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All the World’s a Fair

Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916

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To Kiki and to the memory of my parents
The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, 1904: “The Coronation of Civilization”

So thoroughly does it represent the world’s civilization that if all man’s other works were by some unspeakable catastrophe, blotted out, the records here established by the assembled nations would offer all necessary standards for the rebuilding of our entire civilization.

David R. Francis, 1904

Meet me in St. Louis, Louis,
Meet me at the fair.
Don’t tell me the lights are shining
Any place but there;
We will dance the Hoochee-Koochee
I will be your tootsie wootsie
If you will meet me in St. Louis, Louis,
Meet me at the fair.

“Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis,” 1904

For the better part of 1904, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, an ivory-tinted city of vast proportions, served as the cultural touchstone for the nation as over nineteen million “open-eyed” and “open-souled” visitors, many armed with notebooks, thronged through its gates. Exhibits included a floral clock, one hundred feet in diameter and powered by machines hidden in a shaft beneath the flowers, that measured time in thousandths of a second. Reflecting the national cult of strenuous living, or “the gospel of muscles” as it was called at the fair, the exposition included a Department of Physical Culture that presented the first Olympic Games ever held in the Western Hemisphere. Displays of airships and automobiles—the latter introduced to Americans three years earlier at the Buffalo fair—excited popular expectations for a better way of life in the twentieth century. A series of international congresses brought leading scientists and men of letters from around the nation and world to the fair, including Max Weber, Henri Poincaré, William Rainey Harper, and Hugo Münsterberg, to address audiences on topics ranging from the social and natural sciences to philosophy and mathematics. Few fairgoers would ever forget their first experience with an ice cream cone, a novelty introduced at this exposition by an enterprising concessionaire who rolled up a waffle and topped it off with a scoop of ice cream. Yet the taste sensations, scholarly gatherings, transportation innovations, athletic competitions, machines in the gardens, and monumental exhibit halls were only isolated aspects of the overarching effort by local and national elites to issue a manifesto of racial and material progress and national harmony that would equal the far-reaching effects of the utopian decree laid down at Chicago a decade earlier.

“Remember,” Harper’s Magazine predicted as the fair got under way, “that such a Fair as this that St. Louis offers leaves no intelligent visitor where it found him. It fills him full of pictures and of knowledge that keep coming up in his mind for years afterwards. It gives him new standards, new means of comparison, new insight into the conditions of life in the world he is living in.” William F. Slocum, president of Colorado College, elaborated on the educational value of the exposition for the masses. According to Slocum, the fair embodied “as perfect an illustration as has been seen of the method of the University of the Future,” which is to exchange pictures and living objects for text-books, and to make these, with the aid of laboratory work, the means whereby instruction is given and individual development [is] obtained.” Slocum compared the Saint Louis fair to the Crystal Palace Exhibition, the Centennial, and especially the World’s Columbian Exposition, noting that “[i]t is the same kind of people that learned most there that will be the greatest gainers here—the great mass of unlearned, if not unlettered, people whose first really wide outlook is to come to them now, and that other class possibly as large, who have never known the widening influence of travel, but have learned from their reading the fact that here much that the ordinary traveler may fail to see is made accessible to them.” With an initial capitalization of
$15 million (ironically, the same amount of money that the United States originally paid for the Louisiana Territory), the directors of the Saint Louis fair turned this portrait of the world into an anthropologically validated racial landscape that made the acquisition of the Philippine Islands and continued overseas economic expansion seem as much a part of the manifest destiny of the nation as the Louisiana Purchase itself.  

The directors of the exposition formed a notable court. Heading the enterprise was David R. Francis, a former grain broker who had served as mayor of Saint Louis, governor of Missouri, and secretary of the interior in Grover Cleveland’s second administration. At a meeting of the Saint Louis Businessmen’s League in 1896, Francis won acceptance of the idea, first proposed by the directors of the Missouri Historical Society, to hold an exposition commemorating the centenary of the Louisiana Purchase. During the ensuing eight years, Francis was instrumental in gaining support for the fair from leading bankers, exporters, railroad directors, corporate lawyers, wholesalers, mining tycoons, and university presidents. He also included in the roster of world’s fair officials many former exposition builders. Frederick J. V. Skiff, director of Chicago’s Field Museum and widely acclaimed authority on expositions, was selected as director of exhibits. The immigrant German sculptor Karl Bitter again arranged the sculptural ornamentation into a series of heroic allegories about America’s progress. Frederick W. Taylor, who had just finished his tenure as director of exhibits for the Pan-American Exposition Company, journeyed to Saint Louis to take charge of the Horticultural Department. Together with many other experienced exposition hands, these individuals lent their personal talents and collective dreams to the success of the Saint Louis fair.  

The magnitude of their vision translated directly into the sheer size of this fair—the largest international exposition the world had ever seen. Its total acreage nearly doubled the 664 acres of the World’s Columbian Exposition. Total exhibit space exceeded the 82 acres at Chicago by more than one-third. “Any of the principal exhibit palaces at St. Louis covers virtually as much space as was occupied by all of the exhibit buildings of the Pan-American Exposition,” boasted the official catalog of exhibits. The Saint Louis fair was so vast that Dr. Charles H. Hughes, professor of neurology and dean of Barnes Medical College in Saint Louis, urged his colleagues in the medical profession to do everything in their power to prevent patients diagnosed as neurasthenic from visiting the exposition because its dimensions would surely lead to their collapse. Hughes also admonished his fellow doctors to encourage “specially brain-fagged businessmen” and other mentally fatigued “men of affairs” to make their visit “a recreative, diverting, restful, sight-seeing tour” lasting at least several weeks or months in order to avoid the almost certain breakdown that would result from a hurried visit.
“The Coronation of Civilization”

in to St. Louis,” noted one visitor. “Hello Gladys, I wish you were here,” said another. “Buildings are now light up [sic]. Beautiful beyond description,” observed a third exposition enthusiast. Writing in the *National Magazine*, Joe Mitchell Chapple summed up the experience of many exposition visitors when he wrote: “The Fair is a succession of mental shocks, cumulative and educative.” Nothing, he added, impressed him more than “the deep, far reaching, ethical, and educative import of the Universal Exposition in St. Louis.”

The person who classified the exhibits for the fair, F. J. V. Skiff, explained the meaning of this cumulative education on opening day: “The scene which stretches before us to-day is fairer than upon which Christian gazed from Dectable Mountain.” Continuing, he explained: “over and above all [the fair] is the record of the social conditions of mankind, registering not only the culture of the world at this time, but indicating the particular plans along with which different races and different peoples may safely proceed, or in fact have begun to advance towards a still higher development.” As Skiff understood it, the exposition was “designed to teach all—but primarily and distinctly . . . the expert working citizenry of the country and the world—in all lines of human activity.” Over two hundred strikes directed against the exposition company during the course of construction gave a special sense of urgency to Skiff’s classificatory mission. As he explained the social importance of his exposition classification scheme to the graduating class at Colorado College:

Capital and labor must be classified; classified and correlated. A spade is of no value except in its employment, and it cannot be properly employed except directly or indirectly in the work of development in the line of progress. Progress depends upon unity, upon harmony. Common labor is the seed of progress. But the harvest must be gathered, and science must be the husbandman.

A scientific classification, Skiff believed, gave purpose to people’s lives, shaped their methods of analysis, and created “a properly balanced citizen capable of progress.”

To create this ideal citizen, Skiff developed a twofold classificatory arrangement for the exposition that refined classification schemes developed for earlier fairs. In the first place, he organized exhibits in “a sequential synopsis of the developments that have marked man’s progress.” But he subsumed this portrayal of “the evolution and development of individuals in certain environments” within a broader synchronic arrangement illustrating an ideal, “composite type of man.” This composite portrait consisted of sixteen categories that corresponded to the exposition’s departments. The departments of Education, Art, Liberal Arts, and Applied Sciences (including Manufactures, Machinery, Electricity, and Transportation) headed the classification. Skiff noted, because they “equip [man] for the battle and prepare him for the enjoyments of life.” Next came departments devoted to displays of raw materi-
als—Agriculture, Horticulture, Mining, Forestry, and Fish and Game—that “show how man conserves the forces of nature to his uses.” Three departments concluded the classification: Anthropology, representing the study of man; Social Economy, “where man considers the welfare of communities”; and Physical Culture, “where it is demonstrated that a sound mind and moral character demand a healthy body.” Skiff regarded each of these categories as important, but he left no doubt about which he considered the cornerstone for the rest.

“A universal exposition,” he told the graduating seniors at Colorado College, “is a vast museum of anthropology and ethnology, of man and his works.” This observation reflected the reality of the Saint Louis fair and the importance assigned by the directors to the Anthropology Department in their attempt to create that “properly balanced citizen.”

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition featured the most extensive Anthropology Department of any world’s fair. The directors expressed their intent to establish “a comprehensive anthropological exhibition, constituting a Congress of Races, and exhibiting particularly the barbarous and semi-barbarous peoples of the world, as nearly as possible in their ordinary and native environments.” These plans received enthusiastic endorsement from leading anthropologists around the country, including Frederic Ward Putnam, former head of the Department of Anthropology at the World’s Columbian Exposition, who tendered the directors his “heartfelt approval” for their plans. To head the department, the directors turned to W J McGee, who had become one of the nation’s preeminent anthropologists during his tenure at the Bureau of American Ethnology before charges of financial irregularity forced him to resign. His reputation was defiled, but by no means demolished. He regarded the exposition as an opportunity not only to maintain his stature in the anthropology profession, but to fashion the national identity out of his own well-developed theory of racial progress.

McGee had organized the substance of his theory about progress into two addresses: “The Trend of Human Progress,” delivered at the Washington Academy of Sciences, and “National Growth and National Character,” one in a series of lectures on national expansion sponsored by the National Geographic Society. In “The Trend of Human Progress,” McGee developed a broad overview of human history, observing the existence of a “trend of vital development from low toward the high, from dullness toward brightness, from idleness groveling toward intellectual uprightness.” The driving forces behind this upward movement, he explained, were “cephalization”—the gradual increase in the cranial capacity of different races—and “cheirization”—the regular increase of manual dexterity along racial lines. The proof, he believed, was self-evident: “It is a matter of common observation that the white man can do more and better than the yellow, the yellow man more and better than the red or black.” As a consequence of cheirization and cephalization, the “advance of culture” proceeded along lines of racial achievement:

Classed in terms of blood, the peoples of the world may be grouped in several races; classed in terms of what they do rather than what they merely are, they are conveniently grouped in the four culture grades of savagery, barbarism, civilization, and enlightenment.

This division of humanity into racially based cultural grades did not signify a static universe for McGee. Far from it. He saw the turn of the century as a time when “perfected man is over-spreading the world.” By “perfected man” he simply meant “the two higher culture-grades—especially the Caucasian race, and (during recent decades) the buded enlightenment of Britain and full-blown enlightenment of America.” Caucasians, he argued, were ushering in a new era in world history when “human culture is becoming unified, not only through diffusion but through the extinction of the lower grades as their representatives rise into higher grades.” The net effect of this process was that “the races of the continents are gradually uniting in lighter blend, and the burden of humanity is already in large measure the White Man’s burden— for, viewing the human world as it is, white and strong are synonymous terms.”

McGee elaborated on the specific role of the Anglo-Saxon as burden bearer in “National Growth and National Character,” a spirited exhortation to Caucasian race pride and action:

it is the duty of the strong man to subjugate lower nature, to extirpate the bad and cultivate the good among living things, to delve in earth below and cleave the air above in search of fresh resources, to transform the seas into paths for ships and pastures for food-fishes, to yoke fire and lightning in chariots of subtly-wrought adamant, to halter thin vapors and harness turbulent waters into servile subjection, and in all ways to enslave the world for the support of humanity and the increase of human intelligence.

McGee scoffed at “pessimists, doubters, and cowards among the highest races who shudder at the figment of Wall Street and the phantom of monopoly; they forget that the multi-millionaire’s daughter becomes an angel of mercy . . . and that the best organized monopoly founds a university whence a thousand students go forth annually to diffuse higher knowledge.” For McGee, progress demanded unity of purpose as much as racial fitness.

All in all, McGee’s two lectures vindicated American national experience and synthesized the works of leading evolutionary thinkers including Darwin, Powell, and Spencer. The lectures offered a vision of racial progress that made cultural advance synonymous with increased industrial expansion. By stretching humanity out on an anthropological rack that highlighted racial “grades,” moreover, McGee distinguished between “enlightened” and “civilized” whites, thus broadening his racial theory to include various white ethnic populations just when national concern was mounting about the racial “fitness” of southern and eastern Europeans immigrating to America.
McGee admitted that his theoretical apparatus suffered to the extent that much of the anthropological data on which he based his argument was unpublished, and perhaps unpublishable. The necessary pieces of evidence, he assured his listeners, existed in abundance, "but they overflow the poor worksites of savage skin-dressers and ancient arrow-makers, the simple laboratories of barbaric stone-workers and semi-barbaric smiths, the mines and mills of civilization, and the elaborate manufactories of enlightenment—they are far too voluminous for books, yet within the constant sight of all whose eyes are open."

This matter of evidence, however, could not be dismissed so easily. The credibility of his theory depended in large measure on assembling for public view "types" of various people acting out their traditional cultural pursuits. McGee's interest in international expositions followed accordingly. He had been involved with Smithsonian preparations for the Atlanta, Nashville, Omaha, and Buffalo fairs but had been disappointed over their failure to incorporate wide-ranging living ethnological displays under the direct supervision of anthropologists. After receiving assurances that the management of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition planned to make anthropology the heart of their fair, McGee left his troubles at the BAE behind and eagerly accepted the directors' offer to take charge of the Anthropology Department.

When McGee arrived in Saint Louis in August 1903, he made it clear that he would fashion the exhibits in his charge into an exemplum of his theory of racial progress. "The aim of the Department of Anthropology at the World's Fair," McGee stated, "will be to represent human progress from the dark prime to the highest enlightenment, from savagery to civic organization, from egoism to altruism." "The method," he added, "will be to use living peoples in their accustomed avocations as our great object lesson," with particular emphasis on "Indian school work, America's best effort to elevate the lower races." As the exhibits took shape, McGee noted that the Anthropology Department would also contribute "a moral motive" to the overall education offered by this "university of the masses." That moral dimension involved teaching exposition-goers "something of that upward course of human development beginning with the Dark Ages of tooth and claw and stone and tools, and culminating in the modern enlightenment illustrated in the great Exhibit Palaces and the International Congresses." This constant upward spiral, McGee emphasized, left some people by the wayside:

So every advanced nation has its quota of aliens through ill-starred birth and defective culture, who can be lifted to the level of its institutions only through a regeneration extending to both body and mind, both work and thought—they are the mental and moral beggars of the community who may not be trusted on horseback but only in the rear seat of the wagon. In truth, standards are rising so rapidly that the lower half find it hard to keep up.

"The Coronation of Civilization"

McGee's metaphor aptly summed up the idea of progress that took visible form on the fairgrounds at Saint Louis. For his efforts to implement this vision, a local newspaper dubbed him "overlord of the savage world." 15

By opening day, though his appropriation had been substantially cut, McGee had converted the western portion of the exposition grounds into a field research station for the study of nonwhite "types." Groups of pygmies from Africa, "Patagonian giants" from Argentina, Ainu aborigines from Japan, and Kwakiutl Indians from Vancouver Island, as well as groups of Native Americans gathered around prominent Indian chiefs including Geronimo, Chief Joseph, and Quanah Parker, were formed into living ethnological exhibits. They were supplemented by an adjoining United States government exhibit of nearly one thousand Filipinos and by separate ethnological concessions along the Pike. McGee assembled the nonwhites directly under his charge into a "logical arrangement" of living "types" stretched out between the Indian School Building and the Philippines display.

The department also contained anthropometry and psychometry laboratories "so that the race-types and culture-grades assembled on the grounds may be brought within the range of comparative study." Sections devoted to archaeology and history illustrated respectively "the successive states of advancement during prehistoric times" and "the later development of a vast territory from a savage wilderness to the family of the great commonwealths of which the seat of the Exposition is the metropolis." With its offices, museum space,
and laboratories located in Cupples Hall No. 1, a permanent building belonging to Washington University, McGee’s department possessed implicit academic stature that made its role as the scientific foundation of the exposition all the more convincing.  

Scientific prestige and credence also accrued to the department as a direct result of several other anthropologists’ contributing advice and collections of material. For advice on the laboratories, McGee turned to Franz Boas at Columbia and Aleš Hrdlička, newly appointed head of the Department of Physical Anthropology at the United States National Museum. Until his appropriation from the Smithsonian failed to materialize, Hrdlička had planned to participate in the administration of the anthropometry section. As it stood, the laboratories were placed under the direction of two Columbia University psychologists, Robert S. Woodworth and his student Frank Bruner, whom Boas had nominated for their positions at the fair.  

McGee made clear what he expected of these laboratories in a prospectus he submitted to Woodworth for approval before sending it to the exposition’s publicity division. The laboratories, McGee explained, would make “customary measurements” and “introduce tests of strength, endurance, etc., in order that the results may indicate—so far as measurements may—the relative physical value of the different races of the peoples” involved in the fair. Psychological measurements, he added, would involve testing “sensitiveness to temperature, delicacy of touch and taste, acuteness of vision and hearing, and other sense reactions, together with power of coordination as expressed in rapidity and accuracy of forming judgement, etc., in the different races and cultural stages, in order to determine the relative prevalence of sense defects.” In its first month of operation, McGee noted with satisfaction that over twenty-five thousand people had visited the laboratory and that well over one hundred measurements had been taken. Various juries of awards were equally impressed. One jury, composed of James Cattell, Hugo Münsterberg, and E. B. Tichener, believed that the results obtained from the laboratories “will be a real contribution to science.” Yet, if the published results of the psychometry measurements were any indication, rather than serving the cause of science the laboratories served to quantify the impressions visitors received from the remainder of the anthropology exhibits and from the fair in its entirety. According to Bruner’s report, “the racial superiority of whites was manifest in their heightened sense of hearing” as opposed to the hearing ability of “inferior races,” while intelligence testing demonstrated that the Pygmies were “dense and stupid.” Anthropologist Clark Wissler commented favorably on these findings, noting that Bruner had left little doubt that “racial differences exist.” Most fairgoers left the laboratories with the same idea firmly ingrained in their minds.  

Boas and Hrdlička, particularly the latter, regarded the Anthropology Department in its entirety as a valuable source for field research, especially “for acquiring some interesting racial anatomical material.” The basis for this brainstorm was Hrdlička’s suspicion—confirmed by McGee—that deaths were inevitable “among the Filipinos and other tribes” gathered for display. Two Filipinos, in fact had already died on route to the fair when, despite freezing weather across the western states, train crewman shut off heat to their cars. What to do about this expected loss of life at the fair? Hrdlička approached Boas and George S. Huntington at Columbia as well as Livingston Farrand at the American Museum of Natural History about formulating “some arrangement by which all of us would benefit from such cases.” Since the bodies would be lost to various cemeteries, Hrdlička, after discussion with Boas, proposed obtaining as many corpses as he could lay hands on and dividing the bodies in such a way that Columbia and the American Museum would receive “the soft parts” and skeletons while the United States National Museum would receive the brains. The response by Columbia officials is unknown, but Farrand presented this idea to Hermon Bumpus, director of the American Museum. According to Farrand, the publicity-conscious Bumpus declared that, “while he is personally entirely in sympathy with the idea he feels it is better not to participate formally.” Farrand was “sorry,” he told Hrdlička, “for I should like to see the stuff come here,” but reminded Hrdlička that “it makes no difference to science in which institution the results are placed.” Hrdlička certainly agreed, for shortly after the close of the exposition three Filipino brains from Saint Louis augmented the collections of the Smithsonian Institution.  

Fig. 51. Aleš Hrdlička (1869–1943). Courtesy of National Anthropology Archives.
The didactic value of the Anthropology Department also engaged the attention of a perennial fairgoer and frequent contributor to past exhibitions, Frederick Starr, professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago. At the behest of the exposition management and Mc Gee, Starr became a special commissioner to Japan and returned with several Ainus, aboriginal inhabitants of northern islands in the Japanese archipelago, for display in the Anthropology Department. Starr's contributions to the department continued far beyond the completion of his expedition to Japan. He also received permission from Mc Gee and from the University of Chicago "to give a definite and systematic field school work at St. Louis, using the living ethnological material there gathered." Starr's plans included "definite class lectures, practical talks, and direct work with material, living and not." Regularly enrolled students at the University of Chicago could take an examination at the conclusion of the three-week session at the fair and receive course credit in their major fields. The course, appropriately titled "The Louisiana Purchase Exposition Class in Ethnology," attracted approximately thirty "society" coeds from the University of Chicago as well as a number of Saint Louis schoolteachers. Beginning on 1 September, the members of the class heard Starr deliver two daily lectures on a variety of topics extending from "cannibalism" and "physical characteristics of race" to art and sculpture. Starr's educational venture, just as Mc Gee predicted in letters to concessionaires along the Pike requesting free admission for Starr and his students, delighted the local press and generated a great deal of publicity for the exhibits that were visited. The Saint Louis Post-Dispatch headlined a front-page article "Chicago Co-eds Who Hitched Their Wagon to Prof. Starr Are Finding Anthropology a Live Study at World's Fair." The fun was telling, since the living exhibits along the Pike, in the Philippines exhibit, and in the Anthropology Department proper formed the nucleus of the course.23

The efforts of Starr, Boas, and Hrdlička combined to give the Anthropology Department an important aura of legitimacy as a valid educational undertaking. Mc Gee also considered it his duty to instruct as many people as possible. Consequently he jumped at the suggestion by John E. Sullivan, head of the Amateur Athletic Union and of the Department of Physical Culture, to arrange an Anthropology Day at the track stadium to help promote the Olympic Games. "The object of the contests," Mc Gee told the superintendents of the Native American and Filipino exhibits, "will be to obtain for the first time what may be called interracial athletic records." Many nonwhites from the Pike villages, Anthropology Department, and Philippine exhibit participated in the show, but because of poor advance publicity the turnout of spectators was disappointingly small. Mc Gee, however, remained undaunted and proceeded to lay plans for another competition in September that "will give the audience a chance to see the pick of the primitive tribes contesting in modern and native games of strength, endurance, and agility." To promote the competition, Mc Gee joined an "Emergency Exploitation Committee" that generated publicity for the event and attempted to raise money for prizes. He also tried to shift the site for the event to the main plaza area of the exposition and retitled the contest an "anthropology meet." Although he had to use the parade grounds instead of the plaza and had to forgo plans to give monetary prizes, the meet attracted thirty thousand spectators. Albert W. Jenks, head of the anthropology section of the War Department, awarded the winners of the various events American flags as trophies. A local newspaper summed up the results: "The meeting was a grand success from every point of view, and served as a good example of what the brown men are capable of doing with training."24

Training, as Mc Gee understood it, was part and parcel of the imperial mission. "One of the gravest tasks of any progressive nation," he wrote for the World's Fair Bulletin, official journal of the exposition, "is that of caring for alien wards, i.e., bearing the 'White Man's burden,' as told by Kipling, or performing the Strong Man's duty, as felt by the most modern statesmen." Mc Gee condemned much of America's historical treatment of the Indians but praised Indian schools as "a boon to the survivors of our passing race." The Indian School building, however, was "designed not merely as a consummation, but as a prophecy; for now that other primitive peoples are passing under the beneficent influence and protection of the Stars and Stripes, it is needful to take stock of past progress as a guide to the future." On the other side of Arrowhead Lake, Mc Gee noted before the fair opened, "will stand the Filipino, even as against the Red Man on the continent, just beyond the Pacific, stands the brown man of the nearer Orient; and it is the aim of the Model Indian School to extend influence across both intervening waters to the benefit of both races." As a result of careful planning by Skiff and Mc Gee, the encampments of living Native Americans that stretched between the Indian School and the lake made explicit the connection between America's imperial past and imperial future. As one official exposition publication noted: "the time is coming when the purchase and retention of the Philippine Islands will seem as wise to our descendants as does the Louisiana Purchase seem to us who live today." To make the juncture between past, present, and future airtight, the Department of Exploitation, in charge of publicity for the Philippine Island exhibit, widely advertised the display from the islands as the "Philippine Reservation."25

The Philippine Reservation, according to William P. Wilson, chairman of the United States government's Philippine Exposition Board, constituted "an exposition within an exposition; the greatest exhibition of the most marvelous Exposition in the history of the world." With nearly twelve hundred Filipinos living in villages on the forty-seven-acre site set aside for the display, the exhibit climaxed the efforts of earlier exposition promoters to establish, under federal government auspices, a large-scale exhibit of the people and resources of the Philippine Islands. But the size of the exhibit at
Saint Louis far exceeded the wildest dreams of the directors of previous fairs. It was also unique in having the full support of the federal government at the outset.\(^{26}\)

The directors' hopes for government participation in the planned Philippine showing received an early endorsement from William Howard Taft while he was civil governor of the islands. According to the *World's Fair Bulletin*, Taft believed that the proposed exhibit would have a "moral effect" on the people of the islands and that "Filipino participation would be a very great influence in completing pacification and in bringing Filipinos to improve their condition." President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of War Elihu Root supported Taft's position and encouraged his efforts to organize "as comprehensive an exhibit as possible of the products and resources, manufactures, art, ethnology, education, government of the Philippine Islands, and the habits and customs of the Filipino people."\(^{27}\)

Responsibility for the success of the undertaking centered on William Powell Wilson, Taft's appointee to direct the Philippine Exposition Board. At the time of his selection, Wilson had a national and international reputation as the founder and head of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum—an institution that wedded science to the interests of American business expansion overseas. The Commercial Museum came into existence as a direct result of Wilson's visit to the World's Columbian Exposition while he was still chairman of the School of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania. The exhibits at the Chicago fair so impressed him that he returned to Philadelphia and persuaded many of the city's political and commercial leaders of the value of "preserving and enlarging such collections."\(^{28}\) He received guarantees of private and public support and purchased many of the foreign displays as the nucleus for a museum in Philadelphia. In 1894 Wilson was elected director of the museum, a position he held for the next thirty-three years. Under his leadership the institution became an information clearing house, providing American businessmen with data about economic conditions abroad, and a vehicle for public education as well. The museum opened formally in 1896 with a Pan-American Congress inaugurated by President McKinley. Two years later the museum hosted the National Export Exhibition, which drew more than one million visitors to displays devoted to the possibilities for American economic expansion abroad. By the time of his appointment to the Philippine Exposition Board, in short, Wilson, had a considerable reputation as a scientist with America's business interests at heart.\(^{29}\)

One of Wilson's first steps as head of the Philippine Exposition Board was to recommend that his associate at the Commercial Museum, Gustavo Niederlein, be appointed director of exhibits for the board. Like Wilson, Niederlein was a naturalist and scientist devoted to the advance of Western imperialism. His international reputation was such that at the Paris Exposition of 1900 he participated in a number of congresses, including those pertaining to "commercial geography," botany, and "colonial sociology." He so impressed the French government with his contributions to the Paris exposition that government officials asked him to classify exhibits for a permanent colonial museum in Paris. For his work there he received half the collection for the Commercial Museum in Philadelphia. He subsequently joined the secretary-general of the French colonies on an expedition to the colonies and was in the process of advising him on exhibits for the Hanoi exposition of 1902 when the United States War Department appointed him to Wilson's staff in the Philippines. As Wilson described him, Niederlein was "a thoroughly trained scientific and business man."\(^{30}\)

In late 1902 Niederlein and Wilson put their scientific and business talents to work in the Philippines. With the cooperation of several prominent Filipinos and numerous United States colonial officials—including Clarence R. Edwards, chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Albert E. Jenks, former ethnologist at the Bureau of American Ethnology and head of the War Department's Ethnological Survey of the Philippine Islands, Daniel Folkmar, anthropologist and lieutenant-governor in charge of the Philippine civil service, and Pedro A. Paterno, president of the Philippine senate—they proceeded to arrange material for the colonial exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Simultaneously, in accordance with the congressional act authorizing establishment of the Exposition Board, Wilson and Niederlein collected materials for a permanent commercial museum in Manila and for a preliminary exposition that would show Filipinos the exhibits that would be sent to Saint Louis. The museum, intended primarily to provide American business interests with commercial data about the economic possibilities of the islands, opened in February 1903 but closed in May when it became apparent that the exhibits would be needed to complete the display for Saint Louis. The preliminary exposition never materialized for the same reason. Yet the motives behind the Manila exposition and museum informed the plans for the exhibit at Saint Louis and
revealed the overall goal of the government to institutionalize American colonial rule, to bring to the Filipinos "the impelling power of modern civilization," as Niederlein termed it, and to show the Filipinos how America would aid the development of the islands through "the consumption of the raw material of this archipelago in [America's] well developed and increasing industries."  

To emphasize to Filipinos the long road they would have to travel before achieving the capacity for self-rule, the short-lived museum included a division of ethnology illustrating "tribal and racial exhibits in every detail" and "showing the state of culture and growth of civilization" on the islands. This ethnological feature not only reappeared in the exhibit at Saint Louis, but dominated the Philippine Reservation to such an extent that McGee, as early as November 1903, informed the New York Times that the display from the islands would be "to all intents and purposes ethnological in character." When the experienced midway organizer Edmund A. Felder joined the board as an executive officer in March 1904, it became clear that the Exposition Board would draw upon the decade-long tradition of midway ethnological concessions as well as upon received scientific wisdom en route to establishing what amounted to a federally sanctioned ethnological village on the site of the reservation.  

Under the primary direction of government-appointed scientists, the reservation affirmed the value of the islands to America's commercial growth and created a scientifically validated impression of Filipinos as racially inferior and incapable of national self-determination in the near future. No exhibit at any exposition better fulfilled the imperial aspirations of its sponsors. As David R. Francis observed at the official dedication of the million-dollar exhibit in mid-June, the display from the Philippines alone justified the expense and labor that went into the entire fair. From start to finish he believed it was the "overwhelming feature" of the exposition. Francis noted, moreover, that ninety-nine out of a hundred fairgoers visited the reservation.  

The prevailing imperial message of the reservation was inescapable and apparent from the moment visitors set foot on the forested acreage set aside for the display. The moss-covered Bridge of Spain, the main entrance to the reservation, conveyed visitors into an immense War Department exhibit in the Walled City—a replica of the fortification around Manila—where fairgoers could relive the recent military triumphs by the United States.  

Beyond the Walled City, the Philippine Exposition Board engineered the circular ground plan of the reservation into a series of three cultural spheres depicting the civilizing influence of the Spanish past, the current ethnological state of the islands, and the beneficent results that Filipinos and Americans alike could expect from the United States takeover. At the center of the reservation the board established a "typical" Manila plaza, surrounded by four large Spanish-style buildings. These structures, consisting of an upper-class residence, a government building, an educational building, and a reproduction of the commercial museum in Manila, reminded visitors of the Spanish legacy on the islands and at the same time laid out the attributes of civilization—social and political order, education, and commerce—that the federal government considered essential to the future well-being of the islands.  

Radiating from the central plaza were a series of ethnological villages, often placed adjacent to exhibit buildings depicting the wealth of natural resources on the islands. The villages portrayed a variety of Filipino "types," including Visayans, "the high and more intelligent class of natives," Moros, "fierce followers of Mohammed," Bagobo "savages," "monkey-like" Negritos, and "picturesque" Igorots. In the third cultural sphere, at the farthest outreach of the reservation and concentrated behind the Igorot and Negrito villages, the board located encampments of Philippine Scouts and Constabulary—collaborationist police forces enlisted by the American military to aid in suppressing the ongoing insurrection in the islands against the United States. The function of these units at the fair extended beyond policing the reservation. As one official guide to the reservation explained, the Constabulary and Scouts were juxtaposed to the Igorots and Negritos to bring out the "extremes of the social order in the islands." Numbering nearly seven hundred, or over half the total number of Filipinos on the reservation, these paramilitary forces were intended to illustrate the "result of American rule" and to suggest the possibility for cultural advance under America's colonial administration of the islands.  

This possibility was also the subject of an ethnological museum situated on the reservation. Directed by Albert Jenks, this institution, "with cloisters like a convent," contained exhibits devoted to "an interpretation of the habits and life of the Philippine tribes." Jenks concentrated on the Igorots, Moros,
Bagobos, and Negritos and declared that they were “true savages.” Jenks, however, stressed that they “represent only about one-seventh of the entire population of the Archipelago, and their culture is almost entirely of their own development.”

Their relative numerical insignificance in the islands and at the fair notwithstanding—there were 38 Bagobos, 41 Negritos, 114 Igorots, and 100 Moros—the exhibits of the “wild tribes” became the most popular displays on the reservation. From the start of the fair, the Igorot and Negrito villages, especially the former, caught the fancy of fairgoers and of the nation to a degree unsurpassed by any exhibit at any fair since the summer of 1893 when Fatima had danced the hootchy-kootchy on the Midway at the World’s Columbian Exposition. The perceived simplicity of Igorot life doubtless accounted for part of their appeal and made some fairgoers long for a less complicated way of living than that represented by the monuments to industrialization contained in the White City palaces. But the immediate impetus to see the Igorot exhibit stemmed less from preindustrial longings than from a powerful mixture of white supremacist sexual stereotypes and voyeurism.

Nothing propelled the Igorots and Negritos into prominence more rapidly than the controversy that erupted in June, shortly after the opening of the exhibit, over what one visitor termed “their dusky birthday robes.” With a presidential campaign under way and with anti-imperialists in the Democratic party on the verge of including a plank in the party’s platform stating that the Filipinos were “inherently unfit to be members of the American body politic,” the Roosevelt administration became concerned that local press reports emphasizing the absence of clothing on these Filipinos would undermine the government’s efforts at the fair to show the possibilities for progress on the islands. On 23 June Taft wired Edwards to avoid “any possible impression that the Philippine Government is seeking to make prominent the savageness and barbarism of the wild tribes either for show purposes or to depreciate the popular estimate of the general civilization of the islands.” In a follow-up telegram, Taft suggested “that short trunks would be enough for the men, but that for the Negrito women there ought to be shirts or chemises of some sort.” Taft also ordered: “Answer what you have done immediately. The President wishes to know.” Edwards lost no time in cabling his response, telling Taft that the Negritos “were until recently dressed up like plantation nigger[s], whom they diminutively represent, recently . . . [the] men have discarded these clothes and put on their native loin cloth.” Furthermore, Edwards informed the secretary of war, signs had been put up showing the low number of “wild tribes” relative to the overall population of the Philippines. The administration, however, remained unsatisfied. The following day Taft’s private secretary wired Edwards: “President still thinks that where the Igorot has a mere G string that it might be well to add a short trunk to cover the buttocks and front.” Taft, moreover, instructed Edwards to obtain a written statement from the Board of Lady Managers, an adjunct to the general directorship of the exposition, assuring the administration that the appearance of the Igorots and Negritos was unobjectionable. In the meantime Edwards ordered Niederlein to have Truman K. Hunt, former lieutenant-governor of the Lepanto-Bontoc province and manager of the Igorot village, put breechclouts on the Igorots and “allow no child to go naked.”

The government’s efforts at overnight civilization provoked much mirth, brought an outcry from anthropologists, and generated a great deal of publicity.
for the exposition. The Saint Louis Post-Dispatch carried a cartoon showing Taft carrying a pair of pants, in hot pursuit of an Igorot clad only in a G-string. The editor of the same newspaper dispatched a letter to the “Department of Exploitation” at the reservation, declaring: “To put pants on [the Igorots and Negritos] would change a very interesting ethnological exhibit which shocks no one into a suggestive side-show.” An irate Frederick Starr seconded these thoughts in a memo to Wilson: “The scientific value of the display is unquestionably great. Such value would be completely lost by dressing these people in a way unlike that to which they are accustomed.” Starr also added that clothing might actually kill the Igorot and Negrito villagers, given the heat of the Saint Louis summer. By mid-July the Board of Lady Managers concurred in the need for maintaining the apparent genuineness of the exhibits, and the Roosevelt administration abandoned its plans to compel the Igorots and Negritos to wear bright-colored silk trousers.99

Authenticating these villagers as “savages,” however, left the administration with the original problem. If fairgoers perceived the villagers as utterly backward and incapable of progress, the displays would actually buttress the racist arguments used by anti-imperialists to oppose annexation of the islands.

But the Philippine Exposition Board had already circumvented this dilemma by driving an ethnological wedge between the Igorots and Negritos. The Negritos, according to various official descriptions of their village, were “extremely low in intellect,” and “it is believed that they will eventually become extinct.” To reinforce this idea, one of the Negritos was named Missing Link. The Igorots, on the other hand, were judged capable of progressing. “Scien-
tists,” according to an official souvenir guide, “have declared that with the proper training they are susceptible of a high stage of development, and, unlike the American Indian, will accept rather than defy the advance of American civilization.” Igorot women, one American official hastened to point out, “are the most expert ore-sorters” in the world. The possibility for uplift was highlighted when Roosevelt visited the reservation and a missionary schoolteacher led her class of Igorots in a chorus of “My Country ’Tis of Thee.” The Globe-Democrat recorded the president’s satisfaction. “It is wonderful,” Roosevelt declared. “Such advancement and in so short a time!” In conceding that the Igorots might be capable of cultural advance, however, the government did not suggest that they were capable of achieving equality with Caucasians. Rather, the schools in operation on the reservation suggested that the place of the Igorots and other members of the “wild tribes” in the American empire would closely resemble the place mapped out for Native Americans and blacks in the United States. 41

With the exception of the Negritos, who were placed on the road to extinction by government ethnologists, the Philippine Exposition Board crowded other “grades” of Filipinos into the wagon of progress—to borrow McGee’s metaphor—without permitting them to ride horseback. As several members of the Scouts and Constabulary discovered, any attempt to cross the forward limits of the racial hierarchy imposed on the riders down the road to utopia would meet with serious consequences. Members of the Scouts and Constabulary who accepted the invitation of young white women schoolteachers from Saint Louis

to accompany them on tours of the fairgrounds and of the city were taunted as “niggers.” When taunts failed to halt the promenades, several United States Marines, with the active cooperation of the exposition’s police force, known as the Jefferson Guards and composed largely of southern whites, took matters into their own hands. As couples walked around the grounds, a contingent of Marines and guards—the latter had been issued slingshots “heavily loaded with lead” in lieu of revolvers—threatened to arrest the white women and kicked their Filipino escorts to the ground. When the Scouts returned to their camp, an even larger group of Marines arrived on the scene determined to show the Filipinos that the lynch law was not limited to southern blacks. They charged the Filipinos, shooting revolvers into the air and shouting, “Come on boys! Let’s clean the Gu-Gus off the earth!” Edwards deplored the racial clashes, “in view of the fact that there are none of the negro blood in the Scouts or Constabulary.” But the outburst of violence against the “highest grade” of Filipinos represented on the reservation underscored the success of the exhibit in confirming the impression that Filipinos were savages at worst and “little brown men” at best. 42

On the occasion of Philippine Day at the fair, held to commemorate the surrender of Manila, “a great step in the diffusion of freedom over the globe,” a local paper summarized the overall meaning of the reservation: “For the sake of the Filipinos and for the credit of our own country we retained control of the Philippines, with the determination to educate their people into the nearest approach to actual independence which they can have with safety to themselves.” As the reservation made clear, that “nearest approach to actual independence” entailed instructing Filipinos in the ethnological limitations operating to hamper their progress—limitations that in turn mandated that

Fig. 57. Imperial schooling on the Philippine Reservation. From National Archives.

Fig. 58. Visayan theater. From National Archives.
Filipinos be willing workers and consumers in the burgeoning overseas market being established by American commercial interests. "The Filipinos themselves learned from their St. Louis experience that they were not ready for self-government," the Portland Oregonian reported on the eve of the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, which also would include an exhibit of Filipinos. Americans, the newspaper added, "who talked with [the Filipinos] and studied the tribesmen disabused themselves of any impression that the natives could take care of themselves." The newspaper conceded that "[t]here are intelligent Filipinos. But the majority are comparatively helpless. They are children. . . . Burdened with a problem of government, they would be hopelessly lost." Two home missionaries who visited the exhibit similarly commended the government officials in charge for "a grand affair—wisely planned, well adjusted to enable Americans to see the several tribes in their various stages of development and to note the capabilities and possibilities of the race." The reservation, they continued, "has strengthened our confidence in the wisdom of our government's general policy respecting the Philippines and their people, and in the hopeful outlook for the Filipinos under American jurisdiction." The missionaries, moreover, promised to do everything in their power to advertise the exhibit as they traveled around the country on the National Home Mission lecture circuit. It remained for the New York Post to sum up: "There probably was never such a colonial exhibit gathered in the world."43

The exhibits in the Anthropology Department and on the Philippine Reservation provided fairgoers with an anthropologically calibrated yardstick for measuring the world's progress. In important respects these two areas of the fair served as the scientific proving ground for the lessons about comparative racial progress that pervaded the entire exposition, especially the amusement street, the Pike.

According to Thomas R. MacMenemy, press agent for the Department of Concessions: "The Pike is a living color page of the world, and pictures speak louder than words." With its total cost exceeding five million dollars, MacMenemy stressed that the Pike "is not a jumble of nonsense. It has meaning just as definite as the high motive which inspired the exposition. It mirrors the lighter moods of all countries." Norris B. Gregg, Saint Louis businessman and director of the Department of Admissions and Concessions, explained that the meaning of the Pike lay in its "ethical origin." The exposition management, Gregg wrote, intended "to make the lighter field of entertainment a pleasant vehicle of academic impression, producing its lesson in a lasting manner by direct appeal to the imagination, the most active and retentive faculty of the mind." Entertainment, in other words, became a vehicle for instruction about the world's progress. As Gregg declared:

"The Coronation of Civilization"

Through the guise of amusement, therefore, lives and manners of peoples may be contrasted with our own, thus establishing by the most striking comparison, true ethnological values. The industries of many races, as they will be pld on the Pike, give us a keen lesson in economics. Their ways of living offer suggestions along the lines of sociology.

The Pike, in short, reflected the imperial vision of the exposition's promoters and was intended to shape the way fairgoers saw the world.44 "To See the Pike Is to See the Entire World," the St. Louis World headlined an article about the L-shaped street with its ethnological villages, wild animal shows, mechanical amusements, and sham battles. The same newspaper provided a brief synopsis of the Pike, explaining how its location complemented and underlined the importance of its purpose: "The original idea of giving the amusement section a strong educational value by having its general tone reflective of the manners and customs of the whole world, has been carried out in its conspicuous location, especially in relation to the exhibit division of the great show." The exposition's directors purposefully arranged the Pike "between two grand entrances to the Exposition, with an additional entrance from the outside, in the very center of the amusement street." For the first time, the World noted, "a street of concessions becomes the earliest impression of the visitors."45

The impression of humanity that the exposition management intended the exhibits along the Pike to convey crystallized on the opening day of the fair in a parade of "Pike types," with Frederick Cummins, head of the Wild West show, serving as grand marshal. Shortly before the fair opened, one newspaper "estimated that about 2,000 natives of the various races will be seen in the parade and that several hundred animals will add to the barbaric picture." In actuality, close to nine thousand people, whites and nonwhites, participated in the caravan as it wound around the exposition grounds. Immediately after Cummins, at the head of the parade, came the "aristocracy of the Pike"—Hale's firefighters, "a crack organization of American fire ladies with their modern apparatus"—followed by "a hodge-podge of all nationalities" drawn from Cairo Street, Mysterious Asia, Empire of India, Fair Japan, the Chinese Village, the Tyrolean Alps, the Moorish Palace, the Irish Village, the Old Plantation, and the Boer War Exhibit.46

Over the course of the fair, the distance between the Pike "aristocracy" and the "descendants of races which have at least left thumb-prints on the records of civilization" came into sharp focus in the Boer War Exhibit. Twice daily, British and Boer troops, including several wartime heroes from both sides, reenacted battles of the recently ended war against a backdrop of "a village of Zulus, Swazies and other South African tribes" that also formed part of the concession. This conflict between white Europeans over the domination of
South Africa, Walter Wellman wrote in Success magazine, “compels the pity that such valor and endurance as the heroic Boers displayed might not have been exerted in behalf of progress rather than in a futile effort to block its way.” Wellman concluded that this exhibit, as much as any other, complemented the general lesson of the fair: “As this is a story of progress, the lesson is that it is imperious, irresistible, and universal. Nothing, whether prejudice, or error, or selfishness, or tradition, or bigotry, or habit, or pride, can stand before it.”

This same law of racial and material progress dictated that the Japanese be represented at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition by official displays in the White City and in Fair Japan—a concession on the Pike. Unlike the Chinese at the fair, who were “measured by the Bertillon system, put on record by the thumbprint process and . . . tagged with a card bearing a number, which was recorded by government representatives, and which will be worn so long as the Chinamen are in this country,” the Japanese were comparatively well received. With Japan’s victories over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War sharing headlines with the opening of the fair, the Japanese exhibits became, in Wellman’s words, “the sensation of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.” Particularly noteworthy, he remarked, was the progress shown by the Japanese in the decade since the World’s Columbian Exposition. “At Chicago,” Wellman recalled, “the Japanese appeared as interesting and picturesque makers of toys and knickknacks and articles of virtue of characteristic form but limited range—a sort of half-developed, peculiar people, with a hazy past not far

Fig. 59. Boer War concession. From David R. Francis, The Universal Exposition of 1904.

removed from actual savagery and with an uncertain future. At St. Louis they appear as one of the first nations of the world.” It was precisely this rapid rise to military and industrial prominence, however, that occasioned concern and required explanation. One place to turn for an answer was the Anthropology Department.99

When asked about Japan’s sudden military triumphs by a reporter from the Post-Dispatch, McGee replied: “It’s the complexity of the blood. The more strains of blood a nation has in its veins, the greater and more powerful it becomes . . . and in the instance of the [Japanese] anthropologists find that they are the most complex nation of the Orient, just as the Anglo-Saxons, through the waves of successive populations that swept over the continent, were made the most complex nation of the Occident.” McGee admitted that anthropologists knew little about the Japanese except “that they constitute a distinctively composite assemblage of more primitive types than any other Oriental nation.” But part of the answer to the dramatic appearance of the Japanese as “The Greeks of the East,” McGee believed, lay with the Ainu aborigines on display in the Department of Anthropology. According to McGee, the exhibit of the “occupations and handiwork” of the eight Ainus presented fairgoers with “some of the most significant stages in industrial development known to students—germs of some of those material arts which in their perfection have raised Japan to leading rank among the world’s nations.”99

In McGee’s eyes, moreover, the Ainus magnified the racial characteristics that underlay Japanese progress. “Ainus men,” McGee noted, “have skins as white as Europeans, and in facial appearance they often resemble the Greeks, but among the women there is always the heavy, coarse features and dark-hued complexion that characterizes the lower order of Mongolians.” This ethnological profile was not unlike the description of the Japanese offered by Finley Peter Dunne’s Mr. Dooley: “Th’ Japs ar-re Chinymen well-done.” Indeed, this split ethnological personality that McGee attributed to the Ainus, and by extension to the Japanese people as a whole, reinforced the ambiguity that ran throughout the popular response to the Japanese at the fair. The title of Grace Griscom’s newspaper article about the Japanese exhibits perhaps shaped as much as it reflected the popular perceptions of the Japanese: “Some Quaint Little Ways of the Quaint Little Japs.” Admiration for the Japanese, in short, was tempered, as it had been at Chicago, by the view that Japanese were “little brown people”—this phrase was Wellman’s—and by the conditions, noted by the Globe-Democrat, that the Japanese maintain the Open Door in China and otherwise contribute to the ongoing Anglo-Saxon domination of the world. These considerations would continue to determine the evaluation of the Japanese at subsequent expositions held on the Pacific Coast over the next ten years.99

Similar commercial motives buttressed by claims of ethnological authenticity animated the bazaars along the Pike that represented the Near and Middle East. In the Mysterious Asia concession, street scenes depicting Calcutta,
Rangoon, and Tehran, populated with Indians, Burmese, and Persians, created the impression that those portions of the world were simply vast marketplaces peopled with “exotic types.” The same effect was achieved by the separate concessions devoted to Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Cairo. Together these exhibits left few visitors in doubt about the Near and Middle East as a marketplace in which Americans could play at will.51

The precise relation between the White City and the various ethnological features along the Pike, in the Anthropology Department, and in the Philippine Reservation hinged on the contrast between “savagery” and “civilization.” Contrasted with the grades of culture illustrated in the ethnological shows, the vision of America’s racial and material progress embodied in the White City burned bright. Most visitors basked in the glow.

The success scored by the exposition directors became most apparent in the exhibit established by the American Federation of Labor as part of the Department of Social Economy. A souvenir catalog of this exhibit, issued by the AFL, reminded fairgoers that “it was the council of the American Federation of Labor, acting in conjunction with the chiefs of the railway brotherhoods, which refused in the face of immense pressure to participate in the great strike on the railroads centering in Chicago in 1894, and thus averted a bloody and disastrous conflict with the military forces of the United States.” The AFL, the catalog continued, “in refusing to affiliate with the Central Federation in New York, with its 59 local unions and some 18,000 members because it included a branch of the Socialist labor party, struck the keynote of resistance against the dangerous delusion that the emancipation of the working class can be achieved by placing in the hands of shallow politicians the business enterprises now conducted by private persons.” Fairgoers were also told that the AFL had spearheaded the drive in which “the programme of the common ownership of all the means of production and distribution was declared alien to the trade union movement.” By informing exposition-goers that “the spirit of the trade union is essentially conservative, and that in the measure of its conservatism it has become the most valuable agent of social progress,” the AFL leadership left little doubt that it embraced the vision of utopia projected by the exposition’s promoters. Participation by the AFL, of course, did not signify an endorsement of this blueprint for progress by all members of the working class. But the presence of this exhibit suggested that the exposition had gone a long way toward becoming what exposition president Francis termed “an incomparable seminary of ideas and inspirations for people of all classes and avocations.”52

In the minds of the directors of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the fair had succeeded as an inspirational force. “It is evident,” Saint Louis Mayor Rolla Wells told the closing day audience, that the exposition “has not lived in vain, but has been a joy and a benefit to all who may have been so fortunate

as to have been within its sway.” On that same occasion, Francis expressed confidence that the “compensation will continue to flow for at least a generation to come.” When, at the close of his remarks, the exposition band struck up “Hail to the Chief” and the “primitive” people assembled at the fair marched around the central plaza in a gesture of apparent tribute, the fulfillment of the directors’ imperial aspirations seemed near. But what about their efforts to implant their values in American culture? What did fairgoers remember from the Saint Louis world’s fair?53

Testimony gathered by the Missouri Historical Society for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the exposition substantiated the directors’ faith in the fair’s abiding influence. The persons interviewed for this occasion had been young—between the ages of six and twenty—when they saw the fair. And they remembered eating their share of ice cream cones and hot dogs and getting lost on the Pike. Like the tenant farmers in John Steinbeck’s Grapes of Wrath, some still treasured souvenir soapstone carvings purchased at the fair. Such lasting sentiments for the fair were important because they formed a reservoir for other memories as well. When asked specifically about exhibits that still stood out in their minds, respondents almost invariably recalled the ethnological displays, particularly villages of Filipinos, Indians, and Pygmies. “There,” one former fairgoer emphasized, “are memories that do not fade.”54

Above all, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition gave a utopian dimension to American imperialism. So great was the fair’s success that it fired the imaginations of commercial and political leaders in the Pacific Northwest. Gripped by world’s fair fever, exposition promoters in Portland and Seattle actively sought and willingly received from their Saint Louis peers the task of keeping visions of empire before the American people. “The king is dead. Long live the king,” proclaimed the Post-Dispatch in an article about the relation of the Saint Louis exposition to the Portland fair planned for 1905. At the close of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the scepter of cultural sovereignty passed into the hands of commercial and political leaders in the Pacific Northwest.55