

In celebration of Christopher Columbus' 400th voyage to the Americas, President Harrison announced on April 25, 1890 that Chicago, Illinois would host the 1893 World's Fair. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 had left a large field of land for building the Columbian Exposition site, better known as the Chicago World's Fair.

At the Exposition the Montana Mining Pavilion featured many displays that told the story of why Montana was the Treasure State. Nuggets of gold, gold dust, ore from which gold protruded, placer and crystallized gold, wire silver, quartz crystals and many other specimens were on display. But the must see of the Columbian Exposition was Montana's silver statue of "Justice".



The "Silver Queen" was created by sculptor R. Parks and Irish immigrant, and actress Ada Rehan (Delia Crehan) was the model for his creation. The statue was the largest and most expensive silver sculpture ever produced in the world. The silver was borrowed from W.A. Clark of Butte, Montana and Samuel Hauser of Helena, Montana.

According to notes from author Wayne Bednersh, "The silver statue itself was 5' 10 and 1/2" high and composed of 24,000 ounces of sterling (about 22,200 ounces of pure silver) worth about \$23,000 when it was cast and less than \$14, by the time it was put on display (approx. \$750,000 now). The gold plinth beneath the statute was made of almost 12,000 ounces of gold, over 800 pounds, all from the Spotted Horse mine at Maiden, in the Judith Mountains of central Montana. The value at the time was \$242,000, or more than ten times the silver value. That would be over \$20 million today. The gold was lent by Clara McAdow, who ran the mine for her wheelchair-confined husband, Perry. The plinth was returned to the Spotted Horse immediately after the fair. At the entrance to the Montana Exhibit was a large specimen of ruby silver in quartz from the Granite Mountain mine near Philipsburg. The Granite Mine specimen was 4307 pounds, 975 ounces of silver per ton."

After the Columbian Exposition ended the statue became the property of the Montana Silver Statue Company, of which F.D. Higbee was the general manager. An equivalent number of ounces of silver was then returned to the State of Montana in lieu of the statue. The silver statue then traveled to various county fairs and stores and ended up in Omaha where it was consigned to a smelter and melted in 1903.

In later years, after visiting the Columbian Exposition, Copper King William Clark would build for the city of Butte, Montana the Columbia Gardens, whose garden and pavilion were designed after the Columbian Exposition.

