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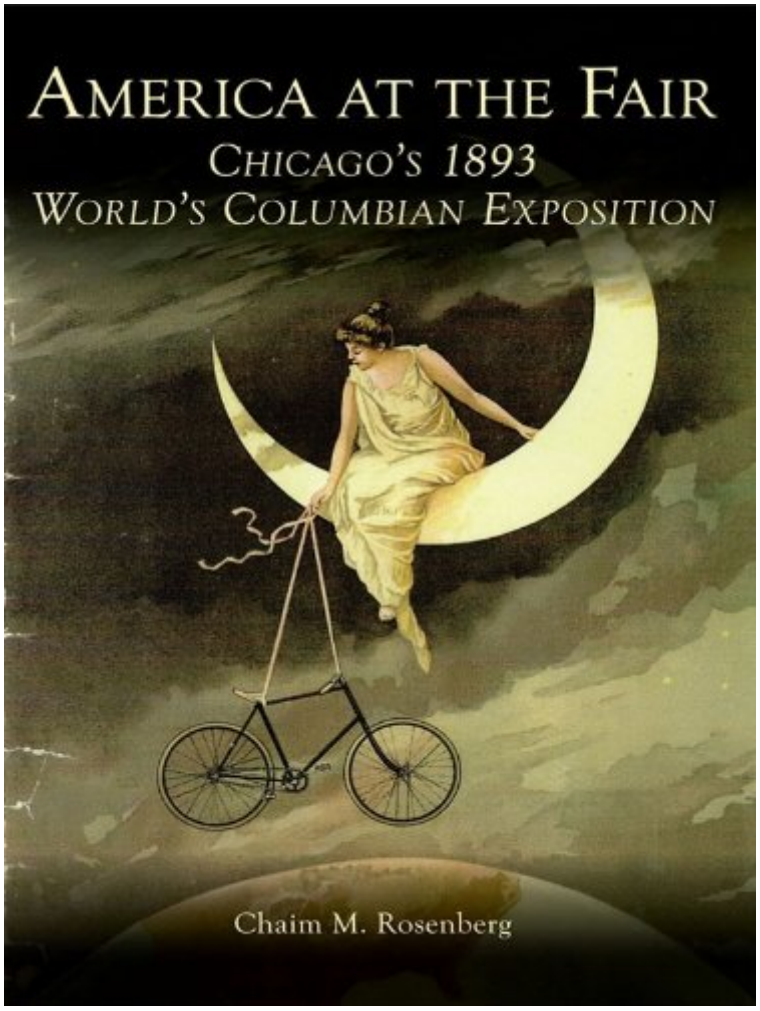
America At The Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition



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Synopsis

At the time of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, the United States was fast becoming the world’s leading economy. Chicago, the host city, had grown in less than half a century from a village to the country’s second-largest metropolis. During this, the Gilded Age, the world’s most extensive railroad and steamship networks poured ceaselessly through Chicago, carrying the raw goods and finished products of America’s great age of invention and industrial expansion. The Fair was the largest ever at the time, with 65,000 exhibitors and millions of visitors. It has been called the "Blueprint of the American Future" and marked the beginning of the national economy and consumer culture.

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Customer Reviews

There are many books about the epochal Columbian Exposition, the cultural, commercial, and technological watershed whose wonders awed the 28 million visitors who ambled through "The White City" between May and October of 1893. But one book arguably contains more detail than most others: Chaim M. Rosenberg’s "America at the Fair."For instance, I already knew that the

Columbian Exposition was the first world's "electric" fair and that evening ticket-holders were thrilled by dazzling displays of electric lights. But until reading "America at the Fair," I didn't realize that Edison's General Electric Company and the Westinghouse Electric Company had been involved in a "War of the Currents" since 1883 and that Westinghouse gained not only the right to light up the Chicago fair but that it also won the "best site" award in the Electricity Building.Most books which discuss the Fair's Women's Pavilion also mention that architect Sophie Hayden was commissioned to design the building. But, to my knowledge, none but Rosenberg's relates that because of discouragements suffered relative to her association with the Fair (including being paid significantly less than her male counterparts) Ms. Hayden suffered a breakdown and never designed another building.Perhaps, some readers will find that Rosenberg provides too much detail at times. For instance, some might not care that the New York Life Insurance Company, one of the many insurers of the Fair in case of fire, had assets of 137 million and 224,000 policies.

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