

LOCATING THE FAIR.

INTERESTING HISTORY OF HOW JACKSON PARK WAS SELECTED.

A Splendid Site, but the Commissioners Came Near Blundering by Placing the White City in Other Sections—How the Fair Has Developed the Carrying Systems—Something About the Electric Roads and Electricity as a Power—Routes from the City to the Grounds.

CHICAGO, AUG. 18. [Editorial Correspondence Wheeling Intelligencer.]—I alluded in my last letter to some of the mistakes that have been made in connection with the World's Fair inside and outside the grounds. I was talking on this and other subjects lately with Editor Medill of THE TRIBUNE, who is always full of information upon any topic his callers may start up, and he gave me an interesting sketch of the early contest among the members of the Locating Commission as to where in Chicago the fair should be placed. At one time it seemed certain that it would be located on Lake-Front Park, the park that fronts the break-water harbor between Van Buren and Twelfth streets, and had it not been for Banker Gage of the First National Bank it would have been located there, and that mistake would have been a blunder of such a serious, if not fatal character, that all other mistakes, such as I have alluded to, would have been as dust in the balance by comparison. As a matter of fact the fair at one time was actually located there (on paper) by a direct vote of the commission, and had the personnel of the minority been less influential than it was it would have been built up in that park and on so much of the adjoining space of water frontage as could have been advantageously appropriated by piles and flooring. Fortunately, however, so much friction was engendered by the various interests involved, such as those of the Illinois Central railroad and the property-holders of aristocratic Michigan avenue boulevard, that the project was held back from consummation long enough to enable the minority of the commission to bring about a reaction, and thus save the fair as we see it today in all the matchless glory of the White City at Jackson Park.

[One of the objections made to the Jackson Park location was that the site was mostly a marsh, only a few inches higher than the lake at average level, and that it would cost millions to raise it a few feet above the lake surface. The minority brushed away this objection by suggesting the excavation by steam dredges of lakelets, lagoons, and water channels, and contending that the material thus thrown up would raise the remainder of the park several feet above high water; and this was just what was done and what resulted. The dredging cost but little, comparatively, and the site, while raised high enough for drainage, was also beautified by the genius of Olmstead, the great landscape gardener.]

The Single Site.

There was also another project as regards the location of the fair that would have been worse in its fatal effects than the foregoing project, and that was to divide it up between the South and West Sides or the South and North Sides, and make two attractions of it, and thus boom two sides of the city in a real estate way. Then, again, there was the more rational project of locating it in Washington Park, the twin park (connected by the pleasure) of Jackson Park. This project would have materialized in all probability but for the inexorable conditions imposed by the Park Commissioners, which were that the grounds should be restored to their status quo after the fair, forest trees included, a task practically impossible. To this stand of the Washington Park Commissioners we owe the presence of the fair to where it is today, and I think that every visitor to the fair will agree that we owe them a vote of thanks, and this, too, notwithstanding the acknowledged fact that their park would really have been an attractive location for the fair. Everything is good, better, and best by comparison, and the best in this case was the unimproved and unattractive waste known as the south half of Jackson Park as it stood at the time of the final vote in December, 1890.

The real estate market of the whole Hyde Park region trembled in the balance in those days, and prices were made and unmade for realty within the vicinages of the two parks named with "neatness and dispatch" according as the eavesdroppers got wind of what was going on in the council chamber of the locating commission. I should remark that Hyde Park is a generic term formerly applied to pretty much all the territory south of the late city limits. It included Washington and Jackson Parks and all the contiguous country, all of which is now in the city.

Advantages of Jackson Park.

The ostensible reason for locating the fair in 1890 at Lake-Front Park was because of the distance to either Washington or Jackson Park, say seven miles, and because of the utter inadequacy of then existing transportation facilities between the city proper and those parks. The Illinois Central road was practically the only means of getting there with any directness. The South Side elevated road project was as yet only a project, and the crosstown electric on Sixty-first and Sixty-third streets, connecting the cable lines on State street and Cottage Grove avenue were not any further along. The contention of Messrs. Gage, Jeffrey, Bryun, Medill, and their minority colleagues was that the location at Jackson Park, when once determined on, would quicken into actual life all inchoate schemes for rapid transit facilities on the South Side of whatever kind and character, elevated, electric, and cable, and that they would vie with each other in speedily providing the ways and means for moving World's Fair visitors to and from all parts of the city. This is exactly what followed the selection of the site. The Illinois Central road went to work at once and spent \$1,500,000 in laying additional tracks, in building viaducts, and in making a wide four-track and six-track road bed at the fair grounds, and in preparing an immense equipment of summer cars which would run to the fair from Van Buren street, without stop, in fifteen minutes, at 10 cents per passenger. The electric road was pushed through amidst many obstacles arising out of questions of right of way, such as the Manhattan company in New York has been litigating for years, and was completed and ready for business on the first day of May. It rivals the Illinois Central in its extent of equipment and in its capacity to move an immense number of people to and from the fair. It transports at least an average of 25,000 people per day to the fair, carrying them all the way from Congress street right into the midst of the fair grounds for five cents, which, as the London Times once said about Harper's Monthly, is ridiculously cheap.

Its Great Accessibility.

The two cable lines referred to, the State street and Cottage Grove lines, deliver through their cross-town electric connections on Sixty-third and Sixty-first streets (all one company) at least an equal number of people to the fair every day. Their cable trains of two and three cars follow each other on State and Wabash in almost unbroken succession all day and all night up to midnight, and they, too, by transfer tickets, land you at the fair from any point on their lines for the same "ridiculously cheap" fare of five cents. Their time from the Palmer House is about one hour; the time of the elevated thirty-five minutes from Congress street, and the time of the Illinois Central fifteen minutes from Van Buren street.

These facilities are not all the means of reaching the fair that the location at Jackson Park invoked into life. There is the great big water line known as the World's Fair Transportation company, running boats every half hour from the pier at Van Buren street to the pier at South Inlet on the lake front of the fair, a distance of seven miles for 15 cents, or 25 cents for the round trip, by which route you get a cool ride on a hot day and also an excellent view of the South Side frontage of the city on your way down. The time consumed is generally about three-quarters of an hour. You can step from the boat at the pier at south inlet onto a curious device for entertaining and exhilarating the multitude who come to the fair to be amused—viz.: a movable platform that goes round the area of the pier in the form of a figure 8, an eighth of a mile, and keeps going all day long, access to it being gained first by the purchase of a five-cent ticket, and next by stepping onto a slowly moving platform that parallels it all the way round, like the tire on the felloe of the wheel. There you can sit and ride all

the day long, and view the lake and the fair frontage as you make the circuit, and be fanned by the gentle zephyrs that are there always blowing, and all for the ridiculously cheap price of five cents.

Transportation Problem Solved.

Situated as I am near the fair grounds I can take in from my hotel a good deal of the transportation problem every day. All the elevated trains and all the Sixty-first and Sixty-third street cross-town electric cars pass before my eyes. The electric cars are a sight to behold every morning and evening. You have seen bees swarm on the limb of a tree in such numbers as to completely hide the limb. This is pretty much the case with these electric cars. They are almost hidden under the piles and clusters of people who are in them and on them, and hanging on to them to an extent that I suppose you never saw in Wheeling on the biggest day the electric cars ever had there. If I once had any doubts as to the future of electricity as the motive power of the future, they have been dispelled by what I have observed on these cars. A train of three cars thus crowded goes by us here at the corner of Rhodes avenue and Sixty-first street with the rush and roar of a Western tornado. At night the point of contact between the trolley and the wire emits a succession of sparks and flashes as it skims along that make these cars look like flying meteors shooting along the highway. Not only are they propelled and lit up inside by electricity but they catch such a surplus of it that it can find no sufficient vent over the armatures underneath or through the incandescents inside and must needs, like Wagner's "Flying Dutchman," make ghosts of themselves by these convulsions at the masthead. There is no object lesson in the great electrical building on the grounds that interests me more than the daily exhibition of the speed and power of these heavily loaded cars that are propelled by a power "as mysterious and invisible as the will of man," as some one said of it.

The Intramural and Other Wonders.

Not only are these swiftly and powerfully moving street cars propelled by this mysterious power, this dominant power of the future, but likewise the elevated trains that move upon the "intramural" railway inside the grounds at the fair. I like to visit the power house of the company at the south end of the park and see them generating this mysterious power through the medium of one great, swiftly moving wheel, "whose seed is in itself," as were the endowed sources of life in the opening drama of creation; evolving power from the coiled magnets within it, and sending it forth on a wire to make a thousand other wheels revolve. There is nothing in all the exhibits of the fair so mysterious as this evolution of electrical power. It is like the fable of Jupiter stamping on the earth and releasing the giants of Olympus to work their will on mankind. Think of a wheel that generates 5,000 amperes of electrical force, only 2,000 of which are necessary to keep all the trains moving on the intramural railway, and that furnishes at the same time an indefinite amount of light for a multitude of lamps. What is the ultimate destiny of a power that can furnish at once power, heat, and light? In the great electrical building all these phenomena are to be seen. Animal life is there produced by electricity. The incubators pour forth their broods of ducklings hatched by electricity. Bread is baked and meat is cooked by electricity. Steel is melted and welded by electricity. Engraving on china and glass is done by electricity. There is no end to its functions.