

## The World's Columbian Exposition's Lasting Effect on Chicago

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In many ways, a world's fair is a microcosm of a city. Similar to any large city, a fair must be built to accommodate a deluge of visitors, have working sanitation systems, running water and electricity, and scores of buildings to present to the public. In addition to being efficient, a world's fair must also be aesthetically pleasing. The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was both functional and beautiful, and it encouraged visitors to rethink the aesthetics and infrastructure of American cities. The Exposition strongly influenced American architecture and city planning, and this was especially true in Chicago where Daniel H. Burnham's leadership was instrumental. The planning and success of the World's Fair inspired the City Beautiful movement, which forever changed the face of Chicago.

In the late nineteenth century, Chicago was a bustling, but gritty, city. According to architectural historian Carroll Westfall, the city was not even sixty years old when the World's Fair opened in 1893.<sup>1</sup> Yet Chicago had already burgeoned into a populous, industrial center that was eager to host international audiences. Chicago's growth and prosperity was inspirational and somewhat surprising, considering the Great Fire that had destroyed much of the city only 23 years prior. In 1871, "Approximately two thousand acres lay waste; about eighteen thousand people [were] left homeless."<sup>2</sup> By 1893, Chicagoans had rebuilt their city and they were ready to exhibit it to the world. The World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park gave them the opportunity to show off their city's Phoenix-like rebirth and accomplishments. At the time, the city was described as "cluttered," "raucous," and "smoke-filled," and the World's Fair needed to be the antithesis of this polluted chaos.<sup>3</sup> What better way to impress its visitors than with pristine, white buildings of monumental proportion? The resulting "White City" inspired Americans to incorporate

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll Westfall in David Stone, *Chicago's Classical Architecture: The Legacy of the White City* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 7.

<sup>2</sup>Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago, 1871-1893* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 5-6.

<sup>3</sup>David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 44-45.

classical architecture, green spaces, and bodies of water into their cities' plans, and much of the success of the World's Fair can be attributed to Burnham's planning.

Daniel H. Burnham was appointed Chief of Construction for the World's Columbian Exposition. Burnham and his partner John Wellborn Root had established a name for themselves as one of the most successful architectural partnerships in Chicago and throughout the United States. By 1890, "the firm had gained widespread recognition, having designed and constructed about \$40 million in buildings."<sup>4</sup> This reputation led the pair to be nominated as consulting architects for the World's Fair. E.T. Jeffery, the chair of the Grounds and Buildings Committee, assigned Burnham the position of Chief of Construction in 1893 as a way to centralize the control of the Fair.<sup>5</sup> As Chief of Construction, Burnham was responsible for almost all aspects of the Fair, except the exhibits. According to James Campbell,

The duty of the Chief of Construction...was, broadly stated, to select, organize, and control all forces needed to prepare the grounds and erect the buildings for the Exposition. These forces were those of surveys and grades, landscape works, architecture, sculpture, decoration, general superintendence, sewers, water and fire protection, steam plant and other machinery, electrical plant, transportation of persons and goods, guard and secret service, fire department, medical department construction accounts, purchasing, attorneys.<sup>6</sup>

An enormous honor was bestowed upon Burnham in being appointed Chief of Construction, but with this honor came tremendous responsibility. The unexpected passing of his partner, Root, in 1891 from pneumonia meant that the success of the Fair lay largely in Burnham's hands. Fortunately, Burnham had the skills and insight to plan and carry out a world's fair of expansive scale.

The grandeur of the World's Columbian Exposition impressed visitors from around the world. The buildings were of massive proportions, and the Fair, at 190 acres, was the largest ever at that time.<sup>7</sup> The site and buildings had to be large enough to accommodate 65,000

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<sup>4</sup>Kristen Schaffer, *Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner* (New York: Rizzoli International Publication, Inc., 2003), 60.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>6</sup>James B. Campbell, *Campbell's Illustrated History of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: N. Juul and Company, 1894), 386.

<sup>7</sup>Burnham, quoted in Benjamin C. Truman, *History of the World's Fair Being A Complete and Authentic Description of the Columbian Exposition From Its Inception* (New York: Arno Press, 1976, reprint of the 1893 edition), 146.

exhibitors and millions of visitors.<sup>8</sup> Visitors to the Fair, like journalist Marian Shaw, marveled at the sheer vastness of some of the structures. “By far the largest building on the exposition grounds, is that of the manufactures and liberal arts, its dimensions being 787 x 1687 feet, and having a floor space of 44 acres.... It is said that a thousand cottages 25 x 50 feet could be placed within its walls.”<sup>9</sup> However, it was not only the enormity of the buildings that awed visitors at the Fair, but it was their design as well.

The elegance and uniformity of the Neoclassical and Renaissance architecture, referred to as Beaux-Arts after the *École des Beaux-Arts* (School of Fine Arts) in Paris, were imitated by cities across the country in the decades following the Columbian Exposition. In 1893, Chicago architects were already discussing how the Fair might influence future architecture in an article that appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. One architect, S.S. Beman, had this outlook:

Your request for an opinion as to the influence that the Columbian Exposition will exert upon the architecture of this country almost tempts one to enter the realm of romance.... To my mind, however, the chief value of this great architectural object lesson lies in the fact that it will awaken the masses to a broader and higher appreciation of architecture. I believe that the effect of the architecture of the Exposition will be to hold the development of American architecture to the conservative and refined lines of the classic and renaissance types.<sup>10</sup>

Beman was correct in his assumption that the architecture would rouse visitors and result in an explosion of classical architecture. Nevertheless, not everyone was pleased with the homogeneous white, neoclassical buildings. Louis Sullivan, one of the architects of the Columbian Exposition and one of its harshest critics, argued against the “slavish copying” of Greco-Roman structures.<sup>11</sup> While it is debatable what effect Root’s death had on the final plans of the Fair, his sister-in-law believed

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<sup>8</sup>Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2008), 68.

<sup>9</sup>Marian Shaw, *A Woman Journalist Views Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1992, Republished from *Chicago Daily News*, 1893), 36.

<sup>10</sup>“Lesson In Building: Effect of World’s Fair Architecture on Future.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1893.

<sup>11</sup>Almus Pratt Evans, “Exposition Architecture: 1893 versus 1933.” *Parnassus* 5 (1933): 17.

the architecture at the Exposition would have been more colorful and festive had his designs been carried out.<sup>12</sup>

The buildings that were arranged around the Court of Honor, a major focal point of the Fair, shared the same principles. According to Burnham,

It was not considered judicious to impose upon the designers any conditions in regard to style or proportions which might tend to hamper them in the free exercise of their artistic skill and invention; but, as harmony was an essential element of the composition of the Grand Court, it was suggested that the adoption of the classical style in that group of buildings would secure the desired result. Acting in the direction of this suggestion the Board [of Architects] agreed to fix the height of the cornice of these buildings at sixty feet from the ground.<sup>13</sup>

Burnham assigned each architectural firm to a building, and the Beaux-Arts structures brought a unity to the court (Fig. 1).

Classical influences pervaded the Fair, as illustrated by the buildings and the sculptures. Shaw discusses the “Corinthian style of architecture” of the Liberal Arts Building in one of her articles, and the Corinthian order could be found throughout the Fair.<sup>14</sup> The Columbus Arch and Peristyle, which lay between the harbor and the Court of Honor, consisted of forty-eight Corinthian columns. At the ends of the Peristyle were replicas of the Roman Forum’s Temple of Vesta, and sculptures of Roman soldiers and winged goddesses decorated the structure.<sup>15</sup> Near the Peristyle, a statue stood in the Grand Basin and Court of Honor. The 65-foot-high statue designed by sculptor Daniel Chester French was modeled after statues from ancient Greece (Fig. 1).

Triumphal arches, Corinthian columns, pediments, and winged statues were repeated throughout the buildings and added to the harmony of the Court. An obelisk was located at one end of the Grand Basin, and though this is an ancient Egyptian form, it was frequently used in classical revival architecture. According to David Stone, “Beaux-Arts architecture is also known for its grand scale and its more decorative and eclectic interpretation of classical architecture (often inspired by the Renaissance).”<sup>16</sup> The buildings at the Fair fit this description because they were more ornate than classical structures and they incorporated a variety

<sup>12</sup>Burg, *Chicago’s White City of 1893*, 78.

<sup>13</sup>Daniel Hudson Burnham and Francis Davis Millet, *The Book of the Builders* (Chicago: Columbian Memorial Publication Society, 1894), 22.

<sup>14</sup>Shaw, *A Woman Journalist Views Chicago’s 1893 Columbian Exposition*, 36.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

of styles. The Machinery Hall is a fine example of this eclectic mix of architectural styles at the Fair. The Hall featured repeating Corinthian columns, but incorporated Spanish architecture as well (Fig. 2). According to Hubert Howe Bancroft, “the details of this design have been kept in rigid conformity with classical and scholarly traditions, relieved in parts by motives suggested by the highly ornate renaissance of Spain.”<sup>17</sup> Though the architects had guidelines to which they had to adhere, it is apparent they had both flexibility and freedom in designing the buildings.

In addition to uniformity in their design, the buildings at the Exposition shared similar construction materials. The majority of the buildings were impermanent structures that were made from “a combination of plaster of Paris and fibers, which was called staff, superimposed upon lathe.”<sup>18</sup> The Palace of Fine Arts (Fig. 3) was one of two permanent structures built for the World’s Columbian Exposition (the other permanent structure was the World’s Congress Auxiliary Building, later the Art Institute of Chicago). The Palace was constructed “with walls of bricks; with merely a coating of staff, and with roof of iron, steel, and glass.”<sup>19</sup> The citizens of Chicago wanted a portion of the Fair to remain for public use, and visitors were relieved that the stunning Palace of Fine Arts building would be a permanent Chicago fixture:

Among those who have beheld this edifice, of itself a work of art, their pleasure was not impaired by regret that within a few brief months it was doomed to demolition; for here was no ephemeral structure, but one...which after the close of the Fair would remain as among its monuments, to be used for museum purposes and for the safe keeping of the many valuable exhibits presented to the management.<sup>20</sup>

After the Fair, the Palace became the original Field Museum, and later was refurbished and reopened as the Museum of Science and Industry in 1933. This lasting remnant of the Fair has been an inspiration for similar public buildings across the country in both its proportions and design. The permanent, neoclassical building was modeled after a Greek temple, while its dome is of Roman influence. “The temple of fine arts, a gem of the purest water . . . taking as the keynote of the plan the temple of Athena Polias in the Erechtheum.”<sup>21</sup> The structure incorporates 24 caryatids and numerous Ionic columns (Fig. 4).

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<sup>17</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (Chicago: The Bancroft Company, 1893), 307.

<sup>18</sup>Burg, *Chicago’s White City of 1893*, 84.

<sup>19</sup>Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, 665.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 665.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

The Beaux-Arts architecture of the Fair influenced buildings across America, but the Exposition's legacy of innovative infrastructure also made a lasting impression on cities themselves. The planners of the Fair had to accommodate millions of visitors, and this meant that proper sanitation systems had to be installed. According to one report on the Fair, "Within the Exposition grounds there were 3,116 water closets, as against 250 at the Paris Exposition of 1889."<sup>22</sup> The sanitation system at the Fair was elaborate, and it had to transport approximately 3,200,000 gallons of waste daily, according to a report on the sewage disposal at the World's Fair.<sup>23</sup> The report described the sewage disposal works as consisting of iron tanks 32 feet high and 32 feet in diameter. The sewage was forced into these tanks by 26 pairs of Shone ejectors scattered throughout the Fair.<sup>24</sup> The Fair operated like a small city, with state-of-the-art sewage systems and running water.

Water was a key element at the Columbian Exposition. One of the major focal points of the Fair was the Grand Basin surrounded by the Court of Honor, which connected to Lake Michigan. The basin was 350 feet wide and 1,110 feet long.<sup>25</sup> Canals, lagoons, and fountains ran throughout the Fair and they added to the overall European character of the Beaux-Arts exposition. Mass quantities of water were needed, from the fountains and mechanical devices to drinking water and fire safety. According to historian David Burg, the water was supplied by a well beneath the Machinery Building, where two vast Worthington pumps moved 12 million gallons of water daily.<sup>26</sup> There may have been more water required to run the Fair than Burg suggests. An article written at the time of the Fair claims that there were three Worthington pumps that forced 40,000,000 gallons of water into the great mains daily.<sup>27</sup> This elaborate water system further illustrates how the Exposition functioned as a small city, and gave Burnham the experience needed to plan entire American cities.

The use of water at the Exposition was breathtaking, but the utilization of electricity was truly phenomenal to many visitors. In some cases, electricity was incorporated into water displays to create a stunning spectacle. A young man who had recently graduated from high school visited the White City and was in awe of the illuminated fairgrounds. In

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<sup>22</sup>H. N. Higinbotham, *Report of the President of the Board of Directors of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1898), 15.

<sup>23</sup>Allen Hazen, "Chemical Precipitation of Sewage at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893" in *25<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the State Board of Health: Massachusetts* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Company, 1894), 600.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 600.

<sup>25</sup>Stone, *Chicago's Classical Architecture*, 12.

<sup>26</sup>Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893*, 87.

<sup>27</sup>Truman, *History of the World's Fair Being A Complete and Authentic Description of the Columbian Exposition From Its Inception*, 158.

one diary entry he elaborates for several paragraphs about the electricity at the Columbian Exposition:

In the evening we spent much time in admiring the great electrical display. There is no doubt but that it was done on a scale never before conceived.... The Electrical Fountains throw jets of water and spray of various colors and combinations of colors high up in the air.... The interior [of the Electrical Building] is brilliantly illuminated.... Electric lamps in a great variety of sizes, shapes, colors and arranged in all sorts of ways, were present on all sides.<sup>28</sup>

The scale of the Fair's electric display was unsurpassed at the time. Electricity was still a novel concept to many people, and only a small portion of the population had electricity in their homes in 1893. The White House had electricity installed only two years prior.<sup>29</sup> According to Burg, "The exposition comprised the largest electrical exhibit and the greatest employment of electrical energy in the nineteenth century."<sup>30</sup> The Fair employed sixteen generators driven by fifteen engines, which meant the central plant in the Machinery Hall was capable of simultaneously lighting "172,000 16-candle-power incandescent lights."<sup>31</sup> Rossiter Johnson claimed that the plant was "two or three times as great as that then in existence in the business district of the city of Chicago."<sup>32</sup> If such grand scale electric, water, and sewage works could be created for a world's fair, then the possibility for improving and modernizing American cities was probable and practical.

The success of the Fair and the experience in planning such a massive project encouraged Burnham to extend this World's Fair model to cities across America, especially Chicago. Members of the community were equally impressed with Burnham's planning skills. According to architect Peter B. Wight, a contemporary of Burnham, "The businessman of Chicago then realized more than ever before that [Burnham] was the man for big things, and nothing was so large as not to come within the possibility of his accomplishment."<sup>33</sup> Chicago was Burnham's hometown,

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<sup>28</sup>G. L. Dybwad and Joy V. Bliss, eds., *White City Recollections: The Illustrated 1893 Diary of Friend Pitts Williams' Trip to the World's Columbian Exposition* (Albuquerque: The Book Stops Here, 2003, from typescript manuscript), 25-29.

<sup>29</sup>White House Historical Association, "Timelines- Technology," [http://www.whitehousehistory.org/05/subs/images\\_print/05\\_d.pdf](http://www.whitehousehistory.org/05/subs/images_print/05_d.pdf).

<sup>30</sup>Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893*, 98.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>32</sup>Rossiter Johnson, ed., *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition* (New York: D. Appleton, 1897), 187.

<sup>33</sup>As quoted in Schaffer, *Daniel H. Burnham*, 71-72.

and it was his strong desire to make the city as pleasing as possible, for visitors and residents alike. Burnham began his plans to beautify and renovate Chicago shortly after the World's Columbian Exposition. It took more than a decade for these plans to be implemented, however, and in the meantime Burnham was hired to help design other cities, including Washington, D.C., Cleveland, and San Francisco. These cities were more receptive to Burnham's visions, and it took Burnham longer to convince Chicagoans of the practicability of his plans.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, his designs for the other cities gave him more of the experience needed for his large-scale plans in Chicago.

Burnham's first city-planning project was in Washington, D.C., which took place from 1901-02. Burnham collaborated with three men, including two who had been involved with the Columbian Exposition, architect Charles F. McKim and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.<sup>35</sup> The fourth man was landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the son of the landscape architect who had worked with Burnham at the Fair.<sup>36</sup> The commission was appointed to improve downtown Washington, D.C., as part of the City Beautiful movement. According to historian Carl Smith, the area west of the Capitol and south of the White House was "embarrassingly cluttered and shabby," and it was the goal of the commission to create an aesthetically pleasing downtown that would capture the greatness of America.<sup>37</sup> Burnham and his associates traveled to several European cities, including Paris, Rome, and Vienna, to evaluate city-planning methods and gain inspiration. Upon return, Burnham persuaded the Pennsylvania Railroad to shift its location, which allowed him to successfully plan the area known as the Mall. The commission was chiefly responsible for the arrangement of monuments, parks, government buildings, and cultural institutions that are found today near the Capitol. Burnham charged no fee for his work in Washington, D.C., or for future government city-planning projects. Burnham wanted to beautify cities like Washington, D.C., and Chicago as a means of public service.

Burnham was asked to revitalize Cleveland's lakefront almost immediately after he finished his work in Washington, D.C. In 1903, he was appointed by the governor of Ohio to lead a team of three men in constructing Cleveland's civic center. Burnham's layout for Cleveland was similar to the Court of Honor at the World's Fair, but this was a more difficult project for Burnham because he had to demolish hundreds of acres of urban buildings before he could begin construction.<sup>38</sup> In contrast,

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<sup>34</sup>Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 138.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>37</sup>Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 23.

<sup>38</sup>Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 163.



Jackson Park, the location for the World's Columbian Exposition, and downtown Washington, D.C., were relatively undeveloped areas. Nonetheless, Burnham was able to renovate the previously inhabited lakefront, and the neoclassical architecture of the civic center invoked memories of the World's Fair. Burnham's experience renovating Cleveland's waterfront and his successful negotiations with the railroad company in Washington, D.C., illustrated to many that Burnham was ready for larger city planning projects.

In 1904, Burnham was invited to plan the city of San Francisco. Burnham created an elaborate 184-page plan for the city that proposed a civic center and numerous parks. His designs for San Francisco differed from his previous work and provided Burnham the opportunity to fully exercise his skills in city planning. The World's Fair was built as a temporary exhibit, and his Washington, D.C., plan, while permanent, was heavily based on the work of Pierre Charles L'Enfant.<sup>39</sup> Burnham's plan for Cleveland was confined to the civic center. In San Francisco, however, it was requested that Burnham plan the whole county and much of the peninsula.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, tragedy hit San Francisco in 1906 when an earthquake and subsequent fire destroyed much of the city. Burnham was asked to implement his plan and help with the reconstruction of San Francisco, but he regretfully declined. Burnham's health was deteriorating, and he had prior obligations to other cities that prevented him from embarking on such an ambitious undertaking.

It was always Burnham's aspiration to expand his World's Fair model to the rest of Chicago. The Fair had awakened a renewed interest in Chicago's lakefront, and Burnham began plans for the area in May of 1894. At the time, members of the community felt that the lakefront was an eyesore, and "a positive disgrace to the City of Chicago."<sup>41</sup> Burnham hoped he could revitalize the lakefront and bring to mind images of the World's Fair. Unlike his later Cleveland model, however, Burnham wanted Chicago's lakefront to be composed of cultural parks in addition to civic centers.

Though Burnham began his planning for Chicago in 1894, it took more than a decade for his plan to materialize. After he ended his work in San Francisco in 1906, Burnham began officially planning the layout for the city of Chicago with his assistant, Edward H. Bennett. Their plan was sponsored by the Commercial Club of Chicago, which was composed of many notable businessmen. Burnham had been meeting with the elite organization since 1897, but the *Plan of Chicago* was not published until 1909. Burnham believed that if his plan were implemented, the world would see "another transformation as occurred in '93 at Jackson Park,

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Schaffer, *Daniel H. Burnham*, 92.

only this time the result will be far more beautiful, and, better still, it will be permanent.”<sup>42</sup> For Burnham, an attractive and efficient city meant a prosperous city. Burnham argued that aesthetic reform would benefit all Chicagoans, and he was able to convince the businessmen of the Commercial Club that commercial and financial growth would occur if Chicago were beautified.<sup>43</sup> Burnham understood that tourists would bring revenue, and residents would not feel the need to travel as frequently if they had attractive parks within their reach. After the World’s Fair, Chicago was going to need a massive renovation if tourists were going to swarm there once again.

Chicago faced a multitude of problems in the late nineteenth century, including political corruption and widespread poverty. Along with these obstacles was the question of what should be done with the cluttered downtown and waterfront. Historian Thomas S. Hines has written that Chicago was unattractive, inefficient, and was “born of rapid, unguided, and haphazard growth.”<sup>44</sup> Chicagoans sought ways to correct the city’s political and social problems, and Burnham’s leadership was instrumental in the movement to improve Chicago’s efficiency and attractiveness. One of Burnham’s first plans for Chicago proposed that the site of the World’s Fair remain a city park, and he hoped to connect that space (Jackson Park) to downtown Chicago and the lakefront (the area known as Grant Park). It was his vision to have the two parks connected by landscaped parkways and lagoons.

The Columbian Exposition was largely composed of lagoons, and this appears to have been a feature that Burnham believed Chicago should replicate and expand on for the pleasure of its inhabitants. Burnham envisioned his proposed waterways rivaling “the Thames, the Seine, and the canals of Venice.”<sup>45</sup> Burnham and Bennett believed a planned waterfront would benefit Chicagoans and increase tourism:

Imagine this supremely beautiful parkway, with its frequent stretches of fields, playgrounds, avenues, and groves, extending along the shore in closest touch with the life of the city throughout the whole water front. What will it do for us in health and happiness? After it is finished will the people of means be so ready to run away and spend their money in other cities? ...We should no longer lose so much of the cream of our earnings, now spent in other lands.

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<sup>42</sup>As quoted in Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 316.

<sup>43</sup>Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 315.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago*, ed. Charles Moore (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993. Originally published: Chicago: Chicago Commercial Club, 1909) 51.

When this parkway shall be created, our people will stay here, and others will come to dwell among us.<sup>46</sup>

The actual plans that were implemented differed from Burnham and Bennett's *Plan of Chicago* in some respects, but much of Burnham's legacy can be seen in Chicago today.

There are many key features in the *Plan for Chicago* that embody the City Beautiful ideals. Firstly, Burnham was a proponent of increasing the number of parks and public spaces in the city. Burnham and Bennett envisioned the lakefront as a public space that would be accessible to the masses, and they proposed widening the lakefront with fill. The visitors to the World's Fair thoroughly enjoyed their strolls along the lake, and it is apparent that Burnham believed all Chicago citizens should continue to have this luxury. The Plan also encouraged landscaping Grant Park in a "formal" style, as opposed to being "natural."<sup>47</sup> The development of museums near Grant Park is a result of Burnham's planning as well. In the *Plan of Chicago*, Burnham and Bennett write, "The intellectual life of the city will be stimulated by institutions grouped in Grant Park."<sup>48</sup> They believed that the expansion of "centers of intellectual life" would "give coherence and unity to the city."<sup>49</sup> Grant Park would then be a place to excite the senses as well as the mind. Burnham proposed that museums, a library, and a civic center be built within the park, but Grant Park's official designation was to "forever be vacant of buildings."<sup>50</sup> The building for the Art Institute, which is located in Grant Park, was constructed during the World's Columbian Exposition and escaped this rule. Institutions built later such as the Field Museum and Shedd Aquarium are located south of Grant Park's southern border because of this ordinance.

Though Burnham was a proponent of parks and attractive buildings, he also focused on ways to improve the efficiency and order of Chicago. The City Beautiful movement was not based solely on aesthetics, but it was an attempt to improve urban life and social problems as well. The movement was based on the notion that well planned, clean, attractive spaces would help cure some of society's problems. In developing the Columbian Exposition, Burnham was required to plan for massive amounts of people in one relatively small area. In planning for Chicago, Burnham similarly had to determine the best ways for the populous city to run smoothly, and he addressed the need for sanitation improvements. Burnham and Bennett argued that sanitary regulations should be enforced to "insure adequate air-space of the dwellers in crowded areas."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 130.

<sup>48</sup>Burnham and Bennett, *Plan for Chicago*, 112.

<sup>49</sup>Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 87.

<sup>50</sup>Stone, *Chicago's Classical Architecture*, 34.

<sup>51</sup>Burnham and Bennett, *Plan for Chicago*, 108.

Additionally, they believed that there should be “absolute cleanliness in the street, on the sidewalks, and even within the buildings.”<sup>52</sup> Burnham and Bennett acknowledged that overcrowding in the city was a problem, but they did not think it was severe enough to require government intervention:

Chicago has not yet reached the point where it will be necessary for the municipality to provide at its own expense, as does the city of London, for the rehousing of persons forced out of congested quarters; but unless the matter shall be taken in hand at once, such a course will be required in common justice to men and women so degraded by long life in the slums that they have lost all power of caring for themselves.<sup>53</sup>

The *Plan for Chicago* offered solutions for a number of issues relating to the improvement and productivity of the city, and it illustrates how far Burnham’s planning skills had escalated since the World’s Fair sixteen years before.

Burnham and Bennett despised the filthy streets of Chicago, but they were also aware that much of this pollution could be attributed to congestion problems within the city. The Plan addressed the issue of Chicago’s teeming, disordered streets. It called for “The systematic arrangement of the streets and avenues within the city” that involved creating new diagonal streets and widening major roads, “in order to facilitate the movement to and from the business district.”<sup>54</sup> Burnham and Bennett’s plan elaborated on transportation issues by arguing for “The creation of a system of highways outside the city” that would involve concentric roadways that would loop to neighboring states.<sup>55</sup> The plan also focused on other modes of transportation at the time, namely the railroad system, which was vital to any city’s success. The Plan suggested that the “development of a complete traction system for both freight and passengers,” consisting of trains, subways, tunnels, and elevated rapid transit, should be located along Canal and Twelfth streets.<sup>56</sup> These streets were located on the edges of downtown, which would reduce congestion in the city center. Many of the roadways and train routes that can be found throughout Chicago today were most likely influenced by Burnham’s ingenious planning.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 108-109.

<sup>54</sup>Smith, *The Plan of Chicago*, 87.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Burnham and Bennett, *Plan for Chicago*, 68.

The World's Columbian Exposition provided Burnham with the opportunity to plan and design on a large scale, and that experience resulted in lasting effects in Chicago's parks, streets, and public buildings. Burnham was a strong proponent of Classical architecture, and the city of Chicago is heavily influenced by the architecture of the World's Fair. One of Burnham's architectural feats after the Fair was the construction of the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank in Chicago (Fig. 5). The bank, a classical building with Corinthian columns, was built between 1896 and 1897. The building was constructed of granite, which gave it a similar appearance to the white structures of the Fair. Other architects at the time appreciated Burnham's design, and McKim told Burnham "as an echo of the work of '93 it will remain a monument long after you are gone."<sup>57</sup> Regrettably, the building was demolished in the 1920s, but there are several classical structures that remain permanent Chicago features to this day.

The design of the Field Museum was inspired by the architecture at the Columbian Exposition, and Burnham also planned this classical building. The Field Museum incorporates a peristyle in the Ionic order (Fig. 6). The front entrance houses two caryatids that are modeled after the Erechtheion in Athens, similar to the Palace of Fine Arts at the Fair. Unlike the temporary structures at the World's Fair, the building is constructed of white Georgia marble, and not simulated marble made from plaster. The Shedd Aquarium, built in 1929, is another Chicago building that is reminiscent of the Fair. Ernest Graham, who had worked for Burnham, designed the Beaux-Arts structure. The Aquarium's formal facade is based on traditional Greek temples, and Doric columns support the portico (Fig. 7).

Not far from the Shedd Aquarium and Field Museum is another classical structure near the lakefront. Soldier Field was built in 1924 by the firm of Holabird and Roche, and its design incorporates a colonnade in the Doric order. The classically inspired buildings of the World's Fair affected building styles across Chicago and the rest of America. According to Hines, the "classical" White City introduced a "classical" revival in American culture.<sup>58</sup> This classical influence can be seen in museums, libraries, and capitol buildings across the country.

Many scholars believe that the World's Columbian Exposition inspired the City Beautiful movement, the same movement that resulted in the beautification and reorganization of Chicago in the early twentieth century. Architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson argues, "The immediate crystallization of the City Beautiful movement can be laid to the

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<sup>57</sup>Schaffer, *Daniel H. Burnham*, 98.

<sup>58</sup>Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 123.

World's Columbian Exposition and the wide approbation it received."<sup>59</sup> The Beau-Arts White City gave Americans the notion that they could plan and beautify entire cities and the Fair became a model for large-scale city planning projects across the country.

Not all historians, however, would agree that the Columbian Exposition was responsible for the City Beautiful movement. Historian William H. Wilson concedes that the Fair "exerted a major cultural influence," though he disagrees that the White City inspired the City Beautiful movement and led to comprehensive city planning in the United States.<sup>60</sup> Wilson believes this argument is flawed because of chronology.

Wilson argues that "the City Beautiful movement was not named until 1899, and did not mature until 1902 and after," even though the Fair ended in 1893.<sup>61</sup> Wilson does not take into account the planning that was begun by Burnham for Chicago's lakefront, as early as 1894. That year, Burnham attended a meeting of the Commercial Club to discuss, "What Shall Be Done with the Lake-Front?" and by the end of 1894, Burnham and the Commercial Club decided it should be a site for public buildings and public recreation.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the argument against a direct connection between the World's Columbian Exposition and the City Beautiful movement because of chronology is inconsistent for the reason of finances. According to Hines,

A long, crippling depression of the mid-1890s had dampened the immediate prospects of a real city planning movement. Only with the increased prosperity that followed the Spanish-American War did the legacy of the White City exercise its anticipated influence on American urban development.<sup>63</sup>

The Spanish-American War did not occur until 1898, and the economic slump before that date would have hindered the execution of city beautification and reorganization projects.

Lastly, it seems erroneous to argue that the Fair did not influence the City Beautiful movement because it inspired the architects who were involved in the project, like Burnham, to engage themselves in city planning afterwards. It is impossible to determine exactly how much influence the Fair had on the City Beautiful movement and city planning,

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<sup>59</sup>Richard Guy Wilson, "Architecture, Landscape, and City Planning," in *The American Renaissance 1876-1917*, edited by The Brooklyn Museum (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 87-88.

<sup>60</sup>William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 53.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Schaffer, *Daniel H. Burnham*, 92.

<sup>63</sup>Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 142.

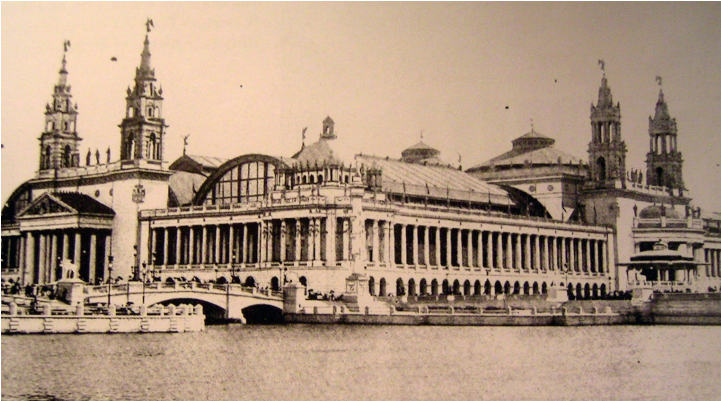
but it gave Burnham the experience needed to implement plans for beautifying cities and improving their efficiency all across America.

The World's Columbian Exposition awakened an interest in public buildings and spaces. Attendees from across the globe were impressed by the organization and presentation of the Fair, and the Exposition inspired the City Beautiful movement. Daniel Burnham had a vision that even after the Fair the city of Chicago could be a place of beauty that would attract visitors. Burnham hoped to cure many of Chicago's social ills through improving the infrastructure of the city, and he was a proponent of clean streets and buildings, ordered transportation systems, and numerous cultural institutions. He also desired that Chicago would have a waterfront that would rival European cities, and that public parks would be scattered throughout the city. Chicago owes much of its efficiency and aesthetics to the World's Fair and Burnham's planning. Grant Park remains an attractive public space that is highly visited, and the architecture of the city continues to awe visitors.

### Illustrations



**Figure 1:** Grand Basin and Court of Honor (Courtesy Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology).

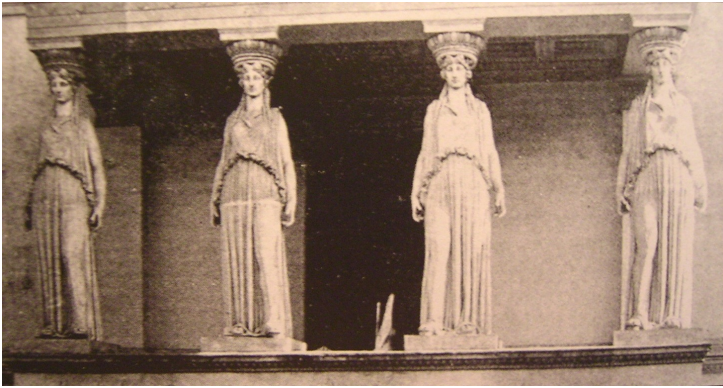


**Figure 2:** Machinery Hall From the Northeast (Courtesy Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology).



**Figure 3:** Palace of Fine Arts (Courtesy Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology).





**Figure 4:** Caryatids at the Palace of Fine Arts (Courtesy Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology).



*Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, Chicago*  
**Figure 5:** Illinois Trust and Savings Bank (Courtesy of *Chicago's Classical Architecture*, Arcadia Publishing).



**Figure 6:** Field Museum Entrance (Courtesy Chicago Photographic Collection [CPC 41-S-188], Special Collections Department, University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago).



**Figure 7:** Shedd Aquarium Entrance (Courtesy Chicago Photographic Collection [CPC 41-S-190], Special Collections Department, University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago).