

BORN FROM DILEMMA: AMERICA AWAKENS TO THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES, 1901-1903

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When the first celebration of the Modern Olympic Games was concluded in Greece in early April 1896, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin was euphoric. Though the *renovateur* had little to do with organizing the great festival in Athens, he was satisfied that his grand blueprint plan for translating international sport into harmony and understanding between people and nations of the world had been launched on an auspicious note. In the Baron's mind, future Olympic festivals would surely advance his quest for eventual world consciousness of Olympism.¹ Such optimism was destined for serious deflation. On balance, the Games of the 2nd Olympiad were a failure, doomed from the outset of their planning and execution by interfering government officials, bickering French amateur sport functionaries, poor facilities, and envelopment by the Paris Exposition of 1900.² Even the association of the word *Olympic* with the Paris contests was opaque at best.

In the United States the subject of Olympic Games was neither well known nor understood. Scant notation appeared in American newspapers during the days leading up to the first Games staged by the Greeks in 1896. Further, the highly successful Athenian sports festival elicited but limited American newspaper treatment during its eight day tenure and in the days and weeks after its conclusion. Newspaper information that did appear was limited almost entirely to northeastern publications, in particular, tabloids published in the Boston and New York areas;³ and this, after significant achievement by American track and field athletes.⁴ When the Games of 1900 unfolded in Paris, American athletes, most of them eastern university men, once again scored handsome victories.⁵ Modest newspaper attention followed, much of it ignoring the term *Olympic* in describing the contests.⁶ In general, the first two editions of

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the Modern Olympic Games were like ‘lost weekends’ in American sport psyches. Thus, for the Olympic Games to generate broad national interest in the United States—a country which had dominated the track and field contests of the first two editions of the Games—an Olympic occasion of more relevance than an obscure athletic festival held in a far away foreign land would have to occur. The most glorious of “Olympic occasions,” of course, are celebrations of the Olympic Games themselves. Only by hosting such a spectacle might the “Olympic aura” be witnessed firsthand and its symbolism appreciated in the country which had long since gained parity with Great Britain as the world’s most powerful sporting nations.

Six years before his death, the Baron de Coubertin sat down to write his memoirs, informing his readers that it had been understood from the beginning (i.e. the Sorbonne Conference, 1894) that the 1900 Games planned for Paris would be followed four years later by an Olympic festival in America, completing, as he phrased it “. . . the original trinity chosen to emphasize the world character of the institution and establish it on a firm footing.”⁷ On this point, however, the record does not square with the Baron’s memory. In fact, neither does it square with the Baron’s own statement made some six months after the conclusion of the 1896 festival. Reflecting on the first edition of the Olympic Games in the American publication, *The Century Magazine*, Coubertin himself posed the question: ‘Where will those (the Games) of 1904 take place? Perhaps at New York, perhaps at Berlin or at Stockholm. The question is soon to be decided.’⁸ Thus, it was not at all decided at the Sorbonne that the Games of the 3rd Olympiad would be celebrated in America. After deciding on Athens (over London) for 1896, and Paris for 1900, the remaining decision made at the Sorbonne Conference on succeeding sites for the Games was that they would occur quadrennially *dans d’autres villes du monde*.⁹ America was not a predetermined *defacto* choice of the IOC for the 1904 Games. Indeed, if America was to host the festival, then, as now, it would have to prepare a bid and win the blessing of the IOC.

THE AWARD

Before the Games of 1900 unfolded in Paris, IOC members thought about a 1904 host. After witnessing a mysterious set of circumstances at the Sorbonne Conference, at which time a motion to hold the inaugural Games in London was tabled, then reversed in favor of Athens,¹⁰ British amateur sports officials had some confidence that England (London) would host in 1904.

Though sympathetic to this, American IOC members also conferred with Coubertin on possible hosting sites in the United States. In this regard, four American cities (Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and St. Louis) were eventually considered by the Baron and his IOC.

Philadelphia was the first American city to bid for the Games of 1904. In the spring of 1899 University of Pennsylvania athletes recorded signal successes at the American intercollegiate track and field championships, winning nine of the thirteen events on the program. That achievement established the venerable Ivy League institution as the premier university track and field power in the United States. Elated by all this, Penn's athletic officials announced plans for its athletes to compete in Europe the following year; first, in competitions with British university sportsmen, and afterwards, participation in the track and field events of the 1900 Olympic Games scheduled for Paris.¹¹ Prior to the departure of Penn's track and field team for Europe in the early summer of 1900, its athletic directorate corresponded with British amateur sport officials on the prospect of "moving" the Olympic Games of 1904 from London to Philadelphia. When Penn's athletes embarked for England in June, they were accompanied by Frank Ellis, a Penn graduate and former chairman of the university's track and field committee. Ellis sailed with authorization to negotiate final details for a transfer of the Games. In late July, as the Games of the 2nd Olympiad were concluded in Paris, the *New York Times* trumpeted the fruits of Ellis' labors with the following headline: "Olympic Games in America."¹² *The Chicago Tribune* repeated the headline and added its own subheading: "Philadelphia will probably secure the quadrennial event."¹³

John Lucas has referred to this incident as "bizarre," contending that Penn's gesture for hosting the Games was stimulated solely by enthusiasm to stage track and field activities, not a multi-sport spectacle.¹⁴ Despite Lucas's contention, there is clear evidence that Penn's interest was taken seriously by Olympic officials, including Coubertin. In Paris, Henri Bréal, Secretary of the Franco-American Committee, had contacted Coubertin on the question of the 1904 Games. Bréal, no stranger to Olympic affairs, represented the interests of Chicago as a possible 1904 host. When the two met, Coubertin told Bréal of Penn's interest in hosting the Games. This news prompted Bréal to write to Henry J. Furber, one of his two Chicago contacts (the other was French Consul-General, Henri Merou),¹⁵ warning that "the University of Pennsylvania has made precise and serious offers through its athletic association to secure the honor of hosting the Games."¹⁶ We learn no more of Penn's quest to gain the

Games for Philadelphia, except insofar as its obvious intent served to stimulate Chicago officials to act with moderate dispatch on their own behalf.

If Philadelphia's bid for the Games was both brief and limited, another city's quest for them was even more so. The fact that New York became a consideration for hosting the Games in 1904 can be traced to the thinking of William Milligan Sloane, senior American member of the IOC. Obviously, in athletic matters concerning the United States and the Olympic Movement, Coubertin sought the advice and counsel of his IOC colleagues in America. This was particularly true with respect to Sloane, with whom the Baron had enjoyed a friendship for well over a decade.¹⁷ With nothing decided, and no official declaration having been made by any prospective host city, American or otherwise, Coubertin, for reasons we are uncertain of, announced on November 11, 1900 from his home in Paris, that following consultation with his committee, either New York or Chicago would be the site of the 1904 Olympic Games.¹⁸ The very next day, *The New York Sun* published the Baron's announcement, adding that Coubertin had "received from President Harper of the University of Chicago an important letter which evidently makes the Baron feel in favor of Chicago."¹⁹ Two days later a quick denial from Harper of having written such a letter was published by *The Sun's* competitor, *The New York Daily Tribune*.²⁰

Coubertin's disclosure did not escape the attention of James E. Sullivan, outspoken and often confrontational leader of the American A.A.U. In still another of the episodes that continually strained their relationship, Sullivan proceeded to inform those who read New York newspapers that Coubertin had no jurisdiction over Olympic matters in the United States, having been stripped of his control of international athletics by French sports authorities during their management of the recently completed Paris Games.²¹ There is little doubt that Sullivan viewed his A.A.U. as the sole certifying agent for staging Olympic Games in America, based solely, of course, on his perception that when amateur athletics occurred in the United States they were subject to the rules of domestic sports governing bodies. In his concluding remarks published in *The Sun*, Sullivan emphasized that it might be possible to hold the 1904 Games in the United States, "provided President Harper apply to the new union (A.A.U.), as it will be impossible to hold a successful meeting without the consent of that body."²²

The New York newspaper announcements prompted Sloane to correspond with Coubertin. "I am not sure," mused Sloane in a letter to the Baron written in early December, 1900 "but I think it would be possible to unite our four oldest universities in a plan to hold the games of 1904 in New York."²³ Sloane posed

an alternative consideration to his friend: "On the other hand, I rather incline to having them in Chicago. They would be a much greater educational force there than anywhere else in the country and would draw a larger, more enthusiastic audience."²⁴ Sloane's comment on the Games being "a much greater educational force" in Chicago than in New York clearly underscores the hope (and concern) of IOC members that people all across America become aware of the *Olympic Games*, an awareness that appeared to be absent beyond the New England/New York/Pennsylvania areas of the northeastern United States.²⁵

Sloane's letter prompted a published statement from the Baron in his *Revue Olympique*: "It seems now very probable that the next Olympian games will take place in America, and people agree generally that, at the meeting which will be held shortly, the members of the International Olympic Committee will have to decide in favor of the New World. A rivalry was thought to arise between New York and Chicago; but Chicago seems to have already taken the lead."²⁶ The Baron was right; Chicago had taken the lead, even though no official announcement of intention had arrived at the Baron's Paris home by New Year's Day 1901. Indeed, such a declaration would not arrive until four months later.

To date, no Olympic historian has deciphered the entire set of circumstances surrounding the award of the 1904 Olympic Games to its original American host, the city of Chicago. Bill Henry comes closest to the mark.²⁷ But even his description and analysis falls short, mainly because he relied on but two archival sources: Coubertin's memoirs and *Revue Olympique*. The full scenario is far too complex for such a limited approach. A study of the material related to Chicago's bid for, and eventual award of, the Games underscores beyond all doubt the major player in the drama. That individual was not William Rainey Harper, as Coubertin often led us to believe, but rather, Henry J. Furber Jr. Furber left none of his private papers to posterity, therefore, my investigation and analysis centers on letters to and from Furber found in both American and European primary source repositories.²⁸

History has reported very little of Henry J. Furber Jr., architect and executer of Chicago's successful bid for the 1904 Games, and, subsequently, president of the city's Olympian Games Organizing Committee. In effect, he is an almost unknown name in United States Olympic history. Henry Jewett Furber Jr. was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1866, making him contemporary to Coubertin.²⁹ Furber's father was born in New Hampshire and educated at Bowdoin College in Maine and the University of Wisconsin. By the early 1890s Furber Sr. had ascended to the upper ranks of the social and financial elite of Chicago, the city of his residence and career interest after 1865. He was a partner

in one of the city's leading law firms (Higgins, Furber & Cothran) and owned extensive Chicago real estate, including some of the Windy City's most distinguished buildings. He was also one of the world's most avid collectors of Christopher Columbus memorabilia, many items of which were displayed at the Chicago World's Fair and Exposition of 1893. The splendid collection, which included a huge Ezekial bronze of history's most storied admiral, might have been viewed by Coubertin when he himself attended 'that grand and glorious spectacle.'³⁰

Furber Jr. was an achiever cut from his father's example. He earned an undergraduate degree from the Old University of Chicago in 1886, followed by a Bowdoin M.A. and subsequent study for five years at various German universities. His studies in Germany were culminated by the award of a PhD from the University of Halle in 1891. His published doctoral dissertation, *Geschichte der Okonomischen Theorien in Amerika*, launched him on a scholarly path that produced frequent contributions to economic journals and reviews. Like Coubertin, Furber was a man of letters. And, like his father, young Furber rose to the pinnacle of Chicago's influential elite, evidenced in part by his membership in the prestigious Chicago Literary Society, the Chicago Athletic Club, and both the Columbia and Chicago Yacht Clubs. During the period of time germane to this investigation (1900–1903), Furber was a member of the corporate law firm, Steere & Furber. As well, Furber owned numerous real estate and insurance interests in Chicago. Like Coubertin, he was a man of substance. Unlike the Baron, however, Furber's wealth was earned through initiative and financial risk-taking in law and business environments.

We are not certain when Chicago first became interested in hosting the 1904 Olympic Games, but from references and asides noted in private letters written in late 1900 it is reasonable to suggest that a small group of Chicago citizens, which included Furber, met sometime in the late summer of that year to discuss the possibility. It may well have been accounts of the Paris Games published in *The Chicago Tribune* that prompted the group's initial activities.³¹ Their informal discussions came to the attention of Henri Merou, chief legate of the French Consulate headquartered in Chicago. Merou, in turn, informed the secretary of the France–American Committee in Paris, the previously mentioned Henri Bréal. Communication ensued between Furber, Merou and Bréal which focussed on Chicago making an overture to host the Games. In August 1900 Bréal wrote to Furber, relating that he had "set to work . . . concerning the Olympic Games project." Bréal also disclosed that he had visited Coubertin, to whom he referred as "a very active member of the Committee of the Games." Bréal concluded that

“in order for headway to be made plans must become more precise and the help of the University of Chicago enlisted.”³²

Almost two months passed with no response from Furber. An alarmed Bréal wrote to the Chicago lawyer once again, warning that the University of Pennsylvania was making a concerted effort to secure the Games, and that Chicago should act at once to send an official letter to him in Paris for transmission to Coubertin . . . “enumerating the grounds, moral, political or financial (for this item should not be overlooked) which militates in favor of Chicago.”³³ This time Bréal’s letter prompted reaction. As Halloween 1900 descended on Chicago, Furber wrote to William Rainey Harper, the influential and powerful president of the University of Chicago. Harper had been a member of Chicago’s original “Olympic discussion group.” Stated Furber:

Now my dear Dr. Harper, inasmuch as Consul Merou of Chicago, at present in Paris, and Mr. Bréal, as well as myself, have undertaken to create a movement in favor of Chicago, we must ask that, in justice to all concerned, a committee, such as we already have considered, be appointed in order that we may formulate some definite plan of action and be able to follow up our general declaration of intention.³⁴

Harper promptly wrote to five University of Chicago colleagues, including the institution’s famous football coach, Amos Alonzo Stagg, requesting that they serve on a committee such as Furber proposed.³⁵ Of those Harper nominated, Stagg was by far the most important for Chicago’s Olympic plans. Not only was he well-versed in matters concerning sport organization and administration, he had attended the 1900 Games, encountering experiences in Paris that would most certainly be of value if Chicago were to host the Olympic Games. Furber lost no time in inviting Stagg to lunch at his opulent offices in Chicago’s Stock Exchange Building (often called the Rookery), stating that he would like to “discuss certain features of these games . . . before consulting with the committee of the whole.”³⁶

Meanwhile, Coubertin had been made aware of Chicago’s interest through communication with Bréal in Paris. Lamenting the lack of an official proposal from any American city, including Chicago, the Baron told Bréal that the hosting issue for the 1904 Games would be decided by the IOC “next spring” (1901) and “I shall be delighted if I am able to communicate a definite plan” (from Chicago).³⁷

Between November 1900 and mid-February 1901 the record is silent on Chicago efforts for framing a plan which Coubertin might present to his

committee. The Baron wrote to Furber asking for information: “something official,” he said. The Christmas and New Year’s holidays passed. Still no response from Furber. But, Olympic matters were receiving attention in Chicago. On February 13, 1901 an enlarged committee, the formation of which was the work of Furber, convened at the Chicago Athletic Club and publicly announced the city’s intent to gain the 1904 Olympic Games. An account of the proceedings appeared on the front page in the next day’s *Tribune*.³⁸ The public profile of a phenomenon called “the Olympic Games” appeared to be gaining momentum.

Coubertin himself, however, knew nothing more than what newspapers reported. *The Tribune’s* announcement, also published in *The New York Times*, had been brought to his attention, but he had heard nothing from Chicago officials themselves. This state of affairs pressed him to seek advice from American members of the IOC, of which there were three, William Milligan Sloane, an original Coubertin appointee to the IOC in 1894, and Caspar Whitney and Theodore Stanton, each of whom had only recently been appointed (October 1900) IOC members and had yet to attend a meeting. Sloane became the Baron’s most faithful correspondent. Acknowledging a recent letter from the Baron, Sloane wrote to Coubertin in late February, 1901 and asked if the International Committee was ‘bound to Chicago?’³⁹ A month later Sloane again wrote the Baron, acknowledged receipt of still another letter, and stated that he considered “the matter settled about Chicago and will do my best to further the plan. My only fear is a certain indifference here in the east. But if Yale and Harvard do not interest themselves we can get by without them.”⁴⁰

An April 22nd note from Sloane concluded his correspondence with Coubertin on the American host-city issue. “I have seen Sullivan,” wrote Sloane, “and he is entirely happy. He wants the games at Chicago and he will work like a good fellow.”⁴¹ Indeed, James E. Sullivan had become enamored by the prospect of Chicago as Olympic host. On March 21st, 1901 the American czar of amateur athletics posted a letter to his sometimes nemesis in Paris:

My Dear Baron, there is a great deal of talk here about Chicago getting the Olympian Games. I hope they do. The papers say they are raising a lot of money out there, one paper placing it at \$200,000. If that is so, it is simply marvelous. They could never get that much money in New York.⁴²

In late April, Caspar Whitney, president and editor of the popular American sporting publication, *Outing*, wrote to Coubertin stating that after having met with Sloane and Sullivan, “all agreed that Chicago is the place for these games,

and we are prepared to back you to the full extent of our power, provided of course Chicago is prepared to make necessary arrangements . . . ”⁴³ Theodore Stanton, the third American IOC member, cabled Coubertin on March 15th, informing the Baron that Chicago was a much better choice than New York for the Games, attested to by the fact that the great midwestern metropolis had done such a magnificent job in organizing and executing the World Columbian Exposition in 1893.⁴⁴

Occupied by both business and Olympic affairs in Chicago, Henry Furber was tardy in writing to Coubertin, posting a letter in early April in which he acknowledged having received a letter from the Baron, one “which had remained too long unanswered.”⁴⁵ First, he flattered Coubertin, telling him how great a personal pleasure it was to help advance “the great work which you have initiated. The work is great because it is in exactly such international intercourse that nations learn to know and to esteem each other, that friendships are formed, and the world discovers its own fellowship.” Then Furber got to the crux of the reason for his delay in responding to the Baron’s letter, pointing at problems related to the acquisition of financial commitments from Chicago sources for underwriting the cost of the Games. “Board of directors of various Chicago corporations, from which much was expected in the way of financial support,” related Furber, “convened only every six months or so and it is always a question in such cases as to whether or not their good intentions can be given official expression.”⁴⁶

There was more to explain Furber’s delay than what he had communicated to the Baron in his April 4th letter. We are accorded a glimpse of at least one incident that dictated delay on the part of Chicago authorities and, as well, nearly folded Chicago’s Olympic bid plans altogether. In a letter written by Consul Merou to Coubertin in late May 1901, shortly after Chicago had ultimately been awarded the 1904 Games, he congratulated the Baron on the IOC’s decision, and recounted how his own efforts had been critical in leading Chicago to finally make an official bid. Merou related that Harper, “chairman of the finance committee,” had become discouraged by his inability to gain commitments from Chicago’s business community, and further, had recommended to Furber that the Olympic project be abandoned. Merou also claimed that Furber had actually prepared a letter to the Baron with just such a message. Informed by Furber of this proposed action, Merou related that he had paid the Chicago lawyer a swift visit. Together, the two of them had visited Harper, offering persuasive encouragement to continue the project. Harper relented, and all had reached new resolve in pressing ahead with the bid to host the Olympic festival.⁴⁷ Coubertin

knew nothing of this from Furber's long-delayed letter. But, the Baron did know that without proper finance the Games stood little chance of succeeding. Furber's mention of 'financial concerns' no doubt raised a measure of uneasiness in the Baron's mind concerning Chicago's good intentions. Two years later Coubertin's anxieties on this point had expanded so considerably that he sent the Games packing to another city.⁴⁸

In early May 1901 the Baron de Coubertin's quest to possess an official Olympic bid for the 1904 Games was finally realized. On May 1st the Chicago Olympic Games Committee, under Furber's direction, sent Coubertin an official request to host the Games. The document, signed by thirteen Chicagoans, assured IOC members that "efforts we have made to secure the funds which properly provide for the holding of said contests, had been such as to convince us all of the warm support and interest of our fellow citizens and of our ability to carry out the plans proposed."⁴⁹ It is important to note here that the letter also expressed the financial agreement between the two parties: "And we further agree that all gate receipts and other revenues from the holding of said games, over and above the money thereon and in connection therewith actually expended plus 10% per annum, for the term of the investment, shall, in the manner set forth in the said prospectus, become the property of the International Olympic Committee."⁵⁰ The next day (May 2nd) Furber wrote a personal letter to Coubertin, expressing the hope that Chicago, "which has never failed of success, will have the opportunity of exerting its energies in promoting this great work which you have so well organized."⁵¹ Attached to Furber's letter was a note from Harper, assuring that the Chicago Committee would receive complete cooperation from the University of Chicago on "matters pertaining to grounds, grandstands, and training quarters."⁵²

The IOC was scheduled to meet in Paris at *Le Club Automobile de France* on May 19–21, 1901, at which time the final decision on the 1904 Olympic Games host city would be made. Clearly, the University of Pennsylvania and the city of New York as possible sites had been dismissed. Chicago appeared a certainty. But, at almost the last moment another candidate entered a bid to host the 1904 Games. Realizing the economic and national prestige advantages gained by Chicago as a result of its execution of the 1893 World's Fair, the city of St. Louis sought to capitalize in the same manner, initiating plans to stage a huge world's festival of its own in 1903—an exposition to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. Planning for the affair commenced in the late 1890s. By New Year's Day 1901 national and world-wide interest in being a part of the exposition proceedings had become so great that Fair officials contemplated a

postponement. The necessary facilities and final preparations could not possibly be implemented by 1903. Accordingly, a delay of one year appeared to be the solution.⁵³ Although the Fair's executive delayed until May 1902 to make its official announcement of the one year postponement, there were many in America who were privy to the advance thinking of St. Louis authorities regarding the issue.⁵⁴ Further, some St. Louis and IOC individuals realized what the implications of an Exposition postponement might mean to the *Olympic Games* of 1904. One such person was *Outing's* energetic Caspar Whitney, an individual who seemed to have his finger on the pulse of all matters that concerned American sport. On April 30, 1901 Whitney wrote to Harper in Chicago, telling him of the St. Louis Exposition's possible postponement, and conveying to him the alarming news that St. Louis had made an application to the IOC for the 1904 Games.⁵⁵

When the IOC finally met in Paris in May 1901, Coubertin told the committee members in more detail about the overture from St. Louis. The Baron related that he had received an early April visit to his home in Paris from a resident of St. Louis—Count Penaloza. Penaloza requested that the Olympic Games of 1904 be given to St. Louis, the competitions to be held coincident with the exposition being organized there.⁵⁶ The Count told the Baron that a formal letter of invitation would be sent in short order. Days passed without a response. Finally a note arrived from Penaloza with the information that St. Louis officials were unable to authorize an invitation “at this time.” Instead, he passed along a request from St. Louis authorities asking the IOC to postpone its decision until 1902.⁵⁷

A delay of still another year in naming a host for the 1904 Games was something for which the IOC had little sympathy. Their deliberations at Paris on the hosting issue were swift and decisive. The lone American IOC member in attendance was Theodore Stanton. He presented the case for Chicago, aided immeasurably by the personal presence and persuasive arguments of Henri Bréal, who, as we have seen, was a zealous worker from the start on behalf of Chicago's attempt to get the Games. There was no representative from St. Louis, nor one from any other American city. The final vote was unanimous. Chicago was declared host for the Games of the Third Olympiad.⁵⁸ The news was conveyed to America immediately.⁵⁹

Almost at once, a relieved Harper wrote to Furber, offering congratulations on the “success of the effort” and praising the lawyer's leadership in the whole endeavor: “No one knows more than I do how much of this success is due to you, and I can assure you that we appreciate your efforts.”⁶⁰ On May 29th

Furber sent a letter to Coubertin, expressed his personal thanks to the IOC for its confidence, and gave assurances that “the success of the games will be signal and complete; and it is the general feeling that in every detail appertaining to the contests, we should fall in no manner below the high standards established by our exposition of 1893.”⁶¹ Despite the upbeat tone of Furber’s letter, a comment made by Consul Merou at the conclusion of his enlightening letter to Coubertin of May 28th, caused the Baron to resolve in his mind that the Chicago group would have to be monitored carefully. “Allow me to congratulate you on the choice of Chicago,” wrote Merou. “It is an excellent choice. However, from time to time you will need to animate their [Chicago’s Olympian Games Committee] good intentions in order take full advantage of the three years left with all required and practical energy.”⁶²

When news of the IOC’s decision was received in Chicago, wild celebration ensued, particularly on the campus of the University of Chicago, which, it had been well known, would be one of the principal sites for the athletic contests. In Paris, Coubertin received Chicago newspaper accounts from Furber describing the celebrations. One of the most graphic descriptions was chosen for publication in the Baron’s *Revue Olympique*.⁶³ It described a mammoth bonfire celebration on Marshall Field at the University of Chicago, a wild affair featuring a crowd of some six thousand, deputations from various Chicago schools and institutes, processions and speeches, including one by Furber. In the aftermath of the City’s jubilation, Alderman W. H. Thompson forwarded a plan to the License Committee of City Council to construct a stadium for the Olympic Games, making perhaps the original version of the now shopworn statements to the effect that following the Games the stadium could be used to furnish the city with a public athletic field for years to come.⁶⁴

Thus ended the initial chapter of the scenario to stage Olympic Games in America for the first time. The Chicago award tells us something about Olympic history’s first really competitive bid, that is, one in which more than one candidate city desired the privilege and distinction of hosting the Games. Additionally, the award scenario provides a background for understanding a subsequent series of controversial events that must be judged as infinitely important in charting the rise of America’s Olympic consciousness. Such controversies surround the transfer of the 1904 Games from Chicago to St. Louis. American newspaper attention given to events occurring between the time of the award of the Games to Chicago in May 1901, until their official transfer to St. Louis almost two years later, did more to enlighten Americans about Olympic Games than did the collective weight of reported American victories achieved in

the first two renditions of the great international sporting affair or, for that matter, the published accounts of the St. Louis Games themselves as they were finally celebrated in September 1904.

THE TRANSFER DILEMMA

Following a short period of satisfaction and initial elation in Chicago generated by having won the Games, a quiescent atmosphere settled over the city and its Olympic organizers, a state that endured for well over a year. Chicago's most industrious worker for getting the Games was put in charge of organizing them. Scarcely a week after the award, Furber wrote to Coubertin, conveying thanks and assurances that Chicago would give the project full and undivided attention.⁶⁵ There was, of course, much to do. Furber endeavored to keep Coubertin posted on several matters, the most pressing of which were: (1) the question of a code of international participation/eligibility rules which the A.A.U. must necessarily play a role in framing; (2) the association of the American president with the Games, hopefully as their patron; (3) gaining appropriations from the United States Congress to help support the grand project; (4) the subscription of state and local funds to finance the greater percentage of Olympic expenses; and (5) the enlistment of support from governments abroad towards boosting foreign athlete participation. Although all were urgent problems that needed solution in the little over three year time period remaining before the opening of the Games planned for September 1904, attention to each concern developed very slowly.

In characteristic fashion, however, Coubertin set to work at once. A passion of the Baron's, right from the start of his Olympic initiatives, was the necessity to secure an association with the Games of the heads-of-state in the host country. Seven days after the award of the Games to Chicago, Coubertin wrote to President William McKinley asking him to accept the honorary presidency of the 1904 Olympic Games.⁶⁶ Despite the Baron's assertion otherwise, there is no record of a response from McKinley. On September 6th, while attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, McKinley was seriously wounded by an assassin's bullet. He died eight days later, and an American president described by his critics as "a patty man and a follower" was succeeded in office by an individual of quite opposite reputation, the bombastic Theodore Roosevelt.

Roosevelt had scarcely settled into the White House's oval office when he received a letter from Coubertin. The Baron told Roosevelt of his earlier request conveyed to McKinley (inferring that he had received a favorable reply), and

asked “the new chief of the Great American Republic” to accept the honorary presidency of the forthcoming Chicago Games.⁶⁷ Three weeks later Roosevelt responded: “My dear Sir . . . It is a matter of very real regret to me that I do not feel at liberty to accept your very kind request that I become honorary president of the Chicago Olympic Games. Unfortunately, after consultation with members of the cabinet, I feel it would not do for me to give the unavoidable impression of governmental connection with the Games.”⁶⁸

Undeterred, the Baron continued to pursue the issue. On December 22, 1901 he wrote once again to “his excellency,” pointing out the precedents set in 1896 and 1900 which might allow for Roosevelt to reconsider.⁶⁹ On the issue of the “honorary presidency” of the Chicago Games, however, Roosevelt never relaxed his stance. And yet, readers of Olympic history are greeted in Bill Henry’s book by the following:

As so frequently happened in the early days of the revival of the Olympic games, there were numerous misunderstandings, due to lack of information regarding Olympic precedent. One abortive movement proposed offering the honorary presidency of the 1904 Games to the Ring of Greece in recognition of the part played by the Greek nation in the ancient games. However, the honor was offered to Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, early in May 1902,⁷⁰ and on May 28 President Roosevelt announced his acceptance.

How did this false assertion enter the record? It has been noted earlier that one Chicago concern in preparing for the Games was to enlist the support of foreign governments in an effort to boost the participation of athletes from abroad. Accordingly, the Chicago Organizing Committee, headed by Furber, planned a lengthy tour of Europe in the summer of 1902. The Committee agreed that letters of introduction from the President would aid immeasurably in gaining audiences with European heads-of-state. With that purpose in mind, Furber and a committee colleague, Benjamin Rosenthal, visited Roosevelt in the White House in early May 1902. Roosevelt agreed to write the letters of introduction; as well, they talked of other matters.⁷¹ After his return to Chicago Furber wrote to Roosevelt expressing ‘personal gratitude’ for the reception accorded them in Washington.⁷² Roosevelt’s subsequent response to Furber has been thoroughly misinterpreted by Henry. Though offering to help in ways he could, the President said nothing about official patronage or of responsibility for the Games by federal government. Stated Roosevelt in his letter of May 28th:

I earnestly wish you success in your undertaking. While I

regret that the United States cannot officially take charge of or be responsible for the games, I shall do all in my power to contribute to their success, and it will give me great pleasure to open them [which he never did] and to send to them bodies of U.S. troops and U.S. sailors to take part in the contests, in which representatives of the armies and navies of all nations are expected to enter.⁷³

Roosevelt said nothing about accepting the "honorary presidency." True to character, however, he did add that he hoped the military exercises might include feats of horsemanship and marksmanship as well as tests of endurance and strength under service conditions.⁷⁴ The association of Roosevelt with the Games was a subject of delicacy for Furber and the Chicago Committee. Assurances given in private by Roosevelt must be treated with care in a public forum. Furber communicated exactly this point to Coubertin after his visit to Washington. "I think it preferable that no mention be made of President Roosevelt's assurances," wrote Furber. "He has kindly consented to write a letter for publicity . . . and this will . . . relieve me of the possibility of seeming to make free with the substance of his remarks."⁷⁵ All too evident later was the fact that Furber's advice was ignored by the IOC President.

In an effort aimed at enlisting support from the heads of European governments "so that expressions can be used as leverage on Congress for mustering American support," Furber and a delegation of Chicago Organizing Committee members sailed for Europe on July 1st aboard the crack Hamburg-American liner *Graf Waldersee*. A letter written by Furber to Coubertin shortly before his departure from America expressed the hope that the two could meet and discuss issues and problems.⁷⁶ Furber arrived in Paris on August 1st after a round of visits in various European countries. For almost three weeks he marked time in a vain effort to see Coubertin. The Baron was away from the city. Finally tiring of waiting for his return, Furber left Paris on August 17th, sending a hopeful note to Coubertin's home: "I have not dispaired at the chance to see you before I myself leave for New York."⁷⁷ Furber suggested an early September meeting.⁷⁸

The end of August found Furber cruising in the North Sea with Sir Thomas Lipton on the British millionaire's yacht *Erin*. An ominous development that Furber had learned about immediately prior to sailing, however, prevented his full enjoyment of the cruise. It had to be attended to at once. From his stateroom he penned a note to Harper in Chicago: "I have just been informed that the St. Louis Exposition is trying to secure the AAU championship contests in 1904. As the AAU virtually controls athletics in the United States, this would seriously

injure the Olympian Games.”⁷⁹ Chicago officials, including Furber, were well aware that the St. Louis Exposition had been postponed to 1904. Even before the award of the Games to Chicago in May 1901, the Fair’s probable postponement was a fact known by many, including Chicago Olympic planners. Public announcement of the postponement had first surfaced in the Chicago press on May 2nd, 1902, well before the European trip commenced.⁸⁰ The news had raised no Chicago reaction. It was not until Furber learned that St. Louis officials were trying to secure the National AAU track and field championships for 1904 as part of the Physical Culture Department’s program of activities that Chicago’s anxieties were aroused.⁸¹ Just such an anxious mood punctuated Furber’s demeanor as he finally met face-to-face with Coubertin at the Baron’s mother-in-law’s estate near Münster in Alsace. The meeting took place on the weekend of September 20-21, 1902.⁸²

Unfortunately, we have only Coubertin’s impression of the meeting between Furber and himself. On October 31st the Baron wrote to his close friend and IOC colleague, Godefroy Blonay (IOC member from Switzerland). Describing his meeting with Furber, to whom he referred as “the honorable president of the Chicago committee,” the Baron unfolded an interesting personal impression of the man who stood as the most critical link between success and failure of the IOC’s interests in Chicago. “Furber,” wrote Coubertin, “is a very interesting individual, extremely shrewd and egotistical. He is intelligent, but much of a bluffer, just like a Chicagoan. I handled him to the best of my ability.”⁸³ There is little doubt that Coubertin’s session with Furber lowered the Baron’s confidence in Chicago. The Baron’s patience had been taxed by a signal lack of success on Furber’s part to gain unqualified promises of monetary support for underwriting the costs of the Games. Chicago contributors and the United States government had been reticent on this crucial Olympic matter, and Coubertin knew it. He had been warned by Consul Merou about a “lack of animation” on the part of certain Chicagoans associated with the Games. The state of the Baron’s anxious mood was communicated to Blonay at the end of his letter: “I am thinking about expressing my views, in spite of the horror of a move.”

Finally, it was out in the open! A Coubertin “mind-set,” that preparations for the Olympic Games in Chicago were encountering serious trouble. If Coubertin’s demeanor on the status of the Chicago Games had approached the highly anxious state, so, too, had Furber’s shortly after the Chicagoan debarked in New York on his return from Europe in late October.⁸⁴ Hardly down the gangplank, he was presented with a message from St. Louis Exposition officials requesting an immediate meeting with him in New York, the stated purpose of

which was to find a way for the nation's best track and field performers to participate in both the A.A.U. championships and the Olympic Games, each of which were scheduled for identical time frames in September 1904. Apprehensively, Furber agreed to a meeting, and Frank Skiff,⁸⁵ the Exposition's Director of Exhibits, along with Alfred Shapleigh, member of the Exposition's Executive Committee, traveled at once to New York. Though pressed by various New York newspapers for decisions emanating from their deliberations, Furber, Skiff and Shapleigh remained tightlipped.⁸⁶ We are, however, afforded a glimpse of what really transpired in the meetings through analysis of a letter Furber wrote to Coubertin almost a month later.

Upon my arrival in New York a month ago, I was informed that the Exposition officials wished to confer with me at once in view of the conflict of dates arising through the postponement of the St. Louis Fair. I consented, and in response to a telegram a delegation came on to New York. They informed me politely but clearly, that the Olympian Games of 1904 threatened the success of their World's Fair, and that if we insisted on carrying out our program they would develop their athletic department so as to eclipse our games . . . dwelling upon the impossibility to concede to us the slightest point, they concluded by requesting a transfer of the Games from Chicago to St. Louis. I informed them that this was a matter in which only the International Olympic Committee had power; but that when I reached Chicago our Board of Directors would discuss the matter.⁸⁷

Clearly, larger considerations occupied the minds of St. Louis authorities than simply articulating the A.A.U. championships in track and field with those of the Olympic Games scheduled for Chicago. The expressed desire to resolve Chicago Olympic dates with St. Louis Fair athletic contest schedules was nothing more than a ploy by Exposition authorities to get Furber to agree to a meeting. What St. Louis really wanted was the 1904 Games in their entirety. And, they were prepared to threaten and coerce in order to gain their objective.

When Furber returned to Chicago one week after his New York encounter with Skiff and Shapleigh, he got first hand evidence of this. Awaiting him was still another unsettling message, this time from David R. Francis, former Governor of Missouri, now president of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Francis requested an audience with the Chicago Organizing Committee's entire board of directors. A dinner meeting was arranged for November 10th. In the same elegant dining room of the prestigious athletic club where the Chicago bid for the Olympic Games had first "gone public," the grand hopes and expectations

for their celebration began to unravel. The St. Louis delegation, headed by Francis, repeated their request for a transfer. Chicago's board members said little, clinging to the hope that they might be removed from the thorny issue by International Olympic Committee action. In the end, the Chicago board voted by a small majority to lay the entire matter before Coubertin and his IOC and have them decide the fate of the 1904 Games.

As Furber departed the Chicago Club on that November evening he was confronted by a reporter from the *Chronicle* who asked him to comment. Said Furber: "There are three positions open to us. One is to have the games as scheduled in 1904." When asked if that was a likely possibility, Furber replied: "It is not That certainly would be discourteous to St. Louis." Continued Furber: "Another is to transfer the games to St. Louis." When asked if that was likely, Furber hedged: "The directors will have to answer that question." "The Third," said Furber, "is to postpone the games until 1905."⁸⁸ The next morning the specter of a possible transfer greeted Chicago newspaper readers: "May Yield the Games to St. Louis Exposition," "May Lose Big Games," "May Lose Olympian Games," announced *the Tribune*, *Record-Herald* and *Chronicle*, respectively.⁸⁹

Not only was the news of great concern to Chicagoans, it was also of interest to Americans in other parts of the country. News of the dilemma and possible transfer received wide attention in small town weekly and monthly newspapers, and in the daily publications of large cities. Though newspaper response was particularly notable in municipalities of the northeastern United States, the news also penetrated to more remote areas of America. Olympic news, much of it in "first time" incidence, reached such places as Nebraska, Tennessee, Colorado, Montana, Utah and California.⁹⁰ As well, some American newspapers saw the transfer deed as signed and sealed, subsequently trumpeting the tidings that St. Louis had the Games.⁹¹

The Chicago element perhaps most alarmed by the developing dilemma were students, professors, administrators, and alumni of the University of Chicago. From the outset of the Olympic endeavor Chicago's students had been enthusiastic supporters of the project. The possible loss of the Games to St. Louis was announced in the University's student newspaper *The Daily Maroon*.⁹² Three weeks later *The Maroon* announced a mass meeting organized by the Senior Student Council for the express purpose of registering support for keeping the Games in Chicago.⁹³ Attendance was far below expectation, even though Coubertin referred to the affair as "*un colossal meeting d'etudiants*."⁹⁴ The last we learn of campus reaction to the specter of transfer is a critique of St.

Louis delivered by Professor Max Ingres (an original member of the Chicago Olympian Games Bid Committee):

We have gone to much labor in making many plans for the games. St. Louis cannot make a success of the games, as there is a danger of their being overshadowed by the exposition. St. Louis is not the center of the United States, its water is bad, hotel accommodations insufficient, its athletic field is nearly two miles from the exposition grounds. The only way out . . . is for a postponement to 1905.⁹⁵

The official proceedings were adjourned after a hastily contrived student resolution was enacted.⁹⁶

Some two weeks after the meeting with St. Louis officials at the Chicago Club, Furber dispatched two communications to Coubertin in Paris. One, an official letter from the Chicago Organizing Committee, was succinct. It briefed the Baron on the postponement of the St. Louis Exposition and the impact of the Fair's "huge physical culture exhibit with plans for athletic sports of all types," which would be in direct competition with Chicago and the Olympic Games.⁹⁷ Furber's second communication was a personal letter, a "friend to friend" epistle.⁹⁸ Candidly, Furber detailed the events that had transpired since his return to America in late October. Noting the implications of the St. Louis action, he outlined alternatives for the Baron's consideration. While doubting that any "St. Louis effort could excel our own efforts," Furber was not hesitant in coming to terms with the hard realities of the moment:

St. Louis has an organized and paid corp of officials that could outstrip us in promptness and efficiency of work, the official recognition of the national government which would embarrass us in our missions abroad; a huge (over \$6,000,000) appropriation from the government, plus sums from states involved, thus blocking our own efforts; and St. Louis might place Chicago in the light of mischievously competing in an enterprise in whose success the honor of the nation is involved.

Furber's final remarks to the Baron came from a beleaguered person, one pushed to the limits of his considerable patience and endurance. And yet, despite all, he felt that Chicago might still carry off the project in 1905, amid the serenity offered by the absence of externally competing events. "Now my dear Baron," continued Furber:

If we try to carry out our program in 1904, St. Louis will jeopardize our enterprise. She will . . . injure us in a thousand

different ways . . . it would be better to accept the invitation of St. Louis and transfer the Games to that city, than to attempt to conduct them at Chicago in the face of difficulties with which St. Louis would oppose us. Still, my dear friend, I do not believe that this would be the wisest course. In my official letter I have suggested a postponement to 1905. If this plan should meet with your approval, I see the greatest possible success for us.

Furber's rationale for delay until 1905 and his optimism for "greatest possible success" were based on a number of considerations, among them, support from: (1) St. Louis itself (in return for postponing the 1904 Games for a year), (2) the Great Lakes region (by dint of proposed naval and yachting displays), (3) the Western states (through the influence of the National Livestock Association and equestrian and cavalry features of the program), (4) New England (because of the scientific dimensions of the festival), and (5) Canada (from which a large attendance would be drawn).⁹⁹ In concluding his lengthy letter Furber appealed to the Baron's pragmatism. "Such, Baron, are the complications which confront us," wrote Furber. "We are in a position where we must use the highest of all human qualities, plain and honest common sense; and I assure you it is an inexpressible satisfaction that in a moment of such grave responsibility, we can turn to you whose confidence in our devotion we feel to be no less great, than is our reliance on your friendship and wisdom."¹⁰⁰

As Parisians prepared for Christmas (1902), the Baron's energies were focussed on matters other than celebration of the season. A vexing dilemma faced him; testiness replaced his usually unflappable manner. First, Merou wrote from Chicago saying that he had met with Harper and that both of them opposed a transfer.¹⁰¹ Merou informed the Baron that Furber's official letter to Coubertin, stating the position of the Board, represented a bare majority viewpoint. Merou's "informer" had been Harper, an angry member of the minority. Further, Merou related that Harper felt Furber was a weak president, and that under the prevailing circumstances a new president should be chosen and Chicago press ahead with its plans to stage the 1904 Games, St. Louis or no St. Louis. Merou's argument to keep the Games in Chicago was counteracted by an overture from Michael LaGrave, French Minister of Commerce who had been appointed Commissioner General of the large French exhibit planned for the St. Louis Exposition. LaGrave, obviously an advocate of St. Louis, in a like manner and for the same reasons that Merou favored Chicago,¹⁰² pressed Coubertin for a transfer of the Games to the bustling "Mound City" on the banks of the

Mississippi River.¹⁰³ At almost the same time David Francis, chief of the Louisiana Exposition, registered his own plea that the “transfer be executed.”¹⁰⁴

Newspaper reports across America advanced several prospects. The Games would be celebrated in Chicago as scheduled! The Games would be transferred to St. Louis! They were to be postponed for one year! All speculation, of course. Nobody knew for certain what the dilemma’s solution was to be, not even Furber. As many rumors abounded in Paris as did speculations in Chicago, St. Louis and other American towns and cities.

Prompted by Furber, the owner–publisher of two Chicago newspapers, the *Daily News* and *Record–Herald*, endeavored to get the latest information from the most accurate source in the fastest time possible—an update on the situation from the Baron de Coubertin himself. Accordingly, publisher Victor Lawson directed his Paris correspondent to contact Coubertin. Obeying instructions, Lamar Middleton sent a note to the Baron’s home: “I understand that no action has been taken on a proposed transfer . . . and that you have decided to leave the matter in President Roosevelt’s hands.”¹⁰⁵ The next day the Baron responded: “The IOC will allow a transfer,” said Coubertin, “but will never permit the suggested postponement. I have written to President Roosevelt to that effect . . . and I have nothing more to say on the subject.”¹⁰⁶ The revelation that Roosevelt was, or might become, involved in the embroglio was “big news” indeed. Prodded again by Lawson, Middleton tried to elicit further comment from Coubertin, requesting the IOC President to reveal “the truth as you would like to have it stated . . . Is the committee awaiting a reply from President Roosevelt as to his opinions on the matter?”¹⁰⁷ On an issue which he claimed was of concern to 300,000 readers, Middleton urged “accurate information in order to correct the ‘stories’ of the rest of the publications in Chicago.” The specter of Roosevelt’s association with the decision-making process buoyed St. Louis’ hopes for the *Games*. “Roosevelt’s part in the negotiations,” reported the *St. Louis Republic*, “is explained by his great interest when the Olympic Games were assigned to Chicago and because of his position as the head of a government which is a heavy financial partner in the Exposition. The next advice on the subject, it is expected by the management, will come from Washington.”¹⁰⁸

However, only silence emanated from Washinton on the transfer question. Coubertin, too, stalled. Feeling the pressure mounting, Coubertin dispatched letters/cables to all IOC members on December 21st. While presenting a positive case for a transfer of the Games to St. Louis, the Baron also defended the possibility of keeping the Games in Chicago, arguing that the Chicago Committee was in favor of a transfer only “by a weak majority,” and,

furthermore, many Chicago residents and the “totality of the student body” at the University of Chicago wanted to keep the Games.¹⁰⁹ Concluding his letter, the IOC President offered a possible solution to the dilemma:

Given the exclusive national character of the difference of opinion between the two cities and the necessity to promptly arrive at a resolution of this difference, I believe it is appropriate to rely on the judgement of President Roosevelt who wishes to demonstrate constant interest and who is very competent in all sport questions. I would be grateful to receive your opinion on this matter.

What had been Furber’s warning conveyed to Coubertin in a letter written some six months previous, about “making free with the President’s interest and remarks on Olympic matters as they pertained to Chicago”? Yes, Roosevelt was on record as being interested in the Olympic Games. Yes, he was competent in sport questions. But Roosevelt was not prepared to enter the transfer dilemma, as Coubertin inferred to his IOC colleagues and the public, and as the Baron falsely recorded in his memoirs.

Reconstructing events of the transfer incident in his memoirs written some thirty years after the fact, Coubertin stated: “On December 23, 1902, after receiving mainly favorable messages from my colleagues, I wrote unofficially to ask President Roosevelt to decide the matter.”¹¹⁰ Coubertin’s statement begs analytical comment, indeed challenge. It is doubtful that Coubertin could have written, much less cabled, IOC members in Europe and America on December 21st and have heard back from them two days later. In fact, the record substantiates that he did not. Seven responses from IOC members written in reply to the Baron’s December 21st letter on the transfer issue have survived. Of the seven, only two were dated as having been written before the Baron’s “December 23rd” citation. Three were dated after New Year’s Day 1903.¹¹¹ All seven of the responses were negatively disposed towards transferring the Games to St. Louis. The Baron’s described action [“after receiving mainly favorable responses, I wrote unofficially to ask President Roosevelt to decide the matter”] deserves challenge. Absolutely no record has ever been discovered of Coubertin having written Roosevelt on the transfer issue. Neither did a reference to a Roosevelt link to the transfer issue appear in *Revue Olympique*, the official news organ of the IOC, financed and edited by Coubertin, and a publication which all too often featured the Baron’s penchant for “namedropping.” If Roosevelt had used the power and influence of his office to provide a solution to the dilemma, one is assured that the Baron’s readers would have been informed.

There are other bits of evidence against Coubertin's claim that Roosevelt arbitrated the matter. Lamar Middleton, persistent to the end, appeared at Coubertin's Rue de Lubeck home on the morning of December 22nd, spoke briefly with the IOC President, and reported their conversation to publisher Victor Lawson in Chicago. "The Baron is unwilling to admit that the entire matter has been left to President Roosevelt, though that is apparently a well founded impression in Paris," reported the *Record-Herald*.¹¹² Indeed, it was a "well founded impression." Coubertin had seen to that! Nettled by Middleton's persistence, Coubertin tersely announced that "because of the absence of many members [responses] of the international committee we are awaiting several replies before making our final decision regarding the Olympian Games."¹¹³ The tenacious Middleton claimed to have conducted his own query of IOC members, reporting to publisher Victor Lawson that of the 21 members he reached, all opposed transfer.¹¹⁴ An interesting remark by Coubertin concluded his public announcements made during that Christmas season on the matter of transfer. As reported in the *Bloomington Paragraph* (Illinois), the Baron posed the ironic proposition that a Chicago Olympic Games might be held "as a sort of athletic annex to the St. Louis Exposition."¹¹⁵

Christmas Day 1902 passed; so did New Year's Day 1903; nothing had been resolved. Scarcely a year and a half remained before the 1904 Games were scheduled to be held. Would Olympic history's first cancellation of the festival occur? Despite the unpleasantness of envisioning his "grand athletic festival" being staged on the banks of the muddy Mississippi, despite the misgivings of IOC committee members warning him about the certain depreciation of the 1904 Games if they were associated with a gigantic world exposition, indeed, despite all, the Baron de Coubertin began to favor St. Louis. What alternative did he have? The zeal and determination of Chicago for the project had developed serious malaise. Coubertin's expanding impressions of the situation were ones underscored by Chicago's uncertainty and lack of common resolve. On the other hand, the Baron was no friend of the city of St. Louis. After his visit to the Chicago Colombian Fair in 1893, Coubertin had toured the American West and South, calling at several cities, including two for which he had high praise—San Francisco and New Orleans. Memory of a visit to St. Louis dredged up his negative impressions of the city:

I harbored great resentment against the town for the disillusionment caused by my first sight of the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. After reading Fenimore Cooper, what had I not been led to expect of the setting where those two great rivers with their strange resounding names

actually met! But there was no beauty, nor originality. I had a sort of presentiment that the Olympiad would match the mediocrity of the town.¹¹⁶

There were grounds for the Baron's low opinion of St. Louis. Despite the fact that the city had long been the bustling junction of Mississippi/Missouri River exchange of commerce, as well as the center from which an abundance of 19th century westward expansion commenced, the city continually suffered when compared to Chicago. St. Louis experienced a torpid, sweltering climate in the summer months. Its water was unhealthy; fevers persisted; energies sapped. The constant flow of transients traveling through the city heading for "other places" slowed its permanent growth and beautification. Perhaps most disturbing to Coubertin was the fact that St. Louis was not known for having a well-established civic sporting tradition, located as it was, "outside" the pale of the American eastern and midwestern sports establishment.¹¹⁷

January 1903 passed; February commenced; Coubertin's resolve began to harden. Affairs in Chicago had deteriorated beyond salvaging. As distasteful as the prospect was to him, St. Louis would get the Games. At least they would be celebrated, but in what atmosphere and to what effect Coubertin had little idea. The end of the lengthy stalemate came quickly. An exchange of telegrams between Coubertin and Chicago officials sealed the fate of the 1904 Olympic Games. First, the Baron cabled Furber in Chicago. On February 10th the IOC President's cryptic message, "Transfer accepted," ended some two and a half years of planning, nullified considerable expenditure of funds and human energies, and shattered Chicago's lingering hopes for civic prestige and world-wide attention gained through hosting the 1904 Games.¹¹⁸ David R. Francis learned of the transfer as his steamer cleared New York bound for Europe on a mission to enlist from foreign governments the type of support for his Louisiana Purchase Exposition that Furber and his cohorts had hoped to gain for their Chicago Olympic Games as a result of excursions abroad in the summer of 1902.¹¹⁹

For the IOC President, the great dilemma was solved. In the end, the decision had been his, and his alone; not Roosevelt's; not the IOC's;¹²⁰ not that of any other party!

On February 12th, Coubertin received a cable from Furber. The message matched the Baron's in brevity and succinctness: "Instructions just received. Will transfer accordingly."¹²¹ Courtesy dictated that the Baron write a final letter to the Chicago Committee. He executed that task on February 11th:

Gentlemen:

The telegram which I sent yesterday I wish to complement by a few words in that you may understand how we had to wait for the answers from members of our committee before we could say what the decision of the committee was about the proposed transfer of the games of 1904 from Chicago to St. Louis. I am directed by the committee to say that while regretting that such a transfer should have been necessary as we are bound by the fundamental laws of our constitution not to allow any change in dates of the Olympiads we consider that there was no room for another solution and we do not wish to place your committee in a position of acknowledged antagonism with the authority of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Thanking you, gentlemen, for the efforts you were ready to make in order to celebrate the opening of the third Olympiad of the modern period in a way worthy of your great city as well as of our institution.¹²²

Not a word about Theodore Roosevelt. Why? Because the President had purposely remained a silent spectator to the transfer embroglio. Roosevelt was far too astute a politician to become embroiled in shenanigans which could well have alienated a large body of wealthy and influential Chicago Republicans. As we have seen, too, Roosevelt steadfastly resisted placing the American Presidency in any type of compromising position relative to Olympic matters.

AMERICA'S OLYMPIC AWARENESS

The news of the final decision to transfer the 1904 Olympic Games from Chicago to St. Louis echoed throughout America.¹²³ By the end of February 1903, Olympic news had captivated the attention of newspaper readers in 29 different states, the District of Columbia and the Territories of Oklahoma and Arizona.¹²⁴ In many of the states in the American Deep South, however, Olympic news seemingly passed unnoticed, though in the months following the news of the transfer four Deep South states would join the Olympic news bandwagon (South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama).¹²⁵

The lengthy scenario of events surrounding the transfer embroglio placed the subject of Olympic Games squarely before the attention of the American public. When that issue ceased to be of news, publishers continued to capitalize on a subject which was obviously of interest to newspaper readers. Consequently, those readers were fed a steady diet of material on the historical link between the

modern Games and those in antiquity. Americans, the larger percentage of whom had little or no education in the classics, now became correspondence students of sport history, or, more specifically, consumers of articles describing the nature of the ancient Olympic Games.¹²⁶ Community newspapers located in virtually every corner of America found it fashionable to relate the prestige of the Olympics in ancient Greece with the third rendition of their modern reincarnation scheduled for America the following year.¹²⁷ A few newspapers even published pictures of the Baron de Coubertin, architect of modern Olympic Games.¹²⁸

Other Olympic-associated matters of 1903 played roles in maintaining, indeed, increasing American attention to the Games. With the Games safely ensconced in St. Louis, and the public properly educated in their ancient heritage and short modern history, the country's newspapers turned their attention to the question of just who might be the best choice for the chief executive position (i.e. President of the Organizing Committee). Speculation was widespread. James Edward Sullivan was most prominently mentioned.¹²⁹ The official appointment of Sullivan by St. Louis Fair officials in mid-July 1903, together with the prospect of various American regions being represented at the Olympic Games by their best athletes, provoked still another wave of fresh newspaper membership to the large body of print publications already on the Olympic bandwagon.¹³⁰ The prominent attention given Sullivan in the nation's press on matters dealing with the Olympic Games must have been gratifying to him. His picture was published from one end of America to the other.¹³¹ On the other hand, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin, Sullivan's theoretical 'boss' on Olympic matters, could not have been anything but ambivalent towards the widespread attention on the other side of the Atlantic being paid to his creation. On the positive side, nothing like this had happened before. His Modern Olympic Movement had "arrived," at least in America. On the other side of the coin, Coubertin was given only limited attention in the press. Instead, an individual for whom the Baron had little fondness was the focus of all the attention.

CONCLUSION

In the slightly more than two and a half year period between the award of the 3rd Olympic Games to Chicago in May 1901 and the eve of the year in which they would be celebrated, most of America had come to know about Baron Pierre de Coubertin's Modern Olympic Movement. As Olympic-related events unfolded in the United States, American newspapers reacted in what might be described as "ripple consequence," that is, the series of scenarios that occurred

between 1901 and 1903 unfolded in such a way that one saga whetted reader interest for the next serial installment. Controversy, speculation, indeed, a colorful cast of characters, were all present to provoke and maintain interest. If the award of the 1904 Games to Chicago and the city's preliminary energies in preparing for them elicited but modest reaction from American newspapers in 1901 and most of 1902, the controversial events surrounding the specter of a transfer of the Olympic festival from Chicago to St. Louis changed all that. When the possibility of transfer first surfaced in early November 1902, the news ushered in the beginning of intense newspaper fascination with the Games, a fascination, of course, generated by public interest in reading about them. Newspaper focus on Olympic matters increased in both quantitative and demographic perspective with the announcement in February 1903 that the Games had been transferred from Chicago to St. Louis. Seeking to capitalize on an established increase of national interest in the Olympic phenomenon, newspaper articles endeavored to enlighten the public on the Games' link to antiquity. Finally, the appointment of James E. Sullivan in July 1903 to preside over the organization of the Games and, at the same time, the prospect of athletes from various regions across the United States taking part in the Olympic contests, prompted newspapers to print Olympic news on their front pages and in the sports section.

Table I demonstrates the stage-by-stage widening of American newspaper attention to Olympic events between February 1901 and December 1903. Newspapers in but six states published Olympic news during the "Bid/Award/Preparation" period from February 1901 through October 1902. By Christmas Day 1903 newspapers in the District of Columbia, Arizona and Oklahoma Territories and 37 individual states had advanced American awareness of Olympic Games. Literally, the Olympic Games were on the map in America.

Silence on Olympic matters from newspapers in the states of Idaho, Wyoming, South Dakota, Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Delaware, Vermont, and the Territory of New Mexico merits some comment. The population of the United States in 1900 totalled 76,000,000 people. The collective population of the states/territory noted above totalled 5,606,000 in 1900, hardly more than than 7% of all American residents.¹³² There were certainly daily and weekly newspapers located in each. As seen in Table I the period which recorded the largest newspaper increase in reporting Olympic news was that period referred to as "Transfer specter/Transfer." Thus, a major newspaper for each of the states/territory noted above was surveyed for that period (November 1902–February 1903).¹³³ No mention of Olympic news was



TABLE I

Legend

- Dark Grey—Bid/Award/Preparation (Feb. 1901–Oct. 1902)
- Med. Grey—Transfer specter/Transfer (Nov. 1902–Feb. 1903)
- Light Grey—History/Director issue/Participation (Mar. 1903–Dec. 1903)
- White—No known Olympic reporting (Feb. 1901–Dec. 1903)

identified. This research begs interested scholars to delve deeper into Olympic affairs in those “void” states in an attempt to fill in the mosaic.

It has been argued that the 1904 Olympic Games were a failure, having suffered the consequences of obliteration by the grandeur and activity of the greater Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Further, arguments focus mainly on the fact that few foreign countries were represented,¹³⁴ that many of the best American collegiate athletes did not attend,¹³⁵ and that the facilities were only slightly better than those in Paris in 1900, arguably, the worst in Olympic history. But, those negative assumptions are, in fact, countered by positives of much greater lasting consequence. One, of course, is the fact that the athletic performances recorded at St. Louis generally eclipsed those of 1896 and 1900 by considerable measure, setting ever higher standards of excellence at which athletes of the future might aim in pursuit of becoming “swifter, higher, stronger.” But, most importantly, and certainly contrary to general historical opinion, an association of the Games with the St. Louis Exposition “helped,” not “hindered,” the International Olympic Movement. The striking newspaper attention given to the St. Louis Exposition across America and, along with such attention, focus on the Olympic Games, was a phenomenon Coubertin never contemplated, much less ever appreciated. In effect, though, it was the most important outcome of the entire 1904 Games saga—the arousal of interest in the American sports psyche for the Olympic phenomenon, an interest that established an American credo on the subject of international sport.

Notes

1. The formulation and spread of *Olympism* became the Baron de Coubertin’s most ardently pursued mission during his lifetime. The term *Olympism* connotes a philosophy of social reform aimed at peace and international understanding. Coubertin’s concept of *Olympism* embraced sport as a worthy moral and social initiative, one which might contribute to a state of harmony and understanding among men. The Baron left a rich corpus of literature pertinent to his thoughts on this subject; the best collection is *Pierre de Coubertin–Olympisme* (Norbert Müller, ed.), Zurich: Weidmann, 1986, pp. 361–441.

2. Little serious scholarship has been presented on the subject of the 1900 Olympic Games. Much of our limited knowledge about them is in scholarly works which focus on Coubertin and the origin of the Modern Olympic Movement, with treatment of the 1900 festival reduced to oblique commentary. See, for instance: Richard D. Mandell, *The First Modern Olympics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 60-61; and John J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origin of the Modern Olympic*

Games, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. p. 274. Without documentation, but written and produced with official approval of the IOC (foreword by Avery Brundage) is Bill Henry's, *An Approved History of the Olympic Games*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1976 (3rd edition), pp. 42-45. At its meetings in Lausanne, April 1949, The IOC's Executive Committee voted to give Henry's book "official recognition." The author donated the royalties received from the first edition of the book to the IOC.

3. Mandell, *op. cit.* pp. 158-161.

4. For instance, American men won 9 gold medals out of a possible 12 in the track and field events, losing only the marathon, and the 1500 and 800 meter runs.

5. See Henry, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49. American men won 17 out of 23 possible gold medals in track and field events of the 1900 Games.

6. Tanya Pitt executed a content analysis of *New York Times* material published on the Games of Olympiads I, II, and III. Her findings for Olympiads I and II are appropriate for notation here. Surveying a four month period embracing the prelude, execution and aftermath of the Games held in April 1896 (Athens) and July 1900 (Paris), she found that the *Times* published 30 articles with reference to 1896, and 24 for 1900. In the 1896 articles the words *Olympic / Olympian / Olympiad* appeared 44 times (out of 45 total references) to describe the contests in Athens (the sole odd reference was to "International Contests"). The *Times* adopted a different approach in 1900. In its reporting of the Paris Games the words *Olympic / Olympian / Olympiad* appeared in the *Times* on but 13 occasions (out of 38 total references) to describe the contests (a host of other terms appeared, including references to "International Contests," "World Amateur Championships," "Paris Exposition Athletic Events," and "French Games"). See Tanya Pitt, "Trends in America's Olympic Consciousness: A Content Analysis of the Issues and Events of the 1896, 1900 and 1904 Olympic Games as Recorded by the *New York Times*," Unpublished paper, Centre for Olympic Studies, University of Western Ontario, 1991.

7. Pierre de Coubertin, *Memoirs Olympique*, Lausanne: Bureau International de pedagogie sportive, 1931, p. 60. Numerous letters and documents pertinent to this investigation were written and/or published in French. My own translation efforts were aided immeasurably by Karel Wendl (Director of the Archives, IOC Headquarters, Lausanne), Diane Potvin (University of New Brunswick), and August Weber (University of Western Ontario). To each of them I am grateful.

8. Pierre de Coubertin, "The Olympic Games of 1896," *The Century Magazine*, November 1896, p. 50. Parenthesis mine.

9. See *Bulletin du Comitee International des Jeux Olympiques (No. 1)*, Paris, July 1894. p. 4 (Article XIII—Les Jeux Olympiques).

10. The most comprehensive description and analysis of events at the Sorbonne Conference surrounding this point is offered by David C. Young, "The Origin of the Modern Olympics: A New Version," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 4, No. 3, December 1987, pp. 280-285.

11. See *New York Times*, June 24, 1899.

12. See *New York Times*, July 28, 1900. The *Times* announcement never mentioned the Baron de Coubertin or the International Olympic Committee, but did state that American Olympic Committee members Sloane, Whitney and Sullivan favored the idea of a Philadelphia Olympics.

13. See *Chicago Tribune*, July 27, 1900.

14. See John Lucas, "Early Olympic Antagonists: Pierre de Coubertin and James E. Sullivan," *Stadion*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1977, pp. 261-262.

15. At this point the Consulate representing French interests in the upper mid-western area of America was located in Chicago. Merou's sphere of jurisdiction included the city of St. Louis.

16. This news, communicated to Furber by Bréal in a letter of October 19, 1900, was cited verbatim by Furber in a note of concern to William Rainey Harper (President of the University of Chicago). See Furber to Harper, October 30, 1900, Presidential Papers of William Rainey Harper (hereafter referred to as Harper Papers), Box 50, Folder 13, University of Chicago Archives (hereafter cited as UofC).

17. Sloane, a Princeton professor and respected "philosopher of history," may well have met Coubertin on one of his several visits to Paris in the 1880s. When Coubertin first visited the United States in November 1889, his friendship with Sloane was renewed. In the large corpus of letters written to Coubertin during his association with "Olympic matters" (1894-1937), Sloane was one of the few to address the Baron in familiar terms, that is, as "Pierre." For a relevant treatment of Sloane, including his relationship to Coubertin, see: John Lucas, "Professor William Milligan Sloane: Father of the United States Olympic Committee," *Umbruch und Kontinuität im Sport-Reflexionen im Umfeld der Sportgeschichte* (Andreas Luh and Edgar Beckers, eds.), Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1991, pp. 230-242.

18. It was not at all unlike Coubertin to proclaim his own feelings on Olympic matters as being representative of the views of the IOC itself. This may well have been the case in this instance.

19. "Olympian Games for America," *The Sun* (New York), November 12, 1900. No record of such a letter from Harper, if indeed it was written, has survived.

20. "Denial from Harper," *New York Daily Tribune*, November 14, 1900.

21. In effect, Coubertin never controlled international athletics. This was an incorrect assumption by Sullivan.

22. *The Sun*, November 13, 1900.

23. Here, Sloane undoubtedly referred to Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Pennsylvania in the context of their intercollegiate athletics prowess, not the actual age of the institution. Recognizably, Harvard is America's oldest college, but there are others older than Yale, Princeton and Pennsylvania.

24. Sloane to Coubertin, December 12, 1900, Lausanne: IOC Archives, Coubertin Personal Correspondence (hereafter cited as CPC).

25. For instance, a review of *Chicago Tribune* reporting on the Paris Olympics reveals that the sport contests were seldom referred to as "Olympic" or "Olympian Games." See *Chicago Tribune*, May 1 to August 1, 1900, inclusively.

26. See *Revue Olympique*, January 1901, p. II.

27. Bill Henry, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-53.

28. The most important of those repositories are: (1) the IOC archives in Lausanne, (2) the Presidential Papers of Theodore Roosevelt in the Library of Congress Manuscript Center, Washington, D. C. and at the Lamont Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, (3) the papers of William Rainey Harper and Amos Alonzo Stags in the archives of the University of Chicago, and (4) the archives of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis.

29. Biographical information on Henry Jewett Furber Jr. and his father, Henry Jewett Furber Sr. can be reviewed in *The Book of Chicagoans* (John W. Leonard, ed.), Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Company, 1905, p. 222.

30. It may well have been at the Chicago Fair that Coubertin sewed the seeds for an eventual Olympic Games in Chicago. While visiting the Fair, which he found to be "grand and really beautiful," he stayed at the prestigious Chicago Athletic Club. He met several noted Chicagoans, including William Rainey Harper. For a description of Coubertin's visit to the Chicago Fair in the fall of 1893, see Pierre de Coubertin, "Chicago Chronique," in *Les Sports Athletiques*, 4th Annee, 28 October 1893. For a brief aside on the Baron's Chicago visit, see MacAloon, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

31. Between early February and late July of 1900 the *Chicago Tribune* published several news and commentary articles dealing with preparation for and competition in what would eventually become known as the "Games of the 2nd Olympiad." Rarely did the *Tribune* refer to the contests as either *Olympic* or

Olympian. Instead, articles referred to “International Collegiate Games,” “World Amateur Championships,” “Paris Athletic Contests,” and “Paris Exposition Games.” The chief reason for *Tribune* coverage, of course, was the fact that University of Chicago track athletes (accompanied by Coach Amos Alonzo Stagg) competed in the Paris contests.

32. Bréal to Furber, August 29, 1900, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers (hereafter cited as Stagg Papers), Box 80, Folder 3, UofC. Bréal also proposed that a special Olympic prize be offered by the France–American Committee, one that lent itself to a competition which had particular reference to Chicago’s historic past. This idea, of course, was stimulated by the action of his older brother, Michael, who donated the cup awarded to Spiridon Loues, winner of the marathon race at the 1896 Games in Athens.

33. Bréal to Furber, October 19, 1900, Harper Papers, Box 50, Folder 13, UofC. Much of Bréal’s letter is quoted by Furber in a note he wrote to Harper on October 30th.

34. Furber to Harper, October 30, 1900, Harper Papers, Box 50, Folder 13, UofC. Underscore mine. Furber concluded by relating that he was convinced Chicago had an excellent chance, but they “must not delay a moment.”

35. Harper to Professors Vincent, Stagg, Abbott, Mathews and Thatcher, November 1, 1900, Stagg Papers, Box 50, Folder 4, UofC.

36. Furber to Stagg, November 12, 1900, Stagg Papers, Box 50, Folder 4, UofC.

37. Coubertin to Bréal, November 4, 1900, Stagg Papers, Box 80, Folder 4, UofC. Parenthesis mine.

38. See “Chicago wants Olympian Games,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 14, 1901. The Chicago Club meeting, attended by a dozen influential Chicagoans, including Henri Merou and Henry Furber, was chaired by Charles R. Crane. Furber presented a plan for bringing the Games to Chicago. A five member Olympic bid committee was established, chaired by Furber, whose responsibility it was to confer with architects and other sources in preparing a bid prospectus to present to IOC authorities in Paris.

39. Sloane to Coubertin, February 26, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

40. Sloane to Coubertin, March 31, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. The Coubertin letter to which Sloane referred, has not survived. But, we do know that at the time Coubertin wrote it he had received no official bid from Chicago authorities.

41. Sloane to Coubertin, April 22, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. “Sullivan,” of course, is James Edward Sullivan, Secretary of the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, by far the most powerful sports governing body in America at the time.

42. James E. Sullivan to Coubertin, March 21, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. Sullivan's comments here are in opposition to an interpretation advanced by French scholars that Sullivan "dispaired at the choice of Chicago." See Guy Lagorce and Robert Pariente, *La Fabuleuse Histoire des Jeux Olympiques*, Paris: Editions Odil, 1972, p. 61. I am grateful to John Lucas for bringing this source to my attention.

43. Caspar Whitney to Coubertin, April 30, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

44. Theodore Stanton to Coubertin, March 15, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

45. Furber to Coubertin, April 4, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Merou to Coubertin, May 28, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. It is only speculation, but Harper may have been spoiled when it came to fund raising. After all, John D. Rockefeller, the oil-rich 19th century philanthropic millionaire, had given Harper eleven million dollars in 1891 to establish the University of Chicago. Rockefeller remained a significant donor to University of Chicago building and development projects in succeeding years. Indeed, there may have been other higher priority projects on Harper's fundraising mind in late 1900 and early 1901 than dollars for the 1904 Olympic Games. One of them concerned his own university. On January 2, 1900, before an audience of some 2,000 students and their families gathered for winter convocation exercises, Harper announced that enough had been raised by the University that only a mere \$315,000 more was needed in order to ensure a matching gift from Rockefeller of \$2,000,000. For further on this, see *Chicago Tribune*, January 3, 1900. A second project concerned development of Chicago's public parks and playgrounds. Since the middle of the 19th century, more and better parks in Chicago were issues of public concern. In the late 1890s Harper himself had authored a report that called for expanded use of school playgrounds to help alleviate Chicago's acute shortage of recreation and leisure space (see Harper, *Report of the Educational Commission*, 1899). The impact of the *vigorous* turn-of-the-century campaign in Chicago to gather funds from the city's business and commerce elements for the underwriting of public parks, an action that may have complicated Harper's and Furber's attempt to pry Olympic monies from the same pot, is captured by the remarks of Edgar A. Bancroft, president of the Merchant's Club: "Business men have the roots of their strength and business in the centers of population. It is a mere matter of intelligent selfishness, of prudence, of wisdom to recognize that they should be interested in improving a city's condition . . . the city is asked to do something not out of goodness of its heart, but out of the soundness of its head . . . a matter of business" (see *Chicago Tribune*, November 12, 1899). Possible sources of Chicago Olympic Games funding approached by Harper and Furber may well have balked at what they considered a less pressing social concern than more and better "quality of life" facilities for Chicago's growing

population, a population which, by 1900, had increased to such proportions that the Windy City was by far and away the second largest city in the nation, close behind New York. I am indebted to Jerry Gems for sharing research information on this point.

48. At least one reference to difficulties encountered by Chicago officials in fund-raising related to the matter of building a stadium for the Olympic Games. Just five days following the decision to transfer the Olympic festival to St. Louis, the *Albany Argus* published the following: "It comes to light that Chicago's recommendation that the Olympian Games be transferred to St. Louis to take place at the time of the exposition was not prompted entirely by generosity. These games carry with them the obligation to build a \$300,000 stadium, and the promoters of the Windy City found difficulty in opening enough pocketbooks." See *Albany Argus* (New York), February 16, 1903.

49. The Chicago Olympian Games Committee to the International Olympic Committee, May 1, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. Of the thirteen Chicago signees, eight became members of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Olympian Games Organizing Committee. They were: Henry J. Furber Jr., Harry G. Selfridge, E. Fletcher Ingals, John Barton Payne, William Rainey Harper, Benjamin J. Rosenthal, Charles L. Hutchinson, and Edwin A. Potter. The securing of funds alluded to in this letter contained an important qualification: "subscriptions have been pledged, by representatives of different interests, *conditional on the entire amount needed being secured.*" See Harper to Gaspar Whitney, May 2, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. Italics mine.

50. *Ibid.* This letter stands as an important historical document in readdressing conventional wisdom on Olympic events. Wishing to modify the agreement on the disbursements of revenues from the Games, an agreement stated explicitly in the official bid letter of May 1, 1901, Furber wrote to Coubertin in early October 1902 (see Furber to Coubertin, October 1, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC) and referred the Baron's attention to the official bid letter of "May 1900." Here, Furber erred, mistakenly citing "1900," rather than 1901. There was no bid letter written in May 1900. In his memoirs and recollection of events concerning the 1904 Games, Coubertin repeated Furber's error. The 1900 notation error, mistakenly cited in the Baron's memoirs, unfortunately but understandably, has been replicated by writers ever since.

51. Furber to Coubertin, May 2, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

52. Harper to Olympian Games Committee of Chicago, May 1, 1901, Harper Papers, Box 50, Folder 13, UofC.

53. An identical set of circumstances faced Chicago in its organization of the World Colombian Fair in 1893. Originally scheduled for 1892, in celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' first voyage to the New World in 1492, application to participate from cities across America, as well as from countries

abroad, mushroomed the event to such immensity that a one year postponement became necessary.

54. See M. Bennit (ed.), *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*, New York Amo Press, 1976, p. 95.

55. Whitney to Harper, April 30, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. Commenting on the St. Louis overture to the IOC, Whitney stated: "In their application they profess to have unlimited financial backing and propose most elaborate and costly preparation. Mr. de Coubertin, President of the International Committee, and Prof. Sloane, Mr. Sullivan and I have just had a talk on the subject. We are agreed that Chicago is the place for these games I am writing you for some definite guarantee as to what Chicago will really do."

56. See *Proces—Verbal de la 4eme Session du Comité International Olympique*, May 21, 1901.

57. The contents of Penalozza's letter to Coubertin, written from London, are recounted by the Baron in *Revue Olympique*, July 1901, p. 33.

58. See *Proces—Verbal*, May 1901.

59. See *Chicago Tribune*, May 22, 1901. The *Tribune* announced that Furber had received two telegrams from Paris, one from Coubertin with the two word message: "Chicago wins." The second telegram lowered Coubertin's record for brevity: "Oui," was the happy expression sent by Henri Bréal.

60. Harper to Furber, May 22, 1901, Harper Papers, Box 50, Folder 13, UofC.

61. Furber to Coubertin, May 29, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

62. Merou to Coubertin, May 28, 1901, *op. cit.* Brackets mine.

63. See *Revue Olympique*, July 1901, p. 40.

64. *Ibid.* A stadium such as Alderman Thompson proposed actually advanced to the architectural stage of planning. The envisioned structure was to accommodate 75,000 specators, embrace six main entrances and 108 exits, and, startlingly, was to be fitted with a tent-like canvas retractable roof for inclement weather conditions. For more on this sensational plan, see *Chicago Record-Herald*, January 12, 1902.

65. Furber to Coubertin, May 29, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

66. Coubertin to President William McKinley, May 28, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC.

67. Coubertin to Theodore Roosevelt, November 15, 1901, IOC Archives, CPC. Coubertin stated to Roosevelt that McKinley had "favorably received" his

invitation. No response from McKinley has been discovered, either in Lausanne or in McKinley's papers at the Library of Congress Manuscript Center in Washington. Knowing Coubertin's predilection for sometimes "stretching the truth," it is doubtful that the "favorable response" attributed to McKinley was ever rendered.

68. Roosevelt to Coubertin, December 7, 1901, Presidential Papers Microfilm Series 1, Reel 327, Lamont Library, Harvard.

69. Coubertin to Roosevelt, December 22, 1901, President Papers Microfilm Series 1, Reel 23, Lamont Library, Harvard.

70. Henry, *An Approved History of the Olympic Games, op. cit.*, p. 70.

71. Upon Furber's return to Chicago from Washington he wrote immediately to Coubertin, telling him of "gratifying results" with reference to military and naval displays at the Games and a possible appropriation from Congress to aid in financing the festival. See Furber to Coubertin, May 6, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

72. Furber to Roosevelt, May 24, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

73. Roosevelt to Furber, May 28, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC. Roosevelt's letter to Furber was published by Coubertin in his *Revue Olympique*, July 1902, p. 46. Parenthesis mine.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Furber to Coubertin, May 31, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

76. Furber to Coubertin, June 21, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

77. Furber to Coubertin, August 17, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

78. Furber's suggestion to meet with Coubertin in early September meshed with his scheduled visits to the Ring of Belgium and President of Switzerland during the same month. See: "Furber Remains Abroad," *Deseret Evening News (Utah)*, September 5, 1902.

79. Furber to Harper, August 30, 1902, Harper Papers, Box 50, Folder 13, UofC.

80. See, for example, *Chicago Record-Herald*, May 2, 1902.

81. One of the major departments planned for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition was one focussing on modern developments in *physical culture*. A giant exhibition encompassing displays of facilities, equipment, and activity programming was envisioned. A star feature of the Physical Culture Department's schedule of events was to be the organization of all kinds of

sporting competitions, including, it was hoped, the American national championships in several athletic disciplines.

82. One of the few notations of this “historic” meeting appeared in the *Concord Daily Monitor* (New Hampshire), September 22, 1902. Dated Berlin (Germany), the article claimed that Furber and Coubertin had agreed that the rules of recognized athletic organizations in the United States, such as the A.A.U., would govern the Chicago Games.

83. Coubertin to Godefroy de Blonay, October 31, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

84. See: “Directors of Olympian Games Return,” *Deseret Evening News* (Utah), October 22, 1902.

85. Skiff was responsible for the exhibits of all departments, including those of the Physical Culture Department.

86. New York, Chicago and St. Louis newspapers each reported that the meetings took place. See, for instance, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, October 30, 1902; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 28, 1902; and *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 30, 1902.

87. Furber to Coubertin, November 26, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

88. See *Chicago Chronicle*, November 11, 1902.

89. See *Chicago Tribune*, November 11, 1902; *Chicago Chronicle*, November 11, 1902; and *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, November 11, 1902.

90. See, for instance: *The Holdridge Progress* (Nebraska), November 28, 1902; *The Evening Gazette* (Colorado Springs, Colorado), December 2, 1902; *Anaconda Standard* (Montana), December 9, 1902; *Nashville Banner* (Tennessee), January 10, 1903; *Deseret Evening News* (Utah); and *Oakland Enquirer* (California), January 14, 1903.

91. See, for instance, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, November 13, 1902; *Boston Transcript*, November 14, 1902; *The Sun* (New York), November 14, 1902; and *Rochester Gazette* (New York), November 14, 1902.

92. “St. Louis May Get Olympian Games,” *The Daily Maroon*, November 12, 1902. Unfortunately for the cause of Olympic Games in Chicago, the early reaction on the University’s campus was muffled to the extent that the announcement received only secondary attention and reaction. A more important priority in university life was the culprit—college football. Coach Stagg’s Maroons were scheduled to play Fielding Yost’s Michigan Wolverines on the weekend. The prospect of facing Willie Heston and the eligibility status of Michigan’s Dan McGubin, tempered campus interest in Olympic matters.

93. See "Olympian Games Mass Meeting in Kent Tomorrow," *The Daily Maroon*, December 4, 1902. *The Maroon*, waxing nostalgic, described the mass student demonstrations in the spring of 1901 when the Games had finally been awarded to Chicago. As well, the paper reported on plans to make the 1904 Games the occasion for "a great Alumni reunion."

94. See *Pierre de Coubertin: Olympisme* (Norbert Müller, ed.), Zurich: Weidmann, 1987, p. 200.

95. See *The Daily Maroon*, December 5, 1902. .

96. After listing several "whereas" items, the resolution moved that the IOC agree to hold the Games in 1905, and if that was out of the question, then hold them in Chicago in 1904 according to its original decision. See *The Daily Maroon*, December 5, 1902.

97. Furber (on behalf of the Chicago Organizing Committee) to Coubertin, November 26, 1902. IOC Archives, CPC. The verbatim text of this official letter was published in the *Chicago Chronicle*, February 13, 1903.

98. Furber to Coubertin, November 26, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

99. See Furber (on behalf of the Chicago Organizing Committee) to Coubertin, November 26, 1902.

100. Furber to Coubertin, November 26, 1902.

101. Merou to Coubertin, December 2, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

102. In a substantial article published by the *Chicago Record-Herald* (December 1, 1902), Merou was quoted at length on his reasons for favoring the city where his Consulate Office was located. Merou's reasons included: (1) limited facilities for sports in St. Louis, (2) the Games would be lost in the greater St. Louis Exposition, (3) the torpid climate in St. Louis during August and September would hamper the performance of athletes from Europe who were used to cooler conditions, in fact, that factor might keep them from desiring to participate, and (4) Chicago and the IOC had made commitments to each other and these ought to be honored.

103. St. Louis' nickname is drawn from the nearby location of huge pre-history burial mounds, an archaeological legacy of American Indians resident in the area long before St. Louis was established by French explorers and missionaries in the 16th century. By 1900 the "bustling" river port, known also as "the gateway to the American West," had become America's fifth largest city. On the other hand, its population was less than half that of Chicago's.

104. Francis' cable to the Baron on this point has not survived, but Coubertin paraphrased its contents in *Revue Olympique*, February 1903, p. 7.

105. Lamar Middleton to Coubertin, December 9, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

106. See *Chicago News*, December 10, 1902. A December 15, 1902 Coubertin letter to Furber on this point has not survived, but Furber acknowledged having received it when he wrote to the Baron on December 31st. What Coubertin had written Furber on December 15th was that the fundamental laws of the IOC's constitution allowed for no alteration of the established quadrennial scheme. (See Furber to Coubertin, December 31, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC). Further to the Baron's statement of having contacted Roosevelt on the matter, no record of Coubertin having written, nor Roosevelt having received the letter to which the Baron referred has ever been discovered.

107. Middleton to Coubertin, December 20, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

108. See *St. Louis Republic*. December 12, 1902.

109. Coubertin to IOC members, December 21, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC. When Coubertin referred to "the totality of the student body" he may well have interpreted the University of Chicago Senior Student Council resolution passed at the December 5th Kent Hall meeting as conveying a stance more overwhelmingly supported than what the document really represented—the declaration of a moderately attended meeting.

110. Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (English translation by Geoffrey de Navacelle, Coubertin's grand-nephew), Published by the IOC, Lausanne, 1975, p. 41.

111. The surviving responses are from Blonay/Switzerland (December 22, 1902), Mejerado del Campo/Spain (December 23, 1902), Mercati/Greece (December 26, 1902), Guth/Bohemia (December 30, 1902), Ribaupierre/Russia (January 3, 1903), Balck/Sweden (August 1, 1903), and Usseaux/Italy (October 26, 1903).

112. See *Chicago Record-Herald*, December 22, 1902.

113. *Ibid.* Brackets mine. Some historians have incorrectly reported that Coubertin convened a meeting of the IOC in Paris on December 21, 1901 for the purpose of deciding the Chicago/St. Louis issue. Such an assertion is absolutely incorrect. There was no IOC meeting; the vote was conducted by mail/cable.

114. *Ibid.* The reliability of Middleton's statement can be questioned. He claimed that he was "unable to contact the other eight members." In December 1902 there were 25 IOC members, not 29 as Middleton thought (see IOC Minutes, 4th Session–1901 and 5th Session–1904 [IOC Membership], IOC Archives, Lausanne).

115. See *Bloomington Paragraph* (Illinois), December 23, 1902.

116. Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (English translation by Geoffrey Navacelle), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

117. Professional baseball might be judged by some as a challenge to the context of my remarks here. St. Louis fielded an entry in the original National League (established in 1876). In the first decade and a half of the National League's history, however, the *Brown Stockings* and *Maroons* (as they were alternately called) competed in only four campaigns; Chicago's *White Stockings*, on the other hand, fielded a team in each of the 15 seasons, and a powerful team at that. Professional baseball before the turn of the century, in general, identified distinctions between the two cities in the areas of sports management and entrepreneurship.

118. Coubertin to Furber, February 10, 1902, IOC Archives, CPC.

119. Francis communicated this information to Coubertin by letter after he arrived in Europe. See Francis to Coubertin, March 7, 1903, IOC Archives, CPC.

120. Coubertin's rhetoric to the contrary, the archival evidence strongly supports an hypothesis that IOC members played negligible roles in the final decision.

121. Furber to Coubertin, February 12, 1903, IOC Archives, CPC.

122. Coubertin to Chicago Olympian Games Committee, February 11, 1903, IOC Archives, CPC.

123. See, for instance: *Bardstown Record* (Kentucky), February 24, 1903; *Fort Worth Register* (Texas), February 23, 1903; *San Antonio Express* (Texas), February 22, 1903; *Dallas Enterprise* (Texas), February 19, 1903; *Taylor Journal* (Texas), February 26, 1903; *Shawnee News* (Oklahoma), February 23, 1903; *Jerome Mining News* (Arizona), March 2, 1903; *St. Paul Dispatch* (Minnesota), February 13, 1903; *Milwaukee Sentinel* (Wisconsin), February 12, 1903; *Oskosh Times* (Wisconsin), February 27, 1903; *Walla Walla Statesman* (Washington), March 3, 1903; *Tacoma Ledger* (Washington), March 5, 1903; *Baker City Democrat* (Oregon), February 27, 1903; *Portland Oregonian* (Oregon), January 19, 1903 (the *Oregonian* misinterpreted the possibility of transfer to be a deed already accomplished); *San Francisco Bulletin* (California), February 12, 1903; *Reno Journal* (Nevada), January 14, 1903 (the *Journal* also prematurely reported that the Games were to be in St. Louis); *Colorado Springs Evening News* (Colorado), February 20, 1903; *St. Joseph News* (Missouri), March 2, 1903; *Marshall Democrat-News* (Missouri), February 28, 1903; *Oskaloosa Herald* (Iowa), March 10, 1903; *Des Moines Register* (Iowa), February 13, 1903; *Davenport Union Leader* (Iowa), February 23, 1903; *Columbus Dispatch-Citizen* (Ohio), *Grand Rapids Herald* (Michigan), February 12, 1903; February 12, 1903; *Richmond Dispatch* (Virginia), February 12, 1903; *Parkersburg State Journal*

(West Virginia), July 10, 1903; *Newark News* (New Jersey), February 12, 1903; *Pittsburg Gazette* (Pennsylvania), February 12, 1903; *Philadelphia Telegraph* (Pennsylvania), February 23, 1903; *Buffalo Courier* (New York), February 26, 1903; *Syracuse Post-Standard* (New York), February 12, 1903; *New York Tribune*, February 13, 1903; *New York Evening-Journal*, February 13, 1903; *New Haven Leader* (Connecticut), February 25, 1903; *Springfield Republican-Union* (Massachusetts), February 12, 1903; and *Boston Post* (Massachusetts), February 12, 1903.

124. At this point in history, the continental United States was composed of 45 states, three territories and the District of Columbia.

125. For examples, see: *Shreveport Journal* (Louisiana), July 27, 1903; *Biloxi Herald* (Mississippi), October 17, 1903; *Mobile Item* (Alabama), December 12, 1903; and *Columbia State* (South Carolina), August 26, 1903.

126. Oddly enough, when Chicago was awarded the 1904 Olympic Games in May 1901, little information about the link between the modern Games and their ancient counterparts appeared in American newspapers. This may have been due to the unsettled Chicago efforts in preparing for the Games, or the fact that newspaper editors and publishers saw fit to employ a strategy aimed at educating readers in Olympic matters during a period much closer to the event actually occurring, rather than during a period some three years in advance. This point remains unclear for the time being.

127. See, for instance: *Berkeley Gazette* (California), March 3, 1903; *Aberdeen Bulletin* (Washington), March 20, 1903; *Laramore News* (North Dakota), April 10, 1903; *Kansas City Star* (Missouri), March 16, 1903; *Edwardsville Republican* (Illinois), March 20, 1903; *Chicago Inter-Ocean* (Illinois), March 7, 1903; *Burlington Post* (Iowa), April 4, 1903; *Saginaw News* (Michigan), March 13, 1903; *Akron Democrat* (Ohio), April 11, 1903; *Rome Citizen* (New York), March 4, 1903; and *New York American*, March 14, 1903.

128. See, for instance: *Oakland Enquirer* (California), March 21, 1903; *Kansas City World* (Kansas), March 26, 1903; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (Missouri), February 18, 1903; *Terra Haute Gazette* (Indiana), March 3, 1903; and *Columbus Press* (Ohio), August 11, 1903.

129. See, for instance: *Woonsocket Reporter* (Rhode Island), April 3, 1903; *Hartford Post* (Connecticut), April 11, 1903; *Brooklyn Eagle* (New York), May 2, 1903; *Parkersburg Statesman* (West Virginia), July 10, 1903; *Indianapolis Sentinel* (Indiana), April 3, 1903; *Topeka Journal* (Kansas), April 6, 1903; *Atchison Globe* (Kansas), April 9, 1903; *Elko Free Press* (Nevada), May 2, 1903; *Tacoma Ledger* (Washington), June 7, 1903; *San Francisco Post*, April 21, 1903; and *San Francisco Examiner*, May 2, 1903. Another name that surfaced as a possibility was Albert G. Spalding, an individual on a par with Sullivan as the

nation's best known sports promoter/organizer/entrepreneur. See, for instance, *Woonsocket Reporter* (Rhode Island), April 3, 1903.

130. In New England, for example, see: *Waterbury Journal* (Connecticut), July 16, 1903; *Portland Advertiser* (Maine), July 24, 1903; *Waterville Mail* (Maine), July 27, 1903; *Manchester News* (New Hampshire), December 18, 1903; and *Providence Journal* (Rhode Island) July 25, 1903. In Northeastern and Middle Atlantic states, see, for instance: *Washington Star* (D.C.), July 16, 1903; *Wilkes Barre Record* (Pennsylvania), July 17, 1903; and *Baltimore American* (Maryland), July 26, 1903. For examples in the American South, see: *Nashville News* (Tennessee), July 18, 1903; *Louisville Times* (Kentucky), July 21, 1903; *Shreveport Journal* (Louisiana), July 27, 1903; *Atlanta Constitution* (Georgia), July 27, 1903; *Rome Tribune* (Georgia), August 1, 1903; *Savannah News* (Georgia), August 8, 1903; *Biloxi Herald* (Mississippi), October 17, 1903; *New Orleans Daily States* (Louisiana), September 11, 1903; *Columbia State* (South Carolina), August 26, 1903; *Chattanooga News* (Tennessee), August 12, 1903; *Mobile Item* (Alabama), December 12, 1903; *Augusta Herald* (Georgia), August 22, 1903; and *Roanoke World* (Virginia), July 31, 1903. For mid-America, see: *Winona Herald* (Minnesota), July 22, 1903; *Lincoln Herald* (Illinois), July 25, 1903; *Waco Times-Herald* (Texas), July 27, 1903; *El Paso Times* (Texas), November 5, 1903; *Weeping Waters Republican* (Nebraska), August 6, 1903; *Dakota City Eagle* (Nebraska), October 8, 1903; *Denver Times* (Colorado), December 13, 1903; *Chandler Publicist* (Oklahoma), August 21, 1903; and *Salt Lake City Tribune* (Utah), August 2, 1903. For a sample in the Far West, see, for instance: *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 16, 1903; *Albany Herald* (Oregon), August 8, 1903; and *Arroyo Grands Herald* (California), August 8, 1903.

131. For example, see: *New York Local*, April 3, 1903; *Woonsocket Review* (Rhode Island), April 3, 1903; *Olean Herald* (New York), April 9, 1903; *Atchison Globe* (Kansas), April 9, 1903; *Williamsport Sun* (Pennsylvania), April 15, 1903; *Elizabeth City Times* (New Jersey), April 27, 1903; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 16, 1903; *New York Telegram* July 16, 1903; *New York News*, July 16, 1903; *Jersey City Journal* (New Jersey), July 16, 1903; *Syracuse Post-Standard* (New York), July 18, 1903; *Louisville Times* (Kentucky), July 21, 1903; *Akron Democrat* (Ohio), July 26, 1903; *St. Paul Dispatch* (Minnesota), July 29, 1903; *Toledo News* (Ohio), August 6, 1903; *Fall River News* (Massachusetts), August 6, 1903; *Knoxville Sentinel* (Tennessee), August 6, 1903; *Marshall News* (Missouri), August 8, 1903; *Grand Rapids Herald* (Michigan), August 9, 1903; *Brooklyn Telegram* (New York), August 10, 1903; *Youngstown Telegram* (Ohio), August 11, 1903; *St. Louis Republic*, August 16, 1903; *New York Daily News*, August 18, 1903; *Wilkes Barre Record* (Pennsylvania), August 24, 1903; *Albion Free Lance* (New York), August 25, 1903; *Omaha News* (Nebraska), September 11, 1903; *New York News-Telegram*, September 22, 1903; and *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, September 26, 1903.

132. For these statistics I have depended on *Historical Statistics of the United*

States: Colonial Times to the Present (Volume 1). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Census, 1975.

133. The newspapers surveyed for *this* period were: *Burlington Free Press* (Vermont), *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), *Charlotte Observer* (North Carolina), *Cheyenne Daily Leader* (Wyoming), *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* (South Dakota), *Tampa Morning Tribune*, (Florida), *The Every Evening News* (Wilmington, Delaware), *Pocatello Tribune* (Idaho), and *Albuquerque Daily Citizen* (New Mexico Territory). I would like to express my appreciation for the aid given me by my research assistants in carrying out a considerable dimension of the necessary newspaper research upon which many of the findings of this study are based. Those individuals are Robb MacDonald and Karen Berkout. I would also like to recognize the archivists at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, who brought to my attention and made available for my use an invaluable document—"Louisiana Purchase Exposition Scrapbook, Vol. 31," a collection of newsclippings from various American newspapers that published Exposition/Olympic news between June 1902 and December 1903.

134. In actuality, athletes from eight foreign countries participated in the Olympic-sanctioned events of the 1904 Games. Those countries represented were Australia, Canada, Cuba, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, and South Africa. Several commentaries on participation figures of the 1904 Games list athletes from foreign countries who, even though they had been born abroad, resided in the United States and represented American athletic clubs at the Games. Such individuals cannot be considered as foreign entrants. I am indebted to Bill Mallon for his most thorough overview of athlete participation in the St. Louis Games. See Bill Mallon, "A Statistical Summary of the 1904 Olympic Games," Unpublished manuscript, Durham, North Carolina, 1981. Copy held at the Centre for Olympic Studies, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.

135. For instance, many of America's best track and field stars from universities in the East, notably from Harvard and Yale, failed to compete due to eligibility differences held between Sullivan's A.A.U. and university athletic officials.