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“Chicago - United Air Lines,” by William Lawson, ca. 1948.

Commercial aviation in the U.S. boomed after World War II, and few posters capture the energy and confidence of the period like those artist Lawson did for United Air Lines in the late 1940s. Possessing an airbrushed glamor, these posters are also attractive for their striking lighting, visual depth, and sculptural treatment of buildings.

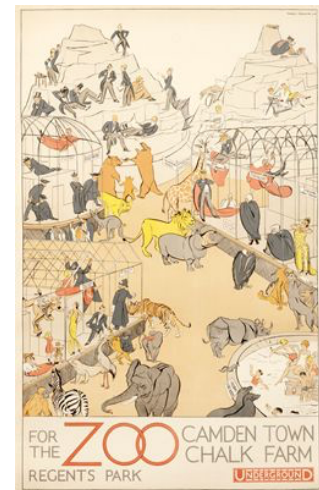
Lawson’s “Chicago” features the Chicago Water Tower, famous for surviving the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, and the Palmolive Building, built in 1929. The light on top, the Lindbergh Beacon, was added in 1930 to guide aircraft in to Midway Airport. The aircraft here appears to be the new Douglas DC-6, United’s answer to the Lockheed Constellations flown by TWA and Pan Am.



“For the Zoo – Camden Town – Chalk Farm – London Underground,” by Anrid Banniza Johnston, ca. 1930.

From the London Underground’s brilliant poster output comes this witty satire by Anrid Banniza Johnston, for the Camden Town and Chalk Farm lines leading to the famous Regent’s Park Zoo. While seals, a lion, and an elephant stroll around looking at exhibits, humans cavort in the cages. There is a “Cockney Vulgaris,” a “Screeching Prima Donna,” and a couple of “Great Crested Magnates” with a sign on their cage saying “Do Not Tease These People.” Observant and good-humored, the poster offers up social criticism of a sort rarely seen in poster advertising.

Originally from Sweden, Miss Johnston did other posters for the Underground as well as illustrating a book of Aesop’s Fables. She specialized in drawing animals and was also a sculptor and carver.



“Fight or Buy Bonds – Third Liberty Loan,” by Howard Chandler Christy, 1917

Howard Chandler Christy was one of America’s leading illustrators when the U.S. became involved in World War I. He produced numerous posters for the war effort, typically featuring beautiful brunettes who became known as Christy Girls. These posters have become icons of the experience of the American home front in the Great War. This poster for the Third Liberty Loan is one of his best. A beauty in every way!



“Chicago – New York Central Lines,” by Leslie Ragan, 1929

“Chicago” was Leslie Ragan's first poster for the New York Central Lines, the railroad for which he would produce some of the most romantic cityscapes in posters. With its great depth and combination of shadowy and luminous areas, this image of Michigan Avenue skyscrapers under a towering thunderhead contains all the magic of Ragan's mature style.

A product of the rural heartland, the Iowa-born Ragan was heavily influenced by the traditional American illustrative tradition of N.C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish. Nonetheless he embraced the skyscrapers of Chicago and New York as symbols of American progress. In “Chicago,” the City of the Big Shoulders is reborn as a Midwestern Athens.

