



# Fair of the century still enthralled Chicago

*The city celebrates again the architecture and amusements of the Columbian Exposition*

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Chicago

Up from ashes of the Great Chicago Fire came both a new skyline and, in time, plans for an opulent exposition and amusement park. The World's Columbian Exposition eventually drew 21 million visitors to the city.

What they found upon arrival was the first successful world's fair held in America with its buildings of classic Roman architectural style built just for the event. Reflective ponds shimmered in the sunlight. Examples of 20th century commerce from around the world filled display halls. Sideshows brought out the curious public and amusements ranged from a giant Ferris Wheel to Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

The year was 1893, only 22 years after fire called into question the future of the city on Lake Michigan. Chicago's "I Will" spirit that determined to survive after the Great Fire dug in again to transform the remade city into a worldwide attraction called the World's Columbian Exposition. The world would celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America.

## Schedule of events

- **Fireworks display:** Viewed from Grant Park at 10:15 p.m., Saturday, May 1.
- **Memorabilia:** 'Seven Days at the Fair: a Celebration of the World's Columbian Exposition,' at the Harold Washington Library Center, Saturday, May 1.
- **Free museum passes:** 'Chicago Day,' Sunday, May 2; free admission to 16 museums and entertainment facilities, many with special exhibits on the World's Fair of 1893.
- **Exhibit on the fair:** Chicago Historical Society's "Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893," opens Saturday, May 1.
- **The fair architecture:** Museum of Science and Industry's "Building MSI: 1893 to the 21st Century," opens Saturday, May 1.
- **Slide show:** Friends of Fabyan Forest Preserve present a slide lecture, "A Chicago World's Fair to Remember - The Columbian Exposition of 1893," covering the architecture and sculptures of the fair at 7:30 p.m. May 17 at the Unitarian Church, 102 S. Second St., Geneva. \$2 donation.
- **Photo exhibit:** Art Institute of Chicago's "Constructing the Fair: Platinum Photographs by C.D. Arnold of the World's Columbian Exposition," May 1 through July 4.
- **Bus/Walking tour:** Chicago Historical Society's tour "The Fair and the City," July 17.

The size of the fairgrounds (almost 10 times the size of those at the Paris world's fair of 1889), the scale and the grandeur of the buildings and the decorative references to historically significant European cities made an indelible impression on visitors' minds.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of that mammoth cultural undertaking, several Chicago museums and

entertainment institutions will pay tribute to the world fair starting this weekend. Many of the museums were founded in conjunction with the fair to share the city's cultural riches with visitors from around the world, says Ellsworth Brown, president of the Chicago Historical Society.

Leading the way is the Chicago Historical Society, at North Avenue and

Clark Street. The museum is the single most important repository of World's Columbian Exhibition paintings, photographs, publications and memorabilia.

The historical society has dubbed its two-gallery tribute "Grand Illusions," due to the architectural and philosophical facades put in place. Exposition halls built to appear hundreds of years old were actually made of plaster and lasted only six months. Inside, visitors found massive steel and glass sheds.

With about 500 objects on display from the fair, the historical society's exhibit running through July 15 also presents a multimedia presentation on the event, samples of merchandise and original packaging, a ship's anchor allegedly used on Columbus's third voyage to this continent, and souvenirs.

Some of the Midway's attractions that will be represented through original materials are the Japanese Village and the "Street in Cairo."

In the Fox Valley, the Friends of Fabyan mark the fair's importance in art and architecture with a slide lecture by Susan Epstein, an art history professor at Northwestern University. "A Chicago World's Fair to Remember" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 17, at the Unitarian Church, 102 S. Second St., Geneva. Admission is \$2.