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# The Tower of London Becoming a Tourist Attraction in the 19th Century

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THE TOWER OF LONDON BECOMING A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN THE 19<sup>th</sup>  
CENTURY

by

Catherine McDonald

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors  
(History & Secondary Education)

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## ABSTRACT

Underfunded and decaying, the Tower of London's outlook at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was bleak. Then used as a military garrison, its former glory as a palace and prison was mostly forgotten. The Tower of London was transformed into a tourist attraction in the Victorian Age because of the rise of the middle class and the changing values that they had. The middle class valued education and wanted to use their leisure time to further their knowledge. History in particular interested them. Popular culture reflected this change in attitude about a subject previously not looked to for entertainment. The Tower of London was highlighted by authors and illustrators through historical stories of former prisoners. Victorians became increasingly interested in their national history. The Tower's popularity grew, and new inquiries were made by tourists. This led to an inquiry from Parliament and the formation of a Committee charged with finding ways that the Tower could be improved. The end result was increased accessibility for Victorians. The Tower was transformed into an area that was geared towards visitors learning about the building and country's history.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, the Tower of London is an icon of British history. Standing as a symbol of the strength of the British monarchy, it functions almost exclusively as a tourist attraction. Visitors can access information about the history of the Tower as well as learn about England. The Tower's original intent was not to act as a pilgrimage site for history fanatics or tourists of any kind. Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, it played various roles as a palace, prison, and arms storehouse. Prior to then, small numbers of visitors came to the Tower to view the Crown Jewels and menagerie in order to see something spectacular and out of the ordinary. In the early Victorian period, however, the interests of the British people changed. As the middle class grew in number and economic power, it began to view leisure in a new way. The middle class had more free time and it desired to be entertained. The middle class set the cultural norms and attitudes for 19<sup>th</sup> century Great Britain and the working classes followed its lead. The Tower became an important focal point among the growing number of London attractions. Victorians were interested in the Tower's history of torture, execution, and imprisonment. Victorians began to view the Tower as a site of historical importance. This perception transformed the Tower well beyond its use as a military garrison.

To accommodate the changing needs of the people, the state and crown invested time and money into rebuilding and re-branding the Tower. Parliamentary and private committees assessed popular culture and transformed the Tower to meet their findings. New guidebooks, historical novels set in the Tower, and theater productions all played on this motif. The people of London became increasingly invested in protecting what they had begun to see as a site of their national history.

The transformation of the Tower can be examined in two broad ways. One way is to look how middle-class attitudes changed towards it. Increased value was placed on the historical context of the Tower. Popular culture changed to reflect interest in the historical interest in Tower of London. More emphasis was placed on the dramatic retelling of historical events that occurred at the Tower, particularly during in the Tudor era. Many books, periodicals, and even theater productions began to focus on its history. Dramatizing historical events made the Tower more appealing and interesting to middle class Victorians. Increased publications brought more attention to the attraction than it received in the previous century. Popular culture took hold of the subject and portrayed the Tower in a new historicized manner. Stories of its prisoners were popular, such as those portrayed in William Harrison Ainsworth's 1840 novel, *The Tower of London*. Former Kings and Queens as well as traitors to the crown were other frequent subjects in popular culture. This framed the way Victorians thought about the Tower. They began to see it as an object of historical fascination and believed it was important to experience it first-hand. The Tower was no longer the cold and secluded military garrison that it was in the early 19th century.

Another way to explain the transformation of the Tower of London is to examine its physical structure. The Tower of London changed dramatically in the Victorian period as some parts were torn down and new sections were opened up to the public. Physical changes were the manifestation of new cultural attitudes surrounding the history of the Tower of London and the increased interest that Victorians had in visiting the structure. Facilitated by a variety of people, restoration efforts were driven in part by the Committee on National Monuments, who heavily lobbied Parliament to make the Tower

more suitable for tourism. Other influences in the physical transformation were figures like architect Anthony Salvin, who oversaw some of the largest refurbishments in the Tower's buildings. Cultural perception surrounding the Tower of London increasingly valued the castle as important to the history of England, pushing for increased access to the site for tourists. This project will work to understand why the Tower became so popular as a site of historical pilgrimage and how it can be viewed as an important symbol of the rise of the middle class in Victorian Britain.

The Victorian Era witnessed a period of change in British attitudes toward history and tourism that contributed to the Tower of London's transformation into a tourist attraction. Tourism increased significantly during this period and scholars have examined the reasons why the Tower became an important site for Victorian tourists. Although there are many causes for this, the Tower of London became a popular attraction due to its historical associations.

To understand why the Tower of London became a tourist attraction it is important to look at changing Victorian values. New bills like the Reform Act of 1832 brought the power of electing officials to more subjects providing inclusion of more people's opinions.<sup>1</sup> More government power in the hands of more people prompted changes throughout Britain. As Martin Hewitt describes in his work, "Why the Notion of Victorian Britain Does Make Sense," government reform began to reflect the needs of more than the upper class.<sup>2</sup> Increased government participation meant that the voices of others were finally being heard. Most of this participation came from the emerging

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Hewitt, "Why the Notion of Victorian Britain Does Make Sense," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 3 (2006): 399.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.



middle who gained more power and privileges in the Victorian Age.<sup>3</sup> Opinions were disseminated throughout the country through the increased speed of communication, spread by newly completed railroad lines. Advancements in communication technologies increased the amount of information that was spread.<sup>4</sup> New technologies led to works being more affordable and allowed more people to consume the material. Besides sharing information about political happenings, journals and periodicals emphasized scholarly information; they presented it in both traditional scholarly writing as well as in a more entertaining and accessible manner. The subject of material was very intentional. Hewitt describes middle class Victorians as being “preoccupied with the threat of ignorance.”<sup>5</sup> Knowledge was the alternative to a society of degenerates. In order to keep the middle class morally sound, educational resources became more essential and were “seeped into almost every corner of culture.”<sup>6</sup> All of these themes of Victorian culture are important to consider when understanding the rise of the Tower of London as a tourist attraction.

The most prominent theme in recent scholarly work about the transformation of the Tower of London is the interest that the landmark held as a form of entertainment. Stories of famous prisoners, torture, and execution found an eager audience. Peter Hammond highlights the social and political changes that helped facilitate the transformation of the Tower. Hammond highlights the way that public perception about the Tower changed. He argues that an the “rehistorization” of the Tower that occurred at the end of the 18th century influenced the appearance of history in popular culture in the next century. Gradually Victorians started to associate the Tower with their national

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 399.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 404.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 424.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 424.

history because of the relationship between location and history. His main argument is that the importance of popular culture in art and literature was the driving force of people's interest in the Tower's history. Hammond discusses the Victorian interest in "black humour".<sup>7</sup> He defines this as viewing execution and torture as a form of entertainment, enjoying learning about them instead of being turned off by the morbid topic. As a site of prison and execution, the Tower was able to provide a space for entertainment while informing Victorians of the past. Most importantly Hammond's work is how popular culture framed what people knew about the Tower of London. This project will build on the work that Peter Hammond has done on the Tower of London becoming a visitor attraction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Historian Billie Melman builds on the idea of Victorian interest in "black humor" and delves deep into the dark attraction that the Tower had on Victorians in her article, "Horror and Pleasure: Visual Histories, Sensationalism, and Morality in Britain in the Long Nineteenth Century."<sup>8</sup> She argues that Victorians' interest in history stems from the entertainment they found in it. Memorizing long lists of kings and queens with dates and accomplishments did not necessarily appeal to Victorians, but learning of the horrific and shocking things that happened to them did. The way the information was presented was a primary reason Victorians were interested in the Tower of London's history. She also highlights the use of popular culture that helped to drive people's interests in the Tower. Horrors entertained Victorians and the presentation of a historical context gave the subject a newfound purpose. The location of the material was important. Using a local

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Hammond, "Epitome of England's history: The transformation of the Tower of London as visitor attraction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century," *Royal Armouries Yearbook*, Vol 4. 170.

<sup>8</sup> Billie Melman, "Horror and Pleasure: Visual Histories, Sensationalism and Modernity in Britain in the Long Nineteenth Century," *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 1 (2011): 26-46.

attraction instilled a sense of closeness that encouraged Victorians to relate to the events more, because it gave them a sense of realness in a nearby site, they were able to see the Tower in print and in real life. Authors were able to place stories in real destinations around England, intriguing audiences more by giving them a physical place to correlate with the historical event.<sup>9</sup>

A phenomenon discussed by John Urry and Jonas Larsen in their work, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, is how people interact with tourism via visual representation.<sup>10</sup> Relatable to a close physical location, visual representation of historical situations was another way the importance of history was reinforced for Victorians. This has to do with images of the Tower and Victorians who viewed the Tower firsthand. The authors discuss how a place becomes a tourist attraction based on notions “inscribed in circles of anticipation, performance and remembrance.”<sup>11</sup> These themes were presented to Victorians through popular culture. Entertainment provided anticipation and performance, and historical information was a backdrop for remembrance. Victorians’ interaction with the Tower of London fits this phenomenon. The Tower acted as a visual representation of historical knowledge. In order for this knowledge about the Tower to move beyond words and visuals presented in popular culture, it needed to be accessible to tourists. Most authors acknowledge the physical transformation that accompanied the change in cultural attitudes. Increasingly, Victorians became interested in visiting parts of the Tower that were previously not open to them.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>10</sup> John Urry & Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 118.

This project will build on the work that these historians have done to address the change in cultural attitudes surrounding British history that helped push the transformation of the Tower of London into a tourist attraction. An examination of the way that physical transformations were influenced, and the types of new cultural phenomenon will help explain how the Tower of London became a site of national history where people visited to engage on a more personal level. The Tower of London provided opportunity for increased learning and entertainment about some of the bloodiest moments of the Tower by putting them into historical perspective. The associations between history, Victorian culture, and the physical construction of the tourist attraction is what makes this project unique.

This project will examine several means of measuring numbers of visitors to track the transformation of the Tower into a tourist attraction. Firstly, it is important to track the number of visitors that the Tower had throughout the Victorian era. Tower employees kept very detailed records of how many visitors were granted admission and admission costs.<sup>12</sup> Also important to consider are the types and number of refurbishments which were introduced to increase the number of visits. Some of these changes include the transformation of the Armour Hall exhibit, opening buildings previously held as office space, as well as the expansion tourist amenities like a ticket booth and more opportunities for guided tours. Examining different types of popular culture resources in Victorian England will also assist in understanding the information presented to potential visitors.

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<sup>12</sup> Return of Number of Visitors to Hampton Court and Kew Gardens, 1849; Return of Number of Visitors to Tower of London, February 1845-50; Return of Monies taken at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's.

Secondary sources must be considered when understanding the impact that social class, Victorian culture, and the ideas of a national history had on visitors to the Tower of London. Understanding this material utilizing primary sources, like guidebooks and documents discussing different types of physical restoration that happened at the Tower of London, will build a more complete vision of how and why the transformation occurred. In addition, other scholarly works will be used to reinforce these arguments and their interaction with primary sources.

In terms of primary sources, this paper will use a combination of Parliamentary presentations, visitor numbers recorded by the Towers' visitor office, and a selection of popular culture from the mid-1800s.<sup>13</sup> To help understand Victorian knowledge about the Tower this paper will look works such as William Harrison Ainsworth's 1840 novel, *The Tower of London*, and periodicals that highlighted the Tower in an historical context. These are useful in understanding where Victorians received their information about the Tower and how they were encouraged to think about it.<sup>14</sup> To support these specific works, other appearances of the Tower of London in places such as newspapers, periodicals, and art will be referenced.

This project will begin by discussing the history of the Tower of London, from its construction in 1078 to its reimagining in the Victorian period. The uses of the Tower are important to in order to give insight into how Victorians consumed their past. A close examination of the role of the Tower before Victorian influence started sets the stage for

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<sup>13</sup> Select Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, Session 1. 1841.

<sup>14</sup> John Murray Firm, *Murray's handbook for modern London. Modern London, or London as it is.* London: Pub, 1851.

how the Tower was able to become a tourist attraction. Secondly, special attention will be given to the state of the Tower around the year 1830. The experience of visitors will be discussed to understand what the Tower meant to tourists before the period of Victorian transformation. In addition, a short discussion of different buildings that were open to the public for viewing will provide a base for discussion later in the paper for what Victorians wanted to see different. In the third section, the cultural attitudes of Victorians will be evaluated. By understanding the types of entertainment that Victorians wanted, the material they were consuming can be better understood concerning why it influenced a spark for change in tourism. Next, information from groups that demanded change will be presented. Comparisons to other locations of interest in Victorian popular culture and the voices that spoke for the middle class will be made. To wrap up the third section, primary documents related to visitor numbers, changes to tourist guides, as well as physical refurbishments to the Tower of London will be examined to show changing demands made by middle class Victorians. Finally, not only is the actual transformation of the Tower important to this project but so is understanding why the transformation impacted Victorians understanding of history and what the history of the Tower of London meant to them as members of the national history of England.

## BACKGROUND

Construction of the Tower of London started in 1078 by order of William the Conqueror, the first Norman King of England who ruled from 1066 to 1087. He commissioned Gundulf the Bishop of Rochester to build it along with many other fortifications throughout England, in order to keep power over the newly conquered land.<sup>15</sup> The Tower of London was unique because of its central location in the most densely populated area in England and its access to the Thames River. This strategic situation allowed the Tower to control and intimidate the newly conquered people of London should there be outbursts of opposition.<sup>16</sup> The historical connection to William the Conqueror and the context in which the Tower was commissioned and constructed is critical to understanding how 19<sup>th</sup> century British thought about the Tower. Because of these origins, the Victorians associated the Tower of London with a powerful national history.

Over the years, the Tower became more than a fortress. From the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was primarily used as a palace by the royal family. Henry III was the first monarch to make improvements to the Tower in order to make it more lavish to be suitable to house a king. In order to keep up with the “rapidly rising European standard for monarchical extravagance,” refurbishment of the Tower commenced.<sup>17</sup> By the 1220s, Henry III’s efforts intensified, and there was almost

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<sup>15</sup> Derek Wilson, *The Tower* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Stacey, *Politics Policy & Finance Under Henry III 1216-1245* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 242.

constant work being done.<sup>18</sup> The work included basic upkeep, modernization, and decoration. One of the most prominent architectural changes made under Henry III was the addition of a new outer wall.<sup>19</sup> This wall further encapsulated and secluded the Tower, following the traditional monarchial practice of showing strength by physically separating the king from the common people. The most prominent decorative change was Henry III's choice to lime wash all of the walls. This was an attempt to give the grounds a sense of cohesion and conformity, as many of the buildings were designed and constructed in different centuries and therefore were inconsistent in appearance.

From Henry III (r. 1216-1272) to Henry VII (r. 1485 - 1509), the Tower served as the home of the English monarchy.<sup>20</sup> Continued refurbishments were necessary for the Tower to remain a comfortable royal home. The restoration of the decaying St. Peter and Vincula chapel during King Edward's reign is one example.<sup>21</sup> These constant renovations over the course of three centuries are why the Tower remained so well preserved into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite these changes, the aging palace gradually became less suitable for the royal family. England's kings wanted a higher standard of living than the Tower could provide.<sup>22</sup> Henry VII was the last king to use the Tower as his primary home. The large rooms and open spaces that the Tower possessed were moving out of fashion as 16<sup>th</sup> century elites preferred smaller and more intimate spaces for gathering.<sup>23</sup>

The Tower soon took on a new role. After Henry VII moved to Richmond Palace it became that of a prison. Its use as a prison peaked during the Tudor era, when famous

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson, *Tower*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, ed., *Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 21-2.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson, *Tower*, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 81.



prisoners such as Guy Fawkes, Anne Boleyn, and Lady Jane Grey were held there. Boleyn and Grey were both executed on the grounds. Some prisoners of the Tudor era left their mark on the Tower both metaphorically and physically. To pass their time while awaiting release or execution, they carved inscriptions such as names, dates, or small sketches into the walls of their cells. The Tower became an ominous sight on the London skyline. Increased executions at both the Tower and at the scaffold on nearby Tower Hill cast a frightening shadow on the Tower and reinforced the uninterrupted theme of Royal power over the people. The Tudor era of imprisonment and torture later interested Victorians very much. The engravings became one of the most interesting attractions for Victorians. Preservation efforts in the Victorian era protected the carvings and ensured their survival to the modern day.<sup>24</sup>

More modern prisons opened in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and as time went on the Tower of London became less practical as a prison. Still, periodically, it continued to maintain this role during times of imminent threat to the people of London.<sup>25</sup> The Tower was still the largest fortress in London and through the 18<sup>th</sup> century it continued to be primarily viewed as a military stronghold. During times of rebellion, the Tower was well stocked with weapons to arm the military and was well guarded to keep these weapons out of the public's hands.<sup>26</sup> At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Napoleonic War propelled the Tower to the peak of its use as a military garrison. With a threat of invasion looming, the Tower of London was further prepared to protect the country. This included taking steps to increase efforts by the Ordinance Office, the head of military coordination,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 216.

employees there “carried out research and experiments into improved designs, and issued military and naval ordnance,” in addition the Inner Wall became a handgun factory for the remainder of the war.<sup>27</sup>

The Tower also continued to serve non-military features and non-military functions. Some of the features of the Tower of London, included the Royal Mint, menagerie, and Crown Jewels. These sites could be visited well before the Tower became a tourist attraction. These buildings along with the Armoury, which held a collection of weaponry and armor collected by and gifted to the British empire, were regularly open to the public. In 1830, 12,469 people visited the Armouries by paying 2s (£6.78 in today’s money)<sup>28</sup> or gained free admission through a Tower employee.<sup>29</sup> Visitors could visit the Royal Menagerie until 1835 to view lions, tigers, bears, and many other exotic animals. In 1835, the menagerie was moved out of the Tower to the newly established zoo in Regent’s Park.<sup>30</sup> Early visitors were also interested in viewing the Crown Jewels, which have been held at the Tower since the 1660s<sup>31</sup>. The Jewels could be viewed for an additional small admittance fee. Viewing parties were escorted by a Yeoman Warder. Yeoman Warders, or Beefeaters, were live-in guards whose roles transformed from keeping people out and prisoners in, to becoming tour guides around the time the Tower became a prominent tourist attraction.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>28</sup> “Currency Converter,” National Archives, accessed September 15, 2018, <https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter>.

<sup>29</sup> Return of Number of Visitors to Armouries at Tower of London 1834-1838, House of Commons Paper, Vol 3. Paper 209, 1839, 478.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, *Tower*, 225.

<sup>31</sup> “The Crown Jewels,” Historic Royal Palaces, accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/the-crown-jewels/#gs.WGvKLAY>.

The Tower's buildings in 1830 had not changed much since the last additions made by Henry III. Several buildings that were previously used as housing for royalty or as places where prisoners were held had become places used as office space, storage, and housing for the Yeoman Warders. In 1830, the primary reason for visiting the Tower of London was not to learn about its history. Early visitors were less focused on antiquities and more interested in seeing the extra attractions within the Tower walls such as exotic animals and beautiful jewels which satisfied their pursuit of entertainment. Engagement with the Tower was centered around seeing specific exhibits within it. Visitors did not visit the Tower to observe the grounds or buildings in an historical way. The connections between the Tower and the history of Britain were not established in pre-Victorian times. Interest in history or antiquarianism was not a popular hobby for most people.

In the years leading up to 1830, the Tower faced a decline in resources and its overall purpose was becoming less clear.<sup>32</sup> Fewer wartime panics reduced the need for it to retain large artillery and, as more secure prison facilities were built outside of London, the need for the Tower to act as a prison was diminished as well. Offices of Yeoman Warders and other officials filled the buildings that were once reserved for the royal family. The transformation of the Tower to a tourist attraction gave the facility a purpose to stay open.

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<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *Tower*, 224.

## THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AND VICTORIAN CULTURE

The Victorian age was a time of great economic and cultural growth in Great Britain. Although, the period began with the crowning of Queen Victoria in 1837, many of the developments that are associated with this era had already started by the beginning of the 1830s. Some of the most important transitions during this period stem from the Industrial Revolution which provided opportunities for people to leave their homes and farms in the countryside to growing cities like London, Birmingham, and Manchester. Some people worked the factories and others took office jobs allowed the increasingly complex economy of Britain to operate.

The end of the Industrial Revolution and the beginning of the Victorian era overlap. The Industrial Revolution brought economic and cultural power to the middle class of Britain. Situated between the working poor doing physical labor in the factory and the more landed aristocracy, the middle class was employed in the growing urban manufacturing economy, doing clerical work and financing. The middle class was filled, as a rule were more educated than the working class. Their jobs were characterized by work that “used their brains not their hands.”<sup>33</sup> Education was the distinction between the lower and middle classes. Middle class jobs were not physical in nature; they were not the ones working machinery in the factory. They oversaw the operations of the factory. As the number and size of factories grew, so did the need for a larger support staff. Clerks recorded everything that was happening within the factory. In addition to clerk jobs, middle class men also served as shopkeepers, bankers, and military officers; all jobs

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<sup>33</sup> Liza Picard, *Victorian London: The tale of a city 1840-1870* (New York: St Martin’s Griffin, 2007), 95.

that required more critical thinking.<sup>34</sup> Doing unskilled factory work was seen as work for someone uneducated, even if it paid better than some middle-class jobs. Working with numbers and records was more intellectual work and had more social prestige associated with it. Men dominated the workforce among the middle class. Some women worked as teachers in private schools or as companions to upper-class women, but generally it was seen as inappropriate for a middle-class woman to work outside the home.<sup>35</sup> Women controlled the domestic sphere, taking care of children, the household, and doing leisure activities such as needlework or reading.<sup>36</sup> The new middle-class life generated more income and created increased time for leisure. In addition to taking Sundays off, most middle-class establishments closed early on Friday, and the Bank Holiday Act of 1871 granted four Monday's free from work.<sup>37</sup>

One change that came from the middle class' rise in economic power was the expansion of suffrage. The middle class earned respectable incomes and they were taxed by the government. As it grew in economic power, many in it felt that their voice was not being heard in Parliament, where upper-class opinions mattered most. One solution to this problem was the Reform Act of 1832. This bill was supported by the Whig Party, who pushed for moral reform throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They felt that because the middle class had achieved an important economic and social status in England, they should receive increased representation in Parliament.<sup>38</sup> The Reform Act of 1832

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<sup>34</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westwood: Greenwood Press, 1996), 21.

<sup>35</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A social history of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988), 198.

<sup>36</sup> Mitchell, *Daily Life*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>38</sup> J.P. Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 78.

restructured representative districts in England and Wales to reflect the changes in social and economic power which sprang from the Industrial Revolution. The number of MPs that represented each district also changed to more accurately represent the population. The redistribution of seats reflected the changes in demographics; new large cities such as Manchester and Birmingham were more accurately represented while smaller areas that traditionally had more inherited wealth received less representation. Representation became more about general population and less about where the upper class lived. Another important part of the Reform Act was the attempt to move away from nominating MPs based on bribes and encouraging the legitimate election of representatives that held the interest of people who lived in the borough.<sup>39</sup> Increased representation of the population was important to protect economic interests that allowed the middle class to thrive. The middle class were the main benefactors in the Reform Act of 1832. The Act provided increased access to a political voice for “the property, the wealth, the intelligence, and the industry of the country.”<sup>40</sup>

By the beginning of the Victorian age, the large-scale migrations to cities was slowing. The steadily growing economy encouraged people to expand culturally and adapt to city life with their increased income. The middle class was the epitome of this newfound post-Industrial revolution culture. The members of this new culture were financially secure, but still needed to work to stay in in the middle class. The “new money” phenomenon created space for a new culture in Victorian Britain. Cultural separation from the lower classes was important in characterizing middle class culture.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 82-3

<sup>40</sup> House of Commons Debate, September 21, 1831. vol 7, cc378-464.

Middle class culture strongly valued education.<sup>41</sup> As noted already, one cultural trait that set the middle class apart from the lower class was that they were educated enough to work beyond the factory floor. In order to keep their family educated, adults felt responsible for educating their children in good schools, private if possible, so that their children could get respectable jobs as adults and remain in the middle class. Adults also felt as though they needed to continue their own education informally by participating in educational leisure activities like reading books and newspapers, in the evening after a meal. The middle class felt strong connections to their family and valued spending time with their family.<sup>42</sup> They had the unique opportunity to spend a lot of time with their family, especially their children, which was not the case among the lower and upper classes. Both parents were not required to be out of the house, children did not work, and the family took care of their own children instead of hiring a nanny to look after the young children.<sup>43</sup> The Victorian middle class felt strongly about spending its leisure time constructively, building on their value of education.<sup>44</sup> Using leisure time to further their education, whether that was learning about history or visiting local museums, displayed a sense of obligation to remaining middle class. Victorians felt strongly that their social class standing was dependent on remaining educated and aware of current events. The middle class viewed maintaining proper social etiquette as well. Because of this there were many different guides which offered suggestions on how the middle class should behave in order to separate themselves culturally from the working class.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mitchell, *Daily Life*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 149.

More free time allowed for opportunities to engage in new forms of entertainment. There were several standards that forms of entertainment needed to meet in order to be considered acceptable to the Victorian middle class. Leisure activities needed to fit the ideals of family life and be something that the entire family could participate in, while also being something that was educational. Activities like these were considered constructive uses of leisure time. Some of the most popular leisure activities for the middle class were watching and playing sports, such as football and tennis, playing and listening to music, and reading novels.<sup>46</sup> The Industrial Revolution brought the mass production of books to Britain, allowing access for more people to read and own books. The Victorian era was a movement towards more refined activities, especially for the middle class, who placed emphasis on the differences between them and the working class.

Stemming from the desire to find entertainment in educational material, the Victorians took a great interest in history. Reading about history fit into the constructive use of leisure time. Victorians were very interested in the Middle Ages because they understood the period as a time of transition from the Dark Ages to a more enlightened one. Victorians were interested in their “quest for identity,” associating other periods with their own to better understand themselves.<sup>47</sup> By learning about the history of the Middle Ages, Victorians felt connected to a time that was similar to theirs and felt more secure in the idea that though the society was changing very quickly, their experience wasn’t new. The Middle Ages were also a time that experienced changes in society. The Victorian

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 209-38.

<sup>47</sup> Charles Dellheim, “Interpreting Victorian Medievalism,” in *History and Community: Essays in Victorian medievalism*. ed., Florence S. Boos (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1992), 54.



middle class could look to the experiences to the Middle Ages and feel at ease that they would get through their period of change as well.<sup>48</sup>

The study of the Middle Ages was a form of entertainment for the Victorian middle class. The primary way that Victorians learned about history was to read novels set in that time. Authors highlighted topics of romance and violence to interest their readers.<sup>49</sup> Historical fiction was a very popular genre during the Victorian age. It allowed for the inclusion of romance and violence while still fitting into the ideals of learning something from a book. Basing novels loosely on historical events made the genre popular in Victorian Britain. This is the period when now-famous authors such as Charles Dickens began to publish works of historical fiction.<sup>50</sup>

Victorians were interested in learning about the historical sites of the departed in the historical novels they read. Lucky for them, Britain was filled with many sites of historical importance. London, in particular, held sites such as the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey and London Bridge. As interest grew in history, the Victorians sought new opportunities to visit and interact with historical sites. The Tower of London was of special interest to them. It possessed the essence of what they desired in a tourist attraction. The Tower was full of opportunities to learn about history.

The rise of the middle class was a crucial factor in the transformation of the Tower of London. Their rise in economic power lead them to make distinctions between themselves and the working class. One way they did this was by emulating a more

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 53-4.

<sup>49</sup> Florence S. Boosm, *History and Community: Essays in Victorian medievalism* (New York: Garland Publishing Company 1992), 265-274.

<sup>50</sup> David Amigoni, "Novel Sensations in Early and Mid-Victorian Fiction: From 'Boz' to Middlemarch," in *Victorian Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 41.

refined lifestyle. Having occupations that required more education influenced the way that the middle class thought about themselves. Morality and family were also very important. Accumulated wealth and more free time gave the middle-class opportunities for more leisure. The literary market benefitted from this change. Historical writing especially interested the middle class. It fit the criteria for acceptable forms of leisure time and gave Victorians a space to think about their country's history.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TOWER OF LONDON

The Tower of London became a symbol of British history to Victorians because of the way it was represented in popular culture. Literature about the Tower during the Victorian era moved away from previous writing that lacked entertainment value for most readers. Previous writings were not written for entertainment, but to inform readers about the historical timeline of the Tower; they were geared towards antiquaries. The language used in these works was hard to read for anyone not trained in the discipline. Popular culture presented the Tower of London through short articles about the history, romantic historical fiction, and accounts of Victorian visitors. Images were also popular in providing information about the Tower and influenced thinking about what the Tower looked like in the past and in the present. History as a leisure activity flourished as a literary genre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Throughout the summer of 1863, the weekly issues of Fun, a periodical marketed toward the middle class, featured the history of the Tower of London. The author, an unnamed member of the Archeological Society, wrote about the history of the Tower in a light-hearted manner, as if he were recounting a personal experience from memory. For example, in the June 27<sup>th</sup> issue, the author discussed some of the executions which occurred during Henry VIII's reign. He wrote of Thomas More, one of Henry's religious councilors who disapproved of Henry's separation from the Catholic Church, that "so deeply rooted was with him the habit of joking, even that on the scaffold he cut jokes with the executioner, who in return cut off his head."<sup>51</sup> This informal presentation of

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<sup>51</sup> Member of the Archeological Society, "Wanderings in London," *Fun* 4 (Jun 27, 1863), 148.

information appeared throughout the different entries about the Tower's history. The middle class engaged with works like this because they were learning while reading something that was not difficult to understand. It allowed them to access the same information that older antiquarian literature featured, but in an easy-to-read form.

Historical fiction was one popular way in which history to present history to the Victorian middle class. One writer, William Harrison Ainsworth, took advantage of the interest that readers had in learning about places of historical importance and wrote novels highlighting different sites in England. In his work, *The Tower of London*, first published in 1840 in the periodical *Bentley's Miscellany* and later as a single bound book, Ainsworth set his story around the Tower of London in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The romantic novel is based on the story of Lady Jane Grey (d. 1554) and her time at the Tower of London where she ruled as the Queen of England for nine days. She was then dethroned and executed at the Tower. Grounded in historical facts that Ainsworth gathered from reputable antiquaries of the time, the novel also included a fictional romantic aspect that interested Victorians. He combined history and entertainment into one story to make for a successful product. Ainsworth gave his characters complex personalities and backstories that displayed the humility of those in the Middle Ages which encouraged connections between the Middle Ages and Victorian times. Beyond using the Tower as the setting for his novel, Ainsworth intrigued readers to visit the Tower in another way. His preface made a direct request for the refurbishment of the Tower, calling for the opening up of new parts to visitors. This plea was reinforced throughout the novel when he mentioned parts of the White or Beauchamp Tower and specific historical events that happened there in relation to what was happening in those buildings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ainsworth

also highlighted specific areas of the Tower by describing where they could be found on the grounds. As a result, his book could also serve as a guidebook for potential visitors.

Visual representation of the Tower was as important as written words to pique middle class interest in the structure. New technologies in printing, such as lithography, mezzotint, and aquatint, improved standards and made it more cost and time effective to reproduce drawings very quickly, allowing an increased number of people to view the illustrations.<sup>52</sup> Wood-engraving also returned into fashion and allowed for work to be reproduced more cheaply than copper-engraving techniques.<sup>53</sup> Illustrations displayed historical topics in an accessible manner which were appealing to Victorians. These images did not take a long time to consume intellectually and were easy for younger Victorians to understand and appreciate the historical information which they delivered. Periodicals used images to attract buyers and increase interest in the written content.

Like many Victorian novels, *The Tower of London* was accompanied by illustrations. The artist, George Cruickshank, got his start in art as a satirical cartoonist in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. His work became popular and was noticed by famous authors such as Ainsworth and Charles Dickens. Cruickshank moved away from working on cartoons and became well-known as a detail-oriented illustrator. In 1840, he began working with Ainsworth to give his scenes visual representation. The pair worked together to accurately create the drawings and descriptions in the novel, to match the actual layout of the Tower. They made monthly trips to the Tower before publishing a new chapter in order for the book to provide Victorians with the closest possible experience of visiting it.

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<sup>52</sup> J.R. Harvey, *Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 19.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Cruikshank designed his work to compliment the text and this encouraged readers to think about the text as a guidebook. The illustrations provided readers with an understanding of what laid beyond the high walls on the bank of the Thames. Cruikshank took the ideas he got from visiting the Tower and incorporated Ainsworth's storyline into them. One of his most iconic images is the execution of Lady Jane Grey. The shocking image provided reference to what the scene could have looked like in that moment. Victorian readers could use the background as a point of reference if they visited the Tower to better understand the historical event they had read about. Ainsworth and Cruikshank's work was notable because of the in-depth experience they provided readers by combining history, visual aids, and explanations of how the reader could follow the physical path of the story at the Tower.

Showing images of the Tower as it stood in the 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired middle class Victorians to want to visit it. In 1868, Fun published an American visitor's account of a tour of the Tower of London.<sup>54</sup> Along with the text was an illustration which portrayed Victorians visiting the Armoury Hall. The image showed small groups of people led through the Hall by a Warder who was talking to his visitors. The image showed nicely dressed men, women, and children acting in an orderly and refined manner, highly interested in what the guard was saying about the hall. The image showed that many people who visited the Tower of London learned about the history of the site. The illustration displayed calm and dignified visitors at Tower of London contrasting them to some early accounts that expressed concern about the experience.<sup>55</sup> This image displayed

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<sup>54</sup> Dodge, E. "The Tower of London," *Fun* 7 (Jun 20, 1868.) 160.

<sup>55</sup> *Report from Select Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art*, Volume 6. London, 1841. 109.

confidence in the Tower as an emerging tourist attraction that could comfortably accommodate visitors.

The relationship between reading about the Tower and seeing illustrations enhanced the experience of learning about the Tower. Readers who hadn't seen the Tower before gained a better understanding of the kinds of things they read about by seeing it drawn out and inspired interest in visiting. It was important for readers to be able to see themselves on the Tower grounds. Writers framed their work to engage Victorians to think about themselves in times past. One periodical encouraged readers to imagine what it would have been like to walk among the Tower grounds in the Middle Ages directly by saying: "if they be of the slightest poetic temperament, they will find their minds carried back to the picturesque, but in nowise to-be-regretted, days of feudalism, *i.e.* barbarism."<sup>56</sup> Statements like this prompted Victorians to imagine themselves in the Middle Ages and pushed visitors to think what it would be like if they were in that time and the kinds of things they would have experienced. Victorians were interested in the Middle Ages, and texts like this prompted them to directly imagine the similarities and differences between their lives and those who lived before them.

Victorians wanted to see important artifacts that they felt were important to their interaction with the Tower and with their history. Sites of execution and imprisonment were two things which intrigued Victorians. They especially were interested in seeing the lasting evidence of their history in the form of prisoner engravings on the walls of the White and Beauchamp Towers. William Ainsworth contributed to the interest in the

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<sup>56</sup> "The Tower of London," *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, Nov. 1822-June 1847 1, no. 23 (Jun 06, 1846) 353.

markings left by prisoners by describing them in detail in his work and he informed his readers where they could be found.<sup>57</sup> Early visitors that wished to see closed areas of the Tower, especially areas in the White Tower, requested access from their Warder tour guide.<sup>58</sup> The various inquires made by visitors to see closed off parts of the Tower was noticed up by influential members of society, who hoped they could accommodate them.

Middle-class Victorians did not hold enough power to gain these special privileges at the start of the century. They needed government representation to facilitate change. The increased coverage of the Tower in popular culture put pressure on the government to act. In 1841, Parliament decided to form a committee to look into to making sure that attractions were fully accessible to all visitors to ensure that Victorian values of morality and education were perpetuated in these middle-class leisure activities.<sup>59</sup> The committee was appointed to report on the status of the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, the National Gallery, and the British Museum as tourist attractions. The stated purpose of the committee was to "consider the best means for their protection, and for affording facilities to the Public for their inspection, as a means of moral and intellectual improvement for the people."<sup>60</sup> The government felt that all these sites could serve as appropriate places for the middle-class to visit and that by opening them up to increased tourism, they could improve the society by offering more acceptable alternatives to corrupt leisure activities, such as drinking and gambling. These activities were causing a lot of problems for the police and government in the East

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<sup>57</sup> William Harrison Ainsworth, *The Tower of London* (London: Routledge, 1840).

<sup>58</sup> Parliament, *National Monuments*, 109.

<sup>59</sup> The Gentleman's Magazine (London, England) Volume 170, 1841.

<sup>60</sup> Parliament, *National Monuments*, ii.



End of London, a huge slum of urban poor during the Victorian Age. The middle-class pushed for cultural separation from the working class. These sites offered and educational, government approved alternative.

Visitor interest in the White Tower was repeatedly brought to the attention of the Committee. The White Tower was a notable piece of Norman architecture and there were repeated inquiries about the inscriptions found within it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the building, once the site of dungeons, was used as a mess-room for the soldiers that were housed there.<sup>61</sup> There was very little access granted to the public to view the inscriptions in the White Tower. It was only available for viewing when the room was empty and only if the Warder leading the tour felt that it was appropriate to allow his party to examine the markings.<sup>62</sup> A Warder cited Ainsworth's work as a reason that visitors were asking to see it. Characters such as the Earl of Guildford were mentioned when visitors looked to make connections between *The Tower of London* novel and the physical Tower they were visiting.<sup>63</sup>

The committee had a specific vision of what the Tower of London should look like as a tourist attraction. The Gentleman's Magazine reported that the Committee had a "desire for improving and increasing the collection of ancient armoury at the Tower" and "hoped that a more complete and historical arrangement" for visitors.<sup>64</sup> The emphasis on the Tower as site of historical importance set it apart from other monuments that were important for religious purposes, like St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. The Tower was

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 145.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, iv.

different from the British Museum and the National Gallery as well because historical events took place on its grounds as opposed to these museums where works of historical importance had to be brought in to attract visitors. The Tower was part of the committee's efforts because they hoped it would function more as a museum for the public than as a working military garrison. The main goal of the committee was to open the White Tower and prison rooms that included the restoration of medieval inscriptions inside. The committee encouraged the preservation of history and access to the Tower.

The physical transformation of the Tower began in the 1840s after Parliament considered the report of the Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art. Employees of the Tower were also consulted. The project was headed by the famous British architect, Anthony Salvin.<sup>65</sup> The plans for the Towers were announced to the public in Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper in December of 1844, several years after the Committee made its report. The "extensive alterations and improvements", brought the Tower much needed renovations it had not seen in similar magnitude in several centuries.<sup>66</sup> Most of the improvements made were an effort to make the grounds more attractive to potential visitors. For example, a "new grand entrance" with a new ticket booth located inside it was added.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, buildings that surrounded the White Tower and Beauchamp tower were razed in order to "throw that interesting and stately structure open to the view of the spectator,"<sup>68</sup> and placed them at the center of visitor's attention. This action represents the change of the Tower from a military area to one

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<sup>65</sup> Wilson, *The Tower*.

<sup>66</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper* (London, England), December 1, 1844; Issue 106.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

centered around the tourist experience. It directed tourists towards buildings that were open for them. New buildings were constructed on the outskirts of the property to house the records from the central area. The buildings matched the medieval aesthetic of the two Towers.<sup>69</sup> These plans reinforced the idea that physical changes represented what the transformed Tower stood for. The Tower was physically transformed into an area that welcomed visitors and allowed them to access areas that they had requested.

The Tower was refurbished in a way that highlighted its history. The restoration efforts of the Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art were reflected in the opening of the White Tower. Tourists were eager to engage with the Tower based on the popular culture that they had consumed. In addition to the buildings themselves being updated, there were also changes to how information in the Tower was presented. The Armoury Hall, where historical information was presented about the armor collected by the British Empire, was left mostly untouched after an extensive update by Samuel Myrick in 1826.<sup>70</sup> After the architectural changes were complete, the layout of the Tower of London and its historical framework allowed tourists to immerse themselves into the Middle Ages.

Visitors increased dramatically after the renovations were finished. In the years between 1850 and 1854, the average number of visitors to the Armoury was about 48,620.<sup>71</sup> During 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition in London, which brought

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Duffy, "French Artists and the Meyrick Armour," *The Burlington Magazine* 151, no. 1274 (2009) 284.

<sup>71</sup> U.K. Parliament. Return of Number of Visitors to Tower of London, February 1845-50, Volume 33. 1.

millions of people to the city to experience the finest things the city had to offer, an incredible 251,531 people were recorded visiting the Armoury. Tourism to this part of the Tower increased by four times between the 1830s and the start of the 1850s. The refurbishments that were made to attract tourists to the Tower were outwardly effective.

## CONCLUSION

The industrial revolution brought money, social clout, and more leisure time to members of the middle-class. The middle-class had more opportunities to learn and read, and also to do things outside their homes. The notion of Victorian tourism was characterized by the increase in the power of the middle-class and their interests in history and finer forms of entertainment. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, travelling and visiting tourist attractions were no longer activities just for the upper class. Local attractions in London flourished during the Victorian age. Values of morality and education challenged previous values. The middle class began separating themselves from the working class by the way they used their leisure time. The middle class was more interested in examining historical artifacts and learning national historical narratives as a way to flex their moral superiority over the working class. Attractions that highlighted history, such as the British Museum and the National Gallery as well as religious sites like St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey were successful in attracting middle-class visitors. The Tower of London, however, held a unique place in London's tourism scene. While these other attractions all held objects of intellectual importance, Victorians viewed the Tower as a place where historical events actually happened and, by visiting the site, they could be closer to their history. Extensively represented in popular culture, the Tower featured spaces of past executions and imprisonments that other attractions did not offer. This is important when thinking about how visitors interacted with the Tower. They were interested in stories of specific people and seeing the lasting impact that was left by them. This built on the connection that Victorians felt with the Middle Ages and their interest in the Tudor era that was well-

represented in popular culture. Victorian authors increasingly wrote works of historical fiction centered around the Tower and used in depth descriptions of the grounds to prompt Victorians to think as if they were at the Tower. Due to low entry costs and a central location, the Tower was easily accessible to middle-class Londoners. One author, William Ainsworth in particular, was instrumental in encouraging Victorians to visit the Tower. Ainsworth suggested throughout his sensational novel, *The Tower of London*, that readers should visit the Tower. He also gave specific instructions to explore parts of the Tower he mentioned in the book, even if those areas were closed to visitors. This prompted visitors to ask to see closed parts of the Tower, and the increased interest in these parts brought about refurbishments later in the century.

The Tower of London was ill equipped to welcome a large influx of visitors in the beginning of the Victorian era. It was rapidly decaying and held little purpose beyond holding a small weapons store and housing a handful of soldiers. Early visitors were disappointed by the rushed and crowded tours they received half-heartedly from Warders. Specific parts of the Tower they hoped to see, such as the inscriptions by medieval prisoners, were not open for their viewing. The more demands visitors made to see closed areas, the more apparent it became that changes needed to happen in order for the Tower to find its purpose as a tourist attraction for Victorian society.

Parliament noticed the growing attention that the Tower of London received from the middle-class. Its members saw an opportunity to get involved in a project for the betterment of society. That Victorians wanted to visit the Tower to learn more about the history of England was viewed by them as a positive activity. Politicians were concerned making sure the middle-class was engaged in acceptable leisure activities. Faced with

many issues concerning the urban poor of London, Parliament wanted to maintain the support of the middle class and keep them busy and happy. Promoting the Tower as a tourist attraction repurposed the old and decaying set of buildings in the heart of the city. The government was still responsible for the upkeep of the structure and it was now possible to justify delegating funds to its repurposing. Converting it fully to a tourist attraction not only gave the building a new purpose but increased paying visitors would buy a return on the investment. Admission fees did not immediately cover the money needed to make the changes but over time the many visitors to the Tower proved the upfront cost was a worthy investment.

The creation of the Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art was instrumental in bringing about the physical changes to the Tower of London. The Committee interviewed a number of influential people, including antiquarians, artists that used the Tower as inspiration for the work, and Warders to better understand the state of the Tower. They also asked questions to find out what concessions were needed in order to make the Tower a suitable tourist attraction. The Committee examined the concerns surrounding the visitor experience. The Committee's primary goal was to transform the Tower into a tourist attraction that resembled other contemporary attractions. The Committee also advocated for the opening up of parts of the Tower that were closed to visitors. Better understanding what the middle class wanted allowed the Committee to make better recommendations about what changes needed to be made to the Tower to increase visitor satisfaction. In order to highlight its history, the committee suggested incorporating better labelling of artifacts, to make the Tower feel more like a museum, which would interest visitors in the history of the place.

The Committee's recommendations were met, and the tower was physically transformed. The middle class applauded the changes. They welcomed the historically focused tourist attraction they so desired. The Tower became more accessible to visitors. The White Tower which had been used as a mess hall for soldiers was opened for visitors. Visitors gained access to the inscriptions that they had long requested to see as well. The site became focused on highlighting the Tower's long history. The Tower was transformed, and middle-class visitors flocked to see the newly repurposed site.



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