



With the Chicago Railroad Fair, the nation's railroads threw a big party for one final time

THE LAST GREAT RAILROAD SHOW

IT SEEMED INCREDIBLE, BUT THERE IT WAS. Suddenly, in the summer of 1948, there appeared along a narrow stretch of Chicago's lakefront a mile-long carnival of displays, rides, color, and theater, placed there by an industry which, as conceded by *Railway Age*, "tends to have more dignity and reticence than is fashionable nowadays." *Time* Magazine stated the case more frankly: "The railroads, which usually talk to the public in conservative full-page ads and statistics ... tried it with whoop-de-do and the can-can." The "whoop-de-do" was the Chicago Railroad Fair, a "National Exhibition of Pageantry and Exhibits Depicting 100 Years of Railroad Progress," the largest public exposition ever mounted by a single industry.

Despite the raised eyebrows, there was precedence for such railroad showmanship. Way back in 1883, Chicago itself had hosted the National Railway Appliance Exposition, whose feature "The Old Curiosity Shop" marked the first time railroads exhibited their "relics" to demonstrate the industry's progress. Author Edward Hungerford was aware of this event when he created his Fair of the Iron Horse for the B&O Centennial in 1927. The success of that event prompted *Railway Age* to

BY CURTIS L. KATZ



With the Windy City skyline, Soldier Field, and IC tracks as a backdrop, the Chicago Railroad Fair had a grand lakefront setting. (See "Observations" [page 81] for rolling stock identification.)

propose a national railroad exposition for 1930, the centennial of common-carrier rail service in America, but the Great Depression scuttled that idea. Meanwhile, large-scale railroad presentations had come to be associated with world's fairs. Both of Chicago's fairs, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and A Century of Progress in 1933-34, had major railroad exhibits. The largest railroad extravaganza to date had been that presented by the Eastern Railroad Presidents Conference at New York's 1939-40 World of Tomorrow; it was, in fact, the largest exhibit at the fair and one of the most popular. The crowds attracted by tour-

mid-January 1948. C&NW had recently removed the *Pioneer* from its resting place in Chicago's Museum of Science & Industry (MSI) to be restored to operation for the North Western's own centennial celebration; why shouldn't *all* railroads join in the party? The form of the Railroad Centennial was refined at subsequent meetings before being officially endorsed January 30 at a regular meeting of the Western Association of Railroad Executives at Chicago Union Station. The *Tribune* dutifully broke the story: The event would be a fair; it would have a pageant featuring trains, cowboys, Indians; it would have tent exhibits, track exhibits, outdoor

a slight profit during the worst years of the Depression. No "Kentucky Colonel," Lohr had been a career Army engineer, decorated in World War I. Taciturn, businesslike, formal (he was always "Major Lohr," or simply "the Major," rarely "Lenox"), he incongruously possessed an uncanny flair for showmanship. The railroad presidents among the science museum's trustees knew the Major could be counted on to give Chicago and the railroads a good show. "Everything is hectic at present," wrote Lohr to Edward Hungerford on February 9. Hungerford, whom Lohr had known as the author of the transportation pageant "Wings of a Century"



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ing streamliners during the Depression demonstrated an amazing dormant public interest in railroading. In the tough competitive and regulatory environment of postwar transportation, it was an interest the railroads knew they would do well to harness.

A FAIR IS BORN

The Chicago Railroad Fair was born of postwar euphoria, civic boosterism, and the railroads' desire to secure a share of peacetime progress and prosperity. However, the nominal occasion for the show was the centenary of railroading in Chicago, the acknowledged railroad capital of the nation. It was in 1848 that a secondhand Baldwin 4-2-0 named *Pioneer* steamed westward from the Chicago River on the first wooden rails of the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad, earliest predecessor of the Chicago & North Western. The notion of a Chicago Railroad Centennial had been circulating around the offices of the *Chicago Tribune* for about a year before the idea was first proposed at a meeting of railroad executives and publicity men sponsored by the *Tribune* in

movies, and fireworks. In short, it would be "The Greatest Railroad Show."

The stated purpose of the Chicago Railroad Fair was to show "in Educational, Scientific, and Graphic form the building and development of the Railroads of North America with a demonstration of their place and importance in the American Economy." The railroads themselves hoped the Fair would entice the public to ride their shiny new postwar streamliners. Chicago's mayor, Martin Kennelly, hoped the Fair signaled a new era of cooperation between the railroads and the city, especially regarding the city's proposed Consolidated South Loop Passenger Terminal, which a commission of railroad officials had been reluctantly studying since 1945. But Major Lenox Lohr simply wanted "the public to associate the railroads with a pleasant day or two spent at their show."

Chicago's impresario of technology and MSI president since 1940, Lenox Riley Lohr was the unanimous choice to head the Railroad Fair. Under Major Lohr's management, the Century of Progress fair had been brought in with



This structure (left), seen in 1948, marked the fair's main entrance. For the '49 reopening, the *Tribune* ran a special section with a big cartoon.

at A Century of Progress, had been contacted the previous week to write the Chicago Railroad Fair's pageant, ultimately titled "Wheels a-Rolling." "Hectic" barely describes the birth throes of the Railroad Fair. Opening day had been set for July 20, giving Lohr hardly six months in which to create a world's-fair-style event. To expedite the process, he would rely on proven creative and managerial talent from A Century of Progress, such as Hungerford, and from MSI, such as Dan MacMaster. MacMaster, who had been with the museum since it opened in 1933, was made general manager of the Fair; this would be the first of many projects Lohr would entrust to MacMaster, leading him naturally to the presidency of the museum when the Major died in 1968.

RUSH TO COMPLETION

The site chosen for the Fair was a 50-acre lakefront strip of Burnham Park between 20th and 30th Streets 2 miles south of the Loop, convenient to city transit lines as well as to the Illinois Central and its 27th Street engine terminal. During A Century of Prog-

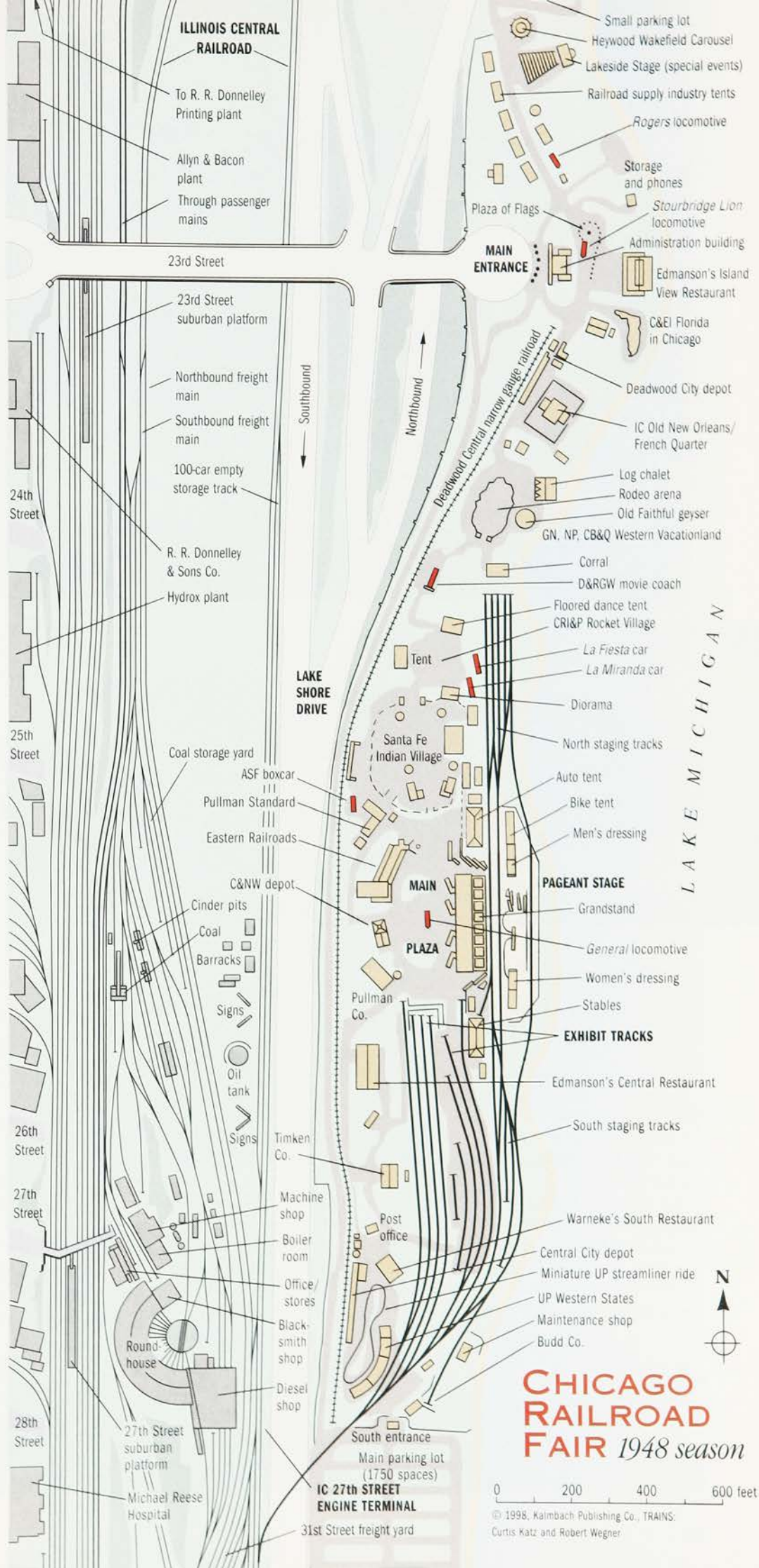
ress, this had been the location of the popular International Villages. The Chicago Park District approved use of the site on February 23, the day after the Santa Fe became the first road to announce its exhibit: a Southwest Indian village. However, no construction could begin until the Chicago Railroad Fair was incorporated, and a contract negotiated and signed on March 16. Ground was broken on April 13. The next day in Washington, D.C., Major Lohr presented President Harry S Truman with a scrolled invitation to the Fair. The IC was contracted to perform switching on the fairgrounds, and to construct nearly 5 miles of Fair track, including the Railroad Fair Spur, flung at grade across Lake Shore Drive during the two nights of April 21-23. As work intensified, Dan MacMaster put in 14-hour days at the site, while Major Lohr took up residence on the fairgrounds, as he had during A Century of Progress, but this time aboard business cars provided by the railroads. In late May the pageant was cast and began rehearsals in an empty hall of the Museum of Science & Industry until the outdoor stage was completed and the vintage railroad equipment began arriving after July 1.

On June 11 a golden spike ceremony was held marking completion of all track, and two weeks later the fairgrounds were pronounced 75 percent complete. The trains for the pageant began arriving, some with considerable fanfare. The *Pioneer* toured the C&NW system in May and June before taking its part in "Wheels a-Rolling." The B&O made its Fair contributions into an exhibit train that paused at towns along the B&O main line between Baltimore and Chicago. The Great Northern's ancestral engine *William Crooks* ran short excursions as it made its way down the Burlington Route from Savanna, Ill. Press coverage and public interest were at a fever pitch.

On July 19, a gala parade was held on State Street, featuring rubber-tired replicas of famous locomotives, bands, rodeo riders, Indians, and handcar races on the streetcar tracks. The parade's grand marshal was spunky Janie Jones, widow of IC's legendary "brave engineer," Casey Jones.

The next morning at the fairgrounds, flags were raised by a military honor guard, and 38 participating railroads and numerous railroad supply companies with a collective investment of over \$2.25 million watched for the 2 million people Major Lohr said would pass through the turnstiles by Labor Day.

On Tuesday, July 20, 1948, at 10 a.m.,





HENRY J. McCORD



WALT EVANS

the gates at 23rd Street were opened, and the first visitors plunked down their 25-cent admissions to see what one industry had wrought in but six months: the Chicago Railroad Fair, a world's fair of America's railroads.

Out of expedience, many of the Fair structures consisted of tents, or of that recent world war wonder, the Quonset hut, but the world's fair ambiance was established through the expert application of color, landscaping, flags, and—at night (closing time was 10:30 p.m.)—lighting effects ingeniously arranged by Pyle National and the Mars Signal Light Company, makers of locomotive headlights and warning lights.

A TOUR OF THE GROUNDS

Though this was a national railroad exposition, it had a decidedly Western tilt. The GN/NP/CB&Q Western Vacationland presented a continuous rodeo, a log chalet, and a working reproduc-

tion of Yellowstone's Old Faithful geyser; Rock Island's Rocket Village featured country music and square dancing; Union Pacific's Western States tent and, of course, Santa Fe's Indian Village all carried out the Western theme. These were the largest exhibits.

Just inside the 23rd Street entrance however, Southern hospitality greeted visitors at Chicago & Eastern Illinois' Florida in Chicago exhibit, with its palm trees and floral Florida map, and at the neighboring New Orleans French Quarter presented by the Illinois Central. On the plaza by the entrance to the pageant, B&O, Boston & Maine, Erie, Maine Central, Monon, New York Central, Nickel Plate Road, Pennsylvania, and Wabash were together under one roof at the Eastern Railroads pavilion. Its murals, exhibits, and model railroad were upstaged at the door by "Genial Joe," the robot railroader, a 9-foot-tall cartoonish figure in overalls that greeted and talked with exhibit visitors.



HENRY J. McCORD

Top: CB&Q 4-6-0 637 headed an "immigrant train" in the pageant, while a footboarded Q 4-4-0 played the role of UP 119. **Above:** A C&S Mogul worked the Deadwood Central pike. **Left:** Among the displays was a huge C&O turbine.

Next door, the C&NW had reconstructed Chicago's first railroad station. Flanking the plaza were the exhibits of Pullman Company and Pullman-Standard (the two Pullman components were then undergoing a court-ordered divorce). At the south end of the fairgrounds, rival Budd Company displayed its "Car of the Week," each week showing a new stainless-steel passenger car fresh off the assembly line.

Oh yes, you could also see *trains* at the Railroad Fair. On the exhibit tracks

that dominated the south end of the grounds was presented the largest collection of railroad rolling stock ever gathered for a non-operating purpose. Here literally side by side was equipment ranging from locomotives of yesteryear to the GM *Train of Tomorrow*, from Pennsy's 1868 0-10-0T *Reuben Wells* to its modern duplex-drive T1. Some of these exhibits were changed out through the course of the summer.

And you could *ride* a train too, along the western edge of the grounds, on the Burlington's Deadwood Central 3-foot-gauge train, pulled by the *Chief Crazy Horse*, actually Colorado & Southern 2-6-0 No. 9, vintage 1884, in fancy dress.

Most of the railroad supply industry exhibits were in tents at the north end of the grounds—the vestige of a failed initiative to unite 100 such companies in one huge Quonset. Many of these were standard trade show displays, but some exhibitors, such as Heywood-

Wakefield, showed imagination. HW's contribution was a merry-go-round in which fair-goers rode not on painted ponies but on the sponsor's products: coach, sleeper, and parlor car seats.

Adding to the appeal and carnival spirit of the Railroad Fair was a daily diet of special events. Each railroad had its own special day, as did states, cities, civic organizations, and ethnic groups, affording the railroads opportunities to organize excursions to Chicago. The Lionel Corporation gave away train sets in a kids' essay contest. There were photo contests, watermelon-eating contests, and a cutest grandma contest, a Freckles Day for boys and a Pigtail Day for girls. Corny gimmicks? Major Lohr preferred to call them “proven attractions,” which served to keep the railroads and their Fair in the newspapers.

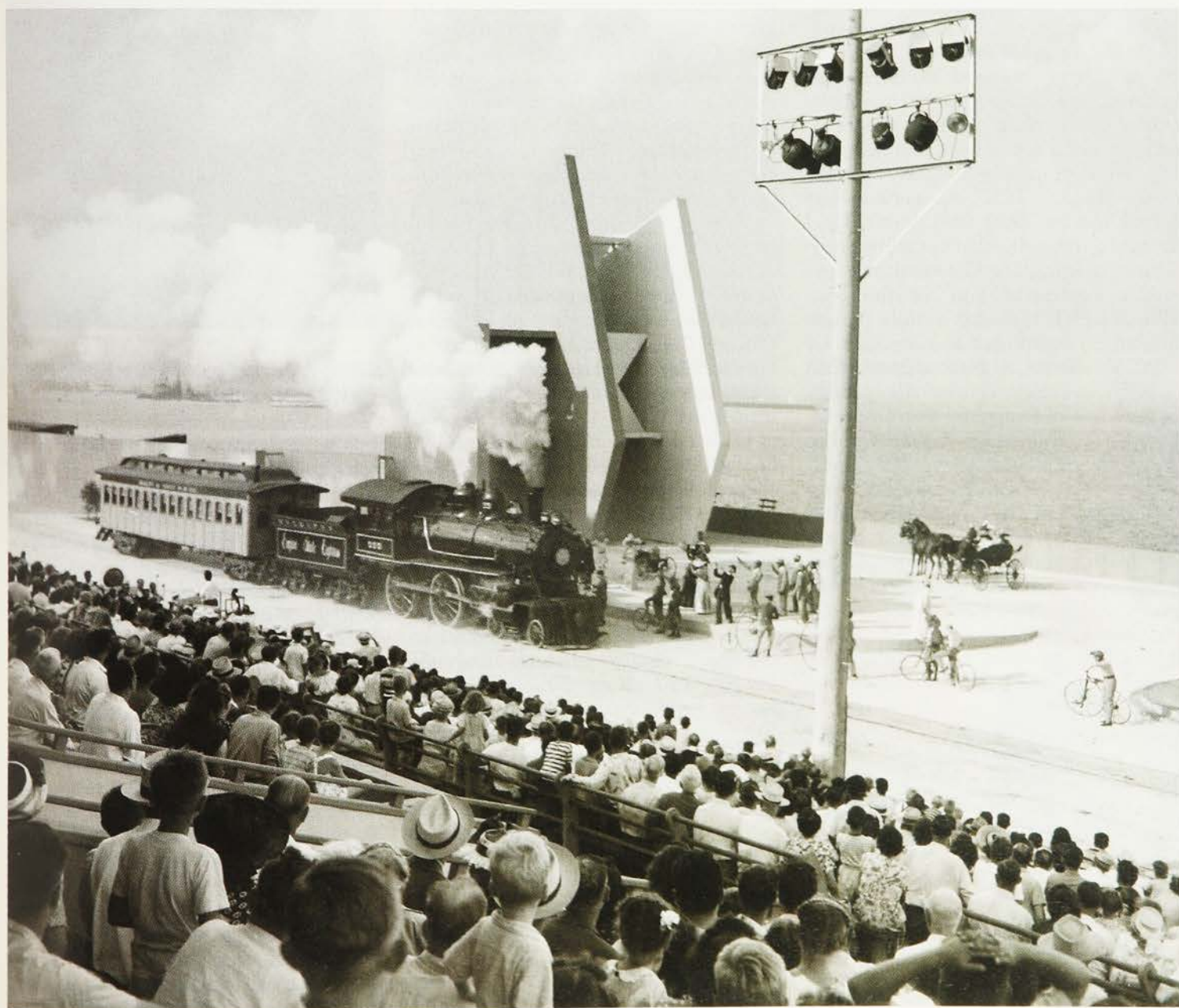
Also good for publicity were celebrity visits, not just railroad executives and public officials, but popular per-

sonalities ranging from Eddie Cantor to Elsie the Cow. The Fair's most lasting legacy may have been the impression it made on Walt Disney. As a show *business* man, Lohr must have found in Disney a kindred spirit. He gave Walt the run of the grounds, plus the privilege of a walk-on part in the pageant. Within days of his return to California, Disney wrote, “The Main Village, which includes the Railroad Station, is built around a village green or informal park ...” It was the initial sentence of his first studio memo describing ideas for a new kind of amusement park.

ON WITH THE SHOW

The Fair's featured attraction was the colossal pageant “Wheels a-Rolling,” presented on a lakefront stage 450

Heavily rebuilt but still a ham, NYC 999 reenacts its famous high-speed dash of 1893 before a packed grandstand during “Wheels a-Rolling.”



NEW YORK CENTRAL

feet long and 100 feet deep before a 5000-seat grandstand. Four times a day in 1¼ hours, 14 scenes unfolded 300 years of American transport history, with the main focus on the 19th century, and emphasis on the railroads' role in westward expansion. "Performing" on three tracks were the show's stars: 21 historic trains, original and replica, supported by 150 actors in multiple roles, animals including 70 horses, and numerous wagons, coaches, bicycles, motor vehicles, and other conveyances. Except for a few songs and a speech by Abraham Lincoln, this costume spectacle was performed in pantomime, the action advanced by two narrators in a sound booth in the grandstand, and supported by music from a 13-member augmented orchestra front-and-center in the stands, plus an off-stage chorus of five voices, all audio-amplified. Standard theatrical lighting made the night performances the most spectacular of all. All this for just 60 cents!

The creator of this theatrical wonder was Edward Hungerford, "the dean of American railroad authors." An architect by training, a journalist by trade, Hungerford penned scores of articles and a dozen books on railroad-ing. While preparing a massive history of the B&O in 1927, Hungerford was appointed by B&O President Daniel Willard to organize that company's centennial celebration. The result was the wildly successful Fair of the Iron Horse, which included a daily parade of historic equipment accompanied by floats, music, and costumed

actors. This was the genesis of Hungerford's transportation stage pageants of the 1930's: "Wings of a Century" at Chicago's A Century of Progress, historical pageants for the centenaries of Rochester and Syra-

cuse in Hungerford's native upstate New York, "Parade of the Years" in 1936 for Cleveland's Great Lakes Exposition ... and Hungerford's magnum opus, "Railroads on Parade," for the Railroads exhibit at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair. This extravaganza included lavish sets, 250 actors, and music by composer Kurt Weill.

Drawing on all his prior experience, Hungerford was able to prepare a new show in just three months. His script for "Wheels a-Rolling," with narration that borrowed liberally from his 1939 show, plus a musical score he commissioned from music folklorist Tom Scott, were air-mailed to the offices of the Railroad Fair on April 30. On June 11, shortly before he was to come from New York City to personally oversee the production of the pageant, Hungerford took ill and was hospitalized.

The burden of bringing Hungerford's show to life fell all the more heavily on the shoulders of its director, Helen Ticken Geraghty. Originally a medical student, Geraghty forsook the scalpel for the stage and studied with, among others, Max Reinhardt, the master of theatrical gigantism. Geraghty's direction of Hungerford's "Wings of a Century" earned her the *Tribune's* praise as "one of the great American stage managers."

Tom Scott's musical score for the pageant was placed in the hands of music director Isaac Van Grove, another old hand at monumental theater, whose conducting credits included the Chicago Civic Opera and "Railroads on Parade." Van Grove revised Scott's work a bit, but retained Scott's borrowings from Kurt Weill's 1939 music, as well as his basic concept of an arrangement of familiar public domain popular songs, folk melodies, and patriotic airs.

Technical Director Arthur Mayberry, also a veteran of Hungerford pageants, organized the backstage heart of the show—a working railroad, with 1½ miles of track, 21 locomotives, numerous cars, and daily interchange business with the IC, all run by a trainmaster, two superintendents, switchmen, a mechanic, and several engine crews.

The enginemen came mainly from Eastern roads, and were assigned to the show on a rotating basis. Invariably, the railroaders' initial response to this assignment was disdain, manifested in their refusal to wear their costumes. But after several exposures to footlights and applause, they were invariably stage-

struck, and quickly warmed to their roles with gusto.

Beyond foppish attire, the crews had to contend with a bewildering museum of railroad hardware—couplers, brakes, throttles, even hand-operated valve gear. During rehearsal, a stage manager demanded of the *DeWitt Clinton's* engineer why he consistently failed to stop on his mark, only to learn that the primitive engine had no brakes! Fortunately the train's stagecoach cars had brake handles within reach of their actor passengers, and the *Clinton* never missed its mark in performance.

A synopsis of this monumental production would be an article in itself,



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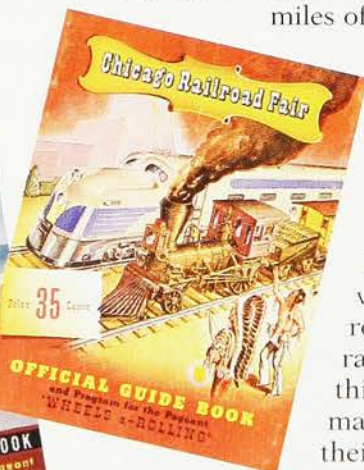
Edward Hungerford scripted "Wheels a-Rolling," the last of his many great railroad works.

but here for example are some of its most popular moments:

- The race of the B&O's *Tom Thumb* (a replica) with a horse car: With greater initial tractive effort, the gray mare won four times a day.

- The Lincoln Funeral Train: B&O's *William Mason*, with two cars draped in black, rolled slowly across the stage, accompanied by Weill's choral blending of "This Train is Bound for Glory" with the refrain from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Audiences, perhaps recalling the death of a more recent war-time president, were moved to tears.

- Promontory: UP's 119 and Central Pacific's *Jupiter* (actually CB&Q's *Pride of the Prairies* and Virginia & Truckee's *Genoa*, reprising their "Railroads on Parade" roles) met center stage in the most-photographed scene of the play. Author and critic Lucius Beebe carped that the portrayal of this event was too sanctimonious. A stagehand was spe-



cially assigned to immediately remove the "Golden Spike" at the end of every show, lest it become a souvenir.

- The Horseless Carriage: Five minutes of frantic slapstick, as a Keystoneish cop tries to preserve a Chaplinesque drunk from his own undoing in a whirl of vintage motor vehicles, a scene no doubt calculated to please Major Lohr, who loved silent movies and old autos.

- The Finale: The heroic closing began with the arrival of the *Pioneer Zephyr* at A Century of Progress, and culminated with streamers radiating from Chicago on a map of the U.S., modern motor vehicles, a modern steam locomotive and the latest diesel meeting, a

was given a Rock Island trip for two to Colorado Springs. Struggling to handle the throngs, the little Deadwood Central, its 10-cent fare notwithstanding, was earning an enviable \$40 per train-mile! The SRO crowds and high praise that greeted "Wheels a-Rolling" simply mirrored the response of public and press to the entire Fair, and the railroads were ecstatic. Twice the original Labor Day closing date was pushed back, until finally the Railroad Fair dropped its fires on October 3.

And still the public clamored for more, praising the Fair for its "educational value and portrayal of 'Americanism.'" Major Lohr did not disap-

entrance replicated the east portal of the Moffat Tunnel. The C&NW topped neighboring Genial Joe with a 35-foot animated figure of Paul Bunyan. The Burlington presented Gold Gulch, a "Wild West town," while the Western Pacific, not represented in 1948, brought to Chicago a piece of San Francisco: a hill with an operating Powell & Mason cable car.

The railroad supply industry, whose trade show-style exhibits met with little approval from either the public or from Major Lohr, did not return, but subscribed to present a free ice show. For added general interest, the Cypress Gardens Water Thrill Show was im-



MUSEUM OF SCIENCE & INDUSTRY

Major Lenox Lohr, Fair president (left), and Walt Disney pose onstage in period costume.



B. REA WARG COLLECTION

Issac Van Grove, music director of "Wheels a-Rolling," was an old hand at large-scale theater.



B. REA WARG COLLECTION

Helen Geraghty, director of "Wheels a-Rolling" (pictured with husband Maurice Geraghty).

multitude of flag-waving servicemen, and "God Bless America." In postwar 1948, audiences cheered.

And so did the critics, who praised "Wheels a-Rolling" effusively. The coveted seal of approval came from *Tribune* critic Claudia Cassidy, long the terror of Chicago's performing arts scene. Said she, "It is a wonderful display of authentic conveyances past and present, and it manages to be amusing, touching, exciting." The public agreed, and performances often sold out.

Alas, the accolades came too late for Hungerford, who had already played his last scene. Just one week after "Wheels a-Rolling" opened, Edward Hungerford died in New York at age 72.

SUCCESS, AND A SECOND SEASON

On September 4, a man described as a "legless veteran" became the 2 millionth visitor to the Railroad Fair, and

point. Less than two weeks after its closing, Lohr announced that the Chicago Railroad Fair would reopen in 1949, "not bigger, but better."

The resulting intermission gave the railroads an opportunity to rethink and remake the Fair they had built by haste and miracle. The physical plant was improved to accommodate the crowds that had taken everyone by surprise in 1948—buildings and tracks were moved, paths widened, more restaurants provided, 1000 seats added to the grandstand. The Deadwood Central constructed a passing siding, and a second train, dubbed the *Cripple Creek & Tin Cup*, was brought in by the Denver & Rio Grande Western (power for this train was D&RGW 2-8-0 No. 268). Old exhibits were improved and new ones introduced, with emphasis on the sensational and exotic. The Rio Grande, for instance, replaced its modest movie coach with a cinema and exhibit whose

ported from Florida. "Wheels a-Rolling," of course, remained the main theatrical attraction, with revisions to accommodate a circus parade, as well as to introduce additional railroad equipment. Much attention was lavished on Milwaukee Road EP-2 "bipolar" electric No. 10250 which, nearly 2000 miles from its native catenary, lumbered across the stage crammed to the gunwales with storage batteries. When the *Pioneer Zephyr* was wrecked in service on April 29, the chorus girl who saved the show by stepping in for the injured star was *Zephyr* 9902, one of the first *Twin Zephyrs*. She performed this stand-in role like a trooper until the original *Zephyr* returned on August 27 to finish out the season.

The 1949 Chicago Railroad Fair opened June 25, a month earlier than the 1948 season, again with fanfare and parade. Despite an enthusiastic reception by civic boosters and the press, ini-



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Hoping to lure tourists, the Western roads had elaborate exhibits, including Santa Fe's Indian Village (top), the GN/NP/CB&Q Vacationland (right), and Rio Grande's Moffat Tunnel theater.



TRAINS COLLECTION

tial public response to the '49 Fair was slow, perhaps because of early summer heat waves. But attendance picked up through the season, as ACF's Talgo train was exhibited, circus impresario John Ringling visited, and Burlington President Ralph Budd was feted on his retirement. On September 26, a press release crowed that the Chicago Railroad Fair had accomplished what no world's fair had ever done, attracting more people to its second season than to its first. What the release conveniently did *not* mention is that world's fairs ran seasons of roughly equal length; the second season of the Railroad Fair was 32 percent longer than its first, but would ultimately draw only 9 percent more fair-goers. Showman



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Lenox Lohr surely knew this as well as he knew the old show biz maxim, "Leave 'em wanting more." Despite national cries of "Encore!", on October 2, a cloudy Sunday, The Greatest Railroad Show took its final bow, as scheduled.

Disappointed but undaunted by the Railroad Fair's closing, civic boosters seized the moment in an attempt to realize a dream cherished by Chicagoans since the Columbian Exposition, that of a perpetual world's fair on Chicago's lakefront. The Park District approved the plan, and the railroads were delighted to be relieved of the contractual expense of restoring the Fair site to park land. In the summer of 1950, Chicago Fair opened. Two dozen of the Railroad Fair's structures were adapted for use by such exhibitors as Westinghouse, Borden's, and Bell Telephone. The Deadwood Central was retained, as

was the stage, for a patriotic historical pageant, "Frontiers of Freedom." The new show utilized many of the trains and vehicles seen in "Wheels a-Rolling," as well as much of its personnel, including director Geraghty and conductor Van Grove. But two years of fair had been enough. Chicago Fair flopped, subsequent fair plans failed to materialize, and it was not until April 1952 that the Park District at last managed to demolish the former Railroad Fair buildings. Today, the Railroad Fair site is dominated by the huge McCormick Place exposition center.

SMASHING SHOW, LIMITED LEGACY

Was the Chicago Railroad Fair a success? As popular entertainment, it exceeded all expectations. Five and a quarter million people attended it. Five

huge clippings books attested to its public relations value. During its two-year run it was deemed one of America's top travel destinations. *And* it came in at a profit. But like so much popular entertainment, it was quickly forgotten by a fickle public.

And apparently by the railroads. No sooner had the IC trundled the last exhibits across Lake Shore Drive than the railroad companies returned to the stuffy "dignity and reticence" of their former selves. The spirit of cooperation and imagination manifested in the Fair vanished with its tents and Quonsets. On December 23, 1949, the railroads formally rejected the city's proposed Consolidated South Loop Terminal. A statement in the Terminal Commission's report to Mayor Kennelly seemed to repudiate the creative animus that in just six months had built a Railroad Fair: "The ideal and the monumental should not be presently considered." More obvious in its irony was the news in March 1950 that the Chicago & North Western would discontinue passenger service between West Chicago and Freeport—the west end of the Galena & Chicago Union line whose centennial had been the rationale for

the recent exposition. This, of course, was but a hint of things to come. Instead of heralding an era of postwar progress and prosperity for America's railroads, the Chicago Railroad Fair in fact marked the end of their century of dominance in American industry and popular imagination.

The fate of the nation's railroads in the years following the Fair is well known. Today, railroads generally avoid ballyhoo publicity, reject their past for fear of appearing "old-fashioned," and seldom unite, except in merger.

In 1998, there will be no major commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Chicago's first railroad. But if you want, you can have your own commemoration. At the museum of the Chicago Historical Society, quietly en-

shrined since 1972, rests Chicago's first locomotive, the humble *Pioneer*. If you visit her in her dotage, please do not regard her as a mere "relic," however historic. Rather, see her as a reminder of a time of pageantry and celebration, of a time when Chicago was host to "The Greatest Railroad Show." **I**

CURTIS L. KATZ is a Chicago-based Amtrak car attendant. His "Railfun" comic strip appears in Railfan & Railroad magazine. This is his first TRAINS byline. He thanks Dan and Sylvia MacMaster, as well as Rea Warg, for sharing their Railroad Fair recollections; also Laura Graedel, archivist at Chicago's Museum of Science & Industry; and Mary Ann Bamburger and her staff at the University of Illinois Chicago Library.

WP imported a genuine San Francisco cable car (below). Pullman-Standard's towered pavilion (bottom) was a Fair landmark. Genial Joe drew crowds at the Eastern Railroads exhibit (right), while C&NW's Paul Bunyan was a big hit as well.



SANTA FE



THREE PHOTOS: WALT EVANS