

Remarks by Gary T. Johnson, September 16, 2013, at the Chicago History Museum, at the Celebration of the Opening of the Exhibition “Siam: The Queen and the White City”, in the Presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of the Kingdom of Thailand

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff of the Chicago History Museum, I welcome Your Royal Highness, Ministers of the Royal Thai Government, His Excellency Mr. Ambassador Mr. Chaoyong Satjipanon, Consul-General Mr. Songphol Sukchan, and all of our honored guests.

Your Royal Highness, this is now your museum, because we have conferred upon you the same status that this museum once conferred upon President Abraham Lincoln – Honorary Member.

Yesterday, Her Royal Highness and her arts ensemble were kind enough to offer to the members of Chicago’s own Thai community the performance that you will see tonight. This auditorium, the gallery outside, and the lobby were packed.

And yesterday, we also had a very special meeting. It was Her Royal Highness’s Great-Grandmother, Queen Savang Vadhana of Siam, who prepared the beautiful embroidered book for the World’s Columbian Exposition that you can see in our exhibition. And the Queen sent that book in 1893 to Bertha Honoré Palmer, who was the President of the Exposition’s Board of Lady Managers. And Bertha’s own great-grandson was here yesterday to meet with Her Royal Highness, our Museum’s Life Trustee Potter Palmer IV. The meeting of these two great-grandchildren was charged with history.... Your Royal Highness, thank you for yesterday’s events!

You in our audience know that this museum has hosted many exhibitions about the World’s Columbian Exposition, but, by and large, those exhibitions have focused on what the exposition meant to Chicago. Today, thanks to Her Royal Highness’s vision and love of history, we can learn about what that Exposition meant to another country.

It turns out that in 1893, both the City of Chicago and the Kingdom of Siam had the same goal: to find a bigger stage on the world's scene. They each found that bigger stage in Chicago at the World's Columbian Exposition.

And, in a way, the same is true this evening.

The mission of our museum is to share Chicago's stories. And sharing stories also turns out to be the personal mission of our royal guest this evening. As you will see this evening, we can share stories through an exhibition, and also with art, music, and dance.

And so, tonight, 120 years after the Columbian Exposition, Thailand and Chicago have found another stage ... the stage of the Chicago History Museum.

I thank you all for coming. Please enjoy an evening for sharing stories!