

A MUSEUM'S EYE VIEW

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The vast majority of Americans possess incredible stereotypes about the American Indian. Almost universally he is thought of as a nearly naked savage on horseback, galloping across the Plains, feather bonnet flying, ready to attack the cavalry or a wagon train. Rarely do people know that here were many different tribes of Indians, each of whom lived in their own ways. Even those who know that Indian peoples were diverse may not know that there are Indians alive today. Many assume that Indians have become extinct. Those who know that Indians have survived generally assume that they have been assimilated into the mainstream of American life.

The part that novels, movies, TV, and textbooks have played in the creation of these stereotypes and misconceptions is being exposed by Indians and others. Anthropologists have also come in for their share of criticism. As a group they are accused of using the Indian as fit subject for observation, for experimentation (Medicine, 1971), as a chessman on a board (Ortiz, 1971) at the expense of Indian humanity and reality.

Museums in their displays describe American Indians for the general public. These displays are generally created by anthropologists. And yet, despite the fact that thousands of people visit such displays each year, no one has considered the role, if any, that museums have played in the generation of these stereotypes.

In 1969 a photomontage of an Indian pierced through the heart with a dissecting pin, laid to rest in a museum drawer labeled "American Indian" was published. It accompanied an article written by Vine Deloria, a Sioux Indian, decrying the fact that American Indians were invisible—that the dominant society did not know anything about the *real* Indian because the stereotypes were so strong. I was disturbed by the photomontage and wrote to Deloria about it. I asked him if he felt that museums, like other aspects of the dominant society, had been instrumental in generating false stereotypes—if the photomontage implied that museums had also sacrificed Indians to their own ends. Deloria replied that, although the illustration was not

his idea, it well symbolized what he felt, and that he was "very suspicious of the museum mind that seeks to permanently relegate Indians and Indian culture to the distant past." (Deloria, 1971)

Other Indians have also perceived the museum as merely a place for the past. When the Museum of the Plains opened on the Blackfoot reservation, those people who had never seen a museum before concluded that it was like *Ahkeeneenon*—the memorial lodge to the dead chief or famous warrior of long ago—a lodge furnished with the finest and most prized personal belongings and then closed and left as a memorial (Ewers, 1943).

Have museums, as Deloria suggest, been instrumental in perpetrating the image of the Indians as a vanished species, an extinct race? Have they, like the TV westerns, the novels, and the textbooks, generated unjust pictures of American Indian cultures? Have the anthropologists associated with the museums ignored the Indian as a person, in the name of knowledge? Is the Blackfoot perception of the museum as a "sealed up memorial lodge" an accurate description of today's museum exhibits? If so, then museum men must also share the responsibility for today's "invisible" Indians.

In this paper, I will try to assess this museum responsibility by considering the exhibition of American Indian artifacts, first as they were generally presented to the public in the very early years of museum going, and then in a selected sample of American museums from the late 19th century to the present time.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXHIBITS

Anthropological museums are repositories for artifacts. Their function, as each admits, is to preserve, study, and exhibit those artifacts. It is the last category—that of exhibitions—that has to be evaluated if the museum's role in Indian invisibility is to be assessed. It is *exhibition* that presents the museum's view of Indians to the public. Since the spectator takes away with him the "messages" of the exhibitor, both the implicit and the explicit ones, it is these messages that must be studied.

THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

An evaluation of museum exhibits must begin with the first exhibits in this country: the Cabinet of Curiosities. In the eighteenth century, the well traveled gentleman placed in his home a cabinet, a piece of furniture, in which he displayed those curios that he had collected on his jourmies. They included anything that had caught his fancy, either man-made or from the natural world. They were chance assemblages of objects arranged according to the whim of the owner. This collection was referred to as a cabinet of curiosities. In time the word *cabinet* and the word *museum* came to be used interchangeably. (Bell, 1967).

19th Century Cabinets

Such Cabinets of Curiosities flourished in the nineteenth century. As in the eighteenth century, collectors continued to be interested in anything natural or man-made. Now, in addition to the cabinets of individuals in their homes, there were the public cabinets that catered, for a fee, to popular curiosity, and the cabinets of scientific societies and institutions interested in increasing their knowledge of the world.

A sampling of these different types of cabinets indicates that Indian artifacts were shown as curiosities. Often, they were not identified by tribe or function. Even when they were so labeled, their context was destroyed by being grouped with artifacts with which they had no real relationships.

William Clarke's Indian Museum (1816-1838). William Clarke's museum is an example of an individual's cabinet. It was "open to any person of respectability at any time. "Built in 1816 as an annex to his St. Louis home, the museum was intended to serve both as a repository for Clarke's Indian collection and as an Indian council chamber. Descriptions of his collection indicate that medals, portraits, minerals, and animal specimens were exhibited along with his extensive Indian collection. According to contemporary accounts, the Indian collections had no labels and were not arranged by tribe or function. Apparently, Clarke interpreted the artifacts for each visitor. (Ewers, 1967).

A description of the exhibits just before the arrival of an Indian delegation seems to indicate that Clarke had prepared a special display just for their visit. The image of Indian chiefs sitting in a room surrounded by fine specimens from their own cultures (cultures that were still flourishing) is indeed special. It seems a compliment to his visitors that Clarke valued their workmanship and saw fit to display it *for them*. A display of Indian artifacts for Indians did not often occur.

Charles Wilson Peale's Museum. Charles Wilson Peale's Philadelphia Museum (1785-1854), Catlin's Indian Museum (1837-1848), and P. T. Barnum's Museum are outstanding examples of public cabinets.

In 1800 Peale's museum was exhibiting wampum belts and tomahawks (Goode, 1901). In 1811 an advertisement stated that "mammouth figures of Indian chiefs, in appropriate dresses" were on display. (Donaldson, 1887). A set of labels from Peale's Museum is now preserved in Peabody Museum (Accession File 95-20). They indicate that the museum contained a chance assemblage of objects that could not have been arranged in any kind of logical sequence. A sampling of the labels follows:

Pair of Chippeway Snow Shoes.	Cap made of the bark of a tree.
Indian basket ornamented with porcupine quills.	Wooden head ornament from the Northwest Coast.
War cap or helmet worn by the Chiefs of the Sioux Indians.	Rude Indian Knife.
Indian shirt made of buffalo skin covered with hieroglyphics, from Oregon.	Indian Arrows Tipped with Human Bones.

The information presented seems to reinforce existing stereotypes or misconceptions. It is, for instance, highly doubtful that Indian arrowheads were made from human bones! This is a clear instance of Indian manufactures and, by inference, Indian peoples being presented as "curiosities".

Catlin's Indian Museum. Catlin's Indian Museum, although the life work of an individual, can also be classified as a public cabinet. It was shown to immense crowds, in England and France as well as in the United States.

Catlin's Gallery—600 paintings depicting Indian life and customs—is well known. It is less well known that "Indian curiosities and manufactures" were exhibited together with this gallery of paintings. These "curiosities" included a Crow tepee, cradleboards, skulls, peace pipes, weapons, and men's and women's dress. The tepee which was, in Catlin's words "a splendid and interesting thing" stood in the middle of the gallery. (Catlin, 1848). Catlin set it up as a home, as it was intended to be seen and used. It may be the first time that a tepee was so displayed. In addition to his functional presentation of a tepee, Catlin carefully prepared figures on which to display his men's and women's clothing. Each set of clothing was displayed on a mannequin representing the specific person to whom the clothing had once belonged. Catlin used life masks to convincingly portray these people and took care to identify them in his catalogue. In London, Catlin also had visiting Ojibway and Iowa Indians speak to the spectators via an interpreter. (Donaldson, 1887).

Although it is clear from Catlin's exhibit, catalogue, and other writings that he was interested in presenting the Indians as people, his image of them was not always successfully communicated to the spectators who visited his gallery. Newspaper accounts of the day generally praise Catlin's effort, but continue to speak of the Indians as a "savage people". (Catlin, 1848). This is certainly an early example of one of the pitfalls of exhibit-making. Unless the preconceptions of the viewer are taken into account by the exhibitor, the viewer may not even receive the message being presented.

P. T. Barnum's Museum. There is no question that the Indians were presented as "curious beings" in Barnum's museum, which opened in New York City in 1851. In addition to the usual run of curiosities-mermaids, models of Niagra falls, and grizzly bears, Barnum hired Sioux Indians to re-enact "massacres" that had occurred on the Plains. In 1864, he exhibited twelve Indian chiefs en route to Washington. The chiefs were told that people had come to pay them honor. When they found out that the people had to pay to come in to see them, they quickly and angrily departed! (Barnum, 1927).

Although one can deplore the side show atmosphere of such museums, it is, as Witteborg points out (Witteborg, 1958) probable that commercial museums of this type encouraged the development of true science museums by awakening an interest in unknown aspects of natural history, and in museum-going.

The American Antiquarian Society. Cabinets were also founded as centers that would collect and preserve natural and artificial curiosities to extend man's knowledge of the world. One such cabinet was founded by the American Antiquarian Society in 1812. Its goals were "to discover the antiquities of our continent, preserve the handicrafts of the Aborigines, and perform research on Indian origins in order to possibly prove their connection with Noah" (Shipton, 1967). Their archaeological cabinet was dispersed before the end of the century. Other early scientific cabinets of natural history survived to form the nucleus of more formalized museum collections.

John Varden and the National Museum. John Varden's Washington Museum was opened to the public in 1836. It included, among its collections of natural history, historical, and art objects, thirty-one Indian artifacts. A sampling of Varden's accession book indicates that although some specimens were well identified, such as "Three Bowles made by the Indians of the Six Nations in Alabama," others like "A pair of Indian moccasins," could be assigned no specific tribe. (Ewers, 1959.) When Varden was appointed Curator of the National Cabinet of Curiosities in 1857, he closed his Washington Museum and took his collections with

him to the National Cabinet. Varden's collection, together with that of the Wilkes Exploring Expedition (1838-1841) formed the nucleus of this National Museum collection. The Wilkes' Indian material was also inadequately documented. Northwest Coast pipes and masks were described as "curiosities of native workmanship . . ." (Wilkes, 1845).

The 1859 guidebook for Smithsonian states that American Indian exhibits occupied one case and portions of two others on the upper galleries (Ewers, 1959). Although they were now at least sorted into an American Indian category, it would seem that these artifacts, due to the lack of detailed information about them, would still have been viewed only as curiosities. Lumped together under the designation "Indian", there could have been no reference to specific peoples or lifestyles.

Jeffries Wyman and the Peabody Museum at Harvard. When Jeffries Wyman was appointed first curator of the Peabody Museum, his personal cabinet of curiosities formed the nucleus of Peabody's collection. The very first entries in the Peabody ledger (Vol. 1) describe Wyman's collection as:

Vase from an Indian grave, Hingham.
Cranium, lower jaw, stone pestle, Hingham.
Stone Axe, Somerville.
Stone arrows, Chelmsford.
Stone sinker, Cambridge.
Indian ornament of shell, Florida.
Indian vase, Dutch Guiana.

These entries indicate that the earliest exhibits of the Peabody Cabinet, like that of the National Museum, could only have been arranged as "Indian" and viewed by the spectator as "curiosities". The possibilities for arrangement were limited, even in the scientific cabinet, as can be seen from the following description of the first Indian display of the Peabody Museum:

The case consisted of crania and bones of the North American Indians, a few casts of crania of other races, several kinds of stone implements, and a few articles of pottery. (Peabody Museum *Annual Report*, 1868).

MAN'S PLACE IN HISTORY: NEW WAYS OF SORTING AND CLASSIFYING ARTIFACTS

As major cabinets, like those of the Peabody or the National Museum, began to be established, collections of artifacts were donated or purchased from other scientific societies and from individual collectors and deposited in these museums. This meant a tremendous increase in numbers of the same kinds of objects. Scientists, at this time, were interested primarily in studying

the origins of man and his technological progress towards civilization. With extensive collections of the same types of objects it was now possible for curators to begin to sort and classify materials in ways that would demonstrate via objects, the gradual world-wide advance towards present technology.

American Indian objects were no longer exhibited as a chance assemblage of objects—a miscellany arbitrarily placed together in one or several cases. Now they, like artifacts from all over the world, were selected, ordered and exhibited in definite series. There were two main forms of object arrangement—a culture history series, and a single class of object series (Holmes, 1898 & 1903; A & B; Ewers, 1959). Both were founded on the assumption that cultures could be graded, and that the model against which all others were to be judged was 19th century “civilized” European and American culture.

The Culture History Series

The first type of technological exhibit was based on the assumption that man developed in a logical, irreversible progression from savagery to civilization. Scientists sought to illustrate this progression with objects. Otis T. Mason, a curator at the National Museum, was particularly interested in this type of systematic classification. He proposed that there was a “history of technography” that could be illustrated by showing the evolution of tools and mechanical processes (Mason, 1893). An example of this type of exhibit at the Smithsonian (Ewers, 1959, Plate 3; see my xerox), possibly designed by Mason, shows the evolution of striking tools. It begins with simple hammerstones and progresses, in a sequential arrangement, to a factory-made hammer, with metal head and wooden handle. Since tools could be selected from *any* culture as long as they represented the needed step in the proposed evolution, it was impossible to associate the artifacts with a people.

Of course, this was never the intention of the exhibitor. In fact, Mason stated that the study of aboriginal American mechanics served primarily as a model for understanding “our own ancestors” when they were in that stage of development (Mason, 1893). It is understandable, given this point of view, to note that artifacts in the tool series were not limited to those from the so-called “primitive cultures”. As Goode, Secretary of the Smithsonian, pointed out (Goode, 1901) “such systems show the evolution of culture and civilization without regard to race and freely use much material that is not normally displayed in an “ethnographic museum”.

Arts and Industries: The Class Series

Mason also postulated that there were six major classes of human arts and industries: exploitation, cultivation, manufacture, transportation, commerce, and enjoyment (Mason, 1894 & 1896) and that objects representing these six divisions (or examples of these industries) could be exhibited together to illustrate the “culture status” of a race or races of man. This classification system presented the great variety of forms within a single class of object. Apparently such an exhibit could include objects from one continent, several continents, or all continents. American Indian objects, like those of other aboriginal races, were sorted into the types of human activities that they represented and then exhibited in that series. An exhibit showing the “watercraft” of the American Indian, an example of “Transportation” activities (Holmes, 1903A, Plate 57; shows boat models from the two Americas and includes everything from kyaks, birchbark canoes, bull boats, dugouts and reed boats to sea-going canoes! An exhibit case titled “Throwing Sticks of the American Indian” (Holmes, 1903A, Plate 49; contains thirty-six different types of this classification of artifact. From such exhibit, it is only possible to infer that at some time in their history, American Indians apparently used boats and throwing sticks. It is impossible to get a sense of particular peoples. It is evident, however, that this exhibit format allowed the museum to display its wealth of materials from particular areas in particular industries. Although it was not the specific intention of the exhibit to make an evolutionary statement, it seems to have been expected that the viewer would make this judgment by himself by a comparison with the range of forms from other races in the same industry.

In an unexpected way, this method of arrangement is reminiscent of the curio cabinet. It still brought into association with each other artifacts that were, in reality, not related. Only the artificial creation of a classification system in this instance, or the chance association of artifacts in the case of the curio collector, established connections between artifacts. In both instances, objects were removed from their cultural context, with an inevitable loss in meaning.

Evidence of these Exhibit Types at Peabody

At Peabody Museum, in the latter part of the 19th century, similar methods of classification and exhibit arrangement were being undertaken. Like Mason at the National Museum, Putnam also recommended that exhibits be prepared to “select articles illustrating the

development of men toward civilization as shown by his inventions, arts, and manufactures" (Peabody Museum *Annual Report*, 1878). There are statements by Wyman and Putnam that indicate that both the culture history series and the class series exhibits were present at Peabody. In 1873, Wyman wrote "spears, paddles, and canoes from different parts of the world are on exhibit, as well as bows and arrows from different parts of America and the Pacific Islands (Peabody Museum, *Annual Report*, 1873). Putnam, in speaking of tool evolution, remarked that "exhibits that showed the distribution of certain implements and weapons through time and space would be constantly subject to change according to the ideas of successive curators (Putnam, 1889). As at the National Museum, there is the expectation in both exhibit formats that the spectator will judge how far along the continuum the race of people represented has progressed. There is no chance of perceiving the life styles of the many groups of people within that "race" or even of conceiving a mental picture of what they looked like.

THE GREAT EXPOSITIONS

It is generally agreed that the move away from abstract classification systems to a more accurate presentation of cultures of different peoples can be traced to the Great Expositions in the late 19th and very first part of the 20th century (Ewers, 1959; Witteborg, 1958; Reekie, 1964). It was then that museum scholars, particularly those at the National Museum, were asked to prepare exhibits for the general public. Although the extant classification systems were satisfactory for the scholars, they seemed to realize that they would need new ways of sorting and exhibiting artifacts if anthropology were to be made meaningful to the general public. Their exhibits would be in competition with those of the commercial enterprises and if they wished to draw large audiences, their exhibits would have to compete successfully with the eye-catching presentations of industry.

The Philadelphia Centennial — 1875

The goal of the exhibit of the National Museum at the Centennial was to "illustrate the past and present condition of the native tribes of the United States, or its anthropology" (Baird, 1876).

Life Size Figures. For the first time in a scientific museum exhibit, life size figures were prepared to represent some of these native peoples. Hundreds of lay figures, each dressed with the clothing and ornament of its tribe, were exhibited (Baird, 1876). They were a

"sure bet"—Peale's and Catlin's museums had already proved the popularity of this exhibit technique.

Living Exhibits. It was also proposed, evidently to illustrate the *present* condition of the native tribes, that there be an exhibition of "living representatives of the principal Indian tribes, each series . . . to be grouped on a reservation of the Centennial grounds where they could carry on their various occupations" (Baird, 1876). The appeal of this kind of exhibition had already been demonstrated by Catlin and Barnum. Although Baird's proposal was not approved, his suggestion indicates that Indians were still thought of as "curiosities", capable of exciting public interest.

Other Innovations. A fully erected tepee, several totem poles and a variety of dwelling models were also exhibited at the Centennial (Baird, 1876). Once again, Catlin had already demonstrated the interest that could be generated by a tepee exhibit; it was a new device only for the National Museum.

The Look of the Centennial. Photographs of the Centennial (Ewers, 1959, Plate 2) indicate that certain other exhibition methods remained constant. Technological exhibits seem to be present. Also, as usual, an overwhelming amount of material was presented. Costumes and painted skins hang from the ceiling; a canoe sits on top of a life size figure's case; a mortar stands in an aisle; and pottery rests casually on the top of a table top. The tepee (which must have stood about 25 feet high) and the totem poles were dwarfed by the incredible array of material.

The Columbian Exposition—Chicago, 1893

The development of two really significant exhibition techniques—the presentation of *groups* of life size figures and the sorting of artifacts by culture areas—can be traced to the Chicago exposition.

Life Size Groups. The single life size figures dressed in appropriate clothing had been effective in Philadelphia, but they had not succeeded in showing man engaged in the human industries that so interested the scholars. To better illustrate the industries, several life size figures, each portraying involvement in a particular aspect of a specific industry, were exhibited together. Zuni bread making, potting, and belt-making; Navaho spinning and weaving; and Plains Indian hide preparation were illustrated (Goode, 1895A, Plates 51 & 52; see my xerox). All of the figures in the same set were dressed in the clothing of the same tribe and artifacts relevant to the activities were placed nearby. These occupational groups were popular, and a source of satisfaction to the scholars who had created them. Goode, Secretary of the Smithsonian, described

these groups as "pictures from life" and went on to explain:

It is not expected that in the ethnographic museum of the future the lay figure will supplant the show case as a means for displaying ethnographic collections but just as naturalists may feel it legitimate to use a considerable number of cases of animals mounted in the midst of natural surrounding to illustrate their habits or make impressive memorials of species which are rarely seen or likely to become extinct, so will the anthropologist employ figures, not only for the education of the public, but as a more sure means of preserving certain of the most precious memorials of the primitive races of mankind. (Goode, 1865A)

The Living Exhibits. While sculptured figures of Indians were on display inside the Exposition Halls, living Indian exhibits were on display outside. Putnam had succeeded in arranging this, where several years before, at the Centennial, Baird and Mason had not! A sampling of the Exposition catalogue explains that there are "Four families of Penobscot Indians living in their birch-bark wigwams and paddling their birch-bark canoes on the South Pond" (Putnam, 1893). A newspaper account describes the same exhibit as follows:

Visitors who walk along the shore of a little bay on the fair grounds will find these groups arranged geographically and living under normal conditions in their native habitations. (Dexter, 1966).

With the sculptured groups described as a species likely to become extinct, and the living Indians described much as one would describe a zoo where animals could be seen in their "natural habitations", it is no wonder that Vine Deloria (1970) complains that "Indians were relegated to the status of a picturesque species of wildlife". Certainly in 1893, as in 1875, Indians were viewed as interesting "curiosities".

A New Classification System

The "discovery" of the concept of culture areas, now accepted as a standard tool for classifying and presenting American Indian artifacts in museums, can also be traced to the Columbian Exposition.

Powell and American Indian Linguistics. In 1886 John Wesley Powell's *Indian Linguistic Families of America, North of Mexico* was published. He recognized that all Indians did not speak the same language, established 58 distinct linguistic families and isolates, and described, as far as it was known, the geographical area occupied by each language family (Powell, 1886). Intended for scholars of Indian linguistics, this method of geographically grouping tribes by linguistic stock was quickly adapted by museum men.

Mason and Culture-Regions. In 1893 Mason proposed that an exhibit of arts and industries for each linguistic family of North America be set up in Chicago. The families selected were, of course, to be based on Powell's map (Goode, 1895B). Although Mason could not find material to represent all the stocks indicated on the map, and apparently eliminated others where "the environment had invited the assemblage of a large number of linguistic stocks" (Mason, 1894), he did select 16 groups for presentation. Mason expected that the exhibits would "attempt for the first time to co-ordinate the concepts of tribe, language and industry" (Goode, 1895B). Although Mason did not carry out his plan as fully as he would have liked, it appears that objects from all tribes within a given linguistic stock were exhibited together, sorted first by linguistic stock, and then within that general category, by specific industries.

When Mason had his exhibits prepared, he realized that *environment* and not linguistic stock seemed to be influencing the arts and industries of the tribes within a particular geographical area. Mason continued to study the problem. Two years later he established and described 18 distinct culture areas, each identified by a special environment, inhabited by specific tribes (often belonging to many different linguistic stocks) and characterized by specific industries (Mason, 1896). This was, of course, the beginning. The refinement of the culture area concept by Wissler and Kroeber is well known. What is critical here is that the culture area as a classification system originated with Mason's Chicago exhibit of arts and industries.

The Pan-American Exposition—Buffalo, 1901

The creation of family or "story" groups and the first extensive presentation of dwelling models can be traced to the Pan-American Exposition.

Family groups. The groups of full size life figures popular at the Chicago exposition showed unspecified people, all engaged in a particular process or occupation. They were replaced, in Buffalo, by family groups that showed members of a family engaged in occupations typical of their role, reacting to other family members. For example, in a family group depicting the Sioux Indians (Holmes 1901, Plate 28; see my Xerox), Sioux Indians (Holmes 1901, Plate 28; see my xerox), a wife, scraping a hide, looks up as her husband returns from hunting; his young son, holding a toy bow runs towards him; two sisters continue beading a moccasin, while a baby in a cradleboard stares impassively.

Dwelling Models. An extensive series of dwelling models were designed and presented at the Buffalo Ex-

position. Dwellings were chosen because they represented an important industry—the building arts; miniature models and miniature people were used because of space limitations. Although the models appear to be crudely done, with a minimum of detail and people “frozen” in position (Holmes, 1901 Plates 35-46), these are only the first efforts. They represent the beginnings of a popular exhibition technique: dioramas of village life.

Geographical Progression. It is now standard operating procedure for museums to present culture areas in geographical progression. The first specific mention of this kind of ordering dates back to the Buffalo Exposition. Twelve family groups, each representing a “culture area”, were situated so that the visitor would move from the Northernmost, an Eskimo family, to the Southernmost group, a Tierra del Fuego family (Holmes, 1901).

The Old Stand-bys. Together with these innovations, there was also an exhibit of the arts and industries of the American race—clearly a continuation of the class series of objects popular at the Peabody and the National Museum. How different these class series (Holmes, 1901, Plates 47-57) were from the new types of exhibits that for the very first time associated artifacts with specific peoples and even specific ways of life!

The Impact of the Expositions

Life size figures, life size “family” groups, the concept of “culture areas”, dioramas of village life, and ordering by geographical progression—all these innovations can be traced to the great Expositions. Clearly then, these expositions do represent a turning point in the history of the scientific museum. For the first time, peoples had been represented and an effort made to associate those peoples with specific life styles. For the very first time artifacts had been separated out from the abstraction of technology, and linked directly to the people who created them. The theoretical classifications that viewed all of mankind in a single evolutionary chain had at the very least been supplemented with display techniques that recognized the existence of many different cultures. This is not to say that the scholar’s interest in man’s place in history had exclusively given away to objective culture studies. The sense that these cultures could be rated on an evolutionary scale was still there as can be seen from the class series exhibits in Buffalo, or the statement by Harlan Smith that “from the first to the last, the exhibits of this department will be arranged and grouped to teach a lesson: to show the advancement or evolution of Man”.

(Smith, 1893). Neither is it true that the representations of Indians in exhibits stopped the public or even the scholars from continuing to regard them as “curiosities”. Nevertheless, whatever the attitudes and motives, the Expositions do mark the first serious museum attempts to present a more meaningful and coherent picture of the cultures of different peoples.

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Alaska Land Claim

Jude Nusai

There used to be more to Indian
 than being brown
 More to my Race than drunk in town,
 Our souls are fragile and easily broken
 Wild flowers that wilt
 where European is spoken,
 Now we wrestle with life in worn-out clothes
 (And the same thing goes for Eskimos)
 We knew the ways of woods and barrens
 We’ve all been seduced
 by the white man’s goods,
 We live in a world not of our making
 There’s nothing here
 that’s ours for the taking.
 Once the horizon was the limit of our land
 Our claims are extinguished
 (ain’t justice grand?)
 Yes, yes, we’re wild things and easily daunted
 White man can’t you ever tell
 when you’re not wanted?