

Columbian Exposition Garland Stove Still At The Fair!

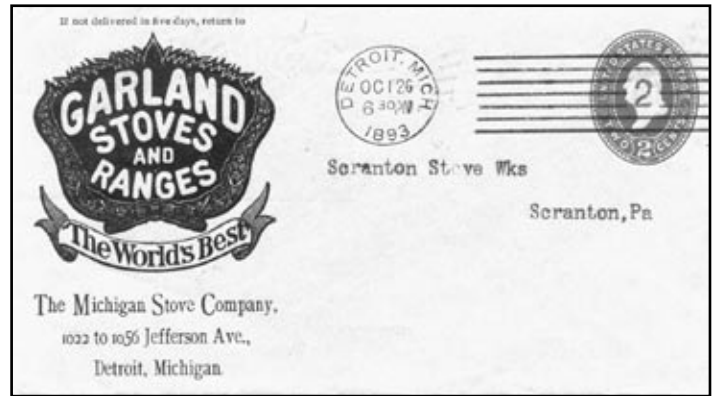
by G. L. Dybwad and Joy V. Bliss, WFCS #1926

The *Reader's Digest* surprised us! Perhaps you read the very brief note on page 28 of the August 2004 issue describing a large replica of a cast-iron stove? We recognized it immediately as the 1893 Garland Stove exhibit in the huge Manufactures Building, location O-4 in the U.S. section on the south end of the main floor. We recognized it because we used an 1893 stereo view card image of the "World's Largest Stove" to illustrate the Columbian diary we had recently published, *White City Recollections*, in which the young diarist singled out that exhibit by the Michigan Stove Company on his visits to Manufactures with his father. The 33-word *Reader's Digest* article plus vignette photo explained that the Stove was at the Michigan State Fair; we quickly decided to investigate.



1893 Underwood & Underwood stereo view card image of the Garland Stove exhibit

Here's what we knew in advance: the Michigan Stove Company location is listed in the 1893 *Official Directory* (citation #1207, *Annotated Bibliography: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893* by Dybwad and Bliss) but not in any of the major historical reference works issued during and after the Columbian Exposition: Bancroft's *Book of the Fair*, Rossiter Johnson's *History of the World's Columbian Exposition*, Campbell's *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* and many others. We have in our collection a pretty blue business envelope from the Michigan Stove Company showing their logo and Stove and a chromolithographic



Michigan Stove Company blue envelope showing their logo and Columbian exhibit (front and back)



Chromolithographic ad card from Michigan Stove (front and back)

ad card from the company. As you can see from the accompanying exhibit illustrations, their array of display stoves easily fits below the giant replica, as well as do many curious visitors.

Through a series of telephone calls, we finally talked with the very helpful Michigan State Fair Project Manager, Rosemary Peralta, at her fairgrounds office, which overlooks the grand 1893 Garland Stove. One of her many duties is issuing available information about the Stove and serving as a contact for those wishing to help preserve it by donating to purchase an inscribed memorial brick for the walkways surrounding it. She mailed us a wonderful packet of images, information, and previous articles about the journey of the 25-foot-high Stove after it left Chicago. We'll summarize.

The Michigan Stove Company's 25 x 30 x 20 foot replica of the Garland was made of 15 tons of carefully carved oak and painted black and silver to replicate the nickel-plated look of their large line of ranges. The Company's home, Detroit, was a major center for castiron stove production that began in the 1870s. After the Columbian Exposition, the exhibit was freighted back to Detroit before the Manufactures Building burned to the ground in 1894. The company icon was re-erected at the Michigan Stove headquarters on East Jefferson in

Detroit where it fortunately escaped the fiery destruction of the factory in 1907. Because of its wood construction, the Stove required constant repainting as shown in the bottom 1920s image below. After a corporate merger, the Columbian fair survivor was moved further east on Jefferson. Finally in 1965, the local landmark was relocated to the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit. Decay from time and the elements forced dismantling and storing of the structure in 1974. Later, current General Manager of the fair, John Hertel, learned of the existence of the long-lived and warehoused exhibit and mounted a 1998 campaign to revitalize the Stove. Major contributors quickly came forward from all quarters! The proud symbol of a major Detroit industry was unveiled on the state fairgrounds in August 1998 and continues to serve as a rallying point for fairgoers today.



The Stove at corporate headquarters, 1920s



The renovated Garland Stove now at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit



Painting the mammoth structure in the 1920s

The Antique Stove Association held their annual convention and display of old stoves under the Garland replica in 2000. The Michigan fairgrounds are open all year for visitors to enjoy this nostalgic wonder created in 1893. Michigan State Fair Project illustrations of the Stove are reproduced on this page by permission.

Contact us at The Book Stops Here, www.bookstopshere.com, gldybwad@comcast.net, for further information about the long history of the eye-catching oak exhibit billed for over a hundred years as the "World's Largest Stove." The brick donation form can be found at www.michigan.gov/mda/ and choose Michigan State Fair. [As an aside, Detroit is also home to the "World's Largest Tire," a remainder from the 1964 New York World's Fair U.S. Rubber exhibit.]