

A FEW MONTHS ago, a towheaded eighth grader who had just walked into an imposing granite building on Chicago's south side was stopped near the door by a motherly looking woman and gently but firmly told to leave.

The incident—between a truant officer and a youngster from a nearby school—sounds common enough, but the surroundings weren't. It was a museum, and you might think that would be the last place to find a lad evading school! But Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, where the little drama occurred, is a rare place.

In fact, the museum's multitude of exhibits have proved so fascinating to the younger generation that the city's board of education has to send a truant officer there quite frequently. Perhaps understandably, the opportunity to examine a captured submarine, see real coal being mined in an authentic replica of a mine, walk through a giant model of the human heart, watch chicks being hatched, play tic-tac-toe with an electronic robot, and participate in dozens of other equally absorbing scientific adventures seems more exciting than another day in an ordinary classroom.

But the kids aren't the only ones who are fascinated. Last year, two-and-a-half million adult visitors spent an average of three hours apiece meandering through the museum's huge and varied exhibit halls. That's a larger attendance than any other museum in the world can boast.

About 60 percent of the sight-seers are tourists.

They come from every state in the Union and many foreign countries. During a recent afternoon, for example, the museum's parking lot was filled with cars from 46 states and five Canadian provinces. Among the notables to tour the museum within the last two years have been the sultan of Pelang (one of the Federated Malay States), the premier of Australia, the educational minister of Thailand, the premier of Indo-China, and a union delegation from England.

The submarine is perhaps the most interesting item in the museum's collection. Originally the Nazi U-boat 505, it was captured off the coast of Africa in 1944 by a Navy task force—the first enemy warship to be taken on the high seas since the War of 1812. On board the sub, U. S. officers found the key to the German Navy's radio code. The capture was kept a top military secret, and by deluding the enemy we were able to read his battle messages throughout the remainder of the conflict.

Another popular exhibit is dubbed "Yesterday's Main Street." It reproduces a typical city thoroughfare as it looked about 1910, down to cobblestone streets and gas-burning street lamps.

Sometimes these displays put their point over in rather unorthodox ways. A few weeks ago, three grade-schoolers were standing in front of the transparent chick incubator in the "Food for Life" exhibit, betting on which egg would hatch first.

No one has ever convinced the kids, or museum officials either, that learning can't be fun.

*Chicago's Museum
of Science and Industry
is so fascinating
that youngsters skip school
and tourists come
from all over the world
to see it.*

Where Learning Is Fun

by Phil Hirsch



This is what the museum visitor sees as he approaches the huge building. City children can see the miracle of hatching in the museum's incubator.



Here's a typical city thoroughfare of 1910, complete even to such details as gas lamps and cobblestones—all inside the museum! Note the sign (right) on suffrage.



Most popular exhibit is the captured German submarine just outside the museum. Inset shows two young visitors learning how it operated.

