

commentary

from other pens...

The reinventing of Washington, D.C.

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Exactly a century ago, the restless ghost of Pierre L'Enfant began to stir in the capital he had envisioned as a sweep of broad avenues, green parks and spraying fountains.

L'Enfant's city plan was rediscovered by a new generation of architects who saw how a work of 18th century city planning could be adapted to meet the capital's 20th century needs.

On Jan. 15, 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt brought his family to the Corcoran Gallery near the White House to view a dazzling display of before-and-after models and 179 drawings of a city of the future.

The models illustrated a unified and grander place, one viewed by its promoters as worthy of a nation emerging as a world power.

The new plan was issued by the architects of the McMillan Commission, named for its sponsor, Sen. James McMillan, a Michigan Republican was chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia.

Soon, influential Washingtonians were enthusiastically absorbing details of proposals by four of America's leading designers: architects Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens.

The map L'Enfant drew in 1791 became their blueprint for a reinvented city's monumental core. Washington, the planners said, should be treated as "a work of civic art."

The architects were energized by the "City Beautiful" ideas that had sprung from the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

All of this would have been heady stuff for L'Enfant. Headstrong and hot-tempered, he was fired by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in 1792 after only a year on the job. He spent the rest of his life bitterly dunning Congress for the pay he insisted was owed him.

That year had been a foundation stone. The city slowly struggled out of the dust and the mud along the avenues L'Enfant had laid out.

By 1900, the 100th anniversary of the federal government's move to the new capital, Washington was sleepy and disheveled. Railroad tracks and train sheds cut across L'Enfant's great Mall, which had become a series of parks, not the grand vista the French engineer had hoped for.

The McMillan Commission plan restored L'Enfant's hopes.

Discussing it last week in a centennial lecture at the National Building Museum, historian Jon A. Peterson ranked the commission's 1902 report with "the most significant urban plans in American history."

The McMillan plan is universally recognized for "public idealism, its consummate artistry and professionalism," said Peterson, an associate professor at Queens College of the City University of New York.

The plan went to the heart of the matter with a spectacular design for the city's ceremonial center. It expelled the clutter that had accumulated over the previous century and put the Mall on parade as a tree-lined greensward extending 2 1/2 miles west of the foot of Capitol Hill.

Gone were railroads and a jumble of parks, grounds and red brick Victorian buildings. Other elements of the plan called for a new Union Station to consolidate rail lines away from the Mall, an extensive park system with room for playing fields, a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, new parkways, a memorial bridge across the Potomac River, a redesigned Arlington National Cemetery and much more. All came to be.

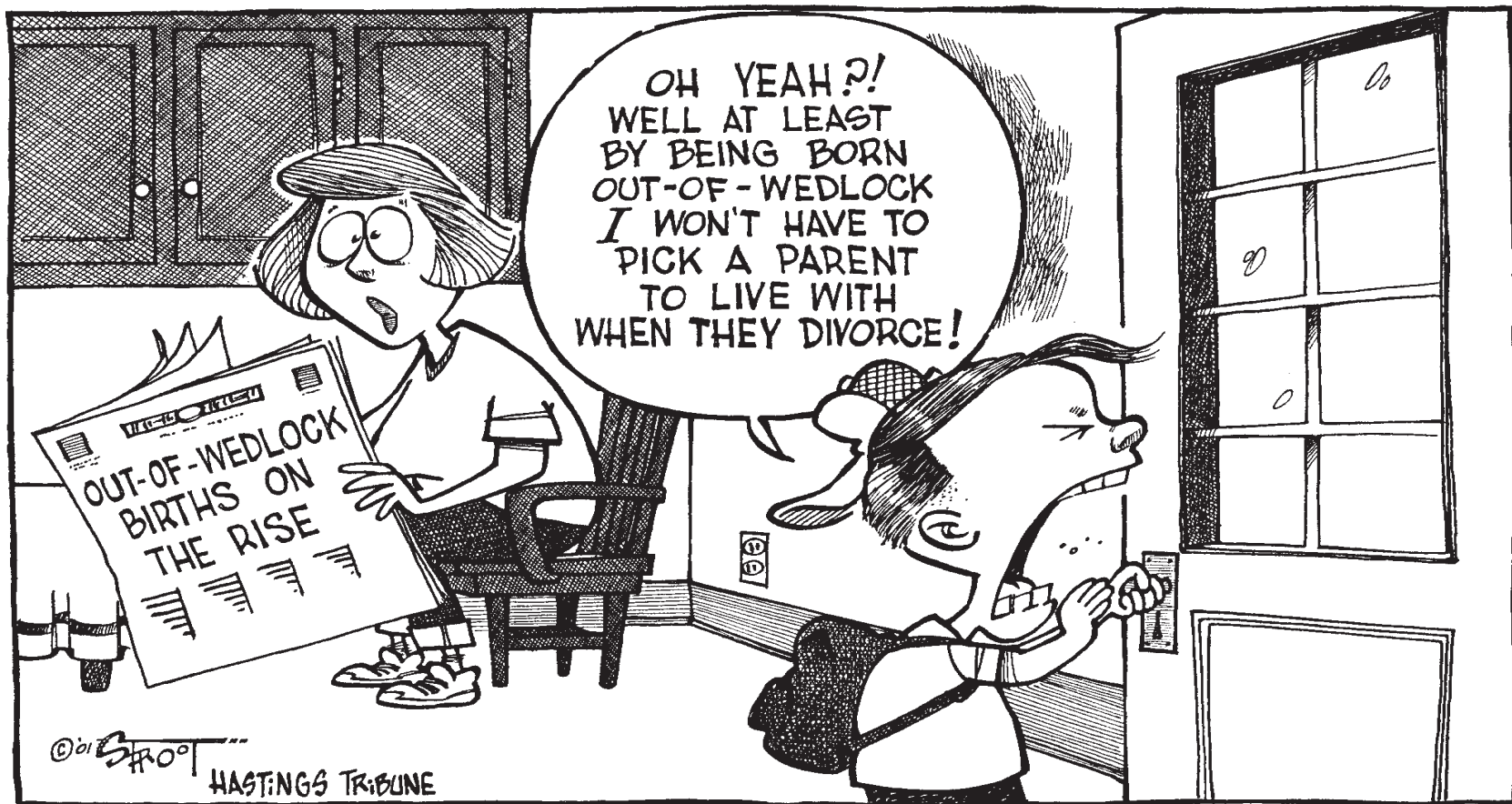
"No American city had ever contemplated anything like it," Peterson said. "It was a new comprehensive vision of the capital and the nation."

So enthusiastic were its supporters that in 1909 L'Enfant's remains were removed from an obscure Maryland grave and installed with honors on the hill at Arlington Cemetery overlooking the Potomac and the city he had designed.

The McMillan Commission ended its work by reporting its plan had cost three times the money allowed by its small budget.

"Worth every cent, then and now," Peterson said.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington's history for 34 years.



Enron a price gouger?

Editor's note: Conservative columnist Wayne Gattshall died Saturday, Jan. 19, of a heart attack at age 78. This column was received early last week, and his final column was received by email from his wife, Carol on Sunday. His funeral will be Thursday at Koons Funeral Home in Goodland.

Was Enron hustled by a bunch of tin horn day traders at the Chicago Board of Trade?

But they were, it's really hard to believe they terrorized anyone that lives by their wits on the futures market.

It was in 1845 when the first futures market opened its doors in the United States. The Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) began when a group of grain traders met on Chicago's South Water Street to trade warehouse receipts for grain.

But these days just about everyone wants to be a speculator in the futures market. They say it's a way to have a right to price a certain commodity for pennies to the dollar. It just costs too much to produce commodities — it costs too much to hold an inventory. The smart money just wants to set the prices of everything.

However, this cyber market began back in 1974 when the Chicago Board of Trade opened its new trading floor. It was bigger than a football field and it was first used by banks and financial institutions along Wall Street. But who would think these refugees from a hangman noose would try to beat those New Yorkers trading in derivatives? The first Texas cattle ranchers may have had a price on their heads, you know.

While Enron did not call itself a hedge fund, that's what it was. Hedge fund normally is applied to mega-buck currency markets. It once was a pipe line company but became a cyberized company in



wayne gattshall

• wayne's world

the late 1980s.

Until recently, Enron was rated at number seven in the Fortune 500 list. It was lauded in the financial press, government circles and "academia." It had become a veritable pillar of the so-called new economy, until it filed for bankruptcy.

You could call it a stop and shop for energy. Users could buy it the same day they needed it, no commodity carrying charges. Wasn't the cyberspace economy great? A hedge fund in every pot, beam me up now.

But something went wrong. It was way too big a boo. One tribe can't wait to investigate, the other is headed for a cave in Afghanistan.

Enron Chairman Kenneth Lay once was a big time show horse (lobbyist) in Washington and a friend of the Big Chief in the White Teepee.

Well trading on the futures market has always been for dopes.

Speculators always hold contracts on many times the amount of the free stocks available. If it was farm commodities, it would be called surpluses. But on the futures market — go man go — there are no surpluses.

In the mid 1990s Congress allowed something called over the counter trading of commodities. It was designed to bypass the regulatory regime of the Commodity Exchange Act. It was supported by Senator (pot hole) Alfonse DeLmato of New York.

He said don't regulate me I don't want big government sticking its nose into my business.

And that's where Enron got into trouble. It decided to be it's own futures market. This off the exchange trading brought down the 233 year old Baring family bank of London in 1994 and the Sumitomo Corporation in Japan when it tried to set the price of copper. They all did off the books trading, when they got into trouble not even their accountants knew, by the way.

Does anyone remember the hedge to arrive fiasco in 1995. Grain prices had reached pre-embargo levels. Normally that would have been good news for farmers unless they couldn't fill their contracts.

To make things worse banks and grain buyers advised farmers to price their grain quick before prices went down. But when farmers showed up at the local elevator in four wheelers instead of an 18-wheeler loaded with corn they had to buy \$3 to fill a \$2 contract. Like Enron, what was supposed to be entrepreneurial cleverness proved to be xenophobic stupidity.

So Governor Gray Davis may have been right when he said California was being gouged—and maybe farmers were getting gouged too. About 65 percent of the cost of fertilizer is the cost of natural gas. Anhydrous fertilizer went from \$275 to \$450 a ton. Irrigators, like California, found it impossible to contract natural gas without paying through the nose.

Oh well things are bound to get better. Senator Jesse Helms from North Carolina is retiring and that bellicose Geraldo Rivera is a war correspondent, in Afghanistan

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Watch out for water quality claims

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

I recently received a telephone call from a water softener company which claimed I had won a dinner for two at a local restaurant along with a free test to be completed on my home tap water. I agreed to allow the company representative to come and show the system to my family, and after conducting a test of the water from the kitchen faucet he advised us that the tap water was hard and full of unhealthy chemicals. The representative said that by purchasing the unit we would be healthier and we would save money on the purchase of soap, shampoo, and laundry detergent. He claimed our dishes would also be cleaner because of the unit. Attorney General Stovall, I am concerned for my family's safety, and the system sounds great. Do you have any suggestions?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

My office is concerned that some companies may be making statements about public water systems that lead people to believe that water from our taps is unsafe. It is important to remember that our public water systems are closely monitored by state agencies which ensure that our drinking water meets strict guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Water may vary in smell and taste from area to area depending upon the different types of naturally occurring organic materials; however, this does not make the water unfit to drink.



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

There are many types of water purification and softening units on the market today. Some units remove dirt, rust, and sediment from the water only and are not designed to eliminate bacteria or micro-organisms which could render the water unsafe. There are also units which use carbon filtering systems to remove some organic chemical contaminants, but once again, do not work to eliminate bacteria or micro-organisms.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the safety or quality of your drinking water, there are a number of resources at your disposal. Under federal law, public water suppliers must distribute a Consumer Confidence Report with water quality information to all customers on a yearly basis. If you have concerns, contact your supplier directly. If you are on well or private systems, contact your local county health agency or the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Water Bureau at (785) 296-5500 for assistance or a list of approved water quality labs where testing is available for a reasonable fee. In addition, your

local K-State Extension Office may be able to assist and has a pamphlet on water quality and treatment systems available. You may also contact my Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-432-2310 if you have concerns about claims made by water softener companies.

Shop around before making such an extensive purchase. Water treatment systems can easily cost as much as three or four thousand dollars, and most contracts usually do not mention that financing will be provided by an outside financing company which can sometimes include extremely high interest rates. Read all contracts carefully before signing documents and purchasing a unit, and check with the Better Business Bureau and my Consumer Protection Division to inquire whether complaints have been filed against the company.

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310. Leave your name, number and subject of your inquiry with the receptionist and your call will be returned promptly.

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I vote for the current system

To the Editor:

Sorry I couldn't be at the council meeting due to a prior commitment.

My thoughts on garbage pickup system.

Stay with the trucks and dumpsters you have in use at this time. To my thinking it would be a money losing thing to sell off a truck and residential dumpsters and then buy a back load truck and a bunch of small rollaways for household usage.

As for the back loading truck, which city commissioner is going to ride on the back of the truck on the cold, windy days and wrestle the garbage into the truck?

Would they like to ride on the back of a smelly garbage truck when it's 100 degrees and the garbage really stinks?

This is going back to the old days!

Then too, think of the extra time required to pick up garbage cans at every home.

Again thinking of time, locks on garbage cans and dumpsters? Wow! Have you ever tried to open a lock after a freezing rain? I don't have time to



from our readers

• to the editor

unlock and lock garbage cans after each deposit.

What about the small rollaway on a windy day (which we have plenty of) you're going to have garbage rollaways blowing over and trash flying.

I think the present system of garbage pickup is best. Cost wise and for a clean city.

If we have to hire another person, so be it. With a back load truck you will need another person anyway. I don't believe you need two people extra to sort garbage.

Sorry to step on toes, but we need to think this setup change over thoroughly.

Arlo R. Hansen
Goodland

berry's world

