The Roaring River of Memory: Conflict and Changing Memory at the 1984 Louisiana World Expo

By

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December 2018

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History Dual-Degree Program in History and Archives Management Simmons University Boston, Massachusetts

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the mentorship of Dr. Jessica Parr, my first reader and Stephen Berry, my second reader. I was also guided by Dr. Sarah Leonard, and Dr. Steve Ortega from the Simmons University History Department. Thanks, is also due to the archivists at the New Orleans Public Library City Archives and Louisiana collection, and the archivists at the Tulane University Archives and Louisiana Collection. Lastly this work would not have been possible without the emotional support of my parents Tom and Karyn Pennison.
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Introduction

Throughout the Twentieth Century World’s Fairs were a large part of American culture, but by the end of the century these events of modern technology and cultural exchange had disappeared from the United States. Some fairs and their remnants loomed large in culture such as the 1964 New York Fair with its Unisphere, and the 1962 Seattle Fair with its Space Needle. Others have gone without notice such as the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition (LWE). Nationally this fair was nearly forgotten with only occasional mentions of its status as the final American fair, but locally it remained a well know and fond memory.

The Louisiana World Exposition was held on the banks of the Mississippi River in the Warehouse district of New Orleans where the Ernest Morial Convention center and Riverwalk shopping center now reside. It ran from May 12 to November 11 1984. The LWE hosted a variety of pavilions including country pavilions that were in some cases provided by the country and in other cases were led by local groups, such as Korea, The United States, Canada, and Japan.\(^1\) The fair’s run suffered from poor management and poor attendance.\(^2\)

Despite its problems, LWE transformed into a fond memory locally through a three step process which occurred during an initial planning phase, the run of the fair itself, and the time from the end of the fair to the thirtieth anniversary in 2014. In the first phase an intended balance between nationally appealing pavilions and activities and ones which appealed to local residents and cultural groups shifted towards the local due to the efforts of residents and government


officials. In the second phase negative media coverage of the fair further confounded the ability of the organizers to communicate their vision to the public and discouraged national and international visitors from attending the fair, ensuring that locals overwhelmingly visited the fair compared to other groups. In the third phase the negative memory created by the publicity and bankruptcy of the fair was recontextualized through the memory of local visitors and the changing nature of the fair site. Despite the plans for an international fair this World’s Fair was instead a site for the celebration and reframing of local memory and cultural practices. Its memory transformed as an element of a local past due to amnesia of the fair nationally, and the nostalgic memory which developed for the fair in the following years.
Historiography

To reveal the process of the fair’s memory and perception this thesis draws from two fields of study, the first which concerns the history of world’s fairs and the second which concerns memory. World’s Fair history is a varied field which is situated upon the questions of why is a fair undertaken, what constitutes a success, and how influential are world’s fairs? Scholars approach this field from various disciplines within history, including political history which informs authors such as Robert W. Rydell, Gender History which informs authors such as At Hajdik, and Social history which informs authors such as Lawrence R. Samuel.

The field is divided into several schools of thought, with each representing different sides of a debate between the importance of visitors and the public in interpretation of World’s Fairs. The first school adopts an approach which chiefly concerns itself with the creators of fairs and their intent. This school is termed the “Cultural Hegemony” school by Rydell, John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle in Fair America: World’s Fairs in the United States. Rydell is one of the chief authors in this school and writes several monographs which analyze different periods of fairs from the perspective of the organizers. His chief argument is that World’s Fairs serve to spread and reinforce the ideas and values of the American cultural, government, and business elite through pavilions, entertainment, and presentations which enforce the dominant ideas of the time on topics including race, class, and business. Rydell establishes this framework in his first monograph All the World’s a Fair (1984) and continues to write prolifically and influentially

in the field. The cultural hegemony framework remains key to many studies of fairs which add other lenses of inquiry such as Anna Hajdik’s work “A "Bovine Glamour Girl": Borden Milk, Elsie the Cow, and the Convergence of Technology, Animals, and Gender at the 1939 New York World's Fair,” which use gender and the cultural hegemony theory to argue that the portrayal of Elsie at the 1939 fair served to reinforce and profit from images of traditional gender roles.® Other authors approach from other angles such as architectural history and ideological struggle.™ This theory is foundational to World’s fair studies and forms a basic component of the analysis of the 1984 fair, but it is challenged and supplemented by other ideas.

Within the cultural hegemony school there are also two organizational approaches which influence the analysis. The first is a comparative approach which covers several fairs in a period or region and compares the methods and messages of each fair. Rydell utilizes this method in most of his works, as well as Robert H Kargon, Karen Fiss, Morris Low, and Arthur P. Moella who use the comparative approach to explore the ways international fairs functioned to prepare the world for a battle of ideologies in World War Two. The second approach focuses on one fair or in some cases one pavilion. It allows for greater detail and for more time to be spent on the specifics of one place at one time. Hajdik demonstrates this approach, as well as Daniel H. London who focuses specifically on the involvement of labor unions at the 1939 World’s Fair to

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7 Kargon et al., World’s Fairs on the Eve of War, 1-3.
examine how they attempted to represent labor as well as how their efforts were undermined by the city and other powerful organizers.\(^8\)

The other side of the debate consists of two schools, the first of which is unnamed and challenges the hegemony school by insisting that visitors and others who were affected by the fair brought their own ideas and did not necessarily receive the ideas as sent by the organizers. This school includes Lawrence R. Samuel who challenges Rydell in *The End of the Innocence: the 1964-1965 New York World’s Fair* (2007) by integrating the stories of visitors and day workers at the 1964 World’s Fair to present a more nuanced view of the way people experienced the fair.\(^9\) He also directly challenges Rydell for focusing on the institutions and elite rather than the people and neglecting the inspiration, excitement, and positive memories which were created at the fair.\(^10\) While London did concern himself with workers and their efforts, he was primarily concerned with union heads who made decisions rather than rank and file members.

Beyond Samuel, other authors challenge the hegemony idea such as James Gilbert, who writes in *Perfect cities: Chicago’s Utopias of 1893* (2000) about the 1893 Chicago Fair from a similar perspective.\(^11\) This school informs the fair history component of this thesis, due to its focus on including visitors in addition to the organizers. Another school which informs the thesis is the counterhegemony school which argues that marginalized participants in fairs such as Native Americans and women could actively use the fairs to resist and challenge stereotypes about themselves. It resists Rydell through a picture of fairs as sites of agency where marginalized groups resist the intentions of the elite. Lester G. Moses posits this in *Wild West*

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Shows and The Images of American Indians, 1883-1933 (1999), which looks specifically at Native Americans and the ways in which they were able to use their presence at fairs to resist stereotypes about them. This school is useful as a starting point for considering the way in which the Italians, Cajuns, African Americans, and Women at the fair sought to resist past stereotypes through their pavilions.

Two other schools approach the fairs from other disciplines, the first is an anthropological approach which looks at fairs as communal events which usher in new cultural norms in a ritual way. This school includes Burton Benedict in The Anthropology of Fairs (1983), and Warren Susman in “Ritual Fairs,” (1983), and is an anthropological version of the Hegemony school that focuses on the new values being normalized. Susman contextualizes world’s fairs in the context of medieval fairs and argues for them as a societal rite of passage for new ideas. This echoes Rydell’s ideas of perpetuating or encouraging both new and old cultural norms. The second school specifically looks at the technological, architectural, and urban planning elements of the fair. This school is concerned with the concrete components of the fair, but works exist which link this school with the idea of counterhegemony, which includes work in sociology such as K. F. Gotham who writes out of the Tulane Sociology department and argues in “Resisting Urban Spectacle: The 1984 Louisiana World Exposition and the Contradictions of Mega Events,” (2011) that the planning of the 1984 World’s Fair as well as other fairs was a site of resistance and struggle between the elite and those who opposed their goals. This work is

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one of the few that includes the 1984 fair, and it provides perspective into reasons why some planned components of the fair never materialized.

One final school of note is both academic and popular and consists of people who document the ephemera and images of fairs as well as official histories. This school existed for LWE in the form of Bill Cotter who amassed a large collection of photographs of the 1984 Fair. He combined this collection with his own research and experience at the fair to create a book in the Images of America series, entitled simply the *1984 New Orleans World's Fair* (2008) which covered the LWE and provided his own ideas about the event. Despite his nonacademic background, he dialed into the argument that visitors are an important component of viewing a fair. He noted that the legacy of the fair has been reevaluated in recent years. He also echoed the sentiments of Samuel, as he argued that it is a disservice to exclude or forget the excitement and positive feelings and memories that were created by the fair.\(^\text{16}\)

To build upon the notion that visitors’ experience is key to the study of fairs, this thesis expands the idea to include the lens of memory. Although the previous authors contend with audience and even legacy in the case of Cotter, memory serves to explain why the visitors bring their own views to the fair and effect its memory. It serves as a key lens in the study of how perception of this fair evolves between conception, the event, and the legacy. It provides an explanation beyond finances and ticket sales of the fair’s performance and allows an exploration of why people reacted to the fair rather than simply the how. Memory is a wide area of study, but three small areas are key for this thesis. These include the general study of how society remembers things, local cultural memory, and physical commemoration.

The general study of how society remembers things includes key works such as On Collective Memory by Maurice Halbwachs, which looks at the way individual memory is informed by group memory, and Mystic Chords of Memory by Michael G. Kammen, which traces the evolution of national and collective memory in the United States. Halbwachs argues that memory changes and reframes within larger groups and societal memory, he states that “Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess.”

This message provides for how memory can change over time but also compliments the idea that visitors are not beholden to the messaging of the organizers, as local society can influence memory in a way that runs counter to the organizers. Kammen speaks on the evolution of collective memory in the United States and argues a few central points, including conflict between different memories, and a growing historical amnesia which coincides with the country’s rapid acceleration in the second half of the 20th century through the popularization and commercialization of history. Kammen frames the conflict of memory in several contexts including the division of memory of the civil war along north and south lines, as well as general regional conflicts of memory between memories of puritanism and other origins of Americans. This National level of contextualization demonstrates how people with different memories react differently to presented messages as well as bring their own memory with them. Both pieces provide a framework and vocabulary for informing analysis through a memory lens and moving beyond the World’s Fair schools.

Local cultural memory includes works on memory of Italian immigrants to Louisiana, as well as creole experience and Catholic memory. One of these is Rodger Payne’s “‘Patronus Obscurus:’ Devotion to Saint Amico and the Italian "Other" in South Louisiana” (2005), which looks at how an local cultural practice represented both memory of catholic traditions but also a way of coping with local prejudice.\textsuperscript{20} Another is Shirley Thompson’s “‘Ah Toucoutou, ye conin vous’: History and Memory in Creole New Orleans” (2001), which looks at the ways a creole song created myth with memory and revealed a complex memory of race relations in the case of a woman who attempted to pass as white and was outed after attempting to defend against a claim that she was.\textsuperscript{21} This piece provides insight into the tangled web of relations which serves as the background for how the fair presents the city’s memory. Michael J Pfeiffer looks at the way a local Catholic church in New Orleans has changed in its culture and memory due to demographic changes in “The Strange Career of New Orleans Catholicism: Race and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 1905-2006” (2017).\textsuperscript{22} Pfeiffer examines how a once segregated church changed in its demographics to be primarily African American. He pays specific attention to how that change brought with it a changing cultural memory and relation to Catholicism with the church, including French Catholicism which was displaced by Irish American segregated Catholicism, which eventually gave way to a Catholicism which integrated the previous memories of the church with current African American Catholicism. This work demonstrates that while Catholicism has a strong presence in New Orleans, different locals bring with them elements which shape it to represent them. These works serve to illustrate ideas about local


\textsuperscript{21} Shirley Thompson, “‘Ah Toucoutou, Ye Conin Vous’: History and Memory in Creole New Orleans,” American Quarterly 53, no. 2 (June 2001): 232.

culture and memory in the memory field and illustrate both the memories which various groups brought to the 1984 Fair as well as the way in which memory changes and adapts to the passage of time. These works describe the tensions which arose, even within a local cultural area, which complicate the interplay of different memories. Different memories exist in people’s minds but also manifest in the way physical areas are remembered.

Physical commemoration involves discussion of both monuments and remnants of previous events. These works inform analysis of the way art and the fair in general are commemorated today in New Orleans, and include *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape* (2001), edited by Paul A. Shackel, which includes several studies of the way historic events and places are commemorated both in terms of monuments, as well as how sites are preserved. This text is especially concerned with the way sites can be a place of conflict between dominant and suppressed cultural memory. This contention both can show why some sites are not commemorated, as well as providing a public history angle towards conflicts of memory. *The Texture of Memory* (1993) by James E. Young looks at the way Holocaust memorials create and contextualize meaning. An important work from the public history field is *The Power of Place: urban landscapes as public history* by Dolores Hayden, which explores how memory and history are presented in an urban landscape. These works serve to provide insight into how to examine the physical remnants of the 1984 Fair.

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Works which touch upon the 1984 Fair are few, but the previously mentioned Gotham and Cotter works are significant examples of works that do. Two other examples include part of a chapter in Fair America which gives a description of the fair and its included pavilions, as well as a brief discussion of the many reasons why it failed, and a master’s thesis by Peter Edward Hagan at Tulane University, who covers the history and impact of the 1984 fair.27 This work dates from 1994 before much of the other fair literature mentioned here and is only available in person at Tulane, and due to time constraints does not inform analysis in this thesis.

This thesis builds upon the Samuel school to question Rydell’s Hegemony school, and posits not only that visitors shape the success and experience of a fair, but that memory plays a key role in why fairs do not purely represent organizers stated intentions. Organizers and local groups bring their own conflicting memories into the process which results in a fair which presents a picture of many local cultures. In addition to contributing memory to the field of world’s fair studies, this thesis contributes to the small amount of work on the 1984 fair. It also serves as a case study in how memory can be shaped by changing group perceptions, as well as shared group memory.

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Primary Sources and Methods

These secondary sources informed the analysis of several sets of primary sources, including documents from archival collections at the New Orleans City Archives and Louisiana Collection, The Tulane Archives, and a variety of media and online sources related to the fair. This material provided the material in which the centrality of memory to the fair was discovered.

The archival sources have been analyzed in terms of content and language, to determine what kinds of memory the organizers and others were expressing, as well as what they sought to promote during the fair. This involved some textual analysis, but primarily consisted of content analysis, and comparison between works.

One key collection from the city archives is the Mary Kate Tews Papers, who was the head of art and certain cultural programs at the fair. This collection supported the point that there was a conflict and balancing act between international art which represented the theme of the fair and art from Louisiana which presented local culture. Key events of interest covered in this collection included the international Water sculpture competition, and the Major Works exhibition which featured local artists. This collection included official publications of the fair, as well as memos and letters sent between Tews and various other involved parties. It also included documentation of the selection process for both major arts initiatives, as well as materials on the development of a folk life festival. Tews’ papers were analyzed in terms of

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29 Mary-Kate Lorenz Tews Papers, MS-328, Manuscript Collections, Louisiana Division New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana.
what memories the programs she was involved with drew upon, as well as who among local stakeholders were involved in the process.

In addition to the Tews Papers the Robin Riley Papers relating to the World's Fair in New Orleans, 1977-1979 provided an insight into the early development of the fair. Robin Riley was an architect involved with the early planning of the fair. This collection contained discussion of earlier sites for the fair, as well as a discussion of how the river theme can be used to appeal to broad groups of people.\textsuperscript{30} This contained correspondence, renderings, and reports related to early planning of the fair including initial site plans and changes.\textsuperscript{31} The original plans for the fair were examined in terms of which areas of the city the fair sought to accentuate, and the ways in which the expo sought connection to other fairs.

Outside of organizers records from various city departments helped to illustrate fair plans and what New Orleans wished to get out of the fair. One of these is the Vieux Carré Commission, which oversaw preserving the character of the French Quarter through building preservation and zoning restrictions. The Morial Administration Planning and Development Cultural Series Records documented the desire of the mayor for the fair to play a role in improving and cleaning up existing statues and areas around Jackson Square. They contained memos and correspondence, as well as information on possible residual legacies of the fair such as a proposed science museum. The Public Information Office Records contained correspondence and public releases related to the city’s public relations department and reactions and views of the

\textsuperscript{30} Memo to Officers regarding informal reaction to report, 3 March 1977, Folder 1, Robin Riley Papers relating to the World’s Fair in New Orleans, 1977-1979, Manuscript Collection Louisiana Division/Special Collections, New Orleans Public Library.

\textsuperscript{31} Site Plan Narrative, n.d., Folder 2, Robin Riley Papers relating to the World’s Fair in New Orleans, 1977-1979, Manuscript Collection Louisiana Division/Special Collections, New Orleans Public Library.
fair. It also contained documents such as an exit survey taken of fair visitors during the Fair.\textsuperscript{32} The data from the survey was analyzed in terms of interest in the fair, and the demographics of who attended. An early economic impact report from the Office of Policy Planning and Analysis, Central Files, was also consulted for insight into early ideas of the effect of the fair.

In addition to the collections at the New Orleans Public Library, the \textit{Winston Lill Collection} from the Louisiana Collection at the Tulane Archives was also utilized. This collection comes from Winston Lill, who was a key organizer involved with advertising, public relations, and in making the case to the Bureau of International Expositions (BIE) to approve the fair. This collection included memos, administration files, plans for various pavilions, publications of the fair, as well as news coverage of the fair which was collected by Winston Lill.\textsuperscript{33} The materials in this collection documented many aspects of its creation and operation including research performed on other fairs to inform this fair, as well as the description and planning documents for many of the pavilions and exhibits which made up the fair. It also contained information about pavilions and programs that did not materialize which demonstrated the changing nature of the planning process due to local resistance. These materials demonstrated how the memory of other fairs was utilized both successfully and unsuccessfully, as well as what public relations strategies employed by the fair to influence visitors. The various publications and news coverage of this fair present in this collection provided insight into both the ways the organizers sought to frame the fair, as well as the ways in which press coverage diminished the fair’s image.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} Winston Lill papers, Manuscripts Collection 930, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118.
\textsuperscript{34} Dan Smith, “Advice to fair givers,” 14 August 1984, Folder 35, Box 5, Winston Lill papers, Manuscripts Collection 930, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118.
In addition to these collections of primary sources and the published media material present in Lill’s collection, other media coverage from the time both in print media and tv news stations contributed evidence into this analysis, including the opening special for the fair presented by WDSU channel 6, a local news channel. This special was taped at the time on VHS and later uploaded to YouTube where it was accessed for this research.\(^35\) It provided insight into the excitement and anticipation that the organizers hoped to build for the fair, as well as the pavilions and experiences which the organizers and the news sought to focus on. The closing special from the same news channel, also provided insight into how things changed over the course of the fair.\(^36\) Other television news included coverage of the opening and financial issues from *Louisiana: The State We’re in*, a news magazine on Louisiana’s PBS which was found on the American Archive of Public Broadcasting digital archive as well as news coverage of the fair’s closure and bankruptcy from WWL, another local news station.\(^37\)

Beyond local news coverage, news publications from other parts the country also covered the fair. Some previewed the fair such as *Ebony Magazine* which ran a feature on the African American pavilion. Others such as the *New York Times* provided mixed coverage, which reported both in anticipation of the fair, as well as on the management and financial issues which became apparent even before the fair opened.\(^38\) These sources supplemented the local news and


provided a more complete picture of the fair’s coverage and allowed for the perception of the public to be considered through the lens of news reporting.

As time passed people reminisced about the fair in various ways, ranging from articles published by modern local newspapers and websites such as Nola.com and the New Orleans Advocate, to memory websites such as Expomuseum.com, which has a page dedicated to the 1984 fair. In addition to these types of sources, some modern news stories from channels such as WGNO, the local ABC affiliate, contributed stories which showed how by the time of its thirtieth anniversary in 2014, the fair’s memory had been rewritten as a national bust, that was nevertheless a great time for locals and a catalyst for the redevelopment of the area.39

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Organization of the Thesis

These sources formed the basis of my exploration which is divided into three chapters, which are roughly chronological. “Chapter 1: Many Streams Feed a River: The Memories Behind the Fair” covers the planning and development of the fair with a focus on the organizers’ dual intent to focus on local as well as the international, with other attention given to the memory of various groups, countries, and companies who were present at the fair. Attention is also given to the ways in which the dual focus of the organizers was undermined and resisted resulting in a fair which reflected the local slightly more than the international.

“Chapter 2: The Rapids of Perception: Memory meets Reality”, covers the media runup to the fair as well as coverage and perception during the fair’s run with a focus on how the organizers sought to present their fair, as well as how media coverage, and visiting guests resisted or missed that messaging among the negative news coverage of the fair. This media coverage and bad perception resulted in reduced international attendance which created a situation where more locals than others were exposed to a fair which already was somewhat tailored to them.

“Chapter 3: The River Erodes: The rehabilitation and reduction of the Fair’s Memory”, looks at how the fair is remembered, and the ways in which its memory has changed from one purely of failure to one that acknowledges the failure but prioritizes the enjoyment and positive memories of locals, and the economic revitalization of the fair site which followed as a result of the fair construction. This section also looks at how people who remember the fair only remember parts of it, with some pavilions left largely unremembered. Lastly, this section discusses the monuments and material legacy which remains of the fair, and the ways in which some of it overtly references the fair, and other parts forget the fair entirely.
Chapter 1: Many Streams Feed a River: The Memories behind the Fair

World’s fairs often took a long time to go from planning to reality, and the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition was no exception. Initial planning for the fair began in 1974 and continued with various ideas and proposals. From the onset the planners sought to use the fair to bring investment and tourism to New Orleans, but the strategies for this changed over time. Throughout this process they were concerned both with how the surrounding area presented, and with how other countries and corporations were presented at the fair. This dual focus on the local and the international created a climate where the local focus eventually became primary.

In addition to the primary organizers, various other groups contributed to the planning of pavilions including other countries such as Australia, and Spain, as well as local groups such as the Catholic Archdiocese, Italian Americans, and African Americans who wished to put their own memories and messages into the fair. The primary organizers’ desire to present a message which reinforced and encouraged certain views of New Orleans, as the organizers did in the fairs Rydell studied, was resisted by the organizers of many of the local pavilions. ¹ This complicated the international side of the desired view as locals were driven by appealing to their local populations, and rewriting the way they were portrayed to resist stereotypes. The local groups’ desire to tell their own story evoked components of Moses’s idea of people from oppressed groups resisting their previous negative portrayal and treatment.² The various memories brought by these groups created a complex fair which presented both local and international memory, but even some of the international pavilions were driven by local groups.

² Moses, Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933.
The intertwined and sometimes conflicting interests of the various organizers paired with the desire of local city government and residents to maintain the memory and historic nature of New Orleans prevented some elements of the fair from materializing. Resistance to certain components of the plan led to a fair which strayed from the original vision and neglected some of the intended connections to other fairs. This type of conflict of memory evoked the ideas of Michael Kammen, and his coverage of the ways in which memories of a place or event can become contentious between different groups and the trend at this time of museums seeking to present a picture of people who had previously been omitted.³

The planning and organization of the 1984 LWE demonstrates a process of memory conflict born from competing interests and the desire to both respect the past of New Orleans while creating a fair which highlighted the world beyond Louisiana and the future. This conflict would lead to a failure of the dual focus on international and local, as local became predominant, both in terms of attention given, and resources dedicated. The World of Rivers came to New Orleans, but the land which bounded the Mississippi River was the overwhelming focus in this case.

³ Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 393, 638-639.
Early Planning and Many Focuses

Plans for the fair evolved throughout the planning process, but from the beginning there was a desire to present New Orleans to the world. A series of documents defining the theme and ideas of the fair were created by 1977 and documented the ideas behind the fair in order to attain certification from the Bureau of International Expositions (BIE). The packet described the main theme as “The World of River Cultures” and had subthemes split into food, power, industry, art, and beauty of the river. The document included a note on how these themes also highlighted the joyous atmosphere and character of New Orleans. It also demonstrated the dual focus on international and local, but the themes themselves were largely universal, as all those concepts were present on rivers throughout the world rather than simply the Mississippi River. Beyond establishing the theme, organizers at this time such as Charlie Caplinger, F. Monroe Labouisse, Architect August Perez III, and fair consultant Ewan Dingwall were concerned with establishing a fair site which represented the city as well as universal themes of water.

One of their priorities was to differ from other previous development projects in New Orleans such as the Superdome football stadium, by selecting an architecture firm that was local to New Orleans. Despite the stated desire for a World’s fair, the insistence upon local architects suggested that the organizers already favored the local. The organizers also acted upon the memory of other projects where non local architects had built developments which did not represent the local people. The organizers were acting upon the idea of regionalism from Kammen, as they sought to maintain what made them unique despite the pressure of national

5 Dingwall Associates, “Theme Document.”
6 Minutes of Meeting, 2 June 1977, Folder 1, Robin Riley Papers, 1-3.
trends. The organizers extended the desire to present the state’s uniqueness into the first site plan.

During this period the organizers developed a multi-site plan including what would become the fair site on the river, the Vieux Carré, which is a historic district including the French Quarter, the Superdome, and Armstrong Park, a recently constructed music and cultural park. This initial multisite plan demonstrated a desire to represent the culture, history, and present of New Orleans alongside the international nature of the fair. The Superdome was considered by the organizers to be a useful large expo space as well as a visual draw for the fair. The Vieux Carré intended to present the history and culture of New Orleans, while Armstrong park presented important figures in the musical history of the city as well as cultural memory. The purpose built fair site intended to present all of the pavilions as well as the future of the city. The organizers’ initial plan created a vision where the local and international had their own sections, with the local focused in the Vieux Carré and Armstrong Park and the international in the Superdome and River site. This form created a closer balance between each side, but did not materialize. The organizers desired to present the place and transform the city which were relatively new ideas in fair creation at the time. Historically fairs served to commemorate or highlight an event or topic, with only some attention paid to the local place. The focus on the host place had cropped up a few times before in the past, but the idea of permanent transformative construction as a part of the fair had only begun in 1962 with the Century 21 Exposition in Seattle, and had been followed only occasionally at subsequent fairs. The organizers’ desire to leave permanent residuals from the fair was informed by the memory of

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7 Kammen, Mystic Chords, 428-429.
8 Site Plan Narrative, Circa 1977, Folder2, Robin Riley Papers, 1-4.
9 Minutes of Meeting, 2 June 1977, Folder 1, Robin Riley Papers, 3-5.
10 Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, Fair America, 102-103, 119.
both fairs which failed to do so as well as fairs which left a lasting impact on their host cities. Beyond physically transforming the city. The LWE organizers sought to influence their visitors, as Rydell argues, but rather than encourage a corporate future as in the 1964 fair, or imperialistic tendencies as in late 19th and early 20th century fairs, this fair sought to inform people about the culture and history of Louisiana and the importance of rivers more generally.11

Plans for the LWE fluctuated, but in the meantime the organizers had to convince the BIE to approve the fair as their recognition was necessary for other countries to participate. One key member of LWE Inc. was Winston Lill, and he was a large part of public relations for the fair. He also played a key role in presenting the fair to BIE.12 In addition to Lill, other members of the group in Paris included Bob Leblanc from the Louisiana Department of Tourist Development, and Mr. Silverberg. The participation of Leblanc demonstrated the state’s dedication to securing this fair. The materials and speeches presented to the BIE in Paris were more internationally minded, but still focused on Louisiana. For example, in a December 1978 speech Bob Leblanc began by accentuating the international nature of Louisiana, from its historic links to French speaking and Latin countries to its importance as a shipping port. He also focused on local culture saying “New Orleans is jazz, it’s Mardi Gras, it’s the Spring Fiesta, it’s the sugar bowl, it’s the super bowl, it’s a way of life and excitement, a holiday of happy events.”13 This excerpt differed in tone from the rest of the speech, which was very matter of fact, but more than that it argued that various elements of New Orleans culture form a key component of the fair. This list also highlighted a diverse range of local groups including, jazz with its African roots, Mardi Gras

12 Receipts for Travel, Folder 18, Box 10, Winston Lill papers, Manuscripts Collection 930, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118.
13 Bob Leblanc, Speech to the BIE, December 1978, Folder 20, Box 10, Winston Lill Papers, 2.
from the French, Spring Fiesta from the Spanish, and the bowls represented modern southern sports culture. This suggested a multifaceted view of the culture of New Orleans by the organizers, and a conception that the multifaceted nature of local culture was important to convince the BIE to approve the fair. This conception allowed for local groups to later effectively influence and resist fair plans as they were already considered a key component of the fair.

This cultural focus was reiterated one year later in 1979 when Carl F Bailey, then president of LWE Inc., gave a progress report speech in which he again highlighted the history and culture of New Orleans, while assuring that New Orleans was a center of trade and commerce.14 Of note between these two speeches was the repetition of messages, but also the extent that the speeches focused on New Orleans, despite the fair having Louisiana in its title. These speeches primarily focused on New Orleans, with southern Louisiana’s rich culture mostly mentioned in terms of the city without mentions of other parts of the state. This focus suggested that locally, organizers were concerned with southern Louisiana, but chiefly with New Orleans itself. In 1979 BIE gave approval for the fair, and planning continued to evolve with a solid date for the fair in 1984.

As the planning process continued the organizers kept a close eye on the planning and development of other fairs, although their view of each fair was different, for example they saw the 1981 Ontario California fair as a possible impediment to their own fair, and as it faced difficulties they asked the Federal government if continued recognition was in the country’s best interest.15 In 1981 organizers from the New Orleans Fair spoke of the problems and likely failure

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14 Carl F. Bailey, Speech to the BIE, 1 June 1979, Folder 23, Box 10, Winston Lill Papers, 1-2.
of the 1982 Knoxville fair prompting that fair to send them a letter of complaint. This sentiment of other American fairs as a possible detriment to their own fair demonstrated that they understood that a fair perceived as redundant could face problems. The steering committee for the LWE, had early on noted the importance of studying both past fairs and fairs which were currently in process at the time. They were selective in the fairs they used to orient their own including the plan for LA Expo 1981, as an example of failure as well as Knoxville Energy Expo 1982, San Antonio Hemisfair 1968, Seattle 1962, and Spokane 1974. The organizers stated that these were selected to learn what was successful and what was unsuccessful. The organizers feared the financial shortfalls of several of these fairs, as well as the limited permanent benefit left by some fairs. Except for the LA Expo, which was chosen as an example of failure due to it not occurring, the other choices were interesting as they highlighted the organizers interest in a topical fair rather than a full world’s fair, as each of those fairs had topic themes such as energy at Knoxville and the environment at Spokane. The organizers learned that the keys to their success included presenting clear evidence of residuals and creating a fair which would attract sponsors and visitors who would finance the fair. This was evident in the selection of water theme of the LWE, as it served as a universal theme which lent itself to the permanent redevelopment of riverside land and attracted the interest of corporations and countries who relied on rivers in their business. The inclusion of other fairs in preparation and research demonstrated that the organizers were thinking about other fairs and the ways in which their performance could both inform their decisions, and influence perception of their fair.

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17 Louisiana Expo Steering Committee Meeting #1 Minutes, 14 June 1977, Folder 1, Robin Riley Papers, 1.
18 “Steering Meeting,” 1.
The influence of other fairs extended beyond broad planning and into some of the proposed components for the fair. One element common to many fairs was a theme structure. Famous examples included the Unisphere in New York from the 1964 Fair, and the Space Needle from the 1962 Seattle fair. New Orleans also sought a theme structure and in early planning intended to evoke memories of Seattle and San Antonio, with a needle like tower of its own.\textsuperscript{19} This initial tower differed in aesthetics from the towers at other fairs but evoked a similar feeling of a towering presence. This plan was resisted by the FAA and the local administration of the Lakefront airport, as they believed it would impede flights.\textsuperscript{20} The Warehouse District Development Association resisted on both the grounds of disrupting the historic nature of the area and the lack of a public hearing.\textsuperscript{21} They resisted through circular letters and encouragement for locals to mail their councilmen.\textsuperscript{22} The tower evoked previous fairs but met successful resistance from local groups although organizers had not yet given up on a theme tower to center the fair.

The next attempt was titled the Tower of New Orleans and intended to be a unique theme structure while maintaining the shape of a tower. Ron Filson, the Dean and project architect for the tower described the tower as “never meant to be an ‘easy image’ nor was it meant to be a cliché of a theme tower as those for other major recent world’s Fairs have become (witness the Sunsphere in Knoxville); nor was it meant to be another tall building. It is meant to be a unique statement on its own that addresses the issues of its site, its use, and its landmark significance,”\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} Perez Associates, Plans for Tower, 20 July 1982, Folder 375, Box 28, New Orleans City Planning Commission Subject Files, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana.
\textsuperscript{20} Report, 1982, Folder 375, Box 28, City Planning Commission subject files.
\textsuperscript{21} Letter to Mayor Morial from Scot Murison, 18 February 1984, Folder 315, Box 24, City Planning Commission subject files.
\textsuperscript{22} Peggy Wilson, Letter Regarding Tower, April 1 1982, Folder 5, Box 5, Winston Lill Papers.
Filson demonstrated how the tower was intended to allude to the idea of theme structures while creating something unique to New Orleans. This idea made it into concepts and preproduction art, but ultimately it also failed to materialize. Other local people felt that the public was not given proper coverage and the ability to comment on the tower designs. A writer in Gambit criticized the local media for not providing ample coverage or allowing for public discussion, as the author found the winning design to be ugly, and not representative of the city. While the organizers wished to both represent other fairs and the city with this tower, they failed to include the local public in the process which prevented public support and prevented the tower from appearing.

The theme structure which ultimately appeared was the Wonderwall, and was created by a local architecture firm and artist Charles Moore to evoke the past within a modern setting as well as evoking a carnival like atmosphere. It integrated various architectural styles, including veiled references to other fairs such as the palace of arts from the San Francisco 1917 fair, but it primarily evoked an imaginative and local character. Thus a component that was originally supposed to overtly evoke other fairs evolved with resistance to represent both Louisiana and other fairs and finally, only overtly Louisiana. The final theme structure echoes Bob Leblanc and his statements about what New Orleans was, and demonstrates how despite planners’ intentions fair components came to represent the city alone.

25 Wonderwall booklet, 1983, Folder 7, Box 8, Mary Kate Tews Papers, 2-3.
Programs, Pavilions and the Past: Local culture on Display

Beyond high level planning, various pavilions and initiatives sought to focus on the creations and contributions of Louisiana. Some of these were run by organizers from LWE Inc. itself and others were organized and run by other parties. Several of the arts programs including Major Works, featuring Louisiana artists, the folklife festival, and The International Water Sculpture competition were led by Mary Kate Lorenz Tews. She joined LWE Inc. in 1982 and had previous experience as an art administrator for the City of New Orleans and helped found the Louisiana State Arts Council. The Major Works project was designed to showcase contemporary Louisiana artists who operated in a variety of formats. Despite this focus on the local, the idea for all of the art programs was drawn from previous fairs. Tews personally made trips to the Knoxville fair and examined their arts programs as inspiration for the LWE program. Before Tews, Robert Tannen, a consultant for the fair, in 1981 espoused the need to follow suit from recent fairs with a comprehensive arts program.

Prior fairs served as the blueprint for the arts programs, but the content of those programs pulled from the variety of history and culture Louisiana had to offer. Major Works drew upon modern memory of Louisiana Artists and included finalists from New Orleans, Ruston, Opelousas, Baton Rouge, Gonzales, and Elm Grove. Interestingly, while these cities do cover

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27 Deposition of Mary Kate Tews, 1986, folder 13, box 3, Mary Kate Tews Papers, 6-8.
29 For Tews Trip: Letter to Petr L. Spurney from Mary Kate Tews, concerning The Arts and Children’s programs, 14 October 1982, Folder 18, Box 3, Mary Kate Tews Papers, For Tannen: Memo from Robert Tannen to Allen Eskew RE: Preliminary Expo ’84 Arts Program and Master Plan, 9 September 1981, Folder 18, Box 3, Mary Kate Tews Papers
several regions of Louisiana, ten of the seventeen finalists came from New Orleans. This focus on New Orleans artists, again raised the question of what level of locality the fair celebrated.

While an overt focus on New Orleans was evident in Major Works, the Folklife Festival sought to balance the New Orleans focus by celebrating both the city and the surrounding state. The Festival was advertised to “serve up a gumbo of Cajun music, old-time rhythm and blues, Zydeco, Creole cooking, folk architecture, boat builders and crafts to the millions of visitors to the 1984 World Exposition (LWE)”. In this statement Tews described how the folklife festival was intended to accentuate the culture of coastal Louisiana. The festival was created to inform people from Louisiana about their own state and traditions, and provided a window into the “real” Louisiana for out of state visitors. This event was presented as extremely local in character in participants and contents, but they made a note that their chief consultant was Richard Van Kleek, the former director of the Folklife festival at the Knoxville fair. This program linked to the memory of a previous fair, but was ultimately concerned with culture which appealed to locals and presented Southern Louisiana to other visitors. In contrast to Major Works, and the Wonderwall, this project evoked the memory and cultural staples of a bygone time which were an integral part of Louisiana culture before the fair and continued to be afterwards. Beyond the educational value of this goal for out of state visitors, cultural practitioners reaffirmed their own memory and informed others through this goal in a method similar to what Halbwachs describes as community rewriting the personal memory. The organizers desire for federal funding created a complex dynamic as they presented information

30 Louisiana Major Works Finalists, circa 1983, folder 2, box 4, Mary Kate Tews Papers.
31 Mary Kate Tews, Folklife Festival to Be Launched by Boat Builders, circa 1983, Folder 8, box 5, Mary Kate Tews Papers, 1.
32 Tews, Folklife Festival, 3.
33 Tews, Folklife Festival, 2.
34 Halbwachs and Coser, On collective memory, 51.
that touted the value of the festival to visitors throughout the country, while in reality the festival primarily provided space for local cultural practitioners to reaffirm and express their own culture.\textsuperscript{35} Thus Tews and others involved with the festival convinced the National government to provide funding which would help educate others about local culture, but also allowed for locals to exchange and redefine memory within local groups. The line between local and national was blurred in the planning and backing of these programs, but they overwhelmingly served the purpose of local memory and cultural exchange, over the broader purpose of educating visitors.

In addition to the arts programs, pavilions were also driven by local organizers, in some cases even when the pavilion was international in nature. One such pavilion was the Vatican, where art was sent from the Vatican, but the building and administration of the pavilion itself was handled by the Archdiocese of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{36} The archdiocese had received various requests for them to sponsor the pavilion, and paid for the pavilion themselves without monetary support from other catholic diocese.\textsuperscript{37} Archbishop Hannan mentioned that the request for a pavilion came from many local people including informal encouragement from the city government.\textsuperscript{38} In this case locals expressed interest in a pavilion first leaving Hannan and the archdiocese to find their own sources of funding. Local interest also ensured that the pavilion had a prominent spot at the fair which could be seen towards Fulton street. The pavilion was billed as having artistic treasures from the Vatican, but also from other countries that contributed to the development of Catholicism in Louisiana including France, Canada, Italy, Spain, Ireland, and

\textsuperscript{35} Letter from James L Isenogle to Bess Hawes regarding Folk Arts Grant, 21 October 1983, Folder 8, Box 5, Mary Kate Tews Papers.
\textsuperscript{36} Letter to Dr. Becker from Val A. McInnes regarding Vatican Pavilion, 5 January 1983, Folder 307, Box 24, City Planning Commission subject files.
nations in Africa.\textsuperscript{39} This pavilion was framed as a representation of Catholicism and its artistic treasures but was focused on its own overarching theme of “Jesus Christ the Source of Living Waters.”\textsuperscript{40} This demonstrated the archdiocese dedication to fitting in with the larger theme of the fair, but due to the archdiocese choosing the art adherence to a large theme was still informed by local memory.

The leadership of the archdiocese ensured that the pavilion would appeal to the large local population of Catholics, and their culture and memory. The Vatican artifacts evoked ancient Catholicism and cultural legacy, while the other artifacts showed the various cultures and memories which resonate with local Catholics. The brochure which promoted the pavilion mentioned explicitly that the countries involved contributed to Louisiana and included in the artworks featured with pictures a Monstrance created for the National Eucharistic Congress held in New Orleans in 1938.\textsuperscript{41} This artifact represented the local but also the coming together of various Catholics from throughout Louisiana and the south. This artifact along with the selection of artifacts from around the world including Europe and Africa demonstrated the archdiocese’s awareness of the various groups in Louisiana who were Catholic. By gathering these artifacts, the archdiocese represented the many cultural groups who practiced Catholicism in Louisiana. These groups included the Irish and the Italians, who were represented with artifacts from Rome and elsewhere, and African Americans who were represented with artifacts from Africa such as a Zaire Cross.\textsuperscript{42} The archdiocese ensured the pavilion appealed to various local groups through

\textsuperscript{39} Treasures of The Vatican Brochure, circa 1984, Folder 53, Box 8, Winston Lill Papers.
\textsuperscript{40} Father McInnes, “Art Works Chosen Around One Theme,” Clarion Harold, May 3, 1984, sec. 2, Folder 1, Box 11, Winston Lill Papers, 10.
\textsuperscript{41} Treasures.
selecting artifacts which would appeal to each group, but local appeal did not shield the pavilion from all resistance.

The pavilion faced resistance primarily in regard to its physical appearance. It was originally intended to be a permanent structure, but due to resistance from the city the pavilion was downsized to omit a tall spire, and made a temporary tent building.\textsuperscript{43} In expressing their concerns the city cited that the needle tower idea had recently been rejected for the same site, due to excessive height in a historic district.\textsuperscript{44} In the Vatican pavilion, the Archdiocese appealed to local requests and interests in both its hosting and selection of art, but was still forced to limit the scope of the pavilion. Other local groups protected the historic character of the city, even when the proposal benefitted and presented local culture. Beneath the local international conflict lurked a conflict between local memory.

Local preservationists and government agencies expressed a desire to maintain and enhance the existing memory and nature of the Vieux Carré and French quarter. They influenced fair development and resisted several pavilions. From the initial planning of the fair, mixed attention was paid to the buildings of historic significance within the fair site, as organizers marked some buildings for inclusion and renovation, but marked others for demolition.\textsuperscript{45} The organizers included an inventory and description of various historic buildings in the fair site during their initial report. Statements within the report worried preservationists such as “A simple review of the Warehouse District and the proposed Exposition area reveals that there are both exceptional warehouse buildings which deserve careful preservation as well as structures

\textsuperscript{43} Letter to Dr. Becker from Val A. McInnes regarding Vatican Pavilion, 5 January 1983, Folder 307, Box 24, City Planning Commission subject files.

\textsuperscript{44} Letter to Father McInnes from Robert W. Becker regarding Vatican Pavilion Plan, 8 December 1982, 307, Box 24, City Planning Commission subject files.

\textsuperscript{45} Environmental Impact statement, n.d., Folder 371, Box 28, Central Planning Commission Subject Files, 4-30 – 4-44.
and vacant land that are of negligible architectural value.”⁴⁶ Local government and preservationists sought to limit damage, such as demolished buildings, and overly disruptive architecture, by resisting parts of the fair. This was accomplished through public uproar as well as the actions of local agencies. The Central Business District Historic District Landmark Commission issued a response to the impact statement which highlighted that they held approval decisions for all demolition within the district “no matter what architectural significance the building has.”⁴⁷ The conflict chiefly concerned the demolition of old buildings and the construction of buildings which preservationists deemed disruptive of historic character. Examples included the theme tower, and Vatican spire, but also included locals expressing dismay at the removal of Belgian block pavement for asphalt, as well as the city insisting the fair contribute improvements to lighting and other amenities in Jackson square.⁴⁸ These cases illustrate a conflict between the existing landscape and memory of the city and the fair. The preservationists fought for the importance of the city’s history and raised questions about whether the fair’s transformation was positive or purely erasure of the past. Their efforts resulted in the cancellation of the theme tower, a smaller and temporary Vatican pavilion, and a fair which destroyed less than the original plan suggested.

While local preservationists fought for city memory, Cajun people fought for their own memory and life which was presented centrally at the fair through the folklife festival and through the Louisiana Pavilion. The centerpiece of the Louisiana Pavilion was a boat ride which

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⁴⁶ Environmental Impact Statement, 4-30.
⁴⁷ Steven Robbins, Memo to Pat Fretwell on CBD HDLC jurisdiction within World’s fair site, May 27 1981, Folder 308, box 24, City Planning Commission Subject Files. City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana.
showed guests the nature and history of Louisiana. The ride began with a scene on water, but then presented the arrival of people to Louisiana immediately followed by a scene of traditional Cajun life. Of Louisiana ethnic cultural groups, the Cajuns were the only ones given a specific scene in the ride to themselves, only New Orleans, and Antebellum life received similar focus as individual scenes. The centrality of Cajun culture in the pavilion raises questions about local memory and its recontextualization. Since their arrival in Louisiana in 1765, they had faced hardships and prejudice, including as recently as WWII when education manuals insisted upon correcting their language and Americanizing them. In light of this history a movement began in the 1950s and 1960s among Cajuns who resisted erasure by preserving and reviving their cultural hallmarks including music. This movement grew in strength and popularity with festivals being held in more places, which led to a growing popularity of Cajun music and culture. By the time the fair was held this movement had grown enough in popularity that Cajun culture was considered central to Louisiana. The portrayal of Cajuns at the fair represented their efforts to position themselves as important and omitted the long history of prejudice and erasure their culture faced, which reinforced a narrative of Cajun traditional culture as central to Louisiana. The representation of Cajun people at the fair demonstrated how their memory, once shunned, had become a central positive memory and culture for the state of Louisiana through their own efforts.

Outside of the Louisiana pavilion other groups presented their memory and legacy in a positive way to counter previous views. Italian Americans in New Orleans also faced prejudice...
and discrimination upon their arrival in Louisiana, including lynching in the case of men who were accused of murdering a New Orleans Police chief in 1891. These sentiments continued, but by the 1970s Italian Americans in Louisiana were attempting to legitimize themselves and celebrate their culture. This took several forms including increased scholarship on the Louisiana Italian Experience including Paul Giordano’s writing in “Italian Immigration in the State of Louisiana: Its Causes, Effects, and Results,” which included detailed description of the history and life of Italians in Louisiana, and the development of monuments to celebrate Italian Americans. In 1978 the Piazza D’Italia was constructed in New Orleans, near Fulton Street and the future Fair site. It was intended to honor the cultural contributions of Italian Americans to New Orleans and serve as a memorial to that community. A group of Italian Americans in New Orleans led the construction of the Piazza including Joe Maselli. Maselli went on to be an influential part in the establishment of the Italian Village at the 1984 LWE. The village represented traditional Italian culture and memory and sold various items. It was focused on Italy itself, but was put on and organized largely by local and regional Italian groups. In addition to the pavilion itself, an Italian cultural parade was featured as a part of the televised opening ceremony of the fair. The village and the parade at the fair was part of a larger trend in the city of the Italians reclaiming their culture and establishing themselves as an important part of the city’s culture. Much like the Cajuns, the Italians used the fair to reaffirm their memory and

57 The Official Guidebook, 1984, Folder 13, Box 8, Winston Lill Papers, 45.
insisted upon their presence as a part of local culture. This trend continued after the fair in 1985 with the establishment of the Italian American Cultural Center behind the Piazza.

Locals from cultural groups and city agencies fought for the cultural integrity of the cultures in the city and state, both those which were historically dominant such as the Catholics, and the business history of the warehouse district, but also groups who fought for inclusion in the broader cultural landscape such as the Italians and the Cajuns. These various groups represented conflicting, but also sometimes complimentary, forces within the culture of Louisiana and New Orleans. While different local groups focused upon themselves in each pavilion, there was a general sense of representing the many facets of local memory at the fair and each of the groups mentioned pushed for their inclusion in that. While locals presented themselves at the fair, other countries and corporations pushed their own memory.
National and International: The other side of the dual focus

The main organizers sought to bring the world to Louisiana as much as they sought to bring Louisiana to the world. In service to that they reached out for international, national and corporate involvement with the fair. One such program was the International Water Sculpture competition, which called for artists to create water sculptures representing the fair theme of “World of Rivers: Fresh waters as a source of life.” This contest was concerned purely with the international side of the fair and served as a balancing point to the Major Works and Folklife programs. It also concerned universal ideas of water, and in presentations about the contest Tews featured the movement of water in various forms. Tews and other organizers were concerned with creating a universal memory of their own with this contest. In public presentations the contest was linked to the United Nations Decade of Water which occurred at the same time. By attracting world renowned artists for sculptures, Tews and others wished to associate fine art with the fair as well as a dedication to United Nations Initiatives. The contest found thirteen finalists, but despite appeals to international memory and initiatives the contest organizers failed to secure sponsorship for installation of most of the winning sculptures, as only three of the thirteen were built.

While art was one international component of the fair, nations presented themselves in a positive light through pavilions. Unlike the Vatican and the Italian Village, these pavilions lacked a local group behind them and were entirely focused on bringing a country to the United

59 Fendrick Gallery Exhibits Water Sculpture Competition Finalists, 4 October 1983, Folder 33, Box 7, Mary Kate Tews Papers.
60 Script for Slide Presentation about the First International Water Sculpture Competition, 1983, Folder 24, Box 4, Mary Kate Tews Papers, 1-5.
61 Script for Slide Presentation, 1.
States. South Korea was one such country, although the pavilion was called Korea. This pavilion endeavored to show the history and culture of Korea as well as its future.62 One key component of advertising for this pavilion was that it would give a preview of what visitors could experience if they traveled to the 1988 Olympics. Lill and other organizers gained nothing from this cross promotion of the Olympics, but Korea hoped that visitors to the LWE would also visit their country for the Olympics. Korea wanted to inform Americans of their own culture, both as a way of exchange as in previous fairs, but also to encourage tourism and travel to their own country. Korea brought awareness of their culture to the fair, as many of the local groups did, but they primarily used the LWE as an advertisement for their own event and were just as concerned with encouraging travel to their own country as they were with presenting their culture and memory.

Some international pavilions were concerned with presenting their own country as well as engaging in cultural and memory exchange. Japan presented a pavilion which illustrated the ways Japan had been shaped by water and its rivers. It also included entertainment which both represented Japan in the case of Kabuki Theater, and promoted cultural exchange in the case of the Rag-Pickers, a Japanese New Orleans Style Jazz band, which came from Japan to perform.63 Unlike Korea who saw the fair primarily as advertisement, Japan utilized the fair for both presentation of their own memory, as well as an opportunity for representatives from their country to discover Louisiana local memory. Rather than the traditional strategy of one way memory communication demonstrated by many of the other pavilions, Japan actively engaged in a two way exchange of memory which informed both parties about the other. The two pavilions

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62 Korea Pavilion Brochure, Folder 37, Box 8, Winston Lill Papers
63 The Japan Pavilion, n.d., Folder 36, Box 8, Winston Lill Papers. And Entertainment Program for Japan Days, June 1984, Folder 36, Box 8, Winston Lill Papers
represented strategies employed by many other international pavilions who either advertised for an event or engaged in exchange while presenting their own country. Countries both advertised for their own events, and engaged in the presentation of their own memory, but many of the corporations at the fair engaged only in advertisement.

Companies also organized pavilions at the fair and utilized local memory, national memory, and in some cases memory of previous fairs. One case of national and previous fair memory was the Aquacade. This pavilion housed a synchronized swimming show, and shared a name with a swimming pavilion from the 1939 New York fair. The show within the pavilion went through the decades paying tribute to national culture including Esther Williams movies, surf movies, and other water themed music ending with a Splashdance number. Nostalgic national memory was also utilized by Union Pacific, who presented their railroads as rivers of iron, and brought a vintage train to New Orleans which seized upon national nostalgia for railways. These two pavilions fell into traditional world’s fair modes of appealing to nostalgia and history while selling a norm.

Outside of the corporate and international pavilions, States, Federal agencies and other national groups organized pavilions. Two groups who had been under or misrepresented at other fairs rallied to host their own pavilions at the LWE. African Americans organized an Afro-American Pavilion under the name I’ve Known Rivers, Inc., which told the story of African Americans and their accomplishments in the United States. It was national in focus but did contain a Louisiana section which featured information specifically about the state. Also in this

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65 Union Pacific, News Release, n.d., Folder 52, Box 14, Winston Lill Papers
66 For discussion of corporate pavilions and the establishment of norms see Rydell, World of Fairs, 115-117.
vein, a Women’s Pavilion was also organized, it specifically featured the accomplishments of women as well as sixty works of art by women artists.\textsuperscript{68} Both pavilions echoed the efforts of the Italians and the Cajuns to present their own memory locally, but also served as a modern evolution of the counterhegemony school.\textsuperscript{69} These pavilions served to present memory which had been previously ignored, and pushed for its inclusion in broader collective memory.

The LWE was engulfed in its dual focus to present Louisiana to the world and to bring the world to Louisiana. This dual focus was drawn to one side by local influence, as was seen in the case of the theme building, and in the cases of the Italian Village and the Vatican. While the fair intended to present both local and international memory equally its planning process resulted in a theme building which evoked Louisiana, an art program which featured two major initiatives for local artists, and one that resulted in only three sculptures which featured international artists. Local culture and its celebration took central stage both through the established plans of organizers and the resistance to initiatives which evoked a more universal memory. Despite the universal theme of rivers and subthemes meant to highlight the different characteristics of them, organizers both local and otherwise promoted their memory in the way which served them even when its relation to rivers was suspect. Before the fair had opened the thematic thrust of the fair had already shifted local. This is not to say that the corporations and other countries had no impact on the messaging of the fair as their pavilions were also a large presence at the fair, but they only had influence at the pavilion level. The effort that local groups and preservationists dedicated to maintaining the local character and memory of the fair and its surrounding area created a final product which retained the veneer of both international and local participation, but

\textsuperscript{68} Women In the Mainstream 1884-1984, n.d., folder 18, box 8, Mary Kate Tews Papers.
\textsuperscript{69} For an example of the school in how Native Americans resisted the loss of their culture through performance in shows see: L. G Moses, Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 7-9.
was far more local in focus. The groundwork for a local memory of the fair had been laid by these efforts, but the actual run of the fair exacerbated the local focus and conflicts seen throughout the planning process.
Chapter 2: The Rapids of Perception: Memory meets reality

As the opening of the fair approached the Organizers needed to reassure the public of the fair and turned to advertising of various forms. In doing so they directed focus to certain aspects of the fair, while neglecting others. This media blitz failed as it was directed at the wrong groups and was not sufficient to counteract ongoing news coverage about the fair’s financial and management issues. The LWE organizers directed more of their advertising budget to local advertising than national, which both further encouraged locals to visit, and failed to reach national and international visitors. The media focus allowed local memory to take center stage, through visitors, but also failed to prevent negative coverage from temporarily subsuming it in a wider perception of financial failure and lawsuits. The media effort failed to convince non-local or regional visitors to go to the fair. This failure tied into the arguments of Lawrence R. Samuel, in that visitors and potential visitors brought their own perceptions, shaped by experience and media coverage which countered the organizers’ messages about the fair, and led to bad attendance.¹

The views of the LWE presented in paid advertisement and nonpaid coverage of the fair varied heavily, which created a disconnect between the ideal of the organizers, the coverage of news media, and the actual experience of visitors. This disconnect largely discouraged non-local visitors as they primarily read national publications where non paid coverage dominated over paid advertisement. Local visitors watched and read many advertisements both on the news and in papers. This led to a greater interest in the fair from locals and regional visitors, who already benefited from proximity to the fair. Negative national coverage ensured that a lasting national

memory of the fair did not form, as many people from other parts of the country did not attend, and news coverage moved on from the fair after its closure and bankruptcy proceedings. Due to the imbalance in advertising, locals visited the fair in greater numbers and resonated with the pavilions and performances which evoked their own memory and other local memories. Through this process they were able to create a memory of the fair, but the news coverage affected them as well leading to a mixed memory at the fair’s conclusion which latched on to the positive memories but was overwhelmed by coverage of the bankruptcy and financial failure. A national memory of the fair never formed due to lack of national attendance, which with the experience of local visitors created a foundation for a local and positive memory.
Guiding the River: The Organizer Media Blitz

The organizers hoped to attract people both from the surrounding area and elsewhere. They engaged in a wide-ranging press campaign which involved local and national publicity. Paid inserts were present in local newspapers, and WDSU, a local news station was a pavilion sponsor at the fair, with a temporary news studio located within the convention center. As such media coverage fell into paid coverage in favor of the fair, and general news coverage, which was often critical. Paid inserts in the paper contained information about the fair, but also glowing articles and reviews which misled readers who lacked awareness of their paid nature. These inserts served two purposes for the organizers, one was to highlight events and pavilions at the fair, but the other was to directly counter and downplay the negative publicity the fair was receiving. Several advertisement supplements appeared in local papers for each month of the fair’s run. The first insert was a comprehensive guide to the fair and totaled forty one pages. It began with a justification to the public that the history of New Orleans intertwined with water and that the fair selected an appropriate theme. The entire first section of the insert concerned the planning of the fair and the Legacy of New Orleans as accentuated by the fair. Within the insert the organizers prioritized the local over the international. Many inserts also drew attention to upcoming musical acts, with the schedule front and center. These acts varied from local Jazz

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entertainers such as Wynton Marsalis, to current national stars such as the Stray Cats. Also included in these schedules were international acts from participant countries. The prominently placed schedules seized upon the varied memories of readers, with local acts both new and old, as well as national acts who attracted locals and non-locals. The inclusion of acts from various places and time periods allowed for an appeal to various groups of locals including those who grew up with jazz, as well as those who were more interested in national acts such as Linda Ronstadt. A wide appeal was intended but these inserts only appeared in local newspapers, which led to only locals visiting the concerts. National audiences received paid advertisement, but none with the detail of the local inserts. Beyond giving visitors advice on what to see, these inserts served as a defensive strategy against claims of bad management and financial shortfalls that were plaguing the fair.

The claims of financial issues and management problems were true despite the fair’s insistence otherwise. Presale tickets sold far under expectations which endangered the fair’s opening. Petr Spurney, the fair president, asked the state for an emergency loan of ten million dollars. The state provided the loan, but the fair’s tenuous finances before opening day proved discouraging to newspapers and to visitors. The financial and management issues manifested earlier in private, as concerns about expenditures and the validity of revenue studies had been raised as early as 1982. Overt issues continued once the fair opened as Martin Katz, an organizer, warned Spurney about cash flow problems from lack of attendance which led the fair

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4 “Variety of entertainers featured at Fair,” The Time Picayune, May 5 1984, sec. 8, Folder 14, Box 17, Winston Lill Papers, 16.
to within one bad weekend of overdrawing their bank accounts. These issues only worsened during the fair as newspapers reported these issues and created a self-fulfilling loop of dropping attendance. Despite these real issues Spurney and his crew continued to advertise.

The print media and inserts partnered with a campaign of television and media promotion. This involved films distributed to advertise the fair beforehand, as well as a four-hour opening television special hosted by WDSU, who sponsored their own pavilion at the fair. The initial advertisement films circulated a year before the fair, and contained information about the pavilions, the fair, and most especially the unique atmosphere and party of New Orleans, with one film highlighting the upcoming fair entitled “Mardi Gras City,” highlighting the fair and its theme song of the same name.7

These publicity films served as the first wave of communicating what people could expect from the fair, but for local audiences, the opening television special, served as a powerful tool for creating excitement for the fair as well as highlighting certain aspects of it. The special showed the opening ceremonies of the fair, as well as interviewing people involved with the fair and celebrities who were at the event such as Pat Sajak.8 This type of coverage was designed to show how much fun people who were already at the fair were having as a way countering preopening negative press, as well as making a good first impression. The tone of the special is exemplified by the speech of the Governor of Louisiana who spoke about the doubts many had when the fair was proposed, and that its opening showed that New Orleans hosted a fair and was a world class city.9 This special was a symptom of the larger trend in the media materials which downplayed the reality of money shortfalls and management issues for a perception of a

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7 Communications Department, “Catalog of Audio-visual Resources,” 12 December 1983, Folder 25, Box 4, Mary Kate Tews Papers, 1-3
8 Galaxies352, “1984 Louisiana World Exposition Opening Day 5/12/84 WDSU TV6 N.O., La.”.
fair that was perfect and great. Despite its attempts to downplay money and attendance issues, the special demonstrated insecurity about them, as it often cut to views of crowds in an effort to exaggerate the underwhelming early attendance. This reframing of reality reflected a version of the Hegemony school especially Anna Hadjik’s writing, where the Borden company introduced a live Elsie the Cow at the 1939 fair in order to reassure the public of the continuity of milk and agrarian life despite the upheaval of the 1930s. Although in this case the organizers hoped to reassure the public about the fair itself rather than reassuring the public of larger societal directions. Also, unlike the case of Elsie this attempt was unsuccessful in the short term. LWE’s attempt to deny the negative press only aired locally and targeted locals who more easily visited the fair. Organizers also ignored attendance realities despite public knowledge of presale ticket shortfalls. The special exaggerated the level of foreign attendance by dedicating an interview slot with the American Ambassador to France, who said that a large amount of visas were secured by French people to visit the fair. This section operates on two levels, on the surface it suggested a strong International interest in the fair, which later coverage and evidence revealed as less than strong, and on another level it appealed to local visitors as it referenced the kinship many Louisianans had with the French.

In addition to convincing people to visit the fair, the special also focused on various pavilions to influence where visitors went. Some featured pavilions were national in nature such as the Aquacade and the Chrysler Pavilion, but the Louisiana Pavilion received great attention including a filmed ride through with the weatherman from the national Today show. The Italian Village received ample attention as it was one of the first pavilions featured specifically

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on the special. This special reflected the dual focus of the organizers by featuring pavilions with local appeal, and others with more international appeal. The special also reflected the same misguided focus as the inserts with national personalities appearing on a special which primarily aired locally. The organizers pretended that all was well, but only pushed that message to locals who likely visited the fair despite coverage. The overall presentation of the special also reflected this in the selection of people interviewed which included local visitors to the fair, out of state visitors, and a series of television celebrities who lent their fame to recommending pavilions and touting the fun of the fair. The special convinced those who already visited the fair, but did little against the worries of people who read the reports of low attendance and bad management.

The paid media coverage described above demonstrated the insecurity of the organizers and their desired perception of the fair as a triumphant success, that both highlights the local culture of New Orleans and Louisiana, as well as the memory of the countries and companies who were at the fair. It presented an ideal fair free of unfinished art pieces, financial shortfalls, and lackluster ticket sales, a fantasy which the organizers sought to present in defiance of reality.
Denying the Party: Negative media coverage of the fair

The reality the advertising inserts and the television special resisted was reported by many papers and news sources, both local and national, which ranged from opinion pieces in local newspapers to reports of the fair’s financial problems in the *New York Times*. Criticism from the press had begun before the fair had even opened but only gained speed afterwards. Criticism fell into two categories, one of the qualities of the fair in comparison to past fairs, and others of the management and financial problems. The day after the fair opened a piece appeared in the *New York Times* entitled “There's Fun in the Fair's Architecture, but Not Quite Enough,” which criticizes the Wonderwall and other pavilions, for their lack of beauty and grandeur as compared to other fairs.13 Media perception influenced people who visited other fairs with unfavorable comparisons, interestingly the author reassures the that artist behind the Wonderwall had done good work, but that it was not good as a theme structure.

Many articles criticized the management of the fair including a preopening article from *Gambit*, a local publication in New Orleans. This article called for state agencies to refuse to give more money to the fair, and stop it before it occurred rather than create a situation where the fair asked for more money.14 Already before opening, resistance to the fair and its mismanagement were being reported to the public. Another piece, by Allen Katz in the *Times Picayune* ran one month into the fair and already predicted it would be the last moderately budgeted fair, and brought attention to Petr Spurney’s bad management and the vast amounts of money lost by the fair both of private funds and funds from the state.15 Similar sentiments were expressed in the

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The New York Times, but with the caveat that the fair itself was a fun and entertaining place and that management had failed to provide proper advertising and money management. This type of publicity discouraged people from other regions from making the effort to travel to New Orleans. In addition, the article brought attention to the fair asking for money from the state government a second time, after their first request in April. The sentiment of the article combined with the framing of a fair which was losing money and reducing offerings, painted a picture of a place travelers should avoid. This sentiment seized upon a longstanding idea in American culture and memory, described by Michael Kammen that government spending on cultural and historical preservation was wasteful, and further drew on anxieties of government funding private enterprise. Excitement was tempered in coverage of the fair, including coverage from Louisiana Public Broadcasting, where the fair was presented as opening, but also as likely to lose money due to poor attendance. As this publicity continued to overshadow the fair it became impossible for the fair to show Louisiana to the world, as the world was not coming.

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17 Marcus, “Fair is Fun.”
18 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 477-478.
While attendance was well below expectations, people visited the fair and formulated their own views on how the fair was doing. Some wrote letters into papers and others submitted their opinions in exit surveys, but many weighed in. One couple from Golden, Colorado sent in an opinion piece about the fair. They expressed their criticisms while also stating “Basically, you have a terrific world’s Expo, but because of obvious mismanagement, that won’t be seen by half the people who might have attended because of all of the bad (yet justly deserved) publicity about it.”\(^\text{20}\) In the opinion of this visitor the bad publicity had discouraged people from attending and he believed he should have heeded those warnings as the fair was overpriced, and people could not afford to go. This visitor’s reaction suggested that most of the enjoyment and education they could have gained from the various pavilions and activities was overshadowed by the money and perception issues. Not all visitors sent in negative opinions. Bonnie Lou Way wrote from Santa Anna California, about her enjoyment of the fair, but she still had suggestions, chief among them expanding publicity for the fair as she stated “Advertising and publicity is poor on the fair. You must be aware that there are 25 million travel-happy money-spending Californians who would love this fair. For heaven’s sake let them know about it.”\(^\text{21}\) Even in a glowing review of the fair, press coverage was singled out as a negative.

Visitors who took the time to send in letters were a small group within those who visited, but visitors’ experiences were captured in an exit survey taken in June the second month of the fair.\(^\text{22}\) The exit survey helped to establish both the demographics of people who visited

the fair, as well as what pavilions and activities people were most interested in. For the
organizers this survey informed them of who visited the fair and which pavilions and
performances they preferred. Beyond their purposes the survey provided insight into how people
experienced the fair, and the visitor’s opinions on how the fair performed. Demographic
information confirmed the assertion that most visitors were local. Thirty-nine percent of visitors
were from New Orleans proper with Fifty-Five percent from Louisiana. Out of state visitors
primarily traveled from other southern states.23 This demonstrated that local people were the
majority, and that few people traveled from elsewhere. Due to this, national memory of the fair
did not develop as national perception of the fair was only based on media coverage as people
from outside of the region largely avoided the fair. Conversely, to the large amount of local and
regional visitors, the fair resonated due to its local focus. Local and instate visitors created more
memories of the fair as they made several visits. One third of New Orleans visitors made at least
five visits in the four weeks preceding the study.24 This high rate of return visits demonstrated
that local guests enjoyed going to the fair, and that they were being exposed to more of the fair
than one time visitors.25

In addition to information on number of visits the survey also provided detailed
information on which pavilions visitors went to and which ones they planned to revisit.
Attractions were ranked both on how many of the surveyed visitors had seen it, but also if they
planned to return. The top ten that were noted represented both local and national memory but
the two with the highest rankings were the Louisiana pavilion, and the Italian Village.26 The
popularity of these two pavilions paralleled with the way they were featured in promotional

24 Rosenweig, “Exit Survey,”, 2A.
26 Rosenweig, “Exit Survey,”, 8A.
material and the opening special. These two pavilions presented a local cultural message, and their popularity with the sample suggested that the heavily local audience was drawn to pavilions with local appeal. These pavilions also had a high percentage of visitors who said they would see the pavilions again.\(^{27}\) This further established that visitors in this survey enjoyed these pavilions and wished to see them again. These pavilions were also popular with the regional and non-local people in the sample, hinting that perhaps the local culture was appealing to those visitors that traveled from out of town. The Vatican Pavilion also made it onto this list in the last spot with thirty-four percent of people visiting.\(^{28}\)

The local pavilions were quite popular with visitors, but other pavilions were also popular including the Aquacade and the United States Pavilion. These drew high interest in visiting again but had less who had visited than the local pavilions.\(^{29}\) This interest accentuated the idea that the fair had brought the world to Louisiana, as the locals enjoyed national pavilions and a few international in the case of Japan and Canada. The results from the survey also demonstrated that the organizers failed to guide the focus of visitors, as the Chrysler pavilion had a large amount of time dedicated to it in the opening special, but did not rank among the top ten pavilions visited.\(^{30}\) Locals were attracted to broadly appealing pavilions, both of a local and national nature, while more focused local pavilions attracted less visitation. For example, the Artworks ’84 program which featured local artists only had twenty-seven percent of the sample attend it, and the Folklife festival fared worse with twenty-three percent.\(^{31}\) The lower attendance

\(^{27}\) Rosenweig, “Exit Survey,” 32.
\(^{28}\) Rosenweig, “Exit Survey,” 8a.
\(^{29}\) Rosenweig, “Exit Survey,” 8a.
of these pavilions as compared to others suggest a possible division between broad cultural pavilions, and pavilions which were dependent on viewing specific artists.

While tourists who visited the fair did enjoy it, the survey found that there was a noticeable difference in the rating of aspects of the fair between local visitors and tourists. One telling example was that eighty-five percent of local visitors had a positive impression of the spirit and atmosphere of the fair compared to seventy-two percent for tourists.32 This marked difference in perception of the spirit of the fair evoked its local appeal, as the fair reflected a local and carnival atmosphere which was suited to connect with and the memories of locals more so than tourists who lacked that frame of reference. This difference reflected two phenomena, the way in which memory and culture created barriers between groups, as theorized by Halbwachs, and the historical trend that local and vernacular art and culture were growing in popularity among local groups throughout the country as evidenced by the rapid development and popularity of Appalachian local art in 1980s discussed by Kammen.33 The tourists who went to the fair enjoyed the fair overall, but did not connect with it on the same level as the locals, due to the memory barrier and lack of cultural knowledge they possessed. This also explains why those tourists did enjoy pavilions which reflected broad American culture, as they shared in that memory. A growing interest in preserving and presenting local culture and memory through art and exhibits throughout the United States also contributed to the locals expressing greater appreciation for the spirit and atmosphere of the fair. The respondents were also asked if they considered the fair something to be proud of, in this category eighty-nine percent of locals agreed, but only sixty-nine percent of tourists agreed.34 In addition to further suggesting that

33 For the barriers memory creates: Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, 140. On rise on vernacular culture: Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 681-684.
34 Rosenweig, “Exit Survey,” 31,
locals enjoyed the fair more, this suggested a local pride in seeing their culture represented. As people sought to experience their own local heritage, they resonated more with a fair which presented that rather than culture they were separated from.

The results of this survey demonstrated that visitors to the fair were discouraged by the press coverage despite their eventual attendance. It also corroborated the idea that some of the local pavilions were the most popular at the fair, while showing that some international pavilions were also popular. Ultimately people who went to the fair enjoyed it with locals visiting and enjoying it more than tourists due to its local focus and the way memory resonated with them. Those who visited the fair remembered the fair, but at the time other forces such as the media, and the organizers themselves created an immediate negative perception which evoked negativity and ensured the fair’s legacy was a complicated one in the short term. The closure of the fair ensured this as locals celebrated the fun they had, while Federal investigations and bankruptcy lawsuits played out in the news.
The End of the Fair: A complex Legacy created

During the fair, its financial shortcomings and negative press continued to hurt attendance and sour its reputation, but this paled in comparison to the immediate aftermath of the fair, as it entered bankruptcy and closure. A reputation which had already been plagued with negative response was subjected to further scrutiny at the end of the fair, headlines in the *New York Times* read “Failed Fair Gives New Orleans a Painful Hangover,” and served to further question the wisdom of holding a fair in the first place.\textsuperscript{35} They suggested that the World’s Fair as a concept had become unnecessary due to a world of television, and places like EPCOT Center in Florida.\textsuperscript{36} The president of the French Quarter Business association was quoted in the article as saying “World’s fairs are passé, you can go to Disney World, you can go to EPCOT. World’s fairs used to be were the leading edge of the newest ideas and newest technology. Now we see that every day on television.”\textsuperscript{37} This sentiment reflected the reality that permanent places existed which filled the role previously only held by temporary fairs. This sentiment did not necessarily apply across the world as Vancouver had a successful fair in 1986.\textsuperscript{38} In addition to questioning the wisdom of the fair, the article also covered the history of the fair’s development and its myriad financial and management problems, with attention given to Federal investigations into possible kickbacks among organizers of the fair. Investigators discovered a merchandise


\textsuperscript{36} King, “Failed.”

\textsuperscript{37} King, “Failed.”

kickback scheme, and Frank Kennedy, a former director of marketing was charged with fraud. Further, other *New York Times* articles described investigations into illegally written worthless checks. This type of national coverage at the closure of the fair served to solidify and expand the negative perception of the fair, as it only paid passing mention to the enjoyable parts of the fair with greater focus given to the money shortages, poor attendance, and corruption. Regardless of how the comparably small amount of people who visited the fair enjoyed it, the wider publicity of the fair during its run and at its conclusion created an overwhelming perception of an unnecessary and terrible fair which lost the city of New Orleans a large amount of money and resulted in a variety of lawsuits as various vendors attempted to recoup their costs.

While this negative publicity was pervasive, some local media attempted to reframe the negative outcome as a component of the wider fair picture with WDSU’s closing coverage focusing on the enjoyment partying of people at Fulton Street, the entertainment district created for the fair and the enjoyment people had during the fair, with only some mention of the financial disaster. This is not to say that local media was dedicated to presenting a positive memory of the fair, as articles analyzing the downfall of the fair continued to be published locally for months afterwards including an article which reported on the high amounts of money the various advisers for the fair were paid. In addition to this targeted coverage, further coverage in early

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1985 of an auction intended to produce money for the Federal Bankruptcy Court to pay debts, further reminded the public of the disaster the fair had been.43

The LWE opened with advertising which presented a targeted idea of a fair which would represent both the local and the international. This advertising already did not reflect the reality of the fairs local leaning as seen in the planning phase, but that initial local bent was exacerbated by the failure of advertising to attract national and international audiences, who were discouraged by media reports and a general perception of a fair which was overpriced and badly run. This created a visitor base which was primarily local and was uniquely situated to latch on to the local aspects of the fair and create a positive memory of the fair. In the short-term however, any possibility of a positive memory was overshadowed by the bankruptcy and court proceedings which dominated the public sphere in the months following the fair. The proceedings ended, time moved on and with it the memory of the fair did as well.

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Chapter 3: The River Erodes: The rehabilitation and reduction of the Fair’s memory

As time passed, the overarching perception of financial disaster faded along with many details of the fair, which allowed for the dominant local positive memories of the fair to rise to the forefront, but those memories were incomplete due to the reductive nature of memory. Over time people remembered the fair with the distance and amnesia of time. This new memory of the fair included factors which were unknown at the time of the fair’s failure. The warehouse district transformed into a tourist and cultural central point for the entire city. The convention center which housed the Louisiana and other pavilions became a source of convention and tourism dollars, and the international pavilions transformed into a popular mall which today draws many visitors. These factors assisted with the erasure and reduction of the negative memory of the fair and allowed the positive memory of those who went and still lived locally to reemerge as the bankruptcy and failure receded into an amnesia which remembered its occurrence but lessened its impact.

The shift in the memory of the LWE followed ideas and patterns suggested by Halbwachs and Kammen, in that the memory of the fair changed to fit the present importance of that part of the city. Locals retained pieces of their memory of the fair, but forgot both many of the scandals, and many of the pavilions at the fair. It was unique however in that the positive memory which valued the experiences and changes to the city was largely unchallenged by the national narrative of a failure, as the fair had simply been forgotten at the national level. The fair received
occasional mentions as a financial failure, but only infrequently and in passing.\textsuperscript{1} The modern local memory remembered only parts of the fair as some things were forgotten or continued to exist without context. The physical memory of the fair was a complex mix of overt tributes and areas of contested meaning where current and previous interpretations clash. The memory of the fair which developed over the thirty-four years since the fair closed reflected a final stage of local memory reaching dominance, as the negative and national memory faded, locals looked back at the fair as an important cultural experience which prepared the warehouse district for its later importance. It also reflected the way in which historic distance eroded the detail to create an approximate memory of the fair, with some pavilions remembered while others were forgotten. The combination of selective memory in local visitors and physical commemoration of the fair, created a memory which remained as locals retained their memory, and lack of overt physical presence prevented non-locals from gaining knowledge of the fair.

Lingering memory: Fan Sites and Memory online

Online fan sites of various kinds helped to keep the memory of the fair alive after the invention of the internet, but a large local interest and memory of the fair began to arise in the 2000s leading up to an outpouring of memory in 2014 for the thirtieth anniversary of the fair. Many of the early fan sites were born of people who had an interest in fairs generally, including Bill Cotter who was an avid photographer and was present at many of the American fairs. He established a website for his photos in 1998, which featured descriptions and photos from various fairs including the LWE. While Cotter had a general passion for fairs, he devoted a great amount of time to the LWE including making documents from the fair available on his website and later writing an Images of America book about the fair. Cotter’s website served as early resources for people who wished to learn about the fair, but it contained some factual errors, such as citing the reason for the fair as a celebration of the centennial of the 1884 exposition, when the organizers planned the fair originally for 1980, with that linkage developed after the year change. Despite inaccuracies, Cotter suggested in the text of the page that the fair did have positive effects such as memories people made and the construction of the convention center. Others joined Cotter in presenting their own memories as time passed.

Local enthusiasts added their recollections over the years including Raymond Ward, a Louisiana lawyer who posted the pictures he took at the fair with the commentary stating that it was a financial failure, but he remembered many guests who seemed happy when he was there.

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The gallery also served as a narration of his own memory of the fair. This type of recollection deemphasized the fact that the fair went bankrupt, in favor of recounting the experiences they had and contributing their own memory to the larger narrative. Many of the posts made online before the 2014 anniversary were primarily framed around the pictures they had taken. Some represented a component of a person’s larger interest including Michael Strauch, who documented streetcars and transit and dedicated a page on his site to the Monorail and skyride from the fair on his website. The memories on these websites represented the way in which memory of events was selective, and driven by the interest of the person remembering. Kammen found this phenomenon in analysis of various tests of Americans’ historical knowledge. These people were selective in what they remembered, but due to the photographic nature of the posts, what they remembered was driven by what resonated with them at the time of the fair. Within their photos the pavilions and art pieces which resonated with them in 1984 stayed central to their memory, while the bankruptcy and broader components of the fair fell to the back of their memory. This process continued over the thirty years after the fair, with memory slowly appearing online.

Local memory surged online in 2014, as various people gathered to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the fair. As Kammen noted, anniversaries are often an important moment for the care and expression of memories, as they can drive interest in the event. The 2014 anniversary was marked by further blog posts, as well as articles from local newspapers and websites and a plaque was placed to commemorate the fair and the anniversary. The articles

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9 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 664-667.
10 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 667.
ranged from photographs and specific people’s memories to broader coverage of the fair and its commemoration. The commemoration of the Anniversary itself was covered by WGNO who framed the fair primarily around the way it jumpstarted the tourism and convention industry which is now a large part of the city’s revenue. The people involved in the commemoration continued the fair’s tradition of celebrating local culture by including a traditional second-line in the ceremony. The commemoration reinforced the local nature of the fair, by drawing focus to locals’ enjoyment of the fair, and neglecting the financial problems.

While each of these articles featured different memories and photographs, one constant among the news articles was the narrative that despite its failure, the fair brought attention and revitalization to the warehouse district which allowed it to become an important part of the city in the intervening years. Thus the modern local collective memory of the involved the positive experiences people had at the fair, and that the initial failure of the fair was only a setback which delayed its revitalization of the city. Peoples’ memory reflected the idea that over time the way a group remembers their past changes to reflect their current situation. In hindsight, which developed over thirty years, the key role that the convention center and other remnants of the fair came to play in the city’s cultural life and economy further reframed the memory in terms of the fair’s effects. What locals remembered as an event which cost the city a great amount over time

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13 Pope, “56 World’s Fair Photos.”

was viewed as the catalyst for development which later drew large amounts of tourism dollars to the city.

The other driving force behind the way the fair was remembered was nostalgia as the fair serves as a time to look back to where local people enjoyed their culture and loved the fair. Nostalgia helped people adapt to the changing nature of a place and gave them a point to fall back on. Sentiment among many of the articles touched on the pleasant memory of those six months of the fair. Due to its short run the fair later served as a point of nostalgia, a perfect time where the issues of the fair were unimportant compared to the experience of the fair itself. This feeling of nostalgia was strongly expressed by Lea Filson, a WWL anchor at the fair, as she said "Near the end of the fair, I remember traveling across the bridge and looking down at the Wonderwall, and the magic of it all, and thinking how sad I would be when it ended." This type of statement places the fair memory in the role of an idealized past as described by Kammen, one which recalled the enjoyment of the fair, but forgot the problems.

Nostalgia for the fair was further exemplified by Bill Cotter when he published his book on the fair in the *Images of America* series. While he based his website primarily on his own experience and photos of the fair, he added the memories of fair organizers to the book, which created a view of the fair that benefitted from more passed time, as well as organizers who desired an idealized memory of the fair. This type of book allowed readers to relive their experience of the fair through Cotter’s pictures and narration. His selection of photographs served as a mediation through which the memory of the reader could travel and remember fondly.

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16 Pope.
what resonated with them during their visit to the fair. The book’s nostalgia also came from Cotter’s interviews with various people who organized the fair including Spurney. As they ran the fair, it was in their interest to present a positive memory that reflected well on them. While nostalgia served the visitors as a realm of positive memory, for the organizers it served to recontextualize their failure as an enjoyable experience that created success for the city as time went on. Spurney and the others involved in the book used the changes in the city to change the meaning of their involvement, as within the new context their work could appear as a success rather than failure. Nostalgia also provided a sense of security and identity as described by Kammen, both for the organizers who reframed their past, and for visitors who looked back upon the fair as a better and simpler time.\(^{19}\)

The visitors’ impression of a simpler time came out of their lack of complete memory. Visitors only remembered select pavilions and experiences from the fair. The Wonderwall was remembered by most and featured prominently in many of the articles about the fair.\(^{20}\) While it was fondly remembered details about it have fallen out of memory, such as its references to other fairs, and its architectural influences, instead it was remembered as a visually distinctive backdrop for many photos, and its beauty.\(^{21}\) In the end the connections to past fairs, and specific memory were replaced by a broad memory of a visually interesting structure which evoked New Orleans through its use of alligators and other Louisiana emblems.

Visitors remembered other components of the fair more specifically than the Wonderwall. Locals recalled musical acts quite well, even when the venue they performed in was forgotten. Visitors to the fair clearly remembered seeing Linda Ronstadt with the Nelson

\(^{19}\) Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 295.

\(^{20}\) Pope, “56 World’s Fair Photos,” 2, 3 and 7.

\(^{21}\) Pope.
Riddle Orchestra.\textsuperscript{22} One visitor, Bettye Anding returned to the fair often and visited a variety of pavilions, she talked about some of them briefly including a local artist she discovered at the Artworks Pavilion.\textsuperscript{23} As with the other memories Anding remembered only a small amount about the things she enjoyed at the fair. She failed to mention many pavilions and only recounted limited detail concerning pavilions she did visit. Locals remembered things that resonated with them, whether it was a musician playing music they loved, or a new exposure to culture either familiar or unknown, visitors remembered the positives, but even those memories were incomplete. The incomplete memory extended beyond peoples’ memory and into the physical commemoration and remnants of the fair in the city.

\textsuperscript{22} Pope.  
Physical Fragments: The Landscape which Remains

The incomplete nature of the memory of the fair was reflected in its physical remains, which consist of major buildings such as the convention center and the Riverwalk, and smaller items such as art pieces from the water sculpture contest and sculptures from one of the fair entrances. The convention center represented a continued use that has modified the meaning of its memory as the center became known more for later conventions than its initial use at the fair. Over the years the convention center has expanded several times and has covered up parts of the fair site. While many locals knew that the convention center served as the grand hall of the fair and a key component the convention center website omitted that history.24 The disconnect between public knowledge of the fair’s role in the use of the convention center, and the acknowledgment of that role by the center created a situation where popular memory and official memory diverge. The Convention Center Authority focused on the present as opposed to the past and reflected the idea that organizations presented their site in a way which best serves their interest as posited by Matthew Palus in his analysis of Acadia National Park.25 Popular memory also disconnected from the modern Riverwalk mall which inhabits the former international pavilions, as it lacked any acknowledgment of its past. Despite this lack of official mention, the commemoration articles made a point to mention the origin of both of these buildings.26 Buildings were not the only remnants of the fair, as streets and sculptures remained with their own presence and lack of presence in local memory.

Other remnants of the fair were less known due to their existence as static remnants rather than reused buildings. This type of legacy presented itself in the sculpture Rain Towers, which was a winner of the water sculpture contest, but during the fair was only installed as a dry sculpture without its kinetic features. After the fair it was installed in front of the New Orleans Public Library where it remained with no plaque commemorating why it was created. The only information online about the sculpture listed it as part of a larger New Orleans art initiative and gives the creation date as 1986, thus erasing any link to the fair. People who remembered the fair forgot this sculpture as a legacy of the fair. It escaped mention by articles that addressed remnants of the fair. It served as a victim of the amnesia of memory and the fact that many of the people who visited the fair did not pay attention to the arts programs. Even in the case of physical monuments the positive memory of the fair was selective.

Selective memory worked in favor of remembrance in the case of the Ernst Café, as despite the evolution of Fulton street over time, Ernst Café left a sign on their restaurant which denoted their involvement in the fair. In this case the owners of the café retained their link to the fair, while most of the street changed to reflect the post fair city. While Ernst Café was not mentioned specifically, the revitalization of Fulton street was mentioned in the remnant article. This offers a contrast to the sculpture as the owners chose to evoke memory of the fair but people failed to remember it as they remembered the convention center. This supports the idea that the

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27 Letter from Helen Escobedo, 11 October 1984, Folder 34, Box 4, Mary Kate Tews Papers.
30 “237 Lafayette Street, Ernst Cafe,” Google Maps, August 2016, https://www.google.com/maps/@29.9472459,-90.0657761,3a,60y,167.84h,83.31t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1suuDlrBVOSSYcmtCdLjeFzwI2e0I7i13312!8i6656.
people who visited the fair only connected or remembered major attractions or venues, therefore creating a current memory which has omitted even components which still exist today.

In addition to these remnants, a commemorative plaque was placed in 2014 to remember the fair and its anniversary. It was placed on the plaza outside of the convention center entrance and denoted that the fair occurred on that site.\textsuperscript{31} This plaque evoked general memory of the fair rather than highlighting specific elements. This type of commemoration allowed for visitors to ascribe their own memory to it, thus reinforcing the local nature of the memory. A convention attendee who saw the plaque would only learn that a fair occurred without any further knowledge or memory of it, while a local person who experienced the fair or received the memory from someone who did would be reminded of their own knowledge. This type of remembrance allowed the visitor to bring their own meaning and has been used in many contexts, including more solemn subjects such as the Holocaust memorial in Boston as discussed by James E. Young in his analysis.\textsuperscript{32} The plaque also brought consideration to the site beyond it.

The plaque denoted that the fair occurred across the eighty-two acre site, which allowed broader consideration of the surrounding area in terms of the fair. However as previously shown the physical remains of the fair lack proper markings for recognition if someone sought other sites. While it was possible for someone with no prior knowledge to discover remnants of the fair, identifying many of them required prior knowledge of the fair and its elements, which ensured that the memory remains local, as its commemoration is largely inaccessible to nonlocals who lack prior cultural knowledge.

\textsuperscript{31} Trotter, “Bronze Plaque Commemorates 1984 World’s Fair.”
The modern memory of the fair heavily reflects the phenomena of amnesia and nostalgia, as a memory which was largely defined by the negative outcome of the fair, has over time evolved to more reflect the experiences of the many locals who found the fair to be a special and enjoyable time which more than outweighed the poor management. This memory remained local due the initial local appeal of the fair, as well as how the fair slipped out of the national consciousness completely. In the modern day, the memory of the fair remained largely local, as those who visit the city remained unable to identify the remnants due to limited commemoration. The final stage of the LWE’s long trail of memory was an undetailed fondness which forgot many of the pavilions and the troubles of the fair but remembers the way in which the fair exemplified local memory and resonated with locals who visited.
Conclusion

The LWE was intended to be a typical fair of the era which celebrated the local but was equally concerned with linking to other fairs and international memory. Despite the organizers’ goals for this type of fair, the efforts of local cultural groups shifted the focus more locally during the planning process through their efforts to represent their own memories and the memory of the city. In addition to those efforts the organizers desire to introduce links to other fairs were hindered at every turn through zoning laws and local resistance. That initial process laid the ground work for a fair which resonated deeply with locals and become an important part of the collective memory of New Orleans.

The case of the LWE demonstrated how the memory of an event both resisted the organizers intentions and shifted to serve local people who helped organize the fair, this duality shows how the primary organizers failed to execute their vision, but the local group organizers succeeded in representing their culture and creating a positive view of themselves. The city also succeeded in protecting its historic character from the more intrusive elements in the fair plan. The city both protected itself, and enhanced knowledge of local culture through the fair thus converting an overtly national event into one of local utility.

The centrality of memory and locality in this study stands in contrast to other scholars on World’s fairs such as Samuel and Rydell, who consider fairs in terms of their immediate planning national consequences. This work expands beyond that approach through the inclusion of local perspective which provides insight into why organizers failed to execute their vision, as well as more broadly the effect local people can have on an international fair. This work further integrates memory as an explanation of what informed the main organizers and other groups who
influenced and resisted the fair. and provides greater insight into the creation of a fair’s legacy. Specifically, memory serves as a novel approach to fairs, as some memory scholars mention fairs in passing such as Kammen, but World’s fair scholars currently do not integrate memory into their analysis.¹ This study however centralizes memory in all stages of the fair in question.

The run of the fair itself served local use of the fair as the negative publicity and poor non-local attendance ensured that the fair would serve as a breeding ground for local memory. Locals experienced the fair in far greater numbers than anyone else and resonated with the atmosphere and exhibits which were already designed to accentuate local culture. The negative national publicity questioned the wisdom of continuing to hold a world’s fair but for the locals who visited it, it served as more of a high budget local festival rather than a fair.² Despite this the locals enjoyed the fair and learned about other cultures, but it only served to become a part of their own local memory. Their local memory was subsumed as the ongoing news coverage of the fair’s bankruptcy dominated memory of the fair for the first few years afterwards.

As time passed the local memory expressed both resilience and amnesia, as the positive memories of the fair returned to the forefront but in doing so they lost their detail. This outcome demonstrated how even though the legacy of the fair was unique in terms of other fairs, it reflected established memory patterns of nostalgia and amnesia as described by Kammen.³ The memory which remained by the thirtieth anniversary was an overwhelmingly positive one which saw the fair as a catalyst for later development of the area and an amazing experience for those who visited, and the money lost as only a temporary setback. With the positive memory also

came a loss of detail as many attractions and pavilions were forgotten, and much of the art presented at the fair was forgotten. This fragmented quality of the positive memory was epitomized by the physical remnants as some components were remembered for their involvement but not physically commemorated, and others remained with no evidence they were made for the fair. A fair once viewed as a disaster through time evolved into an ingrained part of the nostalgic collective memory of New Orleans, but with that nostalgia much of the specific culture which the fair presented was forgotten.

The case of memory at the LWE opens the path for further exploration of this fair, and of others through the lens of memory. This study focused on the LWE as a whole, but articles and other work could be written which focus on one pavilion or cultural group mentioned in chapter one. The LWE would benefit from further historical study both utilizing memory, but also more generally as this work is one of few works on the subject. Scholars could use memory to study other fairs in ways which emphasize the power groups other than the organizers can wield during a fair. That movement started with Samuel and others, but through memory it could expand.

Memory was central to the story of the LWE, but it may be central to other fairs as well. Integrating memory into fair studies allows for new interpretations of fairs with little coverage such as the LWE, but also fairs with ample coverage such as New York. The inclusion of memory allows for a complete picture of world’s fairs. It includes organizers, but further reveals their motivations and inspirations through the memories they drew upon. It allows for the greater inclusion of other concerned groups and visitors, who were previously left out of fair analysis. Memory revealed an evolved process of conflict and evolution in the planning and legacy of the LWE, but there is still room for exploration of the legacy of other fairs.
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