The States Building

A Century Of Progress

International Exposition
1934
A Century of Progress
1934

It has been the manifest destiny of A Century of Progress that its gates must reopen for the second year—1934.

It was self-evident that ultimate achievement could not be climaxed in one short summer season after years had been spent in planning and millions of dollars expended in substantial construction work. The first year’s attendance of over 22 million people established a new record for expositions in the United States.

Before the opening date, May 27, 1933, the Exposition was generally recognized as a focal point of optimism and hope for the future and a tangible proof of militant faith in the recovery of international confidence and ultimate prosperity.

A Century of Progress, conducting the Exposition, was organized and incorporated “not for profit.” The decision to continue beyond the first season was not suggested or inspired by selfish motives. All other considerations were swept aside by the insistent demands of the press and public in the name and in behalf of the people of Chicago and its surrounding area. These demands came from newspapers of the nation, from associations of commerce and other civic bodies, and from official sources as well.

Toward the close of the 1933 Exposition assurances were received that the President of the United States would recommend to the Congress convening in January, 1934, an
appropriation for the further participation by the Government of the United States and the continuance of its exhibits. The Governor of the State of Illinois indicated his intention of recommending to the General Assembly the passage of the necessary legislation authorizing the use of the present site. The Mayor of Chicago, who is also President of the South Park Commissioners, having jurisdiction over the park lands on which the Exposition is built, publicly urged that the Fair be reopened for another season. Railroads serving the entire country, officials of local wholesale and retail institutions, hotels, industrialists and business men offered their co-operation.

—by Exhibitors

Questionnaires were sent to all exhibitors of the 1933 Exposition. The result was encouraging; between seventy and eighty per cent favored the reopening of the Fair and indicated their interest in returning. The directors of the concessionaires’ association reported that ninety per cent of its membership endorsed the proposal. It was felt that experienced industrialists and showmen were competent to estimate accurately the interest of prospective visitors before committing themselves to additional expense in organizing their exhibits and attractions for 1934. Commissioners and Consuls representing many foreign countries added their approval and endorsement.

—by Concessionaires

—by Foreign Governments

—by States

Illinois, the “home State,” was the first to act on reopening plans. At a meeting of the Illinois State Commission, November 11, before the Fair closed, a resolution was adopted insuring participation in 1934 on the same scale as in 1933. Governor Horner presided at the meeting. Commissioners and Directors in charge of other State exhibits were unanimously in favor of continuance. Many of the State exhibits were left practically intact in anticipation of returning; several exhibits were returned home for exhibition with the intention of installing entirely new exhibits here for 1934.

Another development of great significance was the fact that letters received by the administration and those published in the press were in many instances written by individuals who had visited the 1933 Exposition and who planned to return in 1934. Again, it was thought that improvement in economic conditions would make it possible for large numbers of people who could not attend the Exposition in 1933 to visit it the succeeding year.

Finding no negative reaction from any source, the Trustees of A CENTURY OF PROGRESS unanimously passed a resolution enabling the Executive Committee of the Exposition to reopen the Fair in 1934 subject to the passage of the necessary legislation.

A CENTURY OF PROGRESS in 1934 will continue the celebration of the centennial of Chicago’s incorporation as a municipality. The century which has encompassed the life of Chicago is the period in which man has made his greatest progress toward understanding the laws of nature and using its forces for his own purposes. It has witnessed the general introduction of steam and electricity and all those modern conveniences that have ministered to human comfort. The distinctive character of the century required that the central idea or theme of the Exposition should be an attempt to demonstrate to a national and international audience the nature and significance of scientific discoveries, the methods of achieving them, and the changes which their application has wrought in industry and in living conditions.
Attendance at Exposition

With 23,565,859 paid admissions recorded, A CENTURY OF PROGRESS attracted more people than any other exposition held in the United States, and in attendance and income was exceeded only by two major European fairs, both of which operated over longer periods of time. The second largest attendance at American expositions was recorded at Chicago's first World's Fair in 1893.

No Subsidies

Subsidies from federal, state and municipal governments for the 1933 Exposition were neither sought nor received. No subsidies will be received in financing the 1934 Fair.

Financial Background of 1933 Exposition

In the early stages of plans and promotion, before the blight of depression had become a world problem, it was comparatively easy to find the money for preliminary study and research work. Nearly 300 Chicago citizens contributed $1,000.00 each as founder members, and sustaining members paid a smaller sum. These receipts were used in the initial development. The members received no promise of return on their contributions. As further evidence of public confidence and approval of the project, over 100,000 Chicago citizens bought advance sale admission certificates and $5.00 memberships in the "World's Fair Legion." The receipts from this sale, however, were not expended during the period of promotion, and the money was deposited in escrow until the opening of the gates was assured and the actual tickets available for issue.

It was not until all other plans were complete and ready for actual construction that the financial plan was announced, which was based on the sale of ten million dollars in gold notes guaranteed by a larger sum in underwriting and further assured by 40 per cent of future gate receipts. Cash was realized on the sale of these notes at par as the money was needed. Thus it was always possible to contract for and buy materials on a cash basis. A conservative budgetary system insured public confidence and credit throughout the construction years. No obligations were undertaken without assurance of our ability to liquidate them.

The completed Exposition represented a total investment of $38,647,836.69, exclusive of the value of exhibits and private property.

The land on which the Fair stands belongs to the State of Illinois, and under legislative authority, the South Park Commissioners granted A CENTURY OF PROGRESS the right to use it for Exposition purposes.

The outstanding indebtedness of the association has been fully provided for and 50 per cent, together with accrued interest at the rate of 6 per cent, has been paid to the holders of the gold notes. From receipts of the 1933 Exposition a sum sufficient to carry the Fair through until the opening in 1934, has been retained. This sum, added to amounts already received from and to be paid by exhibitors and concessionaires for space, assures the sound financial position of A CENTURY OF PROGRESS another year.

Structures erected for the 1933 Exposition are for the most part being retained and will be utilized during the 1934 Fair. Within the limits of ground areas available, other buildings will be erected. Plans for new color schemes, lighting effects and landscaping, novel attractions and concessions are in preparation.

The Fair grounds in 1934 will consist substantially of the same site, being 424 acres of newly-made land and destined to become an important link in the park system of Chicago. This site, three and a half miles long, lies along the lake front op-
posite the very heart of the city, separated from
the business section of Chicago only by the park
system itself. The Adler Planetarium is included
within the Exposition grounds. At the north
gate of the Exposition are the Field Museum of
Natural History and the Shedd Aquarium. A
few blocks to the north and officially allied with
the Exposition is the Art Institute of Chicago,
an art center of international reputation, where
the official World’s Fair art exhibit was held in
1933. Adjacent to the Exposition grounds is
Soldier Field, a great stadium having a seating
capacity of 125,000. All these permanent struc-
tures, built on classical lines and conservative
architecture, could not be duplicated without the
expenditure of many millions of dollars.

THE STATES BUILDING

Choice Location

The States Building or “Hall of States”, as it is popularly
known, is situated on Northerly Island, midway
between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Street
bridges leading from two of the main entrances
into the Exposition. It surrounds an open
“Court of States” and embraces the Federal
Building, erected by the Government of the
United States. Based on figures compiled dur-
ing the 1933 Exposition, the Federal and States
Group proved one of the most popular and at-
tractive features of A CENTURY OF PROGRESS,
with an estimated attendance of over 20 millions
of people.

The New Idea

This structure is one of the major groups on the grounds, and
the ensemble presents a radical departure from
the plan used at former Expositions of separate pavilions widely scattered over the grounds. It
has the advantage of economy and centralization.
The arrangement has done much to promote
good will and better acquaintance among the
States. There was no spirit of rivalry or un-
friendly competition in evidence. From the
opening date the States Group was known as
the “happy family.” The Federal Building
served as a further bond of co-operation, and the
United States Commissioner tendered to the
States the use of the beautiful Federal Lounge
for meetings and social events.

The States Building is U-shaped Description
and contains thirty-two units or
pavilions in sizes ranging from 2000 to 8000
square feet. Each pavilion, fronting on the
Court of States, has its own private entrance,
above which the name of the State appears and
the colors and seal of the commonwealth. Typi-
cal units measure approximately thirty by
seventy feet. The walls, twenty-eight feet in
height, lend themselves admirably to almost any
type of decoration, but are especially adaptable
for murals, maps, transparencies, dioramas, and
other numerous decorative features. The walls
and ceiling are finished in plain white plaster
board.

The Exposition furnishes two watts per square
foot of electric current for interior illumination,
and additional current is obtainable at reason-
able rates, if required. Utilities such as electric
power, water, and gas are available.

The enclosed space, known as Court of States
the Court of States, was recog-
nized as one of the finest locations on the
grounds for open-air meetings, band concerts,
and other large gatherings, including the cele-
bration of State days. This court has a capacity
of over 20,000 persons, with the features of a
great amphitheatre, large stage to accommodate
two or three hundred performers; the upper
promenade surrounding the Court and the great
second floor balcony of the Federal Building
provide vantage points for several thousand
spectators.
Programs and special events were scheduled daily from eleven A.M. to ten P.M. o'clock. Programs were amplified by A CENTURY OF PROGRESS public address system. National broadcast service was available for special occasions by the courtesy of various facilities, under the auspices of A CENTURY OF PROGRESS, resulting in much invaluable publicity for the various States on many notable occasions.

The displays by the States at A CENTURY OF PROGRESS in 1933 represented an investment of over a million and a half dollars. Much of the material, and this is true especially of the murals and dioramas, is of a permanent nature and available for future use.

Never before in the history of international expositions in this country has it been possible to install and operate State exhibits on such a low cost basis. The costs for 1934 will be even lower than those of 1933 when new records for economy were established.

The first great saving was made possible by building the States Building on the group plan and selling of space to the States at the estimated cost basis. Now that the building is paid for the second-year charges for rent have been reduced about 75 per cent, the charge now being estimated on the cost of reconditioning and maintenance only.

Comparative figures with other world's fairs of the past are interesting. Forty years ago the States and Territories represented spent a total of over six million dollars without taking into account loaned exhibits and special contributions outside of State funds. The average per State was between $130,000 and $150,000 each, and similar amounts were spent by various States at other Fairs of similar character during the last forty years. The average for 1933 was roughly one-third of the above figures due to modern and progressive methods of construction, lighting, landscaping, installation, maintenance and administration.

Inquiries are invited as to range of cost as to various types of exhibits. Planographs and blueprints showing floor and wall spaces are available on request.

Various amounts were expended by the several States, including State appropriations, private subscriptions and contributions, supplemented by loaned exhibits. The subjects generally covered were:

First, scenic and recreational exhibits with a background of history and pioneer achievement visualized by works of art in murals, dioramas, photo-murals, panoramas, moving pictures, sculptures, pictorial maps, and every type of colorful advertisements of modern design and setting to offer invitation and lure to the visitor and tourist.

Second, Exhibits to attract investment in natural resources, developed industries, agriculture and ripe opportunity for the homeseeker and investor.

Third, Outstanding and unique State achievement in all lines of progress and endeavor; State pride in public works, institutions, education, administrative and legislative activities to justify the stewardship of the State in the care and conservation of resources and public property belonging to the commonwealth in trust for the people at large; to publicize and dramatize the story with dignified showmanship and prideful sincerity.
At all previous Expositions, as shown by the records of the last forty years, the cost of typical State exhibits was from two to ten times as great as estimated costs for 1934 and based on our actual experience in 1933. The principal item of saving was in our rental charge as compared with the cost of special State buildings or pavilions including construction and maintenance plus landscaping and exterior decorating and other items now included in the rental charge of $1.25 per square foot gross (as against $4.50 gross for 1933).

The group plan of building construction and operation is most successful, economic, popular and profitable. This saving has been passed to the States as above indicated.

Exhibit space is offered as a business opportunity to those progressive States, where publicity and advertising is recognized as an asset and good investment.

FINANCIAL DATA—1933 EXPOSITION

The operating statement of A Century of Progress, dated November 12, 1933, reflects only such funds as were actually collected and disbursed by A Century of Progress and does not take into consideration the vast sums expended by governments, exhibiting corporations and concessionaires in the construction of their particular buildings and building and installation of exhibits, nor maintenance by exhibitors and concessionaires.

The following is therefore set out to give effect to the estimated total cost of construction and organization expense prior to the opening on May 27, 1933:

| Amount expended by A Century of Progress | $11,832,123.92 |
| Estimated Cost of Buildings Constructed by Governments and Private Corporations | 2,667,000.00 |
| Estimated Cost of Concessionaires’ Construction | 5,202,000.00 |
| Estimated Cost of Construction and Installation of Exhibits by Exhibitors | 13,000,000.00 |
| Estimated Cost of Construction of Scientific Exhibits | 460,000.00 |
| **Total Estimated Cost of Construction** | **$33,161,123.92** |
| Organization expenses including Insurance, Interest on Gold Notes and all overhead from Jan. 5, 1928, to May 27, 1933 | 5,486,712.77 |
| **Total Estimated Investment** | **$38,647,836.69** |

The above expenditures do not reflect the cost of operation during the Exposition period by A Century of Progress, which amount to $4,783,839.24 and the cost of operation by governments, exhibiting corporations and concessionaires, which in total would undoubtedly exceed the operating expenses of A Century of Progress. It may also be of general interest to note that A Century of Progress employed 6,777 persons during the peak of the operating period, and it is estimated concessionaires and exhibitors employed approximately 15,000. During the pre-Fair period thousands were employed by exhibitors and concessionaires to construct and install exhibits and concessions and by contractors in the construction of the Exposition.

The Exposition sold 22,565,859 admissions, of which 245,403 tickets were unredeemed. It will be noted that $10,345,894.92 was received as revenue from admissions, which includes $170,887.50 from visitors prior to the formal opening. The amount therefore allocated to the Fair period was
$10,175,007.42 representing 22,565,859 admissions. The average received was a fraction over 45 cents per admission despite the fact that children’s admissions all through the exposition period were 25 cents and on Fridays of each week 5 cents.

Other Revenue

The total amount expended by visitors to the Exposition (exclusive of gate admissions, and certain features from which A CENTURY OF PROGRESS derived its revenue other than from a percentage of the gross) was $27,095,518.63, which indicates an average expenditure per person amounting to $1.21. This total represents the Concessionaires’ gross take for the period of the Fair. Twenty-seven of them grossed over $250,000 each and three of these over a million dollars each.