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Ethnicity, Power, and Historical Memory at Two California Sites

“The Days of Old, the Days of Gold, the Days of ’49”: Identity, History, and Memory at the California Midwinter International Exposition, 1894

BARBARA BERGLUND

Following on the heels of Chicago’s Columbian Exposition, San Francisco’s Midwinter Fair generated representations of identities, histories, and memories that promoted a vision of social order that spoke to the hopes and fears of both the city and the nation. The version of history articulated at the Fair’s 49 Mining Camp exhibit looked back to the past with nostalgia to construct meaningful identities for the present. Through that gauzy lens, it fashioned masculine historical identities that sought to assuage race, class, and gender-based anxieties in the present by emphasizing white male dominance and downplaying the economic dislocations associated with the expansion of industrial capitalism.

“We celebrate to-day this great fact—a history-making fact in the annals of the world—that the American people have reached the Pacific Ocean, and that civilization, having sprung in the remote east and pursued its destined course, has

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reached the western edge of the American continent in California. . . . “The eastern nations sink, their glory ends, An empire rises where the sun descends.”
—James D. Phelan, Opening Day Celebration, January 27, 1894.¹

THE CALIFORNIA MIDWINTER INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION—also known as the Midwinter Fair—was held in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park from January 27 to July 4, 1894. Following on the heels of the World’s Columbian Exposition, it showcased selected exhibits from Chicago’s spectacular commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s journey to America as well as an impressive number of new exhibits at its specially constructed fairground, Sunset City.² As the first American international exposi-

1. *The Official History of the California Midwinter International Exposition: A Descriptive Record of the Origin, Development and Success of the Great Industrial Expositional Enterprise, held in San Francisco from January to July 1894* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1895), 74–75. San Francisco native James Duval Phelan was a prominent banker and civic leader, a key supporter of the Midwinter Fair, and a proponent of the City Beautiful Movement, which held that moral and civic virtue could be inspired in urban inhabitants through the creation of well-planned and regulated cities. Daniel Burnham, also a leading advocate of this vehicle of reform and social control, designed the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. He also prepared a plan for the redesign of San Francisco, commissioned by Phelan, that was never implemented. In 1897, Phelan would be elected mayor of San Francisco and serve three two-year terms.

2. The Midwinter Fair was the brainchild of Michael H. de Young, the publisher of the *San Francisco Chronicle* as well as a commissioner of the California Exhibits and vice president of the National Commission at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. While at the fair in Chicago, de Young realized that although California’s exhibits were indeed impressive, they did not demonstrate the full extent of the state’s remarkable progress and abundant resources. He determined that it would be of great economic and social benefit for San Francisco to host a similar fair on home soil. He called a meeting of the San Franciscan businessmen with him in Chicago, pitched his idea, and despite some skepticism, they pledged over \$40,000 for the enterprise. Although it had taken seven years to bring the fair in Chicago to fruition, within eight busy months, a corporate-style organizational structure had been arranged, successful fund-raising and publicity campaigns had been run, many of the exhibits from the Chicago fair were carried by rail to San Francisco, an impressive number of new exhibits were developed, and Sunset City had been designed and built. The Midwinter Fair was nevertheless even more of an economic success than its promoters had hoped. When the fair closed on July 4, 1894, nearly two-and-a-half million people had visited Sunset City. See Arthur Chandler and Marvin Nathan, *The Fantastic Fair: The Story of the California Midwinter International Exposition, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1894* ([California]: Pogo Press, 1993) for a very useful descriptive history. De Young’s motives are further elaborated in the *Official Guide to the California Midwinter Exposition*, first edition, compiled from Official Sources Under the Direct Supervision of the Exposition Management (San Francisco: George Spalding & Co, 1894), 19; *The Official History of the California Midwinter International Exposition: A Descriptive Record of the Origin, Development and Success of the Great Industrial Expositional Enterprise, held in San Francisco from January to July 1894* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1895); and James D. Phelan, “Is the Midwinter Fair a Benefit?” *Overland Monthly*, 23, 2d series (April 1894): 390–92. According to Chandler and Nathan’s calculations in *The Fantastic Fair*, “The exposition had earned \$1,260,112.19 in revenues, as against \$1,193,260.70 in expenditures, netting a profit of \$66,851.49.” 67. Moreover, funding of the Midwinter Fair was based solely on popular subscription. In the midst of the economic crisis, federal, state, or municipal financing was an impossibility. Wealthy individuals and firms subscribed generously after some initial hesitancy, but “with a few notable exceptions, the amounts promised were comparatively small, the number of those who contributed was correspondingly large.” *Official History*, n.p. Attendance figures are based on Chandler and Nathan, *The Fantastic Fair*, 77, and *The Official History*, n.p. Just to provide a sense of scale,

tion ever held west of Chicago, the Midwinter Fair provided San Francisco elites with an opportunity to present an image of the city—only fifty years removed from conquest but the largest city on the West Coast and the eighth largest in the country—to an audience of local, national, and international observers, participants, and visitors. Throughout the nineteenth century, one of the ways the city’s elites had attempted to organize this newly acquired, rapidly urbanizing, exceptionally racially and ethnically diverse, and heavily immigrant society was through the control of the discourses, practices, and places generated by and through the city’s cultural spaces—places such as restaurants, hotels, and boardinghouses; places of amusement; tourist attractions; and fairs and expositions.³ As the elaborate fantasy of an anxious yet powerful elite, the Midwinter Fair’s representation of a carefully ordered city in the face of a reality of continual, stubborn social disorder was part of this process of cultural ordering—of forging social relationships and categories of identity in and through the city’s cultural spaces—which was integral to this new American city’s consolidation of a social order built on nationally dominant hierarchies of race, class, and gender. As James Phelan’s inaugural remarks made clear, Sunset City was designed to serve as a paean to America’s landed empire and San Francisco’s position as the jewel in the crown of western expansion. In complex and contested ways, Sunset City articulated the desires of local elites for the city to assume the position of a thoroughly civilized, conquered, and thus “American” place. Claiming this identity was linked to both the containment of class, race, and gender-based disorder in the city and the promotion of a West still wild enough to be regionally distinct but also domesticated enough to be suitable for incorporation into the fabric of the nation. One of the places where these goals came together most powerfully and were articulated most forcefully was at the 49 Mining Camp Exhibit, which presented the fair-going public with a nostalgic version of California history that, by playing on already familiar tropes about “the wild west,” sought to assuage race, class, and gender-based anxieties in the present by emphasizing white male dominance and downplaying the economic dislocations associated with the expansion of industrial capitalism in its rendition of the past.⁴

27,529,400 people attended the Columbian Exposition; Robert Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 40.

3. Thinking of cultural spaces in terms of “discourses” means taking into account their socially constructed qualities; the visions of leisure entrepreneurs and boosters that informed their genesis; and the representations they generated as evidenced in travel literature, guide books, journalistic accounts, advertising, and souvenirs. Paying attention to “practices” means figuring out the interlocking webs of social relations among the people who used these spaces, when they used them, and how they used them. Thinking in terms of “places” involves analyzing the way decor and built environment were constructed and marketed to convey particular meanings and also to encourage certain kinds of usage. It also requires situating these spaces in terms of their specific locales in the city and investigating how they contributed to the creation of spatial relationships between groups of people and their environment.

4. My understanding of International Expositions has been shaped by Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*

Nostalgia and Masculinity at the 49 Mining Camp

The 49 Mining Camp was one of the most novel and popular exhibits at the Midwinter Fair. The concession sought to create a replica of a mining camp from the Gold Rush years against a “well constructed and artistically painted” panorama of Mount Shasta. It featured a gambling saloon, hotel, restaurant, “charming señoritas” dancing the fandango, old cabins literally hauled down from the Gold Country, stagecoach rides, periodic gunfights, and a frontier press—*The Midwinter Fair Appeal and Journal of 49*—to name just a few of its attractions. Inside the camp, buildings were arrayed along a single main street, and “the ‘irresistible contagion of good music’ filled the air. The ‘familiar sounds of the banjo and fiddle, the clink of chips, the rattle of dice and the jargon of the keno players’ filled Joe Harvey’s gambling house. Papa Peakes’ Rest for the Weary Hotel offered not just a place to lay one’s head but also ‘beans cooked in the ground’ that ‘simply melted in one’s mouth.’” At the dance hall, visitors were treated to “a constant flash of gayly colored hosiery, the rhythmic beat of pretty feet, the gleam of mingling lace and shapely ankles . . . keeping time with the clink and clash of the castanets.” Throughout the exhibit one came into regular contact with “Mexicans in gay attire, braid and velvet, tassels and colored sashes, hats covered with silver ornaments and shoes with gaudy buckles, miners in blue jeans and cowboys in big hats.” As a sideshow, the 49 Mining Camp cost visitors an extra twenty-five cents—in addition to the initial fifty-cent admission to the fairgrounds—and twenty-five cents apiece more to partake of the 49 Dance Hall or the 49 Theatre. Its location at the far western end of the exposition grounds at the base of Strawberry Hill positioned it on the fair’s outskirts, yet it was the Midwinter Fair’s largest single concession, occupying 150,000 square feet of ground. It could be reached from the interior central court of Sunset City from three different avenues, each of which wound “through young pine and eucalyptus forest” which were, according to one guidebook, “highly suggestive of the condition of the auriferous districts as the pioneers found them.” To reach the 49 Mining Camp, visitors could either walk or “if desiring to enter in the proper pioneer frame of mind” they could travel by stagecoach—purportedly the same one ridden in by Horace Greely on his visit to the West—which took hourly trips from the Administration Building. Soon after the 49 Mining Camp’s opening, *The Midwinter Appeal and Journal of 49* de-

(New York: Hill & Wang, 1982); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Curtis M. Hinsley, “Strolling Through The Colonies,” in Michael P. Sternberg (ed.), *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 119–40, and “World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago’s Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

scribed the sights that filled eighteen hundred people “with wonder and astonishment”—all of whom had “trudged through the sand to inspect the camp” on a rainy Sunday before its main road “had been macadamized”.⁵

The first thing that strikes the visitor is the picturesque gateway. There is a rustic tollhouse at the entrance, where the visitors plunge their quarters, and then pass through a gateway made attractive with a combination of rustic work, vines and evergreens. Once through the gate the revived glories of the old California mining camp come into view. The old cabins built of logs, shakes and slabs, from whose stone and adobe chimneys the smoke curls lazily; the crooked street past the mule corral, with its old-fashioned ‘Rest for the Weary’ hotel; the log cabin newspaper office, the gambling hell, the dance house and various little offices where the lawyers and doctors have hung out their shingles.⁶

The 49 Mining Camp was the creation of a group of journalists and entertainment entrepreneurs. It was financed, in large measure, by a mining mogul. Together, they, along with a few other businessmen, formed an incorporated company “to establish the concession on business principles.” One of the journalists was Sam Davis, the editor of the Carson, Nevada *Appeal*—which explains both the name and the existence of the camp’s recreation of a frontier press that was published intermittently during the fair and circulated at both the fair and at city-newsstands for five cents a copy. In fact, according to the Midwinter Fair’s *Official History*, the idea for the 49 Mining Camp Exhibit grew out of Davis’ suggestion “that it might be of interest to establish, in connection with the Exposition, a frontier newspaper office, where a typical early-day periodical should be printed upon brown wrapping paper, the proof read on the bottom of an upturned barrel, and whose editor would at all times be expected to be prepared to answer for his criticisms with his

5. According to *The Official History*, “In the catalogue of concessional attractions, next in interest to the international element, and perhaps more interesting than any, on account of its characteristic representation of life in the early days of California, was the Forty-Nine Camp,” 152. The *California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated, Official Souvenir: Illustrations and Descriptions of all Prominent Buildings, Biographical Sketches, Synoptical History of Early California, Notice of Concessions, etc.* (San Francisco: Robert A. Irving Publisher, 1894) likewise extolled that “the 49 Mining Camp is one of the most popular exhibits at the Fair, and it is without doubt one of its most unique attractions.” Mention of “charming señoritas,” can be found in Taliesin Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair, San Francisco, and Interesting Facts Concerning California* (2nd ed.) (San Francisco: W.B. Bancroft & Co, 1894), 155–61. Data about the size and the location of the 49 Mining Camp comes from: Taliesin Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair, San Francisco, and Interesting Facts Concerning California* (1st ed.) (San Francisco: W.B. Bancroft & Co, 1894) and *The Official Guide*, 106. “This company . . . has been granted more land at the exposition than the owners of any other concession. It has ground enough to establish a Midway Plaisance in itself,” *Chronicle*, 24 November 1893. Quote about “auriferous districts” is from Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair* (2nd ed.), 157. Descriptive passages from *The Midwinter Appeal*, 27 January 1894. In 1859, the newspaper editor and reformer Horace Greeley traveled overland to California, sending dispatches back to his paper, the *New York Tribune*, in support of a railroad to the Pacific. The words “go West, young man” are often attributed to him but were actually written by an Indiana editor, John Soule. Greeley, however, was a staunch proponent of organized settlement and did express many similarly phrased versions of this sentiment.

6. *The Midwinter Appeal and Journal of 49*, 24 January 1894.

life.” During its lifetime, *The Midwinter Appeal* frequently used such rough, purportedly frontier language in its pages and promotional material. For example, readers were curtly informed that, “The sheet will come out in the afternoon when it comes out at all.” In addition to Davis, the “well known theatrical manager and newspaper man,” James H. Love, Esq. served as the 49 Mining Camp’s manager, and another journalist, Eugene Hahn, assumed the duties of assistant manager and press agent. The Camp’s president was Frank McLaughlin, a noted engineer who made “a fortune” pioneering the development of hydraulic mining techniques. He entered into the 49 Mining Camp project “with his whole heart and soul, and with the full power of his purse.” These elites were but a small subset of the contingent of local luminaries—rallied together by fair-organizer and editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* Michael de Young—who put their financial support and entrepreneurial energies behind the fair.⁷

Although the primary purpose of the 49 Mining Camp was to provide profitable amusement, in conjunction with that it was also in the business of proferring potent lessons about history, memory, and identity. At its core, the version of history presented in the 49 Mining Camp took the form of a creation myth that told a story about the origins of the state of California and its inhabitants that was as much about the present and the future as it was about the past. This creation myth was constructed through two distinct yet interwoven and overlapping stories. The first was a tale of nostalgia for a lost white republic that contained within it lessons about race relations in the West. The second was a story that celebrated the ideals of the independent, self-made man and rugged masculinity in the wake of the increasing dominance of bureaucracy and corporations in everyday life. This story contained within it lessons about American masculinity and gender relations. Thus, although the fair as a whole was a celebration of the coming of civilization to the American West that contrasted California’s savage past to its current state as an urban, industrial metropolis, the 49 Mining Camp looked back with longing to a romanticized notion of a less civilized time to construct meaningful identities for the present.⁸

One tactic that the 49 Mining Camp used to support the mythic memory

7. The incorporation of the 49 Mining Camp Company is mentioned in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 November 1893. Information about the “business principles” governing the camp as well as Sam Davis is from *The Official History*, 152. There was some opposition to *The Midwinter Appeal and Journal of 49* from the Concession Bureau over the advertising content, as they contended another group had been given exclusive rights to advertising. See *The Midwinter Appeal*, 10 February 1894. Information about the publication schedule of *The Midwinter Appeal* is from *The Official Catalogue*, 154. The *California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated* contains information about the 49 Mining Camp Company’s officers and managers.

8. For a discussion of the functions of local history celebrations in California and elsewhere see David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001). He writes, “To the extent that civic celebrations represent a collective history, they are representations of and for the collective but not necessarily by the collective. Such representations primarily serve as tools that some groups use to structure a common reality for others” (p. 62).

of early California as a white man's sanctuary was to represent miners—the pioneer heroes of the creation myth—as exclusively white despite the fact that men from many racial and ethnic groups engaged in mining. “The motley crowd of the camp, Spaniards, Mexicans, miners, and gamblers,” one description told its readers, “mingled with the crowd who came to see them.” Although this text did acknowledge that 49 mining camps were generally multicultural arenas, excluding miners from a racial designation also indicated that they occupied the normative designation, white, which literally could go without saying.⁹

The 49 Mining Camp also mobilized the lines, “The days of old./The days of gold./The days of 49,” as a memorable, catchy phrase that stood for both the camp and its vision of a white republic. “A jolly lot of seasoned miners and gentlemen of fortune in woolen shirts and slouch hats crowded the swaying coach inside and out,” wrote one journalist in his description of the 49 Mining Camp, “There was an adventurer with a banjo on the coach top, and whenever the procession halted he struck up a ditty on ‘the days of old and the days of gold, the days of 49.’ Miners, gamblers, and the laughing throng joined in the chorus.” These lines were repeated in association with the 49 Mining Camp in numerous guidebooks, souvenirs, and newspaper articles. They were taken from a popular song, “The Days of 49,” published by E. Zimmer in 1876. The song looked back with nostalgic longing to the Gold Rush years. It was narrated by an old pioneer, Tom Moore, who mourned the loss of that earlier time: “And I often grieve and pine,/” he confessed, “For the days of old, the days of gold./The days of 49.” The song took the listener through his fond memories. Part of what “old Tom Moore” missed from his younger days were his “comrades . . . a saucy set” who were rough but also “staunch and brave, as true as steel.” Among the men he identified were the typical gold rush figures: gamblers, miners, and hard drinkers. “There was Kentuck Bill, one of the boys,/Who was always in for a game” and “New York Jake, the butcher boy,/So fond of getting tight.” But another part of what Tom Moore lamented were social changes that he believed threatened both the American body politic and his rightful position, as a white man, atop the racial hierarchy. He made his sentiments clear in the song's final verse:

Since that time how things have changed
 In this land of liberty.
 Darkies didn't vote nor plead in court
 Nor rule this country;

9. Description of the “motley crowd” is from the *Chronicle*, 15 January 1894. For other examples of the identities of “miner” or “pioneer” being defined as white through the absence of a racial or ethnic label see also: “The keno game was in progress and the dance hall presented its customary scene of rough gayety, with its pretty girls, miners, gamblers, and Spaniards all in the hearty enjoyment of the fandango,” *Chronicle*, 30 January 1894; “Mexicans, Spaniards, and miners will mingle on the street,” *Chronicle*, 14 January 1894; “And then there is a suggestion of deviltry about the Spanish fandango that the girls dance with the Mexicans and pioneers of those by-gone times,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 January 1894.

But the Chinese question, the worst of all,
 In those days did not shine,
 For the country was right and the boys all white.
 In the days of '49.¹⁰

On February 17, 1894, *The Midwinter Appeal and Journal of Forty-nine* published an illustration that echoed the views expressed by Tom Moore in “The Days of '49.” It featured Chinese miners working side-by-side with what looked like an Anglo miner. The Chinese appeared to have quite a bit of gold and a more sophisticated sifting system, while the white miner panned for gold without, it seemed, much luck. The caption read: “Before Dennis Kearny’s time.” In the late 1870s, Dennis Kearny—a “producer in the Jacksonian sense” and a firebrand of the Workingman’s Party—was responsible for fomenting support for violence against San Francisco’s Chinese as well as advocating policies that would prohibit Chinese immigration. Clearly, this illustration and its caption symbolized the belief held by some whites that before immigration restriction and perhaps even before restrictive mining laws, Chinese miners were getting more than their fair share. It also is suggestive of ways in which, as Robert Lee has demonstrated, Chinese immigrants disrupted the nostalgic image of California as a white Jacksonian’s paradise. As immigrant workers, the Chinese symbolized industrial capitalism—a system antithetical to an economy of small producers—and provided a disturbing reminder of California’s position as a center of capitalist production.¹¹

In a similar vein but with a different target, the *Midwinter Appeal*, in one of its typical pieces in which one of San Francisco’s preeminent capitalists, Claus Spreckels, was spoofed as a Wild West Sheriff, reported that “Deputy Sheriff Spreckles [sic] went into Buckskin’s saloon last evening and attempted to arrest Johnny Smoker while he was killing a Mexican.” This action was not

10. The description of men at the 49 Mining Camp singing the “Days of 49” is from the *Examiner*, 28 January 1894. Robert G. Lee’s work in *Orientalism* on racialization and popular songs called my attention to the significance of the recurrence of this tune. Some examples of its repetition are as follows: “This is especially true of those things treating of the ‘days of old and the days of gold’,” *The Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and Sunset Scenes: Being Views of California Midwinter Fair and Famous Scenes in the Golden State* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1894); “California’s Midwinter Exposition would be incomplete without a representation of ‘The days of old/the days of gold/The days of 49,’” *Official Guide*, 106–107; “. . . to show visitors from the East and elsewhere how the hardy California miner worked and lived, In the days of old/The days of gold/ The days of 49,” *California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated*; “Every man or woman accompanied by one or more hopefuls will be admitted free to the grounds and will be shown around by guides, who will tell the ‘tales of old, the days of gold, the days of 49,’” *Examiner*, 6 January 1894; “There was an adventurer with a banjo on the coach top, and whenever the procession halted he struck up a ditty on ‘the days of old and the days of gold, the days of 49,’” *Examiner*, 28 January 1894; “In its buildings, people and ways and means it is a most realistic representation of the days of old, the days of gold, and the days of 49,” *Chronicle*, 25 March 1894. Full text of the lyrics to *The Days of 49* can be found in Richard E. Lingenfelter (comp.), *Songs of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 558–59.

11. *Midwinter Appeal and the Journal of 49*, 17 February 1894; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 116–21; and Lee, *Orientalism*, 22 and 31.

greeted with popular approval. Instead, “he was promptly thrown out and several citizens are talking of a mass meeting to ask him to resign his office.” The problem, according to the *Midwinter Appeal*, was that Sheriff Spreckels had “a large idea of his duties, and when he enters a saloon without being invited and interferes with an American who is putting the quietus on a greaser it’s time to inquire where our boasted land of freedom is tilting to.” Here the category of American meant white men and thus excluded people of Mexican descent, who were racialized as nonwhite. Freedom was defined as American white men being able to guard their position atop the racial hierarchy through violence if necessary. On one hand, in its rebuke of the sheriff, this historical representation spoke nostalgically to non-elite whites’ sense of entitlement to democratic, egalitarian processes. On the other, given the fact that the local citizenry meted out punishment to the sheriff for attempting to protect “a Mexican,” it, like Tom Moore’s song, promoted the notion of a *herrenvolk democracy*—a society born out of fear of labor competition from below and loss of control from above in which democracy prevails for the dominant racial group while tyranny and inequality are the order of the day for subordinate groups.¹²

As these examples reveal, the basic story about the origins of the state of California that the 49 Mining Camp told is a familiar one. At the heart of its creation myth were the hardy pioneer miners, generally represented as young, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men. The majority, as the *Midwinter Fair’s Official Guide* told its readers, were “possessed of neither astonishing virtues or astonishing vices; they were simply honest, earnest men who in their own strong, rough way gradually curbed the vicious propensities of the criminal minority, forced law and order out of the turbulent chaos, and laid the foundations of the future State.” According to the myth, these men were part of a larger contingent of nineteenth-century American expansionism embodied in sturdy, purified yeomanry spreading out over the accessible, undeveloped land of the frontier, supplanting savagery with civilization and blazing a fresh trail for egalitarian democracy and individual freedom along the way.¹³

Contained within this creation myth—as presented at this recreation of a

12. *Midwinter Appeal and the Journal of 49*, 7 January 1894. The concept of *herrenvolk democracy* is taken from George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind; The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 61. Fredrickson draws upon the ideas of Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Wiley, 1967), 17–18 and applies them to the African-American context yet the concept of *herrenvolk democracy* is certainly applicable to the multiracial society in nineteenth-century California.

13. *The Official Guide*, 16–17. The problem with this version of history had as much to do with what it said as with what it silenced. The region as a whole often saw the convergence of women as well as men, Indians, Europeans, Latin Americans, Asians, and African Americans in interaction with each other as well as with the natural environment. This version of history also uncritically glorified the steady forward march of progress and placed an overly optimistic faith in improvement that often obscured the routes of western expansion and development that resulted in harm or failure or both. Three important correctives to this history of Gold Rush society that actively grapple with and disclose its diversity and complexity are Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque:

49 mining camp in the 1890s—was a palpable nostalgia for the loss of a romanticized white republic. Through a process of creative remembering, the 49 mining camp conveyed lessons about race relations in the present and future as well as the past. Despite the complicated multicultural terrain of many 49 mining camps, the exhibit's narrative of California's history made the white, American conquerors the central actors in its triumphal, progressive story. Other racial groups, when included in the story, were relegated to the margins. This tactic of inclusion at the margins worked as what Curtis Hinsley has referred to as a strategy of "representational containment" that resonated in both the past and the present because it provided a way to incorporate yet simultaneously subordinate non-white groups in the historical record and, by extension, in California society. A related part of this construction of historical memory involved resuscitating and reinscribing an image of California that had been alive and well during the Gold Rush years. As Robert Lee has astutely shown, "In the 1850s, California was constructed in the popular mind as a Jacksonian community of independent small producers, miners, and pioneers. These men imagined California as a place where a lost American organic community could be reconstructed and their own identities remade." Just as this construction of a *herrenvolk democracy* offered solace to whites frightened of societal changes in the 1850s, it could do similar cultural work for those white Americans looking for order in the face of the racialized anxieties of the 1890s. Although taxes on foreign miners and Chinese exclusion were already history, in the 1890s issues of mixture and inclusion remained fractious in San Francisco—a city with the largest proportional foreign-born population in the United States. And, concurrent with the 49 Mining Camp, anxieties about the desirability of integrating the colonized peoples of the Pacific Rim into the American body politic were being expressed through the fair's Hawaiian and Inuit exhibits. Moreover, both the need for and the appeal of the ordered vision represented at the 49 Mining Camp can be further apprehended by juxtaposing its version of history with the reality of the effects of the panic of 1893 which were also being played out in Golden Gate Park. As fairgoers headed to the park for leisure and entertainment, over two thousand unemployed men also gathered there to participate in a huge, privately organized, city-wide, work-relief project. These destitute men were part of the larger social context of the Midwinter Fair that simultaneously disrupted and fostered the nostalgic idealizations of the 49 Mining Camp and presented an ironic, mocking contrast to the fair's overall celebration of capitalist progress and imperial impulses.¹⁴

University of New Mexico Press, 1999); and Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). See also Glassberg, *Sense of History*, for a discussion of how Anglo Californians "came to identify themselves with a 'white' pioneer heritage" and to recognize "other people's history on the land only selectively" (p. 170).

14. Curtis Hinsley, "Strolling Through the Colonies," 138. Hinsley provides a theory of the ways the historical narratives presented at expositions can simultaneously incorporate and ex-

Whereas at the 49 Mining Camp the Chinese symbolized white racial dominance through their absence—which represented the triumph of racially exclusionary policies—Mexican culture reinforced white racial dominance at the exhibit through its presence. Although the 49 Mining Camp fairly thoroughly erased the history of America’s military conquest of Mexican California, and its mouthpiece did not accord people of Mexican descent a place in the American body politic, a racialized version of Mexican culture lived on in the dance hall—a telling indicator of the symbolic centrality of socially peripheral, racially subordinate groups to the Mining Camp’s representational goals.¹⁵ The dance hall was a place, for both the miner of yore and the fair-going spectator of the 1890s, where gender and race came together in powerful, telling ways. “That the local coloring imparted by our Spanish-speaking predecessors has not been eliminated from California is here made apparent,” declared the caption to a photograph of the dance hall. “The wish for a reproduction of the pioneer scenes had scarcely been uttered before the old-time fandango materialized.” A visit to the dance hall, according to this same account, provided an opportunity for “the unhappy lot of the argonautic goldseekers” to have some much-needed fun. “It is like a ray of bright sunshine athwart the gloom of an existence devoted to hard work, flapjacks, beans and bacon, betokening that the respected progenitors of our Native Sons were not always the solemn, self-sacrificing State-builders that some have painted them.” The dance hall’s promotional literature, laden with the language of conquest and dominance, feminized and infantilized Mexicans as “dark-eyed, soft-voiced children of the South” and contrasted them to “a tribe of men only, bearded, rough of speech and manner, mighty in strength and endurance.” Such rep-

clude. Robert G. Lee, *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 15. Jacksonian democracy was predicated on white male supremacy. Rights of citizenship for white men meant as much as they did, in part, because others were excluded from them, especially women and people of color. By the 1820s, ideas about the inherent equality of white men had fused with the ideology of republicanism. The result was the expansion of suffrage, greater voter control over branches of government that had previously been shielded from the pressure of public opinion and, overall, an increasing democratization of American politics for white men. Yet, as white men gained political rights, white women and free black men lost what little opportunity they had possessed for formal political expression. As legal loopholes that allowed some property-holding white women and free black men to exercise the vote were closed, the concept of the equality of all white men and the consequent inequality of all others hardened. While white men worked to level what they perceived to be artificial social distinctions among themselves, at the same time they began to emphasize what they came to believe were natural differences that distinguished them from white women and people of color, which worked to further justify the exclusion of these groups from political or economic arenas of competition. Paradoxically, the rhetoric of the equality and equal opportunity of all white men was most powerful and most fervently embraced precisely when economic changes were actually increasing the economic and social stratification present in America to make the ideal of an egalitarian society much less real. For further discussion of Jacksonian democracy, see Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

15. See Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). As Stallybrass and White point out, “The low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organization and social being whilst it is instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture” (pp. 5–6).

representations suggest that one aspect of this cultural appropriation was to aid in the construction of an inferior, non-white “other” for white Americans to define themselves against. As in Tom Moore’s song, here again the 49 Mining Camp represented a thoroughly conquered California in which white men were secure in their place at the top of the state’s racial hierarchy.¹⁶

A large part of the appeal and popularity of the dance hall was undoubtedly the prospect of the contact with exoticized “charming señoritas.” The 49 Mining Camp’s “dancing girls” made their first public performance on January 14, 1894. Afterwards, the *Examiner* reported: “A feature that will probably attract more visitors than have yet been allured by Turkish dancers is the Mexican fandango that will be given in the dancehouse.” Yet while these dancers were ostensibly just part of the entertainment, they also took their place in the racial hierarchy arrayed before visitors to the Midwinter Fair. “These girls come from Mexico,” announced an article in the *Examiner*, “They have black eyes, too, but not the sooty black of the Egyptians or the beady black of the Indians. Their eyes are bright and quick and sparkling. There is mischief in them and a sort of tricky intelligence that gleams out like a will-o’-the-wisp while the music sounds.” In many respects, the female dancers at the 49 Mining Camp, like other exotic dancing girls showcased on Sunset City’s Midway, allowed white American men to partake of an exoticized sensuality and to indulge in fantasies of more “primitive” styles of masculinity. Such fantasies allowed white men both to transgress the constraints of allowable expression of bourgeois masculinity and to reaffirm their own sense of gender and racial superiority. Some of the dancers, however, were men. Descriptions such as—“The pretty Spaniards, girls and men, were at the prettiest part of one of their graceful dances”—in which men were described as pretty and thus feminized also bolstered the sense of superior masculinity of the white male spectators. And although all the dancers were understood to be Mexican or Spanish—the two terms were used interchangeably—it is likely that some of them were not what they appeared to be. Some names, like Miss Mamie Davidson, Señorita Amalia Monroy, Señor Edward Abrams, and Señorita Irene Hubbard are suggestive of racial masquerading or mixed-race descent. The names of some of the other dancers were less ambiguous: Señorita Carmen Martinez, José Vincent, Señorita Christina Lopez, and Francisco G. Valenzuela. Yet even these may have been stage-names connoting nothing other than a savvy job-specific choice on the part of the performer.¹⁷

16. *The Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and Sunset Scenes and Official Guide*, 16–17.

17. “Charming Señoritas” were mentioned in Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair* (2nd ed.), 155–61. Coverage of the first public performance can be found in the *Examiner*, 14 January 1894. The article that positioned the dancers in the fair’s racial hierarchy was: Annie Laurie, “The Midwinter Fair Sex,” *Examiner*, 28 January 1894. The ways in which white bourgeois men of the late nineteenth century projected themselves into more “primitive” styles of masculinity have been developed by Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Male dancers were described in the *Examiner*, 15 January 1894. The names of performers were found in the *Chronicle*, 14 January 1894. There is little information on the work-

In its representations of Native Americans the 49 Mining Camp presented yet another example of racial hierarchy building. Native Americans were regularly represented at the camp as local color, part of the landscape, or props that contributed to the overall effect of the built environment. “The entrance is by the side of an old time stage station,” informed the *Official Guide*, “suggestive of salt pork, bread baked in a frying pan, road agents, and Indians.” Similarly, the *Call* reported that “Placer mining will be carried on by a gang of forty genuine old-time miners, who with as many Indians and a score of yellow dogs will occupy the cabins.” Here, as in the presentation of Mexican culture, Native Americans existed in a representational format that obscured very recent histories as well as ongoing realities of “violence and appropriation.” Yet despite these carefully orchestrated silences, these presentations actually succeeded in giving expression to political, military, and economic relationships of power in part simply through their ability to order and display—to use as props for the historical narrative under construction—the human contents of these ethnographic exhibits.¹⁸

Although Native Americans were marginal to the performance of the white man’s West enacted at the 49 Mining Camp, they were featured at two concessions located on the same side of the fair grounds approximately the equivalent of a city block away. “One of these,” the *Official History* explained, “was an encampment of Sioux Indians, where characteristic dances were given every day and evening, and the other was at the Arizona Indian Village, where a company of Yaqui Indians lived in huts similar to those they occupy at home, and made baskets and pottery.” “Both groups of Indians,” this account continued, “included squaws and several papooses.” The Sioux Village, under the direction of concessionaire Dr. White Cloud, had also been exhibited at the Chicago Fair. There, one account disclosed, the Indians “live just as they do in their native wilds where Government rations are given out.” If one got to the fair early enough, the account continued, one could “gather in the rear of the Southern California Building and watch the whole tribe garnering in oranges which went wrong in the citrus display the night before.” Descriptions of the Arizona Indian Village tended to stress the barbarism of its inhabitants, particularly evident in the descriptions of their dancing and the assumptions made about their gender relations that, according to observers, positioned women as drudges and men as loafers. “Three Indians sit cross-legged inside the dance ring,” one account related, “their rude voices keeping time to the rubbing together of sticks and drumming on gourds . . . the barbaric play ends with . . . a general hubbub of cries and drumming.” In general, when Native Americans were presented as active, their activities were

ers and the general “backstage” of the 49 Mining Camp. Issues of gender, work, and representation are explored more fully in my dissertation, *Ordering the Disorderly City: Power, Culture, and Nation-Making in San Francisco, 1846–1906*, from which this work is drawn.

18. *Official Guide*, 106–07; *San Francisco Call*, 24 November 1893. Hinsley, “Strolling Through the Colonies,” 120–21.

scripted by negative stereotypes: dependent, barbaric, and drunk. When they served as part of the landscape or local color, Native Americans were represented as both passive and pacified, no longer part of the “wild” West. Tellingly, such representations were in keeping with the symbolic significance of the horrific massacre of Sioux men, women, and children four years earlier at Wounded Knee by the United States Army. For both Native Americans and Anglo Americans, Wounded Knee signified Indian defeat, the effective “end of the frontier.” Although these kinds of ethnographic representations of Native Americans effectively obscured this recent history, they nevertheless succeeded in simultaneously reinforcing stereotypes of domesticated, dependent Indians that spoke to the kind of subordinate status that government policies frequently now relegated them.¹⁹

The first part of the creation myth represented by the 49 Mining Camp offered lessons about race relations in the West told through a nostalgic tale about a lost white republic; the second component told a story that celebrated the ideals of the self-made man and independent, rugged masculinity. At first glance, these two gender identities might appear to be a study in contrasts: the hard-scrabble life of pioneer miner as the epitome of independent, rugged masculinity versus economic and political success and elite social standing as the marks of the self-made man. At the 49 Mining Camp, however, the two were interrelated. Independence and rugged masculinity were represented as preconditions for self-made manhood, and self-made manhood thus often had its roots in independent, rugged masculinity. These gender identities, moreover, were integrally related to the racial ideology at the heart of the nostalgia for a lost white republic. The ideals of the self-made man and independent, rugged masculinity undergirded the identity of white republican manliness that was the foundation of the white republic and its racism. Reinvigorated and reinscribed into the 1890s, these gender identities continued to contribute to the ongoing process of linking white male power to white racial superiority. In addition, the 1890s found in the past persona of the pioneer miner—already since the 1860s a standard trope of the California origin myth—a masculine image that combined these attributes and was especially appealing in the wake of the increasing dominance of wage work, bureaucracies, and corporations—all of which could easily lead to a sense of compromised independence in everyday life.²⁰

Historians have identified the 1890s as the decade in which bourgeois Americans—especially those who were white and male—began to react

19. *Official History*, 162; Eames, Ninetta, “The Wild and Woolly at the Fair,” *Overland Monthly* 23, 2 series (April 1894): 356–73. Evidence of Indians stereotyped as drunkards can be found, for example, in the *Call*, 24 November 1893: “At the further end of the village will be an Indian camp, with inhabitants just as they were when they bought fire water from the miners, and frequently gave hot lead in exchange.” Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1993), 28–31.

20. Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 20–22, articulates some of the key ways in which white male power became linked to white racial superiority through the discourse of civilization.

against the constraints of both Victorian and industrial America: time discipline, carefully controlled emotions, parlor culture, urban living, and sexual restraint. One outcome of this reaction was the development of a new gender ideology—a rugged masculinity increasingly oriented around the ideal of the “strenuous life.” This was set in contrast to what some viewed as the artificiality and effeminess of a different gender ideology—manliness—that had held sway since the mid-nineteenth century. Manliness was associated with possessing a solid character and exercising masterful control over one’s interior and exterior self. The emergence of rugged masculinity was accompanied by an increased interest in sports and wilderness experiences; the elevation of science, business, and realism; and a desire for “authentic” experiences that sometimes drew upon premodern symbols such as the medieval craftsmen, warrior, and saint. This new masculinity was organized through the powerful discourse of civilization that linked white supremacy and manhood in new ways. At its core, “civilization” was an explicitly racial concept that asserted white, especially Anglo-Saxon, supremacy as well as male dominance in gender relations. Theodore Roosevelt—the imperialist, capitalist, cowboy, athlete, and politician who feared “race suicide”—became the embodiment of this new construction of powerful white, racist masculinity via the “strenuous life”—which he articulated in a now famous speech in 1899 that captured and expounded upon feelings and trends that had begun to exist among American men in the final decade of the nineteenth century.²¹

The 49 Mining Camp venerated the frontier culture and the independent, rugged masculinity of the heroic pioneer miner in the American West—a place that had, since before the Civil War, served as a central proving ground of American manhood. It sought to capture “the rough-and-ready scenes when men were reckless and daring.” Visitors to the office of the *Midwinter Appeal and the Journal of 49* were “invited to come into the sanctum, make free

21. See Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; John Higham, “The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s,” in John Weiss (ed.), *The Origins of Modern Consciousness* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965); Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Rotundo, *American Manhood*; Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); and Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). Although some scholars date the emergence of the ideology of “the strenuous life” to the early years of the twentieth century, I, following Filene and Rotundo, see its emergence in the late nineteenth century. Theodore Roosevelt’s famous “Strenuous Life” speech was delivered in 1899. As Rotundo points out, the martial ideals that it advocated had been presaged by the growing association of violence, strife, and force with manhood in the final decades of the nineteenth century and the related urge to go to war that “developed a growing urgency in the 1890s and culminated in the Spanish-American War in 1898 (226, 235). Filene contends that “Americans throughout the nineteenth century had talked about the strenuous life, although in different eras they had located it in different environments. The frontier context had given way, during the Civil War, to the battlefield, which in turn had been succeeded by the athletic field, the arena of civic corruption, and again the wild-west frontier. By 1899, Roosevelt had in mind the jungles of Cuba and the Philippines, where Americans would prove their nation’s manliness” (p. 76).

use of our corncob pipe, spit on the floor, and utilize the copy hook as they see fit.” “If the gatekeeper gives you any palaver,” they were told, “knock him down and walk in.” At the barbershop, customers could “indulge their inclination or have their whiskers either shot off or shaved off,” and the saloons were “fitted up as saloons were when men were as likely to shoot the bartender as to take a drink.” Even the food was tough. “After looking at the food of the ancients,” wrote one account, “one need be told no more that the Argonauts were hardy people; the flapjacks show it.”²²

These miners were not only ruggedly masculine, they were also independent—free from wage work, bureaucracy, and the corporation. By choosing to represent a mining camp in the earliest days of the gold rush, the 49 Mining Camp focused its exhibit of life in the diggings on the very short span of time in which placer rather than hydraulic mining predominated. The exhibit proudly showcased “a placer mine showing the method of washing gold from gravel with sluice boxes, rockers, and all the primitive paraphernalia of the early prospector . . . in full operation.” Placer mining represented the independence of the Jacksonian white republican at the heart of the creation myth. During the placer mining period, men could and did work independently, as the image of the lone miner with pan, pick, and shovel would suggest. For many of the men who flocked to California after gold was found at Sutter’s Mill, mining offered a chance to return to an economy of small producers. It was also an opportunity to escape wage work in the industrial Northeast or farm work on the prairie. The halcyon days of placer mining, however, were quickly superseded by hydraulic mining, which came with a very different set of relations of production. Hydraulic mining used the force of water to get at gold deposits that the pan, pick, and shovel method could not reach. It required a large amount of start-up capital and a large number of wage workers. It also concentrated the profits in the hands of the few rather than the many and wreaked havoc on the natural environment. Moreover, this representation of placer mining had additional appeal in the 1890s since it spoke to the antimodern impulses of a strain of rugged masculinity that looked backward in time for sources of intense experiences that would provide self-fulfillment and, ultimately, ease the transition from a “‘producer culture’ of an industrializing, entrepreneurial society” to “the ‘consumer culture’ of a bureaucratic corporate state.” Ironically, and fittingly, the capital behind the representation of placer mining at the 49 Mining Camp came from Frank McLaughlin, renowned for developing the antithetical techniques of hydraulic mining on the Feather River.²³

22. “Rough and ready scenes” mentioned in the *Chronicle*, 14 January 1894. Similar adjectives were used by the *Examiner*, 28 January 1894. Descriptions of the newspaper office, barbershop, and saloon were found in the *Chronicle*, 24 November 1893. Description of flapjacks was found in the *Chronicle*, 25 March 1894.

23. Description of the placer mining exhibit was found in *Official Guide*, 106–107. Mining’s relationship to an economy of small producers is further developed by Lee, *Oriental*, 19. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xv. Details about Frank McLaughlin can be found in *The California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated*.

Along these same lines—and also ironic in retrospect—was the anti-corporate stance taken by *The Midwinter Appeal and Journal of 49* that was a component of the paper's generally ruggedly masculine tone. It stood in stark contrast to the rapid corporatization of the press that men like Sam Davis, editor of both the Carson, Nevada *Appeal* and the *Midwinter Appeal and Journal of 49*, and Michael de Young, the president of the Executive Committee of the Midwinter Fair and owner of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, had a hand in facilitating. The paper expressed its anti-corporate position by flouting its lackadaisical publishing schedule and drinking on the job, which tended to be related: "The public can expect another issue as soon as the printers sober up." This diverged markedly from the efficiency and time discipline that was at the heart of corporate production. *The Midwinter Appeal* also gave voice to anti-corporate sentiments in its disdain for overbearing editorial policies: "Contributors' articles will go as they are written, not to be edited by some ass who thinks he knows better what the contributor wants to say than the man who writes it." This contrasted with the flourishing of new micro-managerial techniques in incorporated America that were rapidly decreasing workers' control over the manner in which they did their jobs. Moreover, in a lengthy controversy in which the fair managers accused the paper of running advertisements without the proper license, the editors took advantage of the situation to present a David and Goliath, pro-little guy story. The increasing dominance of impersonal corporations and the incredible fortunes of wealthy capitalists made Gilded-age America anything but a pro-little guy story.²⁴

The 49 Mining Camp also mobilized the rugged masculine histories of numerous self-made men to challenge the commonplace associations of wealth and bourgeois identity with effeminacy and overcivilization. As these men had become increasingly successful—often amassing fortunes, political power, and social position—they also became increasingly removed from their roots in rugged masculinity. By emphasizing their rugged pasts, the rightness and desirability of their economic, political, and social position—increasingly challenged not only by their bourgeois effeteness but also by their capitalistic ex-

24. The increasing dominance of corporations in the late nineteenth century is described by Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*; David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865–1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890–1916: The Market, The Law, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State 1900–1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); and Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916* (London: The Free Press of Glenco, Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1963). Irregular publication and drinking on the job noted in *The Official Catalogue of the California Midwinter International Exposition: A Reference Book of Exhibitors and Exhibits, Officers and Members of the California Midwinter International Exposition, Together with Descriptions of all General, State, and Other Buildings, Etc.* (San Francisco: Harvey, Whitcher & Allen Publishers, 1894), 154; and *The Midwinter Appeal and Journal of 49*, 27 January 1894; the editorial policies were described in *The Official Catalogue*, 154.

cesses—could be reaffirmed. As Peter Filene has pointed out, biographies in popular magazines in the 1890s frequently positioned businessmen as Napoleonic heroes embodying the militarism, physicality, and individualism of “the strenuous life.” The 49 Mining Camp worked to strengthen the connection between new kinds of business elites—models of self-made manhood—and a new kind of rugged masculinity. In doing so, it provided a platform for local elites to reinscribe their own biographies within California’s pre-existing origin myth. At the 49 Mining Camp, for example, rugged masculinity and self-made manhood were both idealized and linked through the displays of a number of cabins “which had actually been occupied in those ‘days of gold’” by men “who, years ago, were unknown and poor, but who to-day are rich and powerful from their success in the mines.” One was the cabin John W. Mackay had used “for six years as a home at Allegheny, Sierra County, in his humble mining days” long “before he became a bonanza king.” Another cabin was that in which the United States senator from California, George C. Perkins, had been able “to make himself comfortable nearly forty years before he represented the State at Washington.” It had been his home for eight years at Thompson’s Flat, Butte County. Since his days as a miner, Perkins had been on the road of social mobility and capital accumulation. He had been engaged in merchandising and the steamship business, and served a term of three years as governor of the state. The cabin of Major Downie, the founder of Downieville, whose name, one account declared, was “familiar in every mining camp on the Pacific Coast from the lower California line to Bering Strait” stood “in a recess in the hillside.” On account of the Major’s untimely death on the steamer *City of Puebla* just as it was entering San Francisco’s harbor, his cabin was “draped in emblems of mourning.” The 49 Mining Camp also displayed the cabins of some other men who had become “more than locally prominent”—Senator James G. Fair, Senator J. P. Jones of Nevada, Alvinza Hayward, and the early homes of writers Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and John W. Marshall, the first discoverer of gold in California.²⁵

In addition to the luminaries noted above, all of the men involved in running the camp were also portrayed as self-made men. Mention has already been made of Frank McLaughlin, the mining mogul, as well as the bevy of newspapermen and entertainment entrepreneurs who conceptualized and managed the 49 Mining Camp. Of the latter, the biography of James H. Love is worthy of special attention because of the way it combines self-made manhood in the present with rugged masculinity in the past. He, extolled one account, “seems in his brief career to have followed the dictum of the philosopher of old, that action was the most wholesome rule of existence. He has been as restless all his life as a stormy petrel.” Born in Tuolumne County in

25. Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 76; “Days of Gold,” *The Official History*, 153; “Success in the Mines,” *Chronicle*, 8 January 1894; Information on John W. Mackay, George C. Perkins, and Major Downie from Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair*, 2nd ed., 155–61; and *The Official History*, 153.

1855, “he started in to herd cattle when he was only ten years old, at fourteen he bossed a gang of Chinamen, hunted game for the poulterers’ stalls in the market at fifteen, was a messenger boy for the Western Union Telegraph Company at sixteen.” Love also worked as a “clerk and bookkeeper in the principal mining companies’ offices, managed baseball players, walking matches, Billy Emerson, John L. Sullivan, Sousa’s band, and numerous other traveling companies; he has also managed the Grand Opera House, the Baldwin, California and Standard theatres, together with Woodward’s Gardens—once noted as a pleasure resort and zoological grounds, on Sixteenth Street.”²⁶

Moreover, the site of the 49 Mining Camp provided a playground for numerous prominent men where they could indulge in fantasies of participation in the mythic Wild West. The newspaper of the 49 Mining Camp, *The Midwinter Appeal and the Journal of 49*, filled its pages with jovial yet fantastic spoofs on their supposed frontier antics. Not only did the paper report on Claus Spreckels as a racially misguided Wild West Sheriff, it also reported that James G. Fair was the new Presbyterian minister at Jackass Hill, miner John Mackay wandered into Grizzly Gulch “half starved” and “dead broke,” and “Adolph Sutro, a boy from Angel’s Camp was in town yesterday on a big jag with Billy Sharon, one of the boys from Bobtail Canyon.” In reality, Claus Spreckels was a sugar magnate. James G. Fair was a railroad tycoon and a Comstock Lode millionaire. John Mackay was also a Comstock Lode millionaire. William Sharon was a banker, the builder of the Palace Hotel, and United States Senator from Nevada. Adolph Sutro was a mining engineer on the Comstock Lode who built Sutro Baths in 1893 and had been elected mayor of San Francisco in 1894.²⁷

Self-made men—many of them the epitome of corporate, bourgeois manhood—also readily partook of the 49 Mining Camp exhibit. At one o’clock on the 49 Mining Camp’s opening day, Director General de Young, the members of the Executive Committee, and a few invited guests boarded the old stage coach at the administration building. “There was little ceremony about it,” the *Chronicle* reported, “as they have none in connection with the camp. The driver cracked his whip and the coach was off to the camp. It rumbled down the street and stopped at the dance hall. The visitors were not there ten minutes before the Justice of the Peace killed a man.” In early February, the *Chronicle* reported another visit: “Notice having been given that the pack train had got in, forty-two days from Frisco, and that there was plenty of grub in the camp, the Director-General, the executive committee and members of the press responded yesterday to an invitation to take lunch with Old Man Peakes at the Forty-nine Mining Camp.” They dined at the Rest for the Weary Hotel, where “Papa Peakes and his assistants dispensed beans and other

26. Biographical information of James H. Love comes from *California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated, Official Souvenir*. Michael de Young is also portrayed as a self-made man in his biography in *The Official History*.

27. *The Midwinter Appeal and the Journal of 49*, 17 January 1894.

things.” “Everything connected with the banquet,” the reporter assured his readers, “was conducted in the spirit which prevailed in the days of 49.” Interestingly, much of what passed for authenticity involved the flagrant disregard for nineteenth-century bourgeois notions of proper etiquette and good manners—to some, surefire markers of feminization and overcivilization. “The guests kept their hats on at table and the waiters wore pistols with which to resent criticisms on the menu. Brown paper served as table-cloths and all the plate and china was of tin.”²⁸

A reporter for the *Chronicle* made clear the didactic intent of these displays of self-made manhood in the present with rugged masculinity in the past. “The child of an investigating mind,” he wrote, “will take much interest in the old cabins of the men who, since they lived in them, have become famous. These gentlemen attended strictly to business when they went to sleep forty years ago. They did not care whether the pillow had been aired or the mattress had been turned. They went right off to sleep, as soon as they laid down.” “What was the result? To-day they are rich and famous,” he told them. The reporter further advised good conduct and a little endurance at home as a recipe for prosperity in the future:

Let little boys learn a moral from this and go to sleep just as soon as they get into bed. If they do, they will live long and prosper. There can be no hope, though, for the boy or girl who rolls around and always wants a drink of water. The Argonauts never asked for water. See the result—most of them are rich to-day and able to vote at the annual election of the Society of California Pioneers.²⁹

Although the didacticism presented above may appear a little silly, children—the rising generations of the West—were one of the 49 Mining Camp’s primary audiences. The Midwinter Fair hosted a number of Children’s Days on which youngsters were admitted without charge. On February 2, 1894, the *Examiner* reported, “Good news from the 49 Mining Camp. They cannot do enough for the children there! They were the first to throw open their concession to the children and they seem to have spent every minute since trying to think up new kinds of fun.” On one such special day at the 49 Mining Camp, children were given “a bag of candy and an orange apiece.” In late March, “the sixty girls of the Maria Kip Orphanage were special guests of the Forty-nine Mining Camp. . . . A nice repast was spread for them in the big private dining room of the manager. They were conveyed to the Fair Grounds and back in the old-fashioned coaches which are a feature of the camp and they enjoyed the ride as well as everything else.” Moreover, it was the belief of one journalist that “a child can learn more about the . . . magnificent life of the Argonauts by visiting this camp than his father, provided he is a pioneer, would ever tell him.” In many respects, the 49 Mining Camp spoke for itself, but on these special days, children and the adults that accompanied

28. *Chronicle*, 15 January 1894 and 4 February 1894.

29. *Chronicle*, 25 March 1894.

them were “shown around by guides who will tell the ‘tales of old, the days of gold, the days of 49.’”³⁰

Another audience identified as particularly suited to visit the 49 Mining Camp were the old pioneer miners themselves. “For the old pioneer who spent a good portion of his life in just such a scene as this depicts, the camp will arouse stirring memories,” declared the *Official Guide*. “It is the Mecca toward which every man who has at any time in his life been engaged in the seductive occupation of gold-mining turns his footsteps,” announced another, with even greater clarity of the kind of memories the 49 Mining Camp sought to evoke. “Here, the visitor finds himself in reality transported to a scene so realistic that, if he has at any time mined, he lives over again the experiences of the free and independent life of the past, all its trials and triumphs, all its hopes and pleasures being arrayed before his mental vision.”³¹

Visitors from the East or from abroad were still another target audience of the 49 Mining Camp. One of the camp’s self-proclaimed purposes was “to show visitors from the East and elsewhere how the hardy California miner worked and lived.” The managers of the 49 Mining Camp hosted out-of-town journalists, many of them from Chicago, and arranged special festivities for their benefit, including a performance of the fandango. “The life of the camp was at its height when the guests of the day arrived in the old stage coach,” one account reported. “The keno game was in progress and the dance hall presented its customary scene of rough gayety, with its pretty girls, miners, gamblers, and Spaniards all in the hearty enjoyment of the fandango. . . . The newspapermen enjoyed it all immensely. It was all new and strange to them.” “Not that the visitors gave way to the jubilee spirit of the occasion and made the gulch howl with the expression of their own merriment,” another account observed, “for they are mild-mannered and dignified, but the whole camp set out to amuse and edify them.”³² A writer for the *Chronicle* delineated at length the kind of coverage the 49 Mining Camp was getting across the country and around the world. He also alluded to the fact that the version of the West presented via the 49 Mining Camp fulfilled the expectations of visitors well-versed in American frontier fiction:

The leading dailies, weeklies and monthly magazines in every country have for months past published extensive and profusely illustrated accounts of the quaint, unique, and realistic representations of early life in the mines to be found in the Midwinter Fair’s Forty-nine Mining Camp. Harper’s Weekly, Frank Leslie’s, the New York Sun, the New York Herald, the Chicago Record, the

30. *Examiner*, 2 February 1894; *Chronicle*, 1 April 1894 and 25 March 1894; *Examiner*, 6 January 1894.

31. *Official Guide*, 106–07; Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair* (2nd ed.), 155–61; A similar statement was made by the *Call*, 19 November 1893: “The old settlers in the city, those who came in the good old days of 48 and 49, will find many realistic ideas portrayed here which will bring back to them vivid recollections of those halcyon days.”

32. *California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated*; *Chronicle*, 30 January 1894; and *Examiner*, 30 January 1894.

Chicago Herald, and papers of Cincinnati, New Orleans, St. Louis, Omaha, Philadelphia and of nearly every other Eastern city of note have printed columns after columns about the Forty-nine Mining Camp, and the English, French and German exchanges, in mentioning the Midwinter Fair, never fail to speak of this special feature. To a Californian, this universal approval of a novel enterprise is more than a passing significance. It shows the great and mighty interest the people abroad take in the land of gold, immortalized by Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and Joaquin Miller and many others.³³

In the literature generated to promote and commemorate the Midwinter Fair, the 49 Mining Camp was repeatedly praised for faithfully and literally capturing historical reality. Visitors, informed the *Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and Sunset Scenes*, “see presented the real life as it was in the first days of gold fever, and an exact reproduction of the surroundings of a pioneer mining camp.” “The picture will be realistic to the last degree,” the *Chronicle* assured its readers, “Saloons, faro banks, miners’ cabins and dance-houses will resound to the noise of mirth and amusement. The life of almost fifty years ago will be lived again.”³⁴

This notion of reconstituted reality persisted despite the fact that the exhibit explicitly acknowledged that it was shaping its representation of history based on literary fiction. The *Official Guide* blatantly told its readers that the exhibition would be of particular interest to those “who have in imagination lost themselves in the Sierras with Bret Harte, crossed the Plains with Joaquin Miller or roughed it on the Comstock with Mark Twain.” Likewise, the same writer for the *Chronicle* quoted above informed his readers: “In Golden Gate Park, near the north drive of the Midwinter Fairgrounds, is located Bret Harte’s Truthful James’ and Abner Dean’s old original ‘Forty-nine Mining Camp’ and ‘Stanislaw society’ is there in full blast every day and night.” Joaquin Miller, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain were some of the most popular nineteenth-century myth-makers of the American West. Their stories—brought to life by the 49 Mining Camp—told the familiar tale of California’s origins that revolved around nostalgia for a lost white republic and independent, rugged masculinity. Clearly, however, as the popularity of the 49 Mining Camp exhibit attested, the mythological fiction of Miller and Harte possessed the cultural power it did because it represented the “reality” of a past that had incredible resonance in the present. In fact, in the 1890s, the relevance of this history had begun to take on a new intensity. As David Glassberg points out, it was during this decade that children of California pioneers—often organized in chapters of the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, often having grown up on the work of Twain, Harte, and Miller, and often

33. *Chronicle*, 22 April 1894.

34. *The Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and Sunset Scenes*; *Chronicle*, 14 January 1894. See also: *The Official History*, 152–54; *The Official Catalogue*, 154; *Official Guide*, 106–07; *California Midwinter Exposition Illustrated*; Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair* (1st ed.), 155–61; *Call*, 19 November 1893; *Chronicle*, 24 November 1893 and 25 March 1894; *Examiner*, 14 January 1893.

fearing their forebears' history would be lost as the remaining material artifacts disappeared with time—began serious efforts to both revisit and preserve “the ‘storied’ places” of the California Gold Rush.³⁵

Moreover, the 49 Mining Camp's celebration of America's landed empire and neat transformation of the disordered Gold Rush years into a nostalgic fantasy of a racially and economically simpler past existed as a perfect complement to the Orientalist Fantasy motif that dominated the architecture and decor of Sunset City writ large and expressed dreams of a future filled with overseas imperial grandeur grounded in white racial dominance. In its entirety, Sunset City occupied 160 acres in Golden Gate Park, situated between North and South Drives, and encircled by the Buffalo Paddock, the Children's Playground, the Aviary and Strawberry Hill. Its main buildings, its Court of Honor, formed a quadrangle.³⁶ Outside the quadrangle were “the various concessions made to private exhibitors and to foreign nations, and the various counties of the State”—including the 49 Mining Camp which existed on the outskirts of the fairgrounds. The Midwinter Fair's Oriental theme, which combined Eastern motifs along with those of Spanish and Mexican California, was given its most spectacular expression in the five main buildings, all designed by prominent local architects.³⁷ The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, for

35. *Official Guide*, 106–07; *Chronicle*, 22 April 1894. See also *The Official Catalogue of the California Midwinter International Exposition*, 154. Although Mark Twain needs little in the way of introduction, Joaquin Miller and Bret Harte are less well known. Joaquin Miller, known as “the poet of the Sierras” was born Cincinnatus Hinus Miller in Ohio in 1837. His family migrated to Oregon when he was an adolescent. He adopted his name from the legendary California “bandit,” Joaquin Murietta, and became a colorful character who dressed in a buckskin coat and red shirt and wore his hair in long, blonde tresses. On his visits to Europe, he personified the rugged American West and in fact set the prototype for the “Man of the Wild West” which Buffalo Bill imitated. As a poet he may not have been the most talented, but he did succeed in using embellished episodes from his own life—and sometimes even outright fabricated events—to create and sustain an image of the mythic West. Francis Bret Harte was born in Albany, New York, in 1839 and, like Miller, migrated to the West—in his case California—at the age of fifteen. In 1868, he became the first editor of *The Overland Monthly* and for it he wrote most of his best known frontier literature and local color stories. Harte, however, only had limited experiences in Gold Rush mining camps and, as result, his portraits of mining life were impressionistic at best. Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 173–75. Some pioneers also participated in these efforts.

36. The outline of the Midwinter Fair's Grand Court of Honor exists today at the today as the Music Concourse in Golden Gate Park. Until 1921, the Fine Arts Building served as San Francisco's first public art museum, the de Young Memorial Museum, in memory of the Midwinter Fair. Although the building was demolished in 1928, the two sphinxes at the entrance of the current de Young remain from the fair. See Taliesin Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair, San Francisco, and Interesting Facts Concerning California* (1st ed.), (San Francisco: W.B. Bancroft & Co, 1894), 71–75, quotation from 75.

37. The Orientalism that undergirded the Midwinter Fair's Orientalist fantasy originated in the context of European imperialism. Orientalism, a Western discourse, reaffirmed imperial dominance over colonized peoples—particularly of the Arab world—by using the selective appropriation of cultural artifacts to produce what came to be recognized as the singular authoritative representation of the Orient. Through this appropriation a reciprocal process occurred in which both “the Occident” and “the Orient” were mutually constructed. By defining itself in opposition to the cultural contestant it created, Europe not only strengthened its own identity but also increased its cultural hegemony over the East. At the Midwinter Fair, Sunset City's Orientalist fantasy looked to the image and imaginings of a powerful, imperial Europe to create its own im-

example, had “something of the old Mission character in its architecture, with Moorish detail” and featured a much noted turquoise blue dome and golden cupola. The Fine Arts Building was described as Egyptian and “covered with hieroglyphs” with “a suggestion of the temples of India in the pyramidal roof.” The buildings themselves were painted colors chosen to evoke a sunset over the Pacific—their creamy ivory facades were enlivened with pink, turquoise, gold, vermilion, and greenish gray accents.³⁸ According to the discourse articulated in the literature of promoters and boosters, Sunset City’s Orientalist Fantasy exemplified “the individuality of Californians” as well as their “dash and daring, “the most complete expression of a new civilization,” and “the strangely beautiful blending of the East and the West.”³⁹ But below the surface, it suggested other less sanguine meanings. The Orientalist fantasy represented San Francisco as “The Imperial City of the West” and declared the United States—by way of San Francisco, its far Western commercial, financial, and military outpost—a force actively reaching out toward and desiring dominance over Asia and Latin America. In this sense, while the 49 Mining Camp worked to inscribe the racial and gender hierarchies of cultural ordering in ways that resonated locally and, perhaps, nationally, the overall thrust of Sunset City’s Orientalist fantasy looked outward, to order places and people beyond the city as much as within the city. In fact, just four years later in 1898, the United States annexed Hawaii and troops en route to the Spanish-American War—which resulted in further overseas imperial acquisitions—were stationed at San Francisco’s Presidio precisely because of its strategic location as a base for American expansion into the Pacific.⁴⁰

perial persona through which it asserted social hierarchies and furthered cultural ordering. However, although Sunset City’s Orientalism was founded upon European precedent, as a result of local conditions, it was both more broadly and somewhat differently conceptualized. In addition to encompassing East Indian, Egyptian, and Moorish qualities, it also claimed the power to represent Chinese, Japanese, and the related Mission and Spanish Colonial styles. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

38. Descriptions of the buildings come from *The Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and Sunset Scenes: Being Views of California Midwinter Fair and Famous Scenes in the Golden State* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1894; and *The Official Guide*, 43, 55, 67. More detail about the architects and architecture of the Midwinter Fair can be found in Chandler and Nathan, *The Fantastic Fair* and Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

39. *The Official History*, 47; “The plans for all of these structures were prepared by San Francisco architects, local competition having been invited by the Directors, and those designs chosen wherein the style of architecture seemed most characteristic of California,” *Official Guide*, 25.

40. Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair* (1st ed.), 24. Evans also called San Francisco the “The Imperial City By the Western Sea,” 25. Evans, *All About the Midwinter Fair* (1st ed.), 25. In addition to the imperial stance noted above, the city had long been secure in its imperial dominance of its regional hinterlands. See Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Quote from James D. Phelan, *The Official History*, 75. As a result of the Spanish-American War, the United States acquired varying levels of dominion over Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. During the Spanish-American War, thousands of troops camped in the Presidio in tent cities awaiting deployment in the Philippines. Returning sick and wounded soldiers were treated there in the army’s first permanent general hospital. Moreover, a year before the Midwinter Fair, the Columbian Expo-

Conclusion: Ordered Visions

“The exposition will attract the attention of the civilized world. Then people elsewhere will not look at you as if you carried a pistol in your belt and a bowie-knife in your boot when you tell them you come from California”—Mrs. Clara S. Feliz.⁴¹

In the six-month duration of the Midwinter Fair, San Francisco presented an image of itself to what Mrs. Clara S. Feliz referred to as “the civilized world” that revealed a carefully ordered vision. In complex and contested ways, Sunset City articulated the city’s elites’ longing for San Francisco to be recognized as a civilized and thoroughly “American” metropolis. The version of history articulated in its 49 Mining Camp exhibit showcased an image of San Francisco’s wild, disorderly past that was appealing in part because it offered solutions for constructing identities essential for a well-ordered present. The 49 Mining Camp helped to justify capitalist expansion by linking wealth to an image of rugged, independent masculinity. It assuaged class anxieties—exacerbated by the Panic of 1893—by looking backward to a time before the dislocations of industrialization. It also presented a version of history that marginalized the diversity of the American West to assert and affirm the racial dominance of whites in both the past and the present. In these ways, the 49 Mining Camp promoted a vision of the West that fit within the framework of a story of national expansion and consolidation that already had widespread acceptance and appeal. Although one aspect of San Francisco’s disordered legacy had been shaped by the ways the city’s patterns of diversity diverged from others in the nation, the overall image presented at the Midwinter Fair was one of conformity to national patterns of gender, class, and race relations. It was through this kind of containment of the city’s heterogeneity combined with the promotion of a West still wild enough to be regionally distinct but also domesticated enough to be suitable for incorporation into the fabric of the nation that San Francisco elites could claim for their city the identity of an “American” place.

sition’s White City had offered a utopian vision of a well-ordered American city, emphasized the consolidation of the country’s landed empire, and displayed America in a dominant position in relation to the other nations of the world. If some of the first ideological steps toward realizing the nation’s nascent imperial ambitions were taken at Chicago, the second steps were taken at the San Francisco Fair.

41. These words were spoken to the crowd at a mass-meeting held to promote the Midwinter Fair and reported in the *Call*, 27 July 1893.