

A Note from  
CHS President Gary T. Johnson

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**March 20, 2006**  
***Chicago Begins Here***

We are turning the old Chicago Historical Society upside down. We have a new name, the **Chicago History Museum**, which lets the world know that we are museum, not some kind of club.

Right now, our building is a construction zone as we prepare for a future that marks a dramatic break with our past. This September 30, the whole city will be invited to visit our newly-designed galleries and public spaces. Museum treasures will be on display throughout the building — expect some big surprises the moment you walk through our door!

Our slogan is "Chicago begins here." Our museum will be your starting point for visits to Chicago, providing a look at its past and a window on its future. We will have over twice the museum space for telling the stories of Chicago and its diverse communities than we have ever had before. Our community gallery will focus on one Chicago-area community after another, beginning with Chicago's very first Mexican neighborhood, which grew up in the shadow of the steel mills.

Have you read *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*? I hear that the movie is coming out this fall. Also opening this fall, one of our new galleries will feature treasures from the World's Columbian Exposition, as well as from Chicago's other world's fair, the Century of Progress. We even punched a hole in the wall of our building to bring in the very first 'L' car, which was built to take visitors to the White City. Now 'L' Car No. 1 is sitting on our second floor — if you can imagine such a thing — and you'll be able to take a seat and see for yourself what it was like to take a ride to the fair during that period of drama, excitement, and possibility.

Our outstanding costume and textile collections will get their due with a gallery of their own. We are leading off with our own blockbuster on Dior. Did you know that Chicago was Dior's original entry point to the U.S.? Or that some Chicago women organized anti-Dior demonstrations? Come and learn more this fall!

You will want to plan return visits because the themes for our exhibitions will represent the flagship strengths of our collections and there is much to explore. The Chicago History Museum will be your place for continued learning about fascinating Chicago topics, such as architecture, social history, and crime and forensics. Regional and decorative arts will be well represented. You always will find photographs on display. Did you know we have two million images in our collection? If we reopened as a museum of photography, we would be

# Chicago History Museum

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one of the largest in the country! Our special exhibitions will draw on our own collection — which numbers 22 million holdings — but also on the rich resources of Chicago collectors and collections.

Our new museum also will be your place to explore fun topics, including Chicago sports and music. We will not apologize for having fun! Kids will discover that the minute they enter our new children's gallery, which will encourage them experience Chicago with their five senses.

You can also count on us to be fearless in offering cutting edge exhibitions of great historical importance, particularly when they reach out to diverse communities. The exhibition that we closed with, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, was a prime example.

Some things, of course, will not change. The Chicago dioramas will be back, restored and better than ever. Our Research Center will continue to meet the needs of school children and scholars.

All this is happening because of the boldness of our Board of Trustees and the generous support of our members, volunteers, and friends. And none of this would be possible without the incredible dedication to the cause of history shown by the Museum's professional staff. I am in awe of their talents. Our staff astonishes me every day as we prepare the future of history at the new Chicago History Museum.



Gary T. Johnson  
CHS President