MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS
St. Louis 1904 World’s Fair Photograph Books

Abstract: Two books of published photographs of the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

Extent: 2 volumes

Physical Description: Paper

Location: Missouri State Archives; Stacks

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Alternative Formats: The Forest City is available online as a PDF

Access Restrictions: Fragile; handle with care

Publication Restrictions: None

Preferred Citation: Stevens, Walter B. The World’s Fair: Comprising the Official Photographic Views of the Universal Exposition Held in Saint Louis, 1904 Art Edition c1904; Record Group 998.193; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

or

Stevens, Walter B. The Forest City: Comprising the Official Photographic Views of the Universal Exposition Held in Saint Louis, 1904 Art Edition c1904; Record Group 998.193; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

Acquisition Information: Gift; Accession #1992-0116

Processing Information: Processing and notes begun by LJ. Completed by EW on 03/28/2017.
HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Preparation for the St. Louis World’s Fair began in January 1899 when St. Louis was chosen as the next city after Chicago to host a world’s fair. Former Governor David R. Francis was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee planning the fair. Other Committee members from Missouri were John Perry (Kansas City), E.W. Stephens (Columbia), and Howard Elliott (St. Louis). Soon Walter B. Stevens would become Secretary and his name appears on many of the St. Louis World’s Fair – aka Louisiana Purchase Exposition – documents.

The theme of the Fair was to be the 100th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase and a goal of Winter 1903 was set for the opening. Eventually the opening was shifted to April 1904. The Fair remained open until December 1, 1904.

George Kessler was the Fair’s primary designer and the plan he came up with required approximately 1,200 acres of land and water in the area that would later become Forest Park and Washington University in St. Louis. Architects included Isaac S. Taylor, Emmanuel Louis Masqueray, Paul J. Pelz, and many others.

Participants from all over the country and the world were recruited to design and build exhibits and buildings representing their native lands and cultures. Forty-three (of 45) states built exhibit space as well as 50 countries. Native peoples from across the world were brought to St. Louis where they would be required to appear in their native clothing and accouterments for the attendees to observe. Photographs of these native groups make up the bulk of the images in this manuscript. William H. Rau was the official photographer for the Fair and he is likely the individual who took the photographs featured in this book.

Overall, almost 20 million people attended the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Related Collections

MS105 St. Louis 1904 World’s Fair Photograph Book
MS249 Beauty of the World’s Fair and St. Louis 1904 Photograph Booklet
MS270 The Universal Exposition Book
MS279 George Kessler Papers
MS305 Meet Me At the Fair
MS393 Early Photo Album
MS398 Missouri Postcard Collection
MS423 Tim Williams Collection
MS435 Souvenir Postcards of St. Louis
RG550 General Assembly

Available in the Archives’ Reference Book Collection:


Hanson, John Wesley. The Official History of the Fair, St. Louis, 1904: The Sights and Scenes of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. 1904. Call #R 917.78 H1986.


Additional External Resources

Boone County Historical Society’s postcard collection of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition / World’s Fair is online through Missouri Digital Heritage: http://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/bchspstcrds.

The Library of Congress has nearly 1,000 photographs and other records on the World’s Fair: https://www.loc.gov/.

The Missouri History Museum in St. Louis has extensive collections devoted solely or partly to the World’s Fair. In particular, see collection #A0934 Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company Records, 1898-1925 and #A0816 George E. Kessler Papers, 1886-1923. [NOTE: The Archives has the Kessler papers on microfilm, manuscript collection MS279.] They have also digitized both volumes of David R. Francis’s The Universal Exposition of 1904 and placed them on Missouri Digital Heritage: http://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/expo.

The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia has many collections involving the Exposition. In particular, see collections #C0806, #C4123, #P0093, #C0051, #C1228, #S0085 and an online photograph collection.

SERIES

St. Louis 1904 World’s Fair Photograph Books

Scope and Content

These are two very similar volumes of photographic collections of 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair books. The first is The World’s Fair: Comprising the Official Photographic Views of the Universal Exposition Held in Saint Louis, 1904 Art Edition by Walter B. Stevens and photographs by William H. Rau. This is the art edition published by N.D. Thompson Publishing Company priced at $4.75.

The second book is The Forest City: Comprising the Official Photographic Views of the Universal Exposition Held in Saint Louis, 1904 by Walter B. Stevens and photographs by William H. Rau. This is the library edition published by N.D. Thompson Publishing Company priced at $5.75.

Technically only The Forest City was donated with accession #92-0116. However, The World’s Fair is kept with this collection because of its similarity. The World’s Fair came first and its pages are numbered (302). The Forest City came next and its pages are unnumbered. The photos are mostly the same images but in different order.

The Forest City was digitized by The Internet Archive and is available online for free at https://archive.org/details/forestcitycompri00stev.

See MS105 for two additional incomplete copies of The World’s Fair.

Container List

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