The Pleasure Gardens of Antebellum America and the Performance of American Identities

by

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Abstract

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Pleasure gardens (outdoor, privately-owned entertainment venues) were popular in a number of European cities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Typically-overlooked, the American exemplars have been assumed to be inconsequential and mere imitations of the English venues. However, I argue that pleasure gardens were important venues for citizens of the newly-formed nation to define through performance what it meant to be American. Focusing on performance as role playing and as providing opportunities to test identities, this study examines the practices of proprietors, patterns of patronage, and staged entertainments of twelve American pleasure gardens operating within five east-coast cities.

The unique manner in which pleasure gardens addressed concerns with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the nation is explored by examining the geographic locations of the various sites. Investigating but ultimately dismissing the claim that American pleasure gardens were the same as English venues, I then examine how American national identities were tested through simultaneous adoption and rejection of English associations. I add to this discussion a study of the use of the gardens for patriotic events and activities. I then turn to focus on class roles and the relationship between class and performance, followed by a study of how issues of racial and ethnic American identities were addressed within the gardens through

enactments, plays, and dances. This study concludes by examining the legacy of pleasure gardens in American popular entertainment, positing concert saloons, roof garden theatres, vaudeville, world's fairs, public parks, and amusement parks as successors to pleasure gardens.

Though American pleasure gardens have been largely neglected to date, and difficult to pin down due to scarce resources, this study highlights the value of studying these "rural retreats." In addition to their centrality to performances of American identities during a time of fervent national identity negotiation, I demonstrate that the pleasure gardens of America have contributed to such fundamental aspects of American culture as fireworks on the Fourth of July, vaudeville, and theme parks.

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Introduction

The once-popular outdoor entertainment venues known as pleasure gardens were significant sites in which experimentation with the concepts of nation and identity could be seen. These privately-owned establishments operated in many countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but scholarly attention has been mostly centered on the Vauxhall and Ranelagh sites in London, while the American exemplars have largely been neglected. The pleasure gardens of the East coast cities of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston, South Carolina, provided a mixed clientele with a host of entertainments, ranging from vocal concerts and refreshments, to firework displays, Fourth of July celebrations, and dramatic interludes.[1] The patrons of these venues, the policies enforced by the proprietors, and the various activities occurring within these sites present a wealth of opportunities for exploring the concept of American identity through popular entertainments. Like the theatres, museums, and circuses with which they had close connections, these sites contributed to the discussion of what it meant to be American in the period following the Revolution.[2]

[1] Pleasure gardens could be found in many other cities, including New Orleans and Richmond, but this project will be confined to the five major cities listed above due to the scale and relative success of these ventures. Other major cities such as Chicago and Memphis do not appear to have supported such ventures, which may be due to the fact that the entertainment form was in decline when these cities began to flourish. Although Chicago was considered a large city in the late nineteenth century, it had a population of just under 4,500 in 1840, when pleasure gardens were at the peak of their popularity, and was not sizeable enough to support such a venue. In the same year, New York had a population of 312,710, Baltimore 102,313, and Philadelphia 93,665, for example. See Campbell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790-1990," Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., June 1998. http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html (accessed 15 March 2010).

[2] Pleasure gardens frequently offered exhibits of curiosities and waxworks (amongst other items), with the gardens providing a temporary site for circuses in several cities, including Charleston. For a discussion of the development of an American identity through museums, see Joel J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740-1870* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990). For a discussion of the role of the circus within the development of class-based cultural identities in Philadelphia, for example, see Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre From the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 4.

Focusing on the period 1789-1855, this study investigates the activities at the gardens and the practices of inclusion and exclusion of various demographic groups, and relates these findings to the ongoing experimentation with the concept of identity in America during these years.[3] Exploring the concepts of nation, culture, class, and race, this study examines the activities and attendance at the gardens in relation to issues of identity construction. It will be argued that these gardens were important venues, in that they allowed individuals to perform American national identities in a public space; they both reinforced racial divisions and allowed for assertions of equality; and they allowed class and gender assumptions to be explored. Further, it will be argued that these venues played an important role in American cultural history, as they provided a site for early American vaudeville, sustained fireworks as an important means of celebrating the Fourth of July, and ultimately contributed to the development of American World's Fairs and amusement parks.

A Pleasure Garden by Any Other Name

Before commencing this study, a word or two should be spent examining the name "pleasure garden," the history of its use, its connotations, and its precise definition. The term "pleasure garden" has been periodically used to designate a garden grown for ornamental purposes (such as a flower garden), but in the twentieth century it has become the term of choice for a series of outdoor entertainment venues that operated in England and across the globe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[4] The sites now designated as pleasure gardens were not always called this;

[3] These dates reflect the dates of operation of the significant pleasure gardens in America.

[4] See, for example, Peter Martin, *The Pleasure Gardens of Virginia: From Jamestown to Jefferson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), and Rose Standish Nichols, *English Pleasure Gardens* (1902; Boston: David R. Godine, 2003), both of which discuss ornamental gardening.

Thomas Garrett notes that the pleasure gardens found in New York in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "were not referred to as pleasure gardens by contemporaries, and indeed, fewer than half of them used the term 'garden' in their names."[5] Rural retreats, pleasure grounds, Vauxhalls, and garden theatres were among some of the various choices of terms to designate the venues under discussion here, with the term "pleasure garden" becoming gradually more and more common as a means of designating the sites in the twentieth century.[6]

The recent labeling of "pleasure garden" should be examined, as both halves of this term raise interesting questions. The word "pleasure" has a number of meanings and connotations, and the *OED* notes over twenty different meanings and uses of the words, including positive, negative, physical (and sensual), and psychological meanings. In the context of the term "pleasure garden," "pleasure" is assumed to take on the basic meaning of a site that gives delight.[7] Yet other readings can be taken from this word in this context; several scholars have noted the high prevalence of prostitution and the relaxation of inter-gender interactions (especially in the "dark walk") of eighteenth and nineteenth century pleasure gardens. Miles Ogborn, for example, describes "Vauxhall's walks and shades" as being "heavy with sexual tension."[8] While the gardens often marketed themselves as chaste, moral spaces, the choice of the modern name of "pleasure garden" betrays more than the simple "delight" the venue provided.

Similarly, the term "garden" can be deceptive, as many entertainment venues used the term "garden" as a descriptor when no garden was present. Vauxhall Garden in Baltimore, for

[5] Thomas M. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City, 1700-1865" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1978), 17.

[6] The *OED* cites the first use of this term as being in 1961. *OED*, s.v. "pleasure," 6b.

[7] *OED*, s.v. "pleasure," 2a.

[8] Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 122.

example, operated as a tavern 1829-1873, but as contemporary maps clearly illustrate, there were no sizeable gardens there at all.[9] Similarly, Niblo's Garden retained the "garden" of its title after 1848, even though there was little by way of garden, with the focus being upon the theatre and other buildings. The term garden has been used in America to designate some entertainment venues apparently lacking in traditional gardens since the nineteenth century, with one of the definitions given in *Webster's* being "a large hall for an indoor athletic contest, . . . a spectacular show, . . . or a circus."[10] The term is deployed similarly in the American venues of Madison Square Gardens and Boston Garden.[11] The label garden has been applied to entertainment venues without any lawn, plants, or shrubs, and so care should be taken not to assume that garden means cultivated ornamental ground. However, the pleasure gardens of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had actual green, outdoor spaces which were central to their operations and traditional gardens were a requisite part of the form. It is clear then that neither "pleasure" nor "garden" are clearly-understood words, and in the context of pleasure gardens, the term is broad one that is attached more to an idea than to any one specific landscape.

The limited scholarship on pleasure gardens adds little clarity to this matter as scholars often neglect to define what they mean by the term pleasure garden. For example, in their study of London pleasure gardens, Warwick and Edgar Wroth attempt to differentiate between three types—tea gardens, mineral springs, and "the Vauxhall type"—yet many of the gardens surveyed by them fall into multiple categories, while others fall outside of their definitions of all three

[9] See city directories and various contemporary maps for confirmation of this point.

[10] *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "garden," 2b.

[11] "Boston Garden" has been officially called "TD Garden" since 1997 due to sponsorship. Although the current Madison Square Garden (the fourth venue to operate under that name in New York) has never operated as a garden, earlier Madison Square Gardens had a covered garden (from 1875) and a roof garden (from 1892), which may explain the origin of the term in this instance. See Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 3, 7.

types (and thus outside of their own definition of pleasure garden).[12] Harold Eberlein and Cortlandt Hubbard define a pleasure garden as "an agreeable outdoor resort, well laid out and planted, where city-dwelling patrons might promenade to their hearts' content, obtain refreshment for the inner man, and get entertainment from some sort of 'thrill,'" which is general, to say the least.[13] Most, however, neglect to define the term at all, focusing instead on a specific site that is considered by the author(s) to be an example of such a venue.[14] However, while a precise definition of this term has not been agreed upon, it is typically used to refer to an outdoor entertainment venue offering refreshments, walks, and some form of amusement, such as concerts, dancing, or fireworks.

Within this dissertation, I adopt the definition of pleasure garden put forward by Garrett: "a privately-owned (as opposed to a governmentally owned) enclosed ornamental ground or piece of land, open to the public as a resort or amusement area, and operated as a business."[15] This definition excludes commons, public parks, and other such free public green spaces found in towns and cities, identifies the venue as being a business open to the public (rather than a country estate with limited access to its grounds), and includes the availability of some form of organized amusement or entertainment.

[12] Warwick Wroth and Edgar Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979 [1896]), introduction.

[13] Harold Donaldson Eberlein, and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1944): 151.

[14] See for example the texts discussed below on Vauxhall, Ranelagh, and Marylebone Gardens.

[15] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 4.

Pleasure Gardens as Interdisciplinary Fulcrum

The unusual nature of pleasure gardens as theatres, exhibition spaces, concert venues, public celebration grounds, and gardens has meant that a variety of disciplines have found material of interest in pleasure gardens; it is their receptivity to interdisciplinary investigation that makes pleasure gardens such fascinating objects of study and opens them up to multiple conversations. While historical surveys dominate the scholarship of pleasure gardens, other scholarship heralds from the fields of urban studies, art, music, theatre, and garden studies, with many combining several different disciplinary approaches. While I focus primarily on the performative elements of the gardens, it is important to identify the various avenues pleasure gardens present for study, as the work conducted on these sites informs my own readings, regardless of the disciplinary origin.

The foundational texts dealing with pleasure gardens holistically typically work within traditional "event-oriented history," and many of these have proven to be little more than surveys of the various sites with little social or cultural context being explored.[16] For example, Warwick and Edgar Wroth's now-dated survey is still cited as a central text in studies of pleasure gardens. Their approach was to catalogue all of the gardens both by "type" and by geographical location, thus providing readers with a reference book.[17] Though sparse in detail, this slim volume provides the names and dates of the chief pleasure gardens of London and pays particular attention to the entertainments offered, the cost of admission, and the uses of the site before and after its pleasure garden tenure. This text is filled with anecdotes and the authors' assessments of the gardens, and the quantity of information about each site is uneven, so while this study

[16] Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 370.

[17] Wroth and Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century.*

provides the reader with a starting point from which to work on pleasure gardens, it presents little more than basic (and biased) information. Warwick Wroth's second text, *Cremorne and the Later London Gardens*, has many of the same flaws, and additionally lacks a clear rationale for the selection of entries and provides little by way of commentary on the spaces and their activities.[18]

London's Vauxhall is commonly perceived as the chief pleasure garden—the model on which countless subsequent gardens were based. As such, it is not surprising that this particular site has been the subject of numerous book-length studies. The earliest of these is James Southworth's *Vauxhall Gardens*, which is an anecdote-filled volume lacking many specifics such as names and dates.[19] While this volume does not serve the reference function of the Wroths' texts, it does introduce the idea that this specific site is worthy of independent study due to its prevalence in literature, its centrality in contemporary entertainments, and the operations of C. H. Simpson, who served as Master of Ceremonies, 1797-1835.[20] The successor to this volume is *Green Retreats* by W. S. Scott, which presents little new material beyond that found in Wroth and/or Scott, but takes a chronological approach in an attempt to show the rise and decline of the venue over its long history.[21] While this text is filled with factual errors and relies heavily on anecdotes, it does describe clearly the changing layout of the gardens and begins to question *why* pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall became popular and then declined when they did.[22] Another

[18] Warwick Wroth, *Cremorne and the Later London Gardens* (London: Elliot Stock, 1907).

[19] James Granville Southworth, *Vauxhall Gardens: A Chapter in the Social History of England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

[20] David Coke, "Vauxhall Gardens," "Proprietors & Staff," http://www.vauxhallgardens.com/vauxhall_gardens_proprietors_page.html (accessed 4 March 2010).

[21] W. S. Scott, *Green Retreats: The Story of Vauxhall Gardens, 1661-1859* (London: Odhams Press, 1955).

[22] The reasons Scott presents for pleasure gardens becoming popular towards the end of the seventeenth century are: "the inherent love of the English people for out-of-doors amusements," the suppression of nearly all forms of entertainment during the Commonwealth, the fact that it was one of the few amusements open to women, and the influence of foreigners (though what that was is never made clear), *Green Retreats*, 11. Scott later writes that the pleasure gardens then failed to succeed due to there being a change from people supplying themselves with

major pleasure garden, Marylebone, has earned a book-length study in the form of Mollie Sands' *The Eighteenth Century Pleasure Gardens of Marylebone*.[23] This slim volume works very closely with primary material. Aside from some problematic assumptions (such as the lack of extant advertisements for a given time signaling that nothing happened during a particular period), Sands presents the reader with a mostly-sound chronological introduction to the activities at Marylebone Gardens.

A small number of publications have addressed the pleasure gardens found outside of England, including Ian Dougherty's short booklet on the Vauxhall of Dunedin, New Zealand, and Shirine Hamadeh's chapter on pleasure gardens and outdoor resorts in Istanbul, but these two instances are both very brief and provide little beyond basic factual material.[24] The limited scholarship on the American venues is also predominantly of a survey nature, with the first summary of American pleasure gardens being Eberlein and Hubbard's 1944 article, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era."[25] Attempting to cover all pleasure gardens throughout America, this article jumps from city to city in a non-chronological fashion, noting some of the major gardens of New York, Charleston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. More comprehensive within its defined scope is Thomas M. Garrett's 1978 dissertation, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City, 1700-1865," which catalogues forty-eight pleasure gardens in New York.[26] This dissertation focuses on collecting rather than analyzing data, but in his introduction and conclusion, Garrett draws some connections between the gardens and public parks, exploring

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simple entertainments to requiring a more sophisticated form of entertainment provided by someone else (again, these arguments are left vague).

[23] Mollie Sands, *The Eighteenth Century Pleasure Gardens of Marylebone, 1737-1777* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987).

[24] Ian Dougherty, *Vauxhall Gardens: Dunedin's Notorious Victorian Pleasure Gardens* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Saddle Hill Press, 2007); Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), chapter 4.

[25] Eberlein and Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era."

[26] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 599.

the contributions of the activities of the gardens to the arts, and investigating the relationship between the English and American venues.

While the authors of these various texts hail from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, they are, in this instance, focusing on the gardens (generally or specifically) in a way that defies categorization beyond the broad discipline of history. Others, however, have approached the subject of pleasure gardens from a specific discipline (or several different disciplines simultaneously), and it is these texts that allow us to see the manner in which this one cultural form can be approached and used to such different ends.

Perhaps most surprisingly, theatre history is the most underrepresented discipline in studies of pleasure gardens. The 1998 special issue of *Performing Arts Resources* focusing on pleasure gardens contains four articles on American gardens expressly from this discipline, yet they are the only such writings to come from theatre. The first article from this volume, "Philadelphia's Early Pleasure Gardens" by Geraldine Duclow, provides a chronological survey much like Eberlein and Hubbard's article does, but Duclow is more comprehensive in her research.[27] Although there are a small number of errors (such as her unfounded claim that John Jewitt narrated his experiences of being held captive by Native Americans to audiences at Vauxhall), her article provides an introduction to the various gardens found in Philadelphia. John Frick's article focuses on the Palace Garden of New York, and in addition to providing an overview of the activities there, he notes that pleasure gardens in New York blossomed at a time when the city was on what he terms the rural/urban and modern/traditional cusp.[28] Pleasure gardens, he argues, provided a venue that allowed individuals to reconsider their identity in relation to both nostalgia and modernity. Arthur Bloom's article catalogues events at the

[27] Geraldine Duclow, "Philadelphia's Early Pleasure Gardens," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 1-18.

[28] John Frick, "'Fireworks, Bonfires, Balloons and More': New York's Palace Garden," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 19-32.

Columbian Museum and Garden, while the final essay of the volume (by Katy Matheson) takes a more comprehensive view of Niblo's Garden and saloon, exploring the unique nature of Niblo's "hybrid" garden/saloon.[29] While each of these articles comes from a theatrical viewpoint, they are the only texts dealing with pleasure gardens that fall squarely in this category, and with the exception of Frick, they in fact overlook the theatrical context almost entirely.

Pleasure gardens held many close ties with the theatres; the two worked together as businesses in many instances (Alexander Placide operated a Vauxhall in Charleston to supplement his theatre over the summer months, for example). Both presented entertainments to a paying public (some gardens presenting full plays), and many gardens became theatres in their later years (such as Niblo's Garden in New York).[30] Aside from these tangible connections, both venues encouraged experimentation with the performance of identities, and pleasure gardens encouraged the use of the space for the performance of the visitors in a very active manner, with people visiting in order to see and be seen.

Performance Studies offers the ideal discipline (or marriage of disciplines) to examine the multi-layered performances enacted in early American pleasure gardens, and several scholars have applied a performance studies approach to the topic. The very fact that these venues were gardens has opened them up to explorations through the lens of garden theory and theories of

[29] Arthur W. Bloom, "Science and Sensation, Entertainment and Enlightenment: John Mix and the Columbian Museum and Gardens," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 33-52; Katy Matheson, "Niblo's Garden and Its 'Concert Saloon,' 1828-1846," ibid., 53-105. It is not, however, made clear just how Niblo's was "unique," given that other saloons were in operation.

[30] Pleasure gardens were largely seasonal venues, opening during the summer months, when the theatres were often closed. The relationship between Placide's Vauxhall and theatre was a pattern seen elsewhere to various degrees, such as the Vauxhall of New York's partnership with the actors of the Park Theatre for a period of time. Other pleasure gardens were able to operate year-round, but in very different capacities, with indoor concerts being sustained in Charleston (before Placide's management), indoor performances at Washington Gardens, Boston, and dinners in Vauxhall, Philadelphia, for example. See *City Gazette* (Charleston), 22 October 1795; *Boston Intelligencer*, 15 January 1820; and *Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia), 20 January 1789. The plays presented within the various gardens differed from site to site, but in many cases the same plays were seen in both the theatre and the garden. In Charleston, several plays were performed in the theatre and then in the gardens the following summer, whilst in Boston and New York, for example, pieces appear to have been created specifically for the gardens.

space and place. Unlike other forms of entertainment, pleasure gardens allowed visitors to walk around in a manner/direction of their choosing in an outdoor setting and admire structured performances and exhibits of artwork and curiosities, as well as interact with other patrons. John Dixon Hunt has successfully combined theatre, performance studies, and garden history in his article "Theatres, Gardens, and Garden Theatres," in which he explores the ways these disciplines intersect in pleasure gardens.[31] Hunt looks at how pleasure gardens were stages upon which the patrons performed to one another (even employing backdrops in the forms of views and constructed scenery), at how garden and theatre design are connected, and at the visual narrative built into spaces such as Vauxhall, London. Similarly, Gregory Nosan identifies the importance of the various patterns of movement around the space of a pleasure garden in his article "Pavilions, Power, and Patriotism: Garden Architecture at Vauxhall," in which he explores the interaction between the artworks, space, and patrons.[32] Nosan argues that the space of Vauxhall, London, allowed individuals to perform national identities by their patterns of movement and engagement with the space.

Similarly, pleasure gardens have not yet been fully investigated in terms of what their status as "garden" contributes to their use and perceptions. The space of the garden is seen by Erving Goffman as impacting the individual, in that gardens and parks are perceived differently from other public spaces which is reflected in the fluidity of social rules; Goffman argues that gardens are among the limited number of spaces where the rules governing social interactions are "loosened."[33] Working with ideas that have been further explored in the field of performance

[31] John Dixon Hunt, "Theatres, Gardens, and Garden Theatres," chapter 2 in *Gardens and Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992).

[32] Gregory Gerald Nosan, "Pavilions, Power, and Patriotism: Garden Architecture at Vauxhall," in *Bourgeois and Aristocratic Cultural Encounters in Garden Art, 1550–1850*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 101-21.

[33] Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), chapter 13.

studies, Goffman highlights the fact that because they are such specific and peculiar spaces, (pleasure) gardens allow scholars to investigate the behavior of individuals in new ways.[34] Unlike more controlled spaces, pleasure gardens thus allow us to witness the results of more social freedom and experimentation; while individuals were not freed from all social rules and expectations, there was more room for exploration of personal performances of class and national identities than in other venues (such as the enclosed playhouse or assembly room).

Pleasure gardens have not been specifically invoked in terms of the relationship they create between the spaces of the city and the country (beyond John Frick's article, cited above). Texts such as Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* and Marvin Carlson's *Places of Performance* have explored the semiotics of the city and the role of theatre buildings in relation to the wider city and I suggest that pleasure gardens could contribute much to this discussion.[35] The fact that these were gardens within the city keys into the relationship between the urban and rural, city and country, and this concept is addressed at length by Leo Marx in his *The Machine in the Garden*, by Raymond Williams in his *The Country and the City*, and is also given some attention by Rosemarie K. Bank in her *Theatre Culture in America: 1825-1860*.[36] These texts have opened the door to explorations of the position pleasure gardens held in terms of the rural/urban tension and the position they held within the city at large.

Art historians and theorists have used pleasure gardens as case studies in the fields of painting, sculpture, and the visual sciences—particularly the original Vauxhall. Brian Francis,

[34] Although Goffman is referring to public parks in this chapter, his ideas relating to the outdoor setting may be applied here, though it should be noted that there are certain differences between a free public park and an entertainment venue requiring an admission fee.

[35] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960); Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), chapter 3.

[36] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Rosemary K. Bank, *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 1.

for example, has studied the supper box paintings exhibited at Vauxhall, while David Coke has looked at the statue of Handel found in Vauxhall in his article "Roubiliac's Handel for Vauxhall Gardens: A Sculpture in Context."[37] Others have combined performance studies with art, such as scholars Peter De Bolla and David Solkin, who devote a chapter of each of their books to Vauxhall, London. In *Education of the Eye*, De Bolla explores the development of what he terms visual culture and various "regimes of the eye," and he employs Vauxhall as one of his chief examples of this phenomenon.[38] Noting the visuality of being in the gardens (seeing, being seen, and being seen seeing) and of the role of the visual elements (optical illusions, mechanical exhibits, and artworks), DeBolla combines performance studies and art theory to argue that Vauxhall played a vital role in the development of new ways of "seeing." Also uniting performance theory with art, Solkin focuses on the specific paintings within the gardens and how they contributed to the discourse of the gardens and allowed for social elevation of the patrons through granting them access to conversations on art and juxtaposing images in paintings with the patrons sitting before them.[39]

Music historians and musicologists have studied pieces composed for the gardens. Mollie Sands, for example, published a book-length study of Ranelagh (Vauxhall's main rival), focusing on the singers and musical developments within the gardens.[40] She highlights the fact that music was a central component within the gardens, with important ramifications being seen in music in London more generally. Other studies from a musical perspective include Paul Rice's article

[37] Brian Allen, "Francis Hayman and the Supper-box Paintings for Vauxhall Gardens," in *The Rococo in England*: *A Symposium*, ed. Charles Hind (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1986), 113-33; David Coke, "Roubiliac's Handel for Vauxhall Gardens: A Sculpture in Context," *Sculpture Journal* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 2007): 5-22.

[38] Peter De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), chapter 2.

[39] David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), chapter 4.

[40] Mollie Sands, *Invitation to Ranelagh 1742-1803* (London: John Westhouse, 1946).

"Music Nationalism and the Vauxhall Gardens," and David Rhodes' publication of James Hook's music (volume one focuses on the music composed for Vauxhall).[41]

There are two forthcoming works on pleasure gardens, both of which embrace an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the gardens. The first of these, *A Comprehensive History of Vauxhall Gardens, 1661-1859*, is presented as an historical corrective to earlier histories of Vauxhall, but also devotes two full chapters exclusively to the music and art of the gardens, noting the importance of the activities at Vauxhall in relationship to developments in English art and music.[42] A second forthcoming volume, *Grounds for Pleasure*, will provide the reader with a collection of essays drawn from multiple disciplines; with contributors from the fields of music, art, garden studies, theatre, urban history, and the history of fashion, this text highlights the manner in which pleasure gardens have proven to be an interesting focal point for a variety of disciplines.[43]

While remaining open to this variety of disciplinary approaches, my primary focus within this study is theatre and performance, and I explore the ways in which identities were performed within the space of the American pleasure gardens. The concept of American identities in relation to the performing arts is not a new one, and yet it remains a troubled idea that many scholars continue to explore. Recent studies by Rosemarie K. Bank, Heather S. Nathans, and Jeffrey H. Richards have investigated theatre with this concern in mind, and while they all acknowledge identity to be a fluid construct identifiable only by markers or traces, they do note theatre as being a fruitful means of exploring what it meant to be American in the period 1775-

[41] Paul F. Rice, "Music Nationalism and the Vauxhall Gardens," *Lumen* 19 (2000): 69-88; David J. Rhodes, *James Hook (1746-1827)*, vol. 1 (Dochroyle Farm, Ayrshire, Scotland: Piper Publications, 1995).

[42] David Coke and Alan Borg, *A Comprehensive History of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

[43] Jonathan Conlin, ed., *Grounds for Pleasure: Pleasure Gardens in Britain and America, 1660-1880* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

1865.[44] It is to this disciplinary conversation that I am contributing through this study of pleasure gardens.

American Gardens and Identity

I investigate the ways in which Americans have seen themselves as "American," by looking at what this means on a national and local scale and as seen through the pleasure gardens (in terms of layout, entertainments, clientele, location, and management policies). Although identities of class, gender, ethnicity, and race are examined within this study, it is national identity that remains central, as this study focuses on a time when America as a nation was in its infancy and was slowly defining itself, meaning that concerns with race, class, and gender all operated within the wider concern of what it meant to be American.

American Studies as a field is filled with explorations of the concept of American identity and discussions of the American nation are fraught with difficulty and interest. Several disciplines have explored the concept of American identity at length, with theatre scholars, for example, producing volumes ranging from the pioneering efforts such as Francis Hodge's *Yankee Theatre: The Image of America on the Stage: 1825-1850*, and Walter J. Meserve's *An Emerging Entertainment: the Drama of the American People to 1828*, to more recent texts such as Jason Shaffer's *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater*, S. E. Wilmer's *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities*,

[44] Nathans, *Early American Theatre*; Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Bank, *Theatre Culture in America*. Also see S. E. Wilmer, *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) for a broader chronological consideration of identity on the American stage.

and Jeffrey H. Richards' *Drama, Theatre and Identity in the American New Republic*.[45] Each of these volumes acknowledges the particular efficacy of theatre in allowing for the exploration of national and cultural identities. For example, Wilmer notes that "theatre in the US has often been used to define or challenge national values and the notion of nation," and that it is especially effective in exploring and communicating such national identities, because the presence of the audience allows for a communal experience and for instantaneous feedback.[46] And theatre is just one of the many cultural forms that have been interrogated in terms of what they reveal about the emergence of American identities, and museums and art, for example, have also been investigated in this vein.[47] Each of these forms is intrinsically part of the culture within which they exist, commenting on and modifying the society in which they can be found. While pleasure gardens have not yet been subjected to this form of investigation, they, too, are cultural forms that demonstrate the ongoing process of renegotiation and redefinition of what it meant to be American.

As a starting point for this discussion, it should be noted that identity cannot be written of in the singular form—especially in relation to national identity. Although Benedict Anderson notes the formation of an "imagined community" through the conception of simultaneous time and space, he does not explore fully how the variety of notions became unified (if, indeed, they

[45] Francis Hodge, *Yankee Theatre: The Image of America on the Stage: 1825-1850* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964); Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Wilmer, *Theatre, Society and the Nation*; Richards, *Drama, Theatre and Identity*.

[46] Wilmer, *Theatre, Society and the Nation*, 3.

[47] For a discussion of the development of an American identity through museums, see Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, for example. For American identity as seen in painting, see Tim Barringer, "The Course of Empires: Landscape and Identity in America and Britain, 1820-1880," in *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820-1880*, ed. Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 39-65.

did at all).[48] As Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts note in their volume *Messy Beginnings*, there must have been, at least in the early stages of the development of the idea of an American nation, a multitude of different understandings of what it meant to be American.[49] These "several competing, imagined nationhoods" were entangled "with European nationalisms" leading to the necessity, they argue, to acknowledge the complications inherent within any binary between singular forms of English and American national identity.[50] It is not possible (nor desirable) to seek a singular American identity. Of much more value and interest is an exploration of the various ways this concept was approached, developed, and negotiated through the public space of the pleasure garden. As Harry Elam Jr. observes, identity is "not fixed but is the site of multiple contestations and fluid locations," and it is this fluidity and multiplicity that forms the heart of this study.[51] With this in mind, I refer to American "identities" in their plural form throughout.

The performance of American national identities on a local and national level has been explored by Len Travers, David Waldstreicher, and Simon Newman in their studies of street festivals and the development of political celebrations and national consciousness(es).[52] Waldstreicher in particular notes how American political identities were constantly negotiated through public presentations of the self and of political parties, with individuals and groups believing themselves to represent the "true" American political or personal identity. Both

[48] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

[49] Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts, eds, *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 15. Looking at gardens in a variety of cities will enable me to look at a variety of understandings of national identities in the North and South.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Harry, J. Elam Jr. and David Krasner, eds., *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13.

[52] Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Simon Peter Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

Waldstreicher and Travers stress that any discussion of "national consciousness" requires an awareness of the fact that the majority of the population left no record of their thoughts on such a concern—only traces and absences remain.[53] This difficulty in recovering these numerous points of view means that any discussion of American identities must be undertaken with care. I do not argue for a single identity being represented within the space of the pleasure garden; rather I will assert the value of the forum as a venue for the constant (re)negotiation of what American identities were and what they were perceived to be. Throughout this study I pay particular attention to who was accepted or denied entry to the gardens, to celebrations of nationality (especially Fourth of July celebrations), and to the activities and entertainments seen within the gardens as instances of these traces.

Activities within the pleasure gardens undertaken by or witnessed by those who were permitted entry are considered here in relation to ideas of performance. The pleasure gardens can be viewed as a performance space (and, indeed, the London sites have been overtly studied as such) with rules being enforced regarding what was to take place there and who was able to perform. In using the term "performance" here, I am primarily concerned with ideas of performance as role playing. I argue through this discussion that it was in the pleasure gardens that patrons were able to "try on" aspects of American identities, being at times able to play as though of a different social class, exploring what American cultural identity was, and performing against a background of racial others. In this dissertation, I am asserting that Americans performed (with varying degrees of consciousness) elements of their national, social, and racial identities within the space of the pleasure gardens through a form of role play. Concurrently, I am also interested in the more overtly constructed performances in the form of presentations,

[53] For a discussion of how to approach Early American history when confronted with absences, see Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli's Plaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), introduction to part I.

plays, and dances. The performances undertaken by Native Americans (or Native American impersonators) in the pleasure gardens, for example, were billed as entertainments and placed upon a stage before a paying audience, adopting what should therefore be seen as a transparently constructed performance. Performance is thus additionally defined as "the action of performing a play, piece of music, [or] ceremony," presented "in front of an audience," and will be differentiated from my earlier use of the term by designating it "staged" or "theatrical performance."[54]

Within this dissertation, I explore the role of the pleasure gardens in the display of and experimentation with American identities in the east-coast cities of the new Republic. From advertisements and other materials, I examine the main forms of entertainments and question how they may have contributed to or allowed for a sense of national identity by focusing on the language used in their descriptions. The importance of class and nation is teased out, and the position of the Native American and African American within these venues is addressed. Breaking my study into chapters based on aspects of American identities, I explore nation, culture, class, and race in relation to the pleasure gardens of America, focusing on the period 1789-1855 and on the gardens found in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston, identifying patterns, contrasts, and trends among the various sites.

The first chapter of this dissertation gives an overview of the origins of the form of the pleasure garden, by charting the main developments in the primary gardens of London. I then survey the principal pleasure gardens of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston, and identify their dates of operation, managers, chief entertainments, and locations. The proximity of the gardens to the heart of the city, to other entertainment venues, and to public buildings will be documented, along with what happened to the site once the gardens closed. I

[54] *OED*, s.v. "performance," 4a and 4c.

then investigate the position of the gardens in relation to the cities in terms of the relationship between the country and the city and how this impacted perceptions. The principal case studies will be: New York's Vauxhalls (four sites operating c.1750-1771, 1797-1809, 1798-1805, and 1805-1855), and Niblo's Garden (1828-1848/1895); Philadelphia's Gray's Ferry (1789-1792), Vauxhall Harrowgate (1789-1810), Vauxhall (1813-1825), and McArann's Garden (1839-1842); Boston's Vauxhall (which actually failed to open, 1798), and Washington Gardens (1814-1828); Baltimore's Gray's Chatsworth Gardens (1794-c.1805), and Columbian Gardens (1789-1847); and Charleston's Vauxhall (1795-1821).[55]

In chapter two, I explore of the manner in which both proprietors and patrons used the gardens to explore the concept of national identity. I begin with the American gardens' invocation (explicit or otherwise) of the English and French gardens. I question how the gardens did or did not demonstrate an impulse to shape American nationalism in opposition to England and/or Europe (following Eric Hobsbawm and others).[56] I argue against any simple binary of English *versus* American culture, and challenge the oft-repeated statement that American pleasure gardens were simply direct imitations of English venues.[57] The activities within the gardens communicated varying attitudes towards the English nation, with the first of the New York Vauxhalls providing both a venue for celebrating George III's birthday, and later for Stamp Act protests. Similarly contradictory attitudes towards the relationship to England are seen with the use of the gardens for Fourth of July celebrations and for visiting dignitaries (including

[55] Niblo's is listed here with two dates, the first marking the end of Niblo's as a pleasure garden, and the second identifying the end of the venue operating under the name "Niblo's Garden." As will be shown below, after 1848, Niblo's garden was not, in fact, a pleasure garden.

[56] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 19. Hobsbawm is one of many theorists of nationalism who argue that nations must be distinct from others through certain shared characteristics (such as language, religion, etc.). See also Ross Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), chapter 1.

[57] Eberlein and Hubbard, "The 'Vauxhalls' of the Federal Era," 154, 157; Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 604; Duclow, "Philadelphia's Pleasure Gardens," 2.

presidents), while the gardens were simultaneously advertised as being specifically modeled on Vauxhall, London, and hosting English performers, with printed materials concerning the Vauxhall of London also being circulated. The implications of the choice of the name "Vauxhall" for many of the gardens is also addressed.

A second model of national identities allows me to study the use of pleasure gardens in the performance of nation through celebrations as seen on a local level without explicit opposition to other national identities being invoked. Fourth of July celebrations were particularly important in terms of this exploration, and as the gardens often played a central role in the festivities, the events held there are studied in terms of their facilitation of the performance of nation on local and national platforms. Similarities and differences are noted between the various cities, as is the tendency to portray local conceptions of national identity as being nationally true (and singular) by paying particular attention to depictions in newspapers.

In chapter three, I examine the performance of class within and around the gardens by focusing on issues of attendance, links with other cultural forms (especially theatre), and instances of riots. In order to speculate on who attended these gardens, I closely examine the wording of advertisements (in terms of appeals being made to specific class groups), along with admission prices and travel writing.[58] I relate admission prices of the gardens to the costs of admission to theatres and other entertainment venues and to statistics on earnings in order to ascertain the affordability of the gardens in relation to other recreational activities. Many of the pleasure gardens exhibited close relationships with the theatres of the cities, and actors of local theatres performed in the gardens during the summer months in many instances. The Vauxhall of Boston that failed to open and Charleston's Vauxhall demonstrated this close connection very

[58] Admission prices were relatively consistent at fifty cents (occasionally with reduced prices available for children). A dollar was sometimes charged for special exhibits or events. See chapter two for a fuller consideration of admission prices.

clearly, and so will be used as case studies to discuss the relationship between theatres and gardens in terms of what they offered different classes. Further, the similarities and differences between the repertoires of the theatres and gardens will be noted, with Charleston's Vauxhall presenting plays that had been formerly presented at the theatre, but the gardens in Boston and New York, for example, presenting a wider variety, including some plays that were created specifically for the gardens.[59] I study the content of these various productions and how they relate to productions shown at the same time at the principal neighboring theatres.[60] The New York and Philadelphian Vauxhalls both experienced riots over problems of exclusion of certain persons (potential guests were excluded through erecting barriers and by the managers introducing or increasing an admission fee), and additional riots and disturbances occurred at Columbian Gardens, Baltimore and Gray's Ferry, Philadelphia (among others). I investigate these incidents in terms of what they reveal about contemporary class relations and the performance of class within the space of the pleasure garden.

The fourth chapter investigates the role of race in the spaces created by the gardens. The position of Native Americans and the function they played in the development of American identities were witnessed within the space of pleasure gardens, as seen in the Vauxhall and Palace Garden of New York which hosted Native American performances, Baltimore's "Indian Coronation" (held at Vauxhall), and Boston's "Grand Indian War Dance" of 1828 performed at Washington Gardens.[61] Looking at tours, coronations, plays, and performances, I examine how

[59] The content of the plays apparently created for the gardens is often difficult to determine; while full-length plays were often produced elsewhere and are available in print, other shorter pieces (often involving dances and fireworks) can only be apprehended through descriptions printed in newspapers.

[60] It should also be noted that many pleasure gardens were not open in the winter months, while many theatres did not open during the summer months. There were, however, exceptions to this rule, and structures erected in the gardens of Charleston and New York, for example, enabled year-round entertainments.

[61] *Morning Chronicle* (New York), 11 August 1804; *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858; *Baltimore Patriot*, 18 March 1823; William S. Rossiter, ed., *Days and Ways in Old Boston* (Boston: R. H. Stearns and Company, 1915), 123.

the space allowed for and presented Native American identities in relation to ever-evolving American identities and relate this to activities on the popular stage.[62]

African Americans were frequently excluded from pleasure gardens, with the line "no admittance to persons of color" being a common feature in advertisements for such venues, particularly in the South.[63] In addition, while it is known that persons of color were admitted to the amphitheatre constructed within Vauxhall, Washington Gardens (Boston), it is not yet clear if they were admitted to the rest of the pleasure garden site as patrons.[64] However, their general exclusion from many pleasure gardens did not mean they had no presence at all, as the topic of race was discussed within the gardens (for example in a speech delivered in Vauxhall, Charleston, on the subject of freedom given on 4 July 1807),[65] and African Americans were known to work within the gardens.[66] Further, there are examples in the Northern cities that demonstrate that African Americans were not entirely excluded from all pleasure gardens as patrons. The African Grove provides an example of a pleasure garden that was operated by and for African Americans in New York City. Marvin McAllister argues that pleasure gardens provided a forum for experimentation with an inclusive American identity which embraced African Americans and Native Americans. He envisions the African Grove as a "rehearsal space" for blacks to perform as American citizens and also as a place for imitation of white

[62] Similar events within the theatre have been noted, with the "authenticity" of war dances being questioned in such articles as Rosemarie K. Bank, "Staging the 'Native': Making History in American Theatre Culture, 1828-1838," *Theatre Journal* 45, no. 4 (December 1993): 461-86.

[63] See *City Gazette* (Charleston), 29 July 1799, for example.

[64] See the *Repertory*, 17 July 1819, for an example of an advertisement detailing admission prices for various seating areas, including the "seats . . . for persons of color."

[65] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 314-5. Here Waldstreicher notes a Fourth of July toast given by Thomas Holland in 1807 which discussed freedom and liberty for slaves and was given in Vauxhall, Charleston—a venue which simultaneously explicitly prohibited persons of color from entering.

[66] William Niblo, for example, hired African American waiters, as evidenced by the report that "a colored man" named Charles worked at Niblo's as a waiter and died there in a fire. *Spectator*, 21 September 1835.

(assumed inherently superior) culture.[67] Other New York pleasure gardens open to persons of color discussed in this chapter include the Mead Garden (c.1827) and Haytian Retreat (1829). Through these sites, African Americans asserted their right to be included within pleasure gardens (with them establishing their own resorts). The sites of Charleston, however, exhibit only signs of exclusion. Much like the exploration of Native American identities and their place within American identities, the stage and popular theatrical entertainments key into this conversation, and particular attention will be paid to any presentations of African Americans within the extant plays that were produced within the gardens.

In the fifth and concluding chapter, I chart the long-term influence of the form after its decline, noting how the pleasure garden relates to subsequent venues of entertainment. It is generally argued that pleasure gardens led to the modern-day amusement park,[68] and various scholars have noted in passing that a variety of forms and venues grew out of the pleasure garden, but they have not fully investigated their claims. Katy Matheson argues that pleasure gardens in New York (specifically Niblo's) led to the creation of saloons,[69] Garrett suggests that pleasure gardens contributed to the development of the public park in New York,[70] while Wroth sees pleasure gardens as leading to the creation of botanical gardens and zoos in London.[71] I argue that pleasure gardens can also be seen as a forerunner of the World's Fair exhibitions, with

[67] Marvin Edward McAllister, *White People do not Know how to Behave at Entertainments Designed for Ladies & Gentlemen of Colour: William Brown's African & American Theater* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[68] See Heath Schenker, "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque," in *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations*, ed. Terence Young and Robert Riley (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 69-89. In addition, there is an article exploring the connections between American pleasure gardens and amusement parks in the forthcoming volume *Grounds for Pleasure*, ed. Jonathan Conlin.

[69] Matheson, "Niblo's Garden and Its 'Concert Saloon,'" 54.

[70] Garrett, "A History of the Pleasure Gardens of New York City," 616-20. Schenker argues that the selected design for Central Park was a deliberate attempt to move away from pleasure garden form. "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque," 69. Also see Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, "Pleasure Garden? Civic Monument? Pastoral Eden?" in *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 103-11.

[71] Wroth and Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century*.

the Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations (New York, 1853), Centennial International Exhibition (Philadelphia, 1876), and the World's Columbian Exhibition (Chicago, 1893) being three key examples. The use of the gardens of New York for the American Institute's annual fair will be cited as a critical step in this evolution. Further, many pleasure gardens quite literally became theatres, exhibiting the continuance of their close relationship with theatre.[72] An exploration of the significance of pleasure gardens in relation to the wider picture of American cultural forms concludes this study, positioning this fascinating entertainment venue within its historical cultural context.

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A Note on Sources

Sources on pleasure gardens are very limited; many venues were short lived, and their programs of entertainments have not been systematically preserved or collected. As such, I often construct arguments based on a small number of documents. Throughout this study, I have taken care to read these documents appropriately and to not allow one incident or document to represent the activities of the site for the years on which the archives are silent. However, the limited nature of sources does have several significant implications—particularly the silences and the areas of focus. The records are silent on the design and layout of most gardens, for example, and the (probably African American) laborers who actually planted and maintained the gardens are not recorded. Account books, scripts, and staff records are also absent from archival collections. A more pervasive problem within this dissertation, however, is the fact that there are a greater

[72] Niblo's and the Palace Garden in New York became theatres, as did the Vauxhall of Charleston and Washington Gardens of Boston.

number of documents available for the pleasure gardens that operated in New York than in any other city. A combination of a high number of newspapers and previous scholarly work in related fields has meant that details of the New York sites are more numerous and easier to locate than the other cities discussed here. One immediate impact of this is that despite this dissertation attempting to discuss sites in a number of east-coast cities, New York examples often eclipse the others. This is often unavoidable, and where non-New York details are available, they have been given particular attention.

Thomas Garrett's dissertation on the pleasure gardens of New York has proven to be an invaluable resource in this study, and I have relied on him throughout this dissertation for his generally reliable references to primary sources, as my numerous mentions of his work attest to. However, I have found Garrett's interpretation of these documents to be troubling and superficial at times, and so while his scholarship is central to my own, it is with many reservations that I use his work (as will become clear from reading this study).

Another problem that has become apparent during this study is the lack of known authorship of many of the newspaper pieces I reference. The descriptions of the various pleasure gardens obtained from newspapers may have been written by newspaper editors, patrons, and/or (especially likely for the more flattering pieces) by the proprietors of the venues. As such, these pieces have been analyzed especially carefully.

I have used a great number of newspaper sources throughout this dissertation, and many of them changed their titles through the years. In all instances, I have referred to newspapers by the title they were operating under at the time the relevant article/advertisement was printed. I have identified where newspapers operated under different names in different years in the bibliography.

I have not noted the page numbers for newspapers that are four pages in length or less, and I have preserved the spelling and punctuation of these publications in quotations throughout.

Chapter 1

The Pleasure Gardens of America: Origins, Developments, and Perceptions

In a 1944 magazine two American historians argued that "the history of one [pleasure garden], so far as general character is concerned, is virtually the history of all."[1] These two scholars were among the first to study American pleasure gardens, and while the attention they gave to these venues surpassed anything before them, their work was too limited in depth and scope to begin to expose the wide variations to be seen among these sites. Further study of these various venues reveals that the American gardens differed from their English predecessors and that these differences were not merely ones of geography or topography, but tied to the social, cultural, and economic circumstances to be found in America during the colonial and antebellum periods. Each of the American venues also differed from the other; while patterns and trends may be identified, each garden offered something unique, either in terms of the entertainments offered, the experience of journeying to it, the clientele, or the relationship the garden held with the theatrical scene of the larger city.

In this chapter I chart the origins of the American pleasure gardens by providing an overview of the form in London. I also introduce the major American case studies used in this study. My focus in this chapter is on the specific details of how American pleasure gardens emerged out of the post-war culture and how their offerings changed over the sixty-three year period of my study. I also look closely at the locations of the various sites and question what their locations reveal about their cultural and social significance.

[1] Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1944): 174.

The Origins of Pleasure Gardens

Pleasure gardens are widely acknowledged as originating in London in the late seventeenth century. In his study of New York pleasure gardens, Thomas Garrett notes that "there are no known pleasure gardens or similar resorts in either the other cities of England or the cities on the Continent that predate the London gardens in time of origin or at any significant stage of development."[2] The editors of the issue of *Performance Arts Resources* devoted to pleasure gardens state that "the pleasure garden itself originated in England."[3] Often beginning as the grounds to manor houses or as tavern gardens, the earliest prototypes of these London venues could be found in or near the city, with Spring Gardens and New Spring Gardens being the first such sites. While Warwick Wroth identifies sixty-eight distinct pleasure gardens, it was the rise of Vauxhall that initiated the craze for pleasure gardens in or near London that was to last into the nineteenth century.[4]

Vauxhall opened on the south bank of London in 1661 under the name of "New Spring Gardens."[5] Initially, the site offered walks and refreshments with entertainments found only in the form of singing birds and music provided by other patrons. The gardens began to host more structured entertainments after Jonathan Tyers took on the lease of Vauxhall in 1729, displaying paintings from 1729, and presenting balls (such as the *ridotto al fresco*) and suppers from 1732. Throughout his tenure at the gardens, Tyers added various structures, including new orchestras in

[2] Thomas M. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City, 1700-1865" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1978), 10.

[3] Stephen M. Vallillo and Maryann Chach, "From the Editors," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): ix. Also see the forthcoming volume, *A Comprehensive History of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859* by David Coke and Alan Borg (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

[4] It should be noted that pleasure gardens were found in other English cities in the eighteenth century—not just in London.

[5] The following history is compiled from the chronology found in David Coke and Alan Borg, *A Comprehensive History of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

1735 and 1758, an organ building in 1737, the "Turkish Tent" (a covered viewing area) in 1741, and a rotunda in 1748, keeping the admission at one shilling throughout. Before his death in 1767, Tyers also introduced an artificial cascade, painted scenes at the end of walks, and a statue of Handel. The business passed to his son Jonathan, who continued to offer balls and concerts following his father's plan in most respects (but raised the admission to two shillings in 1792). The appointment of Christopher H. Simpson as Master of Ceremonies in 1797, marked the start of what Southworth calls the "golden age" of Vauxhall.[6] Fireworks, balloon ascents, and tightrope walkers (such as Madame Saqui) were introduced to the garden during Simpson's tenure. Ownership transferred to Thomas Bish and Frederick Gye in 1821, during which year the gardens were plagued with wet summers (but still remained a popular and profitable venture). Raising the admission to four shillings in 1825, Bish and Gye offered concerts, artwork, and a lottery, hosted flower shows, and provided the launch site for numerous balloon experiments and ascents. After 1841, the gardens passed through the hands of a variety of proprietors who offered such additions as American bowling, a hall of mirrors, and a shooting gallery, before the doors finally closed (after a number of "final" nights) in 1859.

Two major pleasure gardens were to be found in London besides Vauxhall—Ranelagh and Marylebone. Ranelagh operated between 1742 and 1805 in the area known as Chelsea, and was most noted for its large rotunda which housed the orchestra.[7] Throughout its years of operation, Ranelagh's entertainments focused on music and promenades around the rotunda, but it also had extensive gardens. Marylebone operated between 1737 and 1777 boasting a wider

[6] This period is termed the "golden age" by Southworth. See James Granville Southworth, *Vauxhall Gardens: A Chapter in the Social History of England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

[7] Mollie Sands, *Invitation to Ranelagh 1742-1803* (London: John Westhouse, 1946).

variety of entertainments than Ranelagh, including concerts, acrobatic displays, burlettas, puppets, fireworks, balls, and lectures.[8]

Vauxhall's career (encompassing that of the New Spring Gardens) shows a development from rural garden to site of variety acts and reflects the development of many other English venues. Vauxhall was the garden with the most enduring reputation, and gardens modeled on it could soon be found across the globe in places such as The Hague, Stockholm, the Netherlands, Germany, Paris, and Dunedin, New Zealand.[9]

Most studies of American pleasure gardens concur that pleasure gardens in America descended directly from these London venues. For example, Eberlein and Hubbard argue that the "progenitors of the American Vauxhall of the Federal Era were, of course, the London . . . pleasure gardens," and Stephen Vallillo and Maryann Chach state that "American colonials and later citizens quickly imitated the European example."[10] Garrett develops idea of imitation by arguing that the gardens' proprietors did not simply copy the final product, but that the whole process of development from a simple garden with refreshments, to a venue featuring concerts and fireworks (with much more elaborate entertainments in the later years) also mirrored the British pattern.[11] In terms of the physical origins of the American gardens, Garrett argues that the American pleasure gardens emerged from taverns and the grounds of country houses, just as was seen in England.[12] Eberlein and Hubbard, however, note a broader range of origins, stating that "inns, taverns, baths, wells or springs—any of these might become the nucleus about which a

[8] Mollie Sands, *The Eighteenth Century Pleasure Gardens of Marylebone, 1737-1777* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987). Like Vauxhall, Marylebone still lends its name to a London neighborhood.

[9] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 46-8; Ian Dougherty, *Vauxhall Gardens: Dunedin's Notorious Victorian Pleasure Gardens* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Saddle Hill Press, 2007).

[10] Eberlein and Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," 151; Vallillo and Chach, "From the Editors," ix.

[11] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 55.

[12] Ibid., 45, 55.

later pleasure garden grew up."[13] As will be seen, the physical origins of American pleasure gardens were rather diverse.

Case Studies

In this dissertation, I explore various pleasure gardens located in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston, South Carolina.[14] These principal case studies have been selected on the basis of the degree of documentation and their representative nature (in terms of location, size, duration, and/or types of entertainment offered). These case studies will be introduced below on a city-by-city basis and will be approached chronologically within each city, in order to lay out the basic facts of each garden. After each of the twelve case studies has been introduced, the locations of each venue will be investigated more fully and the place of the gardens within the respective cities will be addressed in order to look for similarities, differences, and patterns. I will assert that the gardens were perceived differently in different cities and that they offered different clienteles a range entertainments in venues that operated for vastly different durations and with varying degrees of success.

[13] Eberlein and Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," 169-70.

[14] Other gardens not noted here that will be discussed in subsequent chapters relate only to one element of this study and so will be introduced in the relevant chapter. Typically these venues (such as the African Grove) were not long-lived or well-known gardens and so are noted only in relation to specific points and are not drawn upon as central case studies.

New York

New York was home to a large number of pleasure gardens, most of which have been surveyed in Garrett's study.[15] While I differ with Garrett on numerous points regarding his interpretation, his factual content is thorough and reliable and so has been drawn on extensively here to create the foundations from which I will construct my argument. The case studies to be examined in greater detail in New York are the four main Vauxhalls and Niblo's Garden.

Four successive New York venues operated under the name of Vauxhall,[16] and the first recorded use of the name in America is found in 1750, when, according to D. T. Valentine, the "Bowling Green Garden, [which] was for many years one of the chief places of resort for pleasure-hunters from the city" changed its name to Vauxhall.[17] Valentine also notes its location as being "on the shore of the North river, about the present junction of Warren and Greenwich Streets" and "along the northerly side of the present Warren Street, from the river shore to the present Church Street." From 1765, the site operated as a business under the management of Samuel Francis, offering balls, exhibits of wax figures, vocal and instrumental concerts, fireworks, and refreshments.[18] When it was offered for sale in 1773, Erasmus Williams purchased the site, renamed it Mount Pleasant, and operated it as a tavern with a garden (rather

[15] Garrett himself notes that he cannot survey all of the sites as many have little by way of documentation. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 599.

[16] Two other Vauxhalls operated in New York for a very brief time (giving a technical total of six Vauxhalls in this city), but little is known of them besides isolated advertisements. Mr. Miller attempted to open a garden under the name of Vauxhall on Great-George Street in June 1793, but nothing is heard from the site after the advertisement announcing its opening. *Daily Advertiser*, 27 June 1793. A second short-lived Vauxhall was established by Peter Thorn at 5 Pearl Street in 1797—the same year as Joseph Delacroix's first venue (discussed below). This venture closed later the same year. *Minerva*, 23 May 1797; *Daily Advertiser*, 26 July 1797.

[17] D. T. Valentine, *The Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York* (New York: McSpedon and Baker, 1856), 472; Edwin G. Burrows, and Mike Wallace, *Gotham*: *A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 176.

[18] *New-York Mercury*, 11 February 1765; *New-York Gazette*, 25 July 1768; *New-York Chronicle*, 22-29 June 1769, 63; *New-York Chronicle*, 14-21 September 1769, 165.

than as a pleasure garden, *per se*) from June 1774 until 1784, after which it was sold again and became the site of an earthenware factory.[19]

Several years after the closure of this site, the city enjoyed three more gardens under the name of Vauxhall—all operated by a French confectioner named Joseph Delacroix. Although the first two were relatively short-lived, I consider them in conjunction with his more successful venture, as their shifting locations and increasingly diverse entertainments represent an interesting trajectory. The first began in 1797 when Delacroix announced the opening of a site called variously the "Ice House" and "Vauxhall," located at 112 Broadway.[20] Here, he offered refreshments and concerts three days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday).[21] The following year, he opened a second Vauxhall on the Bayard estate near Bunker's Hill, which approximates to today's Grand, Broome, Crosby, and Lafayette Streets, leaving the site at 112 Broadway under the management of his son Clement Joseph Delacroix.[22] In seasons running from April to August or September, Delacroix Sr.'s new Vauxhall offered fireworks, concerts, dances, refreshments, and grand Fourth of July spectacles.[23] The exhibits at the Bayard site became grander in terms of scale and sheer number of firework pieces. Other changes included a temporary circus erected in 1802 by Mr. Robertson, a large equestrian statue added in 1803, and an Indian War Dance presented in 1804.[24]

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[19] *New-York Gazette*, 4 October 1773; *New-York Gazette*, 6 June 1774; *New-York Morning Post*, 23 June 1789; *Daily Advertiser*, 20 July 1789.

[20] *Minerva*, 20 May 1797.

[21] Ibid.; *New York Gazette*, 8 June 1797.

[22] I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1928), 5:1352; Valentine, *The Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, 627. Delacroix's ability to operate two such venues simultaneously speaks to the popularity of such sites as early as the 1790s, and by the 1830s, the number of such venues could be counted in tens, despite the various sites all offering very similar entertainments.

[23] *New York Gazette*, 25 May 1798; *Daily Advertiser*, 28 June 1798; *New York Gazette*, 20 August 1798.

[24] *New York Gazette*, 18 September 1802; *Morning Chronicle*, 29 June 1803; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 August 1804. The "War Dance" will be discussed further in chapter four.

In 1805 Joseph Delacroix turned his attention to his most enduring and successful site (also named "Vauxhall"), located between Broadway and the Bowery, "between Great Jones and Eighth streets," to the north of the earlier sites.[25] Before it became a pleasure garden, the ground belonged to Jacob Sperry, who "created a hothouse and attractive gardens, where plants, flowers and seeds were raised, for sale to the owners of large estates and farms and to lesser gentry."[26] John Jacob Astor bought this commercial garden and leased it to Delacroix. While the records regarding when this site first opened contain several contradictions, a series of newspaper announcements place the opening of the "New Vauxhall" sometime in 1805.[27] Showcasing recitals, fireworks, vocal and instrumental concerts, exhibits of statues and busts, and Fourth of July celebrations, this third Vauxhall of Delacroix's featured much the same fare as the former site until 1806, when after announcing his business partnership with his eldest son, Clement Joseph, he opened a "summer theatre."[28] Employing actors from the theatres in Philadelphia and New York, this theatre presented such pieces as Elizabeth Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism*, David Garrick's *The Lying Valet*, and Isaac Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock*.[29] Combining performances, concerts, comedians, illuminations, and fireworks, Delacroix's new offerings marked this season as decidedly different from previous ones.[30] These ambitious programs continued for two years,

[25] O. H. Holley, *A Description of the City of New York: With a Brief Account of the Cities, Towns, Villages, and Places of Resort Within Thirty Miles. Designed as a Guide for Citizens and Strangers, to all Places of Attraction in the City and its Vicinity* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1847), 53.

[26] "When the Village was Farmland," *Villager, Greenwich Village, New York*, 1 August 1968.

[27] D. T. Valentine places the opening in 1803, Burrows and Wallace in 1804, and Stokes in 1805. Newspapers of 1805 confirm the opening as being official in 1805. D. T. Valentine, *The Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York* (New York: Edmund Jones and Co, 1866), 586; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 448; Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, 5:1436; *New York Gazette*, 20 April 1805.

[28] *Morning Chronicle*, 8 July 1806; *Evening Post*, 31 March 1806.

[29] Actors included Mr. and Mrs. Placide, and John Hogg, from the American Company at the Park Theatre, and Mr. and Mrs. Francis, Mr. and Mrs. Mills, and Miss Hunt from Philadelphia. *Morning Chronicle*, 8 July and 7 August 1806; *Commercial Advertiser*, 11 August 1806; Weldon B. Durham, ed., *American Theatre Companies, 1749-1887*, vol. 2 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 25-6; Reese Davis James, *Cradle of Culture, 1800-1820: The Philadelphia Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 140-41.

[30] In effect, Delacroix was extending the theatrical season by offering plays through the months when the theatres were typically closed. Although the weather and the prevalence of such diseases as yellow fever provided

with an increasing number of plays being offered each season and improvements being made to the theatre structure (such as the addition of a covering to the "theatre" in 1808).[31] However, a fire in August 1808 destroyed the distillery, store house, part of the theatre, and, it would appear, Delacroix's passion for his work.[32] Delacroix re-opened the gardens in May 1809, but his announcements and programs betray a weary disposition and were accompanied by a series of advertisements offering the remainder of his lease for sale.[33] Ultimately, Delacroix retained his lease and passed the property to his son in 1817.[34]

In 1821, Timothy Madden (husband to Delacroix Sr.'s youngest daughter, Louisa Delacroix) took on the lease of Vauxhall.[35] Madden opened a new theatre and viewing scaffold (for the firework displays). He advertised a range of new entertainments, including several balloon ascents by Monsieur Guille, concerts, nitrous oxide demonstrations, wirewalking, tumbling, marksmanship, plays, dances, and fireworks. He also continued to have the gardens "illuminated every night with coloured lights . . . arranged into every fancy figure." [36] A fire this same year did not hinder Madden's plans;[37] instead his nemesis arrived three years later with the city's plan to construct Lafayette Place, designed to run straight through Madden's gardens.[38] In

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good reasons for the theatres to be closed, Delacroix clearly saw an opportunity to tap into an underexploited market.

[31] *Commercial Advertiser*, 11 July 1808.

[32] *American Citizen*, 1 September 1808.

[33] For example, Delacroix's Fourth of July program announcements had previously been very grand and enthusiastic; by contrast, his advertisement on 3 July has a much more despondent tone, pleading with would-be patrons to visit his garden on the Fourth despite the high probability of rain in order to prevent the site falling into "a state of decay and ruin." *Evening Post*, 3 July 1809. The partnership between Delacroix Sr. and his son was dissolved this year, leaving Delacroix Sr. to run the business on his own.

[34] *Evening Post*, 8 May 1817.

[35] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 321; *Evening Post*, 23 November 1818.

[36] Ibid.," 324-7; Diaries, 1821-1824, New York Historical Society, BV Diary, 1821-1824, vol. 1, folder 11 (New York, 10 May 1822).

[37] This fire was popularly held to be due to the fireworks manufactured there, which led to several (unsuccessful) petitions to rid the gardens of these nuisances in an increasingly-residential area. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 342.

[38] The gardens were still operating on a lease and were not owned by the various proprietors. As such, they had no real say in what happened to the land—that rested with the owner, Astor.

1828, the gardens were divided in two: the site to the west became known as Broadway Vauxhall Garden and was operated by Madden's widow (Madden having died that same year), while the east portion became known as the Old Vauxhall Garden and was operated by Joseph Hunt.[39] This division was the first of several encroachments that ultimately eroded the site entirely by 1855.

Broadway Vauxhall Garden survived only a few years before the land was sold off for a series of stately homes, while Old Vauxhall Garden (which contained the saloon, the hall, the fountain, the Field of Mars, an equestrian statue, the main promenades, and the bowling green) survived much longer.[40] A series of managers took over the site, including Henry Jones in 1838 followed by his brother Bradford Jones in 1840. Managers including Samuel Rockenberg and P. T. Barnum presented increasingly diverse entertainments in the saloon, such as "singing, dancing, Yankee Stories," and "Grand Trials at Negro Dancing."[41] In 1840, the site was divided into two portions. One became a riding school and the second continued as Vauxhall. Two more losses of land occurred in 1849, when a 50-foot strip of land was sold to make room for stores, then another half acre for the Astor Library.[42] By 1852, a small L-shaped site was all that remained, and by 1855, it had almost disappeared.[43] Garret records the various losses of land, but does not cite a reason for the continual infringement upon the site. It appears likely, however, that with the growth of the city around the site and the corresponding increase in land value, the various proprietors sold off portions of the site in order to make an increased profit.

However, there may have been another reason for the site's gradual decline. As early as 1830, a substantial portion of Vauxhall's clientele began patronizing a new pleasure garden.

[39] Ibid., 347.
[40] Ibid., 349.
[41] P. T. Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum Written by Himself* (New York: Tubbs, Nesmith and Teall, 1854; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 210; Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 385. See Garrett for a more detailed discussion of the various managers of the site in the final years. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 366-409.
[42] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 403.
[43] Ibid., 405; *New York Daily Times*, 4 December 1855.

According to Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace "the upper classes deserted the déclassé Vauxhall and turned to William Niblo's new concern, established in 1828 at the northeast corner of Broadway and Prince."[44] Niblo had operated the Bank Coffee House from 1814 at Pine and William Streets where he generated a loyal customer base of "prominent merchants."[45] Initially operating under the name of "Sans Souci," the gardens quickly became known simply as "Niblo's Garden," offering concerts and illuminations.[46] The gardens became the site for the New York Horticultural Society's balls, and the exotic flowers were frequently commented upon in the press, suggesting that the gardens themselves (what was grown and brought to the site) were the focus in these early years of operation.[47] This emphasis on the garden (served by two houses at the front [as seen in figure 1.1], and one "Stadium" in the rear) was to shift gradually as the gardens aged, with increasingly elaborate entertainments being provided and more performance venues being constructed.[48]

Over the years the venue was described as a "romantic retreat" offering "exquisite music" and attended by "the *bon ton*."[49] Despite a fire in 1835, Niblo's continued to operate, and the site was even opened during the winter season that same year to host a fair for the benefit of the New York Institute of the Blind, using the saloon for the sale of items made by various society ladies and the blind students of the institute.[50] Other exhibitions held at Niblo's included the Annual

[44] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 585.
[45] W. Harrison Bayles, *Old Taverns of New York* (New York: Frank Allaben Genealogical Company, 1915), 455.
[46] Ibid., 456; *New York Morning Herald*, 29 June 1830 and 5 July 1830.
[47] See for example, *Spectator*, 10 September 1830 and 19 July 1831.
[48] Bayles, *Old Taverns of New York*, 456-7.
[49] *Spectator*, 13 September 1834, 29 September 1834, 25 June 1835, and 2 July 1835.
[50] *Spectator*, 21 September 1835 and 28 December 1835.

Fairs of the American Institute which showcased American inventions and manufactures to the public.[51]

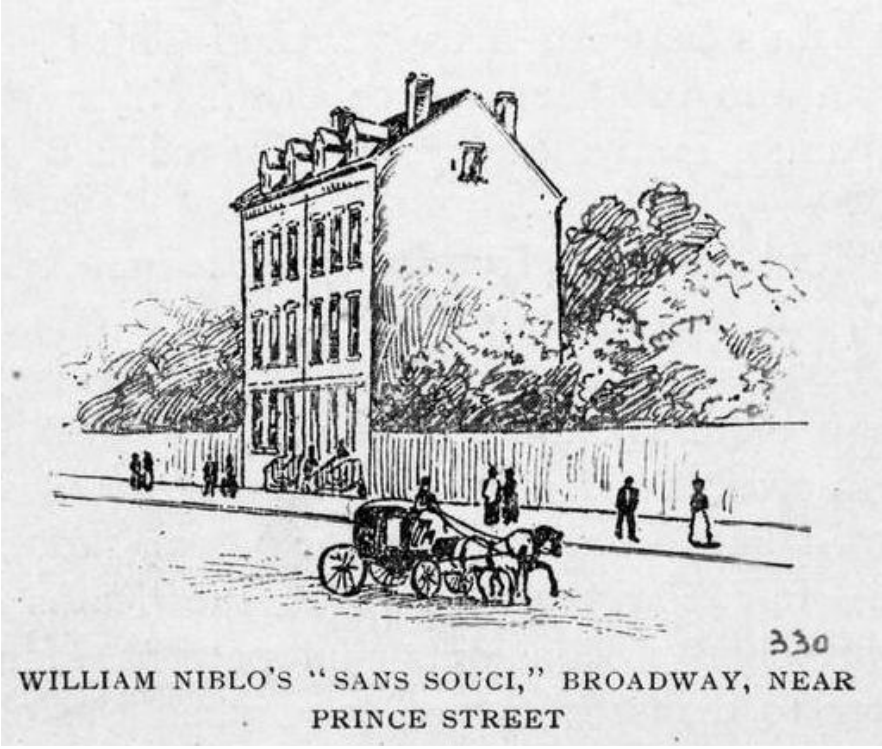

Figure 1.1. Niblo's Garden in 1828. This same engraving is variously labeled "Sans Souci" and "Niblo's Gardens" in a variety of sources. Image from NYPL Digital Gallery, "William Niblo's 'Sans Souci,' Broadway, near Prince Street" (1897). http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?809939 (accessed 3 March 2010).

More "traditional" pleasure garden offerings were also made available. The Ravel family performed their acrobatic acts from 1838, and burlettas, farces, and firework displays were presented, making Niblo's "the most prominent and popular place of amusement in the city."[52] The Ravels performed both within the saloon (which was exposed on all sides, but could be covered in inclement weather) and out in the gardens, meaning this venue balanced its indoor

[51] See for example, *Spectator*, 3 October 1836 and 2 September 1839. These fairs will be discussed further in chapter five.

[52] *Spectator*, 16 July 1838 and 23 August 1838; Antonio Blitz, *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle: Being an Account of the Author's Professional Life; His Wonderful Tricks and Feats; With Laughable Incidents and Adventures as a Magician, Necromancer, and Ventriloquist* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft, 1871), 122.

and outdoor events in a different way to its predecessors. In addition, "on popular occasions," the performer Antonio Blitz noted, "a number of side entertainments were given in convenient locations, erected for this special purpose."[53] Despite the increasing frequency of indoor exhibits and plays presented on the covered stage, one reporter declared that he still found Niblo's "legitimate attractions so great that the idea of wasting an hour amid the crowd and heat of the little theatre appears intolerable"—he preferred the fountains, music, ice cream, plants, and people-watching. Another writer called the venue a "*rus in urbe*" (or "an illusion of the countryside in the city") in 1841.[54]

In 1848, William Niblo turned his attentions to the Astor Place Opera House, the site of repeated attempts to establish opera in the city. As a man of "tact, honor, and talent," it was hoped that Niblo would revive this theatre and successfully stage opera for the city's elite.[55] During Niblo's transfer to the Astor Place Opera House (known later in the season simply as "Niblo's Opera House"), construction was underway at his old site. A theatre, ballroom, gardens, hotel, ice cream saloon, and promenade opened the following season.[56] Although Niblo retained a portion of the garden (a strip of land 257 feet long running between the hotel and theatre), the focus thereafter was on events within the theatre building, and he removed fireworks, outdoor concerts, and garden acrobatics from his program of events.[57] At this point Niblo's ceased to be a pleasure garden, although it retained the name "Niblo's Garden." The theatre at Niblo's original site began producing Italian and English opera, and is perhaps best-known for producing *The Black Crook* in 1866. Niblo's Garden finally closed its doors in 1895.[58] Although the various

[53] Blitz, *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle*, 122.
[54] *Spectator*, 30 June 1841; *Weekly Herald*, 24 July 1841, 686; *OED*, s.v. "Rus in urbe."
[55] *New York Herald*, 13 May 1848.
[56] *Weekly Herald*, 16 June 1849.
[57] Ibid.
[58] *New York Times*, 24 March 1895.

Vauxhalls and Niblo's Garden were the chief pleasure gardens within New York City, they were not the only gardens to be found within the city, nor was New York the only city to support multiple pleasure gardens.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia boasted a substantial number of pleasure gardens during the post-Revolutionary and antebellum periods, including Gray's Ferry (1789-1792), Harrowgate (1789-1791, 1810), Vauxhall (1813-1825), and McArann's Garden (1839-1842).[59] Although none was especially long-lived, these venues offered a variety of entertainments and were perceived as worthwhile endeavors by their proprietors, who often invested substantial sums of money into their creation and operation. Several of these ventures began not as private estates or city taverns (contrary to Garrett's argument, above), nor did they begin as pleasure gardens (as seen in the various New York sites, above), but as part of various business ventures, including a way station (Gray's Ferry), a mineral spa (Harrowgate), and a botanical garden (McArann's).

Starting in 1747, George and Robert Gray operated Gray's Ferry (also known as "Lower Ferry") and the adjacent 12-acre gardens located about four miles out of the city.[60] By 1787, the gardens at Gray's Ferry boasted artificial mounds, non-geometric plantings, ruins, Chinese

[59] Others include Lombardy Gardens, Lebanon Gardens, Tivoli Gardens, and the Labyrinth Gardens. See Eberlein and Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," 167, and Geraldine A. Duclow, "Philadelphia's Early Pleasure Gardens," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 1-17.

[60] Gray's "Ferry" was by the time the pleasure gardens opened (1789) a floating bridge. George Gray operated the ferry from 1747 which was replaced with a floating bridge sometime in 1777. Joseph Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, vol. 3 (Harrisburg: National Historical Association, 1932), 650, 668; David John Jeremy ed., *Henry Wansey and his American Journal: 1794* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1970), 112; Robert I. Alotta, *Street Names of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975), 76-77.

bridges, a hermitage, cascades, grottoes, meandering paths, and views built into the design.[61] This extensive landscaping was similar to the British school of landscape design (spearheaded by "Capability" Brown) and it appears that the Grays were responding to an interest in such fashionable designs when commissioning this work. Although this redesign of the grounds was not in preparation for opening specifically as a pleasure garden, they did apparently have a profitable function and were let out for private gatherings in the 1780s. As Masanneh Cutler noted, part of the main house was "divided into Halls and small apartments, for the accommodation of several large companies," with the understanding that Gray would "soon reimburse his expenses" in this manner.[62]

These gardens were eventually opened to the public in the form of a pleasure garden in May 1789. The Grays offered free concerts weekly at 4PM, refreshments were available (with fresh fish being particularly noted), and patrons could hire the house and gardens private dinner parties, dances, and/or club meetings.[63] Visitors travelled to the site by a wagon (operating twice daily), and by a ferry operating from the Middle Ferry (a bridge closer to the city).[64] The 1789 season culminated on 13 October with a concert from 3PM to 6 PM, a "splendid" illumination of the "Fall of the Water at the Mill," and the display of the ship "the *Union*" from 10AM decked in the colors of the "Nations in Alliance with the United States" and illuminated throughout the evening.[65]

The following season began on 1 May 1790, when concerts were offered twice a week on Tuesdays and Saturdays for the admission price of three-sixteenths of a dollar. Refreshments

[61] The figure of 12 acres comes from the advertisement for the sale of the grounds in 1792, *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, 22 February 1792. A description of the gardens can be found in William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, eds., *Life Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, L.L.D.*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1888), 276, and Jeremy, ed., *Henry Wansey and his American Journal*, 112.

[62] Cutler, *Life Journals and Correspondence*, 275, 278.

[63] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 May 1789.

[64] Ibid., and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 July 1789.

[65] *Federal Gazette*, 13 October 1789.

were offered and the space continued to be advertised for the use of private parties.[66] The regular season schedule was interrupted only by the Fourth of July celebrations, which provided a variety of entertainments. They included "Odes, Songs and Musick," the "Bridge dressed with Shrubbery and Colours for each State in the Union," the ship *Union* being "dressed with the Colours of all Nations in Alliance with the United States," "an artificial Island, with a Farm-House, Garden," "a transparent Painting of the illustrious President of the United States," "a beautiful display of Fire-works," and the exhibit of "a Vault, composed of 12 Stones, with the Key at Top, represent[ing] the Completion of the Federal Union by the Accession of Rhode Island."[67]

Gray's Ferry enjoyed one more season under the proprietorship of the Gray brothers, but the success of the 1790 Fourth of July celebrations were not to recur; during the course of the celebrations of the holiday in 1791, a "disturbance" occurred, when several people gained admission without paying by scaling the walls and fences and then, upon being ejected, threw stones at the door keepers and pulled down some fences, inciting a riot.[68] Early the following year, the Grays sold the gardens and all its contents.[69] Although George Weed purchased the venue and opened it to the public (not offering any entertainments, but keeping the refreshment venues available), Gray's Ferry ceased to be a pleasure garden, returning to its former function as a tavern or way station.[70]

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[66] *Federal Gazette*, 29 April 1790. The relative values of these prices will be discussed in chapter 2.

[67] *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 3 July 1790. The various appeals to patriotism and the links with the rural aspects will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

[68] *General Advertiser*, 6 July 1791. The details and implications of this riot will be more fully discussed in chapter three.

[69] *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, 22 February 1792; *Mail*, 3 May 1792.

[70] *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, 7 June 1792. See Jeremy ed., *Henry Wansey and his American Journal*, 112 for a description of the refreshments offered in 1794. It is Gray's Ferry that William Priest refers to in his *Travels in the United States of America* in 1794, when it was clearly operating as a place of refreshments but not of any entertainments. See William Priest, *Travels in the United States of America; Commencing in the Year 1793 and Ending in 1797 With the Author's Journals of his Two Voyages Across the Atlantic* (London, 1802), 34.

A spring located four miles outside of Philadelphia on the Frankford road operated as a pleasure garden for a limited time under the names of "Harrowgate" and "Vauxhall."[71] First advertised in 1786, George Esterly offered his mineral spring, land, and buildings for rent on the condition that the tenant construct suitable buildings to make best use of the waters. Esterly opened the baths and springs to the public himself later the same year (suggesting that no suitable tenant came forward).[72] The springs were especially popular, garnering the attention of Dr. Benjamin Rush, who wrote a pamphlet on the medicinal values of the waters.[73] The health-giving qualities of the springs were frequently advertised alongside notices for alcoholic beverages available at the gardens, leading Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott to comment sarcastically that "brandy and rum did not destroy the virtues of the Harrowgate mineral waters."[74] This site operated as a pleasure garden between 1789 and 1792, offering vocal and musical concerts, plays, illuminations, transparencies, various acrobatic displays by John Durang, and exhibits of paintings, in addition to the dining facilities, baths, a circular fishpond "running around a small island on which stood a Chinese temple," groves, gravel walks, fruit trees, and flowerbeds.[75] In 1817 the site was described as being 6 acres in size, and having a 600-foot promenade (16 feet wide). At this point it also featured gravel walks and boxed beds, a

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Subsequent managers, including George Ogden, Curtis Grubb, and the Kochesbergers, continued the venue as a way station offering refreshments but no entertainments. Alotta, *Street Names of Philadelphia*, 77.

[71] Duclow, "Philadelphia's Pleasure Gardens," 5; *Independent Gazetteer*, 15 May 1790. An earlier tavern operated here under the name of Vauxhall was opened by Thomas Mullen in 1773. *Pennsylvania Chronicle* 7, no. 44 (22 November 1773): 388.

[72] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 17 February and 17 July 1786.

[73] *Directions for the use of the Mineral Water and Cold Bath at Harrowgate near Philadelphia*. As cited by F. H. Shelton in his article "Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 47 (1923): 216.

[74] Thomas J. Scharf, and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts and Co, 1884), 943.

[75] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 14 July 1789; *Federal Gazette*, 4 June 1791 and 20 August 1791; Duclow, "Philadelphia's Pleasure Gardens," 5-6; Alan S. Downer, ed., *The Memoir of John Durang: American Actor, 1785-1816* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), 33.

central orchestra, and terraced and serpentine walks.[76] In the years between 1793 and 1810, the gardens operated as a mineral spa with only two isolated concerts being offered in 1796 and 1807 for Fourth of July celebrations. Two additional concerts were offered under the direction of Mr Gillingham in 1810. But, "as all such places have their zenith and decline, so had Harrowgate," which, according to F. H. Shelton, closed due to "the creation of newer and nearer resorts and amusement centers."[77]

A more central Philadelphia Vauxhall was found on Broad Street between Walnut and Chestnut Streets, on land owned by John Dunlap, Jr. (inherited from his father, Colonel John Dunlap), operating between 1813 and 1825.[78] The site was opened by John Scotti, who is listed in the city directory as an Italian perfumer and hair dresser.[79] After opening his Vauxhall towards the end of the 1813 summer season, Scotti began his full seasons of entertainments in 1814 with grand balls and galas, until Charles Magner took on the site in 1818.[80] Much like his predecessor, Magner offered concerts, balls, and refreshments, and he also exhibited curiosities (such as the "velocipede" in 1819) and produced a variety of performances (such as the "Lecture on Heads").[81] While Magner continued as proprietor, others tried their hand at managing the venue

[76] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 1 November 1817.

[77] Shelton, "Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians," 216. Shelton notes the date of the closure of the gardens as being 1816—a piece of information that is cited in subsequent publications, including a footnote by the editor of Henry Wansey's travel writing. See Jeremy ed., *Henry Wansey and his American Journal*, 95. The earliest evidence found for the closure of the gardens is 1817 (see ibid.).

[78] Joseph Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, vol. 4 (Harrisburg: National Historical Association, 1933), 1154. Jackson lists the gardens as being opened in 1814, but an earlier advertisement identifies the site as being opened at least once in 1813. *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, 28 September 1813. Also see Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, 958. A third site was known as "Vauxhall" for a very short time. The Bush Hill estate (former residence of William Hamilton) was initially opened to the public under the name of the "Pennsylvania Gardens and Hotel," offering entertainments in the manner of Vauxhall, London, and was referred to in certain advertisements by the name of Bush Mill Vauxhall. This site appears to have only been operational for a short time in 1797. *The Gazette of the United States*, 26 May 1797; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 15 and 23 June 1797.

[79] Joseph Jackson, "Vauxhall Garden," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1933): 290.

[80] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 28 September 1813, 8 May 1815, and 7 August 1815.

[81] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 15 May 1819; *Franklin Gazette*, 26 May 1819. The "velocipede" was essentially a form of bicycle, while the *Lecture on Heads* was a satirical monologue based on various character "types" using busts as props that was popular (in its original and altered forms) through the eighteenth and into the

over the years, including orchestra leader James Hewitt, who presented farces and light comedies using a troupe of actors he called the Vaudeville Company.[82] These performances took place in the Pavilion Theatre located within the grounds, on the northeast corner of Walnut and Broad Streets.[83] In 1819 and 1820, Monsieur Guille made several balloon ascents, one of which was delayed in 1819 due to bad weather, resulting in a riot that led to the destruction of the grounds.[84] After closing in 1825, the gardens became an outdoor restaurant until the site was sold in 1838, at which time the Broad Street front was purchased by James Dundas who built a residence there.[85]

McArann's garden—"a spacious and popular resort, capable of containing many thousand people"—began life as a botanical garden run by John McArann, opening around 1823.[86] Operating on Filbert Street between Schuylkill Fifth and Sixth streets, the gardens first opened to the public as a venue for entertainments with a "series of concerts of vocal and instrumental music" beginning in June 1839.[87] The initial success of these concerts led to an expanded bill by August 1839, when the proprietors added the Ravel family, a magician, fireworks, and illuminations to the bill.[88] The season of 1839 convinced McArann of the

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nineteenth centuries in England and America. See Gerald Kahan, *George Alexander Stevens and the Lecture on Heads* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984) for more on this piece.

[82] Jackson, "Vauxhall Garden," 293; Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, 1155. James Hewitt was a "music publisher, composer, performer, seller, importer, teacher, and orchestra leader," best known for his leading of the Park Theatre orchestra, New York. See John W. Wagner, "James Hewitt, 1770-1827," *Musical Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (April 1972): 259.

[83] Duclow, "Philadelphia's Pleasure Gardens," 9-10. A detailed description of the gardens and Pavilion Theatre can be found in *Franklin Gazette*, 2 July 1819. Also see Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 958.

[84] Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Soc. Misc. Coll., box 4a, folder 8; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 598; Eberlein and Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," 168. This riot will be discussed more fully in chapter two.

[85] Duclow, "Philadelphia's Pleasure Gardens," 13-14; Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, 1156; and *National Gazette*, 7 July 1827.

[86] Blitz, *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle*, 171; Thomas Meehan, "An Early Philadelphia Nursery," *The Gardener's Monthly and Horticulturist* 29, no. 347 (November 1887): 346.

[87] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 June 1839. Schuylkill Fifth and Sixth Streets became known as 18th and 17th Streets respectively in 1853 (as they are still known today). See Jefferson M. Moak, *Philadelphia Street Name Changes* (Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill Almanac Genealogical Series, 1996).

[88] *Public Ledger*, 3 August 1839.

economic viability of such a venue, and he expanded his offerings again the following year, constructing the "Vesuvius amphitheatre," capable of accommodating 3,000-4,000 spectators.[89] The amphitheatre was the home to a thrice-weekly exhibit of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, described as follows:

> A correct, beautiful and stupendous Panoramic View, (erected by Mr Ward at an expense of several thousand dollars) presenting the City and Bay of Naples, and town of Portici, with Mount Vesuvius and its grand and Terrible eruptions. A lake of real water; a vast Amphitheatre, villages around Naples, beautiful vineyards, castles, cathedrals, illuminated palaces, temples in ruins, deserted mountain towers, tents, shipping in port, entrance into Port of American and other vessels, band of music on the water, songs, duets, and glees in Naples, Portici, and on the bay, the mountains on fire, escape of Porticians from Portici. Eruption of the Mountain: The whole of the surrounding scene exhibiting an appalling effect of sublime conflagration and stupendous destruction.[90]

The 50-cent exhibit (complete with fireworks, concerts, and refreshments) was advertised until 9 June 1839. The following year the events were scaled back drastically and the few advertisements available for 1840 boast only of "rural charms," fireworks, and refreshments.[91] In August of 1841, a long list of entertainments was offered for just 25 cents, including Signor Blitz's acts of "experimental, philosophical, wonderful, laughable, surprising, deceiving thaumaturgics," ventriloquism, and a "dance of 6 dinner plates on a common table," with music, dances, Italian fantoccini.[92] The producers also resurrected the fireworks and Vesuvius eruption from the 1839 season.[93] These exhibits were supplemented by paintings, stuffed animals, lamps, exotic plants, and scenery.[94] Clearly the entertainments were not the money-maker McArann had hoped for, as he filed for bankruptcy in April 1842 and offered the contents of the gardens for

[89] In June, the delayed opening of the amphitheatre was announced, with the structure and exhibit contained therein being described in subsequent advertisements throughout June. *Public Ledger*, 1 and 5 June 1840.
[90] *North American*, 9 June 1840.
[91] *North American*, 21 July 1841.
[92] Fantoccini were a form of string-operated marionette puppets. *OED* s.v. "fantoccini."
[93] *Public Ledger*, 9 August 1841.
[94] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 April 1843; *North American*, 25 May 1843.

sale in April and May of 1843.[95] Indeed, even though McArann's garden continued to operate into 1842 (after the filing), advertisements made note of how the gardens' unprofitable nature (citing the weather as the chief reason for the failure).[96] This was to be the end of McArann's Gardens—after just three years of operation, the gardens closed to the public.

Despite their varied origins, different operating practices, and rather short lifespans, each of these sites was a success in some way, demonstrating their eagerness and ability to adapt to changing public taste. Gray's Ferry, Harrowgate, Vauxhall, and McArann's were just four of numerous such venues to be found in Philadelphia, and others existed in still different circumstances, yet the four case studies highlighted here provide a good cross-section of the types of gardens and activities to be found in Philadelphia. Other cities did not have such varied examples of pleasure gardens, and, by way of contrast, Boston's pleasure garden history is very limited.

Boston

In contrast to the numerous gardens of New York and Philadelphia, Boston witnessed the establishment of only one pleasure garden—the Washington Gardens.[97] An attempt was made to initiate a Vauxhall in 1798, and although the garden did not actually open, the details of that undertaking are relevant to later discussions and so will also be noted here.

In February 1798, advertisements in the *Columbian Centinel* and *Federal Gazette* announced the intent of "a number of gentlemen" to open a Vauxhall in Boston "in the course of

[95] *North American*, 12 April 1842; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 April 1843.

[96] For an example, see *Public Ledger*, 6 August 1842. Rain plagued many of the pleasure gardens of England and America, as their very nature left them open to the unpredictability of the weather.

[97] The scarcity of pleasure gardens in this city has been explained as being due to the fact the Bostonians had access to Boston Common, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

the ensuing summer."[98] Further details appeared in March of the same year, when Snelling Powell (an actor at the Haymarket Theatre, and brother of C. S. Powell)[99] and J. B. Barker (or Baker, manager of the Haymarket Hotel)[100] placed advertisements in several Bostonian newspapers for their proposed Vauxhall Garden.[101] They sought 200 subscribers paying fifty dollars each in order to establish the gardens at a site in the Boston area.[102] However, these gardens never opened, and no mention of them surfaces in any of the four major newspapers of Boston after 26 March 1798.

These gardens did not open for a variety of reasons, including the haste with which the plans were put together. Snelling Powell had been an actor at the Federal Theatre when it burned down on 3 February 1798, and like the other actors employed by the theatre, Powell found himself suddenly without an income. The first outlines of the plan for Powell's Vauxhall appeared in the newspaper on 10 February 1798, just one week after the fire. Powell's unemployment, combined with the speed with which the first advertisement appeared after the fire, suggests that rather than a carefully considered proposal for an entertainment venue suitable for the population at hand, this project may have been a hasty response to an unfortunate situation.

There may also have been concerns regarding the suitability of the site for a venue of this kind. An advertisement in the *Federal Gazette* on 8 March warned potential subscribers and

[98] *Columbian Centinel*, 10 February 1798 and 24 February 1798. See also *Federal Gazette*, 28 February 1798.

[99] William W. Clapp, *Record of the Boston Stage* (1853, reprint; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 21; and Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre From the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 73.

[100] Nathans, *Early American Theatre*, 220.

[101] *Federal Gazette*, 8, 12, 15, 22, and 26 March 1798; *Columbian Centinel*, 7, 14, and 21 March 1798; *Massachusetts Mercury*, 16 and 23 March 1798. There is no evidence of either the continuation of seeking subscribers or the opening of the gardens evidenced in any of these papers after 26 March.

[102] The advertisements seeking subscribers (those published in March) invite those interested to visit Mr. Blake's Bookstore to obtain information about the site of the gardens, and an earlier advertisement described the site as being situated in "the rural groves at the western end of West-Boston Bridge." *Columbian Centinel*, 10 February 1798.

patrons, noting the "frequent objections [which] have been started on the score of *Musquitoes* [sic]."[103] A "Correspondent who has been some time in the West-Indies" published a "sovereign remedy" for this nuisance in the *Federal Gazette* which, if not indicative of a real problem with the site, certainly suggested to potential subscribers that there would be an issue with these pests. This may have been one of the contributing factors to the gardens' failure. An additional hindrance was the social divisions in Boston society and the financial burden on potential sponsors incurred from the theatrical rivalries between the Haymarket and Federal Street Theatres.[104] In any event, this first Vauxhall of Boston was destined not to open.

A more successful Bostonian venture came in the form of the Washington Gardens, which opened on 22 June 1814 on Common Street, and was renamed Vauxhall, Washington Gardens in 1815.[105] The house and grounds were owned by James Swan, who leased it to John H. Schaffer (initially on a short-term lease, but later on a ten-year lease at a rent of $1500 per year in 1818), with the right to construct buildings on the site.[106] Whilst operating under the name of Vauxhall, the site offered vocal concerts, illuminations, transparencies, and fireworks under the direction of James Hewitt until 1818 (later manager of Vauxhall, Philadelphia, described above). In 1818 the gardens reverted to the former name of Washington Gardens.[107] In 1819, the Washington Gardens Amphitheatre opened on the site, offering plays, magic shows, slack rope acts, equestrian displays, and ventriloquist acts, with the gardens being occasionally used for firework displays and a balloon ascent.[108] In its final years as a site of entertainment the

[103] *Federal Gazette*, 8 March 1798.
[104] See Nathans, *Early American Theatre*, chapter 4.
[105] *The Repertory*, 29 June 1815.
[106] William S. Rossiter, ed., *Days and Ways in Old Boston* (Boston: R. H. Stearns and Company, 1915), 120.
[107] See various advertisements in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, the *Boston Gazette*, and the *Repertory* throughout 1815-18.
[108] See the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and *Columbian Centinel*, 1819 to 1824. Mr Guille's balloon ascent was advertised in the *Columbian Centinel*, 11 August 1821.

land was used for stables, the house for boarding and dining, and the amphitheatre for exhibits and amateur dramatics. The gardens closed after the ten-year lease expired in 1828, and after Schaffer was sued by the city for failing to pay for a theatre license.[109] Unlike its fellow urban centers in the North, Boston was home to only one relatively short-lived pleasure garden.

Baltimore

Baltimore hosted a variety of pleasure gardens both within and outside of the city, including Jalland's Gardens, Gray's, Toon's, Spring Gardens, and the Columbian Gardens. Each of these offered something slightly different from its competitors.[110] In this chapter I focus on Gray's/Chatsworth, and Easton's/Columbian Gardens, as these two venues were amongst the most popular and well-documented of the various sites, and they provide a good cross-section of the varieties of pleasure gardens found in Baltimore.

Chatsworth Gardens was a large estate just to the northwest of Baltimore. Part of the land operated as a pleasure garden from 1794 to 1805 (with a one-night revival in 1808) under the names Gray's Gardens (while it was under the management of John Gray), and then Chatsworth Gardens (under John J. Mang). The estate was initially constructed in 1752 for William Lux, and while the grounds may have been used for private gatherings and meetings, it was not until 1794 that it began operating as a pleasure garden.[111] This "partial retreat from the noise of the town" was situated about a half mile from the city and offered illuminations, fireworks, refreshments,

[109] Rossiter, *Days and Ways*, 121-23.

[110] See Barbara Wells Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), chapter 9, for a cursory discussion of the variety of outdoor entertainment venues in Baltimore and neighboring areas during this time frame.

[111] Mary Ellen Hayward and Frank R. Shivers, eds, *The Architecture of Baltimore: An Illustrated History*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 12; *Maryland Journal*, 18 June 1794. The gardens were offered for rent in 1790 in an apparent state of disrepair, but evidence of pleasure garden activity is not seen until 1794. *Maryland Journal*, 26 October 1790.

and subscription dinners.[112] In 1800, John J. Mang assumed management of the gardens, changed the name to refer to the name of the estate on which the gardens were initially constructed (Chatsworth), and offered Fourth of July celebrations, illuminations, concerts, and fireworks.[113] The gardens were generally free to enter (with charges for refreshments) with the exception of special events, such as Fourth of July celebrations.[114] The operation of this site as a pleasure garden was short-lived, with events between 1800 and 1808 being intermittent (and boarding and citrus fruits becoming the focus of advertisements). Gradually the grounds were sold off in parcels, with notices of sale appearing from 1809.[115] George Busch is listed in the 1810 city directory first as being the "keeper" of public gardens, and then as the "inn-keeper, Gray's Gardens" in 1812, suggesting he continued the site as an inn. However, this was apparently not a successful investment, as the site was offered for sale again in 1812 and 1814.[116]

A more long-lived venture was found in Baltimore starting in 1789 and operating under a variety of names. In 1789, Margaret Myers opened her house and gardens to the public.[117] Calling the gardens "Rural Retreat," she offered patrons "recreation and refreshment" and "Boxes . . . for the Accommodation of Parties in the Summer Season."[118] Situated on the corner of Bond Street and Dulany Road, this site closed in 1791, when Myers offered the house and

[112] *Federal Gazette*, 30 January 1800; Hayward and Shivers, *The Architecture of Baltimore*, 12.
[113] *Federal Gazette*, 30 January and 7 July 1800.
[114] *North American*, 2 July 1808.
[115] *Federal Gazette*, 18 July 1805 and 29 July 1809.
[116] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 21 February 1812 and 17 March 1814; William Fry, *The Baltimore Directory for 1810, Containing the Names, Occupations and Residences of the Inhabitants, Alphabetically Arranged* (Baltimore: G. Dobbin and Murphy, 1810); *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the year 1812: Containing the Names, Occupations, Residences, &c. of the Inhabitants, Within the City and Precincts, Alphabetically Arranged* (Baltimore: B. W. Sower, 1812).
[117] It is interesting to note that Ms. Myers is one of only three examples I have been able to identify of a female proprietor (the first was Ms. Madden's short proprietorship at Vauxhall, New York from 1828, discussed on page 37, and the second is Ms. Bulet's management of Vauxhall, Charleston, discussed below). Most pleasure gardens were owned and run by men, but Ms. Myers, Ms. Madden, and Ms. Bulet appear to have opened their grounds to the public following the deaths of their husbands.
[118] *Maryland Journal*, 7 July 1789 and 8 February 1791.

gardens for rent (though she remained in residence).[119] In 1801 Nicholas W. Easton reopened the "Rural Retreat" offering waters, shaded walks, fireworks, ice cream, music, and liquors, renaming it "Easton's Gardens."[120] Easton's management continued through 1803, but by 1804, Thomas Leaman was advertised as proprietor, listing the site under the names of both "Rural Felicity" and "The Seige of York," with music and dancing being among the offerings.[121] According to his memoirs and contemporary advertisements, John Durang and his son Christopher were engaged by Leaman for three seasons (1804-1806), presenting the paying public with acrobatic acts on the slack rope, songs, dances, and skits.[122] In 1804, Durang "constructed a stage with a cover and dressing rooms underneath, an orchestra in the front, a curtain with the decorations of scenery." Durang further notes that a "circus ring was formed" to which he "introduced horsemanship."[123] Under Mr. Leaman, variety shows were presented twice a week throughout the season (June through September), with dialogues, songs, vocal and instrumental concerts, transparencies, dances, mechanical exhibits, slackrope acts, and acrobatic displays on the bills of performance.[124] The name of the gardens was changed by Leaman to "Columbian Gardens" (not to be confused with the Columbian Inn on the same street), and the venue was to operate under this name for the remainder of its existence.

Leaman continued as proprietor of the gardens until at least 1808 (the last year he is listed at this site in the city directory), and the gardens were known informally as "Leaman's gardens" until 1812 (suggesting he either remained as proprietor until this time or that they were closed

[119] *Maryland Journal*, 8 February 1791; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 3 August 1801.
[120] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 3 August 1801, 22 August, and 19 September 1801.
[121] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 7 July 1804; James Robinson, *The Baltimore Directory for 1804, Containing the Names, Trades & Residences of the Inhabitants of the City & Precincts* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1804).
[122] Downer, *The Memoir of John Durang*, 118; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 7 July 1804. John Durang also appeared at Harrowgate Gardens, Philadelphia. See above.
[123] Downer, *The Memoir of John Durang*, 118, 127.
[124] See *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 1805-1806.

but his reputation persisted), but by 1816, Anthony Lawson was listed as proprietor.[125] In 1817, Joseph Marshall attempted to revive the gardens, sporadically advertising fireworks and illuminations between 1817 and 1819,[126] but an 1819 auction of various household, bar, and garden items from the Columbian Gardens indicates that the venue was not profitable and was probably sold, passing through the hands of Thomas Watson, James McSoley, and "a youth," before being taken on by Joshua K. Harrison in 1829.[127] Although the city of Baltimore was expanding, the gardens remained intact throughout Harrison's tenure and Harrison rented out the gardens to other individuals such as Mr. Peters and Mr. Ravali, who displayed their "Grecian and Roman exercises," sword swallowing, slack rope acts, and fireworks in May 1833.[128] Similarly, Mr. Scott and Mr. Dick provided fireworks for twenty-five cents in the same year, advertising them as being instructional and not injurious to morals.[129] Harrison also offered firework displays and balloon ascents.[130]

By 1835, the gardens became less visible in newspaper advertisements, with Harrison being listed as the "proprietor of the Columbia Hotel" in 1835, and William Curtain (Harrison's successor) advertising the Columbia Gardens "tavern."[131] While there were occasional events,

[125] *Baltimore Directory, and Citizens' Register for 1808. Containing the Names, Occupations and Places of Abode of the Inhabitants, Arranged in Alphabetical Order* (Baltimore, 1808); *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812*; *The Baltimore Directory and Register for the Year 1816* (Baltimore: Edward Matchett, 1816).

[126] See for example, *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 14 August 1817 and 4 September 1819.

[127] *Baltimore Patriot*, 22 November 1819; C. Keenan, *The Baltimore Directory for 1822 & '23* (Baltimore: Richard J Matchett, 1822); *Baltimore Patriot*, 21 August 1824; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 4 July 1827. Sometime after 1824 Dulany Street changed its name to "East Baltimore Street," meaning that the venue began to be advertised by Harrison at a different address (though the location remained the same). George W. McCreary, *Street Index: An Index to the Ordinances and Resolutions (1797-Sept. 1900) Affecting the Opening, Closing, Widening, Naming, Paving, Grading, etc., of the Streets, Alleys, Lanes, Roads, Wharves, Docks, Parks, Railroads, Railways, Sewers, etc., in the City of Baltimore. Also, the Acts of Assembly (1732-1900) Referring to the Same; the Land Records of the Mayor and City Council; Together with the Plats and Street books in the Office of the City Librarian, City Engineer, Topographical Survey, Harbor Board, and Commissioners for Opening Streets, as well as Data from Other Sources* (Baltimore: Kohn and Pollock, 1900), 68.

[128] *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 27 May 1833.

[129] *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 10 October 1833.

[130] *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 1 July 1831 and 17 February 1832.

[131] *Mattchett's Baltimore Director[y], for 1840-1* (Baltimore, 1840).

such as "Mr Elzer" from Blackpool (who claimed to predict marriages), and a "grand military and civic procession" in 1846, the site became primarily a tavern, and the gardens were gradually lost to new construction.[132] The tavern continued under the management of William and Ann Curtain (she became sole proprietor after his death) until 1847.[133]

The pleasure gardens of Baltimore were more numerous than those of Boston, and it was the Columbian Gardens (under its various names) that was the longest-lived and most successful of the sites found here. Although the chapter by Barbara Sarudy noted above identifies a number of outdoor venues operating in Baltimore that could be called pleasure gardens, it is Gray's and Columbian Gardens that best represent the form of pleasure gardens in Baltimore.

Charleston

Despite its subtropical climate and cosmopolitan nature, Charleston, SC, was home to a very small number of pleasure gardens, and Vauxhall was the principal site.[134] The history of this venue begins in 1795, though its early history (before 1799) is not entirely clear.[135] A lease held by the South Carolina Historical Society reveals that Harriot Horry (of the Pinckney family) rented a plot of land bounded by Queen, Broad, and Friend (now Legare) Streets to two performers Joseph Bulet (or Bulit) and Antoine Lavalette to establish "a public but decent and reputable place of entertainment in the city of Charleston under the denomination of Vauxhall or

[132] *The Sun*, 15 Aug 1843 and 18 September 1845.

[133] See the city directories for these years.

[134] Other venues include Orange Gardens (c.1760), Tivoli (c.1825), and Niagara (c.1842). I am indebted to Nicholas Butler (author of *Votaries of Apollo*) for bringing the first of these short-lived two gardens to my attention. A small number of newspaper advertisements alerted me to the existence of the Niagara Gardens.

[135] In June and July of 1767, a "New Vauxhall" appears to have operated in Charleston. Little is known regarding its location, success, or if it was even a pleasure garden, but it did offer refreshments, concerts, and balls. See O. G. Sonneck, *Early Concert Life in America (1731-1800)* (New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949), 20, and *South Carolina Gazette*, 1-15 June 1767, and 6-13 July 1767.

Garden of recreation" for a term of three years.[136] Although I have not been able to locate any newspaper advertisements for this period providing details of entertainments at Vauxhall, Bulet's wife advertised in 1797 (following her husband's death) that she would continue to keep the "baths, which she established there" and that refreshments would be available.[137] Although I cannot establish how continuously the gardens were open throughout this period, it appears that they were used for baths and refreshments at least occasionally. Bulet was engaged with other ventures during this period, arranging for at least one display of fireworks (though, oddly, not at Vauxhall) co-managed by the actor Spinacuta in early September 1795.[138] Lavalette and Bulet also supported themselves by acting at Charleston Theatre under the management of Alexander Placide in 1795.[139] Bulet had died and Lavalette had apparently left the city by the time their lease expired in 1798.[140]

A second strand to this early history of this site follows one "Citizen Cornet" and William Robinson. In 1795 Citizen Cornet advertised that a Vaux-hall would be opening at 44 Broad Street, offering concerts of French music, balls, and dinners.[141] This appeared to be a year-round operation and so must have been located within a building and not out in the gardens. Although the exact location of 44 Broad Street is difficult to determine, it is possible to ascertain that it was west of King Street (and thus at or near the site discussed above).[142] One of the buildings on the Vauxhall site fronting onto Broad Street (and the lease, above, mentions several

[136] South Carolina Historical Society, Pickney Family Documents, 1097.02.02 (1795), [1].
[137] *City Gazette*, 25 May 1797.
[138] *City Gazette*, 27 August 1795.
[139] See various advertisements, including *City Gazette*, 9 February and 17 April 1795.
[140] Lavalette is not listed in the city directory and ceases to be listed as one of Placide's company, and Bulet's widow advertises the fact that she is, indeed, a widow.
[141] *City Gazette*, 22 October and 15 December 1795.
[142] The numbers ran from west to east, with 47 being near King Street and 9 being near the poor house. This was determined through looking at names listed on Broad Street in the 1794 and 1796 city directories and cross-referencing the findings with advertisements in contemporary newspapers giving addresses as being at the corner of Broad and another street.

structures) was used for these balls and concerts by Citizen Cornet from October 1795 until May 1796.[143] William Robinson (formerly of the Shakespeare Tavern) began advertising his management of the site from August 1796, when he offered rooms for hire and a tavern.[144]

These two inter-related histories become silenced between 1797 (widow Bulet's advertisement) and 1799 (when the most successful period of Charleston's Vauxhall began), with no reference to the site or to the various persons associated with the venue found in newspapers. Starting in June of 1799, Alexander Placide, manager of the Charleston Theatre, offered a variety of entertainments of a familiar variety: fireworks, illuminations, transparencies, ice cream and other refreshments, puppet shows, musical and vocal concerts, and dramatic interludes.[145] The fact that several of the performers and pieces performed overlapped with the Charleston Theatre suggests that Placide used the gardens as the summer residence for his theatre company. Charles Dibden's *The Waterman*, John Hodgkinson's *The Purse; or, American Tar*, and Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism* were among the plays performed at both the theatre and the gardens.[146]

After Placide's death in 1812, the garden passed through the hands of a variety of managers, none of whom met with any great success.[147] In 1817, a French visitor, the Baron de Montlezun, described the choice of name as being "pompous," referring as it did to "an enclosure of half an acre which comprises a café, baths and several square fathoms of grass

[143] South Carolina Historical Society, Pickney Family Documents, 1097.02.02 (1795), [1].
[144] *City Gazette*, 22 October 1795, 2 May 1796, and 8 August 1796.
[145] See various newspaper advertisements in the *City Gazette* and *Charleston Courier*, 1799-1812.
[146] For performances at Vauxhall, see *Charleston Courier*, 11 July 1804, 29 July 1805, and 31 July 1805; for performances at the Charleston Theatre, consult the appendix of Stanley W. Hoole, *The Antebellum Charleston Theatre* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1946).
[147] Mr. Pepin and Mr. Breschard took on the site in 1812, constructing an amphitheatre there, Mr. John Dastas simply offered warm and cold baths, and Msrs. DuPont and Fillete offered baths; *City Gazette*, 16 November 1812, 3 April 1816, and 14 April 1819.

plots" and little more.[148] As addressed in chapter 2, this relationship between American sites and European counterparts was central to the way the gardens were perceived by many. After being sold in 1816, 1817, and again in 1821, the gardens closed their doors to entertainment and became a school for young boys.[149]

Although Charleston was much smaller in the early nineteenth century than the other cities discussed here, it was a busy town and home to a subtropical climate, leading one to expect pleasure gardens to be a popular form. However, Charleston was home to only one substantial pleasure garden. A further point of interest and difference can be observed in the fact that unlike the majority of the sites discussed thus far, the main pleasure garden of Charleston was owned and operated by a widow and by a succession of French émigrés.

The gardens described in this chapter show a number of similarities and differences; while they offered many of the same amusements (several even hosted the same performers), they operated for very different periods of time (ranging from three to fifty years), were located in different areas of their respective cities, began as a variety of sites (from tavern, to botanical garden, to spa, to private estate), and were repurposed as very different sites after closing as formal gardens. Perhaps the most significant difference (which I discuss below) is the location of the gardens both in relation to their host cities, and in relation to other sites of public entertainment or civic use. In the next section of this chapter, I question how the locations of these gardens (whether outside the city's boundaries or situated within bustling urban spaces) shaped the clientele and the perceived "use" of pleasure gardens in early urban America. The tension between rural and

[148] Baron de Montlezun, "A Frenchman Visits Charleston, 1817," ed. Lucius Gaston Moffat and Joseph Médard Carrière, *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 3 (1948): 147.

[149] *City Gazette*, 23 February 1816, 13 January 1817, 3 January 1821, 28 April 1821, and 18 December 1821.

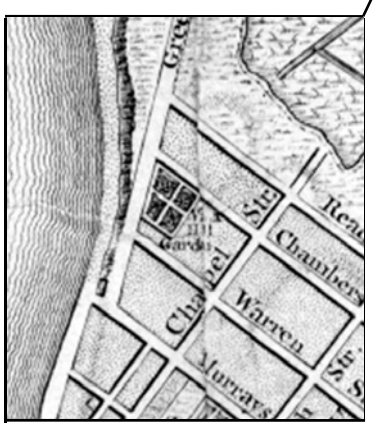
urban had a tremendous impact on the development of the urban cityscape in the late eighteenth century. The perception of these pleasure gardens and their respective locations can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of class, economics, and changing industrial relations during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Places of Performance

The tension between the country and the city, the rural and the urban, was one that played an important role in early America. Tensions between the rural idyll with its associations with good, honest labor, and the civilized city fuelled by rapid industrialization permeated the early American society and culture, and Leo Marx has explored this as seen in literature in his *Country and the City*. The pleasure gardens responded to and were part of this tangible tension as they literally brought the country to the city and allowed for a nostalgia for rural simplicity to be indulged in within the city. Each of the gardens keyed into this discussion in a very different way, however, with some being located outside of the city, some on the cusp, and others in the heart.

The first Vauxhall (operated by Francis), was located outside of New York (as seen in figure 1.2), while Delacroix elected to open his first site within the city of New York, in a relatively built-up area (see figure 1.3). Despite New York being a "walking city" in the early decades of the century, Delacroix chose to open his second and third Vauxhalls outside the town (figures 1.3 and 1.4), in locations where transportation was deemed necessary.[150] It appears that

[150] Mary C. Henderson, *The City and the Theatre: The History of New York Playhouses. A 250-year Journey from Bowling Green to Times Square* (New York: Backstage Books, 2004), 42; *New York Gazette*, 25 May 1798; *Evening Post*, 13 June 1820.



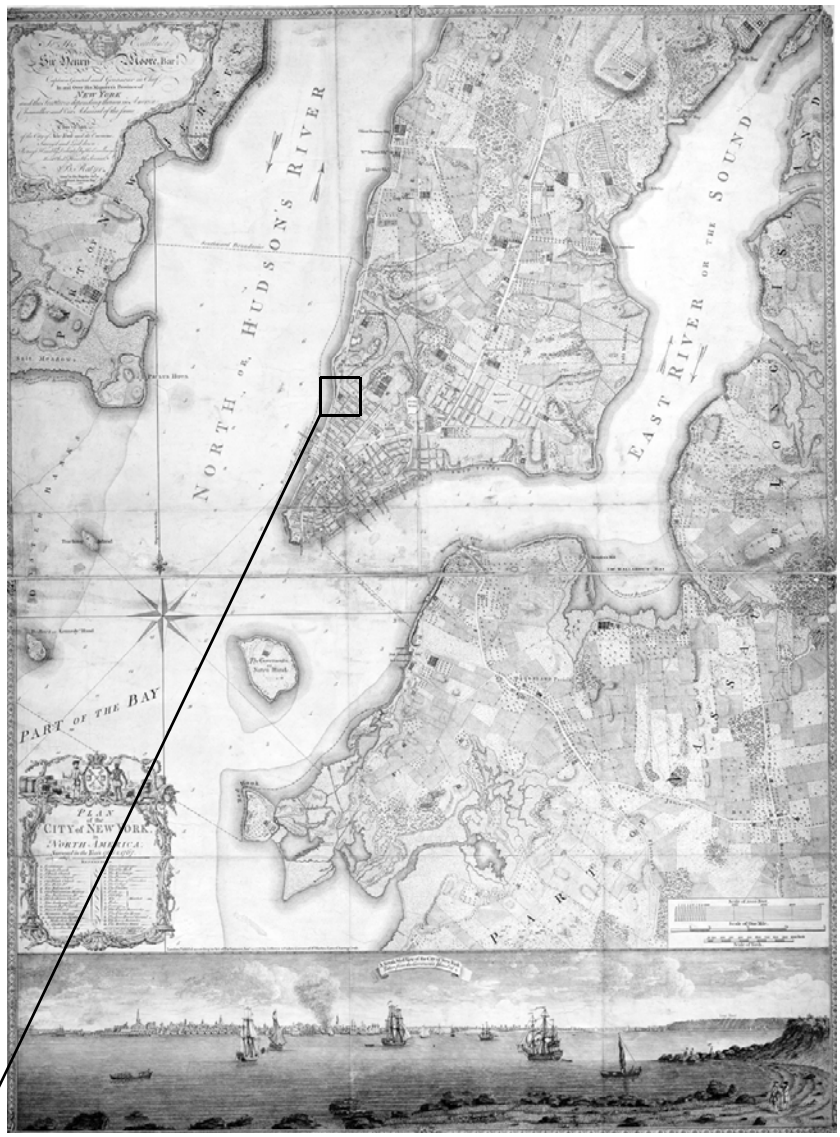


Figure 1.2. New York: Vauxhall I. Inset below, Francis' Vauxhall is labeled as "Vaux Hall Gardens." At this time, Greenwich Street ran close to the river. *Plan of the City of New York and its Environs. . . . : Surveyed in the Years 1766 and 1767* (Ratzer, 1767). Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.

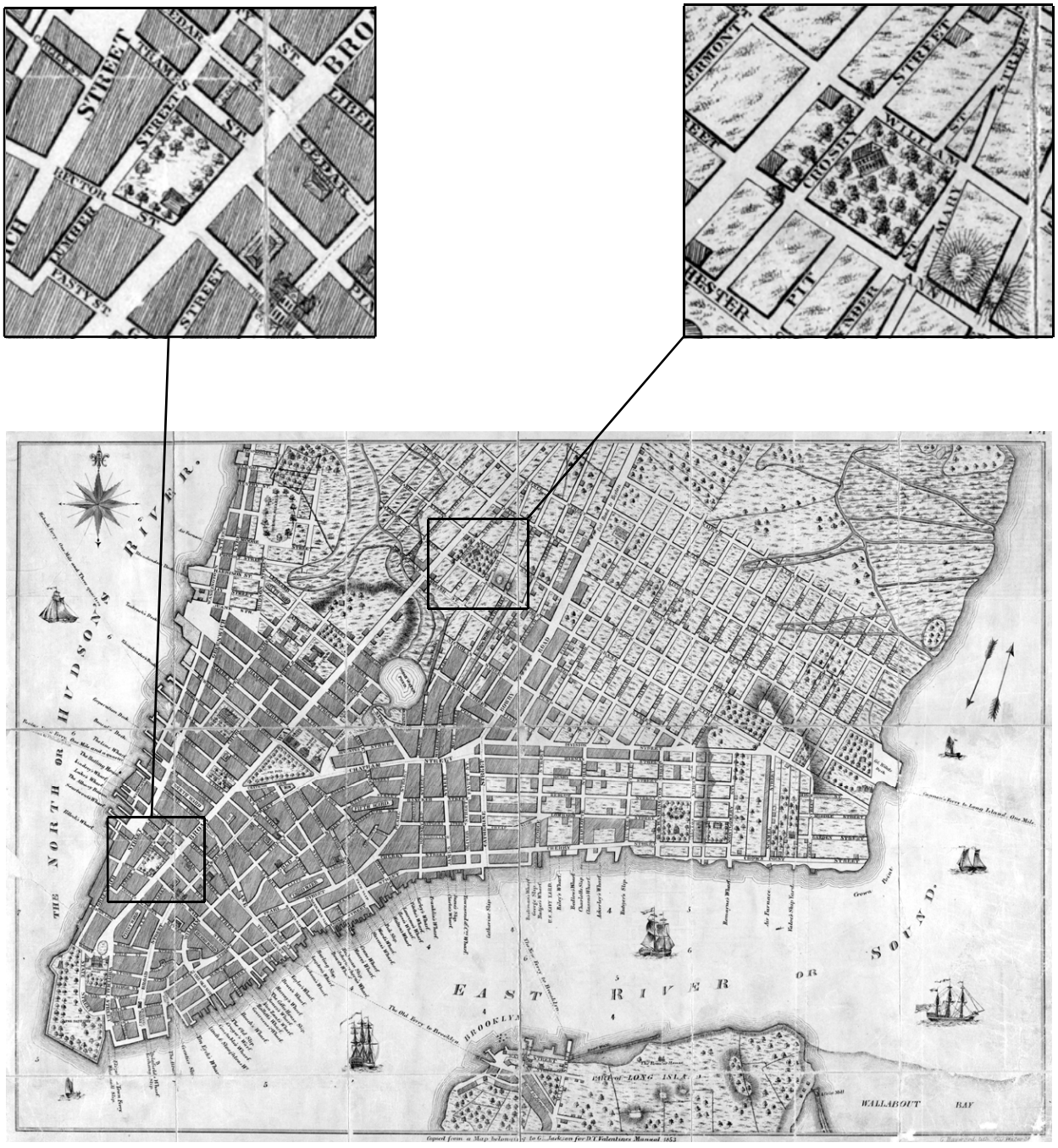


Figure 1.3. New York: Vauxhall II and III (both run by Delacroix). The earlier of the two (above, left) is surrounded by shaded areas, indicating that the area was built up. The later venue (above, right) was located outside of the town. *A New & Accurate Plan of the City of New York in the State of New York in North America* (1797). Courtesy of the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

in the case of the first, third, and fourth Vauxhalls, an attempt was made to be situated on the outskirts of the city and to tap into ideas of the country by establishing a retreat from the city and requiring patrons to journey out of the town. Yet the peripheral nature of the three Vauxhalls initially established outside of the city was not long-sustained in any of the locations, with contemporary comments such as "its walks skirted with trees flowers and shrubs beside so much city confusion is delightful," revealing that the gardens were soon to be found within New York City itself.[151] The relatively rapid growth of the city meant that the various pleasure gardens were quickly enveloped within the city, literally placing the country within the city.

Niblo's Garden went against the trend of trying to stay outside of the city, as William Niblo opened his site on the northeast corner of Prince and Broadway (see figure 1.4). It is likely that by being further south from the contemporary Vauxhall, Niblo's Garden was more accessible. Yet the "rural" element was still important to Niblo, and he went to great lengths to accentuate the garden aspects of this *rus in urbe*.[152] The flowers and shrubs of the gardens were particularly noted in advertisements, and there were strong links between Niblo's garden and the Horticultural Society.[153] Although as Garrett notes, "throughout the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the trend at New York's pleasure gardens was to de-emphasize the garden aspects—the trees, shrubs, flowers, lawns, gravel walks, and fountains—and to emphasize the entertainments, in particular those of a more popular nature," Niblo worked hard to retain the garden elements in the early years of operation.[154] After 1849, Niblo used the land for multiple

[151] Diaries, 1821-1824, New York Historical Society, (New York, 10 May 1822).
[152] *Weekly Herald*, 24 July 1841.
[153] The night-blooming Cereus was noted as were various flowers and shrubs in various advertisements of 1831. *Spectator*, 19 July and 13 September 1831. The Horticultural Society used Niblo's for a ball in 1830 and an exhibition in 1839, for example. *Spectator*, 10 September 1830 and 5 September 1839.
[154] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 537.

Figure 1.4. New York: Vauxhall IV and Niblo's Garden. The fourth Vauxhall (above, right) had initially been constructed out of the city, but by 1833 it was within the city and had been dissected by Lafayette Place. The smaller Niblo's (above, left) was opened within the city from its conception. *Map of the City of New-York Drawn by D.H. Burr, Expressly for "New York as it is in 1833."* Courtesy of the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Library.

structures, giving in to financial pressures and constructing several businesses on a site formerly occupied by just one.

The gardens in New York were on the literal border between the country and the city, exhibiting different relationships with the city and country as the city grew. The gardens of other cities also explored this balance, with the earlier gardens of Philadelphia, for example, being found distinctly outside of the city and the later ones being within the heart of the city. Philadelphia's Gray's Ferry and Harrowgate were located at a significant distance from the city, requiring transportation to visit. As cities expanded and as urban dwellers sought refuge from crowded downtown locales, gardens that offered the illusion of a country retreat (without the expense of an estate) provided a welcome refuge from the daily pressures of life

Because Philadelphia's Harrowgate and Gray's Ferry were situated a few miles outside of the city (see figure 1.5), attending either of these venues required a certain degree of planning, as well as additional leisure time to travel to and from the site. This gave the experience a sense of excursion or holiday for some (though certainly, for those journeying to take the medicinal waters at Harrowgate, the trip would not have felt quite so much like a treat). The short journey allowed individuals to escape to a "retreat" from the noise and chaos of the city. But it was not simply the *journey* out of the city that appealed to visitors; there were other associations with the rural retreats that these venues tapped into.

As Tamara Thornton notes in her book *Cultivating Gentleman*, having a some understanding of agriculture and possessing a country estate was an important element of being a true "gentleman" in America.[155] Focusing on Boston, she explores how involvement in agriculture through founding societies, writing, and having physical ties to the countryside was a

[155] Tamara Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life Among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

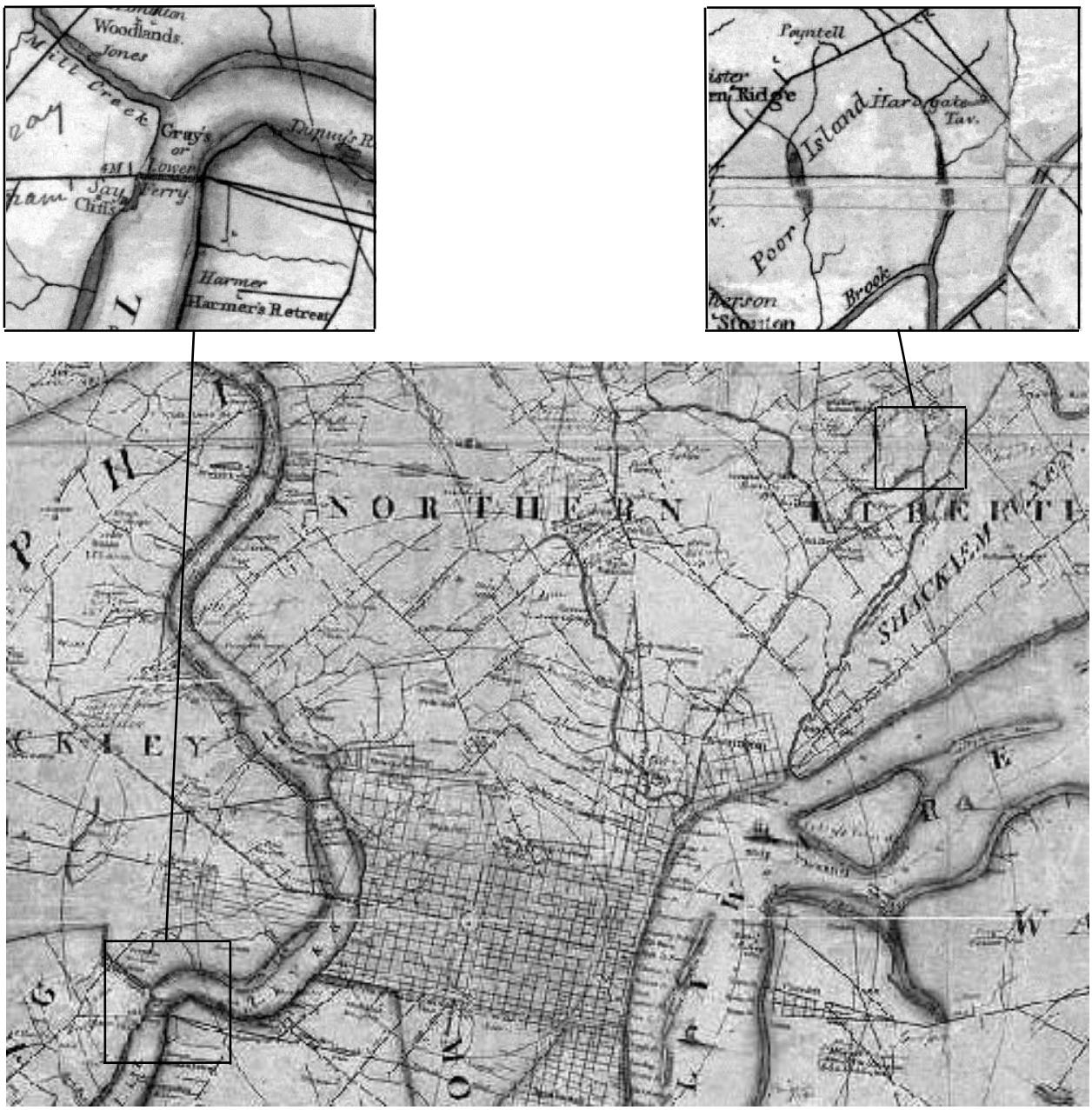


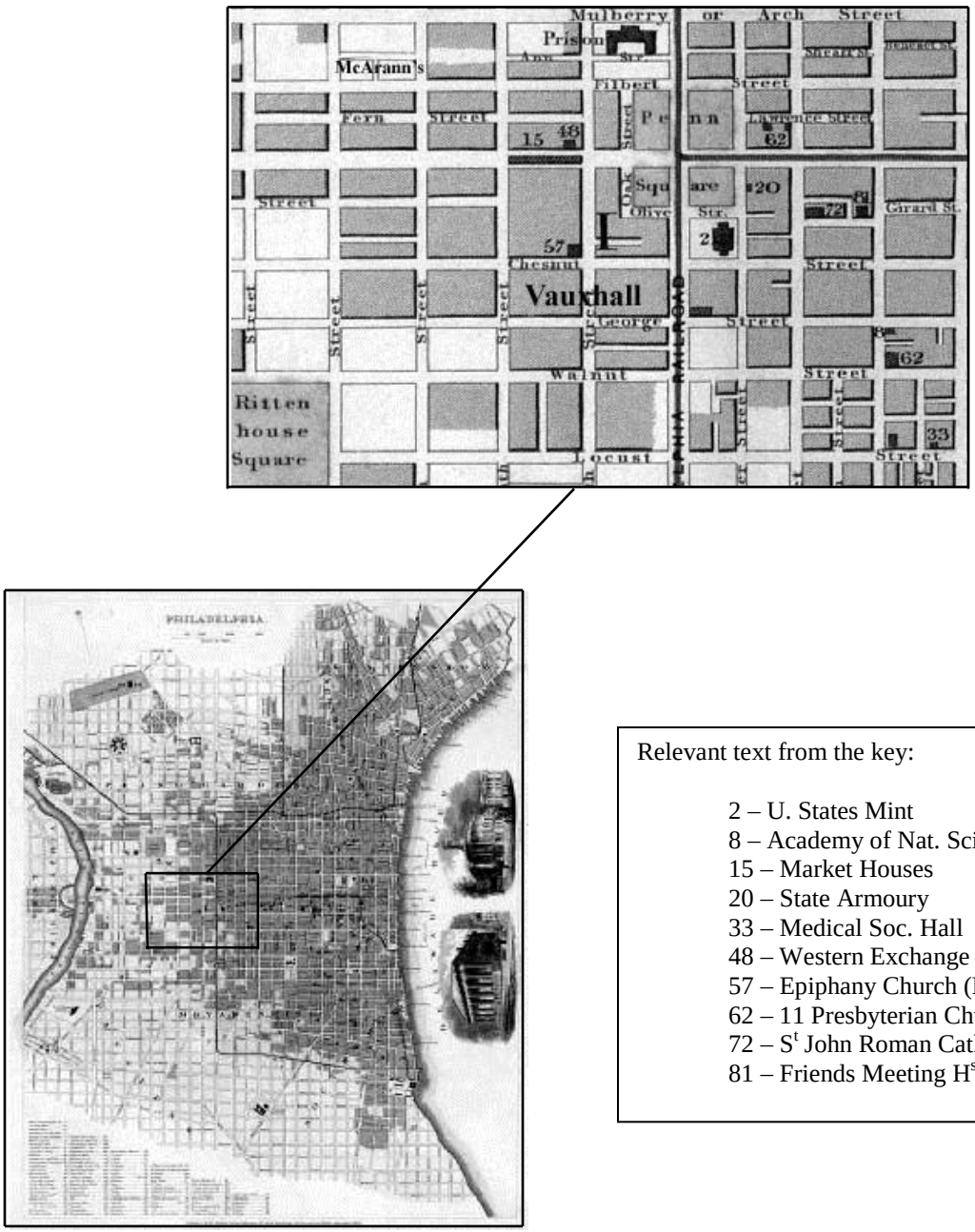
Figure 1.5. Philadelphia: Gray's Ferry and Harrowgate. Insets show Gray's Ferry (above, left) and Harrowgate (above, right, labeled "Harogate Tav[ern]"). Detail from *Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs* (John Hills, 1808), from the Historical Society of Frankford. Accessed through Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. http://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/viewimage.cfm/HSF.D2G1.A (accessed 27 March).

way for the landed elite to show that their activities were practical and for the common good. Similarly, the writings of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson identify the "honourable" [sic] and "virtuous" associations of agricultural pursuits.[156] These agricultural impulses were tied with Jeffersonian democracy which held that responsible use of land to support natural industry was a patriotic endeavor. Associating oneself with the country came to be seen as noble and virtuous, though only the elite had the luxury of owning a country estate.

As associations with rural industry and cultivation became more central to notions of Jeffersonian democracy, these venues (with their gardens, orchards, and festivals of regional agriculture) offered urban Americans the opportunity to participate (albeit to a small degree) in America's growing passion for rural culture. Perhaps more importantly, these venues promised a product to their patrons (whether through patriotic participation in firework shows, new knowledge gleamed from strolling amongst the displays of the New York Horticultural Society, or medicinal waters). Thus these gardens distinguished themselves from their corrupt European counterparts (which were reputed to foster immorality).

While the Philadelphian gardens initially drew a more elite class, lured by the prospect of rural enjoyments outside the city, F. H. Shelton speculates that Harrowgate closed due to "the creation of newer and nearer [and thus more accessible] resorts and amusement centers."[157] Harrowgate may have inspired more democratic (and less exclusive) sites within the city. Philadelphia had two gardens found within the city limits. Vauxhall and McArann's Gardens were found within a few blocks of each other, located in the west of the city. These gardens did not operate at the same time, but occupied a similar position within the city (see figure 1.6). Vauxhall was on Broad Street between Walnut and Chestnut Streets, operating between 1813

[156] Albert Henry Smyth, "Introduction," *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), 148; *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 301.
[157] Shelton, "Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians," 216.



Relevant text from the key:

2 – U. States Mint
8 – Academy of Nat. Science
15 – Market Houses
20 – State Armoury
33 – Medical Soc. Hall
48 – Western Exchange
57 – Epiphany Church (Episco[l])
62 – 11 Presbyterian Churches
72 – S[t] John Roman Catholic Church
81 – Friends Meeting H[s]

Figure 1.6. Philadelphia: Vauxhall and McArann's Gardens. Detail above shows the location of McArann's and Vauxhall (text superimposed), with nearby public buildings marked on the original. *Philadelphia, 1840*, from the private collection of William Krispin. Accessed through Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. http://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/society-diffusion-phila-1840 (accessed 2 February 2010).

and 1825,[158] while McArann's was on Filbert Street between Schuylkill Fifth and Sixth streets, opening in June 1839.[159] Although the map depicts the gardens right on the edge of the city, it must be remembered that the distance from the far south or north of the city was still quite a distance, so transportation was still thought necessary by the proprietors, and a wagon was offered from the Exchange.[160]

These gardens opened at a time when the area was already populated with residences and businesses (unlike the gardens discussed above), so the choice of location should be carefully observed. As figure 1.6 illustrates, the gardens found within the city of Philadelphia were located close to the market houses, the Mint, the Exchange, and the prison. Thus the locations were likely associated with an area of business and commerce, and travel there would have involved passing through this busy neighborhood. Although this type of association between rural settings and commercial areas might seem a little incongruous, the relationship betrays one of the central issues at play within the gardens and within American society at large.

At the turn of the century, America was transforming from an agricultural nation that imported many of its manufactured goods to an independent nation encouraging the growth of American industry.[161] As John Frick notes in his article on the Palace Gardens of New York, the country was making "the inexorable transition from a rural, agrarian, pre-modern society to an urban, industrial, modern one," and the pleasure gardens are an interesting example of this transition, as they often existed quite literally on the cusp between the two—the rural setting

[158] Joseph Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia* (Harrisburg: National Historical Association, 1933), 1154.

[159] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 June 1839.

[160] *Public Ledger*, 3 August 1839, 3; *Public Ledger*, 5 September 1839.

[161] See also the fact that the American Institute housed its fairs within pleasure gardens in New York, noted above and discussed further in chapter five.

immediately adjacent to the commercial center.[162] The physical location of these gardens betrayed issues of conflicting national identities in terms of economic and social change.

Some scholars have attributed the scarcity of pleasure gardens in Boston to the fact the residents and visitors had access to Boston Common, which was designated as common pasture from 1634.[163] Pleasure gardens, they argue, provided residents with green space they otherwise lacked (assuming they did not own an estate, farm, or retreat). For this argument to be supported, any successful pleasure garden within this city would have had to be located far from the Commons, providing green space for those who could not reach the Commons. However, as figure 1.7 illustrates, the only successful pleasure garden was located immediately adjacent to it. This suggests that rather than providing the semi-rural space in the city, these gardens actually served a different purpose.

The location of the gardens alongside the free, public commons suggests a possible affinity with the green space, but the fact that it is across the road and marked off means it is annexed from the commons. By requiring payment for entry into a space next door to a free outdoor space, Washington Gardens was elevated in terms of its restricted access; these gardens gained cultural status precisely by being adjacent the space that allowed free access to any member of Boston society.

Gray's Garden (also known as Chatsworth) and the Columbian Gardens both operated a little outside of Baltimore (see figure 1.8).[164] Gray's was described in advertisements as a

[162] John W. Frick, "'Fireworks, Bonfires, Balloons and More': New York's Palace Garden," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 20.

[163] See, for example, Eberlein and Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," 157; Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 620. Project for Public Spaces, "Boston Common and Public Garden," http://www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one? public_place_id=10 (accessed 5 February 2010).

[164] While called Rural Felicity and Easton's, this garden was located on the corner of Bond and Dulany (commonly called Philadelphia Road) Streets. When, in the 1820s, the street names changed, the newly named "Columbian Gardens" was to be found in the same location, but was now described as being on East Baltimore Street (today's East Baltimore Street, between S. Dallas and N. Bond Streets). McCreary, *Street Index*, 68 and 187.

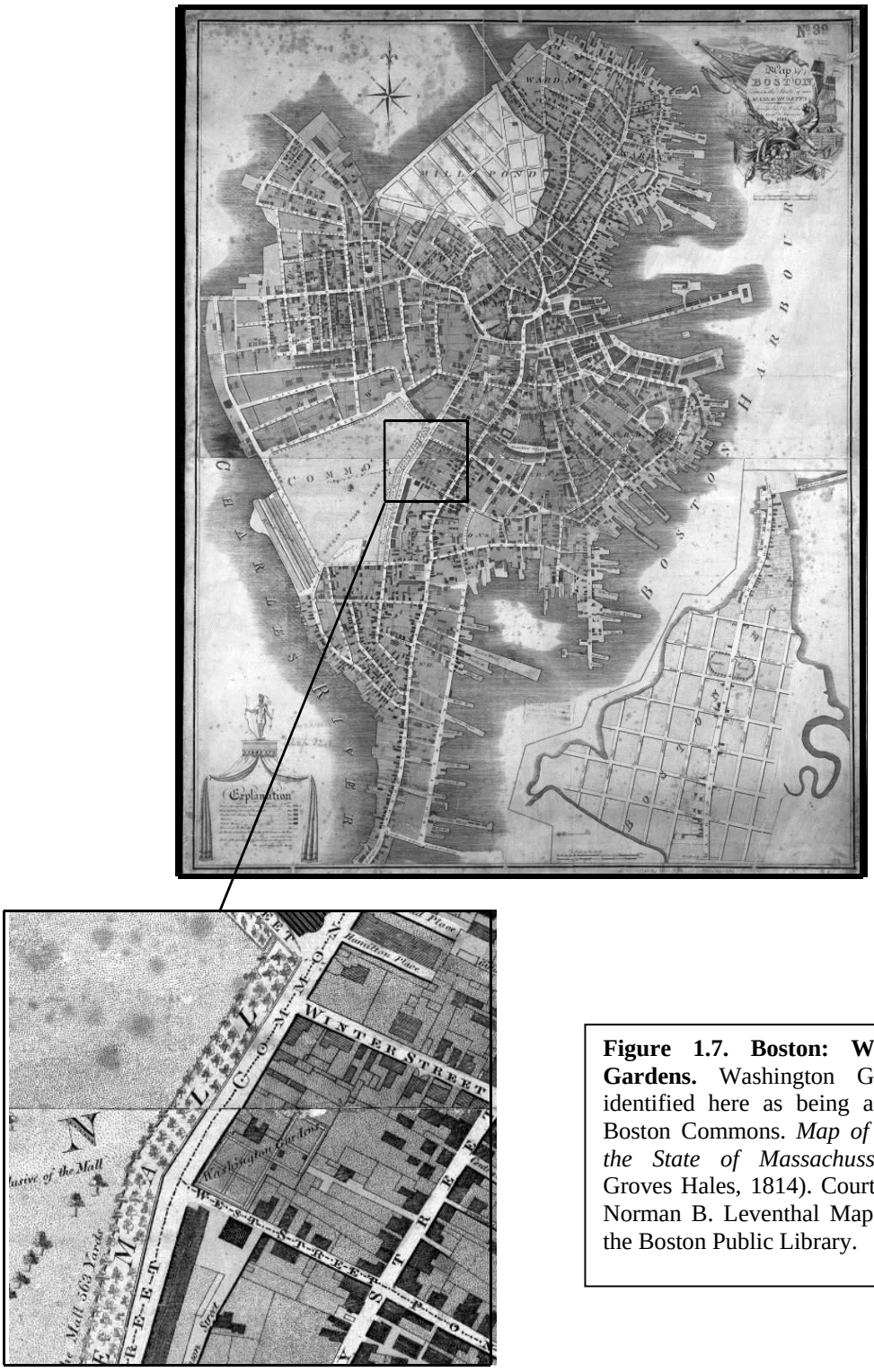


Figure 1.7. Boston: Washington Gardens. Washington Gardens is identified here as being adjacent to Boston Commons. *Map of Boston in the State of Massachussets* (John Groves Hales, 1814). Courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library.

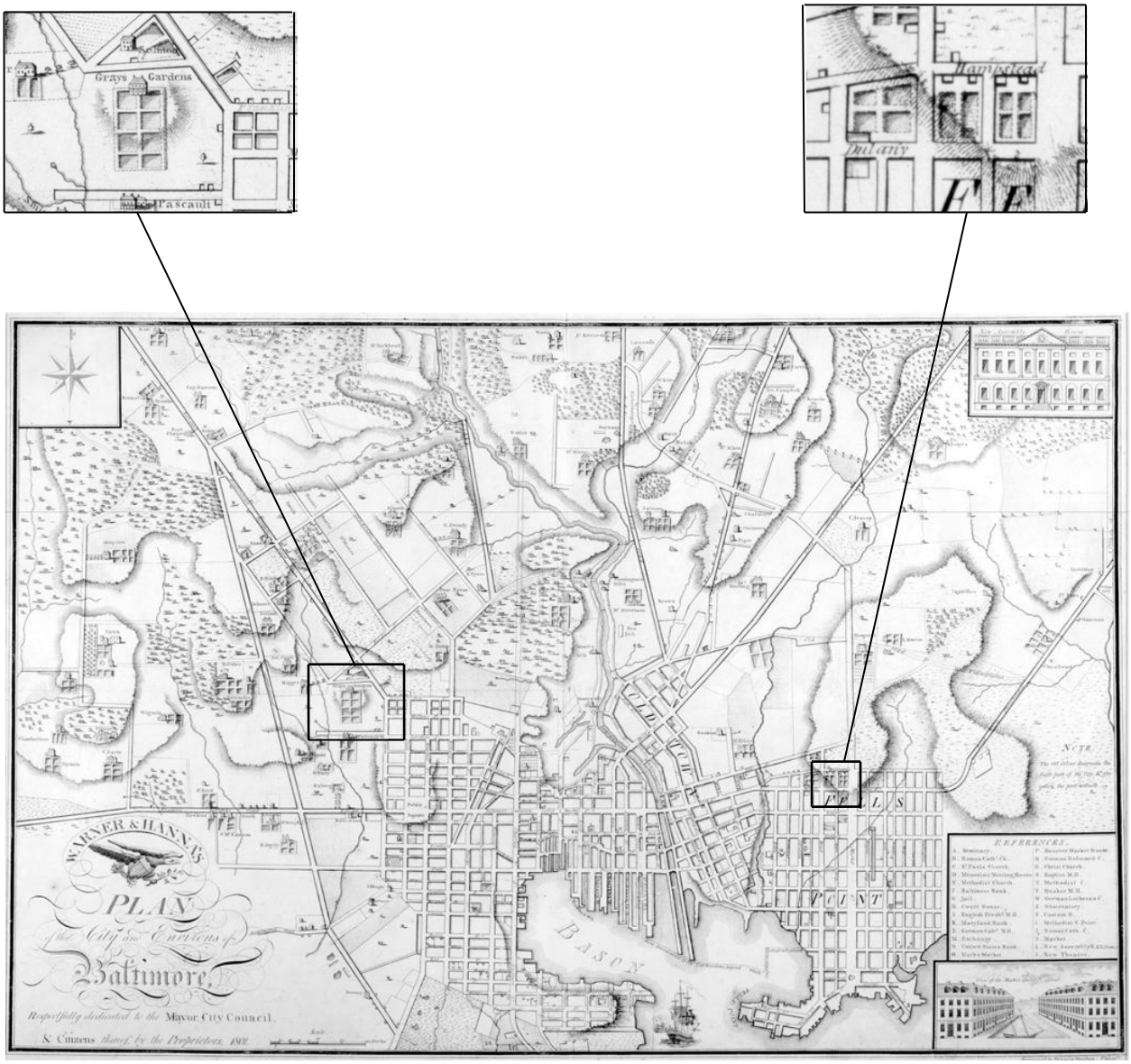


Figure 1.8. Baltimore: Gray's Gardens and Columbian Gardens. Inset images above show Gray's Garden (left, labeled as such on the map itself) and Columbian Gardens (right, called Easton's Garden at the time, but not labeled here). *Plan of the City and Environs of Baltimore* (Warner and Hanna, 1801). Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.

"partial retreat from the noise of the town,"[165] while the Columbian Gardens (known in its early years as "Rural Retreat" and then "Easton's Gardens) allowed people without easy access to transportation to attend—at a distance of just 15 minutes on foot, it was advertised as part of the appeal of the venue.[166] The location of these gardens allowed them to exist (quite literally) on the cusp of rural and urban locations and to embody the ideas of both—conveniently located within walking distance, but far enough away from the town to be termed a "retreat."[167]

However, in its later years, Baltimore grew and put pressure on the land for construction and development. According to the city directory, in 1804 this area was mostly residential and dominated largely by members of the artisan class with seamen, a music professor, and several craftsmen dwelling in the neighborhood.[168] By 1816, when the gardens were known as "Columbian Gardens," the area was still primarily populated with artisans, but had also become home to a number of small businesses, including a book binder, a rope maker, two grocers, and a music master (in addition to several residences).[169] By 1835, the site had become better known for its hotel and tavern than its urban garden. This shift suggests not only a repurposing of the site to meet increased urban pressures on the land, but also a change in popular taste. Citizens who might once have valued the garden as a rural refuge now required the amenities of a hotel and tavern (either to support their leisure hours or to conduct their business).[170]

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[165] *Federal Gazette*, 30 January 1800; Hayward and Shivers, *The Architecture of Baltimore*, 12.

[166] *Democratic Republican*, 30 June 1802.

[167] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 3 August 1801. According to the Baltimore City Directory for 1816, Dulany Street was "commonly called Philadelphia Road." Matchett, *The Baltimore Directory and Register, for the year 1816*, 10.

[168] James Robinson, *The Baltimore Directory for 1804 Containing the Names, Trades & Residences of the Inhabitants of the City & Precincts* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1804).

[169] Matchett, *The Baltimore Directory and Register for the year 1816*. Each of the businesses listed above were cited in the directory as being "near Columbia Gardens," suggesting that the gardens functioned as a landmark known by most residents and allowing for navigation. Of course, the term "near" is subjective, and the fact that the same descriptor is not used in the previous or subsequent directory may be indicative of the perceptions of the city by the compiler that year, rather than any wider awareness of the centrality of this particular venue.

[170] The reasons for the closures of the individual gardens and the demise of the form as a whole are complex and multiple and will be discussed further in chapter five.

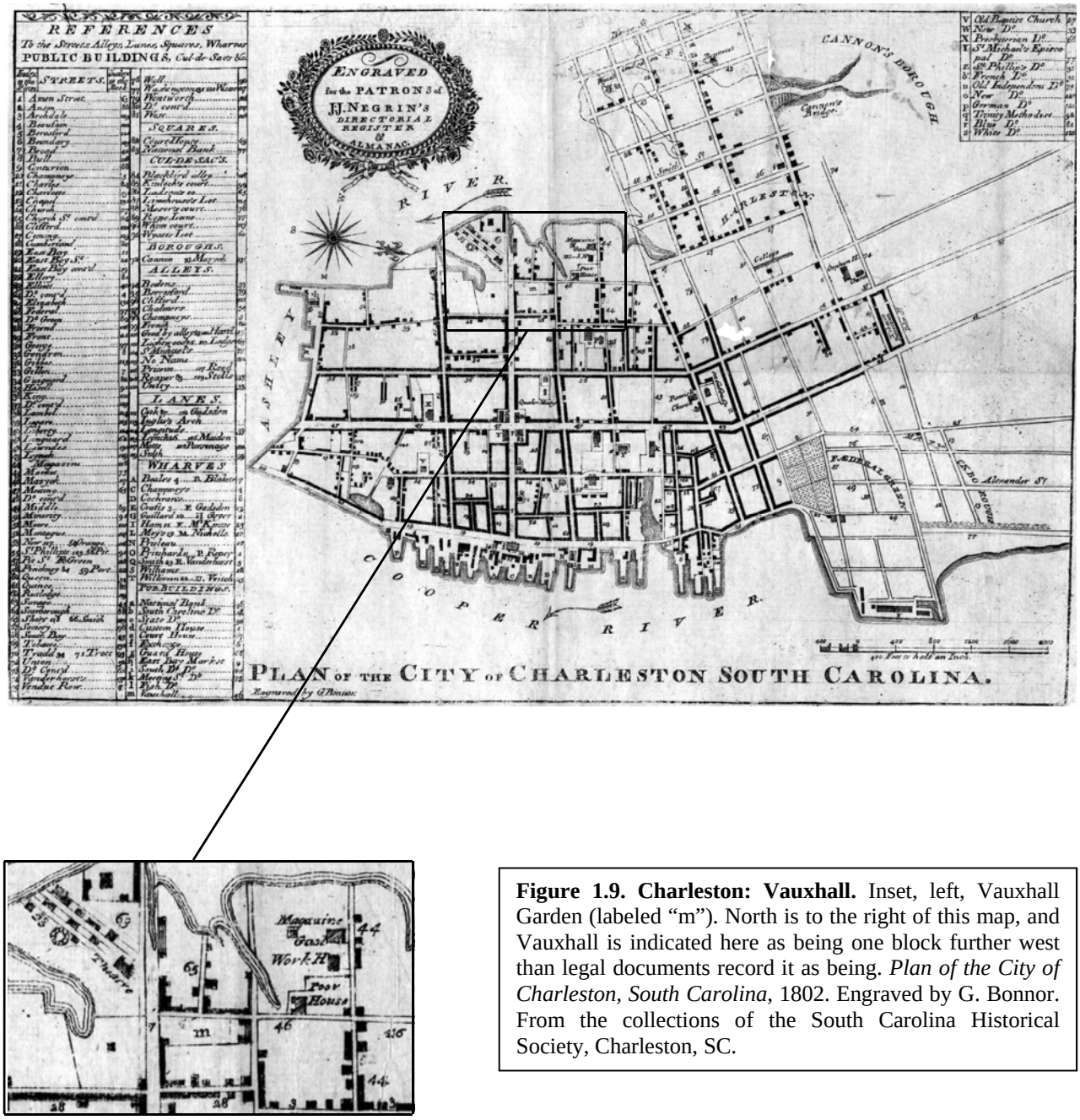

Figure 1.9. Charleston: Vauxhall. Inset, left, Vauxhall Garden (labeled "m"). North is to the right of this map, and Vauxhall is indicated here as being one block further west than legal documents record it as being. *Plan of the City of Charleston, South Carolina*, 1802. Engraved by G. Bonnor. From the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC.

Charleston's Vauxhall could be found on the block defined "to the northward on Queen Street to the southward on Broad Street, & to the westward on Friend Street," placing it away from the commercial ports and the economic center of the market and banks.[171] This site was equidistant from several groups of public buildings, including the City Hall, Court House, and the Guard House (one and a half blocks to the east), the poor house, work house, and prison (one and a half blocks to the northwest), and the theatre (one and half blocks to the southeast). Interestingly, this ambiguous position was altered in the only contemporary map to show the location of the gardens, which, as figure 1.9 shows, were depicted one block further to the west than they actually were. While a single depiction of the city should not be allowed to stand in for the perceptions of every resident of and visitor to the city, this shift east suggests that the gardens were associated more with this part of the town than the administrative and legal buildings located to the west.

It should also be noted that Charleston is the smallest of the cities under investigation here; while it was sizeable at 18,824 in 1800, this city was substantially smaller at this time than Philadelphia (41,220) and New York (60,515), for example.[172] Walking through Charleston to reach the Vauxhall garden was much more feasible than in Philadelphia or New York, and the Vauxhall of Charleston would have been more accessible to a greater percentage of the population. Experientially, the journey would have been impacted by the industrialization of the city less than in New York or Philadelphia, yet the garden was still in the city itself, surrounded by business, legal, and entertainment districts.

[171] South Carolina Historical Society, Pickney Family Documents, 1097.02.02 (1795), [2].

[172] See Campbell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790-1990," Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., June 1998. http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html (accessed 4 May 2010).

The pleasure gardens identified here played different roles within their various locations. Whilst most tapped into the urban/rural relationship in some way, the manner in which they did so varied. While Harrowgate and Gray's Ferry took pride in their more remote locations, Niblo's focused on its rural nature whilst being in the heart of the city, for example. The growing industrial and economic nature of the cities was also being juxtaposed with the agrarian past, with McArann's being located in the commercial center of the city, drawing the two concepts together in a very physical manner. The location depicted on a contemporary map of Charleston's Vauxhall reveals assumptions about the "category" to which the gardens "belonged." These gardens played an important role in the developing societies of the respective cities, reflecting change and conflict; these sites reveal some of the contradictions inherent in progress and nation-building.

The tension between the country and the city was just one conversation taking place within the (often unconscious) discussion regarding what it meant to be American, and this dissertation will now focus in more detail of different elements of identity. In the following chapter I examine the role of the gardens in experimenting with and performing American national identity by questioning how American national identities can be seen, and then how they were made manifest through the layout, entertainments, and patronage of the gardens.

Chapter 2

Performing Nation: The Pleasure Gardens as a Space for Defining America

> Ye Belles and Beaux, who take delight,
> In pastimes gay to spend the night,
> To *Vaux-Hall Garden* each repair,
> Where music soft and debonnaire,
> With pleasing raptures fires the mind,
> And dying murmers to the wind;
> Where the *jet d'eau* delights the eye,
> Throwing water to the sky;

The first eight lines of this poem are very suggestive of the London Vauxhall, describing music attended to by "Belles and Beaux" on a summer's evening. Yet the closing couplet places us firmly outside of the London venues:

> While *Hail Columbia!* from the band,
> Proclaims a free and happy land.[1]

The evocation of a distinctly English entertainment venue followed immediately by a proclamation of freedom from the same country is an interesting juxtaposition. This poem, printed in a Charleston newspaper, was one of several such descriptions of the numerous pleasure gardens found throughout the United States of America in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that (deceptively) presented them as similar to the London site. Although Thomas Garrett argues that these sites were the same as Vauxhall, London "in heritage, in plan, in ambience, in entertainments offered, in refreshments offered, and even in admission procedures," they were, I suggest, venues which responded to the London site in many different

[1] "Ode to Vauxhall Garden," *City Gazette* (Charleston), 3 July 1799. Italics in orginal.

ways, ultimately allowing these gardens to be a forum in which Americans could explore what it meant to be American.[2]

Although it is generally understood that the concept of a pleasure garden and the name "Vauxhall" were English inventions, it should not be simply assumed that the appearance of this form signifies an uncomplicated attempt to recreate the British original. As the main pleasure gardens operated in the period between the Revolution and Civil War, they were created and attended during a period of great change and flux in terms of the concept of nation in the United States.[3] The proprietors of the gardens positioned their sites in direct alignment with and opposition to the English (and French) sites, allowing the form to depict the American nation and American culture as being both directly linked with and opposed to other countries. Further, many public celebrations of the nation took place *within* the grounds of the gardens, and these events created and reinforced American identities by allowing a large portion of the public to actively participate in the definition of what it meant to be American. Within this chapter I will explore the ways in which understandings of the American nation were performed by both the proprietors and the patrons, investigating first how the proprietors positioned their venues in relation to those of other countries, and then how individuals celebrated and commemorated events and people of national significance in order to construct national identities within the various sites.

Before I launch into this discussion, it is essential to define certain terms. Most important, perhaps, is the question of "nation," as what this has meant to scholars varies widely, with some even excluding the United States before the Civil War from the conversation, arguing that it was

[2] Thomas M. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City, 1700-1865" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1978), 604.

[3] With the exception of the early years of the first Vauxhall in New York.

not a nation.[4] There are several schools of thought on nationalism, and I here align myself with the modernist school that sees a nation as a modern construct, and not the product of a continuous ethnic and cultural history. In defining nation, I borrow from Anthony D. Smith's recent work, in which he defines nation as "a named human population occupying a historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members."[5] In using this definition and applying it to the United States I appreciate that there are certain problems—what are the common myths and memories in this new nation, for example? This problem led to much questioning and redefining of what the American nation was and how it functioned, with history and memory being actively constructed.

For the successful construction of a nation, a national identity needs to be fostered and actively pursued by the citizens. In defining national identity, I again borrow from Smith: "the maintenance and continual reinterpretation of the patterns of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that form the distinctive heritage of the nation, and the identification of individuals with that heritage and its pattern."[6] I see these "patterns" as being addressed in America (and specifically within the pleasure gardens) in two distinct ways: the questioning of the relationship of America with the former imperial power (and related reassessments of relationships with other established nations), and the repeated attempts at legitimizing the new nation through public celebrations and commemorations.

[4] See Susan-Mary Grant, "When was the First New Nation?: Locating America in a National Context," in *When is the Nation?: Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*, ed. Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac (London: Routledge, 2005), 157-76 for a discussion of the position of the American nation within established scholarship on nation and nationalism.

[5] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.

[6] Ibid., 24-5.

It is also important to remember that it is now acknowledged that identity cannot be discussed in the singular form (even when describing a single person), and so the plurality of identities comprising any sense of nation must be recalled. Although Anderson notes the formation of an "imagined community" through the conception of simultaneous time and space, he does not account for how the variety of notions became unified (if, indeed, they did at all). As Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts note in their volume *Messy Beginnings*, there must have been, at least in the early stages, a multitude of different understandings of what it meant to be American.[7] As such, it is not possible (nor desirable) to seek a singular American identity; of much more value and interest is an exploration of the various ways this concept was approached, developed, and negotiated through the public space of the pleasure garden. I therefore refer to American national identities in their plural form.

In this chapter, I investigate the manner in which both proprietors and patrons used the gardens to explore the concept of national identity. The American gardens are first examined in relation to their invocation (explicit or otherwise) of the English gardens, allowing for an investigation into American national/cultural identities as being formed in opposition to England (following Eric Hobsbawm and others).[8] As the pleasure gardens of America flourished after the Revolution, the changing relationship between America and England (and various other countries) was complex and constantly in flux. I challenge the oft-repeated statement that American pleasure gardens were simply direct imitations of English venues, instead examining the simultaneous alignment with *and* distancing from English culture.[9] The relationship between

[7] Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts, eds, *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 15.

[8] Hobsbawm identifies the fact that nations often impose national identity retroactively and that revolutionary nations often define themselves in opposition to other nations. See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 1.

[9] Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1944): 154, 157; Garrett, "A History of Pleasure

the American gardens and those of France also warrants attention, as do the changing and problematic relationships with other countries. I argue that attempts to create and define American national identities were seen within cultural forms, and that American citizens sought for these to be distinct from those of other nations by drawing contrast between them. Simultaneously, however, these cultural forms borrowed elements from these same countries both consciously and unconsciously, often drawing on the same sources to create the "heritage" required for national identities.

I then employ a second model of national identities, which allows for a study of the use of pleasure gardens in the performance of nation through celebrations and commemoration, without opposition to other national identities being explicitly invoked. Fourth of July celebrations were particularly important in terms of this exploration, and as the gardens often played a central role in the festivities, the events held there will be studied in terms of their facilitation of the performance of nation at a local level. Drawing on David Waldstreicher, Len Travers, and Simon Newman, I will explore the role of celebration and commemoration in creating and sustaining national identities. I will not present one narrative for the manner in which these gardens witnessed the development of national identities, but rather will explore how these gardens allow us to gain insight into multiple manners of creating and understanding American identities.

Gardens in New York City," 604; Geraldine Duclow, "Philadelphia's Pleasure Gardens," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 2.

America and England

America and England share a past fraught with intimate connections and passionate conflicts. This history need not be recounted here, but it is nonetheless obvious that any attempt to forge American national identities inevitably involved renegotiating the links to England. Examinations of the cultural relationship between the two countries have often set up a binary with American cultural and national identities being formed in direct opposition to British cultural identity.[10] They argue Americans sought to define themselves as a nation committed to the ideas of equality, democracy, and self-reliance, and in opposition to the monarchical country of England with its strict hierarchical class structure determined by birth. Discussions of this binary can be seen in David Gerstner's exploration of how British and American art were gendered as female and male opposites,[11] for example, and in Kim Sturgess' assertion that all American culture has been constructed in direct opposition to British culture, with the single exception of Shakespeare.[12]

An alternative approach has been to consider early American culture to be the same as British—a mere replica. Noting the British origins of many of the early settlers, it has been suggested that the colonists simply brought their culture to America with them. The theatre of the period under discussion here in particular has been characterized as a wholesale import, from the design of the theatres to the plays and the actors that toured them. In his book on identity in American theatre, for example, Jeffrey Richards notes that the stage "types" seen on the

[10] These ideas are further problematized by the fact that identity is constructed in these terms as a single, monolithic entity.

[11] David Gerstner, "Nineteenth-Century Formulations of Masculinity and Realism: The Body of Edwin Forrest," in *Manly Arts: Masculinity and Nation in Early American Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[12] Kim C. Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

American stage in American-authored plays were essentially the same as the British prototypes.[13] Similarly, in his study of American theatre during the Revolution, Jared Brown argues that the "Theatre in America was predominantly British Theatre."[14]

Yet American culture in its entirety was neither the same as nor opposite to English culture. For example, when looking at early American dramatic literature, attempts to distinguish works from their British counterparts were seen in writings such as Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* in which he proclaimed that American "native themes" could be depicted in literature with the "refinement [which] may be found at home" in "homespun arts."[15] Yet even within this attempt to present a "native" and "homespun" play, its structure and form reflected that of England; Tyler set out to distance his play from English drama, yet at the same time, embraced it.

The problem of defining a new American culture while simultaneously drawing on that of England (whether seeking to emulate it or using it unconsciously) was a problem tackled within the pleasure gardens of America. On the one hand, Americans were actively seeking to create a new national and cultural identity by distancing themselves from the English form, and on the other, they were embracing the form of pleasure gardens complete with the design, entertainments, and exhibits, foregrounding the similarities as a means of establishing their own cultural value (as will be identified below). Proprietors of gardens demonstrated the fact that America had cultural forms of value and significance by citing England's version as a source of legitimacy. Simultaneously, however, commentators dismissed the English venue as inferior and immoral. The establishment of pleasure gardens in America spoke to the aims of asserting a

[13] Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), part II.

[14] Jared Brown, *The Theatre In America During The Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170.

[15] Royall Tyler, *The Contrast: A Comedy in Five Acts* (1787; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 20.

culture of national value and worth by both drawing on England for legitimacy, and distancing themselves from the English model.

Recent scholarship by Schueller and Watts, and Michael Warner proposes a variety of ways to view the relationship between England and America. Rather than advocating for a simplistic view of Americans having merely adopted British culture as their own, these scholars, working within a postcolonial framework, identify a more complex use of British culture by Americans. Warner identifies a shift in which "white Creoles in British America learned to think of themselves as colonized rather than as colonizers," while Schueller and Watts advocate for an awareness of the "messiness" of the founding of the American nations, noting that "the struggle between imperial and local claims to cultural authority," the establishment of and resistance to "Anglophone colonial power," and the "entanglements" that result are the main areas demanding focus.[16] These approaches allow for a more nuanced reading of the relationship between England and America, working within a dialectical relationship between nations. In terms of the American pleasure gardens, the proprietors of these various sites pursued conflicting impulses of adopting the culture of their heritage and defining themselves in opposition to it.

Before pleasure gardens became popular in America, the existence of them in England was well known in America—particularly Vauxhall. Views of Vauxhall, London were advertised for sale as early as 1754, and sheet music for the songs performed there was sold from 1768.[17] The theatres of Charleston and Philadelphia presented performances of the Vauxhall Echo (a popular song in the London venue) in 1794 and 1799 respectively.[18] In Boston, the Vauxhall of London was depicted in act two of William White's *The Poor Lodger*, and advertisements for

[16] Michael Warner, "What's Colonial About Colonial America?" in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert George St. Blair (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 62; Schueller and Watts, *Messy Beginnings*, 2-3 and 11.

[17] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1 July 1754 and 30 June 1768.

[18] *City Gazette*, 28 June 1794; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 3 May 1799.

this play highlighted this specific scene.[19] Conversations overheard at Vauxhall were reprinted in Philadelphian newspapers along with the lyrics for popular songs.[20] When pleasure gardens finally opened in the major American cities, it was the London venue that they looked to as a model, and despite several of the proprietors being of French origin, "their standard for excellence as explained in their advertisements, was not a Parisian garden but the London Vauxhall."[21]

The very fact that the name "Vauxhall" was selected for several of the main pleasure gardens in America suggests an attempt to copy or recreate the London gardens in the major American cities. Further, the highlighting of features shared by both Vauxhall, London, and the American venue was a common tactic in advertising. For example, when the opening of Washington Gardens (Boston) was announced, the Vauxhall of London was specifically invoked, and newspapers proclaimed that the gardens were planned "on the scale of Raneleigh [sic] and Vauxhall Gardens in the vicinity of London,"[22] and that the elegant design was comparable with "the celebrated Gardens of that name near London."[23] Similarly, Delacroix advertised his first Vauxhall in New York as resembling Vauxhall, London ("as near as the situation of the place wou'd admit").[24] Other London gardens were also invoked, such as Harrowgate which was compared to "those [gardens] in the vicinity of London" and Gray's Ferry which was described as being "like Bagnigge Wells," but it was Vauxhall that was most commonly cited as the model.[25] These descriptive references to Vauxhall are further reinforced

[19] *The Poor Lodger* was based on the novel *Evelina* by Frances Burney, which is well known among Vauxhall scholars for its depictions of activities within Vauxhall, London.

[20] *The Mail*, 18 October 1791; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 June 1768.

[21] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 55.

[22] *Columbian Centinel*, 10 February 1798.

[23] *Columbian Centinel*, 24 February 1798.

[24] *New York Gazette*, 8 June 1797.

[25] David John Jeremy, ed., *Henry Wansey and his American Journal: 1794* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1970), 95, 112.

Figure 2.1. The layout of Vauxhall, London. "A General View of Vaux Hall Gardens," by Samuel Wade. Victoria and Albert Museum, http://www.vandaprints.com/image.php?id=412952 (accessed 17 March 2011)

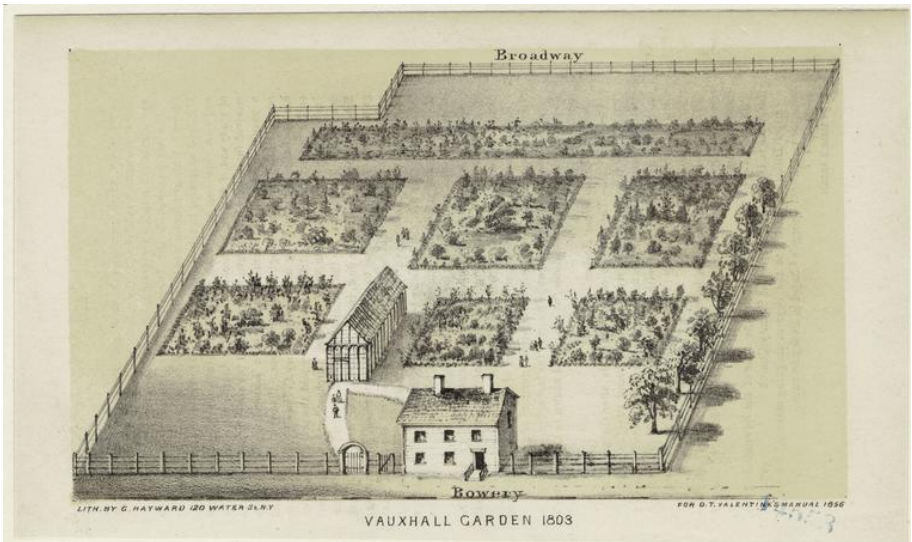

Figure 2.2. Vauxhall Gardens, 1803. Although labeled "Vauxhall Gardens," this image depicts "Sperry's Garden." In 1803, the fourth Vauxhall in New York was not yet open, and the land which was eventually to be used as the site, was operating as a nursery by Jacob Sperry. Although a grid-like pattern is seen, we cannot read too much into this fact due to the different function it served. *Manual of the Corporation of the city of New York*. New York Public Library, online Digital Collection http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/ ID number 800211.

by a consideration of the layout of the gardens.

The layout of Vauxhall, London is well-known (see figure 2.1), and its rectangular divisions and straight paths were echoed in the Charleston garden's "several square fathoms of grass plots,"[26] as well as in the last Vauxhall in New York's "seven irregularly sized [rectangular] seed beds separated by wide grass-filled avenues, bordered with hedge, and filled with low, bushy plants."[27] Detailed images for each of these sites do not survive, so we cannot fully understand their layout, but generally a trend can be seen in which the gardens were laid out much along the lines of Vauxhall, London.[28] It should be noted, however, that the design of Vauxhall, London was not typical of early-nineteenth-century English garden design; the use of straight lines and symmetry was more indicative of French garden design than of the "natural" landscape garden for which the English were becoming known.

Far from being "natural," the English landscape school headed by the practices of such figures as Humphrey Repton and "Capability" Brown required great feats of engineering and construction. Moving away from the use of straight lines and symmetry, this school sought to combine fluid lines, surprises, and "imitations of nature." The Vauxhall model was, in fact a direct opposite to what could be termed "English garden design" at this time, demonstrating that what "English" was, was not at all simple to define. Although the layouts of the gardens appear to reflect that of the London, Vauxhall, we should remain aware that these examples do not indicate a wholesale attempt to replicate British culture on American soil, but rather, Vauxhall specifically.

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[26] Baron de Montlezun, "A Frenchman Visits Charleston, 1817," ed. Lucius Gaston Moffat and Joseph Médard Carrière, *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 3 (1948): 147.

[27] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 281.

[28] An image of the site used for the fourth Vauxhall in New York can be found in Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, 1866, 587, titled "Sperry's Garden, on Bowery Lane, 1810," but it is problematic due to it referring to the gardens that existed prior to Vauxhall becoming a commercial pleasure grounds and was etched, apparently, from memory. See figure 2.2. Also see Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 281-3.

While some gardens were modeled on the English example of Vauxhall, others demonstrated an interest in embracing English garden design more specifically. Gray's Ferry provides an example of an American pleasure garden composed in the emerging English landscape style. Although we do not have any detailed images of Gray's Ferry, we do have a description in the journals of Reverend Manasseh Cutler of 1787, in which a walk through the gardens is described in great detail, along with the fact that the design was implemented by an English designer.[29] The gardens of approximately twelve acres were laid out in a manner very typical of the English landscape style, with a great deal of eclecticism and man-made imitations of "natural" landscape.[30] The gardens are described as consisting of "a number of detached areas, all different in size and form," containing "three very high arched bridges . . . in the Chinese style," "a hermitage," a view of "one of the finest cascades in America," "grottoes wrought out of the side of ledges in the rocks," and "a curious labyrinth," traversed by alleys which "were none of them straight, nor were any two alike." The whole is described as both a "work of art" and "the bounty of nature without the aid of human care," and it was this paradox (natural yet artificial) that lay at the heart of the English landscape style.[31] Although this description of the gardens was written before they opened as a public resort, there were no major renovations or redesigns of the gardens prior to opening, and so Gray's Ferry would have been laid out in a very English manner. Adopting both English garden design and the specific design of Vauxhall, London, the various proprietors of the pleasure gardens of America drew (inconsistently) from

[29] William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, eds., *Life Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, L.L.D.,* vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1888), 278. Henry Wansey's *American Journal* also notes a few details of the gardens in 1794, but offers much less detail.

[30] The figure of 12 acres comes from the advertisement for the sale of the grounds in 1792, *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, 22 February 1792. Cutler and Cutler, eds., *Life Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler*, 276.

[31] Cutler and Cutler, eds., *Life Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler*, 275-77.

English culture when implementing their designs. While fundamentally opposed to one another in terms of style, these very different models were both adopted as being English.

The various pleasure gardens offered entertainments much like those found at the London venue, and concerts, fireworks, and variety performances graced the programs of most of the English and American venues. Some rather explicitly identified such similarities: Delacroix described his Vauxhalls as displaying colored lights "in the style of London Vauxhall," hosting a gala in the "style of London Vauxhall," and offering Vaudevilles "upon the same plan as the Royal Garden of Vauxhall, in London."[32] There were also specific references to performers and songs as being *of* Vauxhall, London. For example, the "Pandean Music Band" of London's Vauxhall was to appear at Vauxhall, New York every Thursday through most of the 1811 season.[33] Further, some of the songs performed within the various gardens had been performed at the London venue, and where plays were performed, they were most frequently English plays. Although there were a small number of American creations staged within the gardens, these were typically fireworks exhibits themed around an idea or basic story, or a marginally-adapted version of an English play; the majority of the plays staged within the gardens were English farces and afterpieces freely available via a number of printed volumes (see appendix 1).[34]

In terms of what was displayed within the various American Vauxhalls, while we do not see the number of paintings found in Vauxhall, London, we can find instances of sculptures being presented, with the fourth Vauxhall in New York, for example, containing a series of

[32] *New York Daily Advertiser*, 2 July 1804; *New York Gazette*, 20 April 1805; *New York Evening Post*, 11 June 1838.

[33] *Columbian*, 11 June 1811.

[34] Elizabeth Inchbald's volumes of farces, for example, were advertised as being for sale in New York newspapers in 1808. Elizabeth Inchbald, ed., *The British Theatre: or, A Collection of Plays, Which are Acted at the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808).

busts. Amongst this collection (imported from Europe) could be found busts of various political, classical, and literary figures including the English writers, Addison and Pope.[35]

It might appear to an outside observer that America had desired and ultimately created replicas of the London form. It was no longer necessary to envy the entertainment venue of London, as various American cities had created their own copies; "No more shall we sigh for the charms of [London's] Vauxhall," one observer proclaimed.[36] However, this was not mere imitation with the aim of having a comparable venue. Rather, what began as claims of comparability (highlighting similarities with the London site) became declarations of superiority. Niblo's was described in 1849 as being vastly superior to any other such venue (particularly Vauxhall and Cremorne), for example. This attitude could also be seen in references to a specific feature of London's Vauxhall being surpassed in American sites. Although not initially created for Vauxhall, the small mechanized "tin cascade" was widely acknowledged as an important part of anyone's visit to the London site.[37] In what seems to be a reference to this feature, Delacroix advertised the "Falls of Niagara" which were to be on a larger scale than the London automaton.[38] Not only was this model larger, but it was also based on a specific American natural wonder that an earlier commentator had described as the "roaring, thundering, deafning [sic], cataracts of Niagara, in the savage wilds of America" which clearly surpassed the "little, curious, gently-murmuring, glittering *tin* cascade" of Vauxhall, London.[39]

In terms of the quality of entertainments, London's Vauxhall was described as being inferior to American gardens, with one description reading, "noise, plenty of noise, is all they

[35] These two figures were also associated with the early developments of English landscape style. *Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1805.

[36] *Freeman's Journal* (Philadelphia), 15 June 1785.

[37] See the famous literary visit to Vauxhall depicted in *Evelina*, for example. Fanny Burney, *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (London: Harrison, 1861), 217.

[38] *National Advocate*, 9 May 1817.

[39] *Gazette of the United States*, 9 May 1789 to 13 May 1789, issue 9, 34. Emphasis in original.

care for in music; and their Vauxhall is so tedious, that one leaves it for home with the gravity of a monk on quitting his chapel for his cell."[40] Even the layout of the American gardens began to be noted as being superior, with Vauxhall, Philadelphia being described in 1819 as being more tastefully arranged than Vauxhall, London.[41]

It is also clear from a number of comments printed in newspapers that the Vauxhall of London was often positioned as vastly inferior to the American gardens due to questions of morality.[42] A 1785 newspaper printed a mock list of taxes that suggested that "white necks, red cheeks, and lily hands" could be found at London's Vauxhall, while another implied that London's Vauxhall had become little more than a common marriage market as early as 1765.[43] At the same time, a commentator on Gray's Ferry in 1790 remarked that the pleasure gardens in America were an intrinsic part of avoiding immorality in this "polished nation."[44] The American venues, while initially citing Vauxhall, London as a model venue, later positioned themselves as aesthetically and morally superior to the London site.

The relationship with England was especially important in defining national identity in the northern cities, and the prominent and dynamic relationship between England and America was played out within the gardens. Often contradictory in nature, the discourse at times drew on the history and culture of England for cultural legitimacy, and at other moments spurned it as being inferior. This is the "messiness" that Schueller and Watts cite in their study of American literature and customs, with the "the struggle between imperial and local claims to cultural authority" being played out through the establishment and development of the form of the

[40] *Spectator* (New York), 23 September 1833.
[41] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 3 June 1819.
[42] The drama of the period provides us with excellent displays of the assumption that European culture was considered to be more refined, with the plays *Fashion* (by Anna Cora Mowatt, 1845) and *The Contrast* (by Royall Tyler, 1787) openly mocking the general acceptance of the superiority of French and English culture.
[43] *New-York Packet*, 18 August 1785; *New-York Mercury*, 9 November 1767.
[44] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 June 1790.

pleasure garden in America. The resistance to "Anglophone colonial power" combined with the desire to seek legitimation from this same power created "entanglements" that formed neither a wholesale adoption nor rejection of English cultural authority.[45] The dynamic not only changed with time, but was often contradictory at any given time—both embracing and rejecting the mother country. It was in alignment with and opposition to England that the proprietors often positioned their gardens; as a means of assuring cultural legitimacy, they presented their venues as drawing from, being comparable with, and, at times, surpassing the venues found in other countries. By attending such gardens and by participating in the activities offered therein, patrons were participating in a discussion that used English culture both as a "useful foil" and as a source for the construction of American national identities.[46]

It is important not to oversimplify either the emulation or distancing seen, or to conclude that American gardens conversed with London's Vauxhall exclusively. The references to "Vauxhall," for example, should be read with care, as the use of this name did not always indicate the London site. The pleasure garden phenomenon was not merely seen in England and America (as discussed in chapter 1), but rather was seen across the globe, throughout Europe and as far away as New Zealand, where Dunedin hosted its own Vauxhall.[47] As Garrett argues, the word "Vauxhall" took on a generic meaning in Europe and was simply a word used to refer to "all such pleasure resorts," and not to indicate the specific London venue.[48] Indeed, this can be seen to be explicitly the case in certain advertisements and accounts in America, such as in

[45] Warner, "What's Colonial About Colonial America?," 62; Schueller and Watts, *Messy Beginnings*, 2-3 and 11.

[46] Ruth M. Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 103.

[47] Ian Dougherty, *Vauxhall Gardens: Dunedin's Notorious Victorian Pleasure Gardens* (Dunedin, NZ: Saddle Hill, 2007).

[48] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 10.

Durang's description of how Mr. Esterly "established a Vauxhall" in Philadelphia.[49] The term "Vauxhall" can thus be seen to be a problematic one; often referring to the specific London venue, this term was also used in a generic way without a specific referent.

A further complication arises when proprietors made it clear that they were invoking another specific site by using the term Vauxhall. Certain managers referred to a general "European Vauxhall," and specifically to the Parisian Vauxhall (also spelled "Wauxhall") in the advertisements for their gardens.[50] The explicit references to the French site were frequently accompanied by mentions of French customs, persons, and celebrations, with various entertainments and exhibits being billed as being from France. In Vauxhall, New York, for example, advertisements were placed for Monsieur Guille's balloon ascent, with his French origin being clearly stated.[51] The foregrounding of the French origin of several performers implies that England was not the sole source for "legitimacy" in terms of seeking cultural imports or authority. Indeed, associations with France added more than "cultural legitimacy" to the sites—they bolstered certain American ideals, namely freedom and equality.

America and France

The political alliance of France and America against England during the American Revolution and the unfolding of the ideologically-affiliated French Revolution gave rise to the perception of close connections between the two countries. The reality of the bonds of ideology and politics between these two countries is debatable and has been questioned by several scholars, yet the

[49] Alan S. Downer, ed., *The Memoir of John Durang: American Actor, 1785-1816* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), 33.
[50] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 July 1789.
[51] *Evening Post*, 22 May 1821.

fact remains that there was, at least, the perception of strong ties of affinity and fraternity.[52] This led to a strong image of fraternal nations linked politically and philosophically. The elusive yet powerful relationship could be seen in events within the grounds of several gardens, where the legitimacy of the American nation was bolstered by emphasizing links with the established nation of France.

In 1795, for example, Gray's Garden (Baltimore) hosted an event specifically for Bastille Day, advertising illuminations and a subscription dinner, and the nearby Jalland's Garden also celebrated this anniversary, offering a musical concert and fireworks in honor of the occasion.[53] The observation of the French anniversary was linked to the perceived close affinity many Americans saw between them and the aims and ideals of the emerging French Republic. In Gray's Ferry, for example, the Fourth of July was celebrated in 1790 with an exhibit created especially for the occasion, including "the arms of America and France entwined by LIBERTY."[54] In this event, the Gray brothers used the gardens as a space to foreground the close alliance with the French, integrating the two nations within a common ideal.

Yet the relationship between the American and French nations was occasionally upset, and the XYZ Affair provides an example of a period of time in which relations turned sour.[55] When the attempts at bribery by three French agents was made public in 1798, the public attitude towards the French swiftly changed to be one of outrage. There was little by way of protest or demonstration against the French seen within the gardens, but it is worth noting that the Vauxhall site in Charleston was closed from 1797 to 1799. Run by the Frenchmen Lavalette and Bulet and

[52] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
[53] *Federal Intelligencer*, 13 July 1795.
[54] *Federal Gazette*, 3 July 1790.
[55] The XYZ Affair refers to a series of events in 1798 and the resulting scandal when three French agents made a series of demands for continuing negotiations, including money, loans, a bribe (on behalf of Talleyrand), and a formal apology by President Adams.

then Bulet's widow, this venue faded away for the few years during which the XYZ Affair was at fever pitch. It was only in July 1799 that Placide reopened the site.

The direct references to France and comparisons with the French Vauxhall were not especially prevalent in the northern pleasure gardens, but an example could be seen in advertisements in New York in 1797, when a recreation of the illuminations of Vauxhall, Paris was displayed with fireworks at Rickett's Circus.[56] A further reference could be seen in the small number of advertisements for Bush Hill in Philadelphia in which it was compared to both the London and Paris Vauxhalls.[57] However, the explicit invocation of the Parisian venue was limited in northern cities; despite the fact that the manager of one of the longest-running pleasure gardens in America was a Frenchman (Joseph Delacroix of Vauxhall, New York), the instances of citing or celebrating French culture were few, and he more frequently invoked the London site than the French.

Unsurprisingly, it was in the southern cities that French culture was drawn upon more frequently when seeking to legitimize the gardens. From its opening, Citizen Cornet of Charleston highlighted the similarities of his Vauxhall with French sites, offering French music while the nearby theatre presented *French Vauxhall Gardens; or, the Amusements of the Day*.[58] When Alexander Placide (himself a Frenchman) took on the site, he announced his *jet d'eau* and included *Feu de joy* [sic] in his program of events.[59] Probably reflecting the prevalence of the French language within the city, the use of such French terms and emphasis on French music was more prevalent in Charleston's garden than in those of the northern cities.

[56] *The Diary or Loudon's Register*, 17 July 1797.
[57] *Gazette of the United States*, 26 May 1797.
[58] *City Gazette*, 22 October 1795 and 2 May 1796.
[59] *City Gazette*, 8 July 1799 and 9 August 1800.

In both the north and the south, while the degree varied, a very positive relationship with the French was seen within the gardens. Instances of French performers in the American gardens and of visiting French dignitaries became more frequent in the 1820s, and various French balloonists visited the gardens, their arrivals surrounded by descriptions highlighting their French origin. Post-1820, perhaps the most significant demonstration of the attitude of Americans towards the French could be seen in their respect for General Lafayette.

General Lafayette was a figure for whom many Americans held a special affinity; serving as an emblem of both the Revolutionary ideal (fighting for the American cause without seeking financial reward) and of the American "mission" (returning to France with those ideals and being a key player in the French Revolution), Lafayette held an important place in the popular American imagination. As Anne Loveland argues, the reality of Lafayette's actions, ambitions, and motivations was overshadowed by a wide-scale admiration of positive aspects of his character.[60] Serving as a symbol of Republican values and as a hero, Lafayette inspired a degree of hero-worship that allowed Americans to focus on the American ideals he had come to represent. When Lafayette visited America in 1824 and 1825, proprietors of various pleasure gardens responded enthusiastically to his tour of the States. Washington Gardens in Boston, for example, held a fireworks exhibit in August in honor of his visit, and New York's Castle Garden held a ball for him.[61] As will be discussed below, Lafayette was only one of several figures of national importance who were celebrated within the pleasure gardens. However, this French individual serves as a clear example of the fraternal bond many Americans felt they had with the

[60] Anne C. Loveland, *Emblem of Liberty: The Image of Lafayette in the American Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

[61] *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 23 August 1824; A. Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825; or, Journal of a Voyage to the United States* vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1829), 97-98.

French, and celebrations of him were rather celebrations of the ideas he had come to represent which were seen as part of an American identity personified—revolution and liberty.

The relationship between America and France was an important and mostly positive one, but it was not as pronounced or as violent in its swings as that with England. This tame relationship was seen within the gardens through celebrations of French anniversaries and persons, and through comparisons being made between the French and American sites. There were changes to be seen in the (perceived) relationship between the two countries within the gardens, and while the degree of French influence was muted in most cities, the close alignment with French culture in Charleston is reflected in the pleasure gardens. In the sites of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, French influences were not central to the construction of the identities of the gardens (or of the people within them), yet such influences did become more visible at all these sites at moments of particular interest (such as Bastille Day celebrations and the impact of the XYZ Affair). The changing attitude of the American people towards the French in terms of national self-definition was thus demonstrated within the various gardens.

Other nations were also invoked within the gardens (either through comparisons or exhibits). For example, amongst the busts of English authors discussed above were Classical figures, including Cicero, Ajax, Apollo, and Demosthenes, suggesting that authority and legitimation also came from a general association with the cultures of antiquity.[62] Italian- and Chinese-style illuminations and entertainments were presented at many of the venues, including those in Philadelphia and New York, and Spanish dancers (and those of other European

[62] *Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1805. For a more detailed discussion of this, see Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

nationalities) were presented at Niblo's.[63] Yet the references to these nations were not as pronounced or as central to the pleasure gardens and the creation of American identities.

However, much of the continual redefinition of what American national identity meant took place not in relation to other, established, nations, but within the country itself. In terms of the entertainments offered, for example, although many gardens did present or reference English and French entertainments, several also offered performances that could only be deemed American in nature. For example Vauxhall, New York presented "singing, dancing, Yankee Stories," and "Grand Trials at Negro Dancing" in 1841, and various minstrel performances throughout the 1840s.[64] Indeed, certain exhibits and entertainments were ultimately exported to England where they were seen in the London Vauxhall; the American Bowling Saloon (offering patrons "real" American drinks made by "real" Americans) opened in 1848, being expanded the following year as the American Grand Saloon.[65] However, in terms of creating and defining national identities, acts of commemoration and celebration had a more profound impact.

It was the use of public festivals and ceremonies that allowed Americans to perform the "values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions" necessary to legitimize a nation and to perform various national identities, creating opportunities for individual members of the nation to participate in its creation.[66] I will now turn to investigate the various ways in which the pleasure gardens allowed for the exploration of American identities through cultivating patriotism, celebrating anniversaries and victories, and commemorating battles and significant

[63] *Federal Gazette*, 25 July 1791; *Morning Chronicle*, 24 April 1804; *Weekly Herald*, 10 July 1852 and 26 August 1854.

[64] P. T. Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum Written by Himself* (New York: Tubbs, Nesmith, and Teall, 1854; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 210; Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 385.

[65] Information from the appendix of the forthcoming volume David Coke and Alan Borg, *A Comprehensive History of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

[66] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 25.

dates, and how participation in these events allowed patrons to create and perform such identities.

Patriotism, Commemoration, and Celebration

As discussed above, national identities require distinctive "values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions," and in this section I explore how celebration and commemoration coupled with the adoption of focal figures and calls for patriotic activities allowed these elements to be rehearsed within the gardens.[67] The gardens were presented as being patriotic venues in which patriotic endeavors could be pursued. Commemorations and celebrations of national victories were likewise seen in the gardens, along with Fourth of July spectacles. Drawing from the myriad of events in and commentaries on the gardens, I investigate how the gardens operated as a site in which myths, symbols, and memories were performed.

In the years following the Revolution, the patriotic nature of pleasure gardens was remarked upon by several commentators. In 1789, for example, an article signed "A Votary of the Patriotic Muses" identified three principle reasons why Americans should patronize the gardens: they promote American industry (above European "toys") and are linked to the valuable practice of agriculture; they allow for people to mix regardless of class; and they "elevate the human mind" due to the "genius of the place" nature affords.[68] While the accuracy of the second reason is highly debatable (and will be discussed in chapter 3), the idea that the gardens were patriotic endeavors was made clear through an examination of the ways in which the venues supported American trade, interest in the patriotic industry of agriculture, the idea of equality,

[67] Ibid., 24-5.
[68] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 May 1789.

and the betterment of the individual citizen. In a similar piece published a year later, the presence of gardening in all "polished nations," the necessity of such entertainment venues in avoiding immoral behavior, and the influence music has upon national character are all foregrounded with a view to present pleasure gardens as patriotic venues suited to the furtherance of the American ideal character. The elegance of the Gray's Ferry site was also credited with improving the "taste of their country," with being "truly patriotic," and with providing evidence of industry and wealth within the nation.[69]

These multiple and often abstract ways in which the gardens were touted as patriotic were seen in many cities, and the patriotic nature of various industries was frequently highlighted. In Washington Gardens, for example, a display of "Mechanic Arts" (such as casks and ship blocks) was advertised as being "intimately connected with the real *Independence* of our country" due to the possibilities such industries presented for America to be independent from Europe in terms of trade.[70] Similarly, Niblo's hosted numerous American Institute exhibits from 1834 which included silk, fruits, flowers, agricultural products, and mechanical apparatus;[71] offering prizes for various categories of exhibits, these events were described in very patriotic tones. In an address at the closing of the 1843 exhibit it was observed that excessive importing of goods leads to a dependence upon other countries (primarily England), thus the encouragement of agricultural and mechanical innovations was for the good of the country. Indeed, in the same address it was observed that America was achieving this goal to a degree, noting that "Europe, which has been conspicuous for her machinery, certainly the last century, has scarcely sent us a

[69] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 June 1790.
[70] *Columbian Centinel*, 7 July 1819. Italics in original.
[71] These fairs were held here each year until 1845 when they moved to Castle Garden (another New York pleasure garden) from 1846 to 1853. The fair was also held at New York's Crystal Palace from 1853 to 1858, and then Palace Garden in 1859. These events (and the venues) will be discussed at greater length in chapter 5. Ethan Robey, "The Utility of Art: Mechanics' Institute Fairs in New York City, 1828-1876" (PhD dissertation: Columbia University, 2000), 628-35.

specimen, which has not soon been returned, amended and improved by American Ingenuity."[72] In advertisements in the run up to such exhibits, citizens were explicitly encouraged to consider contributing to the show, thus becoming a part of the patriotic display.[73] These exhibits which showcased the industrial achievements of the nation, were surrounded by praise for the innovations of Americans, and were accompanied by firework displays and other celebratory events. These kinds of exhibits were seen on a smaller scale in other pleasure gardens (such as Washington Gardens, above), and demonstrate instances of the sites being used as a forum for demonstrating patriotic industry. In attending or contributing to these events, individual citizens were provided with a means to celebrate the achievements of the nation within a patriotic framework.

While advancements in industry were an important element in the development and recognition of national independence and value, battles and military accomplishments figured more highly within the pleasure gardens as a means of asserting national legitimacy. In both the act of fighting for one's country and in commemorating battles and military victories, individual citizens were presented with a way to actively participate in the creation of national identities on the global stage—asserting ideas of a nation worth fighting for and of its superiority over other nations.

As the pleasure gardens were a place of entertainment and a leisure resort, it is not surprising that commemorations of soldiers who died fighting for their country were given little attention within the gardens. However, in Harrowgate Gardens, a "Grand MONUMENT of the HEROES who have fallen in the glorious cause of Liberty" was unveiled in 1792.[74] In 1835,

[72] James Tallmadge, *Address, Delivered at the close of the Sixteenth Annual Fair of the American Institute, New-York, October, 1843* (New York: James Van Norden, 1843), 19.
[73] See for example, *Spectator*, 9 September 1839.
[74] *The Mail*, 12 July 1792.

retired officers of the ninth regiment were honored at Niblo's with the presentation of a silver vase and pitcher.[75] A military presence was also seen in the gardens with various events and processions, such as the "Grand military and civic celebration" at Columbian Gardens, Baltimore in 1846.[76] The performance of songs such as "Columbia Land of Liberty" by James N. Barker and the display of "naval battles and presidents" further enhanced this idea.[77] Commemorations of specific battles could be seen in Vauxhall, New York, where there was a depiction of the "Nautical Exploits of the American Squadroon in the Mediterranean" in 1805, and a mechanical representation of the Battle of New Orleans in 1815.[78] By observing and celebrating such military achievements, proprietors were highlighting national achievements and strength, while patrons were given the opportunity to participate in the celebration of the nation.

Individual figures played an important role in the creation of national myths and values. For example, various presidents were given specific attention within the gardens, ranging from exhibits and transparencies to events celebrating the visits of presidents. Various aspects paid homage to George Washington: the naming of Washington Gardens; the exhibit of a transparency of Washington in Gray's Garden, Baltimore in 1808 and Vauxhall, Charleston in 1809; and the celebration of his birthday in the Boston gardens in 1819, for example.[79] President James Monroe's visits to New York and Boston were marked with special programs of events in 1817 in pleasure gardens.[80] Past and present presidents (along with Lafayette, discussed above) were adopted as "hero-symbols," which, as Anne Loveland argues, served an important function in nation-building; the primary function of such figures was "to symbolize and perpetuate

[75] *The Spectator*, 22 June 1835.
[76] *The Sun*, 10 September 1846.
[77] *Commercial Advertiser*, 7 July 1817; *Boston Gazette*, 2 July 1818.
[78] *Morning Chronicle*, 22 July 1805; *Evening Post*, 12 August 1815.
[79] *North American*, 2 July 1808; *City Gazette*, 10 August 1809; *New-England Palladium*, 23 February 1819.
[80] *Commercial Advertiser*, 12 June 1817; *Boston Gazette*, 7 July 1817.

collective values, particularly in periods of rapid change and social reorientation." These individuals, she continues, are "an important part of any national ideology [and] served in America as substitutes for the symbols, heraldry, inherited titles, and traditions to which older cultures looked for values and continuity."[81] Loveland identifies the value of nationally-recognized figures appearing to represent common values and (albeit recent) traditions. While individuals may have held differing opinions of these various figures, presidents and other public officials created a focal point of commonality. Within the gardens, the celebration of such figures created a focus for national identity formation, presenting opportunities for maintaining and reinterpreting "shared values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions"—the acts necessary for national identity to be formed and developed.

By far the most wide-spread public celebration of the American nation within the gardens was, however, the Fourth of July, and each of the sites under discussion here hosted special events to mark the occasion, thus allowing for the public celebration of (and thus performance of) the American nation. Many of the pleasure gardens served as the focus for one or more elements of the day's festivities, with orations and fireworks being among the many events taking place there. Newspapers record a great number of Independence Day celebrations connected with the pleasure gardens, with toasts, dinners, special concerts, fireworks, and transparencies being exhibited specifically in honor of the founding of the country. Figure 2.4 provides an example of one such program.[82]

Of all the events staged at the various gardens on the Fourth of July, fireworks were perhaps the most important and widespread. In 1820, Joseph Delacroix argued that far from

[81] Loveland, *Emblem of Liberty*, 7.

[82] See also, *Franklin Gazette* (Philadelphia), 6 July 1819; *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), 7 July 1827; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 3 July 1815; *City Gazette* (Charleston), 6 July 1801; and *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 1 July 1805, for examples of extensive Fourth of July programs.

being incidental to the day, "the productions of the Pyrotechnic Art are now considered the most elegant and appropriate" for the Fourth of July celebrations.[83] Indeed, fireworks are still considered indispensible to Fourth of July celebrations throughout America, and their display has become emblematic of American Independence. As Michael Lynn has argued, the history of fireworks (both in terms of their past exclusivity and use in depictions of battles) has made them very effective as a "republican tool for promoting nationalism" in both France and America.[84] Although the first use of fireworks to mark independence in America was not within a pleasure garden, subsequent years saw pleasure gardens emerge as the primary site for such exhibits.[85] Indeed, when newspapers printed commentary on the previous day's entertainments and celebrations of the Fourth, it was only the gardens that were noted for illuminations and fireworks—the fireworks were a chief celebratory act of the Fourth, and the gardens were the primary venue for viewing these displays.[86]

The gardens touted other events as an appropriate way for Americans to unite and to celebrate the birth of the nation. The "Glorious Anniversary" was marked with combinations of transparencies, concerts, performances, orations, and (of course) fireworks being presented to the public.[87] Joseph Delacroix was particularly notable for the extravagance of his Fourth of July celebrations, and his detailed programs allow us to get a more comprehensive view of what exactly a patron could expect to encounter at Vauxhall on the Fourth. For example, on the Fourth of July 1817, Delacroix presented a "Grand Concert" (opening with "Monroe's March"), an address, twenty-nine firework exhibits (all itemized, including the "Star of Freedom, 12 feet in

[83] *Columbian*, 30 June 1820.

[84] Michael R. Lynn, "Sparks for Sale: The Culture and Commerce of Fireworks in Early Modern France," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 75.

[85] Other sites were used as well, with an example being found in Boston in 1820, when a fireworks display was given from Boston Common (which was adjacent to the gardens); a concert was given that night from within the gardens. *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 4 July 1820.

[86] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, 6 July 1818; *Mercantile Advertiser*, 6 July 1820.

[87] *Evening Post* (New York), 1 July 1808.

diameter" and "The United States, represented by 19 suns revolving around a center"), and the "Eruption of Mount Etna," all set in his Vauxhall, with "transparent paintings" commemorating the peace of 1783 and 1813 and "several thousand lights."[88]

The importance of such public festivals and events in relation to the exploration of national identities has been discussed at length by David Waldstreicher, Simon Newman, and Len Travers, and they variously argue for the manner in which parades, festivals, and feasts allowed individuals to contribute to, and experiment with, national identities.[89] Newman argues that it was "in their rich array of parades, festivals, civic feasts, badges, and songs that most Americans experienced national politics," while Waldstreicher notes that such "celebrations enabled ordinary citizens to practice national politics."[90] The Fourth of July was a particularly important festival in the Early American calendar, as it was central to the "formation and communication of national identity and national consciousness in the early republic," as Travers argues, allowing for "a mythos of national identity and national interests that transcended local and regional concerns."[91] Martial music, grand fireworks, and galas were among the ways in which the gardens allowed individuals who lacked an official role in the festivities (such as military persons participating in a militia muster, or political figures who could deliver orations or attend dinners) to participate in the celebration of the nation. By attending a concert of military music, marveling at a "transparency of America," or simply consuming the popular

[88] *Commercial Advertiser*, 1 July 1817.

[89] David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

[90] Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, xiii; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 173.

[91] Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 4, 6.

turtle soup at the public venues, an individual could actively participate in the celebration of (and thus construction of) ideas of national identities.[92]

National identities were created, explored, and performed within the gardens in a variety of manners. Ranging from variable associations with the English and French gardens allowing for identification with or disassociation from the respective nations, to methods of celebration and commemoration, the gardens hosted multiple ways in which patrons could explore what it meant to be American. Through the performance of individuals in a variously-coded space, the gardens were able to cultivate a variety of national identities through a variety of means, creating and reiterating "symbols, memories, myths, and traditions," drawing on the English "heritage" as well as creating a new one.[93]

The Fourth of July has been termed an "imagined community of the Revolutionary American nation," as it allowed for the shared belief in a singular national identity, even when partisan politics and flawed democracy put the very idea of a unitary identity in doubt.[94] Political inequalities seen in partisan politics, class divisions, and race or gender discrimination meant that Anderson's "imagined community" took anything but a singular form. Even while these celebrations wore the mask of a single, democratic national identity, there were significant exclusions from these celebrations in particular, and from pleasure gardens more generally. Such events mostly centered on white men. In the ensuing chapter I will explore the question of who was permitted to participate in these performances, examining questions of class and race, and how they figured into admission or denial within the gardens themselves and within broader questions of what it meant to be American.

[92] *City Gazette* (Charleston), 6 July 1801. This is further discussed by Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, chapter four.

[93] Smith, *Chosen People*, 24-25.

[94] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 17.

Chapter 3

Performing Class: The Challenge to and Reaffirmation of Class Divisions and Hierarchies

In an oration delivered by playwright and politician James Nelson Barker in Vauxhall Gardens, Philadelphia on the Fourth of July 1817, he noted that America is not and should not be defined politically by a class structure. He refuted the need for a hierarchy in which people foist themselves to a position of superiority at the expense of those below, but did note that class is an important element of American society. Any civil society, he argued, "will naturally divide itself into classes" which will differ in terms of leisure activities, stating that "education and taste, and other circumstances, will give to each class its own proper manners and usages."[1] What makes America particularly enviable, he states, is not its lack of class structure ("which our enemies have falsely imputed to us") but its lack of a hierarchical class structure being seen on a political level. It was clear to Barker that democracy and the ideals important to the new nation did not mean absolute equality, but rather political equality, and that this could be gained even in a society divided into classes with different (often competing) goals. Yet the "equality" he cited was to erupt into violence and bloodshed at the very site of his oration just two years later—class divisions and perceptions were not as stable or inert as he (and others) believed.

Democracy and equality, and the relation of these ideas to class structure have been and continue to be important and persistent topics of debate in discussions of post-

[1] James N. Barker, *An Oration Delivered at Philadelphia Vauxhall Gardens, on the Forty-First Anniversary of American Independence* (Philadelphia: John Binns, 1817), 9.

Revolutionary America. The myth of an American society without class divisions has been an enduring one. The early nineteenth-century Scottish travel writer James Flint identified America as not being "divided or formed into classes by the distinctions of title and rank;"[2] the scholar Garrett described antebellum New York as lacking "a rigid social structure," instead presenting "a classless society" in which "all but the extremes of the two ends mixed freely;"[3] and more recently, Joyce Appleby describes "a social homogeneity in which Americans began to take pride" after the Revolution.[4] The concept of a "classless society" with a "social homogeneity" was a popular idea that continues to be associated with the founding of the US, despite its obvious falsehood. As Barker noted, class structures exist in all societies, and antebellum America was no exception. The degree to which classes could interact and socialize together and the fluidity of class divisions, however, was open for discussion.

The Vauxhall of London has often been characterized as a place accessible to all levels of society, with the gardens allowing for social mixing between the various personages there—from the Prince of Wales to prostitutes, and everyone between. Although the degree of this social mixing may not have been as extensive as once thought, the possibility of social inclusion was much admired within England and has been repeatedly cited.[5] Given this popular understanding of the English gardens, one

[2] James Flint, *Letters From America, Containing Observations on the Climate and Agriculture of the Western States, the Manners of the People, the Prospects of Emigrants, &c., &c.*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1904), 292.

[3] Thomas M. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City, 1700-1865" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1978), 614.

[4] Joyce Appleby, "The Social Consequences of the American Revolutionary Ideals in the Early Republic," in *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class*, ed. Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2001), 39.

[5] The most sophisticated discussion of this generally-held truth is to be found in the work of Elizabeth Grieg, whose paper, "'All together and all Distinct': Social Exclusivity and the Pleasure Gardens

would expect that the American gardens would have provided an ideal site for the realization of a utopia of socializing regardless of class in the new nation; if America was indeed fostering a society in which all classes could mingle without distinction or prejudice, the pleasure garden ought to be a suitable space to view this ideal in practice. Indeed, the American gardens were occasionally noted as being distinctly "American" due to the fact that they supposedly allowed for social mixing across traditional class lines, and a Philadelphian newspaper contributor noted that Gray's gardens were "congenial with republican manners" due to his perception that class was not a primary concern at this site.[6]

Yet, as Barker notes, social class divisions were in place, forming an important facet of American identity, and although he raises the idea of the equality of the different classes in terms of value, even within his speech he betrays an unconscious and ever-present value system which places classes in a hierarchical relationship to one another; when he observes that "the rustic would feel but little at ease" among the assemblies of the fashionable, he tries to avoid, but cannot, the fact that the "unlettered" rustic is widely-perceived as inferior to the urban elite. The "equality" that is often cited in relation to class in antebellum America refers not so much to equality of class status, but rather to the idea of perceived equality of *access* to class status.

Class divisions existed, but they were not seen as fixed, inevitable, or determined by birth. Instead, class was an active process in this new society which embraced social mobility and sought to further social advancement by distinction through industry, behavior, and self-presentation. An awareness of how one dressed and behaved, and

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of Eighteenth-Century London," was delivered at the conference, "Vauxhall Revisited: Pleasure Gardens and Their Publics, 1660-1880," held at the Tate Britain, 16 July 2008.

[6] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 May 1789.

where one was seen, could potentially determine social status, as these markers of class could be adopted or adapted. As ideas of gentility became demystified, it became possible to behave appropriately and adopt the manners of persons of a higher class and thus "perform" as though of a different status through dress, manners, taste, etc. But as these performances attempted to blur and cross class divisions though physical displays, they simultaneously led to the reinforcement of class divisions. Far from being venues that allowed for the erasure of class distinctions, the pleasure gardens played a role in the renegotiation and ultimate reaffirmation of class lines.

In *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, Lawrence Levine identifies three methods the elite employed in attempting to elevate and define themselves as the superior and distinct class: "retreat[ing] into their own private spaces; . . . transform[ing] public spaces by rules, systems of taste, and canons of behavior; . . . [and] convert[ing] the strangers so that their own modes of behavior and cultural predilections emulated those of the elites."[7] These various tactics allowed for the implementation of cultural elitism and the clarification of class divisions through cultural forms. Levine identifies these tactics as leading to a cultural bifurcation which took place from the 1830s, with divisions being seen between the categories of "highbrow" and "lowbrow." The former was seen as exclusive cultural forms reserved for the elite, and the latter as the popular forms open to/of the masses. While there is a degree of ambivalence in these operations, this process is seen by Levine as dividing culture into class-specific strata.

Both the encouragement of social mobility through performance and the tactics of reasserting class boundaries through the sacralization of culture could be seen in the

[7] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 177.

changing perceptions and representations of the American pleasure gardens. They began by embracing the belief that all were socially mobile (typically understood as upwardly mobile), and that by adopting what Richard Bushman terms a "vernacular gentility," many could perform as genteel. Yet as cultural bifurcation began, the gardens quickly moved from their democratic ideal of inclusive gentility, through highbrow ambitions, and to their lowbrow destination, along the way giving rise to riots, violence, and the destruction of property.[8] The pleasure gardens thus display a concern with the performance of class and its importance to ideas of class identity in post-Revolutionary America. Within this chapter I explore how the "middling sorts" explored social mobility through performance and how proprietors of gardens capitalized on this trend by creating a genteel space in which individuals could perform. I will then trace how, despite presenting the idea that class lines could be erased through mere performance, these divisions became paradoxically reaffirmed by such performances. After identifying the emergence of the cultural divisions highbrow and lowbrow, I finally explore how these gardens became decidedly lowbrow, despite their highbrow aspirations. The gardens can thus be seen as a place in which class—an important element of American identity—was experimented with and performed.

A Space for the "Middling Sorts"

The proprietors of the various gardens targeted the "middling sorts" of the population, presenting them with a defined space in which they could perform class. Although advertising and entertainments are two important ways to determine who was appealed

[8] These terms will be discussed in greater detail below.

to, the costs of admission were also an indicator of who was sought by the proprietors. After defining what is meant by the phrase "middling sorts," I will investigate what the admission costs were and how they related to wages and to other forms of entertainment, before identifying the target audience as indicated by these findings.

The category "middling sorts" is difficult to identify with precision, but there have been several attempts to define and delimit this large section of the American population. Sean Wilentz, in his recent study of democracy, presents a social spectrum based on occupation and relative status that is echoed by many others. Wilentz identifies the vast majority of city populations pre-Revolution as being made up of mechanics, artisans, petty merchants, shopkeepers, and tradesmen (a mix of skilled manual and non-manual tradesmen), who made up the "middling sorts." This segment of the population was governed largely by professionals such as lawyers, teachers, physicians, and clergymen (all skilled persons engaged in non-manual work). Both these groups of people were above the lesser tradesmen, sailors, mariners, and unskilled laborers, who were above the free laboring poor, who, in turn, were above slaves.[9] Stuart Blumin and Billy G. Smith similarly identify city populations as being structured along lines of manual and non-manual trades, and between skilled and unskilled, with the "middling sorts" (the largest component of the population) being comprised of both skilled manual and non-manual trades.[10]

The "middling sorts" made up the majority of antebellum American city populations and constituted a large social group. This increasingly politically-active

[9] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 20.

[10] Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of The Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17-65; Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 4-5.

segment of the population engaged neither in classless mixing nor a static hierarchy, but rather constantly redefined, eroded, or blurred the boundaries between and amongst traditional lines.[11] As Richard Bushman argues, a "vernacular gentility" emerged in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, with outward markers of respectability being adopted by "middling people."[12] A heightened self-awareness was part of this development, one which saw people who were not previously identified as being "genteel" turning their attentions to their manners, dress, and actions with the aim of capitalizing on the possibilities of social mobility. Bushman argues that class was not fixed at this time for the middle section of society, and that concerns of class and perceived status were constantly being renegotiated by such individuals. He suggests that an awareness of one's class through behavior, dress, and other manifestations of taste was at the forefront in defining one's identity in America in this period, and that people became aware of how the acquisition of certain goods and behaviors could alter the way they were seen by others in terms of social class. This observation can be extended to include not merely the acquisition and display of material goods, but also the performance of manners and attendance at certain venues on specific days.

Pleasure gardens were not the cheapest (nor most expensive) form of entertainment available to city dwellers during the summer months. As illustrated in appendix 2, the average price for entry to a pleasure garden was about 50 cents.[13]

[11] While the precise make up of the middling sorts and the development of internal hierarchies fluctuated with time and from city to city, this study covers too many cities and too long a time period to allow for an in-depth study of the changing composition and organization of this large group. Instead, for my purposes here, what matters is that this group was undergoing constant renegotiation of relative status and definition.

[12] Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1993), xiii.

[13] The admission fees varied with time and location, and the fact that there was more than one currency in circulation makes simple comparisons between relative costs of entry problematic. In addition

Although Garrett argues that "anyone was free to go to any garden," the 50 cent admission fee would have prohibited entry to the lowest-earners of each city, as manual laborers would have typically earned under a dollar a day, and thus the 50 cents would have represented a portion of their income too high to permit regular attendance.[14] However, skilled tradesmen such as masons, hat makers, and clock makers would have had sufficient income to patronize the various gardens in each of the major cities under discussion.

A wealth of summertime entertainment options were available alongside (or in competition with) the pleasure gardens, ranging from traditional theatre to animal exhibits, demonstrations of mechanical inventions, museums, musical performances, circus, and acrobatic displays. In Boston in the summer of 1820, for example, entertainment options included a visit to the New England Museum, where one could see an exhibit of wax figures, a demonstration of a "pondrometer" (an extravagant scale for weighing people), or hear music (each being 25 cents),[15] see transparencies, paintings, and a panorama (also 25 cents),[16] go swimming in seawater at Canal Bridge (25 cents for warm water, 12.5 cents for cold),[17] or marvel at "Hindoos perform[ing] deceptions,

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to the British shilling and newly-created American dollar, the Spanish dollar was also in common circulation at the end of the eighteenth century. The relative worth of these various currencies is an inexact science, with exchange rates fluctuating widely over short periods of time, and having different relative values in different cities. For a more detailed discussion of the problems associated with currency conversions during this time period, see Lawrence H. Officer, *Between the Dollar-Sterling Gold Points: Exchange Rates, Parity, and Market Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[14] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 615. Precise details of income are difficult to establish, but a report of 1885 for Massachusetts identifies typical wages for various trades from 1752 to 1860, with 1820 being used as the point of comparison for discussion here on the basis of wage information availability and the fact that most of the gardens were in operation with a 50 cent admission charge at that time. Carroll D. Wright, *Comparative Wages, Prices, and Cost of Living, From the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, for 1885* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1889).

[15] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 1 June, 8 June, and 28 April 1820.

[16] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 1 and 29 April 1820.

[17] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 28 April 1820.

optical delusions, etc, & wonderful feats of Strength and Activity" at Exhibition Hall (also 25 cents).[18] On the opposite end of the spectrum, "select oratorios" could be heard at Boylston hall for $1.[19] At a cost of 50 cents, therefore, Washington Gardens was more expensive than most popular entertainments, but less expensive than the most exclusive and costly events available in the summer. In relation to issues of admission costs, it thus appears that the pleasure garden in Boston occupied a middle ground, catering neither to the lowest nor highest classes but rather for the portion of the expanding middle with an interest in social mobility and advancement.[20] The gardens were presented as a space elevated above more plebian performance spaces but were still within the economic reach of much of the middling sorts.

In the South, class divisions were even more pronounced, yet a similar audience was targeted. As Nicholas Butler notes, "there was a clear sense of social stratification in South Carolina," and of class "inflation" coupled with social ambition that allowed for numerous balls and series of concerts to be sustained.[21] In the years surrounding the Revolution, Charleston became a "locus of conspicuous cultural displays" that Vauxhall catered to.[22] The various forms of entertainment available in Charleston during the summer months were rather limited (due in no small part to the weather and to the fact

[18] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 25 August 1820.

[19] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 29 April 1820. It was not until the late-nineteenth century that Boston developed an elite entertainment culture, with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts being founded in 1870 and the Boston Symphony Orchestra as late as 1881, for example. See Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. Paul Storey (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 454-75.

[20] It should be noted here that the 50 cents admission was for activities in the gardens and not for the performances in the newly-opened theatre found within Washington Gardens. Access to the theatre will be discussed further, below.

[21] Nicholas Michael Butler, *Votaries of Apollo: The St Cecilia Society and the Patronage of Concert Music in Charleston, South Carolina, 1766-1820* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 8-9.

[22] Ibid., 1.

that many left the city during the hot season).[23] However, newspapers of 1805 reveal that there were some organized amusements, including the theatre, which offered amateur productions with prices ranging from 2 shillings and 4 pence for the gallery to 4 shillings and 8 pence for a box (which equates to about 53 cents and $1.06, respectively), and an oratorio for $1.[24] Also at this time the St. Cecelia Society offered a series of concerts for the price of $30 per annum.[25] With its admission price also being at the national average for such venues (of 50 cents), the Vauxhall of Charleston was one of only a very small number of entertainments open to the public that was relatively affordable; while the northern cities had a vast and vibrant scene of entertainments, each vying with the other to garner the attention of a large section of the population, the Vauxhall of Charleston was almost the only venue where those referred to in the north as the "middling sorts" could go for publically-sanctioned, respectable entertainment. Many other venues were prohibitively expensive or not recognized as genteel locations, such as taverns. The gardens thus provided a forum for those wishing to capitalize on the possibility of social mobility to perform as though of a higher social class.

While the "middle" may have been smaller in Charleston, the desires to advance socially and to perform as though of a higher class were still present. Through costs of admission, it becomes clear that the "middle" was the target audience for these gardens in their early years of operation. The years of success of Vauxhall can be seen to coincide

[23] John Melish notes of Charleston residents that "almost every person who can afford it, removes to a more healthy situation during this period [mid-May to mid-July and mid-October to mid-November]." John Melish, *Travels Through the United States of America, in the Years 1806 & 1807 and 1809, 1810, & 1811, Including an Account of Passages Betwixt America & Britain, Ireland, and Canada* (Philadelphia, 1815) 280-81.

[24] *Charleston City Gazette*, 1 April and 10 June 1805. The year 1805 has been selected based on the fact that Vauxhall was popular during that year. These conversions have been made using Lawrence H. Officer's website, "Measuring Worth," "Dollar-Pound Exchange Rate From 1791." http://www.measuringworth.org/exchangepound/ (accessed 21 April 2010).

[25] Butler, *Votaries of Apollo*, 90. Vauxhall closed in 1821.

with the period of luxury and cultural sophistication in Charleston, closing along with the end of the period of prosperity in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when "the region's reputation for cultural sophistication quietly lapsed."[26] The gardens here were firmly tied to the performance of wealth, class, and leisure.

Creating a Genteel Space

In order for the space of the pleasure gardens to appeal to the "middling sorts" who sought social advancement through performance, it had to be presented as genteel and appropriate as a site for the performance of gentility. When using the term "genteel" here, I am referring to the manners, appearance, and conduct that resemble those which "prevail in upper-class society" and are "suited to the station of a gentleman or gentlewoman."[27] The metaphorical space the various gardens held within society was determined to a large degree by the way in which proprietors attempted to position their establishments through advertisements and entertainments and how the gardens were reported on and depicted. In these various forums, the associations of the rural ideal in an urban setting (as discussed in chapter one) combined with appeals to morality, taste, fashion, and refined manners allowed the gardens to be presented as genteel spaces. This tactic of presenting a genteel space appealed to the "middling sorts" and their aspirations of social advancement.

Much advertising for the pleasure gardens consisted of declarations and assertions of the genteel nature of the gardens, including reassurances that the gardens were

[26] Ibid., 15.
[27] *OED* s.v. "genteel," 2(b).

"respectable and fit places of resort for the best classes of society," attended only by those seeking a "rational, elegant, and instructive species of entertainment."[28] The advertisements of the various gardens betray a concern with appealing to a genteel audience through specific descriptions (stated as directly as "no ungenteel people") and through affirmations of the fashionable nature of the sites (with Niblo's being described as being the "resort of the *bon ton*").[29] Of course, claims of being genteel should not be taken at face value; they do, however, suggest an attempt to present the gardens as refined and respectable venues, suited to those of taste.

The association of the various sites with the rural idyll was an element seen in the activities at and portrayals of many of the gardens. As discussed in chapter one, the gardens literally brought the country into the city and embodied the tension between rural and urban. Descriptions of the gardens as possessing "rural beauties" (Harrowgate) or providing "a partial retreat from the noise of the town" (Gray's/Chatsworth) were common descriptors;[30] the "rural and picturesque" McArann's garden boasted "rural charms" and provided patrons the opportunity to "enjoy rural life," while Easton's of Baltimore provided a retreat "from the heat and fatigues of the day."[31] The idea of the countryside as being an honest and pure space of leisure was frequently drawn upon and directly related to the gardens.

The proprietors of Gray's Ferry in Philadelphia promoted the link between the gardens and the rural idyll in even more pronounced ways. In July of 1790, for example, the gardens boasted "an artificial Island with a Farm House Garden, &c.," which was

[28] *Franklin Gazette*, 2 July 1819.
[29] *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, 28 May 1794; *Spectator*, 2 July 1835.
[30] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 5 September 1789; *Federal Gazette*, 30 January 1800.
[31] *North American*, 11 June 1841; *Maryland Journal*, 7 July 1789.

complimented by "Thirteen young Ladies and the same number of Gentlemen" who were to be "dressed as Shepherds and Shepherdesses" and to emerge from "the Grove."[32] By literally recreating idyllic scenes and characters within the gardens, the proprietors of Gray's were highlighting this element of the gardens. Commentators on Gray's Ferry likewise emphasized the moral and respectable nature of such spaces by noting that a "love of beautiful Nature softens, refines, and elevates the human mind" and that "even rude minds are harmonized by the genius of the place."[33]

Respectable venues had to be presented as being moral and charitable, and the various gardens adopted a variety of tactics to appear as such, ranging from benefit events (such as Washington Gardens hosting a benefit following a fire at Petersburgh in 1815) to descriptions in advertisements (such as Niblo's claim that a performance was "chaste").[34] Other commentators also saw fit to highlight the moral nature of these spaces in a variety of newspaper columns, describing the gardens as instrumental in "avoiding immoral behavior," for example.[35] In order to distance Columbian Gardens from accusations of frivolity, a lengthy advertisement was placed that noted how fireworks are not injurious to morals in the slightest and should rather be considered to be instructional.[36]

The advertised presence of women in gardens was another method employed by the proprietors, and there were several direct appeals to women made by many of the gardens through advertisements, descriptions, and events. With the exception of the very early years of Columbia Gardens, Baltimore, and Vauxhall, Charleston, and the late years

[32] *Federal Gazette*, 3 July 1790.
[33] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 May 1789.
[34] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 17 August 1815; *New York Herald*, 17 June 1845.
[35] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 June 1790.
[36] *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 8 October 1833.

of Vauxhall, New York, the gardens were run by men, yet the associations of the gardens with the "fairer sex" were important to their success. The Vauxhall in Charleston specified having a designated area for women, whilst Washington Gardens announced in 1815 that they could accommodate "both sexes," and opened a "Ladies SODA Room" in 1819.[37] Vauxhall, New York presented a fireworks exhibit aimed specifically at women; the "Temple of Love" of 1801 was described as an event suitable for "the Ladies of this city," with tickets (six shillings) admitting one gentleman and "as many women as he thinks proper."[38] Niblo's also encouraged active participation by women in its early years; the exhibit of 1839 was prefaced with invitations for women to submit flowers to be displayed.[39]

However, even in these overt instances of inviting women to the gardens, or highlighting their presence in advertisements, it was made clear that women were typically not admitted to the gardens if not accompanied by at least one man.[40] Much like the London Vauxhall, prostitution appears to have been a constant threat to the reputation of various pleasure gardens in America, and most proprietors took steps to exclude such women. The refusal to admit "unescorted women" and the employment of surveillance were common to many of the gardens, including the Vauxhall of Philadelphia, various New York Vauxhalls, and Washington Gardens, Boston, and these efforts apparently met with moderate success. Delacroix and Niblo in particular were "consistently praised for their ability to exclude 'women of pleasure' from their

[37] *City Gazette*, 18 July 1804; *Boston Gazette*, 17 July 1815; *Boston Intelligencer*, 15 May 1819.
[38] *Commercial Advertiser*, 10 August 1801.
[39] *Spectator*, 9 September 1839.
[40] Even in the "Temple of Love" event described above, women were targeted, but tickets were sold to men so they could accompany the women.

gardens."[41] While women were encouraged to attend the space in order to present the activities there as being genteel, "women of pleasure" were not, for the same reason.

It was not merely women accompanied by a partner who were actively invited to the gardens, but whole families. By offering half price admission to children, many of the gardens expressed a desire to welcome the family unit to their sites in order to promote an image of respectability. Rural Felicity/Easton's openly invited families in 1801 and 1802, while Washington Gardens (Boston), McArann's (Philadelphia), and Columbian Gardens (Baltimore) advertised half price tickets for children.[42] Some gardens, such as Niblo's, Vauxhall, New York, and Vauxhall, Charleston extended a similar admission policy for children in tandem with events designed specifically for families and/or children, hosting the "Chinese Lady," a balloon ascent, and a "Theatre Picturesque and Mechanique" respectively.[43] Unaccompanied children, however, were prohibited by many of the sites, with Washington Gardens and Vauxhall, Charleston being very explicit about such a policy.[44]

These various policies designed to actively encourage families were part of the goal of creating the impression of a respectable space, elevated above the plebian entertainments found at taverns and similar resorts. The proprietors of the various gardens appeared to be catering for a demand for respectable entertainment, untroubled by concerns of "prostitutes, drunkards, noisy spectators, and occasional riots, as well as

[41] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 608.

[42] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 19 September 1801, and 10 July 1802; *Boston Gazette*, 31 August 1815; *Public Ledger*, 3 August 1839; *Baltimore Patriot*, 31 July 1831.

[43] *New York Herald*, 30 July 1847; *Mercantile Advertiser*, 30 June 1800; *City Gazette*, 13 June 1807.

[44] *Boston Intelligencer*, 29 August 1818; *City Gazette*, 7 April 1809.

Figure 3.1. McArann's Garden, Philadelphia. Painting of McArran's Garden c.1840. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

risqué spectacles."[45] At the turn of the century, pleasure gardens were addressing a then-emergent desire of the "middling sorts" for "chaste entertainment" which "exclude[ed] prostitutes and liquor and encourage[ed] family attendance" in a manner that preempted the "minor revolution" which Bruce McConachie identifies as extending to the theatres in many American cities after 1845.[46] The "genteel" space created by the gardens was utilized in this manner as a way of performing gentility.

The ability to enter this space of gentility presented by a pleasure garden was made all the more distinct through the delineation of the grounds. The pleasure gardens were not typically marked by hedges or low fences, but rather with high wooden fences designed to prevent outside spectators from looking in. As can be seen in figures 3.1 and

[45] Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 157.

[46] Ibid., 158.

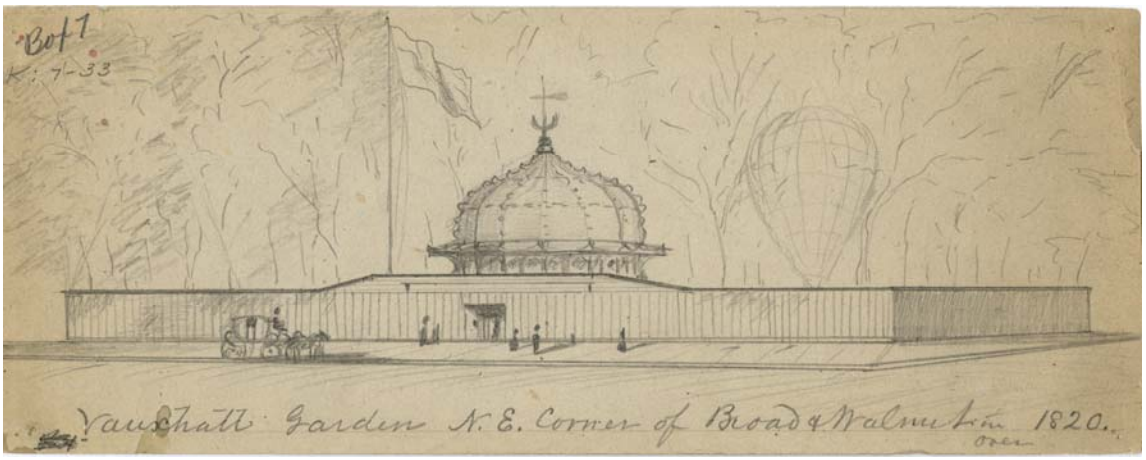

Figure 3.2. Vauxhall, Philadelphia. This sketch, drawn in 1820, depicts the gardens from the outside revealing a balloon ascent in the gardens (in the right of the image). On the reverse, an eye-witness of the riots of 1819 records his observations. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

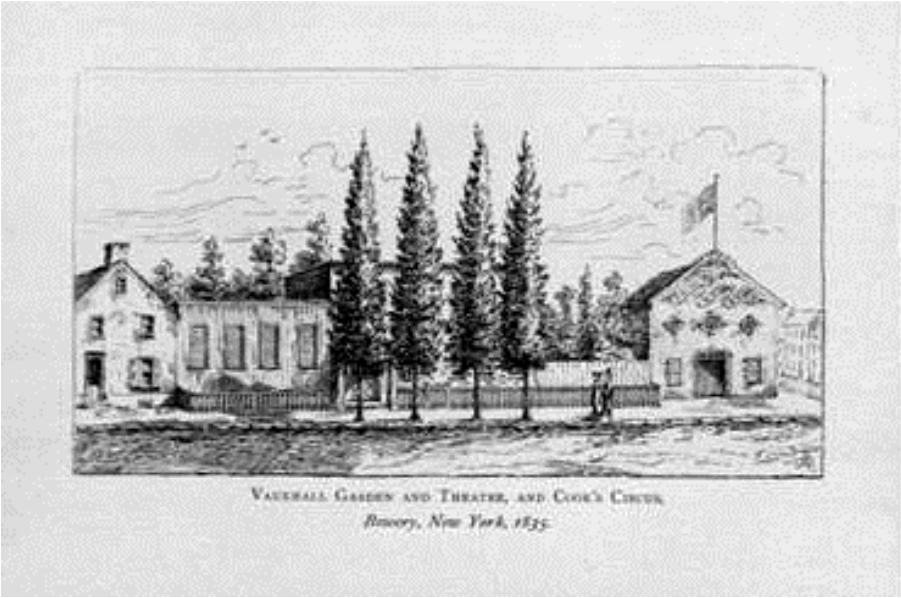

Figure 3.3. Vauxhall Gardens, New York. Harvard Theatre Collection. Image File, N. Y. Theatre Views, Vauxhall Gardens.

3.2, McArann's Garden and Vauxhall, Philadelphia were surrounded by tall wooden fences designed to prevent onlookers. Similarly, Vauxhall in New York was depicted from the outside showing restricted views and tree tops (figure 3.3). The lack of other buildings nearby in the first two of these images makes the space of the gardens appear more contained. By having a distinct, clearly-marked space, it was clear if one gained entry or not—one was in or out. The genteel space created by the proprietors was clearly-defined, and one's presence in the garden was a clear statement of admission to a forum in which gentility could (at least in theory) be performed.

A Too-Inclusive Gentility?

The gardens pandered to the upwardly socially mobile aspirations of the "middle" by presenting them with a venue in which they could behave according to the standards of gentility. Initially, these spaces encouraged an inclusiveness that allowed anyone who could pay the admission charge and was prepared to ape gentility to gain entry and to perform within the space. The belief that everyone desired to perform in such a manner (and could do so) was seen in admission policies that actively sought attendance by those not typically deemed as "genteel." Initially these sites appealed to a very broad conception of the "middle," even allowing those who could not afford to pay to gain admission on specific days.

In some of the gardens, there were days when there was no admission charge, which speaks to an encouragement of an inclusive gentility embracing a wider segment of the population than the already large "middle." For example, the Vauxhall of New

York and Harrowgate of Philadelphia opened for free on Sundays, allowing a larger segment of the population to gain access to a space they would have normally been excluded from.[47] This lack of admission charge permitted entry to "the public in general," but only if "decently dressed."[48] By requiring certain standards of dress, proprietors such as Delacroix (Vauxhall, New York) and Esterly (Harrowgate, Philadelphia) were apparently open to promoting or experimenting with a society in which almost all were welcome to socialize in the same space (even if not on the same days), but only with the caveat that all at least aspire to a "vernacular gentility" and to perform appropriate class when in attendance.[49] Further, Delacroix permitted free entry every day of the week on which scheduled entertainments were not to take place (that is, music might be offered, but not a formal concert or fireworks). Perhaps subscribing to the promotion of a "homogenous" society, Delacroix wanted his gardens to be open to all. In this example, there was an active pursuit of the concept of social mobility in Delacroix's policies and a demonstration of an understanding that people of all backgrounds and income levels could socialize in the same space.

While apparently believing in the philosophy that all could be socially ascendant and attempting to include all segments of the population, Delacroix also made clear that they could only be included if they submitted to the understanding that genteel behavior (and persons, dress, customs, etc.) was inherently superior. Merely through encouraging and providing the space for the aping of genteel behavior and manners, Delacroix (and

[47] *Daily Advertiser*, 2 May 1803; David John Jeremy, ed., *Henry Wansey and his American Journal: 1794* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1970), 95.

[48] *Daily Advertiser*, 14 April 1800.

[49] Of course, requiring certain standards of dress even on free days, meant that the extreme lower classes would have been unable to attend even on such days, as they would not necessarily have had access to appropriate attire.

other proprietors) was deploying an unconscious tactic of the elite—by desiring to perform as though elite, the "middling sorts" were reaffirming the superiority of the elite. Some of the methods of defining the superiority of elite status Levine identified were seen here in the encouragement to ape elite "modes of behavior and cultural predilections," which were enforced through the continued implementation of "rules, . . . and canons of behavior."[50] While it appears that making the site inclusive was a benevolent act imbued with ideals of social equality, the desire of visitors to be in the space and to be able to perform according to the dictates of genteel conduct paradoxically reasserted values associated with class divisions and demonstrated the operations of hegemony.

In view of the inclusiveness of the gardens (and the consequent lack of true elite status being gained due to this openness), segments of the middling sorts who were in the gardens needed to find new ways to assert their superiority over others within the space. In many of the gardens, the performance of class was not merely to be seen in attending the gardens (or not), but also in the use of the space within the gardens and the performance of class relative to others. Initially, all the pleasure gardens offered simple entertainments with few (or no) restricted areas or places requiring additional charges or requirements to enter. Once patrons had paid the fixed admission price, all were free to circulate in the same areas (at least, in theory). However, with the introduction of theatres and saloons to several of the gardens, admission prices began to vary depending on the position of seating, with Washington Gardens and Vauxhall, New York, for example,

[50] Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 177.

advertising more than one rate of admission in local newspapers.[51] In 1820, the theatre at Washington Gardens had tiered admission costs, ranging from 25 cents for a seat in the pit, to $1 for a box. Patrons were placed in a position relative to others who had paid more or less than them. This tiered entry cost reflected the practices of theatre in relating seating position to price paid and allowed for a visible arrangement of relative wealth or status within the auditorium. With the introduction of admission charges that allowed for people to pay less than the standard admission charge (and the same as many other forms of entertainment), the gardens granted access to people who would normally have been excluded. Likewise, with the introduction of a charge above the standard 50 cents garden entry fee, others had a means of distinguishing themselves as being above those around them. The gardens allowed for an exploration of class through individuals elevating themselves by "performing" within a genteel space, and also through performing class in relation to one another.

This inclusivity which allowed almost anyone to perform above their station, having led to stratification of the performance of class, then morphed into an attempt at exclusivity—a feature described by Burrows and Wallace as the "key to success" for the gardens.[52] In order to present the venue as more "exclusive," changes were made. The admission policies of Delacroix were modified in 1803, for example, when he introduced a "refreshment ticket" which required all patrons to spend two shillings to enter the gardens on days without entertainments (having been formerly able to enter for free), then allowing them to redeem the ticket for refreshments to that value inside the

[51] Gardens with theatres included Washington Gardens, Columbian Gardens, Niblo's Garden, Vauxhall, New York, and Vauxhall, Charleston.

[52] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham*: *A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 585.

gardens.[53] While Delacroix notes that part of his motivation to introduce such a ticket was to ensure a return on his investment in the site by requiring patrons to purchase refreshments, the majority of his announcement of this change published in a local newspaper focuses on the "genteel" nature of some (but not all) of the patrons he had been hosting. Delacroix veers away from the idea that class could be performed through outward shows when he notes that many who were "genteely dressed . . . were not genteel in character, [and] therefore not suited to the chief part of the company who frequented his gardens."[54] Delacroix makes it clear through this announcement that an outward show of gentility through dress was not sufficient to allow a person to pass as being genteel. In order to assert a degree of exclusivity, Delacroix reintroduces the dividing line of price, enforcing a "refreshment ticket" on most days (but kept Sundays as a day of free entry, while still requiring appropriate dress and behavior). Delacroix made it clear that his garden could not be classed as being genteel if "every person has an indistinct right of entrance"; he wanted his gardens to be considered to be genteel and acknowledged very clearly his awareness that such an aim required divisions and discrimination.

The increasingly-restricted nature of Delacroix's Vauxhall presented the gardens as a more exclusive venue, and this exclusivity became an important element.[55] While most gardens gradually transitioned to become exclusive, Niblo's opened much later than the others discussed here and aimed to be exclusive from the start. As Burrows and Wallace note, "after 1830 the upper classes deserted the déclassé Vauxhall and turned to William Niblo's new concern," which was noted as surpassing "all others in elegance and

[53] *Daily Advertiser*, 2 May 1803.
[54] Ibid.
[55] This was seen in other venues as well.

respectability, its status sustained by high entrance fees, expensive food, and urbane entertainments."[56]

Paul Gilje asks how affluent theatre patrons of the early nineteenth century were to "enjoy their moments of high culture without being exposed to the low humor of the poorer classes? The answer," he continues, "was the establishment of different theatres catering to different classes," which began to emerge in the 1820s and 1830s.[57] This process was also seen in the gardens of New York, with the establishment of Niblo's drawing the upper classes from Vauxhall to a new location. An instance of the elite "retreat[ing] into their own private spaces," Niblo's presented a space for those trying to define and establish themselves as being elite and distinct from the "middling sorts," allowing them to engage with one another in a space perceived as being genteel, but apart from the masses.[58] In his attempt to distinguish his gardens from the others (including Vauxhall), Niblo incorporated a cultural form that had been adopted as a sign of a high class status—opera. As McConachie argues in his article on opera, the "rituals of operagoing that assisted in preserving and perpetuating the power of their class" allowed the elite to determine "membership in the fashionable elite" through appropriate behavior at suitable sites.[59] For Niblo, however, the mere introduction of opera was not sufficient to gain a more exclusive or upper middle class clientele, and in his attempt to maintain this target audience, he found it necessary to remove most of the traces of the "pleasure

[56] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 585, 642.

[57] Paul Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 252.

[58] Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 177.

[59] Bruce McConachie, "New York Operagoing, 1825-50: Creating an Elite Social Ritual," *American Music* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 189, 181.

garden" by removing much of the garden and its outdoor elements when he renovated the site in 1849 (while presenting his operas at Astor Place).

These class divisions were not only reflected in the entertainments, but also in the geography, which further enforced this physical retreat to a "private" and distinct space. As the novelist and journalist Maria Child noted, "being in the Bowery, [Vauxhall] is out of the walk of fashionables, who probably ignore its existence, as they do most places for the entertainment of the people at large,"[60] and her contemporary Asa Greene identified the separation, noting that it "is so vulgar . . . to be seen walking in the same grounds with mechanics, house servants, and laboring people,"[61] while Niblo's boasted a more fashionable location. The attitudes betrayed in these sources (along with newspaper commentaries and contemporary histories) reveal that there was a physical as well as cultural "retreat" from the more accessible gardens frequented by the large "middle." Yet Niblo's was unable to retain its upper middle or elite status as a pleasure garden, and the outdoor elements were quickly removed, becoming primarily a theatre and hotel.

As Levine argues, a cultural bifurcation took place from the 1830s which saw culture being divided along class lines. The pleasure gardens seemed poised to become a highbrow venue open only to the upper middle classes or even the elite, with Niblo's demonstrating this potential most clearly. However, despite some attempts to restrict access, raise admission costs, and change entertainments, the pleasure gardens were not able to achieve the highbrow status of, for example, opera. Although many of the gardens did display concerns with gentility and made attempts to be exclusive, their increasingly

[60] L. Maria Child, *Letters From New York: Second* Series (Boston: J. H. Francis, 1845), 171.

[61] Asa Greene, *Glance at New York: Embracing The City Government, Theatres, Hotels, Churches, Mobs, Monopolies, Learned Professions, Newspapers, Rogues, Dandies, Fires and Firemen, Water and Other Liquids, &c. &c.* (New York: A. Green, 1837), 216-17.

restrictive admission policies and attempts to regulate behavior according to genteel codes led to resentment and even violence, and prevented them from becoming highbrow venues.

The Tensions between Highbrow Aspirations and Lowbrow Status

These attempts to become exclusive—as seen particularly in New York—were not especially successful, and the pleasure gardens came to be viewed as places "for the entertainment of the people at large."[62] The higher end of the "middling sorts" found their genteel space compromised by inappropriate behavior, while the lower end resented the restrictions presented by the imposition of codes of conduct. These class tensions over the status and accessibility of the space were to erupt at numerous sites in the form of violent riots, which led to the destruction of the grounds of at least four venues. Despite being primed to become highbrow venues through their focus on gentility, the pleasure gardens ultimately became lowbrow venues.

"Highbrow" and "lowbrow" are commonly-used terms, but it is worth taking a moment to explore what is meant by these terms and how they apply to this discussion. Levine's study addresses the terms at length, and he explores how these cultural categories implying cultural hierarchy (though not the terms themselves) emerged in America in the 1830s. Cultural forms deemed highbrow had to be accessible to and appreciated by only the educated elite of a society, with the untutored and indiscriminate masses being incapable of truly understanding or appreciating such forms, laying claim instead to lowbrow, or popular forms. While popular and lowbrow are not necessarily

[62] Child, *Letters From New York*, 171.

descriptors of the same cultural forms, they are tied in the sense that the "masses" were perceived as uneducated and unrefined (by elite standards) and thus drawn to lowbrow cultural forms. The pleasure gardens initially aimed at refined behavior and decorum, and in creating a genteel space and restricting entry, they seemed poised to become a highbrow form as a hierarchy emerged. Yet the popular appeal of the gardens, the lack of true exclusivity, and the palpable tensions between classes within the space prevented the gardens from being deemed as highbrow venues.

After just a few years, many proprietors had problems with vandalism, theft, and "boisterous" behavior, which made it difficult for them to maintain a genteel space. In Baltimore, for example, the destruction and theft of the lamps at Gray's was reported in 1794, along with several "disturbances" of the peace in 1794 and 1795. Perhaps a more common problem at many of the sites was pickpocketting, with numerous newspaper announcements requesting the return of items stolen from persons at the gardens in Philadelphia and New York, among others.

Attempts were made to regulate this behavior or to exclude the persons responsible through a variety of policies. The introduction of "officers" or constables was the most frequent practice, with Gray's Garden of Baltimore posting notices of such supervision from 1796, Vauxhall of New York from 1799, Washington Gardens from 1814, and Columbian Gardens from 1832.[63] The Vauxhall of Charleston prohibited unaccompanied children from 1809, as Placide apparently considered them to be the chief culprits of vandalism, while he also implored patrons not to touch the plants.[64] Few copies of the official rules and regulations of each of the gardens are extant (where they

[63] *Federal Gazette*, 10 September 1796; *Daily Advertiser*, 4 July 1799; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 1 August 1814; *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 18 February 1832.

[64] *City Gazette*, 7 April 1809.

even existed), but the Vauxhall of New York maintained such a document that was posted in the gardens and was noted in a newspaper in 1826.[65] Within these rules, fines for picking flowers (four shillings), procedures for ejecting unruly persons from the gardens, and the charges for breaking or damaging glasses or ornaments are listed, suggesting that such problems did emerge. Policies were also introduced that reassured patrons that employees would behave appropriately, and Gray's Garden of Baltimore introduced numbers for the waiters in 1796 after some had apparently failed to return with change for purchases.[66]

In these various manners, proprietors attempted to regulate behavior within the space of the gardens in order to maintain order and respectability (mostly excluding those who could not or would not conform). However, even the most successful gardens failed to sustain a genteel space free from the "undesirable element," and attempts to exclude persons through cost led to individuals causing or participating in riots over exclusion. The "utopian" ideal of all mixing in one space being replaced with attempts at exclusivity backfired at many points in the various careers of the gardens, but for many gardens, it was a riot caused by the exclusion of those perceived to be of the lower middle classes who had previously been granted the right of admission that marked the peak of this problem.

As we shall see, riots have been documented as taking place within the gardens in Philadelphia (Gray's and Vauxhall), New York (Vauxhall), and Baltimore (Columbian Gardens), and where the cause is known, the exclusion of certain persons through erecting barriers or increasing admission fee is the most prevalent reason. In Philadelphia,

[65] *New-York American*, 4 May 1826.
[66] *Federal Gazette*, 10 September 1796.

for example, the two documented riots transpired due to people desiring to gain entry without paying. At Gray's Ferry in 1791, a "disturbance" occurred when several people gained admission without paying the required admission fee and were met with opposition from those who had paid.

According to a report in a local newspaper, several people gained entry to the gardens on the Fourth of July 1791 in order to join the Independence Day celebrations without paying the admission fee. After being ejected from the gardens by the constables, they "communicated their vindictive sentiments, on account of this treatment, to a number without the garden, who made a forcible attack with stones and clubs upon the door-keepers, and pulled down several fences and palings." Those inside the gardens are then described as "fighting for the right which their quarter of a dollar had purchased" by helping to force the offenders out of the gardens and returning the volley of stones and missiles. The fight (described as a "contest") ended without loss of life, but with "hard knocks on both sides, and much injury to the house and gardens."[67]

The riot at the Vauxhall of Philadelphia arose from a similar instance of exclusion of individuals from a popular event. At Vauxhall, the reason was a balloon ascent, meriting an increased admission charge, which led to a riot amongst the excluded viewers with resulting destruction of the grounds. On 8 September 1819, Monsieur Michel was scheduled to make a balloon ascent and parachute jump, and ticket prices were raised to one dollar. Although many people paid the admission charge, an even larger number (estimated at thirty thousand) assembled in the "vacant lots and fields all around the

[67] *General Advertiser*, 6 July 1791.

resort."[68] Those who were watching from outside the gardens were not able to see everything as "a high board fence enclosed Vauxhall Garden." When a young boy climbed up on the fence to get a better view, reports held that he was "struck by an attendant of the garden" and was rumored to have been killed. The response was initially muted: the balloon was damaged with stones, but the event continued on. The inflation of the balloon took much longer than anticipated (due to the damage done by a stone), and tempers continued to rise as three or more hours passed. Eventually "the unruly mass went forward in a determined manner, tearing down the fence, ripping the balloon to shreds, sacking the wines and liquors in the garden"; they "threw stones, broke and tore everything with the balloon to pieces" and "complet[ed] the ruin by setting fire to the pavilion or theatre."[69]

These riots (and those at other pleasure gardens) were the violent repercussions of class tensions and policies of exclusion. Although Gilje recognizes theatres as a site at which class tensions arose, his observation of the events following the enclosure of public lands should also be noted.[70] Gilje identifies the fact that as the city of New York (the focus of his study) expanded north, lands that had once been used by anyone without charge began to be sold and fenced off, and the once-free lands became private property. This led to resentment, which culminated in the destruction of fences and hedges on numerous occasions. This resentment of enclosed lands for the use by the wealthy can be seen in the riots described above, where predominantly-green space was fenced off and required payment and codes of conduct and dress to enter—the exclusion was no less real

[68] Joseph Jackson, "Vauxhall Garden," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1933): 294.

[69] Ibid., 295; Alan S. Downer, ed., *The Memoir of John Durang: American Actor, 1785-1816* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), 141.

[70] Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 246.

in the pleasure gardens than in the fencing off of common lands. Having been first invited into the gardens, the crowds resented the various policies of exclusion and, in some cases, took action and protested by tearing down fences.

Not only did the gardens initially encourage individuals of lower social classes to participate in a cultural form that presented itself as genteel, but the political scene was one that encouraged the belief in social equality. By retracting this superficial equality, the gardens became the focus for riot, and this reaction against exclusivity ultimately led to the decline of the fashionable nature and highbrow aspirations of the gardens, as the lower classes claimed the gardens for themselves. The portrayal of the gardens and the form they took (in terms of entertainments offered and the types of acceptable behaviors) switched from focusing on exclusivity and highbrow claims to a decidedly more popular and lowbrow appeal. Embracing this change (or, perhaps, forced to for economic reasons), proprietors introduced changes to the offerings of their gardens, presenting minstrelsy, variety acts, magicians, etc.

In 1802, for example, Columbian Gardens (then called Easton's Garden) offered fireworks, ice cream, and suppers. By 1805, mechanical representations of battles, songs (including one titled "the Learned Pig"), a ballet dance, a pageant, a hornpipe, and a "concert on the clarinet" were offered on one night.[71] McArann's garden opened with a focus on the plantings and the occasional concert, but by 1840 was offering an enactment of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, fireworks, minstrel performances, illuminations, and a concert on one night.[72] Delacroix's early Vauxhalls offered evenings with simple concerts, fireworks, and refreshments, but by 1845, the gardens hosted minstrel

[71] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 13 July 1805.
[72] *Public Ledger*, 5 June 1840.

performers, "the wonderful tattooed man," dancers, singers, and other variety acts, which were described as having "caught the attention of the Bowery people, who attend . . . in great numbers."[73] In tandem with the switch from simple entertainments of music, fireworks, and refreshments to increasingly diverse and popular acts, the admission price of several venues fell from 50 cents to just 25 cents. As appendix 2 illustrates, Niblo's, McArann's, Columbian Gardens, and Vauxhall, New York all illustrated a drop in admission price that coincided with the change in entertainment types.

This change from highbrow to lowbrow entertainment and the corresponding change in audience has been described by most commentators in a decidedly negative manner. Eberlein and Hubbard note how "Harrowgate gradually sunk into a state of rowdyism," while Garrett notes Vauxhall as being a victim "of a decline in the quality of patronage" with "the most sensational entertainments . . . attracting the lowest riffraff or clientele."[74] This use of terms such as "decline" and "sunk" reflects the hierarchy that was (and is) in place that sees popular forms as being decidedly lowbrow and of the lower classes of being inherently less worthy. In actuality, the proprietors of the gardens appeared not to be "victims" of "decline," but rather, to embrace their new market. While there was a decline in admission cost (and thus revenue from admission on a per head basis), a degree of success was ensured due to the broad appeal and high rates of attendance (thus maintaining a sizeable income all told).

[73] *New York Herald*, 17 August 1845.

[74] Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, "The American 'Vauxhall' of The Federal Era," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1944): 166; Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 611.

Depictions of the Gardens in Literature

In each of the case studies followed here, a shift can be seen towards increasingly eclectic acts with less concert music and opera, and more popular performances (including magic shows, acrobatics, ventriloquism, and impersonations). Although the timing and duration of the shift can be seen to vary, the change to being a lowbrow form was a universally-demonstrated one. It is in this form that the gardens are most frequently depicted in literature, and these sources suggest that while the gardens were indeed seen as being lowbrow, they simultaneously showed traces of their past as a place where social elevation could be performed. In the three sources examined below, the gardens are populated by the lower ends of the middling sorts, and the action supports the discussion above.

Chapter 29 of the Cornelius Matthews's *The Career of Puffer Hopkins* is set in Vauxhall, New York, where the title character attends a ball organized by the "Round-Rimmers." This fictional society is described as a "fraternity of gentlemen" who are seen as "classical gentry" and have exclusive "haunts of their own," yet occasionally "condescend to join the common world in certain of their observances."[75] In this chapter, they decide to host their complimentary ball at Vauxhall with Puffer Hopkins (described as "an eloquent . . . and popular politician") being one of two "attractions" in the form of distinguished guests. The (comically) elite men select Vauxhall as a suitable venue to engage with the "commoners" while making it clear that both the site and the persons they are inviting are beneath them.

[75] Cornelius Matthews, *The Career of Puffer Hopkins* (New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 214-15.

The guests who attend the ball are described in a manner communicating their ineptitude at performing as though belonging to a higher class. Of their appearances, Hopkins notes that the young ladies are either "red-nosed and flat-breasted" or "of a rounded form," while the men stand "with their arms a-kimbo on their hips." When observing the dancing, he notes how the couples are "throwing out limbs," with gentlemen "thumping the floor with their heels at every descent," and ladies occasionally "losing balance" and dashing "headlong into the ruffles of one of the stationary young gentlemen." Even the speech of the guests (which is described as being "in a dialect which was in a great measure intelligible") is not above ridicule.[76] The overt mockery of the lower classes attempting to perform above their station is implicit in Hopkins' biting words. While being a place where class can be performed, the gardens are here depicted as a site belonging to the lower middle class and disdained by the elite. But the gardens are also presented as a place of romance. Puffer Hopkins sees and falls for a "dark-eyed girl," and thoughts of her permeate the subsequent chapter.

The gardens as a place of the lower classes aping higher classes and also of romance can be seen in two other literary sources which focus on the antics of Mose and Lize. Mose the Bowery b'hoy and his "gal" Eliza or "Lize" are central figures in both Benjamin Baker's play *A Glance at New York* and Francis A. Durivage's poem "Love in the Bowery."[77] Bowery boys (or "b'hoys") were typically American-born apprentices

[76] Ibid., 217-8, 223.

[77] Benjamin Baker, *A Glance at New York* (1848), in *On Stage America!*, ed. Walter J. Meserve (New York: Feedback Theatrebooks and Prospero Press, 1996); Francis A. Durivage, "Love in the Bowery," in *Stray Subjects, Arrested and Bound Over* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1848), 103-5. I have been unable to identify literary descriptions of pleasure gardens other than Vauxhall, New York, aside from brief poems published in newspapers.

(often to butchers) and were a New York phenomenon in the 1840s and 50s.[78] Mose was the stage form of this "type" and was depicted as being a volunteer firefighter, famous for his brawling, loyalty, and his courting of his g'hal Lize.

The final scene of *A Glance at New York* takes place in Vauxhall, with "arches of variegated lamps" and dancing forming the setting. The scene is short but finds time to gently mock the characters in this supposedly-refined space, with Lize, for example, requesting "a cup of coffee, and nine doughnuts" for herself. However, despite the light mockery, the gardens are presented as being a relatively refined space where the men behave courteously to the women, and at the very end when Mose is summoned to a fight, the violence is kept outside the gardens. Similarly, the seven-stanza poem by Durivage identifies Vauxhall as a suitable space to elevate the courting of Mose and Lize to a place of romance.

In this play and poem, Vauxhall is portrayed as the backdrop against which central characters court; while Mose is known for his antics and fights, such scenes are confined to the barroom and similar sites, with the garden being kept as a place of romance. While the rural and romantic elements of the gardens were maintained, the class of the focal figures had changed in the New York Vauxhall by the 1840s, and the mockery of the belief that one could perform class becomes apparent. The clear identification of the space as being open to the lower classes but a locale where the performance of genteel behavior is still expected is not presented in any way other than comically, yet the practice continued. Far from being a simple lowbrow space, the

[78] Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 180-81.

gardens were able to retain a sense of social elevation even within the more limited sphere to which they were confined.

Conclusion

The pleasure gardens of America were the focus of class divisions, tensions, and changes. As sites of the performance of class they presented opportunities to indulge the popular belief in social mobility (or elevation) through performance, yet they also confirmed the *status quo* through the very fact that such behaviors were deemed to be superior. Although it was possible to perform class to a limited degree, it was not possible for all the middling sorts with social aspirations to be deemed to be part of the elite purely through performance. The elite were ultimately those who defined what that performance was, with the rules becoming more mysterious and specific with time in order to prevent transparency and openness to all. The operations of hegemony were thus very apparent within the gardens.

Although the pleasure gardens initially seemed to embrace the concept of a classless society (and were popularly held to do so in England), they simply did not do this in America, and the operations of class divisions and hierarchies became increasingly pronounced. The tactics of elite self-definition (through retreat, use of codes, and encouragement of imitation) were all deployed within the gardens. This saw them morph from superficially inclusive spaces, to attempts to be exclusive ones, to spaces of the masses with no pretentions to highbrow status, while still reinforcing the superiority of

the elite. Many of the gardens became a focal point for class tensions, with conflicts being played out in a very physical and violent manner.

The gardens were a space for class concerns to be played out through individual performance, but they were also a locus for the performance of other elements of identity; as already discussed, these venues allowed for the exploration of what it meant to be American in terms of a national identity and class. The performance of race and ethnicity was a further aspect of identity seen within the gardens, with the question of how these facets played into the larger national identity being raised. The discussion so far has been largely limited to the discussion of the assumed white (male) American, yet the question of the roles of the African American and Native American were also crucial to the concern of what it meant to be American in the period under discussion here.

Chapter 4

Performing Race: Native Americans and African Americans within the Gardens

In 1857, John W. Francis described a performance by Native Americans at Vauxhall, New York, in "earlier days," recalling that

> amidst fireworks of dazzling efficacy, . . . [the Osage Indians] yelled the war-whoop and danced the war-dance, while our learned Dr. Mitchell, often present on these occasions, translated their songs for the advancement of Indian literature, and enriched the journals with ethnological science concerning our primitive inhabitants.[1]

In describing this event, Francis was making several assumptions: that the Indians seen on the stage were actual Native Americans of the Osage tribe; that their performance was "authentic" (at least, sufficiently so to be deemed educational); and that the Native American ways of life were relics of the past, or "primitive." These questions of identity, authenticity, and temporal relevance played out within the gardens in the presentation of racial identities and their relations to white American identities. The regulations of the various gardens largely prevented Native Americans and African Americans from being counted among the patrons, and when granted admittance, they were required to perform entertainments onstage or inferiority offstage. Depictions of Native Americans and African Americans within pleasure gardens were constructions that allowed white Americans to define themselves in opposition to them, and the depictions responded to a wider ambiguity about the place these racial groups held in the new nation. In this chapter, I investigate the performance of race both on and off stage within the pleasure gardens.

[1] John W. Francis, *Old New York; or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years* (1857; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), 20. It is not clear exactly when the performance he witnessed took place; Francis refers to it having been in "earlier days" and from his description of the gardens' size, it was possibly as early as the 1800s—perhaps even the same performance recorded in Vauxhall in 1804 discussed below.

Native Americans were granted access to the pleasure gardens, but only under very particular circumstances and with a view to their consciously performing for white patrons. For example, Vauxhall of New York, Washington Gardens of Boston, and Columbian Gardens of Baltimore all hosted Native American war dances; Palace Gardens (New York) welcomed "Indians from the far West"; and Niblo's (among others) staged plays with Native American characters, such as Brougham's burlesque *Po-ca-hon-tas*.[2] These various performances are here investigated in terms of how they allowed for and presented Native American identities on the stage, and what these proclaimed "authentic performances" contributed to ever-evolving American identities.[3]

African Americans were also largely excluded from pleasure gardens as legitimate patrons.[4] They were however, permitted entry as waiters (in which capacity they played a servile role, as opposed to that of patron), and were represented in the highly artificial form of minstrelsy.[5] Once theatres began to appear in the pleasure gardens and seating could be segregated, African Americans were allowed to be patrons, but only if they sat in designated areas, meaning that in gardens such as Washington Gardens (Boston) from 1819, they were allowed a physical presence, but only if they were willing to perform inferiority.[6] Unlike Native Americans, however, African Americans created pleasure gardens run by and for African Americans, and in New York, there were at least four such gardens: the African Grove (1821),

[2] *Morning Chronicle* (New York), 11 August 1804; *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 27 July 1805; William S. Rossiter ed., *Days and Ways in Old Boston* (Boston: R. H. Stearns and Company, 1915), 123; *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858, 7; *New York Herald*, 22 July 1858, 7.

[3] Similar events within the theatre have been noted, and the "authenticity" of war dances has been questioned in such articles as Rosemarie K. Bank, "Staging the 'Native': Making History in American Theatre Culture, 1828-1838," *Theatre Journal* 45, no. 4 (December 1993): 461-86.

[4] See *City Gazette* (Charleston), 29 July 1799, for example.

[5] See figure 4.4. See *Spectator*, 21 September 1835 for evidence of African Americans being employed at Niblo's Garden.

[6] See *The Repertory*, 17 July 1819 for an example of an advertisement detailing admission prices for various seating areas, including the "seats . . . for persons of color" (3).

Mead Garden (Manhattan, 1827), Mead Garden (Brooklyn, 1828), and Haytian Retreat (1829). These spaces will be explored within this chapter in terms of how they permitted certain forms of typically-excluded African American identities to be performed.

In discussing these concerns, it is necessary to revisit the word "performance" and to explore the meaning of the term "authentic" in this context. In my earlier chapters I have explored how performances resembling role playing have been seen within the pleasure gardens. While in this chapter I still acknowledge the performances of white American identities in this manner, I am doing so in relation to highly constructed performances of/by Native Americans and African Americans, and so will also be referring to more overtly framed performances upon the stage. War dances by Native Americans (genuine and/or impersonations), minstrelsy, and stage types within plays are the main ways in which Native Americans and African Americans were introduced into the principal pleasure gardens, and so their overt performances upon a stage will be considered here in relation to the everyday performance of the patrons.

The related term "authentic" also needs to be addressed here as many theatrical performances staged in the gardens were billed as being such. Authentic is defined by the *OED* as "real, actual, 'genuine' (as opposed to imaginary, pretended)" and "really proceeding from its reputed source or author; of undisputed origin, genuine."[7] Applying this term to some of these performances can be seen to be problematic when the context of the performance is considered and when the authenticity of the performers themselves is brought into question. In the ensuing discussion of performances of/by Native Americans and African Americans, I pay particular attention to what is understood by "real" and "authentic," and the implications for American identities.

[7] *OED*, s.v. "authentic," 5 and 6.

Native Americans

Given the contemporary associations of Native Americans with untamed wilderness and nature, it is, perhaps, unsurprising that they played a role in the pleasure gardens. The "natural" (albeit artificial, pruned, and constructed) setting of the pleasure garden may have been perceived as a "safe" yet appropriate space within which to encounter Native Americans. When Catlin toured with several Native Americans to England, it was in Vauxhall that they lodged for a while, which he asserted gave the Indians "very great pleasure" as it afforded them "almost a complete resumption of Indian life in the wilderness."[8] Catlin's account highlights the pleasure gardens as the ideal place in which to showcase Native Americans, where they "erect[ed] their four wigwams of buffalo hides," and played "various games and amusements, whilst blue smoke was curling out their tops," presenting what Catlin called "one of the most complete and perfect illustrations of an Indian encampment . . . [where] the men, women, and children [were] living and acting on a similar green turf, as they do on the prairies of the Missouri."[9] For Catlin, the "prairies of the Missouri" and the "green turf" of a city pleasure garden were interchangeable, the latter having the added benefit of being accessible to the city's population and controllable.[10]

Despite Catlin's assertion that the spaces were one and the same, the tamed nature of the straight walkways lined with pruned shrubs and pastoral paintings meant that the gardens were constructed spaces. In using such a space, Catlin was allowing for encounters with these "wild" and "savage" beings, in a safe, tamed manner. The authenticity of these displays was, of course,

[8] George Catlin, *Catlin's Notes: Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, North American Indian Collection*, vol. 2 (London, 1848), 117.

[9] Ibid., 118.

[10] A similar instance of assuming the gardens to be an appropriate space for Native Americans within the city can be seen in an error in historiography that led Geraldine Duclow to trust Joseph Jackson's erroneous assertion that John H. Jewitt recounted his experiences of being held captive by Native Americans in Vauxhall, Philadelphia. Geraldine Duclow, "Philadelphia's Early Pleasure Gardens," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 10; Joseph Jackson, "Vauxhall Gardens," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57, no. 4 (1933): 293.

an illusion, and the choice of space allowed for the mere *idea* of authenticity in a constructed space. However, Native Americans in American pleasure gardens were not typically presented as being observed in their "natural habitat," as appeared to be the case in London.

In the American pleasure gardens, Native Americans were typically admitted, but not as equal patrons, rather as sources of education, anthropological exhibition, or pure entertainment. In all documented instances of Native Americans in the pleasure gardens, there were attempts to present this diverse race of peoples as being singular, fixed, and known, ignoring the multiple tribal and individual differences. Further, the complexity of their temporal and spatial proximity to contemporaneous American geographic realities was glossed over. In this section I identify a number of events that may stand in for the great number of incidents wherein Native Americans were introduced to the space of the gardens and how their presence was commented on in newspapers and other printed sources after the fact. In doing so, I identify the commonalities between the various events in which Native Americans were billed and draw some conclusions regarding the perception of Native Americans and the place they held in the construction of American identities.

Native Americans have occupied a number of positions in relation to the American national consciousness, being variously excluded and included—being distanced as savages, and embraced as part of a utopian ideal, of being feared and admired due to being at one with the untamed wild, and romanticized and pitied as part of a mythic past. The relationship of Native Americans to "new" Americans was problematic, and this struggle was played out within the gardens. As Philip Deloria argues, Native Americans were central to the formation of American identities, and in order "to understand the various ways Americans have contested and constructed national identities, we must constantly return to the original mysteries of

Indianness."[11] The native identity of the country was an important element in defining "Americanness," yet it was not clear what role that identity would play, since, while wanting to embrace aspects of what they symbolized (native identity, affinity with nature), Americans simultaneously sought to wrest land and power from them, relocating them to increasingly-distant frontiers.

In defining what it meant to be American, there was a simultaneous affiliation with and rejection of Native Americans. This contradiction in attitudes towards Native Americans becomes clearer when concerns of proximity (in time and space) are considered: as Wolfgang Hockbruch argues, "whereas contemporary Indians were objects of wrath and contempt, Indians of the past were accepted as geographical ancestors because they proved that the United States had a cultural history of its own"—as figures from the past they were to be embraced, as figures of the present day, they were to be rejected.[12] This disconnect between idea and reality, past and present, put them in a problematic position in relation to their role in constructing American identities, which was reflected in the activities at the pleasure gardens. There, Native Americans were used to define the American present in opposition to the American past, positioning Native Americans as intrinsic to American heritage, yet simultaneously rejected them as part of present identities.

One manner in which Native Americans were depicted within the gardens was in stage plays, which allowed for a fixed and temporally-distanced version of the race. Native Americans were one of a large number of stage "types" that populated dramas of the period. The specific "type" of the Native American has been studied by a number of scholars, including Don B.

[11] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

[12] Wolfgang Hochbruck, "'I Ask for Justice': Native American Fourth of July Orations," in *The Fourth of July: Political Oratory and Literary Reactions 1776-1876*, ed. Paul Goetsch and Gerd Hurm (Tübingen: Narr, 1992), 155.

Wilmeth, Jeffrey H. Richards, Eugene H. Jones, Richard E. Amacher, and Theresa Strouth Gaul, and they have identified that Native Americans have been presented in a multitude of ways:[13] as brutes to be eradicated through force or through destiny; as noble savages; and as other distinctly positive or negative (and often inherently contradictory) stereotypes.[14] These stage versions presented stage types or "ideals" which conveniently presented Native Americans in often apolitical ways, ignoring the reality of relocation and active attempts at eradication. The plays *Metamora* and *Indian Princess* have garnered particular attention by these scholars, and both of these plays (or versions of them) were performed in the pleasure gardens. Both these playtexts and the Native American characters they depict supported the perception of Native Americans as part of the American past, but not of the American present.

John Augustus Stone's *Metamora* was a popular piece created for Edwin Forrest in 1829 and performed on stages across the country, including Niblo's.[15] The character Metamora was an exemplar of the noble savage stage type. Loyal to his tribe and family, honorable, and vengeful, the noble savage was a male type destined to die, portrayed simultaneously as admirable (due to his sense of honor, or his nobility) and as uncivilized (due to his vengeful nature, or savagery). Metamora embodied these characteristics throughout the play, and he supported the idea of manifest destiny, wherein the race was seen as being admirable in the past tense, but destined to

[13] Don B. Wilmeth, "Noble or Ruthless Savage?: The America Indian on Stage and in the Drama," *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 39-78; Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Eugene H. Jones, *Native Americans as Shown on the Stage, 1753-1916* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1988); Richard E. Amacher, "Behind the Curtain with the Management of Indian Plays, 1825-1860," *Theatre Survey* 7 (1966): 101-14; and Theresa Strouth Gaul, "'The Genuine Indian who was Brought up on Stage': Edwin Forrest's Metamora and White Audiences," *Arizona Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 1-27.

[14] See Sally A. Jones, "The First but not the Last of the 'Vanishing Indians': Edwin Forrest and Mythic Re-creations of the Native Population," in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 13-27; Vivien Green Fryd, "Imagining the Indians in the United States Capitol During the Early Republic," in *Native Americans and the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 297-330; and Bank, "Staging the 'Native'."

[15] See, for example, *New York Times*, 1 December 1862.

die out. As Marvin McAllister notes, although the "stage Indian reminded Euro-America of the core values, such as freedom and individuality, on which the nation was allegedly founded. . . . Euro-Americans also crafted stage Indian dramas to justify destroying or relocating Indians as part of their manifest destiny."[16] In doing this, the playwright was consigning Metamora (and by extension, all Native Americans) to the soon-to-be past.

The Pocahontas story was especially popular both in the pleasure gardens and in the theatres more generally, and there were a variety of versions in circulation.[17] Robert Tilton identifies that although this story "centered around such broad issues as miscegenation, racial conflict, and colonial expansion, . . . [it] avoided any form of social criticism."[18] Promoting the romantic idea of encountering a virgin land complete with maidens ready to convert and assimilate, this story indulged the idea of a romantic, mythic past; the various tellings allowed white colonizers to be seen as the successors to the original inhabitants of the land, and Native Americans as being "complicitous in ensuring the success of the white race."[19] This traditional tale was performed in August 1858 at Palace Gardens, New York, when *Pocahontas: Saving the Life of Captain Smith* was staged.[20] Depicting this tale of Smith and Pocahontas, necessitated a look back in time, again positioning Native Americans as figures from the past rather than the present.

[16] Marvin Edward McAllister, *White People do not Know how to Behave at Entertainments Designed for Ladies & Gentlemen of Colour: William Brown's African & American Theater* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 88.

[17] See Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), for a more detailed discussion of the circulation of this story.

[18] Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, "Burlesquing 'Otherness' in Nineteenth-Century American Theatre: The Image of the Indian in John Brougham's *Met-a-mora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs* (1847) and *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage* (1855)," *American Studies* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 112.

[19] Tilton, *Pocahontas*, 51.

[20] *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858, 7. Although the exact text of this production is unclear, it seems unlikely to have been Brougham's burlesque (discussed below), but rather a more serious/traditional retelling, along the lines of James Nelson Barker's *Indian Princess; Or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808).

A very different example can be seen in Niblo's Garden in 1858, when John Brougham's *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage* was staged.[21] This two-act musical burlesque took the popular Pocahontas story as its focus and highlighted the various errors and contradictions within its various forms. The historical inaccuracy of the traditional tale is commented on, for example, by the hyper-specific assertion that the action is set on "Wednesday, Oct. 12, A.D. 1607, at twenty-six minutes past 4 in the afternoon," and further by the note that scenery designs drew on Mr. Isherwood's "vivid imagination."[22] The benevolent Smith of the traditional tale is portrayed as one who seeks riches and tells the Indian King that "we are come out here your lands to ravage," losing all pretence of fair dealings.[23] The relationship between Smith and Pocahontas is seen not as a love story, but rather as a business transaction, since Smith is prepared "to marry any red queen that in my way should fall."[24] The Indian characters are not presented as primitive, but rather as having all the trappings of contemporary New York society, presenting the various characters as attending finishing school, debating taxation, and even visiting their own pleasure garden (Castle Garden, New York). Yet for all its identification of the problems with the traditional retelling of the Pocahontas story, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas* avoids addressing the problem of the Native American in contemporary society. Indeed, at the end of the play, Smith and Pocahontas do not marry; rather, Smith observes that "with her [Pocahontas], in name alone, I'll be united."[25] As Robert S. Tilton observes, this "comic ahistorical ending does away with the need to portray even the possibility of miscegenation," instead, asking the audience to applaud the actors' comic presentation.[26] While this play is concerned with questioning the role of Native

[21] *New York Herald*, 22 July 1858, 7.
[22] John Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage*, in *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762-1909*, ed. Richard Moody (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1966), 406, 404.
[23] Ibid., 408.
[24] Ibid., 409.
[25] Ibid., 421.
[26] Tilton, *Pocahontas*, 76.

Americans in the American past, it avoids the question of what followed and the contemporaneous attitudes.

Other staged depictions of Native Americans included plays and ballets, such as Vauxhall, New York's, various *ballets d'action* featuring Native American characters. In June 1823, for example, *Indian Heroine; or, the Rival Chiefs* was staged, staring an Indian Princess called Mina, a chief named Miami, and two other unnamed chiefs, who engaged in a series of competitive dances.[27] Without knowing more than the short description provided in the advertisement, one could presume that the three chiefs danced in order to "win" the affections of Mina, Miami presumably being triumphant. In this piece, there seems little room for complexity of character, but plenty of opportunity for display of dances and rituals—the focus of the events discussed above. In addition, performances such as these had a tradition stretching back to court dances, and thus were not based on perceived realities. Rather than responding to the physical reality of Native Americans, such performances were continuing a performance tradition and were thus further removed from any semblance of authenticity.

The simplicity of these pieces and of the Native American characters within them are laughable to present day readers, yet the proprietors went to great lengths to assure patrons of the authenticity of these pieces. In the 1858 production of *Pocahontas: Saving the Life of Captain Smith* at Palace Gardens, New York, for example, various parts were performed by the same Indians who earlier in the same program recreated war dances.[28] In this instance, the clearly constructed stage Indian is given added authority by the advertised fact that genuine Native Americans would be playing certain roles. Similarly, the play *Metamora* had a general acceptance of being accurate, due to Edwin Forrest's "extensive researches" for the role when it

[27] *New York American*, 16 June 1823, cited in McAllister, *White People do not Know*, 94.
[28] *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858, 7.

was first staged.[29] By studying a specific Native American, Forrest presented a supposedly accurate portrayal of all Native Americans, allowing his studies of Push-ma-ta-ha, a Choctaw chief, to suffice for an accurate portrayal of a Wampanoag chief. Such studies allowed him to be seen almost as an anthropologist, presenting the "picture," "personification," "delineation," and "portrait" of Native Americans, and thus an "authentic interpretation of the native."[30] By drawing on the experiences and bodies of genuine Native Americans in this way, this performance assured spectators that what they were witnessing was an accurate and genuine depiction of Native Americans. Although Forrest did not appear in the Niblo's Garden production, the establishment of Metamora as an authoritative and accurate depiction of Native Americans had been firmly established long before 1858. Here another false authentic tradition was being followed, as by 1858, the "authenticity" of the performance of this role was to be assessed in relation to Forrest's depiction, rather than any reality.

As discussed above, an "authentic" performance has been defined as "really proceeding from its reputed source or author; of undisputed origin, genuine," and thus authentic is a problematic word in this context.[31] The staged performances of war dances were advertised as being "real" and "authentic," yet by taking away the motivation for, context of, and thus meaning of these rituals and ceremonies, the performances were not (and could not be) exactly the same as if performed in context. Indeed, they were "pretended" rituals, which contradicts the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of "authentic" as being "*opposed to* . . . pretended."[32] Being billed as "authentic" despite being presented in highly-constructed forms (plays, dances, etc.)

[29] David Gerstner, "Nineteenth-Century Formulations of Masculinity and Realism: The Body of Edwin Forrest," in *Manly Arts: Masculinity and Nation in Early American Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 16.

[30] Ibid.; Gaul, "The Genuine Indian who was Brought up on Stage," 10.

[31] *OED*, s.v. "authentic," 5 and 6.

[32] Ibid., s.v. "authentic," 5. Emphasis added.

meant that the one-dimensional portrayals were given authority and credibility, allowing Native Americans (as a race) to be known and thus controlled.

War dances were chief among the Native American performances staged within the gardens and billed as "authentic," and Vauxhall, Palace Gardens (both of New York), and Columbian Gardens (Baltimore) were among the many pleasure gardens to advertise such dances for the paying public. On 11 August 1804, for example, Delacroix planned a "Fete dedicated to Friendship" in which "Osage Chiefs" would perform "the Indian dances of Joy and Friendship" and the "Osage War Dance."[33] The event was later described in papers as beginning with the arrival at 8PM of the "king," who was accompanied by music and dressed in "a laced blue coat, and corresponding under vestments, wore a cocked hat, and had a handsome sword by his side," accompanied by other chiefs in "blue jackets and red capes."[34] Other members of the party were described as "savage" and as almost naked, with "their bodies, arms, and faces" being painted red with streaks of white on their cheeks, having "polished bones, pieces of various metals, beads, and other trinkets" hanging from their ears, and wearing only a feather on their heads.[35]

The degree of specificity in this description suggests a scientific or anthropological attitude towards documenting the event. Paying particular attention to details such as times, colors, materials, and specifics of dress, this commentator presented the event as a piece to be recorded and analyzed for its educational nature. Such treatment was not reserved solely for this event, and similar responses to "authentic" war dances were recorded, including the event described at the opening of this chapter in which Francis recalled how "Dr. Mitchell studied and recorded their performances "for the advancement of Indian literature, and enriched the journals

[33] *Morning Chronicle*, 11 August 1804.
[34] *Daily Advertiser*, 15 August 1804.
[35] Ibid.

with ethnological science concerning our primitive inhabitants."[36] These accounts appear to remove the sense of this being a performance at all, but rather an anthropological study designed to better the knowledge of settlers and city-dwellers. These stagings are presented as educational, thus implying they are authentic action, and not (re)constructed performances, despite the fact that they are presented out of context and on a constructed stage.

Similar events could be found in Washington Gardens and Palace Gardens; at Boston, "a company of Oneida Indians" performed the "Grand Indian War Dance" in October 1828, while the Iroquois Indians staged a variety of dances at Palace Gardens, New York in 1858. In the case of the latter example, "Indians from the Far West" were advertised as being "visitors" to the gardens, yet they were clearly there to perform. Throughout the advertisement, assertions of their authenticity are continually made, providing the name of the tribe ("the great tribe of Iroquois Indians"), the names of dances ("THE WAR DANCE, THE GREEN CORN DANCE, THE BUFFALO DANCE, THE SPY DANCE, [and] THE DEATH DANCE"), and referring to specific individuals by name (such as "the young chief BLACK HAWK grandson of the celebrated old chief of the same name. The young warrior, WHITE EAGLE. The braves Big Thunder, Halt Time, Young Elk, Big Tree, and Mud Turtle").[37] Referring to them as both "guests" and "performers," the author of the advertisement attempts to highlight the authenticity of these individuals and their various dances, but it is also clear they are not simply visiting the gardens as patrons, but rather are performing for a paying audience.

Although the degree of actual authenticity of such performances has been questioned, it should also be noted that the bodies of the performers themselves should not be assumed to be authentic. As Rosemarie Bank notes in her article "Staging the 'Native'," there have been

[36] Francis, *Old New York*, 20.
[37] *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858, 7. Caps in original.

recorded incidences of "genuine" performances of Native American dances and rituals which have been uncovered as fraudulent. In 1836, for example, the National Theatre, Washington, D.C., advertised that "TEN CHEROKEE CHIEFS . . . will this evening appear and perform their real INDIAN WAR DANCE." Just a few days later, a notice was printed reporting John Ross (Chief of the Cherokees) as stating "neither I nor any of my associates of the Cherokee delegation have appeared on the stage" in a letter to the newspaper.[38] It is not made clear if the performers were in fact white actors in makeup and costumes, Indians of a different tribe, or actually Cherokee Indians performing without Ross's knowledge, but the potential for forgery in these performances was clear. Thus it is apparent that even on occasions when the presence of Native Americans was stressed as being authentic, the accuracy of such statements must always be questioned.

Baltimore's Columbian Gardens hosted a number of such displays, but the claims of authenticity were not as pronounced. In 1850, "The American Wigwam" was first offered, consisting of "The Osage War Dance, and The Chipawaw Eagle Tail Dance."[39] Later that year, it was made very apparent that these were not real Native Americans that were performing, but rather their resident actors simply performing a skit. On 7 September 1805, the "Wigwam Sports" was advertised as being "*a striking likeness* of the manner and custom of the Savage Dances."[40] On 6 August 1806, the "striking likeness" descriptor was retained, but the advertisement was extended to describe the dance as a "historical" and "characteristic" dance.[41] While the constructed nature of these performances became increasingly apparent at this

[38] *The Globe*, 11 and 15 February 1836, quoted in Bank, "Staging the 'Native'," 483.
[39] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 27 July 1805.
[40] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 7 September 1805. Emphasis mine.
[41] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 6 August 1806.

Baltimore venue, the advertising was also witness to a simultaneous move from present day to past.

The use of "real" Native Americans performing their "manners and customs," would suggest an attempt to present Native Americans as being very much a part of the present day. As opposed to the portrayal of historical tales and dying Indians as seen in the stage plays, having "real" Indians perform their "genuine" rituals, would suggest showing the customs of another people in the present day to be the goal. However, through labeling such pieces "historical" (as seen in Baltimore), and having an anthropologist record their movements and cries with a view to recording them for posterity (as seen in New York), these activities were placed in the past tense. This temporal distance was also enforced by referring to them as "primitive" in many instances, consigning them to the past.

In all these instances, it was typically war dances that were highlighted in advertisements, and claims for the accurate nature of such exhibits were somewhat unbalanced by putting WAR DANCE and DEATH DANCE in capital letters in an advertisement for Palace Gardens, with the statement "and go through the Courting and Marriage ceremonies" being placed beneath in lowercase; the focus was clearly upon sensation and savagery, with a lesser interest in other, more domestic, aspects of Indian culture.[42] The primitive and brutal aspects of the manufactured idea/image of the Native American were emphasized in this manner, sustaining the idea that Indians were inferior and uncivilized, while distracting patrons from the violence employed against them.

In presenting Native American performances and positioning them as authentic, management presented patrons with a known Other backed by some form of authority. Despite the fact that there were a great number of markedly different Indian tribes, the desire for a single

[42] *New York Herald*, 29 August 1858, 7.

image further speaks to this need for fixity. As Robert F. Berkhofer asserts, despite "being aware of differences between both individuals and individual tribes," "whites . . . persist[ed] in using the general designations, which required the lumping together of all Native Americans as a collective entity," creating a cohesive Other against which to define whiteness.[43] As Theresa Gaul argues, such performances allowed for a stable, fixed image of the Native American to be presented, adding to the "stability of the knowledge of their own whiteness."[44] As the identity presented was fixed, Native Americans became known and fixed, thus allowing white patrons to define themselves in relation to them. The attempt to fix Native Americans as a single, knowable group betrays a desire to fix this Other as clear and distinct.

The manner in which patrons then defined themselves can be seen in the various attitudes elicited in response to these framed performances. For example, after describing the dance performed at Vauxhall, New York in 1804, the newspaper article records that "the general impression which the scene left on our minds was that of pity for our fellow creatures, ignorant of civilized life, ignorant of themselves as rational and moral beings, ignorant of the end of their creation and their future destiny, and strangers to those principles and sentiments which ennoble our nature and elevate us to a near relation with the Supreme Being."[45] In this description, the focus is on the observers more than on the performers; the interest for this commentator lay in the assumption that the assumed white audience members were superior to the Indians in terms of knowledge and self-awareness. The description specifically invokes pity of their inferiority and notes that the observers of the spectacle felt "gratitude to heaven [that they were not] ignorant . . . [and] cruel" like the Osage Indians. In presenting them as pitiful and ignorant, this

[43] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 23.
[44] Gaul, "The Genuine Indian who was Brought up on Stage," 9.
[45] *Morning Chronicle*, 11 August 1804.

reporting makes it clear that Native Americans are to serve as reminders of white American superiority. Despite claims that such portrayals were educational, Indians were invited into the space not in order to envelop them as equals or part of American civilization, but rather as a foil against which to mark (white) American superiority, as seen in this description. Native Americans were not embraced as part of an American present, merely observed as a dying, pitiable past.

By watching such performances, white patrons were able to acknowledge the place of Native Americans in their past, perceive them as pitiable and inferior, and reassure themselves that they were superior. Conceding their relevance to past identities, the entertainments of the pleasure gardens appeared to exclude Native Americans from contemporary definitions of Americanness. That the Native American was still considered to be part of American *heritage*, however, could be seen in the prominence of such events within programs of national celebration. For example, the "American Wigwam" included a "representation of the tomb of Washington," who had died in 1799, replaced in a later program by "the Apotheosis of the illustrious Lieut. Gen G. Washington."[46] Such performances allowed the figure of the Native American to be part of larger structures of the construction of American identities, and, as Jeffrey Richards argues, encouraged audience members to see "American identity as [one] of overwhelming whiteness," which, while it might absorb the heritage of the natives of the land, would not display "any palpable mark of difference."[47]

Two principal tensions appear to be central in depictions of Native Americans: authentic versus staged, and past versus present. Native Americans played an important role in establishing the "distinctive heritage of the nation" (established in chapter 2 as an essential component of

[46] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 27 July and 7 September 1805.
[47] Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity*, 187.

national identity), yet their "primitive" ways were not seen as part of contemporary identities.[48] Native Americans were a real and present component of the populations of the North American continent and thus of the United States, but their usefulness in creating American identities related solely to their role in America's past, not in its present. As such, the establishment of the Native American figures in the pleasure gardens as temporally distant through "vanishing Indian" stage characters or using museum-esque tactics supported the creation and assertion of American identities. The anthropological approach employed in many descriptions of and advertisements for war dance presentations relegated such activities to the past. In order to support the inclusion of Native Americans in the American past and removal from American present identities, authority needed to be assigned to their portrayals of Native Americans as a dying people. Through enlisting Native American performers, researching Indian roles, presenting Native Americans through labeling pieces such as war dances "historical," proprietors were asserting the accurate and authoritative nature of these constructions.

This problem of inclusion or exclusion of an entire race from American identities was not restricted to Native Americans, and the anxiety over what it meant to be American (and how that related to racial "others") grew. As Hochbruck notes, "after the War of 1812," orations on the Fourth of July began to change, as "speakers started to point out that many of the promises and principles of the *Declaration of Independence* were . . . as yet unfulfilled.[49] The question of slavery and the social position of free blacks led to similar instances of exclusion and restrictive inclusion of African Americans within pleasure gardens.

[48] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.

[49] Hochbruck, "'I Ask for Justice'," 156.

African Americans

While slavery was still in operation in the early nineteenth century, the north saw an increasing number of free blacks. Although the southern states continued to support slavery until the 1860s, a growing proportion of the black populations in the north were free. With the passing of the Gradual Emancipation Act in Pennsylvania in 1780, the 1780 and 1783 acts in Massachusetts, and the end of slavery being slated for 1827 in New York, the free black population in the north steadily increased through the early nineteenth century.[50] However, despite the gradual abolition of slavery in these states, restrictions and segregation remained intact for decades to follow, and equality between blacks and whites was not forthcoming.

Free black populations were "in their economic standing and social aspirations . . . becoming more distinct and class conscious," as they considered their place in the nation.[51] No longer slaves and thus not "inferior" by default, African Americans began to assert their right to be citizens in a country founded on equality and democracy, but this change was met with much opposition. While it is clear that many African Americans (especially freed blacks) saw themselves as part of the nation, the dominant consensus was that one was either African or American—the hyphenated identity was not an option—and many whites were hostile to attempts to change this situation. As African Americans began to assert their right to perform as American citizens, with equal access to culture, fashion, and national celebrations, the reaction from the white population was largely one of ridicule and mockery, occasionally turning to violence. The adoption of "white" behaviors and customs was met with "humor demeaning

[50] A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *Shades of Freedom: Racial Politics and Presumptions of the American Legal Process Race and the American Legal Process*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[51] Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 223.

blacks, and physical violence against them" by white society.[52] Shane White further observes that African Americans were often perceived as performing an "inappropriate black translation of whites' mores into blacks' own lowly situation."[53] Travel writers noted of Philadephians that "the black women are, indeed, . . . eager to imitate the fashions of the whites," and that "as a whole [Philadelphian African Americans] show an overweening fondness for display and vainglory—fondly imitating the whites in processions and banners." [54] These images and writings attempted to assert white superiority by mocking attempts of blacks to stake a claim to class and society, and trying to make them appear ridiculous.

While such a backlash was witnessed in many cities, a series of images printed in Philadelphia in the late 1820s provides a good illustration of the kind of reactions seen. The "Life in America" series was a popular and widely-circulated set of fourteen images printed in Philadelphia between 1828 and 1829, which "satirized the dress and doings of Philadelphians, both white and black," with the middle-class African American figures (the focus of the collection) portrayed as "inept mimics of white high society."[55] Clay's "Life in Philadelphia" series employed biting humor and portrayed the various figures as "slightly exotic, irresponsible, non-threatening beings with a childish fondness for fancy clothes and manners."[56] The activities of these figures range from purchasing stockings to calling on a suitor, and appear to "flow from

[52] Shane White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 106.

[53] Ibid., 92.

[54] [William Newnham Blane], *An Excursion Through the United States and Canada During the Years 1822-23 by an English Gentlemen* (London: Baldwin, Craddock, and Joy, 1824), 25; John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia, Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, & Incidents of the City and its Inhabitants from the days of the Pilgrim Founders* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey and A. Hart, 1830), 479.

[55] Nancy Reynolds Davison, "E. W. Clay: American Political Caricaturist of the Jacksonian Era" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1980), 85. Other (less popular) series were issued in New York and London. Collection description, ImPac, Library Company of Philadelphia, http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R?RN=324912417 (accessed 29 October 2010).

[56] Davison, "E. W. Clay," 94.

actual observed situations."[57] The examples seen in figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 demonstrate the nature of these pieces, poking fun at attempts of African Americans to mimic white fashions, by mocking their speech and dress. This mockery was seen when African Americans were perceived as aping other "white" cultural forms, including pleasure gardens.

Figure 4.1. "Have you any flesh coloured stockings?" Life in Philadelphia Series, Library Company of Philadelphia. http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R?RN=416249676 (accessed 29 October 2010).

[57] Email communication from Shane White to Phil Lapsansky (Curator of African American History at the Library Company of Philadelphia), 27 January 1999. In "Life in America" file, Library Company of Philadelphia.

Figure 4.2. "What do you Tink of my new Poke Bonnet?" Life in Philadelphia Series, Library Company of Philadelphia. http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R?RN=416249676 (accessed 29 October 2010).

Figure 4.3. "How you like de Waltz, Mr. Lorenzo?" Life in Philadelphia Series, Library Company of Philadelphia. http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R?RN=416249676 (accessed 29 October 2010).

Advertisements for Vauxhall, Charleston, frequently proclaimed the gardens to be off limits to African Americans, and even northern sites prohibited them, such as Vauxhall, New York, which listed "No admittance for coloured [sic] people" as one of its sixteen rules.[58] This policy was seen in most of the pleasure gardens, reflecting a general exclusion of free blacks from supposedly white cultural activities. However, African Americans could be found in pleasure gardens in specific roles. For example, performances of inferiority granted African Americans admission through service roles, such as wait staff. As a result of a fire that resulted in a death, it is known that in 1835 Niblo's, New York, employed at least one "colored man."[59] Similarly, New York's Conoit Garden employed African Americans as wait staff, while Vauxhall, Charleston offered a concession of public chairs operated by "a careful negro man."[60] As patrons, African Americans were later admitted to some pleasure gardens, but only if they were prepared to perform inferiority by sitting in separate areas for productions, such as in Washington Gardens, Boston, which offered seats for persons of color for 50 cents from 1819.[61] By granting entry under such conditions, whites were able to reaffirm the superiority of whiteness; by forcing African Americans to perform inferiority within the space of the pleasure gardens, the superiority of the white patrons was asserted and assured.

African Americans were also granted a form of admittance through minstrelsy. While not granting them an actual presence, minstrelsy saw whites inserting a physical construction of blackness that was under their control. From the 1830s, minstrelsy began to appear increasingly frequently in the northern pleasure gardens, and while it was often a part of a larger program of a variety of events, occasionally, the minstrel element was the highlight and was billed

[58] See *City Gazette* (Charleston), 29 July 1799; *New-York American*, 4 May 1826.
[59] A "colored man" who was a waiter (Charles) died in a fire of 1835. *Spectator*, 21 September 1835.
[60] W. Harrison Bayles, *Old Taverns of New York* (New York: Frank Allaben Genealogical Company, 1915), 453; *City Gazette*, 21 July 1801.
[61] *The Repertory*, 17 July 1819. Boxes were available for whites at 75 cents.

accordingly. For example, in 1838, T. D. Rice appeared at Vauxhall, New York where he performed his "celebrated Negro Extravaganza of Jim Crow" and played "Ginger Blue" in a burletta called *Virginia Mummy*.[62] During the 1840s, minstrelsy became increasingly popular (see figure 4.4). In this manner, patrons were presented with a childlike (and thus harmless and inferior) representation of African Americans, which allowed the status quo to be reaffirmed. Of course, minstrelsy entailed more complex operations than simply the mockery and infantilizing of African Americans by whites, but within the realm of this study, it is necessary to note that, much like the function of representations of Native Americans, minstrelsy acts allowed an entire race to be presented as containable, knowable, and (most importantly) inferior.

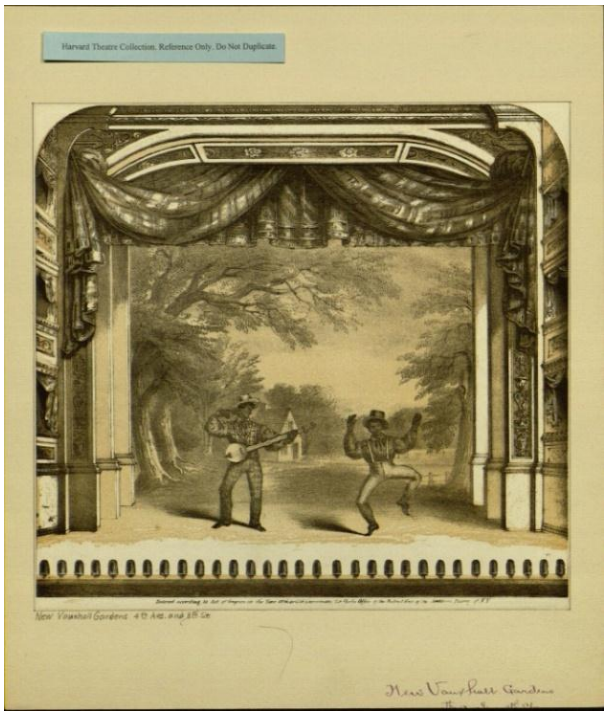

Figure 4.4. A blackface performance at the "New Vauxhall Gardens," New York, 1846. N.Y. Theatre Views. Vauxhall Gardens. The exact performance date and text has not been determined. Courtesy of the Harvard Theatre Collection.

[62] *Evening Post*, 23 August 1838.

Unlike Native Americans, however, African Americans responded to being excluded from the main pleasure gardens as equal patrons by establishing gardens particularly for their own use. In the 1820s, a variety of pleasure gardens were opened in New York by and for African Americans, allowing them access to this form of cultural self-display as legitimate patrons.[63] New York hosted at least four pleasure gardens open to persons of color, including the African Grove (1821), two by the name of Mead Gardens (1827 and 1828), and the Haytian Retreat (1829). William Brown's African Grove was established in the backyard of his residence at 48 Thomas Street for "fellow black stewards."[64] Open for only one month, this site was specifically designed for "the People of Color" and provided "every refreshment peculiar to such places."[65] There is limited information about this site beyond the very brief advertisements placed by Brown and the highly racist and biased commentary provided by Mordecai M. Noah.[66] The first of the Mead Gardens (at 13 Delancy Street) was operated "for the accommodation of genteel and respectable persons of colour [sic]," and was announced on 8 June as having opened on 1 June by Nicholas Pierson.[67] Another venue of the same name was opened the following year at 116 Front Street (at the corner with Jay Street) in Brooklyn on 1 May by Edward Haines.[68] It is not clear if these two sites were connected in any way other than having the same name, and there is no information to be found in newspapers regarding further activities at either

[63] While I have been able to identify four short-lived pleasure gardens for African Americans in New York, I have not been able to do so for the other cities under discussion. This does not mean that there were not any such venues in the various cities, rather that documentation is difficult to locate.

[64] McAllister, *White People do not Know*, 29. Brown provides the street address in his advertisement, *New-York Gazette*, 13 June 1821.

[65] *New-York Gazette*, 13 June 1821. Brown went on to open the African Theatre the following year—a theatre famous for the "Shakespeare riots" and for seeing African American actors Ira Aldridge and James Hewlett on the stage.

[66] Mordecai Noah's commentary appeared in the *National Advocate*, and his lengthy description of the gardens (dominated by his opinion of how ridiculous the sight was to him) was reprinted in various newspapers across the country.

[67] *Freedom's Journal*, 8 June 1827. The same advertisement was placed each week until 14 September 1827, suggesting the venue was in operation throughout the season.

[68] *Freedom's Journal*, 2 May 1828. The same advertisement was placed each week until 11 September 1828, suggesting the venue was in operation throughout the season.

site. The Haytian Retreat was located at the corner of Broadway and Prince Street in 1829 on a site owned by Lewis K. Storms.[69]

Such venues were not generally welcomed by white citizens. They were greeted with a combination of disdain, mockery, anger, and complaints. The African Grove, for example, was forced to close after just one month due to complaints of noise,[70] and when the Haytian Retreat opened in New York in 1829, the owner's anger and desire to distance himself from its operations were made clear in the announcement he published:

> TO THE PUBLIC. The undersigned in justice to himself deems it his duty to inform the public, that he has no participation whatever in changing the "Military Garden" at the corner of Broadway and Prince Street into a place of resort for colored people, under the name of the "Haytian Retreat." This has been done against my expectation and wholly contrary to my wishes or approbation, by the person who has at present a lease of the Garden. LEWIS K. STORMS.[71]

The fact Mr. Storms thought it necessary to place an advertisement of this nature suggests the urgency he felt regarding distancing himself from such a venture. Although the site was his and he was content with it being used as a pleasure garden, he tries to make it very clear here that he does not support the use of the land for an African American garden. The angry and aggressive nature of this announcement betrays a widely-held reaction against such venues—they were not welcomed by white society at large.

Pleasure gardens were predominantly presented as exclusively-white venues which actively sought to exclude and/or diminish the status of African Americans.[72] By establishing sites allowing entry to African Americans, proprietors were providing a "semiprivate, semipublic" space which "provided leisure-seeking Afro-New Yorkers with their own privileged

[69] The name of the lessee/proprietor has not been discovered.
[70] McAllister, *White People do not Know*, 37.
[71] *New York Evening Post*, 16 July 1829.
[72] The class status associated with the gardens may not have matched the reality of the patrons, but the association prevailed, as discussed in the previous chapter.

escape."[73] Mirroring the claims of other pleasure gardens, the Mead Gardens sought "genteel and respectable" people and denied entry to "unprotected females," apparently seeking the same respectable reputation as the more established gardens.[74] Establishing the cultural and moral standing of these venues was clearly important to these proprietors, and they did so by employing the same tactics as the main (white) pleasure gardens. From the limited sources we have, it appears that the form of the garden was essentially the same, as were their methods of advertising, entertainments offered, and associations. These gardens were essentially imitations of the main gardens, and the activity of dressing for, attending, and socializing at such gardens fostered a form of whiteface minstrelsy which served a number of functions, including questioning white assumed superiority, severing race from class-based identities, and allowing African Americans to rehearse American citizenship.

Whiteface minstrelsy is here defined "as extratheatrical, social performances in which people of African descent assume 'white-identified' gestures, dialects, physiognomy, dress, or social entitlement," borrowing from McAllister.[75] This form of performance has been discussed in relation to urban African Americans of the 1820s by Shane White in relation to "dandys and dandizettes," and by McAllister in relation to the African Grove.[76] As both of them observe, acts of whiteface minstrelsy were not empty imitations or parroting, but rather were complex actions deserving of close study. Little is known about the activities at the African American gardens, but we do have more information about the African Grove than the other three, so it this venue that we must draw from. Unfortunately, the only source from which we can recover details of these performances are the writings of one Mordecai Noah.

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[73] McAllister, *White People do not Know*, 29. Presumably white people were able to attend if they wished, as Noah was able to enter the African Grove.

[74] *Freedom's Journal*, 8 June 1827.

[75] McAllister, *White People do not Know*, 15.

[76] White, *Stylin'*, chapter 4, and McAllister, *White People do not Know*, chapter 1.

Mordecai M. Noah (editor of the *National Advocate*, playwright, and politician) visited the African Grove and printed his commentary in his newspaper. His clearly-biased reporting is very patronizing and racist. He describes how "the little boxes in this garden were filled with black beauties 'making the night hideous'" and remarks that "it was not an uninteresting sight to observe the entrée" of a gentleman who wore a "cravat tight to suffocation, having the double faculty of widening the mouth and giving a remarkable protuberance to the eyes." These "black fashionables," Noah continued, "sauntered up and down the garden in all the pride of liberty and unconscious of want." He described the concert as "vile," and mocks the conversations as imitative and the participants as having little understanding of what they were talking about. The attempt of one patron to touch on topics of international relations and voting practices is reduced to superficial and vague remarks. Noah concludes by noting that the African Americans of the African Grove "run the rounds of fashion; ape their masters and mistresses in every thing; talk of projected matches; rehearse the news of the kitchen . . . fear no Missouri plot; care for no political rights; happy in being permitted to dress fashionable, walk the streets, visit the African Grove, and talk scandal."[77] Turning their actions into empty parody, Noah infantilizes and mocks the African Americans at the African Grove.

Yet some "recovery" can be undertaken. In Noah's description of the evening he attended at the African Grove, he noted that ice cream was eaten; he heard a musical concert and observed as the various patrons wore fashionable clothing, exchanged social pleasantries, and discussed politics. The content of Noah's report suggests that the individuals were participating in a cultural and social form that McAllister describes as "seemingly reserved for Euro Americans."[78] In doing so, he continues, they were questioning the "presumed associations of whiteness with

[77] *National Advocate*, 3 August 1821.
[78] McAllister, *White People do not Know*, 20.

progress and blackness with backwardness, thus contesting absolute claims of white supremacy," and rejecting "the negative connotations associated with blackness and advocated an alternative, more self-possessed African American identity."[79] Far from playing "dress up" and engaging in empty practices of parroting, the activities of African Americans at the pleasure gardens, while directly imitating white venues, were not empty—they were reclaiming and asserting a validity to their identities as Americans citizens.

The reported activities at the gardens also suggest attempts to allow for the performance of class. Due to the existence of slavery (actively or in the past tense), African Americans were associated with slave labor and menial work and thus were perceived as being of a low class (below that of whites undertaking paid manual labor). For many white Americans in the early nineteenth century it was difficult to conceive of African Americans as being equal or superior to them in terms of class, and the concept of them performing class was ridiculed (as discussed above); yet there were attempts to sever race from class by the activities of African Americans. Although mocking the gesture, the dialogue recorded by Noah overheard on his visit to the gardens included the reference to voting for "Harry." As McAllister observes, Harry was the candidate for the Federalist Party that opposed the Irish immigrants. By identifying themselves with the wealthy candidate who opposed the lower-class immigrant candidate, these African Americans were separating race from class as part of a wider attempt to separate "gentility from whiteness" by setting themselves against the "unrefined [white] Irish."[80] Tactics such as these allowed African Americans to begin to position themselves as having the ability to advance in terms of class.

[79] Ibid., 18, 22.
[80] Ibid., 32.

Such activities can also be seen to be a form of rehearsal for forthcoming performances of citizenry and equality. As McAllister argues, the African Grove could be seen as "a training ground or rehearsal hall for greater political and social participation in public life" in which African Americans had the opportunity "to rehearse dominant social sensibilities and to 'self-create' a liberated Afro-America."[81] This "rehearsal space" allowed blacks to perform as equal American citizens and also presented a place in which to imitate white (assumed inherently superior) culture.

While the African American venues played multiple important roles, they were mostly short-lived, and I have not been able to identify any venue surviving more than one season. Met with hostility, these sites were forced to close due to complaints or were perhaps financially unsound, meaning they were unable to have any lasting impact on the pleasure gardens more broadly. Thus, in pleasure gardens, African Americans were largely excluded, and despite their attempts to forge their own American identities in their own comparable venues, they were only used in the major gardens to perform inferior identities, allowing white patrons to retain a belief in their superiority.

Conclusion

Superficially, both Native Americans and African Americans can be seen to have been excluded from the main pleasure gardens and from constructions of American identities, yet their roles within and without the gardens were more complex. Within the spaces of the pleasure gardens, much control was exerted over how these races were to be constructed. Native Americans were framed as a fixed and stable singular identity of the past, adopted as elements to form an

[81] Ibid., 34, 35.

American heritage (a crucial component of any national identity), while distanced as temporally and spatially distant. African Americans were constructed as inferior (through playing servile roles) and as simple persons with great entertainment value through minstrelsy. Through these various forms of minstrelsy (redface, whiteface, and blackface), white American identities were constructed in opposition to inferior others, allowing "primitive" Native Americans and "servile" African Americans act as foils against which (white, superior) American identity could be performed. As Deloria identifies, "blackness, in a range of cultural guises, has been an essential precondition for American whiteness," and within the gardens, both Native Americans and African Americans provided the required "blackness" against which "whiteness" could be performed.[82]

African Americans used the gardens in another way to reconfigure what American identities were. Rather than accepting their inferior place within the gardens, several instances have been recorded of pleasure gardens being established by and for African Americans. Although there were probably such venues in other cities, New York boasted at least four such venues, and the limited records we have of them reveal that they were used to create and perform alternative American identities in which the hyphenated identity became possible.

The pleasure gardens of America can thus be seen as fascinating windows into identity construction through inclusion and exclusion, and were important venues as the nation came to grips with who and what it was. What, then, caused these venues to disappear from the major cities, and what took their place? In the following chapter, I explore the principal roles of the gardens and then suggest the various forms that stemmed from these gardens.

[82] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 5.

Chapter 5

Beyond the Pleasure Garden

What happened to the pleasure gardens? I have asserted their importance throughout this dissertation, yet at some point after the 1840s they began to die out. Various scholars have put forth a variety of opinions on the matter, arguing that it was due to their not being "economically viable" as the "value of land climbed," suffering from "the public's preference chang[ing] gradually from active to passive entertainments," or conversely, that that there was a "desire for more participatory and fast-paced forms of recreation."[1] Suggestions of what pleasure gardens literally became have ranged from transforming "from pleasure gardens to parks," their evolving "into concert saloon theatre," and to their being an "ancestor of the later amusement park."[2] Of course, explanations that focus on single influencing factors or simple trajectories hide a wealth of nuances present within the form and its development. This tendency to simplify the form and function of pleasure gardens has made the identification of the legacy of pleasure gardens unsatisfactory to date. Scholarship on pleasure gardens has frequently observed the form in a vacuum, with no apparent awareness of how they relate to more than one other form of entertainment, or how such developments were shaped by more than one influence. As a result, discussions of what became of pleasure gardens have predominantly been cursory and over-simplified. These oversights, which have allowed the complexities of pleasure gardens and their

[1] Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 2; Thomas M. Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City, 1700-1865" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1978), 636; Raymond M. Weinstein, "Disneyland and Coney Island: Reflections of the Evolution of the Modern Amusement Park," *Journal of Popular Culture* 66, no. 1 (Summer 1992): 136.

[2] Katy Matheson, "Niblo's Garden and its 'Concert Saloon,' 1828-1846," *Performing Arts Resources* 21 (1998): 93, 54; Brooks McNamara, *The New York Concert Saloon: The Devil's Own Nights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

importance in the cultural landscape of America to be largely overlooked are what I wish to address in this chapter.

So what did happen to pleasure gardens? The literal answers to this question are easy—many became theatres,[3] some succumbed to pressures for land development, and a few continued.[4] Yet to jump to these short, simple answers avoids the more interesting questions: what impact did the gardens have on other forms of popular entertainment? What replaced the gardens in terms of the social space they had created and filled? In this chapter I ask what happened to pleasure gardens, not in the literal sense of what happened to the geographical space they occupied, but rather what happened to the cultural and social space they had occupied. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the pleasure gardens of America played many important roles and were spaces in which Americans could address through performance concerns over what it meant to be American. I have explored how various answers to questions of nation, class, and race were performed within these spaces, yet these questions were not definitively answered in 1840. Instead, these questions took on new dimensions as America progressed through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

The need to celebrate the anniversary of the nation in order to create and perpetuate a sense of national identity and history persisted beyond the early nineteenth century, as did the fascination with technological innovations and the desire to display such progress. Similarly, although the roles of the city and agrarianism were not fraught with as much tension as they had been in the 1790s and 1800s, the problems of the city (in terms of health, wealth, and morality)

[3] Niblo's and the Palace Garden in New York became theatres, as did the Vauxhall of Charleston and Vauxhall, Washington Gardens of Boston.

[4] As late as 1940, a pleasure garden was in operation in Butte, Montana. Opening in 1899, this garden attempted to recreate the feel of a mid-nineteenth-century pleasure garden, evoking a sense of nostalgia for the form, even as it operated as a new business. Harry C. Freeman, *A Brief History of Butte, Montana: The World's Greatest Mining Camp* (Chicago: Henry O'Shepard, 1900), 48-51.

were still of concern into the twentieth century. The experimentation with, and enforcement of, class hierarchies perceived in the pleasure gardens in the 1820s, 30s, and 40s persisted (albeit in new ways) in the decades after pleasure gardens closed. Additionally, despite monumental steps taken in favor of equality through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the white male continued to be the primary figure in American identities, with those of other races/ethnicities and countries being presented as exotic Others.

The need for an outlet such as pleasure gardens continued, but the surrounding social and material circumstances changed, meaning the concept of the pleasure garden had to be adapted. I begin by noting several forms of entertainment that can be seen to have grown from the idea of the pleasure garden, before focusing on the complex trajectory of pleasure gardens, to world's fairs, to amusement parks (with strong influences on public parks) in greater detail.

Related Forms

Botanical gardens, public parks, zoos, amusement parks, concert saloons, and roof gardens are all examples of outdoor venues that have variously been claimed to have grown out of the pleasure gardens.[5] There is merit of varying degrees to be assigned to each of these claims: while amusement parks clearly do owe a debt to the pleasure gardens, for example, botanical gardens did not emerge after pleasure gardens, and McArann's in Philadelphia provides an instance of the inverse being true—the botanical garden became the pleasure garden. While I do not claim that pleasure gardens were the single most significant form in the history of American popular

[5] See, for example, Warwick Wroth, *Cremorne and the Later London Gardens* (London: Elliot Stock, 1907); Heath Schenker, "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque," in *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations*, ed. Terence Young and Robert Riley, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002); Matheson, "Niblo's Garden and its 'Concert Saloon'"; and Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres*.

entertainments, I assert that they were an invaluable piece of American popular entertainment history and that they played an important role in the development of various venues and forms. In this section, I highlight a small number of entertainment venues that can be seen to owe a debt to pleasure gardens, thus assuring them the place in the conversation regarding popular entertainments that they have largely been denied to date.

Roof garden theatres have been argued to stem from pleasure gardens by Stephen Burge Johnson, who cites Rudolph Aronson's dissatisfaction with outdoor amusements and his desire to run an elegant concert garden in New York in the early 1880s as an example of the impulse to replace pleasure gardens with roof gardens. In seeking to establish a "small, elegant garden" in which he could offer concerts and various entertainments, Aronson found operating traditional pleasure gardens was not commercially viable due to increasingly-high land costs and opening being limited to the warmer months. Aronson considered "indoor, or convertible, facilities" for his concerts, but, unsatisfied with using a single space for multiple functions, he turned to roof space (on top of theatres). By having his "summer garden above his winter theatre," Aronson allowed one to sustain the other throughout the year—offering outdoor concerts during the summer, and indoor entertainments in the winter and in inclement weather.[6] Spaces such as the Casino Theatre (1882) and Madison Square Garden (1890) offered summer concerts and variety acts from the late-nineteenth century and into the twentieth.[7] This use of roof space allowed the theatres to support the gardens (and vice versa), extending the life of the pleasure garden through the use of affordable space, albeit on a much smaller scale.

In this instance, the pleasure garden can be seen to have adapted to the increasing density of the city: as land became increasingly expensive and limited (at least in central locations),

[6] Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres*, 2-5.
[7] Ibid., 7.

spaces for outdoor entertainment in the setting of plants and flowers only made commercial sense if previously un-used spaces were used—maximizing the land available by using rooftops. Providing entertainments similar to those offered at pleasure gardens, roof garden theatres coupled hints of a garden landscape with entertainments in the heart of the city.

Concert saloons provide another example of an important entertainment venue that grew out of the pleasure gardens. In his book on New York concert saloons, Brooks McNamara defines concert saloons as indoor venues which served refreshments, offered free or low-cost entertainments, and provided music, "flourish[ing] in New York City during, and for twenty years or so after, the Civil War."[8] McNamara asserts that saloons were influenced by pleasure gardens (along with music halls and Parisian concert cafés), citing the fact that "many people who appeared at concert saloons also performed from time to time at pleasure gardens" to support his case.[9]

Katy Mattheson is more direct in her assertion of tangible links between pleasure gardens and concert saloons, arguing that the latter were a "vulgarization of the functions of an establishment like Niblo's," and that pleasure gardens (especially Niblo's) "played a pivotal role in the evolution of variety theatre in America and of the term 'concert saloon.'"[10] Matheson's argument overlooks the importance of English music hall and American taverns in the establishment of concert saloons and uses just one case study (that of Niblo's) to make her claim, but there is further evidence to support her assertion, as Vauxhall, New York, for example, also became a concert saloon. As discussed in chapter 1, the site for the final Vauxhall garden was gradually broken into various smaller parcels of land, though different versions of the garden continued to operate until the 1850s. From the late 1840s the last remnant of the garden became

[8] McNamara, *The New York Concert Saloon*, 1.
[9] Ibid., 8.
[10] Matheson, "Niblo's Garden and its 'Concert Saloon,'" 99.

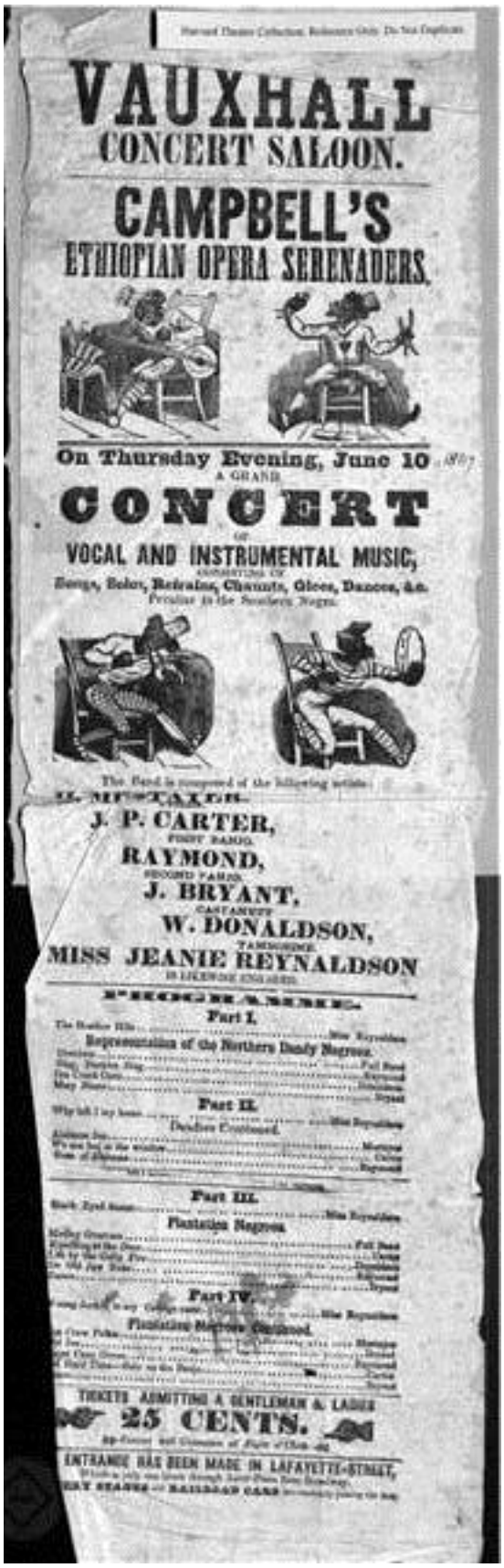
known as the Vauxhall Saloon (and later, and Vauxhall Variety Theatre). Though few details of this site can be established after 1840, there are a small number of extant playbills that testify to its operations, such as the one depicted in figure 5.1, which refers to the site explicitly as a concert saloon. While there are problems with Mattheson's argument, it is apparent that pleasure gardens had important and clear links with the concert saloons that were to emerge, and more importantly, with the variety theatre and later vaudeville so often cited as originating in concert saloons.

"Vaudeville" is difficult to define with any precision, yet its importance within American popular entertainments is well-established. Like variety shows, vaudeville in this period was composed of a number of individual acts, and according to the *OED*, the term was used to "designate variety theatre," in turn defined as "music-hall or theatrical entertainments of a mixed character (songs, dances, impersonations, etc.)."[11] Pleasure gardens were an early venue for vaudeville entertainments—both for the form style and the use of the term.

As discussed in chapter 3, pleasure gardens engaged an increasingly-varied selection of entertainers for a single night, and examples found in many of the gardens attest to this.[12] In addition, advertisements for activities at the pleasure gardens actually used the term vaudeville. Although an encyclopedia entry on the subject identifies the first use of the term "vaudeville" in America as being in Boston in 1840, Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* reveals that Niblo was employing the term to describe "unrelated acts on a single bill" in his gardens from at least

[11] *OED* s.v. "vaudeville," 2 and "variety," 9b.

[12] See, for example, the programs printed for the Columbia Gardens (Baltimore) in the *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* in 1805 and 1806; the variety recorded for McArann's Garden (Philadelphia), *Public Ledger*, 5 June 1840; and for Vauxhall (New York) in the *New York Herald*, 17 August 1845.



VAUXHALL
CONCERT SALOON.

CAMPBELL'S
ETHIOPIAN OPERA SERENADERS.

On Thursday Evening, June 10
A GRAND
CONCERT
OF
VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC,
CONSISTING OF
Songs, Solos, Refrains, Chaunts, Glees, Dances, &c.
Peculiar to the Southern Negro.

The Band is composed of the following artists:
J. P. CARTER,
FIRST BANJO.
RAYMOND,
SECOND BANJO.
J. BRYANT,
CASTANETS
W. DONALDSON,
TAMBOURINE.
MISS JEANIE REYNALDSON
IN LIKENESS ENGAGED.

PROGRAMME.
Part I.
Representation of the Northern Dandy Negroes.
Part II.
Part III.
Plantation Negroes.
Part IV.
Plantation Negroes Continued.

TICKETS ADMITTING A GENTLEMAN & LADIES
25 CENTS.
ENTRANCE HAS BEEN MADE IN LAFAYETTE-STREET,

VAUXALL
VARIETY THEATRE
392 BOWERY, 392.
Junction of 3d and 4th Avenues.

The Liverpool Music Hall of America
OPEN THE YEAR ROUND

F. CROSBY MR. BURDEN ... PROPRIETOR ... Business & Stage Manager
O. CROSBY & A. EDWARDS ... TREASURER ... Musical Director

The Management take pleasure in announcing that they have leased the above place for a term of years, and will present to the public a first-class entertainment consisting of some of the leading artists in the United States.

In a Varied and Diversified Programme
NEW ACTS, NEW FEATURES,
NEW FARCES, NEW MUSIC
Everything New, Fresh and Sparkling
And Genuine Fun without Coarseness or Vulgarity

It is the intention of the Management to make this a
FIRST-CLASS FAMILY RESORT

GRAND OPENING
SATURDAY EV'NG, SEPT. 15, 1877
With a First-Class Company, consisting of the
Following array of Talent

Figures 5.1 (left) and 5.2 (above). Playbills from Vauxhall, New York in 1849 and 1877, when the venue was advertised variously as a "concert saloon" and "variety theatre." Figure 5.2 stresses the respectable nature of the offerings, describing it as being "without Coarseness or Vulgarity" and a "first-class family resort."

1836.[13] It would appear, then , that pleasure gardens were an early venue for vaudeville, employing the term in the commonly-understood manner before the 1840s.

After Vauxhall, New York, became a concert saloon in the late 1840s, programs of entertainment were offered in 1859 billed as "both as variety and as vaudeville."[14] Rather than indicating that what was offered was not vaudeville, this merely suggests a change in tone and association, as the difference between "variety" and "vaudeville" stems from questions of respectability: as Cullen says, vaudeville "sounded French, and if something were French, it was presumed classy" while variety "had been debased in America through its associations with unsavory elements, ribald performance and its male-only clientele."[15] Concert saloons, generally-speaking, developed a reputation for being "boisterous and unsophisticated," and an effort to move away from this association was what led to such programs being labeled as "vaudeville" instead of "variety," despite the fact that only the tone, not the type of entertainment, changed.[16] The sites of former pleasure gardens opted to use the term "vaudeville" earlier than elsewhere. This pattern suggests that these sites (and names such as "Vauxhall") were still associated with a degree of respectability and class elevation. While pleasure gardens can be seen to have had direct links with concert saloons, they also can be seen to have close ties with the later vaudeville, which is traditionally described as developing out of the concert saloon. Although concert saloons that began independent of pleasure gardens also offered variety entertainments, they did not have the same moral and respectable reputations as pleasure gardens, and so while the former may have supported the growth and popularity of

[13] Frank Cullen, *Vaudeville Old and New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performers in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2007), xv; George C. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 4 (1928; New York: AMS Press, 1970), 160, 180. See also Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play: A History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1940).

[14] Cullen, *Vaudeville Old and New*, xvi.

[15] Ibid., xii

[16] Parker R. Zellers, "The Cradle of Variety: The Concert Saloon," *Educational Theatre Journal* 20, no. 4 (December 1968): 582.

vaudeville in later years, vaudeville as a form distinct from variety may be seen to owe more to the practices of pleasure gardens.

However, the most common answer to the question of what happened to pleasure gardens is that they became amusement parks.[17] The standard argument is this: pleasure gardens were privately-owned, outdoor entertainment venues catering to the paying public. As interest in the garden elements declined and the focus on pleasure through mechanized exhibits increased,[18] amusement parks emerged—privately-owned, outdoor entertainment venues catering to the paying public.[19] However, to reduce this development to such a simple trajectory overlooks the various social and economic factors at play, and the other developments that contributed to this evolution. While I agree that there is a relationship between the two, I suggest there is much to be gained by examining this relationship in more detail. We should question what was happening in terms of social and economic change that led to the development from the pleasure garden to the amusement park, borrowing from public parks and world's fairs along the way.

Fairs and Parks

Before the leap from pleasure gardens to amusement parks can be made, the intervening emergence of public parks and world's fairs should first be examined, as each of these forms engaged directly with the development of pleasure gardens. It is only when these "siblings"—

[17] See, for example, Schenker, "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque"; and Josephine Kane, "Edwardian Amusement Parks: The Pleasure Garden Reborn?" in Jonathan Conlin, ed. *Grounds for Pleasure: Pleasure Gardens in Britain and America, 1660-1880* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

[18] For example, the Montagne Russe (literally "Russian Mountains," or early rollercoasters) were seen in French pleasure gardens.

[19] Other arguments seeing a link between the two forms have focused on the growing eclecticism: "by the early nineteenth century the pleasure garden had the look and feel of a fairground." Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres*, 2.

pleasure gardens, public parks, and world's fairs—are viewed in relation to one another that the trajectory of amusement parks (and later, theme parks) can be seen to emerge from the changing attitudes towards urbanization, industrialization, nation, and race discussed here in relation to pleasure gardens.[20]

Despite claims by Garrett to the contrary, the public park system did not signal the end of pleasure gardens, with the function of the latter being replaced by that of the former.[21] Pleasure gardens and parks certainly shared a number of concerns—both, for example, contained elements of self-conscious display (seeing and being seen), both drew on the idea of escaping from the chaos of the city without actually leaving the city, and both provided spaces in which those of lower classes could (and were actively encouraged to) perform as though of a higher class, with a view to being considered more "respectable." Pleasure gardens did have an impact on public parks, and parks were, in turn, to influence the development of pleasure gardens, but the relationship between the three was not the direct trajectory suggested by Garrett. Rather, a more complex relationship was seen, with aspects of public parks rejecting the form of and associations with pleasure gardens, while also retaining similarities.

When designing Central Park, for example, the Central Park Commission considered pleasure gardens as a model for park development. Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar assert that planners had to decide when looking at the various submitted proposals what the function of the park was to be—"Pleasure garden? Civic monument? Pastoral Eden?"[22] From a design viewpoint, pleasure gardens had an aesthetic of "popular eclecticism," employing

[20] Neil Harris describes pleasure gardens, amusement parts, and theme parks as "siblings" in "Expository Expositions: Preparing for the Theme Parks," in *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance*, ed. Karal Ann Marling (New York: Flammarion, 1997), 20.

[21] Garrett, "A History of Pleasure Gardens in New York City," 616-20.

[22] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 103.

"variety, flexibility, and unpredictability in arrangement and use of space."[23] Rosenzweig and Blackmar note that the Commission determined that the park should not reflect pleasure garden sensibilities, but rather have a "unified artistic and social purpose" and be "insulated from both the novelties of pleasure gardens and the social unpredictability of the streets," and they selected Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's design as best suited to their purposes.[24] In this sense, the artistic vision driving the design of Central Park can be seen to be distanced from pleasure gardens. Heath Schenker argues that the rejection of the pleasure garden as a model for Central Park was also driven by issues of social class, and while pleasure gardens were "associated with working-class leisure" by the mid-century, Central Park was to create "an escape from urban crowds and boisterous revelry," for all residents who desired such escape.[25]

While this may appear to suggest that Central Park (and public parks generally) sought to distance themselves from pleasure gardens,[26] it could also be argued that they were trying to recapture the ideals pleasure gardens still represented to some in the 1850s. Raymond Weinstein suggests that public parks and pleasure gardens both responded to "the burst in urban populations and the desire of reformers to counteract the negative effects of overcrowding,"[27] and Neil Harris labels them both as "wholesome antidotes to urban congestion," operating as "safety valves" and "public health measures" which allowed for the elevation of society from the squalor and poverty that plagued cities.[28] Both public parks and pleasure gardens responded to increasing urbanization and saw artificial constructions of the country being created within urban

[23] Ibid., 104.
[24] Ibid., 110.
[25] Schenker, "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque," 69-70, 82, 86.
[26] While Central Park should not be allowed to stand in for all public parks, this example presents an interesting case study in that planners had actively to choose between specific proposals from various parties, rather than contracting a landscape architect (a new job title at that time) to undertake the commission. However, many public parks (designed by Olmsted or not) adhered to the same principles and were responding to similar drives.
[27] Raymond M. Weinstein, "Disneyland and Coney Island: Reflections of the Evolution of the Modern Amusement Park," *Journal of Popular Culture* 66, no. 1 (Summer 1992): 133.
[28] Harris, "Expository Expositions," 20.

environments. Counteracting the landscape of the city with that of the country was not merely a case of aesthetics and illusions of clean air, however, and extended to moral reform.

As demonstrated in chapter 1, cities were growing rapidly throughout the nineteenth century, and they were often portrayed as dens of vice, while the country was associated with innocence, honesty, and patriotism. In the mid-nineteenth century, the elite residents of cities became increasingly aware of the impact of city-living on the working-class residents and sought to socially-educate and reform the public. Olmsted in particular saw public parks as being "instrument[s] of moral reform" and as having a "refining influence upon the most unfortunate and lawless classes of the city."[29] Olmsted's views on the importance of public parks in increasingly-dense cities have been well documented, and his designs, underlain by his ideals, led to public parks in cities of over twenty states, including Boston's "Emerald Necklace," and Baltimore's Druid Hill Park.[30] Much like Delacroix's open invitation to all to attend his Vauxhall, Olmsted believed that public parks should be egalitarian venues open to everyone, and believed that social consciousness and respectability could be imparted through the influence of nature. Just as Delacroix reversed this position when he instilled dress codes and increased admission, Olmsted and Vaux were unable to continue this approach in Central Park when management switched in 1870 from the elite Board of Commissioners to the Department of Public Parks under Tammany Hall in 1870.[31] Public parks did, however, remain free of admission charges.

[29] George L. Scheper, "The Reformist Vision of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Poetics of Park Design," *New England Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (September 1989): 373; Frederick Law Olmstead, *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes*, ed. S. B. Sutton (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 96.

[30] "National Association for Olmsted Parks," http://www.olmsted.org/ht/d/sp/i/1162/pid/1162 (accessed 5 February 2011).

[31] John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 18-20.

Public parks shared their origins with pleasure gardens in that both forms were created to counteract the ills of rapid urbanization, and both attempted to provide democratic spaces for citizens. Additionally, both presented a highly-constructed version of a country landscape in the heart of the city. Although there is no direct link to suggest that public parks led to the demise of pleasure gardens, or that public parks filled a void created by the closure of pleasure gardens, it is clear that despite efforts to differentiate their designs from those of pleasure gardens, they actually shared much in common in terms of the social functions they attempted to fulfill. At the same time as the public park system was emerging, another form was developing that shared links with pleasure gardens—world's fairs.

The display of technological innovations played an important role in many of the pleasure gardens, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the exhibits held in New York by the American Institute.[32] Founded in 1828, the American Institute held yearly exhibits that showcased "the finest products of agriculture and manufacturing, the newest types of machinery, the most recent contributions of inventive genius" with the goal of "encouraging and promoting domestic industry in this State and the United States."[33] As discussed in chapter 2, these fairs were held at Niblo's Garden between 1834 and 1845, with later fairs being held at other pleasure gardens, including Castle Garden (1846-1853) and Palace Garden (1859).[34]

Using an entertainment venue for the display of new technologies was more than a matter of mere convenience (i.e., pleasure gardens were not the only suitably-sized spaces). By using

[32] Other examples of where inventions were displayed in pleasure gardens can be seen with the various balloon ascensions (at Vauxhall [New York], Columbian Gardens [Baltimore], and Washington Gardens [Boston], for example), the demonstration of the velocipede at Vauxhall (Philadelphia), and the various developments in firework technologies. This (along with its relationship to national pride) has been discussed in more depth in chapter 2.

[33] Edwin Forrest Murdock, "The American Institute," in *A Century of Industrial Progress*, ed. Frederic William Wile (New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1928), v-vi.

[34] Ethan Robey, "The Utility of Art: Mechanics' Institute Fairs in New York City, 1828-1876" (PhD dissertation: Columbia University, 2000), 628-35.

the space of the pleasure gardens, organizers of the fair were part of an ongoing coupling of education with entertainment that was later employed at museums (such as Peale's and Barnum's in Philadelphia and New York respectively), in the theatres (such as the temperance reform melodramas, *The Drunkard* and *Ten Nights in a Barroom*), and the circus (with its displays of exotic others and foreign animals). It was relatively common for entertainments of the late-nineteenth century to be touted not as being frivolous activities, but rather respectable and educational pastimes, and the use of pleasure gardens for educational exhibitions can be seen as a sharing such aims. In the American Institute's annual fairs, the displays of products were a means of celebrating the nation's achievements and delighting visitors with displays both static and mechanic. The "great annual national jubilee" featured steam powered machines, ploughing matches, and firework displays, amongst its many offerings.[35] Similar exhibits had been occurring in European countries, such as the d'Avèze exhibition in France, which became an annual event from 1797. As John Findling and Kimberly Pelle argue, part of the goal of this French exhibit was to demonstrate (perhaps to their citizens more than other nations) France's ability to compete with British industries—a similar motivation can be seen to have operated in the fairs held by the American Institute.[36]

Although Findling and Pelle argue that mechanics fairs in the US "seem to have had negligible impact on the individuals who were involved in the planning of the earliest international fairs held in the United States," it cannot be denied that they served many of the same functions.[37] Indeed, the first fair run by the American Institute that lost money was the one of 1892, and both the depressed economy and interest in the forthcoming 1893 world fair were

[35] "American Institute of the City of New-York. Sixteenth Annual Fair," SY1843, no. 15, New York Historical Society.

[36] John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle, eds., preface to *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 6.

[37] Ibid., 7.

cited as the causes of this deficit.[38] The exhibit of the following year was cancelled due to coinciding with the Chicago fair, which makes the direct links between the Institute's exhibits and the world's fairs even more apparent.[39] Although I am not arguing that world's fairs were the direct product of the fairs held in pleasure gardens,[40] the links between the two forms are worth considering.

The Institute's fairs were popular for many years, but the world's fairs quickly filled this function as the goal switched from a state-level representation to national and international stages. America's first world's fair came in 1853 with the "Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations" in New York. Inspired by London's Crystal Palace, a large building on the site of what is now Bryant Park, designed by Charles Gildemeister and Georg J. B. Carsten (designer of Copenhagen's Tivoli Park), housed the various exhibits.[41] When the main building burned in 1858, it was hosting the annual fair of the American Institute, again highlighting the links between the two.[42]

The Columbian Exposition of 1893 (or the White City, as the 1893 fair was popularly known) was projected as a unified vision of "harmony, unity, and beauty" which was compared to an "ideal city."[43] Although it could not be seen as "a real alternative to the American city or, especially, to the city of Chicago," it did influence future city planning.[44] After the fair, Daniel

[38] "Guide to the Records of the American Institute of the City of New York for the Encouragement of Science and Invention 1808-1983 (Bulk 1828-1940)," finding aid, New York Historical Society, http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/americaninst2.html (accessed 5 January 2011).

[39] Ibid.

[40] Indeed, Findling and Pelle have a valid point when they observe that the world's fairs hosted in France and England played a large role in the decisions made by the US fair organizers.

[41] John R. Davis, "New York 1853," in Findling and Pelle, *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions*, 18.

[42] The American Institute's annual fair was held in the (New York) Crystal Palace every year between 1853 and 1858. Robey, "The Utility of Art," 633.

[43] Russell Lewis, preface to Neil Harris, Wim de Wit, James Gilbert, and Robert W. Rydell, *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993), xi-xii.

[44] Wim de Wit, "Building an Illusion: The Design of the World's Columbian Exposition" in *Grand Illusions*, 71.

Burnham tried to transfer the ideas of symmetry and unity to Chicago, and this had a subsequent impact on city planning elsewhere in America.[45] The goals of presenting alternative urban environments, it can thus be seen, underlay pleasure gardens, public parks, and world's fairs to varying degrees.

John Kasson identifies close ties between the goals of the planners of early public parks and those of the White City, as both "provided an alternative environment that expressed a strong critique of urban conditions and culture," with Central Park providing a "picturesque rural retreat" and the 1893 Exposition, a "heighten[ed] . . . sense of possibility of what a city might be."[46] Indeed, there were many direct links between the planning of parks, fairs, and cities, as Olmstead was involved with the planning of both Central Park and the Columbian Exposition,[47] and Daniel Burnham was central in the designing of the Exposition and in subsequent planning in Chicago.[48] According to James Gilbert, Chicago's elite "envisioned a genteel city. They aimed to impose moral order that would, like a map, guide the resident to the proper places and into the proper attitudes," in an attempt to address the growing concerns they had with the moral, economic, and cultural depravity they saw in the city.[49] Rather than creating a small enclave in which people could be instructed through communion with nature, the creators of this exposition sought to guide the visitors in a more direct way, elevating them by presenting a vision of what the city might be: not creating an escape, but an alternative. As discussed above, the sense of responding to rapid urbanization was met with different responses; the pleasure garden was an

[45] Ibid., 72.

[46] Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 18-19. While Kasson uses Central Park as his chief example, he allows his argument to encompass all nineteenth-century public parks, using Central Park as the specific example only due to its ubiquity. The problem of allowing Central Park to stand in for all public parks is also seen in discussions of world's fairs, where the White City is frequently permitted to stand in for the idea of American world's fairs.

[47] R. Reid Badger, "Chicago 1893," in Findling and Pelle, eds., *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions*, 123.

[48] Wim de Wit, "Building an Illusion" in *Grand Illusions*, 72.

[49] James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 36.

early version, in which proprietors provided a pastoral space in the heart of the city to escape the chaos of the city. Public parks shared this goal, but did not have the same financial motives as pleasure gardens. The Columbian Exposition, meanwhile, also tackled the question of what to do about the problems inherent to cities, but rather than providing an escape within the city, it offered an alternative (however unfeasible and temporary that alternative might be) that combined business operations with patriotic and social-reform objectives.[50]

Adjacent to (and technically part of) the White City was the Midway Plaisance—a strip of land connecting Jackson and Washington Parks, housing popular entertainments and "anthropological" exhibits apart from the "formal" White City. World's fairs were expensive endeavors, and previous fairs had almost universally lost money. Initially, the Exposition was to house only the exhibits of the main site, but the high number of requests from "amusement vendors, restaurateurs, circus acts, musical troupes, and speculators of all sorts," combined with the economic value of allowing for such stands and the likelihood of them operating on the outskirts of the fair anyway, led to the creation of the Midway Plaisance.[51] This entertainment and exhibit area led to the common feature of the "Midway," which was soon considered indispensible to subsequent fairs. The contents and position of this segment of the Exposition reveal much about how the attitudes towards race, gender, and class seen in the operations of pleasure gardens continued and had a tremendous impact on the development of the amusement park.

[50] It should be noted, however, that although American world's typically fairs aimed to make a profit, this was not always the case. The Columbian Exposition did, however, make a small profit. Badger, "Chicago 1893," 123.

[51] Ibid., 119.

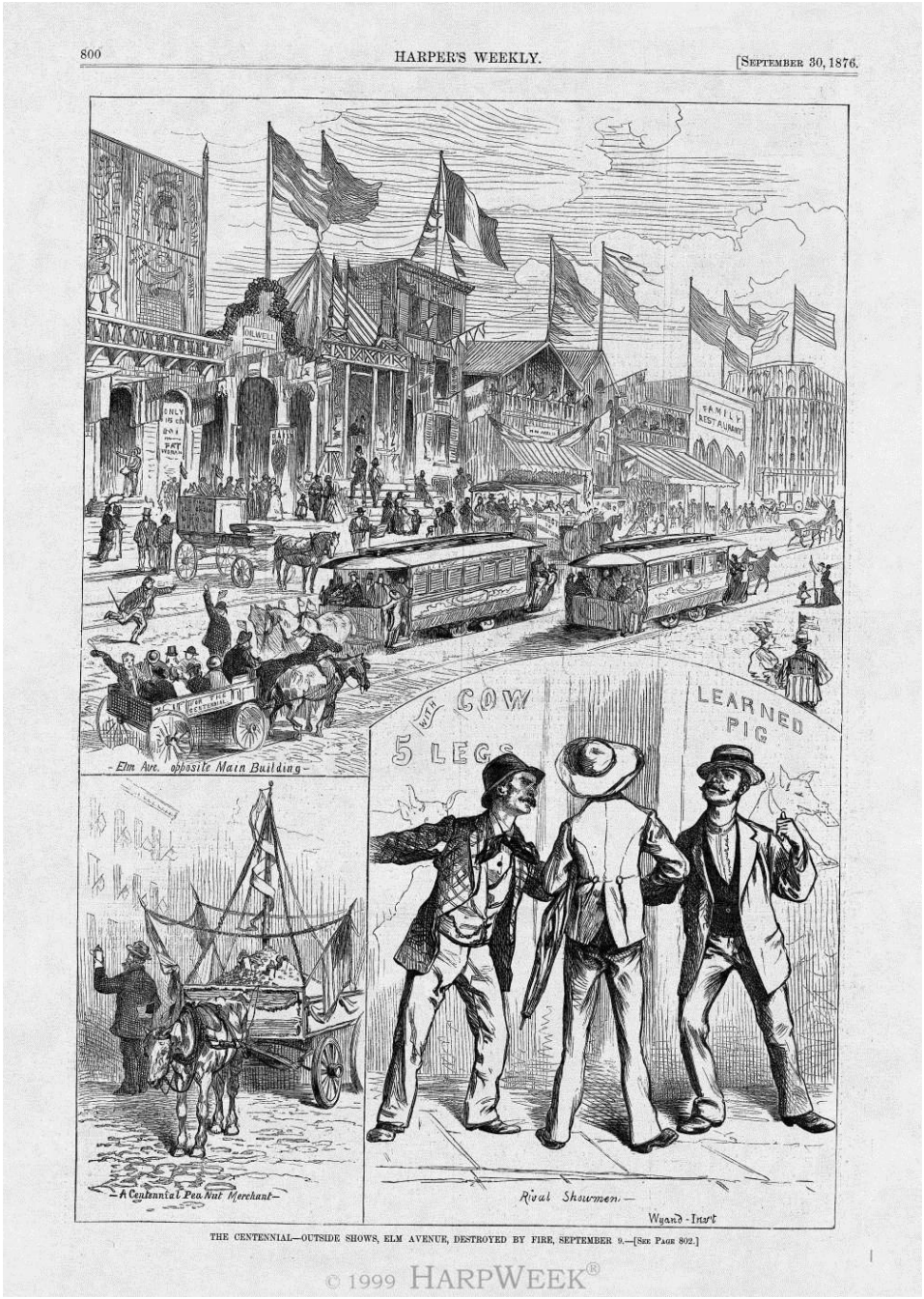


Figure 5.3. Popular entertainments on the outskirts of the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 (Philadelphia). Before being officially admitted into the grounds of the world's fairs from 1893, popular entertainments often emerged around the perimeter of world's fairs, hoping to lure the thousands of visitors to the fairs to their concessions. This series of scenes includes such shows as the "Learned Pig," a captive balloon, a fat lady, and a five-legged cow. *Harper's Weekly*, 30 September 1976, 800.

At this first and all the pre-1893 world's fairs, the focus was squarely on the exhibits, and sanctioned entertainments were limited to displays and demonstrations, such as "machines-in-motion, tethered balloon ascensions, frequent fireworks displays, drills by the U.S. Life Saving Service in Exposition Lake, and torpedo explosions."[52] These official entertainments were very similar to those that had been offered by pleasure gardens in their formative years (especially fireworks and balloons), and the links between technical innovation, education, and entertainment were paramount. Entertainments of a more popular variety frequently emerged on the outskirts of fairs, where showmen would exhibit their freak shows and performances to the thousands of visitors to the fairs for a small fee. The 1853 New York fair, for example, was surrounded by a busy and vibrant series of concession stands (much to the dismay of fair organizers),[53] and figure 5.3 depicts the range of shows found outside Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial International Exhibition. It was only in 1893, with Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition, that popular entertainments became an intrinsic part of world's fairs, and it is this particular fair that best exhibits the links between this form, pleasure gardens, and the later amusement parks.

As figure 5.4 shows, the Midway was home to rides (such as the captive balloon and the now-infamous Ferris wheel), numerous theatres (including the Chinese and Persian theatres), displays (various panoramas and the Eiffel Tower model, for example), restaurants (including the Java Lunch Room, Vienna Restaurant, and the New England Farmer Diner), and a large number of "villages" and "streets" (spanning Cairo, Algeria, Austria, and Lapland). As can be seen both from the map and the brief overview given here, the supposedly anthropological exhibits dominated the Midway, but the focus remained on the concept of entertainment. The fact that

[52] Miki Pfeffer, "New Orleans 1884-1885," in Findling and Pelle, eds., *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions*, 83.

[53] Davis, "New York 1853," 19.

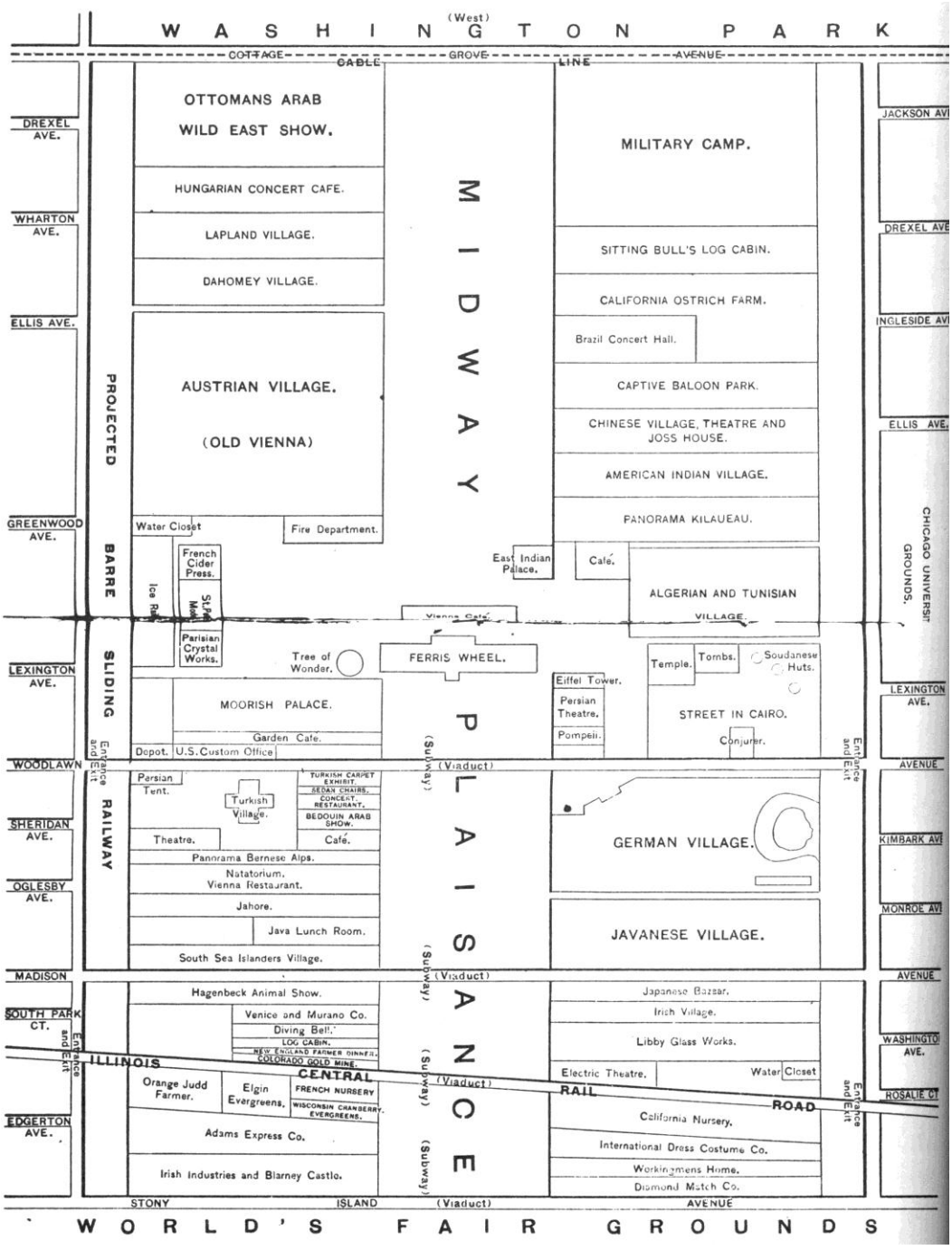


Figure 5.4. Map of the Midway, Columbian Exposition of 1893. From *Guide to the Midway*, reprinted in Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*, 112.

entertainment trumped scientific anthropology can be seen throughout the various exhibits of the Midway and is further emphasized by the presence of the "International Dress Costume Company" and the distribution of the exhibits, with entertainments being an intrinsic part of the displays (see, for example, the conjuror positioned in the "street in Cairo").

Gilbert describes the Midway as being populated with "popular culture and unregulated commercialism" which contrasted starkly with the "planned high culture" of the White City; operating between the focal point of the fair and the city itself, he asserts that the Midway served as a "cushion" between the fair and Chicago, between the white and black cities.[54] An underlying current of class-distinction and hierarchies could be seen in the very fact that these "popular" elements were distinguished from the "high culture" of the heart of the fair by being positioned on the outskirts of the fair. Much like the attitudes witnessed in the changing management practices of pleasure gardens described in chapter 3, the Exposition set up a supposedly ideal and democratic space, but built hierarchies of class into its very design; as Russell Lewis asserts, the Exposition did not present a democratic, ideal city, but rather revealed "the nation's prejudices and exclusionary practices [that] were incorporated into the planning, building, and running of the exposition."[55]

As has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the pleasure gardens were a site in which the "ideal" American citizen was presented. Similarly, the Exposition was designed and operated by and for the middle-class white male: according to Lewis, "women, African Americans, Native Americans, and so-called 'exotic' peoples from around the world were either excluded from participating in the fair or confined to specific pavilions, exhibits, or Midway

[54] Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*, 83, 111.
[55] Lewis, preface, *Grand Illusions*, xii.

attractions."[56] Women were allowed to participate, but they were to remain inferior in the male-dominated White City. Although R. Reid Badger asserts that "women played a more visible and active role in the Columbian Exposition than in any previous world's fair," the nature and positioning of their contributions is worthy of note.[57] The "Women's Building" designed by Sophia Hayden (the first female graduate from MIT), was a substantial building that contained a variety of exhibits dealing with social reform issues, all of which were arranged by women, and highlighted the ideology of domesticity and its role in advancing civilization.[58] However, as Robert Rydell observes, the Women's Building was located adjacent to the Midway, positioning women on a border between "primitive" and "savage" culture, and genteel, ideal, high culture.[59] While women were not excluded from the fair (just as they were not excluded from pleasure gardens), they were assigned a place within an unstated hierarchy that positioned them above the "primitive savages" found in the Midway, but still below white men, only admitted in a position of implicit and unstated inferiority. In pleasure gardens, unescorted women were typically excluded—they needed the presence of a man.[60]

When most pleasure gardens were in operation, slavery was still a reality in many states, but by the opening of the 1893 Exposition, slavery had been legally abolished. However, African Americans were largely prevented from exhibiting at the fair and were initially excluded from positions of responsibility in the planning. In doing this, organizers of the fair reaffirmed prevailing racist assumptions, but were not allowed to do so quietly. Following protests by the African American community, a Jubilee—or "Colored People's Day," as it was also called—was

[56] Ibid.
[57] Badger, "Chicago 1893," 121.
[58] Robert W. Rydell, "A Cultural Frankenstein? The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," in *Grand Illusions*, 151-2.
[59] Ibid., 156-57.
[60] As was seen in chapter three, even when an event at Vauxhall, New York, was specifically targeted at women, the admission policy still required women to be accompanied, and tickets were advertised as admitting one gentleman and "as many women as he thinks proper." *Commercial Advertiser*, 10 August 1801.

announced, which was greeted with divided reactions: Ida B. Wells urged African Americans to boycott the fair, while Frederick Douglass saw an opportunity to showcase black accomplishments and condemn white supremacy.[61] As was seen with the establishment of the African Grove pleasure garden, the restricted inclusion of African Americans was met with opposition and action.

The "ideal city," then, was designed to restrict predominantly the roles of African Americans and women, and in doing so, reasserted their positions in the hierarchy. Also operating within this hierarchy was the position of other ethnic groups, and the Midway itself was where this ranking was most apparent. As Badger notes, American world's fairs perpetuated "Western imperialism, and 'scientific' racism" through presenting ethnic Others, including Native Americans, Chinese, Algerians, and Arabs in a manner that encouraged viewers to perceive them as subhuman.[62] By positioning these "villages" in the Midway, surrounded by panoramas, balloons, ice rinks, and the Ferris wheel, a clear message was being put forward about such exhibits being a form of entertainment and about the view that the subjects were decidedly inferior to the ideal (white male) occupants of the White City.

The exhibition of various ethnic groups had occurred before the world's fairs, but world's fairs welcomed a broader range and created so-called "villages," where visitors could watch "specimens" in recreations of their "natural habitat"; According to Rydell, "beginning with the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, every American international fair held through World War I included ethnological villages sanctioned by prominent anthropologists."[63] Such displays aimed "not simply to amuse, but to perpetuate an image of underdevelopment," much as

[61] Ibid., 144-50.
[62] Badger, "Chicago 1893," 123.
[63] Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 21.

was seen in the reporting of the "savage" and primitive beings in Vauxhall (discussed in chapter 4), which reporters and advertisers alike encouraged spectators to pity.[64] Pleasure gardens had been an early place to exhibit Native Americans as "anthropological curiosities" used to assert the superiority of white Americans, and while museums continued to present Others as exhibits, they did so as individual "specimens" and not within so-called villages or enacting rituals. Thus the world's fairs were a primary venue which continued this pseudo-anthropological tradition.

Of equal importance in this trajectory from pleasure gardens to amusement parks via world's fairs are the various entertainments found within the Midway; the "captive balloon," various panoramas, and theatres coupled with the exotic villages nod towards the activities at pleasure gardens, while the Ferris wheel, "Snow and Ice Railway" (a version of the rollercoaster), and "Street in Cairo" hint at the direct contributions this (and other) world's fairs were to give to the amusement park. As Judith Adams observes, it was the World's Columbian Exposition that "gave us the midway; the Ferris wheel . . . ; the presentation of exotic cultural environments as exhibits; a clearly sectored landscape design; [and] a celebration of American technology and industry in a highly entertaining mode of presentation"—all features of the then emerging amusement park.[65]

The rise of the amusement park in America was not simply a product of technological innovation.[66] As John Kasson argues, "America in the late 19th century was at a critical juncture

[64] Rydell, "A Cultural Frankenstein?" in *Grand Illusions*, 164.

[65] Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), xiii. I do, however, question her claim that world's fairs "gave us . . . the presentation of exotic cultural environments as exhibits."

[66] In using the term "amusement park" I wish to distinguish it from the more recent term "theme park." Although there is a general consensus that amusement parks and theme parks are different, the definitions vary significantly. Margaret J. King argues that "amusement parks use the immediate physical gratification of the thrill ride," while a theme park "is a total-immersion art form built to capture a coherent mind experience, one that owes more to physics." Weinstein argues that amusement parks can be defined by their "lower admission costs and shorter lines, . . . classic mechanic rides, . . . and provide local residents the opportunity for one-day excursions," with theme parks offering the opposite in all cases. Yet much of this definition consigns amusement parks to the past

where essential values were in conflict," including "the agrarian ideal" and "the concept of a nation" which were being challenged by "industrial capitalism," and "the [continuing] rise of cities."[67] These questions and conflicts were not new to the late nineteenth century, but rather had been present in America through the early part of the century (as discussed throughout this dissertation), and the amusement park was a significant entertainment venue of the 1880s onwards that addressed these concerns. Much like pleasure gardens and public parks, amusement parks were enclosed areas "segregated from urban environments," which Kasson identifies as being an attempt to "eliminate the unsavory elements of city life."[68] Requiring transportation to visit, early amusement parks were located outside of the city, inviting patrons to escape the evils of city day-to-day life and to take an excursion to a place designed for escape and release. As will be shown, the development of amusement parks in America owes much to pleasure gardens, public parks, and world's fairs.

The first American amusement park is generally agreed to have been Coney Island, Brooklyn.[69] Initially a seaside resort in 1824, Coney Island offered visitors "seclusion and surf" in an area that was not significantly developed.[70] However, as Coney Island's fame grew, and, more importantly, transportation became more efficient, a series of establishments emerged, run

(making the definition easy to interpret as meaning that "amusement parks are older than theme parks"). Stephen Mills differentiates between the two by identifying theme parks as defined, contained spaces requiring an admission fee, while amusement parks are open to all, in a space undefined or free to enter (but with rides requiring a fee); yet Coney Island's various amusement parks were defined spaces requiring a fee to enter. In using the terms "amusement park" and "theme park," I acknowledge the main difference being the degree of commercialism and corporate sponsorship associated with the latter. Although the concept of "theme" for theme parks is central, many amusement parks have (and have had) themes that unite the various rides and displays. The overt corporate sponsorship of such modern parks such as Disneyland, Universal Studios, and Island of Adventure is what allows them to be identified as "theme parks," as I understand it—the "theme" is not the unity of concept or idea, but rather its association with the sponsor. Margaret J. King, "Theme and Amusement Parks," in *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America*, vol. 2, 364; Raymond Weinstein, "Amusement Parks," in *Encyclopedia of Urban America: The Cities and the Suburbs*, ed. Neil Larry Shumsky, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 25; Stephen F. Mills, *The American Landscape* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), 101-2.

[67] Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 23-24.

[68] Ibid., 27-28.

[69] See, for example, Weinstein, "Amusement Parks," 23.

[70] Weinstein, "Disneyland and Coney Island," 135.

by a number of individual entrepreneurs.[71] Operating over the summer months (from May to early September), Coney Island's various parks were marked by several features that were shared by pleasure gardens: a concern with improving the moral quality of the entertainments and patrons, the enclosure of outdoor areas into defined spaces requiring admission, the introduction of mechanical inventions, and the display of "anthropological" exhibits.[72] The first two of these features stemmed from the rising association of the area with rowdy behavior, which resulted in the enclosure of areas by proprietors and introduction of an admission fee. Much like the requirement to pay to enter pleasure gardens, this allowed managers to have better control over the caliber of their clients. Although the "cleaning up" of Coney Island through the establishment of specific parks, such as Steeplechase (opened in 1897 by George C. Tilyou), Luna Park (1903, Frederick Thompson and Elmer Dundy), and Dreamland (1904, William H. Reynolds) is often presented as being the result of the various individuals sharing a philanthropic goal, in Kasson's view, "the creators of these amusement parks were more animated by pecuniary interest than reformist zeal," and it was as a business that these parks operated (much like pleasure gardens).[73]

The relationship between philanthropic goals and commercial gain is one that has often been close; throughout much of the nineteenth century, aims to associate entertainment with education and respectability were common, and goals of profit and morality were mutually compatible, as the middle class were a growing portion of the population, and their concerns with respectability were wise to acknowledge. Within this broad "middle," the various proprietors targeted different subsets. As noted above, the enclosure of the parks allowed

[71] Regular service to Coney Island was offered by steamship from 1847 (the journey taking about two hours) and via a plank road from 1850. By the end of the 1870s, nine steamboats and five rail lines covered the distance in half an hour. Woody Register, "Coney Island," in *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America*, ed. Gary S. Cross, vol. 1 (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2004), 239-40.

[72] Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 37.

[73] Ibid., 34.

proprietors to restrict and control access to their parks, but they did not all target the same level of respectability. Weinstein identifies a hierarchy of the various Coney Island Parks, describing Steeplechase as catering to working-class populations, and Luna Park and Dreamland catering to middle class audiences, with Dreamland being slightly "superior" to Luna Park. In justifying this stratification, Weinstein points to Steeplechase's lack of enactments, exotic villages, and architectural styles, and the fact that many of the rides had sexual elements (skirts blown up, men and women thrown together). Luna Park and Dreamland, in this view "attracted more middle-class audiences [and] appealed to a better-educated public's interest in foreign travel, spectacular exhibits, realistic drama, and esthetic [sic] sights."[74] In addition to the rides and exhibits, both Luna Park and Dreamland invested large sums in illuminating their parks brightly, so the grounds were fully illuminated at night.[75] However, it appears that Dreamland may have sacrificed too much of its entertainment value for the sake of respectability, as it was the first of the three to fail—a failure Weinstein attributes to the fact that Dreamland was "built by politicians and not by showmen."[76] While commercial goals and concerns with respectability did operate hand in hand, there was clearly a danger of catering too much to one end of the spectrum or the other, and the amusement parks tried to walk this line carefully. In a similar vein, proprietors of pleasure gardens had variously experimented with the degree of respectability their sites could offer, balancing social elevation with maintaining a substantial pool of patrons, as discussed in chapter 3.

Another aspect of amusement parks that is shared with pleasure gardens are the acts of seeing and being seen. As noted in chapters 1 and 2, the performativity inherent in attending

[74] Weinstein, "Disneyland and Coney Island," 141.
[75] See, for example, Register, *The Kid of Coney Island*, 132, and Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 66 for observations on the extent of lighting.
[76] Weinstein, "Amusement Parks," 23.

Figure 5.5. Photograph of the "Human Whirlpool" at Steeplechase Park, c.1910. Image provided by the Digital Content Library, University of Minnesota.

pleasure gardens in both England and America was an important aspect of their allure, as individuals could perform being of a higher social class and typically enjoyed observing other patrons. In amusement parks, pleasure was to be found in the mechanical rides, which often saw patrons become the object of spectacle. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 reveal the degree to which patrons of the amusement parks were also part of the spectacle, betraying the fact that seeing and being seen was part of the appeal. In figure 5.5, for example, a large number of spectators can be seen to closely watch the participants—our attention is drawn to the act of watching. Figure 5.6 focuses on the gaze of the viewer by exaggerating the spectacle. Although depicting a very similar scene (the same ride at the same park) in very different ways, in each of these illustrations, our attention is drawn to both seeing and what is being seen.

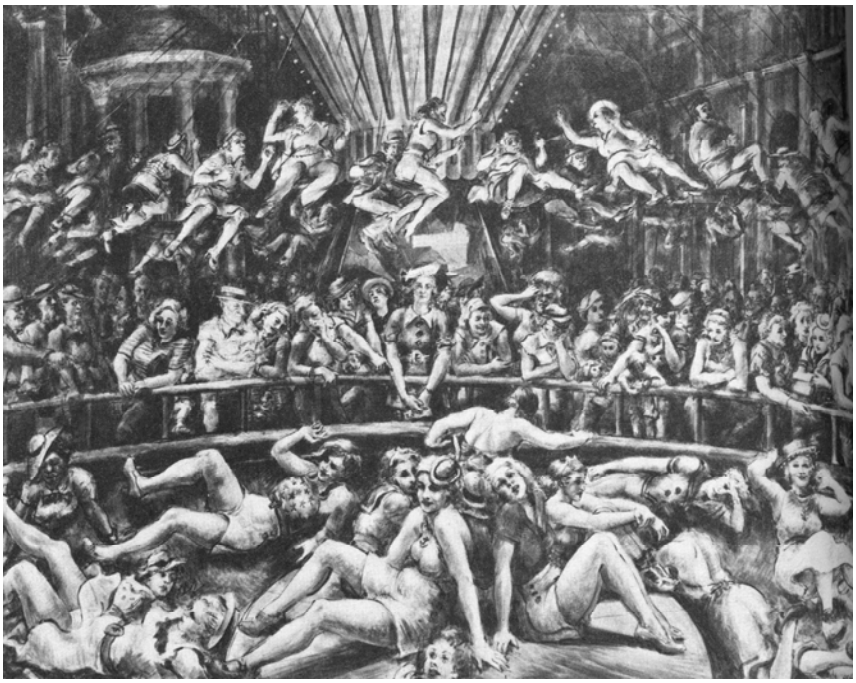


Figure 5.6. ***George C. Tilyou's Steeplechase Park***, by Reginald Marsh, 1936. Despite depicting the same scene as figure 5.5, this highlights the "ample, undulating curves and powerful muscles [which were] thrown in all directions" at the heart of the appeal observed by Adams at such parks as Steeplechase. Adams, *The American Park Industry*, 45. Image from the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1966.

A similar example of the visitor becoming the object of observation can be seen in the "blowholes" at Steeplecahse Park, which saw small groups (often couples) being taken by surprise by jets of air which blew garments and accessories. After making their way through the various elements of this attraction, participants would end up in an auditorium where they were able to view the people behind them going through the same experience—the visitor to this attraction would literally be the spectator and spectacle.[77] While the degree of participation and transparency of the acts of observing and being observed were more pronounced in this setting,

[77] Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry*, 45.

pleasure gardens, public parks, and amusement parks all share "seeing and being seen" as an essential component.[78]

A further similarity between pleasure gardens and amusement parks can be observed in the introduction of technological innovations. The importance of rides employing new technologies within the amusement parks is well known—what would an amusement park be if we were to ignore such rides as the rollercoaster, carousel, and Ferris wheel? The introduction of technologies into pleasure gardens has already been discussed here with the American Institute exhibits, and the introduction of early rollercoasters into French pleasure gardens was raised earlier, but the introduction of such mechanical rides into the American gardens did not simply reflect the French developments. The transition from pleasure garden to amusement park was not as simple or straight forward as many have suggested.[79]

The exact origin of the rollercoaster has been explored fairly comprehensively in Robert Cartmell's *The Incredible Scream Machine*, in which he identifies "Russian mountains" as being the first examples of roller coasters.[80] Dating to the fifteenth century, these early prototypes were initially made of ice, and wheels were added to the cars in 1784. When introduced in Paris from 1804, these rides gained much popularity and appeared in many Parisian pleasure gardens. In America, the first rollercoaster appears to have been devised independent of the French craze. In 1827, Josiah White developed the switchback railway at Maunch Chuck, Pennsylvania, that employed gravity to transport coal and workers from the top to the bottom of the mountain. To return the carts to the top again, mules, then later, steam engines were employed. In 1872, the use

[78] In present-day theme parks, it is common for riders to have their photograph taken while on a rollercoaster, further continuing this focus on the patron as spectacle.

[79] See Schenker, "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque"; and Kane, "Edwardian Amusement Parks: The Pleasure Garden Reborn?"

[80] Robert Cartmell, *The Incredible Scream Machine: A History of the Rollercoaster* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), 1-47.

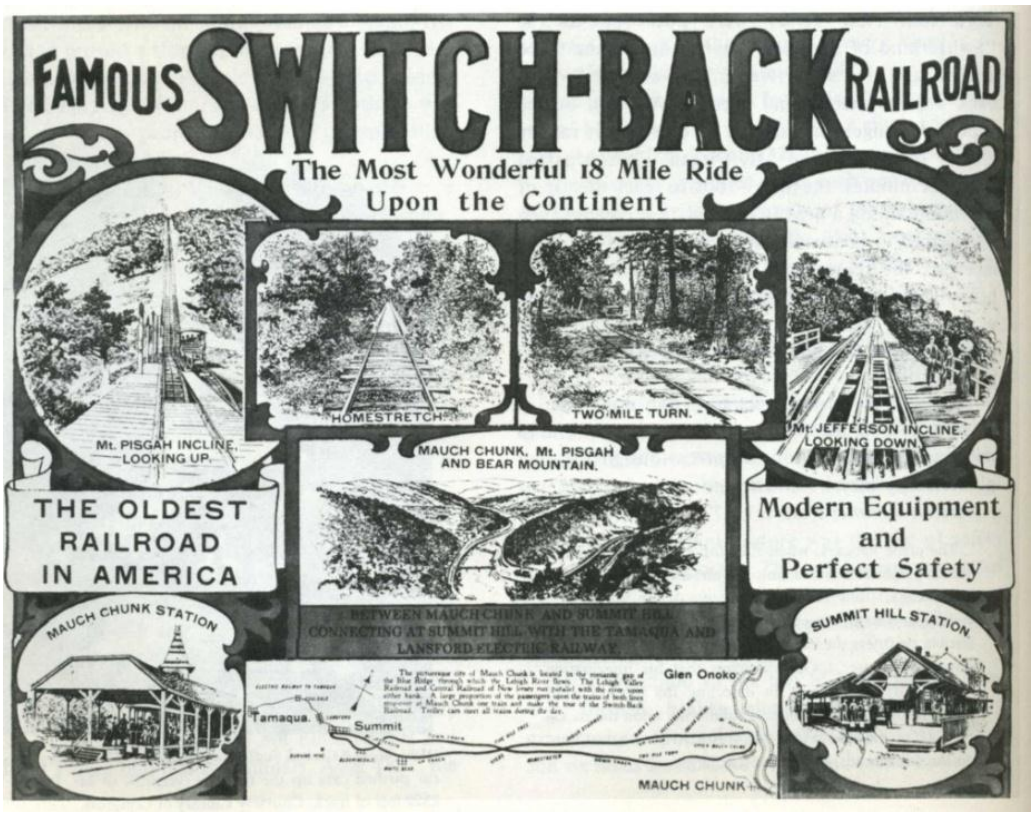


Figure 5.7. Advertisement for the Switchback Railway when it was a tourist attraction. In Cartmell, *Incredible Scream Machine*, 38.

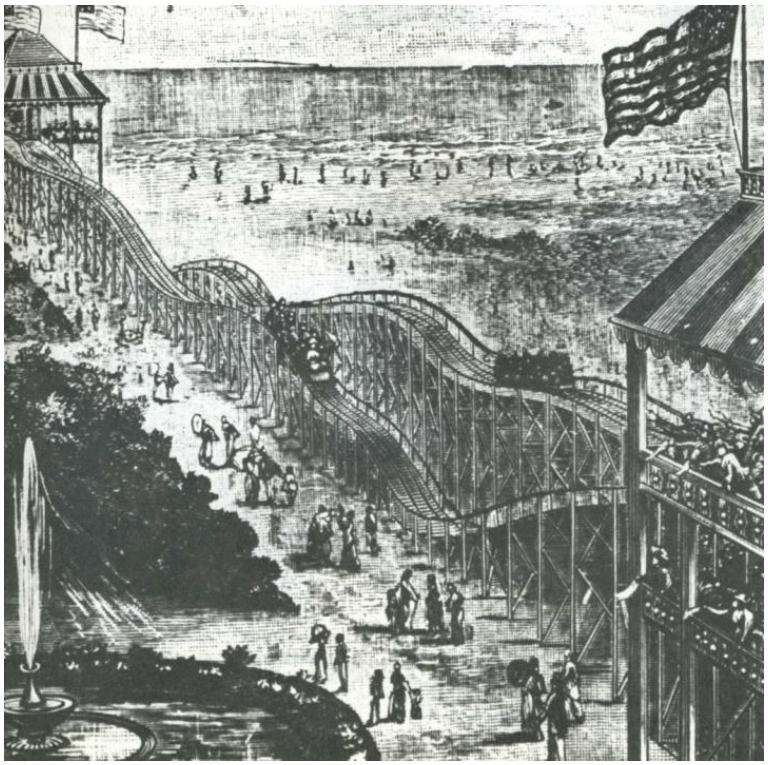


Figure 5.8. Thompson's Switchback Railway on opening day (13 June 1884) at Coney Island. Image from *Incredible Scream Machine*, 45.

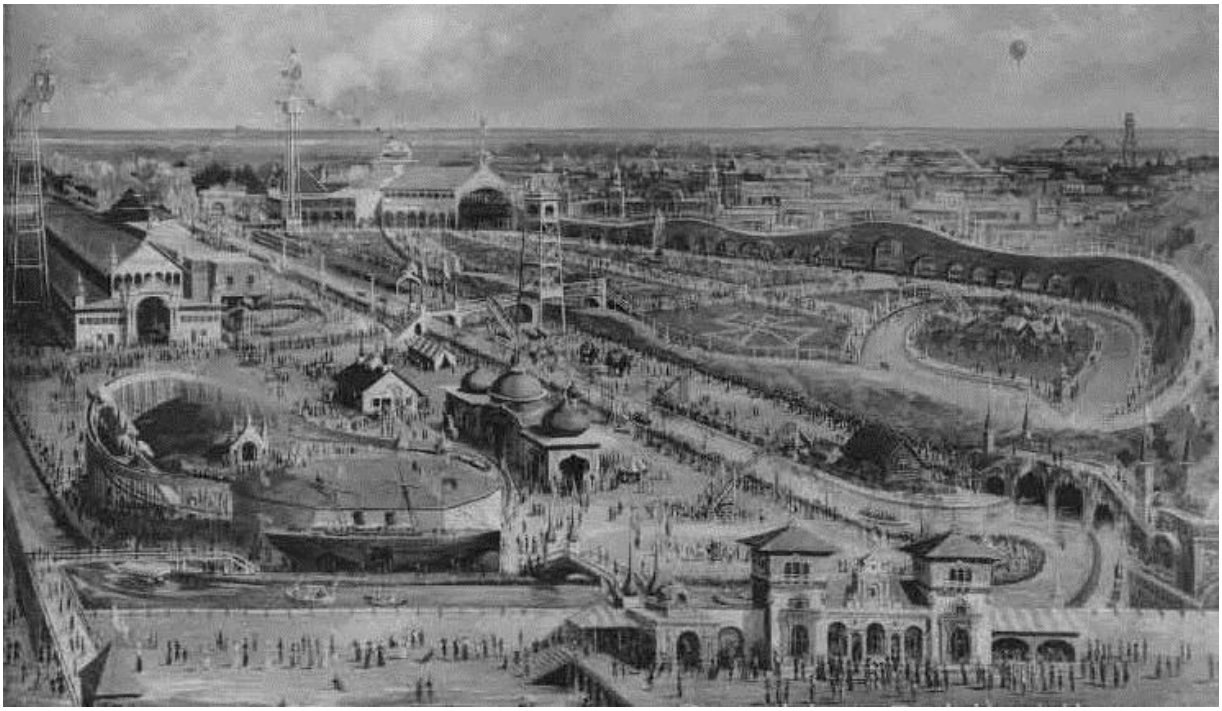


Figure 5.9. Steeplechase Park, Coney Island, 1898. Note the signature track around the perimeter of the park. Image from Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

of this railway switched to tourism exclusively, and the ride became a popular attraction (see figure 5.7). It was this basic idea that Richard Knudsen drew upon when he submitted his 1878 patent for his "Inclined-Plane Railway," which first saw fruition in "Thompson's Switchback Railway" which Fred Thompson built in 1884 in Luna Park, Coney Island (see figure 5.8).[81] In this and subsequent years, numerous variations and developments of this basic model could be found in Coney Island, including the iconic Steeplechase created by George Tilyou (depicted in figure 5.9). The connection between coal mining and the rollercoaster can also be seen in Butte, Montana, where one of the latest pleasure gardens I have identified employed a similar device drawing on the mechanics required by the town's mining industry.[82]

[81] Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry*, 43.

[82] Freeman, *A Brief History of Butte, Montana*, 48-51. See figure 5.10 for an illustration of the gardens from c.1940.

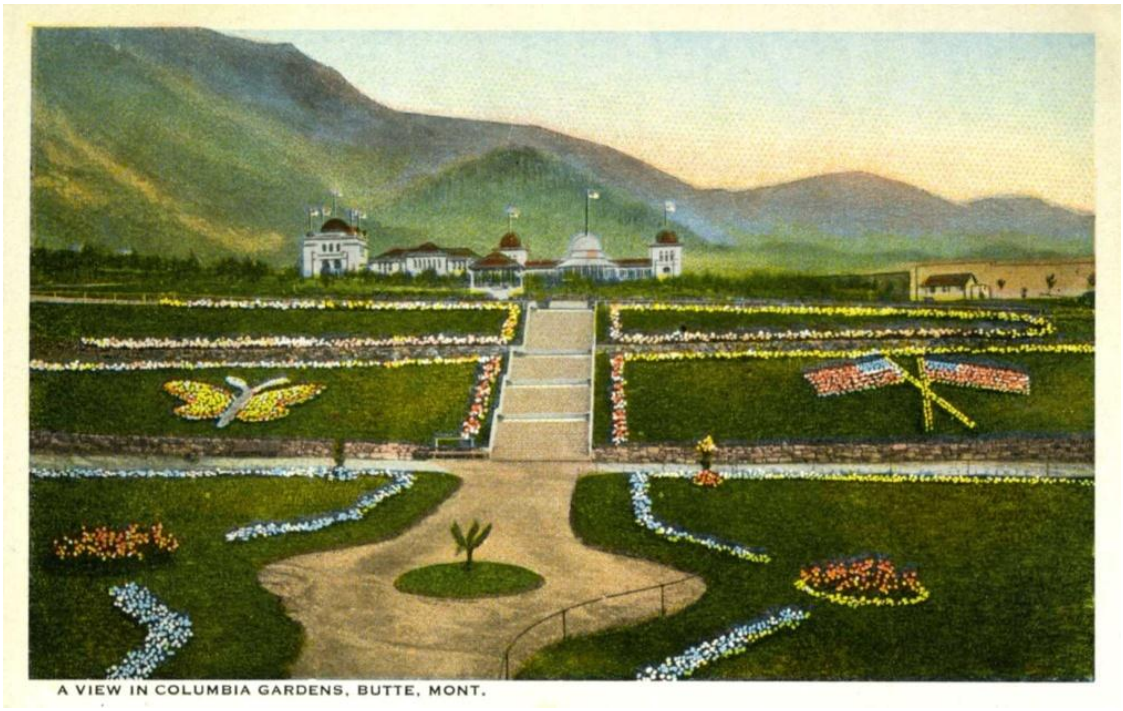


Figure 5.10. Postcard of Columbia Gardens, Butte, Montana, c.1940. Although not seen in this image, Columbia Gardens also had a simple rollercoaster. Author's collection.

These links between amusement parks and mining notwithstanding, the role of world's fairs in stimulating the development of the amusement park through technological innovations used for pleasure deserves attention. Tilyou (of Steeplechase) provides a direct link between world's fairs and the rides at amusement parks: after having seen George Washington Gale Ferris's wheel at the Columbian Exposition of 1897, Tilyou attempted to buy the machine once the exhibition closed in order to bring this technology designed for recreation to the masses in Coney Island. After Ferris refused to sell his creation, Tilyou created his own version for Steeplechase Park.[83] In this manner, direct links can be seen between world's fairs and the attractions of amusement parks. Similarly, Tilyou's dramatic cyclorama "A Trip to the Moon"

[83] Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 57.

was opened after he saw a similar display at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo.[84] Earlier links can be seen in 1877, when, as Harris observes, one of "Coney Island's first major novelties was directly imported, in 1877, from the Philadelphia Centennial"—the Sawyer Observatory.[85] Frederick Thomson (co-founder of Luna Park) further cements these ties to world's fairs, as he was involved with the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, where he encouraged a focus on the entertainments of the fair, culminating in "Midway Day."[86]

The links between the pleasure gardens, public parks, world's fairs, and amusement parks are numerous: from the desire to create an escape from or alternative to the city, to attempts to introduce social reform; from interests in democratic spaces (even if they could not be fully delivered), to reinforcing social hierarchies that placed white men at the center and delegated women and ethnic Others to peripheral spaces; and from positioning the patron as both spectator and spectacle, to exploring technical innovation as being educational, entertaining, and patriotic. The philosophies behind these various forms, the combination of concerns with business and respectability, and the specific content (balloon ascents, garden landscapes, volcanic eruption recreations, and the Ferris wheel, for example),[87] are shared by these forms, creating a complex trajectory that does not present a simple "A became B" pattern, but rather a variety of forms responding to similar concerns and drives in different ways.

In addition to concert saloons, variety, vaudeville, roof garden theatres, public parks, world's fairs, and amusement parks, traces of elements of the pleasure gardens have been observed by other scholars in modern-day department stores, shopping malls, and museums,

[84] Ibid., 61.
[85] Harris, "Expository Expositions," 21.
[86] Register, *The Kid of Coney Island*, 80.
[87] The volcanic eruption reenactment most commonly seen in pleasure gardens was the eruption of Mount Etna, while Luna Park hosted that of Vesuvius. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry*, 49.

amongst other locations.[88] In these instances, the organization of knowledge, the drive to see and be seen, and increasing commercialization lie at the heart of these assertions. Other connections and distinctions could also be made between travelling fairs and carnivals, and their relationships with amusement parks and theme parks. While the influence of pleasure gardens can indeed be seen in fields beyond those I have focused upon here, I have chosen to restrict my focus to these selected forms and the period before 1920. The strength of the communication between pleasure gardens, public parks, world's fairs, and amusement parks is especially direct and compelling, and while other forms could be examined for such communication and shared ideals, the task would be an unending one. Furthermore, at the heart of what was occurring in the nineteenth century to which the pleasure gardens responded most forcefully were the issues of urbanization and industrialization. The year 1920 marks the first time that more Americans lived in urban areas than rural, meaning a fundamental shift had occurred with regards to the relationship between the rural/urban tension and American identities.[89] While non-urban American identities continue today, the place of the city in American national identities took on new-found wide-spread acceptance. Additionally, the continuing development of film (transitioning from Nickelodeons to feature films in the late 1920s) saw an ever-strengthening focus upon technologically-produced mass culture through film and television, providing a very different means by which to represent American identities for and by the masses.[90]

[88] Register, *The Kid of Coney Island*, 17; Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising, and Popular Taste: The Struggle for Influence," in *Material Culture and the Study of American* Life, ed. Ian M. G. Quimby (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 140-74.

[89] Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), 57.

[90] See Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999), chapter 1, for further discussion of popular culture, mass culture, and the change seen in the early twentieth century.

Conclusion

That the issues, philosophies, and concerns explored in pleasure gardens can be seen in these other forms is hardly surprising, since questions of American identities permeate popular culture. As concerns about what it means to be American have never been resolved in any final way, Americans have found different ways of addressing them, and popular entertainments have continued to provide a venue in which to do so. Pleasure gardens allowed for a space in which patrons could explore (consciously or unconsciously) a variety of issues concerning American identities, but in a manner unlike other contemporaneous forms. Pleasure gardens were simultaneously gardens, entertainment venues, nostalgic retreats, venues for displays of technological advancement, sites of commemoration and celebration, and spaces of inclusion and exclusion. These veritable heterotopias were at once all of these, yet not definable by any one at any given time.[91]

I have argued throughout this dissertation that patrons were able to perform identities, with the concept of "American" being at the heart of these experimental performative acts. The "identities" under discussion have been fluid and multiple, often encompassing apparently contradictory elements, and ranging from the identities of an individual to those shared by groups on local and national levels. Concurrently, the term "performance" has encompassed a multitude of meanings here, including the performance of the everyday (following Goffman), and the overtly staged performances of plays and displays. The "performers" of these acts have included the proprietors and patrons of the gardens as well as the actors upon the stage, but the

[91] See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York, Routledge, 1998), for a discussion of heterotopias.

focus has remained upon the performance of the American self both independently of and in relation to others.

Pleasure gardens (and later related forms) were populated with people who enjoyed "seeing others and being seen," and these performances were of varying degrees of consciousness.[92] For example, patrons of pleasure gardens could be perceived as performing as though of a class status different from their own (and, indeed, were occasionally actively encouraged to do so), or as performing whiteness in opposition to blackness or Otherness. Especially apparent instances of performance in the pleasure gardens were those by Native Americans (as constructed Others) and African Americans (as dandys). In several of the forms identified here as being the successors to pleasure gardens, the body of the patron was overtly made the object of the spectator's gaze. The rides and exhibits at Coney Island encouraged such spectacle, with the spectators viewing participants on rides (see figure 5.6), for example. The "blowholes" of Steeplechase Park further emphasize this aspect, with the patron becoming very literally the spectator and spectacle.[93] This element is continued with modern-day rollercoasters through the practice of taking photographs of riders at specific points on the ride, then displaying the photos at a booth for immediate observation, as well as purchase and subsequent display outside the park.

With regard to performances addressing specific concerns of American identities, the relevance of the rural-urban tension has been shown to have been a particularly important one in the context of the pleasure gardens. Pre-1920, the anxiety over the relationship of American identities to the city and the country was more palpable than in subsequent years. The ills of the cities and the vices they harbored were persistent topics of discussion, and while some forms of

[92] Harris, "Expository Expositions," 20.
[93] Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry*, 45.

entertainment emerged to educate and warn against such ills, others emerged to counteract the effects and/or to provide an alternative. Pleasure gardens (followed by public parks, and, in a slightly different manner, world's fairs) responded to this anxiety. Pleasure gardens and public parks both presented patrons with a tamed wilderness—a highly-constructed version of the Edenic landscape at the heart of early American visions of the nation. In providing such spaces, planners and proprietors created reassurance for city-dwellers in their attempt to counteract the vices of the city. The phrase "rural retreat" was a common name for pleasure gardens, yet many of the post-1800 sites were found in the heart of the city—a retreat without departing from the city. Such venues provided the semblance of escape and catered to a nostalgia that was hard to find at other venues within rapidly-expanding cities, allowing city-dwellers to indulge in aspects of and associations with the country, without abandoning their city lives. World's fairs such as the Columbian Exposition drew on elements of this idea by providing an alternative—not an escape or haven within a city, but rather, an alternative model.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the English origin of pleasure gardens, these venues provided Americans with an interesting place in which to experiment with what it meant to be American. Embracing, rejecting, and adapting English and French elements and associations, patrons and proprietors performed a multitude of reactions to the position of these nations in American heritage. As discussed in chapter 2, aping English cultural forms and activities was accompanied by protests and assertions of independence. Most significant, perhaps, was the fact that these venues became central locations for the affirmation of American national identities through commemorations, celebrations, and exhibitions. Defined by Smith as the "maintenance and continual reinterpretation of the . . . symbols, memories, . . . and [newly created] traditions" of the nation, national identities were performed within the pleasure gardens through a number of

methods, including fireworks.[94] Fireworks (with their strong associations with the French Revolution) were embraced in the gardens as a suitable method in which to acknowledge the anniversary of the nation, which continues to this very day.

Along with the place of the city and the relationship of the nation to other nations, technological developments played a central role in defining American identities. The period under discussion here witnessed many rapid developments in the fields of science and engineering, and the importance of these developments was seen in the way celebrations and events trumpeted such successes and developments, positioning American industriousness on a national stage. Presenting the best aspects of industrialization in a space that excluded the detrimental effects of urbanization was a feature of pleasure gardens (and later, world's fairs and amusement parks); whether it be demonstrations of a velocipede, fireworks, exhibits at the American Institute's fairs, or eruptions of volcanoes, pleasure gardens celebrated technological advances. This display of American industriousness was combined with a vigorous assertion of national worth on an international level with the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations (New York's world fair of 1853) and subsequent American world's fairs. As Neil Harris asserts, the amusement parks that developed out of fairs and gardens continued in this vein, as they were "linked physically and spiritually, to the industrial and technological changes transforming the lives of millions of people," continuing the importance of technological advancement into the twentieth century.[95]

Class and equality were two other central concerns with regards to defining American identities. In chapter 3, the fallacy that pleasure gardens were a classless space was collapsed along with the idea that the new nation was in any sense "classless" or a place of actual equality.

[94] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24-25.

[95] Harris, "Expository Expositions," 21.

In reality, while there was evidence of people adopting or exploring a new social equality through actively inviting patrons to perform gentility, class structures were inherent in both the operations of pleasure garden and in the society at large. Indeed, as the pleasure gardens demonstrated, class tension was tangible, with conflict ultimately erupting in several of the gardens, including those in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore. Such tensions remained after the pleasure gardens' demise, but rather than the two-tier highbrow-lowbrow binary described in chapter 3, managers, proprietors, and entertainers found themselves able to profitably address the growing middle without requiring highbrow overtones or overt nods to respectability. As Neil Harris observes, world's fairs and similar forms after the 1930s "no longer had to serve as bridges between high and low; they could, instead, acknowledge the broad middle without apology."[96] The "broad-based, popular culture" of amusement parks and later theme parks were part of a wider shift being seen in the emergence of the middlebrow—the easily accessible, sufficiently respectable, popular forms of entertainment.[97]

The concept of equality was one on which the United States was founded, yet as has been discussed throughout this dissertation, the entertainments presented and practices followed within the pleasure gardens responded to prejudices and inequalities tied to issues of race and ethnicity. Native Americans were depicted within the gardens as anthropological exhibits, yet responses of pity and claims of primitivism permeated advertising and commentary, revealing that such displays served to reinforce white supremacy. While other entertainment venues (such as museums and theatres) presented Native Americans as exhibits, pleasure gardens held events and housed encampments, removed from the humbuggery of Barnum and the fictional veneer of drama. Similar tactics were employed (albeit largely unconsciously) at world's fairs, where

[96] Ibid., 26.
[97] Schenker, "Pleasure Gardens, Theme Parks, and the Picturesque," 89.

Native Americans and a host of ethnic Others were presented as being inherently inferior and primitive, nestled amongst trivial entertainments and physically-exhilarating rides. Pleasure gardens and their related forms provided a space in which Americans could witness framed performances of Others, allowing them to perceive of their implied superiority as (largely-)white Americans.

While African Americans could open their own pleasure gardens in northern cities in the antebellum era, they too were represented as inferior. Restricting their entry as patrons and mocking their attempts to establish venues such as the African Grove, white proprietors and patrons alike were able to use the pleasure gardens to reassert their white superiority even after slavery was abolished and legal citizenship granted. This was continued through the subsequent related forms, with racism being intrinsic to many of the decisions made regarding the Columbian Exposition, for example, and has continued beyond even this. In pleasure gardens, the resistance to allowing African Americans to bear the title "American" was countered through such activities as the founding of the African Grove, at the Columbian Exposition, through the protests and celebrations surrounding the Colored People's Day.

In all these ways, pleasure gardens have spoken to multiple anxieties about what it meant to be American at a time when the question was being vigorously debated and continuously renegotiated. Through their form as garden, their various locations, the policies of proprietors, patterns of patronage, and the entertainments presented within them, pleasure gardens served many functions within the construction and performance of American national identities. That they became largely obsolete in the late twentieth century should not be taken as evidence of their insignificance—throughout the nineteenth century, the gardens served important roles in

national identity formation, and their impact can still be felt in forms of popular entertainment familiar to us all today.

Concert saloons, roof garden theatres, vaudeville, world's fairs, public parks, and amusement parks can all be traced back to pleasure gardens. Although pleasure gardens were not the only form of popular entertainment to influence these later venues and forms, the pleasure garden was a significant element. From presenting anthropological exhibits and variety entertainments, to celebrating technological advances in the context of national achievement and entertainment, pleasure gardens can be seen to have had a significant impact on these later alternative urban environments.

Though American pleasure gardens have been largely neglected to date, and difficult to pin down due to scarce resources, this study has highlighted the value of studying these so-called rural retreats. In addition to their centrality to performances of American identities during a time of fervent national identity negotiation, the American pleasure garden has been seen to have contributed to such fundamental aspects of American culture as fireworks on the Fourth of July, vaudeville, and theme parks. Wide-reaching both chronologically and geographically, pleasure gardens have herein been proven to hold an important position with American popular culture.

Appendix 1
Performances at Vauxhall, New York, 1806-1808

In the table below, the performances at Vauxhall, New York's "Summer Theatre" between 1806 and 1808 have been documented. Only New York's productions are presented here, as other gardens did not produce plays as frequently as this venue. This table only reflects the performances advertised in newspapers and the titles are listed as they are advertised and are not necessarily exactly the same as the title given by the playwright (subtitles often being omitted or altered). When the author's name is given in an advertisement, it is provided below; where it is missing, the probable author is provided.

As the table below demonstrates, most plays performed were English in origin, though "The Magic Tower" by Delacroix's son presents an example of an American text. The most popular playwrights were George Colman and Elizabeth Inchbald, and the most frequently performed piece was "Cinderella."

Play Title	Author	Number of Recorded Performances
Blue Devils	George Colman (the younger)	2
The, Mountaineers	George Colman (the younger)	1
Poor Gentleman	George Colman (the younger)	1
Sylvester Daggerwood; or, the Mad Dunstable Actor	George Colman (the younger)	1
Village Lawyer	George Colman (the younger)	2
Wags of Windsor	George Colman (the younger)	1
Ways and Means; or, a Trip to Dover	George Colman (the younger)	2
Animal Magnetism	Elizabeth Inchbald	1
The Child of Nature	Elizabeth Inchbald	1
Lover's Vows; or, the Natural Son	Elizabeth Inchbald	3
Midnight Hour	Elizabeth Inchbald	2
To Marry or Not to Marry	Elizabeth Inchbald	1

Wedding Day	Elizabeth Inchbald	1
A Cure for the Heartache	Thomas Morton	1
Children in the Wood	Thomas Morton	2
School of Reform	Thomas Morton	1
Speed the Plough	Thomas Morton	3
Spoil'd Child	Isaac Bickerstaffe	1
The Romp; or, A Cure for the Spleen	Isaac Bickerstaffe	1
The Padlock	Isaac Bickerstaffe	1
Catherine and Petruchio; or, Taming of the Shrew	David Garrick	2
High Life Beneath Stairs	David Garrick	1
The Lying Valet	David Garrick	1
Agreeable Surprise	John O'Keeffe	1
Sprigs of Laurel; or, the Rival Soldiers	John O'Keeffe	1
Poor Soldier	John O'Keeffe	1
Virgin Unmasked	Henry Fielding	2
Mock Doctor; or, Dumb Lady Cured	Henry Fielding	2
The Weathercock	John Till Allingham	2
Fortune's Frolic; or, the True Use of Riches	John Till Allingham	3
Rosina	Frances Brooke	2
The Lock and Key	Prince Hoare	1
The Prize; or, 2 5 3 8	Prince Hoare	2
Matrimony	James Kenney	3

Raising the Wind	James Kenney	2
The Apprentice; or, the Tragedy Struck Heroes	Arthur Murphy	1
The Citizen	Arthur Murphy	1
Lover's Quarrels; or Like Master Like Man	T. King	2
The Will; or, the Batchelor in the Straw	Frederick Reynolds	1
Cheap Living	Fredericks Reynolds	1
The Cooper	Thomas Augustine Arne	1
The Adopted Child	Birch, Samuel	3
Cinderella; or, the Glass Slipper	Mr. Byrne	4
Chrononhotonthologos	Henry Carey	1
Ghost	Susanna Centlivre	2
The Devil to Pay	Theophilus Cibber	1
First Floor	James Cobb	1
Who's the Dupe?	Hannah Cowley	1
Magic Tower; or, the Reward of Virtue	Joseph Clement Delacroix	2
Hunter of the Alps	Mr. Diond Jr	1
The Mayor of Garrick; or, the Hen-pecked Husband[1]	Samuel Foote	1
Scheming Milliner	Mr. Francis	3
Edgar and Emmeline	John Hawkesworth	1

[1] This title is spelled according to the advertisement; the Foote title is "Mayor of Garrett."

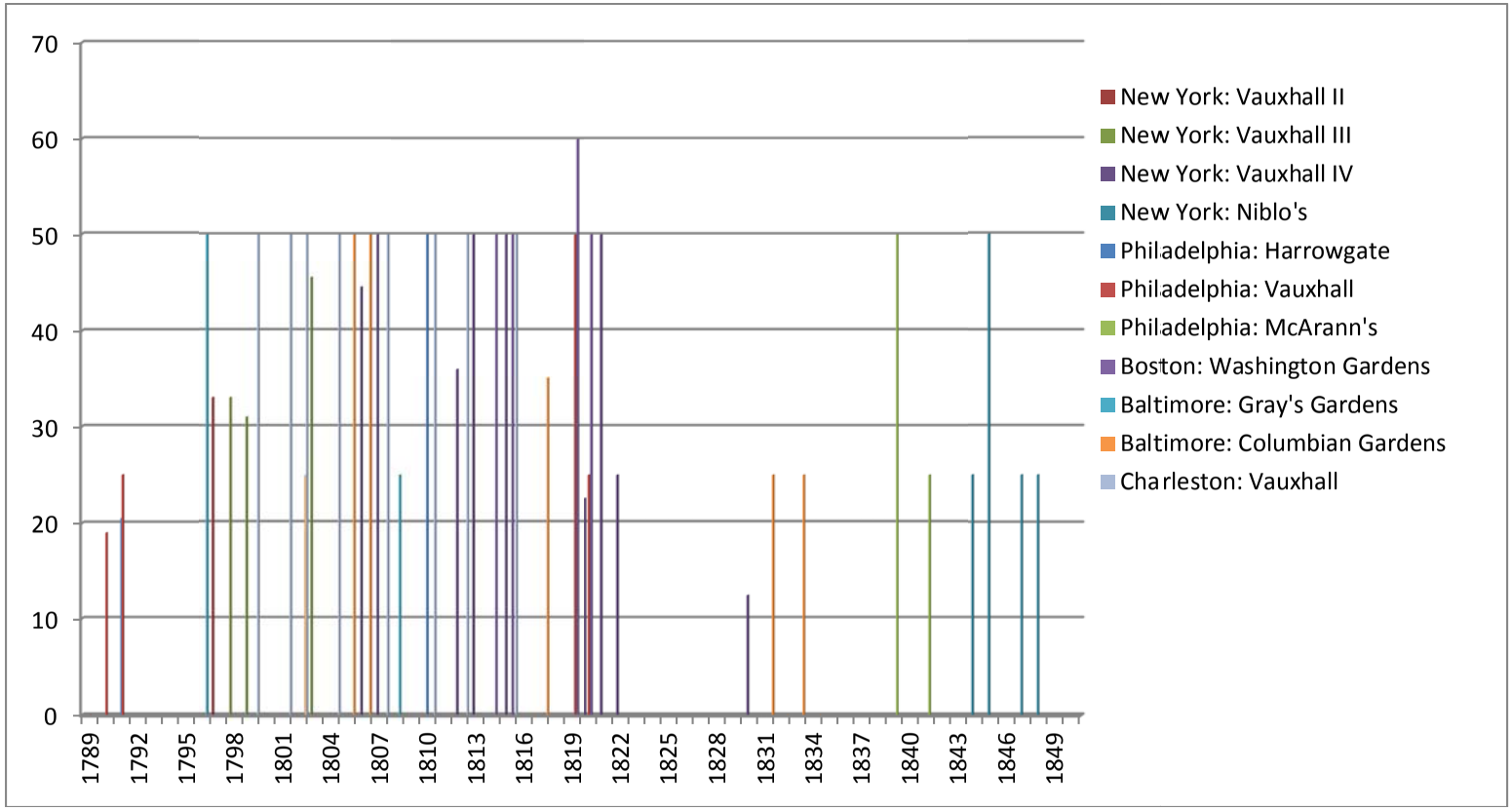
The Purse; or, American Tar	John Hodgkinson[2]	1
Douglas; or, the Noble Shepherd	John Home	2
Two Strings to Your Bow; or, The Servant with Two Masters	Robert Jephson	1
Turnpike Gate	Thomas Knight	1
George Barnwell; or, the London Merchant	George Lillo	1
Love a la Mode	Charles Macklin	3
Irishman in London	William Macready	1
Sultan; or, Peep Into the Seraglio	Moses Mendez	2
The Register Office; or, Donald MacIntosh'd Travels from Aberdeen to London	Joseph Reed	1
The Point of Honor; or, The School for Soldiers	John Peter Roberdeau	1
The American Farmer; or, Sailors in the Country	?	1
Brazen Mask; or, Alberto and Rosabella	?	1
Caledonian Lovers; or, the Awkward Recruit	?	1
Doctor's Last Examination Before the College of Physicians	?	1
Old Soldier	?	1
The Stratagem; or, the Female Duelist	?	1
Two Philosophers and Merry Girl	?	1

[2] Although this play was written by John Cartwright Cross, the change in the subtitle suggests that this was the revised version by John Hodgkinson of Boston. See Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 285.

Appendix 2
Admission Prices for Selected Pleasure Gardens

In the table below, I have charted the changing prices of the various venues based on the advertised admission prices for entry, excluding special events (which typically had higher entry rates for one night only). Where prices are given in shillings and pence, the amount has been converted to American cents using Lawrence H. Officer's conversion rates for ease of comparison.[1]

This table shows much fluctuation in entry prices, but illustrates the average price as being around 50 American cents for all of the venues with available data.[2].



[1] Exchange rates for this table have been obtained from Lawrence H. Officer's website, "Measuring Worth," "Dollar-Pound Exchange Rate From 1791." http://www.measuringworth.org/exchangepound/ (accessed 21 April 2010).

[2] A typical decrease in admission price over time is also seen here, and this will be discussed below.

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Baltimore

American and Commercial Daily Advertiser
Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser (includes *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, *Federal Gazette, Federal Intelligencer*)
Baltimore Patriot
Democratic Republican
Federal Gazette
Maryland Journal
North American
The Sun

Boston

Boston Commercial Gazette (includes *Boston Gazette*)
Boston Daily Advertiser
Boston Intelligencer
Columbian Centinel
Federal Gazette
Massachusetts Mercury
Repertory

Charleston

Charleston Courier
City Gazette

New York

American Citizen
Columbian
Commercial Advertiser

Daily Advertiser
The Diary or Loudon's Register
Evening Post
Freedom's Journal
Harper's Weekly
Mercantile Advertiser
Minerva
Morning Chronicle
National Advocate
New York American
New-York Chronicle
New-York Gazette
New York Herald
New York Packet
New-York Mercury
New York Morning Herald
New-York Morning Post
New York Times
Spectator
Villager
Weekly Herald

Philadelphia
Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser
Federal Gazette
Franklin Gazette
Freeman's Journal
The Gazette of the United States
General Advertiser
Independent Gazetteer
The Mail
National Gazette
North American
Pennsylvania Chronicle
Pennsylvania Gazette
Pennsylvania Mercury
Pennsylvania Packet
Philadelphia Gazette Philadelphia Inquirer
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser
Public Ledger

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