

‘Exhibits with real colour and interest’: representations of the West India Regiment at Atlantic World’s Fairs

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ABSTRACT

Beyond their role in expanding and securing the British Empire, the West India Regiments (WIRs) were used to sell the Caribbean region to tourists and potential investors. Soldiers travelled in person and in photographic form to numerous world’s fairs that brought the empire to London and major American cities such as Chicago and New Orleans. Through their representation at these events their likeness, and in some cases their actual physical presence, was showcased to a range of audiences who did not have to venture outside of their home countries for the experience. For nations such as Britain, who controlled vast empires, the fairs provided a justification for empire by showcasing the lack of development of some native peoples and the advancement of others under colonial rule through human exhibits. The WIRs were used as key examples of this progress and decorated promotional stands related to the West Indian colonies, unlike representatives of African ethnic groups who were used to populate constructed ‘native villages’.

Introduction

The front of a postcard dated 31 September 1905 instructs the recipient to ‘pay a visit to the Crystal Palace to hear these men play. When you get there do not forget the exhibits from Jamaica’. The postcard was sent by a visitor to Jamaica who signs off as ‘R.S.’ and depicts the band of the West India Regiment (WIR) – the sole surviving of 12 in the British Army that had a non-white rank and file. R.S.’s postcard text highlights the importance of the WIR’s band to the promotion of Jamaica overseas. For R.S., it seems that the band was seen as a Jamaican institution worth witnessing whenever and wherever possible. The use of the WIRs’ band, and the rest of the rank and file, as promotional ambassadors became increasingly important as the West Indian colonies moved away from agriculture and sugar production as their main means of income. In the years following their foundation in 1795, the WIRs had been key to protecting Britain’s sugar islands.
from French invasion. Following the decline of the sugar industry, the men of the WIRs became important to the promotion and protection of the next key exploitative industry that the region’s wealthiest inhabitants chose to pursue, tourism.

As is demonstrated from R.S.’s postcard, the men of the WIRs travelled beyond the Caribbean to perform at and appear at exhibitions. As well as the fair at Crystal Palace that R.S.’s acquaintance was encouraged to visit, the WIRs appeared at numerous other world’s fairs and expositions across the Atlantic world. Through their representation at these events, their likeness, and in some cases their actual physical presence, was experienced by a range of audiences who did not have to travel abroad. The peak period for these international exhibitions covered the years between 1851 and 1939, and the Regiments were frequently represented in person and through photographs until the final one was disbanded in 1927. For countries such as Britain, controlling vast empires, the fairs provided an opportunity to bring the peoples, places, and potential profits onto home soil. They also provided, through human exhibits, a justification for empire by demonstrating the lack of development of some native peoples and the advancement of others under colonial rule. The WIRs were used as key examples of this progress and decorated promotional stands related to the West Indian colonies, unlike representatives of African ethnic groups who were used to populate constructed ‘native villages’. In North America, fairs were also used to demonstrate racial superiority, with Paul Greenhalgh stating that at these events there was an ‘insistence on the primacy of white culture over all others’ and an outward expression of the ‘ingrained belief that white Americans alone had been responsible for the success of the nation’.2

The first world’s fair in Britain was the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace. The first to take place in the United States was the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition celebrating 100 years of independence in 1876. Importantly, Jamaica held its own world’s fair in 1891 to signal the birth of a ‘New Jamaica’, based on encouraging economic investment.3 This article analyses photographs of the WIRs circulated, sold, and displayed at these world’s fairs. It aims to analyse the possible intentions behind the photographs to develop an understanding of how the WIRs were used to sell the Caribbean colonies by presenting a particular image of their populations. Photographs of the WIR related to the 1884–1885 World’s Industrial and Cotton Exposition in New Orleans, the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the 1891 Jamaica Exhibition, and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago will be referenced, demonstrating the connection between the intentions of the producers of the photographs and the fairs themselves.

The WIRs

Little has previously been written about the ‘soft’ power, or the cultural power, of the WIRs. The main focus has naturally been on military engagements,
achievements, and capabilities, as well as the circumstances of their founding. The traditional regimental histories of Major Ellis and Colonel Caulfeild, written at the end of the nineteenth century, have been the starting point for most studies about the Regiments and focus on military engagements emphasizing the capabilities of the men. Ellis and Caulfeild’s coverage of the Regiments’ activities beyond the battlefield is thin, although some parades and social events are mentioned. In Slaves in Red Coats, Roger Buckley examines the regiment’s early history and puts it into the context of the continuing process of the Africanisation of British West Indian society, war in the Caribbean, and the beginnings of British imperial expansion in Western Africa. Brian Dyde’s The Empty Sleeve provides some insights into the social lives of the WIRs as well as public opinions of the men that are not present in earlier works. Many of Dyde’s chapters open with poems that can be used as evidence to examine public perceptions of the WIR both in general and after specific events, such as a Jamaican folk song that refers to their involvement in the suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865.

In Slave and Soldier: The Military Impact of Blacks in the Colonial Americas, Peter Voelz discusses the history of the WIRs with the aim of presenting a counter-narrative to the myth of black resistance ‘that has been allowed to develop with little examination of those blacks who defended their colonies or resisted the resisters’. This kind of analysis is important to the history of the WIRs, which not only crushed resistance but helped spread British colonial control elsewhere. The motivation of black recruits joining the WIRs is therefore thoroughly outlined, as is their impact on race relations in the British Caribbean. However, the attention Voelz gives to race relations and the WIRs focuses more on their presence as a threatening force and the subsequent reactions and perceptions of the population. Again, there is scant reference to the Regiments’ soft power or of the soldiers’ function as a non-violent cultural force. For such discussions, works on the image of the Caribbean in general must be consulted. Krista Thompson’s An Eye for the Tropics stresses the importance of images of black policemen to the reputation of the Bahamas, stating they ‘proved that blacks could be assimilated into Britishness and could be both civilised British subjects and civilisers of other blacks’. The same would have been true of photographs of the WIRs, though Thompson does not discuss these in detail. This paper aims to place photographs of the WIRs within the visual culture that Thompson outlines, but with a focus on the context of usage and display as well as the content of the images.

**World’s fairs, imperialism, and racial ideology**

The literature on the world’s fair phenomenon addresses two key areas that are particularly useful to the analysis of representations of the WIRs at these events. Perhaps most important are references to the fairs’ connections to imperialism...
and racial thought, and the discussions about the use and perceptions of African exhibits and native villages that displayed the more recent victims and recipients of colonisation. John Mackenzie dedicates a chapter of his book *Propaganda and Empire* to the ideological intentions of imperial exhibitions from the 1880s onwards, which he believes were different to their earlier predecessors. Rather than being showcases for industry, as earlier exhibitions were, MacKenzie argues that from the 1880s exhibitions were ‘the most striking examples of both conscious approaches to and unconscious approaches to imperial propaganda’. Exhibitions were used to mark imperial world-wide control and in the United States were used to signal the coming of new economic and political power. These imperial exhibitions were a celebration of the ability of the white man to reach and create societies modelled on European lines, and the WIRs’ presence at world’s fairs was a key example of this. They demonstrated through their physical and photographic presence that those of African descent could be civilised and made loyal to the crown.

Previous literature has also focused heavily on the ideological intentions behind the native African villages that were such a major attraction for visitors to world’s fairs. The WIRs’ representation at Atlantic World’s Fairs, from Crystal Palace to Kingston, was slightly more complex than that of ‘native villagers’. This was especially true in the United States, where their presence occurred in spaces where African-Americans had been prevented or discouraged from representing themselves. MacKenzie states that at British exhibitions, the native villages ‘always performed one function’ and that this was to use ‘the quaint, the savage, the exotic’ to demonstrate the ‘onward march of imperial civilisation’. In *Ephemeral Vistas*, Greenhalgh dedicates a chapter to the use of ‘human showcases’ but presents the native villages as more complex than MacKenzie. He notes that ‘there were not always racial, imperial, or commercial motives behind human exhibits’ and that in fact some human exhibits acted more as ambassadors for their home nations. This is an important distinction to make when discussing the representation of the WIRs at these fairs but Greenhalgh fails to acknowledge that it was possible for human exhibits to fulfil both roles. The case studies in this article will highlight the possible conflicts between the ambassadorial and racial and imperial motives of the representations of the WIRs. A similar view is put forward by Christopher Reed, who writes that such exhibits did not always ‘exist as a panorama of ethnic or racial shame’ but as representations of ‘parts of a highly differentiated global humanity’ that could be studied by students of the races of mankind. None of the works mentioned provide an analysis of photographs in representing other cultures and peoples. Although Mackenzie acknowledges the importance of the postcards and photographs produced by and for exhibitions, he does not reference the visual culture of these imperial exhibitions in any detail.
The 1884–1885 World’s Industrial and Cotton Exposition in New Orleans

The WIR were represented at the 1885 World’s Industrial and Cotton Exposition in New Orleans, held at a time when race relations within the state of Louisiana were volatile. According to Rydell, African-Americans attempted to use the fair to seek social and economic change; however, the fair’s Director General had a different intention: to encourage African-Americans to remain dedicated to manual labour, and stated that an aim of the fair was ‘to implant in him the desire to come out of the slough of ignorance and make a manly effort to occupy with us the improved farm, the workshop, and the factory’. Segregation was also in place, and protests were made by activist Booker T. Washington calling for the separate accommodation on the railways that was provided for African-American visitors to the fair to be equal to that provided for whites. It was into this complex racial environment that Jamaica’s racially mixed exhibitors arrived.

Corporal G. S. Gale of the 1st WIR travelled to New Orleans as part of this delegation and featured amongst the exhibits in the Jamaica Court as a ‘native attendant’. In an article written for the Gleaner at the time of the 1891 Jamaica exhibition that reflected on exhibitions past, it was stated that Gale was a ‘stalwart coal-black negro, who by his steadiness and intelligence contributed in no small degree to invest the exhibits with real colour and interest’. Back in the Caribbean, the men of the WIR were used to add colour and interest to postcards and tourist guides. In the same way as his colleagues decorated photographs of Jamaican scenes, Gale was used to adorn the Jamaica Court and attract visitors to the stand. He was taken to New Orleans as an ambassador for his island and used to promote Jamaica to fair-goers. In an illustration from Jamaica’s Gleaner, he can be seen on the stand near Sir Daniel Morris, the Director of the Botanic Department in Jamaica (Figure 1). Morris and his botanical specimens demonstrate Jamaica’s agricultural promise and the potential of the island’s landscape, and Gale illustrates the potential of the island’s people. Like those who were used in photographs to sell Jamaica as a safe and profitable environment, Corporal Gale was utilised as a physical artefact to demonstrate the security of Jamaica and the potential of its citizens of African descent to develop under white rule and leadership into well-disciplined citizens. To demonstrate this, he stands erect and upright in front of a British flag explicitly highlighting which country was responsible for his development and the country to which he was loyal. The stand was described as a great success in the Gleaner. It occupied a ‘prominent position in the most frequented part of the exhibition’ and received ‘hundreds of visitors’ each day.

The illustration gives us a good indication of the kind of goods that were displayed at the Jamaica Court. The stand was bedecked with jars of botanical samples displayed above prints that demonstrated the diversity of Jamaica’s
plant life. The *Gleaner* states that businessmen were most attracted to the Jamaica Court by these specimens of Jamaican products. However, other visitors were allegedly ‘simply on the look out for curiosities’. It is not too far fetched to assume that Corporal Gale would have been one of these ‘curiosities’ for both white and black American southerners, dressed in his distinctive Zouave uniform, speaking to them in his Jamaican accent and surrounded by ‘tresses of Old Man’s Beard’.¹⁹ American visitors to the West Indies often remarked on the Regiments’ Zouave uniform that was worn by Gale at the exhibition. The author William Drysdale was fascinated by the ‘most romantic’ dress uniform of the WIRs during his trip to the West Indies in 1885 and wrote that he was ‘confident’ that it was ‘the handsomest military uniform in the world’. He believed that the bright colours complimented the ‘coal black’ skin of the soldiers who wore it and that the uniform would ‘attract attention even in a cosmopolitan city where bright uniforms are plenty’.²⁰ American visitors to the exhibition would likely have shared the same fascination. In the illustration, Corporal Gale stands in between two pillars topped with palm leaves dressed to look like palm trees. They add a more life size representation of Jamaica’s plant life to the image and, of course, to the stand itself. Even more interestingly the two palm trees have trunks made up of photographs of ‘numerous views of Jamaica scenery’ that were framed in black and gold. There are two further palm trees with a photograph of adorned trunks behind them at the

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Fig. 1. Illustration from the Gleaner showing Corporal Gale and Sir Daniel Morris on the stand at the New Orleans Exposition, Daily Gleaner Jan 28, 1891 (c) The Gleaner Co (Media) Ltd.
Photographs were therefore an important feature of how the stand was arranged; in fact, it could be argued that they were at its foundation. Sixty-five ‘views, photographs, and botanical specimens mounted in frames’ appeared alongside the prints and samples for visitors to gaze upon.²¹

The importance of photography, and of Corporal Gale, to Jamaica’s exposition display and the promotion of Jamaica as a place of business and leisure is clear from the *Gleaner* article. However, this importance extended beyond the day that visitors engaged with him on the stand, and beyond the temporary exposition. For those who enjoyed interacting with this particular Jamaican curiosity, there was an opportunity to repeat the experience in the comfort of their own homes. A stereogram of Corporal Gale was available for purchase from the exposition’s photographers, the Centennial Photographic Company. This allowed buyers to view him in three dimensions and scrutinise his form long after the fair ended (Figure 2). In the stereogram, Gale stands next to an aloe Vera plant with the cane that symbolises his status as a Non-Commissioned Officer. He is placed next to this plant to give him a sense of tropicality. The representation of soldiers of the WIR beside tropical plants, often a palm tree, was a frequent feature of portraits of them, including those featured in books about uniforms and on cigarette cards. A path runs horizontally through the photograph and as in the illustration Gale stands just off centre. The viewer’s eye is

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*Figure 2.* ‘Corporal G.S. Gale, 1st West India Reg., Jamaica Section’, Sir Daniel Morris Collection West Indian Views, Royal Commonwealth Society Library, University of Cambridge.
drawn to Gale’s body. He stands upright, but slightly casually one foot in front of the other. Gale’s body has been positioned so that the full details of his uniform can be seen. The most important visual components of the image are perhaps those that denote Corporal Gale’s military status such as the cane, the stripes on his sleeve, and his military medal. These decorations demonstrate that a black soldier was able to rise up to ranks to a certain level and that they were effective soldiers who had been honoured for their actions in battle. As a result, they presented British colonial rule to the American audience as one that generated loyalty and potential amongst its subjects of African descent. Back in Britain, numerous articles in illustrated weeklies used the men of the WIRs to highlight the development of black soldiers. An article in the *Navy and Army Illustrated* from December 1898 said the men ‘conclusively’ showed that ‘the descendants of slaves may make as excellent soldiers as any European power could wish for’.

The fact that the photograph of Gale was produced as a stereogram suggests that it was meant to be used in a certain way. If the other side of the stereograph was present and the print was viewed with a stereoscopic viewer, Corporal Gale would appear in three dimensions, his body more open to inspection and scrutiny to those who viewed it than it would be if just a conventional portrait. The popularity of the stereograph had been launched in Britain via the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition after Prince Albert and Queen Victoria had shown great interest in this method of capturing and viewing photographs. Within three months of their use of the device at Crystal Palace, half a million were sold in London and Paris. The stereoscope’s connection to the world’s fair phenomenon therefore began very soon after its invention. World’s fairs provided visitors with a means of seeing the world and its inhabitants temporarily in grand exhibition halls, whilst stereograms were a means of collecting them and viewing them more permanently in their own homes. In the United States, images were particularly popular during the Civil War and, according to Zeller, served as ‘American home entertainment’ with images of loved ones as well as celebrities and important places being collected. Stereo views of war scenes were extremely popular and hundreds were taken by war photographers and sold from local galleries. Gale’s likeness was therefore circulating within an environment at the New Orleans Exposition where military themed stereographs were in demand and sold well.

Visual representations of the WIRs remained important, and a year after Gale’s trip to New Orleans photographs of the men featured at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886. The exhibition catalogue lists photographs of the WIRs and sites connected to them contributed by a number of exhibitors. The governors of the Institute of Jamaica sent photographs of the cotton tree at Up Park Camp, the barracks of the 2nd WIR, and of the band of the 1st WIR for display. Photographs exhibited by C. Washington Eves included one of the 1st WIR Band taken by The Stereoscopic Company,
London. Just as Gale had been preserved in stereogram form for American visitors to purchase and then peruse at their own convenience in the comfort of their homes, the 1st WIR’s band were also reproduced as a stereogram for British audiences to purchase and view later. Such stereograms were an important method for people in the metropolis to be brought into contact with the conquered peoples of Empire, and turned colonial subjects into ‘objects’ that could be ‘symbolically possessed’. Through purchasing images of these peoples, particularly stereograms that could be viewed as three-dimensional entertainment, attendees of the fairs could begin to take possession of these peoples, just as their governments were doing. The stereogram of the band has not survived in an archive, but likely featured them in formation with their instruments, allowing viewers to place themselves at the scene of one of their performances.

From the ‘New Jamaica’ to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago

When the world’s fair phenomenon reached Jamaica in 1891, the WIR played an important role in the proceedings. The Exhibition opened on Tuesday 27 January in the presence of the Prince of Wales, and the WIR’s band were present at the opening to accompany a choir singing Psalm 100. The WIRs had also been used to welcome the Prince when he arrived in Kingston. According to the Gleaner ‘a brilliant wall of the men’ awaited him on the east of the market wharf, a key part of a scene that was ‘brilliant in the extreme’ due to ‘the bright Zouave costume of the soldiers, the white stripes of the marines’. Krista Thompson writes that the Jamaica Exhibition was part of attempts to promote the ‘New Jamaica’ as ‘a place where the “fruits” of colonialism, both the “benefits” derived from British colonial rule and American enterprise could be observed’. These fruits, of course, included the local population as well as the local produce. Sir Henry Blake, the island’s Governor, believed the exhibition would boost trade and investment, ‘inspire the population’, and help build Jamaica’s reputation as a civilised nation. It is with these goals in mind that photographs of and from the exhibition were produced by Valentine and Sons, the British-based firm commissioned to capture them. The enlistment of a British firm like Valentine and Sons was important to Governor Blake’s goal of promoting Jamaica. It meant the photographs would be sold back in Britain through the Valentines’ vast catalogue which contained over 40,000 views. The 116 photographs taken in Jamaica in 1891 numbered amongst these, available for purchase as 30.5 by 20.5 in. or 21.5 by 15 in., mounted or unmounted. Hiring Valentines also added prestige to the occasion of the Jamaica Exhibition as they had been named Royal photographers in 1868. The snubbing of local firms by the Governor – and there were several with longstanding reputations – also serves as evidence that he had a more international circulation in mind for the photographs.
Of the 116 photographs taken by Valentine and Sons in Jamaica, four featured the WIR. They are listed in the Valentine and Sons catalogue as ‘13907 WIR drill order, 13908 WIR guard, 13909 WIR gun detachment, and 13910 WIR drum band’. Three of these photographs are accessible online through various archives, but the exception is ‘13908 WIR guard’. Their concurrent numbering implies that they were all taken on the same day or within the same session. The photographs fit together by featuring various aspects of the duties carried out by the WIRs. However, despite the WIR participating in the Jamaica World’s Fair, none of the photographs of them were taken within the environment of the exhibition. In fact, the register of photos taken in Jamaica in 1891 by the Valentines lists only two of the exhibition in total, and these were of the outside of the building. Grundy and Montgomery suggest this reveals that Valentines were not hired to document the exhibition, despite the time of their arrival, but to capture promotional photographs of Jamaica more generally that could be used and re-used at a later date. No communications between the Governor and the photographers remain, so this cannot be proved. However, the Valentine photographs were worked into a book and display for a larger international exhibition, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In this context, the promotional intention of the photographs and the importance of the WIR to this promotion is made even clearer. The photographs of the WIR taken in 1891 were used to entice American investors at the fair commemorating the quatercentenary of Columbus’s discovery of the Americas.

The intention of the Jamaican government to attract American investment in particular is emphasised by their choice to locate the Jamaica Court in the manufacturing building rather than the British building, separating themselves from their colonial ruler and demonstrating that they were open to other external influences. The book that was put together for the exhibition by Colonel Ward, World’s Fair, Jamaica at Chicago: An Account Descriptive of the Colony of Jamaica, also rarely mentioned any British connection. By situating themselves in the manufacturing building, they aimed to represent Jamaica as a place of business rather than as a typical colony that exhibited ethnographic artefacts. They also attempted to promote Jamaica as a place of leisure in the hope of attracting more American tourists, and served coffee and banana cake to visitors every afternoon. Photographs of the WIR displayed at Chicago were important to both of these promotional intentions.

The first of these three photographs, ‘WIR drill order’, is held in the collections at the National Library of Jamaica (Figure 3). In this photograph soldiers of the WIRs are arranged in two rows in a square or diamond formation. Their shape is both defensive and assertive. The guns of the standing men point outwards and the guns of the kneeling men point upwards at an angle, ready to fire. To take the edge off this aggressive scene, an officer stands at one of the diamond’s sides as if watching over his men. He provides a supervisory white presence over his armed and dangerous black troops. The posing of the men
shows that the security of the island is taken seriously, and the presence of the officer shows that this essential task is not wholly entrusted to black men. In their analysis of the 116 Valentine photographs, Grundy and Montgomery argue that many of the black subjects appear to have been posed, suggesting their complicity in the vision of Valentines to promote the particular view of Jamaica requested by the Governor. They state that ‘to the potential settler, the posed figures may have evinced the black population’s obedience’. In this photograph, the discipline and obedience of the men is highlighted through their arrangement and how it interacts with the photograph’s other components. The tightness and neatness of their formation is emphasised by the fact that one side of their diamond runs perfectly parallel to one of perfectly straight lines of the garrison buildings.

Through its various components, this photograph like the others in the series, places the WIRs within a landscape that is both ordered and mystically picturesque. The viewer’s eye cannot help but be distracted by the shadows of the mountains in the background and the mists above them. In 1890, Governor Blake had written a paper entitled ‘The Awakening of Jamaica’ with the stated objective of highlighting that in Jamaica ‘amid all the loveliness of which Nature is so lavish, is ample room for immigration of the proper kind’. The paper was produced for the intellectual British monthly literary magazine

**Figure 3.** ‘WIR Drill Order’, Valentine Collection Box 3, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston.
Nineteenth Century and the ‘proper kind’, of course, meant white migrants. This photograph, and the others of the WIRs that share this backdrop, are clear visual attempts that demonstrate Blake’s intention to emphasise the abundant beauty of the natural environment as an incentive to settle in Jamaica alongside other incentives such as security and labour potential. This photograph demonstrates that even military drill exercises took place against beautiful backdrops, and spaces like the parade ground could be enjoyed by tourists as well as the soldiers who were drilled there. This is clear from numerous tourist accounts and guides that reference these areas as a place of interest. Stark’s guide to Jamaica described the parade ground as a ‘favorite resting-place for the people after the heat of the day is over’ and presented it as a place of tropical fecundity and beauty ‘profusely adorned with tropical plants and ornamental shade-trees’.39

In the next photograph in the series ‘WIR Gun Detachment’, the WIRs are presented in a similarly active group pose and against a similar backdrop (Figure 4). In this photograph, seven gunners stand within an encampment in Jamaica. One of the men stands apart from the group and is in dress uniform. His presence ensures that the smarter, cleaner aspect of barrack life is represented along with the more active and hands-on aspects. All the other men are in combat fatigues with rolled up sleeves demonstrating their readiness to work. Of these men, four are actively engaged in the loading of the gun. Two men bend down in front of the gun carriage, one of them can barely be seen and the other waits to take action. Three standing men interact with the gun. One watches his two colleagues intently; the other two men load the weapon with one man cradling a shell in both

Figure 4. ‘WIR Gun Detachment’, The Caribbean Photo Archive, Archive Farms Inc.
hands whilst the other pushes another shell into the gun with a rammer. On the other side of the gun carriage, another soldier watches on. Behind the soldier in dress uniform is a gun carriage carrying the box of artillery shells. Although photographs of the WIRs carrying out artillery drills are common, it is unusual to see the soldiers physically loading the equipment and carrying the shells with which to do so. Of all the soldiers included in this photograph, the one who most commands our attention is the soldier loading the gun with the rammer due to his stance and the shine from his skin. He is strong and capable, and most importantly, trusted to carry out such duties thanks to the British colonial environment in Jamaica that has allowed him to flourish.

Through this photograph, Valentine and Sons seem to want to demonstrate the discipline and capability of the WIR's black soldiers. Thompson writes in her analysis of photographs circulating during efforts to generate a ‘New Jamaica’ that the promotion of the Caribbean islands as disciplined societies was extremely important and that photography played a central role. Those selected for representation, like the men of the WIR in this photograph, were chosen due to their ability to conform to this ideal of obedience. The trust of the white population in the WIR was rooted in the belief that they would use their capabilities in the service of the white population against the wider black population if and when necessary. British adornments and behaviours, as well as the presence of white British officers, helped to reinforce this. Potential settlers may have had fears that the local black population could arm themselves against those who occupied a position above them in the social, economic, and political hierarchy. Photographs like this one were created to show that these fears were unfounded as there were also loyal, efficient and organised local black men armed with machine guns and shells to put down any unrest their compatriots may attempt.

The final photograph of the WIRs taken by Valentine and Sons that remains available today is of the Regiment’s drum band (Figure 5). It is the only one of the three that clearly connects to the Jamaica Exhibition, where the band had accompanied a choir at the opening ceremony and played at evening recitals. In the photograph, 15 members of the WIR’s band stand as if performing or rehearsing, next to a tent outside one of the buildings at Up Park Camp. In contrast to Figures 3 and 4, the men in this photograph are all dressed in the full Zouave uniform with the more decorative braided turbans worn by the band. The men are of various ranks as is detailed by the chevrons on their sleeves. The leader of the band stands at the front with his cane and sash, symbolising his status. A range of the band’s instruments are featured including drums and whistles. Standing to the left of the men is another uniformed figure: he is not in the uniform of the Regiment and could be a police officer or one of the labourers at Up Park Camp. Again, trees and mist-topped hills can be seen in the background. The picture is bright and attractive to view and looks much more professional and polished than other photographs of the band.
that were in circulation on postcards and in books. It is a photograph taken to display and appreciate, not simply to document.

Photographs of the WIR taken at the time of the exhibition for display in Chicago were presented alongside Colonel Ward’s book that marked locations associated with the Regiment as places ‘of interest’. The photograph of the band, mid-rehearsal in Figure 6, would have provided a visual accompaniment for text that referred to weekly evening concerts at Up Park Camp as ‘a favourite resort for lovers of music’.\(^{42}\) The WIR was therefore first introduced in Ward’s book as entertainers to an American audience that may have still been uncomfortable with the idea of men of African descent taking up arms and serving. The book does not mention any of their military achievements, despite making references to the Morant Bay Rebellion that was the ‘scene of much punishment’ in which the WIRs had, of course, played a major role. Instead their role as entertainers is emphasised.\(^{43}\)

Alongside Ward’s book, which did not feature any photographs of the WIR amongst the selection of the Valentines photographs used, the photographs of the WIR on display at the Columbian Exposition aimed to demonstrate the potential of Jamaicans to investors. Inserted into Ward’s text was a short article by Governor Blake entitled ‘Opportunities for Young Men in Jamaica’ that had previously been printed in the North American Review. The article emphasised the beauty of the natural environment, mirroring Blake’s 1890 article aimed at a British audience that stressed ‘natural beauty, whose infinite variety baffles the power of words to fully paint’.\(^{44}\) Blake’s article also went to great lengths to

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Drum_Band_W.I._Regiment.png}
\caption{‘Drum Band W.I. Regiment’, The Caribbean Photo Archive, Archive Farms Inc.}
\end{figure}
stress the capabilities of the local black population. Directly addressing American audiences who may have feared racial unrest, he stated that ‘it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the people are singularly law-abiding, and that there is an entire absence of the reported crimes, that, if true, disgrace the Southern States of America’.\(^45\) In contrast, in Jamaica the black population were ‘fulfilling their duties as citizens quietly and well, and there are no grounds for apprehension that they will retrograde from their present position’.\(^46\) The WIR were perfect illustrators of this point and it is within this context that the Valentine photographs of the WIR carrying out their drill exercises were on display to represent the level of civilisation, discipline, and obedience that the Jamaican population had reached under British rule.

Within the social context of the Columbian Exposition, although perhaps not as important to the Jamaican government at the time, the photographs of the WIR also had an impact on African-American audiences. The 1893 Columbian exposition, like that in New Orleans in 1884–1885, was riddled with racial strife and debates about the representation of African-Americans. African-Americans had sought to be represented at the fair but were left disappointed when no African-Americans were included on the exposition’s first national committee. After complaints, an alternate African-American commissioner was selected. Hale G. Parker was a St Louis school principal, but his late selection was seen as an act of tokenism by many. Second, groups such as the Afro-American League had wanted a ‘Negro department’ or ‘Afro-American annex’ to ensure representation of African-Americans. The Columbian Exposition’s Board of Managers rejected this idea, instead suggesting that submissions for African-American exhibits should be presented to the screening committee of each state. In order to ensure their community was represented as they thought they should be, Ida B. Wells (an anti-lynching campaigner) and Frederick Douglass (the famous former slave and politician) planned to publish a pamphlet to highlight the African-American aspect of America’s story. Along with publishers Irvine Garland Penn and Ferdinand L. Barnett, they produced *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature.*\(^47\) The pamphlet asked pointedly:

> Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in this World’s Exposition? Why are they not taking part in this glorious celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of their country? Are they so dull and stupid as to feel no interest in this great event?\(^48\)

The authors stated that ‘America is just now, as never before, posing before the world as a highly liberal and civilized nation’ but that African-Americans had actually lost ground since the civil war, as enemies were attempting to
stop their progress. Barnett outlined in his chapter that African-Americans had ‘hoped that the Nation would take enough interest in its former slaves to spend a few thousand dollars in making an exhibit which would tell to the world what they as freedmen had done’ but instead they had been left disappointed after not being given the chance to represent themselves. In Douglass’ opinion, to add insult to injury, the Dahomeyans were presented within the midway village ‘as if to shame the Negro’ and ‘to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage’. These fears that connections between African-Americans and the Dahomeyan tribe would be made due to the absence of much other black representation proved justified when cartoons were produced for Harper’s Weekly. One featured an African-American man shaking hands with one of the tribesmen much to the horror of his wife who stated ‘Ezwell Johnson, stop shakin’ Han’s wid dat Heathen! You want de hull Fair ter t’ink you’s found a Poo’ Relation?’ Both of the men were depicted with exaggerated ape-like features that sought to stress their similarity and primitive origins compared to white society. These alleged similarities were also highlighted in textual commentaries of the fair with one correspondent for Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly saying of the Dahomeyans ‘in these wild people we easily detect many characteristics of the American negro’.

It is within this context that African-Americans would have come across photographs of the WIR’s black rank and file at the fair. They had been left disappointed with their lack of representation in American state and national exhibits and were concerned with parallels that would be drawn between them and Africans in the native villages. There were few exhibits that would have inspired them or presented a more positive image. The photographs of the black WIR’s privates on display in the Jamaica Court may have been amongst these few, along with the extremely popular Haitian Pavilion. Photographs of military men of African descent that depicted their capability and necessity could have been a source of pride and admiration for African-Americans who felt that their ‘generous and patriotic’ military contributions, as referenced in The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition, had been too quickly forgotten. The pamphlet also argued that due to the racist recruitment policy that prevented them being hired as guards for the fair, ‘only as a menial is the Colored American to be seen’ in a ‘deliberate and cowardly tribute to the Southern demand “to keep the Negro in his place”’. During the exhibition, the 140-person janitorial staff that carried out light clean ups was exclusively African-American whilst the Columbian Guards were exclusively white. African-Americans were also hired as lavatory attendants. It was therefore only as a janitor or lavatory attendant that most African-American visitors would have interacted with black men during their daytime visits to the exhibition. Photographs of the WIR in their military uniforms offered an alternate representation of men of African descent, showing that they were capable of greater jobs and greater respect elsewhere.
With the exception of the Haitian Pavilion, the use of men and women of African descent in other exhibits harked back to slavery, as in the displays by the states of Mississippi and Louisiana, or emphasised their primitive aspects and origins as in the Dahomeyan village and popular Zulu war re-enactments.\textsuperscript{58} Unfortunately, there are no records of responses to the photographs of the WIR’s black soldiers at the Columbian Exposition but their very presence gave them a power to provide an alternate narrative of blackness that was extremely important. Representations of the WIRs were chosen to attract white American investment in Jamaica at these two American fairs and their representation was therefore geared towards what the Governor believed would achieve this goal. However, in both cases their representation unintentionally may have challenged the racist intentions of the fairs and societies of these white American investors. Photographs of the black WIR soldiers used for promotional purposes did not only disempower them by reducing them to saleable commodities and symbols of investment opportunities, but arguably empowered them and possibly African-American audiences who viewed them by celebrating and highlighting black potential and black military achievement.

In order to assess the possible impact of the Valentine photographs on African-American visitors to the 1893 Columbian Exposition, it would be useful to analyse them through the prospective gazes of African-American Civil Rights campaigners and intellectuals, Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois. Both men were extremely positive about photography and its potential in the fight for equality and to break down existing stereotypes of African-Americans. Douglass gave four separate lectures on photography: lecture on pictures, life pictures, age of pictures, and pictures and progress. He saw photography as a democratic art and believed in its truth and objectivity.\textsuperscript{59} As a result, he was intent on using his own visual image to erase racist stereotypes.\textsuperscript{60} He was extremely concerned about the presence of the Dahomeyans at the Chicago Exposition and believed that they had only been included in order ‘to exhibit their barbarism and increase American contempt for the Negro intellect’.\textsuperscript{61} For Douglass then, photographs of the WIR could have served as a contrast to the Dahomeyans and demonstrated what African-Americans could potentially achieve. They also highlighted that elsewhere pride could be attached to black military service and gratitude given for it. In one of his lectures on photography entitled ‘Age of Pictures’, Douglass stated that the United States Civil War had proved that ‘slavery, hitherto paramount and priceless, may be less valuable than the army – that the Negro can be more useful as a soldier than as a slave’.\textsuperscript{62} The photographs of the WIR on display at Chicago would have reinforced this point.

Du Bois was even more proactive in using photography to counter negative stereotypes at world’s fairs. After the exclusion and marginalisation of African-Americans at the Columbian Exposition, Du Bois was keen to produce what Shawn Michelle Smith has called a ‘counterarchive’, which was presented at the 1900 Paris Exposition. For the exposition Du Bois produced
three albums: types of ‘American Negroes, Georgia, USA’ (volumes I-III) and ‘Negro Life in Georgia, USA’ that aimed to show ‘what the negro really is in the South.’ In contrast to beliefs that had connected African-Americans to the Dahomeyans as part of the same racial ‘type’, Du Bois presented African-Americans as plural and featured blonde and pale, brunette and brown skinned, and dark-skinned men and women in his photograph exhibit. Du Bois therefore saw the exhibition of photographs that contested racial stereotypes and emphasised the diversity of those of African descent as extremely important to the pursuit of social justice. The photographs of the WIR at Chicago could have supported such a view.

**Conclusions**

It is clear that photographs of the WIRs were an important feature of attempts to visually promote the Caribbean to white tourists and investors both in the United States and back in Britain. The Regiments’ black soldiers were commodified and used to represent what their compatriots were capable of as well as demonstrating that the region was a secure place to invest. However, their impact on black audiences must also be considered, particularly in the tense, racialised environment of the United States. By proving the potential of the black West Indian population to white investors, they also contradicted white American stereotypes about the place of African-Americans. In New Orleans, a Confederate city that had not allowed African-Americans to enlist, audiences interacted with a soldier of African descent used to demonstrate the potential of his race. In Chicago, African-Americans were not allowed to present their progress to visitors but the progress of African Caribbeans was displayed to attract and impress white audiences.

The photographs of the WIRs serve more than one simple ideological purpose, complicating the history of the fairs they attended, as well as the history of the Regiments themselves and of imperialism more generally. Less than 100 years after the Regiments’ formation, and less than 60 years after emancipation in the British empire, the men were being used as examples of the possible progress of those of African descent to garner support for Britain’s imperial project. That these men could have progressed so quickly from slave to celebrated soldier may have raised questions about the necessity of colonialism in the long-term, whilst at the same time supporting it in the short-term. How much longer would such peoples require British stewardship if the best of them were already so far advanced in comparison to other African descended peoples who had only recently been colonised? These photographs of the Regiment also highlight the importance of the cooperation of the colonised in maintaining and promoting colonialism. Not only did the men of the WIRs fight to protect the empire in the Caribbean and expand the empire into West Africa, but they also acted as ambassadors for empire in Britain and the United States. They
were therefore both physically fighting for the imperial cause and justifying the ideology that was driving the colonial wars that they took part in.

Photographs of the men of the WIRs also reveal that the history of world’s fairs is more complex than many have acknowledged. Although the fairs were clear examples of imperial propaganda and served as a means for predominantly white British and American audiences to develop upon their feelings of racial superiority, they also helped to bring together non-white peoples and facilitated their interactions. African-Americans may indeed have walked past native villages fearful of the connections that would be made between them and the village’s inhabitants, but they also may have interacted with Corporal Gale in New Orleans and noted that those of African descent were also being presented as a people who were capable of representing their nations overseas in more positive ways. Jamaica aimed to position itself as a place of industry and progress, and Gale was chosen to be a part of that attempt, much as those in the native villages were chosen to demonstrate the opposite. The photographs of the WIR at Chicago were displayed with a similar intention and would have elicited similar responses from African-Americans who came across them. The images therefore highlight the importance of the audience when discussing the ideas and outcomes behind world’s fairs, and there is much more work to be done to decipher the responses of the non-white majority to this phenomenon.

Finally, the presence of the WIRs in visual and physical form at these large cultural events adds a richness to their own history and expands it beyond the theatres of war in the Caribbean and West Africa. The men travelled to Britain to represent their home nations and perform at numerous exhibitions and celebrations. They also travelled to the segregated American South, and were represented in other American cities, spreading their influence across the Atlantic world. It could be argued that their reach as a cultural force far exceeded their reach as a military one. Their representation at world’s fairs allowed their likeness to be viewed by all of those who visited and exhibited, meaning that they reached a global audience spanning the breadth of the British Empire and the American continent, and possibly captured the imaginations of peoples from Australia to Alaska.

Notes

1. For references related to the WIRs before 1888, when two or more regiments were in existence, WIRs and WIRs’ will be used. For references to the WIRs post-1888, when only one regiment with two battalions existed, WIR and WIR’s will be used.
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50. Ibid., 65, 79; Reed, ‘*All the World is Here*, 75.

51. Wells et al., *The Reason Why the Colored American*, 9.

52. Cooks, ‘*Fixing Race*, 454.

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