

## *Preparations For The Centennial Exhibition of 1876*

MOST AMERICANS were aware that the United States would celebrate its first century of independence in 1876 but few had any idea of how to go about it other than by holding a fair or exhibition. Historically, the purpose of many fairs, such as the British Industries Fair held today, was specifically to sell merchandise. Though people in the United States frequently interchange the words "fair" and "exhibition," there is a difference between the two. A fair, such as the Civil War Sanitary Fairs, was primarily an occasion when goods were offered for sale, and an exhibition where they were displayed. The difference is not as minor as it seems, even granting that the goal of the exhibitor who displayed his goods was to sell them ultimately through orders placed at the time of the exhibit.

There were many reasons to have exhibitions, of which the most obvious was to show off, to draw particular attention to the nation exhibiting, to demonstrate its progress.<sup>1</sup> Another purpose was to advance the material interests of the individual exhibitor and allow him to transact business which in the end was good for the nation's economy. Thirdly, the exhibition was a means to enliven competitive instinct by permitting exhibitors to compare products which in turn might stimulate them to readapt their own or to invent a newer or better one.<sup>2</sup> Probably the most recent reason to have an exhibition has been to provide cultural pleasure and instruction. Today exhibitions are more than anything else a powerful means for propaganda.<sup>3</sup>

The industrial exhibition was essentially a modern development, closely connected with the Industrial Revolution and the social, political, and economic changes which it brought about. Though the

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth W. Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions* (London, 1951), 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Monte Calvert, "American Technology at World Fairs, 1851-1876" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1962), 2.

first industrial exhibition appears to have taken place in 1761 in England, this was actually an all-English show. The modern exhibition movement really started in France in 1798, where, though no art was displayed, there were exhibits from many countries. The French continued to have exhibitions every few years, each lasting only a few days.<sup>4</sup>

It was not until 1851 and England's Crystal Palace Exhibition, however, that the great exhibitions we have come to know first took place. The Crystal Palace with its one large building and lack of an art exhibit was followed by New York's abortive attempt in 1853 to copy the English. Next came the Paris Exhibition of 1855 which included a fine arts display but in other ways also tried to copy the Crystal Palace and was, like New York, a financial failure. The year 1862 saw England once again host an exhibition, but it was overshadowed by their first attempt and was not considered a success. The Paris exhibition of 1867 was the first to differ from the 1851 model by laying out the main exhibition building on a grid system so that the exhibits could be arranged by nationality and by subject, and by having several smaller buildings grouped around the main building. The Vienna Exhibition of 1873 expanded upon the Paris plan by using the large and lovely Prater parkland, giving the Exhibition a beautiful setting and a great deal of space for many minor pavilions. Nevertheless, it was not considered a success, mainly because the price for hotels and lodging had been doubled by Viennese innkeepers and the expected heavy foreign visitation had been frightened away by the high cost.<sup>5</sup> The next international exposition was the Centennial of 1876, for all practical purposes the first serious attempt to hold an industrial exhibition in the United States.

As early as December, 1866, Professor John L. Campbell of Wabash College, Indiana, had written to Mayor Morton McMichael of Philadelphia suggesting that an international exhibition be held in Philadelphia to commemorate the centennial.<sup>6</sup> This suggestion

<sup>4</sup> Luckhurst, 63, 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-137; Edward C. Bruce, *The Century: Its Fruits and Its Festival* (Philadelphia, 1877), 43.

<sup>6</sup> S. Edgar Trout, *The Story of the Centennial of 1876* (Lancaster, Pa., 1929), 39. Many people have claimed the honor of first suggesting the idea of a Centennial celebration, including John Bigelow, Gen. Charles B. Norton and Col. M. R. Muckl , but Campbell is generally accepted as the first person who put his request in writing and followed it through.

was discussed by many prominent Philadelphians and on January 20, 1870, resolutions endorsing it were brought before the city's Select Council. The Pennsylvania legislature and the Franklin Institute quickly endorsed the proposals and offered their support, but not everyone thought it was a good idea. The editors of the *Nation* felt that the success of the United States in its first hundred years had not been spectacular, that its civilization was not brilliant, and that the country was not equipped to handle such a large undertaking.<sup>7</sup> Many nationalistic Americans argued that the Centennial should be a private American affair and that Europeans should not be invited, specifically that "monarchs should not be invited to celebrate" the birthday of a republic.<sup>8</sup> This latter argument was denied by proponents of the exhibition who claimed that it would be an excellent way to show how successful a republican way of life was over a monarchy. Similarly, it was felt that since the purpose of our participation in foreign exhibitions had been to publicize our national resources and industries and to show our competence and growth, and, since we had often been handicapped by our inability to ship large exhibits abroad, we would have the best opportunity to show foreign nations our country at its greatest on its own soil. It was also believed that most Americans had very little knowledge of European art, manufacturing, and mechanical pursuits, and that the Centennial celebration would be an excellent opportunity for everyone, especially young school children, to broaden their minds if it included foreign exhibits.<sup>9</sup>

Another battle that flared briefly was over the location of the Centennial. Washington, as the nation's capital, was considered, but was found to be too small and to have too few lodging places for visitors. New York had had its exhibition in 1853 and Boston, despite its historical significance, was considered too small and too inaccessible to most Americans.<sup>10</sup>

Philadelphians thought their city was the logical choice. It was the birthplace of the nation where the Declaration of Independence had been signed, and it had been the seat of the Continental Congress,

<sup>7</sup> *Nation*, XVIII, No. 451 (Feb. 19, 1874), 118-119.

<sup>8</sup> Merle Curti, "America at the World Fairs, 1851-1893," *American Historical Review*, LV (1950), 853.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, editorial, Oct. 1, 1873.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce, 60.

the Constitutional Convention, and the first administrations under the Constitution. It was also the second city of the nation in population and often called the city of homes, claiming that of 140,000 buildings, 130,000 were dwelling houses, thus enabling it to accommodate many visitors. Promoters neglected to say that there were fewer than 5,000 hotel rooms in the city, and that of the 130,000 dwellings very few were boarding houses.<sup>11</sup>

The claim was also advanced that living expenses in Philadelphia were moderate when compared with New York, Boston, Chicago, and St. Louis, and that only Baltimore of the major cities was less expensive.<sup>12</sup> Philadelphians pointed out that their city was a good half-way point between North and South and was easily accessible to foreign visitors.

Philadelphia was not, however, everyone's choice. The *Atlantic Monthly* stated that "the exhibition involves many ideas besides that of a national festival and for the most part ideas of an order peculiarly opposed to the Philadelphia habit of mind. No place of such size has been so consistently adverse to anything new; no large community ever set its face so firmly against innovations and improvements . . . the pride of Philadelphia has been to perpetuate the mistakes of previous generations."<sup>13</sup>

Despite these and other adverse comments, Philadelphia was the logical place to hold the Centennial and, in fact, it was the only city willing to undertake the financial burden. From the beginning the Federal Government was not overly receptive to the idea of an international exhibition. Unlike European nations whose expositions were largely financed and sponsored by their respective host governments, the United States government had no intention of playing such a role. Many members of Congress, led by western senators and congressmen, failed to see any value in exhibitions, and a few, specifically Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, bitterly opposed the idea. Had it not been for Sumner's death in 1874, his continued opposition might have proved fatal to the Centennial.<sup>14</sup> Only the incessant pleas of senators and congressmen from the northeast,

<sup>11</sup> James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia, 1876), 27.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>13</sup> *Atlantic Monthly*, XXXVIII (July, 1876), 85.

<sup>14</sup> Calvert, 150, 179.

Middle Atlantic, and some southern states, who believed that exports grew as a result of participation in exhibitions, had enabled our participation in foreign expositions.<sup>15</sup> Philadelphia boosters argued that the Centennial would be a tremendous stimulus to trade and that American exports would multiply just as England's had soared since 1851.<sup>16</sup>

At all events, Philadelphians were determined to have the exhibition in their city regardless of congressional attitudes. Shortly after the Select Council of Philadelphia resolved in favor of the event, the Franklin Institute asked the municipal authorities to grant the use of a portion of Fairmount Park, the fourth largest park in the world, and the largest in the United States covering nearly 3,000 acres, for the purpose of the celebration. The city responded by providing 450 acres in the section of Fairmount Park known as West Park.<sup>17</sup>

In early March, 1870, Congressman Daniel J. Morrell of Pennsylvania presented a bill in the United States House of Representatives to provide for the exhibition. Though still worried that it might ultimately be asked to finance the Centennial, Congress finally passed the bill, several times amended, in March, 1871, providing for the selection by the President of the United States of a commissioner and alternate from each state and territory of the Union. Philadelphia was officially named the site for the Centennial, and it was carefully noted that the United States Government would not be liable for any expenses incurred.<sup>18</sup>

Critics immediately pounced upon the idea of commissioners nominated by the governors of their states and automatically passed on by President Grant, accusing most of them of being nothing more than political hacks with no knowledge of how to plan an exhibition successfully. Instead of businessmen, industrialists, and architects being appointed to develop the Centennial, it was charged that politicians were in command. Many feared that ultimately someone like Daniel Drew or Jay Gould would emerge from the background to manipulate control.<sup>19</sup> It was a discouraging possibility

<sup>15</sup> Curti, 833.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Trout, 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Nation*, XVIII, No. 458 (Apr. 9, 1874), 238.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII, No. 451 (Feb. 19, 1874), 118-119.

in which most of the nation believed and it led to a general feeling of distrust on the part of the citizenry for the next few years.

On March 4, 1872, the chosen commissioners and alternates assembled in Philadelphia where a permanent organization was created and General Joseph Hawley of Connecticut was elected President.<sup>20</sup> Professor Campbell, who had first suggested the idea of the Centennial, was chosen Secretary, and Alfred T. Goshorn of Ohio, Director-General.<sup>21</sup>

Pennsylvania was represented on the Centennial Commission by Daniel Morrell and Asa Packer, Delaware by John K. Kane and John H. Rodney, and New Jersey by Orestes Cleveland and John G. Stevens. Notable among other representatives was George Corliss of Rhode Island, whose massive steam engine was to dominate the opening ceremonies and to be the center of attraction in Machinery Hall.

From its inception, however, it was realized that the idea of placing the United States Centennial Commissioners in charge of the exhibition was unwieldy. For many of them traveling distances were often great and expensive, and thus it was very difficult for all the Commissioners to meet in Philadelphia at one time. In order to transact much of the business they would be required to spend a good deal of their time there and away from the people they represented.<sup>22</sup> This, most of them were unwilling or unable to do. (The Commissioners actually met in only nine sessions from March, 1872,

<sup>20</sup> Hawley, the son of a Congregationalist minister, had been a lawyer and editor of the *Hartford Evening Press* before the Civil War, emerging from the war a major general of volunteers. An active Republican, he was elected governor of Connecticut in 1866, and in 1867 became editor of the *Hartford Courant* with which the *Evening Press* had merged. He gained popularity in 1871 after a series of arguments with his former commander, Benjamin Butler, who was running for office in Massachusetts. Following the Centennial Exhibition, Hawley served three terms in the House of Representatives and was elected to the Senate in 1881, where he remained until two weeks before his death in 1905. He does not appear to have brought any strong qualifications to the job of President of the Centennial Commission and has been accused of being responsible for the closing of the Exhibition on Sundays, supposedly due to his strong religious upbringing. Ralph H. Gabriel, *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1932), VIII, 421-422.

<sup>21</sup> Goshorn, one of the most experienced men connected with the Centennial, had been a lawyer and later an owner of extensive white lead works in his native Cincinnati. From 1869 to 1872 he headed the very successful Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, and had made a careful study of other industrial exhibitions, traveling to Paris in 1867 and Vienna in 1873 to view their expositions. Trout, 201; *Cyclopaedia of American Biographies* (Boston, 1900), III, 338.

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1874.

to January, 1879.) Most of the responsibilities of the Commission were, therefore, carried out by the Executive Committee made up of thirteen members and led by Hawley and Goshorn, both of whom ultimately moved to Philadelphia to be closer to their work.<sup>23</sup>

Realizing that some means of raising funds was necessary, Congress adopted a bill, signed by President Grant on June 1, 1872, creating a Centennial Board of Finance, which was authorized to issue stock in shares of ten dollars each, with the entire amount issued not to exceed \$10,000,000 (the cost of the Vienna Exhibition). Each state and territory was allocated a quota of stock subscriptions to be sold according to the size of its population. A meeting was held in Philadelphia in April, 1873, at which time each stockholder was allowed to cast one proxy per share of stock owned to elect twenty-five stockholders as directors of the Centennial Board of Finance. Nearly every state and territory sent two representatives to vote, while Philadelphia, where most of the early stock had been sold and where most would continue to be sold, put forward fifteen candidates, all of whom were elected to the Board along with ten other stockholders, including two from elsewhere in Pennsylvania.<sup>24</sup> John Welsh of Philadelphia was elected President along with William Sellers of Philadelphia and John S. Barbour of Virginia as Vice-Presidents.<sup>25</sup> By electing most of its members from Philadelphia the Board of

<sup>23</sup> United States Centennial Commission Papers (Record Group 230), Archives of the City of Philadelphia.

<sup>24</sup> Centennial Board of Finance Minutes (Record Group 231), Archives of the City of Philadelphia.

<sup>25</sup> Welsh was eminently qualified to be President of the Board of Finance. A native of Philadelphia, he was active in his family's West Indian trade which mainly involved sugar, and was a member of the Select Council from 1855 to 1857. He was also a member and chairman of Philadelphia's Sinking Fund Commission from 1857 to 1871, and was a prime mover in the development of Fairmount Park, which he served for nearly twenty years as a member of the Fairmount Park Commission. In addition, he served as President of the North Pennsylvania Railroad, and was President of the Philadelphia Board of Trade for fifteen years. In 1864 Welsh had organized the highly successful Great Central Sanitary Fair held for the benefit of war charities in Philadelphia. A man apparently above reproach, he brought his experience in business and trade along with his management of the 1864 Fair to the position of President of the Board of Finance. Much of the ultimate success of the Centennial was credited to him, and in appreciation \$50,000 was raised and given, through him, to the University of Pennsylvania, where he was a trustee, to establish the John Welsh Centennial Professorship of History and English Literature. In 1877 President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed Welsh minister to the Court of St. James, where he remained for two years. Roy F. Nichols, *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIX, 647; J. T. Scharf & Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1884), I, 842.

Finance not only gave weighted representation to the area from which most of its revenue would come, but also, aware of the difficulties the Centennial Commissioners were having in holding regular meetings, insured that a quorum would always be present to carry on business. Among the prominent Philadelphians on the board, along with Welsh and Sellers, were Thomas Cochran, Clement Biddle, N. Parker Shortridge, Edward T. Steel, J. Vaughan Merrick, John Wanamaker, and John Price Wetherill. The heavy preponderance of Pennsylvanians on the Board created an unfortunate situation in the coming months when it was realized that most of the states were not represented and sales of stock in those areas consequently lagged far behind. It was then explained that many people from the Mid- and Far West did not know or trust the men selling stock certificates. Raising enough money through the sale of stock was, of course, the objective of the Board of Finance. If it did not succeed, the Centennial could not take place. In order to gain the trust of many Americans and stimulate the sale of stock subscriptions outside of Philadelphia, a Bureau of Revenue was created as a special subdivision under the Board of Finance. Committees on Subscriptions were set up for Philadelphia and New York, Boston and the eastern states, New Jersey and Delaware, the southern states, and the western and Pacific states. Each of these regional committees had smaller local committees attempting to sell stock in each state and territory.<sup>26</sup>

The job of the Board of Finance was not easy. The unfortunate scandals connected with the Grant administration were coming to light, and many feared the Centennial stock would be worthless or would be manipulated by dishonest governmental officials. The panic of 1873 further darkened the prospects of sales.<sup>27</sup> And, although the United States government had recognized the existence of the Centennial, it had not encouraged the nation to support it; in fact, its position was that it would have nothing to do with the financing or insuring of the Exhibition. For these reasons many people felt that the endeavor was a gamble at best; millions of others failed to take the celebration seriously.<sup>28</sup> Though the Centennial was to show

<sup>26</sup> Centennial Board of Finance Minutes, Apr. 22, 1873, to Dec. 12, 1874.

<sup>27</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1874, Mar. 5, 1874.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1874.





JOHN WELSH

*(Frank Leslie's Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition 1876)*



PAYING OFF WORKMEN

*(Frank Leslie's Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition 1876)*

the great progress made in this country from 1776 to 1876, the *New York Times* suggested that it also feature portraits of the members of the Continental Congress in 1776 and of the U. S. Congress in 1876 to show how corruption now ruled and how congressional morality had declined.<sup>29</sup>

To indicate its commitment to the Centennial and to encourage others, the City Councils of Philadelphia appropriated \$500,000 on February 7, 1873, to aid the Exhibition.<sup>30</sup> Mass meetings were held throughout the city and merchants, mechanics, and manufacturers were encouraged to buy stock. A Citizens' Centennial Trade Committee presided over by John Wanamaker was formed in March, 1874, and subsequently reported that the coal trade had pledged \$25,000.<sup>31</sup> Announcements of the sale of stock subscriptions to the street railway systems, the Pennsylvania Railroad, lumber companies, printers, publishers, rolling mills (the Phoenix Iron Co. bought \$4,000 worth of stock, Clark Reeves and Co. \$1,000, Cambria Iron Co., \$5,000, among others), flour mills, and fraternal societies, such as the Improved Order of Red Men, were greeted with publicity and praise.<sup>32</sup> But despite the \$1,000,000 the State of Pennsylvania had appropriated for the building of a Memorial Hall to be a permanent structure on the grounds, and the \$500,000 the city of Philadelphia had donated, along with the estimated \$1,500,000 raised through the sale of stock subscriptions, mainly in Pennsylvania, the Board of Finance was nowhere near the \$10,000,000 it needed to insure the opening of the great event.<sup>33</sup>

Hawley, President of the Centennial Commission, repeatedly asked Congress for aid, arguing that the Centennial would bring the Nation together for the first time since the Civil War. He was turned down each time. This plea for unity eventually did catch on and became a popular idea nationally. In early 1874, President Grant showed his support by sending Congress a message, along with the Centennial Commission report, encouraging congressmen to support the Exhibition. He felt strongly that the failure of the United States

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 25, 1872.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 7, 1873.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 1874.

<sup>32</sup> Centennial Board of Finance Minutes, Apr. 22, 1873, to Dec. 12, 1874.

<sup>33</sup> *New York Times*, Mar. 9, 1874.

to celebrate properly its one hundredth anniversary would be a disgrace and that the only way to arouse public opinion throughout the country in favor of the Centennial would be to have Congress act and lend its complete support.<sup>34</sup> Congress, however, refused to do anything.

Though raising enough money to finance the Exhibition was of vital importance, other aspects of the celebration also had to be carried out in order for it to be a success, especially important was foreign participation. As early as July 4, 1873, at the official ceremony transferring that portion of Fairmount Park chosen for the Exhibition to the Centennial Commission, the Governor of Pennsylvania officially notified President Grant that enough money had been raised to begin erecting suitable buildings. This was said even though less than \$3,000,000 had been raised of the estimated \$10,000,000 needed.<sup>35</sup> With this information in hand President Grant asked Secretary of State Hamilton Fish to notify representatives of foreign governments of the time, place, and purpose of the Centennial. For the first time an international exhibition would commemorate a significant historic date as well as display a nation's arts and industry. Fish, however, appears to have had reservations about the Centennial and, unfortunately, conveyed these feelings to foreign representatives. He made it quite clear that the Centennial was a private undertaking and that, unlike national European expositions, the United States would not be responsible for finances.<sup>36</sup> Despite his insistence that the United States Government was not issuing an invitation but simply notifying them of a private venture, a few countries quickly accepted the "United States' invitation."<sup>37</sup>

Realizing the confusion created by Fish's announcement, Congress officially passed a bill in June, 1874, requesting the President to invite foreign nations to "take part in the International Exposition to be held at Philadelphia, under the auspices of the government of the United States . . ." Though the bill went on to refuse any liability on the part of the Federal Government for any expenses incurred as a result of the Centennial, it still remained a direct invita-

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1874.

<sup>35</sup> *Nation*, XVIII, No. 458 (Apr. 9, 1874), 235; *New York Times*, July 5, 1873.

<sup>36</sup> Calvert, 151.

<sup>37</sup> *New York Times*, Mar. 9, 1874.

tion from the United States Government and was accepted as such by foreign nations.<sup>38</sup> In order to encourage foreign exhibitors to bring as many exhibits as they desired, Congress also approved a bill in June, 1874, admitting, free of duty, articles intended for the Centennial. If the articles brought in were sold, either during or after the celebration, they would then be subject to the same duties as if they were being imported for regular trade.<sup>39</sup>

The next major task facing the Commissioners concerned the actual physical form the Centennial would take. The Committee on "Plans and Architecture" with Director-General Alfred Goshorn as Chairman, issued invitations in April, 1873, to architects to submit plans for a main exhibition building and an art gallery. As of 1873 the Committee appears to have been thinking along the same lines that had shaped prior exhibitions, that is to have one large building housing most of the exhibits and a few smaller buildings containing specialized collections, such as art. The Committee had learned from studies and visits to European expositions a few things that it wished to apply in Philadelphia. It stressed to the architects that it wanted most if not all of the exhibits on the ground floor with vertical and side lighting wherever possible, and ample and convenient access to the buildings so that goods could be rapidly and conveniently delivered and removed. Above all, the practicality of the plan, to offer the maximum accommodation at the least cost to both exhibitors and visitors, was to be more important than the architectural effects alone.<sup>40</sup>

One hundred and seventy-three architectural firms applied for information and received details from the Committee, but of this number only forty-three architects submitted sketches. This led to complaints that only one or two of the nation's best architects had competed and that because of the "overbearing" attitude of representatives of the Committee on Plans when in Boston and New York, no Boston architects had submitted drawings, and only one had come from New York.<sup>41</sup> Of the designs entered, most featured one large building, not much different from previous exposition

<sup>38</sup> Trout, 59.

<sup>39</sup> *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1874.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 1873.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 30, 1873.

structures. Of the forty-three designs submitted, ten, including seven by Philadelphia architectural firms, were chosen as finalists.<sup>42</sup> These ten were asked to resubmit their drawings, revised in light of new specifications. The Pavilion Plan, submitted by Calvin Vaux and George Radford of New York, was ultimately selected along with the design for a Memorial Hall by Collins and Autenreith of Philadelphia, and sent to the Executive Committee of the Centennial Commission for final approval. On November 6, 1873, the Executive Committee decided, after a lengthy session, that none of the plans could be accepted because of their large estimated costs and the undue amount of time needed for completion.<sup>43</sup> Instead, the Executive Committee chose Collins and Autenreith to prepare, under the guidance of the Auditor General of the Commission and representatives of the State Supervisors, City Council, and Board of Finance, a new plan which would enable Memorial Hall to be built less expensively, and to be finished in time for the scheduled opening.<sup>44</sup> After continuing dissension about the cost, H. J. Schwarzmann, a young engineer and architect who would ultimately aid in the construction of nearly two hundred Centennial buildings in his position as Architect-in-Chief, was asked to redesign Memorial Hall. On July 4, 1874, amid auspicious ceremonies, ground was broken for this building, and it was finally completed on March 1, 1876.<sup>45</sup>

Vaux and Radford, the New York architects, were asked to modify their original plan of a series of connected pavilions constructed of iron and glass that would make up the main building, but they had difficulty cutting costs to the satisfaction of the Committee, and their plans were handed over to Henry Pettit, a consulting engineer of the Centennial Commission who, with his partner Joseph Wilson, utilized many of their ideas, managing to keep costs down.<sup>46</sup> Work

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 19, 1873.

<sup>43</sup> It was estimated that Memorial Hall would cost between \$4,000,000 and \$5,000,000. *Ibid.*, Jan. 12, 1875.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1873.

<sup>45</sup> Trout, 90. R. J. Dobbins was the contractor for Memorial Hall. The iron work was furnished by the Edgemoor Iron Company of Wilmington, Delaware, the Pencoyd Rolling Mills, and the Kittredge Cornice Company. Shortly after work began on the building it was found that applications from exhibitors for space to be used as the Centennial Art Gallery were so numerous that an annex had to be built to the north of the gallery. *Ibid.*; Frank Norton, ed., *Frank Leslie's Historical Register of the United States Centennial Exposition, 1876* (New York 1877), 109.

<sup>46</sup> *New York Times*, Jan. 12, 1875. R. J. Dobbins was the contractor.

began on the building (located immediately east of the intersection of Elm and Belmont Avenues, running east to west, parallel with Elm Avenue) May 8, 1875, and was completed on February 14, 1876, at which time it was said to be the largest building in the world, occupying 21.27 acres. It was also claimed that more than half the population of Philadelphia could gather inside it at one time.<sup>47</sup> Construction of Machinery Hall, the second largest building on the grounds, started in late January, 1875, and was completed by October 1 of that year. This structure was situated next to the Main Building, parallel to Elm Avenue. Once again, Pettit and Wilson were the designers, this time using Philip Quigley of Wilmington, Delaware, as contractor.<sup>48</sup>

The smallest of the five principal buildings of the Exhibition was Horticultural Hall, built on the Lansdowne terrace a short distance north of the Main Building and, along with Memorial Hall, one of the two buildings intended to be permanent. Financed by appropriations from the City Council, designed by Schwarzmann, and built by John Rice of Philadelphia, ground for this building was broken on May 1, 1875, and it was completed April 1, 1876.<sup>49</sup> Agricultural Hall was the last of the main buildings to be erected. Designed by James H. Windrim and built by Quigley, who used only wood and glass in its construction, Agricultural Hall was the least expensive of all the major edifices.<sup>50</sup>

Fortunately for the Centennial planners, the fall and winter of 1875-1876 were mild and, except for a severe wind storm that blew down much of the framework of Architectural Hall in October, 1875, injuring several workmen, a great deal of work was accomplished both on the buildings and grounds before the opening of the Exhibition.<sup>51</sup> Several states appropriated money for small state pavilions to serve as meeting rooms and rest places for visitors from their states. Similarly, many foreign countries erected buildings to illustrate their

<sup>47</sup> Thompson Westcott, *Centennial Portfolio* (Philadelphia, 1876), 2. The population of Philadelphia, Apr. 1, 1876, was 817,448. McCabe, 23.

<sup>48</sup> Pusey, Jones & Co. of Wilmington supplied all of the wrought and cast iron work used in the building. Trout, 96.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-103. Memorial Hall still stands, but Horticultural Hall, damaged by a hurricane in 1954, was taken down the next year.

<sup>50</sup> Westcott, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Scientific American*, Supplement, I, No. 9 (Feb. 26, 1876), 130; *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 1875; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Oct. 13, 1875.

particular way of life. These ranged from the complex of British Government Buildings to the small Japanese dwelling constructed, to the amazement and amusement of large crowds of Philadelphians, without nails by workmen who were sent from Japan with all the materials needed to build it and the Japanese Bazaar.<sup>52</sup> Along with the state and foreign buildings, restaurants, and service bureaus set up by the Centennial Commission, there were also business and industrial buildings, such as the Shoe and Leather Building, Butter and Cheese Factory, and the Brewers' Building among many others.

Realizing that it should be represented at the Centennial, especially in view of the many foreign nations participating, Congress finally appropriated \$500,000 on March 3, 1875, to construct a United States Government Building with displays that were to show some of the functions of the government in peace and war. The Departments of War, Navy, Interior, and Post Office, along with the Smithsonian Institution and the Agricultural Bureau, were to help with the exhibit.<sup>53</sup>

With much of the construction underway and foreign acceptances arriving in increasing number, the last major problem facing the Centennial (aside from its always present financial worries) concerned lodgings. The city, eager to improve its image and encourage visitors to come to Philadelphia, had begun a massive house cleaning early in the 1870's. In order to facilitate access to the Exhibition grounds it erected bridges over the Schuylkill River at Callowhill Street and at Girard Avenue at a cost of more than \$2,500,000.<sup>54</sup> Street car service was expanded and residents were repeatedly asked to open their houses to boarders and friends and relatives during the Centennial.<sup>55</sup> Unlike New York, Philadelphia was not a city of hotels. Though five hotels with a total accommodation of perhaps 2,500 called themselves "first class," it was argued that only the Continen-

<sup>52</sup> Westcott, 22, 50; *Scientific American*, Supplement, I, No. 18 (Apr. 29, 1876), 280.

<sup>53</sup> Westcott, 6.

<sup>54</sup> McCabe, 136.

<sup>55</sup> Practice runs were made by railroad and streetcar services on July 5, 1875, to see how well they performed with great loads. It was estimated that 133,809 persons, most of them children of school age, were brought to the grounds, 25,309 by train service and 108,500 by streetcars. Still many thousands were compelled to walk. As a result of this experience it was decided to add more cars, and run them more often in preparation to carry 250,000 people daily. *Nation*, XXI, No. 546 (Dec. 16, 1875), 385.



tal Hotel at Chestnut and 9th Streets truly deserved this distinction, and it, when enlarged, could accommodate only a thousand guests.<sup>56</sup> Most of the so-called first class hotels were in the center of Philadelphia and planned to charge \$5 a day for a room. It was clear to the Commissioners that something had to be done about the working-class visitor who would come with his family and could not afford to pay very much. The boarding houses of the city would have to be used as they had in London in 1851 for the Crystal Palace exposition, but this would still not take care of the great crowds that were anticipated.<sup>57</sup>

Colonel Thomas Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad is generally credited with originating the idea of building large, temporary hotels close to the Centennial grounds that could be torn down as soon as the Exhibition was over. At the same time, plans were discussed with the International Hotel Company, made up of railroad and hotel officials, to build three city blocks of houses to be used by the exhibitors and their assistants during their stay at the Exhibition and to be converted into housing when the Centennial ended.<sup>58</sup> Other ideas included building "dwelling house" hotels which were composed of one or more rows of houses built on inexpensive land that would be undesirable for a hotel, and designed to be sold or leased as dwellings after the exposition. Families could rent an entire house during their visit, or individuals could rent a single room. Visitors would have the choice of cooking their own meals or eating in the central dining room built for the dwelling-house hotel guests.<sup>59</sup> Three establishments of this type were built: the Grand Union in northern Philadelphia near the crossing of the Pennsylvania and Germantown Railroads consisted of 90 separate houses in three rows containing a total of 850 rooms; the United States, built by R. J. Dobbins near the entrance to the Exhibition grounds, composed of two long rows of three-story brick houses with a total of 300 rooms; and the Aubrey, built on Walnut Street between 33rd and 34th Streets, and made up of 26 houses in a row to accommodate 400 guests. It was the intent of the

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1875, May 8, 1875.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1874.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1875.

<sup>59</sup> *New York Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1875.

builders to convert them with a minimum of effort and expense into dwelling houses once the celebration was over.<sup>60</sup>

The two temporary hotels built near the Exhibition grounds included the Globe Hotel, which stood opposite the entrance to the Centennial, and the Transcontinental Hotel. The Globe had nearly 1,000 rooms to accommodate between 3,000 to 5,000 guests daily, and planned to serve 2,000 persons at a time in its dining rooms. The Transcontinental, owned by the proprietors of the Continental Hotel in center Philadelphia, had 560 rooms and was situated on Elm and Belmont Avenues across from the entrances to the Exhibition.<sup>61</sup>

In order to solve the many lodging problems that still existed, the Centennial Boarding House Agency was formed to care for the large number of out-of-town visitors who wanted cheap rooms. It was decided to place coupon tickets for boarding accommodations on sale in various parts of the country. The purchaser would be met either on the train or when he arrived in Philadelphia by a messenger for the agency who would give him a card with the address of his lodging and directions on how to find it. He would present the owner of the boarding house with his coupon and she, in turn, would be reimbursed for it by the Centennial Boarding House Agency.<sup>62</sup> It was hoped that this method would not only allow 20,000 to 30,000 people to find rooms in boarding houses more easily, but that it would also prevent proprietors from charging exorbitant prices and chasing away visitors, as had happened in Vienna. The total number of persons expected to be housed at any one time in Philadelphia, including accommodations in hotels, dwelling-house hotels, boarding houses, campgrounds, and by friends and relatives in private homes, was expected to be about 125,000.<sup>63</sup>

It was also thought that many visitors would choose to stay in New York City and commute to the Centennial. At a meeting of General Railroad Ticket Agents in Louisville, Kentucky, in February 1876, the Committee on Centennial rates recommended that charges for travelers to the Exhibition be lowered by as much as twenty-five

<sup>60</sup> *Scientific American*, Supplement, I, No. 4 (Jan. 22, 1876), 50; *New York Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1875; *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1875.

<sup>61</sup> *Scientific American*, Supplement, I, No. 4, (Jan. 22, 1876), 50.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 5 (Jan. 29, 1876), 70; *New York Times*, May 5, 1876.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

per cent from conventional rates from certain parts of the country.<sup>64</sup> Various types of round-trip tickets were also offered from New York to Philadelphia for as little as two dollars. In addition, the Pennsylvania Railroad added more cars on this run and laid a special spur line into the Centennial depot, which it had built at the entrance to the Exhibition grounds. Other railroad companies were encouraged to connect with the Pennsylvania's Centennial track and deliver their passengers directly to the Exhibition gates.<sup>65</sup>

Everything seemed to be in readiness, but financial problems persisted. It was estimated in early 1876 that the Centennial would need about \$1,500,000 to insure a successful opening. Pressure was exerted on Congress not only by the Centennial Commissioners but by newspapers and magazines across the country. All agreed that the Centennial had gone too far to allow it to collapse because of the lack of government aid. The *Nation*, which had once supported Congress' refusals to give aid, claiming that the lack of government help "suppressed extravagance and sharpened the wits of the managers,"<sup>66</sup> now called for a congressional appropriation saying, "Those who have it in charge have shown by unmistakable evidence of every kind that they know how to plan and work. A cursory glance at the grounds and buildings ought to convince the most skeptical that the managers have labored with great wisdom and economy, making every dollar yield its full return."<sup>67</sup> Many felt the very reputation of the country was at stake.

On January 25, 1876, the House passed the Centennial Appropriations Bill, by a vote of 146 to 130, amending it to make it a loan and not a contribution. Opposition to the bill came mainly from Democrats who were naturally opposing much in Grant's Republican Administration, and from southern and a few western states. Less opposition was found in the Senate where the bill passed 41 to 15, loaning \$1,500,000 to the Board of Finance.<sup>68</sup>

It rained May 9, 1876, the day before the official opening of the Centennial, and the rain continued into Wednesday, May 10. But

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 10, 1876.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Nation*, XXI, No. 546 (Jan. 27, 1876), 386-387.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1876; *Nation*, XXII, No. 554 (Feb. 17, 1876), 105.

despite the weather crowds poured into Philadelphia and residents of the city hung out their flags and bunting to welcome them. By early morning, as the rain stopped and the sun broke through, large numbers of people began converging on the Exhibition grounds.<sup>69</sup> Though the Centennial was farther along by opening day than any previous exhibition had been, workmen still labored up to the last moment, setting up exhibits that were late in arriving.<sup>70</sup> It was estimated that more than 150,000 people flowed through the turnstiles at the several entrances to the grounds to witness the opening ceremonies held between Main Building and Memorial Hall. After some hymns and speeches, President Grant, with members of Congress, governors, ministers of foreign countries and Centennial Commissioners seated around him, officially proclaimed the opening of the International Exhibition of 1876. Following this the procession of dignitaries passed through Main Building into Machinery Hall where Grant and Emperor Don Pedro of Brazil, the second crowned head of a nation ever to visit the United States, turned a screw in the mammoth Corliss steam engine, which in turn generated power for the rest of Machinery Hall, setting in motion nearly fourteen acres of machinery.<sup>71</sup>

The Centennial would close seven months later on November 10, 1876, a resounding success.

*The Hagley Museum*

FAITH K. PIZOR

<sup>69</sup> McCabe, 271.

<sup>70</sup> *Nation*, XXII, No. 568 (May 18, 1876), 313.

<sup>71</sup> McCabe, 275-295. The only other crowned head of a country to visit the United States up to this time was Kalakaua, King of the Sandwich Islands. Trout, 43.