



THE BULLSHEET

bullsheet@denison.edu | @dubullsheet | denisonbullsheet.com

The Bullsheet, a forum for news, humor, and community dialogue, is funded by DCGA, recycles, and is printed each day that classes are in session. Submissions must be sent before our editors shamble into the office for next day publication via email to: bullsheet@denison.edu. Submissions herein solely reflect the opinions of the authors.

Edited last night by:

George, Lindsey

Delivered this morning by:

Havre, Meredith

April 9th, 2026

GRANVILLE'S "MOST ACADEMIC" PUBLICATION

Vol. XLV, No. 122

LEARN SOMETHING NEW TODAY

Lindsey George,
smrt

Hey readers! Do you want to learn something new today? Well, you're in luck. Here's the entirety of the essay I just turned in about Daniel H. Burnham. Who is that, you ask? Well, read on to find out! Btw, I've already turned it in, so if you have any critiques, keep them to yourself.

Daniel Hudson Burnham: Planning and Building the American City

Introduction

The late 19th century was a period of explosive urban growth and industrialization in America (Hines, 1971). Chicago, Illinois, was no exception to this rapid growth, though the Great Chicago Fire complicated its rise as an emerging urban hub (Hines, 1998). Throughout this time of rapid development, urban planning and architecture provided a unique opportunity for people like Daniel Hudson Burnham to make their mark in the world of planning and design. Burnham emerged in the late 19th century as a newly established architect, but soon made himself known through his notable work in Chicago (Hines, 1998). His projects pushed the boundaries of architecture, and he became known as an accomplished urban planner as well, collaborating with a variety of others in his field throughout his career (Hines, 1998). His projects spanned the country, from Chicago to Cleveland to San Francisco to Washington D.C., and even outside of the United States, in the Philippines (Hines, 1971). His work goes beyond buildings; he shaped cities, designed societies, and his work had not only physical impacts but also economic and cultural benefits (Hines, 1971). Burnham worked with several different architectural styles during his time, including Beaux-Arts and Queen Anne style (Hines, 1998). His successful career earned him his own unique style which became known as "Burnham Baroque," known for its classic elements that used Baroque-type designs (Hines, 1998, p. 4). Burnham's architectural expression goes beyond physical function to reflect national pride, civic identity, and future ambition (Hines, 1971). Through his integration of urban planning into the design process, he became a central figure in the modernization of American cities while balancing utility and aesthetics (Hines, 1971).

Biographical Overview

Burnham's career was defined through his early collaborations that shaped his development as an influential architect. His first professional partnership was the product of the two men's previous employer Carter, Drake & Wright; in 1873, Burnham and John Wellborn Root, another draftsman, left the company and opened their own office together (Hines, 1998). Their focus was on Queen Anne style architecture highlighting decorative features, and their inspiration came mainly from the British architects Richard Norman Shaw and Henry Hobson Richardson (Hines, 1998). While they started out working mainly with residential projects, Burnham claimed that he was "not going to stay satisfied with houses; [his] idea [was] to work up a big business, to handle big things, deal with big businessmen and to build up a big organization." (Hines, 1998, p. 3). It didn't take long for the two to complete this type of work; before Root's death in 1891, they made themselves famous for Chicago skyscrapers, like the Montauk Building and the Monadnock Building (Hines, 1998). Together, Burnham and Root helped to establish Chicago as a center for architectural innovation (Thoreson, 2026). Root played an important role in Burnham's path to success, both personally by being Burnham's first business partner, and professionally, as the two of them began to change the course of Chicago's architecture through the presence of the buildings they designed together (Hines, 1998).

Root's absence was quickly filled by Charles B. Atwood, with whom Burnham worked until 1895. The greatest result of their collaboration was the Reliance Building in downtown Chicago (Hines, 1998). After 1895, design responsibilities at Burnham's design firm were headed by Pierce Anderson (Hines, 1998). All of these collaborations led to Burnham's ultimate success in both the architectural and planning industries, and to putting together his own personal style for which he would become well known.

Architectural Style

After beginning his career with John Wellborn Root and mainly using Queen Anne style architecture, Burnham's architectural style evolved into one that was distinctly his own. Throughout his work in Washington D.C., he adopted a Beaux-Arts style, identified by its symmetry and a mix of classic and dramatic elements, which showed up predominantly in the libraries, museums and railroad stations he designed there (Hines, 1998). These projects are what earned him his own characteristic style, called "Burnham Baroque" (Hines, 1998, p. 4). Generally, Burnham became known for his architectural styles being reflective of the social climate at the time (Hines, 1971). During the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States, he had the opportunity to do vital work in a time of rapid industrialization, high levels of urban growth, and a lack of identity as a country (Hines, 1971). Burnham reflected the complexities of rapid urban growth in his intricate, elaborate designs, focusing on aesthetics and order in addition to the function of a space (Hines, 1971).

One way through which Burnham combined function and beauty through his work is the park systems he designed. His work emphasized the integration of parks, streets and transportation networks, which shows in the way many of his designs differentiated streets by function, with different designs for residential, traffic, and boulevard purposes (Field, 1974). Burnham also promoted the importance of parks in urban planning, seeing them as a way to calm stress in highly populated areas, and to encourage positive, peaceful behavior in cities, as they promote "healthful conditions and moral uplift" (Field, 1974, p. 385). However, his view of parks also had another side; Burnham viewed parks as being directly linked to discipline and social order, and as "promoters of sanity...[and of] happy, self-controlled men and women" (Field, 1974, p. 337). He saw parks as an opportunity to translate his design principles such as symmetry, order and grandeur into the urban landscape (Field, 1974). Through his plans, Burnham tried to use design to establish a sense of authority and power within cities and the societies there. These projects represent Burnham Baroque in style, but they also hint at his ideas about the role architecture can play in shaping society.

Philosophy and Principles

A central element of Burnham's philosophy was the belief that cities should function as cohesive, connected systems, prioritizing the relationship between structures over individual building designs (Field, 1974). His philosophy reflects the idea that cities should function as one cohesive whole, and he had an emphasis on "an orderly and fitting arrangement of many buildings" (Field, 1974, p. 56). His view that cities are not isolated communities but rather interconnected systems guided many of his plans, including his Plan of Chicago (Hines, 1998). While Burnham is celebrated for many beneficial elements of his work, he has also been criticized for assumptions he made about citizens in his work that were based solely on opinion and intuition, not research (Field, 1974). One of these criticisms is that he fails to acknowledge social issues, and focused on the beauty and infrastructure of his designs over social issues that were plaguing the cities in which he worked (Hines, 1971). In fact, he "never mentioned the 'poor,' only occasionally the worker" (Field, 1974, p. 350). Instead, Burnham reflected the taste and desire of upper class citizens, and designed buildings and cities with this population in mind, reflecting his prioritization of aesthetic and structural order over social equity (Hines, 1971). In his planning, the physical environment reflected the social environment of the cities Burnham built, with his explanation of building inaccessible systems being that obstacles could be overcome by "the will of the people" (Field, 1974, p. 356).

Significant Works

One of the most influential works that Burnham established through his career was the presence of skyscrapers in cities. This change came as a response to industrial capitalism in America, and as such, skyscrapers were an innovation unique to America, becoming the "new cathedral of modern...business society" (Hines, 1971, p. 89). Burnham and his team built skyscrapers that experimented with light, height, and the idea of steel frame construction, and they tested "how far they could carry the idea of 'wall-less-ness'" (Hines, 1971, p. 598). The structural innovation of these massive buildings was before its time, and coupled with the style and aesthetics they showed, the skyscrapers were an incredible feat that reflected Burnham's vision of order and civic identity (Thoreson, 2026).

These skyscrapers show up often in Burnham's work in Chicago after the Great Fire. His 1909 Plan of Chicago, which he worked on with Edward H. Bennett, "achieved, of all plans of that period, the most significant integration of aesthetic and pragmatic strands" (Hines, 1998, p. 7). This plan was extensive, accounting for not only the city center, but also the area within a 60-mile radius, which included boulevards that connected surrounding areas to the city itself to improve connectivity between parts of the urban area (Field, 1974).

Burnham and Bennett didn't stop there, though; their plans included straightening the Chicago River to make water transportation and commerce more efficient, and for 20 miles along the river, a park system was included, establishing a grander park network allowing citizens to engage with nature in the middle of the downtown area (Hines, 1998). To tackle the problematic transportation system, the two men made plans for all train stations and tracks to be relocated and consolidated to further increase efficiency within the city.

The intricate plan has an “elegant, formal culmination in downtown Grant Park,” and exhibits Burnham’s classic Beaux-Arts style architecture (Hines, 1998, p. 8). Chicago was, before this project, considered one of the most “unattractive cities,” and wealthy people avoided the area (Hines, 1971). As a result of Burnham and Bennett’s work, it became a beautiful city that retained wealthy people, attracted visitors from all over, and thrived economically (Hines, 1971). The Plan of Chicago is considered Daniel Burnham’s largest achievement (Hines, 1998).

Daniel Burnham did not work solely in Chicago; he has renowned works across the country in Cleveland, Ohio and San Francisco, California, but most notably in Washington, D.C. (Hines, 1971). His redesign of Washington in 1901 and 1902 had a goal of transforming the capital into a city that reflects a sense of order and national pride, turning it into a symbol of the authority and power of the leaders of the American people (Vernon, 2014). Some of the key features of Burnham’s work in Washington include the redesign of the National Mall, the alignment of the Capitol, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, an expansion of the park system, and the grouping of government buildings by their function (Hines, 1971). The result of his work was a reimagined city as a center for imperial power, and gave urban design the power to communicate political agendas (Vernon, 2014). Burnham’s work received high praise and he was admired far and wide for the feat that he accomplished (Hines, 1971).

In addition to his work in America, Burnham also completed projects in the Philippines, though these works still had a very American agenda (Hines, 1971). After acquiring the Philippines in 1898, the U.S. sought to “modernize” the city of Manila, and Burnham was hired for the redesign of the city in 1904 (Vernon, 2014). His inspiration for this project came from the British imperial planning in India, and he used these ideas to construct a highly controlled, dominated space that was used to “Americanize” Manila and reshape the space and the citizens within it (Vernon, 2014). Burnham used his planning skills to express the strength of American power onto the Philippines, expressing “the destiny of the Filipino people” (Hines, 1971, p. 398). While he did use his talent outside of the continental United States, his style did not change to reflect this location. This situation displays Burnham’s principles that he used throughout the United States. Across all of his projects, Burnham’s work consistently combined efficiency and architectural aesthetic, shaping both the physical and social character of the cities he designed (Hines, 1971). The products of his work reflect the idea that cities should be “a composition of convenience and beauty,” and in Burnham’s case, these concepts should be executed in the way in which America sees them (Hines, 1971).

Influence Beyond Design

While Burnham’s architectural work was celebrated and held in incredibly high regard, his influence continues past the physical buildings for which he is known. He gained recognition for his ways of thinking about cities and shaping urban life (Field, 1974). He saw urban planning as an essential, moral necessity for building productive societies, and believed that planning was more than just problem solving; it shaped culture and national identity (Field, 1974). In this way, his work went beyond fulfilling a physical need to inspiring those who interacted with his work; he said once, “make no little plans... they have no magic to stir men’s blood” (Field, 1974, p. 13). Burnham’s planning prioritized the relationship between elements of design, examining how spaces interacted through a larger lens, instead of focusing on individual structures (Field, 1974).

Not only did he expand his imagination past the physical space in which he was building, but he also planned outside of the boundaries of time, expanding development into surrounding regions, even if the need for such structures had not yet arisen (Field, 1974). This is a proactive way of thinking and planning, and led to a strong coherence between his designed spaces (Field, 1974). Daniel Burnham received great praise for not only his architectural talent, but also his humanity. He had a deep passion for cultural philanthropy, and financially supported the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Art Institute of Chicago (Hines, 1998). He was complimented by many notable figures, including President Taft, who bestowed upon him the honor of the first chairman of the National Commission on Fine Arts in 1910, claiming him to be “one of the foremost architects of the world” (Hines, 1998, p. 8). Other praise he received was from Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, and specifically Cass Gilbert, who claimed that Burnham “would have been successful in any walk of life, for the qualities which make for success were his to an unusual degree” and that “his leadership gave prestige to every project that he undertook” (Hines, 1998, p. 9). The influence of not only Burnham’s incredible architectural talent but also of his personal relationships and inspirations spread far and wide, and made him well known for reasons beyond his design expertise.

Design Challenge Application

As the Director of Works for The Columbian Exposition in 1893, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair, Daniel Burnham had notable experience with massive design challenges (Vernon, 2014). His role in this project was to coordinate large teams of people to plan and construct the location for this renowned event, and he practically produced the exhibition himself (Vernon, 2014). This project prioritized themes of unity, classical design, and visually appealing coordination, and was a turning point for Chicago, which was once seen as an industrial and unattractive metropolis (Vernon, 2014). The product of such a planning enterprise became known as the “White City,” full of boulevards and gardens that reflected the goals of the project, to make Chicago stun those who visited (Vernon, 2014).

The plans from the White City in the Exposition were transferred to plans for other cities and used in the development of Burnham’s work in other areas, including Washington, D.C., Cleveland, San Francisco, and Manila (Hines, 1998). Starting from only a concept and producing such a successful developed area, Burnham overcame an incredible design challenge. The work done and the end product also became the beginning of the City Beautiful movement which made an effort to achieve a feeling of “an older and grander European civilization” within American cities, and “Burnham was the movement’s acknowledged father and leader” (Hines, 1998, p. 4). Burnham’s impact at the Columbian Exposition had implications on American cities for years to come. Given Burnham’s experience with past designs with minimal starting resources, he would have had the expertise to respond to a prominent design challenge in an urban society. His Plan of Chicago is an excellent example of using space to benefit a desired societal lifestyle, with the presence of parks and plazas throughout the city (Hines, 1998). Specifically, the presence of the 20-mile riverwalk and its interconnected park systems gave citizens a space to be outside in the middle of an urban city (Hines, 1998). Another strength Burnham could use in a design challenge is his ability to unite a community through architectural elements that convey pride and prosper (Vernon, 2014).

However, despite his talent and past architectural achievements, it is hard to say whether Burnham would have accepted a challenge that responded to a barrier to society. His designs primarily reflected the needs and tastes of upper-class citizens, often overlooking accessibility accommodations for marginalized populations (Field, 1974). His cities are built for the ideal citizen, with no concern for the homeless, those without access to transportation, or any other barrier that would keep someone from enjoying architectural beauty (Field, 1974). Because of this, design challenges affecting underrepresented populations were generally outside the scope of his work.

Conclusion

Daniel Burnham’s philosophy expands past the utility of architecture and into the idea of it as a source of beauty; something worth taking note of. According to Burnham, beauty in architecture was not merely decorative; it attracted economic investment, social pride, and it encouraged continued, organized urban growth (Thoreson, 2026). This philosophy can be seen in the White City, where Burnham combined aesthetics with order in the placement of buildings to create both visual appeal and functionality. If cities would like to attract wealth and retain residents, then beauty in architecture is a useful marketing campaign (Thoreson, 2026). However, a focus on visual appeal does not disregard the importance of efficiency in Burnham’s designs. The architect consistently reacted in opposition to disorder within individually designed spaces, but especially in urban growth, claiming that cities should be designed systems as opposed to unorganized expansion that hinders movement and ease of use (Thoreson, 2026). Combining these two perspectives, Burnham believed that cities should be “a composition of convenience and beauty” (Hines, 1971). This belief that visual appeal and function are inseparable is visible in the Plan of Chicago, with its park systems, neighborhood connectivity and efficient transportation routes within the city. These elements were all designed to be both attractive and to guide urban circulation and improve quality of life. Through his combination of beauty and functionality, Burnham set the stage for modern city planning and showed how architecture could organize cities, inspire community pride, and shape whole societies.

Thank you for reading! I hope you learned something valuable today, that you can go home and tell your roommate about! Have a fantastic day, readers, and appreciate the architecture around you!



Staff “Essay Grade” Box

Carter “98%” Seipel, Managing Editor
Christine “78%” Trueh, Head Writer
Leah “61%” Jackson, Senior Editor
Lindsey “10000%” George, Sophomore Editor
William “44%” Eddleman, Sophomore Editor

Lucy “81%” Dale, Foreign Correspondant
Elliot “67%” Harpham, Senior Writer
Eleanor “76%” Mason, Foreign Correspondant
Lucy “90%” Hollingsworth-Hays, Sophomore Writer
Anna “71%” Crum, Sophomore Writer
Lilly “84%” Andrews, Freshman Writer
Lily “21%” Reaser, Freshman Writer
Aiyana “49%” Harrison, Freshman Writer
Meredith “95%” Havre, Freshman Writer

