

The Many Messages of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá poselství Světové výstavy v Chicagu v roce 1893. Událost, která formovala jak Spojené Státy, tak i celou společnost, nesla rovněž název Kolumbovská a měla za cíl oslavit 400. výročí objevení Ameriky Kryštofem Kolumbem. Nicméně, ve skutečnosti byla výstava po slavném mořeplavci pouze pojmenována. Hlavním cílem bylo poukázat na výjimečnost Spojených států, překonat všechny předešlé světové výstavy a vyzdvihnout především kulturní a technologickou moc Spojených států, na nadřazenost bílé rasy a také na postavení žen v tehdejší společnosti.

Klíčová slova: Spojené státy, Chicago, světová výstava, Kolumbovská výstava, Bílé město, Midway Plaisance, Buffalo Bill, technologie, kultura, původní američtí obyvatelé, Afroameričané, pokrok, nadřazenost, barbarský, Burnham, Olmsted, 1893, budova, Manifest Destiny, pozlacený věk.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the messages of the World's Fair in Chicago, 1893. The event, which shaped both the United States and the whole society, was also known as the Columbian Exposition and took place in honor of the 400th anniversary of Columbus's first voyage to America. However, in fact, the exposition was only named after the famous voyager. The main objectives were to create the impression that the United States is exceptional, surpass all previous world's fairs and primarily to point out the cultural and technological power of the United States, the superiority of the white race and the position of women in the society.

Keywords: United States, Chicago, world's fair, Columbian Exposition, White City, Midway Plaisance, Buffalo Bill, technology, culture, Native Americans, African Americans, progress, superiority, savage, Burnham, Olmsted, 1893, building Manifest Destiny, Gilded Age.

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

World's fairs have been occurring for more than 150 years, and their aim is to show the society innovations in the field of technology, industry, and culture. They are attended by many countries, which do their best to contribute with something new and revolutionary. It is an admired and well-known event that brings a lot of inspiration and allows people to look into the future. The World's Fair in Chicago was the twelfth official world's fair and the second which took place on the American continent.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the inhabitants of Chicago did not live in the best conditions. Chicago was at that time dubbed the "Black City," which was considered one of the severest and most dangerous in the United States. Crime, often violent, was a daily part of life, as was the presence of bars, brothel, gaming clubs, and slaughterhouses. This scene was supplemented with polluted air and dirty streets.¹ The fair, which was eventually organized in this city, had the main goal to highlight the United States, but also to restore the reputation of Chicago. For the United States, this was a unique opportunity to become a superpower because at that time, the power was still in Europe. Even though Americans organized one world's fair in Philadelphia in 1876, they were not entirely satisfied with it. They assumed that they did not fulfill their potential, and therefore they were more than willing to take this second opportunity. They wanted to surpass not only this event but also the world's fair in Paris held in 1889 which was mainly known for the Eiffel Tower. The Chicago World's Fair collided with the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, so organizers decided to call it the Columbian Exposition. Eventually, his name was the only thing the fair and the famous voyager had in common.

It focused more on other messages. It is these messages that are the focus of this work. Namely, it is the United States' belief in their exceptionalism and the desire to become the world superpower, which they presented primarily in the field of technology and culture. It also points out how Manifest Destiny was depicted, as the conviction that the new nation was blessed by God with a responsibility to expand. It also focuses on how the fair celebrated white male supremacy.

¹ Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (London: Vintage, 2004), 11-2.

1 WHAT ARE WORLD'S FAIRS

The world's fair is an international event used by a host city or country to not only market itself but to demonstrate the latest industrial, scientific and even cultural advances. In most cases, entertainment and educational components are intentionally combined and presented in the form of various shows, activities, and exhibitions. It is an opportunity for the host country to strengthen its position in international circles because the world's fair is open to regular visitors, as well as to world leaders and decision makers.² For instance, in 2017, Astana, Kazakhstan hosted the Expo from June to September, and the theme of the Expo was energy, which is Kazakhstan's leading industry.³

Such a world's fair, however, is not only for the host country but also for many other countries, which are invited to this event to present their ideas. The main goal was often to present the most recent progress to the public. However, recently, as in Astana, organizers have also begun to present the ideals and aspirations of their nation.⁴ Nowadays, the world's fairs also have the function of connecting the world and bridging gaps by instigating discourse over fundamental and important human topics.⁵

Since 1928, the world's fairs have been directed by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), which is located in Paris.⁶ Its mission is to organize high quality and successful fairs that follow certain rules established to ensure that no human rights are violated. It picks the host country and provides it with expertise in event management, national branding, and public diplomacy, and it makes sure that all participants respect the rules.⁷ The BIE has already overseen over 50 successful exhibitions,⁸ Astana being the latest.⁹

² "What is an Expo?," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/expos/about-expos/what-is-an-expo>.

³ "Location," Expo 2017 Astana, accessed February 2, 2018, https://expo2017astana.com/en/page_id=218.

⁴ "The History of World's Fairs," ExpoMuseum, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://expomuseum.com/history/>.

⁵ "What is an Expo?," Bureau International des Expositions.

⁶ "Our History," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/bie/who-we-are>.

⁷ "Who We Are," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/bie/who-we-are>.

⁸ "Our History," Bureau International des Expositions.

⁹ "Expo 2017 Astana," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed February 2, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/2017-astana>.

However, before 1928, including in 1893 in Chicago, it was a tradition that the rules were always set by the organizing country without discussing them with the others that participated in the fair. This led to a lack of transparency and disinformation, which were sometimes intentional to help the organizing country. These include, particularly, national laws, regulations, and taxation. Another problem was that there was an enormous increase of world's fairs because countries wanted to compete with others over whose event would be the most successful and the most epochal, which cost the host and participant countries a lot of money. Another, no less important, problem was the organization of fairs of a new focus, which were also called World's Fairs but which were far smaller and more specific.¹⁰

¹⁰ "Our History," Bureau International des Expositions.

2 THE HISTORY OF WORLD'S FAIRS

World's fairs, as we know them today, have been around for over 160 years. From the beginning, they served primarily to display the latest technologies and inventions of mankind that have a significant impact on the development of society and to promote the host country, whereas every invited country was trying to contribute something new. A similar principle could be found in ancient times when similar kinds of events took place at the main crossroads, where marketers offered their products, and comedians served as attractions.¹¹

It was Great Britain that held the first modern world's fair in 1851. In the nineteenth century, Great Britain overflowed with optimism and was considered the center of the most innovative ideas. The British believed that sufficient capital and control over industry and trade would give them global dominance. They had reason to think so because they ruled up to two-thirds of the world at that time.¹² The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations was held from May to October in Hyde Park, London, and was organized under the auspices of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, Sir Henry Cole and John Paxton.¹³ There were over 100,000 exhibits, of which more than half came from the organizing country and its colonies.¹⁴ This fair was significantly affected by the industrial revolution and colonialism, which became its main focuses.¹⁵ The main purpose of this event was to try to resolve the social problems of the population, mainly to eliminate human labor through gradual mechanization, making their lives much easier, to point out new cheap materials that could be used in the clothing industry, as well as cheap aluminum dishes.¹⁶ Besides, thanks to expansionism, visitors could see all the exoticism of the British colonies, their inhabitants included. They called them "primitive people," and their presence served to the amusement of visitors.¹⁷ The fair as a whole was evaluated positively and was highly profitable.¹⁸ Except for the Crystal Palace, the main pride of the exhibition, which was destroyed by fire in 1936,

¹¹ "Expos Q&A," World's Fair, Inc., accessed February 28, 2018, <http://worldsfairs.com/expos-qa/>.

¹² Jaroslav Halada and Milan Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000* (Praha: Libri, 2000), 20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Liza Picard, "The Great Exhibition," British Library, accessed February 22, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/victorian-britain/articles/the-great-exhibition>.

¹⁵ "Past Expos - A Short History of Expos," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/expos/past-expos/past-expos-a-short-history-of-expos>.

¹⁶ "Historie světových výstav," Česká televize, accessed February 27, 2018, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/archiv/1447575-historie-svetovych-vystav>.

¹⁷ "Past Expos - A Short History of Expos," Bureau International des Expositions.

¹⁸ Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 25.

many important buildings have been preserved, such as the Natural History and Victoria and Albert Museums, the Imperial College of Science, the Royal Colleges of Art and the Albert Hall. In addition, Great Britain confirmed its reputation as the world's most developed country, and the fair is now seen as the most successful event of that time and an important milestone in history.¹⁹

It did not take long for the world's fairs to serve not only for cultural enrichment and entertainment but also as an important political tool. Countries began to compete with each other and tried to show their power. They competed over who could build the most monumental buildings, exhibit the best inventions and attract the most visitors. Their goal was to achieve the highest possible position in the world.²⁰

With the second world's fair, in Paris in 1855, France tried to match Great Britain as the greatest European power. Until then, France had primarily focused on national exhibitions, which were composed mainly of fine arts. It was art that France incorporated into its program, and the art often reflected the ideals of the post-revolutionary regime. However, despite innovative elements, the audience generally agreed that the London exhibition in 1851 remained unrivaled.²¹

In 1862, the world's fair returned to London. More than 80,000 items exhibited at the fair lacked any descriptions and details to specify them. It was not, as people originally thought, the negligence of the organizers, but the intention. It was because Great Britain feared intellectual property theft and "industrial espionage." People could not even get sketches of exhibited goods. This fact was later criticized by the public as well as by the experts because sometimes it was not clear what purpose all those items had.²² London did not organize any other world's fairs.²³

On the other hand, although the world's fairs were primarily intended to educate visitors in new cultures and to contribute to the development of society, they became later a mediator for spreading propaganda. Organizing countries were trying to show their superiority to the entire world, and Eurocentrism and colonialism were at the forefront. Western Europe used

¹⁹ Ben Johnson, "The Great Exhibition 1851," Historic UK, accessed February 25. <http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Great-Exhibition-of-1851/>.

²⁰ Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 31-51.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² *Ibid.*, 40-43.

²³ "World's Fair Timeline," ExpoMuseum.com, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.expomuseum.com/1851-1883/>.

all sorts of means to show what a great power it was and pointed out their advanced “civilization”. This was done mainly by exhibiting exotic peoples. As Alexander Geppert noted, “These ‘native villages’ with their human exhibits proved to be of central importance for the overall effect of these exhibitions because their presence gave the necessary air of authenticity to everything else on display. ‘Wild’ people could not be reproduced artificially and were thus viewed as a guarantee of the spectacle's overall veracity.”²⁴

The first exhibition held outside Great Britain and France was in Vienna in 1873, and this despite obstacles such as the Vienna stock market crash and a dangerous cholera epidemic, which resulted in reduced fair attendance.²⁵ Despite all this, this event made a great contribution to the city’s reconstruction, namely, the Danube channel and the old part of the city. Moreover, this event first emphasized the importance of education and upbringing.²⁶

In 1876, a world’s fair was finally held elsewhere than in Europe, specifically in Philadelphia, in honor of the centennial of American independence. At that time, the western frontier was being conquered, and this fair was a great opportunity for making new bonds between east and west.²⁷ The Americans planned to prove that although they were quite a young nation, they were just as important a power as France and Great Britain. Exhibited at the fair were significant discoveries such as Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone, Thomas Edison’s telegraph, Remington’s typewriter and Heinz tomato ketchup.²⁸ A major novelty was also the women's pavilion, which was organized and run by volunteer women’s organizations.²⁹

²⁴ Alexander C. T. Geppert, “World's Fairs,” European History Online (EGO), accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/gepperta-2013-en>.

²⁵ Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 60-61.

²⁶ “Expo 1873 Vienna,” Bureau International des Expositions, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1873-vienna>.

²⁷ Elizabeth Cornelius Pruett, “Kindergarten Goes to the Fair: How the World's Fair of 1876 Advanced the Kindergarten Movement in the United States” (PhD diss., University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2013), 16-17.

²⁸ “Expo 1876 Philadelphia,” Bureau International des Expositions, accessed February 27, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1876-philadelphia>.

²⁹ Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 70.

Before the world's fair in Chicago, five more exhibitions were held, in 1878 in Paris, in 1880 in Melbourne, in 1888 in Barcelona, in 1889 again in Paris,³⁰ and in 1891 in Prague.³¹

Although many world's fairs took place in Paris, the fair in 1889 is considered to be the best of all. It was even called "the greatest fair of its time" thanks to its magnificence and exoticism.³² The fair was organized not only to show the progress of France but also to celebrate the centennial of the French Revolution.³³ However, before this fair started, there were many complaints from both journalists and citizens, mainly that the fair would increase crime. But there were also new complaints, that the money spent on preparations could be used differently and better, e.g., to improve the working conditions of manual workers, as France was experiencing a period of great unemployment.³⁴ In addition to the expositions, the area was surrounded by attractions, which should entertain visitors and attract new ones. These "entertainment zones" started to occupy more and more space at the fair area over time.³⁵ Iron architecture dominated at the fair, as exemplified by the Palace of Machines. Inside this building, visitors could see inventions such as cigarette makers, or the phonograph and telephone. However, without a doubt the most dominant iron feature of this exhibition was the Eiffel Tower. The construction of the iron tower was, at that time, the dream of many engineers, so it is no wonder that when the competition for its construction began, many applicants were interested in it. At first, the project was highly criticized, as it was unusual to use iron as an architectural element, and the tower was called an abomination that degrades Paris. However, after 26 months of work, the tower was finished and became the most successful feature of the fair.³⁶

³⁰ "Expo Timeline," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/expo-timeline/expo-timeline-world-expo>.

³¹ "General Land Centennial Exhibition, Prague: The Kingdom of Bohemia Parliament Building (Landesausschuss des Konigreiches Bohmen)," RIBA Architecture, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.architecture.com/image-library/ribapix/image-information/poster/general-land-centennial-exhibition-prague-the-kingdom-of-bohemia-parliament-building-landesausschuss-des-konigreiches-bohmen/posterid/RIBA88727.html>.

³² Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 1.

³³ "Expo 1889 Paris," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed January 24, 2018. <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1889-paris>.

³⁴ Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁶ "Expo 1889 Paris," Bureau International des Expositions, accessed January 24, 2018. <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1889-paris>.

3 THE GILDED AGE

The term “Gilded Age” was first used in 1873 by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in their book *The Gilded Age, A Tale of the Day*, to describe an American era (1870-1914) of industrialization, mass immigration, increased racism and income disparity.³⁷ Twain himself described it as “all that glitters is not gold,” suggesting that the United States was beautiful on the surface but rotten underneath.³⁸ On the one hand, the Gilded Age was a period of great progress and optimism, whether in the fields of industry, culture or technology. Moreover, great emphasis was placed on education and new inventions.³⁹ Americans generally believed that through industriousness and creativity, they were able to achieve anything.⁴⁰ Business boomed, resulting in the rise of a middle class and an overall increase in living standards.⁴¹ Before this period, people mainly worked as farmers and relied on what they had grown. At the end of the Gilded Age, however, most Americans lived in urban settings and relied heavily on a range of products they had to purchase.⁴² Thanks to urbanization and new technologies, many new positions were also created, such as social worker, traffic engineer, playground supervisor but also sociologists, economists, statisticians, city planners and civil engineers.⁴³ Thanks to employment opportunities, as well as for political and religious reasons, immigration increased. Around 1870, there were about 38.6 million people in the United States, but at the end of the Gilded Age in 1914, there were more than 76 million people. These immigrants came primarily from Europe and Russia.⁴⁴ As immigration increased, so did racism, spurred on by social Darwinists, who argued that different races were evolving at different rates, with whites evolving faster than southern Europeans or Slavs. Blacks were evolving the slowest, if at all.⁴⁵ All of these

³⁷ Scott A. Sandage, “The Gilded Age,” in *A Companion to American Cultural History*, ed. Karen Halttunen (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 139-40.

³⁸ Thomas Adams Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 26-27; Robert Paynter, “Commentary on Gilded Ages, Now and Then,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16, no. 4 (December 2012), 776, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23355818>.

³⁹ Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age*, 25.

⁴⁰ “America’s Gilded Age,” Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, accessed February 3, 2018. <https://www.flaglermuseum.us/history/gilded-age>.

⁴¹ Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age*, 25.

⁴² Christopher M. Nichols, and Nancy C. Unger, *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 1.

⁴³ Nichols, and Unger, *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 31-32.

⁴⁴ Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age*, 114-115.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25; Christopher N. Matthews, “Gilded Ages and Gilded Archaeologies of American Exceptionalism,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16, no. 4 (December 2012): 718-719, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23355815>.

impulses found their way into the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, during which technology, Western traditions, and white supremacy were visibly intertwined.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ “America’s Gilded Age,” Henry Morrison Flagler Museum.

4 THE CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR

The Chicago World's Fair, also known as the World's Columbian Exposition, a defining moment in American history, took place from May 1 to October 30, 1893 in honor of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' first voyage to America.⁴⁷ (The world's fair was actually a year late, due to construction delays.⁴⁸) And although the expo was named in honor of Columbus, its content focused mainly on showing America's technological and cultural superiority since 1492.⁴⁹ The director of the fair, George R. Davis, wrote that through this exhibition, they also wanted to display the resources of the United States, their development, and the progress of the New World civilization.⁵⁰ The main reason was to point out that the United States managed to recover quickly from the Civil War and show the world that the twentieth century would be its.⁵¹

The organizers of the exhibition faced a great challenge, as the world's fair in Paris in 1889 was a huge success. They knew that it would not be easy to trump it.⁵² In Paris, the Americans inadequately represented their artistic and scientific skills, and their exhibition stands were, in comparison to other countries, subpar. It was this failure that prompted them to hold world's fair in the United States.⁵³ Another factor that motivated the organizers was the first great fair ever held in the United States, the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Even though Americans were proud of this exposition, which contained more than 30,000 exhibits, they felt like it did not really capture of what they, as a young nation, were capable.⁵⁴ "Make it the Greatest Show on Earth," appealed Phineas Taylor Barnum, the American showman, politician, and businessman to the World's Fair committee.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 8.

⁴⁸ Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age*, 46.

⁴⁹ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 46-7.

⁵⁰ George R. Davis, "The World's Columbian Exposition," *North American Review* 154, no. 424 (March 1892): 308.

⁵¹ Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 488.

⁵² Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 1.

⁵³ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 14-5.

⁵⁴ Bolotin and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 1.

⁵⁵ Miller, *City of the Century*, 380.

4.1 Nominated Cities

Plans to realize such an event began in 1888 in Washington D.C., and Chicago was not the only possible host city for the world's fair: St. Louis, Washington D.C., and New York also applied. St. Louis was the clear underdog, but Washington D.C. was the capital, and New York was the country's most populous city and the wealthiest. Chicago had the central location and an extensive transport network. The decision would be made by the House of Representatives, and it came down to New York and Chicago.⁵⁶

The New York representative argued that if the fair should celebrate Columbus, arguably the greatest navigator that ever lived, it should be in the largest maritime city in the western world. The Chicago representative countered that the enthusiasm and can-do attitude of Chicago's inhabitants (the same attitude that allowed them to recover so well from the Great Fire of 1871) best represented the American spirit.⁵⁷ Moreover, he countered the stereotype that Chicagoans were redneck pig butchers, instead portraying them as up-and-coming westerners.⁵⁸

Although New York was the favorite, eventually it was determined it did not have a suitable location for holding such a sizeable event. One of the suggestions was to make the fair in Central Park, but this idea was immediately rejected by the people of New York. Largely for this reason, Chicago ultimately won the bid.⁵⁹

4.2 Main architects

The main word regarding the design of the fair belonged to the well-known landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. His most famous works are, for example, Central Park in New York or the Niagara Reservation at Niagara Falls. He arrived in Chicago with his assistant, Henry Sargent Codman, whom Olmsted later instructed to oversee the construction, while his firm, Olmsted & Company, served as a consultant for other architects during the construction.⁶⁰ After a long deliberation, during which Olmsted considered all the possibilities that Chicago provided, he decided that the ideal venue for the fair would be

⁵⁶ "The House of Representatives' Selection of the Location for the 1893 World's Fair," History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/36662?ret=True>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 16.

⁵⁹ Bolotin and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 2; Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 30-45.

⁶⁰ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 67-68.

in Jackson Park. It was not that trim as other parks, but it had one great advantage, Lake Michigan, which gave the whole park a special charm. Other advantages were the size of the location and transportation accessibility.⁶¹

The main architects were Daniel H. Burnham and John W. Root of the same name company, Burnham & Root.⁶² These two gentlemen became famous primarily for designing the Montauk Building, the first skyscraper. Root was the artistic core of this company, and his biggest strength was design. Although Burnham was a famous architect, he was primarily known for his business spirit and his ability to attract new customers. They formed a strong team but knew that this contract was a big risk to their business. The enthusiasm and the expectations were high. If everything went well, their names would be known all over the world, but if not, the city and their company would suffer. They had about three years to build a big city-like complex which would surpass the Paris World's Fair.⁶³ The situation became complicated in 1891 when Root died of pneumonia, at age 41, and when the preparations for the fair were only in their early stages.⁶⁴ He was replaced by Charles B. Atwood.⁶⁵

4.3 Participating Countries

The exhibition was attended by a total of 50 countries.⁶⁶ Each country got its own exhibition space, varying in size according to the importance of the state. In their space, they were to exhibit products that are typical for the country, including new technologies or novelties. Great Britain and France displayed heavy machines in their exhibition space.⁶⁷

Among the most influential country outside of the United States was the United Kingdom. It primarily exhibited things in the fields of machinery, manufacturing, transportation and fine arts. However, its participation had also a strategic subtext. The United Kingdom wanted to increase its visibility. At the time, the British economy was limping along, trailing well behind the growing power of the United States, which at that

⁶¹ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 68.

⁶² Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 92-93.

⁶³ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 24-34.

⁶⁴ "The Death of John Wellborn Root – January 15, 1891," Glessner House Museum, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://www.glessnerhouse.org/story-of-a-house/2016/1/11/the-death-of-john-wellborn-root-january-15-1891>.

⁶⁵ Halada and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 93.

⁶⁶ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 232.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

time was experiencing a huge boom in the fields of agriculture and industry. This event was therefore seen as an opportunity to increase exports.⁶⁸

The fair's guidebook, authored by Horace Morgan, stated that the Chicago World's Fair would give an opportunity to Americans to glimpse the cultures of other nations. It further noted that for the participants, it was a privilege to be there. Morgan took a condescending attitude towards the participating nations, especially those like Peru, Chile, and China, which in terms of development were, in his opinion, far behind the Western world.⁶⁹

4.4 Planning and Building the Chicago World's Fair

The plan was clear from the very beginning – to create something that had never been seen by the human eye before. The exhibition was supposed to be bigger, more beautiful and more original than any before.⁷⁰ This was almost an insurmountable task for all of the invited architects. They had less than three years to build something incredible from almost nothing, to change Jackson Park beyond recognition and create countless lagoons, lakes, and palaces. Many of the architects were unprepared and considered refusing the project, but Burnham and Root convinced them that 1893 would be as historically important as 1776 and 1861, and most acquiesced.⁷¹

Contrary to some previous exhibitions, all buildings were to be temporary, comprised chiefly of plaster, cement, and wood, at great cost savings.⁷² The committee selected architects to design the main buildings and when it came to making designs, they started to compete with each other who would make a better one. Each building was a bit more sophisticated and more perfect than the previous one, and above all, a higher than any building ever built. However, they had in common one thing – pomposity. It was so mainly because they wanted to amaze all those who would visit the fair. Olmsted, however, insisted that although the fair is supposed to be also a celebration of architecture, the designers should not be carried away. He thought that, in an attempt to overcome the world's fair in Paris, the final effect would be too over-decorated, and it would lose its original purpose. The buildings

⁶⁸ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 232-5.

⁶⁹ Horace H. Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide* (St. Louis: Pacific Publishing, 1892), 29-32.

⁷⁰ Bolotin and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 8.

⁷¹ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 79-99.

⁷² Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 72; Bolotin and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 18.

should be spectacular, but he told the designers not create too many decorations, statues, and reliefs and keep it simple.⁷³

The organizers drew inspiration not from the architectural styles that emerged in the United States at that time, but from those that were in Europe. Which was a slightly unexpected move, as it was meant to celebrate the discovery of America. The fair was wholly carried in a neoclassicist spirit.⁷⁴ This style is especially typical of its elegant and simple lines, majestic buildings and columns. The overall look takes inspiration from the ancient Greece and Rome and its aim was to embody the perfection.⁷⁵ The White City, as the fair's center was later called, provided many architectural elements which were supposed to show that the Americans are the rightful heirs of the Western tradition, and they can be proud of the virtues of their ancestors. "They studied abroad not to mimic Europe, but to pick up the threads of the arts and culture from earlier Western societies in order to more efficiently bring Western Culture to its full glory, which was America's obvious destiny."⁷⁶

Another question was who would design the Woman's Building. In this case, the organizers exceptionally allowed women to participate in the designing of the building. The Board of Lady Managers tried to refute any prejudice against the females and agreed that only adept women architects would be allowed to be in the selection procedure.⁷⁷ The prize for the winner was \$ 1,000, while male architects at that time received at least \$ 10,000 for the same amount of work.⁷⁸ The winner was Sophia Hayden, who got an MIT degree in architecture but she did not have much experience so far. Her design was carried in a Renaissance style and contained fine elements, balconies, and loggias.⁷⁹ For a moment, Hayden was suspected that she did not make the designs by herself, but after a more detailed inspection, they reached the conclusion that it was not true.⁸⁰ Her design had to be subsequently changed in a rather broad way because there was not much time to fine-tune all the details. The final construction of the building was eventually evaluated by both

⁷³ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 113-170.

⁷⁴ "The Columbian Exposition and the Woman's Building, Chicago, 1893," Radford University, accessed March 16, 2018, <http://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women%20and%20art/amerwom05/columbianexposition.html>.

⁷⁵ "NeoClassical Architecture," World of Level Design, accessed March 16, 2018, http://www.worldofleveldesign.com/categories/architecture/neoclassical/neoclassical_architecture.php.

⁷⁶ "America's Gilded Age," Henry Morrison Flagler Museum.

⁷⁷ "The Columbian Exposition and the Woman's Building, Chicago, 1893," Radford University.

⁷⁸ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 120.

⁷⁹ "The Columbian Exposition and the Woman's Building, Chicago, 1893," Radford University.

⁸⁰ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 120.

positive and negative reviews, for one simple reason – it was designed by a woman. Still, the Women’s Building in Chicago was far more successful than its predecessor at the Philadelphia world’s fair.⁸¹

The natural components of the fair were not forgotten as well. Although, at first, it might seem that the potential of the selected location was only seen by Olmsted himself.⁸² He planned that the lagoons would be surrounded by living birds of various species, and with a different kind of grasses with flowers,⁸³ and a “Wooden Island” will be built in the middle of the central lagoon. This was supposed to be the Japanese section. Their intention was to build there the traditional Japanese temples and gardens to serve as an oasis of peace in the middle of a busy world’s fair.⁸⁴ There will be sailing boats on the Lake Michigan which will be paddled by Indians in their typical costumes and feather headband on their heads. The entire concept should have a mystical impression. Everything sounded marvelous, the only problem was that there was a lack of time.⁸⁵

With the approaching date of the opening ceremony, the public’s interest in the event also increased. Burnham immediately took advantage of this and allowed visitors to watch the construction of the fair area for a fee. People who paid 25 cents had an opportunity to see what is behind the scenes. This move was a great success because in one week the site visited more than 3,000 people.⁸⁶

One of the main attractions of this event should be something that will capture the visitors’ attention. The plan was clear – to surpass the Eiffel Tower. The tower was also one of the most frequent suggestions of architects, but Burnham refused it. He claimed that size is not so crucial now, but that he wants something new, original, which no one has built yet, and especially it must be built by an American. George Ferris, who eventually took the lead on the project, came up with the idea of a big revolving wheel with cabins to which visitors could fit and admire the fair from a very top and from the completely different perspective. His idea was first considered bizarre, but it did not discourage Burnham at all. However, the

⁸¹ “The Columbian Exposition and the Woman's Building, Chicago, 1893,” Radford University.

⁸² Bolotin, and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 9.

⁸³ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 115-8.

⁸⁴ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 11.

⁸⁵ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 115-8.

⁸⁶ “A History of the Fair,” University of Virginia, accessed March 24, 2018, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma96/wce/history.html>.

work on Ferris Wheel also took the delay and it was not working for 6 more weeks after the grand opening. Despite that, “it opened world’s eyes to American prowess and ingenuity.”⁸⁷

As already mentioned, preparation of the fair did not happen without complications. In addition to the lack of time, many other problems aroused during the preparation, which could made it quite easy to delay or thwart the whole fair, whether it was the harsh winters that struck during the construction, strong winds, landslides, illnesses like smallpox or cholera, but also the bad reputation of Chicago as the city of crime and violence. Another, no less serious problem was strikes of the workers. The core of constructing of the fair was a cheap labor force, but soon protests emerged because the construction company employed immigrants from Italy and not local workers desperately needed a job. A few days later there were also complaints from workers who demanded higher salaries and only eight hours of work. With the approaching date, Burnham’s nervousness was increasing. They could not afford to postpone the grand opening date again, so construction work continued even under harsh conditions. They worked in the nights, even in great heat, which eventually took several lives.⁸⁸

About two months before the opening ceremony, exhibitors from all over the world began to gather in Chicago, with the aim of preparing for the event so everything would go smoothly. Among them was Buffalo Bill, with his attraction called “Wild West” featuring Indians and former American cavalry soldiers, as well as boats with exotic cargo such as mummies, sphinxes, and various animals to exhibit at Midway Plaisance. New hotels were built all around the city to attract as many visitors as possible. The city was properly cleaned, police patrols were enhanced. Altogether, it created a veil that covered the imperfections of Chicago and presented it as a cultivated city.⁸⁹

Finally, after three years of work, the fair was finally opened. It happened on May 1, 1893. The opening ceremonial was attended by hundreds of thousands of people and other masses visited the event during the next six months from the opening.⁹⁰ At the end of the construction, the fair area looked almost like a small town, and thanks to the network of streets and about 90,000 feet of railway track.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 21-3.

⁸⁸ Larson, 119-178.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 206-212.

⁹⁰ “A History of the Fair,” University of Virginia.

⁹¹ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 17.

5 THE WALK THROUGH THE FAIR

The long-awaited grand opening, which was led by President Cleveland and director Davis, was held in a festive spirit. On the highest flagpole was a large American flag, and next to it two more, one representing Columbus and the other Spain, a homeland of Columbus. The ceremony was attended by crowds of people who literally hustled to see it. According to official statistics, there was over quarter million visitors. They were dressed in their best clothes. The women wore expensive gowns and hats and gentlemen had black or gray suits. In many people, this opening ceremony awakened patriotic joy, so they began spontaneously singing “My Country.”⁹²

Visitors could use many ways how to get to the fair. From the center of Chicago, people could take a steamship that stopped near the Casino. It was especially popular because it offered a beautiful view of the exhibition grounds and after the disembarkation, people stood on the moveable sidewalk, which transported them to the shore. Another option was the Illinois Central Railroad, an elevated rail and a cable car.⁹³

The organizers did not leave anything to chance, the fair included everything the visitors could think of – many expositions, restaurants and entertainment options. The whole concept gave the fairgoers the impression that the fair is a place of unlimited possibilities. The main core consisted of a total of 14 so-called “the Great Buildings” – Administration, Agriculture, Anthropology, Electricity, Fisheries, Forestry, Horticulture, Machinery, Manufactures and Liberal Arts, Mining and Mining, Fine Arts, Transport, United States Government and Woman’s Building. Within these buildings could be seen the most valuable, most important and most remarkable pieces of the whole fair. With the newest technologies, inventions, and curiosities, the United States wanted to show that they have the makings of the world superpower which does not hamper the progress. The goal was to show the New World’s best qualities. These main buildings were complemented by 200 additional ones such as Casino, Music Hall and Children’s Building which offered visitors more expositions, restaurants and various possibilities of distraction and entertainment.⁹⁴

The buildings were situated mainly in the Jackson Park which had 553 acres and were surrounded by gardens full of flowers, crystal-clear lagoons and basins. The smaller part of

⁹² Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 237-9.

⁹³ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 143.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-141.

the buildings and villages were located in Midway Plaisance, which had only 80 acres and connected the Jackson and the Washington park. The whole area was so large that it was almost impossible for visitors to go through it all, and certainly not in a single day, which means they had to decide what is most interesting for them and to visit only some places.⁹⁵

Although the buildings were spectacular at first glance, they gave an impression that this was an attempt to imitate ancient Greece and Rome, which was highly despised and mocked by critics.⁹⁶ According to them, the Americans only tried to imitate the inimitable.⁹⁷ On the other hand, it was noted that once the American visitors entered the compound, the spirit of patriotism captured them. All over the place were typical national symbols that depicted the greatness of the United States. According to them, the architecture was more perceived as a return to Classicism and “a return to their better selves.”⁹⁸

5.1 The Administration Building

Right at the entrance, visitors could notice the Administration Building which was considered the pride of the fair. It was huge in size, and its dominant feature was a large bronzed dome.⁹⁹ There was even an indisputable resemblance with Washington’s Capitol.¹⁰⁰ Inside, the walls were decorated with the names of all participating countries and with the names of the great thinkers of history. Those names were complemented by paintings that resembled the great discoveries of society, and under the dome were statues which represented the major areas of interest of the nineteenth century – trade, industry, war, peace, religion, patriotism and others.¹⁰¹ It served primarily for administrative purposes and for managing the fair, but also as a headquarters for firefighters, police officers, medical staff, post office and bank. It was the only building which was not accessible to visitors.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition*, 11-141.

⁹⁶ Miller, *City of the Century*, 490.

⁹⁷ Halada, and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 95-6.

⁹⁸ Miller, *City of the Century*, 490-1.

⁹⁹ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 81-2.

¹⁰⁰ Miller, *City of the Century*, 491.

¹⁰¹ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 81-2.

¹⁰² Morgan, *The Historical World’s Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide*, 36-40.

5.2 The Government Building

The Government Building was a pavilion that resembled another famous building of the United States, the National Museum in Washington.¹⁰³ It served primarily as a War Department, the Bureau of Architecture, the Treasury Department, and the Post-office Department.¹⁰⁴ However, it also portrayed the most important activities of the government and progress of the United States during the nineteenth century. There were displayed coins, stamps and historical documents and a lot of very interesting items such as the Bible from 1559, the fragment of Plymouth Rock, pitch-pipe used by Puritans, and patented models of American inventions.¹⁰⁵

5.3 The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building

Although there were many things to see, most of the visitors were attracted by 4 specific buildings – the Electrical Building, the Transportation Building, the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building and the Machinery Hall. They contained inventions, which at the time, were a complete novelty for the public. The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building was particularly interesting because of its size which made it the largest building of that time.¹⁰⁶ From inside it even seemed larger than from the outside. Its height was 246 feet and contained many gold domes and decorative elements, as well as several huge electric chandeliers, each of which had a luminous intensity of more than 800,000 candles. Only this building was visited by more people than the entire Centennial Exposition in 1876.¹⁰⁷

Exhibited items were divided into 34 categories covering pharmaceuticals, furniture, decorations, various materials, as well as toys, silverware, and jewelry. It can be said that there was everything that was ever created for the needs of people.¹⁰⁸ On the first floor, there were mostly expositions from Europe and some from South America, Japan, India, Siam, and Persia. They showed visitors not only their culture but also what they excelled in. Italy has demonstrated work with marble and the art of sculpture, Switzerland their scientific instruments, and for example, China has demonstrated how to drink tea in a proper way.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 83.

¹⁰⁴ Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide*, 58.

¹⁰⁵ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 98.

¹⁰⁶ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 87.

¹⁰⁷ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 266.

¹⁰⁸ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 89-93.

¹⁰⁹ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 87-8.

5.4 The Electricity Building

One of the greatest miracles of the fair was electricity and that is why the Electricity Building was one of the most visited ones. This event was held at a time when households with electricity were not a standard, and so most of the visitors were carried away.¹¹⁰ The Columbian Exposition was the first world's fair ever, where electricity had such great a representation that it even got its own building. It was a brand-new industry and therefore an important milestone in human history. In this building, the organizers wanted to show what is possible with the help of the electricity and point out its benefits. Electricity was not limited to a simple building, but it also covered an exterior. All the buildings and roads were illuminated with 8,000 arc-shaped lamps, complemented by headlights, reflectors, and electric fountains which became a popular attraction especially in the evenings. This innovation often earned visitors' applause and admiration and helped the United States to stick in people's minds.¹¹¹

The organizers were proud that Edison and Siemens took part in this event. They believed that thanks to them visitors would be able to see all of the possible ways how to use electricity, and nothing would be omitted. Here, for the first time, Edison showed his kinetograph to the public, which was the first camera. It was introduced a flotilla of low-power luxury electric boats. Other innovations that appeared on the fair were phonograph, push-buttons, lamp-lighters, burglar alarms, radiators, ventilators, elevator motors and many others.¹¹² Fairgoers could also see the first kitchen that was whole powered by electricity and even contained a dishwasher and they could listen to the orchestra, which was transmitted from New York by a long-distance telephone, a metal cylinder that recorded a voice track, or an electric chair.¹¹³ The so-called "Tower of Light," created by Edison, was also built for the purpose of the exhibition. It was 82 feet long and covered with 18,000 light bulbs.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Tamara Wolski, "The World's Columbian Exposition's Lasting Effect on Chicago," *Historia* 19 (2010): 164-5, <http://www.eiu.edu/historia/2010Wolski.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 128.

¹¹² Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide*, 240-1.

¹¹³ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 247.

¹¹⁴ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 80.

5.5 The Machinery Hall

The Machinery Hall also known as the Palace of Machinery Arts “showed the inventive skills of American engineers in the transmission of power whether by electric, steam, hydraulic or pneumatic apparatus. There were over 70 classes and thousands of individual exhibits showing almost every mechanical device fashioned by the ingenuity of man.” Inside, there was everything that the people could need to build bridges, roads, houses, but also devices for clean water and sewerage system. There were also steam engines, steam pumps, carriages, iron shoemakers, locomotive engines, sewing machines, etc.¹¹⁵ Another inventions that worth mentioning were forty typewriters that had the ability to adapt to all languages, and a Yerkes telescope that had a value of half a million dollars.¹¹⁶ For everything to work properly and all machines were in full operation, there was consumed as much electricity as in 24,000 households.¹¹⁷

5.6 The Transportation Building

The Transportation Building contained everything that a person could imagine by transport. There were not only cars, but also a dining car, a baby carriage or a homing pigeon.¹¹⁸ The United States demonstrated a steamship model, engines, and more than 250 locomotive and railroad supply companies were represented there and presented 200,000-pound locomotives and train carriages. However, the steam-powered locomotive had the greatest success.¹¹⁹ Visitors see there the so-called “Ideal of Industry”, which attracted visitors mainly thanks to the large number of locomotives and carriages, as well as the detailed model of the town, which supposed to serve as a paradise for the workers. They could glimpse into the train, which was scheduled to be on the Chicago – New York line soon and which contained luxurious equipment such as crystal chandeliers, polished wood and comfortable seats.¹²⁰

5.7 The Anthropological Building

The Anthropological Building served primarily as a scientific center mapping the progress and development of the human race. People could see there how their ancestors looked like

¹¹⁵ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 192-4.

¹¹⁶ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 90-3.

¹¹⁷ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 192-4.

¹¹⁸ Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide*, 67.

¹¹⁹ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 179-186.

¹²⁰ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 265.

from prehistoric times to the present. Expositions included figurines of cavemen, aborigines, Indians of various tribes, ancient Romans, and Egyptian rulers. There were also displayed models of an ideal American man and American woman that were created by Harvard professor, according to the features and proportions of 25,000 Americans.¹²¹

5.8 The Woman's Building

The Woman's Building was the only building that was created and managed by women. Radical thinkers who believed that men and women were equal suggested that women should not have their own building but should present their success alongside men. According to them, women should be measured according to their achievements, not gender. This belief was unacceptable at the time, and so a separate building was created.¹²² The premises consist of mainly from handicraft and educational components.¹²³ Visitors could see there the model of the kindergarten, the hospital, the kitchen, then the library and records, the female lounge, the common room and the dressing room.¹²⁴ In addition to these expositions, a small industrial project was created to show the world that in many industrial disciplines the women were the first ones. It included, for example, ceramics, weaving, architecture, decorative arts and much more.

At that time women were seen more like housewives. At the fair, they were often compared with savage women from Midway Plaisance, who were referred to as the predecessor of a modern woman. In this pavilion, there were wall paintings that depicted a modern and primitive woman so people could see the long way and progress that the women's generation had gone.¹²⁵ Above that, the book guide written for the purpose of this world's fair praises the location of the Woman's Building and tells the visitors that no better place could be found for it, it was, in fact, situated at the intersection of the White City and Midway Plaisance, which say something about the attitude towards women at that time.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 76-7.

¹²² Erik Trump, "Primitive woman— domestic(ated) woman: The image of the primitive woman at the 1893 world's Columbian exposition," *Women's Studies* 27, no. 3 (1998): 218-9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.1998.9979208>.

¹²³ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 99.

¹²⁴ Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide*, 71-4.

¹²⁵ Trump, "Primitive woman— domestic(ated) woman," 216-220.

¹²⁶ Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide*, 71-4.

5.9 Curiosities

Many buildings also contained a variety of curiosities headed by giant cheese in the Agriculture Building that weighed 22,000 pounds,¹²⁷ Liberty Bell reproduction made of wheat, oats and rye and a whole map created from pickles. Mines and Mining Building presented Statue of Liberty, which was all created from salt.¹²⁸ There was also a locomotive that was sewn from a silk thread and a bridge made of soap. Interesting novelty was a pancake mixture Aunt Jemima, chewing gum with a fruity flavor, Pabst Blue Ribbon beer, and also the first zipper.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Rosenberg, *America at the Fair*, 108-9.

¹²⁸ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 74-94.

¹²⁹ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 247-8.

6 THE TWO FACES OF THE CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR

It can be said that the whole exhibition was divided into two parts. Jackson Park and its adjacent parts were called the White City, according to the gorgeous, white design of the buildings which surrounded the Court of Honor.¹³⁰ Thanks to this appearance, it was also sometimes called the New Jerusalem.¹³¹ The second part, named Midway Plaisance, occupying a rather smaller part of the fair, served rather to relaxation, to amuse visitors and experience exoticism.¹³² Both of these areas played an important role in shaping character of visitors. The White City was supposed to teach visitors about the development of human race through the theoretical knowledge and science.¹³³ Moreover, this part was considered to show people a bright future for humanity and determine the direction that American architecture would go.¹³⁴ Midway Plaisance, on the other hand, used the experience and deep insight and went back in time so that people could see how long way they had gone.¹³⁵

6.1 The White City

This part of the fair hosted “the more serious expositions” and it embodied all that the United States could boast at that time. All the main buildings and lagoons were situated there.¹³⁶ This area of the fair served primarily as a center for the gathering of Anglo-Saxon people, mostly Americans.¹³⁷

The city of Chicago and the White City gave an impression of a contrast between what the city had looked like and how the city would look like in the future. Chicago was, by its nature, a dirty city, full of smog and garbage, while the White City provided visitors with clean water, clean toilets, a sewerage system, electric lighting, a medical emergency and advanced urban transportation.¹³⁸ In short, it offered solutions to every problem that would arise in a modern city. The construction of the White City had good timing. It appeared at a time when many Americans were afraid of industrialization which was associated, for

¹³⁰ Halada, and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 95.

¹³¹ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 31.

¹³² Halada, and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 95.

¹³³ Mona Domosh, “A ‘civilized’ commerce: Gender, ‘race’, and empire at the 1893 Chicago Exposition,” *Cultural Geographies* 9, no. 2 (April 2002): 184, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474002eu242oa>.

¹³⁴ Miller, *City of the Century*, 382.

¹³⁵ Domosh, “A ‘civilized’ commerce,” 184.

¹³⁶ Halada, and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 95-6.

¹³⁷ “The Columbian Exposition and the Woman’s Building, Chicago, 1893,” Radford University.

¹³⁸ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 247-291

example, with polluted air, crime, gamblers, and similar problems. This “city of the future” which they saw at the fair gave them hope. It was a flawless, safe and clean.¹³⁹

In the middle of all this was the Court of Honor, which looked so magnificently and beautifully that even some of the visitors burst out crying. There were electric boats at the lagoons, and at night the whole area was illuminated with so much electricity that it used three times more of it than whole Chicago. The fair was generously financed, and the inhabitants of Chicago were proud of it. There was also a strong spirit of patriotism, especially on 4th July, when the Independence Day was celebrated in the United States. The highlight of the day was the anthem and huge fireworks in national colors. The colors then blended together and formed a great American flag. Eventually, a large wire mesh was raised and began to explode which formed George Washington portrait. On this day there was a record attendance, almost 300,000 guests.¹⁴⁰

Despite some people’s doubts about the overall look of the fair, the organizers did what they could. During the exhibition, even the smallest details were debugged to make everything look perfect and flawless. Nevertheless, despite the seemingly perfect atmosphere, some problems arose. There were disagreements between Burnham and Olmsted. Olmsted had the impression that the fair should constantly surprise visitors, so he came up with the idea of informal and random performances that would attract even more people and make them laugh. However, Burnham strongly disagreed. He had in mind a totally different picture – more serious with security guards on every corner. He made his idea real at least by prohibiting unauthorized photography. The permission to sell the fair images was granted only to one photographer and in addition, Burnham had the power to choose which photographs will be spread into the world. He approved only pictures of the upper class, elegantly dressed, with good manners.¹⁴¹

6.2 The Midway Plaisance

The Midway Plaisance was a strip of land around one mile long, passing through the center which connected Jackson Park and Washington Park.¹⁴² If a visitor wanted to get to the fair, one of the major entrances was through the Midway Plaisance. Therefore, it was guaranteed

¹³⁹ Miller, *City of the Century*, 493-4.

¹⁴⁰ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 247-291.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 302-3.

¹⁴² Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 60.

that the visitor would see it.¹⁴³ There were situated expositions which included aboriginal villages, markets and examples of non-white ethnic groups.¹⁴⁴

The entire concept of Midway Plaisance can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, this part of the exhibition was perceived as a medium for education and a mean of exchanging information about new cultures and gaining new experiences. In this case, people were pushed to engage their senses as well.¹⁴⁵ It was called an “illustrated encyclopedia of civilization.”¹⁴⁶ In order for the exposition to be positively evaluated, it was categorized under the Department of Ethnology and Archeology, which provided it with credibility.¹⁴⁷ The other way how to look at Midway Plaisance is that the ambassadors of other cultures were regarded only as objects that served as a source of amusement and as a shining example for confirming Western theories of human development and power.¹⁴⁸

In the nineteenth century, the idea was that some people and some races were inferior to the others and that only the white race was able to fully develop. This theory can be seen at the Chicago World’s Fair.¹⁴⁹ According to Sinder, Midway was built on a “sliding scale of humanity” principle, where the most civilized and the most developed nations were closer to the White City and least civilized, savage, races were on the edge of the area. It was some kind of evolutionary ladder which created a picture which perfectly cohered with the persuasion that Anglo-Saxons are on the very top.¹⁵⁰ It was Darwin’s evolutionary theory in practice.¹⁵¹ This step was justified by the fact that thanks to this composition, the visitor can see the progress of civilization in the best way. The closest to the White City were German and Irish villages, in the middle, was the Mohammedan world, West, and East Asia, and at the very end, there were races which were considered savage – the African nations and the Native Americans.¹⁵²

¹⁴³ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 235.

¹⁴⁴ “The Columbian Exposition and the Woman's Building, Chicago, 1893,” Radford University.

¹⁴⁵ Mandy Treagus, “Yuki Kihara’s Culture for Sale and the History of Pacific Cultural Performance,” in *Touring Pacific Cultures*, ed. Kalissa Alexeyeff and John Taylor (Acton: Anu Press, 2016), 143, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1crs3.15>.

¹⁴⁶ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 45.

¹⁴⁷ Josh Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway,” *Historia* 16 (2007): 16, <http://www.eiu.edu/historia/cole2.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ Treagus, “Yuki Kihara’s Culture for Sale and the History of Pacific Cultural Performance,” 143.

¹⁴⁹ Domosh, “A ‘civilized’ commerce: Gender,” 185.

¹⁵⁰ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair, 1876-1916*, 64-5.

¹⁵¹ Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway,” 16.

¹⁵² Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair, 1876-1916*, 64-5.

Visitors could see there a variety of different nations such as the South Seas islanders, Javanese, Egyptians, Bedouins, Brazilians, African tribes and Native Americans, who were somewhat exotic to them and all the villages were designed to highlight the white race.¹⁵³ All these villages represented more stereotypes than actual reality. It did not matter whether these nations had gone through some development or not. People simply wanted to see primitive and different races. For example, they had to wear typical clothing for their nation. This appearance gave the impression that those nations were inferior.¹⁵⁴ There were typical cabins and the earth was covered with the straw on which the natives were sitting. The whole ambiance had an outrageous impression on the visitor and the main reason for presenting different kinds of villages was to show evolutionary principles and to point out the hierarchy.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, the so-called live exhibits were the greatest attraction for visitors because they could see primitive cultures directly as the face to face experience and look into their development history.¹⁵⁶

One of the most popular villages in Midway was the Egyptian one, “which offered the exotic female as an object of sexual desire, clearly reflected in the form of ‘hootchy-cootchy’ dance”. This catch attention of many male visitors of the fair. Dahomeyan women, on the other hand, were seen as ugly and without any charm.¹⁵⁷

The Native Americans were portrayed as culturally distinct from the civilized white race and therefore also classified as inferior. For example, Native Americans who were also at the fair were at first supposed to show what material benefits they could bring to society, but instead, they were constantly mocked and treated harshly because they embodied just the opposite of what the White City was. They were considered as a potential threat.¹⁵⁸ Although Native Americans lived on American soil, they were still perceived as a savage nation. At Midway Plaisance, their expositions included teepees, their typical clothing, beaded jewelry, and other stereotypes, such as cooking food over the fire. The organizers insisted on these things, even though the majority of Native Americans were no longer living under these conditions. They did it just to show their racial inferiority.¹⁵⁹ The supremacy of the white

¹⁵³ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair, 1876-1916*, 60-4.

¹⁵⁴ Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway,” 17-8.

¹⁵⁵ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair, 1876-1916*, 60-4.

¹⁵⁶ Domosh, “A ‘civilized’ commerce,” 184.

¹⁵⁷ Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway,” 20-2.

¹⁵⁸ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair, 1876-1916*, 57-4.

¹⁵⁹ Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway,” 26.

race was visible the most at the opening ceremony, where the organizers invited several defeated Sioux chiefs to watch the celebration from the highest point of the Administration Building. “As one newspaper correspondent later reported the effect of the scene: ‘Nothing in the day’s occurrences appealed to sympathetic patriotism as much as this fallen majesty slowly filling out of sight as the flags of all nations swept satin kisses through the air, waving congratulations to cultured achievement and submissive admiration to a new world.’”¹⁶⁰

As the organizers were particularly interested in high attendance and came to the conclusion that the electrical ships were no longer interesting for visitors, they were constantly trying to attract their attention with something else. One of these attempts was the exotic attraction in the basin near the Court of Honor. Every Tuesday there a boat race was held. However, these races consisted only of the Midway villages. Each of them had their own traditional vessel which was typical for their country. Another attempt to increase attractiveness was Friday’s races between Native Americans, Africans, and Turks. It was typical for this match that no competitor could wear any clothes.¹⁶¹

The perception of the Midway Plaisance section varied. Some visitors said that the organizers did a great job with the creation of these exotic villages, but others said that everything was covered very superficially. This was commented on by Rand-Mc Nally’s guide. He wrote that a visitor who wants to visit Midway Plaisance should first visit White City to really appreciate that civilization difference.¹⁶² According to Rydell, this step was crucial for the Americans because they were able to get the supremacy of the white race, both domestically and abroad. The exhibits displayed the races that Anglo-Saxons should conquer for their own good. Only in this way, through the acceptance of religion, politics and government of whites, they could be civilized and accepted.¹⁶³

Part of this section was also the already mentioned Ferris Wheel, which could take 2,160 visitors at a time to the height of 264 feet. It consisted of 36 cabins and 60 people could fit in each. The ride took about 15 minutes, and for many visitors it was the first time they were so high. It gave them a unique opportunity to see the fair from the bird-eye perspective.

¹⁶⁰ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair, 1876-1916*, 57-4.

¹⁶¹ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 311.

¹⁶² Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair, 1876-1916*, 61-2.

¹⁶³ Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway,” 14.

Through the duration of the fair, over 1.5 million people tried this novelty and paid 50 cents for the ride.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ “Chicago’s Ferris wheel story,” Chicago Architecture Foundation, accessed April 10, 2018, <http://www.architecture.org/architecture-chicago/topics-news/evolving-chicago/chicagos-ferris-wheel-story/>.

7 THE BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST SHOW

Anglo-Americans believed that it is their destiny to expand over a new continent. America was seen it as something new and immaculate, offering endless possibilities. If people work hard, they could prosper. They were convinced that they have exceptional qualities which God had determined to spread them further. This belief is called Manifest Destiny. They did not take account whether other inhabitants live on the continent or not. Native Americans, who were considered a primitive nation and originally occupied the land, were either repressed or killed in order to fulfill the divine message, to utilize the land that was given to the new nation.¹⁶⁵ It was an era of massive migration, which gradually came to the West. This period started with the first English colony, Jamestown, at the beginning of the seventeenth century and ended at the end of the nineteenth century when the upheaval slowly began to quench. Buffalo trails turned into roads, and the Indian villages were replaced with reservations.¹⁶⁶

William Cody, alias Buffalo Bill, dealt with this historical period through his performance. Cody and his team visited over 1,000 cities and 12 countries all around the world and his show also found its place in Chicago. There it was called “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and the Congress of Rough Riders of the World”. It was a live show featuring cowboys and Indians, which reflected battles, buffalo hunts, and battles, and which portrayed Native Americans as a savage and aggressive nation.¹⁶⁷ Buffalo Bill was also many times associated with the name of Christopher Columbus. Columbus discovered the New World, and Cody, according to journalists, mediated this experience of conquering America to people.¹⁶⁸ This attraction, although very popular among the visitors of the fair, did not actually take place in the area of the famous exposition. According to the organizers, the show was inappropriate and did not match with the nature of the fair, and they refused to give Cody permission to perform there. Cody, however, rented a large land just next to the fair area where he performed his show. This move brought him many visitors.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ John W. Day, *America’s Most Sustainable Cities and Regions: Surviving the 21st Century Megatrends* (Göttingen: Copernicus, 2016), 9-10.

¹⁶⁶ Tim McNeese, *The American Frontier* (Dayton: Milliken Publishing Company, 2002), 2-93.

¹⁶⁷ McNeese, *The American Frontier*, 93.

¹⁶⁸ Ronald A. Reis, *Buffalo Bill Cody: Legends of the Wild West* (Langhorne: Chelsea House Publishers, 2010), 97.

¹⁶⁹ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 133.

Cody's performance always began with the cowboy show, followed by horseback riding of Germany, France, Russia, England and America soldiers. Very popular was also sharpshooter Annie Oakley, which hit every target. The performance continued with the scene when the Indians attacked the post office coach, which was immediately defeated by Buffalo Bill and his men. However, the most popular part of this show was the attack of the Indians on a log cabin with full of white men, whose Buffalo Bill rescued as well.¹⁷⁰

This show was perhaps inappropriate, but it was also very popular visitors especially because it awakened their patriotism and supported the idea of Manifest Destiny and therefore that Anglo-Americans really belong to the new continent.¹⁷¹ While the fair had from time to time the lack of visitors, the show Buffalo Bill enjoyed great success all the time. The organizers then regretted that they did not grant a license to Cody, as the attendance would be much larger, as well as the revenue. Overall, the show was seen by almost 4 million people¹⁷² and earned over one million dollars. Moreover, many visitors who visited this show said that the ones who did not see it as if they did not visit the world's fair at all. The Columbian Exposition was one of the most successful milestones for Cody.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 222-3.

¹⁷¹ McNeese, *The American Frontier*, 93.

¹⁷² Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 250-1.

¹⁷³ Reis, *Buffalo Bill Cody*, 96.

8 THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AT THE FAIR

As the United States planned the world's fair as an event to celebrate their progress, the glorious past and patriotism, they could not afford to fail. They had to act united and strong, so all racial, economic and political discrepancies between South and North had to be minimized. It had to be accepted that African Americans are unable to adapt to the required principles and have barbaric behavior. These regulations were given according to the principles which exclude all those who do not have an Anglo-Saxon origin. The fact that African American would appear at the fair was unacceptable and would be a defect in the beauty of the otherwise perfect White City¹⁷⁴ (nicknamed also "the great American white elephant" or "the white American's World's Fair" by the African Americans¹⁷⁵) and it would also ruin a utopian image of the perfect society.¹⁷⁶ However, for the African-Americans who survived slavery, this was a unique opportunity to tell people something about their own history and to show their achievements.¹⁷⁷ This request was inconceivable for the organizers from the very beginning, and the effort to exclude them from participation was great.¹⁷⁸

The conflict began when the commission chose people to represent the states at the fair. African Americans were disappointed that they were all "simon pure and lily white." This angered them because they had so far been excluded from all the important decisions and the only positions available for them were the positions of janitorial and other less important functions.¹⁷⁹ It went so far that they wanted to complain to the United States president himself. This action was unsuccessful as well, as the White House ignored all their requests.¹⁸⁰ This evoked the idea that there should be created a department exclusively for them. Something like the "Negro department" or "Afro-American annex", which was also rejected by the Board of Managers. Instead, a compromise was proposed. Some contributions from African Americans will be included at the fair after the approval by the

¹⁷⁴ Bridget R. Cooks, "Fixing Race: Visual Representations of African Americans at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *Patterns of Prejudice* 41, no. 5 (November 2007): 443-4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220701657278>.

¹⁷⁵ Elliott M. Rudwick, and August Meier, "'White City': Negroes and the Columbian Exposition," *Phylon* 26, no. 4 (4th Qtr. 1965), 354, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/273699>.

¹⁷⁶ Cooks, "Fixing Race," 443-4.

¹⁷⁷ Rudwick, and Meier, "'White City'," 354.

¹⁷⁸ Cooks, "Fixing Race," 443-4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 444-6.

¹⁸⁰ Rudwick, and Meier, "'White City'," 354.

screening committee. However, this committee had so ambiguous terms that the exhibits did not pass through the selection process.¹⁸¹ So they decided to use the Negro press to publish *The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not In The World's Columbian Exposition*, in which they would describe everything that happened. This pamphlet supposed to serve mainly for informing foreign visitors. They would be provided free of charge and even in four languages – English, Spanish, French, and German. Nevertheless, this idea was rejected by many Negro publishers because they thought that African Americans would only be ridiculed in the eyes of the world and though there was a racial discrimination, they would humiliate themselves by accepting it in front of all the foreign visitors who cannot do anything about it anyway. It would only make the situation worse and the attitude toward African Americans would be much more hostile. In the end, only a few hundred dollars were collected, which were enough to produce the brochure only in English.¹⁸²

Representatives eventually got to the exhibition thanks to Haiti, who announced that it would accept the invitation for the fair if the Douglass consul would oversee the preparation of their exposition. Frederick Douglass was an author and reformer who was interested in helping African Americans to contribute something to the fair. The exposition was very successful. The white men came to express their support to a man whom the country refused to respect.¹⁸³ Another example of African American representation can be seen in the Women's Building where several drawings and needlework were presented.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Cooks, "Fixing Race," 444-6.

¹⁸² Rudwick, and Meier, "'White City'," 356-7.

¹⁸³ Cooks, "Fixing Race," 444-6.

¹⁸⁴ Rudwick, and Meier, "'White City'," 359.

9 THE END OF THE FAIR

A record number of people visited the fair within the last month of its duration. Many of them did not think about the fact that the fair would be closed soon and so they wanted to take the opportunity to see it for the last time. The closing ceremony was meant to be spectacular. Many speeches, award ceremonies and acknowledgements for chief architects were planned¹⁸⁵, but everything was canceled because the mayor of Chicago, Carter Harrison, was assassinated a few days before the celebration. That is why the end of the Chicago World's Fair was held in a mournful and quiet spirit with flags at half-staff and with Beethoven's Funeral March.¹⁸⁶

Overall, the Columbian Exposition was rated as a big success. More than 27.5 million people from all over the world could admire 65,000 expositions, and it is said that 25% of all American citizens visited this fair.¹⁸⁷ Visitors from Europe talked about the United States as a big, rich and prosperous country. This was, after all, the purpose of the fair. Businessmen in Chicago praised their profits, as the event brought Chicago a great popularity. Perhaps for the first time in the history of mankind, Europe was seen as a past that was exhausted and obsolete, while the New World represented the future in terms of freedom and novelty.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 327-331.

¹⁸⁶ Bolotin, and Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 154.

¹⁸⁷ "A History of the Fair," University of Virginia.

¹⁸⁸ Halada, and Hlavačka, *Světové výstavy od Londýna 1851 po Hannover 2000*, 97.

CONCLUSION

The greatness and power of the United States at the World's Fair in Chicago was proved mainly by the overall look of the fair which gave the visitor an impression of perfection. No matter how much time, trouble, and human lives it cost. These qualities were embodied in the White City which provided countless bountiful buildings, restaurants, and lagoons, showed, in a rather utopian way, how the future of cities should look like. Everything was clean, safe and quiet. This place had everything that the United States could boast at that time and the aim was to show their best qualities. Above all, the electricity was the mayor success. It was so mainly because at that time the electricity was not a standard and the whole exhibition practically consumed three times more energy than the whole Chicago which gave the impression that the United States is a prosperous country which could afford such an expensive equipment and expositions. There were available many electrical-powered inventions to see, such as an electric chair or dishwasher. However, the heavy machinery and various modes of transport were also popular as well as. Moreover, there were lot of different types of curiosities which made the fair extraordinary. The walking through the exhibition grounds was made easier for visitors thanks to electric lifts and moveable sidewalks which were also not typical for the nineteenth century and therefore very popular.

The supremacy of the white race was captured in this case mainly at the Midway Plaisance, which was the place where the organizers placed all the nations they considered inferior and not good enough to place them to the area of the White City. Although their purpose was to educate visitors about their culture, the nations were, in fact, objects of scientific researches, amusement, and ridicule. The whole area was arranged from the most primitive and savage races to those who were considered the most developed, so fairgoers could see the development of the human race easily. Subconsciously, there was an impression created in their minds that they are more developed, cultivated and better than those nations. Although some nations have gone through some development and were civilized, they were still forced to dress and behave according to stereotypes, so the difference could be even more visible.

The representatives of the Africans Americans, who wanted to present their culture, were almost forbidden to participate at the fair. For the organizers, this step was inconceivable, and they denied their participation because the African Americans could damage the flawless appearance of the White City. After many unsuccessful attempts, they eventually managed to get to the fair but only to Midway Plaisance, where they shared the

exhibition with the citizens of Haiti and some women could show their handiwork in Woman's Building.

Manifest Destiny was expressed during the Buffalo Bill's show. As was mentioned, Manifest Destiny deals with the Anglo-Americans belief that God gave them the right to occupy the New World, regardless of whether or not there is any other population. They believed they had specific qualities that they should spread, and America was the land of infinite possibilities that helped them do so. Buffalo Bill in his show performed how the New World was conquered and showed Native Americans as a barbaric and primitive nation that constantly attacks white people, is aggressive and impossible to civilize. In many visitors, his performance evoked a sense of patriotism.

The last message of the World's Fair in Chicago was the attitude towards the women. During the event, women were trying to get a better position in society. Although the Woman's Building was designed by a woman, she was even then suspected that someone helped her because an ordinary woman would never design a building on her own. In addition, the organizers gave her a much smaller reward than to her male colleagues. Even though, this building was presented for the public in the best light, this in no way altered the fact that it was situated on the borders with the Midway Plaisance which categorized the women as less developed than men. It contained mainly expositions which categorized women as housewives. However, at the suggestion of some of the women, at least a small exposition has been organized, proving that in some disciplines women surpassed men.

According to the provided arguments, it can be said that the Columbian Exposition was linked to Christopher Columbus only nominally and its aims were much different than to remind this famous voyager. It had a big impact on the world, whether cultural, technological or anthropological. In the eyes of Europe, the United States was seen as a rich, prosperous country with a great potential. It eventually became a superpower, which was its main goal from the very beginning. It was, therefore, a great milestone in both American and world history.

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