

The World's Columbian



There and Back Again  
1893. 2012

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*Deborah C. Andrews, Center for Material Culture Studies*

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*Exhibition logo designed by Kate Ackerman*

The World's Columbian Exposition  
There and Back Again  
1893 . 2012

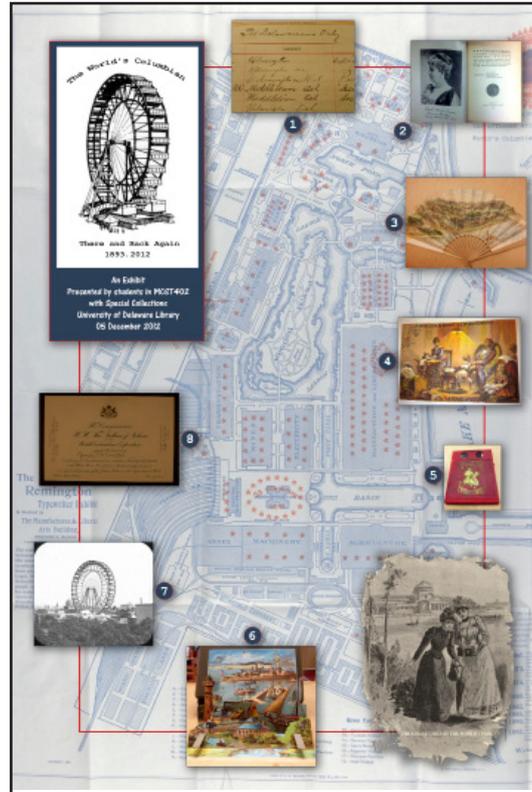
An Exhibit  
Presented by the students of MCST402  
with Special Collections  
University of Delaware Library

05 December 2012

Center for Material Culture Studies Conference Room  
77 East Main Street  
Newark, Delaware

# Key to Selected Objects

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# “Make No Little Plans:” Learning from Material Culture

“Ferris had created more than simply an engineering novelty. Like the inventors of the elevator, he had conjured an entirely new physical sensation.”

*Erik Larson, **The Devil in the White City***

Towering two hundred and sixty-five feet high over the Midway Plaisance, the first amusement center at a world’s fair, the Ferris wheel dazzled the spectators at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. Designed by George W. Ferris as the technological lynchpin of the Chicago Exposition, the wheel surpassed its closest competition, the Eiffel Tower, constructed for Paris’ Exposition Universelle of 1889. The wheel’s steel lattice supported thirty-six cars, carrying sixty passengers apiece. It not only soared, it moved. That perpetual motion echoed the fair’s departure from the static tendencies of earlier world’s fairs. Not only did Chicago’s spectacle establish a formidable American presence among its European counterparts, but the proliferation of material objects and technological innovations that lasted beyond the short duration of the fair speaks to its significant impact on American society. The surviving artifacts and their progeny preserve the

notions of progress and spectacle manifest at the fair and continue to resonate with modern audiences.

The World’s Columbian Exposition signified a cultural milestone in celebrating the four hundred year anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the Americas. It was an event of innumerable significant firsts and shattered records, from its staggering 716,881 admitted visitors on October 9th’s Chicago Day, the largest recorded outdoor event attendance on a single day, to the debut of modern day grocery staples such as Quaker Oats and Shredded Wheat. The Chicago Exposition gave birth to modern notions of urban planning and the City Beautiful movement, revealing, “that cities did not have to be dark, soiled, and unsafe bastions of the strictly pragmatic. They could also be beautiful”.<sup>1</sup> For most Americans, the fair marked their first exposure to ethnic cultures via the Midway’s exotic,

albeit racially and culturally insensitive, ethnographic exhibitions. Furthermore, the Columbian Exposition incorporated over 120,000 electric lights into its landscape, branding it as the world's brightest event at the time.<sup>2</sup> The aftermath of this electric spectacle is visible today through alternating current and the increasingly obsolete incandescent light bulb.

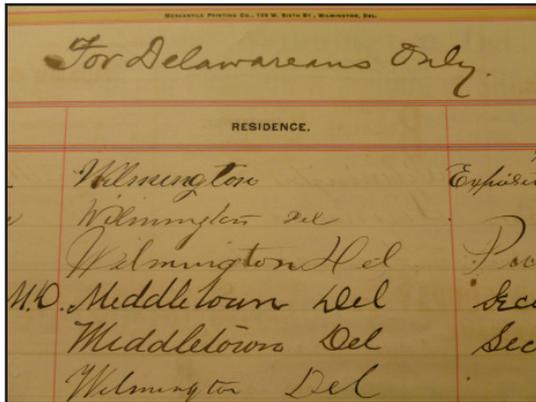
Conversely, a darkness undermined Chicago's pristine white façade, aptly dubbed "the White City" for its spray-painted architecture: crime rates soared to unprecedented heights, missing persons increased by the day, countless numbers of workers were injured or killed during the fair's expedited construction, waste clogged the city streets, and upon the fair's demolition Chicago's impoverished landscape was blatant as ever. The exposition's surviving artifacts to a certain extent reveal this tension; moreover, they echo the tactile experiences and interactions that ultimately encouraged new modes of engagement through material culture.

One hundred years after the death of Daniel Burnham, Director of Works of the Columbian Exposition, *The World's Columbian Exposition: There and Back Again 1893 . 2012* serves as a timely reminder of the fair's continued presence

in our modern century. The exhibit represents the combined research efforts of the students of MCST402 in collaboration with Maureen Cech and Jaime Margalotti from Special Collections, University of Delaware Library. It emphasizes how these world's fair objects serve as lenses through which to examine the social, cultural, and political implications of the Columbian Exposition. Although this small sample of objects represents a mere fraction of the ephemera that circulated at the Columbian Exposition, their juxtaposition with modern counterparts encourages strong engagement between object and audience, between past and present. *The World's Columbian Exposition: There and Back Again 1893 . 2012's* brief exhibition lifespan at 77 East Main Street mimics the transient nature of world's fairs; thus, we students of material culture invite you to learn from our research that provides a context in understanding these transformative cultural experiences.

*Chase Markee*

# Register Book



*Register of Visitors to the Delaware State Building,  
Special Collections, University of Delaware  
Library, folio F169 .C55*

Upon visiting the Delaware State Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois in 1893, tourists had the opportunity to literally leave their mark at the fair by signing the Delaware registry book. This register of visitors, with the handwritten disclaimer "For Delawareans only," contains hundreds of inscriptions, proclaiming the names, Delaware residences, and Chicago hotel addresses of the signees. Between the dated signature pages lie thick, wood pulp pages advertising prominent Delaware businesses. Though the register contains the occasional signature of a non-Delawarean, this book is primarily a record of the Delaware residents who visited the World's Columbian Exposition. The signature pages reveal not only with whom each tourist was traveling, but also the overarching inclination of the tourist to declare his or her presence at this mammoth, international event, thereby creating an unbreakable association between the individual and the grandiosity of the Fair.

The World's Columbian Exposition was defined, at least in part, by the opposition between the White City of the fair and the surrounding city of Chicago. In 1893, at the time of the Fair's opening, the city of Chicago was in midst of revitalization, having been devastated by the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. The White City, so-named for the uniform grandiose neoclassicism that dominated the architecture of the Fair, was seen as ushering in both a new Chicago and a new urbanism, reverberations of its design.<sup>3</sup>

The state buildings, located northwest of the central fairgrounds, mostly stood in opposition to the neoclassical design of White City, for the most part. Fittingly, they also served a different purpose from the idealized Midway for tourists. These structures, including the Delaware State Building, were often designed to echo the vernacular architecture of their home state and were seen as places of rest and sustenance. Familiar spaces with a sense of home, they encouraged mingling among the visiting residents of a particular state and were seen as decidedly separate from the overwhelming sensory oversaturation of the White City. American tourists at the 1893 World's Fair were thus simultaneously at home and abroad. The World's Columbian Exposition and its countless exhibits exposed tourists to exotic cultures and the latest international innovations, while the state buildings acted as "pseudo-domestic clubhouses" for American tourists.<sup>4</sup> In comparing the White City to the state pavilions, then, there is a clear delineation between senses of the novel and the familiar at the 1893 World's Fair.

This register book is not merely a literal record of visitors; it is also a representation of the experience of the American tourist at the World's Columbian Exposition. It is a manifestation of the desire of Delawareans to reclaim a sense of home and familiarity in the dizzying flurry of the World's Fair exhibits, each exuding novelty and foreignness.

*Katie Bonanno*

“This register book is not merely a literal record of visitors; it is also a representation of the experience of the American tourist at the World's Columbian.”

# Cookbook

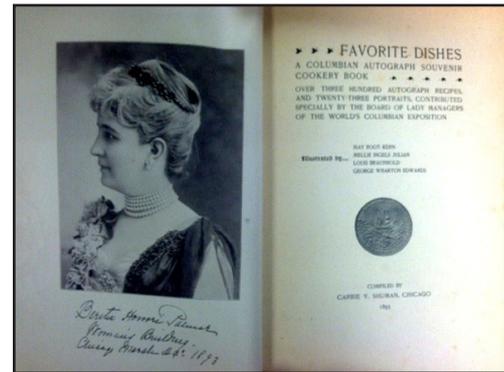
“**Favorite Dishes** not only signifies the fair as a collection of people coming together as one, it also signifies the spread of social change in the world.”

This vast collection of autographed celebrity recipes was brought together for one special occasion: the World’s Columbian. Bound in 1893, **Favorite Dishes** served as a nineteenth-century look into the world of lavish celebrity cooking and recipes. Filled from page to page with preserves, cakes, creams, and treats, it is a celebration of many recipes of the “modern” powerful, influential women of the time. A unique way to preserve the history of culture, and acknowledge the women of the time, **Favorite Dishes** offers a contrast to the many advertisements at the fair. The cookbook, created by The Board of Lady Managers did more than just offer a souvenir for the fair-goers; it offered the opportunity to attend the fairs, to those less fortunate. Through the philanthropy of Mrs. Potter Palmer, less-fortunate were given these books to sell in order to collect funds to purchase tickets to the fair.

The Board of Lady Managers was created in 1890 and headed by the President Mrs. Potter Palmer. She married into one of the leading families in the Chicago area, giving her a large presence in society. Palmer, an upstanding woman of class, insisted on bringing women’s rights to the forefront of the fair. **Favorite Dishes** centers on something cultural and representative of the pride the women had for their country by making the essence of the American dream available, even temporarily, to those less fortunate.

The World's Columbian offered a large platform for Mrs. Potter Palmer to demonstrate the power of women. With that, more women were able to gain a presence in the fair in areas such as architecture, design, and the overall ambiance that the fair was built around. **Favorite Dishes** not only signifies the fair as a collection of people coming together as one, it also signifies the spread of social change in the world.<sup>5</sup>

*Kelsey Darby*



*Favorite Dishes, A Columbian Autograph Souvenir Cookery Book, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, T500.L1 S55*

# Paper Fan



*World's Columbian Paper Fan, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, MSS 630, Box 3*

This paper fan is a souvenir from the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Bound together with a metal ring, this handheld fan is constructed with a light and smooth wooden frame. 15 wooden sticks are glued to a thick sheet of paper which, when fanned out, depicts an aerial view of the fair. It is unknown whether the image was painted onto the paper or printed; however, we can assume it was the latter since this souvenir was most likely mass-produced.

Centered at the bottom is the printed text, "World's Columbian Exposition Fan." Stamped in red fading ink on the right upper edge of the fan is, "Reed & Company: The Prescription Druggists Of Danbury." According the Merck Report of 1904, a guide for physicians and pharmacists published by Merck, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world Reed & Company was one of the oldest drug stores in the city of Danbury, CT, managed by Martin J. Coughlan.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, little information is to be found on this drugstore; however, this fan is a treasure regardless. It is a material reminder of the great World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

As stated in the thesis of a University of Virginia graduate student, approximately 25% of the US population experienced the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 firsthand between the months of May and October of 1893.<sup>7</sup> However, countless millions of people encountered the fair secondhand, whether through newspaper accounts or the pictures, stories, and most importantly, souvenirs of friends and family who were in attendance. These souvenirs can last a lifetime "to serve as traces of authentic experience," as Susan Stewart says in her book, **On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection**. The World's Columbian Exposition was certainly an authentic experience that influenced American culture and society. A souvenir "is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia," Stewart writes.<sup>8</sup> Through the possession of a souvenir, like a handheld paper fan depicting an aerial view of the fair, visitors could remember and reflect on their experience at the World's Columbian Exposition, as well as remind everyone that they took part in this monumental event.

*Gena Soffer*

"This fan is a treasure  
regardless. It is a material  
reminder of the great World's  
Columbian Exposition of  
1893."

# Sewing Machine

“Sewing machines produced by Willcox and Gibbs are considered historically significant because they were accessible by a wide range of women in the 19th century and were mass produced across the country.”

Willcox and Gibbs arguably created one of the greatest chain stitch sewing machines of all time. It is mostly highlighted as being such a great machine due to its automatic thread tension. It was Gibbs who patented the rotating hook that can be seen on almost all chain stitch sewing machines into the present day. Willcox and Gibbs produced a large number of sewing machines in many different styles: hand crank, treadle, latterly, and motor powered. Sewing machines produced by Willcox and Gibbs are considered historically significant because they were accessible by a wide range of women in the 19th century and were mass produced across the country.

The Willcox and Gibbs Silent Automatic was feature in a newspaper article in the Sydney Mail dated from September 9th, 1899. The advertisement clipping wrote “Silence is golden especially when it is combined with many other virtues. When you have a heap of dressmaking to do, and baby is cross and easily wakened, the Willcox and Gibb Silent Automatic will work so smoothly and silently that its gently TICK, TICK soothes the little cherub while mother makes the work fly.”<sup>9</sup>

“Willcox & Gibbs’ famous plunger operated “automatic” thread tensioner was first patented in 1871. It would appear that its use in production models did not occur until several years later. The original design was subsequently ‘tweaked’ in an 1876 Gibbs’ patent.”<sup>10 11</sup>

*Kate Ackerman*



*Willcox and Gibbs Sewing Machine Advertisement  
from World's Columbian Scrapbook, Special  
Collections, University of Delaware Library,  
MSS 093, Item 017*

# Stereoscope and Stereograph



*Stereograph of W.C.T.U. Building,  
Special Collections, University of  
Delaware Library,  
MSS 630, Folder 24*



*Stereoscope, Special Collections,  
University of Delaware Library,  
MSS 630, Box 3*

Many of the photographs preserved from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition are stereographs, illusionary, three-dimensional images that capture the grandeur and spectacle of the Columbian celebration. For instance, the stereograph of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U) building, housed in the University of Delaware Library's Special Collections, comprises two nearly identical, adjacent photographs. However, the slightly skewed perspectives of these two photographs merge to produce a single, three-dimensional image when viewed through the lens of the stereoscope. This stereograph belongs to a packaged set of thirty stereographs from the World's Columbian Exposition that captures the construction of various buildings in the months prior to the 1893 opening. Elevated vantage points and panoramic urbanscapes emphasize dynamics of space and scale, and the images ultimately encapsulate the exposition's monumental presence and transformation of the Chicago landscape.

Stereographs and their optical devices, stereoscopes, became widely available means of virtual travel, education, and entertainment during the nineteenth century. This portable stereoscope, also housed in the University of Delaware Library's

Special Collections, is an example of the type of inexpensive souvenir available for purchase at the World's Columbian Exposition. Its frequent use is evidenced by the discoloration and frayed edges of the red fabric in addition to the missing interior stereograph stand. Its exterior is branded with gold labeling denoting the World's Columbian Exposition and features an image of a woman demonstrating the stereoscope's proper use. This particular model was patented on April 5, 1892, as indicated by the interior label.

Sir Charles Wheatstone invented the original stereograph in 1838 as a scientific experiment; however, Sir William Brewster further combined Wheatstone's technology with photography, in particular with paper and glass-plate negatives. Stereographs were largely featured in London, England's Great Exhibition of 1850, and proliferated American culture by 1854 through the Langenheim brothers of Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> Shortly thereafter, Oliver Wendell Holmes, a medical doctor, created the first handheld stereoscope, a conveniently portable model such as the one on the left, that played a role throughout the World's Columbian Exposition. By the late nineteenth century, stereographs embodied a consumer culture of ephemera that changed the viewing dynamic, and subsequent understanding, of the relationship between spectator and object.

“Stereographs and their optical devices, stereoscopes, become widely available means of virtual travel, education, and entertainment during the nineteenth century.”

# Pop-up Book

“By experiencing the gigantic structures as miniature environments, the viewer becomes all-powerful, and the buildings have become portable memories.”

As the popularity of World’s Fairs grew, cities hosting the expositions hosts were faced with the challenge of creating innovative and memorable souvenirs to ensure that their fair would remain in minds of attendees across the nation. For the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, pop-up books were sold as captivating souvenirs that illustrated various buildings constructed for the occasion. Patented in 1883, printed in Germany by an unknown publisher, and valued at \$717.00 today, these pop-up books were made available for either individual purchase or in their complete set of four.<sup>13</sup> Each book reveals a pop-up scene of buildings that are numbered to correspond with their identifying names on the front cover. This particular book, the only copy owned by Morris Library’s Special Collections department, demonstrates the fair’s Naval Exhibit, a detailed, full-scale mockup of an Indiana-class battleship; the Pier, where boats came to dock; and the Fisheries Building, which offered large aquariums filled with hundreds of different fish species.

Each pop-up book consists of two 12 x 10 inch pieces of illustrated cardboard that have been taped together on the long side, one piece forming the foreground, the other piece forming the background. Three rows of cut-out cardboard building shapes are affixed to the foreground leaf. When the volume is opened and placed upright, the cut-out buildings are raised up to present a three-dimensional panorama of an area of the Chicago World’s Fair.<sup>14</sup>

“Optical souvenirs produced for international expositions reconfirmed the enchanted visual experience in a way that other mass-produced souvenirs could not and, moreover, this held implications for both popular consumption and collective memory.”<sup>15</sup> These pop-up souvenirs made for world’s fairs operate metonymically. That is, they offer a single, fragmentary viewpoint that stands for the whole experience of attending an international exposition. By experiencing the gigantic structures as miniature environments, the viewer becomes all-powerful, and the buildings become portable mementoes. The process of miniaturization renders the abstract visual experience into a neatly collectible commodity. This tantalizing pop-up concept still underlies children’s books, holiday cards, and other publications today.<sup>15</sup>

*Ally Smith*



*World's Columbian Pop-up Book,  
Special Collections, University of  
Delaware Library,  
T500 .C1 W676x 1893*

# Ferris Wheel



*Midway Plaisance Sketches, Special  
Collections, University of Delaware Library,  
T500 .C1 C754*

In the late 19th century, American artists, architects, and engineers were challenged with the enormous task of creating and designing the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The massive job of designing the park became the responsibility of architect Daniel Burnham. To accomplish this task, he called upon the greatest architects of the time to employ their imagination and skills for this project. These masters included, among others: Richard Hunt, Charles McKim, and Sophia Hayden. The architects designed their buildings in the neoclassical style made popular by the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, resulting in a collection of stunning, elaborate buildings never before seen in one location.

In addition to the extraordinary architecture, Americans wanted the Exposition to exemplify not just their building talents but also their ability to discover new technologies. Multiple displays illustrated these new ideas and showed the world that America had established its own identity. The displays set America apart from all other countries, particularly those who had previously hosted a world's fair. One such invention was electricity which, in 1893, lighted up every building and street lamp at the Exposition. Never before had electricity been used at that scale.

Another unique feature of the Exposition was the Midway Plaisance. Prior to the building of the Exposition, in 1850, the area was slated to become a park known as the Midway Plaisane. Founded by land developer Paul Cornell and with the assistance of esteemed landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, the Midway was to link Jackson

and Washington Parks. Designs for the park included lagoons and waterways as well as rich landscaping, including trees and unique plantings. It was to be used as a retreat from the congestion of the city for upper class residents. However, the plans for the park were destroyed in the Chicago fire in 1871. Later, Olmstead's awareness of the Midway gave him the idea of integrating the area into the Exposition. The Midway would become the first section of a world's fair ever to provide entertainment to the public. The entertainment consisted of diverse ethnic villages, such as Little Egypt; demonstrations, including a cider press; and amusement rides, including the balloon ride.

The most astounding marvel of the Midway, however, was the Ferris wheel. The wheel was invented by George Washington Gale Ferris, an American engineer, specifically for the World's Columbian. Although the wheel was Ferris's idea, it satisfied Daniel Burnham's quest to find a structure that would rival the Eiffel Tower, which was exhibited at the 1889 world's fair in Paris. The wheel was an engineering phenomenon and went beyond the need for just a structure. A ride on the wheel provided an exhilarating and interactive adventure, enabling passengers to view the Midway, the entire World's Fair, most of Chicago and Lake Michigan from 265 feet above the fairgrounds as the wheel moved through two revolutions. No one had ever experienced anything like this ride before their visit to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The idea of the Ferris wheel has survived, and although no plans or drawings were ever preserved from the original construction, it continues to be replicated all over the world.<sup>16</sup>

“A ride on the wheel provided an exhilarating and interactive adventure, enabling passengers to view the Midway, the entire World's Fair, most of Chicago and Lake Michigan from 265 feet above the fairgrounds as the wheel moved through two revolutions.”

# Invitation

“Invitations to the many prestigious events varied from generic to personalized reflecting the importance of the invitee.”

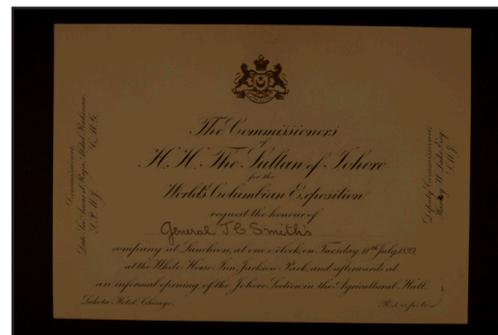
Hosting the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition was an honor that the city of Chicago strived hard to obtain. The citizens of Chicago raised an initial 5 million dollars to show that they were determined to host the fair. A vote solidified the deal and Chicago beat out New York, St. Louis and Washington D.C. for the honor. Almost ten years of construction and 28 million dollars later, “the White City” opened to the public on May 1st, 1893. Along with the unveiling of World’s Columbian, came an endless stream of galas, banquets and dedications.

Invitations to the many prestigious events varied from generic to personalized reflecting the importance of the invitee. The Sultan of Johor sent one such personalized invitation to General John C Smith. The Sultan was hosting a private opening of his exhibit located in Agriculture Hall. While seemingly insignificant, this invitation may be seen to carry a hidden political meaning altogether different than its superficial exterior might suggest.

The country of Johor is located south of Malaysia and north of Singapore on what was historically referred to as the Malay Peninsula. Johor boasted a long history of violence and turmoil instigated by its many conquerors, beginning with the Portuguese in 1509, and followed by the Dutch, British and other neighboring provinces. The era of violence ended in 1824 when Johor gained independence from the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, which reinstated the Sultan as sovereign ruler of the country and led Johor to become arguably the first state on the Malay Peninsula.<sup>17</sup>

Sultan Abubakar was the sovereign leader and Sultan of Johor at the time of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, known simply as the Sultan of Johor. Sultan Abubakar was part of a string of Johorian Sultans who were known for their intrigue and court scandals. In 1885 the Sultan, disguised and using a fake name, visited England and began a courtship with a young lady named Jenny Mighell. When Mighell eventually found the Sultan's true identity, she had high hopes of marrying Abubakar and becoming the Sultana of Johor. The Sultan then left England, returning five years later to find that Miss Mighell was still laboring under the false impression that they were to be married. When Jenny found that her hopes of becoming royalty were misconstrued, she proceeded to file suit against the Sultan on the grounds of "lacerated affections". The suit was dismissed on the grounds that the Sultan was a sovereign ruler of an Independent State.<sup>18</sup>

The press that was generated from the lawsuit was no doubt one of the reasons that Johor hosted an exhibition at the 1893 World's Fair. The newfound notoriety of the country would surely attract visitors to the exhibit and offer viewers the chance to learn about the state. The invitation that was sent to General John C. Smith, inviting he and his wife to attend a private opening of the Johor exhibit in Agriculture Hall, is a display of the opulence the state was attempting to convey. The Sultan must have viewed his notoriety as an opportunity to attract the rich and famous to his exhibit and further his countries political connections.



*World's Columbian Exposition Invitations, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, MSS 630, Box 1, Folder 13*

# Today's Objects



Guest Book



Cookbook



Desk Fan



Sewing Machine



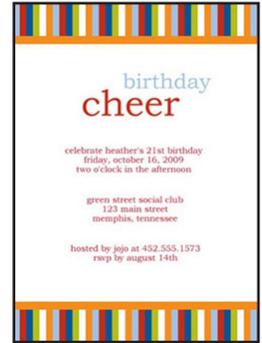
Instagram Photograph



Pop-up Greeting Card



London Eye



Invitation

# Notes

## *"Make No Little Plans:" Learning from Material Culture*

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“Make no little plans.”

*David Burnham, Director of Works for the World's Columbian Exposition*