



The Great Chicago Fire

Ross Miller

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On October 8, 1871, four decades after its founding, Chicago's destiny was rewritten 'with a pen of fire'. In this imaginative and penetrating study, Ross Miller considers the mythic proportions of the Great Chicago Fire as the city reshaped its own tragedy into an archetype of the modern struggle against adversity. Amid myriad eyewitness and photographic accounts of the fire, a consideration of what had actually happened was quickly subordinated to a developing narrative that attempted to resolve the city's conflicted identity into a unity. Disaster was recast as opportunity, and a period that began with catastrophic destruction ended in the triumph of the World's Columbian Exposition. Within a generation of the fire, Chicago became home to a radical new architecture, a daring new realistic fiction, literary journalism, and the new scientific study of society.

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