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LFC to launch Web site to show Burnham ideas that faded away

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/lakeforest/news/1615906,lake-forest-website-061109-s1.article>)

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By **DANI SCHWEIGERT** dschweigert@pioneerlocal.com

One hundred years ago, architects and city planners Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett developed plans for the Chicago area, including Chicago's sweeping lakefront, the "emerald necklace" of County Forest Preserves and Wacker Drive - but some of their plans were never built.

"Some elements of their plan were built, but they were changed around a little bit," said Davis Schneiderman, co-director and chair of Lake Forest College's American Studies program and associate professor of English. "Some items were really sort of grand and European in design, and they were overtaken a bit by the 20th century."

Lake Forest College is offering a chance to see the plans of "The City That Never Was" through its Virtual Burnham Initiative (VBI). The VBI was created to celebrate and analyze Burnham and Bennett's vision as part of the Burnham Plan Centennial, Schneiderman said.

The VBI includes a Web site that is planned to launch June 15 that combines historical research, 3-D models, curriculum development and philosophical debate, Schneiderman said. The Web site, <http://vbi.lakeforest.edu>, will capitalize on new technology and community networking to facilitate an open, ongoing discussion of the Chicago area's development and show people "The City That Never Was" and the ways Burnham and Bennett's ideas are embedded in our public memory.

Schneiderman added that the Web site will create specific structures from Burnham and Bennett's "1909 Plan of Chicago" in Google Earth, along with overlays of maps of Chicago. Visitors can turn on layered maps to see how the original plan for Chicago lines up with today.

Modern melange

The Civic Center, Grant Park, Monroe Harbor and later in the summer the lagoon system stretching from Jackson Park to Grant Park burst forth in their imposing Beau-arts glory, wonderfully juxtaposed with the "Chicago that is" - a modern and postmodern melange that Burnham and Bennett could have hardly dreamed up in their wildest architectural vision, according to a press release from the college.

Bennett was a Lake Forest resident, Schneiderman said, and in 2008, his family donated to the Lake Forest College Library's Special Collections papers, photographs and artwork by Bennett, much of it relating to the "1909 Plan of Chicago." Those items, which are part of a collection called the "Marcia O. and Edward H. Bennett III Collection: Papers and Photographs of Edward H. Bennett," will be put on the Web site.

"I had become interested through some of my courses in virtual reality, and I began thinking of some of the ways it could be applied at Lake Forest College, being a Liberal Arts college," Schneiderman said.

The VBI also includes an event launch, called "The World According to Burnham and Bennett: the Launch of the Virtual Burnham Initiative," from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 23, at DePaul University, Loop Campus. The initiative is being funded by a \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Schneiderman said.

Although he is facilitating the project, it's the students who really have made it become a reality, Schneiderman said.

"This is truly a student enterprise," he said. "They are the ones building the structures, making the Web site and creating the Google Earth maps and the video about the initiative. This is a great way for students to be able to practice using new media."

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