

Remarks by Gary T. Johnson, President, Chicago History Museum,
at the celebration of Independence Day, July 4, 2009

Today the Fourth of July marks a very important day in Chicago History – the centennial of Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett’s “Plan of Chicago.” You will hear more about that later in the program, but now I am very pleased to welcome some very special guests – members of the families of Edward Bennett and Daniel Burnham.

(following the reading of the Declaration of Independence)

“That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness....”

Every year, it seems, there is a phrase in the Declaration that takes on a special meaning because of what’s happening around us. Did you notice the reference to the right of the people to “institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness....”? “*Laying foundations*” and “*organizing its powers*” – that’s exactly the spirit of the “Plan of Chicago” that was announced exactly one hundred years ago today. Only in a democracy – in a confident democracy, in a hopeful democracy – do people see a connection between laying foundations and their own happiness. And in the “Plan of Chicago,” we see what happens when a confident democracy, a hopeful democracy, masterfully lays foundations for the future of a great city.

Here with us to celebrate the “Plan of Chicago” is a great educator, and a great civic leader, one who also is a leader in the Plan of Chicago centennial – Adele Simmons.

[Adele Simmons discussed the centennial of the “Plan of Chicago” and introduced the guest speakers, Daniel Burnham V, and Timothy R. Bennett, who read excerpts from the “Plan.” Following that, the three presented the first gold leaf copy to Gary Johnson of a new edition of the “Plan of Chicago,” which was made possible by the Great Books Foundation.]

(following the presentation of the book)

Thank you Adele, Daniel and Tim. For the first time, the “Plan” is in paperback at an affordable price. That is a real public service.

It was no accident that the “Plan for Chicago” was launched on the Fourth of July. We can see that today very clearly, can’t we?

The wonderful thing about this hundred-year-old plan is that it is in the DNA of the people of Chicago. It’s a living plan. The phrases that were read to us still inspire us and challenge us to look ahead.

Thank you, all, for joining us in this special celebration.