

**THE LAKESIDE MEMORIAL  
OF THE BURNING  
OF CHICAGO, PART  
I.-BEFORE THE FIRE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649426638

The Lakeside Memorial of the Burning of Chicago, Part I.-Before the Fire by Anonymous

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ANONYMOUS**

**THE LAKESIDE MEMORIAL  
OF THE BURNING  
OF CHICAGO, PART  
I.-BEFORE THE FIRE**



THE

# LAKESIDE MEMORIAL

OF

*THE BURNING OF CHICAGO.*

---

PART I.—BEFORE THE FIRE.

A GLANCE AT CHICAGO'S HISTORY—ITS TOPOGRAPHY AND  
ARCHITECTURE.

THE Conflagration of Chicago, October 8th and 9th, Anno Domini 1871, will form a memorable event in the future history not only of our own country but of the world; and therefore it is that we propose to embody in a permanent and accessible form for the benefit of the future annalist, the principal incidents connected with this tremendous event. This conflagration, in the amount of property consumed, is beyond the memory or example of ancient or modern times. Other great conflagrations, like those of London and of Moscow, swept away districts but imperfectly built, which subsequent enterprise beautified and adorned; but this conflagration wiped out the most substantially-built and beautifully-adorned portion of the city—structures, which in their solidity and in their architectural details commanded the admiration of every beholder.

There are men yet living and in the prime of manhood, who saw the site of Chicago when it was but a wet prairie. They have seen its fairest portions laid in waste; and they will live, very many of them, to see every trace of this waste obliterated. The same causes which led to the rapid growth of this city are still in operation; and this conflagration, disastrous as it was, will prove but a temporary check in the development of the great metropolis of the Northwest.

To comprehend the causes of the unprecedented growth of the city, and at the same time the magnitude of the disaster, it may not be deemed inopportune if we recur to her earlier history, and trace her progress, step by step, from small beginnings until she attained her late commanding position—the fourth city in point of population, and the third city in point of commercial importance, in the United States.

As early as 1672, the French Jesuits had explored and mapped the whole of Lake Superior, and the upper portion of Lake Michigan—then known as Lac des Illinois—as far south as Green Bay. They had established themselves at various points, among which were the Mission de Ste. Marie de Sault; Mission du St. Esprit, at La Pointe; Mission de St. Fr. Xavier, at the head of Green Bay; and the Mission of St. Ignace, at the outlet of Lake Michigan, nearly opposite Mackinac, on the north shore of the lake.\* At that time the English colonists skirted the Atlantic Coast from Florida to Nova Scotia, without penetrating far in the interior. Elliot, in his missionary zeal, had explored only so far as Natick, six miles out of Boston; the Connecticut Valley was still unoccupied.

Among these Jesuit missionaries was James Marquette, a man of high culture but of meek and lowly disposition, whose name is indelibly engraven in the annals of the Northwest. He was attached to the Mission of St. Ignace. In his intercourse with the savage tribes, he had heard of the existence of a great river to the west, whose banks were bordered by vast prairies over which roamed countless herds of buffalo. On the 17th of May, 1673, accompanied by Joliet, with two canoes and five *voyageurs*, he embarked on a voyage to explore the great unknown river. Coasting along Green Bay to its head, then ascending the Fox River and descending the Wisconsin, one month after starting he beheld the mighty current of the Mississippi, on which he floated as far south as Arkansas. In returning, he paused at the mouth of the Illinois, and instead of proceeding on to the Wisconsin, ascended the latter stream, taking the Des Plaines branch, by which he passed by an easy portage to the Chi-

cago River. Having reached Lake Michigan, he coasted along the west shore, and thus reached, after a canoe voyage of over 2,500 miles, the point of his embarkation.

So cordial had been the reception of the good father among the tribes in habiting the valley of the Illinois, that he resolved to return and erect among them the standard of the Cross; and the next autumn (1674) he arranged to carry out his design. It was late in October when, with a canoe and two *voyageurs*, he embarked. Reaching the mouth of the Chicago River, he ascended that stream for about two leagues, where he built a hut and passed the winter. Game was abundant; and from his hut, buffalo, deer, and turkeys were shot. Originally of a frail constitution, this voyage had told fearfully upon the good father. Cold winds swept the lake, and notwithstanding the camp fires by night, his limbs were chilled. A hemorrhage, to which he was subject, returned with increased violence; and he predicted that this voyage would be his last. With the return of spring, his disease relented; when he descended to the Indian village below Ottawa, and there celebrated among the barbaric tribes the mysteries of the Christian faith. A few days after Easter, he returned to Lake Michigan, where he embarked for Mackinac, passing along the great sand-dunes which line its head, and thence along its eastern margin to where a small stream discharges itself into the great reservoir, south of the promontory known as the "Sleeping Bear." Marquette was so far debilitated that he stretched himself in the bottom of the canoe, and took little heed of what was passing. The warm breath of spring revived him not; and the song of birds fell listless upon his ears. Here he desired to land; and his attendants bore him tenderly to the shore, and raised over him a bark hut. He was aware that his time was come. Calmly he gave directions as to his mode of burial; craved the forgiveness

\* To those interested in the early history of the Northwest, we commend the map entitled, "Lac Superior et autres lieux ou sont les Missions des Peres de la Compagnie de Jesus comprises sous le nom D'ILLINOIS," published at Paris, 1672.

of his companions, if in aught he had offended them; administered to them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and thanked God that he was permitted to die in the wilderness, a witness of His loving kindness. This event happened May 18, 1675.

Upon the banks of a stream which bears his name, they dug his grave and consigned his remains to the earth; but this was not to be his final resting-place. A year or two afterwards a party of Ottawas disinterred his remains, placed them in a birchen box, and conveyed them to St. Ignace, where, amid the priests, neophytes, and traders assembled to do them honor, they were consigned to a place beneath the floor of the chapel in which the good missionary had so often officiated.

Thus, then, Marquette was the first white occupant of Chicago, and that occupancy dates back nearly two hundred years ago. But for the calamity which has befallen her, it would be proper for Chicago, in 1873, to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of her discovery, with bonfires and illuminations, and other evidences of public rejoicing; to go to St. Ignace and gather up and transport, with pious care, the ashes of Marquette, and erect over them the most elaborate mausoleum.\*

La Salle followed in the footsteps of Marquette. Late in the fall of 1670, in four canoes, he passed the mouth of the Chicago River, circled the head of the lake, and landed at St. Joseph, on the opposite shore, whence he ascended that stream to what is now South Bend; and by the portage of the Kankakee, then called Theakiki, or Hankiki, he entered the Illinois Valley. In the fall of 1681, he passed by the Chicago

portage *en route* to the Mississippi; and while this portage was repeatedly used by his followers, no permanent settlement was made at the mouth of the river.

By the treaty of Fontainebleau, in 1762, the vast territory east of the Mississippi passed into the possession of the British Government; and the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, transferred this country to the dominion of the United States. In 1804, the Government established a military post at the mouth of the Chicago River, which was dignified by the name of Fort Dearborn; and a single company of infantry was deemed a sufficient garrison. In 1812, on the declaration of war, the Indians gathered about the fort and showed unmistakable signs of hostility. Captain Heald, then in command, foreseeing that his supplies might be cut off, and availing himself of discretionary orders, undertook to retreat with his little command to Detroit, three hundred miles distant; but he had proceeded less than two miles along the lake shore, when he was ambuscaded, and only three of his party escaped massacre.

In 1816, the fort was rebuilt and garrisoned by two companies of infantry. It was not until the close of the Black-Hawk War, in 1832, that the region of Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin was thrown open to settlement. Emigration soon began to flow in with an uninterrupted tide, which has continued up to the present hour. A hamlet clustered around Fort Dearborn, which took the name of Chicago. As late as 1837, flour was shipped from Ohio to supply the infant settlement; and in 1839 the first shipment of wheat, amounting to 1,678 bushels, was sent from this port, which is now the world's great market for breadstuffs and provisions. In 1840, Chicago contained a population of 4,470; in 1850, 28,269; in 1860, 109,263; in 1870, 298,977; and at the time of the fire hardly less than 350,000 souls.

\*The name "Chicago" is a modified spelling of "Chekagou"; but this name was applied to a different stream from that of the Chicago River. In the map by Franquelin (1684) of "La Salle's Colony on the Illinois," the present Chicago River is called "Cheagoumeinan"; and "Chekagou" is applied to a small stream heading near the lake and entering the Des Plaines or "Panghitchia" River, above the debouchure of the Kankakee, and corresponding with Jackson Creek.

Nothing could have been more uninviting than the original site of the city. Ridges of shifting sands bordered the lake shore; while inland, and stretching beyond the range of vision, was a morass supporting a rank growth of blue-joint grass, with here and there a clump of jack oaks. Through this morass wound a sluggish river, only flushed by the spring and fall freshets; and adjacent to its banks were pools of water, which were the resort of wild fowl. The river's mouth was barred

by shifting sands, but the bar once passed, deep water was found within. For a mile its course was east and west, when it branched into two forks, running northerly and southerly. This stream, so uninviting, forms the present harbor of Chicago, and separates the city into three divisions—the North, South, and West. The watershed between Lake Michigan and the Des-Plaines River—a tributary of the Illinois—was only eight feet in height; and during flood time, communication could



FIRST HOUSE BUILT IN CHICAGO—BY JOHN KENZIE, IN 1835, ON LAKE SHORE, NORTH OF RIVER.

be made in a canoe without disembarking. A well-marked channel can be traced, through which, up to comparatively recent times, a portion of the waters of Lake Michigan escaped to the Gulf of Mexico. Such were the topographical features of Chicago forty years ago. How wonderfully have they been transformed! The city commenced its growth upon the original surface; and so saturated was the soil with water, that cellars and basements were from necessity dispensed with. The streets in many places presented an oozy mass of mud, and here poles were thrust down bearing placards "no bottom." The more frequented thoroughfares were planked, and when driven over the planks were subjected

to a churning motion which caused the ooze to spurt up through the crevices. The gutters at the sides were filled with stagnant water, whose surface was covered with a green scum, the appropriate nidus of the cholera and other pestilential diseases. So fatal were these pestilences, and so multifarious their forms, that medical terms were exhausted, and "canal" cholera was applied to designate a peculiar and fatal form of that disease; and the victims were left by the roadsides near Bridgeport, where they remained for a long time festering in the sun,—the citizens being afraid to approach the corpses, lest the disease be communicated to their persons, and thus propagated through the city.



The first impulse communicated to the growth of Chicago, was the passage, by the State Legislature, of an act, January 18th, 1825, for the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal; and in aid thereof, of the passage of an act of Congress, March 2d, 1827, granting to the State alternate sections of the public lands, embracing a zone of six miles wide on either side of the projected canal; but it was not until 1836 that the work was entered upon, nor was it completed until 1848.

In 1831, Cook County, embracing Chicago, was organized. In the spring of 1833, Congress made an appropriation of \$30,000 for improving the harbor; and that same year a post office was established—John S. C. Hogan, who occupied a "variety store" on South Water street, being the first postmaster. The mail was brought weekly, on horseback, from Niles, Michigan. That same year witnessed the cession of all the lands in Northern Illinois, amounting to about 20,000,000 acres, by the Pottawotamies, who removed farther westward. Chicago was incorporated as a town by a nearly unanimous vote; and to show the number of voters, it may be said that twelve were in favor of and only one against the proposed measure.

In 1834, the poll list of citizens amounted to one hundred and eleven, and the amount of taxes reached forty-eight dollars and ninety cents; but this being inadequate for municipal purposes, the trustees resolved to borrow *sixty dollars* for the opening and improvement of streets. The next year, however, grown bolder by the success of the former loan, the treasurer, "on the faith of the president and trustees," was authorized to borrow \$2,000, at a rate of interest not exceeding ten per cent., and payable in twelve months.

In 1837, Chicago became incorporated as a city, and William B. Ogden was chosen as its first mayor. From that time to the present, the history of the growth of the city becomes too complex to be traced, except in a com-

prehensive form. A series of public improvements was devised and executed, mainly under the direction of Mr. Chesbrough, as City Engineer, which made Chicago one of the pleasantest and healthiest cities in the Union. A system of sewage was established for underground drainage, which required that the original surface in many places be raised eight feet. This change of grade involved the necessity of raising many of the largest structures in those streets adjacent to the river. Such structures as the Tremont and Briggs Houses, the Marine Bank, and in fact entire blocks, were lifted up, with little or no interruption to business. Thus the city became thoroughly drained, the houses admitted of cellars, and the streets became dry and solid.

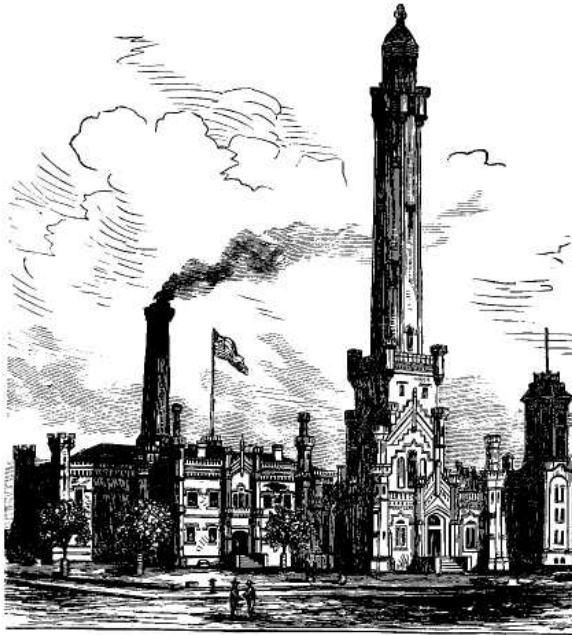
The mouth of the river, in 1816, according to the statement of Colonel Long, of the Topographical Engineers, was at Madison Street. It was a rippling stream, ten or fifteen yards wide, and only a few inches deep, flowing over a bed of sand. In the summer of 1833, the Government entered upon the improvement of the harbor, or rather commenced the construction of one. The north pier was extended a short distance lakeward, a lighthouse established, and an embankment thrown across the old channel to divert the water to the new course. An unusual freshet during the next spring tore out the sand and left a practicable channel into the river. The pier has from time to time been extended, until now it reaches a distance of about three thousand feet; and yet the problem of getting rid of the shifting sands thrown up by every northeaster, and leaving an open ship channel into the river, is far from being solved.

The river and its branches afford nearly fifteen miles of wharfage in the heart of the city; and the Dock Company, on the North Side, along the lake shore, have constructed works which add immensely to the harbor accommodations. The dock line is seven and one-half feet above low

water mark. Thus, then, a tideless river and a nearly level plain afford almost unequalled facilities for receiving and distributing the immense freights which accumulate here.

To supply the city with pure water, Lake Michigan was resorted to as an unfailing reservoir. In the old works established on the North Side, the water was taken out near the shore. There were times when the current of the river, reeking with the sewage of the city, the offal of slaughter houses, and the slops of distilleries, was borne against this portion of the shore; and the drainage from the cemetery, popu-

lous with the dead, was also in this direction. Besides, during the winter, multitudes of small fishes would collect about the strainers and gain admission to the pipes, so that when the faucets at the houses were turned, out would come scores of minnows, some alive and some in various stages of decomposition. A violent northeaster would so roil the water that it became necessary to filter it. To obviate all these inconveniences, the novel, but as the result proved perfectly practicable, idea was conceived of drawing the water through a tunnel from the lake two miles distant from the shore. A



BUILDINGS OF THE CHICAGO WATER WORKS—ERECTED 1867.

shaft was sunk on the land side to the depth of twenty-six feet, and a "crib," pentagonal in form, forty feet in height and ninety-eight and one-half feet in diameter, was floated to the site in the lake and there anchored. It was then filled with stone and made to settle to its bed. An iron cylinder, nine feet in diameter, occupies the centre of the structure, and penetrates from the water-line to the depth of sixty-four feet, and thirty-one feet below the lake bed, where the tunnel commences. This is all the way excavated in a tough blue clay which offered no serious obstacles in the progress of the work. Its dimensions are five feet two inches in height, by five feet wide; and it is lined with two courses of brick laid in cement. Its capacity, under a head of two feet, is 19,000,000 gallons daily; under a head of eight feet, 38,000,000; and under a head of eighteen feet, 57,000,000. A tower, one hundred and thirty feet in height, contains an iron cylinder three feet in diameter, through which the water is forced by powerful machinery, and thence by its own pressure is distributed through the mains to the different parts of the city. Thus, at an expense of about two and one-half millions of dollars, Chicago has secured an ample supply of water, always pure, cool, and sparkling.

The river, as we have seen, was originally in the nature of a lagoon rather than a running stream. Into this river was discharged one-half of the sewage of the city, and upon its banks were numerous packing houses and distilleries, whose refuse added to the pestiferous contents. The color of its water varied all the way from inky blackness to rich chocolate brown; and the nasal organs had no difficulty in recognizing as many distinct stench as Coleridge did in the River Rhine at Cologne. To remove this nuisance, which had become unbearable, the city, under authority of an act of the Legislature, passed February 16, 1865, proceeded on the plan of cutting down the canal for twenty-six miles to at least

six feet below the low water-level of the lake. This plan was completed only last year, at a cost of about \$3,000,000; and a current of pure lake water now flows through the city and discharges itself into the Mississippi, through the Des Plaines and Illinois rivers.

The intercourse between the three divisions of the city, up to a recent time, had been effected wholly by swing-bridges, which at intervals of two blocks spanned the river, whose average width is less than two hundred feet. These bridges were a serious impediment to navigation; and their almost continuous turning proved an equally serious impediment to vehicles and pedestrians. To obviate this inconvenience, a tunnel was constructed under the river at Washington street, arched for two hundred and ninety feet, by which an uninterrupted communication was established between the South and West Divisions. This tunnel proved so satisfactory that another tunnel was constructed under the river at La Salle Street, by which a similar communication was established between the North and South Divisions of the city.

The streets of Chicago were for the most part laid out on a liberal plan, which admitted of sidewalks ten feet wide and then of a grass plat in front of the residences for the planting of trees and shrubbery, with ample space for vehicles in the centre. Twenty years ago, to a stranger from an Eastern city they seemed unnecessarily wide; but it was fortunate that this plan had been adopted, for on the introduction of the horse-railway—the people's mode of conveyance—it was found that on either side of the track there was room for two teams to pass. In the improvement of the streets, the original surface was found to be ill-adapted to roadways: the soil was either sand or mud. Plank was first resorted to, and in 1854 twenty-seven miles had thus been laid; but it was found that with a mortar foundation and