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Transformation or Revival: St. Louis Culture Before and After the Great Fire of 1849

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B.A., History, University of Missouri—St. Louis, 2006

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School at the University of Missouri—St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in History

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Abstract

It is commonly accepted that Antebellum St. Louis was reborn in the wake of fire and disease. A boom in cultural activities during the 1850s has allowed the Great Fire of 1849 to serve as a historical landmark separating an older fur trading town from a new cosmopolitan city. This study examines that transformation hypothesis from a broader frame of reference and concludes that the Great Fire merely coincided with the end of a temporary lull in cultural activities that had begun much earlier in the 1830s. By following the ebb and flow of museums, panoramic paintings, and public lectures across the 1830s, 40s, and 50s, I have identified a brief gap in the 1840s that can account for the apparent transformation of St. Louis after 1849 and help to clarify why and how it blossomed as a cosmopolitan city.

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Introduction: Mind the Gap

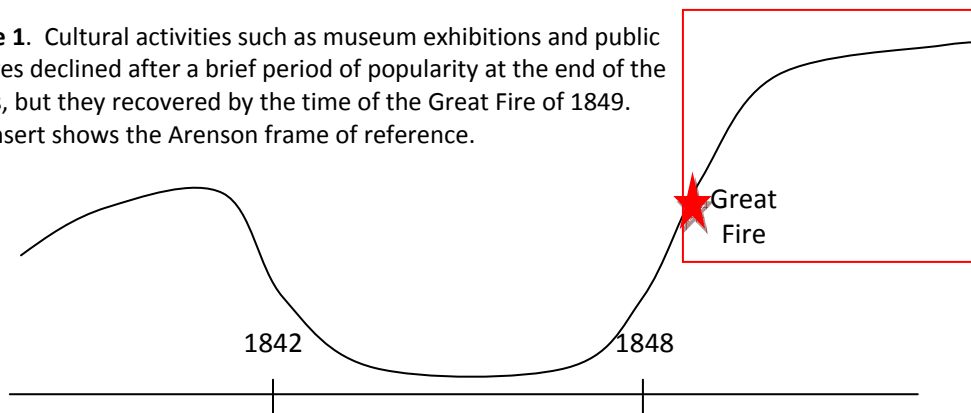
There is a persistent idea among historians of Antebellum St. Louis that the city underwent a drastic transformation in the wake of the tragic fire and cholera epidemic of 1849. After almost being destroyed, a new St. Louis was born with paved streets, sewers, and a huge population of immigrants. This observation about the city's character is true but incorrectly understood. The transformation hypothesis interprets a lack of activity before a great cultural flowering as a real and permanent shift from the way things were to the way they became. A more correct framing of Antebellum St. Louis should recognize the abundant cultural activities of the 1850s as a reinvestment in ideas first advanced twenty years before in the 1830s. St. Louis did not, like a phoenix, arise from its own ashes in 1849, but instead suffered from a series of tragedies while already shaking off a temporary period of conservative introvertedness that occupied the city and the United States for most of the 1840s.

The transformation hypothesis suggests that the Great Fire of 1849 gave birth to a new city that was fundamentally different from the old Gateway to the West. This is the argument historian Adam Arenson makes in *The Great Heart of the Republic*, a history of St. Louis culture from the Great Fire to the end of Reconstruction. He argues in his first chapter, "The Destruction of the Past," that the fur trading town of St. Louis burned away to make room for a nascent cosmopolitan city. Old structures and ways of life disappeared altogether. Arenson argues that the need to rebuild after the Great Fire, increased immigration as European immigrants fled the revolutions of 1848, and the larger context of a newly continental United States bounded by two great oceans pushed St. Louis into a new

era at the end of the 1840s, turning the city for a time into perhaps the most important city in America.¹ Arenson, however, ignores an intermediate step between the old Gateway to the West and the new city on a bluff. The cultural transformation identified by historians like Arenson did not destroy the past, but was in fact a restoration.

This is a study of two inflection points in St. Louis cultural history. The first happened around the year 1842 when a period of institution founding, public exhibitions, and popular lectures died out. The second occurred towards the end of 1848, when new museums were constructed, artists exhibited grand panoramic paintings, and audiences once more showed up to hear lectures in large public auditoriums. Between these two inflection points, cities across America saw their museums and institutions fail or close to the public in the mid 1840s. Scientists focused on their research, artists took mundane commissions where they could find them, and libraries persisted as private social clubs.

Figure 1. Cultural activities such as museum exhibitions and public lectures declined after a brief period of popularity at the end of the 1830s, but they recovered by the time of the Great Fire of 1849. The insert shows the Arenson frame of reference.



To understand St. Louis in its prime, as *The Great Heart of the Republic* during the 1850s, it is important to recognize the merging of interests that took place at the end of the 1840s. At the beginning of Arenson's frame of reference, the great public events and gatherings of the 1830s returned while the 1840s drive for research and self-improvement

¹ Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

among private citizens persisted. Public spectacle and private scholarship sublated together (as the later St. Louis Hegelians might write) into new stable institutions. This same merging can be recognized across diverse fields of historical scholarship.

Two fields rarely studied in parallel are museum histories and Westward Expansion. For much of the nineteenth century, the city of St. Louis defined itself by its location at the center of North America on the edge of the expanding United States. Museums, libraries, and intellectual societies formed in response to a shifting geographical perspective as the United States expanded its interests first to the Northwest, then the Southwest, and finally to San Francisco and the Pacific Ocean after 1848. This geographical component in the formation and function of St. Louis cultural institutions contrasts with established American museum histories which have focused on institutions in the Northeast or on isolated stories of individual museums or curators such as Charles Willson Peale or P. T. Barnum. Northeastern museum histories have not been previously considered in relation to St. Louis or the West for the middle decades of the nineteenth century, nor have St. Louis institutions been studied as a continuous narrative thread in the literature on Westward expansion. Taken together, the intellectual history of museums in the Northeast and the expansion of the United States by steam, war, and rail have obvious overlaps in St. Louis.

	St. Louis	Museums	Lyceum	Exploration	Botany
1820s & 1830s	To the Northwest	Egalitarianism	Amateur	Imperial Rivalry	Jeffersonian
1840s	To the Southwest	Professionalism	Professional	Manifest Destiny	Grayian
1850s & 1860s	To California	Compromise	Normalizing	Grand Surveys	Pacific Surveys

Table 1. Periodization schemes for St. Louis’ geographical orientation, the Museum Movement, the Lyceum Movement, and the exploration of the West as developed by this study, Joel J. Orosz (p. 7-8), Carl Bode (p. 250), and William H. Goetzmann (p. xiii). These are presented alongside Elizabeth Shaw’s botanical corollary on Goetzmann’s periodization.

This study examines St. Louis institutions in three geo-historical phases (see table 1). In the first, which lasted from the city's founding into the 1830s, St. Louis was a growing fur trading town that conducted its business by river—first by paddle and then by steam. The St. Louis economy connected the Great Lakes, the Ohio River, and the Gulf of Mexico to the Missouri River and the trade and exploration of the Northwest. Early St. Louisans interacted with Indians such as the Osage, Sauk, and Fox who were close, and the Mandans and Arikaras upstream along the Missouri. In the second phase, in an age of Indian removal and westward migration, St. Louis oriented itself to the Santa Fe Trail and Mexico in the 1840s. The Mexican-American War concluded as revolutions began in Europe, gold was discovered in California, and St. Louis suffered from cholera and the Great Fire of 1849. The conclusions of these events pushed St. Louis into a third phase in the 1850s with new institutions, streets, and residents. The city gained many more immigrants and occupied a central place in American society at the center of the recently expanded republic. The city's new focus on the West called for the creation of a Transcontinental Railroad to San Francisco and a political agenda of expansion, but the real interest was in the city itself and how it and its institutions would benefit from the changing of the times. Some residents would later lobby to make it the new national capital: “the Future Great City of the World.”

These three geographical contexts for St. Louis cultural institutions have parallels in the literature on nineteenth century American museums. Though there is little survey literature on collections, buildings, and activities as a whole, there are many studies of individual curators and showmen like Charles Willson Peale, P.T. Barnum, and Buffalo Bill Cody. Historian Joel J. Orosz crafted a rare exception in 1990 with *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740-1870*, which took into consideration all the institutions of

the Northeastern United States. The book confronted the often repeated assumption that early American museums were simple copies of European institutions and that no true museums existed until the 1870s. Orosz argues, on the contrary, that American museums in the early republic were unique endeavors that followed their own path and indeed gave birth to the post-1870 museums which placed equal emphasis on research and display.

Orosz proffered six periods in the development of American museums between 1740 and 1870, the last three of which are most relevant to St. Louis institutions (see Table 1). These periods are the Age of Egalitarianism from 1820 to 1840, the Age of Professionalism from 1840 to 1850, and the American Compromise from 1850 to 1870. During the first period, curators created spectacles, presented sideshow acts, and showcased exotic performers to draw in revenue.² The best example of this in St. Louis was the St. Louis Museum owned by Albert Koch, famous for its ventriloquists, alligators, wax figures, and mummies. The Western Museum of Cincinnati was another example. Both closed by the end of the 1830s as the Age of Professionalism began. During this second period, museums emphasized rigorous study, and were collections for reference by researchers in the production of knowledge. In this period of professionalism, Koch gave up his museum and began more serious work as a paleontologist, though still occasionally acting as a showman. Orosz's last period is the synthesis of the public display and research needs of a museum into an "American Compromise," of institutions that attempted to do everything at the same time. These museums maintained intellectual rigor in research while simultaneously engaging with the public. It is in this post-1850 period when St. Louis came into its own as a cosmopolitan city with a flowering of institutions, each conforming in their own way to public and private interests.

² Joel J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740-1870*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1990.

Another consideration in the development of St. Louis institutions is the advance of public education in the early nineteenth century and its adult equivalent, the Lyceum Movement. Beginning in the 1820s, debating and public speaking clubs appeared throughout New England as mechanics institutes, Franklin institutes, lyceums, and library companies. In their early years, they encouraged their members to deliver public lectures on practical and moral topics for the better diffusion of knowledge throughout society. This model of community education ended by the early 1840s as a professional lecture circuit developed, allowing well-known speakers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. to travel across the country from city to city, stopping in lyceums and museums alike. Lyceum historian Carl Bode, has described this period of professional speaking tours as lasting to the start of the Civil War, but changing in character by the time of the Reconstruction to become more or less the system of intermittent public lectures we have today (see Table 1).³

The museum and lyceum movements of the mid-nineteenth century have not been applied to St. Louis despite their national scope. Orosz considered no museum west of Cincinnati. Bode dismissed St. Louis as part of the southern states not participating in the lyceum movement despite taking note of St. Louis having a lyceum, a Franklin Society, and a Mechanic's Institute.⁴

When applying the purportedly national studies of Orosz or Bode to St. Louis and its three geographical contexts, the material and cultural place of the West as a shaping influence must also be considered. William H. Goetzmann structured his classic 1966 survey text, *Exploration and Empire*, around three periods of western exploration (see table 1). From

³ Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind*. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1956), 250.

⁴ Bode, *The American Lyceum*, 86.

1805 to 1845, Goetzmann saw a period of national rivalry and imperialism that fueled exploration. From 1845 to 1860, a period of settlement and manifest destiny pushed wagon trains and immigrants to the West. From 1860 to the end of the century, Goetzmann identified a period of “Great Surveys,” with government sponsored scientists and geological survey teams.⁵

In 1986, Elizabeth Shaw published a botanical corollary to Goetzman’s periodization considering the contributions of the St. Louis scientist George Engelmann. Shaw studied the influence of the botanical collecting network of Engelmann and the Harvard botanist Asa Gray, and she separated Goetzmann’s settlement period into a Grayinan period in the 1840s and a Pacific Railroad Survey period in the 1850s (see table 1).⁶ The Grayian period covers the brief years of intense collecting in the Southwest between Asa Gray’s appointment at Harvard in 1842 and the government funded Mexican Boundary Survey in 1848. During this time, Engelmann identified potential plant collectors in St. Louis to send to the Southwest, Gray identified individuals and institutions in the Northeast to purchase what could be collected, and John Torrey of the New York Lyceum of Natural History used his connections with the military to ensure that Engelmann’s collectors could join government expeditions.⁷ This collaborative network directed the movement of specimens from the West to the institutions of the East through St. Louis. This exploration necessarily required some St. Louisans to travel and others to focus harder on the research rather than attending meetings and supervising exhibits.

⁵ William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1978), xiii

⁶ Elizabeth Shaw “Changing Botany in North America: 1835-1860 The Role of George Engelmann” *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 73, 3 (1986), 509.

⁷ Shaw, “Changing Botany in North America,” 508-519.

Looking at these various periodization schemes on diverse topics, an outlining structure can be created for understanding the formation and function of cultural institutions in nineteenth century St. Louis and their role in the exploration of the American West. The 1840s, in particular, appear as a brief transitional period of research intensity accompanied by a lull in public involvement in science, art, and public speaking. The Great Fire of 1849 occurred at the end of this and added emphasis to the beginning of the third period of grand surveys and full lecture halls in the newly continental United States.

This study began with the question of what happened to the first museum in St. Louis. William Clark, well known for his role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition that bears his name, maintained a private museum of Indian artifacts in a building beside his home on the St. Louis riverfront from 1816 to the late 1830s. Most of Clark's collection dispersed to other cities and countries or moved to new institutions in St. Louis by the time of his death in 1838. Scientific objects like mineral samples and instruments passed to the Western Academy of Natural Sciences. The larger ethnographic portion of Clark's collection joined mummies, stuffed birds, and wax figures in Albert Koch's St. Louis Museum. Both of these collections, the academy and the museum, disappeared for the duration of the Grayian period of the 1840s. In the 1850s, a new St. Louis Museum and a new Academy of Science appeared. The second academy's museum burned in an accidental fire in 1869 and the St. Louis Museum's collection moved upriver where it was also destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871. If any objects from Clark's original museum remained in St. Louis through these two new institutions, those objects most likely did not survive to the end of Reconstruction. However, what, if any, relationship may have existed between the collections of the first St.

Louis Museum and the second or between the Western Academy and the Academy of Science?

Clark, or perhaps his son, maintained an informal catalog of the objects in his museum, which now rests among the Clark family papers at the Missouri History Museum. I decided in 2011 to determine the path taken by each of these objects to their ultimate destruction or current resting place by comparing museum visitor accounts, probate records, catalogs, annual reports, meeting minutes, and whatever other clues could be found. In pursuing these objects, I discovered again and again that there was a gap. The question of what happened to Clark's museum became a question of what happened to the 1840s. Why did institutions thrive in the 1830s, fail, and then need to be reborn in the 1850s?

By examining the related themes of the historical periods shown in Table 1 and the stories of the individual institutions and people holding Clark's objects, the gap in St. Louis cultural activities during the 1840s becomes more of an established fact. From this perspective, Arenson's assertion that the past was destroyed in 1849 at the end of this gap can be understood as a conclusion born of a constrained frame of reference. Past activities of the previous two decades merged in 1848 or 49 to create an impression of a radical departure to new heights of cultural activity. .

This study breaks the story of St. Louis' cultural decline and restoration into three chapters representing the three decades in consideration. Each chapter is in turn broken into three subchapters covering science, art, and public speaking, and the homes for those activities in museums, galleries, and libraries. In the first chapter museums are created, artists are commissioned, and libraries are founded. In the second chapter, each of these efforts is put aside as the young idealist Whig and immigrant founders of the 1830s age and settle into routines. Scientists like Albert Koch and George Engelmann closed their

museums to focus on their research. Artists who worked with Clark such as George Catlin and Chester Harding fell on hard times. The Saint Louis Lyceum, the last of the debating clubs and libraries founded in the 1830s alongside associations like the Western Academy, became a haven for patriotic Whigs to discuss moral, patriotic, and rhetorical issues among themselves.

In the third chapter, new immigrants and educators join the previous generation in building bigger and better versions of failed 1830s institutions. All of the public activities of the 1830s return to St. Louis stronger than before. Engelmann and Koch joined together in a new Academy of Science. A new phenomenon in panoramic landscape painting pioneered by John Banvard, the last curator of the first St. Louis Museum, brought many painters back into the public light. The new St. Louis Museum at Wyman Hall hosted the nascent Saint Louis Mercantile Library Association, which grew to take over the Lyceum, construct a new grand lecture hall, and become the center of St. Louis culture in the 1850s.

With these three decades in perspective, the Arenson frame of reference from 1849 to 1877 can be better understood. The period of great cultural achievement that Arenson claimed made St. Louis into *The Great Heart of the Republic* did not begin with St. Louis breaking altogether away from its past. The desire for public education and public conversations merely gained a second wind, and unlike before, this investment was sustained by deeper knowledge and experience gained through the emergence of professional intellectuals among the citizens of St. Louis.

Chapter 1: Founding

The Age of Egalitarianism, as Joel J. Orosz called the 1830s, was a time of institution founding and public engagement. Museums, libraries, and social clubs were founded throughout the country. In St. Louis, these cultural activities overlapped with the lingering priorities of an earlier time that Orosz called the Moderate Enlightenment, a period of museum keeping that advanced cultural nationalism, particularly the interests of the United States, through rational display. These nationalistic values fit the phase of exploration that Elisabeth Shaw called Jeffersonian and William H. Goetzmann dubbed a period of Imperial Rivalry. Museums maintained qualities that made them useful to the government of the expanding United States and to the pride of citizens newly granted the right to vote and participate in political decisions.

The first museum in St. Louis, William Clark's Indian Museum, was a byproduct of the Moderate Enlightenment, but by the 1830s the times changed. New immigrants and new institutions appeared belonging to what Orosz called the Age of Egalitarianism, a time of great public spectacles and exciting new organizations. When Clark's museum finally closed and its objects found new homes, a new generation of museum curators took over.

Museums to Diffuse Knowledge

The Moderate Enlightenment in American began in Philadelphia after the Revolutionary War. The American Philosophical Society (APS) finished construction on its new building in 1789. The United States government moved into the adjacent Independence Hall the next year, and the Philadelphia Museum of Charles Willson Peale moved into space rented from the APS. Peale acted as curator of his and the APS' natural

history collections beginning in 1794.⁸ The political and intellectual capital of the new United States consolidated its resources into a single complex of buildings. The Moderate Enlightenment stressed rational amusement, pleasurable instruction and the promotion of piety, but in Philadelphia in close proximity to the seat of government, museum collections also assumed a character of cultural nationalism.⁹

Museums in the Moderate Enlightenment collected items of importance to national origins. Thomas Jefferson, as president of the APS and vice-president of the United States in 1797, co-created with Peale a Committee on History within the APS aiming to “procure one or more entire skeletons of the Mammoth... obtain accurate plans, drawings and descriptions ... of ancient Fortifications, Tumuli, and other Indian works of art... enquire into the Customs, Manners, Languages and Character of the Indian nations, ancient and modern, and their migrations.”¹⁰ The goals of the committee underscored the interest in American Indians maintained by Jefferson and the elite establishment of Philadelphia who sought to distance the United States from its European past.

Jefferson had been planning a scientific expedition to the West to document Indian cultures as early as 1783 when he contacted George Rogers Clark asking him if he would like to lead it. Clark declined for lack of funds, and Jefferson tabled his plan for twenty years until congress approved the expense in 1803.¹¹ As president of the United States, Jefferson used his position to guarantee the launching of his pet venture to sponsor an expedition to ascend the Missouri River to its source and continue to the Pacific Ocean. He chose his

⁸ Whitfield Bell Jr., “The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society” *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Five Episodes in the Evolution of American Museums*, ed. by Whitfield Bell Jr. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1967), 7-9.

⁹ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 28-29.

¹⁰ Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: the tragic fate of the first Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 152-156.

¹¹ William H. Foley, *Wilderness Journey: The Life of William Clark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 12-13.

secretary Meriwether Lewis to lead his Corps of Discovery, and Lewis chose his former commanding officer, the younger brother of George Rogers Clark, to accompany him on that mission. William Clark met Lewis and Jefferson at the White House and joined the ranks of an intellectual society devoted to curiosity collecting on behalf of the nation.

Of the two co-captains leading the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Clark was more level-headed, practical, and wilderness savvy, while Lewis was moody, eloquent, and academically educated. In preparation for the journey, Jefferson sent Lewis to Philadelphia to be trained in scientific observation and specimen collecting by the members of the APS including the botanist Benjamin Smith Barton, the anatomist Dr. Caspar Wistar, and the physician Dr. Benjamin Rush. Clark spent the same period in Kentucky recruiting for the voyage.¹² Together, Lewis and Clark would carry trade goods on their journey from St. Louis to give as gifts to the many tribes they encountered. The gifts they received from Indians in return, in addition to the many plant and animal specimens collected en route, would eventually reside in the museums of Philadelphia, London, and Paris.

After spending a winter camped beside Mandan villages on the upper Missouri, they sent a few men back to St. Louis in April of 1805 with a shipment of these collected goods. In a letter composed to Jefferson, Lewis inventoried the contents of four boxes, a large trunk, and three cages and stated his intentions that:

These have been forwarded with a view of their being presented to the Philosophical society of Philadelphia in order that they may under their direction be examined or analyzed. After examining these specimens yourself, I would thank you to have a copy of their labels made out, and

¹² Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 55-58.

retained until my return. The other articles are intended particularly for yourself, to be retained, or disposed off as you may think proper.¹³

Among the animal, plant, and mineral contents was a Mandan pot which went to the APS, a Hidatsa buffalo robe and clothes, and a painted Mandan buffalo robe later displayed at Jefferson's Monticello estate and in Peale's museum. The shipment also contained living animals: four magpies, one prairie hen, and one prairie dog.¹⁴ Several items, including Indian moccasins, were sent to Clark's family along with a buffalo robe for the wife of Clark's slave York who accompanied the expedition.¹⁵

Upon viewing the shipment from Lewis, Jefferson wrote to Charles Willson Peale in October informing him that he was packing a few boxes to send to him, writing also that, "There are some articles which I shall keep for an Indian Hall I am forming at Monticello, eg. Horns, dressed skins, utensils &c."¹⁶ Jefferson as President of the United States turned the half-constructed White House into a "nexus of science" as he opened packages of seeds and specimens from contacts spread all over New England and Western Europe and repackaged and shipped others.¹⁷ When not in Washington, he spent time on his mountain at the Monticello estate cultivating his garden and curating his library and collection of curiosities. Among the plants that particularly excited him were those that might help the young United States to grow its agrarian economy such as the Arikara beans sent by Lewis and Clark that sustained them in their travels.¹⁸ These he planted at Monticello in test plots

¹³ Letter from Lewis to Jefferson, April 7 1805, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*, edited by Donald Jackson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 231.

¹⁴ Letter from Lewis to Jefferson, April 7 1805, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 231-242.

¹⁵ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 104-106.

¹⁶ Letter from Jefferson to Charles Willson Peale, October 6 1805, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 260-261.

¹⁷ Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 164.

¹⁸ Wulf, *Founding Gardeners*, 170.

for two years before forwarding them to the botanist Benjamin Smith Barton.¹⁹ In his home, in the foyer of Monticello, Jefferson displayed his Indian Hall, a shrine to American peoples and animals. The north wall contained items shipped to him by the Corps of Discovery and included maps, antlers and horns from various western animals, and a collection of Indian artifacts.²⁰

Jefferson and George Rogers Clark carried on correspondence about Indians and geology in the years following the American Revolution. They shared an interest in mammoths and mastodons.²¹ Jefferson not only did not believe in extinction, but had a suspicion that American mastodons existed somewhere to the west and that Lewis and Clark's expedition might find one alive.²² A visitor to Monticello in 1809 noted that Jefferson kept an elephant jawbone next to a mastodon's in his Indian Hall for comparison.²³ Peale similarly sought to show the larger size of New World animals to those championed by European naturalists.²⁴ In Philadelphia, he placed the full skeleton of a mastodon beside that of an Indian elephant imported by a member of the APS.²⁵

¹⁹ Jefferson to Benjamin Smith Barton in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 559.

²⁰ Joyce Henri Robinson, "An American Cabinet of Curiosities: Thomas Jefferson's 'Indian Hall at Monticello,'" *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, 1 (Spring, 1995), 48.

²¹ Mammoths and mastodons were not clearly differentiated in the intellectual discourse of Jefferson's day despite the great differences in their teeth. Mastodons have 'mammary shaped teeth' while mammoth teeth look a lot more like the ridged teeth of elephants. The terms mammoth, mastodon, and *incognitum* were used interchangeably. Better scholarship on Pleistocene megafauna emerged later in the 1830s.

²² Lee Alan Dugatkin, *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose: Natural History in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 86-87. One reason Jefferson may have believed there to be mastodons in the West may have been a story told to him by a delegation of Delaware Indians. When asked about the many mammoth and mastodon bones at Big Bone Lick, Kentucky, they spoke of a tribe of the beasts that had come to the land and angered the "Great Man above" who rained lightning down upon them and killed all but the bull who deflected the bolts with his great forehead and ran across the Great Lakes to the lands beyond, where perhaps he still existed. Wallace, 75-76.

²³ Robinson, "An American Cabinet of Curiosities," 50.

²⁴ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 52-53.

²⁵ Bell, "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society," 12.

Given the nature of the correspondence between Jefferson and George Rogers Clark in the 1780s, William Clark eventually found himself discussing fossils with Jefferson when he visited him at Monticello after returning from his westward expedition.²⁶ Clark spent time digging for the president at Big Bone Lick, Kentucky and forwarded him a number of specimens which Jefferson then forwarded to the APS and to the National Institute in Paris.²⁷ Jefferson sent a collection of specimens including Clarks mammoth and other natural history items from the expedition to France in July of 1808.²⁸

Clark was not to visit Jefferson again until the unfortunate death of Meriwether Lewis, who died en route to Washington in 1810. Without Lewis, Clark became responsible for the legacy of the expedition. Lewis was an intellectual, close to Jefferson, and trained by the doctors and philosophers of Philadelphia to collect specimens for their museums and associations. Clark was a practical soldier who lacked confidence in his own spelling ability. When he became Lewis' intellectual heir, it was his place to oversee the publication of the expedition's journals.

Clark stopped to see Jefferson at Monticello on his way to Philadelphia to find a publisher. In Philadelphia, he sat for a portrait by Charles Willson Peale. Clark would have seen the items collected on his journey to the Pacific set out as museum objects in Jefferson's Indian Hall as well as those he had excavated for the President more recently.²⁹ In Peale's museum, he would have seen more specimens of the expedition placed among natural history curiosities and objects of fine art. In the Philadelphia Museum, as he sat for his portrait, Clark may have also seen a wax figure of Lewis dressed in Indian clothes and an

²⁶ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 157.

²⁷ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 64-165.

²⁸ Letter from Jefferson to Bernard Lecépède, July 14 1808, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 442-443.

²⁹ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 183.

1807 portrait of Lewis like the one that Clark sat for, reminders of Clark's new status and obligations as Philadelphia's man in the West.³⁰

Clark arranged for Nicholas Biddle to write the expedition's journals and Benjamin Smith Barton to compile the scientific data.³¹ Eventually Biddle published, and Clark donated the original documents to the APS.³² The 1814 publication of the journals of Lewis and Clark during the confusion of the War of 1812 earned no money for Clark, but it did gain him fame in Europe and New England. His new-found scientific credibility secured him membership in the American Antiquarian Society.³³ That museum and library in Worcester, Massachusetts, like Charles Willson Peale's museum, had established a regional receiver system with various collectors throughout the country sending them curiosities as they came upon them.³⁴ The addition of William Clark, as Indian Agent in St. Louis, to their ranks potentially allowed them much greater access to the artifacts of the tribes west of the Mississippi with whom he regularly met. Through agents like Clark, museums across America and Europe filled with Indian curiosities in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Peale's collection swelled with similar donations to over 800 items of Indian manufacture by 1819.³⁵

Established in his relations and occupation, William Clark built a museum in St. Louis modeled upon the collections of Jefferson and Peale. At the Gateway to the West, his Indian Museum served as an orientation space for travelers seeking information and

³⁰ Letter from Charles Wilson Peale to John Hawkins, May 5 1807, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 410-411.

³¹ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 185.

³² Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 215.

³³ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 202.

³⁴ Clifford K. Shipton, "The Museum of the American Antiquarian Society" *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Five Episodes in the Evolution of American Museums* ed. Whitfield Bell Jr. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 37.

³⁵ John C. Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis 1816-1838," in *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Five Episodes in the Evolution of American Museums*, ed. Whitfield Bell Jr. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 70-71.

passports. In the museum they found not only some of the most accurate maps of the continent, paintings of various Indian leaders with examples of their tribal artifacts, but also the knowledgeable governor himself full of the latest news from the West. Clark's museum continued in the mode of the Moderate Enlightenment of 1790s Philadelphia into the 1820s and 30s. While the rest of the country entered the Age of Egalitarianism, Clark maintained a modest and semi-private museum of rationally arranged objects to further the interests of the United States.

Clark built the museum on Main Street at the center of the St. Louis riverfront. On April 2, 1816, Clark purchased a 120' x 150' city block from Auguste Chouteau, the venerable founder of St. Louis, for \$4,500.³⁶ On this lot, he built a two-story brick home for his family with an entrance from the west and a 100' x 30' building for his Indian council chamber with an entrance on the south for those Indian tribes west of the Mississippi seeking to do business with the United States.³⁷ Indians would bring gifts to their meetings with Clark and he would place them on the walls along with objects from his travels. Most of the objects recorded in his museum catalog were Indian pipestems or similar native gifts, but there were also gifts from friends like a Spanish bridle from Taos given by a Captain Wilson Megungle and a boar skin presented by Alexander McNair. Joining objects from Indians and friends were natural history specimens including petrified cedar, sea shells, and the bones of mastodons.³⁸

Construction continued on the complex of buildings until 1818, but the council chamber must have been constructed quickly because it was filled in less than a year with

³⁶ Landon Y. Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 237.

³⁷ Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 53.

³⁸ William and Meriwether Lewis Clark, "Catalogue of Indian Curiosities" Clark Family Collection, Missouri History Museum Archives, St. Louis.

Indian artifacts when William Campbell Preston of Virginia visited Clark at the end of 1816. Preston noted that the walls were “adorned with a profuse and almost gorgeous display of ornamented and painted buffalo robes, numerous strings of wampum, every variety of work of porcupine quills, skins, horns, claws, and bird skins, numerous and large Calumets, arms of all sorts, saddles, bridles, spears, powder horns, plumes, red blankets and flags.”³⁹ Preston also witnessed Clark negotiate a treaty with a delegation of Rock River Sauk and Fox in the chamber. He noted that Clark sat in his museum at one end of a large table “with a sword laying before him, and a large pipe in his hand. He wore the military hat and the regimentals of the army.”⁴⁰

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft visited the museum in July of 1818 and noticed Indian garments and weapons “arranged with great taste and effect,” but also a great variety of “skins of remarkable animals, minerals, fossil-bones, and other rare and interesting specimens.” Returning three years later, Schoolcraft noted that it had the “character of a museum, or cabinet of natural history.”⁴¹

As Missouri gained statehood, the *St. Louis Directory of 1821* reported that “The Council Chamber of Gov. William Clark, where he gives audiences to the Chiefs of the various tribes of Indians who visit St. Louis, contains probably the most complete Museum of Indian curiosities to be met with anywhere in the United States.”⁴² As governor, Clark had been responsible for the various tribes in his territory, but with statehood, Clark became a federal agent with a larger jurisdiction. Made Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, Clark gained the dual responsibility of maintaining relations with all western tribes and

³⁹ Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West*, 237.

⁴⁰ Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West*, 237-238.

⁴¹ McDermott, “Museums in Early Saint Louis,” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 4, 3 (January, 1948), 130.

⁴² Ewers, “William Clark’s Indian Museum in St. Louis,” 56.

issuing passports for traders and settlers heading west.⁴³ This transformed Clark's museum into a diplomatic space for all Indians wishing to negotiate with the United States, and therefore ensured the depositing of a great number of artifacts. The museum also grew as a space for respectable travelers heading west to learn of the peoples they might find there and to gain the advice of Clark himself.

The Corps of Discovery relied on good maps and advice in St. Louis before setting out on their expedition, and twenty years later, Clark's Indian Museum served the same function. Although never skilled in astronomy or botany like Lewis, Clark was the better cartographer and had drawn a detailed map of the West in 1810 for publication with the journals. It was described by one viewer as "manifest destiny visualized."⁴⁴ Clark kept a similar "master map of the West" prominently displayed on the wall of his museum that visitors would study prior to their departure.⁴⁵

Clark received a visit from Prince Herzog Paul Wilhelm von Württemberg in 1823. Prince Paul described the collection as complete and deserving to be painted and created a similar collection upon his return to Europe. More than just orienting the prince on his travels, Clark also found him an assistant. Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, born on the Lewis and Clark expedition to the French trader Toussaint Charbonneau and the Shoshone Indian Sacagawea, was baptized in St. Louis with Auguste Chouteau as his godfather, educated with Clark's funding, and with his father's permission sent to Germany for six years to dwell in the Württemberg household. Clark employed Toussaint as an Indian agent and acted as his

⁴³ Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 55.

⁴⁴ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 188.

⁴⁵ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 232.

benefactor.⁴⁶ Perhaps the Minitara (Hidatsa) saddle and scrapper listed in the museum catalog as a gift from a Mr. Charboneau were given in return for Clark's generosity.⁴⁷

The Marquis de Lafayette visited the museum in 1825. His secretary, Levasseur, observed that "Among the articles commonly worn by Indian hunters, collars made of claws of prodigious size, particularly struck our attention." There was but one grizzly bear claw in the natural history cabinet in London, and the bear furs and handicrafts made from claws in Clark's museum made an impression.⁴⁸ Remembering Lafayette's interest in the claws, Clark later arranged for a bear cub to be sent to him in Paris. Lafayette kept the animal until it grew aggressive and then donated it to the zoo at the Jardin de Plantes.⁴⁹ Among other live animal shipments from the west, Clark also sent bison and beavers to Europe and an elk to Washington.⁵⁰ In doing so, he followed the example of Jefferson and Peale who had also shipped American specimens abroad to the wonder of Europeans.

There has been some confusion about when Clark's Indian Museum closed. Clark moved his council chamber to a new building in 1826 and rented out all his vacant rooms for income. This was in response to a fire which could have damaged part of the collection.⁵¹ Washington Irving visited Clark outside of the city in 1832 at the Marias Castor land purchased from Pierre Chouteau in 1808. Clark had moved there to avoid the cholera epidemic in the city and to save Indian visitors from infection. This land became known as Council Grove and took on many of the functions of Clark's downtown council chamber.⁵²

⁴⁶ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 188-189.

⁴⁷ William and Meriwether Lewis Clark, "Catalogue of Indian Curiosities" Clark Family Collection, Missouri History Museum Archives, St. Louis.

⁴⁸ McDermott, "Museums in Early Saint Louis," 130-131.

⁴⁹ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 233.

⁵⁰ Jay H. Buckley, *William Clark: Indian Diplomat*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 214.

⁵¹ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 243.

⁵² Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 174, 257-8.

Irving's friend Charles Fenno Hoffman observed that the walls of the council chamber were "completely covered with Indians arms and dresses, and the mantelpiece loaded with various objects of curiosity connected with the aborigines."⁵³ The writer Edmund Flagg, visiting the home at Council Grove, noted "Paintings, busts, medallions, Indian curiosities, &c., &c., tastefully arranged around the walls and shelves of an elegant library."⁵⁴ It is not clear if or when the entire museum moved to Council Grove, but the downtown council chamber emptied and was eventually rented out to the famous frontier doctor William Beaumont just months before Clark's death in 1838.⁵⁵

Despite the passage of time, Clark's museum persisted in the mold of Jefferson and Peale into the 1830s as new museums appeared in St. Louis under the leadership of German immigrants. These new museums enthusiastically participated in the recent Age of Egalitarianism, which opened collections to the public for entertainment and engaged in a more community driven form of natural history collecting than the earlier age of the Moderate Enlightenment.

In February of 1833, a young German doctor named George Engelmann settled on an isolated farm in Belleville, Illinois. His medical training at the Universities of Heidelberg, Berlin, and Würzburg prepared him as a botanist as well as a medical doctor. He was a member of the Botanical Society of Regensburg and the Senkenberg Society of Natural Science in Frankfurt.⁵⁶ Prior to moving to the United States, Engelmann had been living in Paris where he treated cholera patients with his young friends Alexander Braun and Louis

⁵³ McDermott, "Museums in Early Saint Louis," 132-133.

⁵⁴ Edmund Flagg, *Flagg's The Far West, 1836-1837* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books, 1838), 259.

⁵⁵ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 263.

⁵⁶ William G. Bek, "George Engelmann, Man of Science." *Missouri Historical Review* 13, 2 (January 1929), 195.

Agassiz whose fame still lay ahead of them. Engelmann moved to Belleville to look after a farm his family had purchased, but stopped first in Philadelphia where he toured the cabinet of the Academy of Natural Sciences and saw the skull collection of Dr. Samuel G. Morton. To the men in Philadelphia, Engelmann promised to send specimens when he could. He arrived at his family farm near St. Louis as a trained scientist and as a man accustomed to involvement with scientific organizations.⁵⁷

Just two months later, on April third, in Engelmann's hometown of Frankfurt, his cousin Theodore Engelmann joined with other students in an attempt to overthrow the German confederation. When the citizens failed to rise and join the students, the revolution failed and Theodore with many other students soon fled to the United States. Some joined the German settlement in Belleville. One of these students, Fredrich Adolph Wislizenus took a longer route—receiving his medical degree in Zurich and working through hospitals in Paris and New York. Wislizenus moved to St. Louis and established a medical practice with George Engelmann as his partner.⁵⁸

Other German intellectuals followed, all keen on rebuilding a civil society in the West. Karl Geyer, a horticulturalist from the Dresden Botanical Garden, arrived in 1834.⁵⁹ Christian Bimpage and J. B. von Festenbut started a German newspaper in 1835, the *Anzeiger des Westens*, but it was soon taken over by Engelmann's friend Wilhelm Weber. In keeping with their tendency toward organization, Weber, Frederich Muench, Gustav Koerner and Theodore Hilgard created a short-run German journal called *Das Westland*—written in St.

⁵⁷ Michael Long, "Enterprise and Exchange: The Growth of Research in Henry Shaw's St. Louis." *St. Louis in the Century of Henry Shaw: A View beyond the Garden Wall*, ed. by Eric Sandweiss. (St. Louis: University of Missouri Press, 2003) 141.

⁵⁸ F. A. Wislizenus Esq. *A Journey to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1839* (New York, Cosimo: 2005), 7-8.

⁵⁹ Walter B. Hendrickson, "The Western Academy of Natural Sciences of St. Louis" *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 16, 2 (January, 1960), 124.

Louis and published in Heidelberg by Joseph Engelmann. In its pages, George Engelmann detailed his experiences taking meteorological readings in St. Louis and traveling in the Ozarks looking for mineral deposits.⁶⁰

On January 27, 1836, it was announced in the *Missouri Republican* that a local German by the name of Albert C. Koch was opening a museum at Second and Market. For 25 cents, visitors to the St. Louis Museum would be able to see an Egyptian mummy from Thebes in its sarcophagus beside an Indian mummy from a cave in Kentucky, wax figures, cosmoranic paintings, and natural history specimens.⁶¹ The museum had between “5 and 600 birds and animals from Europe, Africa, Asia, and America.”⁶² “In fact, the whole illustration of natural history, consisting of Beasts, birds and creeping things, is in very good keeping, and evident of great talent and industry.”⁶³

It is unclear where Koch and his collection came from. His father was known to have maintained a cabinet of natural history in Roitzsch, the area of Saxony where Koch was born. Koch may have already owned the collection when he arrived in St. Louis with his wife and two daughters,⁶⁴ or the museum may have already existed locally in some form. There were two popular museums in St. Louis prior to Koch’s 1836 announcement. The first St. Louis Museum operated briefly in 1829 with wax figures, statues, a grand panorama with “views of Cities, Palace, Castles, Churches, Bridges, Naval and Land Battles, &c. &c. &c.,” and other items of popular appeal such as the “Grand Panharmonicon” which

⁶⁰ Bek, “George Engelmann,” 172-173.

⁶¹ John Francis McDermott, “Forward” *Journey through a Part of the United States of North America in the Years 1844-1846*. by Albert C. Koch (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972) xi.

⁶² John Francis McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 4, 4 (July 1949), 234.

⁶³ Ernst A Stadler, “Introduction” *Journey through a Part of the United States of North America in the Years 1844-1846*. by Albert C. Koch (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972) xix.

⁶⁴ Stadler, “Introduction,” xix.

consisted of thirteen wax figures that could play instruments. A second popular museum opened in St. Louis in 1830 under the ownership of N. St. Leger d'Happart and contained a "permanent cabinet of petrifications, fossils, madrepores, preserved insects, reptiles, birds and quadrupeds, Indian dresses, family utensils, and war instruments, ancient foreign coins, medals, etc.," but d'Happart's museum closed after a short time.⁶⁵ Both of these early collections overlap with the similar holdings of Koch's St. Louis Museum of 1836, but no direct evidence remains to demonstrate that the three museums were related in any way.

A year after Koch opened his museum, on January 13, 1837, the *Missouri Republican* reported that any mineral found in Missouri or a nearby state would be analyzed for free by the St. Louis Association of Natural Science provided that the mineral sample could be retained for inclusion in the association's cabinet. These same men had found a vein of anthracite coal in Missouri and hoped it would lead to a burgeoning iron and steel industry. They wrote to the United States Congress asking for funds to secure a building and botanical garden along with instruments and books for the formation of a scientific library. They asked for similar funds from the Missouri Legislature and incorporated as the Western Academy of Natural Sciences at St. Louis. They received no government funding, but established a natural history collection and herbarium of plant specimens, and began to compile meteorological tables while sending out public announcements inviting new members. Scientific papers would be read at meetings and donations would be accepted.⁶⁶

Members of the western academy were designated active, associate or corresponding. Active were those "familiar with one or more branches of Natural Science" and needed at least two recommendations from other members. Associate members did not have to be scientists, and corresponding members were nonresidents. Honorary memberships were

⁶⁵ McDermott, "Museums in Early St. Louis," 134-136.

⁶⁶ Hendrickson, "Western Academy," 116-118.

bestowed on those St. Louians of “sufficient scientific or literary attainment.” Active members were assigned to departments of zoology, botany, mineralogy and chemistry, natural philosophy, and meteorology. Each department had a chair in charge of collecting specimens for the cabinet, and all donated items went to the appropriate chair for analysis by that department.⁶⁷

The Western Academy’s collection reflected its membership. The animals largely belonged to a local dentist and anatomy demonstrator at Saint Louis University (SLU) named Benjamin Boyer Brown.⁶⁸ The minerals belonged to founding Western Academy president, SLU chemistry teacher, and curator of the school’s medical cabinet, Henry King. The herbarium belonged to George Engelmann. By necessity, lacking a building, the collections of the academy were stored in the separate homes of its members⁶⁹ until the establishment of the Hall of the Western Academy at the northeast corner of fourth and chestnut.⁷⁰ Ed Charles, John O’Fallon, and William Drummond Stewart donated fossils to the collection and Dr. A. Reavy of Illinois donated a large collection of birds.⁷¹

The Western Academy had ambitious plans to be equal to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and to represent the interests and knowledge of the entire American West. It was therefore fortuitous for the explorer Joseph Nicollet that he arrived in St. Louis in 1837 to prepare for his survey of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. He met members of the newly formed Western Academy eager to assist him just as visitors a decade before found helpful maps and advice in William Clark’s Museum. Engelmann helped Nicollet to

⁶⁷ Hendrickson, “Western Academy,” 118-119.

⁶⁸ McDermott “Dr. Brown’s St. Louis,” *Missouri Historical Review* 54, 3 (April 1960), 245.

⁶⁹ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 145.

⁷⁰ Hendrickson, “Western Academy,” 126.

⁷¹ Hendrickson, “Western Academy,” 127.

calibrate his barometer and the academy outfitted him for his journey.⁷² One member, Karl Geyer, even signed up to accompany Nicollet as a plant collector.⁷³

The year 1837 ended with three museums in St. Louis in addition to various medical collections. The Hall of the Western Academy was on Fourth Street, the St. Louis Museum was a block south and two blocks east, and William Clark's Museum sat just a little further down on the riverfront or perhaps at the more distant Council Grove. On December 28, the St. Louis *Commercial Bulletin* reported that Albert Koch had "procured many interesting Indian curiosities from the collection of Gen. Clark, and has added them to his valuable establishment."⁷⁴ Koch would soon write that he received the curiosities of General Clark, "through the liberality and kindness of that gentleman."⁷⁵ This was not the entirety of Clark's Museum however, for on February 10, 1838, Meriwether Lewis Clark donated "the scientific portion of his father's well known and valuable collection" to the Western Academy of Natural Sciences.⁷⁶ By May, the building that housed Clark's council chamber was rented out to Dr. William Beaumont, pioneering medical researcher and officer of the recently formed Medical Society.⁷⁷ William Clark died that autumn, and the St. Louis Museum and the Hall of the Western Academy remained with his collections. As the younger generation assumed control, the Moderate Enlightenment in St. Louis ended and the Age of Egalitarianism took hold.

In early 1838, with Clark's Museum mixed in with these two other collections, the paths of individual objects begin to blur with similar items already contained in those museums. On April 20, 1840, Koch's Museum was robbed. The *Daily Pennant* reported that

⁷² Hendrickson, "Western Academy," 128.

⁷³ Long, "Enterprise and Exchange," 146.

⁷⁴ McDermott, "William Clark's Museum Once More," 131.

⁷⁵ McDermott, "William Clark's Museum Once More," 131.

⁷⁶ McDermott, "Early Museums in St. Louis," 133.

⁷⁷ Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 66.

a thief “carried off several valuable Indian curiosities and dresses from the museum.”⁷⁸ In May, the Western Academy sent six boxes of natural history specimens to the Senckenberg Institut in Frankfurt claiming themselves to be an offshoot of that institution and in need of financial assistance. These included the complete skeleton of a young bison, a black bear skull, over a thousand plants, six hundred insects, forty-three fish, and a wide selection of small mammals and reptiles.⁷⁹

That same May, Koch attracted great attention to his museum through the addition of a live anaconda, a grizzly bear, and five alligators—all advertised as mortal enemies soon to fight. One witness who visited the museum in July noted that all five alligators had died, one leaping valiantly from the third-story window to crash upon the cobblestones below in an attempt to find its freedom. A visitor named Frederick Marryat noted that there was another mounted in the museum “as a memorial... and to make him look more poetical, he has a stuffed negro in his mouth.” This visitor mistakenly assumed the displayed alligator to be one of the five that were alive in the museum in May, but the *Missouri Saturday News* had reported months earlier on January 20 of the “bran new alligator, with a young agonized negro in his jaws.”⁸⁰ This display came less than a month after Koch received part of Clark’s Museum, which may have included the eight-foot-long alligator seen among Clark’s things by the visiting Duke Bernard of Weimar-Eisenach in 1826.⁸¹

The St. Louis Museum contained several unusual monsters in addition to large specimens of wolves, birds, and twenty-eight-pound oyster shells. Much like the two-headed calf from Clark’s Museum catalog, there was “a lamb with two heads and six legs, a calf with

⁷⁸ McDermott, “William Clark’s Museum Once More,” 131.

⁷⁹ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 146-7.

⁸⁰ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 235-236.

⁸¹ Ewers, “William Clark’s Indian Museum in St. Louis,” 58.

a head like a large bull dog, teeth like an ox and but two legs.”⁸² In September of 1838, Koch exhibited the body of a “prock” which had the body of a short-legged zebra and a head resembling that of a rhinoceros. It was placed on a large rock surrounded by flowers.⁸³ The next month, Koch left St. Louis to disinter the remains of an animal the size of an elephant with large claws on its feet.⁸⁴ This may have been the creature Thomas Jefferson had dubbed the *Megalonyx* or great claw, which later came to be known as the giant ground sloth. The fossils took the St. Louis Museum in a new direction as Koch increasingly went away to dig for yet more fossil remains of Pleistocene megafauna to put on display.

Koch found the creature at the bottom of the Bourbeuse River. Among burnt bones and ashes, Koch had discovered arrowheads, a spearhead, and stone axes which he had removed in front of many witnesses.⁸⁵ In another instance, he had discovered a stone arrowhead under the thigh bone of one of his finds and argued that if the animals were not killed by humans they at least lived at the same time as them.⁸⁶ That this controversial claim, which went against established ideas of the time as developed by Cuvier and Agassiz, should originate from a museum of rhino-headed zebras and wax figures of presidents may have kept Koch from being immediately taken seriously. In May, while at a dig in Jefferson County, Koch discovered the fossilized skeleton of a creature “six times as large as that of the elephant of modern days.” Acknowledging Koch’s discoveries, the editor of the *Daily*

⁸² McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 233.

⁸³ Stadler, “Introduction,” xxi.

⁸⁴ McDermott “Forward,” xi ; McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 240.

⁸⁵ Albert C. Koch, “Mastodon Remains, in the State of Missouri, together with Evidences of the existence of Man contemporaneously with the Mastodon” *Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis* 1, (1857), 62-63.

⁸⁶ Koch, “Mastodon Remains,” 63.

Bulletin wrote that he was “surprised that it has as yet attracted so little notice from scientific and learned men.”⁸⁷

That spring in 1839, while Koch was developing his reputation as a scientist, the St. Louis Museum hosted performances befitting the Age of Egalitarianism. There was the Turkish mystic “Miss Zelina-Kha-Nourhina” and her father “the Professor of Hindoo Deceology.” Together they presented an “amusing and mysterious science... of pretended Miracles of the ancient Pagans, Hindoo Brahmins, Persian and Chaldean Magi, Grecian sybils, Egyptian sorcerers, enchanters and necromancers.” This was followed by a Master Haskell, a “Wizzard and Magician” who presented “Thaumatugics; Mysterious Deceptions; Magical Illusions; Instantaneous Changes; Sudden and extraordinary Metamorphosis.” After that came Mr. Seeman the ventriloquist and his automatons and a Mr. L. Reed with “powers of GASTRILOQUISM” or the ability to change his voice to imitate musical instruments, animals, and people.⁸⁸ At the time, Koch the scientist could not be separated from Koch the entertainer, and no evidence suggests that he had any relations with the nearby Western Academy.

In early 1840, the academy had acquired five or six acres at Eighth and Chouteau for the creation of a botanical garden. It lasted for about a year overlapping perhaps to its detriment with George Engelmann’s temporary absence.⁸⁹ Suitably established in his medical practice, Engelmann returned to Europe to marry Dorothea Horstmann and bring her back to St. Louis. He stopped on his way to deliver a collection of skulls to Samuel G. Morton in Philadelphia.⁹⁰ Engelmann continued to Frankfurt, Berlin, Göttingen, Prague,

⁸⁷ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 240.

⁸⁸ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 236-239.

⁸⁹ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 147.

⁹⁰ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 147.

Warsaw, Vienna, and back with his wife to New York where he first met the American botanists Asa Gray and John Torrey, who he would work with extensively in the future.⁹¹

Koch was also away from St. Louis much of 1840, but in April he exhibited the creature he had found the year before in Jefferson County. Claiming it to be a new species with sideways curving tusks and a much bigger skeleton than a mastodon, he dubbed it the *Missourium*.⁹² The exhibit opened with the large fragmentary skeleton placed beside a more complete mastodon, but Koch was away again digging along the Osage River. He returned to St. Louis in July aboard the steamer Little Red with twenty more boxes of bones.⁹³ Koch claimed that he had found the remains of a giant human complete with arrowheads three times larger than normal. By the size and density of the bones, this human would have been twelve or fifteen feet in height. These went on display that August—mastodon, *Missourium*, and human together. They could be viewed for fifty cents.⁹⁴

Koch left St. Louis at the end of August of 1840 for another dig along the Osage River, but he was back by November announcing he finally had all the pieces required to complete his *Missourium* skeleton. On Monday the 16th, the sixteen-foot tall, thirty-four-foot-long skeleton would be on display before being packed up for a European tour. A band was hired for the event and placed in “the most commodious place,” in the rib cage of the beast.⁹⁵ It resonated with the very different display of skeletons erected by Peale in Philadelphia a generation earlier to demonstrate the grandeur of American fauna.

⁹¹ Shaw, “Changing Botany in North America,” 514.

⁹² McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 240-243.

⁹³ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 243.

⁹⁴ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 245-246.

⁹⁵ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 248.

Portraits and Panoramas in the Age of Egalitarianism

A German nobleman, Duke Bernard of Weimar-Eisenach, visited William Clark's Indian Museum in 1826 and was the first to take note of portraits on the walls of the "various chiefs who have been at St. Louis, to conclude treaties." Duke Bernard recorded an extensive inventory of "several weapons of different tribes, wooden tomahawks, or battle-axes... bows of elks-horn and of wood, spears, quivers with arrows, a spear head of an Indian of the Columbia river, hewed out of lint, a water-proof basket of the same people, in which cooking can be performed, several kinds of tobacco pipes, especially the calumet, or great pipe of peace." Duke Bernard also observed various "medals which the Indian chiefs have received at different periods from the Spanish, English and American governments" as well as "an alligator, eight feet long; a pelican" and "two canoes, the one of animal-hide, the other of tree-bark."⁹⁶

Clark was not a portraitist like Peale or a man of refined taste like Jefferson who kept eleven classical paintings in his Indian Hall,⁹⁷ but Clark supported artists around him. When the painter Chester Harding arrived in St. Louis in 1820, Clark found him a room for his studio and agreed to be his first sitter. When a local engraver made lithographic copies of one of Harding's paintings, Clark showed his favor again by purchasing three copies.⁹⁸

The paintings of Indian chiefs noted by Duke Bernard, whether by Harding or other artists, reflected a large documentation and publication project being conducted by U.S. Indian Agents from the 1820s into the 1850s by figures such as Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and

⁹⁶ McDermott, "Museums in Early Saint Louis," 131-132.

⁹⁷ Robinson, "An American Cabinet of Curiosities," 54.

⁹⁸ Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 217.

Clark's supervisor Thomas L. McKenny, who Clark corresponded with about paintings in 1826.⁹⁹

Clark received another painter and documenter of Indians in 1830. George Catlin had been a portraitist without training in Philadelphia, but found guidance from Thomas Sully and Rembrandt Peale. He became determined to go west and paint Indians after seeing a delegation of them in Philadelphia on their way to Washington. Catlin secured a letter of introduction to Clark and arrived to paint the governor's portrait in 1830.¹⁰⁰ Clark showed Catlin the museum and took him that summer to Prairie du Chien to witness a gathering of Indians. Catlin painted portraits of Indians from eight different tribes at Fort Leavenworth later in the year and delegations of Menominee and Seneca in 1831.¹⁰¹ Catlin was also able to paint a delegation of Nez Perce that visited Clark.¹⁰² The next year, he took the steamship *Yellowstone* up the Missouri River. It was the second voyage for the first steamship ever to travel the Missouri. Catlin visited and painted forty-eight tribes including the Mandans who were wiped out by smallpox just three years after his visit.¹⁰³ Catlin also happened to be in St. Louis in the early months of 1833 when the Sauk leader Blackhawk was imprisoned at Jefferson Barracks just south of the city.

Clark's museum was an extension of his work as a government agent, and as his office moved for his different responsibilities, so too in a sense did the museum. As prisoners, Blackhawk and his men belonged to the United States and to Clark who acted as their trustee. Of all the exhibits Clark showed to his guests, none were more documented

⁹⁹ John Francis McDermott, "William Clark's Museum Once More" *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 16, 2 (January, 1960), 132.

¹⁰⁰ Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 185-186.

¹⁰¹ Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 22.

¹⁰² Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 253.

¹⁰³ Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 186-187.

than the Sauk Indians in chains outside of their cells at Jefferson Barracks. Clark led Catlin there as well as the writer Washington Irving, the British traveler Charles La Trobe and the German Count Albert Pourtalès.¹⁰⁴ Catlin painted Blackhawk and five other Sauk prisoners there with balls and chains around their ankles.¹⁰⁵

The German Prince Maximilian and his landscape painter Karl Bodmer arrived in St. Louis in 1833 as the more moderate Sauk chief Keokuk met with Clark to plead for Blackhawk's release. Clark invited the prince and his painter to the meeting where they observed the "highly interesting collection of arms and utensils" in his council chamber. For half an hour Clark talked with the Indians through an interpreter before ending the meeting with introductions between his European and native guests.¹⁰⁶ Maximilian and Bodmer then accompanied the Sauk delegation to Jefferson Barracks to observe the Sauk reunion with their vanquished chief before Blackhawk's removal to the East.¹⁰⁷

George Catlin initially set out for the West and for Clark's museum in St. Louis with Romantic ambitions to document the people and cultures he encountered. He wrote that "the history and customs of such a people, preserved by pictorial illustrations, are themes worthy the life-time of one man, and nothing short of the loss of my life, shall prevent me from visiting their country and of becoming their historian."¹⁰⁸ He traveled extensively and his collection of paintings and Indian artifacts grew into a museum similar to Clark's. By

¹⁰⁴Washington Irving, *The Western Journals of Washington Irving*, edited by John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944), 15, 83-84.

¹⁰⁵Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 259-260.

¹⁰⁶Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 62.

¹⁰⁷Harry Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 145.

¹⁰⁸George Catlin, *North American Indians* edited by Peter Matthiessen (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 2. The editor of this volume retitled and made changes to Catlin's original *Letters and Notes*, but it is presented as the original source material.

1833, he had about 140 finished paintings and had just as many in development when he began to exhibit them in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville.¹⁰⁹

Catlin was not always in the same city as his paintings. He had a habit of leaving them in the care of others either in storage or on display while he made his travels. This is demonstrated by his abrupt departure from Buffalo in 1836, leaving his paintings still hanging on exhibition with only his family to remove and store them.¹¹⁰ When William Drummond Stewart visited St. Louis in the winter of Black Hawk's imprisonment, he noted the presence in Clark's museum of "a collection of arms with the portraits of those who bore them."¹¹¹ Maximilian and Bodmer were then able to see paintings by George Catlin at the home of Clark's nephew Benjamin O'Fallon, another Indian Agent.¹¹² It is unclear who painted the portraits in Clark's museum, but they began to be seen by visitors after Catlin's first visit and they disappeared later in the 1830s as Catlin consolidated his collection in New York. Whether or not William Clark's Indian Museum was partly composed of Catlin's Indian Gallery, both collections were very similar despite great differences between their curators, and St. Louis would have been a convenient place to store artifacts and canvases for the adventuring artist.

As Clark's museum was a byproduct of the Moderate Enlightenment, George Catlin's gallery was of the Age of Egalitarianism. Rational amusement and cultural nationalism gave way to public spectacles and dramatic storytelling. Indians became entertainment to those living in cities far away. As the historian William H. Goetzmann wrote "To most men of the day, the Indian was merely one of the many Western wonders—marvels, freaks, and exotics, all the more interesting because they were sometimes

¹⁰⁹ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 29-30.

¹¹⁰ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 39-40.

¹¹¹ Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 61.

¹¹² Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 65.

dangerous. With few exceptions, they were to most observers, not men at all... They were marvels—the very symbol of romantic America.¹¹³ In such an age, Catlin easily used Indians to attract crowds to his gallery.

As Clark and Charles Willson Peale kept catalogs of their museums, Catlin and the later generation of Indian Agents after Clark published great illustrated encyclopedic stories to promote their collections. The first of these came in May of 1835 when James Otto Lewis published *The Aboriginal Port-Folio; or, A Collection of Portraits of the Most Celebrated Chiefs of the North American Indians*. It included 45 portraits he produced for the War Department's gallery.¹¹⁴ Lewis had initially produced his portraits for what became the three-volume *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, published between 1836 and 1844 by Thomas McKenny and his partner James Hall of Cincinnati. As head of Indian Affairs, McKenny collected information on various tribes from agents like Clark and ensured that Indian delegations visiting the nation's capital sat for portraits by the artist Charles Bird King. These portraits appeared in McKenny and Hall's publication beside explanatory text for each tribe, and the portraits themselves went on display at the new National Institution for the Promotion of Science in Washington, D.C.¹¹⁵

Catlin initially declined an offer by James Hall to join with him in the publication of a book of Indian portraits in 1836,¹¹⁶ but in 1841 Catlin published his own two-volume study of American Indians titled *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indian Written During Eight Years' of Travel (1832-1839) Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians of North America*. In it, he published many of the portraits he displayed in his gallery. As with McKenny and Hall, descriptions of various tribes were placed alongside portraits of

¹¹³ Goetzman, *Exploration and Empire*, 329.

¹¹⁴ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 86

¹¹⁵ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 114-115.

¹¹⁶ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 84.

famous Indians. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, an Indian agent and rival of Catlin's, attempted to produce an "Indian Cyclopedia" towards the end of this period, but by 1842 he found no subscribers and could not publish his *Condition and Prospect of the Indian Tribes of the United States* until 1851 with the assistance of another Indian remover, the soldier and artist Seth Eastman.¹¹⁷

Catlin's principal interest in publication was in support of his art and his gallery. By 1837, he had set up an exhibition at New York's Stuyvesant Institute. He displayed his paintings, gave lectures, and erected a Crow tipi in the exhibition area. He also exhibited a small model of Niagara Falls that December.¹¹⁸ Catlin started to make his lectures more extravagant by introducing theatrical elements. He began appearing dressed as a Blackfoot medicine man covered in furs and a large bear skin holding a spear and rattle.¹¹⁹ Catlin was so successful that he took his show to London in 1839. He set up in the largest exhibition room available in the Egyptian Hall at Piccadilly Circus in January of 1840.¹²⁰ George Catlin's Indian Gallery, by then significantly larger than William Clark's collection, contained more than three hundred portraits of Indians, two hundred scenic paintings, a large Crow tipi, and thousands of smaller Indian artifacts.¹²¹

In London, Catlin indulged in the last years of the Age of Egalitarianism. He hired local people to perform in a "Tableaux Vivants Indiennes" of war scenes and a domestic interlude. Tableaux, or scenic paintings composed of live people on stage, had been invented two years earlier in New York and had just become popular in Europe.¹²² Catlin

¹¹⁷ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 93.

¹¹⁸ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 100.

¹¹⁹ Robert M. Lewis. "Wild American Savage and the Civilized English: Catlin's Indian Gallery and the Shows of London" *European Journal of American Studies*, 1 (2008), 7.

¹²⁰ Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 190.

¹²¹ Lewis, "Wild American Savage," 3.

¹²² Lewis, "Wild American Savage," 8.

also began appearing at public events with his nephew Theodore Burr Catlin coated in bear grease and dressed as Indians. They performed dances and ceremonies while Catlin, dressed as a Pawnee chief, served as translator for his rude, savage nephew.¹²³ They attended parties in costume, beat drums, and even exchanged scalps for jewelry with women in high society.

As Caitlin took his gallery abroad, another painter named John Banvard arrived in St. Louis to display large scrolling panoramas at the St. Louis Museum. Prior to the 1830s, these moving landscapes had required specially constructed buildings. In 1829 however, an innovation in London to move a painted canvas from one large roller to another allowed long scenic landscapes of any length to be shown in motion across the width of a stage.¹²⁴ By the next year, a showman named Mondelli presented panoramas in St. Louis of Mount Vesuvius and New Orleans.¹²⁵

In 1836, Albert Koch displayed at the St. Louis Museum “cosmopolitan views” of the Battle of Austerlitz, the French Revolution of 1830, the tunnel under the Thames, and Bonaparte entering Moscow. He also showed scenes of local interest such as the “fracas with the gamblers at Vicksburg, with a view of North’s house” referencing an event that just took place the previous July¹²⁶ In 1838, there appeared in St. Louis displays of the Battle of Waterloo, the Battle of Genappe, St. Helena and the Funeral of Napoleon, with 12 views.¹²⁷

As the decade came to a close, John Banvard became co-owner of the St. Louis Museum with William S. McPherson in 1841. Banvard was a scenic painter with a background in theater, and he made several panoramas for the museum including a “Grand

¹²³ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 100.

¹²⁴ John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.

¹²⁵ McDermott, *The Lost Panorama*, 9.

¹²⁶ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 10.

¹²⁷ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 11.

Moving Panorama” of Jerusalem and Venice to accompany the performance of Miss Hayden, the “far-famed American Sybil” which opened on March 17, 1841.¹²⁸

As co-owner, in April of 1841, Banvard advertised a grand panorama of St. Louis and a trip through the Infernal Regions similar to experiences found in Dante’s *The Inferno*.¹²⁹ Like the bear grease covered Caitlin, Banvard worked to amuse and entertain rather than to document the saga of America and her people like Clark, McKenny, and Hall.

Another notable scenic artist whose time in St. Louis overlapped with Banvard’s was John Caspar Wild. He came to St. Louis from Philadelphia in 1839 and drew public attention with an illustration of the city as seen from across the river in Illinois. He went on the next year to make a series of eight celebrated views of the city from various vantage points, and in 1841 began to release a work known as the *Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated*, which incorporated his collection of lithographs into a new portfolio that sold nationwide. The highlight of the collection was a series of views taken from the top of the Planters Hotel looking out in the cardinal directions. These lithographs placed together formed a sweeping panorama of the city from one of the best views in town.¹³⁰

The Lyceum Movement

In the same tradition as the Western Academy of Natural Sciences, other membership-led mutual education societies formed in the early 1830s as America shifted from the values of the educated and elite founding fathers to the egalitarian age of Jackson

¹²⁸ John Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist: John Banvard (1815-1891) and his Mississippi Panorama* Dissertation, Michigan State University University, 1979, 39.

¹²⁹ Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist*, 40.

¹³⁰ John W. Reys, *Saint Louis Illustrated: Nineteenth-Century Engravings and Lithographs of a Mississippi River Metropolis* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 31-41.

and popular sovereignty. The Lyceum, a debating and lecture club run by local citizens, came to be seen as a “crusade.” The growth of the lyceum coincided with the removal of property restrictions for voting at the end of the 1820s. With more men voting, interest in public education intensified, and the lyceum became a politically acceptable alternative to the idea of government funded public education. Sectarian and partisan issues, such as abolition, were banned in the lyceum, and the neutrality of the lecture hall contributed to the institutions support by all political factions. Whigs and Democrats both policed the lyceum to keep it tame and nonpartisan.¹³¹

The Lyceum Movement began in Europe with Mechanics’ Institutes—social clubs born from the Industrial Revolution by workers and engineers in need of practical skills and training for operating and building machines. In 1823, their activities became popularly known through the *Mechanic’s Magazine*, a periodical dedicated to advice, illustrations of mechanical processes, and information about British Mechanics Institutes. By 1825, a similar publication called *American Mechanics’ Magazine* was distributed by the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia, a recently formed organization for providing a scientific education to those that could not afford it.¹³²

In 1826, Josiah Holbrook, the father of the Lyceum Movement, repurposed Mechanics’ Institutes for the United States “for the general diffusion of knowledge, and for raising the moral and intellectual tastes of our countrymen.” In an article published in the *Journal of American Education*, Holbrook called for lyceums to be created in towns across the country as places for people to come together to conduct debates and hear public lectures. Holbrook sought “to procure for youths an economical and practical education, and to diffuse rational and useful information through the community generally” but also to “check

¹³¹ Bode, *The American Lyceum*, 27-30.

¹³² Bode, *The American Lyceum*, 9-10.

the progress of that monster, intemperance, which is making such havoc with talents, morals, and everything that raises man above the brute...”¹³³

Before the Lyceum Movement, whose debating clubs often took the form of libraries, reached St. Louis, there was already a thriving library with more than three thousand volumes contributed by the city’s founders and leading public figures. By the 1830s, the directors of the St. Louis Library Company became serial institution founders. Many of these directors were members of the soon-to-form Western Academy of Natural Sciences including George and Theodore Engelmann, Edward Haren, Marie P. Leduc, William Greenleaf Eliot, Benjamin Boyer Brown, and William Weber. Brown and Eliot supported the briefly formed Franklin Society, a local literary club. Brown, Carpenter, and Eliot helped in various capacities with the new St. Louis Public Schools. George Engelmann and others formed a German school. Brown contributed to the creation of the St. Louis Mechanic’s Institute, and was an active member of the Saint Louis Lyceum, of which Leduc was an officer.¹³⁴ The Saint Louis Lyceum promoted debates and lectures while the Mechanics’ Institute focused on the practical skills of industry. Both maintained libraries and grew large memberships.

In 1833, the Missouri general assembly granted a new charter to St. Louis Public Schools and Leduc served as president until 1840. The first schools opened in 1838 with the north school at Broadway and Cherry and the south school at 4th and Spruce. The Reverend William Greenleaf Eliot spoke at a public meeting at the time for the need to keep religion out of these schools and maintain their secular nature as at the lyceums.¹³⁵ Eliot also spoke a few years earlier to the Franklin Society on “The Obligation Which Rests upon the Present

¹³³ Bode, *The American Lyceum*, 11-12.

¹³⁴ Hendrickson, “The Western Academy,” 119-120.

¹³⁵ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2013-2018.

Generation to Establish Literary Institutions in the West.” Eliot advocated the founding of literary societies to “excite many a young man to obtain a solid, useful education.” He argued that lyceums “would exert a purifying influence upon public morals and tastes.”¹³⁶

The 1830s saw the rise of St. Louis as a cultural center. It had museums, natural history collections, libraries, schools, debating societies, artists, and a vibrant community of intellectuals. In the Age of Egalitarianism, the growing town of St. Louis increasingly showcased this intellectual culture in public exhibitions and lectures where the citizens could judge the scientific merit or humbug of procs and ventriloquists for themselves. This however quickly came to an end as the 1840s began and other priorities gained focus.

¹³⁶ Bode, *The American Lyceum*, 86-87.

Chapter 2: Decline

Across the United States, professional scientists pushed back in the 1840s against the perceived popularization of science expressed through public museums and lecture halls. Along with increasingly specialized titles such as geologist, chemist, or botanist, the term scientist came into use in 1840 as a more specific replacement for the older general titles of natural philosopher or savant.¹³⁷ The trend towards professionalization led amateur and scholarly science down divergent paths.

James Smithson, the wealthy son of the Duke of Northumberland, died in 1829 bequeathing his immense fortune to the United States for the creation of an institution in its capital for the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.” In the 1830s, the diffusion of knowledge through exhibitions and lectures could be found in every American city. By the 1840s, when Congress began to consider what to do with the Smithson bequest, the Age of Egalitarianism had ended. A generation of scientists, artists, and men of letters turned their attention to other tasks. In the new Age of Professionalism, natural history collections no longer served a public purpose. They became only specimens for scientists to study for the increase of knowledge through research and academic publication. Museums and galleries for the public closed. Artists retreated to what work they could find. Debating clubs and lecture halls served a smaller audience and addressed moral and philosophical questions presented by their members for their members.

¹³⁷ William Whewell, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences: Founded Upon Their History, Part 1* (Cambridge: John W Parker J&J Deighton, 1840), cxiii.

Museums to Increase Knowledge

After a decade of legal difficulties, the Smithsonian Bequest arrived in Washington in 1838. That same year, Congress authorized the U.S. Exploring Expedition to lead the largest publically funded natural history collecting and surveying mission since the voyage of Lewis and Clark. To hold the expedition's collection and the Smithsonian Bequest, the National Institution for the Promotion of Science was founded in 1840. It took on the collections of two previous Washington museums: the Columbian Institution and the Washington City Museum, and in 1842 received a twenty year charter by congress.¹³⁸ It housed vast natural history collections including over two thousand birds. There were skulls, weapons, and artifacts from the cultures of the South Seas, Peruvian mummies, Persian carpets, and government documents including the original declaration of independence. It also held the 150 Indian portraits by Charles Bird King created for McKenny and Hall's encyclopedic work. The National Institution fit all of these things into the second floor of the national patent office's building in a space 290 feet by 60 feet.¹³⁹

For cultural and political reasons, the National Institution did not receive the Smithsonian bequest. It was founded upon the ideas of the Age of Egalitarianism as a new Age of Professionalism began. By the early 1840s, museums dedicated to the diffusion of knowledge among the public surrendered to the needs of professional scientists. The nearby National Botanical Garden closed, not to reopen for a decade. Among scientists in the 1840s, the increase of knowledge mattered more than the diffusion of it. Albert Koch traveled and excavated more fossils while George Engelmann botanized and saw to his medical patients. Neither needed a museum collection, and the St. Louis Museum and the

¹³⁸ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 142-143.

¹³⁹ Dippie, *Caitlin and his Contemporaries*, 114.

Western Academy disappeared. The Smithsonian bequest to increase and diffuse knowledge offered balanced priorities just as American society moved towards specialization and against the public diffusion of knowledge.

The St. Louis Museum had been for sale since August of 1840 for an unspecified amount to be paid with \$500 down and 6 percent interest. Albert Koch, “being engaged in Zoological researches and wishing to devote his whole time and undivided attention to this business,” was ready to sell. On January 20, 1841, William S. McPherson purchased the museum and it closed later in the year.¹⁴⁰

George Engelmann had returned from his wedding trip abroad. The short-lived botanical garden at Eighth and Chouteau ceased operations and the Western Academy’s first president Henry King moved to Washington D.C. to become curator of the new National Institution for the Promotion of Science.¹⁴¹ The Hall of the Western Academy remained until the end of 1842 until its collections were distributed among its members.¹⁴² The Western Academy sublet the space briefly to the Medical Society of Missouri before folding altogether in 1843.¹⁴³

In 1841, Koch left St. Louis for New Orleans, then traveled up the Ohio River to Louisville and Philadelphia to meet with the American Philosophical Society and the Academy of Natural Sciences. The Academy had closed its collections to non-researchers a year before to focus on scientific work just as Koch had transitioned from entertainment to more full-time work as a paleontologist.¹⁴⁴ Koch’s transition from public spectacles was not complete however because he was accused in Philadelphia by a Dr. Goddard of placing extra

¹⁴⁰ McDermott, “Dr. Koch’s Wonderful Fossils,” 249.

¹⁴¹ Hendrickson, “Western Academy,” 125.

¹⁴² Hendrickson, “Western Academy,” 127.

¹⁴³ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 149.

¹⁴⁴ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 145.

bones onto the skeleton of a mastodon and calling it something else. He then moved his specimens from Philadelphia to London to meet and be similarly condemned by Richard Owen at the Royal Geological Society.¹⁴⁵ He exhibited the *Missourium* at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly Circus, like George Catlin, and then toured Dublin and returned to sell his specimens to the British Museum.¹⁴⁶

By 1842, Engelmann had positioned himself as John Torrey and Asa Gray's agent in St. Louis for orchestrating the collecting and describing of western plants. He had met them in New York on his return from Europe with his new wife. Torrey and Gray together led the effort to push botany in America down divergent popular and professional paths. They championed the specialized natural taxonomic system associated with the French botanist Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu which considered all the characteristics of a plant rather than just examining the anatomy of flowers as was done in the older Linnaean system well-known to casual students of botany. When Engelmann met them, they were in the process of producing an updated list of all the plants in North America in accordance with the natural system, and Gray had already produced an introductory botanical textbook using the new system. Gray's textbook offered an alternative to the more popular *Manual of Botany* by Amos Eaton, which taught the Linnaean system. Gray's textbook gained use among scientists, while Eaton's remained the standard work among polite society and amateurs.¹⁴⁷

In St. Louis, Engelmann identified plant collectors among the local German immigrants while Torrey used his military connections to place them on government survey teams. Gray, newly established as a Harvard professor, arranged buyers among New England botanists interested in specimens from the West. At first there were losses. G. J.

¹⁴⁵ Stadler, "Introduction," xxvi.

¹⁴⁶ McDermott, "Dr. Koch's Wonderful Fossils," 250.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Goldstein, *Midwestern Naturalists: Academies of Science in the Mississippi Valley, 1850-1900* Dissertation, Yale University, 1989, 19-20.

Lüders lost everything when his canoe tipped over in the Columbia River, and he broke off relations with Engelmann and Gray. Former Western Academy member Karl Geyer collected plants in the Northeast for Engelmann but delivered his specimens to Sir William Jackson Hooker in London instead. Ferdinand Lindheimer, like Engelmann a member of the Senkenberg Society of Natural Science in Frankfurt, proved more reliable and began sending specimens to Engelmann and Gray from Texas in 1842.¹⁴⁸ Engelmann also began to make use of this network and his private collection of specimens to write for scientific journals. His publication that year of “A Monography of the North American Cuscutineae,” established him as an expert in unusual and difficult families of plants.¹⁴⁹ The next year, Engelmann instructed the explorer John C. Frémont in plant collecting before sending him west as well.¹⁵⁰ By 1844, Lindheimer pushed west of the Colorado River with a German company called the Adelsverein and founded the town of New Braunfels, which would serve as a permanent outpost in Texas for the Engelmann-Gray network.¹⁵¹

After Koch left London, he sold bones, Indian artifacts, and soil that he had excavated in Gasconade County to the Royal Museum of Berlin. This sell may have included some objects from William Clark’s Museum, but evidence suggests that they were his own discoveries of archeological artifacts.¹⁵² Koch left his family in Dresden and returned to the United States in 1844.¹⁵³ He dug for a time in Indiana before returning to St. Louis that November. He reunited with old acquaintances before moving on to

¹⁴⁸ A. Hunter Dupree, *Asa Gray: American Botanist, Friend of Darwin*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1959), 159-160.

¹⁴⁹ Shaw, “Changing Botany in North America,” 515.

¹⁵⁰ Dupree, *Asa Gray*, 157.

¹⁵¹ Dupree, *Asa Gray*, 160.

¹⁵² Hugo Gross, “Mastodons, Mammoths, and Man in America,” *Bulletin of the Texas Archaeological and Paleontological Society* 22 (October, 1951), 105.

¹⁵³ Stadler, “Introduction,” xxvii.

Bloomington, Iowa where he found various fossilized plants.¹⁵⁴ Returning south, he found fossilized animal footprints in Herculaneum in Jefferson County and a human footprint at nearby Hillsboro. He arrived back in St. Louis that December with an ox cart of petrifications and left six days later.¹⁵⁵

The following March of 1845, Koch excavated the remains of a zueglodon (or baliosaurus), which he dubbed the *Hydrarchos*.¹⁵⁶ He returned to St. Louis in June long enough to see friends and change boats to ascend the Ohio. He went on to meet Dr. Morton in Philadelphia and other scientists before leaving for New York,¹⁵⁷ where he presented his 114-ft. specimen there not at a museum, but at a theater. He negotiated in July for the 1,500-seat Niblo's Garden,¹⁵⁸ but exhibited in August at the Apollo Rooms at 410 Broadway, home to many famous performing groups of the period including the New York Philharmonic. He then set sail for Hamburg and on to Dresden to rejoin his family.¹⁵⁹ The show at the Apollo Rooms was a rare exception to the mid-1840s absence of exhibitions, but its context within a theater and the much distributed image of Koch lecturing with pointing stick in hand fits better into the Lyceum lecture circuit than the spectacle of his previous exhibitions of monsters, musicians, and wax figures.

The same year Koch uncovered the zueglodon, George Engelmann and Asa Gray co-published the "Plantae Lindheimerianae: An Enumeration of the Plants collected in Texas, and distributed to Subscribers, by F. Lindheimer, with Remarks, and Descriptions of

¹⁵⁴ Albert C. Koch, "Introduction" *Journey through a Part of the United States of North America in the Years 1844-1846*. ed. and trans. by Ernst A Stadler (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972) 62-63.

¹⁵⁵ Koch, *Journey*, 72, 74, 77.

¹⁵⁶ Koch, *Journey*, 103-104.

¹⁵⁷ Koch, *Journey*, 111, 115.

¹⁵⁸ Koch, *Journey*, 118.

¹⁵⁹ Stadler, "Introduction," xxix-xxx.

new Species &c.” in the *Boston Journal of Natural History*.¹⁶⁰ It was the first in a series of publications of Lindheimer’s discoveries and set the tone for similar publications of work undertaken by collectors in the field. Engelmann and Gray arranged for the collector August Fendler to journey to Santa Fe on a similar mission.¹⁶¹ At the same time Josiah Gregg and Engelmann’s medical partner Wislizenus followed the times and also went west to collect plants for the Engelmann and Gray specimen collecting scheme.¹⁶²

As sentiments turned away from museums for exhibition and display and towards practical scientific collecting of specimens, the Smithson bequest found a home. Respected scientists turned against the National Institution and towards the founding of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846. Congress authorized the bequest with the requirement that half the funds be spent on a museum, a library, a gallery of art, and a lecture room, but these did not happen immediately. Joseph Henry, the new leader of the Smithsonian insisted that “the most prominent idea in my mind is that of stimulating the talent of our country to original research... Practical science will always meet with encouragement in a country like ours it is the highest principles that require to be increased and diffused.” By this he meant that the increase of knowledge mattered most and its diffusion should be done secondarily through Smithsonian publications, but not great public exhibitions.¹⁶³ Henry saw collections such as those held by the National Institute to be a burden, and the Smithsonian under his leadership would not function as a public museum or library in the 1840s.

¹⁶⁰ George Engelmann and Asa Gray, “Plantae Lindheimerianae: an Enumeration of the Plants Collected in Texas, and Distributed to Subscribers, by F. Lindheimer, with Remarks, and Descriptions of New Species” *Boston Journal of Natural History*, 5, 2 (October, 1845) 210-264.

¹⁶¹ Dupree, *Asa Gray*, 162.

¹⁶² Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 152.

¹⁶³ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 143, 157, 160-161.

Forgotten Paintings and Backdrop Landscapes

When George Catlin first reached London, he increasingly engaged in theatrics while promoting the more serious nature of his collection. He gave lectures about his idea to build a Museum of Mankind to preserve “the looks and manners and history of all the declining and vanishing races of man.”¹⁶⁴ The launch of a museum had no funding however, and Catlin moved more and more into theater. By January of 1841, Catlin’s balance sheet for his gallery recorded 32,500 visitors and \$9,433 made, but all of it was spent.¹⁶⁵ By the next year, he presented to the Queen, but found himself unable to pay the rent he owed to the Egyptian Hall.¹⁶⁶ When the historian Frances Parkman visited the Egyptian Hall in 1844, he found Catlin’s paintings forgotten and darkened by London smoke. The main exhibition hall was taken up by P.T. Barnum on tour with his theater performer, the diminutive General Tom Thumb.

Catlin had just parted from a group of traveling Ojibwas performers when he partnered with Barnum to bring more native entertainers across the Atlantic. These Iowa Indians camped in tipis, shot arrows, danced, and performed ceremonies “under the superintendence of Mr. George Catlin.” He and the Iowas left Barnum to tour the provinces, and they eventually made it as far as France before parting company. At that point, Catlin joined another group of traveling Indian performers composed of eleven Ojibwas from Canada under the leadership of a Methodist missionary. They were struck with smallpox in Brussels and several died on their way back across the Atlantic.¹⁶⁷

Impoverished and unable to easily move his massive gallery, which included more than two tons of mineral and fossil specimens, Catlin tried for the remainder of the 1840s to

¹⁶⁴ Lewis, “Wild American Savage,” 7-8.

¹⁶⁵ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 99.

¹⁶⁶ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 98.

¹⁶⁷ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 101-109.

sell his collection to the United States government. With each attempt, Catlin had his champions in Congress, and it even seemed at times that his collection would fit well with the Charles Bird King gallery at the National Institution or in the national gallery envisioned for the new Smithsonian Institution, but ultimately the United States did not want to buy a Museum of Mankind during the 1840s.¹⁶⁸ The National Institution was unsupported and the Smithsonian concentrated on research rather than collections. Unable to support himself through exhibitions, Catlin suffered through years of poverty.

John Caspar Wild, despite his brief success as a scenic painter in St. Louis at the end of the 1830s, went on to produce smaller works for other cities. He eventually moved to Davenport, Iowa by 1844 where he died shortly after leaving only a few prints and lithographic presses behind.¹⁶⁹

John Banvard had only just arrived in St. Louis as the times turned against exhibitions. The St. Louis Museum closed and panoramas temporarily disappeared from St. Louis, but St. Louis was not completely without entertainment. The scenic painters that would create the great panoramas in the years ahead found employment in the intervening years in theaters, especially those belonging to the company of Noah Ludlow and Solomon Smith. Many artists found employment creating landscape backdrops for the moralistic plays performed during the 1840s.

The St. Louis Theater, owned by Ludlow and Smith, opened in 1837 at Third and Olive, to replace an older one that occupied a converted salt warehouse.¹⁷⁰ The new theater

¹⁶⁸ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 111-113, 118, 133,

¹⁶⁹ Reys, *Saint Louis Illustrated*, 44-46.

¹⁷⁰ Louis Gerteis, "Shaping the Authentic: St. Louis Theater Culture and the Construction of American Social Types." *St. Louis in the Century of Henry Shaw: A View beyond the Garden Wall*, ed. by Eric Sandweiss. (St. Louis: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 192.

was 150 ft by 80 ft. with two tiers of boxes and galleries and seated an estimated 1,200 to 1,500 people.¹⁷¹ The painter Leon Pomarède found employment there in 1843 in addition to what he could earn painting signs, portraits, and frescos for hire. He had painted the interior of the St. Louis Cathedral a decade earlier before living for a time in New Orleans where he married the daughter of the panorama artist Mondelli.¹⁷² Of the other artists later known for panoramas, the landscape artist Henry Lewis maintained a small studio in St. Louis,¹⁷³ John Rowson Smith painted for the St. Charles Theater of Ludlow and Smith in New Orleans before moving to others in the East.¹⁷⁴ Samuel B. Stockwell painted at the St. Charles Theater, the St. Louis Theater, and the company's theater in Mobile.¹⁷⁵ These theaters provided work in a time without support from museums and exhibition halls.

The Saint Louis Lyceum

Other than the St. Louis Theater of Ludlow and Smith, the Saint Louis Lyceum Hall and the Mechanics' Institute Hall were the main secular public gathering places in 1840s St. Louis. These halls were first borrowed from churches, but came to be alternate names for the same location as the two organizations shared the same building and lecture hall for much of the decade. They offered each other reciprocal membership benefits and may have merged their libraries. The Lyceum also offered similar benefits to the members of the Young Men's Debating Society, which thrived for a time as a junior affiliate.

The Lyceum began meeting in 1838 to debate rhetorical questions proposed by their members. The organization received its charter with the stated goal of the "intellectual

¹⁷¹ John Francis McDermott, "Dr. Brown's St. Louis" *Missouri Historical Review* 54:3 (April 1960), 250-251.

¹⁷² McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 145-146.

¹⁷³ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 82.

¹⁷⁴ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 49

¹⁷⁵ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 69.

improvement of its members in literature, science, and the arts, through the medium of lectures, debates, and other literary exercises; and whereas, for the promotion of the above objects it is the design of the said association to collect an extensive library, and procure a building suitable to the wants of said association.”¹⁷⁶ The Saint Louis Library Company, the first library in St. Louis and holder of books donated from the personal collections of the city’s founders, merged into the Saint Louis Lyceum in 1839 and contributed more than three thousand volumes.¹⁷⁷

The Lyceum’s founding at the end of the Age of Egalitarianism overlapped with several other institutions for diffusing knowledge. The Mechanics Institute of St. Louis released its constitution in 1839 and called for a cabinet of minerals and models, a library, and a reading room.¹⁷⁸ Benjamin Boyer Brown became director of a school for apprentices run by the Mechanics Institute for the next two years.¹⁷⁹ Public School no. 3, the old Benton School, opened at Sixth and Locust in 1841, and Saint Louis University opened a medical school at Tenth and Washington in 1842.¹⁸⁰ That was however the temporary end of institution founding in St. Louis and the beginning of closures and consolidations.

In 1842, the Lyceum resolved at their March meeting to form a committee of three to investigate if the failing Western Academy of Natural Sciences might like to join them, but no record remains to indicate a merger¹⁸¹ They were meeting at their hall at Third and Pine, holding debates and hosting lectures through the winters. In 1842, Thomas White was

¹⁷⁶ Meeting Minutes of the Saint Louis Lyceum, Charter of the Saint Louis Lyceum, Feb 13, 1839, SLML, M-114: Records of the Saint Louis Lyceum.

¹⁷⁷ John Neal Hoover, “Private Libraries and Global Worlds: Books and Print Culture in Colonial St. Louis” *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlan, Barbara Berglund, and Adam Arenson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 195.

¹⁷⁸ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Mechanics’ Institute of St. Louis with the names of the Officers of the Institute, the Board of Managers, &c. &c. for the year 1839* (St. Louis: C. Keemle, Printer—22 Olive Street, 1839). SLML, M-114.

¹⁷⁹ McDermott, “Dr. Brown’s St. Louis,” 253.

¹⁸⁰ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 1972, 2014.

¹⁸¹ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, March 16, 1842. SLML, M-114.

president, the painter Chester Harding was librarian, and the last owner of the St. Louis Museum, William McPherson, was on the library committee. The Young Men's Debating Society, with its 1000 volumes, held meetings on Saturday evenings in the same building. The Mechanics' Institute met at William Greenleaf Eliot's Unitarian Church at Fourth and Pine with Meriwether Lewis Clark as president and Benjamin Boyer Brown sitting on the Council.¹⁸² Enjoying healthy membership, the Lyceum considered founding a literary journal at their November meeting, but nothing came of it.¹⁸³ The Lyceum voted the next January to give members of the Young Men's Debating Club free admission to Lyceum debates.¹⁸⁴

Politically, the members of the Lyceum seem to have been Whigs leaning towards patriotic Nativism, which limited their membership to a small spectrum of St. Louis society. Like the later Whig members of the St. Louis Mercantile Library who would found Washington University, the Lyceum leadership championed George Washington perhaps to identify as Americans rather than Catholics or Germans. On February 22, 1843 they met to celebrate Washington's birthday with prayer, a reading of Washington's farewell address, and a eulogy on his "life and character." This was followed months later by a reading of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July.¹⁸⁵ The observation of Washington's birthday would be repeated semi-annually.¹⁸⁶ Other than events such as these, and sparsely attended debates at meetings, few records exist of other Lyceum activities, which suggests that public lectures happened with less frequency.

Sources conflict about the location of the St. Louis Library Association's collection during this time. John Francis McDermott, the foremost historian of early St. Louis

¹⁸² *The Saint Louis Directory; for the year 1842*, Saint Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1842.

¹⁸³ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, November 14, 1842. SLML, M-114.

¹⁸⁴ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, January 19, 1843. SLML, M-114.

¹⁸⁵ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, February 22 and July 4, 1843. SLML, M-114.

¹⁸⁶ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, February 23, 1846. SLML, M-114.

libraries, wrote that the Library Company's books passed from the Lyceum in 1844 to the Mechanics Institute.¹⁸⁷ *Green's St. Louis Directory* for 1845 repeated older claims that the Lyceum had one hundred and fifty members and three thousand volumes in their "spacious" hall at the northeast corner of Third and Pine, suggesting that the association's books stayed with the Lyceum.¹⁸⁸ The same directory listed the Mechanics' Institute nearby at a lecture room on Third between Market and Chestnut.¹⁸⁹ The two institutions grew closer to each other as they began discussing reciprocal membership privileges in February of 1845. By November, a plan of "junction" was signed and on December seventh the Lyceum agreed to grant Mechanics' Institute members the right to borrow from their library.¹⁹⁰

Little evidence remains to clarify their relationship, but the meeting minutes of the Lyceum indicate that the two organizations may have merged. On December 20, 1847, the members of the Lyceum resolved to give notice to the Mechanics' Institute that the union between them had been dissolved by the expiration of their contract. This must have been renewed because a month later on January 31, 1848, the Lyceum resolved that the members of the "joint executive committee of the Lyceum and Mechanics' Institute" would examine unneeded furniture, policies, and the shared needs of their organizations.¹⁹¹

The Lyceum, as a lecture sponsoring debating society, was one of the only public institutions in St. Louis during the 1840s, and its member-focused model of moral self-improvement did not last. By 1846 an alternative model formed in the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association, which made its library the first priority and did not sponsor rhetorical moral debates. As James Yeatman, one of the library's founders, would later recount:

¹⁸⁷ McDermott, "Dr. Brown's St. Louis," 253.

¹⁸⁸ James Green, *Green's St. Louis Directory for 1845* (Saint Louis: James Green, 1844), page unclear.

¹⁸⁹ Green, *Green's St. Louis Directory for 1845*, xx.

¹⁹⁰ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, 1845. SLML, M-114.

¹⁹¹ Saint Louis Lyceum Meeting Minutes, January 31, 1848. SLML, M-114.

... the merchants of St. Louis, feeling the need of a public library, as well for others as themselves determined to organize a library, to be governed and managed by those engaged in mercantile pursuits, but from the enjoyment of the advantages of which none were to be excluded; every citizen, professional and non-professional, could be admitted to its privileges, except a participation in its management, by becoming beneficiary members.¹⁹²

That Yeatman and other founders felt a need in St. Louis for a “public library” in the middle of the 1840s demonstrates that the Lyceum and the Mechanics Institute did not fulfill that role, and it indicates that the leadership of the Mercantile anticipated the coming change in St. Louis culture toward broader and more open institutions than the exclusive debating clubs of the 1840s.

¹⁹² *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association* (St. Louis: Missouri Democrat Print, 1871), 39. SLML, M-117: Archives of the St. Louis Mercantile Library and the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association.

Chapter 3: Revival

When the city of St. Louis caught fire in 1849, it was already moving towards rebirth. The first images of the fire seen by many around the country appeared on theater stages scrolling past on panoramic paintings between large rollers. The speakers standing before the moving scenery were St. Louisans on tour who incorporated the flames into their already successful acts as soon as they heard the news. The fire scrolled by, and the presentations continued.

A theatrical thread linked the St. Louis Museum that closed in 1841 to its successor of the 1850s. John Banvard, the last curator of Albert Koch's museum, and John Bates, curator of Edward Wyman's later St. Louis Museum, both worked in theaters in the 1840s and participated in the sudden rebirth of the moving panorama phenomenon that manifested in 1848 with five simultaneous displays of the Mississippi River in motion on stages across the United States and Europe. Theaters survived the temporary 1840s lull in popular display and gave continuity of talent to allow for a new wave of panorama and museum exhibitions. A new genre of scrolling canvas paintings allowed Eastern spectators to travel the lengths of the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers and see all the sights of Western riverbanks. The painted city of St. Louis, burning in the Great Fire of 1849, stood out as a notable landmark in the ever unwinding scenery. After this fire came new theaters, a new city, and a new St. Louis Museum in a second age of exhibition.

After Wyman Hall and the second St. Louis Museum, the next center of public life in St. Louis was the auditorium of the Mercantile Library Hall. It grew from the Lyceum Movement, a tradition of public lectures and debates developed in parallel to the creation of the modern public education system. The maturing of the Lyceum in the 1850s fulfilled

many of the promises of the 1830s. Permanent institutions, a new Academy of Science, public subsidies, and public admission changed the character of St. Louis and its people.

The St. Louis Museum and the Academy of Science Reborn

Not all museums disappeared in the 1840s. P. T. Barnum in New York succeeded as others failed. Capitalizing on the national decline, Barnum purchased and consolidated failing museums including the American Museum in 1841, the Peale Museum in 1843, and the Philadelphia Museum in 1849.¹⁹³ He succeeded in creating a major collection of natural history specimens while drawing audiences in through public events, especially by bringing theater into his lecture hall at the American Museum. Displays of a moral nature proved most popular. The cautionary play *The Drunkard* lasted for more than one hundred performances at the American Museum. Theater also took Barnum to Europe where his performer General Tom Thumb entertained Queen Victoria, and Barnum met George Catlin while exhibiting the mysterious “missing link” at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly Circus.¹⁹⁴ He would return to America in the early 1850s with his greatest performance yet, taking the Swedish singer Jenny Lind on a tour of the United States. In St. Louis, in 1851, she performed at Wyman Hall.

Edward Wyman was an educator with experience in Boston’s public schools and seven years at an academy in Hillsboro, Illinois. In 1843 he had founded the English and Classical High School in St. Louis near Fourth and Olive.¹⁹⁵ In 1848, he purchased land on Walnut Street and constructed a four-story building across Market Street from the court

¹⁹³ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 174-178.

¹⁹⁴ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 175-178.

¹⁹⁵ William Hyde and Howard L. Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis: A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference*. (New York: The Southern History Company, 1899), 2446.

house.¹⁹⁶ Wyman Hall was forty-four feet wide by one hundred feet deep. Shops occupied the ground floor, a gas-lit auditorium that seated 1,200 to 1,500 people occupied the second, and the top two floors were for classes.¹⁹⁷ In addition to the school he operated, Wyman also served on the board of directors for St. Louis Public Schools in 1849 and as president in 1850.¹⁹⁸ Unlike more serious scientists like George Engelmann and Albert Koch, Wyman was an educator dedicated to the diffusion of knowledge.

Wyman Hall became one of the main public venues in St. Louis for a few brief years coinciding with Barnum's visit in March of 1851. "Jenny Lind sang for the school, and in response the school sang for her. Tom Thumb walked through the aisles of the large assembly room, shaking hands with the boys and otherwise amusing them."¹⁹⁹ It was around this time that Wyman decided he too would operate a museum like Barnum. He purchased the beginnings of the new St. Louis Museum the same year as Barnum's visit and the same year that William Clark's old museum building was torn down to make way for new construction.²⁰⁰ Wyman hired John Bates as curator of the museum. Bates had a background in theater and had just opened his own large venue that January.²⁰¹ The Bates Theater sat 2,500 patrons and became an important destination for a time after the old St. Louis Theater of Ludlow and Smith was taken over by the government in July,²⁰² but that

¹⁹⁶ Walter L. Whipple, "The St. Louis Museum of the 1850s and the Two Egyptian Mummies and Papyri" *Brigham Young University Studies Quarterly* 10, 1 (Autumn, 1969), 58.

¹⁹⁷ Jacob N. Taylor and M. O. Crooks, *Sketch Book of Saint Louis: Containing a Series of Sketches of the Early Settlement, Public Buildings, Hotels, Railroads, Steamboats, Foundry and Machine Shops, Mercantile Houses, Grocers, Manufacturing Houses, &C.* (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp & Co., Printers and Binders. 1858), 46.

¹⁹⁸ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2556-2557.

¹⁹⁹ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2557.

²⁰⁰ John P. Bates, "Preface" in *Catalogue of Birds, Quadrupeds, Reptiles, &C., Collected, Prepared and Arranged by J. P. Bates* (St. Louis, Missouri Democrat Press, 1856). ; Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis," 70. St. Louis Public Library Special Collections.

²⁰¹ *Missouri Daily Republican*, January 3, 1851.

²⁰² *Missouri Daily Republican*, January 5, 1851.

unique position lasted only one month until the Varieties Theater opened followed by others in a new wave of theater openings.²⁰³

Albert Koch, proprietor of the previous St. Louis Museum, returned to St. Louis in May of 1853 to show the skeleton of the large aquatic dinosaur he called a Zeuglodon. He had taken his *hydrarchos* to the Leipzig Fair in 1847 and to Berlin where Friedrich Wilhelm IV bought it for his Royal Anatomical Museum. In return, Koch received an annual pension for life.²⁰⁴ He returned to Alabama to uncover a second, smaller zeuglodon skeleton in 1848 which he shipped to Europe and exhibited at the Royal Academy of Dresden. It then traveled to Vienna and Prague before returning to the United States to be displayed for a time at the Great Southern Museum in New Orleans.²⁰⁵ It was purchased by Joseph N. McDowell in June to be added to the medical cabinet of the University of Missouri,²⁰⁶ but afterwards came to be the prized possession of Wyman's St. Louis Museum.²⁰⁷ Koch and his family followed, settling in St. Louis while also maintaining property owned in Golconda, Illinois.²⁰⁸ The St. Louis Museum of the 1850s, like Koch's of the 1830s, showcased a great excavated skeleton as its main showpiece.

It was also in 1853 that Wyman and Bates retired from their previous careers to focus on developing the St. Louis Museum. Wyman closed the English and Classical High School.²⁰⁹ Bates sold his theater after advertising in the *New York Herald* in April, "a Fine

²⁰³ *Missouri Daily Republican*, August 17, 1851.

²⁰⁴ Stadler, "Introduction," xxx-xxxi.

²⁰⁵ Stadler, "Introduction," xxxi.

²⁰⁶ McDermott, "Dr. Koch's Wonderful Fossils," 252.

²⁰⁷ "June 2, 1856" *Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis*. 1 (1857), 18.

²⁰⁸ Stadler, "Introduction," xxxii.

²⁰⁹ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2556.

Investment for Capitalists.” In addition to the Bates Theater in St. Louis, he also sold the National Theater in Cincinnati and the Louisville Theater in Louisville.²¹⁰

A new academy would also be founded in the 1850s. With the close of the Mexican-American War in 1848 and Asa Gray’s publication of the “*Plantae Fendlerianae*,”²¹¹ the next chapter in the botanical exploration of the West began with a commission to study the new boundary between the United States and Mexico. Several plant collectors were named to this commission through the influence of George Engelmann and his associates including John Milton Bigelow and Charles Christopher Parry. Their efforts would lead to the publication in 1859 of Engelmann’s best known work: “*Cactaceae of the Boundary*.”²¹² Engelmann’s study of the cactus genera and species of the West established his reputation as an important scientist and drew praise from other St. Louisans.

When John Francis Snyder wrote to Engelmann by letter on May 10, 1854 on the topic of “establishing a public museum in St. Louis,” Snyder wrote that he addressed Engelmann on the subject as “at the head of scientific men of the West, and as a patron of all scientific enterprises.” Snyder desired “to center in St. Louis specimens” of various sciences and not to create a museum that would be “a mere charlatan, humbug show with the sole view of making money.” Snyder’s motivation for organizing such a museum came from his examination of “the place where Dr. Koch exhumed his great Missouriium,” where he “found deposits of fossil remains equally as extensive; but for want of means [he could not] engage in disintombing them.”²¹³

²¹⁰“A Fine Investment for Capitalists” *The New York Herald*. April 1853.

²¹¹ Dupree, *Asa Gray*, 164.

²¹² George Engelmann, “*Cactaceae of the Boundary*” *United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, Under the Order of Lietu. Col. W. H. Emory, Major first Cavalry, and United States Commissioner*. (Washington: C. Wendell, printer, 1857-1859),

²¹³ “May 10, 1854, John Francis Snyder to George Engelmann,” George Engelmann Papers. Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis.”

On March 10, 1856, fifteen men gathered in the hall of the Board of Public Schools to found the new Academy of Science of St. Louis. They included members of the old academy such as George Engelmann and Fredrich Adolph Wislizenus, but also well connected new members such as John Francis Snyder, Nathaniel Holmes, James B. Eads, Charles Pope, and Charles P. Chouteau. They elected Engelmann as their president and devoted their attention to the founding of a new collection.²¹⁴

Perhaps the driving force behind their organization was establishing a home for specimens collected by the explorer Ferdinand V. Hayden who had traveled through the Bad Lands in the Nebraska Territory with assistance from Chouteau's trading company. Hayden collected for two years and returned to St. Louis in January of 1856 with six tons of specimens that Chouteau displayed at his house for people to come and view.²¹⁵ After donating his part of the Hayden collection to the new academy, Chouteau sent a taxidermist up the Missouri River to collect fossils, animal skins, and Indian artifacts to further expand the collection.²¹⁶

From the beginning, the academy benefited greatly from a strong relationship with the St. Louis Medical College under the influence of Charles Pope. The college had just broken away from Saint Louis University the previous year in 1855, and as dean of the college, Pope helped the newly independent school to attain its own charter and set a new direction.²¹⁷ He arranged for the academy to house its new cabinet of specimens in the college's O'Fallon Dispensary and donated materials from his own museum of comparative anatomy including an eyeless fish from Mammoth Cave, a grizzly bear, a weasel, various

²¹⁴Henry M. Whelpley, "Addresses at the Meeting of March 5, 1906, A Sketch of the History of the Academy" *Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis*, 16 (1906) xxii.

²¹⁵Long, "Enterprise and Exchange," 154-155.

²¹⁶Long, "Enterprise and Exchange," 155.

²¹⁷Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 1972.

fossils, and some Indian artifacts. Other members of the college faculty, including Charles W. Stevens and William M. McPheeters were also active members of the newly founded academy.²¹⁸

By coincidence, Albert Koch moved back to St. Louis with his family just as the new academy formed. Koch joined on April 21st as an associate member, and the following month they arranged for him to dig in Mississippi on the academy's behalf.²¹⁹ The next year he became one of the four curators of the academy and published an article in *The Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis* on the overlapping histories of men and mastodons as evidenced by discoveries he had made in his excavations.²²⁰

John Bates issued a catalog for the St. Louis Museum in 1856 in conjunction with a new exhibition "of a pair of Mummies from the catacombs of Egypt."²²¹ These were mummies first exhibited in the 1830s that lasted through the 1840s to be exhibited again in St. Louis. They were among the eleven mummies brought to the United States by Michael Chandler, nephew to Antonio Lebolo who collected artifacts in Egypt for French museums between 1818 and 1823. Chandler sold seven of his mummies to museums in New England around the same years that Albert Koch showcased his Egyptian mummy in St. Louis. But Koch did not exhibit one of Chandler's remaining mummies because all four were sold in 1835 to the Church of Latter Day Saints in Navoo, Illinois.²²²

The church's leader, Joseph Smith, exhibited the four mummies to his congregation along with papyrus scrolls he found among them. Through divine inspiration, he claimed to

²¹⁸ William Trelease, "The Academy of Science of St. Louis, A Biography," *Popular Science Monthly* 64 (December, 1903) 119-120.

²¹⁹ Stadler, "Introduction," xxxi, 54-55. McDermott, "Dr. Koch's Wonderful Fossils," 252.

²²⁰ Stadler, "Introduction," xxxi.

²²¹ *Daily Missouri Democrat*, August 14, 1856.

²²² James R. Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1955), 149-150.

be able to read the hieroglyphics on the papyrus and found that they were written by the Biblical Joseph in Egypt who under the instructions of an angel ensured their survival in the sarcophagus of a queen. Smith assured his congregation that the ancient papyrus legitimized the “gold plates” in Navoo—the Book of Mormon.²²³

When Joseph Smith died in 1844 and his followers traveled west, Smith’s mother Lucy remained in Illinois with the Egyptian artifacts until her death in 1855. At that time two of the four mummies found their way to St. Louis.²²⁴ Edward Wyman and John Bates began exhibiting these two mummies in 1856.

Professor Seyffarth of Concordia Seminary represented the Academy of Science that November when he delivered three lectures in the Mercantile Library Hall on Egyptian Archaeology and hieroglyphics. In his presentations, he discussed the papyrus scrolls found with the mummies located at the St. Louis Museum.²²⁵ These may have been loaned to him by Wyman, who served on the academy’s standing committee for ornithology. Seyffarth described the papyrus as a prayer to the god Horus and gave no mention of the Biblical Joseph.²²⁶

By 1857, Wyman favored the academy over his museum as his debts increased. He attempted to sell them his collection of birds, and when that failed offered to lease them his museum for \$1,200 a year so that he might display their collections beside his own, but no deal was reached.²²⁷ On May 31st, Charles Pope wrote a letter to John F. Snyder about the state of Wyman’s Museum. He professed that he wanted the research and public components of the academy (the *Transactions* and the museum) to grow alongside each other.

²²³ Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, 149-150.

²²⁴ Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, 152-153.

²²⁵ *Eleventh Annual Report*, 16. SLML, M-117.

²²⁶ Whipple, “The St. Louis Museum of the 1850s,” 63.

²²⁷ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 156.

For \$10,000 they could buy Wyman's museum entirely with its birds and giant zueglodon skeleton for the academy, but the money was sadly not at hand.²²⁸

Between 1856 and 1869, the Academy of Science of St. Louis had an average of sixty to one hundred and fifty members and an active attendance at meetings of between six and thirteen individuals. In 1859, it had "183 exchanges with 134 organizations in Europe," 49 in the Americas, five in Asia, two in Australia, and one in Africa, and it was growing.²²⁹ Despite this growth, they could not add the St. Louis Museum's large collections to their cabinet.

Earlier in 1856, Wyman borrowed \$10,000 against his collection.²³⁰ In that year's catalog describing dozens of cases of birds, the museum was described as still operating at Wyman Hall in the upper two floors where Wyman's school once was. Admission cost 25 cents, and visitors could see the Zueglodon excavated by Albert Koch in 1848 and formerly exhibited in Dresden. John Bates wrote the catalog's preface, stating that he had been curator there since 1851, had traveled on the museum's behalf in the tropics to collect specimens, and that he had made at least one trip to Europe for a "large and important accession."²³¹

Edward Wyman became president once more of the Board of Public Schools in 1858, and lost his building soon after in July to a Mr. Henry Whitmore for \$12,000 after mortgaging the building for \$20,000.²³² Silas M. Brooks became curator of the museum, and John Bates was retained as taxidermist.²³³

²²⁸ "May 31, 1857, Charles A. Pope to J. F. Snyder," John F. Snyder Collection. Missouri History Museum, St. Louis.

²²⁹ Hendrickson, "Academy of Science of St. Louis: The Early Years," 89.

²³⁰ Whipple, "The St. Louis Museum of the 1850s," 61.

²³¹ Bates. "Preface" 1856 Catalog of the St. Louis Museum.

²³² William G. Swekowsky, uncited research, MHM, building file for Wyman Hall.

²³³ Whipple, "The St. Louis Museum of the 1850s," 62.

Taylor and Crook noted the change in ownership in 1858 in their *Sketchbook of St. Louis*. They described Wyman Hall as “latterly [known as] the ‘Odeon,’” presumably after its purchase by Whitmore. The “large, airy, well lighted, and well ventilated” third floor exhibition space with its seventeen-foot-high ceilings displayed “splendid collections of oil paintings, dissolving views, dioramas, &c.” From this floor visitors could look out to the East over the city and the riverfront. There were birds from every land that appeared “life like, as if sporting in their native wilds.” Among the collections were “the Great Zeuglodon, Gallery of Oil Paintings, superb statues of Venus and Mercury, Egyptian mummies, Indian curiosities, &c.” Taylor and Crook also mentioned performers including General Green, “the smallest dwarf in the world,” and the Thayer Family, “the only Female Sax Horn Band in the world.”²³⁴

The new curator, Silas M. Brooks, was an aeronaut who took St. Louisans for rides in his hydrogen-filled balloon. In 1859 he would bring national attention to the St. Louis Museum when John Wise brought his balloon, the “Atlantic,” to St. Louis for a flight across the eastern half of the continent. Wise planned a voyage by balloon from the United States to Europe, and he was in St. Louis for a test flight. An “enclosure was erected in the city common” at Twelfth and Clark, known as Washington Square. The St. Louis Gaslight Company supplied Wise with hydrogen through an eight-inch pipe arranged for the occasion. Brooks requested to accompany Wise in his own balloon, “the Comet,” and guide him out of St. Louis. Wise later wrote that “In the mellow twilight of the evening we espied Mr. Brooks, a little to the north of our track, in the careful keeping of a crowd of Illinois farmers, among who he had alighted.”²³⁵ Newspapers reported on Wise’s flight nationwide

²³⁴ Taylor and Crook, *Sketch Book of Saint Louis*, 46-48.

²³⁵ John Wise, *Through the Air: A Narrative of Forty Years’ Experience as an Aeronaut* (Philadelphia: To-Day Printing and Publishing Company, 1873), 490-493.

and few failed to mention the helpful curator of the St. Louis Museum who preceded him out of town.²³⁶

Bates published another catalog in 1859 with more listed cases of birds, skeletons and other details. Among the many items listed were a broad global representation of artifacts and some reminiscent of earlier St. Louis collections including an Indian canoe and an alligator head along with a caste of General Tom Thumb's hand. The catalog included a message from the proprietor, which may have been Brooks, Bates, or Whitmore. The message urged citizens, strangers and "especially the young" to visit the museum "as a means of delightful study, recreation, and improvement." The undersigned included Charles A. Pope, John O'Fallon, Edward Bates, William Carr Lane, T. M. Post, Fredrich Adolph Wislizenus, and Benjamin Shumard.²³⁷

Little else survives of the next four years of the St. Louis Museum. There was an exhibition in November of 1860 of the panopticon of D. C. LaRue, which showed various scenes of battles with the English in India.²³⁸ In 1863, Whitmore sold the museum to General Thomas Lawson Price for only \$1,400 and it shuttered ten days later on June 11 before moving to Chicago. The old concert room at Wyman Hall in St. Louis became known as William Koser's Metropolitan Theater.²³⁹ The newly dubbed Chicago Museum opened on Randolph Street on August 17 with John Bates as curator and John O'Mellen as manager.²⁴⁰ The museum printed a catalog that August nearly identical to the St. Louis Museum catalog of 1859 with only minor additions in specimens and added pages for advertisements from Chicago companies. It included the birds, mummies, zeuglodon, views

²³⁶ *Belmont Chronicle*, July 7, 1859.

²³⁷ John P. Bates, *Complete Guide to the Saint Louis Museum, Wyman's Building* (St. Louis: R. P. Studley and Co, Printers, 1859). Missouri History Museum.

²³⁸ *Nashville Union and American*, Nov 20. 1860

²³⁹ Swekowsky. Uncited research

²⁴⁰ Whipple, "The St. Louis Museum of the 1850s," 62.

of California, and “TWO COSMORAMA SALOONS, containing three hundred of the most magnificent views in the world.”²⁴¹ The next January it became Colonel Wood’s Museum under ownership of Colonel John H. Wood.²⁴²

As the Civil War progressed, the Academy of Sciences collection slowly grew. When the southern sympathizing doctor Joseph Nash McDowell abandoned his medical college in 1862, the Western Sanitary Commission, a charitable aid organization under the leadership of the same people who founded the St. Louis Mercantile Library and Washington University, donated his holdings to the Academy of Science and the St. Louis Medical College.²⁴³

The St. Louis Public Schools grew over this period as well. A new building finished construction in 1867 at the corner of Seventh and Chestnut called the Polytechnic. The Polytechnic contained the public school library and the administration for the school system. The Polytechnic also served as home to the Art Society, the Medical Society, the Institute of Architects, the Engineer’s Club, the Missouri Historical Society, the Microscopical Society, the Local Steam Engineer’s Association, and the Academy of Science of St. Louis.²⁴⁴

The move to the Polytechnic marked a tragedy and an end of an era for the Academy of Science. While still in the O’Fallon Dispensary, the natural history cabinet containing carefully assembled collections and earlier materials from the old Western Academy, “was wiped out by the unfortunate fire of 1869 and for years the Academy museum was stored in the officer’s minds rather than in the Academy rooms.”²⁴⁵ The fire

²⁴¹ John P. Bates, *A Guide to the Chicago Museum* (Chicago: Evening Journal Book & Job Print, 1863 1863), Lincoln Presidential Library.

²⁴² Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, 158.

²⁴³ Long, “Enterprise and Exchange,” 163.

²⁴⁴ Logan Uriah Reavis, *St. Louis: The Future Great City of the World* (St. Louis: Gray, Baker & Co., 1875), 64-65.

²⁴⁵ Whelpley, “Addresses at the Meeting,” xxvi-xxvii

began in an adjacent building and by the time the firemen arrived, only parts of the academy's library were salvageable. When they moved to the Polytechnic, they began new collections.²⁴⁶

Two years later, in 1871, Chicago had its Great Fire and the remains of the St. Louis Museum met the same fate as the academy's cabinet. The two great natural history collections of antebellum St. Louis were destroyed and along with them whatever may have remained from the earlier St. Louis Museum, the Western Academy of Natural Sciences, and William Clark's Indian Museum.

The Mississippi Panoramas

It was John Banvard who repopularized the moving panorama. By 1846 he was earning a living painting the interior of the local Odd Fellows Hall in Louisville.²⁴⁷ There he finished a long scrolling panorama of the riverbanks of the Mississippi River and displayed it at the Louisville Gas Company in the fall. Not a single person attended the opening, but Banvard persisted in his presentations until his "three mile canvas" proved popular. He added additional sections of scenery along the Missouri and Ohio Rivers and took his show to New York City's Apollo Rooms in October. In New York, he added scenes of the upper Mississippi and by December moved to Armory Hall in Boston where the panorama proved very popular and profitable. It ran for six months and Banvard's success became well-known.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Walter B. Hendrickson, "St. Louis Academy of Science: The Early Years" in *Missouri Historical Review* 1, 66 (October 1966), 94.

²⁴⁷ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 27.

²⁴⁸ Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist*, 55-59, 71.



Figure 2 Image of John Banvard's Mississippi panorama as published in *Scientific American* in December of 1848.

The rolls of canvas were hidden off-stage and Banvard created runners along the top to keep the canvas from sagging in the middle. Viewed from a distance, the panorama served as a theater backdrop to Banvard the entertaining tour guide with his pointer stick and witty stories. School groups attended for free. It was the only view of the West available to many New Englanders.²⁴⁹

By the beginning of 1848, Banvard had become a success. His panorama stayed in New York until September and more than 175,000 people saw it there.²⁵⁰ Such was the novelty of the show and his mechanical innovation that the magazine *Scientific American* featured Banvard's panorama in that December's issue with an illustration of how the canvas moves and avoids sagging.²⁵¹ Banvard then sailed for London where he presented at the

²⁴⁹ Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist*, 59-65,

²⁵⁰ Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist*, 73.

²⁵¹ "John Banvard and His Panorama" *Scientific American* 5, 1 (Dec, 1848).

Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly Circus and eventually met a down-on-his-luck George Catlin who borrowed fifty pounds from him and secretly tried to copy his panorama.²⁵²

Catlin was not the only imitator. John Rowson Smith toured New England in 1848 with a panorama of the Mississippi said not to omit anything “not a patch of inlet—not a rock—nay, scarcely a tree.” It was claimed to be larger and more accurate than that “smaller panoramic painting called *Banvard’s*.”²⁵³ Smith, like Banvard, was a theater painter having done so in New Orleans and London. He exhibited panoramas in Louisville and Boston in 1840, and then painted for the Park and Simpson’s Theatres in New York in 1842 and 1843. He showed a panorama in Boston in 1844 and was back in New York at the Broadway Theatre in 1847 before going on tour with his own Mississippi panorama.²⁵⁴

In St. Louis in 1848, with the Mississippi River so accessible, Banvard’s imitators multiplied and panoramas of all kinds became popular again. A showman named Weedon displayed “Hudson’s Grand Panoramic View of the Hudson River,”²⁵⁵ and produced “Hudson’s Great National Painting of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.”²⁵⁶ Three other artists set out on their own from St. Louis to sketch the river and return with plans for panoramas. The painter Henry Lewis at first arranged a partnership with Samuel Stockwell and then with Leon Pomarède, but both alliances fell through and each went their own way.²⁵⁷ Stockwell left first that March floating in an open boat to the gulf. He then took a steamboat to the mouth of the Minnesota River and floated in another open boat to St. Louis, sketching the scenery along the way.²⁵⁸

²⁵² Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist*, 77-80.

²⁵³ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 48

²⁵⁴ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 48-54

²⁵⁵ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 13.

²⁵⁶ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 169.

²⁵⁷ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 86.

²⁵⁸ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 70.

Lewis went up the Mississippi in June with a more sophisticated plan involving two assistants. He made previous sketching tours the two years before, but this was the first continuous one. The journalist John S. Robb followed shortly after intending to work up a continuous story to accompany Lewis' sketches. He was a reporter for the *St. Louis Weekly Reveille*. After some floating down the river, an assistant artist named Rogers met them in Galena, Illinois. The three then stopped in the Mormon settlement of Navoo and met the widow of Joseph Smith. Lewis and Rogers sketched the town, the temple, and the baptismal font.²⁵⁹

Leon Pomarède set out that August and did not sketch with crayon and paper like the others, but actually painted his studies on canvas so that he might remember the rich texture he witnessed. He returned later that fall and set to work on a full canvas with his partner Charles Courtenay.²⁶⁰

Henry Lewis and his party returned to St. Louis in August and continued to Cincinnati where he organized the transferring of his and Rogers' sketches to canvas with the help of "Messrs. Leslie, Durang, Johnston, and Laidlaw, the first scenic artists of the country." John Bates, the owner of the National Theater in Cincinnati (and future curator of the St. Louis Museum), financed the project and bought partial ownership of the panorama. Others would also be involved. A river expert named George Stanley helped with the first public presentation, Edmund Flagg did some writing, Charles Gaylor directed, Henry Stagg managed the business, William A. Warner oversaw the exhibition, and Lewis presented on the platform.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 85-89, 109, 114.

²⁶⁰ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 148.

²⁶¹ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 88-89.

In September, Stockwell finished his canvas and John M. Weston of the Ludlow and Smith theater company narrated the eventual presentations. The work was advertised at the end of October of 1848 as three times the length of any other painting. It represented 3,500 miles of American scenery and more than 1,300 water craft including hundreds of well-known steamboats. It ran for 18 nights in St. Louis in the Grand Saloon of the Planters House for 50 cents admission. Stockton and Westin then took the panorama to New Orleans in December and on to Mobile in February.²⁶²

In Europe, Banvard continued to find audiences. Banvard's arguments with John Rowson Smith and George Catlin continued, but he managed to get testimonials from famous lecturers securing his priority in being the first to tour with a panorama of the Mississippi. In April of 1849, he presented his three mile canvas to Queen Victoria and toured rural areas of England before going to Paris and eventually Egypt to sketch the Nile.²⁶³ Smith and his partner, the acrobat Professor Risley, had followed Banvard to England and also secured an audience with the Queen before launching a tour of the continent. The Smith panorama had a larger scope than Banvard's scenery of the lower Mississippi. Smith's started at the Falls of St. Anthony above Fort Snelling and stretched to the Gulf of Mexico. It even included an elaborate view of Navoo with architectural drawings of the Mormon church and a depiction of the baptismal font in the basement enlarged and placed beside the building. This was accompanied by a description for European audiences of Mormons as clever thieves distrusted by other Americans.²⁶⁴

In May of 1849, a fire broke out on a steamboat moored along the St. Louis riverfront and it spread to other boats and into the city destroying many older buildings.

²⁶² McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 74-78.

²⁶³ Hanners, *The Adventures of an Artist*, 89-91.

²⁶⁴ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 55-60.

The news spread to the St. Louis artists on tour in other cities. Stockwell and Weston were displaying their panorama in Charleston, South Carolina,²⁶⁵ and Henry Lewis had just begun presenting in Cincinnati. Lewis took his panorama to Louisville in June before returning to Cincinnati to work on stretches of the lower part of the Mississippi and to add three scenes of St. Louis and the Great Fire: an untouched city at sunset, a rising moon, and a grand conflagration. With the added length, Lewis broke his presentation into a two night series showing first the upper half of the river and then the lower section. By the end of August, he had returned to St. Louis for a September opening.²⁶⁶

Henry Lewis and Leon Pomarède displayed competing panoramas at the same time in St. Louis. Pomarède set up his canvas at the Odd Fellow's Hall on September 17th and concluded with "a beautiful dissolving view of the Great Fire in St. Louis" followed by a view the next day with the river full of smoking boats and ruin. After four weeks, Lewis left for Peoria, Milwaukee, Detroit, Rochester and Buffalo. Pomarède then had St. Louis to himself, and he added new scenes and opened a small museum of Indian curiosities for two hours every morning. Pomarède left for New Orleans in November and exhibited there at Armory Hall for five or six weeks. He then took his panorama to the East Coast where it burned in an accidental fire in Newark a year later.²⁶⁷

Stockwell and Weston made it to Boston by October where they enjoyed some success and added a sketch of "St. Louis in ruins."²⁶⁸ Stockwell's panorama then disappeared from history like Banvard's and Smith's. Henry Lewis eventually settled in Dusseldorf where he sold his panorama to a merchant bound for Java, where it too

²⁶⁵ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 79.

²⁶⁶ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 132-136.

²⁶⁷ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 143-145, 158-160.

²⁶⁸ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 68-69.

disappeared.²⁶⁹ There remains today however a panorama painted by I. J. Egan for the antiquarian Dr. Montroville Wilson Dickeson who between 1837 and 1844 collected many Indian artifacts in the Mississippi Valley, opened one thousand burial mounds, and had forty thousand Indian relics. This moving panorama Dickeson displayed behind his cabinet of Indian curiosities in an exhibition in Philadelphia in 1851. It was the last of the Mississippi panoramas and one of the last presentations of Indian artifacts from the St. Louis of William Clark's time.²⁷⁰

As the 1850s continued, panoramas continued to be shown in St. Louis. James F. Wilkins, who formerly shared a studio with Henry Lewis, showed his panorama of the *Moving Mirror of the Overland Trail* at Wyman Hall in the fall of 1850. It included two hundred watercolor sketches from his trip with an 1849 caravan to California. "The spectator, with very little assistance from the imagination may fancy himself in an air balloon, overtaking and passing the emigrants on the road, witnessing their distress, and seeing the country and the nature of the obstacles they have to contend with; and all with the safety and comfort of sitting at your own fireside."²⁷¹ Through this period, moving panoramas continued to be shown in St. Louis and they became an important way of sharing news and information. In April of 1853 a medical panorama showed across the street from Wyman Hall depicting the story of a local woman cured of lock jaw.²⁷² The next year, panoramas showed at Wyman Hall depicting "Battles in Mexico," the "Crystal Palace," and "Views of New York City."²⁷³ Regular mention of panoramas, views, and scenes continued in newspapers throughout the rest of the decade.

²⁶⁹ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 144.

²⁷⁰ Angela Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America': New World Lost Empires and the Debate over Cultural Origins" *American Art* 8, 3-4 (Summer-Autumn, 1994), 8-27.

²⁷¹ McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, 16.

²⁷² *Daily Missouri Democrat*, April 15, 1853.

²⁷³ *Glasgow Weekly Times*, August 17, 1854.

Building a Bigger Lecture Hall

Foreshadowing the eventful year before them, Alfred Vinton addressed the officers and members of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association at their third annual meeting in January of 1849. Vinton, president of the board of direction, spoke of the growing membership of the organization and the luck of St. Louis to not be “ravaged by pestilence, nor wasted by conflagration, like some sister cities.”²⁷⁴ By the time Vinton reported to them again the next January at Odd Fellows Hall for their fourth annual meeting, the tone had changed. “Who, that witnessed it, can forget the resplendent horrors of the conflagration of hundreds of buildings, and millions of property, on the night of 17th May last? Who will ever forget the succeeding pestilence—the frightful havoc of human life—the suddenness of death—the perpetual passage of funeral trains...” Despite acknowledging St. Louis’ tragedies, Vinton went on to note that the city was thriving: “...the Association is now in a most flourishing condition.” Though 94 of its members in 1849 had moved to California, left the association, or died, 311 new members joined to bring the library up to 589 active members—four times as many as were ever reported for the Saint Louis Lyceum.²⁷⁵

The Mercantile Library’s success followed the phases of the Lyceum Movement. Lyceums began as debating clubs occasionally encouraging their members to deliver public lectures, and they grew lending libraries to support the interests and education of their members. Historian Donald M. Scott has observed that the Lyceum Movement matured through three phases prior to the Civil War. In the 1830s public lectures were usually free and open to non-members. The lectures were given by unpaid locals who were usually

²⁷⁴ *Third Annual Report*, 13. SLML, M-117.

²⁷⁵ *Fourth Annual Report*, 7. SLML, M-117.

members of the lyceum. By the 1840s, admission was charged even to members, and the lecturers were paid professionals usually from out of town. These lectures were often moral in nature or about general intellectual topics that were both secular and nonpartisan. In the 1850s, lectures were all the more public and polished. They were given by invitation only and needed to be ‘useful to all and offensive to none,’ while profitable to the host institution.²⁷⁶

Lyceums proliferated throughout the Northeast, but few formed in the South. The most successful lecturers traveled through a dense network of lecture halls concentrated between New York City and Boston. Lyceums in St. Louis prior to the 1850s often failed to attract these men due to their distance and isolation from the rest of America’s lecture halls. This meant that famous speakers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Park Benjamin did not speak in St. Louis until the city and transportation improved. When they did come these speakers attracted large crowds and funds to public conversations. By the end of the 1840s, public lectures became popular theater. With their moral pretensions toned down, they were welcoming to larger audiences.²⁷⁷

The first lectures of this third phase of the Lyceum Movement took place at Wyman Hall. In 1849, Edward Wyman was a new member of the board of St. Louis Public Schools and director of his own English and Classical High School. Wyman had between four and five hundred students and had just moved his school into a new building which for the next few years became the most important lecture hall in the city.²⁷⁸

Wyman opened his school in its new building just as public lectures began to be profitable again and large venues became necessary. Like the Saint Louis Lyceum, the

²⁷⁶ Donald M. Scott, “The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America” in *The American Journal of History*, 66, 4 (March, 1980), 792-793.

²⁷⁷ Scott, “The Popular Lecture,” 805.

²⁷⁸ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2018, 2556-2557.

Mercantile Library also had a lecture committee from the beginning but it proved unprofitable and was abandoned until 1849. It then sponsored lectures successfully, even with competition from the newly formed YMCA.²⁷⁹ Both organizations held their lectures at Wyman Hall.

In 1850, Wyman replaced William Greenleaf Eliot as president of the board of St. Louis Public Schools as a 1/10 percent tax subsidy for the growing district came into effect.²⁸⁰ At the same time, his lecture hall began drawing large crowds to hear speakers of a higher caliber than were ever available to the Saint Louis Lyceum. On November 14, 1850, Senator Thomas Hart Benton delivered his “Progress of the Age” speech at Wyman Hall under the organization of the Mercantile Library. “So large and intelligent an audience, composed of citizens of both sexes, was probably never before assembled in this city, to hear a lecture on any subject.”²⁸¹

Benton’s speech addressed the city at mid-century, speaking of the past and the future of St. Louis and the nation. It followed on the heels of an address to a gathering of railroad interests at the St. Louis court house. Benton championed the plan for a railroad from St. Louis to California and thrilled his listeners with a vision of a mountaintop in the Rockies carved to resemble Columbus pointing west to say “there is the East! there is India!” However, in his companion speech at Wyman Hall, Benton struck a nonpartisan pose in keeping with Lyceum tradition. He spoke of the “Progress of the Age,” of the changing of the times and the past and future of compromise. He stood upon thirty years of the successful implementation of the Missouri Compromise and he saw a future of railroads

²⁷⁹ Bode, *The American Lyceum*, 163.

²⁸⁰ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2014, 2018.

²⁸¹ *Fifth Annual Report*, 16-17. SLML, M-117.

and the West as a theater for St. Louis' ambitions.²⁸² He also spoke of the diffusion of knowledge and the popularity of lecture halls at mid-century: "Lectures... impart knowledge, and create a thirst for more. They apply to all subjects, and may be adapted to all hearers... All our American cities are now availing themselves of this rational and elegant mode of instruction, so appropriate to winter evenings, and I rejoice to see St. Louis following the example."²⁸³

Benton's vision of St. Louis at midcentury recognized a time of great change and opportunity. Benton's observation of the nation's recent embrace of public lectures proved true in the weeks and months that followed. The Mercantile Library organized many more lectures at Wyman Hall. The Reverend William Greenleaf Eliot lectured on "Rome, with a description of St. Peters and the Coliseum," and it was "listened to with profound attention, and evident satisfaction, by a very large and brilliant auditory." Then the Reverend Giles delivered six lectures on the "Actual and Ideal of Life," and Father Smarius of Saint Louis University spoke on "Pagan and Christian Families." T. M. Post presented on "The Voices of History," Reverend William Homes gave two lectures on the "Obligations of Literary Men," and Dr. R. S. Holmes mused on the "Harmonies in Nature."²⁸⁴ It was a rich offering for an institution that could not maintain a lecture committee prior to 1849.

By early 1851, the officers of the Mercantile Library felt Benton's progress of the age. The library's slow start of the 1840s was over. They had grown by their fifth annual meeting to 658 members and their lectures proved profitable.²⁸⁵ The new president, Hudson E. Bridge, announced in terms demonstrating his faith in St. Louis that the

²⁸² Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 34-35, 43.

²⁸³ Thomas Hart Benton, "The Progress of the Age" transcription, 20-21. SLML, M-8: Thomas Hart Benton Collection.

²⁸⁴ *Fifth Annual Report*, 16-17. SLML, M-117.

²⁸⁵ *Fifth Annual Report*. 13. SLML, M-117.

association's "continued progress is a fixed fact; and when we contemplate the future destiny of our city, and its commercial greatness, we cannot but think, that in after times, its Mercantile Library may become as world renowned as that of Alexandria of old."²⁸⁶

The Mercantile's success paralleled the decline of the Saint Louis Lyceum. "Their resources, became exhausted, and the number of its members rapidly diminished... it had become so feeble, that its warmest friends were disheartened." The last of the Lyceums members paid off the organization's debts and merged the combined holdings of the St. Louis Library Company, the Lyceum, and presumably the Mechanics' Institute, into the Mercantile Library.²⁸⁷

With membership and collections growing, the Mercantile purchased land at Fifth and Locust for construction of a new building in June of 1851, but they continued using rented rooms while they secured plans and funding for the new building.²⁸⁸ Another winter of profitable lectures commenced "all delivered at Wyman's Hall," a floor below the new St. Louis Museum.²⁸⁹ Among the speakers, Charles A. Pope spoke on the pleasures and advantages of science and Ralph Waldo Emerson presented seven lectures from his *Conduct of Life* series.²⁹⁰ Reflecting on the surge in attendance, the leaders of the association noted that :

three years back... your Board of Directors could not have assumed an undertaking more disastrous to the fortunes of your Treasury, than that of inviting a lecturer to address your fellow-citizens... We have, however, responded to the spirit of the times, and added to the facts which have warranted the chronicler of the times in pronouncing this the 'Lecturing

²⁸⁶ *Fifth Annual Report*. 33. SLML, M-117.

²⁸⁷ *Sixth Annual Report*, 23-24. SLML, M-117.

²⁸⁸ *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report*, 36. SLML, M-117.

²⁸⁹ *Sixth Annual Report*, 19. SLML, M-117.

²⁹⁰ *Seventh Annual Report*, 22-26. SLML, M-117.

Era...? Lectures are, indeed, the peculiarity of the times... everywhere now, are they in demand... This mode of instruction... has rapidly developed within the past five years...²⁹¹

They recorded that something had changed at the end of the 1840s, and they sensed that the momentum of this surge in public involvement was just beginning.

The next year in 1853, Edward Wyman closed his school, but six more public schools opened bringing the total to twelve. Some like the Benton, Clark, and Laclede Schools were named for old St. Louisans. Others like the Eliot and Webster Schools drew their names from prominent Whig reformers.²⁹² Eliot in particular became associated with education that year when members of the Mercantile Library secured a charter for a new university and nominated him to direct it. Eliot was already a director of the recently founded University of Missouri in Columbia, but he took on this new role at the urging of his friends. They named the school for George Washington to “indicate the unsectarian and unpolitical, but yet American and Christian, basis on which [it was] determined to build.” In contrast to the state university and the Catholic Saint Louis University, Washington University was founded to be broadly American and Protestant in a time of nativist sentiments and growing immigrant populations. It put St. Louis along a path recognizable to New England educators.²⁹³

Though only just beginning to move into a hall of their own, the Mercantile Library began acquiring art donated by their members for their new building. Meriwether Lewis Clark donated two paintings said to be by Albrecht Dürer, Henry D. Bacon ordered the casting of a life-sized statue of Daniel Webster,²⁹⁴ and the board of directors arranged for the

²⁹¹ *Seventh Annual Report*, 26. SLML, M-117.

²⁹² Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2557.

²⁹³ Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 56.

²⁹⁴ *Eighth Annual Report*, 19. SLML, M-117.

move of a large portrait of William Clark from the court house. The directors hoped that it would “prove a nucleus around which our citizens, who possess works of Art, will take pleasure in adding their contributions.”²⁹⁵ The artist was the former librarian of the Saint Louis Lyceum, Chester Harding, who willingly conceded that the work would be shown in better light with less possibility of damage at the library than in the rotunda of the court house.²⁹⁶



Figure 1 Rendering of the Mercantile Library Hall as it appeared in the 8th Annual Report to the Board of Directors of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association

As the Mercantile Library transitioned to its new building, the brief reign of Wyman Hall as the premiere lecture hall in St. Louis came to a close. The new Mercantile Library Hall would be the primary event space for important meetings, lectures, and concerts for decades after its construction. The Grand Hall closed from June to October of 1854 for the

²⁹⁵ *Eighth Annual Report*, 13. SLML, M-117.

²⁹⁶ McDermott, “How Goes the Harding Fever Go?”, This portrait was mostly likely painted in the 1830s after Harding had grown more sophisticated as an artist, but has been dated to 1819 or 1820 in several sources due to confusion with Harding’s earlier, cruder study’s of Clark’s likeness.

artist Leon Pomarède to paint the interior,²⁹⁷ and when it officially opened in 1855, the four story building resembled Wyman Hall in structure and function. Its first floor rented to other institutions, including the recently founded YMCA and the St. Louis Chess Club.²⁹⁸ There was a grand lecture hall and space for the library above that. Lectures in the newly painted hall were numerous, well attended, and profitable. The two floors above held the library's collections as Wyman Hall's top floors held its museum.

There were more than twenty lectures arranged by the Mercantile in 1854 including such speakers as Bayard Taylor, a star of the lecture circuit, who spoke of Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan.²⁹⁹ Taylor returned in 1855 to speak of India, travel, and the "Animal Man." The venerable professor Silliman Sr., founder of the *American Journal of Science*, gave twelve lectures on geology. The hall also took on the quality of Wyman Hall as host to lectures arranged by others. From the beginning, the Mercantile Library collected rental fees for its auditorium from the YMCA, which was both a lecture sponsoring institution and a tenant,³⁰⁰ but as time went on, the library increasingly rented the hall to other civic groups such as the St. Louis Philharmonic Orchestra, the Caledonian Society, and various mutual aid associations for benefit concerts and socials.³⁰¹ In 1858, the Mercantile even acted as a central gathering place to mourn the death of Thomas Hart Benton, whose "mortal remains rested in [the] Grand Hall before their final removal to the grave; and thither thousands, moved by a common respect, came to stand in the presence of the dead."³⁰²

²⁹⁷ *Ninth Annual Report*, 13. SLML, M-117.

²⁹⁸ *Ninth Annual Report*, 17. SLML, M-117.

²⁹⁹ *Ninth Annual Report*, 20-21. SLML, M-117.

³⁰⁰ *Tenth Annual Report*, 13-14. SLML, M-117.

³⁰¹ Event Flyers folder, SLML, M-117.

³⁰² *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 17. SLML, M-117.

As the Mercantile Library and Washington University grew in size under the city's Whig leaders, St. Louis Public Schools gained a larger and larger tax levy to cope with the needs of the newly expansive city. By 1865, the Public School Library Society of St. Louis began operation.³⁰³ Soon afterwards, the new library moved into the recently constructed Polytechnic Building. It was the "centre from which extend the radiating arms of [the] educational system." The Polytechnic served as a home for the school district's administration and library, but other institutions soon joined them.

In 1871, on the 25th anniversary of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association, James E. Yeatman, one of the library's founders, spoke to the association and reflected upon the organization's tenure at the center of St. Louis culture. The third phase of the Lyceum Movement had passed. Libraries and lectures were established components of American culture. Of the changing times, Yeatman noted the convergence of organizations in the Polytechnic and the emergence of free public libraries throughout the country. Like Benton before him, he noted the changing of an age. He called for the city to donate land and tax revenue to the Mercantile so that it might become a public library and an art museum on a corner of the Missouri Park at the edge of the Lucas Place neighborhood.³⁰⁴

Three of the institutions sharing the Polytechnic building eventually realized Yeatman's dream. The newly collectionless Academy of Science and the Missouri Historical Society persisted into the 21st century to see the creation of the publically funded St. Louis Science Center and Missouri History Museum. The school district's library became the St. Louis Public Library, and its central headquarters was built to Yeatman's specifications as an edifice beside Lucas Park. It remains a home to books, art, and public lectures in the middle of downtown St. Louis.

³⁰³ Hyde and Canard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 2015-2016.

³⁰⁴ *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report*, 43-44. SLML, M-117.

Conclusion: Botanical Compromise

The increase of lectures and exhibitions in St. Louis after the Great Fire of 1849 happened through a steady accumulation of interests suppressed during the mid-1840s. St. Louis culture was not fundamentally altered by the events of 1849, and the past was certainly not destroyed. While the city really did change after the fire, it did so by embracing the momentum for a return of the public events, spaces, and institutions of the 1830s and combined that momentum with the more introverted self-improvement of the 1840s. This synthesis of public and private agendas is well defined by the American Compromise advanced by Joel J. Orosz in his history of the museum movement in the United States.

The American Compromise, invented by institutions pursuing the split agendas of increasing and diffusing knowledge simultaneously, is one of the great legacies of the 1850s, but the final permanent synthesis of museums with research and education divisions or libraries with research fellowships as well as lectures and exhibitions, took many more decades to form. Perhaps the greatest legacy of this kind in St. Louis today in 2014 can be found in the mission of the Missouri Botanical Garden: “To discover and share knowledge about plants in order to preserve and enrich life.” To discover knowledge, the garden contains one of the largest research herbaria in the world, a growing library of taxonomic literature, and research staff on multiple continents. To share knowledge, the garden maintains elaborate floral displays, employs a large education division, and trains hundreds of volunteers in horticulture, botany, and sustainable living. This split purpose began in the 1850s in the combined efforts of two St. Louisans of differing backgrounds and agendas. Henry Shaw founded the botanical garden as a place for the public to visit and enjoy.

George Engelmann championed its research program as an expansion and continuation of the botanical science he had done all his life. However, a whole generation needed to pass to see these two agendas come fully together.

The combining of Shaw and Engelmann's legacies is one of the most popularly recounted stories in St. Louis history. The rich philanthropist Henry Shaw decided to create a world class botanical garden on his country estate, and so he wrote to the director of Kew Gardens in London, Sir William Jackson Hooker, for advice. Hooker, and Asa Gray at Harvard, convinced Shaw that the very best guidance available to him was in the person of George Engelmann. It is popularly said in publication after publication that Engelmann acted as "scientific adviser" to Henry Shaw in the founding of the Missouri Botanical Garden. After Engelmann's death, Shaw endowed the George Engelmann professorship at the Henry Shaw School of Botany at Washington University, and since Shaw's death all presidents of the Missouri Botanical Garden have been Engelmann professors of botany.

This merger of research and public interests can be better understood in light of the American Compromise and the parallel stories of other St. Louis cultural institutions. Engelmann and Shaw's legacies have intertwined since that fateful letter to Hooker in 1856, but historians have generally not questioned why Engelmann and Shaw, fellow St. Louisans, would have needed a transatlantic intermediary to bring them together. The simplest answer is that they occupied different social strata; Shaw was a wealthy British merchant and Engelmann was a busy German obstetrician. Another approach is to consider that for many years they were not even in the same city. For most of the 1840s, Engelmann concentrated on his work. As Engelmann professor and garden director William Trelease would later write "There was an end of the [Western] academy; but under the law of the survival of the

fittest, Dr. Engelmann ‘survived’ and became an Academy of Science in himself.”³⁰⁵ While Engelmann toiled, Shaw traveled through Europe.

Shaw retired from a profitable import business in St. Louis in 1839, and he left for Europe in July of 1840.³⁰⁶ In 1841 he toured the grounds and botanical garden at Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna, and from abroad procured expansive lands on the edge of St. Louis. He returned in person to finalize the transfer of property in April of 1843 and became a citizen of the United States that summer, but then he left again. He toured the Scottish Highlands. He went on to the cities of Germany and France, Egypt, Russia, and Scandinavia not to return until August of 1846.³⁰⁷ Shaw then left again to attend the Great Exhibition in England in 1851 where he toured gardens and admired the Crystal Palace. Only after this decade of travel did Shaw finally return to St. Louis and begin planning a garden of his own. He made his intentions known for the first time in the summer of 1853.³⁰⁸

Shaw wrote to Hooker in February of 1856 of his desire to “endow a public botanical garden.” Hooker wrote back urging him to remember science in his efforts and to seek out the advice of George Engelmann.³⁰⁹ Hooker wrote again to Shaw in support of the professional needs of research botanists stating, as quoted in William Barnaby Faherty’s biography *Henry Shaw*, that “Very few appendages to a garden are of more importance for instruction... than a library and economic museum; and they will gradually increase like a rolling snowball.”³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ Trelease, “Academy of Science of St. Louis,” 117.

³⁰⁶ William Barnaby Faherty, *Henry Shaw: His Life and Legacies* (St. Louis: Missouri Botanical Garden Press, 1987), 40-41.

³⁰⁷ Faherty, *Henry Shaw*, 42-58.

³⁰⁸ Faherty, *Henry Shaw*, 68, 72.

³⁰⁹ Faherty, *Henry Shaw*, 78-80.

³¹⁰ Faherty, *Henry Shaw*, 90-91.

Despite the zeal of the scientific community, Shaw's primary purpose remained the establishment of a large strolling garden for public enjoyment. He constructed a museum building in his garden modeled on a converted fruit-storage building at Kew called Museum No. 2. Engelmann considered it unfortunate that the rooms would be too small for the herbarium and library he had purchased for Shaw and that there would be no place to work other than the basement. The garden that opened to the public in 1859 reflected Shaw's interests. Engelmann complained to Gray the next year that "We are very good friends but I am afraid would not hitch well together. Scientific botany is secondary or tertiary with him, while I cannot get up an enthusiasm for what interests him."³¹¹

For the remainder of Shaw's life, the Missouri Botanical Garden remained committed to functioning as a public attraction rather than a research institute. Engelmann continued his research without Shaw using his own herbarium and found more scientific collaborators locally in the Academy of Science of St. Louis. However, after both eventually died and a new generation took over, the Missouri Botanical Garden expanded its mission. William Trelease, the first endowed Engelmann professor of botany and director of the garden after Shaw's death, dedicated funds to expanding the library and herbarium and in September of 1889 accepted from Engelmann's son, George Julius Engelmann, the personal books, specimens, and papers of his father.³¹² Trelease and later leaders of the garden grew the research division and the public gardens in parallel as two components of the same mission: to increase and diffuse, or to discover and share knowledge about plants.

The original museum building, too small for research even before it was built, found a new purpose more than a generation later in 1930 when it was designated as a lecture hall

³¹¹ Faherty, *Henry Shaw*, 116-117.

³¹² Faherty, *A Gift to Glory In—The Missouri Botanical Garden* (St. Louis: Missouri Botanical Garden Press, 1987), 4.

to accommodate a scientific conference. The building was renovated and fitted with a projection booth and screen for showing films and presentations. It served the garden until 1972 as a venue for both public and research events including conferences and a speaker series.³¹³ It was converted into a library again and finally closed. Now, in 2014, it is the focus of a fundraising initiative. The garden hopes to restore the building and the great floral fresco on the building's ceiling by the panoramic painter Leon Pomarède. It will be repurposed as a public exhibition hall. This is an exciting new purpose, but as this study has hopefully demonstrated, exhibitions in St. Louis are not entirely a new idea.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is known in St. Louis as Shaw's Garden, and it is known locally for display and education. Engelmann's Garden, the research division, what some have called "the Unseen Garden," prospers beyond the notice of the average citizen.³¹⁴ Orosz's Age of Professionalism and the 1840s lull in exhibitions and lectures have been similarly unseen by historians of Antebellum St. Louis because they are not on display, but the unseen gap in activity gives emphasis and greater meaning to St. Louis as the Great Heart of the Republic because in the spirit of the American Compromise the high and the low come together as two feet walking forward in the creation of what became the St. Louis Movement. The cultural flowering of St. Louis sprang from a shared past, not one that was destroyed.

³¹³ Kim Klienman, *The Museum in the Garden: Research, Display, and Education at the Missouri Botanical Garden Since 1989*, Dissertation, Union Institute College of Graduate Studies, 11-12.

³¹⁴ Bruce A. Stein. *The Unseen Garden: Research at the Missouri Botanical Garden* (St. Louis: Missouri Botanical Garden Press, 1987).

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