

Daniel H. Burnham and Chicago's Parks

by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District Historian



Daniel Hudson Burnham from a painting by Zorn, 1899, (CM).

In 1909, Daniel H. Burnham (1846 – 1912) and Edward Bennett published the *Plan of Chicago*, a seminal work that had a major impact, not only on the city of Chicago's future development, but also to the burgeoning field of urban planning. Today, government agencies, institutions, universities, non-profit organizations and private firms throughout the region are coming together 100 years later under the auspices of the Burnham Plan Centennial to educate and inspire people throughout the region. Chicago will look to build upon the successes of the Plan and act boldly to shape the future of Chicago and the surrounding areas. Beginning in the late 1870s, Burnham began making important contributions to Chicago's parks, and much of his park work served as the genesis of the *Plan of Chicago*. The following essay provides a detailed overview of this fascinating topic.

Early Years

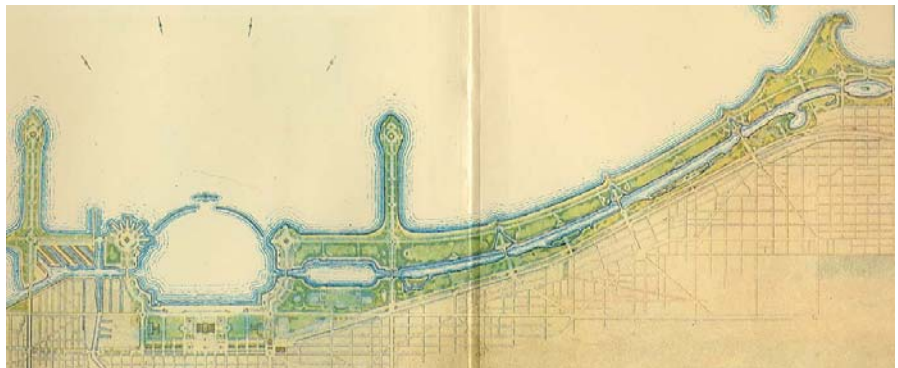
Born in Henderson, New York in 1846, Daniel Hudson Burnham moved to Chicago with his parents and six siblings in the 1850s. His father, Edwin Burnham, found success in the wholesale drug business and was appointed president of the Chicago Mercantile Association in 1865. After Burnham attended public schools in Chicago, his parents sent him to a college preparatory school in New England. He failed to be accepted by either Harvard or Yale universities, however; and returned home in 1867.



Burnham at age nineteen, CM.

Burnham worked briefly in business and politics, and then became an apprentice in the architectural office of Jenney & Loring. The firm was established by one of Chicago's most influential architects and landscape designers, William Le Baron

Jenney (1832 – 1907). Trained in architecture and engineering in Paris, Jenney had served as an engineering officer during the Civil War. While at Vicksburg, Jenney met Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. (1832 – 1902) who was there as a mem-



Plan for Lake Shore from Chicago Ave. on the north to Jackson Park on the South, 1909, (POC).

ber of the United States Sanitary Commission. Olmsted, who is now considered the nation's most famous landscape architect, had created the original plan for New York City's Central Park only a few years earlier. In 1868, he and his partner Calvert Vaux designed Riverside, Illinois; the first planned community in America. Jenney had settled in Chicago after the Civil War, and Olmsted and Vaux hired him as the project architect to design buildings for Riverside and to oversee the implementation of its naturalistic landscape.

Jenney would soon go on to produce the original plans for Chicago's West Park System, which includes today's Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas parks. Jenney also designed buildings and structures in Lincoln Park. In fact, when Burnham began to train in Jenney's office, one of his first



Rendering of Lincoln Park Bridge, ca. 1880, (CPDSC).

assignments was to take dimensions and make sketches of bridges in Lincoln Park. Burnham reported, "It is very engaging work and I enjoy it." Not long afterwards, he wrote, "I shall try to become the greatest architect in the city or the country."



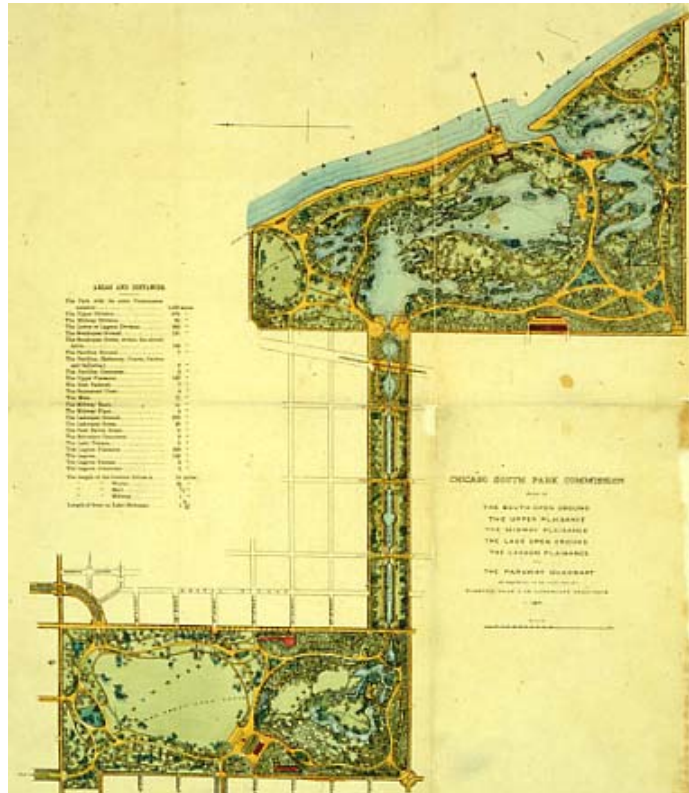
John W. Root, n.d. (CM).

After the apprenticeship, Burnham moved to Nevada to try his hand at silver mining. When this venture failed, he returned to Chicago and worked briefly for several architects including John Van Osdel. In 1872, the firm of Carter, Drake & Wight hired Burnham as a draftsman, a position that proved extremely significant to his future career. One of the partners, Peter B. Wight became a supportive mentor who helped Burnham develop his drawing skills. At the firm, Burnham met a young and talented architect, John Welborn Root (1850 – 1891), who would play an even greater role in his career and life. Born in Georgia, Root moved to England during the Civil War. After studying architecture and engineering in England and America, he worked for several architects in New York including Wight. Root followed Wight from New York to Chicago and became head draftsman for Carter, Drake & Wight. Burnham and Root formed a close friendship and the two decided to form their own partnership in 1873.

After several lean years, Burnham & Root received an important commission in 1875. John Sherman (1825 – 1902), founder of Chicago’s Union Stock Yards, hired the young architects to design his new home on Prairie Avenue, then one of the city’s most fashionable streets. While working on the project, Burnham fell in love with Sherman’s daughter, Margaret, and the two were married in the new house in January of 1876. The success of the design project and prominence of the Sherman family quickly brought attention and new clients to the firm.

Burnham & Root and the South Park Commission

Sherman became a member of the South Park Board of Commissioners in 1878. One of three park districts chartered by



Above: Olmsted and Vaux’s Original Plan of South Park, 1871, (CPDSD).

To the Right: Burnham and Root’s Jackson Park Bridge now known as the Clarence Darrow Bridge, ca. 1893, (OA).



state legislation in 1869, the South Park Commission (SPC) was responsible for creating and managing a 1055-acre park and a ribbon of boulevards that would connect with Lincoln Park and the West Park System. Olmsted laid out the original plan for South Park, which included the Eastern Division (later renamed Jackson Park), Western Division (Washington Park), and the Midway Plaisance, a broad tree-lined boulevard between the two large landscapes.

Soon after Sherman’s appointment, Burnham & Root began receiving work from the SPC. Among their earliest projects were a fountain and a phaeton (horse-drawn carriage) depot on Oakwood Boulevard near Washington Park, and a bridge in Jackson Park. According to the Chicago Daily Tribune (July 27, 1879), the fountain was composed of cut stone

and bronze and had two tiers of water cascading and soft colored lights to emulate “perpetual moonlight.” The dark stone Gothic Revival style phaeton stand was compared to a similar structure in New York’s Central Park.

Burnham & Roots iron and stone bridge spanned over an arm of Jackson Park’s North Pond (also called the Columbia Basin) that connected with the East and West Lagoons. The 1879-1880 *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners* described the bridge construction as among the “most important work” in the park. Although the decking was later changed, the elegant masonry structure remains. In 1957, the bridge was officially named in honor of Chicago’s notorious lawyer Clarence Darrow (1857 – 1938) who lived nearby and had his ashes scattered in the North Pond.

Burnham & Root also designed Washington Park's stables and roundhouse, an impressive structure composed of Joliet Limestone. Completed in 1880, this is currently the oldest existing building in the park. It originally provided facilities to stable approximately 60 horses, and space for the storage of phaetons and sprinkling carts. The commissioners later remodeled the building to accommodate more than 100 horses. Even after the automobile became popular, the stables housed horses used by the mounted police, supply and delivery wagons, street sweeping and sprinkling, and the University of Chicago's artillery unit. In the 1930s, the Chicago Park District began using the roundhouse as a central storage facility for costumes, sets, and props for the drama programs throughout the system. Today, the DuSable Museum of African American History has plans to rehabilitate the building as part of an expansion program.



Washington Park Stables and Roundhouse, 2003.

Another early masonry building designed by Burnham & Root no longer exists. Originally called the Jackson Park Shelter, it was built near 56th Street overlooking the lakefront in 1888. The granite structure had a slate roof and included a large open shelter with a dance floor and an attached turret. Available to park patrons in the daytime and evenings during warm seasons, the shelter could be reserved and used free of charge. In 1893 the shelter was expanded and transformed into the Iowa State Building for the World's Columbian Exposition. The Chicago Park District razed the original building in 1936 when South Lake Shore Drive was widened. (Shortly thereafter, a nearby limestone shelter was named in honor of the old Iowa Building.)



Jackson Park Shelter, ca. 1910, (CPDSC).

The last building produced by the Burnham & Root partnership for the SPC was the Washington Park Refectory. The firm designed this classically inspired building in 1891. Constructed the following year, the buff colored Roman brick building has a hipped roof with four square rooftop towers that rise above the roofline. At the first story level, the east and west facades extend into a lower wing with a shallow hipped roof. Along the north, east, and west facades of the first story level, an open loggia is edged by colonnades of Doric white terra cotta columns.



Washington Park Refectory, 2003.

In its early years, the building provided refreshment rooms, a kitchen, and administrative office space for the South Park Commissioners. Among the Refectory's fine original interior features was a mosaic floor. Created by Murdoch, Campbell & Co., the mosaic tiling lined the vestibule and refreshment rooms of the first floor. (Today, a small remnant has been preserved and is on display.) The Chicago Park District remod-

eled the building in the 1930s when adjacent swimming pools were added. The facility underwent a major rehabilitation project in the early 1990s.

World's Columbian Exposition

When the United States Congress officially selected Chicago as the site of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1890, Burnham and Root were named the consulting architects and Olmsted as the consulting landscape architect for the Fair. Olmsted recommended Jackson Park as the site for the fairgrounds because of its largely unfinished condition and its proximity to Lake Michigan. He believed that lake would provide a dramatic backdrop and would serve as an inspiration for the design of the entire campus. The architects soon began working with Olmsted and his associate Henry Codman to develop a general scheme for the fairgrounds.

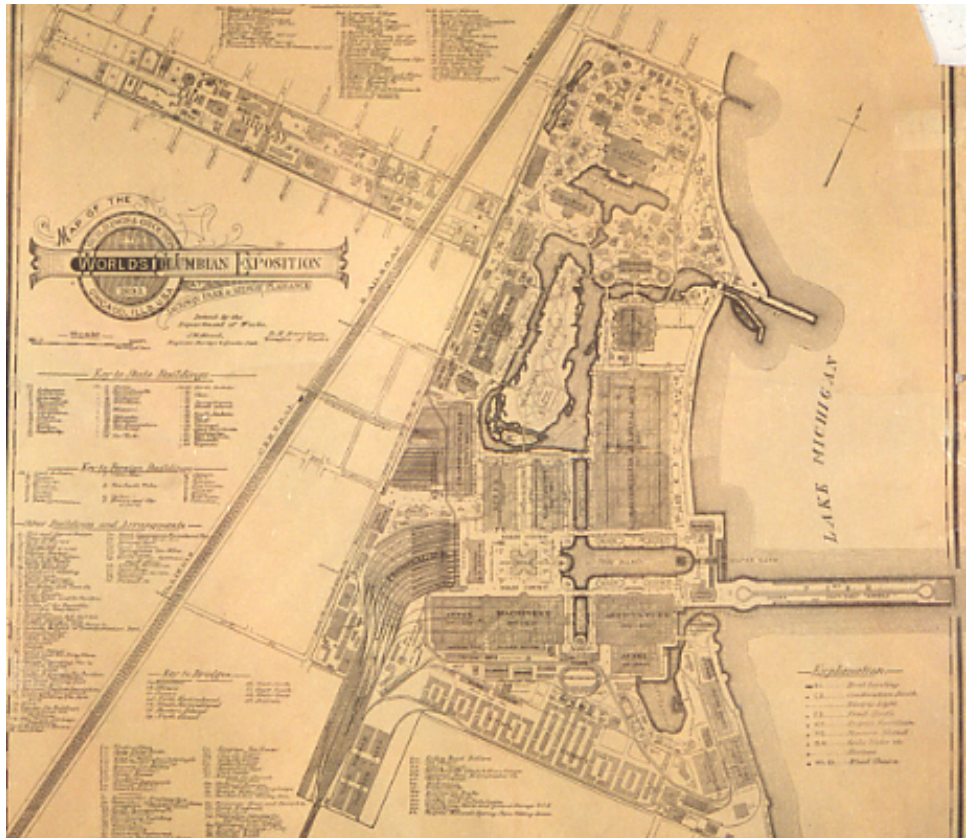


Unimproved Jackson Park site before the World's Columbian Exposition, ca. 1890, (OA).

Olmsted later explained that during an early design meeting:

"...a crude plot, on a large scale, of the whole scheme was rapidly drawn on brown paper... The plot, formed in the manner described, contemplated the following as leading features of design: That there should be a great architectural court with a body of water therein; that this court should serve as a suitably dignified and impressive entrance-hall to the Exposition, and that visitors arriving by train or boat should all pass through it; that there should be a formal canal leading northward from this court to a series of broader waters of a lagoon character, by which nearly the entire site would be penetrated, so that the principal Exposition buildings would each have a water as well as land frontage, and would be approachable by boats..." (from: *World's Columbian Exposition Report of the Director of Works* 1892, 4-5).

Burnham & Root selected a group of the nation's most significant architects to de-



Map of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, (CPDSC).

sign the Fair's buildings. After receiving criticism for not including any local architects, they added several important Chicago firms such as Adler & Sullivan and Jenney and Mundie.

In January of 1891, Root died suddenly of pneumonia. Despite mourning the loss of his friend and partner, Burnham had to continue rapidly with planning the Fair as its chief of construction. Later, his title changed to director of works. Working with Olmsted, the World's Fair architects, gifted artists such as painter Francis D. Millet, and many sculptors including Augustus St. Gaudens, Lorado Taft, and Daniel Chester French, Burnham transformed the raw lakefront site into a gleaming "White City." It had magnificent waterways lined with Beaux Arts style buildings made of a temporary plaster material known as staff. The most iconic part of the design was the Court of Honor with French's monolithic gilded *Statue of the Republic* at the eastern end. In contrast with the formal character of the fairgrounds, the Wooded Island was a lush naturalistic landscape with ancient native oaks, and masses of other newly planted trees and shrubs, many of which were native species.



Court of Honor Looking East, 1893, (FBV).



Statue of the Republic, c. 2005.

More than 27 million visitors attended the World's Columbian Exposition during a six-month period which ended in late October of 1893. The intent had always been for the Fair to be temporary, and the South Park Commissioners soon began efforts to turn the site back into parkland. In January of 1894 a series of fires destroyed many of the plaster structures. Later that year, the Chicago Wrecking and Salvage Co. demolished most of the remaining buildings. An exception, however, was the Fine Arts Palace. It had been built with a fire-vaulted interior. Due to its more permanent internal structure, Burnham and the commissioners decided to retain the building. Department store magnate Marshall Field gave \$1 million to purchase anthropological artifacts that had been exhibited at the exposition. They were soon housed in the old Fine Arts Palace, which became the "Field Columbian Museum." In the late 1920s, an even larger donation from businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald funded the transformation of the then vacant "Columbian Museum" into the Museum of Science and Industry.

Olmsted's firm, then called Olmsted, Olmsted, and Eliot, created a new plan in 1895 to return the fairgrounds back into parkland. The plan continued to incorporate interconnected lagoons, and accommodate boating. Burnham's architectural office, which had become known as D.H. Burnham & Co. following Root's death, continued working for the SPC. As part of the Jackson Park redesign, the firm produced plans for two classically-inspired boat houses that were built along the shore of the West Lagoon in 1896 and 1906. The first one served as a principal station for rowboats and canoes while the other provided an electric launch station. Neither structure exists today.

Neighborhood Parks Movement

At the turn of the century, the South Park Commissioners hired Burnham & Co. and the Olmsted Brothers to create an innovative system of new parks for overcrowded tenement districts within their jurisdiction. The city had recently experienced tremendous industrial growth and the population was surging. In 1869, when the original park commissions were formed, Chicago had 300,000 residents. By 1900, that figure had increased to 1.7 million, and nearly 750,000 people were living about a mile away or farther from any park. Deplorable living and working conditions had devel-



South façade of Museum of Science and Industry, c. 2005.

oped throughout the area and the South Park Commissioners and General Superintendent J. Frank Foster believed that a new type of park could provide breathing spaces and serve as vehicles of social reform for these neighborhoods.

In 1901, the South Park Commissioners acquired a 34-acre site near the stockyards to create an experimental neighborhood park. Named in honor of President William McKinley, the site was improved with ball fields, playgrounds, swimming and wading lagoons complete with changing rooms. The park proved to be such a great success, that when the SPC held its formal dedication the following summer, more than 10,000 people attended.

Foster and the commissioners soon began developing plans for a more ambitious system of neighborhood parks that would provide recreational programs and social services and open space to the densely populated neighborhoods throughout their district. In 1903, they contacted the Olmsted Brothers and D.H. Burnham & Co. to solicit some general design ideas for the proposed parks. The Olmsted Brothers

firm, which had been formed by Olmsted Sr.'s stepson John Charles Olmsted (1852 – 1920) and son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (1870 – 1957), responded with a detailed letter with landscape design recommendations. Burnham also had great interest in the project, but at the time he was awaiting the arrival of Edward H. Bennett (1874 – 1954) a young and talented architect who would come from New York to join his firm and head the project.

Foster suggested that in addition to the ball fields, swimming facilities, and playgrounds that had been tested in McKinley Park, the new parks should also provide a variety of other features. These included separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women, running tracks, children's sand courts, and a new type of building, the field house. Based on the precedent of Chicago's settlement houses, these innovative park buildings would provide athletic, educational, recreational programs and social services throughout an entire year. This was particularly useful because Chicago's cold climate had traditionally limited park use from early spring to late fall.



Cornell Square, 1905, (CPDSC).



To the Left:
Davis Square children
receiving bathing suits,
1905, (CPDSP).



To the Right:
"Typical" field house
Library, 1905, (CPDSC).

The original system of new parks included six considered squares because they were less than 10-acres in size and eight referred to as small parks because they were larger than 10-acres. The design for each of the 14 parks was to include the program components conceived by Foster. Although every plan incorporated comparable features and basically followed a prototypical scheme, the Olmsted Brothers believed it important to give each park its own individual design. Similarly, Bennett drew influence from the classicism of the World's Columbian Exposition, while creating a uniquely designed architectural complex for each park.

When Bennett joined the project, he entered an undefined area in architecture. Although Burnham's firm already had a long and productive relationship with the SPC, earlier park structures provided functions that were quite unlike those of a field house. Until this time, structures tended to have a single utilitarian purpose such as a stables or a conservatory, and many park buildings such as a refectory (a party-building) were opened only during warm weather. Inspired by Chicago's settlement house movement, the new field houses offered a variety of functions within a single architectural complex. The buildings included indoor gymnasiums, allowing for year-round active recreation in the parks for the first time. Shower rooms with lockers and changing facilities and outdoor swimming pools would provide many residents of the surrounding neighborhoods greatly-needed access to public bathing. As the field houses also had clubrooms, auditoriums and some of the earliest branches of the Chicago Public Library, the facilities also served as social and educational centers for their communities.

The building material selected for nearly all of the field house complexes was exposed aggregate concrete. From this material, which was also known as "marblecrete" or "popcorn concrete," buildings could be constructed quickly, relatively inexpensively, and ornamentation could be molded directly into facades. Although the buildings relied on classical details, the material allowed for a visible expression of the small pieces of aggregate, and the rough-cast character required that details be rendered in a simplified vocabulary devoid of intricacies.

By late fall of 1905, the first 10 new neighborhood parks had been built and opened to the public. These included Armour, Russell, Cornell, Mark White (later renamed McGuane), and Davis squares, as well as Sherman, Hamilton, Ogden, Bessemer, and Palmer parks. The remaining four properties— Marquette, Fuller (originally intended as a square) and Calumet parks, and Hardin Square were delayed for various reasons. The ten finished parks were extremely well received. In fact, by the end of 1906 hundreds of thousands of people from congested south side neighborhoods had collectively visited these parks more than

five million times.

It became quickly apparent that the new South Side parks would provide a model for the entire country. Burnham & Co. and the Olmsted Brothers had national reputations and both firms presented the Chicago prototype to professionals and clients in many other American cities. In 1907, when Chicago hosted the Playground Association of America's first annual conference President Theodore Roosevelt recommended that park administrators throughout the country should come to "... see the magnificent system that Chicago has erected in its south park section, one of the most notable civic achievements in any American city."

In 1911, the Fuller Park field house complex opened to the public. Although this was the last neighborhood park that the D.H. Burnham & Co. had designed in Chicago, the SPC continued creating similar field houses for many years to follow. Today, a number of the Burnham-designed field houses retain historic integrity including Davis, Armour, and Cornell Squares; Sherman, Hamilton, Bessemer, and Palmer parks; as well as Fuller Park, which has more of its original architectural fabric than any of the others.



Above:
Cornell Square, 2005.



To the Right:
Fuller Park, 2008.

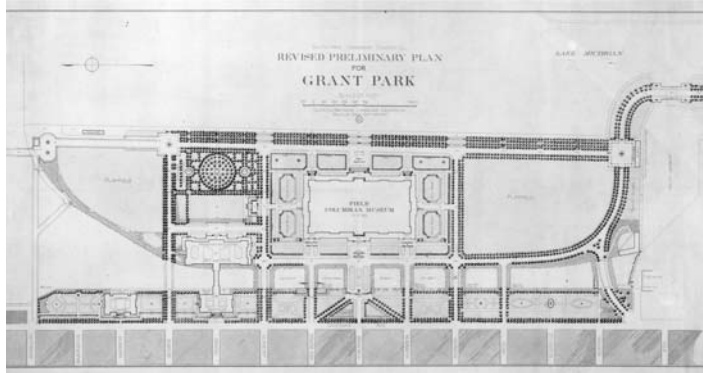
Burnham's Plans for Grant Park

As Burnham and Bennett were designing innovative field houses for tenement neighborhoods on the South Side, they also continued to focus on downtown. In the 1880s, Burnham & Root had produced some of the world's first skyscrapers such as the Montauk and the Rookery buildings in Chicago's Loop. After Root's death, D.H. Burnham & Co. made new contributions to the Chicago School of Architecture with the Reliance and Railway Exchange buildings and other noteworthy skyscrapers. Burnham's interests, however, went much beyond these significant downtown buildings. In the mid 1890s, along with many prominent Chicago businessmen, representatives of the City of Chicago, the SPC, and other high profile designers, Burnham began developing plans for Lake Park (also called Lake-Front Park, and later renamed Grant Park.)

A City Council subcommittee formed in 1895 to consider enlarging the downtown park by adding more landfill, a practice that had begun decades earlier. There was one existing museum in the park—the Art Institute of Chicago which had recently occupied the former World's Congresses Building, the only World's Fair structure that had not been built in Jackson Park. Although the Field Columbian Museum had only recently opened in Jackson Park, there was already strong consensus that the institution should erect a permanent museum in Lake Park. A new Crerar Library and Illinois National Guard building were also being considered for the park as well as a new city hall and other municipal buildings. Burnham and Charles Atwood, a talented architect on his staff who had helped design the World's Fair grounds, began developing a new plan for Chicago's "Front Yard."



Art Institute of Chicago, c. 2005.



To the Right:
Olmsted Brothers Re-
vised Preliminary Plan of
Grant Park, 1908,
(CPDSC).

Below:
Landfill and Field Mu-
seum of Natural History,
ca. 1920, (CPDSC).

Burnham and Atwood's preliminary plan for Lake Park (soon to be named Grant Park) emulated the "White City" on a smaller scale. They placed a monumental neo-classical Field Museum as the centerpiece, symmetrically surrounding it with

many smaller structures including a permanent exposition building for the City of Chicago. In 1895, Burnham and Atwood presented the scheme to the subcommittee. According to the *Chicago Tribune* this would provide a "speedy transformation of the Lake-Front into a beautiful park, with splendid buildings, large play grounds, noble statuary, graveled walks, macadamized drives," and a reproduction of the fair's huge decorative fountain by sculptor Frederick MacMonnies.

During this period, other prominent designers and organizations suggested alternative schemes that would include new buildings, while also retaining the open views of Lake Michigan. Interestingly, Burnham's early mentor, Peter B. Wight helped develop one of these alternative plans on behalf of the Municipal Improvement League. This proposal, which also made strong reference to the World's Columbian Exposition design, relied on a large "Court of Honor" basin as the center piece, and placed the proposed buildings along the edges.

Between 1896 and 1903, the City had transferred ownership of the entire Lake Park site to the SPC and renamed it to honor Ulysses S. Grant. Burnham continued developing his vision for Grant Park as a formal Beaux Arts style landscape with the Field Museum as the centerpiece. The South Park Commissioners supported

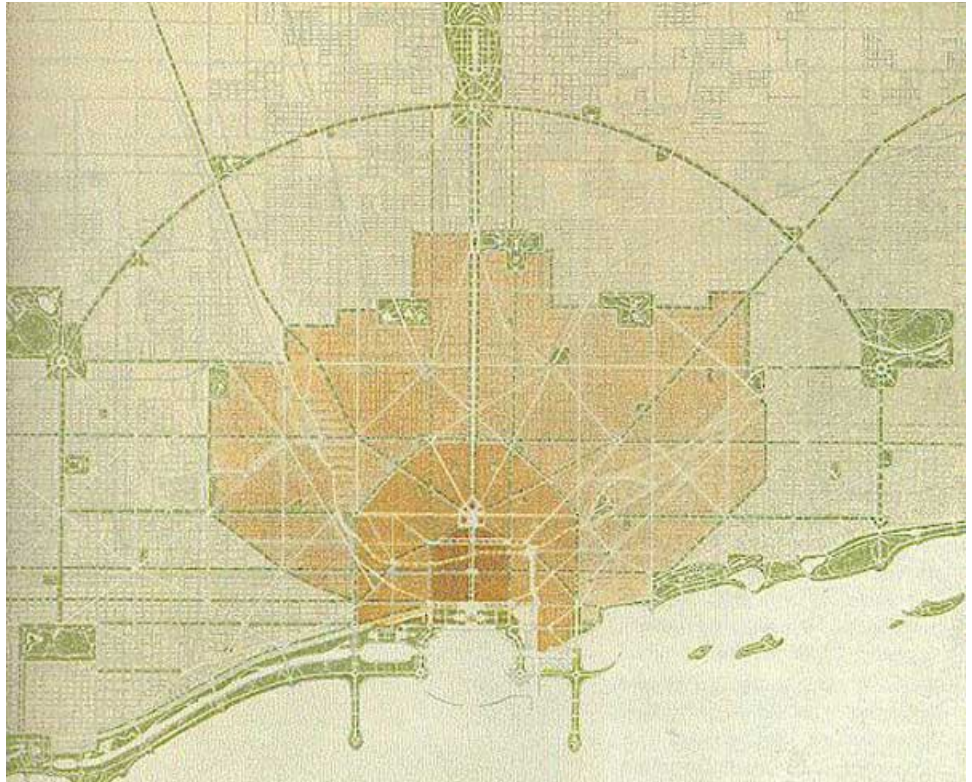


the idea, and hired the Olmsted Brothers to help Burnham fully develop this scheme. The South Park Commissioners intended to move swiftly to improve Grant Park following Burnham's recommendations, however; they faced a major impediment. Mail order magnate Aaron Montgomery Ward had waged a series of legal battles to protect Grant Park's green space and open views based on early land restrictions to keep the site "free and clear of buildings" and other major obstructions. The lawsuits delayed construction; however, landfill operations continued to enlarge the size of Grant Park.

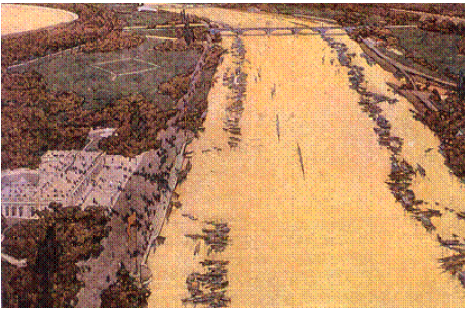
Many Chicagoans blamed Ward for Grant Park's raw and unfinished appearance over a long period of time. In a rare interview that he gave to the *Chicago Tribune* in 1909, he voiced frustration about the lack of public support for protecting the open space. He said, "Had I known in 1890 how long it would take me to preserve a park for the people against their will, I doubt if I would have undertaken it." Ward also explained, "I fought for people of Chicago, not the millionaires... Here is park frontage on the lake, comparing favorably with the Bay of Naples, which city officials would crowd with buildings, transforming the breathing spot for the poor into a showground of the educated rich." At the time, the park remained unimproved as the battle continued in the courts.

Burnham's Vision for Green Space and the Plan of Chicago

While developing ambitious plans for Chicago's "Front Yard," Burnham also began envisioning a magnificent stretch of new parkland between Grant and Jackson parks. For this new lakefront green space, Burnham suggested a series of manmade islands, lagoons and harbors, beaches, meadows, and playfields. The SPC called the project the "Outer Park Boulevard," or the "South Shore Development." Burnham briefly suggested this addition to the lakefront as an exclusive residential development, but soon decided that it should be a public park, a "playground for the people." The linear green space would have a scenic drive with a series of attractive rustic bridges crossing the lagoons at regular intervals would buffer views of the Illinois Central railroad. Burnham believed that this new waterway would compare favorably with "the Thames, the Seine, and the canals of Venice."



General map showing topography, waterways, and complete system of streets, boulevards, and parks, 1909, (POC).



View looking over the lagoons of the proposed park for the South Shore, painted for the Commercial Club by Jules Querin, 1909, (POC).

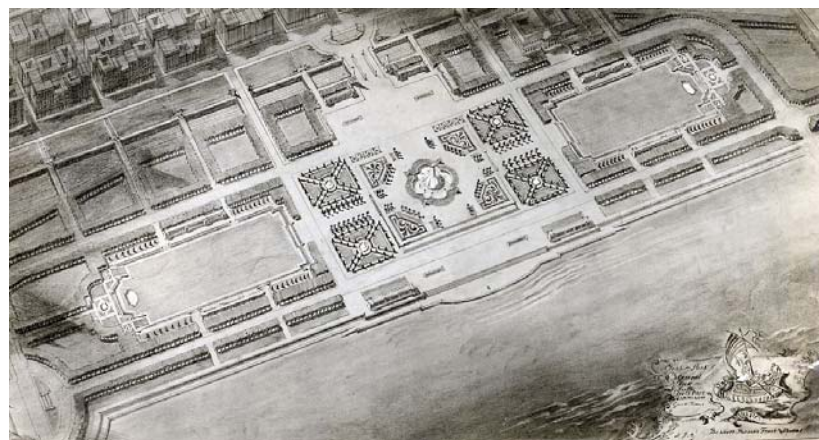
After Edward H. Bennett joined the firm, he assisted on the lakefront plans. These proposals served as the genesis for Burnham and Bennett's 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, a seminal document which was beautifully illustrated by Jules Guerin. In a caption to one of Guerin's drawings of the new lakefront green space south of Grant Park, the planners explained the practicality of creating new acreage from landfill: "This park may be built almost without cost to the people of Chicago, by making use of the excavated material and general wastage from the city. This material aggregates at the present moment an amount sufficient to fill as many as twenty-two acres per annum. In this manner Grant Park has already been created, and its extension down to the south shore will only be a question of time."

The *Plan of Chicago* envisioned improvements to the lakefront stretching from Chicago's northern suburbs south to the edge of Indiana. It also addressed the western perimeter of the region by recommending the preservation of forested lands in these areas. In 1904, architect Dwight Perkins and landscape architect Jens Jensen had produced a detailed report recommending the protection of valuable acreage along the Skokie Valley, Des Plaines River, Salt Creek, and Lake Calumet. The Cook County Board tried to move swiftly to acquire land for the new "Outer Belt Park Commission," however, there were legal impediments. Burnham agreed that forest preserves were extremely important to the region. By incorporating Perkins' and Jensen's recommendation into the *Plan of Chicago*, Burnham brought wider public support for saving the valuable forest lands, though legal difficulties delayed the formation of the Cook County Forest Preserves for many years.

The SPC's goal to realize Burnham's recommendations for expanding the lakefront had similar legal impediments. The fact that the Illinois Central Railroad Company (ICRC) held the rights to much of the submerged lands along the lakefront between 12th and 50th streets had to

be overcome. While the South Park Commissioners attempted to secure the rights to enlarge the lakefront, A. Montgomery Ward continued his legal battle to preserve Grant Park as green space. Ward won his final lawsuit in the Illinois State Supreme Court in December of 1910, thus preventing the SPC from moving ahead with any of their existing plans for Grant Park. Negotiations with the ICRC resulted in an alternative site for the proposed Field Museum as well as an opportunity to move forward with the lakefront expansion. The ICRC agreed to surrender its rights to the submerged lands south of 12th Street in exchange for expanding its right-of-way between 12th Street and Jackson Park. This allowed the South Park Commission to begin creating new landmass along the south edge of Grant Park. This landfill would provide the site for the Field Museum as well as the beginnings of the vast new lakefront park that would extend south to Jackson Park. Burnham produced revised plans for the neo-classical museum building in 1911, the year before his death. The Field Museum of Natural History finally opened to the public from its new site at the south end of Grant Park 1921.

In 1913, the Chicago Plan Commission hired Bennett as its first consulting architect to help implement the visionary *Plan of Chicago*. A few years later, the SPC hired his firm of Bennett, Parsons, Frost, and Thomas to develop revised plans for Grant Park. The firm's final scheme paid homage to Burnham's vision while respecting the park's open character. Rendered in the French Renaissance style, the plan relied on formal symmetry and outdoor room-like spaces defined by tree allées. Bennett envisioned a large ornamental fountain as the centerpiece of the park and the alternative to the Field Museum in that location. Inspired by the Latona Basin at Versailles, Bennett designed the fountain with French sculptor Marcel Loyau and engineer Jacques H. Lambert. Chicago philanthropist and art patron, Kate Sturges Buckingham, donated \$1 million dollars for the fountain, which she dedicated to the memory of her brother, Clarence. The iconic Buckingham Fountain Memorial Fountain was completed in 1927.



Rendering of Bennett, Parsons, Frost and Thomas proposed plan of Grant Park, ca. 1924.

During the 1920s, much progress was also made towards realizing the ambitious stretch of parkland that would extend between Grant and Jackson parks. All of the necessary government approvals were finalized in 1920. Voters approved a \$20 million bond issue to create the park. Another bond issue that was passed by the public in 1922 allowed the South Park Commissioners to move forward with a stadium that had been previously proposed by Burnham and Bennett. Architects Holabird and Roche designed the neo-classical stadium dedicated to World War I soldiers in 1925. Two years later, landfill operations continued moving south and the South Park Commissioners named the partially finished site in honor of Daniel H. Burnham.



Latona Basin at Versailles, France, ca. 2008



Clarence Buckingham Memorial Fountain, ca. 2008.

In 1929, the Shedd Aquarium was opened to the public. Its Beaux Arts style harmonized with nearby Field Museum and Soldier Field. Although the onset of the Great Depression had initially slowed the efforts to build Burnham Park, progress was swift after much of the site was designated as the campus for Chicago's second World's Fair. Paying tribute to Chicago's centennial, *A Century of Progress* took place on Northerly Island and the newly filled mainland between 12th and 39th streets for two full seasons in 1933 and 1934. Burnham's son, Daniel H. Burnham Jr. was the

Fair's Director of Works and Edward H. Bennett served on the Architectural Commission. The Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, one of the first permanent planetariums in the world, opened on Northerly Island in 1930 as the Fair construction was underway. For two full seasons, more than 38 million fairgoers enjoyed the rides, spectacles, exhibits, and other attractions of *A Century of Progress*. Today, remaining elements of the Fair include the Columbus monument in Grant Park, the Balbo monument in Burnham Park, and the Japanese Garden, which was moved from Burnham Park to Jackson Park's Wooded Island in 1935.

After the Fair, a committee formed in hopes of developing Burnham Park as a permanent exposition grounds. As a result, a two-season Railroad Fair took place in the park in the 1940s, marking the centennial of Chicago's first locomotive. The push for the site as permanent fairgrounds ultimately led to the construction of McCormick Place in 1960s. This happened despite protests against building on and commercializing the lakefront.

After a fire destroyed the original hall in 1967, citizens rallied for the relocation of McCormick Place away from the lakefront. The relocation never occurred, however, and the controversy fueled a public movement leading to the adoption of the milestone Lakefront Protection Ordinance in 1973. This vision of an uncompromised open lakefront continues today as the Chicago Park District plans to enhance public opportunities to commune with nature along Northerly Island, Burnham Park, and the entire lakefront.

Key
 CPDSC – Chicago Park District Special Collections
 POC— *Plan of Chicago*, Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, Commercial Club of Chicago, 1909
 OA- Olmsted Archives, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site
 CM- *Daniel H. Burnham: Architect Planner of Cities*, Charles Moore, 1921.
 FBV— *Fotografiske Billeder af Verdensudstillingen of Midway Plaisance*, 1894.