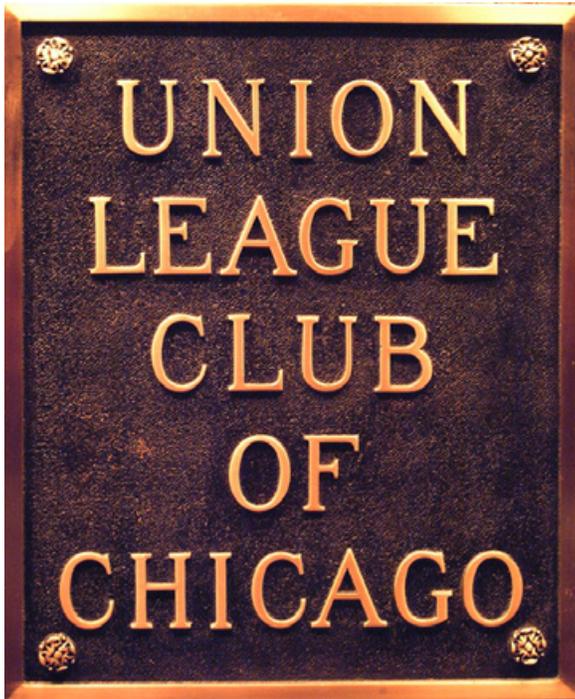


COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION ART AT UNION LEAGUE CLUB

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Hunting for new material for our *Annotated Bibliography: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893: Supplement*, we visited the Union League Club of Chicago. We hoped that the club had retained some of its Columbian heritage, since several of its members in the 1890s were active participants in the fair. Ferdinand Peck, president of the club in 1893, served as first vice president for the Columbian Exposition and, consistent with the club's interest in young people, led the drive to reduce the price of children's admission tickets for Chicago Day, October 9, 1893.

Their archive is headed by retired club president and club historian, Everett Barlow, with whom we had first corresponded, and who arranged our visit. During a delightful lunch in the main dining room and surrounded by part of the club's vast art collection, we learned that the Chicago branch of the club was incorporated in 1879 as a private club whose early members were Republican supporters of the Union and General Grant. It now serves local and visiting business people with a full complement of elegant facilities housed in a 22-story

building at 65 West Jackson in the heart of Chicago's Loop. A hallmark of the club is its extensive volunteer effort on many fronts to improve city life, business, and administration. A full history of this active club and its many contributions to the Columbian Exposition are found in Bruce Grant's 1955 book, *Fight for a City*.

Guided by the retired director of public affairs, Frank Whittaker, we toured the club, its library and archive. After compiling a nice list for our bibliography of Columbian books and books on Chicago that contain information about the Columbian Exposition, we learned that the club has one of the most important art collections in Chicago. Fine art graces the walls of the many beautiful function rooms and hallways on each floor. The club started buying pieces by American artists in 1892; acquisition continues today, as does conservation. Marianne Richter, curator, is responsible for researching, expanding, and maintaining the collection.

We were overjoyed when Richter responded affirmatively to our query whether the club owns art exhibited at the 1893 fair. What follows is a description the three Columbian pieces in their collection. We are indebted to the Club for making prints available for these items and allowing their reproduction.

Prominently displayed in the main lounge is Elizabeth Nourse's (1859–1938) five foot by four-and-a-half foot work entitled *Good Friday (Vendredi Saint)* completed in 1891. It had been exhibited in France, London, and Munich before its display in the Palace of Fine Arts at the world's fair where it won an award. The religious subject of the painting, one of her largest, shows peasant women



Good Friday by Nourse

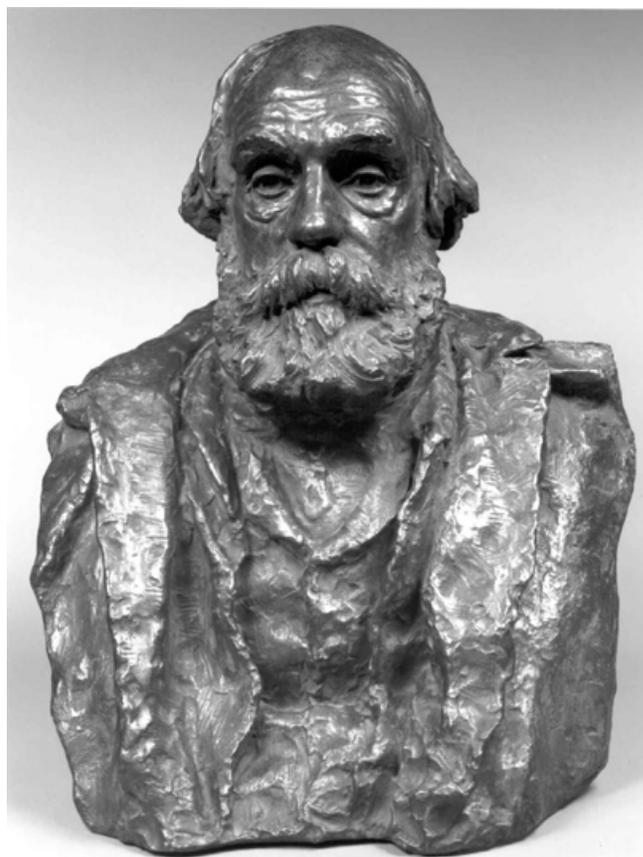
in Assisi kissing the crucifix as part of their Good Friday observances. Completed in Rome and influenced by Baroque art, it may reflect Nourse's Catholic religiousness. Nourse was born in Cincinnati, and after the fair, the painting was displayed in her home town. As a full time and successful artist with a long career, her subjects were often women and children in rural settings.

Exposition exhibit #883 at the Art Palace was another oil on canvas and was executed by American artist, Charles Yardley Turner (1850–1918). Turner was Frank Millet's assistant in overseeing decorative projects at the Exposition. Influenced by Longfellow's poem and interested in early American history, Turner painted *John Alden's Letter* in 1887. The brass plaque on the frame is engraved "Miles Standish and John Alden." The painting is approximately 3 feet by 4 feet in size and currently hangs at the entrance to the club library.



John Alden's Letter by Turner

American sculpture from the Columbian Exposition is represented at the Union League Club by William Orndway Partridge's bronze bust, *Edward Everett Hale*, which was completed in 1891. It was exhibit #101 in the Fine Arts Building at the fair and is now located in the club's spacious and comfortable library on fourth floor. Hale spoke to the Chicago Union League membership in 1893 and ten years later was named chaplain of the United States Senate. This large bust of the clergyman-author basks in floodlight atop a bookcase and measures 26 by 19 inches.



Edward Everett Hale by Partridge

All three of the above Columbian survivors were featured in a 100 year art retrospective, *Revisiting the White City: American Art from the 1893 World's Fair*, by Carolyn Kinder Carr. This companion book to the display at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. was issued in 1993 and is recommended reading for anyone interested in the still popular art shown at the fair. The Fine Arts Building from 1893 is now the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, and its archive contains many remainders from the fair.

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