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The Inuit vs. the steamboat: Human exhibitionism and popular concerns about the effects of the market revolution in the Early Republic

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The Inuit vs. the Steamboat

Human Exhibitionism and Popular Concerns about the Effects of the Market Revolution in the Early Republic

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Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of my great aunt, Mary J. Morris
Acknowledgements

This thesis began as a one-off paper for HIST 673. At the time it was submitted, it was a topic that I never expected to deal with again. I would like to thank my 673 classmates and our professor, Dr. Gabrielle Lanier, for convincing me that it was a subject worth pursuing for my thesis. I would also like to thank my thesis committee: Dr. Lanier, Dr. Steven Reich, and my thesis chair, Dr. J. Chris Arndt. Thank you all for your input, encouragement, and advice during the writing of this paper. My thanks also to all my friends and family, both within the program and at home in Connecticut, especially Mom, Dad, Haley, and Uncle Donnie. Finally, I would like to thank Lauren Fleming for, first of all, convincing me to attend JMU, as well as for always being there with advice and encouragement: I’ve enjoyed following in your footsteps.
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Abstract

In the early nineteenth century, a new form of human exhibitionism spread through eastern American cities. While public displays featuring live human beings had existed since the colonial era, these new shows specifically focused on Native Americans. This paper examines one such show, the Inuit Exhibition of 1820-1821, as a case study of this phenomena. Primarily through the use of contemporary newspaper accounts, this project argues that shows like the Inuit Exhibition occurred within a cultural context that legitimized the practice of human exhibitionism as a legitimate, post-Enlightenment method of educating citizens about the natural world. Furthermore, so-called “Indian Exhibitions” were not popular solely for their novel content, but also appealed to contemporary middle class concerns about social changes brought about by the market revolution, such as increased foreign and domestic trade, the growth of cities, and early industrialization. Objectified, supposedly “primitive” Native Americans, such as the Inuit, served as symbols that simultaneously celebrated, and cautioned against, notions of “progress” in the Early Republic.
Introduction

On the afternoon of July 11, 1821, passengers aboard the steamboat *Virginia* watched an Inuit man in a sealskin boat paddle alongside them in Baltimore Harbor. As a band played over the drone of the *Virginia*’s engines, shocked spectators witnessed the small craft break through the steamboat’s wake and shoot past the larger vessel with relative ease. The race between the two craft was part of a traveling exhibition of an Inuit man and woman that toured the United States that year under the guidance of their agent, a former sea captain named Samuel Hadlock, Jr. For over six months, Hadlock and the Inuit performed for middle-class urban audiences along the eastern seaboard. The passengers on the deck of the *Virginia* were some of the last paying customers to view the exhibition; it departed for Europe several weeks later.

The Inuit show exemplified a new type of human exhibitionism that arose in the Early Republic. Following the War of 1812, Native peoples were put on display in “Indian Exhibitions” that toured east coast cities. During these shows, Native performers typically stood on display dressed in “traditional” garb and acted out scenes of “authentic” Native American life for middle-class audiences. In addition to serving as forms of entertainment, human exhibits in the Early Republic also conveyed positive messages about American progress and the effects of the “market revolution.”¹ As objectified “Others,” human exhibits provided the American public with images of...

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¹ For the sake of this paper, the term “market revolution” is used to refer to the dramatic market expansion that occurred during the early nineteenth century. The increased accessibility of foreign and domestic markets led to developments such as the growth of American cities and industry, as well as increased class stratification. For an examination of the historiography of the market revolution, please see: Melvyn Stokes, introduction to *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, eds. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 1.
primitiveness to juxtapose their modernizing nation against. In fact, the country was going through a period of immense social change at the time that the Inuit Exhibition went on display in New York City and Baltimore. With the American victory over Great Britain in 1815, the young nation entered a period of dramatic postwar prosperity. Settlers streamed westward into newly annexed territory, trade ships spread American economic interests across the globe, and cities teemed with new industry and technology. Amidst this prosperity, the middle class was opened to a wider portion of the American public.

Within the context of this paper, the term “middle class” is used to refer to a segment of the population that pursued a particular cultural mindset following the American Revolution. According to historians like Richard Bushman, this middle-class status was predicated upon the desire for “gentility,” which was historically characterized by sophisticated education and polite manners. Within a republican society, this traditional realm of Old World elites was seen as nominally open to citizens willing to work toward self-improvement. Material possessions often signified one’s commitment to a genteel way of life, and amidst a culture of increased production and consumerism, a greater portion of the American population was able to buy their way into a new social stratum.²

Due to these de facto materialistic qualifications, the makeup of the new American middle class was highly dependent upon race in the early nineteenth century; Native peoples whose lands were increasingly absorbed by the republic, and African Americans, whether enslaved or recently emancipated, rarely had the disposable income

to take part in the escalated consumerist culture of the time. Audiences that viewed human exhibits in the Early Republic, such as the Inuit show, were in all probability comprised mostly of whites. This middle-class appeal of human exhibitionism was a relatively recent development. Prior to American independence, public displays of human beings had primarily appealed to leisurely classes.

The middle-class respectability that human exhibits enjoyed in the Early Republic grew out of the larger cultural movement that emphasized the democratization of knowledge. After the American Revolution, historians like Gordon Wood observed a new popular commitment to bringing information to the American people. Public exhibitions enjoyed a long history of popularity in the American colonies, but primarily as examples of novel entertainment. The people featured in such displays were oftentimes characterized by physical disabilities and exhibited for their extraordinary appearances. With the cultural turn toward the democratization of knowledge, however, human exhibitions took on a nominally educational veneer. No longer were people put on display solely for their exotic novelty, but also for their ability to educate audiences.

In this regard, American exhibits resembled contemporary European shows. Beginning in Great Britain specifically, public shows featuring human beings were used to reinforce new scientific notions of race, and to simultaneously justify British territorial expansion. The best known example of this phenomenon was the 1810 exhibition of a Khoisan woman named Saartjie Baartman. The Baartman’s exhibit was used to reinforce white supremacist theories of racial science, as well as British colonialism in southern Africa. Several years after Baartman went on display in British urban centers, American

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3 The Khoisan are an ethnolinguistic group native to southwestern Africa.
showmen began to display peoples similarly coming under the forces of American territorial and economic expansion and to infuse their exhibitions with educational rhetoric.

Following the War of 1812, the focus of human exhibits in the United States shifted toward Native Americans. Displays of physically disabled individuals certainly continued, but it was primarily the Indian Exhibitions that took on a respectable, educational appearance. Such performances typically featured admission prices catered to middle-class patrons, and appealed to the middle-class demand for self-improvement through publicly accessible education. After the American victory in 1815, Native American resistance in the West was temporarily broken. As settlers made their way into these new territories, public interest in their indigenous inhabitants, as well as the belief that they were doomed to extinction through the forces of national expansion, led to a particular interest in Native peoples in general, particularly in east coast cities. At the same time, public institutions also catered to popular interests in the lands touched by American economic expansion. The Inuit who toured the United States during 1820-1821 represented a type of hybridity between these twin interests.

The dual identity of the Inuit with American audiences stemmed from their status as indigenous inhabitants of North America that were not in the path of American territorial expansion. For the middle-class patrons of Hadlock’s show, the performers represented both the “primitive” Native peoples that contemporary Euro-American progress threatened to exterminate, and the distant locations impacted by American commerce. Upon their arrival in the United States, the physical bodies of the Inuit were
emphasized in order to celebrate American economic growth and the rise of the middle class within a society experiencing hardening class divisions.

In December 1820, Hadlock and his traveling exhibition arrived in New York City. Originally, the show featured three Inuit: a young man, a young woman, and her infant son. While sources agree that the child’s name was Ekeloak, there is uncertainty over the names of the adult Inuit performers. This paper refers to them as George and Mary, due to the fact that they were known by these names in their home region of Labrador. While some contemporaries referred to the male Inuit as Niakungituk and the female as Tonnujak, these may well have been patronizing names concocted by supporters of the exhibition in order to further the exotic nature of their display. Indeed, Hadlock himself made up multiple names and titles for his employees in an attempt to play up their mysterious and foreign origins. This tactic was used to obscure the Inuits’ true backgrounds, which directly contradicted Hadlock’s narrative.

In addition to the conscious decision to refer to George, Mary, and Ekeloak by those specific names, this paper also uses the term Inuit to describe their racial backgrounds. Contemporary sources unanimously labeled the three individuals Esquimaux, a term better known by its anglicized form, Eskimo. While this demonym was universally accepted by Westerners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, today it is often regarded as derogatory by Native peoples of the Arctic regions. Although the etymology is disputed, it is popularly believed that the word Esquimaux derived from a hostile tribe’s derisive term for “eaters of raw flesh.” Conversely, the term Inuit is an indigenous word meaning “the people,” and refers to the traditional belief that the Arctic
natives were the only true human beings on the planet; other groups were thought to be comprised of individuals descended from animals and demons.\(^4\)

Despite Hadlock’s assurances that he met the three Inuit in the remote Arctic, and that they therefore represented an isolated, primitive people, George, Mary, and Ekeloak were actually from a relatively Westernized region of Labrador. When word of Hadlock’s deception eventually broke in New York, the show was immediately shut down amid public outcry. On the surface, New Yorkers were upset that they had not seen what they had paid for, but on a deeper level, their anger also revealed how important “authenticity” was to the exhibit’s popularity. In the early nineteenth century, Native Americans, and Inuit in particular, represented peoples that were antithetical to the citizens of the Early Republic; the forms of George, Mary, and Ekeloak provided counterpoints that strengthened contemporary white, middle-class American social norms related to issues such as gentility and motherhood. The truth that the Inuit were from a Westernized area shattered that mindset, and negated their function as symbols of primitive novelty and of far-flung American commercial expansion.

Due to the collapse of Hadlock’s narrative regarding the Inuits’ identities, subsequent incarnations of the exhibition downplayed their focus on the physical bodies of George and Mary; Ekeloak tragically passed away in New York. Once the show moved on to Baltimore, the program emphasized the artifacts that accompanied the Inuit more so than the Inuit themselves. Specifically, Hadlock shifted the focus of the exhibit to a twenty-foot-long boat made from driftwood and sealskin that George brought with him from Labrador. The sealskin craft was ideal for conditions in and around the Arctic,

where its waterproof and flexible hull protected passengers from freezing water and errant ice floes, but within the context of the Early Republic, the boat took on a new meaning amidst a culture obsessed with innovation and technology.

The city of Baltimore exemplified the *zeitgeist* of technological progress that characterized early nineteenth-century America. While postwar New York implemented policies that encouraged overseas trade, Baltimore took a more-active stance toward encouraging manufacturing and technological innovation. Prior to the American Revolution, the community along the northern reaches of the Chesapeake Bay existed mainly as a modest port that primarily dealt in the shipment of tobacco. Following American independence, however, and the supplanting of tobacco with more profitable grain crops in the surrounding countryside, Baltimore grew into the center of the American grain trade. By the time the Inuit Exhibition toured the city during the summer of 1821, the prosperity from the grain trade resulted in a booming population and a wealth of capital that was invested into industry and the development of new technology. While cities like New York capitalized on postwar conditions that favored direct trade with other nations, Baltimore represented more of a dedication to manufacturing, especially through the use of the steam engine.

In Baltimore, the steam engine freed entrepreneurs and nascent industrialists from a reliance on water power; steam engines weakened the bonds between technological progress and nature. Steam-powered factories allowed for the spread of manufacturing complexes and mills within city limits, and reliable, steam-powered ships led to the extension of American hegemony over newly-acquired lands in the West. Hadlock’s race between the sealskin boat and a steamboat in Baltimore Harbor juxtaposed an example of
supposedly primitive Inuit technology against one of the premier examples of American technological prowess. While the Inuit may have been from colonized areas of Canada, and their resultant knowledge of Western languages and religion popularly discredited their statuses as “uncivilized” or “savage,” their boat remained a symbol of primitive simplicity. As such, the object enhanced celebratory notions of American technological progress, and, contradictorily, also appealed to emerging ideas associated with the Romantic Movement which valued pre-industrial, natural ideals. The sealskin craft thus symbolized both American progress and an idealized, pre-industrial past that the country was leaving behind.

After touring the United States for six months, Hadlock and the Inuit departed for Europe, where the showman found even more success than he encountered in New York and Baltimore. Despite his fame overseas, Hadlock never again worked as a showman in the United States, and tragically George and Mary both died before they were able to return to Labrador. Following the exhibition’s departure in mid-1821, American human exhibitionism continued, but gradually shed its respectable, middle class-veneer. As Gordon Wood noted, one consequence of the democratization of knowledge was that museum proprietors increasingly pushed the limits of what items qualified as “educational” to put on display in their establishments. Some museum owners vulgarized the information they presented to the public through the exhibition of blatant “curiosities” in order to compete with rival museums and to continually provide paying audiences with interesting viewing material.⁵ A similar phenomenon occurred within the realm of human exhibitionism.

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Almost fifteen years after the Inuit Exhibition left the United States, the country’s best-known showman of the nineteenth century got his start under similar, nominally respectable circumstances. Connecticut native Phineas Taylor Barnum began his career through the public exhibition of an elderly African-American woman named Joice Heth. According to the showman that sold Barnum Heth’s contract, she was a 161-year-old slave that took care of George Washington as a child. Despite the fanciful and extraordinary nature of the exhibit, public displays of Heth followed the ostensibly-educational format of predecessors like the Inuit Exhibition. For instance, Heth’s supposed bill of sale to the Washington family from 1727 was exhibited alongside her in order to verify her backstory, and upon her death, Barnum sold tickets to a public autopsy that he falsely believed would scientifically verify her age.6

Although the Heth expositions were technically supported by evidence of her remarkable identity, they also signaled the beginning of a different type of human exhibitionism in the United States. According to Barnum scholar Neil Harris, what differentiated Barnum from earlier American showmen was his blatant prioritizing of entertainment over education. Crucially, Barnum knowingly exploited the ambiguity that surrounded his exhibits’ authenticity in order to draw in more customers.7 Barnum’s model proved widely successful and ironically returned human exhibitionism to its pre-Enlightenment era roots. Barnum’s de-emphasis of his show’s educational content essentially changed its formula to that of earlier exhibits that baldly focused on physical novelty. Barnum and his imitators helped remove human exhibitionism in the United States from its brief position as a legitimate, ostensibly educational phenomenon.

7 Harris, Humbug, 22-23.
Within the larger evolution of American human exhibitionism, Indian Exhibitions experienced a particular fate. After the 1820s, evidence suggests that the spectacles largely disappeared for roughly fifty years. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the formula of Indian Exhibitions reappeared in the form of Wild West Shows. According to Joy S. Kasson, the appeal of Wild West Shows was largely related to an urban desire for escapist entertainment during the rapid social change of the Second Industrial Revolution. Additionally, the popular interest in the Wild West was also inextricably tied to contemporary notions of the “closed” Western frontier and the end of organized Native American resistance to white settlement. The specific popularity of Indian Exhibitions during the early and late nineteenth century was likely related to remarkably similar phenomena that occurred during those eras: both time periods saw a marked increase in industrialization, as well as the cessation of conflict with Native tribes in the West. Indian Exhibitions presented middle-class urban audiences with subjugated, non-threatening “primitive” people that helped them come to terms with their own rapidly changing culture.

The historiography of Indian Exhibitions is dominated by studies of late nineteenth-century displays. Historians such as L.G. Moses and Joy S. Kasson have painstakingly examined the social factors that made Wild West Shows so popular with East Coast urbanites during the late nineteenth century, but their research does not thoroughly study earlier American displays of Native peoples or make connections between the shows that arose following the War of 1812 and those that began after the

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“closing” of the western frontier. There are no known academic studies devoted solely to Indian Exhibitions of the Early Republic. This work uses the 1820-1821 Inuit Exhibition as a case study to investigate this phenomenon and draw attention to the cultural precedents of later Wild West Shows.

The historiography of general human exhibitionism in the United States during the early nineteenth century is also lacking. The majority of studies on the subject during that era focus on contemporaneous events in Europe, beginning with the public exhibition of Saartjie Baartman in 1810. Scholars such as Gilles Boetsch, Pascal Blanchard, S. Solly and Bernth Lindfors have all studied human exhibitionism during the early nineteenth century, but their focus is limited to Europe, despite the fact that the phenomenon arose in the United States at around the same time. American exhibits of human beings were based on many of the same social and scientific concerns that led to displays of “exotic” people such as Baartman, but transnational connections between the shows have not been explored. Through a comparative approach, this paper intends to show that European and American human exhibits during the early 1800s were related, not necessarily through direct emulation, but that they grew out of similar post-Enlightenment era concerns about the developments associated with market expansion.

Despite the lack of scholarship on American human exhibits during the Early Republic, there is a growing amount of research being done on the subject of

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9 These specific works are: Kasson, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, and L.G. Moses, Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

exhibitionism in general. Specifically, this work is being done by Brett Mizelle, a professor of History and American Studies at California State University Long Beach. Mizelle does not focus on displays of people, but rather on the cultural meanings of early American exhibitionism in general, especially through the study of animal exhibitions. Despite his lack of focus on public displays of human beings, Mizelle’s work provides historical insight that can be expanded and applied to the study of human exhibitionism in the Early Republic.\textsuperscript{11}

It is crucial to note that this paper is not the first work done on Samuel Hadlock Jr.’s traveling Inuit Exhibition. In 1934, American author Rachel Lyman Field published \textit{God’s Pocket: The Story of Captain Samuel Hadlock, Junior of Cranberry Isle, Maine}\.\textsuperscript{12} Field, best known for her popular children’s books, wrote the work after obtaining Hadlock’s journal from his descendants. \textit{God’s Pocket} was written in the form of a novel, and received only a limited publication upon its release. Field’s source material was recorded by Hadlock during his sojourn in Europe following his American tour, and contained no information on the exhibitions studied in this paper.\textsuperscript{13} In 2003, however, the Islesford Historical Society in Cranberry Island, Maine published a short sequel, \textit{Beyond God’s Pocket}, which attempted to summarize the history of the exhibition in the United States. While the work does contain historical sources, it is mostly a novelized biography


of Hadlock, a one-time resident of Cranberry Island. This paper will analyze the American incarnation of Hadlock’s show, and examine the ways that George, Mary, and Ekeloak appealed to the middle-class audiences that paid to see them in New York and Baltimore during the early 1820s.

Chapter 1

When audiences paid to view Samuel Hadlock, Jr.’s traveling Inuit Exhibition, they were taking part in an American cultural phenomenon that had existed for decades. However, the practice of public exhibitionism in general, and human exhibitionism in particular, was also in the midst of a cultural transformation brought about by factors associated with transatlantic influences associated with the Enlightenment and aftereffects of the War of 1812. From the beginning, these public exhibitions were primarily an urban phenomenon. Port cities with direct access to foreign markets, as well as concentrated population bases, attracted showmen and their acts before and after the American Revolution. Earlier public exhibits had mostly featured exotic animals and were generally viewed as leisurely forms of entertainment. It was not until the second decade of the nineteenth century that the exhibition of human beings became a cultural force in the United States.

Several concurrent trends in American culture gave birth to human exhibitionism. While earlier public exhibits had drawn in spectators by openly catering to curiosity and novelty, exhibitions in the Early Republic also took on an educational veneer that placed them within the cultural movement that saw the democratization of knowledge in the new nation. The combination of the exotic and the application of scientific theory resulted in human exhibitions that encouraged particular racial messages. Much like contemporaneous shows in Britain, which featured African performers, displays in the United States focused on peoples coming under the forces of national expansion. Specifically, American exhibitions focused on Native Americans and through objectifying the performers, contributed to the popular belief that Native peoples
and culture were disappearing. The nominally educational format of human exhibits, their relation to popular culture beliefs, and their admission prices made them a primarily middle-class form of entertainment.

Early public exhibitions typically provided the public with entertaining displays of visibly disabled individuals or exotic animals. For instance, New York audiences were treated to shows featuring Capitello Jumpedo, the “surprising Dwarf,” during the summer of 1749.¹ Less than a decade later, New Yorkers were similarly invited to view an awe-inspiring Buffalo “lately brought back from the Mississippi.”² Both of these shows marketed themselves to audiences based purely on their novel entertainment value, without any of the academic pretensions that characterized later exhibits of the Early Republic. Animal exhibitions were especially popular prior to American independence. According to Brett Mizelle, this popularity was due to their ability to expose Americans to faraway, exotic locations.³ Shows such as the ones featuring Jumpedo and the buffalo were primarily found in coastal cities, much like later public exhibitions, likely as a result of their direct access to distant markets and their high populations of potential customers.

Prior to American independence, public exhibitions were mostly considered leisurely forms of entertainment. Accordingly, the shows were temporarily stopped during the American Revolution as men and materiel were diverted into the war effort.⁴ As late as the first decade of the nineteenth century, displays that specifically featured animal novelties were lampooned by critics as pointless and decadent. In 1809, a humor magazine in Boston ran a parody of an exhibition advertisement that featured a “sapient

¹ “Lately Arrived From Italy.” New-York Gazette, June 26, 1749.
² “To Be Seen.” New-York Mercury, January 16, 1758.
oyster.” According to the ad, the oyster was capable of such feats as playing chess, sweeping chimneys, practicing law, defeating Napoleon, and conjuring ghosts. Tickets for adults cost one dollar, apes were half-price, and for “fools, gratis.”5 This scathing caricature of exhibitions based on novelty occurred amid a social climate that disparaged public displays that did not contribute to the cultural betterment of the new nation.

In the immediate postwar era, public exhibitions resumed, but took on a more educational form. This functional transition from public entertainment to public education fits within the cultural turn identified by Gordon Wood which saw the “democratization” of knowledge in the Early Republic. According to Wood, revolutionary-era rhetoric about democracy and republicanism led to an increased desire for visible, sensory forms of knowledge by large segments of the American population.6 The research of Brett Mizelle supports Wood’s argument, and shows that even before American showmen began displaying people, public exhibitions began to wade into the realm of democratized knowledge. For example, items and animals from west of the Mississippi River, such as the aforementioned Buffalo, were used as a means to physically educate audiences about new areas absorbed by American settlers.7 The first displays of human beings based on scientific ideas were held in the United States within this atmosphere of nominally educational public exhibitions.

The proliferation of new ideas following the American Revolution led to new theories about race, and human exhibitions incorporated many of those new hypotheses. Beginning in 1796, an African American man named Harry Moss first put himself on

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public display in Maryland. An army veteran from Virginia, Moss exhibited himself after a medical condition caused him to lose the pigmentation of his skin, and to apparently “become…white.”8 This phenomenon seemingly verified the racial theories of educated men like Dr. Benjamin Rush that non-European peoples could become both physically and culturally white through the willful adoption of Euro-American culture. Ultimately, this school of thought only enjoyed a brief period of academic legitimacy, and began to retreat to the margins of popular thought by the early nineteenth century.9

Although the scientific ideas that drove the exhibition of Moss were relatively short-lived, his display represented one of the earliest instances of nominally educational human exhibitionism in the United States, and its specific focus on race set a trend that was followed by subsequent exhibitions. While precise aspects of racial science were contested during the Early Republic, such as the question of whether peoples of non-European descent could become white, Western scholars generally agreed that all human beings were members of the same species.10 Despite this agreement, however, it was also popularly believed that the species was divided into a hierarchy that was dependent on physical characteristics of race.

Scientific notions of racial hierarchy first arose among European academics associated with the Enlightenment and were subsequently spread by their counterparts in the United States. One of the most influential American tracts related to the subject was Jedidiah Morse’s Geography Made Easy, which went through nineteen editions following its initial publication in 1791. Morse prefaced his geographic work by

8 “A Great Curiosity.” Federal Gazette (Baltimore), July 9, 1796.
10 Chiles, Transformable Race, 16.
introducing his audience to the theories of race propagated by Enlightenment-era naturalists such as Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte du Buffon and Carolus Linnaeus. Specifically, Morse endorsed the idea that there were six racial varieties of the human species and that Europeans constituted the preeminent group. In defense of his thesis, Morse championed Europe’s comparative “intellectual and moral” superiority versus the “slothful,” “effeminate,” and “barbarous” peoples of other continents.\footnote{Jedidiah Morse, Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgement of the American Universal Geography (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1802), 409-410.} The cultural development that encouraged the democratization of knowledge in public exhibits and museums helped racial notions such as these become mainstream in the United States.

In his Philadelphia museum, Charles Willson Peale was interested in taxonomically showing the “natural order” of humanity through the use of artifacts. Peale’s order placed Western Europeans and their descendants at the top, and specifically placed Khoisan people, an ethnic group from southern Africa, at the bottom.\footnote{Mizelle, “He Cannot Behold It Without Beholding Himself,” 163.} Peale’s typology was far from unique; at the dawn of the nineteenth century, Khoisan people were popularly relegated to the lower levels of humanity by many Western scholars. Travel accounts from southern Africa proliferated at this time and Khoisan people, then-known by the derisive term “Hottentot,” were mocked in the press, especially for their physical appearances. In one widely serialized editorial, the author joked relentlessly about the physique of Khoisan women and their practices of personal adornment.\footnote{“Hottentot Ladies.” Jenk’s Portland (Maine) Gazette, November 11, 1799.} For the unnamed European traveler, the outer appearance of the Khoisan marked them as an indelible and inferior “Other” compared to the society that he or she was accustomed to.
Peale’s museum did not specifically use living human beings to illustrate his hierarchical beliefs, but he did employ tactics that played upon muddled academic views on race. In the early nineteenth century, taxonomical similarities between humans and apes were recognized by some scholars; the children’s book, *People of All Nations*, even listed orangutans as a lower order of humanity.\(^\text{14}\) In 1799, Peale put a stuffed orangutan on display in his museum, which he described as “a curious animal so nearly approaching the human species.”\(^\text{15}\) An exhibit in Baltimore even went so far as to describe the live orangutan that starred in their show as a “Guinea Lady,” implying the exhibit’s human African nature.\(^\text{16}\) All of these mediums exploited the opaque taxonomic boundaries between man and animal as well as contemporary racism. While American shows operated largely within this biological gray area, simultaneous developments in Europe changed how people would be displayed in the Western world.

In September 1810, a Khoisan woman named Saartjie Baartman arrived in London from southwestern Africa. Originally a domestic servant, Baartman was exhibited throughout Britain by her employer’s brother under the stage name “Hottentot Venus.” Although non-Western peoples had been displayed in Europe for centuries, Baartman is recognized as being the first person whose display was defined by the scientific and racial beliefs that had developed in Western Europe during the Enlightenment. Giles Boetsch and Pascal Blanchard maintain that these beliefs went beyond a simple hierarchical ordering of humanity, and effectively classified the Khoisan as an “‘intermediate race’ between men and animals.”\(^\text{17}\) From the outset, the first modern


\(^{15}\) “Peale’s Museum.” *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia)*, April 13, 1799.

\(^{16}\) “Naked Truths.” *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser (Baltimore)*, December 18, 1818.

\(^{17}\) Boetsch and Blanchard, “The Hottentot Venus: Birth of a ‘Freak’ (1815),” 62.
human exhibit was popularly recognized as an objectified “Other” by her Western audiences. However, like the Inuit Exhibition eleven years later, much of what audiences saw was specifically crafted by Baartman’s promoters.

British audiences expected to see a certain type of individual when they visited Baartman’s exhibit based on published traveler’s accounts. What they witnessed fit perfectly within popularly disseminated stereotypes. According to visitors, Baartman was shown to audiences wearing a close-fitting skin-colored body suit, so as to convey an appearance of nakedness. Due to the fact that Baartman had worked as a servant in a colonial household before traveling to Britain, it is clear that this was an intentionally inaccurate representation of how Baartman dressed and looked in her home country. Her promoters consciously created her shocking and “uncivilized” appearance in spite of her true background in order to pander to the preconceptions of their audience.

The artificial nudity found in the Baartman exhibition would have been seen as culturally authentic to British audiences due to so many accounts that fixated on the supposed uncivilized marker of Khoisan nakedness. For instance, in 1800, the French clergyman Nicolas Hamel published an informative book on world geography and history in London. His section devoted to the Khoisan people made mention of their “uncivilized” seminomadic lifestyle and religious beliefs, but focused vividly on the fact that Khoisan women’s “breasts, legs, and thighs have no covering.” Baartman’s people were already dehumanized and objectified years before she arrived in Britain; indeed, the overtly sexual nature of how Khoisan women were described by Europeans like Hamel directly contributed to her demeaning stage name.

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Human exhibits like Baartman were presented in such a way that they became racial archetypes. For instance Baartman’s “nakedness” not only reflected upon her as an individual, but also Sub-Saharan Africans in general. Human exhibits visually reinforced popular Western ideas about non-whites that were rooted in Enlightenment-era notions of racial hierarchy. According to Boetsch and Blanchard, the public display of Baartman reified African people in general as a group that was racially and culturally inferior to whites. Essentially, Baartman was not presented as a unique individual, but was used as a representative for an entire race of people who were doomed to be colonized or disappear through contact with Europeans. This in turn helped encourage colonialist discourse about the need for “advanced” nations to colonize and “civilize” territories inhabited by racial inferiors. Indeed, at the same time that Baartman was on display, British forces were expanding their dominion in southern Africa through a brutal war against the Xhosa people. The practice of displaying peoples coming under forces of expansion similarly appeared in the United States around this time.

Following the War of 1812, Native Americans were first put on display in the United States. Earlier American exhibits of people like Harry Moss, the African American man who was supposedly turning white, were not used to make generalizations about entire groups of people; Moss drew crowds because he was exceptional, not because his condition was widespread. Interestingly, it does not appear that the contemporary developments in regards to exhibited racial archetypes were directly connected in the United States and Great Britain. Due to the war between the two

20 Boetsch and Blanchard, “Hottentot Venus,” 69.
countries that lasted from 1812-1815, little information about Baartman reached
American audiences until 1816, a full year after her death.\(^{22}\) American exhibits that
generalized about race were products of existing Enlightenment-era ideas of racial
hierarchy combined with unprecedented postwar territorial expansion. With Britain
defeated, American settlers pushed westward in ever increasing numbers with dire
consequences for the Native peoples who inhabited those lands.

Beginning in 1815, the cultural phenomenon of Indian Exhibitions proliferated
throughout the northeastern United States. The Inuit Exhibition that went on tour five
years later was a specific example of this trend. The increased public interest in Native
Americans at this time was ultimately the result of the recent military victory over the
British, and more importantly, their Native American allies. As Donald R. Hickey has
noted, the American victory in 1815 was most keenly felt in Native communities along
the western frontier.\(^{23}\) While the main thrust of the war effort was ostensibly directed
against the British, the conflict also encompassed campaigns of Native resistance with
roots that preceded the formal declaration of war in 1812. One of the best-known
examples of this phenomenon was Tecumseh’s War, which began as a fight against white
encroachment on Native lands in the Old Northwest in 1811, but was later interwoven
into the war between the British and Americans.\(^{24}\)

Similarly, as the war continued the goals of American policymakers and military
commanders evolved at the expense of western tribes. Most notable were the
southwestern campaigns of Andrew Jackson that essentially became wars of conquest

\(^{22}\) “Letters in Paris.” *Boston Intelligencer*, September 14, 1816.
against frontier tribes such as the Creek. For Native peoples, the end results of the War of 1812 were twofold. Not only would white settlers continue to push into Native lands, but now they would do so at the expense of tribes that no longer had the benefits of British support. By 1815, Americans increasingly saw frontier tribes as powerless to stop westward expansion. Only a year after the war’s end, on the eve of Indiana’s statehood, one Albany editorialist opined that the population of eastern states was being sucked westward as people moved “in search of new lands and more elbow-room.”

Organized Native American resistance was no longer a formidable barrier to the nation’s push to the west; their military defeats during the War of 1812 effectively hampered their ability to fight against white encroachment.

Following the conflict, land seizures were not solely justified as spoils of war, but were also increasingly defended on legal grounds and even from a humanitarian standpoint. Legal historian Stuart Banner observed that western Natives were regularly reclassified as land “occupants” rather than landowners during this time. This development was based on the misconception that Natives failed to cultivate their lands, and therefore had no legal right to ownership. According to Banner, such inaccuracies were the result of white ignorance of Native lifeways as well as opportunists eager for additional justification to take Native land. Additionally, some moral reformers claimed that an overabundance of land was the cause of the supposedly roving and unsettled lives led by western Native Americans; with less land, tribes would be forced to adopt

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27 Albany Advertiser, January 13, 1816, 1.
agricultural ways of life and become as “civilized” as their white neighbors. In 1819, President James Monroe approved a bill for humanitarian aid that starkly outlined the consequences for Native Americans who rejected the advances of agriculture and white civilization. According to the “Act Making Provisions for the Civilization of the Indian Tribes adjoining the Frontier Settlements,” resistance would result in nothing less than the “final extinction” of tribes along the border.

Through sentiments such as these, the disappearance of Native American ways of life became seen as natural and inevitable. Native peoples living in the path of American migration were given the choice of either giving up their culture or disappearing. According to early American historian John Demos, belief in the latter option was related to historical observations of Euro-American and Native American relations. As low population figures for Native peoples in the Northeastern United States illustrated, contact between the two groups apparently really could result in Native American extinction. Western tribes faced few options by 1820: either attempt to assimilate to American “civilization,” meet the same fate as the peoples who once populated the Northeast, or submit to policies of “Indian removal.” While removal policies are most synonymous with the 1830s, they were already established by the time of the Inuit Exhibition. In fact, from 1817-1821, ten transactions occurred between Native tribes and the federal government that resulted in the removal of thousands of Natives west of the Mississippi River. Whether through “assimilation,” extermination, or removal, Native

30 “An Act.” National Standard (Middlebury, Vermont), May 12, 1819.
32 Banner, How the Indians Lost Their Land, 194.
American ways of life were popularly seen as fleeting by many white observers by the early 1820s.

Amid celebrations of the American victory over Great Britain, the first recorded “Indian Exhibition” was held at the Columbian Museum in Boston in late February 1815. For fifty cents, adults could view a band of Oneida warriors who had fought with the American Army against the British along the frontier. Beginning at 7:00 in the evening, audiences were treated to authentic ritual dances performed in “the true Indian style.”

This instance was apparently part of a larger east coast tour, as only weeks later, the warriors appeared at a “Grand Indian Exhibition” in Portsmouth, New Hampshire where they indulged audiences with a genuine Native American “war feast.”

Exhibitions such as these included several similarities. Most noticeable was the fact that the actions of the varied performers were interpreted as exemplifying those of an overall “Indian race,” much in the way that Saartjie Baartman was used as an archetype for all Africans. Within the contemporary racial hierarchies that placed whites at the top and Africans such as the Khoisan at the bottom, the position of Native Americans was often much more variable. In 1816, for instance, Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill published an account wherein he attempted to deconstruct the racial origins of the American Indians and place them within a hierarchical system. According to Mitchill, a natural history professor in New York, natives of the Americas had common racial origins in eastern Asia. Mitchill further held that the Native American race contained two varieties, those who inhabited North America and the more “civilized” tribes that lived below the equator.

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33 “Peace And War Dances.” *Boston Gazette*, February 27, 1815.
in Central and South America.\textsuperscript{35} This opinion gave scientific legitimacy to the idea that all Native Americans in the United States were part of the same race.

As racial scholar Katy Chiles has noted, Euro-American hypotheses on Native American race were more complex than the theories they applied to individuals of African descent. According to Chiles, the complicating factor for distinguishing Native peoples along racial lines was the fact that from a physical standpoint, they were not seen as radically different from whites. These difficulties led to theories which stressed culture as well as race in establishing Native peoples as an “Other.” Due to the fact that the two groups were already racially similar, Native Americans were seen as being especially capable of becoming “civilized” through the adoption of white cultural norms, especially agriculture.\textsuperscript{36} This in turn encouraged the belief that Native American culture was disappearing and fueled the novelty of Indian Exhibitions that featured it in an “authentic” fashion.

Devotion to “authenticity” was another common element found in postwar Indian Exhibitions, and much like in the displays of Saartjie Baartman it was conveyed to audiences through the outerwear of performers. This devotion served as a way to seemingly preserve aspects of supposedly vanishing Native cultures, and as a means to define performers in opposition to their audiences. During the last week of December 1817, a multiday Indian Exhibition was held in Charlestown, Massachusetts, just outside Boston. Promoters for the event assured spectators that the show provided accurate depictions of Native American life, especially through its display of the performers in

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\textsuperscript{35} “Zoological Disquisition.” \textit{Republican Advocate (Batavia, New York)}, May 11, 1816.
\textsuperscript{36} Chiles, \textit{Transformable Race}, 18.
}
their “native garbs.” A year later advertisements for an exhibition of seven Native Americans in New York City similarly extolled the role that outerwear played in establishing racial authenticity. Unlike most promotions that complemented descriptions of Native clothing by promising other supposedly authentic practices, such as archery, the New York show primarily touted the fact that audiences would have the opportunity to view performers in “their native costumes and tattooed faces.”

The use of clothing, or the combination of clothing and tattoos, was a means to underscore the “Otherness” of Native American performers. As the research of Katy Chiles has shown, the variable place of Native peoples within white notions of racial hierarchy necessitated the use of cultural markers in order to support notions of Native American racial inferiority; outerwear served this purpose. Performers in Native American clothing also presented audiences with a rare chance to physically view a culture that was popularly thought to be doomed and a race that was thus destined for massive change. If American policies were correct, within mere decades Native Americans, such as the performers in Charlestown and New York, would either be “civilized” or gone.

A final similarity found among the postwar Indian Exhibitions was the somewhat celebratory way that Native Americans were presented to the public. Although each show typically included aspects related to Native American warfare, these displays were also balanced out by tribal councils, songs, and “peace dances.” This format was related to contemporary beliefs related to the noble/ignoble savage dichotomy and the desire of

37 “Indian Warriors.” Boston Commercial Gazette, December 29, 1817.
white Americans to selectively create a unique American culture that incorporated aspects of both the Old and New Worlds.

The trope of the noble and ignoble savage existed for generations before the advent of Indian Exhibitions. According to historian L.G. Moses, the dichotomy was elastic and could be applied by Euro-Americans to Native peoples variably depending on the specific situation. The noble savage was typically presented as being simple-minded and friendly, and living in harmony with nature. The ignoble savage, on the other hand, was thought of as dull-witted, warlike and bloodthirsty. Despite the seemingly contradictory nature of these two schools of thought, they both succeeded in portraying Native Americans as objectified inferiors.\(^{40}\) No matter how positive Native peoples may have been presented in Indian Exhibitions, it was within the framework of racial inferiority and the popular belief that Native peoples were either culturally or literally dying out.

The perception that Native American ways of life were declining through contact with whites made it easier for audiences to take an interest in Indian Exhibitions. Historian Joyce Appleby found that ideas about Native impermanence led to prominent Native Americans being “ritually cleansed” in popular thought, especially following their death or subjugation by whites. Appleby specifically noted how Tecumseh was recast as an American hero only years after his death at the hands of American troops.\(^{41}\) In the urbanizing northeastern United States, the Wampanoag leader Metacom (better known by his English nickname King Philip) was specifically rehabilitated by whites during this

time period. In 1675, Metacom led a campaign to drive whites from New England, but over a century later was written about as a “magnanimous hero” and the subject of statues and songs. Defeated and deceased Native figures, such as Tecumseh and Metacom, provided non-threatening and silent subject matter for Euro-Americans to mold into national symbols.

Following American independence, popular questions began to arise about the particulars of a uniquely American culture. Initially, animal exhibitions had contributed to this cultural search by displaying native fauna, such as buffalo, that highlighted the unique natural resources of the continent. With Native American tribes no longer considered an organized threat following the War of 1812, especially along the east coast where Native populations had been low for decades, the exhibits of Native peoples sent similar messages to spectators through the selective underscoring of “noble” aspects indigenous to the American continent. The east coast popularity of Indian Exhibitions was in some ways related to anxieties related to the effects of the market revolution and nostalgia for the preindustrial era, as will be discussed in the third chapter of this work. Conversely however, the exhibition of Native peoples also held appeal as a way to distinguish between racial attributes native to the Americas and those associated with the whites who had colonized them.

During the late eighteenth century, European notions of race were closely tied to ideas of environmental determinism. According to this theory, an area’s environment caused the racial attributes of its inhabitants. For example, the physical and meteorological attributes of the Americas were seen as being responsible for the racial

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42 “Bristol.” Herald of the United States (Warren, Rhode Island), June 19, 1801.
condition of Native Americans. A subset of this school of thought also held that environmental forces were so strong that peoples transplanted from one continent to another could start to racially “degrade” so as to acclimate to their new habitat. Following American independence, with the new nation formally separated from Europe, this fear drew the attention of academics on both sides of the Atlantic.44

In 1810, the American theologian and academic Samuel Stanhope Smith published an updated edition of his 1787 work, An Essay on the Causes and Varieties of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species, wherein he directly addressed ideas of environmental determinism. While he did not discount the theory outright, Smith held that Euro-Americans were uniquely immune to the forces of racial degeneration because of their “arts of civilization.”45 According to Gordon Wood, this viewpoint was readily adopted by American audiences.46 Indian Exhibitions therefore presented spectators with a group that they were comparatively superior to due to their distinct “civilization.” This emphasis on civilization related both to the European cultural legacy of American whites, as well as the social advancements that were occurring within the United States during the early nineteenth century, especially those which saw the rise of the middle class.

During the early nineteenth century, human exhibitions were primarily a middle-class affair. This was true of public exhibitions in general, and of other forms of “democratized” knowledge in the Early Republic such as museums. In 1793, Charles Willson Peale intentionally set the price of admission for his Philadelphia museum at 25

44 Chiles, Transformative Race, 20-21.
46 Wood, Empire of Liberty, 722.
cents\textsuperscript{47} to draw in middle-class audiences. Peale reasoned that his price would draw in interested middle-class patrons, and at the same time dissuade potentially disruptive poor people from visiting his museum.\textsuperscript{48} A comparative analysis of the Indian Exhibitions that occurred after the War of 1812 similarly reveals that audiences uniformly paid no more than 50 cents per show.\textsuperscript{49}

The growth of the middle class in the Early Republic contained several defining characteristics. For one, it was a primarily white-dominated phenomenon. As the research of historians such as Joyce Appleby has shown, the growth of the middle class included social components that effectively rendered non-whites invisible in the public sphere, especially in the urbanizing northeastern states.\textsuperscript{50} This was most apparent in actions taken against freed slaves, especially the rewriting of state constitutions at this time that disenfranchised potential African American voters.\textsuperscript{51} Measures such as these curtailed potential African American civic agency and complicated the ability of African Americans to attain cultural aspects of middle class life dictated by whites.

For the purposes of this study, the term “middle class” refers primarily to a cultural mindset rather than to a concrete group of people. Although personal income and material possessions certainly played a role in defining the middle class, membership was more so the result of accepting certain cultural beliefs. Chief among these beliefs was the post-Revolutionary War notion that stressed the possibilities of social mobility and self-


\textsuperscript{48} Wood, Empire of Liberty, 556.

\textsuperscript{49} Comparison of advertisements: “Peace and War Dances.” Boston Gazette, February 27, 1815; “A Grand Indian Exhibition.” Portsmouth Intelligencer, March 16, 1815; and “Indian Warriors,” Boston Commercial Gazette, December 29, 1817.

\textsuperscript{50} Appleby, Inheriting the Revolution, 160.

improvement through the combination of hard work and the adoption of genteel behavior. Broadly speaking, gentility in the early nineteenth century referred to education and formal manners that had previously been enjoyed primarily by elites, but through the democratizing effects of American independence came to be seen as theoretically attainable by all.\textsuperscript{52} Despite such lofty and inclusive goals, the realities of measures such as slavery and disenfranchisement meant that most members of the middle class were white.

Indian Exhibitions, with their nominally informative function, catered to the cultural importance that members of the middle class placed on self-improvement and gentility. Specifically, such shows provided accessible education for the general enlightenment of the population. Therefore, the authenticity of such shows was crucial; shows based on false information failed to properly educate audiences and forfeited middle class respectability. One of the most significant ways in which public exhibitions fostered gentility was through the locations in which they were hosted. Earlier displays of disabled people and exotic animals were typically held in places such as taverns. For example, customers who hoped to see the 1739 exhibition of a camel in Boston had to visit the tavern known as the Three Horse Shoes.\textsuperscript{53} The Three Horse Shoes was evidently successful in its animal exhibits, as only two years later it hosted the display of a catamount, which promoters described as a monstrous hybrid of features found in lions, bears, tigers, and eagles.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} “Advertisement.” \textit{Boston Gazette}, February 19, 1739.
\textsuperscript{54} “Advertisement.” \textit{Boston Gazette}, November 10, 1741.
The use of taverns as venues for public exhibitions restricted the composition of potential audiences. In her social history of American taverns, Sharon V. Salinger identified tavern culture as primarily male-dominated in early America. According to Salinger, taverns were generally frequented by men, and upper and middle class women generally avoided them due to concerns for their genteel reputations. 

Human exhibitions, on the other hand, were typically hosted in venues more suitable to the tastes of middle class men and women. In February 1815, attendees who paid to see “traditional” Native American ways of life in Boston watched the performers from within the confines of the Columbian Museum. The Columbian Museum was directly concerned with spreading genteel culture to almost anyone with potential interest; at the annual Independence Day celebration several months later, the museum’s founder urged all Bostonians to view his entire collection of “fine arts” for only 25-cents. Adjusting for inflation, this price was less than the admission price Charles Willson Peale pioneered for middle class visitors to his museum two decades earlier.

In addition to museums, Indian Exhibitions were also held in buildings associated with respected political organizations. In November 1818, a public display of Native American performers was held in New York City’s Washington Hall. The building, which was completed six years earlier, was one of the most opulent structures in the city; the neoclassical structure towered above its neighbors at the corner of Reade Street and

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56 “Peace And War Dances.” *Boston Gazette*, February 27, 1815.
Broadway. Washington Hall functioned primarily as the base of operations for the city’s Federalist Party, and rivaled the better-known Tammany Hall headquarters of the rival Republican Party.

Despite the overtly political nature of the venue, Washington Hall also served as a social gathering place and as a dissemination point of genteel culture. For instance, only a month before the Indian Exhibition, the venue had hosted a unique science and art exhibit. For the middle-class price of 50-cents, audiences could view a female wax figure that doubled as a work of art and a lesson in human anatomy. Men and women were both urged to view the exhibit, although separate viewing times were specified for groups of the opposite sex. Similarly, outreach to male and female audiences was a common facet of nineteenth-century human exhibitionism in the United States.

Advertisements for human exhibits made it clear that the shows were appropriate for both genders. Showmen specifically addressed both “ladies and gentlemen,” and even listed discount admission prices for children. One exhibition notice went so far as to assure potential audiences that “nothing immodest” would be featured at their performance featuring Native American dancers. Evidently, unlike in earlier tavern-dominated exhibitions, middle class women were regular patrons of human displays. In 1815, one Boston editorialist was moved to write up an informal guide for etiquette at public exhibitions after witnessing his fellow gentlemen take all the seats at one show,

62 “Peace and War Dances.” Boston Gazette, February 27, 1815 and “Exhibition.” National Advocate (New York), November 24, 1818 are two specific examples of advertisements such as these.
resulting in many women who were forced to stand during the performance.⁶⁴ Indian Exhibitions served as a unifying medium to draw both men and women into genteel spaces, such as museums, to witness nominally educational displays about Native peoples. This fact, combined with the middle-class prices for exhibition tickets, effectively established Indian Exhibitions as a middle class phenomenon.

The ideas of gentility that came to culturally define the American middle class during the Early Republic had their roots in the social practices of the British aristocracy. In his landmark study of refinement in nineteenth-century America, Richard Bushman noted that members of the nascent American middle class struggled to reconcile this emulation of nobility within a republic. According to Bushman, they were able to justify their behavior through the belief that technically the cultural traits of refinement, such as formal manners and a commitment to education, were available to all people in the American republic, regardless of what class they were born into.⁶⁵ Despite these efforts to differentiate genteel American culture from its British progenitor, however, a popular interest in British affairs remained in the United States even after the War of 1812.

The content of American newspapers reflected the continued American interest in Great Britain. Each day, especially along the east coast, readers were treated to reprinted stories gleaned from British periodicals. By summer 1818, the literate American public was enthralled by British efforts to explore the Arctic. Earlier that year, two ships under Commander John Ross and Lieutenant William Parry left Britain for the Arctic Circle in search of the fabled Northwest Passage.⁶⁶ Newspapers from Maine to Georgia carried the

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⁶⁵ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 434.
latest news from the expedition to American audiences for several months. In October, readers of the *City of Washington Gazette* were treated to an especially vivid account from the expedition that described such extraordinary events as sunless days, frozen seas, and thousand-foot-high glaciers. In addition to these natural wonders, a common theme found in reprinted British news articles was accounts related to the curious natives of the region, the Inuit.

In the early nineteenth century, information about the Arctic region and its inhabitants remained largely unknown in both Britain and the United States. Territory inhabited by the Inuit stretched from Greenland across the northern reaches of North America and included lands that were both within and below the Arctic Circle. Historically, European contact with the Inuit was uneven, with Inuit living in sub-Arctic regions much more likely to interact with European traders and colonists. In Labrador, where Samuel Hadlock later recruited George and Mary, increased British settlement in the southern half of the region led to significant new colonial policies in the late eighteenth century. In 1771, the British government encouraged Moravian missionaries to set up mission stations in northern Labrador to attract Inuit from the south and open up more lands to European settlement. Western views that saw a North-South dichotomy for Inuit civilization and Inuit savagery were shaped by such policies that resulted in the European settlement of southern Inuit territories

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Notions about the uncivilized nature of the isolated northern Inuit were encouraged by the accounts of Arctic explorers. In early 1819, Commander John Ross of the British Arctic expedition triumphantly informed his superiors in London that his crew had identified a “newly discovered race of Esquimaux” as they pushed further north through the Arctic Circle. A follow-up account written by members of Ross’ crew presented readers in Great Britain and the United States with a harsh assessment of the supposedly new Inuit race. Among the social indictments levied by anonymous chroniclers against the Inuit were critiques of their ill-fitting and filthy sealskin clothing, their habit of eating raw meat, the crude construction of their tools, and their supposed propensity for theft. One interviewed sailor summed up his assessment of the Inuit by simply stating they were “the most uncivilized of the earth’s inhabitants.”

For middle-class American readers, accounts of the 1818-1819 Arctic Expedition established the northern Inuit as an indelible “Other.” In a society that was increasingly adopting genteel notions that stressed self-improvement through hard work, education, and polite manners, the Inuit must have appeared completely alien. Furthermore, it appeared that “civilization” for Inuit who lived in the northern spans of the Arctic was impossible. The adoption of agriculture was a key provision in American policies to civilize Native Americans, but the homeland of the northernmost Inuit appeared to be nothing more than a frozen wasteland incapable of sustaining plant life. The harsh climate and inability for the growth of “civilization” even led the aforementioned

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70 “Arctic Expedition.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), January 21, 1819.
71 “Northern Expedition.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), March 10, 1819.
geographer Jedidiah Morse to starkly predict that the Inuit were inevitably doomed to “a dreary, yet peaceful” extinction.\textsuperscript{72}

Published reports from Moravian missionaries in the area were seldom more encouraging. A year before the Ross expedition left Britain, Moravian authorities at the mission station of Okkak in northeastern Labrador wrote to their allies in London about their continued difficulties in translating Christian texts into the Inuit language. The effectiveness of their mission was also not helped by the fact that so many Inuit retained a seminomadic lifestyle and only lived in the Moravian community for half of the year.\textsuperscript{73}

These portrayals of the Inuit as inferior along cultural lines were encouraged by existing racial ideas that were peculiar to the Inuit.

In addition to the perception that the Inuit represented the most “uncivilized” Native American tribe, interest in the Inuit was also the result of scientific theories that established them as a particular type of Native American. In the hierarchical parlance of nineteenth-century racial and scientific thought, the Inuit occupied a unique station in the Western imagination. This situation dated to at least 1777 when the Scottish historian and clergyman William Robertson published \textit{The History of America}. This work, portions of which were serialized in newspapers throughout the United States, concluded that the Inuit were a “race different than the rest of the Americans.” Robertson based this conclusion on his observations, gleaned from European travelers’ accounts, that the Inuit had a different skin color than other Native Americans, grew bushy beards, and had a language similar to Norse. According to Robertson, the Inuit were descendants of the

\textsuperscript{72} Jedidiah Morse, \textit{The American Universal Geography, or, A View of the Present State of All the Kingdoms, States, and Colonies} (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1812), 155.

\textsuperscript{73} “From the Moravian Missionaries on the Coast of Labrador.” \textit{Boston Recorder}, March 24, 1818.
Vikings who had colonized Greenland centuries earlier and had lost contact with their Scandinavian homeland.\textsuperscript{74}

The hypothesis that Inuit were not native to North America had direct implications for racial theory in the nascent United States. If Robertson was correct, that meant that the American climate could in fact cause transplanted European colonists separated from their motherland to racially degenerate. According to Western theories of environmental determinism, the physical conditions particular to different geographic locations caused the visible “racial” differences found amongst the world’s peoples. Theoretically, citizens of the newly-declared United States living in harsh environments risked racial transformation within generations of independence. Although Robertson’s conclusions were challenged by American academics, such as Samuel Stanhope Smith, who questioned the validity of environmental determinism in general, the notion that the Inuit represented a degenerated European race, and at the very least a unique race within the human species, continued into the nineteenth century.

Interest in the questions surrounding Inuit race captivated American academics, readers, and even a former president in the Early Republic. In 1816, Dr. Samuel Mitchill, the New York-based naturalist and historian, published his own racial views on the Inuit in a widely serialized editorial. Mitchill agreed with Robertson and expanded upon his original theory. According to Mitchill, the Inuit had originally inhabited sub-Arctic regions of North America, but following their loss of contact with Europe, they were driven to the “barrenness and cold” of areas like northern Labrador by the warlike

\textsuperscript{74} William Robertson, \textit{The History of America}. (Dublin: Whitestone, Watson, Corcoran, et al, 1777), 303.
ancestors of Native Americans.\textsuperscript{75} Robertson’s theories were still influential enough during this time period that former President James Madison elaborated upon them in a public address given to a Virginia agricultural society. Madison specifically endorsed the idea that the Inuit were degenerate descendants of Norse colonists and used the example to encourage the continued development of agriculture and industry in the United States.\textsuperscript{76} The views of Mitchill and Madison reveal that only years before Samuel Hadlock and the Inuit Exhibition began their tour, the Inuit engendered a unique form of racial curiosity, and even anxiety, among American audiences.

In the aftermath of the 1818 Arctic Expedition that enthralled British and American newspaper audiences with rich descriptions of the Arctic region and its natives, an individual Inuit came to embody the allure of his people and homeland. John Sackhouse, a native of Greenland, accompanied the expedition as its translator. In 1816, the nineteen-year-old Sackhouse hid his sealskin kayak aboard a Scottish whaleship that was plying the waters near his home along the Davis Strait and stowed away. Upon landing in Edinburgh, Sackhouse began to put himself on regular public display near the docks in the port area of Leith.\textsuperscript{77} Unlike the exhibitions of Saartjie Baartman that had caused so much controversy in Britain only several years earlier, the Sackhouse shows did not meet with any public opposition. This may have been due to the fact that Sackhouse was his own agent; unlike Baartman, he had agency over his public display.

Sackhouse soon became a celebrity in Great Britain. According to Robert G. David, part of the draw to the Sackhouse exhibits was the juxtaposition of authentically

\textsuperscript{75} “Interesting Disquisition on the Population of America.” The Columbian (New York), November 18, 1816.
\textsuperscript{76} “Address of Mr. Madison.” Washington (Pennsylvania) Review and Examiner, August 3, 1818.
\textsuperscript{77} “Some Account of the Late John Sackeouse, the Esquimaux.” The Analectic Magazine 14 (1819):64
“traditional” Inuit culture against the backdrop of familiar British communities.78 In Leith, Sackhouse displayed himself and his sealskin kayak amidst a port that was rapidly growing into one of Scotland’s major centers of commerce and industry through the forces of the Industrial Revolution.79 The presence of Sackhouse in his sealskin clothing and kayak served as a physical representation of the widespread markets visited by British ships, and also as a non-Western “Other” that highlighted the supposed progress and civilization of Great Britain. By 1818, Sackhouse’s celebrity had grown to the point where he was invited to accompany the Ross expedition to the Arctic by the secretary of the British admiralty.80

American audiences were first introduced to Sackhouse in a reprinted British story that celebrated the last of his exhibits before the Ross Expedition left for the Arctic. The newspaper story described, in flourishing detail, every aspect of Sackhouse’s public exhibition. Readers learned of the huge crowds who came to see the Inuit perform, of the dexterity Sackhouse showed in maneuvering his sealskin craft on the water, and the excitement that the crowd felt as they watched him throw spears into floating targets in the harbor.81 All of these facets of the Sackhouse exhibit were later recreated to some degree by Samuel Hadlock in his own Inuit Exhibition. It is likely that Hadlock was one of the multitude of Americans who took an interest in Sackhouse through following reprinted British news articles.

78 David, The Arctic, 131.
80 “Some Account of the Late John Sackeouse,” 64.
81 “Arctic Expedition—Wonderful Esquimaux.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), May 22, 1818.
In 1819, American readers received the melancholy news that Sackhouse had died shortly after his return to Britain with the Arctic Expedition. Newspapers throughout the northeastern United States, from Washington, D.C. to New Hampshire, printed copies of his obituary. Additionally, only a month after word of his death reached the United States, American booksellers began importing a posthumous biographical sketch titled *Some Account of the Late John Sackhouse, the Esquimaux.* In praising his deceased friend, the anonymous author noted all of Sackhouse’s positive qualities, such as his love of education and fine art, but stressed that he contained them in spite of his Inuit background; only removed from his “rude tribe” was Sackhouse able to transform himself into a gentleman. To close, the writer praised the attention that Sackhouse’s death received and stressed that such honors paid to an ordinary everyday individual was evidence of “the distinction between a civilized, and a savage state of society.”

The author’s implication that the Inuit represented an especially “savage state” was consistent with both the firsthand accounts given by Arctic explorers and the theories of academics that continued to denounce the particular “ignorance, stupidity, and superstition” of the Arctic natives.

Stackhouse’s posthumous biography effectively humanized the former human exhibit. The unknown author portrayed Stackhouse as an extraordinary member of his race and shed light on a portion of his life that paying audiences never experienced. While on display, Sackhouse acted as a complete stereotype of an Inuit; he wore sealskin

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82 Newspapers that carried Sackhouse’s obituary include: *The Concord (New Hampshire) Observer, Worcester (Massachusetts) Gazette, and American and Commercial Daily Advertiser (Baltimore).*
83 “Advertisement.” *Newburyport (Mass.) Herald,* July 23, 1819.
84 “Some Account of the Late John Sackhouse,” 67.
85 Morse, *Geography Made Easy,* 409.
clothing, paddled around Leith in his kayak, and threw his spear at various targets.

Stackhouse’s chronicler was adamant in both his praise of Sackhouse’s true erudite nature, and his condemnation of the Inuit race that Stackhouse left behind in the Arctic.

*Some Account of the Late John Sackhouse, the Esquimaux* succeeded in its goal of deconstructing the person behind Sackhouse’s exhibit, but also in furthering notions that the Inuit in general were an exotic and savage people.

In September 1820, Captain Samuel Hadlock, Jr. landed at Greedy Harbor in southeastern Labrador in search of Inuit willing to portray “uncivilized” stereotypes for American audiences. Before reinventing himself as a showman, Hadlock worked as the captain of the merchant schooner *Five Brothers* for two years. From surviving records, it appears that Hadlock was primarily involved in the ice trade with the Caribbean. Each voyage, Hadlock would set out from his home port in Maine to the ice fields of the North Atlantic where his crew would load the *Five Brothers*’ insulated holds with ice hacked from icebergs. Hadlock would then sail to the Caribbean, sell the ice, and replenish the holds with items like plaster to sell in ports like New York and Boston. 86

Although Hadlock was experienced in the ice trade, he immediately made it clear to authorities in coastal Labrador that he had ulterior motives for visiting Greedy Harbor. Soon after the *Five Brothers* landed Hadlock sought out John McPherson, a Scottish trader living in the community, and asked if he knew of any Inuit who would be willing to travel to the United States and be put on public exhibit for a year. According to McPherson, Hadlock presented him with two letters of recommendation written by other sea captains from his hometown which vouched for his character. After considering the

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letters, McPherson recommended two candidates that would be willing to accompany the captain on his return home. The fact that Hadlock arrived in Labrador with prepared letters of recommendation is proof that the purpose of his voyage was to procure Inuit performers from the start.

The true backgrounds of the Inuit recruited for Hadlock’s human exhibit contradicted everything that Hadlock later presented to the public. The first person that McPherson contacted about working for Hadlock was a young man living in Greedy Harbor named George. Hadlock met with George and then visited his widowed mother who lived fifteen miles north of the Greedy Harbor. After giving her a year’s worth of bread, pork, and molasses, she gave her blessing for her son to travel with Hadlock to the United States. Although not much is known of George’s background, it appears that he was working as a wage laborer in Greedy Harbor in order to support his mother. Despite his young age, George apparently traveled frequently in search of work, as he had previously lived at one of the Moravian mission stations in northern Labrador, where he learned to speak English and German, and had once resided in Hawke Harbor in the southeastern corner of the territory. George likely accepted Hadlock’s offer as a means to take care of his mother.

The personal motivations of Mary, the second Inuit who went to work for Hadlock, were less clear. Five years earlier, she and her family had removed to Greedy Harbor from northern Labrador, and after her father, Coonanock, began to work for McPherson, her entire family had moved into McPherson’s home. McPherson discussed

87 “Esquimaux Indians.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), November 14, 1821.
88 “The Esquimaux Indians.” Cherry Valley (New York) Gazette, February 27, 1821.
89 “The Esquimaux Indians.” Cherry Valley (New York) Gazette, February 27, 1821.
Hadlock’s exhibition plans with Coonanock, and he readily agreed to give his teenage daughter, along with her infant son, Ekeloak, permission to travel to the United States for a year.\footnote{“Esquimaux Indians.” \textit{Commercial Advertiser (New York)}, November 14, 1821.} Due to the fact that Inuit family life was patriarchal, Coonanock had authority over the lives of both his young daughter and grandson, and Mary may not have had a personal choice in her exhibition.\footnote{Janet Mancini Billson and Kyra Mancini, \textit{Inuit Women: Their Powerful Spirit in a Century of Change}. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 56.} It is unknown what type of payment Mary’s family was given in exchange for her absence, but it may have been less than the compensation given to George’s mother, as Mary was not the primary provider for her kin.

With his human exhibits recruited, Hadlock concluded his business in Greedy Harbor and prepared to sail for New York. In addition to George and Mary, the aspiring showman also obtained a sealskin boat and a sled dog for his planned exhibit.\footnote{“Esquimaux Indians.” \textit{Commercial Advertiser (New York)}, December 15, 1820.} The inclusion of the dog added an original mark of authenticity to Hadlock’s show, but the Inuit boat strongly recalled the exhibitions of Sackhouse. In order to cover up the decidedly non-exotic ways in which Hadlock met George and Mary, he similarly borrowed information from the Sackhouse exhibits. According to Hadlock’s official story, while hunting seals in the Davis Strait, he encountered the three Inuit and persuaded them to return to the United States with him aboard the \textit{Five Brothers}. George was presented as an Inuit chief named Koonanux, and Mary and Ekeloak as his unnamed wife and son.\footnote{“Esquimaux Indians.” \textit{Commercial Advertiser (New York)}, December 15, 1820.} Hadlock claimed that he was the first white person that they had ever seen, and had Mary make sealskin clothing for them to wear before their exhibit opened to American audiences.\footnote{“The Esquimaux Indians.” \textit{New-York Gazette}, February 7, 1821.}
Every facet of the Inuit Exhibition’s background was concocted by Hadlock in order to capitalize on contemporary interest in Sackhouse and establish George and Mary as total curiosities for American audiences. Hadlock’s claim that he encountered the Inuit while on a sealing voyage to Davis Strait directly echoed how and where Sackhouse met the British whalers who had carried him to Scotland. The story also covered up the fact that George and Mary were from European-colonized southern Labrador and placed their point of origin in the “uncivilized” northern reaches of the Arctic.

The claim that the three individuals were a noble Inuit family served several purposes. Most importantly, the lie hid the scandalous situation of an unmarried man and woman, who had likely never met prior to working for Hadlock, living and working together. Additionally, describing George as Chief Koonanux added an element of exoticness and “savage” authenticity to the show that his true identity would have completely lacked. Many contemporary Indian Exhibitions also assured audiences that their performers were “chiefs,” which may have had a particular appeal to audiences living in a country with no formal aristocracy during an era when such trappings were increasingly seen as outmoded; interestingly the name chosen for George appears to be an alternate spelling of Mary’s father’s name, Coonanock.

The claim that the Inuit had never seen a white person before meeting Hadlock was one of the most egregious falsehoods of Hadlock’s account. George had not only regularly worked for whites up and down the coast of Labrador, but had also studied Christianity and spoke both English and German. Mary’s circumstances were even more contradictory, as she and her family had been living with McPherson for five years before she came under Hadlock’s employ. The sealskin clothing constructed by Mary served as
a costume that underscored the Inuits’ exoticness, much as Saartjie Baartman’s flesh-colored dress had a decade earlier. Not only were the clothing habits of George and Mary likely altered through extensive European contact, but sealskin garb was also traditionally worn by Inuit only during the spring and summer.95

The complete illusion crafted by Hadlock transformed George and Mary into racial archetypes that would directly appeal to middle class American audiences. While the Inuit Exhibition was specifically a more or less plagiarized adaptation of the Sackhouse displays, it also represented a unique subset of the burgeoning “Indian show” phenomenon. These shows in general appealed to audiences through their display of peoples who were considered “Others” along racial and class lines. As the primarily white middle class grew during the early nineteenth century, the public presentation of Native Americans reinforced positive notions regarding American economic and territorial expansion, especially among urban white audiences who were living in areas that were experiencing increased racial and social diversity. As the Five Brothers sailed for New York, it carried physical representations of the most “uncivilized” peoples in the Western Hemisphere to the blossoming commercial center of the United States.

By all accounts, the wintertime arrival of the *Five Brothers* in New York Harbor was uneventful. Indeed, for New Yorkers the sight of schooners and trade ships of all sorts was an everyday occurrence by 1820. The same day that Hadlock landed, cargoes of coffee, turtle shell, and indigo had already arrived from such faraway locations as Hispaniola, Cuba, and Curacao, respectively.¹ New York was actively growing into the preeminent commercial center of the United States by the second decade of the nineteenth century, and for New York audiences the Inuit Exhibition had a particular appeal within that atmosphere of rapid transformation. On the one hand, the very presence of George, Mary, and Ekeloak tangibly illustrated the city’s global economic reach. On the other, they reinforced contemporary social norms and provided exclusive spaces for white, middle-class solidarity in a city experiencing increased class stratification.

In order to meet those twin appeals, Hadlock stressed the “authenticity” of the Inuit performers. The narrative that George, Mary, and Ekeloak were from the remote Arctic successfully showcased American mercantile expansion and also transformed the Inuit into exceptionally “uncivilized” objects for audiences to compare their own culture against. Due to this devotion to supposed authenticity, Hadlock’s shows in New York focused primarily on the physical bodies of the Inuit; the curious outward appearances of George, Mary, and Ekeloak were used to reinforce and confirm popular preconceptions regarding the Inuit. Unfortunately, much of the authenticity promised by Hadlock was inherently false. Despite his grand claims, the three Inuit whom audiences gazed upon

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were not representatives of a completely alien and uncivilized people, and the show collapsed under popular outrage when news eventually broke of the Inuits’ true backgrounds. George, Mary, and Ekeloak were not merely primitive representatives from the fringe of American mercantile expansion, but in actuality had much in common with their audiences.

Shortly after the *Five Brothers* landed on the evening of December 20, 1820, Hadlock began reaching out to various venues to host his show. Some proprietors may have been anticipating his arrival, as word of a brief trial run of his exhibit hosted in New London, Connecticut had reached New York several days before the *Five Brothers* landed.\(^2\) Regardless of how much knowledge of the exhibit preceded the ship’s arrival, Hadlock was able to include notices for his show in no less than five city newspapers that ran the day after the *Five Brothers* docked.\(^3\) News of the anticipated exhibit swept through the metropolis due to Hadlock’s use of the press and was met with immediate enthusiasm by multiple public venues.

Only days after word of the show’s arrival in New York spread through the city, Park Hall narrowly outbid Tammany Hall for the honor of hosting the exhibit.\(^4\) The venue stood at the corner of Murray Street and Broadway in Lower Manhattan, directly opposite City Hall Park and the recently-completed New York City Hall.\(^5\) The neighborhood around City Hall Park served as Hadlock’s base of operations for the duration of the show’s three-month run in New York. At the same time that the novice

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\(^3\) These newspapers for December 21, 1820 were: *The New-York Columbian, Commercial Advertiser, Mercantile Advertiser, The National Advocate*, and the *New-York Daily Advertiser*.
\(^5\) “Park Hall Auction Room.” *National Advocate (New York)*, April 20, 1818.
showman came to terms with Park Hall’s management, he rented several rooms from local innkeeper Charles T. Butler. Butler’s establishment stood nearby on the outskirts of City Hall Park near the burned-out shell of the Park Theatre, which was gutted by fire seven months earlier. The short distance between the performers’ living area and their workplace may have been convenient, but it also increased the risk for public interaction. For the first several weeks at least, this proximity did not appear to threaten the exhibit’s “authenticity.”

In many ways, Park Hall typified the middle-class establishments that catered to public exhibitionism during the early nineteenth century. In fact, the Inuit Exhibition was the third major show to use the venue in 1820; months earlier two inventors had used the

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6 “The Esquimaux Indians.” *Columbian (New York)*, February 8, 1821.
space to demonstrate a supposed perpetual motion machine and humanoid automatons, respectively. The educational content of both of these shows was typical of developments concerned with the democratization of knowledge, and Hadlock ensured that the Inuit exhibit fit within that cultural framework. Advertisements for the display sought to inform audiences about Inuit life and to place aspects of the exhibit within their cultural context. For instance, Hadlock explained to audiences that the presence of the dog within his human exhibit was due to the fact that in the Arctic, Inuit traveled in “sledges drawn by these animals.” It was particularly important for Hadlock to establish an educational base for his exhibit in New York City at this time.

A year before the Inuit Exhibition traveled to New York, the state enacted legislation that targeted public exhibitions based solely on novelty. “An Act to Suppress Common Showmen, Mountebanks and Jugglers” effectively banned all public exhibits not based on civic or educational concerns. While the targeting of non-educational shows fit within the cultural movement to publicly disseminate knowledge, the allowance of shows related to civic themes closely mirrored developments associated with theater in the Early Republic. According to Heather S. Nathans, during this time period, theater owners attempted to present shows sensitive to middle-class tastes by showing performances that both emulated the latest fashions in Europe and appealed to patriotic sentiment. Hadlock was exempt from the 1819 legislation through his show’s

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8 “The Ladies.” *The Ladies’ Literary Cabinet* 1 (1820): 136 and “Last Week.” *The American (New York)*, July 29, 1820. Automatons were essentially mechanical mannequins that were popular with audiences at this time and oftentimes built by watchmakers familiar with intricate mechanisms.


supposedly educational premise, but the sailor-turned-showman also made sure to appeal to civic-minded potential customers as well.

George, Mary, and Ekeloak were described in such a way as to arouse patriotic sentiment among New York audiences. According to the exhibit’s earliest known advertisements, the three Inuit represented an exclusive chance for Americans to view a rare type of the “varied natives” of North America.\(^\text{12}\) The Inuit shows explicitly played into contemporary notions about the disappearance of Native peoples, both literally and culturally. The three Inuit were dehumanized and presented as artifacts that highlighted the natural diversity of the continent. This is similar to sentiments that Brett Mizelle identified in earlier exhibits that displayed various animals from the American frontier in order to celebrate the country’s territorial growth.\(^\text{13}\) In both of these instances, the animals and Inuit were objectified and used as symbols to convey messages about the continent’s resources and white American expansion. In the case of the Inuit Exhibition, the display of George, Mary, and Ekeloak highlighted the country’s economic, rather than territorial, growth.

New York’s status as a major commercial center was relatively recent as of 1820. During the War of 1812, the British naval blockade of the east coast crippled American commerce, and prices for imported goods skyrocketed in coastal cities like New York.\(^\text{14}\) All shipping activity along the east coast became risky, as cargoes bound for the United States and abroad were similarly at risk of being captured by the Royal Navy. Shortly after the implementation of the blockade, one New York newspaper listed two ships

\(^{12}\) “From the New-London Gazette.” *Albany Gazette*, December 22, 1820. This claim was made in regards to the territory surrounding the Davis Strait, in keeping with Hadlock’s false origin story for his employees.

\(^{13}\) Mizelle, “I Have Brought My Pig,” 184.

\(^{14}\) Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 151-152.
laden with goods bound from New York, and three that were attempting to approach the city, that had recently been captured by the fleet of British warships that patrolled the waters outside New York Harbor. Following the War of 1812, however, New York City rapidly grew into one of the key commercial centers of the United States.

In the aftermath of the American victory in 1815, New York City became a major center of international trade not only through the disappearance of the British blockade, but also due to several key pieces of business-friendly legislation. During the war, forward-thinking British merchants stockpiled goods in warehouses in overseas territories near the United States and flooded the country with British imports upon the cessation of the blockade. In 1817, New York City implemented the “auction system,” which allowed foreign merchants to uniquely auction off their cargoes in the city. This system was considered especially convenient, and as having a remarkably quick return, by many foreign businessmen, and New York became seen as a premiere location for international business. New York’s mercantile reputation was further increased by the founding of the New York Stock Exchange that same year and the establishment of regular transatlantic passenger service from New York to Liverpool a year later. As more and more ships arrived in New York Harbor, popular interest in the places visited by their crews grew alongside the city’s burgeoning international and domestic trade.

Hadlock was well aware of the role that global commerce played in New York City life due to his former career as a mariner. On one of his last trips to the city, the Five

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Brothers had unloaded its cargo of flour alongside ships laden with Dominican mahogany and Neapolitan brandy. Increasingly, in addition to their valuable cargoes, American ships also began carrying keepsake items back from the foreign lands they visited; these in turn were sought by proprietors of the multitude of museums that sprang up at the same time. Ironically, Park Hall was located just yards from one of the city’s best-known repositories for foreign artifacts, Scudder’s American Museum.

The museum, which took up the second floor of the former city poorhouse in City Hall Park, exemplified the cultural practice of proudly exhibiting items from lands impacted by American economic expansion. In one typical example, the proprietor John Scudder invited audiences to come and view a 212-pound “Native Rock Crystal” from South America donated by the merchant Lewis Pintard. Scudder’s collections also contained items such as “coins of all nations” and weapons from Fiji. The reliance on sailors for museum collections was not necessarily a new development; the museum at Yale College requested that “masters and owners of ships employed in either domestic or foreign voyages may do us a very acceptable service by preserving for us a great variety of articles which in different countries fall in their way” as early as 1797. However, the dramatic increase in American overseas commerce after 1815 brought the collection of foreign items to a new level.

The presence of items like the South American crystal and Fijian weapons was directly the result of the city’s maritime expansion. Patrons to Scudder’s Museum would

19 Edward P. Alexander, Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1995), 66.
22 “Yale College.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), August 29, 1797.
have been physically in the presence of artifacts from foreign countries visited by their
city’s growing merchant fleet. As objectified human exhibits, George, Mary, and Ekeloak
served a similar function. Their presence on display served as tangible proof of the
nation’s economic expansion into the Arctic. Hadlock provided audiences with living
eamples of the curious people who lived along the Davis Strait rather than simply native
artifacts and curiosities brought back from the region.

Hadlock’s show was unique among the Indian Exhibitions that proliferated
following the War of 1812. Specifically, Hadlock presented audiences with Native
peoples that were only coming under the forces of American economic expansion. Unlike
earlier Native performers, George, Mary, and Ekeloak were from areas firmly under
British and Danish jurisdiction, and thus were not at immediate risk of American
territorial expansion. Hadlock’s falsified story of meeting the Inuit while hunting seals in
the remote reaches of the Davis Strait perfectly illustrated the growth of American
merchant activity in the Arctic. Voyages such as his cover story had increased following
the War of 1812, and were further encouraged by contemporary accounts related to the
search for the Northwest Passage, including one that explicitly urged American sailors to
assert their presence in the British-dominated area at the “earliest opportunity.”23

The Arctic origins of the Inuit gave them a unique type of dual identity not found
with other Indian Exhibition performers. George, Mary, and Ekeloak were all at once
Native Americans and inhabitants of a foreign country. Due to this duality, the Inuit show
shared commonalities not only with other displays of Native peoples, but also the
contemporaneous exhibits of foreign peoples in wax museums. Wax museum

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displays regularly presented audiences with models of the “exotic” people encountered by merchant sailors. The growth of American wax museums coincided with the proliferation of both museums in general and American involvement with international trade. Scudder’s Museum was one of the pioneering institutions in this regard. In 1811, a year before war with Great Britain temporarily crippled American shipping, Scudder displayed a wax figure of a Hawaiian prince, “in the dress of his country…composed of the feathers of birds of various colors.”

The dress in question was likely an *ahuula*, a long cloak made of tropical bird feathers. These garments were typically made of bright red and yellow feathers and served as status symbols of island elites.

The inclusion of the Hawaiian wax figure coincided with popular interest in the islands spurred by increased American shipping activity in the Pacific, much as the Inuit Exhibition coincided with growing Western maritime activity in the Arctic. A year earlier, the first American edition of the British explorer John Turnbull’s *A Voyage Round the World* was published. Newspapers throughout the United States serialized portions of this work, especially his chapter that highlighted the “most active trade” between American merchants and Hawaii. The wax Hawaiian functioned as a stand-in for an actual human being and gave museum patrons the chance to see the exotic and “uncivilized” natives of Hawaii that their country’s sailors were successfully trading with in the middle of the remote Pacific. The presence of the wax figure, rather than just the *ahuula* cloak on its own, gave Scudder’s exhibit a unique visual appeal and sense of

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24 “Scudder’s American Museum,” *Columbian (New York)*, August 6, 1811.
26 “From Turnbull’s Voyage round the World.” *American Citizen (New York)*, June 24, 1809.
immediacy that the exhibition of native artifacts on their own lacked. Hadlock’s exhibit effectively borrowed such traits from contemporary wax exhibits.

Wax models of human beings literally transformed individuals into objects. As the research of Michelle E. Bloom demonstrates, the use of wax to represent people appealed to artists and museum proprietors due to the agency that they possessed in presenting their subject. Wax figures presented constructs that conformed to audience expectations and were, above-all, silent.27 There is no way to know exactly how the Hawaiian figure in Scudder’s Museum looked, but its image presented museum patrons with a supposedly authentic representation of what Hawaiian Islanders looked like. For non-white peoples who lived beyond the bounds of the expansionist footprint of the United States, such displays fulfilled the same functions as human exhibits. As Arctic natives, the presentation of George, Mary, and Ekeloak combined features from both Indian Exhibitions and wax museums. The most important feature grafted from wax displays was Hadlock’s requirement that his performers remain silent at all times.

Unlike contemporary Indian Exhibitions featuring Native peoples from the continental United States, Hadlock’s show did not feature any traditional songs or speeches. This was due to the fact that George and Mary were contractually bound by their employer not to speak.28 This caveat was in all likelihood related to concerns over the true backgrounds of the Inuit performers and the fantasy that Hadlock spun for his audience. Ironically, the silence clause of George and Marys’ contracts also fit neatly within one of the more obscure beliefs about the Inuit published in contemporary travel

literature; according to one source, the Inuit did not possess an audible spoken language. For audiences who visited Hadlock’s exhibit at Park Hall, George and Mary, if not the infant Ekeloak, represented completely silent symbols of American mercantile expansion into the remote Arctic.

George, Mary, and Ekeloak were displayed, alongside their dog and sealskin canoe, at Park Hall for about a month. Every day, except for Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings, the three Inuit were exhibited in the spacious Park Hall “auction room” from 8:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night. Ironically, Hadlock’s exhibit was hosted in one of the same auction centers that helped make New York City commerce so successful. After paying the middle-class price of 25-cents, or 12-cents in the case of children, ladies and gentlemen were able to gaze at the silent, sealskin-clad Inuit “family.” Unfortunately, there are no surviving accounts of what visitors explicitly saw or felt when visiting the exhibit. Weeks afterward, however, one customer bitterly recounted that the three Inuit were simply, “exhibited as wild and untamed savages.”

Clearly Hadlock’s show was consistent in portraying the Inuit as the “uncivilized” people that audiences were expecting from popular notions fostered by racial science, travel literature, and accounts of the John Sackhouse exhibit.

The Inuit Exhibition proved exceptionally popular in Lower Manhattan, as the Shakspeare Gallery was able to lure the exhibit away from Park Hall in late January. The Shakspeare Gallery was located just yards away from Park Hall, and functioned as

33 This particular spelling was the institution’s official name.
both an art museum and book store.\textsuperscript{35} Details of the Inuit display at the Shakspeare Gallery are better known than the earlier program at Park Hall. At 7:00 each evening, patrons who paid the 25-cent admission fee were treated to seeing George, Mary, and Ekeloak on display within an exhibit celebrating the work of the painter Francis Guy. The gallery was “brilliantly lighted,” and an organist provided a background soundtrack of “pleasing airs.”\textsuperscript{36}

The setting of the Inuit Exhibition’s second venue was decidedly more genteel than the converted auction room in Park Hall. While Park Hall was by all accounts an impressive building, and had a history of hosting public exhibitions, the Shakspeare Gallery embodied the types of establishments that spread genteel culture to the American middle class at this time. It is also notable that the three Inuit were presented among the works of Francis Guy. An Englishman by birth, Guy immigrated to the United States and became well known in New York for his cityscape paintings. According to historians Howard B. Rock and Deborah Dash Moore, Guy’s paintings “wondrously [caught] the commercial spirit of New York.”\textsuperscript{37} The juxtaposition of George, Mary, and Ekeloak against such celebratory works related to the mercantile growth of New York further established them as “trophies” that represented the distant lands touched by the city’s commerce.

In addition to serving as virtual souvenirs of American commercial expansion, the display of the Inuit also helped strengthen class solidarity among their audiences. While this study is primarily concerned with culturally defining the “middle class” as a cross-

\textsuperscript{35} “Old New York Revived—Continued.” \textit{The Historical Magazine} 1 (1867): 105.
\textsuperscript{36} “Esquimaux Indians.” \textit{National Advocate (New York)}, January 20, 1821.
section of the population that consciously strove for social improvement and upward mobility through the emulation of genteel society, especially through the adoption of formal manners and education, material wealth undoubtedly played a large role in class formation. To quote Bernard L. Herman, “wealth did not determine status; it purchased opportunity.” For American families intent on bettering themselves socially, financial security certainly helped in the acquisition of cultural markers that signaled their status, such as certain types of clothing, or admission to sites of public education, like museums and exhibitions.

Unfortunately for many Americans, the ability to pursue such gentility was largely dependent upon race; indeed issues of class and race in the Early Republic were arguably inseparable. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, a convergence of social and political forces shaped the nation into what Michael A. Morrison and James Brewer Stewart termed a “white republic,” where non-whites were formally and informally defined as outsiders within a state controlled by Euro-Americans. In east coast cities like New York, where the institution of slavery was withering away through the forces of gradual emancipation, the non-white population primarily consisted of recently-emancipated African Americans. While urban freedmen actively strove for gentility alongside their white neighbors, their quest was complicated by their enslaved, impoverished backgrounds, and the open hostility of whites who

resented the rising population of freedmen.\textsuperscript{40} For African Americans in New York, many of whom had once been considered property themselves, attaining outward symbols of gentility proved especially difficult. While select African Americans were able to reach the ranks of the middle class, the social strata remained dominated by white New Yorkers and it is unlikely that many non-whites paid the admission fee to view the Inuit inside Park Hall.

By the time Hadlock arrived in New York with his traveling show, class differences among the American population were beginning to solidify. In his landmark study of the Market Revolution, Charles Sellers identified the second decade of the nineteenth century as a crucial point in the development of American capitalism, particularly in the northeastern United States. Sellers generally traced this development to the decline of subsistence agriculture in the region and the rise of the market economy. According to Sellers, issues like overpopulation and soil depletion in long-settled agricultural communities along the east coast weakened the viability of farmers’ livelihoods, which resulted in the exponential growth of port cities like New York through in-migration.\textsuperscript{41} While American ports had been successful commercial centers long before independence, the financial boom that followed the War of 1812 greatly accelerated urban growth.

The lure of mercantile success drew scores of people from rural areas into American cities during the early nineteenth century. As some older established merchants


\textsuperscript{41} Sellers, \textit{Market Revolution}, 18-22.
used their capital to explore new ventures, such as Moses Brown’s financing of industry in Rhode Island, new ranks of city-dwellers attempted to join their professional cadre.\textsuperscript{42} Hadlock himself was apparently part of this social turn that saw young men leave their family farms and attempt to remake themselves as businessmen. By choosing a career that first took him to sea as a merchant, and then to urban centers as a showman, Hadlock left his father’s farmstead in Mount Desert Island, Maine behind and charted a new life for himself.\textsuperscript{43}

In her examination of Early Republic social dynamics, Joyce O. Appleby similarly examined individuals like Hadlock who broke from their familial pasts and remade themselves as members of the urban middle class. Appleby’s research confirmed Sellers’ findings that massive demographic changes occurred in the northeastern states during this time. Farm families throughout rural New England and New York fractured as younger generations moved west in search of more plentiful and arable farmland, or relocated to cities with the hopes of joining what Appleby termed the “amorphous urban middle class” of assorted merchants, white-collar workers, and professionals.\textsuperscript{44}

Unfortunately, urban relocation was no guarantee of financial success and many individuals who moved to American port cities found themselves joining the ranks of the urban poor, especially by the time George, Mary, and Ekeloak landed in New York Harbor.

A year before the Inuit Exhibition traveled to the United States, the postwar economic bubble burst during the Panic of 1819. The same financial conditions that

\textsuperscript{42} Sellers, \textit{Market Revolution}, 23.
\textsuperscript{44} Appleby, \textit{Inheriting the Revolution}, 60.
allowed New York to emerge as the nation’s commercial center following the American victory over Britain also led to unsustainable economic practices. Upstart businessmen hoping to profit from the flood of cheap imports that rushed into harbors like New York, and land speculators in western territories recently seized from Native peoples both borrowed money from banks prodigiously. In 1818, the federally-controlled Bank of the United States attempted to rein in notes it had lent to over-extended local banks at the same time that foreign demand for American agricultural products dipped. A year later, the convergence of falling crop prices and the increased efforts of banks to collect their notes led to financial panic. Unemployment in cities like New York spiked as businessmen facing financial strain were forced to lay off workers.45

Individuals suddenly ruined by the Panic of 1819 often found themselves suffering alongside artisans and laborers, for whom the postwar commercial boom had brought nothing but hardship. The rush of imports that led to such favorable mercantile activities at the same time grossly devalued American-made products. In larger market centers like New York, master craftsmen adapted to these economic conditions by cutting labor costs and employing former journeymen apprentices as wage laborers. In this way, many former master craftsmen remade themselves as nascent capitalists, while other less fortunate masters and journeymen faced what Charles Sellers termed an “irreversible proletarianization” into wage-laboring members of an urban working class.46 The Inuit Exhibition opened in New York at the same time that fallout from both the preexisting

46 Sellers, Market Revolution, 25.
neglect of industry and the Panic of 1819 combined to widen the social gap between the city’s poor and the middle and upper classes.

In his study of New York’s working class, Sean Wilentz found that the “contrasts between rich and poor” grew at an astounding rate from 1790-1825. During that period, the total wealth per capita rose by 60 percent, but by the 1820s half of the city’s non-corporate wealth was owned by only 4 percent of the population. At the top of the city’s class hierarchy stood the select number of established mercantile elites, while scores of manual laborers and unemployed poor people resided at the opposite end of the spectrum. Master craftsman-turned capitalists made up a significant portion of the growing middle class.\footnote{Sean Wilentz, \textit{Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 25-28.} Returning to the cultural parameters that defined what it meant to be middle class, Richard Bushman similarly observed the growing chasm between the poor and the middle and upper classes during this era. As gentility became a democratized virtue that could be attained through obtaining material goods, whether etiquette books or cutlery, lower social classes were essentially disqualified from membership due to their poverty.\footnote{Bushman, \textit{Refinement of America}, xv.}

In its most basic form, the Inuit Exhibition contributed to white, middle-class cohesion by serving as an economically exclusive educational and entertainment venue. The 25-cent admission fee alone would have discouraged lower classes from visiting the spectacle. This physical separation of classes, and by extension race, mirrored contemporary living arrangements in cities like New York. As more transplants removed to the city, distinct socioeconomic neighborhoods increasingly sprung up throughout Manhattan. Only a decade before Hadlock and his show docked in New York Harbor,
City Hall Park had marked the northern boundary of the city; the rear wall of the new city hall was even built of less expensive material due to the belief that it would rarely be seen by city residents. In the years following this failed prediction, as the population of the city swelled uncontrollably, land north of City Hall was hurriedly converted into widely disparate neighborhoods: scores of middle and upper class New Yorkers removed to comfortable properties west of Broadway, while slums populated by the city’s poor, such as those found in the infamous Five Points area, arose in the east.

The City Hall Park area exemplified early nineteenth-century New York neighborhood stratification. Park Hall and Charles T. Butler’s hotel stood on the northern fringes of one of the city’s most desirable areas. For a narrow stretch of roughly twenty blocks running north along the western edge of Broadway from the southern tip of Manhattan to City Hall, tree-lined streets sheltered the homes of ladies and gentlemen, as well as their places of work, worship, and play. Amidst the rapidly growing metropolis, the neighborhood was widely considered a place where respectable people could “insulate themselves from the seamier elements of urban life.” The Inuit Exhibition was a socially exclusive show held within an already socially exclusive area of the city.

Although historians continue to debate the long-term impact of the Panic of 1819, and much of the country had begun to recover by the time the exhibition opened, the fact remained that relief workers tallied 13,000 paupers in New York City in 1820. At a time when the city’s entire population totaled about 123,706 people, this means that

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51 Burrows and Wallace, Gotham, 456.
52 Sellers, Market Revolution, 137.
roughly 10 percent of New Yorkers needed charitable aid during the year that the *Five Brothers* arrived with Hadlock’s show.\(^5^3\) Although exact figures do not exist for how much laborers earned in New York during this time period, the research of labor historian Seth Rockman has found that their counterparts in Baltimore made an average of approximately eighty-five-cents to one dollar per day. To make matters more precarious for members of the working class, many wage-labor jobs were seasonal.\(^5^4\)

Assuming that laborers in New York were paid a similar wage as those living in Baltimore, it simply would not have made financial sense for them to visit an event that charged one-quarter or more of their daily wage for admission per person. This was especially true as the Inuit Exhibition toured New York during the winter months when seasonal employment was at its lowest point. To make matters worse, the winter of 1820-1821 was reported as being “more severe than any experienced for upwards of thirty years.”\(^5^5\) The same week that the Inuit Exhibition moved to the Shakspeare Gallery, New York Harbor completely froze over. People walked from Manhattan to Staten Island and New Jersey over New York Bay and the North River as the ice broke ships from their moorings and pushed them ashore.\(^5^6\)

With the harbor frozen solid, seaborne commerce ground to a halt. Unfortunately, the waterfront traditionally provided laborers with some of the most regular and dependable jobs in the city. When merchant ships like the *Five Brothers* arrived in port,


\(^5^5\) “The weather last night and this morning.” *Commercial Advertiser (New York)*, January 25, 1821.

\(^5^6\) *New-York Spectator*, January 30, 1821, 1. The North River is the name for the portion of the Hudson River between New York and New Jersey.
laboring class New Yorkers working as longshoremen and teamsters unloaded their cargoes and hauled their freight. In January 1821 even these workers temporarily entered the ranks of the seasonally unemployed. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that among the ships marooned in the ice off New York Harbor were several carrying firewood earmarked for the use of the city’s poor. The arrival of the Inuit Exhibition therefore coincided with the worst winter in generations which disproportionately impacted the city’s working class and impoverished populations. Under normal circumstances the display would have been a mostly middle-class affair, as audiences paid the 25-cent fee to experience the nominally educational show about the Arctic natives, but during the winter of 1820-1821 as poor New Yorkers froze for lack of firewood and out-of-work day laborers went unpaid, the exhibition truly became an economically exclusive phenomenon.

Hadlock successfully incorporated the contemporary humanitarian concerns caused by the cold spell into his act. On February 2, newspapers carried word that Hadlock had a special exhibit planned for the following day, and that three-quarters of the event’s proceeds would go toward supporting the city’s poor. The showman assured readers that the display would include sights that had “never been witnessed in this city, and probably never will be again,” and urged potential spectators to “come prepared for a collection.” The grand outdoor exhibition that Hadlock had planned for his New York audience marked his first attempt to extend the reach of his show across class lines, and

57 Wilentz, Chants Democratic, 26.
58 “Mayor’s Office.” New-York Spectator, January 30, 1821.
his most blatant plagiarism of the John Sackhouse exhibits that occurred in Britain two years earlier.

As February dawned on New York, the extreme cold that characterized the preceding month suddenly gave way to mild, spring-like temperatures. At 11:00 on the morning of Saturday February 3, Hadlock and his performers stepped out of Charles T. Butler’s inn and into the unseasonably warm day. Crowds of eager spectators watched as Hadlock, George, and Mary, who clutched baby Ekeloak, took their places behind a marching band and began to parade down Broadway. As brass instruments and cheering spectators broke the silence of the late winter morning, Hadlock and the Arctic visitors strolled south along the famously-wide thoroughfare, past towering landmarks like St. Paul’s Chapel and Trinity Church, until they reached the Battery at the southern tip of Manhattan.

As its name suggests, the Battery had long served as an artillery installation that protected New York from the threat of enemy warships. By the 1820s, however, the area functioned as a fashionable public park where New Yorkers could leisurely watch ships enter and depart the city’s bustling harbor. Castle Clinton, a sandstone fort that resembled a massive amphitheater, stood on a small island directly south of the Battery. The fort was completed in 1811 as tensions grew between the United States and Great Britain and was connected to the mainland by a 300-foot long bridge. On a day when

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60 New-York Evening Post, February 1, 1821, 1.
63 Jane Mushaback and Angela Wigan, A Short and Remarkable History of New York City (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 53. The gap between Manhattan and Castle Clinton was later filled with earth to join the fort to the mainland. Today Castle Clinton is a National Monument located within Battery Park.
Hadlock provided city dwellers from all walks of life with a chance to view his exhibition, the bridge between Manhattan and Castle Clinton maintained a clear form of class separation.

The outdoor demonstration marked the first time that anyone interested in viewing the Inuit could do so for free. However, Hadlock also stipulated that the bridge to Castle Clinton was strictly reserved for “ladies and gentleman” who paid an admission fee. Members of the upper classes who preferred not to mingle with the less-affluent sorts drawn to the event could be physically separated from the crowd and enjoy the show from an elevated and unobstructed viewpoint. The Inuit Exhibition remained an event defined by class divisions, even removed from the cultured halls of auditoriums and art galleries.

Once the parade reached the Battery, the instruments of the marching band fell silent and Hadlock briefly addressed the crowd of over 10,000 spectators. After the “ladies and gentlemen” took their places along the bridge, and a collection for the city’s poor began to pass through the audience, Hadlock and George placed the Inuit’s sealskin boat into New York Harbor and climbed aboard. As spectators crowded along the edge of the Battery, George and Hadlock paddled around New York Harbor. Following an initial jaunt around Castle Clinton, Hadlock disembarked and George spent the remainder of the time maneuvering the boat around the harbor and throwing spears at targets that bobbed up and down in the icy water to the raucous excitement of the crowd. Following the nautical exhibition, Hadlock and the Inuit marched back uptown where they were put on display in a new venue across the street from St. Paul’s Chapel on Broadway. After a

64 “Esquimaux Indians.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), February 2, 1821.
day spent outdoors, the confines of the new exhibit space, a co-educational academy that boasted of having a view of the city “exceeded by none,” returned the exhibition to the realm of the middle class.66

The outdoor demonstration in the Battery marked the high point of the Inuit Exhibition in New York. Only three days after the opulent display, Hadlock found himself under arrest and his show put on indefinite hiatus, largely due to the influence of upper-class New Yorkers that disapproved of his business. The unraveling of the Inuit Exhibition resulted from over a month of amateur sleuthing by the Moravian minister Benjamin Mortimer. Mortimer was familiar with Moravian missionary efforts in Labrador, and snuck a religious pamphlet written in English and the Inuit language into the exhibit in early January. The inquisitive minister candidly read from the pamphlet, and after George and Mary reacted to words spoken in both Inuit and English, he became suspicious of their true backstories. Mortimer continued to visit the Inuit over the course of several weeks and eventually succeeded in speaking to the supposedly-uncivilized couple in both English and German. After George and Mary suddenly stopped interacting with him, he became concerned that they were being held against their will and took his story to city authorities and the press. Mortimer’s tale soon morphed into lurid newspaper accounts claiming that Hadlock had kidnapped his performers, and a warrant was issued for the showman’s arrest.67

Once Mortimer’s story broke, the moral crusade against Hadlock’s human exhibit was led by many of the city’s elites. The fact that upper-class individuals condemned not

66 “Esquimaux Indians.” Commercial Advertiser (New York), February 2, 1821
only Hadlock as a supposed kidnapper, but also the exhibit in general, further suggests that the show was primarily enjoyed by middle-class audiences. For instance, a committee formed to provide for the welfare of the Inuit after Hadlock’s arrest consisted of some of the most influential men in the city. Members included the mayor of New York, Cadwallader D. Colden, Peter A. Jay, the eldest son of John Jay and a politically-active attorney; William W. Woolsey, a well-established businessman and director of the New York branch of the Bank of the United States; and Thomas Eddy, a wealthy philanthropist who was involved in the construction of the Erie Canal.

In a statement released by the committee, the men slammed the Inuit show as a perverse take on the practice of exhibiting “natural curiosities.” This complaint is particularly interesting due to the fact that the display of natural curiosities was culturally accepted to the point where it was explicitly protected under state law. Therefore, the committee specifically opposed Hadlock’s show on the grounds that the display of humans vulgarized an otherwise acceptable public forum for information. The findings of the aid committee mark the only recorded instance in which anyone criticized the Inuit Exhibition because of its human content. While the objections of men like Colden and Eddy were certainly made in hindsight amidst questions regarding whether Hadlock was a kidnapper, their opinions also suggest further class fissures that the exhibit exposed.

69 Burrows and Wallace, Gotham, 494.
72 Samuel L. Knapp, The Life of Thomas Eddy (London: Edmund Fry and Son, 1836), 117.
The display of “natural curiosities” was common among museums and showmen of the Early Republic. Charles Willson Peale proudly displayed his extensive collection of “natural curiosities,” upon the opening of his pioneering museum in 1786, which he carefully arranged and labeled for the benefit of his audience. Peale described his natural curiosities as “wonderful works of nature which are closeted [within his exhibit] but seldom seen,” and designated their exhibition as an ideal way for the public to learn about natural history.  

According to Charles Coleman Sellers, it is important to bear in mind that in its historical context, the word “curiosity” referred to “an object of intellectual interest,” rather than an abnormality. Following Peale’s lead, subsequent museum exhibits featured all sorts of items ambiguously considered wonderful and rare products of nature that inspired curiosity; the aforementioned South American crystal and Fijian weapons on display at Scudder’s Museum in New York both fell within this category.

Over time, museums and public exhibitions increasingly broadened their definitions of “natural curiosities” to include items that were more bizarre than intellectually stimulating. According to Gordon Wood, the ambitious desire to spread democratized knowledge and culture among the masses could instead result in vulgarized and diluted forms of gentility that pandered to voyeurism and novelty, much to the disgust of elite arbiters of taste. In one particular example, Mix’s Museum in New Haven, Connecticut put a 294-pound teenager on display; his status as a “natural curiosity” was justified by the fact that he supposedly reached his weight despite being a

75 *Freeman’s Journal (Philadelphia)*, July 26, 1786, 4.
vegetarian and a teetotaler.\textsuperscript{78} Exhibits such as these were essentially modernized takes on eighteenth-century displays of disabled individuals cloaked in educational rhetoric. Within this context, it is easy to see why upper class New Yorkers may have viewed the Inuit Exhibition as nothing more than a thinly disguised sideshow.

As elites, such as the members of the Inuit aid committee, condemned Hadlock’s display as a base incarnation of a “natural curiosity,” more details emerged about George, Mary, and Ekeloak’s true backgrounds. Hadlock was placed under arrest shortly after Mortimer contacted city authorities with his fears that the Inuit had been kidnapped. With the showman in prison, journalists scrambled to obtain all the information they could about the Inuit through trial records and interviews with people close to the performers, such as the proprietor of the hotel where they were staying, Charles T. Butler. The majority of articles published in the wake of Hadlock’s arrest were grossly sensationalized, such as the account that described him beating Mary onboard the \textit{Five Brothers}, but all included the common theme that Hadlock’s Inuit performers were completely antithetical to the “primitive” stereotypes that the exhibition advertised.\textsuperscript{79} Rather than being representative of the “uncivilized” Arctic natives that American audiences read about in travel literature and explorers’ accounts, the Inuit were familiar with Euro-American culture, spoke English and had studied Christianity; not to mention, they bore the decidedly non-exotic names of “George” and “Mary.” The fact that the Inuit Exhibition was based on blatant falsehoods removed the show from the realm of educational, respectable public exhibits.

\textsuperscript{78} “Mix’s Museum.” \textit{Connecticut Journal (New Haven)}, October 5, 1809.
\textsuperscript{79} “The Esquimaux Indians.” \textit{Columbian (New York)}, February 8, 1821.
The supposedly inauthentic nature of the Inuits’ clothing was a recurrent subject in articles published about the Inuit Exhibition scandal. In one of the first stories written after Mortimer went to the press, readers learned that the sealskin clothing George and Mary wore for audiences was “made on board” the Five Brothers in order to falsely convey their homeland as the remote Arctic, rather than the colonized portion of Labrador.\(^{80}\) This revelation effectively negated the celebratory notion that the Inuit represented American expansion into the little-known and contested Polar Regions. More broadly, the subject of Inuit clothing fascinated contemporary American audiences. In 1819, a widely reprinted article informed readers about the Inuit clothing practices observed during the British exploration mission to the Arctic. According to British travelers, the Inuit only wore clothing made of animal skin, and were perplexed as to what skins the explorers’ strange woolen garments were made from.\(^{81}\)

From the start, advertisements for Hadlock’s exhibition highlighted the exotic sealskin garb worn by the performers. On the way to New York from Labrador, the Five Brothers had briefly docked in the whaling port of New London, Connecticut, where George, Mary, and Ekeloak were put on display. When the New York press learned the details of their impromptu exhibition, newspapers throughout the city carried vivid accounts of the three Inuit “curiously” dressed in their sealskin clothing.\(^{82}\) Days later when the troupe arrived in New York, the press emphasized that the Inuit were “yet dressed as at New-London, in their seal skins clothes.”\(^{83}\) Advertisements incessantly referenced the sealskin garments worn by George, Mary, and Ekeloak for the duration of

\(^{80}\) “The Esquimaux Indians.” *Columbian (New York)*, February 8, 1821.


the show’s run in New York. The Inuits’ clothing was held up as the prime visible example of their genuine “uncivilized” state. The truth about the clothing’s fabrication complicated the messages that middle-class audiences took away from the exhibit.

The outerwear of the Inuit functioned as a highly noticeable means to define the bodies of George, Mary, and Ekeloak as “Others” compared to their audiences. By the early nineteenth century, clothing served an important social function for the American middle class, especially for women. In her study of women in the Early Republic, Susan Branson identified women’s garments as the “outward vestiges” of middle class social standing; fine clothing publicly displayed an individual’s ambition for gentility and self-improvement.84 Charles Sellers similarly observed that the desire for tangible signs of gentility fueled a middle-class consumer culture uniquely focused on female attire. However, this concern was not solely held by women; within the nominally patriarchal society of the Early Republic, a well-dressed middle-class woman not only signaled her own commitment to gentility, but also that of her male guardian.85 Mary presented a stark contrast to the middle-class women who paid to view her on exhibit.

Mary, clad in her sealskins, served as an “Other” that encouraged middle class American consumerism. Interestingly, the specific subject of how Inuit women dressed was used to support middle-class economic behavior years before Mary set foot in New York. In 1818, an editorial was printed in a Boston newspaper in response to a controversial article written by one of the city’s elites. Within that article, the upper-class Bostonian had lamented the sight of so many middle-class women wearing expensive

85 Sellers, Market Revolution, 155-156.
clothing. The anonymous editorialist passionately defended not only the specific dress of middle-class women, but also American consumer culture in general:

There is a progress in society and a corresponding advancement in arts, manners, opinions, and luxury. The history of mankind has uniformly proved it, and its rapid strides have been perceived in our country by every observing mind. Nor is it to be regretted.

The editorial concluded by rhetorically asking critics of middle-class consumerism if they would prefer middle-class women to dress like “Esquimaux belles.”

The Boston editorial linked female clothing habits not only to the growth of the middle class, but even to national progress. This argument used women’s clothing to connect the middle-class quest for material signs of gentility with the nation’s general economic growth following the War of 1812. When patrons visited the Inuit Exhibition inside Park Hall or the Shakspeare Gallery, they came face to face with an actual, living “Esquimaux belle” that represented the direct opposite of how middle-class American women were expected to dress. The musty skins, ill-fitting and held together by seal sinew, dramatically underscored the material progress of both audience members and middle-class society at large. The sight of Mary in her outerwear implicitly framed increased middle-class consumerism, in the form of clothing, as a positive cultural development. Mary and her outfit were similarly used to support contemporary American gender norms.

One of the first observations audience members would have made about the Inuit Exhibition was that George and Mary were dressed almost identically. In a travel account published the same year that the exhibition was rocked by the kidnapping scandal, British

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author William Bingley described Inuit sealskin clothing for his audience. Bingley noted that Inuit in northern Labrador wore entire outfits made out of sealskin, from their hooded parkas, to their “breeches, stockings, and boots.” Even stranger, the author recalled that Inuit men and women dressed in basically the same clothing; the only differences he observed were that women’s parkas included tails and that women wore larger boots, wherein he assumed they carried their infants. Hadlock advertised his performers as natives of the same region studied by Bingley, so it is likely that their clothing resembled the garments mentioned in his work. The attire worn by George and Mary must have seemed extraordinary and bizarre for urban audiences accustomed to clothing made of fabric. Additionally, the fact that George and Mary wore the same clothing was completely alien to middle-class patrons who associated distinct clothing with separate gender roles.

Gender-specific behaviors for men and women were an important facet of everyday social life in the Early Republic. Cultural historian Bruce Burgett found that during this time period, several strains of thought intersected to encourage notions of gendered social roles, specifically for women. For example, academics like Dr. Benjamin Rush fully equated the biological aspects of sex with the social characteristics of gender. This school of thought formally encouraged gendered female behaviors such as domesticity because of female anatomy and physiology. On the other hand, some social commentators advocated for specific gender roles based on middle-class social values; certain activities were simply prescribed as not being “genteel” for women to partake

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Specific types of clothing for men and women visibly illustrated these social differences.

The belief that men and women were supposed to dress differently was socially engrained upon middle-class Americans. In his study on crossdressing in the Early Republic, Daniel A. Cohen went so far as to describe gender-specific clothing as physically embodying “the culturally constructed distinction between male and female.” Women who did not dress distinctly from their male counterparts destabilized the foundation of these distinctions, but were also the subject of public interest and topics of salacious novels following the War of 1812. Within this context, Mary, clothed identically as her “husband,” served as an uncivilized “Other” that reinforced the genteel middle-class notion that men and women should dress distinctly from one another. However, the contemporary popularity of books about women who eschewed gender-specific clothing suggests that there may have also been an aspect of voyeurism involved with the people who paid to view Mary in her sealskin clothing.

At the same time that Mary’s “uncivilized” appearance seemingly supported cultural norms regarding gender identity and clothing, she may have also embodied a more subversive popular appeal. According to Cohen, women who dressed like men were seen as both threatening and captivating because they abandoned the outer symbols that marked them as female. With outward distinctions blurred between the two genders, cross-dressing women simultaneously shunned their domesticity and encroached upon

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traditionally male social spheres, such as the main character in novels like *The Female Marine.*

The Inuit Exhibition provided the middle class, the demographic most concerned with social propriety and gentility, with a respectable, nominally educational venue where men and women could gaze upon a woman who broke the social and sexual taboo of dressing like a man. For men, Mary may have symbolized a scandalous alternative to American social behavior, while for women, she may have represented freedom from socially prescribed gender norms.

Knowledge that the clothing worn by George, Mary, and Ekeloak was created solely to reinforce their false “uncivilized” backstories complicated the messages that audiences had taken away from the show. Not only were patrons tricked into viewing a supposedly authentic and educational show about the Inuit, but the underlying themes of “Otherness” that encouraged notions of American progress were also muddied. Instead of being examples of the “savage” Inuit who ate only raw meat and dressed solely in sealskin, the reality of their situation showed that George and Mary were more socially similar to their audiences than middle-class patrons previously suspected. George was a former wage laborer who had studied Christianity, and both he and Mary spoke English and normally dressed in Westernized clothing. Certainly, the Inuit remained “Others” for their audiences to define their own identities against, especially in regards to issues of race, but the underlying messages that encouraged ideas of unquestioned American social superiority were challenged.

Popular reactions to the fact that George and Mary were not married illustrate the ambiguous nature of how much “uncivilized” behavior was acceptable for public

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consumption. Ironically, at the same time that critics lambasted the fact that George and Mary were familiar with Western conventions like language, dress, and religion, they were also upset that they did not embody Western standards regarding marriage. The day that news about the scandal first broke, the *New-York Gazette* informed readers that the couple had never met before touring with Hadlock, but also embellished the story to claim that they were each violently kidnapped from separate villages in Labrador and forced to act as husband and wife under the threat of death. The news story concluded by assuring readers that “no improper familiarity” had taken place between the two Inuit.91

Following Hadlock’s arrest, George, Mary, and Ekeloak continued to live in Charles T. Butler’s inn, albeit in separate rooms. Unfortunately, their welfare was not properly maintained in Hadlock’s absence. One editorial noted their emaciated appearances and even speculated that they had been better off under the care of an accused kidnapper.92 Unfortunately, Ekeloak passed away at Butler’s inn on February 18, possibly as a result of the Inuits’ lack of sustenance.93 After the eleven-month-old was laid to rest in a nearby churchyard the following day, the reactions of sympathetic New Yorkers reveal that while on display, Mary and Ekeloak had served as “Others” that reinforced American cultural notions about motherhood and children.

Following American independence, the duties expected of American mothers expanded beyond the immediate domestic sphere. Historians Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton developed the term “republican motherhood” to describe the processes that saw mothers train their children to be respectable citizens of the new republic. Nancy M.

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Theriot observed another change in popular social conceptions of motherly duties beginning in the early nineteenth century. According to Theriot, contemporary ideas about the relationship of sex and gender determinism, such as those supported by Benjamin Rush, resulted in the notion that motherhood defined femininity above all else. Theriot termed this largely middle-class phenomenon “imperial motherhood” and observed that it led to cultural attitudes that generally viewed children in a more affectionate light. The women and children who visited the Inuit Exhibition lived during an era when increased emphasis was placed upon their reciprocal relationship. On the other hand, Mary and Ekeloak represented a completely different type of mother-child dynamic in the popular imaginations of visitors.

Tales of ritual infanticide were among the most disturbing indictments of Inuit “savagery” spread by Western travelers. In a book marketed specifically to children, Reverend Isaac Taylor claimed that when an Inuit mother died, her infant was ritually sacrificed at her gravesite. According to the reverend, whom it must be noted was not kindly disposed to native Inuit culture, “shoals of babes” met that particular fate. Stories such as these found a particular audience among female readers. An 1819 opinion piece on breastfeeding in the *Weekly Visitor, and Ladies’ Museum* candidly informed readers that among the “most barbarous” Inuit, when a nursing mother died, her infant was traditionally buried along with her or thrown into the sea. Such stories further

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95 Isaac Taylor, *Scenes in America, for the Amusement and Instruction of Little Tarry-At-Home Travelers* (London: Harris and Son, 1821), 87-88.
entrenched views of the Inuit as uncivilized within the context of a society increasingly concerned with both motherhood and the innate virtue of children.

Unlike other sensationalized accounts about “uncivilized” Inuit behavior, Western stories of infanticide were based on truth. According to anthropologists, certain Inuit groups historically used infanticide as a means to control sex ratios within their populations. Alternate explanations for the practice include its usage as a form of birth control or a means to remove a dependent during a time of scarcity. Western travelers and missionaries among the Inuit likely learned of the practice and twisted it into tales of ritual sacrifice for their audiences. The events following Ekeloak’s death moved at least some former Inuit Exhibition patrons to rethink their presuppositions about the supposedly uncaring Inuit treatment of children.

Mary’s grief over the death of her son challenged popular views regarding Inuit motherhood and childrearing. On the evening of February 19, curious onlookers watched as Ekeloak was buried in a lower Manhattan churchyard. As Mary stood weeping over the casket of her child, one attendee was rocked by feelings of both grief and shame. According to this individual, the sight of Mary’s tears caused them to recall her exhibition as a “wild and untamed savage” with guilt and disgust. The anonymous critic emphasized that only “Mothers know the anguish that awaits the rending of that tie that bind a mother to her offspring.” The visceral sight of Mary’s anguish complicated American notions of how the “uncivilized” Inuit viewed children.

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97 Billson and Mancini, Inuit Women, 64-65.
Mary’s emotions revealed her as a culturally similar and empathetic individual to American women living in a society increasingly concerned with the relationship between mother and child. The shame felt by the anonymous funeral attendee suggests that prior to Ekeloak’s death, they may have subscribed to the widely disseminated beliefs that considered the devaluation of children an innate quality of Inuit “savagery.” Mary’s status as a mother above all else transcended cultural and racial stereotypes, however briefly, and received select attention following the loss of her son. No longer was the Inuit woman simply a silent “Other” that highlighted the cultural superiority of American motherhood. Following Ekeloak’s funeral, Mary and George somberly returned to Butler’s inn near City Hall. By the time of Ekeloak’s death, Butler was instrumental in keeping the Inuit from contact with Hadlock, even as new information about his innocence came to light.

Butler’s conduct following Hadlock’s arrest strongly suggests that the innkeeper intended to permanently usurp Hadlock’s lucrative position as the Inuits’ agent. Several days before Ekeloak passed away, Butler attended a court hearing alongside George and Mary and entered an affidavit on their behalf which accused Hadlock of kidnapping and assault. Although the court dismissed the charges due to a lack of evidence, the Inuit were put in the custody of Butler until enough funds could be raised to return them to Labrador. Before the committee was able to send George and Mary home, and before Hadlock was set free on bond, Butler sneaked the Inuit out of New York, and embarked on his own short-lived, haphazard tour of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

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Hadlock was released from prison the same week that Ekeloak was laid to rest, after he finally explained the truth about his exhibit to city authorities. The young showman may have been a liar, but the court was evidently satisfied that he was no kidnapper. Unfortunately, George and Mary remained in the custody of Butler, who hurried them across the Hudson River to New Jersey and began to put them on display himself. For almost two months, Butler successfully shuttled the Inuit around the Middle Atlantic States with Hadlock and local law enforcement in pursuit. Hadlock finally caught up with Butler in Philadelphia in April, and all concerned parties were brought before the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court. Chief Justice William Tilghman ultimately settled the case after directly questioning George, who corroborated Hadlock’s story and pledged his desire to again work with the former sea captain On April 25, Tilghman released the Inuit from Butler’s custody and returned them to Hadlock and his traveling exhibition. Following their reunion, Hadlock and his troupe elected not to return to New York, where the exhibit’s image was shattered beyond repair. Instead, the show headed south to the bustling city of Baltimore, where Hadlock tailored the exhibit’s itinerary to avoid further questions regarding the “authenticity” of his employees.

Chapter 3

On Monday April 23, 1821, a traveling showman known only as “Dr. Preston” prepared his weekly program for a series of lectures he was scheduled to deliver in Baltimore. Preston usually lectured on medical or technological matters, but due to popular demand, he agreed to devote his Tuesday night discussion to the “manners and customs of the Esquimaux Indians,” that had caused such excitement in his hometown of New York. The remainder of the week was reserved for subjects such as the “carburetted [sic] hydrogen gas” that lit Baltimore’s streets by night.¹ While the sudden inclusion of Inuit subject matter reveals an immediate popular interest in the commotion that was occurring in Manhattan, the normative content of Preston’s lectures speak to a wider public interest in technology that existed in the Early Republic. Hadlock took advantage of both types of popular curiosity upon his arrival in Baltimore several days after Preston’s talk.

In early May 1821, George, Mary, and Hadlock arrived in the bustling port city of Baltimore. Luckily for the showman and his two employees, news of the scandal in New York was not well known outside of the Northeast. None of the sensationalized stories that flooded the New York press appeared in Baltimore, and once the kidnapping scandal was finally put to rest, a reprinted story in the *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser* assured readers that “George and Mary very cheerfully accompanied Captain Hadlock…and will, no doubt, prepare themselves to receive the visits of the curious.”² However, Hadlock did change the program of the Inuit Exhibition following the disaster in Manhattan; in Baltimore, the show focused more on the presentation of the curious

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¹ “Dr. Preston.” *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, April 23, 1821.
Inuit boat, rather than on the Inuit themselves. The topical shift from George and Mary to their technology functioned as a means to divert possible questions about their fraudulent backstory, and appeal to residents of a city surrounded by the technological innovations of the Early Republic. The presentation of the Inuit boat functioned as a way for audiences to both celebrate American technological achievement and question its side-effects.

The gas lights mentioned by “Dr. Preston” were some of the most visible technological innovations present in the rapidly growing city. In 1816, Rembrandt Peale, the son of museum pioneer Charles Willson Peale, installed brilliant gas lamps described as “gems of light” in his own Baltimore museum.³ Peale’s innovative lights proved so popular that the young man set up a commercial gas company the next year and began installing gas-powered street lamps throughout the city. Baltimore thus became the first city in the United States to feature gas lighting.⁴ The streets that George, Mary, and Hadlock walked in Baltimore were lined with tangible signs of modernization and technical progress. Such themes were especially important for citizens of the Early Republic.

The same early nineteenth-century republican impulses that drove the democratization of knowledge also created a new cultural appreciation for invention and ingenuity. According to Gordon Wood, the belief that the public deserved access to various forms of information also led to the notion that the best types of knowledge were those that were useful to society at large.⁵ In fact, Peale’s offer to line the city streets with

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³ “Gas Lights.” Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser, June 12, 1816.
⁵ Wood, Empire of Liberty, 728.
gas-powered lamps was specifically described as a “liberal and praiseworthy” plan to benefit the “welfare of the citizens” of Baltimore.⁶ Within this social context, inventors were seen as heroic patriots who actively worked toward improving the young nation’s prosperity.⁷ The technological success of individuals like Peale not only benefitted them personally, but also helped define a new national character.

During the decades following independence, traits such as creativity and inventiveness helped establish a common American identity. In the absence of a Western-style, classical past, Americans popularly emphasized their nation’s contemporary innovations and potential for future growth when confronted by European questions regarding their identity. The United States may not have had a comparable history of science, literature, or art, but the nation’s novel republican government seemingly fostered unprecedented social growth.⁸ In 1811, one critic steadfastly refuted the notion that the United States was “dependent on Europe for all the productions of art and genius,” by focusing on the rapid growth of the American steamboat fleet. The anonymous critic boasted of the American engineering, components, and craftsmanship that went into the construction of the fleet, and confidently predicted that “the extent of American ingenuity will very soon astonish and surpass all other nations.”⁹ Steamboats were an especially heralded example of early nineteenth-century American progress, and as Hadlock set up his show in Baltimore, he also began to contact various steamboat companies about an extraordinary exhibition in the Harbor.

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⁶ “Gas Lights.” *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser*, June 12, 1816.
⁹ *Enquirer (Richmond)*, December 17, 1811, 4.
On May 6, the Inuit Exhibition officially opened to the public. From 8:00 in the morning until 7:00 in the evening, Baltimoreans were invited to view the show in the city’s Pavilion Gardens. The very existence of the Pavilion Gardens was directly linked to the complex forces that shaped Baltimore’s rapid nineteenth-century growth. The gardens first opened in July 1816, and were part of a larger compound that also included a new city bathhouse. The “Pavilion Baths and Gardens” stood near the present-day corner of Saratoga Street and Davis Street, two blocks north of City Hall, and only a short walk away from Peale’s museum. John Coleman, proprietor of the baths and gardens, lit his properties with Peale’s new gas-lights and envisioned the Pavilion Gardens as a place for the “amusement, accommodation, and refreshment of the public.” The gardens were generally described as a well-manicured park that included a theater built to resemble a “temple,” as well as a candy store. The specific site of the Baltimore Inuit Exhibition marked somewhat of a shift for Hadlock. Previously, his shows had been held in locations such as galleries and theaters, but in Baltimore, he moved on to the popular Early Republic venue of pleasure gardens.

Contemporary American interest in technological innovation, and the associated rise of industry and cities, led to cultural conditions in which pleasure gardens flourished. American institutions like the Pavilion Gardens traced their lineage to pleasure gardens that arose in eighteenth-century Britain. These privately-owned areas presented the urban public with sculpted grounds and various venues for plays and exhibitions. According

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10 “Two Esquimaux Indians.” *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, June 6, 1821.
11 “Pavilion Baths and Gardens.” *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser*, July 17, 1816.
to Peter Borsay, pleasure gardens were originally developed to serve as “green spaces” where urbanites could experience the natural world of the countryside within their rapidly growing cities. Borsay further contended that early pleasure gardens were typically built on the outskirts of cities in order to serve as a type of transitional space between rural and urban areas. Indeed, John Coleman’s Pavilion Gardens were originally built near Baltimore’s northern boundary, until the city formally annexed a large swath of the surrounding countryside in 1817. By the time audiences lined up to view the Inuit Exhibition, the Pavilion Gardens were a green oasis in the middle of one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.

In the decades following American independence, few cities exemplified the new country’s drive for technological modernization better than Baltimore. Unlike other east coast cities like New York, Baltimore’s growth had few colonial-era precedents. In the late eighteenth century, many Maryland planters switched from growing tobacco to growing more profitable and less-labor intensive grain crops, like wheat. Baltimore’s strategic location at the mouth of the Patapsco River, relatively inland from the Chesapeake Bay, led to its status as the capital of the American grain trade. Farmers from throughout Maryland and southern Pennsylvania shipped massive quantities of wheat to Baltimore for processing and shipping, and by the early 1800s the community was transformed into a major economic center dotted with grist mills and grain warehouses. Additionally, capital raised through grain production was in turn invested into various

other diverse manufacturing ventures, especially textile production.\textsuperscript{16} In this way, Baltimore contained a different type of economic base than Hadlock had experienced in New York.

Baltimore’s close association with grain and textile production gave it a more industrial character than mercantile New York. The same trade policies that led to New York’s rise as a commercial center following the War of 1812 also had a negative impact on the city’s domestic industry. Regulations that favored British imports in New York were especially detrimental to the city’s textile industry, which teetered perilously close to collapse in the years before the Inuit Exhibition’s arrival. Only in the mid-1820s did manufacturers fully adapt to the city’s regulations and modify their businesses accordingly.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, following the economic disruption caused by the War of 1812, the Maryland legislature and various private interest groups actively worked to encourage the further development of Baltimore’s industry.\textsuperscript{18} Such was the enthusiasm for industry in postwar Baltimore that one commentator envisioned a future textile industry in the city “rivaling the manufacturies of Manchester.”\textsuperscript{19} Hadlock’s troupe arrived in the city as it entered a new phase of industrial development through the forces of steam technology.

Steam engines liberated factories and mills from their reliance on water-power. By the early 1820s, entrepreneurs built several steam-powered mills within Baltimore proper.\textsuperscript{20} The most recent of these, as of the time of the Inuit Exhibition, was a three-
year-old facility that ironically ground flour on Pratt Street, adjacent to the spot where Hadlock later staged the race between George and a steamboat.\textsuperscript{21} Public interest in steam engines was expressed through the content of displays put on by Hadlock’s showman peers. Only ten days before the Inuit show opened in the Pavilion Gardens, a public exhibition on a new patent steam engine was given at the appropriately-named Wheat Field Inn.\textsuperscript{22} For Baltimore residents, such displays devoted to steam engine technology were popular not merely for novelty’s sake, but rather were part of a particular city tradition that celebrated American achievement and “civilization.”

Within a contemporary American culture that sought to define itself through technological creativity and innovation, the steam engine represented an especially important invention. Exhibitions of the apparatus had a particularly long history in Baltimore. In 1789, an inventor named Englehart Cruse invited Baltimoreans to a public show of his “improved” steam engine. Cruse described himself as a simple man from humble origins who hoped his engine would help advance the nation’s technological reputation. Cruse extolled the fact that “America, once inhabited by savages alone” had become “a flourishing and civilized empire” through its dedication to technology and manufacturing.\textsuperscript{23} A native of Virginia, Cruse struggled for years to build a steam-powered grist mill on the end of a pier, which would have theoretically increased the efficiency of loading processed flour onto waiting ships, before ultimately moving to Charleston, South Carolina.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} John W. McGrain, “Englehart Cruse and Baltimore’s First Steam Mill,” \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine} 71 (Spring 1976): 65.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser}, April 26, 1821, 2.
\textsuperscript{23} “To the Inhabitants of Baltimore.” \textit{Maryland Journal (Baltimore)}, May 1, 1789.
In many ways, Cruse’s efforts resembled those of an idealized middle class man of the Early Republic. Like so many individuals of the era, Cruse was a recent arrival to the city who came to Baltimore in search of economic opportunity. While the movement of people from rural areas to cities was a nationwide phenomenon, it was especially apparent in Baltimore. Due in part to the city’s humble colonial origins, combined with the emergence of the grain trade in the late eighteenth century, and various territorial annexations, Baltimore’s population more than quadrupled from 1790-1820. Although Cruse ultimately left Baltimore for Charleston after his inventions proved unprofitable, his efforts to rise above his humble origins through hard work and ingenuity, and to create a device that was beneficial to the city at large, were all consistent with Early Republic social values. While Cruse and entrepreneurs like him represented the potential for both middle-class and national advancement, the Inuit “race” remained a curious counterexample to progress in American popular culture.

In a bizarre and widely reprinted article from 1818, written from the perspective of someone reporting from September 4, 2000, the “speculative” future was depicted as a land of leisure and technological innovation. According to the future-author, the prosperity that the United States enjoyed in 2000 was the result of its citizens’ choice to embrace technology and industrialization centuries earlier. Streetlamps full of “Luxean volatile” oil burned bright as day, while gigantic steamboats carried sailors through the Nicaraguan canal to visit the newest American territory of “Kamtaschatka,” recently ceded by Russia. Ironically, a final component of the article included a story about a delegation of Inuit visiting a new factory in the sprawling metropolis of Northampton,

25 Rockman, Scrapping By, 27. The population increased from 13,503 to 62,738 people.
Massachusetts and being stupefied at the technology they saw. Even two centuries in the future, the Inuit remained technologically “backward” compared to their American neighbors.

In the Pavilion Gardens, Inuit technology was at the forefront of Hadlock’s exhibition. Advertisements urged Baltimoreans to view the curious sealskin craft, described as being nearly twenty feet long and as weighing only fifty-five pounds. George and Mary, while obviously still integral to the exhibit, were listed only after the advertisement detailed both their boat and their “half Wolf and half Fox” sled dog. Whether Hadlock was cautiously diverting attention from the humans in his exhibit whose true identities had caused such scandal in New York, or whether he was appealing to a particular interest in technology, the focus of the Baltimore version of his exhibition differed from its earlier incarnation in Manhattan.

Each day during the month of June, curious urbanites, for the price of 25-cents per adult and 12-cents per child, filed into the Pavilion Gardens’ temple-like theater. On the floor of the theater, beside the sled dog and the Inuit performers, lay George’s boat which had caused so much excitement in New York Harbor. Apart from descriptions of the craft’s sealskin construction, length, and weight, little information is known about the boat itself. However, due to the fact that it was able to hold both George and Hadlock in New York, it was likely a type of Inuit craft known as an umiak. These vessels resembled long canoes that could hold two or more people, and consisted of a frame built of either

27 “Two Esquimaux Indians.” *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, June 6, 1821.
driftwood or whalebone covered with sealskin. While the construction materials for Inuit craft mirrored the scarce resources typically available in the Arctic, the boats were also extremely practical for navigating life in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions.

![Umiak model](http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/watercraft/wau03eng.shtml)


*Umiaks* were well suited for the harsh northern ocean conditions experienced by the Inuit. The light-weight sealskin construction was especially useful for withstanding rough seas and ubiquitous ice; while these conditions would have broken rigid wooden boats to pieces, the *umiak* was able to easily flex due to its unique construction. The craft’s sealskin, or alternately walrus-skin, design also rendered it exceptionally water-proof. However, *umiaks* needed to be refurbished every one to three years, as their sealskin exteriors and the sinew used to lash them together began to deteriorate. Despite

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these contextual advantages of the *umiaq*, Inuit ship-building techniques, or lack thereof, were often used as evidence of their “uncivilized” state by Western observers.

Inuit boats were a topic of particular interest for Western explorers in the Arctic dating back to the eighteenth century. One British account republished in American newspapers in 1789 speculated that the Inuit he met in northern Canada paddled boats “curiously” made out of parchment. While he correctly guessed that they wore clothing made of sealskin, he was unable to identify the skins that covered the hull of their boats. Decades later a British history of the North American continent remarked that although Inuit boats represented the closest thing that the “savages” had to art, their work habits rendered the craft useless. According to the author, the Inuit labored with such “languid listlessness” that their skin boats were already half-rotten by the time they were completed. The implications of Western observers on Inuit watercraft were clear: at best, Inuit technology was strange, and even if it had the potential to be efficient, the Inuit were simply too lazy or ignorant to realize their full potential.

At the same time that Inuit technology was denigrated in its own right, it was also used to highlight Western technological prowess. During the famous British exploration mission to the Arctic that included the Inuit John Sackhouse, expedition members brought back amusing stories of Inuit reactions to British sailing ships. According to one sailor, upon meeting the Inuit from the North Pole region, the British were at first unable to convince them to even come near their ship. The Inuit could not conceive of boats built so large, and feared that the vessels were in fact monstrous sea creatures. Upon finally boarding the British ship, the Inuit visitors were stupefied at the hull’s timber

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30 “From A British Publication.” *Herald of Freedom (Boston)*, January 16, 1789.
construction and unsuccessfully attempted to lift the ship up by hand. The tone of the article was generally condescending and openly praised the superiority of the hardy British explorers and their ship, but the story was also probably accurate; timber construction would have been unheard of for natives of the northern Arctic where few trees grew, and indigenous Inuit boats were especially suited for easy portability. Patrons of the Baltimore Inuit Exhibition were uniquely able to experience the supposedly flimsy and unsound Inuit craft mentioned in travel literature firsthand.

For two months, curious Baltimore residents paid to gaze upon the Inuit and their umiak in the Pavilion Gardens. Hadlock’s exhibition dominated the early summer entertainment at the gardens; the only other show that took place during that span was a double feature performed by the Baltimore Oratorical Society one night at the end of May. Otherwise, George, Mary, their dog and their boat were on view for eleven hours a day, every day from May to July. Foot traffic to the Inuit exhibit likely increased in mid-June when the adjacent Pavilion Baths were opened to the public. All the while curious customers visited the exhibit, Hadlock sought to recreate the success of his outdoor show in New York Harbor, but on an even larger scale. Finally, in early July he was able to reach an agreement with a local steamboat line to put on his most ambitious display of the Inuit and their technology yet.

On Monday July 9, Baltimore residents first learned of the race between the Inuit umiak and a steamboat through an advertisement Hadlock placed in the Baltimore Patriot. Spectators were encouraged to gather along the Harbor at 3:00 in the afternoon.

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34 “Baths.” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, June 16, 1821.
of Wednesday the 11th to witness the contest between the Virginia and her famous captain versus George’s rickety craft, which Hadlock reiterated, “weigh[ed] but fifty pounds.” Technically, the event was free to the public, but patrons willing to pay fifty-cents could enjoy the race from the comfort of the Virginia itself.\textsuperscript{35} Despite the free nature of the event, the short notice and timing of the race may have excluded portions of Baltimore’s population from attending. Some wage workers and seasonal laborers likely could not, or chose not, to go to an event scheduled for a midweek summer afternoon. For those able to attend, the show would have provided a chance for them to view the Inuit craft in action against a ship that symbolized early nineteenth-century American innovation and “civilization.”

By the early 1820s, few objects exemplified American progress better than steamboats. Following New York engineer Robert Fulton’s 1807 invention of the first reliable steam powered ship, imitators rushed to emulate his success. After initially only focusing on river travel, newer, more powerful craft were able to take to the sea and navigate the coastline. Passengers raved about the fact that the ships were able to maintain a constant speed, as opposed to sailing ships, and steamboats were hailed as one of the country’s greatest technological achievements.\textsuperscript{36} Much as the steam-powered mills in Baltimore freed factory owners from their reliance on water power, so too did steamboats free their captains and crews from their reliance on wind power. Steamboats showcased American industry’s supposed triumph over nature, while George’s sealskin boat illustrated nature’s mastery over the Inuit. As one contemporary noted, the ability to

\textsuperscript{35} “Race Between the Steam-Boat and the Esquimaux Indian,” Baltimore Patriot, July 9, 1821.
“construct steam engines, and steam ships, to bring together on their breakfast table the products of nations thousands of miles apart,” signaled “true civilization” for Americans.\footnote{37}{“Mr. Davis’s Stone, Gravel, Sand, and Mud Raising Machines,” \textit{Louisiana Advertiser (New Orleans)}, June 3, 1820.}

Fulton and his steamboat were almost mythic to citizens of the Early Republic. It was no accident that an ultramodern “steam frigate” mentioned in the speculative-2000 article was named the \textit{Fulton}.\footnote{38}{“Anno Domini 2000 Anticipated.” \textit{Columbia Gazette (Utica, New York)}, May 26, 1818.} Originally from Pennsylvania, Fulton had studied both painting and engineering during a youth spent in Europe. Upon resettling in New York, Fulton modified the British steam engine technology he observed overseas and created the first commercially successful steamboat, which ran between New York City and Albany.\footnote{39}{Wood, \textit{Empire of Liberty}, 483.} Ironically, Baltimore had come close to beating New York to the first American steamboat line a generation earlier; the state legislature had granted conflicting monopolies for steamboat development to two inventors in the late-1780s, but neither had found success.\footnote{40}{Robert D. Arbuckle, “John Nicholson and the Great Steamboat Rivalry,” \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine} 71 (Spring 1976): 60-61.} Steam-powered ships were certainly popular with residents of the Early Republic for the technological innovation they represented, but just as importantly, they also embodied the spirit of American commercial and territorial expansion.

The continued westward growth of the United States was both a welcoming and challenging development during the early nineteenth century. Western territories were clearly bountiful additions to the country, but effectively integrating the new regions into the national economy proved problematic. Fulton’s improved steamboat proved to be the solution. Shortly after his first vessel began its regular trek up the Hudson from...
Manhattan to Albany, at least one observer predicted that the steamboat, with its regular, sustained speed, was perfectly suited to navigate the Mississippi River and access the “commerce of the Western States.” Fulton concurred, and in 1811 the first of his craft began to traverse the Mississippi. George and his umiak were not simply racing an example of superior American technology, but a palpable symbol of the country’s general economic prosperity.

Despite the practical function that steamboats played in relation to national commerce, they also contributed to the creation of a new type of leisure activity in Baltimore. In June 1813, the first steamboat line in Maryland opened between Baltimore and Annapolis. Each day, for the rather expensive price of a two dollar round-trip, passengers could cruise down the Chesapeake Bay and back again aboard the Chesapeake. By 1820, the number of steamboats present in Baltimore Harbor rose to seven and connected Baltimore to locations from Philadelphia to Norfolk, Virginia. As these relatively nearby locations suggest, steamboats in Baltimore were primarily used for transportation by the city’s wealthier residents. Along with the ships came a new type of harbor culture as well; the Chesapeake regularly delighted crowds by firing a small cannon each time she left port, while the New Jersey drew spectators to the Harbor to see its large figurehead shaped like a golden horse. The regular steamboat service in Baltimore provided a type of constant in an otherwise bustling and chaotic port. The day before George’s race, sixteen trading ships arrived in the Harbor from such faraway

41 “Mr. Fulton’s Steam Boat.” Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), August 19, 1807.
42 Wood, Empire of Liberty, 483.
43 “Steam Boat.” Baltimore Patriot, June 12, 1813.
44 John Thomas Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County from the Earliest Period to the Present Day (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 300-301.
locations as New Orleans, Haiti, and the Dutch East Indies. The same afternoon, the steamboat *Virginia* arrived from Norfolk on schedule and began to prepare for the following day’s festivities.\(^{45}\)

The specific usage of the *Virginia* was beneficial for both the company that owned the ship, the Norfolk and Baltimore Line, and Hadlock. The *Virginia* was launched in Baltimore in August 1817, and at the time of its construction was feted as the largest and fastest steamboat ever built in the United States. The new ship regularly shuttled upwards of 100 passengers back and forth between Baltimore and Norfolk, and was able to make the journey in the span of a day.\(^{46}\) Within two years of the ship’s launch, the *Virginia* and her captain, John Ferguson, were legendary in the Baltimore-Norfolk area. A Norfolk newspaper boasted that Ferguson’s coastal route through the Chesapeake Bay was the most treacherous in the United States and described him as the only mariner with enough skill and courage to regularly make the journey.\(^{47}\) The Norfolk and Baltimore Line chose a ship to represent their company that was not only renowned for its speed and its size, but also for the skill of its pilot; George’s opponent would have been well-known to audiences who came to witness the race.

On the afternoon of July 11, crowds began to make their way to Pratt Street along the edge of the harbor. At Bowly’s Wharf, in the shadow of Baltimore’s newest steam-powered factory, the *Virginia* sat moored in the Harbor. No detailed descriptions of the *Virginia* survive, but it is known that she was larger than the *Chesapeake*, which was 130-feet long and 22-feet wide.\(^{48}\) An image from a contemporary advertisement reveals

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\(^{45}\) “Shipping News.” *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, July 10, 1821.


\(^{47}\) “Steam Boat Virginia.” *Norfolk (Virginia) Herald*, March 8, 1819.

\(^{48}\) Scharf, *History of Baltimore*, 300.
that the *Virginia* likely contained two paddle-wheels located on both the starboard and port sides of the ship. The paddle wheels and the smokestack were both found near the bow of the *Virginia*, while the half of the vessel closest to the stern was shaded by a canopy.\textsuperscript{49} George’s twenty-foot-long *umiak* bobbed in the water beside the hulking *Virginia*, a seemingly fragile counterpoint to the timber and iron symbol of American technical prowess and achievement.

![Image of a Steamboat](image.png)

**Figure 3.** Image of a Steamboat Owned by the Norfolk and Baltimore Line. “Norfolk and Baltimore Line.” *Baltimore Patriot & Commercial Advertiser*, December 5, 1817.

Shortly before 3:00, guests who paid the exclusive 50-cent admission fee boarded the *Virginia*. An “elegant band” onboard the ship began to play for the assembled crowd as Captain John Ferguson readied the ship for departure. Much like in New York, Hadlock joined George in his *umiak*, and the two men sat in the sealskin craft beside the

\textsuperscript{49} “Norfolk and Baltimore Line.” *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, December 5, 1817.
Virginia while the ship’s boilers built up steam. The crowds along the shoreline cheered as the steamboat’s engines suddenly churned to life and the vessel lurched forward into the Harbor. George and Hadlock grabbed their wooden paddles and rowed in unison alongside the flagship of the Norfolk and Baltimore Line. After only a few tense seconds beside one another, George and Hadlock slipped past the Virginia and “outstripped the boat considerably” on their way to the finish line. The fifty-pound boat made of sealskin, driftwood, and sinew easily defeated the most well-known steamboat and captain in Baltimore.

The exact reaction of the crowd to the umiaq victory over the steamboat is unknown. However, based on the popular perceptions regarding the supposed disparity between American and Inuit technology, spectators were likely shocked. The “curious” lightweight boat that audiences observed in the Pavilion Gardens for two months not only proved seaworthy, the craft and its “uncivilized” captain defeated the American ship with relative ease. Conversely, the victory probably did not come as a shock to George and Hadlock. George was especially aware of the craft’s durability and speed, and Hadlock knew the boat’s capabilities from his laps around the Battery in New York Harbor. Regardless of their inside knowledge, the results of the race complicated the message that many members of the public likely expected to take away from the spectacle.

First and foremost, the race between the umiaq and the steamboat was simply a form of novel entertainment. Unlike earlier shows in New York or in the Pavilion Gardens, there were no pretensions that the display was educational in any way. The

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50 “Race between the Steam-Boat and the Esquimaux Indian.” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, July 9, 1821.
supposed authenticity of George’s status as an Inuit, or of his boat as an example of Inuit technology, were not themes of the outdoor spectacle. Even the prior exhibition of the umiak in New York Harbor, with its marching band and midday parade down Broadway, had stressed the fact that audiences were witnessing how Inuit traveled and hunted in the Arctic. Advertisements for the race between the two craft in the Harbor instead focused on the extraordinary nature of the event. Hadlock assured the interested public an unforgettable afternoon and boasted that “there is no doubt but general satisfaction will be given, as the arrangements made are ample.”  

On July 11, Hadlock stripped his show of the nominally-educational veneer that distinguished it as a form of respectable middle class entertainment and recast it as a bluntly novel sideshow.

Apart from its exotic content, the race between George and the steamboat was popular with audiences because of the inherent messages it contained regarding American technology and “civilization.” For the crowds that gathered along the piers of the Harbor or on the deck of the Virginia, the victory of the umiak likely came as a complete shock. Inuit boats, and Inuit technology in general, were widely disparaged as “primitive,” while steamboats represented the best of American engineering and the opening of the West. On the surface, the race between the two boats provided a chance for the Virginia to showcase national prestige and advancement versus a craft made of driftwood and animal skin. Essentially, the juxtaposition of the Native American umiak against the steamboat served as a way to highlight the rapid technological progress of the United States; as the inventor Englehart Cruse boasted in 1789, America was “once inhabited by savages alone,” but had achieved “civilized empire” status through its

52 “Race Between the Steam-Boat and the Esquimaux Indian,” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, July 11, 1821.
dedication to technology. The umiak represented the continent’s “primitive” past, the steamboat represented its productive present and promising future.

George and Hadlock’s convincing win over the Virginia complicated that progressive message. While certainly no audience members advocated a return to skin boats and the shunning of steam-power, the steamboat’s loss definitively showed that Native American technology, even that of the especially “uncivilized” Inuit, was not simply primitive and ineffective. Interestingly, the surprise victory could have also resonated with a peculiar nostalgia that city residents may have had for pre-industrial life. In the sense that the umiak represented a simpler, “natural” state and the steamboat symbolized modern urban society with its ordered streets and factories, the Inuit victory likely appealed to city dwellers who experienced the day-to-day realities of the market revolution, rather than just the abstract popular rhetoric regarding “progress.”

In theory, the planned race between the sealskin umiak and the four-year-old flagship of the Norfolk-Baltimore Line represented a chance to celebrate American “civilization.” The popularity that greeted its result, however, sheds light on contemporary anxieties over industrialization and urban life. Indeed, the public’s response to the race was certainly positive, even if surprised. Only three days after he and George handily defeated the Virginia, Hadlock bowed to public pressure and arranged for a second outdoor demonstration the following week. The follow-up to the race was much less spectacular, and essentially a repeat of the show that he and George put on in New York Harbor five months earlier. In preparation for the new exhibition, Hadlock reiterated the fact that only days earlier the umiak had easily defeated a steamboat. The

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53 “To the Inhabitants of Baltimore.” *Maryland Journal (Baltimore)*, May 1, 1789.
exhibition of July 16 promised to bring back satisfied viewers of the boat race, as well as others who heard of its results and were interested in a brief escape from the realities of everyday city life.

Despite the general enthusiasm that greeted American economic growth following the War of 1812, negative aspects of resultant social changes were also apparent. Only a little over a year before the Inuit Exhibition reached Baltimore, the city was rocked by news that the nearby Patapsco Cotton Factory burned down, instantly leaving “twenty-seven poor families” without work or subsistence.55 New lives in burgeoning American cities may have presented potential economic opportunities for disaffected residents of the countryside, but as the Patapsco Cotton Factory fire made clear, industrialization and wage labor also carried their own sets of associated risks; mechanized production provided people with plentiful jobs, but left them completely dependent on said wages for basic sustenance and only a spark away from unemployment. The harsh realities of working-class life were the downside of the interrelated rise of industrialization and the middle class.

The discrepancies of modern American city life were especially visible in Baltimore. As Richard Bushman observed in his study of the American middle class, nineteenth-century middle class membership entailed the cultural emulation of “genteel” ways of life and was expressed through conscious efforts toward social mobility through avenues such as proper manners and higher education. Aspirations for gentility and its associated status often entailed the acquisition of certain consumer goods to serve as visual class signifiers, and therefore disqualified poorer segments of the population.56

56 Bushman, *Refinement of America*, xv.
American cities, the gap between the poor and the middle and upper classes was starkly apparent. As new residents poured into urban locations like Baltimore during the first decades of the nineteenth century, the attainment of middle-class status often proved out of reach.

Much as in other American port cities, Baltimore contained a middle class made up of various professionals and master craftsmen-turned-capitalists. However, because of the city’s comparatively recent rise to economic prominence and its unique demography, it also contained comparatively large numbers of poor and working-class individuals. The fact that so much of the city was still in the process of being physically built in the 1820s meant that a huge segment of the population worked seasonally as unskilled laborers and struggled to consistently earn enough money to cover the cost of living for months at a time.\(^{57}\) Additionally, an especially large portion of the population was comprised of freed slaves from the countryside who moved to the city in search of work after many tobacco plantations downsized following their switch to growing grain. This situation meant that the majority of African Americans in Baltimore arrived directly from a state of slavery and entered the ranks of the city’s poor.\(^{58}\) Finally, the city’s open embrace of manufacturing also resulted in a sizeable number of poor, unskilled factory workers, such as the twenty-seven families that formerly worked in the Patapsco Cotton Factory.

The circumstances of the city’s continual growth, a large population of impoverished freedmen, and the effects of industrialization meant that the harsh realities associated with the market revolution were especially present in Baltimore. As middle-class families strolled to the Inuit Exhibition, they passed freedmen who earned less

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\(^{57}\) Rockman, *Scraping By*, 159.

\(^{58}\) Rockman, *Scraping By*, 41.
money in a day than it cost them to enter the Pavilion Gardens, teams of poor immigrants
together building roads, and factories full of child laborers; child labor was especially feted as a
way to keep poor children out of trouble and at the same time “cure” them of their
poverty. In fact, industrialization in general was seen as a natural remedy for the city’s
apparently indolent poor population. At an Independence Day toast given a week before
the race between the umiak and the Virginia, a group of civic leaders drank to “Domestic
Manufactures, the offspring of economy—the sinews of government, and the relief of a
dense and poor population.” The Baltimoreans who attended the free, outdoor race in
the Harbor, whether they lived the realities of city life or merely extolled its potential,
were both intimately familiar with its scenes.

In her analysis of the Wild West Shows that toured the east coast a half-century
after the Inuit Exhibition, Joy S. Kasson found that their urban popularity was tied to
ideas of idealistic “escapism.” The untamed vision of the “Wild West,” including its
spacious landscapes and exotic Native American inhabitants, provided a welcome
distraction from the hustle and bustle of city life. Similarly, for urbanites in the Early
Republic, Indian Exhibitions, such as Hadlock’s Inuit show, provided visions of peoples
and their technology that were all at once “uncivilized,” but also represented a simpler,
less-restricted way of life. In the cases of both Wild West Shows and Indian Exhibitions,
urban east coast audiences were living through times of major social change.
Industrialized city life was its initial stages during the early 1800s, while it entered a new
phase at the end of the century due to factors such as increased immigration and the

59 Rockman, Scrapping By, 40.
60 “Editor of the Baltimore Patriot.” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, July 10, 1821.
61 Kasson, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, 15.
technological innovations of the Second Industrial Revolution. Native Americans, who no longer maintained an organized presence near any major eastern cities by the nineteenth century, became idealized and romanticized as emblems of a less-complicated era.

Due to the fact that so many city residents in the early 1800s were recent transplants from rural areas, these Indian Exhibitions may have presented particularly nostalgic views of non-city life for some audience members. This is especially likely in a city like Baltimore that experienced such rapid growth during the Early Republic. By the enumeration of the 1820 federal census, the former tobacco-processing settlement was transformed into the third largest city in the United States, behind only Philadelphia and New York. Many city residents who paid to view the Inuit show in the Pavilion Gardens, or freely watched from the city docks, were themselves, or the children of, migrants from the surrounding countryside. As they looked upon the Inuit and their umiak, they witnessed representatives of a group of people that, however “primitive,” came from a world without crowded city streets or factory fires, much as they or their parents had.

A select number of observers openly praised Native American ways of life as the country became more technologically-driven. On January 2, 1821, as crowds flocked to view the Inuit Exhibition in New York’s Park Hall, an article was printed in the city that openly criticized Secretary of War John C. Calhoun’s “civilization” policies for western Native American tribes. In the column, the author relayed a story of a Native chief in Missouri who recently helped the United States Army solve a murder investigation. The

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62 Rockman, Scrapping By, 34.
chief’s conduct was specifically cited as “proof of the devotion and hardihood of the
Indian character, when uninfluenced by civilization.”

The same week, an editorial was
reprinted throughout the east coast that advocated the use of traditional Native American
medical practices for the benefit of “mankind generally, and particularly the American
practitioners and people.”

To many academics and artists of the Early Republic, Native American lifeways
were deemed worthy of attention and respect, albeit in an abstract, romanticized form.
This interest helped shape the development of Romanticism in the United States in the
years after the Inuit Exhibition toured New York and Baltimore. This literary and artistic
movement, originating in Europe, was closely related to contemporary social strife
caued by the forces of industrialization. The twin growth of industry and cities led to an
emotive and idealized fascination with “nature.”

In the United States, the movement
took a particular interest in Native American subjects. This phenomenon was strongly
related to the artistic desire to focus on non-European, indigenous American subjects, and
the longstanding belief that Native Americans were going extinct; perhaps the best
known example of this movement was James Fenimore Cooper’s The Last of the
Mohicans, published five years after the Inuit Exhibition arrived in Baltimore.

The popular messages of the Inuit Exhibition, and the steamboat race in particular, possessed
a certain type of duality. On the one hand they celebrated American commercial and

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63 “Indian Character.” American (New York), January 2, 1821.
64 “A Question For Medical Men.” Hallowell (Maine) Gazette, January 3, 1821.
65 Bernadette Malinowski, “German Romantic Poetry in Theory and Practice: The Schlegel Brothers,
Schelling, Tieck, Novalis, Eichendorf, Brentano, and Heine,” in The Literature of German Romanticism ed.
Dennis F. Mahoney (New York: Camden House, 2004), 147.
66 Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr, The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the
technological advancement; on the other hand, they also presented audiences with a romanticized view of pre-industrial society. Both messages were equally contingent upon the objectification of George and Mary and their transformation into specific symbols.

Hadlock’s final show in Baltimore exemplified the complex duality of the Inuit Exhibition. The advertisement for the outdoor exhibit invited audiences to watch the umiak maneuver around the Patapsco River, much like the earlier show in New York Harbor. Hadlock described the sealskin boat as being “strange and highly amusing,” but also highlighted its near-effortless victory over the Virginia.67 Tellingly, one decisive win over a steamboat did not alter Hadlock’s overall opinion that the umiak was anything other than bizarre and comical. His particular description framed the umiak as a primitive curiosity, but one that had also humbled an emblem of American civilization. In the days before the capstone outdoor exhibition, the Inuit finished their time at the Pavilion Gardens’ temple-like theater, and prepared for one more outdoor demonstration in the Baltimore summer heat.

In the mid-afternoon of July 16, crowds of spectators began to make their way to the western side of the harbor, opposite the shipbuilding area of Fell’s Point and along the road leading from the city to Fort McHenry.68 Eager Baltimoreans who arrived before the 4:00 start time lounged along the southern banks of the Patapsco and watched as schooners departed the city for locations like Boston and Charleston and ships arrived from places such as Savannah and Bermuda.69 At precisely 4:00, Hadlock addressed the assembled mass of spectators and hopped into the umiak with George. The respectable

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education factor returned to the exhibition following the novelty of the steamboat race, as George and Hadlock demonstrated “in the manner peculiar to [the Inuit] nation, several evolutions on the water.” As the two men paddled around the tepid waters of the Patapsco, Mary stood in a designated area chaperoned by an attendant. According to advertisements for the exhibition, she had not been well in the days prior to the event, although her specific malady was not mentioned. After an appropriate amount of time had passed for a donations box to pass among the crowd, George and Hadlock pointed the umiak toward the audience and made their way back to shore.\(^70\) The Inuit Exhibition in Baltimore was officially over.

After roughly two and a half months in Baltimore, the Inuit Exhibition left the community. Compared to the show’s first stop in New York, the sojourn in Maryland’s largest city was much less eventful. Through switching the focus of the exhibition to the Inuits’ technology, rather than the Inuit themselves, Hadlock avoided potentially unwanted attention regarding their true, Westernized identities. Although surprisingly little information made it to Maryland regarding the exhibit’s scandal in Manhattan, no advertisements in Baltimore made any mention to George or Mary’s backgrounds, fabricated or genuine. The umiak provided audiences with a tangible, “authentic” emblem of preindustrial simplicity, even as questions regarding the personal identities of George and Mary may have been problematic in regards to their stereotypical “Inuit-ness.”

The exhibition’s topical shift to Inuit technology also synched up well with contemporary American interest in technological advancement, especially in a city like Baltimore that was becoming increasingly industrialized. The marquee event of the Inuit

\(^70\) “Esquimaux Indians.” *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, July 14, 1821.
Exhibition’s stay in the city, the race between the umiak and the steamboat, drew massive crowds through its ability to explore both the positive and negative aspects associated with the drive toward American modernization. While the event promised to highlight American progress and “civilization,” the race’s unexpected result, and its subsequent popularity, revealed that the umiak victory may have struck a chord with urbanites frustrated by the day-to-day realities of life in the modern American city.
Conclusion

In early November 1821, readers of the *New-York Journal* learned that Hadlock’s Inuit Exhibition had recently arrived in England.\(^1\) For the next five years, Hadlock’s show toured Europe, opening in such cities as Dublin, Berlin, Vienna, and Paris. Ironically, Hadlock discovered that Indian Exhibitions were equally popular in Europe as they were in the United States, and found himself competing against a traveling show featuring Aimoré tribesmen from eastern Brazil in several cities.\(^2\) While Hadlock profited handsomely from European interest in “Esquimaux Indians,” George and Mary each met tragic ends. Within a year of the show’s arrival in Europe, Mary died unexpectedly during a whirlwind tour of various English fairs. Hadlock, not wanting to change the exhibit’s program, hired a Romani woman to play Mary’s part, but was faced with charges of fraud once authorities uncovered his dishonesty. The showman immediately fired the Romani woman and found a London actress whose “color” and “features” allowed her to pass as Inuit.\(^3\) Even after his imprisonment in New York, Hadlock remained committed to the deception of his audience.

Following Mary’s death, Hadlock, George, and the unnamed actress spent much of the next several years touring the German States. According to contemporaries, a young Māori man from New Zealand joined the human exhibition in 1824, although he died shortly thereafter.\(^4\) In a macabre twist, Hadlock supposedly had his head preserved using Māori methods and attached to a mannequin, which itself became a feature of Hadlock’s show. A year later, George died under mysterious conditions in Strasbourg.

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\(^2\) Wright, “The Traveling Exhibition of Captain Samuel Hadlock, Jr.,” 219-220.
\(^3\) Wright, “The Traveling Exhibition of Captain Samuel Hadlock, Jr.,” 218-219.
\(^4\) The Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.
and Hadlock made plans to return to Maine with a new Prussian wife and infant daughter. Back in New England, Hadlock established a taxidermy business that sold high-end stuffed seals to wealthy customers. In 1829, Hadlock and a crew of eighteen sailors embarked for the Arctic in search of seals in an event that mirrored his cover story regarding how he originally met George and Mary nine years earlier. The thirty-seven year old captain became separated from his crew during a snowstorm in coastal Greenland, and his frozen body was found by local Inuit the next day. Hadlock’s remains were left where he was found, and his sealing ship was lost with all hands on its journey back to Maine, likely in the middle of the Davis Strait.\(^5\)

Within a decade of the Inuit Exhibition’s arrival in the United States, all of its major participants were dead. Ekeloak rested in a lower Manhattan churchyard, Mary in London, George in Strasbourg, and Hadlock in Greenland. Ironically, Hadlock’s life ended in the same remote region where he claimed that his career as a showman began. Despite the Inuit Exhibition’s continuing fame overseas, no further word of its exploits were printed in the United States. For American audiences, the Inuit show was merely one incarnation, however extraordinary, of the Indian Exhibition phenomena that arose in the United States following the War of 1812. Indian Exhibitions remained popular in the years after Hadlock’s departure as the factors that caused their appeal continued to impact the American public.

American human exhibitionism traced its roots to the colonial era; people were put on display for profit since at least the mid-eighteenth century. However, Indian Exhibitions such as Hadlock’s represented a relatively new incarnation of the practice.

Prior to American independence, most people on display suffered from some type of visible disability and their exhibition mainly catered to base curiosity on the part of audience members. By the late 1700s, Enlightenment rhetoric and ideals of republicanism combined to create a new type of human exhibitionism in the United States that sought to publicly spread knowledge among the country’s citizenry. Human exhibitionism became a respectable phenomenon as shows nominally tried to educate their audiences, as well as entertain.

In addition to serving as forms of entertainment, human exhibits in the Early Republic also conveyed positive messages about American progress and market expansion to their audiences. As objectified “Others,” human exhibits provided the American public with images of primitiveness against which to juxtapose their modernizing nation. With the American victory over Great Britain in the War of 1812, the young nation entered a period of dramatic postwar prosperity and development. Settlers streamed westward into newly subjugated territory, merchants spread American economic interests across the globe, and cities teemed with new industry and technology.

The American victory in 1815 led to a new popular interest in the country’s Native inhabitants. Organized Native resistance against the encroachments of white settlers was dealt a crushing blow with the defeat of Great Britain. Native peoples were suddenly viewed in American popular culture as nonthreatening and as a “primitive” group destined for extinction through the westward spread of “civilization.” Human exhibitions featuring Native American performers known as Indian Exhibitions first arose during this postwar era and typically featured Native people acting out scenes of their indigenous culture, such as simulated warfare or dances. Due to their supposedly
“authentic” tribal content, these shows fit within the cultural movement that legitimized human exhibits as respectable, democratic purveyors of knowledge. Indian Exhibitions were especially popular in Northeastern cities; these areas contained large, centralized populations of potential customers and residents that already viewed Native Americans as a mythic, endangered group due to their near-disappearance in the East.

Hadlock’s show featured a unique type of dynamism not found in other Indian Exhibitions. As Inuit, George, Mary, and Ekeloak were both Native Americans and residents of a foreign country touched by American commerce; Hadlock’s false backstory gave their origin as the Danish colony of Greenland, but their actual homeland was the British territory of Labrador. During the early nineteenth century, as scientific attitudes toward race hardened, the Inuit were widely considered to be among the least “civilized” peoples in the world. American audiences who visited the exhibition looked upon living trophies that showcased the bounds of American mercantile activity, and representatives of a society that seemingly highlighted the superiority of their own.

Despite the celebratory intent of Indian Exhibitions in general, and Hadlock’s show in particular, their content was also open to interpretation. For instance, while George and Mary stood as negative caricatures that reinforced contemporary American values, such as those involving motherhood, they also appealed to a romanticized vision of the nation’s past. The public enthusiasm that greeted George’s defeat of the *Virginia*, a true symbol of American technological progress and innovation, may have spoken to popular nostalgia for the preindustrial era. These particular sentiments in turn fueled the growth of Romanticism in the United States, which flourished in the years following the Inuit Exhibition’s departure. Individuals drawn to the umiak defeat of the steamboat may
have been reacting against the stark realities of rapid American economic growth and “progress.”

Displays like the Inuit Exhibition catered primarily to middle-class audiences. Showmen typically fixed their prices at amounts that appealed to middling customers and effectively barred the participation of lower classes. This practice mimicked the contemporary strategy of museum proprietors like Charles Willson Peale, who sought to spread knowledge among the population, but who also resisted the notion of impoverished people visiting their institutions. Indian Exhibitions were also a middle-class phenomenon on a cultural level. From a cultural standpoint, the American middle class consisted of people who sought a sophisticated, “genteel” social status. Within the context of a republic, gentility was seen as a virtue that was theoretically available to everyone. However, values such as refined manners and self-improvement typically required the purchase of cultural markers; etiquette books, silverware, and education, such as the information presented at Indian Exhibitions, cost money and required the possession of disposable income. At the other end of the spectrum, there is evidence to suggest that Indian Exhibitions were unappealing to members of the upper class. The moral crusade against Hadlock’s show in New York was led by many of the city’s elites that saw the display as a thinly veiled sideshow masquerading as a respectable public exhibition.

Following the departure of the Inuit Exhibition, public shows featuring Native Americans remained popular with American audiences. Throughout the 1820s, the supposedly subjugated and disappearing aborigines of America appealed to white, middle-class audiences that continued to observe massive social change caused by
phenomena such as industrialization and territorial expansion. At the same time, however, the general practice of public exhibitionism began to change. Whereas most showmen during the early years of the nineteenth century strove to present their exhibitions as factual and scientific, some businessmen sacrificed these ideals for the sake of profits by the 1820s. This trend aped behaviors that Gordon Wood observed in contemporary museums; in order to compete with peer institutions and draw in larger crowds, purveyors of public information stretched the bounds of what exhibits constituted genuinely academic subjects. This practice ironically returned many public exhibitions to the novel sideshows that existed prior to the cultural movement to democratize knowledge.

The de-emphasis of education in favor of novelty within public exhibits was already occurring as Hadlock and his show finished their tour of the east coast. In July 1821, just as Hadlock was preparing to sail for Europe, an eighteen-year-old Sauk tribesman named Shauwiskanan was put on display in an Albany museum. Advertisements described the young man as a master of different Native American languages and also as suffering from a disability that stunted his height and forced him to spend his life sitting in a wooden bowl. Despite his disabled status, audiences were primarily invited to view him in order to learn about Native American linguistics. The museum setting of the exhibit further entrenched its status as an ostensibly legitimate, informative show. As Shauwiskanan’s tour continued, however, his display increasingly focused on the novelty of his unique disability.

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6 “Natural Curiosity.” *New-York Spectator*, July 20, 1821.
The show gradually began to shun academic legitimacy once it removed to Manhattan. While advertisements still contained rhetoric about Shauwiskanan’s value to natural history and vague references to New York naturalist Samuel Mitchill, no further mention was made of his linguistic abilities and the shows were held in a rented house in the Fly Market district near the East River, far from the cultured enclaves along Broadway. By the time the traveling exhibit arrived in Alexandria, Virginia a year later, it had completely devolved into a voyeuristic sideshow. Customers were invited to a tavern solely to watch Shauwiskanan scuttle around the floor in his little wooden bowl. The Shauwiskanan exhibit exemplified the vulgarization of public exhibits in general. What began as a seemingly respectable show in a museum devoted to Native American languages morphed into a display that exploited Shauwiskanan’s disability in order to draw in customers.

Public exhibits continued their drift toward fantastical subject matter in the years following the departure of the Inuit Exhibition. In 1824, a group of New York academics slammed Boston’s New England Museum for hosting a traveling exhibition that included a supposedly mummified mermaid. Critics charged that the museum had prioritized profits and entertainment over academic integrity. Despite academic criticism, such displays soon became the new norm among public exhibitions in the United States, especially through the efforts of the most prolific American showman of the nineteenth century, Phineas T. Barnum.

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7 An advertisement for the show is found in the article: “Interesting.” New-York Gazette, September 28, 1821. The identity of the venue is found in the advertisement: “To Let.” American (New York), April 5, 1821. A description of the Fly Market district is found: Burrows and Wallace, Gotham, 354.
8 “Shauwiskanan,” Alexandria Gazette, December 14, 1822.
Barnum dramatically changed how public exhibits were viewed in the United States. According to historian Neil Harris, what separated Barnum from his showman peers was not the content of his exhibits, but rather his exceptional talent for marketing and advertising. For instance, Barnum’s first tour in 1835 featured an elderly African American woman named Joice Heth who was supposedly George Washington’s 161-year-old former nurse. On the one hand, Barnum presented evidence to prove the veracity of her story, such as Heth’s alleged eighteenth-century bill of sale. On the other hand, Barnum exploited the extraordinary nature of the exhibit and secretly penned editorials that criticized the show as fake and urged skeptics to visit the exhibition and verify their suspicions. Rather than exhibit supposed academic truths, Barnum thrived on public doubts.\textsuperscript{10}

Barnum’s strategy marked a decisive break from older showmen like Hadlock. Less than fifteen years after the Inuit Exhibition left the United States, Barnum profited from the same issues regarding “authenticity” that had gotten Hadlock’s show banned in New York. Arguably, all human exhibits were based on misinformation. George and Mary were not isolated natives of the remote Arctic, just as Joice Heth was not Washington’s 161-year-old former nurse. Hadlock remained committed to his show’s informative façade to the point where he spent several weeks in jail on kidnapping charges rather than admit his performers’ true backgrounds. Barnum meanwhile manipulated his show’s outlandish content in order to profit from believers and skeptics alike.

\textsuperscript{10} Harris, Humbug, 22-23.
The shift from displays put on by showman like Hadlock to those put on by Barnum and his imitators exemplified a much larger cultural transformation within the United States. With the election of Andrew Jackson and the associated rise of “Jacksonian Democracy” in the late-1820s, earlier republican notions regarding the popularization of information for the enlightenment of the American citizenry began to fade. Jacksonian ideals that stressed individualism and personal financial success helped fuel the movement that saw museums morph from halls of public information to centers for bizarre entertainment. Barnum, an outspoken Jacksonian Democrat himself, pioneered this development among public exhibits. The Inuit Exhibition represented the twilight of an era. Within a decade, public displays were able to abandon their outward pretensions of academic legitimacy and plainly function as sources of entertainment, much as in the cases of earlier colonial-era exhibitions.

Within the broader historiography of public exhibits, the specific phenomenon of Indian Exhibitions faced its own particular fate. From surviving evidence, it appears that Indian Exhibitions became less popular after the early 1830s. Notices for human exhibits featuring Native Americans occurred much more sporadically, and the Native performers who were put on display were increasingly billed as supporting acts for such displays as Baltimore’s “wonderful double-headed boy.” Additionally, advertisements took special care to assure readers that the performers were “docile” or “temperate.” These developments reflected both the transformation of public exhibitions into sources of

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12 Harris, *Humbug*, 33.
novel entertainment, and that public perceptions of Native Americans changed after the 1820s.

A key factor that led to the popularity of Indian Exhibitions after 1815 was the belief that Natives no longer posed an organized threat to American interests. The decreased appeal of such shows after the early 1830s may have been related to concerns revived by the 1832 Black Hawk War. During the four-month conflict between an alliance of Western tribes against the U.S. Army and various militias, eastern newspapers provided their readers with lurid details of supposed Indian savagery. One Baltimore paper even called upon city residents to march to the frontlines in Illinois, lest the tribal confederacy pillage Maryland. Native Americans were suddenly demonized in the very east coast cities where Indian Exhibitions found such success. The displays did not regain consistent mainstream popularity until Native Americans were once again considered subjugated by urban American audiences.

Controversy over Indian removal policies in the 1830s may have also contributed to the temporary decline of Indian Exhibitions. Originally, such policies were championed by American politicians as a means to protect Native peoples in the south and west from increasing numbers of white settlers. Residents of eastern states generally agreed, upon the condition that removals were carried out voluntarily. The forced removal of tribes such as the Creek and Cherokee during the late 1830s accordingly drew outrage from many eastern observers. The editorial section of one Boston newspaper in 1837 decried both the “sufferings and privations” of the Creeks.

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14 “War, War.” Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser, June 8, 1832.
15 Banner, How the Indians Lost Their Land, 195.
16 “Indians.” Hampshire Gazette (Northampton, Massachusetts), January 6, 1830.
currently marching west, and the likely extinction that awaited the Cherokee in their new arid territory. Amid such controversy in the eastern cities frequented by Indian Exhibitions, shows featuring Native Americans may have been popularly deemed as controversial or insensitive.

Although human exhibits featuring Native Americans continued sporadically following the Black Hawk War and the Indian removals of the late 1830s, they did not reach their levels of pre-1832 popularity again until the late nineteenth century. Ironically, this development occurred even as an abstract interest in the county’s indigenous inhabitants persisted and even expanded. Artists like Charles Bird King profited handsomely from paintings of Native American subject matter, and crafted whitewashed images that specifically appealed to the American public; King’s paintings captured “noble” Native Americans whose peace medals from the federal government solidified their nonthreatening appearance. King’s peer, George Catlin, took his interest in Native Americans a step further and even displayed himself in Native clothing to complement his exhibits. Catlin’s strategy provided audiences with a human exhibit that provided the ostensible presence of a Native American, but also shielded them from a group that was considered potentially dangerous.

With the closing of the Western Frontier in the late 1800s, and the permanent removal of organized Native resistance against American expansion, Indian Exhibitions enjoyed a new wave of immense popularity. Wild West Shows, such as the one hosted by

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“Buffalo Bill” Cody, drew huge crowds in the east coast cities where Indian Exhibitions once toured. In keeping with the post-Barnum history of public exhibitions, these displays typically emphasized fantasy and entertainment over academic accuracy. For instance, one show in New York featured a band of Native Americans that play-acted the burning of a “white man at the stake.” It is unlikely that such a display would have been popular during an era when Native Americans were still seen as a genuine threat to white settlers. Wild West Shows and their Native performers also arose amidst similar social conditions that led to the popularity of their Indian Exhibition predecessors.

Much as in the early 1800s, the late nineteenth century was also a time of immense social change in American cities. Due to forces related to the Second Industrial Revolution, class differences hardened and urban populations swelled through the arrival of new immigrants. Human exhibits featuring Native Americans again appealed to middle-class audiences during this time period. The descendants of audience members who watched George and Mary in New York similarly looked upon supposedly subjugated, non-threatening Native Americans decades later. By this point, however, shows no longer consciously promoted national progress at the expense of Native American primitiveness. As the research of Joy S. Kasson has shown, Wild West Shows promoted themselves as romantic entertainment, and their patrons in turn accepted them as escapist fantasies from the realities of city life. In the 1820s, Indian Exhibitions officially exuded enthusiasm for progress through their programs that denigrated Native American simplicity as antithetical to the ambitions of the new nation. After decades of facing the harsh realities of modernity, Wild West Shows directly appealed to the

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20 “In War Paint and Feathers.” *New York Herald*, January 6, 1887.
subversive thrill that some audience members may have felt in watching George’s simple umiak defeat the hulking Virginia in June 1821.

Ultimately, the 1820-1821 Inuit Exhibition represented a unique moment in the history of American popular culture. Amidst a zeitgeist of postwar prosperity that looked toward the promise of the future, Hadlock’s show both celebrated and cautioned against the forces of market expansion. Officially, the exhibit used the Inuit as culturally inferior objects against which to measure American progress. Unofficially, however, the popularity of certain aspects of the show, like George’s victory over the steamboat, revealed that part of its allure may have been related to popular nostalgia for the preindustrial past. At the same time, the Inuit Exhibition represented the end of the era that saw public exhibitions used as forums for the spread of education. Future public exhibits, including those featuring Native Americans, overtly shunned academic pretensions in favor of entertainment value. The curious race between the Inuit and the steamboat exemplified the deterioration of one cultural paradigm and the beginnings of another.
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