

Navy Pier:  
Daniel Burnham's Dreams Brought to Life

Chloe Elliott  
Junior Division  
Paper  
Paper: 570 words  
Process Paper:  
127 words

### Process Paper

I chose my topic because my English Language Arts class and I were listing possible History Fair topics a few weeks back, and Navy Pier was one of them. Navy Pier displayed plenty of debate and diplomacy during its journey to the attraction it is now.

I conducted my research mainly through simple Google searches surrounding my topic.

I typed my project out on a Google Doc, and printed it.

My historical argument is that The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (McPier) made the revitalization of Navy Pier one of the greatest achievements in the history of Chicago, bringing to life Daniel Burnham's Plan for the city and diplomatically changing/transforming a dangerous place into something enjoyable for everyone visiting. This makes my topic significant in history, as well.

In 1909, a man named Daniel Burnham, one of the greatest architects in American History, decided that he wanted Chicago to have multiple piers for entertainment and shipping purposes. Unfortunately, only one was built. It was placed at the mouth of the Chicago River, where its construction began in 1914. Its name was Municipal Pier, and it was opened to the public in 1916.

The entertainment section of the pier was thriving. A theater, restaurants, and a streetcar line was built on it in the late 1910's. From 1921 to 1922, William H. Thompson held "Pageants of Progress", which drew almost a million visitors during only 15 days of events. These were Municipal Pier's best years.

Unfortunately, these good days would not last long. Once the Great Depression hit, visitors declined. Despite this, recreational and cultural use of the pier lived on.

During the two world wars, Municipal Pier temporarily housed the Red Cross, soldiers, and recruits as well. In order to honor the Navy veterans of the first world war, it was renamed Navy Pier in 1927. Once the second war came along a few years later, Navy Pier was turned back into a military station, mainly serving as training grounds for pilot orientation. The Navy also

opened up other programs for training soldiers to become things such as diesel engine technicians and metal smiths. In 1946, the Navy moved out.

From 1946 to 1965, the University of Illinois at Chicago made use of the pier as an undergraduate campus. In fact, my grandfather went to school there in the early 1960's. During the 50's, the primary convention center of Chicago was Navy Pier. There were 12 - 16 trade shows held annually.

In 1971, McCormick Place was rebuilt after having burned down in 1967. Once it reopened, it became the city's main convention center. This caused Navy Pier to fall into disuse. Luckily, in 1977, Navy Pier was declared a landmark.

The Illinois General Assembly gave \$150 million for upgrading Navy Pier. The plan was to build new structures, including museums, shops and restaurants. In order for those buildings to go up, the sheds that had once served the piers passengers and freight had to come down. This only left some parts of the original piers structure standing.

Without the sheds, Theodore Hild of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency claimed that Navy Pier did not have the “architectural integrity” that made the pier able to qualify for the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. The Commission on Chicago Landmarks attempted to turn Theodore’s analogy upside down. An architectural group gathered in a conference room to debate on this topic.

The commission agreed not to stand on continuing Navy Pier’s status as a landmark, which was scheduled to be considered by the state preservation agency. In the end, after much discussion and negotiation, Navy Pier was removed from the National Register so that construction of its new features could be expedited. Without removal from the National Register, any new additions would have to be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. That would have been a very time consuming process that the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois felt would jeopardize the planned improvements to Navy Pier.

Because of their negotiation and conclusion to remove Navy Pier from the National Register, we have the Navy Pier that we love to visit to this day.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Sources I used:

- Navy Pier Makeover Stirs Landmark Debate: Chicago Tribune

This article was able to help me understand some of the debate and diplomacy that went on during Navy Pier's journey to become what it is now.

- Why Was Navy Pier Built?: Concierge Preferred

This website's information was extremely helpful when it came to learning about the pier's evolution throughout the years.

- NHD Rule Book 2020

Although this rule book is from two years ago, it was what helped me form my paper. It was an excellent guide.