The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 26
"America's Coming Out Party"
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

You can talk all you want about naval power and the Spanish-American War, and imperialism, but the moment when the United States of America truly took its place on the world stage was the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Other nations have navies and colonies, but what country do you think of when you think of hamburgers and hot dogs, of marching bands and ragtime, of Jack Daniel's and iced tea? The 1904 World's Fair was big and brash, cutting-edge and crass, awe-inspiring and over-the-top, international, multicultural, sports-crazy, and more than a little bit racist. It was America's coming out party.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

[music: Sousa, *The Washington Post*]

Episode 26. America's Coming Out Party.

The story of the 1904 Exposition begins with the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Columbian Exposition was organized to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of the New World in 1492. And yeah, they were a year late, but you know it takes time to get these things organized. The Columbian Exposition was regarded as a huge success. It was the first exposition of its kind to host pavilions representing each of the many different nations of the world, as would afterward become the norm at these kind of events, and it also did a lot to raise America's stature in the world. Yeah, everyone thought that the Columbian Exposition was a great success – except for the city fathers of that other great American city of the midwest, St. Louis, who were left wondering how anyone ever thought that the "hog butcher for the world" would be the place to host the international exposition when St. Louis is right there just down the rail line.

And so, by the time they were padlocking the gates on the Columbian Exposition, the city fathers of St. Louis were plotting an exposition of their own. As it happens, 1903 would be the 100th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase, which was in 1803 and was of course a major historical event crucial to the development of the United States. And St. Louis, at the confluence of the Missouri and upper Mississippi Rivers, the starting place for the Lewis & Clark expedition, would be the natural place to host a Louisiana Purchase Exposition, right? Congress approved a bill granting St. Louis the right to hold the exhibition in March in 1901, and the 1903 Louisiana Purchase Exposition will be the biggest and best world exposition ever, and make everyone forget that Chicago even exists.

Wait a minute, I hear you cry, I thought you said this was going to be the 1904 Exposition. Yeah, about that… bear with me for a minute. Speaking of 1904, that was the year of the third modern Olympics. As we've already seen, the modern Olympic movement only got going in the 1890s, and the first modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896. To the Greeks, it was obvious that every Olympics should be held in Greece, but not everyone agreed with that, particularly Pierre de Coubertin, the guy who basically thought up the idea and got it going and was president of the International Olympic Committee at the time. And so the 1900 Olympics were held in Paris at the same time as the Paris Exposition of 1900, as we saw in the last episode.

In February 1901, a number of Chicago businessmen and faculty members at the University of Chicago went public with an announcement that they were going to put together a bid for Chicago to host the 1904 Olympics. Other American cities contemplating a bid that year were New York and Philadelphia, but it turned out in the end that the only other American city that submitted a bid that year would be St. Louis, because hey, Chicago? Are you kidding me? But America's sports authorities, like the recently-formed Amateur Athletic Union, backed the Chicago bid, and the International Olympic Committee voted unanimously for Chicago in May. The *Chicago Tribune* remarked that beating out a small city like St. Louis "is nothing to be specially proud of". Meanwhile, back in St. Louis, organizing the exposition was taking longer than they figured, and they had to delay it until 1904, because it takes time for 62 foreign nations and 43 of the 45 US states to design, build and ship in all their exhibits. And anyway, it took Chicago an extra year to get their exposition going too, so there.

But speaking of Chicago, bumping the Louisiana Purchase Exposition into 1904 would mean that two huge international events are going to be going on at the same time on opposite sides of the state of Illinois, which is not an ideal situation. It didn't help that Chiago couldn't get the rights to build their Olympic stadium on the lakefront, as they had originally planned. Nor did it help that the St. Louis Exposition was now wooing the Amateur Athletic Union to run athletic events at the Exposition in competition with the Chicago Olympics, because hey, when people find out there's going to be athletic events in St. Louis, they are totally going to go there, and Chicago, you are screwed.

So in early 1903, with the clock ticking, and with Chicago still having not gotten even so far as acquiring a piece of land on which to build their stadium, and with even the American President, Theodore Roosevelt, now lobbying for the new venue, the International Olympic Committee reluctantly agreed to move the Olympics to St. Louis. De Coubertin hated this idea. He refused to attend the St. Louis Olympics, and said afterward that he "had a sort of presentiment that the Olympiad would match the mediocrity of the town." I think the kids call that a "burn". The father of the Olympics was not pleased with what happened in St. Louis that year.

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition opened on time on April 30, 1904. President Roosevelt did not come, because he was running for reelection that year, and he was afraid people would see a speech at the fair as campaigning. He did send a congratulatory telegram, and he also sent the secretary of war, William Howard Taft, and *USS Nashville*, the gunboat that gave "gunboat diplomacy" its name. John Philip Sousa and his band provided the music at the opening ceremonies.

[music: Sousa, *The Stars and Stripes Forever*]

There were over 180,000 visitors on hand on that first day, and just under 20 million people visited the fair before it closed on December 1. That's 20 million in a country with a population under 80 million. The fair was a huge, sprawling success, so take that, Chicago. And here's a rundown on the good, the bad, and the ugly.

First, the good. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, or the 1904 World's Fair, if you'd like, had a huge cultural impact. It inspired a song: "Meet me in St. Louis, Louis". 40 years later, a movie musical with the same title would be released by MGM starring Judy Garland, who of course won't be born for another 18 years yet. Scott Joplin wrote a piece of music, "The Cascades", inspired by the grand array of fountains and artificial waterfalls that flowed down from the Festival Hall to the artificial lake at the heart of the Exposition. The Festival Hall was a grand building with a 3,500-seat auditorium that hosted receptions, lectures, meetings, and organ concerts, featuring what was then the largest organ in the world. Scott Joplin presumably visited the fair, although I can't document that.

Other fair visitors included the French mathematician Jules Henri Poincaré, who gave a lecture on the principle of relativity, a subject that Albert Einstein is about to run with. Recent Radcliffe College graduate Helen Keller also gave a lecture. The city of Birmingham, Alabama contributed a 50-ton cast-iron statue of the Roman god Vulcan, which was, and is, the world's largest cast-iron statue. After the fair, the statue was returned to Birmingham. It stands today on top of Red Mountain, where the iron in it was quarried, and it is Birmingman's most prominent landmark.

One of the most popular concessions at the Exposition was a reenactment of the Boer War. There was a mock British Army encampment, reconstructions of Black African villages, and twice-daily battle reenactments involving hundreds of reenactors, many of whom were veterans of the actual war. The highlight of these reenactments was our old friend in the flesh, the impossible-to-capture Christiaan de Wet, who would demonstrate his impossible-to-capture-ness twice daily by escaping from the British on horseback, then making a dramatic, 35-foot dive (on the horse) into a pool of water.

And speaking of horses, there was a performing horse at the Exposition named Jim Key. Jim Key was owned by Dr. William Key, a former slave and now veterinarian. The horse supposedly could do addition and subtraction problems, make correct change from a cash register, and other amazing things. You may have heard of the German horse Clever Hans, who was claimed to be able to do similar things at about the same time. Jim Key had already toured the United States and was a popular exhibit at the fair.

The idea that horses can do math is nonsense, of course, but what's important about Jim Key is that William Key emphasized how he had trained his horse without a whip, using patience and humane methods. The movement against animal cruelty was just getting going in the United States at this time, and the Jim Key exhibit brought the issue before millions of Americans. The American Humane Association acknowledged his contribution by making Jim Key an honorary member.

But what interests me the most about the cultural impact of this fair is the food. If you've ever heard anything about the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, you've probably heard that some food or another was reputedly invented for, or introduced at, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The list of foods that this claim is made for is pretty impressive, and it's growing all the time. It includes foods like hamburgers, hot dogs, ice cream cones, peanut butter, cotton candy, iced tea, Dr. Pepper, and puffed wheat cereal. The truth is a little more complicated, so let's take a closer look at this.

First of all, it depends on what you mean by "introduced" at the fair. If by "introduced" you mean "no one in the world ever saw this food before", well then, none of these foods were introduced at the fair. But if you mean by "introduced" that the food was local or ethnic or newly invented, and was not well-known at the time, but it was brought before a much wider audience among millions who visited the fair, and as a result of the fair it became entrenched in American cuisine, well then, yeah, you can say that about some of these foods. Maybe the best way of putting it would be to say that they were popularized at the fair. Okay? You have my permission to say that, just please don't say "invented at the fair", okay?

The food that has the best claim for being popularized at the 1904 World's Fair is the ice cream cone. Ice cream was nothing new, of course, ice cream had been around for many decades. But the idea of taking a crisp waffle, curling it up into a cone while it's still hot, and letting it harden that way, and then putting a scoop of ice cream in the top of it and turning it into a finger food – that was a fairly new idea at the time. And it makes it a really convenient way to eat ice cream at a World's Fair, doesn't it? In 1904, 20 million people were exposed to the idea of walking around in the outdoors, looking at exhibitions and licking an ice cream cone.

And speaking of finger food, the hamburger, the frankfurter, and the wiener, as their names imply, are German foods. St. Louis has a large German immigrant community, so it's no surprise that German ethnic foods were well-known there. The American innovation is wrapping them in bread and turning them into finger food. In Hamburg, hamburgers are a sort of poor man's steak. You eat them on a plate with gravy and maybe mushrooms if you're lucky. Now, there are conflicting claims about exactly when and where people started wrapping these things up in bread, but it certainly happened in the United States first, and it certainly happened before 1904. The hot dog was already associated with baseball games by this time. But again, I think the real significance here is that these are finger foods. They're the perfect thing to eat while you're walking around and taking in the fair, and that no doubt made them immensely popular, and an idea that people took back home with them. And ever since the fair, it has been socially and culturally impossible in the United States to hold any kind of outdoor event, celebration or exhibition during the summer months without serving hamburgers, hot dogs, and ice cream cones.

I can't tell you how disappointed we were here at *The History of the Twentieth Century* when we were researching this episode and learned that all the stories we had been taught in childhood about how George Washington Carver invented peanut butter were revealed to be entirely fiction. Peanuts are a New World food, and people have been grinding them into a paste since pre-columbian times. But actual peanut butter was invented by, of all things, a Canadian. Specifically, Marcellus Gilmore Edson, a chemist (that's if you're in Canada, in the United States you would say "druggist") who patented his idea back when George Washington Carver was still a 20-year-old whiz kid trying to find a college that would accept him even though he was an African-American. By the way, I definitely want to talk about George Washington Carver, but I'm afraid that's going to have to wait for a future episode.

As far as Marcellus Gilmore Edson is concerned, the idea behind his invention of peanut butter was to create a soft and nutritious source of protein suitable for people who couldn't chew. You can probably guess that dental hygiene wasn't very good in those days, and there were a lot of people with bad or missing teeth, so there was a need for a food like this. The distinction between peanut paste and peanut butter is kind of a subtle one, but there is a difference: Peanut butter has added vegetable oil and sugar, partly to give it a more appealing consistency and partly to give it a more appealing taste. Peanut butter would become a hugely popular food in the United States. The National Peanut Council claims that the average American eats 1,500 peanut butter sandwiches during his or her childhood.

Yes, every American loves peanut butter – except for those who have peanut allergies. And, those who find the smell of peanut butter so repulsive that just opening a jar of the stuff is enough to drive them out of the room, like your host. But anyway, the 1904 World's Fair probably has something to do with changing the perception of peanut butter from a medical nutritional supplement kind of thing to something that people eat for pleasure.

Iced tea and Dr. Pepper were already well-known products in the United States by 1904, so you can't credit the fair with them, but I feel confident in saying that large quantities of both were drunk underneath the hot summer sun in St. Louis that year.

A machine for spinning sugar into cotton candy was first invented in 1897, but again, the 1904 World's Fair brought it before a wider audience. The maker called the stuff "fairy floss" back then, the name "cotton candy" would only come into use later. And I am told that they still call it "fairy floss" in Australia.

Puffed wheat, as I'm sure you know, is the cereal that's shot from guns, generally while Tschaikovsky's *1812 Overture* is playing in the background. No, really, it is, kind of. You made puffed grains by cooking them under pressure, and then suddenly releasing the pressure. Okay, so it's the cereal that's shot from pop guns, whatever. The modern process for doing this was developed in 1901, and yes, it was a product that was popularized at the fair.

Jack Daniel entered his whiskey into competition at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and walked away with the gold medal, and that did for Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey what the Paris Exposition of 1900 did for Campbell's Condensed Soup.

[music: Kerry Mills, “Meet Me In St. Louis, Louis”]

Okay, so that was the good. Now let’s talk about the bad. There were exhibits from many other countries at the fair, as I’ve said. There were also living exhibits of indigenous peoples of territories under U.S. control: Native Americans of many tribes, native Alaskans, and Filipinos, dressed in the traditional clothing of their people. The Filipino men were contractually obligated not to wear shirts, even in November. There were also Ainu from Japan, Patagonians, Africans, and so on. It was, in short, a human zoo, displays of people from various traditional cultures living in reproduction villages, dressed in traditional clothes and performing traditional ceremonies at regular intervals for the entertainment of the crowds. The Philippine exhibit was particularly large, with separate villages for various Filipino ethnic groups. The Igorot exhibit was particularly popular. Audiences were intrigued by the custom of eating dog meat, which the Exposition organizers required the Igorot to do once a day for the edification of the visitors.

One of the Native Americans on display was the now 75-year-old Geronimo. Geronimo was born in 1829 as Goyaałé, not that I’m promising my Apache is as good as it used to be. Geronimo was a name given to him by the Mexican Army, and it’s the name by which he was best known. In his younger days, Geronimo was an Apache military leader who was one of the last Native American leaders to refuse to accept United States rule. He fought both the Mexican and the US Armies, and developed a reputation for escapes that rivalled Christiaan de Wet’s. He was eventually captured by the U.S. Army in 1886. They kept him as a prisoner of war at Fort Sill in the Indian Territory, but the Army let him out occasionally to make public appearances, and his biggest one was at the 1904 World’s Fair, where he sold souvenirs, gave autographs, and posed for pictures for a nickel.

And while I’m on the subject of Geronimo, I suppose this is as good a time as any to bring up the American custom of shouting “Geronimo!” when jumping out of an airplane. There are conflicting stories about where this custom originates, but the most plausible one has it beginning in 1940, during a test jump by an experimental parachute platoon at Fort Benning, Georgia. The night before the jump, the nervous platoon is said to have gone to see a movie at the post movie house for inspiration, apparently the 1939 film *Geronimo*, starring Victor Daniels, the actor who had previously played Tonto in the *Lone Ranger* films. One of these men, a private named Aubrey Eberhardt, announced at the end of the evening that he had found his courage and expected his jump tomorrow to go smoothly. His friends teased him about that, remarking that he would forget his courage by the time he had to go out that airplane door tomorrow morning, and so to prove them wrong, the next day Eberhardt shouted “Geronimo!” at the top of his lungs when he jumped out the plane. Whether or not that story’s true, what is true is that by 1941, the U.S. Army’s first parachute regiment, the 501st, incorporated the name Geronimo into their regimental insignia, with the permission of Geronimo’s family, and it’s been there ever since.

But I guess I’m getting off track, back to the World’s Fair.

One of the other people on display was Ota Benga. Ota Benga was born in 1883-ish, in the northeast Congo, in the area that was David Livingstone's old stomping grounds. Ota Benga was one of the Mbuti people, one of the peoples westerners call "pygmies". Ota Benga was a hunter who had grown to manhood, married, and fathered two children. One day, while he was off hunting, King Leopold's *Force Publique* slaughtered everyone in his village, including Ota Benga's family. Ota Benga himself, now lost and alone in the world, was captured by slave traders.

An American minister named Samuel Verner was hired by the organizers of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition to travel to Africa to recruit pygmies. He wasn't having much luck in his recruitment effort, and if you remember episode 20, you'll probably understand why the natives of the Congo at this time view a white man with suspicion, but then he came across the slave traders, and he paid them a pound of salt and a bolt of cloth in exchange for Ota Benga. The two men travelled the Congo together, and became friends. With Ota Benga as a character reference, Verner was now able to visit a Batwa village and persuade four Batwa men to come along with him and Ota Benga to St. Louis.

Ota Benga proved a popular attraction. His teeth had been filed into points when he was a child, which was the custom among his people. The crowds found this fascinating, and it didn't take Ota Benga long to learn to ask for a nickel before displaying them. His sharp teeth were regarded as evidence that he was a cannibal, and soon the fair was publicizing him as the only cannibal in America.

And if you'll indulge me for a moment here, I can't help but take note of how fascinated the stuffy and still pretty Victorian western world of the early 20th century was with two aspects of the cultures of central Africa: Cannibalism and skimpy clothing. It shouldn't surprise anyone that people who live in the tropics show a lot more skin than Europeans are accustomed to. Victorians visiting these regions were always badgering the natives to wear more clothes, much to the confusion of said natives. Although I can't help but note that westerners in the Congo were able to set aside their moral objections to bare skin long enough to strip Congolese naked and whip them with *chicottes* for trivial offenses… sorry. Westerners were similarly repulsed and fascinated at the same time with reports of cannibalism in tropical Africa. To what degree these reports were true is hard to assess from our vantage point more than a hundred years later, but it's safe to say that it was talked about in the west a whole lot more often than it was practiced in Africa.

And on a personal note, I have to tell you that, as a child growing up in the 20th century, the cartoon images of interior Africa shown to me back then still invariably depicted Black men dressed only in skirts made of leaves and carrying spears. These would be found in villages made of grass huts, and there was no sign of technology aside from ubiquitous cast-iron cauldrons that were like four feet tall and must have held hundreds of gallons of water, that the natives invariably kept over a roaring fire and filled with boiling water on the off chance that some white person (or Bugs Bunny) might wander by.

But I digress. Ota Benga was much talked about at the fair, and called by many different names. My favorite is "Autobank", which sounds more like a drive-thru ATM, but what are you gonna do? Geronimo and Ota Benga reportedly became buddies.

After the fair was over, Verner returned to the Congo with Ota Benga. Ota Benga attempted to live among the Batwa, but they were a very different ethnic group, and he didn't fit in, so he returned to the United States with Verner. Ota Benga then hung out at the American Museum of Natural History for a while, and he became something of an attraction, but he got tired of that. In 1906, he was invited to hang out at the Bronx Zoo. He took an interest in the apes there, and played with the chimpanzees and the orangutans. For a while, the zoo was passing him off as an employee (except, you know, for the part where he gets a paycheck, which he never did), then they encouraged him to hang his hammock in an empty cage in the monkey house. Then they set up a target and encouraged him to practice shooting arrows at it. Then they spread some bones around the cage for atmosphere, and the next thing you know, Ota Benga is an exhibit. Yes, the Bronx Zoo actually had a human being on display in the monkey house.

A group of New York African-American clergy, and many white church people as well, began protesting almost immediately. They opposed both the racism of the display, and also its implied endorsement of Darwin's theory of evolution. They protested to the Mayor of New York City, George McClellan Jr., the son of the Civil War general, but he refused even to meet with them. *The New York Times* editorialized that Ota Benga "is probably enjoying himself as well as he could anywhere in his country, and it is absurd to make moan over the imagined humiliation and degradation he is suffering." Nevertheless, the zoo was eventually sufficiently shamed to stop calling Ota Benga an exhibit, and give him the run of the zoo again.

But by this time, he was something of a celebrity, and he could no longer wander around the zoo without attracting crowds, who would yell at him, poke at him, trip him, and make fun of him. He was moved from the zoo to an African-American orphanage in Brooklyn, until the director of the orphanage, the Reverend James Gordon, could arrange for Ota Benga to be relocated to Lynchburg, Virginia. There, his teeth were capped, he was enrolled in school, he learned a trade, and got to have something like a normal life for the next ten years. But eventually, he would become depressed and homesick for the Congo, and in 1916 he declared he wanted to go back. When it was explained to him that the Great War made it impossible for him to travel to Africa safely, he killed himself. He was in his early 30s.

[music: *Suite for José Rizal*]

So that's the good and the bad. Now let's talk about the ugly. And when I say "ugly", what I mean is the 1904 Olympics. Now, I already mentioned that the 1900 Olympics were held in Paris as part of the 1900 Universal Exposition there, and similarly the 1904 Olympics were part of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and I mentioned that this didn't work out so well either time from the Olympic Committee's point of view. The IOC decided not to make this mistake again – although it will turn out that the 1908 Olympics will be held in conjunction with yet another exposition, but that was an accident, it wasn't according to plan.

The opening ceremony for the Olympics was held on July 1, 1904, but it was not a big event, and no notable guests appeared. The fair tried to hold one "Olympic" event every day until it closed on December 1, but although the fair used the word "Olympic", many of these events did not have IOC sanction. In the end, there were 94 events held that year that are today recognized as Olympic.

Now, the Wright Brothers had only done their thing at Kitty Hawk a few months earlier, so there was of course no such thing as transatlantic air travel during this time. The only way an athlete from Europe could reach the Olympics was by taking a long and expensive steamship ride. Even that only got you as far as the east coast of the United States, and then you would have to take a not very comfortable two-day train trip to get to St. Louis. So, maybe 10 days' total travel time to get you to St. Louis, and of course you're not doing any training while you're travelling. A lot of the athletes couldn't afford to make this trip, or didn't want to, and it didn't help that war had broken out between Japan and Russia earlier this year. Oops, should have given you a spoiler alert there, but we'll get to that in a few more episodes; don't worry, the Russo-Japanese War is going to get the full *History of the Twentieth Century* treatment… soon.

In the end, only 12 nations were represented at the Olympics. There were a total of 651 athletes who participated, but 526 of them were Americans, and over half of the Olympic events held that year had no athletes in the competition who were from any other country. The second-largest national team was from Canada, unsurprisingly, with 56. Germany sent 22, and Greece 14. The other 8 nations in competition had teams numbering in the single digits. So needless to say, America did very well in the medal count that year: 239 in all. So, uh… USA! USA! I guess.

This would be the first Olympics to hand out gold, silver and bronze medals in the way we're familiar with today. Perhaps the most remarkable athlete at the 1904 Olympics was George Eyser, a German-American immigrant with a prosthetic left leg who, nonetheless, won 6 medals in gymnastics. The next time an athlete with a prosthetic leg would compete in the Olympics would not be until Natalie du Toit in 2008. And by the way, if Eyser had been a country instead of a human being, he would have come in fourth in the medal count, behind the US, Germany and the newly-independent Cuba, and tied with Canada. George Poage became the first African-American athlete to win an Olympic medal. He got two in the 200m hurdles, and the 400m hurdles. Another African-American athlete, Joseph Stadler, also won two medals that year. Both of them participated in the Olympics even though some African-Americans were calling for a boycott, because the spectator stands were segregated.

But the most colorful stories of the 1904 Olympics come out of the marathon. It was held on a very hot day, August 30. One of the competitors was a Cuban postman named Félix Carvajal, who raised the money to travel to the Olympics by putting on athletic demonstrations in Havana. Unfortunately, he lost all his money gambling in New Orleans along the way. He had to walk and hitchhike the rest of the way to St. Louis. He arrived at the Olympics penniless, hungry, and exhausted. Oh, and they're starting the marathon in a few minutes! Have you got sneakers? No? Okay, but at least cut your pants into shorts and you can run in your dress shoes.

It seems like he was doing pretty well in spite of these handicaps. He reportedly stopped to chat with spectators, stole some peaches, but then he stole some apples that turned out to be rotten and they made his stomach hurt, so he had to stop and take a nap, because of course he did. In spite of all that, he came in fourth, and returned to Cuba a hero.

This marathon was also the first Olympic event in which not one, but two Black South African athletes competed. Their names were Len Tau and Jan Mashiani, and they were already at the World's Fair because they were part of that Boer War reenactment thing I told you about. They finished 9th and 12th, respectively, although many argue that Len Tau might have won a medal if he hadn't been chased more than a mile off the course by dogs. Then there was Frank Pierce, the first Native American to compete in an Olympic event, but he was unable to finish. Actually, only 19 out of the starting field of 32 marathoners were able to finish the race.

And then there was the American Fred Lorz, who ran pretty well for the first 9 miles. Then he got leg cramps and quit the race. They were going to take him back to the stadium in a car, but the car broke down. Lorz was feeling better by then, so he got out and ran the rest of the way. When he entered the stadium and people started cheering, he thought to himself: "Hey, they think I'm still in the race, and I'm winning!" Then a minute later, he had another thought: "Hey, they think I'm still in the race – *and I'm winning*." So he crossed the finish line and claimed victory. The President's daughter, Alice Roosevelt, was on hand to crown him with a laurel wreath. But then some spectators pointed out that the guy hadn't actually, you know, run the race. When confronted, Lorz admitted that he had not, and the Amateur Athletic Union, which did not find the situation nearly as funny as he did, banned him from competition for a year.

15 minutes later, the actual winner entered the stadium: Thomas Hicks, an English-American immigrant who only managed to finish the race because his trainers were feeding him a mixture a brandy and strychnine (which was supposed to be performance-enhancing, I guess, even though strychnine is more commonly used to poison rats). Hicks's trainers all but carried him across the finish line, and the strychnine almost killed him. But after that thing with Fred Lorz, I suppose this looked like a model of fair play, and so they gave him the gold medal.

And then there were the Anthropology Days, held on August 12 and 13, 1904, an event that lives in infamy. Anthropology Days was also at the time called the Special Olympics, although it has nothing to do with Special Olympics as we know them today. It was the brainchild of James Sullivan, who was the secretary of the Amateur Athletic Union and chairman of athletics at the World's Fair. Sullivan got it into his head that as long as we had all these native people on display at the World's Fair, wouldn't it be fun to bring them together in their own little Olympic competition – you know, Patagonians against Africans, Native Americans against Filipinos, and so on? Just like the real Olympics, only with people we don't respect! So Sullivan contacted the anthropologist William McGee, who was in charge of these native peoples' exhibits at the fair, and proposed doing this as a sort of scientific experiment.

It was organized at the last minute, and pretty haphazard. Bear in mind that the people in these exhibits were professionals, they were being paid to be part of the exhibits. Granted, some of these people were little better than captives, it wasn't like an Igorot who got fed up could just quit and go back to the Philippines without help from the fair organizers. Also, many of them couldn't speak English, so they didn't understand the rules of the competitions when these were hastily explained to them, often just minutes before the event began. And many of them thought: "Hey, I'm not being paid for this, so why the heck should I care?" And many of them thought western-style sports like pole vaulting and tennis looked pretty silly. Seriously? You want me to do *that*?

The first day was all about western-style competitions, and that went badly. The second day, the organizers tried events they figured would be easier for the competitors, stuff like javelin throwing, tree-climbing, archery. But the competitors didn't do very well at these events either. As an anthropology experiment, it was a failure, although it's hard to see how it could possibly have been anything else. McGee couldn't help pointing out that the competitors might have done better if they had been, you know, properly trained and instructed; but as far as Sullivan was concerned it was a great success, because it proved everything he already wanted to believe.

Back in those days, many white people (like Sullivan) took it for granted that white people were superior to other races in all fields of human endeavor, including athletics. Sullivan wrote: "The whole meeting proves that the savage has been very much overrated from an athletic point of view. In the future, please omit all reference to the 'natural athletic ability'." As for Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the Olympics, the guy who refused to go to St. Louis and had a premonition that these games were going to be mediocre, he was disgusted. Sullivan's claims, de Coubertin said, "will of course lose their appeal when black men, red men and yellow men learn to jump, run and throw and leave the white men behind." And that, my friends, is why the name Pierre de Coubertin is still known and respected to this day, while James Sullivan is… who exactly?

And so, there you have it. The good, the bad, and the ugly. A World's Fair, and an Olympics, for the history books.

We'll have to stop there for today, but I hope you'll join me next week on *The History of the Twentieth Century* as we take a look at the Slavic nations of Eastern Europe, because if you know anything about the 20th century, you know that Slav nationalism is going to be a real big deal. We'll take a look at Slavic history, take a tour of the Slavic nations of Europe, and examine where we stand at the beginning of the century. That's next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

Oh, and one more thing. I mentioned that the Festival Hall at the 1904 World's Fair had the world's largest organ. After the fair closed, the organ was purchased by Philadelphia department store magnate John Wanamaker, who moved it to his store in Center City, Philadelphie, where free organ concerts have been offered ever since. The store is a Macy's now, but there are still free concerts Monday through Saturday in the grand court. And while you're there, you may want to check out the huge bronze eagle in the middle of the court, which is also a souvenir from the World's Fair.

[music: Closing Theme]