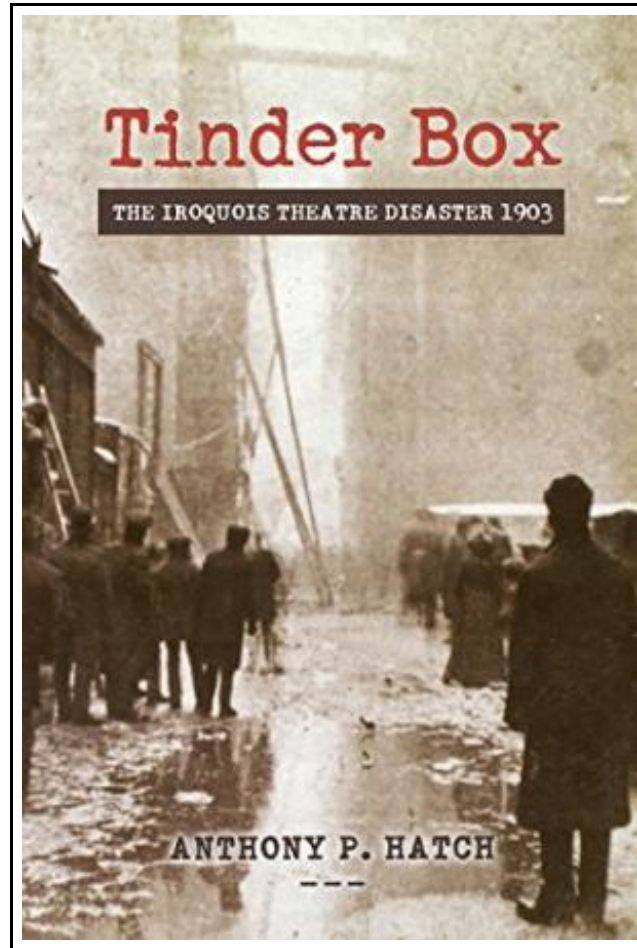


Tinder Box: The Iroquois Theatre Disaster 1903



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Reviews

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(Lorenz Vandervort)

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Academy Chicago Publishers. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Tinder Box: The Iroquois Theatre Disaster 1903, Anthony P. Hatch, At a Christmas week matinee December 30, 1903, more than 600 people, mostly women and children, perished in less than 30 minutes in a five-week-old theater that was advertised as being "Absolutely Fireproof" and one of the most luxurious playhouses ever built in America-the epitome of Twentieth Century luxury, comfort and safety. Rushed to completion because of corporate greed, the Iroquois opened in Chicago's Loop without exit signs, firefighting equipment, sprinkler system, fire alarm, telephone, a completed ventilation system and exterior fire escapes because city building inspectors had been paid off in free tickets and fire department and other officials looked the other way. Published warnings went unheeded. When fire broke out from a short circuit in a backstage spotlight, the panicked audience found itself locked in by untrained ushers and though leading comedian Eddy Foy begged for calm, people trampled one another in a mad dash to escape and piled up at exit doors that, even when broken open, swung in rather than out. Hundreds jumped or were pushed from the incomplete fire escapes into what became known as "Death Alley." The disaster, which for 1903 had the impact that the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, stunned the world, closed theaters and ultimately resulted in fundamental changes in building and safety codes now taken for granted, such as illuminated exits signs, panic bars, doors that swing out, not in and fire retardant materials. However, questions remain as to whether today's theaters and movie houses are any safer in a panic situation, and some fire experts interviewed by the author say that another Iroquois disaster could again occur.

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