

TEMPLES OF THE CITY, PILLARS OF THE COMMUNITY:
CHICAGO AND THE MODERN MUSEUM MOVEMENT, 1880S-1940S

By

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To my inspiration, mentor, rock, friend, and first teacher: my mother. I love you.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Science and Industry and the circumstances that surround their founding and early history. From the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century, Chicago became home to many large museums, including those listed above. Chicagoans established cultural institutions partially to combat national views of the city as crude and uncultured. The museums that were established in Chicago between the 1880s and WWII were both the exception and the rule of American museums. They followed the national trends that embraced natural history, art, and science museums as well as metropolitan museum building. The rapid pace at which Chicago museums were established was exceptional.

The success of Chicago's museums came from the cooperative support that their founders were able to garner with the city government and private philanthropists. The pooling of sustained public and private effort gave the museums the resources they needed to flourish. The growth in cultural institutions can also be partially linked to Chicago hosting two World's Fairs just forty years apart. Cooperation between the Commercial Club of Chicago, the South Park Commissioners, World's Fairs and the three museums created a system for museum founding and support that enabled Chicago's museums to grow at an extraordinary pace and scale.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: SUPPORTING CULTURE: HOW THE CITY, STATE, AND NATION HELPED CHICAGO GET ITS MUSEUMS	13
CHAPTER TWO: THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO: ELEVATION THROUGH ART.....	43
CHAPTER THREE: A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FAIR INCARNATE: THE FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.....	71
CHAPTER FOUR: SAVING FOR SCIENCE: THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY.....	107
CONCLUSION: A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS	135
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	142

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
1) Chicago's Population Growth 1840-1910.....	12
2) Souvenir Map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance.....	40
3) Fine Arts building façade ca. 1912.....	41
4) Museum of Science and Industry, Jackson Park, Reconstruction for South Park Commissioners.....	42
5) The Art Institute of Chicago ca. 1895.....	70
6) Field Museum staff moving zebra out of building, March 1920.....	105
7) Field Museum staff moving ornithology exhibit case out of building, March 1920.....	106
8) An early exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry that was on display during A Century of Progress. ca.1933.....	133
9) The main hall of Museum of Science and Industry in 1939	134

INTRODUCTION

In early October of 1871, a fire raged through the center of Chicago, turning it into a smoldering pile of ash and destroying much of the economic and social heart of the city. The *Chicago Tribune* published an article a day after the fire was quelled titled “Cheer Up: Chicago Shall Rise Again.” Among the blessings counted were that three-fourths of Chicagoans survived, provisions were pouring in from around the country so that the survivors would not be without food or clothing, and already businessmen and city managers were springing into action. City officials were contracting workers to clear away and rebuild. Chicago’s commercial efforts were also alive and well, for according to the *Chicago Tribune*, “Field, Leiter & Co., and John V. Farwell & Co. will recommence business to-day.”¹ The article also reassured its readers that banks and railroads were still working. The optimism expressed in the article was not unfounded. Chicago’s boosters and commercial interests were deeply invested in the city’s recovery. In 1877, a few years after the fire, many of these same businessmen founded the Commercial Club of Chicago, a social club where they could gather monthly to discuss their city and how it might be improved. Their topics ranged from infrastructure improvements to how to deal with social issues and labor unrest.

A little under a decade after the fire, the city had so completely recovered that the Commercial Club asked its members, “Has Chicago not reached a period in

¹ “Cheer Up: Chicago Shall Rise Again,” *Chicago Tribune (1860-1872)*, October 11, 1871.

its growth when special attention should be paid to the fostering of art, literature and science?"² Their March 1880 discussion topic clearly showed they saw their young city as both matured and lacking. The city was economically successful, and yet it was not complete. To be a great city, like the eastern cities that many of them knew in their youth, Chicago would have to offer more than banking and commerce—it had to be a center of culture, too.

The Commercial Club's discussion topic frames cultural institutions as part of the evolutionary growth of the city. For these men, and those around them, "culture" served as a vehicle to bring stability and order to the city as well. Carl Smith explains in *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief* that urban elites of the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century believed culture could bring order to the city as well. Large urban centers were a relatively new phenomenon in the United States and with their size came instability. Though Chicago was not the only large urban center in the United States, its dramatic growth from a small frontier city in 1833 to over a million citizens by 1900 was staggering. (See Figure 1.) Donald L. Miller artfully describes the city as "a combination of wealth and squalor, beauty and ugliness, corruption and reform."³ William Cronon notes that it was a vast market place that had "the greatest" grain, cattle, hog, and lumber market in the United States, just to

² Commercial Club of Chicago, *The Commercial Club of Chicago, Organized 1878* (Chicago, Commercial Club, 1904), 25, <http://archive.org/details/commercialclubof00comm>.

³ Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 17.

name a few commodities received, prepared, and sold from Chicago.⁴

Industrialization and land speculation in Chicago had made some men very wealthy. The demand for workers in these industries and easy access to the city from its vast rail network attracted new residents from rural American and foreign lands during the end of the nineteenth century. The city had shallow historical roots and its citizens had little in common to unify them. The fire may have given Chicagoans a unifying goal, but after the city recovered, the underlying issues that characterized Chicago remained. Smith explains that those at the top were concerned about “what commonality would hold the city together? What would mitigate some of the sources of instability, including the materialistic tendencies of the booster mentality . . .?”⁵ The answer to these questions “was ‘culture.’”

During the second half of the nineteenth century, philanthropy trended toward supporting “cultural uplift.” In his essay review “Cultural Uplift and Social Reform in Nineteenth-Century Urban America,” Douglas Sloan enumerates the two assumptions that surrounded cultural uplift at the time. First, “the social problems of urban America were at bottom cultural problems that could be attacked by promoting institutions and activities that would elevate and refine the intellectual,

⁴ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 148.

⁵ Carl S. Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*, 2nd ed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 81.

moral, and spiritual life of the cities.”⁶ Second, the only people who could lead such an effort were the small group of “educationally and culturally advanced members of society.” In Chicago, those who took the lead in the city’s cultural uplift were the *nouveau riche*.

Culture to the *nouveau riche* took many forms, including “training, habits, customs, institutions, and forms of production closely associated with the ideal of the refined individual in a civilized society.”⁷ Its alternative was “anarchy.” Culture was, therefore, linked to order and in the late nineteenth century, “inseparable from considerations of class conflict.” The people of Chicago were not unfamiliar with outright class conflict, and the members of the Commercial Club were not silent on the subject either. The Haymarket Affair and the Pullman strikes are the most visible examples of class conflict in Chicago.

Only a few weeks after the Haymarket Affair, the Commercial Club discussion topic for May 29, 1886 was “the late civil disorder; its causes and lessons.”⁸ Club members Marshall Field and George Pullman “had been special target[s] of the anarchists’ invective” and the two of them were vocal about the need to punish the bombers.⁹ Eight years later, striking workers upended Pullman’s attempts at creating an ideal factory town. Often characterized as “paternal,” Smith explains that Pullman himself rejected the term since “[he] treated employees neither like

⁶ Douglas Sloan, “Cultural Uplift and Social Reform in Nineteenth-Century Urban America,” ed. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *History of Education Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1979): 361–62, doi:10.2307/367651.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Commercial Club of Chicago, *The Commercial Club of Chicago, Organized 1878*, 31.

⁹ Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief*, 130.

children nor as objects of philanthropy.” What it was for him was a sound business investment and a great source of pride.¹⁰ In 1894, the workers decided to strike to protest the living conditions in the town. Despite wage cuts in reaction to the 1893 depression, rents and utilities rates in Pullman stayed the same. Frustrations about not being able to own a home or have a democratic government boiled over into a nationwide sympathy strike by American Railway Union workers.¹¹ The thoroughly organized urban space of the town of Pullman failed to bring harmony to urban life.

The answer to urban disorder then was not in the culture created by company towns.¹² Culture could still be the answer, but it had to come by a different way. One form of culture that theoretically could both bring civility to Chicago and interested Commercial Club members was cultural institutions. Museums in particular, were a favored enterprise of the Commercial Club. This dissertation will focus on the founding and early history of three museums in Chicago.

Members of the Commercial Club served on the founding boards of many of Chicago’s museums. Among these museums were the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), The Field Museum of Natural History (Field), and the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI). Paul DiMaggio explains that this self-selected group of men used museums as “project[s] of civic mobility—an attempt to establish Chicago as central

¹⁰ Ibid., 200–201.

¹¹ Ibid., 233–236.

¹² Robert H. Wiebe argues that during a time of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and mechanization, progressives sought a new order and new ways to cope with the industrial economy. This included creating a bureaucratic order that emphasized professionalism and standardization. Wiebe, Robert H. *The Search for Order: 1877–1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.

in culture, as in commerce.”¹³ Though these men constituted the wealthy elite, they lacked a “commitment to standard-setting and social exclusion” that characterized the cultural institutions of older cities. This meant that “the institutions they created were open both to commercialism and to the public to a greater extent than in many other places.” Though the founding members all came from a small group of men, all Chicagoans had some degree of access to the museums along the lake.

The balance between commercialism and the public is one that Joel J. Orosz terms the “American Compromise.” In his history of early American museums *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement In America, 1740–1870*, he suggests that between 1850 and 1870, American museums found a balance between public education and professionalism similar to the dual purposes Chicago’s museums held a few decades later. According to Orosz, “1870 marked the take-off point” of American museums, especially “Great Metropolitan Museums.”¹⁴ Earlier museums work “had raised the field to a level of development necessary for exponential growth, and after 1870 museums achieved that level of growth.” The great metropolitan museums that Orosz uses as examples are in Boston and New York. Had he extended his study beyond 1870, he might have included museums in Chicago as well.

¹³ Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum, eds., *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, 1st ed, Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 210.

¹⁴ Joel J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740–1870*, History of American Science and Technology Series (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 235.

During the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, many wealthy Americans founded and supported museums throughout the United States.¹⁵ The museums in Chicago, however, can be set apart by the speed with which they were founded and their rise to prominence. The civic-minded founders of the museums in this study explicitly created the museums to improve the national perception of Chicago. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz observes that in the 1880s, Chicago represented “all that was crude in American life.”¹⁶ With its meat packing, grain dealing, and the filth of industry spilling into the air and river, Chicago’s crudeness was easy to spot, but this understanding of the city also failed to account for “the city’s cultural life.” Chicago’s cultural life started long before the fire with schools, libraries, and concert halls.¹⁷ These, however, did not alter the national perspective on Chicago. The Columbian Exposition, “the supreme flower of nineteenth-century culture,” did alter outsiders’ views of Chicago, and large cultural institutions that came out of the fair sustained that perception.¹⁸

The two museums linked with the Columbian Exposition, the Art Institute and the Field Museum, were quickly recognized as the top of their field.¹⁹ Chicago was the home of innovation as well. The Museum of Science and Industry, housed in

¹⁵ Marjorie Schwarzer and American Association of Museums, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2006), 10.

¹⁶ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Culture & the City: Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago from the 1880s to 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 27, 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁹ Edward P. Alexander, *The Museum in America: Innovators and Pioneers*, American Association for State and Local History Book Series (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1997), 14, 24.

the same building that the Field Museum first occupied, was “America’s first museum of science and industry . . . the Chicago institution often is called the first noisy museum in America” because the halls were filled with exhibits that moved, squeaked, and encouraged excitement as visitors interacted with the exhibits.²⁰ What is most extraordinary about the precipitous rise of Chicago’s museums is its pace. These museums achieved the status of elite and groundbreaking in a mere forty-year span.

These museums accomplished this remarkable feat through a combination of factors that characterize Chicago’s culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the support of individual philanthropists, who were motivated by civic pride and social uplift, and government support, Chicago emerged in the early twentieth century as a leading cultural city in the United States. It was a time when the city was primed to use all that had made it a capitalist center to become a regional center of culture, art, and learning.

None of the three museums in this study would have flourished if they did not have external supports. The first chapter of the dissertation lays out the major external supports that aided the museums. The Commercial Club of Chicago played an important role in making these museums a reality. The World’s Fair Columbian Exposition of 1893 acted as a catalyst that set in motion larger and more lasting impacts on the physical and cultural landscape of the city of Chicago. An 1836 ordinance protected the lakefront from development. Often called “Forever Open,

²⁰ Schwarzer and American Association of Museums, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals*, 35.

Clear, and Free,” the legislation set aside twenty acres of lakeshore for public use. An additional law passed in 1893 gave park districts the authority to erect and maintain museums on parkland.²¹ Without these two pieces of legislation, there is no telling how or even if Chicago’s museum would have succeeded. Building on earlier legislation allowing public parks to have museums on them, Chicagoans approved a tax in 1903 that supported “Museums in the Park.” This tax funneled funds directly to the museums. Originally only divided between two museums, it now funds eleven institutions in Chicago.²² Another external support for the museums was a master plan for the city introduced in 1909, which suggested, among other things, using public parkland for museums while also expanding green space in the city. These and other aids helped the museums’ founders in their endeavors to found museums.

Chapter two is the first institutional history and spotlights the Art Institute of Chicago. The history begins slightly before 1880 and continues to the 1920s. Its history demonstrates the pattern for success that would emerge with each subsequent institution. The Art Institute began with private interest in founding a cultural institution. The Commercial Club members then organized themselves to provide an administrative and economic foundation for the museum. The connections that Commercial Club members had with city officials helped the Art Institute get access to land and financial support. After the museum was established,

²¹ Museums in Public Parks Act, 38th Gen. Assemb. § 123/1 (Ill. 1893).

²² “Museums in the Park,” accessed February 2, 2017, <http://museumsinthepark.org/>.

the work of the museum became more professionalized. Of the three museums, the Art Institute's history has the most circuitous development. This is because the Commercial Club members came to an existing organization to bring financial stability, not to found a new museum. Despite this difference, the larger pattern remains consistent.

Unlike the Art Institute, the Field Museum's founding was rapid and focused. As the Columbian Exposition came to a close, preparations were hastily made for a museum to continue past the fair. One building on the Fair grounds, the Palace of Fine Arts (later referred to as the Fine Arts Building), was repurposed to house the new museum. The institution these organizers conceived of and built is known today as the Field Museum of Natural History. Intellectually, the legacy of the Columbian Exposition lived on in the Field Museum, but the memorial museum did not last long. The collection and interpretation instead moved toward natural history. Its professionalization and the challenges it faced to find a suitable home are studied in chapter three.

Chapter four continues the history of the Fine Arts Building and looks at its current occupant: the Museum of Science and Industry. Inspired by a German industrial museum, the Museum of Science and Industry was the brainchild of Julius Rosenwald, who, like many of the Commercial Club members, earned his fortune in Chicago. Believing that Chicago should be home to a new kind of museum, Rosenwald worked hard to get the Commercial Club and the city of Chicago to aid in completing his vision. A Century of Progress, the second World's Fair hosted in

Chicago, also helped the museum by entering a cooperative agreement that shared both knowledge and exhibits with the new museum. As before, the rallying of public and private enterprises finally allowed the Museum of Science and Industry to succeed.

Though unable to create a social order out of urban chaos, Chicago's museums were able to reshape the city in other ways. In exchange for use of protected public space, Illinois state legislators required each museum to give Chicagoans access. These museums also exemplify a desire by Chicago's elite to be more than men of commerce. In between Chicago's two World's Fairs were opportunities for cultural growth and willing people with the means to make it a reality. Cooperative efforts, rather than the work of a single person, created and fostered the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Science and Industry by gathering collections, giving resources, and patronizing the museums. The city of Chicago granted each a home and continued support because the museums benefitted the city and the citizens. The founding of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Science and Industry were both typical of the period and extraordinary in pace and scale. The model of cooperative action to support and fund museums has proven so successful that it has continued and expanded in Chicago into the new millennium. Eight additional "Museums in the Park" now follow a similar model.

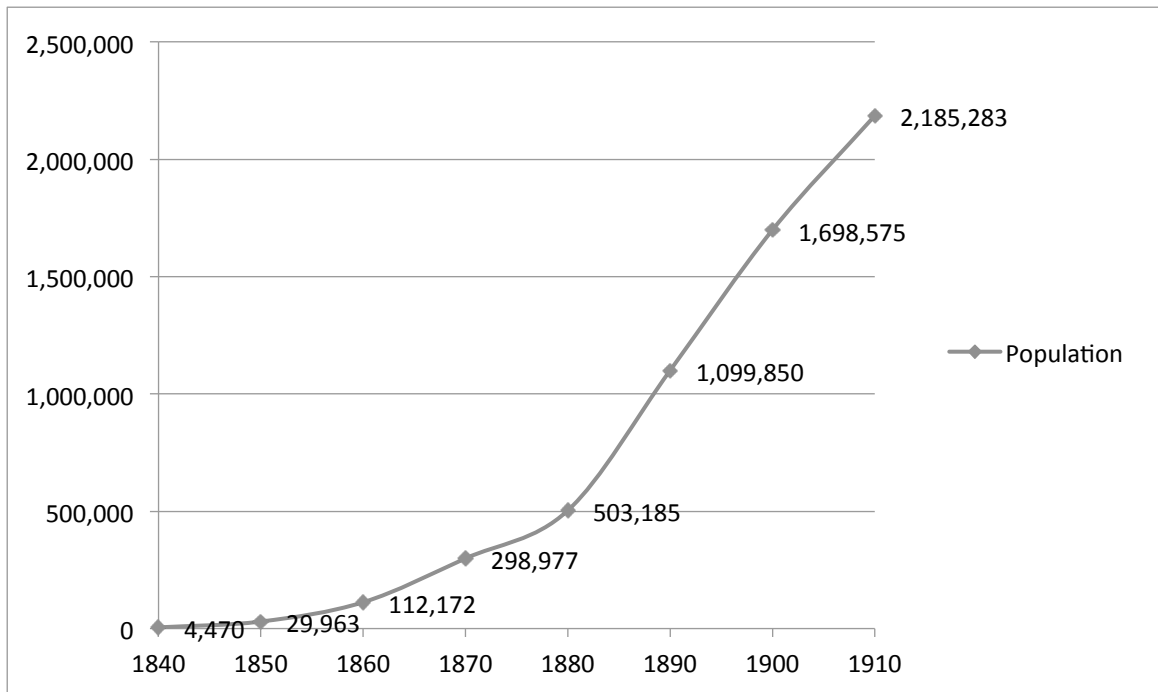


Figure 1) Chicago's Population Growth 1840-1910
Based on U.S. census data.²³

²³ "Chicago Population History," accessed February 2, 2017,
<http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/chicago.html>.

CHAPTER ONE

SUPPORTING CULTURE: HOW THE CITY, STATE, AND NATION HELPED CHICAGO GET ITS MUSEUMS

The Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Science and Industry are all products of specific factors and events that combined in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. No individual factor is unique to Chicago, but the success of the city's museums was contingent on support from a combination of public and private supporters working together make them a reality. Private individuals and clubs sought public land for museum buildings. They also utilized World's Fairs to procure collections and buildings for museums. Illinois state legislators gave special dispensation for museums in public parks, which allowed urban planners to advocate for a gathering of cultural centers in the downtown parkland. The South Park Commissioners, using their authority as part of the city government, helped fund and maintain the museums. The Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs and concerned citizens led preservation efforts that aided Chicago's museums as well. This chapter examines these external supports from which all three of the museums benefitted.

Though numbering only sixty members, the Commercial Club of Chicago assembled some of the wealthiest men in the city in one place to discuss how to improve the city that had made them so prosperous. One kind of project these men took on was the creation of new museums, into which they put both their time and money. Most of the founding and early board members of the museum in this study

were also Commercial Club members. The close connections with the Commercial Club would also prove beneficial as each museum sought to gather capital and collections that would allow them to prosper. Members who did not serve on the board in some capacity were still generous toward the museum projects.

The Commercial Club of Chicago started in 1877 when “17 businessmen joined together for dinner.”¹ The businessmen organized the club “for the purpose of advancing by social intercourse and by friendly interchange of views, the commercial prosperity and growth of the city of Chicago” and quickly grew to 60 members.² The club members had come from different parts of the country before settling in Chicago and were not initially well acquainted with one another. This problem, Patrick Barry notes in his history of the club, “was something a good meal could overcome.”³ A schedule of meetings with meals and speakers throughout the year planted “ideas [that were] followed by open discussion to develop them.”⁴ The constitution called, as much as possible, to have as members of “various commercial interests of the city” so that commercial interests were “fairly represented in the Club.” This group of men proved to be a powerful force for the advancement of museums in Chicago.

Though Commercial Club members did not have deep roots in the city,

¹ Patrick Barry, *Together for Our City: A Brief History of The Commercial Club of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Commercial Club of Chicago, 1996), 3.

² Commercial Club of Chicago, *The Commercial Club of Chicago, Organized 1878* (Chicago, Commercial Club, 1904), 3, <http://archive.org/details/commercialclubof00comm>.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴ Barry, *Together for Our City: A Brief History of The Commercial Club of Chicago*, 3.

Chicago had existed since 1833. Two seemingly insignificant land grants, one by the U.S. government and one by supervisors of the Chicago Canal project, greatly changed the shape of Chicago's lakefront forever. During a weekly town meeting on November 2, 1835, Chicagoans discussed what would happen to the land occupied by Fort Dearborn, which the U.S. military had scheduled for decommission. That evening, the assembled citizens resolved to set aside twenty acres of the land that abutted the lake to be reserved for a public square. In 1839, when the U.S. government put the land up for sale, a portion was set aside as public ground.⁵ This small patch of what was marshy ground is now the northwest corner of Millennium Park.⁶

In 1836, the state of Illinois had three men—Gurdon Hubbard, William F. Thornton, and William B. Archer—plot the land along Lake Michigan for a new canal. A narrow strip between Madison Street and 12th Street (now Roosevelt Road), only a mile long, was designated, “Public Ground --- A Common to Remain Forever, Open, Clear and Free of any Buildings, or other Obstruction Whatever.”⁷ For the more than one hundred years Chicagoans would fight in courts and in the newspapers over the implications of this label. The fights included what was considered appropriate public use of parkland and how open, clear, and free that land had to be. The major actors in the saga were the South Park Commissioners

⁵ Lois Wille, *Forever Open, Clear, and Free: The Struggle for Chicago's Lakefront*, 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 22.

⁶ Millennium Park borders Grant Park to the west and the Art Institute of Chicago to the south.

⁷ Wille, *Forever Open, Clear, and Free*, 23.

(SPC), city and state legislators, the board members of the cultural institutions who wanted their buildings to be in the parks, and the “Watch Dog of the Lakefront,” Montgomery Ward.⁸

How the land was divided and used in the early years of Chicago’s history is significant to the history of the museums in this study. All three museums stand on public ground abutting Lake Michigan. Without the public parkland there is no way to know how or even if the museums in Chicago could have been founded. “Forever Open, Clear, and Free” saved a portion of lake abutting land from development, but it did not make it park land either. The marshy land was not immediately or entirely converted to useable parkland for some time and was by the 1890s it had become a wasteland of debris and vice.⁹ In the parts that were kept clear, political parties hosted rallies and conventions.¹⁰ According to common practice, temporary structures were allowed on the grounds. Chicago’s businessmen were quick to take advantage of such a loophole.

In an early showing of cooperation, the government of Chicago and the city’s business leaders joined forces after the fire to create the Inter-State Industrial Exposition. The impetus for the 1873 venture was to “demonstrate to the world that

⁸ Aaron Montgomery Ward never went by his full name in life. He was either referred to as A. Montgomery Ward or Montgomery Ward. Both A. Montgomery Ward and Montgomery Ward will be used interchangeably and refer to the same man. Ward’s legal battles over the lakefront will be chronicled more fully in chapter 3.

⁹ Wille, *Forever Open, Clear, and Free*, 74.

¹⁰ Dennis H. Cremin, *Grant Park: The Evolution of Chicago’s Front Yard* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 17.

Chicago had arisen phoenix-like from the flames” of the Great Fire of 1871.¹¹ The structure built on the public grounds of Lake Park was considered temporary, thus skirting “Forever Open, Clear, and Free.” Dennis H. Cremin explains that “the Inter-State Exposition had created an under-one-roof spectacle, equal parts trade show, dry-goods store, industrial showroom, fine-arts gallery, indoor garden, and fair.”¹² This first exposition after the fire set an important precedent for the use of public land for private ventures, especially ones that “would profit Chicagoans’ pocketbooks as well as their souls.” The Inter-State Industrial Exposition was a smaller version of the World’s Fairs that were becoming increasingly popular among major Western cities.

Philadelphia hosted a World’s Fair in 1876 to celebrate the centennial birth of the nation. The year 1892 was considered by many to be the next major anniversary in American history: four hundred years after Columbus crossed the Atlantic to the “New World.” Hosting the fair was a coveted honor, and Chicago won over some stiff competition. William H. Wilson notes that it was Chicago’s businessmen’s early practice of progressive-style “nonpartisan devotion to community welfare” that won the fair for Chicago.¹³ They “submerge[d] whatever political, partisan, economic, or cultural antagonisms [that] divided them to unite in pursuing specific goals.” This unity was “an expression of civic pride, cooperation, and patronage of the arts.” Those same businessmen who brought the fair to

¹¹ Ibid., 31.

¹² Ibid., 33.

¹³ William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, Creating the North American Landscape (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 60.

Chicago would continue to express their pride and patronage when they invested in cultural institutions.

After beating out New York City, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. to host the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago's fair organizers faced the daunting task of mounting a major event. When it came time to choose a site for the first World's Fair, they only considered public park locations. This opportunity led to much debate between the executive committee of the fair and the three different park commissioners about where the fair would take place. With two large parks that were both accessible to the large rail depots downtown, the South Park Commission won out. Which of its two large parks would play host remained up for debate. The renowned landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmstead had just completed Jackson Park, which abuts the lake, for the South Park Commission. Washington Park, another large park, had potential too, but the fair directors rejected it. By the time Jackson Park and its adjoining Midway Plaisance were finally chosen as the fairgrounds, the 1492 quadricentennial loomed. The prolonged negotiations by those in charge over which park would host the fair caused it to open late: seven months later than originally planned and in the wrong year, 1893.

Despite these stumbling blocks, the Columbian Exposition awed the nation and "set a standard against which every subsequent exposition would be measured."¹⁴ In a 1929 history of Chicago, Gilbert Paul and Charles Lee Bryson wrote that the Columbian Exposition "swept away the provincial atmosphere, and

¹⁴ James R. Grossman et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 902.

made the young city of the West recognized by the entire civilized world as a center of art, of science, of industry, and of all those refinements which make up a people's culture."¹⁵ Chicago hosting the fair increased the city's cultural resources. The fair commissioners and the exhibitors aided two museums: the Art Institute of Chicago and the Field Museum. The first museum to benefit from Chicago hosting the World's Fair was the Art Institute of Chicago.

As fair organizers were planning the buildings of the fair, Charles L. Hutchinson, president of the Art Institute of Chicago and Commercial Club member, saw an opportunity for the young art museum and negotiated for the use of a permanent building in Lake Park after the fair closed. The agreement called for a building that would be built for the World's Congress and then given over to the Art Institute of Chicago after the fair closed.¹⁶ Despite having the blessing of city officials, its legal status on the grounds of Lake Park was dubious.

Just a month and a half after the Columbian Exposition opened in 1893, and one day before the legislature adjourned for the summer, the Illinois General Assembly passed *Section 123 Museums – In public parks – Their erection and use*. This law stated, "corporate authorities of cities and park districts having the control or supervision of any public park [were thereby] authorized to purchase or erect and maintain within such public park, edifices to be used as museum for the collection and display of objects pertaining to natural history and the arts and

¹⁵ Ibid., 201.

¹⁶ South Park Commissioners, "Official Proceeding of the South Park District, February 3, 1904 to July 12, 1905. Vol. 8" (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1905), 5, Chicago Park District Archives.

sciences.”¹⁷ The legislation seemed perfectly tailored to accommodate the two museums that grew directly out of the Columbian Exposition. Admission fees were capped at twenty-five cents for anyone over the age of ten, at ten cents for anyone ten years or younger, and the legislation stipulated that “all such museums shall be open to the public without charge for two days in each week, and to the children in actual attendance upon any of the schools in the State at all times.” Under this new law, both the Field and AIC could legally be maintained on public parkland. The legislation did not negate “Forever Open, Clear, and Free,” but it carved out a legal path to circumvent an interpretation that prohibited any permanent structure. Moreover, the 1893 legislation granted both museums physical space and funding for their maintenance. These benefits gave them support that neither likely would have been able to thrive without.

The new legislation was a windfall for the newly organized Columbian Memorial Museum, later renamed the Field Museum of Natural History. At the end of the Columbian Exposition, the Field Museum organizers were able to move into the now-empty Palace of Fine Arts. This solved the immediate issue of where to put newly acquired exhibits and was a logical location for a memorial museum. The problem with the building was the same as with all White City buildings; it was not built to outlive the fair, which the museum founders organized the museum to do. Like the Art Institute before them, the Field Museum supporters would later have to work to get a permanent building. Whatever struggles might lie ahead for the

¹⁷ Museums in Public Parks Act, 38th Gen. Assemb. § 123/1 (Ill. 1893).

museums, 1893 was a good year for both museums. Fair and government authorities gave the museums important advantages: buildings in park locations that came with some support from the park system.

Government aid for these projects neatly fits with the progressive ethos of the age. Alan Brinkley explains that progressives believed an interconnected society required “state intervention” to “ensure the citizenry a basic level of subsistence and dignity.”¹⁸ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz notes that “the Progressive spirit manifested itself also in cultural endeavors as trustees and administrators of cultural institutions experimented in ways to bring them closer to the public and into new relations with municipal government.”¹⁹ Her study of cultural institutions in Chicago states that during the Progressive period, there was a concern about “the public nature of the institutions.”²⁰ Municipal aid, however small it might have been, forged a bond between museums and the city that would dictate the public nature of the institutions.

The majority of public support from the park system in the early years came in the form of maintaining the grounds around the museum buildings. The South Park Commission also granted a small stipend to help run Field Museum. Within the first year of the Field opening to the public, the South Park Commissioners had given a portion of their annual tax levy to the museum as part of the original 1893 tax

¹⁸ Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 9.

¹⁹ Horowitz, *Culture & the City*, 194.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

law.²¹ In 1900, the South Park Commission took over the care of Lake Park, which was originally a city park and was home to the Art Institute. The incorporation of Lake Park into the South Park Commission brought AIC into the park district, which made it eligible for the same benefits the Field Museum was afforded.

To handle their growing financial needs, the South Park Commission had to seek more funding. The Commissioners proposed a half-mill tax to help support the museums. The half-mill tax the Commissioners proposed would tax fifty cents per every thousand dollars of property value that homeowners in the South Park district owned. Referred to by the South Park Commissioners as “the Museum Act,” it was put before and approved by the Illinois Legislature.²²

In a letter to Marshall Field, president of department store Marshall Field’s and major sponsor of the Field Museum, the South Park Commissioners explained how the new tax would work. They wrote that they had drafted a bill that would allow them to levy taxes, including a tax that would “contribute toward the care of the [museum] building and grounds surrounding same.” The Museum Act “authorizes the Commissioners to submit the question of an additional half mill tax to the citizens of the South Park District, the proceeds of such tax to be devoted to the care and maintenance of the [Field] Museum and Art Institute.” This bill would

²¹ “Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners ... 1882/83-1894/95.,” *Hathi Trust*, 40, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112051841812?urlappend=%3Bseq=1>.

²² A mill is a monetary unit equal to 1/1000 of a U.S. dollar or 1/10 of a cent. (The American Heritage College Dictionary, 2004.) The Museum Act was also called the “Museum Tax.”

be put to a vote in the next general election in April of 1904.²³ In February and again in March of 1904, the leadership of the Art Institute and the Field Museum wrote to the South Park Commissioners asking them to “to have the matter of a half mill tax for the maintenance of Museums in Public Parks submitted to the voters in the South Park District at the election to be held April 5, 1904.”²⁴ In March they even provided language for the “small ballot.”²⁵ The Field Museum, though getting a portion of the Jackson Park funds, did not receive any of the half-mill tax levy until it moved into Grant Park.²⁶

The implications of the tax were significant for the two museums in the South Park Commission’s district. The twenty-fourth annual report of the Art Institute of Chicago explains both the process and the implications. It states that the new bundle of laws presented by the SPC and approved by the Illinois General Assembly permits both the new Field Museum to be built on the lakefront in Grant Park, and the Art Institute to expand its building east over the Illinois Central Railroad tracks. The Museum Tax portion of the law also “authorizes the South Park Commissioners, after a referendum to the voters, to levy an annual tax of one-half mill on the dollar for the maintenance of the Art Institute and the Field Columbian Museum, which

²³ South Park Commissioners, “Official Proceeding of the South Park District, September 10, 1902 to January 20, 1904. Vol. 7” (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1904), 163, Chicago Park District Archives.

²⁴ South Park Commissioners, “Official Proceeding of the South Park District, February 3, 1904 to July 12, 1905. Vol. 8” (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1905), 8 and 36, Chicago Park District Archives.

²⁵ Ibid., 36.

²⁶ N. H. Carpenter, “Letter to Arthur B. Jones from N. H. Carpenter Regarding Tax Levy,” October 29, 1906, Recorder/ Registrar Museum Site Contract W/ South Park C. etc., Folder 6, Field Museum Archives.

will amount to about \$50,000 a year for each institution.”²⁷ The Trustees note that the tax would not go into effect until April of 1904 and that “it is necessary to obtain the passage of the city ordinance.” Despite the possible two-year delay, the legislation is deemed “friendly” and would “solve at once the problem of the maintenance of the museum,” which had been running an annual deficit of between \$10,000 and \$15,000. The Field Museum, too, had been running a deficit, but until Marshall Field’s death in 1906, the millionaire had covered those expenses.

The South Park Commission justified the Museum Tax in their 1902–1903 annual report. The Commissioners wrote:

The purpose of this Act was to enable the Commissioners to assist the Art Institute and the Field Columbian Museum in extending their benefits to the people of the entire City of Chicago, and also to secure the location of the [Field] museum on the lake front. Its importance to the public is greater than any other one enterprise that has engaged the attention of the Commissioners during the year, and we therefore give the correspondence between the Commissioners and Mr. Marshall Field, whose generosity has made possible the erection of the museum building in Grant Park.²⁸

The park commissioners attempted to do everything in their power to ensure that the Field Museum had a new building. This meant they needed to provide land for the museum free of charge. Though the legislative pieces and common intentions were in place, the road to a new building for the Field Museum proved to be

²⁷ “Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Trustees for the Year Ending June First, 1903. - N530_A3_1902-03.pdf,” 12–13, accessed July 31, 2016, http://www.artic.edu/sites/default/files/libraries/pubs/misc/N530_A3_1902-03.pdf.

²⁸ Chicago South Park Commissioners, *Report of the South Park Commissioners*, 1903, 7–8.

anything but smooth, as will be shown in the chapter focusing on that museum. In a legal opinion of the act presented to the Commissioners in August of 1909, the law firm of Tolman, Redfield & Sexton notes that the language of the Museum Tax “would authorize the South Park Commissioners ‘to bear the expense of’ a museum, ‘to support,’ ‘to keep up’ a museum and ‘to supply’ it ‘with what is needed.’”²⁹ This specification aided the museums because the park district could use the money for more than maintaining the buildings, which relieved some strain on the already tight museum budgets. It was also important to the SPC, because they could set aside some of that money to maintain the grounds.

As the Field Museum of Natural History and the Art Institute of Chicago were reaping the benefits of both physical space and financial support, another campaign created public support for a re-envisioned city with a cohesive cultural center along the lakefront on public land. This campaign was part of a national trend of city planning, called the City Beautiful movement that was linked with the progressive movement, which was concerned “with the quality of social life, particularly in the cities.”³⁰ Sponsored by the same clubmen who sponsored the museums, this campaign drew upon the World’s Fair for inspiration and was working to reshape how Chicago was laid out and the lakefront was used.

The White City of the World’s Fair Columbian Exposition was an idealized urban landscape that “devoted almost as much attention to plumbing and garbage

²⁹ South Park Commissioners, “Official Proceeding of the South Park District, August 6, 1909 to May 18, 1910. Vol. 13” (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1910), 5, Chicago Park District Archives.

³⁰ Horowitz, *Culture & the City*, 194.

removal as [it] did to the monumental display” that coordinated “different elements with a eye to both efficiency and aesthetic appeal.”³¹ The master architect of the White City was the young and ambitious Chicago architect Daniel H. Burnham. He and his partner John Root were “at the top of the path breaking Chicago architectural profession” when their firm was hired to plan the grounds of the fair.³² William H. Wilson explains that though the White City was not the original inspiration for city planning in the United States, it did make an important contribution. He explains that “improvement groups” and professionals turned to the White City for examples because the improvement groups recognized that the beauty of the fair came from the work of two groups: a “nonprofessional elite . . . mobilized Chicago’s civic spirit and wealth to secure the fair and the professional experts” carried the fair through.³³ It also came together with far more aesthetic appeal than “political’ methods” ever had. Chicago had done it once on a small scale in the early 1890s. Ten years later, Chicago’s civic spirit would be mobilized again for a much larger project.

Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett’s *Plan of Chicago*, sometimes known as the “Burnham Plan” for the famous architect who led the project, was published in 1909. Burnham and Bennett had collaborated on other city plans, including the *San Francisco Plan* 1905. The *Plan of Chicago* was sponsored by the Merchant Club of Chicago, which merged with the Commercial Club of Chicago while

³¹ Duane A. Smith, *Colorado Goes to the Fair: World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 19.

³² Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 55.

³³ *Ibid.*, 66.

the *Plan* was under development. As Carl Smith explains, these wealthy businessmen “had faith in the ability of self-appointed elite like themselves to re-create urban space and, as a result, expand the human prospect within that space.”³⁴ Divided into nine chapters, the *Plan* takes the reader from the origins of the plan and the history of urban planning, and then discusses different areas of Chicago until it reaches the “Heart of Chicago,” the downtown. The final chapter covers the feasibility, cost, and other issues associated with the *Plan*.

The Merchant Club desired to create a plan for the city of Chicago in part because in the early 1900s, “newcomers had heard too many pessimistic forecasts about Chicago’s condition and ‘too few concrete constructive propositions laid before them to appeal to their imagination and hope and to increase their civic pride and loyalty.’”³⁵ Civic pride and loyalty were the same sentiments that members of the Commercial Club had used to garner support and funds for the museums in Grant and Jackson parks. The *Plan* would tap into the imaginations of all those who read it and “render its readers receptive to the notion that Chicago might in fact be made a place more beautiful and fine than anyone previously thought possible if they would only embrace the vision the *Plan* advances.”³⁶ Part of that vision was a lakefront that would be a center of culture for the beautiful and organized city that emerged with the *Plan*.

This bold statement of Chicago’s future focused on development of

³⁴ Carl S. Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

infrastructure and called for improvements on the lakefront, creation of a civic center where cultural institutions and government would be based, and acquisition of parkland to ring the city. The *Plan for Chicago* called for infrastructural improvements that benefitted both businesses and citizens. These improvements included roads that connected the north and south sides of the city; building or widening thoroughfares in the heart of the city to reduce congestion; the designation of free and open space for public use, especially near the lake; relocation of railway terminals and construction of highways to divert through traffic around, rather than through, the city; and expansion of a belt of park and forest land ringing the city. A final recommendation called for the coherent placement of cultural and civic institutions, including the relocation of the Field Museum to a site near the Art Institute in Grant Park.³⁷

Burnham was well placed to craft a plan that addressed the city as one unified entity. He was accustomed to working with leaders in both the business and public spheres and was able to “convinced these leaders of the world of affairs that long-range comprehensive planning deserved as much support and participation as the interests of their own enterprises.”³⁸ Indeed, self-interest in these matters was seen as no different from public interest. Though he could not shape the city to his will, Burnham has had a lasting impact on the shape of the city. Developers past and present have honored his call for open public space throughout the city. He also

³⁷ John W. Reps, “Burnham before Chicago: The Birth of Modern American Urban Planning,” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, The Art Institute of Chicago Centennial Lectures, 10 (1983): 212.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

legitimized the use of parkland for cultural institutions by suggesting a location for the new Field Museum building: Grant Park.

The *Plan's* chapter "The Heart of Chicago" deals directly with Grant Park. Burnham and Bennett note that "Grant Park readily lends itself to the function of a spacious and attractive garden."³⁹ Unlike the 1836 idea of parkland that is open, clear, and free of structures, the garden described in the *Plan* is home to physically large cultural institutions. The choice to suggest that the Field Museum of Natural History and the Crerar Library be in Grant Park can be understood by readers simply as a way for the authors to acknowledge the agreements that the South Park Commission had already negotiated but were fighting in court. Other interpretations should be considered as well. It is important to realize that Marshall Field and John Crerar were both deceased members of the Commercial Club, of which Burnham was also a member. This favored position might have been a result of the author's desire, under the direction of the Commercial Club, to aid the institutions associated with those former members. As the "heart of the city," it could also be that Burnham and Bennett wanted cultural institutions in Grant Park to elevate the citizens and the reputation of the city. Neither of these possible readings is mutually exclusive.

The *Plan* explains the choice this way: "The location of the Field Museum in the center of this space is a special instance of good fortune." It is a museum designed "to gather under one roof the records of civilization culled from every

³⁹ Daniel Hudson Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago*, ed. Charles Moore (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 110.

portion of the globe” and man’s struggle for advancement.⁴⁰ “Hence it must become a center of human interest, making appeal alike to the citizen and the visitor.” The planned library would be “monumental in character and classical in style of architecture, so that it will harmonize with the design of the Field Museum.”⁴¹ The *Plan* continues, “As meeting center for the scientific societies of the West, the location in Grant Park, near buildings devoted to music and art, seems most appropriate.” With the Art Institute just to the north of the Field, and the Chicago Symphony Center across the street from the Art Institute, the *Plan* proposed a core of cultural institutions within a half-mile radius of each other. Chicago’s “heart” was not the commercial downtown, or the meatpacking stockyards, but rather a perfectly appointed park, with “monumental” classical structures and Lake Michigan as a natural jewel to crown the achievement.

Creating the *Plan of Chicago* was only the beginning. The *Plan* would only go so far if the planners did not do something with it. So, “even before they had formulated any specific recommendations for improving Chicago, they began a strategy for the figurative selling of whatever these recommendations might be to government officials, the business community at large, property owners, and voters.”⁴² Innovation and the dissemination of knowledge were key to the promotion of the *Plan*; “the *Plan* itself was forward-looking, but in some respects the

⁴⁰ It should be noted that Burnham’s architectural firm drew up the original designs for the new Field Museum building.

⁴¹ Burnham and Bennett, *Plan of Chicago*, 110.

⁴² “Promotion, Interpretive Digital Essay: The Plan of Chicago” accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/300007.html>.

publicity techniques the planners used to generate support, especially after its release, were even more innovative and modern.” Charles H. Wacker, a native of Chicago who was president of Wacker and Birk Brewing and Malting Company, the youngest member the Chicago World’s Fair directorate, and a Commercial Club member, orchestrated the effort. His obituary noted that he had a “life of restless activity dedicated to the beautifying and development of cosmopolitan Chicago.”⁴³ His involvement in the *Plan* exemplifies this. In order to make sure the *Plan* succeeded and was put into practice, the Commercial Club under Wacker’s leadership tirelessly worked to get the *Plan of Chicago* approved as the official planning document for the city. They also worked “to make sure that there was an organization actively pushing political leaders to put the *Plan* into action. The third area of focus was to convince the community as a whole of the value of the *Plan*. The effort to achieve these goals constituted one of the pioneering exercises in large-scale public relations.”⁴⁴ In an effort to get the community behind the *Plan*, Wacker had simplified versions of the *Plan* “especially prepared for Study in the Schools of Chicago” under the “auspices of the Chicago Plan Commission.”⁴⁵ Though the city never fully followed the *Plan*, planners did implement many ideas that Burnham and Bennett proposed, like increasing the number of bridges over the Chicago River.

As Chicago’s landscape was being reimagined, so too was the future of

⁴³ “Charles H. Wacker Dies at Lake Geneva,” accessed December 20, 2016, http://flps.newberry.org/article/5418474_6_1092.

⁴⁴ “Promotion.”

⁴⁵ Walter Dwight Moody, Charles Henry Wacker, and Chicago Plan Commission, *Wacker’s Manual of the Plan of Chicago: Municipal Economy* (W. D. Moody, 1912).

museums in the United States. In May of 1906, a group of museum professionals met at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. At that meeting, the group founded the American Association of Museums (AAM).⁴⁶ As “an association of the museums of America,” AAM grew to be an organization that codified the professionalization of American museums.⁴⁷ The AAM’s report from the first meeting noted that there were those “who came from great distances in order to testify to their interest in the movement.”⁴⁸ This list includes a man from Honolulu, one from Salt Lake City, and another from Nebraska. Chicago’s two major museums, the Field Museum of Natural History and the Art Institute of Chicago, both sent representatives. When the assembled members formally created the American Association of Museums, two Chicagoans were elected to help govern the organization. Dr. William M. R. French, director of the Art Institute, was elected to the position of first vice-president. Dr. George A. Dorsey, curator of anthropology at the Field Museum, was elected secretary. They were only the first in a long line of Chicagoans who held governing positions in the AAM.⁴⁹

French was the first from the Chicago museums to serve as American Association of Museums president. His term spanned from 1907 to 1908. Just a few years later, Field Museum Director Frederick J. V. Skiff took over the position of AAM president from 1910 to 1911. The Field Museum’s curator of geology, Oliver

⁴⁶ The American Association of Museums changed its name to the American Alliance of Museums in 2012. <http://www.aam-us.org/alliance/why-the-change>

⁴⁷ “About Us,” accessed December 17, 2016, <http://www.aam-us.org/about-us>.

⁴⁸ “The American Association of Museums,” *Science* 23, no. 596 (1906): 859–61.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Farrington, served as president of the AAM from 1914 to 1916.⁵⁰ This only highlights those who became president of American Association of Museums, but others for Chicago's museums served in different capacities as well. The work of the AAM to professionalize American museums clearly influenced, and was influenced by, Chicago's art and natural history museums.

Even as the leadership of the Field Museum was participating in and leading the forward-looking organization of the AAM, their building was crumbling around them. The impermanent historic structure had begun to show its age. The last building standing from the Columbian Exposition's White City could not hold up to the ravages of Chicago's weather. By the 1910s, the Field Museum building looked more like it belonged to the ruins of ancient Greece than Chicago's beloved White City. (Image on page 41) The Field Museum vacated the building in 1919. The building was so dilapidated that there was even a push to raze the building.

Saving the beloved, if ravaged, building became a matter of much public concern. The group that rose to the challenge was the members of Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. They wanted to preserve the Fine Arts building "for the sake of securing the attention of the public and demonstrating what might be done in its restoration."⁵¹ They were not about to let the last vestige of Chicago's great achievement go the way of the rest of the White City. To this end, a committee

⁵⁰ American Association of Museums, *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums* (The Association, 1916), v.

⁵¹ Maude G. Palmer, *The History of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, 1894-1928* ([Chicago?]: Published by authority of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, 1928), 101, <http://archive.org/details/historyofillinoi00palm>.

called “Restoration of Columbian Art Building” was formed, which raised \$7,000 for their purpose. Their money was used to “restore” the northeast corner of the east wing of the building. (Image on page 42) To call it a restoration is a bit misleading. Unlike the original construction, which had plaster of Paris applied over a brick and wood structure, the women of the Illinois Federation of Women’s Clubs spent their \$7,000 on stone, the material that plaster of Paris mimicked.

In November of 1922, the *Chicago Tribune* declared: “Work on the restoration of the old Fine Arts building in Jackson park was assured yesterday when a committee of the Illinois Federation of Women’s clubs met with members of the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects” and presented the \$7,000 they had raised.⁵² The architects then began their work on the small corner of the building. Once restoration work had begun, the task of preserving the whole building passed on to the South Park Commission.

During the winter of 1923, the South Park Board passed a resolution providing \$500,000 for the restoration of the exterior of the Fine Arts building, but had to wait for the new board to act. In 1924, when the new South Park Commission board was confirmed, they took “action for the restoration of the Fine Arts building in Jackson Park which should put the preservation of that treasure beyond defeat.”⁵³ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* described the effort to save the building as “a splendid example of social spirit and official and community foresight” which “deserve[s] the

⁵² “Turn Over \$7,000 to Save Old Fine Arts Building: SAVE BUILDING,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922), November 11, 1922.

⁵³ “The Fine Arts Building Saved.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), April 18, 1924.

thanks of the city.”⁵⁴ A vote in June would determine whether the voters would approve the tax increase to pay for the restoration. An article at the end of May described the stakes as a test of Chicago’s appreciation of civilization. In saving the building, the city could “show that Chicago knows the beauty of her own creation and loves it.” The cost of losing the Fine Arts building would be severe. The unnamed author writes, “if we let those vehicles of beauty go down, these half wrecked columns and the plaster covered walls, how can we find our creation? . . . Chicago has still to learn to appreciate and conserve the material embodiments of its great ideas.”⁵⁵ Through the efforts of the Illinois Federation of Women’s Clubs, architects, the South Park Commissioners, and the newspapers, the voters were convinced that the building should and could be saved.

Now that the people of Chicago, and the South Park Commission in particular, had reinvested in the Fine Arts building, what purpose it would serve became a new point of debate. An early suggestion for the repurposed building came from the famous sculptor Lorado Taft. He suggested at a meeting held “under the auspices of the Hyde Park Women’s club” that the Fine Arts building be used for a gallery of modern sculpture focusing on “industrial groups typifying the spirit of the middle west.”⁵⁶ He added that the west end be used as a community center for the adjacent neighborhood of Hyde Park. Still others suggested that it be converted to a

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Save the Fine Arts Building,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, May 31, 1924.

⁵⁶ “Make Arts Building Center for Modern Sculpture, Taft Plea,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, June 2, 1923.

convention center.⁵⁷ The Chicago Federation of Women's Organizations requested in May of 1926 that one room in the newly refurbished building be "provided for the use of club women," and that there be a room set aside for musical uses.⁵⁸

The South Park Commissioners received many ideas for how the space should be used, and the intention was for the Fine Arts building to serve multiple purposes, but in August of 1926 the South Park Commission met and discussed a communication they had received from the attorney for Sears, Roebuck and Company president Julius Rosenwald. The letter outlines how Rosenwald and the Commercial Club of Chicago would organize a not-for-profit organization known as the "Julius Rosenwald Industrial Museum" or "Rosenwald Industrial Museum." It then explains how the South Park Commission would use the \$5,000,000 bond issue from June 2, 1924 to reconstruct the building and that Rosenwald would contribute "no less than \$3,000,000 to the Museum Corporation" and pay any additional amount necessary to finish the construction of the building.⁵⁹ The South Park Commission decided that the industrial museum, which later was named the Museum of Science and Industry, would be the best use of the space. The Park Commission once again chose to support a private museum in public space. For their part, the Commercial Club of Chicago also got behind the project. Though

⁵⁷ "Fine Arts Building Acclaimed as Site for Conventions," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), May 30, 1924.

⁵⁸ South Park Commissioners, "Official Proceeding of the South Park District, September 16, 1925 to August 5, 1926. Vol. 34" (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1926), 273, Chicago Park District Archives.

⁵⁹ South Park Commissioners, "Official Proceeding of the South Park District, August 5, 1926 to June 20, 1927 Vol. 35" (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1927), 13, Chicago Park District Archives.

Rosenwald was of the next generation, he continued the tradition started by previous museum philanthropists. City officials and the other moneyed elite of the city acquiesced and did all in their power to get Rosenwald's industrial museum into the precious Fine Arts building.

To celebrate Chicago's centennial, some of the city's business elites put forward, and Congress endorsed, the idea of Chicago hosting another World's Fair. This fair was called "A Century of Progress."⁶⁰ The fair would focus on Chicago's progress over the century, particularly in science, engineering, and industry. Once again, a spirit of cooperation would enhance Chicago's museums.⁶¹ The Museum of Science and Industry would provide exhibits and scientific experts for the fair, which in turn would promote the museum and share a portion of the profits.⁶² The fair benefitted the city of Chicago by bringing 200 million dollars into the city, and in turn the Museum of Science and Industry benefitted intellectually and materially.

Without the cooperative support that each of Chicago's museums received, it is possible that they would have suffered in the same fate Charles Willson Peale's museums. Though Peale's museums are from the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, their story is instructive. Charles Willson Peale served as

⁶⁰ Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 119.

⁶¹ Museum of Science and Industry Board, "First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald" (Chicago, IL: Museum of Science and Industry, December 31, 1929), 29, Wormser - King Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder File 19-A/D9766, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

⁶² "Contract No. 5230: Agreement between A Century of Progress and Museum of Science and Industry," May 19, 1934, Wormser - King Collection --Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder D9767, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

proprietor and curator of three consecutive museums, all of which were open to the public.⁶³ Gary Kulik notes that despite Peal's desire to educate the public through the exhibits in his museum, he failed to attract state support. It was the "failure to attract public funds [that] sealed the museum's fate."⁶⁴ In 1821, six years before his death, the museum "was incorporated as a joint-stock company. After Peale's death . . . the stockholders became insistent about turning a profit," which the museums had not done, and turned to animal performances and other sideshow style attractions to draw paying visitors. The museum's collection was later sold to P.T. Barnum.⁶⁵ Despite their strong connections to business elite, none of Chicago's museums were ever expected to make a profit. Financial support though the city also allowed the museums to focus on their missions.

From the years leading up to the Columbian Exposition through those following A Century of Progress, Chicago's moneyed elite, city planners, and government departments were primed to create lasting cultural institutions. In search of an enhanced perception of Chicago by those not directly affiliated with the city, the civic leaders saw these institutions as the means to elevate the city's reputation. But by themselves, none of these individuals or entities had the means to bring their various visions of Chicago to fruition. Legislation and government action on both the state and local levels were required to clear a path, and the support of business leaders, both personal and financial, proved critical in accomplishing

⁶³ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 44.

⁶⁴ Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 4–5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

shared goals. The struggle to found museums in Chicago would have been much more difficult if not for the public land, taxes, and goodwill that became available to these institutions. But even these could not completely erase the age-old battle over the use of public parks, and the debate over museums in the park versus parkland that was open, free, and clear.



Figure 2) "Souvenir Map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, Chicago, Ill, U.S.A. 1893." Map. Accessed February 4, 2017. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4104c.ct002834/>.



Figure 3) Fine Arts building façade ca. 1912 Courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry.



Figure 4) Museum of Science and Industry, Jackson Park, Reconstruction for South Park Commissioners, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White Architects, R.C. Wieboldt Company Contractors. View Looking S.W. of East Wing. No. 7 Date Oct. 4-1929. Courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO: ELEVATION THROUGH ART

The spectacular growth of the city of Chicago led to enormous wealth for a few industrious men who came to the city at just the right time. Chicago symbolized the richness of the United States' material strength and "get-ahead spirit."¹ In fact, the journalist Noah Brooks wrote that "on the shore of Lake Michigan has risen a great and growing city, worthy to bear the title of the Empire City of the West."² Brooks believed that Chicago's economic strength entitled it to such a claim, but others felt the city was still lacking. In 1882, Chicago was still considered by many in the eastern part of the country as culturally inferior. It might have been a boomtown, but it was at best a frontier boomtown. New York aristocrat William Waldorf Astor referred to Chicago as merely "an inland and prosaic city."³ What Astor and others failed to recognize was the rapid flowering of cultural institutions that followed the economic boom.

In 1866, a group of local artists founded the Chicago Academy of Design, which would later become The Art Institute of Chicago.⁴ Supported through patronage from Chicago's nouveau riche and member dues, this organization offered

¹ Miller, *City of the Century*, 131.

² Ibid.

³ Robert D. Parmet, "Competition for the World's Columbian Exposition: The New York Campaign," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 64, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 369.

⁴ Like many of the early cultural institutions in this dissertation, the Art Institute of Chicago has gone by different names. In this dissertation the Art Institute of Chicago will be referred to as either Art Institute or AIC.

art classes and put on regular exhibitions. The main purpose of the classes and exhibits was to support the artists who were the Academy's members. Like many groups in Chicago, the 1871 fire devastated the organization. It destroyed their building and the artists struggled to regain footing after such a complete loss. In 1878, local business leaders created a board of trustees in an attempt to stabilize the Academy's finances. Kathleen McCarthy writes that the trustees "eagerly wrested the task of cultural arbitership from the ailing Academy of Design in a blatant power coup."⁵ Discovering that the artists had rebuilt the Academy of Design "upon a foundation of highly questionable business practices . . . [t]he businessmen abandoned the artists to their [debts] and formed a rival institution."⁶ Within a year, the board decide to create a new organization, the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. The expanded mission added collecting works of art as well as continuing to offer classes and exhibit art.⁷ The secretary of the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, William M. R. French, "sided with [the trustees] . . . and subsequently served as chief administrator of the new organization."⁸ French played a leading role in the organization for many years to come.

⁵ Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity & Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ James R. Grossman et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 44-45.

⁸ Celia Hillard, "The Prime Mover": Charles L. Hutchinson and the Making of The Art Institute of Chicago, *Museum Studies*, 36.2010,1 (Chicago: Art Institute [u.a.], 2010), 21.

The organization changed “from a school run by artists to a multifaceted institution superintended by the city's mercantile elite.”⁹ It would be the first of many shifts that the AIC would make toward expanding to include a wider audience. The academy changed its name again in 1882 to the Art Institute of Chicago, the name that it still carries today. The change, however, went deeper than the organization's name. It shifted who was in control and what the academy would offer. When the organization became the Art Institute, the purpose of the collection became more public, and a new audience was cultivated. Early exhibits were comprised of loan collections from the private collections of Chicago's elite.¹⁰

Two things concerned the moneyed elite of Chicago in the years leading up to the turn of the century and continuing into the twentieth century. The first of these was the perception of their city held by those from older and “more cultured” cities of the American east coast like Boston and New York. Many arguments against Chicago hosting the World's Fair Columbian Exposition in 1893 manifested themselves as doubts that a rough western city, which Chicago was considered at the time, could not do justice to the important celebration. The second concern the moneyed elite had about their city was “materialism.” Diane Dillon explains that the Art Institute and other recently established educational and arts organizations “served to offset Chicago's materialism and improve its image. They realized that the city's continued economic growth depended on its transformation from a center

⁹ Grossman et al., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 44–45.

¹⁰ Anne Felicia Cierpik, “History of the Art Institute of Chicago from Its Incorporation on May 24, 1879 to the Death of Charles L. Hutchinson” (Master's Thesis, DePaul University, 1957), 97.

identified with commerce to a cosmopolitan place filled with cultural offerings.”¹¹ As one of the early and lasting cultural organizations in Chicago, AIC demonstrated that an economically prosperous western city could be culturally wealthy too.¹²

Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz notes in her book *Culture & the City: Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago from the 1880s to 1917* that since the early part of the nineteenth century, “the attainment of culture had distinguished the patrician from the nouveau riche. In addition, materialism had become identified with municipal corruption and the unmitigated harshness of American cities.”¹³ Chicago was brimming with both nouveau riche and the harsh life industrialization brought. Charles L. Hutchinson, longtime president of the Art Institute of Chicago, mourned in an address at the Art Institute that businessmen were “caught in materialism,” which he described as “a mere machine devoted to business.” Men of business had no time for finer pursuits like art and literature, and this was a detriment to the city.¹⁴ The businessmen were not the only people in Chicago who could benefit from art.

Horowitz describes the late nineteenth century mentality toward cultural uplift through art as a transformative experience: “As the audience became familiar with works of art, its taste would be shaped according to the traditions. The ultimate

¹¹ Grossman et al., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 44.

¹² Only men served on the boards of most of these cultural organizations during the period covered by this dissertation. See McCarthy, Kathleen D., *Noblesse Oblige: Charity & Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) for more information.

¹³ Horowitz, *Culture & the City*, 75.

¹⁴ Ibid.

end of art was culture.”¹⁵ The moneyed elite of Chicago understood culture also as a possible stabilizing force in the city. The relatively short history of Chicago “and the rapidity of its growth meant that change ran deeper and tradition provided less of a countervailing force than in other cities.”¹⁶ Many wealthy men were personally invested in Chicago and its reputation and worked to foster cultural institutions.

Potter Palmer was one of those men. Palmer began selling dry goods in Chicago in 1852. By 1867 he was forty-one, a retired millionaire, and had sold controlling shares of his business to Levi Z. Leiter and Marshall Field. He was able to make his store such a success because he created a customer service policy that hinged on customer satisfaction, free home delivery, and the creation of a safe and respectable place for women to shop. His successor, Marshall Field, was able to continue this tradition and profited greatly from the “Palmer System.”¹⁷ As a wealthy retired man, Palmer’s interest in fostering art education and exhibitions in Chicago started before the Great Chicago Fire and continued long after. When the Chicago Academy of Design was reorganized, he was actively involved. In 1877, Palmer was appointed to the board.¹⁸ Palmer’s interest and patronage were critical in fostering the development of the fledgling institution but, as with other major endeavors in the maturing city, progress came from the efforts of a wider circle. In

¹⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

¹⁷ Miller, *City of the Century*, 137, 140.

¹⁸ “Bertha Palmer” in *Renoir Paintings and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago*, ed. Gloria Groom and Jill Shaw (Art Institute of Chicago, 2014), para 5.

1879, a young Charles L. Hutchinson joined the board with Palmer, and the young art lover changed the history of art in Chicago.

Charles L. Hutchinson was second-generation money in Chicago, the son of Benjamin P. Hutchinson, Board of Trade operator and meat packer. The elder Hutchinson was one of the many men who made himself a fortune in Chicago's rough-and-tumble early years, and his eldest son benefitted greatly from it. The younger Hutchinson grew up with an early education in business. His mother, Sarah Ingalls, was "old Yankee stock" and "a direct descendant of a family that settled the town of Lynn [Massachusetts] in 1629." During his education at the Chicago High School, a distinguished school with renowned faculty, the young Hutchinson cultivated his lifelong love of art. As the eldest son, he was not allowed to continue his education but expected to learn all the types of business in which his father had done so well.¹⁹

Charles L. Hutchinson was not educated beyond high school. He completed his education not in the formal halls of learning of an august university as he had desired, but in the crucible of Chicago commerce. Mirroring his father's ascent to wealth, Charles Hutchinson "spent a year in the grain business and a year in the packinghouse, starting as a clerk earning \$3 a week."²⁰ When he turned twenty-one in 1875, "his father made him a present of \$25,000, some of which he used to speculate in the markets, with disastrous results. Thereafter Charles entered the Corn Exchange Bank," an environment that suited him better. He might not have had

¹⁹ Hillard, *The Prime Mover*, 14–15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

his father's seemingly innate talent to weather and revel in the storms of business and acquire wealth, but the family fortune helped Charles Hutchinson become one of Chicago's leading citizens and he used some of his money and position to further the cause of the Art Institute.

In 1884, the power shift within the Art Institute was clear. William French had stepped away from his duties as head of school at AIC to mourn the death of his wife. Upon returning to work, he resumed his position as head of school and the board also then named him director of the museum; "however, [board president] Hutchinson was accustomed to arriving at the museum by nine in the morning and supervising its every routine, including the choice of exhibitions, the arrangement of pictures and display cases, and all manner of decisions relating to gifts, loans, and purchases." Director French "came to accept that condition as inevitable given the nature of the job."²¹ As director, French would be an art advisor, but the final say rested with Hutchinson. Charles L. Hutchinson would direct the acquisitions and exhibitions in the museum throughout his forty-two years as president.

Along with being president of the AIC board, Charles L. Hutchinson was also the vice president of the Chicago Corn Exchange. The wealth from the latter position gave him the means to be the former. He acted as AIC president until his death in 1924. Under his presidency, the Art Institute gained a prestigious location and an encyclopedic collection ranging from ancient pottery and sculpture to modern oil paintings. His tenure was a tremendous effort and instrumental to the success of the

²¹ Ibid., 21.

museum, but he needed aid from the public and private sector. Many associated with the museum harnessed this help to create what would become one of the best museums in the world.²²

The title of a *Museum Studies* article speaks volumes about Hutchinson's importance to the Art Institute. "The Prime Mover': Charles L. Hutchinson and the making of The Art Institute of Chicago" focuses on the immense work that he performed during his life to make AIC a success. Hutchinson's obituary in the Annual Report of the Art Institute in 1924 also shows how important he was to the AIC and Chicago. The praise for him is glowing:

[Hutchinson] was often called "Chicago's first citizen," and no one who knew him can deny that the title was worthily bestowed. His energy, his resourcefulness, the clarity of his vision, the very human and likeable qualities that were peculiarly his, will live long in the memory and the hearts of men. In the city which he helped to create, there is no phase of educational or philanthropic work that has not enjoyed his generous support. He was a dreamer of dreams who lived to see them built into concrete form. His entire life was dedicated to public service, but his service to the Art Institute was so intimate, his devotion so complete that it is not possible to measure it. He was the Art Institute, and it will stand as his most permanent monument.²³

²² The Art Institute of Chicago was voted "One of TripAdvisor's Top Museums in the World—Four Years in a Row" 2013-2016.

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelersChoice-Museums-cTop-g1>. See also: <http://www.artic.edu/visit>.

²³ "The Art Institute Of Chicago Forty-Sixth Annual Report," Annual Report (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 1924), 20, http://www.artic.edu/sites/default/files/libraries/pubs/misc/N530_A3_1924.pdf.

There is no denying that what Charles L. Hutchinson did was impressive, but he alone did not create the Art Institute.

When the Academy of Fine Arts was formed, Charles L. Hutchinson was twenty-four years old and because of his education, experience, and occupation, served as the Academy's auditor and trustee. In 1882 he was elected president. At the time, Hutchinson saw the potential of the museum, which went far beyond the immediate needs of the city. He planned on creating a center for art that would "satisfy the requirements of the city of the future and bring beauty within the reach of every man, woman, and child."²⁴ The Academy's building at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Van Buren Street in downtown Chicago was a good start, but a commercial building was not the same as a museum. In 1890, the Art Institute was presented with a marvelous opportunity.

The exposition corporation, which financed and ran the World's Fair, was going to build numerous structures as part of the Columbian Exposition. It would be easy enough to build one that was permanent and pass it on to the Art Institute after the fair had closed. The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia had set a precedent for this kind of planning. The art building at that fair, Memorial Hall, was designed by the fair architects to outlast the fair and house a permanent museum. Hoping to take advantage of the upcoming Chicago fair like those in Philadelphia had, the Commercial Club met in October of 1890 to discuss, "Has Chicago not reached that period when special attention should be given to the founding of art

²⁴ Ibid., 21.

galleries and museums? Will the World's Columbian Exposition be of any benefit to this city in that direction?"²⁵ Such a conversation topic suggests that these businessmen who acted as Chicago boosters were hoping to capitalize on the legacy of the fair. They were in an excellent position to do so. Many of the members of the Commercial Club were either members of the Exposition Corporation or members of the board of trustees of the Art Institute. A few of them were both. If they were neither, there would be ample opportunity to become involved in another cultural institution that would benefit from the Chicago hosting the Columbian Exposition.

At that meeting, the club members chose a committee to meet with the fair's directors. The purpose of the meeting was to propose a cooperative effort that would "establish a permanent art gallery and museum."²⁶ At the meeting the Commercial Club's committee would emphasize the "benefit to the community of such an arrangement."

The exposition corporation's president was Harlow N. Higinbotham, a Commercial Club member since 1887. It seems unlikely that convincing the corporation of the benefits of building a permanent structure for the Art Institute as part of the Columbian Exposition preparations was a difficult case to make. The idea had already been discussed at the Commercial Club, and the main trustees of the Art Institute were also members of the club.

²⁵ Commercial Club of Chicago, *The Commercial Club of Chicago, Organized 1878* (Chicago, Commercial Club, 1904), 35, <http://archive.org/details/commercialclubof00comm>.

²⁶ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 51–52.

The executive committee of the Art Institute did its part to ensure the best case was made for the AIC getting a new home. They “empowered [the Art Institute’s] president [Charles L. Hutchinson] to discuss a permanent art museum with the officers of the Chicago Public Library and the World’s Columbian Exposition.”²⁷ Despite having “just completed a significant building campaign, the Art Institute’s board members remained ambitious.” Hutchinson’s own feelings, that public institutions in Chicago were continually hindered because they did not prepare for “the growth that was sure to come,” might explain this new push. Initial discussions were for the permanent building to be jointly held by the Chicago Public Library and the Art Institute, but “the Directory of the exposition and the Art Institute reached a tentative agreement that excluded the library.”²⁸ Its location became the next major hurdle.

After much delay, the directors of the exposition corporation settled on putting the Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park on the city’s South Side. Much of the choice hinged on the availability of land on which to build the grand fair. As much as the fair directory wanted to host the fair in the center of the city, the scale they had envisioned would not allow it.

The south side location, however, was not appealing to the Art Institute board. As Dennis Cremin explains, the Art Institute had been on Michigan Avenue for almost ten years and the board was insistent on staying in the city center. The question of the building’s location ended in compromise. The fair directory agreed

²⁷ Hillard, *The Prime Mover*, 32.

²⁸ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 52.

to build a building in Lake Park that would host a supplementary series of public lectures called the World's Congress Auxiliary.²⁹ On March 30, 1891, the Art Institute of Chicago, represented by Hutchinson, the city of Chicago, and the World's Columbian Exposition came to an agreement. Approved by the mayor of Chicago on April 3, 1891, "provision was made to vest in the Art Institute of Chicago, the right to use said building [constructed for the World's Fair] upon the terms and conditions in said ordinance is hereby made for certainty and particularity."³⁰ Even with the three parties in agreement, the new building could not be started. There was another group who could stop the project: private citizens.

Building on the lakefront met with legal challenges. Warren F. Leland and Sarah E. Daggett, who had previously voiced opposition to a proposed electric power plant in Lake Park, again took legal action to stop construction of the permanent museum structure. On May 31, 1892, Leland and Daggett obtained an injunction that halted construction of the new building.³¹ In June of 1893, a report from the trustees of the Art Institute summarized what followed:

Work had been begun upon the new museum building, the pile foundations had been completed, and the stonework had reached the surface of the ground- Building operations had been arrested since May 31, 1892, by an injunction issued by the Superior Court of Cook Co. restraining the city from erecting buildings upon the Lake Front. The Art Institute, in Conjunction with the Columbian Exposition, procured a rehearing of the case before a full

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ South Park Commissioners, "Official Proceeding of the South Park District, February 3, 1904 to July 12, 1905. Vol. 8," 5.

³¹ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 53-54.

bench of judges, and upon June 23 the injunction was dissolved, upon the ground mainly that the Legislature of Illinois by an act in 1890 had authorized the city to permit the erection of buildings connected with Columbian Exposition upon the Lake Front and to retain some of them permanently - Work upon the building was, immediately resumed and continued without interruption until its completion in May - 1893.³²

Leland and Daggett were unable to stop the construction, but their efforts foreshadowed the challenges and battles that would be fought over the Lakefront. Even before all the legal hurdles had been cleared, there was still the problem of financing the building project. To take on this challenge, Hutchinson looked to Martin A. Ryerson for help. Ryerson was a fellow Chicago philanthropist and Commercial Club member. Hutchinson and Ryerson had a long-standing friendship. This kind of collaboration surfaces again and again in the development of Chicago's cultural institutions and primed the museums for success.

In order to fund the building project, the two men began by selling the Art Institute's Michigan Avenue building for \$425,000 to the Chicago Club. The sale, however, only partially funded the Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge-designed building. Paralleling almost every building in the White City, the new museum's design was neoclassical. The Boston firm drafted a building that showed the art museum's "elevated purpose through its neoclassical design (recalling the humanist ideals of the Renaissance as well as the architecture of many European museums) and the

³² "Report of the Trustees, June 6, 1893. - N530_A3_1892-93.pdf," 1893, 3, http://www.artic.edu/sites/default/files/libraries/pubs/misc/N530_A3_1892-93.pdf.

names of famous artists carved into its entablature.”³³ Charles A. Coolidge was in charge of the project. In their 1892–1893 annual report, the board took the opportunity to record their pleasure with the architectural firm and gave “their grateful recognition of the taste, skill and unflagging attention of Mr. Chas. A Coolidge.”³⁴ With their Michigan Avenue property sold and their new home still under construction, the Board of the Art Institute had to make provisions for the continued operation of the art school and museum until the close of the World Columbian Exposition.

By renting rooms, the Art Institute was able to continue holding classes and exhibiting art until it could take possession of its new building. The board explained that the exhibitions had been interrupted due to the move. They had turned over possession of the old building to the Chicago Club in July. Visitation was impacted in 1892 as well because it was “impracticable to hold extensive exhibitions and public receptions in the temporary quarters.”³⁵ The board was optimistic about the future of the museum when they gained full possession of the new building on November 1, 1893. These growing pains would not be in vain, for despite “all the adverse circumstances,” the board reported about the 1892–93 fiscal year that “the retention of almost our whole membership and the steady growth of the school are

³³ Grossman et al., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 44.

³⁴ “Report of the Trustees, June 6, 1893. - N530_A3_1892-93.pdf,” 9.

³⁵ “December 8, 1893 - ART INSTITUTE’S OPENING RECEPTION. | Chicago Tribune Archive,” accessed September 29, 2016, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1893/12/08/page/2/article/art-institutes-opening-reception>.

just occasions for congratulation.”³⁶ The Art Institute officially opened with a member’s reception on December 8, 1893.

The land the Art Institute’s new building occupied was part of a city park. As had happened elsewhere in the United States, “the combination of private beneficence, city maintenance, and the federal tax laws that encouraged private support produced some of the greatest art museums in the world.”³⁷ Chicago’s art museum was no exception. Though it greatly aided in the success of the museum, the Illinois law that allowed cities and park districts to erect and maintain museums came with other strings attached. Any admission that was charged was capped, they were required to have free admission two days a week, and children who were attending school were to be admitted free of charge.³⁸ Though not explicitly stated, public support meant the exhibitions and programs needed to be accessible to the public. The deed stipulated that “the exhibition halls of said building shall from 9 o’clock a.m. till 5 o’clock p.m., on Wednesday and Saturday of each week, and on all legal and public holidays, and from 1 o’clock p.m. till 5’oclock p.m., on each Sunday, be kept open and accessible to the public, free of charge, under such rules and regulations as the said Art Institute shall from time to time prescribe.”³⁹ These rules

³⁶ “Report of the Trustees, June 6, 1893. - N530_A3_1892-93.pdf,” 2–3.

³⁷ Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd ed, American Association for State and Local History Book Series (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008), 36.

³⁸ Museums in Public Parks Act, 38th Gen. Assemb. § 123/1 (Ill. 1893).

³⁹ South Park Commissioners, “Official Proceeding of the South Park District, February 3, 1904 to July 12, 1905. Vol. 8,” 6.

were similar to the ones that would also be imposed on the Field Museum when it opened.

Now open to the public, the Art Institute of Chicago had to acquire and display a fuller collection of original art rather than the copies or studies of famous works displayed when the primary audience was art students. The museum had two main methods to obtain collections: loans from private collections and purchase. In the earliest days of the museum, temporary loans from art collectors in the city were a staple of the exhibitions. In 1893, the trustees listed over thirty individuals who had loaned material for exhibition.⁴⁰

Once the collections and staff moved into the new building, museum collection purchases began to pick up. A telling example of how the Art Institute used both loans and purchases for the museum comes from a single trip Charles L. Hutchinson took to Europe in 1898. Hutchinson met with both Director William French and board trustee Martin Ryerson on the European continent. Hutchinson and French by chance encountered Philip D. Armour, a meatpacking industrialist from Chicago, in Rome while they were looking for art to bring back to Chicago. Armour asked them to “purchase a good picture in his name” for the museum.⁴¹ His donation would become one of many from wealthy Chicagoans that built AIC’s encyclopedic collection in the later part of the nineteenth century.

On the same trip, Hutchinson and Ryerson made their way to Paris to negotiate a loan of several paintings from the Durand-Ruel gallery. Being able to

⁴⁰ “Report of the Trustees, June 6, 1893. - N530_A3_1892-93.pdf,” 13–16.

⁴¹ Hillard, *The Prime Mover*, 41.

borrow pictures from a prestigious gallery would have helped the AIC garner members and entice others to donate. To their surprise, the paintings could not be loaned out because they were for sale and several had already sold. Hutchinson then “cabled Mr. Field, Mr. Armour, Mr. Kent, and a few others . . . [and] asked them to buy the pictures and hold them till such time as the Art Institute was able to buy them, or until generous men could be found to donate them. They promptly gave authority to buy them, and we went to Florence and closed the sale.”⁴² All told, they secured thirteen paintings for approximately \$200,000. As a new museum, the Art Institute did not have the funds to pursue collecting outright. The network of people in and around AIC allowed the museum to procure works of art. The legwork of several dedicated board members, well connected to men who could and would buy art on behalf of the museum until such time as the museum could purchase them, is what gave the Art Institute the groundwork for its extensive collection. The use of funds from civic-minded men and rapid acquisition of collections is characteristic of Chicago’s museums.

The museum’s encyclopedic collection attracted large crowds. Anne Felicia Cierpik describes it during 1897 as: “constant movement of men, women, and children” coming in and out of the museum from the moment the doors opened until closing time. Part of the appeal for the museum was its central location where it was easy for people who had other business downtown to visit the museum before or after another engagement. On free days, the museum was bustling with those who

⁴² Ibid., 43.

could not pay the regular admissions fee.⁴³ The Art Institute board's decision to stay in the center of the city was a wise one and worked to the Institute's advantage.

In 1900, the Illinois State Legislature transferred all of the parkland east of Michigan Avenue between Randolph Street on the north and Park Row (now called Roosevelt Road) on the south to the South Park Commission (SPC). The state's action included the land the Art Institute was built on. The South Park Commission rededicated the Lake Park as Grant Park on October 9, 1901.⁴⁴ This transfer also meant that the SPC had two museums on its parkland.⁴⁵ In 1904, the Art Institute's secretary, Newton H. Carpenter, "appeared and submitted the following deed from the City of Chicago to the South Park Commissioners for the Art Institute Building."⁴⁶ With the deed transfer complete, the South Park Commission would now be able to give money to the AIC for the maintenance of its building and grounds. The steady support from the SPC and the popularity of the museum even "on days when a quarter was paid to the young woman who sat near the door" helped the organization grow.⁴⁷

As the museum gained public support, it could devote its resources toward developing a professional staff. The Art Institute was at the forefront of museum

⁴³ Cierpik, "History of the Art Institute of Chicago from Its Incorporation on May 24, 1879 to the Death of Charles L. Hutchinson," 121.

⁴⁴ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 82.

⁴⁵ The Field Museum of Natural History operated in Jackson Park, a South Park Commission park, since 1894.

⁴⁶ South Park Commissioners, "Official Proceeding of the South Park District, February 3, 1904 to July 12, 1905. Vol. 8," 5.

⁴⁷ Cierpik, "History of the Art Institute of Chicago from Its Incorporation on May 24, 1879 to the Death of Charles L. Hutchinson," 121.

professionalization in the United States. When a group of museum professionals met at the American Museum of Natural History in May of 1906, the Art Institute sent a representative who would become involved in the creation of a new museum organization. Director French joined the committee on “permanent organization” that would establish the American Association of Museums (AAM).⁴⁸ When “the final organization was effected by the election by ballot,” the voting members of the new AAM elected Dr. William M. R. French, director of AIC, as “first vice-president.” Dr. W. J. Holland was elected “second vice-president.”⁴⁹ The third annual meeting of the AAM in 1908, held in Chicago, was hosted by “the Chicago Art Institute [sic], the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Chicago Academy of Sciences.”⁵⁰ This meeting featured a discussion of the “educational work of museums.”⁵¹ Given that the Art Institute and the Field Museum both had mandates from the city to serve schoolchildren, the topic would have been appropriate for the host institutions. Director French, as head of a school attached to a museum, would have been especially interested in this topic. The educational emphasis of museum exhibits and programs would not be practiced widely until the Great Depression.⁵²

⁴⁸ The American Association of Museums changed its name to the American Alliance of Museums in 2012. <http://www.aam-us.org/alliance/why-the-change>

⁴⁹ Paul M. Rea, “The American Association of Museums,” *Science* 27, no. 694 (1908): 636–37.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Paul M. Rea, “The American Association of Museums,” *Science* 27, no. 694 (1908): 637.

⁵² Marjorie Schwarzer and American Association of Museums, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2006), 14–15.

Hosting the AAM also served as a networking opportunity and perhaps a chance for the trustees to show off all they had done. They invited “Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, [who] accepted the invitation of the Trustees of the Art Institute to visit Chicago during the meeting of the American Association of Museums the first week in May.”⁵³ They held a reception “in his honor” and “although the weather was very adverse, a large and brilliant company gathered to greet the distinguished guest.”

Throughout the years, the Art Institute continued to provide leadership and insight for the AAM. Newton Carpenter was business manager and director *pro tem* of the AIC when he became vice president of AAM. In 1916, he gave an address to the AAM on “How the Art Institute of Chicago has made itself useful to the public.”⁵⁴ This address shows that the AIC was leading the way in community engagement. When Carpenter died just two years later in 1918, the AIC trustees wrote that, “For nearly four decades Mr. Carpenter bore a conspicuous part in promoting the development and increasing the influence of the Art Institute and his able management of its business affairs contributed largely to its steady and consistent material growth.”⁵⁵ His influence beyond the AIC is also noted in the *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago*. It states that his service at AIC was during the time when the “art museum movement in America has had its most significant development.” His

⁵³ “Twenty-Ninth Annual Report. - N530_A3_1907-08.pdf,” 29–30, accessed September 30, 2016, http://www.artic.edu/sites/default/files/libraries/pubs/misc/N530_A3_1907-08.pdf.

⁵⁴ *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* (The Institute, 1916), 188.

⁵⁵ *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* (The Institute, 1918), 96.

contributions to the Art Institute, which influenced and inspired many older and younger institutions, had a wide influence on American art museums as a whole.⁵⁶ His connection with the leadership of AAM certainly contributed to the influence of the AIC as well.

Furthering the public perception of the museum, both locally and nationally, accomplished one goal, but it was not sufficient to ensure its future success. Equally, a professional museum with a weak collection would not succeed. To that end, the leadership of the Art Institute continued to seek art pieces that would facilitate the growth of the Art Institute's permanent collection. In the early years, Charles L. Hutchinson and Martin A. Ryerson's connections to a large social network in Chicago, one that included people who were not considered eligible to serve in leadership roles of the museum because of their gender, gave the Art Institute some of its most iconic items.

The donations by these women, who otherwise would not have been able to shape the Art Institute, have become part of the museum's very identity. The first major donation came from Mrs. Florence Field, wife of Henry Field, who was the younger brother of Marshall Field. The younger Field was an early member of the board of trustees of the Art Institute, but he died before the museum could move into the new building on Michigan Avenue. His widow donated "a highly valued collection of oil paintings to the Art Institute as a tribute to her late husband. This generous gift contained key works by the Barbizon school of landscape and genre

⁵⁶ Ibid., 90–91.

painters.”⁵⁷ With this gift to the museum in 1893, while it was still under construction, Mrs. Field was able to physically shape the space the art was to occupy. As a condition of the donation, “Mrs. Field helped to design a gallery in which she wished the works to hang. This ornately decorated space—the Henry Field Memorial Gallery (now Gallery 216)—was reminiscent of the Field home, where the paintings were originally hung. The room was crowned by a large art-glass ceiling designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany.” Not only did she shape the inside of the building, she changed the outside as well. In May of 1894, Mrs. Field’s second major donation was unveiled: the iconic bronze lions that flank the original formal entrance to the Art Institute. (Image on page 70) She commissioned Edward Kerneys, famous for his animal sculptures, to create the larger-than-life statues.⁵⁸ By using her resources and connections, Florence Field was able to shape the very image of Art Institute.

The next major contribution from a female collector came in 1922. Through her acquaintance with Marie Cassatt, Bertha Honoré Palmer, wife of early AIC supporter Potter Palmer, met many Impressionist painters and purchased their art in the 1890s. At the time, “it was considered radical, even controversial,” but Mrs. Palmer collected it nonetheless, and she is why “Chicago is home to one of the greatest collections of Impressionism in the world.”⁵⁹ When Bertha Honoré Palmer died in 1918, she donated part of her considerable collection of Impressionist

⁵⁷ “Report of the Trustees, June 6, 1893. - N530_A3_1892-93.pdf,” 5.

⁵⁸ “Interpretive Resource | The Art Institute of Chicago,” accessed September 30, 2016, <http://www.artic.edu/aic/resources/resource/1644>.

⁵⁹ *Renoir Paintings and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago*, para 1.

paintings to the Art Institute. Her will gave the Art Institute “two bequests . . . [that] were to be used to purchase artworks from her collection.” Museum trustees, including her sons Honoré Palmer and Potter Palmer Jr., evaluated and chose the paintings and pastels that were added to the AIC. Her sons supplemented their mother’s bequest, donating thirty-two additional works.⁶⁰ In 1922, the museum installed the collection. The Impressionist collection continues to contribute to the popularity of the museum.

American culture in the nineteenth century was marked by a dramatic change in culture. In the early part of the century, “urban Americans shared a common culture, which they experienced at home and in a relatively undifferentiated set of public entertainments.” By the end of the century, however, “the arts were becoming sharply stratified.”⁶¹ The art museums in the East are examples of this. New York and Boston have art museums founded in 1870. Each placed “primary emphasis on education, moral uplift, and social betterment.” As Calvin Tomkins notes, “It was this that made the American museums so different from the great museum of Europe,” which had a “privileged tone” set by royal patronage and “aristocratic connoisseurship.”⁶² Joel J. Orosz calls this balance in American museums the “American Compromise.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid., para 10.

⁶¹ Beckert and Rosenbaum, *The American Bourgeoisie*, 209.

⁶² Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Rev. and updated ed (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 21.

⁶³ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 180.

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) sought to be an encyclopedic art museum. This was in part to aid American artists who would otherwise have to travel to Europe to see great works of art.⁶⁴ Tomkins explains that the Met's "founders believed that the presence of edifying examples at home would greatly encourage the development of native artists."⁶⁵ Joseph Hodges Choate, a lawyer in New York and later a diplomat for the United States to the United Kingdom, was a founding member of the Met. He and the other trustees of the museum knew that if they were going to achieve their lofty goals the museum needed support "those Choate called 'men of fortune and estate' --- the New York bankers and businessmen whose wealth" was mounting rapidly at the time.⁶⁶ One of these "men of fortune" who became deeply involved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art was J. P. Morgan.

The formal connection between J. P. Morgan and the Met began in 1888, when he joined the board of trustees. He was a private collector of art of all kinds and by the end of his life had nearly fifty percent of his estate in works of art.⁶⁷ A powerful force on the board, he became even more influential as president. In 1904, when Morgan became president, "the concept of the museum underwent a fundamental change." It would no longer "defer to the European institutions, limit itself to the utilitarian and educational" standards set by the South Kensington Museum. The new purpose of the museum was to amass masterpieces from

⁶⁴ Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, 295.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 180.

different places and times to illustrate art history.⁶⁸ The Art Institute, similarly, worked to create an encyclopedic collection, but did not have the same monetary backing as the Met. Like many business leaders in New York, J. P. Morgan was not just a wealthy man, but had come from wealth. New York's deeper roots gave it an edge over newer cities like Chicago, but Boston too had founded an art museum in the 1870s.

Paul DiMaggio writes in his chapter titled "The Problem of Chicago" "Notable differences in cultural entrepreneurship, classification, and sacralization distinguished Boston from New York."⁶⁹ Boston had a more cohesive Brahmin class, which built up "hegemonic cultural organizations with relative ease." This class, in order to protect itself, created a "distinctive artistic status culture that was impregnable to profane culture." New York's upper class was larger and so did not have the same cohesiveness as Boston's. New York's fragmented elite had a weaker grip on cultural authority. Despite the fact that Morgan and the other "men of fortune" had more parallels to the men who were involved in the founding of the Art Institute as men of business, Chicago's cultural institutions developed more like Boston's. DiMaggio notes that Chicago had a "cohesive upper class" who were keen to educate a narrowly defined community to serve the interests of art.⁷⁰

What makes Chicago interesting, according to DiMaggio, is that the cohesive upper class lacked the access to aesthetic specialists, extensive family ties, and

⁶⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁹ Beckert and Rosenbaum, *The American Bourgeoisie*, 209–10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 210.

historical maturity the Brahmins did. The difference between Boston and Chicago was also that the founding of the Art Institute was done in an effort to make Chicago a cultural center, whereas in Boston, which was already a cultural center, cultural institutions were established to “define and maintain social boundaries.”⁷¹ Chicago’s elite was a more fluid group than in Boston. Most of the men who bought pieces for the Art Institute came from middle-class families. As a result, more of Chicago’s cultural establishments reached out to both middle-class and wealthy patrons.⁷² With an openness of larger portions of the city and a comfort with modernism, the AIC was able to serve its city in a way Boston’s Museum of Fine Art could not.⁷³

The Art Institute was clearly following the national trend of art museums. Chicago’s art museum is set apart, however. The Art Institute comes out of the disorder caused by the fire and needed to tap into the resources of the nouveau riche as well as a broader middle class for support. Its supporters also looked to it as a way to change both the city’s reputation and its people. By the 1880s, when the Art Institute was founded, Chicago already had several cultural institutions, such as schools, libraries, performance spaces, and galleries.⁷⁴ Some have persisted, but none has flourished quite like the Art Institute of Chicago did. It flourished because many people came together at the right time to make it successful. Outsiders and the city elite alike saw the young city as lacking in culture. The philosophy of the day deemed that art created culture and could civilize and lift up the masses. Charles L.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 213.

⁷³ Ibid., 210.

⁷⁴ Horowitz, *Culture & the City*, 32.

Hutchinson, William M. R. French, and Martin A. Ryerson all worked to make the Art Institute a success, but they are only one part of the story.

The Commercial Club of Chicago brought together the moneyed men to work towards supporting cultural institutions. When several of them were interested in bringing art to the city, they were able to band together to pick up the slack when the funds to gather an encyclopedic collection were lacking. The city of Chicago helped secure a beautiful location for their custom-built home. Even Mrs. Florence Field brought grandeur and permanency to the project. Like a Pointillist painting, it was not one person or one moment that created Chicago's world-class art museum, but all those points coming together to create a master work.



Figure 5) The Art Institute of Chicago ca. 1895. The lions were installed in 1894. Detroit Publishing Co., "The Art Institute, Chicago, Ill." Photo, print, drawing. *Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA*. Accessed February 4, 2017. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/det.4a08062/>.

CHAPTER THREE

A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FAIR INCARNATE: THE FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The World's Fair Columbian Exposition had been a crowning moment for the people of Chicago. In the idealized urban plan of the White City, Chicagoans and many other fairgoers saw an urban space with order and civility—a civility that could immediately be recognized by visitors as one reflected in museums. Out of the exhibits at the World's Fair grew a museum that emerged as one of Chicago's most important cultural institutions. The Field Museum's rapid maturation from exhibits saved from the fair to a focused natural history museum mirrored the rapid growth of Chicago and echoed national trends of museum building. Though its establishment was contested during the early years of its history, the founders of the Field Museum of Natural History were able to rally support in both the public and private sectors that allowed them to establish one of the leading institutions in the country.¹

The Field Museum organizers drew on a long tradition of natural history museums in the United States. The earliest museum in what is today the United

¹ The institution currently called the Field Museum of Natural History had several names between its formation from the assembled parts of the Columbian Exposition in 1893 and 1921 when this history of the museum concludes. Between 1893 and 1894, it was called the Columbian Museum of Chicago. After the Fair closed, the name changed to the Field Columbian Museum and occupied the former Palace of Fine Arts Building in Jackson Park. In 1905, the name changed to Field Museum of Natural History, and in 1943, the name was changed again to Chicago Natural History Museum. For simplicity and clarity, throughout the dissertation, the institution will be referred to as the Field Museum or just the Field.

States dates back to 1773 with the Charleston Museum, which held a natural history collection. It was not alone for long: “Along the Atlantic, small groups of enthusiasts met together to discuss and study objects emerging from the explorations of the new continent.”² These groups began as exclusive meetings for a select number of private members, but within a few years they usually had public hours to display their collections. An early example is Charles Willson Peale’s museum. Started in 1784, the museum moved twice in Philadelphia, until in 1802 his natural history museum moved into Independence Hall. The Philadelphia Museum, as it was originally called, “was one of the leading attractions of the city.”³ New York City has had some kind of natural history museum since 1816. P.T. Barnum took over the 1816 New American Museum in 1841. He then acquired much of the collection of Peale’s failed Philadelphia Museum “as well as the holdings of the Baltimore and New York branches” of Peale’s museums. Despite having many sideshows and “hokum,” Barnum’s American Museum also displayed serious natural history collections. When the museum burnt down in 1865, “Barnum talked of building a great new national museum in New York, open to the public without charge.”⁴ The American Museum of Natural History in New York City opened to the public by 1877. By the 1880s, museums were found in every large city in the United States, most of them focusing on either art or natural history.⁵ For all its growth and commercial wealth, in 1880 Chicago did not have a natural history museum. The

² Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

lack of cultural institutions did not sit well with Chicago's nouveau riche. The business leaders wanted Chicago to be more than a center for banking and commerce; they wanted it to be a center of culture too.

Commercial Club members had rallied around the Art Institute of Chicago and once again turned their attention to another cultural endeavor: the development of the Field Museum. In October of 1890, the Commercial Club had another discussion about cultural institutions, this time with explicit reference to art galleries, museums, and the World's Columbian Exposition.⁶ In the following year the club fully engaged with the idea of creating a memorial museum out of the exhibits of the Fair. A guest speaker, Mr. Frederic Ward Putnam, prompted this discussion. Putnam was a professor and curator at the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard. As a vocal and articulate advocate for a proposed new natural history museum, Putnam pointed out that there were clear difficulties in creating the museum he envisioned. Historian Paul D. Brinkman explains, "Born and educated in New England, Putnam believed Chicago was a culturally inferior city, which was an attitude that prevailed along the East Coast."⁷ Indeed, the perception of Chicago's cultural inferiority grew to be both a push and pull factor for the creation of the Field Museum. Pulled to create an institution that would bring Chicago on par with its East Coast counterparts, those who had the means and motivation to do so would push away the man who goaded them to it.

⁶ Commercial Club of Chicago, *The Commercial Club of Chicago, Organized 1878*, 35.

⁷ Paul Brinkman, "Frederic Ward Putnam, Chicago's Cultural Philanthropists, and the Founding of the Field Museum," *Museum History Journal* 2, no. 1 (2009): 84.

Putnam's basic idea was not a new one. The National Museum in Washington D.C., now the Smithsonian, received its establishing collection from the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876.⁸ In fact, George Brown Goode, director of the National Museum, "in April, 1891, recommended that a committee be appointed immediately to arouse interest in a local museum [in Chicago]."⁹ It was F.W. Putnam, however, who proposed a specific scheme for the permanent museum that received an audience with the well-connected and wealthy members of the Commercial Club.

As he began his speech, Putnam lauded the cultural institutions that Chicago already had, complementing the number of libraries in the city and its "Art Museum of the highest character in connection with its Institute of Art, and [its] Historical Society."¹⁰ He was quick to point out that while "the lovers of literature, art and history are thus assured of essential aid in their studies," the "multitude of students and lovers of nature" are without an institution of their own. The Chicago Academy of Science, whose facilities and collections were destroyed in the fire of 1871, never fully recovered from the loss. The purpose of his speech quickly became clear: to advocate for the establishment of a natural history museum using resources gathered for the enormous Exposition. Early in the speech, Putnam used the phrase "great city" in reference to Chicago several times. His use of the phrase seemed to be claiming both that Chicago is a great city and that it can do more to claim this title.

⁸ "Centennial Exhibition | Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia," accessed July 1, 2016, <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/centennial/>.

⁹ Frank C. Lockwood, *The Life of Edward E. Ayer* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, n.d.), 185.

¹⁰ Frederic Ward Putnam, "Columbus Memorial Museum," November 28, 1891, 1, Field Museum Archives.

Chicago, “[n]ow so markedly and lamentably wanting,” needed a natural history museum. He asserted, “In fact, such museums now exist in nearly all prominent cities; and certainly when searching out the general culture of a city, one asks for its libraries, museum and galleries and judges fairly well of its intellectual life by what he find therein.”¹¹ He went on to describe how a museum should be administered and what departments would be a part of his vision for Chicago’s natural history museum.

Despite being well thought out, Putnam’s vision did not come to fruition. This outcome had more to do with the individuals whom he had to court to make it happen than with a lack of general support for his idea. One major setback was Putman’s desire for a permanent space to be built on the fair grounds. The Art Institute was to get the World’s Congress Auxiliary building at the end of the fair, so the idea for a permanent structure that would take on a life after the Exposition closed was not outside the realm of possibility. Paul D. Brinkman explains the difficulty this way:

The idea of a permanent museum continued to be an issue. . . . Putnam had originally wanted exposition authorities to provide him with a large, permanent building modeled after one of the monumental prehistoric structures of Peru, Mexico, or Central America. Such a structure could house his anthropological exhibits during the exposition and then serve as the building for Chicago’s permanent museum at the exposition’s end. His idea clashed, however, with head architect Daniel Burnham’s vision of a White City composed of an orderly procession of neoclassical buildings.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹² Brinkman, “Frederic Ward Putnam, Chicago’s Cultural Philanthropists, and the Founding of the Field Museum,” 78.

Style seemed to be the major problem for Burnham, but Putman's interpersonal relationship was also strained with the Exposition's president, Harlow N.

Higinbotham, who was later deeply involved in the founding and early operations of the Field Museum. Brinkman is also quick to point out that Putman's vision did not connect to the men who had the money and power to make a museum happen:

First, they [the founders of the museum] believed strongly in the virtue of superlatives, especially "most," "best," and "biggest"; and second, they had faith in themselves and a determination to do things their own way. The World's Columbian Exposition had been the biggest, most extravagant, most popular world's fair ever held; likewise, the Field Columbian Museum would be the largest, most comprehensive museum in the world.¹³

At a meeting on August 17, 1893, "a hundred leading citizens of Chicago," who believed that creating a memorial museum would be the best course of action to take after the close of the Exposition, gathered to discuss their plans.¹⁴ The Executive Directors of the Columbian Exposition called the meeting, held in the Administration Building of the Exposition. After considering suggestions to affiliate the museum with either the Columbian Historical Society or the Academy of Sciences of Chicago, the meeting attendees determined that a new organization should be created. Exposition President Harlow H. Higinbotham, who favored this course of action, "spoke very earnestly in favor of 'a new and strong organization, independent of educational institutions, locality, creed, or calling, strong enough to stand alone, and large enough to take in everything.'"¹⁵ The Columbian Museum of

¹³ Ibid., 83–84.

¹⁴ Lockwood, *The Life of Edward E. Ayer*, 186.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Chicago was to “be an abstract of the World’s Columbian Exposition—an international exhibition of comprehensive scope, but on a reduced scale.”¹⁶ As a memorial museum, the narrow field of natural history that Putnam advocated for simply would not do.

Even with the backing of many of the wealthy and powerful men of Chicago, the museum could not begin collecting just yet. The United States was experiencing one of the many financial panics and depressions that plagued nineteenth-century America. The panic was extensive enough that in December of 1893, “the comptroller of the currency announced the failure . . . of 158 national banks, 172 state banks, 177 private banks, 47 savings banks, 13 loan and trust companies, and 6 mortgage companies.”¹⁷ Despite the ensuing depression, there was one man in Chicago sufficiently wealthy, even in hard economic times, who could provide the funds necessary to make the museum a reality: Marshall Field. The order was steep, because it was calculated that the only way to secure sufficient exhibit material and manpower to create the new museum would be to obtain at least one million dollars.

Convincing Field to part with his money would not be easy. In a 1929 biographical sketch, the author wrote of a young man of humble means who came to Chicago at the age of twenty-two: “Marshall Field and Chicago literally grew up together. They evolved their respective visions together, and together they saw

¹⁶ Brinkman, “Frederic Ward Putnam, Chicago’s Cultural Philanthropists, and the Founding of the Field Museum,” 89.

¹⁷ Davis Rich Dewey, *Financial History of the United States* (Longmans, Green, 1918), 446.

them unfold into realities beyond their fairest dreams.”¹⁸ Field could not have accumulated his wealth without the concurrent growth of the city of Chicago. He worked in department stores until he had enough money to buy a majority share of Potter Palmer’s wholesale store. The department store venture later became Marshall Field and Company, a retail giant. Marshall Field also invested in real estate when the land around Chicago was comparatively cheap. When the city expanded, the value of his holdings went up.

Field was known as a hard worker. After his death on January 16, 1906, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published a full-page article about him. The article references his humble beginnings, love for Chicago, and the losses he suffered after the Great Chicago Fire, and then continues by commenting on the importance of his persistent work ethic. Writing about previous associates, the reporter observes, “Mr. Field did more than make himself rich. He made his business associates rich. One man after another has stepped out of the house of Marshall Field & Co. and retired to enjoy the wealth which was his share. But while others sought ease and its pleasures, the man in command kept his hand to the rudder, standing the watch and taking the toll. So he stood at the last.”¹⁹ When it came to supporting the museum, Field was intransigent. His response to solicitations was always the same: “I don’t know

¹⁸ Paul Gilbert and Charles Lee Bryson, *Chicago and Its Makers: A Narrative of Events from the Day of the First White Man to the Inception of the Second World’s Fair*. (Chicago: Felix Mendelsohn, 1929), 734.

¹⁹ “Marshall Field’s Career as Merchant and Financier,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 17, 1906, <http://proxy.cc.uic.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/173281277?accountid=14552>.

anything about a museum and I don't care to know anything about a museum. I'm not going to give you a million dollars."²⁰ In desperation, the museum's supporters turned to Edward E. Ayer, a Commercial Club member and friend of Marshall Field, to solicit the sizable donation.

Ayer was connected to the museum project at the second meeting and replaced a trustee who could not fulfill his duties. The 1929 biography *The Life of Edward E. Ayer* recounts how he was able to secure the million-dollar donation from Marshall Field. With much persistence, Ayer convinced Field to give him fifteen minutes of his time to make one final pitch. Ayer asked Field if he knew any person under the age of 25 who knew of A.T. Stewart. Field replied in the negative. Ayer continued, "He was a greater merchant than you . . . and *he is forgotten in twenty-five years . . . you can sell dry goods until Hell freezes over; you can sell it on the ice until that melts; and in twenty-five years you will be just the figure A.T. Stewart is – absolutely forgotten.*"²¹ Ayer continued by telling Field that he had a "vouchsafed" opportunity to be "the educational host to untold millions of people who will follow us in the Mississippi Valley." Ayer ended his session by asking Field to tour the World Fair with him, to see all the exhibitions that the fair's department heads had recommended for the new museum.²²

The morning after his tour of the fair, Marshall Field met with Ayer and another man, Norman Ream, and gave them the million dollars for the museum.

²⁰ Lockwood, *The Life of Edward E. Ayer*, 188.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

²² *Ibid.*, 190.

Edward Ayer's major argument was directed toward Field's own vanity about his legacy, but he also made arguments about educational aspects of the institution. Field's precise motives for deciding to give the money are not revealed in Ayer's telling of the story. From what little documentation that does exist, it seems it took an understanding of what opportunities were to be gained, or lost, that finally convinced Marshall Field to sponsor the museum. Kathleen D. McCarthy refers to a version of this donation story in her 1982 book, *Noblesse Oblige, Charity & Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929*. She too believes that it was a later moment in the Field-Ayer story that caused Field to accede to Ayer's request. She writes: "The spoils of the Columbian Exposition goaded Marshall Field" into giving his substantial contribution. "Only when his friend, Edward E. Ayer, made it clear to him that 'a tremendous amount of material from different countries as well as from all parts of America . . . could be secured for a minimum price at the end of the exposition' did" Marshall Field yield to Ayer's supplications.²³ McCarthy's estimation of Field's motivations favors an interpretation of him as a meticulous businessman first and foremost. Field recognized a bargain and an opportunity and moved to take advantage of it.

Possibly taking a cue from his fellow philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Field initially required that another one million be put up as a match.²⁴ In an unpublished

²³ McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige*, 156.

²⁴ When John D. Rockefeller agreed to give the University of Chicago \$600,000 from his endowment to fund the founding of the new university, it came with the stipulation that the trustees needed to raise an additional \$400,000 by June of 1890.

history of the museum, Edward E. Ayer writes, “[Field] would give the million dollars, provided we would raise another million.”²⁵ Ayer then rushed to get large pledges to meet Field’s condition, but “found that it would be impossible to raise over \$500,000”; yet “Mr. Field kindly consented to give the million provided we got the other \$500,000.” Marshall Field was invested enough in the idea of a museum that he was willing to accept less than he had asked for in matching funds in order to make the museum a reality. The obvious gains for his home city took priority.

Most of the partial match came from others of comparative means. As Ayer recounts it, “George Pullman gave a hundred thousand, Mr. Harlow Higinbotham gave a hundred thousand, my friend Mrs. George Sturges gave fifty thousand,” and Ayer donated his collection of indigenous North American anthropological artifacts, which was estimated to be worth about one hundred thousand dollars.²⁶ These donations totaled \$500,000 in matching funds. The support of Commercial Club members and their friends seemed the only way Chicago’s museums could get traction. Despite Edward Ayer’s appeal towards his vanity, immortalizing his name seems not to be the reason Field finally gave. It took almost a year of convincing

Field also aided the founding of the university by donating ten acres of land he owned along the Midway in January of 1890, but it came with the stipulation that the value of the land would not be used toward the \$400,000 match. Both men were clearly seeking some assurance that his money and resources would not go to waste. See Robin Faith Bachin. *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago, 1890-1919*. Chicago, IL; Bristol: University of Chicago Press; University Presses Marketing [distributor], 2008.

²⁵ Edward E. Ayer, “History of the Museum” (Chicago, 1916), 5, Field Museum Archives.

²⁶ Lockwood, *The Life of Edward E. Ayer*, 190.

before Marshall Field allowed his name to be put on the museum.²⁷ As the first director of the Field Museum, Frederick J. V. Skiff recounted the suggestion that Field's "name [should] be added to the corporate name of the Institution . . . met with opposition from Mr. Field . . . He persisted in the objection to the use of his full name, but finally and with marked reluctance permitted his surname to be employed."²⁸ It was not until May of 1894, over half a year after Field's million-dollar pledge, that the museum was legally named the Field Columbian Museum.

In September of 1893, museum organizers sent a proposal to form a corporation, with the name Columbian Museum, to the Illinois Secretary of State.²⁹ It noted that the object of the museum was the "accumulation and dissemination of knowledge, the preservation and exhibition of objects illustrating Art, Archæology, Science and History."³⁰ Between the end of 1893 and June of 1894, the museum moved into the Palace of Fine Arts.³¹ The museum's initial exhibits were simply the ones collected from the exhibit halls throughout the fair grounds. In its first fiscal year (September 1894-95), the fifteen trustees under the direction of the Committee on Building (George E. Adams, William J. Chalmers, and Cyrus H. McCormick) had

²⁷ Ibid., 189–190.

²⁸ F.J. V. Skiff, "A History of the Museum" (Chicago, 1916), 6, Field Museum Archives.

²⁹ Field Columbian Museum, "Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1894-95/ Field Columbian Museum," Annual report of the Director, Report Series (Chicago, U.S.A.: Field Columbian Museum, October 1895), 53, <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25588#page/9/mode/1up>. The 64 undersigned included Philip D. Armour, Andrew McNally, Edward E. Ayer, George M. Pullman, and Stephen A. Forbes.

³⁰ Ibid., 52.

³¹ June of 1894 was also when the Columbian Museum of Chicago became the Field Columbian Museum to honor their million-dollar donor.

many changes made to the Palace of Fine Arts to suit the new institution's needs. Seeking help with writing their bylaws, Harlow H. Higinbotham wrote to the man with the most experienced in running a non-profit museum in Chicago: Charles L. Hutchinson, president of the Art Institute of Chicago and fellow Commercial Club member. Higinbotham explains, "It must be remembered that this grand museum we are planning and working for is not to be merely a store-room for objects left over from the Exposition, but is to be an institution covering all branches of science and in a manner worthy of our country."³² He continues, "We simply take advantage of the Exposition to make a start, as the National Museum took advantage of the Centennial Exposition."

On September 16, 1893, the Columbian Museum of Chicago was incorporated by the State of Illinois, forty-five days before the closing of the Fair on October 30.³³ According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, it was not until the closing of the fair loomed large "that active steps were taken toward the goal of a memorial of the Exposition." This is only partially true, as much had been in the works behind closed doors, but the closing of the Exposition also gave urgency to the project. The fair had twelve departments. The heads of each of these departments formed a museum committee that selected displays from throughout the exhibition to seed the collection of the new museum. Most of the exhibits were donated freely, though some were

³² Harlow H. Higinbotham, "Copy of a Letter to Mr. Hutchinson," October 3, 1893, 2, Recorder/ Registrar, Putnam, F.W., Field Museum Archives.

³³ Field Columbian Museum, "Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1894-95," 52. By incorporating, the founders of the museum ensured that the institution would live beyond their involvement.

purchased “at a price that was little more than nominal.”³⁴ The museum committee chose the Palace of Fine Arts to be the home for the new museum on November 18, 1983.

On December 7, 1893, Frederick J. V. Skiff, the former Chief of the Department of Mines, Mining, and Metallurgy and Deputy Director-General for the Exposition, became the temporary director of the museum. Later, in January 22, 1894, the Board of Trustees appointed him permanent director. Fredrick Ward Putnam, though present at the planning meeting at the Palace of Fine Arts, did not receive an offer to take over the permanent museum. Paul Brinkman conjectures that there were several reasons for this. The first is that Putnam “had never risen higher than the position of Department Chief” at the Exposition, while Skiff had demonstrated his abilities as an administrator as Deputy Directory-General and had a friendly, though deferential, relationship with the president, H. H. Higinbotham.³⁵ Skiff, unlike Putnam, had a “willingness to adapt himself to local circumstances. From [the board’s] perspective, Skiff was the ideal candidate to carry out the designs of Chicago’s philanthropists” who were wary of someone leading the museum who might have split loyalties—the desires of the board on one side and the high principles of science on the other. Skiff was the board’s clear choice to make

³⁴ “All Ready to Open,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1984, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/174873342?accountid=14552>.

³⁵ Brinkman, “Frederic Ward Putnam, Chicago’s Cultural Philanthropists, and the Founding of the Field Museum,” 88, 90–91.

their museum come to fruition.³⁶

Skiff's reports do not explicitly state why the board chose the Palace of Fine Arts over the other soon-to-be vacant buildings of the White City, but its unique construction probably played a large role. Unlike most of the buildings of the World's Fair, the Palace of Fine Arts was designed to be "absolutely fire-proof" to protect the borrowed treasures from around the world.³⁷ Though still covered in staff, also called plaster of Paris, to match the rest of the buildings, the walls of the Palace of Fine Arts were constructed of solid brick instead of wood like all the other White City buildings. The roof and floors, as well as the galleries, were made of iron. All light was supplied through skylights. These measures, including the lack of artificial light, were designed to make the building "fire-proof," and although the building was of "temporary character," it was the most solidly built of all the buildings in the White City.³⁸ The concern and pronouncements about "absolute" fireproofing might seem obsessive, but the Great Fire of 1871 was well within living memory for many Chicagoans and probably also on the minds of the many collectors and museum directors who loaned precious art works for display at the Columbian Exposition. The choice of the Palace of Fine Arts turned out to be fortuitous for the memorial museum. On the evening of July 5, 1894, fire swept through the White City, destroying the terminal station and the administration, mines and mining,

³⁶ Brinkman, "Frederic Ward Putnam, Chicago's Cultural Philanthropists, and the Founding of the Field Museum," 88, 90-91.

³⁷ "EVENTS OF THE WEEK IN DETAIL," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 27, 1891.

³⁸ "Plans for the Art Palace," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1891, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/174494542?accountid=14552>.

electricity, manufacturers, and agricultural buildings. The flames also consumed the machinery hall, turning it to ash.³⁹ Situated further north, across the lagoon, the Field Museum escaped from the blaze unharmed. Though a wise choice, the Field Museum board wanted to ensure that the building would work well for the new museum.

The first annual report lists the improvements that marked the inaugural year. Included in the list is the lecture hall, which was “re-fitted as an audience room, furnished with a movable platform, rear and side, doors, roof and base ventilators, stereopticon stand, two hundred chairs, etc.”⁴⁰ In this hall, lecturers gave a series of courses, which were free to the public. Offering lecture series was common practice in American museums.⁴¹ Organizers of Field’s first lecture series sent out tickets to the lectures to the “officials and constituency of the Museum. . . . [After the first two lectures] the method was abandoned and the doors were thrown open to the public indiscriminately.”⁴² Attendance at the first course of lectures waned as the weather became colder, but public attendance grew with the start of the next course of lectures, so much so that “the lecture hall was invariably crowded

³⁹ “White City Burned,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 6, 1894, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/174959544?accountid=14552>.

⁴⁰ Field Columbian Museum, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1894-95,” 23.

⁴¹ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 65.

⁴² Field Columbian Museum, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1894-95,” 8.

beyond its seating capacity.”⁴³ Lectures were predominantly given by the curatorial staff, though college and university professors also frequented the stage.

Supporters had originally envisioned the museum as a memorial to the Columbian Exposition, but it quickly became a place where new knowledge was disseminated to crowds of over 200 people. The annual report notes “this lecture course has been brought prominently before the universities of Chicago and vicinity, and the public school principals and teachers.”⁴⁴ It was an already educated group that attended, but the Field was able to demonstrate that they provided a service that the public wanted.

Even as the public happily attended lectures and visited the museum, the leadership of the Field Museum knew that a better home had to be secured. The collection continued to grow and space was quickly at a premium. It was not a fully conscious effort, but as the collections grew, they also began to focus on natural history. Skiff explained:

Material secured from the Columbian Exposition became lost in other similar material subsequently obtained, or was discarded as unmuseumistic in character and as the purchases of new material added to the acquisitions made by expeditions and original work on the part of the scientific staff practically destroyed the physical condition of the Museum as a memorial to the Exposition, the opinion grew that the word “Columbian” besides being misleading as to the character of the Museum, should be omitted in the name of the Institution and also because it had, as a matter of fact, ceased in any sense to have the nature or appearance of a memorial to the Exposition. The authorities of the Museum had by a natural process, rather than by admitted design, developed such tendency toward natural history as to leave no doubt

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

that this was to be the field of its future.⁴⁵

It was becoming a more professional museum. Because the Exposition was in part a way to demonstrate the advances in industry, the Field had building stones, iron and steel, petroleum samples from around the United States, ceramics, jewelry, and textile art. As the museum began to settle into its role, the collection changed. In November of 1899, the Executive Committee was already discussing “the disposition” of materials in Halls 9 and 10, “known as the Columbian Memorial material.”⁴⁶ In 1903, Skiff reported that much material had been gained for the museum through exchange. He writes in the annual report, “The increase of material obtained by means of exchange is highly gratifying, and during the year this mode of increasing the collection has been considerably extended.” Some of the institutions the Field exchanged with were the British Museum; the Australian Museum, Sydney; K.K. Naturhistorisches Hof Museum, Vienna; the U.S. National Museum; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington.⁴⁷ Textiles, though covered by the “art” section of the original mission, were loaned out. In January of 1906, the executive board instructed Skiff to “arrange with Miss Addams of the Hull House and with the Director of the Chicago Art Institute for the transfer of the Textiles now on

⁴⁵ F.J. V. Skiff, “A History of the Museum,” 7.

⁴⁶ “Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee of the Field Columbian Museum” (Chicago, IL, January 4, 1906), 160, Field Museum Archives.

⁴⁷ Field Columbian Museum, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1903-04/ Field Columbian Museum,” Annual report of the Director (Chicago, U.S.A.: Field Columbian Museum, October 1904), 178, <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25537#page/11/mode/1up>.

exhibition at the Hull House to the Art Institute.”⁴⁸ The board was comprised of men who knew business first and foremost, but the staff was professionalizing.

During this time, professionalization was taking hold in American museums. In May of 1906, a group of museum professionals formed the American Association of Museums (AAM). Both the Art Institute of Chicago and the Field Museum were “well represented” at the first meeting. The second day of the meeting, Dr. George A. Dorsey, the Field’s curator of anthropology, was chosen as the official secretary.⁴⁹ Dorsey was the first, but not the only Field employee to hold a position at the AAM. The Field Museum’s director, Frederick J. V. Skiff, and curator of geology, Oliver Farrington, both served as president from 1910 to 1911 and 1914 to 1916, respectively.⁵⁰ Their involvement as leaders in the professional American museum organization demonstrates their peers thought highly of their work at the Field Museum. As an organization, the Field Museum was solidifying.

In November of 1905, just two months before Marshall Field passed away, the corporate members of the museum had the institution’s name changed from Field Columbian Museum to Field Museum of Natural History, thus publicly acknowledging the move away from the Columbian Exposition and emphasizing the museum as a natural history institution that was no longer a memorial to past glories. Another way in which the board was striving to move beyond the fair was

⁴⁸ “Minutes Of the Meetings of the Executive Committee of the Field Columbian Museum” (Chicago, IL, January 4, 1906), 243, Field Museum Archives.

⁴⁹ “The American Association of Museums.” *Science* 23, no. 596 (1906): 859-61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1632854>.

⁵⁰ Museums, *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums*, v.

working to move into a new location.⁵¹

As early as 1903, administrators at the Field Museum were discussing moving out of the Palace of Fine Arts. They had outgrown the space and the plaster of Paris that covered the exterior of the building was falling apart. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that a landscaping contract for the new Grant Park was sent to the Olmsted Brothers and the Field Museum was “fixed as the center of the tract.”⁵² According to the news report, the location for the museum was suggested to Field, but he had not been formally agreed upon it.

In keeping with his desire to make sure his money was used prudently, Marshall Field had inserted particular stipulations in his will about the money he would leave to the museum, including how and when it must be used. In regard to the four-million-dollar building fund:

The entire devise and bequest herein made is, however, upon the express condition that within six years from the date of my decease there shall be provided for said Museum and shall be given to it or devoted to its permanent use, without cost to it, lands and premise, which shall be acceptable and satisfactory to its said Trustees as a location and site for the building or buildings to be erected as its permanent home; and in the event that such lands and premises acceptable and satisfactory to its said Trustees shall not be given to it, or be devoted to its permanent use within said period,

⁵¹ Field Museum of Natural History, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1906/ Field Museum of Natural History,” Annual report of the Director (Chicago, U.S.A., January 1907), 99,

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25551#page/9/mode/1up>.

⁵² “LET GRANT PARK CONTRACT AND PLACE FIELD MUSEUM,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1903,

<http://proxy.cc.uic.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/173178215?accountid=14552>.

and without cost to it, then the *entire capital* [emphasis added] of said entire devise and bequest, together with any accumulated and unexpected income thereon, shall upon the expiration of six years from the date of my decease, *revert to and become a part of my residuary estate.*⁵³

Six years after Field's death would be January of 1912; Marshall Field likely could not have understood what hurdles the museum would have in getting land for a new building.

The process of getting a new building proved to be a difficult task. Skiff reported in the Annual Report of the Director in 1907 that the building plans that had been discussed for over a year prior to Field's death in January of 1906 were almost complete. According to the report, the plans for the building had been "under the personal and constant supervision" of Marshall Field.⁵⁴ Everyone involved in the decision-making process about the design of the structure, including the curators in each department, was satisfied with the plans. However, there were two issues over which no one at the museum had control. The first was the new location. As Skiff put it, "when pending questions affecting the proposed site in Grant Park shall have been determined, work upon the new building will be commenced."⁵⁵ The second issue was the amount of time they had to utilize Marshall Field's sizable donation, without which the project could not be completed. Marshall Field's will stipulated that a new location needed to be secured without purchase within six years of his

⁵³ Marshall Field, "The Will of Marshall Field (Numbered Lines, Annotations and Italics by Counsel)," September 5, 1905, 39–40, University of Michigan Law Library.

⁵⁴ Field Museum of Natural History, "Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1906/ Field Museum of Natural History," 9.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

death, by January of 1912. In January of 1907, however, the new location for the building was the more pressing issue as opposition arose to the proposed lakefront location.

Using the experience its employees gained working on the World's Fair, the South Park Commission "dedicated itself to advancing the civic vision that had emerged in the wake of the exposition."⁵⁶ Using landfill from commercial and public works, Lake Park was built out into Lake Michigan. Grant Park, which included land from the former Lake Park, was contested space, however.

Montgomery Ward, the founder of a mail order company who had trained under Field, fought the city of Chicago in a series of legal battles over the use of lakefront parkland beginning in 1890. He owned property across from the lake, overlooking the parkland. Dennis H. Cremin writes about the case that was filed in 1896, stating, "As they had in the first case, Ward's lawyers centered their argument on the original platting of the site and its two additions."⁵⁷ As parks, the site could not have structures on them that were not for park purposes. Previous structures Ward had fought against were a post office, armories, a police station, and an engine house. Even though other museums were blocked, Montgomery "Ward allowed the Art Institute to remain in the park."⁵⁸

The plans for the Field Museum with which Marshall Field was directly involved called for the new building to be erected in the new Grant Park. Daniel H.

⁵⁶ Cremin, Dennis H. *Grant Park: The Evolution of Chicago's Front Yard* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 77–78, 82.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Burnham & Company was slated to design the new structure.⁵⁹ During “1905, the South Park Commission shored up support for the new museum with the encouragement from” both the administration of the Field Museum and the trustees of Marshall Field’s estate.⁶⁰ In 1907, the park commissioners entered into a contract with the trustees of the Field Museum to build the new structure in Grant Park for approximately four million dollars in four and a half years. In the public eye, everything was ready for the museum’s new home. However, Montgomery Ward did not want another structure built in Grant Park and petitioned to stop the construction.

Ward was scorned in the press. In his history of Grant Park, Cremin describes the reaction to Ward’s filing a petition in 1907 to bar the construction of the Crerar Library and the Field Museum in Grant Park.⁶¹ He writes, “In the face of the tremendous gift these two institutions represented, the press vilified Ward. The pressure on him was so great that his business partners and friends were enlisted in an attempt to get him to relent. Ward made it clear that he was not against the Field Museum, but rather its proposed location.”⁶² He wanted to maintain the area as a “green ward.” Montgomery Ward was willing to fight to keep both the space clear and make it a useable park for the people of Chicago.

⁵⁹ Field Museum of Natural History, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1906/ Field Museum of Natural History,” 9.

⁶⁰ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 86.

⁶¹ The Crerar Library is an example of a cultural institution that was unable to get into Grant Park. In the 1980s, the directors consolidated the library’s collection with the University of Chicago’s.

⁶² Cremin, *Grant Park*, 86.

In a succession of court cases filed over the twenty-year period from 1890 to 1910, Ward repeatedly contested plans to develop Lake Park, as Grant Park was originally named; sought to have existing structures on the land, with the exception of the Art Institute, removed; and petitioned to have any future buildings banned. The basis for Ward's cases was the public nature that the land had had for sixty years. The original platting in the 1830s called for the land to stay "forever open, clear and free of building and any obstructions whatsoever," a status that had been repeatedly upheld over the decades.⁶³ Though Ward prevailed in his original cases, there was a general sentiment that he would not fight plans to situate improvements on the expanded space gained from lakefill and designed to perpetuate the legacy of the Columbian Exposition.⁶⁴

Contrary to these expectations, Ward sued to keep the Field Museum out of Grant Park. The South Park Commissioners pursued various means of accomplishing the goal of moving the museum into the park. Two Illinois legislators even introduced a bill in 1910 to designate an area 200 feet east of Grant Park as an island, where the Field Museum could be built.⁶⁵ One of the major issues argued in these cases was the meaning of use of the land as public park and open space and

⁶³ Museums in Public Parks Act, 38th Gen. Assemb. § 123/1 (Ill. 1893).

⁶⁴ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 75–76.

⁶⁵ "PLAN AN ATLANTIS OF FIELD MUSEUM," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 5, 1910, <http://proxy.cc.uic.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/173453416?accountid=14552>.

whether the erection of a museum was consistent with this designation.⁶⁶ Whereas Ward asserted one vision of the space, others championed a different one.

While the fight with Montgomery Ward played out in court, the administration of the Field Museum was wary of a ticking clock. In his 1906 report to the board, Director Frederick J. V. Skiff wrote, "The controversy as to the site in Grant Park for the new Museum building has made progress in the Courts, but at the date of this report remains undecided."⁶⁷ In the meantime, staff and architects focused on the interior spaces of the plans. With the legal delays persisting into 1907, museum officials started looking for alternatives.

The push factors were also mounting. By 1908, "[t]he pressure for floor space became so acute . . . [that] a large part of the Annex [had to be] refloored and repaired, and turned over to the Department of Anthropology."⁶⁸ The report goes on to describe the failed efforts to reseal the decaying plaster of Paris façade. Exhibit spaces were bursting at the seams while the building was falling down around them. With four years until the museum no longer had access to Field's bequest, the staff focused on making their current building useable until they could move out.

By January of 1911, the six-year deadline was a year away, and Stanley Field,

⁶⁶ "LAKE FRONT OPEN TO PARK HOUSES," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 25, 1908, <http://proxy.cc.uic.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/173393518?accountid=14552>.

⁶⁷ Field Museum of Natural History, "Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1906/ Field Museum of Natural History," 113.

⁶⁸ Field Museum of Natural History, "Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1908/ Field Museum of Natural History," Annual report of the Director (Chicago, U.S.A., January 1909), 219, <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25551#page/9/mode/1up>.

Marshall Field's nephew and business heir, interceded on the museum's behalf.⁶⁹ As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported, the younger Field wrote the South Park Commissioners that the museum "would be willing to accept a site for the proposed museum to be located in Jackson Park, if this is agreeable to the commission."⁷⁰ He continued by explaining the time constraints that inspired the compromise. On March 22, 1911, the board of the Field Museum held a special meeting with the South Park Commissioners at which they agreed to change the location of the new museum building. As Skiff explained, "The location provided and accepted immediately north of the present building—highly desirable in every way and determined upon after careful consideration had been given to other sites . . . was designated at a special meeting." More importantly, the agreement "clearly complies with the terms of Mr. Field's will and secures a site without cost to the Museum within six years following the date of his decease."⁷¹ In these two brief statements, Skiff reminds the board of the reasons for the change in location and tries to make it seem less like a fallback position. The South Park Commission's willingness to aid the Field Museum is a continuation of the cooperative relationship that began in

⁶⁹ Stanley Field was Marshall Field's nephew and a member of the museum board. He was elected as president of the Field Museum in 1909, a position he held for 53 years. He started work at Marshall Field & Co. in 1893 and eventually served as chairman of the executive board for 22 years.

⁷⁰ "\$8,000,000 MUSEUM IN JACKSON PARK?," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1911, <http://proxy.cc.uic.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/173519475?accountid=14552>.

⁷¹ Field Museum of Natural History, "Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1911/ Field Museum of Natural History," Annual report of the Director (Chicago, U.S.A., January 1912), 105, <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25541#page/11/mode/1up>.

1893.

The Jackson Park location that the SPC offered was a stopgap measure. Despite repeated references to preparing exhibits for the “New Building” as it was called in annual reports, construction on the Jackson Park site never began. The details of the agreement between the South Park Commission and the Board of the Field Museum of Natural History were not disclosed, but it can be assumed, given the series of events, that the two organizations agreed not to act on the Jackson Park site until all the legal battles were concluded over Grant Park. They did have Burnham’s architects draw up plans for a long building with sympathetic architecture to the Fine Arts Building. A description of the building for Jackson Park calls for “eight long halls lying parallel to 57th Street.”⁷² While the board was preparing for the very real possibility that they would have to stay in the less favorable Jackson Park, the board president, Stanley Field, was lobbying the state general assembly to gather support for an alternative way that the museum could be built further north: an artificial island off the coast of Grant Park.

The plan was to build an island on which the museum could be constructed and thus work around the issue of building in a public park. John Barton Payne, a retired judge working for a law firm, counseled the museum and Stanley Field on this matter. Payne drafted a bill to present to the state legislature that stated in part that east of Grant Park, “[the] Field Museum of Natural History [is granted] authority to create an Island in Lake Michigan on said submerged lands, to be used

⁷² D. H. Burnham & Co. Architects, “Description of the Proposed Building for the Field Museum of Natural History,” March 15, 1911, 1, Field Museum Archives.

by it as a permanent site for its Museum.”⁷³ With some minor alterations to timing and what would happen if the museum was not in fact built, the legislation passed through the efforts of Stanley Field and the board, along with their associates, using a letter-writing campaign to secure support. Though the island was never built, the idea of constructing land for the museums was used. A large part of the park where the Field Museum sits today is landfill.

The Grant Park location put it squarely downtown. According to Daniel H. Burnham and his urban planning partner Edward H. Bennett’s original plan for Chicago, Grant Park “reflected those [plans] of the Olmsted Brothers, with the Field Museum planned to be built in the middle of the landfill section of the park in line with Congress Street.” The impact on the structure would be greater because Congress was to be the central axis of Chicago. “Thus, the Field Museum, for physical as well as aesthetic reasons by virtue of its planned location, would have been the most important cultural building in the city as well as one of the foci of the plan.”⁷⁴

John Cotton Dana, a library and museum director who worked to make both types of institutions accessible to average people, would have approved of the central location. In 1917, he wrote with disdain at the imported European idea of placing museums in parks to highlight the “building’s outer charms” where “distant from the center of population and the difficulty most citizens would encounter did they attempt to see the museum’s contents were given no weight.” By choosing this

⁷³ Pierson, *For the Act to Authorize the Use of Certain Submerged Lands under the Waters of Lake Michigan, Therein Referred To, for Public Purpose*, 1910, 2.

⁷⁴ Cremin, *Grant Park*, 88.

location, Dana argues that the institution will not “either entertain or instruct the community.”⁷⁵ It would only be a point of distant pride featured in advertisements for the city, but never used by the people who live there.⁷⁶ With its central location, planned by the same man who planned the White City, and hired to design the new building, the Field Museum could be a crowning achievement for the architect, the business men who had poured their money and energy into the museum, and an educational bright point in the center of the city.

Proving educational value was key in continuing public support for the Field Museum. Throughout its history, free admission for groups and student visits were important parts of how the Field Museum connected to the people of the city. In 1911, for example, a total of 136 teachers and 3,231 pupils came to the museum “in classes.”⁷⁷ These numbers come from days when an admission fee was required. The museum did not keep records of classes that came when admission was not charged. As part of their effort to choose, and make the best case for a site for the new building, the board of trustees had metrics gathered for the attendance of the museum teachers and pupils from the public schools and the University of Chicago. One trend that was clear was the steady increase of students and teachers coming to use the museum. From 1900 to 1911, the number of classes jumped from 1 to 19,

⁷⁵ John Cotton Dana, *The Gloom of the Museum* (Elm Tree Press, 1917), 13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Field Museum of Natural History, “Teachers and Pupils Admitted to Field Museum in Classes on Pay Days During the Year 1911,” 1911, 4, Historical Series, Grant Park Museum & Site Development, Proposed Museum Sites - 1911 Concerning Location of Public Schools in Chicago & Their Distance, Field Museum Archives.

with a peak in 1910 at 28.⁷⁸ As an educational institution for the residents of Chicago, the Field Museum was there for a large part of the population.

Grant Park was one of three parks that were possible locations for the new building. In an undated document, the population within the reach of each park location was calculated by how many people lived within an eight-mile radius. These numbers were broken down into one-mile intervals. Under “L” for Lincoln Park, a lake front park north of Chicago’s business district, there was calculated a population of 1,842,722. “J” for Jackson Park had a total of 1,213,981 and “G” for Grant Park had 1,939,841.⁷⁹ For Dana, the Grant Park location would have been preferred. The building was planned in consultation with the curators, avoiding another complaint Dana had with many museums of this time, but there was one aspect of the New Building that John Cotton Dana would not appreciate: its architectural style.⁸⁰

There are several reasons why the neoclassical style of the new Field Museum building was chosen. As a building “with a monumental order of Greek Ionic architecture,” it would mirror the style of the Palace of Fine Arts, which would

⁷⁸ Field Museum of Natural History, “Attendance of University of Chicago Teachers and Students in Classes from 1900 to 1911, Inclusive,” 1911, Historical Series, Grant Park Museum & Site Development, Proposed Museum Sites - 1911 Concerning Location of Public Schools in Chicago & Their Distance, Field Museum Archives.

⁷⁹ “Untitled Document Showing the Number of People within an 8 Mile Radius of Three Parks,” N.D., Historical Series, Grant Park Museum & Site Development, Proposed Museum Sites - 1911 Concerning Location of Public Schools in Chicago & Their Distance, Field Museum Archives.

⁸⁰ D. H. Burnham & Co. Architects, “Museum Planning Report,” April 1905, Recorder/ Registrar, Museum Planning Report, Field Museum Archives.

be especially important if the building had been erected behind the first museum.⁸¹ The second reason, as Dana complains, is because that is what is often done in Europe. Dana writes, “The prevalence of the European idea of a museum determined . . . the character of our museum buildings . . . which [are] so disastrous in their effect on the character . . . of our museum buildings.”⁸² The neoclassical style, Dana argues, does not fit with the character of American cities and is so unwelcoming that many who are not trained at an early age to enter such a building feel as though they are not welcome.⁸³ Given the Field Museum’s connection to the Columbian Exposition and the White City, it is not surprising that neoclassical architecture was the only style proposed. Whatever the style, the new museum building needed to accommodate the collection in a way the repurposed building simply could not.

The Palace of Fine Arts was built to exhibit art, not store museum objects. With its collections growing annually, due to donations and field expeditions, the Field Museum staff had to cordon off gallery space to store specimens. Fredrick J. V. Skiff reported that in 1913, “In some of the courts and halls the circulation provisions have been reduced to two-foot passage-ways which really almost prohibits an inspection of the contents of the cases.”⁸⁴ As much as displaying and

⁸¹ South Park Board, “Resolution of Board of South Park Commissioners,” 1914, 9, Stanley Field, Building Files, Building Files with 1911 Contract Jackson Park & Grant Park 1914, Folder 2, Field Museum Archives.

⁸² Dana, *The Gloom of the Museum*, 13–14.

⁸³ John Cotton Dana, *The New Museum* (Elm Tree Press, 1917), 14.

⁸⁴ Field Museum of Natural History, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1913/ Field Museum of Natural History,” Annual report of the Director (Chicago, U.S.A., January 1914), 279, <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25566#page/17/mode/1up>.

educating the public was important to the board and the curators, the space simply could not facilitate this purpose anymore. It would take another two years before the dispute over the use of Grant Park land was settled.

The political and physical landscape changed when Montgomery Ward died in December 1913. At one point, the so-called “Watch Dog of the Lake Front” confronted forty-six proposed structures in the park, many of which had popular support.⁸⁵ It had been suggested by Ward’s estate that they would continue to fight against lakefront development after his decease. One or two other Chicagoans had even joined in the legal wrangling over the parkland. Despite their assertions, it was not the same. Ward’s impact on the long-term use of park space in Chicago’s “front yard” was considerable, but his vision of keeping the entire area open to the shore ultimately was not realized, as provisions were made to cede land to institutions such as the Field Museum.⁸⁶

When the board of the Field Museum received word that they would get a site on the south side of Grant Park, they wasted no time in starting construction. In January of 1915, Director Skiff reported, “the greater part of the steel necessary for the construction of the building is on the ground, and of the marble necessary for the exterior of the structure more than one-half has been quarried and cut.”⁸⁷ By

⁸⁵ “A. MONTGOMERY WARD DIES,” *The New York Times*, December 8, 1913, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/97401762?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:summon&accountid=14552>.

⁸⁶ The green space along Lake Michigan, originally called Lake Park and then later Grant Park, was popularly referred to as Chicago’s front yard.

⁸⁷ Field Museum of Natural History, “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1914/ Field Museum of Natural History,” Annual report of the

July of 1915, the president of the museum, Stanley Field, “directed the contractors and architects to start work immediately and speed it up as fast as possible.” The board employed a new architecture firm, Thompson-Starrett Company, as the general contractor.⁸⁸

To expedite the building process, the museum board appointed a committee of three, with Stanley Field chairing it. This arrangement was done in hopes of mitigating any further delays. In March of 1911, even a three-member committee proved too difficult to coordinate and Stanley Field requested that authority be given to him to act on details that required immediate attention. The other committee members granted him this power.⁸⁹ The cornerstone was laid in September of 1919. By building on new land, the new building’s construction was slowed, and it was not until 1920 that collections from the Jackson Park museum were moved to the Grant Park location. A rail line was built to help move the exhibits. (Images on pages 105 and 106) On May 2, 1921, the Field Museum of Natural History opened to the public in Grant Park. With a new building and professionalized staff, the museum could fulfill its full potential.

Director (Chicago, U.S.A., January 1915),

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25600#page/11/mode/1up>.

⁸⁸ “Construction Work on the New \$5,000,000 Field Museum of Natural History Will Begin Today after Twelve Years of Planning and Negotiation,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 15, 1915,

<http://proxy.cc.uic.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/docview/173921181?accountid=14552>.

⁸⁹ Frederic J. V. Skiff, “Meeting of the Building Committee of Field Museum of Natural History” (Chicago, IL: Field Museum, March 27, 1911), Board of Trustees, Board & Committee Mts. 1911-1921, Board of Trustees Building Committee 1911, Field Museum Archives.

The Columbian Memorial Museum and the Field Museum of Natural History are two markedly different institutions. The memorial museum was reminiscent of early American museums. The exhibits were intended to be comprehensive and pulled from such a wide array of disciplines that the exhibits had very little cohesion. Following the national trends in museums, the Field's staff professionalized and simultaneously specialized the collection into one focused on natural history. The speed at which the Field Museum changed demonstrates what sets Chicago's museums apart. The men who sought to create Chicago's cultural institutions were not half-hearted in their endeavors. As Paul Brinkman noted, what they sought in their cultural institutions was superlatives like "best" and "most."⁹⁰ The Field Museum now demonstrated the American Compromise of professionalization and education.⁹¹ Edward E. Ayers proudly commented in 1927, six years after the museum opened in Grant Park, "Today [the Field Museum] has become one of the very great museums of the World. Our building is a white marble temple with twenty-six acres of floor space. Our collections in many ways are superior to any of the other museum collections in the city that are being used in educating the youth, and the Field Museum is doing more in this direction than any of the other natural history museums in the World."⁹² The museum that took over the Palace of Fine Arts, the Museum of Science and Industry, would make its name by going after another title: first.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 83–84.

⁹¹ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 232.

⁹² Lockwood, *The Life of Edward E. Ayer*, 206.



Figure 6) Field Museum staff moving zebra out of building, March 1920. Image courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago.



Figure 7) Field Museum staff moving ornithology exhibit case out of building, March 1920. Image courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAVING FOR SCIENCE: THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

In 1919, the Field Museum of Natural History moved out of its original building and into a purpose-built structure just outside of Grant Park, leaving the Palace of Fine Arts without tenants. By this time, the last great vestige of the World's Fair looked more like it belonged to the crumbling ruins of ancient Greece than to the glorious White City of barely a generation past. Even under the determined care of the Field Museum staff, the impermanent plaster of Paris façade covering the building could not be salvaged. Chicagoans, especially those on the South Side where the Fair had been held, were unwilling to see the beautiful building simply crumble. After much public debate about what should happen to the building, a new generation of Chicago's business leaders and philanthropists stepped up to gift the city a new museum to live in the Fine Arts building. The museum was new not only to Chicago but also new to the United States. It reflected a national trend but also showed once again that Chicagoans made "no little plans."¹ The new museum would

¹ When first discussing the *Plan of Chicago*, Daniel H. Burnham famously said, "Make no little plans: they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will not be realized." It is a saying that continues to resonate in Chicago. The full quotation and its context can be found here: Commercial Club of Chicago, *The Merchants Club of Chicago, 1896-1907* (Chicago, IL: Privately printed by direction of the Commercial Club of Chicago for distribution among its members, 1922), 100. For more on its continued influence, see Carl S. Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 161.

bridge the past of the Chicago's Fair and its future by focusing on industry, technology, and science.

By 1913, ideas for a new kind of museum, referred to at the time as "industrial museums," were already percolating. At the eighth annual meeting of the American Association of Museums (AAM) in Philadelphia, Professor Franklin W. Hooper presented a paper titled *Industrial Museums for Our Cities*.² As the director of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, he was uniquely positioned to discuss such a topic. Hooper argues that the American educational system does a disservice to the American youth by not giving them "a vital and practical" education to prepare them for work in the real world. Luckily, at the time, there existed a number of private institutions, including the Armour Institute in Chicago, that taught these practical skills. Hooper continues:

[T]he industrial museum will have a very large place [in U.S. cities], supplementing, as it will, the industrial and vocational schools of every kind and character . . . moreover, [industrial museums] will not only be of value to the boy and girl who is being trained for a life career, but will also be of service to every artisan and manufacturer and to every commercial enterprise.

All of this value comes from the industrial museum being "a museum in action."

Hooper then ends his presentation with a call to all the museum professionals in attendance: "You have it in your power more than any other men and women in the country to determine what shall be the educational value of museums in the

² Two AAM officers at this meeting held positions at a Chicago museum. Oliver C. Farrington was chair of Fossils & Meteorites at the Field and held the position of first vice-president of the AAM. Frederick J. V. Skiff was the director of the Field and served as a counselor for the AAM.

future.”³ In 1913 the educational value of museums and how they served the public that supported them was already a large concern in Chicago, even if it would be more than a decade before Chicago had an industrial museum of its own.

By 1913, Julius Rosenwald had been a Sears, Roebuck & Company executive for nearly two decades. Now known for his philanthropic efforts with the “Rosenwald Schools,” which funded school buildings for blacks in the rural South, Rosenwald was involved in many philanthropic ventures. He was born in 1862 in Springfield, Illinois. Starting at the age of seventeen, he worked in New York’s clothing industry with his uncles. He later went into the men’s clothing trade with his brother and later his cousin.⁴ In 1893, Richard Sears offered Rosenwald’s brother-in-law, Aaron Nusbaum, half of the interest of Sears, Roebuck & Company, but Nusbaum was unwilling to make such a large investment. He asked Julius Rosenwald, who had been supplying the company with cheap suits, to take a quarter interest.⁵ In 1895, Rosenwald moved to Chicago and took the position of vice president at Sears, Roebuck & Company. In 1908, the company board named Rosenwald president. By that time, Rosenwald was a multimillionaire and able to put more of his efforts into philanthropy.⁶

Rosenwald’s philosophy on philanthropy emphasized that the best form of charity enabled self-help. To this end, he looked for “opportunities for self-

³ Museums, *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums*, 6–10.

⁴ Peter Max Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South*, Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 2–9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25–26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

improvement [of those in need], for education and recreation, for the acquisition of spiritual, moral, mental, and physical strength, that makes for manhood and self-reliance.”⁷ The schools he helped fund in the South most exemplify this. Rosenwald schools were matching-grant projects in which the communities and local school board also raised a certain amount of funds for the schools. He did have other philanthropic endeavors as well. A trip to Germany with his family would inspire one such gift to the city of Chicago: the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI).⁸

On a family vacation in 1911, Julius Rosenwald found inspiration. The Deutsches Museum in Munich was a new museum dedicated to science and the favorite spot of Rosenwald’s eight-year-old son, William. The reason for his pleasure was simple: “Youngsters were encouraged to push buttons and pull levers, to visit the coal mine, or to have their hands x-rayed.” Julius Rosenwald began to consider whether such a museum could be established in Chicago.⁹ He reasoned that it was possible, but local and international help would be needed to make it a reality.

In a June 1929 article in *The Scientific Monthly* titled “Revealing the Technical Ascent of Man in the Rosenwald Industrial Museum,” Waldemar Kaempffert, the first director of MSI, gives a brief history of industrial museums in Europe. The Deutsches Museum was inspired by “Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, founded at

⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁸ The Museum of Science and Industry was first incorporated as the Rosenwald Industrial Museum. The name changed again to Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald. Later the phrase “Founded by Julius Rosenwald” was dropped. For clarity, the museum will be referred to as Museum of Science and Industry or MSI.

⁹ Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 265.

the close of the eighteenth century in Paris, and . . . the Science Museum of South Kensington, which was the outgrowth of the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851.” The Deutsches Museum was established in 1903. According to Kaempffert, “Dr. Oskar von Miller invited representatives for German industry to discuss with him the creation . . . of a museum in which the masterpieces of science and engineering were to be preserved and in which their relation to industry was to be set forth.”¹⁰ The museum Miller created was the one Rosenwald’s son fell in love with. In the words of Kaempffert, Rosenwald was dually struck by “the brilliant success” of the Deutsches Museum and “the anomaly that, despite its achievements in science, engineering and industry, the United States had nothing that corresponded with the Deutsches Museum.” Rosenwald then “decided to establish in Chicago not merely an imitation but an institution which would utilize the experience of Europe as a foundation.”¹¹ As interested in the museum as he was, it would take the investment of Commercial Club of Chicago members to turn Rosenwald’s ideas into reality.

The Commercial Club of Chicago and its members had a hand in making many civic projects a reality. The members were deeply involved in the Art Institute, the World’s Fair, and the Field Museum. After absorbing the parallel organization for young businessmen called the Merchants Club, the Commercial sponsored the *Plan of Chicago*. Deeply interested in the welfare of the city for both altruistic and business reasons, the Commercial Club “typically had six or eight active committees

¹⁰ Waldemar Kaempffert, “Revealing the Technical Ascent of Man in the Rosenwald Industrial Museum,” *The Scientific Monthly* 28 (June 1929): 481.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 483.

looking into everything from rail terminals to education to high pressure water systems” during the early part of the twentieth century.¹² In 1921, Commercial Club president Samuel Insull sought suggestions for what project the Club might take on next. Julius Rosenwald replied:

I have long felt that Chicago should have, as one of its most important institutions for public usefulness, a great Industrial Museum or Exhibition in which might be housed, for permanent display, machinery and working models illustrative of as many possible of the mechanical processes of production and of manufacture.¹³

Though this project had been on his mind for a decade, the problem of where this museum or exhibition would reside had only recently been resolved. The Fine Arts building stood vacant. The Field Museum of Natural History had abandoned the building over maintenance and space concerns. Though it would take much work to salvage the building and make it a suitable space for a museum, Rosenwald pledged one million dollars to back his idea.¹⁴

The Commercial Club members were unwilling to commit to Rosenwald’s idea in 1921, but that did not mean it was ignored either. Other Chicagoans too had ideas for what the Fine Arts building should be used for. *Together for Our City: A Brief History of the Commercial Club of Chicago* summarizes the public debate:

“Various organizations and politicians had ideas for the property, and so from year to year the planning went on and the deterioration continued, until finally \$5 million

¹² Patrick Barry, *Together for Our City: A Brief History of the Commercial Club of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Commercial Club of Chicago, 1996), 14.

¹³ Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 265.

¹⁴ Barry, *Together for Our City: A Brief History of The Commercial Club of Chicago*, 15.

in bonds were sold in 1925 to rehabilitate the structure as a ‘hodge podge of halls designed for civic betterment.’”¹⁵ Chicagoans passed the five-million-dollar bond on June 2, 1924. It provided funds for interior work and to replace the deteriorating plaster of Paris that covered the outside of the building with a suitable exterior material. The central part of the new building was to “be remodeled into the Town Hall of the Nation, the largest convention hall in the United States. The two wings [were] to be devoted to the works and models of architectures, sculptors and decorators.” Lorado Taft, famous sculptor and Chicago native, championed the use of the wings in this way.¹⁶ Julius Rosenwald did not support the mixed-use idea for the building. Speaking first with the Commercial Club and then with the South Park Commission, Rosenwald made known that he was willing to contribute three-million-dollars to install exhibits and maintain a museum in the Fine Arts building.¹⁷ In August of 1926, Rosenwald’s lawyer, Leo F. Wormser, wrote the South Park Commissioners outlining how the new museum would be funded and the use of the bond money.¹⁸ At the August 18 meeting, the SPC directed its secretary to write a response to the proposal “stating that the subject matter was considered by the commissioners at the meeting and it was unanimously voted that the Board record itself in favor of the acceptance of the very generous offer made by Mr. Rosenwald,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Oscar Hewitt, “Town Hall of U. S., Is Plan for Fine Arts,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, June 2, 1924.

¹⁷ Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 267.

¹⁸ South Park Commissioners, “Official Proceeding of the South Park District, August 5, 1926 to June 20, 1927 Vol. 35” (Proceedings, Chicago, IL, 1926-1927), 13–14, Chicago Park District Archives.

in substance,” and the full details would be worked out later to the satisfaction of the SPC and Rosenwald’s lawyer.¹⁹

For the moment at least, the future of the new industrial museum seemed secure, but a building and funding do not a museum make. To create a museum from scratch with the lofty and all-encompassing ideas that Rosenwald had proposed would require the talents and skillset of a singular sort of person. Leo Wormser wrote letters of inquiry seeking advice from people like George Vincent of the Rockefeller Foundation. Rosenwald’s preference was for a businessman who could guide the board. Among the candidates suggested in the early part of the search was Dr. Samuel Stratton, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He did not, however, wish to leave the prestigious institution. Stratton suggested Dr. F. C. Brown as a suitable candidate. Brown was employed by the Museum of Peaceful Arts, another industrial museum in the works, but was struggling to find significant funding and a suitable location in Manhattan. Brown initially seemed willing to move west, but he never did, and that lead sputtered out.²⁰

An unusual candidate, Waldemar Kaempffert, the science editor of the *New York Times*, was suggested several times for the position of director of the museum. He was known for his ability to explain “technical discoveries of science to the layman in popular language.”²¹ Author of *A Popular History of Invention*, published in

¹⁹ Ibid., 14.

²⁰ Jay Pridmore, *Inventive Genius: The History of the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago*, 1st ed. (Chicago: The Museum, 1996), 25.

²¹ The New York Times Studio, “Waldemar B. Kaempffert Dies; Science Editor of The Times, 79: Noted for Explaining Technical Developments for Layman --On Staff 26

1924, he clearly knew how to make science accessible. As an editor, he also had the leadership skills that were needed for such a large undertaking as setting up the industrial museum in Chicago. It took until 1927 before the trustees of the museum really began considering Kaempffert as a viable candidate. All told, it took almost a year of correspondences between Kaempffert and Wormser for the job offer to be extended.²²

The *New York Times* reported of Kaempffert's new position on April 16, 1928. In the article titled "Chicago Takes the Lead," the writer metaphorically doffs his cap to the city of Chicago:

The selection of Waldemar Kaempffert to be the Director of the Rosenwald Industrial Museum shows Chicago for the second time in a week taking steps to maintain height leadership among American cities . . . The fact that it is to have the first scientific museum in the country, with an expert of wide attainments at its head, is salutary in an esthetic and economic sense.

The author notes, "Not only will the exhibits themselves be the broadest in significance and type that Mr. Rosenwald's great endowment makes possible, but the shell around them will be one of the finest public buildings in America." Though expressing the *Times'* regret in losing their editor, the paper "is yet pleased to be able to assist Chicago in this advance."²³ After almost two years of searching, the museum had a director. Kaempffert for his part dove in headlong and set out almost

Years Elected to Phi Beta Kappa Won British Science Award," *New York Times*, November 28, 1956.

²² Pridmore, *Inventive Genius*, 27.

²³ "Chicago Takes the Lead," *New York Times*, April 16, 1928.

immediately for Europe to become more familiar with the industrial and science institutions that had inspired Rosenwald to create a museum in Chicago.²⁴

Finding someone to lead the museum was not the only delay experienced by the museum board or the South Park Commission. The “shell” so glowingly referred to by the *New York Times* was causing problems as well. As explained in the first annual report of the Museum of Science and Industry founded by Julius Rosenwald, “Between August 18, 1926 and March 20, 1929, the South Park Commissioners vainly advertised several times for acceptable bids for restoring and reconstructing the Fine Arts Building.” Although there were no lack of contractors willing to take on the project, the five million budgeted would not cover any of the bids. The continued delay caused “Mr. Rosenwald [to step] forward and through the Museum corporation agree not only to donate the original \$3,000,000 promised but also make good any sum in excess of the \$5,000,000 that might be needed to reconstruct the Fine Arts Building.” Depending on which contractor’s bid was considered, Rosenwald’s offer to cover costs increased his donation by one or two million dollars. There was one string attached to such a generous offer: “the condition that the entire building be used for the purposes of the Museum of Science and Industry.” It was a condition the SPC was willing to agree to.²⁵

²⁴ Museum of Science and Industry Board, “First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald,” 10, Wormser - King Collection - Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder File 19-A/D9766, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

²⁵ Ibid.

Settling all the issues around the building proved more difficult than simply covering costs. Even before the South Park Commission had accepted “in substance” Julius Rosenwald’s offer to found a museum, a lawyer named William Furlong began a legal battle contending that the park district did not have the authority to build or reconstruct buildings as early as 1924. He represented himself as a taxpayer and seemingly did not have much public support for his actions. It is also true that the newspapers were outspoken proponents of the museum project and did not report on Furlong’s actions kindly. The case made it all the way to the Superior Court of Illinois in 1926, which rejected the attorney’s claims. In 1929, almost three years after the South Park Commissioners had chosen Rosenwald’s project to fill the reconstructed Fine Arts building, Furlong renewed his legal attack.²⁶

In April of 1929, William Furlong brought a new suit against the park district and the museum. This time he claimed rightly that the bond issue was proposed to voters “as a restoration of the Fine Arts building, in exact replica, to be used as a convention hall, industrial museum, exhibition hall, and for similar purposes.”²⁷ The voters did not approve a single use, privately owned and operated, industrial museum. Furlong, perhaps seeing a new way to stop what he believed to be illegal action by the park district, sought an injunction to stop the use of money from the bond issue. If his petition had been granted, it would have greatly hindered the already struggling project. Attorneys for the park district and the museum “forced

²⁶ “ATTORNEY OPENS NEW ATTACK ON MUSEUM PROJECT: Asks Injunction to Stop Use of Bond Funds,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, April 17, 1929.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

an immediate hearing of the petition.”²⁸ The judge ruled that “the question of the legality of the issue had been decided by the Supreme Court,” and he would not comment further. With this legal hurdle cleared, museum director Waldemar Kaempffert announced to the Chicago Association of Commerce at the luncheon he was attending that work on the museum would begin June 1.

Legally the path was cleared for the industrial museum. R. C. Wieboldt Company was reconstructing the Fine Arts building and the museum had a director.²⁹ Now, the museum required a name. The two names suggested in 1926 to the South Park Commission were “Julius Rosenwald Industrial Museum” and “Rosenwald Industrial Museum.”³⁰ Rosenwald was not very comfortable with his name being so prominent; the Field Museum served as a cautionary tale. In October of 1928, Kaempffert wrote Julius Rosenwald and his lawyer Leo Wormser, as well as Sewell Avery, president of the board. Kaempffert had been corresponding about the museum’s name with Oskar von Miller of the Deutsches Museum and Director Simms of the Field Museum. Von Miller did not want “Chicago” in the title of the museum because “the museum would be national and international in character.”³¹ Simms was strongly opposed to the use of “Rosenwald.” Kaempffert reported:

²⁸ “COURT REFUSES WRIT TO HOLD UP MUSEUM PROJECT: Rules Park Bond Issue Is Legal,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, April 18, 1929.

²⁹ Museum of Science and Industry Board, “First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald,” 10.

³⁰ South Park Commissioners, “Official Proceeding of the South Park District, August 5, 1926 to June 20, 1927 Vol. 35,” 13.

³¹ Waldemar Kaempffert, “Letter from Kaempffert to Rosenwald, Avery and Wormser Regarding the Name of the Museum,” October 3, 1928, Wormser - King

I discovered on talking this matter [of the name] over with Mr. Simms, Director of the Field Museum, that the name "FIELD" has been a great handicap. There seems to be a feeling that the Field Museum exists for the glorification of the Field family. As a result, Mr. Stanley Field [nephew of Marshal Field and president of the Field board] must exert all the influence that he can to convince possible donors of its real purpose.

To give the recognition that Rosenwald deserved, Simms suggested that the museum follow the example of the University of Chicago.³² At the time, the phrase "founded by John D. Rockefeller" always appeared. Rosenwald thanked Kaempffert for confirming his qualms, writing, "I have always contended that my name in the title of the Museum would be a handicap and I delighted to know that Mr. Simms has expressed himself as you state."³³ In 1929, the legal name of the museum was changed from the Rosenwald Industrial Museum to the Museum of Science and Industry, and the board decided that "whenever the name 'Museum of Science and Industry' is used by or on behalf of this corporation (except in legal papers and documents), it shall be immediately followed by the words: 'founded by Julius Rosenwald.'"³⁴ This was a compromise that made all parties comfortable.

Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder D9721, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

³² Ibid.

³³ Julius Rosenwald, "Letter in Reply to Letter from Kaempffert to Rosenwald, Avery and Wormser Regarding the Name of the Museum," October 4, 1928, Wormser - King Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder D9721, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

³⁴ "Certificate of Change of Corporate Name and Increase of Number of Trustees of the Rosenwald Industrial Museum (a Corporation Not for Pecuniary Profit)" (Cook County, IL, July 9, 1929), Wormser - King Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder D9767, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

The Museum of Science and Industry was not the only industrial museum in the works during the first decades of the twentieth century. Dr. von Miller founded the Deutsches Museum in Munich in 1903. In the United States, several other industrial-type museums were founded before MSI. As mentioned earlier, the Museum of Peaceful Arts already had a staff when MSI was still looking for its first director. In 1912 Dr. George Kunz presented a paper at the annual meeting of the AAM in New York titled "The Projected Museum of Peaceful Arts in the City of New York." This was one year prior to Hooper's AAM paper on "Industrial Museums in Our Cities." Kunz similarly proposes that his "Peaceful Arts" museum "will furnish a thorough and effective education to our industrial workers, as well as to those who employ such workers in the many industries here represented."³⁵ Kunz, as well as those involved in the founding of MSI, were responding to the economic struggles that characterized the period. It would be another two years before the city of New York officially incorporated the Museum of Peaceful Arts in 1914. Despite the support of businessmen, the museum struggled for funding and could not find a site for the museum in its ideal location: Manhattan. In 1924, Henry R. Towne left a bequest of three million dollars, which finally enabled the museum to make real progress toward opening to the public.³⁶ The 1926 *New York Times* article "Chicago Doing It First" noted that Chicago was making progress in ways New York's Museum of Peaceful Arts was not. The article states, "While we are still saying it Chicago has

³⁵ "The Projected Museum of Peaceful Arts in the City of New York," 2, accessed December 22, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/projectedmuseumo00kunz#page/n3/mode/1up>.

³⁶ Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 267.

risen to do it.”³⁷ The editorial congratulated Rosenwald, but would not concede defeat. It notes that Chicago’s museum “will not lessen the need of a like museum here—even a greater one.”

The two issues that plagued the early history of the Museum of Peaceful Arts were already resolved for the Museum of Science and Industry by 1926. With millions already pledged for the building and museum, three from Rosenwald and five from the bond issue, significant funding was already secured. A museum location was secured, even if the building needed major repairs. The building was also in a location that the public was accustomed to visiting. Since private individuals and public agencies were already cooperating to support museums in Chicago, MSI’s founders were able to work within a preexisting system and move quickly.

Closer to Chicago, Henry Ford was working on his own version of an industrial museum. President Hoover officially opened Greenfield Village and the Edison Institute in 1929. Though some of it is set up like an “open air historical village . . . [it was also] rich in important American and British items of industrial development.”³⁸ Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander note that the Mechanical Arts Hall was “most important of all in showing technological development.” Influenced by the industrial museums in London and Munich, “all objects [in the hall] are full-scale, most of them original . . . [however, they are] largely

³⁷ “Chicago Doing It First,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1926, sec. SPORTS RADIO.

³⁸ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 97–98.

uninterpreted artifacts.”³⁹ Rosenwald and his fellow Commercial Club members knew about these and other planned industrial museums. Their announced plans and openings put pressure on MSI to open quickly. Rosenwald’s museum was going to stand out from Ford’s by not just showing, but explaining how science and industry came together. In his first year as director, Waldemar Kaempffert hired a curatorial and research staff, all of whom were specialists in their respective fields either academically or in private practice.⁴⁰

Kaempffert wrote about how he envisioned the Museum of Science and Industry fulfilling its mission in “Revealing the Technical Ascent of Man in the Rosenwald Industrial Museum.” He explains that “scientific principles and inventions are discovered and made to be utilized. What do they mean in our lives? It is this question that the Rosenwald Industrial Museum intends to answer as well as to explain science and industry technologically.”⁴¹ Using the example of an engine, Kaempffert notes that children’s knowledge of mechanics gained from seeing it move will be supplemented by “pictures and films [showing] what effect the engine has on the society” of which the child is a member. The social implications and progress that technology brought were just as important as the engineering and science behind them.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Museum of Science and Industry Board, “First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald,” 11–12.

⁴¹ Kaempffert, “Revealing the Technical Ascent of Man in the Rosenwald Industrial Museum,” 485.

Human fascination with mechanics and technology was clear. To prove his point, Kaempffert points to the small crowds that gather to watch “the stiff but effective movements of a steam-shovel excavating” at a construction site.⁴² Those crowds do not, however, “have the opportunity to gratify that interest, no opportunity to survey the technical and social progress of the past and evaluate the status of the present.” The museum he was shaping and Julius Rosenwald was sponsoring would give the people of Chicago and the world such an opportunity.

Another such opportunity was brewing in the city of Chicago. In 1933, Chicago would turn 100. To celebrate this occasion, city leaders decided that a World’s Fair should be put on. The fair would come to be known as A Century of Progress. In 1927, “political and business leaders selected oil tycoon Rufus C. Dawes to serve as chairman of the exposition board.”⁴³ He then brought his brother General Charles Gates Dawes, acting vice president of the United States, on to the board as head of the finance committee. The Dawes brothers proved to be a powerful team.⁴⁴ The not-for-profit organization, A Century of Progress, was organized by a group of Chicago’s leading citizens on January 5, 1928.⁴⁵

In February of 1929, Congress “endorsed the idea of holding a world’s fair in Chicago but made its support contingent on” those sponsoring the fair to raise five-

⁴² Ibid., 498.

⁴³ Grossman et al., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 124.

⁴⁴ To distinguish between the Dawes brothers, Rufus C. Dawes will always be referred to by his full name or Mr. Dawes. Charles Gate Dawes will be referred to by his full name or Gen. Dawes.

⁴⁵ James F. Fardy, Judge, A Century of Progress, a corporation, plaintiff, vs. Chicago Park District, a municipal corporation, et al., defendants (Illinois. Superior Court (Cook County) December 29, 1937).

million-dollars to prove financial solvency.⁴⁶ Gen. Dawes pledged to raise ten-million, in less than a week, before he left the country for England to serve as Herbert Hoover's ambassador to the Court of St. James (United Kingdom). *New York Times* reporter S. J. Duncan-Clark noted in a 1929 article that Gen Dawes "is much of a popular figure in Chicago, and his display of faith in the enterprise and confidence in the city will unquestionably have an excellent effect. No one doubts that the \$10,000,000 will be assured before he sails for England."⁴⁷ Demonstrating the depth of support for the 1933 fair, the Dawes brothers were able to secure over twelve million dollars (\$12,176,000 to be exact) to support the effort in 1929. Major subscribers to the fair were of course the Dawes brothers, but also Julius Rosenwald. Between the three men, a third of the subscriptions were covered.⁴⁸

As ambassador to the United Kingdom, Charles Gates Dawes could exert pressure that would benefit Chicago's fair, especially after the stock market crashed on October 29, 1929. Paris hosted a World's Fair in 1931, and during its planning, it was unclear whether the United States would send an exhibit. Not sending an exhibit to the Paris Colonial Exposition would jeopardize Chicago's chances of getting an exhibit from France for their upcoming fair, especially "given the

⁴⁶ Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 119.

⁴⁷ S. J. DUNCAN-CLARK Editorial Correspondence of THE NEW YORK TIMES, "CHICAGO WEAKENING IN EFFORTS FOR GOOD: Forces of Civic Righteousness Weary of Well-Doing in Face of Disappointments. DAWES STEPS INTO BREACH He Is Going to Raise \$10,000,000 for World's Fair Before He Leaves to Be Ambassador. Righteous Forces Seem Tired. Dawes to Aid Fair Project. Traction Troubles Waning. CHICAGO WEAKENING IN EFFORTS FOR GOOD," *New York Times*, June 2, 1929, sec. Editorial.

⁴⁸ Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 119–20.

worsening international economic climate.”⁴⁹ Cooperation would be key to A Century of Progress’ success. This was particularly true for the fledgling Museum of Science and Industry.

In the first annual report of the Museum of Science and Industry, Kaempffert wrote a short note about the relationship between the proposed World’s Fair and the new museum. He writes, “Both intend to show the evolution of science, engineering, and industry, although the Fair will confine itself largely to the last one hundred years.”⁵⁰ Both the Museum and World’s Fair also “seek to interpret the social and economic effects of science, engineering and industry.” These overlaps were useful, but perhaps a bit worrisome too. As always, the leadership of MSI sought the advice of Deutsches Museum director Dr. Oskar von Miller. Explaining the relationship between the Deutsches Museum and the Dusseldorf Exposition, he noted that the Exposition agreed to borrow exhibits, “cede to us [the Deutsches Museum] historic models,” and “promised financial support.”⁵¹ MSI would develop a similar relationship to A Century of Progress. Kaempffert had taken a position as a member of the National Research Council Science Advisory Committee, which worked with the trustees of the Chicago’s World’s Fair Centennial Celebration.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁰ Museum of Science and Industry Board, “First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald,” 29.

⁵¹ Oskar von Miller, “World’s Fair and Rosenwald Industrial Museum,” December 29, 1928, Wormser - King Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder D9721, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

Along with Kaempffert, the museum's curators of physics and geology were working with subcommittees of the fair.⁵²

A Century of Progress International Exposition was a mixed blessing for the museum. The fact that the board of the fair had chosen such a similar theme as the museum's meant that Rosenwald and the rest of the museum's supporters were right in believing that the public was interested in learning more about science and technology and how it had affected their lives. Given the delays in finding a director, the building reconstruction opening before the World's Fair seemed like an increasingly unlikely possibility. The year 1930 also proved to be a difficult time for the leadership of MSI.

During 1930, George Ranney joined MSI's board of trustees.⁵³ Ranney also served as director of International Harvester, a manufacturer of agricultural equipment and household products. For the board president, W. Rufus Abbott, Ranney seemed a perfect fit. For Director Kaempffert, this represented a conflict of interest given the museum's plan to have an entire section of the museum devoted to Agriculture and Forestry.⁵⁴ This was just the most obvious point of tension between Kaempffert and the board. On January 2, 1931, Waldemar Kaempffert

⁵² Museum of Science and Industry Board, "First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald," 29.

⁵³ Museum of Science and Industry Board, "Second Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald" (Chicago, IL: Museum of Science and Industry, December 31, 1930), 3, Wormser - King Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder File 19-A/D9766, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

⁵⁴ Museum of Science and Industry Board, "First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald," 11; Pridmore, *Inventive Genius*, 47.

resigned his position as director. Leo Wormser, now serving as secretary of MSI, contacted an ailing Julius Rosenwald about the resignation. Writing about “the Kaempffert problem,” Wormser recounts the conversation with Kaempffert:

He was visibly distressed. That he had not slept well for several weeks was noticeable in every line of his face and in every word he uttered. He was not only unnerved, but angry --- angry, I thought not only because of what had caused him to act, but angry because of the action he had taken.⁵⁵

Wormser then praises the former director for his ability to convey the “dream” of the museum to others. Now, they would need to find someone to enact it.

As leadership troubles and construction delays plagued the museum, A Century of Progress International Exposition loomed large. Cooperation between the two enterprises was the best course of action. Connecting with the board of the World’s Fair was easy enough. Rufus C. Dawes was a member of MSI’s executive committee.⁵⁶ Along with initially sharing the museum director and some curators, the “museum workshops were also engaged to build dozens of models for the fair’s huge Hall of Science.”⁵⁷ Similar to the Field Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry would reap the spoils of a World’s Fair in Chicago. The models, built by MSI staff, would be returned to the museum as well taking in “many other [exhibits and models] from around the world.”⁵⁸ In an agreement first created July 13, 1932 and renewed in May of 1934, “A Century of Progress was to pay the Museum of Science

⁵⁵ Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 376–77.

⁵⁶ Museum of Science and Industry Board, “First Annual Report of the Museum of Science and Industry Founded by Julius Rosenwald,” 3.

⁵⁷ Pridmore, *Inventive Genius*, 46.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

and Industry twenty-five per cent of all surplus funds” remaining at the close of the fair.⁵⁹ There was no surplus at the end of the first year, but it had been such a success that A Century of Progress was extended another year. Because the museum had and continued to “cooperate . . . in the preparation of scientific and industrial exhibitions” for the Fair, the contract was continued. For its part, A Century of Progress Corporation gave “publicity to the exhibits . . . [that were] presented by the Museum in its building.”⁶⁰ Entering into this contract would benefit the museum in more ways that could have been fathomed in 1934.

The World’s Fair board chose Major Lenox R. Lohr as the general manager of A Century of Progress. Charles Gates Dawes learned of Lohr after World War I when Lohr was editor of the journal *Military Engineers*.⁶¹ Gen. “Dawes was so impressed by Lohr’s right-thinking managerial prowess and fiscal talents that he decided to turn the general operation of his fair over to [Lohr].”⁶² Under Lohr’s leadership, something miraculous happened. A Century of Progress was a smashing success—not in the way every city might claim their World’s Fair was a success, but empirically. The Fair “[1] was attended by 45 million persons, [2] poured 200 million dollars into the city during depression years when it was vitally needed and [3] ended its two year run with a substantial profit, something unprecedented in the

⁵⁹ “Contract No. 5230: Agreement between A Century of Progress and Museum of Science and Industry,” May 19, 1934, Wormser - King Collection -- Very Early Papers (1926-39) Folder D9767, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Clay Gowran, “Lenox Lohr: Genius in Museum, Fairs: Lenox R. Lohr: Genius in Thrilling Crowds! Runs Big Fairs, Then Revives a Museum,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), December 9, 1962, sec. SECTION ONE.

⁶² Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 120.

history of pervious major American expositions.”⁶³ Franklin Delano Roosevelt was so impressed with A Century of Progress, and the economic stimulation it created, that “he urged the continuation of the fair into 1934.”⁶⁴ When A Century of Progress closed, Lohr left Chicago to take a position at NBC, later becoming the broadcasting company’s president.

For his part, Rufus C. Dawes moved from trustee to president of the Museum of Science and Industry. Julius Rosenwald had died in January of 1932, but Rufus Dawes and other members of the Commercial Club of Chicago would not let his museum die with him. In an address to the Commercial Club dated November 9, 1934, Dawes spoke passionately about his feeling of keeping MSI going. Mr. Dawes reminded members that “before [Rosenwald] provided for the establishment of this Museum he sought the sponsorship for the Commercial Club.”⁶⁵ Dawes continues:

He placed as it were this precious legacy to Chicago, his greatest gift to the city that he loved, in the hand of the members of his Club, and he reused to identify his own name with it. He felt that your interest and support and that of your successors in this Club would assure its permanent usefulness. And the Commercial Club, proud of Julius Rosenwald and grateful for his unexampled liberality, has accepted this charge and is faithfully observing it. It was Julius Rosenwald and not the Commercial Club that founded the Museum of Science and Industry, but the Commercial Club owes it to the memory of Julius Rosenwald to follow its development with continuing interest, and in fulfilling this obligation the Commercial Club will perform another notable service to Chicago.

⁶³ Gowran, “Lenox Lohr.”

⁶⁴ Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 106.

⁶⁵ Rufus C. Dawes, “Address by Rufus C. Dawes,” Address (Chicago: Commercial Club of Chicago, November 9, 1934), Wormser - King Papers/ The Commercial Club & MSI Governance (1929-1946) Folder: Commercial Club, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

The tone of speech implies the struggles faced by MSI. Though the board had hired new directors, first Otto Kreusser, and later Phillip Fox, the museum was not succeeding as it should have.⁶⁶ Operating expenses far exceeded income.⁶⁷

Rufus Dawes spoke with Major Lenox R. Lohr when the latter came to Chicago for a visit. Lohr served on the board of the museum, but his work in New York kept him from being very involved in museum activities. In the meeting, Dawes expressed his concerns with the direction MSI was taking. Fox, though a competent scientist, did not have much in the way of industry represented in the museum, a balance that was intended and explicit in the name of the museum.⁶⁸ When Dawes died in January of 1940, Lohr felt compelled to leave NBC and return to Chicago. A report to the Commercial Club of Chicago explains what happened next. The vacancy caused by Mr. Dawes' death "was filled by the election of Major Lenox R. Lohr, who took active charge in July."⁶⁹ The newly elected president then engineered the departure of the Museum Director. The article explains, "With the [requested] resignation of the former Director of the Museum, the duties of the office of Director were combined with those of the President." Fox, the former director, called the decision by Lohr "an assault without parallel and without precedent in any

⁶⁶ "O. T. Kreusser Picked to Direct Chicago's Industrial Museum," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, September 7, 1931; "Ousted Director Attacks Science Museum Firings," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, August 29, 1940.

⁶⁷ Gowran, "Lenox Lohr."

⁶⁸ Pridmore, *Inventive Genius*, 63-64.

⁶⁹ Committee on Industrial Museum, "Rough Draft of Report of Committee on Industrial Museum of the Commercial Club of Chicago for 1940-1941" (Chicago, IL: Commercial Club of Chicago, 1941), 1-2, Museum of Science and Industry Archives.

American cultural institution. It is an affront to the intelligence of the community.”⁷⁰

Though Lenox Lohr might “bristle” at being called a showman, on a scale between John Cotton Dana at one end and P. T. Barnum at the other, he would fall on the Barnum side of the scale.⁷¹

As the newspapers reported, Major Lohr brought rapid change to the museum. He “quickly restructured the museum's organization and focus.”⁷² Instead of resources being devoted to a large staff of researchers and in-house exhibit creation, Lohr looked outside the museum for exhibits. His new model “hoped to attract industry-sponsored displays through increased attendance. In exchange for construction and maintenance costs, the museum would allow the sponsor to advertise in the exhibit. Exhibit space would be allocated to 10 percent to historical achievement and 90 percent to the present.”⁷³ The changes Lohr brought made the museum financially sustainable.

Some of these changes were for the comfort of the visitors. When he took over, he “heaved the ‘no smoking’ signs into trash cans and put in ash trays, provided scores of places where visitors could rest, and established attractive cafeterias serving food at reasonable prices.”⁷⁴ Other than allowing smoking in the buildings, Lohr’s changes are still recommended today as ways to make visitors stay longer and enjoy their visit more. He brought the museum back to the exciting and

⁷⁰ “Ousted Director Attacks Science Museum Firings,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), August 29, 1940.

⁷¹ Gowran, “Lenox Lohr.”

⁷² Grossman et al., *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 555.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gowran, “Lenox Lohr.”

interactive museum Rosenwald envisioned. The change was drastic, and in 1941, attendance soared.

The balance between science and industry, past and present would continue to change over the years, but Rosenwald's Museum of Science and Industry was saved. The museum could not have been founded or prospered if so many people and organizations had not come together. The building would have fallen to ruin if a group of women had not shown that it could once again stand in glory. Those women would not have had the chance if the South Park Commission had razed the building when it was first suggested. Similarly, without the continued support of the Commercial Club or the infusion of resources from A Century of Progress, the museum could not have sustained itself after Rosenwald's death. It was a collection of sustained public and private effort that gave the Museum of Science and Industry all that it needed to flourish. The cooperation of the Commercial Club of Chicago, the South Park Commissioners, and A Century of Progress with the Museum of Science and Industry repeated the pattern of museum founding and support that enabled Chicago's museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to grow at an extraordinary pace and scale.



Figure 8) An early exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry that was on display during A Century of Progress, ca.1933. The building restoration was not complete at the time and the brick walls were still visible. Image courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago.

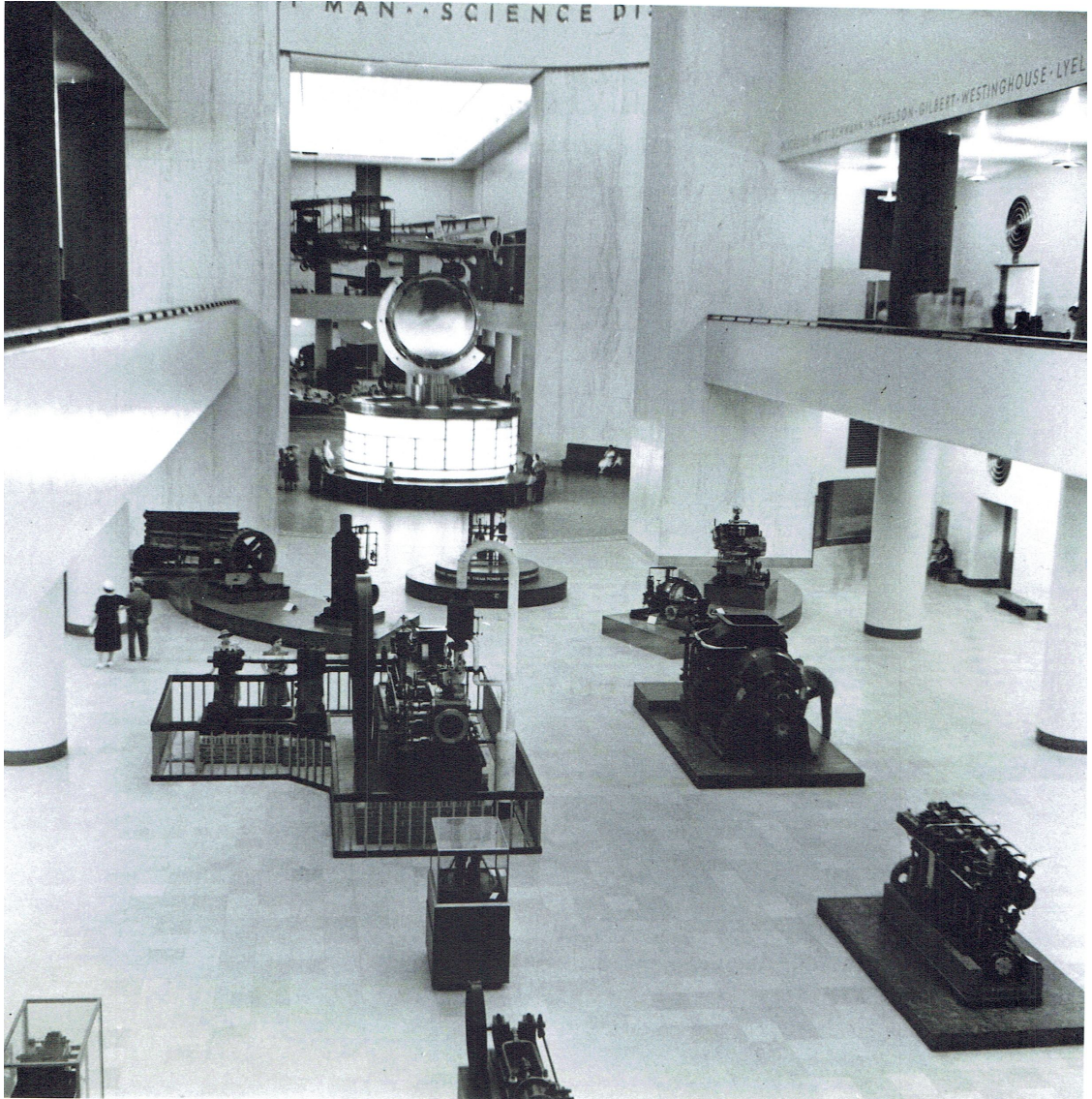


Figure 9) The main hall of Museum of Science and Industry in 1939. Image courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago.

CONCLUSION

A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

In the United States, both public and private support is required to found and sustain robust museums. Though this is true throughout the country, the early history of Chicago's major museums, between the 1880s and World War II, demonstrates the importance of this cooperation. Dramatic economic and social changes during this period primed Chicago's public and private sectors to work together to rapidly establish and support cultural institutions, especially museums. It was a time when Chicago's philanthropists, fueled by a need to promote their city as more than a place of commerce, invested their time and money into cultural institutions. Working together on these philanthropic endeavors were a park system and citizenry that were ready to embrace new museums. Museums mollified many of the perceived problems of Chicago: materialism and unrest. According to the wealthy elite, the fears and instability of the new urban environment could be mitigated by the introduction of culture into the city via museums. This attitude helps explain the rapid investment in Chicago's museums. Chicago's two World's Fairs punctuated and inspired this period of cultural investment while demonstrating how much Chicago had grown.

Today, public-private partnerships are touted as a new model for sustaining institutions that once relied solely on a single source of funding. Declining federal funding in the United States and abroad has inspired cultural institutions to seek

grants and partnerships from private sources. POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, for example, claims to be “the first public-private partnership institution of its kind.”¹ The Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, the city of Warsaw, and the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage partnered in 2005 to create the museum.² The funding model that POLIN used has a long tradition in Chicago.

The early histories of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Science and Industry all follow a similar model for founding and funding. Each began with support and investment from a small group of wealthy and well-connected men. This group had the means to invest large amounts of time and money into philanthropic endeavors. They also shared a connection to Chicago, where each man made his home and fortune. In their social club, the Commercial Club of Chicago, they discussed how to reinvest in and improve their city. Their investment included supporting the nascent cultural institutions that others among them were founding by serving as founding or board members of the museums.

Collaboration between public and private actors was key to the success of each of Chicago’s museums. Without the work of the Commercial Club of Chicago and numerous private individuals, it is difficult to imagine a situation where Chicago

¹ “Public-Private Partnership,” *POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.polin.pl/en/about-museum/public-private-partnership>.

² “About the Museum,” *POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.polin.pl/en/about-museum>.

would become home to many large and well-regarded museums so rapidly. All three museums also used Chicago's World's Fairs to further themselves. Without the Columbian Exposition, all would have been without their lakefront building. The fairs augmented the museums further by gathering collections, giving resources, and directing visitors to the museums.

City officials, especially the South Park Commissioners, were integral in giving space to the museums. It was only through their authority that the museums could be built on parkland. The Commissioners went to court several times to defend the legality of the museums' locations. Commissioners also put forward an annual tax levy that helped fund the museums. Taxpayers, too, willingly supported the museums. Every time the South Park Commission suggested a tax levy to help fund the museums in the parks, voters overwhelmingly supported it. Without public support, the Art Institute, Field Museum, and Museum of Science and Industry risked the same fates as Charles Willson Peale's privately funded museums.

In order to stay relevant and garner continued support, Chicago's museums adapted to the changing world around them by expanding into new areas of collecting and embracing new partnerships. By the 1920s, the Art Institute's acquisitions had expanded into more modern expressions of art. This choice by the collection team proved to be a wise one. By opening the collection to contemporary and American art, the AIC was able to procure two iconic American paintings before they were popular. In 1930, Grant Wood exhibited his now famous *American Gothic* at the Art Institute at its forty-third Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and

Sculpture. It won a small three-hundred-dollar prize, and the museum quickly secured *American Gothic* for its collection. It “quickly became one of America’s most famous paintings and is now firmly entrenched in the nation’s popular culture.”³ It was exhibited as part of the Century of Progress Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture. The Art Institute was similarly quick to recognize an important American art piece in *Nighthawks*. Added to the Art Institute’s collection the same year Edward Hopper painted it in 1942, *Nighthawks* is “one of the best-known images of twentieth-century art” and a prized possession of the AIC.⁴ Embracing modern art was one way that the AIC continued to stay relevant.

Another way the AIC worked to adapt to changing times and secure funding was to allow museum space to be used for more than exhibits and teaching space. Other museums had held after-hours special events, but they had been for their own patrons and boards. In 1974, “the Art Institute of Chicago became the first museum to develop a formal program to rent space to other organizations.”⁵ Reaching beyond traditional partnerships with schools and other museums would help sustain the Art Institute.

The Field Museum, similarly, has adapted to a new funding environment by embracing donations from corporations. In 1997, the Field Museum partnered with McDonald’s Corporation and Walt Disney resorts to purchase the fossilized T-Rex

³ *The Art Institute of Chicago: The Essential Guide*, Revised (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 2013), 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵ Marjorie Schwarzer and American Association of Museums, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2006), 57.

“Sue” at auction. Sue is “the largest, most complete, and best preserved *Tyrannosaurus rex* ever found.”⁶ Though there was some criticism of the “commercialism of this price-spiking deal,” the visitor turn out was “wildly enthusiastic.” The Field Museum’s attendance during the first five years of Sue’s exhibition increased by 30 to 40 percent.⁷ As uncomfortable as some critics might be with using corporate sponsorship to acquire collections, the practice is not drastically different from when wealthy private citizens helped found the museum or purchase items for the collection. The Field Museum has clearly adjusted to a new funding model in which corporations have replaced the nouveau riche patrons of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Museum of Science and Industry has always embraced partnerships with corporations and industry. This puts it ahead of many of the other funding trends for museums in the United States during the twentieth century. As a museum whose mission was to show the relationship between science and industry, it is not surprising that it was an early adopter. It was in 1941, under Major Lenox R. Lohr’s leadership, that “the largest miniature railroad in the world” became a mainstay of MSI’s Hall of Transportation.⁸ The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company sponsored the display. Today, MSI continues to partner with industries to bring in exhibits.

⁶ “SUE Press Release,” Text, *The Field Museum* (March 7, 2013), <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/about/press/sue-press-release>.

⁷ Schwarzer and American Association of Museums, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals*, 85.

⁸ Jay Pridmore, *Inventive Genius: The History of the Museum of Science and Industry*, Chicago, 1st ed (Chicago: The Museum, 1996), 69.

Even as partnerships with corporations have become the norm, federal, state, and local funding is still an important portion of the income each of the Chicago museums bring in. In the 2014 tax year, the Art Institute, Field Museum, and MSI reported revenue from contributions and grants as 22.4%, 54.0%, and 47.9% of their budget, respectively. 11.61% of the AIC grants were government grants (contributions), while 5.94% of the Field Museum's and 3.64% of MSI's grants came from the government.⁹ Each museum continues to participate in "Museums in the Park," the modern iteration of the museum tax the South Park District initiated in 1903. The Art Institute's list of foundation and government gifts notes that "the Chicago Park District generously supports all activities at the Art Institute of Chicago."¹⁰ Though the funding sources for each museum have shifted over time,

⁹ The Art Institute reported \$70,334,380 in contributions and grants (\$6,055,722 in government grants) with total revenue equaling \$312,795,230. The Field received contributions and grants totaling \$51,540,413 (\$8,663,940 government grants) and a total reported revenue of \$95,311,778. MSI reported \$26,262,579 in contributions and grants (\$7,206,532 in government grants) with total revenue coming to \$54,771,392.

"Form 990 Final - 2015-Annual-Tax-Return(Form 990)-Min.pdf." Accessed February 16, 2017. <http://www.artic.edu/sites/default/files/2015-Annual-Tax-Return%28Form%20990%29-min.pdf>.

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<http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2014/362/167/2014-362167011-0c4a5956-9.pdf>.

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¹⁰ "annual_reports_foundation_govenment_2016.pdf," accessed February 16, 2017, http://www.artic.edu/sites/default/files/annual_reports_foundation_govenment_2016.pdf.

public and private support continues to characterize the funding of Chicago's cultural institutions.

Chicago's museums between the 1880s and WWII were both the exception and the rule. They followed the national trends that embraced natural history, art, and science museums as well as metropolitan museum building. Chicago's cooperative establishment and funding model was American in nature, but was honed in the city of Chicago during the inter-Fair years. The rapid establishment of Chicago museums was exceptional. Using this model and their continued success demonstrates the cooperative model's potential for other museums. Resource sharing between city agencies and private individuals between the 1880s and World War II gave the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Science and Industry the means to persist, even during difficult economic times. It was the civic pride of Chicagoans that gave Chicago's museums their start and civic-minded cooperation that allowed them to thrive.

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