

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE
EXCITING

1893

WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

by Kathleen Haak

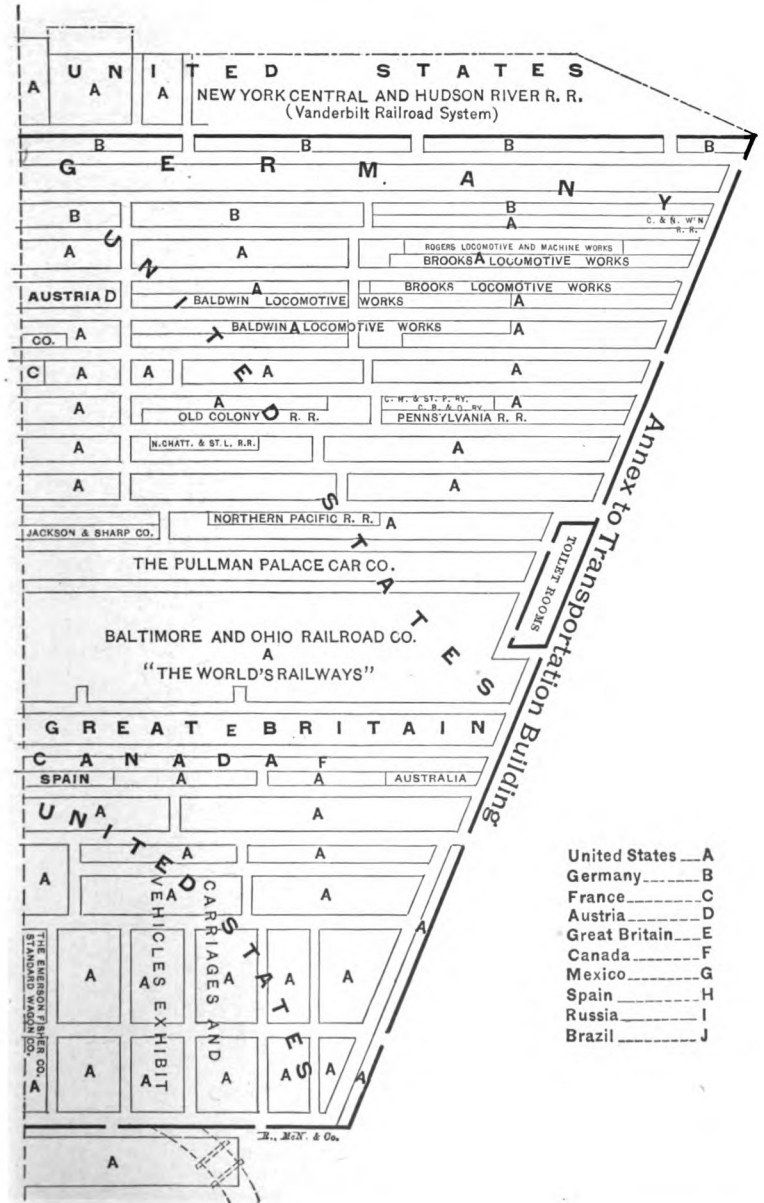
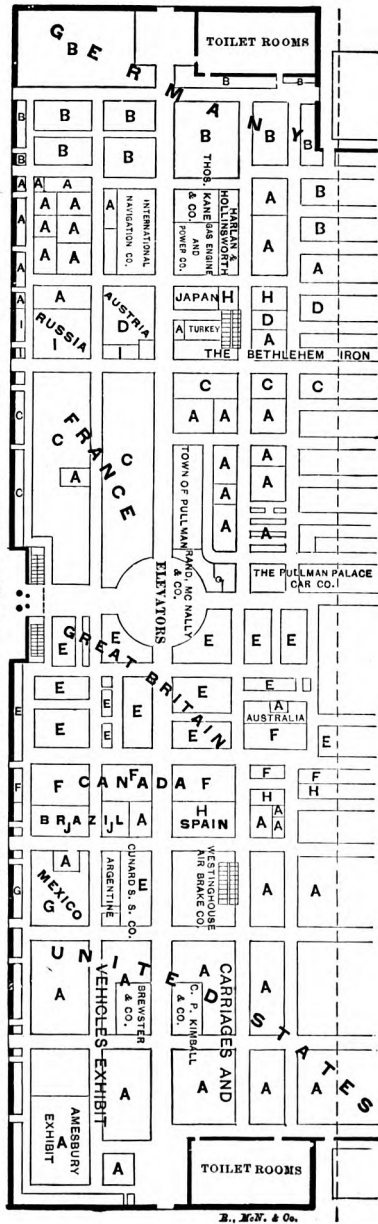
The World's Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago, Illinois in 1893 to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in America. The fair ran from May 1, 1893 – October 30, 1893, attracting over 27 million visitors from around the world. For many the visit was a life changing event, for businesses it could mean millions. For carriage makers, who were dealing with worker strikes and modernization, it was an opportunity to shine.

The Exposition covered 690 acres, including 200 new “temporary” buildings and housed 55,000 exhibitors. Many of the buildings were painted white, giving them the nickname “The White City.” The Transportation Building was somewhat unique with various colors, primarily red. Around the facades, which were made of a mixture of plaster, cement, and jute fiber, were angels cut from linen and glued to the exterior. The structure itself was long, two hundred and fifty-six by six hundred and ninety feet; the Transportation Annex was four hundred and twenty-five feet by nine hundred feet. Train tracks ran into the Annex from the rear, allowing trains and their cars to be displayed. Railroads were big business in 1893, the American section was called “Railways of the World” and featured 40-50 full sized perfect imitations of early locomotives and 1,750 photographs of railroad machinery from around the world.¹ The display

cost over \$100,000. By comparison the American Vehicle Exhibit at the north end of the Transportation Building was a more modest ninety thousand square feet.

The fertility of resource and invention of the American carriage builder, who by a perfected system of manufacture, produces an almost endless variety of vehicles, at prices that meet the purchasing possibilities of people of very moderate means, and adapted to every necessity and every whim of the popular fancy, and who also builds voitures de luxe, the graceful lines, perfect construction, elegant furnishings and superior finish of which meet the demands of the most lavish tastes of the millionaire purchaser, is wonderfully illustrated in the American carriage exhibit. It is the climax of the progression that has been made in carriage building since, a quarter of a century ago, American carriage builders became independent of foreign models and transatlantic traditions, and began to develop the faculty for originality which is so pronounced in every line of American production.²

Visitors would pass through the golden doors of the main entrance to the Transportation Building, and upon reaching the main aisle of the building turn to the right (facing north) would find themselves in the carriage space. The



- United States A
- Germany B
- France C
- Austria D
- Great Britain E
- Canada F
- Mexico G
- Spain H
- Russia I
- Brazil J

Rand, McNally & Co.'s Handbook of the World's Columbian Exposition includes a first floor map of the Transportation Building and a map of the Annex. The building was designed by Adler & Sullivan, architects based in Chicago, for \$370,000. The floor area covered nearly 9.5 acres.

For years after the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago there would be statements like “5/A Horse Blankets took the first prize at the World’s Fair, Chicago, 1893, and at the Pan-American, Buffalo, Exposition, 1901” in advertisements around the world. It was the first successful World’s Fair in the United States and trademen were justifiably proud of their accomplishment.

James Cummingham, Son & Co. (New York) occupied the first space with “two magnificent hearses of original design and richly carved, and four elegantly finished heavy carriages, aggregated in value \$30,000.”³ The Columbus Buggy Co. (Ohio) was next with a large space, prominently showing off their twelve vehicles. Brewster & Co. (New York) and Studebaker Bros. of Chicago (Illinois) were neighbors, presenting a very high quality, and striking, exhibit.

On the opposite side of the aisle was B. Manville & Co. (Connecticut) with four vehicles sharing space with Keyes & Wilson (New York) with three vehicles. C.P. Kimball & Co. had eleven vehicles representing their home city of Chicago. J. Curley of Brooklyn, New York was next with a D’Orsay with a shell body and ornate carvings. Another native company, C. Stone & Son, adjoined them with companies from Ohio, Michigan and Connecticut, sharing the rest of the aisle. Amesbury (Massachusetts) had one of the biggest joint displays with thirty-seven area companies joining together. Cincinnati (Ohio) followed in their footsteps with companies joining together to display thirty-four vehicles. [A partial list of carriage companies on display can be found at the end of this article.]

Hearses and buggies shared the hallways with phaetons, gigs and breaks. The management forbade platforms, creating uniformity with oak wood floors and brass railings amidst the eye catching displays. The middle section of the Annex held a special array of wagons – delivery, express and more. “The beauty of the painting and finish of some of the wagons in the annex is a revelation on how high it is possible for the wagon painter to carry his art, for some of the ornamentation is splendidly artistic.”⁴ Fulton & Walker Co. of Philadelphia, the Racine Wagon & Carriage Co., Fish Bros. Wagon Co., Weber Wagon Co., and the Kentucky Wagon company were just a few of the wagon makers present. Representatives from *The Carriage Monthly* rhapsodized over Studebaker Bros.’ rosewood wagon, Knickerbocker Ice Co.’s ice wagon with ‘splendid’ panel paintings, Fulton & Walker Co.’s piano van and the aluminum finished wagon from Moline Wagon Co.. The level of craftsmanship was outstanding.

Showmanship skills played a heavy role in attracting the attention of interested parties. D.F. Sargent, of D.F. Sargent & Son, Geneseo, Illinois, demonstrated the Geneseo Road Cart, “never tiring of illustrating its freedom from horse motion by balancing a silver dollar on the arm rail, and placing himself between the shafts, and driving the vehicle with all the motions caused by the different gaits of a horse. He offers to give the dollar to the spectator if it is dislodged by this agitation. The coin retains its perilous poise unmoved, and finds lodgement again in the pocket of the pleased pat-entee.”⁵

The Carriage Builders’ National Association Freight Committee worked hard to have a Western Classification and the Western Classification Committee did try but ulti-



Transportation Building

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Official Guide to the World’s Columbian Exposition offered these words of advice for travelers to the Exposition.

Before arrival of train at depot in Chicago a responsible baggage agent will offer to check baggage to any point within four miles of depot for twenty-five cents per single trunk, and for 50 cents additional each will take passengers by omnibus to any hotel within the business district, or within one mile from the depot.

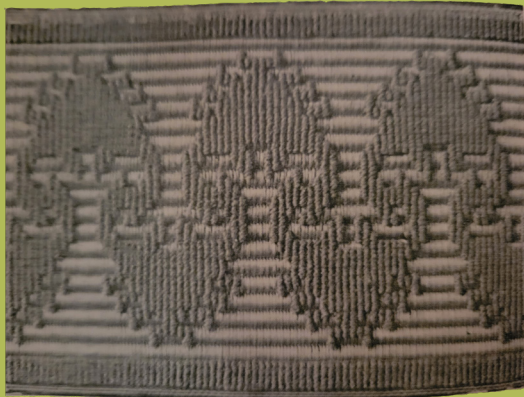
One horse Hansom Cabs will carry one or two passengers to any point for 50 cents per mile, or, at the rate of 75 cents per hour, and 25 cents for each additional quarter hour. Additional passengers 50 cents each. “Hack” or two horse carriage rates are \$1.00 for conveying one or two passengers any distance less than two miles; \$1.50 for each additional passenger; rate by the hour \$2.00; each additional hour or fraction thereof, \$1.00. Travel baggage free. Rates named are fixed by city ordinance, and any excess (which should be at once reported to police officer) subjects the offender to penalty.

Jackson Park, site of the Exposition, is about seven miles from the down-town railway depots and may be reached by street car or elevated railway for 5 cents; by Illinois Central railroad, round trip, 20 cents; or by steamboat from foot of Van Buren Street, round trip, 25 cents.

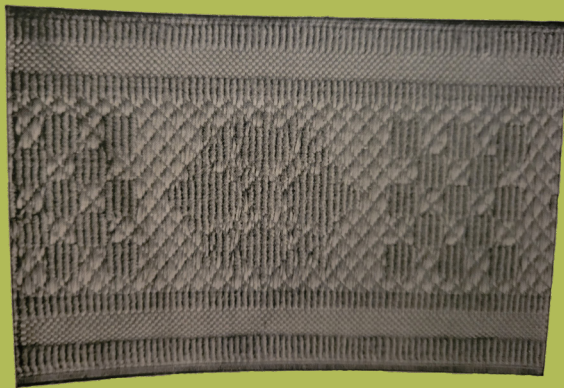
The October 1893 issue of *The Carriage Monthly* was the “World’s Fair - Carriage Laces and Fringes” issue. In addition to detailed descriptions of the cloth for various carriages it included 22 images of lace.



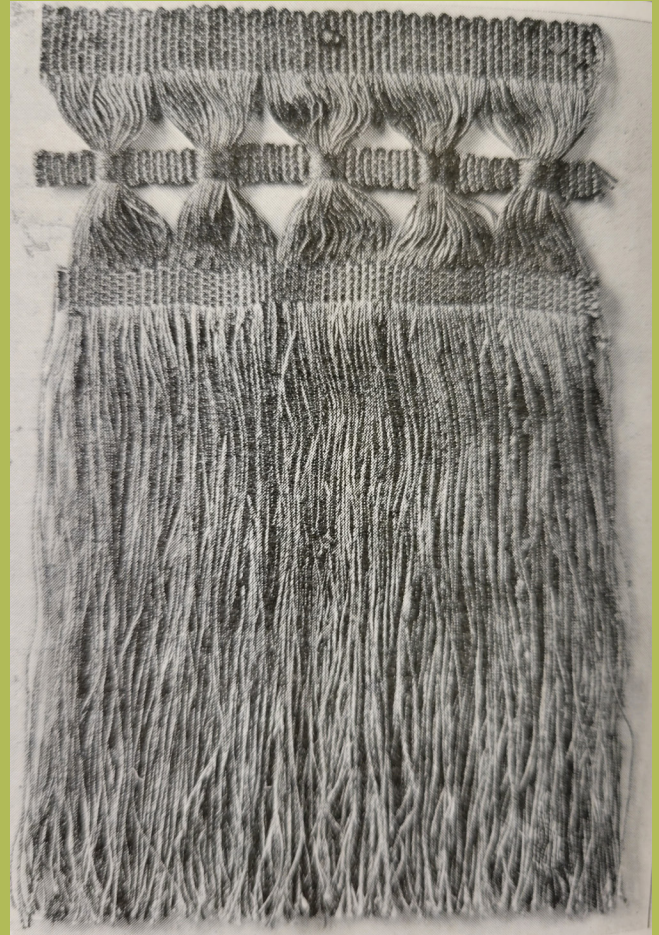
Lace on Landau, exhibited by Cunningham, Son & Co., Rochester, New York



Lace on French Buggy, exhibited by Stave & Abbott Manufacturing Co. of Chicago, Illinois



Lace on Square Front Brougham, exhibited by C. Stone & Sons of Chicago, Illinois



Fringe on Pony Surrey and Shetland Pony Wagon, exhibited by Walborn & Riker, St. Paris, Ohio



Figured corduroy on Pony Surrey, exhibited by Walborn & Riker, St. Paris, Ohio

mately failed. "It was estimated that the expense of obtaining a reduction of the classification of vehicles in the territory controlled by the Western Classification Committee would be about \$3,000, and it was supposed that this sum would easily be secured among the 697 members of the Association.... The results of the effort to raise the needed funds, however, netted but \$1,130, which represents contributions from but 72 carriage builders and dealers. This is certainly not complimentary to the 25,000 carriage builders and the many thousand carriage dealers of the United States."⁶

The foreign exhibits were not as plentiful as hoped for. Canada was represented by five carriage builders – G.W. Robinson, Verret & Co., J.B. Armstrong Manufacturing Co., Chatham Manufacturing Co. and Bonnars Carriage Manufacturing Co.. The Bonnars exhibit featured "a buggy with metal gear, truss axle, improved coupling, and hubless wheel," attracting much attention.

From Great Britain there were relatively few vehicles on display, the showstopper being the State Coach of the Lord Mayor of London. Harness, whips, and other equestrian goods were more prevalent in the British display. Several companies were still unpacking when the Columbian Exposition first opened, including the Austrian representative, Jacob Lohner. For unknown reasons the Russian carioles and sleighs were displayed in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building.

The Transportation Building saw a steady stream of visitors, from billionaires to 'hayseeds.' *The Carriage Monthly* recounts the story experienced by Studebaker's manager, "a young lady... rushed up to the Studebaker exhibit ... and eagerly inquired 'is that George Washington's old coach?' The look of disgust on Manager Quick's countenance, as he said 'no, madam, that is a modern road coach,' was worth reproducing on canvas."⁷

As indicated by the international exhibits, carriages were not the only equestrian items displayed at the Columbian Exposition. There was a plethora of exhibitors showcasing axles and wheels, in addition to harness, whips, blankets, brushes, even oat cleaners. The German exhibit by Dick & Kirschten had a nice selection of springs, axles and other forgings.

The Leather and Shoes Trades Building was in the southwest portion of the fair grounds. Carriage makers were sure to find familiar names among the displays: Hugh Smith (Newark, New Jersey), Albert Trostel & Sons (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), W.W. Mooney & Son (Columbus, Ohio), S.H. Frank & Co. (San Francisco, California), as well as S. Halsey & Son of Newark, New Jersey. Halsey also displayed at the Crystal Palace in 1851 and the Centennial in 1876. The Mooney & Son's pavilion had very ornamental panels made of Mooney leather, stamped with coaching scenes. Oak tanned leather was frequently mentioned in conjunction with harness. Oak tanned leather is made with tannin from

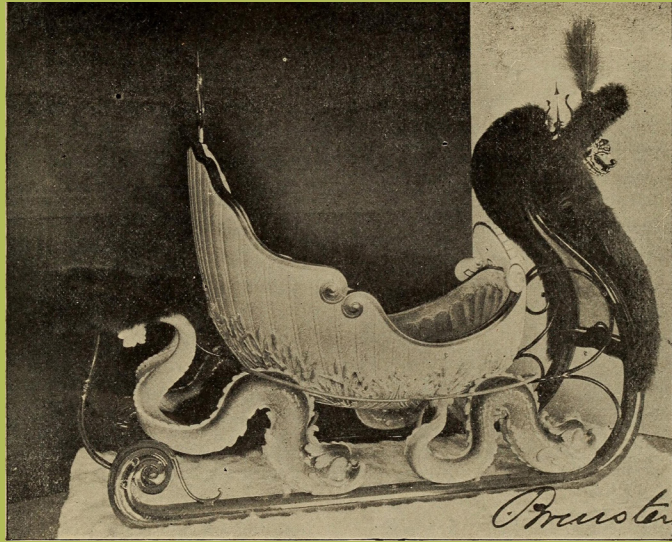


Medal awarded to Enid Yandell, commemorating her as a Designer of the Columbian Exposition. Yandell was an American sculpturer from Louisville, Kentucky who designed the caryatid which was to support the roof garden of the Women's Building. This medal, along with numerous works by Yandell, are on display at the Speed Museum in Louisville.

The Columbian Exposition was a World's Fair and like any fair, the 1893 World's Fair gave out awards. Medals, similar to the one above, were awarded as well as certificates. There was much consternation when a one man jury system was proposed and it was quickly overruled. Ferdinand F. French, B. C. Shaw, Hugh Johnson, G. Herbert Thrupp, Irvine Miller, W. Hooker Atwood, and Henry C. McLear were members of the Jury of Award in the vehicle division.

A few award winners related to carriages include:

- H.D. Smith of Plantsville, Connecticut for carriage, wagon, sleigh and bicycle forgings.
- Dann Bros & Co. of New Haven, Connecticut for bent wood.
- C. Cowles & Co. of New Haven, Connecticut for carriage coach lamps.
- S. Taylor & Co. of Chicago, Illinois for track harness.
- Chicago Trace Holder Co. of Chicago for trace holder.
- Henney Buggy Co. of Freeport, Illinois for Canopy Top Surrey and Extension Top Cabriolet.
- Cork Faced Collar Co. of Lincoln, Illinois for horse collars, pony tack, buggy and track harness.



One of the most perfect specimens of vehicular art that ever graced an exhibit is a sleigh exhibited in the Transportation Building by the great house of Brewster & Co., of New York City, and it detracts not a whit from the grand and artistic features of their complete exhibit to say that it attracts more individual attention than any other vehicle of their great collection. It combines in itself the great excellency so noticeable in all their products, and an originality of design that has few, if any, equals.

The body of the sleigh represents a shell, resting upon a bed of sea-weeds, supported on four dolphins. The front represents a mythical sea-dragon, with wings extended; a thin metallic wire screen represents the dragon's breast, and the fenders its wings. The tridents are fashioned after the fork of Neptune, the god of the sea.

The carvings throughout are of the highest artistic quality, the dolphins in particular being marvelously beautiful. The body and dolphins are entirely out of wood. Five months were spent on the carvings alone.

The body is painted white; the sea-weeds at the base are of their natural tint, delicately blended into the white as they extend upward. The dolphins are given a delicate green and white enameled finish. The artist who applied the paint accomplished a remarkable piece of workmanship in producing a superb surface and finish, at the same time preserving every delicate line made by the carver's tools — work that we have never seen equaled.

The trimming is of silk plush of a pale, delicate green, a tint and surface that were selected with a view to giving the interior an iridescent effect, which under a certain light charms the eye as would a most charming picture.

— The Hub, September 1893

oak bark and was considered a higher end leather as it took over a year to process. Leather of all types was exhibited for use in harness, carriage and whip making.

Singer Manufacturing Co. of New York had four exhibits at the World's Fair - one in the Manufacturers' Building, two in the Leather and Shoe Trade Building and one in the Machinery Hall. The Machinery Hall was abuzz with the sound of equipment. Of special interest to the carriage makers were drill presses, lathes, and forges. Most were still hand or foot powered. The J.A. Fay & Eagon Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio exhibited over 1,000 different machines, for all types of woodworking.

These exhibitors didn't arrive overnight. The planning for the Columbian Exposition took over three years and there was a tremendous push not only to get 'average' people to the Exposition but also skilled craftsmen. The Carriage Builder's National Association, with C. F. Kimball as President, very rightfully felt that this would be an appropriate time and place to plan their 21st Annual Convention.

*Office of the Secretary and Treasurer
Wilmington, Del., April 21, 1893*

To the Members of the Carriage Builders' National Association and all those interested in Carriage Manufacturing and its Associate Industries:

By order of the Executive Committee, the Twenty-First Annual Convention of the Carriage Builders' National Association will be held in Chicago, October 3, 4 and 5, 1893.

It is the desire of this Association to have at this Convention the largest gathering of carriage builders ever held, and it is proposed by the Executive Committee that the week commencing October 1st shall be "Carriage Builders' Week" at the World's Fair.

With this purpose in view, we cordially invite every carriage builder and every representative of the associated industries, whether a member of the Carriage Builders' National Association or not, to participate in this important event in the history of our trade, and we earnestly request that they will time their visit to the great Fair so as to be with us on this occasion.

Arrangements have been made with the Joint Committee on Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition whereby October 6th has been designated "Carriage Makers Day." On this day it is the design of the Executive Committee of this Association to have some suitable celebration, the details of which will be published later.

We ask the co-operation of every manufacturer of carriages and carriage materials, so that we may have a demonstration that will be an honor to the great industry we represent.

*By order of the Executive Committee,
Henry C. McLear, Secretary*

The program for the convention shows a greater diversity of committees than we might think of today. In addition to the 'regular' committees, reports were called from:

- Treasurer of the School Fund
- Committee on Roads and Highways
- Committee on Technical Education
- Committee on Statistics of the Carriage and Accessory Trades
- Committee on Fire Insurance
- Committee on Classification of Carriage Freight

Throughout the convention there were guest speakers. There were over 600 people in the banquet hall to hear Ludwig Lohner and the Lord Mayor of Dublin's speeches in the Auditorium Hotel. For those interested in seeing more of the Fair, association members were treated to a luncheon and furnished rides on electric launches on "Carriage Builders' Day." Rain reportedly spoiled the boat rides but the luncheon was enjoyed by all.

The Columbian Exposition was an overwhelming success. Coverage of the event, provided through *The Carriage Monthly*, *The Hub* and other carriage magazines of the time is very comprehensive. Sadly the event has been overlooked in carriage history in favor of European expositions.❁

Resources

- 1) *The Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition*, 1893, The World's Columbian Exposition
- 2) *The Carriage Monthly*, June 1893, pg 85
- 3) *The Carriage Monthly*, June 1893, pg 88
- 4) *The Carriage Monthly*, June 1893, pg 88
- 5) *The Carriage Monthly*, October 1893, pg 211
- 6) *The Carriage Monthly*, November 1893, pg 242
- 7) *The Carriage Monthly*, June 1893, pg 92

Crossword Puzzle Answers

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1) Beeswax | 11) Pony |
| 2) Sarven | 12) Plugging |
| 3) Linseed | 13) Isinglass |
| 4) Team | 14) Blunderbuss |
| 5) Trot | 15) Rippon |
| 6) Trade | 16) Pair |
| 7) Leaders | 17) Swing |
| 8) Dalmatian | 18) Pace |
| 9) Archibald | 19) Frog |
| 10) Wheelers | 20) Caisson |



Frederick and Louis Rieckheim first introduced the mix of popcorn, peanuts and molasses known today as 'Cracker Jack' at the Columbian Exhibition. "That's a cracker-jack!" meant something of great quality and the confection's name quickly evolved into Cracker Jack. The brothers registered the name in 1896 and the legend continues today.

Dr. Gregg and Jody Cutler of California have in their collection this lovely Cracker Jack trade vehicle. When the company celebrated their 100th anniversary they released special 'throwback' boxes. The Cutlers quickly snapped up enough to fill their trade vehicle, adding a special touch to the colorful wagon.

