

MY FAIR LADIES

***WOMEN, POWER, AND REPRESENTATION AT CHICAGO'S 1893
WORLD'S FAIR***

PRESENTED BY: ANGELA ESPOSITO
VICE PRESIDENT OF LEARNING, CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE CENTER
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, 2027



CHICAGO **ARCHITECTURE** CENTER





GRAND BASIN AND COURT OF HONOR





WORLD'S COLUMBIAN
EXPOSITION
CHICAGO.

ADMIT THE BEARER

1ST May to 30TH Oct. 1893.

952686

A. F. Seiberger, H. H. Higinbotham
TREASURER. PRESIDENT.

~~P~~RESIDENT

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY, NEW YORK







The Isabella's

Dr. Frances Dickson



Phoebe Couzins



CALL
500
1890

Membership Fee \$1 No. 566

Queen Isabella Association.



This is to certify that *(Mrs) Ellen Hall Long*

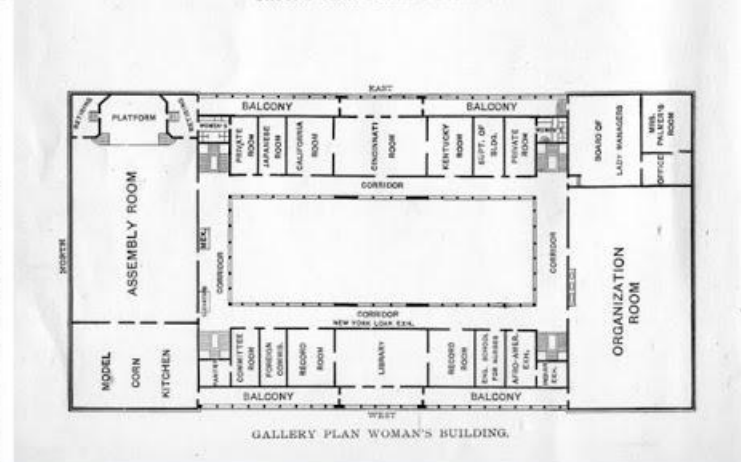
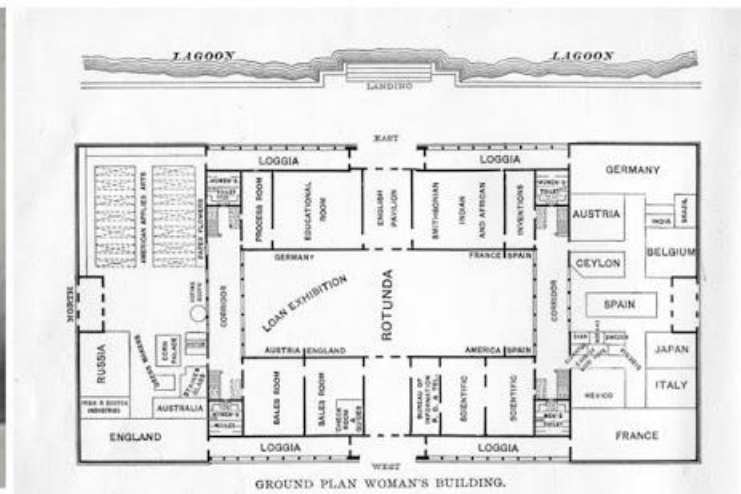
is a Member of the QUEEN ISABELLA ASSOCIATION until and during the World's Fair of 1892 and is entitled to the privileges of the Association and the benefits of the Queen Isabella Pavilion wherever the Exposition be located.

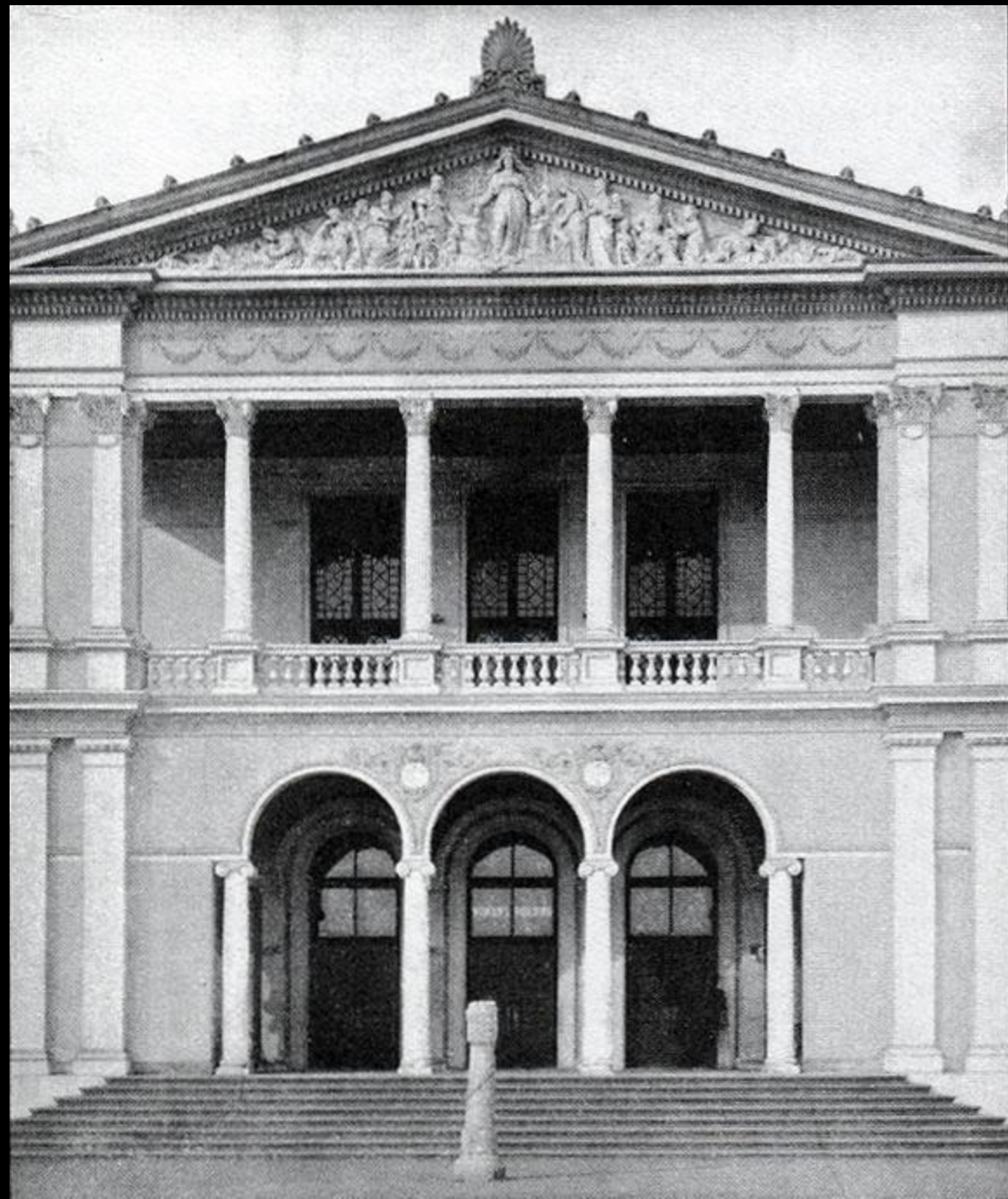
Witness the seal of the Association and signatures of the Directors,
at Chicago, this *first* day of *November* 1890

DIRECTORS

Eliza Holmes Smith *Eliza Allen Starr*
Frances Dickinson *Corinna S. Brown* *Catharine V. Waite*

THE CHICAGO BANK NOTE COMPANY





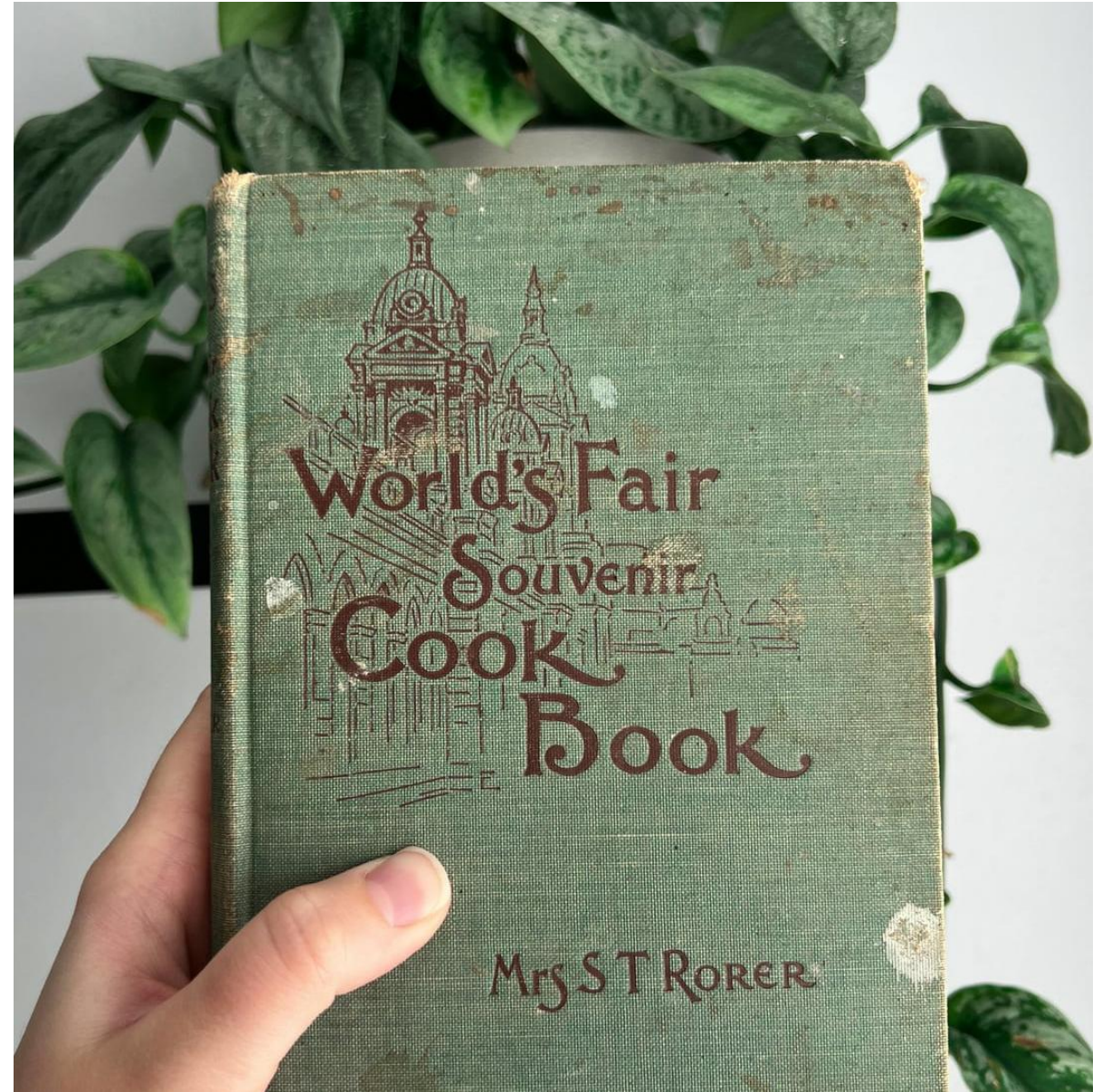


PRIMITIVE WOMAN, DECORATION OF SOUTH TYMPANUM



MODERN WOMAN, DECORATION OF NORTH TYMPANUM

Sarah Tyson Rorer





Caroline Brooks



Fannie Barrier Williams



Joan Imogene Howard

Ida B. Wells

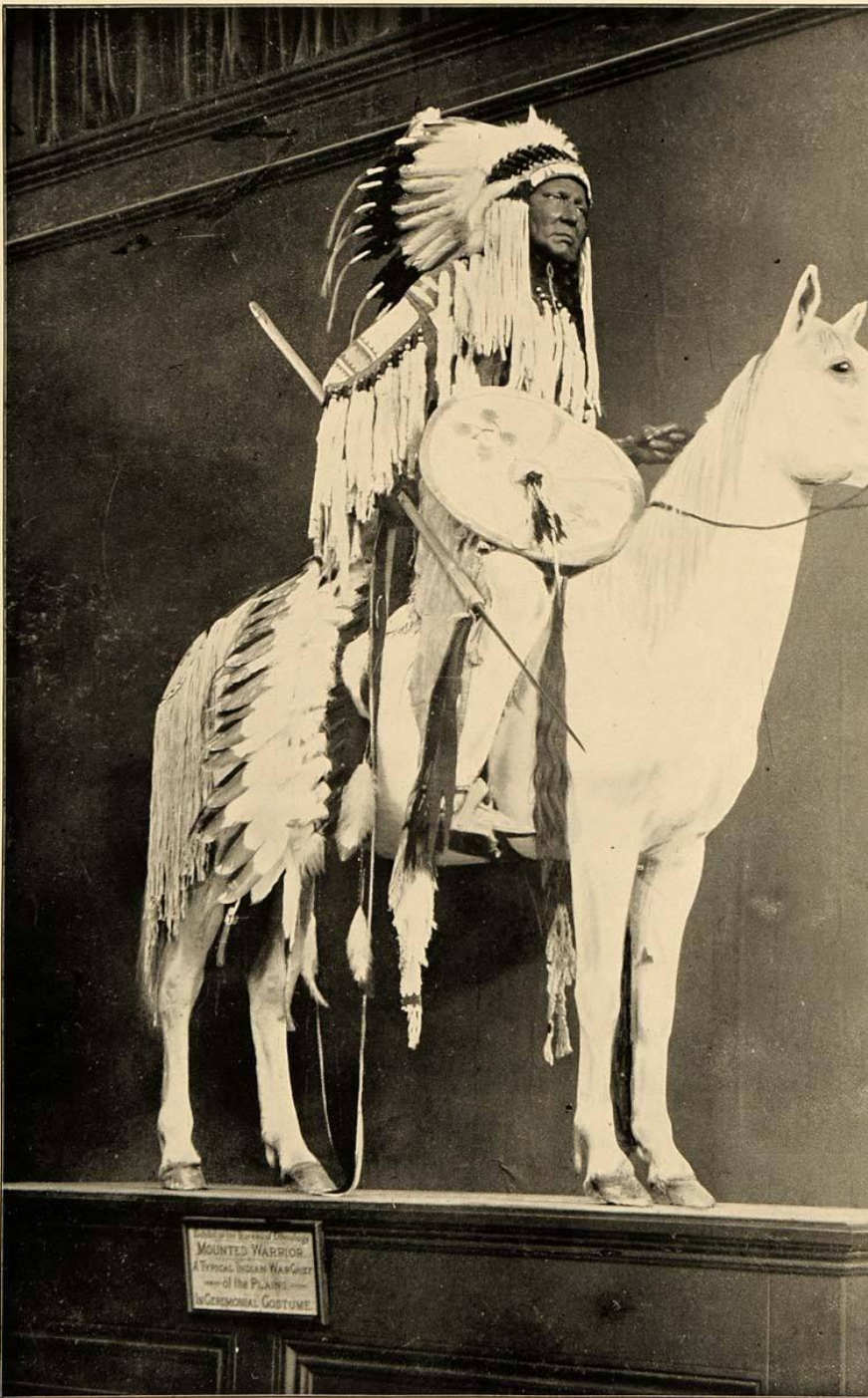


THE REASON WHY

The Colored American is not
in the World's Colum-
bian Exposition.

The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature

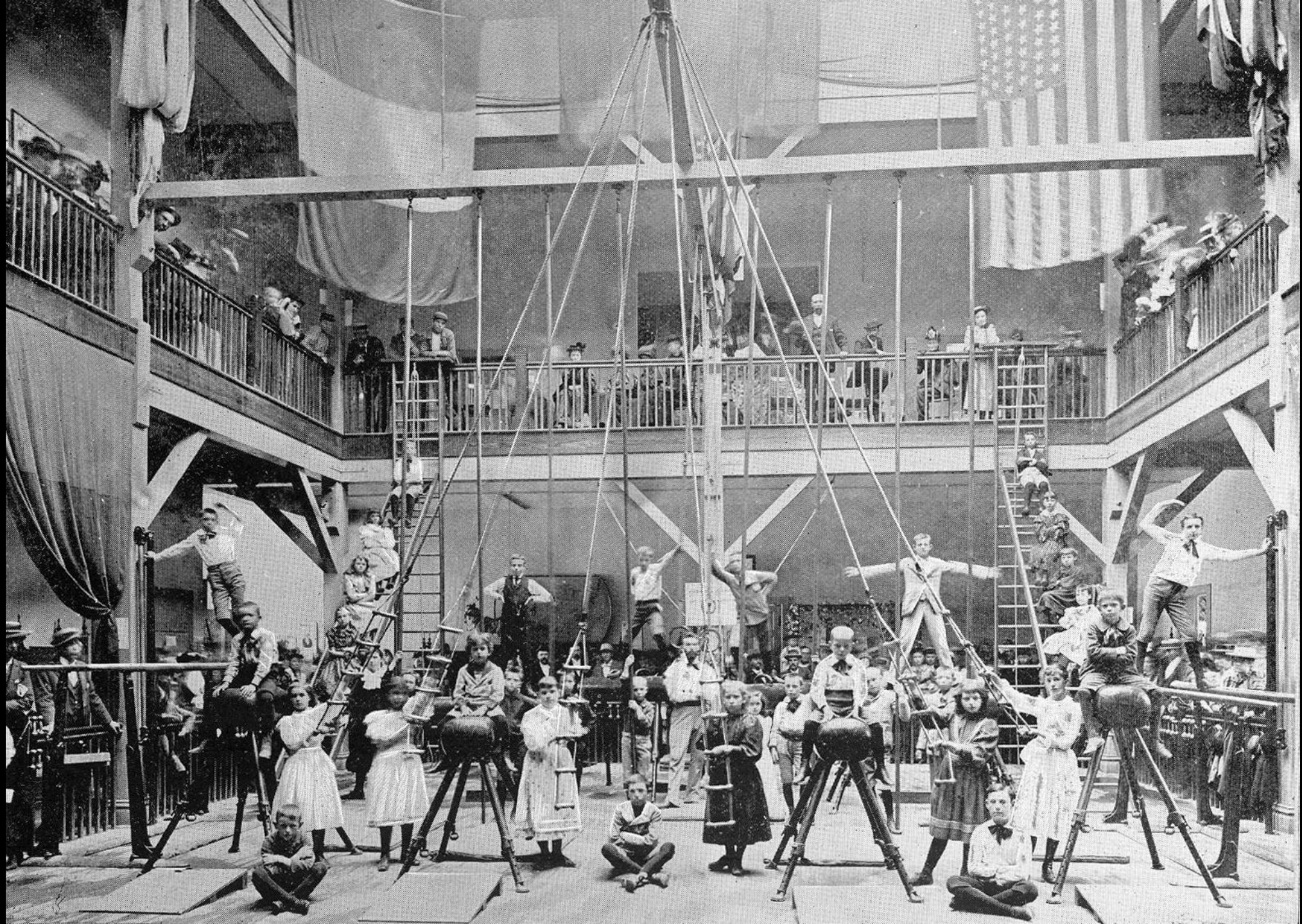
Copies sent to any address on receipt of three cents for
postage. Address MISS IDA B. WELLS, 128
S. Clark Street, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.







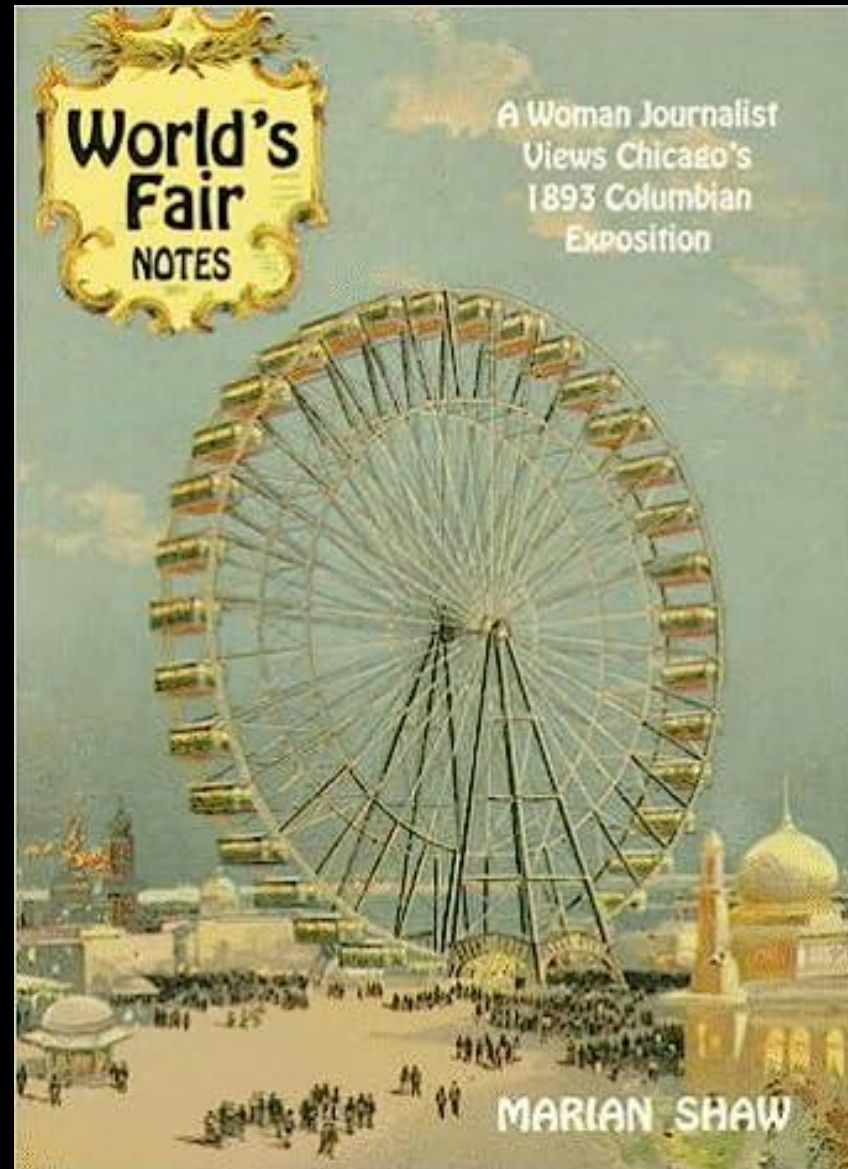
CHILDREN'S BUILDING



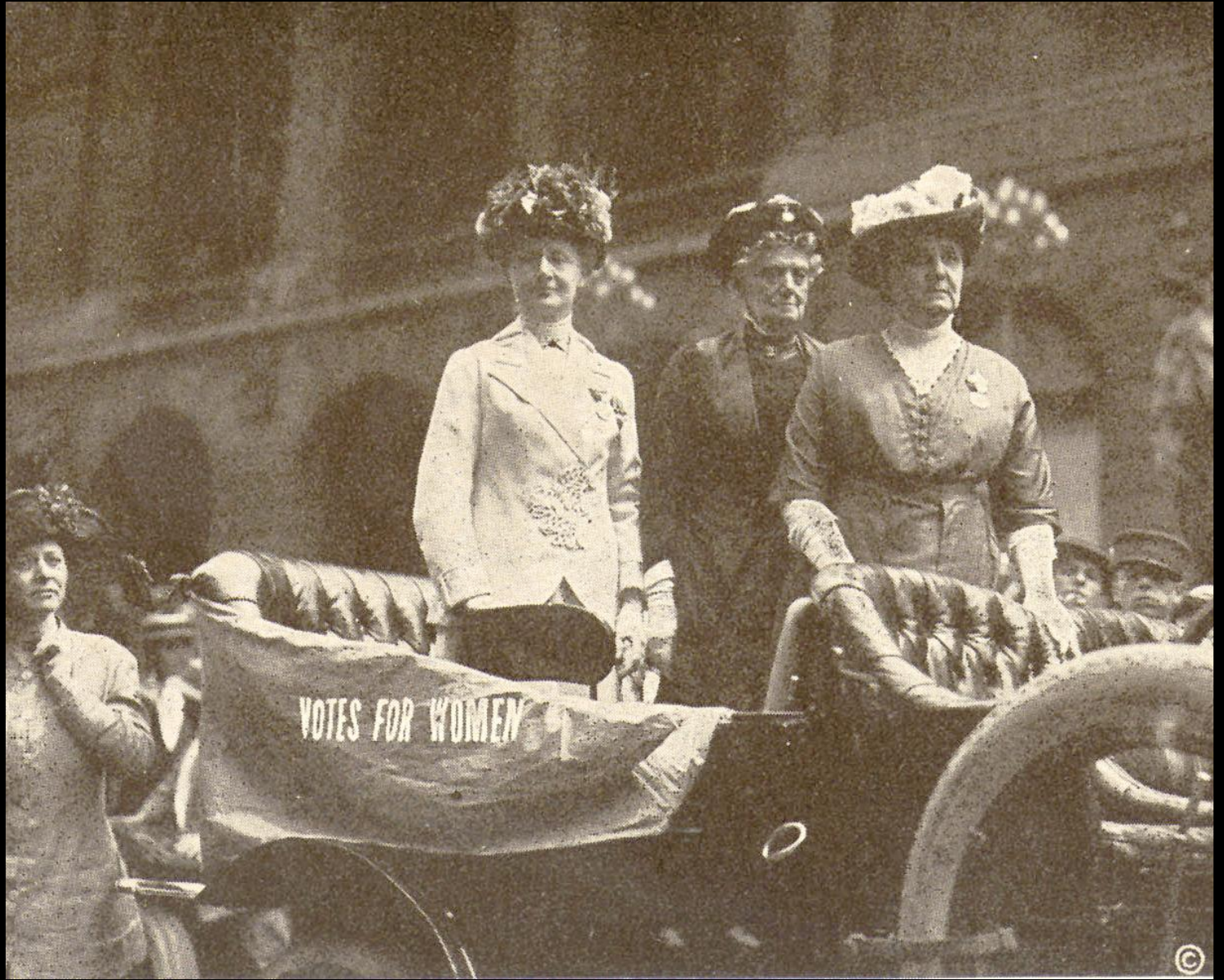


NURSERY IN THE WOMAN'S BUILDING.—The Board of Lady Managers, and their efficient and able assistants, whose efforts were so well directed and untiring, are entitled to the highest praise that can be bestowed for the splendid achievements of the sex at the Fair. The direction of their labors was towards the elevation of woman in all walks of life, and also in the better and most intelligent care of children. Our description of the Woman's Building, and the gymnasium therein, briefly told the story of what the spirited and highly intellectual ladies did at the Fair, exhibiting them as endowed with executive qualifications equal to that which the best of the sterner sex can boast; the above photograph illustrates the loving, motherly sentiment which was practically manifested by the lady managers in the provisions made by them for the care of infants at the Fair. The arrangements comprehended not only a model nursery provided over by trained nurses, but also a spacious play-room where children might be left in the care of faithful attendants by mothers visiting the Fair. It was an infants' chock-room, a novel but most excellent provision appreciated by thousands of women.

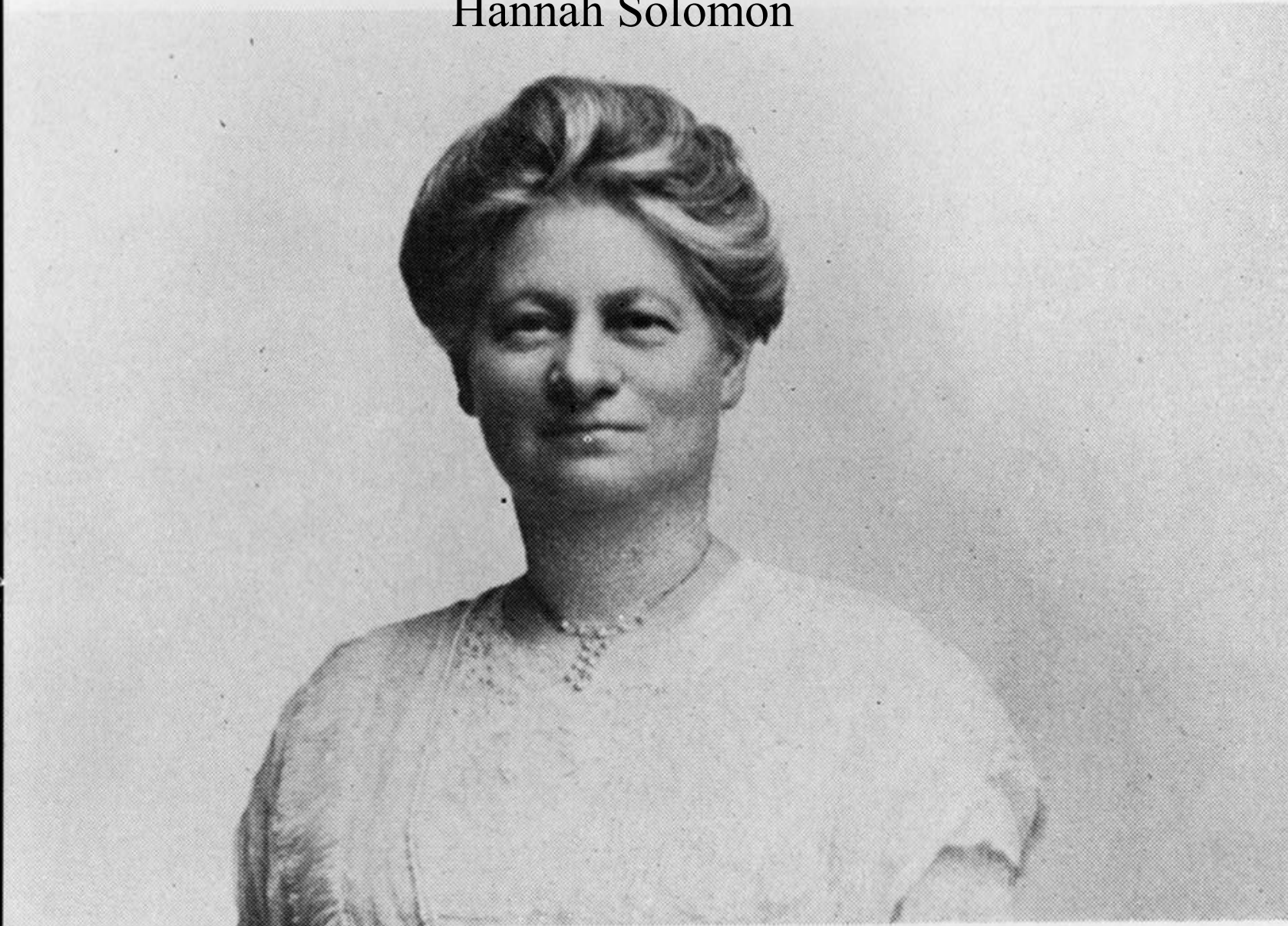
Marion Shaw







Hannah Solomon



119348







A large, semi-transparent 'CAC' logo is positioned on the left side of the image, behind the main text.

THANK YOU!

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References/Resources

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My Fair Ladies

Women, Power, and Representation at Chicago's 1893 World's Fair

Presented by: Angela Esposito

Vice President of Learning, Chicago Architecture Center

Edd Candidate, 2027

Presentation Length: 15–20 minutes

Thesis

The 1893 World's Fair is often remembered through the vision of Daniel Burnham, the architecture of the "White City," and the technological and cultural spectacle of the Fair. Yet women were instrumental in its planning, architecture, programming, artistic expression, social reform, and public discourse. *My Fair Ladies* examines both prominent and lesser-known women who shaped the Exposition while exploring the complicated questions of **who was permitted to participate, whose accomplishments were celebrated, and whose voices were excluded.**

I. Setting the Stage: Why Chicago?

Approximately 2 minutes

- Introduce the World's Columbian Exposition as a commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus's 1492 voyage.
- Place the Fair within the extraordinary transformation of Chicago following the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.
- Briefly examine Chicago's campaign to secure the Exposition following the success of the 1889 Paris Exposition.
- Introduce the civic and business leaders who advocated for Chicago and the congressional process that ultimately awarded the city the Fair.
- Establish Daniel Burnham as Director of Works and one of Chicago's most influential architects of the period.
- Introduce Jackson Park and the creation of the "White City" as both a physical environment and an expression of nineteenth-century ideas about American progress. The Fair ultimately ran from May through October 1893 and presented technology, art, industry, horticulture, transportation, and international exhibits to an enormous public audience.

Transition:

The familiar story of the Fair is largely a story of powerful men: Burnham, Olmsted, architects, businessmen, and politicians. But Congress had made an unusual decision: women were going to have an official role.

II. The "Queen of Chicago": Bertha Honoré Palmer and the Board of Lady Managers

Approximately 3 minutes

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- Introduce the congressional authorization establishing the Board of Lady Managers and the unprecedented inclusion of women in the official administration of a world's fair.
- Discuss the appointment of 117 women to the Board and the selection of Chicago socialite Bertha Honoré Palmer as president.
- Introduce Palmer as Chicago's unofficial social "queen"—wealthy, connected, culturally influential, and exceptionally effective at organizing support for women's participation.
- Explore the contradiction at the center of the Board:
 - Women had officially been given a place at the Fair.
 - Yet they remained largely outside its highest levels of decision-making.
- Examine Palmer's interest in expanding opportunities and visibility for women while recognizing that her understanding of women's advancement was shaped by her social class and the conventions of the period.
- Brief discussion of Palmer's interest in issues including women's clothing and dress reform.

Central question:

Women were going to be represented—but which women, and on whose terms?

III. Another Queen: Queen Isabella and the Women Who Challenged the Establishment

Approximately 2 minutes

- Introduce **Queen Isabella of Spain** as an important symbolic figure within an exposition commemorating Columbus.
- Contrast Palmer's Board of Lady Managers with the Queen Isabella Association, an organization associated with professional and reform-minded women who sought greater equality and recognition.
- Discuss tensions over whether women's accomplishments should be placed in a separate Woman's Building or displayed alongside men's work throughout the Exposition. Contemporary critics of the separate building argued that segregation could reinforce the idea that women's accomplishments were secondary.
- Introduce:
 - **Dr. Frances Dickinson**, Ophthalmologist and a leader within the Queen Isabella Association.
 - **Phoebe Couzins**, pioneering attorney, suffragist, and initially secretary of the Board of Lady Managers, whose conflicts within the Board resulted in her removal.
- Use these competing organizations to highlight divisions among women themselves—particularly around class, professional identity, suffrage, and strategies for equality.

IV. Designing Womanhood: Sophia Hayden and the Woman's Building

Approximately 4 minutes

- Introduce Sophia Hayden, the first woman to earn a four-year architecture degree from MIT.
- At only 21, Hayden won the competition to design the Woman's Building.
- Discuss her Italian Renaissance/Beaux-Arts-inspired design and the extraordinary symbolic importance of a major exposition building designed by a young woman architect.

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- Examine Hayden's difficult relationship with the Fair's leadership and the repeated alterations demanded of her design.
- Address the dramatic disparity in architectural compensation:
 - Hayden received **\$1,000**.
 - Some male architects received as much as **\$10,000** for their Fair buildings.
- Hayden never developed a sustained architectural practice afterward; the Woman's Building was her first and last realized building.

Women Designing Women

Use the building itself to examine nineteenth-century ideas about women's roles:

- **Alice Rideout**, the young sculptor responsible for major architectural sculpture on the building, including its prominent pediment.
- **Mary Fairchild MacMonnies**, whose mural *Primitive Woman* portrayed women of the past.
- **Mary Cassatt**, whose *Modern Woman* offered a contrasting vision of contemporary womanhood.

Work, Food, and Everyday Life

Briefly highlight some of the more unexpected attractions:

- **Sarah Tyson Rorer** and the Model Kitchen, including her advocacy for corn as nutritious food for people rather than simply animal feed.
- **Caroline Brooks**, the celebrated "Butter Woman," and the broader presence of women working in forms often categorized as domestic or decorative art.

Transition:

The Woman's Building demonstrated what women could create, but its version of "womanhood" was far from universal.

V. Who Was Missing? Black Women Challenge the Fair

Approximately 3–4 minutes

Shift from gender to the intersection of **gender and race**.

Although the Woman's Building celebrated women's accomplishments, Black women were largely denied meaningful representation within its official structure. The Fair also presented racist depictions of non-European cultures, prompting outspoken criticism from African American reformers.

Fannie Barrier Williams

- Chicago educator, writer, clubwoman, and reformer.
- Became an important advocate for Black participation at the Exposition.
- Spoke at major Fair congresses on the intellectual progress of Black women and on religion and racial equality.

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Joan Imogen Howard

- Black educator who worked within the Exposition's organizational structure.
- Helped secure the inclusion and documentation of work by African American women, demonstrating how women sometimes worked within existing systems to create representation where little had originally existed.

Ida B. Wells

- Journalist and anti-lynching activist who forcefully challenged African American exclusion from the Fair.
- Along with Frederick Douglass, Irvine Garland Penn, and Ferdinand Barnett, produced *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*.
- Approximately 10,000 copies were distributed during the final months of the Exposition.
- Wells used the international audience assembled in Chicago to expose the contradiction between America's celebration of “progress” and the realities of racism, segregation, and lynching.

Key argument:

Women were breaking barriers at the Fair, but not all women encountered the same barriers or received the same opportunities.

VI. Women Creating Spaces: Children, Journalism, Religion, and Reform

Approximately 3 minutes

The Children's Building

- Examine childcare as both a nineteenth-century issue and one that remains remarkably contemporary.
- The Board of Lady Managers supported creation of a Children's Building, providing programming and care for children while creating additional professional and caregiving opportunities for women.
- Discuss Bertha Palmer's fundraising efforts, including opening the Palmer residence to visitors to support the project.

Marion Shaw: Documenting the Experience

- Introduce journalist **Marion Shaw**, whose detailed accounts help historians understand the Fair from the perspective of a woman visitor.
- Her observations provide sensory and social descriptions of what the Exposition looked, smelled, sounded, and felt like, an important counterpoint to official histories.

The World's Congresses

- Move from Jackson Park to the World's Congress Auxiliary building in downtown Chicago, the building that became the **Art Institute of Chicago** after the Fair.

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- More than 100 congresses addressed religion, culture, education, reform, and other subjects, creating a major public platform for women speakers.

Highlight:

Hannah Greenebaum Solomon

- Chicago reformer and one of the first two Jewish women admitted to the Chicago Woman's Club.
- Organized the **Jewish Women's Congress** during the Fair.
- The 1893 gathering led directly to the founding of the **National Council of Jewish Women**, with Solomon as its first president.

Jane Addams

- Represent the growing connection between women's public leadership and the social reform movements transforming Chicago during the same period.
- Place her work within the broader conversations about poverty, labor, immigration, education, and civic responsibility taking place around the Fair.

VII. Who Was Really the Queen of the Fair? Susan B. Anthony and the Closing Story

Approximately 2 minutes

- Return to the idea of the “Queen of Chicago.”
- At the conclusion of the Exposition, Bertha Palmer's influence and leadership were widely celebrated, including through the presentation of her portrait by Swedish artist **Anders Zorn**.
- But another woman repeatedly commanded public attention during the Fair: **Susan B. Anthony**.
- Already in her seventies, Anthony was one of the country's best-known women's-rights advocates and a powerful presence at the Fair's women's congresses. The World's Congress of Representative Women alone drew approximately 150,000 attendees and 500 speakers from 27 countries, including Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Julia Ward Howe.
- Anthony provides a final counterpoint to Palmer: one woman represented elite influence and institutional power; the other represented decades of agitation for political and social change.

VIII. Conclusion: Rethinking the White City

Approximately 1 minute

Return to the thesis.

The World's Columbian Exposition offered women opportunities that would have been nearly unimaginable at previous world's fairs. Women served as administrators, architects, artists, educators, journalists, reformers, organizers, cooks, caregivers, and public intellectuals.

But the Fair also exposed the limits of that progress.

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Bertha Palmer, Sophia Hayden, Frances Dickinson, Phoebe Couzins, Fannie Barrier Williams, Joan Imogen Howard, Ida B. Wells, Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, Jane Addams, Susan B. Anthony, and countless lesser-known women were not simply supporting characters in Daniel Burnham's White City.

They negotiated it.

They designed it.

They challenged it.

They documented it.

And, in many cases, they demanded that its definition of “progress” become more expansive than its organizers originally intended.

The story of women at the 1893 World's Fair is therefore not simply a story about inclusion. It is a story about women asking, and repeatedly renegotiating, the question: *Who gets to be represented in the story of American progress?*