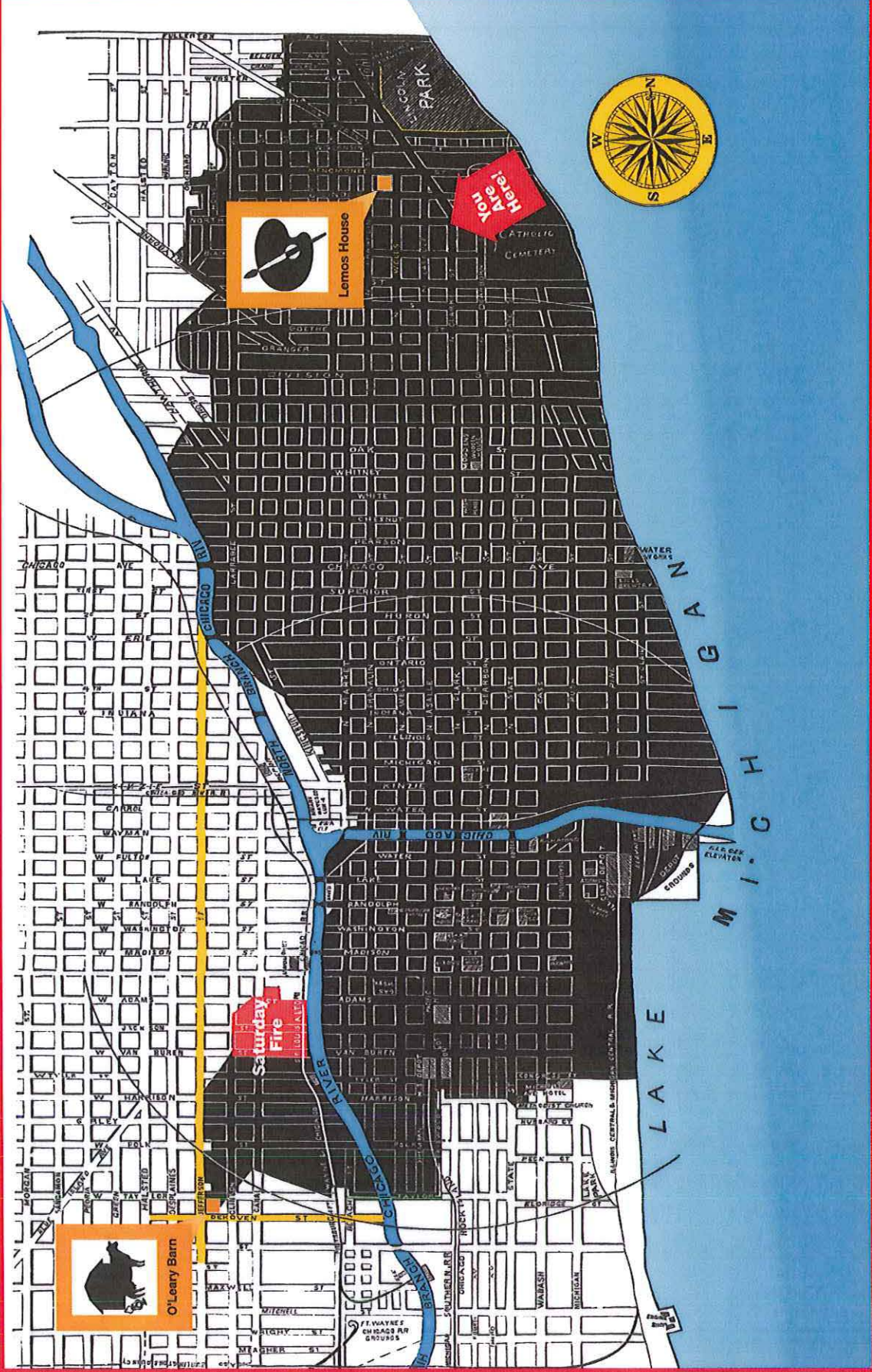




*Memories of the Chicago Fire in 1871* by Julia Lemos

**Fire Map:  
Key Locations in the  
Burnt District**

# Julia Lemos and the Great Chicago Fire, 1871



# Julia Lemos and the Great Chicago Fire, 1871

# Julia Lemos

## Excerpts

## **My Experiences of the Fire of 1871 in Chicago-Julia Lemos**

At the time of the fire, Julia lived on the North side of Chicago with her parents and her five children. Her husband had died and she was a single mother. She worked at a company that printed copies of artwork that were put on sale for people to buy. Julia realized that she had lived through one of the most important events in Chicago's history so she wrote down what she remembered and she created the painting.

### **Excerpt #1**

I pulled the window shutters to close them, but there was such a strong wind blowing, that I had to pull hard to close them. I said out loud, "Oh what a wind. It would be bad if there was a fire"—I did not know it then, but the fire had already started on the west side. I went to bed, but about five o'clock in the morning was woken up by a rumbling noise. Since I was awake I got up and threw open the shutters. I thought I was dreaming, the whole street was crowded with people, with hats and shawls on.

### **Questions**

#### Reading Comprehension (evidence/logical inferences)

- How can we see evidence of the strong wind in Julia's painting?
- Where does Julia say the fire started? [west side-point out the O'Leary barn on the floor map, and Julia's home]
- Julia said she woke up from a rumbling noise. What noises can we imagine she heard from looking at her painting?

### **Excerpt #2**

There was an old wooden fence where we were and father pulled four boards off, and laid them on the grass to make a bed, and laid three of the children on them and covered them with his large cloak. But my oldest child, a boy about 9 years old stayed with me. I sat on the grass holding the baby, and the boy laid his head on my lap and went to sleep. From where I was sitting I could see fire in the distance, and then I saw a church steeple topple over in the flames. Just then my boy woke up and began to cry. I said, Willie, mama is here, do not cry.

### **Questions**

#### Reading Comprehension (evidence/logical inferences)

- How many children did Julia have?
- In her account, how do Julia and her Father care for the children? [possible answers: make a bed out of a fence-find fence in painting. Cover with cloak, reassure.]
- Where in the painting can you see adults taking care of children?
- Julia saw a church steeple catch on fire and fall over. Where is the church steeple in her painting?

## Conclude with Higher-Order Thinking Questions

Use one or two of these questions to conclude the discussion with either excerpt.

Tell students: After the fire Julia said that “In spite of all my troubles I was happy because I had all my children with me.” We have learned so much about Julia from her painting and her words.

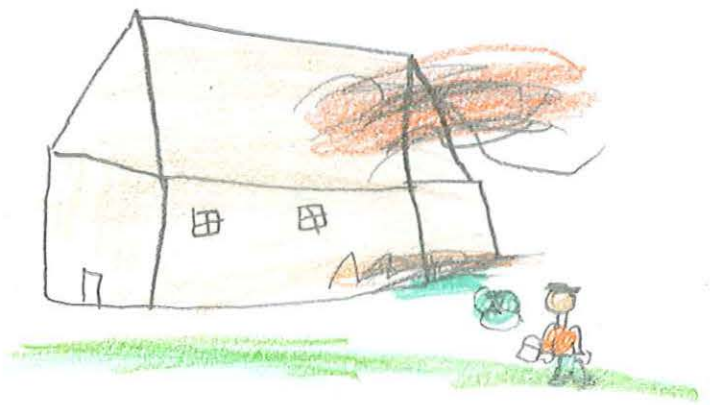
- What words would you use to describe Julia (character traits)? Why?
- How do you think she felt during the fire? Why?
- Why do you think she made her painting and wrote down her experience?
- What lessons do you think people learned from the fire?

After the Fire: Julia’s family was very lucky. They all lived through the fire. They moved to New York for a little while where some of their family lived, but a year after the fire they returned to Chicago. Julia got her job back at the company she worked for before the fire. Julia’s painting and writing help us understand today, what happened during the fire. They are so special, that they are kept safe here at the Chicago History Museum so that everyone can learn from Julia.

# Student Work

## Sample: Pre-Visit

I will ring the alarm  
So someone will come to  
help. I will also do knock on  
the o'lyre door to woren  
them. I could also trie  
to stop the fire.

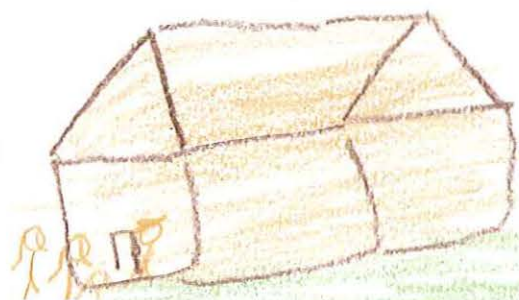


My neighbors mitte take  
there pets and make sure  
Your childres are out of the  
house. And take clouse and  
Pictures. Also other important  
things that they need.



They mitte be praying  
and cring from ioy. Tring to  
find savety. Happy because  
they thing this rain can  
stop the fire.

They Starded to build  
again and Starded to live  
chicago. Or help others  
to build homes. And at the  
end al of them where  
happy to stay.





# Student Work Samples: On-Site

# Memories of the Chicago Fire in 1871

Artist: Julia Lemos



Find a detail!

What do you notice? Write it down or make a quick sketch.



It's smoke



Act it out!

How can you use your body to act-out your detail?



I would... move around and squiggle like smoke



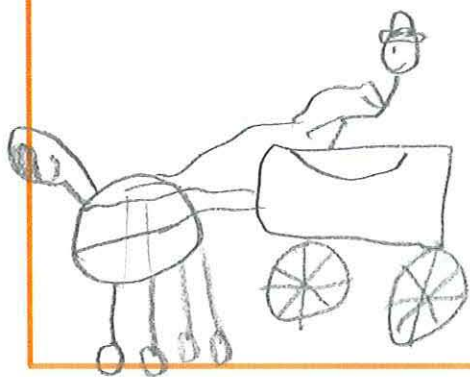
# Memories of the Chicago Fire in 1871

Artist: Julia Lemos



**Find a detail!**

What do you notice? Write it down or make a quick sketch.



**Act it out!**

How can you use your body to act-out your detail?



I would...

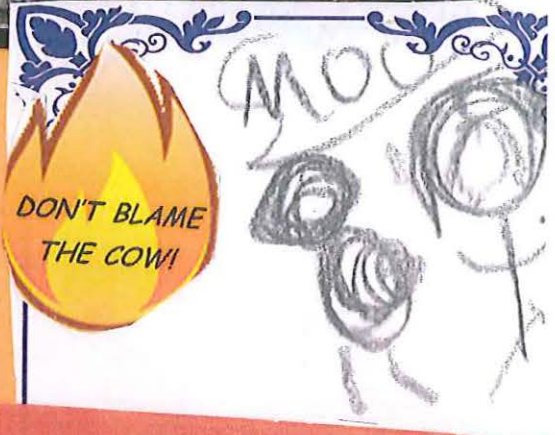
pretend to  
have a rope  
and say  
clickady-  
clack.



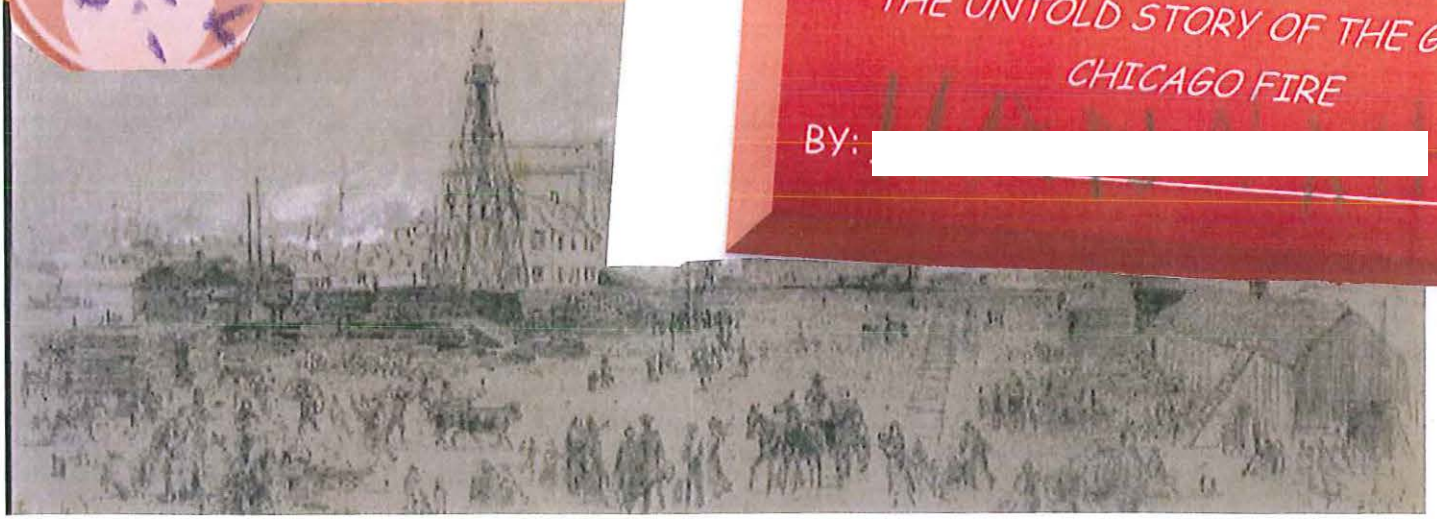
Tales of  
Daring and  
Courage

How  
Did it  
Start?

Why  
did it  
start?



THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE GREAT  
CHICAGO FIRE  
BY: \_\_\_\_\_



# Student Work

## Sample: Post-Visit

the Great Chicago fire

Write title here

By:

&

Your Names

Alfred Waud

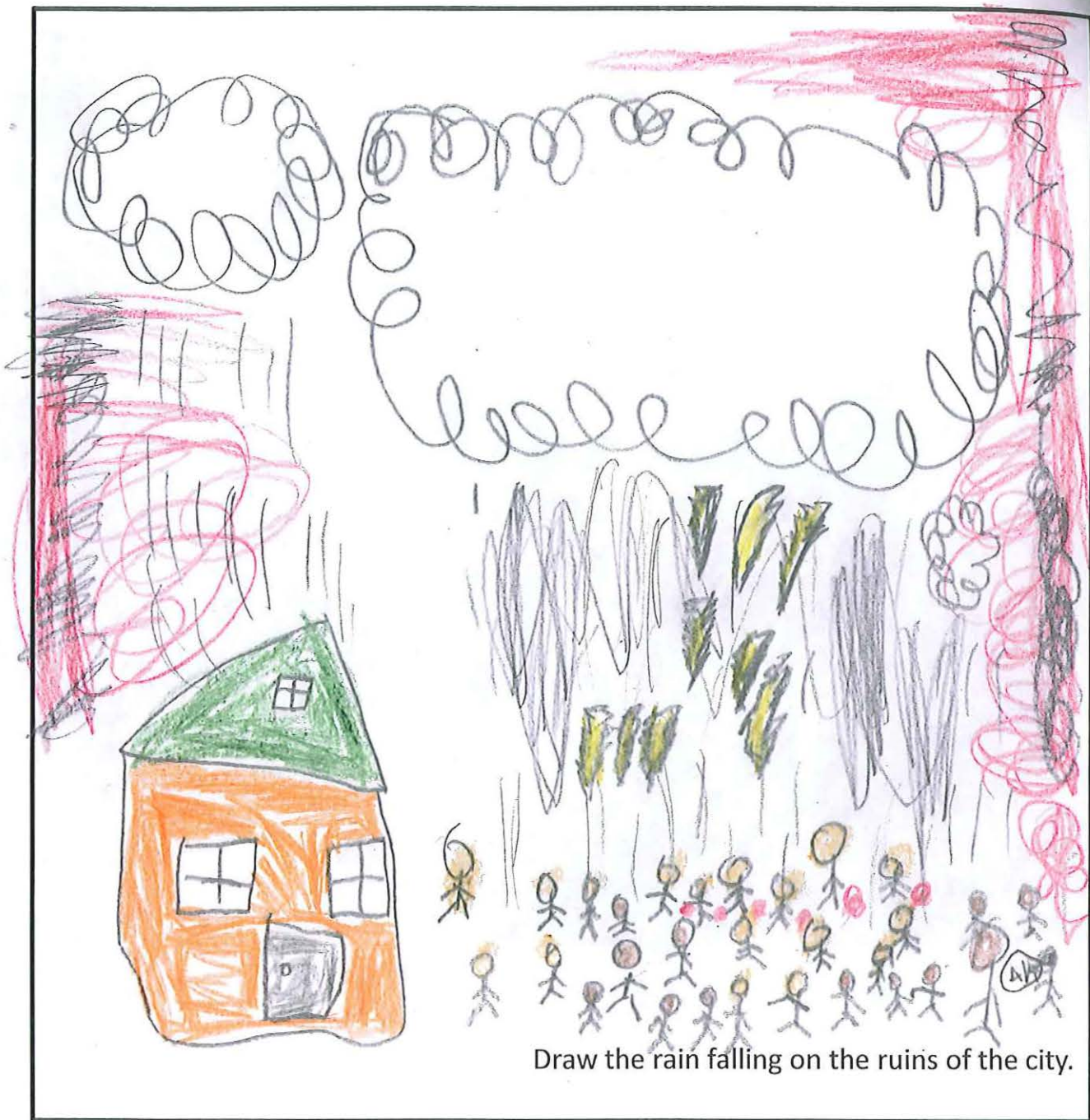
School Name & Year

Soldiers and policeman  
watched over the burning  
city to help people escape  
and protect property and  
belongings from thieves.



You have to leave there  
because you can't go back  
in there.

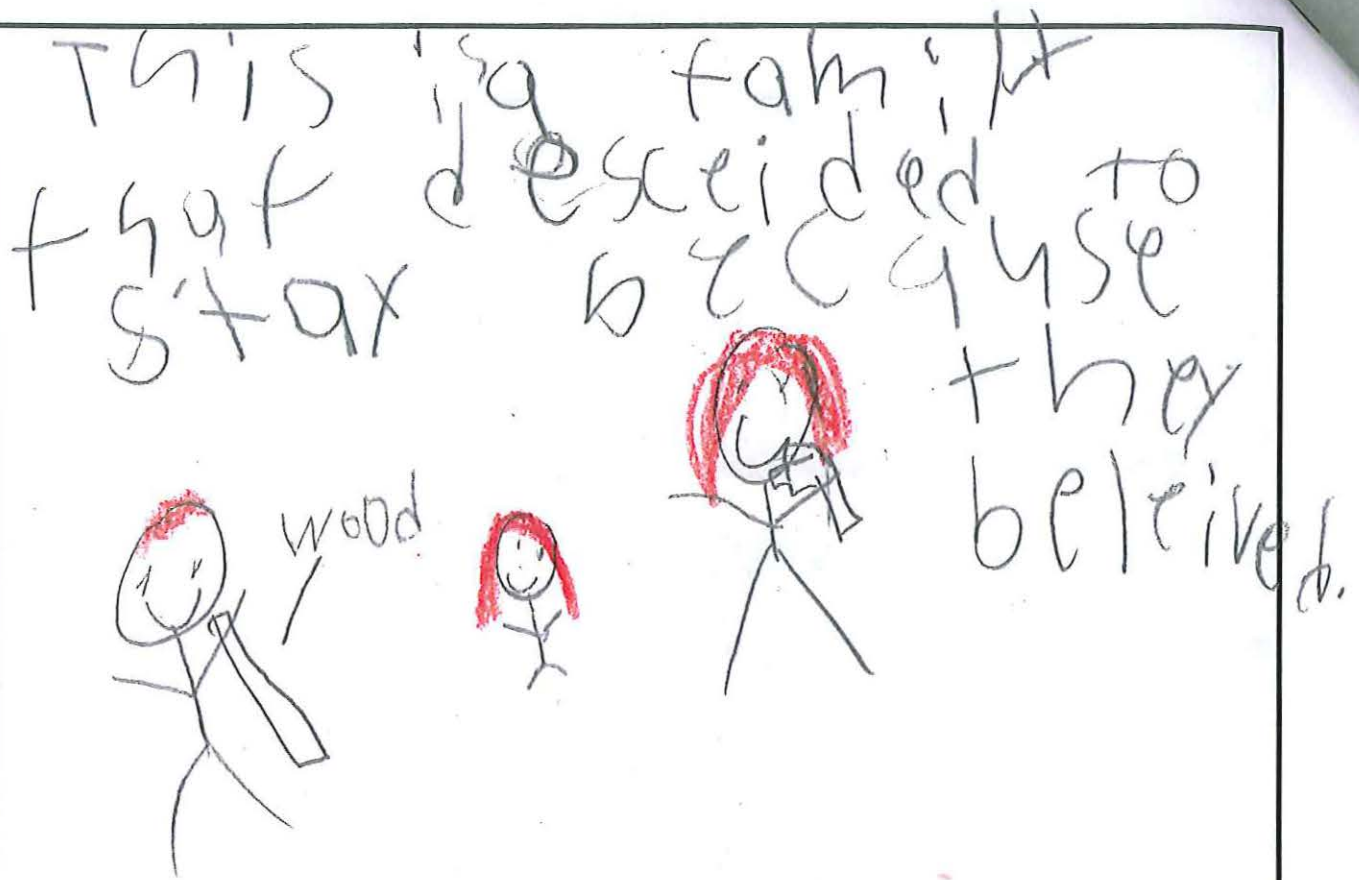
Write what the soldier said to the two men.



Draw the rain falling on the ruins of the city.

Finally on the third day of the fire, it began to rain which helped put out the fire.

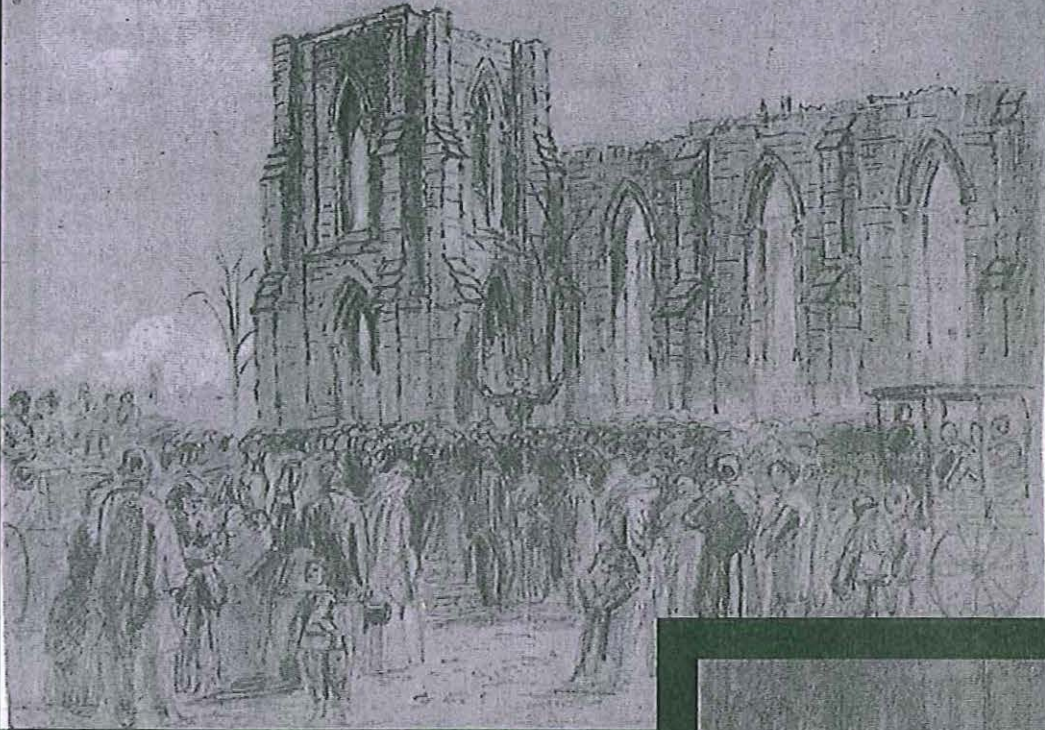




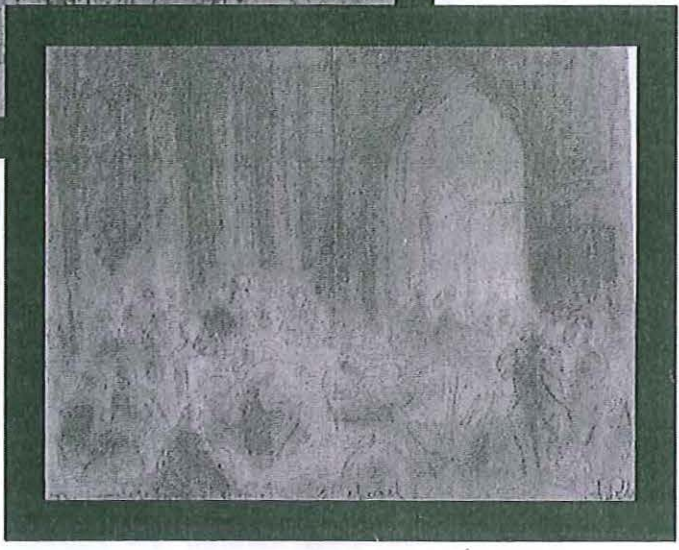
Draw a picture of a family that decided to stay **OR** a family that decided to leave.  
Write about what factors led them to that decision.

Many Chicagoans did not know what to do next. Was it better to move on to a new city or town, or should they stay and rebuild?

Painting at the westmost entrance cor. of DuSalle St & Chicago Ave.  
Sunday Oct 15



12/1/77



The people who stayed  
had to face seeing  
all the things they  
loved destroyed

Describe the challenges the people who stayed in the city faced.