



Chicago Historical Society



THE WORLD'S FAIR OF 1893

A Tribute to Agriculture and Advertising

Grade level: Middle school through high school

Estimated time: Four class periods

Specific topic: Identifying the connections between agriculture, advertising, and mail order catalogues during the 1890s as expressed at the World's Fair of 1893.

Subtopic: World's Fair of 1893

Teacher background information

World's fairs and expositions held in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries celebrated the past while introducing visions of the future. The World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, was a "city of realized dreams," proclaimed the *Catholic World*. Farmers were lured to the fair by the nostalgic tone devised by fair planners. Many of these farmers supported the populist movement "and they seemed to be saying 'Whoa,' and 'Hold on,' and 'Let's look at the old-time rural values'" (Hakim, 137).

By catering to a rural clientele, Chicago had become the mail-order center of the United States by the time of the fair. Patrons visited the fair in great numbers and, while in the city, visited the mail-order houses themselves. "During the Columbian Exposition, [Montgomery Ward and Company] was said to have been visited by 285,000 of its customers" (Emmet, vii).



Ferris wheel on the Midway of the World's Columbian Exhibition



Key concepts

Regionalism, boosterism, nostalgia, populism, and advertising

Key questions

Why did farmers embrace the fair? How did objects displayed at the fair appeal to rural visitors? Why were mail-order catalogs popular in rural areas? How does advertising influence the decisions of consumers?

Goals of this lesson

Students will learn that the fair represented an “idealized world for middle-class urbanites” and “a model of America’s urban future” (Gilbert, 99) while celebrating the country’s agrarian past.

Objectives

1. Students will learn that while the fair celebrated advancement, it also reflected past glories associated with rural life.
2. Students will realize the importance of advertising, especially through the mail-order catalogs that were popular with rural residents at the time.
3. Students will interpret photographs of fair exhibits that pertain to agrarian life.

Materials

Master copies of all photographs and handouts are provided.

1. Photographs of the Canadian exhibit of “Mammoth Cheese” and the interior of the Agricultural Building (one per group)
2. Montgomery Ward’s catalog page from the 1890s (one per group)
3. Map of the fairgrounds (one per student)
4. Photo analysis worksheet (one per student)
5. Print advertisement analysis worksheet (one per group)
7. Magnifying glass (one per group, optional)
8. Each group will also need some basic art supplies, including poster board, scissors, glue sticks, old magazines, and markers, crayons, or colored pencils.

Procedures

1. Divide students into groups of four. Distribute copies of the photographs and the photo analysis worksheet to each group. Student groups should work together using the worksheet to interpret the Canadian exhibit image. How would the reactions of rural fair visitors differ from those of urban fair visitors to this exhibit?
2. Have groups share their findings with the entire class. Compare and contrast individual group findings and hold a class discussion about the photographs.
3. Ask students to study the photograph of the interior of the Agricultural Building. What new observations can students make about agriculture and the fair?
4. Distribute a copy of the Montgomery Ward’s catalog page to each group. Explain to students that prospective customers saw these advertisements in large printed catalogs for the purpose of purchasing products via mail order and that the images are from a reproduction Montgomery Ward catalog of the 1890s era. Discuss the reasons why mail-order catalogs were popular in rural areas. Ask the students to analyze the images for their effectiveness by completing the print advertisement analysis worksheet.
5. Instruct each group to present their findings to the entire class.
6. Distribute the map of the fairgrounds. Locate the Agricultural Building on the map. Then use the map with students to locate other fair buildings and exhibits that might have appealed to farmers from rural areas.
7. Ask students to develop an advertisement that attracts travelers from rural areas to visit the fair. Each group will design and present a poster, using the 1890s advertising techniques they previously analyzed. Their goal is to “lure” rural visitors, primarily farmers, to the fair. Posters must include both language and imagery. Students can either draw their own artwork or use magazine clippings.

Suggestions for student assessment:

Assess the group posters. Devise a rubric to score the advertisements based on three major categories.

Share the rubric with students before they design their posters. For example:

Language: Is there a catchy slogan? Is language broken up visually or are there larger headings and smaller subheadings?

Artwork: Is the poster eye-catching? Do the images represent the fair? Is there an effective use of color?

Target audience: Does the poster make a specific appeal to rural visitors?

Additional resources

Faragher, John Mack, ed. *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*. New York: Henry Holt, 1994.

Hakim, Joy. *A History of Us: An Age of Extremes, 1870–1917*. Vol. 8. New York: Oxford University, 1999.

Emmet, Boris. Introduction to *Montgomery Ward and Company Catalogue, Number 57* (unabridged facsimile). New York: Dover, 1969.

James Madison University:
www.jmu.edu/madison/teach/burson/1890.htm

Extension activity

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered one of the important addresses at the fair. Turner titled his address, “The Significance of the American Frontier in American History.” While the address is dense, it is worthwhile to examine parts of it while studying the fair. Turner’s thesis states that the nostalgia craze then in vogue in rural America had a great deal to do with the contiguous borders of the United States being inhabited by the 1890 census. Why does Turner believe the frontier was significant to America and Americans? How did its “disappearance” affect fairgoers? Do Americans need a “frontier”? If so, what is our frontier today?



Exterior of the Agricultural Building at the World’s Columbian Exhibition

This lesson fulfills the following Illinois Learning Standards:

English Language Arts

- State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.
- State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.
- State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

Social Science

- State Goal 14: Understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States.
- State Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.
- State Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

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MONTGOMERY WARD & CO.'S CATALOGUE No. 57.

The Little Giant Green Bone Cutter.
FOR HAND POWER ONLY.



Weight with shaft, 60 pounds. Price, \$40.00
Weight, without shaft, 30 pounds. Price, \$20.00
Height, 45 inches. Capacity, 20 bushels per hour.
This mill is adapted especially for cornstarch and larders. Also for use in grain bins, etc., having an iron door easily raised in use.

BIG GIANT.

Improved Grinding Mills.

All Mills shipped second-class freight.

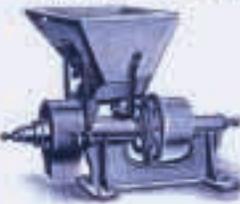


A mill with the greatest capacity and best work producing all kinds of grain-cracked meal in the factory. Adapted to feeding, elevators, and granaries, especially in granaries, located above by hoists at the rear of all granaries. Requires from 5 to 15 horse power, according to size and speed.
70244 The No. 1 size 30x30, 10 to 15 horse power, 10 to 15 bushels per hour. Price, \$100.00
70245 The No. 2 size 30x30, 15 to 20 horse power, 15 to 20 bushels per hour. Price, \$120.00
70246 The No. 3 size 30x30, 20 to 25 horse power, 20 to 25 bushels per hour. Price, \$140.00

- 70240 The No. 2 size 24 inch horse power for attachment to combine and capacity 10 to 15 bushels per hour. Weight, 225 pounds. Price, \$80.00 per set. Price of Mill, \$10.00
- 70241 The No. 3 size 30x30, 20 to 25 horse power. Weight, 225 pounds. Price, \$100.00 per set. Price of Mill, \$10.00
- 70242 The No. 4 size 30x30, 25 to 30 horse power. Weight, 225 pounds. Price, \$120.00 per set. Price of Mill, \$10.00
- 70243 The No. 5 size 30x30, 30 to 35 horse power. Weight, 225 pounds. Price, \$140.00 per set. Price of Mill, \$10.00

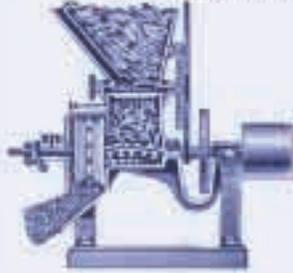
Montgomery Ward & Co.'s Lightning Grinding Mills.

All Mills shipped second-class freight. Pulling, 10, inches in diameter; 4 inch feet.



70254 Is made of iron and steel, has the working parts in cast iron to get out of order will not break. It will stamp and crush any grain without injury to the grain, which is an important feature. The drive and shaft are made of iron and are so arranged that if one or any other part becomes worn it can be replaced without breaking the mill. It will crush all kinds of grain, making the best cracked meal for feeding stock. Will grind from 8 to 15 bushels per hour if run by hand and in 1,000 revolutions per minute. Can be run by power with shaft or any other power. The horse are 2 1/2 inches in diameter and accurately fitted. Price of mill with extra set of burrs, \$12.50
Extra burrs, per set of 2, 75
Weight, 100 pounds.

Grinding Mills—Continued.



70255 The Kelly Patent Grinding Mill, see description in our catalogue. It is a large mill, adapted for grinding all kinds of grain, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for grinding corn, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for grinding corn, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for grinding corn, and will run on any kind of power.



70256 Corn and Cobs Mill will grind corn and cobs, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for grinding corn, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for grinding corn, and will run on any kind of power.



70257 Hand Corn Planter has the greatest capacity and best work producing all kinds of grain-cracked meal in the factory. Adapted to feeding, elevators, and granaries, especially in granaries, located above by hoists at the rear of all granaries. Requires from 5 to 15 horse power, according to size and speed.

Corn Planters.

Shipped second-class freight.



70258 Hand Corn Planter has the greatest capacity and best work producing all kinds of grain-cracked meal in the factory. Adapted to feeding, elevators, and granaries, especially in granaries, located above by hoists at the rear of all granaries. Requires from 5 to 15 horse power, according to size and speed.

The "Chataqua" Corn, Bean and Seed Planter.



70259 Hand Corn Planter has the greatest capacity and best work producing all kinds of grain-cracked meal in the factory. Adapted to feeding, elevators, and granaries, especially in granaries, located above by hoists at the rear of all granaries. Requires from 5 to 15 horse power, according to size and speed.

Triumph Corn Planter.



70260 Kelly's Patent Triumph Hand Corn Planter can be used on soil as hard as gravel. Weight, 45 lbs. Price, each, \$10.00

The Little Giant Broadcast Hand Seed Sower.



70261 With this sower, wheat sown broadcast, will produce 20 bushels per acre. It will also sow any other grain, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for sowing broadcast, and will run on any kind of power.

The Niagara Broadcast Seeder.
Shipped second-class freight.



70262 The Niagara Broadcast Seeder will sow all kinds of grain, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for sowing broadcast, and will run on any kind of power.

The New Five-Hoe One-Box Grain Drill.



70263 The New Five-Hoe One-Box Grain Drill will sow all kinds of grain, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for sowing broadcast, and will run on any kind of power.

The Cranger Seeder.
All seeds shipped second-class freight.



70264 The Cranger Seeder will sow all kinds of grain, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for sowing broadcast, and will run on any kind of power.

The Cyclone Hand Seeder.



70265 The Cyclone Hand Seeder will sow all kinds of grain, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for sowing broadcast, and will run on any kind of power.

Harrow.
Shipped second-class freight.



70266 This harrow will break up the soil, and will run on any kind of power. It is especially adapted for breaking up the soil, and will run on any kind of power.

We Invite Correspondence On any business subject, and will try to answer all inquiries promptly and intelligently, as we employ a large and experienced force of correspondents for this purpose.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

PHOTO ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Each member of the group should select one quadrant of the photograph to study in detail. Use the back of the sheet to record the evidence found in your quadrant. Then unite the four quadrants to form one whole picture. Share your observations with each other. Finally fill in the table as a group. If available, use a magnifying glass to observe detail.

Evidence

List the physical details (or evidence) found in the photograph.

Inference

What conclusions can you draw from the evidence?

As a group complete the following:

1. When your photo is whole again, make up a creative title and a caption.

2. Is the subject posed or captured spontaneously? Why is this important in understanding the image?

3. What do you think were the photographer's intentions? Did he or she have a certain agenda in taking this photograph? What might it have been?

4. What points of view or beliefs are not included in the photo?

5. What is the message of the photo? What ideas does it express?

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

PRINT ADVERTISEMENT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Examine the Montgomery Ward catalog page and answer the following questions:

1. What product interests you most on this catalog page? Why?

Use the same product you chose for question #1 to answer the following five questions:

2. Who is the intended audience(s) for the ad? Support your answer with evidence from the advertisement.

3. What mood is created by the ad? What feelings does it stimulate?

4. Analyze how language is used in the advertisement. Is it informational or does it provoke an emotional response? Is the language catchy, as in a slogan? Is it memorable? Support your answer with evidence from the advertisement.

5. Does the advertisement convey the sense that the product it is promoting would improve your life in some way? If so, how?

6. What information do you need to make sense of the advertisement? Does it allude to certain beliefs? Is it a reflection of a certain lifestyle? Does it assume information and knowledge on the part of the person looking at the advertisement?

7. Now look at the entire catalog page. Quickly scan the other products for sale. Do the products on this page have anything in common? If yes, what? If you had to name this page (classify its contents), what would you call it?

8. Do you think this catalog was useful to residents of rural areas? Why or why not?
