

*Historical/
Specialized
Committees*

World's Columbian Exposition Planning Committee, 1890



CHAIR: Lucas Flanagan

GWCLA XXIX

December 7th

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Letter from the Chair

Delegates! My name is Lucas Flanagan, and I will be serving as the Crisis Director for the World's Columbian Exposition Planning Committee. If you have participated in GW CIA before, you may remember me from the Shrek committee from 2023 or the Locarno committee from 2022. I am a Junior at GW majoring in Political Science, and I am double minoring in Linguistics and Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Not only am I a member of GW's travel MUN team, but I am a huge fan of tabletop games and a part of GW's board games club. I was born in Chicago and raised in the suburbs, and chose this committee topic because of the great significance it had to where I'm from. During this committee, the chair will be assuming the role of George R. Davis, the fair's Director-General. Hopefully, this background guide should give a good introduction to the committee's format and topics, but if you have any other questions, email me at lucas.flanagan@gwmail.gwu.edu and **be sure to CC (Carbon Copy) your advisors!** I can't wait to see how you all navigate the planning process of one of the most influential events in Chicago history, and I'll see you in committee!

- Lucas

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Intro and Committee Format

Welcome, delegates, to the World's Columbian Exposition Planning Committee! This committee is a historical committee that combines aspects of general assembly and crisis committees. For instance, delegates will take on the roles of characters rather than countries, and instead of writing long resolutions, we will instead pass shorter directives in frequent rounds. Crisis updates, which describe events happening in the world of the committee, will help guide the topic of debate, and what is included in directives that pass voting will influence the crisis updates. Crisis pads/notes will not be used in this committee (so no need to worry if you don't know what those are). Because of the way this committee is structured, the pace is expected to be a little faster than your typical general assembly committee. For more information on any of these terms or on parliamentary procedure (the rules on what actions you can do during committee sessions), please refer to the delegate handbook.

Though it is difficult to find concrete and straightforward information on the structure of the fair, I have decided to make it so that the Chair will fill the role of Director-General George R. Davis. Additionally, all the delegates will be members of a general planning committee under the Director-General's supervision and will have equal power. Delegates are encouraged to take actions related to their historical role, and to go beyond and do new things too (for example, if your character was an architect who designed just one building, you may write clauses about building multiple other buildings, or work on clauses and directives related to artwork or showcases, etc.).

One more thing must be addressed before we get into the topics of debate: the Exposition was held at a time when people held views of minority groups that ranged from slightly ignorant to very harmful. Many of these views and ideas were expressed and advanced in some of the exhibitions at the fair. Because GW CIA is a welcoming

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environment, we ask that you please do not support bigotry in any form in both written and oral word, even if your character has done so in the past. [If any delegate makes you uncomfortable, please fill out the anonymous reporting form and the situation will be handled accordingly]. Please keep this in mind throughout the day, and without further ado, let us dive into the history of the World's Columbian Exposition.

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Historic Background

What is a World's Fair?

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, a World's Fair is a "large international exhibition of a wide variety of industrial, scientific, and cultural items that are on display at a specific site for a period of time, ranging usually from three to six months," including visitors and exhibits from many foreign nations and a lot of entertainment attractions.¹ They have their roots in fairs held in Britain and France, but Britain's Great Exposition in 1851 could be recognized as the first modern World's Fair. While the golden age of these fairs has passed, World's Fairs are still being organized every five years by the Bureau International des Expositions, with the next one being hosted in Osaka, Japan in 2025.

What was the World's Columbian Expo?

One of these World's Fairs was held in Chicago, Illinois in 1893, and was called the World's Columbian Exposition. This event was so significant to the city's and the country's history, that one of the four stars on Chicago's city flag represents the exposition.² Before all of this, there was a lengthy process that the House of Representatives went through to choose a host city. While Saint Louis, MO and Washington, D.C. were also trying their hand at securing a spot, the main battle was between New York City and Chicago. Congress ended up awarding the fair to Chicago, due to the city's transportation system, location, character, and especially its fundraising efforts, much to the bitterness of New York City.³

¹ Findling, "World's Fair."

² Chicago Architecture Center, "The Chicago Flag."

³ Connolly, "How Chicago beat New York to get the 1893 World's Fair."

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Present Situation

The year is 1890. The city of Chicago has the honor to host the World's Columbian Exposition, meaning that you all have been assembled to organize this grand event under the leadership of director-general George R. Davis. People are still talking about the 1889 Paris Exposition, held just one year ago, and the Eiffel Tower that was showcased there. That won't be the only thing on guest's minds when they arrive: some will also recall the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, which was the first World's Fair to be held in the USA. With those high expectations in mind, we need to outdo the previous fairs and plan the best fair the world has ever seen!

The first thing we need to consider is location: should we pick a spot that is easier to access and more buildings? On one hand, this would mean we don't need to do as much construction, but on the other, it could be a big disruption to city residents, and we would need to rent space in buildings. Alternatively, we can settle on a less developed area, which would give us more freedom to build whatever kinds of buildings we like, but would be more costly and means that we need to have a way for people to get there easily.

Speaking of building things, that's the next point: what kinds of buildings are necessary for the fair? It is up to you to figure out everything about construction: how many buildings will be built and the functions they will serve. Consider the architectural elements you would like to add to the buildings, and if one uniform style is better or if the fair would be better off incorporating a bunch of different styles. And yet there is more debate on the styles that should be used, with many talks of using neoclassical architecture. Proponents say it will give a grand and beautiful look, while others say it is better to display newer American styles to give a more modern vibe. Whichever styles are chosen could have a huge impact on the kinds of buildings architects across the

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country would be interested in, so many fear that neoclassical buildings would “set back” American architectural movements and stall progress. Landscaping is another huge factor, and the beauty of the grounds should be taken into consideration. Also, keep in mind which structures should be permanent (which is more costly), and which should be temporarily built for the fair.

And what’s a fair without guests? Besides the foreign delegates in this committee, it is up to you to decide which other countries should come to the fair. Additionally, it is important to rouse the public’s interest so that we can get the highest attendance possible (in other words, we need advertising!). It is especially important to detail the exhibits at the fair, and which buildings they will be in. These exhibits, of course, are the main reason why people come here in the first place!

Finally, we come to funding. While we do have some top investors in the room to help pay for the fair, we will need all the help we can get. One possible option is finding a way to appease wealthy New Yorkers who are upset that their city did not get to host the fair. And while this strategy could also attract many New York guests, some argue that instead of risking putting our efforts all into trying to court New York, we should turn to less wealthy but more easy-to-secure financiers from elsewhere.

As you can see, it is a lot of work to put on a fair of this scale, but with all your experience as entrepreneurs, architects, activists, diplomats, and inventors, this committee is sure to produce a magnificent fair. Good luck!

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Questions to Consider

- How will the fair be financed?
- How should the fair be advertised to attract the highest amount of guests?
- How should Chicago be prepared in order to host the expo? What kind of buildings and structures are necessary to construct for the operations of the fair?
- How can other nations contribute to the fair? How can you get more countries interested in attending?
- What measures should be taken to ensure the safety and security of the fair?
- What kind of exhibits will be presented, and where? How should all the buildings be designed?

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Character List

1. Daniel H. Burnham
 - Director of Works
 - Burnham is a prominent architect with a passion for city planning, who had worked on many buildings and skyscrapers in the past. His main priorities are finding possible issues with the fair as well as making sure things are implemented and constructed properly.
2. Frederick Law Olmsted
 - Landscape Architect
 - Known as the “father of landscape architecture,” Olmsted wants to find the most beautiful location for the fair, and will contribute to making the fair grounds as visually appealing as possible (through landscaping, of course).
3. Charles T. Yerkes
 - Financer
 - A Philadelphia banker with a messy financial and political past, he moved to Chicago for a fresh start. He is known for financing the city’s public transit system as well as the exposition, but not shying away from using shady tactics to get his way.
4. Marshall Field
 - Founder of Marshall Field & Co.
 - Marshall Field is a retail and wholesale entrepreneur known for a focus on consumer comfort, pioneering the phrase “the customer is always right.” As a financier of the fair, he hopes to bring his hospitable approach to the exposition to attract guests and hold their attention.
5. Philip Armour

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- Founder of Armour & Co.
 - Armour is an entrepreneur who eventually built his fortune on the meatpacking industry. Selling meat to the military during the Civil War boosted his career, and he developed many innovations for food preservation. He is using his wealth to help finance the fair.
6. Lyman Gage
- Banker
 - Though born in New York, Gage was the “dealbreaker” who raised so much money in just one day that Congress finally awarded the fair to Chicago over New York City. He knows a lot about collecting and handling money, and was even offered the position of Secretary of the Treasury by Grover Cleveland, but he declined.
7. Francis Davis Millet
- Decorations Director
 - Millet wants to bring his talent and passion for painting to the fair, and hopes to employ new technologies to create murals that visitors can enjoy. He wants to make sure the fair’s aesthetic qualities leave a lasting impression on guests with other artistic decorations.
8. George Washington Carver
- Agricultural Scientist
 - Carver is an up-and-coming agricultural scientist who also has a talent for art. Despite facing hardships in the world of higher education due to his race, he was invited to the fair and he hopes to present his art and his findings on agriculture at an exhibit.
9. George Brown Goode

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- Smithsonian Liaison
- An accomplished scientist specializing in ichthyology (the study of fish), Goode has experience working at the first World's Fair hosted by the U.S. in Philadelphia. He is in charge of handling Smithsonian artifacts and materials for government-sponsored displays at the fair.

10. Bertha Palmer

- President of the Board of Lady Managers
- An academically gifted socialite from Kentucky, Palmer's charisma helped her gain influence in Chicago after marrying millionaire Potter Palmer. She is in charge of affairs related to women's presence at the fair and presenting the achievements of women. She also is an innovator in the realm of baking.

11. John Henry Barrows

- Organizer of the World's Parliament of Religions
- A pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, Barrows is tasked with gathering religious figures around the world at the World's Parliament of Religions, the first of its kind. In addition to deciding on topics for discussion, he needs to figure out where they will be meeting and how to accommodate these leaders.

12. Frederick Douglass

- Civil Rights Activist and Haitian Representative
- From growing up in slavery to becoming a figurehead of the abolition movement, Douglass has long advocated for racial equality, and has criticized the fair for the lack of black voices. He has also been selected to represent the Republic of Haiti and its interests at the fair

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13. Susan B. Anthony

- Women's Rights Activist
- Anthony is an outspoken advocate for women's suffrage, and has long supported the movement. She is a chief organizer for the World's Congress of Representative Women, a convention to be held at the fair, to discuss women's issues.

14. Joan Imogene Howard

- Educator and Principal
- Originally from Boston, her academic skill made her the first African American woman to be admitted to and to graduate from the Girls High and Normal School. Now a school principal and working on a Master's Degree in Pedagogy, she wants to bring her educational skill to the exposition.

15. Nikola Tesla

- Inventor
- Engaged in a "war" with Thomas Edison over electrical currents, Tesla's AC system was chosen to power the fair over Edison's DC. Not only does he have to set up the power system for the fair, but he also wishes to show off some of his inventions.

16. George Washington Gale Ferris Jr.

- Inventor
- Studying civil engineering, Ferris was drawn to the fair due to a challenge presented to engineers across the country: design a monument to surpass the fame of the Eiffel Tower, unveiled at the previous exposition in Paris.

17. Joseph Lyman Silsbee

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- Architect/Inventor
- As an architect, Silsbee dabbles in a broad range of styles. However, while he does intend to help with the designs of some buildings, his main goal at the fair is to find a way to move a large amount of people around in a comfortable and convenient way.

18. Louis Sullivan

- Architect
- Although there is already much discussion of having a standard Neoclassical style for much of the fair's buildings, Louis Sullivan wants to design buildings in his own way. His main project at hand is the Transportation Building.

19. Sophia Hayden

- Architect
- Only 21 years old, Hayden is a young architect tasked with designing both the interior and exterior of the Women's Building. However, she has a strong sense of maintaining the integrity of her designs, and has turned away rich people who wanted to pay to see certain elements included.

20. Ernest Volk

- Archaeologist and Naturalist
- Volk has done a lot of work in Trenton, New Jersey excavating various archaeological sites and contributing his specimens to museums. He wishes to compile collections to educate the public about early civilizations in America.

21. Walter Stetina*

- German Representative

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- A patron of the performing arts, Walter has been sent to represent the German Empire and its interests. He plans to exhibit industrial and military inventions.

22. Aimee Orellana*

- Venezuelan Representative
- Aimee has come a long way to represent the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela during the expo. She sees it as an opportunity to increase Venezuela's presence on the world stage, and has connections with a New York congressman.

23. Murray M. Mortimer*

- British Representative
- A broken ankle did not stop Mortimer from representing a late Victorian era United Kingdom at the fair. He is excited to display the culture and technology of Britain at the time.

24. Nicolas Armand*

- French Representative
- Armand believes the two best things in life are business and baseball, which brings him to the city of Chicago. He advocates for the interests of the French Third Republic, especially its art.

25. Ryuki Otsubo*

- Japanese Representative
- Otsubo arrived optimistically in Chicago to represent Meiji era Japan, hoping to teach about Japanese culture and history, and to learn about Western industry and politics.

*Denotes fictional character

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