THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEAUX-ARTS CITY PLANNING AND THE MUNICIPAL REFORM MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the history of architectural city planning in the United States between the early 1890's and the mid 1920's. It offers evidence for the relationship between the municipal reform movement and the Beaux-Arts city planning style. In establishing this relationship the fundamental problem is one of iconography: to demonstrate why the adherents to the municipal reform movement adopted the grand planning style as an institutional image for that reform.

The thesis presents a historical summary of the municipal reform movement as the first political manifestation of progressivism in the United States. This summary includes a description of late nineteenth-century urban politics and the reform cause, together with a brief sociological profile of the urban progressive. The chief American reform organization, the National Municipal League, established a program for political and administrative reform; both professionalism in the urban civil service and institutional reform are cited as the main reasons why architectural city planning became part of the program of the National Municipal League.

A discussion of the emergent Beaux-Arts city planning style centres on the Columbian Exposition or Chicago World's Fair of 1893. While the "White City" became an immediate model for urban physical reform, the progressive attitudes of its chief builders, Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham, were closely connected with those of contemporary liberal urban reformers. The thesis thus offers evidence for a continuity in planning after the Chicago Fair.

The historical and stylistic stage set, the thesis elaborates upon the iconography of Beaux-Arts city planning. The source of iconographical evidence is literary, embracing both theoretical polemics as well as commentaries and actual explanations of Beaux-Arts plans. The leading planning theorist within the municipal reform movement was Charles Mulford Robinson and the major Beaux-Arts practitioner was Daniel Burnham.

Finally, this thesis discusses the high point in Beaux-Arts planning and the concomitant widest acceptance of municipal reform principles. The grand planning and reform movements became strongly interrelated in *City Planning*, a textbook published by the National Municipal League. The reform cause and Beaux-Arts planning waned simultaneously, and by 1920 the relationship effectively ended. This disparate final condition, which saw Beaux-Arts planners continue their work outside institutional patronage, is

tested on a scheme for examining the social function of the arts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Before the advent of the municipal reform movement in the 1890's there was little demand for architectural city planning in the United States. Apart from conducting an initial municipal land survey, few American cities adopted further planning techniques.[1] From the post-Civil War period until the early 1890's, however, there was a great surge of physical growth, and America was unprepared for it. With the coming of industrialization in the latter half of the nineteenth century the American government pursued an active immigration policy; the result was that most new settlers established themselves as factory workers and residents of the larger Eastern cities. By 1890 American cities were growing three times as fast as rural areas.[2] The very idea of "urbanization" was so new that municipalities - even the largest - did not perceive their own jurisdictional, and hence, institutional integrity. Throughout this period state legislatures created and controlled cities through the establishment of numerous independent municipal boards to administer local functions.[3] In 1900 only four states granted constitutional "home rule" or chartering to cities.[4]

This lack of municipal independence was exacerbated by the partisan politics which controlled local decision-making. Even at the ward level political parties exerted a heavy-handed play for favours and consequently most elected figures, from the local "boss" mayor to state governor, seemed to be part of an unaccountable political machine. Frequently they were. The number of proven cases of municipal graft was unequalled in American history.[5] And such spectacular scandals as the New York Tweed Ring did involve the corrupt extension of partisan control from the state down to the local level.

Widespread civic graft became the object of attack for a group of aggressive journalists who later became known as the "muckrakers". These journalists successfully initiated the vigorous prosecution of corrupt politicians, but more importantly they focussed attention on the abysmal condition of local government in the United States. The reform cause was taken up by the "progressives" who, in the mid-'nineties represented the younger generation of liberals who were self-admittedly "modern" and of the urban middle or upper-middle class.[6] The progressives took as one of their immediate goals the elimination of political corruption and indeed, they succeeded in exposing and unseating many political bosses guilty of graft. But the progressives also sought a more pervasive and permanent ideal, namely "Municipal Reform," and they soon established programmes designed to bring new values to the government and administration of cities. Their two key reforms were first, the elimination of partisan (and hence corrupting) politics from municipal government, and second, the establishment of a professional civil service at the municipal level.[7] It so happened that by the provisions of this second reform the progressives became the first coherent body in North America to sanction professional civic planning. In the mid-'nineties the prevalent architectural civic planning style was Beaux-Arts, so it was partially by temporal circumstance that the Reform Movement adopted its institutional image - an apparent paradox with which few historians have been comfortable since.

American architecture of the latter half of the nineteenth century, while undergoing changes of style and constructional experimentation, remained rather constant in its institutional values. By the early 1890's there were two stylistic movements in architecture: the Beaux-Arts school, comprised mainly of architects who had graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the emergent Chicago school whose leading architects were Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler. The Beaux-Arts idiom was traditional in that its leading adherents - architects such as Richard Morris Hunt, Charles F. McKim and Stanford White - were dedicated to the interpretation of historical styles. While Hunt favoured the French Renaissance, McKim and White looked to the Italian Renaissance and Neoclassical styles for inspiration. In contrast, the architects of the Chicago school rejected historical styles and worked in a more experimental and synthetic mode. In terms of stylistic alternatives, according to the conventional argument, urban reformers might have chosen either the Chicago-school cityscape with its skyscrapers and organic form, or the Beaux-Arts urban ideal with its unmistakable allusions to the cities of Europe.

The catalyst which convinced most people, including the progressives, to make the connection between the Beaux-Arts style and civic planning reform was the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.[8] Daniel Burnham was chief architect and Director of Works, and under him were such prominent architects as Richard Morris Hunt, C. F. McKim, Stanford White and Louis Sullivan. The leading American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted drew the site plan. The scale of the Exposition was enormous and Beaux-Arts eclecticism provided the stylistic inspiration for the site plan as well as for most of the buildings. Moreover, Burnham and his consultants were determined that the entire architectural scheme share a physical unity in scale and in colour, with the result that the Exposition became known as the "White City" - the paradigm of a new urban ideal.

The Chicago World's Fair was very popular and "modern". Its planners and builders were the leading institutional architects nationally. These two facts promoted an identification of Beaux-Arts civic planning with progressive municipal reform. In fact, the same year as the Chicago Fair the Municipal League of Philadelphia called a "National Conference on Good Government" to give civic reform a proper organizational footing in the United States.[9] The events of the year 1893, then, were of greatest significance in terms of progressive awareness of both grand-scale planning and municipal reform.

But surely Neo-Classical architecture and Neo-Baroque planning were antithetical to the liberal reform programme of the 'nineties! This notion has become a premise among many architectural and political historians who see progressive democratic reform as something alien to an urban planning style which connoted aristocratic, sectarian and even corrupt governance.[10] Beaux-Arts planning under progressive patronage is thus a historical paradox, and its apparent lack of success or at least lack of complete implementation around the turn of the century is given as evidence for its failure to reflect the needs of the institution for which it was intended. No attempt seems to have been made by an architectural historian to reconcile or to explain this paradox, except to infer that the progressives failed to call upon the Chicago or Prairie Schools to provide that image of civic reform.[11]

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the strong connection between Beaux-Arts civic planning and the municipal reform movement to prove that those who supported the municipal reform movement commissioned Beaux-Arts planners, as to establish an iconography - a relationship between the stylistic medium on the one hand and the philosophical matrix or ideological belief system on the other. The primary materials to be examined are not only the manifestations of Beaux-Arts planning, but also the perceptions of Beaux-Arts planning principles by the contemporary planners and municipal reformers. The most active reform-minded planners spent their energies proselytizing ideal civic planning principles. In essence, it is the discursive method of the Beaux-Arts civic planners which lies at the heart of the iconographical problem. This thesis will examine the writings of several influential Beaux-Arts practitioners and apologists, including Edward Bennett, Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Charles Mulford Robinson. The secondary materials to be examined include representative examples of Beaux-Arts schemes influenced by Progressivist concepts.

This thesis considers two art historical approaches. The first is the combined stylistic and ideological analysis of ideal city plans, particularly that used by Dr. Helen

Rosenau in *The Ideal City*.[12] Because Beaux-Arts city planning under Progressivist influence is demonstrably idealistic, it follows that thematically it ought to be included in the history of ideal city plans. The second art historical approach is that suggested by Dr. Alan Gowans for the analysis of social function in the arts. This methodology is appropriate in explaining what Beaux-Arts planners "did in and for" their society.[13] Again, given the idealistic nature of this planning, perhaps the ultimate reason why it was not more tangibly nor widely influential was that the planners themselves were self-admitted devotees to a "fine arts" movement; that in fact Beaux-Arts planners neglected social function and practiced their art as an end in itself.

Notes

Chapter I

[1] John W. Reps, *Town Planning in Frontier America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 422-429.

Williamsburg, Virginia, was perhaps the most prominent example of architectural or "three-dimensional" city planning in colonial America. It was designated the capital of Virginia in 1699, and shortly thereafter Governor Francis Nicholson produced an axial plan with the College of William and Mary and the Capitol at either termination of Duke of Gloucester Street. *Ibid.*, fig. 45 and pp. 137-144.

The other leading colonial city planned three-dimensionally, though not so explicitly as Williamsburg, was Philadelphia. In 1681 William Penn specified the use of land for parks and the general siting of buildings in this new capital. *Ibid.*, fig. 68 and pp. 204-215.

[2] Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half Century of Municipal Reform* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 2.

[3] These independent boards were each headed by an elected official. Typical boards included those of city engineer, fire engineer, treasurer, auditor, solicitor, police judge, superintendent of markets and, of course, of the mayor himself.

John A. Fairlie, *Municipal Administration* (London: MacMillan, 1910), pp. 87-88.

[4] Stewart, *Municipal Reform*, p. 6.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[6] Ernest S. Griffith, *A History of American City Government - The Progressive Years and Their Aftermath 1900-1920* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 21-22.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[8] Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 74.

[9] Stewart, *Municipal Reform*, p. 15.

[10] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 173.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 173. For a historian's perception of this paradox see David W. Noble, *The Progressive Mind* (Chicago; Rand McNally, 1970), p. 122.

[12] Helen Rosenau, *The Ideal City* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 12-15.

[13] Alan Gowans, *The Unchanging Arts* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971), pp. 3-12.

CHAPTER II

THE ADVENT OF THE MUNICIPAL REFORM MOVEMENT AND ITS CITY PLANNING POLICY

The first manifestations of progressive politics in the United States occurred at the local government level.[1] The dismal state of civic government, following the rise of cities after the Civil War, became worse during the 1870's and 1880's. The inverse relationship of physical growth to political decay was obvious to all, and disturbing.

Municipalities were the legal creations of state government, but state government was seldom consistent in delegating specific legislative powers. This "power vacuum" was filled by the urban political machine.[2] Concessions to local legislative automony were few and awkward. In the 1880's, for example, there was a gradual tendency to concentrate authority and responsibility in the mayor.[3] The so-called "strong mayor" not only appointed municipal administrators but through them he controlled the local civil service.[4] Such an overwhelming concentration of power was often abused. Moreover, most municipal councils were elected on the ward system and the practice of partisan politics at that level gave a seedy and frequently corrupt atmosphere to local government. The latter half of the nineteenth century was the reigning period of the ward and city "bosses" whose power was based on rigged elections, power-brokerage, patronage, and police pay-offs.[5] By the early 1880's the number of weak and corrupt civic administrations had reached epidemic proportions. In fact, reform-minded individuals most consistently perceived local government as a type of disease.[6]

The health metaphor would have had great appeal to the progressive individual in the early 'nineties. If such a person could be described in general terms his profile might emerge thus: The progressive would be an urbanite in an age-group ranging from the mid-twenties to the mid-forties, likely a family head and a member of the middle or upper-middle class.[7] His background would be either Anglo-Saxon or North European although he would undoubtedly be considered an exemplary American citizen. He would be Protestant and likely an active member of a prominent dissenting denomination or sect: Presbyterian, Methodist, Christian Scientist or Unitarian.[8] In the last decade of the nineteenth century progressives had yet to organize any cohesive political body, so that the individual progressive might have Republican or Democrat affiliation.[9] Occupationally, the progressive was a professional or businessman; typical callings among progressives included those of lawyer, clergyman, physican, university teacher, journalist (as opposed to reporter) and the many other solid, white-collar positions an urban middle-class American would have found respectable.[10] But it was not simply these socio-economic factors which made the progressive profile. To these were added important ideological and philosophical premises. The progressive was generally highly patriotic and even chauvinistic.[11] More specifically he was dedicated to "civic virtue," that is, a sense of individual public duty. This was a key concept, especially pertinent to the writings of reform movement city planners at the turn of the century. Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristics of a progressive was his "activist" nature. He argued that social evils would not remedy themselves, and that it would be wrong to sit by passively and wait for future events to unfold as they might.[12] Finally, one of the most general yet highly communicable traits of the progressive was his intense optimism. He believed that the American democracy and its spirit of enterprise had a glorious future - a kind of manifest destiny.[13] This tendency among progressives was by far the most idealistic; it presumed a national dedication to altruism, non-discrimination, fair business practice and even health itself.[14] Within a decade this total outlook which was characteristic of the progressive individual did in fact expand itself to a national scale and within a second decade, namely the period between 1900 and 1910, it had a pronounced and ubiquitous influence in American life - from breaking monopolies to agitating for female suffrage to prohibiting alcohol.[15]

In the early 'nineties the progressives applied their principles to municipal reform. By that time civic corruption had reached its most ostentatious level and already there was agitation for reform. Journalists later known as the "muckrakers", writers who were inclined to challenge the political parties and all other institutions, began to publicize the practices of city bosses.[16] Since the 'seventies political cartoonists like Thomas Nast (famed for his attacks on Tammany Hall in New York) joined muckraking journalists as major forces in the national campaign against corruption. But muckraking, however aggressive, did not provide leadership; it only influenced the timing of the cause.

Exactly why the progressives mobilized when they did is an essential historiographical question, answerable in terms of the U.S. power structure which rested on huge business enterprises like U.S. Steel and Standard Oil in the 'nineties. The United States itself was in the hands of businessmen who, within the decade, would finally shirk off the Populists - respresenting one of the last vestiges of democratic agrarianism - and commit the country to industrialism, international commerce, and the gold standard. According to Parrington:

> The immediate reaction to so broad a shift in the course of manifest destiny was a growing uneasiness amongst the middle class - small business and professional men - who looked with fear upon the program of the captains of industry . . . . It was to this great body of petite bourgeoisie that members of the lesser intellectuals - journalists, sociologists, reformers - were to make appeal.[17]

But this reaction, or at least a semblance of it, took place at the urban level between the years 1890 to 1894, a full ten years before the upsurge of national Progressivism. Even then, on a smaller scale a similar situation existed. In the words of Jackson and Schultz,

> The urban boss can be viewed as one of the successful businessmen coming to power and prominence during the late nineteenth century, and the [political] machine as a prototype of the business corporations arising at the same time.[18]

One could then say that it was not simply the visibility of local corruption in the 'nineties which compelled the progressives to action. It was largely this threat to security as it was perceived simultaneously by a number of middle-class urbanites which gave impetus to the municipal reform movement.

Only such a foregoing explanation could accommodate the fact that the greatest number of municipal reform groups were independently organized in the five-year period between 1890 and 1894.[19] The volunteer citizens' reform club was the new institutional vehicle by which the progressives hoped to achieve their goals. As these local organizations mushroomed in the early 'nineties their very names - "municipal league, reform league, city club, civic federation, good government club" - connoted progressive goals.[20] Understandably, the members of these organizations were chiefly business and professional men. That women were allowed to join most of these organizations denoted a liberal stance. In the area of policy these groups seldom differed, and for the most part they sought such concrete reforms as:

> honest, efficient, and economical administration; reduction of taxes; simplification of government; suppression of the saloon; home rule; improved legislation and charters; civil service reform; [and] . . . conduct of local government upon non-partisan and strictly business principles.[21]

Several of these reforms ought to be considered individually. The two principles of "economy and efficiency" were basic to the whole movement. "Economy and efficiency" became twinned and in later years the denotation "E and E" was used automatically to signify a "reform man".[22] For "home rule" and "improved legislation and charters" the progressives appealed to state legislatures for more local autonomy. "Simplification of government" meant no less than a complete structural change in municipal administration. The reformers wanted the ward system and "strong mayor" combination of government abolished in favour of a council system with the aldermen and mayor elected at large. One recipe for a paradigmatic "simplified" council was that of Richard S. Childs, a young progressive who wrote, "To avoid blind voting, elective offices must be (a) visible, (b) not too numerous, (c) not unimportant, (d) not dull."[23] This formula became known as the "short ballot", simply because of the fewer number of elected officials. Civic administration, of course, normally required many more officials than the short ballot could elect, but by "civil service reform" the progressives hoped to have more officials appointed. These would be professional civil servants, hired by a personnel commission, and responsible for carrying out the daily non-political government functions. Finally, the reformers believed that local government ought to be conducted "upon non-partisan and strictly business principles." The assumption here was that partisan politics was antithetical to business; in other words, the burden of proof that politics did not foster administrative corruption was placed in the hands of the partisan politicians. This notion was later paraphrased by S. J. Duncan-Clark who bluntly stated that ". . . the election of a partisan administration means that the service of the community must take second place to the service of the party."[24] Again, the progressives wanted strict political autonomy at the municipal level - almost a call for the city-state concept, with an explicit "civic leglislature."[25] From an architectural point of view one might surmise that the need for an institutional image for this new ideal autonomous city must have been in the minds of some progressives.

In 1893 the Municipal League of Philadelphia instigated a National Conference for Good City Government. The League invited all local reform associations to send representatives, but it also invited progressive individuals, such as Theodore Roosevelt, whose talents could be used in the newly-enlarged cause. Importantly, the guest list included Frederick Law Olmsted of Brookline, Massachusetts.[26] The fact that America's leading landscape architect was asked to contribute to a national congress on municipal reform indicated the seriousness of the progressives in providing an *image* for that reform.

The result of the Philadelphia Congress was the formation of the National Municipal League. A year later, in May 1894, the League held its first meeting in New York City. Various municipal and civic reform groups named delegates to that first meeting, which considered resolutions and prepared its first programme for civic government in the United States. This programme included not only the basic progressive tenets of "good government" but it also delineated these reforms in detail.

The League published these in a lengthy report, a "blueprint" for an ideal municipal government. The concept of the civic legislature was institutionalized; under the heading "Powers of City" all local corporate and jurisdictional powers were described.[27] Included was the power "to regulate the height of buildings and method and style of construction" - in other words, strict municipal control of architecture through the medium of city planning. Moreover, this regulatory section included the power "to establish and maintain schools, museums, libraries and other institutions" for benefit and edification of citizens. The presumption here was obviously that the city ought to consolidate these institutions under its control. It followed that the city would then be the controlling agency for the architecture of the structures. Finally, from a planning perspective, this section on municipal power included the provision for civic annexation of "territory contiguous and adjacent to its limits." Again, the notion of civic state is implicit.[28] Most progressives perceived merit in a large, centrally-controlled civic institution with such unprecedented powers.

These reforms having been articulated, it remained for the progressives to think about *a new image for the city.* By definition this new city would have to be large and integrally planned. It would have to symbolize efficiency and professional control. Above all, it would need to give expression to the concept of civic virtue. These were the specifications of the National Municipal League in 1894.

Notes

Chapter II

[1] Arthur S. Link, *American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 83.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[3] Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half Century of Municipal Reform* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 6.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[5] Perhaps the most infamous city boss was William Marcy Tweed of New York City whose followers included:

> . . . the governor of the state, the mayor, and numerous underlings on the bench, the Board of Supervisors, the Board of Education, and in most other branches of city government.
>
> His ties stretched from the legislature in Albany to the local precinct in New York City.

One of the Tweed Ring "specialities" was election-fixing, made possible because the secret ballot was not widely used in American elections until the early 1890's. On polling day the candidates or political parties distributed open-ballots, and the bosses organized "repeaters" who voted for the party ticket at several polling places. One of Tweed's captains explained the advantage in having bearded repeaters:

> When you've voted 'em with their whiskers on, you take 'em to a barber and scrape off the chin fringe. Then you vote 'em again with the side lilacs and a mustache. Then to a barber again, off comes the sides and you vote 'em a third time with the mustache. If that ain't enough and the box can stand a few more ballots, clean off the mustache and vote 'em plain face. That makes every one of 'em good for four votes.

Besides the power-brokerage and election-fixing of bossism the worst in documented occurrences of political graft took place at this time, and the three most frequent sources were police payoff, the securing of public utility franchises "for a consideration" and direct raids on city treasuries by political parties.

Kenneth T. Jackson and Stanley K. Schultz, "Bosses, Machines, and Urban Reform," *Cities in American History*, ed. K. T. Jackson and S. K. Schultz (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 362-63.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[7] Ernest S. Griffith, *A History of American City Government: The Progressive Years and Their Aftermath, 1900-1920* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 21-22.

[8] Link, *American Epoch*, pp. 35-38.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[10] Griffith, *The Progressive Years*, pp. 16-17.

[11] The progressive's perception of American imperial ambition is interesting. The Spanish-American War, for example, "represented an expression of the tendency toward a crusading morality or moralism of the American people in its most undiluted form. It gave a new dimension to the people's sense of mission. It added one more stimulus, however indirect, to the progressive mood."

Griffith, *The Progressive Years*, p. 16.

[12] Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Movement. 1900-1915* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 4.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[14] In his chapter entitled "Progressive Fundamentals" proselyte S. J. Duncan-Clark clearly refers to this altruism in his definition of the Progressive Movement as ". . . an attempt, scientifically and philosophically, to discover a means for such readjustment of all factors (social, industrial, political), in their mutual relations and interdependence, as will result in the largest measure of good from the whole people."

S. J. Duncan-Clark, *The Progressive Movement* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1913, reprint New York: A. M. S. Press, 1972), pp. 1-2.

[15] Hofstadter, *Progressive Movement*, pp. 5-6.

[16] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 186-188.

[17] Vernon L. Parrington, "The Progressive Era: A Liberal Renaissance," *The Progressive Era: Liberal Renaissance or Liberal Failure?*, ed. Arthur Mann (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Windston, 1963), p. 7.

[18] Jackson and Schultz, "Bosses, Machines, and Urban Reform," *Cities in American History*, p. 365.

[19] In 1890 there were about twenty such groups but by 1894 there were over eighty.

Stewart, *Municipal Reform*, pp. 11-12.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[22] These twin principles have comprised the most enduring policy contribution of the Municipal Reform Movement. According to two contemporary political scientists,

> From early in the twentieth century until the late 1960's, a single approach to diagnosing problems and prescribing improvements in government has dominated the thinking and recommendations of most analysts of urban government in the United States. That single approach has been called the efficiency and economy reform movement or the good government reform movement.

Robert L. Bish and Vincent Ostrom, *Understanding Urban Government* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1973), p. 7.

[23] Richard S. Childs, *Civic Victories* (New York, 1952), cited in Ernest S. Griffith, *The Progressive Years*, p. 55.

[24] Duncan-Clark, *The Progressive Movement*, p. 273.

[25] Stewart, *Municipal Reform*, p. 34.

[26] The guest list of the National Conference for Good City Government appears in "Call for the Conference and Endorsement," Appendix A, Stewart, *Municipal Reform*, p. 201.

[27] All quotations under the heading "Powers of City" are taken from "A Municipal Program, Report of a Committee of the National Municipal League, adopted by the League, November 17, 1899, Together with Explanatory and other Papers (1900)," cited in Stewart, *Municipal Reform*, p. 33.

[28] Some reformers actually did consider the historical civic state as an ideal model for the emergent American city. Thus Frederic C. Howe reasons,

> Home rule would create a city republic, a new sort of sovereignty, a republic like unto those of Athens, Rome, and the mediaeval Italian cities, a republic related to the state as the states are now related to the nation at large.

Frederic C. Howe, *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 164.

CHAPTER III

EMERGENCE OF THE BEAUX-ARTS CITY PLANNING STYLE

The Programme of the National Municipal League, in its brief and statutory manner, defined the concept of city planning as it had never before been understood in America. In delineating ideal civic powers the progressives included the regulation of both land and architecture, in other words, they saw the need for "architectural town planning" or "three-dimensional planning." Such a comprehensive scheme could only have been possible with a concomitant restructuring of municipal government, as we have seen. However, by anticipating the coming reform enthusiastic progressives were already seeking physical models for the new city. To participate in the National Conference for Good Government in 1893 they had invited Frederick Law Olmsted, a landscape architect whose life's work had seemed to peak that same year in his plan for the Chicago World's Exposition. Indeed, most progressives looked upon the Chicago "White City" with its unity of building style and scale together with its grand planning scheme as a paradigm for the new American city. In the words of J. Horace

McFarland, president of the American Civic Association and progressive spokesman:

> It remained for Chicago to awaken our dormant sense of form and appropriateness in architecture and environment, and to show what planning could accomplish.[1]

The predominant architectural idiom of the Fair was Beaux-Arts Neo-Classicism based on Imperial Roman orders. This style stimulated America's "dormant sense of form" by providing a persuasive image of civic virtue which, for most Americans and certainly for the patriotic reformer, had been absent since the Civil War. The grand-scale and stylistically accurate Roman Imperial motif was an emblem of manifest destiny as understood by the progressives. Similarly, Frederick Law Olmsted gave substance to the "form and appropriateness" of an ideal American "environment" with his planning at the Chicago Fair. Here Olmsted not only worked within the given Beaux-Arts idiom - incorporating grand scale, axial ordering and control of vistas - but he added his own repertory of park and suburban landscape architecture. In 1893 the progressive thus praised the Fair as a model for American urban planning.

Stylistically, the convergence of architecture and planning on the scale of the Chicago Fair was perhaps the nineteenth-century American triumph in eclecticism. Ideologically, the Fair was a symbol of planning efficiency - an "instant city" built by professionals and technicians and almost entirely free from the influences of politicans.[2]

The progressive could easily believe that "style" and "efficiency" were indivisible in the same way that he could perceive "economy and efficiency" as coefficients.

For a man such as Horace McFarland the notion of "appropriateness" stood for an amalgam of ideals and physical manifestations. He saw in the White City evidence of efficiency, hygiene, civic virtue and freedom from political corruption; therefore, he recognized an ideal urban setting. Moreover, it so happened that the Beaux-Arts practitioners of 1893 interpreted "appropriateness" in the same way. The two leading functionaries of the Chicago Exposition, landscape architect Frederick Olmsted and chief architect Daniel Burnham, also consciously imported "progressive" ideals in their work.

In the career of Frederick Law Olmsted planning was closely woven with personal ideals. Born in 1822, Olmsted grew up in New England where agriculture was "his first enthusiasm."[3] Although he attended Yale for a short time, by 1847 he owned a home landscaping and nursery business. Olmsted also participated in local county affairs and thus began a life-long but futile attempt to understand politics. His curiosity, mostly in the field of landscape design, took him on lengthy travels - first around the United States and then to Europe. Although Olmsted found little planning inspiration in the Southern "slave states," his journey through that part of America aroused in him an Abolitionist and humanitarian conviction which grew in his later years.

Olmsted's first writings were the result of his experiences in the South. That the purpose of these writings was "to induce tolerance" seems awkward to us now. But from a planning perspective his first work is crucial, in that it alludes to a key reform theme of improvement through the use of appropriate surroundings. In his "Remedial Measures" Olmsted asks rhetorically of the Southern landowners:

> Can they, want [sic] nothing but corn, coffee, hogs, niggers and camp furniture, support mechanics and merchants?[4]

As a remedy Olmsted suggested the establishment of an industrial base for the South and a vigorous promotion of education. He called for separate urban and rural areas, the latter carefully cultivated and controlled to prevent further "despoiling of virgin lands" by the crude slash-and-burn farming practice.

Olmsted's journey abroad undoubtedly contributed more to his stylistic idiom. In 1856 he went to Europe where he found the landscape of Italy particularly inspiring. Brimming over with his newly-acquired vocabulary of ideal landscape Olmsted returned to the United States in 1857. That same year he obtained his first significant appointment as superintendent of the new Central Park in New York City. He associated himself with Calvert Vaux, the English architect who had been in partnership with Andrew Jackson Downing. Through the medium of his new associate

Olmsted drew upon fashionable Downingesque designs in the competition for a new design for Central Park. His submission being successful, Olmsted was appointed architect-in-chief of Central Park in May 1858.

The Olmsted-Vaux plan for Central Park (Fig. 1) was seminal to the development of urban planning in America in at least three ways. First, the "reform" nature of the plan was without precedent in the areas of efficiency and safety. According to Albert Fein's analysis:

> . . . the designers made separate provisions for three forms of movement within the park itself - in vehicles, on horseback, and on foot. Such attention to safety was revolutionary; for the first time in any city, a child keeping to the pedestrian walk 'might toddle from one end of the Park to the other, and run no danger whatever'.[5]

Second, Olmsted described the park as "a democratic development of the highest significance," a model landscape meant to set a national standard and simultaneously to inspire civic virtue.[6] Third, the plan for Central Park brought recognition to Olmsted and Vaux as practitioners of landscape design within an urban setting.[7] This was an important intermediate step towards professional city planning in America.

The Civil War preempted much of the urban planning effort. Olmsted took a leave of absence and was offered the position of general secretary of the United States Sanitary Commission, the parent organization of the American Red

Cross. Omsted accepted the position and worked enthusiastically to coordinate the research and planning of physical and social environments.[8] Unfortunately his health was weak, and in 1863 Olmsted abdicated his strenuous duties and moved to California. There he took up landscape architecture once again, designing improvements for Yosemite State Park as well as a plan for the new University of California at Berkeley. In 1865 Olmsted returned to New York City where he and Vaux resumed their positions as landscape architects of Central Park. The next twelve years were prosperous; Olmsted expanded his practice and took on his son, Frederick Law, Jr. Beginning with Prospect Park in Brooklyn (1866), the firm produced major works in Chicago, Buffalo and Boston. Although Olmsted was quite successful in his institutional commissions - he was retained to design the grounds of the U.S. Capitol at Washington in 1874 - he was becoming increasingly disenchanted with unsavory government administrations. According to Hubbard, ". . . political machinations finally removed him from Central Park" in 1878.[9]

After an extensive trip around Europe Olmsted returned to Boston where he resided and practiced from his home in Brookline after 1881. In this final period of his career he designed and supervised his finest private and public commissions, including the "Biltmore" estate for George W. Vanderbilt at Asheville, North Carolina; the

Boston and Hartford parks, and above all the Columbian Exposition at Chicago. During this part of his practice Olmsted had become conversant in the Beaux-Arts idiom through travels and associations with architects such as Richard Morris Hunt, with whom he collaborated at Biltmore and later at Chicago. But the development of style alone did not motivate Olmsted during these years. At the same time he publicized those ubiquitous "political machinations" which he had so grown to abhor. In a short work entitled *The Spoils of the Parks* he exposed, according to Hubbard, "the political filth which had constantly retarded his efforts to do justice to the public interest."[10] In a positive manner his *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns* and *A Consideration of the Justifying of a Public Park* were significant contributions to "the development of American civic consciousness."[11] Olmsted's loathing of civic politics had certainly brought him within the sphere of municipal reform in the early 'nineties.

By 1893 Olmsted was nearing the end of his career and to many contemporaries his planning for the Chicago World's Fair represented the apex of his work - a recapitulation of all his stylistic and ideological principles combined. Charles Eliot Norton, President of Harvard University and fellow guest at the National Conference for Good Government, so summarized Olmsted's life work, with particular emphasis on its progressive nature.

Norton averred that

> Of all American artists, Frederick Law Olmsted, who gave the design for the laying-out of the grounds of the World's Fair, stands first in the production of the great works which answer the needs and give expression to the life of our immense and miscellaneous democracy.[12]

The fundamental acceptance of the Chicago Fair as a civic planning paradigm, then, was largely due to the culmination of one man's career and personal belief system.

But the Chicago Fair also made a vivid impression as exemplary three-dimensional or architectural city planning. If it represented the culmination of the career of America's leading landscape architect it also heralded the launching of the career of America's eminent Beaux-Arts city planner, Daniel Burnham. The close relationship between Olmsted and Burnham at Chicago was, in craft terms, one of master and apprentice. Although Burnham was chief architect and Director of Works he deferred to his senior on planning matters.[13] Like no other man who worked under "General" Burnham, Olmsted had a privileged position. As a result of this relationship Burnham and Olmsted continued to collaborate until Olmsted's death in 1903. It was as if the torch had been passed on; Olmsted recognized in Burnham a kindred talent who would foster his principles in this promising new field of city planning.

Architecturally, the career of Daniel Burnham was remarkably successful.[14] Burnham was one of those men who recognized the changing nature of architectural expression as it applied to different institutions. In so changing his application of style he has stood accused of compromising his "talent." But the fact was that Burnham was a true eclectic, a Late Victorian architect who recognized the social function of various forms as much as he appreciated the wondrous possibilities of technological applications.

The first part of Burnham's career is the quintessential story of the rise of an aggressive and innovative architect.[15] The fact that he chose burned-out Chicago in 1872 for his practice signified his business acumen. Within two years Burnham and his partner John Root were designing houses for Chicago's leading businessmen. Their first commission was a residence for John B. Sherman, the stockyards magnate. This three-and-a-half-storey mansion of brick and sandstone was a rather typical essay in the High Victorian style, replete with numerous dormers, turrets, and fussy detail. The Sherman House gave Burnham and Root a reputation among the wealthier residents of Chicago and resulted in many similar commissions.

By the early 'eighties Burnham and Root had dropped the High Victorian idiom in favour of a more sober and pure "French Renaissance" style. Although neither partner had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris each had recognized the trend towards this fashionable "Beaux-Arts" mode among Eastern American architects. Certainly the Kent

House (Chicago, 1882-83) exemplified the mass and proportions of say, Hunt's New York residences, albeit on a smaller "Midwestern" scale. Even so, Burnham and Root did not consider this a definitive style and by the late 'eighties they were designing buildings such as the Art Institute (Chicago, 1886-87) simultaneously with Beaux-Arts residences.

The Art Institute may well have owed its style to an imitation of the Richardsonian Romanesque of the Marshall Field Warehouse Store only a few blocks away, completed by Richardson the previous year. Indeed the latter half of this first part of Burnham's career, the period between 1881 and 1891, saw Burnham and Root pursuing that lucrative trade in designing large office and commercial structures for which Chicago became famous. Beginning with the Montauk Building (1881-82) the partnership produced its tallest and most innovative works. The Rookery (1885-88) used advanced cast-iron framing while displaying "the heavy and aesthetically appropriate stone work" on its company front.[16] Burnham and Root excelled in these massive commissions, the "skyscrapers" which became synonymous with both business prowess as well as architectural achievement. Yet, within this new medium Burnham and Root continued to combine eclecticism and the technological aesthetic; simultaneously they could provide in the Woman's Temple (1890-92) a striking Beaux-Arts composition with chateauesque roofline, and in the Monadnock Building (1889-92) a stark and almost utilitarian structure relieved by a minimal bay-window articulation.

If Burnham had a flexible stylistic approach he certainly did not swerve from his single-minded approach to business. Like the magnates to whom he owed his first commissions (and his social connections, for he married Sherman's daughter) Burnham himself proved to be a skilled businessman and administrator. He thus enhanced the reputation of his firm by using organizational skills to achieve efficiency. Burnham deliberately sought to change the image of the architect as craftsman to architect as professional businessman. This "reform" went directly against the "virtuosi" of the time, especially the Beaux-Art-trained men such as Hunt. In fact Burnham's organizational ideals caused the only source of friction between himself and his own partner. He chided Root for spending too much time on drawing details for buildings. On one occasion he exclaimed:

> John, you ought to delegate that sort of thing. The only way to handle a big business is to delegate, delegate, delegate.[17]

Burnham not only perceived a "bigness" about his work but he felt he controlled a great destiny. In his youth he was taught Swedenborgian ideas, especially the notion that one must struggle for self-improvement as a measure of one's virtue in this world. "The path to the mountain height is arduous, seven and many times more difficult," his mother once wrote him.[18] Burnham's Protestant sectarian background compelled him to justify improvement in all things; in the attainment of "the mountain height" such a relatively small thing as architectural detail was a hindrance. In business, it was also uneconomical. A religious urge thus contributed to the idealism of Burnham in the same way it contributed to the idealism of contemporary progressives. Given his background, his idealism, and his trust in professionalism one could say that Burnham himself might be considered a progressive.

That the Chicago Fair appeared so coherent and so exemplary to the progressive mind was therefore largely due to the principles of its two leading organizers. Obviously Olmsted and Burnham brought with them repertories of style and talent. But Olmsted, for one, recognized that the Fair was no landscape exercise for its own sake; rather, this was an opportunity to use landscape together with architecture as an expression of American urban aspirations. Industrial display, civic architecture, and the natural garden each had its place in the plan (Fig. 2).[19] The Main Court and Grand Basin with its Imperial Roman Beaux-Arts architecture was the urban centre; here, landscape design was "the handmaiden of monumental architecture."[20] Surrounding this centrepiece were the Machinery, Agriculture, Manufactures, Liberal Arts and Transportation buildings in a less-rigid but nonetheless urban setting. To the north was the great urban park, the Wooded Island and Lagoon which represented for Olmsted the refinement of his many years of studying the irregularities of nature. He sited the relatively smaller exhibits interspatially but he used elements of landscape, particularly reflecting pools, canals and parkways to unify the vistas. Olmsted also provided for those progressive ideas which pertained to human needs: circulation, hygiene (symbolized also by the fountain "Hygeia") in plumbing and sewerage, illumination and street-cleaning.

As Director of Works Burnham was responsible for deciding the architectural nature of the Fair.[21] The Columbian Exposition was meant to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. For its organizers the Fair was a celebration of American prosperity as a sign of national maturity. From the outset of its planning Burnham, Olmsted and their associates "had determined that the Fair would not be a mere repeat of previous expositions with mammoth glass sheds merely covering the exhibits."[22] Instead, they wanted the Fair to be "a dream city."[23] Even though the Fair was temporary Burnham put his full organizational abilities into the task. In effect, he became a professional city planning commissioner. E. T. Jeffrey, president of the Illinois Central Railway and

Chairman of the Committee on Grounds and Buildings, drew the terms of Burnham's commission so that all the building officials and heads of departments would have to report directly to him. In turn, Burnham established rigid working guidelines for the architects chosen by the building committee. Among other things, he called for the "strict economy of the two essentials, time and money," in a genuinely progressive spirit.[24] At the first meeting of the Exposition architects, yet more rules had to be confirmed, including the size and setting of each building and the agreement on uniformity of cornice line. Burnham then assigned the various buildings to the nominated architects and proceeded to build the Fair.

The architecture chosen by Burnham provided that "third dimension" to Olmsted's plan. By recommending the assignment of individual commissions Burnham in fact set the stylistic theme of the Fair. Of all the works those surrounding the Court of Honor were to be most prominent. Burnham assigned five of the six Court buildings to non-Chicago architects, but in doing so there was no evidence that he was deferring to the Eastern Beaux-Arts establishment.[25] On the contrary, there were strong arguments in favour of their style.

> Given the general and agreed-upon specifications for formal monumentality, for basic similarity of style, and for uniformity of cornice line, neoclassicism seemed the obvious choice at the

> time. Most of the fair's architects, including all of those to design central buildings, were familiar with the classical idiom from their common, earlier training at the Paris Ecole des Beaux Arts. The division of labor and the shortness of time demanded that they agree on a unified theme and produce it quickly and conveniently. With other builders and overseers in charge of executing their instructions so rapidly and at such a distance, it seemed important to work with an easily understood architectural vocabulary.[26]

But beyond these arguments Burnham himself thought and worked as a Late Victorian eclectic architect. It was not as if he were incapable of envisaging an ideal city filled with Richardsonian and Sullivanesque architecture; Burnham was well versed in this idiom himself. But Burnham's definition of "function" in architecture was quite different from that used by practitioners and later apologists for the Chicago School. Throughout the first part of his career he understood "architectural vocabulary" extremely well; he perceived his business in terms of successfully tailoring images for institutions.[27] As a result of his experience as Director of Works, according to Hines, "Burnham grew increasingly attracted to 'classical' architecture."[28] But perhaps this was less a change in aesthetic and more a change in medium. After the Chicago Fair Burnham turned his attention fully to architectural planning. In the words of his biographer, ". . . he came to see the White City of 1893 as his life's most significant watershed."[29]

Stylistically, the Fair was also a watershed for would-be urban reformers. Olmsted, Burnham and others transplanted to a rambunctious Midwestern city all the refinements and accoutrements of the European city. For example,

> All of the buildings around the Court of Honor and most of the major structures on the lagoons were variations of Roman and Renaissance adaptations of classical Ionic and Corinthian orders.[30]

The observer of 1893 saw a grand composite of classical detail nearly everywhere he turned. If he were a businessman he might have felt that in this melange of steel, plaster and wood he was getting the best possible "deal." If he fostered "civic consciousness" the Fair would have been a lesson to him. By studying the water-fountains, obelisks, statues and "bridges leading nowhere" he would have reached a normative understanding of what city planning could provide.

Certainly the Fair had a profound influence on the progressive mind. During the period immediately after the Fair one finds in progressive journalism an explicit iconographical relationship between municipal reform principles and the grand-planning style. For example, in his article entitled "What A Great City Might Be - A Lesson From The White City," John Coleman Adams suggests that the Fair was, above all, a model for the physical and moral reform of cities. Thus he argues,

> Nothing in any of the exhibits within the walls of those great buildings, illustrating the achievements of human skill and power, was half so interesting, so suggestive, so full of hopeful intimations, as the Fair in its aspect as a city by itself. In the midst of a very real and very earthly city, full of the faults which Chicago so pre-eminently displays, we saw a great many features of what an ideal city might be, a great many visions which perhaps will one day become solid facts, and so remove that blot and failure of modern civilization, the great city of the end of the century.[31]

Nor is Adams afraid to infer that Chicago itself contributed to "that blot and failure of modern civilization." Throughout his article one discovers that "failure" means corruption both spiritual and physical. For Adams, the largest physical failure of the contemporary city was its haphazard and disjointed nature, whereas the Chicago Fair ". . . exhibited a prevision, a plan, an arrangement of things with reference to each other."[32] Like his fellow progressives, the municipal reformers, Adams perceived merit in the unified planning system. Moreover, he, too, believed that the idea of the unified "city state" was conditional, and that it would be realized only when ethical and aesthetical standards converged. He describes the physical city in its symbolic or emblematic sense. For example, in contrast to what one found in the extant American city, at Chicago, he argues,

> The buildings were not a heap and huddle of walls and roofs; they were a noble sketch in architecture. The streets were not a tangle of thoroughfares

> representing individual preference or caprice; they were a system of avenues devised for public convenience.[33]

Here Adams praises the ideal beauty and order he finds in Beaux-Arts architecture, and at the same time he supports the grand-planning style for what he perceives to be its moral import. He assumes that a planned street system is an "outward sign" of egalitarian order. Furthermore, he believes that this ideal civic state and civic order can only come about under an altruistic, non-political, and professional administration.[34] In fact, Adams articulates those same concerns about local government which were outlined by the National Municipal League in 1894. Conversely, by the time Adams was penning his words, the municipal reformers were putting their faith in the grand-planning style.

Notes

Chapter 3

[1] J. Horace McFarland, "The Growth of City Planning in America," *Charities and the Commons*, XVIX (1907-1908), cited in Roy Lubove, "Housing Reform and City Planning in Progressive America," *Cities in American History*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson and Stanley K. Schultz (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 344.

[2] Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 75-76.

[3] Biographical references to Olmsted are taken from Theodora Kimball Hubbard, "Frederick Law Olmsted," *Dictionary of American Biography* (1934), XIV, 24.

This brief but cogent entry reflects the perceptions of a planning historian. The definitive biography of Olmsted is Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

[4] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey to the Back Country* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860) Schocken reprint, 1970, p. 375.

[5] Albert Fein, "The American City: The Ideal and the Real," *The Rise of an American Architecture*, ed. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 85.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[7] Hubbard, "Frederick Law Olmsted," p. 26.

[8] Fein, "The American City," p. 93.

[9] Hubbard, "Frederick Law Olmsted," p. 26.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[12] Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham*, I, cited in Hubbard, "Frederick Law Olmsted," p. 27.

[13] For example, Olmsted refused Burnham permission to allow Theodore Roosevelt's model "hunters' camp" on the Wooded Island, apparently for its lack of decorum. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 109.

[14] Unless otherwise noted, all references to Burnham are taken from Hines, *Burnham of Chicago.*

[15] Chapter II of Hines, *Burnham of Chicago* gives an intensive coverage of this period of Burnham's career.

[16] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago,* p. 57.

[17] Cited in Hines, *Burnham,* p. 25.

[18] Cited in Hines, *Burnham,* p. 7.

[19] "Map of the Buildings and Grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition" in Trumbull White & William Igleheart, editors, *The World's Columbian Exposition* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing, 1893), pp. 66-67.

[20] Fein, "The American City," p. 104.

[21] Hines, *Burnham,* p. 83.

[22] *Ibid.,* p. 78.

[23] *Ibid.,* p. 78.

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 87.

[25] Architects of the Columbian Exposition and their works: Richard M. Hunt (New York), Administration Building; McKim, Mead & White (New York), Agricultural Building; George B. Post (New York), Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building; Peabody & Stearns (Boston), Machinery Hall; Van Brunt & Howe (Kansas City), Electricity Building; Burling & Whitehouse (Chicago), Venetian Village; Adler & Sullivan (Chicago), Transportation Building; Henry Ives Cobb (Chicago), Fisheries Building; Solon S. Beman (Chicago), Mines and Mining Building; William Le Baron Jenney (Chicago), Horticultural Building.

Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham - Architect, Planner of Cities Vol. 1* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), p. 45.

[26] Hines, *Burnham,* pp. 86-87.

[27] Burnham's own biographer, Hines, seems to falter on this point. He quotes part of a letter written by Burnham to the Pennsylvania representative:

> There can be no question but that Independence Hall would be the proper thing for your headquarters. The historical interest should settle this . . . as

> no modern design can be so fitting or suit our scheme so well. (Hines, *op. cit.*, p. 97).

Hines thus interprets Burnham's architectural indignation as a "conservative traditionalism," an implicit prejudice against modern formalism. The key aspect in this quoted passage, however, seems to be in the tailoring metaphor in the last sentence, the inference of which Hines overlooks.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

[31] John Coleman Adams, "What A Great City Might Be - A Lesson From The White City," *New England Magazine*, XIV (March, 1896), 3.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[34] According to Adams,

> The source and secret of the order, the safety, the beauty, the devotion to the good of the people, which were found in that one small municipality of the Chicago World's Fair, lay in the fact that the best were called upon to produce the best. Those beautiful grounds were planned by the best minds that could be brought to the undertaking. The beautiful buildings were decorated by the best artists could be secured. The present of the Directory was one of the foremost business men of Chicago.

Ibid., p. 12. It was altogether fitting, then, that the National Municipal League invited Frederick Law Olmsted as professional planner to its National Conference on Good Government.

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESSIVE ATTITUDES AND THEORETICAL BEAUX-ARTS CITY PLANNING

The relationship between the municipal reform movement and the Beaux-Arts city planning style became firmly established as a result of the Chicago World's Fair. On the basis of this relationship the Beaux-Arts city planning "reform" of urban America took two major paths. In one direction, the Chicago Fair had an immediate influence on actual commissions for city planning. Here one finds a continuity in the planning practice of Daniel Burnham. Seven years after his work at Chicago Burnham was asked to take charge of the key American city planning scheme, namely that of Washington, D.C. In the other direction, as opposed to actual planning, one finds after 1893 a vigorous proselytizing of theoretical Beaux-Arts planning in the name of municipal reform. This publicizing of urban planning took the form of polemics which combined arguments in ethics and aesthetics. In this body of writings one has, in discursive form, perhaps the strongest documentary evidence for a relationship between the principles of the municipal reform movement and the essential elements of the Beaux-Arts planning style. The tangible results of the Chicago Fair, as found in the stylistic continuity of Burnham's work, could be interpreted in a different way; one might argue that this practitioner would have continued in his success regardless of style. Be that true, the fact that Burnham was retained by the Federal Government only re-emphasized for reformers the notion of professional planning by legislative sanction. The Senate Plan for Washington thus became an emblem for the National Municipal League. In the League's own outstanding propagandistic text, *City Planning,* this magnificent Neo-Baroque plan appeared as the frontispiece.[1]

In the decade following the Chicago World's Fair the most prominent Beaux-Arts theoretician and reform polemicist was Charles Mulford Robinson. Born in New York in 1869, Robinson graduated from the University of Rochester in 1891.[2] At first Robinson worked as a journalist and newspaper editor, but in 1899 he became interested solely in writing about civic improvement. *Harper's Magazine* commissioned him to write a series on European cities, a book on the possibilities for municipal improvement in North America. *The Improvement of Towns and Cities; or The Practical Basis of Civic Aesthetics* appeared in 1901. Two years later he published his largest work, entitled *Modern Civic Art; or The City Made Beautiful.* Robinson thus became America's foremost publicist and teacher in the field of municipal planning. He was active in various civic federations and served as secretary of the American Park and Outdoor Art Association, an organization of landscape architects, park commissioners, and concerned citizens. Although he had no formal technical training Robinson became known as a city planner, and in 1913 he was appointed Professor of Civic Design at the University of Illinois, a position created for him. Only four years later, in 1917, Robinson died at the age of 48 years.

In Robinson's biographical profile one recognizes certain progressive characteristics. He was a college-educated journalist, a publicist for reform, and a voluntary participant in the greater reform cause. Robinson had faith in professionalism. When one examines his writings one recognizes that he did not merely engage the American mind with the possibility of recreating grand Neoclassical cities in North America; that had already been accomplished by Olmsted and Burnham at Chicago. In a more recognizable Progressive manner Robinson related the principles of the municipal reform movement to a tangible, physical expression. He believed that he had discovered an ideal model for the reformed city. Like many of his peers he made the Beaux-Arts city the kind of setting in which men would lead virtuous, temperate and industrious lives under the organization and administration of altruistic professionals.

Robinson's first and outstanding work was *The Improvement of Towns and Cities.*[3] The title itself denotes a reform attitude. In this municipal guidebook Robinson treats what he considers to be the major topics in city planning, namely: site, street planning, zoning, parks and architectural development. In doing so he articulates and elaborates upon those very resolutions passed in 1894 by the National Municipal League of which he himself was now a member. And, in each of these topics one finds two constant and concurrent references: the Beaux-Art style and the municipal reform ideal.

Siting is the first topic which Robinson considers. He discusses the development of two locations: the flat plain with rises, and the coastal setting. Considering the former, Robinson reviews the utilization of the highest ground available within a city's boundaries. He articulates the "principle"

> . . . that to the eminence whence the city may be mastered at a glance, and where its noise and turmoil may be left behind, all the people should have access. And no more certainly for the view thence than for the view thither, as the height commands and lords the town, should it, in the perfect city, be held by the community rather than by individuals. This is the great lesson in the treatment of inequalities of surface.[4]

The idea of dramatic prospects, expressed by Robinson as "the view thence" and "the view thither," is a characteristically late Victorian or Beaux-Arts planning notion. But Robinson concomitantly upholds the collectivist assumption that the eminence ". . . be held by the community rather than by individuals." Moreover, such communal ownership provides a "great lesson" as an expression of reform planning beyond its mere physical layout. Similarly, he continues, the treatment of a waterfront site must take into account ". . . the use of the water by the community, whether it be mainly for (1) power; (2) navigation; or (3) picturesqueness."[5] If possible, Robinson suggests, the waterfront should be the ". . . proper approach and entrance to the city."[6] To make this entrance an institutional image it would have to be improved, and the models Robinson offers are all large-scale and European, such as Paris on the Seine, Budapest on the Danube, Florence on the Arno and London on the Thames. As a practice in eclecticism this "selection" of waterfronts goes far beyond Late Victorian practice; in scale it is quite typical of the Beaux-Arts movement.

The second major topic Robinson discusses is street planning. Here he upholds the Municipal Reform principle, albeit by way of an aesthetical argument, of the integral master plan. He argues,

> We shall not attain to cities and villages that are beautiful until we learn artistically to plan them. Transformations may help us greatly, as London and Paris and some examples at home show; but a mended article is never as good as one well made at first.[7]

To achieve beauty the planner must relate parts to the whole; that is, he must be capable of producing a master scheme. Such a practice, Robinson indicates, is only possible when the planner conforms to a professional discipline. Groping for the methodology of this new discipline, he concludes:

> The ideal for all urban conditions has not, indeed, been discovered; but from an examination of effects actually secured in different cities, we should at least attain to underlying principles.[8]

Robinson's formula presumes eclecticism, even though he clothes reference to it in a scientific system of abstraction and generalization. By examining extant street plans Robinson hopes to derive the "underlying principles" of the ideal city. The highest principles, it seems, are really a combination of municipal reform concepts and Beaux-Arts stylistic elements. According to Robinson they are exemplified in none other than Neo-Baroque city plans. He argues that

> . . . on the one hand, the gridiron plan offers the maximum area for building sites and a regularity of almost childish simplicity; on the other, the diagonal avenues afford economy of communication, vistas of much possible beauty, and open spaces and spaces that are grateful to the eye and of no little sanitary value.[9]

Like the Beaux-Arts practitioners, Robinson believed that the diagonal system as seen at Washington, D.C., for example, was more mature than the simpler orthogonal system.

But as a progressive he relates the ideas of economy and health to this concern for the grandiose and the picturesque.

Robinson also considers it appropriate to discuss the grouping of public buildings under the topic of street plans. Given the conditions for dramatic siting and grand scale one finds in Baroque and Neo-Baroque city planning, one would expect such a consideration by a Beaux-Arts theoretician. But again, Robinson does not treat the grouping of public buildings as a mere exercise in aesthetic replication. He believes that such clustering is an expression of the institutional integrity of the "city" - a moral concept which relates to progressivist principles. Whereas groupings of public buildings are found throughout Europe, in the typical American city, he argues,

> . . . the post office rises in one place, the court house in another, the city hall in yet a third. Each loses in dignity through the crowding about it of commercial structures. The city is robbed of definite centre, nor is there a spot that beyond all rivalry attracts to itself esthetic street adornment and gives it unquestionable appropriateness.[10]

Robinson assumes a threat to the dignity of public buildings by their proximity to commercial structures. He takes a protective stance against the implied indignity of coarse commercialism. Furthermore, without such a grouping of public buildings "the city is robbed of definite centre," the inference being that a city under normal circumstances should possess an institutional civic centre. Finally, Robinson indicates, such a centre allows an "aesthetic street adornment," thus evoking a scene of converging grand avenues replete with landscaping. In other words, the civic centre allows the "city beautiful" to permeate the very core of the plan.

Having considered siting and street planning, Robinson devotes an important minor chapter to "Suppression and Repression," in which he discusses the need for municipal regulations. Some of these regulations, particularly those referring to architecture, are significant in that they address themselves not only to health and social concerns - signal progressivist concepts - but also to an ideal state of urban aesthetics in which the professional architect is guided by the municipal institution. Robinson argues in favour of such a state as follows:

> The accepted building regulation . . . which is based upon purely aesthetic grounds is still rare in the United States. One conspicuous result of its rarity can be seen in the incongruity of urban architecture. The owner treats the architect as his employee, not as his professional master. As a consequence, successive houses on any street may represent Gothic, Classic, Renaissance, Colonial, Queen Anne, and unnamable modifications of these styles. The architect has meekly followed the owner's wishes. There is a fine representation of the whims of tasteless, egotistic wealth, the stamp of untrained individualism. There is no repose, no communal expression, no dignified and epoch-making work, little imagination. A municipal requirement of harmony has at least the merit of enforcing the

> lesson of obligation to the community, and of giving to the architect that mastership which is his right.[11]

Once again, Robinson's argument is based on the progressivist notion of collectivism. The houses to which he refers are examples of High Victorian eclecticism, and his reference to "tasteless, egotistic wealth" is an attack on the entrepreneurial class which patronized such works. In this context, Parrington's analysis of class insecurity among Progressives is particularly applicable. For Robinson, the professional architect supposedly working in a reformed system would altruistically provide that municipal "harmony." Such an expert could indeed provide for this new urban state both "communal expression" and "epoch-making work" through a grand-scale building programme in conjunction with a Beaux-Arts city plan.

The third major topic in Robinson's theoretical work in which one discovers a conjunction between Beaux-Arts planning and municipal reform is his consideration of parks. The chapter-heading entitled "Parks and Drives" itself evokes the image of an urban setting penetrated with greenery. But Robinson does not believe that parks serve only to beautify; he characterizes them as the "most aesthetic achievements of urban philanthropy." Moreover, he assumes that other people share his belief, in suggesting:

> There is happily no need to present . . . the arguments in favor of parks for cities, nor is

> it necessary to go deeply into the history of the movement in their belief. This has arisen lately and has gained strength rapidly, until the assertion is made today that parks and park systems are the most important artistic work which has been done in the United States.[12]

And it seemed that by 1901 such an "assertion" owed credence to the lifetime of theoretical and practical work of Frederick Law Olmsted. Robinson does not explicitly mention Olmsted, but he praises "the chain system of parks" which Olmsted developed in Boston and Chicago.[13] The chain system, with its parks placed at points around the city and equidistant from its centre, was a particularly North American development.

In relating Beaux-Arts park planning to the reformed city Robinson includes a discussion of squares and playgrounds. These park-like features are not only related to the chain system, they are also very significant in Neo-Baroque Beaux-Arts planning. In describing these smaller green spaces Robinson makes important allusions both to the source of this planning style and to municipal reform. He reasons,

> The small squares, the circles, and triangles formed at the junction of city streets, and ornamented with vegetation, are destined to carry out the purpose of the parks and drives in adding to the amenities of city life. Properly considered, therefore, as belonging to the park system, they are usually put in charge of its governing board. Indeed, in the ideal development of the beautiful city, all parks, "squares," and drives would have appeared on the original map, harmonizing with each other, and carrying with

> logical sequence the park idea into every portion of the city. And because these small ornamental areas are so identified with the street plan, they are, in fact, very frequently conceived at the start. The pleasant result is that sense of intimate and inseparable connection with the city's life which more ambitious parks too often lack.[14]

Robinson makes at least three significant assumptions here. The first is stylistic. When Robinson describes squares, circles, and triangles "ornamented with vegetation" he is referring to a major theme in late Baroque landscape architecture. The outstanding precedent for this treatment of geometric interstitial space was Versailles, begun in 1683 by Le Nôtre.[15] Like his Baroque predecessors, Robinson believed that nature's passions, once subdued, could embellish the civic setting. To realize this condition one had to impose order by filling the geometric parterres and bosquets with lawns and flowering shrubs.

The second assumption is that these "squares" can be best controlled by the "governing board." Here Robinson is referring to the Park Commission, an administrative system sanctioned by the municipal reform movement. Once again Robinson denies, by inference, that the smaller neighbourhood or ward would be capable of planning its own landscaping. He assumes that such work is best left to professionals and administrators who would altruistically provide the best environment.

The third assumption, which follows from the second, is that there be a master plan on which landscape architects would designate these small squares. Indeed, to carry "the park idea into every portion of the city" would require planning on the largest possible scale. This effort to include on a master plan the smallest features of the physical city gives tangible expression both to the reform of ward politics and to the imposition of central control in municipal government.

The fourth and final major topic in Robinson's theoretical planning system is "Architectural Development." Robinson emphasizes that buildings are the "dominating feature" of a city, and his reasoning once again combines aesthetical and ethical arguments. Buildings, he suggests, are important in three ways. They

> . . . are the background and the foreground, they define the vista, and because the community is a collection of human beings, the dwellings in which these residents live and the houses which they build for their work or pleasure are the most obvious material expression of its life.[16]

Stylistically, buildings in the ideal city ought to control their landscape setting. This function is derived from Baroque practices and now becomes fundamental to Beaux-Arts grand planning. Ideologically, Robinson refers to the social function of this urban architecture. However, he recognizes but one patron institution, and that is "the community." Ideally, the community ought to have a collective supremacy in determining this architectural expression.[17] Robinson has a rather stilted view of the "community" as patron of architecture. In the "older cities" of the past, he argues,

> . . . public buildings rather than private were the truest reflection of the people. This is because the public structures belong to all. City halls, courts, churches - these are the people's houses. . . . If a city, then, is notable for handsome administrative buildings, or splendid edifices devoted to religion, arts, and letters, there is record of something more important than merely its aesthetic magnificence. And the conclusion works the other way. If a city has not a crown of imposing structures it cannot, in a democratic age, gain towers and domes and spires that stir, until the popular mind has risen to the point where it dreams of them and wishes for them concretely and insistently.[18]

For Robinson the "democratic age" would be conditioned by the reform notion that the "community" would be the leading determinant of the social function of architecture. Once again the Progressive principle of consensus, rather than coercion, is assumed. Superficially, it seems to be a paradox that this community would choose "towers, domes and spires" as its ideological expression. But Robinson indicated previously that the people would not have to make this choice, notwithstanding the final clause of his argument. The "popular mind" might well dream about these images, but it would have to abrogate its desires, and its trust, in favour of professionalism. That form or style which suited this community - the reformed American city - was defined by Robinson and his peers. The question that one must ask is, "Did this 'community' ever give its trust to Beaux-Arts practitioners?"

Notes

Chapter IV

[1] John Nolen, ed., *City Planning*, National Municipal League Series (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), frontispiece.

[2] All references to C. M. Robinson are taken from Katherine McNamara, "Charles Mulford Robinson," *Dictionary of American Biography* (1935), XVI, 36.

[3] Charles Mulford Robinson, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities or The Practical Basis of Civic Aesthetics* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901). Robinson's *Modern Civic Art or The City Made Beautiful* was published by G. P. Putnam's Sons in 1903. In the latter work Robinson amplifies the theme of the former and, in doing so, becomes absorbed with the smallest details of urban planning. Even so, he remains resolutely Progressivist, as evidenced by his definition of "civic art" as that which

> . . . properly stands for more than beauty in the city. It represents a moral, intellectual and administrative progress as surely as it does the purely physical. It stands for conscientious officials in public spirit, and where the officials are elective it is evidence of an aroused and intelligent populace.

Charles Mulford Robinson, *Modern Civic Art*, 4th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), p. 17.

[4] Robinson, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities*, p. 4.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-159.

[14] Robinson, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities*, pp. 172-173.

[15] Helen M. Fox, *André Le Nôtre - Garden Architect to Kings* (New York: Crown, 1962), pp. 82-93.

Cecil Stewart, *A Prospect of Cities* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), pp. 123-124.

[16] Robinson, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities*, p. 186.

[17] To the Progressive, the notion of community meant that all groups would work together for the city's welfare and prosperity, and that the individual would be willing to vote and serve and sacrifice for the common good. In a more pragmatic way, according to Griffith,

> Two governmental changes made especially strong contributions to the sense of community: separation of municipal from state and national elections and constitutional home rule.

from "Factors in the Growth of 'Community.'" in Ernest S. Griffith, *A History of American City Government: The Progressive Years and Their Aftermath, 1900-1920* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 115-117.

[18] Robinson, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities*, p. 188.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEAUX-ARTS PLANNING IN THE SERVICE OF MUNICIPAL REFORM

After the Chicago World's Fair the first genuine urban renewal program which related Progressivist ideals to the grand-planning style was the Senate Park Commission Plan for Washington, D.C. On March 8, 1901, the Hon. James McMillan, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, secured the passage of a resolution calling for the "development and improvement of the entire park system of the District of Columbia," and empowering the Committee to "secure the services of such experts as may be necessary for a proper consideration of the subject."[1] McMillan thus alluded to the notion of comprehensive planning so strongly supported by the municipal reform movement, and at the same time he upheld the Progressivist idea that professionals or "experts" could best provide such a service. Significantly, McMillan recommended that Daniel Burnham be retained as city planner for the Senate Commission.[2] Nor was Burnham unaware of the role in which McMillan had cast him. By 1900 Burnham began to identify with Progressivism as such; he perceived a strong need for reform and professionalism at all levels of government.

According to Burnham's biographer Thomas Hines,

> The Washington Plan of 1902 was, after the [Chicago] fair, the first manifestation of his new progressivism and his newly developed planning talents.[3]

That Burnham's first commission in actual urban planning was the nation's capital, and that he recognized this task as one of improvement, gave his grand city planning idiom its firmest institutional and ideological foundations.

Whereas the Chicago Fair had compelled urban reformers to see the city as a statement of Beaux-Arts Neoclassicism, Washington reaffirmed European late Baroque city planning principles. The renewal of the Washington plan gave fullest meaning to the City Beautiful movement and Beaux-Arts planning. The original plan for Washington had, in fact, followed the Baroque style. It was designed by Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a Frenchman with republican leanings who came to fight in the American Revolutionary War.[4] L'Enfant was an engineer, surveyor and builder, and General Washington asked him to produce the city plan for a new capital on the Potomac River. L'Enfant's plan of 1791 was entirely in the Baroque idiom, owing strong precedence to both Versailles and Paris.[5] The new capital was to have wide, tree-lined boulevards running diagonally across a grid system interspersed with parks and squares (Fig. 3). Indeed, L'Enfant perceived his task as one of providing an image of monumental grandeur. Far from alluding to republican ideals, L'Enfant described his first thought about Pennsylvania Avenue, for example, as

> . . . a street laid out on a dimension proportional to the greatness which . . . the Capital of a powerful Empire ought to manifest.[6]

Throughout its growth in the nineteenth century, however, Washington developed in a manner other than that envisioned by its planner. Although the radiating street plan was laid out, and L'Enfant's great avenue did connect the Capitol with the "President's Palace," the long Baroque vistas were lost amid picturesque or simply undeveloped landscape. In fact the major axis, the mile-long mall connecting the Capitol with the White House grounds, fell prey to what Parrington would call "shambling Jacksonian individualism."[7] In 1851 Andrew Jackson Downing completed a romantic, rambling, asymmetrical park where L'Enfant had designated an axial Grand Canal and Parade Ground. With the addition of the Romanesque Revival Smithsonian Institution (begun in 1847) and railway tracks in the 1850's, the "mall" concealed any reference to the original plan.

During the late 1890's, when America embarked on an activist foreign policy, in many respects an Imperial foreign policy, there was an accompanying surge of nationalism. One is tempted to think that this national self-consciousness was largely responsible for the reviving of L'Enfant's original plan for Washington.[8] Certainly the grandiose nature of the Baroque planning style suited

America's new position. Significantly, the task of completing the nation's capital was now entrusted to professional architects and artists - one might say entrusted to image makers - because Burnham and his fellow-commissioners Charles McKim and Augustus St. Gaudens all shared at Chicago a predilection for the grand, the impressive, and the dramatic. The fourth commissioner, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., brought with him his father's repertory of site planning and "improvement" landscaping. As chief commissioner, Burnham had to interpret this planning mandate and direct his colleagues accordingly. The only true method of reviving the intent of the original planner, Burnham decided, was by leading his fellow commissioners on a tour to inspect

> . . . sites L'Enfant had either observed personally or studied via the maps of European cities Thomas Jefferson had acquired in France. These sites . . . would serve to acquaint and imbue the commissioners with the general aesthetic atmosphere that surrounded L'Enfant and the architectural traditions that influenced him.[9]

Among other sites, the group visited Paris, Rome, Vienna, Budapest, Versailles, Berlin and London. One recognizes that these were all Imperial or Royal capitals and that they all shared a grandiose scale. The eclectic process of identifying appropriate stylistic sources for the replanning of Washington, and therefore of a number of other large American cities, was now an accomplished fact.

The Senate Park Commission Plan of 1902 revived and surpassed in grandeur L'Enfant's Baroque scheme (Fig. 4). Burnham and his fellow-commissioners re-established the main axis and designated that it be flanked by Neoclassical buildings for various departments. A cross-axial mall, fronting the White House, would intersect with the main axis slightly west of the Washington Monument and extend south to a proposed monument to Thomas Jefferson. The major axis would continue, beyond the Washington Monument, in a reflecting canal similar to that at Versailles. To the west of the canal this major axis would terminate at the site for a future memorial to Abraham Lincoln. In addition to planning this central cross-axial scheme the Commissioners revived L'Enfant's system of diagonal boulevards imposed on a grid system. Relating to this street system was a pattern of symmetrical and congruent smaller squares and intersections. Finally, with a clear reference to the Progressive notion of "the innocent enjoyment of one's leisure hours" and to Olmsted's own concerns the Commissioners called for

> . . . the conversion of the vast area between the south side of the Washington Monument and the Potomac into vast recreation grounds to include ball parks and facilities for summer and winter sports.[10]

The Washington plan thus combined the Beaux-Arts neo-Baroque model of grandeur with the Progressivist concepts of comprehensive planning, professionalism, and the social gospel.[11]

President Theodore Roosevelt received the Senate Commission Plan with enthusiasm. It seemed, no doubt, a tangible expression of America's new assertion of power. To Burnham, on the other hand, the plan for Washington was less an imperial image and more a prototype of the reformed American city. In an article entitled "White City and Capital City" he linked the City Beautiful, as exemplified by the Washington plan, with the morally and politically reformed city. Burnham strongly believed that this ideal civic condition would come about through enlightened consensus. In a particularly Progressivist, optimistic flourish he concluded:

> It is the signs of the time that the people will no more continue to endure gross violations of landscape art than they will the disgusting and disorderly in domestic and municipal environment. Sentiment is gathering to the form of an edict that the offensive shall not be forced upon the multitude, and that when the chief expenditure is of brains, and not money, they shall no longer be denied the right to live among beautiful things. And I say again that it is not so much money that is wanted to shape municipal improvements in response to the growing taste of the American people as it is a general, a well-thought-out plan - a plan that reaches out not merely through the life of one throw of the political dice, but beyond men and seasons and policies, for a century.[12]

To the Progressive mind there was, clearly, a demonstrable connection between Beaux-Arts planning and the needs of the contemporary American city. The Senate Plan of Washington was thus successful in two ways: it compelled municipal leaders to observe a replanning undertaking, and it firmly established Burnham as the leading city planner in the United States.

The next grand city planning commission for Burnham, and one of the outstanding examples of the relationship between Beaux-Arts planning and municipal reform was the Cleveland Group Plan of 1903. The idea of a consolidated civic centre or "Group Plan" had been first raised by the Cleveland Architectural Club in 1895 as a direct result of the Chicago Exposition.[13] It was not until 1901 and the endorsation of this scheme by reform mayor Tom L. Johnson that the Group Plan became possible. Mayor Johnson was an ardent progressive, supporting such measures as city health inspection, advancement of education, and national women's suffrage.[14] He was known as a "light and water socialist" because of his belief in the public ownership of utilities. He led his fellow-mayors in the campaign for municipal "home rule" in Ohio.[15] After his election to office in 1901 Johnson worked towards the establishment of a civic commission whose purpose would be to implement the Group Plan. In the following year this planning commission was formed and, on Johnson's advice, Daniel Burnham was appointed its chairman. The two other commissioners were John M. Carrère and Arnold W. Brunner; both were New York architects who practiced within the Beaux-Arts Neoclassical style.[16]

The Burnham commission was given the task of replanning the central core of Cleveland, that area which included the proposed municipal administration and cultural centre, together with the railway and ship terminals on Lake Erie. This civic centre was to serve as a tangible expression of that municipal autonomy which Mayor Johnson sought. Moreover, the rebuilding of Cleveland's core was firmly dedicated to another Progressivist ideal. According to Hines,

> The area marked for reclamation formed in 1903 the core of a miserable and crime-ridden slum. The waterfront dives, bordellos, and tenements had long embarrassed the city's progressive up-lifters and had formed prime targets for their reforming zeal.[17]

An important part of this planning was hence addressed to moral questions. The image of this new "civic state" would not accommodate what the progressives might have defined as 'occasions of sin.' City planning was also the act of replacing the venues of crime and poverty with an expression of order and good behaviour.

Like the planning vocabulary of the Columbian Exposition, that which was chosen by the Cleveland commissioners could be understood by the "patron" and his following, that is, the urban middle-class. The scheme consisted of a grand axis and parklike mall which extended north, joining the civic centre with the transportation and lakefront terminals (Fig. 5). A shorter cross-axis extended along the waterfront.[18] Where the two axes met there was to be a great square with Baroque parterres. The south end of the main axis was terminated by a Neoclassical City Hall and County Court House, both of similar size and shape. On the secondary axis the Public Library and Federal Building flanked the central square and faced the waterfront. These buildings were also designated to be Neoclassical. The stylistic source of this entire ensemble was uninhibitedly explained by Commissioner Brunner:

> We took for our inspiration the Place de la Concorde [in Paris] and recalled the two beautiful buildings with which we are all so familiar. Wood Street [fronting the secondary axis] is about the same width as the Rue Royale, which separates Gabriel's masterpieces. . . .[19]

The planning commissioners presumed an eclectic approach, that is, a process of choosing a suitable civic grouping and interpreting it within a similar setting. Thus the Cleveland Group Plan Commissioners practiced that same methodology upheld by the theoretician Charles Mulford Robinson.

In addition to the main civic centre, the commissioners suggested other important features for the Cleveland plan. In a manner which combined Beaux-Arts style with reform principles they advised that the entire city have a unified system of parks and interconnecting parkways. In another reference to comprehensive planning they urged ". . . that uniform architecture be maintained for each function" of building, in the designs for schools, fire and police stations, and hospitals.[20] Here "function" meant social function, or the defining of architectural content as opposed to the mere flourishing of styles. In this instance the function of architecture, applied uniformly, provided a continuity of visual imagery within the city.

The City of Cleveland implemented its Group Plan in a slow but fairly thorough manner between 1903 and 1913.[21] By 1912 the Federal Building and County Court House were completed, and the Library and City Hall were in progress. Concurrently, Mayor Johnson won several re-elections and in 1910 he was victorious in his campaign for municipal home rule in Ohio.[22] Johnson's reform administration established the first autonomous municipal planning commission according to the formula outlined by the National Municipal League. Moreover, Burnham and his associates once again demonstrated the fitness of architectural city planning based on European precedents.

The circumstances surrounding Burnham's acceptance as the planner for San Francisco were much the same as those in Cleveland. From 1897 to 1901 James D. Phelan, the progressive mayor of San Francisco, attempted to gain more autonomy and power for his city.[23] He successfully fought for a charter which would give San Francisco the right to purchase and control public utilities. Having thus alienated himself from the business giants Phelan only went on to use police to break up a labour demonstration and hence he lost all support in the midst of his reforms. Outside of office

Phelan and his fellow progressives continued to agitate for reform, and one of the issues they adopted was city planning. Phelan himself admired the recent planning for Washington and Cleveland, and he undoubtedly perceived Burnham as the godsend in municipal improvement.

On January 15, 1904 the Association for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco was formed and Phelan was elected its president. Within a year the Association increased from twenty to four hundred members. Among the goals of the Association was one "to bring to the attention of the officials and people of the city the best methods for instituting artistic municipal betterment" and another, "to stimulate the sentiment of civic pride in the improvement and care of private property."[24] The implied method of achieving these goals was through publicity - that basic Progressivist vehicle for instigating improvement. Indeed, outside the sanction of municipal power, this publicizing was the most the Association could accomplish. However, Phelan's enthusiasm was infectious, and he convinced the Association to retain Daniel Burnham to produce a plan. Interestingly, Burnham agreed to do the plan as "a labor of love" and refused to take a retainer in the same idealistic progressive spirit, one would tend to think. Burnham only stipulated that his firm be reimbursed for expenses, including a research trip to Europe.[25]

The plan took exactly one year to complete, between

September 1904 and September 1905. The physical plan for San Francisco was largely the work of Edward H. Bennett, who worked as a city planning associate in Burnham's Chicago office. Bennett was born in England in 1874 and obtained his training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, from which he graduated in 1902.[26] Bennett's training and his obvious familiarity with Paris both affected the San Francisco plan. More than any of the plans previously designed under Burnham's supervision this scheme overtly exposed its stylistic precedent. Like Paris at the turn of the century its street system was dominated by *rond points*, *places*, and wide boulevards diagonally superimposed on a grid system (Fig. 6). Moreover, the published plan included a "Theoretical Diagram of the Plan of Paris" showing an ideal circulation system and its application to San Francisco.[27]

The key institutional feature of the plan is the civic centre with its grouping of public buildings. In the text of the report these are defined as the "Administrative" and "Educational" groupings.[28] The former includes the City Hall, Court of Justice, State Building, U.S. Government Building, and Post Office. The Educational group includes the Library, Opera House, Concert Hall, Academy of Art, Technical and Industrial School, Museum of Art, Museum of Natural History, and Academy of Music, to name its most prominent members. In explaining the juxtaposition of these two groups Burnham writes:

> These buildings, composed in esthetic and economic relation, should face on the avenue forming the perimeter of distribution, and on the radial arteries within, and in particular on the public Places formed by their intersection and should have on all sides extensive settings contributing to public rest and recreation and adapted to celebrations, fêtes, etc.
>
> Both groups, relating directly to the spacious *Place*, the heart of the city's circulation, and removed from the direct flow and press of business, will gain in repose and strengthen the public sense of dignity and responsibility of citizenship.[29]

In this explanation one again recognizes the connection between the City Beautiful and the reformed city. Like his counterpart, the theoretician Charles Mulford Robinson, Burnham believed that these physical and ideological conditions were co-efficient. His argument was clear: When the municipal administrators provided architecture alluding to their authority, when they made possible the re-enactment of some supposedly Baroque pageant on a large scale, and when the citizen could identify himself with a collective institution larger, more important and more benign than the merely commercial city, then and only then would a reformed urban "state" come into being.

In the service of reform principles the Burnham and Bennett plan was exemplary in another highly-visible way. It was the most comprehensive plan yet devised for an American city.[30] Not only did the plan delineate the civic centre and urban core, but it also included the entire county and a large portion of the San Francisco peninsula. In other words, by considering such a wide geographical area Burnham and Bennett addressed the question of regional physical planning. The National Municipal League had deemed the metropolis as good in itself, provided that it was centrally controlled. The San Francisco plan made this belief in the metropolis credible and tangible. Besides connecting the urban core with the suburbs and relating the parks to that system, the San Francisco planners reinterpreted natural geographical features - such as shores and hills - as part of the whole plan. The Baroque style, with its allusions to the control of nature, suited in grandeur and dramatic effect the "improvement" of these natural features. As if he were describing theatrical props, Burnham treats the hills as "a series of planes diminished in their ascent." He continues,

> Considering only the more important hills, this indicates the character which should be given to roads climbing them, for each hill or succession of hills should be circumscribed at its base. . . by a circuit road. As the higher levels are reached in unbuilt tracts the level circuits or contour roads become easy of accomplishment. They should be repeated at various heights and should be connected by easy inclines. Places of interest should be emphasized by terraces with appropriate approaches.[31]

Burnham and Bennett specified this elaborate planning treatment for the two highest promontories - Telegraph Hill and Twin Peaks.[32] With their circuit roads and axial symmetry these "improved" features no longer alluded to the natural setting; rather, they "stated" that the planning phenomenon was ubiquitous, centralized, and controlled by a powerful body. And herein lay the crucial concern of contemporary citizens and their municipal leaders. Could such centralized, professional planning serve the municipality, or was it instead a self-interested pursuit aimed at creating larger and more spectacular examples of planning for its own sake?

In the first decade of the twentieth century municipal politicians began to believe the promises of grand urban planning. Even Phelan and his Improvement Association were successful in convincing Eugene E. Schmitz, ostensibly the "boss mayor" of San Francisco, that this plan was vital to the city and its people.[33] Within a few months after the Burnham and Bennett plan was published San Francisco suffered its disastrous earthquake and fire, and there was an immediate cause for adopting the new plan. However, aside from a partial reference to the civic centre feature, neither the elected officials nor the citizens saw the need for building this Beaux-Arts scheme. Instead, they quickly rebuilt their Victorian "picturesque" and highly individual commercial and residential architecture along the existing narrow streets and steep hills.[34] Without a strong institutional backing and genuinely popular support the San Francisco scheme remained for the most part an exercise in ideal city planning.

Burnham's last city plan was his largest and most successful one. He produced it for his own home city of Chicago. Moreover, Burnham's perception of a rebuilt Chicago grew directly from his work at the Columbian Exposition. In 1894 he urged that the Fair site and the shoreline north of it be preserved in order to make a continuous park to the centre of downtown Chicago.[35] In 1896 Burnham voluntarily completed his "South Shore Plan," and the following year he tried to convince the Chicago Commercial Club and the Merchant's Club to take up this improvement cause. Interest in this scheme grew simultaneously with the awareness of municipal reform generated by the Chicago Civic Federation.[36] But it was Burnham's involvement with the Washington Plan which underlined for Chicago's reformers the necessity for urban planning. In 1903 the Merchant's Club, comprised of the younger and more progressive businessmen, adopted Burnham's project. Perhaps as a result of the publicity about Washington their only criticism of Burnham's scheme was that it was not a comprehensive plan.

The amalgamation of the Commercial Club and the Merchant's Club in 1906 gave Chicago businessmen the financial base which would allow them to retain Burnham to produce a comprehensive city plan.[37] In consultation with the new Chicago Commercial Club Burnham and Bennett worked on the plan throughout 1907 and 1908. The Club members formed committees on "The Lake Front," on "Streets and Boulevards" and on "Railway Terminals," among others.[38] Burnham himself was responsible for many of the planning details. In fact, he surpassed his expertise in site and architectural planning and he considered such matters as transportation, health, and education. He compiled statistics on shipping, including the size of boats, docks and port tonnage; he consulted with the medical profession on Chicago's hospitals and their likely future needs; and, he won the approval of social workers in designating Chicago's south shore as a public access area.[39] The Chicago Plan thus went far beyond the "City Beautiful" considerations of neo-Baroque boulevards and Neoclassical architecture. The seed of regional planning in North America had germinated.

The Chicago Plan was published, undoubtedly with symbolic intent, on the 4th of July, 1909. The references to Beaux-Arts city planning at the service of the progressive municipal ideal were most clear. Burnham and Bennett called for no less than the complete replanning and rebuilding of Chicago and its suburbs (Fig. 7).[40] For this metropolitan plan they followed European precedents, especially Paris, with its circulation and transportation systems. Recognizing change in the latter area they designated roadways, particularly the major downtown thoroughfare, for automobile traffic. In the civic centre, on axis with the waterfront gateway to the city, the great domed City Hall rose above a sea of Neoclassical buildings (Fig. 8). The planners specified but two uniform cornice lines for all the architecture in the civic centre. Nor did Burnham find any contradiction between such explicit ordering and the Progressive belief system. In the text accompanying the plan he noted the mutual dependence between the Beaux-Arts style and the typical reform concerns of "economy and efficiency," health, recreation, improved housing, and good government. Repeating a key Progressivist belief he carried over from his San Francisco *Report* he declared that "good citizenship is the prime object of good city planning."[41]

Several months after its publication the Chicago Plan received civic institutional sanction. In November 1909 the mayor of Chicago appointed a 328-member planning commission to guide the city's future growth according to Burnham's plan.[42] Having officially adopted this scheme, the city used every means to convince Chicagoans that the plan was necessary. The new medium of motion pictures was used to publicize it. Moreover, to "educate" its future citizens the Chicago School Board reproduced an abridged version of the plan in a new high school civics textbook.[43] Again, the Progressives placed significant emphasis on the didactic method. In thus making the Chicago Plan a teaching document and a popular image the civic administration in fact gained much support in its new work.

From its inauguration in 1909 the Chicago planning commission followed Burnham's plan for the next twenty years. Until the beginning of the Great Depression the city constructed several important features, including Michigan Avenue, Wacker Drive, the bridges across the Chicago River, and the long string of lagooned parks to the north and south along the lake.[44] Grant Park, with its elegant foundations and terraces, was an outstanding realization of Beaux-Arts planning (Fig. 9). However, neither Burnham's Neoclassical, uniformly-corniced architecture nor his massive civic centre complex were attempted. More emphatically than was the case with San Francisco, it seemed that Chicago was not prepared to accept such a complete stylistic re-ordering.[45] The business community, for example, was satisfied with the economic fact and innovative design of its unique "Chicago style" architecture. Indeed, full application of the Chicago Plan would have led to the destruction of many early Burnham and Root commissions. Moreover, residents of the new suburbs preferred the various domestic revival modes or the innovative "Prairie Style" rather than ubiquitous Neoclassicism. Whereas Chicagoans could accept comprehensive planning in boulevards, parks, and esplanades, they rejected the coercion of complete architectural control by the city. The detailed planning of Burnham and Bennett therefore remained largely a vision of idealists - a city state where consensus ruled and aesthetic harmony prevailed.

Among Progressives, however, idealism was a virtue. With the official acceptance of the Chicago Plan the Beaux-Arts city was firmly established as the municipal planning ideal. Many prominent cities in the United States and Canada invited Burnham to produce grand planning schemes. Burnham personally turned down opportunities to replan St. Louis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Montreal, Atlantic City and Brooklyn, as well as smaller cities such as Portland, Oregon and Tampa, Florida.[46] At the same time the University of Illinois and Amherst College called upon him to design comprehensive campus plans. By 1912, however, Burnham was sixty-five and ill with diabetes. He delegated several commissions to his younger partner and ostensible successor, Edward Bennett. This "laying on of hands" was timely; Burnham died on June 1, 1912. Bennett, Olmsted, Brunner and a number of other practitioners continued to furnish Beaux-Arts plans for American cities.[47] Moreover, with the establishment of professional schools of civic design at the universities - such as that chaired by Charles Mulford Robinson at Illinois - new specialists were beginning to appear. In the second decade of the twentieth century progressive patronage continued, but the nature of the city-planning profession was itself beginning to change.

In several ways, then, the work of Daniel Burnham represented the high point in Beaux-Arts city planning.

Notes

Chapter V

[1] John W. Reps, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capitol Center* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 92.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[3] Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 138.

[4] Reps, *Monumental Washington*, p. 8.

L'Enfant's personal political beliefs are mentioned in Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p. 403.

[5] Reps, *Monumental Washington*, pp. 5-8.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[7] Vernon L. Parrington, "The Progressive Era: A Liberal Renaissance," *The Progressive Era: Liberal Renaissance or Liberal Failure?*, ed. Arthur Mann (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 7.

[8] This view is supported in Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 140. The fact that the Progressives supported America's activist foreign policy, especially during the Spanish-American War, gives additional evidence for the connection between liberalism and imperialism. One immediate result of the Spanish-American War was the possession of the Philippines. In 1904 Burnham won the commission to plan the "colonial" cities of Manila and Baguio. Interestingly, Burnham perceived his task as one effecting a "progressive civilization" in the new American possession. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-200.

[9] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 145.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[11] The Progressivist perception of Washington's local government is well expressed by the reformer Frederic C. Howe:

> For a generation the city of Washington has known no serious scandal. Its departments are intelligently and economically administered. Its

> official class is dignified and of a high order of talent. True, Washington is governed in an autocratic way, for in the Capitol City the citizen is disenfranchised. Three commissions appointed by the President perform the functions usually entrusted to the Mayor and the heads of city departments, while Congress itself is the Board of Aldermen.
>
> Washington is probably as honestly governed as is any European municipality, and it has been for years. Its streets are clean, well lighted, and well protected by police. Its school system is among the best, and its health, fire, and many other departments are beyond serious criticism.

Frederic C. Howe, The City: *The Hope of Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 48.

[12] Daniel H. Burnham, "White City and Capital City," *Century Magazine*, XLI (1902), 620.

[13] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 160.

[14] Johnson served in office from 1901 until 1909, and was recognized as the model mayor of the Progressive Era in civic government. His accomplishments included ". . .honest weights and measures, elimination of grade crossings, public bathhouses, a forestry department, band concerts and skating carnivals, antibillboard ordinances, and clean streets." In 1904 muckraker journalist Lincoln Steffens called Cleveland the best-governed city in the United States.

Ernest S. Griffith, *A History of American City Government: The Progressive Years and Their Aftermath, 1910-1920* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 146-148.

[15] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 159.

[16] John Merven Carrère (b. 1858 - d. 1911) was born in Rio de Janeiro but educated in Switzerland and France. He graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1882 and, the following year, he entered the office of McKim, Mead & White in New York. Later, in partnership with Thomas Hastings, he designed resort hotels and churches in St. Augustine, Florida, in the Spanish Renaissance Revival style. Carrère excelled in commissions which required integral landscape planning; "Bellefontane" and "Blairsden" were two large country estates he planned in the French Renaissance style. After serving as chairman of the board of planning

architects for the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo in 1901, his partnership undertook a greater proportion of institutional architecture. Perhaps the greatest architectural achievements of Carrère and Hastings were the United States Senate and House Office buildings of 1905-1906. During his work in Washington he became vitally interested in city planning. He served on the planning commissions of Grand Rapids (1909), and Hartford (1911), as well as that of Cleveland. Abstracted from Talbot F. Hamlin, "John Merven Carrère," *Dictionary of American Biography* (1929), III, 518-20.

Arnold William Brunner (1857-1925) was born in New York and received his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1877 to 1879. His institutional commissions included Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York; Cadet Hospital, West Point; and the Department of State Building in Washington, D.C. Brunner served on the planning commissions of Baltimore, Rochester, Denver, Albany and Cleveland. Abstracted from "Arnold William Brunner," *Who Was Who in America* (1943), I, 156.

[17] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 163.

[18] The Cleveland plan was published as the *Report on a Group Plan of the Public Buildings of Cleveland in 1903*. Copies are rare, according to Hines. No reprint is available. One of the most detailed descriptions of the plan, including reproductions of drawings, can be found in P. Abercrombie, "Cleveland: A Civic Centre Project," *Town Planning Review*, II (July, 1911), pp. 131-135.

[19] Arnold Brunner, "Cleveland's Group Plan," *Proceedings of the Eighth National Conference on City Planning* (New York, 1916), 15, cited in Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 166.

[20] Daniel H. Burnham, John M. Carrère, and Arnold Brunner, "The Grouping of Public Buildings at Cleveland," *The Inland Architect and News Record* XLII (September, 1903), 15.

[21] Correspondents for the British *Town Planning Review* paid close attention to the American civic centre projects in the first two decades of the twentieth century. English planner Patrick Abercrombie recognized the success of the Cleveland Project and he chose it for examination. "This particular example has been selected," he stated, "because it was one of the first to be projected, it is certainly the finest in design, and it is the farthest advanced towards completion."

P. Abercrombie, "Cleveland: A Civic Centre Project," p. 131.

[22] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago,* p. 159.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 175 ff.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[26] John Nolen, ed., *City Planning* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), p. xvi.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[30] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago,* p. 188.

[31] Burnham, *Plan for San Francisco,* p. 44.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 145; pp. 155-157.

[33] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago,* p. 189.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

By 1908, however, the need for a new city hall revived the notion of a civic centre. Three years later, mayoral candidate James Rolph, Jr. made this scheme part of his campaign platform, and won. Early in 1912 Mayor Rolph appointed an advisory board of architects, consisting of John Galen Howard, Frederick H. Meyer and John Reid, Jr., who were all leading San Francisco architects. Following in part the civic centre scheme produced by Burnham and Bennett, the board designed and supervised the building of the city hall, auditorium, library and opera house around a central plaza. Interestingly, the directors of the Panama-Pacific Exposition "donated" a million dollars for the auditorium, thus assuring its completion by the 1915 Exposition opening.

Abstracted from Adolphus Graupner "San Francisco's Great Civic Centre," *The Craftsman,* XXIV (September, 1913), 588-598.

[35] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago,* pp. 313-314.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 313.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 321.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 321-322.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 323-324.

[40] The plan covered a 60-mile radius from the city centre. It included outer parks, forest preserves, and the development of a 20-mile-long lakefront park system on new land produced by filling in parts of the shoreline of Lake Michigan.

Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago* (Chicago, 1909).

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[42] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 388.

[43] The chairman of the Chicago Planning Commission was Charles H. Wacker, a brewery heir who "retired" at the age of 50 to devote his full time to the Commission. The managing director of the Commission was Walter D. Moody, the prolific business publicist.

> Establishing a command post in the Sherman Hotel across from City Hall, the pair proceeded to barrage the city with publications urging the support and development of the plan. In 1911, with the plan still not official, a publication was issued addressed to the "Owners of Chicago" entitled "Chicago's Greatest Issue: an Official Plan." Also in 1911 came the publication called "Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago" which for nearly three decades was a textbook in the Chicago School System. In 1917 came the report "War and the Chicago Plan" followed by one entitled "Reclaim South Water Street for all the People!"

Richard A. Miller, "Burnham's Plan Shaped Modern Chicago," *Architectural Forum* CXVI (May, 1962), 111-112.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[45] Griffith, *The Progressive Years*, p. 121.

[46] Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 347.

[47] These were outlined in the *Town Planning Review* as follows:

New Haven - Cass Gilbert, Architect
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.,
Landscape Architect

Rochester - Arnold W. Brunner, Architect
Frederick L. Olmsted, Landscape Architect
Brian J. Arnold

Madison - John Nolen, Landscape Architect

Pittsburgh - Frederick L. Olmsted, Landscape Architect

Boulder - Frederick L. Olmsted, Landscape Architect

Chattanooga - John Nolen, Landscape Architect

"Review of Current Periodicals and New Books," *Town Planning Review* II (July, 1911), 150-151.

CHAPTER VI

THE FATE OF BEAUX-ARTS PLANNING

The widespread adoption of Beaux-Arts planning in the service of municipal reform peaked during the second decade of the twentieth century. Even the publicist, C. M. Robinson, achieved institutional support for his theory on the City Beautiful as an image of reform. Beaux-Arts planning was ubiquitous, and served many North American cities with even the smallest of land areas and populations. In examining the theoretical writings and actual planning reports of this decade one recognizes a constant propaganda for change. The acceptance of Beaux-Arts principles paralleled the elimination of partisan politics and the ward system. Throughout the period from 1910 to 1920 Progressive cities continued to commission and publish plans for civic centres, axial malls, grand boulevards and comprehensive park systems. Simultaneously, the municipal reform movement continued to clamour for moral "urban renewal."

The state of the relationship between reform and planning during this decade is most amply documented in *City Planning*, published by the National Municipal League in 1916.[1] *City Planning* was one volume in a series of textbooks addressed to the concerns of urban Progressivists.[2] Edited by John Nolen, it recapitulates the grand planning movement since the Chicago World's Fair. The book is comprised of eighteen chapters, each written by a specialist connected in some way with physical municipal reform.[3] Importantly, references to both the ideal and the practical natures of city planning converge in the text. Moreover, each chapter of *City Planning* complements the Beaux-Arts style in principle, even though the most utilitarian aspects of planning are now themselves deemed to be important.[4] In the Introduction, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. defines this new complexity in planning. He argues,

> Nothing which may conceivably become a part of the city or affect the city's future can logically be excluded from the [planning] field. It will embrace the most diverse branches of specialized science and technique applied to urban affairs, including countless phases of engineering, sanitation, economics, and finance, and every art which can minister to the happiness and welfare of an urban population.[5]

Although the kernel of altruistic intent remains, the practice of city planning is not merely restricted to replicating the "White City." Since the first meeting of the National Municipal League in 1894 city planning had developed through the medium of the architectural profession. The compilation and publishing of *City Planning* by the National Municipal League represented a substantial achievement of the goals of 1894. At the same time, this textbook indicated a change in the very nature of city planning itself.

Nevertheless, the Beaux-Arts planning style still held its primacy in 1916. In *City Planning* the chapter on the civic centre is very significant in this respect; it was entitled "Public Buildings and Quasi-Public Buildings" and it was written by Edward Bennett.[6] Having collaborated with Burnham in the planning for San Francisco and Chicago, Bennett was keenly aware of the use of Beaux-Arts style in the service of urban reform. This iconographic theme penetrates his writing. Stylistically, Bennett supports Neoclassical architecture and neo-Baroque landscape planning; ideologically, he imports the Progressivist belief system. In suggesting the siting of public buildings, for example, he allows that they are only "rightly placed when grouped in locations that will satisfy economic conditions, and when they are readily accessible to the public."[7] Conversely, in describing the location of public buildings in the ideal city plan, Bennett refers to "focus" as the primary criterion for both outstanding visual effect as well as for convenience. He argues,

> Such a [focal] point in the city plan will give the maximum opportunities of accessibility from all directions; also, the maximum opportunity for architectural effect of the public buildings and for their development with regard to the streets themselves, and with regard to the plazas composed by their intersections. A focus of this nature may be inland, or it may have reference to a river or lake front, the latter being perhaps the finest of all.

> [Furthermore,] there is an economic advantage in the conception of transportation lines and arteries of circulation towards one or more focal points.[8]

The "focus," of course, alludes to a neo-Baroque system of converging, diagonal boulevards. As with Bennett's other references to the ideal city plan, one recognizes his stylistic presumptions. Where the converging streets intersect, for example, Bennett assumes that plazas will be built. And, like his Baroque predecessors, he maintains the aesthetic supremacy of siting near water.[9] Besides these stylistic presumptions, the other major element in Bennett's program is Progressivism, and one finds continual references to "economic advantage" - as with the focal street planning - throughout this chapter.

Bennett outlines other significant grand-planning themes in relation to municipal reform principles. In his discussion of "The Sites of Public Buildings" he characterizes extant municipal architectural groups in the United States for their aesthetic and symbolic failings.[10] The single municipal building does not adequately accommodate growth, in Bennett's estimation. He suggests that extension-building is unsatisfactory because it destroys symmetry, and he denies that various departments of municipal administration can function in scattered, separate buildings. By offering the ideal paradigm of a Beaux-Arts civic centre, however, Bennett provides what he considers an acceptable aesthetical as well as functional, that is, symbolical, reform alternative. In a doctrináire manner he states:

> The group plan surrounding or controlling a public space may be said to be the ideal plan. Arguments need not be presented to demonstrate the quality that may be attained in the composition of a group of buildings of a balanced nature on a regular axis, and with a dominant central note.[11]

The "dominant central note" is, of course, the city hall, and here one recalls the civic centres which Bennett planned for San Francisco and Chicago. Although he does not explicitly refer to these he does illustrate his idea by including his plan for the civic centre of Minneapolis.[12] Again, this plan betrays its European precedents in its radiating avenues, its grand axis, and its flanking architectural group consisting of City Hall, Law Courts, public library and auditorium. The central public square is landscaped with geometrical parterres in the neo-Baroque style. Such is the ideal model of a Beaux-Arts civic centre in 1916.

Finally, Bennett discusses the topic of "Relative Nature and Design of Buildings." Again, as a Beaux-Arts practitioner in the service of municipal reform, he does not consider this problem one of pure aesthetics, nor design as an end in itself. But Bennett does address the question of institutional imagery, and he interprets the problem as one of dominance in municipal architecture. Here, Bennett offers an instructive simile in outlining the problem. What he does, in fact, is to declare the ideological perceptions of himself and his progressive colleagues:

> Formerly public buildings may fairly be said to have represented the height of achievement of constructive science, as well as of artistic expression. In this they were rivalled only by the church and were often excelled by it. Such conditions existed in this country until the advent of skeleton steel construction. A great impulse to the building of tall structures was then given, and, with the natural clinging to old or recognized monumental types of buildings, anomalous conditions were created. The public building, like the church, has been submerged by the flood of business blocks. Excess and pretension in the expression of a great portion of these commercial structures, for the most part uncontrolled, have added to this condition.[13]

Ideologically, the comparison between the church and the public building is most revealing. Both symbolize institutional centres of power. Indeed, the Progressive recognizes the city hall as the only true source of administrative wisdom and strength. What he finds "anomalous" is the fact that "recognized monumental types" continue to be used for civic buildings, while the new skeletal-steel building - representing "the height of achievement" - is adopted by the business establishment. Bennett perceives this new commercial architectural symbolism as a threat to the civic order in its encroachment upon the city hall. He invokes the imagery of chaos - the flood - no doubt in allusion to his belief that the urban commercial sprawl destroyed the visual, if not the ideological supremacy of the church in former times. Certainly Bennett's denunciation of uncontrolled "excess and pretension" in the contemporary commercial encroachment is a moral judgment. It seems that Bennett's judgment parallels the Progressivist denunciation of large corporations and monopolies at the turn of the twentieth century.[14] Again, one recognizes the strong ethical basis for the municipal reform movement, and its reflection in the planner's justification of traditional styles for civic imagery.

Yet the condition of Beaux-Arts city planning in 1916 was not entirely solid nor spiritually healthy. The preponderance of the National Municipal League's textbook on city planning was devoted to themes other than that of architectural and landscape compositions. Progressives also articulated their fears about controlling the cityscape and implementing grand planning. This rising state of insecurity generated another textbook for urban administrators.

Like *City Planning*, the work entitled *Carrying Out The City Plan* is a concurrent document on the aspirations of the municipal reform movement. Unlike *City Planning*, however, *Carrying Out The City Plan* does not assume a state of consensus in the urban community. The book was written by a Progressive lawyer, Flavel Shurtleff, and its full title was *Carrying Out The City Plan: The Practical Application of American Law* *in the Execution of City Plans.*[15] Its introduction, written by Frederick Law Olmsted, was symptomatic of the stage of impasse reached by grand planners in the United States at this time. Olmsted states,

> The reason for preparing this book is the astonishing variation in the practical efficiency of methods actually employed and prescribed by law or legal custom in different parts of the United States in acquiring land for public purposes, in distributing the cost of public improvements, and in other proceedings essential to the proper shaping of our growing cities to the needs of their inhabitants. Mere variation in method would be of little more than academic interest in itself, but variations that result in obstructing the path of progress in one community and clearing it in another are of large practical importance. The extent and significance of these practical variations have impressed themselves more and more strongly on the writer in the course of an extended practice as a landscape architect, especially in connection with the design and execution of such municipal improvements as parks, playgrounds, public squares, parkways, streets, the placing of public buildings and the improvement of their grounds. Even more notable than the variation in method and in relative efficiency has been the close preoccupation of public officials, especially in the city law departments, with the constantly recurring problem of finding the way of least resistance for navigating a specific improvement through the maze of obstacles imposed by the existing local legal situation, accompanied by an almost fatalistic acceptance of these obstacles as a permanent condition.[16]

By 1914 the model of consensus was already found wanting. Quite simply, the urban Progressives found themselves the Establishment and, as such, they discovered that their perceptions of municipal improvement did not coincide with those held by other groups in the community. When Olmsted refers to "municipal improvements" he is essentially describing a Beaux-Arts planning program. Moreover, he equates this type of program with "the path of progress," and he deems any objection to that program as an obstruction. By this time the planner's major concern had become one of implementation. In order to realize their plans the municipal reformers had to resort to the legal process, that is, they had to invoke sanctions against the individual for what they believed to be the good of the greater number.

Among the legal topics which Shurtleff considers, one of the most important is excess condemnation.[17] Interestingly, the first model legislation which Shurtleff cites is that found in *Acts of Ohio, 1904*, which states,

> All municipal corporations shall have power to appropriate, enter upon and hold, real estate within their corporate limits for the following purposes: . . . .
>
> 12th: For establishing esplanades, boulevards, parkways, park grounds, and public reservations in, around and leading to public buildings, and for the purpose of reselling such land with reservations in the deeds of such resale as to the future use of said lands so as to protect public buildings and their environs, and to preserve the view, appearance, light, air, and usefulness of public grounds occupied by public buildings and esplanades, and parkways leading thereto.[18]

This statute describes, of course, a civic centre built on Beaux-Arts planning principles. The presumption here is that such a planning scheme is normative. The statute does not simply provide a vehicle for municipal condemnation and control of land, it tends to sanction a particular planning style. As a legal vehicle it offers neither an alternative in planning nor a remedy for those who might be affected by it. Shurtleff cites many similarly confining statutes, all dating from the turn of the century to 1914.[19] They coincide with the growth of the municipal reform movement and they originate in jurisdictions where grand planning is most vigorous.

By about 1920 grand city planning had reached the end of its institutional life. Beaux-Arts city planners already recognized the adoption of the skyscraper as the preeminent "urban" building form, and they realized that grand planning could only be attended by continuous litigation. Although Chicago proceeded with large parts of the Burnham plan its approach represented an exception to the new norm.

The immediate reason why Beaux-Arts planning lost its institutional patronage by 1920 was related to a specific policy failure by municipal reform politicians. That policy was annexation, the inexorable drive towards making larger and larger cities.[20] For the Progressivist, metropolitan consolidation meant both economy and efficiency. In turn, Beaux Arts planners could provide a tangible expression for this "civic state." The movement towards centralized metropolitan control paralleled the acceptance of Beaux-Arts city planning. Most urban consolidation and annexation occurred between 1900 and 1920. But there was, in reality, an inverse relationship between urban growth and administrative centralization.

Between 1900 and 1920 American urban change was conditioned by both economic and cultural values. Along with the decentralization of industry and commerce within the city came the residential suburb, and the search for more space in which to live and preserve traditional American values by individual home ownership.[21] By about 1920 municipal government was unprepared for this suburban growth, and the new suburban dwellers did not always agree with centralized control. According to Griffith, the problem was basically a financial one:

> There were those [suburbanites] that did not want the higher tax rates which annexation by the city would bring them; and there were those whose needs, compared to their taxable capacity, were such that the central city did not want to face the burden of annexing them.[22]

The existing institution of municipal government was already becoming obsolete in many instances, and county or regional government was necessary to cope with metropolitan problems. Regional planning, as opposed to city planning, would embrace a larger set of questions, including transportation, social services, municipal engineering, and financing. Moreover, in the context of physical planning, the Beaux-

Arts style would not be the appropriate means for giving expression to this new urban phenomenon. For regional and suburban planning schemes the practitioners would find more meaning in the garden city model.[23]

What, then, was the ultimate fate of Beaux-Arts planning? This final question must be related to the waning of Progressivism as the preeminent urban political movement. If Beaux-Arts planning was the tangible manifestation of the reform ideal, and that ideal lost credibility by about 1920, one is still faced with the situation in which practitioners and publicists continue to espouse the grand planning style. Scholars generally agree that the Beaux-Arts planning movement continues until 1930 or thereabouts.[24] In the 1920's then, without institutional support, Beaux-Arts planning loses its social function and indeed, fails even in its idealism.

In this final decade of the City Beautiful in America two Beaux-Arts planners, Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets, continued to suggest ideal schemes for unified city plans and civic centres.[25] Their massive 1922 edition of *The American Vitruvius: An Architect's Handbook of Civic Art* was undoubtedly an attempt to revive Beaux-Arts planning when it was already dead.[26] The book itself was designed to impress both architect and publicist, yet throughout this grandiose work the theme is one of defense and insecurity. Its authors attempt to make their role legitimate by invoking the name of Vitruvius, the Roman planner of ideal cities who worked in the latter half of the first century, B.C.

In fact, *Civic Art* gives the semblance of a complete history of Beaux-Arts planning from beginning to conclusive end. The authors discuss the precedents of the Beaux-Arts city plan in the most detailed and hortatory manner. Reviewing the history of Baroque planning they claim that

> . . . the main western axis of Versailles may be called the unsurpassed climax of modern art; its endless perspective into limitless space, opening like a magic window into infinity, ministers to such a deep longing of the heart, that its contemplation almost partakes of the character of a sacrament.[27]

Versailles is indeed seminal to the history of Beaux-Arts city planning, but Hegemann and Peets give it a very stilted position. They describe it in superlative terms, thereby reducing their own eclectic methodology into a narrow process of passing judgment in order to find the ultimate touchstone of their profession. Moreover, they fail to recognize the real significance of Versailles in its allusion to domination by an absolute king; instead, they characterize the vista of its grand perspective as "a magic window into infinity," an enchantment of visual gratification. Finally, they all but claim to be members of a sacred priesthood, for who but the 'anointed' could provide such a 'holy communion' as they describe?[28]

With Beaux-Arts planning relegated to history, and no longer serving a social function, the practitioner must not only be contented with publicizing but he must also resort to the defense that what he does is 'sacred' and arcane. Nor is it surprising that the Beaux-Arts planner, in this last phase, sees himself as an "artist," practicing his art for its own sake. Such a perception is openly stated in *Civic Art*; it serves well to illustrate why Beaux-Arts planning continues after 1920. The Introduction to *Civic Art* here serves as a conclusion to this question:

> The artist himself, running continuously against the opposition of the so-called "practical" man with his "lack of funds" and his untrained imagination, gradually learns to make concessions and to be satisfied with compromise. He finally loses the nerve to propose big plans and to fight for them, as he learns that support is much more readily enlisted for the production of little things. It is invigorating, even for the strongest from time to time to see together a large number of compositions, daring solutions, straightforward proposals untainted by compromise; whether these were finally executed or remained an artist's bold dream is not important.[29]

Notes

Chapter VI

[1] John Nolen, ed., *City Planning*, National Municipal League Series (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916).

[2] Other titles include: C. R. Woodruff, ed., *City Government by Commission*; C. L. King, ed., *The Regulation of Municipal Utilities*; Mary R. Beard, ed., *Woman's Work in Municipalities*; and C. L. King, ed., *Lower Living Costs in Cities*. Each title emphasizes an important Progressivist policy.

[3] The topics discussed in *City Planning* include the legal, economic, and sociological aspects of physical planning. Of its eighteen chapters, three are addressed to legal problems, seven are concerned with site and street planning, two relate sociological questions, and four deal with public utilities. One chapter is concerned with financing, and one is devoted to the civic centre. Interestingly, Charles Mulford Robinson contributes the chapter entitled "City-Planning Legislation." The notion of implementation seems to have supplanted Robinson's preoccupation with Progressivist didacticism.

[4] The combining of the Beaux-Arts Style with Progressivism is well exemplified in Arthur C. Comey's chapter entitled "Neighborhood Centers." Although Comey ostensibly discusses his topic from a sociological standpoint, he does consider the ideal physical nature of a neighbourhood centre. Here he weaves the Progressivist doctrines of economy, efficiency, and social welfare with the grand planning style:

> Public facilities gain in dignity, convenience, and economy if grouped, instead of being scattered, regardless of one another, throughout the district they serve. This is especially true of the educational, recreational and social elements of the city plan. Not only is the architectural effect of buildings greatly enhanced by their becoming units of a large composition, and by being visible across the necessary open spaces at a far more effective angle than when seen merely along a street, but, of far greater importance, the service rendered is vastly increased, both through the economical interlocking of various facilities in such an arrangement, and especially through the increased use apt to be made of a single comprehensive plant in contrast with scattered units, each of which

> must be sought separately. Looked at in this way, the neighbourhood center properly constitutes a single plant which serves the needs of all ages from the play of the youngest child to the quiet reading of the elder citizens.

Arthur C. Comey, "Neighborhood Centers," *City Planning*, p. 118.

[5] Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., "Introduction," *City Planning*, pp. 2-3.

[6] Edward H. Bennett, "Public Buildings and Quasi-Public Buildings," *City Planning*, pp. 103-115.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

[9] In Baroque planning, grand axial reflecting canals were favoured. The outstanding examples are found at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles, both by Andre le Nôtre. Beaux-Arts practitioners and theoreticians continue to favour water as a natural mirror, but they also recognize the potential for creating a grander scale by siting on water. C. M. Robinson, for example, considers that water is ". . . the most favorable place from which to view a city. . . . [because] no distracting element intrudes between scene and seer."

Charles Mulford Robinson, *Modern Civic Art*, 4th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), p. 42.

[10] Bennett, "Public Buildings," *City Planning*, p. 108 ff.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[12] Bennett describes the Minneapolis civic centre plan, *ibid.*, p. 112; he includes a reproduction of this plan between pages 114-115.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[14] Ida M. Tarbell published her "History of the Standard Oil Company" in *McClure's* in an eighteen-month serialization, beginning in November, 1902. The leading muckraker, Lincoln Steffens, was the first journalist to document the corrupt alliance of politicians and businessmen in municipal politics. *The Shame of Cities* appeared in 1904.

[15] Flavel Shurtleff, *Carrying Out The City Plan: The Practical Application of American Law in the Execution of City Plans* (New York: Survey Associates, 1914).

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. v-vi.

[17] Excess condemnation is the process by which a municipal jurisdiction acquires land for an improvement (e.g., boulevard widening), plus an extra amount of land outside the limits of the physical improvement. By selling this excess land at a later time the municipality can pay a portion of the cost of the improvement.

Frank Backus Williams, "Public Control of Private Real Estate," *City Planning*, pp. 58-61.

[18] Shurtleff, *Carrying Out The City Plan*, pp. 268-269.

[19] The excess condemnation legislation passed by the State of Pennsylvania in 1907 was successfully contested by the Pennsylvania Mutual Life Insurance Company. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court handed down a decision on 15 April 1917, declaring the Act of 1907 unconstitutional.

Ibid., pp. 268-280.

[20] Ernest S. Griffith, *A History of American City Government: The Progressive Years and Their Aftermath, 1900-20* (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 286.

Sheer physical growth of American cities in the mid-nineteenth century was the first determining factor in municipal consolidation. By the turn of the century, however, annexation was the prime manifestation of the municipal reform principle that "bigger is better."

Kenneth T. Jackson, "Metropolitan Government Versus Suburban Autonomy," *Cities in American History*, ed. K. T. Jackson and S. K. Schultz (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 442-462.

[21] Griffith, *The Progressive Years*, p. 286.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[23] Sir Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) published a book on theoretical planning entitled *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1898. As a result of Howard's publicity work Letchworth Garden City, near London, was begun in 1903.

The Garden City Movement had as its antecedents several model cottage suburbs built from 1851 onwards by British manufacturing magnates and social reformers. Sir Titus Salt, developer of the worsted process, founded Saltaire in 1851. This was followed by Bourneville, begun in 1879 by Richard and George Cadbury, the cocoa processors. In 1888 William Hesketh Lever (later Lord Leverhume) proposed and helped to design the town of Port Sunlight, for his soap industry.

Leonardo Benevolo, *The Origins of Modern Town Planning*, trans. Judith Landry (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

In the United States, George Pullman, manufacturer of railway sleeping cars, commissioned the planning of a factory town in 1880. Pullman, Illinois, flourished until 1894 when a strike and violent protest by workers disrupted the ideal company town. Ultimately, the Illinois Supreme Court ordered the Pullman Company to divest itself of all real property holdings not directly concerned with its manufacturing.

John W. Reps, *The Making of Urban America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 421-424.

The establishment of residential suburbs by government agency or housing co-operative was suggested by James Ford in "Residential and Industrial Decentralization," *City Planning*, pp. 333-352.

[24] Mullin defines the "City Beautiful period" as the timespan between 1890 and 1930. Reps, Black, Hancock and other planning historians generally agree with this definition. John R. Mullin, "World's Fairs and Their Impact Upon Urban Planning," *Exchange Bibliography #303*, ed. Mary Vance (Monticello, Illinois: Council of Planning Librarians, 1972), p. 2.

[25] Werner Hegemann (1881-1936) began his career as a historian of architecture and city planning. As a result of his work at the Berlin Planning Exhibition of 1910 he became director of the Socialist "Co-operative Building Association Ideal," an organization which constructed garden suburbs for workingmen. In 1913 he moved to the United States, where he acted as a planning consultant for the East Bay housing development in San Francisco. From 1916 to 1921 he helped to direct real estate subdivision work in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. After extensive travels in Europe and the Middle East he and Elbert Peets published *Civic Art* in 1922. From 1924 until 1933 Hegemann worked as a planning consultant in Germany, but he returned to the United States

when the Nazi regime took power. In 1935 he became an associate professor of architecture at Columbia University.

Abstracted from "Werner Hegemann, City Planner, Dead," New York *Times*, April 13, 1936, p. 17.

Elbert Peets (1886-1968) was an American landscape architect and town planner who spent most of his career as a lecturer at Harvard and Yale. He was an inveterate admirer of Renaissance and Baroque planning schemes, and wrote eleven essays and articles on the plan of Washington, D.C. These, and fifteen other essays, were published as a collection entitled *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, ed. Paul Spreiregen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1968).

[26] Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets, *The American Vitruvius: An Architect's Handbook of Civic Art* (New York: Architectural Publishing Company, 1922).

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

[28] "And each generation of Fine Artists more insistently claims to be doing in the new State that redeeming work Churches performed in the old - that is, expanding the psyche, making men steadily wiser, more sensitive, more creative, closer to the state of divine spirits."

Alan Gowans, *The Unchanging Arts* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1971), p. 51.

[29] Hegemann and Peets, *Civic Art*, p. 1.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The municipal reform movement was the earliest political manifestation of Progressivism and, as such, it set as its first cause the remedy of some very real ills in urban America. The first intelligentsia of this movement were liberal journalists, lawyers and sociologists, and their membership gave the movement the seminal characteristics of a middle-class revolution. In a fundamental way America's own "social revolution" was comprised of its various progressive movements. It was liberal America which led the crusades to transform an individualistic and competitive society into something approximating the welfare state.[1] In the cities the progressives fought for, and obtained, victories for participatory democracy. Yet the progressive movements probably contributed more to a status revolution and less to a social revolution. The municipal reform movement, for one, did more for the middle class and less for the working class. In fact, the American worker enjoyed the abundance which flowed from his urban political machine, however corrupt it was and however squalid its setting. He wanted the social services that the machines knew how to give and that the progressives had not yet developed.[2] In contrast, the urban progressive was of another mind, and saw the growth of bossism and partisan politics as signs of urban divisiveness and even decay. By the early 1890's, therefore, the urban, liberal middle-class felt at once threatened in its security, and it also felt itself indispensable to the leadership of the new order.

When the National Municipal League held its first meeting in 1894 it offered a platform of reform which, if implemented, would place altruistic professionals in charge of centrally-controlled city states. Simultaneously, it seemed, America's leading architects and landscape planners had provided the solution to a problem whose time had arrived. Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham brought to the Chicago World's Fair the ideal for a professionally-devised setting for urban democracy. The White City was the centrepiece of the wedding of Beaux-Arts city planning and municipal reform. In its grand scale and "fearful symmetry" the progressive mind recognized a whole greater than the sum of its parts. And beyond its symbolic unity, comprehensive city planning could accommodate the progressive desires for "uplift" in cleanliness, open spaces, parks, civic museums, schools and theatres.

The leading propagandist of grand city planning on behalf of municipal reform was Charles Mulford Robinson. One finds in Robinson's writings evidence of class insecurity, evidence which supports the notion of progressivism as a status revolution. Robinson believed that uniformity in city planning would serve as the ideal metaphor for the new collectivist city-state, provided that the presumably middle-class meritocracy reigned. Thus municipal reform would beget the professional civic administration which would beget the city planning commission.

By placing faith in architects and city planners the municipal reformers were deferring to perhaps the most doctrinaire eclectics in the history of modern architecture. For practitioners such as Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett there was a challenge in replicating European cityscapes in North America. The real paradox in progressive planning, therefore, was that the status revolution went too far; that the imposition of the Rue Royale in Cleveland could only lead to the suggested recreation of the entire Paris street system in San Francisco. Such close replication on such a large scale was ultimately the reason why Beaux-Arts city planning ceased. Its institutional support collapsed when municipal politicians and voters rejected the concepts of centralized, metropolitan government and of annexation - growth in the cause of supposed greatness and unproven "economy and efficiency." Whereas Cleveland and Chicago built large segments of their grand plans, these cities also had the strongest progressive leadership.

The degree of acceptance of Beaux-Arts city planning in the United States seemed to correspond with the degree of success gained by the municipal reform movement. Without this latter institutional support, in fact, Beaux-Arts city planning degenerated into a stylistic movement for its own sake.

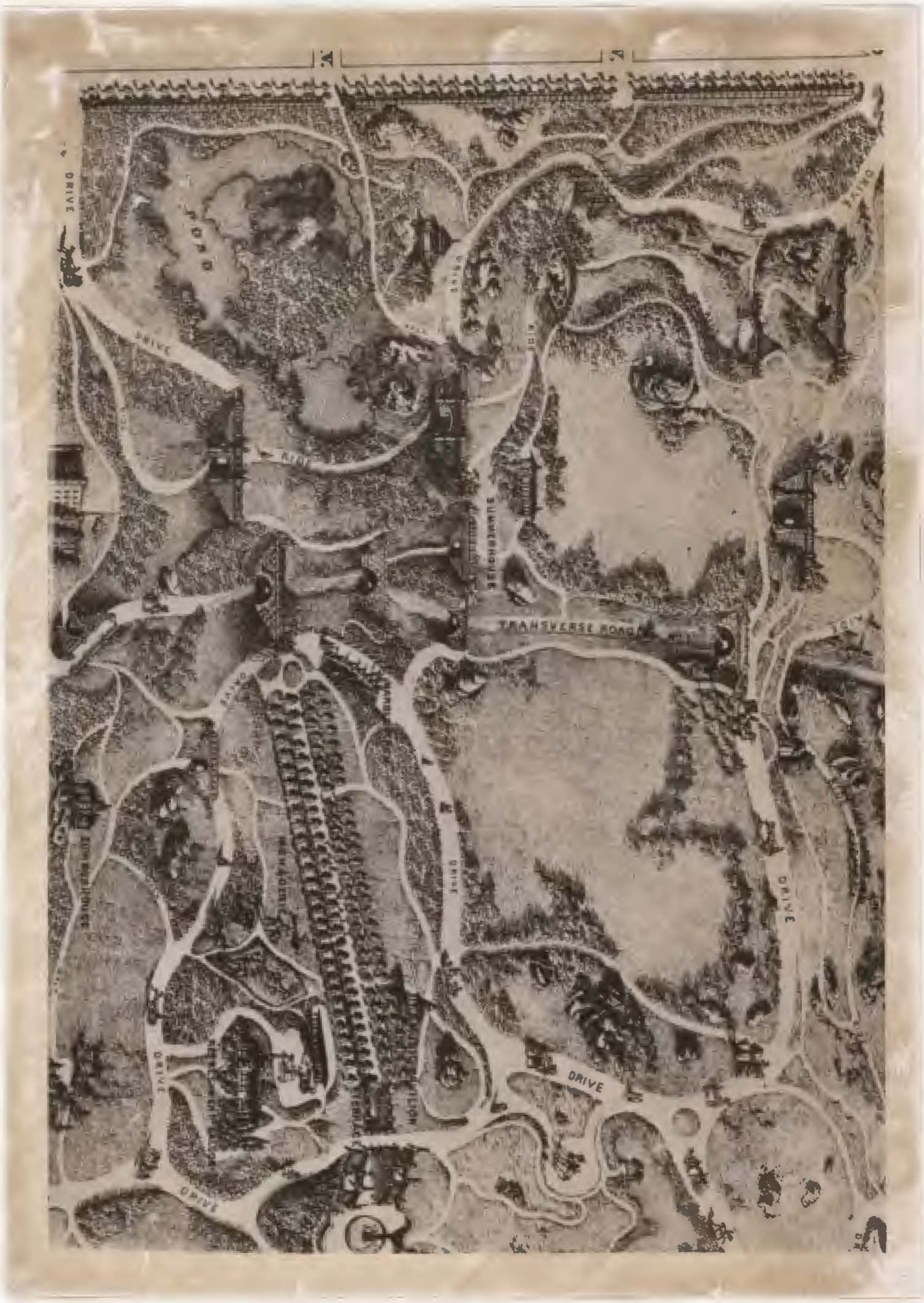
Notes

Chapter VII

[1] Arthur S. Link, *American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 72.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Fig. 1 Central Park, New York City.
Olmsted's Circulation System,
ca. 1870.


DRIVE
POND
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SUMMERHOUSE
TRANSVERSE ROAD
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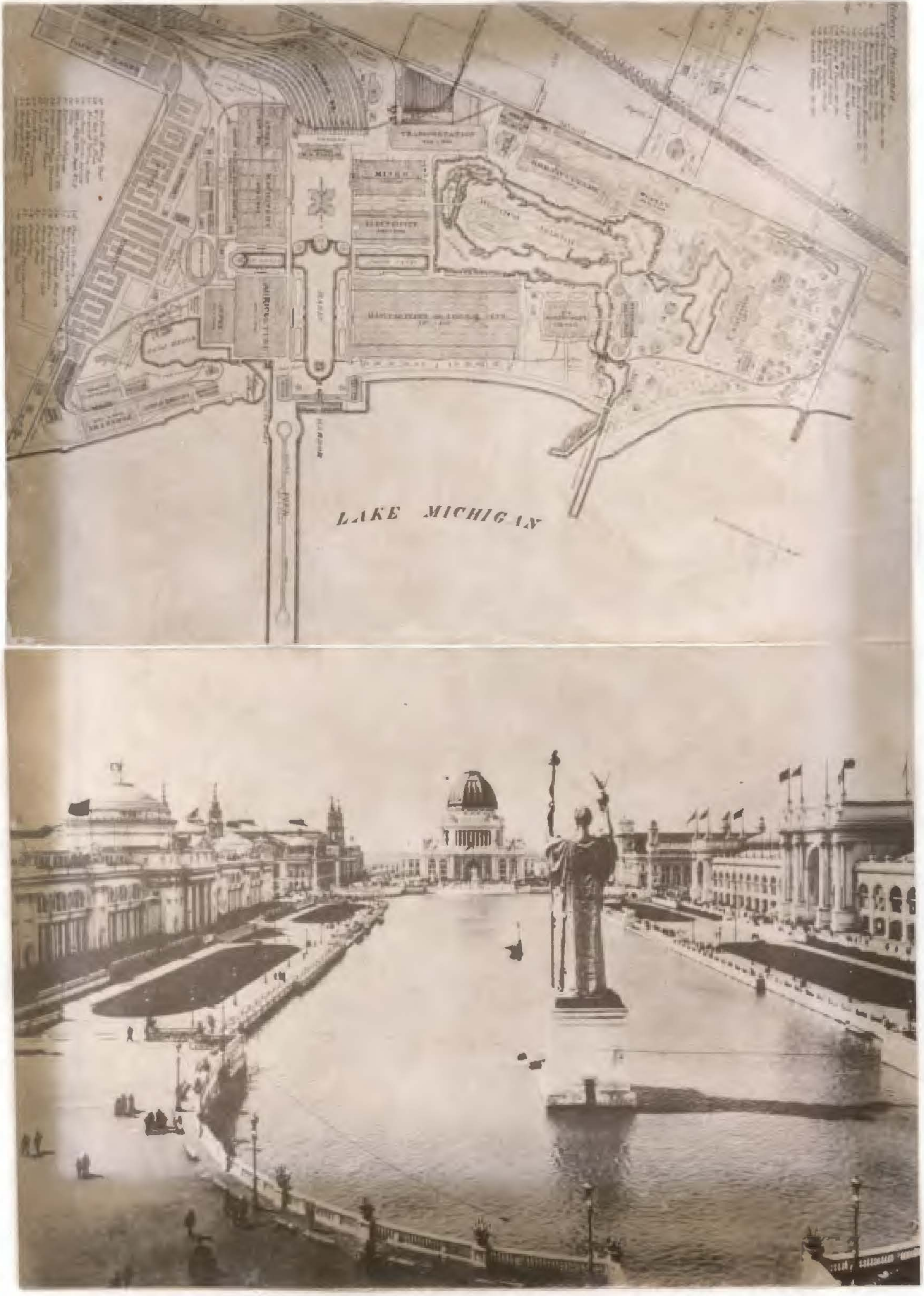
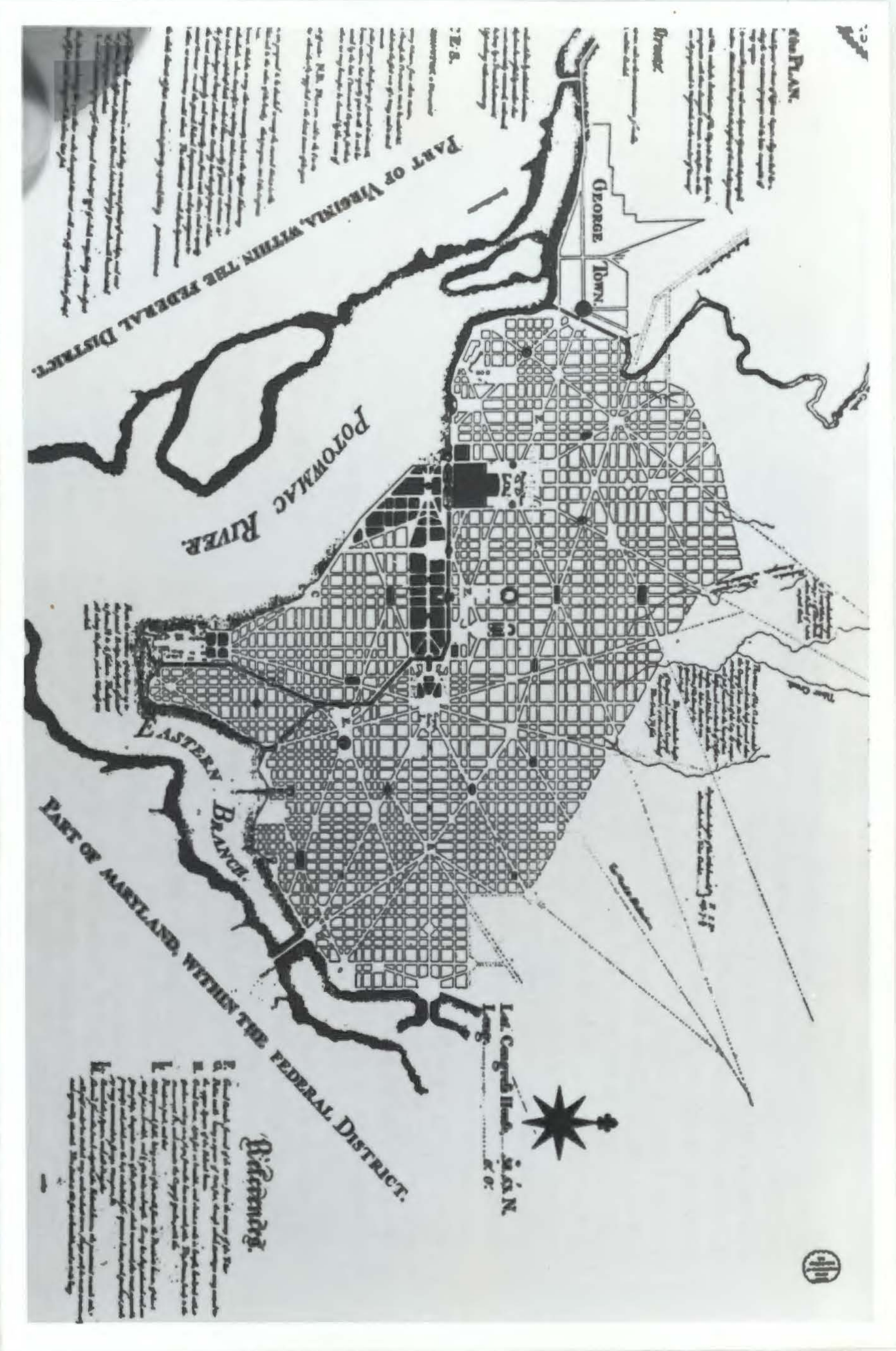
Julius Fabos and others, *Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.*, pp. 24-25.

Fig. 2 World's Columbian Exposition,
Chicago, 1892-93.


TRANSPORTATION
MINES
AGRICULTURE
LAKE MICHIGAN

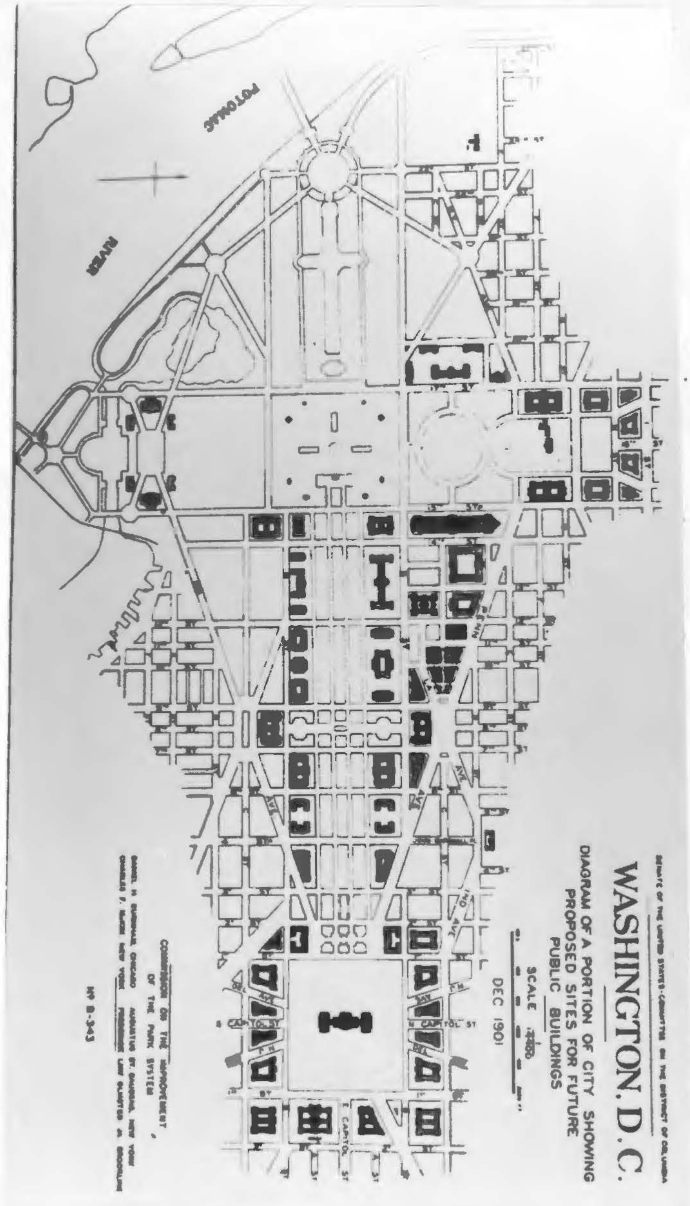
Julius Fabos and others, *Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.*, pp. 93 and 97.

Fig. 3 Plan of Washington, D.C. by Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 1791.


PART OF VIRGINIA WITHIN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT.
POTOWMAC RIVER.
GEORGE TOWN.
EASTERN BRANCH.
PART OF MARYLAND, WITHIN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT.
References.

John Reps, *Monumental Washington*, p. 16.

Fig. 4 Plan of the Senate Park Commission for the Central Mall of Washington, D.C., 1901.


POTOMAC
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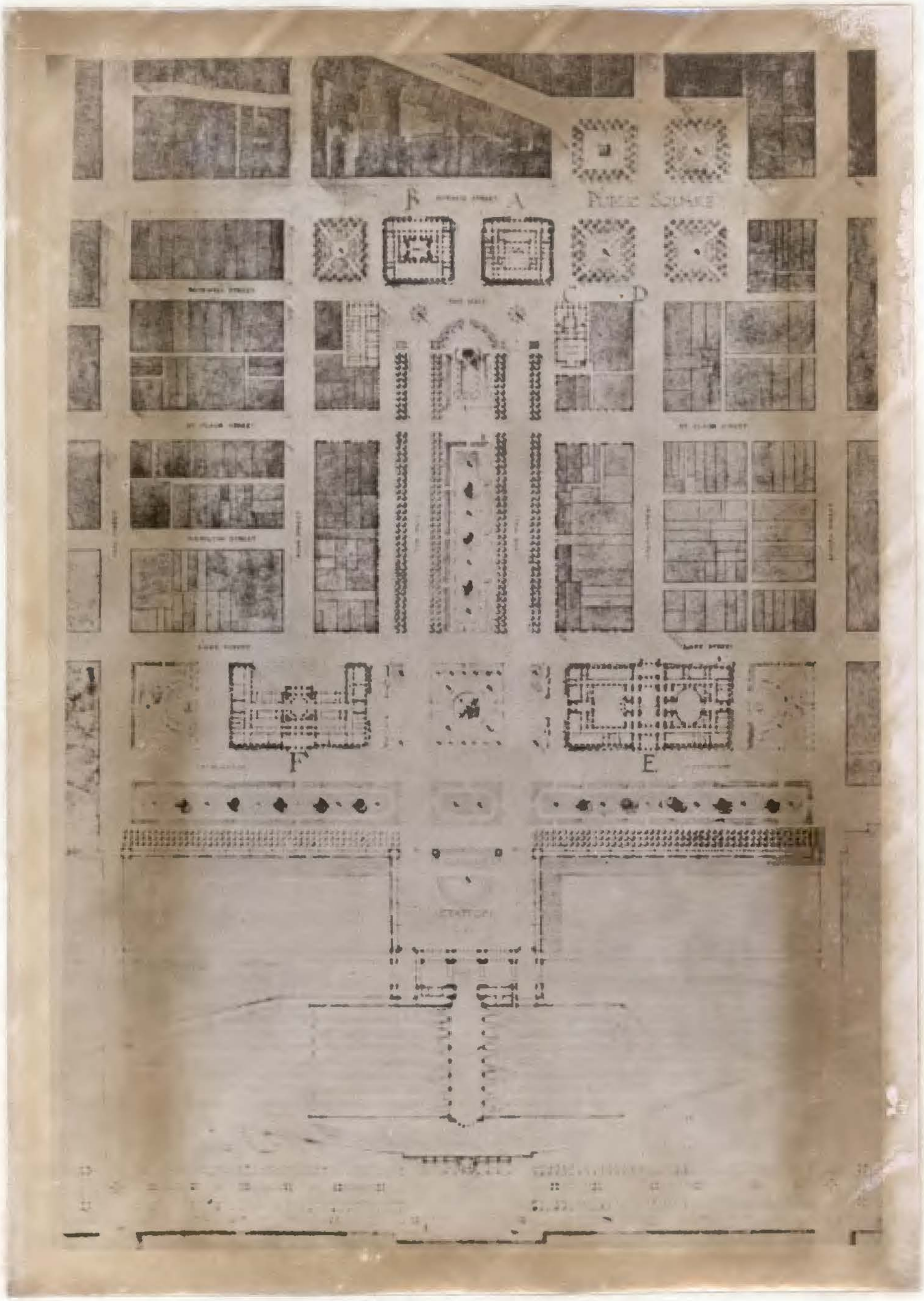
WASHINGTON, D.C.
DIAGRAM OF A PORTION OF CITY SHOWING PROPOSED SITES FOR FUTURE PUBLIC BUILDINGS
SCALE
DEC 1901
COMMISSION ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARK SYSTEM
CAPITOL ST

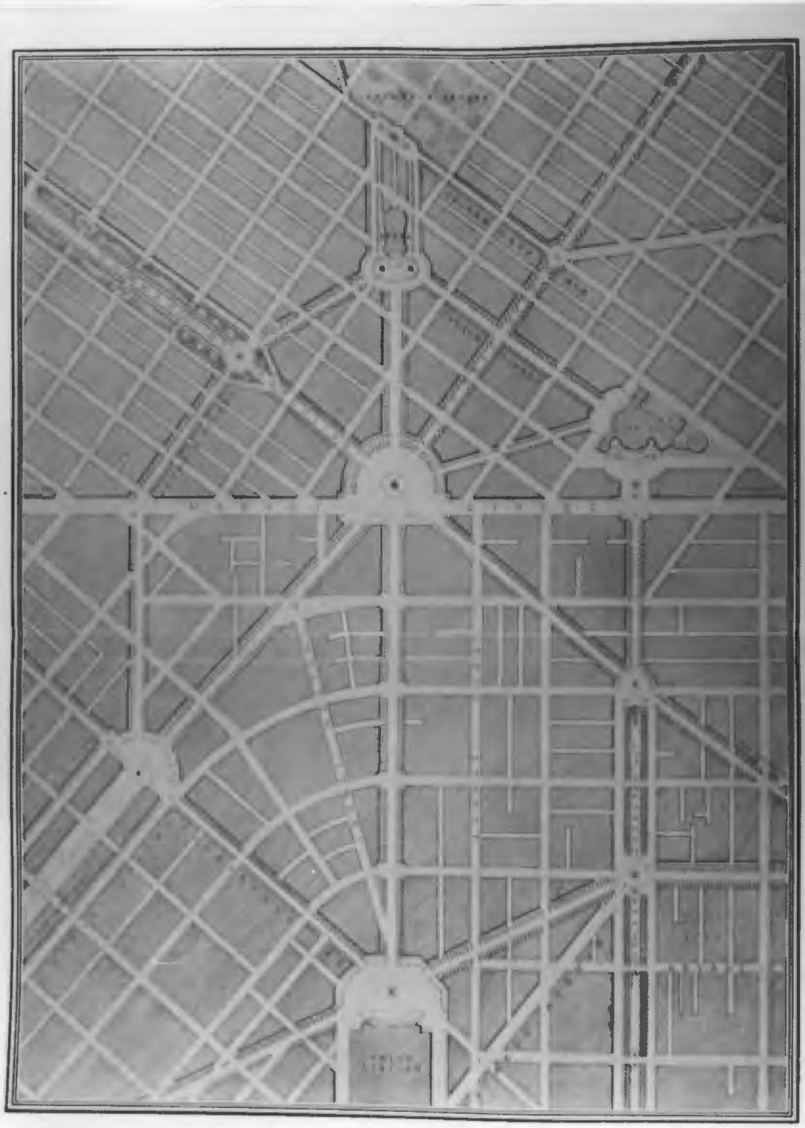
John Reps, *The Making of Urban America*, p. 509.

Fig. 5 Plan for the Cleveland Civic Centre by Burnham, Brunner and Carrère, 1903.


B
A
PUBLIC SQUARE
C
D
F
E

P. Abercrombie, "Cleveland," *Town Planning Review* (July 1911), opposite p. 130.

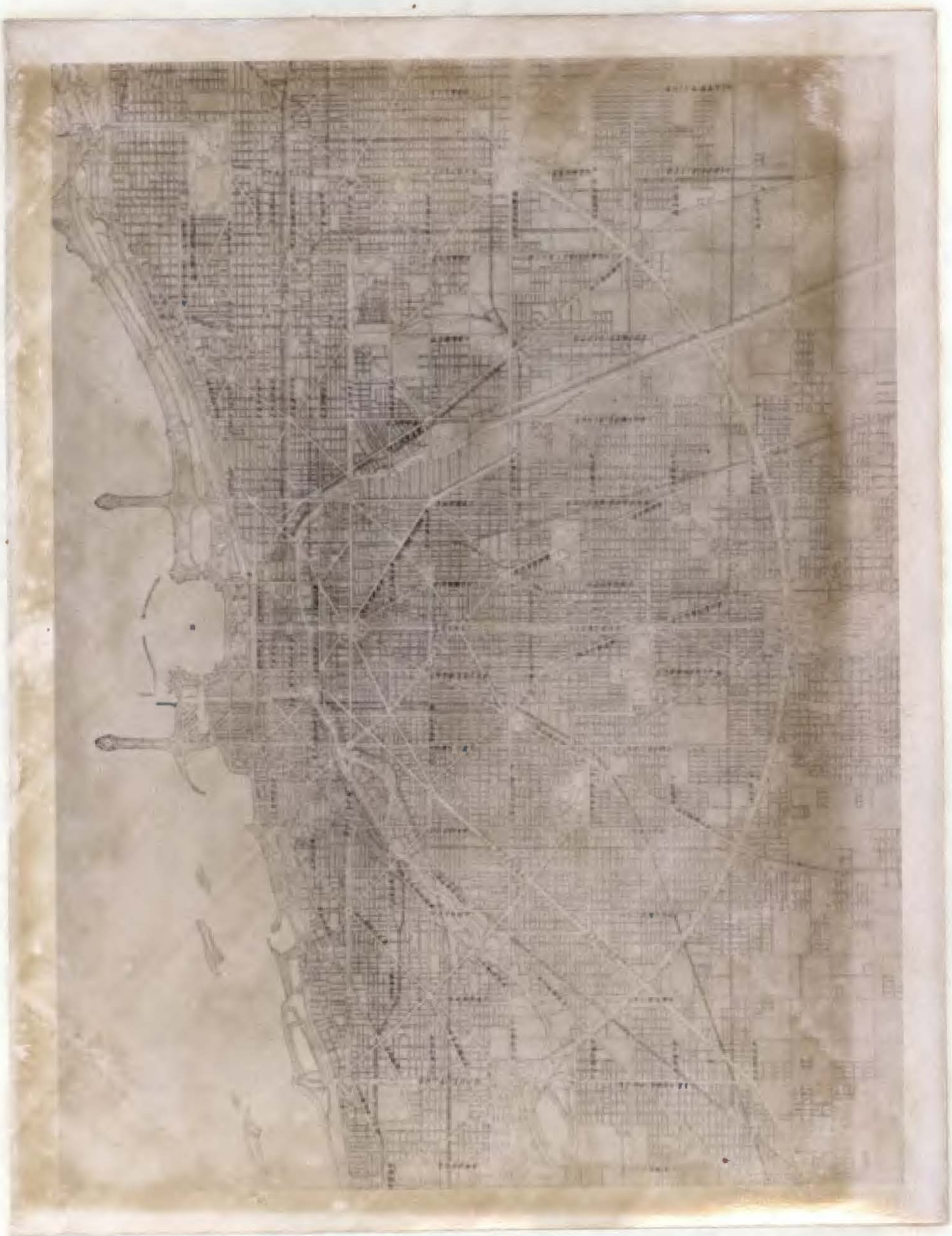
Fig. 6 Plan for the San Francisco Civic Centre by Burnham and Bennett, 1905.



PLAN OF CIVIC CENTER

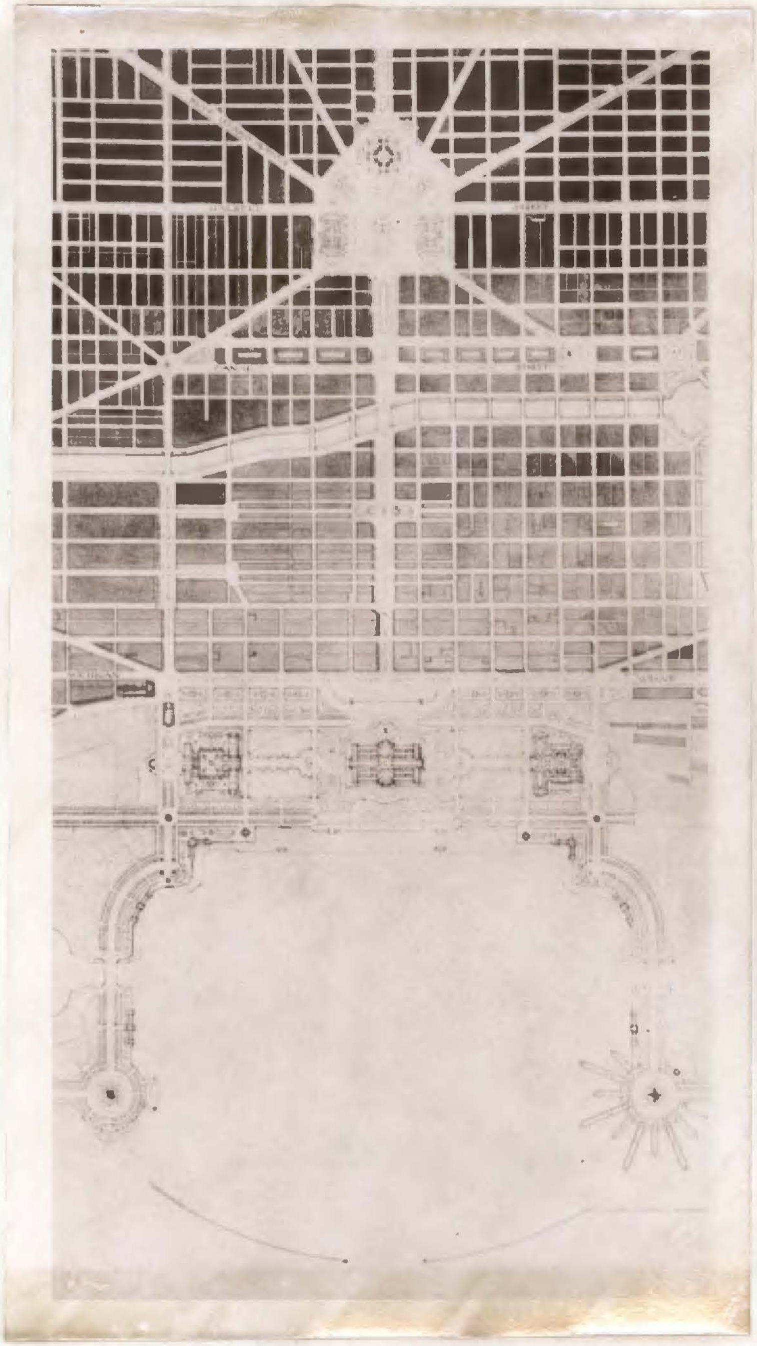
D. Burnham and E. Bennett, *Report on a Plan for San Francisco*, pp. 99-102.

Fig. 7 Plan of Chicago by Burnham and Bennett, 1909



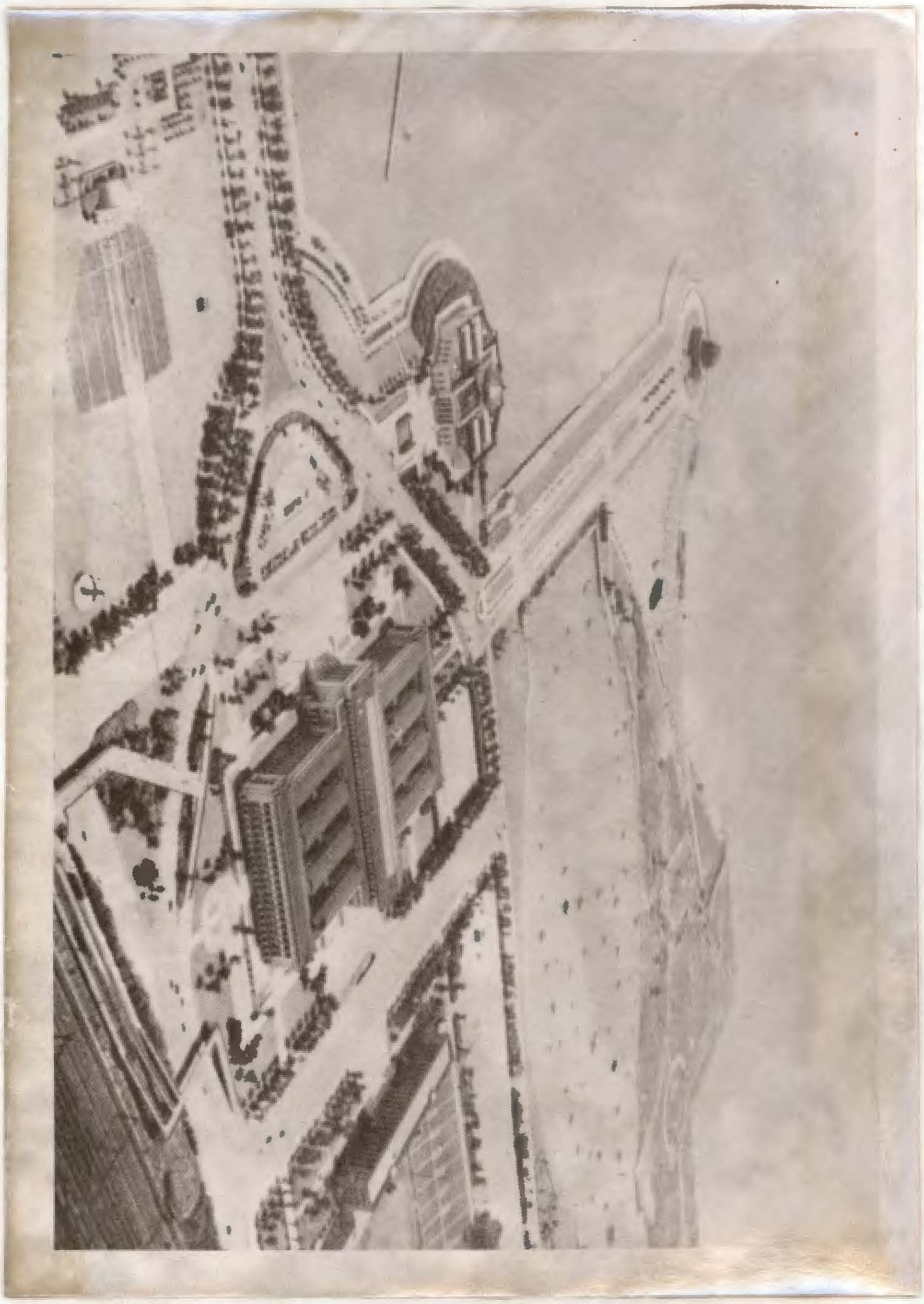
John Reps, *The Making of Urban America*, p. 520.

Fig. 8 Civic Centre, Plan of Chicago by Burnham and Bennett, 1909.



John Reps, *The Making of Urban America*, p. 522.

Fig. 9 Grant Park, Chicago, 1947.
Built according to the Plan
of Chicago by Burnham and
Bennett, 1909.



Thomas Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, p. 343.

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18 April 1977
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