

...Section 3...

The Great Chicago Fire Aftermath

Information Overview

After the Chicago fire many people wrote letters to loved ones describing the scenes of the aftermath. These letters are the main source of information to tell us what went on then. The information in this lesson is based on a compilation of two letters written by survivors of the fire. The writers are A.S. Chapman, who wrote a recollection of the fire which he went through when he was young. The other writer is James W. Milner who wrote his letter describing the streets of Chicago post-fire to an associate about a week after the fire had occurred on late night October 8th, 1871.

City Moral

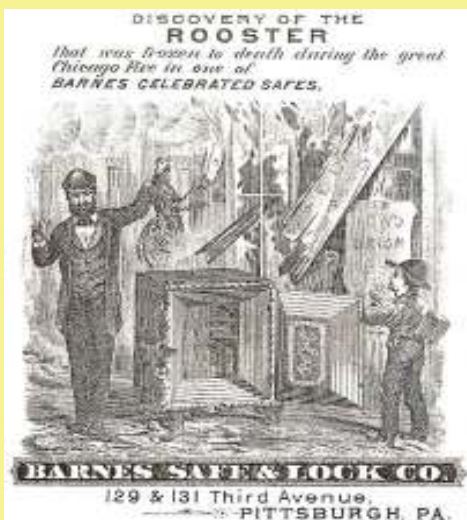
After the fire it is said that people in the city mostly stayed calm, due to the presence of the military soldiers. The soldiers were there to make sure that there would be no disorderly gatherings and no approaching riots. In a letter written by James W. Milner he claims that, "The general sentiment and feeling of the people is an honor to humanity. The business men are cool and cheerful. A quiet determination to accept the situation, and steadily weather it through to better times, is the prevailing feeling."



< Corner of State and Madison after the fire in 1871.

No House On the Prairie

James W. Milner never talks of what went on outside of the city or the country-side where many people fled to. In a recollection about the fire and the days after written by A.S. Chapman who went to the country-side with to stay while the city was getting rebuilt he wrote, "The cows where gone from the prairie. In their place was a scene of indescribable chaos - piles of clothing and furniture- -buggies, carts and wagons- -people moving restlessly among them- - mothers holding back their own tears to comfort their children- - the contents of a thousand homes emptied on the raw prairie with the only thought of escape."



< Advertisement for a safe company.

A Burning Deficit

In the fire many popular banks where burned down along with the documents and money left inside. A.S. Chapman wrote in his recollection, "Money- - money; everybody looking for money in safes. I see men and women Standing around a safe as it's door is forced open. The air rushes in and I see their hopes turn to ashes as rolls of bills crumble at it's touch."

The BAND Aid

Due to the victims of the fire banding together and volunteers helping the immediate aftermath was not as devastating as some of America's more recent disasters such as Hurricane Katrina's effect on New Orleans.

Section 3 Review

- 1. RECALL** at least 3 events that the letter writers explained.
- 2. Identify** the two men writing the letters, what are their names, when did they write the letters.
- 3. Critical Thinking** Using the text explain why the country side was not as calm as the city.