

Chicago fire



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1871? 300; Peshtigo An extraordinary event happened in Chicago on a calm night in 1871 that left an impression on thousands of people then, and millions of people still to this day. Between the early evening of Sunday, October 8, 1871 and the early morning of Tuesday October 10, fire destroyed practically every building in the heart of Chicago. Property valued at 200, 000, 000 was turned into rubble, 90, 000 people were left homeless, and 300 lost their lives. Some people would say the common designation the ? Great Chicago Fire? is an understatement, and that it was the most destructive fire in all of American history. But who is to say that the Chicago fire was the most devastating.

On October 8 1871, people from Northeast Wisconsin begged to differ. The most devastating fire in their eyes was the Peshtigo forest fire that swept through all of northeast Wisconsin claiming 1200 lives. It was said that the fire started from natural reasons, and it was a wildfire that rapidly pushed its way all over Wisconsin.

The purpose of this paper is to examine why the Chicago fire was passed down through generations as a great tale, and why the Peshtigo fire receives just small mentions if any in history books, and by people throughout the nation. The Chicago Fire that is known by many people across the nation as a horrific tragedy grabbed more people's attention due to two reasons, one that Chicago was and still is today a bigger and more popular city, and two, it was the famous legend of Mrs. O'Leary's cow knocking over the lantern that turned everyone's head.

I believe that due to the population of Chicago at that time, the fire brought tragedy to everyone's eyes and no one had time out to look at what else was going on around them. Bigger and more tragic things happened that same night, but people neglected to realize that because Chicago was the ? bigger city. Both cities have great importance to the people that live there and to hardly mention a great devastation is beyond me. The Chicago Fire caused heart ache to the people at that time and people today but when you look at the facts, it is so clear that the Peshtigo fire caused more damage and caused more deaths than the Chicago fire. All of northeast Wisconsin

was wiped out, while just one city here was. To some the Peshtigo Fire was the most devastating fire to hit America. Taking 1200 lives and destroying 1.25 million acres of land I would have to say that the fire did a lot of damage, but things touch people in different ways. The fire burned rapidly to 16 other towns, but the damage in Peshtigo was the worst. The city was gone in an hour.

In Peshtigo alone, 800 lives were lost. Yet most people have never heard of the Great Peshtigo Fire because, strangely, it occurred at the exact same time as The Chicago Fire. The fire in Chicago that may or may not have been started by Mrs. OLeary's ornery cow grabbed every headline in America. Both of the cities before the fires were pretty much the same in every way. You had your hardworking people trying to make money to support their families, and young children eager to go off to school to learn more about the world, but the day the fires broke out it changed not only the cities but the people's vision on life.

Imagine running out of your house that you built that took so much time and effort that was built to protect you and your loved ones only to see it being burned down. One story of a man in Peshtigo reportedly carrying a woman to safety that he thought was his wife, when he found out that it wasn't the man went crazy with fear trying to find her. Another story from a 13-year old immigrant said that she had to hold on to the horns of a cow all night just to survive. People from all over fled to the river in Peshtigo, as it was said to be the only safe haven from the fire, as flames were everywhere. One lawyer Jonas Hutchinson writes to his mother as he was experiencing the Chicago fire first hand? This has been an eventful day. Last night about 9:30 a fire broke out here and from that time to this it has raged fearfully? What a sight, a sea of fire, the heavens all ablaze, the air filled with burning embers, the wind blowing fiercely and tossing fire brands in all directions, thousands upon thousands of people rushing frantically about, burned out of shelter,

without food, the rich of yesterday poor today, destruction everywhere is it not awful It makes me sick. One could but exclaim my God when will it end.

? (C. H. S. pg11) Another letter from Mary Fales writing to her mother says, ? I cannot convey to you the way the streets looked. Everybody was out of their houses without one exception, and the sidewalks were covered with furniture and bundles of every description. The middle of he street was a jam of carts, carriages, wheel-barrows, and every sort of vehicle, and many horses being led along, all excited and prancing, some running away.

? (C. H. S. pg.

16) As you can see both fires caused dramatic impressions on everyone? s lives. To be able to live through the events that occurred in Chicago and also in Peshtigo and be able to tell about them is a great gift.

Chicago is one of the greatest cities in the world and to be able to have a history like that to explain to generations and generations to come is a wonderful thing, and who knows Peshtigo may be a great city too, but I? ve never been there to explore it. The reason why the Chicago fire was heard more around the world was mainly because of the legend of the cow. I believe that if the story was changed and the cow didn? t kick over the lantern the fire wouldn? t have caused such a great effect that it did on the people then and today, and it would have gotten the same public results that the Peshtigo fire received.

It would have been remembered in history but it wouldn? t have been carried out as drastic as it was. Not one fire is greater than the other, because you can? t put a title on someone or something? s life. Both fires mean something different to different people. To some it could mean total

devastation, and to others it could mean a new beginning to change the old and bring in the new. But to put title on one fire and not the other isn't right. A lot of people died in both fires and to recognize them and what they did is most important.

Both cities are strong, because it's not what they cities lost themselves, it's that they built new one's together. -w ;,?