The MittenN

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Columbian Exposition

In 1893, America held a giant fair in Chicago to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the European discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus. It was called the Columbian Exposition, and it was an opportunity for Americans to show off their greatness. As one Michiganian wrote, "The world is coming to see us, and we must put on our good clothes."

The fair opened on May 1, 1893, and it remained open for six months. More than 27 million visitors toured thousands of exhibits from 39 states, including Michigan, and 19 nations. The exhibits were housed in 16 huge halls that were built on land south of downtown Chicago. Outside the exhibit halls, visitors were entertained by a variety of shows along the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long strip that included the world's first Ferris wheel.

What did they see?

To welcome visitors, Michigan built a massive, three-story, wooden house. The building had large open porches where visitors rested. Exhibits inside the Michigan State Building included a collection of stuffed birds that belonged to the president of the University of Michigan. The city of Grand Rapids finished the ladies' parlor that gained a reputation as "the most **exquisite** work" at the fair. Only five state buildings were larger than the Michigan building.

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Photos Larry Massie

Thousands of people visited the Michigan Building (above) and the fair's Michigan agricultural exhibit (left).

Providing the Inspiration

When the plans for the Columbian Exposition were being drawn up, inventors of "vehicles propelled by [means] other than animal power" were encouraged to exhibit their inventions.

Two Michiganians who had an enormous impact upon the future automobile industry visited the Exposition. They saw a lot of engines and horseless carriages powered by gasoline, electricity, and steam.

An experienced engineer and architect, Charles B. King was impressed with a one-cylinder, one-horsepower engine that had uses on watercraft. When he returned to Detroit, he purchased one of the engines and began applying it to a horseless carriage. On March 6, 1896, King became the first Michiganian to drive a horseless carriage when he drove his "car" down Detroit's Woodward Avenue.

Henry Ford later recalled that "a small, gasoline engine that had been mounted on a wide two-wheeled horsecart and used for pumping water" impressed him at the Exposition. When he returned to Detroit, he was inspired to build a similar engine. In June 1896, Ford drove his gasoline-powered, horseless carriage in Detroit.

King never manufactured automobiles. By the early years of the twentieth century, Ford had become the world's largest manufacturer of automobiles.

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Michigan brought many exhibits to the fair. In the Forestry Building there were 3,380 examples of wood and wooden products from Michigan. This included a full-sized **replica** of a logging camp and a sleigh carrying 18-foot-long white pine logs. There was also a sign that read: "Woods which will not stand handling will not bear using. Michigan woods are not that kind. Handle them all you wish."

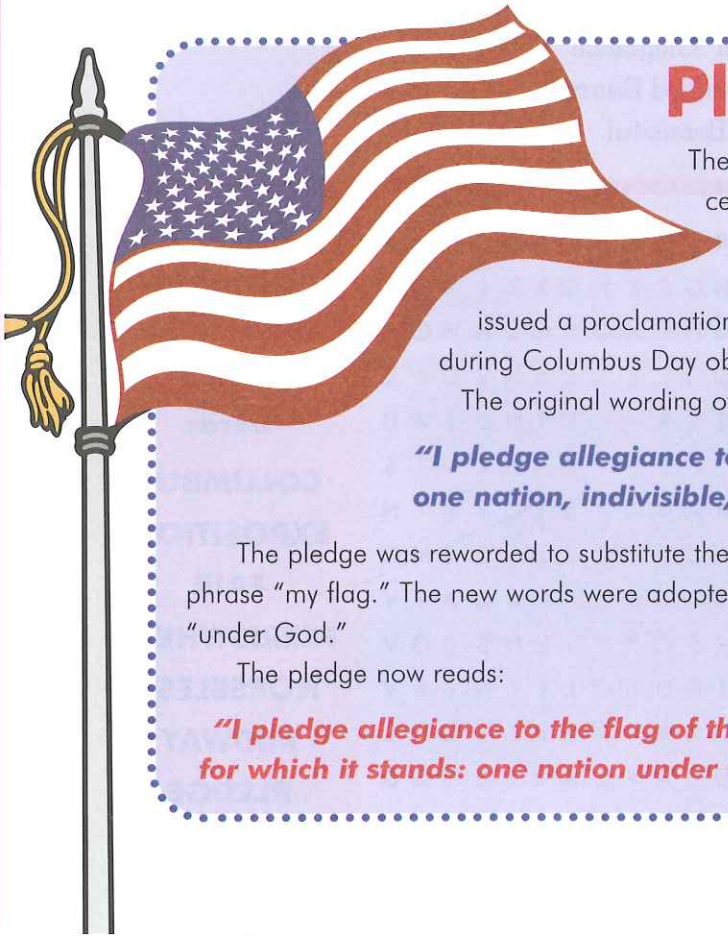
Michigan farmers filled the Palace of Agriculture with more than 5,000 samples of farm products. One of the fair's unique exhibits was a four-person family made out of cornhusks and ears of corn.

The Michigan Mining and Mineral Exhibit

In the Mines and Minerals Building, visitors saw two large pieces of copper and a cross-section of an iron mine. Michigan's mineral exhibits received more awards than any other state.

There were also Michigan exhibits in the Manufacturing and Liberal Arts Building, including samples of Michigan furniture. The students at Michigan State College sent models of animal skeletons, while younger students donated pennies for a children's exhibit that included a "roll of honor" listing their names.

When the Columbian Exposition closed in October 1893, most of the buildings were destroyed. The Michigan Building was sold for scrap. We don't know where many of the exhibits are today.



Pledge OF Allegiance

The patriotism and enthusiasm Americans showed during the celebration of Columbus's discovery of the New World led the editors of a children's magazine to create the Pledge of Allegiance. President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation that the pledge should be used on October 12, 1892, during Columbus Day observances in the public schools.

The original wording of the pledge went as follows:

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the republic for which it stands; one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

The pledge was reworded to substitute the words "the flag of the United States of America" for the phrase "my flag." The new words were adopted on June 14, 1924. In 1954, Congress added the words "under God."

The pledge now reads:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands: one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

What Did You Learn?

BONUS:

Which Michigan exhibit gained a reputation as "the most exquisite work" at the fair?

a. the ladies' parlor
b. the stuffed bird collection
c. the forestry exhibit

1. ***Where was the 1893 Columbian Exposition?***
a. New York, New York
b. Columbus, Ohio
c. Chicago, Illinois

2. ***The world's first _____ _____ was at the Columbian Exposition for visitors to ride.***

3. ***Which Michigan inventors got ideas from things they saw at the fair?***
a. Henry Ford and Thomas Edison
b. Ransom E. Olds and Henry Ford
c. Henry Ford and Charles King

4. ***Which of these was written around the time of the fair?***
a. The Pledge of Allegiance
b. The Star Spangled Banner
c. America the Beautiful

Vocabulary WORDS

Exquisite: finely done or made

Replica: a close reproduction

G D Z F L S C N V R Y E B E O S O O Y Q A
I S S E L E S R O H G R X K Q X R I A O P
P S X R S W V D P D H P N Q S M L N W O R
W J T R B U A E E Q O F A I R S M V D W R
X U J I H F B L C S K R P L C T H U I W D
F Z N S O Z P M I T H L F V E R Z L M T S
Q D X W A W M T U A K V N J B T C V P T N
P I S H Q N I V Q L Z K U E E E J S Z M Q
W A F E B O W G X Y O L W C O M P Q A Y V
I V C E N C T D X R F C P Y I H N B R G V
V M X L X U H S D I G D Z O L E I N B E V
O F Z Y F T D O B H R R V W S R Z I Q B L
J N Q K Q M R R B U J A V Z A R V S D Q D
G E Z G Y I A V F T K Z J S L J Z W E T F

Find the following COLUMBIAN EXPO words

COLUMBUS
EXPOSITION
FAIR
FERRISWHEEL
HORSELESS
MIDWAY
PLEDGE