Britain and the United States at the World’s Fairs, 1851 – 1893

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Thesis Submitted for a Doctor of Philosophy in History

University College London

Words: 99,706
I, David Samuel Tiedemann confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
This dissertation examines how British and American people imagined and understood the transatlantic relationship in the second half of the nineteenth century. Specifically, it examines visitors’ and observers’ reactions to five world’s fairs held between 1851 and 1893 in both nations to illustrate how these conceptions changed over the period. These events, unlike any others in the period projected national images created by government officials and industrialists in each country. They forced visitors and observers to renegotiate their understanding of the world through these curated presentations of foreign products and art. The dissertation employs newspaper reports, guidebooks, organisational documents, and other texts from these events which record visitors’ changing conceptions of British and American industry, global power, and the two nations’ cultural and historical bonds. These sources also record reactions from people who observed these fairs from afar without visiting them.

By the end of the period British visitors and observers of these events saw the United States as part of an extended British world, bound by a shared “Anglo-Saxon” racial heritage. Americans initially highlighted their transatlantic connections at these fairs and used them to vindicate their displays. However, as American trade expanded, and its diplomatic clout blossomed in the century’s final decades, American displays became more confident and robust, and U.S. visitors and observers desire for British vindication, and need to stress transatlantic connections dissipated. At these fairs British attendees became more firmly convinced of the two nations deep connections while Americans rejected any special transatlantic link by 1893. This study suggests that Americans, as their nation expanded abroad, became more firmly convinced of their national power, and did not see themselves as more similar to empires like Britain. Simultaneously British visitors and observers sought to co-opt the rising United States as an extension of themselves.
Impact Statement

It is genuinely quite difficult to write this kind of statement for a thesis in history without sounding either horribly arrogant or so timid as to make this section redundant. I could write that this thesis will be the greatest historical work since Gibbon put quill to paper, that it will revolutionise the discipline and be taught in every classroom in this country. Or I could posit that, at best, this work – should it be published – will sit in a dark corner of some university library for the next half century until some plucky student picks it off the shelf and cites it in an undergraduate essay. The truth is, I have no idea what the impact of my research will be. I have no illusions, I’m not curing cancer, building interstellar rockets, or seeking to change the government’s educational policy with this thesis. What is comforting though is that this statement is essentially an estimate. One can really say what one wants here. Almost certainly no one will ever check if the castles built in the sky here will ever actually exist.

On the most practical and careerist level I hope that this thesis will be published by a reputable academic press, and that I can get a good article out of it. Hell, I’ll dream big. This seems the space for it. Maybe people in the field will actually read and enjoy the thesis should it be published somewhere. I believe that it might change some historians’ notions about the nineteenth-century Anglo-American relationship, and popular understandings of racial identity in both nations covered. I would go further on this point, but that topic is covered in far, far more depth in the actual body of the thesis.

I would absolutely love it both in an egotistical and mercenary, but also a very genuinely intellectual way, if some people besides academics and my blood relations read this thesis. The best any historian can hope for I think is that people read their work and rethink how they understand the world or question their assumptions about the past. In these heady pre-Brexit days before the impending fall, with interest in the ‘Special Relationship’ very high in this country, I imagine this work might aid people in reconsidering the transatlantic bond. The thrust of the work is that by the end of the period British people, living as they were through a period of national decline, cared far more about their relationship with the wealthy growing United States than Americans did. There are perhaps some parallels between that characterisation of the relationship and our own period that might help someone understand the present predicament this country finds itself in vis à vis the United States.
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Acknowledgements

My first acknowledgements must go to my parents Karen and Geoff and grandparents Marian and Ed, without their support this project would not exist. I am eternally grateful for their help and encouragement. This experience has been incredibly rewarding and without them I would not have been able to undertake this course of study and produce this dissertation.

I also very thankful to my supervisors Adam I.P. Smith and David Sim. They have advised on this project’s directions, and their incredibly generous willingness to read and give notes on innumerable drafts has been invaluable to this project. Several other historians have helped to formulate and shape this dissertation, and my experience as a PhD student. I would particularly like to thank UCL’s Graduate Tutor Eleanor Robson for help in the dissertation’s early stages, and Daniel Peart and Nick Witham for their guidance on teaching and other parts of life as a PhD student. I must also thank Professor Aubrey Newman and Jonny Medland for reading a draft of this dissertation, both of their notes were incredibly helpful. I would also like the thank the convenors, speakers, and attendees of the IHR North American History Seminar, the discussion and papers at that series have certainly influenced this dissertation. Similarly, I must thank the BrANCH committee, their conferences each year have been excellent opportunities to present research and meet fellow historians.

My fellow Americanists in the UCL History Department Alys Bevert, Mark Power Smith, Gareth Hallett Davis, Matt Griffin, and Andrew Short have also greatly influenced this dissertation, and aided its completion. To have such a large group of fellow nineteenth century American historians to go through this process with was an immense stroke of luck. All have been happy to read work, to offer advice, to co-organise events, and each has really made this dissertation much stronger. I would also like to thank my fellow PhD students at UCL in no particular order: Shane, Alessandro, Melissa, Grace, Jack, Agata, and Johannes. I could make up some line about how they all have provided a great intellectual community, but really it has been wonderful to have a group to talk to about teaching problems, funding and job applications, complain, gossip, and drink with. Without them this experience would have been far more solitary and far poorer.

I am grateful to the UCL History Department, and Illinois State Historical Society who have funded research trips for this dissertation. And to the staff at UCL who have helped me throughout the project. I am also thankful to the staff at the
British Library, National Archives, Library of Congress, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Library Company of Philadelphia, Newberry Library, Chicago History Museum Archives, Art Institute of Chicago Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, University of Chicago Library, and the Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley, who all provided assistance with this project’s research.

Finally, I must thank Lucy. Your encouragement and support through this project have been incredibly important.
Introduction

In April 1851 Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, arrived in Liverpool. He continued to London to arrive in time for the Great Exhibition’s May 1 opening ceremony.\(^1\) Greeley attended the fair to report for his own newspaper, and to judge displayed products as a United States’ representative on one of the award-granting juries.\(^2\) Upon his arrival and the fair’s opening he marveled at the great glass structure designed by Joseph Paxton. Greeley recorded in his travelogue that the Crystal Palace was, “better adapted to its purpose than any other edifice ever yet built could be,” and that “the triumph of Paxton is perfect, and heralds a revolution.”\(^3\) Greeley was less charitable about the rest of the opening; he found the royal pageantry “empty and blundering,” and prophesized that the Exhibition would hasten the end of aristocracy.\(^4\) His travelogue included disclaimers that he did not support Britain’s monarchy, and explanations that American readers searching for that kind of European narrative ought to look elsewhere.\(^5\)

Greeley was, though condescending towards British society, obsessed with his own reception and reputation. When *The Times* failed to record his speech at a dinner of foreign dignitaries he bitterly complained about Britain’s lack of quality journalism. When Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited the Exhibition’s American section he fawned over the Prince’s interest in the United States.\(^6\) Greeley expressed contradictory opinions about the actual material on show. He admitted that the American section was unimpressive and simple, but stridently defended his country’s exhibition. Greeley reasoned that the U.S. display was impressive because of the great distance products travelled, and he criticized the British press’ derision of the material.\(^7\) Though Greeley believed that the fair educated the working class in craft and artistic design, he also wilfully attacked displayed British products. He

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1 Horace Greeley, *Glances at Europe: In a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Etc., during the Summer of 1851; Including Notices of the Great Exhibition, or World’s Fair* (New York Dewitt & Davenport, 1851) p. 18-19.
4 Ibid., p. 23.
5 Ibid., p. iii.
6 Ibid., pp. 73-75.
7 Ibid., pp. 26-28.
described British machines as inferior to American counterparts, or as copies of U.S. inventions. During his tour of the Great Exhibition Greeley’s feelings on the event were contradictory and confused. At one moment he endorsed the fair’s educational goals but then complained that the products shown were unimpressive or stolen. He concurred with British critiques that the American section was meagre but defended the exhibit as a whole and attacked British newspapers for their poor reviews of the U.S. display. While mocking certain Americans for their sycophantic love of aristocracy he demanded recognition from The Times for himself, and glowingy described Prince Albert’s visit to the U.S. section.

Greeley’s 1851 visit to London encapsulates American visitors’ and observers’ contradictory ideas about Britain at the first three exhibitions this dissertation covers. His resentment of British criticism of the U.S. section, paired with his desire for British endorsement and vindication, wonderfully summarises American reactions at these fairs. American visitors and observers only saw U.S. products as successful if they were judged superior to and therefore embarrassed British competitors, or if British visitors endorsed them. This desire for vindication however, dissipated by the nineteenth century’s final decades. As American organisers, observers, and visitors felt more comfortable about their own nation’s displays, and more confident in the country’s status as a global power, they no longer demanded vindication from British audiences. This dissertation explores American visitors’ changing ideas about their connection to Britain at these fairs, and more broadly their own national identity, and understanding of their nation’s position in the world throughout the late-nineteenth century.

British visitors to and observers of these fairs had a more consistent understanding of the United States and its products. They believed American products were simple and unostentatious, particularly compared to the European finery often displayed, but were also functional. British audiences at these fairs believed these exhibits proved Americans’ inventiveness, which they explained resulted from their supposed British descent. The United States was not, in the nineteenth-century British imagination, a fully foreign nation; for all its exoticism, the country seemed to lie somewhere, albeit problematically and almost undefinably, within the British world. Over the period British visitors to and observers of these fairs distilled this conception of Americans. At the final two exhibitions covered in

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8 Ibid., pp. 92, 107.
This dissertation, these visitors and observers saw Americans as fellow Anglo-Saxons, with a common transatlantic racial identity and a shared fate to cooperate internationally to assure global peace and commerce. Americans were—to the British—assimilated into an expanded idea of a “Greater Britain” just as Americans became more self-confident about a nationality that was less dependent than ever on its “Anglo” origins.

This dissertation examines British and American participation at five world’s fairs held between 1851 and 1893: the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, the 1862 Great London Exhibition, Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial, the 1887 American Fair at Earl’s Court, and Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. By examining what products and fine arts British and American exhibitors showed at these events, and most importantly visitors’ and observers’ written reactions, this dissertation traces large groups of people in both nation’s perception of the other country and how its role in the world developed and changed. It explores these transformations through examination of newspaper reporting, guides, illustrations, photographs, travelogues and other textual and visual sources created for these fairs. These exhibitions drew millions of visitors to see highly curated displays organisers intended to project particular national images. They are therefore ideal and unique arenas to explore how, though imagining the other country, British and American national identity developed in this period.

British visitors and observers of these fairs constructed an expansive national and racial identity that encompassed the United States. These attendees saw the United States, at the final fairs, as both a fellow Anglo-Saxon racial power, and a nation with political and economic institutions similar to Britain. However, their American counterparts did not see themselves as part of an Anglo-Saxon world. As their nation expanded as a commercial and imperial power Americans at these fairs discarded any attachment to a transatlantic identity and saw themselves more as a distinct nationality. As American displays grew larger and more impressive, particularly at Chicago, attendees believed the country represented human progress’ pinnacle. By 1893 Americans showed themselves at these fairs as not mere Anglo-Saxons but as superior to Britain. An American national identity inherently confined to the country’s own borders. As British racial identity became more expansive in this period, American visitors understanding of their own nation became more firmly exceptional and distinct.
At the first three events American visitors, exhibitors, organisers, and observers sought British visitors’ praise for their nation’s products. American visitors at the fairs were obsessed with showing that their products were better and more functional than British competitors, and also with British opinions of and ultimately support for their display. For American visitors and observers concerned about how their production compared to European finery, this support or ‘buttressing’ vindicated their displays. This obsession with British vindication climaxed at the 1876 Centennial; organisers and visitors understood the British display as a presentation of the United States’ pre-1776 history, and an endorsement of the country’s suitability to host such an event. The United States was able to host such an international fair because its culture was buttressed by its British heritage; it was not a young unsophisticated country but had a long transatlantic history. However, after 1876, American visitors to and observers of these events lost their desire for British vindication of U.S. displays, and only saw the country as a trading partner. U.S. organisers designed the 1887 American Exhibition in London as an advertisement for immigration to and investment in the United States, and American observers writing about the event did not express any desire for British vindication of their products. By 1893 in Chicago, American visitors saw Britain as simply another nation on display, and generally considered the country’s exhibits less impressive than European competitors.

This evolution of American ideas about Britain is explained by changes in the U.S. and British position globally. In the 1850s the United States was, compared to European powers, relatively weak economically and diplomatically. In the 1850s cotton was half of U.S. exports; Ian Tyrrell likens the country to oil-rich Persian Gulf States in the twentieth century, economically dominated by a single commodity. Tyrrell also argues that the cotton trade forced a myopic transatlantic focus in American foreign policy. Walter LaFeber notes that international American trade and diplomacy was deeply enmeshed with British interests. American diplomats worked with British counterparts in places like China to expand U.S. trade. Before the Civil War American expansion remained firmly continental, the United States invaded Mexico and signed treaties with Britain to assure the nation’s territorial

growth in North America.\textsuperscript{11} American visitors’ desire to show their products were superior to competing British inventions, or to receive positive reviews from British attendees reflected this relationship. Britain was the era’s supreme economic power and certainly the United States’ most important trading partner. American visitors’ demand for British vindication, and at the same time understanding of the country as the foe to best at world’s fairs, advertised and promoted American products both in the United States and abroad.

By the end of this dissertation’s period, American visitors to these world’s fairs had many reasons to see their nation as more important globally, and their racial identity as distinct from Britain. Growing American disinterest in British displays existed against a backdrop of expanding U.S. trade and a re-evaluation of American white identity in a global context. After the Civil War the federal government used the U.S. Navy to force open foreign markets for American manufactures notably in Korea.\textsuperscript{12} The United States participated in more international treaties and conferences after the Civil War. The federal government sent representatives in the 1880s to treaty discussions with European powers on the global gold standard and fixing the Prime Meridian.\textsuperscript{13} U.S. foreign policy makers renegotiated their diplomatic relationship with Britain in the same period. In the 1870s the Hayes administration attempted to renegotiate the Clayton Bulwer Treaty so that the United States would control any future Central American trans isthmian canal. Congress settled international copyright standards in 1891, an issue that long dogged Anglo-American relations.\textsuperscript{14} Diplomatically the United States became a global actor with the international standing - maybe not of Britain - but of other European powers.

American global trade also expanded massively in this period and became less centred on the Atlantic, by 1880 the country produced, according to Tyrrell, a “disproportionally large” 16 percent of all global exports.\textsuperscript{15} Marc-William Palen describes American trade policy by the 1890s as aggressively nationalist with strong

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{12} Bender, \textit{A Nation among Nations}, p. 203-04.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Milton Plesur, ‘Rumblings Beneath the Surface, America’s Outward Thrust, 1865-1890’ \textit{The Gilded Age}, ed. by H. Wayne Morgan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970) pp.140-168. 153-54.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 159, 161.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Tyrrell, \textit{Transnational Nation}, p. 23.
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trade barriers. The Federal government readily engaged in trade wars in the 1880s with France and Germany over commodities like American pork. Thomas Bender argues that, in the century’s last decades, Americans developed a vision of the world that saw openness to American imports as a sign of civilisation. The United States did not create a territorial empire like European powers but a commercial one, whose mission was to open the world to American products that would ‘civilise’ the globe.

Alex Goodall and Michael Patrick Cullinane argue that this commercial expansion was almost universally popular. Financial crises were often blamed on industrial over production, and international trade was widely understood as a salve to this problem. This commercial expansion was not popularly understood at the time as imperial and did not inspire the kind of opposition later American territorial expansion in the Caribbean and Asia did after 1898. This project examines a period of American global expansion that informed visitors’ ideas about the two nations but ends before the United States became a formal empire.

Several scholars identify how late-nineteenth-century Americans revaluated their racial identity in the wake of this economic expansion and new global outlook. Particularly these scholars identify why Americans believed that their racial identity was exceptional. Amy Kaplan argues that late-nineteenth-century Americans like Frederick Jackson Turner and Josiah Strong saw the American frontier as a proving ground that created the highest form of Anglo-Saxon manhood. After the frontier’s closure white Americans, in the racial thinking Kaplan charts, would, almost inherently, spread themselves and American culture across the globe. Experience abroad showed how white Americans were superior to other powers in the period. Edward Blum examines how American missionaries were often portrayed as superior to those from other nations, more easily able to convert colonised peoples and spread ‘civilisation.’ Mona Domosh shows how expanding American international trade shaped notions about American civilisation. Americans spread their civilisation through the sale of commercial products. Commercial literature and advertising

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17 Plesur, ‘Rumblings Beneath the Surface,’ p. 147.
18 Bender, *A Nation among Nations*, pp. 190, 205.
showed that this peaceful and distinctly American way of civilising foreign people, as opposed to European empires’ violence and coercion, made the United States a distinct and superior nation.22 U. S. commercial expansion abroad allowed Americans could see how they were exceptional compared to other colonial nations.

American visitors and observers of these later events understood this changing international roll. In 1876 the United States hosted its first world’s fair, a symbol that the nation was more active globally, but this experience was so new, and the event was so potentially damaging to American standing abroad that U.S. visitors still relied on their cultural connections to Britain to buttress the event. At the later fairs visitors were less impressed by British displays, and the old country was no longer needed to vindicate American participation. The World’s Columbian Exposition showed American industrial and military capacity as the pinnacle of human development, and American visitors and observers simply did not need to emphasise a strong link with Britain. American notions about Britain at these fairs were not based on Anglo-Saxonist racial links.23 American observers of the fairs focused on their cultural and historical relationship with Britain when necessary and then discounted it when it was unneeded. American visitors were confident enough in their distinct and exceptional national identity by 1893 they no longer needed to emphasise the transatlantic connection.

American exhibits consistently fascinated British visitors and observers, and at each fair British attendees explained American products and innovations as the result of the country’s British heritage. The United States was, for these writers at the fairs, an exaggerated Britain; a new territory and a new form of government, but still, in some ways, a product of the metropole. Towards the end of the period British visitors’ interest in American products became more enmeshed in late-nineteenth-century popular racial beliefs. American products and displays proved to British visitors that the United States was a similar industrial and imperial power, and that the two nations were therefore members of the same Anglo-Saxon race. British visitors to the final two fairs covered in this project understood Americans as engaged in a similar Anglo-Saxon endeavour to civilise and settle global frontiers. These visitors believed the United States was a potential ally and a nation Britain could guide, as a kind of paternal example of economic development, into prosperity. At the same time

22 Mona Domosh, American Commodities in an Age of Empire (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 2-4
that American visitors to these events discarded their connections to Britain, British visitors’ fascination with the United States became more defined and intense.

These views of the United States reflected how British visitors felt about their nation’s late-nineteenth-century global role. 1851’s Crystal Palace marked the cementing of free trade, and thus an industrial export economy, as a central pillar of Britishness. The fair attempted to show how interconnected trade, under British auspices, brought global peace.24 Starting in the 1870s British industrial outputs were far less dominant in the global market.25 This industrial decline had tangible political results. Decline challenged Liberal orthodoxy, in the 1890s Gladstone’s low tax policies were no longer feasible and revenue had to rise. 26 Beginning in the 1870s British politicians questioned free trade dogma.27 Towards the end of this project’s period British imperial dominance also declined. At Majuba Hill in 1881 a Boer army forced British withdrawal from the Transvaal. Four years later General Gordon was killed defending Khartoum, a defeat widely blamed on the government’s dithering and inaction.28 As a result of this sense of economic, imperial, and international decline new popular political forces emerged in Britain, most notably Joseph Chamberlain’s pro-imperial advocacy for Empire-wide federation.29 Duncan Bell argues that this decline fed into renewed ideas about British imperialism. Faced with relative national decline metropolitan Britons, according to Bell, constructed a view of themselves as Anglo-Saxons imbued with a special civilisation, and particular innate attributes which helped them settle global frontiers. This Anglo-Saxonism stressed that while Britain may have declined, innate British attributes like independence, manliness, self-government, and industriousness meant that British people were fated to control the world. Bell notes that the United States’ inclusion in this ‘Greater Britain’ concept varies depending on the sources employed. However, his characterisation of late-nineteenth-century British Anglo-Saxonism explains British reactions to American exhibits at the fairs.30 This sense of imperial and

27 Palen, The ‘Conspiracy’ of Free Trade, p. 207.
economic decline, and growing interest in empire and race, inspired British visitors’ fascination with the United States at the fairs, and popular belief that Americans were fellow Anglo-Saxons.

These conclusions revisit and sharpen several historians’ work on nineteenth-century Anglo-American relations. Sam W. Haynes and Kariann Yakota’s work most shape this dissertation’s examinations of American visitors and observers. Both historians identify early-nineteenth-century moments when American cultural and national identity became untethered to Britain; when Americans no longer felt attached to British culture and believed they had created their own distinct nationality. Haynes identifies this cultural break at the Mexican-American War; Yakota argues that the fissure was piecemeal over nineteenth century’s first half. This dissertation extends this cultural connection to Britain into the late nineteenth century and suggests that in the international context presented by these fairs American visitors and observers retained their cultural links to Britain. Only in the last decades of the century, when American visitors became more confident in their national power, did these transatlantic connections fade completely.

Historians of the Anglo-American relationship like Kathleen Burk and Duncan Andrew Campbell both identify the end of the century as an important turning point in Anglo-American relations. Campbell and Burk pinpoint the 1871 Treaty of Washington, which settled American claims for compensation for British citizen’s material support for the Confederacy during the Civil War, as the beginning of a period of Anglo-American diplomatic rapprochement. While both historians centre their work on the diplomatic relationship they also claim that elite British and American people realised their commonalities in the period. Campbell and Burk note that British and American observers understood that the two nations had similar industrial economies, common political reform movements targeting causes like poverty, temperance, and women’s suffrage, and a shared literature. Both historians realise the limits of this social rapprochement. Burk notes that the late-nineteenth-century United States saw the rise of Anglophobic Populism, and increased Anglo-

33 Burk, Old World, New World, pp. 308-79, Campbell Unlikely Allies, pp. 226-51
American imperial tension in Latin America, not all Americans saw similarities between the two nations.\textsuperscript{34} Campbell is hazier about the limits of this popular late-nineteenth-century rapprochement, he notes the rise in transatlantic cultural exchanges in literature and material goods after the Civil War. In one passage Campbell compares U.S. Anti-Imperialists with British opponents of the Boer War to show the similarities between the two nations, noting that even those opposed to empire building could see Anglo-American similarities.\textsuperscript{35} Both historians, because of their focus on diplomacy and elites, leave space for an examination of how American and British people popularly conceived of and understood the Anglo-American relationship. This study examines visitors to world’s fairs to address popular conceptions of the relationship, and so is able to examine how large groups of people without deep interest in the relationship felt about transatlantic links in the period.

Stuart Anderson also suggests that an Anglo-American rapprochement emerged in the late-nineteenth century. Anderson examines ideas about transatlantic racial bonds in this period, and expands on Bradford Perkins’ argument that Anglo-American relations improved markedly at the tail end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries based on a common belief in Anglo-American racial identity.\textsuperscript{36} Study of British politics and foreign policy provides ample evidence to justify this belief; and Anderson identifies popular manifestations of Anglo-Saxonism among Eastern Brahmins.\textsuperscript{37} Anderson provides an excellent study of American elite notions about the transatlantic relationship. This dissertation argues that by examining larger groups of Americans a different understanding of the country’s relationship to Britain emerges.

Belief in common Anglo-Saxon traits was popular in Britain because it united British people with settlers in the Empire.\textsuperscript{38} Whether Americans considered themselves Anglo-Saxons in this transnational way is debatable. Paul Kramer argues that, after 1893, there was a moment of Anglo-Saxonism in the U.S. during the United States’ 1898 colonial conquest of the Philippines. This belief in common global Anglo-Saxons qualities aligned the British and new American empires. Americans

\textsuperscript{34} Burk, \textit{Old World, New World}, pp. 384-85.
\textsuperscript{37} To be fair much of American foreign policy particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was made by Eastern elites like John Hay see Walter LaFeber, \textit{The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750} 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1989), p. 206-07.
\textsuperscript{38} Bell, \textit{The Idea of Greater Britain}, p. 60.
'civilizing’ the Philippines considered themselves Anglo-Saxons engaged in the same mission to uplift their new colonial subjects. Kramer makes much of Rudyard Kipling’s and other British support for the conflict and for the U.S.’ new status as an empire, to support this belief in American Anglo-Saxonism.

However, Kramer himself notes that American exceptionalism and this transatlantic Anglo-Saxonism do not fit together perfectly. Or as Henry Adams put it about Kipling: “Kipling and the American were not one, but two and could not be glued together.” American imperialists compared their rule in the Philippines to the British Empire but also to Germany’s colonies, or posited that the mixture of European ethnic groups made the United States a more dynamic imperial power. Anti-imperialists inverted Anglo-Saxonism and argued that the United States was superior to European empires because it did not violently seize foreign colonies. Amy Kaplan’s examination of colonial novels shows that American imperialists actually compared themselves favorably to British counterparts and believed they created a superior form of colonial rule. Kramer ends his book on the Philippines with an explanation of race as ‘sliding scale’ able to be moved to fit certain historical contexts. This project does not deny that some Americans may have thought of themselves as transatlantic Anglo-Saxons during the Spanish-American war and subsequent conquest of the Philippines, or even during the fairs. Rather it suggests that at theses fairs there was little popular Anglo-Saxonism. Americans at the exhibitions at the end of the century could use terms like ‘Anglo-Saxon’ to refer to white Americans but they saw their nation, presented in these fair’s contexts, as exceptional and so distinct from Britain.

This lack of Anglo-Saxonism in the United States does not mean that the American identity examined in this thesis was not racial in any way. These fairs towards the end of the period showed American white racial identity to be rather than Anglo-Saxon distinctly American. Towards the end of the period figures like Theodore Roosevelt posited that the country’s mix of European peoples and its

40 Ibid., p. 121.
44 Kaplan, The Anarchy of Empire, p. 119.
particular geographical conditions had created a distinct American white race. Roosevelt’s ideas about race fit well with other late-nineteenth-century notions about national and racial identity in the United States. Frederick Jackson Turner gave his paper ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’ at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, in which he postulated that American identity was distinct because it was forged on the frontier, Americans were different and exceptional compared to other white people because of their history of settlement. As Americans crafted these new understandings of white racial identity, their cultural and historical connection to Britain became, at these events, less important.

Exhibitions themselves could help create this distinct and exceptional white American racial identity. These events portrayed American civilisation juxtaposed against displays of primitivism particularly in the form of American Indians and other colonised peoples. American Indians were, according to Lee Baker, used in displays of U.S. culture and industry as a counterpoint to American progress. American Indians were presented as people who refused to participate in American civilisation and were thus consigned to destruction. They also served as a baseline to show just how advanced American culture was. David Roediger shows how this juxtaposition between whites and other races created an exceptional American white racial identity. By examining minstrelsy, another popular presentation of non-white inferiority in the United States, Roediger notes that displays of superiority united American whites. All classes of American society could feel superior and equal at a display of African-American inferiority. Even working-class immigrants could claim a white identity by appearing superior to exhibited non-whites. Alexander Saxton argues this ‘white egalitarianism,’ as he terms it, existed into the late-nineteenth century. After the Western frontier’s close Americans turned their contempt on non-white races from across the globe. Saxton specifically cites the rise of Anti-Asian immigration movements in the final decades of the century to show how white Americans constructed themselves as superior to foreign labourers charged with undercutting

wages for white working men. U.S. hosted events presented a space where white Americans of all social and ethnic backgrounds could see their own superiority and exceptional racial identity, rather than a space to show common Anglo-Saxonism.

This examination of British visitors reveals that throughout the period their notions about the United States at these fairs remained consistently positive. They saw the American sections as proof both of the country’s strong economy, and as the period progressed, the two countries’ racial similarities. These conclusions expand on work examining British economic ideas about the United States, and British racial ideology. Both Peter O’Connor and Mark-William Palen explore nineteenth-century British attitudes towards the American economy and argue that British observers of the United States understood the country’s industry and manufacturing through the prism of free trade. O’Connor notes that British travellers to the American South, even reformers like Harriet Martineau, were sympathetic to Southern sectional grievances because of the region’s free-trade politics. Palen argues that British politicians were, throughout the late-nineteenth-century, deeply interested in American political wrangling over tariffs, and advocated for free-trade candidates like Samuel Tilden, or Grover Cleveland. This study shows that popularly many British visitors and observers of these Exhibitions saw the late-nineteenth-century American economy as singularly powerful and promising because of a similar or shared racial identity. British faith in the American economy was not, at these fairs, necessarily shaped by trade, but by belief in a shared race and destiny.

British visitors at these fairs understood the American economy as singularly impressive, and proffered, particularly at later events, Anglo-Saxonist explanations of is growth. This assertion does not so much challenge as complicate Palen and O’Connor’s characterisations. British visitors at these fairs could be at once critical of American protectionism, and firm believers in shared racial traits between the two nations. Adam I.P. Smith’s work on British nineteenth-century political conceptions of the United States suggests that observers of the country often held contradictory ideas. The United States, Smith illustrates, could in the British political imagination be at once a land of prosperity, of economic exploitation, of democracy for the

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51 Palen, *The ‘Conspiracy’ of Free Trade*, pp. 95, 105-06.
common man, and oligarchical big business. Narratives about the United States were shifting and contradictory, and the fairs were a place to both critique American protectionism, but also celebrate its expansive and promising economy and identify the two nations’ shared traits.

This dissertation’s exploration of British visitors’ belief in transatlantic racial similarities is informed by scholarship on changing British ideas about race and empire in the period. John M. MacKenzie, Bill Schwarz, and Catherine Hall, explore British popular ideological imperialism in this period, which shaped how British visitors and observers understood the United States. All three suggest that imperialism and understandings of race shaped how late-nineteenth-century British people understood the world and their place in it. Nineteenth-century British racial identity, Hall asserts, was based on belief in superiority to imperial subjects. British inherent superiority explained to citizens of the metropole how the nation came to dominate so much of the globe. MacKenzie and Schwarz argue that imperialism emerged as a popular political movement in this period. MacKenzie shows how understandings of racial difference spread through new late-nineteenth-century media like illustrated newspapers and exhibitions and mediated how British people understood the world around them. Schwarz connects this popular imperialism to party politics and particularly fears about British decline. He identifies certain figures, notably Joseph Chamberlain, who propagated a popular idea that imperial expansion could arrest British decline. Chamberlain argued that if only Anglo-Saxon imperial attributes, most clearly expressed on colonial frontiers - manliness, innovation, and self-reliance - could be reimported back to the metropole, Britain’s decline could be arrested. Exhibitions were spaces to imbibe this imperial ideology, because they displayed to metropolitan citizens their industrial superiority, and subject people’s inferior goods and ‘uncivilised’ societies. These fairs are spaces to

53 One could include the entirety of Hall’s oeuvre here but of particular use to this project are Hall, White, Male, and Middle-Class, and At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World ed. by Catherine Hall, and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader, ed. by Catherine Hall, (New York: Routledge, 2000).
54 Hall, White, Male, and Middle-Class, p. 206-09.
examine how popular British notions about race helped form conceptions of the United States. American economic success, vast resources, great perfusion of goods, and growth both industrially and territorially exhibited at the fairs proved that the country was in some ways racially associated with Britain. British visitors’ fascination with the United States at these fairs fits well with these historians’ characterisation of imperial ideology in the period. British visitors had by the 1890s a racial identity that American displays at these fairs appealed and related to.

British ideas about how racial and national identity differed were, in this period, murky and complex. British visitors saw the United States at these fairs as in some ways comparable to their nation. This understanding was in some ways distinct from notions that the two nations were racially aligned. Scholars of the Greater British World like Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich posit that British identity was in this period expansive and transregional. British people since the seventeenth century left the country in the hundreds of thousands and created newer and slightly different Britains in North America and Australia.58 The extent to which this British World was demarcated on racial lines is variable and depends on the subjects examined. Bridge and Fedorowich argue the term ‘British World’ refers to a sentimental and institutional connection between different territories, but also a map of cultural, political, and social networks between people throughout these societies, both things non-white people, as opposed to British settlers, in the Empire could also lay claim to.59 James Belich suggests that Anglo-Saxonism is simply the mythology supporters of the Greater British World, or further Greater British integration used to support their claims.60 This understanding of Anglo-Saxonism and its connection to a British identity does help explain British notions about the United States. Anglo-Saxonism provided a scientific rhetoric that explained the institutional similarities between the two nations. While racial and national identity were different, the latter more focused on shared institutions rather than common inherent attributes, they were linked, and both were seen as commonly held between Britain and the United States by British visitors and observers at these events.

This dissertation focuses on world’s fairs, but they are historical moments to explore questions about how large groups of late-nineteenth-century British and

59 Ibid., p. 6.  
American people understood one another. These events were planned arenas in which organisers created idealized images of their nations. Visitors, though, understood these displays as representative images of foreign nations, and generally believed that attendance at a fair could substitute for international travel. Visitors believed they would gain a better understanding of the world and their nation’s place in it at these events. World’s fairs in this period codified and organised the world and presented to their audiences a digestible image of global power relationships and racial hierarchies. Exhibitions were also places to show uncomplicated pictures of national progress and economic development. Visitors to these events could see which nations were industrially developed and also why they were so advanced. Organisers showed national development through historical relics, or juxtaposed their own industry against displays of ‘primitive’ colonised peoples. These displays made specific arguments about how racial and national identities evolved. These events purported to show the entirety of human production and so were spaces for visitors to compare their country to other nations. They are excellent insertion points to examine how popular narratives about Britain in the United States and vice versa changed over the period. The fairs both reflect existing notions British and American visitors and observers had about one another, and these displays inspired new ideas about both countries and attendees’ own national identities.

In order to understand these popular ideas about Britain and the United States this dissertation examines writing about these exhibitions more than it explores displayed products. These reactions and observations about the fairs record visitors’ understandings of the other country. The dissertation identifies narratives about the two nations that appeared in newspapers and other textual sources. These narratives

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61 The best version of this argument comes from Daniel Burnham organiser of the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago see Chicago, Art Institute Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Burnham Archives, Box 58, Fl.13, pp. 18-19.
65 Works on material culture particularly Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello ‘The Global lives of things; Material Culture in the First Global Age’ in The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World, ed. by Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-28, has been useful for this project, particularly in discussions about how tastes move across the globe. However, The Global Lives of Things employs different sources to this project. I am focused on the texts not the objects, so this literature on material culture is less useful for this project.
were based on descriptions and judgments of displays visitors and observers believed were most successful and indicative of American or British nationality. The project also draws on organising documents to examine how displays were created. Through this analysis each chapter explores the narratives and ideas visitors, observers, and organisers created about both countries at these events.

This dissertation borrows the concept of “narratives” from Lara Kriegel’s examination of attendees’ notions about the Great Exhibition’s Indian section, and particularly how guidebooks and other writing about the fair described the display. Kriegel argues that texts created around the fair narrated and shaped visitors’ notions of the displayed objects. By examining these texts and particularly the language used to describe exhibits, Kriegel identifies three popular narratives about India at the Crystal Palace. Guidebooks and newspapers described the colony as a fertile land of economic opportunity, an oriental treasure trove with a near infinite amount of cultures and objects, and a feminised jewel of the British Empire. These sources detailed various Indian displays, particularly their exoticism, or their economic promise, and they situated the subcontinent as central to Britain’s future economic prosperity but also a colony and therefore a subservient appendage of the metropole. Her methodology does not examine how every visitor to the Exhibition felt about particular displays but identifies commonalities in descriptions of India at the fair. This dissertation identifies narratives in a similar way, looking for commonalities in descriptions of exhibits to identify narratives about Britain and the United States.

Kriegel’s identification of narratives draws on several studies that examine how visitors understood world’s fairs’ meaning and purpose. Paul Greenhalgh notes that fairs obliterated conventional geographical constraints. At these events visitors could see the entire world from the comfort of European capitals. Visitors saw their own nationality displayed and could understand how it was superior to or distinct from other exhibiting countries, encouraging national chauvinism. These displays showed the relationships between different nations, and between colonies and the metropole. Several historians, notably Peter Hoffenberg, show how important this

67 Ibid., pp. 147-49.
68 Ibid., p. 156.
70 Ibid., p. 112.
destruction of normal geography was for British settler colonies. At these fairs colonies like Australia created displays that emphasised how vital their territory was to the imperial economy. These displays showed visitors how localities fitted into the global order. Organisers showed products they thought were indicative of their national economy, and what was most likely to impress visitors.

These events were spaces to gauge other nations, and this study examines how visitors and organisers judged British and American displays, how they wrote about the two nations and the connections between them these events highlighted. Burton Benedict stresses taste’s importance at the exhibitions and argues that objects on display were both “fences and bridges.” These objects were arguments for open trade and global commerce, but they also demarcated for audiences what was civilised and what was not. Fairs were a place, Benedict suggests, for people to assign value to objects. These three historians suggest the fairs were designed as educational spaces where visitors could form or alter opinions about their own and other nations, and judge how objects and displays fit in relation to their own nation. Visitors went to the fair to determine what was of value, what was ‘civilised,’ in essence to see, and importantly to judge, different nations’ productions. This project examines a variety of different sources to look for common judgements about both nations’ displays.

These events were also spaces to show national development and why certain nations were more advanced than others. In order to show national progress and civilisation these fairs showed certain aspects of history and existed in a linked chain. The 1862 fair was the ten year follow up to the 1851 Great Exhibition. It showed how British production and commerce had developed in the eleven years between events. Exhibitions also showed development by comparing production from imperial metropoles to displays of colonised people. Steven Conn notes that museums and exhibitions in the nineteenth-century United States showed societies as Darwinian organisms. Displays presented European and American cultures as more advanced and developed than other nations. This Darwinian vision of how societies compared in exhibitions chimes with Gail Bederman’s description of how Americans viewed their nation and its expansion in the period. Bederman argues that Americans saw

71 Hoffenberg, An Empire on Display, p. xiv-xv.
human civilisation on an almost millenarian Darwinian path, and believed that Americans were the most developed society on the way to perfection. 75 Exhibitions were places to examine this spectrum of civilisation and gauge where nations fit in this global racial hierarchy of progress.

Several scholars on world’s fairs have examined how visitors themselves understood these events, and particularly how true a portrait of the world attendees took these displays to be. Most of this work focuses on how visitors understood Asian and African displays, but it can be used to understand how attendees thought about the objects shown more generally. Timothy Mitchell argues that these fairs created what was real. Visitors presented with exotic scenes for the first time, and with no other reference for these subjects, had no reason to doubt the veracity of these displays. 76 Displayed objects, Steven Conn argues, could even be better representations of nations than actually visiting. Using China as an example, Conn notes that for many Americans travel to China meant a trip only to Canton. At fairs visitors could see objects from the country’s interior. By collecting objects in one space visitors could see a more complete vision of national identity. 77 Fairs could create, according to Meg Armstrong, an easy cosmopolitanism for visitors. By examining what was deemed representative of different nations visitors gained an understanding of the entire world. 78 Visitors’ descriptions of British and American displays can be seen in this context. The fairs showed, because they collected or at least claimed to display representative objects, visions of national identities to visitors.

This project analyses visitors’ understanding of British and American national identities at these events. These fairs are excellent late-nineteenth-century arenas to judge not just how visitors understood the transatlantic relationship but formulated their own national identity in comparison to other displays. However, as David M. Potter posits, national identities are not totalising, but are simply one element of many that form individual historical actors. Gender, race, and class identities are also important, and Potter chides historians for overdue focus on nationality. However, he also argues that nationalism and expressions of national identity are situational and

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can be contextually more or less intense. Historians of Americans abroad, like Daniel Kilbride, show that in international contexts like foreign travel Americans, confronted with different cultures, negotiated and formulated their own national identity. Like travel, international exhibitions are just this kind of context Potter describes in which nationality becomes the most important feature of one’s identity. These events, which attempted and purported to show the whole world in one space, are just the contexts in which visitors were required to compare their own nationality to others. These exhibitions showed visitors and observers how and why nationalities were different, what industrial capacity and cultural differences divided and separated countries. These exhibitions were spaces both to examine and compare national and racial identities.

British visitors and observers employed four overlapping narratives to describe the United States. First, British visitors to each fair did not arrive uninformed about the country and described it as prideful, politically corrupt, and overly demagogic. However, narratives about American displays at the fairs were generally more positive. In the second narrative, British writers at each event described the United States as a relentlessly modern country, a place where new technology emerged at sometimes alarming speeds. Third, combining this second narrative of American innovation with the perennial problems British observers identified in the country, visitors created a narrative of the United States - particularly at the final events covered - as a young and imprudent giant. The nation could create technology, but needed a strong guide, undoubtedly Britain, to show them how to avoid pitfalls on the way to global power. Fourth, British visitors and observers described the U.S. as a frontier nation, similar to Australia or Canada, settling the world’s rough fringes in the name of Anglo-Saxon civilisation. The great profusion of American natural material and, at later fairs, performances of frontier warfare in Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Shows, informed this narrative. The first two narratives remained consistent in British writing throughout the period. However, as belief in British racial supremacy grew the final two narratives of the United States as a frontier nation, and developing Anglo-Saxon superpower became more pronounced in the coverage of these events.

At the early fairs covered in this dissertation American visitors and observers held two related narratives about Britain. One narrative posited Britain as the United States’ traditional foe, a nation whose products American competitors wanted to beat. Related to this image, one might say the reverse of it, was a vision of Britain as the mother country, the place where much of American culture originated. This second narrative of Britain constructed someone like Shakespeare as not just a British or an English icon, but an American one also. American history pre-1776 was also British history and these commonalities buttressed the nation’s claim to cultural sophistication and suitability to participate in these events. At early fairs, between 1851 and 1876, American visitors often expressed both of these narratives simultaneously. A third more practical narrative of the country emerges from American sources later in the period, of Britain as a gateway and business partner. Britain could be a source of investment for American business, as well as a conduit into the European market for U.S. products. At the last two events this final narrative is much more present in the sources, American visitors discounted their cultural connections with Britain, and no longer felt any need to best the country’s products.

Written sources from the fairs reveal these narratives about Britain and the United States. Newspaper reports make up much of this project’s source material, but the dissertation also draws on travelogues, organisational documents, reports from exhibitors, and even popular novels about the events. As these fairs were massively popular there is much more material than can be reasonably accommodated in a single dissertation. This glut of sources necessitates selectivity about how to employ such a large corpus. This dissertation uses different kinds of sources that display particular narratives about either country, rather than attempt to incorporate everything written about the fairs. Different types of sources, which appealed to different readerships, are employed throughout the dissertation. With newspapers this selectivity is easiest. This dissertation identifies common narratives across a variety of different journals, with varied political allegiances and readerships. Guidebooks also reveal narratives about national displays and were generally written for different audiences. They could be cheaper and shorter, or longer and more expensive, and so appealed to different social classes. Travelogues, and other sources like novels, are very descriptive but their readerships more local and specific. To establish these narratives this project looks for commonalities in descriptions of these exhibitions across regionally, socially, and politically distinct source material.
Methodologically the source material employed in this project required a somewhat scattered approach to the archives. Finding a large number of newspaper descriptions of the fairs was relatively easy. However, parsing though organising documents and other sources was more difficult. I used archives in the three cities that hosted the world’s fairs covered in this thesis. These archives like the Newberry in Chicago or the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia contain organising documents, but more importantly they hold the guides and the ephemera from the fairs that this project focuses on. These institutions had everything from gilded-lettered colour-illustrated guides to personal scrapbooks filled with advertising cards and cartoons. These descriptions of the fairs, written for the most part by visitors rather than organisers, reveal how these displays were described and understood. These sources do not all give personal accounts of the fairs. Diaries or personal journals recounting these events do not reveal much, people who had just spent hours wandering the fairground did expend much energy recording each object they saw in detail. Nor were many of these sources written by women or by non-white people. However, they do in some ways reflect these events’ audience. When working through the archives I tried to gather as many different kinds of descriptions of the events as possible to identify my narratives of both nations.

These sources were created to help visitors better understand the fairs and the articles displayed. Geoffrey Cantor, writing specifically about the Great Exhibition, argues that these sources narrated visitors’ experiences at the fairs. In the great jumble of products and exhibits at these exhibitions, newspaper reports, guides, and travelogues provided some organisation and direction of what to see. Newspaper and journals often covered these events in a series of articles on difference exhibits published throughout the fair.\textsuperscript{81} Both visitors and people who did not attend the events used these articles to better understand the objects on show. The dissemination of news itself also changed in the period. Illustrations commonly accompanied articles by the 1860s. Telegraphy’s costs decreased in the period, and the growth in global transportation infrastructure allowed foreign correspondents greater access and the ability to print longer articles from foreign locals. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, and Catherine Waters note that these changes to the late-nineteenth-century press altered how readers understood newspapers. Illustrations and foreign correspondents

conveyed authenticity and immediacy in reporting. Readers understood these descriptions of fairs as accurate tours of the pavilions, and important adjudicators of what was important or worthy to see. The narratives that these guides to the fairs employed shaped how visitors understood the fairs’ presentations of international power and racial hierarchies.

The project also employs organisational documents that reveal how exhibits appeared, and how organisers wanted national displays to be shown. While organisers and visitors did not always agree on how to interpret displays, exhibits were created to present certain narratives about both countries. For example, American organisers at the first two fairs consciously displayed the nation’s natural resources, which fit well with British narratives about the country as a vast territory to be settled. These documents also reveal how organisers thought about other nations, and what they believed would most appeal to British or American visitors. These documents also reveal notable changes in how organisers’ ideas about Britain and the United States changed over the period.

This dissertation’s subjects are the audiences and organisers, who created the source material about these fairs. These audiences are massive and amorphous but can still be characterised. They included non-visitors interested in the event I have termed ‘observers’ as well as those who attended the fair. The fairs attracted millions of attendees; six million entries were recorded at the 1851 and 1862 events, ten million at the Philadelphia Centennial, and twenty-seven million in Chicago. Obviously it is impossible to characterise all of these subjects. However, visitors to these fairs were drawn from specific social, racial, and national groups. Organisers are easily characterised, and most were from wealthy educated backgrounds. Each chapter will contextualise the audience it examines but I will sketch out here - briefly - some commonalities between visitors at each of these events. These fairs also showed particular geographic versions of both nations. This section will also examine

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84 Richard R. Nicolai, Centennial Philadelphia (Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr Press, 1976), p. 84.
the changing geographies of both countries present at the fairs to show what versions of both nations appeared at these events over the period.

The source material cannot even attempt to capture how each of the millions of visitors understood the fair. These sources were mostly written by men involved in journalism of publishing. These depictions were meant to sell to visitors and those who could not attend the fair, and they reflect the authors’ understanding of the event more than the millions of visitors as a whole. However, these books were meant to appeal to visitors and reflect their interests, to guide them around the fairs and note what was most spectacular at the exhibitions. This description of the spectacular was an important part of the fair and how visitors understood the events. Meg Armstrong argues that these events were popular and memorable because they took otherwise banal products and made them monumental.86 The sources help reveal what was considered most monumental and spectacular, and why, and what exhibits, by contrast, were unimpressive. They shaped how visitors understood these events.

British hosted fairs attracted socially, and geographically diverse audiences. Part of the Great Exhibition’s and the following 1862 fair’s purposes were to educate the working class about foreign elements of styling and design, so new techniques might be incorporated into the products they created.87 The first two London fairs had attendances of around six million each out of a population of around thirty million.88 Contemporary sources describe the emptiness of northern cities during the Great Exhibition.89 Railway companies at both events hired out special trains to London.90 British factory owners often gave workers time off to see the fairs, and even organised such excursions themselves.91 However, the American fair in London attracted fewer visitors, and does not seem to have gained wide interest outside of the metropolis, though the Wild West Show element of the fair toured a number of British cities after the Exhibition’s close.92 Papers outside of London also sent correspondents to the American Exhibition, but often only published single articles about it rather than

88 for 1851 see Auerbach, The Great Exhibition of 1851, p.137 for 1862 see Bryant ‘The Progress and Present Condition’ p.78, for population of the UK see Nissel, People Count. p. 125
89 Henry Mayhew, 1851 Or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family: Who Came up to London To ‘enjoy Themselves,’ and to See the Great Exhibition (London: D. Bogue, 1851), p. 54.
90 London, National Archives, BT 342/2, Doc. 922.
91 ‘The Great Exhibition,’ The Leeds Mercury, 7 June 1851.
detailed descriptions. However, organisers tried to attract a socially diverse audience for the Exhibition. All three British hosted fairs were attended by an urban but also socially varied population.

American attendees to the fairs in Chicago and Philadelphia are more clearly geographically and socially demarcated. Generally, visitors to both of these fairs were white, and at Philadelphia native-born, and prosperous. One British visitor related that the Philadelphia fairground gave the impression that all visitors were native born and wealthy and that all the city’s labourers were immigrants. In Chicago, since the city was three-quarters immigrant or first generation American, the number of foreign-born or ethnic identified visitors was much larger. African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and American Indians, were almost wholly absent from these fairs. Domestic visitors to American fairs were somewhat regionally diverse, these events attracted most of their audience from the areas they were held in: Midwesterners in Chicago, North-easterners in Philadelphia. Visitors from the South and West however, attended these exhibitions, and newspapers from those regions covered them.

Most transatlantic travellers to these events in Britain in the United States had to be wealthy enough to afford passage and board abroad. British visitors to the United States in 1876 and 1893 were mostly from industrial centres, sometimes newspaper editors, or those simply fascinated by American production and trade. For unclear reasons, though perhaps they show up in the source material because newspapers often requested their insights, a number of backbench members of Parliament also attended the fairs in Chicago and Philadelphia. This cohort was more Liberal in Philadelphia and more bipartisan in Chicago, but these two groups - politicians and provincial industrialists - predominate, or at least wrote and commented most on the fairs. U.S. visitors to Britain in 1851 and 62 - I have discovered no American visitors’ accounts of the 1887 American Exhibition – were almost all Easterners, or long-term immigrants to Britain or Europe. Unlike British visitors many of these travellers were not urbanites; rural New England clergymen

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93 ‘ART. VII. -America in the Centennial Year’, London Quarterly Review, 47 (1876), 149–78 (p.176).
94 Burg, Chicago’s White City of 1893, p. 66.
and college professors predominate. Travellers’ sources reflect a more socially limited outlook than domestic visitors’ writing about these events.

U.S. newspapers sent correspondents to every fair and provide excellent source material for this dissertation. American press coverage of fairs held in Britain shifted geographically over the period. Eastern papers covered the Great Exhibition and 1862 fair comprehensively. Southern papers also covered the Great Exhibition, but because the Confederacy did not participate in 1862, these journals did not write about the event. By 1887, coverage of the American fair was much more nationally comprehensive. However, much of this reporting on the London fairs originated from larger urban centres like New York, Chicago, Baltimore, and San Francisco, cities with papers wealthy enough to hire foreign correspondents. At Philadelphia and Chicago American coverage of the fairs was regionally more distinct. In 1876 Southern papers, suspicions that the Centennial was a ploy to improve the Northern economy, condemned the fair. Similarly Eastern papers, particularly from New York, attacked Chicago as a poor host for an exhibition compared to their great metropolis, and denounced the Columbian Exposition. Both events attracted large geographically diverse audiences; however, press coverage of each event differed regionally.

The dissertation refers throughout to subjects termed observers, in addition to visitors. This term is used to identify people who wrote about the fairs without visiting them, these subjects were watchers of the fairs from afar rather than visitors who were more active participants. Many British and American writers commented on these exhibitions without making a transatlantic journey. Lyn Spillman argues that these fairs were able to communicate similar messages and narratives to non-attendees. Focusing on the 1876 Centennial, Spillman argues that the Exhibition propagated, even to those who did not attend the fair, a single American nationality through the creation and spread of national symbols. She notes that the published texts from these events were meant to be saved and dispersed, and that part of the fair’s purpose was to propagate certain ideas about American identity to the population at large. Much of my material, newspapers, and travelogues particularly, were created for these kinds of observers, so they could experience the fairs from afar.

99 Ibid., p. 11.
Spillman indicates that these subjects received the same narratives about the nations on show as actual visitors to the events. The project explores visitors to the fairs, but also examines writing by people who observed these events in both nations.

These observers provide excellent material that reflected the narratives established at these events. For example, in 1851 numerous American politicians, like American visitors to the Crystal Palace, revelled in U.S. products’ success over British competitors. These figures expressed the same joy that American products were shown to be superior to British competitors as Americans at the fairs and characterised British participation at the Crystal Palace in the same way. These observers help to explore the narratives this project examines and show their national appeal outside of the fairgrounds themselves. For the most part these observers recorded their reflections of the fairs in newspapers and journals, so their sources are not too distinct from those created by actual visitors examined in this project. The same papers printed observers’ comments on the fair as well as pieces by correspondents at the events.

These fairs showed specific geographies of both nations, rather than the whole countries. The version of Britain presented at these fairs remained consistent at each event. If one were to draw a map of the nation portrayed it would include Scotland’s industrial band, South Wales, Irish cities like Dublin and Belfast, and England’s entirety. Representation of Scotland and England in these events was relatively straightforward, which is to say that English or Scottish owned industrial firms represented both countries at the fair. Welsh industry, though, was almost totally funded and owned by Englishmen, and South Wales was the only part of the ‘Celtic fringe’ that experienced large movements of people from England for work.\textsuperscript{100} In Ireland a similar industrial situation existed; the Anglo-Irish Protestant elite almost wholly owned manufacturing firms.\textsuperscript{101} Given that English and Scottish planners organised these fairs, and they included products from Irish and Welsh manufacturers, this project’s use of the term ‘Britain’ is fitting. The fairs were mostly Anglo-Scottish events with the constrained inclusion of other parts of the nation. Certainly, this project says much more about urban and industrial British narratives about the United States, but there was also some regional variation in participation throughout Britain.

American territorial representation at these fairs shifted throughout the period. The industrial Northeast, including manufacturing centres in New York and New England, showed products at every event. Midwesterners also played a large role in these events both as exhibitors and organisers. Obviously, the World’s Columbian Exposition was held and organised in Chicago. In Philadelphia the Director General was Cincinnati Businessman Alfred T. Goshorn, and the originator behind the fair itself was Indiana college professor John L. Campbell.\textsuperscript{102} Other American regions were less consistently present at these events. The American South was not greatly represented at any of these fairs before the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. During the 1850s the South was a monoculture only remarkable for cotton, and it contributed only a sixth of the American products at the Crystal Palace.\textsuperscript{103} In 1862 the Confederacy was not invited to the London Exhibition so only Northern products appeared. In 1876 Southern States still suffered financially from the Civil War, and so could not fund great pavilions like other states.\textsuperscript{104} By 1893 Southern States had enough money, and were sufficiently wooed by the organisers, to participate in Chicago.

The American West’s image at these events also changed over the period. At the first two fairs held in London the American section displayed the West’s panoply of natural resources, great quantities of Western metals and minerals appeared. These early exhibits also depicted American Indians. Organisers presented the West as a materially rich region, but also peopled with technologically retrograde inhabitants. At the 1887 American Exhibition Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show displayed living performances of American colonisation of this abundant frontier, reinforcing characterisation of the region as largely empty and in the process of white settlement. At Philadelphia and Chicago though, where Western States had more power over their own displays, the region’s presentation was more nuanced. Western States emphasised their manufacturing and cultural sophistication.\textsuperscript{105} Depictions of American Indians, sometimes in living form, remained, but Western white settlers tried at the fairs to distance themselves from characterisations of the region as rough and unsettled. The ‘America’ presented at these fairs changed at each event, but as the period progressed a much more geographically complete, if mostly industrial,

\textsuperscript{102} Nicolai, \textit{Centennial Philadelphia}, p. 21
\textsuperscript{105} Ochsner, ‘In Search of Regional Expression,’ pp. 165-66.
image of the country emerged which incorporated the West, and to a lesser degree the South.

The first three chapters of this dissertation examine in turn the 1851 Great Exhibition, the 1862 Great London Exhibition, and the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial. These three events show the development of American visitors’ narratives about Britain as both a vindicator and industrial foe, and British attendees’ descriptions of the United States as industrially and economically promising, but also prideful and corrupt. At the Great Exhibition British visitors initially criticised American products as unvarnished, but after trials of U.S. goods British reviews changed. British visitors and observers saw the U.S. section, as proof Americans were inventive, and innovative, traits they doubtless inherited from, Britain. American visitors and observers reacted to their products’ success with near universal jubilation. The country’s products both impressed the world’s greatest power, and embarrassed and bested its competing industries. Very little changed in British or American narratives at the 1862 Exhibition. Even during the Civil War British and American visitors and observers of the fair believed that the United States was an inventive nation, the display’s small size did not change British attendees’ descriptions of the country. American observers believed that success in London, and vindication from the hosts was even more important in the context of war. The Philadelphia Centennial was the pinnacle of American demand for British buttressing and vindication. American organisers and visitors worried that the event would show the foreign audience American deficiencies and the nation’s relative youth and unsophistication. The British section showed historicised exhibits like Elizabethan follies, history paintings, and medieval armour, which displayed to American visitors their history pre-1776 and proved the nation, had a strong cultural heritage to draw on. The display vindicated the Centennial Exhibition as a whole.

The final two fairs examined show changes to the narratives British and American visitors and observers expressed at these exhibitions. Starting with the 1887 American Exhibition in London American organisers and observers no longer worried about British vindication of their products and instead hoped Britain would serve as a conduit to European markets. British visitors sharpened their conception of Americans as racially similar. Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show convinced many visitors that Americans were fellow Anglo-Saxons settling and civilising wild frontiers. At the final fair covered by this dissertation, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, American visitors were disinterested in the British display.
Like in 1876 British organisers hoped to impress with a historicised display that showed the two nations’ cultural connections. American visitors in Chicago were not concerned that the fair might show their nation’s deficiencies. Rather, the Exposition showed the United States as the globe’s leading military and technological power. British visitors saw this incredible display as a sign that the United States was developing into a world power, and that the country might be an Anglo-Saxon ally into the future. As Americans at these events lost their interest in Britain, British visitors only became more focused on the two nation’s racial similarities.
Chapter 1: “I AM AN AMERICAN!”
Britain and the United States at the Great Exhibition

On May 1st 1851, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert officially opened the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace surrounded by representatives of the participating nations and a gathered crowd. This global assembly, under the monarch’s patronage, confirmed for the British reporters present their nation’s world pre-eminence. *The Manchester Times* reported “the great variety of uniforms and costumes worn by the assemblage collected in the space around the throne, and the remarkable manner in which the proportion and decorative arrangements of the building brought out their position, rendered the spectacle which the north side of the transept presented a very imposing one.” Other papers, including the conservative *Morning Post* and Chartist *Northern Star,* covered the fair with similar descriptive language. The national power and prestige presented by the opening delighted each paper. These reports conveyed a clear notion that the fair was the ideal venue for Britain to show its global industrial dominance.

Americans also attended the Crystal Palace’s opening. American pacifist Elihu Burritt called the fair’s debut, “the grandest event that has transpired since the birth of our Saviour.” Horace Greeley reported on the event for *The New York Tribune* he edited, and served as the American commissioner for the medal juries; bodies that awarded prizes to the products on show. In the following months other Americans like the Vermont Scientist Zadock Thompson, Maine Clergyman William Allen

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5 International juries were appointed to give out medals to the most deserving products at the Exhibition, generally these were composed half of foreigners, and half of Britons see London, National Archive (Hereafter TNA), BT 342/2/437 p. 1. And Horace Greeley, *Glances at Europe: In a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Etc ...* (Dewitt & Davenport, 1851) <http://archive.org/details/glancesateurope01greegoog> [accessed 10 February 2015] pg. 19-21. And *Wilmington Journal*, July 04, 1851, image 3.

Drew, and U.S. Minister to France, and former Congressman from Virginia W.C. Rives arrived in London to see the Great Exhibition. These visitors, rather than understanding the fair as an example of British triumph, came to London to see proofs of their nation’s economic superiority.

British visitors and observers of the Crystal Palace initially understood the American section during the course of the fair in several distinct political ways based mostly around how they understood free-trade. However, by the event’s end British visitors and observers created a narrative about the United States as a wonderfully inventive country capable of manufacturing functional rather than showy goods, that was in some ways comparable to Britain. Liberals, believers in free trade, represented by newspapers like The Times, and large regional papers like The Manchester Times, The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, and the Leeds Mercury employed different depictions of the American section compared to protectionist radicals like ex-Chartists George Reynolds in his Reynolds’s Newspaper. And both liberals and radicals disagreed with Tories about how to understand the American display. Early in the fair, Liberals used the nation’s display to criticize both the United States’ commerce and society as unrefined and prideful. After successful trials of certain American products these liberal papers, and visitors to the fair, changed their notions about the U.S. section. The American section was, in these sources, not a failure, but presented an inventive economically auspicious nation. Americans, because of the resourcefulness and economic drive displayed in their section, seemed to liberal attendees to showcase the racial similarities between the two nations. These liberal attendees liked to see themselves as innately inventive and powerful, and believed that American successes at the Crystal Palace were the result of shared Anglo-American traits.

Protectionist writers on the fair, both radical and conservative, were less positive about what American success at the Crystal Palace meant for Britain. The U.S. section, in these sources, was a political lesson and a warning that the United States would, because of their protectionism, soon pull ahead of their former colonial masters industrially and technologically. However, both radical and conservative protectionists and liberals saw the American section as a clear indication that the

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7 Drew, Glimpses and Gatherings.
United States was a technologically and economically promising nation. Visitors and observers of all political stripes created a narrative that presented the United States as similar to Britain and economically impressive. Whether this innovative element of the country was frightening and showed how Britain should ape American trade policy, as it was to protectionists, or showed common Anglo-American traits, as it did to liberals, both groups’ shared narrative of the United States was of a fountainhead of innovative technology not overly distinct from the host country. This response to the Crystal Palace shows not only how British visitors and observers understood the United States but reveals how they conceived of their own nation. American economic capacity and its British heritage was enough for particularly liberal visitors to see the nation as, in some ways, similar to Britain and certainly less distinct than other nations on show.

The Crystal Palace showed American visitors their nation’s superiority to Britain, at the same time as it presented to domestic attendees an image of the United States as a country similar to their own. American visitors and those in the United States observing the Great Exhibition - the fair was well covered in the press - saw their nation’s participation at the Crystal Palace as a moment of national triumph. Early in the fair the American section’s poor reception caused sectional and political squabbling in the United States over who was to blame for the failure. Once American machines showed well in trials, however, Americans across the country’s sectional and political divisions celebrated this triumph. Newspapers and politicians, who, early in the fair, reacted at times divisively to failure, employed the same nationalist and Anglophobic rhetoric to celebrate the nation’s later success. American reactions to the fair illustrate the dual popular narrative about Britain in the United States in 1851. Americans across sectional and political divides celebrated American products’ superiority over British competitors, indicating that Anglophobia was a common part of American national identity that could bridge societal cleavages. At the same time Americans at the fair craved vindication from the British audience, exhibits were only considered successful when the London crowds deemed them so. Those interested in the fair in the United States saw Britain in two ways; the country was the traditional foe to be beaten, and the vindicators of American participation in the Exhibition and the country’s technological triumphs presented therein.

In an era of deep American political divisions, visitors and observers from across sectional and party divides expressed common narratives about Britain. These narratives of Britain created at the fair were so powerful and so popular that they were
commonly expressed by Americans of rival sectional and political allegiances. The historiography of the antebellum United States characterises the period’s politics as schismatic, with deep divisions between free-soilers, abolitionists, slave owners, Southerners, Northerners, Whigs, and Democrats. However, American reactions to the Crystal Palace indicate that these divisions could be overcome, and Anglophobic American nationalism could be constructed quickly and easily around a narrative of technological and industrial superiority when U.S. and British products were placed in competition. Where there were opportunities, like the Crystal Palace, for Americans to beat, embarrass, or best British competitors, Americans, at least those interested in the fair, responded with common Anglophobic responses. Anglophobic hostility could screen political sectionalism and was a nationalistic language that many Americans could connect to.

In order to explore how the United States appeared at the Crystal Palace, and particularly British and American conceptions of and responses to this presentation, this chapter takes a chronological format. First, it explores historiography on the Anglo-American relationship around 1851, to give some understanding of the ideas of Britain and the United States visitors brought with them to the Exhibition. The chapter examines the fair in three sections: the early summer cataloguing initial dismissive reviews of the America section and resulting politically and regionally divisive responses in the United States, the midsummer detailing the trials of U.S. goods and their success, and finally the autumn of 1851 in which I will analyse reactions in both countries to the American triumph. This structure will show the ways in which the Great Exhibition presented a portrait of the United States that highlighted, for visitors, the nation’s similarities to Britain. It will also show the way the American section stoked U.S. political and regional divisions before the reception of the display improved and it became a symbol of American united national triumph.


Britain and the United States before 1851

British and American visitors to and observers of the fair had notions about one another predating the Exhibition. This section will explore the narratives about the United States British visitors brought with them to the fair, and what regions of both countries provided goods for the Exhibition. It also includes a discussion of the regional and class identities of British visitors to the Crystal Palace. American ideas about Britain in the 1840s and 50s, and which regions of the United States organisers presented at the exhibition will be dealt with in the section’s second half.

The Exhibition opened in a longer period of transatlantic diplomatic tension. However, in 1851 there were few squabbles that marred the notions British and American writers about the fair had of one another. The Mexican-American war, and the dispute over control of the Oregon Country, causes of transatlantic animosity in the previous decade, ended or were settled by 1849. As it was, in 1851, neither territorial antipathy nor abolitionism was especially prominent in shaping British narratives of the American section at the Crystal Palace. Had the Great Exhibition opened a year later it would have coincided in Britain with the first edition of Uncle Tom’s Cabin and a popular wave of British abolitionism, sure to have coloured visitors’ notions about the American section.

Much of the historiography on British conceptions of the United States in the 1850s and 60s suggest that observers of the country were able to view certain American political and cultural elements as respectable, and others as detrimental. British visitors and observers of the Crystal Palace arrived with mixed ideas about the United States. Popular notions of the country accounted for American problems like slavery, and democratic demagoguery, but did not cloud British ideas about the American economy or the country’s prosperity. Richard Huzzey, Eugenio Biagini, Robert Saunders, Martin Crawford, and Peter O’Connor all argue that British observers identified certain parts of the country they liked and others they did not. Richard Huzzey indicates that before Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, abolitionists in Britain approached American slavery as gradualists. Immediate emancipation, these abolitionists feared, was dangerous, and there was just as much

concern for the future of slave owners as there was for slaves; abolition had to be non-violent. Peter O’Connor agrees with this gradualist characterisation of British abolitionism. In his detailed study of British travelogues about the American South, O’Connor shows that many visitors to the region accepted slaveholders’ paternalist dogma and advocated gradual manumission. O’Connor also shows that British visitors to the South, even ardent reformers like Harriet Martineau, found elements of the region, like Southern commitment to free-trade, or Southern gentry society, they admired. American slavery was criticised in Britain, but it did not characterise or totally shape British narratives about the United States visitors and observers brought to the Exhibition in 1851.

Both Biagini and Saunders suggest that the American democracy’s demagogic excesses – its to their eyes craven populist vote - getting - revolted liberals and radicals in Britain. However, the United States proved, for these same liberals and radicals, that instability did not necessarily result from the electorate’s expansion. The more politically moderate *Times*, as Crawford shows, could support American territorial expansion and economic growth, and at the same time slight the country’s republican institutions and attachment to slavery. British conceptions of the United States were mixed in the period around the fair, and not wholly negative or positive. The United States could be both a positive political example of the benefits of things like expanded suffrage, and at the same time a lesson against demagoguery. All of these historians’ works also show how the United States could be used as a political example or a model in Britain, and that observers of the country did not see the two societies as totally distinct. These studies also identify British observers’ ability to see parts of the United States, like slavery, as problematic without marring the rest of the country’s image. British visitors in 1851 may have come to the fair with critical narratives about the United States but could still see American production positively and did not allow other problems they identified to eclipse the powerful commercial image presented at the fair.

British notions about trade also shaped how visitors understood the United States in this period. At later events American tariffs consternated British exhibitors and visitors. However, anger over American protectionism did not cloud British descriptions of the country’s section in 1851. The Crystal Palace itself showed Britain as a nation devoted to free trade and its expansion. Anthony Howe, in his study of free trade, argues the Crystal Palace capped off a period of transformation in Britain between the 1846 Corn Law repeal and 1851. Commitment to free trade became in those years an important component of Britishness. Though protectionists remained politically active in the country. Free trade was not only important economically in Britain, but advocates for it like Richard Cobden stressed that trade would bring global peace. Nations would not want to enter into conflicts when they traded openly with one another. The Crystal Palace was an advertisement for this global vision of harmonious free trade between nations.

The United States was in this period protectionist, and one might expect that in 1851 British visitors would criticise the American display at an event so dedicated to free trade’s blessings. However, the fair occurred in a rare moment of transatlantic tranquillity on tariffs. After the Oregon settlement there were reasons for British optimism about a liberalisation of American tariffs. British traders had substantial interests in American grain, and the more liberal 1846 Walker Tariff seemed a step towards free trade. Increased transatlantic trade would, according to free traders, eventually show the United States the folly of erecting barriers to commerce. In the years after the Exhibition the United States would both raise its tariffs and end its reciprocity treaty with Canada. Two policies that caused alarm for British free traders. The later decision particularly seemed for British policy-makers to have pressured the colony into passing its own tariffs. In 1851 however, there was no reason to believe that the United States would not embrace free trade. The American section could fit into the Crystal Palace’s presentation of the benefits of free trade well as any other country in 1851.

This chapter divides British sources politically – liberals, radicals, and Tories – for two reasons. As shown in the previous paragraph British observers often examined the United States through a political lens, and this is for the most part how visitors to the Crystal Palace understood the American section. Other ways to analyse British ideas of the United States are more problematic in this period. Mary Ellison’s *Support for Secession* (1972), and Biagini’s criticism of it, highlights the problems with using class to discuss British conceptions of the United States in this period. Ellison argues that Lancashire mill workers supported the Confederacy, and by extension the resumption of the transatlantic cotton trade out of economic self-interest. Biagini, though shows that the Lancashire working class cannot be characterised as wholly behind one side of the conflict or the other. Individual members of that class had their own political ideas that were far more important in determining support for the Union or Confederacy. Some workers did back the Confederate States of America (CSA), but the whole class’ opinion of the United States cannot be ascertained. Viewers’ opinions on free trade, in this chapter, colour their understanding of the American section far more than any class identification.

Contextualising British writing about the American section at the Crystal Palace politically is also important because one’s politics in this period dictated understandings of global affairs. Margot Finn shows that part of a radical or liberal identity in mid-nineteenth-century Britain included a particular understanding of global politics. Solidarity with foreign liberals, or with repressed European minorities, was central to the political identities Finn examines. British radicals and liberals during the Great Exhibition, for example, were enamoured with Hungarian revolutionary Lajos Kossuth. These supporters saw the Hungarian revolution as the most politically moderate, and therefore the most acceptable and celebrated of the 1848 wave of revolutions. Just as political opinions helped shape British ideas about Continental Europe, they also helped define liberal, radical, and conservative visitors’ and observers’ conceptions of the United States broadly, and the American section at the Great Exhibition. Work on Britain and the American Civil War shows how British observers in this period constructed political visions of the United States.

Andre Fleche argues that Confederate diplomats struggled to find British allies during the conflict because they were in such a strange political position. Secession was clearly a conservative revolution, but it was also republican and therefore distasteful to British conservatives who were incapable of supporting such a system of government. Peter O’Connor notes that in the antebellum period British visitors to the United States in part formed their opinions on the country based on political problems they saw. British writers in the United States obsessed over American protectionism, and democratic excesses and used these problems to critique the country in the 1850s. Both these historians suggest that political ideas, more than class allegiance, shaped the way that British observers understood the United States.

This chapter explores British understandings of the United States at the fair, but the event attracted a large and regionally and socially specific audience. To adequately understand British conceptions of the United States at the fair it is vital to understand British regional attendance and contributions to the Crystal Palace, and what identities attendees brought to the Exhibition. The Great Exhibition was organised by an executive council based in London, and by local committees tasked with sending exhibits to the capital. Jeffery Auerbach shows that most of these local committees were located in England, South Wales, and Scotland’s industrial band. Exhibits for the fair came from industrial but geographically diverse parts of the United Kingdom. The Celtic Fringe, however, was almost totally absent from the Exhibition. Visitors to the Exhibition were also regionally diverse, though again from industrial centres. Organisers believed the event would present new styles and designs to labourers employed in manufacturing. Workingmen’s clubs and other subscription societies in towns and factories arranged tickets for workers, and organisers fixed with railway companies cheaper fares for Exhibition-goers. The Exhibition’s audience was as regionally diverse as the products displayed, and presented a specifically industrial, but also British, rather than an English or Scottish image of the country.

Work on American notions about Britain in the decades before the fair is somewhat contradictory, and Sam W. Haynes and Elisa Tamarkin present this

27 O’Connor, American Sectionalism, pp. 56-57, 100-01, 124-25.
disagreement well. The two historians have conflicting conclusions about American popular understandings of Britain in the period around the fair, though Haynes’ work is more focused on popular culture and so more useful for the project. Haynes presents antebellum Americans as anxious about perceived cultural inferiority to Britain, and obsessed, even conspiratorially, with British plots to threaten the United States territorially or economically. Tamarkin, however, suggests Americans in the same period were believers in a shared Anglo-American past. Tamarkin’s subjects believed the United States was simply a different better version of Britain, with a more promising future. During the Revolution Americans outgrew their bonds with Britain and created their own nation, but Tamarkin argues that culturally Americans deferred to British styles and models in writing and art. Haynes and Tamarkin differ over whether Americans viewed their separation from Britain as something constantly in need of protection, or if Americans were secure enough in their national identity to celebrate the nation’s British heritage. Haynes and Tamarkin agree that by the 1850s the latter is truer, but before then Haynes maintains Americans felt they had to prove their cultural separation. Haynes, I think, more correctly interoperates popular understandings of Britain in the antebellum United States. As he notes, it was easy for elite Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century to hold privately Anglophilic views, and at the same time publicly abhor British influence in U.S. affairs. The very sort of people Tamarkin writes about - authors, painters, and historians - are the types to hold these contradictory private and public views. This struggle over how to characterise their nation’s relationship with Britain explains American narratives about the country at the fair. American visitors and organisers wanted both to show the hosts their products were superior, but also British visitors’ acclaim. Britain was both the traditional foe for Americans in the 1850s, but also a nation to impress, and one that could vindicate American products at these events.

Compared to the hosts’ display, the geographical version of the United States shown at the Crystal Palace was actually a more comprehensive mid-nineteenth-

32 Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*. The discussion of Theatre Riots on pp. 83-84, as well as the place of Britain in the internal political fight over the Bank of the United States and Tariff reform pp. 144-74 are particularly illuminating.
33 Tamarkin, *Anglophilia*, pp. 104-12 Also a good explanation of the Britain’s place in American writing in the 1840s and 50s is Christopher Hanlon’s *America’s England: Antebellum Literature and Atlantic Sectionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), though it is more focused on American elites.
century portrait of the country. Exhibits from as far afield as California and Texas showcased the American West as a land of untapped riches. The American section also presented the eastern seaboard as the country’s manufacturing workshop. American visitors, and newspaper coverage, mostly came from the East, generally New England, New York, or Virginia. Many of these Eastern visitors published travelogues of their time in Britain to be sold to their fellow Americans. Charles T. Rodgers, of Philadelphia, even published a compendium of American success at the Crystal Palace consisting of newspaper articles and public speeches detailing triumphs. There was a popular market for information about the Great Exhibition and American success at the fair. Newspapers articles published in the East were also widely disseminated in the country’s interior in the mid-nineteenth-century. Northerners and Southerners attended and wrote about the fair; however, Western visitors were scarce in London. It is likely that Westerners consumed American descriptions of the Exhibition. However, this chapter says much more about Eastern narratives about Britain.

Planning

The British and American governments, in the months before the Great Exhibition, organised committees to plan the national contributions to the Crystal Palace. The American committee saw the fair as a commercial opportunity, rather than as a stage to show U.S. manufacturing’s superiority. American inventions, manufacturing, and natural resources, familiar in Britain, made up much of the U.S. section. British and American organising committees understood the purpose of the fair differently. The Royal Commission for the Great Exhibition saw the Crystal Palace as a stage to highlight British manufacturing prowess, but also to advertise the country’s ability to produce fine crafted goods and not simply the cheap products it was known for. This gulf, between the showy British section and the highly commercial American display, meant that the U.S. portion of the fair was widely mocked and condescended in the event’s first months. However, some American planning documents reveal that certain U.S. organisers wanted to show the country as prosperous and inventive as a result of a freer society. These organisers wanted, from

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the planning stages forward, to show American production at the fair as superior to British competitors.

Politicians like President Millard Fillmore, Maryland Whig James Pearce, and Mississippi Democrat and regent of the Smithsonian fund Jefferson Davis,\(^{36}\) made up the American body that organised the nation’s Great Exhibition display.\(^{37}\) Scientific experts on the committee included: electromagnetist Joseph Henry, geologist Walter R. Johnson, and Joseph C.G. Kennedy, superintendent of the 1850 Census. Two less obvious characters also served: the explorer and naval officer Charles Wilkes,\(^{38}\) and the newspaper editor and former Mayor of Washington D.C., Peter Force.\(^{39}\) No manufacturers or farmers were included - apart from Jefferson Davis who owned a plantation.\(^{40}\) Most of these men, including Force and Wilkes, were members of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science, a quintessentially Victorian scholarly organization that collected natural and scientific specimens from across the nation.\(^{41}\) The Central American Committee asked state governors to set up their own bodies, who would then send exhibits to Washington.\(^{42}\) Included with this directive to governors was an uninspired list of suggestions for material the committee thought was best suited for the Crystal Palace. Among the suggested products were: wool, lumber, lard, meat, cheese, fur and feathers. The Central Committee also asked states to send agricultural and mining implements to highlight the United States’ vast array of natural material. Textile production was the only specific area of manufacturing that the Central Committee wanted to include, to impress the British audience.\(^{43}\) These organizers did not want to present the United States in a particularly political

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\(^{36}\) London, Royal Commission for the Exhibition 1851 Archive (Hereafter RCE), RC/H/1/105, p. 4.


\(^{41}\) Washington D.C. Library of Congress (Hereafter LOC), The Peter Force Collection, Series 8D, Items 109.1-109.3, Reel 52 of 112. The National Institute, which drew up the Central American Committee was created by a number of Washington grandees in 1840 as the main scholarly body for the study of science in the United States. Their political lobbying seems to have centred on attacking the Smithsonian fund, and lobbying for a national museum, as well as acting as a repository for samples of natural material from the interior of the United States, and from American exploratory expeditions. See LOC, The Peter Force Collection, Series 8D, Items 109.1.

\(^{42}\) RCE, RC/H/1/5/38.

way. There were few suggestions from the Central Committee that a display of American manufacturing might show the British audience the importance of protectionism or commitment to liberty or commerce. The committee did not think American labour-saving technology was particularly important to show in London. Rather they wanted to show the nation’s geographic diversity in the most marketable way.

The American Central Committee had bland and marketable ideas about what sort of products were best suited for London, but at least one of the local state organizing boards had a clearer political vision. Whig organizers in New York State consciously tried to show American production as the result of free and protected labour, juxtaposed against the goods created by an underpaid, and repressed European workforce. In an account of the fair, Benjamin P. Johnson, one of the New York commissioners appointed by Governor Hamilton Fish, wrote of the British workers who produced goods for the Exhibition, “The condition of the laboring classes who perform the work is far different from that of our own population, and I trust the day may never arrive when we shall substitute for the intelligent, free and virtuous population of our country, the ignorant, vicious and degraded operatives of the countries across the Atlantic.”

Johnson, in his position as one of the judges on the agricultural machinery awards jury, wrote that American ploughs and reapers “were objects of no small moment to the English farmer, struggling with exorbitant rents, taxes, and poor rates with the foreign competition induced by Free Trade, which called for every possible improvement that would cheapen the production of grain crops.” Johnson wanted the American section to highlight the country’s freer and superior economy, as well as worker’s prosperity in the United States, compared to the “degraded” European workforce. Johnson’s political argument about the American economy is absent from a similar report written by George Vail for New Jersey’s organising body. The State was firmly Democratic, and so less protectionist, in the period. Vail noted the “utilitarian character” of the American section, particularly juxtaposed with European finery, but did not determine this difference

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46 Ibid., pp. 88, 153.
47 New Jersey, Commissioners to the World’s fair, London, Report, p. 3.
was a result of the freer labour, or protection, in the United States.\textsuperscript{48} It is likely different states had divergent political opinions on what to send to London. Some states, like New York, wanted to emphasise an image of the United States as socially freer, and protectionist, while other states, like New Jersey, did not.

British organizers thought the Great Exhibition was a way to relieve widely held anxieties about the nation’s global position, and its manufacturing prowess. Although Britain was the world’s supreme economic power in 1851, European rivals threatened its industrial edge. The country spent far less than all its European competitors on industrial education, and because Britain industrialized first, by 1851, rivals were catching up. According to Jeffrey Auerbach, at the time of the Exhibition British artisans had a reputation as the worst skilled in Europe.\textsuperscript{49} Associated with this fear of industrial decline was anxiety about the place of art in a mechanized world. Industrialization and the rise of cheap mass production created a crisis for British art and style. Could art, and better and more fashionable style, be incorporated in mass production?\textsuperscript{50} Henry Cole, the Great Exhibition’s chief administrator, felt this crisis deeply, and believed the Crystal Palace should be a space for industrial education. If the Crystal Palace showed only the most styled, fashionable, and well-crafted goods, British factory workers would, the Royal Commission believed, learn how to introduce these elements into the goods they mass-produced.\textsuperscript{51}

Britain’s display looked very different to the American section, and this discrepancy can be seen in a number of images. Figure one shows the “Medieval Court” designed by the architect Augustus Pugin. The exhibit showed crafted textiles, jewel-encrusted utensils, and faux medieval art, and was meant by its designer to display Britain’s history as a manufacturing nation.\textsuperscript{52} Figure two shows the exhibition of British “Hardware” at the Crystal Palace. This display was made up of highly styled and ornate furniture. These products were not meant to adorn the average British home, but rather were items to impress the audience with their beauty and craft. This ornate decorative style was almost totally absent from the American section, as can be seen in figure four. There was very little that could be called ornate

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 18-19.
\textsuperscript{49} Auerbach, \textit{The Great Exhibition}, pp. 9-12, 124.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., pp. 168-72.
on show in the American section, a small statue of a Greek slave was the only real piece of fine art displayed. Rather, a model bridge, a ‘rubber trophy,’ and a bloc of zinc dominate the image. Figures three and five show two of the products in the American section: Charles Goodyear’s ‘rubber trophy’, and Cyrus McCormick’s *Virginia* reaper. American products were functional, and certainly less showy compared with Britain’s display, and the rest of the fair. This difference between the sections meant the American display – much to the shock and horror of American visitors and observers – was widely mocked and condescended as rough and unimpressive by attendees in the fair’s early months. By the end of the Exhibition American products unfinished and functional qualities led British visitors, to see the country’s display as innovative and impressive, and to describe in their narratives Americans as similar to themselves.

**Figure 1: Medieval Court**

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Figure 2: Hardware

RCE, RC/F/2/1/16
American Failure, Early Summer 1851

In the Exhibition’s first months British and American visitors and observers of the fair reacted to the U.S. section in politically and regionally distinct ways. British writers, particularly liberals, criticized the American display as rough and unfinished. Radical and conservative commentators on the fair had a grudging respect for American industry as a good example of what protectionism could achieve. Liberal critiques of the U.S. section, both for those Americans visiting the fair, and those reading about it at home in the United States, were the only reviews that mattered. In response to this perceived failure Americans blamed each other, and British visitors to
the Exhibition, for the poor showing. Americans, of different political and regional allegiances, explained the failure in different, and at times divisive, ways.

The London *Times*’ criticism of the U.S. display stung the most for Americans. The paper described the inadequately-filed American section as “a kind of oasis in the desolate prairie,” so few were the exhibits and so great the space between them."54 Particular American exhibits were singled out for ridicule: “Our cousins do nothing like other people, and their originality, sometimes degenerating into grotesqueness is always entertaining…They show ‘a Siamese chair’ in which two people can sit face to face with a Republican disregard for conventionalities and etiquette.”55 Other American goods like “agricultural implements, mining inventions, raw materials, cotton and corn,” were “not very exciting affairs.”56 The *Times* also knocked Americans personally, “England is not given to boasting and swaggering; she generally understands her strength and studies moderation of language about herself…Her Republican progeny are not so modest.”57 Other liberal, free-trade papers, while more cautious in their reporting, were also unenthusiastic about the American section. *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* expressed “some misgivings…as to the effectiveness of the American show.” It blamed the lack of impressive items on poor organisation and the U.S.’ agricultural economy.58 The *Manchester Times* explained that the American section appeared disappointing next to the ornamented and finely crafted products from Europe,59 but the natural materials displayed were what the United States produced. What else could the nation bring?60 These liberal papers disagreed about how venomously to critique the American section. All agreed, though, that the American section was unimpressive compared to the rest of the products displayed in the Exhibition. In a field of finely crafted items, visitors did not see American rubber and zinc trophies as impressive.

Protectionist papers, both radical and conservative, liked the American section more. The republican *Reynolds’s Newspaper* described the United States’ section’s sparseness, “America sends us but few [products]– principally ploughs-

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54 ‘All Visitors of the Great Exhibition Must Have’, *The Times*, 27 May 1851, p. 5.
56 ‘This Is the Tenth Day of the Great Exhibition’, *The Times*, 12 May 1851, p. 4.
58 ‘Multiple Arts and Popular Culture Items’, *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 19 April 1851.
59 The United States asked for too much space in which to display, so their section looked particularly scant. More problematically some American exhibits arrived late to the fair. See ‘Practical Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry’, *Manchester Times*, 7 June 1851, and ‘Arrival Of The American Frigate St. Lawrence’, *The Times*, 14 March 1851, p. 5.
which, however seem to be well chosen.” The paper then listed some of the choicest products, and stated, “all seem very good and we regret that some of these implements were not taken to the trial-field, that their capabilities might be developed.”  

The conservative Morning Post also complimented American exhibits, writing, “The large area scantily occupied by machinery sent from the United States well deserves attention, for though the machines are far apart, and the place looks barren, it contains several things that are new to this country, and might be adopted with advantage.” American presses, engines, and fire grates particularly impressed the paper. 

The Quarterly Review feared Americans would use the fair, and their display, to induce emigration from Britain, and discover new innovations in textile design. Massachusetts’ mills, according to the journal, already outpaced British cotton spinning. 

Descriptions of the American section at the Crystal Palace in newspapers varied based on the journal’s opinions on trade. Protectionists, both radical and Tory, described products they liked in the American section, scant as it was. Certain American machines were, in the pages of these papers, impressive, and symbols of a promising economy that, one day, might rival Britain’s.

Figure 4: American Section

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In response to British criticism Americans highlighted their political and regional divisions. Southerners blamed U.S. commissioner and New Englander Edward Riddle, and foreman of American members of medal awarding juries Horace Greeley for the failure. Virginian visitor E.S. Duncan described Riddle in the 2 June 1851 edition of the *Richmond Enquirer* as “a horse auctioneer of Boston— a Man without the first qualification for such a position…a fellow who cannot speak a sentence of good English, or any other tongue except Yankeedom.” Duncan also believed that, “if he has any knowledge of the arts or literature we have not yet discovered it.” Duncan was even more critical of Greeley, who he described as a “man, without the manners of a gentleman – the rankest abolitionist -- the known advocate of doctrines the most disorganizing and the most horrible and disgusting that can be conceived by a Southern man.” Duncan was especially galled that Greeley “outranks us all; and as if designedly to make the insult more poignant, he may be seen [to] lock arms with a negro.”\(^64\) Southern newspapers also blamed Northerners in general for American failure at the Crystal Palace. The *Charleston Mercury* wrote,

> Our Yankee friends have not doubt very substantial grounds for disappointment, when they find their notions which they expected to ‘beat all creation’ are passed by unnoticed… and sink into merited obscurity when brought forward in untariffed competition with those of other countries. We of the South, therefore, have no cause for disappointment and may fairly leave that to be monopolized by the elegant manufactures of the North and East.\(^65\)

The *Mercury* forswore any association with the fair, and presented it as solely a Northern event, though there were twenty-three contributions from South Carolina.\(^66\)

In the *Mercury’s* view, tariffs caused American failure. American goods were at the Crystal Palace placed in real competition with products from free-trading nations, and this juxtaposition revealed the true state of U.S. manufacturing relative to other countries. The *Richmond Enquirer* also blamed the North for the country’s failure and hoped it would teach overconfident Yankees that the United States was not the only civilized nation on earth.\(^67\)

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\(^{64}\) *Wilmington Journal*, July 04, 1851, image 3.

\(^{65}\) Dalzell, *American Participation in the Great Exhibition of 1851*, p. 45.


overconfidence, and attachment to tariffs, caused the American section’s poor reception.

Northern visitors and observers took a different view of their nation’s reception at the fair: they blamed the American failure on British visitors, and, at times, even vague British conspiracies. Northern visitors to the fair claimed British unfairness and anti-Americanism caused the American section’s poor reception. D. Eldon Hall in *A Condensed History of the Origination: Rise, Progress and Completion of the ‘Great Exhibition’* characterised attacks on the American section as products of the “aristocratic classes” and their influence on the press.68 Scientist Zadock Thompson, visiting London from Vermont, chided in his travelogue, that “the superficial observer” could not appreciate “that real merit might lie concealed under an unpromising exterior.”69 Hall and Thompson argued British visitors were either too wilfully Anti-American, or were just too stupid to see the genius contained in the U.S. section. The Whig press in the United States, even papers like the *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, which before the opening had opposed American participation in the world’s fair, came to the nation’s defence in the Exhibition’s early months. The *Courier and Enquirer* explained that Europe was over-populated, so labour hours were cheaper and European artisans could be employed without much expense to create finely-crafted products. British firms could manufacture affordable beautiful goods because their workforce was so underpaid and degraded. American prosperity and high wages were, for the *Courier and Enquirer*, the reason the United States produced nothing showy. The paper also commented that continental Europe generally benefitted from better tariff protections than the United States, and this was reason for American failure to bring any finery to the fair.70 The *Hartford Courant* stated that free trade advocates in Britain needed the U.S. section to be a failure, in order to justify their liberal tariff policy.71 Both of these Whig papers agreed that the American reception at the fair was caused by British distaste for protectionism.

Northern Democratic papers responded more erratically to American failure. Both *The Boston Post* and Philadelphia’s *Public Ledger* engaged in a moment of

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introspection about American production, before both embraced a similar sense of national pride and rejected the notion that the country could have actually shown so poorly. *The Boston Post* reported on 14 June that the U.S. section deserved such a poor reception because Americans had long boasted overconfidently about the national economy. The *Post* continued, “These are unpalatable truths, but truths they are, and they better be told; for among all the nations of the earth here gathered together Jonathan cuts the sorriest figure by far of all.”72 Two days later the same paper explained American failure differently, and told readers the real reason for British criticism was, “The rapid increase of American manufactures is a fact that the British manufacturer looks upon with jealousy, if not with alarm.”73 Philadelphia’s *Public Ledger* followed the same pattern as the *Post*, writing in early May 1851 that the problem the United States faced at the Crystal Palace was that, “An American woodman’s axe is, in America, worth more than the richest mirrors in France. Transport that axe to the exhibition and its value is lost.”74 Americans, according to the *Public Ledger*, had a different understanding of value than Europeans, which was sure to cause a different conception of the American section. By the end of the month the paper’s argument changed: it wrote that British criticism of the American section was “prompted entirely by the jealousy of rivalship. People disposed to detraction always utter their *most* ill-natured speeches against those whom they fear most; and the English fear the Americans more than they do the all rest of the world.”75 British visitors criticised the United States’ section not for its relatively modest or utilitarian products, as the paper previously stated, but rather out of jealousy, and a conspiracy to deny Americans goods the true glory they deserved.

American responses to British criticism reveal the two over-lapping fissures in mid-nineteenth century U.S. politics: sectionalism and partisanship. Southerners blamed Northerners for the problems at the Crystal Palace. Northerners as a whole, though they focused on different elements of British society, responded to failure with Anglophobic diatribes. Whig papers explained it was obvious that the United States would fail to impress at the Exhibition but did so because of its own economic prosperity and commitment to protectionism. Democratic observers, after a moment of introspection, rejected the idea that the United States could show poorly, and characterised British visitors as jealous of American production. Yet, even papers

75 ‘English Opinions’, *Public Ledger*, 26 May 1851, p. 2.
that did not favour American participation, like the *Courier and Enquirer*, or initially felt the American section deserved failure, like the *Public Ledger*, eventually defended their nation from criticism, and attacked Britain. Anglophobia did much to bridge the gap between parties, and American success at the end of the summer would prove that even regional differences could be screened by Anglophobic American nationalism.

**Trials of American Goods and Changes in the British Press, Midsummer 1851**

British ideas about the American display at the Crystal Palace changed over the summer. Three products from the United States, a lock, a wheat reaper, and a yacht, showed well in trials, besting British products shown in the same category. A New England locksmith, Alfred Hobbs, employed by Day and Newell’s lock company, trialled the first successful American products. Hobbs picked a Chubb’s lock, the same firm that provided locks for the Bank of England. On a later occasion he also picked open locks by Bramah and Co. after the company advertised a 200-guinea prize to anyone who could break open their products. Responding to Hobbs’ success, *The Times* admitted, “Our descendants on the other side of the water are every now and then administering to the mother country a wholesome filial lesson upon this very text, and recently have been ‘rubbing us up’ with a severity which perhaps we merited for sneering at their shortcomings in the Exhibition.” *The Morning Post* declared, “Although Jonathan has failed to create a sensation in the Great Exhibition, yet he has made a stir amongst the bankers and merchants.”

In July, Cyrus McCormick’s *Virginia* reaper was trialled on a farm in Essex. McCormick’s machine cut wheat quickly, even after two of its competitors, one British and one American, clogged in the wet English summer weather. Chair of the agricultural implements section at the Crystal Palace, the Peelite Tory MP Philip Pusey, called McCormick’s machine “the most important addition to farming machinery that has been invented since the threshing-machine first took the place of

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77 Dalzell, *American Participation in the Great Exhibition of 1851*, pg. 47.

78 ‘The Great Exhibition’, *The Times*, 4 September 1851, p. 5.


80 ‘Green-Mountain Freeman’, 4 September 1851, image 4.
the flail,” in the *Morning Chronicle*. Towards the end of the summer, the yacht *America* won the Cowes Regatta, firmly beating its British competitors. The race was not held in conjunction with the Exhibition, but was, as an international contest in yacht building, thematically similar. The New York Yacht Club built *America* with a new innovative design, and the express intention to beat British competitors. *America* won so completely that when Queen Victoria was informed of the victory, she was in attendance on the day, and asked who had come second the answer was that there was no second, so total was the victory. *America*’s win caused a crisis of confidence in Britain, particularly in the maritime industry. *The Daily News* reported that in late summer 1851, that the Cowes Regatta was the talk of all genders, classes, and age groups in Britain. Captain H.J. Mason of the Royal Navy, writing in the *London Times*, argued *America*’s success resulted from clannish British maritime policy. Mason claimed British attachment to tradition meant builders could not make anything to compete with the *America*. The United States, with its open and unconstrained maritime industry, was able to introduce innovations while Britain lagged behind. Whatever the reason for the *America*’s success, the United States showed through its products, by the end of the summer, that its manufacturing was not showy, but it was useful and, in some areas, superior to British competitors.

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American success dramatically changed how British commentators saw the United States at the fair. Liberals were suddenly conciliatory, and even, at times, professed belief in Anglo-American racial kinship at the fair. Protectionists saw the United States, after the success of its products, as a clear economic threat. American triumph proved to these observers Britain’s declining industrial power and that the United States was now a direct rival. Though different political groups understood American success disparately they agreed that the republic across the Atlantic was, in Britain, a comparable political example. Protectionists and liberals picked out elements of the American section they liked, or thought were politically useful in advancing arguments about trade. U.S. products both proved the superiority of protectionism, and that adoption of American policies on trade would benefit the country. The United States at the Crystal Palace, while a possible commercial threat, was a familiar nation to British visitors, and so similar it could serve as an industrial or economic template for the nation.

The London Times dramatically reversed its of opinion of the American section. By September, the paper recorded, “It is beyond all denial that every
practical success of the season belongs to the Americans. Their consignments showed poorly at first, but came out well upon trial. Their reaping machine has carried conviction to the heart of the British agriculturist…Their yacht takes a class to itself.” 85 The British paper Americans most respected argued that trials of American products completely changed the national section’s reception. In finely crafted products, the United States could still not compete with Britain or Europe, but practical and utilitarian manufacturing trials showed that U.S. items could beat any competitors. In Leeds the Mercury agreed that the trials of American goods altered the impression of the country’s section, “The inventive genius and enterprise of our American brethren cause them to ‘go-a-head:’ in several departments of the useful arts; and not withstanding the small pains they have taken to shine in the Exhibition of the World’s Industry, they from time to time startle the world with their original ideas and their mighty progress.” 86 A commentator in The Manchester Times declared “Some of their mechanical inventions again manifest such ingenuity, and, being applied to the ordinary affairs of life, impressed me with that utilitarian spirit possessed by our American cousins, - and which they doubtless inherit from ourselves.” 87 At a dinner in Sheffield of the local commissioners for the Great Exhibition one speaker noted, “when you see the space which had been applied for by America, which has been sneered at as imperfectly filled, but which is not really so to the eye of the man who looks at the article exhibited-for our brethren of America there show that they have within themselves the raw material to carry out every article of manufacture.” The speaker continued “who can look at the productions of America and recall her brief history without seeing in them amazing proofs of progress?” 88 Successfully trialled American products changed the liberal narrative about the U.S. section completely. Liberal visitors no longer saw the American section as barren or unimpressive, but as practical and useful, rather than showy. American success also proved for these writers that the countries were not distinct. Liberal writers explained American ingenuity as a product of the country’s British heritage.

This explanation of U.S. success - that American inventiveness and thus the country’s goods - were products of a British heritage was also expressed at a dinner

88 ‘The Local Commissioners and the Sheffield Exhibitors’, The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent, 19 July 1851.
given by the Anglo-American financier Charles Peabody in October 1851, a few days after the Crystal Palace’s close. A number of British liberal grandees, including Earl Granville, the British minister to the United States Henry Lytton Bulwer, and the designer of the Crystal Palace Joseph Paxton, attended, in addition to a number of Americans involved organizing of their nation’s department. British guests at the dinner keenly stressed the historical connections between themselves and Americans. Bulwer claimed that visiting Americans had discovered the “home of [their] fathers,” and claimed, “your ancestors, side by side with mine, rushed from the heights of Cressy, or charged on the plains of Agincourt.” Thomson Hanky, governor of the Bank of England, questioned, “is it unnatural that I should feel a strong desire to see a sort of ‘Zolverien’ established between the United States and my own country?” Charles Fox, the engineer, continued in the same vein, “we have avoided the expression of that natural affection, which as descendants of the same parents, we silently cherish in our hearts, but which would audibly manifest itself the moment a third party should attempt to call into question the character of either.” American success led to a re-evaluation of the Anglo-American relationship after the Crystal Palace. These notable liberal figures underlined, after the American section’s changed reception, their perceived racial and historical connections with the United States, as a way to explain the country’s success at the fair.

British identification of historical and institutional similarities between the two countries was not, in 1851, a new observation. As early as 1822 Foreign Secretary George Canning wrote an appeal for the two countries to work in concert on foreign policy. “By a common language, a common spirit of commercial enterprise, and a common regard for well regulated liberty,” the two countries, Canning believed, were fated to work together. British diplomatic correspondence about the Oregon country included many references to the perceived similarities, and racial connection between Britain and the United States. American success at the Great Exhibition allowed for an easy expression of this belief in kinship. Trials of American goods did not so

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much create this idea of kinship, but rather allowed for its expression. Liberal visitors saw the American section’s success as proof of shared heritage. Before the trials of American goods liberal papers underscored the social differences emphasised by the United States’ section. American goods at the Great Exhibition showed the country’s republicanism, and its harsh and unrefined qualities. After American success these same sources saw the nation’s inventiveness as proof of its similarity to Britain. Liberal sources indicate that the Great Exhibition showcased the similarities between the two countries, and liberal newspapers saw American triumphs as extensions of their own nation’s technological and economic success.

Radical and Tory protectionists used American success to argue for tariff reform. According to these visitors, Americans succeeded at the fair because of protectionism, and were, as a result, in a position to surpass Britain economically. The Marquess of Granby argued in a speech published by the *Morning Post*, that tariffs caused strong economic growth in the United States, and warned “By the time of another World’s Fair is held the United States will be able to go there, not only as the ‘Great Republic’ but as the greatest maritime nation of the earth, and the greatest the world has ever seen.” 95 One speaker at a protectionist rally in Devon noted, “while we were here amusing ourselves with these principles of free trade -- grasping the shadow -- America was realizing the substance.” The speaker continued, the United States “Well considering the blessings of peace, they were improving their trade, their agriculture, and their manufactures, and at the same time they were attending to the requirements of war.” 96 These protectionists saw the United States as a threat. The Great Exhibition proved, for these orators, the danger of free trade and the United States’ economic power.

*Reynolds’s* also complained that the fair showed American economic capacity to Britain’s detriment. The radical paper claimed that at the Exhibition France and Austria clearly bested Britain in style and taste, and that “the Americans have beaten our ships” and “picked our locks.” The paper believed the fair invited “unnecessary competition to this country.” 97 *Reynolds’s* did not express any ill will towards the United States for besting British products. Throughout the fair the paper argued British criticism of the American section was part of a monarchist plot to discredit republicanism. *Reynolds’s* positioned itself as a defender of the United States in

96 ‘Mr. Buck and the Protectionists’, *The Morning Post*, 3 October 1851.
97 ‘Last Words on the Exhibition’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 12 October 1851.
response to liberal criticism, while at the same time it warned about the threats of free trade. 98 However, like conservative protectionists, Reynolds’s argued that the rise of the United States presented a danger for Britain.

The United States at the Great Exhibition was a model nation for British visitors by the fair’s end. Various political groups in mid-nineteenth-century Britain used the American display to advance a particular narrative that characterised the United States as similar to the hosts. Both nations, in liberal sources, shared a common heritage, similar institutions, and commercial attributes. American technological genius, and economic mastery of the vast North American continent, full of natural riches, proved Americans were not distinct from the British visitors to the fair. Protectionists, both Tory and radical, used American triumphs as lessons in trade policy. They claimed American success at the fair proved both that British attachment to free trade damaged the economy, and the benefits of the U.S. model of protectionism. Protectionists saw the United States as an expanding economy, powerful enough to threatened Britain, but also a lesson for how Britain could develop in the future.

This positive reception of the American section only related to one part of life in the United States. The Great Exhibition was not the venue to discuss thornier problems British observers had with the country. Demagogic democracy, the evils as opposed to the benefits of tariffs, or slavery – all long-held British critiques of the United States - were not discussed much at the fair. 99 British visitors to the Crystal Palace, when presented with an image of the United States as inventive and commercially powerful, saw a version of the country they liked. The narrative of the United States as full of natural material, of American inventors creating utilitarian machines to harvest the riches of the earth, was the narrative that seemed most familiar and impressive to the audience in London.

American observers reacted very differently to their nation’s triumph. Transatlantic visitors to the fair, and American writers in the United States did not see the fair as proof of Anglo-American kinship. Instead they celebrated, in the most triumphant nationalist way, the nation’s successful display as proof of American superiority over the hosts. The sectionalism that defined responses to American failure in the fair’s early months melted away. Americans from all regions and all

99 Slavery was surprisingly absent from British writing on the Exhibition, given the institution’s centrality to the American economy.
political factions patriotically celebrated the U.S. section’s success. Southerners, Northerners, Democrats, and Whigs all responded with, at times Anglophobic, boasting about the American economy, and described Britain as a bested foe, and a nation who had realised the greatness of American production, and so buttressed the country’s display.

Maine Commissioner William Allen Drew summarised American feelings in London in his travelogue,

The United States are feared and respected more than any other nation. Our skill, our naval and military prowess, our intelligence, our free institutions and our great and glorious country, so full and rich in natural resources, make us the wonder and admiration of the world. I never saw and felt the truth of this statement so veritably as I have ever since I came into England. I am proud of my country – and to be able to say, wherever I am – I AM AN AMERICAN! The announcement always commands attention and respect.100

Observers in the United States also expressed jingoistic hyperbole about the American section. The Boston Post wrote, “Nothing now is too good for us! Nothing can be said too much in our favor! Our cousins have all at once discovered that, while we have let alone all that is merely ornamental, we have been making applications of great principles to the useful arts in a manner truly wonderful.”101 Southern papers that previously attacked American commissioner Edward Riddle now published articles by him detailing American successes.102 The Courier and Enquirer wrote, “John [Bull] is beginning to find out the meaning and the use of some of the Yankee ‘gimcracks’ in the Exhibition, and is now showing a very marked inclination to drop the subject.”103 Whig Senator Daniel Webster said, at a public gathering in Massachusetts, that the position of the United States at the fair was “like the position of Jove amongst the Gods - Jove is first, and there can be no second.”104 His Democratic senatorial counterpart Stephen A. Douglas noted, “Our agricultural machines, especially, have excited the wonder of the world...it is perhaps, not unpleasant to have exerted the testimony of England, on this late occasion, to the ingenuity displayed by American inventors.”105 Southern politicians also celebrated

100 Drew, Glimpses and Gathering, pp. 316-19.
101 ‘Correspondence of the Boston Post’, The Boston Post, 15 September 1851, pp. 1–2.
102 ‘North Carolina Standard, November 05, 1851, pg. 5.
104 Rodgers, American Superiority at the World’s Fair, p. 122.
105 Ibid., p.104-05.
American success at the fair. Virginian diplomat W.C. Rives, commenting on the Virginia reaper specifically, wrote “Everybody in England now wonders that a machine at once so simple and so effective, and so precisely adapted to the wants of British agriculture should never have been invented and brought to perfection by some of their own people, and that it should have been reserved for a modest inhabitant of the mountains of Virginia.” Former president John Tyler agreed that American triumphs at the fair embarrassed the hosts, “Do you doubt that the brilliant victory of the yacht America over the long established fleets of Great Britain caused the heart of every Virginian to beat with pleasure, and we believed that the same emotion animated your breasts, when Virginia produced at the World’s Fair a Reaper that has outstripped all the farming implements ever manufactured in England.”

Across the country, and the antebellum political spectrum, commentators on the Exhibition saw American success as proof of U.S. economic superiority, and were particularly pleased that the country’s success had come at British expense.

American success at the fair erased the sectionalism expressed after earlier failures at the Exhibition. Whigs, Democrats, Northerners and Southerners responded to it in similar ways, and created a similar narrative about Britain. Britain was at the fair, now that U.S. products had triumphed a vanquished enemy beaten and embarrassed by American production. American nationalism, particularly Anglophobic nationalism, was easily created with success of U.S. products at the Exhibition. Political and regional divisions rightly define antebellum American history. However, when in competition with Britain, Americans were willing to forget what separated them and embrace a collective nationalism and a shared understanding of Britain as a vanquished foe. This popular response to American success at the fair suggests that antebellum sectionalism could coexist with Anglophobic nationalism and shows both how intense and widespread the American narratives of Britain as a nation to best and embarrass were.

Historians Major Wilson, Gary Gallagher, and Michael A. Morrison, each point out that American regional and political identities, divisive as they were,

coexisted with American nationalism. Americans in the antebellum era in the South and in the North, according to these historians, made the same nationalists references to the revolutionary era, and were both believers in the territorial expansion of the United States, though political factions favoured different methods to achieve these gains. As this chapter shows, Americans, North and South, could be equally Anglophobic, and celebratory about American industry’s superiority over Britain. A popular resentment and desire to best and embarrass Britain existed across American divisions in 1851 and was an important component of American nationalism.

American responses to the nation’s success at the Great Exhibition, though reveal as much deference to Britain as Anglophobia. Changing American responses to the U.S. section betrayed a widespread desire for British vindication. When British visitors and newspapers considered the American display a failure, this reception was, in the United States, mostly accepted. The divisiveness that characterised early American responses to the fair relied on the notion that British attendees disliked the U.S. section. Only the *Public Ledger* and the *Boston Post* questioned British reviews of the American section. Most papers accepted the veracity of the poor reception of the fair and found ways to avert the blame. When reviews changed, and when the American section was popular with visitors, then it could be celebrated nationally in the United States. American observers of the fair relied on British vindication of the country’s section to consider it a success. American newspapers and orators used the fair to differentiate themselves from Britain to show the United States’ superiority in manufacturing. Yet, they only acknowledged their nation’s success when British visitors changed their understanding of the U.S. section. The Great Exhibitions presents the dual American narratives of Britain expressed at these fairs well. Americans interested in the fair obsessed about beating British competitors, but also worried about the reception the United States’ display received from British visitors. At the Crystal Palace Americans needed both to beat British competitors, but also craved vindication and acceptance from the audience in London.

**Conclusion**

American and British visitors and observers had different and even contradictory reactions to the Crystal Palace. U.S. participation at the fair revealed common America ideas about Britain. Americans interested in the fair wanted to beat British competitors, but also needed the audience in London to vindicate the U.S.
section to consider it a success. The British audience at the Crystal Palace served a dual role for American commentators on the fair. American products were considered successful only when the audience at the Crystal Palace deemed them so. Initial poor British reviews of the American section at the Crystal Palace evoked sectionally-divisive responses from Southerners, Democrats, and Whigs. However, when American goods went to trial, and reviews changed, American observers papered over their political and regional differences. Americans of diverse political backgrounds reacted to U.S. success in similar ways. Northerners, Southerners, Whigs, and Democrats all engaged in Anglophobic nationalist boasting in response to American success. Satisfaction at British defeat was part of a common American national identity in 1851. This response shows the two linked narratives American visitors and observers had about Britain at these fairs. The nation was in American writing about the fair, both a special vindicator of American productions, a nation whose positive reception U.S. visitors and observers craved, but also the country’s traditional foe that needed to be bested at the Exhibition. This response shows how entangled American national identity was with both popular contempt for Britain in 1851, but also deference towards the country.

British visitors saw the United States as a nation that was less foreign than the others at the Crystal Palace. American inventiveness, displayed in the country’s section, proved that the nation’s citizens were similar to the hosts. Liberal visitors saw American success as the result of a shared common heritage and attributes. The United States showed at the Crystal Palace it was either an example for Britain to follow economically, or it was an exemplary version of Britain across the Atlantic. Both liberal and protectionist writers agreed that it was American inventiveness and production that made the two nations alike. British writers about the fair described the United States as a country that, at least economically, was very similar to their own. British and American writers on the fair easily accommodated opposing visions of each other in 1851. The Crystal Palace made the United States seem more familiar in Britain, but it only increased Anglophobic language and nationalism among Americans.

British perceptions of the American section at the Crystal Palace show how U.S. economic growth inspired new understandings of the United States as a similar and in some ways comparable nation and highlighted commonalities between the two nations’ production and political institutions. American visitors and observers at the event believed that their display proved they were, in areas like production, superior
to Britain. Though these American responses remained deferential towards British tastes and reviews, and the nation remained incredibly important in the American imagination, the Crystal Palace shows a divergent transatlantic understanding of the Anglo-American relationship. American observers used the fair to distance themselves from Britain to create notions that they were superior, while British counterparts saw the two countries as linked by the fair. This pattern established at the Crystal Palace remained consistent at the next event during the Civil War, and in some ways throughout the period covered in this dissertation.
Chapter 2: Britain and the United States at the 1862 London Exhibition

On 2 April 1861, Lord Lyons, British minister to Washington, formally invited the United States to participate in the world’s fair to be hosted in London the following year. Three days later, Secretary of State William Seward confirmed President Lincoln’s support for American participation in the Exhibition. ¹ One week after Seward’s reply the American political situation changed dramatically: on 12 April, secessionists fired on federal troops at Fort Sumter, and the American Civil War began.² On both sides of the Atlantic organisation for the 1862 Great London Exhibition continued, though the war restrained Northerners’ participation, and the eventual U.S. display was small and haphazard. Compared to the American display at the Crystal Palace, in 1862 the United States exhibited few products. However, British visitors to the fair, as their predecessors did in 1851, saw the American display as impressive, and indicative of the country’s promising economy. The small and scant Northern section in the Exhibition Hall was exceptionally successful, and almost every exhibit won an award. British visitors did not see the American section as small or meagre, and described in reports and guides impressive U.S. natural material and products absent from the display and recorded their faith in the American economy’s future. At the fair at least, British visitors did not believe the war affected American commercial power.

Notwithstanding this positive outcome for American exhibitors, the organisers of the 1862 Great London Exhibition faced a number of challenges in addition to the American Civil War. British organisers initially intended the fair to be the ten-year follow-up to 1851’s Great Exhibition, held at the Crystal Palace. They believed the event would show the decade’s technological changes and serve as an update to the previous fair.³ However, organisational setbacks plagued the Exhibition. War in

¹ United States. Dept. of State, United States. President (1861-1865: Lincoln), and Great Britain. Embassy (U. S.), Industrial Exhibition at London in 1862: Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting Copies of the Correspondence between the Secretary of State and Her Britannic Majesty’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary Accredited to This Government Relative to an Exhibition of the Products of Industry of All Nations Which Is to Take Place at London during the Year 1862 ([Washington : s.n.], 1861), pp. 1-3 <http://archive.org/details/industrialexhibi00unit> [accessed 4 March 2016].
² ‘Herald’s Special Dispatch’, Chicago Tribune, 13 April 1861, pp. 1-4.
Italy forced organisers to delay the Exhibition a year. Prince Albert’s death, in winter 1861, cast a pall over the whole Exhibition. The American Civil War, and particularly the restriction of trade in cotton, and thus curtailment of a large segment of Britain’s manufacturing economy, was another calamity that affected the Exhibition. At its close, visitors, and the public in general, widely considered the Great London Exhibition a failure, even though it attracted about as many visitors as the Crystal Palace. Critics noted problems like the dark and undecorated Exhibition hall that housed the fair, fewer awards were distributed to exhibitors, which angered foreign participants, and the event failed to break even financially. The Great London Exhibition was a poor sequel to the Crystal Palace eleven years earlier.

War in the United States also brought Anglo-American relations to a crisis point. British policy-makers weighed intervention during the first years of the conflict. American trade, particularly in cotton, was vital to Lancashire’s textile mills, and the British economy suffered because of the conflict. Members of the Palmerston Cabinet like Foreign Secretary Lord Russell and Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone believed, particularly after the Union defeat at Bull Run, that Southern independence was a fait accompli. These politicians reasoned that a British brokered settlement between the Confederacy and the rump United States, would be morally, economically, and politically expedient; fewer lives would be lost and there would be greater opportunities for trade. So long as the war continued, British and American interests clashed, sometimes almost violently, and in ways that created near-constant chatter about the prospect of war. Most seriously, in winter 1861 a Union naval officer seized two Confederate diplomats destined for Europe.

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5 ‘Multiple News Items’, *The Hampshire Advertiser*, 8 November 1862, p. 5.
from a British flagged vessel. The *Trent Affair*, as the seizure was later termed, almost led to war between Britain and the United States.\textsuperscript{11} Secretary Seward believed conflict with Britain might end the Civil War. He reasoned war against the old colonial enemy was certain to inspire patriotism in both the U.S.A. and the Confederacy that would bring the South back in to the Union, then both regions could fight united against Britain.\textsuperscript{12} Policy-makers in both nations leaned towards a transatlantic fracture during the Exhibition. However, the Exhibition itself, its organisers, and the coverage around it rarely referenced Anglo-American rupture, and British attendees did not use the fair to voice anti-American animosity.

The Exhibition did not drastically alter Northerners’ conception of Britain and *vice versa*. British writers on the fair in 1862 still created the same narratives their predecessors had in 1851, about the United States as an innovative country brimming with resources. However, the lack of a large American display at the Exhibition allowed British writers on the fair to project their own optimistic images of the U.S.’s economic future. British reporters and guidebook authors made up for the small American section in their descriptions of the Exhibition. They detailed great American technological advancements, and the country’s vast and varied material wealth, like coal and cotton, absent from the fair. The War, indirectly, led these visitors and observers to prophesise a great future for the United States, and reaffirm and strengthen their narrative of the country as a rising technological and industrial giant.

American visitors and writers about the fair, like their countrymen in 1851, wanted their nation’s products to beat British competitors at the international show. Like in 1851, American writers on the fair also craved vindication for their nation’s products from the audience in London. This endorsement of American technology was even more important for American observers during the Civil War. Impressive American technology would show the United States’ industrial capacity, and signal to European nations the dangers of intervention in the conflict. American writers on the fair celebrated their own nation’s success, and denigrated impressive British products as mere derivatives, or copies, of U.S. technology. Anglophobic nationalism, and American industrial triumph over British competition, was widely popular in the United States in 1862. Throughout the Union, after American products were judged

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 83-84.
successful, newspapers celebrated the American triumph and used the nation’s success to denigrate Britain. American observers of the fair also attacked the event for its poor reception and organisation and suggested that it showed British weakness. Americans interested in the fair created the same Janus-faced narratives about Britain in 1862 as their processors had at the Crystal Palace. Britain was still in these narratives an American foe, but American observers of the fair simultaneously craved vindication from the audience in London. During the Civil War that both threatened the United States existentially, and almost resulted in conflict between the two countries, besting British competitors and gaining favourable reviews from British attendees was important for American observers of the Exhibition.

This chapter does not argue that the Civil War was unimportant in Britain, or that, in some ways, the conflict did not change transatlantic ideas about both nations. However, the specific narratives about the United States and Britain visitors and observers created based on the countries’ participation at the fair remained consistent during this conflict. British ideas about the American economy’s power and promise did not change because of the war; in some ways the conflict intensified these notions about the country. The American section impressed British visitors, because it showed what the country could achieve in wartime. British visitors and writers on the fair were not uninformed or disinterested in the Civil War. Rather, this chapter argues that these visitors separated the conflict from their characterisation of the United States as commercially powerful. Northerners’ desire for vindication, and the Anglophobic nationalist boasting that followed American success, were both expressed more intensely at the 1862 fair because of the conflict and transatlantic enmity. Examination of the American section at the Great London Exhibition shows that war, at least at this international exposition, did not drastically alter the transatlantic narratives of either nation exhibited at the Crystal Palace, rather that the conflict reinforced these older images of the two countries.

To argue that these notions about Britain and the United States remained consistent in the period, the chapter’s first part examines the historiography on Britain and the Civil War. British notions about the conflict are probably the most historiographically covered topic in nineteenth-century Anglo-American relations, but much of the work focuses on slavery and diplomacy and less on commerce and technology. After a note on the sources and their limitations—there is less material from the Great London Exhibition to study than there is from the Crystal Palace—the chapter will examine the fair itself. The first section on the Exhibition focuses on
planning and American debates about whether to participate. American success at the fair, and British descriptions of the U.S. section will come next in the chapter. This part of the chapter will also examine the way British observers used the fair to write about the American economy and the country’s future prosperity. Success in London of course created interest in the event in the United States, and I will then deal with Northerners’ reactions to their nation’s success in the final section. This format will show the consistency of British narratives about the United States and vice versa between 1851 and 1862, and also how the Civil War, and the lack of some expected American products, reinforced these narratives.

**Historiography**

This chapter does not attempt to explain British support for the Union or Confederacy during the Civil War. The Exhibition was not an event that inspired British partisanship for either side of the conflict. Much of the historiography on Britain and the American Civil War explains partisanship for one side or the conflict or the other. Most of these explanations, though do not help illuminate British visitors and observers’ opinions of the United States at the fair, and deal with more immediate causes of the conflict. Duncan Andrew Campbell and Richard J.M. Blackett both explore British understandings of the conflict by examining notions about race and slavery. Campbell concludes that, by the end of the conflict, most British observers disliked both sides, and were sceptical about Union commitment to emancipation.\(^\text{13}\) Blackett charts the decline of British abolitionist fervour in the decades before the war, to argue that support for either side of the conflict depended on individuals’ opinions on race and slavery.\(^\text{14}\) Mary Ellison uses the cotton trade rather than slavery to examine the War in Britain, and explores Lancashire mill workers’ ideas about the conflict. Ellison argues that, because of Lancashire’s reliance on Southern cotton imports, some workers in the textile industry supported the Confederacy because they feared unemployment.\(^\text{15}\) All three historians attempt to determine support for one side or the other during the conflict and do so by exploring topics central to the Civil War. While excellent examinations of British conceptions of the conflict, these historians are interested in questions this chapter does not explore. There was little

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discussion of slavery at the fair, and, besides remarks about the lack of American
cotton on show, little discussion of U.S. trade in the crop in the sources. Rather, this
chapter examines how visitors and observers understood the United States and its
economy more holistically. Visitors and observers’ notions about the United States at
the fair were based on longer-term narratives of the country that were either unaltered
or strengthened by the war.

In order to examine these long-term images of the United States in Britain this
chapter employs work centred on the Civil War but with a much larger chronological
scope. Both Jay Sexton and Peter O’Connor explore economic and political ideas
about the United States in Britain in the period around the War, and this work helps to
explain visitors and observers’ ideas about American participation at the Exhibition.
British visitors and observers identified American manufacturing with the Northern
states. O’Connor notes that, though British travellers to the United States in the
1850s held the region in contempt for its demagogic politics and protectionism, they
regarded the Northern states as the seat of American industry. This characterisation
of the North was so firm it shaped many British observers of the United States’
conception of Unionism. If the United States’ two sections were so different, these
observers reasoned, then why should either be compelled to unity? The North was
industrial and protectionist but also without slavery, the South was free trading but
agricultural and committed to bondage.16 O’Connor’s work shows how visitors to
London could still see the United States as economically promising during the War,
and also why the conflict was so absent from the fair’s coverage. The North, in
British conceptions of the United States, dominated manufacturing and, with the
exception of cotton and a few other crops, the production of natural materials in the
United States. Machines, products, and natural material were what nations brought to
exhibitions, visitors expected a Northern dominated U.S. display.

During the War, Jay Sexton argues, the United States did not lose its
reputation as an economically promising nation. British belief in Northern economic
prosperity did not wane even during the War in London’s financial houses. Sexton
shows that throughout the war British financiers believed in the American economy
enough to regularly extend the North loans. Even during the Trent affair former
Democratic Governor of Kansas and Secretary of the Treasury R.J. Walker secured

16 Peter O’Connor, *American Sectionalism in the British Mind, 1832-1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana
loans from London banks for the North. Financers in London had enough confidence in the American economy that they loaned the country money during the worst year of the conflict for the Union. This economic confidence was, as will be shown, also expressed at the London Exhibition. British visitors, were, like London’s financers, optimistic about the United States’ economic future, and this optimism was built on a conception of the Northern States as the country’s industrial heartland.

O’Connor and Sexton indicate that of the British visitors and observers in 1862 saw American industry as firmly Northern and so came to the fair to see displays from that region. Reluctance to discuss the conflict and faith in the future American economy existed because the fair was really only a venue to show Northern products.

Work on American diplomacy with Britain during the War helps explain American observers’ reactions to the event. Don Doyle examines Unionist feelings towards Britain during the War’s early years. Considering Seward particularly, Doyle argues that the Secretary of State publicly and forcefully rejected any foreign intervention in the conflict, and simultaneously propagated the Union cause abroad as republican, abolitionist, liberal, and just. Domestically, Seward used Unionist newspapers to stir Northern popular animosity for European powers, and particularly to antagonise Britain. This strategy both helped solidify Unionism in the North and showed British policy-makers that the United States would not shrink from a transatlantic conflict. Britain was an enemy for the Northern press because it was the Confederacy’s best hope of recognition and independence. Even Democratic Northern papers, like Philadelphia’s Public Ledger, employed Anglophobic rhetoric when transatlantic war threatened in 1862. During the Exhibition Britain was, in the Unionist press, derided as a national enemy and possible abettor of the rebellion. American celebrations of U.S. products’ success at the fair, and the continued narrative of Britain as the nation’s traditional foe can be seen in this context.

The Great London Exhibition itself is little covered in histories of world’s fairs. An edited volume published by the Decorative Arts Society, entitled Almost Forgotten (2014), is the only work focused solely on the Exhibition. John R. Davis’s article ‘The Origins of the 1862 Exhibition’ argues that the fair opened in a more problematic period than the Crystal Palace. In the eleven years between the

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18 Doyle, The Cause of All Nations. pp. 69-76.
19 Ibid., pp. 63-64.
exhibitions European conflict and nationalism increased, so the Crystal Palace’s liberal internationalist message could no longer be sustained.\textsuperscript{21} The fair, despite the era’s problems, was popular, and had two times the exhibitors and two hundred thousand more visitors than the Great Exhibition.\textsuperscript{22} Given the Exhibition’s size, and the number of visitors – there around almost six million - one can assume that attendees were similar geographically and socially to those in 1851. Though the fair was popularly deemed a failure, it still attracted an impressive number of visitors.

**Sources**

Americans did not engage as much with the 1862 Great London Exhibition as their predecessors did at the Crystal Palace in 1851. This silence is understandable in the context of the Civil War, but it does make this chapter’s discussion smaller in scope than the previous one. The American press did not cover the event as extensively as they did the Crystal Palace, but the coverage was geographically and politically diverse. Republican - and Democrat - leaning newspapers covered the event, and journals in large cities like New York, Chicago, and Baltimore provided the most reportage. However, Congressional Republicans were the only politicians that debated whether the United States should participate in the Exhibition, and Republicans organised the display. American observers’ reactions to the Great London Exhibition show a range of Northern responses to the fair, but more source material exists to explore Republican narratives of the Exhibition and of Britain.

Republicans importantly organised the American section at the Exhibition. Figures part of, or close to, the Lincoln Administration, like William Seward, Caleb Smith, Robert Minturn,\textsuperscript{23} and Richard Wallach, staffed the American organising committee.\textsuperscript{24} They appointed Benjamin P. Johnson as Chief U.S. Commissioner in London, and Joseph E. Holmes to serve as his second in command. Johnson’s political and professional background included membership of New York State’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Davis, “The Origins of the 1862 Exhibition,” pp. 18-19.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Bryant, “The Progress and Present Condition.” p. 78.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Minturn severed, in New York City, on the executive council of the Loyal National League, a body created to propagate support for the Federal Government efforts against the Confederacy see ‘Great Sumter Meeting: CALL OF THE LOYAL NATIONAL LEAGUE COUNCIL OF TWENTY-FIVE JAMES McKAYE LOYAL NATIONAL LEAGUE’, New - York Daily Tribune, 10 April 1863, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Wallach served as the Republican Mayor of Washington DC throughout the war see Green, Constance McLaughlin, *Washington Village and Capital, 1800-1878* (Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 249-50.
\end{itemize}
he was also part of the New York State committee that organised displays for the Crystal Palace and seems from the report he authored for that event to be, in 1851, a Whig. The *Morning Post* described Holmes, Johnson’s second, as a “a thorough-going abolitionist.”²⁶ Both Johnson and Holmes wrote reports from the Exhibition, which are invaluable to this chapter. As American organisers their reports reflect a Republican understanding of the event. Americans Taliaferro Preston Shaffner and William Owen also authored a guidebook to the Exhibition. Shaffner was a Unionist Kentuckian,²⁷ and expressed, in a separate book he authored on the Civil War, distaste for both secession and abolition.²⁸ These authors’ politics ran the spectrum from pro-slavery Unionist to fervent abolitionist, so this chapter can explore a wide range of Unionists’ opinions on the Exhibition.

This chapter’s focus on Northern opinions on the Great London Exhibition leads to an obvious question: did Confederates participate? Confederate manufacturers attempted to display at the Exhibition, however British organisers refused to admit them.²⁹ The British organising committee believed that because the Earl Granville was one of their number, and at the same time served in cabinet, Confederate participation would come too close to *de facto* diplomatic recognition. British organisers instructed that Confederates could display as long as they did so under the Union flag.³⁰ I have not found any Confederate who accepted this proposition. However, at least one British-based partisan of the Confederacy reported on the event, and this coverage indicates why Southerners did not write about the fair. Henry Hotze’s London-based pro-Confederate *Index*, on the front page of its very first issue, prophesised the Exhibition would “drown [in] the remembrance of the cotton famine in Lancashire.”³¹ The *Index* did not cover the fair much after the opening, presumably because visitors praised the American section, and the cotton famine did not eclipse or ruin the event. Hotze was only interested in the Exhibition as source of

²⁶ ‘The International Exhibition’, *The Morning Post*, 30 September 1862, p. 3.
pro-Confederate propaganda. Southern papers, and supporters of the Confederacy were, I imagine, reluctant to cover an event that glorified the United States.

British sources on the Great London Exhibition are similar to those from the Crystal Palace, mostly guidebooks and newspaper coverage. Examination of the source material in this chapter is informed by historiography on the British press during the American Civil War. Martin Crawford argues that the London Times was generally hostile to the North, but at the same time not pro-Southern.32 Howard Jones makes a similar point about coverage of the war in the Morning Post.33 These journals disliked both sides of the conflict. Other papers like the Illustrated London News, and Observer advocated for the Union.34 British newspapers’ engagement with the American Civil War offers a new way to question the source material for this chapter. This chapter examines both Unionist and anti-Unionist newspapers and looks for commonalities in descriptions of the United States at the fair.35 The chapter does not argue that all visitors to the fair understood the American section in the same way. Rather, it suggests that the Civil War did not change long-standing narratives about the United States in Britain. Both pro- and anti-Union papers expressed faith in the American economic future in their descriptions of the country’s section. This common belief in American commercial promise, from papers with different editorial lines on the war, reveals a popular narrative of the United States in Britain. Guides to the Exhibition cannot be as easily politically divided. Cheaper and shorter guides to the Exhibition, perhaps because the American section was so small, rarely mentioned it in any detail. Much of this chapter’s material comes from longer illustrated, or specialist guides to the event, priced for the middle class. However, these sources employed the same narratives of the American section as newspapers and can be used to examine the popular ideas about the United States at the fair.

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35 I use ‘anti-Unionist’ rather than ‘secessionist’ purposefully. While The Times and The Morning Post were unsympathetic to the North, that did not seem to bleed into overt support for the Confederacy and certainly not for slavery.
Organisation of the Fair

President Lincoln and Secretary Seward supported American participation in the 1862 Exhibition. In July 1861, Lincoln instructed Congress, “As citizens of the United States may justly pride themselves upon their proficiency in industrial arts, it is desirable that they should have proper facilities towards taking part in the exhibition. With this view I recommend such legislation by Congress at this session as may be necessary for that purpose.” Congress, in turn, appropriated two thousand dollars to fund the U.S. display, and gave the President the authority to appoint an organising committee. William Seward wrote to Lord Lyons later that month that, because of the upheaval of the spring and summer of 1861, the Congress was too busy to vote on a fuller appropriation of funds until the winter session.

The Trent Affair occurred between congressional sessions, and the event was fresh in the minds of congressmen as they voted on an appropriation for the London Exhibition. Some congressman directed Anglophobic ire at the British government. Representative Owen Lovejoy said of the Exhibition, “I hate it, and hate the British Government,” continuing, “I here now publicly avow and record that hate, and declare that it shall be unextinguishable. I mean to cherish it while I live and to bequeath it to my children when I die and if I am alive when war with England comes, and if I can carry a musket in that war, I will carry it.” Lovejoy’s overt Anglophobia did not dominate debate about the appropriation for the fair, however. Congressional Republicans, and Unionist newspapers, were much more interested in whether the fair was the right platform to showcase American industry. Debate in Congress and in the press centred on whether the Exhibition provided the best platform show American products, or whether the successful prosecution of the Civil War already conveyed to European powers American commercial and manufacturing strength. Both sides of this debate hoped to impress the British audience with American technology whether the United States organised a display for the fair or not. The war, and the Trent Affair, did not change how Northerners understood American participation at the fair. Aside from Lovejoy, these Northerners still wanted to impress the British audience, and best competitors with American production, they

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41 I have not found any congressional Democrats who spoke on this appropriation.
merely differed about how to show the nation’s technological and manufacturing prowess.

New York representative Roscoe Conkling argued that the United States should not participate in the fair because the war already showed American production to Britain. Conkling asked why should the country participate when, “There is…a competition going on here, a grapple for the mastery in the fine arts, and the arts not fine, destined to be honoured with monuments that will stand in very conspicuous places on the banks and shoals of time.” Kansas Senator James Henry Lane made a similar point in more bloodthirsty language; “At the other Exhibition we could show reapers, &c [and company]; now the sword and cannon are our reapers, and the rebels are the harvest.” Both Congressmen argued the Exhibition offered few benefits for American industry - the war itself was a display of the nation’s production. Reapers and war material were both industrial products the United States could effectively mass produce. With the whole world fascinated by the conflict in the United States, Americans could show their manufacturing prowess without sending anything to London. Neither Conkling nor Lane believed that American technology would fail to impress at the Exhibition, but rather that the Civil War already shaped foreign opinions about U.S. manufacturing.

In Lane’s home state of Kansas, a local Republican journal in Junction City made the same argument about participation: “The United States are just now busy in an International Exhibition on a large scale, which is no less than the public testing of the power of a free people to put down revolt. The nations are looking on, and will doubtless be instructed by what they are to see.” The paper, and Conkling and Lane, argued that if the fair’s purpose was to show American manufacturing and industrial development then war with the South did just that. Neither the paper, nor the Congressmen suggested that the United States should not participate out of Anglophobic spite. Rather these Republicans saw the war a kind of exhibition, one that would be even greater than the fair in London. Lane and Conkling, while they opposed American participation, wanted to propagate an international image of the United States as a manufacturing power, and still saw Britain as a foe to be embarrassed, but believed the war effort did just that.

44 ‘The Smoky Hill and Republican Union,’ March 20, 1862, image 1.
Writers in a number of Unionist newspapers argued the war made American participation at the Exhibition vital. These authors agreed with Conkling and Lane that foreigners observed the United States more keenly because of the Civil War. However, they argued that people abroad, fascinated with the conflict, would be more impressed if the United States concurrently fought the war, and showed well in London. Ironworks owner N.J. Dodge wrote in the *New York Times*, a paper that consistently backed American participation in the fair,

> If, in the midst of crushing a rebellion, which calls half a million of our sons into the field, we can take up our National loans, attract gold from foreign lands, feed the starving millions of Europe, and find work, day and night, for our steam-engines and water-wheels, surely we can show to the assembled representatives of civilization at London, that neither distance, nor inexperience in encountering the perils of war, nor reserves, nor the cold shoulder of our fatherland, nor the applauded slander that the great democratic bubble has burst, can abash or repress the energy of the only untrammelled labor on the globe.\(^{45}\)

Dodge believed American industrial triumph over British competitors would be even greater in 1862 because of the Civil War.

The *New York Times* also suggested nonparticipation in the Exhibition might alter British ideas about the United States, and damage American interests abroad. The paper argued an American department at the fair would help secure foreign markets to compensate for the loss of trade with the blockaded South. British visitors also “would hardly expect a people, away in this new country, while supporting and advancing an army of half a million, constructing a great navy, blockading a thousand miles of coast, defending a thousand miles of frontier, and raising five hundred millions of money, to make any demonstration at all in a London exhibition.” However, the paper continued, “But if, while doing all these things, and doing them well, instead of showing evidences of exhaustion and weakness, we rival the Old world in this peaceful competition besides, the Old World will begin to suspect that an interference in our matters will be slightly risky and expensive.”\(^ {46}\) War with the South made participation at London more necessary. European powers might intervene in the conflict if the United States did not prove that it was still a great industrial power. The United States needed to impress in London or British visitors might forget American industrial capacity.


American organisers also contended in their advertising material that the Civil War made U.S. participation in the fair more important. In a circular to manufacturers, the organising committee for the Exhibition wrote, “In the present state of our affairs, and the position we now occupy in the eyes of the world, it is of the first importance that every facility be afforded to our exhibitors, in order that the United States may be well and truly represented.” The circular emphasised that a good American display would “convince the nations of Europe, to whom our articles will be exhibited, that notwithstanding so much of our labor and energy is absorbed by the operations of war, we are able also to attend to the arts of peace, to furnish materials and inventions of essential importance to the advance of society in comfort and civilization.”

Organisers agreed the conflict stoked international interest in the United States. They believed a U.S. section would show American industrial capacity during a period of interest in the country. A strong American display would also caution European powers against intervention. The American organising body, and the New York Times agreed that the 1862 Exhibition was an even greater stage to show American technology because of the war. The war did not change how these Northerners thought about their nation’s relationship to Britain at these fairs or alter American narratives about the country. Compared to their processors in 1851, American visitors and observers still wanted the impress British observers and best British competitors, but disagreed about how to show this industrial supremacy.

Conkling and Lane won the argument in Congress; the proposed thirty-five thousand dollar appropriation for an American section at the fair failed. Organisation of an American section for the fair continued privately, and Seward asked British authorities to allow this unofficial group, should it actually get to London, to exhibit at the fair. Johnson and Holmes cobbled together about ninety-

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five exhibits, mostly from New York State, to display in London. However, upon arrival Holmes found “himself without official recognition, and that the space originally reserved for America had been apportioned to others.” Eventually Holmes secured space for an American section, but the location did not augur well. The United States was tucked in a corner of the British section, far from the other foreign exhibitors, behind the host’s carriage and leather displays. The American section was smaller than most others, and in an inauspicious location. However, the display was, by the end of the fair, one of the Exhibition’s most popular exhibits.

**British Reactions**

The American section at the 1862 Exhibition contained a relatively meagre number of exhibits. However, British guides and newspapers, both pro- and anti-Union, generally considered the display successful. These British writers particularly admired, as their countrymen had in 1851, American labour-saving machines. Products like sewing machines and cow-milkers, proved to British writers the nation’s inventiveness. Observers also compensated for the United States’ small showing by padding their descriptions of the section with accounts of products and materials not actually displayed. Visitors saw American manufacturing as inventive, and the country as economically promising during the Civil War, and a particularly tense period in Anglo-American relations. British visitors and observers excused the American section’s small size and wrote glowingly about U.S. manufacturing at the Exhibition. The scant American section actually reinforced British visitors’ positive economic narratives about the United States. The American section impressed British visitors because it was large enough to maintain the narrative of the United

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50 Finding American organisers outside of Holmes and Johnson has proved difficult. As late as November 1861 Johnson along with Seward, Everett, Blood, and Joseph C.G. Kennedy the supervisor of the census, advertised the Exhibition and their organising role in the New York Tribune, however this was before the appropriation failed in congress, see ‘TO EXHIBITORS: INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF WORKS OF INDUSTRY AND ART To Be Held at London in 1862 SECTION I’, New York Daily Tribune, 7 November 1861, p. 7. How many of these men remained in organisational roles is unclear. In July 1862 in the midst of the fair Johnson sent a public letter, printed in the New York Times, to Joseph C.G. Kennedy reporting on awards for American exhibits, and suggesting Kennedy remained involved. The letter also commended American Minister to the United Kingdom Charles Francis Adams on his help to the American section, see ‘The Great Exhibition Awards.: LETTER FROM B.P. JOHNSON TO J.C.G. KENNEDY’, New York Times, 31 July 1862 p. 5.


States as a strong and growing manufacturing power but did so with gaps that allowed attendees to project their own narratives of the American economy’s promising future onto the U.S. section. To explain British opinions of the American department, this section will first look at how British visitors understood the Civil War’s connection to the fair. Then it will examine reviews of the actual display, before moving on to deal with British descriptions of, and faith in, the American economy generally.

British visitors to the fair, and writers on the event, did not often make explicit references to the Civil War. Guidebooks and newspapers commonly included the conflict in the list of calamities that befell the Exhibition. Like Prince Albert’s death, or war in Italy, the Civil War was one of the reasons the London Exhibition lacked the Crystal Palace’s grandeur. The anti-Unionist Morning Post noted: “A great people have passed away from the arts of peace to the pursuits of war. We feel that America is not now with us. We cannot be reminded that she is perhaps the only civilised nation that is not beating in ardent sympathy with our triumph in the works of peace and industry. Her thoughts are thoughts of desolation and ruin.” The Times also believed the war impeded the fair’s success, “At least a million of persons who might reasonably have been counted on as intelligent visitors have been kept at home by the heavy calamity which has fallen upon Lancashire by the sudden and violent check given by the American civil war to the supply of cotton.” According to the Times, the war was not just a calamity for British attendees, but, “The same cause has, no doubt, deprived the Exhibition of many thousand intelligent visitors from the United States.” The pro-Unionist Illustrated London News agreed the war adversely affected the fair, but added that there was no “true Englishman who will not deplore the fact and its causes, or form any other wish for the Americans than that their first civil war may be their last; that they may emerge from its sore trial purified as well as chastened, and be – as they were before its outburst- a free, a happy, and a united people.” Though these papers differed about how to understand the war, they agreed it was unfortunate that the United States could not participate fully in the Exhibition.

54 ‘Multiple News Items’, The Hampshire Advertiser, 8 November 1862, p. 5.
55 International Exhibition of, What do you think of the Exhibition? A collection of the best descriptions and criticisms, from the leading Journals concerning the International Exhibition, the building, the contents, and the Commissioners’ arrangements. Edited by R. Kempt. ... An Appendix of gossip about the Exhibition, etc. (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1862.), p. 47.
British organisers avoided mentioning the conflict, and so there were few references to the war in the Exhibition Hall. J.E. Homes noted in his catalogue that he could only remember one occasion when organisers mentioned the war, when an exhibit was awarded a prize under the national heading “North America, Federal States” rather than the United States. He concluded, “this being an exception to the general rule of courtesy and kindness extended to us, we do not feel ‘obliged to complain.’”

Visitors were not unconscious of the war in the United States. However, descriptions of the American section included few references to the ways in which war might hurt U.S. industry and economic prosperity. These observers did not explain the small American section as a result of the conflict. The Civil War was a tragedy for the Exhibition that prevented visitors, but it did not contribute, visitors and observers believed, to an unimpressive American display.

Like in 1851, British visitors and observers of the United States’ display in the Exhibition Hall believed it showed an inventive and economically promising nation. Again, American inventions and labour-saving technology impressed British newspaper and guidebook authors. The London Times commented on American reaping and mowing machines, “America…has produced a greater verity of reaping and mowing machines than we English have done, most of our new notions of knife or gearing, or delivery, having come a voyage across the Atlantic.” In the Exhibition Hall, the paper continued, “Wood’s reaper and grass-mower,” as well as McCormick’s reaper “adorned…with shining colours” and “the clearest and most lustrous varnish,” were the best American products on show.

Other newspapers had their own favourites in the American section. The Illustrated London News was particularly impressed with American dairy machines; “the United States’ Court carries off the palm with a machine for milking cows.” In the Observer, “The most important piece of machinery exhibited,” in the American section, “and one which is destined to leave its mark upon the manufactures of this country, is a power loom for weaving tufted carpets.” British guides also highlighted the American Section’s industrial, and labour-saving displays. George Frederic Pardon’s Guide to the International Exhibition described the contents of the American section as “New York pianofortes, numerous specimens of that new and

59 What do you think of the Exhibition? p. 149.
important article of commerce, petroleum, and a whole regiment of sewing machines, warranted to overcome all the difficulties of the needle.” Pardon also admired American agricultural machines, and, like the Times, saw their influence on British competitors.\(^62\) John Cassell’s Illustrated Exhibitor highlighted the “wonderful washing machines,” of the American Section “that dispense with all human labour, and fire engines calculated to throw, with the aid of steam, any quality of water to any required height or distance.” Cassell also noted an “American Breach-loading Rifle,” that greatly interested, “military visitors, foreigners as well as English.”\(^63\) Like in 1851, British writers focused on American innovative labour-saving machines in their descriptions of the country’s section. Looms, washing machines, sewing machines, and agricultural machines, all products meant to save labour and make life easier for consumers, dominated the American section, and particularly impressed British writers at the fair. The small show of American products was enough to maintain the country’s reputation as an industrial, and inventive power, and informed the way British visitors described the American section and how they created narratives about the country.

The Record of the International Exhibition, a guide written by a number of industrial experts, also lauded the American section for its inventive and labour-saving technology. University of Edinburgh Professor of Agriculture John Wilson liked the American cow-milker, noting, “It has certainly the charm of novelty to recommend it, while at the same time its mechanical arrangements, combining simplicity of action with economy of price give prima facie evidence in its favour.” Wilson also explained that McCormick’s agricultural machines influenced most British products of that type in the Exhibition.\(^64\) Engineer Robert Mallet called an engine designed by New Yorker Charles T. Porter, “by far the most interesting and important engine to the really instructed mechanical engineer in the whole exhibition.” Mallet thought most non-American competing machines were “huge and splendidly furnished engines,” but the poorly decorated American section was still more innovative and impressive.\(^65\) American products, as in 1851, were not splendidly presented or visually showy, but they were functional. British observers,

\(^{62}\) George Frederick Pardon, A Guide to the International Exhibition; with plans of the building, an account of its rise, progress, etc. (London, 1862), pp. 85, 138.


\(^{64}\) Record of the International Exhibition 1862 (Sl: William Mackenzie, 1862), pp. 40-42.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 231.
both educated engineers, guidebook authors, and newspaper reporters, saw American manufacturing, presented at the fair, as particularly innovative.

Some authors in the Record of the International Exhibition were so impressed with the American section and the country’s products generally, that they included in their descriptions machines and innovations that were not on display. E.P. Alexander wrote glowingly about American sewing machines exhibited at the fair, but also noted that twenty-thousand of these U.S. made devices employed an equal number of women in London’s garment factories. Charles O’Neill discussed American machines absent from the Exhibition. Particularly impressed by the display of paper printing machines, he also described print-works in Massachusetts where each printing machine had its own engine, to prove American innovation in this area of production. This narrative of an inventive industrial United States brimming with new technology and innovation, presented at the Exhibition, was so strong that writers filled in elements missing from the display indicative of this American inventiveness and prowess in labour-saving machinery.

British visitors to the Exhibition were also impressed with displayed American natural resources. The Times described the fine exhibition of American metals including: “Lake Superior copper,” “spiegeleisen from New Jersey” and “franklinite.” Cassell’s Illustrated Exhibitor highlighted the display of corn flour “so rich in mucilage as entirely to supersede the use of eggs in the preparation of custards or puddings.” British observers also compensated, in their accounts of the American section, for natural resource wealth missing from the Exhibition. British writers described materials absent from the American section. The Times ended its commentary on American metals displayed at the fair by noting, “The ironmaking resources of the United States are very great, and it is scarcely necessary to observe are not represented in the present Exhibition.” The paper also compensated for the lack of American coal on display, “But the greatest coalfield in the world is absolutely unrepresented- we allude to that of the United States.” The paper concluded, “however, notwithstanding the recognized inflexibility of the laws of political economy, we should do well to exercise caution in prophesying concerning the future of that vast country, possessing as it does the elasticity of youth and mineral treasures

66 Ibid., p. 341.
67 Ibid., p. 359.
69 Cassell, Cassell’s Illustrated Exhibitor, pp. 42-43.
of incredible value.” Other papers like the pro-Union Manchester Guardian published similar descriptions of American resource wealth unrepresented at the fair, “If the once United States does not exhibit specimens of their vast stores of mineral fuel the cause is but too obvious; at the same time...we are better informed of its extent and peculiarities than of those of some other countries.” Both anti- and pro-Northern papers, the Times and Guardian, agreed the lack of United States’ resource wealth exhibited was understandable in the context of the war. This absence, though, did not matter for the papers. British visitors already knew, or were informed by guides or newspapers, about the great quality and quantity of American resource wealth. These papers both also suggested that this resource wealth promised a great future for the American economy. Neither paper seemed to believe that the war would undo the United States’ auspicious economic development.

British writers even included descriptions of the American cotton market, as well as prophecies about the crop’s bright future in the United States. American cotton was almost totally absent from the Exhibition because of the Civil War and lack of Southern participation, with the exception of a few seeds from Union States. Pro-Union papers were, despite this absence, confident that the United States would again export cotton, and do so with free labour. The Illustrated London News predicted, “that whenever England gets cotton again from the Southern States of America it will be the result of a cultivation of the soil by free men and women, unstained by the brand of slavery.” The Observer wrote about a “A cotton planter’s machine…which was just coming into use in the Southern plantations when the war broke out, and which promised to be a great success. With two men and a horse it will do a day’s work of eight able-bodied ‘contrabands.’” The American exhibit at the fair promised, for the Observer, the resumption of cotton exports in the near future. Cotton could be exported with this machine to process the crop, and, vitally, could do so without slave labour. These pro-Northern publications exhibited an even stronger faith in the future of the American post-war economy. They also believed that cotton would again flow from the United States as the product of free labour after the war.

72 ‘International Exhibition: Coal, Lights, ...eat...’, The Manchester Guardian, 2 August 1862, p. 6.
75 ‘The International Exhibition’, The Observer, 13 July 1862, pp. 5–6.
British writers on the fair had two reactions to the American section. Like their compatriots in 1851, British visitors saw the American section as particularly impressive and inventive. American natural resources were, like at the Crystal Palace, lauded in descriptions of the United States’ section. Though the American exhibit was small it did well, with eighty-three products out of ninety-five awarded medals.76 Visitors in London also compensated for American products and materials like cotton and coal absent from the Exhibition. American exhibitors did not need to do much to prove the country’s economic promise. The United States’ economic future was already secure, the great stores of coal, and iron, and the inventive products like sewing machines, already available in Britain, proved to British visitors American commercial prowess. British writers at the fair projected a promising future for the American economy. Regardless of whether the Union survived these authors were sure that the U.S.’s commercial power would remain intact. The war, at least at the Exhibition, did not alter British narratives about the American economy. Visitors did not see the lack of American products as a sign of impending ruin. Rather, guidebook authors and reporters justified their faith in the United States’ auspicious economy by detailing exhibits absent from the fair. British visitors and observers of the fair came to the event with already formed narratives, exhibited also at the Crystal Palace, about the United States as a wellspring of new functional technology. Their expression of these narratives at an Exhibition which showed such a small display of American goods, during the country’s Civil War, shows how strong and widespread these narratives were in Britain.

British belief in American economic promise evident at the Exhibition links well with Peter O’Connor’s exploration of British notions of American sectionalism, and particularly British travellers and belief that the North dominated American manufacturing. British writing on the American section at the fair confirms the popularity of these ideas about the American economy. The Times and the Observer had similar notions about American manufacturing and commerce. Both saw the United States as economically promising and did not believe the war would dent this abundant future. These papers merely differed on how they thought the war should end. The Times could not understand why, if the United States was such an inventive and economically promising nation, its leaders and citizens insisted on fratricide. A better future awaited the country with peace.77 Pro-Union papers like the ILN and the

Observer shared a positive outlook on the future of the American economy but supported reunification. These depictions of the American section at the 1862 Exhibition show how ubiquitous and how powerful British narratives about the future of the American economy were. The war did not change how British visitors saw American manufacturing, and natural resource wealth, and the scant display allowed writers, both anti- and pro-Union, to express confidence in the United States’ commercial future.

**Northern Reactions**

Northern reactions to the nation’s success at the Great London Exhibition were similar to American responses to the country’s triumphs at the Crystal Palace, eleven years earlier. Although Congressional Republicans had refused to fund the American section at the fair, when British visitors deemed the U.S. display a success, Northerners celebrated the American triumph in jingoistic Anglophobic language. Disparate political voices united around an American display that bested British competition during the Civil War. Northerners popularly imagined Britain as the great foe at the fair to be defeated by American technology, and even celebrated elements of the national display British writers did not highlight as particularly impressive. American writers on the fair covered Steinway Pianos in great detail, and argued they proved that U.S. manufacturing was impressive in areas that required special craft and attention to detail. These newspapers also craved vindication for the American section from the London audience. Reports from the Exhibition focused on the American section’s popularity with visitors, and on which exhibits won awards. The dual narrative, evident also in 1851, of Britain as a nation to be bested in industrial competition, and the vindicator of American claims to industrial prominence, remained intact in 1862. Britain’s role for American observers of the fairs remained consistent between the exhibitions even during the transatlantic animosity caused by the Civil War. At a time when war between Britain and the United States seemed possible, Northern observers of the Exhibition still wanted vindication from and victory over the hosts.

The New York Times, and other Republican-leaning papers covered the fair most comprehensively. At the start of the fair the New York Times decried the American section’s organisation, but after artist Jasper Cropsey rearranged the display
the paper was more optimistic, writing, “The few exhibitors - sixty four in all - who have gone to the expense of representing the national ingenuity, in spite of the discouragement they received from Washington, will not, I am sure regret it. There is hardly a doubt that the American department will bear off more than an average share of the prizes.” The paper wrote glowingly about every part of the American section, and particularly highlighted exhibits popular with the London audience like the cow-milker. The New York Times praised American products that attempted to best British competitors. The paper described “A collection of flat linen-drapers’ boxes, labelled ‘cotton prints,’ ‘delaines,’ ‘hose,’” as a “courageous attempt of an American manufacturer to beard the British lion in his den.” American pianos most pleased the paper, “The folly of sending pianos from America to Europe nearly excited the laughter of cisatlantic makers,” but since the arrival of the instruments, “they have parted with a good deal of their hilarity -for the Steinway pianos are in fact the musical excitement of the Exhibition.” The American section was so wonderful, the New York Times believed it was “extremely gratifying to find that, although in the present state of our National affairs, Congress did not think it wise to make the proposed grant for the exhibition of American industrial products, private enterprise has done so much in vindication of American prestige.” The New York Times believed the fair was a total success. Few American exhibits actually appeared in London, but those that did impressed the audience, and won the United States respect.

Other Northern newspapers also emphasised the American section’s industrial products and the finely crafted items in their coverage of the Exhibition. In July 1862, midway through the fair, the New York Tribune lamented the American section’s weaknesses. Though the paper noted that for a private endeavour the American

78 More exhibits arrived throughout the fair. ‘INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.: The American Department--The Difficulties Under Which It Has Labored.’, Chicago Tribune, 24 June 1862, p. 3.
80 ‘THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.: The “Rages” at the Exhibition Great Reputations and Young Innovators The Hewls of the Unfortunate An American Cowmilker A New Metal and a New Substance.’, New York Times, 13 August 1862, p. 2.
section was “quite credible,” it was “dim and dingy,” and “subjected…to ridicule.”

As American products won awards, and the nation’s section was better attended, the paper’s tone on the section changed. By September, the Tribune noted that, “The American court is lately becoming one of the most popular nooks in the building; it is crowded extensively most of the time, and the cow-milker, the clothes-drier, and the paper-rag machine, threaten to rival the very jewelry cases in attraction.”

The New York Tribune was better disposed to the American section when it competed with popular exhibits for attention, and attracted more attendees. Again, British visitors’ interest in the American section allowed U.S. newspapers to support the nation’s participation, Britain was again both the vindicator of the American display, and the foe to be defeated at the Exhibition.

Outside of New York other papers followed the pattern established by the Tribune. At first many Northern papers derided the American section as small and unimpressive. However, as visitors in London expressed more interest in the American display, U.S. papers became better disposed to the section. In May 1862, The Chicago Tribune reprinted a report on the American section from the New York World in which the author “half wished that the miserable collection had been sunk in the deep ocean it had crossed rather than have arrived in safety to make palpable to all nations the sorrowful truth that the freest institutions are not a safeguard against civil strife and unhallowed ambition.”

By the summer, though, the Chicago Tribune’s opinion on the fair changed, and the paper published articles complementing the American section. The paper described how Elias Howe’s sewing machines attracted more “attention than any other American patent,” and stated that the inventor justly deserved the title “The Greatest of American Genius,” having “taken the highest premium” at the fair.

Much like the New York Tribune, the Chicago Tribune wrote about the American section in glowing terms once visitors considered it successful. These papers craved vindication from the London audience, and were only willing to celebrate the American section when British attendees deemed it a success.

86 ‘What We Expected.’, Chicago Tribune, 29 July 1862, pp. 1-4.
Coverage in provincial Northern papers focused on the American section’s success, and British visitor’s surprise that the country showed so well. The *Baltimore Sun*, a Unionist though anti-Republican paper, wrote in July, “Our pianos, daguerreotypes and violins are far superior to any others exhibited.” The paper also republished a notice from the *New York Post* extolling the American section’s virtues for having “beaten the Englishmen at their own doors.” The article continued “Our reaping machines, bank-note work, pianos, steam machinery, sewing machines, starch, flour and many other articles, received the prize medals over similar articles of British manufacture. The pre-eminence of American industry is thus reasserted.”

In Cleveland, the *Morning Leader* stated visitors to the fair considered Steinway’s piano the best on show in London, a particularly impressive designation as the instruments “came in competition with the best makers in Europe, there being over one hundred pianos at the exhibition.” The *Union Appeal* in Memphis, recently recaptured by the North, recorded “Our pianos, daguerreotypes, and violins, are far superior to any others exhibited.” Like in 1851, American success was enough for these papers to rally around their nation’s section at the Exhibition. These papers admired American products and enjoyed the American section’s popularity with the London audience. American papers’ focus on Steinway particularly reveals their desire to impress the audience and challenge British production. The *Baltimore Sun* and the *New York Post* were the most overt in their desire to beat Britain, and but these papers were all delighted that American products appeared superior to European designs. All these papers also looked for vindication from the British audience. Each reported on how the American section became more popular and gained more prizes as the fair progressed. Again, American papers were interested in their own nation’s success at the fair but could only judge success via British visitors’ reception of the U.S. section. These papers evidenced the continued existence of American narratives about Britain as both a vindicator of U.S. products, reviewing the display well, and the main competitor to be beaten.

American authors on the fair also engaged in Anglophobic attacks on the event itself. These writers focused their venom on the fair’s unpopularity, and broadly attacked British society. Newspaper reporters in the United States also

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90 Cleveland Morning Leader, September 29, 1862, image 3.
91 The Memphis Union Appeal, July 24, 1862, image 2.
claimed that some British products on show were actually American, suggesting that the U.S. contribution to the Exhibition was grander than it appeared. American authors at the fair followed the same pattern their predecessors had in 1851. Britain was the United States’ traditional foe, and particularly during the Civil War, and Anglo-American diplomatic crisis, the Exhibition offered an excellent opportunity to attack the country.

Northern newspapers across the political spectrum attacked the fair for its failures, and criticised organisers and British visitors. In May the New York Tribune wrote that in the first weeks of the Exhibition the “Bull of the British metropolis cheerily frisked its tail and bellowed with melodious delight…. over its new toy,” but by the end of the month the audience was “on the verge of absolute dissatisfaction… wandering among the marshes of doubt and distrust.”92 The Democratic Journal of Commerce critiqued every element of the exhibition from the catalogue, “dull and unsatisfactory,” to the organisers who fulfilled “their duties more like tradesmen and speculators, than men of dignity and high character.” On the whole the paper called the fair “a great failure.”93 The New York Times called the Exhibition building, “an immense failure, as is almost everything here in the way of architecture. America is far before England in that respect.” The Exhibition hall was so tastelessly designed the paper concluded, “New-York, a commercial City, is before London, the capital of a great Empire.”94 The Cleveland Morning Leader called the managers of the fair “totally unfit for their business.”95 Northern newspapers happily celebrated their own nation’s success at the fair, but they also wanted to show that the Exhibition was a failure, and to criticise the event and Britain as a whole.

Diatribes against British society’s corruption and aristocracy accompanied American attacks on the fair’s building and management. The Journal of Commerce accused the unnamed son of an earl of pilfering ten thousand dollars from the Exhibition’s coffers.96 The New York Tribune used the exhibition of an English painting of a slave hunt to note that, if Britain recognized or aided the Confederacy,

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93 Memphis Daily Appeal. November 11, 1862, image 1.
95 Cleveland Morning Leader, June 10, 1862, image 2.
96 Memphis Daily Appeal, November 11, 1862, image 1.
they would also be responsible for propagating slavery.\textsuperscript{97} The \textit{New York Times} published the most stinging critique of British society. According to the paper, before the Exhibition even opened the British public feared the United States’ military genius. Combat between the \textit{Merrimac} and \textit{Monitor}, according to the \textit{New York Times}, “destroyed the value practically of the product of fifty years of European naval art.” The paper concluded that the Exhibition proved Britain no longer served as an impediment to American industry, “The people of America, that were to be kept by England so rude in art, and so awkward as not to know how even to manufacture a horse-shoe nail, have gone in to the English metropolis and established their triumphs over the skill not of England but of all competing nations.”\textsuperscript{98} Both the Civil War, and the Exhibition, in the \textit{New York Times}, proved American industrial superiority over Britain. This perceived British arrogance, and the American opportunity to attack and critique the hosts, for the \textit{Times}, made the Exhibition a success. The Great London Exhibition, because of its poor reception in Britain, was the perfect opportunity for newspapers to express Anglophobia. American industrial success proved the country’s economic superiority, and the Exhibition’s failure demonstrated British society’s weakness and corruption.

Shaffner, in his guide to the fair, and Johnson in his report, scoured the Exhibition for foreign, and particularly British products, which they could claim were American. These two visitors to the fair asserted, with some justification, that impressive British products relied on, or were alterations of, American technology. Shaffner insisted that the finest carriage makers in England and Ireland relied on the lightness of American wheels for their products.\textsuperscript{99} He also stated that the best boiler exhibited “was an American invention, manufactured by Mr. Harrison, a British exhibitor.”\textsuperscript{100} A British mechanism to improve the placement of shipboard guns was, according to Shaffner, “not conceded to Captain Coles,” its purported inventor at the exhibition, “by the Americans, who lay claim to it, they being the first to bring it into

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p. 197.
actual use, and having had the earliest opportunity to testing its power in war.”\textsuperscript{101} The Democratic Public Ledger also wrote about this mechanism without actually mentioning the fair. Coles, the Ledger printed, “like a true Briton, will never surrender what he has once appropriated to himself, belonging to another.”\textsuperscript{102} This defence of American industry from the Ledger did not mention the fair, but the paper still felt it should support the American inventor’s claims, and attack British exhibitors. Johnson found a pair of American shears exhibited by a British firm “admitted, so far as I could ascertain, to be superior to all others.”\textsuperscript{103} He also noted that some of the parts of the exhibited Enfield Rifle were American made.\textsuperscript{104} These authors identified more American products in the Exhibition to argue that impressive British displays were actually the result of American genius. These writings presented American inventors as the true originators of innovations, and British exhibitors as mere copyists. American writers on the fair both wanted U.S. products to beat British competitors, and also to show British manufacturing as the fruit of American genius.

American narratives about Britain at the Exhibition, compared to the fair eleven years earlier, changed very little. British audiences remained a source of vindication for American writers. If the gathered London crowd considered American products successful in the Exhibition Hall, then they were also considered triumphs back home. American writers on the event also wanted their nation’s products to best British competitors, and to highlight that British products were derivatives or copies of U.S. innovations. This narrative remained intact even at a moment of intense Anglo-American animosity during the Civil War. American newspapers also gleefully attacked the fair as a failure, and critiqued corruption in British society. In the context of the Civil War, and American resentment of British support for the Confederacy, showing American superiority to British products was even more important to observers. Anglophobia remained an important part of American reactions to the 1862 Exhibition. The British audience played the same role for American observers it had in 1851- as both foe and vindicator - but the conflict intensified these roles.

\textbf{Conclusion}

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 210. \\
\textsuperscript{102} ‘Who Invented Them?’, Public Ledger, 17 June 1862 p. 2. \\
\textsuperscript{103} Johnson, Report on International Exhibition of Industry and Art, p. 80. \\
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 138.
Writing on the 1862 London Exhibition does not show any real change in the narratives British and American visitors and observers of the event constructed about one another from the previous world’s fair at the Crystal Palace. British observers of the event saw, as did their predecessors in 1851, Americans as inventive, and a promising future for the American economy. At the Crystal Palace, McCormick’s reaper won awards for its utility, even though it was not beautiful or showy. Elias Howe’s sewing machines were also spare and functional but there were, in 1862, a symbol of American inventiveness and ingenuity. What the 1862 fair shows is the strength of these British narratives about the United States and its economy. British visitors still understood the United States as economically promising and the Civil War did nothing to alter these notions. Throughout the fair British writers were quick to point out the manufacturing skill shown in the American section. The small American section allowed visitors and observers to compensate for the sparse U.S. display, and project their own notions of American industrial prosperity onto the small exhibit. Where there were absences in the display, like in coal or in cotton, British writers happily filled in these gaps and proclaimed that the United States had the greatest coalfields in the world, and was sure to resume cotton trading once the war was over. Even in wartime there was a strong belief among these observers in the United States’ inventiveness and economic promise. British writers on the fair expressed a deep confidence in the United States’ economic promise, regardless of their positions on the Civil War.

Northern observers of the 1862 Exhibition also echoed their predecessors at the Crystal Palace. Northern writers about the Exhibition still looked for vindication from the hosts; U.S. products were considered successful if they were lauded and awarded prizes by the British audience. However, Americans observers of the fair also expressed deep Anglophobia, enjoyed the Exhibition’s overall negative reception, and hoped that the event would prove U.S. manufacturing’s superiority to Britain. Before the fair opened Northern politicians and writers who did not want the United States to participate believed it was important during the War to impress the British audience with American manufacturing superiority, they merely believed conflict with the South exhibited these qualities already. American reports from the Exhibition focused on elements of American crafting at the fair writers thought bested and thus embarrassed British manufacturers, like Steinway pianos. Americans observers still craved positive British reviews of their products in London and wanted both vindication from the British audience and proofs of their nation’s superiority to
British manufacturing. As in 1851, disparate political elements of in the United States coalesced around a common understanding of the American section at the 1862 Exhibition.

This chapter shows that the Civil War did not alter American or British visitors’ and observers’ narratives about one another’s countries seen in the previous chapter at the Crystal Palace. American observers of the fair still, as their predecessors had at the Crystal Palace, wanted to impress the British audience and to best British competitors. The war rather strengthened these narratives. British visitors and observers at the fair did not believe that the war would dent the United States’ promising economic future. For Northern observers of the fair besting Britain and impressing the London audience was even more important so as to show that the War did not inhibit American industrial production, and to warn off any British notions that intervention in the conflict might be beneficial. This study does not argue that the war was unimportant in Britain, or that British visitors and observers were disinterested in the conflict. Rather that these narratives remained or were only reinforced by the War, such was their popularity.
Chapter 3: Jousting on the Schuylkill
The 1876 Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia

In May 1876, the Centennial Exposition, the United States’ first world’s fair in a generation, ¹ opened in Philadelphia. President Ulysses Grant explained the Exhibition’s purposes in a speech at the opening ceremony.² Grant’s address lacked some of the bombast one might expect from a speech opening a world’s fair. U.S. visitors, at the two previous fairs examined in this thesis, responded to the American sections in triumphant jingoistic language. Grant, though, stated candidly, and modestly; “One hundred years ago our country was new and but partially settled. Our necessities have compelled us to chiefly expend our means and time in felling forests, subduing prairies, building dwellings, factories, ships, docks, ware houses, roads, canals, machinery.” He continued, “this exhibition will shew in the direction of rivaling older and more advanced notions in law, medicine and theology - in science, literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. Whilst proud of what we have done, we regret that we have not done more.” He asked American visitors in his conclusion to, in addition to observing products from the United States, take “careful examination of what is about to be exhibited to you,” as it would “inspire you with a profound respect for the skill and taste of our friends from the other nations.”³

Grant’s trepidation about the American display at the Centennial also affected many of the Exposition’s visitors and organisers. The Centennial showed the very best American industry, manufacturing, and high culture. As an international exhibition that attracted foreign visitors, the event could also display to European powers American deficiencies and high-cultural and technological inferiority. The global Exhibition in Philadelphia might show Americans where their industry compared unfavourably to foreign manufactures. Grant encapsulated this fear of American inadequacy well. He noted that the country had, in its century of existence, used its energy and industrial capacity to settle a great expanse of territory, and had, to that point, not been able to focus on the fine arts, sciences, literature, or philosophy as the older European nations could. The Centennial was a celebration of American independence, and all the United States achieved in its century of existence, but it was

³ Ibid., pp. 107-08.
also an event that presented to Americans areas for growth, and how it needed to emulate foreign nations in the future, in order to be widely considered a great power.

Organisers and American visitors alleviated this trepidation about how the United States might compare to international competitors at the Centennial with a celebration of American history: after all, part of the Centennial’s purpose was to commemorate the anniversary of American Independence. Some scholars of the fair, like Richard R. Nicolai, argue the event presented visitors an image of the American future, more than a depiction of the past. It is true that, for an event a mere eleven years after Appomattox, there were few reminders of the Civil War. The Centennial however, dripped with references to the Colonial and Revolutionary past. Reminders of 1776 were scattered throughout the fair. Revolutionary relics, like George Washington’s vest appeared, but even in industrial displays, American exhibitors showed Colonial-era versions of their products, so visitors could see technological progress. Domestic visitors, who came to Philadelphia in the millions, delighted in this display of American history because it showed a glorious American past that could be built on, and alleviated concerns that the fair would show the country’s comparative youth. Exhibitors proved, through the display of the United States’ industrial progress through the century, that their nation had a firm grounding of history and tradition upon which it could grow. American history was important for visitors to the Centennial because it showed that the United States could compete with European powers and could eventually develop the sectors it lacked and grow into a global power.

The British pavilion at Philadelphia was surprisingly popular in a fair that fetishized the Revolutionary era and showcased American anxieties about inferiority to European powers. British organisers struggled to secure industrial exhibits for the Centennial, and so presented mostly a historical and cultural image of the country. The nation’s section presented a historicized image of the country and did not display British industrial capacity. The British pavilion was built in mock Elizabethan style.

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7 Nicolai, Centennial Philadelphia, p. 84.
American visitors swarmed to see the historical and monarchical scenes in the British fine arts display. Copies of exhibits from the South Kensington Museum filled the British department in the fair’s industrial hall. Industrial British products were often advertised with references to Shakespeare or other pre-Revolutionary elements of British culture. The British display presented a historical, and a firmly pre-American Revolution, image of the country.

American visitors’ interest in British history was not distinct from their fascination with their own Revolutionary and Colonial past. At a fair meant to show the United States’ industrial progress between 1776 and 1876 British culture and the British pavilion that housed it served as a basis for this development. The Revolution represented a break between the two nations, but the British pavilion showed that before 1776 - Britain and the United States were part of the same country. British historical icons and symbols, like William Shakespeare, commonplace in the country’s display, were constructed by American visitors as English-speaking or even American cultural icons. British displays of medieval armour and artefacts were in American guidebooks, and newspaper reports, exhibitions of pre-1776 U.S. history. British exhibition of high culture and history validated the Centennial for American visitors. Domestic visitors did not need to fret about the American cultural deficiencies the Centennial presented; the British pavilion showed an image of the past that visitors could claim as part of the American historical narrative. The historicised British display also did not challenge American industrial exhibits; rather it validated an image of the United States as commercially powerful. The British section provided cultural bedrock on which the United States could develop into an economic power. American visitors, in part because of this historicised British display, viewed the Centennial as a success. At this first American world’s fair Americans visitors and observers still constructed a narrative of Britain as the country that could vindicate their participation in this global arena. Rather than positive British reviews, American visitors and observers craved British historical and cultural displays that validated their ability to host such an event because they showed the United States’ longer history. The British display alleviated American anxieties about the Exhibition and proved that the young country could gain legitimacy by drawing on its British past.

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British visitors and observers saw the Philadelphia Centennial much more practically and commercially than Americans at the fair. Before the opening, American tariffs convinced many British industrialists to forego participation. But upon the Centennial’s opening, British observers found much they liked in the fair. Some writers were surprised that Americans pulled off such a large event, and many observers saw the Centennial as a way to examine the United States’ global position relative to other nations. The Centennial was not, to these observers, as impressive as some European exhibitions, but it did compare favourably with the most recent world’s fair in Vienna in 1873. Its massive size and attendance impressed British visitors, particularly because much of the country’s press before the opening believed the fair would fail to attract exhibitors and customers. British observers thought certain American products even compared favourably with British competitors. However, the fair did not stoke British fears of American commercial competition. Instead the country was constructed in British coverage as a brother nation, with the same racial and cultural background. These similarities between the countries made the United States a less dangerous competitor than European powers like France or Germany. British observers described the American Revolution as a disagreement, or even a misunderstanding, between two factions of the same people. As British visitors had at the previous two events, they explained the United States’ commercial prosperity as the result of this shared racial background. The Centennial confirmed long held British narratives of Americans, as commercial, inventive, and industrious. However, this event also shows an emerging British narrative of the United States as a nation Britain could paternally guide into the future. The United States had problems like protectionism, but its industrial development meant, for these visitors and observers, that it might develop as a power in a way similar to Britain.

This chapter encompasses five different sections. First is a historiographical review that situates my examination of Britain and the United States at the fair within work on the Centennial, as well as Anglo-American relations in the period. Also included in this section is an examination of nineteenth-century American ideas about history and heritage, themes central at the Centennial. The first section to examine the fair itself focuses on American planning. More importantly, this part of the chapter explores organisers’ and other observers’ anxieties that the event would show U.S. deficiencies in certain areas of high-culture and production. In the third section will probe the importance of Revolutionary-era history to the event, and how British and American visitors thought about their nations’ histories in relation to the
Centennial. I will then explore British organisation, before investigating the Centennial itself. The fourth part of the chapter look at American reactions to the British section of the event, and ways this part of the Centennial vindicated the fair for domestic visitor. Lastly, this chapter examines British visitors’ and observers’ ideas about the Centennial and the image of the United States the fair presented.

**Historiography**

This chapter examines how American visitors understood the images of their country and Britain presented at the Centennial, and particularly how this fair showed American national identity was grounded in British cultural heritage. Robert Rydell and Richard Nicolai both examine how the Centennial communicated a particular image of American identity. Rydell argues that the Centennial, and all American hosted world’s fairs, were part of a process of national organisation. These events, Rydell argues, were perfect venues for politicians, manufacturers, and intellectual leaders to show the American people an easily digestible image of the nation, and to see and understand the country’s economy and role internationally. At the Centennial Americans could compare themselves with other nations, and view their place in the world relative to other participants. Rydell suggests that these comparisons projected, for visitors, an image of the country as industrially progressive, scientific, middle class, and above all racially white. Nicolai moves this argument forward and contextualises this image of the country in the post-Civil War era. He argues the Centennial showed the mostly white American audience a promising economic future that could unite North and South after the Civil War. Both historians base this vision on the way organisers understood and planned the event. While this chapter agrees that America visitors saw their country as industrially progressive and racially white, its main focus is on how attendees themselves understood their connection with Britain. An examination of American visitors’ conceptions of the British section reveals a far greater sense of American insecurity and comparative youth at the fair.

More recent work on the Centennial explores visitors’ reactions to the event and explains attendees’ specific ideas about the United States at the fair. Bruno Giberti characterises the Centennial as a complicated web of planning and reception.

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10 Ibid., pg. 26-31.
11 Nicolai, *Centennial Philadelphia*, p. 95.
Visitors, Giberti reminds, came to the fair with their own agendas and interests, and wanted to be entertained as well as educated by the fair. The organisers’ vague objective to show human progress, a goal that defined all world’s fairs, was open to interpretation. Giberti argues organisers showed visitors a global taxonomy, each nation divided into its own section, art and industry separated, to give a clear indication of each country’s production and capacity. Visitors, though, had their own reactions to this taxonomy, ranging from bewilderment, to criticism that the fair was too commercial and moneygrubbing. American visitors could touch and buy products from other nations and could selectively choose what they thought was most important and valuable at the fair.¹² Visitors could decide what objects or elements of displays they thought were most indicative of national characteristics. Giberti sees the Centennial as more incoherent for visitors than Rydell or Nicolai, and he argues visitors and organisers play an equally important role. This argument for complexity is important for this chapter. Visitors at Philadelphia drew their own connections between the British and American display and projected their own image of American identity as grounded in British heritage. In order to understand the American narratives about the British section at the Centennial it is vital to examine how and why the department was popular with visitors, and how they understood the historical connections between the two nations.

This project also argues that these world’s fairs are a way to examine larger popular notions about the two countries under study. Lyn Spillman shows how the Centennial spread and codified American identity and national symbolism. Spillman suggests that the Centennial helped to institutionalise American national identity through a display of the entire country. At the Centennial, visitors and observers could see themselves as part of the United States. The Centennial was a way that the United States, a nation with little history to build on, could create and disseminate a single national identity, and a location where all visitors could see themselves as part of the same country.¹³ Spillman’s work suggests that the fair had a nationalising role for Americans, even for those who did not attend the Centennial. Visitors, and even those reading about the fair from afar, understood similar images of American identity presented at the fair. Vitally, visitors also helped to shape their own American identity at the Exposition, connecting certain displays to ideas about the country as a whole.

Giberti’s and Spillman’s work suggests that visitors crafted their own understanding of American national identity at the Centennial. This chapter will show that the British display played a vital role in forming this identity.

Ideas about national history played a key role in both the American display at Philadelphia and visitors’ understanding of the British section. American ideas about history and the country’s British heritage were in a state of flux in the late-nineteenth century. Melanie Hall identifies a nineteenth-century transatlantic interest in historic preservation. American enthusiasts claimed ownership over, and wished to preserve and protect, elements of British culture. In 1847, P.T. Barnum attempted to buy William Shakespeare’s birthplace and move it brick by brick for display in New York City. Shakespeare was, because of his influence on the English language, and popularity in the United States, for many Americans as much a U.S. phenomenon as British one.¹⁴ Barnum’s scheme reveals a popular interest in preserving British history in the United States. Christopher Mulvey identifies this same interest in heritage in American visitors to Britain. American travellers, wealthy enough for international tourism, made pilgrimages to Stratford-on-Avon and Westminster Abbey, sites of perceived shared Anglo-American heritage. These travellers saw Westminster Abbey, particularly after a bust of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was added to the Church’s ‘Poet’s Corner,’ as a kind of pantheon of shared Anglo-American cultural figures.¹⁵ Both historians explain that Americans were able to, in the period, see connections between their national culture and British history. Mulvey and Hall, to some extent, focus on elite actors, but this chapter builds on their work to explore popular American interest in British history at the Centennial.

Americans, in the period after the Civil War, also became more interested in national history, and their connections to Britain. David Lowenthal suggests that national history played an increasingly important role in post-bellum American society. Before the Civil War, Lowenthal argues, nostalgia and heritage were complicated concepts for many Americans. Nostalgia for the colonial era was anti-republican, and, though the founding generation still deeply influenced American politics and culture, Americans felt that they could not live up to the Revolutionary

generation. To alleviate this problem antebellum figures like James Fenimore Cooper argued that the United States had no past to burden it, and that this absence of heritage was beneficial. The United States avoided European-style tyranny and social division because it lacked heritage. During the Civil War Americans defended republican ideals, and lived up to the example of the founders, so U.S. history, in the post-bellum era, could be celebrated. This post-bellum interest in history, combined with anxieties about the influx of new immigrants, meant that Americans employed heritage to underscore their identity. Celebration of personal connections to the Colonial Era emphasised one’s Americanism. American history was a popular cultural force for domestic visitors at the Centennial, and a key component of American identity in the years after the Civil War.

Like transatlantic history, Britain’s Monarchy also fascinated post-bellum Americans. At the Centennial British objects and art donated by Queen Victoria, were popular because of their royal connections. Queen Victoria donated a number of paintings and other personal objects to the fair that were incredibly popular with attendees. Frank Prochaska argues that Americans found solace in the British monarchy’s nostalgia and ritual during the Civil War era’s political uncertainty. Queen Victoria was popular in the United States as a constant and sympathetic figure throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction. The nation was firmly republican, but monarchy offered a nostalgic view of the past, as a place where pleasantry, politeness and tradition reigned, in an era of violence and uncertainty. Andrew Heath identifies ex-Confederates, disenchanted with democracy, but open to monarchy, or a similar centralisation of power, to better direct the reconstruction of their region. In New York a journal called The Imperialist advocated for an American constitutional monarch, like Victoria, who could serve as a check on Radical Republican legislative overreach. Monarchy was a symbol of continuity and stability in a period that underscored the uncertainties of democracy. The monarch was, for these Americans, a historicised figure, representing a simpler traditional past. American interest in

19 Andrew Heath, “‘Let the Empire Come’: Imperialism and Its Critics in the Reconstruction South”, *Civil War History*, 60 (2014), 152–89 (152-61).
monarchy helps to illuminate American anxiety, and interest in British history at the fair. In a moment when American visitors and organisers feared the Centennial might show the nation’s inferiority, royal participation, and endorsement of the event was incredibly important for, and popular with attendees. Royal sympathy comforted American visitors through the Centennial just as it had during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Work on American exhibitions in this period, particularly Steven Conn’s two books American museums show how these spaces were designed to communicate broader themes to visitors. Conn highlights that exhibitions and museums at core showed progress, either though the evolution of species or the progress of technological and cultural advancement. These spaces Conn argues showed the United States as the most progressive or advanced nation on the planet.\textsuperscript{20} He also shows how American museums and displays differed compared to European ones. The United States had no grand palaces in which to display relics and exhibitionary spaces focused less on enforcing social hierarchies and more on educating the entire population. Theses museums, particularly via art, tried to show the United States as the inheritor of European culture.\textsuperscript{21} The Exhibition also tried to show American progress by displaying products from 1776 compared to modern versions. The British display also showed how Americans were the inheritors of European culture by drawing clear connections between their history and the United States’. The fair showed how Britain was part of the continuum of American progress, and how the United States developed on British cultural foundations.

The 1870s are notorious in the historiography for social upheaval, financial crises, and political corruption, but the Centennial did not reflect these problems. Americans still felt the effects of the 1873 financial crisis in the Centennial year,\textsuperscript{22} however in Philadelphia itself the financial establishment remained mostly intact, and the crisis did not affect the Centennial greatly.\textsuperscript{23} Organisers were not perturbed by the downturn, or lack of available capital in the market, and the event was physically larger than any previous world’s fair.\textsuperscript{24} 1876 was also a contentious election year, yet the fair closed immediately after the election, before the true scope of the crisis was


\textsuperscript{24} Rydell, \textit{All the World’s a Fair}, p.10.
apparent, and long before politicians struck the compromise of 1877. Federal Reconstruction was still in effect - though waning- during the fair, and the Centennial embraced a correspondingly optimistic racial vision. Bruno Giberti argues that Centennial organisers aligned themselves with Reconstruction’s educational goals. Planners believed that the Centennial was a good way to educate freed people about new commercial opportunities, and images of African-Americans engaged with advanced technology were common at the fair. However, though Black unemployment was high in Philadelphia, the Centennial commissioners hired few African-Americans to work in the fairgrounds, and few African-Americans attended. The first national strike in the United States began in 1877, eight months after the fair’s close. However, the Centennial was not a site of labour agitation, perhaps because organised labour in Philadelphia was broadly more conservative than the national movement. The Knights of Labor – the paragon of the conservative labour movement - originated in Philadelphia in this period. The financial crisis, labour unrest, and organisers’ racial discrimination did not adversely affect the number of visitors to the fair: ten million people attended. Even if one were to cut that number in half to account for repeat viewings and foreign visitors, the figure would still indicate that one in ten Americans, in 1876, visited the Centennial. Organisers claimed that, given the number of visitors, four in five Americans living within a two-hundred-mile radius of the Centennial attended.

These crises did not affect the fair because the Centennial also showed an image of American society and industry sanitized of social problems. Alan Trachtenberg notes that the 1873 financial crisis was the first time that Americans really questioned technology’s benefits. Before the crisis innovation was popularly understood a useful tool to spread American power and democracy. The Centennial presented this uncomplicated and beneficial vision of industry. The fair’s greatest

26 Giberti, Designing the Centennial, p. 94.
27 Spillman, Nation and Commemoration, pp. 48-49.
29 Beers. ‘Centennial City,’ p. 435.
30 Nicolai. Centennial Philadelphia, p. 84.
31 British newspapers of the time noted there were relatively few foreign visitors see ‘The Philadelphia Exhibition’, Daily News, 18 July 1876.
33 Spillman, Nation and Commemoration, p. 51.
exhibit for instance, was the ‘Corliss Engine,’ described in one guide as one of “largest and most powerful stationary engines in the world, and marvels of constructive skill.”\textsuperscript{35} Centennial organisers also refused to allow displays on political themes that might divide visitors. As mentioned above, reminders of the Civil War were largely absent from the fairground in a bid to include Southerners to participate in the event.\textsuperscript{36} The fair included a Women’s Pavilion to show female manufacturing but its female organisers did not advocate for women’s suffrage.\textsuperscript{37} American Indians at the fair appeared as relics of a bygone era, a shrinking people crushed by American technological might.\textsuperscript{38} The Exhibition showed a thematically uncomplicated image of the United States, and presented industrial power, and manufacturing as purely harmonious, rather than socially divisive, facets of American life.

The American Civil War also altered the transatlantic economy and Anglo-American relations. The American economy expanded massively after the War. Cotton remained a major part of the American economy post-1865, and as Sven Beckert shows the cotton industry expanded after the conflict. Exploitation of the crop became more industrial, new rail and telegraph lines spread across the nation to accommodate cotton’s expansion.\textsuperscript{39} British buyers were, though, after the Civil War less dependent on exports of American cotton. New cotton growing regions in the British Empire emerged during the war to compensate for the lack of American imports.\textsuperscript{40} Anglo-American economic links - outside of cotton - proliferated after the War. American companies like Heinz and Eastman Kodak sold their products in the British Empire. These firms considered the Empire an easy foreign market to enter.\textsuperscript{41} Singer Sewing Machines opened a factory in Scotland in 1868 and offices in Australia and New Zealand in the same period.\textsuperscript{42} The transatlantic economy changed

\textsuperscript{35} Thomas Bentley, \textit{The Illustrated Catalogue of the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876. Illustrated by George C. Bell and Other Eminent Artists. (The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876. By Thomas Bentley} (New York: John Filmer, 1876), p. 97.
\textsuperscript{36} Though as Jack Noe’s recent article “‘Everybody Is Centennializing’: White Southerners and the 1876 Centennial”, \textit{American Nineteenth Century History}, 17 (2016), pp. 325–43 notes the prominent place of the Civil War was a problem for Southern visitors and commentators in newspapers back home.
\textsuperscript{37} Nicolai, \textit{Centennial Philadelphia}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{38} Mitch Kachun, ‘Before the Eyes of All Nations: African-American Identity and Historical Memory at the Centennial Exposition of 1876’, \textit{Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies}, 65 (1998),300–323, (306). This presentation of American Indians was exhibited, even though the fair coincided with Custer’s defeat at Little Bighorn.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 294-95.
\textsuperscript{41}Mona Domosh, \textit{American Commodities in an Age of Empire} (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 22.
drastically after the war. British consumers no longer looked to the United States mainly for raw materials but for other kinds of industrial products.

Increased Anglo-American commerce occurred during what Anthony Howe identifies as period of British anxiety about free trade. In the 1860s and 70s several European nations adopted trade protections. At the same time protectionism was politically popular in the white settler colonies. The United States was for many British free traders a protectionist bogeyman used to counter proponents of tariffs. British advocates for fair trade, the introduction of tariffs on protectionist nations, could be rebuffed with claims that specific barriers would lead inevitably to American style corruption. Free trade could not be blamed for the 1873 financial panic because the protectionist United States also suffered. Simultaneously as American products expanded their global reach British resentment of American protectionism grew. This chapter will show that British observers and visitors separated these two phenomena in their descriptions of the fair. American tariffs could be critiqued while American production was praised.

American ideas about the country’s racial identity were in a period of flux in the 1870s. The fair occurred, according to Edward Blum, in a moment when Northern resentment of white Southerners, and even Northern belief that Southern whites were a separate racial group, began to dissipate. Blum specifically cites the fair as a place where memories of 1776 could unite Northerners and Southerners. The fair was also a space to see the world gathered in the United States and for visitors to see new cultures. Amy Kaplan argues that after the Civil War, as Americans began to go abroad in larger numbers and accounts of foreign travel like a narrative by Mark Twain about his time in Hawaii became popular, a new American white identity emerged. Using Twain’s narrative, Kaplan suggests that Americans came to see themselves as masculine colonisers civilising the globe through trade and production, superior to European territorial empires. The fair was a space for Americans who could not travel the globe to see products and people from abroad and importantly to understand what commodities could be sold to them. The fair both helped to unite whites across the nation, but its displays of foreign people and objects showed how

44 Ibid., pp. 135-36
white Americans were superior to citizens of other nations, and how U.S. commerce could be expanded. Americans at the fair believed themselves to be inheritors of British culture, but the event also showed them how the United States was distinct from Britain and its Empire.

British images of the late-nineteenth-century United States, were, in the wake of the Civil War, generally positive. British visitors and observers of the Centennial had in 1876 certain racial and political images of the country that informed their discussion of the fair. After the Civil War more Americans went abroad, and transatlantic social interactions increased. Cheap steamship fares and better infrastructure allowed for more American tourism in Europe. Many British travellers also went to the United States in the period after the War, including several notable politicians like Charles Dilke, Randolph Churchill, and Lord Rosebery. One manifestation of this increased social interaction was the rise in Anglo-American marriages among late-nineteenth-century elites. Stuart Anderson argues that the decades after the Civil War were pivotal for the creation of Anglo-Saxonism among Britain’s elite and middle-class. British and American elites developed a theory that people in both nations were descendants of the same Anglo-Saxon racial family. In some ways ‘Anglo-Saxonism’ is merely a name for something that existed long before the late-nineteenth century. As the previous two chapters show, British visitors to the 1851 and 1862 exhibitions saw in the American sections proofs of shared attributes, and constructed the United States, via these displays, as a comparable nation with a similar economy of institutions. Anglo-Saxonism is a more scientific and distilled definition of this British conception of the United States, one that saw British and American economic success as inherent and innate. This understanding of the United States as a racially similar nation, and potential ally, characterised British visitors and observers’ responses to the Centennial.

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48 Murney Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States: Political and Social Thought in the Late Victorian Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 15, 17-21, 41, 47. Rosebery even attended the Centennial but did not write about it see p. 47.
Political images of the United States in Britain were generally positive, and the Civil War silenced critiques about slavery and democracy’s ingrained instability.\(^{52}\) Among elites at least, the cultural relationship between Britain and the United States also improved with greater social intercourse between the two countries. Anglo-Saxonism gave scientific legitimacy to perceived connections between the two nations. With the exception of tariffs, the Centennial opened in a period of relative transatlantic harmony, and British visitors and observers as a result created narratives of the United States as a similar nation, and one that might develop into a comparable Anglo-Saxon power in the future.

**Sources and Visitors**

In order to best explore American anxiety about the national display at Philadelphia and fears over how the United States would compare to other nations, a large part of this chapter examines organisers. Planning material shows that before the fair opened, organisers were keenly aware that the event might show American deficiencies and hoped that British participation would assure the fair’s success. The Centennial’s organisers were for the most part provincial businessmen, industrialists, and politicians. Alfred T. Goshorn, the Director General, was a Cincinnati businessman, hired because he organised the city’s popular annual industrial fairs.\(^{53}\) The Exposition’s representative in Europe, John Weiss Forney, was a Lancaster Pennsylvania newspaperman and beneficiary of political patronage, who served during the Civil War as Secretary of the Senate.\(^{54}\) Material from organisers in both London and Philadelphia shows planners’ understanding of the fair’s purposes, and reveals why the fair appeared as it did, and how organisers believed Americans should participate in the Centennial. Forney’s work in Europe shows how important foreign, and particularly British, participation was for Centennial organisers.

Visitors to the Centennial, British and American, were for the most part middle-class, and the sources they created reflect this social background. Though the fair attracted millions of American visitors, one can still demarcate what kind of

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\(^{53}\) Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, p. 10.

\(^{54}\) ‘U.S. Senate: John W. Forney, Secretary of the Senate, 1861-1868’ <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/SOS_John_Forney.htm> [accessed 13 November 2017]
Americans attended. As shown above, the fair received few non-white visitors. The Centennial attracted many attendees from the American Northeast, but travel from other regions and lodging was expensive, so most visitors from further afield had to be wealthy enough to make the journey. Few immigrants to the United States visited the Centennial. One British visitor recorded that the Centennial gave the impression that all native-born Americans were middle-class and prosperous, and all immigrants laboured in Philadelphia’s low-wage economy.\textsuperscript{55} It is likely that the cost of travel prohibited immigrants from attendance. Study of the Centennial then says more about middle-class, native born, and white American ideas about Britain than any other group in this period. Most of my material on the fair itself is drawn from guides, and newspaper reports from the fair. Many of these are long illustrated works, which provide detailed descriptions of the event, but were also prohibitively expensive and thus products for the middle-class. I have tried to include cheaper guides as well as newspaper reports from across the nation to give some indication of what images of the British pavilion were communicated to poorer visitors, and those who could not attend the fair.

British visitors and observers, were also, for the most part, middle-class. Authors of travelogues about the Centennial had similar backgrounds; they were mostly provincial men from industrial centres like Macclesfield, or Dundee. They visited Philadelphia to examine American manufacturing and see how U.S. technology compared to industries in their home cities. Popular British newspapers also covered the event. The more Liberal \textit{Times} covered the fair, as did the more Conservative \textit{Morning Post}. These British newspaper sources are limited. Only the larger papers, able to hire foreign correspondents, could really cover the fair in any detail, and so I have mostly focused on these wealthier and more circulated journals. Smaller regional papers, and journals with radical political outlooks, cannot really be employed in this chapter. Like with my discussion of American images of Britain, this chapter says more about British middle-class opinions on the United States.

\textbf{American Anxieties at the Centennial}

The Philadelphia Centennial forced organisers, visitors, and other Americans to consider that the fair might show the nation’s deficiencies to the rest of the world. Before the fair opened congressmen questioned publicly why the United States should host an international fair if it might reveal American inferiority. Organisers worked hard to secure foreign and particularly British participation at the fair, and guidebooks and newspaper coverage of the event saw that nation’s participation as particularly important. If Britain did not attend, then manufacturers from other nations might refuse to send anything to Philadelphia. These two discussions about whether the fair should be held, and Britain’s place at the event reveal American anxieties about how the United States would appear. They also show why British participation was especially important in 1876 for organisers and visitors to buttress the American display.

The fair, though a commemoration of a century of American independence, had other purposes. Jersey City manufacturer and Congressman Orestes Cleveland stated these goals clearly in a speech before Congress.56 “The vast and varied and marvellous results of inventive industry from all of the world shall gather here...From the International Exhibition of 1876 the education of skilled labor, in this country at least is to take a new departure, and we hope the effect will [be] felt also, in some measure, by every civilized nation.”57 Cleveland hoped the fair would show American workers what they could learn from ‘civilized’ nations’ displayed arts and products. As discussed before in this dissertation’s chapter on the Crystal Palace, the act of hosting a world’s fair connoted both strength and weakness. British ability to gather nations to London for the Great Exhibition of 1851 was a sign of British global power. However, one of the event’s goals was to educate the domestic workforce, considered behind their continental competitors and ignorant of craft, foreign styles, and artistic manufacturing techniques. The Centennial’s detractors saw this problem and believed that an international exhibition would highlight American weakness as well as strength. Roscoe Conkling argued in the Senate that a celebration of

American independence ought only to include domestic products. Why, he asked, should American products be shown in competition with foreign goods, and invite unsympathetic comparisons? Charles Sumner, before his 1872 death, argued that the U.S. government had no right to invite foreign nations to participate in a fair on American soil, and blocked organisers’ use of the foreign service to advertise the fair. Both Senators worked to prevent an exhibition that would show American products, next to European competitors, as deficient.

Centennial planners also worried about how American products would compare to European competitors. However, organisers were also concerned that the United States would appear weak if it did not host a world’s fair. This anxiety was expressed in a letter to prospective subscribers of stock in the exposition, “Great Britain, France and other leading powers have instructed and entertained the world with such exhibitions…and it is eminently appropriate that America should assert her place in this respect, as she has in others, among the powers most actively contributing to the advancement of mankind.” The United States was, organisers argued, comparatively late to host a world’s fair, and this reluctance to display could be understood, by Europeans, as a sign of weakness.

British participation was a focal point of this American anxiety about inferiority and success. American organisers dispatched a special commissioner - John Forney - to Europe to encourage foreign interest in the exposition. Forney was especially concerned with British participation. He, and the other organisers, feared that British absence would mean foreign and domestic visitors would not see the fair as truly global. Once the British government assured participation the Centennial and Journal of the Exposition, a publication meant to record the fair’s progress, reprinted an article from the London based Anglo-American Times, stating that the moment the British government accepted the American invitation to participate was “the moment the Centennial Exhibition becomes truly global,” and “it looks now as if not only a success, but a very great success – in its ‘International’ character is assured.”

60 Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP), Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa), Centennial Exhibition Miscellaneous Papers 1873-1876, Box 1, F1.
acceptance of the invitation to participate proved that the fair would be truly international.

One guide to the Exhibition expressed the same fear that visitors would not see the fair as truly global if Britain did not participate. Thomas Bentley in his *Illustrated History of the Centennial* noted that to Britain “the projectors of the enterprise naturally looked with some anxiety to sound the key-note, as it were, of the feeling, whether of sympathy or of discouragement with which it was received.” Bentley understood the importance of British participation for the fair, “upon her zealous, hearty co-operation in this competitive Exhibition not a little would depend. If she held aloof, her indifference might sway the conduct of the other important European nations.” If British manufacturers refused to participate then perhaps other European industrialists would follow their example. British participation alleviated the hosts’ anxieties; the United States was worthy of hosting such a fair if the British government agreed to show in Philadelphia.

British participation vindicated the Centennial. American guidebooks recorded their gratification with British participation in fawning descriptions of the country’s products. Compared to American writing on the earlier two fairs, guidebook authors reviewed the British section favourably, and noted how important the display was for the Centennial’s success. *Gems of the Exhibition*, by George Titus Ferris, described British pottery exhibits as the result of technological genius that Americans could not replicate; “It seems difficult to explain the great lack of art-industry of this character in the United States…Occasionally even we see something marked by genuine artistic feeling, both in form and color; but when we compare it, as a whole, with the English ceramic ware, even the better specimens appear to us tawdry and commonplaces in the extreme.” Ferris believed the discrepancy between American and British pottery was caused by the centuries of history the United States lacked. J.S. Ingram’s *The Centennial Exposition: Described and Illustrated* detailed British textiles as, “on the whole, a finer exhibit than that of any other country. It was not as extensive as the display of our own exhibitors, or as rich in silks and velvets as that of the French, but it embraced a wider range than either.” These positive reviews of British products in 1876 reveal a remarkable change in American

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64 Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition: Described and Illustrated*, p. 400.
understandings of the country. At both world’s fairs in London, in 1851 and 1862, American writers did not find much of value in the British section. When they did discover products they liked they typically argued that these inventions were mere improvements on already existing American technology. In 1876, however, writers on the Centennial positively reviewed the British displays, and highlighted elements of production the United States lacked. Titus recorded why American pottery was inferior to British competitors. One guide even credited British architects for the design of the Centennial buildings, noting that the art department would become, after the Exposition’s close, a “receptacle of an industrial and art collection similar to the famous South Kensington Museum at London.”65 This guidebook presented British culture as an example for American organisers to follow. Britain’s participation was important to American organisers, and guidebook authors noted the nation’s supremacy in certain areas of manufacturing. Unlike at world’s fairs in London, planners and visitors understood American industrial power’s limits.

**American History at the Centennial**

American organisers, to compensate for and alleviate their anxiety at the Centennial, fetishized American history. The U.S. government building showed historical relics from the revolutionary era, including clothes worn by George Washington, and a tea set given to Martha Washington by the Marquis de Lafayette.66 Cutlasses and armour used by John Paul Jones and various naval and national flags from the colonial period appeared in the U.S. Navy department.67 Elsewhere in the Exhibition visitors could buy a newspaper dated ‘4 July 1776’ from a hawker in period dress (Fig. 1.).68 Pre-Revolutionary American history also appeared in the Exhibition. ‘A New England Farmer’s House,’ replete with pilgrim furnishings, and attendants in period costume, formed part of the Massachusetts state display.69 A cannon, “obtained from Alvarado, Mexico, which was cast about the year 1490, and

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67 Ibid., pp. 137, 142.
used by Cortez in his conquest of that country,” appeared in the navy department.\textsuperscript{70} This exhibit reminded Americans of the long historical ties between the Americas and Europe, and also the nation’s war in Mexico in the 1840s. At the Centennial’s Maryland and Delaware day this historical fascination slipped from the parameters of American geography.\textsuperscript{71} To celebrate American Independence, the two states arranged a mock medieval joust between fifteen riders representing the original thirteen colonies, the federal government, and the Centennial.\textsuperscript{72} After the joust the winning ‘knight’ crowned a “Queen of Beauty,” from the gathered spectators.\textsuperscript{73} Visitors’ interest in national history at the Centennial was so ubiquitous that it was worthy of satire. In one book on the Centennial, a New York author wrote that no one could take the train from that city to Philadelphia without meeting “a personage to be found on all trains going or coming from Philadelphia nowadays, who is sure to make travel a pleasure – the historical gentleman, or historical bore, as some careless people are apt to call him.”\textsuperscript{74} All of these exhibits showed Americans their long history. Relics from the American Revolution were the most prominent historical part of the fair, but exhibits also showed scenes from the Colonial era, as well as the first European settlement of North America. Maryland and Delaware day gave visitors an opportunity to see a historical display that connected Americans to European history directly. Visitors to the Centennial could explore the United States’ longer-term history, and see that the country was not young, but contained a deep well of culture and tradition that buttressed the nation’s ability to host such an event.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{70} Ingram, \textit{The Centennial Exposition: Described and Illustrated}, p. 136.
\item\textsuperscript{71} The Centennial like the World’s Columbian Exposition hosted a number of state days celebrating specific parts of the Union. See Nicolai, \textit{Centennial Philadelphia}, p. 70.
\item\textsuperscript{72} Nicolai, \textit{Centennial Philadelphia}, p. 70.
\item\textsuperscript{73} McCabe, \textit{The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition}, p. 768.
\item\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Going to the Centennial, and a Guy to the Great Exhibition}, available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, World's Fairs, p. 6.
\end{itemize}
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American history displayed at the Centennial was not limited to re-enactment and exhibition of relics. In the industrial sections exhibitors used historical artefacts to show American manufacturing’s progression since 1776. In the Machinery Hall printing presses from 1776 churned out newspapers. In the ‘Shoe and Leather’ building visitors could see examples of Colonial era products juxtaposed against modern creations. The fisheries section showed models of wharfs from 1776 set against contemporary examples. The Agricultural hall’s most defining feature was a windmill “built in the old style…It bears the date, 1776, and is complete in all its arrangements.” (Fig. 2). Historicised display also allowed manufacturers to appeal to the popular mania for the American Revolution. Messrs. Griffiths & Sons, manufacturers of agricultural tools, exhibited “an old rusty and half-eaten spade, dug up by the late Rev. Dr. Brainerd from the line of the entrenchments of the American army at Valley Forge during the Revolution.” Guide author James McCabe was so moved by this display he wrote, “This mute instrument, which did its humble part in the work of establishing the freedom of the republic, not inappropriately comes now

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76 McCabe, The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition, pp. 487, 627.
77 Ibid., p. 481.
to share in the crowning glory of the [y]ear which it helped to inaugurate, though the patriot hands which wielded it have long since mouldered to forgotten dust.”

Griffiths & Sons made a clear argument for Americans’ history of manufacturing prowess. Not simply did Americans have a manufacturing history, industrial production was part of U.S. national identity’s defining moment. Without such strong American manufacturing how could the nation have won independence. This display appealed to visitors’ interest in Americans history and associated manufacturing skill with American revolutionary values, and at the same time showed U.S. industry’s progress.

Figure 2: Windmill

Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition: Described and Illustrated*, p. 60.

These two impulses, fascination with the American Revolution, and desire to show the progress of U.S. manufacturing, are related. American visitors and exhibitors, nervous about how the Centennial showed the country’s position in the world, clung to what history they had to back up their claim to be a world power.

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Displays of colonial-era manufacturing proved to visitors that the United States had some tradition of production, something on which to build a stable industrial foundation. Organisers of the Great Exhibition in 1851 did something similar, though much more constrained, with the faux ‘medieval court,’ that presented examples of medieval British products, to support the Crystal Palace’s implicit claim to demonstrate a strong British manufacturing history. Artefacts, products, and re-enactments of the American Revolution and other periods of history beyond 1776, provided visitors examples of the United States’ manufacturing history. Americans had heroes and historical relics like older European nations. The role of American history at the Centennial also further illuminates organisers’ and visitors’ anxieties about the exhibition. Organisers, visitors, and exhibitors needed to display their history to prove that the United States could host a world’s fair, and show the country had the cultural grounding to manufacture and produce impressive objects.

Interest in the American Revolution at the fair did not stoke Anglophobia. U.S. guidebook authors and other writers at the fair cast the war as a disagreement between George III and the American colonies. A children’s book about the Centennial stated George III’s desire for colonists “to help pay the cost of keeping the King and his family in England” caused the Revolution.\(^{(79)}\) Another guide stated that George III forced the Revolution, and that “seventeen thousand foreign troops had been hired by the British government,” because “the war was unpopular with the people of England, and it was therefore difficult to induce them to enlist.”\(^{(80)}\) These guides exculpated the British public at large, and focused the Revolution on George III’s villainy. One satire even poked fun at American demonization of the king and blamed the Revolution on George III’s command “that all the male children born in the Colonies should be cast into the Atlantic Ocean. He also advanced the price of postage stamps.”\(^{(81)}\) This image of the Revolution nixed any ill will between the nations that could arise in a celebration of American Independence.

\(^{(79)}\) Something for the Children, or, Uncle John’s Story of His First Visit to the Centennial (Philadelphia, 1876), p. 28 <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hn2gmz>[accessed 20 January 2017].


British Planning and Display

The British government, though initially sceptical that the United States would be able to host such an event successfully, agreed in 1874 to participate in the Centennial. British organisers, for pragmatic reasons, could not secure many manufactured exhibits for Philadelphia. British manufacturers cited distance as a problem, and the onerous American tariffs. While American organisers saw British participation as a way to vindicate the event, British industrialists interested in the United States weighed the fair’s commercial opportunities. They fretted about what markets the Centennial would open, and how, given the tariffs, they would sell to the largely American audience. In order to overcome these problems, British organisers decided to showcase a cultural and historical - and ultimately very popular - image of Britain at Philadelphia. Discussions between organisers and manufacturers, about whether to participate, showcase British notions about the United States, and reveal how the display eventually appeared.

To convince the British government to participate in the Centennial Edward Thornton, then minister to the United States, in a letter to the Earl of Derby, argued that Americans were more likely than not to host a successful event, and convinced the government to accept the invitation. Thornton also reminded the government, in the autumn of 1874, that France and Germany had already started to create their displays, and that Britain’s absence would be conspicuous. French and German competitors could possibly take buyers from British manufacturers at the fair, if the country did not display.82

British observers of the Centennial’s progress were interested in how the fair, and U.S. products, would appear, but they were also pragmatic about the value of participation in a North American exhibition. Some British industrialists were willing to participate, and many more hoped the fair would be successful, but most manufacturers, when lobbied by organisers, expressed disinterest in the event. John Forney commented, “At first there was a strange indifference…One by one the great newspapers took it up, and by means of correspondence and personal interviews the matter reached the provinces and the great cities of the United Kingdom, until within

the last month the Philadelphia World’s Fair assumed an importance and a dignity which could not escape official attention.”83 This piecemeal response to the Exhibition is also shown in records of British subscribers of Centennial stock. By May 1874, while the government debated participation, British subjects purchased fifty subscriptions of stock in the Centennial. This number dwarfs the next largest foreign contributor, Switzerland with two subscriptions, and outdid states like Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan, with between four and thirty-three subscribers.84 The British government was not interested in the Centennial, but some people of means in Britain had enough faith in the event to invest in it. Forney also noted that British people interested in the fair understood the event’s commercial importance. He reported that an “eminent Englishman” told him, “Your Centennial is important to Great Britain in every sense, but chiefly in a commercial sense. Your manufactures are our successful rivals in many branches. We must open new avenues to our fabrics, and your fair is our opportunity.”85 Certain British manufacturers expressed interest in the Centennial because it would show their products in competition with American manufacturing. The event could also open new markets for British products, and so some manufacturers supported participation in the event.

However, these manufacturers willing to participate in the Centennial were the exception rather than the rule. The Morning Post described the products arranged for display in Philadelphia, in December 1875, as “objects of very minor importance, samples rather of special trade produce, and types of representative industry. The number of exhibitors of machinery is under 30.”86 Several factors discouraged manufacturers’ participation. M.P. W.E. Forester noted in a speech in his Bradford constituency that British people “had had almost enough of” exhibitions and doubted the fair would benefit them.87 Philadelphia’s distance from Europe also factored in manufacturers’ decision to withhold goods. The American based correspondent for The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent asked: “Why any one should travel six thousand miles to see, amid tropical heat and dust, what has been sent from Europe to be shown – lodging while here, at an expense and in a manner which none but those

85 Forney, Centennial Commissioner in Europe, p. 11.
who have gone through it can imagine – is a question no one could answer.”

The paper pointed out that the Centennial would mostly be for the United States; most visitors would be American, why then should manufacturers without a stake in North American markets participate? British newspapers also questioned how many Americans would actually attend the Centennial. Writing about the opening, The Morning Post posited that the Centennial would only attract a few thousand visitors a day, and so investors would not make their money back, and would have to be bailed out by Congress.

American tariffs were, though, the greatest impediment to British participation. Why should British manufacturers send goods to the United States when competition with American products on price was impossible? The tariff destroyed a key inducement for participation in world’s fairs. Why, the Sheffield Independent asked, should British manufacturers participate, when “Whatever foreign goods can be sold in the country under its atrocious tariff, the energy and skill of foreign manufactures, sell here already.”

The Centennial offered no new access to the American market; whatever could be sold at a profit under protection was already available in the United States.

A certain group of liberals and industrialists, though, believed that the fair would prove to Americans the error of protectionism, and that the Exhibition could be used to set an example for the United States to follow. Philip Cunliffe Owen, the first British Executive Commissioner for the Centennial, wrote in the Standard, “the surest way to overcome these high protective duties is to show the superior excellence of British manufactures.”

The Morning Post, though it lamented the lack of British participants, agreed with Cunliffe Owen: “For what better opportunity can possibly be afforded to a foreign manufacturer to convince a benighted people of the terrible economic blunder committed in restricting exchanges by an extravagant, prohibitive tariff on imports than to publicly contrast the prices of foreign production.”

W.E. Forester agreed that the fair could be an opportunity to show the United States the error of protectionism. He also suggested that it was “exceedingly desirable that we should come to some agreement with them on such a question as the patent laws… Without disparaging our continental friends it was impossible to deny that the great

89 ‘Philadelphia Exhibition’, The Morning Post, 26 May 1876, p. 5.
90 E.X.E, ‘Our American Letter’, The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent, 7 May 1875, p. 3.
majority of inventions came from this country or from the other side of the Atlantic.”93 Forester did not believe that tariffs constrained American manufacturing, rather, he thought that the nation would be greater with liberal trade.94 Forester thought that Anglo-American trade would increase if the tariffs ceased, and that the two countries could then work out an agreement on trademarks. The Centennial was a good venue to convince Americans that protectionism was detrimental, and even Forester, who opposed British participation, did not believe that American manufacturing was uncompetitive. British resentment of American tariffs did not mean that British industrialists thought the American economy was inferior, but that they did not see much point to participation.

These industrialists, even though many did not participate, wished the Centennial success. For instance, even while Forester suggested his constituents were disinterested in a British pavilion at the fair, and weary of exhibitions generally, he stated, “if they took any interest in any exhibition anywhere it would be in one that was to be held in America.”95 William Hepworth Dixon, a journalist well acquainted with the United States as a traveller,96 noted in March 1875, “In a hundred years, America claims, and justly claims, her share in the inventions which have done most to serve mankind. Even after striking out her claims to the invention of steamships and electric wires, the list of her inventions, or improvements on inventions is considerable.”97 The Times agreed that the Centennial would be a success, and told its readers in spring 1875, “As the work thus far done demonstrates that the Exhibition will be a complete success, and that it will be participated in by large numbers of exhibitors from all parts of the world, and will in fact, be one of the greatest of World’s Fairs.” The article stated the main building at Philadelphia was similar to the exhibition hall at the previous world’s fair, held in Vienna in 1873, but more “thoroughly and practically done. The ironwork is of superior character, light, strong, ornate, and such as only English or American workmen can produce.”98 British fretting over the Centennial’s distance and American protectionism did not

94 This belief that tariffs constrained a powerful American industry was fairly common in late nineteenth century Liberal political thought see Gerlach, British Liberalism and the United States, p. 78.
97 ‘The Centennial’, Northern Echo, 6 March 1875.
mean British journals and industrialists believed that the fair would fail. Both Dixon and the *Times* agreed that the American economy was impressive and suggested that British nonparticipation in the Exposition was not caused by anti-Americanism. British disinterest in participation did not mean that manufacturers in the country saw the American economy as inferior; quite the contrary, journals and manufacturers expressed confidence that U.S. production exhibited at the fair would impress. These responses show a continued belief in American economic growth, and the nation’s impressive innovations, evident at previous world’s fairs in London. However, British understanding of the Centennial before the opening reveals the development of a new narrative about the United States. The fair was a venue for British free-traders to convince Americans to discard protectionism. Britain could be at the fair, these observers reasoned, a paternal guide to American future development, and help the country expand its economy to even greater proportions.

British organisers, because they could not secure industrial products for the Centennial, created a display that showed a high cultural and historicised image of the nation. The British pavilion, or ‘St. George’s House,’ was built in mock Elizabethan style,99 (Fig. 3). Many exhibits in the British fine art and mechanical departments showcased history, monarchy, and high culture. British displays in the machinery hall included copies of medieval armour from the South Kensington Museum, by Elkington & Co. of Birmingham (Fig. 4).100 Reproductions of Celtic relics also appeared in the mechanical section (Fig. 5).101 The British display also included a sideboard donated by Queen Victoria,102 and a display of British furniture, that included rooms made up in Georgian, Queen Anne, and Jacobean styles.103 In the Women’s pavilion the British exhibit included table napkins and other embroidery spun by Queen Victoria and members of the royal family.104 These exhibits showed a particular image of Britain. Displays like armour, and the pavilion building itself,

102 Fletcher, and Souder, *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876 What We Saw and How We Saw It*, p. 55.
103 Fletcher, *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876*, pp. 54-55.
showed a pre-American Revolution image of the country. American visitors could come see the Celtic relics, the Jacobean interiors, the Elkington reproductions, and connect these exhibits to the other historical displays. The British section was for American visitors, a representation of their own history from before 1776, and an embodiment of their narrative of Britain as a cultural and historical forbear.

Figure 3: ‘St. George’s House’

Figure 4: Medieval Armour.


Figure 5: Celtic Relics

Britain’s fine arts display was also particularly large and impressive to visitors. France, known more for its artistic prowess, declined to send anything of note to Philadelphia, and visitors widely considered the British display the best fine arts exhibit. Chief organiser of the Memorial Hall, which housed fine arts at the Centennial, John Sartain, himself born in England, but for most of his life resident in Philadelphia, noted that “England made a most remarkable contribution, twice as large as she sent to Paris in 1867, and three times as large as her collection at Vienna in 1873.” British works highlighted three main themes, history paintings, royal scenes, and Anglo-American images. British history paintings focused on images that predated 1776. Paintings on show included L.J. Pott’s “Charles I Leaving Westminster Hall after his Trial,” and J.C. Hornsley’s “Checkmate – Next Move” depicting the dowager of Haddon Hall playing chess in Elizabethan costume. Sir John Gilbert’s “After the Battle of Naseby” showed a scene from the English Civil War. These paintings presented images of British history popular with American visitors. Works focused on pre-American Revolution British history allowed visitors to draw connections between themselves and the history presented in the fine arts section.

The selection of history paintings also showed images that highlighted Britain’s more direct historical connections to the United States. George H. Boughton’s, “God Speed the Pilgrims on their Way,” which showed Puritans in seventeenth-century England preparing for their journey to North America, appeared in the British section. The artist himself was an Anglo-American, born in and worked in England, but raised in the United States. Benjamin West’s - another Anglo-American artist - “Death of General Wolfe,” was one of the most popular paintings on show. This work depicted British and American colonial troops’ victory at Quebec in 1759. These images highlighted British and American shared history prior to 1776, as well as in the case of Boughton’s image of Pilgrims, Americans literal descent from English settlers.

105 Ibid., p. 369.
110 I believe McCabe may mislabel this painting in his guide. There is a Boughton work similar to the one he recorded entitled “Godspeed! Pilgrims Setting Out for Canterbury” which is the one I believe he describes McCabe, The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition, p. 527.
111 Illustrated Catalogue of the Centennial Exhibition, p. 332-34.
British organisers also brought more overt ahistorical images to Philadelphia to highlight connections between the two nations. A giant reproduction of the statue ‘America’ from the Albert Memorial (Fig. 6) appeared in the entrance to the Memorial Hall. ‘America’ showed female figures representing Canada and the United States flanking a buffalo staring forward into the future, the figure meant to be the United States pointing straight out.112 This work was, as the image shows, placed conspicuously, and showed a sympathetic British rendering of the United States. Two portraits, one of Washington the other of the Duke of Wellington, appeared in the British fine arts section, and drew overt connection between the two as great and comparable military and political figures.113 Scenes of monarchy and paintings donated by the royal family also featured prominently in the British section of the Memorial Hall. Of particular note for American visitors was a painting of the “Prince of Wales Marriage at the Chapel Royal, Windsor.”114 These paintings drew visitors for the subject matter, but also because Queen Victoria herself donated them,115 and her endorsement of the event drew American visitors.

112 Less visible from fig.5 are also two male figures one with a headdress and spear, the other a broad-brimmed hat moustache and rifle meant, I believe, to represent Native peoples of the Americas and Mexico respectively.
British organisers showed a historicised image of their nation, and the themes presented in the British section fitted well with the rest of the Centennial. American manufacturers and organisers showed an image of national progress from 1776 forward. British exhibits showed Anglo-American history from before the Revolution. The British section focused on exhibits that were medieval, or
Elizabethan, and appealed to American nostalgia for monarchy. British exhibitors showed a history Americans could latch onto easily and visitors to the Centennial were happy see the British display as proof of the United States’ cultural inheritance and deep connections to Britain.

**American Reactions**

American visitors believed the British section fitted thematically with the rest of the Centennial. The British section displayed, through these antiquarian exhibits, American history from earlier epochs. Visitors were unconcerned with the lack of British mechanical displays and were more excited by historical elements. American visitors also enjoyed displays that depicted or were donated by the monarch. American observers, journalists and guidebook authors recorded their delight that the British section worked in kind with the rest of the Centennial. British organisers, though they wanted to show more mechanical exhibits, had, these American writers believed, understood the fair’s historic themes, and importantly endorsed them. The British section showed that Americans had enough history and tradition to be a great power, and to host a world’s fair. Britain’s contribution to the Centennial vindicated and sanctioned the Exhibition and buttressed the claim that the United States could host a successful world’s fair.

To examine American reactions to the British section, this part of the chapter first explores visitors’ opinions on Queen Victoria’s contributions to the Centennial, and then their conceptions of the British fine arts department at the fair. Visitors were fascinated with British exhibits that showed the nation’s long history, like reproductions of medieval armour. These copies of historical relics, or displays that referenced transatlantic cultural icons, like Shakespeare, appealed to the American audience. The second half of this section deals with visitors’ reception of these other historical exhibits scattered throughout the industrial section and the fairground. These exhibits show a continued American belief in a narrative of Britain as a special cultural forbear and vindicator of the country’s display.

American visitors believed Queen Victoria’s contributions to the fair formed a particularly notable part of the British section. Her husband Albert, the *New York Times* opined, originated the concept of the world’s fair at the Crystal Palace in 1851. The paper stated that Victoria, in memory of the Great Exhibition, “cherishes [the Centennial] accordingly,” and “influenced many leading manufacturers to contribute,
and she herself sends five of her own private pictures, commemorative of her own marriage and other family incidents.” Victoria’s contribution, as presented in the *New York Times*, connected the Centennial to past successful world’s fairs. Her exertion on the Centennial’s behalf was an endorsement, something that American visitors and organisers, worried about how U.S. manufacturing would show, craved. Before the Centennial opened several Americans, including journalist and baseball pioneer Henry Chadwick, hoped to convince Victoria to appear at the exhibition. She did not, but by the end of the Centennial American fascination with the monarchy was so pronounced that the *Morning Post* argued that Victoria should visit the United States, because “there was a strong undercurrent of love for England in America, and it was especially concentrated on Queen Victoria. If her Majesty could visit America there would be no bounds to the expressions of respect and affection that the Americans would pay her.” Queen Victoria played an important role in the British section at Philadelphia. Her perceived enthusiasm for the event showed to American visitors her love of the country and hope for its success. For American visitors and organisers worried about how the nation would appear, Victoria’s endorsement was a powerful vindicator of the event.

American visitors to the Centennial particularly enjoyed Victoria’s contribution to the Memorial Hall. British visitor Richard Beckett wrote in his travelogue: “With all their love for Republicanism the Yankees like to look upon anything Monarchical, and to testify to its representatives their appreciation of that style of Government…Before no picture in the Art Gallery was there such a crowd congregated as before the picture of the ‘Prince of Wales Marriage at the Chapel Royal, Windsor.’” American guidebooks stressed that Victoria herself donated this painting. These guidebooks also recorded Victoria’s other donations to the Centennial. Fletcher’s *Centennial Exhibition* noted that a “dessert service” made for the Queen appeared in the British section. Thomas Bentley’s *Illustrated History of the Centennial* highlighted displays of Victoria’s sewing in the Women’s Pavilion.

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117 Philadelphia, HSP [Centennial Exhibition 1876: Two Scrapbooks from the Library of Thompson Westcott, 2 vols., 1876, vol.1
120 McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*, p. 528.
121 Fletcher, *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876*, p. 55.
Fletcher’s *Centennial Exhibition* explained that this display “attracts much attention, not only for its beauty but because so much of it is the work of royal and of titled ladies.”\(^{123}\) Visitors came to this section because of their fascination with monarchy, rather than interest in needlework. Americans were drawn, at the Centennial, to royal displays because they showed British support for the event, and admiration for the United States generally.

American visitors to the British art section of the Centennial were also drawn to other exhibits. Paintings in the section that visitors could construct as Anglo-American were particularly popular. Benjamin West’s work drew many American visitors to the Memorial Hall.\(^{124}\) These visitors viewed West as an American artist. *The New York Tribune* celebrated West as a great friend to his fellow Americans, and to George III “almost his counsellor.”\(^{125}\) The paper emphasised both his connection to the United States and acceptance in British society. This connection is odd because of the way George III appeared at the fair, but it is possible the *Tribune* hoped to present West as an American so talented that he was welcomed into Britain’s highest social circles. Guides also emphasised West’s dual role as an American and British celebrity; one recorded, “He exhibited his American predilections by declining the order of knighthood, which was offered to him, when he succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds as the President of the Royal Academy.”\(^{126}\) The book presented West as an American unwilling to take noble titles, but also showed West’s great talent and elite position in British society. The exhibition of West, and other Anglo-American artists like John Singleton Copley, meant the British display showed Americans their own history of cultural refinement.\(^{127}\) The United States produced great painters and artists; they resided, however, in Britain. British organisers highlighted their connection to the United States though the presentation of American artists. These guidebooks show how British exhibitors presented their display as both an endorser and shaper of American high culture. American visitors could see their own history presented to them in the Memorial Hall, but only through British organisers’ curation.

\(^{123}\) Fletcher, *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876*, pp. 53-54.
\(^{126}\) Fletcher, *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876*, p. 23.
American guidebook authors and journalists emphasized how the British art department appealed to American visitors’ cultural sensibilities. For instance, The New York Times wrote, taking the guise of a foreign visitor in the Memorial Hall, “The Americans, although largely recruited from German and other sources, are in the main of English blood. They have given proofs of their descent in their singular proficiency in those things in which the English excel.” The paper continued, that while neither nation was particularly gifted in the fine arts, a non-Anglophone visitor would conclude from the painting department “the Americans are simply exaggerated English, they will necessarily fall short in those things in which their cognates are deficient just as they have progressed in those things in which their cognates have excelled.”

The New York Times argued that, even if visitors did not like the British, or for that matter the American fine arts sections, the two displays proved the two nations’ cultural similarities. A guidebook, focused only on the fine arts section, Masterpieces of the Centennial, described English art’s innocence. The painting “Mistress Dorothy” was, for the guide, “a lovely, simple English girl, of the time when Anglo-Saxon simplicity was real simplicity, uncontaminated with superficial science and French novels.”

The same guide described how an American landscape painter resident in Britain benefited from the “spirit of English landscape, too, whose nutty honest flavour he seizes so perfectly, is a boon he has secured from a residence in the tight little island.” Masterpieces of the Centennial did not focus on these paintings’ artistic flourishes, but rather looked for shared themes that British and American viewers enjoyed. Though these are elite sources - illustrated guides to the Memorial Hall were not cheap - they reveal what American attendees sought from the British section. American visitors found British paintings thematically easier to understand, and their subjects appealed to American taste in a way that foreign artists could not.

Visitors also looked for historical elements in the British art section. The Illustrated Catalogue, in a description of a picture of Charles I’s trial, recounted a sympathetic narrative of the executed king’s life, and labelled his prosecutors “inhuman.” Another guide noted the American audience enjoyed Elizabethan

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129 Shinn, Smith, and Wilson, Masterpieces of the Centennial, p. 72.
130 Ibid., p. 80.
131 Illustrated Catalogue, pp. 375-77.
scenes, and paintings of performances of Shakespeare plays, but demanded “strict attention to historical costume and accessories, now so much in vogue.”\textsuperscript{132} A critic from the New York Times characterised British paintings in Philadelphia as “illustrative rather than artistic. Many of the subjects are taken from books… all of which are pleasing, and not one offensive.” This critic castigated his fellow visitors to the Memorial Hall, “The story which a picture tells is the first thing which the uneducated public think of, but the last thing in the artist’s consideration.”\textsuperscript{133} Visitors to the British art department did not come to see artistic technique, but veracity, true portraits of history, and innocent historical scenes. Paintings of history and monarchy appealed to the American audience. The British art department showed pre-Revolutionary American history, and also scenes that appealed to similar values, and emphasised, for visitors, the two nations’ shared cultural bond.

\textbf{Figure 7: British Section of the Memorial Hall}


\textsuperscript{132} Shinn, Smith, and Wilson, \textit{Masterpieces of the Centennial}, p. 141.

American visitors flocked to see British artistic contributions (Fig. 7) but were also attracted to the historicised displays in the Centennial’s other sections. British machinery generally failed to impress the American audience. For example, one American guidebook author admitted the display of British farm implements in the Agricultural hall “is far from doing justice to England as an agricultural country.”\textsuperscript{134} Americans in Philadelphia preferred historical exhibits, and products that referenced Britain’s past. Actual historic artefacts were popular in Philadelphia. The reproductions of medieval armour from Elkington & Co. were described in Fletcher’s \textit{Centennial Exhibition}, as “The most valuable of all their works, to art lovers…Copies of famous helmets and suits of armor hang on the outside of this exhibit, which have much interest for antiquarians as well as for artists.”\textsuperscript{135} The British display also included a copy of the ‘Milton Shield’ (Fig. 8), a silver shield illustrated with scenes from \textit{Paradise Lost}, which reminded American visitors of both Britain’s early modern past as well its contemporary cultural significance.\textsuperscript{136} The display of British furniture in one guidebook was an “interesting section devoted to parlor and chamber furniture in the various styles of the last two centuries.”\textsuperscript{137} Guidebook authors and journalists lavished attention on historical exhibits like, “an oak Jacobin chimney-piece,”\textsuperscript{138} and “a carved oak chest made from the oak beams of Salisbury Cathedral.”\textsuperscript{139} Like in the Memorial Hall, Britain’s display showed, this time three dimensionally, history to attract the American audience.

\textsuperscript{134} McCabe, \textit{The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition}, p. 488.  
\textsuperscript{135} Fletcher, \textit{The Centennial Exhibition of 1876}, p. 55.  
\textsuperscript{136} Phillip T Sandhurst, \textit{The Great Centennial Exhibition Critically Described and Illustrated} (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler & Co., 1876), pp. 151, 158.  
\textsuperscript{137} Fletcher, \textit{The Centennial Exhibition of 1876}, p. 54.  
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p. 53.  
\textsuperscript{139} ‘HOW TO SEE THE CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION: A Tour Through the Different Countries--Striking Exhibits--A Fairy Land of Rare Works, &c WHERE TO BEGIN RIO JANEIRO BELGIUM SWITZERLAND FRANCE GREAT BRITAIN INDIA EGYPT SWEDEN NORWAY THE WOMAN’S PAVILION WORK OF SOUTHERN WOMEN CENTENNIAL NOTES’, \textit{The Sun}, 22 May 1876, p. 4.
American visitors enjoyed exhibits that made direct reference to British history, like Queen Anne style furniture. Some British industrial exhibits encouraged this kind of interpretation and were particular favourites in American guidebooks. For example, a loom “from Stevens, of Coventry…set to weave portraits of Shakespeare, Washington, Wesley, Queen Victoria, Lincoln, Spurgeon, Grant, and others.”

Bradbury Agnew & Co., a publishing house, decorated their pavilion with “gilded church-text letters,” quoting from Shakespeare, “Come and take choice of all my library, and so beguile thy sorrow.” These products clearly made a popular commercial appeal to the American audience based on British history and culture, both employed Shakespeare to sell their manufactures. The Stevens loom also drew connections between Britain and the United States’ shared religious institutions. Spurgeon and Wesley’s portraits appealed to a common language of faith between the

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two nations. These British exhibitors explicitly referenced shared Anglo-American culture in order to advertise their products.

Reporters and guidebook authors often chose, in their descriptions of British products, to historicise their subjects. Gems of the Centennial, in a description of British textiles, gave a full history of the industry: “Both English woollen fabrics and linens were celebrated about the time of the twelfth century. Worcester, Norwich, Bath, and Worstead, became famous, the latter giving its name to the product. Irish cloth was used in England in the time of King John.” The same guide also explained that British pottery was superior to American competitors because British study of the craft dated back to the Elizabethan era. Even when manufactured products appeared in the British display, this guide chose to emphasise historic reasons for the exhibit’s success. American visitors looked in the British section for historical elements, and even when the section showed modern products explained these as the result of British history. Visitors were not interested in a modern image of Britain as an industrial competitor and focused on what could be constructed as historical and traditional. The British pavilion at the fair showed these American visitors their past, at times even without explicitly attempting to.

Other scattered exhibits in the Centennial ground also confirmed Britain’s historicised role in the fair. Some of these were small: for example, the Philadelphia Museum and School of Industrial Art commissioned Henry Constable of Cambridge to create a religious stained-glass image in “14th century style.” American visitors also saw the British pavilion, St. George’s House, as a key part of the country’s historical display. The house was said, in one American guide, to be representative “in a very picturesque manner [of] the old half-timber houses of two centuries ago, many of which yet remain near Chester and in other parts of England.” American visitors admired St. George’s House for its early modern decorations. The New York Times described the Elizabethan character of the pavilion and called the British commissioners therein “the representatives of ‘merrie England.’” McCabe’s Illustrated History also noted the decorations in St. George’s House, “the furniture,

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142 Ferris, Gems of the Centennial, p. 152.
143 Ibid., pp. 46, 53-54.
144 Illustrated Catalogue of the Centennial Exhibition, pp. 350-51.
145 Westcott, Centennial Portfolio, p. 17.
upholstery and fixtures are from leading houses in England.” Figure nine shows the interior’s Elizabethan styling. St. Georges House contributed to visitors’ conception of Britain as a place with a longer history than the United States. Commentary on the pavilion also shows how easily accessible this culture was for American visitors. Reference to ‘merrie England,’ and the historic houses of Chester reveal a kind of shorthand for a historicised Britain among American writers. These images of stately homes were familiar to visitors, and the fair offered a chance to see one in person.

**Figure 9: Interior of the British Pavilion**

Sandhurst, *The Great Centennial Exhibition Critically Described and Illustrated* p. 541.

The British department vindicated the Centennial as a whole. British machinery and manufactured products did not really compete with American rivals. Visitors considered most of the British section’s mechanical elements unimpressive. Other areas of production, like textiles, were, American visitors admitted, superior in Britain. British textile and other manufacturing had a longer history than American competitors. The British display of fine arts, and particularly Anglo-American and historical painting, fitted thematically with the rest of the Centennial. American visitors could, in the British art department, see their history beyond 1776, and celebrate the monarchy. British participation vindicated the Centennial as a success, and by extension helped prove to American visitors their nation’s status as a new power. Had Britain not participated, or shown poorly, the event would not have been

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truly global. Instead, British exhibitors showed well, and fitted with the historical elements shown in American exhibits. The British pavilion in Philadelphia proved to American visitors they had a historical grounding that made them a worthy nation to host such an event. American narratives of Britain as a cultural forbear at these exhibitions remained intact at the Centennial. Sam W. Haynes contends that by the antebellum period, the United States had its own cultural identity, distinct from Britain. American responses to the British section at the Centennial reveal that in such an important international context, in the late-nineteenth century, Americans still relied on British vindication, and attempted to attach themselves to British culture.

The British section worked particularly well at an event meant to show the development of American production. Kariann Yakota argues that early nineteenth-century Americans, in order to explain their British cultural heritage, viewed themselves as the future and Britain as the past. Americans were the progenitors of a new culture, based on a British model, but novel, superior, and more progressive, a nation not bound by history and tradition and thus immune to European social divisions. As noted earlier in this chapter these notions morphed after the Civil War. American industry and trade made the United States an exceptional nation. The Centennial’s American section emphasised how U.S. production had developed over the century. It presented the United States, as the host of such an event, as a new commercial power. This non-industrial historical Britain showed itself not as a competitor to this new United States but rather the cultural bedrock on which this glorious American future could be built.

**British Reactions**

British commentators, in newspapers and travelogues on the Exposition expressed two related responses. First: the event’s size impressed British observers, as did the magnitude of the nation’s population, geography, varied products, and natural resource wealth. Philadelphia’s Centennial succeeded for British observers because of its sheer geographical extent and great number of visitors. British writers also emphasised in their coverage of the fair the two nations’ similarities. They saw at

the fair proof that culturally, socially and industrially the two nations were similar. If the United States represented a growing power at the Centennial, these observers were happy for Britain to play a role as guides to the American future. British visitors saw at the Centennial a nation that would be a great power, and also identified how British models and examples could help the nation’s development. The United States’ potential greatness, as shown in Philadelphia, also convinced British visitors that the United States could possibly be a global ally and that the country was certainly less of a commercial threat than the European powers.

British newspapers that questioned the Centennial’s chances of success and profitability before the opening lauded the event after its debut. The Daily News noted the size of the audience was impressive, though few Europeans visited Philadelphia the fair “all the more remarkable when the fact is considered that the number of American visitors exceeds anticipation, and that the average daily entrances are constantly increasing.” The Morning Post was disappointed with the lack of European visitors, but noted, “the attendance at the Exhibition has been larger than that at any previous World’s Fair.” Many British newspapers also believed the fair was a national success for the United States. The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent wrote, “whatever may be the financial result of this great show, no one with a grain of sense can deny that it will be of much importance to the United States. No event since the birth of the Republic has so thoroughly taken hold of the people.” The Times of London agreed: “The American people may be congratulated on the success with which they have entered the arena of international competition which was opened by this country a quarter of a century ago.” The Centennial was, for these newspapers, clearly successful and a monumental event of which Americans ought to be proud.

British visitors to the Centennial were impressed by the sheer size and variety of products the United States could show at Philadelphia. Joseph Wright, a traveller from Macclesfield, wrote that British people had a variety of opinions on the United States, but, “They must all combine in admiration of the vast extent and magnificence of the New World- the imposing grandeur of its varied scenery, and the stupendous scale of its natural wonders; neither can they fail to be struck with the mighty

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151 ‘The International Exhibition’, The Morning Post, 26 October 1876, p. 4.
enterprise, independence, and wealth which its inhabitants have developed and are yet developing.”\textsuperscript{154} The Centennial impressed Wright because of the number of products it showed, and how it highlighted the United States’ ability to produce goods. American agriculture particularly struck Wright: “The products of the American soil denote an indescribable plenty, which was abundantly exemplified in the Agricultural Hall; everything here appeared in great profusion.”\textsuperscript{155} Wright also noted that the country produced this great profusion of products because “a scarcity of labour has evidently given birth to an endless verity of labour saving machines, which demonstrate in a practical form a mighty source of wealth.”\textsuperscript{156} The nation’s sheer size, and its paucity of skilled labour meant, for Wright, that the United States contained an incredible capacity for production.

Other British visitors to Philadelphia agreed with Wright’s characterization of the American economy as displayed at the Centennial. John Leng, editor of the \textit{Dundee Advertiser} noted the fair lacked European products, but that the Centennial did “well to show them a large collection of the world’s products, and for them [American exhibitors] to show Europeans the largest that has ever been brought together of their own- of the productions and manufactures of the Western hemisphere.”\textsuperscript{157} The fair’s great size impressed Richard Beckett, a visitor from Bolton, “the space occupied by the Exhibition buildings greater than any of its predecessors- in fact, it occupies more ground than the Exhibitions at Munich in 50’, London, 51’, New York, 54’, Paris, 55’, London 62’, Paris 67’, Crystal Palace, 71’, and Vienna, 73’, all put together.” The size was so great, he believed “it is a magnificent sight, and I think any other nation in the world will have great difficulty to surpass this first attempt of Young America.”\textsuperscript{158} William Fraser Rae, a visitor to both the 1851 Crystal Palace and the Centennial, felt the 1876 event, because of its great size and variety of products achieved “a success only second to that of the first in London.”\textsuperscript{159} British visitors saw the Centennial’s great area as impressive, and thought the great variety of American products compensated for the lack of European


\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 84.

\textsuperscript{157} John Leng, \textit{America in 1876 [microform]: Pencillings during a Tour in the Centennial Year, with a Chapter on the Aspects of American Life} (Dundee: Dundee Advertiser, 1877), p. 23 <http://archive.org/details/cihm_13996> [accessed 13 April 2016]

\textsuperscript{158} Beckett, \textit{Ten Thousand Miles in Fifty Days}, pp. 103-04.

\textsuperscript{159} Rae, \textit{Columbia and Canada}, p. 85.
exhibits. United States’ exhibitors proved at the Centennial that the country could, all on its own, fill the largest world’s fair the planet had ever seen.

Particular American exhibits at the Centennial also impressed British visitors. Travellers to Philadelphia were struck by the speed of mechanical development in the United States, and American industry’s ability to compete with British manufacturers. In the *Times*, a “Practical Man,” recently returned from Philadelphia, and an attendee of the Crystal Palace in 1851, wrote

> I have watched closely during the last few years their [Americans] rapid progress as a manufacturing people. Their spirit and enterprise are boundless. They have imported the very newest and best machinery of England, Belgium, Germany, and France; they have tempted away, through agents sent over for the purpose, skilled workmen from each of these countries, giving a preference, however, to those of England; and they are rapidly training an army of skilled workmen for themselves.\(^{160}\)

This visitor believed that the United States contained a limitless productive power, and worried that the country would overtake Britain industrially. John Leng admitted that American locomotives outdid British competitors on comfort and design. He continued, “In this, as well as in many other things, a few days spent in America would take the conceit out of many Englishmen who foolishly suppose that everything is better in England than anywhere else.”\(^{161}\) The *London Quarterly Review* believed that U.S. manufacturing benefited from protectionism and was in a position to compete with Britain. Even in textiles, a great strength for British industry, American products could “often compete with the very best made in England, and they have, during the last years, been sold at low prices.”\(^{162}\) *The Morning Post* warned that the Centennial proved that American products of all kinds, when displayed next to European competitors, were, “equal and sometimes superior in quality to those of foreign productions, but they are produced at as small a cost.”\(^{163}\) Philadelphia’s Centennial proved to British attendees that the United States was a competitor, even in industries in which British manufacturers dominated. The United States, as presented at Philadelphia, was not only a large nation with a massive pool of natural resource wealth behind it, but also a rapidly improving industrial powerhouse that could compete with British industry.

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\(^{161}\) Leng, *America in 1876*, p. 31.

\(^{162}\) ART. VII.-America in the Centennial Year’, *London Quarterly Review*, (1876), 149–78 (166).

\(^{163}\) ‘The International Exhibition’, *The Morning Post*, 26 October 1876, p. 4.
Few British writers and observers of the fair, though, truly feared U.S. industrial competition. Rather, these visitors believed the fair showed the United States was a natural friend and potential ally, rather than a threat. British newspapers, like *The Times*, differentiated Britain and the United States from other nations at the Centennial. British writers presented the American Revolution as a point of shared connection. British newspapers and travelogues did not see American fascination with the Revolution as Anglophobic: rather the struggle was recast as a kind of familial misunderstanding. *The Times* argued that the Revolution was merely an outgrowth of a natural desire, shared by both nations for self-government, and separation left no lingering animus. Its correspondent in Philadelphia in a description of a painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill recorded, “I fancy I represent the great majority of my compatriots when I confess to being as little moved by the sight of the Britons at Bunker’s Hill as by that of the Saxons at Hastings.” This author presented the Revolution as an event of which both nations could be proud, “If, indeed the victors of the last century had been French, or German, or any other non-Anglo-Saxon race, one’s feelings might, perhaps, have been different. But about Americans every Englishman must feel, not without a certain pride, that they owed in chief measure to the old country the qualities which won them their independence.”

A foreign power, for this author, did not inflict British defeat; rather the Revolution was an event that British people could also be proud of. Earlier in the course of the fair the same paper blamed the metropole for the Revolution: “A hundred years ago the Colonies of England on the Continent of North America, suffering under injuries and provocations of which the Mother Country has long since become ashamed, asserted their independence, and established a form of Government which has never been tried on so vast a scale before.” *The Times* pre-empted any suggestion that the Centennial stoked American Anglophobia. Rather the Revolution was something that emphasised the two nations’ similarities. Britain and the United States were both ‘Anglo-Saxon’ nations, and the revolution proved that they operated under similar political principles.

*The Times*’ discussion of the American Revolution argued that Americans were for the most part British descendants, and other journals also made this argument in their Centennial coverage. *The London Quarterly Review* believed the Centennial was a venue to judge other nations; “We presume ourselves to be entitled to judge

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164 “The Centennial Exhibition”, *The Times*, 26 May 1876, p. 4.
165 “The American People May Be Congratulated on”, *The Times*, 12 May 1876, p. 10.
American institutes and affairs on analogies drawn from our own country. The people of the two countries are largely of the same blood, either Anglo-Saxon or, at any rate, Teutonic or Keltic.”\textsuperscript{166} The \textit{Illustrated London News} agreed that the fair highlighted American qualities shared with Britain: “Philadelphia is an admirable example of modern utilitarian and republican civilisation, far more characteristic of the true genius of English American than the mixed city of New York.”\textsuperscript{167} Both British observers’ understanding of the Revolution, and the more socially Darwinian discussion of the United States’ racial identity as presented at the Centennial aligned the two nations. The United States was not a competitor to British industry in the conventional sense, like Germany or France, but rather an auxiliary. As has been shown in this thesis, at previous world’s fairs British visitors constructed American successes as products of a shared heritage and culture. Visitors to Philadelphia, like British attendees at the previous London fairs, constructed a narrative of American industrial power and success that connected the two nations via descent, and explained U.S. products and ingenuity as the result of the country’s British qualities.

The United States, to these visitors and observers of the fair, was an industrially powerful nation, but also a young country in need of instruction, and models for future development. Many British writers on the fair characterised the United States as a new nation and suggested that the Centennial proved the country must abandon protectionism. \textit{The Morning Post}, in coverage of American machines at the fair, agreed protection helped the United States develop, but argued the Centennial proved tariffs were no longer useful: “why should the Americans continue to insist upon advantages which they no longer need.”\textsuperscript{168} \textit{The Times} agreed that the Centennial proved American errors; “our Transatlantic kinsmen” were the “the youngest among the great nations,” and, thought such a promising power, needed to forgo protectionism.\textsuperscript{169} The \textit{London Quarterly Review} found other problems in the United States. Americans were, in the \textit{Review}, Anglo-Saxons, but their electoral and spoils system was the “Spectacle of political corruption such as old monarchies in their worst days of tyranny and personal rule have seldom equalled.”\textsuperscript{170} These journals agreed that the United States showed at the Centennial that it was a great manufacturing power, one that could compete with British industry, and at the same

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\textsuperscript{166} ‘ART. VII.-America in the Centennial Year.’ \textit{London Quarterly Review}, October 1876, p. 149.


\textsuperscript{168} ‘The International Exhibition’, \textit{The Morning Post}, 26 October 1876, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{169} ‘The American People May Be Congratulated on’, \textit{The Times}, 12 May 1876, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{170} ART. VII.-America in the Centennial Year.’ p. 150.
\end{footnotesize}
time a racially similar nation. However, they combined this image of the United States with critiques of American politics and tariffs creating a new narrative about the country. These observers suggested that British examples in politics and manufacturing would benefit the United States. They criticised the country’s perceived problems, but at the same time emphasised the two counties racial and historical connections. The Exhibition proved, to British observers, that with proper guidance the nation contained great promise, and that it shared a culture with Britain.

Conclusion

Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial presents a much more harmonious image of the Anglo-American relationship than the previous two world’s fairs held in London. The fair alleviated American anxieties about the condition of manufacturing in the United States. American visitors and commentators did not antagonise or try to specifically show their superiority to British competitors at the Centennial; rather the British display vindicated their national enterprise. The British section fitted well with the rest of the Centennial and showed Americans their nation’s pre-1776 history and culture. This attachment to British history meant that the United States was not a young nation deficient in high culture, but rather a nation with a strong historical bedrock to draw on. An idealised historic, and unthreatening Britain, one that reminded visitors of Shakespeare and Milton, rather than old diplomatic squabbles, greeted Americans in 1876. British exhibitors did not bring machines to challenge American dominance but instead showed paintings and architectural follies to highlight their high-cultural prowess and special connection to the United States. Britain was the past upon which the brilliant American future would be built. When Americans fretted about their comparative lack of history the British section was there to display the United States’ longer history. Like in 1851 and 1862 Britain vindicated the American display. At the centennial Americans did not crave positive reviews but rather a British pavilion that worked in kind with the Centennial and showed Americans their historical attachment to Britain. At this first U.S. hosted Exhibition American narratives about Britain as a nation with a special ability to buttresses the country’s displays at these fairs remained intact.

British observers and commentators seemed happy with this arrangement, and their representation as the past on which the American future would be built. To them the Centennial confirmed that the United States was a powerful, inventive, and
serious industrial competitor. British visitors and observers did not worry about American industry, in the way they fretted about French or German competitors. They believed that American triumphs were in some ways products of a common society and so described the United States as a less foreign nation. American industrial and economic power was something these attendees could feel a part of. American textiles and locomotives were possibly equal or superior to their British competitors, but the United States was an Anglo-Saxon nation, not a frightening foreign power. Much like at the previous events, British visitors and observers in Philadelphia constructed a narrative about American innovation that connected the country to Britain. However, the Centennial also saw the creation of a new British narrative about the United States. British visitors and observers critiqued elements of American society, notably its protectionism and political corruption, but believed these were things that could be altered with proper guidance, and Britain was just the nation to offer that kind of, almost paternal, advice. The Centennial proved that American industry no longer needed trade protections. As an outgrowth of English-speaking people, the United States would, British visitors to the Centennial assumed, fix these problems, and the two nations would be friendly into the future. Britain may have been the past for Americans, but these visitors and observers felt that they could provide a model for American growth in to the future.

The Centennial reveals important changes in transatlantic narratives after the Civil War. Although in 1876 popular American narratives of Britain as a cultural forbear remained. American national identity, as before the war, was, at least for visitors to the Centennial, couched in a language that stressed British historical connections. However, American visitors and observers no longer felt any need to best British competitors. The fair showed through both nation’s exhibits that the United States was an expanding commercial power, and that Britain served as a cultural basis for this expansion. This presentation of American growth at Philadelphia convinced British observers that the United States was capable of incredible expansion and that in time it might be a comparable world power. British observers of the fair believed that the United States would develop into a nation similar to their own: another Anglo-Saxon power, while Americans at the Centennial saw their nation as an expanding power, based in a British cultural heritage, but with a distinct trajectory. Visitors and observers from both nations agreed on the importance of the shared history, they diverged on the implications for the future of that shared heritage. To American visitors, the British pavilion proved the United States had a
cultural grounding gave it the standing to host such an event but was not necessarily a nation in Britain’s image. Observers in both nations were convinced that the United States showed its capacity for expansion at the Centennial but drew subtly different conclusions from this rise. As the century progressed these conclusions only grew more divergent as American industry and commerce expanded. As American displays became more impressive American visitors and observers were more confident in their own nation’s exceptional role in the world they focused less on their relationship with Britain at later world’s fairs.
Chapter 4: Wild West Brompton
The 1887 American Exhibition

In spring 1887, William Gladstone attended the American Exhibition at Earl’s Court, London. The Exhibition displayed American industry and art accompanied by performances of Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show. Touring a camp of American Indians that formed part of the Exhibition with fur trapper John Nelson, Gladstone stopped to question one of the Indian performers, named Red Shirt, about the relationship between Britain and the United States. Gladstone asked whether Red Shirt believed “there was that cordial relationship between the two great sections of the English-speaking race – the people of England and the people of the United States – that there ought to be between two nations that were so much akin.” According to the Saturday Review, Red Shirt replied that he did not know much about that subject.¹

In one sense Gladstone’s question about the transatlantic relationship was absurd. Why would Red Shirt, an American Indian, care about the relationship between the “two great sections of the English-speaking race?” He was not a member of either section of that “race”. However, the American fair in London was, for British visitors like Gladstone, an ideal place to ask such questions about the two nations’ similarities and racial relationship. His enthusiasm for transatlantic amity, an ardour shared by many other visitors to the fair, was so strong that Gladstone discussed this Anglo-American racial bond with someone who was not included in is parameters.

The image of the United States that Gladstone reacted so enthusiastically to was not chiefly organised by Americans. John Robinson Whitley, a Yorkshire industrialist, was the American Exhibition’s chief executive. Whitley organised much of the fair, and he decided to include Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show in the Exhibition.² The Wild West Show was undoubtedly the event’s most popular feature. British attendees could see live scenes reminiscent of James Fenimore Cooper’s and Mayne Reid’s novels, and watch white American cowboys settling and civilising the West and battling American Indian performers. Attendees could also meet and converse with these performers and see exhibitions of American shooting and roping skill. The Exhibition also showed U.S. fine art and manufactured products, exhibits

¹ ‘Mr. Gladstone and “Red Shirt.”’, Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art, 63 (1887), p. 610.
² Charles Lowe, and John Robinson Whitley, Four National Exhibitions in London and Their Organiser. With Portraits and Illustrations (London, T. F. Unwin, 1892), pp. 56-57
<http://archive.org/details/fournationalexhi00lowe> [accessed 22 May 2016].
more commonly part of international fairs of the period, however these displays were less popular with the London audience. At the American Exhibition visitors could also drink American cocktails, ride an American roller coaster, walk through a garden of American plants, and visit a panorama of New York Harbour. The American Exhibition advertised a chance to feel what it was like to be physically in the United States, and newspapers and guidebooks claimed that visitors could experience the United States at the fair without leaving London. Though American products filled the event, British organisers curated it, and the fair reflected an idealised British understanding of the country. The fair, and particularly the Wild West Show, underscored, for British visitors, the two countries’ racial connections. British visitors saw, via the performance, that Americans shared an innate desire to spread their civilisation and settle untamed lands. This tableau fit very well with British understandings of their own empire building; Americans settled vast swathes of territory, much like British colonists in places like Australia and Canada.

Vitally, visitors were also, for the most part, disinterested in the American products and fine arts shown, and instead attended the Wild West Show which highlighted their perceived racial bond with the United States. The American Exhibition is a useful place to examine British narratives about the United States because the products and art exhibited at the fair allowed visitors to choose what element of the country attracted them. American machines did not excite British visitors, nor inspire belief in racial connections between the two nations, but the performances of American colonialism at the Wild West Show allowed attendees to see perceived similarities between themselves and the exhibiting nation. These opinions on the United States show changing British narratives about the country compared to previous events. British visitors’ and observers’ narratives about the United States were in 1887 more firmly connected to popular racial notions of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. These narratives were not based on American inventive or economic skills, as they had been at previous fairs, but on shared Anglo-American racial attributes, and commitment to territorial expansion presented by the Wild West Show.

While Gladstone, and other British visitors, believed the American Exhibition showcased racial links between their country and the United States, for many American observers the fair was an embarrassment. It showed a side of the country that American observers believed emphasised the United States’ lack of sophistication. The American Exhibition, for these writers, injured their nation’s
reputation in Britain. These commentators believed that an American Exhibition in London was a chance to show off investment opportunities to a British audience, and to induce immigration. Exhibitors from the American West and South, areas in need of investment capital and immigrants, saw the fair as a commercial opportunity to advertise their regions. Essentially the fair, like the 1876 Centennial was a place to show American industry and importantly the nation’s economic growth and progress over its history. An American Exhibition in London was a chance to grow markets, but also to prove U.S. sophistication. Fine arts made up a large part of the fair, and this display attempted to show American culture as firmly European in taste.

The inclusion, and popularity of, the Wild West Show, American commentators believed, hurt the Exhibition, and showed a frontier image of the country that was false and detrimental to the fair’s larger goals. The United States was, for American writers on the fair, more inventive and cosmopolitan than the Wild West Show allowed, and the performance did not gel well with the other parts of the fair that showed American industry, and cultural refinement. Cody’s performances of horse riding and warfare showed the United States as antiquated, unsophisticated, and violent. As Lee Baker points out American Indians were, in the American popular imagination, divorced from the image of progress the fair tried to present. Wild West Shows and other cultural displays showed American Indians as permanently primitive. American observers believed the Wild West performances at the fair did not show the best advertisement for the country as an investment or immigration destination.

American observers in 1887 rejected the racial connections drawn by British visitors, and instead saw Britain far more as a commercial partner, and source of immigrants. These responses to the fair show a shift in American narratives about Britain. There was no concern that the country needed to vindicate American displays, rather American observers hoped that the fair would show British visitors commercial opportunities in the United States. American narratives about Britain were more focused on the economic opportunities the country presented, there was no sentimental narrative of Britain as a cultural forbear as there was at the previous three events.

The American fair showed a clear disconnection between British attendees and American observers. British visitors focused on the racial ties the fair presented,

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while Americans observers were interested in the Exhibition’s commercial opportunities. American and British narratives about one another diverged, British visitors and observers saw the fair as a confirmation of the two nations’ inherently similar attributes and linked colonial projects, while Americans interested in the event only focused on material gains the Exhibition could bring. In order to make this argument that British visitors’ images of the United States at the 1887 Exhibition focused more on shared racial traits, while American observers wanted to present a more commercial and culturally sophisticated image of the country, this chapter takes the following form. After a discussion of the relevant historiography and the sources, the second section of this chapter looks at the event’s planning, and how Americans interested in the fair understood its purposes. This section explores organisers’ ideas about the fair’s goals, and shows that British organisers, before the fair opened, believed it would show Anglo-Saxon connections, while American planners mostly saw the event as a commercial opportunity. The next two sections examine the fair itself, what it looked like, and poor British reception of the American section of manufacturers and fine arts. The chapter’s final three parts investigate the Wild West Show itself, and British visitors’ and American observers’ reactions to and criticism of the performance.

Historiography

Work on changing popular late-nineteenth-century British ideas about race help to explain the Wild West Show’s popularity in London. These works illustrate how British visitors to the American Exhibition understood the world, and particularly their conceptions of Britain’s and the United States’ place in the global order, and racial similarities. Bill Schwarz and Catherine Hall explore the late-nineteenth-century emergence of an imperial political ideology in metropolitan Britain. Hall argues that, in response to the perceived failure of emancipation in the West Indies, belief in white racial superiorit was popular in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Anti-

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Slavery societies, Hall argues, believed that, once emancipated, freed-people could be educated to a status equal to whites. Economic collapse in the West Indies and the 1865 Jamaican Rebellion confirmed for British imperialists that non-whites in the empire would never be equals, and validated notions of British racial superiority.\(^5\) Schwarz suggests that this British sense of racial superiority created a political ideology, championed by politicians like Joseph Chamberlain, that saw imperial expansion as vital for the country’s future, particularly because of fear of economic and social decline in late-nineteenth-century Britain. This political movement, Schwarz argues, believed all of British racial identity’s positive traits - self-reliance, manliness, and self-government - originated on the Greater British World’s frontiers. If only these qualities could be reimported back to the United Kingdom, then the decay could be arrested.\(^6\)

These two linked popular ideas of Britain as racially superior, and imperialism as the way to display this supremacy, provides the backdrop to British reception of the American Exhibition. The fair opened in an era of keen public interest in both racial superiority in Britain, colonialism, and global white settlement. British visitors’ fascination with Buffalo Bill Cody, and his performance of white Americans settling the ‘Wild West,’ was clearly related to notions attendees had about their own Anglo-Saxon racial identity and their empire in the period. Through the cowboys’ and American Indians’ performance British visitors could see white Americans re-enacting the settlement of the Western frontier, in a way that evoked for them British colonialism. Cody’s cowboys displayed self-reliance, and manliness, traits that connected well to visitors’ own racial identity. The Wild West Show presented American settlers as Anglo-Saxon archetypes.

Schwarz and Hall’s explanations of late-nineteenth century British racial ideology beg the question, how did the United States fit into this notion of British supremacy? Two books appeared in the 1880s, which made contradictory claims about the United States’ racial relationship with Britain. In 1883 J.R. Seeley published *The Expansion of England*, which presented the United States as a threat to necessary British imperial growth. Seeley compared the United States to Russia, both nations had a growing population and imperial expansion that threatened the British Empire.\(^7\) James Bryce produced *American Commonwealth* one year after the Exhibition. He

\(^5\) Hall, *White, Male, and Middle-Class*, pp. 237, 282-86.

\(^6\) Schwarz, *The White Man’s World*, pp.103-05.

\(^7\) Hall, “Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial,” p. 2.
placed Americans, at least those of older immigrant origin, firmly in the Anglo-Saxon camp.\(^8\) This chapter does not suggest that the American Exhibition influenced Bryce, but these two works do indicate that within this imperial ideology, and ideas about British racial superiority in the 1880s, there was disagreement about where the United States fit, was it a threat or an ally? The American exhibition offers a popular arena to examine how the audience in London understood the United States and its racial connections to Britain.

Much of this chapter deals with how British visitors understood the Wild West Show, and Americans observers’ discomfort with this frontier image of the United States. Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes examine Buffalo Bill Cody’s performances in Europe and by extension the ‘Americanization’ of popular culture. Rydell and Kroes see the Wild West Show as one of many tools used to spread American style mass consumption through participation in large cultural events. Buffalo Bill was, for Rydell and Kroes, similar to American style department stores, Barnum and Bailey’s circus, and U.S.-hosted world’s fairs. All were distinctly American phenomena, but also sites for intense cultural commodification. The Wild West Show displayed to audiences in Europe modern civilisation’s triumph over ‘savage’ America Indians. The performance showed to European audiences the dominance and utility of American products in the West.\(^9\) However, British visitors at the Exhibition did not focus on the commodities present in the Wild West Show, or for that matter in the American Exhibition itself. Rydell and Kroes also explore British and American criticism of the Americanisation and mass consumption the Wild West Show presented. This discussion focuses on elite criticism of American commercialism, and the spread of U.S. culture abroad. The book looks mainly at critiques of consumption written by American Eastern intellectuals like Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford, and British figures like W.T. Stead and Matthew Arnold.\(^10\) 1887’s American fair offers a chance to examine broader, more diverse and popular American conceptions of how the country’s culture spread overseas. It also is an opportunity to examine how well this frontier image of the United States fitted with the propagation of American commerce abroad. American writers on the fair expressed discomfort with the images of the country displayed at the Exhibition.

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American responses to the fair were not Arnold-esque critiques of consumerism, but rather commented on how the Wild West Show, portrayed an economically damaging image of the United States at a fair meant to showcase the nation as an investment and immigration destination.

Rydell and Kroes also do not really explore older European ideas about the American West that help to explain British visitors’ fascination with Buffalo Bill Cody’s show, and their assumptions about the region. Ray Allen Billington examines long-term European understandings of the American West, and shows how, in the decades before the fair, novelists like Mayne Reid and James Fenimore Cooper communicated to the British public a specific narrative of the American frontier. These works showed the American frontier as a romantic landscape, where men needed to be strong and self-reliant to subdue the vast expanses. These images of the American West were also distant from British social mores. On the frontier, according to these popular narratives, men could succeed or fail on their merits; class counted for nothing, only one’s inner determination mattered.\(^{11}\) John Cawelti argues that nineteenth-century images of the American West also presented a remarkably uncomplicated imperialist narrative. American Indians were, in these stories, elements of the scenery. They may, in these narratives, have required a dose of Christian civilisation from white characters, but never in these stories did Western heroes succumb to a *Heart of Darkness* style savagery.\(^{12}\) Before the American Exhibition opened British images of the American West already included popular Anglo-Saxonist elements. These images showed manly white settlers colonising territory out of individual strength and drive. Cody’s show essentially put this narrative into a more popularly accessible and living portrayal.

Several historians have explored the American Exhibition in studies centred on Buffalo Bill Cody and his show. Louis S. Warren argues that the performance showed British visitors, worried about their own racial degeneration, a narrative of strong Anglo-Saxon manhood on the frontier, but also a warning about taking these traits to extremes. Warren compares Buffalo Bill with Count Dracula and argues that the performance, like the Bram Stoker villain, showed how detrimental racial traits could be if unrestrained.\(^ {13}\) This chapter suggests that most visitors to the fair did not

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comprehend the Wild West as a warning about racial degeneration, but rather understood it as uncomplicated proof of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy. Coll-Peter Thrush compares the Wild West Show to other displays of indigenous people in late-nineteenth-century London. Specifically, Thrush cites the tours of Australian Aboriginal and New Zealand Maori cricket and rugby players in the 1860s and 1880s. These events showed Londoners how their empire functioned. These tours not only proved that sport ‘civilised’ peoples, but also particularly in the case of Australian Aboriginal cricketers, their frailty and decline in the face of Anglo-Saxon power.14 Much like these earlier displays of indigenous peoples the Wild West Show in London presented attendees with a familiar narrative. Buffalo Bill and his cowboys showed the decline of American Indians and triumph of white American Anglo-Saxon empire builders.15 For visitors in London the Show was, in the context of popular imperialism and settler colonialism a familiar narrative, and one that confirmed Anglo-Saxon superiority.

Alexander Saxton’s study of American western heroes in a larger chronological context helps explain why Buffalo Bill both appealed to the British audience but was dissatisfying for American observers. American frontier heroes have a long history which Saxton begins with James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking* series. These Novels presented nuanced portraits of American Indians and white settlers. As racial attitudes towards American Indians hardened heroes like Daniel Boon, Kit Carson, and David Crockett eclipsed in popularity Cooper’s racially ambiguous Natty Bumppo. These heroes were hardened Indian fighters shaped by the frontier into “natural aristocrats.” Frontier experience made these natural aristocrats, in narratives about them, equal or even superior to educated elites. Novels about Buffalo Bill stressed his natural aristocracy: his rescue of white women captured by the Sioux, his physical prowess, and his chivalry. These qualities explained his rise from a provincial lower-class figure to a national celebrity.16 Cody and his performance emphasised how white American men’s ‘natural’ qualities emerged on the frontier. British visitors found the performers exciting and admired the white American qualities the performance showed. However, American observers from the South and West, particularly those from

15 Ibid., pp. 198-99.
larger cities, were uncomfortable with this presentation which showed ‘natural aristocracy’ as more quintessentially American than commercial ingenuity.

This chapter explores how Americans in the late-nineteenth century saw their nation relative to other countries. American observers of the 1887 Exhibition wanted to be seen by the London audience as refined, economically prosperous, and ultimately civilised, and several cultural and economic changes informed this understanding of the United States. Hostility to the Buffalo Bill Cody’s show stemmed from this notion that the United States was refined and civilised. The Wild West Show did not reflect American sophistication, and many American observers feared it would colour all British opinions of the country. American late-nineteenth century sophistication and economic prosperity are massive subjects and any conclusions drawn by this chapter will in some ways be lacking, but there are several works that explore American ideas about the country’s development over the period. Broadly, several historians claim that the industrialising United States, in the era around the fair, became less exceptional and more similar to European nations. Alan Trachtenberg argues that U.S. elites and municipalities, in the Gilded Age, aped European cultural institutions. New museums, filled with European art, opened in many American cities. These institutions, Trachtenberg argues, attempted to diffuse European high culture to the population, and associated art and education with foreign finery.\(^\text{17}\) Museums were built in a Classical style, which according to Steven Conn, showed deliberately in Jay Cantor’s words that “culture was taking place” there.\(^\text{18}\) As discussed in previous chapters these institutions drew on European forms and styles to show the United States inherited the continent’s culture. David Cannadine shows that this method of propagating high culture was itself taken from Europe. The creation of institutions or monuments to promulgate high culture to the masses was common in United States, but also occurred in Germany and France in this period.\(^\text{19}\)

Economically, the Gilded Age United States grew massively in the decades after the Civil War. The huge growth of American industry and rail made the United States a much more economically important nation, which competed in industrial output with great European powers. Rebecca Edwards notes that in the decade after


the fair, for example, four percent of rail lines globally terminated in Chicago. Americans by the 1880s had created a massive and robust consumer society that provided foodstuffs and products around the country. However this rise also brought with it social problems; a huge number of strikes occurred in the 1880s, and increased economic inequality, accompanied the country’s post-Civil War industrialisation. Edwards argues that the American middle-class, in response to this crisis, borrowed reformist ideology and policies from Europe. Popular newspapers like the New York World repudiated any suggestion that the United States had, in the late-nineteenth century, developed a European-style class system; however, American reformers employed progressive European policies to tackle economic crises. For example, the first Settlement Houses, an idea borrowed from British social reformers, opened in American cities in this period. American reformers might have balked at the idea that inequality in the United States was as bad as in Europe, but they were willing to apply foreign models to alleviate social and economic ills.

Coupled with this economic growth and increased social stratification, was an expansion of American trade overseas. The United States in the 1880s rivalled Britain in certain areas of production and increased its share of the export market. Thomas Bender also argues that in the final decades of the century Americans, though wary of formal territorial imperialism, formed a global commercial empire. Rather than dominate areas territorially, Bender notes that American firms used European imperial networks to sell their products. The American government even employed its military power in some instances to keep access to markets open.

American commerce’s global expansion also explains why American observers did not write Anglo-Saxonist reactions to the fair. Rather than understand these new global roles as aligning the United States with Britain they showed how Americans were exceptional. Mona Domosh shows that many Americans thought about empire and colonialism differently in the period. American manufacturing and trade were ways to spread American ‘civilisation,’ and to uplift non-white people

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through consumption of U.S. goods. This process made the American commercial empire both more modern, as it was built on consumption rather than coercion, and more global than European territorial empires.25

Americans also had different understandings of imperialism in areas outside of commerce. Edward Blum notes a rise in interest in late-nineteenth-century American missionary endeavours abroad, helped recast American racial identity after the Civil War. Missions united Northerners and Southerners in a belief that it was the duty of white American Anglo-Saxon Protestants to covert the globe to Christianity. American missionaries also showed that while they were in some ways Anglo-Saxon and so able to covert colonised peoples, American Anglo-Saxons were the most adept at exercising dominion over non-whites. These missionary endeavours both showed how Americans were, like other Europeans, colonising the globe, but also how American Anglo-Saxons were more successful and therefore superior to other colonial nations.26 Gail Bederman argues that white Americans combined Christianity with Darwinism creating a kind of racial millenarianism. All racial groups existed on a hierarchy stretching towards perfection. As the most advanced society it was a special American duty to work towards racial perfection. The American displays in Chicago in 1893 tried, Bederman argues, to show this perfection as particularly white and manly.27 Americans, particularly American men, showed through these displays how they represented the highest form of civilisation. Paul Kramer explains there is an inherent tension between American exceptionalism and Anglo-Saxonism. Belief in common attributes between Anglo-Saxon people does not fit well with notions that American were superior. 28 At a fair meant to portray American commerce and thus its exceptional position globally there was little reason for Americans to see a shared racial identity with British visitors.

Accompanying this global commercial reach, the late-nineteenth century United States also played was more active role in foreign affairs. The United States, according to Milton Plesur, sent representatives to international conferences in the 1880s that settled things like the gold standard and prime meridian. Britain and the United States resolved their long-running dispute over international copyright four

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years after the fair. Plesur also notes that the United States began, in this period, to project its power abroad more forcefully. Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes, and Grover Cleveland both realized that the United States could not maintain its commitment to an international trans-isthmian canal in Central American, and so should try to build one on its own.29 These foreign policy moves serviced American commerce. A Central American canal would increase U.S. trade, a gold standard helped set a standard for commerce.

These historians suggest that the United States in the century’s final decades became more like a European power. European-style inequality and class division was increasingly present in American society. These historians also show that many elite and educated Americans saw themselves as much more firmly part of the European world. Wealthy Americans, and cities copied European museums to promote high culture. Progressive reformers borrowed new innovative social policies from Europe to help alleviate economic inequality. The United States also played a much larger role diplomatically in this period and expanded its global commerce. In a particular non-territorial way the United States was an imperial nation by the 1880s with colonial markets. Thomas Bender argues that late-nineteenth-century Americans did not discard notions of their own exceptionalism.30 Rather, as has been shown, Americans believed that through this transformation the United States might have superseded European empires in certain areas. However, these historians suggest that many Americans thought of their country as in certain areas comparable to a European power. Opposition to the cowboy image of the United States presented in London can be seen against this backdrop of both increased American sophistication and global economic importance. American observes of the fair did not see their nation as an uncivilised outpost on the frontier, but as a more sophisticated nation comparable to European powers, and so did not want it presented in London as a rough and unsettled backwater.

Sources and Audience

The fair attracted a large number of British visitors, and sources from the event reveal a socially mixed audience. British sources on the fair clearly divide on

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30 Bender, A Nation among Nations, p. 190.
social lines; guidebooks and newspapers reflected elite, middle class, and working-
class attendance. Political luminaries from both major British parties visited and
endorsed the fair. However, because the Exhibition was treated in the sources as a
recreational rather than a political event, there is no way to characterise sources as
liberal or conservative, or to explore certain political images of the United States, as
there is in other chapters. Both the penny press and middle-class journals endorsed
the fair, and particularly the Wild West Show, though these publications had slightly
different understandings of the fair. All of these sources expressed belief in Anglo-
American racial similarities, and so employing sources from across the class spectrum
gives a sense of how the London audience understood the American Exhibition.
Besides newspapers, planning documents and memoirs left by organisers reveal that
Anglo-Saxonism informed the event from its inception. Finally, the journal of the
Exhibition *The American Eagle* is a useful source not only because it kept a record of
the fair’s development, but also it detailed the event’s reception in both countries.

The American Exhibition’s audience is also harder to discern than fairs
covered in previous chapters. However, the sources can be used to investigate what
kind of visitors attended the fair. Given that the event was covered widely in both the
penny press, and middle-class leisure journals, one can presume that the audience was
socially diverse. Journals from outside of London covered the fair, though it is unclear
how many visitors attended the Exhibition from other parts of the country. From the
source material, which is mainly taken from London-based journals, I expect that,
compared to the Crystal Palace, the American Exhibition did not excite as much
national interest, as previous fairs. The audience, while it was diverse socially, was
not as geographically varied as at previous events. This chapter says more about how
Londoners – rather than the country as a whole - saw the United States, but the fair
was still popular and well-attended and so larger conclusions about British ideas
about the United States can be drawn from the source material.

American sources mostly come from newspaper coverage of the Exhibition.
In the years before the fair opened American newspapers generally supported the
Exhibition. Most large newspapers across the country saw the event as a useful way
to encourage investment and immigration from Britain. However, when the fair
actually opened newspapers disagreed regionally about how to understand the
Exhibition, and the Wild West Show. Eastern and Mid-Western newspapers generally
believed that the fair, and the Wild West Show, would help to induce British
immigration and investment. However, these papers rarely employed the same kind
of Anglo-Saxonist language found in British reports on the fair. Southern and Western papers though expressed deep fears about how the Wild West Show displayed the United States. The South and West had the greatest need for immigration and investment from Britain, but papers across these two regions worried that a performance of Cowboys fighting Indians on the frontier gave a false image of their areas. These Southern and Western States were, observers of the fair reasoned, more culturally sophisticated and developed than the Wild West Show allowed. The American Exhibition, because of this difference in how sources from different regions understood the event, is an excellent site to examine how various Americans, representing different economies and regions, wanted the United States to be seen abroad.

The Fair’s Organisation

Whitley stated that the American Exhibition’s primary goal was commercial, and that he conceived of the event in 1884 after visiting the United States, where he met a number of American manufacturers interested in an exhibition their products in Britain. In his biography however, Whitley claimed he organised the fair with a clear Anglo-Saxonist vision, writing that the Exhibition would be “an outward and visible sign that the unhappy estrangement between parent and offspring, originating in the reign of Her Gracious Majesty’s grand-father, had now at last, in this Jubilee Year of hers, given place to mutual feelings of perfect reconciliation.” 31 British organisers saw the American Exhibition as a display of both Anglo-Saxonism and economic opportunity and did not see any conflict between these two themes. The American Eagle believed that the fair would be both an excellent commercial opportunity and a place for British visitors to see their connections to Americans. In 1885 the Eagle published that the fair was certain to grow “the future investments of European capital, and the trade and commerce of the United States with the Old World and with the British and other colonies.” 32 After the fair’s dates moved back a year, the Eagle argued that the change would not affect visitor numbers. The Eagle believed that an American Exhibition could be held at any time, as “hundreds of thousands of English visitors to the British metropolis will visit the American Exhibition out of pure friendliness of feeling. The profit therefore both to Exhibitors and to the Exhibition

31 Lowe and Whitley, Four National Exhibitions, p. 32.
32 The American Eagle, March 1885, p. 2.
by holding it in the ‘Jubilee year’ is beyond dispute.” Organisers believed that these friendly feelings towards the United States would be enough to draw British visitors to the Exhibition. Anglo-American racial similarity was part of the Exhibitions selling point for the British organisers and something that they were sure would draw attendees. There was no conflict for these organisers between the fair’s two goals. British visitors would attend the fair out of racial solidarity and see the commercial opportunities on show.

Whitley initially gained notable supporters for the American Exhibition in the United States. He secured the services of Alfred T. Goshorn, the Director General of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, and also convinced President Grover Cleveland to endorse the project. Cleveland believed that the American Exhibition would be, like the Crystal Palace, or the Philadelphia Centennial, an opportunity to advertise U.S. products, and so increase trade with Europe. In a letter to the organisers Cleveland wrote, “an Exhibition held in the British metropolis and exclusively devoted to the Arts, Inventions, Manufactures, Products, and Resources of the United States, could not be initiated by the Government of this country…But it will be invited to become an exhibitor in the same manner as the great Corporations, Railroads, and private firms.” Cleveland saw the fair as a commercial opportunity, and believed it would show an economic portrait of the United States. The Federal Government, who Cleveland believed should participate, would exhibit among the great American commercial and manufacturing firms. Cleveland did not believe that the fair would show the racial similarities between the two nations, and Whitley had, at this point, not yet invited Buffalo Bill Cody to participate. Americans interested in the fair did not share the same conception of the event, as a stage to show Anglo-American racial similarities.

Whitely cobbled together an impressive group of American organisers. John Gilmer Speed, editor between 1877 and 1883 of the New York World, and one of the organisers of the Transportation Bureau of the 1876 Centennial served as the Exhibition’s secretary. Whitely also employed several Anglo-American businessmen to organise the event. William D. Guthrie, a member of the firm that handled the Bank of England’s business in the United States, and Colonel J.T. Griffin, American agricultural machine manufacturer and founder and president of the English

33 The American Eagle, February 1886, p 1.
34 Ibid., p. 41.
Agricultural Engineers Association, served as organisers.36 John Sartain, the British-born artist, and organiser of the American fine art section at the Philadelphia Centennial, planned the arts section for London.37 These American organisers had business and social links in Britain. These committee members designed a fair that showed the United States’ commercial opportunities and American high culture. The Wild West Show, though, eclipsed this display of American products and art, once the Exhibition opened.

These organisers, and other Americans who helped boost the fair, understood its purpose very differently from Whitley. The American Exhibition was not, for them, about Anglo-Saxonism. In a speech at the New Orleans Cotton Centennial in 1885, John Gilmer Speed told the audience gathered for Iowa Day, “England and Scotland are full of intelligent people, with money, who want to emigrate, and all classes are anxious to know what the real productive and competitive power of the young Western giant may be.”38 Speed presented the fair, to this American audience, as firmly about immigration and investment. The American commissioner for the Exhibition in Idaho made the same point about why he participated in the fair: “What we want in Idaho is the capitalist and the better class of agriculturist.”39 These American organisers did not see the fair as a celebration of Anglo-Saxonism; rather, they were interested in the trade and immigration opportunities the event presented to Londoners.

Newspapers that covered the American Exhibition, like American organisers, also argued that the fair would increase immigration and investment from Britain. Eastern papers in the industrial North like the New York Herald noted in January 1885: “There has never yet been a first-class Exhibition of American articles anywhere out of this country, and the commercial result of such an undertaking can hardly be over-estimated.”40 Later in the same year The Times of Philadelphia noted, “It is the purpose of the promoters and managers to make…such a display of products and institutions of the United States as shall represent their varied resources and industries, and thus give visitors an accurate idea of what a comparatively new

36 Lowe and Whitley, Four National Exhibitions, p. 43.
38 The American Eagle, June 1886, p 10.
39 Sartain, Reminiscences, p.41.
country really is.” *The Times* added, “In addition to this it is expected that investors will be able to utilise the Exhibition to gain a close and accurate knowledge of the opportunities which this country presents.”\(^{41}\) These Northern papers did not believe the fair would show Anglo-Saxonism: like Speed they understood the fair as an opportunity to increase investment in the United States and induce emigration.

Newspapers from less industrial parts of the United States characterised the American Exhibition similarly to Eastern journals. Papers in the South and West saw that the Exhibition was an excellent chance to attract money and people to their regions. The *Atlanta Constitution* wrote in the summer of 1885: “American inventors, manufacturers and producers will have for the first time an opportunity of presenting to Europeans the many improvements made during the past half century, and a most interesting Exhibition in every way is expected.”\(^{42}\) *The Southern Trade Gazette*, based in Louisville Kentucky, agreed, “The South…has everything to gain and, as we see it, nothing whatever to lose by making a vigorous effort to compel the attention of Europe, but more especially of our English cousins, through the medium of the American Exhibition of Art, Inventions, Manufactures, Products, and Resources of the United States.”\(^{43}\) The American Exhibition in London was an opportunity for Southerners to impress the British audience, and advertise their economy. Like in the North, these Southerners believed the fair would present attractive commercial opportunities.

In the West, newspapers also saw the American Exhibition as a way to induce trade and immigration. *The San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that in addition to California redwood furniture, “The English – and the French, too, for that matter – will be surprised to learn that they can buy as good claret here, for about the same money as they can buy in Paris.”\(^{44}\) Minnesota’s *St. Paul Globe* also believed that the State should participate in the Exhibition, so as “not to be behind her sister states in placing here many advantages prominently before the people of England and Europe Generally.”\(^{45}\) Like in the South, Western papers understood the Exhibition as a way to advertise their products and investment opportunities. Southern and Western papers were more forceful about how the fair could benefit their region. However, American newspapers interested in the fair focused on the commercial gains to be made at the

\(^{41}\) *The American Eagle*, August 1885, p. 11.  
\(^{42}\) *The American Eagle*, July 1885, p. 13.  
\(^{43}\) *The American Eagle*, August 1885, p. 11.  
\(^{45}\) *The American Eagle*, February 1886, p. 10.
Exhibition. These journals did not see, as Whitley did, the fair as an opportunity to showcase the racial similarities between the two nations.

The American Exhibition was originally scheduled to open in 1886, to coincide with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, but organisers of that event asked that the American fair delay a year to avoid competition. This delay caused Whitely a number of problems. Goshorn dropped out of his organisational role.46 American newspapers revealed that to gain Cleveland’s support for the Exhibition, Whitley falsely assured the president that the fair had the Prince of Wales’ full endorsement.47 It was during this setback that Whitley, while in Washington D.C., first encountered Buffalo Bill Cody, and proposed his inclusion in the fair. Whitley did not see a conflict between the exhibition of American arts and products, and a display of Western theatrics. Was Buffalo Bill not Whitely asked, “every bit as much a genuine product of American soil as Edison’s telephones or Pullman’s railway cars?”48 Whitely believed Wild West Show would not only save the flagging exhibition, but also that it fit thematically with the fair’s displays of American art and industry. He did not realise that British visitors would ignore the industrial and artistic displays and come only for Cody.

The Fair

Organisers divided the American Exhibition geographically and thematically into three sections. American arts and manufactured products were located in a building at the centre of the Exhibition Grounds. The pavilion used to host the Wild West Show was attached to the main building by a bridge, and gardens displaying American plants, and several smaller buildings occupied the area north of the Exhibition Hall.49 This arrangement meant that visitors could attend the fair without really viewing the manufactured products and art on show; they could just go for the Wild West Show.

46 Lowe and Whitley, Four National Exhibitions, p. 54.
48 Lowe and Whitley, Four National Exhibitions, pp. 56-57.
The main building hosted displays of heavy machinery and American products widely available in London. Photographs of the Exhibition show a number of harvesters as well as pieces of heavy machinery (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), and American consumables (Fig. 3). These displays were not distinct from American exhibits at previous world’s fairs, and showed labour-saving machinery and American products. The art building contained works by American artists, some on American themes, but the most conspicuous paintings in the Exhibition were two portraits of Queen Victoria (Fig. 4). Most of the art displayed aped European styles and showed Continental subjects. The Art department also featured a donation of American hunting trophies collected by English sportsmen. In the gardens visitors could examine and touch American plants, eat at restaurants selling American food and drink, and listen to concerts of American music. Socially elite visitors could relax in the ‘Welcome Club,’ a kind of private members organisation built just for the Exhibition, decorated with American furniture and objet d’art. Children could take a ‘switch back railway,’ an early rollercoaster, and ‘toboggan’ ride in the gardens. The gardens also contained a panorama of New York Harbour, which the Saturday Review noted “To those who have never been to America, this panorama...will be of interest; since it gives an excellent idea of the size and splendour of that aggregation of cities separated by the two great rivers, the Hudson and the East which together form the metropolis of the New World.” The American Exhibition offered an opportunity to both see U.S. products, but also to experience the nation personally. As the Saturday Review noted, the fair was experiential, for those British visitors who had not been to the United States, the Exhibition was a kind of tourism. One could see, feel, hear, and even taste what life was like in the United States.

50 Ibid., p. 8.
51 Ibid., p. 9.
Figure 1: Interior of the Mechanical Section


Figure 2: Interior of the Mechanical Section

<http://www.worldsfairs.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/SearchDetails/HML_76304#Snippets> [accessed 14 March 2016].

**Figure 3: American Consumables**


<http://www.worldsfairs.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/SearchDetails/HML_76304#Snippets> [accessed 14 March 2016]
Performers in the Wild West Show, both Cowboys and American Indians, also camped on the Exhibition grounds, and attendees could meet and talk with members of Cody’s troupe. The American Indian performers were particularly popular figures with British visitors. Gladstone’s meeting with Red Shirt has already been noted. Queen Victoria invited these American Indians performers to her Golden Jubilee celebration. Oglala Sioux Black Elk, in his memoir, recounted that Victoria told the performers, “I am sixty-seven years old. All over the world I have seen all kinds of people; but to-day I have seen the best-looking people I know. If you belonged to me, I would not let them take you around in a show like this.” Black Elk participated in the Jubilee celebrations and recorded his admiration for “Grandmother England.” 57 Visitors could meet these Indian performers, and to do so was en vogue during the fair. Part of the American Exhibition’s draw was that it allowed visitors to experience

57 Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux as Told through John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow); Introduction by Vine Deloria, Jr (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 221-23.
elements of life in the United States unavailable in Britain. A chance to meet real cowboys and American Indians was an opportunity that even the very highest in British society could not forgo.

Pairing experiential elements with American art and industry fulfilled the two roles that American organisers planned for the Exhibition to encompass. The fair showed the best American production to British buyers, and the other parts like the gardens helped give visitors some sense of life in the United States and induced immigration. The official catalogue of the Exhibition recorded that the fair aimed to convince any “capitalists seeking an investment in the United States or any discriminating man desirous of fixing his home there, would, after several visits to the proposed Exhibition, been in a position to arrive at a reliable conclusion as to what it would be best for him to do.” Visitors, the catalogue argued, were sure to see the benefits of life in the United States from the fair’s industrial and experiential elements.

British Reactions

The Wild West Show was by far the fair’s most popular element, and British visitors created racially charged ideas about the United States at the Exhibition. Familiar American products exhibited in the industrial hall bored British attendees, and while some visitors did express desire to move to the United States, they did so because of the Wild West Show. The performance allowed visitors to channel Anglo-Saxonism, to see a familiar tableau of white civilisation spreading across the globe. Images of the American fair show that the display of manufactures was well attended. However, the British audience reviewed the selection of U.S. products and art poorly. The Times’ stated the selection of manufactured products was “essentially a tradesman’s exhibition. In no sense can it be held as representative of the industries of the States.” The paper added, with disappointment, that some expected American products were not shown: “We have no great grain trophy, no cotton trophy, no tobacco trophy, no gold ingots, no coal trophy.” Continuing its critique, the Times noted that, “Nor can the exhibits be regarded as throughout American. There is more than one stall containing objects that have never crossed the Atlantic.” Large

59 ‘Opening Of The American Exhibition’, The Times, 10 May 1887, p. 10.
60 ‘The American Exhibition’, The Times, 8 June 1887, p. 15.
American dentistry exhibits repulsed many British attendees. A Sheffield visitor noted that the display of fake teeth “is enuff to give you a good twinge as you pass by ‘em.” A female visitor from Wrexham, and author of a local newspaper’s ‘Ladies Column’ agreed: “A shiver ran through me as I saw the ghastly reminder of many painful experiences.” These responses show visitors disappointment with the American products displayed. The same visitor from Sheffield did not believe the American industrial section was more impressive than his city’s local shopping arcade. American technology and machines were too familiar to be impressive to the audience in London.

Visitors expressed similar boredom with the American fine art display. Attendees, confronted with portraits of Queen Victoria, believed the pictures were British in origin. Sartain noted in his memoirs that one visitor asked: “These pictures are not all by American painters, are they?” Sartain countered, “I assured him that they were, or they could not have been admitted. ‘Well they are copies of English pictures, are they not?’ I said that no copies were accepted. He said, ‘Oh, but, my dear sir, look at that portrait of the Queen; that, of course, can only be a copy!’” Finally, Sartain told the man, “I surprised him by assuring him that it was an original, painted by an American artist, Mr. Thomas Sully, for the American Society of the Sons of St. George in Philadelphia, of which I was a member, and that the Queen sat expressly for it.” This particular visitor could not believe portraits of Queen Victoria were American, and assumed, understandably, that they were painted in Britain. The rest of the American fine arts section fitted thematically with the portraits of Queen Victoria. Few paintings appeared in the American art section that did not ape European styles, and few works depicted the United States.

British subjects like portraits of Victoria at the American Exhibition simply did not excite the fair’s audience. Sartain’s section showed what he considered the finest American works, created by artists based in Europe. The American art department, rather than presenting American scenes, tried to highlight American cultural sophistication. The Manchester Guardian review of the art section glossed over these European-inspired works, and selected as the best paintings “California Trees and the Yosemite Valley, by Bierstadt; Bright October, Coast of Maine by P.L.

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61 ‘“Robert” at the American Exhibition’, The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent, 20 May 1887.
63 ‘“Robert” at the American Exhibition’, The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent, 20 May 1887.
64 Sartain, Reminiscence, pp. 254-55.
65 Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP), Sartain Family Papers, Box 1. p. 28.
Senat.”66 The ladies columnist for the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent was
drawn to paintings of “Red Indians” on the frontier.67 The more middle-class, and
slightly sneering, Saturday Review agreed that the audience enjoyed paintings
depicting the United States: “The large picture, measuring 38 feet by 16, of the ‘Battle
of Gettysburg,’ by Mr. Rothermel, is one of those immense works which delight the
people, probably on account of their size.” The Review also highlighted “‘A Storm in
the Rocky Mountains’ by Bierstadt” as a choice painting in the display.68 Visitors to
the Exhibition did not want to see familiar painted scenes. Rather, they came to see
images that were distinctly American, scenes of the Civil War, or the wild frontier.

John Sartain’s record of sales from the Exhibition also shows visitors’ interest
in images of American nature and the frontier. Sartain told numerous American
artists, based in Europe, that their paintings did not sell at the Exhibition. In a letter to
Jasper Cropsey Sartain admitted that “The crowds of people that have visited the
exhibition are a surprise to me but there is no doubt that it is Buffalo Bill’s Wild West
Show that brings them.”69 The audience there for Buffalo Bill were not interested in
pictures of Queen Victoria or the Henley Regatta.70 However, photographer George
Baker, known for his images of Niagara Falls, did sell at the Exhibition – fairgoers
bought his work by the box.71 American nature, in its wild splendour, and images of
the American frontier excited fairgoers and chimed well with the Wild West Show.
Visitors to the fine arts section, like in the industrial display, were not that interested
in things they felt they already knew, and the art department, mostly filled with
familiar European scenes, was banal.

The Wild West Show

Sartain’s claim that Buffalo Bill, and not American industry, brought visitors
to the Exhibition is supported in press descriptions, which detailed the performance’s
popularity. The magazine Time noted that though there were impressive displays in
the machinery section, “one passes rapidly through the long gallery into an enormous

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1887, p. 8.
839.
69 Philadelphia, PHS, Sartain Family Papers, Box 1, p. 99.
70 Philadelphia, PHS, Sartain Family Papers, Box 1, p. 148.
71 Philadelphia, PHS, Sartain Family Papers, Box 1, p. 119.
arena, where what is called the ‘Wild West’ show takes place.”

The Saturday Review agreed: “it is the ‘Wild West,’ after all, which will prove the great attraction of this Exhibition. Nobody has ever been more thoroughly ‘boomed’ than Buffalo Bill, and there is no doubt that he merits a great deal of the fame and popularity he has achieved.” Visitors came to the American Exhibition to see Buffalo Bill Cody and his performers, not to see American fine arts and industrial products.

While some press descriptions of the American Exhibition did note the other elements of the fair, clearly the most popular attraction at the event was the Wild West Show. The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent told its readers that 50,000 people a day, in August 1887, viewed the Wild West Show, and ninety-nine visitors out of one hundred went to the Exhibition for Buffalo Bill Cody. These visitors saw a performance that presented white cowboys as the civilisers and savours of the lawless and wild American West. The Wild West Show contained violence, but there were other more pacific elements of the performance. The performance included a display of Mexican and Indian horse-riding techniques, as well as an Indian war dance. Western shooting legend Annie Oakley performed at Earl’s Court, and defeated Grand Duke Michael of Russia in a shooting contest. Buffalo Bill’s show included an Indian attack on a stagecoach, and a log cabin, as well as a purported war dance. In one version of the show Indian performers attacked MP Col. Francis Hughes-Hallett and Lord Ronald Gower, seated in the mock stagecoach. Later Buffalo Bill’s cowboys saved the pair of British luminaries. As the attack on the Lord and the MP makes clear, the show presented Americans defending civilisation, in the form of white settlers on the frontier, from American Indian savagery. Hughes-Hallett and Gower taking the position of American settlers only made the white cowboys’ heroic role in this theatrical defence of civilisation clearer.

Before the fair’s opening, the British press primed potential visitors for performance’s violent scenes. The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times described one element of the performance, in April 1887, a month before the fair’s opening as, “Buffalo Bill” engaged in “a hand fight with a real Indian chief after the

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75 ‘The Queen at the Wild West Show’, Daily News, 12 May 1887.
77 ‘The Queen at the Wild West Show’, Daily News, 12 May 1887.
manner of his fight with the chief ‘Yellow Hand,’ in which encounter the pale-face killed and scalped the Indian chief.”

Illustrated newspapers published images of the show and its host, including a staged fight between cowboys and Indians (Fig. 5), and of Buffalo Bill engaged in hand to hand combat with a cartoonishly portrayed American Indian (Fig. 6). Visitors to the Exhibition were familiar with these American Western themes via literature. The ‘Wild West’ Show was advertised in journals as an in-the-flesh portrayal of scenes from Mayne Reid’s and James Fenimore Cooper’s novels.

Figure 5: The Wild West Show


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79 “‘Buffalo Bill’s’ Show”, *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 23 April 1887, p. 262.
Buffalo Bill appeared in press accounts of the performance as a masculine hero civilising the American West. While actually doing very little in the show itself, he was described by one female visitor, writing in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, as “looking very handsome and imposing as he rides about on his grey horse, firing at glass balls most successfully and cracking a bullock- whip.” She continued: “Taller than most Americans, with a bronzed and handsome face, and considerable personal dignity indicative of physical courage, Buffalo Bill cannot fail to be admired by all the ladies who see him, for I believe these characteristics go a long way to win favour with the fairer sex.”

The magazine *London Society* also described a manly image of Cody: “One horseback, and especially from a back view, he looks like a mediæval knight, his long hair aiding the resemblance. But when he puts his hat on, the likeness ceases…especially when he doffs it with a free sweep of the arm that recalls the liberal courtesy of a former age.” Cody compared favourably with manly heroes from other historical periods; he was not simply a cowboy civilising the ‘West,’ but reminiscent of medieval knights, or seventeenth-

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81 ‘Our Ladies’ Column’, *Wrexham Advertiser*, 31 May 1887.
century cavaliers. This comparison between Cody and medieval knights helps reveal why the performance was so popular, particularly given the mass cultural fascination with romantic notions of chivalry in the 1880s. Mark Girouard explores Victorian enthusiasm for chivalry, which he argues played three roles in British society.

Chivalry was understood as a force for good in an increasingly evil-seeming Victorian world. It also proved British racial superiority through history, and it could be a cross-class phenomenon, one did not have to have money to be a gentleman all one needed was chivalry. Association between Cody and these medieval heroes shows both the Show’s wide appeal and the power of these ideas about the United States. Cody’s cowboys were for the audience living depictions of Americans on the frontier, and also chivalric heroes, civilised colonist on the fringes of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Visitors’ association of the Wild West Show with medieval chivalry, and descriptions of Cody and his cowboys as medieval heroes, shows the performances’ broad appeal, as well as visitors’ racial characterisation of Americans as Anglo-Saxons. Cody and his performers were compared, in descriptions, to particularly British heroes, and symbols of British racial superiority.

Descriptions of the fair also noted the important role women played in the Wild West Show performance, and camp. The Penny Illustrated told readers, “Lithe lasses are not lacking in ‘Buffalo Bill’s’ troupe. One radiantly fair equestrienne appears as a vision of one of Mayne Reid’s Texan heroines as she sits her saddle with easy grace, and smiles sunnily to here knightly ‘Cow-Boy’ by her side.” Continuing “It is a novel experience, quite, to catch glimpses of the ‘California Huntress,’ Misses Dell and Bessie Farrell of Colorado, Miss Annie Oakley, the Celebrated Girl Wing Shot,” and other accomplished Amazons of the ‘Far West.’ Buffalo Bill and his cowboys were not simply western heroes for the British audience, but also gendered heroes. Louis Warren notes the centrality of female performers to the Wild West Show. In the Show these female performers displayed their shooting skills, but also presented Western women’s role policing morality on the frontier. Performers like Oakley often staged scenes with their husbands, Oakley herself shot cards and cigarettes out of her husband’s hands. This display showed Western women’s skill, Warren argues, in restraining their husbands’ baser urges, ready with a rifle to keep Anglo-Saxon morality intact. In the performers’ camps these women also served as

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domestic paragons and stood as the motherly matrons to Cody’s troupe. Americans, both male and female, in the West spread white chivalrous and moral civilisation to the frontier. The fair presented the importance of civilising the American West. As Cody and his cowboys exhibited, the region must be made safe for white women who could domesticate and restrain their cowboy’s dangerous and immoral urges.

The *Illustrated London News* also noted Cody’s manliness and physical stature. Cody, the paper told its readers, gained his nickname “by having shot 4280 buffalo in one year.” The Paper continued extolling Cody’s exploits “he has passed through every phase of border life...as hunter, trapper, guide, and scout; he has endured dangers and difficulties the recitation of which would fill many volumes; and in every pursuit he has achieved the distinction of being the bravest, the most thorough, the most active, the most chivalrous and most daring man.” These attributes made Cody the greatest figure “whom that phase of American civilisation has ever produced.”

*ILN* combined the chivalric and frontier images of Cody, he was the most heroic figure in the United States, and his frontier life made him the grandest American of his time, worthy of admiration and emulation.

Middle-class journals also recorded the Wild West Show’s popularity with the London audience. *The Saturday Review* noted that that the Wild West Show spurred “the extensive republication... [of] Fenimore Cooper’s novels. It seems as if everybody who has paid a visit to the ‘Wild West,’ at Earl’s Court must forthwith form the acquaintance of *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Leather Stocking*, and *The Pathfinder*.” The Wild West Show was popular outside of mass-market illustrated journals. The *Review* was less impressed by the show, describing it as a circus, but its coverage does indicate a wider British interest in the American frontier, and tales of American colonisation of the West. All social classes in London enjoyed the live performance of American colonisation of the frontier via the Wild West show.

*Time*, a journal started by elite gossip columnist Edmund Yates, commented on the Wild West Show’s popularity with the middle class. The journal recorded that “We have heard a good deal of the cowboy lately; ranching has become fashionable,

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85 Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America.* pp. 246–49
and consequently the cowboy has become an object of interest. The career of a cowboy has become the last resort of the broken sportsman, and the desperate dandy, instead of driving a cab, turns up on a ranche, and rides down herds of cattle.”89 *Time* emphasised the cowboy lifestyle’s redemptive elements. Instead of staying in England, those elites with few options at home could find better, more chivalric, opportunities on the American frontier. The Wild West Show was popular with the middle class; Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking tales experienced a revival, and the cowboy lifestyle, according to *Time*, was an admirable, and even redemptive venture for British emigrants.

**Anglo-Saxonism and the Wild West Show’s Popularity**

Cody’s show inspired British visitors to and observers of the fair to draw racial connections between their nation and the United States. Consistently, across the class spectrum, British viewers of the Wild West Show described the performance and the fair in language that stressed shared racial traits with Americans. The tableau presented, of white, chivalrous, manly, physically powerful cowboys civilising the frontier appealed to the British audience. Americans were, in Buffalo Bill’s show, performing the civilisation of the rough frontier, something to which visitors could relate. Cody seemed to show a version of American identity to the audience that overlapped with their own British self-image as manly self-reliant colonists spreading civilisation across other global frontiers. As Catherine Hall’s and Bill Schwarz’s work points out, the late-nineteenth century saw the creation of an imperial political ideology which placed Anglo-Saxon racial traits, traits that Cody and his performers seemed for the audience to embody, as the pinnacle of human progress. Thus, when presented with a performance of American colonisation of the frontier, and such a manly, powerful, and self-reliant one at that, British attendees at that fair felt a connection between themselves and Americans.

Even before the fair opened British newspapers stressed their nation’s relationship and shared attributes with the United States. The populist and cheap *Illustrated London News* advertised the fair by describing the United States as “now the largest community of the English race on the face of the earth…intimately connected with us by social sympathies, by a common language and literature, by

ancestral traditions and many centuries of a common history, by the same attachment to the principals of order and freedom.” Ties between the United States and Britain, for the ILN, were not material but cultural and historical; it was language, tradition and government institutions that linked both nations. British visitors should attend the Exhibition, according to the paper, to see proofs of these common attributes. The paper noted that American “materials and sustenance of their staple industries” was “a proper subject of congratulation,” but trade and commerce were secondary to this non-material racial bond the two nations shared.

Further public expressions of perceived Anglo-American racial links emerged after the fair opened, and visitors saw the Wild West Show and other American exhibits. The Penny Illustrated after a description of the whole Exhibition, and particularly of the Indian encampment and the fights between Cowboy and American Indian performers wrote,

We gladly offer the hand of cordial friendship to our brethren from across the Atlantic, for we in this Show have ever honestly striven, in storm and in sunshine, to cement the natural alliance that ought to exist between Britain and the United States. Blood is thicker than water. We are kith and kin. Let us foregather and become firmer friends yet, at the American Exhibition!

American products did not impress The Penny Illustrated, rather the paper focused on the common racial bond it believed the two nations shared. The paper noted the Wild West Show’s popularity before explaining that it was blood that connected the two nations. The fair inspired an understanding of Anglo-American similarities that were more social and racial than commercial.

The Exhibition’s close gave British politicians a chance to express their belief in Anglo-American racial reconciliation. The American Exhibition was a platform to lobby the U.S. government for international arbitration in future disputes between the two nations. Various political luminaries met in November 1887 to support the policy’s adoption in both nations. John Bright wrote from Edinburgh on arbitration, “In the States and in this country there is a population of a hundred thousand millions of free people professing the Christian faith, and in possession of the largest measure of political freedom; and the example of such a portion of the population of the civilised world must have a great

91 Codlin, ‘The Showman’, The Penny Illustrated, 7 May 1887,
influence."\(^{92}\) The meeting’s Chairman, the Marquess of Lorne, agreed saying on the exhibition, “It was a pleasure thus to be able to renew their [Britain and the United States’] vows of brotherhood, and to declare that, come what might, the last thing they wished was to have any serious trouble.”\(^{93}\) Gladstone echoed these sentiments at a lunch given for politicians and fair organisers: “God Almighty made Englishmen and Americans kinsmen, and they ought to have affection for one another…I rejoice that the clouds which once obscured our mutual vision have almost vanished from our political sky, and that the future is as bright and promising as the warmest-hearted among us could desire.”\(^{94}\) These political luminaries, as well as the penny press, believed the exhibition proved that there was a bond between Americans and Britons based on shared culture, history, and attributes that defied material connections. Bright saw the same commitment to freedom and the same Christianity as the link between the two nations. Gladstone, in his conversation with Red Shirt, and Lorne in his advocacy for arbitration, stressed the perceived racial ties between the two English-speaking nations underscored by the fair, and particularly the Wild West Show. These figures emphasised the two nations’ perceived similar civilisation, racial attributes, and shared values, they believed were encapsulated, or highlighted by the fair and the Wild West Show. The narrative Buffalo Bill created, of Americans as chivalrous civilising imperial heroes, allowed for the expression of these connections. The mechanical displays and much of the fine art on show did not impress, it was Cody and his performers who allowed this association between Britain and the United States.

The Wild West Show presented a narrative about Americans that fit well with British images of their own nation and late-nineteenth-century role in the world, hence it is unsurprising visitors saw racial connections between the two countries at the Exhibition. Duncan Bell notes that part of British reckoning with imperial problems and demands for colonial self-government in the 1850s and 60s was to reform and reshape their racial self-conception. Belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority kept the British Empire together even as settler colonies moved closer to independence. The very tenets of Anglo-Saxonism according to this argument, self-reliance, commitment to liberty and the spread of white civilisation, forced the

\(^{92}\) ‘Anglo-American Arbitration’, *The Standard*, 1 November 1887.
\(^{93}\) Ibid.
\(^{94}\) ‘LATEST FOREIGN NEWS: Mr. Gladstone Visits The “Wild West” Show--The Schnaebeles Incident’, *The Sun*, 29 April 1887, p. 1.
question of self-government in the settler colonies. As Britons spread through the
world they would civilise and then govern the lands in their domain. The American
Exhibition and the Wild West Show particularly emphasised an American version of
these Anglo-Saxon imperial settler traits. Cody and his troupe performed the
civilising of the American West as manly Anglo-Saxons determined to spread their
civilisation across the globe. The performance at Earl’s Court, while set in the United
States, could have taken place in British imperial domains. White Anglo-Saxon men,
as presented in the Wild West Show, tamed what was deemed wild, and made
territory safe for Anglo-Saxon society on the American frontier.

British visitors identified commonalities with the United States because of the
racial attributes the Wild West Show presented. Visitors to Earl’s Court were not
interested in American manufacturing, or the nation’s claim to cultural sophistication
in the form of the fine arts display. Neither of these parts of the fair inspired any
Anglo-Saxonist writing. The Wild West Show played a key role in visitors’
conceptions of Anglo-American the racial linkages presented at the fair, and the
British audience focused solely on images the United States as an Anglo-Saxon nation
that Cody’s performance seemed to them to present. The American Exhibition’s
commercial section, which might have been a point of contention given the economic
competition between Britain and the United States, was, for visitors, dull. Even in the
fine arts section the audience preference depictions of American natural splendour
and native peoples over paintings which aped European styles.

This characterisation of the American display, and Wild West Show represents
a shift in how British visitors understood the United States at these fairs. At the three
previous events covered in this dissertation British visitors were most impressed by
American machines and natural recourses. Those exhibits showed British visitors and
observers the strong American economy, and its auspicious future. Some British
visitors and observers of these events believed Americans’ inventiveness could only
be explained as a product of the country’s British heritage. However, responses to the
1887 American fair show that British visitors and observers’ notions about the United
States were more firmly based on the two nations’ shared racial attributes and similar
societies than on displays of American products. Machines and other displays that
highlighted the American economy were no longer forefront in British writing about
U.S. exhibits. Cody’s performance of colonialism showed British visitors and

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95 Duncan Bell, The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900
observers in 1887 that both countries were members of the same racial family, both were committed to spreading Anglo-Saxon civilisation to unsettled frontiers. These British narratives about the United States in 1887 were more enmeshed in the era’s popular belief in inherent British racial supremacy. Americans, at least as understood at this Exhibition, were also racially superior Anglo-Saxons because they too were a colonial settler power, with an inherent desire to spread their civilisation. The narrative visitors and observers developed about the United States at the American Exhibition was not about the country’s economic promise, but about the inherent traits people from the two nations shared.

American Reactions

American observers of the fair did not agree with these racial characterisations of the United States made by British visitors to the Exhibition. Most American newspaper reports on the fair remained firmly focused on the event’s commercial goals. American newspapers focused much more on the Exhibition’s industrial element and did not cover British visitors’ fascination with the Wild West Show. Whitley’s lies to President Cleveland meant the fair was widely criticised before even opening. After the Exhibition’s debut and the Wild West Show’s premiere American criticism focused on the performance. Western and Southern newspapers attacked the Show for the technologically backward and racially heterogeneous image of the United States it presented. The United States was not, these papers felt, the wild, uncivilised country that Buffalo Bill portrayed. These performances, according to critics, were not simply incorrect, but they damaged how British visitors would see both the United States and Americans in the future.

Eastern newspapers focused on the fair’s promised commercial gains, and only saw the Wild West Show as a useful way to advertise American products. They did not though focus on the Anglo-Saxonist understandings of the event. Before the fair opened the New York Times noted, because of mismanagement, the American Exhibition might hurt perceptions of the United States abroad. In April 1887, the paper declared, “The name of the American Exhibition can only be claimed for the show because of Buffalo Bill’s connection with it.” The paper asked: “As an American citizen, jealous of our country’s fair fame, I ask the manufacturers of this country to

consider the character of the management and the financial status of this exhibition before shipping their goods for display therein.”

The New York Times worried that British organisers, and particularly Whitley, known to be dishonest, could present the United States poorly and hurt the country’s reputation abroad.

The paper reversed its line on the fair after the opening. It was shocked that British visitors humanized the American Indian performers. One author was particularly aghast that women gave diamond rings to their favourites, however the New York Times admitted the fair effectively showed American products.

In Hartford Connecticut the Daily Courant believed the fair would show American industry well, and “all good Americans should feel a patriotic interest in its success.” These Eastern publications ignored British criticism of their products. They argued that the fair showed American products well, and that the Wild West Show did not obscure the Exhibition’s commercial goals.

The Chicago Tribune, when it discussed the Wild West Show directly, stated that the Exhibition would promote British immigration to the United States because of visitors’ interest in Buffalo Bill. Young visitors fascinated by the gunslinger, “follow with enthusiasm every feature of the exhibition. They buy printed copies of Buffalo Bill’s life by the thousand…The effect produced by all these elements certainly must stimulate emigration upon the part of adventurous youngsters who do not find very much chance at home.”

The Tribune defended the Exhibition’s success to its readers; it reprinted an article from the British journal The Nineteenth Century, which argued the fair’s industrial section was not impressive, but “the mere fact that such an exhibition” existed showed “the pluck of the Americans.”

In the country’s urbanised and industrialised areas like New York and Chicago, newspapers understood the American exhibition as a commercially useful event. Even if the technological displays did not show well, visitors’ interest in the Wild West Show meant the fair would induce immigration from Britain. Visitors who came to the fair to see Cody also saw American products, so even if they were unimpressive they still could find buyers. These papers did not, though, see any kind of racial connection.
between Britain and the United States. The Wild West Show was a useful advertisement for the fair, but the Exhibition remained a place to secure investment and immigrants.

Newspapers from outside the industrial Northeast had different, more critical, opinions on the American Exhibition and the Wild West Show. They focused on how the performance showed the United States as a rough, uncivilised, and racially mixed nation. At the Exhibition’s opening The Washington Post complained that British periodicals received an incorrect impression of the United States’ industrial progress, and that the Wild West Show presented a false image of American society. The Post decried that the performers were “Africans, Indians and Mexicans in outlandish costumes,” masquerading as “types of Western men.” The paper also challenged the technological image of the United States presented at the fair, “The old stage-coach of the days when Horace Greeley went West is shown, also the ‘bull team’, which is a ‘prairie schooner’ with six or ten pairs of oxen attached.” Sarcastically the paper continued, that British journals reviewing the performance “tell their readers that it is safe traveling from New York to Chicago, and that the English type of civilization is gradually spreading over the continent! The English readers are to be congratulated upon receiving such solid chunks of wisdom.” The Baltimore Sun agreed with this characterisation. American mechanical displays were “very thin.” The paper worried that the Wild West Show’s popularity might be detrimental if visitors realised “that such scenes and customs as are depicted are really as unfamiliar to nine-tenths of the American people as to themselves, it is altogether probable that the English would not take so much interest in them.” Both papers worried that these racially heterogeneous and technologically retrograde depictions of the United States gave British visitors an untrue portrait of the country. Travel from New York to Chicago had been safe and easy for more than a generation, and the Post and the Sun pointed out that Buffalo Bill’s performance counteracted the fair’s commercial goals. Display of a covered wagon at a fair meant to show the United States as a commercial power was, the Post noted, counterproductive and confusing. The Wild West Show, the paper worried, obscured the Exhibition’s other aspects. Worse, the performance presented Westerners as racially mixed, and the Post worried British visitors would see Americans as non-white and uncivilised.

Another Southern paper, *The Atlanta Constitution*, agreed that the fair and the Wild West Show hurt American industry’s image abroad. The paper lamented, “The British papers are not disposed to regard the exhibition as a joke, but insist on taking it quite seriously. One journal gravely remarks that whatever belief Englishmen had in American enterprise has been wiped out.”\(^{104}\) The *Constitution* also claimed that Americans, and particularly Georgians, were not interested in the fair before the opening, but wrote about the event because the paper was “sorry that the American exhibition is so flat and dismal a failure.”\(^{105}\) The *Constitution* believed that the disappointing display of American products meant that the fair could never live up to its goals. The paper also only focused on American industrial exhibits in its coverage, rather than the Wild West Show. It expressed no interest in the performance, only in satisfying the Exhibition’s commercial goals.

In the West newspapers also criticised the American Exhibition and the Wild West Show for its uncivilised presentation of the region. These papers particularly feared that audiences in London might judge Westerners to all be cowboys because of the performance. The *Los Angeles Times* agreed with the *Chicago Tribune* that the ‘Wild West’ show would induce immigration to the United States, but the paper recorded,

> It will result in arming all future immigration to this country, and the exiles who resort to our shores will hereafter look for birch canoes at Sandy Hook, and expect campfires on Bergen Hill and Hoboken Heights, as they come through the Narrows. If they are not welcomed to Castle Garden with a corn-dance and offered ponies for their marriageable daughters, they will feel that they have been deceived, and that American life has not been properly put before the English public.

When these immigrants arrived the *Los Angeles Times* worried they would expect the nation to look like a Wild West Show. The paper believed the performance showed the United States not as it was but as a kind of Western theme park. In the same article the paper also worried that visitors might blur the lines between the Cowboys and American Indians. Like the *Washington Post* the *Los Angeles Times* suggested that the Wild West Show presented the United States as racially mixed, writing “A Good many good people in England think that Americans are descended from Pocahontas.”\(^{106}\) Visitors, this paper feared, would see the United States as a wild

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\(^{104}\) ‘A Failure.’, *The Atlanta Constitution*, 18 May 1887, p. 4.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

untamed place, and also view Americans as racially heterogeneous and therefore uncivilised.

In San Francisco, the Chronicle agreed with the Los Angeles Times that the Exhibition hurt the United States’, and particularly the West’s, image abroad. As shown earlier in the chapter, the Chronicle initially supported the Exhibition as a way to advertise Californian products. However, by the fair’s opening, the paper also criticised the Exhibition as damaging to American interests abroad. “It seems to be a question of whether the dog waggles the tail or the tail waggles the dog,” the paper recorded, in May 1887, “Our British cousins will not care to waste their time in inspecting the agricultural, mineral and manufacturing products and resources of America when they can see Indians and cowboys and broncho horses and all the rest of the outfit which, in their eyes, furnishes a true and accurate picture of life in America.”107 The Wild West Show, the paper gathered correctly, eclipsed the American Exhibition’s industrial display. Visitors were not going to see an image of the United States as industrially powerful if they just went to the fair to see Cody.

The San Francisco Chronicle feared that British visitors, via the Wild West Show, would see the country as an uncivilised place; “Yet the prevalent idea remains in the British mind that America is a wild and savage land, and that those inhabitants of the United States who have gone to England [who appear to be] civilized beings and apparently having a notion of the usages of society are quite exceptional, and by no means representative Americans.” The paper lamented further, “Americans have been trying for some years to convince the English that buffaloes are not, as a rule, hunted in New York City.” The Chronicle feared “It will take another century at least to convince the English that America is civilized.”108 Like the Los Angeles Times, the Chronicle feared that Cody’s performance gave visitors incorrect images of the United States and questioned whether attendees could ever conceive of Americans as civilised after seeing the Wild West Show. Americans in Britain, the Chronicle worried, would in future be seen as inferior and uncivilised. Great cities, like New York, existed in the United States, metropolises that could rival British industrial centres. However, the Chronicle worried, if British visitors considered these cities mere outposts on the prairie, then, not only, did British visitors receive a false impression of the United States at the fair, but also the performance tarnished the United States’ reputation as a civilised nation.

108 Ibid.
American newspapers, though they disagreed about how useful the Wild West Show was as a presentation of U.S. production, did not publish Anglo-Saxonists descriptions of the Exhibition. In the Northeast, journals believed Cody’s performance was a useful way to advertise the fair, and that it would induce British investment and immigration. Though the Wild West Show took some focus away from the Exhibition’s products and fine arts, it was still, these papers believed, a popular representation of life in the United States. American commerce was still, they believed, adequately presented at the Exhibition. These papers, though, did not see the performance as a tableau that proved the racial similarities between Britain and the United States. British attendees were, for these papers, very much like visitors to the fairs in London in 1851 and 1862, there to see the great bounty and genius of American industry, but not fellow Anglo-Saxons. These papers wanted visitors to see the United States as an economically powerful, and cultured nation, not an Anglo-Saxonist ally.

Western and Southern newspapers saw the fair and the performance as dangerous to their regional interests, and believed it threatened the United States’ image as a technologically powerful and civilised nation. Cody gave visitors, these papers argued, an incorrect image of the United States, British immigrants would imagine the whole nation as a wild untamed expanse peopled only with cowboys and American Indians. Worse for these papers, British visitors who did not come to the United States would never see how false Cody’s performance was and would forever believe the United States was an uncivilised nation and so look down on Americans. Relatedly these papers feared the performance presented an image of the United States as racially diverse and that visitors might think that Americans were racially heterogeneous. These papers feared that the Wild West Show eclipsed the exhibited products, and also hurt the United States’ transatlantic reputation as an economically growing cultured nation the fair was meant to enhance.

These Western and Southern observers of the Exhibition identified the tension between the commercial displays and the Wild West Show. A fair meant to expand American commerce and show the country’s industrial progress could not coexist with a display of primitive American Indians. If American international trade was meant to uplift and benefit non-white people, then the Wild West Show simply did not fit this image. Western and Southern observers because of their racism towards Native Americans and their fear that such depictions of the United States would be associated
with the primitivism displayed by Cody criticised the performance for both
denigrating American commerce and the country’s image abroad.

These responses to the American Exhibition are very different to American
conceptions of the Philadelphia Centennial, or their nation’s displays in London in
1851 or 1862. These American observers did not fret about the nation’s suitability to
participate in these events. Nor did they crave vindication from the British hosts.
American organisers and supporters of the event were confident that their products and
fine arts would induce immigration and investment from the British attendees. When
the Wild West Show became the fair’s most popular feature Eastern papers responded
that the performance might help advertise the fine section of American goods.
Southern and Western observers were uncomfortable with the narrative the Show
presented, and worried it showed to British visitors an unsophisticated uncivilised
image of the United States. These observers were confident in their nation’s
production and worried about how the county was presented abroad as an industrial
nation. They did not desire vindication, but rather wanted the strong showing of
American goods to be forefront at the Exhibition for commercial reasons. American
narratives about Britain shifted at this event. American observers wanted trade and
investment from Britain; they saw the country as an important trading partner. Britain
was not - at this fair - a special cultural forbear or even the country’s traditional
enemy. Western and Southern American observers worried about how their racial
identity was displayed, but they did not believe they were racially related to Britain.
These observers had their own ideas about American identity distinct from British
ideas about Anglo-Saxonism.

**Conclusion**

American responses to the 1887 Exhibition and the Wild West Show reveal the
way observers of the event wanted the United States shown and understood in Britain.
These reactions also reveal how American narratives about the nation’s relationship
with Britain had changed in the eleven years since the Philadelphia Centennial.
American observers wanted the fair to show the London audience commercial and
immigration opportunities available in the United States. Theses observers saw
Britain chiefly as a commercial partner, there was no fretting among organisers or
other Americans about their suitability to display in London as there was at previous
events. Similarly, there were no descriptions of Britain as a cultural forbear. The
narrative about Britain at the fair was of a country that could be an excellent source of immigration and investment - nothing more.

American observers of these fairs also rejected British Anglo-Saxon characterisations of their nation. Western and Southern newspaper coverage of the fair reveals discomfort with the way the Wild West Show presented the American frontier. These journals believed the Wild West Show presented to visitors an untruthful, economically retrograde, racially mixed, and above all uncivilised image of the United States. In an era when Americans themselves claimed increased cultural sophistication and believed that their commerce and production made them an exceptional trading power, the Wild West Show presented too rough, violent, and racially mixed an image of American life. The display of American Indians at the fair simply did not fit with displays of modern and progressive American industry. Rather than engage in Anglo-Saxonist descriptions of the fair Northern observers hoped the Wild West show would advertise the products displayed and increase British interest in American commerce. Western and Southern observers criticised and rejected the event as a genuine display of the United States. These visitors simultaneously defended the nation’s white racial identity and rejected Anglo-Saxonism. Rather than see the Wild West Show as a display of shared Anglo-Saxon attributes, American observers fretted about how the fair’s pairing of the performance and U.S. industry counteracted the image of the United States as an exceptional global commercial power.

The 1887 American Exhibition also shows a shift in British visitors and observers’ narratives about the United States. British fairgoers came expressly to see the Wild West Show and celebrated the United States as a fellow Anglo-Saxon nation. These visitors were not interested in the American products and machinery on show, or the American art that presented the country’s cultural refinement. These displays were, in 1887, banal for the attendees who felt they were already aware of American products available in Britain. The Wild West Show and its portrayals of cowboys like Cody civilising and settling American West, in much the same way that visitors believed British colonists settled the empire, attracted fairgoers. When presented with the choice to attend the section of American products or a tableau of transatlantic Anglo-Saxon racial superiority the British audience chose the latter. This Anglo-Saxonism was different from connections between the two nations understood by visitors to the two previous fairs held in London or in Philadelphia. It was not based on American manufacturing, or economic prowess, but was firmly centred on Cody
and the Wild West Show and the Anglo-Saxon racial attributes that the performance presented. British visitors’ ideas of the United States at the 1887 fair were more firmly racial, grounded in notions of shared and inherent manly and self-reliant Anglo-Saxon traits.

The Exhibition shows an imbalance in British and American narratives about one another. American observers of the event believed the transatlantic connection was chiefly important commercially, Britain was a good place to sell goods, and maybe coax investment and immigration. British attendees though created a much more focused narrative about the United States. Buffalo Bill Cody’s show proved to these visitors that the two nations shared inherent racial traits. Britain and the United States were, according to these visitors, naturally engaged in a similar process to spread Anglo-Saxon civilisation. As American narratives about Britain became less focused on cultural or historical ties, British narratives about the transatlantic relationship became more firmly related to popular notions about race and Anglo-Saxon identity. Not only did the American economy show the two countries’ similarities, now for British visitors’ racial identity and shared attributes united the two nations.

These divergent understandings of the transatlantic relationship show how British and American narratives about one another had developed and changed since the 1876 Centennial. British observers at Philadelphia saw the United States as an expanding power similar to their own nation. Their fellow British visitors eleven years later saw these similarities even more firmly, though this time narratives about the United States were not based on production, these attendees saw the country as a fellow Anglo-Saxon colonial power, with a shared mission. Americans at Philadelphia understood their nation as a growing commercial power with a British cultural heritage but also a nation that grew in new ways and formed a distinct national identity. Eleven years on in 1887 American observers were far more confident in the country’s exceptional role in the world and saw Britain mostly as a trading partner that could help U.S. commercial expansion. At the final fair covered in this dissertation, six years later in Chicago, both narratives became much stronger, British visitors were more firmly convinced of the two nations’ inherent similarities while corresponding Americans were far less fixated on their cultural and historical connections to Britain.
Chapter 5: Little Pavilion on the Prairie  
Britain at Chicago, 1893

In spring 1887 the H.M.S. Victoria launched from a dock in Elswick, Newcastle. The ship and her sister the H.M.S. Sans Pariel were, according to the Newcastle Weekly Courant, “the largest ships laid down for the English navy since the building of the Inflexible some 14 years ago.” The Victoria was such an impressive specimen of naval engineering that six years later organisers of the British pavilion at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago sent a model of the ship to the fair to show the nation’s maritime power. This model, according the Western Mail, was, “the largest ship model ever made, being one-twelfth of the full size” of the Victoria. In June 1893, soon after the Exposition opened, the ship sunk off the Lebanese coast. On manoeuvres, the H.M.S. Camperdown accidently collided with the Victoria, the ship capsized, both its boilers exploded, and it quickly sank, taking with it the commander of the Mediterranean fleet and almost four hundred sailors. According to one Kansan visitor to the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the tragedy increased the model’s popularity, but attendees only came to get “a better idea than they ever had before of the extent of that awful disaster,” in contrast to the power the organisers hoped the object would show.

The Victoria’s, and more importantly the model’s, fate, is an excellent metaphor for the British section at the World’s Columbian Exposition. Organisers hoped the British section in Chicago would impress the American audience, but rather than showing the nation’s power or industrial capacity, the display was, like the model, a reminder of British problems and failures. Organisers of the British section showed an historical and non-industrial image of the country very similar to the one displayed at the Philadelphia Centennial seventeen years earlier. Many British manufacturers refused to send products to Chicago because of the McKinley Tariff and concern about American economic competition. Highlights included a model of Windsor Castle built out of soap, and watercolours painted by Queen Victoria.

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1 ‘Launch of the H.M.S. Victoria at Elswick’, The Newcastle Weekly Courant, 15 April 1887.
2 ‘The World’s Fair’, Western Mail, 18 May 1893.
Organisers had hoped the *Victoria* model, and the British Pavilion in which it was placed, would attract attendees and show the two countries’ historical and cultural connections. However, the British display failed to impress American visitors. Britain’s pavilion was lacklustre compared to Germany’s massive industrial display and the masterpieces in French fine arts collection. Soap fashioned into a model of Windsor Castle, and even the world’s greatest naval model, could not compete with large industrial or fine high-cultural exhibits from the two European powers. American visitors in Chicago were not impressed with the British historical exhibits and did not see in these displays proofs of Anglo-American cultural linkages.

Responses to the British section at the World’s Columbian Exposition show American visitors’ changing attitudes towards Britain. At previous fairs visitors relied on British participation to vindicate American ability to host such an event. The cultural and historical connections the two nations shared confirmed for visitors at Philadelphia the nation’s ability to host a world’s fair. However, in Chicago visitors felt their nation could host an exhibition without a British buttress, and the American display confirmed this belief. American visitors and organisers saw their country as an exceptional power in its own right and did not need British participation to vindicate this status. 1893’s fair was the perfect venue to show that Americans were superior to Britons. The Exhibition showed physically that white American men represented the pinnacle of human progress. Like for American observers of the 1887 Exhibition, Britain was at Chicago another trading partner for the United States but, at the World’s Columbian Exposition, compared to France and Germany not a very impressive one.

The Chicago exhibition also allowed some American visitors to celebrate their historical connections to Britain at the fair in new ways that deemphasised the country’s historical importance in the United States. Visitors to the World’s Columbian Exposition celebrated Welsh and Scottish ethnic days, which highlighted that some Americans at the fair were of British descent. However, these celebrations were only one among many ethnic events at the fair. Other ethnic groups in Chicago like Irish Bohemian and German-Americans also celebrated national days. These events showed ethnic Americans’ distinct cultures, but they also stressed these groups’ history in the United States. Welsh and Scottish days showed that some

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Americans were ethnically British, but also that they were only one ethnicity among many that made up the late-nineteenth-century United States. In the seventeen years between Philadelphia and Chicago American ideas about their own white racial identity changed. The Exposition presented an understanding of whiteness that was distinct and American, and able to assimilate European immigrants. In Chicago, Britain appeared as one among many competing nations, and British ethnicity was presented as similar to other immigrant identities. American visitors to Chicago did not require a special connection with Britain, as their compatriots had in 1876, to host such an event. Notably at Chicago Britain did not provide the United States’ cultural heritage for American displays, visitors were not captivated by British displays of Milton and Shakespeare. American visitors understood the two nations’ links differently and far more commercially at the World’s Columbian Exposition.

British visitors and observers were impressed with the event and the city of Chicago itself. Manufacturers in Britain, unhappy with American protectionism, refused to send products to Chicago, which contributed to the country’s poor display. However, even critics of American trade policy wished the fair well and believed it would show an impressive amount of American technology. British newspapers and guides detailed, with genuine awe, how quickly the city of Chicago was built and how fast it recovered from the devastating 1871 fire. British visitors to the fair expressed to American newspapers their disappointment with their nation’s section, and how fascinated they were with U.S. exhibits at the Exposition. New and impressive technological displays and exhibits of American military capacity particularly fascinated British visitors. These visitors employed a common racial characterisation of the United States that explained the country’s successful display as the result of their British descent and Anglo-Saxon attributes. This conception of the United States contrasted with American narratives of Britain which no longer emphasised the country’s past as a way to buttress U.S. exhibits. The city of Chicago itself also informed British ideas about the United States. Chicago was a massive and growing city that contained great economic promise, but like the whole United States, needed, according to writers about and visitors to the event, guidance and direction in its development. British visitors and observers believed that their nation could serve as a guide to future American development and like in London in 1887 that the two great Anglo-Saxon powers could be allies in the future. British observers of the United States as at the two previous fairs believed that the country would develop into a nation similar to Britain. American success at Chicago led to greater British
commentary on the relevance of the Anglo-American bond. While for American visitors their own nation’s impressive display showed they no longer needed to rely on a shared transatlantic history for legitimacy at these events.

In order to examine American visitors’ disinterest in the British pavilion, and British attendees’ fascination with Chicago and the Exposition this chapter includes nine different sections. The first section examines the type of visitors the fair attracted. Based on this discussion the chapter then situates the fair in the wider history of the two countries in the period. Particularly this section examines how American politics and contemporary ideas around race and immigration shaped the fair. Transatlantic relations in the 1890s will also be discussed in this section. On the actual fair itself, the chapter will start with a discussion of British reactions to the Exposition and opinions on whether to participate at all. This section provides a background to the next segment that examines how American organisers sold the fair in Britain, and particularly the different and more aggressive way Exposition organisers advertised the fair compared to their Centennial predecessors. The chapter then examines the actual World’s Columbian Exposition, and particularly how the British pavilion appeared, as well as how visiting Americans compared it to competing European nations and their own country’s display. Next the chapter will look at how British observers and visitors understood what the fair showed. The final section looks at how Americans celebrated Welsh and Scottish ethnicity at the Exposition, and particularly how these commemorations show changes in how U.S. visitors in Chicago understood their connection to Britain. These interlocking parts will show British fascination with the fair and the growing American economy, as well as British understanding of the United States as a racially similar nation. Correspondingly this chapter will show that domestic visitors to Chicago did not celebrate or highlight their historical or cultural connections to Britain, and the vindication that Americans once craved from the country was less vital at this Exposition.

Visitors and Sources
The World’s Columbian Exposition attracted twenty-seven million visitors, just five million less than Paris’ 1889 Exposition Universelle. Chicago’s geographical location in the centre of North America meant it was difficult for foreign visitors to reach, so this chapter assumes that the majority of the fair’s attendees were Americans, either native or foreign born. According to the 1890 census, if each visitor was American and there were no re-entries the twenty-seven million figure indicates that two out of every five U.S. citizens visited the fair. Obviously the number of actual visitors was smaller, but the attendance is still staggering, particularly because the fair opened during an economic crisis. Improvements in transportation, and Chicago’s central location allowed a larger number of Americans to visit the fair than travelled to Philadelphia. It is difficult to find a notable late-nineteenth-century American who did not visit Chicago in 1893 or was not involved in some way its organisation. Frederick Douglass served as Haiti’s honorary consul. Henry Adams attended the Exposition, and worried that it showed the United States as too commercial and materialistic. The impressionist Mary Cassatt painted murals for the women’s department. Frederick Jackson Turner gave his famous paper on the close of the American frontier at the fair. Author Theodore Dreiser went as a young reporter for the St. Louis Republic, along with twenty schoolteachers from that city. Heavyweight champion ‘Gentleman Jim’ Corbett appeared in the fair as an example of perfect masculinity. A massive number of Americans, including numerous celebrities, visited Chicago in 1893, and so it is difficult to characterise the fair’s audience as a whole.

Certain claims can be made however, about what kinds of Americans visited the World’s Columbian Exposition. Regional jealousies affected the Exposition, just

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9 N. Smith, a Birmingham Working Man, A Tour through the Land of the West, and a visit to the Columbian Exposition. Author: a Birmingham Working Man. [The preface is signed, N. Smith.] (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1894), p. 84.
13 Ibid., p. 46.
14 Burg, Chicago’s White City, p. 164.
15 Rydell, All the World’s a Fair, p. 47.
16 Burg, Chicago’s White City, p. 232.
as they had hurt the Centennial. Many New York newspapers condemned the Chicago fair, and resented that their city had not been chosen to host. This opposition meant that fewer visitors came from the East, and most came from the area around Chicago. Press reports also indicate that, compared to the Centennial, a higher number of European immigrants to the United States attended the fair. The audience for the World’s Columbian Exposition reflected its host city. Chicago was in this period predominantly white, but also majority immigrant or first generation American. Chicago’s huge economic growth and expansion in the 1880s attracted many European immigrants. The audience in Chicago, by virtue of the city’s demographics, was somewhat socially diverse, and embraced a social spectrum from patricians like Henry Adams to recent immigrants to the United States.

American sources on the fair reflect this Midwestern, but socially diverse audience. Chicago’s newspapers provide much of this chapter’s source material; however, the chapter also employs reporting on the fair from the rest of the Midwest, the South and East. Organising documents, particularly those that relate to British participation, are key sources. Representatives for the Exposition travelled to Europe to induce participation, and the way these spokesmen advertised the fair reveals how organisers understood the British role at the event. This chapter also employs a number of different American guides to the Exposition. These include expensive illustrated guides to the fair, consumed by the middle-class, but also shorter cheaper, and thus more widely available directories. These sources allow for an examination of how different social elements of the American audience understood the fair, and British participation.

The Chicago Exposition also attracted a more socially expansive group of British visitors and observers than the Centennial. Chicago, in the summer of 1893, hosted several notable politicians: MPs Tory J. Henniker Heaton and Liberal

20 Cronon, Nature’s Metropolis, p. 343.
22 Burg, Chicago’s White City, p. 66.
Theodore Fry attended the fair, 25 as did jurist and former Conservative Attorney General Sir Richard Webster. 26 Princess Christian, Queen Victoria’s third daughter served as chief organiser of the British section of Women’s Department. 27 The World’s Columbian Exposition also attracted British visitors interested in American technology and trade. James Dredge, editor of Engineering, was a major backer of British participation at the fair and visited Chicago several times in the 1890s as an agent of his nation. 28 The London Polytechnic also offered students a chance to attend the Exposition as part of a tour of the United States. 29

The fair also attracted a more politically diverse British audience than the Centennial. N. Smith, described in his travelogue as a Birmingham workingman, wrote a protectionist report of the fair. 30 “A gentleman residing at Edgbaston, Birmingham (well known as an ardent fiscal reformer)” paid for the publication of Smith’s travelogue. 31 I suspect this Edgbastonian ardent fiscal reformer was Liberal Unionist M.P. and former Birmingham Mayor Joseph Chamberlain, who in this period developed his pro-imperial protectionist political philosophy. 32 Smith’s book argued that the fair proved that Britain and the Empire should initiate their own tariffs to retaliate against American protectionism. Contrastingly, free traders like chief British organiser Philip Cunliffe-Owen argued that manufacturers should prove at the event free trade’s superiority to Americans. Cunliffe-Owen argued that besides the need to “offer the right hand of fellowship to the United States” during the fair, the Exposition was also an opportunity, “to show the Americans the prices at which

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26 ‘GUESTS OF ENGLAND.: SIR RICHARD WEBSTER GIVES A BANQUET IN THE RICHELIEU. Men from All Nations Join in Toasting the Queen, the President, and the World’s Fair--Cronin Jury Briber Smith Gets a Two Year Sentence--Philadelphia Woman Loses Her Diamonds in the Leland--Killed by the Fall of a Scaffold--Negroes Shot in a Row’, Chicago Daily Tribune, 28 September 1893.
27 Chicago, Chicago History Museum Archive (hereafter CHM), World’s Columbian Exposition Board (1893, Chicago Ill.) of Lady Managers. Reports on exhibitions and Foreign Contributors [manuscript], 1891-1894. Vol. 28, Folder 1
28 ‘GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.: BRITISH SUBJECTS CELEBRATE THEIR SOVEREIGN’S BIRTHDAY. The Royal Commissioners from the Islands and Colonies Give a Banquet to Mark the Conclusion of Her 74th Year at the Hotel Virginia--Union Jacks and “Old Glory” Twined in Roses, Violets, and Narcissus--Toasts to Her Majesty Drank with All Honor. Formed in Hollow Square, Toasted the Gracious Queen. Spoke for the Foreigners,’ Chicago Daily Tribune, 25 May 1893.
30 Smith, A Tour through the Land of the West, p. 37.
31 Ibid., p. 3.
English goods could be manufactured and what it costs to have a tariff." British observers and visitors were not all free traders or Liberals, and the event can be used to examine larger and more diverse political opinions on the United States than previous fairs.

Though the fair attracted a more diverse audience than the Philadelphia Centennial, British manufacturers were not interested in displaying at the Exposition. High American tariffs meant fewer exhibits came from manufacturing centres, and so there was simply less interest in the event in industrial cities. Much of the regional British coverage of American fairs focused either on how local products appeared or on competing manufactures. There were few industrial products on show at the Exposition, and so few regional papers covered the event in detail. Mass-market London newspapers like the Illustrated London News and The Standard provide much of the fair’s British coverage. British writing on the Chicago Exposition gives a politically larger scope of British narratives about the United States at these fairs, but in other ways, particularly regionally, the material is more limited.

**Context of the Fair**

The American audience’s character, mostly white but ethnically and socially diverse, means that the event has to be situated in the period’s racial discourse. Lots of work on the fair examines how the event showed progress and civilisation as specifically white and American. Exploring these works reveals how American visitors understood their own nation’s display at the fair as a whole and helps to explain why the British pavilion was so unimpressive. The 1893 Exposition opened in a period of political and economic tumult. Like the Centennial, the World’s Columbian Exposition occurred during a financial crisis; however, again like the Centennial, this downturn did not greatly affect the fair’s organisation or size. The fair also opened during the rise of the Populist Party and so the fair has to be contextualised in the Anglophobic politics of that movement. This section will also explore larger British images of the United States, and particularly how Britain’s relative economic decline and new American tariffs coloured manufacturers’ opinions.

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of the country as a whole. This section will show that new American tariffs increased manufacturers’ resentment of the United States but also how the economic downturn led many in Britain to embrace new ideas about Anglo-Saxonism and thus see the U.S. as a kindred nation.

Much of the work on the World’s Columbian Exposition focuses on the way that fair showed a particularly white image of both the United States, and of economic development. This dissertation examines how the fair presented American racial identity in comparison to Britain, however these works show how organisers in Chicago and U.S. visitors understood their nation’s role at the event. Particularly this literature reveals how visitors thought about the United States as both a racially white nation, but also as a country that, because of this racial supremacy, was at the forefront of technological development. American visitors linked at the fair their distinct racial identity to their economic and technological expansion. Historians of the fair show that the event placed white Americans at the centre of global development and progress. Robert Rydell argues that the World’s Columbian Exposition presented a vision of civilisation that aligned notions of progress to white racial characteristics. The fair was divided into two main parts, a ‘White City’ full of mechanical inventions, and a ‘Midway Plaisance’ stretching out west from the fairground. The Midway was filled with ethnographic exhibits and organised on hierarchical racial lines. The Irish and German villages were the closest to the White City; other races were positioned along the Midway in descending order based on how civilised organisers perceived these cultures to be, establishing a clear spatial and visual racial hierarchy.

This method of organisation had profound effects on visitors, and Rydell argues it united different social classes in a belief that they were inherently superior. Rydell explores how American organisers and visitors understood themselves and their country as superior through comparison of their production with the crude ethnographic exhibits on show. The World’s Columbian Exposition Midway included popular ethnographic exhibits like a ‘Cairo Street’ and a ‘Moorish Palace.’ These exhibits, according to Rydell, proved to visitors the inferiority of other races and thus white supremacy. He relates an anecdote that visitors were horrified when members of the Samoan exhibit left their faux village to buy American clothing and

34 Rydell, All the World’s a Fair, pp. 60-65.
36 Gilbert, Perfect Cities, p. 122.
get haircuts. Their display of racial inferiority was undone when these living exhibits tried to look like Americans. American visitors felt themselves more united, and more certain of their own superiority, when presented with foreign primitivism. Lee Baker notes that in Chicago educators of American Indians hoped that displays of Indian schools would show how Americans were uplifting this group. However, visitors preferred seeing American Indian performers in the Wild West Show as primitive savages. Visitors, confronted with these depictions of white American superiority, unsurprisingly believed themselves, and the United States as a whole, to be powerful and technologically progressive. The fair presented an image of the country as civilised and economically growing, and so it is unsurprising that visitors did not feel any need for British vindication.

The fair did not simply show the difference between barbarism and civilisation but a particularly American and commercial brand of civilisation. Steven Conn, writing about the Philadelphia Commercial Museum, an institution directly inspired by the Chicago fair, shows how foreign exhibits displayed to Americans how they were civilised but also how to sell things abroad. Rather than experiencing foreign cultures through colonisation Americans at the Museum and the Exposition could see foreign markets and determine how best to appeal to international consumers. As noted already in this thesis, this kind of colonisation via trade was understood by many Americans as superior to territorial imperial expansion. Americans could uplift foreign people through consumption of American goods, rather than through violence and coercion. Mona Domosh’s study of Singer Sewing Machines’ advertising at the Exposition shows how these companies presented an image of civilisation spread via American technology. The fair not only presented white men as the pinnacle of human progress, but also showed how American commerce made the nation the world’s foremost colonial power.

This presentation of American power left certain parts of the country unrepresented. The Exposition presented a very particular image of which Americans

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40 Mona Domosh, American Commodities in an Age of Empire (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 2-4, 56
contributed to the country’s economic expansion and military capacity. Gail Bederman argues that the fair displayed a white manly culture that excluded women from the Exposition’s version of ‘civilisation.’ The Women’s Pavilion was located strategically between the ethnographic Midway and the White City fairground. Women were positioned just between the non-white races and the civilisation of the White City. Gail Bederman argues that the fair displayed a white manly culture that excluded women from the Exposition’s version of ‘civilisation.’ The Women’s Pavilion was located strategically between the ethnographic Midway and the White City fairground. Women were positioned just between the non-white races and the civilisation of the White City. White women appeared as part of the fair’s hierarchical organisation that presented white American men as the pinnacle of progress.

African-American reactions to the fair also show how the World’s Columbian Exhibition presented American civilisation and technology as distinctly white. Few African-Americans visited or exhibited at Philadelphia in 1876, but as shown in an earlier chapter, the Centennial at least presented a progressive image of American race relations. Images of African-Americans at the fair highlighted how the Centennial propagated new technology to freed people and helped Reconstruction. Fair organisers in Chicago did not even show rhetorical images of racial equality. Initially organisers planned a section for African-American made goods, but they scrapped it to avoid upsetting Southerners. African-American leaders debated the fair’s efficacy in showing their community’s contribution to the United States, and questioned whether a display of goods separate from the rest of American manufacturing was appropriate. Frederick Douglass, acting as commissioner for Haiti, believed the fair was a whitewash that did not show any African-American contributions to the United States, and concentrated on a solely white image of the nation. Ida Wells urged fellow African-Americans to boycott the fair’s ‘Colored People’s Day,’ an event meant, much like Irish and Bohemian days, to celebrate African-American contributions to the United States. African-Americans simply did not fit into this display of American white progress and superiority and so were excluded.

Colonised people also had very little influence on how they were displayed. Paul Kramer’s study of conflicts between Filipino intellectuals and organisers at the 1904 St. Louis Exhibition show this problem well. Elite Filipinos in the new

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American colony hoped that the country might be presented in St. Louis as a modern location for American development and investment. However, organisers showed re-enacted battles from the recent war between Filipinos and Americans. Filipinos were depicted so savagely that visitors often drew an almost anticolonial message from the display that there was little the United States could do to civilise the Islands. Colonised people were trapped at these events and could only appear as a counterpoint to white civilisation.

Though the World’s Columbian Exposition rejected African-American contributions, it was more open to immigrants and Americans from European ethnic communities. In the 1890s one in five Americans was born abroad, a population particularly concentrated in Chicago. Organisers created events and displays that catered to the city’s large immigrant population and induced them to attend. The fair hosted ethnic days and the special performances which included these communities. Polish and Bohemian singing groups, the German-American Women’s Choir, and the United Scandinavian Singers gave concerts of ethnic music. Over one hundred thousand people attended the German and Bohemian days at the Exposition. These events were not just ethnic celebrations, but also presented these communities’ contributions to the United States. These days displayed both visitors’ ethnic identifications but also American patriotism, which chime well with Matthew Frye Jacobson’s work on immigrants and white identity in this period. Jacobson argues that the decade around the fair was a period of flux for white immigrants. Distinct foreign ethnicity did not bar assimilation, and adoption of certain traits was enough for European immigrants to achieve wider acceptance as white Americans. As long as these immigrants embraced traits like manliness, commitment to justice, and expansionism, characteristics Jacobson argues widely accepted as central to white American identity, they could be considered white Americans. These national days

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48 Gilbert, Perfect Cities, p. 28.
49 Burg, Chicago’s White City, p. 66.
50 Ibid., p. 171.
fit well into the assimilatory apparatus Jacobson describes. The fairs depiction of colonised people also contributed to this assimilatory apparatus.

David Roediger’s work on blackface minstrelsy shows how white Americans of divergent backgrounds could create a new white identity in the United States. Working-class immigrant and native-born whites could both see themselves as superior at a minstrel show. The Exposition’s colonial displays in the Midway operated like a minstrel show. These displays, juxtaposed against the White City, showed how American whites were technologically and racially superior. The fair worked in two ways to incorporate immigrant Americans. It both celebrated American ethnic diversity and showed how white Americans of all backgrounds were superior compared to the displays of primitivism in the Midway. Alexander Saxton notes that at the end of the nineteenth century new American engagement with the world helped to redefine notions about race. Once the frontier closed American-Indians were no longer the enemy of white expansion and prosperity. American racial animus, particularly working-class racial animus, focused on the perception that Asian labour to undercut white wages. International fairs could act as kind of unifier among white Americans. When confronted with foreign non-European displays white Americans of all backgrounds could feel both superior and threatened. The fairs offered an opportunity for European immigrants to see themselves as superior white Americans.

The World’s Columbian Exposition’s openness to celebrations of European immigrant ethnic identities suggests that the fair helped create a new understanding of white American identity. The fair showed the United States’ integration of immigrants from Europe into a single national and racial identity. Britain’s role at the Philadelphia Centennial was as the United States’ cultural forbear, but at Chicago this role was less necessary. Fewer visitors identified their past with Britain, and in this period and at the Exposition American white identity was more open to those without British heritage. As a result of this absorption of new immigrants British cultural and historical connections were less important for visitors. Americans at the fair embraced very different understanding of what a white identity meant, from their Anglo-Saxonist British counterparts.

The fair opened in a period of political and economic turmoil in the United States, however these problems did little to affect the event or American perceptions of Britain at the Exposition. Economically the country entered into a financial crisis in 1893, however this downturn did not affect the fair much. The crash began in the late winter and early spring of 1893, after much of the fair was already planned and built.\(^{56}\) The crisis also did not affect visitor numbers, the World’s Columbian Exposition was the best attended world’s fair up to that point, with the exception of the Exposition Universelle.\(^ {57}\) Towards the end of the fair, organisers cancelled some performances to cut costs;\(^ {58}\) however, the World’s Columbian Exposition made enough of a profit to satisfy its creditors.\(^ {59}\) According to James Burkhart Gilbert the full force of the downturn was not felt in Chicago until the next year, and so the crisis did not constrict the number of visitors or exhibitors present.\(^ {60}\)

The World’s Columbian Exposition also opened less than a year after the 1892 presidential election, in which Populist James Weaver won over a million votes.\(^ {61}\) Populism is characterised by Richard Hofstadter as deeply Anglophobic, and hostile to British investment in the United States.\(^ {62}\) The British pavilion at Chicago did not, though, inspire much American Anglophobia. Mayor of Chicago Carter Harrison Sr. gave a speech that, in places, attacked British economic power, but this was the one notable example of economic anti-British sentiment at the Exposition.\(^ {63}\) The British pavilion was not a target of this Anglophobic economic resentment, probably because of Populism’s unpopularity in Chicago. Populism’s goals, and the political demographics it represented, explain why there was little economic Anglophobia at the fair. Michael Kazin argues that Populism was popular in the American West because it identified itself as native-born, Protestant, and agrarian. Populism was antagonistic to the largely immigrant, and Roman Catholic, industrial labourers of

\(^ {57}\) Smith, *A Tour through the Land of the West*, p. 84.
\(^ {58}\) Burg, *Chicago’s White City*, p. 170.
\(^ {63}\) ‘TO BRITAIN’S GLORY.: Loyal Sons and Daughters Celebrate the Empire’s Day. FLY THE UNION JACK. Officers at Victoria House Witness Trooping of Colors. CHEERS FOR GOOD QUEEN VIC. Mayor Harrison and Other Speakers in Festival Hall. THEY FROWN ON ANNEXATION. Witness the Trooping of Colors. Gather in Festival Hall. Calls for Cheers for the Queen. Mayor Harrison Enters the Room. Carter’s Words Stir Up Hisses. Sing the Good Old Song. Declare Their Loyalty. Order of the Column’s March.’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 August 1893.
Chicago, and other eastern cities.\textsuperscript{64} Given that most visitors came from Chicago or the industrial Midwest, it is not surprising that these attendees made few Anglophobic references to the British pavilion in Chicago. The Populists who espoused such rhetoric were unpopular with the fair’s urban Midwestern audience.

The fair might have been a location for anti-British Fenian agitation. The World’s Columbian Exposition included overt Irish displays, the Midway featured two Irish villages. These villages showed artisans crafting various traditional products and displayed recreations of Irish landmarks like Blarney Castle.\textsuperscript{65} However, during the fair, William Gladstone, in his final prime ministerial term, worked to pass a second Irish Home Rule bill through the Commons. The bill passed in the Commons but failed in the Lords in September.\textsuperscript{66} But during the summer of 1893, visitors to the Irish sections were optimistic about the island’s future. A statue of Gladstone was even placed in the centre of one of the Irish villages celebrating him as a champion of Irish freedom.\textsuperscript{67} The Exposition’s timing meant there was little Irish-American antipathy for the British pavilion.

An examination of Britain at the World’s Columbian Exposition must also examine Anglo-American relations in the period, and how visitors and observers understood the two nations before the fair. Late-nineteenth-century economic relations between Britain and the United States were poor. The 1890 McKinley Tariff enraged British industrialists and was a key reason many manufacturers refused to participate in the World’s Columbian Exposition. Edmund Rogers argues that American tariffs dominated British late-nineteenth-century political debates on trade. British protectionists feared that the trade imbalance between the two nations contributed the national economy’s decline. American wheat was such a large percentage of British imports that protectionists believed the sheer movement of capital from one side of the Atlantic to the other hurt the economy. Aside from the actual duties on British exports, the Tariff also presented a political problem for manufacturers and free traders. The American protectionist example convinced some voters that Britain needed its own protectionist policy to trade equitably with the United States. The McKinley Tariff was also part of a reciprocity arrangement with Canada, which economically integrated the colony with the United States, and so

\textsuperscript{64} Kazin, \textit{The Populist Persuasion}, pp. 42-43, 50.
\textsuperscript{65} Gilbert, \textit{Perfect Cities}, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{67} ‘In Donegal Castle’, \textit{The Daily Inter Ocean}, 26 June 1893.
threatened trade with the metropole. The McKinley Tariff hurt British manufacturers, discouraging many from displaying in Chicago. It also contributed to a popular image of the United States as a direct economic competitor with Britain.

American tariff reform hurt what was already a faltering British economy. Much of the historiography on the British economy in the 1890s focuses on trade, commercial decline, and the corresponding social problems this downturn caused. K. Theodore Hoppen argues that Britain remained -outside of Ireland - the richest nation on the planet until the end of the century, dominant in the export and shipping markets. Richard Price notes, however, that compared to competing nations, Britain’s economy was not as dominant as it had been decades earlier. Britain’s manufacturing edge, relative to the rest of the world, declined between 1876 and 1896. Both Hoppen and Price emphasize that the British economy was not in a free fall but rather argue for a relative economic decline. However, this relative decline both informed American notions about the British pavilion at the World’s Columbian Exposition and increased British manufacturer’s resentment of American competitors. The end of British economic pre-eminence and rise of rival commercial powers like the United States, France, and Germany, was part of the reason the nation’s pavilion failed to impress at Chicago.

Britain’s relative economic decline had profound political and cultural implications that affected British opinions of the World’s Columbian Exposition and the United States. Certain politicians - even Liberals - questioned the nation’s dogmatic commitment to free trade. Marc-William Palen argues that the McKinley Tariff itself forced British Liberals to reconsider their stance on free trade. Relative economic decline also contributed to British ideas about the global order, and the nation’s racial identity. Liberal Unionist leader Joseph Chamberlain advocated a protective imperial federation as the salve to Britain’s economic problems. He linked protectionism to popular ideas about British racial superiority and the

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importance of empire building. Imperialism, John M. Mackenzie argues, became a cross-class ideology in nineteenth century’s last decades, and a key component of this belief was faith in the country’s Anglo-Saxon racial identity. Bill Schwarz adds a geographic element to this Anglo-Saxon identity. Schwarz argues that belief in Anglo-Saxonism, articulated by Joseph Chamberlain, located all of English racial identity’s main traits - manliness, self-reliance, and independence - within the Empire and specifically believed these attributes were strongest in areas of British settlement like South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. If these qualities could be reimported to metropolitan Britain then the nation’s economic decline would be arrested. A sense of decline forced some British political leaders and voters to re-evaluate how they understood the world, and specifically the United States. Renewed interest in race led to a fascination with the United States in the 1880s. James Bryce’s American Commonwealth published in 1888, spurred an intellectual interest in the United States in Britain. Americans, or at least old stock white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans, were for Bryce part of the same racial group as Britons and exhibited the same Anglo-Saxon traits. British economic decline had somewhat contradictory effects on conceptions of the United States. The United States appeared for British manufacturers as a competitor, but also to late-nineteenth-century imperialists as a fellow Anglo-Saxon power.

As the last chapter argued, the period around the 1887 American Exhibition and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition also saw increased Anglo-American cooperation. Social intercourse between the two countries increased, as did international cooperation. American disregard for British copyright, a long-term sticking point in Anglo-American relations, was finally settled in 1891. Elite Americans celebrated Queen Victoria’s Jubilee in 1887. American publisher George Childs donated a fountain for the occasion in Stratford-on-Avon, inaugurated by transatlantic celebrity actor Henry Irving. Ian Tyrrell argues that many middle-class Americans went overseas to Europe and Britain in the period around the fair, though

immediately after the event transatlantic tourism declined as a result of the economic crisis. Even though the McKinley Tariff angered manufacturers, and convinced many to withhold products from the fair, there was little British antipathy for the United States in the period around the Exposition. New understandings of Anglo-Saxon racial identity saw the United States as a natural ally for Britain, and the two nations were socially and political closer than any point previously.

Reception of the Exposition in Britain

British observers of the fair, before the opening, responded to the event in tepid and somewhat contradictory ways. Manufacturers were unhappy with American tariffs, however, they, and much of the British press, wished the fair well and believed that the United States’ display would impress visitors. Even though few planned to display, both the fair and Chicago itself fascinated British observers. These observers of the fair did not express antipathy towards the United States, rather Chicago itself and the fair’s size and grandeur, and the speed with which both were constructed, captivated newspapers and middle-class periodicals. More so than at Philadelphia, British observers of the event saw in the city and the fair proofs of American economic power and promise.

In the early planning stages British organisers sent circulars to manufacturers who had previously contributed to world’s fairs, and to newspapers to advertise the British section. Representatives of the organising committee, based at the Royal Society of Arts in London, also toured cities to convince manufacturers to participate. At a meeting with organisers in Manchester, in April 1892, manufacturers and local politicians made clear their problems with the fair and American protectionism. Alderman Emmott, Mayor of Oldham stated at the meeting, “he had no intention of sending anything himself to Chicago. He tried to sell his goods without sending them to exhibitions.”

E. Helm, Secretary of Manchester’s Chamber of Commerce felt that businessmen would take “a business view of such a matter,” and not participate.

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80 Robert Sanderson MacCormick, The Future Trade Relations between Great Britain and the United States, and the World’s Columbian Exposition to Be Held at Chicago, Etc. (London: W.S. Trounce, 1892), p. 40. This protest is vague in the sources. It is unclear if Emmott meant he sold his goods in the United States without exhibitions, or whether he simply did not participate in any such events.
because there would be few new customers at the event. Both men, though, while resentful of American protectionism, did not criticise the exhibition itself, and hoped the fair would successfully show American products. Helm noted, “At the same time there was also a broader spirit in Manchester which was not jealous of our neighbours across the Atlantic.” Helm presented this contradictory understanding of the fair well. He believed the event would impressively show American products, but at the same time thought few British industrialists would send exhibits.

Manufacturers at this meeting in Manchester were less sympathetic to the fair, and more critical of American protectionism. These manufacturers were more conscious of American industrial competition and refused to participate because they feared the fair would give economic advantages to U.S. firms. One attendee believed that “4,000 miles is too far to send machinery to be copied. He did not mind this country being represented in science and art, but he thought they should draw the line at machinery.” Another member of the audience believed that potential buyers from Asia and Latin America would be present at Chicago, and so if protectionism prevented British participation, “It would be better that there should be no British Section at all.” A poor British showing would hurt the country’s trade when compared to other nations. Both of these arguments illustrate manufacturers’ discomfort with the rising American economy, and fear about competition with the country. Both these audience members were concerned with the American economy, and unlike at previous fairs, manufacturers fretted that U.S. industry could compete with and possibly overtake British exhibitors.

Several newspapers also argued that American tariffs prevented British participation. The Times wrote that American protectionism damaged British textile manufacturers’ business, so fewer such exhibits could be sent the United States. The same article in the Times also noted that British manufacturing was in a worse position to trade in Chicago than competing nations like France or Germany. These countries could retaliate against tariffs with their own barriers; British commitment to free trade prevented any retaliation. British opposition to the McKinley Tariff was so intense the paper noted that some collectors, opposed to American trade policy, refused to send their fine art to Chicago. After the fair’s close The Standard

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81 Ibid., p. 40.
82 Ibid., p. 39.
83 Ibid., p. 40.
84 As late as 1891 almost a quarter of British industrial workers labored in textiles see Hoppen, Mid-Victorian Generation, pp. 284-85.
explained that, “To shut the gates against the foreign trader, and yet to invite him to incur heavy expense in order to build up a grand American Exhibition, was a little audacious, to say the least of it.”  The paper questioned the use of participating in the fair if it was impossible to compete on price with domestic products. The World’s Columbian Exposition opened in a period of British hostility to American protectionism, and also concern about American industrial competition with Britain, that prevented many manufacturers from participation in the fair.

British distaste for American protectionism prevented many manufacturers from displaying in Chicago but did not inspire complete opposition to participation. Certain areas of manufacturing that required specialised crafting skills could still sell in the United States. Potential exhibitors from less industrial parts of the country were also more interested than the aforementioned Mancunians in displaying at Chicago. These participants created a British display filled with finely crafted high-cultural items. Alan Johnston, the Second Secretary at the British Legation in Washington DC, urged British participation, but warned in the Daily News, “Nothing but goods of the very best quality and workmanship will find a market,” he informed, “as Americans can undersell us in the cheaper sort of manufactures.” Johnston believed that certain products such as “Porcelain-Minton, Derby, and Wedgwood – will find a ready sale; cabinets and the higher class of ornamental furniture, cut glass, cutlery, tiles, Jewellery, gold, and silver work,” would impress and find buyers in Chicago. Certain specialised designed and finely crafted British exhibits could still impress American consumers, and these were the kinds of British manufactures shown in Chicago.

In contrast to the dismal reception the fair received in Manchester, organisers found more potential exhibitors in Bristol. Representatives of the city promised to send a resident descended from Revolutionary-era American loyalists and discussed an exhibition of artefacts from the life of John Cabot. These displays were historic rather than industrial, and emphasised, as British exhibits did at Philadelphia, transatlantic historical connections. These two kinds of displays, historical and high-cultural, dominated the British pavilion. Like in Philadelphia the British display at Chicago showed a historicised image of the country that did not compete with American industry or manufacturing. Opposition to the McKinley Tariff and fear of

88 MacCormick, Future Trade Relations, p. 44.
American economic competition meant the British section at Chicago was filled with historical and high cultural exhibits.

British industrialists opposed participation in the fair, but they and the many other observers were still interested in what American manufacturers would present and how the fair would show the American economy. Part of this interest was practical; these observers argued the fair would in some ways benefit British manufacturers. Visitors from other nations with more liberal trade policies would be in Chicago, and so, while British manufacturers might not sell to Americans, they could advertise to others and also see how U.S. competitors fared. Several newspapers also argued that British absence might result in lost American trade. Many newspapers and journals believed that the fair, and the city of Chicago, would impressively display American manufacturing. Even critics of British participation saw the Exposition as an opportunity to observe the expanding and impressive American economy. Chicago’s size, industry, and history were, for observers of the Exhibition, a microcosm of the industrious and expanding United States, and so the fair was a good chance to better understand the nation.

Arguments in favour of British participation focused on how the fair could expand British trade. The Aberdeen *Weekly Journal* argued that foreigners from areas where British goods already dominated the market would visit Chicago and perhaps find American competitors superior. “South Americans” the paper noted, “will it is expected, be specially numerous; and Mr. Blaine and those who think with him are particularly anxious to annex a large share of our trade in that part of the globe. We can best defeat that design by beating the Americans on their own ground, and showing at Chicago the superiority of our manufactures.”89 Henry Truman Wood, the British representative at the Exposition, argued that Americans had the right to impose duties on imports, however British manufacturers should show them the errors of protectionism with a strong display.90 The fair was both an opportunity to critique American protectionism, and to defend British interests in other parts of the world. The *Weekly Journal* argued that if British firms did not display they would lose more customers to American competitors. These sources suggested that the fair could be a venue to argue against American industrial competition.

Many British manufacturers opposed participation but some thought that the fair would be an excellent display of American technology and a vantage point to

90 MacCormick, *Future Trade Relations*, p. 47.
judge the American economy. Alderman Baily who at the meeting of Manchester manufacturers refused to display, stated at the same forum that he intended to go “to Chicago, as the manufacturers of Manchester, in the last century, seem to have gone to Holland, for the purpose of doing what he so much depreciates in others –‘to learn.’”

Tory M.P. J. Henniker Heaton, who opposed British participation at the fair, visited Chicago in 1893, and, much to the delight of the city’s newspapers, announced his disappointment with Britain’s section and regret that he discouraged contributions. British journals agreed that the fair presented an excellent opportunity to examine the American economy. The middle-class and conservative Quarterly Review characterised Chicago as a particularly representative American city, “None but a long-headed, persevering and scientific people like the Americans could build up by means of steel girders and cement, on a foundation of soft clay, the portentous though unlovely city which has defied storms and fire to overwhelm it and grows with every disaster.” Chicago’s size and economic importance fascinated the journal. It described the city as a “colossal Manchester,” whose warehouses, higher than the London Monument, are crowded within the busiest half-mile on the earth’s surface, - this Rotterdam on the shores of Lake Michigan, with its twenty-two miles of frontage.” The Review noted, the city attracted people and investment because it was the “largest market in the world for cereals and stock, which exchanges the products of the whole East for those of the whole West,” and was “essentially American.” The journal characterised Chicago as a great trading centre, a city quickly rebuilt after a fire, an exaggerated Manchester or Rotterdam, a meeting of East and West, and these qualities made the city quintessentially American. Overall the city’s energy, its huge economic capacity, deeply impressed the Review, and induced British visitors to Chicago to see and judge the American economy.

91 Ibid., p. 41.
95 Ibid., p. 299.
The more Liberal *Speaker*, also wrote glowingly about Chicago’s economy during the Exposition. 96 The journal described the city as a perfect illustration of the United States’ comparative ‘boyhood.’ Chicago exhibited, “Excessive daring, excessive self-confidence, and excessive energy…and to these Chicago has added a crudity and roughness.” However, the journal did not critique the nation or the city for these qualities, and noted “The World’s Fair might be compared to the exercise or essay of a singularly promising boy; it lacks originality, as a boyish exercises are want to do, but the germs of it are there and will develop with experience; it lacks thoroughness and steadiness, but that will come with maturity; and for the rest it is full of talent and conceit.”97 Chicago, in *The Speaker* was rough, new, overly self-confident, and excessive, but these traits proved that the United States would develop into a great nation. The fair showed American development according to *The Speaker*, and because of its displayed innovation and industry the fair proved the country would mature.

Even *All The Year Round*, edited by Charles Dickens’s son, which hated the fair, found Chicago exciting and brash. The journal called the fair “nothing but a gigantic shop,” and claimed that the only visitors Chicagoans wanted to attend the fair were those “they can fleece.”98 *All The Year Round* also criticised Americans for their self-satisfaction at the event, but the journal refused to condemn them. It believed the fair showed the United States’ maturity as a nation and characterised the event as a step forward in the country’s development. *All The Year Round* argued “America…is England written large…It is because England has so many faults that we Englishmen have been looking, with longing eyes, to you across the sea. It is because, in so many respects, England has erred and strayed, that we have hoped that you, her wondrous child, would choose the better way.”99 The fair showed the United States’ development, and even if the journal hated the event, it still found proofs in it that the United States would develop into, with some British guidance, a great nation in Britain’s image.

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British narratives about how to guide the United States towards becoming a world power were firmly expressed before the Exposition even opened. Resentment of American protectionism did not mean manufacturers or British observers had any antipathy for the United States. British observers of the Exposition saw the fair as a way to examine the country’s industry and economic expansion. These observers understood the fair as a guide to how the United States would develop and felt Britain could serve as a model for future growth. The American economy was promising, even if the country was young and immature. This response is very similar to British visitors’ and observers’ ideas about the Centennial. The United States was for these observers a similar nation and needed a British model for future development. It was also a country with boundless energy and industrial capacity, and Chicago and the World’s Columbian Exposition fit this narrative well. Protectionism and American economic competition worried British manufacturers and observers of the fair, however the Exposition still fascinated British observers because it offered a chance to judge and further understand the United States.

**American ideas about British Participation**

Organisers’ understanding of British participation at the World’s Columbian Exposition was very different to their predecessors’ notions about the country at Philadelphia, and this shift indicates that Britain had a very different role at the fair in 1893. To induce British participation American organisers dispatched the scion of one of the city’s industrial families to London to advertise the event. Robert McCormick, nephew of Cyrus McCormick, founder of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, an exhibitor at many world’s fairs, spent the two years before the Exposition propagating the event in Britain.100 In 1876 the Centennial’s organisers desperately craved British participation to vindicate the event. These organisers believed a British pavilion at Philadelphia ensured other European powers would participate, and so confirmed the event’s international character. McCormick’s propagation of the fair reveals changes in how organisers thought about British participation. Instead of fawning praise, Robert McCormick, and his fellow American backers of the fair, threatened and cajoled British manufacturers with descriptions of how the Exposition would be the perfect venue for U.S. manufacturers

100 ‘World’s Fair Doings’, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, 3 February 1892, p. 4.
to take British customers. Rather than sugar-coat the McKinley Tariff, McCormick reminded British manufacturers that if they did not exhibit well at Chicago, they could lose the customers they currently had in the United States. Other Americans in the United Kingdom, as well as newspapers back in the United States made further threats about the possible loss of commerce. McCormick’s advocacy indicates that British participation was not necessary at Chicago to vindicate the Exposition. Rather American organisers argued that if British manufacturers displayed poorly they would lose customers to American competition.

Robert McCormick argued in a series of articles in the U.K. and a speech before the Royal Society of Arts that Britain should participate at Chicago. American protectionism, he argued, did not hurt British commerce as much as manufacturers claimed. He also criticised British attachment to free trade and claimed U.S. manufacturers and politicians understood that Britain supported the policy because it gave an unfair advantage to their manufacturing. In response, McCormick claimed, “The fallacies of free trade have been detected and exposed, and the nations have found in the beneficent power protection a means of escape from ‘British thraldom.’”\(^{101}\) The United States employed protectionism to avoid British industrial domination, and McCormick warned that other nations also used tariffs to prevent being similarly overrun. Global free trade, which benefitted British industry, McCormick warned, would soon come to an end, and so British manufacturers had to compete with products from other nations,

Accompanying this warning about growing protectionism, McCormick also threatened British manufacturers with the spectre of future American competition. The imminent creation of a “Nicaraguan Canal,” McCormick prophesised, would give “ports on the eastern seaboard of the United States an advantage of 2,700 miles over British ports, as compared with the round around ‘The Horn.’”\(^{102}\) McCormick argued that soon American manufactures would compete with British counterparts for commercial domination in Asia and Australia. At a meeting of the London Chamber of Commerce, McCormick told manufactures that their American counterparts planned to capture South American and even British colonial markets at the fair.\(^{102}\) In Manchester McCormick told another meeting of manufacturers that U.S. firms

\(^{102}\) ‘British Interest Aroused’, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, 25 March 1892, p. 5.
already shipped locomotives to Australia, and soon American coal would be cheaper there than British fuel.\(^\text{103}\)

McCormick even dismissed British fears that Americans might copy or steal technology and designs at the fair. In a letter to the American consul at Liverpool, later printed publicly, McCormick wrote, “the leading American manufacturers have representatives in all parts of the world, whose duty it is to send home samples of every new product which might find a market in the United States.”\(^\text{104}\)

British manufacturers could keep their products at home in 1893, McCormick argued, but American competitors would steal their designs anyway. McCormick, instead of coaxing British manufactures to participate, threatened them with ruin and loss of trade if they did not display. He warned that American manufacturers would benefit if their British competitors stayed home. Industrialists in the United States could, if British manufacturers were absent, gain access to more markets.

Chicago’s newspapers shared McCormick’s understanding of British participation. These Journals also slighted British manufacturing and belittled opponents of British participation. Chicago’s *Daily Inter-Ocean*, a chief booster of the fair, dismissed British opposition to participation: “To growl, or fume, or rage about something, or anything, or everything is one of the most cherished prerogatives of the British citizen, and may be said to be not merely a national institution, but a national recreation that contributes conspicuously to the health, happiness, and prosperity of the body corporate of Great Britain.” The paper then noted that British manufacturing was poorly organised compared to the U.S. and Germany, the British government had not helped its nation’s manufacturers in response to tariffs, and so the country risked international embarrassment.\(^\text{105}\)

The *Chicago Tribune* agreed with this argument, and noted that Germany and France spent more on their displays than Britain, and, as a result, these pavilions would probably look more impressive.\(^\text{106}\)

These two Chicago papers did not see much point in British participation at the fair,


\(^\text{105}\) ‘England at the Fair’, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, 11 April 1892, p. 5.

and were certain before the opening that the display would fail to impress visitors. Both agreed that other displays were certain to outdo the British pavilion and the fair would show the country’s economic decline.

These arguments that the British display would show the nation’s industrial decline, however, mostly came from Chicago. Southern newspapers like New Orleans’ *Daily Picayune*, and *The Galveston Daily News* used British criticism of the fair to attack the McKinley Tariff.107 The *Picayune* noted that some foreign manufacturers, including every Sheffield cutlery maker, refused to participate: “Why,’ ask foreign manufacturers ‘spend money and take the trouble to exhibit our products in a country whose markets are closed against us?’”108 McCormick’s arguments were not ubiquitously believed by Americans but the way he advertised the fair in Britain shows a change in how certain Americans, supporters of the fair, saw the country in 1893. His message to British manufacturers was they would suffer if they did not participate; American trade was going to overtake them eventually. McCormick, and the Chicago newspapers that supported him, had no special interest in a British section for the fair, or any belief that a British pavilion would make the fair more of an international success, as organisers had in 1876. Rather McCormick believed the growth of American commercial power forced British manufacturers to participate or they risked losing markets. Propagation of the fair in Britain shows that organisers and backers of the event believed the United States’ position in the world was much stronger in 1893 than in 1876. British participation was far less important, than at Philadelphia and not necessary for the event’s success, American manufacturing McCormick and others like him believed would be impressive enough.

### The British Display

Britain’s display at Chicago was similar to the nation’s exhibit at Philadelphia. Historical displays and picturesque English scenes made up most of the country’s exhibition. In the industrial section, British exhibitors showed the country’s manufacturing history rather than new products. The display also referenced celebrated British political figures of the period. Royal pictures and objects donated by the monarchy formed a popular and large part of the British section. Representations of William Gladstone and to a lesser extent Lord Salisbury also

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appeared in the British section. Fine arts, like in 1876, were a large element of the country’s display. British commissioner at the fairground Henry Truman Wood, told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in March 1893, two months before the opening, “we shall make the greatest display… Naturally we will have a fine showing in the industrial division, manufactured goods and such, but fine arts will be our strong point here.”¹⁰⁹ To complete the historic theme the British pavilion building, Victoria House, was a half-timber Elizabethan folly (Fig.1)¹¹⁰ British organisers admitted that, compared to some of the modern exhibits at the fair, their nation’s display was more historical and less visually stunning.

**Figure 1: Victoria House**

`As You Like It’, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, 26 June 1892.

The British display of manufactured products at the Exposition was similar to the nation’s section at Philadelphia seventeen years earlier. American visitors in Chicago noted the fine display of British porcelain and tableware from the Potteries. Dutton & Co. brought a copy of the statue ‘America’ from the Albert memorial. Like at the Centennial, American guidebooks focused on these displays’ most historical features. Rand McNally’s guide recorded that the “gem” of the porcelain display was the company’s ‘Shakespeare Centerpiece,’ which featured painted illustrations of

¹⁰⁹ ‘STRONG ON ART: England’s Exhibit at the Big Fair Many Pictures Are to Be on Show She Cannot Compete With America in Electricity and Machinery CLEVELAND AND THE FAIR The President Will Consider the Invitation SPAIN’S BABY KING MAY HELP Will Prees a Button at Madrid to Set the Wheels Going - News & Newspapers -, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 March 1893.

¹¹⁰ *Chicago Tribune Glimpses of the World’s Fair; a Selection of Gems of the White City Seen through the Tribune’s Camera* (Chicago: Laird and Lee pub, 1893).
heroines: “Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra.” Other manufacturers also highlighted British history to sell their products. A soap company built a fifty by fifteen foot model of Windsor Castle out of their products (Fig. 2). The image shows how the model helped to advertise the soap. The company elevated the castle so all visitors could see it, and then advertised their product beneath, suggesting the organisers believed putting a historical image of Britain forward appealed to visitors. British exhibitors of heavy industry also highlighted their history of manufacturing. The Great Western Railway showed an “antiquated locomotive, the ‘Lord of the Isles,” to display Britain’s long history of engine building.

**Figure 2: Windsor Castle Soap Model**

Scattered across the fairground were a number of other British exhibits that presented historicised images of the country. ‘Victoria House’ showed, like its predecessor at Philadelphia, half-timber Elizabethan architecture. Elsewhere in the fairground, the British contribution included a complete replica of the Great White

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114 *Chicago Tribune Glimpses of the World’s Fair*.
Horse Inn of Ipswich, from Charles Dickens’ *Pickwick Papers*. The inn contained an English bar, and English barmaids, as well as an “open square court into which the coaches used to drive…reproduced complete in every respect.”\(^\text{115}\) One of the most popular parts of the British section was a complete reproduction of the banqueting hall from Hatfield House, the Marquis of Salisbury’s seat. The reproduction was complete with solid oak carvings, black and white marble floors, and Elizabethan tapestries and armour (Fig.3).\(^\text{116}\) This display, like the British pavilion at the Centennial, tried to appeal to the American audience’s belief in a shared Anglo-American past. At the World’s Columbian Exposition Britain appeared as land of culture and history, of Shakespeare, castles, and Dickens. Like at the Centennial the British pavilion spotlighted cultural connection between the hosts and visitors. British history and culture was, like in 1876, presented by the display as part of the American national narrative. The display attempted to show the United States’ pre-1776 history to show connections between the two nations.

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The British display at Chicago also attempted to highlight the two nations’ political connections. The display showed representations of contemporary British political figures and highlighted the two countries’ shared political institutions. Like at the Centennial, Queen Victoria’s watercolours, in the Women’s Department, were extremely popular, as were her daughters Princesses Christian, Louise, and Beatrice’s artistic contributions. However, William Gladstone was the political figure most commonly shown in the British pavilion. One of the Irish Villages in the Midway included a statue of Gladstone celebrating his advocacy for Home Rule. Wax effigies of Gladstone and the Marquis of Salisbury were used as mannequins to show British clothing, though the *New York Times* noted the models were poor likenesses, and called them a “cruel injustice.” An American-made axe used by Gladstone was shown to highlight the connections between the two nations. The axe showed that Gladstone trusted American manufacturing and underscored the profitability and amount of trade between the two nations (Fig. 4). Gladstone was a popular figure in the late-nineteenth-century United States. American Protestants admired his ability to fuse religion with liberalism. When Gladstone died five years after the fair, the American Protestant press noted that no death since Abraham Lincoln had caused such a depth of mourning in the United States. Gladstone’s presences in the British pavilion showed the two nations’ shared political culture, and indicated both Britain and the United States were liberal Protestant countries. Gladstone’s role in the British Pavilion illustrates how the nation’s display focused on shared political institutions, history, and culture, rather than on industry or technology. Gladstone was a popular political and religious figure in the United States, just as Shakespeare was a literary icon. Neither was an inventor or industrialist, both appealed to a shared Anglo-American cultural understanding.

118 ‘In Donegal Castle’, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, 26 June 1893.
119 ‘GREAT BRITAIN AT THE FAIR: NOT SO IMPRESSIVE A DISPLAY AS AT THE CENTENNIAL. This Partly Due to the Fact That the Other European Countries Are Better Represented Than in 1876 -- Victoria House -- In the Department of Fine Arts -- Conspicuous Eccentricities of the English School of Painting -- Emancipation of American Architecture from British Influence,’ *The New York Times* 16 July 1893.
120 Ives, *The Dream City*.
Part of the reason American visitors were unimpressed with the British section was its poor organisation. The section was, disappointingly for American visitors, not fully built in time for the fair’s opening. The *Bangor Daily Whig & Courier* noted that the British section was “further behind with her display than any other country.” “The other countries,” the paper continued, “show results of their resources and ingenuity in various forms.”  

122 Neighbouring French displays also damaged the British section. Henry Truman Wood demanded in the fair’s first months that authorities force French exhibitors to clean up debris from their displays in the manufacturing building, as the detritus made Britain’s section look bad.  

123 Wood himself also damaged the British section’s reception. ‘Victoria House’ was meant to show British architectural design and domestic products and was given a choice position on the lakefront.  

124 However, Wood refused to let any visitors inside for fear they would sully the interior. Writing to his deputy H.B. Wheatley, Wood worried that the house would be “swamped” with visitors, and these sightseers would have “destroyed the furniture with dust and dirt.” The *Chicago Tribune* attacked him for the closure, and eventually Wood agreed to open ‘Victoria House’ a single day each week.

122 ‘The White City’, *Bangor Daily Whig & Courier.*  
124 Gilbert, *Perfect Cities.* p. 81  
Henry Truman Wood also did not advertise the British pavilion well. He admitted before the opening that the section would in some ways disappoint visitors. Two months before the fair opened, Wood told the Chicago Tribune that, though British manufacturing would be impressively displayed, “Our machinery exhibit will not be so brave a show as usual, for our makers have felt the pinch of American competition.” He stated on the British fine arts display, “There were special difficulties in forming a good collection of English pictures, but we will have some of the most famous works of English artists and specimens from nearly every artist of first rank.” Before the fair opened Wood dampened expectations that the British section would impress, and the eventual display mostly included finely crafted goods, rather than manufacturing or industry.

Britain’s Pavilion Compared to Other Nations

The British display also faced intense competition from displays from other nations. France and particularly Germany, according to the American audience, created far better sections. Both nations spent more on their pavilions than Britain, which hardly outspent their own colony New South Wales on their display. The American audience particularly liked French fine arts and design, and German heavy industry. In displays of manufacturing, or high culture, where Britain might have impressed American visitors, other European nations simply had superior exhibits. American guides noted that the French display of arts included works not previously exhibited abroad. The official guide to the Exposition wrote, “France, incontestably leading all nations in artistic power, has seldom contributed to any but its own expositions.” In 1876 British artists impressed visitors at the Centennial because French organisers refused to risk sending any masterpieces that could be lost in transit. Now, compared to an impressive French exhibit, British art no longer looked so magnificent, and American visitors, the official guide suggested, were more impressed by that country’s display.

The country that undoubtedly impressed the hosts most was Germany. A physical comparison between German and British pavilions shows how the latter

country lagged behind technologically at Chicago. The German pavilion, which attendees could actually enter,\textsuperscript{129} was, compared to the small and closed ‘Victoria House,’ massive and expensive (Fig. 5). Guidebook *The Dream City* noted that German building impressed American visitors, while Victoria House “did not commend itself favourably to either the taste or the pride of Americans.”\textsuperscript{130} The German display also included a building dedicated solely to Krupp of Essen’s massive cannons, which visitors to the White City found incredibly impressive (Fig. 6). The *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted, “There is no single exhibit at the Exposition that will attract more curiosity than the monster gun erected by the Krupps.”\textsuperscript{131} The *New Orleans Picayune* juxtaposed the German section of manufactures with the British display. The paper found British pottery exhibited suitable and noted a lack of textiles and cutlery before it wrote, “there is no more distinctive department than that of Germany…the royal throne room of crystal and gold with tapestries embroideries and paintings is nearly complete.”\textsuperscript{132} The German display showed the nation’s great machines, massive war-making material, and high-cultural finery, which compared unfavourably with Britain’s modest exhibits.

**Figure 5: German Pavilion**

\textsuperscript{129} ‘World’s Fair’, *The Daily Picayune* Louisiana, 1 May 1893.  
\textsuperscript{130} Ives, *The Dream City*.  
\textsuperscript{131} ‘Germany’s Display,’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 April 1893.  
\textsuperscript{132} ‘World’s Fair’, *The Daily Picayune*, 1 May 1893.

Figure 6: Krupp Building

Chicago Tribune Glimpses of the World’s Fair

American visitors noted German and French pavilions’ superiority to the British exhibit. Before the fair opened the Chicago Tribune pointed out that British manufacturers complained about tariffs, while “other countries had to submit to the same regulations, and France and Germany were making great efforts to be thoroughly represented.” France and Germany, the paper argued, created impressive displays under the same tariff conditions, but Britain could not. Walter Wellman writing for the Atchison Daily Globe of Kansas recorded the British display’s plainness. “Compared with France across the aisle to the east and Germany to the west” Wellman wrote, “the British section appears commonplace and dull.

There are no gorgeous and impressive pavilions erected by the government.”

Invoking the Centennial, the New York Times believed the reason for Britain’s success in 1876 was they had no real competition, “Neither Germany nor France was then in a position,” wrote the Times. “or of a disposition, to make any great exertion to impress mankind, and especially American mankind, with her proficiency in the arts of peace.” The Times explained the problem the British display faced at Chicago: it was less impressive than French and German competitors. The Times also noted, that Britain at Chicago did not have a special status as a cultural forbear for visitors that it had at Philadelphia. In 1876, visitors looked to the British pavilion to highlight a special cultural connection with the United States. Britain was, at Philadelphia, the nation of Shakespeare, monarchy, and the United States’ pre-colonial history. At Chicago the British display was only one among many competitors and was not a remarkable exhibit compared to other nations. British exhibitors hoped that the cultural, historical, and political displays would highlight the similarities between the two nations, but American visitors were not interested in these links at Chicago.

The British Pavilion and the White City

The British section also failed to impress American visitors because it did not fit thematically with the rest of the Exposition. American organisers wanted to show at Chicago the United States’ economic, cultural, and military progression from 1876 to 1893, and to display a more impressive show of American technology than had ever been assembled. Mechanical and stylistic improvements and innovation surrounded American visitors to the White City. The fairground, in addition to modern technology, showed American high-cultural refinement and tried to stylistically ape the great 1889 Exposition Universelle. The White City, which contained the fair, was a stylistic pastiche that combined the architectural styles of Paris, Venice, and Rome all into one. At Philadelphia the Corliss Engine was the chief exhibit and presented by the only American firm capable of creating such a

134 Wellman, ‘Foreign Exhibits.’
135 ‘GREAT BRITAIN AT THE FAIR: NOT SO IMPRESSIVE A DISPLAY AS AT THE CENTENNIAL. This Partly Due to the Fact That the Other European Countries Are Better Represented Than in 1876 -- Victoria House -- In the Department of Fine Arts -- Conspicuous Eccentricities of the English School of Painting -- Emancipation of American Architecture from British Influence,’ The New York Times, 16 July 1893.
136 Burg, Chicago’s White City, p. xii.
machine. Seventeen years later the *Official Guide* noted “To-day there are nearly sixty firms making them.”\(^{138}\) The White City included an Electricity Building, which impressed one English visitor so much he recorded in his travelogue, “In the near future people will be carried through the air 100 miles in 60 minutes, and electricity will be used to cook, heat our rooms, light and move our cars, carriages, waggons, and vehicles on land, and propel ships at sea.”\(^{139}\) In Lake Michigan visitors could see a full sized brick model of the recently launched battleship the *USS Indiana*, fully crewed with American sailors.\(^{140}\)

Even though the World’s Columbian Exposition purported to celebrate the quadricentennial of Columbus’ landing in North America, it was primarily a celebration of the United States’ future. Daniel Burnham, the fair’s director of works, wrote in his notes that it was unfeasible for people to travel the world to see all human production. “During an international exposition, however,” Burnham wrote, “many millions of people throw aside their affairs in order to make the most of it; and because it is so comprehensive those that come are taught with rapidity and accuracy out of all proportion to their usual advancement from year to year…and not only are they themselves trained, but many millions more through them are enlightened.”\(^{141}\) Burnham believed the fair would educate the world about the latest advancements in production, “The progress of the world has been kept back by the lagging of whole races…Nations go to school in expositions, and through them learn to understand each other.”\(^{142}\) Burnham saw the fair as a stage to show national greatness, and enlighten and advance the globe’s fortunes. At Chicago the United States’ embrace of European high-culture, architecture, and artistic styles, combined with a mastery of new technology and war-making capacity, made it the pinnacle of human progress. Britain’s humble, historicised display showed nothing new, and the United States was, at least as exhibited in the White City, the globe’s most advanced society that helped the rest of the world develop. It was not a country that needed any vindication of its status, as was necessary for American visitors at Philadelphia.

A speech given at Britain’s national day at the Exposition perfectly encapsulates American disregard for the country’s participation, and global status. In August, British commissioners hosted a national day for exhibitors and citizens from

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\(^{139}\) Smith, *Tour through the Land of the West*, p. 76.

\(^{140}\) ‘The White City’, *Bangor Daily Whig & Courier*.

\(^{141}\) Chicago, Chicago Art Institute Ryerson & Burnham Library (hereafter RBL), Burnham Papers, Box 58, Folder 13, *Uses of Expositions*, p. 3.

all parts of the empire to celebrate Queen Victoria, at which Democratic Mayor of Chicago Carter Harrison Sr. gave a speech. Harrison began with a swipe at British economic policy. “Today” the mayor said, “Great Britain is governing us, is ruling these United States by reason of her manipulation of our finances. England says what money we shall have, and apparently we dare not disobey her.” Harrison then criticised British imperialism in Asia, before he declared, “I look forward to the time when Brother Jonathan will say to John Bull: ‘Stop here, you can go no farther.” Harrison then advocated American annexation of the entire British Empire to end such expansion. This speech, though a bit fantastical, does showcase American visitors’ opinion of Britain participation at the Exposition. The United States, Harrison believed, was a rising power and Britain a declining one, and it was time for Americans to assert their position as the globe’s true leaders. Visitors like Harrison’s disregard for the British section is unsurprising in a fair that showed the United States as the world’s most advanced society. The historical, political, and cultural links the British display presented did not impress American visitors who saw their nation as superior at the Exposition. There was no expression at Chicago of the American narratives about Britain that dominated responses to the Crystal Palace, 1862 Exhibition, and the Centennial. Like in 1887 American visitors saw Britain as a trading partner, the country’s lack of displayed trade goods meant that the nation’s display looked unimpressive, particularly compared to French and German competitors.

**British Conceptions of the Exposition and Chicago**

American visitors to Chicago generally found the British section banal, but British travellers to the World’s Columbian Exposition were impressed by the event’s size and the number of new and modern products shown, as well as by the city itself. British visitors were stunned by American technological advancement in the years between the Centennial and the Exposition. This fascination led British visitors to much the same conclusions their counterparts made about Americans and the U.S.

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143 ‘TO BRITAIN’S GLORY.: Loyal Sons and Daughters Celebrate the Empire’s Day. FLY THE UNION JACK. Officers at Victoria House Witness Trooping of Colors. CHEERS FOR GOOD QUEEN VIC. Mayor Harrison and Other Speakers in Festival Hall. THEY FROWN ON ANNEXATION. Witness the Trooping of Colors. Gather in Festival Hall. Calls for Cheers for the Queen. Mayor Harrison Enters the Room. Carter’s Words Stir Up Hisses. Sing the Good Old Song. Declare Their Loyalty. Order of the Column’s March,’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 August 1893.

144 ‘Britons at the Fair’, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, 20 August 1893.
economy at previous events. These visitors explained American ingenuity as the result of shared racial descent. British visitors to the fair were deeply impressed by the American display and saw it as proof of the United States’ global power. Newspapers in Britain also admired the American display and particularly the modern technological exhibits. These sources generally agreed that the fair proved that the United States was a growing power, but one that still needed to develop in certain areas, and that Britain could provide a guide for the country’s future.

British visitors found the American machinery displayed at Chicago almost revelatory. N. Smith, the Birmingham workingman, believed the World’s Columbian Exposition was something close to perfection. He compared the event with 1889’s Exposition Universelle, but thought the White City was “more sublime in conception and grander in execution than all which have gone before.” And that Chicago and the fairground were “more beautiful than artist’s brush ever painted or poet’s fancy ever sang.”145 Smith wrote about the machinery building, “Had it come to me in a dream, what I really beheld with my own eyes, my exclamation would have been ‘Impossible! It is the baseless fabric of a dream, and never to be realized on this earth.’”146 Smith maintained the fair proved “America – England’s greatest son, now out of his time, free from his mother’s control, able to manage for himself – our Brother Jonathan, our neighbour. Our wish- the prayer of our hearts – is, that the son of England, America will not forget its parent, the old Mother Country.”147 The Exposition confirmed for Smith, as it did for many American visitors, the United States’ status as a growing power and technological leader. Smith was so impressed with the American display he worried that the United States would become so powerful it would forget its historical connections to Great Britain.

British organiser James Dredge also wrote about the impressive technological power the United States displayed in Chicago. He also connected the two nations racially, and hoped, like Smith, that they would not be driven apart. In his travelogue Dredge wrote that the event, he hoped, would result in, “a deeper chord of sympathy and appreciation… awakened between the English people and their American kinsfolk.” Dredge believed, because, “Nothing but the folly of a mad king loosened the tie that exists between them,” and “their numbers are daily increasing,” that “a close union between the two nations, politically and commercially, [was] the surest

145 Smith, *Tour through the Land of the West*, p. 76.
146 Ibid., p. 75.
147 Ibid., p. 11.
guarantee, in the future of the lasting peace of the world.”

Dredge believed the fair showed that the United States and Britain were at least close equals in power, and that should the two operate together, global peace was assured. Both Dredge and Smith saw at the fair a vision of the future, where the two historically connected countries, cooperating together, assured global commercial prosperity and peace. They believed that the fair proved the United States was a power almost equal to Britain.

Other British visitors to the fair were also deeply impressed with the American technology on show and lamented that their nation did not participate fully in the Exposition. Mrs Alfred Hunt, writing in the *Illustrated London News*, called the fair “the most beautiful Exhibition of the kind that world has yet seen.” She lamented that many Europeans opposed the fair before the opening and blamed the “inimical tone of those of New York,” for keeping transatlantic tourists away. Tory M.P. J. Henniker Heaton detailed to the Chicago press his disgust with the British section, and lamented, “England and Englanders will never have another such a glorious opportunity for an international exhibit of their resources and capabilities.” He also blamed the New York press for colouring British opinions about the Exposition. Both these visitors, though less romantic about the historical relationship between Britain and the United States, noted the Exposition’s beauty and industrial power, and their own nations failure take advantage of the fair’s opportunity.

The World’s Columbian Exposition also impressed Britain’s popular press. *The Morning Post* printed a series of articles describing the fair and particularly American mechanical ingenuity. Electricity’s practical application fascinated the paper. “So great are the strides” made in that area, “within the last few years that there are few indeed, except perhaps the electrical expert, even among the most ‘up to date’ people, who will not find many novelties of the most interesting nature.” The paper also lauded the new elevators in the transport building, and the display of live naval drills at the *USS Indiana*. The *Post* centred its coverage on the displays of new technology and American military capacity, and explained to British readers how the fair showed the United States as a powerful and technologically advanced nation.

*The Times* agreed with *The Morning Post* that the fair showed an impressive array of exhibits that dazzled visitors. A correspondent at the fair noted that “One is

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almost dumbfounded at the vast extent and variety of the show; yet in every part the very best that is possible has been done, and the army of untiring workers who planned and created the colossal enterprise are to be congratulated upon the well-nigh appalling results of their overpowering success.”

The correspondent believed that the display of American technology was so impressive it was almost shocking. Compared to Paris’ Exposition Universelle, The Times believed, “This marvellous aggregation of manufactured goods, covering 44 acres of space, as a whole far exceeds it.” The fair also showed a more impressive display of machinery. The paper characterised the Exposition as full of new and impressive displays, greater than previous European fairs, which showed the world’s very best manufactures and machinery.

The Observer’s correspondent in Chicago concurred that the fair showed an incredible number of modern products to “eclipse anything ever seen or dreamt of before.” This reporter was particularly impressed with the vast qualities of agricultural products, “Every kind of cereal product, and of fruits and flowers and things springing from and dependent on the bounties of the earth were there.” They also noted, “The Americans shine out bravely in all ‘labour saving’ machinery, such as wheeled carriages and wagons for general utility, and especially agricultural implements, and all beating and cooking apparatus and things for luxurious mansions or prairie farms, where money is scarce and heat is wanted and fuel must be economised.” For all of these papers the World’s Columbian Exposition showed an incredible array of products, and this display made the fair the grandest ever completed. The United States showed its new technology, heavy industry, labour-saving machinery, and also the great number of products it could sell abroad. These papers agreed that the fair was a massive success for the United States, which placed them in the first rank of nations globally.

British newspapers focused on how the fair showed the promise of future American prosperity. Like before the fair’s opening, these sources characterised the United States, as presented at the Exposition, as a growing, but still imprudent giant. These papers also believed the World’s Columbian Exposition proved the United States was a global power that could show great varieties of goods and attract foreign exhibitors and visitors. The Standard criticised the exhibition’s cost but could not

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152 ‘The World’s Columbian Fair’, The Times, 30 September 1893, p. 3.
deny the affect it had on visitors, “Something has, doubtless, been learned, and something will be gained. The seed has been sown lavishly, but the harvest which presents itself is scanty in the extreme. For something like the commensurate result we are bid to look mainly to the future and that not the immediate future.” Though the fair’s goods did not impress The Standard, they did show the country’s development. The paper also noted that an American commercial mission was already in Japan competing with British manufacturers for customers.\textsuperscript{155} The Illustrated London News agreed with The Standard’s characterization of the Exposition and the United States as a whole. The ILN was particularly impressed with Chicago’s industry and rapid development. It noted the fair was, “held in a place” that “in the early years of this century, [was] a dismal swamp, infested by marauding Indians, where no white man dared to live!” At the opening the paper pointed out “Now there is a city of 1,200,000 people…drawn together by the commercial prosperity of a community second to none but New York on the Western Continent.” The ILN believed the fair also showed American inventive genius: “The Americans, too, are a clever nation, and their wealth has increased without interruption during the past quarter of a century. It is probably now greater, as their home population is much greater, than that of any country in Europe.”\textsuperscript{156} The fair may have been unimpressive in some areas but Chicago’s growth, and the city’s very ability to host such an event, impressed the ILN. These popular press accounts of the fair, from both conservative and liberal papers, were in some ways glowing, but also somewhat critical of the American economy. To all these journals the fair, and Chicago itself, proved the U.S. was a nation full of new inventions and expanding commercial power; however, certain popular newspapers like the Standard, and some middle-class journals believed the United States’ economy was not fully developed and needed some guidance towards prosperity.

These newspaper reports, and visitors’ reactions to the event, reveal a common narrative of the United States at the fair. British visitors, and commentators from popular newspapers and middle-class journals agreed the Exposition and Chicago itself showed the United States’ growing economy. Many visitors saw the fair as proof the United States manufactured some of the most advanced technology available. Visitors like Smith and Dredge hoped that the two nations could be allies

into the future and echoed visitors to the 1887 American Exhibition in London who saw racial similarities between the two countries. Other visitors to the fair believed the event was equal to other great European fairs, and so showed that the United States was not inferior to European powers. Even critics of the fair, and journals who characterised the United States as imprudent noted that the Exposition and Chicago itself proved American economic energy and rapid development. While some observers criticised the event, they could not deny that the fair proved the United States was a growing global power. These observers show a new narrative of the United States as not simply an inventive country but as a growing power. A power that had problems like protectionism, but a nation that Britain could guide in its development and could serve as an ally for the country into the future.

Celebrating British Ethnicities in Chicago

Domestic visitors’ reactions to the British section were very different to American attendees at Philadelphia. These visitors did not need the cultural vindication Britain provided at the Centennial. However, some British and American attendees did use the fair to showcase shared cultural and racial connections. These celebrations show how American visitors, in the period between the two fairs, altered their conceptions of the cultural and racial links the nation shared with Britain. Americans of Welsh, and Scottish immigrant origin, and some British visitors, celebrated their distinct ethnic identity with special days and ceremonies. These events show changes in how Americans at the fairs understood their country’s relationship with Britain. American visitors to Philadelphia, and even to the previous London fairs, understood Britain as a special cultural progenitor, a nation of shared cultural icons like Shakespeare and Milton. American culture, these visitors believed, was in some ways derived from Britain. At Chicago, American celebrations of cultural or racial connections to Britain were very similar to other visitors’ commemorations of German or Bohemian identities. Wales and Scotland were celebrated as places some Americans originated from, but these regional identities were among many commemorated at the World’s Columbian Exposition.

The Welsh and Scottish celebrations at the Exposition presented ethnic culture, but at the same time showed these communities’ patriotism. Both ethnic celebrations emphasised that a Welsh or Scottish ethnicity was not an impediment to being a good American citizen. A network of Welsh cultural - or Cymrodorian -
societies in Britain and the United States arranged an ‘Eisteddfod,’ or Welsh druidic literary festival, for the Exposition. The Eisteddfod’s main event was a ceremony involving stones circles, bards, and Welsh poetry. The festival also hosted singing and artistic competitions sponsored by Cymrosporian Societies across the United States and Britain.\textsuperscript{157} However, the event also hosted speeches and papers on subjects like, “Welshmen as Civil Political and Moral factors in the formation and Development of the United States Republic.”\textsuperscript{158} Like other ethnic days, the Welsh festival included a performance of ethnic identity combined with speeches and papers on patriotic themes stressing the Welsh-American contributions to the United States.

Scottish associations in the United States also organised their own ethnic celebration. The World’s Fair Scottish Directory organised a “grand international reunion”, which hosted one hundred and sixty immigrant and ethnic Scots in Chicago, and their countrymen from across the United States, Canada, and Scotland.\textsuperscript{159} The Midway hosted a performance by a bagpiper,\textsuperscript{160} and in the fairground the “World’s Fair Scottish Assembly Orchestra of 114” performed.\textsuperscript{161} American organisers even schemed, ultimately unsuccessful, to purchase Robert Burns’ cottage and move it to the Midway.\textsuperscript{162} Scottish-American enthusiasm was so pronounced that the magazine \textit{Puck} even poked fun at fairgoers dressed in Highland garb, noting kilts were a fine outfit for young children but looked “foolish” on fully grown men (Fig 7). Like the Welsh celebration, Scottish ethnic commemorations were somewhat kitsch, but they were also non-threatening. Scottish-Americans could celebrate their heritage in Chicago, and at the same time be good Americans.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Ffair y Byd}, pp. 13, 27-31.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{159} ‘The World’s Fair’, \textit{The Galveston Daily News}, 7 May 1893, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Midway Types: A Book of Illustrated Lessons about the People of the Midway Plaisance, World’s Fair, 1893} (Chicago: American Engraving Co, 1894).
\textsuperscript{161} Chicago, University of Chicago Library, ‘Report of the Department of Liberal Arts, World’s Columbian Exhibition.’ p. 20.
These celebrations of particular British ethnic identities reveal how conceptions of Britain changed between 1876 and 1893. British heritage and identity at Philadelphia was something all American visitors shared, and a vindicator of the event as a whole. The British pavilion showed the two nations’ shared cultural institutions and proved that the United States had enough of a cultural bedrock to host a world’s fair. In Chicago Americans did not celebrate their British cultural identity; rather they commemorated British regional ethnicities. Welsh and Scottish-Americans eagerly celebrated kitsch versions of their ethnic identities, but at the same time stressed their contributions to the United States. These ethnic celebrations were also not distinct at the fair; Welsh, and Scottish-Americans were just a few of the immigrant groups, among many, that made up the United States in 1893. These visitors were no different from Americans of Irish, German, Polish, or Bohemian ethnicity; they celebrated their ethnic past, but still showed at the fair that they were
good citizens, and contributors to the United States’ power and growth. Britain was not at Chicago a special cultural progenitor. Ethnically-identified Americans were the only visitors who celebrated the cultural links between the two countries, with imaginative and antiquated performances like druidic festivals or highland costumes. The ethnic celebrations, though, never showed a special Anglo-American connection. The Exposition presented American links with Britain as similar to other U.S. connections with Europe and did not show Britain as a special cultural forebear.

Conclusion

American visitors to Chicago understood Britain’s display and the nation’s connection to the United States very differently from their compatriots at Philadelphia. Previous American visitors at these world’s fairs craved British vindication, and at Philadelphia attached themselves to a particular romantic understanding of British history. At Chicago visitors celebrated connections to Britain very differently, the country occupied no special position at the Exposition. Rather it competed with the other great powers, and it showed poorly. Germany and France proved that they could compete with, and in many areas were more impressive than, British manufacturing. Britain’s display at Chicago was unchanged from its pavilion at Philadelphia in 1876; it was historical, romantic, and placed emphasis on transatlantic cultural connections. Visitors at Chicago were not interested in these pieces; they did not need or wish to feel part of a British narrative in order see their nation as a global power. Vindication was only important when visitors felt their nation was inferior or lacking in cultural capital. At Chicago the United States proved, for organisers and visitors, it was a first rank nation and a technological and cultural leader. In transportation, in invention, in electricity, and in war-making capacity the United States at Chicago was at the cutting edge. The British pavilion with its ship models that reminded visitors of disaster, its Elizabethan folly, and soap castles, was not impressive to American attendees. Some Welsh and Scottish Americans at the fair had cultural links with Britain, but these connections only showed that some American were of British descent. American visitors did not see any strong Anglo-Saxon bond that allied the two nations into the future. Visitors dressed in ethnic costume and read poems in Welsh, but they also proved at their ethnic days that they were good Americans and used these celebrations to showcase their community’s patriotism. British cultural and historical connections were
relegated at the fair to a status similar to other ethnic identities in the United States, and American visitors felt the fair proved the nation was a global power that did not require British vindication.

These changes in how American visitors understood the British display show how American identity and sense of their nation’s position in the world changed between 1876 and 1893. In Philadelphia American visitors and organisers worried that their Exhibition might embarrass the nation and so relied on British vindication. In 1893 American visitors were self-confident and assured about their own national identity, and economic and military power. As the United States industrial power grew and its displays became more robust American visitors discarded their cultural connections to the country. This presentation confirmed for American visitors their nation’s status as the pinnacle of human development and meant that these attendees simply did not need to highlight the nation’s connection to Britain the feel satisfied with their display. These American visitors and observers only saw Britain at Chicago as a trading partner and were disinterested in the cultural connections between the two nations the British pavilion displayed. Americans at the fair were far more captivated by the impressive modern art from France or the heavy machinery and cannons from Germany on show in Chicago than they were in Elizabethan follies.

British visitors to the fair saw the United States much as their American counterparts did. The World’s Columbian Exposition showed that American production could rival any competitors in almost any area of technology or manufacturing. British observers thought Chicago itself was impressive and were struck that the city rose from nothing in less than a century to compete with European manufacturing centres. British responses to the Exposition also show a real concern about American competition and fear of losing markets and consumers. British observers of the fair clearly saw the United States as a growing economic power in 1893. Coupled with this image of the country was a notion that Britain could serve as a guide to American development. These visitors and observers worried that American attachment to protectionism restrained an expanding and impressive economy and hoped that the fair might show U.S. attendees British trade policy’s superiority. This notion led them to believe that the growing United States might, because of its rapid and impressive expansion, be an ally in the future. The two nations could as equal industrial and Anglo-Saxon powers assure global peace and commerce. This understanding of the United States shows that British narrative of the country in 1893 were still focused on how the nation could develop in a British
mould. Many British observers of the fair saw similarities between this powerful United States and their own nation and hoped that the two could be friendly Anglo-Saxon allies. American disinterest in the transatlantic relationship at Chicago did not dampen enthusiasm for the United States among British visitors and observers. Rather the World’s Columbian Exposition, with its incredible displays of American technological might, proved to these British visitors and observers just how similar the two countries were.

These British and American narratives about one another at Chicago show that transatlantic notions changed very little between 1887 and 1893. British observers and visitors to Chicago still believed that the United States was in the process of becoming a comparable power, and eventually an Anglo-Saxon ally. Visitors like Smith and Dredge prophesised that the two nations working together would assure, as duel equal powers, the peace and prosperity of the globe. What the World’s Columbian Exposition reveals though is that American visitors and observers had completely renegotiated their relationship with Britain in the period between 1876 and 1893. By 1893, the United States was, in American visitors’ estimation, already a nation both distinct from, and in some ways superior to, Britain. Americans came to the fair to see their own and other nation’s technological might and modernity. They were unimpressed by the British display of high culture and found other countries like France and Germany far more impressive and thematically appropriate at the World’s Columbian Exposition. Britain had no special status at Chicago as a cultural progenitor to American visitors already convinced of their own national power and prestige.
Conclusion

This examination of British and American visitors’ and observers’ responses to world’s fairs complicates the accepted historiographical narrative about late-nineteenth-century transatlantic relations. This thesis suggests that diplomatic rapprochement between Britain and the United States was not the product of popular Anglo-American affinity. The study examines large socially diverse groups of British and American people at the world’s fairs and this focus forces a re-evaluation of popular ideas about the transatlantic relationship in the period. Visitors’ understanding and responses to these exhibitions of manufactured products, machines, and fine arts does not reveal a growth of Anglo-American popular rapprochement or the wide acceptance of the existence of transatlantic societal, cultural, and economic similarities. Visitors, organisers, and observers’ reactions to these exhibitions reveal that British and American people understood their two nations’ relationship differently to one another. American visitors did not at these fairs, by the end of the period, see proofs their nation shared its culture, industrial drive, or racial identity with Britain. They did not see reasons why British and American people should, because of these perceived inherent similarities, work together internationally. As the United States expanded its global trade, increased its military capacity, built cultural institutions, and showed these developments at world’s fairs, American visitors and observers saw themselves as more distinct from Britain. American displays improved over the period and this success meant American visitors’ identity became untethered to older cultural and historical connections left over from the colonial period. At the same time these attendees, by the Chicago fair, focused on other connections to Europe, aping continental architecture at the Exposition, and celebrating many different European immigrant identities. Americans at the fair forged a distinct national identity that relied less on the county’s British origins.

British visitors and observers had opposite reactions to these events. Displays of American products, industry, and settlement of the Western frontier showed American qualities that corresponded well with British understandings of their own racial identity. British visitors and observers saw at these exhibitions that Americans were fellow Anglo-Saxons with similar inherent attributes, and that the United States was an emerging world power and possibly a future ally. These fairs reveal that popular conceptions of the transatlantic relationship were imbalanced because they showed the strength of British visitors’ and observers’ belief in a shared Anglo-American racial identity, society, and similar attributes. Simultaneously these fairs show the dissipation of American belief in
transatlantic cultural and historical connections, and the formation of a distinct popular American national identity.

Historians of the late-nineteenth-century Anglo-American relationship stress that as part of a larger diplomatic rapprochement, certain - mainly elite - British and American people realised that they shared a similar society. Kathleen Burk, Duncan Andrew Campbell, and Stuart Anderson all identify certain political or cultural spheres the two nations shared: literature, industrial economies, and Anglo-Saxon racial identity, which certain people in both nations, they argue, came to believe showed the countries’ similarities, and highlighted why the two nations should cooperate internationally. All three historians understandably focus their studies either on diplomats who shaped foreign policy, wealthy elites who married across the Atlantic, or Anglo-Saxonist thinkers or politicians. These historians study people with a sustained interest in the Anglo-American relationship to argue that people on both sides of the Atlantic created a new mutual recognition and popular understanding of two nations’ similarities in the period. This mutual understanding laid, they argue, groundwork for Anglo-American diplomatic rapprochement in the period, and increased transatlantic cooperation internationally thereafter.¹

These conclusions may apply to elite historical actors, but this study of world’s fairs has examined larger groups of British and American people beyond diplomatic and social elites. The dissertation has examined sources created by elite organisers, but also penny newspapers, guides to the fair, and specialist industrial publications to get a larger sense of how British and American visitors understood these events. This larger examination reveals that popularly the Anglo-American relationship was not understood in the same way by people in both countries in this period. British visitors and observers were more interested than their American counterparts in the Anglo-American relationship and racial, economic, and institutional commonalities between the two nations. By 1893 Americans visitors perceived no special bond between the countries, and no reason why the two nations should cooperate in future. The attendees at these fairs were not, of course, a perfect cross section of British or American society, but these events were visited by millions and observed from afar by a larger audiences. They are spaces to examine how larger groups of people in both nations felt about the corresponding country. By the Chicago Exposition the American

audience included immigrants originating from many European nations who had no special cultural relationship with Britain. There were, relative to the audience as a whole, few visitors or observers with a particular interest in or antipathy for the Anglo-American relationship. These fairs show how larger disinterested groups of visitors and observers conceived of the transatlantic relationship, how audiences in the millions including people from a wide range of social, regional, ethnic, and political backgrounds understood their connection, or lack thereof, to the other country.

In order to assess these popular, changing, and asymmetrical understandings of the Anglo-American relationship this dissertation has identified seven narratives that attendees developed at the fairs to describe and understand the products shown. These narratives show how British and American visitors and observers understood each other differently in the period. They show how Americans became much less interested in their transatlantic connections as British fascination with the United States only grew and intensified. They encapsulated how visitors and observers reacted to these events, what language they used to describe the other nation and the connections between the two. British visitors and observers at the first three events saw the United States as a nation with many structural problems. These attendees came to the fairs with an already formed narrative about the country as stridently protectionist, politically demagogic, and corrupt. However, at the first three fairs British visitors and observers constructed a new narrative. American production was shown at the Great Exhibition, 1862 fair, and the Centennial in Philadelphia to be unostentatious, and incredibly useful and inventive. American goods showed British visitors and observers how the United States settled its vast territory and how it was building a promising economy. British visitors and observers believed that this American inventiveness was explained by the nation’s British origins.

As the period progressed, two new narratives emerged in British writing about the fairs. Visitors and observers described the United States as a frontier nation, in the process of settling its vast territory. The American sections’ presentation of Western natural resources, as well as displays of American Indians and performances of colonisation in the form of Wild West Shows convinced British visitors and observers that the United States was engaged in a similar imperial process. The United States, these visitors believed, settled its vast territory out of a shared Anglo-Saxon drive to civilise and exploit untamed parts of the globe. At U.S. hosted fairs British visitors and observers also believed that the American displays showed the nation’s capacity for development into a great Anglo-Saxon power. Starting in Philadelphia British visitors and organisers believed that with their guidance the United States could expand its production and develop into a more economically powerful nation if
the country dispensed with tariffs and made other changes to its policy and society to bring it more in line with Britain. The displays of American modern technology like electricity and military capacity in Chicago convinced many British visitors and observers that the country would, with some British guidance, become an Anglo-Saxon world power, and eventually an ally.

At the first three fairs American visitors and observers created two linked and simultaneously expressed narratives about Britain. Britain was, in the first narrative, the United States’ traditional foe, and therefore a nation to beat and embarrass with American production at these fairs. American products’ superiority to British competitors, and therefore the country’s industrial weakness, was commonly identified in American writing about these exhibitions. In the second narrative Britain was the originator of the United States’ history and culture. American observers and visitors cared far more about British opinions of American displays than they cared about others. Good British reviews of American displays were particularly important because of this historical connection. Both narratives emphasised the United States’ historical connections with Britain and showed that American visitors and observers relied on the country and the transatlantic relationship to vindicate their displays. For many American visitors to these fairs and observers, worried about how their young nation would appear compared to the great European powers, these reviews buttressed U.S. displays and proved the nation’s suitability to participate at these events. However, after the Philadelphia Centennial these two narratives faded. At the 1887 American Exhibition in London U.S. organisers and observers did not worry about their suitability to display. And at Chicago in 1893 American visitors did not find much in the British display they considered impressive compared to European competitors like France and Germany. American visitors believed their own displays showed the country as the world’s foremost technological power and projected enough economic advancement that the country no longer required a British buttress. This image of the United States presented at Chicago fit well with popular ideas about American commercial imperialism. American commercial growth and its ability to ‘civilise’ the world via trade made it an exceptional and superior nation. When American visitors and observers wrote about British participation in these events at all they hoped that the country might serve as a conduit into European markets for U.S. products, and a source of immigration and investment.² This final narrative was far

² There is nothing definitive in the sources as to why Americans at these fairs believed Britain would be a good conduit into Europe, though one imagines the long trading relationship and shared language might be the reason. For an excellent work on Anglo-American business relations see Leland Hamilton Jenks, The Migration of British Capital to 1875 (New York: Knopf; Jonathan Cape, 1927).
less focused on the vindication the country could bestow, and rather posited Britain only as a
gateway to Europe and a trading partner. American success and corresponding self-
confidence at these events meant British vindication was far less important for American
visitors and observers by the end of the period.

These narratives show the transatlantic relationship’s lop-sidedness in the late-
ineighteenth century. British narratives about the United States’ displays at these fairs became
more firmly Anglo-Saxonist and more certain of the two nations shared racial identity as the
period progressed. The fairs presented an image of the United States as an industrial and
imperial nation, that these British visitors and observers believed could only be the product of
common Anglo-Saxon attributes. By contrast, American narratives about Britain show that
the country declined in importance for visitors and observers at these events as the period
progressed. As American visitors were confronted with larger and greater displays of U.S.
industrial and military power they became less interested in their historical connections to
Britain and developed their own identity. The United States’ relative rise to become a nation
economically similar to Britain did not engender an understanding for American visitors and
observers of the two nations as linked but actually showed how the country no longer needed
to stress its connection to Britain to vindicate its status as a global power abroad.

There is no single moment one can identify, no treaty or war, that created this lop-
sided Anglo-American relationship, when Americans lost their old cultural and historical
connection to Britain, and when British counterparts began to see the United States as a
kindred Anglo-Saxon nation. These fairs indicate that this process was more gradual in the
decades after the American Civil War, and that domestic changes in both nations caused this
transformation. Essentially, as the United States economy grew and its trade expanded
Americans no longer needed to highlight their historical connections to Britain. The growth
of heavy industry and expansion of the post-war economy dramatically changed the country.
Economically the United States’ was no longer dominated by exports of cotton to Europe,
and the country expanded its trade with all parts of the globe in myriad other goods and
products. Great industrial cities sprung up, new wealth created an American industrial
aristocracy, and an urban labouring class.3 American organisers tried, particularly by 1893, to
show that their nation was developed, culturally, industrially, and militarily enough to host
such events and compete with European powers. The World’s Columbian Exposition

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3 Two works on the Gilded Age make this point about growing American similarity to Europe well. Rebecca
and Alan. Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Hill
and Wang, 2007).
showed that Americans could ape European artistic styles and host a fair capable of rivalling others.

The United States’ rapid industrial rise, after the American Civil War, meant that Americans at these events felt more secure about their own nation’s displays and were no longer obsessed with British opinions of their products. Rebecca Edwards describes the dramatic rise of American industry in the decades after the Civil War, citing particularly the spread of rail infrastructure that allowed the industrialisation of all parts of the United States. Railroads mostly built in the 1870s and 80s allowed food, people, and new products to spread throughout the country. Edwards notes that by the cold winters of the 1880s, Chicagoans were able to purchase fresh California oranges so connected and integrated was the American economy.⁴ Impressive American technology shown at Chicago meant that Americans did not feel any need to prove their suitability to host such an event by emphasising their historical relationship to Britain. The 1876 Centennial, as the nation’s first world’s fair was potentially damaging to the country’s standing abroad, so American visitors and organisers used their connection to Britain to justify hosting the event. However, by 1887 and certainly by 1893, American visitors and observers of these fairs were more confident in the nation’s economic growth, ability to gather new and impressive displays, and standing in the world, and so no longer needed to highlight their connection to Britain.

American economic and commercial growth also shaped ideas about the country’s racial identity. As Americans went abroad after the war as tourists, traders, or missionaries their notions about how their country stacked up in the global hierarchy changed. Amy Kaplan shows how after the Western frontier’s close American expansion was directed towards opening commercial “markets” and “gateways” to new territories.⁵ Mona Domosh argues that American companies trafficked in images that suggested U.S. commerce civilised people abroad and so perpetuated a belief that the American commercial empire was superior to European colonial ones.⁶ At these fairs Americans showed themselves to be superior to other nations, even to be the pinnacle of human development. The World Columbian Exposition’s Midway and White City showed a physical racial hierarchy that placed Americans at the top of economic production and invention juxtaposed against primitive colonised peoples. It is not surprising that Americans at these events, by the final decades of

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the century, expressed no Anglo-Saxonism. They saw their country, while maybe not equal to Britain in terms of global power, as inherently superior and exceptional.

On the opposite side of the Atlantic, Hugh Tulloch notes that during the 1880s elite British liberals saw this economic transformation and began to understand that the United States as an expanding, economically dynamic, nation much like their own. Vitally these British liberals also came to believe by the 1880s that American democracy’s flaws were less important and that the best and most English people in the United States were found in business and industry. These elites saw this rapid post-war growth as a symbol of the United States’ similarity to Britain. Tulloch admits that, while British observers saw more commonalities between their nation and the United States in the decade, most Americans would not have understood their post-war economic rise as a transformation that made their nation comparable to Britain. This thesis argues though that Americans and British visitors to these fairs had different reactions to the changes in the United States Tulloch identifies. The nation’s growing economy, and ability to display new and impressive technology meant that British visitors and observers, much like elite liberals saw the United States as a comparable power in the decades after the Civil War. Their American counterparts understood this rise differently. They were initially interested in British connections to buttress the 1876 Centennial. However, by the century’s later decades U.S. displays and the country’s economy as a whole was so impressive to American visitors and observers, British links were no longer required to support the exhibitions.

Increased British interest in the United States, and popular belief that the country was an Anglo-Saxon power was also based on British anxieties about imperial and economic decline. Britain in the century’s final decades lost its economic and imperial pre-eminence. Fears about imperial competition with new powers like France and Germany were widespread in the period. New popular notions about race and British identity also emerged in the late-nineteenth century, which situated British people as inherently superior, imbued with attributes that allowed them to conquer wide swathes of the globe. For British people already concerned about the rise of new economies and new international threats to their Empire, the United States represented a friendly nation. The United States seemed to these British visitors and observers to contain all the same attributes British people saw in the themselves and could act as an ally in the new more dangerous, competitive, and fear inducing world at the end of the century.

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American and British understandings of the transatlantic relationship, as these fairs indicate, were shaped by U.S. growth and British decline. The transatlantic relationship by the last decade of the century could be described, particularly by British visitors and observers, in a racially sentimental Anglo-Saxonist language, but at core functioned as a salve to British anxieties about their own nation’s global standing. British visitors and observers were more interested in Americans and their perceived Anglo-Saxon attributes because of domestic fears. The language employed to describe the relationship was sentimental but British fascination with the United States was caused by changes to how British people conceived of the rest of the world and new emerging dangers that the U.S. could be helpful in fighting. Americans at these fairs focused less on their relationship with Britain because of their belief that their nation had developed into a global power. The Anglo-American diplomatic relationship itself did not change. What changed, and what this project records, was how visitors and observers understood their own national, and racial identities, and their countries’ positions in the world.

These asymmetrical popular perceptions of the Anglo-American relationship at world’s fairs are also evident in the different understandings in both countries of later moments in transatlantic history. For example, British newspapers followed the Spanish-American War with great enthusiasm, and the British government offered the United States assistance during the conflict. Kathleen Burk notes that the war showed, according to its British observers, that the United States was committed to imperial expansion and sharing the “white man’s burden” to settle the globe and spread Anglo-Saxon civilisation, and so displayed the two nations racial similarities. In the years following the conflict during Britain’s own imperial struggle in South Africa, the American public, according to Thomas F. Gossett, firmly sided with the Boers. The war even forced the closure of several American Anglo-Saxonist journals so unpopular was Britain as a result of the conflict. Americans during the Boer War did not feel any need or urge to support British imperialism and did not understand country’s conquest of Transvaal and the Orange Free State as confirmations of the two nations’ shared racial identity. During the United States’ own foray into territorial imperialism in the Philippines, American ideas about Anglo-Saxonism were complex. Paul Kramer notes that some Americans explained the United States conquest in Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric. However, he also shows how, after the capture of the islands, when actually governing the colony American administrators discarded notions of Anglo-Saxonism.

8 Burk, Old World, New World, pp. 414-17.
Instead they tried to create an exceptional colony that would educate and uplift Filipinos in a way no other empire had done before for its subjects.\textsuperscript{10} Americans’ exceptional identity remained even after the United States established a territorial empire. As British observers saw the United States as more similar and a new imperial power, corresponding Americans did not see any shared international interests with Britain.

Since the late-nineteenth century this uneven pattern has been repeated throughout the history of Anglo-American relations. A decade after Winston Churchill’s 1946 speech at Westminster College in Missouri, in which he described the new Cold War Special Relationship as a “growing friendship and mutual understanding between our two vast but kindred Systems of society,”\textsuperscript{11} President Dwight Eisenhower, with popular support, threatened to destroy the British economy in retaliation for the country’s invasion of Egypt.\textsuperscript{12} Churchill, much like his British predecessors, saw the two nations as intrinsically linked by a common society, not just by mere diplomatic interest. Americans in 1956, however, felt no special attachment to Britain or need to support its policy abroad. As their forbear did at the World’s Columbian Exposition and the Boer War, Americans during the Suez Crisis did not believe that United States’ international policy ought to be encumbered by British interests, or that the two nations were so similar they ought to come to one another’s aid without question. This lopsided picture of the transatlantic relationship remained even into the Cold War. Americans were far more convinced of their singular international clout, and unconcerned with British interests or transatlantic cultural similarities, and in some ways actively hostile to them.

This thesis argues that national identity and popular narratives about both nations evident at these exhibitions provide a context for foreign policy. British visitors’ and observers’ conceptions of United States at these fairs had implications for the countries’ imperial policy. The fairs were spaces for these visitors and observers to perceive similarities between the two nations and inculcated popular beliefs that the two nations should cooperate internationally. British support for American imperialism in Cuba and the Philippines can be contextualised, in some ways, by the popular British narrative seen at these fairs of Americans as fellow Anglo-Saxons committed to territorial and economic expansion. U.S.

\textsuperscript{10} Kramer pg. 90, 169
visitors and observers did not see these similarities, rather these events showed the differences between the two nations at the fairs and how the United States had grown apart from Britain and had a more distinct white American identity. Popular American disinterest in British imperialism corresponds well with this distinct American identity exhibited at these fairs. These fairs created popular sentiments about both nations and, though this project does not seek to explicitly claim reactions to the fairs dictated foreign policy, these opinions about the two nations provide some background for diplomacy in the period. This thesis argues that these popular narratives of both nations, created and expressed at these events, shaped, in some ways, how the two countries interacted into the future.

British and American responses to these fairs suggest that visitors and observers at these events understood the two nations’ racial identities and consequently their futures and economic trajectories very differently. British observers and attendees of these exhibitions saw the United States as a racially similar nation, and believed, at least when came to Americans, that their own racial and even national identity was expansive and could cross borders. American exhibits showed, according to British visitors and observers, the two nations were peopled with fellow Anglo-Saxons, and that political and economic development in the United States in some ways mirrored Britain. This understanding of British racial and national identity fits with work on the Greater British World. Historians of that concept argue that British identity was at the very least trans-regional because so much of British history occurred abroad. As an imperial and maritime nation much of British history involves the creation of new little Britains across the globe in place like North America and Australia, that were understood as part of a national whole.13 By the end of the period covered many observers thought that the United States could be a British ally in the future and based this assertion on the United States’ growing economy, and technological development as well as the country’s racial links with Britain. These exhibitions showed how the United States was widely considered part of this Greater British World.

British characterisation of the United States at these fairs also reveals that racial identity was intimately connected to how visitors and observers understood both countries’ futures. British visitors and observers believed that because of shared racial traits, and the growing American economy the two nations were certain to ally internationally, as fellow Anglo-Saxon powers. Certain racial attributes, and the capacity for material development dictated that the United States would be a great power comparable to Britain. Visitors’ and observers’ desire to provide a mould for American development, to show that protectionism

and other follies were problems that the United States needed to overcome were expressions of this understanding of the future. American development, these observers believed, was in some ways fixed and inherent because of the racial similarities and shared attributes between the nations. It was inevitable that the United States would grow because of its Anglo-Saxon racial identity.

British conceptions of the Anglo-American future, and the importance of Anglo-Saxon racial identity in national development were very different to how Americans at these events understood their own country’s rise. American visitors and observers at these fairs understood their nation had a historical connection to Britain, however unlike their British counterparts they did not believe this bond entrapped or dictated their development. Kariann Yakota argues that early-nineteenth-century Americans believed that they had created a better country, based on British examples and heritage, but also new, superior, and free of the social constraints that restrained Britain. Examination of Americans at the fairs shows that visitors and observers continued to express this understanding of the United States late into the century. American visitors did not see at the fairs proof that they were fellow Anglo-Saxons. Rather they saw their British heritage as a way to show the country was worthy of hosting a successful fair. The Centennial showed that the United States had a built a new and expansive economy on a British cultural bedrock. By 1893 American visitors to Chicago did not see these cultural links as at all necessary due to the growth of U.S. technology and military capacity. These attendees were certain the United States was an exceptionally economically developed nation in Chicago. American technology, manufacturing, and military might’s expansion proved the nation’s strength and industrial progress to visitors and observers in Chicago. These American visitors and observers believed their future was not fixed or determined by an Anglo-Saxon racial identity, they were not fated to be a new British Empire. Rather, the United States’ capacity for development, and ability to create new and exciting products and sell these products abroad made them a distinct and exceptional country.

This description of American identity and ideas about the future did not mean that American visitors’ conceptions of their own nation were not racially charged. Americans at these fairs clearly believed that the people responsible for this technological and economic development were white, and for the most part male as well. However, unlike British counterparts, American visitors at these events did not have an expansive white identity, did not look across the world to see shared inherent traits. In formulating their own white racial

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identity Americans at these fairs saw economic and technological expansion as the real cause of their increased global power. This growth was, as the 1893 fair exposed, not in any way associated with the nation’s British heritage. As the Chicago fair also reveals this American white identity was shaped by European immigration. Americans who were not of British descent and did not have any direct heritage to the colonial era, could by 1890s still be considered white Americans. Popular British and American conceptions of white racial identity were dissimilar due to immigration to the United States, and the expansion of the country’s economy in the late-nineteenth century.

This thesis argues that during this period there was a distinct American white racial identity rather than a popular Anglo-Saxon one. This characterisation is supported by Matthew Frye Jacobson’s work which notes that the United States had its own popular notions about what made one white. Ethnic identifications among both old-stock Americans, and European immigrant groups remained very important socially throughout the period. However, Jacobson argues that Americans, over the nineteenth century, developed an understanding of specific white American traits that all arrivals could aspire to. Simply being in the United States did not make a white European immigrant a white American but education and assimilation could. In the final decade of the of the nineteenth century, Jacobson notes a more rapid absorption of European immigrants citing the popularity of both imperialism in the American ethnic press, and frontier narratives with immigrants which helped bolster a distinct American white identity. Both empire building and narratives about American individuals taming the frontier were assimilatory and showed the white American character of European immigrants juxtaposed against other races.\textsuperscript{15} Other historians like Stuart Anderson have identified Eastern elites who believed they shared an Anglo-Saxon racial identity with Britain. This dissertation however, shows that, unlike elites, large regionally and socially diverse American audiences at these fairs for the most part saw a white identity as something created in the United States that European immigrants could aspire to, rather than a fixed Anglo-Saxon connection. These fairs were for Americans – particularly at Chicago – a place to prove European immigrants’ patriotism and white American qualities to inculcate and absorb newcomers. The fairs' presentation of primitive non-white people in ethnographic exhibits also showed white Americans of all backgrounds how they were superior.\textsuperscript{16} This study’s examination of audiences at world’s fairs shows that

\cite{Jacobson}

\cite{Baker}
part of the United States’ separation from Britain culturally at these events was the creation of a distinct white American identity Jacobson identifies.

This dissertation has challenged the Anglo-American relationship’s traditional historiographical narrative. Examining large and politically, socially, ethnically, and regionally diverse groups of British and American visitors and observers to these fairs, it reveals how uneven the bond between the two countries was by the century’s end. Americans did not fully shed their colonial-era cultural and historical bonds to Britain, at least in an international context, until the Reconstruction era. When Americans at these fairs felt that these older connections to Britain were no longer necessary due to economic growth, they did not replace this understanding of the transatlantic relationship with a popular belief that the two nations were fellow Anglo-Saxon powers. Rather they constructed their own distinct identity at these fairs and believed that their nation showed it was technologically and economically powerful enough abroad to participate in these events without British endorsement. By contrast, British visitors and observers consistently saw at these fairs proofs that the two nations shared a racial bond. As the period progressed these attendees saw in sharper focus a similar American imperial drive, and ability to dominate the globe explained by a shared Anglo-Saxon identity. This relationship was unbalanced, British visitors and observers were far more interested in mutual connections and similarities between the two nations; there was far more popular British belief in Anglo-Saxonism than American. This study, unlike other examinations of the transatlantic relationship, does not show a popular rapprochement between the two nations or any mutual recognition of Anglo-American similarities. Rather this thesis explains how American at these fairs through presentations of technology and consumer goods developed an understanding of their nation and racial identity as distinct from, and possibly even superior to, Britain. While British visitors and observers saw increased racial similarities between the two nations. This unevenness is reflected in British and American ideas about foreign policy. While British observers of the United States craved further imperial cooperation between the two nations in the following decades, Americans, like their compatriots at world’s fairs did not see any shared connection with Britain.
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