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The Mischief Wrought by the Master of the Skerryvore:
Victoria at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the colony of Victoria's involvement in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. The chance to send a display to Philadelphia provided an exciting opportunity for the colony to foster a sense of racial and cultural belonging with the Exhibition's fairgoers with the aim of consolidating economic, cultural, scientific and social networks between Victoria, the United States and the world. Of the Australian colonies, Victoria sent the largest exhibition contingent to Philadelphia. However, restrictive trade laws, parliamentary disunity, and doubts regarding the usefulness of sending exhibits to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition negatively impacted its planning and staging. These problems ultimately led to the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore*, the ship tasked with transporting the Victorian exhibits to the United States, and the subsequent damage to many of the items sent to represent the colony at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition.

This thesis uses Victoria's involvement in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as a lens through which to consider how competing visions of the colony's future, as well as economic and political factors, impacted the colony's representation at Philadelphia. By re-embedding this event in the complex economic, political, and cultural context within which it took place, this thesis sheds light on the broader role played by these influences in affecting the representation of colonies, dependencies and nations at nineteenth-century exhibitions.

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Introduction

The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition was opened on 10 May 1876 to commemorate the centenary of the signing of the *Declaration of Independence*. The fair was a massive undertaking: exhibits for display were sent by a total of fifty nations, dependencies, and colonies, including Great Britain, Belgium, Turkey, Japan, Russia, China, and the Argentine Republic; the British dependencies of Jamaica, the Straits Settlements, and British Guiana; and the Australian colonies of Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria.¹

While the colony of Victoria had previously sent contingents to the Paris Expositions of 1855 and 1867, and the London Exhibition of 1862, the chance to send a display to the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition presented the potential for further cultural, scientific and economic collaboration between the United States and the Australian colonies.² During this period, the relationship between Victoria and the United States was mediated by, and limited by, the colony's cultural and economic ties with Great Britain: in the final decades of the nineteenth century, seventy percent of imports to Australia came from Britain, and over eighty percent of Australian goods were exported there.³ However, the colony was also gradually asserting its economic independence from Britain during this period, and the Victorian government initially responded with enthusiasm to the opportunity to send an exhibit to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. In response to a question in Parliament, Attorney-General George Briscoe Kerferd agreed that 'if it were found that the other colonies were desirous of being represented at the world's fair in Philadelphia in 1876, Victoria should not be behind'.⁴ Commissioners were

¹ *Official Catalogue: Complete in One Volume*. (Philadelphia, PA: J.R. Nagle and Co., 1876).

² Gerard Hayes, 'London, Paris, Philadelphia ... Victoria at the Great Exhibitions', *The La Trobe Journal* 56 (1995).

³ Deryck M. Schreuder, 'Empire: Australia and "Greater Britain", 1788–1901', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 511–34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHO9781107445758.024>. p.524

⁴ 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Assembly, vol. 19, August 18, 1874, p. 950.

appointed, funds were promised, and a circular was sent asking local councils, businesses and individuals to select exhibits they thought were suitable for display at the Exhibition.

The enthusiasm with which the Victorian government responded to the opportunity to send a display to Philadelphia was reflected in the organisation of the 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, which was organised with the aim of choosing suitable exhibits to send to Philadelphia. Of the exhibits sent to the Intercolonial Exhibition, about three thousand were forwarded on to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, making the Victorian Section the largest exhibition contingent sent from the Australian colonies to Philadelphia.⁵ Sending exhibition contingents overseas was an important means by which Victoria could facilitate trade, cultural and scientific networks with both the host nation, and the other nations exhibiting at the fair. Numerous individuals chose to send items for display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and included, among others, manufacturers, agriculturalists, pastoralists, scientists, publishers, mining companies, and the Commissioners themselves.

A significant outcome of the colony's representation at the Philadelphia Exhibition was the exchange of scientific and technological information that resulted from the decision to send a Victorian Section to the United States. World's fairs served as important platforms for the exchange of scientific and technical knowledge and played an important role in developing networks through which the Australian colonies could forge connections with one another and with the scientific establishment in the northern hemisphere.⁶ Scientific exchange was also co-opted to technological, commercial and economic ends. This was the case at the Philadelphia Exhibition: numerous essays were published by both the Victorian and the American

⁵ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record: Containing Introduction, Catalogues, Official Awards of the Commissioners, Reports and Recommendations of the Experts and Essays and Statistics on the Social and Economic Resources of the Colony of Victoria*. (Melbourne: Published by authority of the Commissioners, 1875).

⁶ Peter H. Hoffenberg, *A Science of Our Own: Exhibitions and the Rise of Australian Public Science*, Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019). p.93.

Commissioners reporting on various scientific innovations that were deemed beneficial to the political economy of both societies.⁷ Exhibitions also played a corrective role in informing international fairgoers that Victoria was no longer a frontier, strictly utilitarian society, and that its colonists were capable of developing aesthetic sensibilities through the creation and display of textual material, sculptures, and paintings.⁸

The organisation of the Victorian Section was however fraught from the outset by problems relating to its planning, financing, and staging. Most notably, despite the fact that supporters of the colony's involvement in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition promoted it as an opportunity to encourage trade between Victoria and the United States, restrictive trade laws passed by both societies in the 1860s and into the 1870s prevented any chance of trade from occurring between the two societies following the close of the Exhibition. Victoria took a different path than the other Australian colonies in the late nineteenth century, adopting a protectionist trade policy characterised by high tariffs with the aims of increasing government revenue, promoting the colony's domestic manufacturing industries, and increasing employment. In contrast, the other colonies generally adopted free trade economic policies. Although the passage of tariff legislation in Victoria was fiercely debated, by the 1870s the Victorian government had extended tariffs to most imported goods: the *Duties of Customs Act* of 1871, for instance, meant that goods including iron, spirits, wine, sugar and leather imported into Victoria were subject to import duties of up to twenty percent.⁹

⁷ The *Official Record* to the Victorian Section included essays on scientific, technological, and industrial innovations in the United States and the world that the Commissioners thought would be useful to the colony. Similarly, agricultural associations in the United States published essays on agricultural innovations in Victoria with the aim of improving American farming.

⁸ Hoffenberg identifies how colonial representation at world's fairs played a corrective role in educating international fairgoers about the progress of the colony and demonstrating that Victoria had progressed beyond its agricultural roots. Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2001). p.137.

⁹ 'Duties of Customs Act' (1871), http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist_act/tdoca1871245/.

The United States was in a similar situation during and after the Civil War: during this time, a period of Republican dominance federally, the trend was to protect the U.S. economy by placing tariffs on imported goods. The Morrill Tariff of 1861 was introduced with the aim of using customs duties to protect and strengthen the U.S. economy, and increased and introduced duties of up to twenty-five percent on a vast range of items including sugar, brandy, tobacco, and cotton.¹⁰ In addition to the schedule of goods subject to customs duties being expanded in 1862 and 1864, in 1867, to the chagrin of Australian observers, a lobby of American wool farmers and manufacturers successfully passed the Wool and Woollens Act, which vastly increased duties on washed and scoured wool, as well as imported wool products.¹¹ This was in response to the development of the wool industry in South Africa, Argentina and Australia, which all benefitted from mild climates and cheap land.

The problems experienced by the Victorian Commissioners did not end there. The ship carrying the bulk of the exhibits for Victoria, the *Skerryvore*, was allegedly sabotaged by its captain on the way from Victoria to the United States. According to contemporary news reports, William Stoddart, the captain of the *Skerryvore*, bored a hole in the side of the ship somewhere off the coast of the Bahamas. The captain had apparently plunged the ship into debt by sailing to Mauritius without permission from his shipowners on his way from Britain to the Southern Hemisphere to deliver a cargo of coal. Stoddart had subsequently falsified his financial accounts to make up for this diversion in his journey, and by making a total loss of the ship, hoped to shift the burden of debt he owed onto his insurers. A loophole in British marine insurance law gave Stoddart this option: if he only made a partial loss of the *Skerryvore*, both he and the ship's owners in Britain would be financially ruined, since the ship's insurance would only be recovered in part. However,

¹⁰ F.W. Taussig, 'The Duties on Wool and Woollens', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 8, no. 1 (October 1893): 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882875>.

¹¹ Tom E. Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874-1901* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1973). p.190.

a total loss of the ship would lead to a full insurance payout and the subsequent recouping of the costs incurred by the captain's diversion to Mauritius.

The Victorian Commissioners hoped to use the chance to send a Victorian Section to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as an opportunity to advertise the colony's economic, cultural and social progress to the world. However, an unstable parliamentary situation, as well as restrictive trade laws, made it difficult for the Commissioners to plan, and secure funding for, the Victorian Section. These issues were eventually to their detriment: the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore* led to the damage of many of the exhibits that were to comprise the Victorian Section.

By providing an account of the planning and staging of the Victorian Section, this thesis seeks to achieve three aims: first and foremost, I seek to undertake an analysis of the impact that political and economic factors had on the planning, staging and disbursement of the Victorian Section. Second, I aim to analyse the organisation and layout of the Victorian Section with the purpose of considering how the Victorian Commissioners sought to project a racialised image of the colony's achievements to fairgoers. This was done by the Victorian Commissioners with the intention of facilitating economic, scientific and cultural exchange between Victoria, the United States, and the world. Finally, I hope to consider the outcomes of the colony's representation at Philadelphia. While some scientific and cultural exchange was facilitated between the colony and the United States as a result of its representation at Philadelphia, any opportunity of prolonged economic exchange between the two societies was limited by the restrictive trade laws that existed between them.

The role played by the nineteenth-century world's fairs, especially the 1851 London Great Exhibition, in fostering transnational relationships, as well as in projecting an image of an

economically and socially progressed society, has been extensively studied.¹² Perhaps the most influential study of exhibitions and cultural institutions is cultural studies scholar Tony Bennett's *Birth of the Museum*. While Bennett focuses primarily on the museum, his work also offers insights into the social role played by nineteenth century world's fairs. In it, Bennett argues that, like the prison and the asylum, nineteenth-century exhibitions and museums were used to disseminate elite ideas of social order to the masses. This was a process enacted through spatial and structural means whereby the public were exposed to state-sanctioned ideas of social order and hierarchy. The aim of this, according to Bennett, was to create a self-regulating citizenry that adopted the ideas disseminated by the organisers of these cultural institutions and reproduced the power relations they embodied.¹³

Additionally, studies of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition have considered how social inequalities were either laid bare, or glossed over, at the fair. The bicentennial of the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* saw a rise in histories both of the year 1876, and of the Exhibition itself.¹⁴ Subsequent studies of the Exhibition sought to demonstrate how it reflected the stark racial, social and economic divisions during the Reconstruction Era following the American Civil War. Philip Foner, for instance, explored how discriminatory legislation designed to restrict the ability of African Americans in Philadelphia to find work ensured that not a single black worker was hired

¹² See, for instance, Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1988); Robert Brain, *Going to the Fair: Readings in the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Exhibitions*, Publications of the Project on Innovation in Britain and Germany, 1870-1920 (Cambridge: Whipple Museum of the History of Science, 1993); John R. Davis, *The Great Exhibition* (London: Stroud Publishing, 1999); Elfie Rembold, 'Exhibitions and National Identity', *National Identities* 1, no. 3 (1 November 1999): 221-25; Anna Jackson, *Expo: International Expositions 1851-2010* (London: V&A Publishing, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2008); Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, eds., *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2008).

¹³ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Culture: Policy and Politics (London; New York: Routledge, 1995). p.6.

¹⁴ National Museum of History and Technology, *A Treatise upon Selected Aspects of the Great International Exhibition Held in Philadelphia on the Occasion of Our Nation's One-Hundredth Birthday, with Some Reference to Another Exhibition Held in Washington Commemorating That Epic Event, and Called 1876, a Centennial Exhibition*, ed. Robert C. Post (Washington: National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, 1976); Dee Brown, *The Year of the Century: 1876* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1966); William Peirce Randel, *Centennial: American Life in 1876* (New York, NY: Chilton Book Company, 1969); Maass, *The Glorious Enterprise*; Lally Weymouth and Milton Glaser, *America in 1876: The Way We Were* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1976).

to build the nearly two hundred buildings that were to occupy the Centennial grounds, despite the seventy percent unemployment rate amongst the black population in the city.¹⁵ Mary Frances Cordato similarly focussed on women's involvement at the Centennial, and argued that the establishment of a separate pavilion by the Centennial Women's Committee reinforced the idea that women belonged in a separate sphere to men.¹⁶

Perhaps the most influential work of scholarship on the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition is Robert Rydell's study of exhibitions in late nineteenth-century America. Rydell argues that the world's fairs hosted in the United States during this period played an important role in perpetuating ideas of racial dominance, since they projected the idea that societal progress occurred along racial and economic lines. Rydell contends that the Philadelphia Exhibition was designed to project these values through its elaborate hierarchical classification system, as well as through the staging of an 'Indian exhibit', which consisted of a selection of items relating to Native Americans arranged with little regard for their ethnographic status. This exhibit, according to Rydell, was intended by the fair's organisers to demonstrate that the worth of Native Americans was determined by their 'usefulness as a counterpoint to the unfolding progress of the ages'.¹⁷ The Philadelphia Exhibition's organisers thus used the fair to characterise Native Americans as racially inferior to Europeans, an attitude perhaps amplified by the embarrassing defeat of General Custer's cavalry unit by the Lakota Sioux at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June 1876.

More recent studies of the Philadelphia Exhibition have sought to re-contextualise it within the fraught social, economic and political context of the Reconstruction-era United States. In his study of the United States during the Reconstruction and Gilded Age, Richard White argues that

¹⁵ Philip S. Foner, 'Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876', *Phylon* 39, no. 4 (1978): 283–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/274895>. p.288.

¹⁶ Mary Frances Cordato, 'Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, 1876', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (1983): 113–35.

¹⁷ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. p.25.

the organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition, many of them tied to prominent Philadelphia-based mining and railway companies, sought to use the fair to gloss over increasingly strained relations between themselves and labour unions by inviting miners and other industrial workers to tour the fair.¹⁸ Krista Kinslow has similarly located her analysis of the Exhibition in the context of post-Civil War America, and argues that the organisation of the fair was influenced by debates over the nation's representation at the fair, as well as the role that acknowledgement of the recent American Civil War was to play at the Centennial Exhibition. Ultimately, Kinslow identifies how sectional disputes between the former Northern and Southern states led to the over-representation of states and industries endemic to the North at the fair, at the expense of Southern states and industry.¹⁹

Finally, Joanna Cohen concludes her book exploring the development of the citizen-consumer in the United States with a case study of the Philadelphia Exhibition. Specifically, she argues that the organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition sought to gloss over Congressional debates about free trade or economic protectionism by promoting consumerism as a national good at the fair.²⁰ The general trend in the United States following the Civil War, which was a period of Republican dominance federally, was to protect the American economy by placing tariffs on imported goods.²¹ The Morrill Tariff of 1861 introduced duties of up to twenty-five percent on a vast range of consumer goods, including sugar, brandy, tobacco, and cotton.²² Customs duties continued to be used as a means of strengthening the American economy into the twentieth century, meaning that while imported goods that were to be displayed at the Philadelphia Exhibition were exempted

¹⁸ Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*, The Oxford History of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). pp.308-314.

¹⁹ Krista Kinslow, 'Contesting the Centennial: Politics and Culture at the 1876 World's Fair' (PhD Thesis, 2019).

²⁰ Joanna Cohen, *Luxurious Citizens: The Politics of Consumption in Nineteenth-Century America*, America in the Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). pp.220-221.

²¹ F. W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States: A Series of Essays* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1889).

²² 'Morrill Tariff' (1861).

from customs duties, American fairgoers were charged steep duties for purchasing those same items at the Centennial.²³

There is a similarly extensive body of scholarship focussing on the development of exhibitions, museums, and other cultural institutions in Australia.²⁴ Some older studies that consider the development of these institutions in Australia emphasise their role in both facilitating international relationships and advertising the colony's achievements to the colony's populace. Graeme Davison, for instance, argues that the world's fairs played an integral role in providing platforms upon which the world's nations could compete against one another, and contends that although international exhibitions 'have an important place in the history of trade, they had an even more important cultural role' by facilitating these relationships.²⁵ In her analysis of the development of public history initiatives in Victoria, Maryanne McCubbin identifies the role played by the 1888 Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition in advertising the colony's achievements to the world. McCubbin argues that this was achieved by the fair's organisers through the establishment of a series of disciplinary frameworks intended by them to project ideas of universal hierarchy and good self-governance to the fair's attendees.²⁶ In a similar vein, Paul Fox and Matthew Churchward

²³ Cohen uses the example of Philadelphia schoolteacher Anna K. Baker's purchase of an English-made dinner set at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition to consider how the Exhibition organisers recast citizens as virtuous consumers at the fair: by purchasing a foreign-made good at the Exhibition, Cohen argues that Baker both signalled her identity as an international consumer while also doing her national duty by purchasing an internationally-made item that, through the tariff imposed on it, would contribute to the public revenue. Cohen, *Luxurious Citizens*.

²⁴ David Dunstan, ed., *Victorian Icon: The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne* (Melbourne: The Exhibition Trustees, in association with Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1996); Richard Broome, 'Windows on Other Worlds: The Rise and Fall of Sideshow Alley', *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 112 (1 April 1999): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314619908596084>; Kirsten Orr, 'A Force for Urbanism and National Identity: The Evolution and Impact of the Nineteenth-Century Australian International Exhibitions', in *Identity and Universality/Identité et Universalité: A Commemoration of 150 Years of Universal Exhibitions/Commémoration de 150 Ans d'Expositions Universelles* (Paris: Bureau International des Expositions, 2002), 37–56; Kate Darian-Smith et al., eds., *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University ePress, 2008); Peter H. Hoffenberg, "'A Science of Our Own': Nineteenth Century Exhibitions, Australians and the History of Science', in *Science and Empire: Knowledge and Networks of Science across the British Empire, 1800-1970*, ed. Brett M. Bennett and Joseph Morgan Hodge (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 110–39, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/165045183>; Heather Gaunt, "'In the Pursuit of Colonial Intelligence": The Archive and Identity in the Australian Colonies in the Nineteenth Century', in *Information beyond Borders: International Cultural and Intellectual Exchange in the Belle Époque*, ed. W. Boyd Rayward (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 49–68.

²⁵ Graeme Davison, 'Exhibitions', *Australian Cultural History* 2 (March 1982): 5–21. p.5.

²⁶ Maryanne McCubbin, 'Object Lessons: Public History in Melbourne, 1887-1935' (Masters Thesis, 2000).

have focussed on the development of industrial museums, technical colleges and international exhibitions in late nineteenth century Melbourne, arguing that, by this period, exhibitions had become ‘quasi-religious festival of progress’ in the colony.²⁷

More recent studies of the development of museums and exhibitions in Australia, however, have shifted their focus to an exploration of how scientific knowledge and racial ideologies were disseminated within these spaces, and how the two were intertwined. Peter Hoffenberg, for instance, has written extensively on the importance of international exhibitions in facilitating networks of scientific and intellectual exchange.²⁸ Similarly, an edited collection of essays relating to critical aspects of exhibitions in Australia published as the result of a conference on the topic includes chapters considering how ideas of racial supremacy, as well as scientific knowledge, were disseminated in museums and exhibitions.²⁹ More recently, Heather Gaunt has explored the role played by international exhibitions in establishing a sense of national identity through the dissemination of historical narratives within these spaces.³⁰

There are however few studies that consider the involvement of the individual Australian colonies at international exhibitions. In a review article on Victorian exhibits sent to world’s fairs between the 1850s and 1890s, Gerard Hayes notes that a unique feature of the Victorian contribution sent to the Philadelphia Exhibition was its rich display of books and other textual material relating to the colony’s history and make-up.³¹ Marc Rothenberg and Peter Hoffenberg

²⁷ Paul Fox, ‘Let the Building Be Remembered for This’, in *A Museum For the People: A History of Museum Victoria and Its Predecessors, 1854-2000* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2001), 76–88. p.88.

²⁸ Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2001); Hoffenberg, “A Science of Our Own”: Nineteenth Century Exhibitions, Australians and the History of Science; Peter H. Hoffenberg, *A Science of Our Own: Exhibitions and the Rise of Australian Public Science*, Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

²⁹ Darian-Smith et al., *Seize the Day*.

³⁰ Gaunt, “In the Pursuit of Colonial Intelligence”: The Archive and Identity in the Australian Colonies in the Nineteenth Century’.

³¹ Hayes, ‘London, Paris, Philadelphia ... Victoria at the Great Exhibitions’.

have briefly considered the role that the representation of the Australian colonies at the Philadelphia Exhibition played in facilitating the exchange of scientific knowledge, and frame the contributions of the Australian colonies at the Exhibition as ‘signals being emitted by the colonies and received by the American audience, mediated by the exhibition experience and structure’.³² Rothenberg and Hoffenberg touch on the methodological difficulty of being able conclusively to ascertain how the internal concerns of each colony influenced their representation at the Centennial Exhibition. This is perhaps because the authors sought to write a broader history of colonial involvement at Philadelphia and thus generalised the contributions of each colony.

An important part of the context to the organisation of the Victorian Section, but one that has not been considered in the existing literature, was the factional conflict occurring in the Victorian Parliament stemming from debates over the best way of ensuring the colony’s future prosperity. During the 1850s, an influx of colonists drawn to Victoria by the promise of the gold rush threatened to upset the political and administrative systems established by the earlier arrivals to the colony, pastoralists drawn there with the promise of occupancy of the Port Philip area. These newer arrivals desired democratic governance, equal political representation, and access to the land held by the colony’s pastoralist class. The radical demands of the colony’s newer arrivals were often at odds with those of the colony’s more settled class, and these factions frequently clashed over social and political issues. This conflict came to a head in 1875 when Treasurer James Service introduced a Budget that attempted to systematise the tariff with the aim of increasing government revenue.³³ Politicians from both the free trade and protectionist factions took issue with it, and conservative politician George Kerferd, who was Premier at the time, was replaced by radical

³² Marc Rothenberg and Peter Hoffenberg, ‘Australia at the 1876 Exhibition in Philadelphia’, *Historical Records of Australian Science* 8, no. 2 (1989): 55–62, <https://doi.org/10.1071/hr9900820055>. p.56.

³³ Geoffrey Serle, ‘Service, James (1823–1899)’, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 9 May 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/service-james-4561>.

liberal politician Graham Berry in August 1875. Graham Berry was Premier for just three months before he was ousted in October 1875 by fellow radical politician James McCulloch.

These changes in parliamentary leadership were to the detriment of the Victorian Commissioners: the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition was due to begin in September 1875, and the Victorian exhibits that were to constitute the colony's display in Philadelphia were due to be shipped by the end of the year.³⁴ It was therefore crucial for the Commissioners to secure adequate funding from the Victorian government for the Victorian exhibits to be sent to Philadelphia. However, the unstable parliamentary situation meant that the Government was unable to settle on an amount to be allocated to the Commissioners, and although the Commissioners originally asked for £6,000, they were eventually allocated just £3,500 to send, stage and disburse the Victorian exhibits at Philadelphia.³⁵ These issues collectively were to lead to disaster for the Victorian Commissioners: the ship carrying the bulk of the colony's exhibits to be displayed at Philadelphia, chosen because it was the cheapest option, was sabotaged, as noted above, leading to damage to many of the exhibits that were to represent the colony's accomplishments at Philadelphia.³⁶ This thesis also provides an account of the factors, motives and consequences of this significant but hitherto understudied incident.

Concerns regarding the adequate representation of the colony were not unique to Victoria's involvement at the Philadelphia Exhibition. The report for the Australian colonies at the 1862 London International Exhibition, for instance, indicated that their distinct presence in the space, which was punctuated by items including a giant gold obelisk representing the amount of gold found in Victoria since 1851, served as a way of making up for the poor representation of Australia

³⁴ 'The Exhibition', *Argus*, 2 November 1875.

³⁵ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 1876: Report of the Commissioners of Victoria to His Excellency the Governor* (Melbourne, Victoria: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1877).

³⁶ 'Voyage of the Skerryvore', *Age*, 23 June 1876.

at the 1851 London Exhibition.³⁷ Concerns over whether the colony should be represented independently, or as part of the British Empire, were also expressed in the 1873 Catalogue to the Vienna and London exhibitions.³⁸ While the Commissioners for these exhibitions acknowledged that including items sent by Victoria amongst the exhibits that collectively represented the British Empire meant that the colony would need to put less effort into organising a display, they were also concerned that doing this would risk obscuring the colony's contributions.

The opportunity to stage a display at Philadelphia, was a chance for the colony to further consolidate its scientific, economic, and social ties with the United States. The relationship between the Australian colonies and the United States has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention.³⁹ Norman Harper and Richard Waterhouse in particular have written about U.S. influence on Australia's early colonies.⁴⁰ Lloyd Churchward applies an economic focus to his study of the relationship between Australia and the United States, arguing that the development of Australian society was invariably influenced by concerns and anxieties stemming from the direction taken by the United States in the late nineteenth century.⁴¹ More recently, the focus of studies analysing the relationship between the Australian colonies and the United States has shifted to emphasising the exchange of ideas relating to race, gender, culture and political administration

³⁷ J. G. Knight, *The Australasian Colonies at the International Exhibition, London, 1862: Extracts from the Reports of the Jurors and Other Information Taken from Official Sources* (Melbourne: John Ferres, 1865).

³⁸ Commissioners to the Victorian Section at London and Vienna, *Official Record: Containing Introduction, Catalogues, Reports and Recommendations of the Experts, Official Awards of the Commissioners and Essays and Statistics on the Social and Economic Resources of the Colony of Victoria*. (Melbourne, Australia: Mason, Firth & McCutcheon, General Printers, 1873).

³⁹ Norman Harper, *Australia and the United States* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1971); Norman Bartlett, *Australia and America through 200 Years, 1776-1976* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1976); Noel McLachlan, "'The Future America': Some Bicentennial Reflections", *Historical Studies* 17, no. 68 (1 April 1977): 361–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314617708595557>; Richard Waterhouse, 'The Beginning of Hegemony or a Confluence of Interests: The Australian-American Relationship, 1788-1908', *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 2 (1990): 12–19; Philip Bell and Roger J. Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ Noel McLachlan, *Waiting for the Revolution: A History of Australian Nationalism* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1989); Richard Waterhouse, "'...A Bastard Offspring of Tyranny Under the Guise of Liberty": Liberty and Representative Government in Australia, 1788-1901', in *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 220–47; Harper, *Australia and the United States*.

⁴¹ L. G. Churchward, *Australia & America, 1788-1972: An Alternative History* (Chippendale, NSW: Alternative Publishing, 1979).

between Australia and the United States, and the relationship between the two societies has increasingly been contextualised within a broader transnational framework.⁴²

While this thesis does not seek to directly contribute to scholarship analysing the influence that American ideas of nationhood had on the Australian colonies, the exchange of ideas between the two societies is nonetheless an important aspect of my study. Noel McLachlan has explored the influence of the United States on the formulation of an Australian national identity; more recently, Nicholas Ferns has considered how the American concept of ‘manifest destiny’ was received in the Australian colonies, and Emily Fitzgerald has sought to reconcile the influence that the United States had on the development of Australian federation.⁴³ Finally, in her comparative study of centennial celebrations in Australia and the United States, sociologist Lynette Spillman argues that these celebrations offered the chance for both societies to consolidate and project a sense of national identity distilled from a previously diffuse set of characteristics.⁴⁴

As events that provided societies the opportunity to advertise their social, economic, and cultural accomplishments to other nations, international exhibitions played an important part in strengthening economic, as well as cultural, ties.⁴⁵ However, recent studies of exhibitions in the Australian context continue to emphasise their scientific and cultural aspects at the expense of the

⁴² See, for instance, Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, eds., *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2005); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁴³ McLachlan, *Waiting for the Revolution*; Nicholas Ferns, ‘Manifest Destiny Crosses the Pacific: The Utility of American Expansion in Australia, 1850-1901’, *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 2 (2015): 28–43; Emily Fitzgerald, ‘“That Great Country To Which We Must Constantly Look”: Australia and the United States in the Development of the Australian Federation’ (PhD Thesis, 2018).

⁴⁴ Lyn Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*, Cambridge Cultural Social Studies (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵ Aside from the works mentioned earlier that seek to reconcile the Philadelphia Exhibition in the broader context of Reconstruction-era United States, historians have similarly sought to reconcile the 1851 London Great Exhibition within its broader imperial context. Some recent works include: Davis, *The Great Exhibition*; Auerbach and Hoffenberg, *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851*; Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order*, Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

broader economic, political, and social context within which they were being staged. This thesis seeks to bridge this gap and contribute to studies of exhibitions by examining how, despite the best efforts on the part of the colony to project an image of an economically and socially progressed society to fairgoers, Victoria's involvement at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition was inevitably affected by parliamentary issues and restrictive trade laws that were ultimately to the detriment of the colony. By considering how these factors impacted the colony's representation at Philadelphia, I aim to demonstrate that, by reconciling nineteenth-century exhibitions with the economic, political and social contexts of both the host and visiting society, a more complete account of their role in asserting national identity and consolidating relationships can be achieved.

This study has been inspired by and engages with an emerging historiographical school that seeks to historicise and problematise the relationship between culture, capital, and the economy. In an attempt to bridge the gap between economic and cultural history, Ken Lipartito argues that it is important to 'attend to the mosaic of economic forms and fluid institutions that constitute a capitalist system', in order to construct a more complete picture of the manner in which economic systems are mediated by cultural factors, and vice versa.⁴⁶ Paul Kramer advocates a similar approach, contending that it is important to consider the mutual embeddedness of cultural and economic forms: by doing this, a narrative of capitalist expansion grounded in human agency and political struggle can emerge.⁴⁷ Particularly relevant to the theoretical approach of this thesis is Hannah Forsyth and Sophie Loy-Wilson's intervention in the field of the New History of Capitalism: in a review article, the authors advocate the redirection of critical attention to the reconciliation of economic questions with cultural history sources. Forsyth and Loy-Wilson argue

⁴⁶ Kenneth Lipartito, 'Reassembling the Economic: New Departures in Historical Materialism', *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 1 (1 February 2016): 101–39, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.1.101>. p.113.

⁴⁷ Paul A. Kramer, 'Embedding Capital: Political-Economic History, the United States, and the World', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 15, no. 3 (July 2016): 331–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781416000189>.

that by doing this, capitalism itself can be analysed and interpreted as a historicised phenomenon.⁴⁸ Finally, Simon Ville and Claire Wright seek to re-establish economic history as an important frame through which complex historical processes can be interpreted and understood.⁴⁹

This thesis draws from these approaches to consider how the colony's involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition was influenced by economic and cultural factors, as well as its relationship with the United States. To achieve this aim, I have analysed a broad range of sources, including those more commonly used by cultural historians, such as letters, exhibition catalogues, realia, and newspaper articles alongside economic and political sources, including legal statutes, statistical registers, shipping logs, and parliamentary records, with a view to arriving at a more complete analysis of Victoria's involvement in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition.

The primary objective of this project is therefore to construct a narrative history of Victoria's involvement at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. To achieve this, I have structured this thesis into three chapters. The first chapter gives an account of the funding and planning of the Victorian Section, as well as of the journey of the *Skerryvore*, the ship tasked with carrying the exhibits that were to comprise the Victorian Section to Philadelphia via New York. Ultimately, Secretary to the Victorian Commissioners George Collins Levey was blamed for the *Skerryvore* incident, and experienced anti-Semitic attacks in the press. However, as this chapter demonstrates, the planning of the Victorian Section was also impacted by an unstable parliamentary situation that affected the ability of the Victorian Commissioners to adequately provide for the planning and staging of the Victorian Section. This led to a poor choice of ship, the *Skerryvore*, which was allegedly sabotaged by its captain on its journey from Victoria to the United States. To my

⁴⁸ Hannah Forsyth and Sophie Loy-Wilson, 'Seeking a New Materialism in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 2 (3 April 2017): 169–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2017.1298635>.

⁴⁹ Simon Ville and Claire Wright, 'Neither a Discipline nor a Colony: Renaissance and Re-Imagination in Economic History', *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 2 (3 April 2017): 152–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2017.1279197>.

knowledge, no ship's log from the *Skerryvore* survives, and if it did, it would likely have been falsified by its captain, William Stoddart. However, newspaper and legal reports providing passenger testimonies recounting what occurred aboard the *Skerryvore* on its way from Victoria to the United States survive. Drawing from these reports and analysing them alongside the broader legal context in which British merchant vessels were operating in the nineteenth century, this chapter aims to piece together a more detailed narrative of both the funding of the Victorian Section, and of what happened to the *Skerryvore* during its journey to the United States, placing these events in the political and economic context of the time.

The second chapter analyses the composition and layout of the Victorian Section to consider how the Commissioners used the chance to send exhibits to Philadelphia to assert their identity as a colony, while also projecting a sense of commonality with the fair's American organisers. The Victorian Section was the largest exhibition contingent sent out of the Australian colonies and, in contrast to the other colonies, included rich displays of manufactured goods and textual material. By including these displays, the Victorian Commissioners sought to facilitate economic, scientific and cultural exchange between themselves, the United States, and the world. The Commissioners, however, also sought to establish a sense of racial belonging between themselves and the Exhibition's primarily white organisers and fairgoers by including items relating to Indigenous Australians in the Victorian Section: these items were intended to demonstrate the success of the colony at assimilating its Indigenous population into colonial society.

Finally, the third chapter considers the economic and cultural outcomes of the colony's representation at the Centennial Exhibition, and explores the benefits that both Victoria and the United States received from the colony's representation at the Centennial. Involvement in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition was promoted by the Victorian Government as a way of consolidating trade between the colony and the United States: a broad rhetoric of economic,

scientific and cultural interchange was used to justify sending exhibits to Philadelphia. The Victorian Commissioners were successful in strengthening networks of scientific and cultural exchange between Victoria and the United States following the colony's participation at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. However, the chance to use the colony's representation at Philadelphia as an opportunity to consolidate economic exchange between the two societies was limited by restrictive trade laws. This chapter considers the impact that these laws had on the outcomes of the colony's representation at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition.

Overall, the thesis approaches Victoria's involvement at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as a case study that can help to illuminate the competing visions of the colony and its relations with Great Britain and the United States at the time. By scrutinising a diverse range of sources not usually analysed together, and examining the history of Victoria's involvement at this Exhibition in detail, I seek to shed light on the complex interplay of cultural, economic and political factors that shaped the colony's projection of itself at Philadelphia. By doing this, this thesis seeks to make an intervention not just into studies of nineteenth-century exhibitions, but into the history of the economic development of Victoria, as well as its relationship to both Great Britain and the United States more broadly.

Chapter One: ‘Cheap and Nasty’: The Planning of the Victorian Section and the Voyage of the *Skerryvore*

The opportunity to send a display to the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia presented an exciting prospect for Victoria: some saw it as a chance for the colony to demonstrate to the United States and the world that it had come into its own by displaying the best in its industrial and agricultural output. Victoria was still negotiating a relationship with the United States mediated by its ties to Great Britain, and involvement in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition meant Victoria would have the chance to acknowledge its continued connection to Great Britain while simultaneously strengthening its ties with the United States. The American Commissioners acknowledged the relationship between the United States and Great Britain through giving the British exhibits, which included displays from its colonies, pride of place in the Main Hall, in which the Victorian Section was included.¹ Of the Australian colonies, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia each ended up sending separate contingents to be displayed at the Centennial.²

Despite the privileged position given to the Victorian Section however, its organisation was fraught with problems relating to its planning and funding. These issues would lead to near disaster for Victoria, as indicated in a letter sent by Chief Librarian of the Melbourne Public Library Henry Sheffield to Library Trustee and President of the Victorian Commissioners Redmond Barry on 24 July 1876. This letter was intended to update Barry on recent acquisitions, donations and other matters relating to the running of the Library during his absence in the United States.³ The first

¹ Rydell identifies how the American Commissioners responsible for the layout of the Philadelphia Exhibition organized it to reflect the idea that progress occurred along racial and economic lines. The placement of nations in the Main Building was the ultimate manifestation of these ideas: while the United States, France, Germany and Great Britain (along with the Empire's colonies) were given pride of place in the Main Hall, nations including Brazil, Mexico, Japan, and China were placed on the periphery, presenting the idea of progress as an explicitly racialized concept linking 'ideas about race to nationalism and industrial growth'. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*. p.22.

² United States Centennial Commission, *Foreign Exhibits: Information and Regulations*, 1874.

³ Ann Galbally, *Redmond Barry: An Anglo-Irish Australian* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1995).

few points of business mentioned in the letter were fairly unremarkable: Sheffield discussed the dissemination of various items to institutions in the U.S. and the U.K. as well as the acquisition of items from sources around the world. In the final point of business, however, Sheffield informed Barry that he regretted ‘to learn from today’s July 24th *Argus* that the Victorian exhibits to be sent to Philadelphia had ‘suffered so much during their transit’ from Melbourne to New York (where they were then due to be transported by rail to Philadelphia). Sheffield emphasised his regret that the ‘Schools of Painting’ on which Barry had ‘bestowed so much labor and research are a total wreck’, and expressed hope in the close of his letter that ‘there may be some exaggeration’ to the *Argus* report.⁴

The *Argus* report referenced by Henry Sheffield provided some more details about what had happened to the Victorian exhibits on their journey from Melbourne to New York. The article started on a positive note and commended the popularity of the Victorian Section, especially in comparison to the Canadian exhibits: the reporter noted that ‘the Americans entertain a kind regard for the Australians’ since ‘they do not look upon us as competitors to be beaten off: the Australian colonies were perceived to be too distant from the United States to be in direct competition with one another.’⁵ Alongside this article, however, was a list of damaged and destroyed exhibits, as well as a report detailing how the damage to the exhibits had allegedly occurred. William Stoddart, the captain of the *Skerryvore*, charged with transporting the bulk of the Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian exhibits to Philadelphia, had allegedly made ‘a deliberate attempt ... to scuttle the ship off the Bahamas’, and had failed ‘because the hole bored [apparently by him] ... through the ship’s side, did not admit water so fast as it could be pumped out.’⁶ The reporter of the article on the Australian Courts concluded by providing an estimate of

⁴ Henry Sheffield, ‘Letter from Sheffield, Henry, Melbourne, to Sir Redmond Barry 24 July, 1876’ (24 July 1876), State Library Victoria, Redmond Barry Papers.

⁵ ‘The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia: The Australian Courts (From Our Special Correspondent)’, *Argus*, 24 July 1876.

⁶ ‘The Skerryvore’, *The Argus*, 24 July 1876.

liabilities resulting from the *Skerryvore* incident with the aim of measuring ‘the mischief wrought by the master of the *Skerryvore*’.⁷

The *Skerryvore* incident garnered relatively widespread media attention. Searching the keyword ‘Skerryvore’ across *Trove*, the *British Library Newspaper Database*, the *Chronicling America Database*, the *Times Newspaper Archive* and *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* while delimiting the date range from 1874 to 1878 returned 605 articles in total across Australia, the UK, the United States, New Zealand and India directly referencing the incident.⁸ However, the planning of the Victorian Section and the *Skerryvore* incident itself have attracted little scholarly attention. This is perhaps because the case itself is complex to piece together and occurred in the middle of the ocean with few witnesses. Most testimonies regarding the incident are also today only preserved in newspaper reports, which have been relatively difficult to quantitatively assess and piece together up until the recent advent of digital newspaper databases.

The lack of international agreements regarding marine insurance laws made it difficult for the Commissioners to recoup the expenses lost as a result of the *Skerryvore* incident. Barratry (the deliberate attempt to scuttle a ship) was also a notoriously difficult crime to prove in the nineteenth century for a number of reasons: most notably, it was challenging to preserve the scene of the crime long enough for it to be inspected by a detective. This was only one of the many problems experienced by the Commissioners: of most pressing concern to them was the unstable parliamentary situation: leadership of Victoria changed hands three times between July 1874 and May 1877, and these changes in leadership meant that it was difficult for the Victorian

⁷ ‘The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia’.

⁸ Reporting of the *Skerryvore* incident attracted considerable attention from the press. Significant metropolitan newspapers including the *Age* and the *Argus* in Australia, the *London Times* in England, the *New York Times* in the United States, and the *Times of India* in Mumbai reported on the incident. Numerous regional newspapers, particularly in Australia and the United Kingdom, also referenced the incident (although the majority of these articles were either reprints or brief telegraph reports).

Commissioners to secure adequate funding for the Victorian Section. Finally, Secretary to the Victorian Commissioners George Collins Levey was in a difficult position regarding the administration of the Victorian Section: while he was technically responsible for its management in Philadelphia, since he was not one of the Commissioners, he was unable to directly draw from the Victorian Government for additional funding. This chapter seeks to construct an account of the organisation of the Victorian Section, as well as of the *Skerryvore* incident itself. By doing this, I aim to consider how material and political factors affected the ability of the Victorian Commissioners to adequately plan for, and stage, the Victorian Section.

The Planning of the Victorian Section

Previous to the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition, Victoria had sent exhibits to the Paris Exhibitions of 1855 and 1867, the London Exhibitions of 1862 and 1872, and the Vienna Exhibition of 1873.⁹ The Victorian government agreed in late 1874 that the colony should send a Section to Philadelphia, and a Commission was appointed, funds were promised to be set aside for the journey, and a circular was sent inviting local councils, businesses and individuals to select and send exhibits they thought suitable for display to the Victorian Commissioners for the Philadelphia Exhibition.¹⁰

Sir Redmond Barry, Chief Justice of Victoria, was appointed as the President of the Commissioners, and George Collins Levey, who had previously represented Victoria at the 1870 Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition, the London International Exhibition of 1872, and the Vienna World's Fair of 1873, in addition to numerous Victorian Intercolonial Exhibitions, was appointed

⁹ Hayes, 'London, Paris, Philadelphia ... Victoria at the Great Exhibitions'.

¹⁰ George Briscoe Kerferd, 'Appointment of Sir Redmond Barry, etc. as Commissioners for a Preliminary Inquiry into Action to Be Taken by the Australian Colonies for the International Exhibition, Philadelphia' (Melbourne, 14 September 1874), Series X: Degrees and Commissions 603.4, Redmond Barry Papers, State Library Victoria.

Secretary to the Commissioners.¹¹ Initially, just six commissioners were invited to represent the colony of Victoria at Philadelphia: James Joseph Casey, Minister of Lands and Agriculture; members of the Legislative Assembly James Forrester Sullivan and James Munro; Caleb Joshua Jenner, member of the Legislative Council; banker Leslie James Sherrard; and businessman John McIlwraith, Mayor of Melbourne from 1873-74.¹² However, as indicated in the *Report of the Commissioners of Victoria* following the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, a total of seventeen Commissioners were eventually selected to represent Victoria.¹³

Most of the Commissioners, as well as Barry and Levey, had their own reasons for participating in the Philadelphia Exhibition. McIlwraith, Bosisto and Danks, for instance, each displayed manufactured goods as part of the Victorian Section (and received awards for their displays).¹⁴ French-born naturalist Francis de Laporte de Castelnau displayed ichthyological specimens as part of the Victorian Section.¹⁵ Redmond Barry seized the chance to travel to the Exhibition as President of the Commissioners, using the United States as a ‘stepping-stone to Europe’ where he could visit his family in Ireland again and represent the Melbourne Public Library at the London Conference of Librarians in 1877.¹⁶ Finally, although Levey had a successful track record of assisting in the organization of Victoria’s contribution to previous world’s fairs, he, too, had a

¹¹ Suzanne G. Mellor, “Levey, George Collins (1835–1919),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1974).

¹² Kerferd, ‘Appointment of Sir Redmond Barry, etc. as Commissioners’.

¹³ Aside from the six already mentioned, members of parliament John O’Shanassy, James McCulloch, John Thomas Smith, John Alexander Macpherson, John Danks and John McIntyre joined the Board; as well as judge Samuel Henry Bindon; Mayor of Melbourne in 1876 James Gatehouse; the Reverend John Ignatius Bleasdale; chemist Joseph Bosisto; and naturalist Francis de Laporte de Castelnau. Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *Report of the Commissioners for Victoria to His Excellency the Governor*.

¹⁴ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition.

¹⁵ In an unrelated turn of events, naturalist and ichthyologist Castelnau fell prey to an elaborate hoax committed in the early 1870s by an individual from Gayndah, Queensland, who had sent Carl Theodore Staiger, then head of the Brisbane Museum, an ichthyological specimen supposedly previously unknown to science, the *Ompax spatuloides*. Staiger had apparently made a quick sketch of the fish, which he then proceeded to eat for breakfast, then sent the illustration to Castelnau, who subsequently declared it a new species of fish. The specimen, however, turned out to be a Frankensteinian creation derived from the head of a platypus, the body of a mullet, and the tail of an eel. For more, see Gilbert P. Whitley, “Ompax Spatuloides Castelnau, a Mythical Australian Fish,” *The American Naturalist* 67, no. 713 (1933): pp.563–67.

¹⁶ Galbally, *Redmond Barry*. p.175.

deeply personal reason for acting as Secretary to the Victorian Section at Philadelphia. Levey had fallen in love with an American woman, Mary Elizabeth Bouligny (née Parker), and married her in Washington, D.C. on 23 January 1877 following the close of the Philadelphia Exhibition.¹⁷

Trade, Liberalism, and the Victorian Section

An optimism suffused the initial preparations for the 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, and the subsequent organisation of the Victorian Section to be sent to Philadelphia. Running from September to November 1875, the Intercolonial Exhibition was organised as a preparatory Exhibition to the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. It consisted of almost five thousand exhibits arranged into twenty-six departments, all arranged within the Main Hall, Rotunda and Sculpture Galleries of the Melbourne Public Library, which were temporarily lent to exhibitors for the occasion.¹⁸ Tasmania, South Australia, Singapore and Japan each contributed separate Sections, and exhibitors from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory were included in the general departments.

The 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition was a chance for the colony to select exhibits suitable to be forwarded to Philadelphia, as well as to demonstrate its cultural, economic and social accomplishments to the world. A judging panel was assigned to judge each of the twenty-six departments so that the items most representative of the colony's accomplishments were sent for display at Philadelphia. Further analysis of the criteria used by judges to determine which items were suitable to be sent to the Centennial Exhibition will be undertaken in the next chapter. However, newspaper commentators believed that sending a Victorian Section to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition would be beneficial to the colony for different reasons. Some saw it as a

¹⁷ 'Marriages', *Argus*, 7 March 1877.

¹⁸ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. For the sake of brevity, this item will be referred to as the 'Catalogue' from here on.

chance to consolidate the trade relationship between the colony and the United States through the promotion of Victorian products and manufacturing at the Exhibition.

In the editorial appearing in the 6 January 1875 edition of the *Geelong Advertiser*, for instance, a commentator argued that although the colony was unable to compete with the goods produced in the world's more economically developed countries, it could still benefit from representation at Philadelphia through choosing 'articles a successful exhibition of which may create or extend a market' for them internationally.¹⁹ The author of this article suggested that the colony focus on exhibiting goods such as Australian wool, wine and timber, since these items were unique to Victoria and were more likely to be in demand to be exported to the United States. A commentator writing for a regional paper from Victoria's northeast district similarly attempted to counter what he perceived to be the perception that participation in the world's fairs constituted 'useless "blow" of a negative kind', and argued that involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition was necessary for the promotion of the colony's 'commercial prosperity'.²⁰ This commentator concluded by proposing that the northeast district send its own Section to the Philadelphia Exhibition to make its resources and importance known to Victoria and the world.

Other commentators argued that the representation of the colony at the Philadelphia Exhibition would have an educative function by providing the opportunity for comparison between Victoria's exhibits and those of the other Australian colonies, as well as the nations of the world. A commentator writing for the *Advocate*, for instance, argued that world's fairs encouraged an 'industrial rivalry that is an advantage to every civilised community' and which had an educative purpose in encouraging 'valuable instruction' on 'a great variety of subjects'.²¹ A *Herald* reporter similarly expressed excitement that the upcoming Exhibition would provide a chance for

¹⁹ 'Editorial', *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 January 1875, 6.

²⁰ 'The Value of Exhibitions', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 19 January 1875.

²¹ 'Prominent Topics: The Intercolonial Exhibition', *Advocate*, 23 January 1875.

intercolonial rivalry with New South Wales, hoping that they would provide a platform whereby the colony could 'pass' its 'ambitious neighbour'.²² A reporter writing for the *Weekly Times* took a more holistic view of the benefit of sending a Victorian Section to the Philadelphia Exhibition, and argued that there was a 'twofold gain' to the colony arising from participation in 'far-away shows'. On the one hand, the reporter identified how participation in international exhibitions gave an 'impetus...to manufacturers and manufactures in the colony' to '[bring] out our resources as they would not otherwise be developed', and on the other hand, contended that 'strangers that are outside [Victoria's] borders get the chance to estimate the resources of the colony at about what they are worth'.²³

The notion that sending a Victorian Section to Philadelphia could open avenues of trade between Victoria and the world by facilitating the comparison of the colony's products with those of the other nations was reflected in the Victorian parliament in Governor of Victoria Sir George Bowen's speech commemorating its opening. In it, Bowen expressed his hope that the colony's involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition, as well as the 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, would facilitate the 'free interchange of the growth, products, and manufactures of the various colonies', presumably amongst themselves as well as with the United States.²⁴

The hope that sending exhibits for display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition would open up a new market for the colony's products, as well as facilitate the exchange of scientific, technological and agricultural knowledge, was reflected in the enthusiasm with which agricultural societies in Victoria responded to the opportunity to send exhibits to the Philadelphia Exhibition. The Horticultural Society of Victoria arranged for a series of apples, pears and other fruit to be

²² 'Go Ahead', *Herald*, 24 February 1875.

²³ 'Another Exhibition', *Weekly Times*, 23 January 1875.

²⁴ 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Council, vol. 21, 25 May 1875, p. 3.

cast in wax so that the colony's pomological accomplishments could be displayed at Philadelphia.²⁵ During a meeting of Victorian wine growers, the colony's vigneron agreed that it would be advisable to arrange for a colonial wine bar to be opened at both the 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition and the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. According to one of the meeting's attendees, opening a colonial wine bar at the Philadelphia Exhibition would give the colony's wine growers a chance to introduce Australian wines to the American market.²⁶ This initiative was pursued by the Commissioners for Victoria: a colonial wine bar was opened at the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, and Secretary to the Victorian Commissioners George Collins Levey corresponded with the organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition regarding the opening of a bar selling Australian-made wines at the Centennial.²⁷

The desire on the part of the colony's winegrowers to include a wine bar in the Victorian and Philadelphia Exhibitions was part of a broader initiative in Victoria promoting the consumption and growing of wine as a civilising influence on the colony's urban population. Reverend John Ignatius Bleasdale, one of the Commissioners for Victoria, was particularly active in this regard, and promoted the cultivation of wine as a cure for public indecency and drunkenness.²⁸ In Australia, locally-produced wine in particular was promoted as a healthful alternative to beer and spirits, since it had a lower alcohol content than imported wines.²⁹ Unfortunately however, due to a lack of funds, it proved too difficult to arrange for a colonial wine bar to be built on the grounds of the Centennial Exhibition, and the idea was scrapped.³⁰

²⁵ The wax casts of fruit displayed at the Philadelphia Exhibition are now housed at the Melbourne Museum. 'Horticultural Society', *Leader*, 6 February 1875.

²⁶ 'Meeting of Vinegrowers', *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 February 1875.

²⁷ George Collins Levey, 'Letter Requesting Information about a Colonial Wine Bar' (1 June 1875), Record Group 230, City of Philadelphia, Records Department, City Archives.

²⁸ David Dunstan, *Better than Pommard! A History of Wine in Victoria* (Kew, Victoria: Australian Scholarly Publishing and the Museum of Victoria, 1994).

²⁹ Julie McIntyre, Mikael Pierre, and John Germov, 'To Wash Away a British Stain: Class, Trans-Imperialism and Australian Wine Imaginary', in *Wine, Terroir and Utopia: Making New Worlds*, ed. Jacqueline Dutton and Peter J. Howland (London, England: Routledge, 2019), pp. 42–57.

³⁰ George Collins Levey, 'Letter Informing U.S. Commissioners of Decision Not to Erect a Separate Building for the Sale of Wine' (27 October 1875), Record Group 230, City of Philadelphia, Records Department, City Archives.

Parliamentary Disunity and Criticisms of the Victorian Section

Despite this optimism however, the organisation of the Victorian Section was mired by problems that impacted the ability of the Victorian Commissioners to achieve its adequate planning and staging. While a total of £6,000 was initially promised to the Commissioners to finance the colony's representation at the Philadelphia Exhibition,³¹ they eventually received a total of just £3,497 from the Victorian government to transport the Victorian exhibits to Philadelphia, pay the salaries of the staff members entrusted with their safekeeping, and to pay for the eventual insurance costs and repair of exhibits damaged by seawater as a result of the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore*.³²

The decrease in funding initially promised to the Victorian Commissioners occurred for a number of reasons. The organisation of the Victorian Section coincided with a particularly turbulent time in Victorian politics: leadership of the Victorian government changed three times between July 1874 and May 1877. These changes in leadership were partly caused by factional conflicts between Victoria's earlier settlers, pastoralists drawn to the land with the aim of occupancy of the Port Phillip area, and its later arrivals, liberals who desired to radically transform the colony's economic and political structure with the aim of making Victoria more democratic. By the late 1870s, the colony of Victoria was expanding steadily in relation to Australia's other settlements, and its parliamentarians had grand ambitions for the role it would play in the collective future of the Australian colonies: Melbourne had surpassed Sydney in terms of population growth during this period, and the colony was well on its way to staking a considerable claim in determining how a federated Australia would look some decades later. As a result of improved

³¹ 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Assembly, vol. 20, 15 December 1874, p. 2455.

³² The Statement of Receipts and Expenditure included as part of the *Report of the Commissioners of Victoria* for the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition records that a total of £4,442 was spent by the Commissioners on business relating to the staging of the Victorian Section. Of this money, £3,497 was provided by the Victorian government and a majority of the remainder was raised from the sale of exhibits in Philadelphia. Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 1876: Report of the Commissioners of Victoria to His Excellency the Governor* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1877).

farming and transportation methods, wool and wheat production were booming, and financial ties to the United Kingdom ensured a steady flow of financial capital within the British Empire that in turn benefitted the Australian colonies.³³ The simple moral and spiritual ideals with which Victoria's earlier settlers had hoped to endow the land they settled had been dramatically upended by the relentless march of colonial industry.

With the industrialisation of the colonial economy emerged debates regarding the best way of preserving its wealth while at the same time ensuring that the colony was not falling behind the other colonies. The 1850s was a period during which an influx of newcomers from Britain and Europe arrived in Victoria, many of them spurred by the promise of making their fortune through gold mining. These colonists, however, brought with them ideas of colonial governance that were at odds with those of Victoria's early squatters. As they gained political influence during the second half of the nineteenth century, the colony's newcomers threatened to upset the systems established by Victoria's initial settlers, squatters drawn to the land before the gold rush by the promise of 'simple occupancy' of the Port Phillip area.³⁴ A division emerged from the 1850s between the colony's early settlers, squatters part of a pastoral elite who desired to preserve their power by preventing any upheaval to the social hierarchy and the emerging liberal ascendancy, who abrasively and impatiently desired to open up Victoria to economic development and democratic representation with the aim of allowing as many as possible to partake in its spoils.

The debate over the best way to secure the colony's future economic and agricultural prosperity came to a head with treasurer James Service's introduction of a state Budget in August 1875. This Budget, introduced while George Kerferd was Premier, proposed direct taxes on land

³³ David Greasley, 'Industrialising Australia's Natural Capital', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Australia*, ed. Simon Ville and Glenn Withers, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.150–77.

³⁴ Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, 1991). p.14.

and housing, bank note and stamp taxes, and increased duties on tobacco and alcohol. Intended to ameliorate the colony's factional conflict, this Budget instead threatened to put the new Kerferd government under threat: some weeks before the reading of the Budget, a reporter for the *Argus* noted the strange unfolding of a 'spectacle' in which 'an ultra freetrader' (Treasurer James Service) was 'assisting in the administration of a fiscal policy which he will have made more protective than it was before'.³⁵ The reporter's doubts were proven true, as Service's budget failed to satisfy either supporters of free trade, who opposed it on the principle that it encouraged further tariffs, or protectionists, who opposed the increase of land and housing taxes.³⁶ A strange coalition of extreme free traders and extreme protectionists united to oust Premier George Kerferd, and he was consequently replaced for three months by protectionist politician Graham Berry from August to October 1875, who was then replaced by James McCulloch. Berry came back as premier in May 1877.

Graham Berry's tenure as premier from August to October 1875 was similarly fraught: he proposed to meet the colony's deficit solely by a land tax, with the intention of breaking up large pastoral freeholds and provoking debate in the Legislative Council to force constitutional reform of the representation and payment of members. While the land tax introduced by James Service attracted relatively little attention, Graham Berry's introduction of a land tax triggered a 'violent political storm' that led to the loss of support for the James McCulloch-led faction in the Victorian Legislative Council.³⁷ For a while, the ball appeared to be in Berry's court: he hoped that the deadlock between the upper and lower Houses caused by his Bill would be resolved by a dissolution of the Victorian parliament (whereby the Governor dissolved the Assembly and scheduled an election). However, Acting Governor William Stawell refused Berry's request (on the

³⁵ 'Introductory', *Argus*, 7 September 1874.

³⁶ Serle, 'Service, James (1823–1899)'.

³⁷ Bartlett, 'Berry, Sir Graham (1822–1904)'.

grounds that it would be unfair to his predecessor George Kerferd), and Sir James McCulloch was subsequently commissioned to form a new ministry in October 1875.³⁸

These changes in administration impacted the ability of the Victorian Commissioners to secure adequate funding for the Victorian Section and threw its organisation into doubt. At least one reporter expressed concern over the impact these changes in leadership would have on the Victorian Section, and noted on 16 November 1875, about six months before the opening of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, that ‘the arrangements for the representation of the colony at Philadelphia have not yet been finally determined on, the unsettled condition of political affairs having prevented the Government from dealing with the matter hitherto’.³⁹ The degree to which Victoria’s turbulent political situation in the 1870s impacted the planning and staging of the Victorian Section is difficult to ascertain without further evidence. A letter book that was kept by the Victorian Commissioners would likely shed more light on how the colony’s political environment impacted the Commissioners. I have, however, been unable to find this item.

In spite of this, the reporter’s concern that the unstable political situation in the Victorian parliament was impacting the ability of the Victorian Commissioners to secure adequate funding for the Victorian Section was corroborated by Commissioner and Victorian politician James Munro in a subsequent inquiry undertaken in August 1876 into the funding of the Victorian Section. Munro argued that the unstable parliamentary situation did affect the amount allocated to the Victorian Commissioners: he noted that the Commissioners ‘did their work very successfully and to the advantage of the colony up to the time that the honorable member for Geelong West (Mr. Berry) became ‘Treasurer’. While Berry promised the Commissioners that ‘the sum asked for should be provided’ however, according to Munro, ‘before that could be done he [Berry] went out

³⁸ Sean Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2020). pp.94-96.

³⁹ ‘The Exhibition’, *Argus*, 16 November 1875.

of office, and a new Ministry came in'.⁴⁰ The new ministry, led by James McCulloch (who was himself one of the Commissioners), refused to provide all of the funding asked for by the Commissioners.

As a Commissioner himself and a supporter of trade protection, it is surprising that McCulloch would have chosen not to use the chance to send exhibits from Victoria to Philadelphia as an opportunity to demonstrate the strength of the colony's manufacturing sector to the world. Regardless of the reasons behind McCulloch's reluctance to provide all of the funding requested by the Commissioners to them, Munro's account of what occurred following James McCulloch's overthrow of the Graham Berry ministry in October 1875 is borne out by parliamentary records: while £4,500 was included in the Budgetary Estimates for 1876 to assist the Victorian Commissioners in the representation of Victoria at the Philadelphia Exhibition, they did not receive the funds promised them in these Estimates.⁴¹ The situation only worsened following the new administration's refusal to provide the funding requested by the Victorian Commissioners: according to Munro, the Commissioners subsequently asked the Government for £3,000 to finance the representation of the colony at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition.⁴² However, this amount was not provided to them and rather than try and push for more funding, the Commissioners notified the Victorian government, presumably out of frustration at its ineptitude, that they would not meet again.⁴³

⁴⁰ 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Assembly, vol. 24, 1 August 1876, p. 323.

⁴¹ William Stawell, 'Estimates of Expenditure for the Year Ending 30th June 1876' (Government of Victoria, 1875), VPRS 3253/P0, Unit 409, Public Records Office Victoria.

⁴² While this amount was initially promised to the Victorian Commissioners, records indicate that the vote was not passed in Parliament. Chief Secretary's Office, 'Letter Requesting Excision of Certain Words, under Vote of £3,000 Representation of Victoria at Philadelphia Exhibition, in Additional Estimates, 1875-6' (19 November 1875), VPRS 1207/P0, Unit 713, #9708, Public Records Office Victoria.

⁴³ In his account of what occurred between the Government and the Victorian Commissioners, Munro referred to a letter sent by the Commissioners to the Government from 15 November in which they stated that they were 'unable to undertake the fit exposition at Philadelphia of the articles selected for exhibition there, owing to the refusal of the Government to furnish adequate funds for that purpose'. 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Assembly, vol. 24, 1 August 1876, p. 324.

The decision on the part of the majority of the Commissioners not to meet again threw the organisation of the Victorian Section into doubt. Following the dissolution of the Victorian Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, chemist and parliamentarian Joseph Bosisto, along with James Munro and a small number of the other Commissioners, took it upon themselves to secure £1,500 from the Victorian government so that the Commissioners could proceed to forward goods to Philadelphia. Eventually, rather than cancel the colony's involvement at the Exhibition, these members of the Commission 'were anxious that something should be done if possible', and the result was that the *Skerryvore*, which turned out to be (in Munro's words) 'cheap and nasty', was chosen to send the Victorian exhibits to Philadelphia.⁴⁴

The *Skerryvore* Incident

Despite these funding issues, as well as concerns that exhibitors might be unwilling to send their goods halfway across the world, almost three thousand exhibits were chosen to form part of the Victorian Section at the Philadelphia Exhibition.⁴⁵ The following chapter will explore the process by which exhibits were selected to be sent to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition: this chapter will focus on the journey of the Victorian exhibits from the colony to the United States. Before the funding to the Victorian Commissioners was cut, a range of options regarding the best way of sending exhibits to Philadelphia was considered. Initially, Redmond Barry proposed to the New South Wales government that the Australian colonies send their exhibits to Victoria to together be transported, by long sea voyage, to Philadelphia, because it would be cheaper to do this for the colony. The alternative was to send Victoria's exhibits to the United States via the American mail steamer, which left from Sydney, then overland from San Francisco to Philadelphia.⁴⁶ However, Commissioner to New South Wales Jules Joubert disagreed, contending that while it may have

⁴⁴ 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Assembly, vol. 24, 1 August 1876, p. 325.

⁴⁵ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

⁴⁶ 'Philadelphia Exhibition', *Argus*, 30 March 1875.

been easier for Victoria to send its exhibits by long sea voyage, it was easier for New South Wales to send exhibits by the American mail steamer, since it ran from Sydney.⁴⁷ A minor spat broke out between Barry and Joubert, and it was decided that Victoria would send its exhibits separately to New South Wales. Victoria's heavier exhibits (including manufactured goods, geological specimens, wines, photographs, furniture and some other items) were sent by long sea voyage, along with the South Australian and Tasmanian exhibits, and the wool and wheat exhibits were sent by mail steamer via Sydney to San Francisco, then overland by transcontinental railway to Philadelphia.

The *Skerryvore*, a barque that had recently arrived in Melbourne from Batavia (present day Jakarta), was chosen to transport the colony's heavier exhibits, as well as the exhibits that were to make up the Tasmanian and South Australian Sections, to Philadelphia.⁴⁸ The Victorian Commissioners were apparently warned by the press that the *Skerryvore* would make an unsuitable choice of transport.⁴⁹ This was for good reason: prior to arriving in Victoria, William Stoddart, captain of the *Skerryvore*, had apparently plunged the ship into debt by delivering a cargo of coal to Mauritius without the permission of his shipowners in May 1874.⁵⁰ The *Skerryvore* arrived in Australia in October of the same year.⁵¹ Following this, the *Skerryvore* made a number of trips to Newcastle, then Indonesia, to transport sugar back to Melbourne in July 1875.⁵² It was at this point, after having deposited its cargo of sugar at the Yarraville refinery, that the ship was towed down to the bay, loaded with the Victorian, Tasmanian and South Australian exhibits, and sent off for Philadelphia via New York.⁵³ Aside from two passengers, Leslie Kerr Morrison and Adam

⁴⁷ 'M. Jules Joubert In Explanation', *Argus*, 10 April 1875.

⁴⁸ Smaller than a brig, and subsequently requiring a smaller crew, a barque was a small, three-masted sailing ship widely used for trade and transportation in the mid and late nineteenth century.

⁴⁹ 'Victorian Parliamentary Debates', Legislative Assembly, vol. 24, 1 August 1876, p.326.

⁵⁰ 'Latest Shipping News', *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 11 May 1874.

⁵¹ 'Shipping Intelligence', *Argus*, 2 November 1874.

⁵² 'Batavian Markets', *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 31 July 1875.

⁵³ 'Shipping Intelligence', *Argus*, 28 October 1875.

Jackson (employed by the Victorian Commissioners to supervise the transport of exhibits to Philadelphia), William Stoddart's eleven year-old son, Charles W. Stoddart, was also on board.⁵⁴

Stoddart's journey was an arduous one: his trip took him from Melbourne to New Zealand, then southeast to Cape Horn at the southernmost tip of South America, and finally north past the Bahamas to the east coast of the United States. Reports soon emerged of the captain's erratic behaviour. The departure of the ship from Port Lyttelton in Christchurch was delayed due to leaky water tanks, and an Adelaide paper noted that whilst at the port of Lyttelton in New Zealand, 'the crew, or a greater portion of them deserted, and the captain became quite unmanageable through drink'.⁵⁵ Bonds were raised for the repair of the ship, a new crew was found, and the ship departed New Zealand on 9 January.

Between February and April 1876, things went relatively quiet. However, rather than reassure the press, this was cause for concern: a Tasmanian paper noted that 'the *Skerryvore* ... had not arrived' in Philadelphia on time, speculating that 'we hope lateness will be the worst of the story, for the *Skerryvore* was not a vessel on which we should have liked to pin our faith'.⁵⁶ A telegram appearing in the *Age* on 25 May 1876 similarly reported that 'the *Skerryvore*, with the Victorian exhibits, had not been reported on the 15th April'.⁵⁷ Finally, a telegram appearing some weeks later from the *Age* gave notice that the *Skerryvore* had arrived in Philadelphia on 5 May with the Victorian, Tasmanian and South Australian exhibits,⁵⁸ and following this, a despatch from the *Australasian* some days later noted 'the safe though tardy arrival of the *Skerryvore*, with the Victorian exhibits intended for the Philadelphia Exhibition'.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ 'Passengers' List, *Skerryvore*' (Melbourne, Australia, 10 December 1875), VPRS 948/P0001/000038, Public Records Office Victoria.

⁵⁵ 'Law and Criminal Courts.', *Evening Journal*, 31 January 1876.

⁵⁶ 'The Tasmanian Exhibits for Philadelphia', *Mercury*, 23 May 1876.

⁵⁷ 'Australian Telegrams', *Age*, 25 May 1876.

⁵⁸ 'Latest European Intelligence', *Age*, 5 June 1876.

⁵⁹ 'Our Letter Home', *Australasian*, 10 June 1876.

Eventually, with the arrival of the Californian mail steamer on 20 June, news reached Victoria that ‘Captain Stoddart, late master of the *Skerryvore*, was arrested on landing, upon a telegram from New York, charging him with scuttling his vessel’.⁶⁰ A letter sent by Morrison, one of the passengers aboard the *Skerryvore*, and published some days later in the *Age*, gave further details of what had apparently transpired aboard the ship during its journey. According to the passenger, Captain Stoddart was ‘pig-headed’ in his refusal to successfully navigate the ship to the United States and displayed ‘criminal stupidity’ by attempting to run the ship off course.⁶¹ Once the ship had made it past the Falkland Islands (near the southernmost tip of South America), Stoddart apparently refused to take advantage of the trade winds that would speed up the ship’s voyage, and instead kept the *Skerryvore* in dangerous proximity to the coast of Brazil against the advice of Morrison and the ship’s first mate. Eventually, Stoddart decided that the ship needed painting prior to its arrival in New York and went down to the lazarette (the rear part of the ship’s hold) under the pretence of repainting it. Morrison found it suspicious that the captain insisted on going down to paint this part of the ship himself (rather than send one of the ship’s crew to do the task), and became concerned when the captain remained there for an extended period of time.

The following day, the second mate noticed that the ship was running deep in the water, and it was discovered that the hold had been flooded with about seven feet of seawater. The pumps were put to work, and the water was eventually pumped out. Some days later, Stoddart went down to the hold again with a candle under the pretence of retrieving some biscuits and flour and, according to Morrison, the ship never again flooded with water after that moment. This led him to conclude that when the captain was first in the hold, he had bored a hole through its side to try and scuttle the ship. However, seeing that his plan had failed, he went below again and used a

⁶⁰ ‘The Californian Mail’, *Age*, 20 June 1876.

⁶¹ ‘Voyage of the *Skerryvore*’.

candle to stop the leak. Following the ship's arrival in New York, Stoddart was arrested on suspicion of having attempted to scuttle the *Skerryvore*.⁶²

A subsequent report appearing in the *Argus* corroborated details from this earlier report, and used the testimonies of Morrison and Jackson as evidence (along with the ship's log kept by the first mate) that 'a deliberate attempt was made by Captain Stoddart to scuttle the ship off the coast of the Bahamas', but that the attempt failed because 'the hole bored from the lazarette, through the ship's side, did not admit water so fast as it could be pumped out'. Initially, when the leak was noticed, the writer noted that Stoddart told the first mate that 'it would be better for all parties to make a total loss [of the ship]', but instead pumps were put to work until the leak 'suddenly stopped' with a wax candle by the captain. Once the ship arrived in New York it was carefully inspected, and the hole allegedly drilled by Stoddart was discovered. The captain was promptly arrested on his arrival in New York by direction of the British consul and was transported along with the mate and steward (who were to provide evidence regarding the case) to England to be charged.⁶³

The Trial of William Stoddart

Following his arrest in New York and subsequent extradition to England, William Stoddart was put on trial in Devon in July 1876, charged with eight counts of Malicious Damage under the Act of 1861, Chapter 97, Sections 43 and 44.⁶⁴ Section 43 of the Act related specifically to damaging or destroying a ship or vessel with the intent of defrauding or prejudicing its owners, and being charged of this meant the perpetrator could either be put in penal servitude for at least three years,

⁶² 'Voyage of the Skerryvore'.

⁶³ 'The Skerryvore'.

⁶⁴ 'Devon Lammas Assizes', *Western Times*, 19 July 1876.

or to be sent to prison for up to two years.⁶⁵ Section 44 of the Act punished the attempt itself, and if it could be proven that Stoddart attempted to ‘set fire, cast away, or destroy any ship or vessel’, he would be liable to either be kept in penal servitude for between three and fourteen years, or to be sent to prison for up to two years.⁶⁶ If Stoddart were convicted of all eight counts, he faced the possibility of spending up to sixteen years in prison or life in penal servitude.

While the newspapers may have concluded that Stoddart was the one who had attempted to scuttle the *Skerryvore*, it was more difficult to establish that this was the case in a court of law. The testimony given by the passengers aboard the *Skerryvore* was similar to that reported in the papers, and recounted the discovery that the hold was flooded by ‘seven feet six inches’ of water following the realisation that the ship was sitting deeper than it should have, and the sudden stopping of the leak after the majority of the water had been pumped out by the crew members.⁶⁷ Upon its arrival in New York, the ship was inspected by Edward Brewer (sent to replace Stoddart as captain of the *Skerryvore*), who found a hole that ‘had evidently been bored from the inside’ in a location ‘only accessible by way of the cabin which [the] prisoner occupied’.⁶⁸

However, more than just the passengers’ testimony, and evidence of a hole bored in the side of the *Skerryvore*, was needed to conclusively establish that Stoddart was the one who had attempted to scuttle the ship. Barrister H.C. Lopes, prosecuting Stoddart on behalf of the Crown, was unable to establish a straightforward motive for the attempted sabotage, although he claimed that even ‘in the worst criminal cases, where the facts were proven beyond a question, a motive could not always be assigned for the act of’ the individual on trial.⁶⁹ Conversely, Stoddart’s defence lawyer,

⁶⁵ ‘Malicious Damage Act’ (1861), <https://app-justis-com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/statute/setting-fire-to-ships-to-prejudice-the-owner-or-underwriters/0/fulltext-statute-outline/cYqJn3utm1Wca>.

⁶⁶ Malicious Damage Act.

⁶⁷ ‘Devon Lammas Assizes’.

⁶⁸ ‘Devon Lammas Assizes’.

⁶⁹ ‘Devon Lammas Assizes’.

Mr. Carter, cited the fact that no motive had been assigned for the act of which Stoddart had been accused, as well as the fact that he ‘had his child on board’ and that ‘there had been no satisfactory evidence that the hole was made at the time at which it was alleged to have been made’ as facts suggesting his innocence.⁷⁰ Carter therefore concluded that ‘there was no evidence whatever – however suspicious the case against [Stoddart] might be – to connect him with doing it’.⁷¹ The jury deliberated for only fifteen minutes before finding that the evidence presented by the prosecution ‘was altogether circumstantial’, and gave Stoddart ‘the benefit of the doubt’.⁷²

However, a possible explanation as to why Stoddart may have attempted to scuttle the *Skerryvore* came from a statement provided to the *Age* by Morrison. Apparently, when Stoddart had left Britain, he had plunged the ship into debt by sailing to Mauritius without the shipowners’ permission to deliver a cargo of coal. The ship’s temporary stop at Port Lyttelton on the way to the United States plunged the ship even further into debt, since it was unauthorised and delayed the arrival of the *Skerryvore* in New York. Furthermore, it was alleged that the captain had falsified his financial accounts and, rather than meet his owners, decided instead to try and make a total loss of the ship. According to Morrison, by attempting to make a total loss of the ship, Stoddart would be forgiven of his debts. However, if he only made a partial loss of the ship, he ‘would be ruined forever’, since the ship’s insurance would only be recovered in part.⁷³ This was because it was apparently not necessarily in the owners’ (the Western Transport Company) best interests to convict Stoddart, since if he were to be convicted of barratry, ‘the owners will be responsible for his acts, and have to compensate the shippers or consignees for the losses suffered’.⁷⁴ If it were found that Stoddart was not guilty of the crime, the owners of the *Skerryvore* would thus be

⁷⁰ ‘Devon Lammas Assizes’.

⁷¹ ‘Devon Lammas Assizes’.

⁷² ‘Devon Lammas Assizes’.

⁷³ ‘Voyage of the Skerryvore’.

⁷⁴ ‘The Skerryvore’.

absolved of financial liability, and it would be up to the ship's consignees (the Victorian Commissioners) to compensate for any losses suffered as a result of the sabotage done to the ship.

Stoddart's decision to make a stop at Port Lyttelton may have also been to the detriment of the Victorian Commissioners. According to George Collins Levey, Stoddart's deviation to New Zealand waived the Commissioners' claim against the ship's underwriters in Melbourne and thus invalidated their insurance policy.⁷⁵ This was borne out by the balance sheet included as part of the *Catalogue to the Victorian Section*: while the Commissioners attempted to recoup the costs incurred following the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore*, no money was awarded to them by insurers.⁷⁶

In addition, charges of barratry (the attempt to scuttle a ship and claim an insurance payout) were notoriously difficult to prove in the nineteenth century. This was partly because it was already challenging to preserve the scene of a crime on a ship, as well as the fact that it was difficult to effectively create legislation that would protect merchant ships against barratry. A loophole in British marine insurance law meant that a conviction of barratry was to the detriment of shipowners, since they would then be responsible for paying the insurance claims on the ship's cargo to its consignees.⁷⁷ It was also very difficult to conclusively establish and prove intent of barratry due to the fact that shipowners often brokered a contract with their crew and captains: while an owner could be made liable by fraudulent conduct, they could not, technically, be charged for the crime itself. The difficulty of legislating against marine insurance fraud in the nineteenth century meant that the incidence of excessive risk-taking by a ship's crew with the aim of defrauding shipowners was a risk that its consignees needed to account for.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ 'The Philadelphia Exhibition', *Argus*, 25 July 1876.

⁷⁶ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record: Containing Introduction, Catalogues, Official Awards of the Commissioners, Reports and Recommendations of the Experts and Essays and Statistics on the Social and Economic Resources of the Colony of Victoria*. (Melbourne: Published by authority of the Commissioners, 1875).

⁷⁷ For more on this, see Frederick Martin, *The History of Lloyd's and of Marine Insurance in Great Britain: With an Appendix Containing Statistics Relating to Marine Insurance* (London: Macmillan, 1876). p.261.

⁷⁸ Christopher Kingston, 'Marine Insurance in Britain and America, 1720-1844: A Comparative Institutional Analysis', *The Journal of Economic History* 67, no. 2 (2007): 379-409. p.381.

There were additionally no agreements between the United Kingdom and the United States regarding the crime of barratry up until the passing of the *Marine Insurance Act* of 1906.⁷⁹ This meant that in the nineteenth century it was entirely possible for a member of a British merchant vessel to commit the crime, then escape to the United States to avoid liability. This is exactly what Stoddart allegedly did following his extradition to Britain: rather than face the charges laid against him by the Sunderland Marine Board following his trial, he refused to appear before them and instead ‘sailed off for America’ with ‘his family’.⁸⁰

Reception, Blame, and the Victorian Commissioners

Stoddart was therefore acquitted of the charges laid against him.⁸¹ The Sunderland Local Marine Board, however, subsequently held an inquiry into charges of ‘drunkenness, neglect of duty, and gross misconduct’ against Stoddart and rescinded his mariner’s license.⁸² The captain was accused of having brought women on board while docked in Newcastle, as well as throwing potatoes at monkeys while docked in Padang, Indonesia. Rather than following orders to recharter for the United Kingdom, ‘he went to Melbourne and other places’, and was ultimately tasked with transporting the exhibits that were to make up the Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian Sections at the Philadelphia Exhibition. The report corroborated the reason Morrison gave as to why Stoddart would attempt to scuttle a ship for which he was responsible: apparently the captain had embezzled money from the owners of the ship, stating that ‘the total freight of the voyage the owner estimated at £2,200, but he only received a remittance of £350’.⁸³

⁷⁹ ‘Marine Insurance Act’ (1906), <https://app-justis-com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/statute/marine-insurance-act-1906/overview/cYqdm5ito3Wca>.

⁸⁰ ‘Fast Life on Board Ship - A Captain’s Certificate Cancelled’, *York Herald*, 12 August 1876, 6088 edition, British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900.

⁸¹ ‘Return of All Persons Committed, or Bailed to Appear for Trial, or Indicted at the Assizes 1876, Shewing the Nature of Their Offences, and the Result of the Proceedings, County of Devon’ (Devon, UK, 13 July 1876).

⁸² ‘Charges of Disgraceful Conduct Against a Shipmaster’, *Newcastle Courant*, 11 August 1876, 10520 edition, British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900.

⁸³ ‘Fast Life on Board Ship - A Captain’s Certificate Cancelled’.

News that Stoddart had been arrested on suspicion of having attempted to scuttle the *Skerryvore* emerged first in the Northern Hemisphere and took some time to reach Victoria. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the earliest reports of Stoddart's arrest emerged in New York newspapers the *Sun*,⁸⁴ the *New York Times*,⁸⁵ and the *New York Herald* in mid May 1876.⁸⁶ This news reached papers in Britain long before it appeared in Australia. The London *Times*, for instance, reported that Stoddart had been arrested on 23 May 1876,⁸⁷ and the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported on the incident a day earlier.⁸⁸

Full reports giving details of the arrest of Stoddart and the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore* only appeared in Victorian newspapers some months later after the British and American mail steamers had delivered the news to the colony: on 24 July 1876 the *Argus* printed an article providing a report on the Australian exhibits as compared to their international counterparts. Opening with a description of the various Australian courts, the Philadelphia correspondent provided a detailed overview of the layout of the Victorian Section and included a summary of its positioning in relation to the other courts. The article, however, mentioned 'the flooding of the *Skerryvore*', an incident that had 'destroyed some of the objects which would worthily have filled conspicuous places', and concluded with a detailed list of destroyed and damaged exhibits, which included (among other exhibits to be returned to later) a landau carriage, various photographs of Victorian townships, and some volumes of books from the Melbourne Public Library.⁸⁹ The incident was similarly cause for consternation for individuals in Melbourne. Close associate of Redmond Barry, Farquhar M. Cole, wrote to him that he regretted hearing that the *Skerryvore* had

⁸⁴ 'A Ship Scuttled: Goods from Australia for the Exhibition - A Captain to Be Arrested', *The Sun*, 20 May 1876.

⁸⁵ 'Charged With Scuttling a Ship: Arrest of Capt. Stoddart, of the Bark Skerryvore, In England, On a Telegram From New York', *New York Times*, 22 May 1876.

⁸⁶ 'A Ship Captain Arrested on a Serious Charge - Accusation from New York', *The New York Herald*, 22 May 1876.

⁸⁷ 'Charge of Attempted Scuttling', *The Times*, 23 May 1876.

⁸⁸ 'Charge of Attempted Scuttling a Ship', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 May 1876, 935 edition, British Library Newspapers, Part IV: 1732-1950.

⁸⁹ 'The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia: The Australian Courts (From Our Special Correspondent)'.

been scuttled and stated unequivocally that he ‘hoped the charge against Captain Stoddart may be brought home to him’.⁹⁰ Henry Sheffield, Head Librarian at the Melbourne Public Library, also wrote regretfully to Barry of the *Skerryvore* incident, and expressed his hope that the reports of the damage to exhibits were exaggerated.⁹¹

According to John MacPherson, Chief Secretary under the McCulloch administration from October 1875 to May 1877 and fellow Commissioner to the Philadelphia Exhibition, the difficulty of allocating funds to the Commissioners was due to the fact that Secretary to the Commissioners Levey was technically not one of the Commissioners, so had no authority to ask for funding from the government.⁹² This meant that the Secretary was put in an awkward position following the *Skerryvore* incident, and was forced to ask fellow Commissioner John McIlwraith for £400 to assist him in defraying costs relating to the repair and disbursement of the exhibits that made up the Victorian Section.

A news article from the *Age* reporting on a meeting of the Victorian Commissioners from July 1876 corroborated these details: not only had Levey drawn money from the Victorian government without the consent of the Victorian Commissioners, he was also technically not liable for what was done with it since, as Secretary to the Commissioners (rather than a Commissioner), he was not under the control of governmental authority.⁹³ This put both the Commissioners, and Levey, in an awkward position, since he was unable to directly draw from the Victorian government for extra funding to pay for the repair and return of the Victorian exhibits. An article from the *Weekly Times* reporting on the same meeting took on a harsher tone, and the reporter blamed the Victorian

⁹⁰ Farquhar M. Cole, ‘Letter from Cole, Farquhar M. Brighton, Victoria 24 July, 1876’ (24 July 1876), State Library Victoria, Redmond Barry Papers.

⁹¹ Sheffield, ‘Letter from Sheffield, Henry, Melbourne, to Sir Redmond Barry 24 July, 1876’. State Library Victoria, Redmond Barry Papers.

⁹² ‘Victorian Parliamentary Debates’, Legislative Assembly, vol. 24, 1 August 1876. p.324.

⁹³ ‘The Philadelphia Exhibition Commissioners’, *Age*, 26 July 1876.

Commissioners for taking ‘the injudicious course of burning the candle at both ends’ and irresponsibly spending the funds allocated to them by the Agent-General in London as well as the Victorian government.⁹⁴ Made to deal with a series of administrative and logistical errors caused by the *Skerryvore* incident and exacerbated by restrictive financial and trade laws between the colony and the United States, the Victorian Commissioners were in a difficult position relating to its closing and, according to the press, Levey was the one to blame for making these issues worse.

Levey had to defend himself against allegations that he had mismanaged the close of business relating to the Victorian Section. A South Australian newspaper blamed him for the ‘*Skerryvore* fiasco’, mentioning how, were it not for the assistance of Commissioner John McIlwraith, Levey ‘might have had to go arm-in-arm with Sir Redmond Barry to beg from door to door’, hawking ‘some Victorian drafts about’ Philadelphia.⁹⁵ The Secretary promptly defended himself, writing, ‘I would wish to state that I did not go hawking drafts on the Government of Victoria all over America’: rather, according to him, his ‘difficulty was not because the credit of the Government was bad, but because [he] had no authority to draw upon it’.⁹⁶ In a subsequent column, Levey further wrote that ‘even had the goods shipped by the *Skerryvore* been landed in good condition, the commissioners ... would not have had sufficient money to defray their necessary expenses’, concluding that ‘the course adopted’ of asking President to the Commissioners Redmond Barry and Commissioner John McIlwraith for assistance in defraying expenses arose from the need to repair Victoria’s exhibits, and ‘was the only one practicable under the circumstances of the case’.⁹⁷ Levey had reason to defend himself against those who blamed him for the *Skerryvore* incident: the lack of financial agreements between Victoria and the United States put Levey in an awkward position and forced him to deal with the incident himself.

⁹⁴ ‘Victoria at the Philadelphia Exhibition’, *Weekly Times*, 29 July 1876.

⁹⁵ ‘Victoria’, *South Australian Register*, 31 July 1876.

⁹⁶ ‘Philadelphia Exhibition’, *Argus*, 17 October 1876.

⁹⁷ ‘The Centennial Exhibition’, *Leader*, 18 November 1876.

Despite the fact that Levey was forced to deal with the fallout following the *Skerryvore* incident essentially single-handedly, he was nevertheless attacked in the press: John McIlwraith took to the pages of the *Melbourne Punch* to criticise Levey for his alleged mishandling of the *Skerryvore* incident, accusing the Secretary of having ‘stuck’ him for the £400, and telling *Punch*’s readers that he was sure that they had ‘heard all about ... how the *Skerryvore* was scuttled, how George Collins ran short of cash, and how all the Americans are laughing at our Colonial bungling’.⁹⁸ McIlwraith concluded with a poem that went as follows:

‘A JUDGE and a Jew—a pretty two—
Went out on a Yankee expedition,
And one of the two—of course, the Jew—
Made a beautiful mess of our exhibition.

A beautiful mess, you well may guess,
When he Skerryvored each rich exhibit;
And for doing that, he sends round his hat,
And kindly asks us to pay him tribute.

Well, ’pon my soul! now, I think that’s droll;
But he’s a swell, and he does it heavy—
Oh! fine and grand in the Yankeeland,
And we’re to pay for it, Mister Levey!

Our goods are soiled, destroyed, and spoiled—

⁹⁸ ‘Skerryvore Levey’, *Melbourne Punch*, 27 July 1876.

They're not worth taking out of the puddle;
 So let him keep the whole dashed heap,
 And stick where he is in the precious muddle'.⁹⁹

Aside from the parodic rhyming form of the poem and his crude allusion to Levey as 'a Jew', McIlwraith additionally stereotyped the Commissioner as a Jewish 'old clo' dealer (through the lines that 'he sends round his hat / And kindly asks us to pay him tribute'), a stereotype familiar to nineteenth-century readers as a dealer of second-hand clothes that used a hat to collect payment.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the most striking aspect about this poem, and the cartoons published about a month later, is their blatant anti-Semitism: the depiction of Levey in the pages of the *Melbourne Punch* as a money-hungry Jew intent on swindling the Victorian exhibitors and collecting the insurance payout and legal fees for himself played into contemporary depictions of Jews in the press.

It is difficult to determine how prevalent anti-Semitism was in colonial Australia: despite William Rubinstein's identification of the development of 'an undercurrent of what might be termed populist anti-Semitism' in the colonies based on the fact that 'Jews were ubiquitously depicted as money-lenders, usurers, and racecourse betting touts' in the 'unflattering and crudely stereotyped cartoon imagery' of the 1870s, he concedes that 'it is difficult to know how serious this anti-Semitism was'.¹⁰¹ In a subsequent work, Hilary Rubinstein similarly tracks the rise of a genre of 'jibes and cartoons with exaggeratedly "Semitic" features' that arose during the 1870s. However, she contends that 'arguably, some of the examples contained in these publications [that published anti-Semitic content] should not be taken too seriously'. The 'most consistent offender'

⁹⁹ 'Skerryvore Levey'.

¹⁰⁰ Betty Naggar, 'Old-Clothes Men: 18th and 19th Centuries', *Jewish Historical Studies* 31 (1988): 171–91.

¹⁰¹ W. D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, Australian Ethnic Heritage Series (Melbourne: Australasian Educa Press, 1986). pp.57-60.

was, she suggests, likely the Melbourne *Punch*, as it often lampooned ‘groups of all kinds, not just Jews’.¹⁰²

This was not the last time that Levey would be subjected to anti-Semitic stereotypes: four years later, the *Melbourne Punch* criticised Munro, Casey and Levey’s allegedly extravagant administration as Commissioners to the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880. The three were depicted vainly trying to make the Exhibition pipe organ work, and Levey was portrayed ‘holding out three hats (again as the stereotype of a Jewish ‘old clo’ dealer) for collection’.¹⁰³ Racial tropes were thus used to attack Levey and his administration of the Victorian Section at the Philadelphia Exhibition, despite the fact that Levey appears not to have identified himself with the Jewish community: both his marriages in 1863 and 1877 were officiated in Anglican churches.¹⁰⁴ Although he defended himself against the critics who admonished him for his perceived misadministration of the exhibits that were to become part of the Victorian Section, Levey appears not to have responded to the racial attacks made against him, and likely may not even have seen it as something worthy of his efforts.

Conclusion

As will be explored in the next chapter, despite the attacks Levey experienced regarding his perceived mismanagement of affairs relating to the Victorian Section, the massive task of salvaging the damaged exhibits for display still remained. Not all was lost: working with limited resources at his disposal, Levey had restored as many exhibits as he could for display, and, if reports are to be believed, succeeded in forming a coherent Victorian Section from the salvaged exhibits.

¹⁰² Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History, 1788 to 1945*, vol. 1 (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991). p.476.

¹⁰³ Marguerite Mahood, *The Loaded Line: Australian Political Caricature, 1788-1901* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1973). p.156.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Family Notices’, *Herald*, 25 September 1863.

The case of the *Skerryvore* incident is complex: the incident took place off the coast of the Bahamas on a British merchant ship carrying cargo from Australia to the United States. High stakes were involved for the Victorian Commissioners to ensure that the ship successfully made the journey, and multiple parties were invested in ensuring its journey was successful. Little evidence remains of the incident itself, making the task of constructing a conclusive account of the incident challenging. This chapter has attempted to provide an account of the *Skerryvore's* journey constructed from legal records, newspaper articles and other sources alongside an account of the planning of the Victorian Section to consider the factors behind its attempted scuttling. It is possible that Stoddart himself attempted to scuttle the *Skerryvore* with the aim of defrauding his employers, but it will never be known for sure whether this was the case. However, by providing an account of what occurred aboard the *Skerryvore*, this chapter has attempted to reconcile the factors behind the planning of the Victorian Section with the incident itself to consider how lack of funding provided to the Victorian Commissioners was to the detriment of the colony, and indirectly led to the damage of many of the colony's exhibits.

The Victorian Commissioners had hoped to use the chance to send a display to the United States as a way of demonstrating the progress the colony had made to a new audience, but following the damage suffered by the Victorian exhibits, the likelihood of achieving this aim seemed more and more doubtful. As this chapter has demonstrated, the opportunity to project an image of a unified colony was jeopardised by an unstable parliamentary situation, which subsequently made the Victorian Commissioners' task of securing the funding needed to plan and send a Section to Philadelphia a difficult one. The Commissioners were made to choose a substandard means of transport to send the exhibits for Victoria to Philadelphia, and the colony suffered as a result.

However, Levey judiciously restored as many exhibits as he could, and appears to have succeeded in staging a coherent Victorian Section. Although the Victorian Section was sent to Philadelphia under the pretence of projecting the colony's accomplishments to the world, the exhibits sent inevitably reflected the social, racial and cultural rifts apparent in the colony. The following chapter explores how these rifts were made manifest through the exhibits and essays chosen to form the Victorian Section and considers how the exhibits sent projected the colony's accomplishments thus far.

Chapter Two: The Victorian Section at the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876

Despite some minor delays, the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition was officially opened to great fanfare on 10 May 1876 by U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant. After a day of speeches, song and celebration, Grant and his wife, along with Emperor Pedro II of Brazil, turned on the massive Corliss Steam Engine, the centrepiece of the Exhibition's Machinery Hall.¹ Following a short delay, the engine's cylinders gradually began to pump, bringing life to the vast array of engines, presses and other automated apparatuses arranged around it (to which it provided power). This action concluded the Centennial's opening celebrations, and the gates of the Exhibition were opened to the public.

The Victorian Section, however, was not ready in time for the Exhibition's opening, and the opening ceremonies 'passed over before a case could be opened'.² The *Skerryvore* had only arrived in New York on 6 May, four days before the opening of the Centennial, and the Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian exhibits still needed to be loaded up for transport by rail to Philadelphia. The ship also needed to be inspected for damage, further delaying the unloading and transport of exhibits.³ For some weeks the Victorian Section sat empty, overlooked by Exhibition attendees in favour of the more complete displays in other sections. The worst was feared regarding the extent of the damage done to exhibits: intermittent reports of the *Skerryvore*'s passage only deepened the anxieties of exhibitors back in Victoria who had put time, money and effort into preparing and sending their exhibits halfway across the world.

¹ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984). pp.15-16.

² 'Australasia at the Centennial Exhibition', *Bendigo Advertiser*, 23 June 1876.

³ 'The Philadelphia Exhibition', *Argus*, 23 June 1876.

Conflicting reports abounded regarding the damage done to exhibits: a regional Victorian paper conclusively stated that the exhibits had been ‘much damaged by salt water’.⁴ However, Secretary to the Commissioners George Collins Levey, who was himself overseeing the unpacking of exhibits in Philadelphia, was more optimistic, stating that he ‘believed that the damage was not very considerable’, despite initial reports.⁵ The cases holding the exhibits that were to make up the Victorian Section were finally unpacked and set up, just in time for the judging of exhibits that was due to begin on 31 May, and reports eventually emerged regarding which exhibits had been damaged or destroyed. An initial report noted a wardrobe showing a ‘water mark to the height of five feet’, and identified that some ‘gilt framed mirrors’, ‘several cases of stuffed birds and animals’, and a number of watercolours, had been completely ruined by the salt water.⁶ A final list of destroyed and damaged exhibits was eventually published in the *Argus* on 24 July 1876, alongside which appeared an account of the *Skerryvore’s* voyage. Included on this list, compiled with the intention of allaying, or confirming, the fears of exhibitors, were sets of photographs of Victorian townships, a piano manufactured in Richmond from Australian timbers, a landau carriage representing the best in colonial transport, and books of European painting sent by President of the Commissioners Redmond Barry with the intention of showcasing the best in Victoria’s fledgling book trade.⁷ Damage had been done, but some exhibits appeared to be salvageable.

However, the problems faced both by the Victorian Section, and by Levey, did not end there. Not only had the seawater destroyed some exhibits, due to their submergence for so long, ‘vile odours’ of bilge water emanated from the exhibits constituting the Victorian Section, and its vicinity was ‘pungently fragrant for some weeks’ after its opening.⁸ To add to these concerns, the

⁴ ‘Arrival of the San Francisco Mail’, *Hamilton Spectator*, 21 June 1876.

⁵ ‘General News’, *Weekly Times*, 24 June 1876.

⁶ ‘The Skerryvore and Her Cargo’, *Leader*, 22 July 1876.

⁷ ‘The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia’, *Argus*, 24 July 1876.

⁸ ‘International Exhibition - III. The Australian Courts. Philadelphia, June 10.’, *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 5 August 1876.

South Australian and Tasmanian exhibits were literally in the same boat as Victoria's, as many of them had also been shipped by the *Skerryvore*. According to a South Australian reporter, while the South Australian exhibits had escaped relatively unscathed due to having been stowed above Tasmania's and Victoria's exhibits, Tasmania's exhibits were almost completely ruined.⁹ The Victorian Commissioners had taken responsibility for the safe passage of South Australia's and Tasmania's exhibits, as well as their own exhibits aboard the *Skerryvore*, and had failed in their task.

The Victorian Commissioners had hoped to use the chance to send a display to Philadelphia as an opportunity to facilitate cultural and economic exchange between the colony, the United States, and the world. Following the damage done to the Victorian exhibits however, this goal seemed more and more futile. Parliamentary disunity, funding issues, and doubt over the usefulness of sending exhibits to Philadelphia had together seemingly conspired to jeopardise any chance for the colony to be adequately represented at the Centennial. It is difficult to determine exactly which exhibits suffered major damage on their journey to Philadelphia: aside from the *Argus* report, no official list of damaged and destroyed exhibits was published. Additionally, some of the exhibits that were listed as destroyed in the *Argus* report were later recorded as part of the Victorian Section in the British *Reports to the Philadelphia Exhibition*, including the landau carriage made by the Melbourne firm of Stevenson and Elliott, and the two pianos made from Australian timber by Joseph Kilner from Richmond.¹⁰ In fact, both these exhibits were recorded as having received awards from the Philadelphia Exhibition's judging panels, indicating that they must have been intact enough for their craftsmanship to have been recognised. Furthermore, what appears to be at least one of the pianos made from Australian timber sent as part of the Victorian Section also features relatively prominently beside Charles Summers' sculpture of *Lynceus and Hypermnestra*

⁹ 'The Philadelphia Exhibition', *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail*, 29 July 1876.

¹⁰ Executive Commissioners to Direct the British Section at the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, *Reports on the Philadelphia International Exhibition of 1876: Victoria*, vol. 2, Command Papers (London: Printed by George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1877).

in a stereoscopic photograph of the Court, indicating that its external damage was not major enough to have adversely affected its appearance.¹¹



Figure 1 - Centennial Photographic Company. *Victorian Court, Australian Section, 1876*. Photographic print on stereo card: stereograph. Library of Congress.

Aside from some consumable goods, including biscuit crackers, bags of wheat, and other miscellaneous items, the most significant loss of exhibits as a result of the *Skerryvore's* journey appears to have been to some of the photographic material that was to be included as part of the Victorian Section. Photographic material that appeared to be damaged beyond repair included depictions of shire councils prepared by the Victorian Commissioners to be displayed at Philadelphia, as well as the *Biographical Charts of the Italian Schools of Painting* sent by Redmond Barry

¹¹ Centennial Photographic Co., 'Victorian Court, Australian Section' (Photographic print on stereo card, Philadelphia, PA, 1876), Library of Congress.

to demonstrate the advancements made by the colony in the photo-lithographic process.¹² The *Argus* report giving an account of the damage done to exhibits mentioned this item in particular, and noted that ‘the massive volumes from the Public Library – biographical charts of the Italian schools of painting – were in a deplorable state when lifted from the case’, and that ‘the rich covers had been reduced to a pulp, and the splendid photographs much disfigured’.¹³

In his letter to Redmond Barry reporting on recent acquisitions procured for the Melbourne Public Library, Chief Librarian Henry Sheffield similarly wrote that he regretted to hear from the ‘July 24 *Argus* that the Victorian exhibits have suffered so much during their transit’, and that ‘the *Schools of Painting*’ on which Barry had ‘bestowed so much labor and research [were] ... a total wreck’; Sheffield hoped however that ‘there may be some exaggeration’ in the *Argus* report.¹⁴ Little information remains regarding the production of this item. It appears to have been commissioned and sent to Philadelphia by Redmond Barry, and was most likely compiled by the Victorian Office of Lands Survey Department to serve as a comprehensive reference resource for researchers interested in the history of art in Italy. It seems that Sheffield may have been correct in his assessment that the *Argus* report exaggerated the damage done to this item: not only did the British *Reports to the Philadelphia Exhibition* list the *Biographical Charts of Italian Painting* in its catalogue to the Victorian Section, in a letter to Secretary of the Smithsonian Museum Professor Joseph Henry, Redmond Barry offered these volumes to the Library of the Capitol at Washington.¹⁵

¹² It is difficult to find much information regarding the preparation and production of this work. However, it is included in the *Official Record* to the Victorian Section under ‘Class 432 – Photo-lithographs’ as ‘The Biographical Charts of the Schools of Venice, the Venetian States, Genoa, Cremona, Mantua, Milan, Ferrara, Modena, and Palermo’, with the exhibitor listed being the Commissioners for Victoria themselves. The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

¹³ ‘The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia’.

¹⁴ Sheffield, ‘Letter from Sheffield, Henry, Melbourne, to Sir Redmond Barry 24 July, 1876’.

¹⁵ Redmond Barry, ‘Letter from Barry, Sir Redmond, Melbourne, to Professor Joseph Henry’ (22 September 1876), State Library Victoria, Redmond Barry Papers.

It is therefore difficult to determine exactly which exhibits were completely destroyed as a result of their voyage aboard the *Skerryvore*. Even if the *Argus* report is taken as a conclusive account of damaged and destroyed exhibits, the damage done to exhibits seems to have been relatively minor: the report noted that only about sixty of the three thousand exhibits sent as part of the Victorian Section suffered damage or destruction as a result of their journey to Philadelphia. This may have been because many of the exhibits were well packed: a commentator responding to initial telegraph reports of the *Skerryvore* incident noted optimistically that damage to the Victorian exhibits might have been minimised because ‘the whole of the goods shipped were – with what appeared to be ridiculous precaution – soldered up in tin-lined cases’, a fact that the commentator hoped ‘may ... have enabled Sir Redmond to make a show of undamaged Victorian exhibits’.¹⁶

It is impossible to ever be able to conclusively determine exactly how many exhibits made it intact to Philadelphia. The Victorian Commissioners, however, hoped to use the chance to send a Victorian Section to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as a chance to facilitate cultural, economic and scientific exchange between themselves, the United States, and the world. And while the other Australian colonies were satisfied with sending exhibits consisting primarily of raw materials, the Victorian Commissioners interpreted the regulations provided to them by the American organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition as an opportunity to demonstrate that the colony possessed the markers of an advanced society by furnishing the Victorian Section with a large number of manufactured items and textual material, and by appending essays on the colony’s governance to the *Catalogue* to the Victorian Section. This was in line with the regulations provided to them, which stipulated that exhibits be classed into ten sections from raw materials to ‘objects illustrating efforts for the improvement of the physical, intellectual and moral condition of man’.¹⁷

¹⁶ ‘Talk on “Change”’, *Australasian*, 24 June 1876.

¹⁷ Rothenberg and Hoffenberg identify how the Victorian Commissioners were uniquely concerned with demonstrating the identification of manufacturing with civilisation within the space of the Victorian Section, in line with the regulations provided to them by the Exhibition’s American organisers. While the other Australian colonies

The Commissioners therefore used the Victorian Section to demonstrate that the colony was economically, socially and scientifically advanced. However, the Victorian Section inevitably reflected the tensions and inequalities of a colony that was still debating the best way of securing its future prosperity. The colony's economic output was fairly well represented at Philadelphia: apart from the brewing industry (beer was difficult to export until the 1880s), the mining, agricultural, manufacturing, viticultural and wool growing interests all sent displays to the Exhibition. During the 1870s, however, the colony of Victoria was grappling with two pressing social issues: the perceived threat of Chinese migration to the colony, and the issue of managing the colony's Aboriginal reserves, set up by the Victorian government with the stated aim of assimilating Indigenous Australians into European society.¹⁸

The representation of both of these groups in the Victorian Section reflected their status in colonial society: while the contributions of Chinese migrants to Victoria were completely erased within the space of the Victorian Section, items made or grown by Indigenous Australians were shown to demonstrate the success of the colony in assimilating them into colonial life. Additionally, despite the best efforts of the Victorian Commissioners, American commentators were aware of the debate over protectionism and free trade between Victoria and the other Australian colonies, and were interested in the colony because of its unique economic situation in relation to the rest of Australia.

were satisfied with primarily displaying raw materials, the Victorian Commissioners aimed, to the best of their ability, to fulfil the stipulations provided to them by the fair's American organisers, and achieved this by themselves organising a large display of books, as well as by furnishing the Catalogue to the Victorian Section with numerous essays on the colony's governance. Rothenberg and Hoffenberg, 'Australia at the 1876 Exhibition in Philadelphia'; United States Centennial Commission, *Foreign Exhibits: Information and Regulations*.

¹⁸ Numerous scholars have written on the situation regarding Indigenous Australians during this period, including Michael Francis Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria, 1835-86* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1979); Ann McGrath, ed., *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995); Amanda Nettelbeck, *Indigenous Rights and Colonial Subjecthood: Protection and Reform in the Nineteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, *Taking Liberty: Indigenous Rights and Settler Self-Government in Colonial Australia, 1830-1890* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

The Commissioners hoped to establish a sense of commonality with the Exhibition's American organisers through structuring the Victorian Section in line with the regulations provided to them. By sending exhibits to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the Commissioners thus hoped to facilitate cultural and economic exchange between themselves, the United States, and the world. This chapter aims to provide an analysis of the organisation, layout and reception of the Victorian Section to consider both how the Victorian Commissioners hoped to represent the colony's political, economic and social accomplishments to the United States and the world and how the Victorian Section reflected the tensions and inequalities of a society built on the marginalisation of its non-white populations.

The 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition

By the 1870s, the Victorian colonial economy had steadily expanded as the result of an increase in wool exports from the colony to Britain, the professionalisation of gold mining, and an influx of British migrants to Victoria. Along with the stabilisation of the relationship between Britain and Victoria came the growth of a manufacturing industry financially supported by a strong mining, pastoral and agricultural base in the colony.¹⁹ While these industries were initially reliant on Britain as an export market for their survival, as the colony expanded it diversified its export markets and became less and less reliant on the 'mother country' for its economic growth.²⁰ Victoria in particular desired to assert its own identity as a colony during this period, and the Victorian government's liberal administration, which broadly championed a radical agenda that promoted equal political and economic representation, encouraged the colony to assert its economic independence during the 1870s. This was achieved primarily through the promotion of colonial

¹⁹ Ray Broomhill, 'Australian Economic Booms in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 61 (2008). p.14.

²⁰ Schreuder, 'Empire'. p.524.

manufacturing, which involved (often to the disapproval of Victoria's pastoralist and merchant classes) the introduction of a number of policies and initiatives, including the establishment of trade schools, and the introduction of protectionist trade policies.²¹

As the colony's economic base expanded, the Victorian government began to use participation in international exhibitions as an opportunity to demonstrate its progress to the world. Participation in these fairs was seen as a chance to promote the colony's local industries with the aim of attracting new markets for its products. Participation in the London Exhibition of 1873, for instance, was an opportunity for the colony to send a display of goods to Britain to demonstrate that 'the resources of Victoria are not inferior to those of any country in the world', and it was hoped by the Victorian Commissioners to London that sending Victorian-made items to Britain would make the British public aware of the fact that goods produced in the colony were of comparable quality to goods produced in Britain.²²

The 1875 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition was thus seen as an opportunity for the colony to choose exhibits to then send to the United States that best demonstrated its economic, social and cultural output. To choose exhibits that were suitable for display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, a committee of experts was allocated to judge each section and recommend which exhibits were interesting enough to send to the United States. Their task was to make a selection 'of such commodities ... to justify their transmission, for the purpose of affording an illustration of the resources of the Colony at the aforesaid Exhibition at Philadelphia'.²³ This was according to the regulations provided to foreign nations by the Exhibition's American organisers, which

²¹ Weston Bate, 'Why Is Victoria Different?', *Victorian Historical Journal* 81, no. 1 (June 2010): 5–17.

²² Commissioners to the Victorian Section at London and Vienna, *Official Record: Containing Introduction, Catalogues, Reports and Recommendations of the Experts, Official Awards of the Commissioners and Essays and Statistics on the Social and Economic Resources of the Colony of Victoria*. (Melbourne, Australia: Mason, Firth & McCutcheon, General Printers, 1873). p.iv.

²³ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. p.xii.

initially stipulated that exhibitors were to organise exhibits into ten distinct sections ranging from raw materials to ‘objects illustrating efforts for the improvement of the physical, intellectual and moral condition of man’.²⁴ Conceived by a number of eminent American scientists, most notably geologist William Phipps Blake, the organising logic of the Exhibition’s classification scheme was intended to demonstrate that civilisation advanced along a clearly delineated axis defined by the successful extraction and utilisation of the Earth’s resources for the benefit of society.²⁵ Later revised to seven sections, the classification scheme was essential to the underlying structure of the Exhibition: not only was it designed to make order out of chaos, it was intended as a framework through which the Exhibition’s organisers could disseminate its values, ideas and concerns to fairgoers.²⁶

There does not appear to have been a unifying set of criteria used by the judging panels for the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition to determine a particular exhibit’s worthiness of being sent to Philadelphia. Judging panels responsible for departments displaying the colony’s raw materials, however, generally assessed whether the exhibits were reflective of the colony’s economic strengths in those areas: the panel for the *Minerals* department, for instance, expressed regret that the exhibits did ‘not by any means fairly represent either the mineral resources or manufactures of Victoria’, a fact that contrasted ‘but poorly with former Exhibitions’.²⁷ Conversely, the committee

²⁴ United States Centennial Commission, *Foreign Exhibits: Information and Regulations*. Specifically, as noted in this pamphlet, exhibitors were notified that the following categories were to be included in the scheme of the exhibition:

1. Raw materials—mineral, vegetable and animal
2. Materials and manufactures used for food, or in the arts, the result of extractive or combining processes
3. Textile and felted fabrics—apparel, costumes, and ornaments for the person
4. Furniture and manufactures of general use in construction and in dwellings
5. Tools, implements, machines, and processes
6. Motors and transportation
7. Apparatus and methods for the increase and diffusion of knowledge
8. Engineering, public works, architecture, and so forth
9. Plastic and graphic arts
10. Objects illustrating efforts for the improvement of the physical, intellectual, and moral condition of man.

²⁵ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*. pp.1-6.

²⁶ Bruno Giberti, *Designing the Centennial: A History of the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2002). pp.1-32.

²⁷ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. p.323.

responsible for judging the Agricultural Products department expressed ‘great satisfaction’ that ‘the grain, hops, dried fruits, and woods, are better represented in this than in any former Exhibition in the colony’, and commended the exhibitors for contributing to a display that was representative of Victoria’s growing agricultural sector.²⁸

Conversely, panels responsible for determining which manufactured goods were deemed worthy of forwarding to Philadelphia appear to have made their decision based on whether they were considered innovative and original enough to garner interest at the Centennial Exhibition. The judges responsible for the Motors department, for instance, complimented the ‘originality, utility, and workmanship’ of exhibits presented, and thus recommended that a number of them be sent to Philadelphia. By contrast, however, the judges responsible for the Carriages and Buggies Department expressed regret that ‘the exhibits in this section cannot be said to represent the state of this industry throughout Victoria’ due to competitors constituting ‘metropolitan exhibitors’ from the colony’s urban centres, but nevertheless acknowledged ‘the great advance which has been made in this branch of industry since the Exhibition of 1872-3’.²⁹ Exhibits were therefore judged as to whether or not they were worthy of sending to Philadelphia according to how adequately they represented the economic, social and cultural progress of Victoria.

The Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition was generally well-received: the *Argus* dedicated an eight-page supplement to it in September 1875, outlining the layout of its exhibits as well as the departments and nations included. The supplement opened with an essay on the colonial history of Victoria, charting its progress from Captain Cook’s landing at Botany Bay in 1770 to its separation from New South Wales, to the colony’s growth as a result of the gold rush. Notably, this essay included comparative statistics demonstrating the growth of the colony: the report

²⁸ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. p.332.

²⁹ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. p.372

informed the reader, for instance, that Victoria was '55,571,840 acres, ... slightly in excess of the two Carolinas', that 'six million ounces of gold' had been exported from Victoria, and that of the fifty-five million acres, as of 1874, 'one million' were used for agricultural purposes and, excepting uncultivable land, '15,000,000 acres' were still available for agricultural production.³⁰ Similarly, Melbourne was described as resembling 'a European city of modern date' containing upwards of '205,000 inhabitants', 'a university with 400 graduates', 'a public library containing 80,000 volumes and resorted to on the average by 4,000 persons a week'.³¹ The essay ended with 'a few words respecting the aborigines of the colony'. Attempting to counter contemporary perceptions of Indigenous Australians as 'degraded', the report acknowledged that the original inhabitants of Victoria were 'acute observers ... gifted with wonderful memories ... and possessing a copious vocabulary and a musical pronunciation'. The author of the essay ultimately expressed regret that it was only through 'isolating them' to reserves that the original inhabitants could be protected from the vices of settler colonial society.³²

³⁰ 'The Victorian Exhibition of 1875', 3 September 1875.

³¹ 'The Victorian Exhibition of 1875'.

³² 'The Victorian Exhibition of 1875'.



Figure 2 - Paterson Brothers. *Intercolonial Exhibition, 1875. View of Main Hall. Looking south. 1875. State Library Victoria.*

While the Intercolonial Exhibition largely went to plan, the Commissioners faced some issues relating to its organization. Not enough space had been provided to accommodate the number of exhibits sent, leading one reporter to warn potential visitors to the Intercolonial Exhibition that ‘promenading will be a difficulty’, since so many exhibits had been packed into the Main Hall.³³ The lack of space provided for exhibits was due to the fact that the Government declined to grant the Victorian Commissioners the £15,000 to £20,000 they felt they needed to make extensive additions to the Melbourne Public Library to allow for the adequate display and arrangement of exhibits. Rather, the Legislative Assembly ended up proposing that just £3,000 be spent in adding to the buildings already there, and that £2,000 be given to the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition Commissioners to defray expenses.³⁴ Eventually, just £2,000 was given to the Commissioners,

³³ ‘The Victorian Exhibition of 1875’, *Australasian*, 4 September 1875.

³⁴ “Victorian Parliamentary Debates”, Legislative Assembly, vol. 20, 10 December, 1874, p.2455.

which allowed them to build an annex in which to put any exhibits that did not fit in the halls already part of the Melbourne Public Library.

The Victorian Section at the Philadelphia Exhibition

Of the approximately 3,500 Victorian exhibits displayed by the colony at the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, about three thousand were eventually sent to Philadelphia from all over the colony by individual exhibitors, publishers, manufacturers, mining companies, agricultural firms, winegrowers, town and city councils, government institutions, scientific and artistic societies, banks, distilleries, and the Commissioners themselves. Intended to showcase the colony's material, intellectual and agricultural achievements, the Victorian Section was organised into seven departments: *Mining and Metallurgy*, *Manufactures*, *Education and Science*, *Art*, *Machinery*, *Agriculture*, and *Horticulture*.

The space and composition of the Victorian Section shared some similarities with the Sections sent by the other Australian colonies. Each of the Australian colonies aimed to promote the exchange of goods, as well as items of scientific and cultural significance, by demonstrating the strength of their natural resources. All sent rich displays of agricultural products, including wool, samples of crops and pomological specimens, as well as exhibits demonstrative of the colony's mineral resources. All sent exhibits emphasising the richness of their native flora and fauna, with the intention of fostering scientific and intellectual exchange between the colonies and the United States. The New South Wales Commissioners sent animal specimens and samples of native timber, and their catalogue included essays on the colony's environment.³⁵ The Victorian Commissioners sent plant and animal specimens, and President of the Commissioners Redmond Barry successfully

³⁵ New South Wales Commissioners of the Philadelphia International Exhibition of 1876, *Official Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales : Forwarded to the International Exhibition of 1876 at Philadelphia*. (Sydney, Australia: Thomas Richards, Government Printer, 1876.

facilitated the exchange of scientific catalogues and specimens between the colony and American institutions.³⁶ More broadly, the Australian colonies all used representation at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as a chance to foster scientific exchange with the United States: by its close, both American and Australian scientific and educational institutions had been enriched by the exchange of animal, plant and mineral specimens as well as scientific catalogues and essays.³⁷

Space and the Victorian Section

The similarities with the other colonies, however, ended there. The Commissioners to the Victorian Section were uniquely concerned with ensuring that the Australian colonies were all adequately represented at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, and initially attempted to establish a sense of solidarity with the other Australian colonies through taking it upon themselves to apply for space for a proposed Australian Section.³⁸ However, confusion over whether or not Australia would comprise part of the British Section meant that Levey was made to write to the U.S. Commissioners twice to ensure that the Australian colonies would be allocated space separately to the British Section. Initially, Levey wrote to the U.S. Commissioners in January 1875 to confirm that it was the desire of the Australian colonies ‘to act independently of the British Commission’ and, additionally, to request that ‘the quantity of space likely to be required by Australia is 22,500 square feet’.³⁹ However, in a subsequent dispatch, Levey was made to emphasise that while the colonies were ‘proud to form a part’ of the British Empire, it was not their desire

³⁶ Redmond Barry took it upon himself to facilitate the exchange of books and specimens between Victorian and American institutions, primarily the Smithsonian: the Commissioner, for instance, corresponded with individuals including Smithsonian curator Professor Spencer Fullerton Baird and Smithsonian Secretary Joseph Henry, and went so far as mapping out a plan for continued scientific exchange between the two societies in a letter to Henry.

³⁷ Hoffenberg identifies the important role that nineteenth century Exhibitions played in both facilitating networks of scientific exchange, as well as the role the Exhibitions played in allowing the Australian colonies to contribute to, as well as sometimes contest, the hegemony of the ‘Western scientific enterprise’. Hoffenberg, “A Science of Our Own”: Nineteenth Century Exhibitions, Australians and the History of Science’.

³⁸ Redmond Barry, ‘Letter Informing U.S. Commissioners of Intention to Send an Australian Section and Stage an Intercolonial Exhibition’ (January 1875), Record Group 230, City of Philadelphia, Records Department, City Archives.

³⁹ George Collins Levey, ‘Letter Stating That Australia Desires to Be Represented Separately from Great Britain’ (12 January 1875), Record Group 230, City of Philadelphia, Records Department, City Archives.

‘to lose their own individuality at Philadelphia or to refrain from being represented by their own Commissioners’. Levey was thus forced to clarify in this letter that ‘the application for space which I [Levey] made by telegram on January 29th viz. 23,000 feet, must therefore be taken as the application for Australia, and is quite independent of any space applied for by the British Commission’.⁴⁰

These letters demonstrated a desire on the part of the Victorian Commissioners to assert a sense of belonging with the other Australian colonies independent of their shared relationship with Great Britain. However, as referred to in the previous chapter, the Australian colonies were unable to agree on an equitable way of funding and staging the proposed Australian Section and instead decided instead to each send separate Sections.⁴¹ Staging a Victorian Section posed its own set of challenges: Levey was made to write to the American organisers of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition to ensure that the space allocated to the colony was not reduced, and expressed his wish that ‘there will be no diminution or reduction in the amount of space originally applied for, as the Parliament and the people of the community have made great exertions in order to have this colony adequately represented at Philadelphia’.⁴² Although disagreements regarding the best way of collectively representing the Australian colonies meant that the each colony eventually ended up sending a separate Section to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, this was perhaps in the best interests of Victoria, since the Commissioners were able to assert full control over the space allocated to them.

⁴⁰ George Collins Levey, ‘Letter Emphasising That the Space Applied for Is to Be Occupied by an Australian Court Separate to the British Empire’ (26 June 1875), Record Group 230, City of Philadelphia, Records Department, City Archives.

⁴¹ ‘The Forthcoming Exhibition and Colonial Co-Operation’, *Australasian*, 3 April 1875.

⁴² George Collins Levey, ‘Letter Expressing Concern That the Space Allocated to the Victorian Section Will Not Be Reduced’ (19 October 1875), Record Group 230, City of Philadelphia, Records Department, City Archives.

Manufactured Goods

The opportunity to stage a Victorian Section separate from the other colonies provided the Commissioners the chance to demonstrate the colony's social, cultural, economic and intellectual achievements to the world. In contrast to the other Australian Sections, the Victorian Commissioners took full advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate to the world that the colony possessed all of the markers of a progressed society in accordance with the regulations provided to them by the Exhibition's organisers, and sought to achieve this by sending a relatively substantial showing of manufactured goods to demonstrate the strength of the colony's manufacturing industry, as well as a large showing of books and essays to emphasise its moral and intellectual development.

The push to send manufactured goods was likely at the behest of radical liberal politician Graham Berry, who was Premier of Victoria in the latter half of 1875, and desired to use Exhibitions as a way of demonstrating the colony's success under protectionist trade policies (as opposed to the other Australian colonies, which generally adopted free trade economic policies).⁴³ The influence of protectionist trade policies on the colony's involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition will be further explored in the next chapter: however, the desire to demonstrate that the colonial economy had flourished as a result of protectionist trade policies meant that the Commissioners used the Victorian Section to demonstrate the growth of the colony's manufacturing industry.

The Commissioners stated this aim in their Introduction to the Catalogue to the Victorian Section, expressing their hope that 'a close examination of the manufactured articles' that were to go on display as part of the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition and, subsequently, the Philadelphia

⁴³ Graham Berry was to push for the staging of an International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1877, intended by him as a showcase of Victorian industries. For more, see Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer*. pp.118-119.

Exhibition, would demonstrate ‘the respectable progress made ... in the construction of labour-saving machinery’ throughout Australia.⁴⁴ In a subsequent report on the Victorian Section compiled as part of British reports on the Philadelphia Exhibition, the Victorian Commissioners noted that, in contrast to earlier Exhibitions, which ‘consisted almost exclusively of imported articles’, more recent exhibits sent by the colony reflected an increase in the display of ‘colonial manufactures’, which they saw as being indicative of the ‘skill, ingenuity and taste of the Victorian workmen, artisans, and artists’ who had contributed items for display.⁴⁵

The Commissioners sent manufactured items as part of the Victorian Section to both facilitate trade between the colony and the world, and to demonstrate, in material form, the progress made by the colony. The *Manufactures* Department consisted of chemical products, samples of eucalyptus oil distilled by chemist and fellow Commissioner Joseph Bosisto, tiles, pottery, glassware, furniture, rope samples, hardware, and paper made from native plants.⁴⁶ Bosisto’s samples of eucalyptus oil were particularly notable, since they demonstrated both the scientific and the industrial achievements of the colony. Not only had Bosisto successfully extracted oil from the colony’s native vegetation on a commercial scale, he had also successfully capitalised on the product by infusing manufactured goods such as cigarettes, ointment and rubber with it.⁴⁷ These items were together intended to demonstrate both to the colony’s intercolonial rivals and to the United States that the colony’s administrators had been successful in extracting

⁴⁴ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. p.xvii.

⁴⁵ Executive Commissioners to Direct the British Section at the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, *Reports on the Philadelphia International Exhibition of 1876: Victoria*. p.340.

⁴⁶ While the New South Wales Commissioners sent just 40 exhibits to represent the colony’s manufacturing capabilities, the Victorian Commissioners sent about 288 exhibits to demonstrate the supremacy of Victorian manufacturing in relation to the rest of Australia.

⁴⁷ World’s fairs were an important forum for Joseph Bosisto to popularize the use of his eucalyptus oils: between 1854 and 1891, the chemist sent exhibits of oils to seventeen exhibitions in Australia and around the world. For more, see Michael Pearson, ‘The Good Oil: Eucalyptus Oil Distilleries in Australia’, *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 11 (1993): 99–107. p.100.

the bounteous resources of the colony of Victoria, and that its resources had subsequently enriched the colonial economy.⁴⁸

Almost three hundred manufactured goods were sent as part of the Victorian Section, more than its closest rival New South Wales, which sent just 40 exhibits as part of its *Manufactures* Department.⁴⁹ However, manufactured goods still made up a fairly small portion of the Victorian Section, especially considering the emphasis placed by the Victorian Commissioners on the strength of the colony's manufacturing industry. Despite what was written in the *Introduction* to the *Catalogue*, the Commissioners' hope that the manufactured goods sent as part of the Victorian Section would demonstrate the strength of the colony's industry was largely aspirational: by 1875, Victoria was still mainly a primary producing industry, and its main exports were raw materials including wool, wheat and iron that were then exported and processed overseas.⁵⁰

Essays, Published Material, and Statistics

The Victorian Commissioners' focus on manufactured items highlighted their desire to demonstrate the colony's technological advancements to American fairgoers. The Commissioners included a number of essays in the *Catalogue*, reporting on the various economic, social and scientific aspects of the colony. One, by botanist Ferdinand von Mueller reported on the possibility of utilizing plants native to Victoria on an industrial scale; an essay by ichthyologist the Count de Castelnau was on the fish of Victoria; other essays surveyed the suitability of the colony for growing various crops, including wine.⁵¹ The Victorian Commissioners also included a section on

⁴⁸ Rothenberg and Hoffenberg note how the Victorian Commissioners were uniquely concerned with demonstrating the 'identification of manufacturing with civilisation' within the space of the Victorian Section. Rothenberg and Hoffenberg, 'Australia at the 1876 Exhibition in Philadelphia'. p.56

⁴⁹ New South Wales Commissioners of the Philadelphia International Exhibition of 1876, *Official Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales*.

⁵⁰ Joy E. Parnaby, 'The Economic and Political Development of Victoria 1877-1881' (Melbourne, Australia, University of Melbourne, 1951), <http://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/36095>.

⁵¹ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

various aspects of the colony's governance in fulfillment of the desire by the organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition for foreign exhibitors to include exhibits illustrative of the 'improvement of the physical, intellectual, and moral condition of man'.⁵² These essays covered topics including the colony's history and governance, the success of its institutions, and reports on the colony's welfare societies, hospitals and prisons (grouped together under the subheading 'Physical, Social, and Moral Condition of Man').⁵³

These essays were intended to demonstrate that the Victorian government had been successful in implementing measures for the moral and intellectual uplift of its citizens. A series of essays and tables relating to the colony's Industrial and Reformatory Schools, for instance, demonstrated the efforts of the Victorian government to train the underprivileged members of the colony to become successful tradespeople and, thus, members of the community. Aside from appending statistics relating to the age, religion and familial status of students in reformatory schools, additional tables documented a list of items manufactured by students at these schools (and the estimated value of the labour put into manufacturing these items), along with the employment prospects of graduates, and statistics relating to the agricultural success of students at these schools.⁵⁴

The Catalogue to the Victorian Section included statistics reporting on everything from the colony's economic growth to the yearly number of readers in the Melbourne Public Library, to a breakdown by profession of persons arrested in the colony in the year 1874. These were intended to highlight that the colony's administrators had been successful in converting its natural resources into consumable goods, the profit from which could then be re-invested into enriching its schools, hospitals and other institutions. Statistician Henry Hayter, author of this report, helped advance Australian statistical reporting: his publications went beyond the standards required by the Colonial

⁵² United States Centennial Commission, *Foreign Exhibits: Information and Regulations*.

⁵³ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

⁵⁴ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. pp.173-177.

Office as he strove to capture all aspects of Victoria in numerical form.⁵⁵ In line with advances in the late nineteenth century in the use of numbers and technology,⁵⁶ statistics were used by the Victorian Commissioners to quantify, subdivide and regulate the various aspects of the colony in a form that could be readily consumed by American fairgoers and officials interested in its progress.

In addition to the essays in the *Catalogue* to the Victorian Section, a substantial showing of literary and non-fiction written works made up its exhibits: according to the Catalogue, over two hundred works published in Victoria were sent, covering various themes and subjects ranging from annual reports for mining and educational statistics, to scientific works demonstrating the latest advances in Melbourne's scientific community (including an essay on a new treatment for snakebite by the University of Melbourne's first professor of Anatomy, George Halford), to agricultural and gardening publications. Items sent included examples of British poetry, such as Milton's *Lycidas* and Tennyson's *Oenone*, as well as fictional works written by Australian settlers, including Marcus Clarke's *Term of His Natural Life*, John Whiteman's *Sparks and Sounds from a Colonial Anvil*, and *Memories of Australia*, a series of diaries recounting the experiences of Annie Maria Dawbin, the wife of a colonial military officer.⁵⁷

These books were collectively compiled and sent by the Victorian Commissioners as part of the Victorian Section to showcase the diversity and quality of printed material in the colony: a subtitle to these exhibits introduced them as examples of books printed and produced in

⁵⁵ I. J. Neeson, 'Hayter, Henry Heylyn (1821–1895)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 10 September 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hayter-henry-heylyn-3739>.

⁵⁶ In his book analysing the revolutionary transformations in society brought about by the invention of technologies used to assert control over the mass exchange of information, James Beniger contends that this transformation began in the United States towards the end of the nineteenth century with the invention of mass communication technologies like rotary power printing, the transatlantic cable, and the telephone. James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

⁵⁷ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. pp.110-114.

Melbourne.⁵⁸ While the Commissioners may not have sent these books with an explicitly commercial interest in mind, they reflected how the colony's publishing industry was dominated by a small group of specialised publishers. Newspaper editors David Syme and the McCutcheon brothers were responsible for furnishing many of the Victorian Section's periodical works; publisher George Robertson sent many of the longer published works. Indeed, by 1874, George Robertson (with the help of his London manager William Petherick) had opened accounts in Paris, New York, Boston and Philadelphia, and may have been looking to further expand his market in the United States as a result of the Philadelphia Exhibition.⁵⁹ The number of Australian fiction titles being sold in the American marketplace through British vendors steadily increased between 1870 and 1900; Robertson may have seen the Philadelphia Exhibition as a chance to expand his reach to the United States publishing industry.⁶⁰

At the close of the Exhibition, Redmond Barry insisted that the approximately two hundred books displayed at the Philadelphia Exhibition be donated to the National Library of the Capitol at Washington and that, amongst these, the *Biographical Charts of Italian Painters* mentioned earlier be included. Barry wrote that the *Biographical Charts* had regrettably 'received serious injury from salt water on the voyage from Australia', meaning that 'the illustrations were almost wholly ruined, the paper was stained, [and] much of the descriptive portions of the plates were obliterated'. However, he spoke highly of the work as an item that 'in all respects: compilation, paper, printing, illustration [and] binding ... was purely a product of Victoria', and offered a restored version of it to Professor Joseph Henry, the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.⁶¹ As items published in Victoria, the textual material sent as part of the Victorian Section represented, in material form,

⁵⁸ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. p.110.

⁵⁹ Alison Rukavina, "'This Is a Wonderfully Comprehensive Business": The Development of the British-Australian and International Book Trades, 1870-1887.', *Script & Print* 32, no. 2 (2008): 69.

⁶⁰ David Carter, 'Beyond the Antipodes: Australian Popular Fiction in Transnational Networks', in *New Directions in Popular Fiction*, ed. Ken Gelder (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 349–70, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52346-4_17. p.350.

⁶¹ Barry, 'Letter from Barry, Sir Redmond, Melbourne, to Professor Joseph Henry'.

the advancements made in colonial publishing, and it was hoped by the Commissioners that sending these items to Philadelphia would make American fairgoers aware of the advances made by the Victorian publishing industry.

It would take some time, however, before the exchange of books between Australia and the United States could flourish on a commercial scale. Trade agreements between American and British publishers ensured their continued monopolisation and domination of the Australian market through commercial and regulatory means well into the twentieth century, and the direct trade in books between Australia and the United States suffered as a result of this.⁶² Regardless, by sending these works to be displayed in Philadelphia, the Victorian Commissioners hoped to establish a sense of commonality between Victoria and the United States. This was a point explicated in the Introduction to the *Catalogue*, where the Commissioners expressed the hope that the Exhibition would enable them to ‘bring the resources and industrial progress’ of the colony to ‘the citizens of a State springing from the same race, speaking the same language, and studying the same literature’.⁶³

Aboriginal Australians, Chinese People, and Race at the Centennial

The Victorian Commissioners thus sought to establish a sense of commonality between themselves and their American hosts through the display of books. However, to emphasise this sense of commonality based on a shared sense of racial progress it was necessary for the Exhibition’s American organisers to create a counterpoint to the world’s more progressed nations.⁶⁴ Smithsonian archaeologist Charles Rau conceived an ‘Indian’ exhibit at the Centennial

⁶² Wallace Kirsop, ‘From Colonialism to the Multinationals: The Fragile Growth of Australian Publishing and Its Contribution to the Global Anglophone Reading Community’, *Les Mutations Du Livre et de l’édition Dans Le Monde Du XVIIIe Siècle à l’an 2000*, 2000, 324–29. p.326.

⁶³ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

⁶⁴ This was in keeping with exhibitions dating back to the 1850s. Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

to demonstrate that, in the words of Robert Rydell, 'Native American cultures and people belonged to ... humanity's dark and stormy beginnings' and that their 'worth as human beings was determined by their usefulness as a counterpoint to the unfolding progress of the ages'.⁶⁵ The organisers of the Centennial presented progress as an explicitly racialized concept linking concepts of European racial superiority to nationalism and economic growth, and thus framed the bodies and cultural output of Indigenous people as a counterpoint to the unfolding advancement of colonial society.

The representation of Indigenous Australians at Victorian Sections previous to the Philadelphia Exhibition followed a similar logic. Items relating to Aboriginal people that made up part of Victoria's contribution to the Paris Exhibition of 1867, for instance, were obtained by collectors from Italy, Russia and Britain to add to their personal anthropological collections.⁶⁶ The collection and circulation of items and artefacts relating to Indigenous people was justified by a logic of exclusion, whereby their bodies, as well as the bodies and output of those considered unfit for inclusion in colonial society (including the poor, the penalised, and the mentally ill), were used by the state as counterpoints to the ideals of enlightenment and morality that structured settler colonial society.⁶⁷ Because they were considered inferior, the bodies of these individuals were more likely to become commodities to be sold to the medical and scientific establishment following their death due to their disadvantaged status in life.

While some scientific material relating to Indigenous Australians was displayed as part of the Victorian Section, the items relating to Indigenous Australians sent by the colony to the

⁶⁵ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*. pp.24-25.

⁶⁶ Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians*, ed. Nicholas Thomas, *Objects/Histories: Critical Perspectives on Art, Material Culture, and Representation: A Series* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005). pp.93-98.

⁶⁷ Susan Martin, 'Dissection, Anatomy Acts and the Appropriation of Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Australia: "The Government's Brains" and the Benevolent Asylum', in *The Body Divided: Human Beings and Human 'Material' in Modern Medical History*, ed. Sally Wilde and Sarah Ferber (Farnham, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 57-75.

Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition reflected an effort on the part of the Victorian Commissioners to highlight the efforts of the colony's administrators at assimilating Indigenous Australians into Victorian society. Rather than dedicate a separate department to exhibits relating to Indigenous Australians, the Victorian Commissioners scattered items relating to them throughout the Victorian Section. The most substantial showing of items made by and relating to Aboriginal people consisted of a selection of photographs, artefacts and other ethnographic material, including Redmond Barry's *Vocabulary of Victorian Aboriginal Dialects*, as part of the *Education and Science* department.⁶⁸ However, a selection of Aboriginal weapons was also sent as part of the *Manufactures* Department, and a small collection of hops grown at the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station was sent as part of the *Agriculture* department.⁶⁹

While Indigenous Australians were previously framed as individuals incapable of being assimilated into settler colonial society, the representation of Indigenous Australians within the Victorian Section at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition seemed in some ways intended to lead to the opposite conclusion – to demonstrate the colonists' success in assimilating its original inhabitants into colonial society. The items relating to Indigenous Australians sent as part of the Victorian Section at Philadelphia reflected the Victorian Government's changing attitude towards its Indigenous Australian population in the 1870s. The 1860s marked a period during which Aboriginal people living in Victoria were being moved to reserves overseen by governmental authorities. The aim of those in control of the seven Aboriginal reserves in Victoria was to remake Aborigines as civilised members of colonial society through the replacement of Aboriginal ideas of place and time with European ones, a process enacted by missionaries through the

⁶⁸ Redmond Barry's *Vocabulary* was intended to be the groundwork for a more extended study of the languages and social structure of Indigenous Australians in the colony. Redmond Barry, *Vocabulary of Dialects Spoken by Aboriginal Natives of Australia*. (Melbourne: Masterman, 1867).

⁶⁹ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

reorganisation of those concepts within the space of Aboriginal mission stations.⁷⁰ Schooling was one of the mechanisms of change through which this was enacted, and by the 1870s, a number of Aboriginal reserves set aside to re-educate Indigenous Australians had been relatively successful in their aim of assimilating Aboriginal people into colonial society. Students educated at the Ramahyuck Aboriginal Reserve following the passage of the 1872 Education Act in Victoria, for instance, achieved pass rates of over 90% from 1873 to 1875, compared to an average rate of below 70% in the colony. Similarly, the Aboriginal inhabitants of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station had successfully established a hops farm on the property by the 1870s and exchanged both goods and souvenirs with visitors to the reserve.⁷¹

In addition to the items sent, the statistical essay appended to the *Catalogue* mentioned earlier reporting on the results of the 1871 Victorian Census by Victorian Government Statistician Henry Hayter was intended to demonstrate the success of Victoria's administrators in governing both its Indigenous Australian, and Chinese, populations. Hayter's census of 1871 was the first to try to make 'any attempt ... to ascertain what proportion of the Chinese and Aborigines could read and write'.⁷² With the caveat that they had been tested in English rather than their own language, Hayter reported that '1 in 85' of the Chinese population over five years old could read English, and that '1 in 102, could write it'. Of the colony's Indigenous Australian population over five years old, Hayter reported that '159, ... about an eighth' could read, and '114, or about an eleventh' could write.⁷³

It was important to report on the reading and writing levels of the colony's Indigenous Australian and Chinese populations, especially considering the pioneering role Victoria played in

⁷⁰ For more on this, see Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800* (Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005).

⁷¹ Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*. p.137.

⁷² The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. p.87.

⁷³ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. p.87.

drafting legislation to introduce standardised education to the colony. Victoria was the first of the Australian colonies to introduce a free, secular and compulsory system of education with the 1872 Education Act, which centralised Victoria's educational system under government, rather than church, control. The Act revolutionised teaching in the colony and was designed to enable all children between the ages of six and fifteen to have access to elementary schooling. To facilitate this, it was necessary to enact an educational revolution in the colony, and the passing of the Education Act was accompanied by the creation of the Victorian Education Department, as well as a boom in the construction of schools to accommodate the projected increase in school attendance.⁷⁴

Following Hayter's analysis of the literacy levels of the colony's Indigenous Australian and Chinese population was a section providing a statistical breakdown of the conjugal status of Victoria's population. Again, Hayter counted the conjugal status of Indigenous Australian and Chinese people separately to the rest of the colony's population. Specifically, Hayter found that of the colony's white population, '312 in every 1,000 living were married, and 688 were single or widowed'. The low marriage rate amongst the colony's white population was partly attributable to the fact that most of the migrants who had arrived in Victoria were working class men who either preferred not to get married, or who had left their families in Britain. This was despite the fact that by the 1870s, the sex ratio between white men and women had become relatively equal: according to Hayter, of British subjects, 53 out of every 100 were male, and the rest were female.

Conversely, in regards to the conjugal status of the Chinese population, Hayter found that '17,733 males of 14 years old and upwards, or 99 percent' of Victoria's Chinese population 'were set down as single', with the caveat that 'instructions were given to the sub-enumerators to consider

⁷⁴ B. Bessant, 'Free, Compulsory, and Secular Education: The 1872 Education Act, Victoria, Australia', *Paedagogica Historica* 24, no. 1 (1 January 1984): 5–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0030923840240101>.

all as unmarried except those who had, at the time of the census, or had had at some previous period, wives in Australia'.⁷⁵ It was true that a large proportion of Victoria's Chinese population were men: Hayter himself recorded that at the time of the census, out of the 17,857 Chinese people in the colony, just 31 were female.⁷⁶ However, despite Hayter's caveat to count these men as single if their wives had not emigrated with them to the colony, the truth of the matter was more complex: differing modes of social organisation meant that it was more common for Chinese miners to send money overseas to support their wives, children, and extended family rather than bring their families with them.⁷⁷ The large influx of ostensibly single male Chinese migrants to the colony led the colony's white politicians and social commentators to speculate that, without women to keep them in check, Chinese migrants would become overtly immoral and debaucherous. A slew of legislation was introduced in response to this panic to regulate the migration of Chinese people to the colony, and from the 1850s onwards, the movement and migration of Chinese people to Victoria was heavily regulated.⁷⁸

Anxieties regarding the ability of Chinese migrants to adapt to white society were similarly prevalent at the Philadelphia Exhibition: visitors commenting on the Chinese exhibit noted their supposed moral degradation, which they used as evidence to prove that Chinese people were unable to adapt to white society. Anti-Chinese sentiment was eventually ratified in the form of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, designed to protect the interests of white working-class men who felt threatened by the incoming migrant workforce.⁷⁹ The negative perception of the Chinese exhibit, as well as anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States, however, was somewhat ironic,

⁷⁵ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. p.89.

⁷⁶ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. p.68.

⁷⁷ Barry McGowan, 'The Economics and Organisation of Chinese Mining in Colonial Australia', *Australian Economic History Review* 45, no. 2 (2005): 119–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8446.2005.00131.x>.

⁷⁸ Victoria pioneered some of the earliest legislation designed to restrict Chinese migration in the form of the 1855 *Act to Make Provision for Certain Immigrants*, which limited the quota of Chinese migrants to Victoria and introduced a £10 landing fee for all male Chinese migrants to the colony. Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982).

⁷⁹ Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). p.98.

especially considering the fact that Philadelphia financiers profited tremendously from the trade between China and the United States.⁸⁰ Just as in the United States, the truth about Chinese people in Victoria was more complex than white commentators acknowledged. In addition to emigrating without their families, many Chinese miners arrived at the goldfields in the 1850s and 1860s as part of cooperatives with a strict hierarchy and were indebted to their boss from whom they had borrowed fare monies to make the journey to Australia. Unlike European miners, many Chinese miners were unable to speak English, so were reliant on their boss to manage the purchase of claims, organise leases, provide equipment for mining, and to conduct negotiations with European mining officials.⁸¹ While it was true that the majority of Chinese migrants were men, differing modes of social organisation to those of European miners determined their movement and access to opportunities in the colony of Victoria, and it was not necessarily true that they were unmarried: it was more likely that they had left their families at home.

Additionally, rather than transition to other professions (like many European miners did), by the 1870s, the majority of the colony's Chinese population remained employed as part of professionalised mining operations. This was a fact acknowledged by Hayter: by 1871, about '13,374 out of 17,899, or about 75 per cent' of men of Chinese descent were employed in gold mining, and the rest were employed mainly in small-scale agriculture and retail operations.⁸² Men of Chinese descent therefore made up almost a fifth of the mining workforce in Victoria: of the 52,411 men employed in mining, 13,374 were Chinese. The importance of Chinese migrants to Victoria's mining industry, however, would not have been immediately apparent to visitors to the

⁸⁰ Rydell notes that, despite the tremendous profits made by Philadelphia financiers with China, the nation had never been viewed as an equal trading partner with the United States. However, this opened China up to being exploited by American commercial ventures, since if they were cast as inferior, the Chinese could not be trusted with decisions affecting the course of world progress. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*. pp.30-31.

⁸¹ Barry McGowan, 'The Economics and Organisation of Chinese Mining in Colonial Australia', *Australian Economic History Review* 45, no. 2 (2005): 119–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8446.2005.00131.x>. p.121.

⁸² Specifically, of the Chinese migrants in Victoria who were not miners, Hayter listed 1,446 Chinese as being employed as 'farmers, market-gardeners, agricultural laborers, etc.', 542 as shopkeepers, 274 as hawkers and peddlers, 244 as gamblers and lottery-ticket sellers, 146 as opium dealers, 123 as prisoners, and 114 as butchers. The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*. pp.82-83.

Victorian Section. While a significant number of exhibits were sent as part of the *Mining and Metallurgy* Department, many items were attributed to mining companies rather than to individuals or small businesses. Although most mining in Victoria was done by mining companies by the 1870s, the labour of individual miners went unrecognised, and the contributions of Chinese miners specifically was erased, since they were generally part of professionalised mining cooperatives.

Individuals of Aboriginal descent were also counted separately to the colony's white population: Hayter found that of 'the male Aborigines of 14 years old and upwards, ... 43 per cent [were returned as] husbands', and 'of the female Aborigines at the same age, ... 73 per cent [were returned] as wives'.⁸³ The use of statistics to construct categories and regulate populations was a common technique of colonial governance in the nineteenth century, and is a topic that has received considerable scholarly attention.⁸⁴ In fact, statistics were considered to be an essential component of liberal governance, since they could be used to quantitatively determine the moral and social development of populations determined to be inferior.⁸⁵ Statistics were used to this end in Victoria from the 1830s: to be able to determine the impact that colonisation had had on the colony's Indigenous population, Aboriginal people living in Victoria were counted separately to its white population.⁸⁶ It was especially important to capture statistics relating to Victoria's Indigenous Australian population by the 1870s, since by this time, many of the colony's Aboriginal inhabitants

⁸³ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition.

⁸⁴ Perhaps the most influential contribution to this field has been from sociologist Michel Foucault, who used the notion of 'biopolitics' to consider the role that social categories play in the creation of the individual subject. Ian Hacking similarly argues that statistical categories create subject distinctions which allow the state to govern "deviant" populations. Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980); Ian Hacking, 'Making Up People', in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller and Christine Brooke-Rose (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 222–36.

⁸⁵ Hindess identifies how an underlying premise of liberal governance is that political freedoms are acquired through discipline and moral progress, and that it is the responsibility of the liberal government to sometimes seek to aid in the moral development of populations considered inferior. Thompson explores how statistics were, and are, entangled in the social and political development of societies governed by liberal principles. Barry Hindess, 'Political Theory and "Actually Existing Liberalism"', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 11, no. 3 (1 September 2008): 347–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230802276488>; Debra Thompson, *The Schematic State: Race, Transnationalism, and the Politics of the Census* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁸⁶ Rob Watts, 'Making Numbers Count: The Birth of the Census and Racial Government in Victoria, 1835–1840', *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 121 (1 April 2003): 26–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610308596235>.

had been moved to mission stations to be isolated and subsequently assimilated into colonial society.

The representation of Chinese and Indigenous Australian people at Philadelphia thus reflected the Victorian government's differing stances towards these groups. The exhibits relating to Indigenous Australians in the Victorian Section were intended to demonstrate the colony's attempts at reforming and assimilating these individuals into colonial society, while the lack of representation of the colony's Chinese population in the space reflected the Victorian government's exclusionist stance towards these individuals. While the Victorian government may have had differing stances towards these populations however, statistical analysis played a central role in the regulation of both these groups, and was used to determine the drafting and direction of policies relating to these individuals.

Reception

The representation of the colony's Indigenous Australian and Chinese populations in the Victorian Section thus reflected their status in colonial society. This was a process achieved through the division and allocation of both conceptual, and physical, space within the Victorian Section. By assigning Australian Aborigines and Chinese people separate statistical categories, the colony's administrators could better track the social status of these groups in colonial society. By counting the conjugal status of the Chinese population separately to the rest of Victoria's population, for instance, the colony's administrators could more easily track their marriage rate in relation to the colony's white population. Similarly, by counting Indigenous Australians separately to the rest of the colony's population, the colony's governors could track the success of Victoria's mission stations in assimilating these individuals into colonial society.

It is difficult to provide a complete account of the reception of the Victorian Section: as far as I am aware, few first-hand accounts by fairgoers survive, and it is naïve to assume that these sources alone could demonstrate that the Commissioners had successfully projected the fact that the colony possessed the markers of a progressed society. However, of these sources, a number consist of newspaper and guidebook reviews, and give some insight into how the Victorian Section was conceived of by American reporters. The majority of these reviews drew from common themes in their description of the Victorian Section: most included an overview of its agricultural, manufactured and mineralogical exhibits, as well as a description of the taxidermied specimens on display. Some reviews mentioned the colony's exhibits of photographs, paintings and textual material (and in turn took the opportunity to comment on the status of Victoria's Indigenous Australian population), while others remarked on the shared characteristics of Victoria and the United States in their reviews.

One of the first articles mentioning Victoria's involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition was published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* on 14 May 1876. While it was published prior to the opening of the Exhibition, the subject of Australia's representation at the Centennial was of interest to the reporter, since the two societies shared convergent histories whereby Australia's 'history, her resources, and commercial peculiarities have been almost identical and coincident with those of California'.⁸⁷ The reporter noted how California's gold rush 'preceded similar events in the colony of Victoria by about two years', and that, because of their shared histories, as well as the fact that both societies spoke 'the same language' and were 'inspired by the same progressive and civilizing influences', that it was 'not strange that the people of California and Australia should hold a sort of fraternal feeling toward each other'.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ 'Australia', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 May 1876, San Francisco Chronicle Archives.

⁸⁸ 'Australia'.

It was not uncommon for contemporary comparisons to be made between Victoria and California in the nineteenth century, since both were settler colonial societies that had undergone a rapid period of expansion owing to the discovery of gold.⁸⁹ This sense of commonality was reflected in the remainder of the article: the reporter compared Victoria's to California's gold output, noting how it 'was never in excess of California', but acknowledged how 'in some respects' Australia's economy had 'been more rapidly developed than with us [the United States]'.⁹⁰ Following this, the reporter gave the reader an overview of the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition, and commended it for having been 'gratifying and eminently successful'. The reporter then gave a summary of Victoria's gold, agricultural, manufacturing and wool industries and concluded the article by providing an overview of the extent of its public institutions, newspaper presses, and colonial businesses.

Following this article, two major newspaper reviews of the Victorian Section were published in American newspapers: in the *Boston Journal* on 12 June 1876 and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on 14 June 1876. Both of these articles opened with a summary of the *Skerryvore* incident, and described how Stoddart had allegedly attempted to scuttle the ship by boring a hole in its side. Following the section on the *Skerryvore* incident, the *Boston Journal* reporter commended the Victorian Section for providing 'one of the most charming and object lessons' of the Exhibition, since it gave the visitor a detailed visual overview of the colony in the form of 'elaborate photographic arrangement'.⁹¹ The author of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* report, in contrast, provided an account of the history of the colony, detailing how its past, full of 'bad characters', had been supplanted by a society that 'can compare favorably with many populations of much older origin' replete with 'free schools in

⁸⁹ For more on this, see Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s*.

⁹⁰ 'Australia'.

⁹¹ 'Centennial Letters', *Boston Journal*, 12 June 1876.

abundance; ... hospitals, railways, prisons, medical colleges, theological seminaries, ... and all other adjuncts of an advanced civilization'.⁹²

While these reporters focussed on different aspects of the Victorian Section in their initial description, both framed the decline of Victoria's Indigenous Australian population as the inevitable outcome of colonial progress. The *Boston Journal* reporter noted how the photographic representations of Victoria demonstrated how the 'ugly looking, ignorant and degraded native' was 'fading away like mists before the morning sun of colonial progress and domination'.⁹³ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reporter similarly regretted that 'the aborigines are fast disappearing, as they disappear in nearly all countries on which the white race sets its foot', and noted that 'at this rate they have not long to remain', since the Victorian government had moved the majority of the colony's Indigenous Australian population to reserves.⁹⁴ These attitudes were common in both Victoria and the United States: while there were differences in the manner in which the dispossession of Indigenous Australians and Native Americans of their land was carried out, the idea that these individuals were inferior to white settlers was used to justify their exploitation, dispossession and elimination in both Australia and North America.⁹⁵

Following this passing mention of the decline of the colony's Indigenous population, both reporters then shifted to an overview of the Victorian Section itself. The *Boston Journal* reporter offered a description of its taxidermied specimens, and subsequently gave some sense of the representation of Victoria's 'exports of gold and wool', 'a very large exhibit of minerals', and 'all the new and improved machinery used in the gold fields'.⁹⁶ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reporter

⁹² 'Centennial: The Other Side of the World - The Victorian Exhibit', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 June 1876.

⁹³ 'Centennial Letters'.

⁹⁴ 'Centennial: The Other Side of the World - The Victorian Exhibit'.

⁹⁵ Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s*; Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2019).

⁹⁶ 'Centennial Letters'.

similarly noted its exhibits of wine, wool, wheat and fruit, and provided a brief overview of the industries of each. The reporter, for instance, mentioned that Victoria's wine business 'is not yet out of the experimental stage', but that it was developing on a rapid scale, since 'the product of 1874-75 was nearly 600,000 gallons, an increase of some 12,000 gallons over the previous year'. In contrast to the colony's nascent wine industry, the reporter gave an overview of its wool industry, valued at '\$35,000,000', and of which a large portion 'is exported to England, Europe, and the United States'.⁹⁷

Following this description of Victoria's agricultural sector, both reporters gave an overview of the colony's manufacturing industries: the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reporter gave a brief description of the colony's exhibits of manufactured goods, which consisted of 'common potteries, and some samples of tin, lead, and antimony', as well as samples of leather and furniture produced in Victoria, and alongside which were displayed 'the great nuggets of gold which have become famous in Australian history'.⁹⁸ The *Boston Journal* reporter similarly gave an overview of Victoria's industries, and mentioned how the colony's gold yield 'amounted to more than thirty millions of dollars' in 1874 (and that it could therefore expect 'a future grander than that of the Pacific Coast' of the United States), and in turn gave an overview of the colony's exhibits of wool, wine, pomological specimens and grain, as well as its exhibits of manufactured and processed goods, which included 'the machinery for sinking wells, the great blocks of Victorian antimony, lead, tin and iron, and the tin piping'.⁹⁹

Both reporters concluded by commending the breadth and richness of the Victorian Section: the *Boston Journal* reporter complimented the 'complete and marvellous display' of the colony's resources, and noted in particular the role of the 'pictorial element' in giving the fairgoer an idea

⁹⁷ 'Centennial: The Other Side of the World - The Victorian Exhibit'.

⁹⁸ 'Centennial: The Other Side of the World - The Victorian Exhibit'.

⁹⁹ 'Centennial Letters'.

of Victoria's resources.¹⁰⁰ The writer of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* report similarly justified having written at length on the Victorian Section because 'the country is one about which we know very little, and ought to know more'.¹⁰¹ Both of these reporters gave a detailed description of the Victorian Section with the aim of demonstrating how it had advanced culturally and economically: by emphasising the success of Victoria's agricultural and manufacturing sectors, both authors aimed to highlight that the colony had progressed to become self-sustaining.

In addition to these newspaper reviews, a number of guidebooks, published to aid visitors in navigating the Philadelphia Exhibition, gave descriptions of the Victorian Section. Guidebooks varied in the emphasis given to particular exhibits, but, like the newspaper articles analysed above, generally focussed on common themes. The *Fletcher Guide to the Philadelphia Exhibition*, for instance, opened its account of the Victorian Section by describing a 'kangaroo ... [standing] quietly on its hind feet' overlooking a 'case in which are deposited fac-similes of the great nuggets of gold that have been found in the colony', and mentioned the colony's exhibits of 'wax models of the fruits of Victoria', 'books and paintings illustrative of the advantages and scenery of Victoria', cases displaying geological specimens found in Victoria and 'a case of various species of eucalyptus'.¹⁰²

The guide also described some of the more eccentric items in the Victorian Court, including a 'high tower-shaped case of fancy crackers and confections', a taxidermied cassowary who looked 'ragged and discouraged' and a 'display of silk in skeins and cocoons'.¹⁰³ The passage closed with a description of items in the back of the Section, describing 'a case of models of fishes', 'photographs of the natives ... in their wild state and after civilization', the only statue displayed (Charles Summers's *Lynceus and Hypermnestra*), and numerous cases of both 'plump wheat kernels'

¹⁰⁰ 'Centennial Letters'.

¹⁰¹ 'Centennial: The Other Side of the World - The Victorian Exhibit'.

¹⁰² Fletcher, *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876: What We Saw and How We Saw It*. p.37.

¹⁰³ Fletcher. *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876: What We Saw and How We Saw It*. p.37. The taxidermied cassowary was likely ragged-looking due to the fact that it had been soaked by seawater as a result of the *Skerryvore* incident.

and ‘wools’, which together served as a testimony to ‘the dependence of a land upon its agricultural prosperity’.¹⁰⁴ This guide however neglected to mention in detail either the essays in the *Catalogue* or the manufactured goods sent (with the exception of Bosisto’s samples of essential oils), and thus characterised the colony as one still reliant on its agricultural industries.

In contrast, the *Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exhibition* did more closely reflect the values being projected by the Victorian Commissioners. It dedicated a substantial passage to a description of Victoria’s economic output drawn from the *Catalogue*, and included discussion of



Figure 3 - Norton, Frank H. *The Victoria Court, In The British Colonies Department, In The Main Building*. 1879. American News Company.

the colony’s imports and exports, the establishment and purpose of its public institutions, the average wages of the working classes, and the process of evaluating, leasing and obtaining land in

¹⁰⁴ Fletcher. *The Centennial Exhibition of 1876: What We Saw and How We Saw It*. pp.37-38.

Victoria.¹⁰⁵ These details were interwoven with a description of the exhibits themselves, highlighting, for example, the ‘stuffed specimens of native animals and birds’ that confronted the visitor upon entering the Victorian Section, as well as the facsimiles of gold nuggets, ‘a large number of photographs of local scenes and buildings, specimens of artificial fruit, ornaments in jewellery ... a large number of specimens of wool of different varieties’, a ‘large number of native war weapons, including the celebrated boomerang’ and ‘quite a collection of rocks, minerals and fossils, illustrative of the geological and mining resources of Victoria.’¹⁰⁶ The passage concluded with a description of the various manufactured goods sent by the colony, including ‘bricks, drain pipes, ... crucibles and caustic tiles’, furniture made from Australian timber, and, finally, noted its displays of both artificial and cultivated fruit, which included ‘pomegranates, figs, ran-apples, egg-apples and Cape gooseberries’.¹⁰⁷

Like the *Illustrated Historical Register*, the *New York Tribune Guide to the Exhibition* provided the reader with details of the Victorian Court drawn from the bibliographical and visual information furnished by the exhibitors so that the fairgoer could ‘see the whole country, and travel in imagination through its cities, villages, farms, mines, sheep stations, and its wild interior districts’.¹⁰⁸ This report also mentioned the ‘oil paintings, ... cases of stuffed birds and animals, pyramids of dessert biscuit (crackers), shelves of ales, ... handsomely bound books and sheet music, ... and a large collection of minerals’.¹⁰⁹ However, this account differed from the others in that it explicitly drew on discourses of social and racial continuity to foster a sense of similarity between the eastern United States and the Australian colonies through highlighting their convergent histories as settler colonial societies. It commended the Australian colonies for advancing ‘at a more rapid rate’ than

¹⁰⁵ Frank H. Norton, *Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876 and of the Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1878* (New York: American News Company, 1879). p.257.

¹⁰⁶ Norton, *Illustrated Historical Register*.

¹⁰⁷ Norton, *Illustrated Historical Register*. pp.257-258.

¹⁰⁸ *Visitors' Guides to the 1876 Fair [Tribune Guide to the Exhibition]* (New York Tribune, 1876), p.31.

¹⁰⁹ *Visitors' Guides to the 1876 Fair [Tribune Guide to the Exhibition]*.

the United States, noting that ‘the accomplishments of these Australian colonists may well excite Americans’ admiration’, since Australia already possessed ‘handsomely built cities, well-constructed railways and public roads, good schools and newspapers, [and] many creditable manufactures’.¹¹⁰ Statistics drawn from the Victorian Section’s *Catalogue* as well as the books displayed were co-opted to provide evidence of the colony’s rapid industrial development, accomplishments attributed to the ‘Anglo-Saxon sturdiness and industry’ possessed both by the Australian settlers and earlier American colonists.¹¹¹

The author of the *Tribune* guide to the Exhibition also expressed interest in Victoria due to its unique economic situation. The commentator identified how the colony was exceptional for its ‘protective tariff’ that levied ‘25 per cent on all imports for the avowed purpose of stimulating home industries’. It compared Victoria’s policy of economic protectionism to the free trade policy of New South Wales, and took the fact that Victoria displayed a ‘greater variety of manufactures’ as tentative proof that its trade policy was working better than that of New South Wales.¹¹² The *Tribune* author’s tacit support of Victoria’s policy of trade protectionism was hardly surprising, since the *New York Tribune* was a strongly Republican newspaper that championed trade protectionism.¹¹³ But ultimately, the author of the *Tribune* guide expressed hope that Victoria and New South Wales would continue to adhere to their divergent economic policies so that ‘a fair trial of the merits of the two systems’ could be made ‘in the interest of social science’.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ *Visitors’ Guides to the 1876 Fair [Tribune Guide to the Exhibition]*. p.30.

¹¹¹ *Visitors’ Guides to the 1876 Fair [Tribune Guide to the Exhibition]*.

¹¹² While the commentator’s claim that duties of 25 per cent were levied on items was exaggerated, the Victorian Duties of Customs Act of 1871 meant that goods, including iron, spirits, wine, sugar and leather as well as certain manufactured woollen goods, were subject to import duties of up to twenty per cent. *Visitors’ Guides to the 1876 Fair [Tribune Guide to the Exhibition]*.

¹¹³ The *New York Tribune* was founded by supporter of the Whig and Republican Parties Horace Greeley, which each promoted trade protectionism as the most suitable economic policy for the United States. Robert Williams, *Horace Greeley: Champion of American Freedom* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴ *Visitors’ Guides to the 1876 Fair [Tribune Guide to the Exhibition]*.

The framing of Victoria and New South Wales as testing grounds for determining whether protectionism or free trade was the best economic policy for a society to follow was hardly novel: from the 1870s, supporters from both sides of the free trade debate used the two colonies to affirm that they were correct in their beliefs.¹¹⁵ The mention of this debate by an American commentator, however, demonstrates that some of the Exhibition's American attendees had at least some knowledge of the social and political situation in Victoria.

Conclusion

The Victorian Commissioners hoped to establish a sense of commonality with their American counterparts by sending exhibits that would demonstrate the economic, cultural and social progress of the colony. American reporters commenting on the Victorian Section, in turn, projected their own values and assumptions on it, reading it through the perspective of discussions and debates occurring in the United States regarding its economic and political future. Despite this however, it appeared that American reception of the Victorian Section was, overall, positive: the 24 July *Argus* report providing a detailed account of the Victorian Section implied that the Australian exhibits were well received by American fairgoers. The reporter put this down to the fact that 'the Americans entertain a kind regard for the Australians', since Australia was too distant from the United States to be seen as 'competitors to be beaten off'.¹¹⁶ Another report countered accounts that sought to sensationalise the impact that the *Skerryvore* incident had had on the representation of Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria by pointing out that France and Russia were also delayed in setting up their respective Sections.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Palen discusses how the free trade debate between Victoria and New South Wales was framed as a microcosmic experiment in economic theory by supporters of either side of the discussion over whether free trade or protectionism were the best policies for a society's future. Marc-William Palen, *The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalization, 1846-1896* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹¹⁶ 'The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia'.

¹¹⁷ 'Victoria at Philadelphia', *Ballarat Star*, 23 June 1876.

The Victorian Section was a space within which competing assertions of settler colonial influence coalesced to reflect the concerns of a colony that was still contending with the best way of ensuring its future security. While the Commissioners placed some emphasis on the roles of manufacturing and intellectual advancement in fostering the colony's progress, Victoria was still mainly a primary producing economy well into the 1870s, and the colony's profits came primarily from exporting raw products to Britain and Europe.¹¹⁸ This was perhaps attributable to the fact that the Commissioners felt the need to adhere to the system of classification established by the American organisers of the Exhibition, affecting the representation of the colony.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, in order to successfully project the idea that Victoria had advanced socially and economically as a colony, the contributions of Indigenous Australians and Chinese people were mediated by the Victorian Section's Anglo-European organisers, and were either minimised or completely excluded from the Victorian Section. It was necessary for the Commissioners to limit the representation of these groups at the Centennial: in line with similar practices in Britain and the United States, by presenting Indigenous Australians and Chinese people as groups that were still adapting to colonial society, the Commissioners could justify the need for colonial governance within the space of the Exhibition, since these groups held a tenuous position in colonial society.

It is difficult to determine the impact that the scuttling of the *Skerryvore* had on the representation of Victoria at the Philadelphia Exhibition. Back in Victoria, however, the Commissioners, and the newspapers, were still trying to find someone to blame for the *Skerryvore* incident. If the organisation of the Victorian Section had been marred by parliamentary differences, the successful return of exhibits to the colony appeared to similarly be jeopardised by trade barriers

¹¹⁸ By the 1870s, the bulk of Victoria's exports consisted of wool that was subsequently processed in Europe and Britain. Greasley, 'Industrialising Australia's Natural Capital'. pp.164-166.

¹¹⁹ Giberti identifies how the system of classification designed by the Exhibition's organisers was 'a bit of a fiction', and rather than reflecting an axis of progress, 'was really just a hierarchy of things'. Giberti, *Designing the Centennial*. p.25.

between Victoria and the United States. Additionally, the point of sending a Victorian Section to Philadelphia was itself questioned by commentators back in the colony: if the tangible benefits of representation at Philadelphia seemed uncertain before the Exhibition, the *Skerryvore* incident only added to these doubts.

Chapter Three: A ‘Community of Feeling’? Trade, Belonging, and Outcomes of Victoria’s Representation at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition

On 24 August 1876, about a month after news of the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore* was first reported in major Australian newspapers, a cartoon referencing the incident appeared in the *Melbourne Punch*. Consisting of seven panels, the cartoon juxtaposed satirical images with passages from a letter reporting on the colony’s representation at the Exhibition that had been sent by George Collins Levey to Victoria and republished in *The Age*.¹ The Victorian Section was depicted as a completely empty room save for a lamp, a barrel and a sack with a caption stating that ‘visitors must not laugh’.² An accompanying passage stated that ‘the Victoria Court has been largely attended during the month, and a great amount of interest has been excited by the high quality of the wheat and wool, and the advanced state of our social condition’.

Beside this panel were two parodic reviews of the Victorian Section, one from the ‘*Boston Bouncer*’ titled ‘A One Hors [sic] Show’ observing that ‘the Victorian Court reminds us of the little hoodlum wose [sic] playmates called him fathead’, the other from the ‘*Chicago Cracker*’: ‘Never mind my son, said his mother. There’s nothin’ in it’. Alongside this comic panel was a passage from Levey’s letter which stated: ‘I enclose two extracts from newspapers published at a distance – one in Boston, the other in Chicago, as showing that the high opinion entertained of the Victorian exhibits is not confined to the neighbourhood of Philadelphia’.³ Another panel depicted Barry standing beside a large cow with the caption ‘Victorian Government’ written on its side holding two buckets beneath its udder with ‘250’ and ‘350’ written on them. The accompanying

¹ ‘Victoria and the Philadelphia Exhibition’, *The Age*, 22 August 1876.

² ‘The Latest from Philadelphia’, *Melbourne Punch*, 24 August 1876.

³ ‘The Latest from Philadelphia’.

passage stated, 'In pursuance of the arrangement made in my previous letter, I have drawn by the present mail upon the Commercial Bank for £250, leaving £350 still to draw for'.



Figure 4 - Melbourn Punch, *The Latest From Philadelphia* [Excerpt]. 1876

Similarly, in direct reference to the Commissioners' handling of the *Skerryvore* incident, another panel was accompanied with the statement that 'our lawyers have obtained judgment against the owners of the *Skerryvore* for the sum of £1,495. It is, however, extremely doubtful whether that amount will be recovered'. The corresponding image depicted Levey grimacing and tapping his hooked nose with his finger, and the caption above his head read, 'will you hev it neow [sic] or wait til you get it?' – anti-Semitic visual and linguistic tropes were deployed to suggest that Levey was planning to pilfer the funds that the lawyers working for the Victorian Commissioners were attempting to recover following the *Skerryvore* incident for himself.⁴ The message of the *Melbourn Punch* cartoon was clear: not only had Barry and Levey agreed to represent the colony for purely

⁴ 'The Latest from Philadelphia'.

personal gain, they had exploited the *Skerryvore* incident to their own financial advantage. This was a message that contrasted starkly with the lofty aspirations of the Commissioners, whose stated aim was to use participation in the Exhibition as an opportunity to promote the relationship between Victoria and the United States.⁵

The *Melbourne Punch* frequently parodied the day's events through its columns and cartoons, and the *Skerryvore* incident provided ample opportunity for its columnists and cartoonists to mock the Victorian government. The incident happened during an especially tumultuous period in Victorian politics characterised by fierce debates over the best way of securing the colony's long-term success. The colony's earlier settlers, pastoralists who saw free trade as the most beneficial economic policy for the colony, were at odds with Victoria's later arrivals, individuals who had come to the colony with the promise of finding gold, and who had gained political influence by the 1860s. Many of these individuals saw protectionism as the best economic policy to ensure the colony's prosperity and they held the majority in the Victorian parliament during the 1870s. The *Melbourne Punch* was in contrast unequivocally on the side of free trade, and frequently attacked the Victorian government's protectionist trade policies.⁶

Barry and Levey were therefore not the only intended targets of the *Melbourne Punch* cartoon. The decision to send a Victorian Section to Philadelphia was made amidst a fierce debate over whether free trade or protectionism was the best economic policy for the colony. The protectionists won out, and the 1870s was a period during which tariffs of up to 25% were levelled on goods imported from overseas or the other colonies in an attempt to stimulate Victoria's industries.⁷ The Victorian Commissioners, and newspaper reporters supportive of the organisation

⁵ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

⁶ Marguerite Mahood, 'Melbourne Punch and Its Early Artists', *La Trobe Journal* 4 (October 1969): 65–81.

⁷ Henry Gyles Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria: From Its Discovery to Its Absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. 2, 2 vols (London; New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904).

of a Victorian Section, justified the colony's participation by promising strengthened trade relationships with the United Kingdom and the United States. In his opening speech to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition of 1875, for instance, Redmond Barry expressed his hope that the Exhibition would 'lead to the still more intimate relations of intercourse, and the reciprocal advantages of an expanded trade between the 35,000,000 who inhabit that great Empire and the loyal and dutiful subjects of our Queen in Australasia'.⁸ However, in the view of the government's critics (which included the *Melbourne Punch*), the very administration that had agreed to provide for the planning and staging of the Victorian Section had also introduced policies to isolate Victoria's economy from the world and therefore potentially to jeopardise attempts at strengthening these relationships at Philadelphia.

The first chapter explored how these debates affected the ability of the Victorian Commissioners to secure adequate material and financial support for sending a Victorian Section to Philadelphia. This chapter considers how Victoria's trade situation in the 1870s impacted the Commissioners' hope of facilitating long-term exchange between Victoria and the United States. During the 1870s, Victoria was an outlier amongst the Australian colonies in instituting harsh tariff policies with the aim of facilitating the development of its manufacturing industry. Critics of the decision to send a Victorian Section to Philadelphia argued that Victorian tariffs on imports from the United States made it less likely that involvement in the Exhibition would strengthen social and economic ties between the two societies. The Victorian Commissioners, meanwhile, drew on a rhetoric of racial unity to frame the colony's participation in the Centennial as a success.

Colonial involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition was not completely in vain: Levey used his journey to Philadelphia to collect information that he hoped would be useful to the colony

⁸ 'The Intercolonial Exhibition of 1875.', *Weekly Times*, 4 September 1875. p.1.

about the economic, social, and technological advances of the other nations represented at Philadelphia. However, critics of the colony's involvement at Philadelphia were correct in pointing out that Victorian and United States tariffs would have curtailed opportunities to use the colony's participation at the Exhibition to enhance its trade relationship with the United States. This chapter considers how these tariffs affected any benefits that could be gained from Victoria's representation at Philadelphia and, in doing so, aims to provide an account of the outcomes of the decision to send a Victorian Section to the Philadelphia Exhibition.

Trade, Liberalism and Victoria

By the late 1870s, Victoria had expanded steadily to become the most populous Australian colony. As a result of the gold rush and improved farming and transportation methods, wool and wheat production were booming, and financial ties to the United Kingdom ensured a steady flow of capital that benefitted the Australian colonies.⁹ By the end of the 1870s, the colony's economy had dramatically expanded: by this period, 35,000 farmers worked as 'specialised commodity producers for markets controlled by large commercial enterprises and dependent on economic forces beyond their control'.¹⁰ The fantasy of an agricultural nation in which settlers lived in harmony with the land on large holdings had gradually been supplanted by farmers who instead bought up small holdings of land with the aim of maximising production for profit.

With the industrialisation of the colonial economy, however, emerged debates about the best way of increasing Victoria's wealth. In the 1850s an influx of newcomers arrived in the colony, drawn by the promise of gold. However, these individuals demanded a more open society, democratic governance and liberal institutions, marking a dramatic shift in its makeup and population. By the 1870s, these colonists had gained political influence, and their beliefs were

⁹ Greasley, 'Industrialising Australia's Natural Capital'.

¹⁰ Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*. p.102.

increasingly at odds with the initial settlers to the colony, squatters drawn to the land before the gold rush by the promise of financial accumulation through the premise of ‘simple occupancy’ of the Port Phillip area.¹¹

The specifics of what a durable colonial economy would look like underpinned a fierce factional conflict between Victoria’s squatters and newer arrivals that would rage from the 1850s well into the 1880s. Eventually those in support of liberal protectionism won out, and, following the waning of the gold rush, the colony was looking to diversify its income streams through promoting business and manufacturing enterprises.¹² A series of Land Selection Acts, designed to open up large swathes of land previously settled by squatters, was introduced in the 1860s to increase government revenue and unsettle the squatter class and create an egalitarian society of small farmers. However, these Acts initially had unintended consequences: squatters kept the best parts of their properties for themselves, and many newer settlers ended up worse off than they began, as the plot of land they bought failed to yield a profitable harvest, leaving them in a more financially precarious position than before.¹³

Following the partial failure of the Land Selection Acts to increase government revenue, the colony’s liberals turned their attention to using tariffs as a way of ensuring that the Victorian government would not go bankrupt while also protecting its manufacturing industry. The tariff issue came to prominence in 1871 with the formation of a new government ministry led by free trade supporter Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. Duffy was Premier, but to ameliorate the division between supporters of free trade and supporters of trade protection, protectionist Graham Berry

¹¹ Macintyre. p.14.

¹² Simon Ville, “Colonial Enterprise,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of Australia*, ed. Simon Ville and Glenn Withers, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 202–21. p.209.

¹³ Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*. p.101.

was chosen as Treasurer.¹⁴ Berry took his new role as Treasurer as a chance to reform and extend protective tariffs in the colony, spearheading the first major piece of legislation passed by the Duffy ministry in the form of the Victorian Duties of Customs Act of 1871.¹⁵

Tariffs had long played a role in raising revenue for the Victorian government: from the 1850s, tariffs were applied to goods such as alcohol and tobacco to help cover the public deficit. However, by the mid-1860s, the government shifted its attention to extending tariffs to most imported goods with the intention of promoting the colony's domestic economy.¹⁶ The Duties of Customs Act of 1871 was the first avowedly protectionist tariff (introduced with the explicit aim of protecting the colony's home industries). It introduced duties of up to twenty per cent on a wide range of imported goods, including iron, spirits, wine, sugar, and leather, as well as certain manufactured woollen goods.¹⁷ The passage of tariff legislation increased during the 1870s. By 1880, duties of up to 25 per cent were levied on almost two hundred different types of items.¹⁸ Victoria's involvement at the Centennial Exhibition coincided with the raising of customs duties on goods imported into the colony from the United States, a fact that would have prevented the consolidation of the trade relationship between the two societies following the Exhibition.

Wool, Trade Protectionism, and the United States

Meanwhile in the United States, a similar debate between protectionism and free trade was playing out. The general trend during and after the Civil War, a period of Republican dominance federally,

¹⁴ Parnaby notes that although Duffy was Premier, Berry held the balance of power regarding the drafting of legislation during this period. Joy E. Parnaby, 'Duffy, Sir Charles Gavan (1816–1903)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1972), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/duffy-sir-charles-gavan-3450>.

¹⁵ Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics*. p.67.

¹⁶ Carles Boix, 'Between Redistribution and Trade: The Political Economy of Protectionism and Domestic Compensation', in *Globalization and Egalitarian Redistribution*, ed. Pranab K. Bardhan, Samuel Bowles, and Michael Wallerstein (Princeton University Press, 2006), 192–217. p.199.

¹⁷ Duties of Customs Act.

¹⁸ Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*. p.106.

was to protect the U.S. economy by placing tariffs on imported goods. During this period, increased U.S. production combined with declining transport costs, allowed American meat and grains to enter the British market. A similar process subsequently occurred in Canada, Argentina and Australia, leading to these regions becoming producing areas that challenged the hold that the United States previously had on agricultural products.¹⁹ Tariffs were therefore introduced as part of a series of wartime measures designed to raise the public revenue. The Morrill Tariff of 1861, for instance, ushered in a period of using customs duties, along with other measures, to protect and strengthen the U.S. economy.²⁰ Influenced by pre-Civil War trade laws, this bill increased and introduced duties of up to twenty-five percent on a vast range of items including sugar, brandy, tobacco, and cotton.²¹ By targeting these goods, it was hoped that the Morrill Tariff would enable American production to continue to develop by providing home industries with a competitive advantage.

Protective duties on items imported into the United States continued to increase after 1861: the Morrill Tariff was amended in 1862 and 1864 to expand the range of goods subject to import duties. In 1867, to the chagrin of Australian observers, a lobby of American wool farmers and manufacturers successfully gained the passage of the Wool and Woollens Act, which greatly increased duties on washed and scoured wool and imported wool products, including carpets, clothing items and yarn.²² The intention of the Act was to promote the growth of the American wool industry by protecting its manufacturing sector. However, as economist Frank Taussig identified in 1893, the assertion that increasing protective duties would simply lead to the increased domestic production of wool and wool products of a comparable quality to the imported product

¹⁹ Robert Lipsey, 'U.S. Foreign Trade and the Balance of Payments, 1800–1913', in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States: Volume 2: The Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert E. Gallman and Stanley L. Engerman, vol. 2, Cambridge Economic History of the United States (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 685–732, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521553070.016>.

²⁰ Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States*.

²¹ Morrill Tariff.

²² Tom E. Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874-1901* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1973). p.190.

was a naïve one, especially considering the consistency in quality of Australian and Argentine wool. Taussig acknowledges that it was difficult conclusively to determine the impact that the Wool and Woollens Act had in protecting the American wool industry: although the production of woollen products increased in the period following the imposition of the tariff, this may have been due to the development of enhanced manufacturing capabilities rather than as a result of the new law.²³

The trend of raising customs duties to protect the U.S. economy ushered in by the Morrill Tariff and the Wool and Woollens Act continued into the 1870s, led by a protectionist majority of the Republican party not unlike the faction of radical liberal politicians advocating the raising of customs duties in Victoria. Republican control of the presidency and the House of Representatives until 1874 allowed the party to raise protective duties again in 1869 and 1870, meaning that the tariff, originally intended by former president Ulysses S. Grant to increase public revenue following the Civil War, became a highly protective one as American industry recovered.²⁴ Those in favour of protectionism or free trade in Victoria were generally split along factional lines; the United States had a more developed party system, in which the Democratic party supported free trade and the Republican party protectionism.²⁵ The Wool and Woollens Act was designed to appeal to the Republican party's strongholds of support in the agrarian Midwest and the industrial East, since it was promoted as a way of both preserving and containing the American wool and woollens industries within the nation's borders.²⁶

²³ F.W. Taussig, 'The Duties on Wool and Woollens', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 8, no. 1 (October 1893): 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882875>.

²⁴ Theodore Clarke Smith, 'Political Reconstruction (1865-1885)', in *The Cambridge Modern History; Planned by the Late Lord Acton*, ed. Stanley Leathes, A.W. Ward, and G.W. Prothero, vol. 7: The United States (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1907), 622–654, <http://archive.org/details/cambridgemodernh07actouoft>. p.635.

²⁵ Dobson identifies how the raising of tariffs in the United States corresponded with similar attitudes in Germany, France and Britain. John M. Dobson, *Two Centuries of Tariffs: The Background and Emergence of the U.S. International Trade Commission* (International Trade Commission, 1976). pp.16-17.

²⁶ Dobson. *Two Centuries of Tariffs*. p.59.

Encouraging a mutual relationship between U.S. wool growers and wool manufacturers through the imposition of a tariff was seen as a necessary step to protect the industry from competition from countries with rapidly expanding wool industries. In his speech to the House of Representatives in support of the Wool Tariff Bill, for instance, Republican Congressman Justin Morrill argued that the wool tariff was a means of creating a ready supply of raw wool within the nation for American wool manufacturers to use.²⁷ An article reprinted in an Ohio newspaper following the passage of the 1867 Wool Tariff bill followed a similar logic: the writer claimed that the proposed measures would allow American wool growers to stand equally in their own market against foreign competitors by fostering a ready supply of wool grown within the country.²⁸ Creating a closed system of exchange between producers and manufacturers was therefore seen by advocates of the American wool tariff, and of advocates of protectionism in general, as a way of keeping any profits made from the sale of the goods within the American economy.

The use of the Wool and Woollens Act to gain support for the Republican party were made explicit in an 1866 speech to Congress by Republican Representative from Ohio Ephraim Eckley, who argued that protection on wool was necessary to promote the growth of the home market and thus provide a steady supply of raw material for American wool manufacturers.²⁹ The wool manufacturing lobby, prominent in the Republican-leaning East, played a powerful role in advocating for the tariff. Erastus Bigelow, President of the National Association of Wool Manufacturers, commended the Wool and Woollens Act for giving ‘equal protection to him who raises and him who works up the raw material’ of wool.³⁰ The proposition that equal protection would encourage a mutual relationship between wool growers and manufacturers was an appealing one that informed promotion of the wool tariff.

²⁷ ‘The New Tariff Bill Before the House’, *New York Tribune*, 29 June 1866.

²⁸ ‘Tariff on Wool and Woollens’, *The Spirit of Democracy*, 14 May 1867.

²⁹ ‘Protection of American Wool’, *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 21 June 1866, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers,

³⁰ ‘The Wool Industry of the United States’, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 8 October 1869.

The success of the Act was however compromised by several issues. Competition with the international market was already challenging: as the writer of an article in the *Albany Country Gentleman* conceded, countries including South Africa, Argentina and Australia had an advantage over the north-eastern United States in wool production, since their mild winters precluded the need to supplement the feeding of sheep during winter. Additionally, according to the article, Australia had a particular advantage over the rest of the world due to the fact that it possessed vast swathes of cheap land that could be utilised for wool production. The writer concluded that if the American wool tariff were to be truly effective, it would need either to be raised, or wool production moved to the warmer states.³¹

An article reprinted in a South Australian newspaper from the *Scotsman* took a more polemical tone, blaming ‘the protectionists of the North’ in the United States for continuing to promote heavy customs duties under the pretence of raising money to cover the public deficit, while actually making the trade situation worse.³² A South Australian writer identified the high American wool tariff as ‘one of the most flagrant results of log-rolling and lobby-pressure that even Washington has ever produced’.³³ In their view, the American wool tariff was disadvantageous to both the Australian and American wool industries, since it artificially bloated the price of an item that could not be produced to a comparable quality within the United States.

Trade and Criticism of the Victorian Section

The decision to send a Victorian Section to Philadelphia was made amidst these debates, and its organisation was subsequently affected by these policies, as well as by the colony’s internal factional

³¹ The Country Gentleman, ‘Prospect of the Wool Market’, *Vermont Chronicle*, 18 July 1868.

³² ‘American Protection’, *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, 11 May 1867.

³³ ‘Wool’, *South Australian Register*, 19 August 1867.

conflicts. The seventeen Commissioners appointed to assist in the planning and staging of the Victorian Section represented a relatively diverse range of interests: among them were scientists, parliamentarians, and businessmen. The Commissioners similarly held differing positions on the colony's free trade debate – James Munro, John McIlwraith, John Danks, and Caleb Joshua Jenner were outspoken supporters of protectionism,³⁴ while John McIntyre and John O'Shanassy were ardent supporters of free trade.³⁵

However, doubts regarding the benefit of sending a Victorian Section to the Philadelphia Exhibition primarily came from outside the Commission. One particularly outspoken critic was a writer, known enigmatically as the Vagabond, who contributed a column to the *Melbourne Punch*. The Vagabond, later revealed to be John Stanley James, became known for giving Melbourne readers insightful glimpses into the underbelly of the city's life during the 1870s. He wrote about life in the Kew Lunatic Asylum, his time at Pentridge Prison, and dining at a sixpenny restaurant.³⁶ He also covered topics relating to the colony's debate over protectionism and free trade, and between September 1875 and July 1876 contributed a column to the *Melbourne Punch* about Victoria's decision to send exhibits to Philadelphia. He criticised the decision, arguing that the colony's protectionist trade policies prevented any meaningful economic exchange between Victoria and the United States. In a September 1875 column, he parodically reviewed his experience of visiting the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition. Writing that 'showing and blowing

³⁴ James Munro was a strong advocate for the raising of customs duties, and gave speeches across Victoria in support of protectionism. McIlwraith, Danks and Jenner were similarly supporters of trade protectionism, and were involved in the establishment of various manufacturers' and tariff lobby groups set up with the aim of raising duties on imported goods. Ann M. Mitchell, 'Munro, James (1832–1908)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 1 October 2019, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/munro-james-4271>; Parnaby, 'The Economic and Political Development of Victoria 1877–1881'.

³⁵ Both John McIntyre and John O'Shanassy ran for the Victorian parliament under a free trade platform, and frequently spoke out against the raising of customs duties. Allan Johnston, 'McIntyre, Sir John (1832–1904)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 5 January 2021, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcintyre-sir-john-4102>; S. M. Ingham, 'O'Shanassy, Sir John (1818–1883)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 5 January 2021, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/oshanassy-sir-john-4347>.

³⁶ Willa McDonald, 'A Vagabond: The Literary Journalism of John Stanley James', *Literary Journalism Studies* 6, no. 1 (2014): 65–81.

are pretty much alike', James gave the reader an imaginary experience of the preparatory exhibition, describing his experience of entering and exploring the exhibits and highlighting, for instance, how 'the show is divided, like France, into a lot of departments', the first of which was 'the coal show', an item which 'is not as a rule a showy article'.³⁷ James then offered the reader a mocking description of the Japanese Court (which to him took 'the lead in gimcrackery and crockery'), and went on to observe that 'if the great show points to one thing more persistently than another, it is the growing taste for machinery'.³⁸ James concluded by providing a brief account of some miscellaneous exhibits, including 'a "sheep holder" to assist in washing, ... carriages for riding and sticks for walking, and lots of leather', glibly concluding that 'those who have got a spare shilling ... had better lay it out with Sir Redmond Barry' at the Victorian Exhibition.³⁹

In a December 1875 column, James shifted his focus to the funding of the Victorian Section and questioned the proposition that 'a sum of £6,000 is required to defray the cost of representing ... the colony at the Centennial Exhibition'.⁴⁰ He asked whether there was a 'consistent protectionist in the Assembly who has the courage of his opinions' to question Victoria's involvement, stating that it was 'extravagantly absurd ... for a country which aims by its fiscal policy at the abolition of imports and therefore of exports', to spend money in attempting to promote 'exchange with another country, whose policy is identical to our own'.⁴¹ The comment about 'abolition of imports' was an exaggeration: historian Henry Gyles Turner, himself involved in the trade debates of the 1870s, conceded that the Berry administration's increase of customs duties was intended to encourage the growth of the colony's manufacturing sector, as well as to protect local employment, not to end trade.⁴² Nevertheless, in a subsequent column, James

³⁷ 'Our Philadelphian Show', *Melbourne Punch*, 9 September 1875.

³⁸ 'Our Philadelphian Show'.

³⁹ 'Our Philadelphian Show'.

⁴⁰ 'Notes on Current Events', *Melbourne Punch*, 9 December 1875.

⁴¹ 'Notes on Current Events'.

⁴² Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria*. p.193.

criticised ‘the placing of these exhibits under the care of a pronounced protectionist like George Collins Levey’, since, in his view, such involvement could ‘encourage a *rapprochement* between countries which the hostile tariffs he and his friends approve of, tend to estrange’.⁴³

James’s criticism of the colony’s involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition culminated in July 1876, when news reached Australia of the *Skerryvore* incident. On 27 July, James wrote in response to the news that ‘it was the height of absurdity for this colony to take any part in it at all’, since ‘our fiscal policy, like that of the United States, is to immure ourselves within a great wall of China. We discourage commerce and legislate against exchange. So does America’.⁴⁴ James concluded by asserting ‘how ridiculous’ it was ‘to send our products for exhibition to a nation which passes special enactments to exclude them, and to invite a trade which neither of us wants; and which it is both their and our own policy to prohibit’.⁴⁵ This final column summarised James’s views on the matter: for him, the issues experienced by the Commissioners during the organisation and staging of the Victorian Section, which included a lack of funding, the attempted scuttling of the *Skerryvore*, and the failure to sell off exhibits with the aim of recouping the expenses incurred to stage a Victorian Court, were all intimately connected with the free trade debate raging in the Victorian Parliament. In his mind, had the trade policies of both Victoria and the United States been less restrictive, the two societies would have had a more substantial trade relationship, and the colony’s involvement in the Exhibition would have been more justified.

Another criticism of the government’s decision to send exhibits from Victoria to Philadelphia came from member of the Legislative Council for the Western Province Robert Simson, a Scottish pastoralist who moved to Victoria in 1842. Elected to Parliament in 1868, Simson gained a reputation as a ‘staunch free trade conservative’ who opposed measures that included stricter tariff

⁴³ ‘Notes on Current Events’, 9 December 1875.

⁴⁴ ‘Notes on Current Events’, *Melbourne Punch*, 27 July 1876.

⁴⁵ ‘Notes on Current Events’.

legislation, the extension of customs duties, and the subsequent limiting of free trade practices that he believed were essential for a colony to flourish.⁴⁶ During a debate in Parliament on the introduction of the Customs Duties Bill of 1871, for instance, Simson declared that the Bill was ‘vicious in principle, irritating to the community, and likely to prove ruinous to the colony’, stating that he was ‘a freetrader [sic] by conviction’ who believed that ‘no country can be great which is not guided by freetrade principles’.⁴⁷ Similarly, some years later during a debate relating to the Customs Duties Alteration Bill of 1874, Simson expressed regret that ‘a Government composed largely of free-traders ... have increased the evil of protection’ by agreeing to it, and proposed instead that the sale of Crown lands in Victoria could provide an alternative source of income.⁴⁸

Simson’s criticism of the decision to send a Victorian Section to Philadelphia came in May 1875 and followed Governor Bowen’s speech opening the Second Session of the Eighth sitting of the Victorian Parliament referred to earlier. The member for the Western Province argued that there was no reason to send a contingent to the Philadelphia Exhibition, since protectionist trade policies prevented the colony of Victoria from being able to form meaningful trade relationships with the world. He asked the Parliament, ‘at the risk of sounding unpatriotic ... what productions we have which are fit to compete with the old world?’, arguing that ‘we cannot compete with them. We cannot compete with work from England in any one thing ... therefore there is no great cause for congratulation in the fact that the products of this colony are to be represented at the Philadelphia Exhibition’.⁴⁹ Simson cited Victoria’s protectionist trade policies and the lack of reform on the issue as reasons why Victoria was so far behind in matters of international commerce.

⁴⁶ J. Ann Hone, ‘Simson, Robert (1819–1896)’, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 27 February 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/simson-robert-913>.

⁴⁷ ‘Victorian Parliamentary Debates’, Legislative Council, vol. 13, 26 October 1871, p.1681.

⁴⁸ ‘Victorian Parliamentary Debates’, Legislative Council, vol. 20, 20 October 1874, p.1736.

⁴⁹ ‘Victorian Parliamentary Debates’, Legislative Council, vol. 21. May 25, 1875, p.17.

Simson represented the Western Province in the Victorian Parliament, a region in which the pastoral and agricultural sectors were expanding at a dramatic rate. The development of the colony's farmland in Western Victoria during the 1870s was driven by a coalition of wool and wheat growers who took advantage of the introduction of farming and transportation technologies, such as railways, to Victoria with the intention of enhancing the efficiency of growing, harvesting and exporting their product to a wider market.⁵⁰ However, just as production in the area had begun to reach its stride, the primarily conservative landowners that made up the colony's agricultural and pastoralist classes feared that the introduction of tariffs by the Victorian government's radical liberal administration would threaten the base of Victoria's thriving agricultural sector.

Historians differ in their views of the impact that the raising of protective duties had on Victoria's economy. Henry Gyles Turner characterised Berry's promotion to Premier in August 1875 as marking 'the commencement of an era of political intrigue, parliamentary degradation and shameless self-seeking': the leader lasted less than three months in office before being overthrown by Sir James McCulloch.⁵¹ However, Turner was a banker and noted opponent of economic protection.⁵² Economic historian Brian Fitzpatrick took a more even-handed approach, conceding that, whatever the long-term effects of Victoria's policy of trade protection might have been, it was expedient for the colony to institute tariffs in the short-term with the aim of attracting investment and developing the local manufacturing industry. It was thought that heavy tariffs would help develop the Victorian manufacturing industry through the creation of a closed market

⁵⁰ Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Fourth edition, Cambridge Concise Histories (Port Melbourne, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 2016). p.102.

⁵¹ Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria*. p.182.

⁵² Iain McCalman, 'Turner, Henry Gyles (1831–1920)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 16 April 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/turner-henry-gyles-4760>.

that could keep wages low and demand for manufactured goods high.⁵³ Historian Stuart Macintyre similarly takes a more positive view than Turner on the tariff situation in Victoria, and contends that ‘while the tariff increased costs for Victorian producers and may well have handicapped merchants in intercolonial trade’, local manufacturing flourished under increased protection, ensuring the employment of over 40,000 Victorians in various industrial establishments by 1880.⁵⁴

The truth of the matter, however, lies somewhere between these points of view: although the general consensus amongst historians is that protectionist trade policies successfully increased revenue in the short term, the ad hoc nature of their application in nineteenth-century Victoria impeded any long-term benefits that they may have provided. Economists Wilson and Shanahan argue, for instance, that tariffs in Victoria were generally stricter for goods that required reduced manufacturing capacity, including raw goods and agricultural products.⁵⁵ According to them, the focus on protecting and promoting these industries over industries that used advanced technology (steam power) and had a high turnover of capital meant that any projected benefits were nullified by the lack of protection for high intensity industries. They conclude, tentatively, that ‘tariffs may have been set as a function of special interest politics’, and their economic benefit to Victoria (outside of their potential to create jobs in the colony) in the late nineteenth century was limited.⁵⁶

The Wool Trade, the United States, and Victoria

Whatever the actual effects of the tariffs that existed between Victoria and the United States, the passage of the Wool and Woollens Act, as well as the trend of increasing protective duties in the United States, provided some cause for consternation for observers in Australia and elsewhere. An

⁵³ Brian Fitzpatrick, *The British Empire in Australia: An Economic History, 1834-1939* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1941). p.183.

⁵⁴ Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*. p.107.

⁵⁵ John K. Wilson and Martin P. Shanahan, ‘Did Good Institutions Produce Good Tariffs? Evidence from Tariff Protection in Colonial Victoria’, *Australian Economic History Review* 52, no. 2 (July 2012): 128–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-8446/issues>.

⁵⁶ Wilson and Shanahan. p.143.

article in the British *Mark-Lane Express* identified how, in spite of the tariffs on unwashed wool, American traders were forced to import this product from Australia, South America and South Africa (thus paying for the importation of ‘grease and dirt’), since North American producers were unable to produce wool of a comparable quality.⁵⁷ The reporter was right to point this out: although the article was published in the 1860s, the situation remained largely unchanged in the 1870s, and by 1875 only a small amount of greasy wool, and no scoured or washed wool, was being exported from Victoria to the United States. The vast majority of all types of wool exports from Victoria were destined for the United Kingdom, and of the 28,554,244 pounds of greasy wool exported from the colony, about 26 million pounds ended up in Britain, and just 182,517 pounds was directly exported to the United States.⁵⁸ Britain’s virtual monopoly on Australia’s wool exports remained in place up until the 1880s, and during this time over 80 percent of Australia’s total exports, and about 75 percent of its wool clip, went directly to Britain.⁵⁹

It is however difficult to ascertain the impact that the passage of the 1867 Wool and Woollens Act had on Victoria’s trade in wool and wool products with the United States from trade statistics alone, especially considering that, up until the mid-1860s, most wool produced in Victoria was sent to Britain and Belgium, and some of this wool was then subsequently re-exported to the United States. Britain was a major re-exporter of global produce during this period, both because it imported a vast amount of food and raw materials for its own industry, and because its policy of free trade, as well as its status as a centre of world trade and foreign investment, made it an attractive place for traders to exchange goods at fair prices.⁶⁰ This was corroborated by a Queensland reporter, who identified how, by the 1870s, it was more cost effective for Australian wool growers to export their raw product to be processed into clothing in either Belgium or Britain

⁵⁷ ‘The Wool Supplies of the United States.’, *Australasian*, 30 June 1866.

⁵⁸ Office of the Government Statist, ‘Statistical Register of the Colony of Victoria for the Year 1875. Part IV: Interchange’ (Melbourne, Australia: Parliament of Victoria, 1876).

⁵⁹ Schreuder, ‘Empire’. p.524.

⁶⁰ John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2012). p.84.

and subsequently exported to the United States, since this process circumvented the need to pay customs duties on these goods.⁶¹ Of Australia's wool clip during the 1860s, Alan Barnard estimated that around 80 percent was consigned for sale in England to then be re-sold overseas.⁶² However, by the end of the nineteenth century the point of sale shifted to Australia, meaning that the percentage of total wool exports sold in Australia increased from less than 30 percent in the 1880s to an average of 53 percent in the following decade, and 76 percent in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁶³ As the point of sale for Australian wool shifted from Britain, more and more wool was directly exported from Australia, making it difficult to determine the effect that the Wool and Woollens Act had on the trade in wool between Australia and the United States.

Because of the indirect trade in wool between Victoria and the United States, it is similarly difficult to determine whether the participation of the colony in the Philadelphia Exhibition led to an increase in the exchange of wool between the two societies. It is likely, however, that American and Victorian wool tariffs negatively impacted the importation of Victorian wool into the United States: Lloyd Churchward identifies how, during the 1870s, Sydney had overtaken Melbourne as the main centre of trade to the Australian colonies due to the lack of protective tariffs in New South Wales. Trade between Victoria and the United States also lagged as a result of the protective tariffs successively implemented by the Victorian Parliament.⁶⁴

The impact that import duties in both Victoria and the United States had on the colony's representation at Philadelphia was an issue that was closely followed by commentators in Victoria. A reporter for the *Australasian* observed that American wool buyers were looking 'with longing

⁶¹ 'The American Tariff and Australian Wool', *Queenslander*, 6 May 1876.

⁶² A. Barnard, *The Australian Wool Market, 1840-1900* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press on behalf of the Australian National University, 1958). p.47.

⁶³ Simon Ville, 'The Relocation of the International Market for Australian Wool', *Australian Economic History Review* 45, no. 1 (2005): 73–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8446.2005.00128.x>. p.76.

⁶⁴ Churchward, *Australia & America, 1788-1972: An Alternative History*. p.73.

eyes' at wool grown in Victoria, New South Wales and the Darling Downs region on display at the Philadelphia Exhibition.⁶⁵ Regardless of the trade barriers that existed between Victoria and the United States, this awareness of the apparent interest American buyers had in obtaining Victorian wool was reflected in the exhibits sent to Philadelphia from the colony: exhibits of raw wool made up a substantial portion of the commercial exhibits in the Agricultural Department, which also included a large showing of Australian wines, botanical specimens, animal skins, and ichthyological specimens.⁶⁶ However, the reporter concluded by lamenting that the prohibitive tariff between the Australian colonies and the United States prevented any long-term trade from arising between them.

The tariff issue was also a factor in the involvement of the other Australian colonies at the Centennial Exhibition. Augustus Morris, Commissioner for New South Wales to the Philadelphia Exhibition, disagreed with his fellow Commissioners that it would be 'impolitic and unbecoming' to push for the lowering of the American wool tariff while in the United States. Instead, Morris argued that colonial involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition provided the perfect opportunity to send an advocate from Australia to lobby for the lowering of duties on Australian wool, especially since the lowering of tariffs would be beneficial to the trade in goods between the United States and the Australian colonies.⁶⁷ A report in the South Australian *Adelaide Observer* some weeks later gave some indication of the outcome of Morris's efforts: regrettably, his proposal to use involvement in the Exhibition as an opportunity to advocate for the lowering of duties between Australia and the United States was rejected, since it was considered to be 'scarcely ... becoming for them, as guests of the United States Government, to attack its fiscal policy'.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ 'The American Exhibition', *Australasian*, 24 June 1876.

⁶⁶ The Commissioners to the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, *Official Record*.

⁶⁷ 'Duties on Wool In The United States', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 1877.

⁶⁸ 'American Duties on Australian Wool', *Adelaide Observer*, 1 September 1877.

Two years later however, with Sydney and Melbourne due to host Exhibitions in 1879 and 1880 respectively, the issue of using international representation in exhibitions as an opportunity to advocate for the lowering of tariffs was raised again. In a despatch to the other Australian chambers of commerce, the Sydney Chamber of Commerce noted that since the United States would ‘probably exhibit largely’ at these fairs, it was ‘a favourable time for pressing upon public opinion in America the expediency of abolishing or reducing the ad valorem duties charged upon Australian wools, as a means of promoting trade between the two countries’.⁶⁹ As colonial economies grew and their various governments became more self-assured, the exhibitions became a platform from which both support of, and opposition to tariffs was pushed with increased confidence.

Outcomes

The trade relationship between Australia and the United States was strengthened in the 1890s through agreements brokered between Britain and the United States, long after the Australian colonies had sent exhibits for display to the United States.⁷⁰ In the 1870s, any economic benefits that the Victorian government hoped might arise from participation in the Philadelphia Centennial were limited by the restrictive trade laws that existed between the two societies. Both the colony and the United States, however, received some benefit from Victoria’s participation in the Exhibition, primarily in the form of informational exchange. Apart from the acquisition of books and natural history specimens facilitated by Redmond Barry as a result of the Exhibition, a report compiled primarily by Secretary to the Commissioners George Collins Levey and presented to the Victorian Parliament provided an account of the social, technological, and economic innovations that the Secretary had been informed about in Philadelphia and that might be useful to the colony.

⁶⁹ ‘American Duties on Australian Wools’, *Argus*, 3 April 1879.

⁷⁰ Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914*, 1st ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

This report opened with a preamble by Levey about his experience of the Exhibition. He acknowledged that ‘the series of disasters arising from the various incidents which occurred during the passage of the *Skerryvore*’ meant that ‘the court was not ready for inspection until very nearly a month after the Exhibition was opened’, and that several of the Victorian exhibits had been either ‘entirely destroyed’ or ‘considerably damaged’.⁷¹

Levey, however, was quick to frame the colony’s involvement at Philadelphia as a success, citing the fact that the Victorian Section was the largest sent to date and that it was ‘met with warm encomiums from the visitors and from the press’ in the United States. Levey proudly observed that the representation of the Australian colonies at the Exhibition meant that ‘millions of persons in the United States, who had never before heard of Australia, had their attention specially devoted to its soil, climate, and capabilities in consequence of the Exhibition’. He concluded that ‘the curiosity of the American public was much excited about that remote country [of Australia], and it was felt that the presence in their midst of exhibits and representatives from so distant a portion of the earth’s surface was a convincing proof of the community of feeling between the various branches of the Anglo-Saxon race’.⁷²

It is notable that Levey used this discourse of racial belonging to justify the colony’s involvement at the Philadelphia Exhibition. A rhetoric of commonality based on shared racial ties was used to justify the decision to send a Victorian Section to Philadelphia in the absence of any evidence of enduring economic ties between the two societies. Anticipating Benedict Anderson’s conception of nationalism as an ‘imagined community’ resting on ‘a deep, horizontal comradeship’, Levey strategically deployed a rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon unity to justify involvement in the

⁷¹ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *Report of the Commissioners for Victoria to His Excellency the Governor*.

⁷² Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition.

Centennial Exhibition.⁷³ He signalled the colony's belonging to an emerging order of nations with a set of common values through aligning himself with a sense of shared racial bonds with the United States.

Levey used the fact that the colony of Victoria was awarded more medals than any other British dominion except Canada as 'proof of the success of the Victorian exhibitors', who received a total of 128 medals, in contrast to 'New South Wales', which 'received 72, Queensland 48, South Australia 40, New Zealand 25 and Tasmania 20'.⁷⁴ Levey stated that 'while almost all the awards given to the exhibitors from the other colonies were for raw produce, wine, and scientific collections, 71 medals were given to Victoria for manufactures of various descriptions' – a fact he took as 'gratifying proof of the high standard of excellence already obtained by the manufacturers, artisans, and mechanics' of Victoria.⁷⁵

The allocation of awards for Victoria's exhibits garnered some attention in the press: partial lists of awards given to the colony's exhibitors were published as the United States Centennial Commission released its lists of award recipients. The *Argus* commended the success of the Victorian Section, writing that 'the number' of medals given to Victorian exhibitors bore 'a fair proportion, in the case of the colonies, to the space occupied' by them, and mentioned that some Australians, including Redmond Barry, were invited to speak at conferences held in the United States in conjunction with the Exhibition.⁷⁶ A subsequent report furnished a complete list of Victoria's 128 medals.⁷⁷

⁷³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). p.50.

⁷⁴ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *Report of the Commissioners for Victoria to His Excellency the Governor*.

⁷⁵ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition.

⁷⁶ 'Philadelphia Exhibition: The Australian Awards', *Argus*, 13 November 1876.

⁷⁷ 'Philadelphia Exhibition', *Argus*, 7 December 1876.

If Victoria's protectionist trade policies had worked to the advantage of the colony (since they had, at least in the view of their supporters, facilitated the development of the colony's manufacturing sector), the tariff laws of the United States worked to the colony's disadvantage. Levey regretted that 'the heavy customs duties, and the refusal of the Customs authorities to allow [him] to sell goods by auction within the building', meant that at the close of the Exhibition he was required to 'ship many exhibits back to Victoria at a considerable expense for freight and charges', and 'to sacrifice others at a price much less than their real value', meaning that just a small number of exhibits 'valued at £683' were forwarded to the Agent-General 'in order that they might be available for future exhibitions'.⁷⁸ Indeed, while the organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition had made provision for foreign exhibitors to send exhibits to be displayed at the Centennial duty-free, no accommodation was made to facilitate the return, or sale, of foreign exhibits following its close, leaving exhibitors to pay for the return of items to the countries from which they had come.⁷⁹

Useful Knowledge

While the material exchange of goods between Victoria and the United States may have been limited by tariff barriers, the representation of the colony at Philadelphia was not completely fruitless. Levey's report on the results of the colony's involvement at Philadelphia was followed by a series of essays about technological, economic and social innovations overseas that would be useful to the colony, including railways, agricultural machinery, general machinery, and mining machinery in the United States. The reports focussed on innovations overseas that could provide economic benefit for Victoria: an essay reporting on innovations in the transport of frozen meat by French engineer Charles Tellier, for instance, provided information about the potential for the colony to expand its meat export industry, something it had been prevented from doing due to

⁷⁸ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *Report of the Commissioners for Victoria to His Excellency the Governor*.

⁷⁹ United States Centennial Commission, *Foreign Exhibits: Information and Regulations*.

technological limitations regarding the ability to safely freeze meat. The Australian colonies were all invested in technological advancements regarding the ability to transport frozen meat over long distances, since doing so would allow them to expand their meat export industry. One proponent of freezing meat was New South Wales businessman Thomas Mort, and Levey's mention of Tellier's process of freezing meat coincided with a luncheon held by Mort in which meat frozen by Tellier's process was served to prove that freezing meat was safe and did not adversely impact the quality of the product.⁸⁰

Levey similarly justified the inclusion of a report on the use of grain elevators to store and transport wheat and barley from the Midwest to the Eastern states by arguing that it was a technology that would help '[reduce] to a minimum the expenses of handling' grain: in his view, making the transport and storage of grain cheaper and more efficient was necessary if Victoria was to continue to expand its agricultural industry.⁸¹ Following these reports were essays on innovations in machinery relating to specific exhibits at the Philadelphia Exhibition: including reports on innovations in the meat and grain industry, threshing and pumping machinery, turbines, mining machinery and other machines displayed at the Exhibition were similarly intended to inform interested parties about advances that might be useful to Victorian industries. The final section of the *Report* had essays on the educational systems of Sweden, Russia, and Canada, and the United States, giving details of the administrative, financial, social, and legislative aspects of the educational systems of these nations that Levey suspected would be most useful to the colony. These statistics would have been of interest to the colony, especially considering Victoria's role in drafting legislation to provide a free, secular and compulsory system of education in the form of the 1872 Education Act.⁸²

⁸⁰ 'Mort's Freezing Process', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1877.

⁸¹ Royal Commission to the Philadelphia Exhibition, *Report of the Commissioners for Victoria to His Excellency the Governor*. p.15.

⁸² Bessant, 'Free, Compulsory, and Secular Education'.

There is some evidence that information about social and technological innovations overseas was directly beneficial to the colony: The *Age* provided a summary of Levey's *Final Report* in two columns published a week apart from each other, and summarised Levey's accounts of the postal, meteorological, and railway systems of the United States. These columns also gave a brief summary of the Secretary's account of Tellier's process of freezing meat, as well as his account of American grain elevators.⁸³ An article in the *Geelong Advertiser* noted that a 'set of improved augers' exhibited at the Centennial would be 'one of the most interesting exhibits to mechanics', and gave an account of the innovations that made these particular augers more useful than previous models.⁸⁴ Queensland directly imported some farming machinery that had been displayed at the Exhibition from the United States, with the aim of improving the efficiency of its agricultural industry. There is no evidence that Victoria followed suit: this may have been because agricultural implements imported to the colony were subject to a twenty per cent duty, making the importation of these items into Victoria costly and impractical.⁸⁵

The American organisers of the Philadelphia Exhibition, as well as industrial associations interested in Victoria's exhibits, similarly received some benefit from the colony's participation at the Centennial Exhibition. A series of reports published by the United States Centennial Commission listed medals awarded to the Centennial's exhibitors and included short accounts and essays on a number of Victoria's exhibits: Joseph Bosisto's samples of eucalyptus oil, for instance, were commended for demonstrating the potential for utilising and processing Victoria's native

⁸³ 'The Philadelphia Exhibition Report. No. 1', *Age*, 16 October 1877; 'The Philadelphia Exhibition Report. No. 2', *Age*, 23 October 1877.

⁸⁴ 'Improved Augers', *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 November 1876.

⁸⁵ The report informing readers about medals awarded to Victorian exhibitors noted that '19 cases of goods' consisting of machinery and other labour-saving implements had been shipped to Queensland by its Commissioners. The same was prevented from happening in Victoria, which had an *ad valorem* duty of twenty per cent on a wide range of agricultural implements imported into Victoria. 'Philadelphia Exhibition: The Australian Awards'; Duties of Customs Act.

flora on an industrial scale.⁸⁶ A large number of agricultural exhibits, as well as the geological specimens sent by Victoria, also received awards for their quality, and the colony's exhibits of silk, vegetable fibres, wool and leather received awards for their superior condition.⁸⁷

Of particular interest to American manufacturers were the colony's exhibits of wool: just a year after the close of the Exhibition, and three years before the United States Centennial Commission had published its full list of awards, the National Association of Wool Manufacturers released a report that included a list of medals awarded to the Textile exhibits at the Exhibition along with a series of essays reporting on the textile industries of the nations represented at the Centennial. The judges gave high praise to Australia's wool, stating that it '[led] all nations in supply of [it]', and noted additionally that foreign judges, who were familiar with previous contributions of Australian wool to Exhibitions held overseas, admitted that Australia's wool exhibits at the Philadelphia Exhibition '[surpassed] any ever before made'.⁸⁸

Although the judges regretted that Australia's wool exhibits lacked any systematised information relating to 'statistics of wool production and sheep husbandry, the methods of improvement, and the details which would be so interesting to the practical shepherd', following this preamble was an essay reporting on the characteristics of the Australian wool industry.⁸⁹ The essay discussed various aspects of Australia's wool production, including sections on the fencing, feeding, breeding, washing, and shearing of sheep in Australia. The judges noted that the wool

⁸⁶ United States Centennial Commission, *International Exhibition, 1876. Reports and Awards. Groups 3-7*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 3–7.

⁸⁷ United States Centennial Commission, *International Exhibition, 1876. Reports and Awards. Groups 1 and 2*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 1; United States Centennial Commission, *International Exhibition, 1876. Reports and Awards. Groups 8-24*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880).

⁸⁸ National Association of Wool Manufacturers, *The Awards and Claims of Exhibitors at the International Exhibition, 1876: Containing the Official Awards, with the Respective Claims of Each Exhibitor, and the General Reports of the Judges in the Departments of Textile Materials, Fabrics, and Machinery*. (Boston: National Association of Wool Manufacturers, 1877). p.277.

⁸⁹ National Association of Wool Manufacturers.

grown in Queensland was of a lower quality than that from Victoria and New South Wales and concluded from this that a warmer climate may not necessarily lead to better quality wool.

The judges similarly commented on the role that inbreeding may have played in enhancing the quality of Australian wool: they acknowledged how a process of ‘judicious selection’ could improve the quality of a merino wool yield, since sheep bred as a result of ‘close breeding’ were more likely to express traits desired by the woolgrower.⁹⁰ Perhaps somewhat ironically however, the association that had lobbied for the raising of tariffs a decade earlier was the same one that was benefitting from the exchange of information relating to the Australian wool industry. The National Association of Wool Manufacturers, which had played a prominent role in advocating the raising of duties on imported wool to the United States, was solely responsible for dispensing awards to foreign exhibitors in the Textiles department of the Philadelphia Exhibition, and was similarly responsible for compiling reports about the world’s textile industries.

An essay appended to the list of awards given to the Centennial’s exhibitors contained a section on advances in education overseas, including in Victoria. The author commended Victoria’s ‘very considerable and extremely interesting educational exhibit’, represented by a series of documents and photographs relating to the colony’s state schools.⁹¹ The author also acknowledged the exhibits of items made by individuals from the Victorian Asylum and School for the Blind as well as the Victorian Deaf and Dumb Asylum, commending these institutions for their role in teaching industrial skills to individuals with disabilities in the colony. Notably however, the author’s account of the Victorian educational exhibits did not mention the items made by, or relating to, the individuals of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. While the samples of hops grown at Coranderrk and sent to the Centennial may have been destroyed as a result of the *Skerryvore* incident, the

⁹⁰ National Association of Wool Manufacturers. pp.285-286

⁹¹ United States Centennial Commission, *International Exhibition, 1876. Reports and Awards. Groups 28-36, and Collective Exhibits*, vol. 8 (Government Printing Office, 1880), p. 28.

baskets and other items relating to the colony's Indigenous Australians, as well as Barry's *Vocabulary of Victorian Aboriginal Dialects*, made it intact.⁹² While the author of this account acknowledged the exhibits sent by New Zealand relating to its Indigenous Maori population, there was no such acknowledgement of exhibits relating to Australia's Indigenous population.

While there was thus some benefit to both the colony and the United States in the form of the exchange of knowledge between the two societies, any long-term strengthening of the economic relationship between Victoria and the United States was prevented by the restrictive trade laws that existed between the two societies. Following a small surge in imports from the United States to Victoria in 1876, possibly as a result of the Philadelphia Exhibition, the number of exports to the United States remained the same; and both plateaued to pre-Exhibition levels by 1880.⁹³

Conclusion

Critics of the decision to send exhibits from Victoria to the Philadelphia Exhibition were thus partly justified in questioning the benefit of sending exhibits from the colony to the United States: tariff barriers prevented the strengthening of the economic relationship between the two societies as a result of the Exhibition. A rhetoric of racial unity was used by Levey to defend the colony's decision to send exhibits to the Philadelphia Exhibition and thus perhaps distract from the material factors that prevented any substantial long-term relationships from developing between the two societies in the 1870s. As explored in the second chapter of this thesis, these attitudes were reflected in the organising logic of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, since the contributions of non-white populations were either reduced, misrepresented or excluded at the Centennial.

⁹² The report which appeared in the *Argus* giving an account of the *Skerryvore* incident, as well as of damaged and destroyed exhibits, listed the hops grown at the Coranderrk Mission Station as having been destroyed on their journey to Philadelphia. However, these hops were also listed as having been offered for auction following the close of the Exhibition. 'The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia', *Argus*, 24 July 1876; 'The Philadelphia Exhibition', *Argus*, 25 July 1876.

⁹³ Office of the Government Statist, 'Statistical Register of the Colony of Victoria for the Year 1880. Part IV: Interchange' (Melbourne, Australia: Parliament of Victoria, 1881).

As explored by Bell and Bell, Marilyn Lake, Henry Reynolds and others, discourses of racial belonging would eventually come to play an important role in providing the groundwork for the consolidation of economic, social and cultural ties between the Australian colonies and the United States.⁹⁴ This process gradually germinated into a longer-lasting relationship between Australia and the United States undergirded by the consolidation of economic, social and cultural relationships. However, during the 1870s, the industries of both Victoria and the United States were protected by heavy customs duties, making the consolidation of economic ties between the two societies difficult. It is important not to overemphasise the role that discourses of Anglo-Saxonism played in justifying Victoria's involvement in the Philadelphia Exhibition, in the face of mounting criticism from those opposed to sending a Victorian Section to Philadelphia. But it is clear that ideologies of cultural progress were used both to signal alignment between settler colonial societies with similar origins as well as to detract from material circumstances, like restrictive trade laws, that prevented free interchange between these societies.

The efforts of the Victorian Government to strengthen ties with the United States would, eventually, succeed: as Perkins identifies, the 'great rapprochement', one initiated by the British Government, was to begin in the 1890s, and led to the eventual strengthening of ties between the United States and a federated Australia.⁹⁵ It is therefore perhaps unfair to judge whether the Victorian Government, and the Commissioners responsible for the Victorian Section, were ambitious or foolhardy in their desire to represent the colony at Philadelphia: rather, this decision was one of the many small symbolic affirmations of belonging that was to consolidate the colony's inclusion in an emergent order of nations increasingly defined by claims to a common race, ancestry and culture.

⁹⁴ See, for instance, Bell and Bell, *Implicated*; Lake, *Progressive New World*; Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*.

⁹⁵ Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*.

Conclusion

Following Victoria's participation in the Philadelphia Exhibition, the colony sent exhibits to the 1878 Paris World's Fair, the 1883 Amsterdam International Colonial and Export Exhibition, the 1884 New Orleans World Cotton Centennial Exhibition, the 1889 Paris Exhibition, and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. However, the colony sent the most exhibits to the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition and the 1878 Paris World's Fair, and never again would the number of the colony's exhibits equal those sent to the exhibitions of the 1860s and '70s. This may have also been due to Victoria's staging of the Melbourne International Exhibition and the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition in 1880 and 1888, intended as lavish events that advertised the progress made by the colony to the nations of the world. American traders and manufacturers displayed their wares with increased prominence at the 1880 International Exhibition, and, like the European and other international exhibitors, hoped to use it as an opportunity to find a new market for their goods.¹

While the Victorian government made a small profit from the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition, the staging of the Melbourne International and Centennial Exhibitions marked the end of the colony's period of prosperity: following these Exhibitions, overspeculation in the colony's real estate, housing and transport industries, along with an increase in European manufacturers' agents drawn to Victoria by the promise of expanding their markets (and facilitated by the International Exhibitions staged in the colony) led to a Depression in the 1890s that would halt Melbourne's rapid expansion.² It was only well into the twentieth century that Victoria would again experience events as grand as the exhibitions staged in the colony in the nineteenth century.

¹ Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, 2nd ed. (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2004). pp.1-7.

² Hayes, 'London, Paris, Philadelphia ... Victoria at the Great Exhibitions'.

Despite Victoria's comparatively strong presence at the Centennial Exhibition, it would take until the early twentieth century before a federated Australia took steps, under the watchful eye of Great Britain, to begin to consolidate social and cultural ties with the United States.³ However, while the two societies may have taken steps to facilitate political, social and cultural relationships with one another, trade between Australia and the United States remained heavily regulated well into the twentieth century in favour of a preferential trade with Great Britain.⁴ The *Customs Tariff* of 1908, known as the *Lyne Tariff*, introduced duties of up to 30% on most imported items, and included a separate schedule of reduced tariffs for British-made items.⁵ Duties imposed on items imported to Australia only increased as the twentieth century progressed, and in 1921, the *Greene Tariff* raised the average tariff rate to about double that of the *Lyne Tariff*.⁶ The 1932 Ottawa Agreement subsequently consolidated a system of imperial trade preference between Commonwealth and Empire countries through the establishment of preferential tariffs with non-British countries.⁷

Economic relations between Australia and the United States only began to improve in the late 1930s with the gradual lowering of trade barriers between the United States and Great Britain.⁸ The *Lend-Lease Settlement*, a treaty brokered between the United States and Australia with the aim of promoting multilateral relations as well as to facilitate American expansion into the Asia-Pacific region, marked the initial consolidation of this relationship. The *Lend-Lease Settlement* was followed by the consolidation of diplomatic ties between the two societies in the 1940s through the

³ Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*.

⁴ Emmett Sullivan, 'Revealing a Preference: Imperial Preference and the Australian Tariff, 1901–14', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 1 (1 January 2001): 35–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086530108583111>.

⁵ 'Customs Tariff 1908', C1908A00007 § (1908), 19, <http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1908A00007>.

⁶ Noel Butlin, Alan Barnard, and Jonathan Pincus, *Government and Capitalism: Public and Private Choice in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney, Australia: George Allen & Unwin, 1982). p.88-95.

⁷ Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian American Relations between 1900 and 1975* (St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1987). p.69.

⁸ Bell and Bell, *Implicated*. p.59.

establishment of a legation at Washington.⁹ Security and defence ties were subsequently consolidated between Australia and the United States in 1951 through the signing of the ANZUS Treaty.¹⁰ While these agreements were primarily diplomatic, they were accompanied by the development of formal and informal economic ties between Australia and the United States, and by the 1960s, American foreign investment, which primarily came in the form of large mining ventures, had eclipsed British investment in Australia.¹¹

This thesis has sought to use Victoria's representation at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as a case study of how the colony conceived of itself and its relationships with Great Britain and the United States during this period. While the Victorian Commissioners attempted to use the Victorian Section as an opportunity to consolidate economic, cultural and social networks between the colony, the United States and the world, trade barriers, as well as debates over the usefulness of sending exhibits to Philadelphia, affected the ability of the Commissioners to accommodate for its adequate planning and staging. The Commissioners took a risk by sending exhibits via the *Skerryvore*: this decision would have an adverse impact for Victoria, since it ultimately led to the material damage and destruction of some of the colony's exhibits, and, additionally, affected the reputation of the Commissioners responsible for the colony's representation at Philadelphia. The disbursement, sale and return of exhibits to Victoria, as well as any hope of strengthening the relationship between Victoria and the United States following the Philadelphia Exhibition, were similarly impacted by the lack of bilateral trade agreements between the two societies.

⁹ Joseph A. Camilleri, *Australian-American Relations: The Web of Dependence* (South Melbourne, Victoria: Macmillan, 1980). p.2.

¹⁰ It is worth noting here that the relationship between the United States and Australia was not one of equals: the improvement of relations between the two societies was primarily facilitated by the United States. For more on this, see M. Ruth Megaw, 'Some Aspects of the United States' Impact on Australia, 1901-1923' (PhD Thesis, 1966); Camilleri, *Australian-American Relations*.

¹¹ Bell and Bell, *Implicated*.

This thesis has chosen to focus on Victoria because it was an outlier amongst the Australian colonies regarding its trade policies, having the highest tariffs on imported goods. In spite of this, the colony sent the largest exhibition contingent of the Australian colonies to the Philadelphia Exhibition. It may seem counterintuitive that this was the case: Graeme Davison, however, resolves this by identifying how exhibitions in the nineteenth century often served the purpose of offering ‘a symbolic resolution of the contradictions of social life’, and were staged to instil a feeling of progress and social harmony in the populace.¹² Davison uses the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880 to demonstrate his point, since both of these exhibitions were staged to project a vision of social and economic progress in the face of economic depression (in the case of the United States) or political turmoil (in the case of Victoria).

Despite the tumultuous political environment in which the planning and staging of the Victorian Section took place, both the United States and Victoria received some benefit from the colony’s representation at Philadelphia. This was primarily in the form of intellectual and cultural exchange, since tariffs prevented any economic interchange from occurring between the two societies as a result of the Centennial Exhibition. This was despite the fact that advocates of sending a Victorian Section to Philadelphia argued that the primary benefit of doing so would be to encourage economic interchange between the two societies. Additionally, while American commentators demonstrated perhaps surprisingly detailed knowledge of the social, cultural and economic aspects of Victoria, they inevitably projected their own vision of the colony’s future onto it.

Overall, this thesis has sought to examine how the Victorian Section was a site impacted both by competing visions of the colony’s future, as well as by parliamentary disagreements and

¹² Davison, ‘Exhibitions’. pp.17-21.

restrictive trade laws that affected its planning and staging. While the Victorian Commissioners hoped to project an image of an economically, scientifically and socially developed colony at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the Victorian Section was invariably affected by political and economic tensions that led to the *Skerryvore* incident and the problems subsequently experienced by the Commissioners regarding the disbursement of exhibits. These tensions were always apparent: however, the *Skerryvore* incident brought them to the fore and encouraged some individuals in the colony to question the reasons behind sending exhibits to international fairs.

This thesis therefore has wider implications for the field of exhibition studies: by offering some measure of ‘the mischief wrought by the master of the *Skerryvore*’, this thesis hopes to have demonstrated how using exhibitions as a lens to analyse economic, social and political relations between societies can improve our understanding of how exhibitions were themselves sites in which these relationships were considered and consolidated in the nineteenth century.¹³ I argue that by re-embedding international exhibitions within the social, economic and political context in which they were operating, we can enrich our understanding of the importance that these cultural events had in the nineteenth century.

¹³ ‘The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia’.

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