



4650 N. Rockwell St. • Chicago, IL 60625 • Phone: 773/583-7800 • Fax: 773/583-7877  
lcp@lakeclaremont.com • www.lakeclaremont.com

# **GREAT CHICAGO FIRES**

## **HISTORIC BLAZES THAT SHAPED A CITY**

by David Cowan

### ***Reviews and Endorsements***

“There have been many famous fires in Chicago and most of them can be found in a book titled *Great Chicago Fires: Historic Blazes That Shaped a City*. It is published by Lake Claremont Press and written by David Cowan, who is **a writer at heart and a firefighter by profession**. As such he brings a great understanding of the odd allure and palpable devastation of fires, tracing their path from Ft. Dearborn’s blaze through many of the city’s most memorable fires. You will learn of the fire at the Chicago Stockyards in 1910 that killed 21 firefighters, the most ever in one fire, before or since; and about the night the original McCormick Place was engulfed in 1967. You should find particularly moving the chapter on the Our Lady of the Angels fire. . . . Cowan knows it well, having co-authored its story in *To Sleep With the Angels: The Story of a Fire*. . . . Unlike those of us who see fires only on the TV news, Cowan has first-hand knowledge and so he is able to write with chilling authority that ‘firefighters often speak of fire as a living entity with a deliberate and sometimes cunning mind.’ ”

—Rick Kogan, *Chicago Tribune*, “David Cowan is a Writer Who Knows About Fires,” October 3, 2004.

“Chicago is rife with tales of fires and those who fought them. No local history would be complete without noting the great fire of 1871. Now, a new book is out which chronicles that conflagration and many more of the other significant fires which left scars on the city’s psyche as well as its skyline. . . . **pointed and compelling** . . . peels back the insulation and **gets readers close to the heroism and devastation** generated by these great blazes . . . ”

—Daniel “Peg Leg” Sullivan, *Inside*, October 31–November 6, 2001.

“When it comes to devastating fires, history certainly repeats itself. *Great Chicago Fires: Historic Blazes That Shaped a City*, a new book by David Cowan, Chicago firefighter and writer, documents a number of the city’s major blazes, as well as the history of its fire fighting forces from the early 19th century on. Though October is Fire Prevention Month, the book is a vivid reminder to think fire safety all the time.”

—Sara Burrows, *Lerner* newspapers, “Chicago books suggest history fair topics,” October 17–18, 2001.

“This book by David Cowan, coauthor of *To Sleep With The Angels*, covers Chicago’s most significant fires, including the Our Lady of the Angels fire. A chapter devoted to the OLA fire offers a very concise summary of the fire, accompanied by numerous photographs of the fire and its aftermath. Besides the OLA fire, other significant Chicago blazes, from the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 to the McCormick Place fire of January 16, 1967, are covered as well. The book is **riveting in its narrative, providing insight into Chicago’s most serious fires, and fascinating for anyone interested in Chicago’s history**.”

—Eric Morgan, Webmaster, Our Lady of the Angels School Fire official Web site, [www.olafire.com](http://www.olafire.com).

“The co-author of *To Sleep with the Angels* returns with a look at the other Chicago fires—besides the inferno that devastated the city in 1871. In this **beautifully illustrated** book, the author reveals a number of other horrific disasters including the World’s Fair Fire, the Iroquois Theater fire, the LaSalle Hotel fire, stockyard disasters, the Queen of Heaven fire and its aftermath and much more. **Highly recommended!**”

—Troy Taylor, Webmaster, Prairie Ghosts Web site, [www.prairieghosts.com](http://www.prairieghosts.com).

“. . . Chicago-born writer and firefighter David Cowan offers a **unique perspective of fires** as they have affected Chicago and its citizens. . . .”

—A. J. Goldsmith, *The Week*, “Fires Shaped Chicago’s History,” September 30, 2001.

“*Great Chicago Fires: Historic Blazes that Shaped a City* by David Cowan (\$19.95) **rivets with its sweeping account of Chicago’s longstanding, unwitting identity as a literal urban phoenix**. In our post-9/11 world, when anyone proud of their hometown’s skyline lifts anxious eyes toward it now, this is an inadvertently timely study of the will to self-resurrect. Cowan, co-author of *To Sleep with the Angels: The Story of a Fire*, a vivid paean to the men who battled the deadly blaze at Chicago’s Our Lady of the Angels school in 1958, brings to his chronicle a veteran firefighter’s respect for fire as a diabolical living entity. It also **makes for fascinating reading** as the merciless motivator, from frontier days to modern times, forcing the evolution of techniques to battle it. . . . [H]is detailed grasp of 187 years of Chicago history—with a specific focus on one of the city’s most curiously dogged nemeses—is all that’s necessary to allow a unique epic to leap to life.”

—Jean Kozlowski, *Cricket in the Corner*, November 2001.

## ***Also in Print***

Articles on and reviews of David Cowan’s books have also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Readers Digest*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Firehouse Magazine*, *U.S. Catholic Magazine*, *Nostalgia Digest*, and the Associated Press.

## ***On Television***

David Cowan has appeared in documentaries produced by: A&E Network, Chicago Public Television, Federal Emergency Management Agency, The History Channel, The Learning Channel, National Fire Academy, and The Travel Channel.

## ***Areas of Expertise***

David Cowan has spoken to countless bookstores, libraries, school groups, fire safety organizations, businesses, nonprofits, civic groups, and professional societies on topics that include firefighting, fire service history, school fires, fire safety, the Great Chicago Fire, Chicago fire history, and general Chicago history.

---

**For press kits and review copies for all Lake Claremont Press titles,  
contact Elizabeth Daniel at 773/583-7800, or [elizabeth@lakeclaremont.com](mailto:elizabeth@lakeclaremont.com).**

**Lake Claremont Press authors are available for media interviews,  
and for bookstore/library programs and other events.**