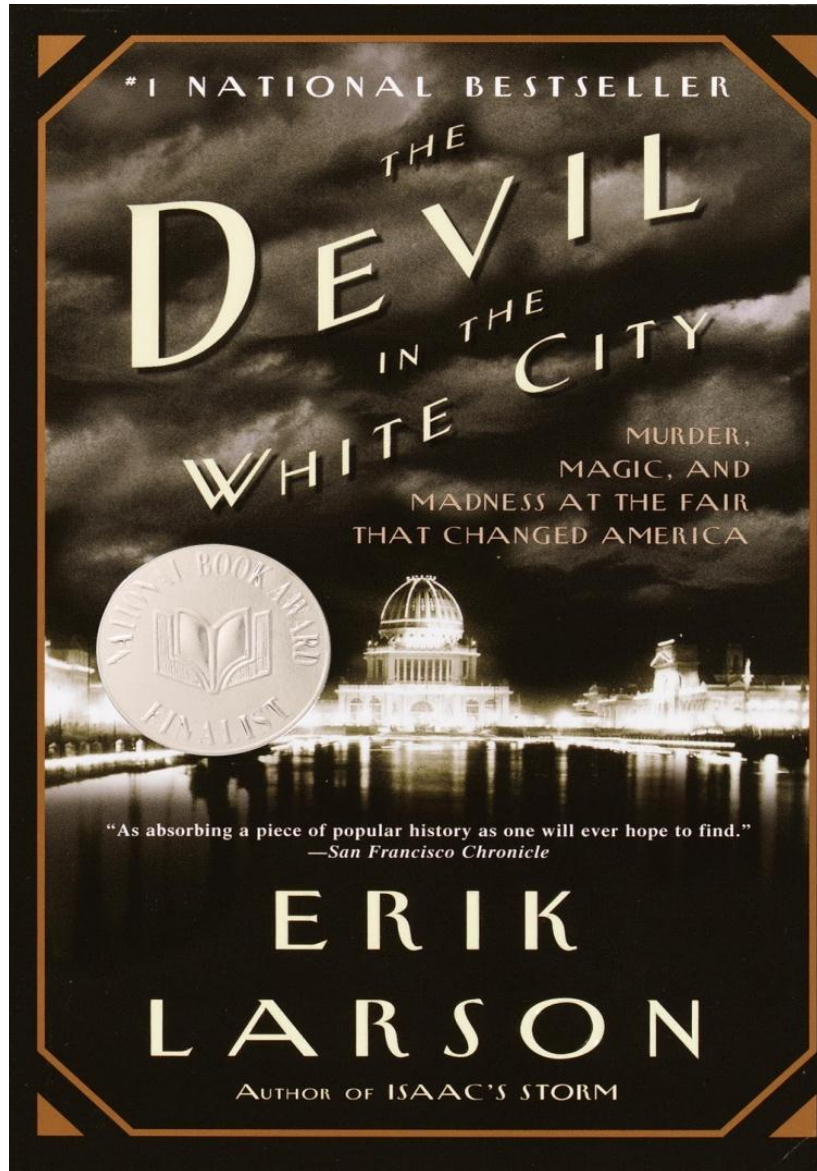


About the book



In the years between 1888 and 1893, the two major figures in this book became very successful at their chosen fields. Daniel Hudson Burnham became the world-famous architect of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, and Dr. H.H. Holmes (born Herman Webster Mudgett) became an accomplished serial killer, using the fair to lure women to their deaths and evade the authorities.

The chapters of Larson's book interweave the tales of these two men, illustrating the deliberate planning, business acumen, and architectural skills of both and juxtaposing how their skills were used.

-Books & Authors

About the Author (Bowker Author Biography)



Erik Larson was born on January 3, 1954 in Freeport, Long Island. He studied Russian history at the University of Pennsylvania and graduated summa cum laude in 1976. After a year off, he attended the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, graduating in 1978.

His first newspaper job was with The Bucks County Courier Times in Levittown, Pennsylvania, where he wrote about murder, witches, and environmental poisons. He is a former features writer for The Wall Street Journal and Time magazine, where he is still a contributing writer. His magazine stories have appeared in The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, and other publications. He is the author of Lethal Passage: The Story of a Gun and The Naked Consumer: How Our Private Lives Become Public Commodities. He has also written Isaac's Storm , about the experiences of Isaac Cline during the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair That Changed America,

Larson has taught non-fiction writing at San Francisco State, the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars, and the University of Oregon, and has spoken to audiences from coast to coast. (Publisher Provided) Erik Larson was born in Brooklyn on Jan. 3, 1954. He graduated Summa Cum

Laude from the University of Pennsylvania and went to graduate school at Columbia University. Larson worked for the Wall Street Journal and then began writing non-fiction books. He is the author of the bestselling book, *The Devil in the White City*, which has been optioned for a feature film by Leonardo DiCaprio. He also wrote *In the Garden of the Beasts*, *Issac's Storm*, *Thunderstruck* and *The Naked Consumer*. Larson lives in Seattle with his wife and three daughters.

Awards

National Book Award for nonfiction nomination, 2003, and Edgar Allan Poe Award, 2004, both for [*The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and the Madness at the Fair That Changed America*](#).

Writings

- *The Naked Consumer: How Our Private Lives Become Public Commodities*, Holt (New York, NY), 1992.
- [*Lethal Passage: How the Travels of a Single Handgun Expose the Roots of America's Gun Crisis*](#), Crown (New York, NY), 1994, reprinted as *Lethal Passage: The Story of a Gun*, Vintage (New York, NY), 1995.
- [*Isaac's Storm: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History*](#), Crown (New York, NY), 1999.
- [*The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and the Madness at the Fair That Changed America*](#), Crown (New York, NY), 2003.
- [*Thunderstruck*](#), Crown (New York, NY), 2006.

- [*In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*](#), Crown (New York, NY), 2011.
- Contributor to periodicals, including *Atlantic* and *Harper's*.

Media Adaptions

[*Isaac's Storm*](#), abridged sound recording, narrated by Edward Herrman, Random House, 1999; research for *The Naked Consumer* became the subject of NOVA documentary, *We Know Where You Live*, broadcast on PBS; *The Devil in the White City* was optioned for film, 2010; *In the Garden of Beasts* was optioned for film, 2011.

Sidelights (Books & Authors)

Erik Larson is a journalist and author. His first book, *The Naked Consumer: How Our Private Lives Become Public Commodities*, is an investigation of how American consumers have become the victims of consumer espionage, wherein the details of their lives have become readily accessible to marketers who use such details to choose their targets. Larson tells how data can be gleaned from the U.S. Census Bureau, communications services, banks, medical records, deeds, lists, drivers' licenses, and electronic and human spies. With these facts, marketers create profiles based on income, credit, health, status, ethnicity, and spending habits. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer noted that the data "then serves as the indispensable basis for insidious commercial appeals that

exploit consumers' fears, vanity, and greed." Alexander Star wrote in *New Republic* that Larson's "most arresting pages detail the development and possible convergence of two devices--the 'passive audience meter' and the supermarket scanner. ... Larson expects the passive meter to become a standard feature of the Nielsen household within a few years. Unlike the old Nielsen box, the meter can break down audience preferences by the second." Larson objects to the Universal Product Code, or bar code, that appears on nearly everything consumers buy. He writes that marketing companies match up what viewers watch on television with what they buy and plan advertising accordingly. Larson shows how easily privacy abuse and manipulation are carried out by advertising agencies. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor opined that Larson "offers strong ammunition against an enemy so insidious that most people don't even know it's there."

John Carroll wrote in *Technology Review* that "marketers know when we're expecting a baby, when we've purchased a house, when we've bought the farm. Like youngsters with their stacks of trading cards, businesses flip us and swap us and bundle us into neat little piles." Carroll said that "by fostering what Larson calls the Culture of the Second Guess, marketers have come to concentrate their efforts on refining their selling techniques rather than their products. Ironically, they may have become too smart for their own good. Because of their targeted promotions and hell-bent couponing, companies have in effect reduced brand loyalty and blurred product distinctions. Relative performance has been overshadowed by relative price. Larson contends that this game reduces creativity in the

marketplace. ... As a result, today's manufacturers and marketers substitute pandering and short-term focus for the inspiration of new ideas."

Larson wrote a series about the gun culture in America for the *Wall Street Journal* and studies the subject in his book, *Lethal Passage: How the Travels of a Single Handgun Expose the Roots of America's Gun Crisis*, reprinted as *Lethal Passage: The Story of a Gun*. His interest in the subject began in 1980 when his Maryland neighborhood experienced a series of drive-by shootings. He wanted to find out how kids were getting guns, and began with a crime that occurred in 1988, when sixteen-year-old Nicholas Elliot took a Cobray M-11/9 to his Virginia Beach school, where he killed one teacher, injured another, and terrorized students. The semiautomatic handgun jammed, preventing Elliot from inflicting further injury. "Larson's journey discloses a commercial system shot through with venality, social irresponsibility, and ingrained bad habits of skirting legality," wrote Ray Olson in *Booklist*.

After he found that the gun had been purchased by Elliot's uncle at a gun show, Larson applied for and easily obtained a federal gun dealer's license. *Playboy* reviewer Digby Diehl wrote that "as a licensed dealer, Larson also became privy to the secret world of gun sales. His thorough investigative report is the most shocking documentation yet of America's gun epidemic, which includes more than 200 million weapons." Larson proposes a five-part omnibus law called the Life and Liberty Preservation Act, which he says would close most of the

loopholes in current legislation. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer called *Lethal Passage* a "valiant, innovative, effective, and timely study." An *Economist* contributor said: "Mr. Larson's purpose is to expose, in plain unvarnished prose, the awful laxity of America's gun industry. He does it as well as it could and should be done."

Isaac's Storm: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History is Larson's study of the greatest natural disaster in United States history, the storm that hit Galveston, Texas, on September 8, 1900, resulting in the loss of between 6,000 and 8,000 lives. *Booklist* reviewer Gilbert Taylor said that "although the subject is grim, this telling is a deftly told fable of folly and fate." Larson focuses on the hurricane and on Isaac Cline, chief of the U.S. Weather Bureau's Galveston station, who said in 1891 that "the opinion ... that Galveston will at some time be seriously damaged by some such disturbance, is simply an absurd delusion." *New York Times Book Review* contributor W. Jeffrey Bolster noted that the Weather Bureau "took its cues from its chief, Willis L. Moore, whose insecurity matched his pomposity. Moore wanted his staff to look confident, soothing and precise; he forbade use of alarming words like 'hurricane' unless authorized from Washington. His pettiness trumped his judgment when, at the peak of the 1900 hurricane season, he halted all telegraphed weather communications from Cuba. He would not admit that men he regarded as excitable Latins might have an edge on his Weather Bureau, even though Havana's Belen Observatory had been systematically studying hurricanes for thirty years."

A Cuban meteorologist predicted that the hurricane would hit central Texas, but Cline and Moore said it would move up the Atlantic coast. "Erik Larson is a very skilled storyteller," wrote Steve Horstmeyer and Jack Williams in *Weatherwise*, "and the images his writing creates are so vivid the reader will come as close to experiencing this historic storm as is possible 100 years after the fact." When the storm hit with gusts of 200 miles an hour, it destroyed one third of the city. A tidal wave decimated Fort Jacinto and carried a steamship two miles inland. A month after it was over, corpses were still being recovered from the debris and burned on pyres. "Larson expertly captures the power of the storm itself and the ironic, often catastrophic consequences of the unpredictable intersection of natural force and human choice," wrote a *Publishers Weekly* contributor. *Library Journal* reviewer Trisha Stevenson called *Isaac's Storm* an "unforgettable work."

While in the early stages of research for *Isaac's Storm*, Larson came across mentions of an obscure, late-nineteenth-century serial killer named Henry H. Holmes. Although Larson did not want to write a crime story at the time, he came back to the subject for *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and the Madness at the Fair That Changed America*, which received a National Book Award nomination in 2003. What changed Larson's mind about taking on Holmes's story was the gradual realization that the psychopathic killer operated in striking parallel to architect Daniel Burnham, who was struggling to complete construction for the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. While

Burnham fought tight budgets, equipment failure, and political obstacles to organize the ultimately successful "White City," Holmes built the nearby Fair Hotel that housed inescapable rooms, hidden chutes, and a crematorium in which at least nine and possibly 200 young women were murdered. Larson alternates between the two men's stories: "I couldn't really tell one ... without telling the other," he told Alden Mudge in a *Bookpage* interview. Mudge deemed this "frankly, a brilliant decision."

Writing in *World and I*, Randy Boyagoda, extolled Larson's presentation of a "rich feast of details related to the fair." In his *Newsweek* review, Malcolm Jones criticized Larson for making up some of the more compelling details about Holmes's killings and placing higher priority on telling an exciting tale than keeping to hard facts. Nonetheless, Jones pronounced *The Devil in the White City* "enchanting."

In his book *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*, Larson explores the experiences of William E. Dodd and his daughter, Martha. Dodd was the American ambassador to Germany. He arrived there in 1933, just as Adolf Hitler was rising to power. In a *Christian Science Monitor* interview, Larson told Randy Dotinga that he was inspired to learn more about 1930s Germany while reading "William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. About a third of the way through, I suddenly finally caught up to the fact that Shirer had been there in Berlin, from 1934 on, and was finally kicked out when the US entered the war." Larson added: "He had met all these people, Hitler and Goebbels and all

those we know to be absolute monsters, before they became monsters. I began to wonder what that would have been like to be in Berlin, early in Hitler's reign, and to have met these people. What would you have thought if you hadn't known how things would have turned out?"

These questions led Larson to discover Dodd and his family. Dodd's daughter was initially excited by the revolution that had reinvigorated Germany, and she carried on affairs with several high-ranking Third Reich officers. However, Dodd became increasingly concerned with the persecution of Jews and the censorship of the press, although the U.S. State Department was somewhat indifferent. As the seeming promise of the Third Reich turns to violence and totalitarianism, Larson traces the Dodds' increasingly precarious position. The resulting tale "is rich with incident, populated by fascinating secondary characters, tinged with rising peril and pityingly persuasive about the futility of Dodd's mission," Janet Maslin remarked in the *New York Times Book Review*. "In his time, he was taunted, undercut and called 'Ambassador Dud.' Hitler would refer to him in retrospect as 'an imbecile.' Yet Dodd spent four years, from 1933 to 1937, in what was arguably the worst job of that era. And he ultimately recognized enough reality, and clung to enough dignity, to make Mr. Larson's powerful, poignant historical narrative a transportingly true story." Nigel Jones, writing in the *London Telegraph*, called *In the Garden of Beasts* a "curiously compelling book." He found that "Larson writes history like a novelist," but "sometimes ... his homely prose resembles a large lolloping dog." Nevertheless, Jones concluded, "he presents a familiar story through

fresh eyes, conveying quite wonderfully the electrically charged atmosphere of a whole society turning towards the stormy dark."

Reviews

Library Journal

Fresh from the triumph of *Isaac's Storm*, which told the story of the deadly 1900 Galveston hurricane, Larson leaps into a dual tale set around the World's Columbian Exposition, semi-officially known as the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. The event was to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America. It did that and also highlighted America's second most populous city, filled with energy, smoke, architectural genius, and animal and sometime human slaughter. Architect Daniel H. Burnham faced a near impossible task: design and construct hundreds of buildings, some monumental in size and grandeur, in the face of an incredibly tight schedule. The author describes the challenges Burnham faced, but his greatest challenge and greatest achievement was the melding of the diverse cast of characters who created the Great White City, so-called because most of the fair's buildings were painted white. Seminal landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted was on hand to complain and create; so were contentious union organizers and agitators, jealous colleagues, builders, and wheeler-dealers. Meanwhile, a few blocks away, Herman Webster Mudgett, a.k.a. Henry H. Holmes, had built a bizarre structure aimed at trapping, exploiting, and killing young women. The story of the psychopath contrasts with

Burnham's, though sometimes the analogies seem strained or absent. Reader Scott Brick has a young and mildly expressive voice; what is lacking is dialog—even invented (educated, of course) dialog would have added an element of interest and suspense. Still, the tale is finely crafted and deeply researched. An excellent selection for both American history and true crime collections.—Don Wismer, Cary Memorial Lib., Wayne, ME (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC

Booklist

Larson's ambitious, engrossing tale of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 focuses primarily on two men: Daniel H. Burnham, the architect who was the driving force behind the fair, and Henry H. Holmes, a sadistic serial killer working under the cover of the busy fair. After the 1889 French Exposition Universel wowed the world with the Eiffel Tower and high attendance numbers, interest began to grow in the U.S. for a similar fair. Chicago and New York were the top contenders for the location, and in February 1890, Chicagoans were overjoyed to hear they had won the honor. Burnham and his partner, John Root, the leading architects in Chicago, were tapped for the job, and they in turn called on Frederick Law Olmstead, Louis Sullivan, and Richard M. Hunt to help them build the world's greatest fair. They faced overwhelming obstacles: inhospitable weather, bureaucracy, illness, and even death. Unbeknownst to any of them, Holmes, a charismatic, handsome doctor, had arrived in the city and built a complex with apartments, a drugstore, and a vault, which he used to trap his victims until they suffocated.

When the White City opened for business in May 1893, hundreds of thousands of people flocked to it, although a plummeting economy and several accidents did nothing to help business. A shocking murder concludes the ultimately successful fair, and that's before Holmes claims his final victims in the cruelest act of his career. A magnificent book. --Kristine Huntley

Publisher's Weekly

Not long after Jack the Ripper haunted the ill-lit streets of 1888 London, H.H. Holmes (born Herman Webster Mudgett) dispatched somewhere between 27 and 200 people, mostly single young women, in the churning new metropolis of Chicago; many of the murders occurred during (and exploited) the city's finest moment, the World's Fair of 1893. Larson's breathtaking new history is a novelistic yet wholly factual account of the fair and the mass murderer who lurked within it. Bestselling author Larson (Isaac's Storm) strikes a fine balance between the planning and execution of the vast fair and Holmes's relentless, ghastly activities. The passages about Holmes are compelling and aptly claustrophobic; readers will be glad for the frequent escapes to the relative sanity of Holmes's co-star, architect and fair overseer Daniel Hudson Burnham, who managed the thousands of workers and engineers who pulled the sprawling fair together on an astonishingly tight two-year schedule. A natural charlatan, Holmes exploited the inability of authorities to coordinate, creating a small commercial empire entirely on unpaid debts and constructing a personal cadaver-disposal system. This is, in effect, the nonfiction *Alienist*, or a sort

of companion, which might be called Homicide, to Emile Durkheim's Suicide. However, rather than anomie, Larson is most interested in industriousness and the new opportunities for mayhem afforded by the advent of widespread public anonymity. This book is everything popular history should be, meticulously recreating a rich, pre-automobile America on the cusp of modernity, in which the sale of "articulated" corpses was a semi-respectable trade and serial killers could go well-nigh unnoticed. 6 b&w photos, 1 map. (Feb.) Forecast: With this book, Larson builds on the success of Isaac's Storm. Anyone with an interest in American history-in particular fans of Stephen Ambrose and David McCullough-should find much to engross them here. (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved

Discussion questions (www.litlovers.com/)

- 1.** In the note "Evils Imminent," Erik Larson writes "Beneath the gore and smoke and loam, this book is about the evanescence of life, and why some men choose to fill their brief allotment of time engaging the impossible, others in the manufacture of sorrow" [xi]. What does the book reveal about "the ineluctable conflict between good and evil"? What is the essential difference between men like Daniel Burnham and Henry H. Holmes? Are they alike in any way?
- 2.** At the end of *The Devil in the White City*, in Notes and Sources, Larson writes "The thing that entranced me about Chicago in the Gilded Age was the city's

willingness to take on the impossible in the name of civic honor, a concept so removed from the modern psyche that two wise readers of early drafts of this book wondered why Chicago was so avid to win the world's fair in the first place" [p. 393]. What motives, in addition to "civic honor," drove Chicago to build the Fair? In what ways might the desire to "out-Eiffel Eiffel" and to show New York that Chicago was more than a meat-packing backwater be seen as problematic?

3. The White City is repeatedly referred to as a dream. The young poet Edgar Lee Masters called the Court of Honor "an inexhaustible dream of beauty" [p. 252]; Dora Root wrote "I think I should never willingly cease drifting in that dreamland" [p. 253]; Theodore Dreiser said he had been swept "into a dream from which I did not recover for months" [p. 306]; and columnist Teresa Dean found it "cruel . . . to let us dream and drift through heaven for six months, and then to take it out of our lives" [p. 335]. What accounts for the dreamlike quality of the White City? What are the positive and negative aspects of this dream?

4. In what ways does the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 change America? What lasting inventions and ideas did it introduce into American culture? What important figures were critically influenced by the Fair?

5. At the end of the book, Larson suggests that "Exactly what motivated Holmes may never be known" [p. 395]. What possible motives are exposed in *The Devil in the White City*? Why is it important to try to understand the

motives of a person like Holmes?

6. After the Fair ended, Ray Stannard Baker noted "What a human downfall after the magnificence and prodigality of the World's Fair which has so recently closed its doors! Heights of splendor, pride, exaltation in one month: depths of wretchedness, suffering, hunger, cold, in the next" [p. 334]. What is the relationship between the opulence and grandeur of the Fair and the poverty and degradation that surrounded it? In what ways does the Fair bring into focus the extreme contrasts of the Gilded Age? What narrative techniques does Larson use to create suspense in the book? How does he end sections and chapters of the book in a manner that makes' the reader anxious to find out what happens next?

7. Larson writes, "The juxtaposition of pride and unfathomed evil struck me as offering powerful insights into the nature of men and their ambitions" [p. 393]. What such insights does the book offer? What more recent stories of pride, ambition, and evil parallel those described in *The Devil in the White City*?

8. What does *The Devil in the White City* add to our knowledge about Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham? What are the most admirable traits of these two men? What are their most important aesthetic principles?

9. In his speech before his wheel took on its first passengers, George Ferris "happily assured the audience that the man condemned for having 'wheels in his head'

had gotten them out of his head and into the heart of the Midway Plaisance" [p. 279]. In what way is the entire Fair an example of the power of human ingenuity, of the ability to realize the dreams of imagination?

10. How was Holmes able to exert such power over his victims? What weaknesses did he prey upon? Why wasn't he caught earlier? In what ways does his story "illustrate the end of the century" [p. 370] as the Chicago Times-Herald wrote?

11. What satisfaction can be derived from a nonfiction book like *The Devil in the White City* that cannot be found in novels? In what ways is the book like a novel?

12. In describing the collapse of the roof of Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, Larson writes "In a great blur of snow and silvery glass the building's roof—that marvel of late nineteenth-century hubris, enclosing the greatest volume of unobstructed space in history—collapsed to the floor below" [p. 196–97]. Was the entire Fair, in its extravagant size and cost, an exhibition of arrogance? Do such creative acts automatically engender a darker, destructive parallel? Can Holmes be seen as the natural darker side of the Fair's glory?

13. What is the total picture of late nineteenth-century America that emerges from *The Devil in the White City*? How is that time both like and unlike contemporary America? What are the most significant differences? In what ways does that time mirror the present?

Read-Alikes

D.E. Johnson, [*The Detroit Electric Scheme*](#) (2010)

Will Anderson is a drunk, heartbroken over the breakup with his fiancée, Elizabeth. He's barely kept his job at his father's company---Detroit Electric, 1910's leading electric automobile manufacturer. Late one night, Elizabeth's new fiancé and Will's one-time friend, John Cooper, asks Will to meet him at the car factory. He finds Cooper dead, crushed in a huge hydraulic roof press. Surprised by the police, Will panics and runs, leaving behind his cap and automobile, and buries his blood-spattered clothing in a garbage can. What follows is a fast-paced, detail-filled ride through early-1900s Detroit, involving murder, blackmail, organized crime, the development of a wonderful friendship, and the inside story on early electric automobiles.

David Grann, [*The Devil and Sherlock Holmes: Tales of Murder, Madness, and Obsession*](#) (2011)

From the bestselling author of *The Lost City of Z* comes this brilliant collection of true stories about people whose fixations propel them into unfathomable and often deadly circumstances. Whether David Grann is investigating a mysterious murder, tracking a chameleon-like con artist, or hunting an elusive giant squid, he has proven to be one of the most gifted reporters and storytellers of his generation. In *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes*, Grann takes the reader around the world, revealing a gallery of

rogues and heroes who show that truth is indeed stranger than fiction.

Douglas Perry, [*The Girls of Murder City: Fame, Lust, and the Beautiful Killer Who Inspired Chicago*](#) (2010)

The true story of the murderesses who became media sensations and inspired the musical *Chicago*, 1924. There was nothing surprising about men turning up dead in the Second City. Life was cheaper than a quart of illicit gin in the gangland capital of the world. But two murders that spring were special - worthy of celebration. So believed Maurine Watkins, a wanna-be playwright and a "girl reporter" for the *Chicago Tribune*, the city's "hanging paper." Newspaperwomen were supposed to write about clubs, cooking and clothes, but the intrepid Miss Watkins, a minister's daughter from a small town, zeroed in on murderers instead. Looking for subjects to turn into a play, she would make "Stylish Belva" Gaertner and "Beautiful Beulah" Annan - both of whom had brazenly shot down their lovers - the talk of the town.

Leon Grandin, *A Parisienne in Chicago: Impressions of the World's Columbian Exposition* (2010)

During the summer of 1892, this twenty eight year old Parisian school teacher boarded the transatlantic ship "La Touraine" bound for New York. At the same time, she began taking notes for a project that would eventually be published as "Impressions d'une parisienne a Chicago." In this lively travel memoir, Madame Grandin describes what

strikes her most about American life, from the diverse neighborhoods and cultural attractions of Manhattan, to a stunning train trip to Niagara Falls, and finally to her extended sojourn in Chicago during the World's Columbian Exposition.

Karen Abbot, [*Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America's Soul*](#) (2002)

A vivid snapshot of America's journey from Victorian-era propriety to 20th-century modernity. Step into the perfumed parlors of the Everleigh Club, the most famous brothel in American history--and the catalyst for a culture war that rocked the nation. Operating in Chicago at the dawn of the 20th century, the Club welcomed moguls and actors, senators and athletes, foreign dignitaries and literary icons into a stately double mansion, and the Everleigh sisters treated their girls far better than most madams. But not everyone appreciated their attempts to elevate the industry.

Theodore Dreiser, [*Sister Carrie*](#) (1900)

Dreiser transforms the conventional "fallen woman" story into a genuinely original work of imaginative fiction. He hurls his impressionable eighteen-year-old heroine into the amoral world of the big city and reveals, with powerful insight, the driving forces of our culture: America's restless

idealism, glamorous material seductions and spiritual innocence.

Watch-Alikes

[Chicago: City of the Century](#), PBS (2003)

City of the Century chronicles Chicago's dramatic transformation from a swampy frontier town of fur traders and Native Americans to a massive metropolis that was the quintessential American city of the nineteenth century. The film tells how innovation, ingenuity, determination and ruthlessness created empires in what was a marshy wasteland and describes the hardships endured by millions of working men and women whose labor helped a capitalist class reinvent the way America did business.

[Expo: Magic of the White City](#), Janson Media (2005)

Narrated by Gene Wilder, "EXPO - Magic of the White City" brings the Chicago World's Fair to life! Experience the world of 1893 through a cinematic visit to Chicago's Columbian Exposition. Many of the world's greatest achievements in science, technology and culture were unveiled there. Fairgoers enjoyed the Midway Plaisance where a one-mile boulevard of fun offered camel riding, belly dancing, street fighting and beer drinking. Nearly 28 million visited the Fair.

[The World's Greatest Fair](#), PBS (2005)

Shortly after the first Olympics in the U.S. was held there, 12 million visitors gathered to visit the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 to marvel at the latest scientific inventions by man and to observe the fantastic cultural exhibits stretched across a massive 1,200-acre sight. This engrossing documentary pays tribute to that eight-month celebration of what historians have called The World's Greatest Fair

The 1939 New York World's Fair, PR Studios (2010)

A collection of 3 films concerning the famous 1939 NY World's Fair in Queens is presented. 1-The Middleton Family at the New York World's Fair -color-1939-54 minutes-This film paid for by Westinghouse, shows a typical American family from the heartland visiting their grandma in Huntington, N.Y. as part of a trip to the World's Fair.

H.H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer, Facets Video (2004)

TORTURE CHAMBERS - VATS OF ACID - SECRET PASSAGEWAYS At the height of his criminal career, the infamous Dr. H.H. Holmes designed his castle of horrors in Chicago, where he rented rooms to unsuspecting victims

visiting the 1893 World's Fair. Further benefiting from his victims, Holmes sold their skeletons to local medical schools.

Listen-Alikes

- Stoughton Musical Society, "Song of Our Saviour" (1881)
- George W. Johnson, "[The Laughing Song](#)" (1898)
- Scott Joplin, "[The Ragtime Dance](#)" (1902)
- W.C. Handy, "[Memphis Blues](#)" (1914)
- Henry "Ragtime" Thomas, "[Honey Won't You Allow Me One More Chance](#)" (1927)



Ann Arbor District Library