

Address by Gary T. Johnson,  
Chicago's Birthday Party, March 4, 2009  
(held with the Mayor of Chicago every year at the Chicago History Museum)

“Look to Chicago History in this Time of Crisis”

Since we were here a year ago, the world has changed. The global financial crisis affects every family – and some families are suffering tremendously.

These recent events help to bring Chicago's own history into sharp relief. In the context of our own times, it becomes clearer than ever that the great events that we celebrate in Chicago, the four events with a star on our City flag, all were set against the background of crisis. If we look to Chicago history, we can draw some lessons.

The first star represents the frontier settlement of Fort Dearborn, which was wiped out during the War of 1812. The settlers rebuilt, and by 1837, the settlement incorporated as a city. Look to Chicago!

The second star represents one of the world's greatest urban disasters – the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Hundreds died, and a third of the population became homeless. Neighbor helped neighbor and the world offered its support. A sign went up on a shack right after the fire: “All gone but wife, children and energy.” Look to Chicago!

The World Columbian Exposition of 1893 represented an urban renaissance that overcame not only the Great Chicago Fire, but the terrible effects of the financial Panic of 1873. The sprawling industrial city stunned the world with its arts and culture. Look to Chicago!

The fourth star represents the Century of Progress International Exposition of 1933 and 1934. During the very depths of the Great Depression, Chicago imagined a bright future, with a theme of technological innovation. Look to Chicago!

**In our own time of crisis, let's look to Chicago history for lessons of rebuilding, of energy, of overcoming obstacles, and of hope.**

Next year, I am confident that we will have better news to report because I know that these lessons from Chicago history will continue to guide us.

Thank you all, and happy birthday, Chicago!