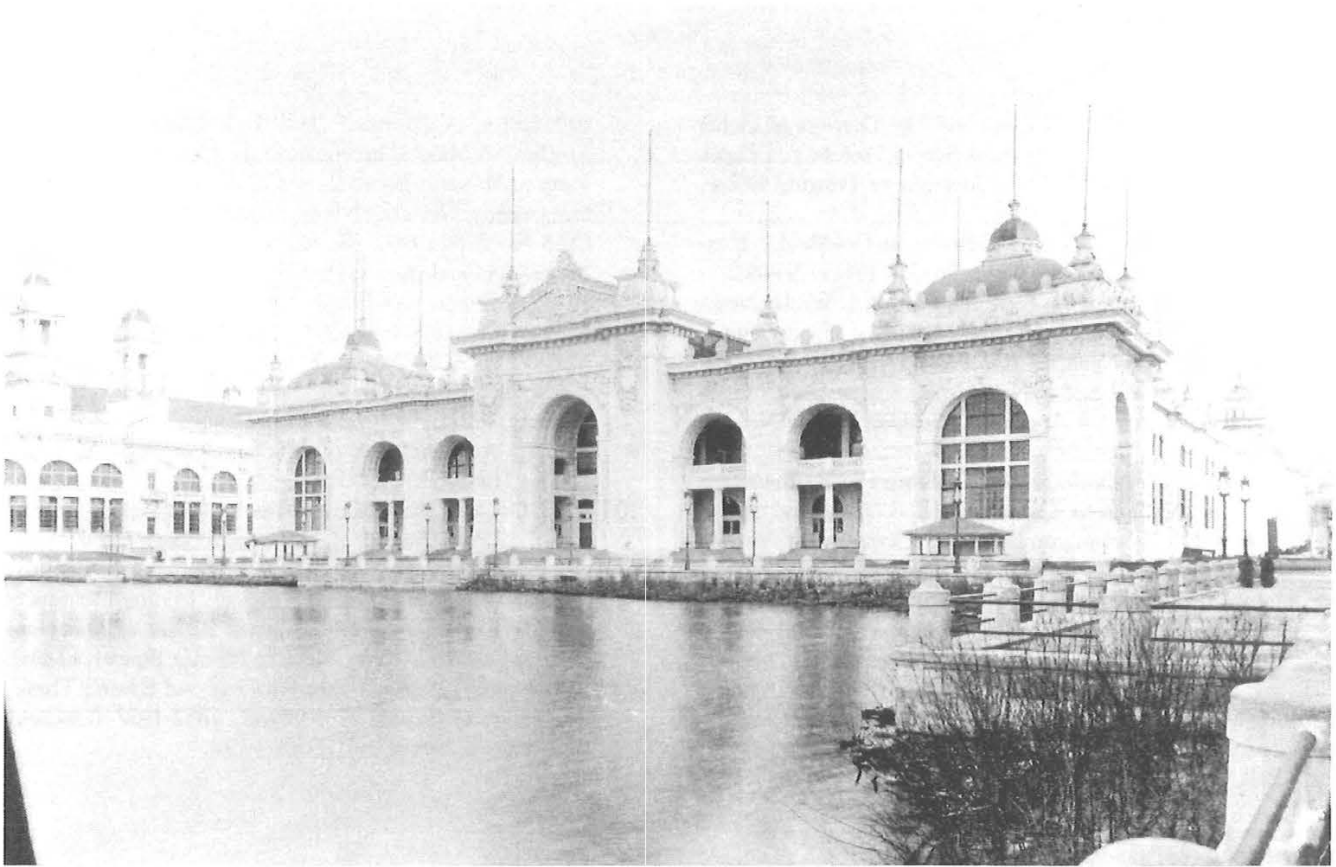

The Mines and Mining Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893: A Photographic Essay

by Karen and Mark Vendl

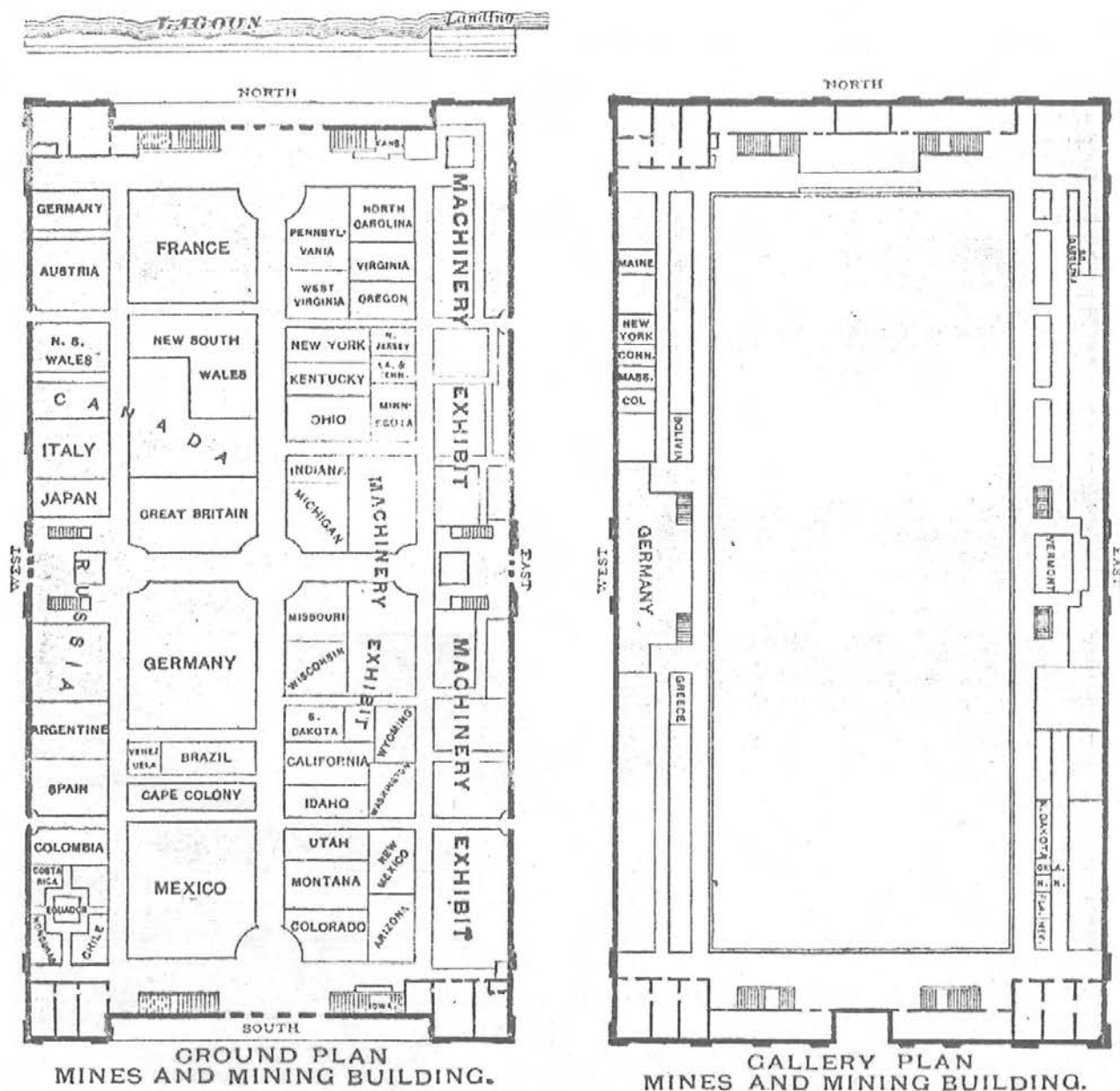


Exterior view of the Mines and Mining Building. (Except as noted, all photographs by C. D. Arnold, courtesy of the Chicago Public Library.)

The World's Columbian Exposition was conceived to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' first voyage across the Atlantic. The desire to celebrate one of the most important events in history with an exposition was motivated in part by the great success of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and the 1889 Paris World's Fair. A bill was introduced in the U.S. Congress in June of 1888, seeking \$5 million in federal funds for the exposition. New York City,

Washington D.C., and Chicago offered proposals to host the fair. Congress was most impressed by Chicago's long list of attributes, and on April 25, 1890, selected that city to host an "International Exposition of Arts, Industries and Manufactures, and products of the soil, mine and sea."

A parcel of more than 600 acres of swamp land was selected for the site. It was six miles south of downtown Chicago on the shore of Lake Michigan. The site included a mile-long, 600-foot-wide strip



In 1893, Chicago had a population of one million people, and was trying very hard to earn a reputation as a leading cultural city. Only twenty-two

Fourteen Great Buildings, called the Court of Honor, surrounded the Great Basin, with the Statue of the Republic at the east end and the Columbian

Fountain at the west end. Among the buildings were Transportation, Mines and Mining, Electricity, Manufacturers and Liberal Arts, Administration, Agriculture, and Machinery. In addition to the fourteen Great Buildings, there were some two hundred additional buildings on the grounds.¹

The Columbian Exposition was the first world's fair at which mining was given a building of its own and placed on an equal footing with agriculture, manufacturing, and other industrial pursuits. In fact, the Mines and Mining Building occupied one of the best locations on the exposition's grounds, in part because mining ranked third in value of production among the industries of the United States in 1893. The Columbian Exposition provided a wonderful opportunity for the mining industry to show the world the state of the art in mineral production. States, foreign countries, mining companies, and mining equipment manufacturers used the exposi-

tion to promote themselves to buyers and investors. For instance, Horace Tabor's Gold and Silver Extraction Company, trying to attract the attention of Midwestern investors, promoted its cyanide process at the Columbian Exposition. The company's process won the "diploma of the first class for the treatment of refractory gold and silver ores."²

The Mines and Mining Building was located at the southern end of the lagoon between the Electricity and Transportation Buildings. The building, in Italian Renaissance style with some French influences, was 700 feet long and 350 feet wide, and cost \$265,000 to build. It had nearly six acres of floor space, and more than one and a half million tons of iron and steel were used in its construction. The Mining Building, like most of the exposition's buildings, was covered with a temporary material called staff. Staff consisted of plaster, cement, and hemp troweled onto wooden lath, and was only intended



Interior view of the Mines and Mining Building.



The Montana Mining Exhibit.

to last for the six-month run of the fair. Almost all of the buildings were white to give a unified, pristine appearance to the grounds, giving rise to the name "the White City."³

The Mines and Mining Building had four entrances, one on each side of the building, leading to the ground floor exhibit area which measured 630 feet by 230 feet. Flights of stairs to the right and left of each entrance led to galleries which were 60 feet wide and 25 feet above the ground. These galleries were lighted by large windows on the sides, and from apertures above. The two main aisles in the building ran north-south and east-west. A central nave at their intersection was sometimes called "Bullion Boulevard." The building contained a total of 227,847 square feet of exhibition space. By instruction of the exposition's director-general, one-half of the space on the ground floor was reserved for foreign countries, with the other half reserved for state

exhibits and for private exhibits of mining machinery. An area outside the building was reserved for well drilling machinery.⁴

The State of Montana hosted one of the most popular exhibits in the Mining Building. Montana had joined the Union only a few years before the Columbian Exposition, and its supporters wanted to show the rest of the nation what a valuable addition it would be. Montana claimed the largest gold mine, the largest silver mine, and the largest copper mine in the country in 1890. In 1892, Montana was second only to Colorado in silver production. The center of attention in the state's exhibit was the silver Statue of Justice, but the Montana exhibit also contained the largest collection of gold nuggets in the Mining Hall— including one weighing forty-eight ounces. The exhibit included fifty tons of specimens from at least twelve counties in Montana. An excellent display of Montana sapphires, rubies, and gar-



Montana's Statue of Justice.

nets attracted great interest. Another curiosity was an old wooden cam used in 1864 at a four-stamp mill on Grasshopper Creek in the Bannock gold district.⁵

The Statue of Justice in the Montana Exhibit was one of the most popular displays in the Mining Building. The statue, fashioned out of native silver from Montana, stood atop a globe which in turn sat on the back of an eagle with its wings extended. In her right hand Justice held a two-edged sword. In her left hand she held scales equally balanced with gold coins on one side and silver coins on the other.

The statue measured nine feet high from the eagle to the top of Justice's head. The lady, globe, and eagle were cast in sterling silver, and sat on a square base more than two feet on a side, made of solid gold. A pile of copper bars stood behind this statue.

The model for the Statue of Justice was the internationally-renowned actress, Ada Rehan, who was chosen by Walter M. Bickford, the executive director of Montana's Board of World's Fair Managers. In selecting Miss Rehan, he said "Out of the 68 measurements that mark the artistic standard of perfect womanhood, 62 of Miss Rehan's measurements con-

form in every way. And in none of the other 6 does she deviate one-quarter of an inch from the standard."

After the fair, the gold base was returned to the woman who had donated it, and the statue, now on a copper base, toured the country for a few years. A legal dispute developed between the two men who owned the silver in the statue in 1896. An agreement was finally reached in 1903 in which Justice was reduced to bullion and the proceeds divided among the contesting parties. Even though Justice's fate was not very glamorous, she did make a big impression on the country. In 1895, the Montgomery Ward catalog sold exact replicas of Justice. A twelve-inch high statue cost \$2.95, a twenty-inch high statue cost \$6.00.⁶

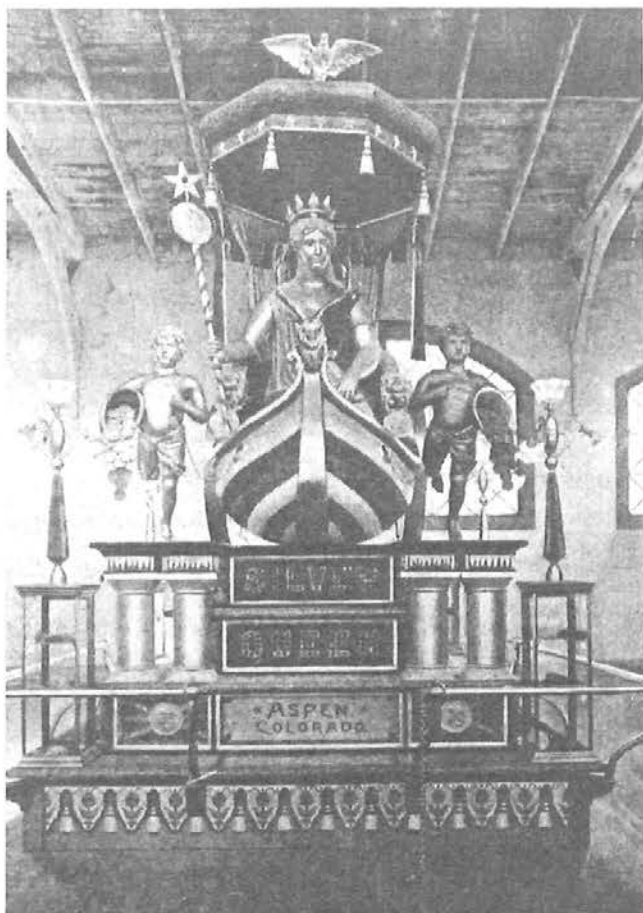
Colorado produced more precious metals than any other state in 1892, and for this reason it was

assigned a place of honor near the south entrance of the Mining Building. The exhibit had columns and pillars made of various building stones and a display of coal measuring eight feet on a side at the base and twenty-four feet in height. Two sides of the exhibit were lined with specimens of ore—including gold and silver-bearing quartz—from various mining districts around the state, including Aspen, Leadville, Gunnison County, Cripple Creek, and Creede. There were wire, nugget, placer and other forms of gold from the Breckenridge District. A large portion of the cabinet display came from the School of Mines in Golden, Colorado. The Colorado exhibit also featured meteorites, coal, iron, and displays on smelting and refining processes.⁷

Colorado had another exhibit in the gallery or mezzanine of the Mining Building. The centerpiece of this exhibit was a statue called the Silver Queen.



The Colorado Mining Exhibit.



The Colorado Silver Queen Statue. (Courtesy of the Aspen Historical Society.)

The figure was made to represent a Colorado girl of 17 years, which was the age of the State of Colorado in 1893. The statue was 10 feet by 12 feet at the base and 18 feet tall from the base to the top of an American eagle perched on the canopy. The composition of the statue is the subject of some historical debate. One story has it being made from a single nugget of silver from the Mollie Gibson mine. Another story claims that the statue was made of zinc and other base metals, rather than silver.

However she assayed, the Colorado Silver Queen was very impressive. She was seated in a chariot, the front of which resembled the prow of an Egyptian barge, with a silver buck's head at the bow. There was a large star on top of the twelve-inch silver dollar on her scepter. Mythical gods of riches stood at either side of the Queen. One god carried a cornucopia overflowing with silver coins, and the other held

one filled with gold coins. A glass case filled with mineral specimens from the Aspen District rested at each corner of the pedestal. The display contained hundreds of miniature lights—within the statue, in the scepter, in the wheels of the chariot, and in the words "Silver Queen."

After the Columbian Exposition, the Silver Queen went on display at the Colorado Mineral Palace in Pueblo, Colorado. After the Palace was torn down in 1942, the statue was supposedly crated to be shipped to Denver, but the trail ends there. No one seems to know what happened to the Silver Queen. In 1976, the Aspen Centennial-Bicentennial committee distributed posters of the Silver Queen and offered a \$5,000 reward for her return to the city of Aspen, but the search never turned up any real clues.⁸

Although still a territory in 1893, Arizona's exhibit in the Mining Building was considered one of the most attractive of the state and territorial exhibits. A series of cabinets contained collections of



Malachite and Azurite from the Copper Queen Mine, Bisbee, Arizona. (Courtesy of the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum.)



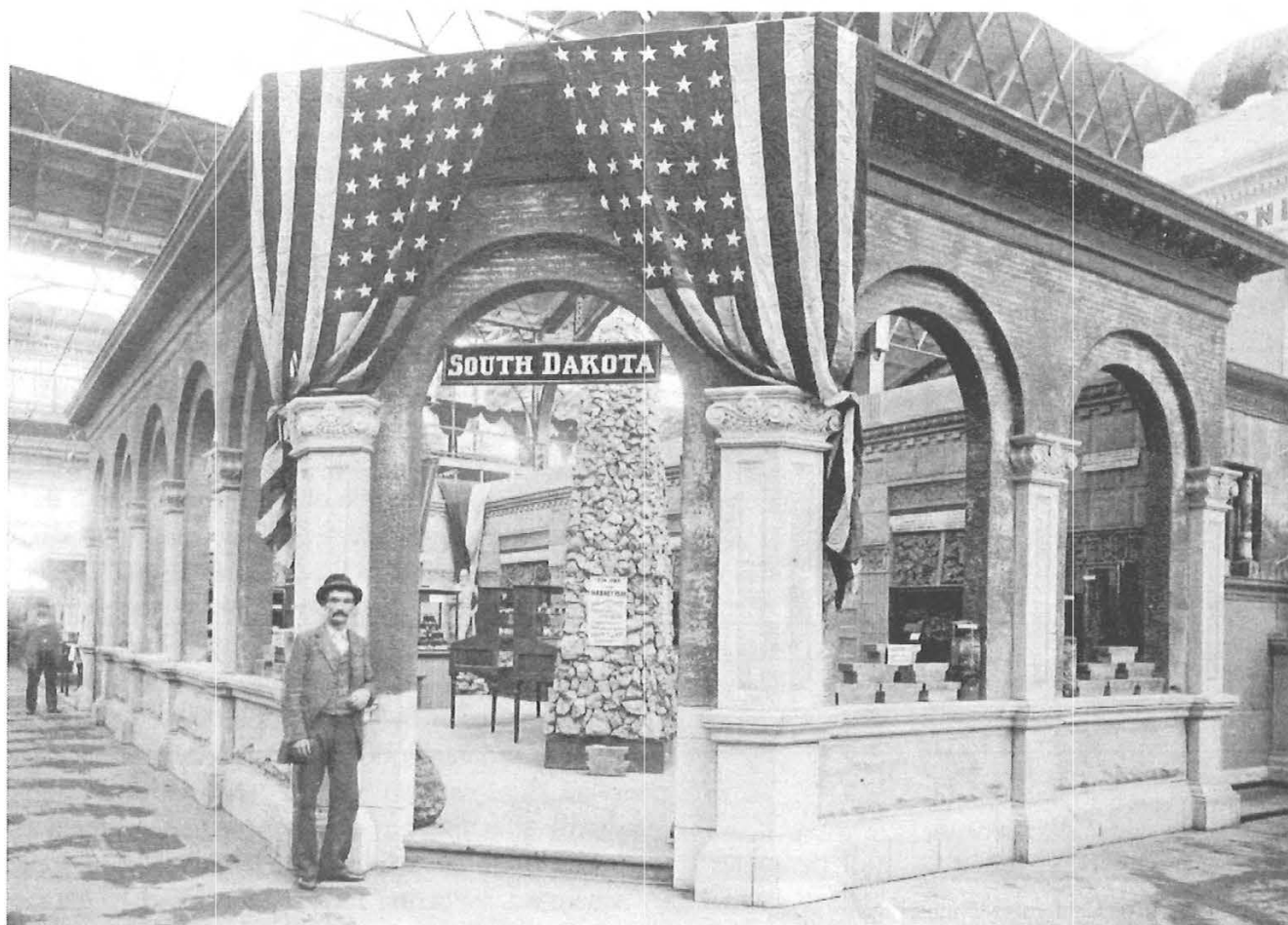
The California Mining Exhibit.

specimens, largely from the territory's copper mines, as well as gold, silver, and lead ores, and gold nuggets. Refined copper was exhibited in bricks, bars, sheets, rolls, plates, and wires. In the center of this exhibit was a three-ton specimen of malachite and azurite from the Copper Queen mine in Bisbee, Arizona. Part of this specimen is presently on display in the mineral hall at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.⁹

Visitors entered the California exhibit through a triple arch, 36 feet in length, with wings on either side. Many types of California building stone were used in the construction of this entrance, from dark granite and white marble to onyx and gray sandstone. Since California was the leading gold producing state in 1892, there were double rows of display cases containing gold and silver ores. The center of interest in the California display was the nugget allegedly picked up by John Marshall from the Coloma millrace in January of 1848. But because of its great value, this specimen was removed from the exhibit shortly after the exposition opened. Also displayed in the California exhibit was a model illustrating the square-set timbering method developed by Phillip



The Idaho Mining Exhibit.



The South Dakota Mining Exhibit.

Deidesheimer for use in the Comstock District of Nevada.¹⁰

Idaho's pavilion, which was colored white and gold, contained samples of gold, silver, and copper ores, as well as cinnabar, building stones, and clays. In the foreground of this photograph is a pile of stembergite, a silver ore which assayed 200 ounces per ton. Every mining district in the state was represented, including the most important silver district in Idaho in 1892, the Coeur d' Alene. Pictures on the walls represented various mining camps throughout the state.¹¹

The South Dakota exhibit bore the inscription "First in gold mining machinery, first in new mines, and second in gold." In keeping with that slogan, it displayed some remarkable specimens of gold ore. Inside the entrance to the exhibit was a structure made of tin ore from Harney Peak in the Black Hills. Also present in the South Dakota exhibit were two

life-sized figures carved in sandstone, a tower of Portland cement from a Yankton manufacturer, and a display of petrified wood.¹²

The Michigan exhibit was located on the northeast side of the center pavilion of the Mining Building in the largest space allotted to any of the state exhibits. Michigan gained this position of honor because of its prominence as a mining state. Visitors to the exhibit entered through a stone arch made of light red and brown sandstone from the Portage Quarries Company. On top of the arch was a bronze statue of two miners and the Goddess Victory. A sandstone fence, courtesy of the Detroit Brownstone Company of L'Anse, Michigan, extended to the left and right of the arch. Pedestals on either side of the arch were made of carved brownstone, topped with a gypsum obelisk.

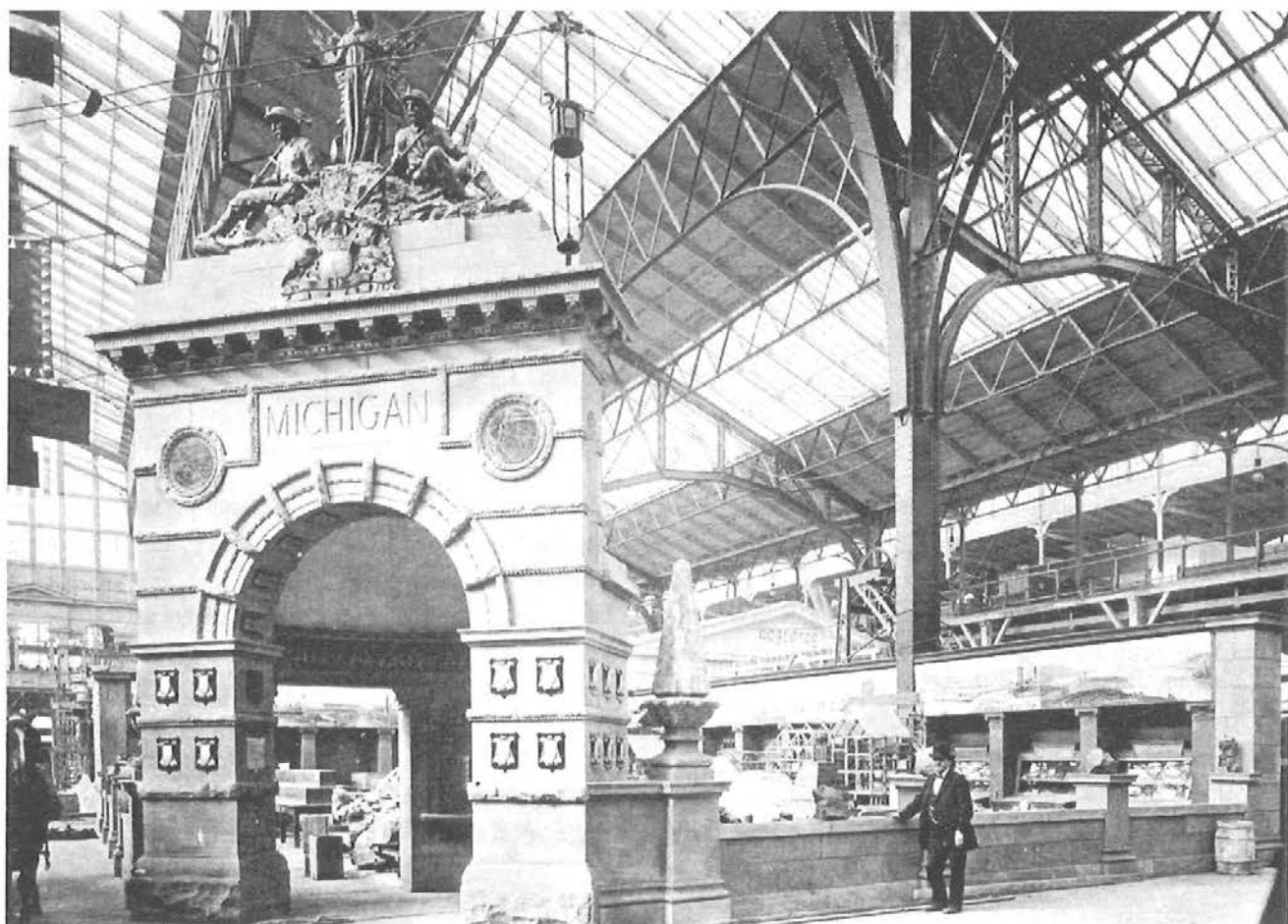
Michigan's mineral display included specimens of iron, gold, and silver ores, and coal, amethyst, and

agate. But copper was the main feature of the Michigan display, presented as native copper, in ingots, bars, sheets, cakes, and wire. The copper ores on display revealed copper in every manner of occurrence, including native copper masses from the Central Mine, as well as a variety of amygdaloids and conglomerates from at least fourteen different mines. There were two masses of native copper on display—one weighed 8,500 pounds and the other 6,200 pounds. Next to the mineral exhibit were models showing the systems of mining, timbering, hoisting, and preliminary crushing used by the Tamarack and the Calumet and Hecla mining companies.¹³

The Canadian exhibit occupied a large space in the Mining Building with an entrance on the main aisle across from the Ohio exhibit. This exhibit included specimens from the Geological and Natural History Survey in Ottawa, and from several provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, Nova

Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Northwest Territories. As a province abounding in mineral wealth, Ontario had the largest exhibit in the Canadian display, with over 1,500 mineral specimens altogether. Of particular interest was an ingot of pure nickel from the Sudbury District weighing 4500 pounds. British Columbia was the gold country of Canada in 1893, and as such it had an extensive gold display, including examples of placer gold from the Caribou, Omenica, and Kootenay districts.

Quebec, with a very productive mining industry in 1893, exhibited an abundance of mineral specimens, featuring asbestos and copper displays, and sheets of mica displayed on the wall—some as large as 30 inches on a side. The central feature of the Nova Scotia exhibit was a gold display showing samples of gold-bearing quartz veins from several parts of the province, but coal was also featured, drawn from the extensive fields of Picton and Cumberland



The Michigan Mining Display.



The Canadian Mining Display.

Counties—and from Cape Breton Island. New Brunswick represented itself with specimens of gypsum, red granite, and other building stones. The Northwest Territories exhibited samples of gold, bituminous and anthracite coal, petroleum, coal tar, clay, and building stones.¹⁴

By the time the Columbian Exposition ended on October 30, 1893, it had hosted about 28 million

visitors. The Columbian Exposition was the first American international exposition to end profitably, with a cash balance of \$446,832. A fire on July 5, 1894 destroyed practically all of the Fair buildings. The only building which remains is the rebuilt Palace of Fine Arts, now the Museum of Science and Industry. Although gone now, the Mines and Mining Building at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 provided the mining industry with a grand stage upon which to enter the twentieth century.¹⁵

Notes

1. Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition* (Washington D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1992), 1-2.
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3. John J. Flinn, *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893), 103. Bolotin & Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition*, 18.
4. "Mining at the Columbian Exposition," *The Engineering and Mining Journal* LV (6 May 1893): 413-6.
5. "Mining at the Columbian Exposition-The Montana State Exhibit," *The Engineering and Mining Journal* LVI (19 Aug. 1893): 187-9. Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, 485-6.
6. Dave Walter, "The Mystery of Hauser's Silver Lady," *The Independent Record Helena*, 23 Oct. 1997. *Montgomery Ward & Co.'s Catalog No. 57* (1895), 202.
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8. Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "The Silver Queen," *Destinations Magazine* (1993): 30-5.
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14. "The Canadian Exhibit at Chicago," *The Engineering and Mining Journal* LVI (16 Dec. 1893): 616-7. Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, 491-2.
15. Constance Gordon, *The World's Columbian Exposition, (Remarkable Papers, 115 Years of Collecting by the Chicago Public Library)*: 31-3.