

World's Fair tickets reveal Orleans County connections

OVERLOOKED ORLEANS: Several residents played a role in 1893 event

By **MATT BALLARD**

Orleans County Historian

ALBION — The collections within the Department of History contain newspaper clippings, genealogies, published histories, and photographs, but a number of interesting artifacts and ephemera items serve as a window into Orleans County's material culture.

A photograph shows a collection of souvenir tickets from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, Ill. The collection once belonged to Dr. Frank Haak Lattin, a dealer in natural specimens, physician, and state Assemblyman.

Nearly 125 years ago, the United States prepared to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in 1492. In order to host the massive event, 200 new but temporary buildings were constructed on 600 acres of land using neoclassical architecture.

The fair officially opened to the public on May 1, 1893.

Although centered in Chicago, the World's Exposition featured numerous connections to Western New York and Orleans County. Frederick Douglass, once a resident of Rochester, was selected to serve as the national delegate for Haiti.

Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed the University of Rochester campus and countless parks in the Western New York area, was responsible for the layout of the fairgrounds.

The Mines & Mining Building that housed exhibits of America's rich coal, oil, and steel resources was designed by Solon Spencer Beman, the same man who later designed the Pullman Universalist Church in Albion.

Some historians have argued that the World's Fair in 1893 was the first time that the term "Windy City" was used to refer to the city of Chicago. Charles Anderson Dana, who as a boy lived at Gaines Basin and later served



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A collection of old tickets helps highlight Orleans County's connections to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

as the editor of the *New York Sun*, was credited with coining that phrase.

Two of Orleans County's own were present at the fair, overseeing exhibitions in the Anthropology building.

Frank Hamilton Cushing of Barre — the noted anthropologist and ethnologist who specialized in the study of the Zuni Indians in New Mexico — and Frank Haak Lattin of Gaiens, a purveyor in natural specimens and publisher of *The Oologist*, both participated in the Exposition.

Lattin's exhibit of natural specimens occupied nearly 2,000 square feet of space. His participation in the fair provided him with the opportunity to purchase the collection once belonging to Col. Ezekiel Jewett, consisting of over 50,000 shell specimens.

Visitors were provided with a number of different tokens and keepsakes from the fair. Coins and medallions were cast for distribution, but others chose to hold on to the tickets that guaranteed them entrance into the Exposition.

About 60,000 individuals were provided with "portrait tickets" that featured images of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Christopher Columbus, Georg Friedrich Handel, and an image of a Native American chief based largely on stereotypes.

Each image was meant to represent a distinct period in American history.

The "season tickets" ensured exhibitors ongoing access to the Exposition between May and October, which would explain why Lattin retained at least one set of tickets — it is presumed that his wife was provided the second set.

Since the tickets were used for ongoing access to exhibit areas, they were often torn, bent, folded, or dropped in puddles of water, resulting in wrinkles and splotted ink — but the collection's tickets remain in excellent condition.

Also included in the set are two one-day tickets purchased for 50 cents, or about \$14 today. These guaranteed visitors access to the Fair on the same day the ticket was purchased; children received "special" tickets at half-price.

Other tickets, such as the "Manhattan Day" and "Chicago Day" tickets provided limited access to special events during the Fair.

Of course, the Columbian Exposition was a place of many firsts, introducing Quaker Oats, Shredded Wheat, Pabst Blue Ribbon, and the Ferris wheel to American society, the Fair also gave rise to America's first serial killer, H. H. Holmes, who was recently suspected of being Jack the Ripper.