

Advertising 1910s-1950s

Did it embolden the American dream?

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May 4, 2020

'Advertising is about one thing: Happiness.'¹ It may not seem like an epiphany today, but this truth was not revealed overnight. As corporations discovered that the surest way into consumers' minds, hearts, and shopping lists is the promise of happiness, their ubiquitous campaigns began to define this emotion in their audience's mind. Advertising, as the vanguard of consumer culture, not only emboldened, but molded and repurposed the American dream.

Some commentators have argued that since the primary purpose of an ad is to convert potential consumers into actual consumers, it's content will almost always be curated such that the audience can view themselves in the context of its imagery and message. In other words, advertising largely reflects the values of a society and is not the instigator of new norms.² Throughout the twentieth century, advertisers have extensively researched the behaviours, motivators, and desires of their target demographic. This has been, so the argument goes, in an effort to tailor their product to the value system already established within this demographic.

In fact, while it may be true that advertisers in America have largely operated within the moral compass presented to them, having deep insights into the consumer's motivations makes it more likely that they have (perhaps unwittingly) introduced new norms and standards in society by associating their products with contemporary values.

Consider the three advertisements depicted in figures one, two, and three. They were seen in periodicals in the 1910s, 20s and 30s respectively.

Have a look at fig. one. 'That's what the experienced salesman will tell you.' While a vote of confidence from the friendly neighborhood barber or salesman may be reason enough to choose Colgate's shaving cream (or stick, or powder) over another brand when you're already at the store, it does nothing to explain why you need Colgate's in your life. If you're already satisfied with the performance of another make, then why bother switching to Colgate's? Why can't you do without Colgate's? Because the 'comfort smile' 'Invariably starts with Colgate's,' declares the second exhibit, seen in fig. two. Not only is the second presentation adorned with images of a young man giving an easy smile, about to enjoy his morning shave, the word 'smile' is used three times in as many sentences. Glancing back at the 1910s specimen, one might argue that there is no allusion to a pleasurable experience. The focus instead is squarely on the performance of the product and the direct functional benefits that it endows upon its consumer.

The association between product and emotion can be extended, however. 'I like your cheek' the girl in fig. three whispers as she admires the handsome man. Colgate's won't just help you get a nice refreshing shave; instead, you will feel its influence on your life throughout the day. It's not a simple bathroom cabinet item. It is the secret to satiating your intimate desires. It will win you admiration. The clean shave comes with.

Across these images one can clearly see the progression from an appeal to reason and utility, to an effort to elicit an emotional response from the audience. Human images become more and more prominent, headlines become increasingly evocative, and function becomes a means not to its own end.

1. Directed by Alan Taylor, Written by Matthew Weiner, *Mad Men-S1E1 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes'*, AMC, July 2007.

2. S. Baker, *Visual Persuasion: The Effect of Pictures on the Subconscious..* (McGraw-Hill, 1961), <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=fX3gtAEACAAJ>; B. W. Brown, "Images of Family Life in Magazine Advertising: 1920-1978" (PhD diss., University of New Hampshire, 1979).

COLGATE'S SHAVING LATHER

"RECOMMEND one?
I recommend
them all. They're all
Colgate's, so they all give
the same perfect lather.
It's only a question of
which method you prefer—Stick, Powder or Cream."

That's what
the experienced sales-
man will tell
you. Take
his advice
and know
the comfort
of the soften-
ing, soothing,
and sanitary
Colgate Lather.

Get your choice at your dealer's.

After Your Shave



Colgate's Lilac Imperial—a refreshing toilet water. Particularly pleasing to men. Trial bottle, 8 cents in stamps, or sent with a trial size of Shaving Stick, Powder or Cream for 12 cents.

COLGATE & CO.

Dept. Y 199 Fulton St. New York



Figure 1: Colgate and Company, *Colgate's Shaving Lather*, 1914, magazines (periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection



The Evolution of the "Comfort Smile"

... It invariably starts with Colgate's!

From first stroke of the brush to last stroke of the razor, the Colgate shave is comfortable, no matter which you use—Stick, Powder or Cream.

No wonder the Colgate Smile is a Comfort Smile, for a Colgate shave is a cool one. No matter how tough the beard, the face is left soothed and refreshed.

Nor is there any need to rub the lather in with the fingers—rubbing-in only adds "mussiness" to what might be a genuine pleasure.

Lather with Colgate's—then Shave with Comfort

With the Stick. After wetting the face pass the stick over the cheeks from ear to ear and back again, then under the chin; once across the upper lip. This gives soap enough for any but the heaviest beard. Work up the softening lather on the face with the wet brush—using hot or cold water.

With the Powder. First, wet the face with the brush. Separate the bristles slightly with the thumb and sprinkle about one-third of a thimbleful of powder on the brush; you soon learn the exact amount you need. The lather is quickly worked up with hot or cold water—on the face.

With the Cream. If you prefer to apply the cream to the face always wet the face first. If you squeeze the cream on the wet brush, wet the face first. The plentiful fragrant lather is then worked up on the face with the brush—using hot or cold water according to preference.

A trial size of Colgate's—Stick, Powder or Cream—sent for 4c in stamps.

COLGATE & CO., Dept. 23, 199 Fulton St., NEW YORK

The name "Colgate" on Soaps, Powders and Perfumes corresponds to "Sterling" on Silver

Figure 2: Colgate and Company, *The Evolution of the 'Comfort Smile'*, 1920, magazines (periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection

"I like your cheek!"



*Face smooth all day long
when you shave in the morning
with small bubble lather!*

"Swell shave this morning, Jack"
—you've heard that at 8 A. M.
But when she says at 6 P. M.
—"Did you get shaved this
afternoon?" that's what a
Colgate shave does for you.

Why? Here's why! Small
bubble lather. Lather that finds
its way to the very base of every
last hair. Softens them *at the*

base where your razor takes
them off. Leaves your face
clean-feeling, clean-looking.

Try this *Colgate* shave to-
morrow morning for a clean,
well-groomed look tomorrow
night. No other shave cream
does it quite like *Colgate's*.

Soap Lather does not make
messy washbowls and greasy
razors.



COLGATE,
Dept. 280, P. O.
Box 81, Hudson Terminal
Station, New York City.

Please send me for the 4c enclosed,
the trial tube of *Colgate's* Rapid Shave
Cream—enough for 10 shaves.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....State.....

Figure 3: Colgate and Company, *I like your cheek*, 1933, magazines (periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection

These trends are also eminent in items targeting female consumers. Figures four through seven are examples of advertisements for Palmolive beauty soap. Figures four and five are earlier examples, from the 1920s.

Note that the title of the first piece (fig. four) is almost a backhanded compliment! The ad offers little elaboration on how this product will improve the consumer's life. Instead the choice is to spend half of the space explaining the ancient origins of this skin treatment and how economically sensible it is. One may wonder why either of these is a selling point for a beauty product. Furthermore, A quick survey of the text in fig. five will reveal that it offers the 'schoolgirl complexion' to women who consider themselves to be no longer in their youth, before it quickly returns to the same tedious appeals to the product's heritage and affordability.

Notice also how the images in the 1920s ads are stylized – as opposed to lifelike- requiring more effort on the audience's behalf to relate to these characters. It also seems that, though all the girls are drawn to have a smooth, silky complexion, none of them seems to think this reason for elation, since there is not a smiling face among them.

These ads briefly pull on the strings of common insecurities before diving into dull tangents about ancient Egypt and the wholesale market. This is all not to say that these promotions are ineffective. They are effective enough to have been in use for decades. At the very least they established name recognition for the brand, and this is the foremost objective of an advertisement. However, these attempts are far from perfect. The issue here is twofold: firstly, 'You're plain but you can be pretty' or 'You're old but you can have youthful skin' are hardly the assurances people seek for their insecurities. They would rather have their self-perceived faults denied rather than mitigated. Secondly, these ads do not explain how the consumers life will be affected by using the product they promote. Will the 'schoolgirl complexion' bring me riches? Ruin? Admiration? Scorn? More suitors perhaps? What about happiness? These early attempts leave the audience to answer these questions for themselves.

As we will now examine, their counterparts in later years tackle these problems.


You are beautiful, exclaims fig. six. Just 'Let your beauty be seen.' Instead of offering to compensate for your plain features with the gift of a perfect complexion, these displays declare that every woman is naturally beautiful, and Palmolive can frame this beauty for the world to see. Palmolive brings out what you have always possessed. We are confronted with realist artwork (possibly drawings of real models) and the characters are letting you know with their eyes and smiles that they haven't a worry in the world. It's not the tag line you notice first about these ads, it's the pretty girl staring out into the world. This makes for a much more emotionally compelling message.

The content of the text has also seen major shifts in its focus. Most notably that it is no longer the focus of the advert. This refocusing away from text and towards imagery has been the trend since 1920.³ The history lesson about ancient Egyptian wisdom has given way to claims about expert opinion; probably more compelling, but possibly also a sign of changing social contexts. The other missing item is the 'Only 10c a cake' section. Mentions of the economic or thrifty nature of this product and others were common in advertisements from earlier decades.⁴ The Palmolive beauty soap is not cheap. It is not expensive. But it is luxury. There is no need, then, to be advertising the price.

These examples illustrate that the promise of happiness did not have to be, and has not always been, the crux of advertising. An analysis of the industry forces that led to these developments is beyond the scope of this text, but one may suppose that they were heavily results driven. However, it is evident that once these shifts in strategy were settled, through the examples above and countless similar media linking consumer products to happiness, fulfillment, and satiated desires, consumption came to be perceived as an important indicator of success and status. As the renowned American sociologist Daniel Bell writes in his 1957 article '*The Impact of Advertising*' 'A consumption economy... finds its reality in appearances. What one displays, what one shows becomes the mark of success. Status is the spur, and status is demonstrated in the different

3. Brown, "Images of Family Life in Magazine Advertising: 1920-1978."

4. see for example *Take it on your trip this summer; it is indispensable to the comfort of your scalp and the beauty of your hair. Canthrox Shampoo.* by H.S. Peterson and Company, as well as *How War Nurses Found a New Use For Cellucotton* by Cellucotton Products Company. Both are accessible through the Ad*Access digital archive.



How the plainest woman can be pretty

A winning personality and a perfect complexion constitute a combination of charm which mere prettiness of features cannot rival.

Such a complexion isn't a gift of Nature, but an attraction every woman can achieve. The secret was discovered in the days of ancient Egypt, was practiced by Cleopatra.

Begin this Treatment To-day

Wash your face gently with the mild, creamy lather of Palmolive, massaging it softly into the skin. Rinse thoroughly and it will carry away all the dangerous accumulations which so often cause skin infection.

Then apply a touch of cold cream, smoothing it into the skin. You will be delighted at the way your complexion looks and feels, at its smoothness, fine texture and fresh color.

Discovered 3,000 years ago.

The use of Palm and Olive Oil as cleansers is as old as history. Ancient Egypt discovered their value 3,000 years ago.

These oils are combined in Palmolive soap because modern science can discover no finer, milder ingredients. They are cosmetic oils, soothing and healing. They impart these virtues to Palmolive soap.


Low Priced

Although money cannot command finer, milder, more beneficial cosmetic soap, modern manufacturing science and enormous demand has reduced the price.

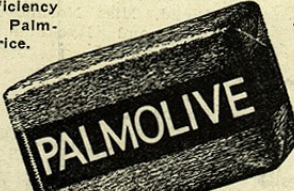
Thus while women prefer Palmolive for their facial soap, it is also the popular family soap. The toilet luxury all may enjoy at the price of ordinary soap.

The Palmolive Company of Canada, Limited, Toronto, Ont.

Volume and efficiency permit us to sell Palmolive at a low price.



**Try Cleopatra's way
to complexion beauty**



1243

Figure 4: Palmolive Company, *How the plainest woman can be pretty*, 1921, magazines (periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection

Keep that schoolgirl complexion

A fine, fresh and blooming skin, radiant with health and free from blemishes, isn't the attribute of early youth alone. Every woman can keep her schoolgirl complexion long after youth has flown.

Proper care is the secret—care which keeps the skin in perfect health. This means the scientific cleansing which makes each tiny pore and skin cell active. You must use soap and water freely—you must use it every day.

Begin this treatment today

Wash your face gently with the mild, creamy lather of Palmolive, massaging it softly into the skin. Rinse thoroughly and it will carry away all the dangerous accumulations which so often cause skin infection.

Then apply a touch of cold cream, smoothing it into the skin. You will be delighted at the way your complexion looks and feels, at its smoothness, fine texture and fresh color. This special face washing formula is thorough. It will not cause irritation.

Volume and efficiency permit us to sell Palmolive for 10c

Remember blackheads come from pores filling up with dirt—that pimples follow when this dirt carries infection.

Daily cleansing is your protection against skin troubles. Powder and rouge are harmless when applied to a clean skin.

Discovered 3,000 years ago

The use of Palm and Olive oil as cleansers is as old as history. Ancient Egypt discovered their value 3,000 years ago.

These oils are combined in Palmolive soap because modern science can discover no finer, milder ingredients. They are cosmetic oils, soothing and healing. They impart these virtues to Palmolive soap.

And best of all the price of Palmolive puts it, though so great a luxury, within the reach of all.

Only 10 cents

Although money can't command finer, milder, more beneficial cosmetic soap, modern manufacturing science has reduced the price to 10 cents a cake. The enormous demand keeps the Palmolive factories working day and night. It permits the purchase of the costly ingredients in gigantic volume.

Thus while women prefer Palmolive for their facial soap, it is also the popular family soap of America. The toilet luxury all may enjoy at the price of ordinary soap.

THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY
 Milwaukee, U. S. A.
 The Palmolive Company of Canada, Limited
 Toronto, Ont.
Manufacturers of a complete line of toilet articles.
 Copyright 1921—The Palmolive Co. 1283

Try Cleopatra's way to complexion beauty

She used cosmetics of every kind to enhance her charm, but cleansing with Palm and Olive oils came first. The same rule, applied today, will keep your complexion fresh, youthful and free from blemishes.

Use the same Palm and Olive oils, mild and soothing. They are scientifically combined for the use of modern women in Palmolive—the beautifying cleanser.

Figure 5: Palmolive Company, *Keep that schoolgirl complexion*, 1921, magazines(periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection

Let Your Beauty be Seen...



**Palmolive
Brings Out Beauty**

WHILE IT CLEANS YOUR SKIN!

**36 LEADING SKIN SPECIALISTS IN 1285 SCIENTIFIC
TESTS PROVED THAT PALMOLIVE'S BEAUTY PLAN BRINGS
MOST WOMEN LOVELIER COMPLEXIONS IN 14 DAYS**

Start Palmolive's Beauty Plan today!
Discover for yourself—as women
everywhere have discovered—that
Palmolive's Beauty Plan brings excit-
ing new complexion loveliness.

Here's all you do: Gently massage
Palmolive's extra-mild, pure lather
onto your skin for just a minute, three
times a day. Then rinse and pat dry.
You'll see Palmolive bring out your
beauty while it cleans your skin.

Doctors Prove
Palmolive's Beauty Results!

For Tub or Shower Get Big Bath Size Palmolive!

**SO MILD...
SO PURE!**



Figure 6: Palmolive Company, *Let Your Beauty Be Seen...Palmolive Brings Out Beauty While it Cleans Your Skin*, 1952, magazines(periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection

August 5, 1951

Page Three

Chie Trib.
Let Your Beauty be Seen...



Palmolive Brings Out Beauty

WHILE IT CLEANS YOUR SKIN!

**36 LEADING SKIN SPECIALISTS
IN 1285 SCIENTIFIC TESTS PROVED THAT
PALMOLIVE'S BEAUTY PLAN BRINGS MOST
WOMEN LOVELIER COMPLEXIONS IN 14 DAYS**

Start Palmolive's Beauty Plan today!
Discover for yourself—as women
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Here's all you do: Gently massage
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You'll see Palmolive bring out *your*
beauty while it cleans your skin.

Doctors Prove
Palmolive's Beauty Results!



For Tub or Shower Get Big Bath Size Palmolive!

**SO MILD ..
SO PURE!**

Figure 7: Palmolive Company, *Let Your Beauty Be Seen*, *Palmolive Brings Out Beauty*, 1951, magazines (periodicals), Ad*Access digital collection

"badges of consumption".⁵

It is true that the interaction between consumer and advertisement is not a one-way street, nor is it the only feedback loop involved in driving the socio-economic tides that shaped our cultural understanding of success and fulfilment.

In 1901, an American family was on average made up of 4.9 members. In 1960, this figure stood at 3.1. At the turn of the century, women comprised 18 percent of the U.S. workforce, compared to 32.3 percent in 1960. An increase of 79 percent. This means in particular that a larger proportion of women were wage earners. The average and median income of the household was on a steady rise during this period, with average incomes increasing nearly nine-fold. Incomes on average came to provide more purchasing power. This all meant that people had higher discretionary incomes.⁶ Advertisements for luxury items that elevate one's status would generally not be effective if their audiences could not afford the product. It may even be the case that, to some degree, people naturally pursue such goods once they have the means to obtain them.

Additionally, rapid urbanization beginning in the late nineteenth century, led to higher population densities in the larger cities which inherently simplifies the task of advertising:⁷ A single placement can reach many more people.

Although these developments have been necessary elements or catalysts for lifestyle changes of the previous century, advertising has had a critical role in heralding in these shifts. As Belk and Polley argue in their paper 'Images of Ourselves: The Good Life in Twentieth Century Advertising', even if Advertising has been largely reflective of emerging social paradigms rather than being a point of inception, it has been prominent enough to crystallize these new expectations in American (and Western) culture.⁸

Take, for example, the deodorant. Managing body odour by deodorant use throughout the day is now a commonplace social expectation. This has not always been the case. There was a time when no such product existed.

In 1912 Cincinnati surgeon Dr Abraham Murphey developed an antiperspirant formula for use by other doctors who may be concerned about sweating on the wrists during operation. His daughter Edna tried to make a business out of selling this product, naming it 'Odorono'. After some adversity, she finally managed to do well enough to hire the J. Walter Thompson Company (J.W.T.) to be in charge of advertising for the product. After some time, sales began to stagnate. At this time, a J.W.T. survey found that 59 percent of women did not use any deodorant, and 47 percent thought that they did not need any.

To convince them otherwise, James Webb Young, the copywriter on the account, concocted the ad seen in fig. 8. His strategy was to convince women that their body odour was repelling to others, particularly potential romantic partners, without their knowing. Following this strategy throughout the next several years, sales of the product increased nearly ten-fold. Through social engineering, advertising had turned an obscure product into what is today a multibillion-dollar industry.⁹

The term 'American dream' is widely attributed to James Truslow Adams, the American historian and philosopher who in his 1931 classic 'The Epic of America' made many allusions to the idea.¹⁰ He defined the American dream as 'That dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement...it is not a dream of high wages and motor cars merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable.'¹¹

5. Daniel Bell, "THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING," Last updated - 2013-02-24, *New Leader* 40, no. 6 (February 1957): 9, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/docview/1308960931?accountid=12372>.

6. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *100 Years of U.S. Consumer Spending Data for the Nation, New York City, and Boston*, technical report, Last Updated 2006-08-03 (U.S. Department of Labor, May 2006).

7. Leah Boustan, Owen Hearey, and Devin Bunten, *URBANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 1800-2000*, National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2013.

8. R. W. Pollay R. W. Belk, "Images of Ourselves: The Good Life in Twentieth Century Advertising," *Journal of Consumer Research* 11, no. 4 (March 1985): 887-897.

9. Rick Collier, *J. Walter Thompson Company timeline (Part 1)*, <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/collections/creators/corporations/jwt1>.

10. Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Oxford University Press USA, 2004).

11. J. T. Adams, *The Epic of America* (Little, Brown, and Company, 1931).



There isn't a girl who can't have the irresistible, appealing freshness of perfect daintiness.

Within the Curve of a Woman's Arm

A frank discussion of a subject too often avoided

A woman's arm! Poets have sung of its grace; artists have painted its beauty.

It should be the daintiest, sweetest thing in the world. And yet, unfortunately, it isn't always.

There's an old offender in this quest for perfect daintiness—an offender of which we ourselves may be ever so unconscious, but which is just as truly present.

Shall we discuss it frankly?

May a woman who says, "No, I am never annoyed by perspiration," not know the facts—does not realize how much sweeter and daintier she would be if she were entirely free from it.

Of course, we aren't to blame because nature has so made us that the perspiration glands under the arms are more active than anywhere else. Nor are we to blame because the perspiration which issues under the arm does not evaporate readily as from other parts of the body. The curve of the arm and the constant wearing of clothing have made normal evaporation there impossible.

Would you be absolutely sure of your daintiness?

It is the chemicals of the body, not daintiness, that cause odor. And even though there is no active perspiration—no apparent moisture—there may be under the arms an odor unnoticed by oneself, but distinctly noticeable to

others. For it is a physiological fact that persons troubled with perspiration odor seldom can detect it themselves.

Fastidious women who want to be absolutely sure of their daintiness have found that they could not trust to their own consciousness; they have felt the need of a toilet water which would insure them against any of this kind of underarm unpleasantness, either moisture or odor.

To meet this need, a physician formulated Odorono—a perfectly harmless and delightful toilet water. With particular women Odorono has become a toilet necessity which they use regularly two or three times a week.

So simple, so easy, so sure

No matter how much the perspiration glands may be excited by exertion, nervousness, or weather conditions, Odorono will keep your underarms always sweet and naturally dry. You then can dismiss all anxiety as to your freshness, your perfect daintiness.

The right time to use Odorono is at night before retiring. Pat it on the underarms with a bit of absorbent cotton, only two or three times a

week. Then a little talcum dusted on and you can forget all about that worst of all embarrassments—perspiration odor or moisture. Daily baths do not lessen the effect of Odorono at all.

Does excessive perspiration ruin your prettiest dresses?

Are you one of the many women who are troubled with excessive perspiration, which ruins all your prettiest blouses and dresses? To endure this condition is so unnecessary! Why, you need never spoil a dress with perspiration! For this severer trouble Odorono is just as effective as it is for the more subtle form of perspiration annoyance. Try it tonight and notice how exquisitely fresh and sweet you will feel.

If you are troubled in any unusual way or have had any difficulty in finding relief, let us help you solve your problem. We shall be so glad to do so. Address Ruth Miller, The Odorono Co., 719 Blair Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.

At all toilet counters in the United States and Canada, 60c and \$1.00. Trial size, 30c. By mail postpaid if your dealer hasn't it.

Address mail orders or inquiries as follows:

For Canada to The Arthur Selig Co., 41 Adelaide St., East, Toronto, Ont. For France to The Agence Americaine, 28 Avenue de l'Opera, Paris. For Switzerland to The Agence Americaine, 17 Boulevard Helvetique, Geneva. For England to The American Drug Supply Co., 4 Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2. For Mexico to H. E. Grier & Co., 24 Guadalupe, Mexico City. For U. S. A. to The Odorono Co., 719 Blair Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dr. Lewis B. Allen, head of the famous Woodfield Laboratories, Woodfield, Massachusetts, says:

"Experimental and practical tests show that Odorono is harmless, economical and effective when employed as directed, and will again render the skin just as healthy."

Figure 8: J. Walter Thompson Company, *Within The Curve of a Woman's Arm*, ca. 1920, <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/collections/creators/corporations/J.W.T.1>

While he was the first to make wide use of the term, the concept of the American dream far predates the twentieth century. In the late 1770s, French American writer Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, later appointed French consul in New York, writes 'There is room for every body in America: has he any particular talent or industry? He exerts it in order to procure a livelihood and it succeeds... Is he a labourer, sober and industrious; he need not go many miles nor receive many informations, before he will be hired, well fed at the table of his employer, and payed four or five times more than he can get in Europe...Whatever be his talents or inclinations, if they are moderate, he may satisfy them. I do not mean that anyone who comes will grow rich in a little time; no, but he may procure an easy, decent maintenance, by his industry.'¹²

These formulations of the American dream are not so different from one another, and crucially, they both view the accumulation of wealth as a means; a means of finding self-actualization or independence. Both men would hold that there is no merit to the pursuit of material wealth beyond the point where it might aid in the achievement of these spiritual goals. But is material wealth not its own end in today's America, and likewise in today's West? Is it not worth pursuing for its own sake? Can the American dream today be defined without mention of a persistent desire for upward social mobility, which, as we have discussed is associated with consumption?

Perhaps a clue lies in Adams' own feelings towards the trajectory on which his country lay. He believed that Roosevelt's New Deal was heralding the country towards a future of soulless materialism, and in doing so treading on American traditions of autonomy. His fears had been realised and unraveled further by the time of his death in 1948.¹³

In this transformation advertising has played an integral part. It has informed the consumer of the relation of his standard of living to the most recent benchmarks.¹⁴ Furthermore, while taking care never to stray too far outside the accepted social boundaries of the time, it led the way in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in shifting the moral paradigm of American society from one emphasising the spiritual (and religious) facets of success, to one where self-realization is largely based on secular values and is much more admitting of self-gratification.¹⁵ This is not the American dream that Benjamin Franklin preached; one where the rungs of the socio-economic ladder are made not only of material wealth, but of virtues; modesty and restraint amongst them.¹⁶

The changes in the advertising medium we explored previously -the increasingly vivid link between consumption and happiness, the characters who appear to be living a perpetually blissful life- have made it not only more effective at propagating this modern ideal of the 'good life', but they have in and of themselves strengthened the consumerist connotations of the twentieth century American dream.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the stage for a profound shift in our collective understanding of what constitutes success, what is 'the good life', and consequently, the meaning of the American dream. Advertising did not single-handedly bring about this change. After all, car ownership would have remained a distant dream for most American if not for Sloan and his innovative payment plans, and without new products to break into the market, there is scarcely any reason for advertising to become as vast an industry as it did. Regardless, the ad man did more than reinforce an already present notion of the American dream in the audience's mind. Advertising was a key factor in transforming America into a consumer society: one where material wealth is held as the end most worthy of pursuit.

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