

PLAN OF CHICAGO

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
THE COMMERCIAL CLUB

DURING THE YEARS MCMVI, MCMVII, AND MCMVIII

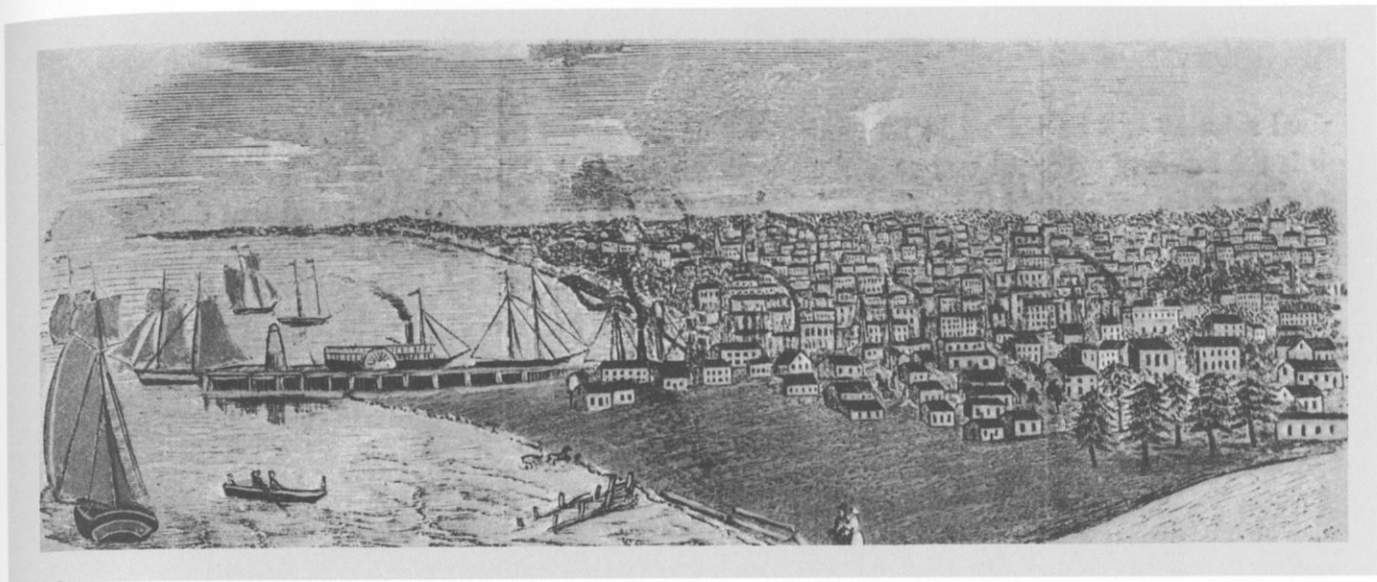
BY
DANIEL H. BURNHAM
AND
EDWARD H. BENNETT
ARCHITECTS

EDITED BY
CHARLES MOORE
CORRESPONDING MEMBER AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



CHICAGO
THE COMMERCIAL CLUB
MCMIX

(1919)

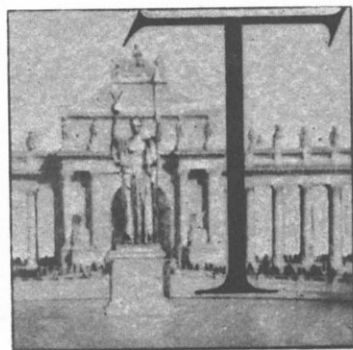


II. WOOD-CUT OF CHICAGO IN 1834.

PLAN OF CHICAGO

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE PLAN OF CHICAGO: THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION OF 1893 AND ITS RESULTS: THE SPIRIT OF CHICAGO



THE tendency of mankind to congregate in cities is a marked characteristic of modern times. This movement is confined to no one country, but is world-wide. Each year Rome, and the cities of the Orient, as well as Berlin, New York, and Chicago, are adding to their population at an unprecedented rate. Coincident with this urban development there has been a widespread increase in wealth, and also an enlarged participation on the part of the people in the work of government. As a natural result of these causes has come the desire to better the conditions of living. Men are becoming convinced that the formless growth of the city is neither economical nor satisfactory; and that overcrowding and congestion of traffic paralyze the vital functions of the city. The complicated problems which the great city develops are now seen not to be beyond the control of aroused public sentiment; and practical men of affairs are turning their attention to working out the means whereby the city may be made an efficient instrument for providing all its people with the best possible conditions of living.

Chicago, in common with other great cities, realizes that the time has come to bring order out of the chaos incident to rapid growth, and especially to the influx of people of many nationalities without common traditions or habits of life. Among the various instrumentalities designed to accomplish this result, a plan for a well-ordered and convenient city is seen to be indispensable; and to the task of producing such a plan the Commercial Club has devoted its energies for the past three years.

It is not to be expected that any plan devised while as yet few civic problems have received

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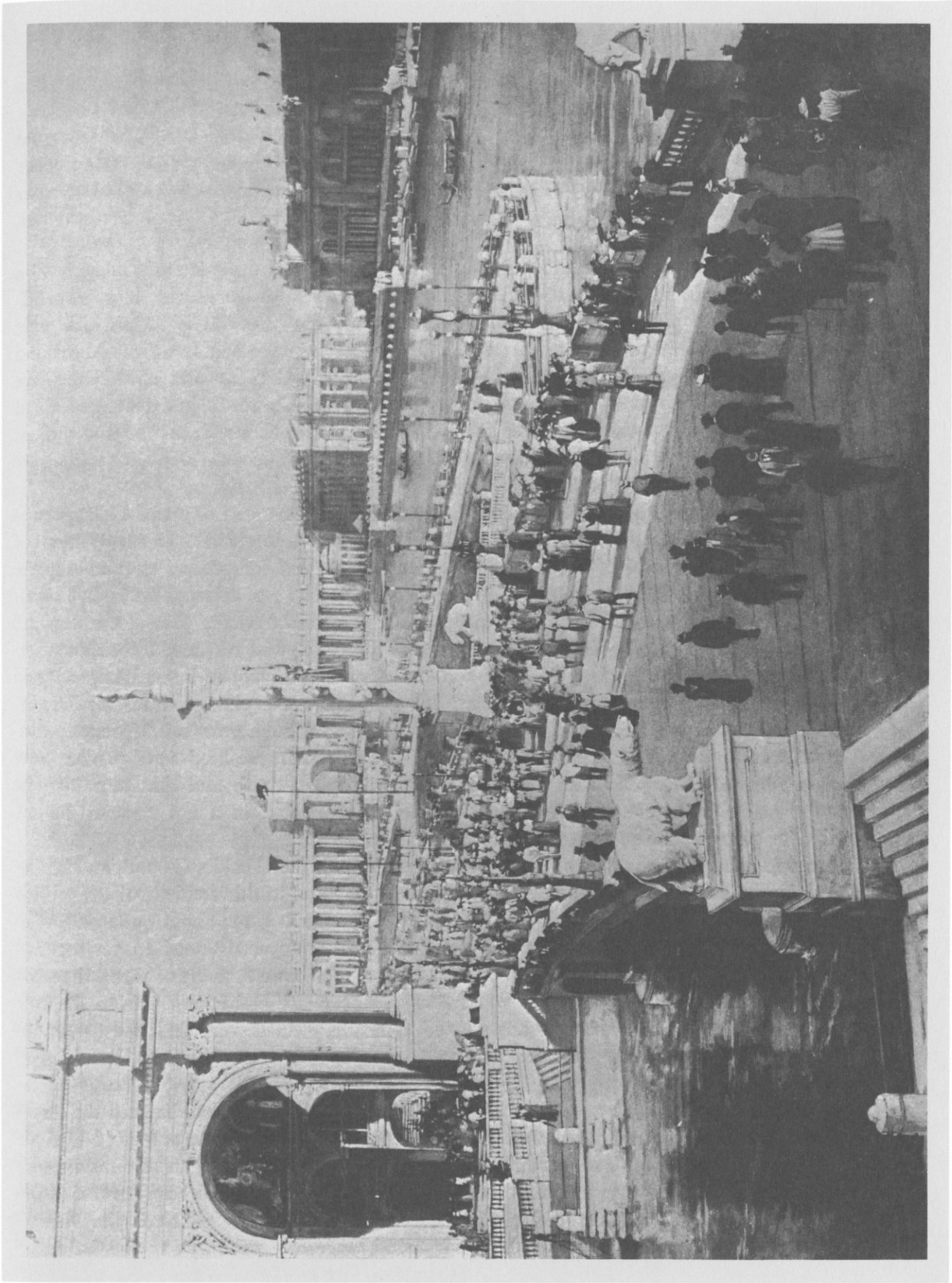
final solution will be perfect in all its details. It is claimed for the plan herein presented, that it is the result of extended and careful study of the needs of Chicago, made by disinterested men of wide experience, amid the very conditions which it is sought to remedy; and that during the years devoted to its preparation the plan has had the benefit of varied and competent criticism. The real test of this plan will be found in its application; for, such is the determination of the



III. THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893.
The Court of Honor, looking towards the Peristyle.

people to secure more perfect conditions, it is certain that if the plan is really good it will commend itself to the progressive spirit of the times, and sooner or later it will be carried out.

It should be understood, however, that such radical changes as are proposed herein cannot possibly be realized immediately. Indeed, the aim has been to anticipate the needs of the future as well as to provide for the necessities of the present: in short, to direct the development of the city towards an end that must seem ideal, but is practical. Therefore it is quite possible that when particular portions of the plan shall be taken up for execution, wider knowledge, longer experience, or a change in local conditions may suggest a better solution; but, on the other hand,



IV. THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893. THE COURT OF HONOR, LOOKING TOWARDS THE PERISTYLE.
This view shows the effect of an orderly arrangement of buildings and a uniform cornice line. From a painting by Mente.

before any departure shall be determined upon, it should be made clear that such a change is justified.

If many elements of the proposed plan shall seem familiar, it should be remembered that the purpose has not been to invent novel problems for solution, but to take up the pressing needs of to-day, and to find the best methods of meeting those requirements, carrying each particular problem to its ultimate conclusion as a component part of a great entity,—a well-ordered, convenient, and unified city.

This conception of the task is the justification of a comprehensive plan of Chicago. To many who have given little consideration to the subject, a plan seems to call for large expenditures and a consequent increase in taxation. The reverse is the case. It is certain that civic improvement will go on at an accelerated rate; and if those improvements shall be marshaled according to a well-ordered plan great saving must result. Good order and convenience are not expensive; but haphazard and ill-considered projects invariably result in extravagance and wastefulness. A plan insures that whenever any public or semi-public work shall be undertaken, it will fall into its proper and predetermined place in the general scheme, and thus contribute to the unity and dignity of the city.

The plan frankly takes into consideration the fact that the American city, and Chicago pre-eminently, is a center of industry and traffic. Therefore attention is given to the betterment of commercial facilities; to methods of transportation for persons and for goods; to removing the obstacles which prevent or obstruct circulation; and to the increase of convenience. It is realized, also, that good workmanship requires a large degree of comfort on the part of the workers in their homes and their surroundings, and ample opportunity for that rest and recreation without which all work becomes drudgery. Then, too, the city has a dignity to be maintained; and good order is essential to material advancement. Consequently, the plan provides for impressive groupings of public buildings, and reciprocal relations among such groups. Moreover, consideration is given to the fact that in all probability Chicago, within the lifetime of persons now living, will become a greater city than any existing at the present time; and that therefore the most comprehensive plans of to-day will need to be supplemented in a not remote future. Opportunity for such expansion is provided for.

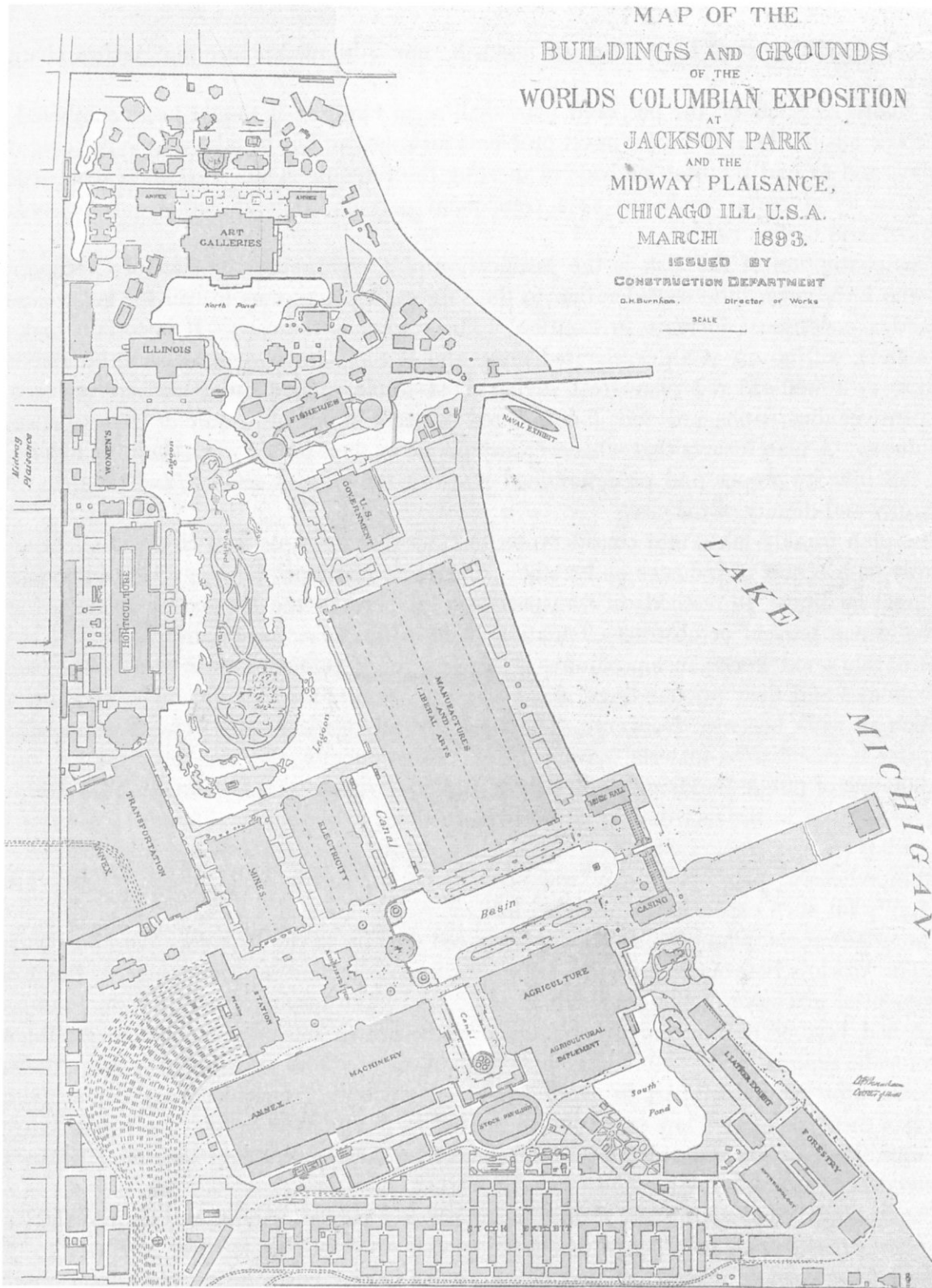
The origin of the plan of Chicago can be traced directly to the World's Columbian Exposition. The World's Fair of 1893 was the beginning, in our day and in this country, of the orderly arrangement of extensive public grounds and buildings. The result came about quite naturally. Chicago had become a commercial community wherein men were accustomed to get together to plan for the general good. Moreover, those at the head of affairs were, many of them, the same individuals who had taken part in every movement since the city had emerged from the condition of a mere village. They were so accustomed to results even beyond their most sanguine predictions, that it was easy for them to believe that their Fair might surpass all fairs that had preceded it.

Then, too, the men of Chicago, trained in intense commercial activity, had learned the lesson that great success cannot be attained unless the special work in hand shall be entrusted to those best fitted to undertake it. It had become the habit of our business men to select some one to take the responsibility in every important enterprise; and to give to that person earnest, loyal, and steadfast support. Thus the design and arrangement of the buildings of the World's Columbian Exposition, which have never been surpassed, were due primarily to the feeling of

MAP OF THE
 BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS
 OF THE
 WORLDS COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION
 AT
 JACKSON PARK
 AND THE
 MIDWAY PLAISANCE,
 CHICAGO ILL. U.S.A.
 MARCH 1893.

ISSUED BY
 CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT
 G.H. Burnham, Director of Works

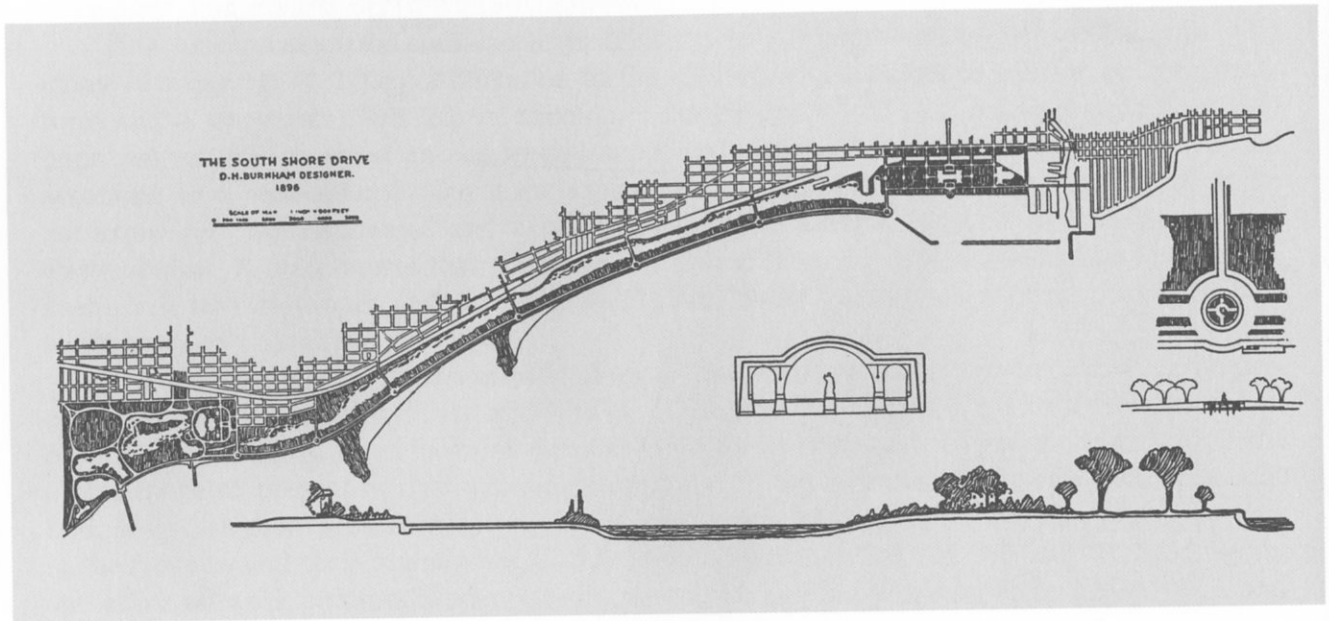
SCALE



V. THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION GROUNDS IN JACKSON PARK.
 Plan showing the harmonious arrangement of buildings.

loyalty to the city and to its undertakings; and secondly, to the habit of entrusting great works to men trained in the practice of such undertakings.¹

The results of the World's Fair of 1893 were many and far-reaching. To the people of Chicago the dignity, beauty, and convenience of the transitory city in Jackson Park seemed to call for the improvement of the water front of the city. With this idea in mind, the South Park Commissioners, during the year following the Fair, proposed the improvement of the Lake



VI. THE LAKE FRONT PARK, EXTENDING FROM JACKSON PARK TO GRANT PARK, ALONG THE SOUTH SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN.
Original plan, 1896.

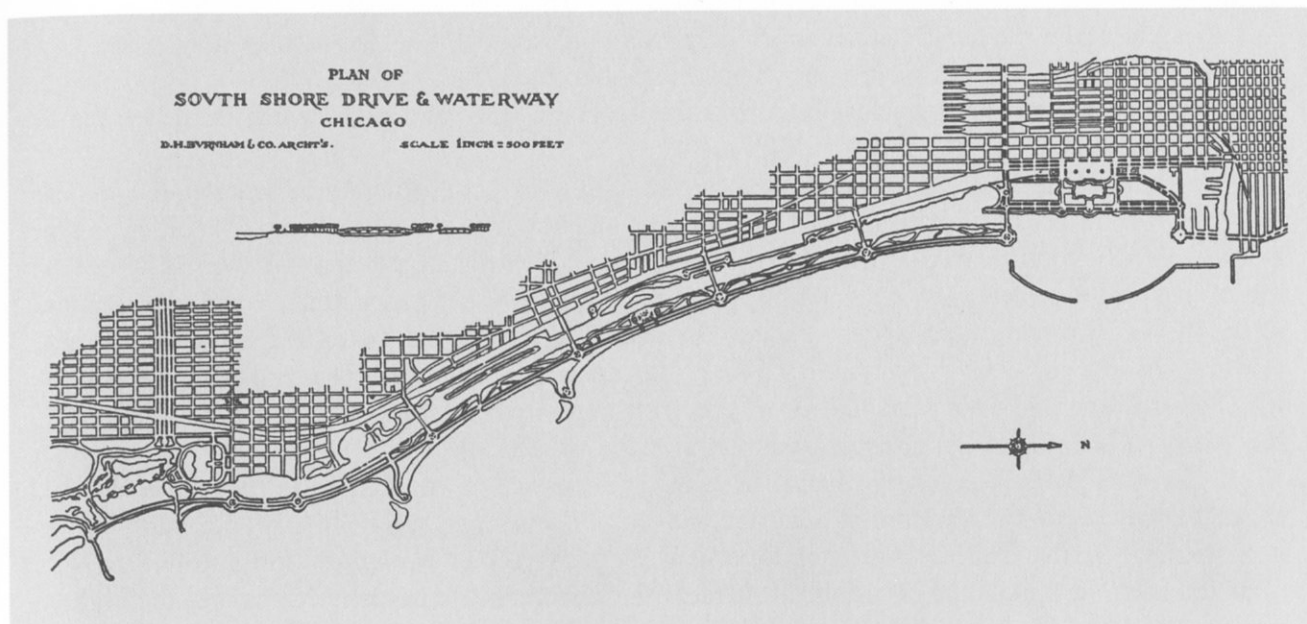
front from Jackson Park to Grant Park. Following out this suggestion, a plan for a connection between the two parks was drawn to a large scale, and the project was presented at a meeting of the West and South Park Commissioners. Later this design was exhibited at a dinner given by the Commercial Club; and many business men were emphatic in expressing their conviction that the proposed scheme would be of enormous value to Chicago, and that it should be adopted and carried into execution. This was the inception of the project for a park out in the Lake, having a lagoon between it and the shore.

During the next three or four years more careful studies of the Lake front scheme were made, and very large drawings were prepared for a meeting at the Women's Club and the Art Institute,

¹ A significant illustration of the spirit in which the World's Fair work was conceived is found in one incident. On the appointed day the architects assembled to submit to the general committee sketches for their several buildings. There had been a luncheon, prolonged by animated discussion. The scheme as a whole had begun to take hold of the men. The short winter afternoon was approaching an end, when Richard M. Hunt (then the dean of the architectural profession), suffering from the severe pains of rheumatism, slowly arose to speak of the Administration Building, a sketch of which he fastened to the wall. The New York architect who followed Mr. Hunt had on his building a dome four hundred and fifty feet high. Instantly a murmur ran around the group. The designer turned from the sketch. "I think," he said, with deliberation, "I shall not advocate that dome; and probably I shall modify the building." There was a breath of satisfaction. The next architect had a portico extending out over the terrace. Without waiting for criticism, he said he should draw the portico back to the face of the building. As one by one each man fastened his sketch to the wall, it was as still as death in the room; and those present could feel the great work drawing them as by a magnet; and each was willing to sacrifice his personal ideas to secure the unity of the whole composition. Finally the last drawing was shown; the last explanation had been made. Mr. Saint-Gaudens, who had sat in a corner all day listening, but never speaking and scarcely moving, went over to Mr. Burnham, and taking both his hands exclaimed: "Do you realize that this is the greatest meeting of artists since the fifteenth century?"

and for a Merchants Club dinner at the Auditorium. The newspapers and magazines, both at home and throughout the country, united in commenting on and commending the undertaking; and during the decade that has elapsed since the plans were first presented, the proposed improvement has never been forgotten, but has ever been looked upon as something sure to be accomplished. This was the beginning of a general plan for the city.

While these projects were in course of preparation, an extensive expansion of the South Parks



VII. THE LAKE FRONT PARK, EXTENDING FROM JACKSON PARK TO GRANT PARK, ALONG THE SOUTH SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN.
Modified plan, 1904.

system was in progress, and a plan was formulated for a metropolitan park system, including an outer belt of parks and parkways. These movements were started with energy in 1903, under the general direction of the South Park Commissioners and the Special Park Commission; and the results of their work have been useful to those who have undertaken the present task.

Early in 1906 the Merchants Club arranged for the preparation of a complete project for the future development of Chicago. In order to facilitate the progress of the work, rooms were built on the roof of Railway Exchange Building, where the drawings have been prepared and the studies have been made. The Merchants Club and the Commercial Club having been merged in 1907 under the name of the latter organization, the work has continued under the auspices of that association. The committee on the plan has held several hundred meetings; during many weeks meetings have taken place daily; and throughout the entire time no week has passed without one or more such gatherings. By invitation of the Club, the Governor of Illinois, the Mayor of Chicago, and many other public officials have visited the rooms where the work was in progress, and have become familiar with the entire scheme as it was being worked out. The Department of State, through the United States consuls in various European cities, has furnished valuable information relative to civic developments now in progress. Thus the plans have had the benefit of many criticisms and suggestions, made by persons especially conversant with existing conditions.

Moreover, visitors interested in the improvement of cities and in park work of all kinds have come from both our own and foreign towns; and from them also much of value and encouragement has been gained.

In presenting this report, the Commercial Club realizes that from time to time supplementary reports will be necessary to emphasize one feature or another which may come prominently before the public for adoption. At the same time, it is confidently believed that this presentation of the entire subject accomplishes the task which has been recognized from the outset, namely:

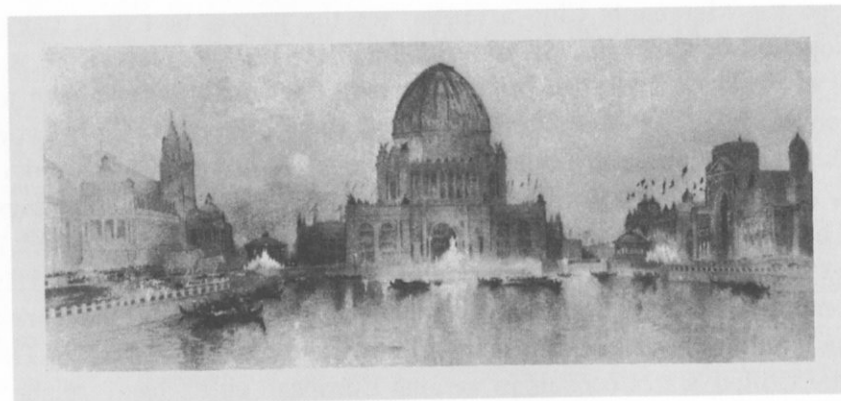
First, to make the careful study of the physical conditions of Chicago as they now exist;

Second, to discover how those conditions may be improved;

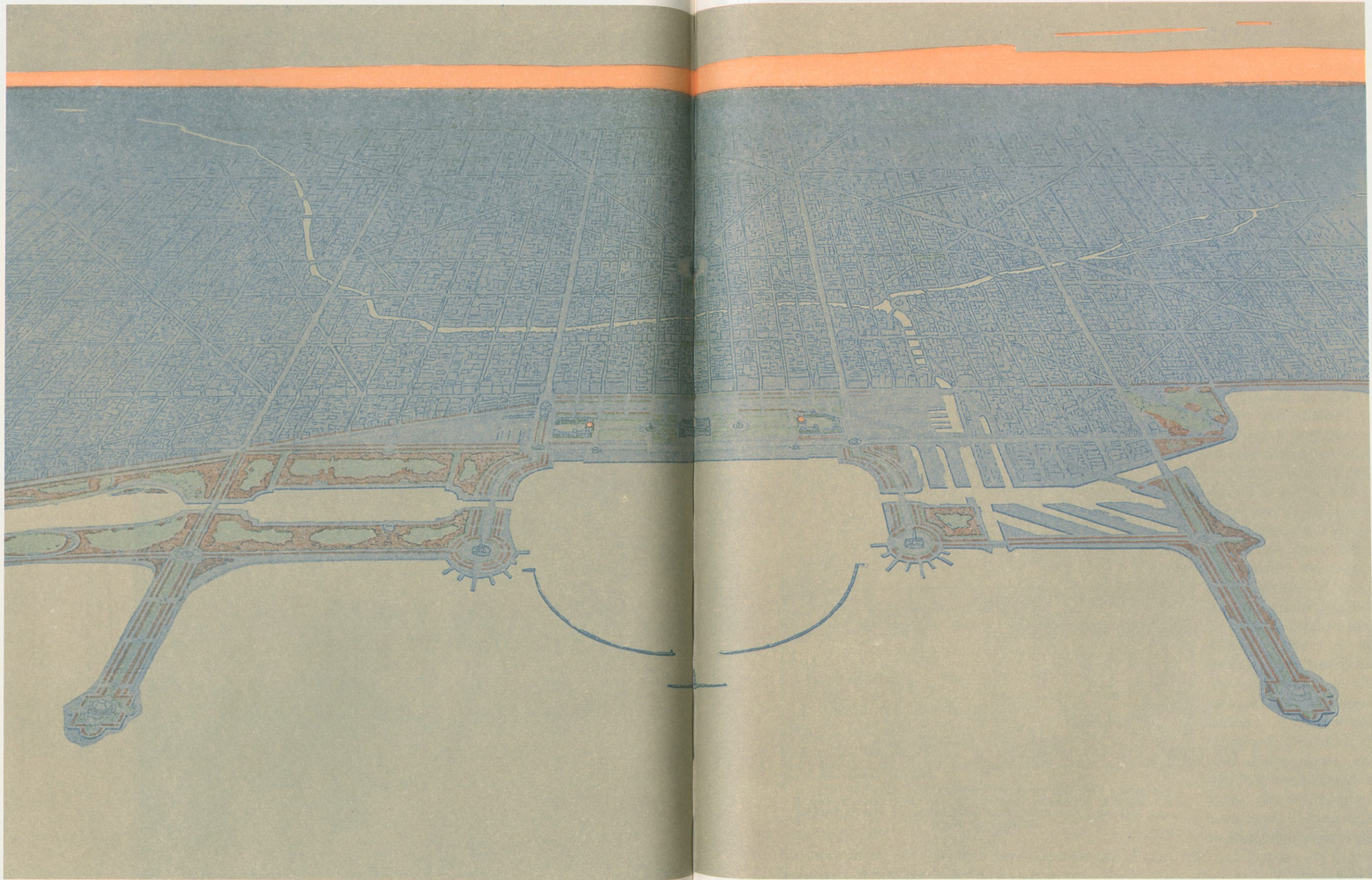
Third, to record such conclusions in the shape of drawings and texts which shall become a guide for the future development of Chicago.

In creating the ideal arrangement, every one who lives here is better accommodated in his business and his social activities. In bringing about better freight and passenger facilities, every merchant and manufacturer is helped. In establishing a complete park and parkway system, the life of the wage-earner and of his family is made healthier and pleasanter; while the greater attractiveness thus produced keeps at home the people of means and taste, and acts as a magnet to draw those who seek to live amid pleasing surroundings. The very beauty that attracts him who has money makes pleasant the life of those among whom he lives, while anchoring him and his wealth to the city. The prosperity aimed at is for all Chicago.

This same spirit which carried out the Exposition in such a manner as to make it a lasting credit to the city is still the soul of Chicago, vital and dominant; and even now, although many new men are at the front, it still controls and is doing a greater work than it was in 1893. It finds the men; it makes the occasion; it attracts the sincere and unselfish; it vitalizes the organization, and impels it to reach heights not believed possible of attainment. This spirit still exists. It is present to-day among us. Indeed, it seems to gather force with the years and the opportunities. It is even now impelling us to larger and better achievements for the public good. It conceals no private purpose, no hidden ends. This spirit — the spirit of Chicago — is our greatest asset. It is not merely civic pride: it is rather the constant, steady determination to bring about the very best conditions of city life for all the people, with full knowledge that what we as a people decide to do in the public interest we can and surely will bring to pass.



VIII. THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION. VIEW OF THE COURT OF HONOR, LOOKING WEST.
From a painting by Moran.



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LXXXVII. CHICAGO. VIEW LOOKING WEST OVER THE CITY, SHOWING THE PROPOSED CIVIC CENTER, THE GRAND AXIS, GRANT PARK, AND THE HARBOR
Painted for the Commercial Club by Jules Guerin.