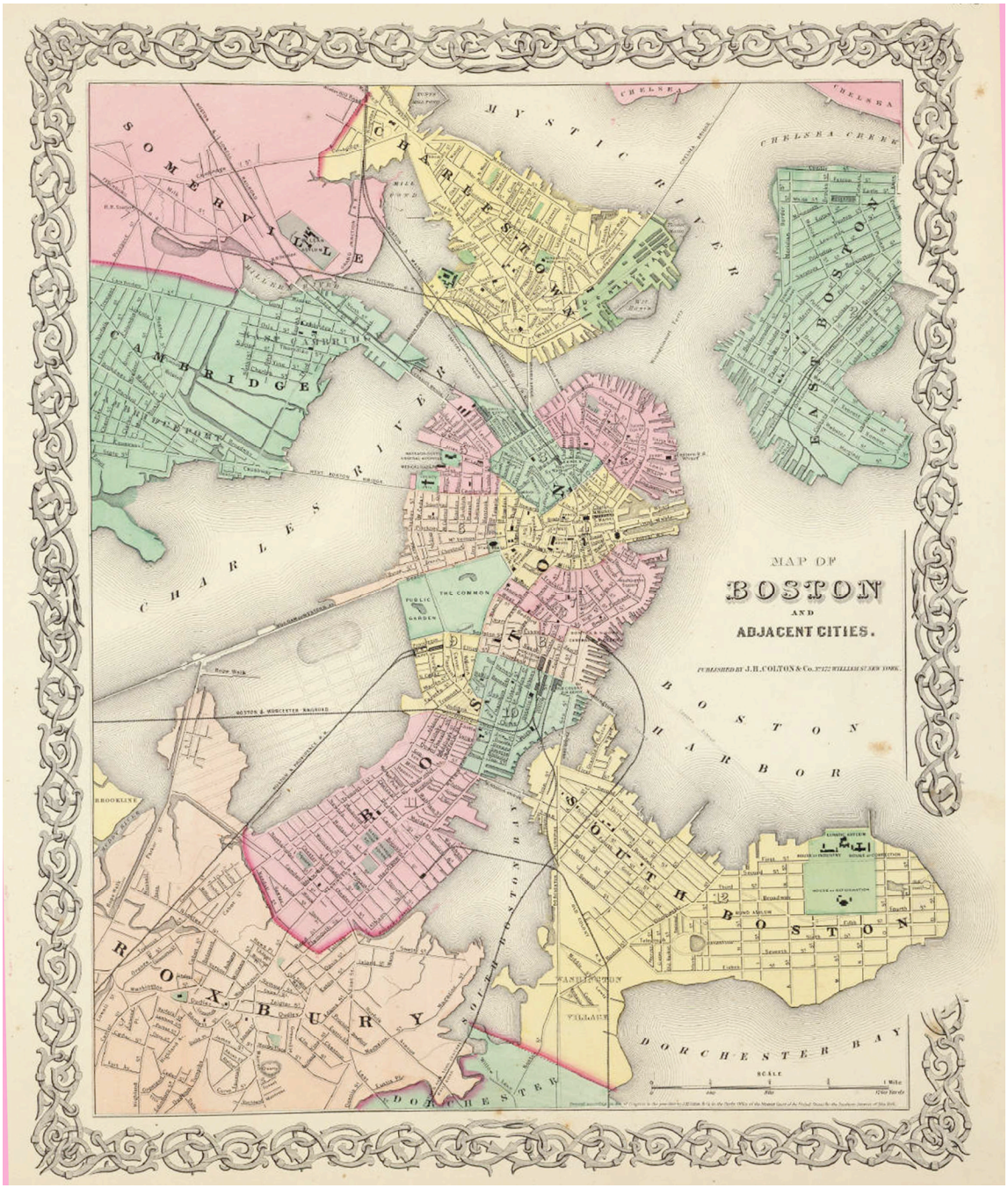
The maps included in this dissertation (excluding Maps 1 and 2) were produced with the software ArcGIS using business addresses supplied by the *Boston Directory* for 1840, 1850, and 1880. The maps include only those businesses listed in the directories; the Federal Censuses supplied addresses of private residences but did not include business addresses specifically. This means the number of eateries included in the maps is far from complete; however the maps do give a general idea of the changing concentration of commercial eateries in Boston. The historic maps were downloaded from the *David Rumsey Historic Map Collection*.

Whenever possible I geocoded the business addresses given in the directory to obtain latitude and longitude lines in order to place the establishments as accurately as possible on the relevant map. When exact addresses were not given in the directory, I manually placed them according to the information supplied (such as intersections, proximity to bridges, wharfs, etc). I did the same in instances where street names or numbering had changed significantly since the publication of the directory, making geocoding impossible. In a few cases, I was not able to locate the location of the business at all on the map and these venues have thus been omitted.

Again, I owe Michael Page of Emory University Library sincere thanks for the assistance he provided in creating these maps.



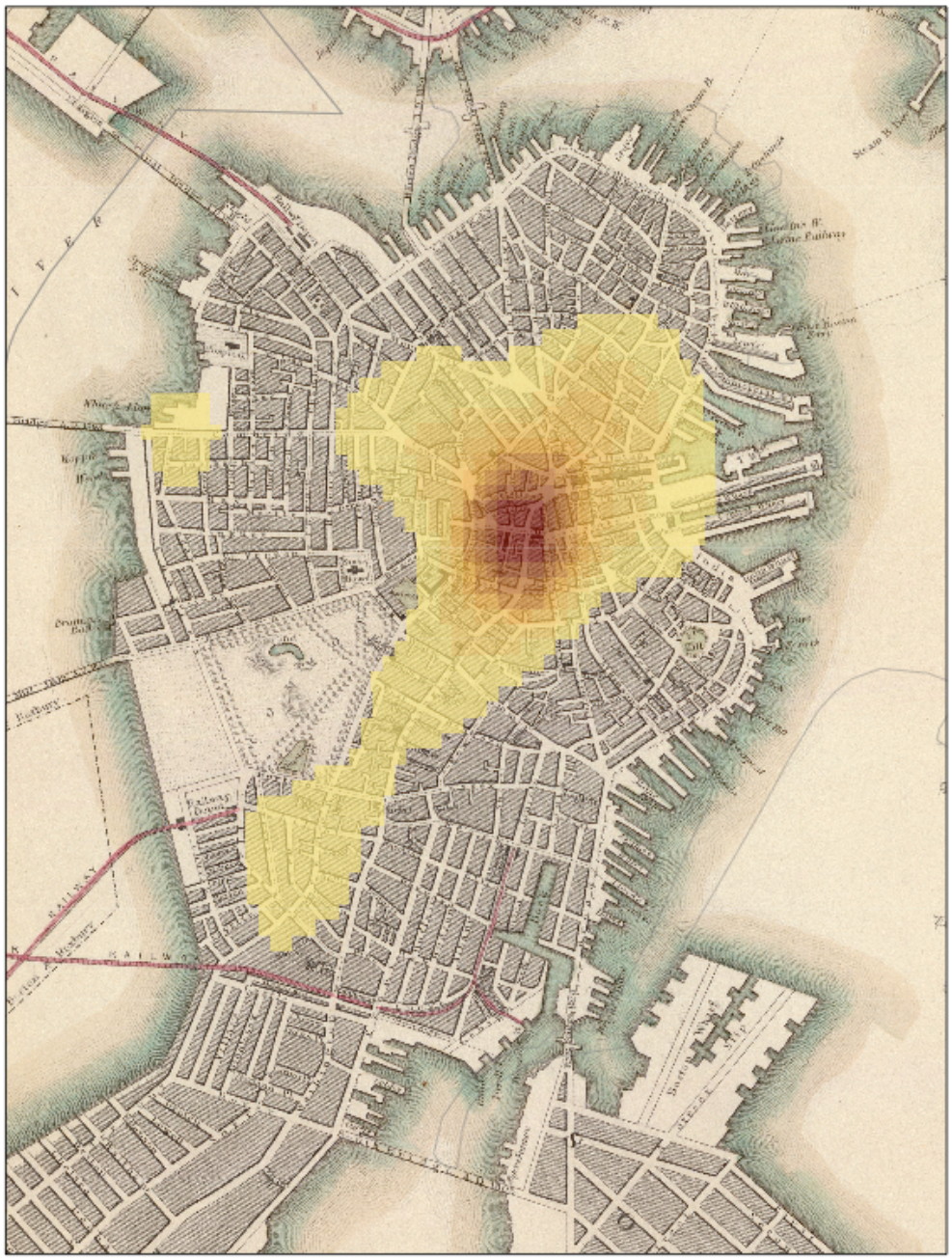
Map 1: A map of Boston indicating the city's neighborhoods in the early 1800s. Source: A Map of Boston in the State of Massachusetts, surveyed by I.G. Halea. The fainter lines show streets in 1880 after various land reclamation projects had been completed. Legend: 1- North End; 2: West End; 3: "Nigger Hill"; 4: Beacon Hill; 5: South End



Map 2: Map of Boston and Adjacent Cities, 1856. Source: Map of Boston and Adjacent Cities (New York: J.H. Colton & Co., 1856).

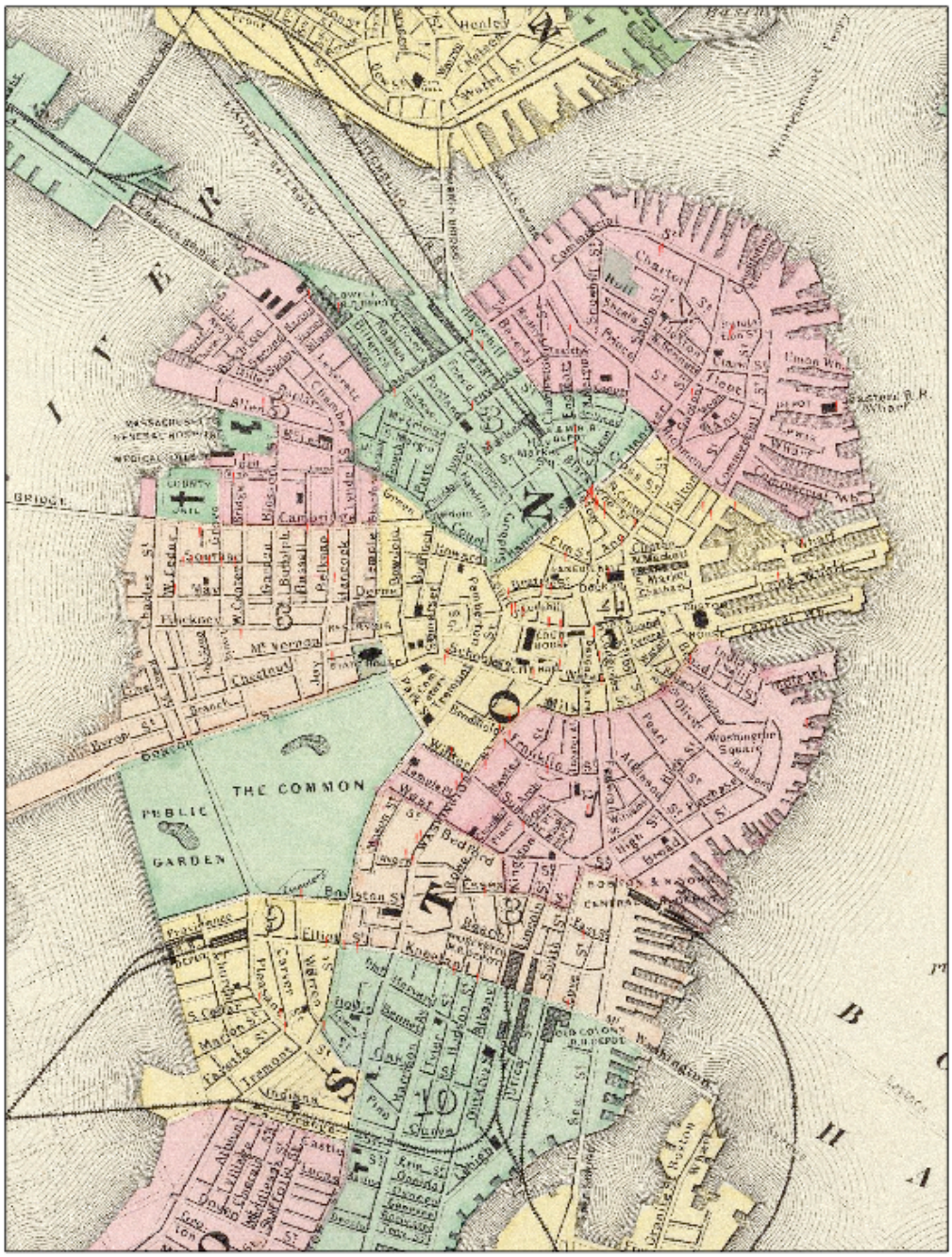
Map 3: Locations of Commercial Eateries in Boston, 1840. Source: B.R. Davies, Boston with Charleston and Roxbury (London: Chapman & Hall, 1844). Location data gathered from Boston Directory… (Boston: C. Stimpson, 1840).

* Each point on the map indicates a dining establishment



Map 4: Density of Commercial Eateries in Boston, 1840. Source: B.R. Davies, Boston with Charleston and Roxbury (London: Chapman & Hall, 1844). Location data gathered from Boston Directory… (Boston: C. Stimpson, 1840).

* Areas darker in color indicate a higher concentration of eateries.



Map 5: Locations of Commercial Eateries in Boston, 1850. Source: Map of Boston and Adjacent Cities (New York: J.H. Colton & Co.,1856). Location data gathered from Boston Directory… (Boston: George Adams, 1850).

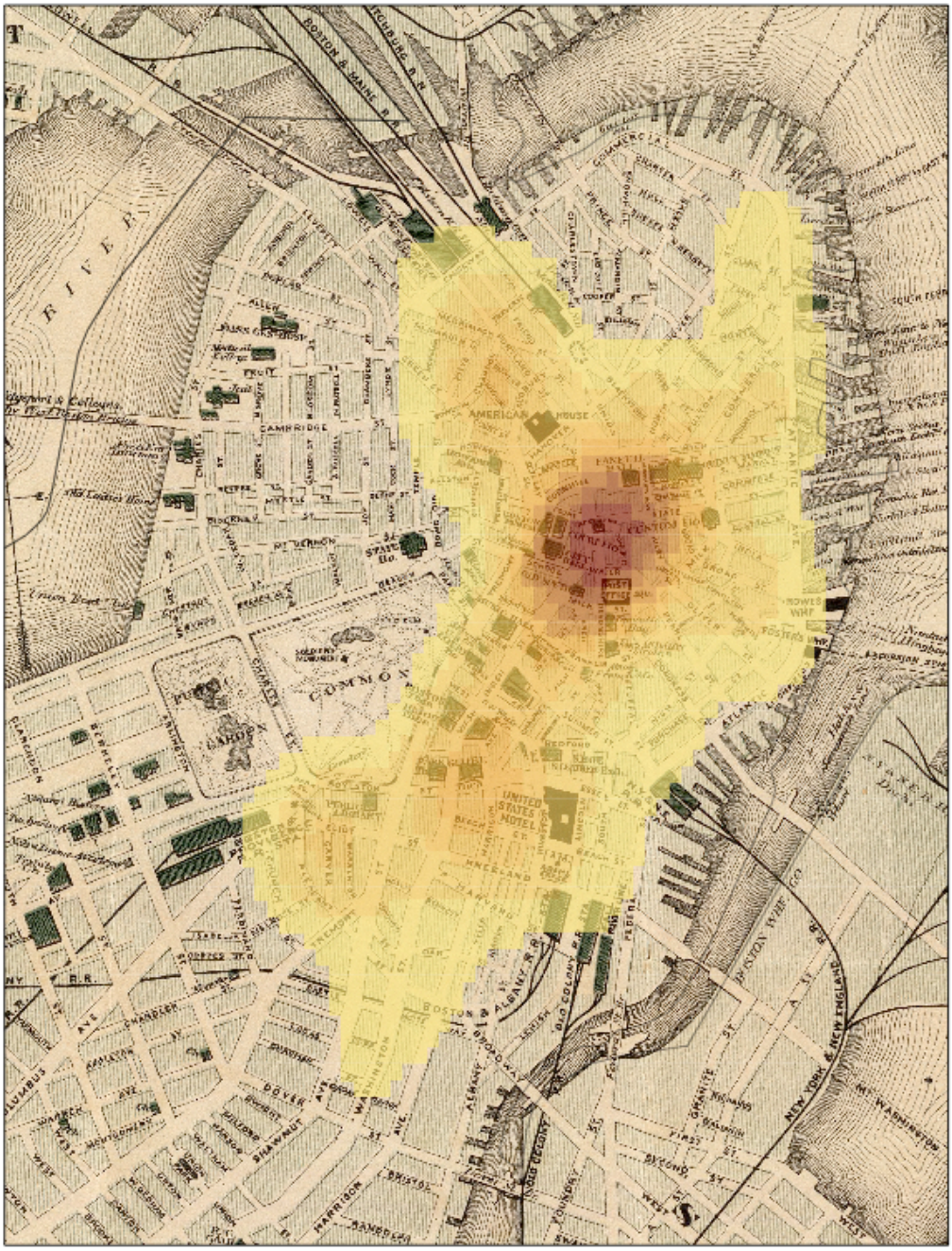
* Each point on the map indicates a dining establishment

Map 6: Density of Commercial Eateries in Boston, 1850. Source: Map of Boston and Adjacent Cities (New York: J.H. Colton & Co.,1856). Location data gathered from Boston Directory… (Boston: George Adams, 1850).

* Areas darker in color indicate a higher concentration of eateries.

Map 7: Locations of Commercial Eateries in Boston, 1880. Source: New Map of Boston giving all points of interest… (Geo H. Walker & Co., 1884). Location data gathered from Boston Directory… (Boston: Sampson, Davenport, & Co., 1880).

* Each point on the map indicates a dining establishment



Map 8: Density of Commercial Eateries in Boston, 1880. Source: New Map of Boston giving all points of interest… (Geo H. Walker & Co., 1884). Location data gathered from Boston Directory… (Boston: Sampson, Davenport, & Co., 1880).

* Areas darker in color indicate a higher concentration of eateries.

Appendix C: Tables and Charts

A Note on the Quantitative Data and its Analysis used in this Dissertation

In gathering quantitative data for this dissertation, I relied primarily on two sources: the 1850 United States Federal Census records for Boston Township in Suffolk County and the *Boston Directory*, published annually. I chose the 1850 census because it was the first to include occupational information. *The Boston Directory* also listed the occupations for heads of household in Boston.

I consulted the *Boston Directory* in five-year increments, beginning with the edition for 1789 (none for 1790 exists) and ending with 1890. For both the census and the directories, I examined each and every page—I did not use any sampling techniques. I recorded all information listed in these sources for any individual who worked in an occupation related to commercial eating. These occupations included confectioners, cooks, waiters, and the proprietors of cafés, eating houses, oyster saloons, restaurants, and hotel eateries, along with the sundry contemporary synonyms that existed for these establishments, such as "dining room" and "refreshment house." Beginning in 1860, the *Boston Directories* began to include a list of "Restaurants, etc" in a business directory that was published annually along with the general directory. I then included the information presented in these business directories in my data collection efforts as well. When possible, I have merged information supplied by an edition's general directory and its business directory so as to fill in gaps and eliminate overlap.

Despite my most dedicated and careful efforts, the data used in this dissertation are likely not entirely complete. I may have accidentally omitted some names and businesses as I made my records. More problematic, however, is the fact that census and directories themselves are incomplete—and incomplete in many ways. Various historians

have already described the many advantages—and the equally numerous pitfalls—specific to each source. I will only briefly outline the major difficulties I encountered.

The government (in the case of the census) and the publisher (in the case of the directories) employed workers to gather information from Boston residents which they then compiled and published. In both cases, these record takers went door-to-door. This method alone presents various, well-known imperfections in data collection. Perhaps most notably here, it privileged more affluent residents while leaving poorer ones, more likely to live in multiple-family dwellings and less likely to have a member of the family home during the day when the record taker knocked, out. Unfortunately, restaurant workers and, even, restaurant owners were often near the bottom of the socio-economic ladder and so were probably excluded in many cases. While directory workers collected information (including occupation and home and business addresses) only for heads of household, the census takers, beginning in 1850, did, at least, attempt to be more complete and gathered the names and ages of all members of a household, as well as the details of Bostonians' race, ethnicity, and birthplace. Furthermore, the 1850 census was the first to list the occupations of all males over the age of 15. In some rare instances, and for inexplicable reasons, the occupations of a smattering of women were also listed in both the census and directories and I included in my records any such relevantly employed women. Nevertheless, it is likely that many individuals, male and female, were not counted in either source and, thus, have not been counted here.

In theory, at least most of the information found in the 1850 *Boston Directory* should also appear in the 1850 census. In fact, however, it does not. I found only 44 names that appeared in both sources. Meanwhile, the directory listed nearly 400

individuals or businesses related to commercial eating while the census included more than 700. This disparity emphasizes the need for the historian to consult both available census and directory data in order to come even close to a complete account of the occupations of nineteenth-century Americans.

In my various analyses of the data I collected, I have employed numbers attained by adding information collected from the 1850 directory to that gathered from the 1850 census whenever possible. Unfortunately, when examining race, ethnicity, or birthplace, I have only been able to draw from the census materials because the directories did not include such information. Similarly, when business addresses are involved, I have only been able to use the contents of the directories since the census did not list business addresses for individuals. This means that the subsequent analysis, using only one source rather than both, is woefully deficient. There is little I can do about this considerable shortcoming except acknowledge it. In any case, in the tables that follow I have indicated from what source(s) the numbers presented drew.

A final note: statistics from 1880 came from the digitized 1880 Federal Census available online from *Ancestry.com Library Edition.* This census is searchable by keyword. Thus, I did not go through it page by page as I did for 1850 but rather relied on the "Search" function to return the occupational information I was after. Whether his method was more or less accurate I cannot say.

Table I

Occupation Numbers using both 1850 Boston Directory and 1850 Federal Census

Occupation	Directory	Census	Overlap	Total (Directory + Census - Overlap)
Confectioners	39	78	6	111
Cooks	27	68	1	94
Eating House Proprietors	8	32	0	40
Hotel/ Innkeeper/ Public House Proprietors	89	65	19	135
Oyster House/ Oyster Saloon Proprietors	5	19	0	24
Restorator/ Restaurant Proprietors	92	122	7	207
Waiters	75	301	7	369

Source: 1850 Census.

Table II

Occupation by Age, 1850

Occupation	Age										Total
	10-14	15-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	Unknown	
Confectioners	0	14	36	16	8	0	0	0	0	4	78
Cooks	2	3	29	18	12	2	0	0	1	0	68
Eating House Proprietors	0	0	12	10	5	4	1	0	0	0	32
Hotel/ Innkeeper/ Public House Proprietors	0	1	12	26	19	5	0	0	0	2	65
Oyster House/ Oyster Saloon Proprietors	0	3	6	5	3	1	0	0	0	1	19
Restorator/ Restaurant Proprietors	0	3	53	42	15	8	0	0	0	1	122
Waiters	0	58	169	50	19	4	0	0	0	1	301

Source: 1850 Census.

Table III

Occupation by Race and Sex, 1850

Occupation	Total	White	Black	"Mixed"	Male	Female
Confectioners	78	78	0	0	78	0
Cooks	68	59	8	1	57	11
Eating House Proprietors	32	32	0	0	32	0
Hotel/ Innkeeper/ Public House Proprietors	65	65	0	0	65	0
Oyster House/ Oyster Saloon Proprietors	19	19	0	0	19	0
Restorator/ Restaurant Proprietors	122	118	2	2	122	0
Waiters	301	281	16	4	301	0

Source: 1850 Census.

Table IV

Occupation by Place of Birth, 1850

Occupation	Massaschusetts	Other U.S.	Ireland	Other British	Germany	France	Italy	Other	Unknown	Total
Confectioners	28	14	7	9	11	4	0	0	5	78
Cooks	13	18	26	3	1	1	3	1	2	68
Eating House Proprietors	12	15	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	32
Hotel/ Innkeeper/ Public House Proprietors	28	27	2	3	1	0	0	1	3	65
Oyster House/ Oyster Saloon Proprietors	15	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
Restorator/ Restaurant Proprietors	55	46	5	5	0	2	3	0	6	122
Waiters	39	65	167	20	1	0	0	3	6	301

Source: 1850 Census.

Table V

Occupation and Residency by Ward, 1850

	Ward																
Occupation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**Chelsea**	**East Boston**	**North Chelsea**	**Unknown**	**Total**
Confectioners	1	5	10	24	4	0	11	1	0	10	6	0	1	1	0	4	78
Cooks	5	4	8	0	6	7	16	0	9	9	3	1	0	0	0	0	68
Eating House Proprietors	0	0	0	8	0	7	1	9	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	32
Hotel/ Innkeeper/ Public House Proprietors	0	7	7	10	1	2	12	2	4	6	4	2	1	2	4	1	65
Oyster House/ Oyster Saloon Proprietors	5	1	0	1	0	0	6	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	19
Restorator/ Restaurant Proprietors	22	16	17	0	17	0	14	2	0	13	6	8	1	6	0	0	122
Waiters	4	24	14	38	16	20	91	9	40	40	2	2	0	0	0	1	301

Source: 1850 Census.

Table VI

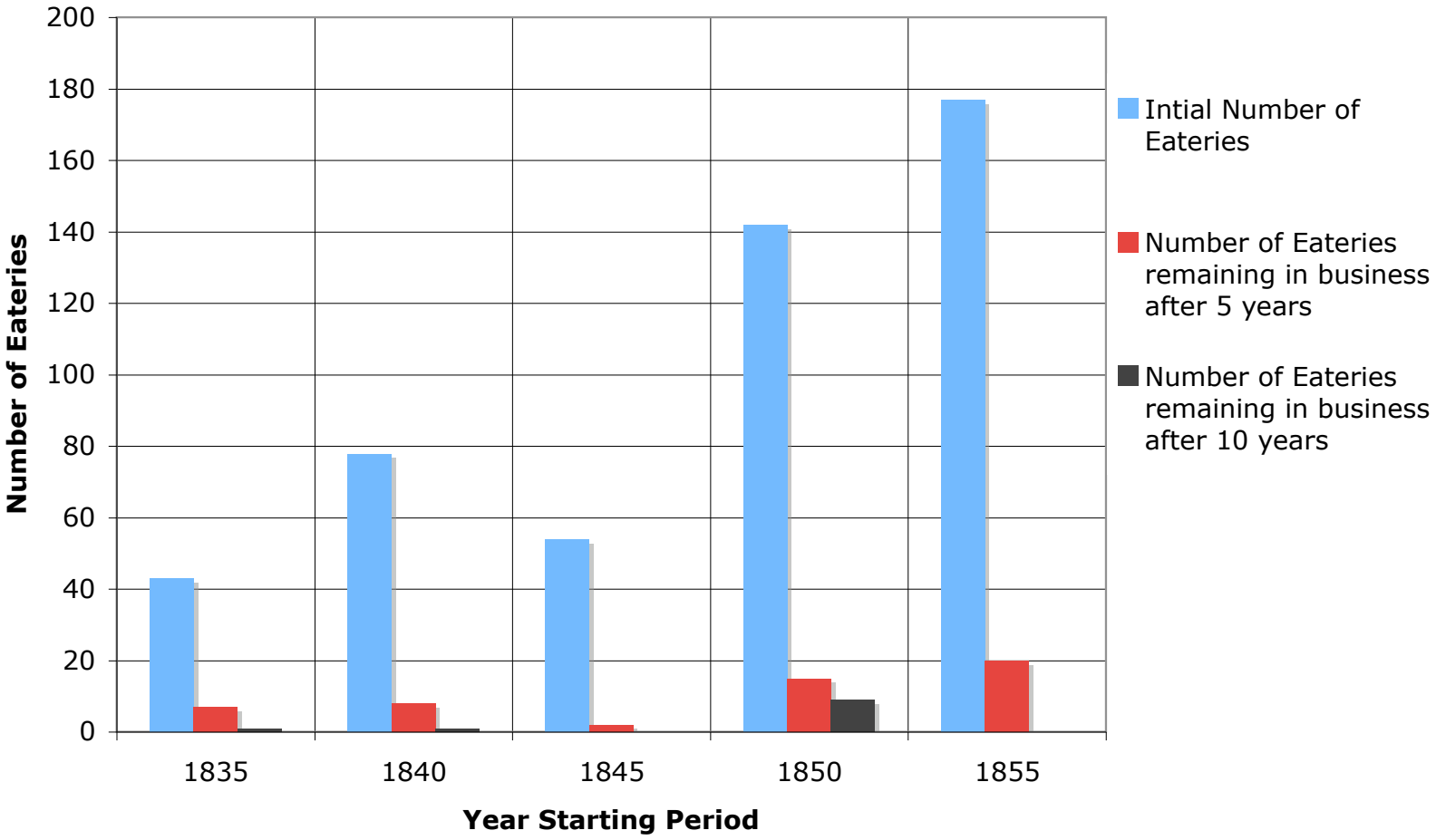
Occupation and Living Conditions, 1850

Occupation	Lives with others besides family members	W/ Real Estate
Confectioners	53	1
Cooks	56	1
Eating House Proprietors	23	0
Hotel/ Innkeeper/ Public House Proprietors	58	5
Oyster House/ Oyster Saloon Proprietors	10	4
Restorator/ Restaurant Proprietors	70	7
Waiters	264	0

Source: 1850 Census.

Table VII

Antebellum Commercial Eatery * Persistence



* Includes restaurants, eating-houses, oyster saloons, coffee houses, and confectionaries

Source: 1850 Census.

Table VIII

Increase in Number of Commercial Eateries in Antebellum Period

Year	Number of Commercial Eateries*	Rate of Increase in 5 Years (%)
1835	43	
1840	78	81.4
1845	54	
1850	144	167
1855	177	23
1860	189	6.8

* Does not include hotel eateries

Table IX

Restorators'** Living and Working Patterns, 1835-1860

Year	Total Restorators Listed in Directory	% whose home and business addresses were the same	% whose home and business addresses were different
1830	39	84.6	15.4
1840	45	95.5	4.4
1850	122	77.9	22.1
1860	85	70.6	29.4

** Includes only restorators and proprietors of restaurants and houses of refreshment

Source: antebellum Boston Directories

Table X

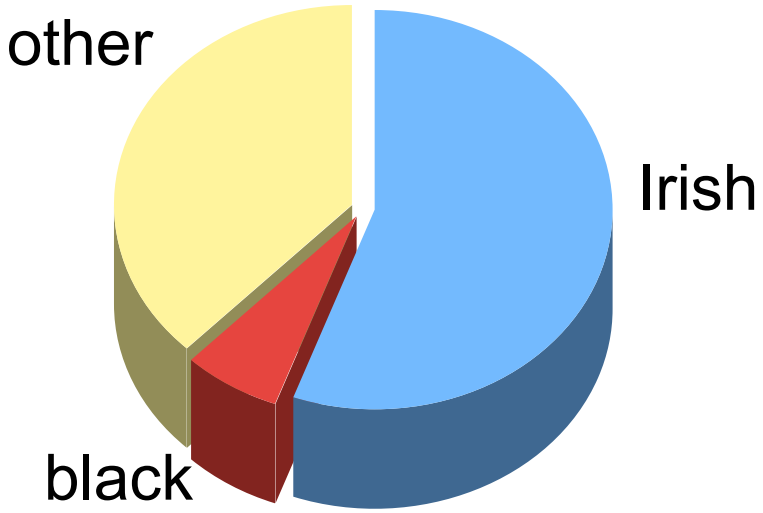
Residence Patterns of Female Cooks, 1850

Total Cooks	68
Female Cooks	11
Female Cooks Residing in Hotel or Eating House	5
Female Cooks Residing in Homes w/ Multiple Families	3
Female Cooks Residing in Homes w/ 1 Family	2
Inmate of House of Industry	1

Source: 1850 Census.

Chart I

Race and Ethnicity of Waiters, 1850



Source: 1850 Census.

Table XI

Black and Irish Waiters, 1850

	Black	Irish	Total
Male Population in Boston	919	17,643	62,774
# of Waiters	20	167	301
% Employeed as Waiter	2.18%	0.95%	0.48%

Source: 1850 Census.

Table XII

Antebellum Waiter and Cook Occupation Retention

	Occupation	
	Waiter	**Cook***
% Retention b/w 1830-35	15	0
% Retention b/w 1830-40	15	0
% Retention b/w 1835 -40	20	0
% Retention b/w 1835 -45	20	0
% Retention b/w 1840-45	19	0
% Retention b/w 1840-50	6	0
% Retention b/w 1845-50	7	0
% Retention b/w 1845-55	10	0
% Retention b/w 1850-55	3	0
% Retention b/w 1850-60	9	0
% Retention b/w 1855-60	7	0

* While antebellum cook retention rates were undoubtedly low, they were certainly higher than 0. This figure likely reflects the fact that so few cooks are found in the Directories because they were rarely heads of households. See Table VI.

Source: antebellum Boston Directories.

Table XIII

Antebellum Waiter and Cook Occupational Mobility

	1835	1840	1845	1850	1855	1860
Waiters who became Proprietors	0	1	1	8	1	6
Cooks who became Proprietors	0	0	0	0	2	1
Proprietors who became Waiters	0	0	0	0	0	1
Proprietors who became Cooks	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: antebellum Boston Directories and Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Manuscript Population Schedules, Boston City, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

Table XIV

Waiter Race and Ethnicity, 1880

	Race/Ethnicity			
	Irish	Black	Mulatto	Black & Mulatto
Number of Waiters	158	215	140	355
Total Race/Ethnic Male Population	27,087	1860	967	2827
Percent of Population for Race/Ethnicity	0.58	11.6	14.5	12.6

Source: 1880 Census.