

## The Great Fire – by Christian Elias Gladitz

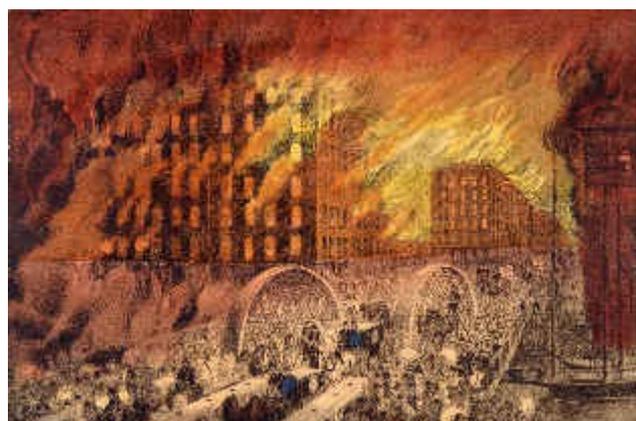
The Great Fire of Chicago was a fire that started on October 8, 1871 and burned until October 10. It destroyed around 9 km<sup>2</sup>. That included 17,000 structures. Also, it killed around 300 people and left over 100,000 people homeless.

The fire started on October 8 at about 8:30 PM in a small barn. The cause has not been discovered yet, but there are many speculations around it. For example, some people believe it was a cow that knocked over a lantern. Because two other fires had started on that day, many believe that there is a relation between those and the fire in Chicago.

Since most of the buildings in Chicago were made of wood, the fire could spread very easily. What also did not help is that the firefighters were initially sent to the wrong place which led to the fire expanding further fast.

The fire started southwest of the city center and then headed north. The fire also made it over the Chicago River because burning debris blew across the river and landed on roofs. What enabled the debris to be blown over the river was a fire whirl. Fire whirls can only form naturally when there is a big fire. If a certain heat is reached, the contact between hot and cold air makes the flames rotate, creating a fire whirl. By then sucking in more oxygen, these can amplify themselves. Therefore, a fire whirl was most likely what shot the debris across the river.

When it started raining in the evening of October 9, the fire slowly started to burn itself out. When the districts that were destroyed were rebuilt, it was made sure that in the future it would not be as easy for a fire to spread. All the properties that were destroyed had a total value of 222 million US Dollars, which would be around 5 billion US Dollars today.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chicago\\_in\\_Flames\\_by\\_Currier\\_%26\\_Ives,\\_1871\\_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chicago_in_Flames_by_Currier_%26_Ives,_1871_(cropped).jpg)