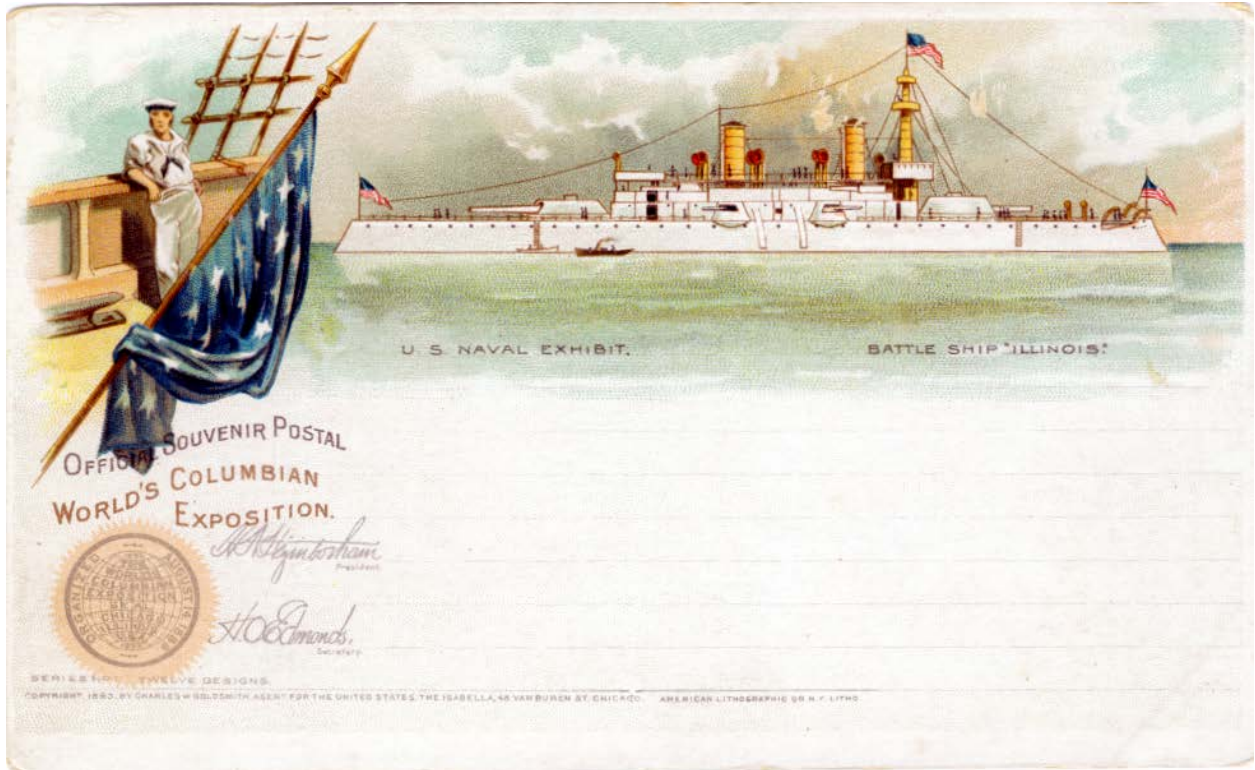
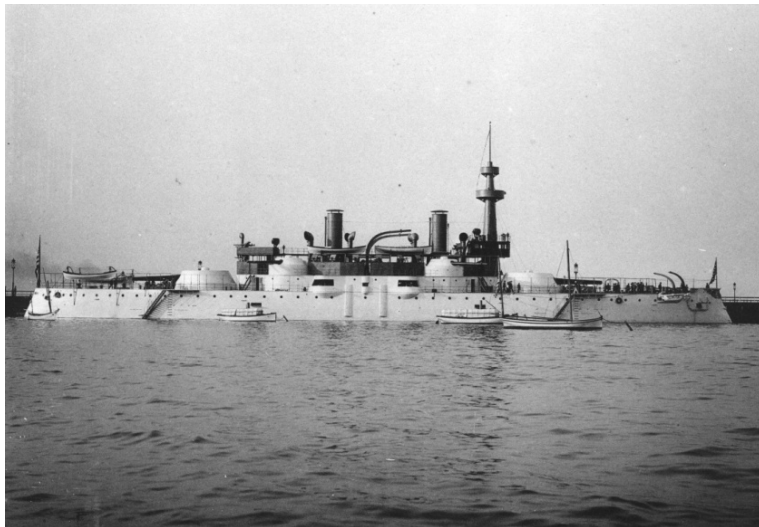


**The Battleship 'Illinois' at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was a mockup made of brick, cement and timbers.**



Courtesy of the Chicago Postcard Museum – [ChicagoPostcardMuseum.org](http://ChicagoPostcardMuseum.org)

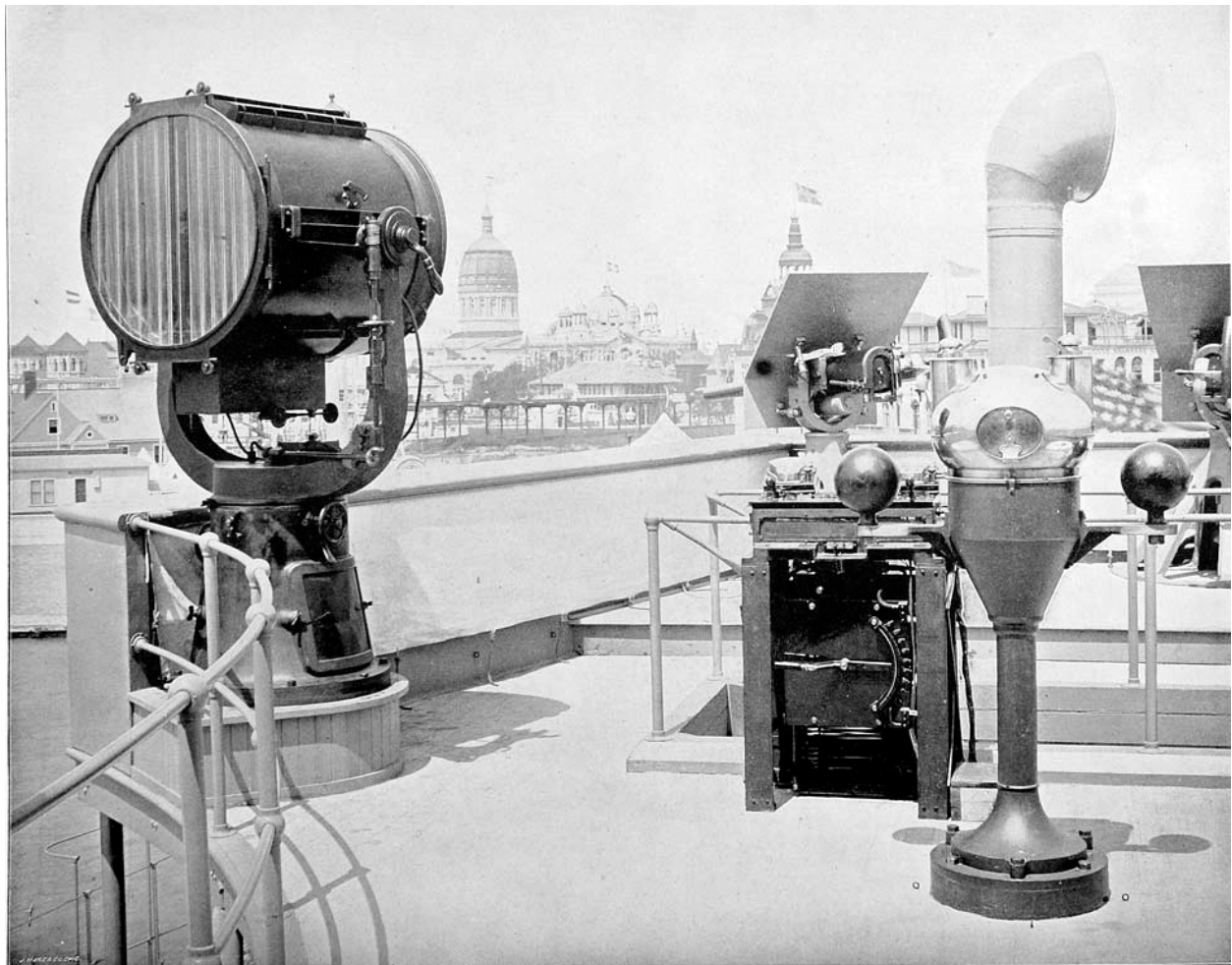
The Battleship 'Illinois' was a detailed, full scale mockup of an Indiana-class battleship, constructed as a naval exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois, in 1893 and displayed along the north pier of the Exposition.



In the decade preceding the Columbian Exposition, the United States Navy initiated a fleet modernization program. Sometimes referred to as the 'New Navy', the first steel-hulled warships were constructed to replace the wooden and ironclad ships from the American Civil War period. In 1891, the first class of modern American battleships, the Indiana-class, was laid down. These warships included modern technologies absent in their Civil War-era predecessors, particularly electricity and electrically-driven

devices. When the Columbian Exposition was being planned, it was decided to showcase this new naval technology. However, the Rush–Bagot Treaty forbade warships to operate on the Great Lakes [1].

Furthermore, a battleship built on the Great Lakes would have been confined there for its entire existence because, prior to opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, there was no way for it to leave the Great Lakes. As a result, it was decided that a full-scale replica of a battleship would be constructed instead. This mock-up would permit the demonstration of new technologies being used in the Indiana-class warships. In keeping with the Navy's policy of naming battleships after states and in honor of the Exposition's location, the facsimile battleship was called Illinois.



Illinois was constructed alongside a pier and gave the appearance that she was moored to the wharf. She was designed by architect Frank W. Grogan, and built at a cost of \$100,000.

A foundation of pilings and heavy timbers were built in Lake Michigan, at the north-east corner of the exposition grounds. The sides of Illinois were constructed of brick, plastered with cement. The hull structure was carefully constructed to match the contour of the Indiana-class warships.

A superstructure, redoubts, barbettes, turrets and main and secondary guns were assembled using wood framing, covered with cement and metal lathing. Fittings and details, such as

anchors, torpedo nets, davits, railings, and a multitude of other details, gave the appearance of a functioning warship. Within the superstructure were berthing spaces, cabins, galley, and other living spaces all constructed to emulate realistic living conditions on American battleships. As a result of the attention to detail, Illinois was a faithful reproduction of a coastal battleship.

*[1] The Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817 between the U.S. and Great Britain provides for the demilitarization of the Great Lakes, making it plausible that the U.S. would build a fake battleship rather than alarm the British. The implication is that, were it not for Rush-Bagot, the federal government would have built an actual battleship in Lake Michigan for public showing. The battleship would have been confined to the Great Lakes for its entire existence because, prior to opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, there was no way to get it out to open sea.*

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