

Shops and Shopping in Britain: from market stalls to chain stores
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2011

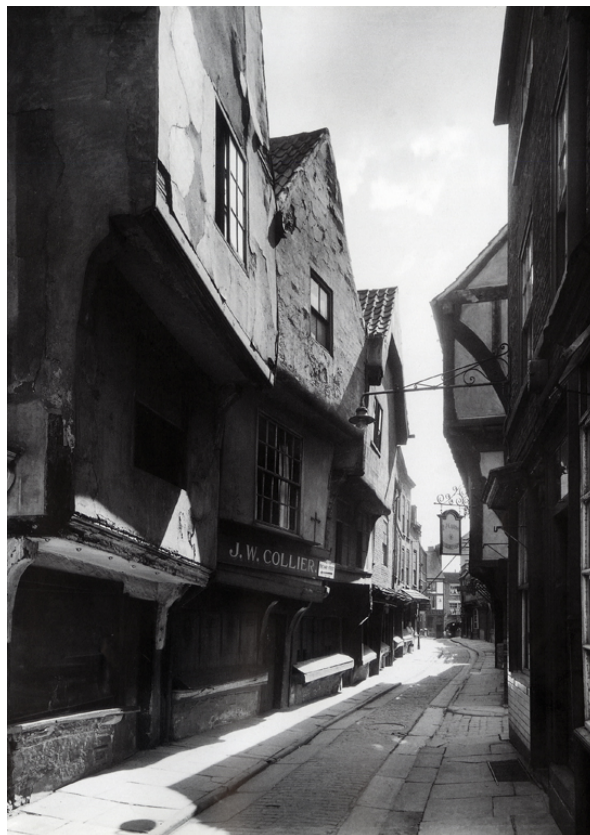
The story of the Industrial Revolution is almost always told from the perspective of the getting and processing of raw materials and the manufacturing of goods. Its heroes have been the inventors, engineers, entrepreneurs, workers and sailors who made possible the innovations in trade, mines, transportation, factories, machines and the new industrial cities. This is what economic historians call the supply side. By contrast, the demand side, or the consumption of goods and service, has been relatively neglected in the story of Britain's industrial revolution. Since the late twentieth century, however, more and more attention has been paid to the role of the consumers who bought the goods produced and where and how they bought them. This illustrated essay seeks to provide an introduction to one aspect of the birth of a consumer society, shops and shopping in Britain from about the Medieval through the Victorian period.

While Medieval England was primarily a rural and manorial society, there were many towns and villages and few individuals or communities were self-sufficient. The wealthy bought goods directly from craftsmen and artisans, such as carpenters, goldsmiths, and tailors, who made them. They brought goods directly to their homes or the buyers visited the workshops where the products were made. Imported luxuries, such as silks, furs, spices, olive oil and wines, were bought by merchants at annual fairs and retailed by middlemen in shops. Ordinary people bought very few goods that were not necessities. They bought what they needed directly from itinerant peddlers, at a local market or, less frequently, at larger regional fairs. The central role of the local markets was to exchange agricultural products for simple goods--such as cloth, cooking pots, pottery, shoes, tools, wooden products--made by the craftsmen and artisans of the town. Markets also provided such essentials as coal, salt, grain, produce, and dairy products.

From the twelfth century, the right to hold markets in Medieval England was a privilege granted by the Crown and amounted to a local or regional monopoly. Markets and shops were heavily regulated by local authorities, merchant and craft guilds. Regulations were designed to assure quality, the adherence to local standards of weights and measures, and to prevent hoarding and price gouging. Sellers of food products were required to sell their goods in the open markets

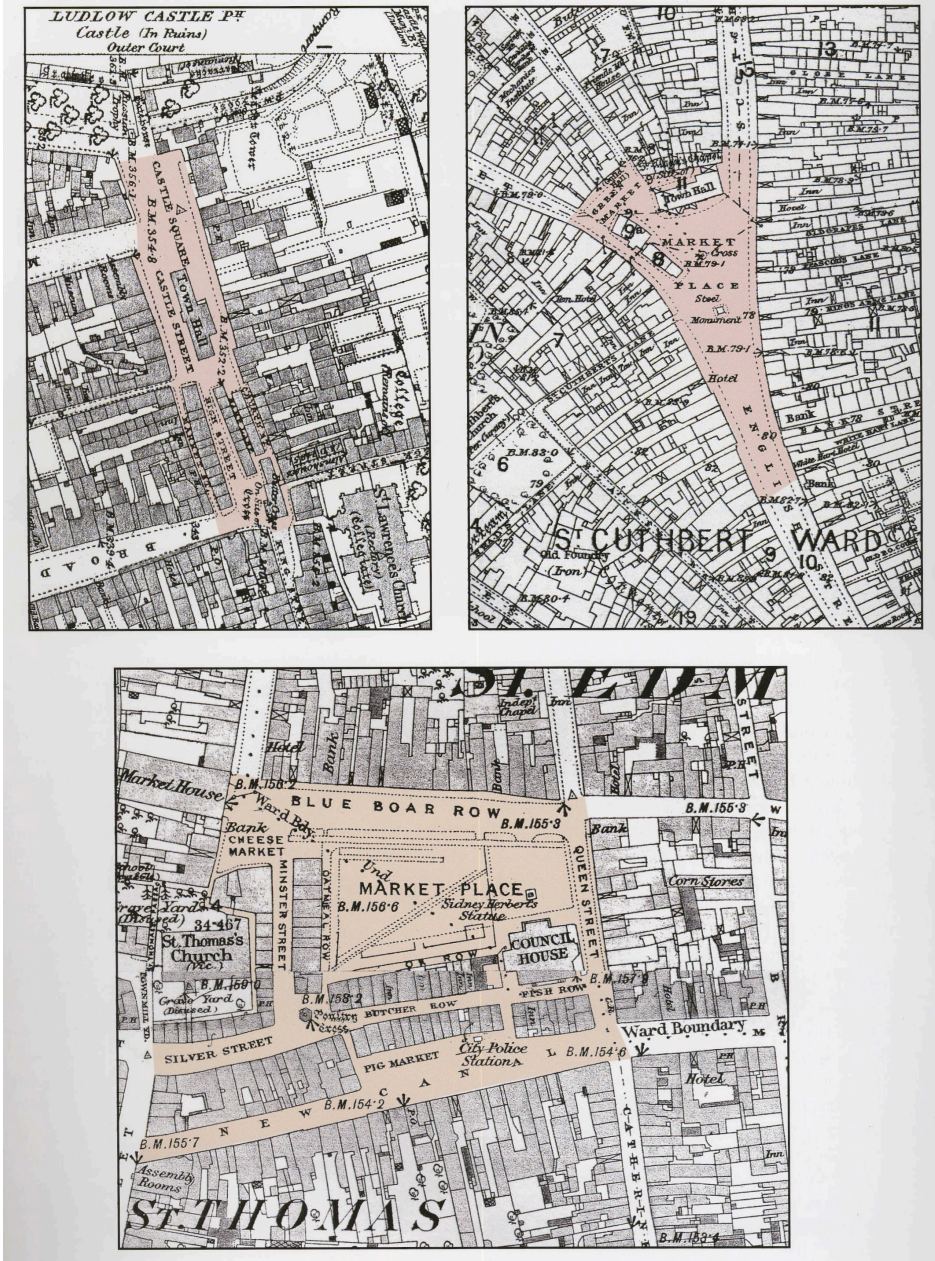
to prevent fraud. The first retail shops, as opposed to those of craftsmen and artisans selling goods they made themselves, were drapers, mercers, haberdashers and grocers.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 mentions fifty markets in England. However, historians believe that many more would have existed at the time. Between 1200 and 1349, about 2,000 new markets were established. After this date, the Black Death caused many markets to be abandoned. It has been estimated that there were about 760 official markets during the Tudor and Stuart period. Originally, traders set out their goods on temporary stalls in rows according to the type of goods to be sold. By 1300, many temporary market stalls were replaced by permanent buildings with retail space on the bottom floor and storage and living space above. Because of the need for hygiene, butchers and fishmongers were the first to erect covered sheds that eventually became substantial buildings, as can be seen in the surviving Shambles in York, photographed in 1950 by H. Felton



Kathryn A. Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping: An Architectural History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, p. 11.

Below are maps of three medieval market places: a linear market at Ludlow, Shropshire, extending between the castle and the church; a triangular market in Carlisle, Cumbria, at a major road junction; and a rectangular market place in Salisbury, Wiltshire.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 9.

Covered and open-sided market buildings were erected in many towns in order to shelter sellers of perishable goods, such as eggs, cheese, and fruit, from inclement weather, as this octagonal market cross built in Chichester, West Sussex, in about 1500.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 8.

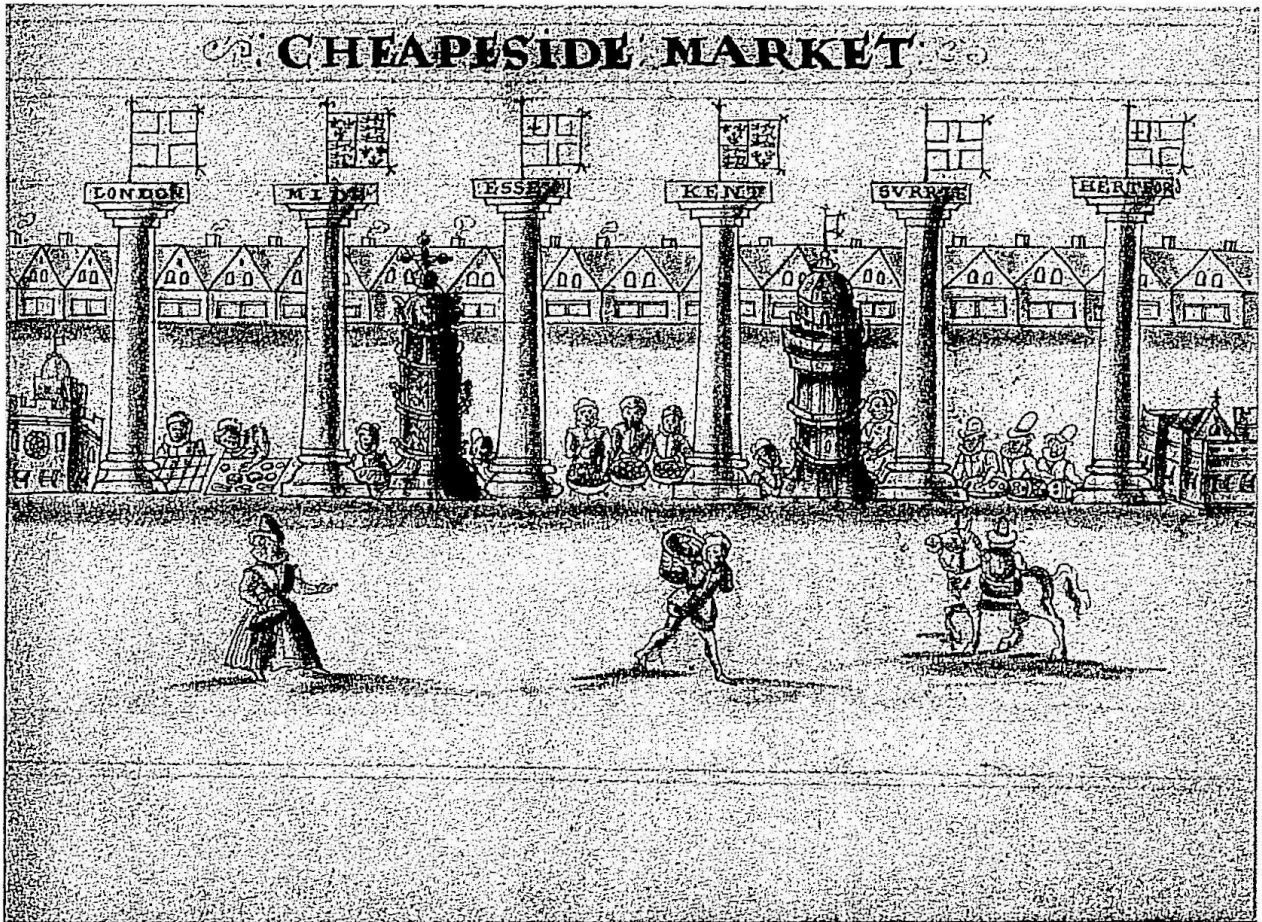
The ground floor of the Cutlers' Guildhall in Thaxted, originally built c. 1400, sheltered traders while the Guild met in the rooms above. The building was heavily restored in 1910. This photograph was taken in 1927.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 13.

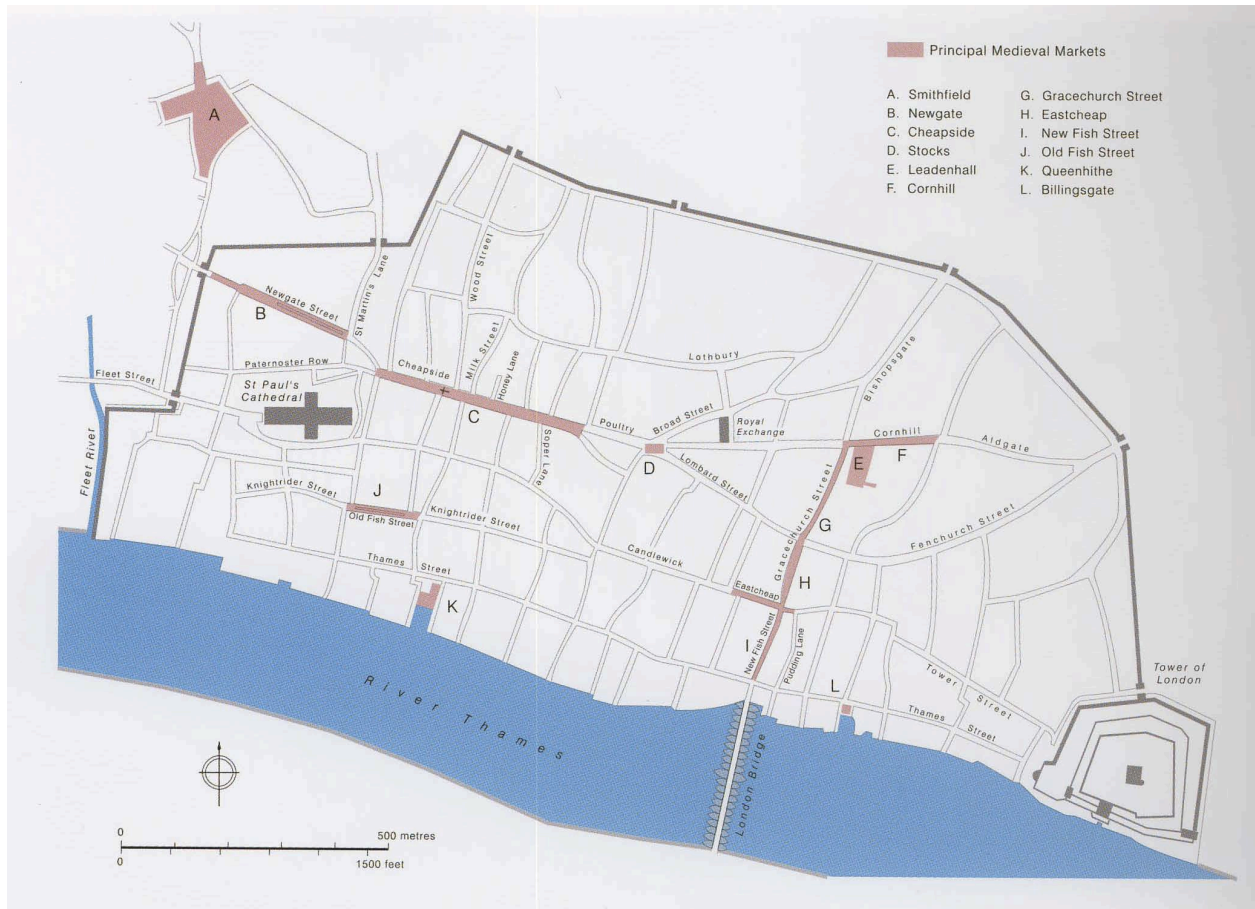
London, by far the largest city in the country, had many markets. Many of these were originally reserved for traders from the countryside, but London retailers could also buy stock there for their shops. In 1282, a timber-covered market was built, called the Stocks, which was modeled on Les Halles in Paris. It was rebuilt in 1406-11 as a three storey stone structure with stalls at the lower level, and shops above for drapers as well as accommodations for single men. In 1455, the City of London opened Leadenhall, a combined market and granary, consisting of a large building with an open courtyard with covered arcades for retail stalls. One of the most

important shopping areas in London was the Cheapside market with its many goldsmith shops. Hugh Alley, who painted the food markets of London at the end of Elizabeth's reign, shows vendors selling food in the middle of the avenue in about 1600.



Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth Century London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 4.

After the great fire many new markets were built outside of the boundaries of the City. Some of these markets continue to exist today, such as Spitalfields Market (1682), which was originally a vegetable market and served the poor districts to the east. As respectable society moved to the west of the City, new markets were built to serve these new residential districts, including the famous Covent Garden Market (1661). The map below shows London's main markets in 1745.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 14.

Several of these markets included enclosed stalls or shops on the ground floors, such as the Oxford Market House below, built in 1726-37. It was enclosed by two storey-units with ground floor shops between 1815 and 1817. The watercolor below was done by J. P. Emslie shortly after the demolition of the building in 1880



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 17.

During the 16th century smaller market buildings were built in a number of provincial cities. Despite the construction of substantial market buildings, most shopping continued to take place in specially designated streets lined with open-fronted shops and stalls. Shops could be simple craftsmen's workshops, retail units specializing in a particular class of goods or as more

substantial showrooms used by important merchants to display goods to prospective retailers or wealthy individual buyers. Shops were generally on the ground floor of buildings with housing and storage above. Goods could also be stored in cellars or in a yard behind the building. This was true even of the shops in the large houses of wealthy merchants. The most valuable buildings containing shops faced the market place or were concentrated in streets nearby or near public buildings, such as churches and town halls. By 1600, this 'traditional' shop-and-house pattern was well established in England and would remain so until the mid 19th century. Already in the 13th century, blocks, terraces, or rows of shops were built and rented out to small merchants. Indeed, rows of shops were one of the most common building types in the center of medieval towns. The Abbot's House in Shrewsbury, built in 1457-9, illustrates a medieval row of shops built as a unit but rented out individually.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 23.

Most common shops, however, were quite simple and remained open-fronted or with a stall on the front until the eighteenth century when glass became more affordable. Indeed, many

shops that sold common and relatively inexpensive commodities were little more than window openings, perhaps with awnings and stall boards that often doubled as shutters. There are very few illustrations of this, but there are Dutch paintings from the seventeenth century of simple shops, which may have been quite similar to English shops. The illustration below is of a Dutch baker's shop by Jacobus Vrel, who was active in Delft and Haarlem in the mid seventeenth century.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 27.

There are also very few illustrations of shop interiors before the late seventeenth century and most of these are Dutch. They show rather small shops with counters parallel to the wall, tiled floors, glazed windows and goods neatly displayed.

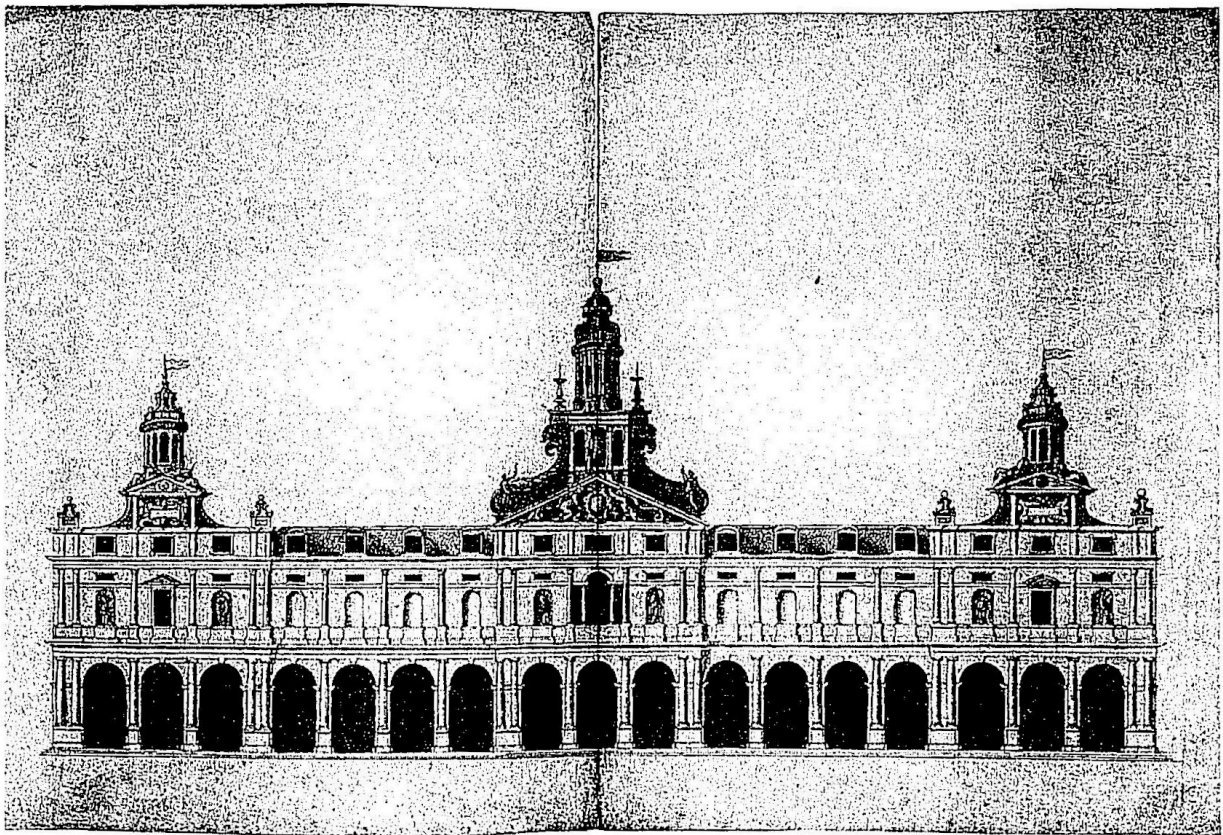
It was not until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the idea of a fashionable and leisurely shopping began to be realized in England with the building of the Royal Exchange in London and the use of glazed storefronts, which encouraged the street display of goods and the pastime of browsing as an essential element of shopping. Thomas Gresham's Royal Exchange opened in London on Cornhill in 1570. It was modeled on the Antwerp Bourse and was designed to bring international merchants together to buy and sell goods but also had retail shops. The print below shows how it appeared in 1640.



Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth Century London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 44.

The building had a paved central courtyard surrounded by arcades and benches, which could accommodate up to 4,000 merchants. Two floors contained 120 small shops.

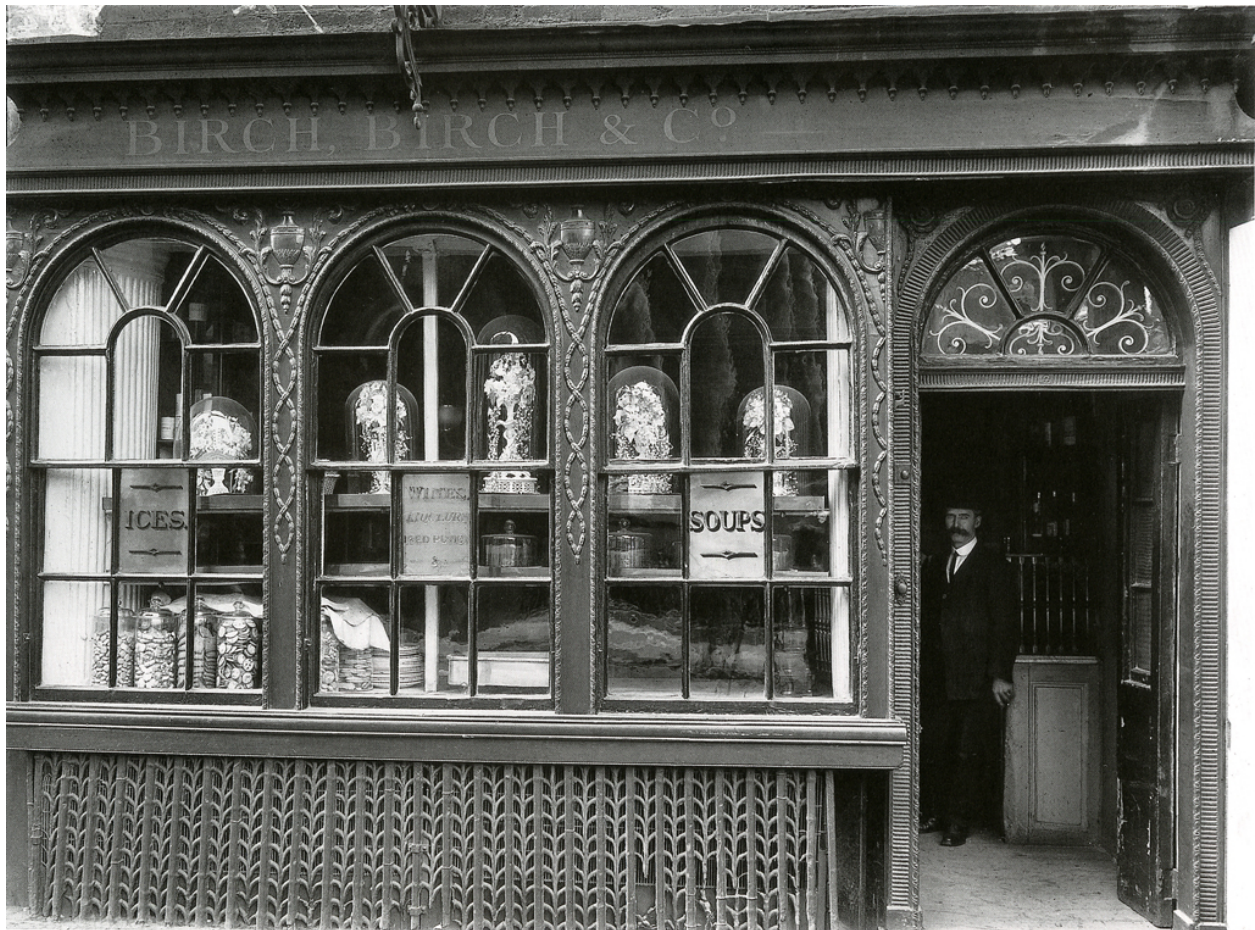
Another upscale market, the New Exchange, opened on the Strand in 1609. It became the premier luxury shopping center in London's new West End. The famous diarist, Samuel Pepys, reported that by 1667, the shops in the New Exchange were enclosed with glass windows to keep out the cold. For almost 100 years, it featured such imported luxuries as porcelain, silks, books, prints, feathers, accessories and other luxury products. It was not only what we would call a luxury shopping mall but also a center of entertainment and a place of sociability for the rich and well connected.



Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, p. 46.

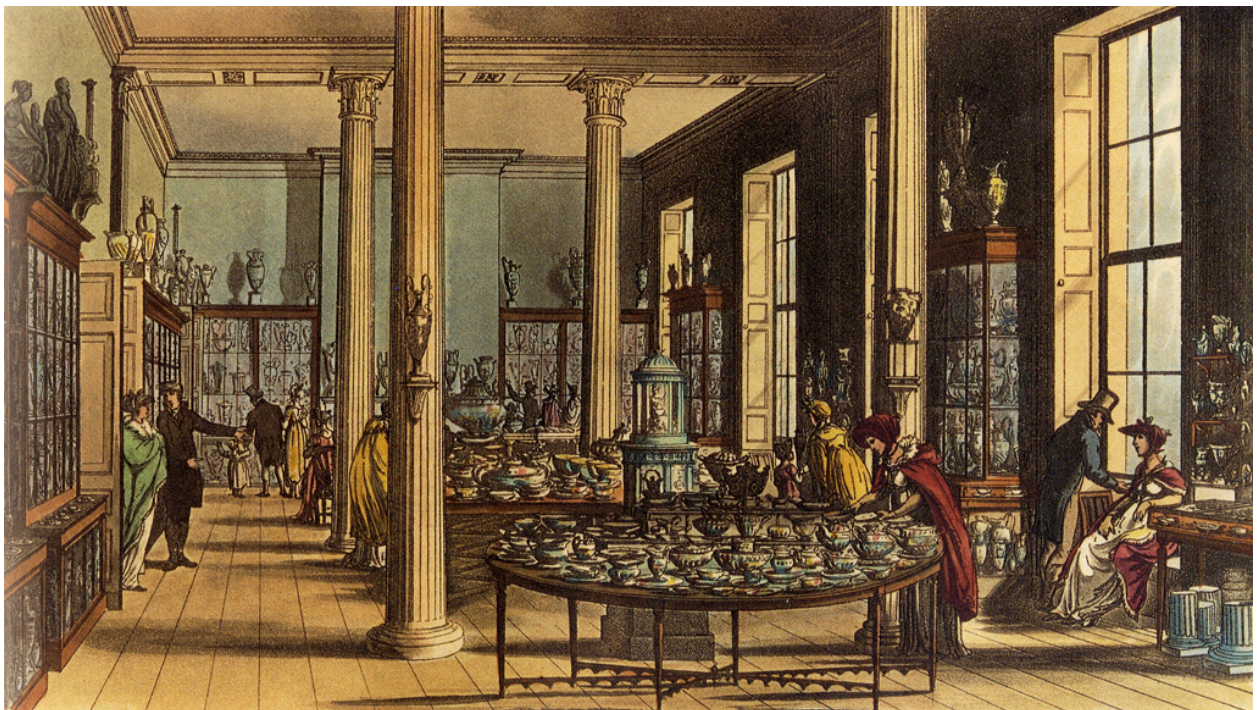
When most City shops were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, many merchants moved further west to Covent Garden, the Strand or Holborn. By the early eighteenth century, the most exclusive shops were found around St. James. Some of these luxury shops survive until today,

such as the luxury grocer Fortnum & Mason, founded in 1707. While most shops remained small during the eighteenth century, those that catered to the well off became increasingly luxurious. Daniel Defoe noted in 1710 that a pastry cook's shop in London included sash windows with plate glass, glazed tiling, ornamental glass, sconces, silver candlesticks and display dishes, painted ceilings, and carved woodwork. He noted that outfitting the shop had cost £300 while a serviceable shop could have been provided for £45. One of the earliest surviving glazed shop fronts in London was that of Samuel Morton, a pastry cook who made his fortune selling "small pies and highly spiced turtle soup in a breakfast room behind his shop." The shop front has been dated at about 1770.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 36.

By the second half of the eighteenth century shopping in London, as well as the larger provincial cities, had become a fashionable past time as the growing disposable income of the middle classes greatly expanded the market for luxury goods. This consumer revolution, which was especially visible in London, was one of the important forces that promoted economic growth in eighteenth century Britain. Shopping markets, such as the New Exchange, had catered to a relatively small elite, but as broader segment of society now began to emulate the consumer demand of the elite, new shopping districts were built consisting of larger and more comfortable shops to cater to a growing demand for a broader range of fancy goods. The more luxurious shops of the period were increasingly lit by skylights and were referred to as ‘warehouses’, ‘magazines’ or ‘repositories.’ The larger shops cultivated a domestic atmosphere with opulent furnishings and decorations to show off their goods. One of the most famous showrooms in London was where Josiah Wedgwood displayed his luxury ceramics. His showroom was opened in Covent Garden in 1668, moved to Soho in 1774, and moved to York Street off Piccadilly after 1795. The illustration below pictured his York Street showroom in 1809.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p.37.

One of the largest shops in early nineteenth century London was James Lackington's bookshop in Finsbury Square. Lackington became known as "the father of cheap bookselling and 'cheap reprinting,'" but his premises were anything but cheap. His bookshop, 'The Temple of the Muses,' was built between 1789 and 1791. His 'ware room', with innovative cast-iron columns, which supported four book-lined circular galleries, fitted into the base of the dome and lit by a cupola, dominated the center of the building. This Ackermann print shows its appearance in 1809.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 38.

Lackington's bookshop was not just a place to purchase books. It was a destination. He provided two rooms "for such Ladies and Gentlemen as wish to enjoy a 'literary lounge', equipped with books in glass cases." Some large London luxury shops even offered refreshments, such as wines, tea, coffee and sweetmeats.

Important shopping streets, such as Bond Street and Oxford Street, were paved and lit. They were lined with shops with glazed fronts and were places of genteel recreation. Shop fronts

were designed to be eye-catching and lure the customer into the shop. Medieval and early modern shop fronts had been an integral part of the building but modern shop fronts were built as screens for display and not as a load-bearing part of the building. Less expensive glass made modern shop fronts possible. Although glass had been available for many centuries, it was expensive and it took a long time for it to become the chief feature of a shop front. The 1737 illustration below of Bishopgate in London shows both open and glazed shop fronts.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 42.

Only fresh food merchants retained open shop fronts by the middle of the nineteenth century
Bow front shops became popular in the eighteenth century because it allowed shops to encroach

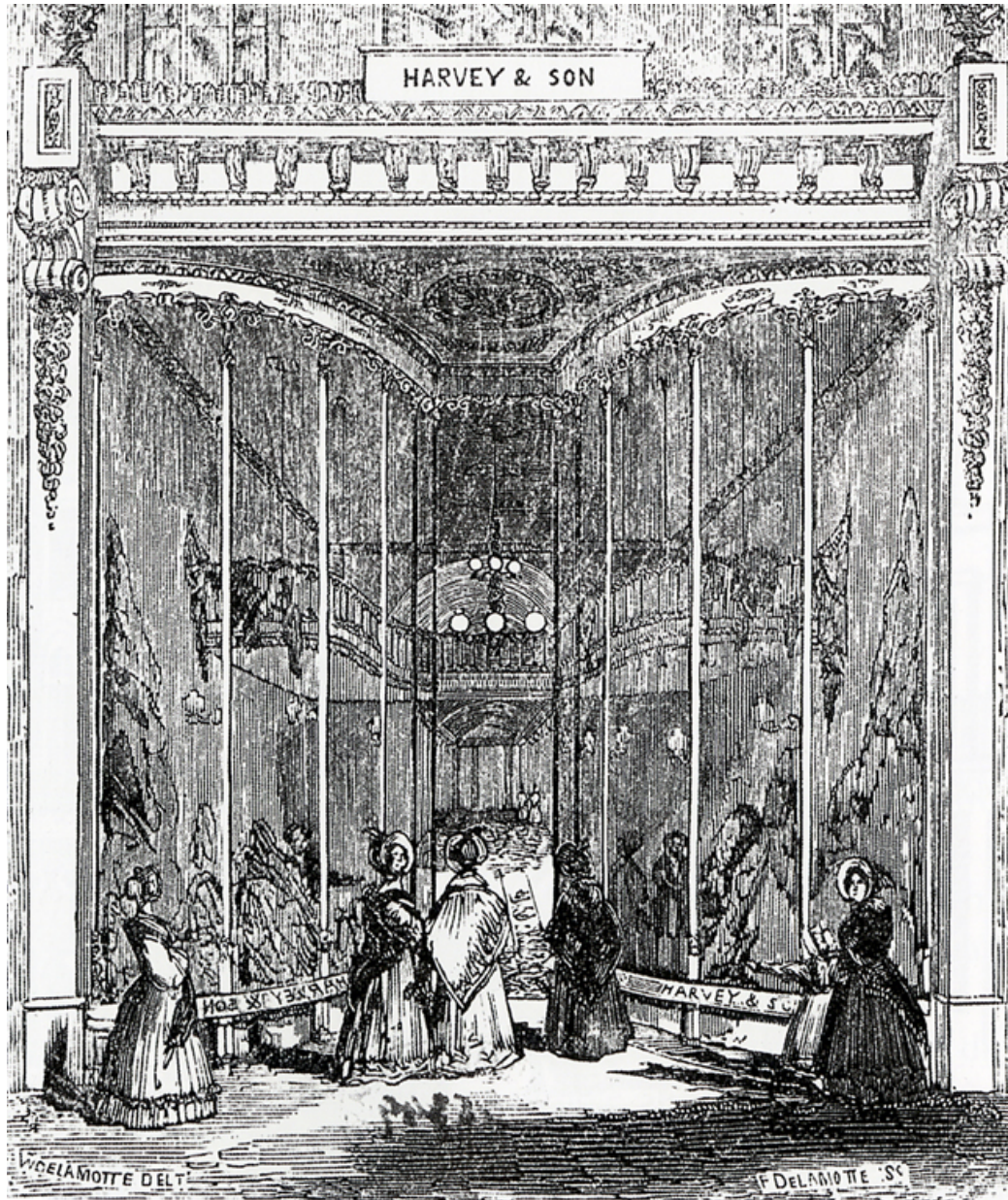
into the street, admitted more light into the shops and made displays more conspicuous. Originally the glass panes were relatively small and held in place by glazing bars, as in this illustration of shops in Woburn Walk, Bloomsbury, originally built in 1822. Bow front shops remained very common in provincial towns until the 1850s and 1860s.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 46.

By the 1790s cast plate glass measuring 6ft X 9ft was already being made in England but remained much too expensive to be used widely. Beginning in the 1830s, English manufacturers began to make much less expensive sheet glass of 3ft x 4ft using a German process. The repeal of the excise tax in 1845 and the Window Tax in 1851 also encouraged the use of storefronts consisting almost entirely of glass. During the 1830s and 1840s most shops chose classical designs featuring large windows surrounded by columns. Some, however, were much more exotic and used Egyptian, Moorish and other exotic designs, such as this spectacular 1841 two-

level shopfront of a draper's shop. The mezzanine shopping gallery and barrel vault of the interior can be seen through the large plate glass windows.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 48.

Shops remained open into evenings until 8 or 9 o'clock, although the campaign to close earlier had already begun by the early 1840s. Contemporary observers were much impressed by

the elaborate lighting of shops in the evenings. At first this consisted of candles and fancy oil lamps and sconces. By the 1840s gas lighting was in general use in shopping areas and shopkeepers began to use external gas lighting to illuminate their displays. From the early 19th century, awnings were introduced to keep goods cool, to shelter the shoppers from the elements and to advertise the name of the shop. Lettered advertising gradually spread all over Victorian shop fronts, and even on the building face, as seen at James Smith's famous umbrella shop on Oxford Street, which dates from the 1870s and survives today.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 54.

Before department stores, chain stores and shopping malls, shops on England's High Streets (the main shopping areas in towns) were specialist shops, which required skilled

shopkeepers and often a high level of craftsmanship. Over the centuries, each trade developed a particular kind of shop suited to its needs. Common to all trades until the middle of the twentieth century was the practice of living above the shop. Even when the shopkeepers moved their families away from their shop, they continued to use the upper floors for workshop and storage space. While many High Streets in Britain still contain lively retail shops, many of these are today branches of chain stores or have been supplanted by supermarkets and department stores, which do not need the storage space of the upper floors of their premises.

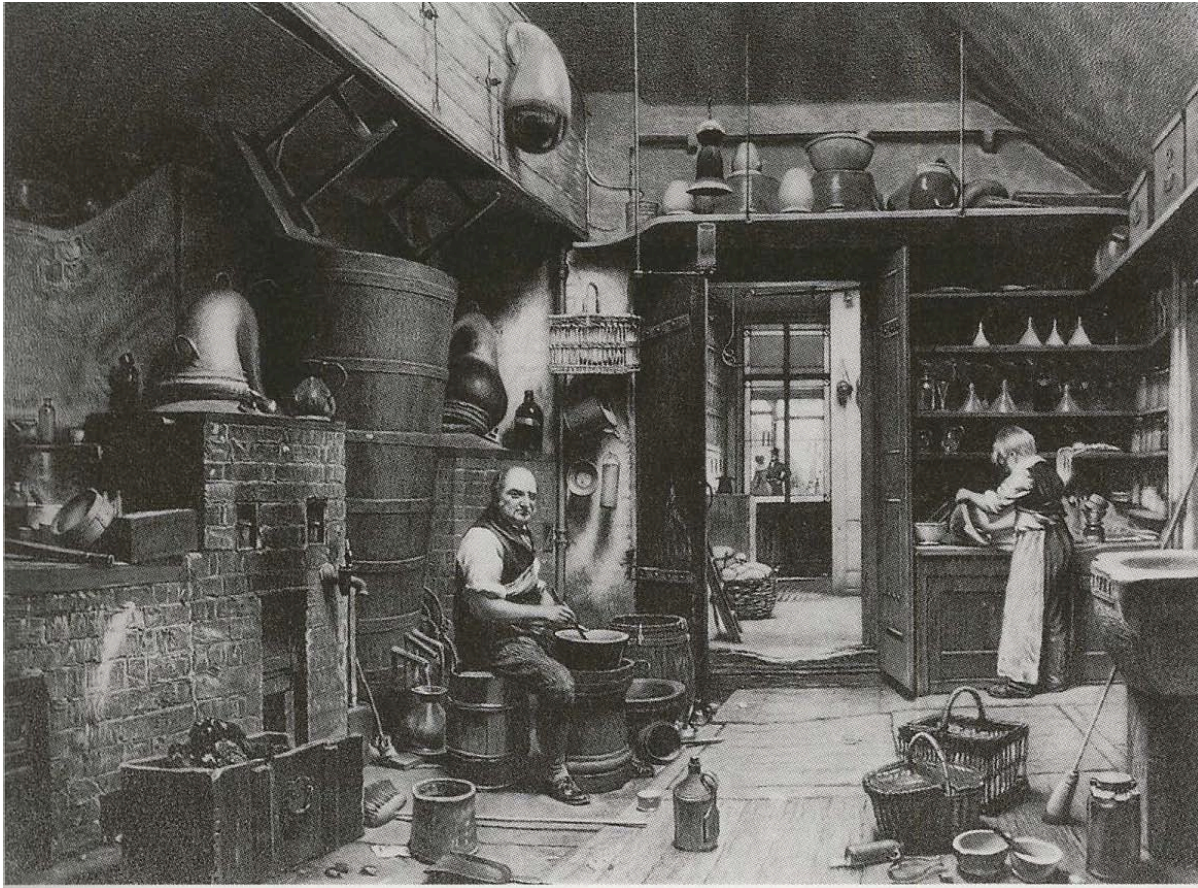
The most iconic specialist shops that flourished in the Victorian period were jewelers, chemists, drapers, grocers and butchers. Jewelry shops have always been amongst the most exclusive retail shops. During the eighteenth century, gold and silver smith shops were among the most expensively outfitted shops. They featured glassed in walls that displayed plate, while smaller articles were kept in drawers or displayed in glass cases. The lavish interiors of many Victorian jewelry and plate shops have survived into modern times because of their quality and because jewelry shops still provide counter service, which was typical of most shops during the Victorian period.

Modern chemist shops are descendents from seventeenth century apothecaries, which provided drugs to patients who could not afford physicians. Retail chemists and druggists became a distinct group in the eighteenth century and created their own professional organization in 1841, the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Chemists could manufacture and dispense drugs but not prescribe them. From the seventeenth century, a chemist displayed their trademark jars in the windows while the walls of their shops were lined with small drawers and shelves for bottles and jars. The illustration below is of A. Deck's Chemist shop in Cambridge in 1810.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 71

Behind the shop was usually a laboratory in which the chemists manufactured many of their own drugs and medicines. John Bell, a London chemist, had such a laboratory built behind his Oxford street shop in 1798. The mezzotint below, based on a painting by W.H. Hunt, shows the ‘elaboratory’ as it appeared about 1850.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 76.

In addition to medicines, chemists sold cosmetics and a variety of patent medicines and personal items. Some of these elaborately outfitted chemist shop interiors have survived in Britain and several have been reassembled in museums, such as at the York Castle Museum’s Victorian Street display.

A draper shop was another common category of early shops in England. In London these were generally specialist shops before the development of larger general drapery shops. Even during the Victorian period many draper ‘warehouses’ survived that specialized in a particular

kind of textiles such as shawls, crinoline, mourning, tartan, silk, linen, or wool. Shoe shops are another example of the movement from a workshop, where craftsmen sold what they manufactured, to retail sellers of goods made elsewhere. It was already possible to buy ready-made shoes during the middle ages but it was not until the eighteenth century that the ready-made shoe and boot industry became more common. Already in 1738 there was a London shoe manufacturer who employed 162 people making shoes on an assembly-line basis. Outside of London, however, shoe selling remained more firmly tied to small-scale production well into the nineteenth century and thus shoemaker shops remained common throughout the country.

Groceries were widely sold by general shopkeepers, but there were already specialist grocers selling luxury products during the late medieval period. The grocery trade in London originated with spice and pepper traders who formed their own guilds in the fourteenth century, which required members to undergo a seven-year apprenticeship. Specialist grocers sold luxury goods such as dried fruit, spices, coffee, cocoa and sugar. By the early eighteenth century, their most important product was tea. Grocers packaged, sorted, blended, and cleaned luxury products as well as sell them. An early London fancy grocer, Fortnum & Mason, established in 1707, survives today. During the eighteenth century there was still a distinction between grocery shops and the provisioning shops that sold such products as butter and cheese. There were also provision retailers who specialized in imported delicacies, such as smoked salmon and Dutch herring, and French olives. By the mid 19th century, the distinction between grocers and provision diminished and grocery shops and grocers sold all sorts of processed food, including tinned food, and fresh foodstuffs. By the late 19th century, early chain shops, such as Home & Colonial shops, Sainsbury, and Lipton had begun to challenge the dominance of independent grocery shops in Britain. A rare example of an early chain grocery shop is this Lipton shop in Chesterfield, which dates from the early 20th century. Note that this shop still sold provisions on one side and groceries on the other. The motto above the grocery counter reads, “The Business on Which the Sun Never Sets.’



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 86.

Butcher shops are another category of specialist shops found throughout the country. During the medieval period butchers were restricted to the shambles so that slaughter of animals and the disposal of offal could be better controlled. It was not until the late eighteenth century that butchers set up their shops in other parts of town. As in the shambles, however, their early shops had open fronts where they displayed their products, as in this row of butcher shops in Aldgate pictured in 1817.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 88.

The nineteenth century saw the development of enclosed butcher shops and many more health regulations. While most meat was now hung indoors on rails, the practice of hanging carcasses outside, especially at times such as Christmas, remained common until well into the twentieth century. Butcher shops often had Dutch doors to prevent dogs from entering. They featured large wooden chopping blocks and sawdust covered the floor to absorb blood. While many city butchers bought carcasses from wholesalers, most butchers in the country bought live animals and killed them in a slaughter house at the rear of the shop. Refrigeration was not common before 1900 and thus butchers used ice to store meat in a back room or cellar or meat was salted in tanks of brine.

During the nineteenth century, three new categories of shopping venues were developed in England, bazaars, arcades and department stores. Bazaar and arcades especially appealed to sophisticated and fashionable metropolitan consumers. Akin to the exchanges of the seventeenth century, bazaars and arcades collected many traders in one large structure. Traders in bazaars

were generally assigned counters in large open-spaces, while traders in arcades rented small shops. In the long run, shopping arcades remained much more popular and were the forerunners of modern indoor shopping centers. Bazaars were not only shopping palaces but also places of theater, spectacle and entertainment. The use of iron and glass allowed the creation of vast open spaces lit by natural light. The first true bazaar in London was built as a warehouse during the Napoleonic wars and was transformed into the Soho Bazaar in 1816. Mahogany topped counters were rented out on a daily basis to 200 female traders. A printed guide listed 31 classes of British manufactured merchandise. A contemporary poem, *The London Bazaar, or where to get cheap things*, suggested that the virtue of the women traders, as well as goods, were for sale. The proprietor sought to counter the reputation of bazaar as a place where the sales girls had loose morals with strict regulations, but theater and excitement was part of the bazaar's appeal. There are no surviving pictures of the Soho bazaar but there are descriptions, which note that its walls were draped with red cloth, the beams were painted with inscriptions, and its walls were hung with mirrors. Bazaars of the period included features such as conservatories, exhibition spaces, and picture galleries. The Queen's Bazaar, pictured below, opened in Oxford Street, London, in 1828.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 94.

The Pantheon bazaar, pictured below, was the most distinguished of all London's bazaars. It opened across the street from the Oxford bazaar in 1834. The building, erected in 1772 to host the "nocturnal adventures of the aristocracy," was rebuilt in 1834 with an enormous central hall of 116 x 88 ft. Towards the rear was a circular refreshment room, a conservatory for the sale of flowers and plants, and a room where ladies could wait for their carriages.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 92.

There were many bazaars in London during the first half of the nineteenth century. The largest was the Baker Street bazaar, which was housed in the rebuilt former stables of the Life Guards. The goods for sale included furniture and fancy ironware, “to meet the requirements of the higher ranks of society,” as well as an Mme Tussauds’ waxworks gallery. One of the most interesting of London’s bazaars was the London Crystal Palace bazaar, pictured below in the *London Illustrated News* in 1858. It was inspired by the Crystal Palace, which had hosted the



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 98.

Great Exhibition of 1851. Its architect was Owen Jones, who had been Superintendent of the Works for the Great Exhibition. Built of iron and glass, it featured a 36 ft high barrel vault with stained glass set in an iron frame. It was lit at night with colored gas lamps. The building introduced the convenience of openly providing private restrooms for ladies with water closets to the world of shopping. Bazaars were not just a London phenomenon in England. By the 1830s almost every major city in England had at least one bazaar.

The modern bazaar appears to have been an English invention while the arcade claims its descent from the Galleries de Bois in 1786, which completed the quadrangle surrounding the Palais Royal garden in Paris. Arcades consisted of covered paved passages lit by skylights with rows of individual shops, usually on both sides. The first English arcade was the Royal Opera Arcade, which opened in 1817. It consisted of a shop-lined covered entrance passage to the Royal Opera. The most famous London arcades, and at 585 ft its longest, was the Burlington Arcade, which opened in 1818 and which survives to this day. The picture below was taken in 1905.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 101.

Shops in this arcade reached to the top of the building. It was situated in the heart of London's exclusive West End and featured a classical styled entrance off Piccadilly. Here London's elite could buy luxury goods and show off their fashionable finery away from the dirt and grime of the streets. Entrance was controlled by its own security officers, smartly uniformed beaules, which strictly enforced regulations preventing visitors from doing such things as singing, whistling, playing musical instruments or pushing prams. The arcade was very selective in choosing its traders and regulated the kinds of goods that could be sold. The success of the Burlington arcade led to the construction of others major cities and seaside and spa towns between 1870s and the early twentieth century. Town planners took up the idea of using arcades as a way of transforming city centers. Joseph Paxton, the designer of the Crystal Palace, even suggested building a ten mile covered arcade surrounding London. From the 1870s to the early twentieth century arcades were built in all major cities in Britain as well as in most resort and spa towns.

Open-air markets had long served the shopping needs of the working classes. As the economy grew during the classic period of industrialization of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the fast growing cities of the Midlands and the North sought to bring more public order, better sanitation and security for women, who did most of the shopping, to their cities by building large municipal market halls. While smaller towns generally retained the open-sided market buildings that had sheltered food traders for centuries, the new industrial cities began to build imposing municipal market buildings to house traders of provisions and ordinary household and personal goods. Market halls were provided with running water, gas lighting, regular garbage disposal, icehouses, routine cleaning, policing, and a growing number of municipal sanitation and food quality regulations. The industrial cities not only built large functional market halls but also embellished them with ornamentation that expressed the civic pride of their dynamic cities. Just as the Victorians spoke of 'civilizing' the subjects of their expanding empire, they also sought to 'civilize' their own working classes by bringing order, civic pride and a measure of cleanliness to their urban centers and its markets.

The earliest of the great nineteenth century municipal market halls was Liverpool's St. John's Market, built in 1820-22. The drawing below dates from 1832.



THE INTERIOR OF ST. JOHN'S MARKET, LIVERPOOL.

Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 111.

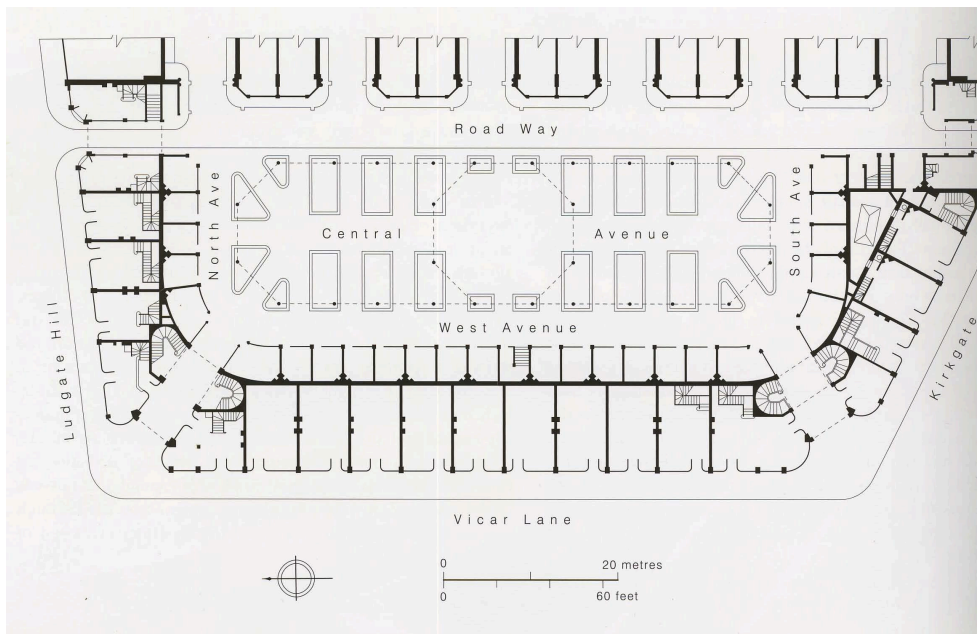
The building provided more than 74,000 sq. ft. of market space. Cast iron columns supported it and featured sixty-two lock-up provision shops with open fronts, as well as rows of stalls and benches arranged in neat rows. The building had four water pumps and a large clock hung in the center.

Derby's great iron and glass vaulted market hall, similar to Victorian railway stations, was opened in 1866. It was restored in 1989. It was pictured in *The London Illustrated London News* in 1866 when it opened and without its central floor's market stalls.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 117.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, several northern cities built market halls surrounded by multi-level ranges of offices, showrooms or flats above the shops on the street sides. Some of these markets looked like grand railway hotels from the outside with expansive market halls in their center. The grandest of these market halls was the Kirkgate Market in Leeds, pictured below. It was built in 1904 to replace an earlier municipal market of 1854.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 118.

The plan of the Kirkgate Hall, above, shows a double row of shops in the front, the open center area with stalls, and on the street behind were blocks of fruit and vegetable stalls built in 1875. The interiors of most Victorian market halls were fairly standard. The halls were divided into long aisles with cross aisles. There were shops around the periphery and permanent stalls arranged along the aisles. Butchers' and fishmongers' stalls were often tiled and often located in separate enclosed areas. Market halls usually included public facilities, such as a restaurant and toilets. The Kirkgate Hall, shown in a recent photo below, was restored in 1992.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 118.

Many of the municipal market halls that still exist in the North but now cater to the underprivileged, while those in wealthier southern cities, such as Oxford and Bristol, now cater to a more prosperous clientele.

The rise of the Department store transformed English retail shopping during the second half of the nineteenth century, although the terms ‘store’ and ‘department store’ originated in America and were not widely used in England until the 1890s. Before this time, the English still referred to large stores that sold a wide variety of goods using such traditional terms as ‘warehouse’ and ‘emporium.’ English department stores developed from drapery emporia. Early in the nineteenth century, drapery shops—shops that draped lengths of cloth in their doors and windows—were small and specialized in a particular kind of cloth. By the 1850s many more drapers’ shops had been established to sell cotton products, now mass-produced in Lancashire. The many new shops no longer catered to a local clientele that knew customers personally but now sold their goods to much more anonymous and growing middle class consumers. As a result, the new shops no longer extended personal credit to their customers and sold their goods at fixed prices clearly displayed. They began to aggressively advertise their goods on their storefronts and enticed passing customers with exuberant notices of clearance pricing. Successful drapers expanded their offerings to include every kind of textiles goods, often including furnishings, furniture, and carpets. During the 1820s and 1830s, large drapery stores still retained a domestic style of architecture, with glazed shop-fronts on the ground floor and lettering on upper stories. There were sometimes showrooms on the second floor and workshop and staff accommodations (most staff still lived on the premises) were housed on upper floors.

Many large drapery emporia were built in London during the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the largest was the Harvey, Kingston and Company store built in Lambeth, London, in 1839. It described itself as “drapers, mercers, hosiers, haberdashers, carpet manufacturers and general furnishings warehousemen.” Many large drapery stores were also built in provincial cities during the period. Some have argued that the Bainbridge drapery emporium, founded in Newcastle in 1838 had grown into the first true department store in Europe by 1850. Others insist that this honor belongs to Kendal, Milne & Faulkner in

Manchester. Warwick House, on New Street in Birmingham, pictured below, was one of the finest purpose general drapery stores of the 1830s.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 127.

Ready-made clothing had been available since the seventeenth century, but did not become common until the 1840s. The first stores specializing in ready-made cloths were exclusively for males and were aimed at working class and middle class customers. The most successful of these early stores was E. Moses in Company in Aldgate, London. The three level shop was described in 1843: “it may be said that it reached from the ground to the roof, every storey being fronted by plate-glass and filled by goods.” Its atrium was lit from the center by a large gas-lit chandelier. Another ready-made men’s cloth shop, Yam’s in Birmingham, was described in 1859 as selling workingmen’s clothes in the basement, middle class ready-made gentlemen’s clothes on the second floor.

Another category of large stores built in mid-Victorian Britain were furniture and ironmongery emporia. Many of these had iron and glass fronts inspired by the Crystal Palace at

the Great Exhibition. Historians have suggested that the growth of large stores selling a variety of goods, and ultimately the department store, was influenced by the Great Exhibition's displays of all sorts of consumer goods in one large space. Heal's new large furniture store, pictured below in a photograph taken in 1897, was built in 1854 on Tottenhamcourt Road in London.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 130.

The store had an iron and brick front with a large amount of glass. This was clearly commercial rather than domestic architecture, which had been the dominant style of earlier large emporia in England.

The most successful early department store in Europe was the spectacular and much imitated Bon Marche built in Paris between 1872 and 1887. The first purpose-built department

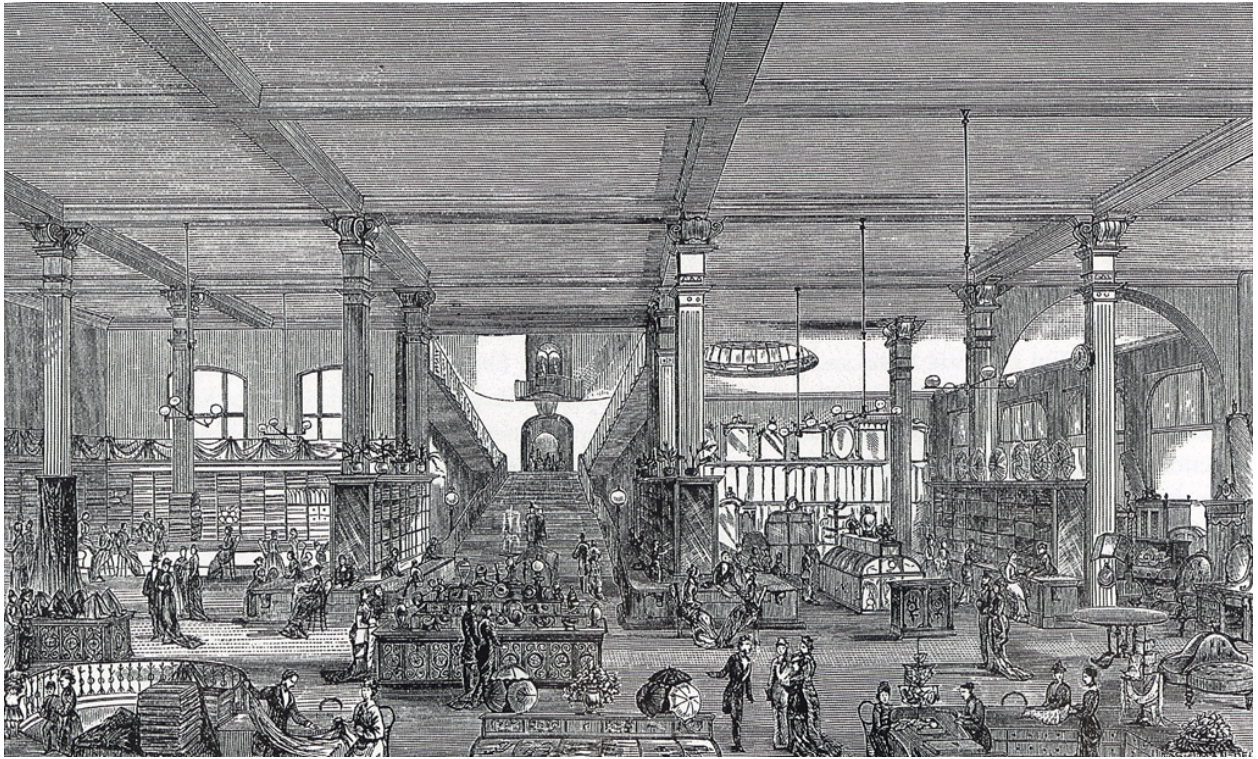
store in Britain was James Smith's Bon Marche on Brixton Road, London, 1876-77. The store was not particularly innovative architecturally since it still retained a style characteristic of domestic architecture. Indeed, when built, it still contained housing for its staff. The store did not close until 1975 but the building remains, as pictured below, and now houses a pub and offices. The front block contained the sales departments on four floors while staff accommodations were in a five-storey block in the rear. There were separate dining rooms for male and female employees, day rooms, visitors' rooms, a library, a billiard room, a manager's apartment and fifty bedrooms.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 136.

An 1877 account noted that food was sold on the first floor and that the establishment sold “almost every imaginable article in food, furniture and dress.” By 1885, food was no longer sold in the store. An account of 1888 noted that the store had thirty-one departments, “including

men's outfitting, cycles and toys in the basement, drapery and fancy goods on the first floor, and furniture on the second floor." There was also a mail-order department in the basement. This print of 1888 shows how departments flowed into each other in an open store plan and had a grand staircase to the first floor with a large stain glass window at the rear that provided light.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 136.

Many large department stores were built in Britain during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. In London the new underground railway made the West End easily accessible and famous department stores were built around Oxford and Regent streets. Many of these stores had opulent interiors and used such new technology as overhead cash railways, pneumatic cash tubes, electric lighting, elevators, and, in 1898, the first escalator in England was installed at Harrods. Department stores further encouraged women to shop by themselves since they provided a safe and secure environment, rest rooms, writing rooms, and restaurants and the lavishly decorated tearooms. All this made it possible for unchaperoned women to visit stores in areas such as London's West End

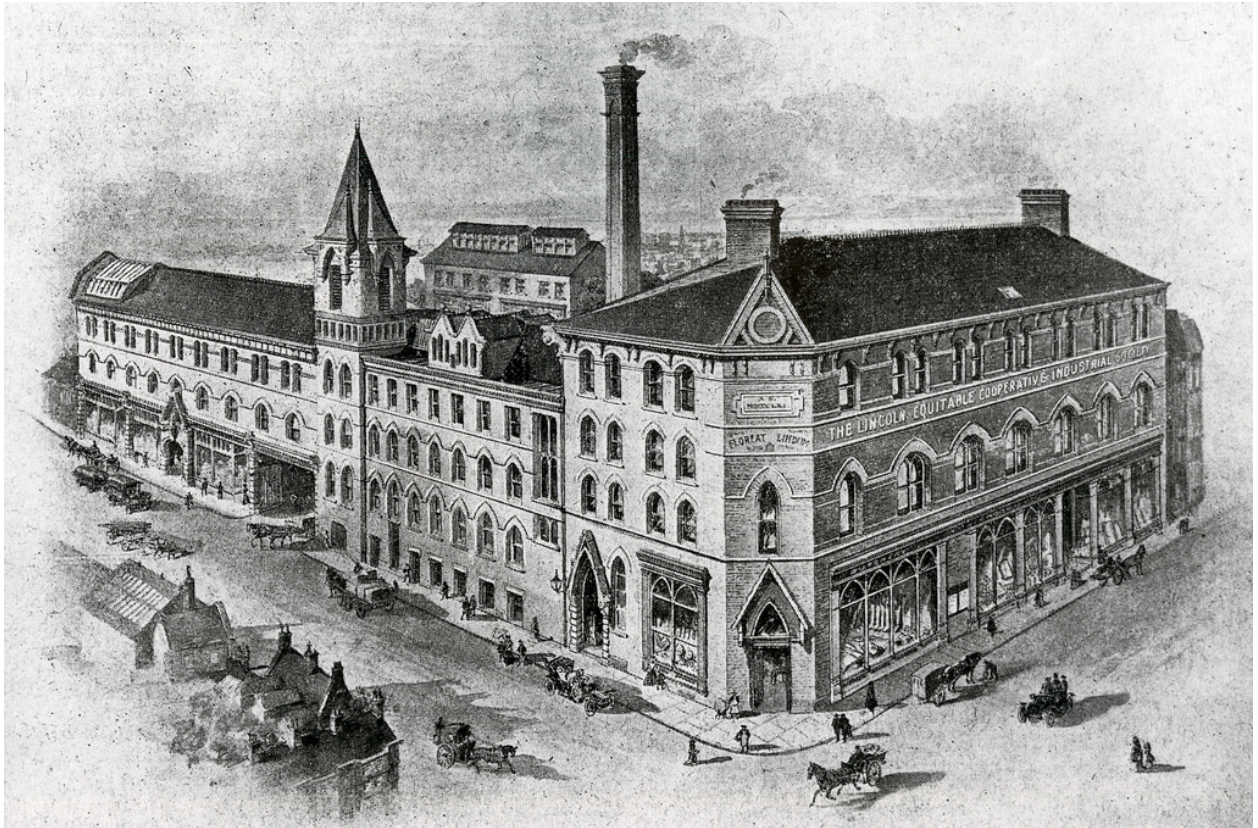
The most famous Department store in Britain, Harrods, began as a grocery shop on Brompton Road in 1853. It gradually expanded. Its new front was completed in 1905. It is pictured below with its famous lighting installed in 1959.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 164.

Large new department stores were also built in major provincial cities. The first English department chain store company, Lewis's, grew out of a men's outfitters store opened by David Lewis in Liverpool in 1854. With the birth of chain stores in the last third of the nineteenth century, we have entered the area of mass consumption, which fundamentally altered the British shopping experience and ultimately severely limited the long tradition of owner occupied shops in Britain.

A very different shopping development during the mid-Victorian period was the development of co-operative stores in Britain, which remained a feature of High Streets in towns all over Britain. The co-operative movement grew out of British utopian socialism and owed much to the work of the utopian socialist and former mill owner, Robert Owen. In 1844, the Rochdale Co-operative Society of Equitable Pioneers was founded. The idea of co-operative stores was to buy and sell provisions on the basis of fair-trading, and to divide the profits to its members as dividends, known as the 'divi.' Many other co-operative societies were formed, chiefly in the growing industrial towns of the North and Midlands. In addition to founding co-operative retail shops, the co-operative societies built working class housing, provided mortgages, built libraries and engaged in social service activities. The societies had close ties to the labour union movement and were active in politics. George Holyoake's 1858 book, *History of the Rochdale Pioneers*, did much to popularize the movement. The first co-operative shops were established in existing buildings but gradually societies put up purpose-built shops. The shops were supplied from a central co-operative warehouses. Societies made territorial arrangements with each other so that shops did not infringe on another society's shops. There was a good deal of opposition to the movement from independent traders and from conservatives who feared the radical politics of co-operative leaders. Nonetheless, the co-operative store movement was quite successful in many areas of England as the print below of the Lincoln Co-Operative Society's Central Stores between 1889 and 1910 in Lincoln, demonstrates. Co-operative societies built large stores in many English towns and opened small branches, which they sold to members, as new areas of working-class housing were built. During the first half of the twentieth century large city Co-Ops were built that rivaled department stores in size and complexity. After the 1960s, Co-Op stores greatly diminished in number but one can still see many Co-Op small grocery markets in working-class areas in the Midlands and the North.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 147.

With the building of large department stores in all major cities of Britain during the late nineteenth century, we have arrived at the consolidation of a mass consumer society. Although large co-operative society stores had broadened consumer society to include the working classes by the early twentieth century, the world of fancy shopping remained decidedly middle and upper class until the prosperity of late-twentieth century Britain made modest luxuries and comfortable shopping available to all but the poorest in society. One of the most common sights today on British High Streets and shopping centers are the shops of Boots, the chemists. The modern 'drugstore', which now provides all sorts of personal goods to all classes of society, was invented in Britain by Jesse Boot (1850-1931). His father, an agricultural laborer, had operated a botanical shop in Nottingham, which sold herbal remedies. His son took over the business in 1877 and advertised over 100 patent medicines to a mostly working-class clientele. In 1883 Boot opened a new four storey building on Goosegate in Nottingham with a showroom on the

first floor, which could be reached with a hydraulic lift. The handsome cast iron shopfront, which still survives and is pictured below.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 210.

For a few years, Boot himself lived in the building and it originally still included staff accommodations. In addition the building housed stockrooms and workrooms, which also served his growing wholesale business. The business became a limited liability company in 1883. This allowed him to add a prescription drug business. Between 1881 and 1893, Boot added seven new

branches in Nottingham and in 1884 he opened his first shops outside of the city, in Sheffield and Lincoln. By 1900, Boot operated 181 branches, mainly in the Midlands and the North. By 1914, the company had 560 shops spread all over the country. His wholesale and manufacturing business also expanded rapidly and, symbolically, he moved this into a former cotton mill in 1890. It moved to nearby Beeston in 1933. In the same year Boot sold the business and the company opened its one thousandth store. From the 1890s, Boot, with the help of his artistic wife, Florence, began to build imposing center-city stores that included, books, stationary, fancy goods, art supplies, toiletries and, in Nottingham, for example, even cafes. A section of the new Nottingham store's interior is pictured below in 1903-04.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 213.

The new Boots in Nottingham became a model for many other large Boots stores. These stores, as this art nouveau store, pictured below, opened in the seaside town of Southend, Essex, in 1915. It still contained prescription drug counters but they were clearly no longer just chemist shops.



Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping*, p. 214.

After World War II, the Boots stores became much more utilitarian in design but the company remains one of the most successful retail providers in Britain. Chain stores, which offer inexpensive necessities but also many small luxuries, are the most characteristic of modern shopping venues in our contemporary society. They were first developed during the mid-Victorian period and represent the triumph of consumer society, which played an important role in the origin of the industrial revolution and created modern society.