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BEAMING FORTH RAYS OF HOPE FOR ALL WOMANKIND:
A COMPARISON OF WOMEN AND MEN'S REFLECTIONS ON THE
'GREATEST FAIR IN AMERICAN HISTORY' – THE 1893 WORLD'S
COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

The World's Columbian Exposition, held in 1893 in Chicago, attracted numerous visitors from around the world to view the exhibits on technology and the advancement of civilization since the evolution of man. In the six short months of the World's Columbian Exposition's existence, approximately one in four Americans visited the fair. Visitors walked away from the grand buildings and various exhibits with impressions of grandness and perceptions of their society and civilization. This was one of the first international exhibits in which women played a major role in the organization of and fundraising the fair. Numerous women visited the fair in an American society becoming more progressive and wrote personal accounts of their observations. Thus, women observed the different buildings, exhibits, and fairgoers differently than their male counterparts, which has connotations for society and civilization in general.

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INTRODUCTION¹

In the summer of 1893, Chicago briefly captured the attention of the world as the city hosted what many at the time thought one of the greatest and influential events in modern history.² The city hosted a “Fair...not only an unprecedented achievement in architecture, education, and entertainment, [but] also...a reflection of and catalyst for the public sphere’s transformation.”³ Numerous items and ideas displayed at the fair, called the World’s Columbian Exposition, left lasting impressions on the visitors and society.⁴

¹Sheldon T. Gardner, ed., “A Visitor’s Trip to Chicago in 1893 By Mable L. Treseder”, TMs compiled by editor, 1943, p. 18-19, Special Collections, Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin – Madison, Madison. The quote in the first part of the title represented the narrator’s reaction to a painting by a female on women’s rights displayed in the Kansas Building at the fair.

²Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 31.; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Gilded Age: or, The Hazard of New Functions* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1997), 150; Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women: The Story of the Woman’s Building, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, with an introduction and edited by Dr. Anita Miller (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981), vii.

³Ann L. Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis, eds., *Women’s Experience of Modernity, 1875-1945* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 189.

⁴Ardis and Lewis, 192. Examples of the fair’s impact abound, for instance, the “Aunt Jemima” pancake character used vaudeville to help enhance the black, female, ‘mammy’ figure in American society. David J. Bertuca, Donald K. Hartman, and Susan M. Neumeister, comp., *The World’s Columbian Exposition: A Centennial Bibliographic Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 365. The World’s Columbian Exposition inspired L. Frank Baum, Katherine Bates, and Walt Disney. Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* is loosely based on his trip to the fair. Katherine Bates wrote the song ‘America the Beautiful’ about her trip through the Midwest to get to the fair, and the reference to the fair in the song is the “alabaster city...gleaming”. Walt Disney’s father helped construct the buildings at the fair when he helped plaster the buildings their white color. The stories Disney’s father told him inspired Walt to create his theme parks. The ‘International Village’ in Epcot and Cinderella’s white castle in the middle of Magic Kingdom are believed to have been inspired by the World’s Columbian Exposition. Ibid., xxi. The fair also presented George Westinghouse with the opportunity to showcase the first widespread use of electricity. Over ninety thousand incandescent lamps lit up the fair at night. Westinghouse outbid Edison to have his ‘alternating current’ electrical system used at the World’s Columbian Exposition instead of Thomas Edison’s ‘direct current’ electricity system. This is one of the main reasons the United States and the world universally adopted the alternating current system after 1893.

The World's Columbian Exposition presented the citizens of Chicago with the opportunity to show the economic, social, and industrial growth of America since Christopher Columbus had landed on the North American continent four-hundred years ago.⁵ In fact, fair commissioners named the event in Christopher Columbus' honor. The citizens of Chicago also used the opportunity to promote the growth of their city in comparison to the more established American cities along the eastern seaboard. New York City's importance economically and politically overshadowed Chicago until the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 also signified the successful recovery of the city of Chicago as a great American metropolis and as a new influential player in regional and national events and politics. A fire had almost destroyed the city in October of 1871 as twenty-seven acres of the city burned to the ground.⁶ The event, known as the 'Great Chicago Fire', destroyed many important sectors of the city, including the financial district, and highlighted the

⁵Joseph Kirkland, *The Story of Chicago*, (Chicago: Dibble Publishing Co., 1892), 420. It is interesting to note that the summer of 1893 actually marked the 401st anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival on the continent, not the 400th. Columbus landed in North America in October of 1492. The official justification for holding the World's Columbian Exposition a year later is because "the exhibition must be held in the summer months, and that, to hold it in the summer of 1892 would be to anticipate the event, and to begin the celebration of the landing on a day of the year when Columbus had not yet set sail." However, it is important to remember Native Americans lived in North America before Columbus arrived. Weimann, 35. Also, due to a lengthy deliberation over the proposed site location between New York City and Chicago in Congress, the planning of the fair was delayed. Chicago received the nickname, "The Windy City", from New York residents who resented their loss of the fair because Chicago's "supporters had talked so much about its ability to mount the greatest Exposition that ever was".

⁶Kirkland, 289. The fire is believed to have begun when a cow at 137 De Koven Street kicked over a kerosene lamp. The family who owned the cow denied the event transpired because they claimed to be asleep at the time. As a result, no one was charged for the damage that occurred. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair: an Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893*, Volume 1, (New York: Bounty Books, 1894), 33, claimed that over three square miles burned to the ground and "\$250,000,000 is a moderate estimate of the damage wrought." Over one hundred thousand Chicago citizens lost their homes and 250 people died as a result of the fire, either from burning to death, being trampled in the rush to get out of the area, or from drowning in the Chicago River.

laissez-faire business climate of the late nineteenth century.⁷ Corruption in both the fire department and the city government also contributed to the devastating effects of the blaze.⁸ Chicago citizens reestablished their city as an important industrial center after the Great Chicago Fire,⁹ but also culturally through the additions of higher learning institutions and a reputable library. Citizens, along with large monetary grants from John D. Rockefeller and Marshall Field, established the Chicago Public Library. Also, the legislature of Illinois authorized the current University of Chicago in 1892.¹⁰ Other institutions founded at this time include the Art Institute of Chicago and Northwestern University in Evanston.¹¹

The American economy towards the end of the nineteenth century experienced a series of depressions which alarmed the nation and highlighted problems of the era, such as social reform and urban problems.¹² Years after the Great Chicago Fire, in February of 1886, the people of Chicago witnessed a violent struggle over worker's rights in Haymarket Square. Anarchist workers

⁷John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920s*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 11.

⁸Kirkland, 290. The firefighters did not respond right away to the fire because it was payday and they were celebrating in the local taverns. There is speculation the man in charge of ringing the fire alarm bell was intoxicated.

⁹Bancroft, 34. The harbor in Chicago shipped two hundred million bushels of grain and one billion feet of lumber in 1892, which is comparable to harbors on the east coast. The grain mostly came from the American west as the frontier shifted west and more farmers moved into the area.

¹⁰*Ibid.* The legislature of Illinois originally set aside funds for a university in Chicago as early as 1857; however, the college floundered financially in 1866. The 'current' in this sentence corresponds with the revival of the University of Chicago which exists to this day.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 35.

¹²Summers, 235-247.

from the McCormick Reaper Works killed seven policemen when a bomb exploded during their “bold stroke of freedom” demonstration.¹³ The Haymarket Square incident caused unrest throughout the United States. The anarchists bolstered fears American-born citizens held that immigrants would take their jobs and position in society. The Pullman strike of the same year, 1886, also contributed to the uneasy feeling of native-born Americans towards workers and the general condition of the economy. George Pullman ordered his employees back to work when they desired an eight-hour work day threatening to replace them with recently arrived immigrants.¹⁴ The labor strikes, economic depressions, and issues of immigration alarmed most Americans. Thus, American citizens, businessmen, and politicians felt the need to celebrate their achievements to date and bolster their world image through a fair designed to showcase their society in a positive light.

The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition evolved from a series of international fairs which had displayed the latest industrial advances and artistic forms from around the world, beginning with the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.¹⁵ The consort of Queen Victoria, English monarch, Prince Albert, had initiated the exhibition and helped fashion the model from which all other

¹³Kirkland, 386. The “bold stroke of freedom” campaign occurred because the anarchist workers attempted to organize for more rights at the McCormick reaper works. When talks stopped the anarchists called for weapons to be brought to the demonstrations outside the reaper works factory near Haymarket Square. The original people targeted in the campaign were not the policemen or the five hundred detectives hired to keep the anarchists out, but the non-union workers, called “scabs.”

¹⁴Ibid., 396. The Pullman strike ended after two weeks and no violence, but the strike left an impact on the city recently worried by the Haymarket Square incident.

¹⁵Trumbull White and William Igleheart. *The World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (St. Louis, MO: P.W. Ziegler & Company, 1893), 21.

international fair commissions constructed their own exhibitions.¹⁶ Prince Albert generated the idea for creating the fair around a theme with a grand building, the Crystal Palace, at the center of the grounds to symbolize the event.¹⁷ The Crystal Palace received its name from the materials used to construct the massive structure and from the resulting cost of the building. The building used enough glass to cover twenty acres and cost approximately one million dollars to erect.¹⁸ However, the cost of the Crystal Palace corresponded to the money generated from the Great Exhibition. At the end of the Great Exhibition, the English treasury discovered it had earned approximately one million dollars in profit and the city of London grossed over twenty million dollars in total revenue from visitors who chose to stay in city accommodations and eat in London restaurants.¹⁹ These substantial amounts largely inspired other nations to host their own fairs in a grand scale throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. The Great Exhibition also set the stage for fair planners to compete for international prestige and construct the grandest structures.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 21-22. Two hundred and thirty-three great architects of the day from all over the world submitted plans in a competition to construct the building. The winning architect, Joseph Paxton, created a Crystal Palace 1851 feet long and 450 feet wide. The length of the building, 1851 feet, corresponded with the year of the Great Exhibition, 1851. Ten thousand people contributed to the construction of the Crystal Palace. Bancroft, 10.

¹⁸White and Igleheart, 22; Neil Harris and others, *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893*, (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993), 58.

¹⁹Ibid., 23-26. The English treasury did not expect to make so much money, as a majority of profit came from attendance ticket sales and refreshments. No alcohol was sold at the event, which greatly bolstered sales in future European and American fairs.

The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 provided the world with the first great glimpse into American society.²⁰ Almost ten million people visited the exhibition grounds in Philadelphia to witness 30,864 displays from all over the world.²¹ The Exposition proved to “the outside world... the marvelous industrial progress of the United States.”²² The Philadelphia 1876 Centennial Exposition also linked in fair exhibits the American psyche and perception of the ‘American Dream’ with the growing amount of wealth citizens, such as Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, amassed through business ventures. However, the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition financially disappointed American businessmen, who considered the fair a failure.²³

The great success of the 1889 World’s Fair in Paris, however, surprised and awed the world and motivated the United States citizens and government to host their own fair to rival Paris. The Paris 1889 World’s Fair attracted over twenty-eight million visitors, twenty million more visitors than the Philadelphia 1876 Centennial Exposition, and the city gained an estimated fifty million dollars through ticket sales and other paying ventures.²⁴ France took the credit as

²⁰Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 19. The first great glimpse into American society showed progress exhibited along racial and economic lines. The white nations of the United States, England, France, and Germany, were provided with prime locations to display their exhibits. The Latin American nations were aligned with the United States, possibly to show how the United States could benefit economically if they took them as colonies.

²¹White and Igleheart, 33.

²²Bancroft, 26.

²³*Ibid.*, 26. The fair cost eight million dollars to put together but only recouped \$4,300,000.

visitors to the Paris World's Fair spoke about the numerous exhibits depicting civilization's 'progress', or a "willed national activity towards a determined utopian goal."²⁵ The attention France received as a result of the World's Fair made many people around the world perceive the country as the leader in technological and cultural advances. American businessmen and congressmen imagined a fair held in the United States which would make money and showcase their nation as the leader of progress. The idea to host an American version of the 1889 Paris World's Fair associated with the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival on the North American continent was a natural, "spontaneous thought in thousands of minds."²⁶ Planners of the 1893 Columbian Exposition used Paris' great exhibition as "one with which all comparisons of the Columbian exposition are made, and by its measure is the favor or disfavor credited."²⁷

Congress passed the World's Columbian Exposition Act only a few months later, creating commission with the intent to construct a world's fair in America to rival Paris' 1889 World's Fair. The commission hired Daniel Burnham as the Chief of Construction. He spent almost two and a half years building the fair in the swampy conditions of Jackson Park along the shore of Lake Michigan (see Fig. 2 in Appendix A).²⁸ Plans called for fourteen great buildings, which

²⁴Kirkland, 423. The Paris 1889 World's Fair also set another record the planners of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition attempted to surpass, for the most people to visit the exposition in a single day, four hundred thousand. The fair also covered over 666 acres, or one square mile.

²⁵Rydell, *All The World's A Fair*, 46.

²⁶Kirkland, 418.

²⁷White and Igleheart, 36.

made up the majority of the 'White City', with each of the thirty-eight states or territories and approximately 100 different countries and ethnicities constructing their own, smaller building on the fairgrounds.²⁹ Copious construction problems plagued Burnham and his crew, which increased the cost and continually threatened to cancel the fair. A massive publicity campaign accompanied the establishment of the commission and construction of the event to globally promote visitors.³⁰ Businessmen heavily promoted the fair during a time of economic depression because they needed to recoup their investments and wanted to showcase their prowess in finance, industry, and the arts to the rest of the world.

The World's Columbian Exposition officially opened on May 1st, 1893:

in the presence of nearly a quarter of a million of people, amidst the unfurling of thousands of flags, the sounding of trumpets, the booming of cannon and the vociferations of the vast multitude...at precisely 12:08 o'clock President Cleveland stepped forward and pressed his finger on the golden key....At that instant the drapery fell from the golden figure of the "Republic," backed by the classic peristyle, she stood forth in radiant beauty welcoming the world.³¹

With the unveiling of the statue of "Republic," Chicago welcomed the world to witness the extent of progress and to observe American society. Both male and female visitors expressed awe and wonder at the sights they witnessed at the

²⁸Kirkland, 425; Weimann, 141.

²⁹Bolotin and Laing, 112-122.

³⁰Bancroft, 43. The creation of the Publicity and Promotion Department in 1890, headed by Moses P. Handy, can be largely credited for the popularity of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Handy and his team of workers sent out numerous articles to over two thousand newspapers world-wide describing the exposition and the reasons why America should host this exposition in 1893. This department generated much speculation and sparked people's curiosity enough to travel thousands of miles to visit the fair. This was the first highly successful, large-scale publicity campaign.

³¹Weimann, 242. See Figures 1 and 3, Appendix D.

1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Visitors walked through a visionary city, nicknamed the 'White City' because of the plaster-of-paris which covered the buildings, built of massive proportions, then ventured through the different exhibits displayed by contributing nations within those structures.³² Outside of the buildings visitors saw beautifully landscaped grounds, the Ferris Wheel looming in the distance, and the international attractions along the Midway Plaisance.³³ A visit to the World's Columbian Exposition inspired Mrs. Whiton Stone to write a poem about her experience which expressed the grandeur the White City evoked in a person:

Upon this central spot we stand,
Encircled with immensity,
Nay—by infinity—
Transfixed with wonder at the grand
Discoveries of human souls—the plans conceived,
The mighty deeds achieved;
The engine's lightning speed—electric speech—
The flashing fires that far off shores can reach;
The current, that in such mysterious way
Connects today [1893] with the whole world's today;
The science, art and music, all expressed
In the genius of the East, and genius of the West,
And soaring higher than Olympian ways³⁴

³²Bederman, 31. The White City showed what society should look like in the future in a perfect world.

³³Weimann, 256. The original Ferris Wheel debuted at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. It became the most identifiable symbol of the event and rivaled the Eiffel Tower built for the 1889 Paris World's Fair. The Ferris Wheel stood 250 feet tall and could hold 1,440 people at once. The Ferris Wheel was the first large-scale use of technology for 'fun'; Bertuca, Hartman, and Neumeister, xxvi. The Midway Plaisance was a mile long and contained mock villages from Germany, Algeria, Egypt, and Africa, among others.

³⁴Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle, ed., *The Congress of Women Held in the Women's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A., 1893* with portraits, biographies, and addresses (Chicago: International Publishing Co., 1893), 101.

Many visitors felt as if they belonged in the 'White City' and compared the sights of their trip to their perceptions of Heaven. Visitors typically left the experience optimistic about the future of civilization and the direction of 'progress.'

Personal accounts by visitors and planners of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago revealed the impact the event left on their lives and perceptions of society. The exhibition halls, decorated in classical architectural style and covered with white plaster-of-paris, held both racial and gender connotations.³⁵ In many instances, male visitors at the fair commented on the racial and gender connotations without realizing their implications for society. For example, white commissioners of the fair kept African Americans from participating in the fair and male visitors noticed the proximity of the Women's Building to the Midway Plaisance. The Midway seemed uncivilized and of a lower social status because the various ethnicities were relegated to this strip of land and denied space in the White City. Visitors to the fair noticed the uncivilized manner of the people who beckoned for their attention and money on the Midway. The embodiment of these racial attitudes and stereotypes in exhibits and displays at the fair compounded the problem minorities, and especially African Americans, faced when attempting to improve their position in American society.³⁶

³⁵Bederman, 31.

³⁶Robert W. Rydell, ed., with original articles by Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass, Irvine Garland Penn, and Ferdinand Barnett, *The Reason Why – The Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1999), xiii.

Female accounts, mostly limited to short manuscripts, newspaper articles, and journal or magazine articles by women who visited the fair, described various aspects of the fair and women's participation in the event. These women, along with the Board of Lady Managers and other women who contributed their time and effort to planning the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, observed the World's Columbian Exposition somewhat differently than their male counterparts. These women commented on the importance of women, mainly white women, in American society and stressed women's role in improving civilization.³⁷

Women's perception of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition differed slightly from the observations made by men. Whereas women and men made the same comments about many aspects of the fair, such as fairgoers, status of minorities and their participation in the fair, along with fair exhibits, not all features received the same analysis. Women perceived their role in society and the architecture and artifacts in the Women's Building differently than their male counterparts. The difference in opinions between the genders from recollections of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago reflected the attitudes and social norms of the late nineteenth century. This paper will examine various

³⁷The major obstacle encountered while writing this paper was the lack of personal accounts by women who simply visited the fair. The women involved with the planning and day-to-day operations of the Women's Building also were active in other areas of society. These women, sometimes associated with a profession, wrote their responses to the fair, submitted entries to journals and magazines, and acted as correspondents for a newspaper. Women wrote to journals and magazines to advertise the Women's Building and convince people to visit the exhibits. The lack of written accounts from women not associated with the Women's Building is possibly due to the fact many women did not receive much formal education before the twentieth century. Their diaries and other accounts are difficult to find and, unfortunately, might have been lost. Also, it is important to note that research on this particular topic can continue indefinitely, as a person can spend copious amounts of time through newspaper records from not just around the United States, but throughout the world as well. The artifacts I used are mainly from Chicago and the Midwest to keep a local perspective.

generalizations made by both men and women at the fair and to compare their reactions to each other and American society.

FORMATION OF THE BOARD OF LADY MANAGERS

The World's Columbian Exposition Act, passed by the United States Congress, originally did not authorize women to participate in the planning of the fair. The addition of the Springer Amendment to the act allowed for women to contribute to the development of the World's Columbian Exposition. The Springer Amendment, offered by Springer of Illinois, required the men of the commission to:

appoint a Board of Lady Managers of such numbers and to perform such duties as may be prescribed by said Commission. Said Board may appoint one or more members of all committees authorized to award prizes for exhibits which may be produced in whole or in part by female labor.³⁸

Mrs. Bertha Potter-Palmer and other women in Chicago interested in contributing to the World's Columbian Exposition largely influenced the creation of the Springer Amendment.

However, the Springer Amendment disappointed many women interested in contributing their time and efforts to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The Springer Amendment specifically called for a separate committee of women,

³⁸Weimann, 32-33. The Springer Amendment was almost not passed with the 1890 World Columbian Exposition Act. The speaker accidentally skipped over the amendment when reading it aloud in the House of Representatives before the vote. This mistake almost cost women their own building and committee. Representative Springer caught the mistake and had the speaker re-read the act with his amendment.

which kept females from contributing to everything but the women's committee and their own building. Many ladies desired positions on the Fair Commission with the men. These same women also felt the title of their committee, the 'Board of Lady Managers', "conveyed the impression that we are a useless ornament" and not an integral part of the creation of the World's Fair.³⁹

Women had contributed their expertise in fundraising and planning for the successful creation of the 1893 World's Fair before the Springer Amendment officially gave them a position. The first building "entirely planned, funded, and managed by women, devoted to women's interests and accomplishments" debuted at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. The women's pavilion at the 1876 exhibition was authorized because of the failure of the fair's commission to raise sufficient funds to construct the grounds. Women agreed to assist men with fundraising if they set aside space to showcase women's achievements.⁴⁰ Feminists disliked this agreement because they thought the separate pavilion demonstrated to the world the second-class position of females in American society. In the eyes of white, American men, women's achievements were an "afterthought."⁴¹

The women of Chicago began their own campaign for a women's building early in order to secure space for women's work in the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. In 1889, before the World's Columbian Exposition Act

³⁹Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1. The resulting building of this agreement opened on May 10th, 1875, with six hundred exhibits of women's work donated from all over the world.

⁴¹Ibid., 4; Bederman, 33.

passed Congress, over one hundred women “petitioned Congress to name some women to the exposition’s governing commission.”⁴² The Women’s Board of Lady Managers was the result.

The group of ladies which became the influential leaders of the Board of Lady Managers included many prominent women of Chicago and women who traveled from throughout the United States to represent their state. At the first meeting of the Board of Lady Managers, the women elected Mrs. Bertha Potter-Palmer of Chicago as President and Chairwoman.⁴³ These women intended the Women’s Building to “present a complete picture of the condition of women in every country of the world at this moment, and more particularly of those women who are breadwinners,”⁴⁴ and to showcase “the new avenues of employment that are constantly being opened to women.”⁴⁵

The successful planning and organizing of the Women’s Building and women’s work at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition gave many men and women faith in the accomplishments of the ‘fairer sex.’ These women had managed to acquire both power and influence in a project very much dominated by males. Men realized this and many praised their work, using

⁴²Bederman, 32-33.

⁴³Kirkland, 428; Weimann, 10. Mrs. Bertha Honore Potter-Palmer married one of the most influential men of the city of Chicago in 1870. Her husband founded a grocery and department store in Chicago before the city boomed in 1852. After the end of the Civil War, Mr. Potter-Palmer had accumulated almost seven million dollars in wealth, which he lost in the Great Chicago Fire, and eventually earned again through various business ventures. See Figure3 in Appendix A.

⁴⁴Maud Howe Elliot, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Women’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition* (New York: Goupil & Co.: Boussad, Valadon & Co., 1893), 13. The author’s mother was the Vice President of the Board of Lady Managers.

⁴⁵Ibid., 15.

complements normally reserved for men's work. In his introduction to a book, a commissioner of the fair, Colonel George R. Davis gave:

a well-deserved tribute to the Board of lady Managers, which early after its organization gave material aid to the Exposition, in the direction of State representation. Indeed in the creation of the Board Congress contributed in an extraordinary way to the general success of the World's Fair. As a body the Lady Managers have been *economical and business-like; as an attraction, their building and their exhibits are among the most profitable to the Exposition Company*. Their building, designed by a woman, is conspicuous for its architectural merits among all the beautiful creations of the Exhibition. Its contents, wholly the work of women, attract and fix the attention of the visitor [emphasis mine].⁴⁶

The words, 'economical' and 'business-like,' normally are not attached to the descriptions of women at the end of the nineteenth century. Women were deemed sensible in 1893 and, since they were not the head of the household, often had very little experience controlling the funds of a household, let alone a business. Davis' comment recognized women as an equal player in the economic field without realizing it. The fact Col. Davis mentioned the profitability of the Women's Building spoke highly of their exhibits as compared to those found in the other thirteen main exhibit buildings planned and organized solely by men.

⁴⁶White and Igleheart, 14.

AMERICAN SOCIETY IN 1893

American society during the late nineteenth century remained divided in gender roles and connected 'civilization' to 'manhood' and 'womanhood.'⁴⁷ Society's expectations of men in America placed them at the head of the family and breadwinner. They were also to display discipline in all aspects of their life. American society assumed that women, on the other hand, as the 'fairer sex', doted upon the men. They needed a man's protection to be a civilized and domesticated woman.⁴⁸ Women, especially middle and upper-class women, grew up understanding that their education prepared them for marriage to a well-bred, civilized man and for running an efficient household.

Women began to question this status quo in the latter half of the nineteenth century with the suffrage movement. Many women, especially professional women, pushed for social and urban reform, the right to vote, and women's rights in general.⁴⁹ They desired a society free from the sex roles which dominated men's expectations of women and challenged women to view their position in society differently. As a result, many women at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition could identify prominent women suffragist leaders, such as

⁴⁷Bederman, 5-7. 'Manhood' and 'womanhood' used in this sentence refers to sexual characteristics which influence gender roles. For example, 'manhood,' is defined as "...a man [that] was self reliant, strong, resolute, courageous, and honest."

⁴⁸Ibid., 135-136; Octave Thanet, "That Man: Your Husband," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 10, no. 2 (January 1893): 8. The advice in this article instructs women to cook "daintily" cooked meals and allow their husbands to show off to their friends "how well their wives cater for them."

⁴⁹Summers, 180.

Alice Paul and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and sympathize with their cause.⁵⁰ Jane Addams, another prominent female figure dedicated to promoting women's role in society and founder of the Hull House in Chicago, claimed that women needed to combine women's natural intuition with "nineteenth century scientific knowledge" and professional training to change the status quo.⁵¹ Also, the traditional family structure began to break down in the time period after the Civil War. Divorce rates began to rise throughout the last half of the nineteenth century and politicians felt the need to enact laws to protect women from abusive husbands.⁵²

This pressure from American women to improve their position in society relative to males caused American men to question their own role in society and their 'masculinity.'⁵³ Throughout the 1890's, men experienced a type of identity crisis in which they felt women assailed their sex roles in society. Men began to push for more masculine roles in society and participate in masculine activities, such as sports, because civilized society ultimately softened their personalities and made them 'feminine.' Sports activities with physical contact, such as football and basketball, debuted in this era, as did the emphasis on men helping

⁵⁰Gardner, 19. The narrator in this especially rich personal account of a female visitor to the 1893 World's Fair commented on numerous female exhibits, as I will explain in the coming pages. However, in this instance the narrator made specific reference to a picture of voters by a Mrs. Paul.

⁵¹Ardis and Lewis, 49.

⁵²Summers, 155-156.

⁵³Bederman, 18. The words 'masculinity' and 'masculine' refer to all characteristics which defined men, whether they held positive or negative connotations.

with the raising of their children.⁵⁴ Boys growing up without guidance from a strong male figure in the home might acquire feminine characteristics and given nicknames such as ‘sissy.’⁵⁵ Men’s need to demonstrate their role in society as the dominant, strong, and capable figure, can be found in the architecture of the buildings and their exhibits in the ‘White City.’

COMPARISON OF THE 1893 WORLD’S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

Men and women who visited the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago witnessed many of the same exhibits, buildings, and displays, yet left with different perspectives. However, it is important to note not all women, and presumably not all men, perceived the fair and its features in the same way. The varied educational backgrounds of the women, their different cultures, ethnicities, socio-economical status, and the enormous extent of the fairgrounds all probably contributed to the variations in women’s perspectives.⁵⁶ As much as women’s perceptions differed from each other, however, trends can be observed which differentiate their perspectives from men’s.

⁵⁴Ibid., 15; *The Milwaukee Journal*, October 14th, 1893. The article mentions how football was gaining momentum as an organized sport and “is going to be as popular in the west as it is in the east.”

⁵⁵Bederman, 17.

⁵⁶Kirkland, 425. The official fairgrounds, without the mile-long Midway Plaisance, covered slightly over 666 acres, or one square mile. Thus, it was impossible for a person to observe the entire fair in one day. A person who went to the fair every single day it was open, might not see everything the fair had to offer. See Appendix E for a map of the fairgrounds.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE WOMEN'S BUILDING AND FEATURES

The Women's Building opened with the rest of the fair's notable buildings, fourteen in all, on May 1, 1893. The fact the Women's Building operated at all during the fair spoke highly of the contributions of women at the time and, perhaps, signified the beginning of a shift in attitudes towards the position of women in American society. Mrs. Bertha Potter-Palmer delivered a noteworthy address which explained the Board of Lady Manager's struggle to decide on the building's vision, exterior decoration, and interior organization of the building.⁵⁷ The Board of Lady Managers had promoted a contest for women to create blueprints of an ideal design for the building to house women's work at the fair. The woman the board pronounced as winner, Miss Sophia Hayden (See Fig. 4 in Appendix A), a graduate from MIT, produced a blueprint "with...balconies, loggias, and vases for flowers...lightest...in its general aspect."⁵⁸

Females viewed the Woman's Building as "delicate, dignified, pure, and fair to look upon", especially as compared to the rest of the buildings designed solely by men.⁵⁹ The buildings designed by men loomed large and the immense size of the structures often dwarfed everything else in comparison. The other buildings also borrowed architectural features from Roman times, as the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition featured massive structures, a

⁵⁷Weimann, 249-251.

⁵⁸Ibid., 148.

⁵⁹Candace Wheeler, "A Dream City," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Vol LXXXVI, December 1892 – May 1893. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1893, 836. See Fig. 1 in Appendix D and all of Appendix C.

colonnade, a gleaming, pure white background, and enormous statues scattered across the fairgrounds. The 'White City' also contained inherently male characteristics which contradicted the Women's Building. The sheer size of the structures and prominence of the decorative classical columns lining the buildings linked the sight of the buildings with masculine characteristics of the era.⁶⁰

Miss Hayden described her building's blueprints compared to the other buildings designed as exhibit halls at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition:

Thus the exterior expression of the building is evolved quite naturally from the interior conditions. It is not modeled after any precedent. In style it may be called Classic or Italian Renaissance, although it follows, strictly speaking, neither style...It is the result of careful training in classical design and is the expression of what I liked and felt.⁶¹

Miss Hayden designed the building classically, which is also the style the male architects followed when designed the thirteen other grand buildings. Miss Hayden's training at the mostly male college, MIT, probably influenced her design style. However, the sculptures visitors found adorning the Women's Building were not designed by Sophia Hayden and did not necessarily follow the classical design. Mrs. Bertha Potter-Palmer and the Board of Lady Managers helped approve Alice Rideout as the designer of sculptures to design to complement Sophia Hayden's architectural plan. The two women most involved with the outward appearance of the Women's Building never corresponded nor

⁶⁰Berg, 114-120.

⁶¹Weimann, 150. See Figure 1 in Appendix B.

collaborated their efforts to unify the building under one scheme. Hayden described the result as a hodgepodge of work.⁶²

Women remarked about the beauty of the Women's Building and the amount of time and effort women donated to its construction despite the obvious lack of collaboration between Hayden, Rideout, and the Board of Lady Managers. Candace Wheeler (See Fig. 5 in Appendix A), who played an important role in decorating the interior of the building, wrote an article to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* prior to the opening of the World's Columbian Exposition, probably to promote people to visit the building. Wheeler praised Sophia Hayden's work, claiming the Women's Building did not attempt to outdo and overpower other buildings stationed along the Court of Honor, which made the building designed by a woman inherently 'better'.⁶³ Wheeler described the appearance of the Building as "man's ideal of a woman" and "that if all these building should sing together at midnight, [the Woman's Building] would lift a pure soprano note like a flute..."⁶⁴ The architecture of the building appeared less structured than the other grand buildings, such as the columns and domes prominent on many of them. The women's building also was only a fraction of

⁶²Ibid., 175-177. A U.S. Senator from San Francisco sent sketches of Alice Rideout's sculpture work to Chicago for consideration in another contest for awarding the bid for sculptures. Weeks later male commissioners of the fair awarded the bid to an unsuspecting Miss Rideout, who was nineteen at the time. Mrs. Bertha Potter-Palmer and the Board of Lady Managers had a difficult task of tracking down Miss Rideout and getting her to Chicago to design the sculptures. Sophia Hayden's experience with the Board of Lady Managers and the construction of the Women's Building left her stressed. In late summer of 1892, she experienced a mental breakdown in Daniel Burnham's office. Hayden then voluntarily entered a "home" to recover from 'melancholia' and distanced herself from the planning of the Women's Building.

⁶³Wheeler, 836.

⁶⁴Ibid.

the size of the other buildings of the fair, which made it seem more inviting and less overwhelming than the thirteen other grand buildings.

Other women commented on the hospitality or lack thereof of the Board of Lady Managers, who attempted to make women feel comfortable as soon as they walked through the doors of the Women's Building.⁶⁵ The Board of Lady Managers built a dormitory building with single beds for women only to encourage their attendance at the fair. The idea of the Women's Dormitory appealed to many visitors of the fair, especially at a cost of forty cents a night.⁶⁶ In order to fund the construction of the Women's Dormitory, the Board of Lady Managers sold stock to women throughout the United States. If a lady purchased a stock ticket, she earned a certain number of certificates for a free night's stay in the Woman's Dormitory.⁶⁷ However, this system caused trouble, especially in late summer when numerous women visited the fair and requested their reserved nights stay at the same time. One woman from Philadelphia who owned stock wrote a letter published in numerous newspapers which described the poor presentation of the Woman's Dormitory:

⁶⁵Mrs. M.P. Handy, "If You Go To The Fair," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 10, no. 7 (June 1893); 20.

⁶⁶Weimann, 327.

⁶⁷Ibid. Women who bought \$10 worth of stock earned up to twenty-five nights of free lodging in the building.

The office...presented a most disgraceful scene, women demanding their rooms and showing their stock, and being treated with the greatest impudence and what was in many cases unkindness – no explanation offered, but merely told that there was no place for them. In addition to this, the management seemed to know nothing about what was going on in the house. And one could march in and secure a cot and camp out in it, and I don't think such ever would be detected.⁶⁸

The Women's Dormitory seemed to be a better idea on paper, but experienced managerial problems throughout the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

A building designed for the care of children while their parents visited the fair operated throughout the 1893 World's Fair. The construction of this building closely followed Froebel's theory and establishment of kindergartens for young children in the United States. The Children's Building, positioned strategically near the Women's Building, allowed for mothers to drop off their children in the care of trained nurses for an hourly fee.⁶⁹ One woman commented on the popularity of the nursery with its window for visitors to look in on the many babies dropped off in nurses' care for the day. After watching the reactions of other visitors to the nursery, Marian Shaw exclaimed, "one would suppose, from the number of admiring spectators, that babies were as rare as \$100,000 diamonds."⁷⁰ This building also contained exhibits designed to showcase the latest theories in successful child-rearing and education, which included housekeeping, physical education, and woodworking skills. A gymnasium located on the roof of the building kept boys and girls physically active for

⁶⁸*The Milwaukee Journal*, July 27th, 1893.

⁶⁹Bolotin and Laing, 105. The planners of the Children's Building underestimated the popularity of the Children's Building and the day care service. "Hundreds of babies were turned away each day."

⁷⁰Marian Shaw, *A Woman Journalist Views Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition* (St. Paul, MN: Pogo Press, Inc., 1992), 64.

hours.⁷¹ The Board of Lady Managers attempted to complement the Women's Building and accommodate the needs of women with both the Children's Building and the Women's Dormitory.

Men often visited the Women's Building throughout the fair and examined the various exhibits made by women. Many men enjoyed the experience, as the Women's Building was highly praised by fair visitors. Men often mentioned in their brief descriptions of their visits to the World's Columbian Exposition of 'walking through the Woman's Building.'⁷² Other times men exclaimed their surprise at the artifacts included in the Women's Building. A man wrote about visiting the Women's Building numerous times, yet on his last visit noticed a room completely filled with inventions created by women:

There were agood [sic] many clever and ingenious things. For instance there was a strong and high basket oaken chair which included a combination of clothes-rack, ironing board, clothes receptacle, and bosom board...invented by a Mrs. Hamilton of Decatur, Ill., and was patented in 1886...There were also various appliances to facilitate the care of infants and the sick. There were several dress-cutting systems. There was a dining table supposed to be self-serving, the center portion being raised a few inches, free from the outside, and whirling on pivot. Thus, if John wanted the bread from the other side of the table he could give the center piece a whirl...⁷³

Thus, men also took in the sights of the Women's Building and complimented the women on their achievements. However, these men made no mention of comparing the women's work to men's and declaring their work equal or

⁷¹Elliot, 162.

⁷²*The Waukesha Freeman*, August 3rd, 1893.

⁷³*Ibid.*, October 26th, 1893.

complimentary on any level. Men recognized women's work, but still distinguished it as separate from their own.

Another interesting aspect of the previous quote by the male visitor regards the nature of the inventions he described. The clothes-rack, dress-cutting systems, and self-serving dining table all are connected with domestic activities and chores done by women. Women attempted to enhance their own lives and ease the amount of work they needed to do in the home. Women invented items to assist their lives, not necessarily because they felt relegated to their role as housewife, but perhaps to allow them time to pursue activities outside the home. Since the Women's Building accepted almost everything donated to them, the displays noticed by this man might account to his inexperience with household chores and the role of women in society.

PERCEPTIONS OF OTHER FAIR EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS

Women perceived the exhibits of the fair slightly differently than their male counterparts. Women especially noticed when the work of other women filtered into buildings and displays other than those found in the Women's Building. This contradicted the common misconception by both genders that women's work was kept completely isolated inside the Women's Building.⁷⁴ The male planners allowed the creation of the Women's Building because they did not want to include women's work in the other thirteen buildings. Also, men rarely commented on female contributions in other buildings.

Women noticed the work of other women displayed in exhibits found in the different state buildings. One woman, Miss Mable Treseder, especially commented on many displays which either showcased something made by women or partially made by women. In the South Dakota Building, a visitor found a miniature of a typical cottage found in the state adorned with the state's natural resources. She reported "The [interesting] part of it all for [her party of people] was that the minerals in its siding were all collected and the entire structure made by women of Chester City, Black Hills, South Dakota."⁷⁵ No mention of this exhibit can be found in the male accounts, which focus on the exhibit of South Dakota artesian wells of "such volume and power," if they mention anything at all.⁷⁶ Miss Treseder also commented on women's work she discovered in the Illinois Building, the Nebraska Building, and the Kansas Building.

The Kansas Building contained a picture, "American Women and Her Political Peers," which demonstrated the artist's perception of women's place within American political society. The picture showed the face of a woman surrounded by four male faces, each depicting a different undesirable ethnicity or trait in men at the end of the nineteenth century. One face showed a Native American, another showed the face of a 'crazy' man. The picture brought about such a response from Miss Treseder that it embodied the typical sentiments of women suffragists of the era: "Why should [woman] be kept here suppressing

⁷⁵Gardner, 12.

⁷⁶*The Waukesha Freeman*, June 29th, 1893.

her reason and her common sense by such a limited sphere? Has woman ever in her history befriended the enemy that she should be made equal with the traitor and even the politician who most strongly opposes woman suffrage?"⁷⁷

Other women also noticed women's work outside the Women's Building. Marian Shaw, a journalist and teacher from Minnesota, commented on the work of the 'butter sculptress', Caroline Shawk Brooks, displayed in the Florida Building and the embroidery of George Washington's niece Nellie Custis exhibited in the Virginia Building.⁷⁸ Shaw also described the Wisconsin Building and two of the works of art within the building as very noteworthy. The Wisconsin Building was the "most substantial [and solidly constructed] building on the exposition grounds" due to the building's construction materials as all native to the state and not the plaster-of-paris found on the grand buildings.⁷⁹ Also, the two noteworthy works of art were made by women who lived in Wisconsin with little or no formal training in art.⁸⁰

Women typically described displays they found particularly interesting, beautiful, or offensive to them. The California display with a stuffed bear scowling down at visitors in a cave-like setting inside the building frightened some visitors.⁸¹ Indeed, at the time, a proper lady might even have fainted at the sight of the bear. Also described as particularly gruesome was the coat Abraham

⁷⁷Gardner, 18-19.

⁷⁸Shaw, 17-18.

⁷⁹Ibid., 21.

⁸⁰Ibid., 22.

⁸¹Gardner, 13.

Lincoln wore the night he was shot by John Wilkes Booth and the blind boys making bead baskets in the Illinois Building.⁸² However, numerous women found the fruit displays or grain displays by the various state buildings as beautiful and described many of them in great detail after they returned home from the fair. An aspect of the fair in which women were not interested was the enormous stock yard with animals milling about. Women typically went on to the next exhibit to “wait for the men” to examine the livestock.⁸³ This perception might be attributed to the fact that many Midwestern women grew up on or near farms and farming animals, including the author of this statement. However, this statement might also reflect the expectations of women at the time to stay within their sphere, the home, and not the barn, or the male sphere.

Displays within the thirteen grand buildings other than the Women’s Building often elicited similar opinions about the exhibit. However, there was a notable lack of recollections of many mechanical exhibits or displays which appealed to men. Women typically commented on the exhibits they found pleasing to their eyes or beautiful and impressive to behold. They did not describe intricate details of machinery or how a particular exhibit worked. The Machinery Building contained a few main exhibits, such as Eli Whitney’s original cotton gin, large, industrial weighing machines, and the longest and widest conveyor belt in the world.⁸⁴ The only thing Treseder recalled of the Machinery

⁸²Ibid., 16.

⁸³Ibid., 7.

⁸⁴Bolotin and Laing, 88.

Building was the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company's exhibit showing how they kept a train running between a farm and the city.⁸⁵ This pattern occurred with the other major buildings as well. Women typically commented on the aspects of the exhibits which did not appeal to men.

PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRGOERS AND AMERICAN SOCIETY

Women and men perceived various aspects of American society and other fairgoers differently. Women attempted to recognize and emphasize the importance of the work of other females displayed at the fair whereas men often failed to acknowledge women's work and contributions to society. Many women also contributed to stereotypes of American women through articles in newspapers and their observations. In this section, comparisons are made between men and women's perception of who discovered North America, Native Americans, and other visitors to the fair.

Women definitely perceived Christopher Columbus, the 'Discoverer of America' slightly differently than most men viewed him. Most white men, including those who helped plan and construct the 1893 Columbian Exposition such as Daniel Burnham, viewed Columbus as a hero figure.⁸⁶ According to the white majority, Columbus introduced North America to 'civilization.' Indeed, planners of the fair named the exposition in the honor of Christopher Columbus'

⁸⁵Gardner, 7.

⁸⁶White and Igleheart, 41; Harris and others, 62.

arrival in North America in 1492. These nineteenth century men saw four hundred years of 'progress' as defined in European terms.

Not everyone recognized Christopher Columbus as the 'discoverer' of the North American continent and the 'New World' rich with natural resources, but still attributed the introduction of civilized society to him. The people of Denmark, for example, recognized Leif Erikson as the first discoverer of North America.⁸⁷ However, most Americans disregarded Leif Erikson's settlement as the first Europeans on the North American continent because "the object of the Norsemen was robbery," not discovery.⁸⁸ An article in *Scribner's Magazine*, a popular journal of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, described the "native Indian...[as] the only one among us who had ancestors to be discovered. He is the aboriginal; the first occupant and owner; the only one here with an [sic] hereditary right to the country we are celebrating."⁸⁹ This man continued on to claim "Columbus came so near discovering [America]; whereas our own connection with the discovered is certainly remote, and sometimes suggests...that we are taking liberties with his name."⁹⁰ This account is the only perception discovered in my research where a man of the nineteenth century recognized the Native Americans presence on the continent long before

⁸⁷*The Milwaukee Journal*, July 1st, 1893. Leif Erikson was a Viking who established a short-lived settlement on the island of Greenland four centuries before Columbus' voyage.

⁸⁸*The Milwaukee Journal*, July 5th, 1893.

⁸⁹J.A. Mitchell, "Types and People at the Fair," *Scribner's Magazine* Vol XIV July-December (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893): 186.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

Columbus arrived. American citizens did not fully grasp the concept that Columbus was not the 'discoverer' of America until the twentieth century.

Not all women perceived Christopher Columbus as the hero so much as they considered his benefactor and financial backer responsible for his discovery of North America. Women connected with the planning of the fair considered Isabella of Castille, the Queen of Spain, as the true heroine in the Christopher Columbus story. These women stressed her importance in the formation of a group in 1889, before Congress passed the World's Columbian Exposition Act. The Queen Isabella Society, comprised of mostly professional women, desired to promote women's achievements throughout the entire fair.⁹¹ Their two main goals included commissioning an artist to produce a prominent statue of Queen Isabella to display on the fairgrounds and to construct a women's pavilion to display women's work.⁹²

Women not involved with the Queen Isabella Society also stressed the importance of Queen of Spain. An example of this was found on the cover of the May 1893 issue of *The Ladies' Home Journal*. The artist of the cover drew Queen Isabella elaborately garbed striking a thoughtful pose on a throne slightly elevated over Christopher Columbus, standing at her feet with his hat in his

⁹¹Weimann, 28.

⁹²Ibid., 28-30. The women involved with the Queen Isabella Society at first did not want to have a separate building dedicated to women's work. They originally pushed for women's work to be displayed in all the buildings throughout the World's Columbian Exposition. The President, Dr. Julia Holmes Smith, and Vice President, Eliza Allen Starr, were known as suffragists and did not want to compromise with the men over displaying women's work throughout the fair. Ultimately, the Queen Isabella Society's radical ideas alarmed the men of the fair's commission, for they chose the more moderate society, the Chicago Women's Department and Mrs. Bertha Potter-Palmer, to become the Board of Lady Managers.

hand.⁹³ A poem by an Edna Dean Proctor, found in *The Ladies' Home Journal* alongside the illustration of Queen Isabella, also emphasized her importance in the discovery of the 'New World.' The last lines of the poem described her possible reaction to hearing of Columbus' successful journey to the New World:

With her brow so pure and smile so sweet
The noblest joyfully knelt at her feet—
With coif and kerchief and regal fold
As she stood when she pledged her gems for gold—
And, beneath, on the marble's spotless sheen,
Write: Isabella, the New World's Queen!⁹⁴

The poem demonstrates the joy Queen Isabella felt when she heard of Columbus' success and the riches he brought back to Spain. This would enhance her country's wealth and her own, individual reputation among her people. Her image also graced the first commemorative quarter, the Isabella quarter, whereas the U.S. Mint struck Christopher Columbus' image on half-dollars to raise money for the fair.⁹⁵

Men and women did perceive Native Americans as second-class citizens, but women tended to celebrate Native American females as their ancestors at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Men stereotyped Native Americans as stupid, stoic characters incapable of "grasp[ing] the innumerable wonders of art and science that only annoy and confuse [them]."⁹⁶ Women also stereotyped the Native Americans of the nineteenth century, but tended to revere them as the

⁹³"The New World's Queen," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 10, no. 6 (May 1893): 1.

⁹⁴"The New World's Queen," 1.

⁹⁵Bolotin and Laing, 150.

⁹⁶Mitchell, 186.

bearers of civilization through their crafts, such as basket-weaving and beadwork. Whereas women revered Native American females for their crafts and identify them as the first bearers of civilization, they may have perceived Native American men as lazy and worthless.⁹⁷

The Women's Building contained numerous exhibits which displayed the industriousness of

Indian women in North and South America. There are cases filled with costumes, needle-work, utensils, bodkins, tools, baskets, pottery, netting, and the like. There are primitive shuttles, distaffs, and looms, made of reeds and rough wood, samples of skins dressed by...Indians...and blanket from the Navajos of the southwest.⁹⁸

This exhibit showed how the tasks of Native American women are similar to the tasks domestic, civilized women performed in 1893. Both white and Native American women cooked and made their families' clothes. The exhibit did not showcase many aspects of Native American cultures where the women helped out with 'men's' chores, even though they assisted their men quite often. Even though each sex had specific gender roles, they helped out each other often and often shared the same duties. American society and division of labor in the home depended on gender and class.

Due to the fact Board of Lady Managers positioned the displays in the Women's Building to emphasize women's development and evolution since the arrival of Europeans in North America, the ladies requested an exhibit from the

⁹⁷Shaw, 17.

⁹⁸Bancroft, 271.

Smithsonian institution entitled, “Women’s Work in Savagery.”⁹⁹ This title alone demonstrates how Americans viewed Native Americans in the late nineteenth century. The displays of varying ethnicities and histories of the people in the Women’s Building demonstrated to the general public that women continued to perform the same tasks as their Native American predecessors in 1893 ‘civilized’ society.¹⁰⁰

However, the arrangement of Native American crafts other than those showcased in the “Women’s Work in Savagery” scattered throughout the Women’s Building demonstrated women’s second-class citizenship to males who viewed the exhibits. The placement of other Native American crafts and demonstrations, such as a live, Navajo woman weaving cloth, confirmed in men’s eyes women had not evolved much since primitive times.¹⁰¹ Men saw women performing the same tasks in 1893 as Native American women prior to the arrival of Europeans. However, they saw their own achievements, such as the invention of electricity and the creation of the steam engines, as part of their evolution from a more primitive being.

The abundance of exhibits sent to the Women’s Building, caused the organizers of the building to place them wherever they fit, and not according to a theme. The Board of Lady Manager’s organization of the exhibits was meant to demonstrate how women were the first bearers of civilization, not men. For

⁹⁹Weimann, 402-403.

¹⁰⁰ Erik Trump, “Primitive Woman – Domestic(ated) Woman: The Image of the Primitive Woman at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition,” *Women’s Studies* 27, no. 3 (May 1998), 220.

¹⁰¹ Trump, 221.

example, hunting, a task usually relegated to the men, demonstrated in women's eyes that primitive woman was the first true bearer of civilization. Many women did not recognize how displaying exhibits about differing ethnicities and time periods mixed together impacted visitor's perception of how little women have evolved in civilization since Native American women. One woman's account of the Woman's Building mentioned the Native American beadwork and pottery exhibit, but within the same paragraph commented on a slave yoke and chain from African natives and a painting created by a Queen.¹⁰² The Board of Lady Managers did not adequately demonstrate through the organization of their exhibits to visitors their vision of women evolving in civilized society. Although the Board of Lady Managers attempted to lift women's position in society through their exhibits, male visitors left the Women's Building with the opposite impression that women have evolved very little since primitive times.

Interestingly, a few reports from both genders emphasized the abundance of newly-weds or young couples who attended the World's Columbian Exposition in the warmer months of 1893. One man commented on the propriety of couples newly married strolling through the fairgrounds. He claimed married couples felt inconspicuous enough in the crowd to hold hands and reject societal norms for appropriate conduct between men and women.¹⁰³ Another article, found in the Women's Department of *The Milwaukee Journal*, lightly commented on the "ways

¹⁰²Gardner, 10.

¹⁰³Mitchell, 190.

to distinguish the honeymoon couples” at the fair.¹⁰⁴ These newlyweds seemed to locate the “secluded spots”, spent money with little regard because the husband seemed eager to please his new bride, and never “seemed weary of sight-seeing.”¹⁰⁵ Lastly, Mable Treseder, a young, unmarried woman from Viola, Wisconsin, who visited the fair in Chicago with her brother and a few female companions over several days in 1893, recorded the rumor of a marriage in the Illinois Building. Treseder described a mock-cave structure with water streaming down the sides similar to a brook in a forest where the supposed marriage took place. She described the location as “a very pretty place for such a ceremony.”¹⁰⁶

A topic of particular interest to women at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition was the fashion of the period and what other female fairgoers wore to visit the exhibits. *The Ladies’ Home Journal* and *The Milwaukee Journal* Women’s Department included many articles on what to pack to wear at the fair. The articles reminded women to check their satchels to make sure they packed the toiletries they needed for the duration of their visit.¹⁰⁷ Women were also recommended to bring along at least two wearable dresses, one of which should be made of sturdier materials to act as a traveling outfit.¹⁰⁸ Other articles in

¹⁰⁴*The Milwaukee Journal*, May 20th, 1893.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶Gardner, 15.

¹⁰⁷Handy , 20; *The Milwaukee Journal*.

¹⁰⁸*The Milwaukee Journal*, May 27th, 1893.

newspapers emphasized how much time ladies of the fair spent discussing fashions, especially the men. A newspaper man commented:

The closing day of the world's congress of women was given up entirely to the discussion of matters relating to the costuming of the sex. Naturally such a subject of general interest brought the women out in force, and both the Washington and Columbus halls were packed to the doors.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, men remained preoccupied with a woman's natural beauty, and not as much on her clothing, unless a woman used her attire to enhance her beauty. Fashion and clothing was deemed a female topic and not important enough for men to discuss in length. However, it was appropriate for women to spend hours contemplating the topic. The popularity of a show on the Midway attests to men's concern with natural beauty, and not the women's topic of clothing and fashions. The Midway exhibit contained forty of the most beautiful women from around the world. The girls represented the ideal of beautiful in forty different nations or ethnicities and remained a very popular exhibit with men.¹¹⁰

Women shared stories of appropriate attire to wear to the World's Columbian Exposition and noted fashion trends. Long dresses remained the preferred attire of the women who visited the fair; however, a lady from Boston sparked both women and men's curiosity when she decided to wear pants to the fair, referred to as a 'Syrian costume.'¹¹¹ When asked about her choice of attire, the woman was "certain she saw a great deal more the fair than most woman

¹⁰⁹*The Milwaukee Journal*, May 20th, 1893. The Women's Congress was a week long convention of speeches and demonstrations to discuss women's topics. There were numerous such conventions held throughout the duration of the World's Fair.

¹¹⁰*The Waukesha Freeman*, July 13th, 1893.

¹¹¹*The Milwaukee Journal*, July 5th, 1893.

would have done, simply because she was not fitted with long skirts.”¹¹² Other fashion trends observed by women at the fair included calico and gingham outfits and overskirts, considered appropriate summer attire and in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century.¹¹³

However, some women’s preoccupation with fashion brought ridicule from other females, who felt fashions quickly became outdated and made physical movement cumbersome. This fixation with fashion stereotyped women and continued to relegate them to a lower position in American society as compared to men. The topic of dress reform surfaced at the fair, at the Women’s Congress, as some women criticized certain characteristics of dress, such as physically heavy and binding corsets and petticoats. They argued that his form of dress harmed the body and forced women to abide by an artificial notion of beauty.¹¹⁴

Female spectators also criticized the clothes worn by the Princess of Spain, the Infanta Eulalia, to various fair and city events.¹¹⁵ Miss Treseder, after waiting outside two hours on the Midway Plaisance to witness the Infanta’s procession with Mayor Harrison, described her light blue dress and hat with a red flower as ‘too conspicuous.’ She also captured the experience of seeing a member of a royal family, which was rare. America is a class-less society and

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³*The Milwaukee Journal*, October 12th, 1893.

¹¹⁴Eagle, 695.

¹¹⁵Gardner, 25; Weimann, 558. See Figure 1 in Appendix A.

therefore does not have individuals with titles. Miss Treseder wrote she had the “satisfaction at least of knowing [I] had seen one of a royal family.”¹¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition closed with great fanfare on October 30th. However, Chicago’s great fair did not end on a positive note. Instead of celebrating the end of one of American society’s great visions of the future brought to life, the citizens of Chicago mourned the death of one of Chicago and the Exposition’s great advocates, Mayor Carter H. Harrison. A disillusioned man who believed Harrison owed him a job for the effort he put into Harrison’s campaign for a fifth term in office had assassinated the mayor on his own front doorstep.¹¹⁷ Thus, the citizens of Chicago experienced the end of not just a glimpse into the future of American society, but the end of an important era in the city’s history.

Chicago’s citizens demonstrated their metropolis was a reckoning force in American politics and society in general. The cultural ramifications which emerged from the White City’s existence affected not just national events, but world events as well. During the late nineteenth century, many international powers, including the United States, pushed into colonization. The various international fairs exemplified this, as their planners organized them around racial

¹¹⁶Gardner, 25.

¹¹⁷Berg, 286; Weimann, 579.

and cultural ties and placed the politically powerful colonizing nations, such as England, Germany, France, and the United States, in positions of prominence at the fair.¹¹⁸ The fair also foreshadowed future events, such as the military dominance of Germany and the Progressive movement in the United States to attack political corruption as well as promote public welfare and protection of the environment.¹¹⁹

The White City disintegrated faster than it had taken the army of workers to construct the buildings, park grounds, and statues. Workers packed up and shipped the displays back to their nations of origin by February of 1894.¹²⁰ Commissioners originally desired to sell the various building structures for salvage to reap as much monetary benefit from the World's fair as possible; however, a series of fires destroyed many of the buildings before the economy recovered enough from the 1872 depression to make the salvage effort profitable.¹²¹ The most devastating fire occurred in early July 1894, and

¹¹⁸Rydell, 21-22. African nations were connected to the European nations whereas the Latin American nations were usually arranged near the United States exhibits. This showed to the public that the economies of Latin America and the Western Hemisphere were under the protection of and dependent on the United States.

¹¹⁹Bolotin and Laing, 106-108. The Krupp Gun Company from Germany erected its own building for the fair to house a five hundred thousand dollar exhibit. The centerpiece of the exhibit was a 127 ton gun which could hit targets up to sixteen miles away; Berg, 198-199. The exhibit demonstrated the military might of Germany, which would do more than just display its massive weapons twenty years later in World War I; Cooper, 94-110. President Theodore Roosevelt, the Progressive President, promoted conservation through the creation of national parks and forest ranger service and legislation designed to break up big business trusts and set standards for various industries, such as the meat packing industry with the Food and Drug Act.

¹²⁰Bertuca, Hartman, and Neumeister, 273.

¹²¹Ibid.; Summers, 235. The American economy crashed in the spring of 1892 as public confidence in the gold supply faltered. The economy during the early 1890's declined significantly as almost six hundred banks failed, one hundred sixty thousand businesses went bankrupt, and the unemployment rate in some states reached twenty five percent.

annihilated most of the major exhibition buildings, including the Administration, Electricity, Machinery, Agricultural, and Manufacturers buildings, which occupied most of the space along the Court of Honor.¹²² Other, smaller fires consumed the other buildings or commissioners razed the structures for the construction of other projects and the restoration of Jackson Park by the early twentieth century. The only major building still intact from the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition today is the Fine Arts Building, which one can visit today as the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.¹²³ Thus, with assistance from the devastating fires on the fairgrounds, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition faded from the minds of American citizens.

Women noticed different aspects of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition than their male counterparts, but still reflected societal stereotypes which were also held American white men. Women believed they evolved from a long line of females who contributed to their current position of progress and civilization in 1893. Women believed Native Americans were inferior to them, but acknowledged their input into the sequence of civilization through crafts such as basket-weaving and beadwork. Many women also fell victim to the common

¹²²Bertuca, Hartman, and Neumeister, 273. The Electricity building had contained most of the major statues and architecture of value from the fair for storage until the commissioners could decide their fate. The entire contents of the Electricity building were completely lost to the flames; Berg, 287-288.

¹²³Ibid., 279-280. Four smaller buildings also survive from the World's Columbian Exposition today. However, these buildings have been restored and relocated to various places around the country. One of these buildings, the Norway Building, can be found in Wisconsin, as a residence on Lake Geneva in the southern part of the state; Bolotin and Laing, 156. The original Ferris Wheel met a similar fate; because after the Wheel earned one hundred thousand dollars in profits, the commissioners sold it to an area businessman who attempted to keep it in operation. However, George Ferris' Wheel lost its appeal after the end of the fair and rapidly lost money. The Wheel operated only one other time, in the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, before the Wheel's owner destroyed the wheel with dynamite and sold its parts for scrap.

male belief that women were only concerned with feminine topics, such as fashion, at the fair. They wrote numerous articles on what to pack and wear at the exposition rather than commenting on actual exhibits at the fair.

However, there are noticeable differences between how women perceived the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and men's perceptions of the same exhibits. Women noticed other women's work within buildings designed to contain work by only males, such as the Kansas Building, the South Dakota Building, and the other thirteen grand buildings which flanked the Court of Honor. Women in general also did not acknowledge Christopher Columbus as the sole discoverer of the North American continent in 1492. They recognized Spain's Queen Isabella as Columbus' major benefactor and the source of the means necessary for his journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

Women also tended to hold themselves in higher regard in society than their male counterparts. They recognized their work throughout the ages just as significant as men's work and through the Woman's Building attempted to justify this. Whereas men visited the fair and enjoyed the artifacts in the Women's Building enough to recommend the visit to others, they failed to see this connotation in the Women's Building due to the haphazard set-up and lack of a coherent theme for a visitor to follow when strolling through the different displays. Women perceived the fair slightly differently than men, but still viewed certain aspects of the fair and society the same. The Board of Lady Managers wanted to show how women were equal to men in civilized society through the World's Columbian Exposition, and 'beam forth rays of hope for womankind.' However,

ultimately the Women's Building and female participation in the fair crushed their hope and only solidified women's position in men's eyes.

APPENDIXES

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APPENDIX A

PICTURES OF PROMINENT PEOPLE AT THE FAIR

Fig. 1. The Infanta Eulalia Fig. 2. Daniel Burnham Fig. 3. Bertha PotterPalmer

Fig. 4. Sophia Hayden Fig. 5. Candace Wheeler Fig. 6. Mayor Harrison¹²⁴

¹²⁴Lew Collins, Paul V. Galvin Library Digital History Collection, *World's Columbian Exposition of 1893*, Last Updated 15 March 1999, Retrieved 29 October 2006, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>. All pictures on page.

APPENDIX B
PICTURES OF THE WOMEN'S BUILDING

Fig. 1. The Women's Building.¹²⁵

Fig. 2. Mary Cassatt's Mural.¹²⁶

¹²⁵*Shepp's World's Fair Photographed*, Chicago and Philadelphia, 1893, and from *Glimpses of the World's Fair Through a Camera*, Chicago, 1893.
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/1893fair.html

¹²⁶K.L. Nichols, *Introduction: The White City*, Last Updated March 2006, Retrieved 1 November 2006, <http://members.cox.net/academia/cassatt8.html>.

Fig. 3. Inside the Women's Building.¹²⁷

Fig. 4. Sophia Hayden's floor plan for the Women's Building.¹²⁸

¹²⁷Mary Pepchinski, *The Women's Building and the World Exhibitions*, Last Updated 2000, Retrieved 1 November 2006, <http://www.tu-cottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/wolke/eng/Subjects/001/Pepchinski/pepchinski.htm>.

¹²⁸Collins, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>.

APPENDIX C
PICTURES OF OTHER GRAND BUILDINGS

Fig. 1. The Machinery Building.

Fig. 2. The Agricultural Building.

Fig. 3. The Administration Building.

Fig. 4. The Fisheries Building.

Fig. 5. Transportation Building. Fig. 6. Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building.¹²⁹

¹²⁹Collins, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>. All pictures on page.

Fig. 7. The Electricity Building.¹³⁰

Fig. 8. The Mines and Mining Building.

Fig. 9. The Peristyle.

Fig. 10. Palace of Fine Arts, 1893¹³¹ Fig. 11. Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.

¹³⁰Chicago Historical Society, 1999, Retrieved 30 October 2006, <http://www.chicagohs.org/history/expo/electric.html>.

¹³¹ Collins, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>. Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11.

APPENDIX D

SCENES FROM THE 1893 WORLD'S FAIRGROUNDS

Fig. 1. Court of Honor with the domed Administration Building at the head of the pool, the 'Lady of the Republic' statue in the foreground of the pool.

Fig. 2. The Ferris Wheel.¹³²

Fig. 3. Statue of the Republic.¹³³

¹³²*Shepp's World's Fair Photographed*, Chicago and Philadelphia, 1893, and from *Glimpses of the World's Fair Through a Camera*, Chicago, 1893.
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/1893fair.html. All photos on page.

¹³³Colins, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>.

Fig. 4. The Wisconsin Building.

Fig. 5. The Illinois Building.

Fig. 6. The Louisiana Building.

Fig. 7. The Minnesota Building.¹³⁴

Fig. 8. View of the 1893 World's Fair from Lake Michigan.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Colins, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>. All pictures of state buildings on page.

¹³⁵ Chicago Historical Society, <http://www.chicagohs.org/history/expo/photos.html>.

APPENDIX E
MAP OF THE 1893 FAIRGROUNDS

Fig. 1. Map of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition without the Midway.¹³⁶

¹³⁶Julie K. Rose, *The World's Columbian Exposition: Idea, Experience, Aftermath*, Last Updated 1997, Retrieved 31 October 2006, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/official.html>.

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