SLIDE 14

Daniel Burnham (American, 1846-1912)
Edward Bennett (American, 1874-1954)
*View of Chicago from Jackson Park to Grant Park, 1907, plate 49 from the Plan of Chicago, 1909* (detail)
Rendered by Jules Guérin (American, 1866-1946)
Watercolor and pencil on paper
On permanent loan from the City of Chicago

"Drawing is the mother of all arts," wrote Giorgio Vasari (1511-74) in the 16th century. And this is as true of architecture as of painting and sculpture. Houses, skyscrapers, building ornament, even city plans start with a pencil in the hand of an architect, and often this preliminary drawing, the germ of the idea, is made on the back of an envelope or a paper napkin. One of the most famous city plans ever conceived, the *Plan of Chicago*, published in 1909, began with drawings.

Often called the Burnham plan, because the organizer and director of this major design for a city was Daniel H. Burnham, the *Plan* was the work of many people, one of whom was the renderer Jules Guérin, the artist who turned the sketches by Burnham into the watercolor painting seen in the slide, his associate Edward Bennett, and other architects. Guérin lived in New York, and the planners worked in Chicago in an office in the Santa Fe Building (designed by Burnham's firm in 1903), which still stands across the street from the Art Institute. As soon as Burnham, Bennett, or another planner had finished a rough drawing, it was rolled up and rushed to a train station for a two-day trip to New York. Guérin would spend about a week transferring the rough drawing into one of his beautiful
watercolors, and then rush it back to the train station for the trip to Chicago. Guerin's stunning, impressionistic views, with their unusual perspectives and dramatic use of color, bring the Plan to life, imbuing it, as Burnham stated about his own aims, with "the magic to stir men's blood."

This view from above shows the city as the planners envisioned it, with an enlarged harbor formed by manmade peninsulas, the Lake Michigan shoreline turned into parks, and great diagonal boulevards channeling traffic into a new city center at the intersection of Halsted and Congress Streets. "The Chicago work has extended through three years ... it has been glorious fun, I can assure you," Burnham wrote a friend when the Plan was finished. And, "Make no little plans," he reputedly exclaimed around the time the Plan was made public. In his big plan, which emulated the grand classical design of European cities, Chicago was to become "a Paris on the Prairie."

In the flat plains of the Midwest, only the Great Lakes are a dramatic, natural feature. And only Chicago of the cities that border the lakes—Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo—embraces its lakefront with grace and elegance, a result of this foresighted plan. What else can we attribute to this Plan? The Magnificent Mile of Michigan Avenue for one thing. The first major bond issue passed to bring this dream on paper into reality was in 1910 for the widening of Michigan Avenue from Roosevelt Road (12th Street) to Randolph Street. When a new bridge was completed over the River at Michigan Avenue in 1920, another Plan recommendation, the widening continued, from Randolph to Oak Street. Trees and planters down the middle of the
Avenue were also part of the Plan; they were not installed until 1992. So, a plan made at the beginning of the 20th century is still affecting our city at the century's end. Another recommendation of the plan, to line the river with an esplanade and small parks, only began to become a reality in the 1980s and has a long way to go.

Burnham's renown in large-scale city planning began when he was Director of Works for Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. He supervised the building of the exhibition halls, lagoons, islands, bridges, roads, gardens and walks, creating a "White City" in what had been a swamp. He and his partner John Root were among the best known architects in the city when planning started for the Fair; two of their buildings, the Rookery (1885) and Monadnock (1891) still stand. The two architects were chosen for the Fair job, but when Root died in 1891 Burnham became the single director.

Unlike Louis Sullivan (see Medallion, slide 12) who was well educated for an architect of the 19th century, Burnham had no college education; his training was all on the job, including working for William Le Baron Jenney as Sullivan did a few years later. Burnham is part of the great triumvirate who put Chicago on the world map: Sullivan for his skyscrapers, Frank Lloyd Wright for his Prairie style houses, and Burnham for the Plan of Chicago. JC
QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

1. Have students research the Plan of Chicago and compile a list of its recommendations. What was completed and when? What was not completed and why not? Which of the manmade peninsulas were finished? (the smaller, inner ones) What stands at the end of each one? (Navy Pier and Adler Planetarium) What is on the one manmade island that was completed? (Meigs Field)

2. Ask students which is stronger and lasts longer, a piece of paper or a building. Explain that buildings are demolished but that their plans on paper can have a lasting impact. Have students research buildings by Sullivan, Burnham, and Wright that no longer exist. Visit the Art Institute to view Sullivan’s reconstructed Stock Exchange Room, architectural fragments, and architectural plans. What can we learn about Chicago and its history by looking at these “clues to the past”?

3. Burnham was the Director of Works for Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. Have students learn about the great “White City” -- its development, scope, and impact on Chicago and on history.