I felt the pride that every thoughtful person connected with journalism must feel when he looks back at what the press has done for the world and the evident greatness of its function in the future. We can trace all that we have of practical science, of industrial art, of political freedom and social advancement to the comparatively short period of less than 500 years since the invention of printing. Before that the world presented a more or less dreary waste of ignorance, superstition and tyranny. The efficiency of the press [is] an element of progress.

—David Williams, publisher of the Iron Age, address to the New England Iron and Hardware Association, 1896

Printed materials held a special significance in nineteenth-century United States. Books, periodicals, and printed art represented both progress and the potential for future progress, as well as functioning as arenas in which to contest various notions of progress. For advertisers and printers, printed art and promotional copy provided key tools for expressing their worldviews, as well as for advancing their ambitions. Printed advertising also placed printers and advertisers in a mutually dependent relationship; together, they developed and experimented with a wide range of advertising media. Newspapers and magazines constituted the category most like our present commercial mass media. Another category of printed advertising media comprised matter sent through the mails, mostly "circulars" but also mail-order materials. Freestanding, specialty formats offered countless options for illustrated messages, making up a third category that ranged from broadsides still in the style of eighteenth-century woodcuts to colorfully lithographed calendars, almanacs, posters, trade
cards, playing cards, and even metal household and office implements, such as shoehorns, rulers, and ink blotters.

As did many tradespeople, printers began the nineteenth century performing most tasks in all-purpose shops; then as they diversified their skills and technologies and demand for specialized work increased, printers and their shops specialized. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most printing offices in the United States produced newspapers, simple magazines, and small books. Additional revenues came from speculation work, such as art prints or sheet music for sale by subscription, wholesale, or retail, plus job printing, that is, printing to order anything from dance tickets to advertising posters to stationery to government publications. By midcentury, the demand for special orders encouraged many shops to specialize in job printing; book and periodical publishers and job printers gradually diverged, providing advertisers with increasingly diverse formats. In addition to examining the printing business, this chapter surveys the printers' products, nonadsvertisements as well as advertisements, because they formed the iconographic and verbal contexts within which advertisers generated their messages and with which industrialists, including printers, defined progress.

Print in Nineteenth-Century American Culture

In many ways, printers operated at the center of U.S culture until film and broadcasting undermined their preeminence and their own automated technologies reduced individual printers' sense of contribution. Writing copy, composing type, and generating images by hand within relatively small print shops gave many nineteenth-century printers a sense of pride in their craft as a key component of the modernizing, progressive culture. Early in the next century, a veteran of more than fifty years described printing as "one of the greatest of world industries, the thing that makes civilization possible, the art that permits cooperation among mankind." He explained that "no education worthy of the name, no industrial progress, no general dissemination of knowledge, no development of the mechanic arts, nor of chemistry and science, would be possible without the art of printing as a basis." Because printing "is the mouthpiece of all American industry, ... we are the advance agents of liberty and prosperity." Given the near monopoly that print had on educational materials and mass communications prior to film and broadcasting, and the presses' central role in political activities, printers had a strong case in making the most of their impact. As the nexus of political and business activity, printers
credited their craft with much of the world's progress to date, and they accepted responsibility for its continuance. In "the interest of all humanity, discovery, enlightenment and civilization . . . ," printers' "requirement, to keep pace with the demands of the age, calls for incessant vigilance and continued improvement in workmanship, material, machinery, and labor-saving inventions."

The presses' centrality to politics not only justified printers' claims to importance but also formed a link between political and commercial discourses. Long before the flourishing of print advertising and its revenues after the Civil War, printers produced argumentative copy as a matter of both principle and enterprise. Newspapers had often functioned as party organs in the first half of the century, relying on political patronage, and printers also produced broadsides for political factions, again out of both principle and enterprise. As a result, printers filled their products with polemics and insults directed at rival politicians and publishers, and in later years many factors reinforced this tradition of the presses' political activism. Moreover, only after the 1850s did Americans regularly distinguish between commercial and noncommercial announcements by reserving the term advertisements for the former. The newspapers' traditions of political patronage also helps explain many publishers' notorious willingness to accept puff advertising, that is, paid or pressured endorsements that appeared as editorial copy. After the Civil War, many newspapers perpetuated maudlin and sensational styles to continue the level of excitement that prevailed during the conflict, drawing on and fostering the polemical styles of patent-medicine and other commercial messages. For instance, although journalism only began to exploit the public's interest in stories of ordinary folks by midcentury, patent-medicine purveyors had employed such techniques in their testimonials much earlier, such as the Anderson's Cough Drops copy reproduced in chapter 1.

The imagery and rhetoric of the nineteenth-century's political and commercial persuasions frequently intersected in lively pictures in both the periodical and nonperiodical presses. These intersections reflected political cartooning's long tradition as a polemical force and the fact that the same printers often produced both political and commercial images. For instance, a political cartoon of the Civil War period entitled "The Great Remedy" (fig. 3.1) mimicked the polemics of patent-medicine advertising to make its political claims for Lincoln's protecting the Union against contraband to the Confederacy. About thirty years later, a trade card for "Empire" Wringer participated—somewhat obliquely—in widespread fiscal debates by showing a playful Uncle Sam blithely wringing gold coins into a basket while exclaiming, "Just look at
Fig. 3.1. Patent medicines and politics were central to printers whose products sometimes linked the imagery and polemics of the two. This 1862 print supported the Union cause by promoting Lincoln as “The Great Remedy.” The kittens’ names (barely visible in this reproduction), Abe (curled up in the liberty cap) and Jeff (being pulled away by a noose) for the white pair, and Contraband for the black kitten, carry both political and racial meanings. Courtesy of the Dearborn (Michigan) Historical Commission.

that! And too much surplus in the treasury already? My ‘Empire’ beats the world.” The copy on the back of the card concludes, “Use the Empire Wringer—Will Pay for Itself” (fig. 3.2).

The roots of political cartooning run deeply into the history of print, and, until photography became the primary reproductive mechanism for advertising, the styles and symbols of one resembled those of the other, including eagles, Brother Jonathan, Uncle Sam, and Columbia, plus other goddess-like figures, to represent the values of the nation.\(^6\) The same racial, ethnic, class, and gender stereotypes can be found in each; for instance, Thomas Nast’s images of minorities continued for decades as visual clichés for mainstream prejudices in advertisements and cartoons. Occasionally, artists even advertised their own services as both lithographer and caricaturist.\(^7\) In the post–Civil War era,
Fig. 3.2. A somewhat mischievous Uncle Sam cranks the Empire Wringer to mint gold coins during the early years of the 1890s, when a federal surplus and related fiscal issues dominated political discussions. The back of this trade card claims that by reducing “the Labor One-Half,” the wringer will save enough “strength every week” to make it worth “much more than the small additional cost.” Producers often portrayed their innovations in household technologies as the means of transforming domestic tasks from drudgery to pleasure. By this they felt they contributed to progress on social as well as industrial fronts.
art styles for both political and commercial art evolved together, sometimes engaging the same artists. Lithographer Joseph Keppler was publisher, printer, and artist, drawing in a style quite similar to many chromo advertisements by his contemporaries. His cartoon creations in the 1880s and 1890s, with their political and social commentaries, made the American magazine *Puck* a success in both English and German. Keppler's cupidlike figure for the *Puck* in the trademark derived from the convention that used cherubs frequently, in both advertisements and almost every other lithographed medium. His Uncle Sam figure likewise resembled that found in countless advertisements, such as that for the “Empire” Wringer. Keppler occasionally illustrated advertisements in his journals as well.

Although Thomas Nast, the century's most influential political cartoonist, did not illustrate advertisements, his drawings for Christmas established the nation's vision of Santa Claus and seasonal trappings that marketers have used ever since. Palmer Cox began his career as a political cartoonist, but found advertising and book illustration more attractive venues for his cartoons of elves named Brownies. The popular character the Yellow Kid likewise began in political commentary but moved back and forth between it and advertising. There is no need here to determine if either field—politics or commerce—led the other in polemical styles, but it is essential to recognize that the same people printed and sometimes drafted both types of messages at a time when personal contact characterized almost all transactions.

Printers' centrality to U.S. culture between the Civil War and the end of the century also rested on the rise of lithography as a nonperiodical mass-communication medium. Lithography was invented in 1796 in Germany as the first printing method that did not require the preparation of either engraved or embossed surfaces. Lithographers, who were almost always job printers, operated as “agencies of mass impression,” as did publishers. Once chromolithographs (color lithography, first used in the United States in 1840) were produced and marketed in vast quantities by the 1870s, both as artworks and as advertisements, their impact on the cultural environment was incalculable. Many of the most popular printed images harkened back to nonindustrial settings, such as rural scenes, biblical stories, and romantic or patriotic scenes, while others pictured various aspects of modernity, such as visions of prosperity and architectural development, fashion, national expansion, new forms of transportation, and world explorations. In a sense, the accessibility of all lithographs, including the pretty and nostalgic images, evinced material progress. In a culture not yet saturated with manufactured images, this accessibility evoked widespread excitement and acquisitiveness, and particularly when pictures were free because they carried advertisements. Although the free advertising pictures were banished from the “better sort” of parlors, they were al-
most universally welcomed into kitchens, laundry rooms, children's rooms, college dormitory rooms, work and public places, and barns, as well as ladies' scrapbooks. As photographs of the period frequently indicate, giveaway chromo advertisements also brightened shops, offices, hotels, restaurants, railroad stations, and taverns.

The penetration of prints into almost every environment and storms of protest against that ubiquity contributed to printers' sense of their importance to the emerging culture. The advent of large numbers of affordable prints in the mid-nineteenth century fostered a widespread enthusiasm for art that many patriots and entrepreneurs nurtured. Excitement about the new communication technologies resembled today's reactions to the Internet—a mix of fascination and trepidation. Art education became a national cause, in part to further civilization itself, in part to advance industrial prowess. Louis Prang opened an educational department in his lithography firm in 1874, established the Prang Educational Company in 1882, and devoted the last decades of his life to art education. Many articles in the general press on the subject of lithography evinced interest in the printing technologies themselves, even though publishers and lithographers used competing technologies. At the great expositions—the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, 1876, and the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893—printers, their machines, and their products drew massive crowds. Even unveiling the first sixteen-sheet billboard in Cincinnati in 1878 attracted crowds that it required extra police to control.

As has happened since with other imitative innovations, chromolithography served as an arena for cultural politics: traditional elites often drew the line that divided them from the rest of society through attitudes toward printed reproductions. Fearing that broad diffusion of cultural materials, in this case reproductions of paintings and other images, would cheapen them in some way, critics attacked the "chromo-civilization," as later critics would attack the cultural effects of plastic. So, even while the general public welcomed chromolithographs into their lives, if not all their parlors, many elitists believed that democratized art was debased art. The very realism that the technology made possible was "the ultimate in deception." A strong denunciation in 1897 asked, "Do we prefer infinite productivity . . . chromos, universal competency of a certain sort, universal cheapness—cheap goods and inexpensive men, or can we afford to deny ourselves the luxury of infinite cheap things . . . and live according to human ideas?" The chromo was one of many industrial goods that some feared were "homogenizing taste and destroying individuality." The chromolithographed advertisements that promoted myriad other industrial goods were doubly dangerous as accessible and colorfully enticing emissaries of a burgeoning and turbulent industrial culture.
Supporters' defenses of chromolithography aligned its achievements with progress, both material and cultural. Louis Prang's work drew strong and early criticisms because of his techniques for copying paintings realistically. Although Prang's current reputation rests primarily on his introduction in 1873 and development thereafter of the greeting card, followed by his extensive productions of advertisements and his later involvement in art education as well as chromo reproductions of paintings, he first gained celebrity for his "artistic prints." He marketed these reproductions widely, won national and international prizes with them, and his success led him into a series of heated exchanges with leading authorities on cultural standards, including E. L Godkin of the Nation and Clarence Cook. The public controversy began in 1866 with Cook's attack in the New York Tribune calling Prang an ambitious perpetrator of "clever imitation." Prang defended his work, asserting that lithography "helps progress in art" in the same way that books aid other aspects of culture. He also published testimonials in his promotions from supportive cultural leaders, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, John G. Whittier, Henry W. Longfellow, and Wendell Phillips. A letter from James Parton, the renowned historian, appeared in the first issue of the house organ Prang's Chromo: A Journal of Popular Art. Parton referred to Prang's prints as "exquisite specimens" and wrote that they satisfied "a favorite dream" of reproducing paintings so that "a great picture can adorn a hundred thousand homes, instead of nourishing the pride of one," while better supporting artists.

Indeed, most commentary on the impact of "republicanized and naturalized" art was positive, although the vast quantities of "street lithography"—that is, the commercial art that appeared for entertainments and other advertisers—eventually reduced support for it. As George Ward Nichols explained in an influential book of 1877, some critics claimed "that the general reproduction of works of art makes them commonplace, and their influence injurious rather than beneficial." Certainly, "one gets very tired of chromo-lithographs and poorly executed prints of the works of great masters; but it is well to consider if it is not better to try to have these copies made in the best way, rather than reject them altogether." Of course, many in the printing trade believed that "commercial art," too, had kept "pace with modern progress" and had had a positive impact on business and society in general; posters in the streets raised the common appreciation for art. Whatever their merit, advertisers' colorful and free chromos came to adorn interior and exterior walls everywhere, public and private, from the lowly abodes of Jacob Riis's subjects to the business places, kitchens, scrapbooks, and carriage houses of the prosperous.

Parton's 1868 letter of praise for chromolithography interpreted the bur-
Fig. 3.3. This exquisitely printed advertisement of 1845 for S. N. Dickinson's job-printing services epitomizes both the craftsmanship and the cultural claims of important printers. Symbols of technologies, both abstract and specific, surround Dickinson's offerings and a vignette representing printing's cultural contributions. Courtesy of Jack Golden, Designers 3, Inc.
engeoning technology in terms of industrialization and material progress in a way that coincided with the printers' own portrayals of their trade. Parton appreciated Prang's "enthusiasm" for his "beautiful vocation" because the "business of this age is to make every honest person an equal sharer in the substantial blessings of civilization; and one of the many means by which this is to be effected is to make the products of civilization cheap." From the early decades of their technological breakthroughs in the 1830s and 1840s, printers expressed their goals for producing inexpensive pictures and text with their machines. Advocates of the printing trade often pointed to its contributions to modern enlightenment through the high volume and low costs of books and newspapers. An influential Boston printer and typefounder, S. N. Dickinson, advertised in 1845 with an image that glorified his press and its products accordingly (fig. 3.3). Light radiated from a press onto books that nestled into the border flourishes, thence to a woman reading with her child, surrounded by symbols of progress: a single large gear, a globe, a train, a steamboat, and a building with neoclassical design. Almost one-half of an 1841 Dickinson advertisement showed a printer at a small rotary press, turning out cards. An eagle with flags topped an 1847 Dickinson advertisement that also featured the Muses of art, literature, and music on a pedestal. In 1849, the Saturday Evening Post promoted itself as "a mammoth paper" and used one-third of its display to show men working a press almost twice their height. In 1869, Hatch & Company, New York, advertised itself with a chromolithographed calendar featuring two Muses, abstract industrial scenes, the Hatch building, busy traffic, itemizations of the firm's services entwined in greenery, and all topped by an eagle.

Printing was one of the largest industries in the nation, and some believed that the printer's "reward of right rated higher than the ordinary manufacturer, because his productions demand greater energy, skill, and brain." Printers' constant emphasis on production, on manufacturing, and on their skills and technologies evinces a technological enthusiasm strongly associated with the nineteenth century generally (and with technologically oriented trades still), and a value system that rated productivity above all other measures of merit. In 1874, the first year of Prang's educational department, he published a series of educational lithographs of Trades and Occupations. All twelve prints, including that for "The Kitchen," showed people at work using their tools. Prang gave his own trade disproportionate representation with one scene for typesetters and another for lithographers. The Inland Printer: A Technical Journal Devoted to the Art of Printing, the period's leading trade journal for printers and their patrons, rarely commented on advertisements for other industries, but it praised as "artistic" an image that exhibited the value manufacturers placed on
The Inland Printer’s editors praised this trade advertisement that compared “Two Magicians” and their products. Aladdin, portrayed as Far Eastern rather than Persian, merely smiled and rubbed his lamp as he sat, in contrast to the heroic “modern mechanic” who plied new and complex technologies to build monuments that were not restricted to aristocratic luxuries. The Chicago Pneumatic Tool Co., *Inland Printer* 26 (January 1901): 677.
production (fig. 3.4). “Two Magicians” portrays Aladdin as languorous, simply rubbing his lamp to create a “most beautiful palace,” whereas the “modern mechanic” takes a heroic stance, wielding the pneumatic power tool with which he built the Eiffel Tower, a skyscraper, a railroad bridge, and an ocean liner.25

A press manufacturer expressed this emphasis on production, and printing as production, in 1891: “As much as a producer is above a non-producer—as much as success itself is above all mere appearances of success—so much is the press that you run more important than the looks of your building, your counting room, your stationery or your furniture.”26

As large-scale machinery became increasingly essential to printers, many artisan shops developed into factories; the Boston print shops of Forbes Lithograph Manufacturing Company, with 400 workers by 1875, and Louis Prang, with 281 employees in 1881, were among the earliest large shops in the country. Their advertisements and trade literature increasingly featured entire establishments and their facilities.27 In 1885, an unusually long article in the Inland Printer on the history of inks since ancient times studied a prominent firm, founded in 1816 and operated continuously by the same family, as exemplary of modern progress. The apology that engravings of the factory’s interior and exterior yielded “only a faint idea of its capacity and magnitude” indicates the purpose of such illustrations. In 1890 and 1891, the same journal ran three articles on typefoundries and five on paper mills, each describing and usually illustrating the firms’ buildings, technologies, products, and sales practices. One typical article described the subject’s large, new building in detail, and extended the owners’ invitation to customers and the public to “inspect” because “they are justly proud, being satisfied that when their inspection is over they will be convinced that the ability of the ‘Central’ to furnish the best of everything wanted in a printing office is unsurpassed.”28 In keeping with this conviction that buildings and the machines in them warranted both owners’ pride and customers’ confidence, advertisements in the Inland Printer before the mid-1890s frequently pictured and commended such evidence of technological progress, especially as it might apply to the practical needs of potential customers.

Printers’ Images

Printers’ enthusiasm for the graphic potentials of their century’s technological innovations and their competitive desires to demonstrate their individual prowess motivated the ornate displays in both typesetting and lithography for which Victorian printing is notorious. Beyond this stylistic tendency, which reigned, despite challenges, until the mid-1890s, printers drew pictorial con-
tent from two different inspirations. Romantic, evocative images ignored, more often than not, the impact of industrialization, while other images glorified industrial innovation and the constructed environment, including views of town and factory and scenes of locomotives and steamboats conquering frontiers.

Printers' success with selling images both to consumers and to their advertising customers depended on their being able to match popular notions about what was pretty, humorous, or pleasantly evocative, and that therefore would please their patrons, their patrons' families, and their patrons' customers. As Thomas Sinclair & Son declared on their catalog cover, their work was “in the highest style of the art,” to which they credited their firm's longevity. Sales differentials gave printers feedback, so the successful among them did work with some sense of popular taste, doing experimental work on speculation, including ideas for stock advertisements, and dropping from their repertoires what they could not sell. For example, after an initially difficult period, Louis Prang did exceptionally well during and immediately after the Civil War once he started lithographing and hand tinting military subjects—maps, diagrams of land and sea battles, and generals' portraits; he also did images of Lincoln. When he turned his hand to chromolithography in 1866, however, Prang sold poorly until he reproduced a series of barnyard scenes and Eastman Johnson's nostalgic Barefoot Boy. Prang and other lithographers learned from such feedback to draw on the same types of images for stock advertisements (including increasingly, by the 1890s, their own advertisements), greeting cards, sheet music, and other prints marketed directly to consumers. The resulting genres featured lovely ladies; pretty children; adorable animals; flowers; patriotic, religious, or sentimental scenes; beautiful scenery; and motifs considered humorous. The latter included various series of racial and ethnic caricatures that many mainstream Americans considered amusing at the time, such as the popular series of trade cards produced by Currier and Ives in the 1880s. In the 1870s, this major printing firm also produced a very popular series of stock trade cards with horse-racing scenes, usually serious but sometimes humorous. The persistence of these styles in advertising and speculative prints attests to the printers' successes with them.

Evocative prints of industrial images, such as Currier & Ives's lithographs of trains, were rarely as popular as the countless nonindustrial images sold to consumers. Yet their occasional successes evinced strong interest in the applications of technologies that were quite dramatically changing everyone's world. Advertisers, in their turn, purchased stock images from the printers' inventories of nonindustrial images, combining the printers' advice with their own tastes and notions about what was appealing, knowing that the stock adver-
Advertisements told the public nothing more about their business or accomplish­ments than that they had selected them. However, when advertisers ordered specialized prints for their messages, the distribution of images balanced quite differently.

**Printers and Advertisers**

Under the noncorporate systems of operation common to most nineteenth­century businesses, custom held that since no one could know a business as well as its owner-manager, no one else could write appropriate advertising copy for it. Yet whatever notions advertisers had about their abilities to write copy and design layouts, only printers could *produce* their own advertisements. Amateur printers could operate the many small presses sold between the Civil War and the 1920s, but without training and expensive equipment, they could not go beyond simple typeset messages. Novel or large illustrations required sophisticated equipment and skills for making woodcuts, engravings, or lithographs; hence, even advertisers who felt sufficiently confident of their artistic skills to draw out a design could rarely reproduce it themselves.

Printers' assistance ranged from simply the mechanical processing of a fully designed display to joint collaboration with the advertisers. The majority of transactions fell in midrange during the decades after the Civil War, although specialists mediated between increasing numbers of advertisers and printers by the end of the century. As a rule, personal contact between advertisers and printers or their salespeople produced most advertisements, so much so that advertisers sometimes made it difficult to maintain an orderly and efficient print shop. According to the *Inland Printer*, clients' tendency to distract the compositors typesetting their advertisements called for occasional warnings that they “will be paying for [their] garrulity and the compositor be absolved from all errors.” A veteran of more than fifty years in the trade explained that “up to about 1875 most printing was sold over the counter like dry goods and wearing apparel.”

This same veteran explained that after 1875 “the drumming salesman came into existence. These earlier salesmen went out with great scrap books under their arms, containing samples of crack jobs.” As the print shops grew larger and sought clients over wider areas, sales forces took the printers' options to clients, maintaining personal contacts, because “those who want printing done desire, in nearly every case, to interview the printer and personally explain their wants.” Some large advertisers even owned their own, large, professional print shops, as did James C. Ayer, patent-medicine producer of
Lowell, Massachusetts, and the Sherwin-Williams [paint] Company, which operated seven presses for its labels and promotions in one of Cleveland’s largest printing houses in the 1890s. Regardless of the setting, printers contended often that “the printer, as a rule, is one of the main springs in the arrangement of judicious advertising. Much of the success of the advertiser is due to him.” Yet a 1900 book of business advice to printers quoted an 1872 statement by “a leading printer of New York” that advised printers to “persuade your customer to furnish his own copy, written in ink. Avoid writing it for him. If it must be done by you, notify him distinctly that he is responsible for its supposed accuracy as to names, places, and figures.” Even though printing advertisements for other businesses was an important part of their occupation, printers did not generally accept responsibility for the content of advertisements before 1890, any more than did advertising agents. In the end, advertisers held responsibility for the content of their messages. As late as 1900, some printers still believed that “if other men had written their ads as well [as they], that there would have been fewer bankruptcies during the last few years.”

Advertisers’ dependence on printers to produce their messages mirrored the printers’ dependence on them, as the two groups participated in the symbiotic relationships typical between advertisers and popular communications firms in the United States, although it was not logically necessary. Printers readily acknowledged the importance of advertising revenues, and they aggressively competed for them. Writing on the business aspects of printing in that era, Paul Nathan advised that “the intelligent job printer will never permit himself to forget that printing is allied to advertising, and that almost all of the printing that he does depends in some way upon its success as an advertisement or as an advertising medium.” Nathan warned that job printers who did not please their well-paying advertising patrons would have difficulty affording to update their presses. To acquire such accounts, printers advertised in manufacturers’ and merchants’ trade journals and even Printers’ Ink, despite its strongly expressed editorial preference for periodical advertising, especially local newspapers and national magazines.

Job printers and publishing printers frequently challenged each other’s claims to be the superior advertising medium. The former believed that an “advertisement in a circular or blotter form is seen by the person whose business is sought while he is seated at his desk, rather than at the breakfast-table or in the [street] cars.” Job printers at the turn of the century also charged that publishers participated in “campaigns” in their columns against nonperiodical forms of advertising, creating “a prejudice in [the advertiser’s] mind against profitable forms of advertising which would be grist to the commercial printer’s mill.” It was “useless for newspapers to decry” such forms of publicity as street-
car signs, because they were "a rival that has come to stay."43 On their side, publishers attacked the "pretty and novel devices for hanging advertisements" and other such "schemes" as inadequate and unprofessional as compared with newspapers and magazines, which were "essential for the successful conduct of all lines of business." "Specialties," another critic asserted, "partake too much of the claim-all patent medicine character."44

Rapidly increasing revenues going to printers for advertising throughout the nineteenth century subsidized developments in their technologies and contents. Advertisers drove the printers' competition as they sought state-of-the-art media to carry their messages, operating on two principles: one, that status accrues to a message according to the attractiveness and modernity of its medium; and two, that a message's audience and impact increase with the attractiveness of its medium.45 Through the century, and accelerating in the last three decades, both newspapers and magazines increasingly competed to attract advertisers' accounts by the quality of their presses, the accuracy of their typesetting, their rates, and, above all, their circulations. Advertising revenues also facilitated many newspapers' metamorphosis from political to commercial organs in the mid-1800s.46 Magazines remained small and meagerly illustrated through the early 1880s, paying contributors poorly and requiring little advertising income, until they, too, began to engage in a competitive spiral that made them the leading medium for advertisers seeking national exposure. Praising this advertiser/media symbiosis, the Ladies' Home Journal's editor, Edward Bok, paid tribute to his magazine's advertisers in an 1898 editorial, for "it is the growth of advertising in this country which . . . has brought the American magazine to its present enviable position in points of literary, illustrative, and mechanical excellence. The American advertiser has made the superior American magazine of today possible."47 In effect, Bok identified advertising as the business of progress in the limited senses of the mutual advancement of advertised products and of publishing.

The dynamic Bok celebrated was even more salient for other printers than for publishers. Newspapers and magazines, after all, have their editorial content and, more important, their circulations by which to attract advertising revenues; job printers have nothing but their craft and their presses to attract clients. The essay on printing in The Great Industries of the United States attested to a positive effect by 1873 of competition between printers: "Now great and small job establishments in all the cities vie with each other in turning out work which displays not only admirable mechanical skill, but frequently the highest artistic taste."48 From the printers' view, this "wild scramble for advertising patronage" did not seem so benign as it too often resulted in their having to "obtain custom . . . at a sacrifice."49
Advertising in Periodical Media

Newspapers and magazines have always offered advertisers very different environments for their messages. Newspapers, since their inception, have relied on advertising revenues for major portions of their incomes, although during the Jacksonian era partisan papers began a period of dependency on party subsidies; this diminished after the Civil War. Through the eighteenth century and into the first decades of the nineteenth century, newspaper publishers routinely placed announcements, both commercial and noncommercial, on the preferred first page (see, for example, fig. 1.1). Some publishers sought clientele so avidly that they bartered space for advertisers' goods, which they then sold to local wholesalers and retailers. This practice highlighted the symbiosis between publishers and advertisers, because in such cases the former essentially operated as sales agents for the manufacturers. By the end of the century, all types of businesspersons tried to reach consumers through newspapers, including brand-name manufacturers seeking national markets. Advertising filled three-fourths of some papers.

The format of newspaper advertisements was quite simple after the Civil War—basically what it had been for a century, namely, columns of type. The most significant breakthroughs in newspaper technologies to date had come in the 1830s, when the availability of cheap newsprint and the early cylinder and power presses made possible the large-format penny papers. Yet while developments throughout the century made possible larger papers and faster printing, advertising pages did not significantly change until the 1860s, when the use of web presses made placing line illustrations from woodcuts easier. Until then, the most radical developments in display followed the lead of Robert Bonner, who promoted his New York Ledger in the 1850s by repeating regulation-sized type, down and/or across columns, to form striking visual effects. Pages of advertisements in 1870 newspapers therefore still looked very much like the classified sections of today's newspapers, differing only in that the individual messages were often larger than today's classifieds, and their fonts varied more. Rarely, however, did individual messages cover more than a single column on a page or run for more than four or five inches. In fact, in the 1860s, George P. Rowell, one of America's earliest and most influential advertising agents, began placing many of his clients' advertisements at the rate of one insertion of one column inch in one hundred papers for $100.

So many advertisers thought this "card" style offered adequate space that the practice became a great success for Rowell and the many who soon imitated him. For instance, Jay Cooke & Co. and other financial houses advertised with such cards in the Commercial and Financial Chronicle after the Civil...
War. The Rising Sun Stove Polish Company, one of the period’s most prolific promoters in all available media, placed small “card” advertisements in four thousand newspapers in 1896. James Pyle, founder of the Pearline Soap Company, a prolific advertiser and an industry leader for decades, started such simple newspaper advertising before the Civil War, despite his initial reluctance to make the expenditure. Horace Greeley convinced Pyle that he could not afford not to advertise and offered a year’s free insertions of a fourteen-line, one-inch card in the Tribune if the ads did not pay.\textsuperscript{55} Advertisers in the 1870s issues of \textit{Puck} were sufficiently satisfied with cards, and unimpressed by the opportunity to include Joseph Keppler’s drawings, gratis, in their messages, that most chose not to pay for enough space to do so, even though Keppler was already acknowledged as one of the nation’s leading illustrators.\textsuperscript{56} Instead of illustrations, printers usually employed headlines, in heavy, often elaborate, typefaces, to draw attention to the individual advertisements. Some purveyors did pay for small generic woodcuts, as they had for a century, or provided their own, when presses began using more and larger woodcuts for editorial material, such as cuts made from Mathew Brady’s Civil War photographs.

The combination of many small advertisements on a page with few illustrations resulted in a cluttered appearance. The large retailers—Macy, Wanamaker, Lord & Taylor, and A. T. Stewart—led the field in running large display advertisements in the 1860s and 1870s, setting their images apart. More dramatic changes came in the last two decades of the century, when many city papers featured photoengraved line, half-tone, and, occasionally, colored illustrations, and advertisers could send in their own “electros” for insertion as fully prepared displays.\textsuperscript{57} (“Electro” was the commonly used term for a photoengraved, mounted plate, easy to reproduce and ready to be inserted in newspapers and magazines. Some electros included only illustrations, around which compositors set type, whereas others were fully prepared displays that needed only to be set into purchased space.) Publishers often placed advertisements in the order received, except for those whose patronage warranted “preferred” placement, such as important local merchants. Sometimes “foreign” advertisers (that is, nonlocal) received preferred placement if they could convince the publishers to do so, or bribe the compositors who made up the paper.\textsuperscript{58}

While most newspapers of the nineteenth century generally tried to raise at least half of their revenues from advertisers, magazines presented a mixed welcome for advertisers. Some of the most important literary and political periodicals of the 1870s and earlier refused to accept commercial announcements except those deemed proper, such as for books, lectures, and stitching patterns. \textit{Harper’s Monthly} allowed advertising privileges only to other publications of the Harper publishing house—unlike \textit{Harper’s Weekly}, which typically ran
three pages of advertising by the end of the Civil War. Bonner advertised his pathbreaking literary publication the *New York Ledger* at the rate of $27,000 a week at that time, meanwhile refusing to accept advertisements himself.\(^5\)

And not until the 1880s did respectable magazines mix advertisements with editorial material. Nonetheless, many periodicals were more than happy to sell their back pages, if not other pages, to advertisers. After the Civil War, a flood of magazines began publication, raising the number of journals in the United States from seven hundred in 1865 to twelve hundred in 1870. That number doubled again by 1880, on its way to yet higher figures by the turn of the century. New publications averaged fewer than four years of life, and success hinged greatly on the ability to attract advertising revenues.\(^6\)

Poetry, literature, fashion, advice to women, and essays that collectively preached or expounded on a wide range of topics made up the journals' stock in trade, attracting the readers most likely to have discretionary income enough to spread beyond the local grocery store. Yet to a great extent, magazine advertisements after the Civil War resembled those in newspapers: individual advertisements were relatively small, often packed a dozen per page, each filled with dark, heavy type. Because the pages were quite small, however, rarely more than ten inches high by seven inches wide, the clutter of printing appeared less oppressive than it did in newspapers. Also, magazine publishers often employed new printing technologies for illustrations faster than did newspapers, facilitating illustrated messages and adding considerably to the attractiveness of both individual advertisements and whole pages of them.

By the mid-1880s, magazines began to compete effectively with newspapers as more convenient and effective means by which advertisers could reach the burgeoning national markets; a single magazine insertion could reach into many communities. The larger a magazine's geographical spread across the growing railroad networks, the more it attracted manufacturers of branded products, and the less appropriate it was for urban merchants, who generally continued to rely on newspapers to offer daily specials and to project the requisite sense of newness and urgency into their advertising.

Americans had ordered products through the mails at an accelerating pace all through the 1800s, but a type of mail-order advertising just emerging by the 1870s demonstrated the attractiveness of magazines as an advertising medium that crossed regional boundaries. In 1869, E. C. Allen of Augusta, Maine, started up the *People's Literary Companion* primarily as an advertising medium for a line of inexpensive products such as recipes and art prints he wished to sell through the mails. Within a few years, Allen's mail-order magazine so successfully attracted the advertising of other promoters that at least a dozen similar mail-order magazines started up during the 1870s.\(^61\) Postal rates for peri-
odicals had declined steadily after 1825, and all magazines, including the new advertising magazines, received a timely boost in 1879 when Congress established the bulk rate system for second-class mail, thereby reducing rates for magazines substantially.62

**Advertising in Nonperiodical Media**

Job printers competed fiercely with each other and with publishers for advertisers' expenditures. As they sought innovative ways to attract accounts, they generated a wide variety of forms to carry messages into the marketplace, employing typesetting, engraving, or lithography, or all three on occasion. Advertisers wanted the printed carriers to be attractive to businesspeople, workers both male and female, homemakers, and even children. They intended some forms to be sent for and others to be taken by consumers from local retailers or other distributors to their homes or work places. By the 1870s, these media included trade cards, posters, boxes and bottles with beautifully printed labels, calendars, bookmarks, and almanacs; in the next three decades, the options grew to include tin containers, metal rulers, paper dolls, trays, and even metal potscrapers. Even though these forms were and are labeled as ephemera, they often outlasted periodicals in ordinary circumstances. Calendars, puzzles, office implements, and so forth typically stayed in use longer than the daily newspaper. Untold millions of such advertising specialties, poured forth over the years, were used and displayed everywhere except fine parlors.63 Despite the huge numbers, their historical presence suffers from their ephemeral nature; when they were bound and preserved, it was informal and personal, not systematic and institutional, in contrast to periodicals.

Despite the complexities of selecting from and using the many options job printers offered for nonperiodical advertising, many businesspeople did not want to be limited to magazine or newspaper advertisements before the 1890s. The uncertainties of appearing in those dark, cluttered pages, with their dubious circulations, did not always warrant their costs and inconveniences. Some advertisers sought a means of exposure that directly pinpointed their potential markets; distributing job-printed forms through retailers, local agents, and the mails could accomplish this on a national scale. Moreover, the nonperiodical media, particularly lithographs, allowed for the prolific reproduction of images, which few periodicals could offer before the development of photoengraving in the 1880s.64 Pictures were still prizes, often literally so, during the nineteenth century. The graphic flexibility of lithography offered advertisers an infinite range of colorful images that could use humor, sentimentality, lust, and
other appeals that were more evocative than the wordy claims typical of contemporary newspaper and magazine advertisements.

Two formats dominated the public presence of the commercial ephemera printed between the Civil War and the end of the century. One category of commercial forms, "circulars"—typically typeset mailers and flyers—likely outnumbered all other forms. Although mail-order and junk mail in the 1870s made but a whisper of their future roar, their importance grew through the century as sellers tried to reach consumers directly. Circulars generally but not always went out on the flimsiest paper, with minimal illustrations, and despite their collective numbers, relatively few have survived to represent the abundance of ancient junk mail. An irritated citizen wrote a letter in 1875 to the editors of the *New York Times* that the newspaper titled "The Nuisance of Circulars." Accusing "those industrious gentlemen who take contracts to address and deliver business circulars" of "making life a burden to me," he wrote:

> When the old-fashioned, unmistakable, and matter-of-fact circular of tradespeople was in vogue the evil was not so great. Bridget could sweep up the day's deposit and make it useful in the kitchen-range. But the circular-senders have headed us off in that direction. Their documents are deceptive and seductive. They come in nice envelopes, and with monograms and postage stamps regularly affixed. One cannot weed them out of his morning's mail. He must go through the lot with circumspection... It is a great nuisance. I am pursued by circulars every hour in the day.

Of course, printers promoted their abilities to accomplish this very deception, even boasting of the "blurred appearance" that mimicked the effects of putting typed and handwritten letters in a copy book.\(^{65}\)

The second broad category of media that printers created to compete for advertisers' expenditures encompassed items illustrated by either lithography or engraving (woodcut or photoengraving, rarely steel engraving), such as trade cards (usually postcard-sized and somewhat stiff, with printing on both sides), and posters, catalogs, paper dolls, and any number of other illustrated novelty items. Until the mid-1870s, most trade cards and posters were in black and white, whether lithographed, typeset, or woodcut.\(^{66}\) During the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, chromolithographed trade cards became all the rage. Thereafter, children and women collected them, often by the hundreds, into scrapbooks, or they decorated walls, screens, and trunks with the cards. As leading lithographer Louis Prang wrote, "Millions upon millions... of the most varied designs were thrown on the market... .Hardly a business man in the country has not at one time or another made use of such cards to advertize his wares."\(^{67}\) For instance, in 1881 I. L. Cragin & Company
informed retailers that it had already distributed more than one million cards in a single ongoing promotion for Dobbins' Electric Soap. Posters varied more widely in size, some being quite large. Because all but typeset broadsides were much more expensive than trade cards, they were not printed in such large quantities. Posters included illustrated advertisements intended for display in stores, on walls and in windows, in other public places such as hotels, stations, and restaurants, and in homes, offices, and workshops. "Show cards," as they were then called, often were mounted on plaster composition boards or stretchers (internal frames) and then varnished to give them luster and greater longevity.

Advertisers had many decisions to make in the process of arranging for lithographic advertisements, and their first decision—whether or not to order a customized design or a stock design—determined their messages' degree of originality and cost. The McCormick Company could afford substantial customized lithographed advertising to supplement newspaper advertisements and its own publications. In 1881, for example, McCormick ordered about eight thousand newly designed show cards printed and framed at a cost of approximately 75¢ each. The company's regional salespeople received these during the winter so that they could place them by spring. McCormick's agents also distributed about 175,000 circulars, plus trade cards, at state and county fairs each year through the 1870s and 1880s. Many advertisers, including all but the very largest of retailers, however, had much smaller budgets than this industrial colossus; they therefore had to rely on stock images upon which their names and locations could be overprinted. The Iron Age reported on the calendars that manufacturers sent in during 1893, and approximately one-third were stock designs; among retailers, stock images were almost universal. The very low costs of these stock prints indicate the economies of scale that lithographers could achieve on large runs requiring no original artwork. For instance, Thomas Sinclair & Son, Philadelphia lithographers whose 1885 catalog offered "Advertising Specialties for the Trade," could sell stock "cabinet show cards" of a standard size, nineteen by twenty-four inches, at $50 for one thousand prints; that is, 5¢ each. Advertisers often had more tailored, word-only messages printed on the reverse sides; these could be typeset locally and inexpensively in black and white. Some manufacturers took advantage of all these options, as the New Home Sewing Machine Company did in the 1880s when it distributed at least eighty customized images on lithographed trade cards, plus dozens of stock images with overprinted messages, flyers, and booklets with agents' information overprinted on the back covers, as well as show cards and hangers (long, narrow posters that hung from a metal strip).

Frequently a brand-name producer or distributor and willing retailers
shared the costs and efforts of getting the advertising messages to the con-
sumers. In this subcategory of the specially ordered advertisement (today
called a "cooperative") a distributor or manufacturer made up an advertise-
ment for a brand-name product and local dealers inserted their names and ad-
dresses next to the preprinted (or today, prerecorded) area. The retailers then
distributed the advertisement to their customers, often merely placing the
items on their counters or walls. Retailers could thereby receive goods that
ranged from paper bags to cookbooks or almanacs, all printed with advertising
and "for gratuitous distribution." If they purchased sufficient quantities of the
products being promoted, retailers could have their "own card" printed on the
booklets' covers "free of all expense."^*2

Some printers worked at expanding their markets by making it convenient
for advertisers to purchase stock prints through the mails, leaving us with some
notion of their dealings. In the 1880s, the [Jonathan] B. Jeffery Printing
Company of Chicago distributed form letters soliciting business informing po-
tential customers, "We are continually getting up new designs... We are now
completing several fine pictures of Running Horses, in colors, which we would
be pleased to send you on application."^3 Thomas Sinclair & Sons offered to
supply "all our regular customers with samples of new goods as soon as they are
issued." Furthermore, "To large advertisers and jobbers, who desire to examine
goods with a view to purchase, we will send our full line on receipt of two dol-
ars, which amount will be deducted from the first bill of fifty dollars or over."
However, this "purely lithographic" firm discouraged customers from request-
ing typeset advertising from them, as they had no facilities for printing indi-
vidual messages on the stock cards. Sinclair's chromo trade cards averaged
about $1.75 per set of one thousand stock images, and they would contract out
typesetting on one side of the cards for an additional 50¢ per thousand on or-
ders of five thousand or more. By dealing directly with their local typesetter,
the Sinclairs' catalog suggested, "our customers can get this printing done as
cheaply as we can, and presumably more to their taste."^4 In terms of absolute
numbers, such images, nonadvertiser specific, accounted for the largest single
portion of all nonperiodical advertisements, some 30,000 basic stock images in
trade cards alone, each typically varied with each reprinting, resulting in many
multiples of that number.75

After 1870, the makers of more and more proprietary—that is, branded—
consumer and trade products ordered uniquely designed lithographed adver-
tisements. Arranging for these generally required more contact between ad-
vertisers and printers than did the purchasing of stock prints. Because of
having to conduct complex negotiations about format and content, the print-
ing industry had to be relatively decentralized, and all but the smallest of

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towns possessed typesetting shops, many of which also published local newspapers. Lithographers were more rare, but many excellent and well-known lithographers prospered outside of the major metropolises because of the need for accessibility. For example, Strobridge and Company of Cincinnati began in 1849 and became one of the largest lithographic firms in the country by the 1880s, serving the alcohol and tobacco industries in the region, plus Cincinnati's Procter & Gamble, a prolific advertiser from early in its history, and the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Sometimes independent solicitors intermediated between advertisers and the "practical lithographers" to whom they would contract the printing. Even when printers obtained business from outside their areas, they facilitated direct contact whenever they could, usually by traveling themselves or sending employees or agents to clients. As one printer explained, "personal acquaintance" was important because "it is entirely necessary that we know what your wants are in detail, before proceeding on a speculative basis."

As difficult as it was to work out the details of unique, individualized designs through the mails, some advertisers attempted it. Fortunately, a few examples of such correspondence survive, indicating something of the nature of the interactions between job printers and advertisers, and showing at the same time how difficult the procedure could be. Sometimes printers received only the broadest instructions from advertisers, such as, "I wish you to take pains in the printing to have them get up in good style . . .— with the name of the company printed in plain and pretty capitals—I will leave it for your taste to arrange the form of the printing . . . P. s. I wish you to put on some pretty vignette." More often the instructions and resulting correspondence entailed more complex negotiations. For instance, many printers responded to potential customers' requests for estimates by sending samples from which customers could select, or which they could use to develop their own designs. One printer suggested, "If you will make us a small pencil layout we can tell better what you want and if you will explain what kind of a lithograph you want, it might be possible that we shall have something in stock that by relettering would be useful for your purpose." Sometimes the materials that the customer sent to the printer were inadequate for an attractive design, and the printer returned it, as one did, explaining, "We enclose herewith copy, which was made up from the matter you sent us, but we do not think in this form that it will be satisfactory to you." At other times the information sent to initiate work was unclear, such as the following request for a price estimate and a speculative design (one done without guarantee of compensation): "Please quote us price on about 100,000 folders similar to the one enclosed, except that we
want an original design, and, of course, the matter will be different. Kindly return a sample [design] with your reply. On occasion, a customer rejected a printers’ work if the lack of direct contact had led to misunderstandings.

Even though the printers’ advertising customers generally wrote and designed their messages, and then decided whether or not to purchase and distribute any given print, the printers influenced the final product. Printers were therefore warned not “to parade [their] notions about taste . . . [as advertisers wanted their] own notions carried out,” yet they often had to guess their patrons’ taste; that is, how they would like their designs and copy actually set up. Proofs went back and forth between printers and advertisers as the printers sought to please their customers, even when they came “up with new ideas to be incorporated.” As a result, the relationships between printers and their patrons included continuous negotiations about the content of the advertisements. Sometimes the customers’ input continued even as printers worked, disrupting the print shop. Nevertheless, it was unavoidable that printers and their artists and compositors impose something of their own styles, techniques, and technologies upon the finished pieces. For instance, the European origins of lithographers often left their traces on their styles in preparing images for American audiences, as with an entire series of posters and metal trays produced for Barbee Whiskey: the illustrations showed Bavarian peasant girls outside an American log cabin that had on its wall a coonskin cap and Kentucky rifle. Occasionally, a printers’ impact was less subtle, such as repeating very similar layouts in advertisements for different advertisers. For example, Louis Prang’s artists virtually repeated a design for two different breweries, two years apart. Donaldson Brothers, of Five Points, New York, was another important lithography firm, despite an occasional impropriety; they, too, produced similar images for two breweries around 1890. These repetitions may well have resulted from the difficulties printers faced in trying to work conventional motifs into their works too frequently. The motifs in the two Donaldson sets of posters included oversized beer bottles, crates with the brewers’ trademarks on them, mythical Germanic kings and fertility goddesses, and goats’ faces, although the brewery, in each case, was that of the advertiser, and the crates had the right trademark. All of these motifs were quite popular with brewers throughout the nineteenth century and remained important parts of their advertising until the brewers’ advertising styles caught up with the twentieth century after Prohibition.
Marketing Advantages of Nonperiodical Advertisements

The nonperiodical media helped advertisers to achieve national distribution of large illustrations before magazines and newspapers did so effectively. Locomotive builders numbered among the earliest industrialists to use lithographed images in meeting their nonlocal marketing problems. In their attempts to sell a product that did not lend itself to salesmen's samples, these manufacturers began to order the highest quality lithographed show cards of the 1830s. Because lithographs were still quite expensive at this time, as were the chromolithographs that often replaced black-and-white prints by the 1850s, they served as appropriately prestigious emissaries for such costly machinery to railroad officials, financiers, railroad contractors, engineers, and other potential purchasers, or advisers to purchasers of engines, such as mining operators and industrialists. An 1856 article in the *Railroad Advocate* reported on the importance of these prints:

They are the appropriate adornments for the offices of every variety of business connected with railroads; they are consulted by master mechanics and locomotive buyers; they are the master-pieces in the parlors of many engineers of good taste. . . . Two prominent locomotive builders have informed us that they owed orders simply to handsome lithographs of their engines, having had no other communication whatsoever with the parties who gave the orders. The lithographs told the whole story just as well as a long conference would have told it. One locomotive sold by a picture, ought to pay for all the pictures a builder would issue in three years. And the builder circulating the best picture, of course, stands the best chance of introducing his work. Again, lithographs are now so common, that they are expected by all locomotive users. The builder who does not issue them is considered behind the times.  

Railroads also commissioned paintings and chromolithographs for self-promotion. The most famous of these included *The Lackawanna Valley* and the *Delaware Water Gap* painted then printed for the Delaware & Lackawanna Company in the 1850s by George Inness. The Santa Fe Railroad mounted an influential promotional campaign in 1892 to attract tourists to the Southwest by using lithographs of artists' romantic renditions of the area and its people.

The national advertising campaigns of McCormick, Fairbanks, and Singer discussed in chapter 1, like the locomotive promotions, were exceptionally grand before the Civil War. These advertisers built innovative marketing systems early because of their special needs in selling highly technical, specialized equipment. However, they were no longer exceptions between the Civil War
and the 1890s. Indeed, the “post–Civil War revolution in the structure of American marketing” motivated rather than resulted from the federal legal environment for free trade within the United States. Industrialists marketing their products nationally fought extensive judicial battles to establish the “idea of a [national] free-trade unit” on the grounds that progress through “the changing structure of business enterprise” required it. This national character of the industrialists’ marketing activities before the mergers of the 1890s is only partially represented by evidence in periodicals, including the advertising trade press, because published media had not before then resolved most problems related to extensive national advertising. Advertisers therefore explored other options. For instance, in 1881, Johnson, Clark and Company of Union Square, New York City, commissioned a chromolithographed poster, or show card, to promote its sewing machine. It portrays a family on their homestead with snow-capped mountains in the background, and the headline reads, “The ‘New Home’ in the Far West,” indicating that the most likely setting is either the Rocky Mountain region or California (fig. 3.5). The firm also distributed show cards and trade cards showing “The ‘New Home’ in the Sunny South.” The Far West poster listed Chicago as one of the firm’s two main regional offices for distributing the New Home sewing machine; the other was in Massachusetts. Chicago had grown rapidly as the second hub of national trade, in part because of the extensive marketing of industrial goods from there into the hinterlands and back to the East as well. Cyrus Hall McCormick had moved to Chicago as early as 1847 and for decades sent his advertisements and agents from there into the heartland in ever-increasing volume. In the spring of 1871 alone, McCormick’s agents distributed eighteen thousand chromolithographed show cards, and through the 1870s and 1880s they took hundreds of thousands of printed pieces to fairs throughout the country.

In the days when even small communities were likely to have multiple newspapers, when no general (nontrade) magazines had extensive national reach, and when circulation figures were unreliable, newspaper advertising required a complex and inefficient set of operations that often left the advertisers unsure of just what they were getting for their expenditures. This uncertainty remained even if the advertisers worked through advertising agents. At the same time, many industrialists, following the leads of McCormick, Singer, and Fairbanks, were developing marketing networks that included agents on commission or traveling salesmen, then called drummers, on salary. An 1871 writer estimated that fifty thousand drummers traveled American roads. Through these representatives, manufacturers distributed their show cards, trade cards, calendars, or other promotional items, and took orders for their products. A good drummer could effectively distribute the advertisements, be

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Fig. 3.5. “The ‘New Home’ in the Far West,” 1881, was one of a series of trade cards and chromolithographed show cards (posters) distributed nationally to sell a popular sewing machine. The setting, with its linen tablecloth and flowering vines coupled with the woman’s clothing and the entire family’s demeanor, all belie the difficulties of homesteading.

Insure that retailers or other recipients put the advertisements on display, and gain considerable feedback information as well. In industries that did not employ traveling agents, wholesalers operated as intermediaries between manufacturers and retailers and distributed their own and manufacturers’ advertisements with their own drummers or with deliveries of orders. Around 1885, for instance, a six-foot-tall chromolithograph poster for Sapolio household cleaner hung as a sample of smaller posters available to retailers in the window of a wholesaler in the Boston-Providence area. Advertisers or their sales agents frequently hired boys to paste or hand out broadsides and handbills and even chromo posters, all over cities, often covering each other’s postings by way of competition. Advertising show cards or other items often went out to merchants through the mails as well, usually not mounted but rolled into mailing tubes; to facilitate this practice, long, narrow posters were designed that
came to be called roll-downs and hangers. This distribution method, while costing very little, gave the advertiser no assurance that retailers displayed the advertisements.

Photographs of stores taken in the decades between 1870 and 1910 show a plethora of chromolithographed advertisements in place. Retailers used them profusely to increase the sales of products on their shelves and to decorate every inch of space not occupied by products for sale. Retailers' storefronts typically deployed advertisements on sidewalks, on outside corners and walls, and in windows, and advertisements filled interior walls and any shelf spaces that happened not to be covered with products for sale. Posters and promotional gadgets even hung from ceilings (fig. 3.6). These colorful point-of-purchase sales devices appealed to manufacturers because they encouraged retailers to carry products that offered such vivid promotional support. Such items also presented consumers with promotional messages at the last possible moment before their purchase decisions. Accordingly, a distributor for Ivory and Lenox Soaps offered retailers the "Services of an Efficient Saleswoman for
Nothing” in the form of a “beautifully colored lithograph of a handsome young woman, life-size, mounted on heavy pulp board.” Retailers would benefit because of “the attention she attracts and how much Soap she will sell. This is by far the most costly advertisement they [Procter & Gamble] have ever given away, but they feel justified in the expense, because of the large increase in the sales of their Soaps she is sure to make.” Similarly, Humphreys’ Medicine Co. offered retailers a “new upright counter show case” of cherry wood with a “front lithographed in ten rich colors” if only they stocked up $25 worth of “preparations.” Retailers ordering goods worth $50 would receive “Case, signs, printed matter, etc., gratis.” Although the resulting retail ambience was, by today’s tastes, more than a bit cluttered, it was lively and colorful. Both retailers and manufacturers expected this abundance of stimulation to increase sales, just as their counterparts today expect point-of-purchase marketing programs to do.

With advertisers seeking out state-of-the-art mass communication technologies to gain a competitive advantage in getting their messages to their markets in the brightest, most vivid manner then available, lithographers, in their turn, competed with each other by continually developing their technologies. They also competed openly with typesetters, who could not offer lithography's inexpensive visual texture before the entry of photoengraving in the late 1880s, nor its freedom from straight-line copy before the introduction of the twisted rule, a device for laying out type in curves, in the 1880s, nor its color before 1900. The contrast of these colorful and popular prints, with their many format options, to the dark, cluttered, and monotonous pages of advertisements in contemporary newspapers and magazines explains something of the attraction businesspeople showed for this alternative. The arguments that advertising agents and publishers repeatedly voiced in trying to dissuade advertisers from using chromolithographed advertisements and other nonperiodical media seemed to have had little effect until the 1890s. By 1900, publishers had succeeded in dominating the advertising arena, but the contest had been intense and often vituperative. Whether the advertising practitioners argued that expenditures on lithography were “money thrown away” out of a genuine concern for advertisers’ success or because they regretted losing commissions on those expenditures, the amounts of job printing done for advertising sufficed to attract considerable attention. O. Kling wrote an article with those very words as title, for the Denver Road—an article Printers' Ink reprinted as part of its campaign against lithography's hold on advertisers' expenditures. Kling cited having received “not less than thirteen calendars for the year 1891” as evidence for his case. “These calendars are so elegant in design that many may be classed as works of art, but owing to their being so nu-
merous the effect that advertisers intended is wholly lost.” He also criticized the “flaming lithographs of women and children whose beauty is chiefly imaginary and whose costumes are, what little there is of them, made attractive by conspicuous draping and plenty of red in the brush.”

The proportions Enoch Morgan’s Sons spent on Sapolio advertising reinforce the impression that the amounts many advertisers spent on job printing were “extensive” relative to publication space, to use Kling’s assessment of “money thrown away.” In 1885, this leading and innovative marketer of cleanser reportedly bought $15,100 worth of space in publications, meanwhile spending $29,200 in various printed, nonperiodical media. Moreover, chromo advertisements survive from an assortment of companies that includes virtually all manufacturing companies that marketed products to the American consumer during the decades before 1900. There certainly were many hundreds of thousands, perhaps more, uniquely designed and printed lithographed advertisements—the medium of prestige as well as the most cost-effective way available then to get a high-quality, multicolored advertising message into peoples’ lives and businesses. The lithography industry grew rapidly during this period, indicating the demand for its services. In 1860, approximately 60 American companies employed about 800 workers. By 1880, the conservative figures of the census listed 167 companies with 4,332 employees. By 1890, there were 700 lithographic companies employing approximately 8,000 people, and having an annual production of more than $20 million—a figure that of course includes both job printing and speculative printing for sales to consumers.

Why did so many manufacturers and other advertisers employ a category of advertising media for which advertising agents had so little regard? No particular trade had yet established itself as the presumed adviser to advertisers. Not only were agents’ opinions not yet authoritative, in some cases agents’ poor advice drove clients away from periodical advertising altogether, and toward relying entirely on job printers’ media. In 1889, for instance, the Lydia Pinkham patent-medicine firm spent its entire advertising budget on trade cards bearing pictures of granddaughters of the deceased Mrs. Pinkham. Charles Pinkham’s concerns about the reliability of his agent’s services had led to his decision to curtail all newspaper advertising. Moreover, advertisers’ extensive promotions outside of the periodical press met many needs that the newspaper and magazine advertisements could not, as advertisers and printers worked together to generate a multitude of ways to solve the problem of getting advertising messages into the ken of customers everywhere. Examples abound. For a century, starting with the 1820s, almanacs served as an especially important advertising medium for the patent-medicine firms as well as
many farm-equipment manufacturers. Prior to the general availability of frequently produced, illustrated sources of information such as magazines, almanacs provided much useful and entertaining information, frequently carrying evocative family scenes or work-related illustrations on their covers and in advertisements throughout. In many cases, the front or back covers also had a local retailer's identification overprinted. Catalogs distributed information about manufacturers' various products to jobbers, retailers, and consumers—as they still do.

Many industrialists' trade journals, such as *Iron Age* and *American Industries*, carried regular columns on advertising that devoted much of their space to describing and commenting on catalogs. From the 1870s, novelty advertising forms carried commercial messages disguised as useful or decorative objects, such as calendars (sometimes embossed and die-cut), rulers, potscrapers, paper and cloth dolls, match holders, puzzles, pocket mirrors, thermometers, cookbooks, paperweights, hangers, corkscrews, games, ashtrays, cigar cutters, mugs, hand-held fans, and shoehorns (fig. 3.7). Although *Business: A Practical Journal of the Office* often carried an advertisement for N. W. Ayer & Son, Newspaper Advertising Agents, on its title page in the early 1890s, its regular "Art and Practice of Advertising" featured point-of-purchase items, novelties, and catalogs more than newspaper copy. A novelty was just as likely as a periodical ad to be described as "a clever bit of advertising" in a regular column in the *Tobacco Leaf*. Another column explained that manufacturers used novelties "to gain the interest of both merchants and consumers." For "catching of the consumer, many houses devote a large share of time and attention and considerable sums of money. For his personal use and delectation are provided pictures and photographs in endless variety; pocket-books, diaries and calendars; writing pads and blotters; pens, pencils and rubbers; cigar and cigarette cases and holders; match boxes, and even hats and caps for summer wear, etc., etc." When manufacturers made such novelties available, they competed for dealers as well as consumers because the latter preferred carrying products supported by so much promotional activity. The price to the consumer was these items' advertising messages—the same price carried now by most periodicals and the commercial broadcast media.

Most Americans eagerly embraced the "chromo-civilization," ignoring the elites who decried it and instead taking the giveaway advertising chromos into their homes and workplaces. The fashion reached its peak in the 1880s, when the *New York Times* ran several lengthy articles about it, such as "High Art on Card-Board." Most of these articles noticed favorably "the rage for picturesque advertising." One article included an interview with a lithographer who declared that "there is a steadily increasing demand for the most expensive kind"
The "STANDARD" Line
ART CALENDARS

12 Sheet
Daily Date
Weekly
Monthly
and
ART
CALENDARS
"De Luxe"

Fans
Blotters
Folders
Xmas
Greeting
Cards
Wall Pockets
Cut-outs
Banners
Card Boards
Mounts

NOVELTIES
Brushes
Plaques
Plates
Passe Partouts
Pencils
Leather Goods
Metal Specialties
Paper Banks
Glass Souvenirs
Framed Calendars
Wood Calendars
Thermometers
Mirror Novelty
Signs
Banners, Etc.

RELIABLE SALESMEN WANTED

Those now selling Advertising Specialities or Calendars preferred.

Standard Art Calendar Co.
Incorporated
564-72 W. Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

Fig. 3.7. The Standard Art Calendar Co., Inc., advertised a wide assortment of printed and embossed items used as advertising in the Advertising Specialty Manufacturers' Directory. The firm's "Standard Directory of American and Foreign Manufacturers, Jobbers and Dealers in the Advertising Specialty Trade" listed manufacturers of thermometers, thimbles, tin cups, tobacco tags, and items beginning with every other letter of the alphabet onto which advertisements could be placed. (Chicago: Schulman Bros., 1917), p. 176.
of lithographed novelty. He also noted that “[t]his kind of advertising must
pay, for some of the largest New York firms have steadily increased their ex-
penses in this direction during the last three years.” The *Times* reporter noted
that the “more beautiful and artistic a card or plaque is, it is argued, the longer
it will be kept in sight and talked about.” Indeed, “ladies mak[e] little pur-
chases in [the] stores for no other reason than as an excuse to ask for one of the
firm’s elaborate spring announcements.”106 Magazine publishers acknowledged
and exploited the popularity of the chromo prints from the 1860s through the
1890s by offering them as premiums for people who solicited sufficient num-
bers of subscribers.107

Some industrial advertisers took this notion even farther in order to meet
their unique marketing problems. When soap manufacturers, including
the four major companies, Babbitt, Larkin, Pears, and Procter & Gamble, started
putting their goods into small, consumer-sized packages, they had difficulty in
convincing buyers to switch from the centuries-old practices of either making
their own soap or buying it in unpackaged, irregular chunks chopped off of
storekeepers’ large cakes. By making the wrappers themselves valuable com-
modities, the companies broke through this bottleneck; they encouraged con-
sumers to save their wrappers to exchange them for desirable goods, first offer-
ing chromolithographed prints as premiums, then later everything from more
soap, to lamps, to furniture. Procter & Gamble offered many attractive chro-
mos in exchange for Star Soap wrappers, for instance, including one with a
picture titled *Ethel*. Retailers were to display this picture of a pretty child as an
inducement for customers to buy to Star Soap and thereby acquire their own
copy of the print without promotional lettering on the front, but with exten-
sive advertising on the reverse.108 Thurber, Whyland & Co., a large New York
food and tobacco distributor, often offered “free advertising novelties” for
many of its goods, “to reach the customer direct.” In 1890, they invited retail-
ers to take advantage of the “sort of mania, on the part of the small boy, for the
collection of the largest quantity of tobacco tags, postage stamps, buttons, etc.”
by offering cigars and cash as incentives to boys who collected enough cigar
bands.109

Advertisers and printers even devised ways to encourage popular demand
for the advertisements themselves, making them collectible items; observers
referred to them as “souvenirs” in a “craze” that was “absolute” in its intensity.
Some coffee and tea processors and many tobacco companies induced trade-
card collecting by ordering sets with themes, such as flowers, exotic peoples,
actresses, game birds, tropical birds, city newspaper editors, military heroes,
Native Americans, and sports champions. In many cases, manufacturers dis-
tributed a chromo poster to local retailers to show all of the cards in any given
set. Instead of trade cards, the Arbuckle Brothers Coffee Company, a foodstuffs processor, often put recipe cards into their packages. Together, these poster and card sets illustrate how advertisers, in getting their advertising messages into the consumers' lives, encouraged brand loyalty and high frequency of use.\textsuperscript{110} Cream of Wheat explained this marketing principle to retailers in 1900: "The Object of Advertising Is to Bring People Into Your Store." The company offered its assistance to this end in the form of eighteen "elegant gravures of Northwestern scenery" packed in each case of cereal to be given to purchasers, plus "a large colored placard" for the window to announce the terms of the promotion to the public. This "scheme" would "bring crowds of new customers into your store without one cent of expense to you"; the pictures, said Cream of Wheat, were "not 'cheap truck,' but are real works of art."\textsuperscript{111} Large numbers of scrapbooks survive demonstrating the success of the collectible strategy, with trade cards and small chromos often preserved next to gift cards and other nonadvertising items.

### Advertisers' Images

Business historian Edward C. Kirkland explains the "general silence by businessmen regarding issues of interest to historians": precious few, he writes, were as "garrulous" as Andrew Carnegie; the industrialists' and merchants' trade presses recorded their views on many matters extensively, but these were internal literature, not intended for general communication. Kirkland attributes this to their preoccupation with "business affairs and activities [that] were dirty, dusty, and personal," and not considered "literary material."\textsuperscript{112} Similarly, in The Progress of Economics, Warren Catlin observes that nineteenth-century economists and most writers on business emphasized production, international trade, and banking rather than entrepreneurship itself. H. G. Wells noted that Victorian business "was carried about in people's heads" and therefore "perhaps the great part of Victorian management went undocumented." Memos and other forms of documentary internal communication evolved only at the end of the nineteenth century as the size of firms grew.\textsuperscript{113} In lieu of written resources, therefore, nineteenth-century advertisements serve as valuable historiographical resources for studying the business people who created them.

When owner-managers dominated U.S. businesses, founders, partners, officers, and their kin performed most managerial functions, including advertising decisions, through direct contact with printers and publishers. Many large corporations still communicated with their printers via "daily visits" as late as the 1890s.\textsuperscript{114} Moreover, contemporary accounts almost always gave company
Fig. 3.8. Late-nineteenth-century advertisers often scoffed at cherished notions of romantic love and companionate marriage, as in this trade card for Corticelli Best Twist silk thread, circa 1885. They did so even when their products' purchasers were those most likely to want to believe in romance, however unrealistic those dreams might have been. Advertisers' frequent insensitivity to consumers' interests and attitudes, often in the name of humor, fueled the arguments of copywriters and artists, who by the turn of the century sought advertisers' patronage.
heads, officers, or kin credit for their advertising campaigns and successes. As a result, advertising messages of the nineteenth century, especially in the nonperiodical media such as chromolithography, represent entrepreneurs' perceived interests and concerns more than do advertisements created by advertising professionals for their clients.

Advertisements served as businesspeople's primary channel of direct, albeit one-way, communication with the public. As such, they fulfilled several functions, only the most obvious of which was to promote and sell the advertisers' products and services. Whether or not advertisements sold their wares effectively in the past is even less knowable than the effectiveness of most advertisements today, but this study's concern with the advertisers and their messages rather than with the audiences' reactions to the messages eliminates having to calculate effectiveness. Nevertheless, considering a few apparent incongruities in advertisers' messages vis-à-vis their audiences yields some insight toward interpreting those messages and their significance for the advertisers.

Humor occurs in these older images frequently. Except for the instances in which anthropomorphized animals played out the jokes, demographic groups other than that to which most advertisers belonged—white, Protestant, bourgeois males—were the objects of ridicule or indignity. Such stereotypes were common in the period's iconography in general, including in manufactured children's books and games, plus countless political cartoons and advertisements that demonstrated their creators' racial, ethnic, gender, and class prejudices. Derogatory portrayals occur in both specially commissioned advertisements and stock prints because their creators considered them amusing. Yet, despite their prejudices and their unabashed publication of them, most manufacturers eagerly sold to anyone, including the objects of their derision. Accordingly, at the end of the last century, advertisements flourished in nearly one thousand foreign-language newspapers in this country, and many industrial and retail firms printed their brochures and packages in several languages. Some advertisers clearly targeted their products to women—pins, thread, and other notions that early on did not require male purchase decisions—through media such as trade cards that were explicitly intended for woman and children. Yet they jested about marital relations frequently, such as picturing women relying on physical restraints such as thread and glue to win and hold their spouses (fig. 3.8). That many advertisers did not hesitate to demean large segments of the population, some of whom counted as potential customers, displayed levels of demographic and cultural centrism impervious to self-consciousness or empathy.
Advertisers also expressed their insensitivity to their audiences by frequently violating today's "one-step-up-rule" in portraying socioeconomic status. Instead of considering their market's most likely status and then portraying their products in use by people in the next higher bracket, nineteenth-century advertisers almost always portrayed their consumers as prosperous members of the upper-middle and upper classes or their servants. For example, the Rising Sun Stove Polish Company often showed women in finery expressing their great satisfaction with a product that women of their position might never even touch. Similarly, a trade card for Scourene portrayed a woman in a lacy dress happily scrubbing pans, while lawn-mower advertisements frequently showed elegantly dressed children mowing lawns. Twentieth-century advertising textbooks routinely warn against offending or intimidating potential customers by presenting too great a gap between consumers' lifestyles and the ones the advertisements present as lures; today, associations of mustard and such with limousines are spoofs. Yet, rather than offering their products as the means to or symbol of a realistic increment in status, nineteenth-century advertisers more often associated their products with the level of status to which they, the advertisers, and their peers were likely to aspire.

In an era noted for its intense emphasis on decorum and propriety among the hegemonic classes, and those aspiring thereto, countless advertisements featured women's forms, and occasionally men's, not at all clothed according to public fashion. Women clothed as actresses or prostitutes staring confidently at their audiences violated norms of female decorum (plate 2). Full female nudity generally appeared only in pictures directed to the male market; these included trade journals as well as advertisements for alcohol and tobacco products, and presumably the only women who would see them there were "crude" or already "fallen." Less frequently, nude and near nude women frolicked on patent medicine, soap, and cosmetic advertisements, the ethereal innocence of their expressions belying their erotic bodies (fig. 3.9). In contrast, not only in advertisements but in every printed medium not primarily intended for children, atavistic variations on classical drapery revealingly clung to countless figures, as it did in the theater of the time. In many cases, the drapery protected modesty (at least that of the viewer) only by adhering strategically if implausibly to breasts and thighs. Debates on the artistic and cultural merits of nudity during the century, such as that inspired by Hiram Power's "The Greek Slave" in 1858 and the abundance of nudity in fine art of the era, may have justified and encouraged the use of such commercial art. Scholars in several fields have analyzed the significance of nude female figures in fine art, theater, and other visual media, reaching various conclusions about its symbolism. Regardless of and in addition to nudity's use as artistic symbol, this
Fig. 3-9. Nymphs offer Dr. Hall's Balsam to male representatives from many nations on this chromolithographed sign on metal, circa 1885. Despite their nudity, these otherworldly creatures smile angelically as they serve the world this potion, in contrast to the very worldly stare on the Lorillard image (see plate 2). Cases of the healing balsam await shipment, apparently produced without benefit of industry. Courtesy of the Don Lurito collection.
practice certainly manifested an insensitivity to propriety and audiences as well as artistic pretension. Significantly, nudity declined in the advertisements of later decades, when artistic expression was less challenged by Victorian prudery and when attitudes toward the clothing actually worn by women were more relaxed. By then, formally educated specialists, more aware of their audience, determined advertising styles.

Another example of advertiser insensitivity to consumer perspectives in nineteenth-century advertisements was the frequent portrayal of factories in settings that seem incongruous now. For example, the Sterling Piano Company issued a chromolithographed show card and matching trade cards in the 1880s that featured a young girl at a piano and a boy with a violin (plate 3). Not only were the children dressed in the highest of fashion, but their parlor setting displayed as many of the trappings of domestic ostentation as would fit the frame, and of all the furnishings, the piano was by far the least ornate. Associating a product, especially an expensive one, with luxuries and cultural enrichment is a time-honored promotional strategy, although the extravagance portrayed here strikes the late-twentieth-century viewer as out of the ordinary. Yet today, two other components do seem quite anomalous for an advertisement directed to consumers: Charles A. Sterling's portrait over the piano and the firm's factory outside the window. If such a luxurious residence actually bordered an industrial site (we might think today), why not draw those heavy drapes? And do not Mr. Sterling's stern countenance and dark attire contrast starkly with the Venus-like statue and the bright children? At it turns out, the home was Sterling's own, situated in a prestigious neighborhood on a ridge that really did overlook his and other factories.¹¹⁹

Factories appeared in a wide range of formats directed to women and children. The Mason and Hamlin Piano and Organ Company, the Estey Organ Company, the Chris. Lipps Soap Company, and the Boston Rubber Shoe Company number among the very many that published trade cards with factory scenes, even though that medium was intended primarily for women and children. The Rising Sun Stove Polish Company's factory provided the only illustration that the firm placed in its quarter-page ad on the inside front cover of a children's book in 1888.¹²⁰ A Dixon Pencil Company hanger (a long, narrow poster) juxtaposes—with no sense of irony—a finely dressed woman drawing her child as she sat in front of a framed factory portrait on her parlor wall.¹²¹ Beyond questions of relevance and interest, the repeated use of this important motif disregarded, even affronted, the many people who found factories distasteful or harmful. In addition to the workers whose limited discretionary incomes often prevented them from being major marketing targets for many products anyway, many prosperous people associated negative connota-
tions with the sight of a factory. This included reformers concerned about urban blight or workers’ conditions, artisans angry over the deskilling of production, nativists concerned about the immigrants who filled the factories, as well as many of the old elites, especially the merchant classes, who saw their neighborhoods and statures decline as the industrialists’ rose.122

B. T. Babbitt’s Best Soap often used an image in countless trade and show cards in the 1880s and 1890s that demonstrates how a particular advertiser’s intuition could combine with his failure to consider others’ perspectives. The sooty factory complex in the central scene contrasts sharply with five vignettes of non-Western peoples eagerly receiving crates of soap. The slogans “Soap for all nations” and “Cleanliness is the scale of civilization” boosted Babbitt’s contributions to progress as a provider of soap’s civilizing touch. Of course, the nineteenth-century ethnocentric implication that exotic peoples could not be civilized until they received the stuff of Western production, in this case Babbitt’s soap, was not limited to industrialists.123 Today it is hard to understand how anyone could miss the incongruity and irony of associating the cleanliness that defined “civilization” with what even then some saw as industrial-urban blight, while judging as uncivilized and needful of soap peoples who still lived under blue skies.

While it is in the nature of prejudices that people tend to be oblivious of their own and sensitive to others’, why did nineteenth-century industrialists often affront some of the very audiences whose trade they sought? Even though mainstream Americans have only in recent decades become widely aware of the need for sensitivity regarding other peoples and lifestyles, communications and advertising professionals began to learn that lesson earlier in this century, at least regarding people they sought as markets; even their tones and messages were more condescending and officious than empathetic. In contrast, communication has never been the primary occupation of most advertisers, with the frequent exception of patent-médecine sellers and entertainers. Until advertising professionals, replacing advertisers as advertisement designers, began to make effective communication the focus of their vocations, questions of feedback and market analysis rarely arose. In the meantime, advertisers projected their messages according to their intuitive senses of what was important or attractive or funny. For the most part, they judged according to their own tastes and those of people like themselves; so all of the above themes filled their trade journals as well as their advertisements, making no distinction between their peers and others as audiences.

Nineteenth-century businesspeople cared so little for empathetic communication with their audiences because, to use David Riesman’s terms, they were “inner-directed” people, rather than the “other-directed” people who

Printers, Advertisers, and Their Products
have since had to function within bureaucratic organizations. The earlier, innovative owner-managers worked in a society “characterized by increased personal mobility, by a rapid accumulation of capital (teamed with devastating technological shifts), and by an almost constant expansion: intensive expansion in the production of goods and people, and extensive expansion in exploration, colonization, and imperialism.” Inner-directed businesspeople focused their attention “on products . . . and less on the human element.” When marketing their products, these people “did not need to look at [themselves] through the customer's eyes,”124 or at least they did not recognize such a need. Neither their business conditions nor their culture inclined these owner-managers to consider how their behavior might offend or distress others. Owner-managers at any time are more likely than employees or corporate managers to be “inner-directed”; hence, the inability of many entrepreneurs to retain control of firms they found but that grow large enough to require bureaucratic management more than innovation.

Given this frame of reference, we can see that the advertising patterns described above are anomalies only judged by our twentieth-century concepts of what advertisements are supposed to do; that is, to communicate effectively with audiences according to the audiences’ needs and interests. Precisely because the early advertisers did not attempt to second-guess their audiences, we can usefully evaluate their messages more as projections of the owner-managers’ interests and perceptions than as audience-sensitive communications. Doing so, of course, requires that we contextualize the messages, to try to re-construct the authors’ social realities and explicate their implicit as well as explicit meanings to themselves.125 So, while advertisers initiated and justified their messages and expenditures as marketing tools, the contents sprang from the advertisers’ intuitive senses of what to tell their audiences based on their own interests and esteem, with little regard for the interests and esteem of the audiences. The clearest shared trait that all the messages indicate is their creators’ claim of predominance over the people and institutions they pictured. Whether this claim followed from arrogance, defensiveness, or wishfulness is another question; it was probably a mix of motives according to the advertisers’ sense of their status relative to their messages’ subjects. So we might surmise it was arrogance toward racial and ethnic minorities, defensiveness against the excessively wealthy portrayed using their products, and a combination of wishfulness and arrogance toward the unclothed, inviting, and vulnerable females pictured emerging from flowers or floating in a businessman’s reveries with the caption, “It’s Tempting.”126 When specialists later created advertisements, operating as self-conscious communication professionals, they still carried the prejudices of their hegemonic cohort, but they softened their
Fig. 3.10. Walter A. Wood called up explicit visual and verbal symbols to convey important qualities of the firm's agricultural equipment on this trade card, circa 1880. Such attention to focusing on communicating clearly product attributes with both words and pictures indicates this advertiser's concern for his audiences' perceptions.

expression: both the changing strategies and the changing mores required greater awareness of other groups through the next century.

All this is not to say that nineteenth-century advertisements contained no pro-sales arguments about their products. Of the countless commercial messages sent into the public arena, many carried comparisons, explanations, demonstrations, exaggerations, and other means of making claims. Thread manufacturers pictured their products pulling Jumbo, Barnum's prize elephant, towing ships, or replacing cables on bridges. Patent-medicine and cosmetic promoters frequently showed or described consumers before and after using their products; this practice included the frequent use of testimonials. Other producers, too, often used testimonials, although they only rarely claimed the before-and-after changes in the fashion that became common for many products after 1910. Instead, the comparisons were often between wise and progressive people who used the advertised product and the foolish, old-fashioned people who did not. The Blair Manufacturing Company, for one, commissioned a series of trade cards that showed little girls effortlessly pushing lawn mowers ("child's play" was a common strategy); another set illustrated a mowing contest in which a neatly-dressed, handsome young man always easily defeated a variety of bumpkins struggling with other makes. Manufacturers of agricultural equipment often portrayed prize racehorses or carriage horses
drawing their machinery—the equivalent in both impracticality and visual appeal of showing an expensive sports car plowing a road. Of thousands of images to sell such equipment, however, rarely did a manufacturer try to incorporate a complex selling argument by visualizing its products’ qualities. Walter A. Wood Machines commissioned an exceptional trade card that translated the qualities of “strength, lightness, and simplicity” into visual symbols: a strong man, a ballerina, and an infant (fig. 3.10). Such apparently deliberate attempts to communicate with, rather than address, an audience were rare, as was the large, simple type running diagonally on the back of the card to explain the machines’ benefits to users. Wood’s trade card shows that advertisers’ intuitive messages did not have to convey more about their creators than about their products and what those products offered consumers. Advertisements that did focus on their creators’ concerns and ambitions, however, preserved those messages as part of their legacy.