

IOWA HISTORY



Courtesy Library of Congress
St. Louis World's Fair, 1904-05

Artist Almost Wins Award

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, also known as the St. Louis World's Fair, was held in St. Louis, Mo., in 1904. As organizers prepared for the big event in the final days of 1902, they invited artists from around the world to submit drawings for the official fair emblem. It was an opportunity for artists to gain recognition for their work and to make a name for themselves.

Charles Holloway was an accomplished artist who had grown up in St. Louis, where he attended art school before moving to Chicago. By the late 1800s he had established a successful stained glass business in the Windy City. In 1893 Holloway had won a competition sponsored by a Chicago newspaper for the design of a logo that represented the "spirit" of the city. His work could be seen at the Garrett Biblical Institute in Evansville, Ill., as well as several public buildings in Chicago, including Steinway Hall.

In the early 1900s Holloway was living in Clinton, Iowa, and working in the studios of William G. Andrews, a local businessman who had won contracts throughout the United States

to provide art work for many public buildings. Holloway was the “head artist” in Andrews’ studio and had worked on several projects, including a new court house in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Late in 1902 fair officials announced the winner of the St. Louis Fair official emblem competition. The honors went to 43-year-old Clinton resident Charles Holloway. Over 300 people, 42 from as far away as Europe, had submitted designs.

Holloway’s drawing featured a central figure of a woman who represented the territory of Louisiana. At her side was the figure of Columbia draped with the American flag. In front of Columbia a figure representing France sat holding the treaty of the Louisiana territory, which transferred ownership of the land from France to the United States in 1803. The border of Holloway’s design depicted four figures representing agriculture, commerce, art and science. Four colors dominated the drawing: red, white, blue and yellow. It was said to be suitable for a poster, medal or plaque. Holloway won \$2,000 for his design.

It’s doubtful that Holloway ever received his money. Shortly after the announcement was made about the winning emblem, fair officials issued a statement saying they had been “premature” in their decision. The award committee had not “unanimously” favored the Holloway design, and the final decision “had not been made.” Artists were encouraged to submit designs again, and Holloway was asked to make revisions to his drawings before resubmitting.

By some accounts Holloway made the recommended changes to his original work, but others indicate he never resubmitted a design. In the end, the fair committee decided Charles Holloway’s work was “not suitable for an official emblem.” They left open the option of using it on an advertising poster.

In December 1903 the fair was still without an official emblem. A St. Louis photographer, James Hannerty, came up with an idea that came to be “generally accepted” as the official emblem, according to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. It was based on Hannerty’s photograph of a young girl named Marguerite Silva who posed as a queen pointing the attention of her subjects to the Louisiana Purchase. It was titled “A Deed of the Pen.” It was expected to be replicated “in tens of thousands” during the fair. [To see a poster, go to www.allposters.com and search for “A Deed of the Pen”]

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Sources

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- Matthew Parbs and Carrie Eilderts of the Sawmill Museum in Clinton contributed to this research.