

After the Chicago Fire: Choosing a Park (Nonfiction)

Long ago, there was a very big fire in Chicago. That was in 1871. After the fire, there was a lot of trash. Many blocks had burned. Many houses were gone. There was so much trash people needed to move it out of the way. They wanted to build new homes. It was hard to go down the street. The streets were full of burned wood.

People traveled by walking or riding horses. They had wagons. They did not have dump trucks. In fact, trucks had not been invented. It would be much later before people had trucks. So moving things was hard.

A leader had a plan. He said they should put the trash in the lake. He said that would be a way to get rid of the trash. And then they would have more land. Some people said that was a waste of time. They should build houses first. But other people said they could do both. They could move the trash. They could build, too.

Moving the trash was hard work. They put lots of old wood from the fire in wagons. Horses pulled the wagons. They started with the trash near the lake. They moved that trash. They put it in the lake. Then they went farther. Block by block, they took the trash. They moved it to the lake.

Soon there was a lot of trash at the edge of the city. Next they got dirt. They got it from places that had burned. They piled the dirt on top. Little by little it got bigger. They called that a landfill.

Some people wanted to build there. But they did not build on new land. They planted grass. They planted trees. That took time. It took a lot of work. Some people said it would be better to build there. They wanted new homes. But leaders said it should be a big park.

They made Chicago a better city. Leaders said the land could be a special place. It would be a great park. It was next to downtown. Many people would be able to go there. The city was very crowded. It was good to have open land. Thousands of people worked in offices downtown. They could come there during their lunch hour.

You can see that park today. It is Grant Park. Because it is downtown, many people go there every day. Thousands of people work downtown. They can all go to the park.

Support the Main Idea

What is the central idea of this passage?

Underline five sentences in the passage that support that idea.