

The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. The exhibit was seen by the Emperor Leo XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and

Annals from the Archives

Wonders in Education:

The Sisters of Notre Dame and the 1893 Columbian Exposition

"This was Catholic educational day at the World's fair and next in importance to the address and music in festival hall was the inspection of the Catholic exhibit. . . . In the hall itself, in addition to the priests, were the nuns and sisters of charity. . . . it has done wonders in the educational line and. . . [is] the finest educational exhibit ever seen in this or any other country. . . ."

From the *Boston Globe*
September 9, 1893



Manufacture and Liberal Arts Building;
Site of the Exhibits from the
Sisters of Notre Dame

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Written by

Nancy Barthelemy

Archivist

nancy.barthelemy@sndden.org

—The 20th century might have been over six years away, but the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, also known as the Columbian Exposition, was in many ways its debut. The Exposition was a showcase of the latest inventions, technologies and marvels the world had ever seen. And partaking in the Exposition's thousands of exhibits were the Massachusetts Sisters of Notre Dame.

Planning for the Columbian Exposition began many years before. In 1890, the city of Chicago was selected as the site for the World's Fair, originally planned to open in 1892, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's sailing for the New World. The organizers for the Exposition chose famed landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), to design the Fair. In a stroke of genius, he selected Jackson Park for the site, which was located on the edge of Lake Michigan. Many wondered at his choice, because Jackson Park was a swamp. But with the opening of the Fair closing in and Olmsted's reputation so prestigious, the organizers ordered the swamp to be dredged. Canals were created to resemble those in Venice. And in keeping with the water theme, a replica of Columbus's ship was built to float on the edge of Lake Michigan.

As soon as one area of the swamp was filled in, buildings began to rise, constructed in the Classical style. The buildings were designed to be temporary. Once the wood and steel frames were completed, the workers used 'staff,' a stucco like material that was spread over the structures. Staff was easy to work with and dried quickly. When everything was completed, the buildings seemed to have been carved from marble. The World's Fair became known as "*The White City*."

When Catholic educators learned of the plans for the Exposition, they immediately met. Columbus might have been seen as the "discoverer" of America, but Catholic immigrants saw him as their own. What better way to claim Columbus than to take part in the Columbian Exposition? Educators from Massachusetts to California participated. The Sisters of Notre Dame sent work from their schools in Boston, Canton, Chelsea, East Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Roxbury, Salem, Somerville and Waltham. The Lowell Notre Dame Academy received a national award for their students' work.

The exhibit hoped to do more than present student work. Though many Catholics had been in the United States for decades, they still encountered much hostility. With the worldwide attention focused on the Exposition, Catholic educators hoped that the discussion of whether Catholic education was *American* education might be settled once and for all.

By the end of the Exposition, over 28 million people had attended the Fair. It is unknown how many of those viewed the contributions from Catholic students, but as far as the Catholic educators were concerned, the Exposition had done much to alleviate some of the prejudice experienced by Catholics in the United States.

*Everyone is invited to visit the Sisters of Notre Dame Archives
30 Jeffrey's Neck Rd. Ipswich, MA
to view the new display and exhibit*

**Wonders in Education:
The Sisters of Notre Dame and the 1893 Columbian Exposition**

**Available for viewing in the Archives
June 11 to October 31, 2013
Mondays through Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Closed June 24th to 28th and July 22nd to August 2nd

Columbian Exposition of 1893

Fun Facts and Trivia

- * .Elias Disney, father of Walt Disney, was one of the construction workers for the Fair.
- * The Exposition covered 633 acres of land
- * George Ferris built his very first "Wheel." It was the largest Ferris Wheel ever built at 250 feet tall. Instead of chairs for 2, the wheel had 36 booths, which could hold up to 60 people. Over 2100 people could ride at one time.
- * Spray painting was invented when workers realized they couldn't finish painting the interiors of the buildings with conventional methods before the scheduled opening in May 1893.
- * 46 nations participated in the Exposition. Admission was 50 cents, 25 cents for children and those under 6 were free.
- * There were nearly 70,000 exhibitors displaying over 250,000 exhibits.
- * A treat made from candied popcorn and peanuts, later known as Cracker Jacks, was first made at the Exposition.
- * Henry Ford was a frequent visitor, as was Frank Lloyd Wright and L. Frank Baum. The "White City" was the inspiration for Baum's "Emerald City" when he later wrote The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, published in 1900.
- * The first cafeteria opened at the Exposition.
- * Chili con carne was another food created at the Fair.
- * Juicy Fruit gum made its debut at the Fair.
- * The only building left from the Exposition is the Palace of Fine Arts, which now houses the Chicago Museum of Science & Industry.