

# Reactions from Satirists in the Literary, Commercial, and Moneyed Center When the Marketing Prize is Lost: New York's Loss of the Columbian World's Fair Mandate is Chicago's Gain

Alfred C. Holden, Fordham University, USA  
Laurie Holden, Fordham University, USA

*The 400th anniversary of the discovery of the new world was clearly an occasion to be celebrated in Victorian America. Meanwhile, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and Washington polished their credentials in preparation for the congressional hearings and final vote (in early 1890) to host a major industrial and commercial exhibition. Well before 1892, Congress would be responsible for selecting the city and allocating several million dollars to assist in assuring the success of the 1892 event.*

*New York, coming out of its very successful hosting of the 100th anniversary celebration of George Washington's 1789 inauguration as President (in lower Manhattan), presumed it would be the logical choice to host the 1892 event. As *Scientific American's* lead editorial of January 18, 1890, summarized—with as much objectivity as possible for a New York-based publication—New York is “the social, the literary, the commercial, and the moneyed center of the United States and there it will remain,” that is, a world class city next to London. The marketing logic for New York was strengthened by the city's ease in forming an impressive series of high-profile, world's fair committees, obtaining over \$5 million in local subscriptions (meaning no subsidy was needed from Washington), selecting a fair site in mid-town Manhattan, noting that the site touches Hudson River piers and so makes for easy access for European arrivals on transatlantic steamers, calculating the large numbers of people who live/work within daily commute of the site (vis a vis the situation in Chicago or St. Louis), spelling out the vast hotel and visitors facilities in place to host expected crowds, and listing the numerous commercial establishments headquartered in New York which could readily promote the nation's products to visitors.*

*This paper evaluates that marketing logic and the shock within New York when logic is superseded by political reality—the vote (on the eighth ballot) by the House of Representatives on February 24, 1890, to extend*

*to Chicago the designation as host. The unique aspect of this paper for CHARM attendees is that the documentation of New York's bid and the city's reaction (after rejection) to political “intrigue” within the Republican Congress and Harrison Administration are complemented by a display by the co-authors at the conference of more than three dozen associated cartoons from the New York-based satirical magazines *Puck* and *Judge*. Their initial depictions of New York's pre-eminence, then Chicago's selection, and finally their view of the type of environment likely to greet visitors in Chicago provide an ongoing barometer of the fair's marketing difficulty in ultimately attracting substantial European and U.S. East Coast visitors and exhibits.*

*In sum, the authors use records of the New York fair organizers and a variety of full-color cartoons to illustrate the gap in living standards that satirists believed existed between the more urbanized northeast and what they perceived to be the still unsophisticated citizens of the wild west. That is, while Chicago's “windy” representatives may have pulled a fast one in Washington, visitors to the fair were bound to be fleeced by Chicago's ambitious real estate and other business interests. The fact that the Chicago fair had to be postponed to the 401<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Columbus voyage and that the Senate vote on April 21, 1890, authorized a pre-fair international naval review for New York harbor in April 1893 only heightened the resentment in losing the marketing prize.*