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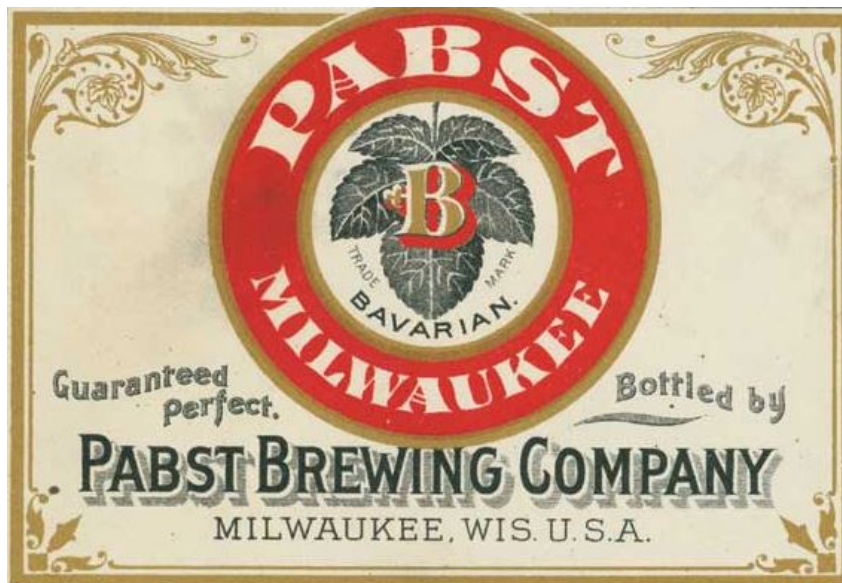
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Pabst Brewing Company and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition Urban Myth Debunked.

THE URBAN MYTHS: 1. Pabst Brewing Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin won their Blue Ribbon at the 1893 Chicago's World Columbian Exposition. 2. Frederick Pabst was a clever marketer and deceived everybody by simply stating that his beer, "Best Select" won the blue ribbon at the World's Columbian Exposition.

MYTHS DEBUNKED: The answer is NO and NO. Pabst had won ribbons and awards at many other previous beer competitions at home and abroad, but not at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Starting in 1882, Pabst had blue silk ribbon tied around the neck of each bottle, to identify it as the winner it was. Considering all the awards that Best Select beer won, it never won a literal "Blue Ribbon" up to that point. The first, according to the company, came at the 1893 World's Fair.



The World's Fair organizers judged the prizes a little differently. Instead of competing directly against each other, the exhibitors, in all categories, were judged against a list of criteria that represented a standard of excellence for that category.

For the beer exhibitions, the judges were told to score each brew on purity, color, and flavor and assign a score between 0 and 100. All beers that scored an 80 or

higher would be awarded a bronze St. Gaudens medallion and certificate. Things didn't exactly work out that way once the exposition opened. The beer judges decided to come up with their own scoring system with ranked prizes awarded based on numerical scores in categories of their own creation. The brewers were left to assume that whoever ended the fair with the highest score "won", never mind that there was, officially, no grand prize and that each medal was bronze and looked the same as all the others.



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Pabst quickly announced himself as the “grand prize winner,” even though his medal and certificate were exactly the same as those won by other brewers. To celebrate, he had the entire brewery in Milwaukee draped in blue ribbon and gave all his workers a day off.

The attention and sales that followed inspired the company to change the beer's name from Best Select to Pabst Blue Ribbon.

Pabst was one of the first executives to understand and utilize a national advertising campaign. More importantly, Pabst realized that he needed to make his product and insignia available and visible everywhere. He managed this by creating a real estate empire that stretched from coast to coast and border to border. Over a period of twenty-five years, hundreds upon hundreds of Pabst taverns or “tied houses” were created and leased all over the country. These tied houses were to display their logo and serve Pabst Brewing Company's products exclusively.

To this day, Pabst continues to boast that their beer was picked as “America's Best in 1893” and has it printed on each and every bottle and can of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer. Additionally, Pabst states on their website that they were awarded the “Gold Medal for Brewing Excellence” at the Exposition, which is also false.



World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893
FRONT OF AWARD



World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893
BACK OF AWARD



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SOURCE: "[After Four Centuries the World's Fair. The Discovery of America to be commemorated by an International Exposition. Chicago, ILL., U.S.A. 1893](#)" – Published by: Department of Publicity and Promotion. World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1891

"Awards are designed to indicate some independent and essential excellence in the article exhibited, and as an evidence of advancement in the state of the art represented by it. They will be granted, upon specific points of excellence or advancement, formulated in words by a Board of Judges or Examiners, who will be competent experts; and the evidence of such awards will be parchment certificates, accompanied by bronze medals. Such awards will constitute an enduring, historical record of development and progress, and at the same time afford exhibitors lasting mementoes of their success."

SOURCE: "The Book of the Fair: an historical and descriptive presentation of the world's science, art, and industry, as viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893." Published by: Hubert Howe Bancroft. The Bancroft Company Publishers, Chicago - San Francisco. 1893 {in my personal collection}

Designed to set forth the Display made by the Congress of Nations, of Human Achievement in Material Form, so as the Effectually to Illustrate the Progress of Mankind in all the Departments of Civilized Life.

"As to awards and medals, it was decided, after much discussion, that they should be distributed among every class of exhibits. By congressional act of April 1890 it was provided that the national commission should, among other functions, "appoint all judges and examiners for the Exposition and award all premiums, if any". At a later session of the national legislature \$100,000 was appropriated for the casting of 50,000 bronze medals and for 50,000 diplomas, this but a small portion of the outlay to be incurred by the committee of awards.

By many of the exhibitors protests were made against awards of any kind, some of them even threatening to withdraw their exhibits on the ground that they had everything to lose and nothing to gain by their goods being classed with those of inferior grade. This question determined, came the method of granting awards, whether by what were termed, in self-explanatory phrase, the single judge or the jury system, the latter the one adopted at former international exhibitions. The former provoked no little opposition, not only from exhibitors, but from the director-general and the chiefs of departments, whose tables were covered with written protests and offers to withdraw applications for exhibiting space. Especially were artists opposed to the single judge system, refusing to submit their work to the judgment of any single member of their profession. By the head



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of the Fine Arts department it was stated before the Board of Control that the adoption of this system would leave the galleries of the Art Palace almost bare of the choicest works of living artists.

Finally it was determined to place all decisions in the hands of juries, competitors to state their intention to compete for prizes, a written report to be filed in each instance, stating why an award had been made or withheld, and with right of appeal to the executive committee, by whom a re-examination might be ordered. In the interests of American artists and of the Department of Fine Arts advisory committees and juries of selection were established in the principal art centers of Europe and the United States. Of the organization and functions of these committees mention will be made in connection with art exhibits.”

SOURCE: [Pabst Mansion Website](#)

“The 1893 Colombian Exposition, also known as the 1893 World’s Fair, was held in Chicago and became a significant event in American history. The Pabst Brewing Company hired noted architect Otto Strack to design a trade pavilion just for this event. Located in the fair’s Agricultural Building, it was used to display Pabst Brewing Company products. At its center stood a thirteen square foot model of the Pabst Brewing Company’s buildings atop an elaborate platform supported by gnomes. The model, originally washed in gold, is said to have cost Captain Pabst \$100,000 and was highly regarded at the fair for its beauty of presentation. The entire structure is of tan terra cotta emblazoned with symbols of the brewing industry including hop vines, beer steins, and the god and goddess of wheat and barley. The entire exterior of the pavilion was highlighted with gold leaf and crowned by a magnificent art glass dome. *In November of 1893, the Pabst Brewing Company was awarded the Gold Medal for Brewing Excellence at the Exposition. (Sorry, there was no blue ribbon.)*”

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