

## **The “Forgotten” Columbia Exposition Self-Guided Walking Tour**

*This walking tour guide has been adapted from Roarin’ Strolls™ Historical Walking Tour, created in collaboration with The Forgotten Columbia Exposition exhibit currently on display in The Studio @ Schapiro.*

*If you have not yet explored [the digital version of the exhibition](#), we recommend that you do so before embarking on your tour as there is plenty of contextual information that may enrich your experience.*

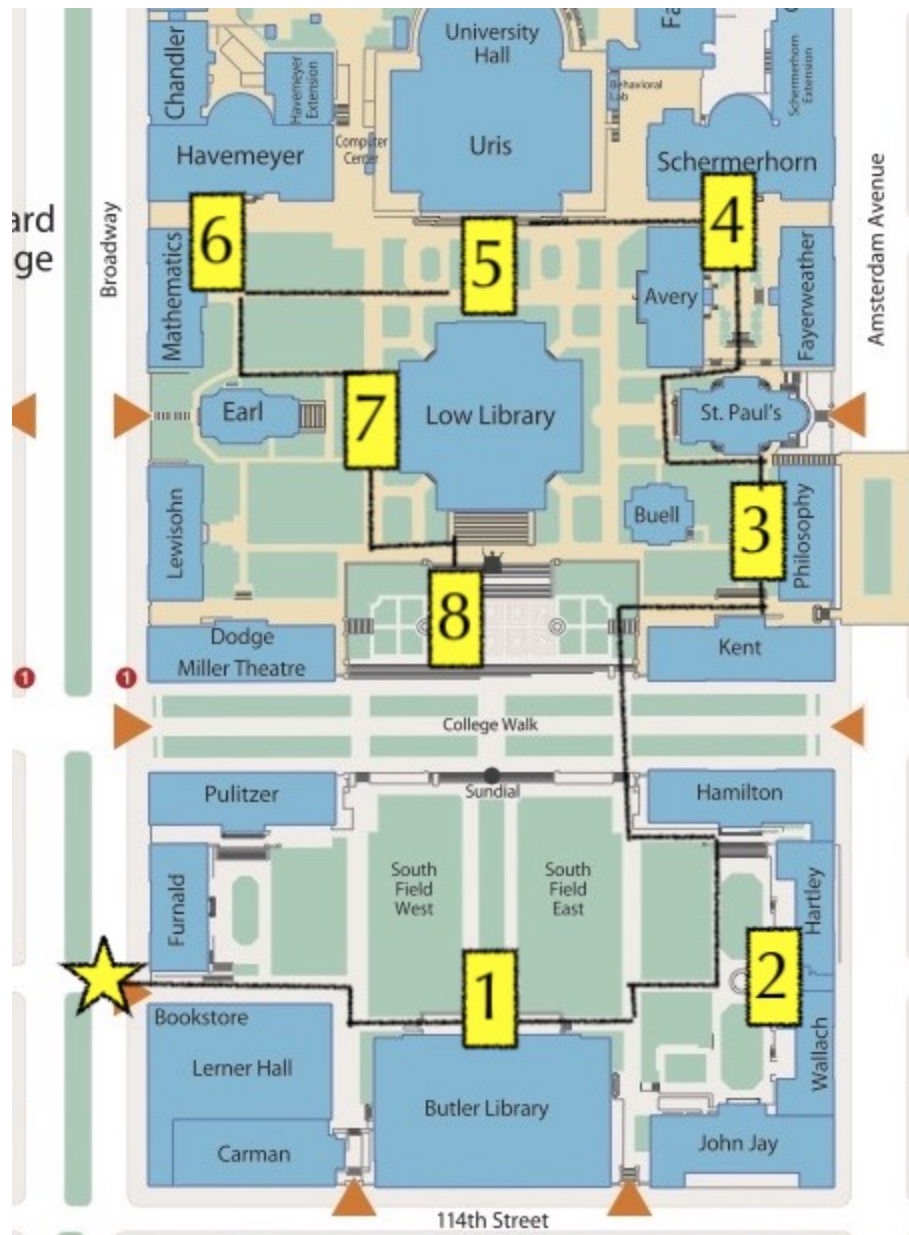
### **What is the Exposition and how do we know about it?**

- It took place on Columbia University’s Campus, July 4-10th 1921. This was a large event, we estimate something like 30-50 thousand people visited the event over its week-long duration (p.5, *Guide for Foreign Visitors at Columbia University, University Press, 1922*). This year marks the Exposition’s Centennial, prompting the creation of this new walking tour.
- It was forgotten (or perhaps covered up) and then rediscovered about 50 years ago, most of the research about the Exposition dates from the early ‘70s and reflects the academic biases of that time.
- Intended to promote “an Innovative & Modern Approach to Nature & Natural Science.” The official motto was “Where Wild Ideas Take Wing.”
- Expositions were a very popular form of public entertainment at the time. Famously, Chicago’s Columbian Exposition held just 28 years prior to ours, kick-started many similar events around the country.
- We believe it was a desegregated event based on the following article from *The Amsterdam News* comparing the event to the Chicago World’s Fair:  
  
“As Ms. Ida B. Wells wrote in 1893, the new Exposition will do well to acknowledge that ‘the colored people of this great Republic number eight millions – more than 1/10th the whole population of the United States. They were among the earliest settlers of this island. [*In New York, the first slave ship arrived in 1626 - ed.*]. They have contributed a large share to American prosperity and civilization. The labor of one-half of this country has always been, and is still being done by them. The first credit this country had in its commerce with foreign nations was created by productions resulting from their labor. The wealth created by their industry has afforded to the white people of this country the leisure essential to their great progress in education, art, science, industry and invention.”

Historians conjecture as to whether this event was forgotten due to the natural erosion of time or if perhaps it was intentionally left out of the narrative due to its inclusive nature, which was decidedly uncharacteristic of large events of the time.

## Tour Route Overview:

We recommend starting your tour by entering campus via the small gateway at 115th Street & Broadway [★ STARRED ON MAP] due to construction happening on College Walk @ 116th Street.



## Our Mission at Roarin' Strolls

Roarin' Strolls is a non-profit organization funded by a branch of the American Library Association (ALA). Founded in 1975 by librarian Sandra McIlheney, Roarin' Strolls has been dedicated to putting New York history on its feet for nearly 50 years. Through multimedia archive experiences, we aim to bring lost history roarin' back to life one curated tour at a time. We fully believe in the dangers of forgetting the past and are passionate about using history to shock visitors into new perspectives of our present reality. We hope visitors will leave thinking: "Wow! Did that really happen?"

## Stop 1: Outside of Butler Library



*Turn North to look at the site of the Athletic Field.*

Imagine the year is 1921 and you've just come to campus from the IRT Station ("Interborough Rapid Transit" - what we call the subway) underneath Broadway. All of the south campus is covered by a large football field: the area in front of and including Butler Library was the **Columbia's Athletics Area** from 1897 through 1921.

### *Fun Facts:*

A major football game between Columbia and Princeton was part of the Exposition back in 1921. (Princeton won, 10-7)

Until 1922, a real lion was brought to campus from the Bronx Zoo as a mascot, Roar-ee the Lion, present at most athletic events. You can read more about that in Katheleen Zoehfeld's *Wild Lives: a History of the People & Animals of the Bronx Zoo*.



*Turn South to look at the site of the Time Capsule discovery.*

Butler Library (built 1931-1934) is built on the site of the former **Exposition Amenities Area** (i.e. the public toilets). When the library was built 10 years after the Expo, the bathrooms were incorporated into the larger building since the plumbing lines were already laid. This building is where, in 1971, Earl Jenkins (a custodian) happened upon an odd metal object: the cocktail shaker/makeshift time capsule which brought renewed interest to the forgotten event.

*Head east, in the direction of Amsterdam Avenue, to find Stop 2: Amringe Memorial.*



## Stop 2: The Van Amringe Memorial



After exploring the Memorial (pictured left), sit on the bench looking North, facing Hamilton Hall.

The “VanAmQuad”, named for the Van Amringe Memorial in its center, had only just been built at the time of the Exposition. In 1921 it was decorated as part of the Columbia Beautiful Movement (We know of a main attraction billed as the “**Hall of Shrubbery**”<sup>1</sup>, part of a larger focus on botany and topiary throughout the event). According to Baker’s account, the Bronx Botanical Garden generously shared their international collection of shrubbery with Columbia University for the “Beautiful Architecture Exhibition” at the Exposition.

The area to the north and south of the Pavilion would have been the **Dining Area** during the Exposition. We know there would have been offerings from local restaurants such as *Charlotte’s Collards* as well as *Tyrone’s Place*. Likely there were also stands featuring products from some of the more food-centric sponsors of the event: *Sheffield Farms Dairy* (located at 125th Street) and the newly founded *Good Humor Ice Cream*.



Before proceeding, walk a few steps toward John Jay hall to find the Lenape Plaque. Please take a moment to acknowledge that we are standing on the unceded lands of the Wappinger and Munsee Lenape peoples who call this island Manahatta in this city which we call New York as a result of displacement and harm caused through the living legacy of colonialism.

During the Exposition, the south campus was home to large, typical events that occurred at most fairs and expositions. Now our tour turns to the northern campus where more attractions and exhibits illustrate the unique character of The Columbia Exposition.

*Head north towards College Walk. In 1921 this was still West 116th Street, open to all traffic until 1947. Cross College Walk and head up the ramp visible on your right hand side as you face Alma Mater & Low Library. Continue up the right hand flight of stairs towards Stop 3.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Nathan Baker. *The Fathers of Bronx Botany, with Urban Planning Applications*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 1926. p. 167.



### Stop 3: Philosophy Hall / Thinker Statue



Once you've arrived at the top of the stairs you should see Kent Hall on your right, the Law School before you and Buell Hall on your left. Head left, down the short flight of stairs and find a spot in front of Philosophy Hall (L). If you sit here, you should be able to see Buell Hall (R) and the rear of a copy of Rodin's *The Thinker*.



Before this area was bought in 1897 by Columbia University, it was used as the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. In front of you is the only remaining building from the asylum, it is now called Buell Hall, but when it was built in 1885, it was called "Macy Villa" after a donor named William H. Macy (not the actor, related to the Department Store). Macy Villa was used specifically for the wealthiest long-term male patients at Bloomingdale. In 1910-11, it was moved from its original location to make room for Kent Hall.

During the Exposition of 1921, this was **The Children's Area**. The Bronx Zoo provided a small **Petting Zoo** near this spot. Zoehfeld's *Wild Lives* book from 2006 talks extensively about which animals were present at the petting zoo including llamas, ponies, and iguanas. There were many displays by toymakers, with a particular focus on toy cars. The recent invention of the Jungle Gym (patented in 1920) suggests one may have been built here as well. There is also evidence of a custom designed



**"Carousel of Heroes,"** built by the Harlem Heights Toboggan Co., featuring Classical Philosophers, American Heroes and "Men of the Future." No images have survived but we commissioned an artist's rendering from a description found in Frederick Fried's *Pictorial History of the Carousel*.

When you're ready, continue north around Buell Hall, circle around the front of St. Paul's Chapel. Make a sharp right to find the well-hidden Avery Courtyard (Stop 4.)

#### Stop 4: Avery Courtyard



*You can pause anywhere in Avery Courtyard to read the following information.*

#### Catching up on historical context:

- Political Activity: before the 20s there was political upheaval in America at large. Dozens of race massacres made up what was known as the “Red Summer of 1919” (leading to the Tulsa Massacre). New York in particular was experiencing upheaval in the 1920s (this was the era of Prohibition, white women won the right to vote in 1920, World War I had just ended).
- In 1921 people were also recovering from a pandemic. Columbia was active in research to aid efforts to combat the 1918 Influenza Pandemic (erroneously called the “Spanish Flu”) and organized for students on campus as well. The Student Army Training Corps (SATC) played a large role, leading public exercises to promote health in the face of the pandemic.

During the Exposition, this courtyard is where we believe the **Medical Tents** were set up. It is highly likely that, since 1921 was the first Medical School class to include white women, they too might have been involved in the complimentary medical care provided here. **Bayer Aspirin** was a major sponsor of the Exposition (Jeremy Green’s *Influenza and Aspirin*) and so likely many of their products on display and used here.



*At the northernmost point in Avery Courtyard Schermerhorn Hall, pictured to the left, proceed left/west, towards the Business School - Uris Hall to find Stop 5.*



## Stop 5: Uris Hall



*Find a seat on any of the benches or the flowerbed ledges (below) that are in front of Uris Hall (left).*



Evidence suggests that this open area was used as the center of **Entertainment for the Exposition**, particularly in the evenings. Music and dance were a must at all events in the early 20s.

We don't know too much about what sort of entertainment occurred except for that there was a different event every evening. Though we do know some facts from Buton Newman's *City of Night: Prohibition, Politics and Amusement in the Manhattan '20s*. When the Exposition was happening, this was the place to be and to be seen every evening. Budgets have been found that included funds reserved both for **Fireworks** and, oddly enough, **Butterflies**, which we believe were involved in some of the shows. According to William Leach's 2013 publication, *Butterfly People: An American Encounter with the Beauty of the World*, a handful of prominent domestic and international visitors journaled about their encounter with a "Butterfly Release" event at the Exposition. As documented in those journals, the butterflies may have been seen as a symbol of world peace, or quite simply a beautiful and extravagant spectacle. We assume these "big ticket items" were most likely reserved for use at a **Daily Invocation Ceremony**, which is more likely to have taken place on the other side of Low Library (near the Alma Mater Statue).

*Next, continue due west towards Mathematics Hall and Havemeyer Hall to learn more about the Exposition's Hall of Shrubbery and other botany exhibits at Stop 6.*



## Stop 6: Mathematics Hall - Hall of Shrubberies & Other Plants



Welcome to the location of the **Beautiful Architecture Exhibition** mentioned earlier on the tour, featuring the **Hall of Shrubbery** and exhibits regarding botany, nature's splendor, the art of topiary and other such gardening related exhibits.

The Hall of Shrubbery was installed in Havemeyer Hall (the face of which is currently covered in scaffolding). The Hall housed the largest collection of shrubs gathered indoors in North America to date. Sources suggest that beyond its scientific ambitions to identify and catalog plant species variants of brushwood, the Hall also functioned as what we might recognize as a de facto community art project, as visitors to the Exposition were encouraged to donate shrubbery to the collection. In fact discounted entry tickets were promised in exchange for the submission of new shrubs. It is believed, though not clearly documented, that the **hedges** and **bushes** which now populate campus, particularly in the area near Mathematics Hall, are in fact the descendants of shrubs formerly displayed at the Exposition. As an extension of the **Columbia Beautiful Movement**, the planners of the Exposition intended to further decorate the campus following the close of the festivities.

*After admiring the greenery, retrace your steps back towards the west side of Low Library to get a good view of Earl Hall and Dodge Courtyard, Stop 7 on our tour.*

## Stop 7: Whispering Bench by Earl Hall



*Make your way to the semi-circle bench (pictured right) which should be on your left as you walk towards the front of Low Library. Sit on the bench and find yourself facing Earl Hall (pictured left).*

This whole area housed the Exposition's **Global Village** with tents and displays from countries and cultures gathered from around the world.<sup>2</sup> Earl Hall hosted Candlelight Sunday Supper, dances, and receptions which continued during the exposition. These events were sponsored by the **Intercollegiate Cosmopolitan Club**, which was in charge of International outreach for the Expo. Their events and programming aimed to encourage connections between international students as well as American attendees. We believe that Former President Woodrow Wilson was particularly engaged with the Global Village. Indeed the village itself was a perfect visual metaphor for the League of Nations that he helped shape (earning him the Nobel Prize). Unfortunately, any evidence of a visit from Wilson has either been lost or intentionally repressed from publication. Regardless, the first year of the League of Nations (1920) definitely fostered the growth of globalization which at least indirectly laid the groundwork for the Exposition's Global Village and the success thereof.

*Head back to Alma Mater Plaza in front of Low Library for the final stop on our tour.*

---

<sup>2</sup> Caroline Donaldo. "Candlelight Sunday Supper in the Archives", *International House*, 4 May 2021, [https://www.ihouse-nyc.org/news\\_events/candlelight-sunday-supper-in-the-archives/](https://www.ihouse-nyc.org/news_events/candlelight-sunday-supper-in-the-archives/) accessed 1 July 2021.



## Stop 8: Low Library / Alma Mater Plaza



Low Library Plaza was the site of a formal Sunset Ceremony (as mentioned before, this was called the **Daily Invocation Ceremony**) which occurred every evening of the Exposition. The closing of the ceremony culminated in a choreographed release of the butterflies from the dome of Low Memorial Library (named not for former Columbia President Seth Low but for his father, Abiel Abbot Low).



Many wonder if Amelia Earhart was involved in the **Butterfly Release**, as she was already familiar with scaling the dome from her brief stint as a student at Columbia University in the years just prior to the Exposition.

Before you go, take a moment to imagine the *Daily Invocation Ceremony* which likely featured a keynote speaker, live entertainment and, the cherry on top, the stupendous butterfly release.

In the grand tradition of Roarin' Strolls, we encourage you to embody history and **bring the past to life** by singing a little song, flitting around the plaza like a butterfly or just clapping your hands in some spirited applause in memory of the events of the Expo.

**This stop concludes our historical walking tour of The Columbia Exposition of 1921. We hope you will carry its memory with you, having traced its worn footsteps 100 years after it almost faded away completely into the mists of the past.**



## LEGAL DISCLAIMER

While we at Roarin' Strolls do not in fact have any evidence that the events of the so-called "Columbia Exposition" actually occurred, we also cannot definitively prove that an event of this magnitude and importance *did not* in fact take place on these grounds 100 years ago.

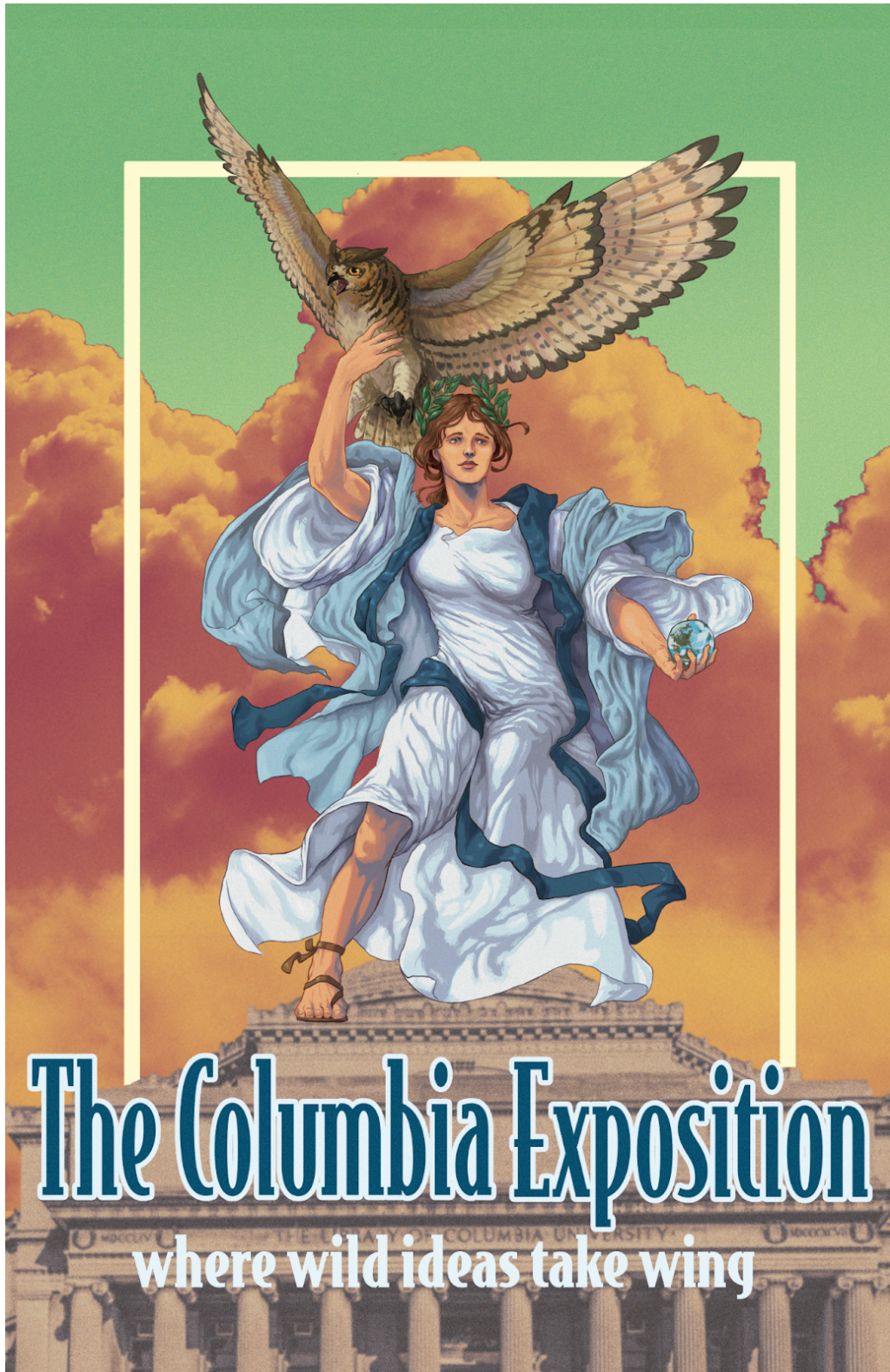
Whether fictitious or true, we have chosen to communally speculate on the subjunctive past to recreate forgotten history. With each tour, you have helped to bring the plausible events of history to genuine life here in the present.

We thank you for your involvement.

And for not suing us.

## Bibliography

- Baker, Thomas Nathan. *The Fathers of Bronx Botany, with Urban Planning Applications*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1926.
- Bergdoll, Barry. *Mastering McKim's Plan: Columbia's first Century on Morningside Heights*. New York: CU, Miriam and Ira Wallach Art Gallery, 1997.
- Bernstein, Mark F. *Football: The Ivy League Origins of an American Obsession*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c2001.
- Bowery Boys, "Movin' on up: From King's College to Columbia University", *The Bowery Boys New York City History*, #90, 11 Sept. 2009, <https://www.boweryboyshistory.com/2009/09/movin-on-up-from-kings-college-to.html>. Accessed 1 July 2021.
- Canadelli, Elena eds. *Behind the Exhibit: Displaying Science and Technology at World's Fairs and Museums in the Twentieth Century*. Washington, D.C. : Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2019.
- Chambers, Julius. "Bloomingdale Asylum Expose", in *The New York Tribune* Tuesday, 28 Aug. 1872. New York: 1872.
- Columbia University. Committee on General Catalogue. *Columbia University Alumni Register and Yearbook, 1754-1931*. New York: Columbia UP, 1932.
- Columbia University. *Guide for Foreign Visitors at Columbia University, 1921-1922*. New York: Columbia UP, 1922.
- Columbia University Archive. *Columbia University in World War I Collection, 1914-1970*. New York: Columbia UP, 1971.
- Country Life in a Big City*. New York: Williamsburgh Post Card Co., 1910.
- Dolkart, Andrew. *Morningside Heights: A History of its Architecture & Development*. New York: CU Press, 1998.
- Donadio, Caroline. "Candlelight Sunday Supper in the Archives", *International House*, 4 May 2021, [https://www.ihouse-nyc.org/news\\_events/candlelight-sunday-supper-in-the-archives/](https://www.ihouse-nyc.org/news_events/candlelight-sunday-supper-in-the-archives/) accessed 1 July 2021.
- Fried, Frederick. *A Pictorial History of the Carousel*. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1964.
- Green, Jeremy. *Influenza and Aspirin: Bayer's Financial Empire in the Deadliest Global Pandemic in History*. New York: Sterling, c2003.
- Johnson, Robert DeWitt. *Morningside Home: Psycho-geographical Origins of Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Columbia UP, c1972.
- Kaetzel, Andrew. *In Search of Expo 93: Chicago World Fair and its Radiance in New York City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c1994.
- King, Shannon. *Whose Harlem Is This, Anyway? : Community Politics and Grassroots Activism during the New Negro Era*. New York: New York UP, 2015.
- Leach, William. *Butterfly People: An American Encounter with the Beauty of the World*. New York: Pantheon Books, c2013.
- Newman, Burton Nicols. *City of Night: Prohibition, Politics and Amusement in the Manhattan 20s*. New York: Scribner, 2004.
- Rigdon, Liv. *Art Deco Handbook: A Visual Guide to a Decorative Style in the 1920s*. Colorado Springs: Creative Arts Publishing, 2021.
- Rogers, Rebecca. *Women in International and Universal Exhibitions, 1876-1937*. London: Taylor and Francis, 2017.
- Smith, Barbarah. *The Discovery of the Child: Children in America, 1900-1945*. New York: Twayne, 1987.
- Weelinger, Adrian. *Nursing, Professional Education, and the Privilege of Prescription: A History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, c2009.
- Zoehfeld, Katheleen Weidner. *Wild Lives: a History of the People & Animals of the Bronx Zoo*. New York: A. A. Knopf, c2006.
- Further Reading:**
- Andlin, R.S. *Rusty Capsule: Reiterating the 1921 Columbia Exposition*. New York: Columbia UP, 1971.
- Avron, Jerry et al. *Up against the Ivy Wall: a History of the Columbia Crisis*, by Jerry L. Acorn, with Andrew Crane [and others] of the Staff of the *Columbia Daily Spectator*. Edited with an Introduction by Robert Friedman. New York, Atheneum Press, 1969 [c 1968].
- Berezovsky, Esther eds. *The Encyclopedia of History of Columbia University, Volume III: 1945-1980*. New York: Columbia UP, 2004.
- Bradley, Stefan M. *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, c2009.
- Canter, Mia. *Field Trip to the Future: An Adventurous Departure from Columbia University in 1921*. New York: Columbia UP, 1971.
- Chu, Jacqueline. "Traveler from Nanking: the Forgotten Account on the 1921 Bedazzlement by Wu Zhong-Yi", in *CU Columbus Studies*, June 1971. New York: 1971.
- Columbia University Archive. 1968, *Columbia in Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Archives, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 2011.
- Columbia University. University Senate. *Columbia University Senate Records, 1968-2008*. New York: Columbia University Archives <Offsite>, 2008.
- Foster, Kate. *A Post-Crisis Re-discovery: Oral History Interviews with Earl Jenkins, Jane Leigh, Samuel Breedlove, Andreas Tyrone et al*. Detroit: Aletheia Books, 1975.
- Kurlansky, Mark. 1968: *The Year that Rocked the World*. New York: Ballantine, 2004.
- Rosenberg, Rosalind. *Changing the Subject: How the Women of Columbia Shaped the Way We Think about Sex and Politics*. New York: CU Press, c2004.
- Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2002.
- Yang, Siting. *Topography of Revolution: Liberated Zone and Spatial Politics in the 1968 Uprising*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2021.



Poster restoration by Eleanor Lewis as commissioned by the Curatorial Team of  
*The Forgotten Columbia Exposition*