

Editors' Note

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One of the great pleasures of editing *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* is observing shifts in the currents of scholarship on our era and trends in submissions as they come across our desks. We often receive proposals for specific forums and special issues highlighting new directions in the field, showcasing pathbreaking methodologies, or commemorating historical milestones. These curated forums and special issues are wonderful opportunities to take stock of specific historiographical trajectories, to reflect on our collective endeavor of scholarship, and to focus our attention on some of the most pressing issues of the day. But because of the uncertainty of the peer-review process and the intricacies of our publishing schedule, it is often more difficult to showcase the unheralded trends that emerge from among the everyday submissions to the journal.

This issue on the history of food in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era is an exception. Drawn from the welter of submissions we've received over the last two years, it created an opportunity for us to explore how ideas about food and health changed as Americans encountered new consumer products and new understandings of the body. As Megan Elias points out, "Historians have long understood the Progressive Era as a time of social transformation, but we can also see it as a time when the American body was transformed." Collectively, the essays in this issue argue that "changes in thinking about and producing food result both actually and symbolically in changes to the human body."

While revealing as a group, each essay stands on its own. Megan Elias opens the issue with an introductory essay locating the articles within the broader historiography on food and the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and argues that scholarship on food and foodways ought to be included within intellectual history. In her contribution, Helen Veit offers a history of the emergence of Cottolene as an everyday food product by the early twentieth century. A manufactured product derived from cottonseed oil—a substance long discarded as a non-foodstuff for much of the nineteenth century—the invention, marketing, and widespread adoption of Cottolene, Crisco, and other cottonseed oil products obfuscated their origins as an industrial by-product, paving the way for the American consumers' growing comfort with highly processed foods and their concomitant ignorance about the ingredients they consume. While Veit's article explores one form of intellectual abstraction, Chin Jou's essay explores another. She investigates the popularization of the idea of the calorie and the rise of calorie counting as a dieting strategy in the 1910s and 1920s to argue that calorie-restriction programs acted as a form of surveillance and control over women's bodies, but also promoted ideals that could trouble the traditional gendering of bodies.

The mutability of bodies was a concern for dieters; it was also a goal of social reformers. When writing about the New England Kitchen, a dietary reform experiment in 1890s Boston, historians have focused largely on the movement's failure to change working-class diets. But, in analyzing the movement's interrelated and sometimes contradictory ideas about food and bodies, Nicholas J.P. Williams argues instead for the importance of the New England Kitchen to the broader intellectual history of the

Progressive Era. Pulling apart the interconnected conceptions guiding the movement's experiment, he argues that "reformist thought was not only defined by plurality across reform efforts; it was contradictory and internally inconsistent, and above all, it was messy—a work in progress." Finally, Alana Toulin delves into the uses of advertising and outreach by American food manufacturers in an effort to sway public opinion after the 1906 passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Focusing on the co-option of reform ideals and rhetoric by the food industry, Toulin argues that that Act was not the watershed food reform moment it's often depicted as being. Instead, she uses a cultural historical approach to explore how unresolved questions about the safety of food continued and have persisted despite legislation and the marketing efforts of industry.