

The Wild Leek Place

S H I · K A A · K W A

*A narrative history of Chicago, drawn only from the research
store*

S C O T T F L A C K



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The ice

BEGIN ABOUT A MILLION YEARS AGO, BECAUSE THE TOWN COULD NOT have stood anywhere else and the reason is geological rather than commercial.

A continental glacier lay over this ground more than a mile deep, moving — as Chamberlin estimated it and J. Paul Goode reported it in 1926 — perhaps no faster than the end of the hour hand of a watch. It pushed off the tops of the hills and filled the transverse valleys, and when it drew back it left a lake standing where the Loop is now. Waves broke on the bluffs at Beverly Hills and Palos Park. The outlet river running southwest below Forest Island was, Goode reckoned, perhaps as large as the Mississippi at Keokuk.

That outlet cut a gap through the rise between two ocean drainages. When the lake fell to its present level the gap stayed, and so did an insignificant creek across the sandy shoreline that Goode calls "a glacial after-thought".

His conclusion is blunt: there had to be a great city somewhere at the head of Lake Michigan, but "the exact site was determined by the little, inconsequential Chicago River", because that creek gave a harbour and lay close enough to the Des Plaines that a slight portage reached the Mississippi. Without the Great Lakes, he wrote, there would be no Chicago.

The whole place rests on an accident of drainage a few feet deep.

What that drainage carried is worth fixing before the rest of this book buries it. Charlevoix crossed the Illinois country in 1721 and described unbounded meadows with bison grazing in herds of two or three hun-

dred, and in the same sentence the need to keep watch while looking at them, for fear of war parties. His editor, annotating him two centuries later, notes that all the early travellers mention parroquets in the Ohio and Illinois valleys, and that the species seemed by then to be extinct or driven off. So the ground this city stands on carried buffalo and parrots inside recorded memory. The buffalo were shot out of Illinois within a hundred years and the parrot was gone before anyone thought to count it. Neither loss is mentioned in the founding literature held here, because by the time that literature was being written the emptiness already looked like the natural condition of the place.

Seven feet

THE ACCIDENT CAN BE MEASURED. LA SALLE MEASURED IT, AND Milo Quaife reports the figure: the prairie where Mud Lake lay stood seven feet above the surface of Lake Michigan.

Seven feet was the divide between the St Lawrence and the Mississippi — between everything draining to the Atlantic and everything draining to the Gulf. And in a wet spring it was not a divide at all. Mud Lake drained both ways. In flood the Des Plaines sent part of its water through Mud Lake and down the channel into Lake Michigan.

St. Cosme, crossing in October 1699, put a number on the difference: the portage ran about three leagues when the water was low and a quarter of a league in spring, because in high water you could embark on the little lake and float most of it. Nine miles or under one, depending on the month you arrived.

Two ocean watersheds, joined by a puddle. Every canoe between Montreal and the Gulf came through that gap, which is why Hulbert called the Chicago Portage one of the "keys of the continent" — and why Quaife could note, as late as 1913, that despite its importance "no careful study of it has ever been made."

The first Europeans to cross it did not find their own way. Louis Jolliet and the Jesuit Jacques Marquette reached the portage in 1673 guided at every stage by people who already knew it: Odawa people at the mission of St Ignace helped them draw the maps they carried, Myaamia guides led them south to the Mississippi by the Wisconsin and Fox rivers, and Kaskaskia guides brought them back through this portage to the lake. The monuments raised here later tell it differently — Marquette upright

and leading, a Native guide crouched behind him — which is a picture, not a record.

The word "portage" on the old maps conceals what crossing it cost. Gurdon Hubbard took an American Fur Company brigade through Mud Lake and described men sunk to their waists in mud that mostly had no water in it, hauling empty boats over rollers with forked poles, their legs "covered with bloodsuckers which caused intense agony for several days". Three consecutive days of that, dawn to dark, to get the boats through to the Des Plaines. Hubbard gives the days, not a distance. St. Cosme, a hundred and twenty years earlier, gave three leagues at low water for the same ground and said nothing of what crossing it cost. The two accounts have no connection except the ground, and neither is a check on the other.

The best-connected traveller of his generation tried it twice and never got across. Charlevoix came south from Mackinac in 1721 meaning to take either the Fox and Wisconsin route or the Chicago and Des Plaines portage, and his editor records that both were shut by the intertribal wars then burning, so he was advised to coast the eastern shore instead. He tried again from the fort on the St. Joseph in September, and wrote that after three days along the southern shore the lake was so stormy they turned back and looked for another way to Louisiana. He then set down the crossing he had not made: up the little river of Chicagou five or six leagues, then two carrying places, the longest a league and a quarter, and a warning he had been given that at that season there was not water enough for a canoe. So he took the longer road, which he says has its own inconveniences and is far from being so agreeable, but is more certain. A Jesuit with royal backing, an escort and every introduction in New France could not use this portage in either direction, and he wrote the standard account of the country without ever seeing the place this book is about.

The plant, and the name

THE CREEK WAS NAMED FOR WHAT GREW ALONG IT.

In the Miami-Illinois language the stem is šikaakw-, and the Myaamia Center's own dictionary glosses it as both the striped skunk and the wild leek or garlic — one word, for the animal and for the plant that smells like it. So the onion and the polecat were never rival theories, which is what a century of Chicago writers assumed. Michael McCafferty, a historical linguist of the language, states it directly: the place name means "striped skunk", extended to the wild leek.

It named the river first — Šikaakwa Siippiwi, the Wild Leek River — and that is grammar, not accident. Naming a river for a plant abundant in its watershed is ordinary Miami-Illinois practice; the Salamonie is blood-root river, Sugar Creek is maple sugar tree river. Then the place where that river meets the lake: Šikaakonki, the Wild Leek Place.

A Frenchman with no stake in the question wrote that order down before there was a question. Charlevoix, describing the country in 1721 and printing it in 1744, says the Miami were established at the southern end of Lake Michigan fifty years earlier, in a place called Chicagou, and then gives the derivation in five words: du nom d'une petite Rivière, from the name of a small river. A century and a half before this city began arguing about onions and polecats, a Jesuit set down that the place was named after the river, which is what the grammar says as well. And the sentence sits in the half of Charlevoix nobody here read. The Caxton Club edition that put him into English translated the Journal, the letters; this line is in the Histoire, which that edition leaves out. The men who spent the nine-

teenth century quarrelling over what the word meant did not have it in front of them.

The variant spellings that fed generations of theorising are French. In the New World French of the period c and k were interchangeable before a, o and u, and Frenchmen regularly heard their own e for a Miami-Illinois i. Checagou, Chicagou, Chicagoua, Eschikagow — one word, written by men with French habits and French ears.

That habit put three Illinois nations permanently on the map of their own state. Reynolds, writing in 1852, notes simply that the Peoria, Cahokia and Kaskaskia occupied the villages of those names and that "the French continued the names of these villages, which they retain to this day". The control case is in his next sentence. The Tamaroa lived at Cahokia too, and have "left no name of any locality indicating their residence in Illinois" but one prairie that has since lost it. Surviving as a place-name is not the same as surviving. It is, however, the difference between being remembered and not, and it was decided by which Frenchman wrote which word down.

The assumption those spellings fed can be dated. A. T. Andreas gave the question a titled section of his 1884 history — *Origin of the Word Chicago* — and in it the skunk and the leek are two separate words, she-gahg and she-gau-ga-winzhe, taken from Chippewa rather than from Miami-Illinois. That is the split that made the quarrel possible. Once they are two words, one of them has to be the real one, and the city spent the next fifty years deciding which it could live with.

Read the section for who is in it. Dr. William Barry, first secretary of the Chicago Historical Society, holds that the word "probably denotes strong or great", applied to the Mississippi, to thunder, and to the voice of the Great Manitou — the escape Edwin Gale would still be attempting in 1902, signposted by the city's own archivist forty years early. E. M. Haines objects that the onion party had consulted only Ojibwe and reasoned "from the mere coincidence of sounds", a good argument correctly

made on the side that turned out to be wrong. And Andreas closes without deciding, allowing that it may never be fully known which word "had the honor of giving a name to the present river and city of Chicago" — which is the position Lloyd Lewis is usually credited with reaching in 1929. Andreas got there forty-five years earlier and nobody took the offer.

The habit was not reserved for this place, which is how you can tell it was a habit. In the same letters Charlevoix describes the Otchagra, the Ho-Chunk, whom the French called Puants and the English translations call Stinkards. He notices that the name came from their neighbours rather than from Frenchmen, then reasons backwards to a cause from what he could see on the shore, wondering whether it was not from their living on fish that the name was given, the cabbins standing among drying fish and the air thick with it. He is honest enough to mark it as a guess. What he does not consider is that the word might have meant something else entirely before anyone rendered it as a stink. That is the whole procedure that was about to be applied here: take a word, hear a smell in it, and then argue for a century about which smell.

A native speaker settled it in print in 1899, with the grammar attached, and nobody took that offer either. In the same Harper's article that carried the Potawatomi account of Fort Dearborn, Simon Pokagon put a footnote on the name: Chicago, he wrote, is from She-gog-ong, the locative of she-gog, the skunk. Then he did the thing none of the disputants had done and declined it, so that a reader could see it was a working word in a living language rather than a guess about a sound. She-gog-ong ne-de-zhaw, I am going to Chicago. She-gog ne-ne-saw, I killed the skunk. Pokagon was Potawatomi and not Miami-Illinois, so this is the neighbouring language and not the one the French wrote down, which is the point rather than the flaw: the word comes out skunk in both. Three years later Gale was still trying to get the city out of it. The guidebooks were printing bad smell in 1912 and Lewis was reopening the whole ques-

tion as unsettled in 1929, and not one of them cites the man who had the language.

One document in that section outlives every theory around it. In 1773 — before the fort, before the state, a century before the argument got going — Native owners deeded a tract to William Murray running "up the Illinois to Chicagou or Garlick Creek". Somebody drafting a conveyance, at a moment when nothing whatever turned on it, glossed the name in English as a plant.

The plant was not a curiosity by a creek. An Illinois State Board of Education teaching packet from 1980 — of all places — records it as a staple used every conceivable way: eaten raw or cooked with meat, used for seasoning, rubbed on the body as an insect repellent, and among the first fresh greens after a winter with none. It answers the old embarrassment flatly: the smell is "not a derogatory statement" but a record of what mattered. That is McCafferty's argument about eurocentrism, arriving in a classroom handout twenty years before he published it.

And what the plant did is recorded too. Atkinson has Tonty's party at the portage in late November, their commander down with malarial fever, "kept alive by wild onions which they grubbed from the marsh".

The people the ground belonged to

THE STATE'S NAME IS A SECOND PLAIN WORD DOING UNGLAMOROUS work, and the obvious reading of it is wrong. William Duncan Strong, writing for the Field Museum in 1938, glossed Iliniwek as men and read it as a slight aimed at the neighbouring nations. That version is repeated everywhere, including here until the linguistics was checked.

David Costa — the leading specialist in Miami-Illinois, and the Costa McCafferty leans on for Moingwena — derives it from irenweewa: iren, ordinary or regular; wee, by speech; wa, he or she. He speaks in the ordinary way. Gravier's Illinois-French dictionary of about 1700 glosses it as "he speaks Illinois". No claim about manhood, no insult to anybody.

And it reached French second-hand. Ojibwe habitually drops the final -wa from words borrowed out of neighbouring Algonquian languages, giving ilinwe and the plural ilinwek — which is the form Allouez wrote at Sault Ste Marie in 1666-67, and which French spelling turned into Illinois. So twelve million people live in a state whose name is a Miami-Illinois word for speaking normally, borrowed through Ojibwe, spelled by Frenchmen, and finally said in English.

They never called themselves that. The French missionary sources record the collective name they used for themselves as Inoka, whose original meaning is not known.

That is the second name on this ground that turns out to be somebody else's word for the thing. Šikaakwa is a plant carrying a skunk's name, and the state is a word for speaking normally. A third is coming: Point de Sable, a surname the city rewrote.

They do not survive it, and the scale comes before the collapse. Robert Warren puts the confederacy at as many as twelve affiliated tribes and more than ten thousand people, holding a territory the French called the Pays des Illinois — roughly a hundred thousand square miles of prairie, forest and wetland. By the summer of 1832, he reckons, 98 per cent of that population was gone, the nation reduced to two tribes numbering fewer than two hundred. Five generations, start to finish.

The confederacy the French met in towns of thousands was at war with its neighbours by 1682 and taking heavy losses from Iroquois raids; then Pontiac was killed by a Kaskaskia, which turned the northern nations against them; then the Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo and Potawatomi took the greater part of their territory. The remnant settled near the French at Kaskaskia and kept declining until, Swanton records, about 150 were left by 1800. In 1832 the survivors sold up and settled on a joint reservation in eastern Kansas; in 1854 they merged with the Wea and Piankashaw as the Confederated Peoria; in 1867, under Chief Baptiste Peoria, they were moved again.

They are still here, and they say so themselves. The Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma governs from Miami, Oklahoma — a confederation of Kaskaskia, Peoria, Piankashaw and Wea united in 1854, describing itself as Illinois people whose homelands lay along the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, removed from Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Missouri, relocated to Missouri, then Kansas, then Indian Territory under the Omnibus Treaty of 1867.

That paragraph rested on a scholar's account until the Tribe's own was asked for. On the question of who the Peoria are, the Peoria are the source — the rule that also puts the Myaamia Center above any linguist on the meaning of *šikaakwa*. A history that describes this confederacy only as a collapse is describing half of it, and describing that half in somebody else's voice.

It matters who did the displacing first — and what this history does not do with the fact. The Potawatomi took Illini ground — and were themselves removed from Chicago by the treaty of 1833, going to Missouri, then Iowa, then Kansas. Two disposessions on the same ground inside about sixty years. That Native nations displaced one another is a fact about power. It is not an excuse offered to the United States, and it is not recorded here as one.

The failure of description is older than the agency, and it can be watched happening inside a single paragraph. Charlevoix, describing these nations in 1721, writes that the women are in some sort mistresses of the state and the principal body of the nation, then that they are of no account and no more than the slaves of their husbands, then that there is perhaps no nation in the world where the sex is more despised, and then, as an oddity, that children belong only to the mother and acknowledge no authority but hers. He is recording matrilineal descent and female political authority and calling it contempt, in consecutive sentences, without noticing. To his credit he adds that he does not know whether it holds everywhere. He was the best observer France sent.

The man paid to know them reported that there was nothing to know. Alexander Wolcott, United States Indian agent at Chicago through the 1820s, wrote to Governor Cass that of all the peoples on earth the Potawatomi had "the least that is peculiar in their manners and customs, or interesting in their history", and that their one prominent trait was an insatiable love of ardent spirits. Andreas reprints it sixty years later as a specimen of the agent's pleasant humour. Read it as evidence and it is evidence about Wolcott: the officer of the government that was about to remove them, certifying in advance that nothing would be lost.

Strong also supplies the thing the fort-and-massacre literature never does: how people actually lived on this ground. Houses covered with rush mats woven by the women, sometimes sixty feet long. Four or five fires to

a house, and eight to ten families under it. Maize planted in spring by the women with a dibble stick, hoes made from the shoulder-blades of deer.

And the villages were not walled. According to De Gannes they stood in the open, sited where a good view of the surrounding country was to be had. That is a defensive choice too. It is simply a different one from a wall, and it was made by people who expected to see what was coming.

The French century

FRANCE REACHED THIS WATER ROAD LONG BEFORE THE UNITED STATES built anything on it. Louise Phelps Kellogg frames the period plainly: France held the keys to the interior of North America at three points that became New Orleans, Detroit and Chicago.

The best scene the record keeps from that century is not a battle. Nehemiah Matson, writing in 1874, describes Marquette returning to an Illinois village and finding a cross raised in the middle of it — hung with deer and buffalo skins, bows, arrows, war-clubs, knives, tomahawks and the scalps of enemies. The head chief said it had been erected in honour of the great French Manito, and the warriors commanded to bow to it. Marquette raised his hands and thanked God that these people had embraced the true religion.

One object. Two readings, in the same paragraph. Neither party lying, and neither understanding the other. That is the whole colonial encounter in a single sentence, and it is why this history records disagreements rather than resolving them.

And the crossing was somebody's address, not just a route through. St. Cosme, coming down in October 1699, found a mission house standing on the bank of the little lake with a prairie on one side and the water on the other, Fathers Pinet and Bineteau in residence, a Miami village of more than a hundred and fifty cabins beside it, and a second nearly as large a league up the river. Pinet lived at Chicago except in winter. The place the French narrated as a portage was, while they were narrating it, two substantial towns.

Marquette is the century's famous name, and a later chapter of this history explains why: his journal survived. The man who did the same work longest is a footnote. Claude Allouez laboured "for twenty more years ... among the Potawatomes, Miamis, and Illinois tribes south and west of Lake Michigan", and died in the night of 27–28 August 1689 near what is now Niles. His description of what a missionary must be was found among his papers afterwards — "quite unconsciously", his biographer writes, "he portrays for us a sketch of his own life". Again the papers outlive the man, and decide what he is remembered as.

There was also a man called Chicagou — a Michigamea chief from Cahokia, sent to France about 1725, whose eloquence and dignity made, in Kellogg's phrase, a deep impression. Older accounts made him the source of the city's name. Flinn disposes of that on a date: the French were writing the river's name in the 1680s, forty years before the embassy. A man and a place carried the same word. The word came from the plant.

He is usually told as a curiosity — the chief who went to Versailles. Swanton supplies what that leaves out. Michigamea means "Big Water", and the division had already been pushed out of Illinois into north-eastern Arkansas and driven north again, merging with the Kaskaskia, before the end of the seventeenth century. The displacement people date to the removal era was two moves old when he sailed.

One more thing decided how much traffic this crossing carried, and it was not geography. North of here the Fox — the Outagami — fought the French for two generations and closed the rival route through their own country. Kellogg, writing in 1925, describes the strategy without quite meaning to: a "determination to live as their forefathers did", pursued by fighting and by rearing "as many children as possible", trained for "the same fierce resistance to civilization". Her phrase is 1925 and is kept as she wrote it; the admiration and the condescension share a sentence. She also thinks the wars need not have happened at all, had one diplomat been

kept in post. Chicago's portage became the road that mattered partly because a nation two hundred miles north refused to be absorbed.

Charlevoix was inside the machinery of that war in 1721 and wrote down what it was made of. At a council at the Narrows he records the two things the governor general wanted: an agreement that no more brandy be sold to the three villages there, and a coalition of all the nations to destroy the Fox. One official, one meeting, the drink and the extermination asked for together. He also concedes, writing for a French audience in the middle of the campaign, that the Fox had been soured by repeated ill treatment from the French, sometimes given imprudently, which is an admission he had no reason to make.

The answer on the brandy is the part worth carrying forward. The nations told him the French could do as they liked, but would have done better never to have supplied any at all; and in the same breath, that they were now so used to it that they could not do without it, and if the French refused they would deal with the English. Charlevoix, who was a Jesuit and no friend of the trade, thought the Huron orator put the case as strongly as any missionary could. A hundred and seventy-eight years later, a Potawatomi chief's son published his father's version of the same finding: that without the fire-water there would have been no massacre at Fort Dearborn. Different nations, different empire, different language, and the same sentence.

Point de Sable

THE FIRST DOCUMENTED RESIDENT OF THE PLACE WAS A BLACK MAN, and the city has his name wrong.

John Swenson, working from the documents, is exact about it: "Point de Sable was his chosen legal name; he was never called Du Sable during his lifetime." Point is part of the surname, not an initial to drop on the way to a plaque — and du Sable without the Point was a minor Quebec noble title belonging to a family with no known connection to him.

He enters the record concretely and by accident. Pierre Durand, petitioning the governor of Canada in 1784 about cargo the British had seized, mentions leaving his packs of furs in October 1778 with "Baptiste point Sable, free negro" — at the Rivière du Chemin, present Michigan City, Indiana, not at Chicago, where he is usually placed. Durand's phrase is Swenson's ground for saying he was born free rather than escaped.

He did not enter that world alone, or by right of a European flag. He married Catherine, a Potawatomi woman — solemnised at Cahokia in 1788 — and it was probably her doing, not his own standing as a Black newcomer, that let him trade here at all: instructing him in protocol, probably serving as his translator into Neshnabémwen, the shared language of the Potawatomi, Ojibwe and Odawa people whose kinship networks the trade actually ran on. Together they built the house and the post here in 1789. The record's usual order — a founder, and a wife mentioned in passing if at all — has it backwards.

His farm at the mouth of the river ran from about 1784 to 1800. When he sold and moved to St Charles in Spanish Upper Louisiana, the improvements and household goods were valued at 6,000 livres — a hold-

ing comparable to the leading households of Cahokia. One of the two men who set that value was John Kinzie, who occupied the house afterwards, by a route this chapter cannot trace, and whom the next century would install as Chicago's father.

That installation can be watched happening. In 1910 Eleanor Lytle Kinzie Gordon — a Kinzie — published a sketch titled "John Kinzie, the 'Father of Chicago.'" Her quotation marks. The whole text was searched: for "Baptiste", for "Point", for "Saible" and "Sable", for "negro", for "first settler" and "first resident". Point de Sable is not in it. The only "Sable" in the document is the Au Sable river and the word "disable". Kinzie's arrival is traced instead to buying out a Frenchman named Le Mai.

Three years later Milo Quaife wrote that early Chicago's truth had been obscured by a mass of tradition "fostered in large part by family pride". The diagnosis and the specimen now sit side by side. And the knowledge the sketch omitted was not obscure, because a generation earlier it had been a joke. Zebina Eastman, writing up an 1842 auction, could refer in passing to the city's "first white settler", a black man who "preceded John Kinzie" and is "the black root from which all our glory has sprung". The wit only lands if the audience already knows the fact. In the 1840s the priority was common property; by 1910 it had become deniable.

Read the sketch for what it does say, and the founder it installs is a stranger figure than the title allows. He was born John McKenzie at Quebec in 1763, son of a surgeon of the 60th Royal Americans, and in the family Bible the Mc is simply dropped, with no explanation offered then or since. The man this city calls its founder had his name shortened at home, and kept it. He ran away at ten, talked his way onto a sloop up the Hudson, and was taken in by a Quebec silversmith who taught him the trade over three years. That is where the name the tribes used comes from, and the sketch offers it as a charming detail while describing a business. He worked the silver coin the United States paid out to Native peo-

ple as treaty annuities into ornaments and tokens, and they called him Shaw-nee-aw-kee, the Silver Man. The government discharged its obligation in metal; Kinzie melted the obligation into gifts and took the credit for the giving.

He had two posts running before he was twenty-one, one at Sandusky and one on the Maumee, which is the far end of this same water road and the subject of the sister work. From Chicago he built outward, to Milwaukee among the Menominee, to Rock River among the Winnebago and Potawatomi, to the Illinois and the Kankakee, to the Kickapoo country afterwards cut into Sangamon, all of it feeding the parent post. Then comes the sentence his granddaughter sets down as an honour: he was appointed Sub-Indian Agent and Government Interpreter. He held the federal offices that existed to oversee the trade while running the trade, and translated both sides of his own bargains.

Above him the network had an owner, and the ownership was not complicated. In 1809 John Jacob Astor organised the American Fur Company under a charter from the New York Legislature, and Andreas disposes of the corporate fiction in five words: "Mr. Astor being the Company." He did not win the trade by out-trading anyone. In 1815 Congress prohibited foreigners from dealing in furs in the United States and its Territories, which made his own mainly British partners ineligible; they sold him their interest, and from the spring of 1817 the firm was the American Fur Company outright. A statute cleared the field and the man already standing on it collected what was left. His two managers in the West, Ramsey Crooks and Robert Stuart, ran the interior from Mackinac. In the autumn of 1818 the Chicago agency went to Jean Baptiste Beaubien, who had a Native wife and Native children, and whose son Madore went west with the removal fifteen years later while the company stayed. That same year Crooks and Stuart found a clerkship at Mackinac for John Kinzie's son.

The men who actually moved the goods were engaged out of Montreal from among the habitants, and the standard was physical. Young, active, athletic men were sought for, Andreas records, "indeed, none but such were engaged, and they passed under inspection of a surgeon." Voyageurs and clerks were under indenture. A company doctor examining labourers as a condition of a term of contract is a form this book meets again in the packing houses and in the employment agencies, and the earliest instance of it here is farmers' sons signing on to paddle six-ton boats.

Even the arrival will not sit still. The sketch has them moving in October 1803, when the baby John Harris was three months old. Andreas has Kinzie still on the St Joseph River and buying Le Mai's house in the spring of 1804. Andreas also places them beforehand at Bertrand, or Parc aux Vaches, near Niles in Michigan, which is the ground the old Pokagon village stood on: the two families were neighbours before either was here. And the oldest boast in the city has three claimants. The family gives first white child born outside Fort Dearborn to Ellen Marion Kinzie on 20 December 1805. Andreas gives it to the same girl in December 1804 and hedges it with probably. Simon Pokagon gives it to Susan Winans, a soldier's wife's daughter, born in what he called the first Chicago.

Whether Le Mai stood between the two men, and on what terms, is the chain this history cannot close — and the reason matters, because a gap does not close just because somebody fills it. Flinn's handbook of 1891 fills it: "one of them, a Frenchman named Le Mai, bought De Sable out". The same paragraph opens by calling Point de Sable "a fugitive San Domingoan slave", which Quaife rejected as unworthy of credence and the documents refute, and closes by having him die at Peoria when he died at St Charles. Two demonstrable errors, one on each side of the claim being tested. The link stays open.

Flinn was not the first to fill it. A. T. Andreas's history of 1884 — the standard nineteenth-century account, the one most later books on this shelf lean on — carries all three of the same claims seven years earlier: the sale to Le Mai in 1796, the Santo Domingo birth, the death at Peoria. Two of the three are wrong. What looked in 1891 like one handbook's carelessness turns out to be inheritance.

And on the middle claim Andreas does something his successors never do. He shows his working. Having established that Saint-Domingue held a large population of free people of colour, many of them educated in France and holding estates, he concludes that under such conditions "it would be natural for an ambitious mulatto to leave the old Spanish colony and seek a fortune among the French". No document is produced. An origin is deduced from what a man of that description would plausibly have done, and then set in type as biography. The invention is not hidden in the record; it is printed in the middle of it, with the reasoning still attached.

What Flinn is good for is the other half. He quotes the British commander at Michilimackinac, writing on 4 July 1779 of "Baptiste Point De Sable, a handsome negro, and settled at Eschikagow, but much in the French interest" — the man in a contemporary document, living at the place under the French spelling of its Miami-Illinois name.

Quaife rejected both origin stories then told about Point de Sable — Kinzie's San Domingo, Matson's runaway from Kentucky — as "equally unworthy of credence", and he was right that both were late and sourceless. He also called the question of a first resident "idle", which is a different kind of statement, and both readings stand here uncollapsed.

Andreas's own volume undercuts its own Point de Sable chapter a few thousand lines later, which is the best argument for Quaife's word. It reports a French trader called Guarie keeping a picketed trading house on the west bank of the North Branch before 1773 — early enough that the branches were known as the River Guarie and the Portage River, one

named for a man and one for the crossing. The source is Gurdon Hubbard repeating what two old traders told him, hearsay at two removes, and Andreas says so. It settles nothing and is not offered as settling anything. It is simply a third name in a question this history has already agreed cannot be answered, and the North Branch carried one of these names before anybody thought to argue about the other.

Swenson notes one more thing. Point de Sable means sand point, and he reckons the man named himself for a place that mattered to him — a place nobody has yet identified. The city carries a lost toponym inside its founder's name and has never gone looking for it.

The fort

THE UNITED STATES TOOK THE WATER ROAD BEFORE IT TOOK ANY-thing else here, and it took it by treaty.

At Greenville in 1795, along with a six-mile square at the mouth of the Chicago river, the nations granted "free passage through their country, in Illinois from the mouth of the Chicago river and over the portage to the Illinois and down to the Mississippi." Before a fort, before a canal, before a state line — the first American acquisition on this ground was the right to cross it.

The treaty's own layout makes the point better than any summary. Chicago is not singled out; it is item (14.) on a numbered schedule — "one piece of land six miles square at the mouth of Chikago river, emptying into the south-west end of Lake Michigan" — with item 15 twelve miles square at the mouth of the Illinois, and item 16 six miles square at the old Peoria fort. Read the list downward and it is the water road from the lake to the Mississippi, acquired as squares of ground at the points where a route can be held. It reads like an inventory because it was one.

And clause 14 ends with five words nobody quotes: "where a fort formerly stood". In 1795 the United States is describing the site of a fort already gone — some French or British post here before Fort Dearborn, which the next paragraph will date to 1803. The treaty also spells the river Chikago, one more hand at the same word.

Everything after is a way of holding that route more securely. In 1803 the government built Fort Dearborn on the south side of the river: two blockhouses, a parade ground, a stockade, and a sally-port — a subterranean passage down to the water. Fifty men and three guns. (Davidson

and Stuvé date the fort to 1804, and the record cannot settle it. The best evidence either way is Andreas's: a return of the Army of the United States dated 31 December 1803, listing Fort Dearborn in Indiana Territory, which would put the post garrisoned and named inside 1803. He then writes "1803-4" himself a few hundred pages later. A compiler who proves a date on federal evidence in one chapter and hedges it in another is telling you something true about how these books were made.)

Before any of what follows, about 1810, John Kinzie killed a man at Chicago, and the killing is a small model of everything this chapter is about to run into. The dead man was a Frenchman named Lalime, a rival trader, described by the officers afterwards as highly respected, educated, good social company. The family's account is circumstantial and flattering. Kinzie had been warned that Lalime meant to kill him, took a carving knife to the grindstone days beforehand while his small son asked what it was for, and was set on at the fort gate one very dark night by a man who sprang from behind the post and put a knife into his neck; he struck back and struck fatally. His wife hid him in the woods and the guard could not find him. He gave himself up when the fuss died down, and the wound that had just missed his jugular brought in justifiable homicide. Then the detail everybody keeps: Lalime's friends buried the body directly in front of the Kinzie house so the family would have to look at it, and Kinzie planted flowers on the grave and set his children to rake the leaves off it.

There was one eyewitness whose account survives, and Andreas printed her. Victoire Mirandeau Porthier was a child at the time and afterwards lived in the Kinzie household until Kinzie died; her mother was Ottawa, her father French, and she never learned to read or write. In her telling the two men walked out of the fort together at sunset, Lieutenant Helm shouted to Kinzie to look out because Lalime had a pistol, the pistol went off, and Kinzie went home bleeding from the shoulder. "You see Kinzie wasn't to blame at all. He didn't have any pistol nor knife, nothing." Grappling, she says, Lalime drew his own dirk and was stabbed

with it as they fell, which is what they all said, though she did not see the knife. Mirandeu took Kinzie up to Milwaukee until the shoulder healed. And then she takes the flowers away: "I don't remember where Lalime was buried. I don't think his grave was very near Mr. Kinzie's house. I don't remember that Mr. Kinzie ever took care of the grave."

Both versions clear him, by opposite means. In one he is armed by prudence and strikes in self-defence; in the other he is carrying nothing at all and the dead man falls on his own blade. Nothing here can choose between them. What can be said is that the version with the tended grave is the one the city kept, and the person who denied it was a woman who could not write it down herself.

In August 1812 Fort Dearborn was ordered evacuated.

Captain Nathan Heald called the Potawatomi to council and promised them the government stores in exchange for safe escort out. On 13 August the cloth and the calicoes were handed over, which was the visible half of the bargain. That night he destroyed the other half. The ammunition went into the well in the sally-port — the tunnel that ran under the stockade down to the water. The barrel-heads were knocked in and the whisky was poured into the river. It was done in the dark, and it was not done unobserved: the record says the Indians came as near as they dared and watched it go. Whatever else was settled that night, the price of the garrison's passage was in the river before morning.

In the evening the chief Black Partridge came to the commander and gave back the medal the United States had given him. He said he could not restrain his young men. He would not, he said, "wear a token of peace while I am compelled to act as an enemy" — which is a man returning a gift and telling you exactly what it will mean that he has returned it.

They marched on the fifteenth, along the lake shore toward the sand hills, and the band played the Dead March. At the head of the column rode William Wells — taken by the Miami as a boy, raised Miami, married to Little Turtle's daughter, and uncle by marriage to the commandant's

wife — who had ridden down from Fort Wayne to bring the garrison off. He had blackened his face before leaving the garrison, "in token of his impending fate". So the column went out to music written for funerals, behind a man wearing his own.

At the sand hills the escort turned. A young warrior climbed into the baggage wagon and killed the twelve children in it. Wells, fighting from horseback nearby, saw it and shouted — "Is that their game, butchering the women and children? Then I will kill too!" — and turned his horse for the Potawatomi camp back by the fort, where their women and children had been left. They ran him down. He lay flat along his horse's neck, loading and firing, until the horse was killed under him. Two men, Winnemeg and Wau-han-see, tried to reach him first. He took his death-blow from behind, from Pee-so-tum. Margaret Helm knew the scalp afterwards by the black ribbon still tied in his queue, hanging from Pee-so-tum's hand.

Cicely was killed there too, and her infant son with her. She was Mrs Heald's serving-woman, which is the word the record uses; Quaife names her among the few documented people held in slavery at Chicago, twenty-five years after the Northwest Ordinance forbade it here. She had been brought to a fort at the edge of the country and kept there by people who were themselves asking for safe passage out. Her son was young enough that he can have understood none of it. Nobody wrote down his name, and no amount of looking will recover it now.

Nor hers, in the one document that should have held it. The 1912 volume prints a list of the garrison, and it is a careful list: twenty-eight men by name with their fates set against them, killed, released, deserted, died natural, and then the women taken prisoner, Mrs. Heald, Mrs. Helm, Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Burns, Mrs. Leigh, Mrs. Simmons, Mrs. Needs. Two are entered under killed in action. One of them is Mrs. Corbin. The other reads, in full, "Mrs. Heald's Negro woman." Every person on that roll has a name except her, and she is the only one described by whose she

was. The clerk who could be bothered to record that Nathan Hunt deserted and that August Mort died a natural death did not write down the name of the woman who was killed. It is not that the record lost her. The record had a line for her and used it to name her owner.

Two days after handing back his medal, Black Partridge pulled the wounded Margaret Helm into the lake and held her head above the water. She recognised him, she wrote, "in spite of the paint with which he was disguised" — so he was painted for war while he did it. He gave back the medal because he could not stop what was coming. He held her head above the water for the same reason. One man, on both days, being consistent.

None of it was decided at Chicago. Tecumseh's resistance movement had marked four American posts for action that summer — Fort Madison, Fort Wayne, Fort Harrison, and Fort Dearborn — coordinated the way the confederacy coordinated everything that mattered, by wampum belt: strings of shell beads carried hand to hand, each one a message. The night before the march, a belt reached the Potawatomi leader Mad Sturgeon telling him plainly that it was time.

Why it fell on this column, though, the Native account gives differently. Black Hawk, who was not there but knew what was said among Native people afterwards, put it down to the broken bargain: the attack came because the whites did not keep their agreement. Andreas turns the blame around inside the garrison and reaches the same night from the other side — the honourable course, he argues, was to hand the arms and liquor over as promised, and Heald was talked out of it by the men around him, of whom he names Wells and Kinzie. The canonical version of this day comes down from the Kinzie family circle and is hard on Heald. The standard history of the city moves the decisive bad advice onto Kinzie himself.

Every version of this story has the same source. When the state wrote its own history in 1874, its massacre chapter cited two sources at the foot

of the page: Heald's official report, and "J. H. Kinzie's Narrative" — Mrs. Helm, the text explains, "furnished Mr. Kinzie, her step-father, many thrilling incidents". The canonical account of Chicago's founding trauma descends from one family circle, and the doubt is as old as the telling: the same chapter quotes an 1844 historian sniffing that the ladies' adventures had "eclipsed the most visionary taste of romance". The state history repeated the story anyway. This one repeats it too — and says where it came from. The monopoly is countable. Lieutenant Linai Helm was there and wrote his own account in 1814; it reached print in 1912, edited by John Kinzie's granddaughter, and in the book that carries Helm's name on the title page the Kinzies are named a hundred and eighteen times to Helm's forty-five. And the standard history was run past the family before it was printed. In February 1884, with Andreas's volumes about to appear, Gurdon Hubbard wrote to a grandson of John Kinzie: "He sent me the account relating to your grandfather to revise. Much in it incorrect, which I have explained." The family printed the letter itself in 1910, seeing nothing in it that needed hiding. Andreas's own closing note says his topical chapters were invariably submitted for review, and this is one instance of what that meant. It did not take completely. He accepted Hubbard's corrections and printed Victoire Porthier on the Lalime killing anyway.

The document also says what it is, on its own first page, and it is not what a founding history usually admits to being. The record was taken in 1836, twenty-four years after the day, from the lips of eye-witnesses who were the writer's mother-in-law and her sister-in-law. It "was not designed for publication". It was made to preserve for the writer's children a faithful picture of the perilous scenes through which those near and dear to them had been called to pass, and that private purpose is offered in the same breath as the excuse for the many personal and family details it contains. It went to press in 1844 only, the preface says, to avoid the possibility of its unauthorized appearance in print. A keepsake written for chil-

dren, published defensively, is the source every later historian of this city used.

Even the date of it is disputed from inside the family. The 1912 volume footnotes the narrative as first published in pamphlet form in 1836. Robert Fergus, writing in 1892, says he set the type for the first pamphlet edition himself in 1844, names the partner who did the presswork, records that Mrs. Kinzie read and approved the proofs, and states that it had not been printed before that date. The earlier date comes from the family. The later one comes from the man holding the composing stick.

What that circle did not carry, nobody carried. Andreas compiled the most exhaustive history of this city the nineteenth century produced, and Cicely is not in it. He names Wells, Ronan and Surgeon Van Voorhis among the killed and stops. No enslaved person at Chicago appears anywhere in the volume, though he treats slavery in Illinois at length elsewhere in it. That is not an accident of scale. A book with room for every tavern-keeper's arrival date had room for her.

One version of the day does not come from that circle, and it was never hidden. In March 1899 Harper's carried an account of the day by Simon Pokagon, chief of the Pokagon band, whose father Leopold had been told of the war spirit around the fort only a day before the evacuation, a hundred miles off at his summer place in Michigan, and who started on horseback with two other chiefs around the head of the lake and rode all night, reaching Chicago the next morning "just before the battle began, but too late for counsel or advice". The son had the traditions from the old men. He opened by doing to Wau-Bun what this chapter has just done to it: the earliest detailed account he could find, he wrote, was by a woman who was not there, who had the story from an eyewitness twenty years afterwards and published it later still, so that "the account was traditional when first published". His arithmetic does not fit either Kinzie book. The objection does.

What his account moves is not the shape of the day but the assignment of it. The Potawatomi had not meant to kill the column, he wrote: they meant to take it prisoner and hold the fort, and Chicago with it, expecting the sort of surrender without a fight that Mackinac had just handed over. The tradition that the escort was a trap from the start, that the Potawatomi walked beside the column only to lead it out and kill it, he had heard and set down flatly as untrue. And the man riding at the head with his face blacked, whom this chapter has as the doomed figure of the sand hills, the Potawatomi remembered as a base traitor, raised among them and turned against them; in Pokagon's telling it was Wells who began the fighting, going through their line "before a bow was bent or gun was fired". Whether he did cannot be settled from the sources here. That the other side said so for a century can.

Pokagon's father gave a cause, and it was neither the stores nor the wampum belt. If there had never been fire-water, Leopold Pokagon said to the day of his death, there would never have been a Fort Dearborn massacre. His son did not leave it at that. He went to Mackinac, where the American Fur Company's old account books were set out for visitors as relics, read the invoices of goods received for 1816 and 1817, found the whiskey entries answering to what his father had told him about the shipments at Fort Dearborn, and then printed where the books were and asked his readers to go and look for themselves. It is the method these pages run on, carried out in 1899 by a man none of the city's historians were citing. The books were Astor's, and they were the books of the consolidation itself, 1816 and 1817 being the two years in which the American Fur Company became the whole of the trade. John Kinzie's son was clerking for that firm at that post from 1818. The founder's son was inside the company; the chief's son read its ledgers; and the ledgers had been left out on a table for tourists.

The best count of the column comes from neither story. On 8 October 1812, seven weeks after, the chief justice of Michigan Territory

wrote to Colonel Henry Procter, the British commander at Detroit, to ask an enemy officer for help. Augustus Woodward had three survivors in front of him and wanted the rest back before winter. The party, he wrote, had been ninety-three: fifty-four military, twelve citizens, nine women, eighteen children. The whole of the citizens were killed, and two women, and twelve children, which is the wagon. Six of the eighteen children came through. Five women were unaccounted for and he set down their names so somebody could look for them: Mrs Burns, Mrs Holt, Mrs Lee, Mrs Needs, Mrs Simmons. He offered to have the ransoms paid, admitting he had no authority to promise it but not doubting his government would meet the cost, and adding that private money was ready too.

Woodward never learned what became of Mrs Simmons. The answer was printed eighty-seven years later by the son of a Potawatomi chief. She was Susan Simons, a soldier's wife, taken north to the village on Green Bay; and when the prisoners were put to run between two lines of women and children with sticks and clubs, she folded her blanket close around her baby and ran, and came out bruised and bleeding with the child untouched. An elderly Potawatomi woman came out of the line, put her arms about her, and took her into a wigwam. She walked over nine hundred miles that winter, through Mackinac and Detroit and Fort Meigs, and reached her parents in Ohio. She said afterwards that no insult was ever offered her while she was a prisoner, and she called the woman who took her in "my Indian mother". The baby was Susan Winans, and in 1899 she was alive in southern California. Woodward asked the question in a letter to the enemy. The answer came back to him in a magazine, from the people he had been writing about.

The word has changed too. This chapter says massacre because Wau-Bun and the 1874 state history say it, and these pages follow their sources' diction rather than tidying it. Most historians now prefer the Battle of Fort Dearborn, placing the day inside Tecumseh's war rather than reading it as an isolated atrocity. Pokagon reached that word a century before

them. He wrote of the Fort Dearborn battle, and said it was the dominant race that had denounced it as a brutal massacre, "regardless of its many individual acts of mercy and kindness". Both are true at once: a co-ordinated action of the War of 1812, and twelve children killed in a baggage wagon.

Somebody stayed, and the founding story does not turn on him. When Kinzie and the other settlers went, Antoine Ouilmette and his family remained, and the Evanston history calls him the only white resident of Chicago for the four years from 1812 to 1816. The phrase is doing work, since Ouilmette was a Frenchman with a Potawatomi wife and the same sentence would not have counted that household as white if it had been asked a different question. What he did in those years is plainer than what to call him. From 1814 he and Alexander Robinson, later a chief of the Potawatomi and later still one of the three men who kept their nation out of the Winnebago war, farmed the field that had been the garden of the old fort, and in 1816 they sold the corn crop to Captain Bradley, who had just arrived to rebuild it. The army's first meal back at Chicago was bought from the two men who had not left.

The fort was rebuilt in 1816, on a larger scale, and the bones of the dead were not gathered and buried until the garrison returned to do it. An Indian agency was established in these same years, first under Charles Jewett, then from 1820 under Dr. Alexander Wolcott, who held the post until his own death in 1830. The troops themselves came and went twice more: withdrawn from the garrison in 1823, restored in 1828, after a war on the frontier that never quite reached Chicago itself.

Even the burial of 1816 did not hold. The coffins were set near the bank at the river's old outlet, and when the harbour engineers of the 1830s cut their channel through the sandbar the lake came in behind and washed the earth away, "exposing the long range of coffins and their contents", which the civil authorities gathered and buried a second time. Interred by the army, exposed by public works, reburied by the city.

In the years without a garrison the town was small enough that its problem was surplus, not scarcity. A friend from "the east countrie" once asked how so few people disposed of a harvest they could not eat and had no market to sell. "Why," came the answer, "we manage, when a vessel arrives, to persuade the Captain to accept a few kegs of butter, and stores of corn and vegetables, as a present, and that helps us to get rid of some of it." The garden fed the ships that fed the mail.

The 1827 war was the Winnebagoes', not the Potawatomi's, and it stayed that way because three men worked to keep it that way. Billy Caldwell, Robinson, and Shaubena rode out to the Rock River bands to argue them into staying tranquil — the same three names this history will meet again, on the other side of the treaty table, doing the removal's own diplomacy. John Kinzie, who had predicted Chicago's rise and did not live to see it, died January 6, 1828, at sixty-five.

The fort had one more use, and it was not only for soldiers. In 1832, during the Black Hawk War, Native families fled to Chicago for safety alongside white settlers, camping as near the fort as they could — some ordered there specifically so they would not be mistaken for the enemy and killed. Among the Potawatomi men who instead joined the Illinois militia raised to hunt Black Hawk were Caldwell and Robinson, five years on from their ride to the Rock River — the same work of keeping their nation out of somebody else's war, done this time from inside the column. Troops sent west brought cholera with them. Thirty died on the way and were, in Davidson and Stuvé's phrase, "heaved into the waters of the lake" for want of burial. Fort Dearborn became a hospital and the families sheltering in it were turned out onto the prairie to make room; ninety more died there in thirty days and went into pits. Remember which lake that is. The city would drink from it for the rest of the century, and the typhoid in that water is the stated reason the river was turned around in 1900.

The line on the map

CHICAGO IS IN ILLINOIS BECAUSE A MAN IN WASHINGTON MOVED A line.

Under the Northwest Ordinance the new state's northern edge would have fallen south of here, leaving the portage and the lake shore to what became Wisconsin. At statehood in 1818 the territorial delegate Nathaniel Pope amended the enabling bill to push the boundary sixty miles north, to 42 degrees 30 minutes — and carried it through both houses, in Thomas Ford's phrase, "upon his own responsibility".

The motive was not Chicago. Ford, who was governor of Illinois and writing about his own state, gives it plainly: it was necessary to give Illinois not only the port and a canal route but "a considerable coast on Lake Michigan, with a country back of it sufficiently extensive to contain a population capable of exercising a decided influence upon the councils of the State" — a lake-facing north that would hold the state to the Union by commerce.

Pope had a second argument, and it was the practical one. Andreas records him telling Congress that the prospect of a canal between Lake Michigan and the Illinois made it desirable for the port of Chicago to sit inside the new state, so that the canal when built "should be entirely in one State jurisdiction". A waterway crossing a state line is a waterway with two legislatures. The bill became law on 13 April 1818; Illinois was admitted that December.

So the portage was still doing what it had always done. From seven feet of wet prairie it decided where the lines on the map would fall. A generation later Ohio and Michigan came close to war over the mouth of the

Maumee, for the same class of reason. That boundary fight is [told in full elsewhere](#).

Andreas carried the consequence forward as far as it will go. Had the line stayed where the Ordinance put it, the fourteen northern counties and Chicago with them would have been Wisconsin's — and Illinois, he argues, would not have gone Republican in 1860, and it is possible that Mr. Lincoln "would never have been a candidate for President at all." That last step cannot be checked and is filed as the counterfactual it is. The ground under it is firmer than it looks: Wisconsin did later ground a real claim to those counties on the same Ordinance provision. A surveyor's line moved sixty miles north to secure a harbour and keep a canal under one legislature, and a man who might otherwise have been a Wisconsin lawyer carried Illinois.

Removal, and what stayed

THE NATIONS DID NOT VANISH; THEY WERE MOVED, IN STAGES, AND the record of it is dry. Edwin Gale, writing in 1902, notes a party removed by Major Sibley and the remainder transferred the following year under Colonel Russell to Clay County, Missouri — then to Iowa near Council Bluffs, then to Shawnee County, Kansas.

Gale calls him "Captain J. B. F. Russell" elsewhere, and notes, dryly, that he was "Captain Russell (then called Colonel)" once he had taken up work as a civic parade marshal, got up in "polished boots, brass buttons and gilt tasseled scarf" — the record disagreeing with itself about one man's rank, and Gale plainly enjoying the disagreement. Whichever title is used, the man who advertised that September for "ox teams and covered wagons, to remove the Indians" resigned his commission in June 1837 and opened Chicago's first office for buying and selling real estate. The ground he had just finished clearing found its next owner in the same hand.

Before that, and during it, Potawatomi leaders lived in the town. Juliette Kinzie's "Wau-Bun" places Robinson — Che-che-pin-qua — with his wife's connexions in two or three log cabins near Wolf Point, where he also kept a tavern, and Billy Caldwell, the Sauganash, residing there occasionally with his wife, a daughter of Nee-scot-nee-meg. Chicago's first hotel took Caldwell's name. Most people who have said it since did not know it was a man's. Robinson married Catherine Chevalier — granddaughter of the Potawatomi leader Naunongee — in 1826, negotiated the treaties of 1829, 1832 and 1833 that removed his own nation, and was granted land on the Des Plaines River under the

first of those: the only Potawatomi reservation the area kept in the post-removal period. He lived on it until 1872.

Catherine's sister, Archange Ouilmette, lived next door to the Kinzies with her own French husband, and the record credits her household with more than a household's work. She helped deliver the children of Fort Dearborn officers' wives. When the column marched out on 15 August 1812 the Ouilmette house sheltered Margaret Helm from the men hunting her — though the sources part company over who did the sheltering, the account this store took from the Newberry crediting Archange with hiding survivors dressed as Potawatomi women, and Andreas giving the courage to a Mrs. Bisson, her sister. The house is agreed; the woman is not.

What she got for it is on firmer ground, and it was not much. She and her husband worked with the Indian agent Alexander Wolcott to secure Native support for the 1833 treaty that removed her own people. The fort chapter has Wolcott dead in 1830, three years before that treaty. This store holds both statements and does not reconcile them.

Under the earlier treaty of 1829, land on the city's northern edge was reserved on her account — to Antoine, Andreas says, rather than to her. Evanston and Wilmette stand on it now and Wilmette carries the family name, but the family did not stay: Antoine and his wife went west with the removal and both died at Council Bluffs.

The reservation was two sections, and what happened to it is recorded in the suburb's own history without any apparent discomfort. The Evanston half, six hundred and forty acres, was sold to speculators in the mid-1840s for a thousand dollars, a little over a dollar and a half an acre; the Wilmette section went in separate parcels and fetched more. Hold that against Simon Pokagon's figure for what his father got for the site of Chicago in 1833, about three cents an acre, which Pokagon said in 1899 had still not been paid. The Evanston land went at roughly fifty times that figure, though his three cents is his own reckoning of the cash value

and not a term of the treaty, which traded acres for acres as well as money. Whatever the rate, it improved for whoever was selling, which by then was not the family it had been reserved to.

Nearly all the trading families of mixed descent went west with the removal — the Bourassas, the Laframboise, Madore Beaubien, the Bourbonnais, the Mirandaus — and Andreas names Victoire Porthier among the few who did not. The land outlasted the household on it.

She is the child from the Lalime killing, grown. She had lived in the Kinzie house until Kinzie died, married Joseph Porthier at Fort Dearborn in 1828, and went up to Milwaukee in 1835. Andreas found her there half a century later in a small house the old settlers of that city had built for her, her children all dead of consumption, and quoted the local history's judgement that with an education she would have been a remarkable woman, her memory being almost as accurate as a written record. It was accurate enough to contradict the Kinzies, which is the only reason anything survives of that night besides their account of it.

Shaubena kept the peace twice — the Rock River bands in 1827, the Potawatomi in 1832 — and was billed for it from both directions. Removed west in 1837, he lost his eldest son and a nephew to Sac and Fox revenge for exactly that neutrality. When he came back to Illinois he found the land reserved to him had been ruled forfeited on the grounds that he had left it, entered for sale at the Dixon land office, and sold. "His eminent services in behalf of the whites in the early days were all forgotten", Andreas writes, "and he was ruthlessly driven from the spot he so much loved." He ended on twenty acres near Morris. The government that took the land had first taken the argument for keeping it: leaving under removal orders was construed as abandonment.

On 18 August 1835 the last of it came due. Some five thousand Potawatomi gathered at the Agency House for the final annuity payment under the 1833 treaty, and when the business was finished about eight hundred of them formed a procession — armed, drumming, dancing,

faces striped in red vermillion edged with black — and danced it through the town. They crossed both branches of the river and halted in front of the Sauganash Hotel, where the other guests stood at the windows and watched. Judge John Dean Caton, who was one of them, called it a war dance when he told the story thirty-five years later.

The record cannot agree on what it saw. Caton counted eight hundred dancers in August 1835; Andreas puts five thousand at Chicago that summer performing "their war-dance, as a sort of farewell", and then, in another chapter of his own book, dates the last assembly to 1836 and numbers it twenty-five hundred. Three counts, two years, and two white observers agreeing on the word war-dance — which is not two confirmations of what it was, only two men reaching for the same word. The Newberry's Indigenous Chicago project reads the day as a mourning procession: a people grieving in public, on the ground being taken from them, at the moment the last payment for it was handed over. What the Potawatomi were doing and what the town believed it was watching were never the same question.

The lot kept working after the hotel was gone. In May 1860 the new Republican party met in Chicago in a vast wooden shed thrown up, Lloyd Lewis records, "on Lake Street, where the old Sauganash Hotel once stood" — the Great Wigwam, holding ten or twenty thousand depending on which statistician was guessing — and nominated Abraham Lincoln for president. The city's first national moment happened on ground named for a Potawatomi leader, twenty-seven years after the treaty that removed his nation, in a building whose own name — "Wigwam" — was borrowed from the people the ground was taken from. Nobody at the convention seems to have noticed.

Mrs. Kinzie kept one scene from the machinery itself. At the annuity payments — the treaty-money table this history has shown working as an instrument of debt and removal — Mrs. Kinzie records that it was "no unusual thing, as the last band came up, for the chiefs to take a quantity

of silver out of the box, and request their 'father' to pay his friends for their trouble", and that they seemed genuinely disturbed when the clerk was not permitted to accept. She records too the custom of the equal share: food offered to a hungry party was divided evenly before anyone ate, and "I never saw this rule violated", she writes, save once. The courtesy is attested at the very table the ledger was kept on.

The treaty that did it is in this store now, and its arithmetic is worth reading slowly. The land trade is even: about five million acres ceded along the western shore of Lake Michigan, and "not less in quantity than five millions of acres" promised west of the Mississippi. The money is not even at all. A hundred and fifty thousand dollars goes "to satisfy the claims made against the said United Nation which they have here admitted to be justly due"; a further schedule carries a hundred and seventy-five thousand more; and a hundred thousand goes to individuals "in behalf of whom reservations were asked, which the Commissioners refused to grant". Against that, the people themselves get a hundred thousand in goods and provisions, a hundred and fifty thousand for mills and blacksmith shops, and fourteen thousand a year for twenty years. A removal treaty turns out to be a debt settlement with a nation attached, and the creditors were in the room when it was drafted.

Charles Latrobe was in the room too, and described the machine rather than the ceremony. The business of arranging an Indian treaty, he wrote, "now lies chiefly between the various traders, agents, creditors and halfbreeds of the tribes, on whom custom and necessity have made the degraded chiefs dependent, and the Government Agents"; once those parties are satisfied, "the silent acquiescence of the Indian follows, of course." He also noticed what was standing in the open while it happened: casks of whisky for sale "under the very eye of the commissioners", which he thought guaranteed that "a stigma will attend every transaction of this kind."

Andreas, fifty years on, put it in his own voice and implicated his own side: "to the shame of the whites be it said", the Potawatomi sold not because they did not love the land or wish to stay, but because they were allowed to drink until they cared for nothing else, and "passively put their hands to the quill". Read the sentence twice. It condemns the whites and, in the same breath, makes the dispossessed the authors of their own dispossession by appetite — which is how the nineteenth century managed to be ashamed of this and comfortable with it at once. Of the seventy-seven Native signers, Andreas records, exactly one wrote his name instead of making a mark, and probably fewer than six understood the provisions. On the creditors' schedule he is blunter than anyone since: the claimants were numerous enough "to constitute nearly a complete census of the white male population of the Northwest", the claims were never audited on the Indians' behalf, and how much of the fund was robbery, theft and perjury "will never be known until the great book is opened at the last day."

The schedule is not an abstraction, and the sheet itself survives. In the manuscript treaty, ruled in red and headed Schedule "A", containing the sums payable to Individuals in lieu of Reservations, the names come down the left in a clerk's hand with the dollars against them on the right: Jesse Walker fifteen hundred, Rachel Hall and Sylvia Hall six hundred each, Alexis Laframboise's children twelve hundred, and, at four hundred, "Mrs. Mann, (daughter of Antoine Ouilmet)". Four Miranda children are bracketed together at three hundred, two hundred, three hundred and four hundred, with a line run out from the brace to the words "For each of whom John H. Kinzie is Trustee." The page carries over at thirteen thousand eight hundred dollars. The family through which the fort's whole story reached print is holding the money in the treaty that took the ground, and it is entered in the same hand as the total.

Nor is he the only one on the page who married into it. Captain David Hunter, trustee for Fanny Leclare four hundred dollars, had mar-

ried John Kinzie's youngest daughter Maria five years earlier, in 1828. The founder's other children had gone the same way. Ellen Marion married Dr. Alexander Wolcott, the United States Indian Agent at Chicago; John Harris then married Juliette Magill, who was Wolcott's niece, and who would write the book; Robert Allan married a daughter of Col. John Whistler, the officer who built Fort Dearborn. By 1833 the family had married the fort that housed it, the agency that was supposed to regulate it, and two of the men administering the money that cleared the ground. None of this was hidden and none of it was illegal. It is simply what a small frontier town's professional class looked like when the same twenty families held the trade, the offices and the pen.

And some of the record itself made the journey out and back. When Matson collected the valley's traditions in the 1870s — confessing in his own introduction that "harmonizing all conflicting accounts ... has not been a success" — one of his informants was "an old Indian called Shaddy, who went west with his band in 1834, but afterwards returned to look once more upon the scene of his youth", and told him how the remnant of the Illinois had escaped to Starved Rock in a night of rain. Matson wrote that these were people "who left no history", and then confirmed his accounts "by notes recently collected among the tribe in western Kansas" — which is to say the history existed; it had been removed with its owners, and the historian had to write to Kansas to get it back.

The hinterland

THE CITY'S OWN BOOSTERS ALWAYS LOCATED ITS CAUSE SOMEWHERE else.

Cyrus McCormick located it first. Surveying the West in 1845 for a place to build his reaper works, he looked at Cleveland, Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St Louis — all more prosperous — and chose the place his biographers say was "unquestionably the ugliest and youngest" city he visited. The reason was the wheat: an Illinois harvest window of about four days, families cutting by moonlight before the grain shattered over-ripe, and a machine that had to be delivered fast from inside the wheat country. The factory chose the mud village at the portage for the same reason the traders had.

The railroad system was aimed at the same point, and by statute. The Illinois Central's grant — 2,595,000 acres of public land, 3,700 acres for every mile of road, the first land grant of its kind in the country — was written for a line from Cairo to Galena until Senator Douglas "included in his bill a road connecting with the lakes", to win the eastern votes. The branch to the lake is why the system pointed at Chicago. The acres granted were acres the removal treaties had emptied within living memory. The road's paternity was litigated for decades — Sidney Breese wanted his tombstone to read that "he who sleeps beneath it, projected the Central railroad" — and no man's epitaph claims the treaties that emptied the acres the grant was paid in.

By 1862, with the war on, a commercial history of Chicago was already fighting about it. The city had claimed to be "the greatest primary grain mart in the world"; rivals called the claim braggadocio; and the an-

swer was a table setting Chicago's exports against Odessa and the other great grain ports of the earth. In the same pages: elevator capacity around two million bushels a day, and railroad mileage in Illinois rising from 105 in 1850 to 2,870.

William Bross, Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, read a paper to the Chicago Historical Society in 1880 on the sources of Chicago's growth — and most of it is about Dakota, the Red River, the wheat belt filling with an industrious people. Goode makes the same argument in 1926 with a glacier underneath it: the city as the natural focus of the richest soil area on the continent. Neither mentions who was removed from that soil.

Between the field and the market stood the grain elevators, which were the tallest structures here for most of a century — the machine that made a crop into a number. Frank Norris put a reader inside the room where that arithmetic was done. "The Pit" (1903) is a novel and is read here as one, but its image of the Board of Trade as a whirlpool spinning a Niagara of wheat is what the trade felt like to someone standing in it. The novel even carries the trade's own cautionary tale, in a character's backstory: a corner held "just a fraction of a month too long", and wheat at a dollar ten collapsing to sixty cents in two days — profitable exactly until the profit is taken. Norris is not evidence of any particular corner; he is evidence of what the trade knew about itself.

The institution Norris wrote a novel about was called into being on 13 March 1848 — the same year as the canal and the first railroad tracks — when Thomas Richmond and W. L. Whiting invited the city's merchants to found a Board of Trade. Among the names on the published call was John H. Kinzie: the son of the man who had taken over Point de Sable's farm, signing a different kind of founding document forty-four years later. The meeting did no more that afternoon than resolve that the city's growing trade demanded the institution; the by-laws came at an adjourned meeting the following month.

The grades were the first thing to rot. In the same year the city was calling itself the greatest primary grain mart in the world, its own chief inspector reported that Chicago's best wheat was being resold in New York under Milwaukee's and Racine's names, "leaving only the poor grades to represent Chicago spring." Every warehouse kept its own inspector and the word Standard meant something different at each, so mixing good wheat with inferior before delivery became ordinary practice. When the Board investigated the warehouses in 1862 the evidence was buried, and when the Tribune said so, nine leading firms demanded the paper be barred from the reading room. Among the signatures was Munn and Scott.

Then the corners. Andreas calls 1868 the year of them: three on wheat, two on corn, one on oats, one attempted on rye, hardly a month without one. The Board answered with a rule letting three disinterested members declare that a corner existed and settle contracts at a fixed value instead of the cornered price, which is the same instinct as the Call rule thirty-eight years early and aimed at its own members' most profitable habit. The first corner it was used against had not been made by buying anything: No. 2 corn in store heated, the elevators posted it out of condition, and the receipts could not be delivered. The power to declare grain unfit turned out to be a power over the market.

By the end of the decade the Board and the elevators were at open war, and Andreas states the conclusion in his own voice: the warehouse interest had "outgrown the control of all private integrity" and was consolidating into a monopoly whose honesty depended on nothing but the character of the men holding it. The Granger laws are usually told as farmers acting against Chicago. Here is Chicago's own commercial establishment deciding that self-policing had failed.

What broke it open was crude. Munn and Scott alone refused to weigh up under the 1871 warehouse law, and when an inspection was finally forced, one of their own employees revealed that bins had been

floored over near the top with a covering of wheat spread on the boards to make them look full. They fought the law to the Supreme Court of the United States and lost in 1877, Field and Strong dissenting. *Munn v. Illinois* is one of the foundational American cases on whether a state may regulate private property, and the facts under it are a false floor in a Chicago grain bin.

The Board tested its own authority over itself once, and the Supreme Court agreed it had it. In 1906 the Board adopted the "Call" rule, binding members to the day's closing bid on grain "to arrive" between trading sessions — a restraint the government sued to enjoin as a Sherman Act violation, without ever showing it had moved a price or hurt anyone. Brandeis reversed in 1918: every regulation of trade restrains something, he wrote, and "the true test of legality is whether the restraint imposed is such as merely regulates and perhaps thereby promotes competition or whether it is such as may suppress or even destroy competition." The reasoning became foundational antitrust doctrine. Set beside Dole's refusal below and Norris's fictional corner, it is a third register of the same question — what restraint on this trade is legitimate — and this time a court answered it.

The town's first corner, though, was refused, and the room is worth standing in.

Autumn 1835. The lake is about to close and the last vessel of the season has come up. In it is a consignment of flour, and when it is unloaded George Dole is holding the winter supply of a town that cannot be resupplied until spring. There is no Board of Trade in Chicago yet — Gale, telling it in 1902, is explicit that the institution does not exist. What does exist, already, is "speculators who understood the value of such a corner on the staff of life", and one of them comes to Dole and offers twenty-five dollars a barrel for the cargo.

Gale says Dole's eyes flashed. Whether they did is between Gale and sixty-seven years; what he reports Dole saying is this. Nine dollars a barrel

affords him a fair profit. He will retail it at that figure, to consumers only. "No man, if I can prevent it, shall speculate upon the people's necessities."

Take the whole thing as the reminiscence it is. What is not in doubt is that both parties were already on this ground in 1835, before there was an exchange for either of them to work in — the man who saw the corner, and the man holding it who would not close his hand.

And south-west of downtown the animals arrived. The Union Stock Yard was a railroad project before it was a packers' one — nine railroads subscribed \$925,000 of its million dollars of stock — and it opened on Christmas Day 1865, the first Christmas after Appomattox, on a site drained through a wet summer by men still wearing their army uniforms.

Two things made it inevitable that were not investment. The ground, three hundred and twenty acres of it, was bought for \$100,000 from John Wentworth, the Long John whose thirty policemen had cleared the Sands for a landowner eight years before (a raid two chapters on reaches); it was reckoned an almost valueless marsh, impossible to be drained. And on 18 December 1865, a week before the gates opened, the Council passed an ordinance restricting slaughtering in Chicago to one particular place. The yards did not win the trade. The city handed it to them by statute, and Andreas records the ordinance in a chapter about public health without ever mentioning it in his chapter about the yards.

The river had already been ruined by then, which is the part the founding story leaves out. In 1863, two years before the Union Stock Yard existed, Dr. Edmund Andrews blamed an outbreak of erysipelas on the packing-house offal choking the South Branch and reported that "the stench could be perceived for miles in the direction of the wind." Consolidating the trade in 1865 concentrated a fouling that was well under way. From the day the gates opened, the company's own history records, "the market never has been closed day or night". By 1907 the yards held five hundred acres, four hundred and fifty of them bricked, and three hundred miles of railroad track inside their own fence — three

times the mileage the whole state had owned in 1848. The company's history describes the trade before refrigeration: cattle grazed to the edge of the city and held on the prairie until their turn, hogs driven in by drovers, pork packed in late winter and moved out when lake navigation reopened. Ice machines dissolved that constraint — and the same waterway that carried the packed pork out was the one the yards emptied into. What that did to the water has a name. The south fork below the yards became Bubbly Creek, and Atkinson describes it in 1912 as "a stream which formerly forgot to run, but stood stationary with such a scum of stock yards refuse upon its surface that men have lost their lives in it by attempting to cross on what seemed to be dry land". A crust that read as ground. He notes that an intercepting sewer flushing lake water toward the Drainage Canal had since corrected it — dilution again, at the scale of one creek — and then, drily, that the smell stayed regardless.

In 1906 Upton Sinclair published "The Jungle". In 1907 Rand McNally published John O'Brien's "Through the Chicago Stock Yards", which concedes that cattle felling and pig sticking are "sanguinary scenes that have little attraction for the fastidious" and directs the visitor toward the refrigeration machinery instead. It is a small masterpiece of misdirection, and it survives as evidence of the packers' self-portrait rather than of the yards.

The city the wheat and the hogs paid for survives in pieces. Chicago Union Station, planned in the 1909 Plan of Chicago and opened in 1925, is the last of the great railroad stations here — and it opened by demolishing the Union Depot of 1882, then lost its own train sheds in 1968 and its street-level concourse in 1991. The habit of replacing the monument on the same ground is very old. The North Western's terminal followed in the mid-1980s; what stands today is its powerhouse, a landmark now, surviving because nobody needed the site it sat on.

The paper town

BETWEEN THE REMOVAL AND THE FIRE THE TOWN BECAME A CITY, AND it became one on paper first: licences, plats, school sections, charters and notes, most of them worth whatever the next arrival would agree they were worth.

The paperwork came before the pavement. The county's first economic act was a price list: with its first two tavern licences in 1831 the commissioners fixed the rates a landlord could charge, wine by the half pint, whisky by the gill, a night's lodging, a horse fed, government arriving as a rate card before the town had a street. Cook County itself was organized in March 1831, carved out with four counties' worth of territory attached to it — Lake, McHenry, DuPage, and Will did not yet exist separately — and Chicago as its only polling place. Two years later, on 5 August 1833, a caucus at Mark Beaubien's house voted twelve to one to incorporate the town — Russell E. Heacock the lone dissent, a justice of the peace who lived outside the town limits and, on the era's own residency rules, probably should not have been voting at all — the whole electorate still small enough to settle the question in a single room.

They were not, on the whole, the poor. Governor Ford drew the class line in his own state's settlement bluntly: the south had been filled by people a slave economy had squeezed out, "unambitious of wealth"; the north — Chicago's part of the state — "was settled in the first instance by wealthy farmers, enterprising merchants, millers, and manufacturers", who built towns, mills, and roads, Ford writes, "as if by magic". The two halves of Illinois came to despise each other over exactly that difference. Chicago's incorporators were drawn from the northern, moneyed stream

— New England and New York, not Kentucky and Tennessee — and the town's character, mercantile and self-improving before it was anything else, follows from who showed up to found it.

Illinois had its own advertising man for this, and he predates Ford. Rev. John Mason Peck, a Baptist missionary who reached Illinois about 1820, spent decades touring, preaching, and writing the state into the country's imagination — "The Emigrants Guide" and the "Illinois Gazetteer" among his works, read by exactly the kind of northern home-seekers Ford describes. Chicago itself, though, stayed overwhelmingly American-born for another two decades. Taylor's history counts some two and a half million people settling the old Northwest between 1830 and 1848, "almost wholly men and women of American birth and ancestry", drawn by cheap land rather than any one man's pen — and notes that "few... except some Germans" had reached Chicago at all before 1848, the year Ireland's famine and Europe's failed revolutions finally turned the tide.

The stakes were worth more than the ground they marked. Governor Ford, needing a metaphor for inflated reputation, reached for the one thing he could trust every reader to know: "politicians estimate the value of such a man as the speculators estimated the value of Chicago lots in 1836" — lots that sold, he adds, for more than they were worth even after the village became a city of fifteen thousand. And the biggest speculator was the state. Ford's own inventory of what bankrupt Illinois could sell lists 230,467 acres of canal lands and 3,491 town lots in Chicago and the canal towns — federal land granted for the canal, converted into a real-estate position, sold to pay for the digging. The canal that abolished the portage was financed by selling the ground beside it.

The town had already made the same trade with its children's land. Section sixteen of every Illinois township was school land, and Chicago's was the square mile between State, Madison, Halsted and Twelfth. In October 1833, on a petition of ninety-five signatures "embracing most of

the principal citizens of the town", a hundred and thirty-eight of its hundred and forty-two blocks were auctioned over five days for \$38,865, on credit. Philo Carpenter opposed the sale and was not listened to; by the time Andreas printed the figures, the four blocks that had gone unsold were alone worth over two million dollars. John S. Wright, who had built the town's first schoolhouse at his own expense, did the full arithmetic in 1867: a cash school fund of about forty thousand dollars, against sold land worth six million at a low estimate, showing "in the strongest possible light the folly of selling school lots of lands in a growing city". Among the buyers was Russell Heacock, the incorporation vote's one dissenter. The petition was lawful, the auction public, and the principal citizens who asked for the sale were the class in a position to bid at it. The sequel took five years. The proceeds were loaned out into the boom, and when the boom went, the fund could not raise interest enough to keep one district school open. In January 1838 the trustees stopped every school in town. The witness is a schoolteacher's private diary, printed by Andreas: "The great school fund of \$36,000, for which Chicago has been so celebrated, is all loaned out and cannot now command sufficient interest to support even one district school." Frances Langdon Willard kept teaching anyway, noting that the fine promises of public buildings made to her had never been fulfilled.

The other engineering of those years was federal, and it announced itself by falling down. The first lighthouse, its walls three feet thick, collapsed in October 1831 before it was finished, hours after confident visitors had climbed to the top of it; the contractor blamed quicksand, others blamed the work, Andreas records both, and the same contractor built the replacement. Then the appropriations opened a contest the city never afterwards left. From 1833 government money cut a channel through the sandbar at the river's mouth, the same bar La Salle had pointed to in 1682 as the flaw in Jolliet's ditch. The lake answered. New bars formed against the north pier faster than the money could chase them, and by 1837 the

shoreline itself had followed the pier seven hundred feet out into the lake. Andreas, tallying the appropriations, states the terms exactly: unless the plan changed, protecting the harbour entrance "would be an indefinite contest between the governmental purse and the natural forces of wind, wave and current." Everything the reversal chapter will argue is in that sentence, sixty years early, at the mouth of the same river.

The money all of this ran on was itself a contrivance. Illinois banking had collapsed with the state bank, and the paper that filled the vacuum was issued by an insurance company: George Smith's Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company, whose certificates of deposit, engraved like bank bills, "performed the functions of money, although they were not in the semblance of 'bank notes'", and, Andreas adds, could never have been proved to violate the charter. What stood behind them was "the confidence of the people in the solvency of the institution, rather than any authority or power conferred by State legislation." The float grew from thirty-four thousand dollars in 1841 to four hundred thousand by 1847, rival banks copied the device when the law proved unable to suppress it, and one issuer engraved Senator Douglas's portrait on its one-dollar certificates and Henry Clay on the threes, which is celebrity standing in for collateral. The Democrat quoted the discounts the way a paper quotes weather: city orders at par to five percent off, the State Bank of Illinois at fifty, Shawneetown at seventy-five. The city raised itself out of the mud on money whose whole backing was the agreement to keep treating it as money.

It nearly did not get the chance. Andreas gives the depression its local dimensions plainly: land almost impossible to sell at any price in 1838, many people leaving the city in 1840, and the canal "really about all that sustained and encouraged Chicago for nearly ten years." The city government of those years took in about a thousand dollars of licence money while supporting a five-thousand-dollar court, and the county refused to keep the city's paupers. The indebted fought the collection machinery it-

self: a public meeting was called to prevent the courts from sitting at all, with two million dollars then in suit, which Andreas renders as five hundred dollars against every man, woman and child in Chicago. The meeting lost and the courts sat. The debtors then got by statute what the meeting could not: the Municipal Court, whose offence was being "too dispatchful", turning matured debts into judgments in the ever-sitting court faster than debtors could regroup, was legislated out of existence after fifteen months. Through all of it, the one institution Andreas calls persistently prosperous straight through is the federal land office. In a town where nobody could sell ground, the government never stopped selling it.

Raising the city

THE DECISIVE WORK OF THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS WAS DONE DOWNWARD, and the baseline it started from was mud. Edwin Gale's memory of the town he arrived in, in the mid-1830s, is that there were no streets at all — "not even a ditch to mark the roads", nothing to show where they would be "save the surveyor's stakes", and for sidewalks, short pieces of cordwood thrown into the mud and pressed level by use. The Chicago American was still urging "public-spirited citizens" to lay their own sidewalks in September 1836. The city's first paving was voluntary.

Chicago stood on a lake bed that would not drain. It had crossed the divide, inherited the harbour and won the boundary, and none of that fixed the fact that water sat where the streets were. From the 1850s the city's answer was to lift its own street grade — and its buildings with it — on jackscrews, so that sewers could be run underneath. Lloyd Lewis tells the set piece as an anecdote about a young contractor named George Pullman, twelve hundred men turning five thousand jackscrews a half-turn at a signal, and a hotel rising inch by inch with its guests still asleep inside. Read the numbers as a journalist's rounding sixty years after the fact; the problem they describe was real.

The raising had a moral theatre too, and it worked on the same logic as the speculation. In April 1857 Mayor Wentworth's men — a deputy sheriff and thirty policemen — tore down the Sands, the vice district on the lakeshore north of the river. The famous version has Long John luring the men of the district away with a dog-fight; Lewis prints that as "one legend has it", and a legend it stays here. Andreas's own chronology says something else again: that on 20 April, "in a moral spasm a mob tore

down nine buildings, and burned six others", breaking up what the papers called the Dens on the Sands. Police, or a mob, or a crowd finishing what officers began, the store does not smooth. What the Tribune of that week actually records is quieter: the land under the shanties had been tied up in litigation, and William B. Ogden had just bought out a litigant and ordered the occupants off. Ogden was the developer Chicago's first mayoral election, in May 1837, chose over the founder's son. He was by now the "railroad king" and the city's richest man. His real-estate agent rode with the police. "Finance, and better business, and the righteous rule of the strong", Lewis writes, "were all playing behind the scenes." The raid scattered the district's people into the residential wards just as a depression set in, which nobody had planned and nobody answered for.

Six weeks before it, Wentworth had stood up at his inauguration in Metropolitan Hall and deplored the violence and the repeating at the recent election. A man who obstructs another's vote, he said, "acts the part of a tyrant and an oppressor", and a fraudulent voter "strikes a blow at the only safeguard of our Republican institutions — the purity of the ballot box". Ten March; twentieth of April. The high principle and the property arrangement were not in different decades or different hands. They were six weeks apart in the same administration.

Some of the sewer brick was made by prisoners. Unable to interest any manufacturer in convict labour, because the average sentence at the House of Correction ran under thirty days, the inspectors built a brickyard and put the male prisoners in it, and the brick went, Andreas records, "largely used in the construction of sewers and other city work". The institution paid for itself and then some: it asked the city for no appropriation after 1875, and the reform that made that possible was replacing a keeper who had been paid twenty-three cents a day per prisoner to feed them with a superintendent on a fixed salary, after which the actual cost of feeding a man fell to between eight and nine cents. Andreas re-

ports the change as economy and never asks what the older arrangement had been paying for.

What the prison held, its own superintendent described better than his critics did: "a medley congregation of inmates, having all of the characteristics appropriate to the alms-house, hospitals, insane and idiotic asylums, as well as to the prison." Children of seven were in it, mostly committed on their own parents' complaint, because the justices had no power to send them anywhere else. So were the old, and the means of their admission is the sentence to keep: "trivial breaches of the peace are charged against these old people in the informations, in order to secure committal to the House of Correction to be treated for disease." A city with nowhere to nurse its aged poor used a false charge as the admission form, and its standard history prints the practice without alarm. The Council was asked repeatedly for room to separate these people and declined; more than half the cells held two or more prisoners, and in 1882 one of them murdered his cell-mate.

The engineer behind the sewers was Ellis Chesbrough, city engineer in the 1850s, who designed the sewerage that required the raising and then drove tunnels out under the lake to draw drinking water from beyond the shore filth. Both were attempts to solve by engineering what the ice had left: a city on ground that drains the wrong way. In 1900 the same instinct would turn the river around, and in the 1970s dig tunnels to hold what the river could not carry.

The decisive year is 1848, and the idea it realised was the oldest idea on this ground. Jolliet's first report of the discovery, in 1674, already stressed "the possibilities of easy transportation by means of a canal at the Chicago portage" — the proposal is in the same document as the news. A hundred and seventy-four years passed between the sentence and the ribbon. It was not obvious to everyone who saw the ground, either. La Salle described the same isthmus in 1682 — forty-one degrees fifty minutes, a little lake divided by a beaver dam — and spoke disdainfully of Jolliet's

proposed ditch, judging the scheme impracticable. The idea had a dis-senter inside a decade, and it was the man who knew the ground best.

Before 1848 most of Illinois traded downriver toward St Louis and the Gulf, the old French direction, along the water road these pages have followed from the portage. The Illinois and Michigan Canal opened that year and turned the pull toward the lake and the east, with the first rail-road tracks laid in the same twelve months. Chicago knew the contest was not won and was, in Atkinson's phrase, thinking hard about how to take the trade of central Illinois. The answer would be the Illinois Central.

The canal's diggers came by the road trade would soon take — down the Hudson, through the Erie Canal, and across the lakes, the same route an 1852 census report says most of Chicago's immigrants actually took — and once they reached Chicago the work waiting was the canal itself. Ninety-six miles of it were cut by hand, mostly by Irish immigrant labor, through swamp that gave many of them malaria in return; some were injured or killed outright in the digging. By 1850 the census counted 6,076 Irish-born residents, a fifth of the city, most of them in the North Division and in Bridgeport — the canal's own district, and later the stockyards'. Jeremiah T. Corcoran, an early settler who had come by way of Canada in the 1830s, ran a hotel at Market and Washington that became headquarters for the canal's own packet-boat trade once the digging was done.

Europe itself started arriving directly in these same years, not by way of the canal payroll but by choice. A colony of Dutch farmers from around Rotterdam and Amsterdam settled the prairie south of the city in 1848, naming their post office Hope; the settlement kept drawing new arrivals from Holland for years after the first ones wrote home. Bohemian refugees from the failed revolutions of 1848 began reaching Chicago in 1851 and 1852 — university men among them, taking work as street-sweepers and cigar-makers on arrival — with a second, larger wave following in the 1860s once the Austro-Italian wars emptied out artisans and

peasants along with the political exiles. By 1854 German arrivals were numerous enough to need their own aid society, founded that May under the name it started with: the Society for the Protection and Aid of German Immigrants. Scandinavians organised their own aid society the same year; by 1870 Chicago held the largest Swedish community in the country. That year's census counted 144,557 foreign-born residents in all — Germany alone accounting for 59,299, Ireland 39,988, Norway and Sweden a combined 12,528, Holland 1,640 — nearly half the city's whole population, and the count does not stop at the nations already named here: 552 Chicagoans that year gave Italy as their birthplace, a wave this history has not yet reached.

Counting arrivals is not the same as noticing what they built, and they had built a great deal by the time the counting got interesting. By 1857 Chicago already held a German singing society running its own theatre, a free singing federation, a Social Democrat Turnverein, and coach-makers', carpenters' and tailors' guilds organised as German Vereine. A Bohemian benevolent society, the Slovanska Lipa, was going in 1863, thirty years before the Pilsen sokol this history reaches at its end. St. Procopius, founded in 1877 at Eighteenth and Allport, was the third Bohemian congregation in the city and by 1885 the largest, with eight hundred families and a parish school of eight hundred children. Four thousand pupils were studying German in Chicago's public schools on the day of the fire, under a curriculum written by a standing Board of Education committee on German, whose report was drafted by the editor of the *Staats-Zeitung*, who sat on the Board.

And the city had already tried once to legislate them out. In 1846 Charles Follansbee lost the mayoralty because Irish Democrats bolted his nomination over a Native American petition he had signed, demanding twenty-one years of residence before any foreigner could be naturalised, which is a lifetime bar dressed as a waiting period. Nine years later Levi

Boone was elected on the Know-Nothing ticket with a full Know-Nothing Council, raised the liquor licence, and the city's Germans rioted.

That last event is not in Andreas. Two volumes covering the century record Boone's election and the "ill-feeling between many good and staid citizens that did not die out for years afterward", and say nothing about the licence, the closing, the crowd or the shooting. Boone's own three-column biography passes over it. The riot survives in twenty-two hundred pages as a phrase in a bill-poster's obituary, where a business is said to have died in July 1855 because of "the Germans and the Lager-Bier War."

The people it was done to remembered it perfectly well. When reformers pushed Mayor Medill toward Sunday closing in 1872, German Chicagoans denounced the Committee of Seventy as a relic of Know-Nothingism, and were understood. The next year they built a party in their own gymnasiums: the People's Party launched from Thielemann's Theater and the Aurora Turner Hall, with the Chicago Turngemeinde meeting in the North Side Turner Hall to denounce all legislation opposed to personal liberty and to invite every liberal society to send five delegates. It swept the city. The Turnvereine this history had not mentioned turn out to have been the political infrastructure of its largest immigrant community.

The Czechs built the same institution in their own language, and the city's own landmarks document says so without being asked: a sokol, it explains, was a club for healthy minds and bodies, "much like a German Turnverein." The Bohemian Freethought organisation put up the Plzensky Sokol on South Ashland Avenue in 1892, to the design of a Bohemian immigrant architect. And the neighbourhood it stood in was a second attempt. Chicago's Czechs had first settled nearer the centre, in a district the city came to call Prague, and the fire of 1871 took most of it. They moved west of the South Branch along Eighteenth Street, and the new neighbourhood "was soon dubbed Pilsen." The name this history closes on is the name of a community's second try.

That document also supplies the word for what kept happening here, and the word is worth holding at arm's length. Ethnic succession, the sociologists' term, describes neighbourhoods where new groups replaced older ones: in Pilsen, Irish and German, then Bohemian, then Mexican. It sounds like weather. Some of these successions were weather, or near enough, people moving as they could afford to. Others were made to happen, and this history will come to them: bombs at the edge of a moving line, a vice district pushed into the one part of the city that could not push back, employment agencies pointing at the single open door. The term covers both and distinguishes neither.

The smallest version of the same discovery was made by the Italian ragpickers, and it is recorded by one of them. Alessandro Mastro-Valerio, an Italian resident of Hull-House, tells it as his answer to the question of whether Italians had Americanised themselves and how far. The trade was attacked from inside the colony first: *L'Italia*, the leading Italian paper in the city, ran a crusade against ragpicking. An ordinance was passed and enforced. Then "the ragpickers formed a sort of political association" and let the party in power understand that they were voters, and would vote against it at the next election if the police did not stop interfering with their occupation. "Immediately the police, by secret orders, let the ragpickers alone." No lobbyist at Washington, he adds, could have worked the scheme more effectually. That is his evidence of Americanisation, and he is right: what they had learned was not English or the flag. It was that a bloc of votes moves a police department faster than a petition does, and that the order to stop enforcing an ordinance need never be written down where anyone can read it.

That first railroad had waited a decade to be built. The Galena and Chicago Union was chartered in January 1836 and then sat idle for nearly ten years — surveyed in 1837 by engineers who waded waist-deep from the foot of Dearborn Street toward the Des Plaines, and not run until 1 June 1849, ten miles, behind a secondhand locomotive named the

Pioneer, bought off a New York road that had no more use for it. As late as 1851 it was still the only line into the city. By February 1854 the number had become seventeen hundred and eighty-five miles of railway converging on Chicago from outside it — most of that mileage lying outside Illinois altogether. The contest Atkinson describes was being run, by then, on steel rather than water.

And underneath the decade sits the Treaty of Chicago of 1833, which removed the Potawatomi from this ground. Quaife shows one of its mechanisms at work: written into the settlement alongside the land cession were cash grants to named individuals, and at least one was routed straight through to a fur company agent in payment of an old debt. The nation went to Missouri, then Iowa, then Kansas. The city that grew on the ground they left had lifted itself clear of the prairie within twenty years of their going.

Who was free in it

WHILE THE CITY WAS RAISING ITS STREETS IT WAS ALSO ARGUING about who was free standing on them, and that argument ran in both directions at once.

Start with what the law already said. The state code, in Andreas's own summary, barred free Black people from residing in Illinois "except under conditions but little better than those of actual slavery". They could not testify in any case where a white person was plaintiff or defendant. Any who could not produce free papers could be arrested, held, advertised, and if no master appeared, sold at auction to cover the cost of their own arrest. John Jones, a Chicagoan born free and well known in the city, filed his certificate of freedom with the Chicago Historical Society, which is to say that a separate register of Black residents was kept as a condition of their staying. That was the ground the 77 people counted in the 1837 census were standing on.

The auction provision was carried out once here that the record knows, and the town turned the execution into its own answer. On Monday 14 November 1842 Sheriff Lowe stood Edwin Heathcock on the sidewalk by the log jail and called for bids. Zebina Eastman and a law student named Calvin DeWolf had spent Saturday night printing a handbill headed "A Man for Sale" and pasting it where churchgoers would pass on Sunday; the crowd blocked the corner on Monday and bid nothing. Silence could not free the man, because the law's answer to no bid was back to jail and another sale. So when the sheriff, apologising as he worked, threatened exactly that, Mahlon Ogden called from across the street: "I bid twenty-five cents." No raise came. Ogden handed over a sil-

ver quarter, called the man to him, and said, "Edwin, I have bought you; I have given a quarter for you; you are my man, my slave! Now, you go where you please." The crowd cheered. The statute was satisfied to the letter, and the letter had been made ridiculous in public, which was the point of the handbills. Eastman believed it was the only slave sale that ever took place in Chicago, and no other is in this store.

Before the argument reached the council it ran through the congregations, and the churches kept better minutes. At First Baptist the fight was over whether prayer meetings that prayed for the enslaved could be announced from the pulpit, and Andreas gives the division its class structure in one sentence: the anti-slavery party "had a majority of the members, the former the most of this world's goods." The compromise gagged the pastor, who agreed not to raise the question from the pulpit again, and Dr. L. D. Boone, the same Levi Boone the last chapter left as the Know-Nothing mayor of the Lager Beer Riot, delivered a series of lectures proving slavery in accordance with the Scriptures. The members whose consciences could not be silenced walked out and founded Tabernacle Baptist in 1843, writing the reason into their founding resolution: slavery "a great sin in the sight of God", communion and pulpit closed to anyone who justified it from civil policy or the Bible. Among the Methodists the policing ran the other way. A member who ventured, in prayer, to "remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them" was at once branded an abolitionist and made very uncomfortable. That is Hebrews 13:3. Scripture itself had become a test of faction, and which verse you prayed told the room which side you were on.

In July 1849 the council let Frederick Douglass use City Hall. Chicago was already a depot on the Underground Railroad by then, though its Black population numbered 323 in a city of 28,269 — eleven in every thousand people, carrying the whole weight of the question. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act tested how far the sympathy actually ran. The council denounced the law and voted non-compliance; then Stephen

Douglas, freshly home from Washington and one of its own architects, talked that same council around in a single three-and-a-half-hour speech; and within weeks, with Douglas gone again, it reversed itself back. Conviction that survives one evening's oratory and returns when the orator leaves town is a particular kind of conviction.

The people the law was aimed at did not wait on the council's conscience. Twelve days after the bill passed, at meetings on 30 September and 2 October 1850, Black Chicagoans resolved resistance, appointed a vigilance committee, and put their case in the founders' own vocabulary: "We who have tasted freedom are ready to exclaim with Patrick Henry, 'Give us liberty or give us death'", with a further pledge not to "permit our brethren to be taken." And then many of them left anyway, because a resolution is not a defence. The Rev. Mr. Johnson went house to house urging his people to flee to Canada before the law could be enforced on them; by November the Journal reported him reduced to indigence, so many of his congregation having fled that there was nobody left to sustain him; in April 1851 he followed them, and organised a church on the far side of the border. A statute passed in Washington dispersed a Chicago congregation to another country and then took its pastor, out of a Black population the census put at 323.

On the ground the law fared worse than in the chamber. In the Curtiss years, before the Fugitive Slave Act, a crowd took a prisoner from the officers outright, and the freed man stood on a second-storey window sill and thanked them; no prosecution followed, though Andreas reckons the offenders would have filled half a dozen jails like Chicago's. At a related hearing the lawyer Collins demanded the premise be proved rather than assumed, and "no one could be found who could testify from personal knowledge that slavery existed in Missouri." The law-and-order meeting called to condemn the rescue passed resolutions instead declaring Chicago on the side of humanity, bound to protect the fugitive legally from oppression. When slave-catchers came for a fugitive in March 1852

the local citizenry drove them off, and Allan Pinkerton — years before founding the agency that made his name — was himself working the Underground Railroad. Moses Johnson, arrested in June 1851 as the fugitive of a Missouri claimant, was discharged after three days of what Andreas calls great excitement throughout the city. Turner, in September 1854, escaped three Missourians who fired on him in the street as he ran; the pursuers were tried for assault and acquitted for want of evidence, so the shots answered to nobody, and the man was not taken either. That same month Judge Treat discharged, on habeas corpus, three alleged fugitives who had been jailed on an assault charge. An abolitionist Andreas quotes managed to invert the whole vocabulary: the anti-slavery feeling made Chicago "a law-abiding community by sheltering and protecting the fugitive slave against illegal arrest." Obedience itself had changed sides.

None of it reached the schools. A city ordinance effective February 1863 required Black and mixed-race children into one separate school in the South Division and barred them from every other. One council, one decade, legislating the opposite of what it had resolved.

Then the war made the city a jailer. Camp Douglas stood on the South Side near the grave of the senator it was named for, on sixty acres of open prairie with a single house on it, and held Confederate prisoners behind Union lines. How many is not settled. The state history of 1874 says about thirty thousand passed through, of whom roughly one in ten died. Andreas in 1885 gives thirty thousand as the number of Union troops recruited and drilled on the same ground, and puts the Confederate prisoners at about seventeen thousand. The two may be counting the same figure and attaching it to different people, which is how a number drifts. Neither is preferred here.

Douglas had put a university on that ground first. In 1856 he gave land at Cottage Grove Avenue and Thirty-Fifth Street to found a University of Chicago, which is not the university of that name now: the

first one lost its property to a foreclosing mortgage holder and closed, and the institution that carries the name today was founded in 1890 with no corporate connection to it. So the same donor and very nearly the same tract produced, within a decade of each other, a university and a prison camp, and it was the university that did not survive. The senator is buried a short walk from both.

What is not in doubt is that the deaths were foreseen. The camp's first commandant proposed a drainage system on taking command and was overruled, and Andreas, writing twenty years later, names that refusal as the cause of the sickness that followed: "For this neglect of sanitary precautions a fearful penalty was paid."

By the autumn of 1864 the camp held eight thousand men behind a guard of seven hundred, and a plot was uncovered with about seventy hours' warning to free them, burn the city, and time the rising to election day, the 8th of November.

The war also broke the money, from an unexpected direction. Illinois's free banks had secured their notes on state bonds, and more than two-thirds of the collateral, \$9,527,500 of \$14,000,000, was the bonds of Southern states. When secession crashed those bonds the notes secured on them went down day by day, while issues backed by federal and Northern bonds held at par: the state had backed its money on the section it was about to fight, and the money died of the war's outbreak. Silver vanished; the town's working change became the streetcar company's hastily printed ten-ride punch tickets, "hailed as a public boon", money reissued once more by whatever institution people happened to trust, as an insurance company had issued it twenty years before. A clearing house operated specifically for the bad paper, and in April 1864 a merchants' mass meeting formally adopted greenbacks and told the bankers to follow.

Who went was also a question of money, and the city's own biographical record answers it twice by accident. Chicago raised 22,532 men with

only one partial draft, and Andreas notes that for all but fifty of the men actually drawn, "substitutes were procured by the draft committees before the time of departure arrived." Substitution was not an exception in this city. It was the arrangement. Yet in the two and a quarter million words of his biographical volumes, exactly two men say they used it. One "did his duty to his adopted country in the day of its trouble, and sent a substitute to the ranks, at a cost to himself of \$600." The other "twice stood the draft and paid for his substitute to represent him in the field." Both sentences are written as credits. The interesting part is not the two who said so; it is that a directory of several thousand men of exactly the right age has almost nothing else to say on the subject, and an absent line in a template reads like nothing at all.

And the war reached the newspapers. In June 1863, on Gen. Burnside's order, the army seized the Chicago Times for "disloyal and incendiary sentiments" and stopped its presses — the same order that silenced the New York World. It is the plainest instance in these pages of the federal government, rather than a mob or a market, deciding what could be printed here.

Last, the dead. The dead of Camp Douglas did not stay where they were put, and the ground under them was never the city's. In 1865 the heirs of Milliman won in the state Supreme Court: the sale under which the city had bought twelve acres of its cemetery in 1850, for \$2,500, was void, and the settlement price of the same ground fifteen years later was \$90,000. The Council ordered the tract vacated, and its 3,136 burial lots given two years to exchange into Graceland, Rosehill or Oakwoods. A state teaching package renders that figure as 3,136 bodies reinterred, and the disagreement stands recorded rather than resolved. A burial ground the city did not legally own is a smaller key of the defect the whole place was built on.

The sanitary case was made in the same years, and it was the old case: three to four feet. Dr. Rauch's pamphlet recorded the smallpox dead

buried at that depth in the public ground, on the lakeshore, beside the water the city drank, because the water table allowed no deeper grave, and a petition of the North Division's most influential citizens asked that the bodies be exhumed and the ground made a park. The order was given. How far it ran is the part the order does not show: a removal ran on the deeded lot, so it needed a claimant, and a grave nobody claimed had no mechanism at all. Modern scholarship counts nearly four thousand Confederate dead in the potter's field and estimates that ten to twelve thousand of the cemetery's people were never moved anywhere. The southern end of Lincoln Park covers the old City Cemetery now.

One tomb stands in the open, and even the scholarship does not know how many people are inside it. Ira Couch was a hotel keeper who died of a sudden fever in Havana in 1857, on the winter residence his health had prescribed, and his brother built the massive stone vault while the ground around it was still an active cemetery. By 1891 the guidebook had settled the story: Flinn assures his readers that the Couch tomb "remains; all others were long since removed", in the same volume that admits the park "covers the site of an old graveyard". The assurance and the admission never meet, and the removal the guidebook asserts is the one the scholarship cannot find. The ground was already playing fields by then. The baseball diamonds over the potter's field date from 1877, and in 1879 the park commissioners assigned a portion of the south lawn, the cemetery end, to the Chicago Cricket Club, where, Andreas records, it has played since.

The rest of the exceptions are invisible: the unclaimed, in their thousands, still where 1866 left them, under ground the city set aside for its dead, recalled for the living, and renamed for Lincoln. Among them, somewhere, is David Kennison, who told the town he was the last survivor of the Boston Tea Party and was believed; the claim was almost certainly false, Andreas printed it straight, and a boulder set up in 1903 commemorates him at a spot that marks no grave. A false story, in a standard

history, under a monument standing nowhere in particular, over the unmoved dead: the whole of this book's subject fits inside one park.

The fire

ON THE NIGHT OF 8 OCTOBER 1871 THE CITY BURNED, AND IT burned as a system, not as an accident.

The city was built of a Chicago invention. The balloon frame — light scantling, sheathing and nails in place of hewn timber — was, in William Bross's words, "first introduced or invented in Chicago, and I believe the claim to be true". It let a town assemble itself in a season, and Bross, describing it in 1848, added in the same breath that "fire made sad havoc with them at times". The method that made the city fast made it fuel, and that was in print twenty-three years before the night it mattered.

The summer of 1871 was a fourteen-week drought, and the fire department's own history keeps the ledger: twenty fires in one week, three on 4 October, four on the 5th, five on the 6th, and on the 7th a planing-mill fire that took a foreman eighteen hours to fight. Some of the crews that answered the great alarm the next night had not slept in thirty hours, and four men of one company came near blind. The waterworks had been given an enormous new pumping engine in September; the fire dropped the burning roof onto it, and the city fought the rest of the night without water. It came close to losing the supply itself. Two miles out in the lake and three from the fire, the keeper of the crib found the sky full of sparks at eleven that night, and from half past eleven till morning, he testified afterwards, "he worked with all his might to prevent the wooden roof of the crib from burning up and destroying himself and wife." The city's chief engineer confirmed it in his report: the crib would have burned "had not the keeper watched them during the night." One man with his hands, at the far end of the tunnel, is the reason there was

still an intake to pump from. Cregier drew the obvious lesson in the same report, that the crib "being so largely of wood, is not only combustible", and it was still the wooden crib when Andreas printed the warning fourteen years later. Even the river burned — vessels, and the grease on the water's surface, the fouling this history has been tracking since the stockyards chapter, here doing service as an accelerant.

As for the cow: the first book about the fire already knew better. Sheahan and Upton place the origin at the cow-shed on DeKoven Street and then say plainly that the lamp story "is now known to be untrue". The correction is a few weeks younger than the fire. The legend has out-run it for a century and a half, because a kicked lantern is a story and a spent fire department is a ledger.

For two weeks afterwards the city was under military authority — Sheridan telegraphing the Secretary of War for rations, tents and two companies of infantry, buildings on State Street and Wabash Avenue levelled with powder on his orders, martial law ending on 23 October. An American city, provisioned by the frontier army.

The warnings were on the record before the night, and not only the fire department's. The oldest was thirty-three years old: remonstrants against licensing the Rialto playhouse in 1838 had told the Council the room was "a wooden building, and surrounded by wooden and combustible buildings", and that "theaters are subject to take fire." The Council licensed the theatre anyway, at a hundred dollars a year, and the premise, that a wooden building among wooden buildings burns, waited. A month before the night, the Tribune had attacked the city's architecture as fraud: sheet-iron cornices, tin church towers, veneer marble fronts, the whole thing held together with "everlasting pine and shingle-nail and putty." Has it all run to shams and shingles, the paper asked, four weeks out. Afterwards the Board of Police listed what it had been saying for years, that the mansard and tar roofs were unsafe, the water supply insufficient, the hydrants twice too far apart, the wooden cornices an abom-

ination, and added the sentence that matters: "None of these things was noticed by the mayor, the Common Council, or the newspapers." It closed by predicting the next great fire would take the wooden city still standing. Three years later it did.

The lesson's paper trail is thinner than the legend's. The fire limits were extended; a Building Commissioner bill died in Springfield; and the office that could tell Chicago what not to build out of — a Building Inspector, then a Superintendent of Buildings — arrived in 1874 and 1875, four years after the fire, while the city rebuilt itself in the meantime largely out of the same wood.

What the fire limits did do was sort people. Requiring brick or stone in the central city raised the cost of building there, and the increase, the encyclopedia records of Armour Square, "drove many working families out to the edge of the 'brick area'", which is where Armour Square is and why it filled. A rule that makes a city safer by making it dearer moves whoever cannot pay the difference, and the map of who lived where afterwards is partly a map of that ordinance. It is the same shape as everything else in this history: the answer is real, and it lands on somebody.

And it was not the city that finally moved. It was the insurers. After a second large fire in July 1874 the National Board of Underwriters resolved on 1 October that every insurance company should withdraw from Chicago, and a general exodus followed. Their July demands were already public: absolute authority for the fire chief, bigger mains, the wooden awnings and cornices torn down, and rigid enforcement of the fire limits against frame buildings. The mayor called the boycott ignorance and unnecessary fright. The city acted when it became uninsurable, which is a different thing from acting when it burned.

Andreas, who was there for the aftermath and wrote it up in 1886, is blunter than any of it about what stood on top of the buildings the city called fireproof: "A negligence, almost criminal, however, characterized the conduct of the municipal authorities, respecting the interior of 'fire-

proof buildings. It was not uncommon to see a building, supposed to be of this class, surmounted by a Mansard roof, as inflammable as a pile of kindling-wood." That is the Iroquois Theatre, in the same word, seventeen years early.

And the office did not settle it. Thirty-two years after the Great Fire, on the afternoon of 30 December 1903, the Iroquois Theatre burned at a holiday matinee and killed something over six hundred people — more than the fire had, in one building, in about fifteen minutes. It was, Everett's volume says, "a typical holiday matinee crowd, composed mostly of women and children, with here and there a few men", the week after Christmas, watching a pantomime called "Mr. Bluebeard". The theatre had been open five weeks. It was advertised as absolutely fireproof. Marshall Everett's instant book — the same genre Sheahan and Upton had invented for 1871, assembled within weeks and sold on the horror — prints that phrase and then the inquest findings that dismantle it: the asbestos curtain meant to seal the stage from the house "totally destroyed", and "wholly inadequate" against the scenery it was supposed to hold back.

The exits were there. That is the part to sit with. Beyond the door everyone came in by there were four emergency exits, and the law specified that they open onto an enclosed alley or the street. An expert quoted in the same volume says the real condition applied to "nearly every modern theater in this city": the exits are ones "with which the audience are not familiar, and which are used so seldom that the employes are unused to having the audience pass out through them". His remedy costs nothing — send the audience out through the emergency stairs after every performance, so that using them is ordinary. A safety measure discharged on paper and never once exercised is the Eastland's untested lifeboats eleven years early. Another expert in the same volume states the paradox exactly: "a theater may be absolutely fire-proof, but when the seating capacity of the house has been overcrowded by reducing sizes of stairs, aisles and exits the building is really worse than a non-fire-proof building, for in the lat-

ter the smoke would have a chance to escape". The word described the shell. The profit was in packing the inside, and the packing made the shell a trap.

Nor was the failure a shortage of rules. When the inquest listed what the theatre had broken, the list was long and specific: ordinances on fire-alarm boxes, on fire apparatus, on "damper or flues on and over the stage", on the "fireproofing of scenery and all woodwork", on enclosing the aisles beside the boxes, on signs designating the exits. Every one of those rules existed before the theatre opened. The theatre violated them item by item, was inspected, and opened anyway. A rule nobody enforces is not distinguishable from a rule nobody wrote.

Two days later, in New York, Daniel De Leon put the socialist reading of it in print. He opens by conceding the objection — that his side sees its own argument in every accident — and then makes the structural case anyway: no system had ever revolutionised production so fast, and in "no other industrial system have antiquated methods and tools been clung to so tenaciously". The gap between the two, he argued, is where the bodies fall. It is a polemic and this history reads it as one. It is also the first time in these pages that the labour side gets to analyse a Chicago disaster instead of being counted among its dead.

And still the thing worth knowing about the 1871 fire is not in Chicago.

Sheahan and Upton — two Chicago newspapermen, one of them of the "Tribune" — published a full account within the year. Their method for counting the ruined tells its own story: they do not count people, they count "wards burnt" and read the population off a census taken earlier the same year. Every house in the First, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth wards, four-fifths of the Sixteenth. A reasonable estimate, and not a measurement.

Bound into the same volume is an appeal headed "To the People of Wisconsin." Through the northern part of that state, it says, fires had

been raging in the woods for many days; hundreds of families were homeless, their crops consumed, their farms a blackened desert.

Those fires were burning the same week. The worst of them took Peshtigo, and it killed far more people than Chicago's did, and almost nobody can name it. A city disaster with newspapermen living inside it became the national story. A rural one with more dead became a fundraising notice in somebody else's book.

Chicago put its fire on the flag, and it got there before the fort did. When the municipal flag was adopted on 4 April 1917, designed by Wallace Rice after a competition, it carried two stars: the Great Fire and the World's Fair. A third was added in 1933 for the Century of Progress, on 9 October, as it happens, the anniversary of the fire's worst day. The star for Fort Dearborn came last, in December 1939, a hundred and twenty-seven years after the day it marks and twenty-two after the flag it was added to. It is displayed first. The city assembled its emblem in the reverse of the order it shows: a fire and two fairs, all of them things Chicago chose to be known for, and only then the fort, once there was room. The second star is the 1871 fire, and the Chicago History Museum's lesson plan asks schoolchildren to find it there before telling them what happened. The disaster became a civic emblem, proof of the city's capacity to rebuild.

That use is not a period curiosity. It is still load-bearing. The regional plan adopted for 2040 opens its case by putting "economic upheavals, social inequities, ecological harm, and even disasters like the Chicago Fire" in a single list, and says that meeting them "made us stronger", that "avoiding such challenges would have held our region back", and that the region is "forever indebted to the foresight of Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett". A hundred and thirty-nine years on, the fire is still being spent — as the warrant for the next plan. Peshtigo, with more dead and no second act, has never been able to spend anything.

One witness cuts against all of that, and he was standing closest. Writing in 1886, among people who had watched the city burn, Andreas records that the fire had already gone quiet: "Less than fifteen years have passed since the great fire, and yet it has become a thing of the past; is not often referred to, or even thought of by those who saw it." If he is right, the line this history has been drawing from the flag to the lesson plan to the 2040 plan is not one unbroken act of remembrance. It is a revival. The survivors put the fire down, and the emblem was assembled later, by people who needed it for something.

Eight hours

ORGANISED LABOUR ENTERS MOST HISTORIES OF THIS CITY TWICE, AS a bomb and as a boycott, and leaves as a footnote to both. It gets the chapter here, because the demand underneath both was the plainest one anybody makes in this book, and because until now these pages have only ever seen working people through somebody else's records — hauled through Mud Lake with bloodsuckers on their legs, counted in wards burnt, packed into a matinee.

In May 1886 the workers of the McCormick Reaper Works struck — the plant that was by then, the Park Service's labour study records, "the largest producer of farm equipment in the world". That is the works Cyrus McCormick had planted in the ugliest and youngest city he could find, because Illinois wheat shattered in a four-day harvest window and the machine had to reach the field fast. The reaper that took the hinterland's grain is the hinge into what followed: the McCormick strike is what put a protest meeting in the Haymarket.

Be exact about what was being demanded, because the answer is not money. The two great labour movements of that century were about the clock — the ten-hour day, then the eight — and the slogan was "eight hours for what we will". The Park Service's study lists what the hours were for: to be parents; play ball; drink coffee or beer; attend festivals, weddings and wakes; march in parades; read in libraries; listen to speeches. Wage earners, it concludes, "wanted to work to live — not live to work". Hold that beside Pullman, eight years later, where an employer supplied the leisure himself, on his own terms, in a town he owned.

Outside the great works there was no wage at all in the sense of a rate. The Hull-House residents found, in one Ewing Street tenement, women sewing five different bundles of knee-pants for the same sweater. The pants were the same size and the same quality. The prices were five cents, seven, nine, eleven and thirteen a dozen, rising with the finisher's skill at haggling and bearing no relation to her skill at sewing. The same work, in the same room, on the same day, at five different prices, because the price was whatever each woman could argue for.

The law was not absent from this trade; it was pointed the other way. A sweater who failed to return the cloth entrusted to him was prosecuted for larceny and, the residents record, "followed even beyond the borders of the State, and brought back for prosecution under the criminal law". A manufacturer whose garments those were held himself in no degree responsible for the wages owed on them. Criminal process followed the goods. The wages were a private matter between a woman in a tenement and the man who had brought her the bundle.

Nine years before the bomb the city had already answered a strike with gunfire, and this history has had nothing on it until now. In July 1877 the railroad strike reached Chicago. Andreas files the whole episode under the Police Department, calls it a riot, and names not one striker. What he records is a police count: ten strikers killed, forty-five wounded, nineteen policemen injured. Later accounts generally put the dead at around thirty. No independent count sits in this store, so neither figure is settled; the direction of the shooting is not in question. Five of the dead fell in one half-hour fight at the Burlington and Quincy round-house on Sixteenth Street, which Andreas gives a single sentence.

The city's official response was to arm one part of the workforce against the other. On 25 July the Council declared the strike a rebellion, gave the mayor unlimited spending authority, and called on employers "to organize and arm their well-disposed employee's." Afterwards the Citizens' Association, a businessmen's body, bought the city four twelve-pounder

Napoleon guns and a Gatling gun and handed them to the militia, where they became a battery; the police force gained a hundred mounted patrolmen at \$110,500 a year. Chicago came out of 1877 with a standing capacity to shoot at crowds, paid for in part by subscription.

The road that closed in those years is the one worth following, because it was not always the road to a bomb. Chicago socialists were winning elections. They sent a senator and two representatives to Springfield in 1878 and carried the bill that created the state Bureau of Labor Statistics; in 1879 their candidate for mayor polled 11,829 votes and they took two wards outright. On that same 1879 ballot the city elected as its attorney Julius S. Grinnell, who would prosecute Parsons and Spies. Then in 1880 Frank Stauber, socialist alderman of the Fourteenth, was counted out of his seat, won in the Circuit and Appellate courts, and watched the Council seat his opponent anyway. The drilling societies came after that, not before it.

Andreas published all of this in 1886, the year of the bomb, and his Chicago contains no *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, no *Vorbote*, no *Alarm*, and no Albert Parsons. His newspaper chapter catalogues the city's press exhaustively and omits its radical half entirely. He is the compiler who submitted his chapters to prominent citizens for their approval before printing.

What happened at the Haymarket this history has always been able to describe from either end and never in the middle. The near end is a police officer's report — a bomb thrown from the east side of Desplaines Street, exploding in the second division of the column. The far end is Governor Altgeld's pardon message of 1893, finding a packed jury, jurors incompetent by the state Supreme Court's own standard, a judge incapable of granting a fair trial, and Neebe held for years after the prosecutor had conceded there was no case against him. Between the bomb and the pardon sat the part that could not be told.

Two documents in this store show how. The first is the doctrine. Gary set it out himself in 1893, quoting the common law his court had ap-

plied: "if several persons conspire to do an unlawful act, and death happens in the prosecution of the common object, all are alike guilty of the homicide" — and "he who advises or encourages another to do an illegal act is responsible for all the natural and probable consequences". What Spies and Parsons had published in newspapers and shouted in speeches was, he wrote, enough. Under that rule nobody had to throw the bomb to hang for it, which is fortunate for the prosecution, because nobody ever established who did.

The second is the jury. The bailiff who had charge of summoning it, a man named Ryce, was overheard saying what he was up to, and a citizen swore an affidavit to it: "I am managing this case, and I know what I am about. Those fellows will hang as certain as death. I am summoning as jurors such men as they will be compelled to challenge peremptorily, and when they have exhausted their peremptory challenges they will have to take such jurors as are satisfactory to the State." On the motion for a new trial the defence asked to examine the witness in open court. Judge Gary refused to order it. That is an affidavit about a conversation and this history calls it one — but it is the sworn account the defence was never allowed to test, and Altgeld, seven years later, found the jury packed.

So: men were convicted of the bombing and "executed in spite of widespread protests". The monument at Forest Home Cemetery names five — four hanged, one dead by his own hand in a cell. Who threw the bomb was never established. (The Park Service puts the night's dead at seven police and at least forty protestors, well above the civilian figures usually given; no primary count sits among these sources, so the disagreement is recorded and no total here should be repeated as settled.)

And the middle can be told now, because the men who argued it left their arguments in the open where a century later they can still be read. In 1887, while the condemned were alive and a governor could still have saved them, General M. M. Trumbull appealed for clemency on the trial's mechanics rather than its politics. Eight men had been tried together, and

"the joinder of the defendants made the testimony against each avail against all". The indictment alleged the killing of Degan "in sixty-nine different ways". And the jury, "in hopeless bewilderment", returned a verdict of guilty "as charged in the indictment" — an indictment, Trumbull observes, "they never read, for they were not out long enough to do so".

Parsons's own account of that night survives too, and until now this store held none of it. He took the stand on 9 August 1886 and, from notes, reconstructed his Haymarket speech for the jury: an estimated three thousand men filling Desplaines Street, an opening on "the evidences of discontent among the working classes... of the civilized world," a speech he says turned on the eight-hour movement itself — "designed to give employment to the unemployed, work to the idle." Two months later, arguing for a new trial, he told Judge Gary the verdict was "the verdict of passion... immersed in passion from its inception to its close," and identified himself as no innocent bystander but twenty years in "what is known as the labor movement in America." Neither statement settles who threw the bomb. Both are the thing the near end and the far end of this story never supplied: the defendant's own word for what he did and who he was.

Spies left an account too, published by Nina Van Zandt — the woman he had married in his cell that January, by law, after the jail stopped letting her visit him as anything less — while his appeals were still alive and the Supreme Court had not yet spoken. His is a story about a word. The handbill calling the meeting said "Workingmen, bring your arms along!" — added, he says, without his knowledge — and he refused to speak until it came out: "This is ridiculous!" ... "None of the circulars are as yet distributed — we can have these words taken out." On the walk to Desplaines Street that evening he passed a hardware store and left the revolver he usually carried, because it did not fit the pocket of the clothes he had changed into. A man who struck the word "arms" from his own meeting's handbill and then happened to leave his gun behind on the way

to it: neither fact proves anything about the bomb, and both are exactly the kind of detail the police report and the pardon message had no reason to carry. At the same October hearing where Parsons spoke, asked why the death sentence should not be passed upon him, Spies said the sentence that outlived the trial: "if you think that by hanging us, you can stamp out the labor movement ... here you will tread upon a spark, but there, and there, and behind you and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up! It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out."

And some of the trial itself can be told with them. This store holds no transcript, but it holds Dyer Lum's condensation of the official record, published by the Socialistic Publishing Company and partisan in the way its imprint suggests, which is why what it reports about the state's own case is worth more than what it argues. Three things in it belong here.

The defence's first witness was the mayor of Chicago. Carter Harrison the elder took the stand on the morning of Monday 2 August and testified that he had been at the meeting, that he told Captain Bonfield "the speeches were about over; that nothing had occurred yet or looked likely to occur to require interference", and that Bonfield had better order his reserves home. The police column marched on Desplaines Street anyway, and the bomb was thrown into it. The city's own mayor, on oath, had judged the meeting peaceable and told the police to stand down.

The witness the prosecution leaned on hardest was a painter named Harry Gilmer, who said he saw the bomb thrown and put the thrower at about five feet eight, nine or ten inches. On cross-examination he admitted having "received some money two or three times from Detective Bonfield."

And Gary's doctrine, the one he would defend in a magazine seven years later, was already being said aloud in his own courtroom while the men were on trial. Refusing to direct a verdict for Neebe, the court held that "if there is general advice to commit murder, the time and occasion not being foreseen, the adviser is guilty when it is committed." He did not

arrive at that rule in 1893 in order to justify the verdict. He was working from it in 1886, in front of the jury that returned it.

Then the appeals ran out. The Supreme Court of the United States heard argument on 27 and 28 October 1887 and dismissed the writ on 2 November, holding the federal questions had not been properly raised below — the merits untouched. Four men were hanged nine days later.

Six years on the judge himself went into print. Joseph Gary published his account of the case in "The Century Magazine" for April 1893, under the byline "by the judge who presided", defending the conduct of his own court to a national readership. Altgeld's pardon message came five months after it, and found that judge incapable of having granted a fair trial. This history holds both and adjudicates neither. What it can say is that the whole chain now sits in its own documents and no two of them agree.

Then the city argued about it for eighty years, in bronze. A statue to the dead police was dedicated on Memorial Day 1889. Part of its inscription was stolen in 1903. A streetcar motorman later ran his train off the track and knocked the policeman off his base, explaining that he was "tired of seeing that policeman with his arm raised in the air". The statue was moved twice, bombed in 1968, bombed again in 1970, and finally carried indoors to the lobby of police headquarters — which is how a city settles a memorial it cannot agree about: by putting it where the public is not. The other dead have their own monument, a few miles west in Forest Park. Both are National Historic Landmarks today. One night, two memorials, never on speaking terms.

Eight years after the bomb, the model town failed. Pullman was a statement — an employer's description of what his benevolence had built — and in 1894 the statement gave way. Jane Addams watched it fail from closer than almost anyone: she had known Pullman personally, sat on the arbitration committee whose meetings she calls "futile", and ate at the strikers' supper tables in Kensington, where the men still trusted that "the

benevolence which had built the model town would not fail them". What the strike showed her, she writes, was a "distinct cleavage of society" nothing in her experience had revealed — a town whose plan had bred "servility on one side and arrogance on the other". She wrote the failure up as a Lear play, the benevolent employer bewildered by ingratitude; Mr. Pullman, she notes, had "a more emphatic phrase" for her trouble. Her last picture of the strike is three years later: a blacklisted workman who had held six months' work under an assumed name, discovered that morning and dismissed — "an epitome", she says, "of the wretched human waste such a strike implies".

The trade drew a colder verdict than hers, and it belongs beside the Lear reading. What the upheaval taught American business, the Park Service's labour study records, was "the folly and costliness of trying to engender labor loyalty and diligence by building model company towns". The mechanics behind that verdict are the ones Addams had no reason to spell out: wages cut in June 1894 while the rents in company housing were not, the plant closed so its owner could live on the leasing of cars already built, the American Railway Union and Debs pulled in, a national boycott, federal troops and injunctions, the leaders jailed, the workers beaten. She read the failure as a bewildered father; the market read it as a balance sheet. Neither reading contradicts the other.

The federal commission that investigated it read the books, and its arithmetic is the plainest account of what the strike was about. On the contract work between September 1893 and May 1894 the company's loss was \$52,069.03, or 3.663 per cent below shop cost. The loss to labour from the wage reduction on the same work, measured against the previous June, was over \$60,000. So the men gave up more than the company lost, and, the commission adds in the same passage, "during all of this reduction and its attendant suffering, none of the salaries of the officers, managers, or superintendents were reduced." The rents that were not cut were already, it found, "from 20 to 25 per cent higher than rents

in Chicago or surrounding towns for similar accommodations", and it could find no reason for holding them there "except simply that the company had the power and the legal right to do it."

The lever was not the sheriff. Rent was collected by the company's own savings bank, which pressed for it "aided by knowledge on the part of the tenant that by arrears he may lose his job", and about \$70,000 of unpaid rent had piled up by the strike. The commission credits that to leniency, and records that no actual evictions took place. It did not need to evict anyone. The man who fell behind on the rent could lose the job that paid it.

Even the company doctor was part of the arrangement. He was salaried to treat injured employees, and it was "also a part of his employment" to obtain from the injured man a written statement about the causes of his injury, and usually to urge acceptance of whatever settlement was offered; if the man sued anyway, the doctor was ordinarily a witness for the company.

And when the strike came, the government's officers were not the government's. The commission recorded that 3,600 United States deputy marshals "were selected by and appointed at request of the General Managers' Association, and of its railroads", and that they were armed and paid by those railroads. It said what that meant in its own voice: it placed officers of the government under the control of a company. Of the Association itself, a body of the twenty-four railroads terminating in Chicago, the commission held that it had "no more standing in law than the old Trunk Line Pool" and was a usurpation of power not granted. The employers had a combination the law did not recognise, and the men were told they could not have one.

The company said so on oath and did not soften it. Thomas Wickes, its second vice-president, testified that "we would not treat with our men as members of the American Railway Union, and we would not treat with them as members of any union. We treat with them as individuals

and as men." Asked about the man who could not hold his own in such a discussion with his employer, Wickes answered that "if he is not able to do that, that is his misfortune." And asked who caused the trouble, he said: "It is only the inferior men, that is, the least competent, that give us the trouble as a general thing."

One of the wage-earners said what the cut meant in her own numbers, on oath, that August. Jennie Curtis, a seamstress in the repair shops and president of the girls' union local at Pullman, told the federal strike commission that her department had earned 22 cents an hour in 1893 and could not clear more than 70 to 80 cents a day by the time of the strike — some of the girls no more than 40 or 50 cents, against a dollar fifty the year before. Her father had worked for the company thirteen years; when he died owing \$60 in back rent, the company took it out of her wages at \$3 a payday, and she said so plainly: she still owed \$15 on the day the strike began, and she doubted they would ever let her pay it back. That is what "wages cut, rents not" cost one named person.

Eleven years after Pullman the answer to a strike was excavation. The Teamsters' strike of 1905 — twenty-one dead, 415 injured, eight hundred schoolchildren walking out of a South Side school at the sight of coal delivered by strikebreakers — so chastened the city's employers that their association "commissioned the construction of underground railway tunnels to bring supplies to downtown businesses", beneath any picket line that could be mounted above. It is this history's oldest move, performed against labour: when the ground is contested, change the ground. The city that raised its streets and reversed its river also dug freight tunnels under the Loop so that a strike could be walked over the top of.

Working people speak for themselves three times before that, and every time because they were made to. Parsons and Spies testified for their lives at the same October 1886 hearing, and Curtis testified to a federal commission in 1894 — the store holds their own words now, not a reporter's paraphrase of them. But none of them chose the room: two

spoke because they were on trial, the other because a president's commission summoned her. It is not until 1922 that the movement appears in these pages describing itself unasked, in its own publication — William Z. Foster in "The Labor Herald", partisan and proud of it, claiming three hundred thousand adherents for the Chicago Federation of Labor and "the cleanness of its leadership". The claim is his and is filed as his. Thirty-six years of strikes, a bombing, four hangings and a national boycott, and it is 1922 before the movement picks up a pen on its own account rather than in answer to a summons.

The White City and the ditch

IN 1893 CHICAGO SHOWED THE WORLD A WHITE CLASSICAL CITY BUILT on made ground at Jackson Park. The Official Guide was written by John J. Flinn — the same Flinn who, two years earlier, had set the onion and the polecat side by side and picked the polite one. The man who tied the city's name for its readers was hired to present the city to the world.

The dedication, in October 1892, stopped the city outright — wagon traffic banned from the business centre, a parade miles long, the new municipal flag of "terra cotta and white" everywhere — and the fair's own historian reached for the only comparison available: "never since the day of the Chicago fire ... had the business of the city been so absolutely suspended. Once it was for stern danger and necessity. Now it was to rejoice." The two days Chicago ever stood still, paired by its own chronicler: the catastrophe and the celebration.

Then look at what his guide presents. On the shore of the South Pond, as part of the Ethnological exhibit, the fair displayed what the guide calls "Living American Indians" — families resident on the grounds for the season, "living in the exact way their forefathers lived before the white man invaded their lands", with "photographs of themselves and their habitations sold as souvenirs to visitors". The verb is the guide's own. Sixty years after the Treaty of Chicago moved the Potawatomi off this ground, the fair built on it exhibited living people as the deep past, and the official text said "invaded" in passing, the way a thing is said when nobody expects to be argued with.

Of every attraction at the fair, exactly two were permitted to charge extra admission: the Cliff Dwellers exhibit and the Esquimau village.

The fine-arts catalogue completes the picture: inside, the Indian appears as "Indian Scouts (Bronze)", "Indian Bear Hunt (Bronze)", "The Indian and the Lily" — cast and framed — while a few minutes' walk away the same fair showed living families beside the pond. Bronze inside, alive outside.

One more bronze went up that year, away from the fairground, and it was the city's own subject. George M. Pullman presented Chicago with a statue called *The Massacre*, set where the killing of 1812 was supposed to have happened, and the moment he paid to have cast was not the wagon or the sand hills. It was Black Partridge lifting Margaret Helm out of the water. In the year the city put Native families beside a pond and charged extra to see them, the monument it raised to its founding violence chose, as the image to keep, an Indian saving a white woman. The same year a Chicago publisher brought out Joseph Kirkland's account of the day, which described the Potawatomi as showing himself "in sense a child, in strength a man, and in cruelty a fiend incarnate". Six years later Simon Pokagon quoted that sentence back at Harper's readers, footnoted the statue in the same article, and asked why less pity should be required of civilised people than of untutored savages. Chicago in 1893 could hold the bronze and the sentence at once and feel no strain, which is the year in one line.

One department of the fair was not run by men, and the woman who ran it is absent from the standard history of the city. An act of Congress required the Columbian Commission to appoint a Board of Lady Managers, two from every state and territory, eight at large and nine from Chicago, and its president was Bertha Honoré Palmer. The Woman's Building was designed by Sophia G. Hayden, chosen from fourteen women architects in competition, and cost nearly \$150,000; from beginning to end, White's account records, "the Woman's Building, and every-

thing contained in it, has been under the management and design of women." He is candid that the board's title drew "much unfavorable comment... and with justice, but the fault is not with the women", and notes that its members were proud of being the first women ever commissioned as officials by Congress. Among them was Myra Bradwell, whom Andreas had written up as a woman whose life would otherwise have "become incorporated with her husband's in the ordinary course of events." Eight years after that sentence she was a commissioner of a world's fair.

The compliment paid to the president carries its own ceiling. White credits Mrs. Potter Palmer's "tact and great executive ability", and then explains it: remarkable "although entering this public life from the domain of a rich and prominent society woman." The word doing the work is *although*. She is called Mrs. Potter Palmer throughout his prose; her own name appears once, in the officers' list, as Mrs. Bertha Palmer. And she is not in Andreas at all. The phrase does not occur in his third volume, published seven years before she presided over a department of the fair, in the same work whose biographical index holds eight women among seven hundred and thirty-seven people. Her husband is in it repeatedly. Potter Palmer had bought most of three-quarters of a mile of State Street frontage, widened the street and built along it, moving the city's retail centre off Lake Street; the hotel he built there and rebuilt after the fire was the room where Chicago's merchants met their buyers, day and night. He is a man the record was built to hold. What she collected, meanwhile, became the Art Institute's Impressionist core, and after his death in 1902 she managed the estate herself and roughly doubled it.

The fair was also a working city, and better plumbed than the real one. Its grounds held 3,116 water closets against the 250 of the Paris exposition of 1889, its own sewage works, and Worthington pumps whose daily capacity the accounts cannot agree on — twelve million gallons in one, forty in another — and the disagreement stands. Its industry advertised itself: in the Bethlehem Iron Company's display stood a fluid-com-

pressed ingot of the kind — one of sixty-five tons — from which the shaft of the Ferris Wheel had been forged, the exhibit and the ride vouching for each other across the Midway.

One building was made to last, because it had to insure the borrowed art inside it. The Palace of Fine Arts was brick behind the staff plaster; it became the first Field Museum, and in 1933 the Museum of Science and Industry, and it is the one piece of the White City still standing. The rest was a stage set, and went back to lath, fire and salvage.

The fair's most famous story is also its least documented, and it is worth being exact about what the record holds. Herman Webster Mudgett, calling himself H. H. Holmes, added a third floor to an Englewood building in 1892 and told people it would be a hotel for the coming fair. It was never finished, never furnished, and never opened to the public; the floors below held shops and rentals, and the odd rooms and passages that later became torture chambers in the telling were used to hide furniture from creditors. He was convicted of one murder, his business associate Benjamin Pitezel, in Philadelphia, and hanged there in 1896. Archival re-examination supports about nine killings, of which exactly one victim was a fair tourist. He himself confessed to twenty-seven, some of whom turned up alive.

The two hundred victims came later, and can be dated. Newspapers inflated the case while it ran; the figure appears to originate in a pulp history of 1940; and a bestseller of 2003 carried it to a general readership with scenes its own author called plausible reconstructions rather than documented fact. The historian of one of the standard popular accounts said the quiet part himself: "By the time I reached the end of my book, I kind of realized even a lot of the stuff that I had written was probably exaggerated." Hold that beside Peshtigo. One catastrophe had more dead and no newspapermen and vanished; one man had few victims and every newspaper in the country, and grew. What survives is not what happened. It is what got written down, and then rewritten.

The remembered ending is electric light and neoclassical calm. The actual ending: two days before the close, Mayor Carter Harrison the elder — the fair's own showman — answered his doorbell and was shot dead by a man whose delusion, Lewis records precisely, was that "he thought he ought to be Corporation Counsel of Chicago". A machine fantasy, a city job owed and withheld, as a murder motive. "The World's Fair flags went to half mast. Tragedy marked its close", Lewis writes, "except in the Midway Plaisance", where the crowds rioted until the small hours.

The fair sold the city as it wished to be seen. Two chapters from now the Sanitary District will be cutting a channel to reverse the river, and the same decade produced both. But between the White City and the ditch lies the trade neither of them advertised, and the city had been trying to decide what to do about it since before the fire.

The trade the city licensed

C HICAGO WAS SELLING SOMETHING ELSE THE WHOLE TIME, AND THE record of it is unusually good, because the city kept trying to decide whether the trade was a crime, a nuisance, or a source of revenue, and wrote down each answer.

The first answer was revenue. We know because of how it ended: in 1875 the legislature had to pass a law "prohibiting city authorities in Illinois from licensing houses of ill-fame", a bill that turns up in a routine sketch of an alderman's accomplishments, filed between a measure against blacklisting workers and a failed run for mayor. A prohibition on licensing is proof that licensing was happening. For as long as it lasted, the city was taking money from a trade it was also prosecuting.

Banning the licence did not end the arrangement; it made it informal. What informal meant is set down by Lloyd Lewis, and it has nothing to do with morals. When receipts were slow, the police would raid a disorderly house and bring in two or three wagon-loads of women around midnight. The bail bonds were ready and expensive. The women were held as long as was advisable, or until the owner of the house paid the fines or fixed it with the alderman. "Meantime", Lewis writes, "the police stole all they could from the women." The raid was not enforcement. It was a collection, and the women were the inventory. The houses answered with sliding windows on hinges for lookouts and a system of electric bells connecting one to the next, to warn of police, which prompts Lewis's driest aside: "one wonders why, when the police were so harmless."

Then in 1911 the city investigated itself, and produced the most detailed account anyone ever made of how the trade actually worked here. This history reached it for a week through a historian's summary written eighteen years later, and then went and got it, which turned out to matter: the summary had compressed a rate into a headcount, merged two counts of children into one larger number, and put quotation marks around a sentence the report does not contain. Carter Harrison the younger, mayor in his own right eighteen years after his father was shot at the door, charged the Vice Commission in the register this history keeps meeting: "These conditions are with us; to pretend that they do not exist is hypocrisy." Fifteen men and women spent a year at it, funded by a Council in which the First Ward's own aldermen voted aye, and published a volume as thick as an astronomy textbook.

Its findings were arithmetic, not sermon. It put the annual profits of the trade in Chicago at "between 15 and 16 million dollars", and called that an ultra conservative estimate; its own recapitulation for the houses and flats of the three restricted districts alone came to \$6,917,900. And it assigned the demand rather than the roles: "this traffic is a man problem", and "the support of this illicit traffic comes from men."

The five thousand is the number usually quoted from the report, and it is not a headcount. It appears in a sentence about landlords: "ostensibly respectable citizens, both men and women, who are openly renting and leasing property for exorbitant sums, and thus sharing, through immorality of investments, the profits from this Business. A Business which demands a supply of five thousand souls from year to year." A supply, from year to year. Elsewhere the report says why it has to be resupplied: "young girls must be continually supplied to take the place of those who die or are rendered useless by disease. Where do these new victims come from?" The city's own Civil Service Commission put its figure at fifteen thousand a year later, the same government differing from itself threefold inside twelve months.

And it located the cause in a wage. Some department stores paid women clerks six or seven dollars a week, and no woman, the report asserted, could live on less than eight. Two dollars is the whole finding. Lewis records what that did to its readers: "There was a stir in State Street when store-managers read that."

The report also traced immigrant women arriving alone with the addresses of friends pinned to their clothing, met by nobody because the immigrant trains had been sidetracked for richer traffic, and picked up instead by cab-drivers, expressmen and panders.

The commission also counted children, and in doing so found a shape this history will meet again eight years later, on a beach. The 1910 school census gave 3,931 children under twenty-one in the First Ward. Inside the principal restricted district there were 298 of all ages, "from babies in arms to those of twenty years", and sixty-seven of those lived in a single block-long row on South Clark Street whose back windows faced the rear rooms of a row of houses of prostitution fronting the next street.

And the same report found the districts moving toward the wards where Black families lived, and the labour market closing every other door at the same time. It counted 1,475 young colored boys and girls in the First, Second and Third Wards, among the disorderly saloons and assignation rooms, and named the mechanism: "young colored girls are often forced into idleness because of a prejudice against them, and they are eventually forced to accept positions as maids in houses of prostitution. Employment agents do not hesitate to send colored girls" there. It noted, too, that anyone confining their residence to the district west of Wabash and east of Wentworth "would not be apprehended." A district nobody wanted was being moved, by policing and by rent, onto the one population that could not move it back, while the employment agencies pointed at the only door left open. That is the 1919 commission's finding, arrived at in 1911, by a body looking at something else entirely.

Its sharpest paragraph is not about Chicago at all. It is the habit of Americans, the report says, to insist on ethical ideals when they make laws and to refuse to compromise, and then, "having once declared their ideals, to find no difficulty when it comes to the administration of the law in allowing officials to ignore them. This is the basis of graft and the greatest evil in municipal government." A city commission, in 1911, stating the argument of this entire book: the gap is never between the law and the lawless. It is between the law as written and the law as administered.

The end, when it came, was not a change of heart. Harrison was shown a pamphlet advertising Chicago to visitors as a city where two things must not be missed, the stockyards and the Everleigh Club, and closed the club on 24 October 1911 over the protests of his own police officials. The rest of the Levee went in 1912, in the State's Attorney's raids. The open, tolerated, police-regulated district was gone, thirty years after it formed.

The Commission had asked for more than that: rigid suppression, an end to protection, a two-hundred-dollar fine falling equally on the keeper, the inmate, the landlord and the man found in the house, and a Morals Court to try them. The city legislated slowly enough that the mayor was out of office before the wheels turned. What the closing did not do was end the trade, and where the five thousand women went afterwards is not in anything this store holds. The record was thorough about the profits, the landlords, the wages and the children. It stops at the women it had counted.

A few miles west, while the commission was still sitting, the ditch it never mentioned had already been dug.

The reversal

THE PROBLEM WAS NEVER THE RIVER

CHICAGO'S WATER PROBLEM WAS INHERITED, NOT MADE. THE GLACIER left a lake bed that drains badly, a rise of seven feet between two ocean watersheds, and a creek Goode was willing to call an afterthought. The city that grew there drew its drinking water from Lake Michigan and put its waste into a river that emptied into the same lake, a few thousand feet from the intake. Everything that follows is an attempt to get those two facts apart.

It had been going wrong from early. The cholera dead of 1832, whom the fort chapter put into the lake and the pits beside it, went into the water the town drank. That is the whole difficulty in one season, forty years before anyone proposed a solution at scale.

And it came back at census scale. Cholera returned in 1849 and stayed six years: daily death reports in the papers by May of that year, six hundred and thirty dead in 1852, and in 1854, the great cholera season, 1,424 reported dead in a city of perhaps sixty-five thousand, about one resident in forty-five. The response ran ahead of the science in one direction: in February 1851, "chiefly because of the ravages of cholera", the legislature incorporated the Chicago City Hydraulic Company so that citizens might get better water, which is the beginning of the lineage everything in this chapter belongs to. And it ran backwards in the other. When the first scattered cases of 1854 appeared in April, "the public prints and the Board of Health denied their existence", Andreas records, "under the mistaken idea that to deny the existence of an evil goes far toward killing it." In June a train came in carrying Norwegian emigrants with the disease

raging aboard: six dead on the train, a seventh minutes after being carried off. Andreas adds that the disease was "almost confined to the emigrant classes", a sentence about who drank which water, set down as reassurance.

FIRST, THEY RAISED THE CITY

The first answer was not hydraulic but vertical, and an earlier chapter did the lifting: you cannot run a sewer under a town built at the level of a marsh, so the city rose on its jackscrews, and Chesbrough reached past the fouled shore with tunnels out under the lake. Both moves have the same logic, and it is the logic of everything that comes after. The ground is wrong. Change the ground.

Reaching past the filth had a price paid offshore. On 8 October 1884, thirteen years to the day after the fire, a storm overtook fifteen workmen on the Hyde Park crib; ten were swept away and drowned during the night, and nobody on land knew until daylight, when the life-boat went out and took off four. A fifth had trusted himself to a plank and drifted ashore. Andreas files them inside a passage about the life-saving station's equipment costs, so the ten appear as the occasion for a rescue rather than as a toll, and none of them is named.

THE CANAL, AND AN IDEA ABOUT DILUTION

The Illinois and Michigan Canal opened in 1848 and did something nobody had designed it to do. It was cut for trade, turning the commerce of central Illinois away from St Louis and the Gulf and toward the lake and the east. But a channel running from the Chicago River to the Des Plaines is also, if you deepen it, a drain. It runs downhill away from the lake.

The seven feet that had made the portage a portage were now the only thing between Chicago's sewage and the Mississippi watershed. Seven feet

is not much to engineer away.

And the reversal was the canal's first design. The original plan was the deep cut — a channel dug below the level of Lake Michigan, so that the lake itself would feed it and the water would run continuously toward the Illinois. What killed it was not engineering but arithmetic: a legislative committee re-costed the summit division from the engineer's \$5.9 million to \$10.2 million, the state was sliding into bankruptcy, and Davidson and Stuvé record the retreat — "the want of money and anxiety to have any sort of canal, now caused an advocacy of the high level or shallow cut, which could be completed at half the cost". Bucklin's shallow cut ran ten feet above the lake and had to be fed by the Calumet and the Des Plaines; the 1843 financing that revived it was a bondholders' mortgage on the canal itself, recommended in Governor Ford's first message. So when the Sanitary District dug below lake level in the 1890s it was not innovating. It was returning to the first drawing, which a financing decision had shelved for fifty-seven years. The river was reversed in 1900; it was first designed to reverse in the 1830s, and the delay was money.

That has a consequence for who gets the credit. The reversal is popularly laid at Chesbrough's door — the engineer who raised the streets and drove the lake tunnels — and the sequence will not support it. The deep cut was drawn before he came to Chicago, he died in 1886, and the Sanitary District did not break ground until 1892. He inherited the idea. What the digging actually cost, when it finally happened, was eight years of year-round work, twenty-eight miles of channel and something like forty-two million cubic yards of rock and soil moved.

The engineer was against it, for what that is worth. Asked in July 1860 to consider deepening the canal to turn the river, Chesbrough reported that he did not think it advisable, and he doubted the diagnosis as well: the North Branch was offensive in 1861, he pointed out, with not a single sewer emptying into it at ordinary times. He thought the packers

were the cause, which the city's own physicians had been saying since 1863.

Money was the obstacle even to the cheap version. In 1862 Chesbrough tried to reverse the current with pumps alone, at Bridgeport, rather than dig the channel the 1830s plan called for — pumps being what the city could actually afford. The canal itself was too shallow to carry the flow away. State law approving a real reversal followed in 1864; the work was not finished until 1871, at a cost of three million dollars, and even then the current ran so slowly the river still looked stagnant.

And in 1885, fifteen years before the Sanitary District turned the river for good, Andreas wrote the verdict on everything done so far. The highest engineering skill obtainable had been applied and money spent lavishly, and "it must be conceded that thus far only indifferent results have been attained." Pumping lake water in at Fullerton Avenue fouled the North Branch within days and the main river within three or four. The city had spent twenty-five years and three million dollars learning that a half-measure buys a half-measure, and it published the finding in its own standard history before trying again at ten times the scale.

1900

In 1900 the flow was turned. The Sanitary and Ship Canal took the Chicago River and made it run backwards — out of the lake instead of into it, down the Des Plaines and the Illinois to the Mississippi.

Read against the rest of this history, that is the largest single act on this ground. The height of land the whole continent's traffic had bent around, the rise men had hauled boats over for three days at a time with leeches on their legs, the seven feet that decided where a state line would fall — abolished, by the city the seven feet had created. The portage is not crossed at the end of this story. It is removed.

MISSOURI SUES

The state downstream did not wait to see how it went. In January 1900 Missouri filed an original bill in the Supreme Court of the United States against Illinois and the Sanitary District of Chicago; the case was argued that November.

The bill describes the same channel from the other end, and the description belongs beside the celebratory one. Where Chicago had built works to protect its drinking water, Missouri's pleading calls it a drain constructed under Illinois authority to carry off and eventually discharge into the Mississippi the sewage of Chicago, which had previously gone into Lake Michigan — by way of the Des Plaines and the Illinois.

By way of the Des Plaines and the Illinois. That is the portage route, named in a Supreme Court pleading. The water road the French took to reach the Gulf, that Greenville secured for the United States in 1795, that the canal deepened, was now the route by which one city sent its sewage into another state's river.

The stated fear was epidemic disease. Missouri argued that contagious and typhoidal diseases introduced into its river communities might spread through the whole state, and that suits by individuals for their own injuries would be inadequate remedies — which is why a state was suing in its own name.

The symmetry should not be softened. Chicago reversed the river because sewage in Lake Michigan was killing Chicagoans with typhoid. Missouri went to the Supreme Court because the same sewage, sent the other way, would carry typhoid to Missourians. Both are arguing about the same water and both are right about the danger. What separates them is which end of the pipe they live on.

(Only the 1901 ruling is used here — the demurrer stage: the Court held it had jurisdiction and required Illinois to answer. It decided nothing

about whether the sewage harmed anyone. The merits came in 1906 and are not here, so nothing above should be read as an outcome.)

WHAT IT BOUGHT

The civic answer is that the reversal ended Chicago's typhoid crisis, and the agency that maintains the works has never stopped saying so. Its own booklet is headed with the claim that nineteenth-century engineering saved the city. In February 2025 the president of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District published a newspaper piece calling the reversal an engineering triumph that transformed Chicago.

A 2025 analysis puts the immediate effect at about four percent.

Stephenson Strobel's study uses ward-level mortality records and synthetic control methods against the standing claim, and finds the reversal reduced mortality by roughly 4 percent in 1900 — on the order of 985 lives — with the effect concentrated in summer months in a pattern consistent with waterborne disease. Real, and not nothing. But the large declines in Chicago's death rate over the following decades, he argues, required chlorination, water filtration and broader sanitary reform as well. Progress came from layered measures rather than one heroic act.

That paper is a preprint and has not been peer reviewed, and this history says so wherever it uses it. The disagreement is recorded as a disagreement, and not resolved. What can be said without resolving anything is that the difference between "ended the typhoid crisis" and "four percent" is not a rounding error. It is the difference between a story and a measurement.

The city's own water department eventually said something close to the same thing, without being asked and without noticing. Its mid-1950s public booklet boasts of "the lowest typhoid rate of any large city in the United States" and no deaths at all from water-borne disease in 1955 — and credits it to having "improved its water supply and other health mea-

tures", detailing the filtration plants and a chlorine dose of some four hundred pounds per million gallons. That is Strobel's argument, in municipal prose, seventy years before the preprint: the water was made safe by treating it. The reversal is not mentioned.

The doctors had already filed it that way, and earlier. The Chicago Medical Society once laid out a century of its own progress on a single sheet, in four columns, from the first sanitary ordinance of 1833 to the middle 1920s. The drainage canal gets one line in it, "1900 Drainage canal opened", sitting between a typhoid vaccination in 1898 and the state declaring tuberculosis an infectious disease in 1901. Chlorination of the water supply is entered separately, at 1916. Nobody making that sheet was arguing about the reversal; they were listing what the profession had done. On their own chronology the canal is one intervention among forty and the chemistry arrives sixteen years after it.

There is also a witness at ward scale. In the summer of 1902 — two years after the reversal — Jane Addams's ward held "one thirty-sixth of the population of the city" and "one sixth of the total number of deaths" in a typhoid epidemic. The Hull-House investigation that followed, Dr. Alice Hamilton's, traced the fever to broken plumbing and flies, and what it ended in was not hydraulic: a civil service trial of half the Sanitary Bureau and the discharge of eleven of its twenty-four employees, the inspectors having been, in Addams's words, "either criminally careless or open to the arguments of favored landlords". Turning the river did not reach a ward whose inspectors were bought. The engineering was necessary. The nineteenth ward is the proof it was not sufficient.

THE RIVER LEAKED BACKWARDS

Then the federal government answered the question by accident, in a document nobody was meant to read closely.

In 1976, justifying the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan, the Environmental Protection Agency listed its purposes. Among them: to prevent further pollution of Lake Michigan due to backflow.

Read that against 1900. The river was reversed precisely so that sewage would stop reaching the lake. Seventy-six years later the United States is proposing to spend on the order of half a billion dollars — Phase I construction alone, chosen from fifty-one alternative subplans — partly in order to stop sewage flowing back into the lake. In heavy rain the reversal reverses.

That statement sets its own baseline. Before the tunnels, storm overflows discharged straight into the area's streams and rivers roughly a hundred times a year, with pollutant concentrations already past the state's own water quality standards. Twice a week, seventy-six years after the problem was supposed to have been solved.

AND THE TUNNELS DID NOT FINISH IT EITHER

The Deep Tunnel was dug. It is still being dug, in the sense that reservoirs continue to come online decades after Phase I.

In its own stormwater strategy the City of Chicago sets out what happens when the system fills: when the treatment plants are at capacity the flow goes to TARP, and when TARP is also full, the mixture of sewage and stormwater overflows through roughly two hundred combined sewer outfalls — into the river, the North Shore Channel, the Sanitary and Ship Canal, Lake Calumet, and Bubbly Creek, which is the stockyards' old open sewer.

The strategy notes that close to sixty percent of the city's land is now paved or built on, in surfaces designed to shed water as fast as possible. Which is the last turn of the argument: having spent a century and a half making the ground shed water faster, the current municipal answer is to slow the water down and let the ground absorb it again.

The district keeps the running total itself. Its own 2025 seminar materials count "at least 15 extreme rainfall events in 75 years" and "at least \$1.6 billion in flood damages" in current dollars — the same agency, in the same year, that called the reversal an engineering triumph. Both statements are true, and the district publishes them both without appearing to notice.

THE SHAPE AGAIN, IN A DIFFERENT WATER

Fifteen years after the reversal, the river took more lives in one morning than any other day in Chicago's history, and the cause was a safety law. The river had rehearsed it, verdict included. On 19 September 1856 the Lake House ferry, overloaded, capsized with North Side labourers hastening to work across the river, and twelve to fifteen of them drowned. The coroner's jury found the victims died of "the imprudence of the people, in rushing in too great numbers upon an unseaworthy boat": the drowned blamed and the boat called unseaworthy in one sentence, with nobody in the verdict responsible for the boat. Hold that finding; it is about to scale.

It is a Saturday morning in July and the families are dressed for a picnic. The Eastland lies at her wharf between Clark and LaSalle, taking on some two and a half thousand Western Electric people and their children for the Hawthorne Works outing — the one day of the year the company gave them. About ten thousand more are on the riverfront: poultry and grocery merchants, their customers, other Western Electric families queuing for the other boats.

She begins to list toward the river. It takes about two minutes. At forty-five degrees she goes over — "like a dead jungle monster shot through the heart", wrote a reporter named Carl Sandburg, covering it for the "International Socialist Review". By half past seven she is lying on her side in twenty feet of water, still tied to the dock.

Because she settled against the wharf rather than away from it, a number of people simply stepped over the starboard rail and walked along the exposed hull to the street without wetting their feet. The captain was one of them. Everyone below and on the far side went into the river. "Those on the upper deck were hurled off like so many ants being brushed from a table", wrote Harlan Babcock of the "Chicago Herald". "In an instant the surface of the river was black with struggling, crying, frightened, drowned humanity. Wee infants floated about like corks."

844 people died — in about twenty feet of water, a few yards from a downtown street, on a boat that never left the wharf, on the one river this history has been following since the ice.

The reason she rolled is the reason this chapter exists. After the Titanic went down in 1912, Congress required lifeboats for three-quarters of a vessel's passengers. The Eastland had been designed for six lifeboats; by July 1915 she carried eleven, plus thirty-seven life rafts at something like half a ton each, plus jackets for every soul aboard — and most of it stowed high. Nobody tested what the weight did to a hull that had no keel, relied on ballast tanks to stay upright, and had nearly capsized once already in 1904 with three thousand aboard. A naval architect warned during the drafting that such boats would "turn turtle" with that much added on the upper decks. Too few legislators listened.

The men who owned her had not been paying attention either. An officer of the company that bought her testified at the inquest, a few days after: "I didn't know much about the boat except that we got it at a bargain. All I do is sign blank checks."

So the lifeboats put there by the last disaster capsized the ship. Hold that beside everything above it: the river turned to keep sewage out of the lake, and leaking back into the lake by 1976; the tunnels dug to catch the overflow, and overflowing through two hundred outfalls; the ground sealed to shed water faster, and now being unsealed to slow it down. The Eastland is the same sentence in a different water, and the shortest version

anyone ever wrote of it: 844 dead of a safety measure, at a dock, without leaving the wharf.

THE DISEASE IT COULD NOT DIG FOR

Everything above is a problem the city could excavate. Not all of what killed Chicagoans was.

Tuberculosis was the other great killer of the tenement decades and no channel reached it. What the city did instead deserves its place here, because it is the one time in these pages that Chicago taxed itself for the sick. A bill of January 1908 let any Illinois city levy a four mill sanitarium tax if its voters approved at a referendum. The enabling amendment passed both houses on 10 March 1909 and was signed on the 11th, the deadline for filing petitions was the 12th, and the sanitarium's own history records a thousand signatures got in twenty-four hours. But the objection raised against the site was not medical. Neighbours feared infection spreading through the district and a decline in land values, and the board answered on exactly that ground, citing cities where sanatoria had lowered death rates and raised land values. Nobody in the recorded argument speaks from the position of the sick. Forty years on, the institution those votes built was handing its patients a booklet that called the grounds exceptionally beautiful and told them not to keep food on the window sills.

Then came something the four mills could not touch. Influenza appeared in Chicago early in September 1918, and at its height, across eight weeks from late September to mid-November, the city was seeing more than two thousand new cases of influenza and pneumonia a day and burying more than five hundred people a day. Set that against the two worst days this book has: the Iroquois Theatre took something over six hundred in an afternoon, the Eastland 844 in a morning, and both are remembered as the disasters they were. The epidemic was doing an Eastland every two days, for two months, and it has no chapter anywhere.

There was no channel to cut for it. It is the one catastrophe in this history the city could not relocate, and it is the one it says least about.

THE SHAPE OF IT

Burnham saw the shape and read it as triumph. The "Plan of Chicago" of 1909 lists the city's four greatest works — "the raising of the grades of the city, the creation of a complete system of parks and boulevards, and the building of the Drainage Canal", alongside the World's Fair — and groups them exactly as this history does, as one continuous act of changing the ground rather than four separate projects. He was writing nine years after the reversal, with Missouri's suit still in the courts, and he gives the canal's origin in the civic phrasing: "the purification of the water of Lake Michigan by the diversion of the sewage", at a cost of sixty million dollars. The same four works, the same sequence, the opposite conclusion.

Five accounts of one act, across a hundred and twenty-five years, and they do not agree:

- 1901 — a neighbouring state swears the channel is a drain aimed at its river.
- 1976 — the federal government proposes to spend half a billion dollars partly to stop the river leaking back into the lake.
- 2014 — the city records that when everything is full, the sewage still goes into the river through two hundred outfalls.
- 2025 — the agency that maintains the works calls it an engineering triumph.
- 2025 — a measurement puts the immediate effect at four percent.

None of them is lying. The engineering triumph and the four percent are answers to different questions; the 1901 accusation and the 1976 admis-

sion are the same complaint made by different governments seventy-five years apart.

What the sequence shows is not failure. It is that a solution at this scale does not end a problem, it relocates it — downstream, downward, or into the future. The portage was crossed, then canalised, then abolished; the lake was fouled, then reversed away from, then leaked back into; the overflow was drained, then tunnelled, then let out through two hundred outfalls anyway.

Each solution is the next problem's cause. That is not a flourish; it is the order the documents come in. The portage was crossed, then dug through, then abolished, and the water has been going somewhere it was not meant to go ever since.

What the city says about itself

OFFICIAL SELF-DESCRIPTION IS A GENRE OF EVIDENCE IN ITS OWN right, because the gap between what a city says of itself and what its record shows is frequently the story.

In 1947 Chicago published a report to its people saying that Chicagoans of all faiths, national origins and racial strains had worked together. In those same years its Commission on Human Relations was recording, in a five year report published in 1952, the violence at the Airport Homes veterans' project, two Black veterans' families who needed help to get milk and ice delivered, and shots fired through a window in February 1947. The commission named the mechanism too: "years of agitation to maintain segregation had magnified the fears of white property owners", so that every small incident carried the seeds of explosion. Some Chicagoans, it records, opposed the veterans' housing programme precisely because it treated white and Black veterans alike.

Neither document is lying about the facts it reports. One is a city describing itself to its citizens; the other is a city investigating itself. The same government published both, five years apart.

The Commission did not stop in 1947. In July 1961 its own research department published census data on where Chicago's Negro population had actually moved over the previous decade — from 14 to 23 percent of the city, concentrated in fifteen of seventy-five community areas, gains and losses named tract by tract: some neighbourhoods cleared by urban renewal, Douglas and Grand Boulevard among them, and others absorbing the growth, North Lawndale and Englewood among them. It reprinted, without comment, a University of Chicago professor's description of

how the market did this — ageing suburban housing turning "invadable", a "breakthrough point" past which a neighbourhood's racial composition could flip fast. The same agency that told the public in 1947 that everyone had worked together was, by 1961, mapping precisely where they had not.

And the 1947 report — the cheerful one — is where O'Hare is announced. On its own pages, a few leaves from the assurance about racial strains, the city reports steps taken "to make Chicago the air capital of the globe by constructing the world's greatest airport on the Douglas site at the northwest edge of the city" — the wartime aircraft plant at Orchard Place, which is why the airport's code is still ORD. One booklet, one year: a promise about how Chicagoans treat each other, and a promise about the crossing. Only the second was kept.

The crossing promise is the one the city has never stopped making. Bross argued Chicago from Dakota wheat in 1880, Goode from the glacier in 1926, Church's schoolbook told nine-year-olds in 1931 that it was "at times a fort, at others a warehouse, again a trading station, but always a junction point", and the Department of Aviation's 2025 guide calls it a "crossroads of commerce, innovation, and connectivity". Four vehicles, one argument, a hundred and forty-five years. The rail count in that 2025 airport document is the same land-grant system Douglas bent toward the lake.

The genre is worst when it is doing arithmetic. Harper's 1921 volume — the title is "History and Forecast" — promotes an estimate of 4,267,803 Chicagoans by 1950 and extends it, "to be conservative", past five million by the fire's centennial. Growth as a law of nature, written down in the decade it stopped being one.

The 1906 civics manual "for the citizen, the teacher and the student" is more revealing still, because it teaches the machine without noticing: the Mayor at \$10,000, an alderman at \$1,500 — and the Treasurer "not paid a salary, but ... allowed twenty-five per cent of the interest accruing

on city deposits". Fifteen hundred dollars was not an alderman's income; it was the ante. Schoolchildren were handed the arithmetic, and nobody in the book finds it remarkable.

What the city hands its schoolchildren about 1812 has been revised twice in twenty-one years, and the revisions are the document. The state's own classroom leaflet still heads the section Fort Dearborn Massacre and glosses the word in the margin, massacre, the violent killing of a number of people, with the sympathies where the nineteenth century left them: the settlers were frightened, it was very bad for the settlers in Illinois, the horrible event. The Chicago History Museum's after-school kit goes the other way. Its Fort Dearborn lesson is historical fiction in the voice of Rebecca Heald, it opens by asking the class to find the first star on the city flag and reminding them that the star is this fort, and in one thousand two hundred and ninety-two words it never once uses the word massacre. It is fair about the grievance, naming Tippecanoe burned and Harrison forcing the cessions, saying the Potawatomi were farmers of corn and squash and beans who stood to lose the ground they farmed. Then it asks the child to imagine packing a trunk. In 2012 the same museum held a bicentennial day for what its programme called the Battle of Fort Dearborn, with a Reconciliation and Memorial Program and the dead of both sides counted in one sentence. In 2024 it reissued the kit with the Fort Dearborn activity taken out, and said so in the filename. Neither version lies about a fact. The first could not bring itself to the word, the second found a different one and counted the Potawatomi dead beside the settlers, and the third stopped teaching it at all. That is not a museum failing at history. It is a city working out in public, at the pace of a generation, what it is prepared to say about the killing it puts first on its own flag.

Nor does Flinn's handbook of 1891, listing where the city's charities got their money. The Erring Woman's Refuge and the House of the Good Shepherd lived on percentages of police-court fines. The police

pension fund drew two per cent of the saloon and dramshop licences, shares of the pawnshop, second-hand and junk dealer licences, and "all moneys collected for fees for carrying concealed weapons" — a retirement funded by the trades the officers policed. And the Washingtonian Home, which treated alcoholics, took a percentage of the saloon licence money, capped at twenty thousand dollars a year. The cure was financed by the disease, by act of the general assembly, and printed in a guidebook as ordinary municipal arrangement.

The genre works at neighbourhood scale too, and there it is franker. In 1926 a resident of Beverly Hills wrote seven articles on her own district for the local weekly, and what she offers as its character is a list of absences: no hotel, no restaurant except in connection with a bakery, no moving picture theatre, one apartment house, no street car inside the district at all, and most of the houses occupied by their owners and standing in well-kept grounds. Every absence is a filter. Nowhere to lodge without an invitation, no fare-priced transit, and capital needed to hold any of it. She is concealing nothing. She is describing a screen and calling it a community, and the first bank had opened four months before she wrote.

Two years later and eleven miles north the same genre is selling something. A souvenir book for the opening of a widened Elston Avenue, dated 15 December 1928, was got up by the Elston Avenue Development Association, underwritten by the Mayfair Chamber of Commerce and assisted by thirteen improvement associations, one of which was called the Watch-Us-Grow Improvement Club. The lead article is "Elston Avenue, From an Indian Trail to a City Street", and it opens by setting the avenue beside the Appian Way, the Strand and Unter den Linden. The trail is the origin story and the origin story is the pitch: the people who made the road are the romance of the first page and absent from every page after. Across from the article a bank advertises. "FOR A SAFE INVESTMENT Buy Our Bank Made 6% First Mortgages and Gold Bonds." That is December 1928. Nobody in the book knows what is ten months out.

And the genre's latest entry is the stormwater strategy the last chapter ended on — the city stating, in its own document, that when the plants and the tunnels are both full the sewage still finds the river through two hundred outfalls, and that sixty percent of its ground is sealed against the rain. It is the most honest thing in this chapter, which is its own kind of progress: the city that told its people in 1947 that everyone had worked together now publishes its overflow points with coordinates.

Who counted whom

CHICAGO'S FIRST POPULATION FIGURES WERE NOT COUNTED AT ALL. Andreas says so himself: no enumeration of the inhabitants survives from 1833, the numbers then circulating ran from a hundred and fifty to a thousand, and every one of them was an estimate "based on the whims, impressions, or rumors of the time". So he reconstructed the town from the only hard number anyone had kept, which was the vote. Twenty-eight men voted at the first town election; he allowed five people to a voter and published a resident population of 140 for August 1833. He used the method again for 1844, turning 2,426 votes into 12,130 people.

Sit with what that means. The franchise in Illinois then ran to white men of twenty-one, resident six months or holding real estate. A population derived by multiplying it does not omit women, Black residents and the unnaturalised; it includes them, as somebody else's coefficient. They are in the total, at a rate of four to a voter, and nowhere else in it.

The first real city census, on 1 July 1837, did count them, and its own addition repays following: 3,989 white residents, 77 black, making 4,066, and then 104 sailors "belonging to vessels owned here" added on to reach 4,170. That last figure is the one the city has repeated ever since as the population it started from. It counts men who lived on boats as residents because the boats had Chicago owners. The city's founding number is part census, part shipping register.

And the dead were not counted at all until June 1851, when the first mortuary report was compiled from returns the undertakers made to the

City Sexton. A death that never reached the burial trade never reached the record.

Counting could also simply be declined. In 1876 the sitting Council refused to canvass the 33,004 votes a mass meeting's nominee had received for mayor, and the city briefly had two of them, until a judge ruled that neither man could sustain the office. And in the tally-sheet case of 1884 the canvassing board certified returns "as it appeared on the face of the poll-book and tally-sheet" while a federal grand jury was matching the substituted tally-sheet's handwriting to its forger. The count went forward at full formality around papers known to be forged. Asked whether his production order reached the ballots themselves, Judge Blodgett answered: "If the jury want them, the order covers the ballots."

Twice the city was surveyed by people who lived in what they were surveying, and both times the counting was the argument. In 1895 the residents of Hull-House published maps of wages and nationality for the congested district around Halsted Street — street by street, household by household. They were women, they lived there, and they were explicit about method: they kept the colours of Charles Booth's London wage maps, importing an English poverty-survey technique wholesale, and each writer signed her own chapter. Their prefatory note is disarming about what they were: residents whose energies had gone mainly to constructive work rather than to investigation, who had done the survey anyway.

Look at what that survey actually did. Every lot on the map was coloured — in one map the birthplace of each individual, in the other the wage of each family — with the street names and house numbers printed so that "the reader can find any address", and a key attached so the reader could check the compilers' symbols against their claims. Hold that shape in mind. It comes back later in this chapter, inverted.

And then look at the rule underneath the colours, because the survey's own method note contains a decision the map cannot show.

Nationality was recorded by asking, but for the youngest it was assigned: "All under ten years of age who were not" pupils in the public school, and not of American extraction, were classified with their parents as foreigners. A child born on Halsted Street to Italian parents, not yet in school, is coloured as Italian on a map of who is foreign. That is not a lie and it is not hidden; it is printed in the book with the maps. But it means the most careful survey anyone made of that district manufactured a small part of the foreignness it measured, by a rule about who counts as from here. This history has spent chapters on records that could not see what they were looking at. It owes the same reading to the document it most admires.

Twenty-four years later the state did the same thing under worse circumstances. On 27 July 1919 Eugene Williams, seventeen, drowned while swimming off Twenty-ninth Street. The beach was not a supervised public one; it was reached across the railway tracks along the lake shore, and — the Commission is careful about this — "it was used by both races". What followed killed thirty-eight people, twenty-three Black and fifteen white, injured 537, required the state militia, and was not reckoned over until 6 August.

Governor Lowden appointed a commission with Black and white members to find out why. It reported in 1922, at about 350,000 words.

Three of its findings carry the structure. The people the riot fell on had mostly just arrived: 44,103 Black Chicagoans in 1910, 109,594 in 1920, a rise of 148 per cent, drawn by war industry and by what the commission heard called the "top of the world". What they arrived into was already under bombardment — from July 1917 to March 1921 the commission counts fifty-eight bombs thrown at Black homes and at the agents who sold to them, one every twenty days for nearly four years, against which the police apprehended two suspects and tried neither. The boundary those bombs marked was also being drawn in quieter rooms. The commission records a real estate board president explaining that "not

much financing could be expected from white people unless boundaries were allotted to the Negroes, so that investors in loans would know definitely what to expect" — redlining named as a precondition thirteen years before the federal maps the practice is usually dated from — and, in the same chapter, that the big loan houses would not write small mortgages at all, one of them considering nothing under half a million dollars. The line was held by explosives at its edge and by underwriting at its centre. And the riot itself was organised: the commission concludes that "but for" the white gangs styled athletic clubs — seeded in the district just west of the Black belt, by the stockyards — "it is doubtful if the riot would have gone beyond the first clash". The yards fed the city, and the yards' neighbourhoods fed the riot.

Why the gangs were by the stockyards is a national fact with a local address. Through the 1920s and 1930s, the Park Service's labour study records, African Americans barely appear in northern manufacturing for one reason — exclusion — enforced from both directions at once: "hiring practices of employers and informal and organized opposition from White workers". And during big strikes some employers hired Black workers to keep production up, "which further exacerbated tensions between White and Black workers". An estimated thirty thousand entered steel during the 1919 strike alone. Unions in the mills had a record of "either ignoring African Americans or segregating them", so some saw strikebreaking as the only way past a door otherwise shut. Two groups of working people were introduced to each other as threats before they were ever introduced as neighbours. That is the machinery under the beach.

The commission set out how the door was held, and it had two hinges. Chicago locals that excluded the Negro did so "either in conformity with the laws of their national unions or in the exercise of 'local option'." The first was written down: eight American Federation of Labor national unions and four railway brotherhoods barred him by constitutional provision. The second needed nothing written at all. Where a

national body had adopted the progressive policy, a local could nullify it by requiring a majority or a two-thirds vote for admission, and the vote never had to give a reason.

Between the two sat a third method, which is the one worth keeping. The Machinists' Union complied in its constitution with the Federation's policy of no racial discrimination and was, the commission reports, frequently referred to as barring the Negro anyway "by a provision in its secret ritual." A rule that satisfies the written policy and defeats it, kept where no member of the public and no journalist could read it. The Electricians' Union needed no ritual to show the result. It had, in Chicago, one Negro member out of eleven thousand.

Somebody named it from the inside at the time. Among the recommendations the commission recorded from Black Chicagoans is a physician's, and it walks straight into the bind: "Negroes should join labor unions and refuse to serve as strike breakers", because breaking strikes "creates race friction and cheapens labor" — and yet a square deal from the unions comes "only when they have joined them in sufficient numbers to demand justice". Where a union would not have them, he says, they should form their own groups and bargain collectively. He asks, first on his list, for a permanent biracial commission to adjust difficulties, and for rigid enforcement of the laws already on the books. The commission that wrote his words down was biracial and temporary, and the laws stayed unenforced.

And it has an ending that should be said plainly. Black and Latino workers became newcomers to northern industry "when industry was no longer expanding in the region and when manufacturing jobs were shifting overseas; ultimately, they would inherit districts of abandoned factories." The doors opened at the moment the rooms were being emptied.

What people do when every door is held is build another building, and Chicago has a long record of that which the commission barely touches. The list of doors is not a figure of speech. Up through the 1950s,

Black Chicagoans were denied entrance to the city's private hospitals, to parks and to public schools outside the Black Belt, along with lodging houses, orphanages and private homes for the elderly. So the institutions were made instead: the Phyllis Wheatley Home, the Louise Juvenile Home, the Amanda Smith Home for Girls, and one that began in a front room. In 1893 Gabriella Knighten Smith, a seamstress, took four elderly people into her house with the help of Fannie Mason, Joanna Snowden Porter and Maggie Stewart. It became the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People, later the Jane Dent Home, and Black Chicagoans kept it running for seventy-eight years on subscriptions from women's clubs, of which roughly a hundred and fifty had been organised in the city by 1915.

Its ending is the part to keep. By 1960 the state was pressing the Home to upgrade its building, install sprinklers, post menus and add more citrus to the residents' diet, and in November 1966 the Secretary of State closed it temporarily. Read one way that is a regulator doing its job on an under-capitalised institution, which it also is. Read another, it is a city that spent seventy years keeping people out of the institutions their taxes helped pay for, and then held the thing they built instead to the standard of the ones they had been kept out of. Sprinklers cost money. So does citrus.

Then the commission counted the counting itself. Twice as many Black defendants as white, twice as many Black indictments — and twice as many Black injured, which cannot all be read the same way, and the commission does not read it that way: the figures "suggest the conclusion that whites were not apprehended as readily as Negroes". The state criminologist gave it the mechanism in testimony — officers believed they were taking fewer chances if they "soaked" a colored man. Even the riot's arithmetic was administered.

It shows in a pair of numbers the commission set side by side. Of the murder and manslaughter bookings in Chicago over the six years to 1919,

Negroes were charged with 17.1 per cent of the murders and 4.1 per cent of the manslaughters. The same people, the same city, the same six years, and the lesser charge is where they nearly vanish. The commission names the reason in its own voice: a disposition, "conscious or unconscious, to arrest Negroes more freely than whites, to book them on more serious charges, to convict them more readily, and to give them longer sentences." What looks in the totals like a difference in conduct is partly a difference in what an officer wrote on the sheet.

Then it stopped counting on purpose. The commission had planned comparative racial crime tables and abandoned them, saying it thought it best "to avoid giving currency to figures which carried such clear evidence of their own inaccuracy and misrepresentation." That is a body appointed to produce findings declining to publish the one kind of figure everybody would have quoted, because it knew what the figures were made of. Set it beside the gang database ninety-seven years later, whose birth dates before 1901 and ages entered as zero did not stop anyone using it.

And where it wanted to count, it found the city had not. "Since the Board of Education keeps no record of Negro children as such, it could not furnish a list of the schools having a percentage of Negro children", so the commission built the list itself, taking boundaries from the board and percentages from the census. What it found once it could look is a school called Fuller, a branch of Felsenthal, sharing a principal and standing in a neighbourhood with practically the same proportion of Negro residents, and holding a very different proportion of the Negro children. A principal who believed in separate schools had no ordinance to enforce and did not need one. Two buildings and a catchment did the work.

Set that beside the 1947 pair in the chapter above — the city assuring its people that every racial strain had worked together while its own commission logged shots through a Black veteran's window. Illinois has investigated itself thoroughly and more than once. What it has not done is carry the findings forward.

It did it again in 1968, and that time the country was looking. On 4 April Martin Luther King was killed in Memphis, the West Side burned along a twenty-eight-block stretch of West Madison Street, eleven people died, and Mayor Richard J. Daley gave the order his own police superintendent then softened: shoot to kill arsonists, shoot to maim looters. Four months later the Democratic convention came to town, and the delegates met at the International Amphitheatre on South Halsted Street, which is to say on the stockyards, the ground this history has followed since it was bought as a valueless marsh in 1865. While they nominated a candidate, the police cleared Grant Park and Michigan Avenue seven miles north.

The federal commission that examined it took statements from 3,437 eyewitnesses and participants, more than twenty thousand pages, a hundred and eighty hours of film, twelve thousand photographs, and reported on 1 December under the title *Rights in Conflict*. Its finding is careful and it is not hedged: what happened in Old Town on those nights had "the presence of what can only be called a police riot." The response was "unrestrained and indiscriminate police violence... particularly at night", and it was "inflicted upon persons who had broken no law, disobeyed no order, made no threat. These included peaceful demonstrators, onlookers, and large numbers of residents."

One count in it belongs to this history rather than to that week. Of about three hundred newsmen assigned to the convention, more than sixty were hurt, had their equipment damaged, or were arrested; sixty-three were physically attacked by police; and in thirteen cases the cameras and recorders were broken on purpose. "Newsmen and photographers were singled out for assault, and their equipment deliberately damaged", the report says, and it quotes what officers were heard saying first: the word is being passed to get newsmen; get the camera. The crowd outside the Hilton was chanting that the whole world was watching, and the instruments by which it watched were being taken apart one at a time. A centu-

ry earlier the army had stopped the Chicago Times's presses on a general's order. This time the record survived, and the commission used twelve thousand photographs of it to write the finding down.

Then the finding went where the others went.

The most recent time it investigated itself, the subject was a list. In 2019 the city's own Office of Inspector General reviewed the police department's gang database and found 134,242 people designated over twenty years, of whom "Black or African American and Latinx males comprise 91.3%". It found the data "incomplete and contradictory" — blank and conflicting identification numbers, birth dates before 1901, ages entered as zero — and more than fifteen thousand people listed with no gang named and no reason given. Those designated "are not notified" and have "no ability to appeal". The department does not regularly review, correct or purge the file. "Once designated, an individual is listed as a gang member in CPD's systems forever."

That is the Hull-House map turned over. There the compilers printed the house numbers and attached a key so a reader could check their claims; here the people are the entries, and they are never shown the page.

A hundred years after a commission counted arrests and concluded that whites were not being apprehended as readily, the counting is still the argument, and it is still being done to the same people. The difference is that this count has no exit.

And note where the 1919 riot started. That lake is the water the city drank; the water the cholera dead of 1832 were put into for want of burial; the water the river was turned around in 1900 to protect. It is also the edge along which the city's segregation was enforced without anyone having to write it down.

Ten years before Eugene Williams drowned, the "Plan of Chicago" had settled the question of that shore in six words. "The Lake front by right belongs to the people", Burnham wrote — arguing it, characteristically, from the view: there are no mountains here, so the lake is the only

place a person can see to a horizon, and such sights "beget calm thoughts and feelings, and afford escape from the petty things of life". It is the most consequential sentence in Chicago planning and the reason the shore is public today. It is also a right asserted in a book. Which people, and which stretch of water, was settled on the sand in 1919 by boys throwing stones.

What the record does not carry

A STORE LIKE THIS ONE KEEPS DISCOVERING THINGS ABOUT ITSELF, and they add up to an argument the rest of this history only implies.

The oldest example in the store is from 1674, and it decided who discovered the place. Jolliet's papers went into the Lachine rapids with his canoe; Marquette's journal reached the Jesuit superior intact. Kellogg states the consequence without ceremony: since the journal "is the only extant record of the expedition, the belief has gone abroad that Marquette, not Jolliet, was the leader. The priest himself never made such a claim." The surviving document assigned the leadership. That is this store's whole argument, three and a half centuries early: what the record carries decides what the record is believed to say.

It still operates, and on nobody less than Burnham. The most famous sentence he is supposed to have written — "make no little plans" — appears nowhere in the Plan of Chicago: not the phrase, not any variant, in eighty-two thousand searchable words. It reached the language by attribution after his death, and the centennial that honoured the Plan a hundred years on led with it anyway. The most quoted line of the most famous document in Chicago's history is a line the document does not contain.

The professions filed it under the same heading. When the Chicago Medical Society set out a century of its own progress on one sheet, the Fire appears in the column of medical milestones, between diarrhoeal diseases being highly fatal in 1870 and the microscope reaching America in

1873, and the entry is four words long: "1871 Chicago fire; records lost". Not a disaster. A gap in the series.

One night in this city destroyed more of the record than any other event in it, and the losses are itemised. The Chicago Historical Society burned with the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation inside it, along with 1,738 files of newspapers reaching back to the earliest settlement of the Northwest and 4,689 manuscripts. What came out of the ruins was two fragments of books and one specimen jar: "all were lost; and this disgusting vial alone remains." The Academy of Sciences had built itself a fireproof building after an earlier fire, and its reputation for safety had drawn other people's collections in for keeping, so the fire took those too. The Post Office vault failed by construction, its fireproof doors hung on hinges each bolted to a single brick. Even the recorders went unrecorded: Andreas, compiling his press chapter, notes that where isolated numbers of a newspaper had been "exhumed from the ashes of the great fire", the date of the paper's own death still could not be fixed. The trade that dated everything cannot be dated from its remains.

And the one archive that came through untouched came through by being despised: nine years of theatrical licence petitions survived in the original City Hall vault, which Andreas, finding them, calls "the only compartment worthy of the name", the flame assailing its walls in vain. The record that lived was the one filed where nobody thought anything valuable was kept.

Every Cook County record burned, and the legislature had to pass a special act so that owners could re-establish title to their own land. What actually carried the titles afterwards was a private substitute: the abstract books the title firms had run out of the fire, which were held sufficient to establish the county's ownership records. The public record did not go missing and did not go unread. It was replaced by a commercial one, and the replacement held. Who owns Chicago rests on what a handful of firms happened to carry out of a burning building.

The replacement had been prepared, though nobody could have known what for. Seven years before the fire, a half interest in one of those private index sets was bought by Louis D. Hoard, lately clerk of the circuit court and recorder of Cook County. The man who had kept the public record bought into the commercial duplicate of it, and in 1871 the duplicate became the only copy. Andreas tells this as a service, which it was. It is also how a county office becomes a private monopoly without anyone doing anything wrong on any particular day.

That is the first way a record fails: made, and lost. The second is quieter. Two of the documents behind these pages are public records that were published as unreadable page images: the Chicago Commission on Human Relations' report of 1952 and the Deep Tunnel's 1976 Environmental Impact Statement, 587 pages between them. Nobody restricted either. They simply could not be searched, quoted or indexed by anyone who had not rendered and machine-read the whole of both. An Environmental Impact Statement exists to be argued with — it is what a public gets to read before a thing is built. Being public and being readable are different things, and the gap between them is where arguments go to die.

There is a third failure, and it is the bleakest of them, because nothing went wrong. In 1938 P. K. Wrigley hired Coleman Griffith — the man now called the father of American sport psychology — to put the Chicago Cubs on a scientific footing. Griffith and an assistant filmed the players, measured them, and wrote "more than 600 pages of reports" in two years. The reports were delivered, and legible, and read by the men with the power to act on them, and those men — "most notably the managers" — set about undermining the work. Nothing was lost, suppressed or made unreadable. It simply changed nothing. Being public and being readable are different things; so are being read and being heeded.

And there is a fourth way, which the other three do not reach, because it is the only one that acts on a person. A record can be wrong

about someone who is never told it exists and has no way to answer it. The inspector general's finding about the police gang file is exactly that: inaccurate, consequential, unreviewed, and closed to its own subject — "those with inaccurate designations have no opportunity to clear their name". The first three failures are about what a record does for a reader. This one is about what a record does to a person.

The country did once fund the closing of that second gap — public but not readable — and it took a depression. The WPA's Historical Records Survey — undertaken, its own preface says, "for the purpose of providing useful employment to needy unemployed historians, lawyers, teachers, and research and clerical workers" — inventoried the county archives of America paper by paper, so a historian could search the unprinted record "in the same way he uses the library card catalog". The Shelby County volume in this store is number 86 of the Illinois series alone. Legibility at that scale has been funded exactly once, by catastrophe, and nothing has funded it since.

Sometimes the record is all that survives the recording. The National Park Service's survey of historic railroad stations counts fifty-one recorded since 1959 in response to "the crisis of the railroads" — and at least a dozen of those demolished anyway, "almost all of them in large urban centers: Pennsylvania Station in New York, Chicago's Grand Central, and Broad St. Station in Philadelphia", with the Service's own caveat that "documentary records can never be a substitute for viable structures". The survey as hospice: measured drawings and photographs of buildings it could not save, saying so itself.

Then the asymmetry of who gets written about carefully. The Association of American Railroads needed 88,000 words in 1951 merely to list what had been published about one Illinois railroad in a century. Nine years later, the local history of the Potawatomi of Kankakee County was written by two fourth-grade classes and a sixth, printed, and shelved

in a university library. One subject got a reference librarian and a federal trade association. The other got nine-year-olds.

This store has holes of exactly that shape, and one is worth naming because it is recent enough that there is no excuse of distance. Greektown, for much of the early twentieth century the largest community of Greeks in any American city, stood where the University of Illinois at Chicago stands now. Nothing in these pages says how that happened or where those people went. The clearance is inside living memory, the paperwork exists, and the absence here is not the archive's failure but this store's.

The trade press made the record's own argument in 1930. "X Marks the Spot", the picture-book of the beer wars, opens with its own theory of evidence: that "with the country-wide publication of the massacre photograph, public indifference to Gangland's crimes came to an abrupt end" — one image doing what years of column-inches had not, "a more powerful example of the defiance of law and order", an editor is quoted saying, "than could be drawn by twenty-five columns of editorials". Two newspapermen restoring the bodies their own papers' retouchers had blotted out and replaced with an X. Whether the death picture was civic medicine or circulation strategy this store does not rule on. It files the claim as the record's own argument about what a record can do.

Who the book was for

THE RECORD DOES NOT ONLY FAIL. IT SELECTS, AND THE SELECTION has a stated method more than once, the earlier statement being the more damaging. Andreas's preface in 1884 sets out the biographical rule plainly: sketches are given of "those men who were identified with early Chicago", included because "the interest attaching to their public work" makes a reader want their personal records. Men, for public work. Women are not absent from the volume, which is the interesting part: "Mrs." appears in it something like seven hundred and sixty-five times. They are densely present as attached names and almost wholly absent as subjects.

His own index settles how far that goes. The Biographical Mention list for the second volume runs from Abbott to Ziegfeld and holds 737 people, of whom eight are women. The ones who get in are teachers, physicians at the women's medical college, singers, and a few widows keeping a dead husband's shop: that is, women with a separate women's institution behind them to justify the entry. None is a merchant, a banker, a lawyer or a member of the Board of Trade, which is where nearly all the other sketches live. Myra Bradwell forced the Illinois Supreme Court to refuse her a law licence twice, first for being married and then simply for being a woman. Andreas even says the rule aloud: writing her up, he notes that her life would otherwise have become incorporated with her husband's "in the ordinary course of events." That is not a description of Bradwell. It is the editorial policy, stated as physics.

Two women run the Sanitary Commission and its fairs through twenty passages of his war chapters, appointing delegations, inspecting hospi-

tals, going east for money. Mrs. Hoge and Mrs. Livermore are not in the index. Mr. Hoge is.

No Black Chicagoan is a subject anywhere in the three volumes. John Jones, county commissioner and one of the wealthiest Black men in the West, gets a single sentence, and it is not Andreas writing: it sits inside a long quotation from an abolitionist, and the repeal of the Black Laws that Jones carried by petition to Springfield is handed in the next clause to a white senator, with Jones left "backed by influential citizens." The mechanism is visible in one list. Three Black Baptist congregations are cleared away in a run of other churches, pastor's name only. Four lines down, the German Baptist pastor from the same list gets a full sketch with his father's occupation in it. The Reverend A. D. Podd's name occurs twice in the volume: once in that list, once in the index of it.

The rule reaches down as well as across. Laborer attaches to a named man four times in the third volume, and every time it is a first job being escaped; apprentice and journeyman appear hundreds of times, because those are stages on the way to owning something. Washerwoman does not appear at all. The sketches are arranged by firm, so the unit of inclusion was never a life. It was a stake. The rule was old. The first two printers in Chicago, the apprentices sent west in charge of Calhoun's press before the Democrat's first number in 1833, have no names anywhere: Andreas says so flatly, and recovers the trade's earliest hands only from the settlement dates in Calhoun's account book, each man entering history at the moment of being paid, at twenty-five cents per thousand ems.

Which leaves the question of how a stake was got, and here the book is at its most informative by being at its least deliberate. Every sketch names the wife's father, because ancestry is part of the template: "daughter of" occurs 730 times across the two volumes. The words for what that marriage did between two men occur fourteen times in total: son-in-law six, father-in-law eight. The alliance is recorded in full and named almost never.

Read across the sketches and it is everywhere. A. M. Wright married Helen Hickcox in 1860, entered partnership with her father in 1865, and the firm was called A. M. Wright and Company. A North Side block sold for \$25,000, came back to market at \$5,000, and was worth about \$200,000 when Andreas wrote; Judge Lambert Tree built his mansion on it, having married the daughter of the man who bought it at the bottom. Best of all is a furniture works on North Wood Street, written up twice within thirty lines. In the first entry Niemann takes his son-in-law into the firm. In the second, Weinhardt joins his father-in-law in the furniture business. The two accounts never mention each other, and the person who made the firm possible appears once, as a clause: married, in 1873, to Miss Albina Niemann.

None of this is concealed. All of it is printed. It simply has no word in the book, and a thing with no word in it cannot be counted, which is the difference between a record that hides something and a record that cannot see it.

The dead children are stranger still, because they are not missing. They are arithmetic. "Died in infancy" occurs eleven times in two volumes and "died young" not once, but the template names a man's children and then sometimes adds how many are living, and the two numbers do not agree. Among the forty-four families that give both, three hundred and one children were born and one hundred and eighty-six were alive. The other hundred and fifteen exist in the gap between the words. That share is not Chicago's child mortality, and should not be read as it: only a fifth of the families say anything about survival at all, and a family with nothing to report had little reason to start. What the count establishes is not a rate but a vocabulary. A book that names every living child in birth order, and prices a firm to the dollar, had almost no way to say that a child had died.

It shows what that costs in a single sentence. A physician gets a column: his professorship of clinical medicine, his years of clinics at Cook

County Hospital, his dispensary, his three medical societies. Then: he married Amelia Hobkirk in 1868, they had three children, only one of whom is living, his wife died in December 1882, and in January 1884 he married again. Two dead children, a dead wife and a second marriage, sharing one sentence with the name of the daughter who lived. That was simply the space the form allowed.

The openings of the sketches hold one more count, and it is about who the city belonged to. Of the roughly sixteen hundred men whose entries open in the third volume, sixty-three were born in Chicago. One in twenty-six, in a book covering 1871 to 1885, in a place then fifty years old. Andreas's Chicago is still, at the very end of it, somewhere people had got to rather than somewhere people were from.

And the few who were from here are not distributed evenly. Take the fifty-two sketches whose subject draws a public wage, the fire companies, the police, the court clerks, the Bureau of Streets: nine of those men were born in Chicago. Of the sixteen hundred who draw no public wage, fifty-four were. Seventeen percent against three. The sample is small enough that the exact figures should not be leaned on, but the gap is far too wide to be nothing. The men who ran toward the city's fires had been born in it. The men who owned the city had not.

One family holds both halves. Ezra Taylor came from New York in 1836 and commanded the battery that carried his name. His son George was born here in 1846 and is captain of Engine Company No. 14. The father is a pioneer; the son is on the payroll. And once, only once in three volumes built entirely on the journey from somewhere else, the book pauses for a man who made no journey at all: Christian Schimmels, born at Desplaines and Meridian in 1845, who in forty years lived in two other houses, and had "never been outside of the State, and rarely outside of the city." The sentence sits in a paragraph establishing him as one of the three oldest captains in the service. In a record where everyone is from elsewhere, the man who stayed is filed under expertise.

Arrival itself is priced. The sketches date their subject's coming with a formula, came to Chicago in such a year, and the years are not the city's. Of the arrivals so dated in the third volume, seventy-nine percent fall before the fire, in the volume that covers 1871 to 1885, in a city which by then was mostly people who had come after it. And the premium was institutional, not just editorial. An Old Settlers' Society attempted in February 1871 came to nothing, and the collecting of the city's early history, Andreas writes, would never have been performed at all but for the Calumet Club, a private social club that from 1879 held an annual reception for anyone who had reached Chicago before 1840, and kept a standing old-settlers committee open only to members whose own residence antedated 1840. The club furnished an Old Settlers' Room for the relics: Mark Beaubien's fiddle, three-stringed and voiceless, and "the historical tomahawk and peace-pipe of Captain William Wells." The man who blackened his face and rode out at the head of the column in 1812 ends these pages as a curio, in a room devoted to white pioneers, in a club that chose the name Calumet because the pipe of peace meant good will. The city's memory of its own founding was a club amenity, and the qualification for keeping it was having arrived early enough.

At the other end of the book, in a closing note, Andreas explains how the topical chapters were checked. The copy was "invariably submitted for criticism, correction and final approval, to citizens who from their personal knowledge were recognized authority, and whose approval should be a guarantee of the correctness of the work." The people described approved the description, and the approval is offered as the warrant of accuracy rather than disclosed as a limit on it.

You can watch the method fail exactly once. Wilbur Storey's sketch records that he was adjudged of unsound mind and that he was divorced, and it is the only entry in three volumes where a Chicago man is allowed either. Everywhere else ruin arrives wearing its exculpatory clause: creditors paid a hundred cents on the dollar, the real estate divided among

them, an unblemished reputation sustained by working day and night. Bankruptcy and defalcation and intemperance are ordinary words in his narrative chapters and almost unknown in his sketches. Storey got the truth because he was dead before the page was set, and could not send it back.

There is a last fact about all this, and it changes the reading of everything above. A subscription list to keep David Swing preaching in Chicago records a thousand dollars each from Wirt Dexter, N. K. Fairbank, Franklin MacVeagh, Ferd Peck, Murry Nelson, Perry H. Smith, John B. Drake, George Sturges and Joseph Medill, among about fifty others. On the same list at the same rate is A. T. Andreas. The compiler was a paying member of the network his biographical department was documenting, at the going price. That is not an accusation of anything. It is the difference between a chronicler being leaned on by his subjects and a chronicler who shares their assumptions without having to be told. The first produces omissions. The second produces a world view, and a world view does not know what it is leaving out.

Quaife's verdict on early Chicago, that its truth had been obscured by a mass of tradition "fostered in large part by family pride", is in this history already. Here is the mechanism, printed by the man working it, as a credential. It sits alongside real labour: the same note records that eight thousand Chicago newspapers issued between 1833 and 1857 were read for the book. The vetting did not replace the work. It sat on top of it, and decided what the work was allowed to say about anybody who was still alive to object.

In 1910 the "Chicago Daily Journal" published "Notable Men of Chicago and Their City", and its introduction explains the criterion without embarrassment: the book is "issued as a book of paper utility in the news-office", because newspapers need portraits on file and are otherwise "compelled to reprint old style line cuts, wash drawings and other unsuitable illustrations". These are the men whose photographs editors expect-

ed to want — notability defined by anticipated press demand, and the demand defined by the same press. What follows is lawyers, overwhelmingly, then railroad men, bankers and merchants. And the title is a specification, not a shorthand: in four hundred and twenty pages the book says "Mrs" twice.

And the volume discloses something its compilers were not trying to say. Read the entries as a network rather than a roll of honour and the city turns out to be held in very few hands. Charles Wacker's paragraph runs: brewing and malting, a land association, a bank, stone, iron and steel, the South Side Elevated — then the executive committee of the World's Columbian Exposition, and the chairmanship of the commission that turned Burnham's plan into actual streets. The drive along the river carries his name. One line in the middle is a director's seat at the Chicago Title and Trust Company, which is the outfit that spent thirty years trying to prise Captain Streeter off the made ground up the shore. The fair, the plan, the title to the land and the money behind all three are one man's résumé, and the book prints it as biography.

The habit never stopped, only changed hands. A theatre publishes its famous alumni; an architecture centre teaches third-graders the names of architects against the state learning standards; a neighbourhood association runs a walking tour of its colourful characters and is honest enough to call them tall tales in the title; the tourism bureau plans to elevate the brand. Every one of them is the 1910 act performed again — a place naming who it would like to be known by — and the only thing that varies is who holds the pen.

And the scholarship that settles the questions in this history is mostly behind paywalls. McCafferty on the name, Swenson on Point de Sable, Halpern on race in the packinghouses — this store holds citations to all three and the text of none, because that is what the licences allow. What can be read freely here is overwhelmingly what was written before 1929, which quietly shapes what any project like this one can say.

Naming a gap is the same discipline as recording a disagreement instead of settling it, and the naming has a record of working. The Great Fire, the riot of 1919, Hull-House, the decades between 1833 and 1871, the ending of the Illinois, and now Haymarket's middle were all absent when this was first written. Every one of them is above. They are listed here as closed rather than quietly tidied away, because a history that only ever announces what it has is not telling you how it was built.

What is still missing:

The Haymarket trial's day-to-day is thinner than it was and still not whole — the seven weeks of testimony themselves. The full 3,323-page transcript exists, digitized by the Chicago History Museum, and is readable online for research; its stated terms still do not let this store hold a copy. The modern standard book is Avrich's and is in copyright. But the defendants' own word is no longer entirely absent: Lucy Parsons's 1889 life of her husband reprints his testimony from the stand, and Spies's own 1887 account, published while he was still alive and appealing, carries his. Dyer Lum's condensation of the official record, held here since, supplies some of the middle: the mayor's testimony, the money the state's chief witness took from a detective, the doctrine said aloud from the bench. None of these is the transcript, and Lum is a partisan of the defence, which is why this history uses him for what the state's case contained rather than for what he concludes about it. Who threw the bomb was never established, and nothing above pretends otherwise — but the chain that used to run from a police officer's report straight to a governor's pardon, with nothing spoken by a defendant in between, now has two men's own words in it.

Labour's own institutions are still barely here. The Illinois Labor History Society has kept these sites in public memory for fifty years and is still publishing; its collections, and the manuscript holdings the University of Illinois guide points to, are where this thread would actually be worked out, and this history registers the door without having gone

through it. What has changed is narrower: the federal government's own strike commission put Jennie Curtis, president of the Pullman girls' union local, on the record under oath in 1894, and that testimony — wages, rent, her own numbers — now sits in this store beside Addams's outside account. A rank-and-file officer's sworn word is not a movement's archive. It is one voice further than this store had.

None of these is an oversight to be quietly corrected later. They are the shape of what has been collected so far, and a history that will not say where it goes quiet is making the same move as a city that renames a street and hopes nobody checks.

Which leaves one thing this record cannot account for, and it is the thing the whole book has been walking toward. Every chapter above is a document — made, lost, unread, disregarded, or wrong about somebody who could not answer it. The last chapter is not a document at all. It is a word that people are still saying.

The name, still spoken

THE USUAL ENDING FOR THIS STORY IS THAT AN INDIGENOUS NAME was worn smooth into something meaningless, carried now by people with no idea it was ever anybody's.

Half of that is false, and the correction matters more than the story.

In the Miami-Illinois language the wild leek is Šikaakwa. The river is Šikaakwa Siipiiwi. The place where it meets the lake is Šikaakonki — and the Myaamia Center states plainly that Myaamia people call the city Šikaakonki today.

The word was never lost. It is a living word in a living language, spoken correctly by the people it belongs to. What was lost was the knowing, and only on one side.

Compare Wells Street, which the aldermen renamed Fifth Avenue in the autumn of 1870, replacing a man's name with a number; Gale was still asking for it back thirty-two years later. That name really was taken, by a vote. Šikaakwa was not.

And it has been done since by people it had been done to. A mile and a half south-west of the Loop is a neighbourhood called Pilsen — named by Bohemian immigrants for Plzeň, a city in a country most of them would not see again, laid over ground that had been Potawatomi within living memory of their arrival. The sokol they built in 1892 kept the Czech spelling when the neighbourhood's name did not. The district is now largely Mexican. So a Bohemian name for a Czech city sits on Potawatomi ground and is spoken mostly in Spanish, and each layer was applied by people who had themselves been moved.

The naming is also usually late, and somebody always does it. Germans developed the tract west of Damen after the fire; Ukrainian and Russian arrivals between 1880 and 1910 left Ukrainians the largest group there, and by 1930 most of a Chicago Ukrainian population estimated near thirty thousand lived inside its hundred and sixty acres. The name became official on 18 January 1983, when Mayor Byrne designated Ukrainian Village a neighbourhood, the first such designation in the city's history. By 1990 two and a half thousand residents claimed Ukrainian descent. The city fixed the name in the decade the people who carried it were leaving.

Bronzeville was named from the inside, and the reason was the alternative. The Second and Third Wards were called the Black Belt in the papers, and the Black Ghetto, and sometimes Darkie Town. James Gentry, theatre editor of Anthony Overton's *Chicago Bee*, offered a word of his own coining because it "more accurately described the skin tone of most of its inhabitants." The *Bee* ran a Mayor of Bronzeville contest in 1930 and it failed; Gentry took the idea to the *Defender* in 1932, where it became the paper's second most profitable promotion, behind only the Bud Billiken parade. It is the one renaming in these pages done by the people the name was for, rather than by a mapmaker, a landmarks commission, a booster, or a community naming a new street for the city it had left.

Two of the others were never quite true in the way they sound. Little Italy grew around Halsted and Taylor beside Hull-House, and Italians there, the encyclopedia notes, "were never actually a majority in the area": the name recorded a presence in the commercial and political life of the place, not a count. Chinatown moved once already, from Clark Street in the Loop out to Cermak and Wentworth after 1910, "mainly for cheaper rent", which is the oldest force in this book working on a community instead of on a canal. The newer Chinatown along Argyle Street had more Vietnamese in it than Chinese by 2000, and is called Chinatown still.

And one ridge on the far south-west side has done it five times over, with nobody dispossessed and nobody aggrieved. A resident of Beverly Hills, writing seven articles for her local weekly in 1926, opened by admitting what neighbourhood histories normally assert: that the boundaries had never been officially determined and could be given only according to the opinion prevailing at present, and that the place had been known by several well-established names. Her succession runs like this. The whole elevation was Blue Island, after the village at its southern end. The rest of the ridge was North Blue Island into the early 1870s. Thomas Morgan bought in 1844 and called his three thousand acres Upwood, a name that lasted about as long as he lived on them. After 1865 the area was The Crossing. Washington Heights was incorporated in 1874 under a name she says the real estate men chose to describe the three ridges, and for years afterwards Washington Heights and Morgan Park were used almost interchangeably. Nobody lost anything in any of it. It is simply what happens to a name here, and it happened to one of the most comfortable districts in the city.

The county itself is the shortest version of the whole argument. Cook County is named for Daniel Pope Cook, an Illinois congressman who, in the flat account of a local history published in 1928, had never stepped foot within its territory and who died four years before the county was organised in 1831. A city that spent a hundred years refusing to be named after a plant, on the grounds that the name was beneath it, sits inside a county named for an absentee who was already dead. Nobody has ever objected to that one.

That is the difference between this and a grievance. Naming over is not something Chicago did once to one people. It is how the ground has always been used, by nearly everyone who arrived on it — which is exactly why the first name deserves to be said correctly rather than avenged.

Not all of it is drift, though, and the suburb standing on the Ouilmette reservation is the hard case. Evanston was named for John

Evans deliberately, by the trustees who owned the plat. Evans was also Lincoln's appointee as governor of Colorado Territory and superintendent of Indian affairs there, sworn in at Denver on 18 May 1862. On 11 August 1864 he issued a proclamation authorising citizens to kill and destroy, as enemies of the country, all hostile Indians. Fifteen weeks later, at Sand Creek, Colorado troops under John Chivington killed about a hundred and fifty Cheyenne and Arapaho people, most of them women and children. Evans was forced to resign.

The town's own histories carry none of it. Viola Crouch Reeling's account of 1928 takes him from Northwestern to Denver as one admiring career, says he solved the Indian problems wisely, and notes without embarrassment that the treaty of 1863 was the most successful ever concluded in Colorado "from the white standpoint". Sand Creek is not in her book. Chivington is not in it. The word massacre is, four times, and every one of them is Fort Dearborn. The other Evanston history held here uses it nine times with the same referent and also never reaches Sand Creek. Reeling's volume was published by the Fort Dearborn Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

That chapter was organised on 6 June 1894, when forty women gathered at the invitation of Miss Cornelia Lunt at her house, with the stars and stripes over the lawn. It was the third chapter in Illinois. Cornelia Lunt was the daughter of Orrington Lunt, who founded Northwestern with Evans, and Margaret Evans, who chose the syllable that made the plat Evanston rather than Evansville, was her aunt by marriage. So the woman who named the town was aunt to the woman who founded the society that published the history that left the massacre out. None of that is a conspiracy, and nobody needed to agree on anything. It is what a founding record looks like when the people making it are four families who see each other socially. The same chapter placed a boulder and a bronze tablet on the hospital grounds in 1923 to mark the Potawatomi departure, and in 1926 it moved the Black Hawk Tree, six hundred years

old when it was felled in 1903, to a park at Davis Street and Forest Place, to be looked at.

The reckoning came late and did not agree with itself. In May 2014 a Northwestern committee found no evidence that Evans planned the massacre or knew of it in advance, but that he was one of several men who, serving a bad federal policy badly, helped make it possible, and that his conduct afterwards was "reprehensibly obtuse and self-interested". That November the University of Denver, which Evans also founded, disagreed strongly and called his culpability "different in character but comparable in degree" to Chivington's. Two universities examined their own founder six months apart and did not arrive at the same verdict. This history holds both and picks neither. The proclamation itself stayed on the books until 17 August 2021, when a governor of Colorado stood on the capitol steps and rescinded it.

Nor is the removal the end of it. In 2024 the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation had portions of their reservation in DeKalb County returned into trust — land that had been, in the Illinois State Board of Education's own word, "illegally sold off by the government" — making them the first federally recognised tribe with land in trust in Illinois in over 175 years. The same nation Gale watched being moved to Missouri, then Iowa, then Kansas. Simon Pokagon gave the address in 1899, in a footnote, without comment: a few Pottawatomies left in Wisconsin, Nebraska, Michigan and the Indian Territory, but the majority of the tribe on a reservation ten miles square in Jackson County, Kansas. That is the Prairie Band. The nation that sold the ground this city stands on was counted in Kansas in 1899 and took ground back in Illinois in 2024, and the two sentences are a hundred and twenty-five years apart.

Around a hundred thousand Native people from more than a hundred tribes live in Illinois now. The state's own personnel department counted 192 Native American employees in Illinois government in FY2020 — 0.41 percent, ten more than the year before — and published

the number in a report filed on schedule. It is the least romantic sentence in this entire history and one of the most necessary, because the commonest lie told about Indigenous people is the past tense.

Several million people say "Chicago" daily. Almost none of them are told whose word it is, or that it names a plant, or that the plant kept a starving French party alive at the portage in November, or that the ground it grew in stood seven feet above the lake and was the reason for all of it.

COLOPHON

The Wild Leek Place. A narrative history of Chicago, drawn only from the research store.

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23 chapters, approximately 45,408 words. Set in EB Garamond. The historical sources this work draws on are in the public domain; the prose, selection and commentary are not.

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