

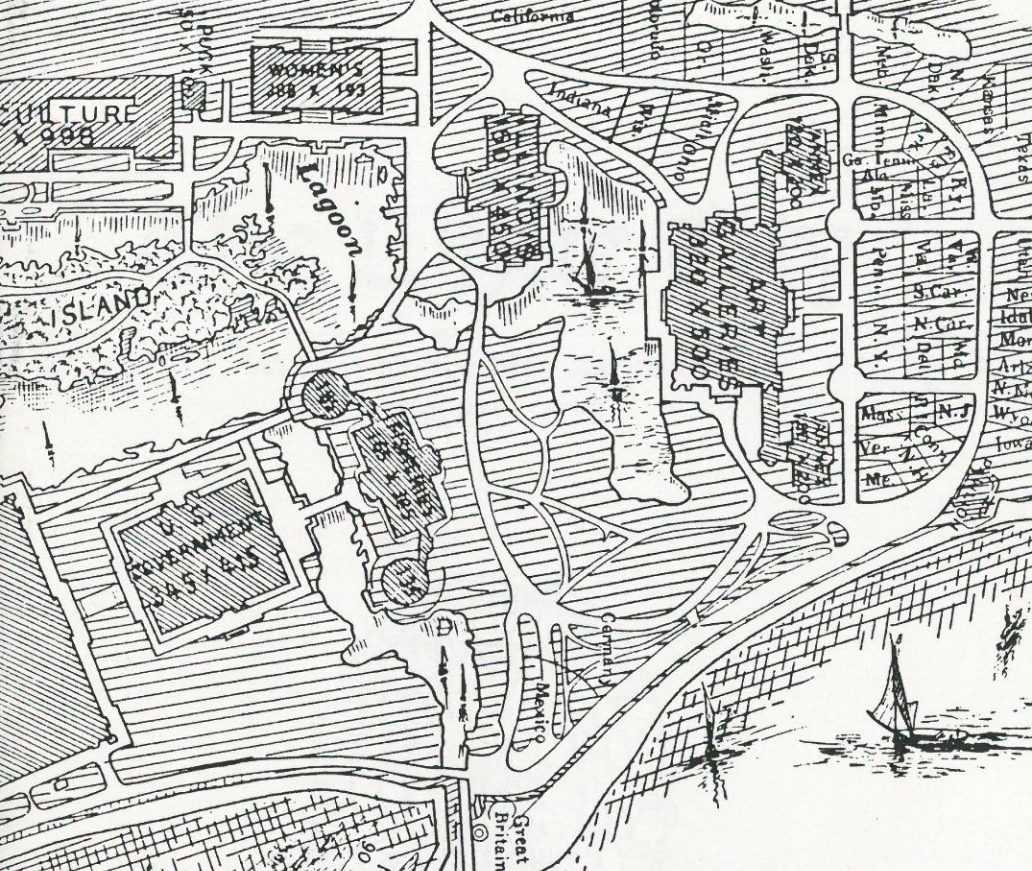
1993

The White City: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893

Tanner, Wesley B.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/120288>

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

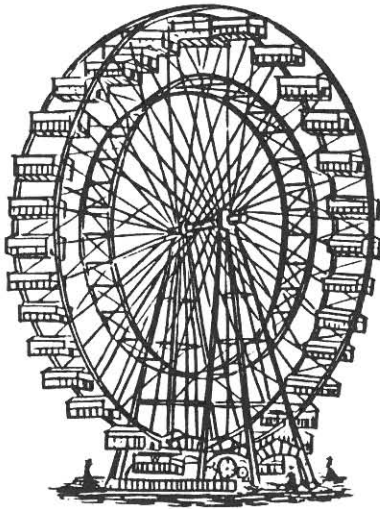


The White City

*World's Columbian Exposition
Chicago 1893*

The White City

World's Columbian Exposition
Chicago 1893



February 1, 1993 – April 2, 1993

*Special Collections Library
The University of Michigan Library
Ann Arbor, Michigan*

Introduction

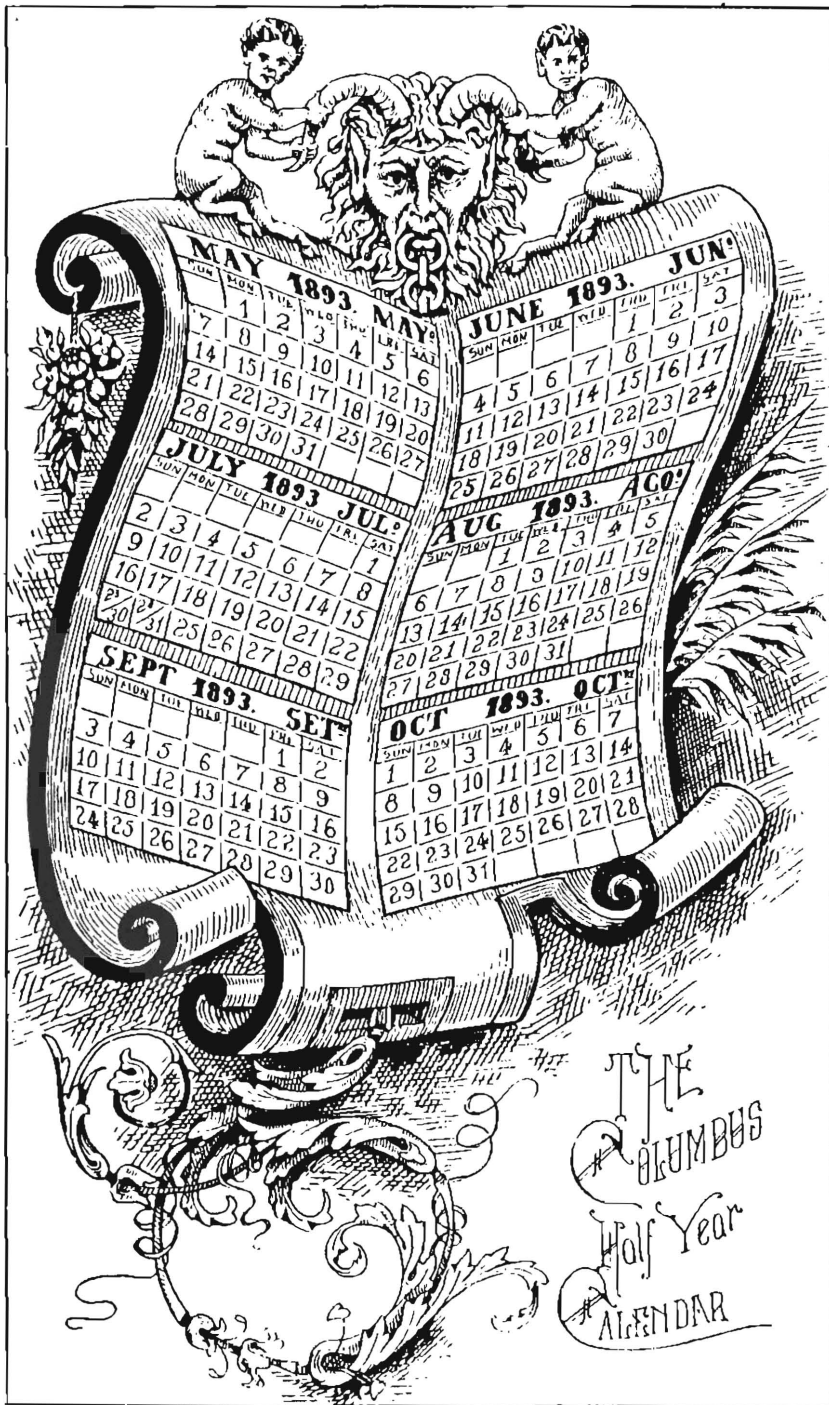
The World's Columbian Exposition, otherwise known as the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, commemorated the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in America. The Chicago Fair was the fifteenth world's fair and the second American one (the first being in Philadelphia in 1876), but this one was of far greater scope than any of its predecessors. Eighty-six nations or colonies participated in the six-month Fair which ran from May 1 through October 31. It covered 686 acres, included 65,000 exhibits, and drew over 27 million visitors. Many believed at the time (and many continue to do so today) that the most compelling and influential aspect of the Exposition was its combined architecture, sculpture, and landscape design.

Among these was Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832-1918), a popular historian of the West and preëminent chronicler of the Exposition. "Greatest of all the exhibits at the Fair," he wrote, "are the palaces which contain them, forming of themselves a display more superb and imposing than any of their contents." On display is a selection of plates (photogravures, etchings, and water-color facsimiles) taken from Bancroft's *The Book of the Fair*. Published by Bancroft's own company in 1893, *The Book of the Fair* consists of ten volumes of commentary by Bancroft on the Exposition plus one hundred loose plates. The plates selected for this exhibit are primarily exterior views which provide some idea of the immense undertaking that was the Columbian Exposition.

Copyright 1993 by the University of Michigan Library
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Designed by Wesley B. Tanner, Ann Arbor

Illustrations supplied through the kindness of
The William L. Clements Library



The Site of the Exposition, Evening View.

The city chosen to host the 1893 World's Fair was Chicago. The specific site was Jackson Park, an undeveloped section of Chicago's park system, situated along Lake Michigan, near present-day Hyde Park. On exhibit is an artist's rendition of the area before the start of construction.

The Map of Jackson Park. Bird's Eye View.

These two maps illustrate the size and complexity of the task in turning Jackson Park into the grounds for a world's fair. The "Map of Jackson Park" is part of *The Official Directory of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893). "The Bird's-Eye View" is the opening plate of the *World's Columbian Exposition; Rand, McNally & Co.'s Sketch Book* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1892). Both books are on loan from the Graduate Library.

Looking South on the Court of Honor.

"The White City" soon became the popular name for the Columbian Exposition. This derived from the early decision by the commissioners that the buildings, especially those surrounding the Court of Honor, should be predominately white.

Administration Building from the Wooded Island.

Considered by many to be the central structure of the Exposition, the Administration Building was the main entrance into the Fair, the gateway for visitors arriving by train, as well as the location for all the Exposition administration offices. New York architect Richard Morris Hunt was the designer.

Administration Building, Evening Effect.

Sunset view of the Administration Building with the Grand Canal in the foreground.

The Administration Plaza.

This plaza, in front of the Administration Building, was the site of the opening ceremonies on May 1, 1893.

Across the plaza was the Electricity Building. Designed by Henry Van Brunt, this building could claim the distinction of being not only the first building in the history of expositions to be devoted completely to displays of electricity and electrical devices, but could also claim more windows than any other structure at the fair: 40,000. It was from this building that the power was generated which made possible the extensive, nightly illumination of the grounds, buildings, and fountains

The Main Entrance, Horticulture Building.

When it was erected, the Horticulture Building was assumed to be the largest hothouse ever built. Chicago architect William LeBaron Jenney designed the building and, as might be expected, it contained floral and botanical displays. The etching on exhibit is the work of Lorado Taft.

The Palace of Mechanical Arts.

At nearly twenty-six acres, Peabody and Stearns's Palace of Mechanic Arts was even larger than the Horticulture Building. The exhibits in the Machinery Building, the other name for the Palace, "represented almost every mechanical device fashioned by the ingenuity of man."

The Hall of Mines from the West Lagoon.

The Mines and Mining Building, designed by S. S. Beman, was largely distinguished by the fact that this was the first time an entire building at an international exposition had been given over wholly to mining products. The diligent fairgoer could see large collections of ores, minerals, fuels, and, most noteworthy, "the largest nugget of gold in existence, the Maitland Bar nugget, which weighs 334.78 ounces."

Looking Across the West Lagoon.

The largest building at the Fair (in fact, the largest roofed structure ever built) was the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. Designed by New York architect George B. Post and covering some forty-four acres, this behemoth contained a dizzying array of American and foreign displays ranging from German Krupp cannon to English Wedgwood china to American pharmaceutical products.

The Art Palace Showing Eastern Facade.

Of all the buildings that were erected for the Columbian Exposition, only the Fine Arts Palace was intended to be a permanent structure. The other buildings were constructed of staff, a combination of plaster of Paris and fibers superimposed upon lath. Staff was ideally suited to be grand yet temporary since it allowed the designs of architects and sculptors to be executed with minimal expense, maximum facility, and adequate permanence. The Fine Arts Palace, on the other hand, was of brick and steel construction with an exterior of staff. It is still in use today as Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

The Fine Arts Palace was designed by Charles Atwood. Into its seventy-four galleries were crammed hundreds of statues and over 9,000 paintings representing the artistic output of Europe and the United States.

West Entrance, Manufactures Building.

Details of one of the entrances into the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building.

The North facade, Agricultural Building.

Situated across the Great Basin from the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building was the giant Agricultural Building, the work of McKim, Mead, and White. One well-known architectural detail was the sculpture atop the dome. This was Augustus Saint-Gaudens's infamous *Diana* statue, originally commissioned by Stanford White for Madison Square Garden. The most popular exhibits in the hall were not the agricultural implements or the model agricultural schools but more along the line of the 22,000-pound cheese from Ontario or the 15,000-pound chocolate Venus de Milo from New York.

A Colonnade Perspective.

This view is looking east through the colonnade of the Fisheries Building toward the United States Government Building. The former, designed by Henry Ives Cobb, contained exotic forms of marine life; the latter, the work of government architects, contained national and historical exhibits.

The Gondola Landing, Art Palace.

One of the most pleasurable activities at the Columbian Exposition must have been the opportunity to view the Fair from the waterways, either in an Italian gondola or an electric launch.

A Water Reflection, Transportation Building.

The Golden Door.

One of the most popular buildings at the Exposition was Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan's Transportation Building in which the history of transportation from the invention of the wheel to the steam locomotive was displayed. In direct contrast to the predominating white of the Fair's other major buildings, the Transportation Building was brightly colored with red, orange, and yellow. Particularly distinctive was Sullivan's so-called "Golden Door," a series of five concentric arches, each highly ornamented and overlaid with gold leaf.

The Woman's Building from the Wooded Island.

In 1889, when she first learned that there was to be a world's fair in the United States, Susan B. Anthony became determined that women would not only be represented but would actively participate. The commissioners of the Exposition agreed that there should be a Woman's Building and Sophia G. Hayden's design for an Italian Renaissance

structure was chosen. Although neither the building nor its exhibits were considered particularly noteworthy, this was the first time women had played such a conspicuous role in a world's fair and as such, both aroused considerable interest.

On exhibit is a facsimile of a water-color showing the east facade of the Woman's Building across the Grand Lagoon; to the right is the California Building.

In the Grand Court, Woman's Building.

A view of the Grand Court in the Woman's Building.

The Midway Plaisance.

The commissioners for the Columbian Exposition had planned from the beginning to allow for an amusement and concession area at the Fair and the Midway Plaisance, an undeveloped strip of land connecting Jackson and Washington parks, was chosen. With its Irish castle, Viennese café, Algerian and Tunisian village, Japanese bazaar, animal shows, 300 Polynesians, and numerous other attractions, the Midway had a distinctly exotic, cosmopolitan, and festive character. The Midway was extremely successful at the time and even today the term is used to indicate the amusement area at a park or fair.

Wedding Procession: Cairo Street.

The Middle Eastern section of the Midway was represented by a "Street of Cairo." Visitors to the Fair could experience a "real" Arabic city, complete with Egyptians, Arabs, a

Moslem mosque, camel and donkey rides, and shops. Twice a day to entertain fairgoers the inhabitants presented a characteristic scene such as a wedding procession or a birthday celebration.

The Ferris Wheel, Midway Plaisance.

One of the leading attractions on the Midway, as well as one of the legacies of the Columbian Exposition as a whole, was the giant Ferris wheel. Built by George Washington Gale Ferris, a Pittsburgh bridge builder, the 264-foot wheel towered over every other building at the Fair. Actually, this first Ferris wheel consisted of two wheels between which thirty-six cars were suspended. When fully loaded it could carry some 1500 passengers; one complete revolution took ten minutes.

The MacMonnies Fountain.

Frederick MacMonnies was commissioned to sculpt the grand *Columbia Fountain*, located in front of the Administration Building at the southwest end of the Grand Basin. The fountain depicted Columbus enthroned upon a triumphal barge rowed by eight figures representing the Arts, Science, Industry, Agriculture, and Commerce. The barge, guided by Time and heralded by Fame, was preceded by eight sea horses, all mounted by young men representing modern commerce. Water for the fountain flowed by way of a series of dolphins and jets surrounding the barge.

The MacMonnies Fountain by Night.

The *Columbia Fountain* at night.

The East Lagoon.

This vista gives a charming view of the west facade of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building with the Illinois State Building in the distance.

A Summer Day at the Exposition.

A panoramic view of the Fair.

The Court of Honor.

From almost the very beginning it was decided that all structures comprising the Court of Honor would be white and in the classical style so as to provide a harmonious setting. In this view, looking east from the Administration Building over the *Columbia Fountain* and the Great Basin, the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building appears on the left and the Agricultural Building on the right. Daniel Chester French's huge, gold statue, *The Republic*, stands in the distance with the Peristyle behind it.

The Wind Mills.

The display of windmills at the Exposition.

The Columbian Arch.

At the opposite end of the Grand Basin from the *Columbia Fountain*, stood Charles B. Atwood's Peristyle. The Peristyle, a series of forty-eight Corinthian columns (one for each state and territory), was the entranceway for visitors arriving at the Fair by boat. At the center of the Peristyle was the Columbian Arch. On the top of the arch was the *Columbus Quadriga*, a fourteen-foot Columbus in a chariot drawn by four horses, designed by Daniel Chester French and Edward C. Potter.

The German Building.

An unusually large number of nations exhibited at the Columbian Exposition, including nineteen who erected their own buildings. One of the most noticeable was the German Building. One author considered it "an extraordinary hodgepodge of eclectic designs," "a composite of Gothic, Nuremburg, and modern German styles." Inside, visitors could see exhibits of German publishers and relics of Bismarck and Von Moltke.

In the French Section, Manufactures Building.

Russian Section, Manufactures Building.

The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building contained numerous international exhibits. On exhibit is a view of the French ceramic vase display and the Russian pavilion.

According to the accompanying caption, the Russian section included furs, silver statuary, vases and urns of jasper and obsidian, and silverware from the Czar's very own household.

The North Lagoon.

State exhibits, displayed in individual state buildings, tended to emphasize historical, archeological, and anthropological themes as well as state products and industries. This view of the North Lagoon shows the Illinois Building, the second tallest building at the Fair, on the left, and the Palace of Fine Arts on the right.

The Street of State Buildings.

This view of the "Street of State Buildings" provides a look at several state buildings. The New York Building, right foreground, resembled an Italian Renaissance villa. Beyond was the Pennsylvania Building, in part a copy of Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

The California Building.

The California Building, modeled after the missionary style of California, was designed by A. Page Brown. It contained exhibits of such California products as minerals, canned goods, and fruit. Two particularly curious exhibits were the city of Santa Barbara's fifty-foot-high tower made of olive oil bottles and a large fountain that gurgled real wine.

Special Collections Library
The University of Michigan Library
711 Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
Ann Arbor