

The great chicago fire

Business



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Great Chicago Fire was one of the most devastating fires in the history of the United States of America. Death, destruction, torture, devastation, and sadness followed in the inferno's wake in 1871. Those who bore witness gawked in horror as something so commonplace in Chicago, a fire, multiplied in size to a hungry beast set on devouring everything in sight. All water that the fire department spurted at the blaze vaporized, and even the Chicago River burst into flames.

This catastrophe was something that could have been prevented, but wrecked much of Chicago. Such a destructive menace as the Great Fire had to have a cause, and reasons for the disaster date back to months before the fire even started on October 8. The entire summer in the Chicago area was hot and dry. When summers are hot and dry, they signify droughts and high temperatures for the autumn. These are perfect conditions that amplify the combustibility of materials, like wood. Actually, because Chicago was built on a swamp, and other substances were much too expensive, the entire city was made of chopped trees, including the buildings, sidewalks, and roads.

Miles and miles of dry wood make quite a pile of kindling. On October 8, a small patch of flames lit up in the barn of the O'Leary's. Urban legend states that a cow knocked over a lit lantern, and some think it was a meteor, but the source of the fire is still unknown to us today. Citizens from a far distance noticed some signs of flames, one being a man named Mathias Schaffer." Schaffer was showing some visitors around the tower when one of them pointed to smoke in the distance. Schaffer glanced at the smoke, but dismissed the sighting.

It was just the smoldering embers from the previous night's fire, he assured them. Nothing to worry about" (Murphy 32). Not only were commoners confused, but the fire department was exhausted from fighting the previous fire for 16 hours straight. Alarm boxes around the city instructed the firefighters where the blaze was, but many people were too far away to strike the right key, and the firefighters, drowsy, followed orders. Not only was this a problem, but some Chicagoans refused to strike their alarm boxes, and some boxes just malfunctioned.

The waterworks, made of wood, burned easily, and that cut the supply of water to the fire engines, making them much more ineffective. Gusty winds spread the fire at too rapid a pace to keep up with. The inferno could have been stopped by the Chicago River, had it not been polluted and filled with greasy oil, turning it flammable, and allowing the fire to cross. While the Chicago fire department had a quality system for fighting fires, it only failed because many did not do their part, and the consequences were terrible. Being the worst fire in the history of fires, the Great Chicago Fire had quite a death toll. 300 people died in pain.

While 300 does not seem like much today, one should remember that this was in 1871, and cities were far less populated. Only 300, 000 people lived in the city of Chicago, so, statistically speaking, 1 in every 1, 000 people died in the fiasco. Because of all of the homes that were turned to ash, 100, 000 Chicagoans found themselves homeless. 100, 000 out of 300, 000 is an entire third of the population stranded without a roof or any of their hard-earned belongings. Houses were among the 70, 000 structures destroyed in

the blaze, and it costed the government 200 million dollars to repair. 200 million dollars in 1871 is more than a billion dollars presently.

During the chaos that spread panic across the city, criminal activity, especially theft, thrived. With the police helping the fire department, and nobody looking after their belongings, robbers could take what they wish without being caught. After such a devastation, the Chicago City Council realized that it was time for an upgrade. The most obvious thing to fix after the Great Chicago Fire was the management of the fire fighting system. Politician Joseph Medill promised to make these changes once he was elected as Mayor, and dutifully carried out his promise to the Chicagoans, who had grown significantly in numbers. After 9 years, urbanization caused 300, 000 to grow to half a million citizens.

There was more room, because construction had begun, and metal skyscrapers were beginning to appear in downtown. While the transportation and infrastructure had not been harmed, they were improved as well, and Chicago became known as a booming city of economics and transportation. With all of the repairs, Chicago was able to host the World's Colombian Exposition, and attracted more than 27 million people to the brand new, gleaming Chicago. Maybe the fire had damaged too much, but it triggered a revolution for the better, and Chicago was a changed city. Chicago, the Windy City, was not always the amazing technological wonder that it is now. For two days in October of 1871, it's wooden buildings burned with a raging fire, and all seemed hopeless and lost. This was the Great Chicago Fire, and it could have been prevented if the fire fighting system was more efficient, or the Chicagoans were more cooperative with signaling authorities. Because of <https://assignbuster.com/the-great-chicago-fire/>

these, along with a few environmental factors, the worst inferno in United States history ate through the City of Broad Shoulders, killing many, and displacing infinite. However, the citizens fought against despair, and starting rebuilding stronger things than ever before. The Great Chicago Fire, the catastrophe, wreaked havoc in the city, but allowed room for the improvement of the human race.