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Chicago Fire Newspaper Collection 1871-1909



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.FIRENEWS
Title	Chicago Fire Newspaper Collection
Date	1871-1909
Size	2.25 linear feet (1 box, 2 ovrz folders)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract The Chicago Fire Newspaper Collection consists of newspapers, a newsprint magazine, and a newsprint flyer, mainly related to the 1871 Chicago fire. Publications included in the collection are *Western Rural Times*, *Chicago Times*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *Chicago Illustrated*, and *Chicago Tribune*. The collection includes articles printed on the eve of the fire, in the fire's immediate aftermath, and a year after the fire. It also contains illustrations of buildings planned and constructed between October 1871 and October 1872. One anomalous item is dated 1909 and makes no reference to the fire.

Information on Use

Access

This collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Chicago Fire Newspaper Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Historical Note

The Great Chicago Fire of October 8-10, 1871 left approximately 300 people dead and 100,000 homeless (of a population of 300,000). It began west of the South Branch of the Chicago river on the evening of Sunday, October 8, swept across the South Branch and the Chicago River to the main business district and the North side on Monday, October 9, and finally stopped early on Tuesday, October 10. It burned 2,000 acres and 18,000 buildings, destroying the entire downtown business district and many thousands of homes and small businesses.

The Chicago fire was unprecedented in scale, but devastating fires were common in Chicago and the wider region. A far more deadly October 8 fire killed 2000 people and destroyed the

entire town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin. The October 8-10 Chicago fire was preceded on October 7 by another major fire, which also started on the southwest side of Chicago and is reported in the newspapers dated October 8 in this collection. The extreme devastation of the October 8 Chicago fire is thought to have resulted from a combination of factors, including a prolonged drought, a strong southwesterly wind, the wooden construction of the city, and a fire department exhausted by the previous night's efforts.

Accounts of the fire focus on the shocking scale of the devastation and the amazing recovery of the city. The event is a turning point in many nineteenth century narratives about the development of Chicago: it rose quickly from the empty prairie, was even more quickly destroyed by the fire, and was miraculously rebuilt in the years following the fire.

Scope Note

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Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spl/select.html>

Chicago Fire Telegrams, 1871. Special Collections, Codex Manuscripts, ms 388.

Subject Headings

- Newspapers -- Chicago
- Chicago (Ill.) -- Fire 1871
- Chicago (Ill.) -- History

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Western Rural

- The Western Rural, Fire Extra, Chicago, October 14, 1871. Two sided newsprint; description of the extent of destruction of the fire, including the Western Rural offices and presses.

Box 1

Folder 2

Chicago Times

- The Chicago Times, October 8, 1871. Triple sheet, folded to show pp. 3, 6, 7, 10, missing 1, 2); news of fire of October 7 on p. 3.
- The Chicago Times, October 8, 1871. Triple sheet, folded to show pp. 5, 4, 9, 8, missing 1, 2).
- The Chicago Times, October 9, 1872. Quadruple sheet (pp. 1-4, 13-16); retrospective on fires on pp. 1-4.

Box 1

Folder 3

Chicago Daily Tribune

- The Chicago Daily Tribune, October 9, 1872 (pp. 1-4, 13-16). Editorial note about destruction of Tribune buildings and presses in fire of 1871, but most of comment is missing because the paper is torn.
- The Chicago Daily Tribune, July 3, 1909. No apparent reference to fire.

Box 1

Folder 4

Chicago Illustrated

- "One year from the fire," Chicago Illustrated, 1872, Chicago: J. M. Wing & Co. Newsprint, sewn, 62 pp.; reproductions of engravings of buildings erected since the 1871 Chicago fire.

Box 1

Folder 5

"Rebuilt Chicago"

- "Rebuilt Chicago," illustrated double sheet, 1872(?). Sheet is torn.

Box 1

Folder 6

Chicago Tribune

- The Chicago Tribune, October 8, 1871. News of fire of Oct 7 on p. 6, headline on p. 1.