

Hired Men • 1893 Chicago World's Fair • Family History

The PALIMPSEST

Volume 74, Number 4

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Winter 1993 \$4.50



Inside—



Many a Victorian parlor displayed souvenirs of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, like the *White City* album (left of chair). Called the White City because of the many dazzling white buildings, the exposition was the first world's fair in the Midwest. In this *Palimpsest*, enjoy a colorful exploration of the Chicago fair, as seen through the eyes of Iowans in 1893.



The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest (*pal'imp/sesht*) was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

THE PALIMPSEST (ISSN 0031-0360) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa. © 1993 State Historical Society of Iowa.



printed with soy-based ink
on recycled paper

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THE PALIMPSEST is received as a benefit of an active membership (\$30) or through subscription (\$14.95). Current single copies are \$4.50 plus \$1 postage. For prices of back issues, contact Publications.



SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ORDERS: Publications, SHSI, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, phone (319) 335-3916.

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS: *The Palimpsest* (quarterly popular history magazine), *Iowa Historian* (bimonthly newsletter), *The Goldfinch* (Iowa children's history magazine, 4 per school year), *The Annals of Iowa* (quarterly journal), books, research guides, technical leaflets. Catalogs available.

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FRONT COVER: From the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (or Chicago World's Fair), clockwise from bottom left: red souvenir program from Iowa Days; sheet music composed by Adelaide Gluck; three Singer sewing machine advertising cards; letter from state Columbian Commission to Governor Horace Boies; commemorative ribbon; Ferris Wheel souvenir. (From the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa, photographed by Chuck Greiner, Front Porch Studio.)

The PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Ginalie Swaim, Editor

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HIRED MEN

Iowa's Unsung Farm Resource

by Gordon Marshall

AS I WRITE of their hard life fifty years later, the hired men of my youth still have my admiration for their skills and stamina. They could drive a skittish team of horses up to a roaring threshing machine, repair a grain binder in a broiling harvest field, or husk corn with rhythm and speed down endless rows of cornstalks.

I grew up on a farm—"Marshall Fields," we called it—in western Iowa in the 1930s and 1940s. On our 320-acre-farm in Woodbury County, we fed beef cattle and raised corn and hogs. We usually hired two men and occasionally three. My dad, William Marshall, was the boss; he seldom worked in the fields except at peak periods. My older brother, Stan, and I were school boys during the 1930s and were mainly extra labor. Not until later, when I was employed as a hired man myself, did I really understand the nature of a hired man's job.

Although the history of midwestern farming has often been researched and recorded, the role of the hired man has been little noted. By hired men, I mean year-round or crop-year



Author (left) and brother Stanley bundle oats, 1938—a hot summer job for farm kids and hired men alike.



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Cattle shed and feed lot on the Marshall farm ("Marshall Fields") in Woodbury County.

workers on the farm, and not temporary or seasonal employees. Hired men were common on many Iowa farms. Numbers are hard to compare, however, because of the inconsistent definitions and counting methods in various censuses and agricultural reports. According to the 1925 Iowa Census (which reported county totals of hired men) about 13 percent of Iowa's 208,789 farms had year-round hired men. Of this 13 percent, 88 percent hired one man; 10 percent hired two; the remaining hired three or more. Other farmers called on family members, neighbors, and seasonal hired labor to meet extensive labor needs.

The role of the hired man is threatened to fade from memory, as do the earlier ways of farm life. Writers perhaps have been more interested in the hired man than have historians. Fiction has often presented the hired man as an uneducated bumpkin. However, no less an author than Willa Cather in *My Antonia* treated her fictional Nebraska farm hands with empathy and respect.

One of my earliest memories about hired

men is of a Saturday night in nearby Battle Creek during the early 1930s—the depth of the Great Depression. Our family was in town that night, and a stranger had gotten the okay from my mother to take me into a store. There he bought me a sack of Baby Ruth and Butterfingers penny candy bars. Then he asked me to deliver a message: "Tell your Dad I want a job." Dad was amused to hear of this approach, and Martin Nielsen was hired.

Martin's brother was already working for us. Like many hired men, Martin and Fred sometimes seemed like members of the family. They took my brother and me to several events, including a free movie sponsored by local merchants and, on one cold winter night, a sledding party at a hill at the edge of town. (Whenever Fred's girlfriend was along, we boys certainly noticed some petting techniques.) The winter that my parents and my brother and I got scarlet fever, Fred pitched in. I remember he made the lumpiest Cream of Wheat that we ever tried to eat.

A capable hired man was a respected mem-



Hired man Vernon Fowler on a 1929 Farmall with grain drill (April 1929). Both tractors and work horses were used on the Marshall farm through the 1930s. Nationally, as farm mechanization increased, the need for hired men decreased.

ber of the community and a valued employee of the farm family. Many successful farmers had been hired men themselves for varying periods of time. My father shared the philosophy of many others—that a farmer should work for awhile as a hired man because hiring oneself out to a good farmer gave one a broader view of farming practices. Most of our men had grade-school educations; only a few had made it through high school. But make no mistake, field work and especially livestock feeding required intelligent and experienced men.

Our hired men were local, farm-raised, single

men in their twenties. A farm family with several sons was always a potential source of hired labor (unless the family expanded operations and needed more hands). For instance, seven of the men we hired over the years were from two related, second-generation Danish families named Nielsen. In the early 1900s, western Iowa had benefited from a substantial immigration from Denmark, renowned in Europe as an agricultural and livestock center. As with many ethnic groups, Danish immigrants and the first and second generations sometimes started out as hired men. Yet Danes in particular assimilated rapidly into American life; they were more fluent in English and less associated with a national church or national organizations.

In western Iowa during the 1930-1942 period, monthly wages during the crop season ranged from \$25 to \$50 plus room and board for single men. Married hired men lived in separate dwellings (often a smaller home on the farmstead) and received housing and farm produce—meat, milk, eggs, and garden space typically—besides a monthly salary. On the last Saturday night of each month, Dad would sit at his rolltop desk in the living room and pay our hired men by check.

Because we only hired single men, they always lived with us, in our massive house built in 1924 of hollow tile. There were some separate facilities for the men. In the basement, the toilet, sink, and shower were for the hired men. On the second floor, their bedroom was large enough for both a double bed and a single bed and other furniture. They furnished their own work clothes except for long sheepskin coats and rubber raincoats. The men were expected to have their laundry done through their own families.

Nevertheless my mother, Mabel Marshall, had plenty to do to uphold our family's end of the work arrangement. There were very few days when she didn't have to cook for hungry hired men besides the family. The men were awakened by Dad at 5:30 A.M. in summer. We ate breakfast early, by 6 or 6:30, and had dinner at noon sharp. In the dining room, where we ate our typically ample, meat-and-potatoes meals, the men sat at Dad's right. After the meal all of us carried our dishes out to the kitchen. Before the men went back to work at 1

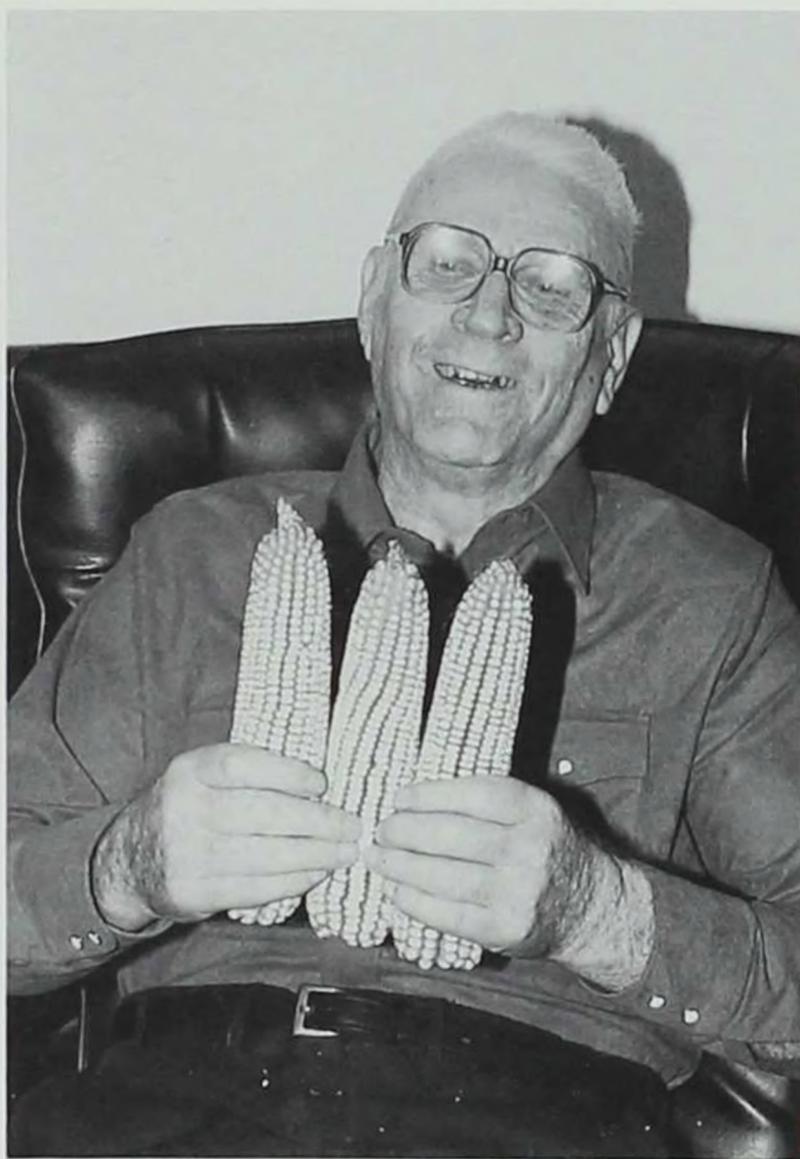
P.M., they lounged in the living room, napping or listening to pop or country music on the radio. Only during hay making, threshing, and silo filling did we also have a hearty afternoon lunch of sandwiches, cake, and coffee at the work site. Otherwise field work stopped in time to do chores before our 6 o'clock supper, another large meal.

The hired men's work ran the full range of corn and livestock farming. To feed the beef cattle, they stacked brome-alfalfa hay in the field (certified brome grass seed was a big specialty crop for us). They cut corn silage for one or two big silos, and shocked corn fodder in the field. Although we milked only four cows, mainly for home consumption, livestock chores were also time-consuming.

When husking corn, the men did no chores except caring for their horses. For a few years we used an old one-row, tank-top mechanical picker, a McCormick-Deering oddity. But most of these years, the hired men picked and husked our corn by hand, throwing the corn into a horse-drawn wagon outfitted with high bangboards to deflect the ears. This monotonous, grueling work, a strain on back, wrists, and hands, went from daylight to dark. The men were paid a bushel rate, five cents some years.

Despite the monotony of the corn harvest, one sunny October day turned into a memorable event. Howard Nielsen, our long-term hired man, was the fastest corn husker in our area and was exceedingly proud of the honor. In 1940 we had a very good corn crop, and twenty-five-year-old Howard was boasting how much he could pick in a day. Dad set up the challenge: just how much could he pick?

Usually the husker had to unload, but this time Dad offered to haul in Howard's loads from the fields, weigh them on our Fairbanks-Morse wagon scales, and then unload them into the crib. Howard took off at 6 A.M. He husked his way along the quarter-mile rows of our best bottomland cornfield at the rate of fifty to fifty-five large ears a minute. He worked for eleven hours, interrupted by an hour off at noon. He husked furiously while ears of corn flew through the air. Unfortunately, his total for the day, 247 bushels, received only county-wide attention, although 100 or 130 bushels was considered good. A later



On the fiftieth anniversary of Howard Nielsen's corn-husking feat, his family threw a surprise party for him at a local supper club, and the *Ida Grove Pioneer Record* published his picture—recognition due anyone who once husked fifty ears of corn a minute.

try by Howard's family for the *Guinness Book of Records* was unsuccessful, but he's held the record in my book.

In some ways the hired men were part of the family. My folks entertained occasionally with evening dinners, and the men, of course, ate with us, usually after a change of clothing. More often we entertained at Sunday noon dinner, but our men were almost never around during the day on Sunday. They did morning chores and then were off. Most of them owned their own Ford or Chevy coupe, parked in our old wooden corncrib (Dad was adamant about not letting them borrow our cars for going to town). One man would return for Sunday evening chores, occasionally bringing a friend to help him. There was no large meal to miss



Hired man Howard Nielsen and Stanley and Gordon Marshall fry steaks in the horse pasture, 1939.

on Sunday evenings; supper was usually casual as my family and I stood around eating meat sandwiches in our narrow kitchen.

By tagging along with the hired men as they worked, I learned how they spent their spare time. I heard uncensored, explicit stories of their activities. Women were high priority, met and entertained at dance halls, roller rinks, and beer taverns. Card playing at the local pool hall drew some of the men. Repairing their own or their relatives' autos was a hobby for a couple of men who were natural mechanics. The Thirties softball craze was in full swing in our neighborhood, and a few of our men played on diamonds laid out in local pastures. Although this was the Golden Age of the movies, going to movies did not rate high with them.

As the hired men and our family worked and lived together, we got to know each other well. Howard Nielsen, the champion corn husker, was a reddish-blond, athletic extrovert—a great dancer and ladies' man. He came from a large family and fought with his father. He had dropped out of high school after one week and

took on the hard life of a hired man. He loved livestock and horses and was the best man to drive our friskiest young team, Dude and May.

That skill with horses came in handy when the Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940 caught us with a herd of feeder cattle in the picked cornfields far from the farmstead. At daylight we took a team and high-wheeled wagon out into the roaring, breath-sucking storm. My brother and I crouched down in the wagon out of the wind, but Howard and my father faced the storm. While Dad was the lookout, Howard, in his sheepskin coat, drove the team against the wind. We eventually found the herd in the wide creek bed, snow-drifted over, and we drove them home.

Hans Schumacher came from a nearby farm family of German descent. Short and dark, quiet and unassuming, he liked machinery and worked on cars as a hobby. His schooling had ended at about the fifth grade.

Hans earned my gratitude one day when we were preparing to fill our silo. Dad sent me to the top to wire the blower pipe to the side of

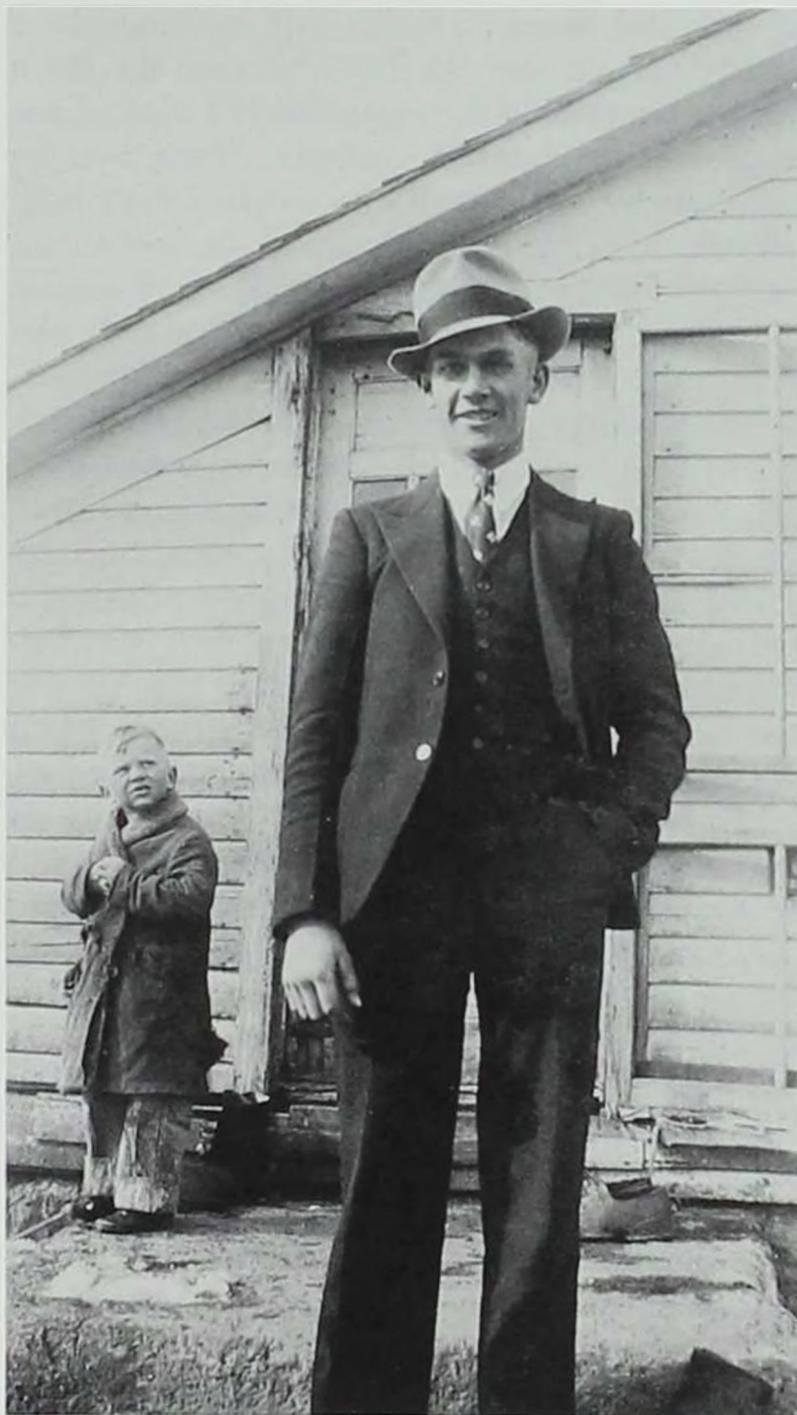
the silo. I scooted a quarter-way around the empty silo, straddling the masonry blocks. Then I looked down—from forty feet up. Since I was holding on with now-tense hands, where was the third hand to wire the pipe? Dad hollered. I froze. In a couple of minutes Hans was beside me. He wired the pipe and saw me safely down.

Quiet Hans made a memorable stir once. Our closest neighbor was careless about keeping his cows at home. They strayed into our pasture often and that really annoyed Hans. One day Hans brought a frequent stray into our cow barn, milked her, and then peppered her with a shotgun shell loaded with salt to send her home. About supper time an angry neighbor called my folks and charged: "You've shot my cow so bad she won't give any milk." We were eating, and my folks were very upset; feuding with neighbors was NOT DONE in our family. Knowing that Hans was behind it, I laughed so hard that for the only time in my life I was sent away without supper.

Wilfred Nielsen, slim and talkative, was the oldest in a Danish family of eight children, including five rambunctious brothers. A high school graduate, he was more of a reader than most of our hired men. Once he typed my presentation for a country-school debate. He enjoyed repairing autos and talking about cars.

Wilfred appeared in one memorable scene in our none-too-clean four-stanchion cow barn on a fall evening. It was in 1935, the middle of the depression. Dad was sitting on his milking stool when he abruptly told Wilfred that he couldn't afford to hire him for the winter. Wilfred was crushed; he badly needed the job. Dad relented and arranged the terms—room, board, and \$5 a month. At Christmas, Wilfred bought presents for our family from his meager salary. That winter, Wilfred was invaluable. Despite the record cold and snow, he kept the waterworks thawed so the livestock could have water, and he managed to reach the haystacks in the outlying fields, which seemed about as accessible as the North Pole.

Wilfred's career as our hired man ended dramatically one hot July day the next year. The drought had brought grasshoppers that summer, and Wilfred had taken my brother and me in his Model A Ford with the rumble seat to



Hired man Wilfred Nielsen in his Sunday best.

nearby Anthon to pick up sacks of poison bran to kill the grasshoppers. Coming home on a graded gravel road, Wilfred inexplicably ran off the road, and we overturned in a deep ditch. Wilfred was trapped under the car. I raced to a nearby farm for help, while Stan tried to free him with a jack. Eventually he was freed, but he suffered a broken jaw. After recovering, he worked in town as an auto mechanic and later as a self-employed electrician.

Just as we got to know the hired men who worked for us, we also got to know—indirectly—other farm families for whom hired men had worked. Hired men liked to gossip about the eccentricities of some farm families. One hired man enjoyed imitating a former boss,

washing his face in a basin and snorting like a thirsty workhorse. We heard about the farm woman who made the men take off their shoes to protect her hardwood floors. Some farmers were harsh taskmasters who worked their help relentlessly. One farmer insisted the hired man load the manure spreader by pitchfork as fast as the son could drive the spreader out to the field and unload it.

Hired men also liked to gossip about each other. There was the hired man who was fired because he would not get up in the morning when called. Some envy surfaced about the heavy-drinking hired man who worked for the area's biggest cattle feeder and was paid top wages. There were often discussions of the hired man and hired girl caught in bed when the farm woman returned home unexpectedly.

Meals were very important to these hard workers. In their eyes it was a sin for meals to be served late (we heard about an aunt of mine who was known for not serving meals on time). Worse sins, though rare, were bad cooking or skimpy servings (and again, at least one family in our area did serve poor meals.) Knowing how much food meant to these men, Mother enjoyed playing good-natured tricks on them on April Fool's Day—such as serving a thin layer of scalloped corn over cotton.

During the field-work season we often hired one unmarried "hired girl." She lived with us, staying in the guest bedroom. She helped with the housework and canning, but did no outside work other than perhaps picking vegetables in the garden. My mother was protective of these local women, who were usually about twenty or younger, but she had little occasion to worry about their involvement with our hired men. Generally the relationship between our hired men and the hired girl was quite casual without much fraternizing.

Despite the abundance of labor during the Great Depression, the steady mechanization of agriculture reduced the demand for hired men. In 1930, 29 percent of Iowa's farmers owned tractors; in 1940, 55 percent did. Nor could farmers pay hired men as well. Nationally, monthly wages with room and board dropped from \$37.50 in 1930 to \$27.50 in 1940 (the low point was 1935, when the average wage was \$22.00). For men who were furnished a house

rather than room and board (generally married men), wages fell from \$48.00 to \$37.50. In the depth of the depression, some farmers served eggs instead of meat to feed their heavy-eating corn pickers, and cut winter wages completely, providing only room, board, and work mittens.

Then the start of World War II affected the labor supply because of war-related employment and the draft. Farm laborers were now attracted to non-farm jobs because of the shorter hours, apparently higher wages, and less-confined employer-employee relationship. According to a 1943 Gallup Poll, 77 percent of American farmers considered "shortage of labor" to be the biggest problem facing them. Over a third of them advocated that farm hands be deferred from the draft. Indeed, World War II arrived at our farm when we realized that



Hans Schumacher, who found an effective way to rid the farm of a stray cow, was drafted during the war.



Howard Nielsen, who helped save livestock in an Iowa blizzard, fought in Panama during the war.

our hired men would be drafted. Surprising to me, a naive high school freshman, was how much these hard-working men dreaded "The Army." Nevertheless, Howard and Hans were drafted.

After the war, both Hans and Howard farmed successfully. In fact, nine of the twenty hired men who had worked for us made the transition from hired men to farmers. But not all nine prospered. I remember one day during the war. It was March 1—traditionally moving day in rural areas. On our county gravel road Dad and I met one of our former hired men, red-faced, whiskery, in the shabbiest of sheepskin overcoats. Driving a team and wagon and

towing a hay wagon filled with old farm equipment, he was moving from one rented farm to yet another. His image still comes to mind when I recall the hard times of some of our men. None of the other men who had worked for us became career hired men. Several operated small businesses, and others held mainly small-town jobs, in truck lines or feed mills, for example.

In 1942 Mom and Dad, only in their forties, sold the equipment and livestock, found a renter to farm the land, and moved to nearby Battle Creek. Now I became an occasional hired man, during high school. Although I lived with my family in town, I worked out by the day, \$2 per day, for a go-getting farmer named Fred Burow a couple miles north of town. Even though I had grown up on a farm, my farming and field work experience was very limited. On the Burows' farm I had my first experiences cultivating corn, bucking hay with horses, and running a tractor mower.

In the summer of 1943 Dad arranged for me to work for Fred "Fritz" Brueck, the renter on our farm, perhaps because Fritz's hired man had gone into the service. I was tickled to go out to the farm where I had grown up and to live with the Bruecks. I hadn't been comfortable eating a big breakfast at home in town, driving out each day to do a long day's work in the country, and then driving back into town. I preferred living out on the farm and being more involved with farm and stock operations. I worked for Fritz half the summer of 1943, a lot of Saturdays through my senior year of high school, and then from May 1944 until the end of the year, when I joined the navy.

Sometimes Fritz had another hired man besides me. The summer of 1943, Bob Brock helped some. Bob was not only a crony of mine but an ego booster: he was a town boy, and he naturally knew less about farming than I did. From the Sioux City employment office came Gene Lundgren, a young guy who talked a good game about farming, women, whatever—a typical braggart. Gene's claim to fame came when he forgot to drain the water out of the old John Deere tractor in early winter, cracking the block. He never got the nerve to tell Fritz about it.

In the winter my main job for Fritz was feed-

ing cattle. I drove Queen and Daisy (the work-horse team that Fritz had bought at our sale) to haul silage, hay, and corn fodder. In the short winter daylight I could just get the cattle fed in the morning before it was time to start feeding them their afternoon rations. How well I remember getting the flu during December's cold spell, but knowing that the cattle still had to be fed. Wrapped to the gills, I'd go out to feed the cattle and then go down into the base-

ment by the furnace and shiver for awhile.

Shocking oats meant long, hot days of stooping over the bundles and setting up the shocks. Then came threshing—in my mind, the most overrated event in the work year (perhaps because in our small threshing ring the hired men had to haul the bundles). Elmer Lake owned and operated the small Red River Special threshing machine, powered by a big, old McCormick-Deering tractor. He was a

Tractor Trouble

I GREW UP during the transition from workhorses to tractors. In the 1930s we had a row-crop Farmall tractor and a big, clumsy John Deere. But we also still had several teams of horses, which we used for hauling feed and some field work. Queen and Daisy made a particularly good team for a green kid to drive.

Then when I worked as a hired man myself, in the 1940s, I had my first experience operating tractors. It was a challenge starting the old John Deere "D," turning over its massive flywheel. Once I got it a'popping, I was loathe to shut it off for nearly any reason. We used it mainly for plowing, and once, without benefit of tractor lights, I plowed with it myself on a moonlit night. The furrows turned over so smoothly on those rolling hills, and so little steering was needed as the "D" lumbered along in the semi-darkness that it seemed I was just out for a ride.

The John Deere "A" was the best tractor of its day, and running it gave me the satisfaction of getting a lot of field work done. One spring day during

corn-planting season I was out in a far field with the "A." Mid-afternoon an approaching storm out of the west showed every indication of being a "gully washer" so I decided to harrow the just-planted field. I zoomed over on the tractor to a wide, grassy gulch and lined up on the harrow by setting my uphill brake hard. Suddenly I was flying through the air—as was the tractor. I knew I didn't want that tractor landing on me, and I lit upon the ground running. The tractor landed upside down like an up-ended green bug, roaring mightily.

The tractor was hauled away to town as I, a humbled hired man, looked on. My boss, Fritz Brueck, and my dad were relieved at my escape, and little was said about my stupidity. Of course, my buddy Bob Brock did refer to me not as G. W. Marshall but T. W. Marshall ("tractor wrecker").

There were lighter moments with tractors, too. For several spring days Curtis Iversen, Alvin Schultz, and I had been driving tractors hooked to manure spreaders. The layer of rich, leached manure in Fritz's feed

yards was stripped off, dumped into our spreaders with a hydraulic loader, hauled by tractor to the fields, and spread on our cropland. Curtis and Alvin each bragged repeatedly about the superior power of his tractor—Alvin on a small, new John Deere "B," and Curtis on an old Farmall on steel-lugged wheels.

Fritz had warned me about the seriousness of a tractor breakdown in wartime. Certainly, tractor pulls were forbidden. Nevertheless, as soon as the hauling was done and our boss had headed for town, the boys prepared for their tractor pull. I even found the log chain—so I was a facilitator, no less. The tractors were chained back-to-back in the barnyard near the gas pump. Yet in this most unscientific test, the slope and the drawbar heights could not be equalized. The result was that Curtis on the Farmall was inched backwards slightly downhill as he, by every physical contortion, struggled against defeat to Alvin. I laughed so hard that I lay helplessly gasping for breath across a horizontal gas barrel.

—Gordon Marshall

wise, fatherly, safety-minded boss for our generally green crew of bundle haulers.

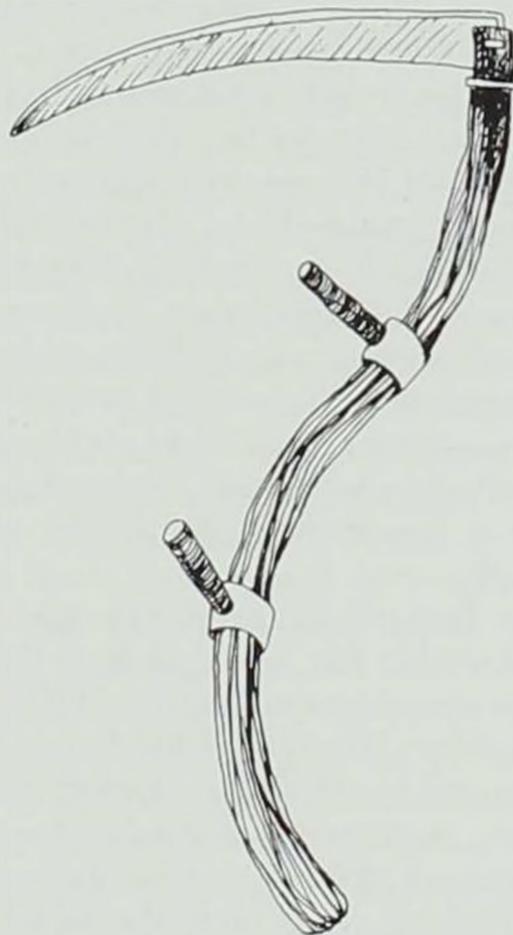
Our teams would walk along the rows of shocks while we pitched the bundles onto the hayrack and artfully built our loads until the rack was full. Then we hauled the load to the farmstead, where the threshing machine separated the grain from the chaff, and blew the straw into the barn or onto a strawstack.

We young guys soon grew tired of the grind, despite our sociable competitions to haul the biggest load—or to even just keep up. Fortunately the threshing dinners interrupted the hot workday. I would quickly unload my last load of the morning into the separator, carefully water my sweaty team at a scummy water trough and tie the horses in a barn, then head down to a cool farmhouse basement to wash off a coating of chaff, dirt, and sweat. Then I would join the gang at the long table for Swiss steak and mashed potatoes and gravy served by friendly, flushed women. We ate quickly with little talk. After a dessert of pineapple upside-down cake, there was time for a brief sit in the shade of the yard for a little talk and kidding around. Then it was back to work. Trotting the team along a rough lane back to the oat field, I stood on the rack trying to digest my big dinner.

A short hitch in the navy and a year at college intervened before I returned to our farm for the summer of 1947, to work for our current renter, Alvin Iversen. I used to show off at noon by leaping the backyard fence to get to dinner. But it was worth the leap for Lena Iversen's cooking. She was an efficient woman who could finish the housework and make a sour cream raisin pie by noon, and play the organ at church all afternoon.

I remember coming back to Alvin's early on warm Sunday nights after dull Sundays spent with the folks in town, not seeing pals or dating. Smoking a cigarette out on the east balcony, I looked beyond the huge cottonwoods that bordered the front yard. I was frustrated that my old house was no longer home. When I had worked for Bruecks, I had been too busy and too young to reflect on that. I knew that I would have to try other kinds of summer jobs, away from Battle Creek. The summer of 1947 turned out to be my farewell as a hired man.

Willa Cather summed it up best about hired men in her novel *My Antonia*: "What good fellows they were, how much they knew, and how many things they had kept faith with!" When my father died in 1972, several of our former hired men stopped by to pay their respects to my mother. On our farm Dad had been a fanatic about weed control, and we had cut weeds endlessly every summer. My brother and I now offered each man one of the scythes from the farm. Hans Schumacher and Winston Mortensen, who had worked several years for us, accepted a scythe as a treasured reminder of their days at "Marshall Fields." Howard Nielsen declined, wanting "no damn scythe." I understood both responses—that of the fellows who wanted to remember how hard they had worked, and that of the fellow who would just as soon forget. □



ART BY M. TRAFTON

Sundays at the Fair

Iowa and the Sunday Closing of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition

by Merle Davis

IN THE LATE nineteenth century, as plans were laid to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World by holding a grand international fair in the United States, the fair became embroiled in an increasingly acrimonious debate over whether the exposition would be open on Sundays.

Americans' Sunday activities had long been regulated by various statutes commonly called blue laws. The laws differed from state to state: in Iowa a term in jail or a fine of one to five dollars—no insignificant sum at that time—was the punishment for any person “found on the first day of the week, commonly called the Sabbath,” engaged in a number of proscribed activities, including fishing, hunting, dancing, buying or selling property, “or in any labor, the work of necessity and charity only excepted.” The Iowa law, like similar laws in most other states, exempted persons, such as Jews and Seventh-day Adventists, “who conscientiously observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.”

The federal government's role in the proposed world's fair would make it the prime target for those demanding that the fair be closed on Sundays. In April 1890 federal legislation was enacted to hold “an international exhibition of arts, industries, manufacturers, and the products of the soil, mine, and sea.” The act established a national World's Columbian Commission (state commissions would follow), selected Chicago as the host city, and set dates for May through October. The act also provided up to 1.5 million federal dollars to cover the

costs of the commission and to erect and maintain certain government buildings and exhibits, if Chicago first raised ten million dollars.

Even before this legislation, demands were already being made for the fair to be closed on Sundays. As early as October 1889, for example, the Synod of Iowa of the Presbyterian Church placed itself “emphatically on record as opposed to the opening of the Columbian Exposition on the Sabbath day, as not only condemned by the Christian conscience, but by the best progressive thought of the American nation.” After April 1890, petitions demanding the fair be closed on Sundays began trickling in from across the nation. What began as a trickle soon became a flood. Indeed, during the 1891/92 session of Congress, 590 pages of fine print in the *Congressional Record* contain lists of petitions demanding Sunday closing.

These petitions normally came from main-line Protestant churches or from Christian young people's societies, such as the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, an interdenominational evangelical youth ministry, or from other organizations with strong religious connections, such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

The petitions normally asked simply that the exposition be closed on Sundays. But some petitions added other requests as well—that Congress prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors at the fair and censor the fair's art displays. For instance, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Morning Sun, Iowa, “prayed that federal aid to the Columbian Exposition be conditioned on the closing of the Exposition on

Sunday, that the sale of intoxicating liquors be prohibited on the grounds, and that purity be preserved in the art department." Similar petitions came from Christian Endeavor societies and Protestant churches across Iowa.

In the winter and spring of 1892, as the Iowa General Assembly considered appropriating \$125,000 for an Iowa exhibit at the fair, petitions began to flood into Des Moines from organizations such as the WCTU of Mount Vernon and Christian Endeavor societies of Nora Springs, Cresco, Pleasant Plain, and other places, all praying for Sunday closing.

Protestant denominations in Iowa commonly demanded a strict observance of the Christian Sabbath. The Synod of Iowa of the United Presbyterian Church—which also denounced Sunday newspapers “as one of the most stealthy and potent influences” against the Sabbath—“joined heartily with the good people in all the nation” to close the exposition on Sundays. Similarly, the Upper Iowa Annual Conference

The Sabbath movement commonly opposed Sunday newspapers and even the operation of Sunday trains.

of the Methodist Episcopal Church denounced the “disposition on the part of some of our people, especially our younger members, to regard the Sabbath as a holiday rather than a holy day, a day for worship and spiritual culture, seeking their own pleasure in buggy riding, visiting, picnicing, or other recreations,” and implored the Columbian Commissioners to close the fair “on the Lord’s Day and thus place the American Christian Sabbath on exhibit before the world in contrast with the continental Sabbath.”

Asked his opinion, William Stevens Perry, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Iowa, feared that Sunday had become “a more dissipated week-day.” To the Methodist Episcopal’s Des Moines Annual Conference, efforts to open the fair on Sundays were “un-Christian and un-American.”

In January 1891, *The Independent*, a weekly religious magazine from New York, queried

senators and congressmen and published their answers in a lengthy article titled “Shall We Obey God’s Commandment?” The Iowa delegation was far from unanimous. “I am opposed to Sunday Amusements,” answered Congressman Isaac S. Struble, Republican from LeMars, “believing the day should be observed more in accordance with the views of Christian people than by attending ball-plays, theaters, exhibitions, etc.; and so am opposed to opening the Exposition on Sunday.” In a similar vein, Congressman Edward R. Hays, Republican from Knoxville replied that “All business of this whole country . . . should respect the American Sabbath by closing its doors.”

Congressman Walter I. Hayes, Democrat from Clinton, took the opposite view: “There are a great class of laboring people that have no other time at their disposal, and who, if it is not so opened, will be practically debarred from its benefits, altho there are none more entitled or to whom greater consideration should be shown.”

Much of the debate dealt with the effect Sunday closing would have on working-class people—either those visiting the fair, or those employed in fair-related jobs. “Every blow dealt against the Sabbath is a blow at the interests of the working-man,” said the Methodist Episcopal *Christian Advocate*. Sunday openings “will not only compel hundreds of men to work on that day needlessly, but will put into the hands of greedy capitalists and tyrannical corporations a new fetter with which to increase the bitterness of the toils of working-men.” Indeed, some fair workers labored very long hours. Iowa editor Charles Ashton wrote about a gate keeper who had “been on duty ninety-eight hours in the week of seven days. He wants the fair closed,” Ashton reported, “he can’t stand the open Sunday.”

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa was concerned that Sunday openings would “increase the toil and traffic and turmoil of Chicago’s Sunday” and “trample on the rights of conscience and the liberty to the rest of the exhibitors and the army of employees . . . in transporting and feeding visitors.” The Lutheran delegates feared that opening on Sunday would “proclaim to the world that . . . our country has surrendered the American

Sabbath, the most distinctive of American institutions, and enthroned in its place the Continental Sunday, 'the holiday of despotism.' They blamed "the miserly greed for gold and the prodigal greed for amusement and the infidel hatred of Christianity" for "most of the clamor for Sunday opening."

This echoed the arguments of the American Sabbath Union, an alliance of Christian denominations, Sabbath associations, and reform groups such as the WCTU. The American Sabbath Union, and like-minded groups such as the Iowa Sabbath Association, demanded a stricter observance of the Sabbath on theological grounds. While they argued that stricter observance would give working people a day off, they still intended to dictate how that day off would be spent. Leaders of the Sabbath movement commonly opposed Sunday newspapers and even the operation of trains on Sundays. Convened in Des Moines in 1891, American Sabbath Union leaders asked for help from the American Federation of Labor (AFL) "in securing the gates" of the fair "so that God may be honored and the workingmen

"All business . . . should respect the American Sabbath by closing its doors."

employed on the fair grounds and by the railroads running thereto may have their rest day."

The AFL agreed that "the Rest day should be zealously guarded against the encroachment of those who live upon the labor of others." But their accord ended there. At its 1892 convention, AFL president Samuel Gompers told the delegates that "the days the wage-earners will have the best opportunity to visit the World's Fair will be on Sundays. . . . A visit to the Exposition and a view of the arts and handicrafts of the peoples of all nations can only ennoble the visitor. . . . There is no idea nor thought for the desecration of the Sabbath."

Although trade unions were more concerned with wages, hours, working conditions, and the right to organize, they did enter the debate over Sunday closing. *The Locomotive Fireman's Magazine*, then edited by labor leader Eugene

Victor Debs, labeled as "bigots" and "cranks" those who wanted Sunday closing, and insisted that "the old theologies have no place in these practical, common-sense days." Trade unions from across the nation petitioned Congress to

"The old theologies have no place in these practical, common-sense days."

open the exposition on Sundays, including local unions in Iowa such as Waterloo's Lodge No. 314 of the International Association of Machinists; Burlington's Tin, Sheet-Iron and Cornice Workers; Sioux City's Cigar-Makers; and Dubuque's local union of Carpenters and Joiners. Ultimately, petitions representing as many as 300,000 working people asked Congress not to act on Sunday closing.

Organized labor was not alone in its opposition. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, social reformer and militant feminist, declared, "When the vast army of men who will construct the magnificent buildings and beautify the grounds, who day by day will lift the heavy machinery and foreign exhibits in place, desire to bring their wives and children to the exposition, Sunday will be the only day they will have leisure to do so," she wrote; "the only day, too, when farmhands of the country, men and women from the workshops and the factories, clerks from the busy marts of trade, servants from their domestic vocations, can claim a few hours of recreation."

Opposition to Sunday closing also came from those who feared governmental interference. Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh-Day Baptists—who considered Saturday the Sabbath—were among the most outspoken. Petitions from their local churches poured into Congress. One of many was from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Audubon, Iowa, protesting "against committing the United States Government to a union of religion and state" by closing the fair on Sunday or creating "any other religious legislation." Fearing that congressional closing of the fair on Sundays would break down the separation of church and state, citizens from Buchanan and Palo Alto

counties petitioned Congress "not to legislate on any religious matter and that the World's Fair may be kept open on Sunday."

Congress acted on the question in the summer of 1892. It authorized that five million commemorative silver half-dollars be given to the fair's directors to help underwrite fair expenses, but then tacked on a proviso that all appropriations hinged on the fair being closed "on the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday." This was the first national Sunday legislation ever adopted in the United States. It was, in effect, a national blue law.

To the Reverend Wilbur F. Crafts, the vote was a victory. Crafts, a spokesman for the American Sabbath Union, had considered the "chief workers" for Sunday openings "liquor dealers, infidels, and Seventh day Adventists." "The Sabbath has won its Waterloo in the official votes at Washington," he rejoiced, "and if this victory is promptly followed up in Congress and in our States and cities, the Continental Sunday of toil and dissipation, the worst of foreign invaders, will soon be driven from our land."

Not everyone was so confident. Consider the Webster City *Graphic-Herald's* editorial, "CLOSE the GATES or WE'LL KILL." "The theory of an open Fair on Sunday," the paper reflected, "leaves every one free to remain away from

"Every blow dealt against the Sabbath is a blow at the . . . working-man."

the grounds in compliance with their convictions of duty. But the Sunday closers would compel everybody . . . to comply with the religious-enforcing statute. The Book which says, 'Remember the Sabbath day,' also says, 'Thou shalt not kill,' yet so furious is the zeal of the closers to keep the gates shut to show the world 'that we are a Christian nation,' that they even appeal to the President to enforce closing, if need be, by military force! Who could doubt our Christianity after visiting Chicago some fine Monday morning and finding the outer walls of the Fair grounds piled high with bloody corpses of men, deliberately shot down

like dogs, that, forsooth, we might show to the heathen world there assembled, 'that we are a Christian nation'?"

The legislation did not have the effect Congress intended. The fair's directors accepted the souvenir Columbian half-dollars, but they balked at closing on Sundays. The matter eventually reached the courts, where legal maneuverings dragged on through the summer and fall of 1893 (the fair ran from May through

"Furious is the zeal . . . to show the world 'that we are a Christian nation.'"

October). The upshot was that the fair remained open most Sundays—despite action by Congress, threatened boycotts by church groups, and lamentations by Sabbatarians.

Several states, including Iowa, and some foreign countries closed their exhibits or buildings on Sundays. Many Christian groups were jubilant when Sunday attendance at the fair fell far below expectations. A resolution by the Northwest Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the fall of 1893 epitomized these sentiments: "We rejoice that the number in attendance upon that day has been much smaller than upon other days. We believe that this fact has exalted the Sabbath not only in the eyes of European visitors, but also in the minds of the directors and all other American citizens."

Despite all the turmoil surrounding the Sunday question, for the thousands who visited the fair—even on Sunday—the sights of the fair would remain embedded in their memories as one of the great events of their lives. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Major sources include Wilbur F. Crafts, *The Sabbath of Man* (Washington, D.C., 1902 ed.); William Addison Blakely, *American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation* (Washington, D.C., 1911 ed.); *Christian Advocate*, *The Independent*, and *Congressional Record* for 1890-1893; and synod and annual conference proceedings of Iowa religious denominations, 1888-1894 (Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian were especially useful).

THE WORLD'S EXPOSITION OF 1892.

Committees' Headquarters, 183 DEARBORN STREET.

DE WITT C. CREGIER, Chairman.
E. F. CRAIGIN, Secretary.

Chicago, August 19- 1889.

Governor Larrabee,
Des Moines, Iowa.

Dear Sir:-

JAMES W. SCOTT, Publisher
CHICAGO HERALD CO., Proprietor
109 & 112 FIFTH AVENUE.

THE CHICAGO HERALD

to expressed
Worlds Fair of
her influential
mce for

July 24, 1889.

the discovery of American
connection

Dear Sir:- That the quadri-cent
should be announced

THE WORLD'S EXPOSITION OF 1892.

Committees' Headquarters, 183 DEARBORN STREET.

DE WITT C. CREGIER, Chairman.
E. F. CRAIGIN, Secretary.

TELEPHONE 2224.

Chicago, NOV 7- 1889.

DEAR SIR:-

WE ARE NOTIFIED ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THE MISSOURI
DELEGATION IS GOING TO MONTGOMERY, ALA. PREPARED TO MAKE A STRONG
FIGHT FOR ST. LOUIS AND TO ANTAGONIZE CHICAGO IN EVERY WAY.
PLEASE HAVE THE DELEGATION FROM YOUR STATE AS STRONG AS
POSSIBLE AND PREPARED FOR ANYTHING THEY MAY SPRING.

YOURS TRULY,

E. F. Craigin
SECRETARY.

The Herald,

New York, Aug. 15, 1889.

DEAR SIR:

Are you in favor of having
the Columbus Exposition of 1892 in New
York City?

What effect do you think such an
Exhibition will have on our trade and
commerce in general?

Are you in favor
of the exhibition on the
description plan, advoca
as opposed to Govern
A stamped
and your early r

No.
A beneficial effect



TELEGRAM.
THIS COMPANY TRANSMITS AND DELIVERS messages only on conditions limiting its liability, which have been
assented to by the sender of the following message.
Errors can be guarded against only by the sender's care in writing and in the delivery of the message.
Errors will not hold the sender liable for errors in the message or for any loss or damage to the message.
This is an UNREPEATED MESSAGE and is delivered by request of the sender, under the conditions named above.
ALBERT B. CHANDLER, First and General Manager
HENRY ROSENBERG, Vice President
EDWARD C. PLATT, Treasurer
GEORGE R. WILLIAMSON, Sec'y and Auditor.

NEW YORK, SENT BY, RECEIVED BY, RECEIVED AT
Dated Chicago 26 2 Me 7
To Gov Larrabee See 13
Received at DESMOINES, IOWA.

Chicago and the whole state of delinoids are very
anxious to secure the worlds fair for 92 in
Chicago. Can you not prevail upon your Convention
which meets tomorrow to pass a resolution
endorsing Chicago as, the, place for the worlds
fair. Please regard this as private as we would
like to have it done without any suggestion
from our state
A M Cullom

Letters and telegrams (and ribbon, opposite page) lobby for Chicago as exposition's host city. Planned for 1892, the fair was postponed one year.

PHOTOGRAPHY BOTH PAGES BY CHUCK GREINER

Iowans at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition

*What they took to the fair,
what they did there,
and what they brought home*

by Ginalie Swaim
with Becky Hawbaker and Lisa Moran

THE LETTER to the Iowa governor was frantic. "We are notified on good authority that the Missouri delegation is . . . prepared to make a strong fight for St. Louis and to antagonize Chicago in every way. Please," the Chicago committee begged William Larrabee, "have the delegation from your state as strong as possible and prepared for anything they may spring."

The fight had been going on for most of 1889. Which American city would host the upcoming World's Columbian Exposition—St. Louis, Washington, D.C., New York City, or Chicago?

In an age when international expositions had become major commercial and cultural statements, the stakes were high. This would be the first exposition in the Midwest, and Chicago needed the support of midwestern states, whose connections with this major market were solid. Asking for Larrabee's support, the *Chicago Herald* reminded him that "Chicago excels all other cities in the United States. It is the centre of thirty eight railroads that extend in all directions. It has immense fireproof

hotels. . . . Its markets are unrivalled and supplied from the whole country."

Having risen from the Great Fire of 1871, Chicago had now set out to prove that it was a match for any East Coast or European metropolis. Chicago's mayor boasted that Chicago would "truly manifest American life, American ideas and American enterprise." *Scribner's Magazine* rejoined that "the woods are full of citizens willing to begin at sunrise and discourse to you until midnight of the wonders of Chicago." So much hot air was expended on the issue that Chicago was dubbed "The Windy City."

The decision became a congressional one, because federal appropriations were involved. Finally in 1890, on the eighth ballot, Chicago won. The planners would now begin transforming a square mile or so of swamp and sand into "a dream city," a "White City." Laced with reflecting pools and lagoons, graced with Frederick Law Olmsted's landscaping, the exposition buildings that arose became a message of high culture and high hopes. As Iowan





Charles Ashton preened, the exposition “brushed the last ash from the plumage of the victorious young Phoenix and sent it soaring high over the startled eyes of two continents. It was greater than Paris, greater than London, greater than Vienna.”

This ideal White City was also far greater than its host city, which lay beyond the exposition gates. As America’s second largest city, populated by a million people, Chicago suffered the overcrowding, poverty, and crime that plagued all American metropolises, especially those with large immigrant populations. *Harper’s Monthly* described the exposition as “the blossom” and Chicago as “the root,” holding “in its grimy fibres as many human activities as the mind of man can well conceive.” The long-lasting economic panic of 1893 would

descend on the city soon after Opening Day (certainly sharpening the fair investors’ appetite for profits). A local smallpox epidemic would ravage the inner city as the fair closed. Surrounding the fantasy of the fair was the reality of humanity and its problems.

NEVERTHELESS, Iowa had plenty of reasons to rejoice that a midwestern city had won this business bonanza. Chicago provided the markets for Iowa’s products. Iowa’s next governor, Horace Boies, in 1893, credited Iowa’s “brawny arms and steady nerves” for the products “from field and mine and shop” that helped “to swell the mighty torrent of trade that has built” Chicago.

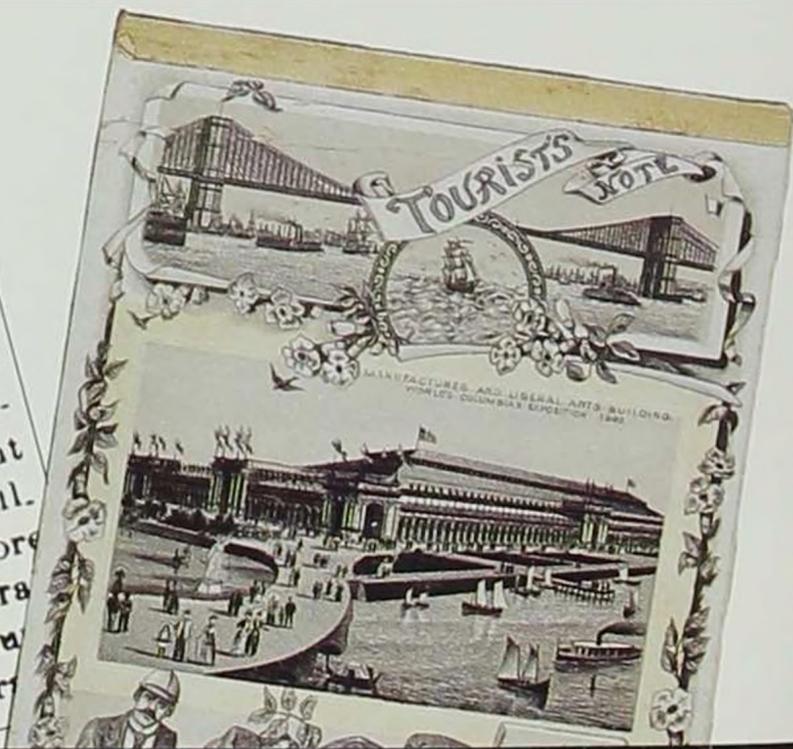
And so Iowa—and the nation—next produced a mighty torrent of tourists. Historians estimate between 12 and 27 million attended the fair, many more than once. After Chicagoans themselves, historian William Cronon writes, “the next-largest group of visitors came from Chicago’s hinterland. Most were rural farmers and residents of small towns in the Mississippi Valley.” According to registration books in the Iowa Building, between 700 and 1,000 Iowans signed in some days. Now, a century later, we’ll look at the World’s Columbian Exposition through the eyes of a few of those Iowans, who left some record of their impressions of the fair. Here are a few of

THE FAIR OF THE AGES.

The great fair is nearing its close. At this writing Thursday evening October 5, but 26 days of the fair remain. Three of these are Sabbaths, so that but 24 working days remain to view the never equalled exhibit of the wonders of Agriculture, invention, education, industry, art and science. Those who fail to see the vast show may never see its equal.

One of the marvels of the great fair is the electrical exhibit. The wonderful progress made in the development of invention in applying and controlling electric force in the past half-century borders on the supernatural. We see the intramural marvellous

Upper left: H. Roy Mosnat photographed scenes at the fair and then created a small album bound by leather ties. Left: One of Charles Ashton’s weekly columns for the *Guthrie*. Below: Tablet used by Sarah Jane Kimball as a fair diary. Note the fair’s Manufacturing and Liberal Arts Building on tablet cover.





Eliza Hursey and Frank Hinton of Keokuk County honeymooned at the World's Fair. Below: Statues, canals and lagoons, and classical architecture were main components of the fair.

the fairgoers you'll encounter in the following pages.

- Sarah Jane Kimball traveled twice to the fair from rural Jones County and stayed at least a week each time. In a "Tourist's Note" tablet purchased beforehand in nearby Wyoming, Iowa, she jotted down her impressions of the fair.

- Frank Hinton and Eliza Hursey spent their honeymoon at the fair. (So did many others, according to a *Harper's* journalist who noted "the profusion of newly married couples" and quipped that the grooms could thereby "kill two birds with one stone.") On the back of the Hinton's wedding portrait, taken in Ottumwa, Iowa, is an illustration of Columbus landing in America. Although the Columbus motif had permeated marketing, Hinton was not much impressed by the Columbiana at the fair. "Ships. Nina, Pinta, Ferdinand Isabella &c." was all he noted in his diary.

- Charles Ashton, editor of the Guthrie Center *Guthrian*, was also one of eleven members of the Iowa Columbian Commission. Written from the fair, his weekly columns in the *Guthrian* are detailed and exuberant commentary.

- H. Roy Mosnat of Belle Plaine took his camera to the fair. Candid photos of the fair are not common today, and were a costly venture then. Amateur photographers were required to

buy a two-dollar permit—four times the daily admission fee—to use their cameras, so intent were the fair's directors on controlling the portrayal of the fair and protecting the monopoly of Chicago photographer C. W. Arnold, who focused on the grandeur, not the humanity, of the fair.

- Charles G. Simpson, like other young Iowa men, had a summer job at the fair. His letters home give us an insider's view.

The exposition would introduce into American culture diverse icons: Aunt Jemima marketed pancakes, Pabst Beer won a blue ribbon, and the Pledge of Allegiance was first chanted nationally by schoolchildren as the fair was dedicated in October 1892. Although the fair lasted only from May through October 1893, vivid memories, new ideas, and some objects endured. The only building that remains is the Museum of Science and Industry, about six miles south of The Loop, near the University of Chicago. Once the fair's Palace of Fine Arts, the museum was rehabilitated in the 1930s.

Our exploration of the World's Columbian Exposition is based on images, objects, and personal and published accounts from the 1890s (all preserved in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa) and later research by historians. In presenting the Iowa angle, we ask: What did Iowans take to the fair? What did they do there? And finally, what did they bring back home?

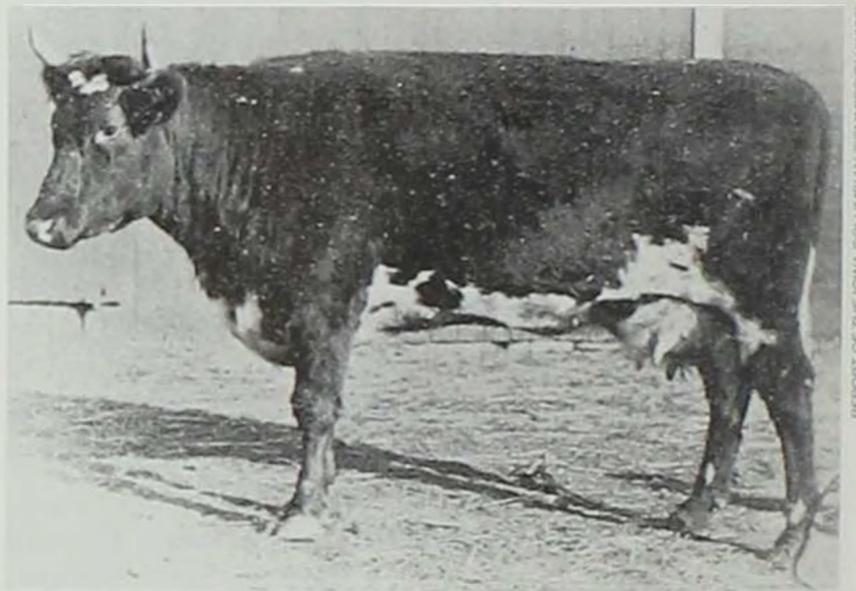


They took their accomplishments

IOWANS TOOK their accomplishments to the fair, to be exhibited in the Iowa Building (most states had their own buildings) and in the enormous "theme" buildings devoted to such subjects as Agriculture, Machinery, Mining, and Women. Other items would be entered in individual competitions, from fine arts to livestock. Student work from public schools across Iowa was gathered together for an extensive display in the Liberal Arts Building.

In some cases, Iowans took their own performing talents. The popular Iowa State Band performed daily at the Iowa Building, at twenty-three dedications for various state and foreign buildings, and for the opening of the Ferris Wheel (and then boarded it for the first ride). They also played for the banquet honoring Princess Eulalia, Infanta of Spain, and for a grand parade of "the world's premium livestock."

Both pride and profits generated the exhibits; international expositions were meant to expand markets. "Every motive of patriotism



REPORT OF THE IOWA COLUMBIAN COMMISSION (1896)

Daniel Sheehan of Osage took "Nora," a Short Horn, to compete in dairy production. Iowa cattle performed well at the fair, a state report concluded, despite a "barn so hot" and "feed so indifferent."

and pride," an Iowa exposition committee noted, "every commercial instinct would impel us to seize upon this opportunity of a century to advance the material interest of our beloved Iowa." Here's a small sampling of what Iowans took to the fair:

Horticulture and agriculture. Colorful pyramids of fruit proved Iowa's horticultural diversity: 29 varieties of plums, 89 varieties of grapes, 351 varieties of apples, all cultivated in Iowa in the 1890s. Six-foot-high glass cylinders held Iowa soil cores. Tubs of butter cooled in fifty feet of refrigerated glass cases, and won awards. Iowa apiarists found buyers for their honey from California, Vienna, and Saxony. Among the grains

PHOTO (AND INSET) BY CHUCK GREINER



Massive oak chair is inscribed "ladies of Dunlap, Iowa," who commissioned it from P. H. Wind's planing mill in Council Bluffs. The chair was set on the speaker's platform in the Iowa Building.



exhibited, corn was clearly king: Winneshiek County farmers sent sixteen-foot cornstalks (with ears nine feet off the ground). As Charles Ashton noted, "There is no humbug in that show."

Minerals and geology. Fort Dodge sent gypsum, Lansing sent lead ore, Keokuk sent geodes. Also, there was coal from Centerville, limestone from Eldora, clay tile from Tipton, and pottery from Red Oak.

Livestock. Poultry, swine, and horses were taken to the fair. Cattle, too—Galloways from Crystal, Iowa, Jerseys from Glenwood, Red Polled from Maquoketa, Aberdeen Angus from Denison, and Herefords from Des Moines. A Cass County farmer sent a fine Suffolk Punch, a new breed of draft horse that Charles Ashton predicted would "take with western farmers."

George Washington Carver, then a science student at Iowa State College, was among thirty-eight Iowa artists whose paintings were selected for the fair. Below: Iowa State College sent three hundred cadets and this "battalion of young ladies" to perform precision drills. Uniformed in blue Zouave jackets, "the girls are an exceptionally healthy-looking and jolly crowd," Ashton wrote.



They took advice

IOWANS TOOK ALONG a great deal of advice about the Columbian Exposition. Those Iowans who were undecided about attending the exposition were courted both by its detractors—who warned of Chicago's crime—and its promoters, the most notable of these being Guthrie Center editor and Iowa Columbian Commissioner Charles Ashton.

Despite Ashton's efforts, Iowans read about thieves, pickpockets, and trunk stealers infesting Chicago. Certain colorful crooks became legendary—one of the most infamous of these was a certain "Antonio," alternately described as the "illegitimate son of an Italian countess" and as "Antonio, the Frenchman." Other shady characters, such as Richard Preston, alias "Windy Dick," George Carr, alias "Mother Empy's Kid," and George Bockman, alias "Little Dutch," were all said to be in Chicago, preying on tourists.

Just as there was no lack of rumors about criminals and crime, there was no dearth of advice as to how to combat crime. The Rand McNally guidebook advised visitors to just "say no" if confronted by a solicitor. "Don't trust your checks with unauthorized individuals," it warned. "Don't let them take hold of your hand-baggage, and do not be persuaded to do anything by their eloquence." The *Cedar Rapids Gazette* warned of the seductive qualities of the pickpocket, who "comes upon you in such unexpected places, under such a pleasant guise and with such insinuating ways that you fall a victim to his artistic skill while admiring the beauty of his face and figure of the excellent fit of his coat."

Awkwardly enough, none other than the wife of an Iowa Columbian Commissioner fell victim to crime while visiting the fair. Mrs. Charles Ashton "had the misfortune to have her pocketbook gone through with by thugs, losing all she had," the *Guthrie* reported, "and then again coming home in the sleeper some thieving person or persons relieved her of another supply of cash." No doubt Mr. Charles

Ashton found it difficult to assert the safety of the fair thereafter.

Ashton preferred not to dwell on the unpleasantries of crime; his columns in the *Guthrie* concentrated on advice for visiting the fair cheaply. He promised his readers that "you can by observing the advice given here make a week's visit to the fair for \$40.00."

Ashton assured Iowans that inexpensive hotels were plentiful. "Go in companies of three, four or more by using cots," he advised, "and so doubling up in rooms you can get cheap rates." He also urged people to stay a week or more, which would earn them a cut rate at the hotel.

For meals, Ashton suggested Iowans go "to a restaurant or lunch room and get a good solid meal for 25 cents," and to avoid restaurants that charged "50 or 75 cents for a meal that will not do you any more good." He considered the "restaurant monopoly" to be "a conscienceless

"Fine dresses will not be needed," Charles Ashton advised Iowa fairgoers.



extortion," and approved of the hundreds of Iowans who packed lunches to eat in the Iowa Building.

Ashton also recommended taking the elevated train, "an excellent way and the cheapest, the ride each way to and from the park costs 5 cents." No doubt some Iowans hesitated to take that advice, after reading other journalists' warning that "Windy Dick" and his gang were fond of creating disturbances on the railway trains and then picking pockets of the unaware.

Ashton believed that the fair was too great an opportunity for any Iowan to miss because of prohibitive costs: "Go see the fair and live plainly while you are there."

They took the train

THE SAME WEB of railroad tracks that delivered Iowa's crops to the Chicago market transported Iowa's populace to the Chicago World's Fair. Railways scrambled to advertise to the fairgoers and to make fares as competitive as possible.

The occasion of Iowa Days at the fair, September 20-21, resulted in some especially frantic advertising skirmishes between railroads. The September 18 *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* included fifteen separate advertisements for World's Fair railroad transportation and special low fares, including a half-page Chicago and Northwestern railway advertisement (below). The enticements must have worked, for sixty thousand Iowans attended the fair on Iowa Days.

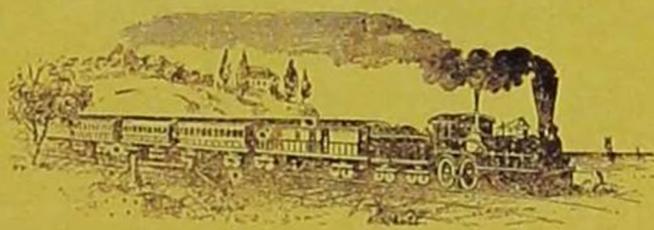
The Illinois Central Railroad advertised itself as "the only true World's Fair route." Indeed, the Illinois Central (I.C.) route ran right along Jackson Park, the site of the fair. This fortuitous location was likely the result of I.C. management's involvement in planning and directing the fair, and of I.C.'s investments in fair bonds.

To prepare for the masses of fairgoers, I.C. built a new million-dollar depot, bought new engines and passenger cars, and elevated all track near the fairgrounds to avoid hindering street traffic. The soon-to-be-legendary Casey Jones engineered one of the special fast trains

THE WORLD'S FAIR

To be held in Jackson Park, Chicago,
from May 1st, to Oct. 31, 1893,
is located on the line of

The Illinois Central Railroad.



Visitors to this Wonderful Columbian
Exposition should, as a matter of
convenience and safety, see
that their railroad tick-
ets read via

THIS LINE,

as it is the only road running to the
World's Fair Grounds.

J. F. MERRY,
Ass't Gen. Pass. Agt., Manchester, Ia.

ADVERTISEMENT IN 1892 CONVENTION REPORT, IOWA STATE SABBATH SCHOOL ASSN.

Our Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette, Monday, September 18, 1893.

ON TO THE FAIR!

The Greatest Exodus in the History of Cedar Rapids
Railway Traffic.

GO WITH THE CROWD. TAKE THE NORTHWESTERN SPECIAL TRAIN

Tomorrow Morning. One-Half Fare \$6.75

Round trip. The train will leave the union depot at 11:40 a. m., arriving in Chicago at 1:40 p. m., making the run in Six Hours. In addition to the special train, passengers can have their choice of the following regular trains:

Cedar Rapids.	Arrive in Chicago.	Leave Chicago.	Arrive at Cedar Rapids.
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They rode the Ferris Wheel and explored the Midway Plaisance

IOWANS ALREADY ASTONISHED by the size of Chicago's buildings must have gasped in amazement at the 264-foot Ferris Wheel, which dominated the skyline at the fair. The steel wheel was four stories taller than the world's tallest building at that time (the twenty-two-story "Capitol" building in Chicago). The consensus of fairgoers was that George Washington Gale Ferris's design had met and surpassed the exposition's challenge to American engineers for "something novel, original, daring, and unique" that would outclass the Eiffel Tower, the monument of the Paris World's Fair of 1889.

Although neither the design nor the idea of using a wheel as a pleasure ride was new, the monumental size, mass, and capacity of the Ferris Wheel made it extraordinary. A 1,000-horsepower steam engine turned 36 wood-veneered cabins, which each carried up to 60 people. The steel structure weighed 1,200 tons,

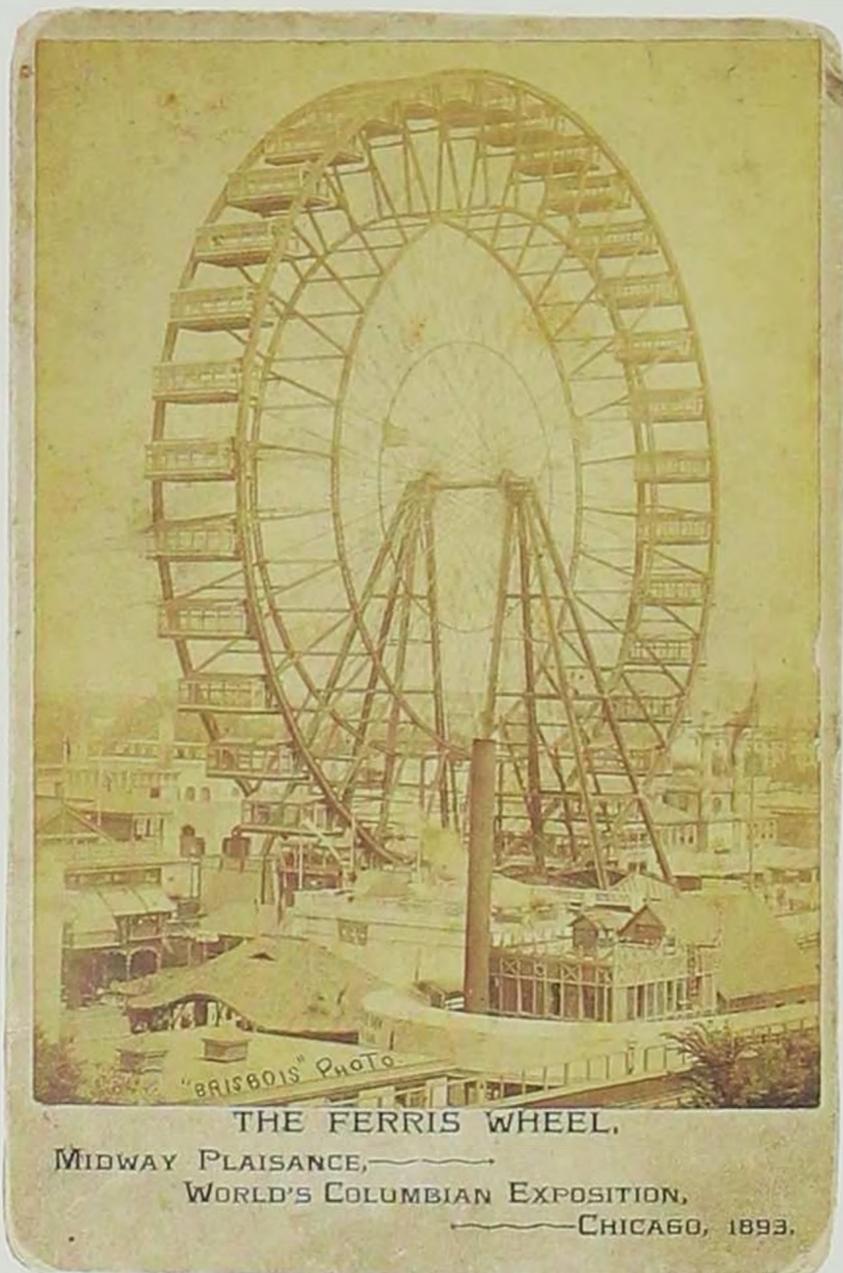
and the hollow axle, which weighed 46 tons, was the largest piece of steel that had ever been forged.

Charles Ashton wrote to his Iowa readers that the Ferris Wheel was the "most wonderful demonstration of the exactness of mathematical science and of engineering and constructive skill." He reassured Iowa readers that the Ferris Wheel engendered "no more risk in riding thereon in its vast revolution than there is in riding on the street car" and that "no one experiences any sensation of sickness or fear in the unique ride."

Our Iowa diarist, Sarah Jane Kimball (and 1.4 million other fairgoers) paid the exorbitant fifty-cent fare (the merry-go-round was only five cents) for two marvelous revolutions on the massive wheel. She would have been helped aboard a cabin by a uniformed attendant (perhaps Henry Gillespie of Manchester, Iowa, who earned college money as an attendant). The attendants had the enviable job of riding along in the interest of safety. The loading and unloading of passengers took so long that the ride lasted for twenty minutes. Kimball recorded that there was "a fine view" from the top. The Ferris Wheel revolved until eleven o'clock at night, and when darkness fell, the structure was lit by three thousand electric bulbs, making it "a fine view" in itself.

The Ferris Wheel, alas, was not designed to be portable, and after the close of the fair, the cost of moving it was prohibitive. The Ferris Wheel made two appearances, one at a small amusement park in Chicago, the other at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, before it was blasted apart by two 100-pound charges of dynamite and sold as scrap metal in 1906. Variations of Ferris's design can now be found in nearly every amusement park in America.

After riding the Ferris Wheel, Kimball explored the rest of the Midway: "Went on the streets of Cairo and saw the Egyptians, their camels and donkeys and brilliant gewgaws," she wrote. "Saw the Turkish building and India

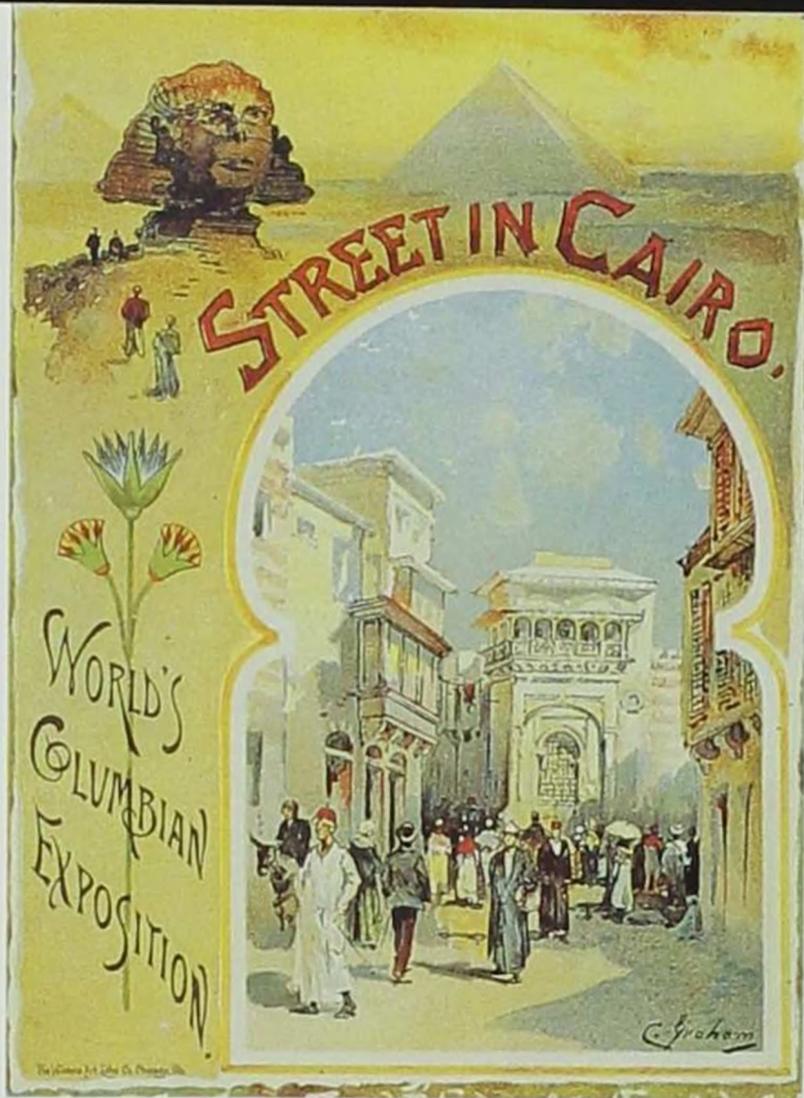


building. Was interested in the beautiful carving."

The Columbian Exposition was the first world's fair to feature a separate amusement zone. The Midway Plaisance—a mile-long stretch of rides, beer gardens, restaurants, and entertainment provided by such personalities as Harry Houdini and "Little Egypt" the belly dancer, established the concept of the amusement park in American culture, and added the terms "midway" and "hootchy-kootchy" to American vocabulary.

However, Frederic Ward Putnam, head of the Harvard Peabody Museum and Midway exhibit planner, believed that "there was much of instruction as well as of joy on the Merry Midway." The ethnological exhibits along the Midway were "arranged and grouped to teach a lesson," according to another designer, "to show the advancement and evolution of man." Towards this end, simulated villages representing world cultures, complete with natives, were arranged on what one literary critic of the time called a "sliding scale of humanity," with Teutonic and Celtic displays closest to the White City and the Dahomey of Africa and American Indians furthest away.

As the exhibits taught their intended lesson, they reinforced American stereotypes of non-white cultures as barbaric or childlike. *Scribner's Magazine* described the natives as "uncleanly, unkempt . . . forbidding and repulsive." *Frank Leslie's Popular Magazine* proclaimed, "Sixty-nine [Dahomeyans] are here



Souvenir of "Street in Cairo" attraction. Below: Crowds through the Midway Plaisance.

in all their barbaric ugliness, blacker than buried midnight and as degraded as the animals which prowl the jungles of their dark land."

Many of those who visited the Midway regarded the ethnological displays as more of a freak show than educational exhibit. As the *New York Times* wrote, "The late P. T. Barnum should have lived to see this day."





Left: The Iowa Building, photographed by Iowan H. Roy Mosnat. Right: Artful grain mosaics graced its interior. The *Des Moines Capital* commented that "the originality of the work in corn and grains is very attractive after the conventional elegance of such buildings as New York's has become tiresome."

They rested at the Iowa Building

THE IOWA BUILDING served a dual purpose at the World's Fair. It served as a clubhouse for Iowans weary of exhibits and strangers, and as a grandiose presentation of Iowa's accomplishments to citizens and strangers alike. Located near the cluster of about forty other state buildings, the Iowa Building was actually a two-story addition added to an existing park shelter. It had the advantage of being on the cool, breezy shores of Lake Michigan.

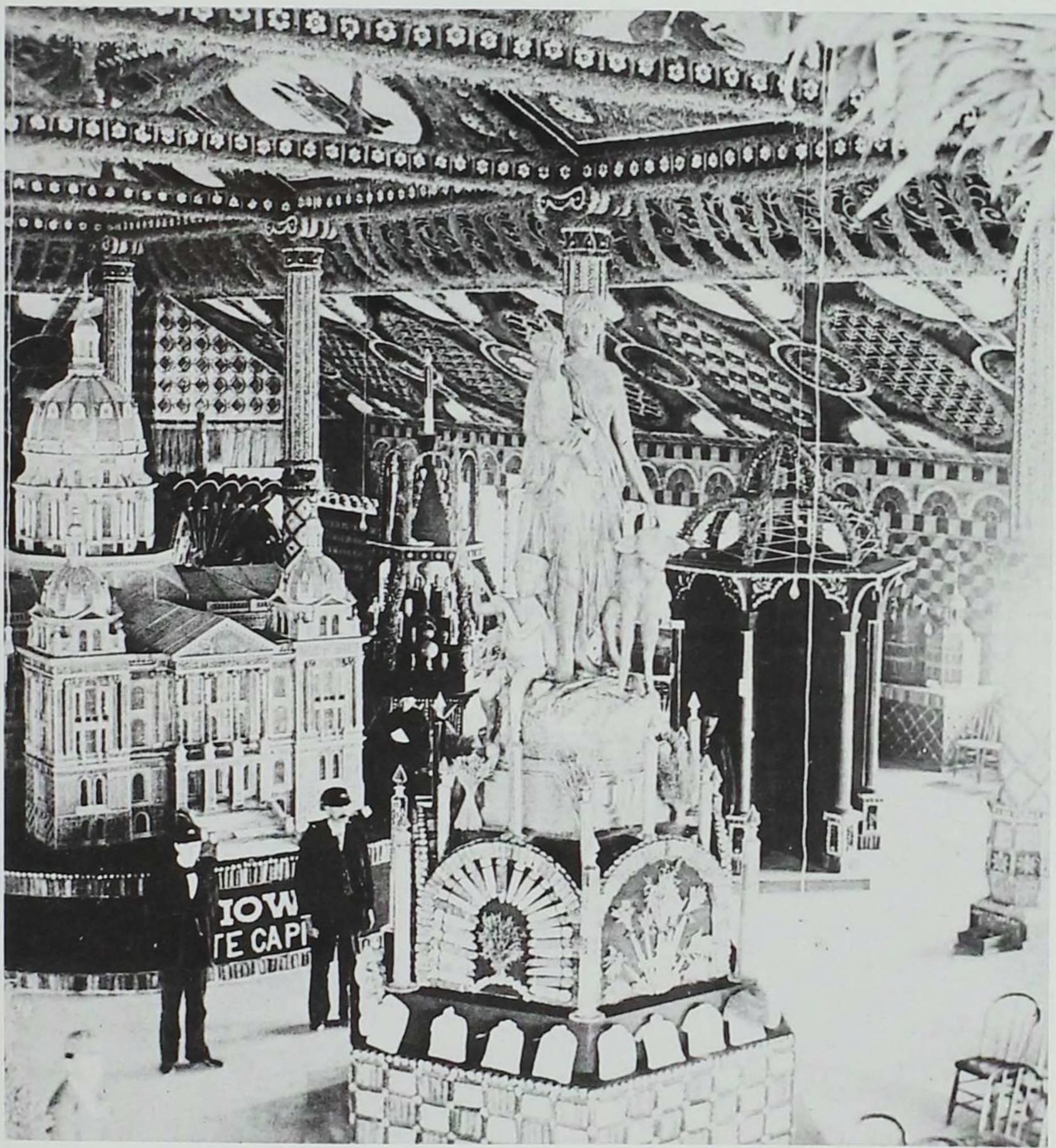
Upon entering the building, "all felt instinctively the hearty welcome," wrote Ora E. Miller, president of the Iowa Board of Lady Managers. Visitors might first sign their names, home towns, and local lodgings in the register to enable friends and neighbors to locate each other in the unfamiliar city. To Miller, "the social feature" of the Iowa Building was its greatest strength, and "the reunion of families, old neighbors and friends . . . was a most fitting culmination of the State's hospitality." Next, the visitors might check their valises, rest

wearily feet in the ladies' parlor or men's smoking room, stop by the library and read their hometown newspaper (or one of seven hundred books and pamphlets by Iowa authors), write a postcard home to the unfortunate ones who could not come, or check the post office, which distributed mail for Iowa tourists.

Many Iowans took Charles Ashton's advice to avoid the concessionaires' high prices by taking in a lunch and eating it at the Iowa Building. Thus, as Miller pointed out, they could enjoy the "dual advantage of rest and a grand musical treat furnished by the celebrated Iowa State Band," who played during the noon hours.

Every inch of the Iowa Building's large Exhibition Hall displayed Iowa's natural products. A glass model of the state capitol was filled with grain. Along with a coal castle, flax palace, and a pagoda with the choicest examples of Iowa corn, the walls, ceiling, and pillars trumpeted Iowa's productivity.

Modeled after the Sioux City corn palaces, panels representing Iowa's industries (livestock,



mining, dairy, and clay) were decorated with designs made of husks, cobs, and kernels of corn, wheat, barley, rye, sorghum tops, sumac, tickle grass, and everything from "mustard seed to pumpkin seed." The *Chicago News* reported that "cultivated fields and wild prairies have been searched, and more than a year consumed in getting the grains, grasses, and seeds together."

er." Another Chicago publication marveled that though the display was "one blaze of color . . . not a kernel was dipped in paint or dyed."

Even Iowans found wonder in the familiar products. "To no one was this . . . decoration a greater pleasure or surprise than to the farmer himself," Miller wrote. "This use of corn and other cereals was a revelation."

They witnessed electricity

IOWANS WERE DAZZLED by the wonders of electricity at the World's Fair. Rural Iowa had little exposure to electricity, although it was beginning to light up towns and cities. Iowans were overwhelmed by the lighting of the exposition grounds itself, and wrote home about illuminated fountains, walkways, and buildings. Other Iowans were impressed by the far-reaching search lights, and still others by the interior lighting of the exhibits, which made them "literally as bright as day." Visitors waxed poetic about the beauty of what they saw, describing "electric splendor," "a marvel of grandeur," and

Below: Interior of Electricity Building. Right: Agricultural Building, awash in electric light.

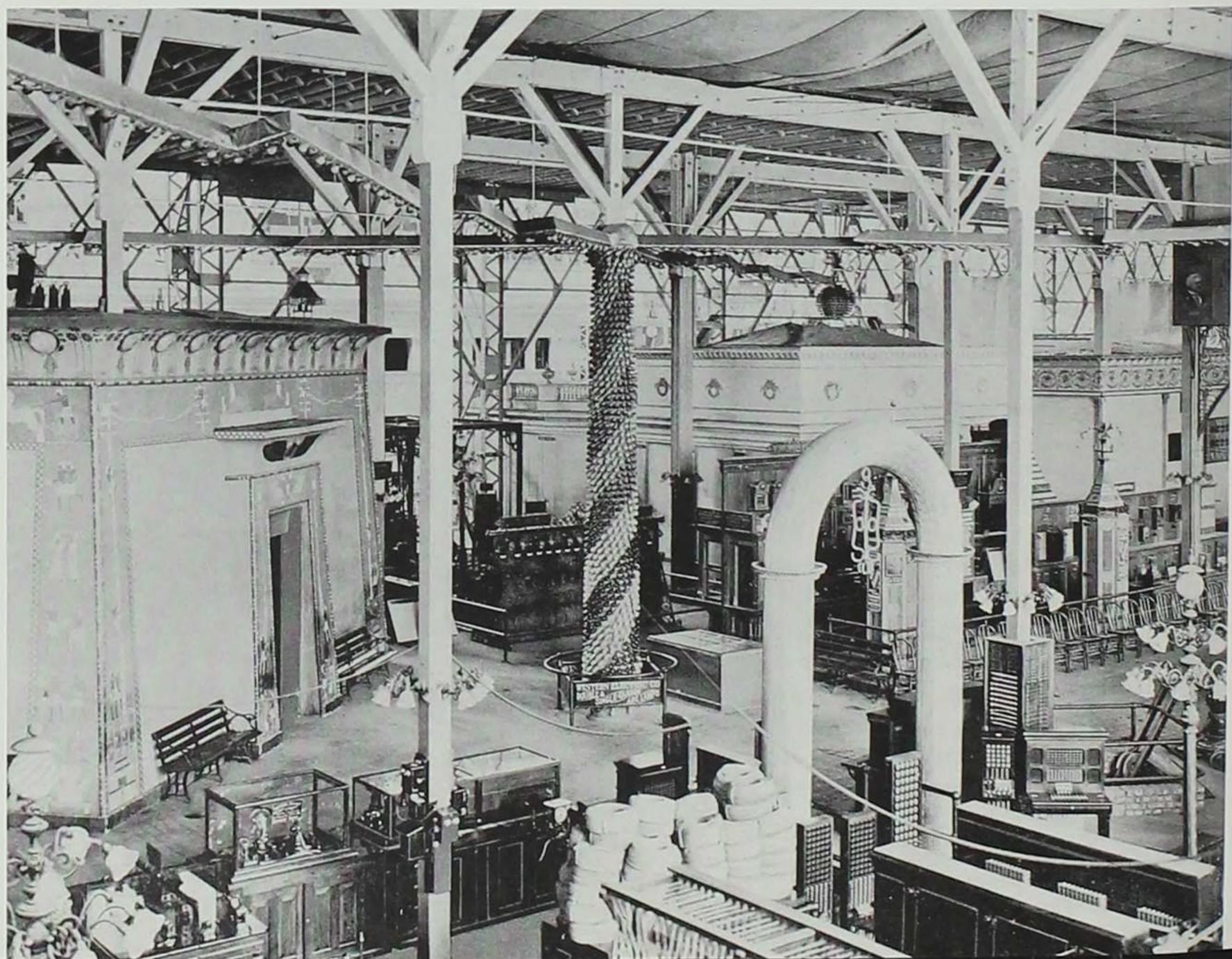


PHOTO BY WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON IN THE WHITE CITY (1894)



PHOTO BY WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON IN THE WHITE CITY (1894)

"hues as various, brilliant, numerous and beautiful as ever were exhibited in the most bright and perfect bow that ever arched the heavens."

Iowans were equally impressed, however, by the technological implications of electricity. Aside from providing a spectacle of light, the Electricity Building provided a comprehensive exhibit of the inventions that put electricity to use. Both women and men were fascinated by the "All-Electric Home," which featured futuristic wonders such as electric stoves, hot plates, washing machines, irons, dishwashers, doorbells, and fire alarms. Other displays of progress ranged from the ominous—the electric chair—to the mysterious—the telantograph and the kinetograph. Reactions varied. Iowa Columbian Commissioner Charles Ashton found the display of electricity bordering "on the supernatural." And at least one Iowan, a Mrs. Lyons, "could not endure the electric currents in the electric building."

Ashton described one exhibit in detail. "We found a man with an electric incubator hatching chickens by electricity. He had a big setting of eggs, not under his hen, but under the influ-

ence of this marvelous power to heat by machinery and in its lurid light." Observing "the tender chicks," he noticed "some asleep and others picking crumbs in the brightness." This was, perhaps, one of the more relevant electrical advancements for farmers, and its implications were a source of wonder, at least for the ever-enthusiastic Charles Ashton. "So one sees in these marvelous discoveries of science the means of performing operations in natural processes," he wrote, "and blending heaven and earth with rainbow beauty and brilliancy."

They held summer jobs

"I EXPECT THE WORK will be pretty hard at first," Charles G. Simpson of Mount Vernon, Iowa, confided to his parents. "But you can depend on it I can put in the time in such a place as this."

Hired as one of 2,500 Columbian Guards, young Simpson would be part of the fair's internal police force to maintain order, direct tourists, and guard exhibits. But the young Iowan intended to see the fair as well. "I have tried to spend from 2 to 3 hours each day, but there are quite a number of the buildings I have not yet seen, let alone being in. But when I get started I can hardly get stopped. They have increased the secret service force and every thing is being guarded more carefully. The number of people is increasing every pleasant day."

In nine long letters to his family in Mount Vernon, Iowa, Simpson also observed darker sides of the fair: "I don't think there has been any great robberies yet," he ventured in his second letter, although



"the other night the secret service men found men at work under the Swiss watch case and fired at him but missed."

He was astonished to see "load after load of beer & liquor hauled in . . . and by a load I mean about 3 times as much as I have ever seen in Iowa." Noticing that "there are thousands of dollars spent here every day for liquors," he added, "It beats all how much money some are making."

Simpson also watched as the debate over Sunday openings played out (see story, pages 156-59). "The Sunday opening is killing itself and I hope it may. There are but small numbers turn out and many of the exhibits are closed as well as quite a no. of the buildings are closed," he wrote in late June. "The people can hardly find a guard off duty to ask questions, of course when on duty we answer them but today they don't get much satisfaction from us."

Low attendance on Sundays was countered on other days by enormous crowds that poured from the elevated trains into the fair. "They run trains every 4 minutes during the day and every 20 min after the crowd has left," Simpson reported. "In the busy times they run a train every min."

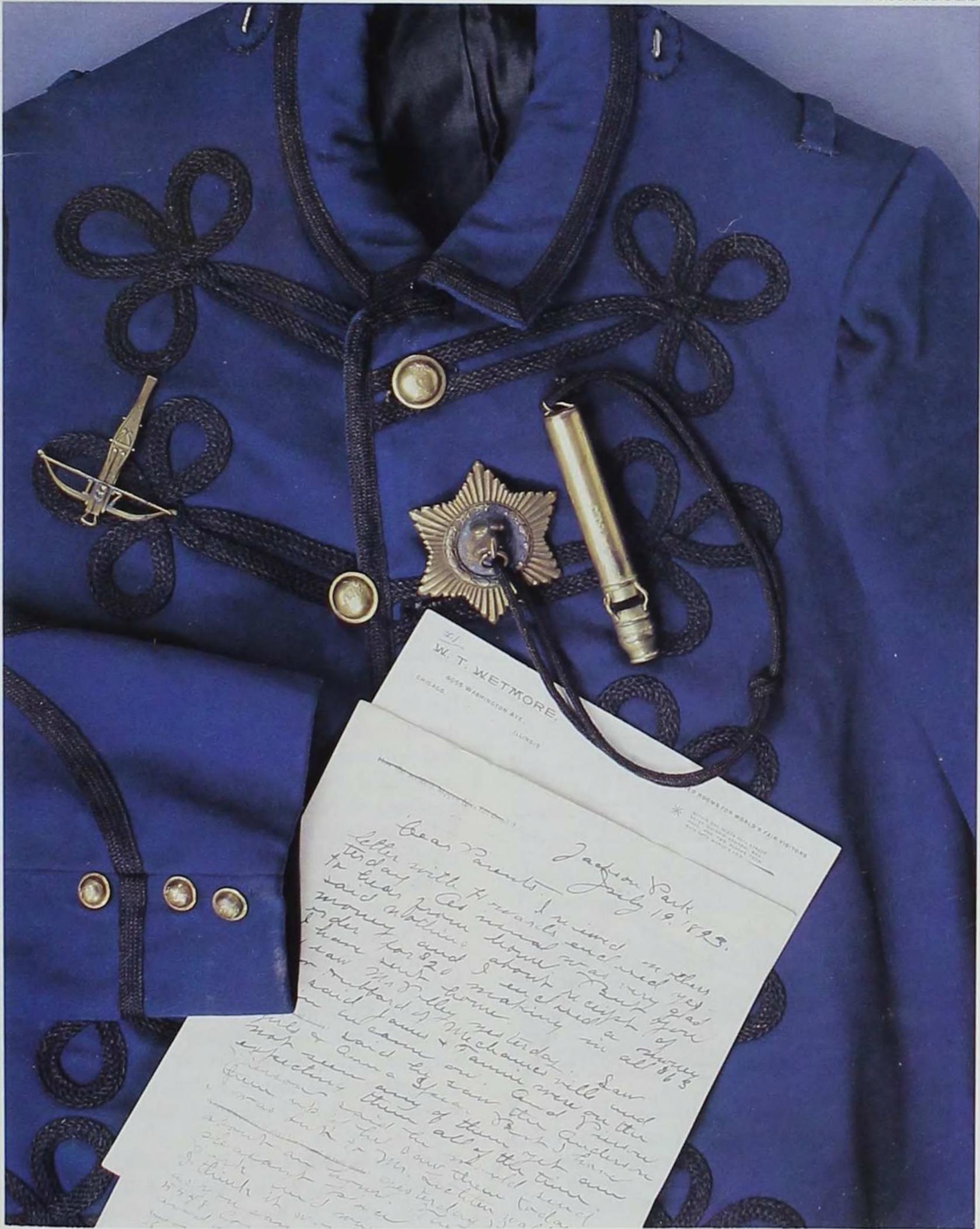
Simpson took pride in his job, and although he refused offers of cigars and beer, he was pleased when a tourist tipped him a silver dollar. But apparently the guards were maligned in the local press. The *Chicago Herald*, for one, had wisecracked that the guards were mostly rural men who could "guess the weight of a hog within twenty ounces." Simpson's letters, which suggest that many of his friends from the Mount Vernon area worked at the fair, defended the guards' reputation: "A very fine

appearing lady whom I had directed," he related, "said the guards were the most gentlemanly lot of young men she had ever met and she was from New England. But the trouble is that the Chicago people want the fair policed and guarded by Chicago men and very very few of the Chicago men ever get on at all."

Rural or urban, not all the guards were pleased with the job. Many were discharged "thick and fast" for dozing or writing letters on the job. Others left, fed up with the discipline and long hours. Then, in mid-July, guards and fire fighters were called out when the fair's cold-storage building caught fire. Sixteen men died. "You can rest assured on one thing," Simpson swore. "They will never get me into any of their buildings after they take fire. Friday two Hotels were burned just over the fence from the Fair grounds."

When off duty, Simpson continued to explore the exposition. He watched a panorama of the Battle of Gettysburg; viewed the "electric display"; joined seventy-five friends for a "Cornell reunion at the Iowa Building"; and marveled as three thousand Turner gymnasts completed precision drills. ("The exercises were a good deal like the girls at Clarence used to go through with wands," he added. "But just think 3000 of them.")

By mid-summer Simpson was a seasoned Columbian Guard. The fair "is getting to look pretty tame to me now," he admitted, "but I know what I thought when I first came." Having recognized dozens of acquaintances from Linn and Cedar counties at the fair, he urged his parents to come, too. Despite a summer of living in barracks, standing long hours, and wearing a wool uniform, he still felt the wonder of the fair and wrote his parents: "I don't want either of you to miss it for anything."



Above: Simpson letters and Columbian Guard uniform of Wallace Mackay. Note image of Western Hemisphere on buttons. Opposite: Columbian Guard by Iowa Building.

1873

Platinum of N.Y. City
 " coin Charles II
 Silver of Macedonia, Greece
 350 A.D. Copper 1/2 piece of
 Sweden 1717 Aluminum
 Cooking utensils of
 The 1st casting made in
 Model U.S. Treas. building at Wash
 D.C. in Admin. B. building
 W. Fair souvenirs
 Machinery Hall
 For heat for distribution

1873

Skeleton, Elephas Primigenius
 mine, from Spokane Co Wash
 13 ft. high. Largest animal
 known, now extinct.

Build S. Dakota, Regulator
 laid out farm in harvest
 Name in small seeds.
 Nebraska
 N. Dakota, Petrified
 wood of corn & other
 plants used

*They saw enough
 to exhaust them—
 but not nearly
 everything
 that was there
 to be seen*



AFTERNOON SCENES AT THE WORLD'S FAIR.

From top: Frank Hinton noted many exhibits that impressed him, including a mammoth's skeleton in the Washington state building. He sketched it in his diary. Newspaper cartoon attests to exhaustion of fairgoers.

CHARLES ASHTON could not exude enough. As a nineteenth-century editor (prone to hyperbole) and a fair commissioner (prone to promotion), Ashton saw the exposition as "the climax of four centuries of the evolution of western civilization."

Ashton tried to prepare his Iowa readers for the fair's enormity by describing one particular building, the forty-four-acre Manufacturing and Liberal Arts Building: "Think of a forty acre field, all laid off in alleys, streets and squares, each square beautifully fitted up and filled with the gems of mechanism and the intelligence of all lands," he wrote, "and then think what a work it will be to traverse all these alleys and corridors to take in all this gathering of wonders."

Sarah Jane Kimball gave that building her best effort. "Went in," she wrote in her diary, "but too tired to see half its wonders." Echoing through national magazines, small-town newspapers, and Iowans' diaries is just that remark—"too much." We'll let the overwhelmed speak for themselves:

Sarah Jane Kimball: "Sept. 28th, Thursday— A cold morning with much wind and some clouds. First across to the Ruins of Yucatan then to Forestry building southside then to Anthropological building where I was much interested then to Indian camp then to Indian



PHOTO BY WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON IN THE WHITE CITY (1894)

Chaotic cluster of state buildings lacked the architectural uniformity of the fair's Court of Honor, but provided places where visitors could relax and meet others from their own state. Note Ferris Wheel, top right.

school where we saw the work of the pupils and heard them sing with piano and recite then went to Casino and sat down. Went through Dairy building then walked through Agricultural building then Machinery building then Mines building then went again to Greenhouses then through Transportation building."

Scribner's Magazine: "The unconquerable American desire to do things on a bigger scale than anybody else, which often results in our 'biting off more than we can chew,' has again run away with us. . . . From the fine arts to canned tomatoes, there is more than enough in numbers and in area to wear out the energy and paralyze the brain."

Charles Ashton: "The only just point of criticism is that it is too grand. The human mind has its limitations. Many a visitor has a feeling akin to discouragement as he attempts to get an idea of the wonders of human industry and ingenuity, genius and resources."

Harper's Monthly, describing the statuary: "Whatever else these plaster gods are or are not, they are too many—too many for even the lavish bounty of a dream. . . . They people it so abundantly that the small human element is almost an impertinence."

Charles Simpson: "There are indian relics of every description till you can't rest."

Frank Hinton, about the Woman's Building: "Immense display of apparently everything."

Cedar Rapids Gazette: "Five hours of sight-seeing. . . . And it doesn't look pretty. The women are collapsed; the men are cross; the children are worse. But thousands remain sprawled here and there on the grass, reclining in all the state buildings, resting on the lake front or seated on the banks of the lagoons."

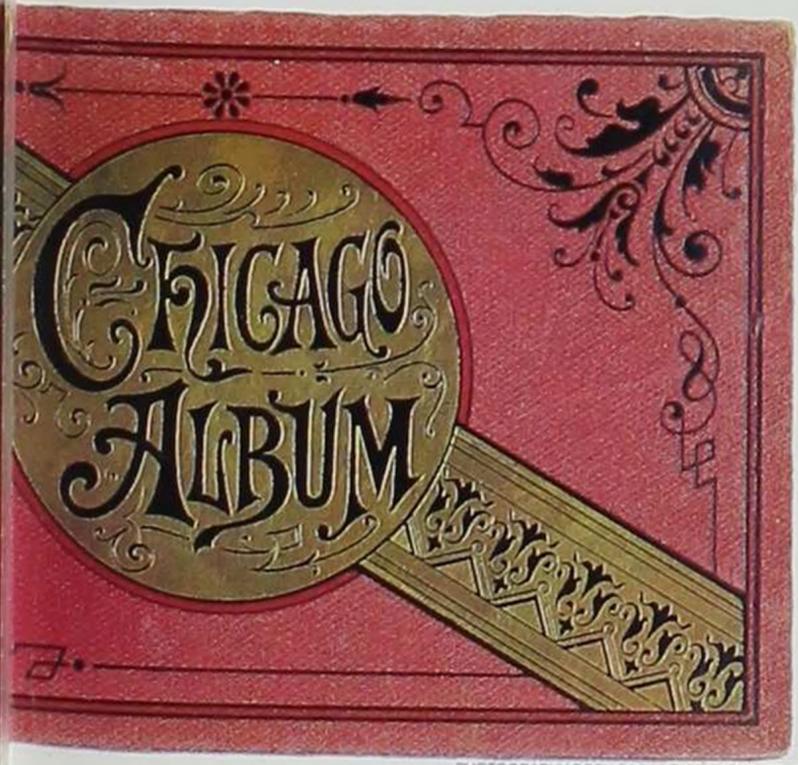
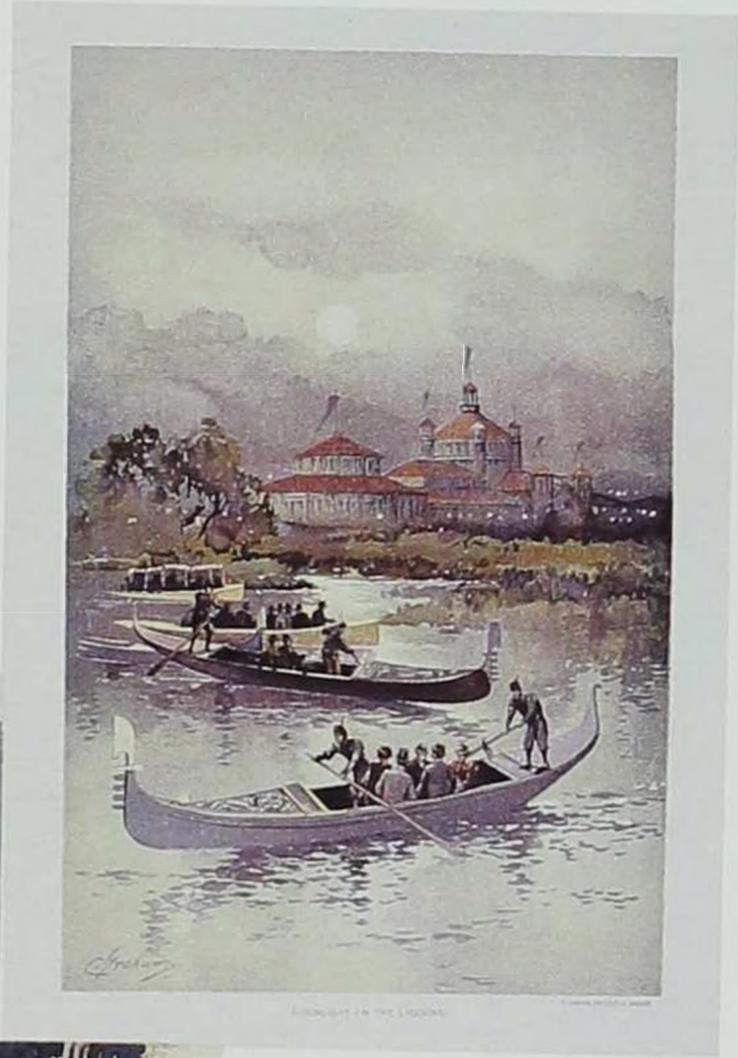
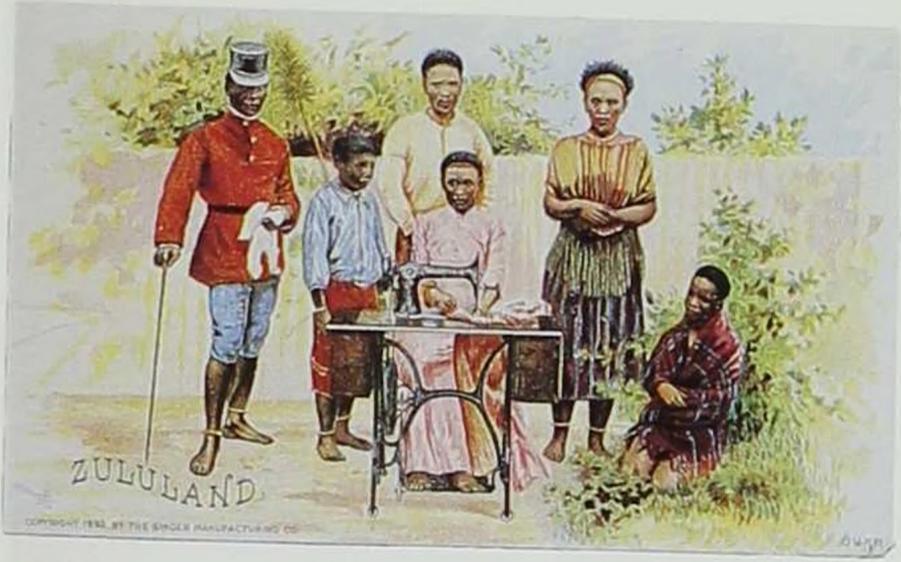
Sarah Jane Kimball: "Father and mother got tired and went home. We followed soon after."



They brought home souvenirs

SOUVENIRS from a century ago! Clockwise from upper left: Ferris Wheel sheet music lyrics begin, "This is the wheel, love / Stately and real, love / Come, we will sail around / Let's leave this common ground." Sample advertising card from Singer Manufacturing Company (each card shows people of a different nationality, dressed in native costume and posed with Singer sewing machines; for more, see back cover). *Chicago Tribune* art supplements romanticize the gondolas in moonlight or electric light. Commemorative coins, as well as fountains and statues, celebrate Columbus. Albums devoted to Chicago's new buildings replace visitors' memories of the devastating 1871 fire with impressions of a vital and aggressive world market. Postcards and watch fob were among hundreds of items bearing exposition motifs.





PHOTOGRAPHY BOTH PAGES BY CHUCK GREINER

They brought home art for their communities



PHOTOGRAPH COPYRIGHT MIKE WHYE

ANYONE WHO HAS SEEN a Tiffany stained-glass window can imagine how the window on the left must have held the gaze of a group of fairgoers from Dubuque. Louis Comfort Tiffany had only recently begun working in stained glass for churches; part of his exhibit at the exposition was a chapel with this "Good Shepherd" window. After the building committee for St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Dubuque saw the window, it was subsequently purchased for the church as a family memorial to D. N. and Clara Aldrich Cooley. St. Luke's



PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER



PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER

would later purchase more Tiffany windows.

While many of the wonders at the fair went home with the original exhibitors, some items, like the window, found new owners and became a community's cultural treasures. This twenty-two-foot altar (see left and detail) was purchased by the parishioners of St. Joseph's Church in Carroll, Iowa. Hand-carved of bird's eye maple, the altar had won first place at the

exposition. In 1972, the altar was moved to St. Peter and Paul's Church at the Grotto of the Redemption in West Bend, Iowa.

They brought home architectural ideas

"THIS IS A CITY for a single summer," reflected *Scribner's Magazine* in August 1893. It is hard to conceive that two hundred buildings covering over a square mile would be constructed by twelve thousand workers for only six months of use. But the buildings were not meant to last. The exhibition halls, for instance, were only enormous "sheds," with the metal or wooden framework exposed inside. On the exterior, the elaborate ornamentation and statuary were made of a stucco-like material called "staff"—easily sculpted but not durable. It was all for appearances. In fact, as Opening Day approached, burning coal was banned to keep the freshly painted white buildings pristine. After the fair closed in late October, the buildings would gradually fall to salvage companies, accidental fire, and arson.

The fair's architectural core was a half-dozen buildings called the "Court of Honor." A team

of nationally recognized architects had chosen a basic style—Beaux Arts (Neo-Classical Revival)—and had agreed to certain guidelines, including a standard cornice height. These and another dozen exhibition halls would all be predominantly white.

The impression was one of unity and splendor, and fairgoers remembered it. In the following decades, Beaux Arts elements—such as the triangular gables and the rows of columns—began to appear again on public buildings and private homes (as they had during the 1840s). "The fair inspired many a state capitol, county courthouse and college building," notes Iowa architectural historian Patricia Eckhardt, "and its impact on urban planning was equally important." Daniel Burnham, the force behind the developing City Beautiful Movement, was also the fair's master planner. Therefore, the White City comprised a vivid

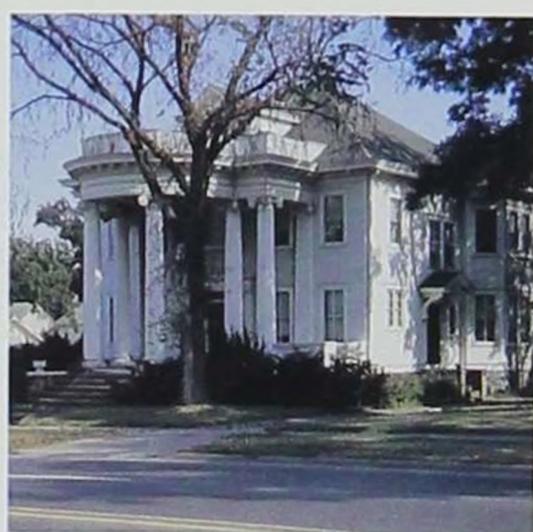
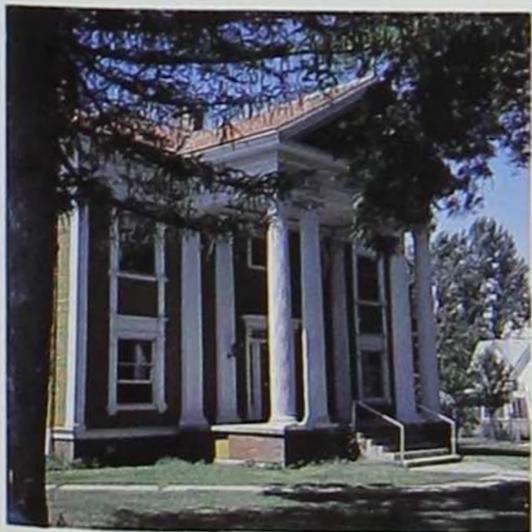


PHOTO BY WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON IN THE WHITE CITY (1894)



THIS PAGE PHOTOS BY AND COURTESY OF LOREN HORTON

Opposite: Agricultural Building was one of several Beaux Arts structures. Their triangular gables and columns became popular after the fair. Above: Clay County Courthouse in Spencer. Below, from left: Winnebago County Historical Society Museum in Forest City; Lucas County Historical Society Museum in Chariton; and private home in Sac City.



(continued)

example of what the City Beautiful Movement would bring to some American cities in the next decades: civic buildings built in an orderly and unified setting of boulevards, bridges, and landscaped open spaces.

Some experts say that Beaux Arts was chosen as the prevailing style for the fair because it was adaptable for the construction methods while rich in classical splendor, and because American architects could show that their skills were equal to Europeans. Yet some American architects—especially Chicago's Louis Sullivan—believed American architecture had already surpassed European styles, and were angered that the fair relied on "worn-out," classical traditions.

Commissioned to design the exposition's Transportation Building (right), Sullivan diverged from the Beaux Arts style of the White City. His Transportation Building was light red, with yellow and orange accents, and its heavily ornamented Golden Doorway

reflected more Middle Eastern or Oriental styles than classical.

Sullivan would later excel as a Chicago School architect and angrily condemn the Beaux Arts influence at the fair as "a virus." His legacy to Iowa and midwestern architecture was a group of elegant small banks with elaborate exterior ornamentation. His use of stained glass, colored tile, stone work, and terra cotta remind us of his boldly designed Golden Doorway at the 1893 exposition.



PHOTO BY H. ROY MOSSBART (1915)

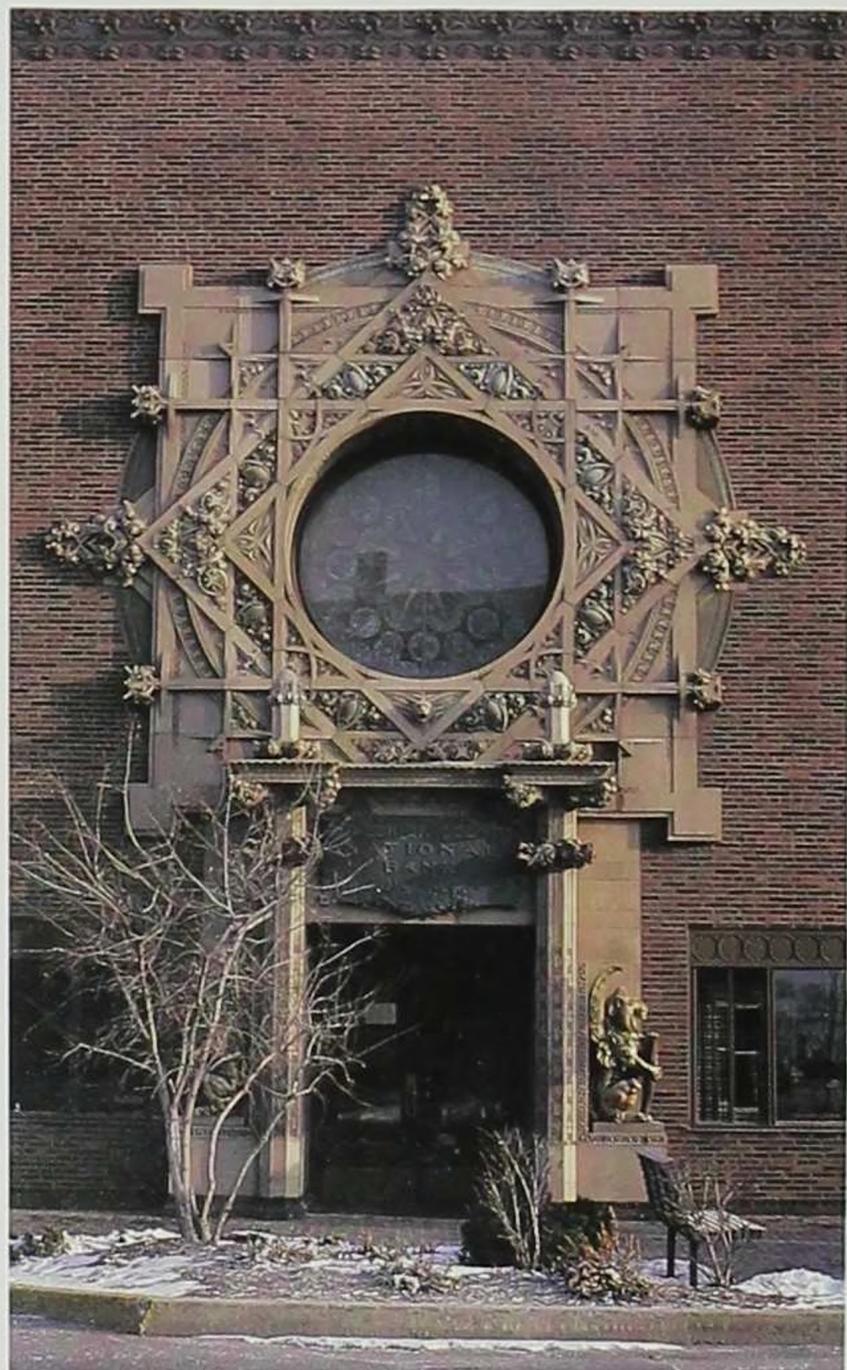


PHOTO BY AND COURTESY OF GERALD MANSHEIM

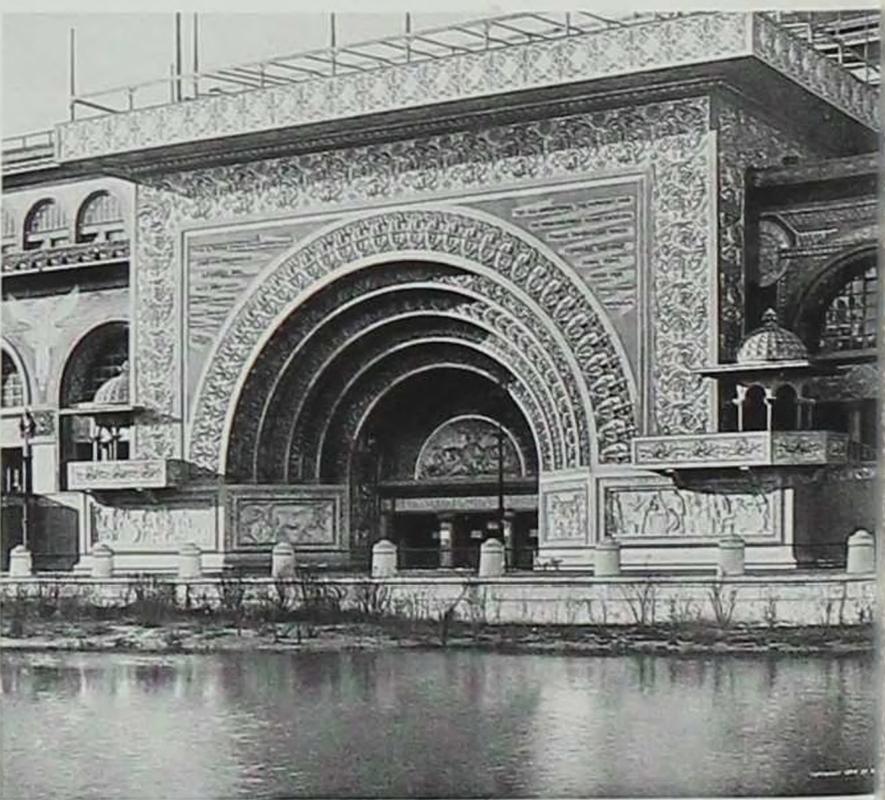


PHOTO BY WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON IN THE WHITE CITY (1894)

Above: Sullivan's Transportation Building and its Golden Doorway. His banks in Grinnell (on left), Algona, Cedar Rapids, and five other midwestern towns are celebrations of exterior ornamentation.

They brought home a new way of looking at the past

by Bill Silag

AMONG THE WORLD-RE-
KNOWN artists, industrialists,
and scholars who traveled to the
Columbian Exposition in 1893 was
a young history professor from
Wisconsin named Fred Turner.
Thirty-one at the time, Turner was
just three years out of Johns
Hopkins, where he had received
his Ph.D. prior to joining the fac-
ulty at the state university in
Madison.

Certainly there were bigger
names among the intellectuals
who convened at the several con-
gresses connected with the expo-
sition that summer. Literary figures
like Henry Adams and William
Dean Howells were there, and
social reformers like Jane Addams
and Susan B. Anthony. But none
of them would make such an
impact on the way Americans
thought about themselves and
their culture as did the somewhat
absent-minded young man who
traveled by train from Madison to
address the exposition's Historical
Congress on July 12. His speech,
of course, was "The Significance of
the Frontier in American History."

Hours before he was scheduled
to speak, Turner was still tinkering
and still polishing, and his biogra-
pher tells us that the heat that
night was so unbearable that the
speech itself was cut short and
delivered in a quick, summary
fashion. No matter, though, for
even in its hastily finished and
truncated form, what Frederick
Jackson Turner delivered to his lis-
teners that hot evening in Chicago
would have a profound and sus-
tained influence on American his-
torical scholarship lasting one hun-

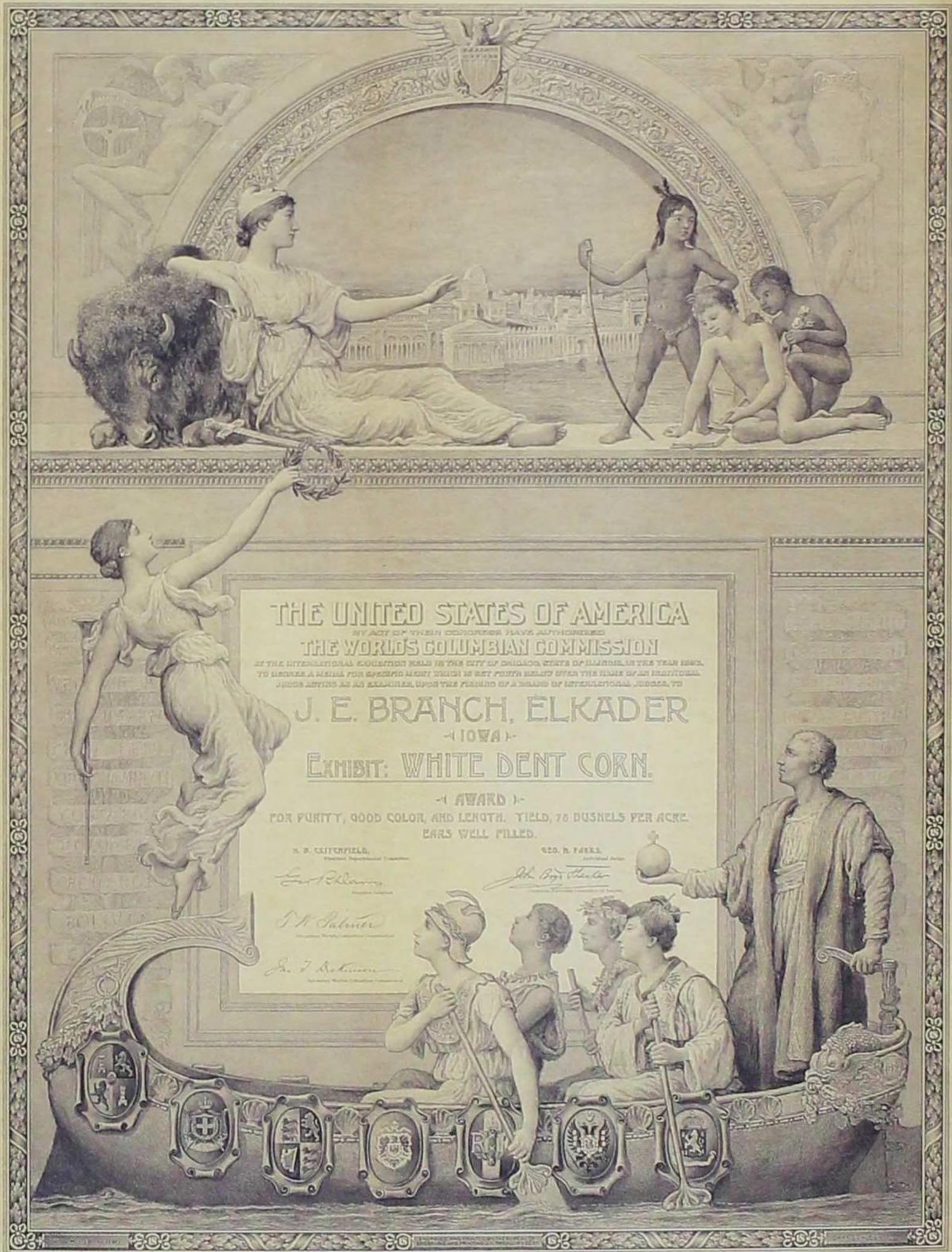
dred years (and counting)—and
would provide one of the central
myths regarding the American
experience.

Turner's key points are probably
familiar to most *Palimpsest* read-
ers. Americans' movement west-
ward, Turner asserted, set them
apart from their European fore-
bears in more than a geographical
sense. As they settled the conti-
nent, Americans shed their
European culture. On the U.S.
frontier, there was a return to a
simpler life, marked by economic
self-sufficiency, informal govern-
ment, fewer social controls, and
infrequent cultural activity. The
social order that subsequently
developed as these successive
frontiers were absorbed into the
commercial and political main-
stream, insisted Turner, was not
like the built-up civilization of
Europe but something new, some-
thing distinctively American.
Turner's enumeration of these
interrelated personality traits and
cultural features read like a patri-
ot's Independence-Day speech:
individualism, independence,
inventiveness, adventurousness,
mobility, social and political
democracy, and nationalism.

Scholars continue to debate the
validity of Turner's thesis. Yet its
lasting importance is not whether
it represents truth or myth, but
that it has shaped how we have
viewed, researched, and written
our local and national past. In
Iowa and elsewhere around the
country, the Turner thesis has
been an operational principle
underlying definitions of commu-
nity and explorations of its chang-
ing character over time. Certainly
a Turnerian frame of reference
informs our centennial histories

that describe bands of self-reliant
pioneers busting sod and building
homesteads on the nineteenth-
century prairie. Even in communi-
ties based on religious covenants
or town-booming schemes, at least
an element of Turner's hardy fron-
tiersman acting alone to tame the
wilderness is likely to appear in
chronicles of the settlement peri-
od. No matter that these hardy,
self-reliant pioneer settlers actual-
ly arrived by rail or steamboat,
spent their first night on the fron-
tier in a depot hotel, or perhaps
traveled to Iowa in an entourage
that included twenty or thirty fam-
ilies joined together in a joint-
stock company.

New information about the set-
tlement period ought not distract
us from the continuing signifi-
cance of the frontier thesis. As an
aid in organizing data and evaluat-
ing change over time, Fred
Turner's Chicago speech retains
its utility. Look, for example, at
how historians such as Allan G.
Bogue and Robert R. Dykstra have
illuminated the community-build-
ing experience in Iowa and in
other midwestern states in terms
derived from Turner. That Turner
ignored variables of race, class,
and gender, and that he exaggerat-
ed some dimensions of frontier life
at the expense of others, are prob-
ably less important as deficiencies
of his thesis than as opportunities
for later historians. And in the
years after 1893, as Turner's ideas
infused American history—even
fiction and film—Iowans would
find that his frontier thesis had
indeed come home with them
from the World's Fair.



J.E. Branch of Elkader brought home an ornate, 20"x26" certificate for corn exhibited at the fair.

They brought home pride— and probably some prejudice

CERTAINLY PRIDE in Iowa and America was one final thing that many Iowans brought back home from the World's Columbian Exposition. The *Des Moines Capital* boasted that "Iowa has the best building, the handsomest booth in the agricultural building, the best band and the best butter." *Scribner's* brazenly told its national audience that the fair "should be sacred to every American, as marking for them and for the intelligent world a point in civilization never before reached by any people."

Sacred or not, the 1893 World's Fair—like all expositions—was not built to endure beyond the six months it was open. *Harper's* found no fault here: "Its impermanence is one of its charms. If it were to remain, one might gradually find flaws in its beauty."

Social critics and historians would indeed find flaws in the fair. For many Americans, the fair was not the epitome of civilization, but rather the same old story of exclusion. A painting by Iowa State student George Washington Carver may have been selected with other Iowa work to be displayed at the fair. But if Carver visited the fair, he would have found only one restaurant and restroom open to African Americans, no clerical or construction jobs for African Americans, and scant exhibit space to present the strides made by his race since Emancipation.

Likewise, American Indians were considered part of ethnological or anthropological exhibits, not as contributors to America. In fact, most non-European/American cultures were considered exotic at best, primitive and uncivilized at worst, and were seen as entertainment amidst the "popular culture" of the Midway Plaisance, compared to the well-intentioned high culture of the rest of the exposition.

Women fared somewhat better, though their work continued to be seen in a sphere separate from men—in fact, in a separate building. The Woman's Building showcased women's contributions in all aspects of human effort. There, women held national meetings, viewed exhibits by clubs (one of the few outlets for women's

civic energies), and shared ideas ("networking," we'd call it today). Davenport physician Jennie McCowen spoke on children's reform issues. Dubuque women's rights leader Mary Newbury Adams, eager to "stir up the ladies," coordinated literary congresses and spoke on suffrage and religious issues.

It should come as no surprise to us that by-and-large the Columbian Exposition reflected the dominant culture's value system—for that's who organized the fair and that's what was taken to the fair. As author Henry Adams noted about the fair, "One sees what one brings."

No doubt, Iowans also brought expectations of witnessing grandeur (fed by the public relations efforts), of making business contacts, and of having a good time in a very big city. Aspiring sculptor Nellie Verne Walker apparently also found something more: inspiration. Awe-struck by the exposition, seventeen-year-old Walker returned to Moulton, Iowa, worked seven years to earn money to return to Chicago, studied there with Lorado Taft, and became a recognized sculptor in the Beaux Arts tradition. Sarah Jane Kimball's diary tells us that she entered the fairgrounds eager "to see the glories" and found, indeed, "a museum of everything." A handful of Iowa women who helped coordinate shipment of 117,000 bushels of corn and other supplies to famine victims in Russia found public praise in a reception for Clara Barton in the Iowa Building. In the same building on another date, Miss Floy Brundage of Des Moines even found an audience for her "whistling solo."

Surely many Iowans brought home awards for their exhibits (opposite), customers for their businesses, and souvenirs for their parlors. No one left much personal record on whether the fair reinforced stereotypes or changed world views. Ora E. Miller, on the Iowa Board of Lady Managers, fervently hoped that posterity would admire Iowa's "exhibition of energy, resources and possibilities." Sarah Jane Kimball said simply, "I enjoyed every minute of it and got very tired." □

Barbara Born in Luxembourg, Europe Jan. 1, 1856
 Died in Des Moines, Ia. Feb. 4, 1943
 Buried in Keosauqua, Ia. Feb. 8, "

George _____

Frank _____

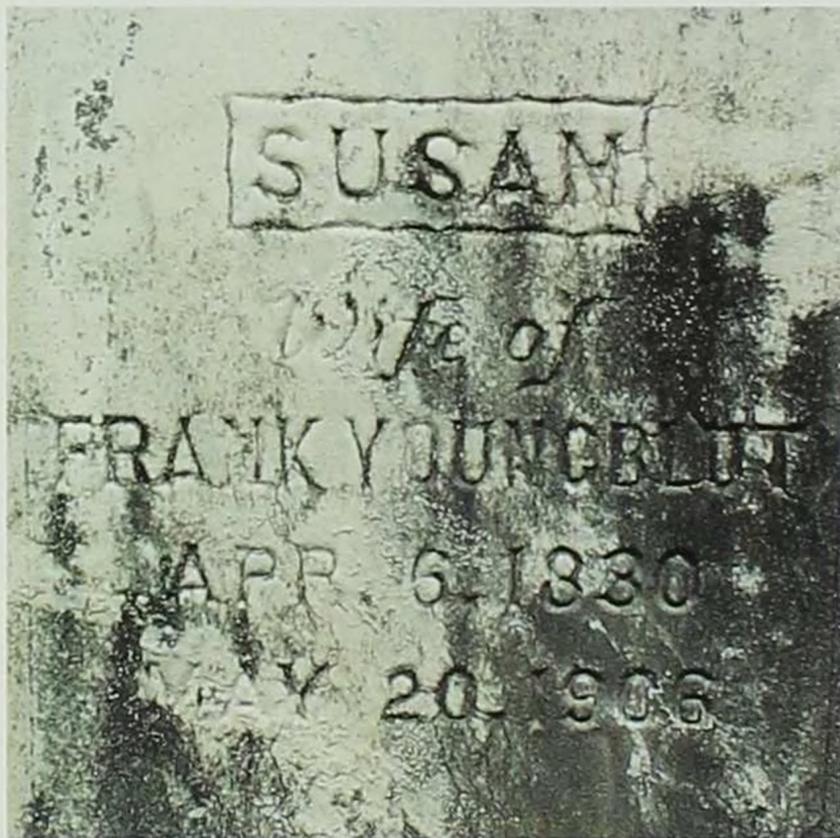
John — Oct 4 1860 Died Sept 28 1924
 married Margaret Roberts

Josephine — Oct 22, 1863 Died _____
 married Ernest Martin.

Frank — June 9 1865 Died June 2 1906



Left: List of Susanna's children, including Barbara. Above: Author and Bible where list was found.



In Search



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY THE AUTHOR

Grandpa Youngblut Born Feb 11, 1823
 died May 11, 1892

Grandma Youngblut born April 6, 1830
 died May 20, 1906

More puzzle pieces, from middle left: Susanna's grave marker in Gilbertville. Frank Bunkers and Lillian Welter, 1908. From lower left: Our Lady of Consolation in Niederfeulen church. Family records ("Grandma Youngblut" is Susanna).

“There may come to be places in our lives that are second spiritual homes—closer to us in some ways, perhaps, than our original homes. But the home tie is the blood tie. And had it meant nothing to us, any other place thereafter would have meant less, and we would carry no compass inside ourselves to find home ever, not anywhere at all. We would not even guess what we had missed.”

—From Eudora Welty's essay "Place in Fiction" in *The Eye of the Story and Other Essays* (1956)

of Susanna

by Suzanne Bunkers

FOR MANY YEARS, author Eudora Welty's words have inspired me to ask, What is the "home tie," the "blood tie," in my life? What defines "home" for me? My sense of the home tie, the blood tie, derives not only from places but also from people. "Home" is linked to my search for Susanna.

Susanna Simmerl, my great-great-grandmother, was born in Niederfeulen, Luxembourg, in 1831. Susanna spent her first twenty-six years in Luxembourg. Then, in 1857, she immigrated to the United States, where she married Frank Youngblut, another Luxembourger who had come to the United States in 1853. Susanna and Frank, who farmed near Gilbertville, Iowa, had nine children. Frank Youngblut died in 1893, and Susanna died in 1906.

These facts briefly outline the life of Susanna

Simmerl Youngblut. But, as I have learned during the past thirteen years, facts are only the tip of the genealogical iceberg; they do not tell the whole story. To find and assemble more pieces of the puzzle, I have needed to search in unconventional places, and I have needed to come to terms with a complicated web of ideas and feelings about the many meanings of "home."

For me, "home" is a green house on Long Street in Granville, Iowa, where I spent the first eighteen years of my life. "Home" is a white house on Carroll Street in Mankato, Minnesota, where I have lived for the past thirteen years. "Home," in a larger sense, is the entire midwestern United States, where I have spent my entire life.

"Home" is also my family of origin—reaching back through the generations, and forward into my daughter's (and future) generations.



The author's genealogical search for her great-great-grandmother led her to Niederfeulen, Luxembourg.

"Home" is Luxembourg, the tiny European country that my maternal and paternal ancestors left when they immigrated to the United States. They began arriving here in the 1840s, settling near the Mississippi River, just outside Dubuque, in the tiny farming communities of New Vienna and Luxemburg, Iowa. From eastern Iowa, their descendants spread across the state, south to Gilbertville and west to Granville, eventually crossing into the Dakotas and Minnesota. Most of my ancestors were *journaliers*, that is, day laborers—Luxembourgers who had little money or possessions, individuals for whom immigration to the United States most likely promised opportunities for a better life.

"Home," for me as a university teacher, is also the scholarly community that shapes the way I do my research. Reading and teaching about women in literature, analyzing approaches to women's writing, and asking questions about the concept of *woman* are central to my work. Finally, "home" represents the connections I have made, the links I have forged with others who share a strong commitment to

studying the lives of forgotten American women.

My weaving of the scholarly with the personal, the geographical, and the cultural has several strands. In reconstructing the lives of women whose daily lives generally passed unnoticed by historians and literary theorists, I am exploring how my forebears' experiences and values might have shaped my own outlook. I am learning the importance of interweaving the tapestry of my own life with the tapestries of other women's lives. I am analyzing directions in my own life, choices I have made, decisions that have affected my beliefs and strategies for daily living. I know that my experience as a mother and as a daughter is central to my study of Susanna's life. During the past thirteen years, as my own life has changed, I have formulated—and discarded—many theories about who she might have been. Thus, in studying my ancestor's life, I am exploring the psychological terrain traversed by many generations of my family, so that someday my daughter might have a "map" to help her discover where she has come from.

MY SEARCH FOR SUSANNA began in 1980, when I made my first trip to Niederfeulen, Luxembourg, accompanied by my cousin, Frank Klein. At the time, the two of us were writing the history of the Kleins (Frank's paternal and my maternal ancestors), who had emigrated from Luxembourg to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the Kleins had once lived in Niederfeulen, and, as Frank and I searched through the parish and civil records and met several cousins, I discovered that my paternal ancestors, the Simmerls, had also once lived in Niederfeulen.

When I began my search for my great-great-grandmother, Susanna Simmerl, I knew nothing about her except for what I had gleaned from short notations in the parish and civil records. I learned that Susanna had been born to Angela Hottua and Theodore Simmerl on April 6, 1831. Although I found nothing about her childhood or adolescence, civil records revealed that at age twenty-five, Susanna had given birth to her first child, a daughter named Barbara Simmerl, on December 30, 1856. Yet the parish baptismal records listed Susanna's mother, Angela Simmerl, as Barbara's mother, and labeled Barbara *filia naturalis* [illegitimate daughter]. No father's name was listed on either the parish or the civil record of Barbara's birth.

I realized that I needed to consider carefully the implications of "legitimacy" and "illegitimacy." Within the almost exclusively Catholic culture of nineteenth-century Luxembourg, a *filia naturalis* would not have been viewed in the same light as a "legitimate" daughter. Barbara Simmerl's baptismal record, which listed her grandmother Angela as her mother, had wiped Barbara's biological mother, Susanna, out of existence. How could I find Susanna again?

Although I knew that Susanna and Barbara had immigrated to the United States sometime before 1875, I didn't learn the circumstances surrounding their immigration until 1984, when I was able to study the passenger list for the ship *William B. Travis*, which sailed from Le Havre, France, early in 1857, arriving in New York City on May 6. Listed among the ship's passengers were Susanna Simmerl, aged twenty-one, and Peter Simmerl, aged twenty-

five. (Both Susanna's and her brother's ages appear to have been mistaken. According to church and civil records in Luxembourg, Susanna Simmerl was twenty-six and Peter was thirty at that time.)

Although I was puzzled not to find Barbara's name on the ship's passenger list, I took it for granted that, because she was an infant, she might not be listed there. Surely, I imagined, Susanna had been a heroic woman who had taken her infant daughter and sailed for America, no doubt to escape the shaming to which she would have been subjected in her native village. Susanna must have hoped to find a more hospitable climate in the United States where, with her child, she could make a fresh start.

I clung to this "heroic mother" theory despite my intuition that certain things just didn't add up. For instance, by 1870, according to U.S. census records, Angela Simmerl was living with her son Peter in Luxemburg, Iowa, not far from Dubuque. The same census records listed Barbara as a thirteen-year-old servant girl working in a neighboring family's household. The census also indicated that Susanna Simmerl Youngblut was living with her husband, Frank, and their young children on a farm near Gilbertville.

How and when had Angela and Barbara come to the United States? Why was young Barbara working as a domestic servant on a farm near Luxemburg, Iowa, and not living with her mother, Susanna, on the Youngblut farm near Gilbertville? I did not yet have any answers to these questions.

BY 1875, when Barbara was nineteen, she had married twenty-seven-year-old Henry Bunkers at Dyersville, Iowa. Church and civil records also revealed that the young couple had settled on a farm near Granville, a few hundred miles to the west. There they raised twelve children, one of whom, Frank Bunkers, married Lillian Welter in June 1908. Frank and Lillian Bunkers became my paternal grandfather and grandmother.

I remembered my childhood walks in the

Granville cemetery with my father, Tony Bunkers. We'd stop to pray at the graves of his parents, Frank and Lillian. Sometimes Dad would cry when he'd repeat the story of his father's unexpected death from a heart attack in 1926. His mother had been left with six children. Dad, the second youngest, had been only five years old. The family had struggled to make ends meet during the Great Depression, and Dad eventually went to live in the home of his maternal aunt and uncle. As a result, Dad knew little about his Bunkers ancestors.

After stopping at Frank and Lillian Bunkers's graves, Dad and I would walk over to the main Bunkers family plot, where my great-grandfather Henry Bunkers was buried next to my great-grandmother, Barbara Simmerl Bunkers. A small grey obelisk stood next to Barbara's grave. Inscribed on it was the name *Angela Simmerl* and the date of death, 1897.

"Who was she?" I asked.

"I don't know," Dad replied.

Now, over twenty-five years later, I did know who Angela was, and I wondered why she was buried in Granville, next to her granddaughter, Barbara, rather than in Gilbertville, next to her daughter, Susanna. That question opened the door for many more questions. But I didn't have time to search for answers. It was 1985. I was teaching full time, and I was pregnant with my own daughter. I wanted to give her a "family" name, yet one that would give her a sense of individuality.

"How did you give me my name?" I asked my mother on a visit to Granville.

"Oh," she smiled, "I liked that song, 'Oh, Susannah,' and I named you Suzanne."

So that was how I came to bear the name of my great-great-grandmother, although my parents had not even known it was a "family" name. Intrigued by the mystery I was beginning to unravel, I began to feel that my parents *had* unconsciously named me after Susanna. Now I wanted my daughter to share our ancestor's name.

On October 17, 1985, Rachel Susanna was heartily welcomed to this world by family and friends. As an unmarried mother, I knew I could count on receiving far more emotional support than Susanna would have received 130 years earlier, when her daughter Barbara had

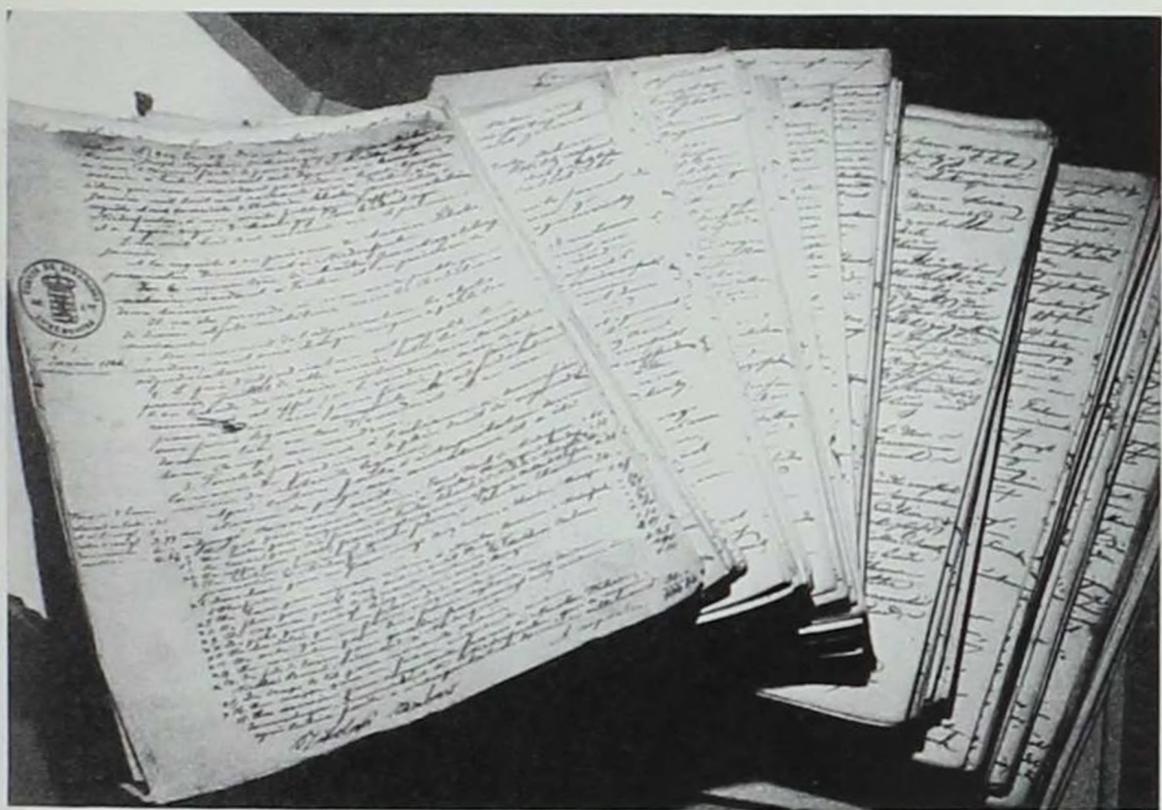
been born. I also had an education and a good job doing what I loved to do—teaching. Unlike Barbara, Rachel would know her biological father, and Rachel would be listed on her baptismal certificate as the daughter of her mother.

TWO YEARS AFTER Rachel's birth, I received a Fulbright research grant to travel to Luxembourg and Belgium, where I planned to study the daily lives of nineteenth-century working women. On a blustery morning in January 1988, with Rachel, her toys, and my research materials in tow, I left Mankato for Europe. For nearly half a year my daughter and I lived in Brussels, Belgium, where Rachel attended a *garderie* (preschool) while I studied historical records in libraries, archives, and parishes. In late March, my mother, Verna Bunkers, who had never been to Luxembourg, came to visit us. Together, my mother, my daughter, and I walked the streets of Niederfeulen and visited the homes of our cousins, the Lindens and the Steiwers. On Easter Sunday morning, we attended Mass in St. Roche Church, where Angela, Susanna, and Barbara had worshipped over 125 years before. We wove our way through the crowded graveyard, where many generations of our ancestors had been buried.

Another day, while my mother watched Rachel, I studied nineteenth-century census records for Niederfeulen. They confirmed my hunch: Barbara had not gone to America with Susanna. In fact, during the late 1850s and early 1860s, as the census records revealed, young Barbara Simmerl was living in Niederfeulen with her widowed grandmother, Angela Simmerl.

My theory of the "heroic mother" collapsed, replaced by a new theory of the "deserting mother." Rocking Rachel to sleep in our Brussels apartment one night, I raged at Susanna: "How could you have left your baby behind in Luxembourg? What kind of a mother were you?"

In an attempt to answer these questions, I began to investigate how Angela and Barbara



Brittle notary records from 1860s reveal clues about Susanna's property and her daughter's immigration.

Simmerl got to America. Jean Ensich and Jean-Claude Muller, scholars who specialized in Luxembourg immigration history, suggested that I study notary records for the village of Niederfeulen. Those records, they explained, would detail all transactions, such as the sale of property or possessions, that helped finance immigration.

So, one spring afternoon I hiked to the state archives, housed in what had been a Luxembourg City military hospital a hundred years before. There, in a dusty packet tied with twine, was a thick stack of notary records for the Feulen area during the 1860s. Midway through the stack, I found a packet of brittle legal papers written in French and dated March 29, 1866. The name *Simmerl* was scrawled across the top of the first page. Here I found legal authorization for the sale of Angela Simmerl's property in Niederfeulen prior to her immigration to the United States. Barbara Simmerl, aged ten, was listed as accompanying Angela on the journey.

Neatly folded inside these Luxembourgish notary papers were legal papers handwritten in English, labeled "Black Hawk County, Iowa," and dated December 18, 1865. These papers stated that Susanna and Frank Youngblut had given Susanna's brother, Peter Simmerl, power of attorney to sell whatever property Susanna might still possess in Luxembourg. Both sets of

legal papers bore the signatures of Susanna, Angela, Peter, and Barbara Simmerl.

Together, these legal papers completed an important piece of the puzzle: Barbara had remained with her grandmother, Angela, when her mother, Susanna, left Luxembourg for America in 1857. During the next years, as the unfolding American Civil War discouraged immigration, Susanna had remained in the United States while her mother and daughter had remained in Luxembourg. Finally, in 1866, the three were reunited.

Some years ago, I was visiting my mother and other relatives in Granville. My cousin Barbara Jacobs (named after Barbara Simmerl Bunkers) showed the Bunkers family Bible to me. There, a notation listed Grandma [Susanna] Youngblut as Barbara's mother and Grandpa [Frank] Youngblut as Barbara's father, even though he could not have been her biological father. Ironically, this family record attempted to accomplish something that the church and civil records did not: restore Susanna to her place as Barbara's mother and provide a father for Barbara, thus belatedly "legitimizing" her.

Now, as I mull over all of these records, I am fairly certain that Susanna and Barbara never lived together as mother and daughter, and that Angela Simmerl lies buried next to her granddaughter Barbara because Barbara cared for Angela in her old age. Angela was both grand-



Barbara and Henry Bunkers (adults in front row) and their family. Barbara was the daughter of Susanna Simmerl Youngblut, but was raised by her grandmother, leading to interesting questions for the author.

mother and mother to Barbara. Susanna was—and was not—Barbara's mother.

LIKE MY THEORY of Susanna as the “heroic mother,” my theory of Susanna as the “deserting mother” was shattered. In fact, the more I studied Susanna's life, the less qualified I felt to pass judgment on her actions. And the less willing I was to believe that I could neatly sum up what her life meant—or what it means.

The dynamics of mother-daughter relationships are complex; feelings between mothers and daughters are powerful and often contra-

dictory. As I study Susanna's relationships with Barbara and Angela through the filter of my relationships with my own mother and daughter, I am better able to appreciate the distinctions between acts of mothering and the cultural institution of motherhood, past and present. More specifically, my search for Susanna has deepened my understanding of how my own experience of daughterhood and motherhood inevitably affects my interpretations of what Susanna did and why she did it. My search has helped me gain perspective on a woman whom I never knew but whose experiences and decisions are interwoven with my own. It has made me grateful for my close relationships with my

mother and my daughter. The story of Susanna, slowly pieced and carefully woven, will become a warm and cherished coverlet for myself and for my descendants.

Two summers ago, when Rachel and I visited our family in Granville, I was able to take another look at the Bunkers family Bible. This time I noticed two loose-leaf pages tucked inside its back cover. It was a letter, written in the late 1960s, from "Aunt Sophie and Virginia" O'Connor of Waterloo, Iowa, to my cousin Barbara Jacobs of Granville, Iowa. The letter listed the names of Susanna and Frank Youngblut's children. Barbara's name was first on the list.

As I held the letter and Bible, I felt sad that my cousin, who had died in 1984, hadn't lived long enough to know how far my search for Susanna had progressed. She would have been glad to know that I had walked Immaculate Conception parish cemetery in Gilbertville, Iowa, until I had found Susanna and Frank Youngblut's graves. On my visits to the Gilbertville area, many of my Youngblut cousins had welcomed me into their homes, eager to share what we could piece together about our ancestor Susanna's life. Susanna and Frank Youngblut had apparently enjoyed a long, happy marriage. Their children had prospered, and their descendants still farm the old home place, on the banks of the Cedar River, just a half-mile from the Gilbertville railroad depot.

IN EARLY JUNE 1993, Rachel and I flew back to Europe for our first visit in five years. After spending a few days in Brussels and Ostende with friends, we traveled by train to Luxembourg, where our cousins, Erny and Nico Linden, again welcomed us into their home in Niederfeulen. Erny explained that on Sunday, June 13, Luxembourgers would celebrate Mother's Day. She invited Rachel and me to join her in a parish procession honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary. Led by the parish priest and acolytes, who carried a statue of Mary, Our Lady of Consolation, the procession wound its way through the streets of Niederfeulen to St. Roche's Church at the center of the village. As



Author and her daughter Rachel (right) were welcome guests of cousin Erny Linden (left) in Niederfeulen, and joined a parish procession on Mother's Day.

the priest gave the benediction, the congregation sang "Tantum Ergo" and "O Salutaris Hostia." The strains of these Latin hymns carried me back to the St. Joseph Church of my childhood—to the pungent incense, the varnished wooden pews, the unpadded kneelers. Now, as I tried to join in the singing, my voice broke, and tears rolled down my cheeks. Rachel looked over at me and took my hand. "It's okay, Mama," she whispered.

After the benediction, she and I lingered a while inside the church. We walked down the center aisle to the entry way, and I pointed out the baptismal font where our ancestors had been christened. Rachel and I climbed the nar-

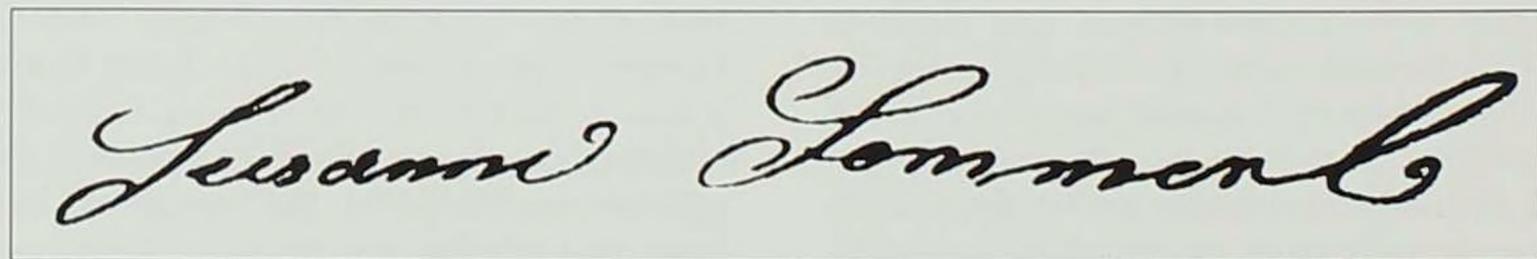
row steps to the choir loft, where our ancestors might once have sung during Mass. There my daughter and I discovered a cache of life-sized statues, their paint chipped and faded, stored behind a curtain next to the pipe organ. I realized that these statues likely stood on the altars of St. Roche Church when Susanna and, in turn, Barbara, had been girls. Then Rachel and I retraced our steps down from the choir loft and rejoined our cousin Erny. As the three of us walked back down the streets of Niederfeulen, I knew I was home.

POSTSCRIPT: I'll be stopping by the Gilbertville cemetery again next summer to leave flowers for Susanna, as I do every year. Sometimes Rachel goes with me to visit Susanna's grave. Together we sit by Susanna's headstone, and I tell my daughter what I've pieced together about her great-great-great-grandmother's life so long ago. The last time I visited Susanna's grave, I made a rubbing of what remains of its inscription:

Now no more will join our number,
Thou no more our song will know,
But again we hope to meet thee,
When the day of life is fled,
And in heaven with joy to greet thee,
Where our farewell tears are shed.

When my daughter asks me, "Mama, where did I come from?" a richer texture underlies my answers, shaped by the quilt of experience that I have sewn. My sense of "home," of the "home tie," the "blood tie," continues to evolve. Now, as I study Susanna's life, I reflect on the wisdom of feminist author bell hooks, who writes:

"I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond boundaries, yet I needed also to return there. . . . Indeed the very meaning of 'home' changes with experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference."



Susanna's signature, as it appeared on property transaction papers. Quotation at end of article is from bell hooks, *Yearning, Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990).

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WORLD'S FAIR: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

Creating an international exposition surely was the labor of thousands. Creating this *Palimpsest* essay also took a lot of help. I want to thank in particular several co-workers at the State Historical Society of Iowa: museum registrar Jodi Evans and archivists Mary Bennett, Beth Brannen, Ellen Sulser, Becki Peterson, and Sharon Avery for their help in locating artifacts, documents, and images. As always, many staff members gave me leads or helped me develop ideas. I'm grateful to all of them, named or unnamed.

My thanks also to past and present work-study students who transcribed, researched, and wrote copy: Becky Hawbaker, Lisa Moran, Sonia de Luca, Marjorie Levine, and Darleen Lev. Jeff Nichols produced a detailed and useful yearly index.

Thanks to Chuck Greiner of Front Porch Studio, who cheerfully and skillfully photographed a lot of items in not very much time, and to Gerald Mansheim and Mike Whye, who loaned images. Becky Jordan (at Iowa State University Archives) has often helped us find photos and chase down facts, as has the staff at University of Iowa Library/Special Collections.

Finally, my thanks to guest authors Merle Davis and Bill Silag, whose historical perspectives added new dimensions to our understanding of the World's

Columbian Exposition.

All objects and images in this essay (except page 165 cadets, 169 "Cairo," 180 window, 183, 184 bank, and cover paisley) were photographed from the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

The Chicago Historical Society's exhibit "Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893" runs through July 17, 1994. The exhibit catalog (same title, by Neil Harris, et al.) presents several excellent essays.

To read more about the exposition, consider these sources, among the most useful in preparing this essay: William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991). Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, "Revisiting the White City," *Historic Preservation* (March/April 1993). Jack Fincher, "George Ferris Jr. and the great wheel of fortune," *Smithsonian* (July 1983). Phil Patton, "Sell the cookstove if necessary, but come to the Fair," *Smithsonian* (June 1993). Henry Petroski, "The Ferris Wheel," *American Scientist* (vol. 81). Suzanne Stephens, "For the Record, Schuyler at the 1893 World's Fair," *Architectural Record* (June 1993). Thomas J. Schlereth, *Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums* (Charlottesville, 1992). Donald Miller, "The White City," *American Heritage* (July/Aug. 1993).

Like many periodicals, *Scribner's Magazine* and *Harper's Monthly* ran frequent articles on the fair throughout 1893. For views of contemporary Iowans, don't overlook Charles Ashton's weekly columns in *The Guthrie*, 1893 (microfilm through the State Historical Society of Iowa), or the 1895 *Report of the Iowa Columbian Commission*.

For more on Turner and the frontier thesis, consult Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

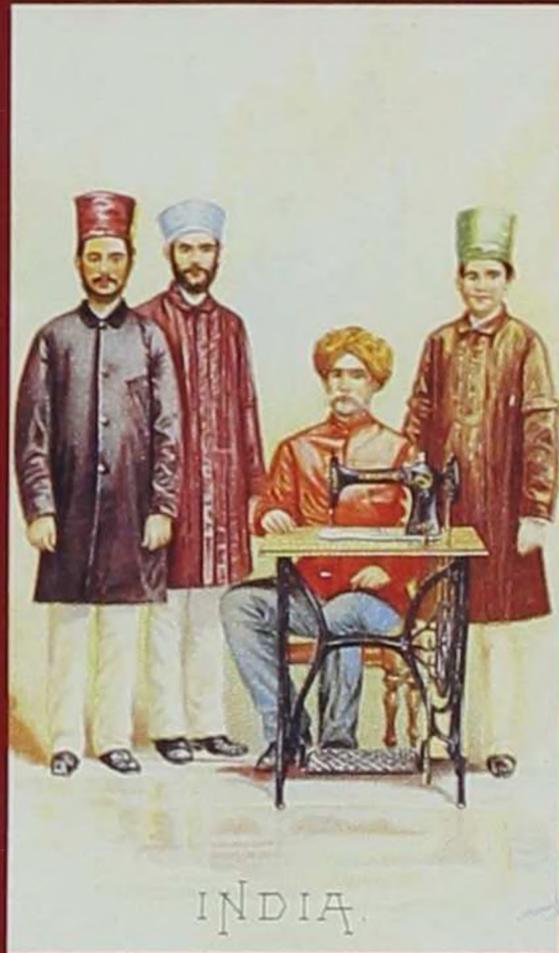
—The Editor

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According to the backs of these colorful advertising cards, "the civilizing influence" of Singer sewing machines had found its way into dozens of foreign countries and had become "the friend of the people." This pack of thirty-six cards, a souvenir from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, hints at the role America articulated for itself at the fair—one of international business and influence. This *Palimpsest* looks at the World's Fair from the viewpoint of Iowans who attended, and considers the fair's legacies a century later.



SPAIN (SEVILLA)

THE PALIMPSEST (ISSN 0031-0360) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society in Iowa City. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. Postmaster: send address changes to State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.