

# Century of Progress

Coordinates: 41°51′38″N 87°36′41″W﻿ / ﻿41.86056°N 87.61139°W﻿ / 41.86056; -87.61139

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(Redirected from Century of progress)

**A Century of Progress International Exposition** was the name of a World's Fair held in Chicago, Illinois from 1933 to 1934 to celebrate the city's centennial. The theme of the fair was technological innovation. Its motto was "Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms" and its architectural symbol was the Sky Ride, a transporter bridge perpendicular to the shore on which one could ride from one side of the fair to the other.

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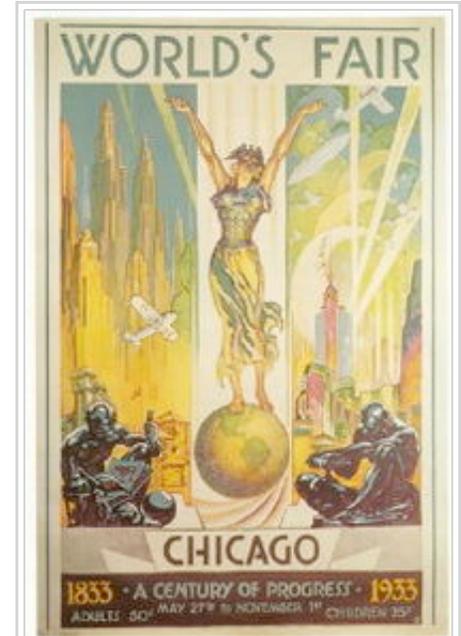
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## History

A Century of Progress was organized as an Illinois not-for-profit corporation in January, 1928 for the purpose of planning and hosting a World's Fair in Chicago in 1934. The site selected was new parkland being created along the Lake Michigan shoreline between 12th and 39th streets. Held on a 427 acre (1.7 km<sup>2</sup>) portion of Burnham Park the Century of Progress opened on May 27, 1933.<sup>[1]</sup> The fair was opened when the lights were automatically activated when light from the rays of the star Arcturus was detected. The star was chosen as its light had started its journey at about the time of the previous Chicago world's fair—the World's Columbian Exposition—in 1893.<sup>[2]</sup> The rays were focused on photo-electric cells in a series of astronomical observatories and then transformed into electrical energy which was transmitted to Chicago.

## Exhibits

The fair buildings were multi-colored, to create a "Rainbow City" as opposed to the "White City" of the



A 1933 Century of Progress world's fair poster



The 1934 World's Fair paper label

World's Columbian Exposition. The buildings generally had a Moderne design to them in contrast to the neoclassical themes used at the 1893 fair. One of the more famous aspects of the fair were the performances of fan dancer Sally Rand. Other popular exhibits were the various auto manufacturers, the Midway (filled with nightclubs such as the Old Morocco, where future stars Judy Garland, The Cook Family Singers, and The Andrews Sisters performed), and a recreation of important scenes from Chicago's history. The fair also contained exhibits that would seem shocking to modern audiences, including offensive portrayals of African-Americans, a "Midget City" complete with "sixty Lilliputians",<sup>[3]</sup> and an exhibition of incubators containing real babies,<sup>[4]</sup>



Cover carried on the *Graf Zeppelin* from 1933 *Century of Progress Exposition* franked with C-18 US Air Mail stamp issued for the airship's visit.

One of the highlights of the 1933 World's Fair was the arrival of the German airship *Graf Zeppelin* on October 26, 1933. After circling Lake Michigan near the exposition for two hours, Commander Hugo Eckener landed the 776-foot airship at the nearby Curtiss-Wright Airport in Glenview. It remained on the ground for twenty-five minutes (from 1 to 1:25 p.m.)<sup>[5]</sup> then took off ahead of an approaching weather front bound for Akron, Ohio. For some Chicagoans, however, the appearance of the *Graf Zeppelin* over their fair city was not a welcome sight, as the airship had become a prominent reminder of the ascendancy of Adolf Hitler to power earlier that same year. This triggered dissension in the days following its visit, particularly within the city's large German-American population.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The "dream cars" which American automobile manufacturers exhibited at the fair included Cadillac's introduction of its V-16 limousine; Nash's exhibit had a variation on the vertical (i.e., paternoster) parking garage—all the cars were new Nashes; Lincoln presented its rear-engined "concept car" precursor to the Lincoln-Zephyr, which went on the market in 1936 with a front engine; Pierce-Arrow presented its modernistic Silver Arrow for which it used the byline "Suddenly it's 1940!" But it was Packard which won the best of show.

One interesting and enduring exhibit was the 1933 Homes of Tomorrow Exhibition that demonstrated modern home convenience and creative practical new building materials and techniques with twelve model homes sponsored by several corporations affiliated with home decor and construction. Marine artist Hilda Goldblatt Gorenstein (Hilgos) painted twelve murals for the Navy's exhibit in the Federal Building for the fair. The frieze was composed of twelve murals depicting the influence of sea power on America, beginning with the settlement of Jamestown in 1607 when sea power first reached America and carrying through World War I.<sup>[6]</sup>

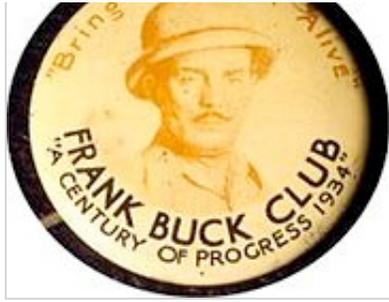


The *Pioneer Zephyr* arrives in Chicago after its record-setting run from Denver on May 26, 1934.

The first Major League Baseball All-Star Game was held at Comiskey Park (home of the Chicago White Sox) in conjunction with the fair.



In May 1934 the Union Pacific Railroad exhibited its first streamlined train, the M-10000, and the Burlington Route its famous *Zephyr*, which made a

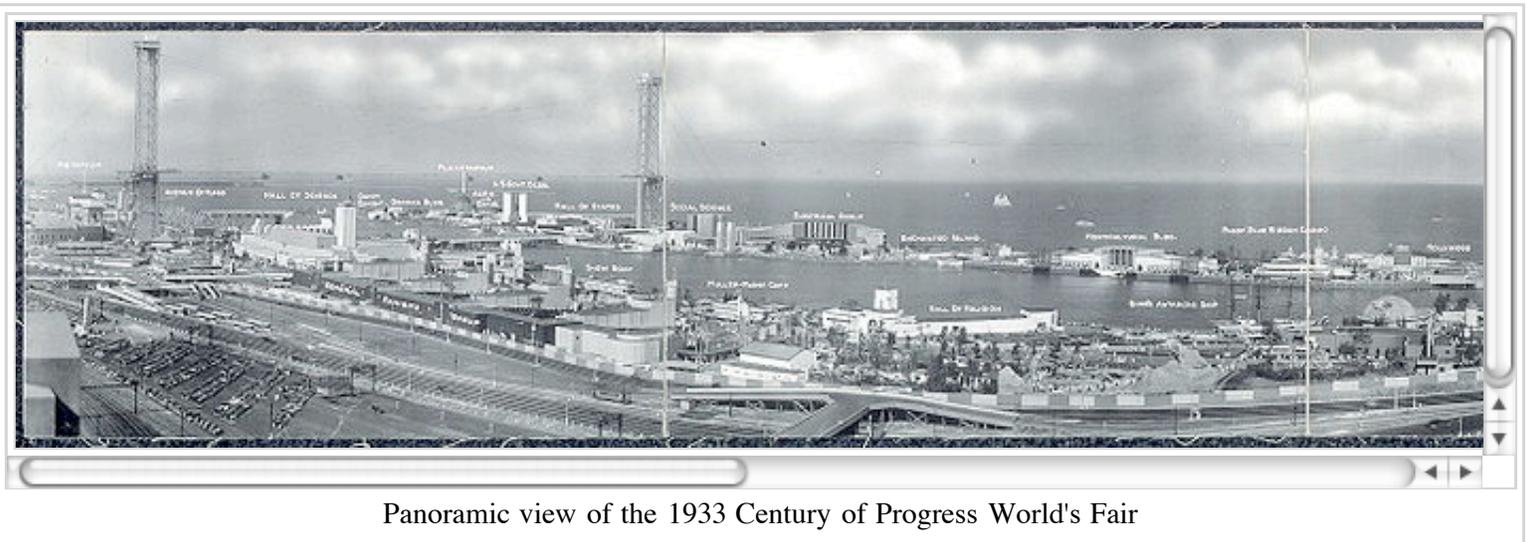


Frank Buck souvenir badge

record-breaking dawn-to-dusk run from Denver, Colorado, to Chicago in 13 hours and 5 minutes. To cap its record-breaking speed run, the *Zephyr* arrived dramatically on-stage at the fair's "Wings of a Century" transportation pageant. The two trains launched an era of industrial streamlining.

Both trains later went into successful revenue service, the Union Pacific's as the *City of Salina*, and the Burlington *Zephyr* as the first *Pioneer Zephyr*. The *Zephyr* is now on exhibit at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

Frank Buck furnished a wild animal exhibit, Frank Buck's Jungle Camp. Over two million people visited Buck's reproduction of the camp he and his native assistants lived in while collecting animals in Asia. After the fair closed, Buck moved the camp to a compound Buck created at Amityville, Long Island.<sup>[7]</sup>



Panoramic view of the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair

## Success

Originally, the fair was scheduled only to run until November 12, 1933, but it was so successful that it was opened again to run from May 26 to October 31, 1934. The fair was financed through the sale of memberships, which allowed purchases of a certain number of admissions once the park was open. More than \$800,000 was raised in this manner as the country came out of the Great Depression. A \$10 million bond was issued on October 28, 1929, the day before the stock market crashed. By the time the fair closed in 1933, half of these notes had been retired, with the entire debt paid by the time the fair closed in 1934. For the first time in American history, an international fair had paid for itself. In its two years, it had attracted 48,769,227 visitors. According to James Truslow Adams's *Dictionary of American History*, during the 170 days beginning May 27, 1933, there were 22,565,859 paid admissions; during the 163 days beginning May 26, 1934, there were 16,486,377; a total of 39,052,236.

## Legacy

Much of the fair site is now home to Northerly Island park (since the closing of Meigs Field) and McCormick

Place. A column from the ruins of a Roman temple in Ostia given to Chicago by the Italian government to honor General Italo Balbo's 1933 trans-Atlantic flight still stands near Soldier Field. The city added a third red star to its flag in 1933 to commemorate the Exposition.<sup>[8]</sup> (The fourth star of Chicago's flag was added five years later in 1939 and the right-handmost star is considered to represent the Century of Progress.)

The Polish Museum of America possesses the painting of "*Pulaski at Savannah*" by Stanisław Kaczor Batowski, which was exhibited at the Century of Progress fair and where it won first place. After the close of the fair, the painting went on display at The Art Institute of Chicago where it was unveiled by Eleanor Roosevelt on July 10, 1934. The painting was on display at the Art Institute until its purchase by the Polish Women's Alliance on the museum's behalf<sup>[9]</sup>.

The U.S. Post Office Department issued a special fifty-cent Air Mail postage stamp, (C-18) to commemorate the visit of the German airship depicting (*l to r*) the Federal Building in Chicago, the *Graf Zeppelin* in flight, and its home hanger in Friedrichshafen, Germany. This stamp is informally known as the *Baby Zep* to distinguish it from the much more valuable 1930 Zeppelin issues (C13-15). Separate from this issue, for the Fair the Post Office also printed 1 and 3 cent commemorative postage stamps, showing respectively Fort Dearborn and the modernistic Federal Building. These were also printed in separate souvenir sheets as imperforated blocks of 25 (catalog listings 728-31). In 1935 the sheets were reprinted (Scott 766-67).

## Resources

A collection of materials including images is held by the Ryerson & Burnham Libraries at the Art Institute of Chicago. The Century of Progress Collection includes photographs, guidebooks, brochures, maps, architectural drawings, and souvenir items.

## Gallery



Mural General Exhibit  
3rd pavilion



This is one of the eagles that stood on pedestals along Lakeshore Drive and Michigan Avenue in Downtown Chicago during the World's Fair.

## See also

Burnham Park

## References

- ↑ *Chicago and Suburbs 1939*. WPA. 1939. pp. 105.
- ↑ "Century of Progress World's Fair, 1933-1934" ([http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/uic\\_cop&CISOPTR=45&CISOBX=1&REC=1](http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/uic_cop&CISOPTR=45&CISOBX=1&REC=1)) . University of Illinois-Chicago. 2008-01. [http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/uic\\_cop&CISOPTR=45&CISOBX=1&REC=1](http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/uic_cop&CISOPTR=45&CISOBX=1&REC=1). Retrieved 2009-09-06.
- ↑ Raabe, Meinhardt; Lt. Daniel Kinske, U.S.N. (2005). *Memories of a Munchkin*. New York: Back Stage Books. ISBN 0823091937.
- ↑ *Baby Incubators, Omaha Public Library* (<http://www.omahapubliclibrary.org/transmiss/regions/northmid/baby.html>)
- ↑ Senkus, William M. (2002). "Cinderella Stamps of the Century of Progress Expo in Chicago, Illinois" (<http://alphabetilately.com/CoP.html>) . *alphabetilately.com*. <http://alphabetilately.com/CoP.html>. Retrieved 2009-03-06.
- ↑ "University of Illinois at Chicago, archive, "U.S. Navy Exhibits Arrive for Fair; Models to Show Sea's Influence on Nation", Chicago Daily News, by Malcolm McDowell, 6 May 1933." (<http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/specialcoll/services/rjd/findingaids/HGorensteinf.html>) . <http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/specialcoll/services/rjd/findingaids/HGorensteinf.html>.
- ↑ Frank Buck's Jungleland ([http://www.pmpphoto.to/worlds\\_fair/wf\\_tour/zone-7/jungle\\_land.htm](http://www.pmpphoto.to/worlds_fair/wf_tour/zone-7/jungle_land.htm))
- ↑ "Municipal Flag of Chicago" (<http://www.chipublib.org/cplbooksmovies/cplarchive/symbols/flag.php>) . Chicago Public Library. 2009. <http://www.chipublib.org/cplbooksmovies/cplarchive/symbols/flag.php>. Retrieved 2009-03-04.
- ↑ The Polish Museum of America - History and Collections - Guide, p.31 Argraf, Warsaw, 2003

## External links

- 1933/1934 Chicago World's Fair website (<http://www.cityclicker.net/chicfair/index.html>)
- Panoramic photograph of Century of Progress (from Library of Congress website) (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/pan/6a28000/6a28300/6a28300r.jpg>)
- Interactive map of the Century of Progress Fair (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma99/kidd/century/fairmap.html>)
- Website dedicated to the 1933-1934 Century of Progress (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma99/kidd/century/begin.html>)
- Photographs of *Graf Zeppelin* over Chicago ([http://rick\\_oleson.tripod.com/index-53.html](http://rick_oleson.tripod.com/index-53.html))
- 1933 Century of Progress Digital Collection from the University of Chicago (<http://century.lib.uchicago.edu>)
- Burnham, Beaux-Arts, Plan of Chicago, & Fairs (<http://www.artic.edu/aic/libraries/research/specialcollections/subject/burnham.html>)
- 1934 Chicago World's Fair Guide Book ([http://www.butkus.org/information/worlds\\_fair\\_1934/worlds\\_fair\\_1934.htm](http://www.butkus.org/information/worlds_fair_1934/worlds_fair_1934.htm)) multiple PDF document of the full official guide book.
- Chicago Art Deco Society (<http://www.chicagoartdecosociety.com>)
- Florida Pavilion - Chicago World's Fair 1933 (<http://www.myfloridahistory.org/index.php?>)

q=gallery&g2\_itemId=27689)

- Century of Progress images from University of Illinois at Chicago digital collections ([http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index\\_uic\\_cop.php?CISOROOT=/uic\\_cop](http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_uic_cop.php?CISOROOT=/uic_cop))

Preceded by <i><b>Ibero-American Exposition of 1929</b></i>	<b>World Expositions</b> 1933-34	Succeeded by <b>Brussels International</b>
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