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55 Chicago history stories you probably were not aware of.

1. Contrary to popular belief, Pabst Brewing Company did not win the infamous “Blue Ribbon” as they first claimed at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, nor did they win a Gold medal as was claimed by Pabst later. [Documented Research Proof](#).
2. Chicago River is the only river in the world that had its flow permanently reversed in 1900. The reversal prevented the yearly deaths of thousands of Chicago residents from waterborne diseases such as typhoid and cholera.
3. Indian Boundary Park on the far north side of Chicago had the World's smallest public zoo. In the mid-1920s, the Ridge Avenue Park District opened the small zoo which initially only housed a lone black bear.
4. In 1913, the Art Institute of Chicago became the first art museum in the country to present the work of a young Spaniard who would become the preeminent artist of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso.
5. The First Blood Bank in America. In March 1937, blood transfusions become safe and reliable thanks to the vision of physician Bernard Fantus. When Dr. Bernard Fantus started the first-ever blood bank at Cook County Hospital, he was merely looking for a way to ensure that patients in dire need of a blood transfusion wouldn't have to endure a frantic search to find a matching donor. Patients in those situations often expired before a match could be found.
6. The Taste of Chicago is the World's largest food festival. Arnie Morton, restaurateur (Morton's Steakhouse, Walton Walk Restaurant, Arnie's Restaurant, Zorine's Restaurant), is the creator of the Taste of Chicago event. He decided to line up Chicago restaurants to participate and persuaded then-mayor Jane Byrne and the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Lois Weisberg, to block off Michigan Avenue for the first Taste of Chicago on July 4, 1980. Of the 100,000 people the organizers expected, over 250,000 showed up, with food and pop (soda/soft drink) sales grossing \$300,000 at its inception. The next year, the Taste of Chicago was moved to Grant Park and grew in size and scope, becoming a 10-day event with more food vendors and musical performers; it also became the world's largest, no admission, food festival.
7. Chicago is home to more than 250 theaters. [This list includes Chicagoland theaters](#).
8. Over 45 million tourists visit Chicago each year. (2012 statistics)
9. Chicago’s nickname "The Windy City" was originally referring to Chicago's long-winded politicians. When Chicago and New York were competing to hold the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Charles A. Dana, editor of the New York Sun, wrote an editorial advising against the 'nonsensical claims of that windy city and its people could not hold a world's fair even if they won it.' This editorial is widely credited with popularizing the 'Windy City' nickname." The Chicago History Museum agrees that Dana "dubbed" Chicago the Windy City.
10. Chicago was technically the birthplace of the soap opera. Broadcasting's most enduring genre emerged in Chicago's radio studios in the early 1930s, the outcome of an experiment to determine whether daytime network programming would attract audiences and sponsors.



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11. The Chicago Public Library was created directly from the ashes of the great Chicago Fire. After Chicago's Great Fire of October 8, 1871, A.H. Burgess of London proposed an "English Book Donation," which he described, two months later, in the Tribune on December 7, 1871. "I propose that England should present a Free Library to Chicago, to remain there as a mark of sympathy now, and a keepsake and a token of true brotherly kindness forever..." The plan carried the support of Thomas Hughes, a prominent Member of Parliament and the well-known author of Tom Brown's School Days, who had visited Chicago in 1870. The impending donation, consisting of over 8,000 books from England, prompted leading citizens of Chicago to petition for a public meeting to establish a Free Public Library. Previous libraries in Chicago were private libraries that required membership fees for their services. The public meeting led to the Illinois Library Act of 1872, authorizing cities to establish tax-supported libraries throughout Illinois. In April 1872, the City Council passed an ordinance proclaiming the establishment of the Chicago Public Library. On January 1, 1873, the Chicago Public Library formally opened its doors at the southeast corner of LaSalle and Adams streets in a circular water tank that had survived the fire.
12. The Shedd Aquarium is home to "Granddad", who weighs in at 20 pounds and is four feet long, is not only the oldest fish at the Shedd, but it is also, according to the aquarium, the oldest fish living in any aquarium or zoo anywhere in the world. The lungfish arrived at the Shedd during the 1933 World's Fair as the first of its kind to go on display in the United States. The Shedd isn't sure of Granddad's exact age because when he arrived in 1933, he was already full grown.
13. Playboy Magazine was founded in Chicago in December 1953 by 27-year-old Hugh Hefner and his associates, and funded in part by a \$1,000 loan from Hefner's mother. This first edition of Playboy was 44-pages long and had no date on its cover because Hefner wasn't sure there would be a second edition. In that first run, Hefner sold 54,175 copies of Playboy magazine at 50 cents each. The first edition sold so well because Marilyn Monroe was the "Sweetheart of the Month" (which was thereafter termed "playmate"). On the front cover of the first edition of Playboy, Marilyn Monroe appeared waving her hand. Inside, Marilyn Monroe bared it all in the centerfold. (Monroe did not pose nude specifically for Playboy; Hefner had purchased the picture from a local printer who made calendars.) This first edition of the magazine is also the only Playboy that does not have Hugh Hefner's name inside. On the first page, Hefner humorously wrote, "We want to make it clear from the very start; we aren't a 'family magazine.' If you're somebody's sister, wife or mother-in-law and picked us up by mistake, please pass us along to the man in your life and get back to your Ladies Home Companion."
14. The first Ferris wheel made its debut in Chicago at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Designed by George Washington Gale Ferris, the wheel was his crazy idea for the fair. Paris built the Eiffel Tower for their World's Fair in 1889, Chicago needed something even better. Ferris decided to build an Eiffel Tower that spins. Everyone thought he was crazy and called him "the man with wheels in his head." However, Ferris was a bridge builder, an engineer and he actually knew what to do. The Ferris wheel was huge, 264 feet, twice the size of the one at Navy Pier today. People hosted weddings and private parties in its 36 railcar-sized cabins, each of which could hold 60 people. The wheel cost riders 50 cents per two-revolution ride, and grossed \$725,805 (\$18,537,674 in today's dollars), making it the only profitable investment for World Fair investors.
15. Chicago is home of the Deep-Dish Pizza. The only paper trail indicates that deep-dish pizza (aka: pan pizza) was invented by "The Pizzeria" at 29 E. Ohio Street at Wabash Avenue in Chicago's near north neighborhood (in a 19th Century mansion) in 1943. "The "Pizzeria" changed its name to "Pizzeria Riccardo" and then settled into "Pizzeria Uno" in 1955.



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16. Chicago is home of the first Playboy Mansion, bought by Chicago magazine impresario Hugh Hefner in 1959. It was located at 1340 North State Parkway and Hefner dubbed it the first Playboy Mansion. He hung a brass plate over the door warning 'If You Don't Swing, Don't Ring'. The 70 room brick & limestone residence was built in 1899 for Dr. George Swift Isham.
17. The zipper was invented by a Mr. Whitcomb Judson of Chicago. Judson invented and patented the "Clasp Locker" which had its public debut at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and met with little commercial success. This is a very sexy description from his patent application: {...each link of each chain is provided both with a male and female coupling part, and when the chains are coupled together the female part of each link on one chain is engaged by the male part of a link on the other chain. I think it looks like a very cool necklace. You can see how raw it is, but you can also see the innovation.} The zipper wasn't named the "zipper" until B.F. Goodrich named it in 1917.
18. Ebony, a pictorial news magazine published by Chicago-based Johnson Publishing Company, first appeared in November 1945. Created by John H. Johnson, who modeled his publication after Life magazine. Ebony celebrated African American life and culture by depicting the achievements of black Americans. It honored black identity by portraying black life, refuting stereotypes, and inspiring readers to overcome racial and other barriers to success.
19. The First Woman in America to win the Nobel Peace Prize (1931). "Laura" Jane Addams (September 6, 1860 - May 21, 1935) won worldwide recognition in the first third of the twentieth century as a pioneer social worker in America, as a feminist, and as an internationalist. She was born in Cedarville, Illinois, the eighth of nine children. In 1889 she and Miss Starr leased a large home built by Charles Hull at the corner of Halsted and Polk Streets. The two friends moved in, their purpose, as expressed later, being {to provide a center for a higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago}. Miss Addams and Miss Starr made speeches about the needs of the neighborhood, raised money, convinced young women of well-to-do families to help, took care of children, nursed the sick, and listened to outpourings from troubled people. By its second year of existence, Hull-House was host to two thousand people every week. There were kindergarten classes in the morning, club meetings for older children in the afternoon, and for adults in the evening more clubs or courses in what became virtually a night school. The first facility added to Hull-House was an art gallery, the second a public kitchen; then came a coffee house, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a cooperative boarding club for girls, a book bindery, an art studio, a music school, a drama group, a circulating library, an employment bureau, a labor museum. After sustaining a heart attack in 1926, Miss Addams never fully regained her health. Indeed, she was being admitted to a Baltimore hospital on the very day, December 10, 1931, that the Nobel Peace Prize was being awarded to her in Oslo, Norway. She died in 1935 three days after an operation revealed unsuspected cancer. The funeral service was held in the courtyard of Hull-House.
20. On September 26, 1960, Massachusetts Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy and Republican Vice President Richard M. Nixon faced each other in a nationally televised presidential campaign debate broadcast from Chicago's CBS studio. The debate had so profoundly altered American politics that it wasn't until 1976 that any other presidential candidates were willing to roll the dice and debate on television again.



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21. President Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States, calls Chicago home and the Chicago White Sox baseball team his favorite.
22. Chicago debuts the first all-color TV station in America. Sunday, April 15, 1956, will always be remembered as "C-Day" at WMAQ-TV Chicago's NBC channel 5. At 4:15 PM, Robert W Sarnoff, then President of NBC, pushed a button and ushered in a new era in television. Channel 5 became the world's first all-color TV station as "[Wide, Wide World](#)" (Wide Wide World was a 90-minute documentary series telecast live on NBC on Sunday afternoons) carried the event to 110 NBC-TV affiliated stations across the country. WMAQ-TV installed its first color equipment in late 1953. Its first major color transmission was the Rose Bowl parade of 1954 Channel 5's first local color program was John Ott's "How Does Your Garden Grow?", featuring the use of time-lapse color film. It was introduced in March of 1955. The Wall Street Journal estimated that Chicago had about 50,000 color receivers in operation at the time WMAQ-TV switched to all-color in April, 1956. At that time, the lowest price for a color TV set was \$595 (\$5030.00 in today's dollars). By late 1968, there were nearly 865,000 color receivers in the Chicago market, about 33 percent of the total number of sets.
23. Chicago was the home of the first hand-powered vacuum cleaner was called the "Whirlwind". It was invented in 1865 by Ives W. McGaffey in Chicago. This invention was also not motorized. It used a hand crank to operate a fan to generate suction. This design was not very heavy, but was hard to operate due to the fact that you had to turn the crank while you were pushing it over the rug or floor. In 1869 he patents the "Whirlwind" and starts the American Carpet Cleaning Company.
24. Chicago is home to 552 public parks and playgrounds.
25. The World's First Movie Theater, insofar as it was the first place for which tickets were sold to see projected, moving photographs, was the Zoopraxographical Hall at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition on the Midway Plaisance as a commercial concession. Its builder was the pioneering photographer Eadweard Muybridge, born Edward Muggeridge. He had been in Chicago lecturing before the Art Institute on his then and now legendary photographs of men and animals in motion. Muybridge's exhibit at the Columbian Exposition was tucked rather ignominiously under one of the viaducts crossing the Midway. Muybridge plunked down \$6,000 - over \$ 153,000 in today's dollars - with the hopes that he'd make the money back on ticket sales and beautifully illustrated zoopraxiscope fans, some of which were painted by Thomas Eakins. Muybridge also sold his book *Descriptive Zoopraxography: The Science of Animal Locomotion*, which featured not just elephants and baboons, but "Grecian dancing girls" and a man hitting a baseball, with instructions for how to turn the picture into your own zoopraxiscope. It was a financial flop.
26. Chicago has 28 miles of bathing beaches. The first City of Chicago Public Beach opened in Lincoln Park in 1895. Today, the entire 28 miles of Chicago's Lake Michigan shoreline is man-made and is primarily used as public parkland. There are twenty-eight (28) beaches in Chicago along the shores of freshwater Lake Michigan. They are (from North to South); Juneway Terrace Beach, Rogers Beach, Howard Beach, Jarvis Beach/Fargo Beach, Loyola/Leone Beach, Tobey Prinz Beach Park (formerly Pratt Beach), Hartigan Beach (aka: Albion Beach), Columbia Beach, North Shore Beach, Hamilton Beach, Berger Park, Thorndale Beach, Kathy Osterman Beach (formerly Hollywood Beach), Foster Avenue Beach, Montrose Avenue Beach, North Avenue Beach, Oak Street Beach, Ohio Street Beach, Humboldt Park Beach, 12th Street Beach, 25th/26th Street Beaches (no longer in use), 31st Street Beach, Oakwood / 41st Street Beach,



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49th Street Beach, 57th Street Beach, 63rd Street Beach, South Shore Beach, Ashe Beach, Rainbow Beach, and Calumet Park Beaches (9600, 9800 and 9900 South blocks).

27. Chicago is the beginning of Historic Route 66. The starting point is Jackson Boulevard, just off of Lake Shore Drive at Columbus Avenue. Jackson Boulevard is the original Route 66, but it is now a one way street heading eastbound to Michigan Avenue. As a result, you can come into Chicago on the original Route 66, but you have to leave by way of Adams Street (one way westbound) which starts exactly in front of the Art Institute.
28. "Walt" Walter Elias Disney was born on December 5, 1901, at 2156 North Tripp Avenue, was a frame cottage that was erected between 1892 and 1893. His father was Elias Disney, an Irish-Canadian, and his mother, Flora Call Disney, was of German and English descent. The modest cottage was built by his father, a carpenter who had worked at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. In 1906, when Walt was four, Elias and his family moved to a farm in Marceline, Missouri, where his brother Roy had recently purchased farmland. In 1917 Elias acquired shares in the O-Zell jelly factory in Chicago and moved his family back to the city of Chicago. Disney attended McKinley High School in Chicago, where he took drawing and photography classes and was a contributing cartoonist for the school paper. At night, he took courses at the Chicago Art Institute. When Disney was 16, he dropped out of school to join the army but was rejected for being underage. Instead, he joined the Red Cross and was sent to France for a year to drive an ambulance.
29. The Home Insurance Building is the first skyscraper. It was constructed in 1884/85 in Chicago, and was the first tall building to use structural steel in its frame, but the majority of its structure was composed of cast and wrought iron. Due to the building's unique architecture and unique weight-bearing frame, it is considered the first skyscraper in the world. It had 10 stories and rose to a height of 138 ft. In 1890, two additional floors were added to the original structure bringing the total height to 180 feet. The 12 story building set the standard for various other building innovations, including rapid, safe elevators, wind bracing and modern plumbing. It was demolished in 1931.
30. The founder of Chicago, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, was born circa 1750 in St. Marc, Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti). Du Sable had a French father and an African-born slave mother. He was educated (possibly in France) and may have worked as a sailor. He had become a fur and grain trader in the Great Lakes region by the late 1770s, establishing a base at the site of what is now Chicago. In 1779 the British questioned Du Sable about his relations with the French. However, the British ultimately sent Du Sable to represent British trading interests with Indians around the St. Clair River, northeast of present-day Detroit. Du Sable returned to his post (at present-day Chicago). In 1784, he erecting several buildings at what gradually became a major trading center (near the present Michigan Avenue Bridge on the north bank). Du Sable was a jack-of-all-trades, working as a carpenter, cooper, miller, and distiller. He was married to a Potawatomi Indian woman named Catherine, or Kittihawa, with whom he had two children, and he became increasingly involved in the affairs of the Potawatomi tribe. But in 1800 he failed in his effort to become Potawatomi chief, and he sold his property for what was then the enormous sum of \$1,200 (\$16,190 in today's dollars), and moved to St. Charles, Mo., where he worked as a farmer and trader. He died on August 28, 1818. In 1912, the Chicago Historical Society placed a plaque on a soap factory at the corner of Pine and Kinzie streets. The plaque commemorated the "Site of the first house in Chicago", which was erected about 1779 by Jean-Baptiste Pointe du Sable. In 1987 a commemorative stamp was issued to honor Du Sable.



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31. Cracker Jacks was introduced by Frederick William Rueckheim and his brother Louis at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Louis learns how to keep the popped corn separated so it's not all one sticky corn mess. A customer at the Fair states "That's a Cracker Jack!" "So it is." says Rueckheim.
32. The Meaning of the Chicago Flag. The Municipal Flag of Chicago consists of 3 White stripes separated by two stripes of Blue with four Red six-pointed stars on the center stripe of White.

The 3 White stripes:

- Top White Stripe represents the North side of the city.
- Center White Stripe represents the West side of the city.
- Bottom White Stripe represents the South side of the city.

The 2 Blue stripes:

- Top Blue stripe represents Lake Michigan and the North Branch of the Chicago River.
- Bottom Blue stripe represents the South Branch of the Chicago River and the Great Canal.

The 4 Red stars on the Center White Stripes represent something as well as each of the points on the stars themselves:

The First Red Star represents Fort Dearborn (added in 1939).

The Points of the First Red Star Signify:

- transportation
- labor
- commerce
- finance
- populousness
- salubrity

The Second Red Star represents the Chicago Fire of October 8-10, 1871.

The Points of the Second Red Star Signify:

- religion
- education
- esthetics
- justice
- beneficence
- civic pride

The Third Red Star represents the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

The Points of the Third Red Star Signify History of the Area:

- France 1693
- Great Britain 1763
- Virginia 1778
- Northwest Territory 1798
- Indian Territory 1802
- Illinois Statehood 1818

The Fourth Red Star represents the Century of Progress Exposition of 1933 (added in 1933).

The Points of the Fourth Red Star Signify:

- World's Third Largest City
- City's Latin Motto
- I Will Motto



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- Great Central Market
- Wonder City
- Convention City

33. Chicago unveils Aunt Jemima at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. In 1889, Chris Rutt and Charles Underwood of the Pearl Milling Company developed Aunt Jemima, the first pancake ready mix. R.T. Davis purchased the struggling Aunt Jemima Manufacturing Company in 1890. He then brought the Aunt Jemima character to life when he hired Nancy Green as his spokeswoman. The image of Aunt Jemima was so popular that the company was renamed in 1914 to the Aunt Jemima Mills Company.

In 1890, a former slave named Nancy Green was hired to be the spokesperson for Aunt Jemima brand food products. Nancy Green was born into slavery in 1834 in Montgomery County, Kentucky. In 1889 the creators of Aunt Jemima, Charles Rutt and Charles Underwood, sold the company to R.T Davis, who soon found Nancy Green in Chicago. The previous owners had already agreed upon her 'look' of a bandana and apron. Davis combined the Aunt Jemima look with a catchy tune from the Vaudeville circuit to make the Aunt Jemima brand. Green's identity was first uncovered at the Worlds' Columbian Exposition in 1893. There were so many people interested in the Aunt Jemima exhibit; police were called for crowd control. Green served pancakes to thousands of people. People loved her warm personality and friendly demeanor, not to mention her cooking.

Green was given an award for showmanship at the exposition. As a result of her dedication, Aunt Jemima received 50,000 orders for pancake mix. Not only did flour sales soar, but Green received a lifetime contract to serve as spokesperson. She was a living legend of the brand until she died in a car accident in September 1923. After Green's passing, the owner of Aunt Jemima, R.T. Davis, experienced financial issues and the brand was sold to Quaker Oats two years later.

34. On April 13, 1992 the "Great Chicago Flood" occurred when 124 million gallons of Chicago River water poured through a crack in the forty-seven-mile network of freight tunnels under the central business district. After filling the tunnels, the river water rose into the basements of many downtown buildings, knocking out electric power and natural-gas service. The flood occurred because in September of 1991 new wooden pilings had been driven into the riverbed next to the Kinzie Street drawbridge to protect the bridge from passing barges and other traffic on the north branch of the Chicago River. The pilings had been placed in the wrong spot and punctured the ceiling of the freight tunnel below. On August 11, 1995, the city agreed to pay up to \$36 million in damages to settle lawsuits brought by the owners of buildings damaged by the flood.
35. Lincoln Park Zoo births the first bison ever born in captivity. In 1868 Chicago's Lincoln Park Commissioners receive a gift of a pair of swans from New York's Central Park Commissioners. The birds become popular attractions, "affording much pleasure to the visitors" and marking the beginning of Chicago's free zoo. The Lincoln Park Commissioners purchase the first animal for Lincoln Park Zoo, a bear cub for \$10 (\$203 in today's dollars) in 1874. A North American bison is born at the zoo in 1884, which is the first ever born in captivity.
36. "Disco Demolition Night" took place at Comiskey Park on July 12 1979. Two Chicago Radio Station disk jockeys from WLUP, Steve Dahl and Garry Meier, came up with the idea of having people bring unwanted disco records to the stadium to be burned between the double header of the Chicago White Sox and the Detroit Tigers. The records were collected, piled up on the field and blown up. Hundreds of rowdy fans stormed the field, refusing to leave, resulting in the second



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game of the doubleheader being postponed. American League President Lee MacPhail later declared the second game of the doubleheader a forfeit victory for the visiting Detroit Tigers. Six people reported minor injuries, and thirty-nine were arrested for disorderly conduct.

37. America's first automobile race in Chicago - The first American automobile was built by Duryea brothers - Charles and Frank - who created their first gasoline-powered "horseless-carriage" in 1893. The brothers built their first car in a workshop located in a building in downtown Springfield, MA. Their new invention was rolled onto the city streets for testing in September 1893. It sported a one-cylinder, gasoline engine and a three-speed transmission mounted on a used horse carriage. It could achieve a top speed of 7.5 mph. The following year, Frank developed a second car with a more powerful two-cylinder engine.

It was this car that he drove in America's first automobile race on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1895. The race was sponsored by the Chicago Times-Herald and ran a 54-mile course from down-town Chicago to Evanston, IL and back. There were five entrants in addition to Duryea: 2 electric cars and 3 gasoline-powered Benz machines imported from Germany. The race started in the early morning in snowy conditions. A little over 10 hours later, Frank Duryea was the first to cross the finish line having survived a journey hindered by numerous breakdowns and repairs. He had averaged 7.3 miles per hour and took home a prize of \$2,000 (\$50,000 in today's money).

Frank Duryea described his experience in his autobiography:

"I now started with draughtsmen on plans for a new car, of which I had, from time to time, been making rough sketches during the past summer. But my work was interrupted by the necessity of preparing the old car for the race promoted by H. H. Kohlsaat of the Chicago Times-Herald. This race was set for November 2, and as driver, the Company sent me out to Chicago with the car on that date. Only the Mueller Benz and the Duryea cars were ready to start, so the race was postponed to Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1895... Thanksgiving Day, when it arrived, found me again in Chicago with the car... A heavy snow had fallen during the night and we experienced hard going as we drove out to Jackson Park from our quarters on Sixteenth Street. Of nearly a hundred entries, only six cars lined up for the start. Of these six, two were electric vehicles entered by Morris and Salom of Philadelphia, and Sturgis of Chicago.

Of the four gasoline-engined vehicles, H. Mueller & Co. of Decatur, Illinois, R. H. Macy & Co. of New York, and The De la Vergne Refrigerating Machine Co. of New York, each came to the start with an imported German Benz. The Duryea Motor Wagon Company's entry was the only American-made gasoline car to start. The word 'go' was given at 8:55 and the Duryea was the first car away. With me as umpire was Mr. Arthur W. White. The machine made good going of the soft unpacked snow in Jackson Park, but when we came to the busier part of the city, the street surface consisted of ruts and ice hummocks, in which the car slewed badly from side to side. While still in the lead, the left front wheel struck a bad rut at such an angle that the steering arm was broken off. This arm had been threaded and screwed firmly to a shoulder, and it was a problem to extract the broken-off threaded part of the arm. When this was finally accomplished, we, fortunately, located a blacksmith shop where we forged down, threaded and replaced the arm.

While thus delayed, the Macy Benz passed us and held the lead as far as Evanston, where we regained it. Having made the turn at Evanston, elated at being in the lead again, we started on the home trip. We had not yet come to Humboldt Park when one of the two cylinders ceased firing... This repair was completed in fifty-five minutes and we got going, feeling that the Macy Benz must surely be ahead of us, but learned later that the Macy did not



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get that far. Breaking the way through the snow in Humboldt and Garfield Parks furnished heavy work for the motor, but also indicated that all competitors were behind us.

After a stop for gasoline, and a four-minute wait for a passing train at a railroad crossing, we continued on to the finish in Jackson Park, arriving at 7:18 P.M. The motor had at all times shown ample power, and at no time were we compelled to get out and push. After receiving congratulations from the small group still remaining at the finish line, among whom were the Duryea Motor Wagon Company party, I turned the car and drove back to its quarters on Sixteenth Street. The Mueller Benz, the only other machine to finish, was driven across the line at 8:53 by the umpire, Mr. Charles B. King, Mr. Mueller having collapsed from fatigue."

38. The first Rotary Club in America was founded in Chicago. - The first Rotary Club was formed when attorney Paul P. Harris called together a meeting of three business acquaintances in downtown Chicago, at Harris' friend Gustave E. Loehr's office in the Unity Building on Dearborn Street on February 23, 1905. In addition to Harris and Loehr (a mining engineer and freemason), Silvester Schiele (a coal merchant), and Hiram E. Shorey (a tailor) were the other two who attended this first meeting. The members chose the name Rotary because initially they rotated subsequent weekly club meetings to each other's offices, although within a year, the Chicago club became so large it became necessary to adopt the now-common practice of a regular meeting place. Rotary International is an international service organization whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian services, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. It is a secular organization open to all persons regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, or political preference.
39. On December 1, 1958 sometime after 2:00 p.m., a fire started in a trash drum in the basement stairwell of Our Lady of Angels school, 909 N. Avers in Chicago. Children and nuns were trapped inside the building. Windows offered the only egress and before any equipment was available for evacuation, children began leaping from them. The fire was brought under control at 3:45 p.m. and the work of recovering bodies began. Ninety students and three nuns died. One hundred sixty children were saved. The fire at Our Lady of Angels school was suspected to have been intentionally set. Over the years at least two individuals were closely investigated, confessed and recanted. No one has been charged with the crime.
40. Dr. Martin Cooper, born December 26, 1928 in Chicago, a former general manager for the systems division at Motorola, is considered the inventor of the first portable handset and the first person to make a call on a portable cell phone in April 1973. The first call he made was to his rival, Joel Engel, head of research at Bell Labs.
41. C. D. Peacock jewelers are the oldest Chicago business still in existence today. - The House of Peacock (Elijah Peacock) first opened its doors for jewelry and watch repair at 155 1/2 Lake Street on February 9, 1837, the same year Chicago was incorporated as a city. According to one historian, the opening of the city's first retail jewelry establishment in the small frame building on Lake Street marks Chicago's passing "from semi-savage conditions to civilization and refinement." The growth of Chicago's business district in the 1840s is indicated by the fact that Peacock's jewelry store had moved to 195 Lake Street in 1843, and by 1849 it was relocated to 199 Randolph Street. The great Chicago fire ravages the city; Peacock's vault is all that survives the fire. Elijah's son, Charles (C.D.), who was born in 1838, opens the new C.D. Peacock store at State and Monroe in 1927. It wasn't until 1968 that C. D. Peacock opens a store on Michigan Avenue.



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42. Chicago Mercy Hospital was the first hospital in Illinois. - In 1846, at the request of Bishop Quarter from the new frontier diocese of Chicago, Mother Mary Frances Xavier Warde chose five Sisters from the growing community in Pittsburgh and set out for Chicago. This muddy village on the shores of Lake Michigan was ravaged by recurrent outbreaks of typhoid, smallpox, and cholera. Sisters of Mercy Land on Chicago Shores In 1846, Sister Agatha O'Brien, who at age 24 was the oldest of the five Sisters, began establishing area schools. One of the schools offered high school classes, 10 years before the opening of Chicago's first public high school.

The Sisters created a boarding school for working girls; treated the sick in their homes, in the alms house and in the local jail. Within a decade, four of the five Sisters had died of disease or exhaustion. In 1852, at a site that today would be near Rush Street and the Chicago River, the Sisters of Mercy converted an old rooming house into Mercy Hospital, the first chartered hospital in Chicago. By 1859, Mercy Hospital was the first Catholic hospital to affiliate with a medical school – Lind Medical School – and the first to require a graded curriculum. The hospital moved to a brand new building at Wabash and Van Buren and was renamed Mercy Hospital and Orphan Asylum. It was here that Mercy's goals became clearly defined – to provide both high quality medical care and excellence in medical education. Mercy Becomes Chicago's First Chartered Hospital.

In the 1860s, when the country was ripped apart by the Civil War, the Sisters of Mercy treated the Union wounded and gave care to the Confederate prisoners of war. In 1863, with the war not yet ended, the Sisters moved their hospital once again. This time, they moved to the site of a former academy at 26th Street and Calumet Avenue, in what seemed like the far distant countryside of Chicago. Many city residents shook their heads over a hospital so far out in the country. There was also criticism when they broke ground in 1869 for extensive additions to the hospital. But two years later every bit of that space would be needed.

In October of 1871 Chicago burned. Mercy Hospital, which had seemed so ridiculously large and foolish placed on the fringe of the city, became a haven beyond the fire's reach and provided for as many as six times the number of fire victims any other hospital could handle. The history of Mercy and the history of Chicago had become inseparable. Mercy's importance to this remarkable new city rising on the prairie was rooted.

43. The game of 16-inch softball was invented in Chicago. - The earliest known softball game of any kind was played in Chicago on Thanksgiving Day 1887 at the Farragut Boat Club when Yale and Harvard Alumni wrapped up a boxing glove and started to hit the "ball" with a broomstick. Until the turn of the 20th century, ball sizes ranged from 12 to 17 inches in circumference. The 16 inch softball was eventually adopted in Chicago because it didn't travel as far as the popular 12 or 14 inch balls. The game was played outdoors, in Chicago, the parks and school grounds are small, so the ball had to be larger to stay in the park. Another advantage of the 16 inch ball was that it allowed everyone to play barehanded. Gloves were a rare luxury as the Great Depression hit Chicago particularly hard. After the first national championship held in 1933 at the Century of Progress World's Fair, the sport grew in popularity. A professional league was formed that lasted through the 1950s. Teams drew crowds of over 10,000 each night.
44. The first Chicago Police Woman. - The widow of a Chicago Police Department officer, Marie Owens became the first woman hired directly as a police officer in 1893. Over the next thirty years Owens, who is generally acknowledged as the "first woman with full arrest powers conferred by a municipal law enforcement agency", visited courts and aided detectives in cases



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involving women and children. Officially listed as a "patrolman" in the Chicago police record books, when Owens retired in 1923 she was awarded a pension.

45. The World's first Moving Sidewalks were introduced at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition by a forward-thinking French engineer by the name of Eugene Henard. It had two different divisions: one where passengers were seated moving passengers at 3 miles per hour, and one where riders could stand or walk. The movable sidewalk was designed primarily to carry those passengers arriving by steamboats. When it was operating, people could get off the boats on Lake Michigan and travel on the moving sidewalk 2,500 feet down the pier and be delivered to the Exposition entrance or carry people back to the pier from the Fair grounds.
46. Chicago is home to the most technologically advanced domed planetarium theater in the world at the Adler Planetarium. In 1928 Max Adler, a Chicago business leader, and architect Ernest Grunsfeld travel to Jena, Germany to view the Carl Zeiss firm's design of an optical projection device that effectively creates the illusion of a night sky. Using light produced by an intricate machine at the center of a hemispherical room, he could project images of celestial objects onto the inner surface of a dome. Adler is so impressed by the modern planetarium that he donates funds to construct the first planetarium in the Western Hemisphere and locates it on Northerly Island in Chicago.

The Adler Planetarium opened on Max's birthday, May 12, 1930. The Adler refurbishes the building and replaced the original Zeiss projector with a new Mark VI Zeiss unit in 1967. Then in 2010 the Adler begins transformation of the historic "Sky Theater". The renamed "Grainger Sky Theater" opened in May 2011. The Grainger Sky Theater becomes the most technologically advanced dome theater in the world. The Adler had three Theaters; the Grainger Sky Theater (dome), the Definiti Space Theater (dome), and the Samuel C. Johnson Family Star Theater. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

47. The Field Museum has the world's largest, most complete and best preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex ever discovered. Field Museum purchased the massive skeleton at auction for \$8.4 million Sue in 1997. The remains of Sue, a 65-million-year-old Tyrannosaurus Rex arrived at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. But her considerable collection of bones arrived in a semi-truck, unassembled. Rebuilding Sue took over two years. Her hip bone alone weighs 200 to 300 pounds. Scientists at Field reassembled the bones to show what Sue may have looked like in her heyday.

The exhibit opened in May for 2000. Sue measures 42 feet long from snout to tail and 13 feet tall at the hip. She boasts 58 dagger-like teeth and cuts a fine figure as the Museum's most popular backdrop for visitor photos. A replica skull crowns the skeleton in Stanley Field Hall, while Sue's original skull, which weighs 600 pounds, rests within an exhibition on the Museum's balcony, under a mural depicting this majestic creature in the flesh.

48. Lincoln Park was designated as a recreational area in 1864. The 120-acre cemetery at the site had most of its graves removed and would be expanded to include more than 1,000 acres of woodlands, bridle paths, playgrounds, golf courses and museums. The cemetery had held the bodies of nearly 10,000 Confederate Civil War soldiers who had died in Chicago prisons were relocated to other cemeteries in 1870.
49. Other than the Water Tower, four public buildings remained standing in Chicago that predates the Great Fire of Oct. 7, 1871. They are: St. Ignatius College Prep, 1076 W. Roosevelt Rd.; Holy



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Family Catholic Church, 1019 S. May St.; St. Patrick's Catholic Church, 718 W. Adams St.; and First Baptist Congregational Church, 60 N. Ashland Ave.

50. Chicago in 1893 was the birthplace of the amusement park as we know it today. Borrowing the concept of an amusement enclosure from the world's first Midway at the World's Columbian Exposition, swimmer/showman Paul Boyton opened Paul Boyton's Water Chute, America's first modern amusement park, at 63rd and Drexel, July 4, 1894. Earlier "amusement parks" centered on natural features such as beaches and picnic groves to attract customers. Captain Boyton's was the first to rely solely on mechanical attractions—specifically, America's first major Shoot-the-Chutes ride.
51. The first of Marshall Field's Clocks was installed at the corner of Washington and State Streets on November 26, 1897. The cast bronze clock rests some 17.5 feet above the sidewalk and weighs a hefty 7.75 tons.
52. Western Electric employees, their friends and families were going to an annual company picnic in Michigan City, Indiana on the excursion steamer Eastland. The ship tilted to one side, and slowly rolled over at 7:28 a.m. Saturday, July 24, 1915. She was still moored to her dock between LaSalle and Clark Streets on the south bank of the Chicago River. Of the persons on board, 844 perished - making this Chicago's worst single disaster.
53. Resting on a foundation of over 20,000 wood pilings, Navy Pier opened in the summer of 1916 at a cost of \$4.5 million (\$94.9 million in today's dollars).
54. Chicago radio station, WGN, began broadcasting Chicago police calls for a few months in 1929. During the test the switchboard operator at the Chicago Police Department would telephone the WGN studios with their dispatch requests. WGN would then broadcast a "police alarm" to the radio (receiver) equipped police car. It didn't take long for the police to determine that the concept of utilizing radios for receiving police calls had plenty of merit. One year later, the police department bought its own transmitter.
55. On December 30, 1903, one of the most devastating fires in American history occurred at Chicago's new Iroquois Theater during a standing-room-only matinee performance starring the popular comedian Eddie Foy. The fire claimed the lives of more than 600 people, including scores of children, who were packed into the place for the afternoon show.

The Iroquois Theater was much acclaimed, even before it opened. In addition to being "absolutely fireproof", it was a beautiful place with an ornate lobby, grand staircases and a front façade that resembled a Greek temple with massive columns. The theater was designed to be safe. It had 25 exits that, it was claimed, could empty the building in less than five minutes. The stage had also been fitted with an asbestos curtain that could be quickly lowered to protect the audience. All of this would have been impressive if it had actually been installed – and if the staff actually had any idea how to use the safety devices that existed.

And those were not even the worst problems. Seats in the theater were wooden and stuffed with hemp. "Unattractive" safety doors were hidden from site and gates were locked across the entrance to the balcony during the show so that those in the "cheap seats" wouldn't sneak into the main theater. The building had no fire alarms and a myriad of other safety equipment had been forgotten or simply ignored – leading to the ever-popular "Chicago pay-offs" to officials who allowed the new theater to open on schedule anyway.



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As crowds filled the theater on that cold December day in 1903, they had no idea that how close their way to meeting their deaths. The horrific events began soon after the holiday crowd had packed into the theater on that Wednesday afternoon to see a matinee performance of the hit comedy Mr. Bluebeard. The main floor and balcony were packed and dozens more were given “standing-room-only” tickets and they lined the rear and walls of the theater.

Around the beginning of the second act, stagehands noticed a spark descend from an overhead light, and then watched some scraps of burning paper fall down onto the stage. In moments, flames began licking at the red-velvet curtain and while a collective gasp went up from the audience, no one rushed for the exits. It’s believed the audience merely thought the fire was part of the show.

A few moments later, a flaming set crashed down onto the stage, leaving little doubt that something had gone wrong. A stagehand attempted to lower the asbestos curtain that would protect the audience. It snagged halfway down, sending a wall of flame out into the audience.

Actors on stage panicked and ran for the doors. Chaos filled the auditorium as the audience began rushing for the theater’s Randolph Street entrance. With children in tow, the audience members immediately clogged the gallery and the upper balconies. The aisles had become impassable and as the lights went out, the crowd milled about in blind terror. The auditorium began to fill with heat and smoke and screams echoed off the walls and ceilings. Through it all, the mass continued to move forward but when the crowd reached the doors, they could not open them. The doors had been designed to swing inward rather than outward. The crush of people prevented those in the front from opening the doors. Many of those who died not only burned but suffocated from the smoke and the crush of bodies. Later, as the police removed the charred remains from the theater, they discovered that a number of victims had been trampled in the panic. One dead woman’s face even bore the mark of a shoe heel.

Backstage, theater employees and cast members opened a rear set of double doors, which sucked the wind inside and caused flames to fan out under the asbestos curtain and into the auditorium. A second gust of wind created a fireball that shot out into the galleries and balconies that were filled with people. All of the stage drops were now on fire and as they burned, they engulfed the supposedly noncombustible asbestos curtain and when it collapsed, it plunged into the seats of the theater.

The fire burned for almost 15 minutes before an alarm was raised at a box down the street. From outside, there appeared to be nothing wrong. It was so quiet that the first firefighters to arrive thought it was a false alarm.

This changed when they tried to open the auditorium doors and found they could not --- there were too many bodies stacked up against them. They were only able to gain access by actually pulling the bodies out of the way with pike poles, peeling them off one another and then climbing over the stacks of corpses. It took only 10 minutes to put out the blaze, as the intense heat inside had already eaten up anything that would still burn. The firefighters made their way into the blackened auditorium and were met with only silence and smell of death. They called out for survivors but no one answered their cry.

The gallery and upper balconies sustained the greatest loss of life as the patrons had been trapped by locked doors at the top of the stairways. The firefighters found 200 bodies stacked there, as many as 10 deep. Those who escaped had literally ripped the metal bars from the front



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of the balcony and had jumped onto the crowds below. Even then, most of these met their deaths at a lower level.

A few who made it to the fire escape door behind the top balcony found that the iron staircase was missing. In its place was a platform that plunged about 100 feet to the cobblestone alley below. Across the alley, behind the theater, painters were working on a building occupied by Northwestern University's dental school. When they realized what was happening at the theater, they quickly erected a makeshift bridge using ladders and wooden planks, which they extended across the alley to the fire escape platform. Reports vary as to how many they saved, but several people managed to climb across the "bridge".

Several plunged to their deaths as they tried to escape across the ladder but many times that number jumped from the ledge or were pushed by the milling crowd that pressed through the doors behind them. The passageway behind the theater is still referred to as "Death Alley" today, after nearly 150 victims were found here.

When it was all over, 572 people died in the fire and more died later, bringing the eventual death toll up to 602, including 212 children. For nearly five hours, police officers, firemen and even newspaper reporters, carried out the dead. Anxious relatives sifted through the remains, searching for loved ones. Other bodies were taken away by police wagons and ambulances and transported to a temporary morgue at Marshall Field's on State Street. Medical examiners and investigators worked all through the night.

The city went into mourning. Newspapers carried lists and photographs of the dead and the mayor banned all New Year's celebrations. An investigation into the fire brought to light a number of troubling facts. The investigation discovered that the supposedly "fireproof" asbestos curtain was really made from cotton and other combustible materials. It would have never saved anyone at all. In addition to not having any fire alarms in the building, the owners had decided that sprinklers were too unsightly and too costly and had never had them installed.

To make matters worse, the management also established a policy to keep non-paying customers from slipping into the theater during a performance --- they quietly bolted nine pair of iron panels over the rear doors and installed padlocked, accordion-style gates at the top of the interior second and third floor stairway landings. And just as tragic was the idea they came up with to keep the audience from being distracted during a show. They ordered all of the exit lights to be turned off.

The investigation led to a cover-up by officials from the city and the fire department, who denied all knowledge of fire code violations. They blamed the inspectors, who had overlooked the problems in exchange for free theater passes. A grand jury indicted a number of individuals, including the theater owners, fire officials and even the mayor. No one was ever charged with a criminal act. Families of the dead filed nearly 275 civil lawsuits against the theater but no money was ever collected.

The Iroquois Fire still ranks today as one of deadliest in history. Nevertheless, the building was repaired and re-opened briefly in 1904 as Hyde and Behmann's Music Hall and then in 1905 as the Colonial Theater. In 1924, the building was razed to make room for a new theater, the Oriental, but the façade of the Iroquois was used in its construction. The Oriental operated at what is now 24 West Randolph Street until the middle part of 1981, when it fell into disrepair and was closed down. It opened again as the home to a wholesale electronics dealer for a time and



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then went dark again. The restored theater is now part of the Civic Tower Building and is next door to the restored Delaware Building. It reopened as the Ford Center for the Performing Arts in 1998.

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