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# THE GORHAM COMPANY'S MARTELÉ LINE OF SILVER: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSUMER AND COMMERCIAL STRATEGY OF THE COMPANY

by
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in
Early American Culture

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This manuscript is dedicated to:
My mother for her unconditional love and support
My cat, Pilgrim, for assisting in the typing of all of my graduate papers.

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All Photographs are Courtesy of the Gorham Company Unless Otherwise Noted.

## ABSTRACT

In the year 1900, the Gorham Manufacturing Company became the premier manufacturer of fine metal products in both America and Europe at the Paris Exposition of 1900. Although up to this point Gorham's leadership in silver manufacture had come about through its innovation and skill with machinery, the firm entered a whole new sphere of production when it introduced a line at the Exposition that appeared to contradict all that had made it a success-- the Martelé line of hand-crafted wares.

Gorham wanted Martelé to catapult into the international arena and make the company the number one producer of both art and commercial silver products in the world. Gorham believed that there was something special about the design and the materials used in the crafting of this art line of silver products that would enable the company to achieve its goal. A thorough examination of design, substance, and the intentions of the company as they relate to the fabrication of the Martelé line and how they were all effected by the consumer culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the subject of this narrative.

An investigation of the genesis of the Martelé line will explore the commercial strategy of Gorham under Edward Holbrook and his chief designer William Codman, how the product was made available to the public by both the company and its retailers, and attempt to reach some conclusions regarding why Martelé had such a brief period of popularity. This narrative explores the effect of World Exhibitions, print advertising, new methods of display in luxury department stores, the effect of economic and consumer changes upon Gorham and, the introduction and marketing of its premier line.

I use the Martelé line as a consumer "case study" of early twentieth-century marketing strategies for luxury products. Through an evaluation of company records, an examination of Martelé products and those offered by the company's competitors, and an interpretation of Gorham's marketing plans through the lens of early twentieth-century consumer theory, this narrative will attempt to determine how Gorham was successful and how it failed in its endeavor to enter the competitive world of high-end luxury products.

## INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, the Gorham Silver Company intended to become not only the most popular in America but also the most renowned producer of silver products in the world. To this end, Gorham introduced its Martelé line of silverwares. Martelé was intended to catapult Gorham into the international arena and make the company the premier producer of both art and commercial silver products in the world. Gorham believed that there was something special about the design and the materials used in the crafting of this art line of silver products that was to enable the company to achieve its goal. A thorough examination of design, substance, and the intentions of the company as they relate to the fabrication of the Martelé line and how they were all effected by the consumer culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the subject of this narrative.

The twenty-five-year period from 1890 to 1915, a time of great growth and real artistic achievement for Gorham, was dominated by two men, Edward Holbrook and William Christmas Codman. Holbrook was the entrepreneur, the salesman, the leader, the one who had the intention to make Gorham the best. If Holbrook dominated the management of Gorham, his designer, William Codman, certainly dominated the artistic direction of the company. It was Codman, whose early career experiences in England had exposed him to the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, who would provide the design component to Holbrook's business savvy. Finally, it was Gorham, whose silver products were the most popular in the world during their tenure, that provided them the rich atmosphere in which they were to work. It was this triad--businessman, craftsman and environment-- that came together to create one of the

finest expressions of artistic silverware of the twentieth century-- the Martelé line of hand-wrought, Art Nouveau-style silver.

Holbrook and Codman were proud and ambitious men and all of their efforts were geared toward making Gorham preeminent in the field of fine silverwares. The great international expositions were the principle promotional vehicles. Although Gorham had done well at the Philadelphia Centennial and the 1889 Paris Exposition, Holbrook, knew that his company's rival, Tiffany & Company, had the reputation for offering the finest silver products in the world. Holbrook meant to change that. He knew, of course, that the international expositions were mainly showcases and were quite expensive to finance, but he was also well aware that reputations were made and lost at these expositions, and that winning top prizes did have a sizable commercial impact. Expositions were the place Gorham could establish international superiority.

While Holbrook was planning a commercial strategy for his company, Codman was choosing the style and the means of production for the development of premier line of sterling silver wares that would provide the company with an avenue for artistic and commercial success. The style that he chose, Art Nouveau, was at the peak of its public popularity in the year of Martelé's introduction to the public-- 1900. As a style, Art Nouveau took its inspiration from the natural world and the human from: graceful curves and sensuous surfaces highlighted decorative elements. While the choice of style was based upon contemporary popularity, the manner in which he would chose to make his silver products was rooted in the craft's past.

Gorham and many of the other silver producers of the nineteenth century had taken advantage of new labor saving inventions to make its silver products inexpensively and quickly. Stamping, rolling and other mechanical implements, while making silver accessible to a wider audience, changed the appearance of the products and removed much of the human element from their manufacture. To counter those

effects, Gorham spent a great deal of money hiring and training what evolved into a special school of metal workers who were responsible for reviving the "lost" techniques of the silver craftsman. Codman also tried several different percentages of silver in an attempt to make Martelé both more malleable and more attractive to those who sought something truly distinctive in their choice of silver products. Using a standard of silver above that of sterling (.925) was both an interesting consumer and artistic choice that will be considered in relation to other choices that the company was making with regards to style and marketing. The revived arts of raising, chasing, molding, and hand finishing served to create the intricate, swirling Martelé forms dreamed up by Codman and his designers and set the product apart from those offered by other silver producers.

Dominique De Menil summarizes what the Art Nouveau meant in 1900 to its proponents: "We were suddenly discovering nature. It was spring, plants shooting everywhere...we felt a vitality, an enthusiasm. Ma petite, you cannot imagine what it was like."[1] Undulant lines, juxtaposed light and shadow and, rare shimmering materials are all used by the artist to capture movement in nature. Martelé, when designed and carried out by the best in the Gorham workshops, was capable of capturing motion in silver; beautiful mermaids, ripe fruits and climbing ivies all appear to be frozen in time, yet with the shimmer of light on the metallic surface of the precious forms, it almost seems that movement can be perceived in the forms that twist and break the line between fantasy and reality.

A close examination of a Martelé tankard made in 1900 for the Paris Exposition illustrates how Codman's attention to detail and design was carried out in his chosen medium (Figure 1). Nearly sixteen inches high, the form is wide and heavy at the base, rising upward in a flourish of leaves, berries and liquid swirls-- twisting around the cylindrical body of the vessel. Hammer marks are lightly visible on the

shiny surface in the middle of the tankard, which seems pulled and stretched across an unseen plane. The leaf and berry motifs return at the top, forming the rim and lip of the vessel. The handle attaches near the bottom of the form in a delicate leaf terminal. The handle then lightly curves upward with slightly raised foliage motifs on its surface, attaching at the top with another leaf motif. This vessel, the only one of its kind created in Martelé, exemplifies the Art Nouveau aesthetic that had gained popularity in Europe.

Martelé was competing against the high Victorian and grand Academic pieces being produced by its competitors: most notably, Tiffany & Co. Tiffany had a reputation for producing objects more art than product. A massive centerpiece was designed by Tiffany for the 1900 World Exposition that exemplified the Academic tradition which relied on themes from the past and the materials of the present (Figure 2). It was over nineteen inches tall and thirty-two inches wide and weighed over 515 troy ounces.[2] Created by numerous craftsmen and costing Tiffany $4,828.25, it was at the time one of the most expensive pieces ever made by the company and was a masterpiece of the silversmith's craft. Formed as a spirally fluted oval bowl centered by the chased foliate "G," the rim is applied with four partly draped female busts. The sides are centered by raised baskets of crisply chased fruit topped by pineapples. The rim is also applied with a deep spreading skirt of openwork scrolled foliage and swags of husks linking paterae. The oval pedestal foot was applied to the foot with an openwork layer of chased acanthus and anthemia. This elegant piece carried on Tiffany's tradition of offering pieces that could truly be called a spectacular but it failed to break away from twenty years of similar designs.

As the two objects described above illustrate, the work of Tiffany and Gorham had many similarities. Both companies were producing high quality, hand-wrought silver products that had both artistic merit and the ability to lend a touch of class and

distinction to their owners' homes. Both the Martelé tankard and the Tiffany centerpiece took days to craft, were expensive, and depicted fruit motifs on the surface of the metal. The difference in design lay in the interpretation of nature: a difference that had a corollary in the fine art world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The depiction of nature in Martelé was similar to that found in the Symbolist paintings of the day. Nature was expressed through a veil of concerns and ideals, abstracted by the hand and mind of the artist and the medium in which it was expressed. In the work of Tiffany, the clearly chased natural forms that rely upon nature not man for their inspiration, are similar to those found in the academic tradition expressed in the paintings of the Europeans that found so much favor in the homes of wealthy Americans of the day. The berries on the tankard and the fruit on the centerpiece, while similar in appearance, are interpreted through different artistic traditions.

Martelé succeeded in garnering accolades at the expositions in the first decade of the twentieth century. But it was not only artistic achievement that Holbrook and Codman sought, they wanted their product to be a commercial success. One advantage which Gorham knew it held over Tiffany was a range and diversity in its product line that allowed it to carry out its artistic ambitions on products that were available to those of different economic levels. Tiffany was strictly a luxury goods producer and did not feel it incumbent upon itself to provide artistic products for a broad range of consumers. Gorham proved to be both innovative and relatively successful in its marketing campaign surrounding Martelé; a strategy that included the production of a range of similar Art Nouveau products at reasonable prices. Through carefully placed and worded print advertising and a carefully-contrived "aura of mystery" that was draped around the introduction and selling of the Martelé line, the company was able to foster a false sense of intimacy between Gorham and the consumer. Martelé was to be

the bridge by which the covetous consumer would be lured into the store. Acting as a connection between and individual and his or her ideals of consumer bliss, Martelé was to convey happiness and status upon its noble owner.

Codman realized that the money invested in raw materials, labor and training for the production of the Martelé line would make the retail price beyond the means of most consumers. He also realized that to compete in the open market he could only impose a slight price increase between wholesale and retail in order to compete with the prices being asked by Tiffany and other European competitors for their top of the line products.[3] It is my contention that Gorham did not expect to make a large profit on the Martelé line. I believe that Codman and Gorham intended Martelé to act as a standard bearer for the entire line of Gorham products. Through clever marketing techniques, the company intended to lure the consumer into the stores to look at Martelé and then, when their pocketbooks could not be stretched to acquire the one-of-a-kind items offered in the premier line, the consumer could look at other similar products that were less expensive and had the look of Martelé's Art Nouveau style. Gorham was operating on a modified "trickle-down" theory, as postulated by G. Simmel in 1904. Simmel believed that subordinate social groups, following the principle of imitation, seek to establish new status claims by adopting the fashions of superordinate groups.[4] Thus, those who could not afford Martelé, could purchase Athenic; those who could not afford Athenic– a related Art Nouveau line that was similar to Martelé but occasionally used different metals, stones, and machine processes in its construction– could obtain machine wrought sterling pieces; and for those who could not afford sterling, plate and base metals were available in the Art Nouveau style to meet their consumer needs (Figure 3).

Such a strategy was fraught with difficulty. Gorham had to ensure that there was a visible difference between each level of the product lines. If Martelé looked like

Athenic then there was no reason for the luxury consumer to buy the more expensive product. Leaving visible signs of hand craftsmanship-- the tiny hammer marks across the metal's surface that gave the product its name-- and the addition of a caustic solution that gave the silver its rich, blue-tinged patina were two methods used by the craftsman to distinguish its premier product from the other lines. Martelé was also done exclusively in silver and almost always in the Art Nouveau style (although a few pieces contain Art Deco and Academic motifs.)[5]

Using similar motifs but different construction methods and materials, the company attempted to clearly differentiate between the various lines. Gorham was largely successful in this endeavor although it can be seen in the design of the only flatware set produced in the Martelé line that there is little visible difference between the design wrought on the Martelé spoon and the design of Gorham's popular sterling, machine-made "Paris 1900" pattern (Figures 4 and 5). Both exhibit Art Nouveau motifs on the handle and the amount of surface area is so small that the craftsmen were unable to leave behind the hallmarks of Martelé on the silver's surface. This undoubtedly was the reason why only one set of Martelé flatware was created and why the objects that were produced in the greatest number in the line-- centerpieces, vases, coffee and tea sets, platters, and loving cups (over a hundred of each were wrought)-- were large hollowware pieces capable of offering the craftsman the surface area upon which to work. It also explains why items like flatware, small toiletries, razor strops, letter clips, reading glasses, and desk set items were produced in such small numbers (between one and three of each of these items was made)-- they lacked the surface upon which to truly implement the Martelé ideal.[6]

Prior to Gorham's efforts, no company had attempted to offer a complete array of silver products from basic plate flatware patterns that anyone of the growing "middle class" could aspire to, all the way up to the hand-crafted Martelé line that was

affordable only for those of extravagant means. Companies offered either high, low, or middle income products and their marketers quickly learned how to reach their intended audience through a process of trial and error. Gorham's attempt to offer a complete line of products and promote it on such a sophisticated cross-line basis was unprecedented. Codman recognized the trickle-down phenomenon and its effect on society and attempted to make his company the one-stop shopping source for silver in America. By crafting a cunning advertising campaign to go along with a high-quality product, Codman drew the consumer first to the superlative product, and then guided her to the highest level of Gorham merchandise that she could actually buy.

This marketing strategy was also adopted by the retail outlets that sold these hand-crafted wares to the public. These retail establishments seemed to relish the task of selling these beautiful, artistic objects. Silver in the nineteenth century had been relegated to the shelves behind the counters at luxury retailers across the country, limited in their display space due to the size of some of the more ornamental hollowware pieces. In the 1890s, retailers came to realize the potential offered through a better method of silver display. Stores like Shreve, Crump and Low in Boston opened new showroom floors devoted exclusively to the display of luxury silver. Pieces by Gorham, Tiffany and their competitors were laid out on tables and displayed on moving carts in extravagant settings that were designed to illustrate how the best products looked when surrounded by sumptuous fabrics, furnishings, and artworks. This, of course, was not so much about the purchase of silver, but the privilege of class. This ability of the consumer to purchase such intangible items as class and style was inherent in all levels of Martelé's production and marketing. Through targeted advertising, the creation of fantastic showrooms to display the silver, and special celebrations designed to formally introduce the silver to the public, these luxury goods retailers were able to elevate the purchase of silver from an economic exchange into an

event. These events were designed to further the sense of intimacy between buyer and seller, while fostering a feeling of conspiracy between the two parties.

While Gorham's popularity was relegated to a rather narrow range of time in the history of silver-- roughly the ten years between 1900 and 1910-- it expressed a new bond between art and commercialism that, while always in existence, had rarely been exploited. For many then and today the relationship between art and commercialism has the appearance of diminishing the quality of the former while sullying the reputation of the other. Gorham was capable, through a well balanced consumer strategy that recognized the wants and needs of its public, to create a commercial line of artistic wares where art was enhanced by commercialism and commercialism nearly became an art form. The Martelé line was a success only because those who designed it were approaching the task from both an artistic **and** a commercial approach. This symbiotic relationship, which was simultaneously occurring in the workshops of several other art line producers of the first quarter of the twentieth century, defined Martelé and signaled a new relationship between art and advertising that was to foreshadow many of the issues that were to be later explored in modern fine and commercial art.

The world is so full of a number of things
I'm sure we should all be happy as kings
Robert L. Stevenson, "Happy Thoughts" 1905

Written during the rise of the age of consumerism at the dawn of the twentieth century, Stevenson's couplet contemplates the abundant things of the world with a child's sense of wonder. In this new world of infinite choices, the happiness of kings is seen as a happiness that comes from having things. In a democratic consumer society anyone with sufficient resources could potentially have his most regal material wishes fulfilled. The belief that such unbridled access to things should lead to unbridled happiness has had a profound effect on the way Americans in the twentieth century view the world. Americans have come to regard an increasing profusion of both natural and manufactured things as objects to be desired, acquired, savored, possessed, and displayed. It is the sustained faith that happiness lies only an acquisition away that allowed companies such as Gorham to sell increasingly elaborate, specialized objects of distinction. Gorham, Tiffany, Rookwood and other luxury goods providers courted the consumer in any number of ways. The symbiotic relationship between producer and consumer was fostered through advertising, elaborate retail outlets, beautiful displays offered to the world in a series of fairs and exhibitions and other emerging marketing avenues.

When Gorham conceived its plan to introduce a hand-wrought line of silver to the public, several external factors acted to make its choice of product and timing ideal. In addition to runaway consumption, political and economic factors heightened the importance of silver as a commodity. In the second half of the nineteenth century,

Americans were on the cusp of sweeping changes in the ways they perceived and used silver. Silver had for centuries been seen as a commodity, specie, the currency of the "realm." During this time in America, with growing expansion and government debt, silver became both a political and a social subject of contention, permanently changing its place in society. First, Congress ended the coinage of silver dollars in 1873 and took the nation off the silver standard. No longer did an American have silver coins in his or her purse as a growing trend towards paper money backed by governmental reserves became the norm. This trend was followed by the Bland-Allison Act of 1878 which required the U.S. Treasury to buy between two and four million dollars worth of silver each month. The Shaman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 further obligated the government to the purchase of silver on a monthly basis. The act and its eventual repeal in 1893, led to an extremely controversial election in 1896 which had as its central issue a debate centering on the issue of silver and its place in the economy. This debate was effectively resolved when in 1900 the Gold Standard Act required all paper money to be backed by gold, permanently removing silver from the American currency debate.

So, while silver continued to be a commodity that could be bought and traded on international markets, it was no longer something that crossed the hands and minds of the people everyday. Its value to those not in the commodity trade was no longer as a form of currency but as a precious "tool" which could be used to fashion items of great beauty and cost. Whereas early American immigrants saw their family silver hollowware and flatware as both as luxury items and back up "cash" reserve, those who would own silver products in the late nineteenth century saw their elaborately styled silver as more of a social commodity. From the sideboard to the storybooks, silver had become the thing of dreams. When Dorothy Gail visited the wonderful land of Oz, it was the magic in her precious silver shoes which were coveted by the Wicked

Witches, that eventually enabled her to return to Kansas.[7] Silver was a thing of beauty and power, capable of taking one away from day to day concerns and allowing one entree into a world of magic and dreams.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, economic instability lead to a series of relatively short periods of boom and bust. While this period of American history has often been called the Gilded Age, hinting at the lavish lifestyle lived by those in the upper stratums of society, Mark Twain, who coined the term, was pointing out in his terminology how thinly applied the luster of this age was. The word "gilded" implies that all that glitters was definitely not gold: underneath the patina of society, a base, tarnished metal was lurking. For every spectacular fortune that was made during this period, many were lost. After nearly a decade of prosperity following the Civil War a general economic panic occurred in 1873, severely damaging the United States economy. It was not until five years later, in 1878, that the economy staged a recovery and even then, the instability in the monetary markets, caused in no large part by a gold/silver/greenback controversy, remained. Later, in 1893, a severe economic depression hit America. Between 1893 and 1897, this depression caused an extremely high rate of unemployment, numerous businesses failed and for the first time in many years, the optimism felt by many of the American people was called into question.

Despite the effects of the unstable economy, Gorham continued to operate in the black under the optimistic leadership of Codman and Holbrook and was able to expand its lines and increase production of plate and sterling. In 1895, Gorham introduced its *Chantilly* line of silver flatware; a pattern that became the most popular line in America. During this same year Gorham became the premiere seller of silver products in both America and Europe in terms of number of sales. This was when Gorham conceived and began to develop the idea for its hand-wrought line of sterling

products--a line that it began to develop as soon as the effects of the depression receded. In 1907, two years after the peak of Martelé's popularity and production, reckless speculation caused another economic panic that sent the economy into a tailspin. At this time sales dropped off markedly. By 1910, these specialty objects were made in very limited quantities and mostly by special order.[8] Martelé was, in essence, a high-end product that was produced during an economic boom punctuated on both ends by periods of economic instability.

While economic factors created an environment for silver luxury goods, other social and cultural conditions influenced its design and manufacture. Distaste for industrial production and fear of the loss of craftsmanship led social reformers and taste makers to criticize the very conditions under which Gorham had been successfully producing its wares. The connection between the machine and the worker was one such relationship that was scrutinized by many in America. As early as 1637 Descartes had declared that the animal machine, as "made by the hands of God, [was] incomparably better ordered [and] more admirable in its movements than any of those which can be invented by men."[9] Such a notion was to be put to the test in the nineteenth century. In 1898 the United States Commissioner of Labor reported that machines had replaced manual process to such an extent that only by moving away from modern methods in time and space could the older methods be recaptured.[10] It was also in 1898 that Frederick W. Taylor began promoting scientific management and other efficiency measures to the industry. His methods, which called for rigid schedules and repetitive routines, was seen by its detractors as an attempt to mechanize mankind. Many believed that Taylor's techniques removed much of the artistry from the creative process and this caused some concern on the part of many who feared the loss of humanity and quality in the workplace. Gorham opened its enormous Elmwood factory in 1890 and began the production of plated and sterling stock wares

at a rate that would have been unheard of half a century earlier. Gorham was guilty of turning away from the skills of man towards the power and nearly infinite capabilities of the machine.

Perhaps reading the writing on the wall, Gorham realized that reliance on the machine, while highly profitable and versatile, eliminated the craftsmanship which had been the hallmark of the silversmith's trade for centuries. Gorham attempted to recapture the smith's craft, as well as to provide a beautiful, meritorious and (it was hoped) profitable offering to the Company's existing line of machine produced wares. Gorham's special "school" designed to train workers in the silversmith's craft allowed for an increased level of artistry--a practice that resulted in some of the most beautiful and creative output in the craft for decades. It was the individuals--the chasers, raisers, and casters--who worked together under Codman to create these remarkable products.[11] Thus, Gorham was able to provide the financial backing but it was those who worked on the products that made them the artistic success that they were.

Gorham had built its reputation on its machine-produced, mass-marketed wares but, if the Company were to attract those consumers who could provide a "king's ransom" it would have to offer something that was unique. Gorham's normal factory-type setting reflected and reinforced the "modern notion of technical change owing more to institutions and less to individuals, of invention as being the province of our incorporations and not of wizards, of human minds and knowledge making a difference in the way people live and work and die not through creative brilliance but through organization and control."[12] Codman and Holbrook's choice to market a product that returned to the practices of the past, offering something that was truly distinctive to those for whom conspicuous consumption was the guiding hand in the decoration of their home, was both insightful and, for a time, successful.

Gorham's product and marketing development also reflected actions that were happening in the world market; especially those that had to do with the development of a silver standard. For centuries the quality of the silver that went into an object had been governed by guilds and governments-- with one notable exception: America. While it was generally held that American silver would be produced according to England's standard of "sterling"--.925 pure--there was no guarantee of quality in America's silver products and, on occasion there were some "fluctuations" in this unregulated standard. Gorham, under the direction of Edward Holbrook, was responsible for the creation of this "Silversmith's Company" that in the 1890s set about to firmly establish standards in the silver industry. As was stated in the Silversmith's Company "articles of confederation":

> During recent years the number of Houses engaged in this business has largely increased, and some, from lack of proper facilities for ascertaining the real quality of their metal, have failed to bring their manufactures up to the Standard, while others, unable to withstand the temptation, the bullion value entering so largely into the cost of the manufactured product, have placed upon the market, a debased Standard, bearing the stamp of "Sterling."[13]

Holbrook's establishment of this "company," a conglomerate of many silver interests that Gorham held part-interest in, was designed to work together to create what amounts to a silver "trust." It allowed them to compete more effectively against Tiffany & Co. and it also gave those involved more economic and marketing control over the product. As the Company's charter states: "they (those companies involved) believe that the superior advantages which they will posses for the production of wares of the highest artistic merit, combined with the essential feature of absolute and certain assurance as to the quality of wares guaranteed by them, will insure success in this undertaking."[14]

The establishment of "standard practice" borrowed something of its method and spirit from the ever growing trend toward efficiency and rationalization. As

science developed, the need for new standards was created.[15] A National Bureau of Standards was formed in the United States in 1901.[16] Gorham and the Silversmith's Company chose to self-regulate and firmly establish the sterling standard long before other American silver companies . As psychologist Donald A. Norman has noted regarding the practice of standardization: "Governmental standardization is the solution of last resort, an admission that we cannot solve the problem in any other way."[17] Holbrook's initiative was not revolutionary in an industry that had been for centuries largely self-regulated, but it was a step toward bringing silver producers in line with the common industrial practice of the day. However, what made Gorham's actions so remarkable is that, less than a decade later, it broke its own standard in the development of the Martelé line.

When Gorham began production of Martelé in 1897, the Company produced its product to the set standard of .925 fine sterling. Approximately four hundred pieces of Martelé were created during this period and it would seem that all were created to the sterling standard.[18] Beginning in 1898, the proportions were changed resulting in a .950 standard of silver for the entire Martelé line. Many have cited this change in standards as being a practical concern for a softer, more pure metal, that while slightly more expensive, was much more malleable. Being able to hammer and chase the product with less effort allowed for reduced labor costs but did in the long run make the product less durable.[19] While lower production costs were undoubtedly at issue when changing the standard from .925 to .950, the third change in alloy percentages, which occurred in 1905 and lasted at least until 1912, to a .9584 standard, hints that there was more to this alteration than mere labor efficiency.

The new standard, .9584, harkened back to the English Britannia standard. This standard, in use in England between March 27, 1697, and June 1, 1720, was adopted to prevent the use of coins in the production of silver. The Britannia standard

ceased to be compulsory in 1720 but several craftsman continued the tradition in the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, the standard had all but been forgotten.[20] By making the product better than the previously set standard Gorham was again stating implicitly in the choice of standard (and explicitly in the advertisements) that the quality was beyond that of other product lines.[21] Holbrook and Codman were taking a practical concern and making it a means to market their product toward those who desired only the best, the most pure, in their household. In creating, and then breaking the standard, Gorham was consciously making the product more desirable to the consumer.

For many years, social historians have sought to account for the rise of consumerism and its effects upon society.[22] But these studies are often limited by their generality; they are often too broad to focus in on the ideological complexity of the rise of a new set of politics of consumption which began at the dawn of this century. Many have now realized that any debate on consumerism must involve the stages of cultural transformation, an examination which concerns a fundamental shift in values and looks at issues of class, regional, generational and gender identities.[23] Twentieth-century economic and social theory which has something to say about consumption (a dialogue which seemed to reach a new level of interest in Victorian American society) has too frequently operated at the most general and therefore abstract of levels.

Despite the high level of abstraction in many theories of this time, several individuals have advanced some ideas that help us understand the brief success of Martelé. Marx's ideas about the strong, almost symbiotic relationship between production and consumption, product and consumer, which are endemic to a capitalist society, are strongly evident in the patterns of luxury consumption at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Other theorists have built on the words and ideas of Marx and Thorstien Veblen (1857-1929), reading in the cultural

and social implications of modern consumerism.[24] All these ideas help explain the creation of elitist products. The act of purchase or consumption in effect became an invitation, an initiation rite into the upper classes--your entrance was assured if you were wise enough to choose X rather than Y. If the consumer were to choose a beautiful, hand chased Martelé bon-bon dish over another company's mass-produced, machine formed Louis XV bon-bon dish; she had not only spent five times as much money, but had acquired the élan that ownership of such a superior product could convey. And her choice of the superior product indicated that she was as discerning and in-the-know as those other discriminating consumers who made the same choice. This conveyed upon the consumer membership in a select society of superior individuals. The individual now sought to improve their position in society by using acquired knowledge, consumer skills, and new commercial possibilities. In late nineteenth-century society when the middle class strove to emulate its socioeconomic betters, the upper-class "connoisseur consumer" strove to stay one step ahead. In this new world "lifestyle is all about knowing the style-code, and the fewer the people that know, the slicker the lifestyle...the lifestyle pyramid: the more you know the style, the fewer are the people that can de-code your own lifestyle, and the higher your place in the pyramid. This premise became the cornerstone of modern marketing."[25] Gorham's Martelé line was designed as a gateway for the consumer into a class of the select few who had both the knowledge and the money to purchase the product.

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In the 1880s a living room of the upper sort in almost any fashionable American home was likely to contain an odd assortment of heavily upholstered,

delicately carved furniture. A large table draped with an intricately patterned tasseled rug and a set of high backed chairs fashioned in a dark exotic wood dominated the center of the room.[26] One corner might be transformed by a balustrade or an artistically hung swag of rich, lush fabric into a romantic "room within a room" draped with shawls and a variety of articles that invoke the sensuous aura of an exotic culture thousands of miles away. The windows, sheathed in velvet and lace, allowed only a trickle of diffused light to escape through their artistically ornamented hangings. Vases, potted palms, assorted lamps, and copies of classical statuary filled whatever empty space was left. This cluttered vision of sumptuous luxury that nearly smothers the viewer with its voluptuous, cloying exotica is comprised of a mixture styles, periods, and cultures and was considered the penultimate of luxury in high Victorian design.

A little over a decade later, a visitor to one of the influential international exhibitions, in which new tendencies in design and decoration were shown to an eager public, would find a room of a different character: in a large comparatively bare space, the table and chairs had been moved from the center to a large, undraped window that flooded the room with clear, even light.[27] The window had been set into a deep, softly curved wall embrasure, its shape accentuated by parallel wood frames and thin lead strips gracefully following the fan-shaped upper section. The table was not a separate element but was instead part of a wide windowsill extended deeply into the room. Armchairs around the table contributed elegantly flowing lines to the total composition. Wallpaper patterned with horizontal swirls covered the lower part of the wall; the upper section carried a stenciled frieze of gently swaying vertical lines. Color was subtle, not designed to catch the eye but to allow the visitor to absorb the spectacle as the eye traveled around the room. Designed for this particular space, like all the other elements in it, was the single lighting fixture suspended from the center of the ceiling: a circle of

individual bulbs swung from thin brass rods allowing the artificial light to complement the natural. Hanging from their electric wires, these attenuated lines seemed like the ribs of a tent.

The contrast between these two rooms illustrates the rapid evolution in style that occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: from a room dominated by artistically placed clutter and exotica to a space defined by sparse elegance where light and gentle curves guide the eye around the room. The Aesthetic Movement, the various revival movements, the Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau and the Colonial Revival were terms that were expressed, if not used directly, by designers and critics who lived and worked in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Whereas a period's style had previously been an outgrowth of intangible ideas and abstract concepts, the last twenty-five years of the century were marked by resolute self-consciousness. Designers became theoreticians who imbued their work with a meaning far beyond the materials and construction methods of the object. While each movement had its own proponents, it is important to note that, in practice, it is nearly impossible to find an object that represents a discrete byproduct of one ideology. Many objects reflect two or more elements of the previously mentioned major styles of the day, with many more reflecting different interpretations of the same ideology.

This lack of precision in style and its interpretation created a rich and varied assortment of products that, while lacking a set of easily identifiable characteristics found in other style periods, was able to carry a meaning beyond its mere design and components. This eclectic aesthetic was mirrored in the fine metal products of the day. Companies such as Gorham and Tiffany observed this continuous shift in sensibilities and were quick to create products that could fit in a room that would be designed in the latest taste.

World's Fairs and Exhibitions became a place where ideas could be exchanged and modified--a tool for the advancement and promotion of designs. Through an examination of the silver products offered (or not offered) by Gorham and its competitors at the fairs between 1867 and 1904, one can observe this exchange of ideas, and the change in the manner that these fairs were used by their exhibitors to promote their products to the public.

World exhibitions were events which played a defining role in the evolution of style between the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century. These "vanity fairs" even managed to impress the French dandy Gautier, for all his aesthetic introspection. As he wrote of the Paris World Exposition of 1867: "Art stood side by side with industry." White statues rose between black machines. Painting spread out alongside the rich materials of the Orient. The whole fascination with the expositions is expressed in these lines: "the encounter with the exotic, the alien, art that could keep pace with progress, an animal character, and an interest in the peculiar beauty in their production." [28]

In 1867 visitors in Paris went to see not only the World Exposition but also the New Paris-- Paris Nouveau-- that had sprung up under Napoleon III and his courtiers. It represented the first gloriously successful urban design for a modern metropolis. Gorham, failing to recognize the importance of these exhibitions and perhaps put off by the enormous expense that an international competition entailed, had not participated in any of the international expositions to this point and 1867 was no exception. It was not until two decades later that the company realized the value of the exposition as a tool to both share ideas and promote products on the world stage. This failure to appear and compete on an international level placed Gorham at a severe disadvantage in international sales and allowed its chief rival, Tiffany & Co., who

regularly competed in these early competitions, to reap the rewards and accolades of a wide audience.

While the Civil War had sent profits and production at Gorham to an all time low, by the end of the decade post war sales were fast approaching an all time high. In 1863, the Gorham Company became the Gorham Manufacturing Company, incorporating the family owned business and making shares available to the public for the first time. Gorham began to develop its flatware and hollowware interests and their designs went from being either plain or provincial to elegant and stylish. What had been in 1850 a local silver shop with fourteen employees was by 1877 producing more sterling silver goods than the entire British silver industry.[29] With this opening of the company to outside influences, the Company, with an influx of ideas and capital, began to expand its operations in both product and scale of production. While Gorham was continuing to make silver products available to a larger audience through its mechanized production methods, presentation pieces that required skill and technical prowess began to become a part of the line offered to the public both in stores and by special order.

The Gorham pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, the company's first foray into the international arena, was arrayed in a manner that strongly resembled the cluttered Victorian Room previously described. The company proudly displayed the largest and the most elaborate of its High Victorian designs as well as three huge drawer chests of flatware.[30] Gorham was proud of its showing and it received numerous accolades, including a gold medal and several other prizes.[31] Gorham's gold medal is indicative of the fact that the company was offering a quality product that, when compared to the wares offered by the world, was judged to be superior.

Charles Carpenter has noted that silver products displayed at expositions tended to have a particular style: a style that he has dubbed the "Exposition Style."[32] Objects such as Gorham's Century Vase exemplified this ornate, flamboyant, extravagant style of decorated silver (Figure 6) . More than four feet tall and five feet wide and weighing in at one hundred and forty pounds, the Century Vase was such an impressive piece that the Company decided to exhibit it (as was the case with many major pieces) at more than one Exposition. The mammoth silver work premiered at the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, and was then featured at two later fairs: Paris in 1889 and Chicago in 1893.[33] Merging the traditional forms of the loving cup, prize cup, and grand centerpiece, the "vase" bears little resemblance to the form for which it was named.

In appearance, this striking piece exhibits many of the characteristics found in the centerpieces of its smaller, High Victorian cousins. The symbolism of the vase was so important, and in many cases so convoluted and obscure in reference that Alexander Farnum, a Gorham employee, published a booklet titled "The Story of the Century Vase" to ensure that the viewers were able to properly appreciate the marvel. [34]

Designed by George Wilkinson and Thomas Pairpoint, the lower portion of the vase resembles a large oval raised plate. The border contains numerous chased designs depicting America's bounty including shellfish, fish, vegetables, fruits and small animals. At the narrow end of the ovoid form, fruits and vegetables are clustered together, raised off the form, and are clearly designed to illustrate the abundance of America. At the widest portion of the base each side has two molded figures, one an American Indian with spear raised and the other of an American pioneer with rifle raised; both forms are crouched down, looking away from each other and exactingly rendered. The dramatically rendered symbolism presented in an Academic style carries on up the body of the vase with figures representing the horrors of war and the

peaceable kingdom flanking the central pedestal of the "vase' which has a medallion on either side depicting Victory who triumphantly brandishes two laurel wreathes. The form raises up to the next plateau where a putti stands in relief amidst instruments of science and art and, atop the massive piece stands America with a laurel wreath in one hand and an olive branch in the other. Standing beside America, though physically lower than her impressive form, are the figures of Europe, Asia and Africa, dressed in "native" costume, being welcomed to the celebration of America's one-hundredth year.[35]

While this piece succeeds in exciting the viewer's sense of awe, it does not capture the imagination by presenting a new artistic form. Its size and quality of execution is remarkable but it fails to break new ground. The vase, which was priced at twenty-five thousand dollars, never sold and was eventually melted down in the 1930s.[36]

The Third Republic's World Exposition of 1878 in Paris was considered to be less of a success, as traces of the Commune insurrection of 1871 were still clearly visible.[37] Despite this cloud of civil unrest hanging over the Exposition, a technique in the treatment of silver would be formally introduced to the public that would prove to be very influential in Gorham's later designs.[38] The design or motif that seemed to capture the imaginations of the public and critics alike were the hammered-type wares produced by Tiffany & Co. that were on display at the fair.

Hammer marks, which had in the past been considered a flaw which indicated that the product had not been finished adequately, became the fashion in the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s. Inspired by Japanese metal wares of the nineteenth century and earlier, this textured background became one of the most successful motifs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and was eventually adopted as a standard look in Arts and Crafts metalsmithing in Europe and America.[39] Originally, these

hammered-type products with exotic motifs that were made in the 1880s was classified to be within the purview of the Aesthetic Movement. The beaten surfaces were often performed on pieces that contained other metals such as copper, gilt and brass and the motifs that were applied or worked into the metal were oriental in inspiration. This exotic mixture of metals, oriental design motifs, high levels of craftsmanship and a hint of the exotic was particularly strong in the decorative arts other than silver and Tiffany and Gorham made these stunningly exotic (and expensive) products available to those of the upper sort in a number of designs in the 1870s and 1880s.[40] That the practice of leaving evidence of hammer marks on the surface of the metal was later adopted by the Arts and Crafts Movement-- as well as adapted in the designs of the Art Nouveau and Colonial Revival-- is indicative of the blurring of the lines between late nineteenth-century styles.

Tiffany was the first company to produce wares with beaten surfaces. Not to be outdone, the Gorham Company began producing similar motifs on its products with perhaps a higher degree of aesthetic success. The marks were produced by hand or machine and often both types of marks are present on the same piece. Tiffany's pieces created a sensation in Paris and the public heralded this *martelé* (meaning hammered) type of product as an innovation that was truly beautiful with the different hammered surfaces reflecting the light in dazzling and attractive patterns.

While Tiffany's products had hammer marks that differed in size depending on the scale of the piece (a small piece would have uniform small marks and a large piece would have larger marks), Gorham choose to allow the silversmith to determine the size and regularity of the markings. The smith was able to vary the depth and regularity in the pattern of the hammering that appeared to be much more "natural" (whether applied by hand or machine) than those products created by Tiffany. This

level of artistic freedom served the Gorham company well in the development of later product lines: including the Martelé line of silverwares.[41]

By 1890 the Gorham family decided that it was time to turn the running of the company over to Edward Holbrook, the maverick entrepreneur. His leadership of the company brought Gorham into direct competition with Tiffany and other silver designers by not only making the company competitive on a national and international level but by launching new and innovative product lines that were an answer to the market's demand. In forming the Silversmiths Company, Holbrook broke new ground that would cause him to be compared with other industrial magnates of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. [42] Holbrook also opened up a new factory plant in the Elmwood section of Providence, taking the plant out of the rundown center of town and placing it in a suburban thirteen acre site that allowed for increased efficiency and an expansion in the factory's production. The plant was completely integrated from alloy melting to design to stamping, finishing and packaging.[43] This thoroughly modern industrial site was considered the most advanced of its day and heralded as an innovation in plant design.

Holbrook hired William Christmas Codman as chief designer to replace an aging George Wilkinson. Hired in 1891, Codman had studied and trained in England. His work was largely in the Gothic style and focused on the restoration of ecclesiastical architecture but he also showed an interest in furniture design--an interest that would be evidenced in his later designs with Gorham.[44] His early designs, influenced by the English Arts and Crafts and revival styles, did not remain stagnant and continued to evolve and run the gamut of taste in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Much of Codman's time when he first joined Gorham must have been spent in an attempt to mount a successful and innovative show for the 1893 World Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. Unlike his predecessors who had not appreciated the

value of a worldwide audience, William Codman saw the opportunity to make a splash on the international scene and capture the imagination of both the critics and the public. Combing the world for new ideas, Gorham's showing in Chicago reflected a myriad of design ideas and styles. In examining the range of wares displayed at the fair, it becomes apparent that Chicago represented a bridge between the Gorham of old and the new, cutting edge Gorham that brought the company into the forefront of artistic design in the world of metalsmithing.

An object that exemplifies this transition period the Victorian style of the past to the style and taste that would come to represent Gorham's greatest triumph is a two handled vase made in 1892 for the exposition.[45] Small in scale, the piece has elements of an Academic Victorian design but also evidences the influence of European Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts styles-- the later of which were traits that would soon become the hallmarks of Gorham design. Spun, hand raised, molded, and chased, this piece is also illustrative of the fact that the company was recognizing the value of both machine and hand crafted methods in obtaining fresh and innovative results. Thick walled and heavy, the bulb-shaped vase has a cast pedestal base upon which the body of the form is attached. The lower portion is chased in swirling, organic designs which are complimented by the application of cast grape and vine motifs. The upper portion of the vase is smooth and the handles also exhibit chased designs and terminate near the rim with a stylized floral motif. The chasing, heft, and shape of the bowl are all elements of design that would not look out of place at Gorham's triumphant Exposition display that was to occur in eight years, but the grape motifs and the continued reliance on past design, in this case Rococo Revival swirls and the classically inspired base design, show that Codman and Gorham had not yet broken free from tradition.

Exhibiting silver, bronzes, ecclesiastical wares, leather products, flatware and a wide variety of wares, the company was awarded fifty-five medals for its efforts. What is extremely interesting is the official account of the French Government concerning the products sold at the Exposition: they were able to discern the growing departure in motivation between Gorham and their primary competitor, Tiffany:

> The two great American Silversmiths have very different styles. Tiffany is the silversmith-jeweler, with whom silver is only a pretext for jewels and enamel work; Gorham is the silversmith proper-- the great manufacturer who produces silverware for daily use, and who throws everyday on the American market, millions of table services--in silver and plated ware--but who owes to the mechanical processes the use, the means of doing well and economically work to satisfy its customers. At the same time he is able to produce artistic and decorative work, calling for the highest skilled and careful hand labor.[46]

The old style of silver with its Academic and traditional forms was becoming a thing of the past in the Gorham factory. After this exhibition, the Century Vase was retired and Gorham, under Codman and Holbrook, set about to capture the imagination. At the 1900 Paris Exhibition Gorham worked within the aesthetic and intellectual trends of Europe and was able to refine them into its own unique style that would charm the buying public and the critics alike.

The importance of the World's Fair, the number of foreign countries participating, and the crowds that visited, all make it easier for one to measure the influence of Art Nouveau at the time. The experiment becomes all the more interesting as the movement could, in today's idiom, be said to have peaked at that particular time. And so closely was Art Nouveau linked, in the popular imagination, with the World's Fair, that it came to be known, derisively, as "1900 Art." Many questioned the validity of this art form. Critic Gustave Geoffroy voiced his reservations after touring the exposition:

> Too many art nouveau whimsies, wood carved to look like ribbons or strings, hangings made of peacock feathers, with staring eyes, corselets of bull's-eyes and flames, the whole wall quivering. Too many faded colors; sick pink, aqueous green, wood painted mauve or covered with insipid scribblings,

> wood treated like metal, made to look cast, as though oak, chestnut, and ash had been melted in a crucible together... Are the decorative arts going to follow the meanderings of art nouveau?[47]

Were the perceptions of the critics accurate? Did the Art Nouveau have merit or was it just a beautiful pastiche, lacking the credentials to be judged as a major stylistic movement? Why would Gorham have chosen to appropriate a style that was considered inferior and how were its wares judged at the fair? Gorham had begun production on its Martelé products in 1897 and held off releasing them to the general public until the Exposition. Was this early attempt at anticipating consumer reaction a success and upon what should one measure their level of success? Before one can begin to evaluate the "value" of the Art Nouveau as it was displayed in the 1900 Exposition, a brief explanation of the style's heritage must be examined in order to better understand its genesis, evolution, apex and decline.[48]

Art Nouveau is a phenomenon of the Western world specifically Northern Europe.[49] Art Nouveau reached its maximum diffusion and concentration in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the first years of the twentieth century. Although its birth as a style can, in certain cases, be specified within a particular region within a year, the art that it produced cannot be circumscribed with any exactitude.[50]

These early stirrings of Art Nouveau grafted some of the Arts and Crafts principles with aspects of the Aesthetic Movement and the craftsmanship principles of the early Colonial Revival. By the 1890s Art Nouveau was by its very nature an ornamental and decorative style, which offers one a concept that may allow for some understanding of all its variations and possibilities. Above all, Art Nouveau expresses itself in the surface, though it is by no means always a superficial style. But, almost without exception, its principles find their full application only in the creation of bodily forms and spaces which, for a lack of a better description, must pass through a filter

which limits them to two dimensions. Thus, there is the surface, then there is a nearly imperceptible movement within this surface.

The best of the Art Nouveau makes it impossible to distinguish the pattern from the background: the positive and the negative forms blend together. Abstraction and organicism become one, asymmetry is emphasized, color is of secondary importance and the surface is where all the art must be wrought, even at the expense of an appreciation of the object in the round.[51] When criticism was launched at the architecture and art displayed at the 1900 Exhibition it was because far too much of the scene failed to adhere to the rules of the Art Nouveau. Another reason was that even though the date 1900 is often considered to be the pinnacle of Art Nouveau design, there was a new aesthetic that had begun to have its presence felt in avant garde circles. The rise of Modernism was being expressed in the designs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and others and thus, the improper application of Art Nouveau principles tarnished the critics perceptions of the style at this exhibit and made it look tired and tawdry in comparison to what was new and elegant.[52]

The Gorham display, despite the mixed reviews earned by the Exhibition as a whole, was an unequivocal success. A Gorham publication for the 1900 Exhibition modestly explains the new direction that was so eloquently expressed by the designs in the Martelé line:

> For years now this gradual development in art, guided and directed by Mr. William C. Codman, a true master of design in metal, who, with Mr. Holbrook, first conceived its possibility, has been allowed to take its own course; it has been nourished but not forced--and the result is shown in the present exhibit.[53]

Gorham records show that the company had begun to plan the logistics of its trip to Paris in 1898, although the Company may have begun its strategy for premiering Martelé on the world stage some time a year--1896--after plans for the Paris Exposition itself were announced.[54] Expectations were running high as Gorham planned to

trounce Tiffany by offering a spectacular array of products with cutting-edge designs that could fulfill Holbrook's dream of being the company that not only sold the most silver products but the company that offered the most luxurious silver. All Martelé products exhibited at the fair were designated as a part of what is sometimes called the "Fleur-de-lis" line; this designation is derived from Gorham's practice of depicting a small fleur-de-lis along with the object's number and photo in the Gorham record books.[55]

Gorham was clear as to how it wanted its products to be interpreted and received by the public. In fact, taking a page out of the Company's 1876 Century Vase Book, it produced a book to explain the new line of products. A section of this booklet written by Horace Townsend, which was handed out at the fair, is particularly instructive as to the manner in which Gorham choose to educate its audience's perceptions of the wares:

> There is no art in which the hammer plays so important a part as that of the silversmith, for there is no metal which lends itself more readily to the influence of the simple hammer than silver. Even gold, though scientifically more malleable, does not compare with silver in this respect. Almost from prehistoric times this has been recognized, and Pliny mentions that in his time silver was worked more than gold by the aid of the simple hammer, just in proportion as the silvermakers of all ages have forsaken the hammer in favor of the chisel or the mould of the caster, so has he artistic excellence of the work produced declined. There is an adjunct to the hammer which relies for the effect it produces upon the hammer itself; this is the chasing tool, which is essentially merely a punch of varying shape and size with which the surface of the metal is modeled under the influence of percussion.[56]

In the first portion of this narrative, Townsend clearly establishes that, despite the fact that gold is more heavily prized as a commodity, silver has the qualities which it make it desirable to the craftsman. Gold could not match silver as an artistic medium upon which to work the highest level of the craftsman's skill. The author also begins to clearly outline to the consumer the process by which such great works of art were made. By describing how artistic silver products are made, Gorham hopes that an

appreciation for craftsmanship will be fostered that will instruct the educated consumer as to how to choose a quality luxury product.

> These were the facts which the managers of the Gorham Company fully recognized when they decided upon their new departure and which they determined to adopt as their artistic principle. The hammer, they determined, should reign supreme. Secondly, they laid down an axiom that the designer and the craftsman, if they could not actually be united in the same individual, should be at all events brought into such close connection that the resultant effect should be practically the same.
> There was yet a third guiding principle to be born in mind. The work they produced should be of its own century. Beautiful as is the work of the "Little Masters" of the past it yet speaks in a dead and forgotten tongue. The designer of today, if he is a true artist, must create and not copy. This is the result which those who had led in the modern revival of the sister arts had taught, and it was felt to be time for the silversmith in his turn to teach it through the agency of the works he should produce.[57]

Did the objects displayed at the fair reflect the publication that was designed to promote their virtues? An examination of several objects that were displayed in Paris and the details surrounding their creation seems to support Gorham's stated objectives. One piece of Martelé in particular illustrates the thought and process that was behind the creation of each individual item. A silver vase that is signed both by its designer, William C. Codman and its chaser, Frederick A. Jordan was made by Gorham in 1898 and taken to the fair. It is one of about a half a dozen known Martelé pieces signed by both Codman and Jordan, many of which were made for the Paris Exhibition.[58] The collaboration between the designer and the craftsman in the world of Martelé was a symbiotic one. Many hand-colored drawings in the Gorham archives lack a great deal of detail and by comparing the final product to the drawings, one can see that the craftsman was able to take the design and enhance and elaborate on it in his workshop.

Of slender baluster form, this finely chased piece with ornamentation in both low and high relief is decorated with delicately rendered morning glory floral motifs. The highly organic and asymmetrical base is composed of leaf tendrils gently curling under the form in a highly naturalistic manner. The vase is over eighteen inches high

and weighs nearly seventy-eight ounces, making it a vase of substantial size and weight. The ground illustrates the typical Martelé handling of surface texture: hammer marks are present causing the surface to resemble the finely pitted surface of a citrus fruit. The finish, the final step in all Martelé pieces, is the application of an oxidation agent (liver of sulfur) that gives Martelé its distinctive bluish surface patina.[59] Not all Martelé objects had hammer marks left in the surface of the silver. Some were left and enhanced by the oxidation process while others were planished smooth by the chaser and, in some cases, the marks actually became integrated into the design. The designs rise from the base with the floral motifs twisting and turning into the "third plane" of the piece--giving the vase a sense of depth and three dimensionally on its surface. Marked on the base with the number 657 in an oval and stamped with the logo of "Bailey, Banks & Biddle, Philadelphia" this piece was (as all pieces marked with a number in an oval are) a sample made on speculation.[60] The vase displays the qualities described in the Gorham handbook: it has the mark of the hand, it unites the designer and the craftsman in an environment that allows them to work in a nearly symbiotic relationship and it displays a style that is of its time: Art Nouveau.[61]

The Gorham exhibit, which included more than thirty pieces of Martelé, was a huge success. The Gorham Manufacturing Company won the grand prix, the gold medal for its silver wares and several of its other fair offerings. Edward Holbrook was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in France and, with the launching of the Martelé line, the Company entered a new era of respect and, despite the high price of the products, profitability. Was Holbrook and Codman's decision to launch Martelé in Paris a good idea? The answer to that question requires further investigation into the strategy employed by Gorham at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition.[62]

In many ways, St. Louis was a continuation of 1900, with similar designs and motivations. After 1900, the Gorham factory began producing hundreds of

Martelé products in a wide range of product designs and types. Starting in 1902, there is evidence in Gorham's account books that products were already beginning to be specially made for Saint Louis with a steady stream of objects--from loving cups to cigar lighters--being produced in the busy workshops that were producing, in some months, over fifty Martelé objects.[63] Again, Gorham was triumphant, winning the grand prizes for goldware, jewelry, silverware, bronze work, leather work, and a special award in the "Applied Arts, Fine Arts Gallery" for a piece created by Codman: a lady's writing table composed of exotic woods, silver, and other inlays.[64] Holbrook and Codman were also personally awarded grand prizes and five of their craftsmen were awarded gold medals for their spectacular efforts.[65]

One silver item in particular illustrates the craftsman's mastery of his medium (see silver item depicted in Figure 7). Marked FFK, this is finely chased with cast mermaid handles. Placed in the center support is the cast figure of a winged woman and four whiplash arms, which support the four smaller bowls and have at their bases the face of a woman with long flowing hair. Gorham's files contain a photograph of the piece and records indicating that it was begun on January 5, 1904, with an estimated 73 hours of working time by Ted Codman, son of the chief designer, and the projected use of 390.8 ounces of silver.[66] The total cost of making the centerpiece was $1,600, making it one of the most expensive pieces of Martelé. The artistry displayed achieves the perfect Art Nouveau balance of solids and voids, appears to float in space it is so well designed.

Gorham continued to display its Martelé line at international exhibitions but it failed to play a major role in its displays. By the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exhibition, Gorham was continuing its gold medal winning ways but its showings failed to be as spectacular and Martelé was not a featured item. So, the question--was Gorham's launching of this premiere line of hand wrought silver based upon a sound consumer

strategy --can finally be answered. Although the decision to delay the launching of the Martelé line for three years allowed for the creation of a reserve stock, allowed for a build-up of publicity and gave the company an International debut, there were some considerable negative aspects to their plan. While Martelé was extremely popular with the critics and did sell well at the Exhibition, the popularity of the product was relatively short-lived.

The wait of three years to introduce the product line formally to the public may have had more success if the style had not suffered such a decline in popularity within a relatively short time after its premiere; a decline that was reflected in the sharp fall in sales of Martelé.[67] The money needed to start up a special school, the high price of production for the entire line of Martelé products, many of which had to be reduced when they did not sell (lowering the already small margin of profitability of the product), and the price involved in presenting them on the world stage made the creation and merchandising of the line a very expensive proposition for Gorham. The fact that less than three thousand pieces were made and that the average price of each piece was well over three hundred dollars is illustrative of the exclusivity and low profit ratio of the line. While Gorham introduced other products to compliment the line, Martelé remained the true thoroughbred: designed for display and accolades but suffering from the narrowness of the market availability to the public.

One must also question the release of such an exclusive line in a setting that had risqué dancers and a carnival-type atmosphere less than twenty feet away. While expositions had the power to reach a wide audience, they tended to lose some of their artistic integrity to appeal to a diverse audience. By making Art Nouveau the "property" of the people, many critics felt that it was appealing to the lowest common denominator. The introduction of Martelé (a line of products that was to be both artistic and aristocratic in its design and audience) in such a setting seems a bit jarring

and perhaps it would have been better to release the product after their brief Waldorf-Astoria showing and reap the benefits of three years of profits.

However great the number of precious objects Art Nouveau may have produced, the universal regeneration of art and life that it attempted was condemned to live a relatively short life that obtained a dizzying height, but was soon followed by a rapid decline. By the time the style became a part of the international language it was corrupted by derivative and commercial artists who applied the motifs but lacked the spirit of the movement. Gorham was able to capture the movement and grace of the style in its silver designs and create a full line of unique products that, like the movement, was applauded by the international community for its originality and execution, only to find itself relegated to the sidelines a few short years later.

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Thorstein Veblen claimed that, "unproductive consumption of goods is honorable, primarily a mark of prowess and a perquisite of human dignity; secondary it becomes substantially honorable in itself, especially the consumption of the more desirable things."[68] The consumption of silver (a precious substance that imparts grace and power to its owners) was once the sole province of the leisure class. Few could afford sterling and even fewer could afford large amounts that would require not only the capital, but also the attendants to maintain it at a high shine. With what Veblen calls the arrival of the "peaceable stage" in America's economic development, the restriction of such luxury goods to just the pinnacle of society was disappearing and more could afford goods that had previously been considered the province of the chosen few.

In this era of increased consumption, the "cultivation of the aesthetic faculty" and the "business of learning how to live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way" became of primary concern to this new leisure class.[69] Such a duty required that the gently bred individual "must consume freely and of the right kind of goods" and that he must "know how to consume them in a seemly manner."[70] With the rise of modern consumer culture fewer people were at work making things. Mike Featherstone, commenting on Jean Baudrillard's depiction of modern consumer society as the passage from "use value" to "sign value," claims that: "Consumer culture does not...encourage a grey conformism in the choice of goods...rather it seeks to educate individuals to read the difference in signs, to decode the minutiae of distinctions in dress, house, furnishing, leisure lifestyles, and equipment."[71] Thus, "conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to the "gentleman of leisure" and the consumer who is well instructed in the art of consumption will be able to purchase the type and quality of goods that will best serve to grant the owner gentility. Those who planned to introduce the Martelé line were either consciously or unconsciously aware of the social power that the Company's unique, expensive, and ornate product was capable of bestowing on its owner. It was this "purchasing power" that was exploited in Gorham's advertising campaigns and marketing techniques.

During the last years of the nineteenth century through the first quarter of the twentieth century, advertising in trade publications, consumer catalogs, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of media was the standard means of introducing and selling a product on the market. Trade catalogs and publications familiarized those in the silver industry with new and exciting developments and product lines. Similarly, money continued to be spent on small, simple advertisements in periodicals and newspapers, although new, more sophisticated methods of advertising in this area began to appear around the turn of the century. Most of this new type of print

advertising stressed name recognition, product quality, silverware as "art", and the importance of and possibilities offered by the inclusion of silver in daily life, much as it had before.[72]

As mentioned above, one of Gorham's primary concerns was selling a wide variety of products to a wide range of customers. This was a forbidding task. Some companies, such as Reed and Barton and the Meridian Britannia Company, focused their advertising on their wide range of affordable plate that could meet and exceed the needs of the average middle income consumer. Through print ads and elaborate, large (both in size and length), heavily illustrated, and expensive catalogs detailing the intricacies and qualities of their products, these companies represented the scope and affordability of their products to the middle class. Others, such as Tiffany and Co., chose to emphasize their beautiful and artistic line of sterling that could be made to order for any occasion in any shape or style for a "reasonable price" for the consumer with means. Tiffany advertised in a few select publications and offered gift books and several small scale catalogues dealing with a narrow range of their product line. But in its silver line, it was the company's custom orders and elaborate showpieces that drove its creative spirit; in this market, Tiffany needed little else than its reputation to attract the buying audience.[73]

Gorham was one of the few companies that attempted to offer a full line of products that appealed to both the family of limited means who desired a modest service of relatively inexpensive plate as well as those members of the elite society who desired a hand wrought silver and gold jewel encrusted punch bowl. At a time when the specialty market had become an integral part of the consumer world, attempting to appeal to such a wide range of consumers, while ideal from an income standpoint, proved challenging. It was Veblen who noticed that:

> our standard of decency in expenditure, as in other ends of emulation, is set by the usage of those next above us in respectability; until, in this way, especially in any community where class distinctions are somewhat vague, all canons of reputability and decency, and all standards of consumption, are traced back by gradations to the usages and habits of thought of the highest social and pecuniary class– the wealthy leisure class.[74]

Gorham believed that by providing the best that the luxury silver market had to offer with its Martelé line, its ancillary lines would be enhanced. Martelé was designed for the wealthy leisure class who existed at the top of the consumer pyramid. Those who could not afford Martelé would admire its style and choose the (oftentimes) less expensive Athenic line that had the style of the premier line but not the level of craftsmanship. For those who could not afford Athenic but desired the look of the high-end lines, the company offered Art Nouveau-style pieces that were mostly machine manufactured and inexpensive. Gorham's advertising was designed to highlight the connections between the low-end to the high-end.

Gorham kept pace with the major silver companies by offering catalogs to both the merchant and customer while printing prominent and descriptive advertisements in the numerous new home and art magazines that were increasing both in number and popularity at the time. Alongside such paid advertising, there was publicity from the company's spectacular showing at the World's Fairs, elaborate exhibits at both the Gorham outlets and other sumptuous venues, and interest generated by advance notice and the press regarding its new offerings.

The Martelé line of handmade products presented several marketing difficulties. The first obstacle was attempting to advance sell an expensive, unique product line. The very nature of Martelé made it impossible to create catalogs for the consumption of the buying public or the retail outlets. Nearly all of the product line was made either by special order or on speculation and despite many similarities in design and the inherent replication in pairs and sets, each piece of Martelé was a one-

of-a-kind work of art. With the exception of a 1900 catalog put out by the company to highlight the products being offered in Paris and several other small catalogs with limited distribution designed to emphasize the use and quality of the wares, no large scale published catalogs were ever produced to advertise the line.
Publications were put out to advertise ancillary lines such as the Paris, Orchid, Poppy, Tulip, and Virginia flatware patterns, along with several other lines of silver and silver-plated flatware that had beautiful Art Nouveau stylings featuring asymmetry and flowing lines.[75]

Gorham made the public aware of the imminent arrival of Martelé through the "planned" publication of several articles in ladies magazines that highlighted the new line in glowing terms. It has been hypothesized by several individuals, including Charles Venable in his landmark work *Silver in America 1840-1940*, that these articles were more advertisement than a critical assessment of new silver styles in America.[76] The reason for such a hypothesis becomes clear when one realizes that Gorham is the only company under consideration in these articles that claims to discuss "new trends" in silver. Also, a close analysis of the text reveals the use of several similar and obscure references in more than one article and the inclusion of many long, descriptive accounts delivered by Codman and Holbrook. This leads one to conclude that these articles were not an unbiased analysis of what the silver products would be.[77]

Written in glowing terms by women or unnamed authors and published in magazines as diverse as House Beautiful and The Craftsman, these articles, which appear both before and after Martelé was introduced to the public, contain enthusiastic descriptions and lush illustrations of the best of the new line of silver.[78] Charles Carpenter first claimed that the name for the Martelé line came from an article written in 1899 for the House Beautiful.[79] The article, titled "New Designs in Silver," also makes the claim that this line of beautiful *martelé* designs have a composition that

"follows the lines with fitting deftness and simplicity... such work is of the right sort; it comprehends its material in a large and worthy sense."[80] In other articles lauding the return of the craftsman ethic to the art of the silversmith, alternative conclusions and comparisons are drawn. Often paired with examples of Colonial Revival silver offered by Gorham, Martelé was said to be the forward looking line while the Colonial silver, with its "style, dignity, and simplicity, almost to severity," were designed to mine the past for inspiration.[81]

These articles, which were placed in magazines that were designed for individuals who either aspired to gentility or desired to acquire knowledge about the newest artistic trends, had an instructive tone.[82] The words used are capable of teaching the individual in the art of "cultivat(ing) his tastes, for it becomes incumbent upon him to discriminate with some nicety between the noble and the ignoble in consumer goods."[83] Moffitt's article in particular reflects Veblen's principles of cultivating the consumer in society. Words such as "beauty," "grace," "integrity," and "dignity" are used to describe Martelé. Moffitt convincingly argues that the artistic merit of each piece of Martelé has the capability of bestowing on the owner all of these same qualities. "The man who takes a piece of rare silver and works into it the thought of beauty," he wrote "gives it something that is beyond the reach of dollars and cents, and only those who can afford it the fullest appreciation deserve its possession."[84] Money alone was not enough to own a piece of Martelé; an owner had to be able to appreciate its artistic value. Thus, according to Moffitt (and, by association, Gorham), the individual who chose to own a piece of Martelé silver must be an individual of taste and refinement. The final link in Gorham's marketing strategy was print advertising. Gorham made the wealthy consumer realize that, with Martelé on her table, sideboard, and dressing table, she could show those of similar sensibilities not only her wealth, but her good taste.

In 1900 Gorham advertised in several publications, including Harper's Magazine and House Beautiful, where it placed beautiful quarter page ads. Both stressed the idea that "Martelé is the most Exclusive Silverware for Wedding Gifts..." and praised the alternate Athenic line as also being worthy for consideration for the young bride.[85] Both printed in the April issues of the magazine, the ads fit the traditional pre-May/June wedding promotional material that luxury goods producers had been exploiting for at least a quarter of a century.[86] Whereas contemporary magazines often turn their June magazines over to wedding advertisements and articles, in the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century, advertising two or three months prior to June gave the bride time to make an order.

Gorham also chose to advertise its premiere line in more than fifteen issues of Country Life in America between 1901 and 1906.[87] Published by Doubleday, Page and Company of New York, the large-quarto size of the periodical, combined with the fine pictures, many of which were reproduced in color, was designed to attract a large and wealthy readership. This audience, which was willing to pay the relatively steep three-to-four-dollar-a-year subscription price, was ideally suited to be "introduced" to the best and finest consumer products that the advertisers had to offer. In this run of half-page advertisements, there are repeats from month to month and many of the views expressed are similar if not the same throughout this nearly monthly promotional campaign. Thus, with lavish ads that painted Gorham's premiere line as "exceptional," "exquisite," "non-commercial," and "unique," readers of this elitist publication came to understand that Gorham was furnishing a superior product that offered more than the intrinsic value of a piece of silver.

In every advertisement that features Martelé, the Athenic line is included, though rarely depicted. The Athenic line, which featured Art Nouveau motifs but was made with more machine-oriented techniques and often included colorful enamel,

cabochon jewels, and gold or copper ornamentation, was considered a part of Gorham's second tier of offerings to the public. Often costing as much or more than Martelé but lacking the clean lines and cache offered by its complimentary line, Athenic was never as popular as Martelé although, with its jewel encrusted and elaborate forms, it offered a perfect foil to the sensuous simplicity often offered by its Martelé cousins. Only one advertisement in CLA illustrates the Athenic as opposed to the Martelé: the March 1903 issue.[88] Featuring a six-piece tea set with a sprig floral decoration on traditional forms, the advertisement reads:

> The Gorham Company is now showing a number of recently completed examples of their exclusive *Hand-wrought* productions in Martelé and Athenic. These are artistically unique and highly specialized pieces not to be had in duplicate, and an inspection is urged upon those who are looking for particular Gifts for Weddings or other occasions.[89]

While many pieces in the Athenic line were unique and as wonderful as those offered in the Martelé line, Gorham chose to illustrate a rather stock (and one with some nearly identical copies) tea set that reveals very little of the qualities inherent in this line.

Other advertisements, featuring some of Gorham's most spectacular Martelé, emphasize the artistic quality of each individual, one-of-a-kind piece. It is suggested that those who can appreciate "art unhampered by the ordinary commercial considerations of expense" will be proud to own Martelé.[90] Offered as the perfect gift for weddings and yachting trophies, these pieces, which were marketed as "art in sterling silver," lured the buyer to purchase these exquisite products. An advertisement from the April 1903 issue of CLA magazine says Martelé is:

> For weddings-- In beauty of design, elegance and perfection of craftsmanship, the Sterling Silver productions of the Gorham Co. afford the fullest satisfaction. An unusually rich and widely varied display of objects particularly appropriate for gifts may now be seen at their warerooms.[91]

Depicted with this glowing report is a rose water ewer and stand decorated with rippling water motifs and a handle which is comprised of a proudly arching mermaid

maiden whose curved form eagerly begs the hand to lift the well sculpted ewer.[92] The rippling water appears to swirl around the silver form with breathtaking maidens peaking out from the thick silver swirls. Such a form, much like the beautiful "Night" and "Day" candlesticks that were lauded at the St. Louis Exhibition in 1904 (advertised in December of 1904) are capable of conveying to the public the artistic quality and uniqueness of the line. Designed by Edwin C. Codman, William Codman's son and Head of Sculpting and Modeling at Gorham, the candlesticks, like the ewer and stand, are exquisite examples of the craftsman's abilities.

"In modern civilized communities" wrote Veblen, "the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal."[93] Veblen's words mirror the marketing of the Art Nouveau style throughout Gorham's entire line of products. With the Martelé line representing the pinnacle of desirability and refinement, all other lines were designed to offer the various strata of society with an entree into the realm of conspicuous consumption.

For many Gorham customers, consumption began not with the arrival of a mail order, but with a visit to a mini-department store. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, these stores were fast replacing the small, regional jewelry store as the place where customers encountered luxury goods for sale. These palaces of consumer culture--the luxury goods department stores of the day--worked in tandem with the advertisers to produce new and innovative means to sell their high-end products.

The period from 1890 to 1930 has been considered the golden age of the American department store.[94] The stores built in this era were designed for the express purpose of seducing the customer. Businesses were molded according to two distinct images: Palace and Home . The first was the Palace of Consumption, the lavish store that is best exemplified by two of the grand icons which still remain--Marshall Field in Chicago, and the former John Wanamakers in Philadelphia.[95] These centrally located buildings that came to be viewed as city landmarks and icons for others to emulate were elaborately decorated displaying the finest woods, the choicest marbles, gorgeous Oriental carpets in every variety, sparkling chandeliers and a metallic gleam provided by gilt and chrome surfaces that effectively dazzled the eye. The effect of such a spectacle was to elevate mundane items like socks, shirts, and trousers into the realm of fantasy--capturing the mind and eye of the consumer. The consumer, bedazzled by the splendor of the hallowed halls of the department store and encouraged by the words of the various advertisements that lured him into the store, would then be encouraged to make his fantasies into reality through the purchase of the institution's "select" merchandise.

The department store also was designed to be presented to the consumer as a fashionable residence, a home in which the customer was an honored guest. The guest was to be coddled and made to feel that this was a place where he belonged--where he could feel comfortable with the surrounding elegance. In a store such as Wanamakers, intimate settings were scattered throughout the immense sales floors, fostering a feeling of familiarity that emulated the comfort of a luxurious parlor. In the case of the luxury goods department stores such as Tiffany's, Gorham, Black, Starr & Frost, Bailey Banks and Biddle and others that were located in major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, such a cozy and convivial atmosphere was reduced in scale

from the mammoth size of the department store to evoke the feeling of a luxurious and highly exclusive club.

Gorham's building on Fifth Avenue and Thirty-sixth Street in New York was constructed according to plans drawn up by the fashionable gentleman architect Stanford White of the firm of McKim, Mead & White in 1905 (Figure 8).[96] It is no coincidence that White and his firm, which designed many of the fashionable residences on Fifth Avenue during the Gilded Age, was also the principle designer of many of the gentlemen's clubs of the day. The University Club, another Fifth Avenue landmark, is strikingly similar in both design and scale to the Gorham store (Figure 9). These clubs, which were known for their sumptuous appointments and elegance in design, were created for the use of gentlemen of wealth and standing in society. Likewise, the luxury department store was created for the use of those whose wealth could afford them the ability to belong to such an exclusive establishment. Many historians consider that the department store acted as the feminine version of the gentleman's club: offering a comfortable, acceptable locale to meet, transact business, and dine in the city.[97] While no studies have specifically been conducted to determine whether such a relationship between the luxury goods department store and women existed, such an assumption seems probable.

The similarity in the architecture of the clubs and the department stores, not only in New York but in other major cities, seems to support the idea that there was an intention on the part of the architects and the companies to connect the two institutions in the minds of the consumers. Designed in the academic style that was popularized by McKim, Mead and White, both the club and the store were generally between four and six story Italianate buildings with sumptuous entrance halls and tall ceilings. Their exteriors were impressively encased in sheathes of white marble with gorgeously rendered classical pediments, entablatures and assortments of archaic icons applied to

the cool exterior. While these buildings were no match in scale with their grand retail counterparts, their exterior elegance and interior flamboyance more than made up for their size. Whereas Marshall Field was attempting to impart a sense of glamour to drygoods, Gorham and its luxury counterparts were attempting to provide a refined setting for their precious stock.

One establishment that is known to have sold Martelé products is the Boston firm of Shreve, Crump & Low (Figure 10). The company, in operation since 1796, served some of America's most famous families in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the Lowells, Cabots, du Ponts, Kents, Crowninshields, Lodges and Mrs. King Gillette were all patrons of this establishment located at 147 Tremont Street.[98] Strongly resembling the club-luxury store model, the emporium, loosely interpreted in the Italian Renaissance style, was described as a "veritable explosion" of merchandise spread across six floors easily accessible by a gilt elevator. This "jeweled palace of trade", as part-owner Charles C. Crump described it, was an outlet for the full line of Gorham products and, when the company began to offer its Martelé line to the American public it is perhaps no coincidence that Shreves decided to remodel its silver showroom.[99] Then, with the close of the century and the introduction of elaborate new luxury lines from silver's giants, the manner in which the precious metal was presented to the public changed. Silver became an event. As evidenced by an invitation in the company's files, Shreve, Crump, and Low had its first special Spring Exhibit of Silver in 1899.[100] In this invitation, while not mentioned by name, Shreve's promises: "In addition to an unusually large variety of articles designed especially for Wedding Gifts, they will display a collection of entirely hand wrought ware, many pieces of which are of exceptional merit and will not be duplicated."[101] While it seems improbable that Gorham was offering the Martelé line at the store in 1899, prior to the date that the 1900 date that Martelé has generally said to have been introduced to the

retail market, it does indicate that the call for hand-wrought wares was evident and meritous of an appropriate introduction to society.

With the introduction of the grand lines being offered by Gorham, Tiffany's and others it became imperative to create a new type of space in order to highlight the quality of these wares. A detailed description of the Shreve showroom offers some insight into the sumptuous nature of this setting that opened to an invitation only audience in 1903:

> No house has been quicker to take advantage of the latest methods of handling fine wares than the Shreve, Crump and Low Company corner of Tremont and West Streets. Having the very finest of everything pertaining to jewelry, silverware, and allied lines always on hand to start with, this company has never neglected to take care that its customers shall be perfectly satisfied and suited when making a selection.

This first paragraph establishes that one of Shreves' key objectives is to make sure that the public is "perfectly satisfied" when they are making purchases in their store. The new luxury goods store on Tremont Street was designed with comfort in mind. Instead of making the customer stand and peruse cases of items, visitors were invited to sit and have the well-informed clerk bring items to comfortable tables for their clients to peruse.

> The latest move of Shreve, Crump and Low Company in this direction is the establishment of a special department exclusively for the display of the most expensive silverware. The demand for chests of sterling silver, solid dinner and tea sets of silver and the like has become very strong, and it was realized that it was inconvenient for customers to examine this line of ware in the general silver room. Therefore particular quarters, reached by the elevator have been fitted up in the most beautiful matter. Upon leaving the elevator, the visitor enters a long hall, hung with sixteenth and seventeenth century tapestries, and adorned with fine marble and bronze statues and furniture of harmonious design, giving the impression of an art gallery.

This section highlights the new layout of the showroom and lets the reader know that the customer-guest will be invited to the "special department" on the second floor of the establishment. Here, removed from the public nature of the ground floor, customers

will be invited into the inner sanctum of the store and be surrounded by luxury where they can, at their leisure, make their selection.

> At the end of this hall is a brilliantly lighted apartment in which are arranged in perfect taste the product of the most expert workers in solid silver. The bright surfaces reflecting the artificial light give an effect like bright sunlight after a shaded room. The whole room is done in dark green, which sets off most effectively the silver, arranged upon tables around the walls. The silver services occupy tables by themselves so that the merits of each are not confused. The chests are upon moving tables, so that the customer can examine them without moving. Burnished and dull finished ware is here in sets of all sizes.
> Upon the walls of the apartment are oil paintings by Huguet, Medard, Lambinet, Tyoran, and others and in the centre is a large table for the display of the silver under the same conditions as it would appear in the home. The lighting arrangements are perfect, either strong artificial light or daylight being available In fact, a person desiring to purchase ware of this character could not do so under more favorable conditions. Already several men of experience in the silver trade have seen the room and have given the opinion that it is unequaled in the country.[102]

Once the customer entered the silver department, she is "given the impression of (being in) an art gallery" and surrounded by bright light and beautiful, artistic surroundings. Here, the art on the wall that would not be out of place in the homes of the Vanderbilts and Rockerfellers, is contrasted with the "expert works" of silver done in the "perfect taste." There is a clear intention on the part of the store to draw a parallel between the art and the silver . Guests could then seat themselves and have the silver brought to them or browse the showroom floor where the silver is laid out "under the same conditions that it would appear in the home." Shreves has, through the use of luxury and clever marketing, elevated the silver to the realm of artwork and made its customers feel like invited guests who are privileged to sit in the store and select from the finest art-silver in the world. The consumer experience has become as much of an art form as the purchases themselves.

It was through ornate rooms within the grand Palaces of Consumption that the Martelé line was being formally presented to the public. These storerooms were transformed from the traditional spaces which placed the emphasis upon storage not

display into elegant living spaces designed to illustrate to consumers how to effectively use their products (Figure 11). With paintings, fixtures, lighting, and silver that would not be out of place in the houses of Shreve's most valued clients, the store was able to create a beautiful stage set, designed to allow consumers to formulate their own fashionable realities out of the offered products. Stores such as Shreves made it a part of their goal to create visual fantasies that, for a price, any consumer could make into a reality in his own home. The engraved invitation inviting the fashionable set to the opening of the new and expanded silver section in October of 1903 ushered in a new type of silver department in America's luxury department stores that was copied by many.

Shreve, Crump and Low, along with its events and new department, issued numerous pamphlets describing the wonders to be found in the new silver section and emphasizing the value of a beautiful piece of silver to the bride or prospective gift-giver. These one page flyers boasting titles such as "Think of Silver," "The Happy Home," "For Hymen's Attendants," and "Weighed in Silver" were all a part of this consumer myth that the consumption of objects of great beauty would bring happiness. They claimed that:

> In each of the bedrooms, toilet articles, candlesticks, picture frames and boudoir knick-knacks show that silver plays its part in all the waking hours of the household. A gift of silver is always welcome in the happy home. There are so many lovely things made of silver that it is possible to choose a gift within the range of every purse. Our entire second floor is devoted to the display of silver.[103]

Shreve, Crump & Lowe, at the time of this pamphlet's publication, 1905, was selling several items from the Martelé line according to company records: no small feat in Boston where the Art Nouveau never really achieved the success that it found in other cosmopolitan cities. These in-store advertisements served to illustrate that silver--lots of silver--in the household paved the way to domestic contentment. And, with the

Martelé line representing the pinnacle of the silversmith's art, a few selected consumers could hope to achieve domestic bliss.

Shreves was not the only company to advertise Gorham's quality silver products. Grogans, a company located in Pittsburgh, released an advertisement for the Martelé line specifically in 1911. This two-page ad commended the return to handmade products and saw it as a return to the quality and the fine craftsmanship that was a hallmark of the American worker. The ad stressed the fact that with the advent of Martelé, we have regained our very souls. One passage reveals that:

> The perfection of machine work threatened Art for a time. Here and there Prudery, in smug disguises laid its cold hand upon the joyous spirit. These two dangers have passed, it seems. The return to hand-wrought creations, particularly notable in that most important of modern advances, Martelé work, is the best evidence of our happy repulse to the machine-work tendency of these days.[104]

The ad further explained how Martelé was truly the culmination of thousands of years of human artistic achievement--from primitive cave paintings, through Babylon, Egypt and Greece to the triumph over the machine age--Gorham was providing "the history of the soul on the beautiful thing that he has wrought."[105] This is not to say that the product has transcended the consumer clutches of those with the ability to possess such art for, in the final line of this exceptional passage, Grogan's claims that: "And if the greatest work one can achieve is the creation of beauty, perhaps the second greatest achievement is to attain appreciation of beauty. It is well to realize that true ownership rests not in mere possession, but in appreciation."[106]

Many of the surviving pieces of Gorham's premiere line are, along with the standard hallmarks, marked with the name of the retailer through which the product was offered. A study of more than three hundred pieces of Martelé yields the mark of ten major vendors on pieces of the product: Gorham Company, Providence and New York, J.E. Caldwell of New York and Philadelphia, Theodore B. Starr of New York,

Spaulding & Co., with outlets in Chicago and Paris, Grogan Company of Pittsburgh, Bailey, Banks & Biddle of Philadelphia, Shreve, Crump & Lowe of Boston, H.G. Hudson of Amesbury Massachusetts, Chester-Billings & Company of New York and T. Kirkpatrick (no known city.)[107] These institutions represent some of the finest silver makers and jewelry retailers on the eastern seaboard and, with the Spaulding outlet in Chicago, a gateway to the west was opened for the sale of Gorham's wares.

While a surprising number of Martelé pieces were marked with the name of the retailers, on the whole, of the pieces I have catalogued and studied, less that ten percent of the line were stamped in this manner. It would appear that if the products were sold by the Gorham Company (or any of its outlets through the Silversmiths Guild) no such stamp was placed on a piece. This probably does not account for all of the unmarked products that I have uncovered; other retailers probably sold Martelé without stamping their name on the piece. Many institutions such as A.B. Griswold and Company of New Orleans, Spaulding and Company of San Francisco (as well as a Gorham outlet in this city which opened in 1879) and other well-known outlets in Atlanta and Baltimore were authorized sellers of the Gorham product line and it is quite possible that they offered Martelé products on a special order basis. It is highly likely that the Martelé line was available throughout America and, through the Spaulding store in Paris and Gorham's London outlet (intended to serve the British Empire), it is quite possible that the line was available, if not sold, throughout the world in the first decade of the twentieth century.[108]

A survey of nearly fifty years of Sotheby's and Christies' sales catalogues offering products exhibiting the Martelé hallmarks and a retailer's mark indicates that the institutions which appear with the greatest frequency are Spaulding & Co. and Theodore B. Starr.[109] From what little can be learned of the Gorham archives concerning the company's retail association with Spaulding and other retailers, it

would seem that the store offered Martelé as both unique "specials" or "samples" (denoted by the circle/square that the letters or numbers were enclosed in) and, to a limited extent, as production stock (numbers prefaced by an "A"). An 1898 price list sent to Spaulding shows a mixtures of "A" line products, circled numerals and blocked numerals, indicating a variety of order types being sent and sold at the Chicago store.[110] Such confusion is endemic in the study of Gorham and its early codification systems which repeat, are inconsistent and often offer confusing contradictions, thus it is always a good idea to examine a piece rather than make judgment based on written records alone.[111]

Despite this difficulty, some limited conclusions can be drawn concerning the Gorham line and its association with its retailers. Gorham records suggest that many small items such as children's sets, child's cups, bon-bon dishes, desk items and loving cups were made on speculation, especially in the first seven years of Martelé's production, and were delivered to Spaulding, T.B. Starr and Grogans in particular. In 1899, early in the production of the Martelé line, approximately four thousand Specials and Samples were created and catalogued in photo albums that still exist in the Gorham archives.[112] Of these, it would appear that, perhaps in preparation for the 1900 Exposition in Paris, between forty to fifty percent of the samples and specials pieces were either of the Martelé line or designed to be compatible with the line.[113] While it would be tempting to speculate about other aspects of the Gorham-Retailer relationship such as why certain pieces were marked and when they were stamped in the production process along with other particulars of the mutually beneficial association, there are few documents that I was unable to uncover to substantiate any suppositions.

The link between the retail purveyors of quality products and the merchandising of the luxury product was being codified at the turn of the twentieth century. Strategies, designs, and luxury became the order of the day in the building

and lay out of these Palaces of Consumption and the art of forging a bond between creator, distributor and the consumer was perfected. Martelé was the most expensive and impressive line of silver offered in the luxury stores of the day. Despite its beauty and quality, it required a special setting in which to shine or it would not have achieved the level of success that it did. Thus like an exquisite diamond placed in a tin setting, if the silver was relegates the back shelves, it would not have been shown in its best light; only when positioned front and center in the cases of America's premiere department stores could it truly shine.

## CONCLUSION

This work has attempted to examine how and why Gorham was able to convey this aura of grace upon those who purchased its most expensive line and it would seem logical to conclude the work with an examination of those who purchased Martelé and their households. Questions such as where they lived, how they lived and used the product, was it bought as a gift or for personal use, and how much was bought for any one household would provide a fitting ending for an examination of Gorham's marketing strategy in the first decades of this century. Unfortunately, such an endeavor is currently very difficult to accomplish. While I was able to discover the names of nearly a score of those who bought Martelé, it is not enough nor is my examination nearly complete enough to make any conclusions regarding those who bought the silver. Many company records are either lost, impossible to interpret due to the imprecise nature of their sales descriptions, or unavailable because of client/jeweler confidentiality. It is hoped that, with the beginning of the new century and with the marking of the centennial of Martelé's introduction to the public, an increased interest in the silver will open more doors to researchers.

While I was unable to discover trends in purchasing for Martelé, of those records I was able to uncover, some interesting directions for future study can be related. In Winterthur's study collection there is an ornate three piece Turkish Coffee set with tray (83.108.1-4) for which there is some information regarding the original provenance of the set. According to Mrs. Elizabeth Knowles, the donor of the set, it descended in her husband's family from Mrs. Helen Bowman Mason.[114] The set was given to Mrs. Mason upon her marriage to Mr. George Reed on October 28, 1903 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. While it is unknown who gave the present to the couple or

if it was purchased from the local purveyor of Gorham products, Grogan & Co., it is helpful to know that Martelé was in fact bought for weddings as many advertisements suggested. It also indicates that other records such as bridal registries might offer further insight into the consumer side of the transaction.

Another object for which much is known about the first owner, is the spectacular dressing table and stool made for the Paris Exposition of 1900. Designed by Codman and crafted by the best workers in Gorham's factory, the set sold for nearly ten thousand dollars. The purchaser was Thomas W. Lawson (1857-1925), was one of the most flamboyant operators of the era. He was born in Boston, the son of a carpenter from Nova Scotia who died when the boy was eight. Lawson began work in a bank by the age of twelve.[115] He became fascinated by the mechanism of speculation; scored a number of coups as a teen; had his own brokerage firm by age twenty-one; was worth ten million by age thirty; and at the time he bought the table– about 1901– was worth fifty million. To his contemporaries he was the "Copper King," the broker who put together Standard Oil, a sugar speculator, a self-made man whose wealth belied his humble beginnings. During the last fifteen years of his life, he seemed to lose his old knack for success, and died penniless.

For Lawson, the table may have represented an entree into the world of gentility. However, this is unlikely. While Gorham was designing its pieces for those who would come to appreciate the beauty and artistry of such objects, Lawson was looking for the prestige of ownership of a silver spectacle.

In 1935, William Codman wrote a *Historical and Biographical Sketch of the Gorham Manufacturing Company*. In this treatise, he expounded on the subject of Martelé as art:

> There is a place in the home for the machine-made articles as there is also a place, and perhaps a more highly honored one, for the work of art, which is the sole product of the thinking brain and the cunning hand of the craftsman.

> This company has always in mind the great principle of bringing the designer and the artisan closer together; of giving the craftsman a real interest in his own work and in the final project. Of the many and varied productions of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, it may be safely said that none are of more interest from the purely artistic standpoint, that those rarely beautiful and individual pieces which are produced by the method of Martelé.[116]

The words of Gorham's chief designer illustrate how Martelé was presented to the public as both an elite luxury product and a decorative art object that transcended the boundaries of its classification to become a work of fine art. A home with Martelé in the dining room, boudoir, or office was capable instructing and educating an observer that he had walked into a home of distinction; the person who was wise enough to chose Gorham's premier line was proclaiming her taste and class to any one privileged enough to view them. During the nineteenth century, many silversmiths fell victim to the competitive pressures unleashed by market forces and new technologies; others, like Gorham, evolved to make use of the new circumstances while recognizing the potential value of the old.

With the turn of the century, silver in the home was enjoyed by more people of different economic classes than ever before. Prices for silver declined during the preceding century, in part due to the enormous increase in silver ore coming from American silver mines in the West. As entertaining took on increasing social importance for the middle classes, the popularity of silver widened. Silver in the household remained a mark of distinction; a table set with silver or a gleaming toilette set arrayed on a dressing stand was one of special merit. With increasing numbers of individuals purchasing silver for the home, Gorham, a company that wanted to provide quality silver products to both the masses and the privileged, recognized the necessity to create a line of distinctive products that would mark all who owned it as both wealthy and discriminating.

Besides the reasons mentioned within this narrative, one of the reasons that the Martelé line had such a brief period of popularity hinges upon the aforementioned trickle-down theory. While Codman and his associates were able to provide an excellent product and related silver pieces to a wide variety of consumers, they failed to recognize the necessity to evolve. According to Simmel, as soon as a subordinate group begins to appropriate superordinate fashion, those of the upper sort begin to desire new items with which to differentiate themselves form the masses.[117] Fashion trends need to evolve and while Martelé provided something new and unique at the turn of the century, by the end of the decade, new trends-- Art Nouveau and Colonial Revival among others-- were fast becoming the province of the elite. While some Art Deco-inspired Martelé was crafted after 1909, the marketing support of the line had ceased. The failure of the company to recognize the need to perpetuate a cycle of evolving fashion in the world of silver was the fundamental reason behind Martelé's waning popularity

Others have put forward some theories that may have contributed to Martelé's decline. Several of these have been hinted at within the body of this work-- economic factors in the nation and at Gorham; a miscalculation in market strategy; changing tastes. One involves market saturation. With acquisition, the mystique of the product is lost. The image has become a reality and then, in order to maintain the consumer cycle, a new ideal must be found and coveted. After 1905 when several thousand pieces were released to retailers, sales of Martelé quickly dropped and, as has been mentioned previously, by the end of the decade, Martelé production had dropped to an extreme low. Less than a dozen pieces of Martelé were made in each of the years 1910 and 1911. There were four-dozen pieces made in 1912, the last year of regular production of Martelé.

Another problem may have been, as Charles Venable has postulated, that with a reduction of personal servants in many households due to changing times and economic conditions, large amounts of highly sculpted silver would have required much more polishing than many had the manpower to clean.[118] The cleaner, flatter lines of the Colonial Revival and Art Deco offered inspired elegance that was easy to clean. Gorham and retailer's records are not clear as to how well the products made during the peak of Gorham's productivity sold. It can be assumed that the answer is not well or production would have continued along established lines.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the consumer revolution that had begun as early as the eighteenth century, was a fully realized, integral part of American society. Consumer goods carried a cultural meaning and each purchase, be it a simple color lithograph or a silver centerpiece, indicated something about the person who bought the object and the society in which it was sold. This language of goods permeated every level of society and by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, producers were skillfully manipulating the nouns and adverbs of this highly evolved dialect. Producers and purveyors carefully controlled the meaning that each object was to have and thus, intangible attributes such as personal values, aspirations, and desires all became a part of the consumer package.

Gorham and its retailers skillfully utilized the language of the day to create the Martelé line. It was capable of conveying status upon its owner through its correct display in home. As a cultural symbol, it was also capable of acting in a fraudulent manner, as was the case in the purchase of the Martelé dresser by Thomas Lawson. He owned the correct items but his ostentatious display of them and his lack of understanding of the true value of the product prevented him from truly appreciating his artistic purchase. He desired the veneer of class and status; Martelé was for those who understood the "hidden" code of social meaning inherent in such a distinctive

product. Martelé was as much a symbol, an icon, as it was an object of great value. Designed and crafted in the workroom and boardroom as an object to be coveted by those who sought prestige through objects, the Martelé line captured the imagination of turn of the century America and made Gorham the most popular and the most successful silver producer in the world.

[1]Yvonne Brunhammer, *Art Nouveau Belgium France* (Houston: Institute for the Arts, 1976), 11.

[2]Charles Carpenter with Mary Carpenter, *Tiffany Silver* (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1978), 32.

[3]While Gorham could easily ask double (or more) the price of its manufacturing price for its machine wrought items, mark up on Martelé was customarily only one third of the cost of its manufacture. Martelé items were also occasionally marked down, further narrowing the profit margin.

[4]Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption* (New York: Midland Book Edition, 1990), 93.

[5]In pieces that were designed to contain liquids, gilding was often added to the interior because silver reacts with many liquids whereas gold does not. Some Martelé pieces has glass vessels with silver mounts or horn handles but there was not the emphasis on gems and other metals that were found in other lines like the Athenic.

[6]Charles Carpenter, *Gorham Silver* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1982), 251.

[7]While many are more familiar with the Ruby Slippers worn by Judy Garland in the movie version of The Wizard of Oz, in the book, L. Frank Baum utilized Silver Shoes. The change was made to Ruby slippers because they made better use of the relatively new Technicolor™ technology.

[8]Between 1909 and 1911 production dropped dramatically to little more than a dozen pieces a year. It was in 1905 that Gorham crafted the most Martelé (several hundred pieces) and also the year that the Company offered the most variety--from terrapin sets to smoking sets.

[9]Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 1.

[10]Carroll Pursell, *White Heat* (London: BBC Books, 1994), 74.

[11]John Jewkes, David Sawers and Richard Stillerman, *The Sources of Invention* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1958). As the neo-liberal economists Jewkes, Sawers, and Stillerman pointed out in their 1958 book *The Sources of Invention*, committees do not invent, people do. In a series of case studies of twentieth-century invention they show how, time after time, new ideas came from individuals, however necessary large institutions may have been in getting ideas through to production and market.

[12]Friedel, 22.

[13]Gorham Archives Card 12.5

[14]Gorham Archives Card 12.7

[15]In 1893, an international congress was held, in conjunction with Chicago's Columbia Exposition, which established standards for the ohm (the standard of resistance), the ampere (current), the volt (electromotive force), and so forth. Not surprisingly, the Germans were the first to establish an official agency for the setting of accurate standards with the creation of the Norman-Eichungs Commission in 1868. Austria followed suit in 1871 followed by the Russians in 1878. In 1879, Britain established its Standard Department, patterned on the German agency.

[16]Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (New York: Doubleday Currency, 1990), 200-202.

[17]Ibid., 202.

[18]Carpenter, 226.

[19]According to Carpenter, the increased percentage of silver in the metal made it so much easier to work that costs did indeed go down. It is also interesting to note that, over the years, many of the minute details on a piece of Martelé would be lost due to years of polishing, oxidation, and wear(Carpenter, 226).

[20]Ibid., 227.

[21]Tiffany was also producing elaborately worked pieces in this era but the Company never felt the need to increase the silver percentage in the alloy to make the silver more malleable.

[22]Alan Tomlinson ed., *Consumption, Identity, and Style* (London: Routledge, 1990), introduction. This collection conveys many of these theories and their proponents.

[23]Ibid., Chapter 2. Theories in this area put forth by men such as Raymond Williams, Herbert Marcuse, and Warren I. Susman are discussed in Chapter 2, "Marketing Dreams."

[24]Some of these theorists who I am referring to are G. Simmel ("Fashion," *International Quarterly* 10. 130-155), Gabriel de Tarde (*The Laws of Imitation*, Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1962), and Lloyd Fallers ("A Note on the 'Trickle Effect'," in *Sociology: Progress of a Decade*, eds. Seymour Lipset and Neil Smelser, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 501-6).

[25]Toby Young, "The Fall of the House of Style," *Leisure Futures* 73 no. 1179 (Winter, 1985), 19.

[26]Arnold Lewis et al., *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age.* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 98. This description is largely based on the Henry G. Marquand House. The house, built at 140 Rhode Island Avenue in Newport, RI. in 1873 by Richard Morris Hunt, was destroyed by fire in 1973. The Marquands displayed so many paintings and objects in their home that their neighbors dubbed it "bric-a-brac" hall. Both LaFarge and Hunt played a part in the decoration of this room.

[27]In this instance, the room described is an amalgam of exhibit spaces from the Munich Secession Exhibition in 1899. The room described is particularly inspired by the designs of Henry van de Welde for this exhibit.

[28]*World Expositions in the 19th Century.* (Munich, 1973), 13.

[29]Gorham Archives Note card c-13.

[30]Dorothy T. Rainwater, *Encyclopedia of American Silver Manufacturers*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1975), 122-3.

[31]*Tiffany Silver*, 55-6 and 100. It is interesting to note that every competitor at a World's Fair received a medal of some color. All entrants were guaranteed a bronze, allowing them to advertise their medal-winning prowess despite the fact that they may have presented designs that lacked any degree of style or quality.

[32]Carpenter, 8.

[33]Venable, 117.

[34]Carpenter, 78.

[35]Alexander Farnum, *The Century Vase* (Providence: Livermore & Knight, 1876), 7.

[36]Venable, 118.

[37]Joseph Butler, *American Antiques, 1800-1900* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1965), 139. The Paris Commune had set itself the goal of transforming the unified French state into a Federation of sovereign communities and making socialism a reality

[38]Gorham chose not to participate in this Exposition and, although its wares reflected many of the same ideas as its main American competitors at the fair, such as Tiffany & Co., the company lacked an international audience and, thus, failed to be recognized for its achievements in Europe. Therefore Tiffany gained the upper hand in the ongoing battle to determine who was the premier craftsmen of silver in America and, by extension, the World.

[39]Carpenter, 109.

[40]Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (London: Elik Books, Ltd., 1969), 5.

[41]Carpenter, 23.

[42]By 1913 the Silversmiths Company included within its holdings William B. Durgin Company, Whiting Manufacturing company, William B. Kerr, Roger Williams Silver, The Mauser Manufacturing Company and Hayes & McFarland. The company continued to grow, gaining exclusive retailing rights with a number of outlets in major metropolitan areas.

[43]Carpenter, 202.

[44]Carpenter , 189 and Gorham Notecard B22. A suite of furniture for the Henry Gordon Morguard house that was designed by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, a well known member of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and one of the most well-respected artists of his day, was built by Codman in 1887.

[45]Carpenter, 206.

[46]M. Camille Krantz, *International Exposition of Chicago, 1893, Committee 24, Jewelry, Gold and Silverware.* (Paris: National Press, 1894), 2.

[47]Gabrielle Fahr-Becker, *Art Nouveau* (Bonn: Könemann, 1997), 73.

[48]The Art Nouveau style, both in time as well as in its development, may be placed midway between Historicism and the emergence of the Modern Movement. And yet--with a few exceptions--it has suffered the same fate as the rest of the design trends of the latter half of the nineteenth century. One is often inclined to judge with the eyes of one's own age, but if Historicism or Art Nouveau is evaluated with the aesthetic yardstick of the twentieth century, the verdict will of necessity be based on false premises, for the reason that the artists of that age strove to attain ideals appear to be the opposite of those of our own age. If we are to attempt to evaluate the age and its objects, we must be familiar with the peculiar feeling for form of the nineteenth century and be capable of appreciating it. The term "function" and its application alone give some idea of the gulf that separates the two ages: during the latter half of the nineteenth century function was expressed through decoration--in the first half of the twentieth century it was expressed through construction.

[49]Bernard Champigneulle, *Art Nouveau* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1972. Art Nouveau was known by different names in different countries: the German term is *Jugendstil,* its Viennese form being *Sezessionsstil,* and its Catalan version was Modernista-- it was not until the 1890's that the term "Modern Style" was applied to the style by the French.

[50] Jean-Paul Bouillon, *Art Nouveau* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 15. In the case of the architect Horta, who is often said to exemplify the style's richest phase, sometimes

considered High Art Nouveau, became popular in Brussels in the early 1890's. *Jugendstil* likewise came into being in Munich in 1894, almost without any recognizable preliminary stage. While the continent drew its inspiration to a great extent from this new interest in organic life with well animated curves, in London an flowing, organic style began as early as 1880, and had been preceded by a trend that began around 1800. The Arts and Crafts movement, founded by William Morris and expanded upon by his followers added to this proto-Art Nouveau style that had found its origins in the work of such artists as William Blake whose fire flowers with their expressive tangle of lines that seemingly form a whirlwind of light and form clearly point to things yet to come.

[51]Schumutzer, 30.

[52]Fahr-Becker, 312.

[53]*The Gorham Manufacturing Company, Silversmiths* (New York: Cheltenham Press, 1900), 14.

[54]Carpenter, 209.

[55]Special designation symbols were given to the products made for the Paris and the St. Louis Exhibitions. In all Gorham photo books depicting these objects, their captions display these symbols in the upper right hand corner. Martelé was not the only product on display at the fair: a number of its products including leather goods, ecclesiastical wares, bronze pieces and flatware patterns-- many exhibiting Art Nouveau stylings-- were shown at the fair.

[56]*Gorham Co.*, 32-34. card c-3

[57]Ibid.

[58]Carpenter, 213. F. A. Jordan, who worked seventy-seven hours chasing this vase, had joined Gorham as an apprentice in 1860. In 1869, he was hired away by Tiffany's and after twelve years returned to Gorham as foreman of the chasing department. Jordan held this position for twenty-seven years, until his retirement in 1907.

[59]Carpenter, 230. For a more detailed description of this process, see Carpenter's work.

[60]Samuel Hough, "Silver Specials "*Silver Magazine* (July-August 1988), 35.

[61]Tiffany also presented an amazing range of products, some of which exhibited aspects of Art Nouveau design, but the bulk of their display appears to have remained focused on the grand Academic style.

[62]Gorham participated in the Turin Exhibition of 1902 where also won a gold medal in an exhibit which featured Martelé. From the records I have observed, however, there were no pieces made specifically for this exhibit and thus, I chose not to discuss it here.

[63]Special Time Book, 1902-1905 transcription. Pieces for the St. Louis Exhibition, like those made specifically for the Paris show, were specially marked: in this case a small letter "s" was superimposed over a large letter "L".

[64]Carpenter, 240.

[65]Carpenter, 244.

[66]Mark Clark and David McFadden, *Treasures for the Table* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1989),48.

[67]Carpenter, 247.

[68]Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: The Modern Library, 1934), 71.

[69]Ibid., 74-5.
[70]Ibid., 75.
[71]Mike Featherstone, "Consumer Culture, Symbolic Power and Universalism", Paper read at the conference "Mass Culture, Life Worlds, Popular Cultures in the Middle East", University Bielefeld, 7-9 February 1985, 4.
[72]JCK 78:1 (2 May 1919): 368.
[73]Carpenter, *Tiffany*, 23.
[74]Veblen, 104.
[75]Katharine Morrison McClinton, *Collecting American 19th Century Silver* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 120 Gorham also made one Martelé flatware service. A portion of this set was offered for sale at Christies sale #8006, June, 1990-- Sale Item # 12. Made around 1910 and monogrammed with the letter "S" it may have been part of a larger set with the same monogram which includes a vase and a bowl. This 93 piece offering at Christie's included 10 lunch forks, 11 lunch knives, 9 teaspoons, 12 soup spoons, 12 orange spoons, 12 iced tea spoons, 11 cream soup spoons, 8 coffee spoons, 2 tablespoons, 2 seafood forks, 2 serving spoons, 1 carving fork, 1 salad fork and 1 trencher salt. This collection represents only a fraction of what the entire set must have encompassed. A catalogue for the "Paris" line is in the Gorham archives: *Paris-1900* (Providence: The Company, 1900).
[76]Venable, 108.
[77]One obvious shared reference is that between Charlotte Moffitt's article [Moffitt, "New Designs in Silver," *The House Beautiful* 7 no. 1 (December 1899), 55] and a piece in *The Craftsman* ["Some Recent Examples of Gorham Silverware," *The Craftsman* 7 (January 1905), 447] both of which evoke the artist Benvenuto Cellini and his followers as being the wellspring from which Martelé has flowed and the heritage which Gorham has reclaimed.
[78]*The Jewelers' Circular*, November 17, 1897, p.16. The first article to mention the arrival of a new line of silver from Gorham was an article published in November of 1897 in the Jeweler's Circular. The article, a review of the showing of the new "hand wrought silver" at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was extremely positive and effusive in its compliments toward Gorham's new line of products. It is perhaps one of the only articles concerning Gorham that offers a truly honest look at the new silver-- its brevity and a lack of commentary from Holbrook and Codman are uncharacteristic when compared to other articles.
[79]Carpenter, 223.
[80]Moffitt, 56. The sentence that includes the word *martelé* reads thus: William Codman, of Chicago, has shown an originality quite as genuine and virile in the production of *martelé*, or hand wrought silver, which is given a dull finish, much more effective than the luster." While Moffitt is often given credit for naming the product, I believe, after examining the article in comparison with others, that it is more than likely than Codman and those put to the task of marketing the new line of silver, had a hand in her choice of words.
[81]Evelyn Marie Stuart, "The American Renaissance in Silvermaking," *Fine Arts Journal* 27 (September, 1912), 581.
[82]Ibid., 583. This pairing of the old and the new served to highlight Gorham's approach to the new century by offering new designs that emphasized the beauty of America's past as well as designs that were forward looking, pointing out the best of

what the country and the company were able to offer. One form offered simplicity in design while the other offered the most elaborate forms that nature and the imagination had to offer; these two polar opposite design trends led one writer to speculate-- "What may we not hope further from such a workshop in such a country and in such an age?"

[83]Veblen, 74.

[84]Moffitt, 58.

[85]*House Beautiful* (December 1900), 55.

[86]Venable, 280.

[87]Frank Luther Mott, *A History of America Magazines 1885-1905* vol. 5 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 338. The magazine was published from November of 1901 and continued its publication run until 1942. It proved to be one of the most popular monthly magazines, regaling its mostly urban and urbane readership with tales of the bucolic countryside, articles on fly fishing and yachting, all alongside advertisements offering stud services for both the prize horse and canine companion.

[88]*Country Life in America* (March, 1903), 234.

[89]Ibid.

[90]*CLA* (February 1905), 398.

[91]*CLA* (April 1903), 243.

[92]Gorham number 4660 and 4661 in an oval, indicating that it was a special one-of-a-kind piece

[93]Veblen, 81.

[94]Susan Porter Benson, "The Adamless Eden: The World of the Department Store" in *The Consumer Culture and the American Home 1890-1930* McFadddin-Ward House Museum Conference October 27-29, 1988, 21.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Carpenter, 219.

[97]Benson, 23.

[98]Bob Sales, "The Two Hundred Year Romance" *Shreves* (Anniversary Publishing Co., 1996), 10. Shreves was located at this location between 1891 and 1930.

[99]Prior to the last decade of the nineteenth century, silver was often given cursory treatment on the showroom floor due to the massive proportions of its grand showpieces and three hundred piece flatware sets. Many advertisements depict such showrooms in establishments such as A. B. Griswold's in New Orleans, Shreve's earlier establishment at Washington and Boylston Street, and Gorham's earlier New York establishment.

[100]Shreve, Crump & Lowe Corporate Offices, unmarked scrapbook. Non-hinged item.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Shreve, Crump & Lowe Press Release, Shreve Corporate Offices, Scrapbook 2, unnumbered pages.

[103]Shreve Crump & Low Corporate Offices, loose file.

[104]Grogan Advertisement, 1911. Files of Charles Venable, Dallas Museum of Art.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Some pieces also exhibit export marks of Birmingham, England and Paris. In Birmingham Gorham had a manufacturing outlet in 1909 and was obviously using the port to sell their products several years prior to the plant's opening. Gorham also had a retail store under its own name in London as early as 1904. In Paris, Gorham obtained an outlet store through its Spaulding & Company association on the fashionable Avenue de l'Opéra.

[108]Venable, 95.

[109]Carpenter, 237. The fact that Spaulding & Co. turns up with great frequency is no surprise as Gorham owned thirty-one percent of Spaulding & Co.'s stock; a purchase made by Edward Holbrook, then Gorham's treasurer, in 1888.

[109] Holbrook, when he became President of Gorham, gained working control of Spaulding, and afterwards the company came to be known as Spaulding-Gorham.

[110]Gorham Historical I 10 b Martelé Prices 19, December 1898. Two Pages, typed Comes w/sheet on company letter head (copy) Copy says on Back 13th Street prices Nov. 93. On back on typed sheets it is written" "Prices sent Spaulding Co." Martelé Photo Book Dec. 19 1898.

[111]Samuel Hough, "Notes from the Gorham Archives" *Silver* 21, no. 4 (July-August 1998), 17. Based on an estimate of eight albums with anywhere between 500 to 750 photographs in each. There are, however, some problems in making assumptions based on orders and other intangible record forms, especially as they pertain to the Martelé line. Gorham's "A" Martelé production line, which generally consisted of small pieces such as ladles and large sets of uniformly decorated dinner services, offers an example of how Gorham's alphanumeric codes are fraught with inconsistencies and enigmatic riddles. It has been suggested that some of the small "A" pieces are really part of a "hammered" line designed to resemble Martelé that was not up to the same level of quality content and construction of the Martelé line and cost considerably less.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Figures based off of a visual interpretation of information and does not reflect a true mathematic reading of the percentages. This does not include the Athenic line.

[114]Winterthur Object File, Registrar's Office, 83.108.1-4.

[115]D. Coral Thompson, "The Paris Exhibition, "The *Art Journal* (London, 1901), 248-9.

[116]William Codman and Hiram C. Hoyt, *Historical and Biographical Sketch of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, History to 1935*, John Jay Library, 1935, Gorham Collection, 8.

[117]McCracken, 95.

[118]Venable, 132.

# FIGURES

Figure 1: Martelé Tankard. 1900.

Photo Courtesy of the Gorham Company

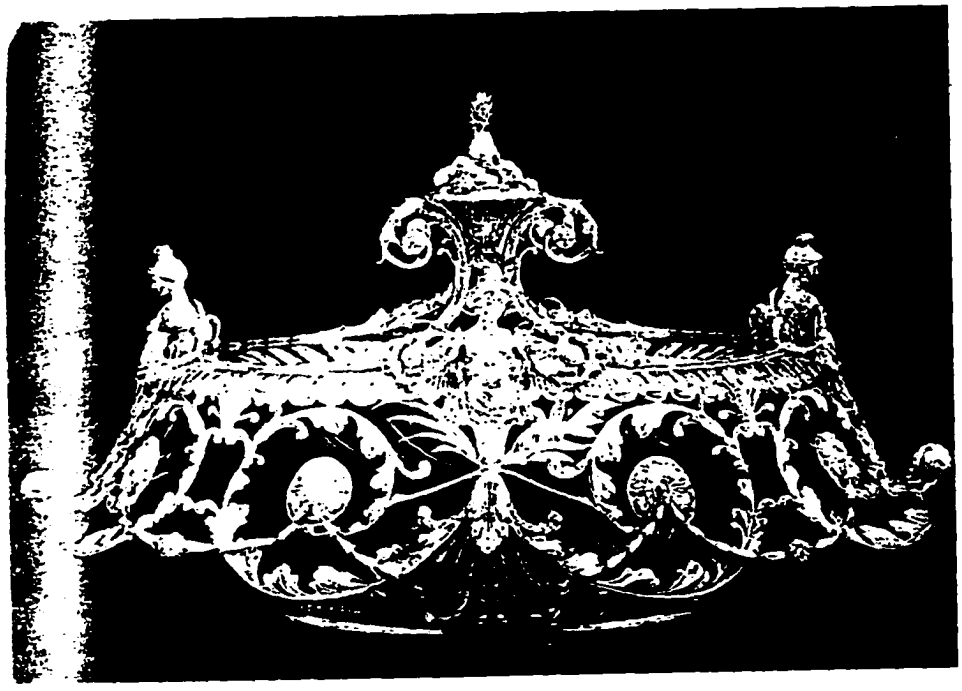

Figure 2: Tiffany Centerpiece. 1900.

Photo Courtesy of Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc.

Figure 3: Athenic Black Coffee Set and Tray.

Photo Courtesy of the Gorham Company

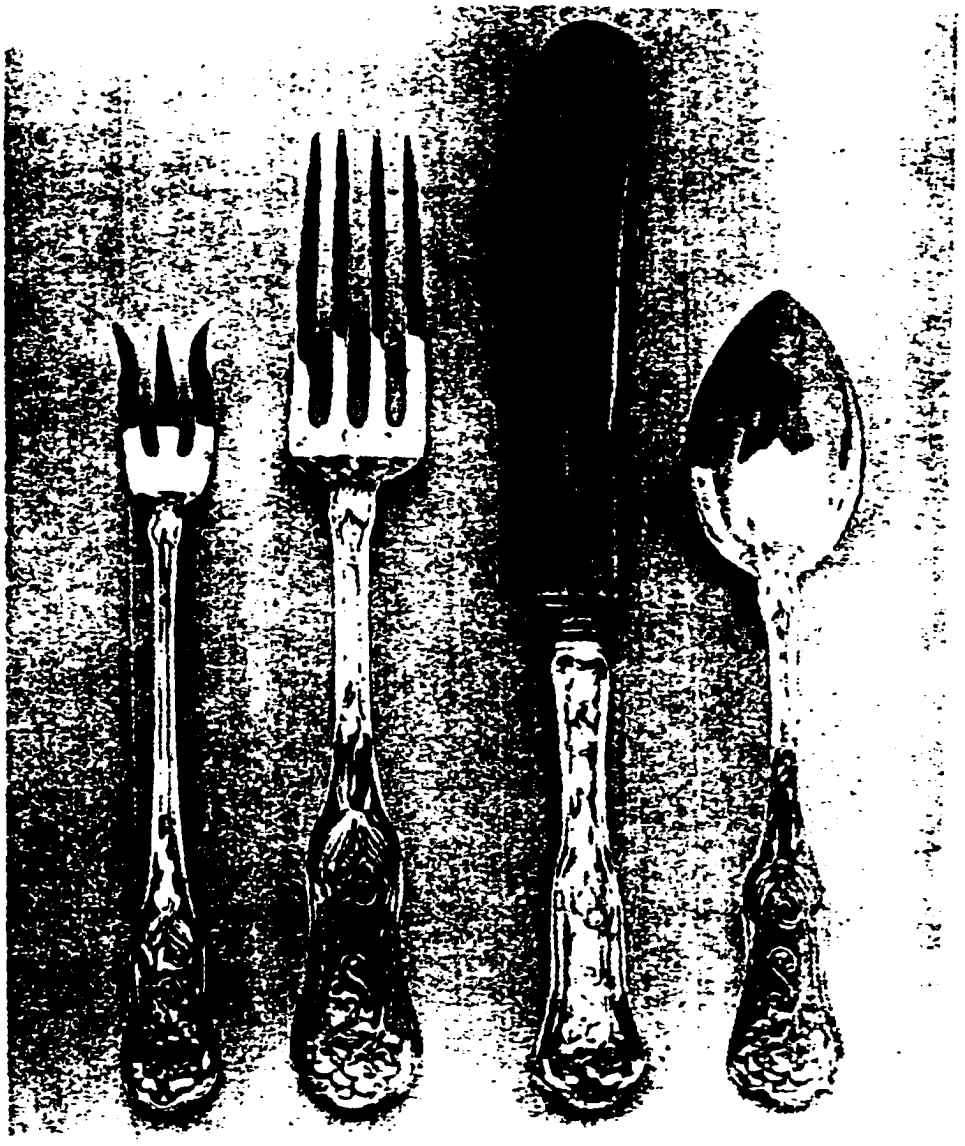

Figure 4: Selection of Martelé Flatware.

Photo Courtesy of Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc.

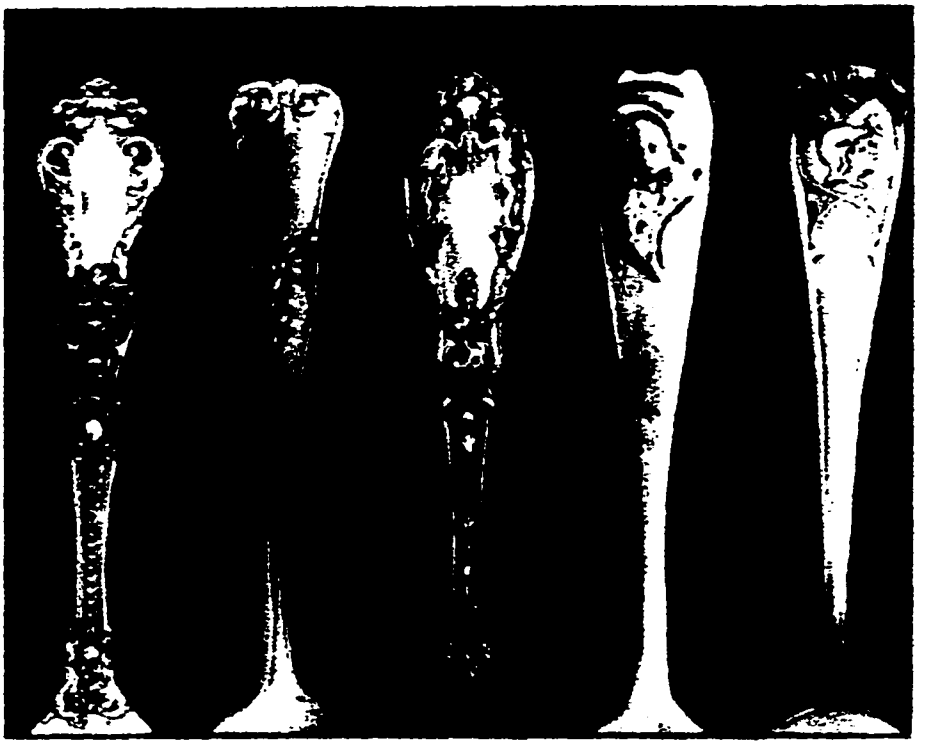


Figure 5: "Paris 1900" Pattern of Flatware.

Photo Courtesy of the Gorham Company

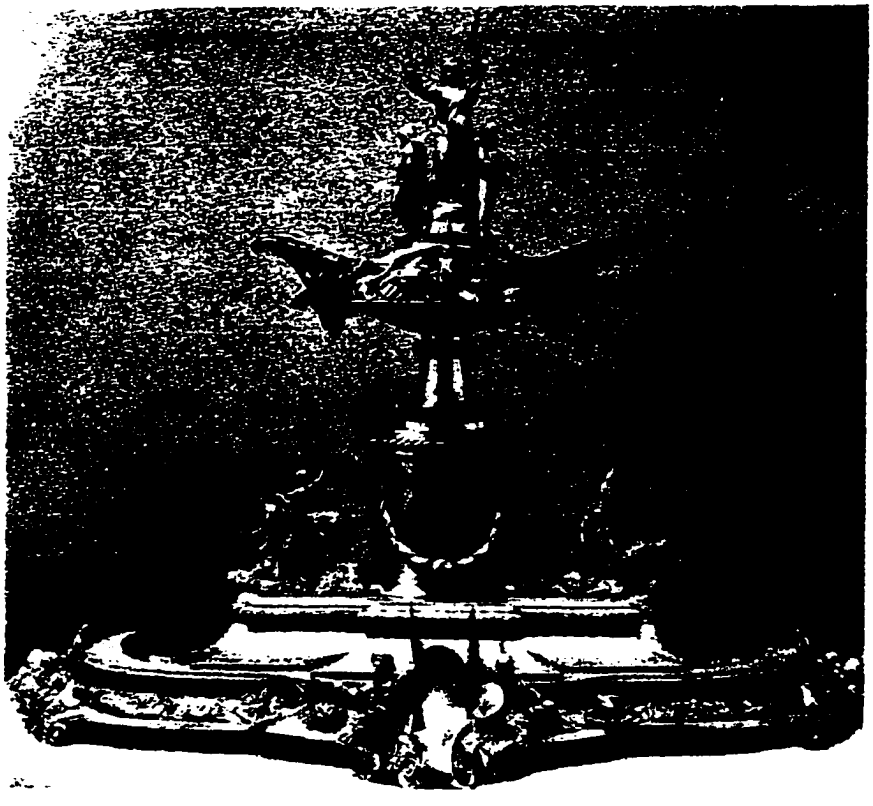

Figure 6: Century Vase, 1876. Designed by Wilkinson & Pairpoint

Photo Courtesy of the Gorham Company


Figure 7: Advertisement for Gorham's Martelé line.

Courtesy of the May 1904 edition of the magazine Country Life in America.

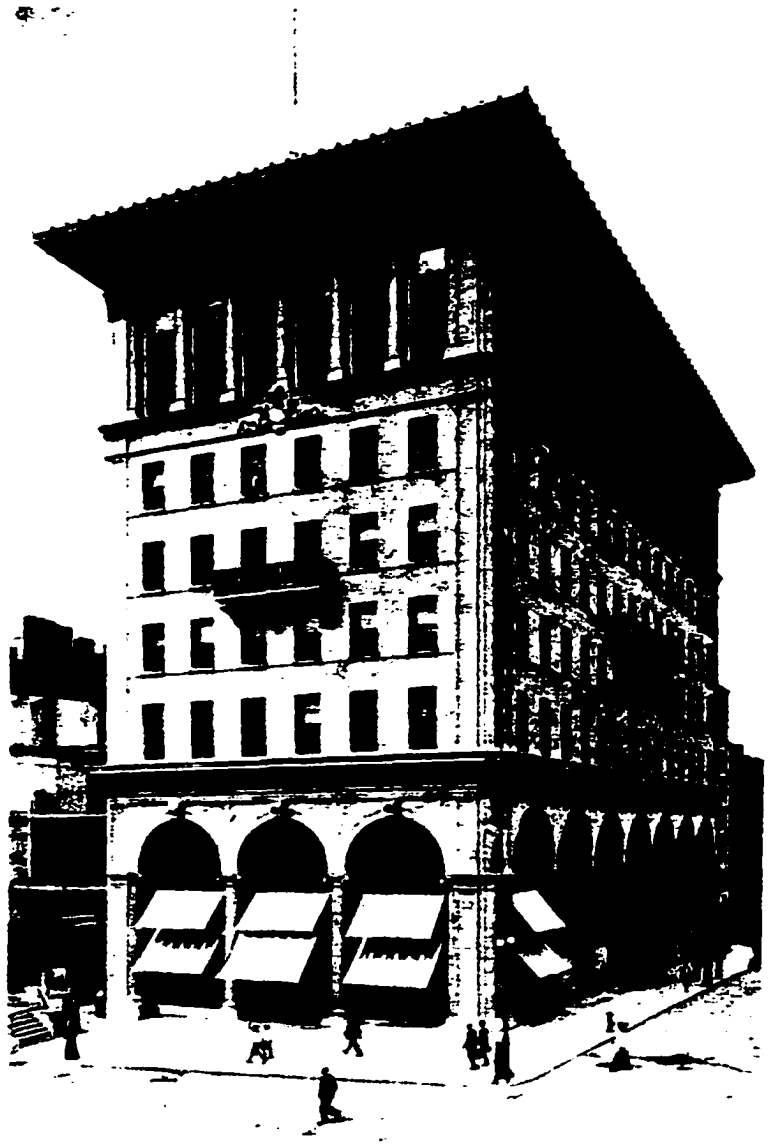

Figure 8: Gorham Building, NYC. 1905. By McKim, Mead, and White.

Photo Courtesy of the Gorham Company

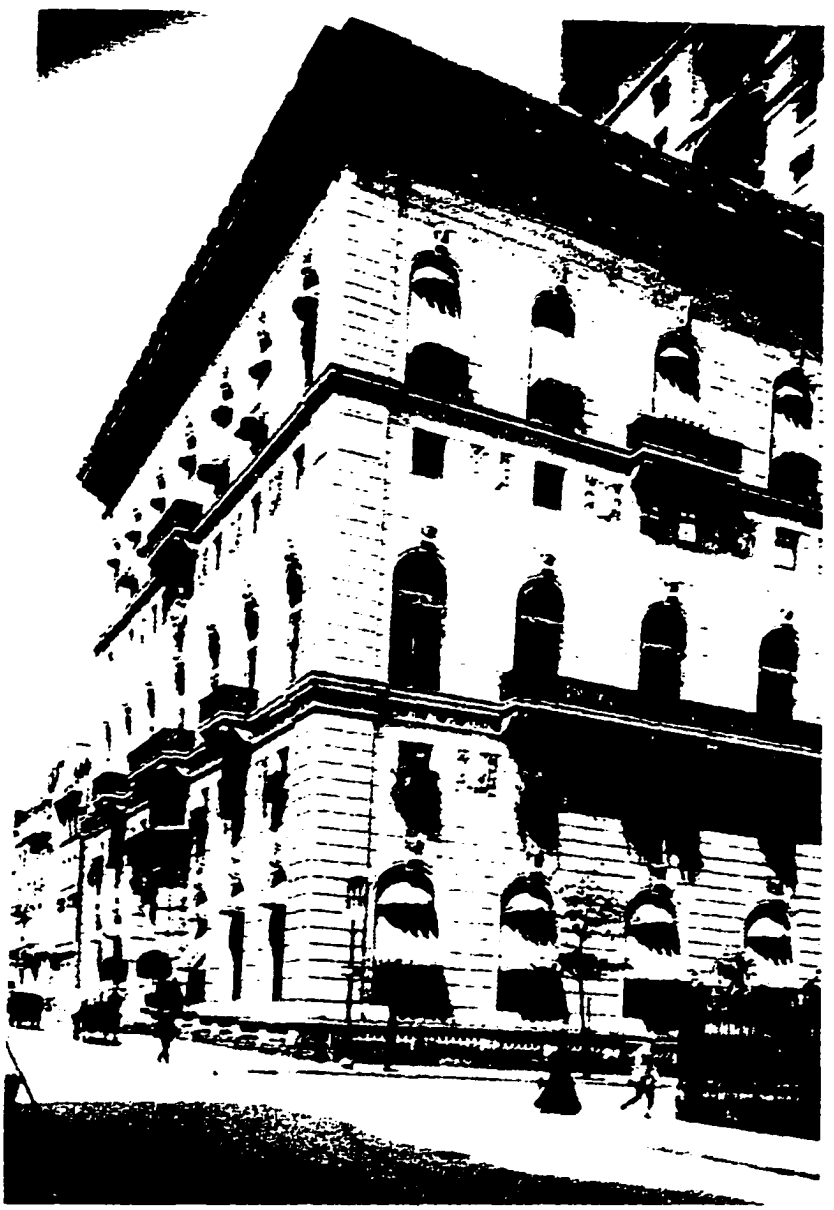

Figure 9: University Club, NYC. 1900. Designed by McKim, Mead, and White.

Photo Courtesy of the New York Historical Society

Figure 10: Shreve, Crump, and Lowe Retail Outlet. c. 1900.

Author's Collection.


Figure 11: A.G. Griswold Advertisement, New Orleans. c. 1875.

Author's Collection.

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# IMAGE EVALUATION
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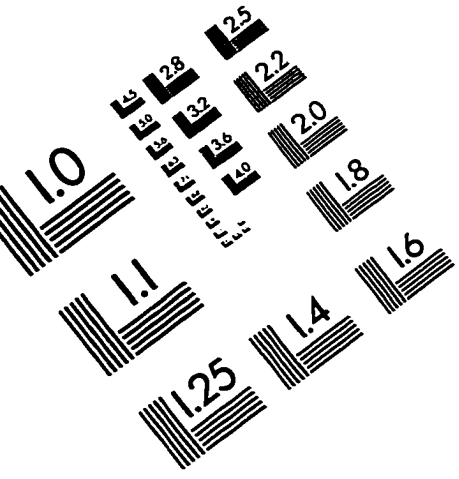


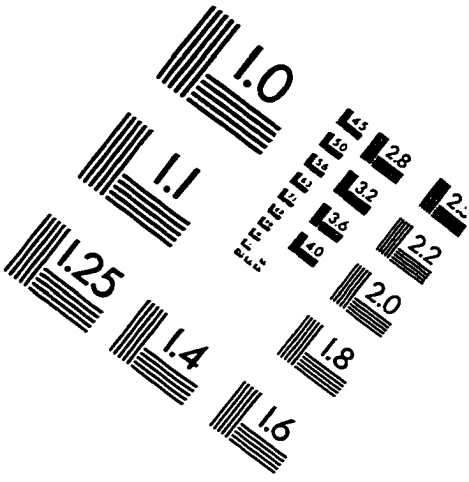


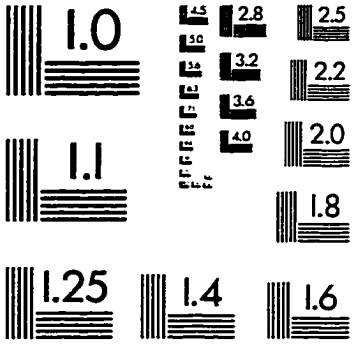


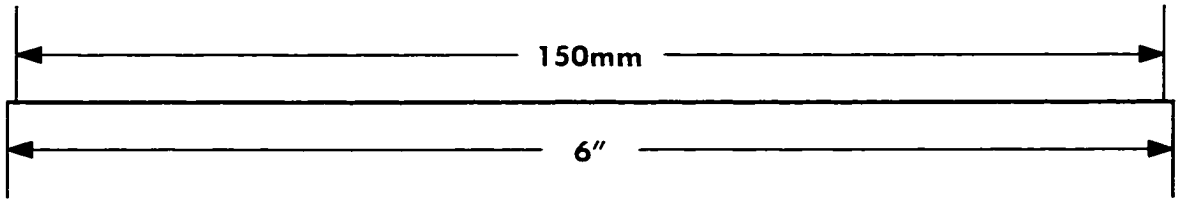


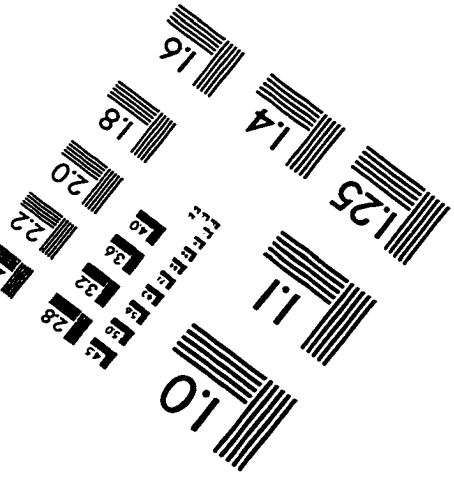


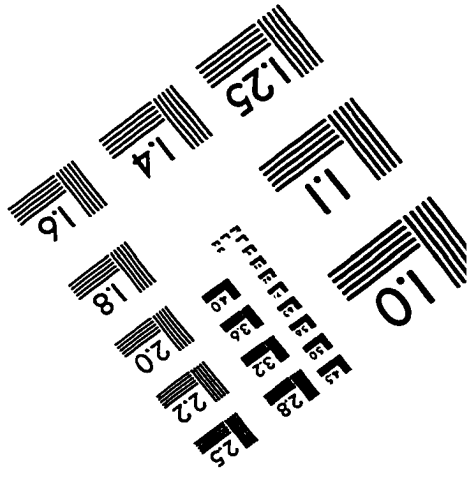


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