

Burnham Interlude 1



PAGE 45, PANELS 1 AND 2

In the early 20th century, Daniel Burnham was the most well known architect and planner in Chicago, and arguably in the country.¹ His role as Director of Works in the wildly successful 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition,² his work on urban plans for Washington, DC³ (1902) and San Francisco⁴ (1905), and his firm’s design for the Flatiron Building in New York (1902) solidified his national reputation. He was often called on to tackle massive civic projects.

In 1906, the Commercial Club of Chicago commissioned Daniel Burnham to begin work on a new *Plan of Chicago*. To help on the project, Burnham hired 32-year-old architect Edward Bennett as the co-author.⁵

Burnham enlisted St. Louis-born painter, Jules Guerin, to make renderings and perspective illustrations for the Plan. The color views of the proposed city are often depicted from a bird’s eye perspective.

As Burnham addresses the reader, the sun is slowly setting and the many workers involved with executing the ambitious project are finishing their day.

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Daniel Burnham and the Chicago Plan Commission (supported by the Commercial Club) recognized that every great city needs a plan. They observed that Chicago’s rapid population and industry growth was choking the life of the city.⁶ When the *Plan of Chicago* was released in 1909,⁷ a *Chicago Tribune* article announced that the ideas “linked trade and beauty” creating “great highways, park chains, and transportation routes.”

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D.H. Burnham and Company had offices in the newly designed Railway Exchange Building,⁸ a structure that the firm had designed in 1904. Burnham moved into the 14th floor of the white terra cotta building at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Jackson Boulevard. Burnham built a small penthouse at the top of the Railway Exchange Building to create a separate workspace for himself and Edward Bennett to work on this new project.⁹ From this perch atop one of the tallest buildings in the city, the two designers could look west to the Loop and the neighborhoods beyond, and look east over Lake Michigan.

Burnham is quoted here with a famous phrase attributed to him by biographer Charles Moore, but not recorded in a specific context.

“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die.”

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Daniel Burnham was born in 1846. Burnham’s family moved to Chicago from upstate New York in 1855. He was nine years old and Chicago was the fastest growing city in the world at the time, having been founded just 21 years earlier. After high school, Burnham drifted around trying to find footing in a profession. He took an early interest in architecture, but failed the admissions test for both Harvard University and Yale University. He came back to Chicago and worked briefly as a draftsman for architect William LeBaron Jenney. After brief attempts at mining silver and running for the state senate in Nevada, Burnham returned to Chicago at age 23—just one year before the Great Chicago Fire.



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The 1909 Plan was unique, in part, because of its incredibly large scope. It didn’t just look at the city itself. Burnham saw Chicago as the center of an entire region, connected by commerce, regional highways, and ribbons of forest preserves.

The six big ideas of the 1909 Plan included:¹⁰

- 1) improved lakefront
- 2) new system of highways outside the city
- 3) improved railway terminals for both freight and passengers
- 4) new outer ring of parks and nature preserves
- 5) streets arranged to ease movement of traffic to and from downtown
- 6) creation of new centers/buildings of “intellectual life” and “civic administration”

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Burnham is sometimes called the “Father of the City Beautiful Movement”¹¹ an urban planning movement in the early 20th century that sought to make cities more beautiful and grand, while also creating moral and civically-minded citizens.

Burnham hired St Louis-born artist Jules Guerin to create the pastel-hued watercolor paintings for the *Plan of Chicago*. Burnham knew that beautiful images would be the key to making the proposal compelling and getting the public excited about the Plan’s ideas. This view shows the Plan’s recommendations to expand the south lakefront with a ribbon of new parkland, in order to create quiet lagoons and space for museums, pavilions, and baseball fields.

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In creating the 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett looked to older European cities which had also undergone major urban redesigns. For Burnham, Paris was especially influential. In the 1850s and 1860s, Emperor Napoléon III tasked Georges-Eugène Haussmann with a massive urban renewal project that would improve traffic flow and create new green spaces in the French capital. Haussmann developed wide boulevards, lined with buildings—inspired by ancient Greece and Rome—all with the same cornice height. Radial streets were designed to have prominent public buildings and monuments at the intersections.¹² These same features would be borrowed for the 1909 Plan to create a new vision and identity for the city.

Panel 3 includes a drawing from the 1909 Plan that shows new train lines and a terminal near Roosevelt and State Street (top right corner of image). Burnham and Bennett also designed a new opera house for Chicago—very similar to L’Opéra de Paris¹³—proposed for the intersection of Roosevelt Road (12th Street) and Michigan Avenue.

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Burnham and Bennett explained the challenges of planning in the Introduction of the 1909 Plan.

“... 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.”

Burnham Interlude 2



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In the year after the *Plan of Chicago* was published, the Commercial Club and Daniel Burnham began a large, multi-year promotional plan. Burnham spoke to hundreds of community groups and civic leaders. He often brought along scale models, drawings, and glass lantern slides that were projected onto walls with a gas flame light (sometimes called “magic lanterns”).

Burnham’s health was failing by 1910; he died in June 1912 touring Europe with his family. But work on promoting the plan continued over the next several years. The committee met regularly—often over long, large dinners—in Burnham’s offices at the Railway Exchange Building.¹⁴

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Charles Wacker, Vice Chairman of the Commercial Club of Chicago, was one of the most important voices in carrying out the Plan.¹⁵ In 1909, Mayor Busse named Wacker as the Chairman of the Chicago Plan Commission. He would hold this position until 1926 and advocate for the Plan’s implementation and improvements in the city throughout his life.

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Shortly after the Plan’s publication, the committee set aside money for a publicity campaign for students in the public schools. They recognized that if the Plan was to be implemented, they would need to convince citizens of its merit and gain support among voters. Eighth grade was a logical grade level to have these conversations, because many students ended their formal education at age 14; these students would also become voters.



PAGE 86, PANEL 1

Walter D. Moody was commissioned by the Chicago Plan Commission to promote adoption of the *Plan of Chicago* among students, which culminated in 1911 as a major new initiative: *Wacker's Manual* for the *Plan of Chicago*.¹⁶

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Walter Moody is seen taking notes from the committee for the student textbook that would become *Wacker's Manual*.

PAGE 86, PANEL 3

Around the table, Moody takes notes on what young people must understand about cities. Members of the committee shout out their ideas. We see the first outline of what would become *Wacker's Manual*.

PAGE 86, PANELS 4 AND 5

Moody's language here is similar to his text in the Introduction of *Wacker's Manual*:¹⁷

"Nature gave Chicago the location that under the touch of modern commerce produced the great city. It is not Chicago's growth that amazes. That growth naturally accompanied industry. It is Chicago's spirit which grips the world's attention.

No city in America perhaps none in the world has the love and devotion of its people that Chicago has.

No people of any city will labor so hard, or sacrifice so much for their city, as will the people of Chicago.

It is this civic patriotism almost as strong as our love of country that will determine the successful future of our city, in the realization of the Plan of Chicago."

Under the direction of Chicago Public Schools Superintendent Ella Flagg Young, *Wacker's Manual* was mandatory reading for more than two decades for all eighth graders in Chicago Public School students.¹⁸ It called on young people to learn about the building blocks of a city, learn about the 1909 vision and plan for Chicago, and steward their city to greatness.

"Conditions, then, demand that this new impulse of love for this city shall be fostered, and that our children shall be taught that they are the coming responsible heads of their various communities..."¹⁹

"The needs and possibilities for expansion and development of community life under proper conditions must be outline for the young, that effort under the urge of civic patriotism may be properly directed..."

"We have reached a time now when the citizen, to do his duty, must plan for the welfare of coming generations. It is necessary that the people realize, and that the young be taught, that the really great work of the world today is that which foresees and builds for the future."

Burnham Interlude 3



PAGE 125, PANEL 1

From his architectural offices on the 14th floor of the Railway Exchange Building, Burnham reminisces about his life and legacy, as the sun slowly rises over the lake.

PAGE 125, PANEL 2

Wacker's Manual, the young person's guide to the 1909 Plan mentioned by Burnham, would be used in Chicago Public Schools for more than 20 years—impacting thousands of students. Ella Flagg Young, superintendent of Chicago Public Schools from 1909 until 1915²⁰ would be instrumental in getting the book into the hands of teachers and students. Catholic elementary schools in Chicago also used the book in civics lessons. Mayor Richard M. Daley confirmed that his father, Mayor Richard J. Daley, used the book when he was a student at Nativity of Our Lord School in the Bridgeport neighborhood. Years later, the elder Daley would quote Burnham and support the development of some of the city's more far-reaching and impactful urban plans.

PAGE 125, PANEL 3 (RIGHT)

The images shown are a collection of articles and political cartoons from the years following the release of the 1909 Plan and the 1911 *Wacker's Manual*.

The North-West Side Monthly Bulletin from 1914 shows the “Captain of the Loop” as a bully representing State Street merchants. He holds a big stick and threatens voters to approve a new bridge to the North Side.²¹ Burnham had proposed a monumental new bridge at Michigan Avenue to connect and expand business on both sides of the Chicago River. State Street merchants thought this bridge would take business away from them.

“Chicago's Children Study Big City Betterment Plan”²² is taken from the headline of a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article from November 1912. It describes the history of *Wacker's Manual*, quotes Walter Moody, and explains its use in Chicago schools.



PAGE 125, PANEL 3 (RIGHT) AND PANEL 4, AND PAGE 126, PANEL 1

Many of the reviews on the Plan were positive, but many articles, and thought leaders of the day, were also critical. Major criticisms highlighted the dearth of discussion about neighborhoods, housing and transportation considerations of everyday working Chicagoans.

John Fitzpatrick, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor was quoted in the organization’s newspaper:

“I know something about the conditions that the workers in Chicago have to contend with, and when you talk about beautifying Chicago industrially or commercially and ignore the cry of despair among the men, women, and children whose only fault is that they must to live, [it] makes ones hesitate and ask if we are in the era before Christ or in the 20th century...”

Architectural historian and critic Lewis Mumford attacked the Plan, calling Burnham “a colossal merchandiser,” and criticizing him and the Commercial Club for being mostly interested in increasing land values. More than 50 years after the Plan was released, Mumford criticized it as having “no concern for the neighborhood as an integral unit, no regard for family housing, no sufficient conception of the ordering of business and industry themselves as a necessary part of any larger achievement of urban order.”²³

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Burnham tells us that not all the ideas proposed for the Plan made it into the final book. Jane Addams was one of the few women consulted in the development of the Plan. In writing her 2003 book on Burnham,²⁴ author Kristin Schaffer discovered that Burnham’s handwritten draft of the Plan included more social issues, including proposals for child care for working mothers and a comprehensive hospital system. But these were cut from the final manuscript and in the end the Plan did not address issues that Addams fought to improve: poverty, education, corruption, health, and labor conditions.²⁵

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Burnham ends with a question: What makes a city livable? In the 21st century, this is a question that citizens, mayors, planners, architects, and civic leaders continue to wrestle with today.²⁶

The final panel of the novel calls on readers to “Have at it,” and try their hand at developing a city that they want, need and deserve.

ADDITIONAL READING

- 1 “Photo: Daniel Burnham,” by Edward Bennett, burnhamplan100.lib.uchicago.edu, <http://bit.ly/2vuwVFg>
- 2 “World’s Columbian Exposition,” ecuip.lib.uchicago.edu, <http://bit.ly/2vuOSn9>
- 3 “Extending the City Beautiful: Three centuries of city planning in Washington, D.C.,” by Rod Freebairn-Smith, Jennifer Devlin and Sarah Karlinsky, spur.org, <http://bit.ly/2u1tdhK>
- 4 “Burnham Plan 1905,” by Robert Cherny, foundsf.org, <http://bit.ly/2w7FYJj>
- 5 “Who was Edward Bennett? And why has he been overshadowed for a century by Daniel Burnham?,” by Patrick T. Reardon, burnhamplan100.lib.uchicago.edu, <http://bit.ly/2f9PXJT>
- 6 “Photo: Intersection of State and Washington, Chicago,” photos.smugmug.com, <http://smu.gs/2vjObwr>
- 7 “Visual Dictionary: 1909 *Plan of Chicago*,” architecture.org, <http://bit.ly/2uXBsys>
- 8 “Buildings of Chicago: Railway Exchange Building,” architecture.org, <http://bit.ly/2hpmxYW>
- 9 “Photo: Railway Exchange Building penthouse,” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org, <http://bit.ly/2hpfYph>
- 10 “*Plan of Chicago* Plates,” burnhamplan100.lib.uchicago.edu, <http://bit.ly/2hpgkwn>
- 11 “Architecture: The City Beautiful Movement,” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org, <http://bit.ly/2u5wj8G>
- 12 “Photos: Paris and the Haussmann Plan,” images.google.com, <http://bit.ly/2w8jJTE>
- 13 “Photo: Paris Opera House,” wikipedia.org, <http://bit.ly/2hpr1yl>

- 14 “Photo: Railway Exchange Building, circa 1904,” bldg51.com, <http://bit.ly/2hpAINY>
- 15 “Charles H. Wacker,” wikipedia.org, <http://bit.ly/2v0TOgu>
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- 17 “Visual Dictionary: *Wacker’s Manual*,” architecture.org, <http://bit.ly/2uXHGHy>
- 18 “*Wacker’s Manual of the Plan of Chicago*,” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org, <http://bit.ly/2uXHqPE>
- 19 “*Wacker’s Manual of the Plan of Chicago*,” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org, <http://bit.ly/2uXHqPE>

- 20 “Ella Flagg Young, American Educator,” britannica.com, <http://bit.ly/2wn1s3V>
- 21 “Are You Foolish Enough to Do It?,” front page of *The North-West Side Monthly Bulletin*, November 1914, publications.newberry.org, <http://bit.ly/2vqz83p>
- 22 “Chicago’s Children Study Big City Betterment Plan,” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org, <http://bit.ly/2ulXK9y>
- 23 “The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects,” by Lewis Mumford, books.google.com, <http://bit.ly/2f9AOZh>
- 24 “Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner,” by Kristen Schaffer, chipublib.org, <http://bit.ly/2u1avqB>
- 25 “Daniel Burnham and Jane Addams: What might have been? Or not?,” by Patrick T. Reardon, burnhamplan100.lib.uchicago.edu, <http://bit.ly/2wnhevl>
- 26 “Liveable City, Healthy World,” thechicagocouncil.org, <http://bit.ly/2ulH4yJ>