

Danny Rice:

Hello, and welcome to a very special episode of the Bloomington Public Library's podcast, Shelf Understanding, where you can really learn to understand your shelf. I'm your host Danny Rice, children's librarian, bookmobile driver, right place at the right time extraordinaire. This month we have the phenomenal opportunity to conduct a phone interview with- and I still can't believe I'm saying this- Erik Larson, multiple time bestselling author of books like *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*, *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*, and the topic of our conversation, the 2003 book *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America*.

Now, each year the Bloomington Public Library organizes Bloomington Reads, a sort of city-wide book club, where we choose one book that staff members are convinced the community will love. We then order extra copies of that book and encourage everyone in the community to read the selection and take part in programs and activities related to the book's central themes. This year, we chose *Devil in the White City*, and will actually be hosting author Erik Larson on April 12th and 13th, where he will be holding a reception at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts on the evening of April 12th, and then hosting a book discussion on *Devil in the White City* the following day, April 13th, at our library. There will also be several other fascinating programs relating to this book throughout March and April at our library, so check our website at BloomingtonLibrary.org for more info. I'll also list these programs after our phone interview at the end of this episode, so stay tuned for that.

Erik Larson primarily writes what we call narrative non-fiction, meaning that he often uses a creative writing style to tell a factual story. This becomes an important distinction for a book like *Devil in the White City*, where Larson himself admits in the intro of the book that many of the events seem incredibly implausible, but are very much historically accurate. As it's been said, the truth is stranger than fiction, which is indeed true with this book. Larson is also an incredibly accomplished journalist, regularly contributing to relatively unknown outlets like *Time Magazine* and the *Wall Street Journal*, his work for the latter earning him a Pulitzer nomination in investigative journalism. Also, it should be noted that *Devil in the White City* is not always appropriate for all ages, so our conversation does feature more adult content than we typically have on our podcast, so fair warning.

The Devil in the White City tells the story of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World's Fair. It specifically focuses on two key figures who were simultaneously exceedingly different and exceedingly similar. Daniel H. Burnham, lead architect and creative genius behind the fair, and Dr. H. H. Holmes, who is regularly referred to as America's first serial killer. Although the two men never met face to face, Holmes used Burnham's fair as a tool to lure victims to his, quote-unquote, "murder castle," and is estimated to have killed anywhere between nine and 200 people, though this figure is widely disputed. *The Devil in the White City* weaves these two stories together in

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unbelievable juxtaposition, unbelievable but still true. Here's my conversation with Erik Larson.

Mr. Larson?

Erik Larson: Yeah, hi. Is this Danny Rice?

Danny Rice: This is, yeah. Hi. How are you?

Erik Larson: I'm good. How are you?

Danny Rice: Good. I'm doing very well. Where are you joining us from today?

Erik Larson: New York.

Danny Rice: New York? Very nice. I saw on your Twitter feed that you were in the Library of Congress the other day.

Erik Larson: I was.

Danny Rice: Very nice. Are you doing research on an upcoming project, or can you not talk about that?

Erik Larson: I am. I am, yup, but I'm not going to tell you what it is.

Danny Rice: Yeah. That's fair. Let's talk a little bit about Devil in the White City. This is a very interesting book for many different reasons. The first thing that jumped out at me was kind of the duality between the two stories, and the kind of choice to not shy away from the fact that they ... One can't exist without the other, so to speak. Can you speak to that a little bit?

Erik Larson: Wait, what did you just say? That one can't exist without the other, or can?

Danny Rice: Can not.

Erik Larson: Can not. What do you mean? Refine that.

Danny Rice: While we have this, you know, giant white palace being built essentially, a few blocks away we have these terrible atrocities happening as well. One kind of ... Holmes kind of fed off of the fair to find some victims.

Erik Larson: Yeah. All right, but to say, though, that one could not exist without the other is not quite accurate. I have a feeling that Holmes would have found a way to kill people anyway. However, the fair really enhanced his opportunities to do so.

Danny Rice: Yeah. The two kind of main figures in this book are Daniel Burnham, the architect, and H. H. Holmes the serial killer. You've talked a little bit in the past about how the two had many similar characteristics.

Erik Larson: Yeah. Well, similar characteristics in that they were both, if you will, heroic in their own ways. Burnham was heroic in a very positive direction, you know, taking on this World's Fair, and doing it in essentially a year and a half, is about as heroic as a feat of architecture can get. The flip side, the heroic, you know, was Holmes. Now, that's a dark heroism, and when I say "heroic," it's that he was a master at killing and at persuading. He was a sociopathic serial killer.

The thing that drew me to this whole thing was just the fact that here was this monumental act of civic goodwill, the World's Fair, nicknamed the White City, you know? Juxtaposed against the dark, dark doings of this guy. I mean, we're talking just blocks away, and at the same time. That's really what appealed to me, was this sort of strange darkness and light kind of gestalt in their existence so close to each other. I would not, by the way, have wanted to write just about Holmes.

Danny Rice: Right. Yes.

Erik Larson: I didn't want to write crime porn, and in fact I had come across him before I even knew anything about the fair, thinking about doing a book about a real life murder somewhere in the past, but I had dismissed him early on because I didn't ... Like I said, I didn't want to do crime porn. I didn't want to do anything that was just so sleazy.

Danny Rice: Like a slasher book.

Erik Larson: Yes, like a slasher book. But it was funny, I learned about the World's Fair. That's what really hooked me to do this book. I mean, just the fact that so many interesting people came there, and all these ... The country and the world were introduced to so many interesting new things at the fair, and it was monumental in ways that I don't think people really can appreciate. You know, I tried to capture as much as I could in the book, but I think that if you or I walked out there on the fairground on some gleaming Chicago afternoon in June, I mean, we would have been just absolutely blown away [crosstalk 00:08:13] ...

Danny Rice: Oh, absolutely.

Erik Larson: ... of the thing.

Danny Rice: Now, what ...?

Erik Larson: The Museum of Science and Industry is there in Chicago, and a lot of people have been there obviously. It's a great museum, and that is essentially a permanent replica of one of the buildings at the fair, and by no means the

largest building at the fair. So if you can imagine a cluster of those buildings right there along the lake, it just becomes really an amazing thing.

Danny Rice: Right, and overwhelming to some degree as well.

Erik Larson: Well yeah, very much overwhelming. I mean, there were reports of people walking into the heart of the White City, you know, and bursting into tears because it was just so, so overwhelmingly beautiful and white.

Danny Rice: Yeah. What do you think really sets apart the 1893 Chicago World's Fair from other World's Fairs that had come before or that have happened since?

Erik Larson: You know, I'm not an ... I hasten to add, I am not an expert in World's Fairs. You know, I drilled pretty deep on one World's Fair, the one of 1893. Further caveat: My book is by no means the definitive book on that World's Fair.

Danny Rice: Sure.

Erik Larson: So many elements, I don't even attempt to capture. In terms of how I feel about it, you know, there were very important fairs and expositions held before. The Paris Exposition being one of them, one of the bigger and more important ones. But in terms of sort of ... I don't know, maybe if you will being a prologue to the 20th century, the World's Fair of 1893 is pretty much unmatched. That's how I feel.

Danny Rice: Sure. Yeah. If you could, which attractions would you want to go to?

Erik Larson: Which attractions would I want to go to? Well, I would have wanted to do the Ferris wheel, just because it was so huge, although I'm not great with heights. I have to be honest. But I think the main thing I would have liked to have seen is the manufacturers' building, which was just absolutely, absolutely immense. Just immense. Just to see all the various machines and inventions and so forth that were in that building. Mostly, really, what I'd love to have done is just to kind of rub shoulders with the people who were there.

Danny Rice: I really enjoyed all the anecdotes of the people who ... Like when Helen Keller met the man who invented Braille, and those were some really, really kind of juicy anecdotes there.

Erik Larson: Yeah, yeah, no. That was really one of the big draws for me, was just this idea that you could be walking through the fair and rubbing shoulders with anybody. I mean, even with a Native American chief, you know? Who would be wandering around, taking time off from his own exhibit.

Danny Rice: Sure.

Erik Larson: Yeah, it must have been a very, very compelling thing.

Danny Rice: Can we talk about your research process a little bit?

Erik Larson: Sure.

Danny Rice: You are a big fan of libraries, which we always appreciate, but many times in my life I've gone into large libraries and felt overwhelmed at how much information was present. How do you kind of traverse that? How do you pick a starting point?

Erik Larson: Well, you know, you can be overwhelmed by just the sheer scale and mass of the books and so forth, but until you start actually doing your research, then right away you winnow that massive presence down to a much, much narrower more manageable slice, because you're not using every book in the house. With libraries, my approach is, my approach ... I use libraries, and I make a distinction now between the main library that everybody uses, and whatever archival collections our libraries have. I see them almost as two distinct entities. But on the book side, the library is invaluable to me as a place to start, because no matter what the subject I'm working on, I will take out a bunch of books, you know, on the broad aspects of what I'm doing. Like, you know, a book about Chicago in this case, or any kind of broader so-called tertiary source. Then start winnowing it down a bit in terms of books with like diaries and memoirs and so forth.

Then you sort of start circling in closer and closer to the things you're really after, and that's when you move on to the archival part of the library, or to a separate archive like in the case of Chicago, the archives of the Chicago historical foundations, you know? Those things are just really important.

Danny Rice: Yeah.

Erik Larson: That's where the fun is.

Danny Rice: Sure. Yes. Absolutely.

Erik Larson: I mean, the library is fun, don't get me wrong, but the real adventure happens when I actually dive into an archive, whether that's part of a library, part of a larger library, or a separate archive, whatever, but that's where the fun really begins.

Danny Rice: Have you ever come across any resistance when visiting an archive, of someone saying like, "Oh, we don't really know if we want to give you access to these pieces of information"?

Erik Larson: You know, I have not. I have not, happily. I have not had that experience. I mean, at least not in America. Happily, things are ... Public archives, public libraries are just ... They're accessible and open to everyone. It can get a little trickier when you have a private archive, like in the case of my book Isaac's

Storm, there's the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, Texas. It's a private archive, but it's fine. They didn't get in my way. They did sort of have a limit on how much stuff I could use, or how many photocopies I could get away with, but then they came to forget that limit.

Danny Rice: Yeah. How do you decide between using primary sources versus secondary sources?

Erik Larson: That's a very good question. You know, it's kind of instinctive now. Often a book about something ... Let's say there's a book about the World's Fair, right? There are books about the World's Fair of 1893. You know, you'll read that and you'll ... It's necessarily that writer's take on the fair, and so you'll see ... Maybe you'll come across something that that writer sort of kisses off in a single sentence, right? But there's something about it that intrigues you. Then you go to the archives, and you try to find information about that thing, you know, that the other writer wasn't terribly interested in but you are. Then that really helps focus things.

I mean, for example, because of the way I write history, I am big on using ... Not in publishing photographs, but in using them as if they were a primary source. Because they can be very powerful for decorating a scene, and miraculously, in the case of Chicago, there had been this incredible street-by-street photographic survey done ... I can't remember the year. Don't hold me to this, but I think it was around 1890. Something like that. I can't even remember what the purpose was, but it was amazing because somebody would essentially stand on a street corner and take photographs of the things that he could see from that corner. You know, the street scapes, and the buildings, and so forth. Then all these photographs are there at the Chicago Historical Society, curated in such a way that you know not only what is being photographed but you know where the person was standing when he or she took it.

Danny Rice: Right. Yeah.

Erik Larson: That's really powerful stuff, because you know your characters are moving through that very city, and they're not blind. Holmes wasn't blind. Burnham wasn't blind, so you know, they were essentially walking through those same street scapes. It's really powerful.

Danny Rice: Seeing the things that we are now looking at.

Erik Larson: Yeah. Yeah, which is very powerful.

Danny Rice: Yeah. In the introduction to *Devil in the White City*, you add in that many of the things that happened, many of the events will seem like they could not have possibly happened, because they're pretty implausible. What are some of the challenges of writing a non-fiction book that can read at times like it's a fiction book?

Erik Larson: You know, the challenge is actually more on the novelist's side, if a novelist were trying to do the same thing, because it's a paradox. We non-fiction writers talk about this all the time. It's a paradox that if I were to have written this book as fiction, nobody would believe it. It would have been totally implausible. But because all this stuff happened, it has much more power, you know? Because it did happen. There was this killer. There was this amazing World's Fair and all these characters who were there, and that's the beauty and the paradox of non-fiction.

Danny Rice: We talked a little bit about some of the famous inventions that kind of came out of the World's Fair. What are some of your favorites of those?

Erik Larson: Well, you know, some of my favorites? The thing actually that was like the fish hook in my cheek that got me interested in the fair, and then that made me realize, "Wait a minute, I can do the fair on one side and the murder on the other." The thing that sort of really drew me into this whole project was one very simple fact, and that was ... I came across it very early in my reading, in somebody else's footnote actually, was that at the World's Fair of 1893, consumers were introduced to Juicy Fruit gum for the first time in commercial product history. I love Juicy Fruit gum, and I was just like, "What? Seriously? This gum is that old? It goes back, you know, 100 plus years? I mean, wow. This is amazing." Then one after another, other things were jumping out at me. I mean, Cracker Jacks, the vertical file. You know, all that stuff.

Danny Rice: Shredded wheat, right?

Erik Larson: Yeah. Yeah. All this stuff that just really started to jump out at me, and I said, "Wow, this fair was a fount of so many things." There were exhibits of AC versus DC current, and this was a big deal because Westinghouse and Edison were sort of at war, trying to determine the future state of wired America. I can't remember actually ... It's been a while since I worked on this book, and I can't remember actually who wired this fair, whether it was Edison or Westinghouse. Anyway, somebody won that particular gambit.

Danny Rice: Westinghouse, I believe.

Erik Larson: The fair was lit in a very, very compelling way. People really loved going to the fair at night because of all the lighting.

Danny Rice: There was also the first documented case of death by electrocution, is that right?

Erik Larson: That's pushing my ...

Danny Rice: No?

Erik Larson: I think the first documented case of electrocution actually was in New York, but anyway I don't know. I can't remember my own book.

Danny Rice: Right. When researching people who actually walked and breathed and were real, living people, do you find yourself in your research becoming attached to any of them?

Erik Larson: Do I find myself becoming attached to any of them? You know, not really. I mean, I did become quite attached to ... Well, not attached. Attached is a weird word.

Danny Rice: Sorry.

Erik Larson: I came to really admire Frederick Law Olmstead. I mean, I had always admired him, but I mean I really ... He's my favorite character in the book. I just really came to respect his intellect. I mean, he had terrible handwriting. Terrible. It drove me nuts, but even in routine bureaucratic correspondence, his sentences, his thoughts were just utterly original. I came away with this real enhanced admiration and respect for him. Yeah, I guess it sort of verged on affection, but you know, the problem is the writer's curse. You know, you work on a book so hard and so long that frankly on the eve of publication, you're sick of everybody in it. You know, that's the sausage being made. You're just done, you know?

Danny Rice: Yeah.

Erik Larson: Anyway, Olmstead would be the guy. I mean, Burnham I liked. I thought he was an interesting, very compelling character to take on all those tasks, but I think that again, Olmstead was my absolute favorite.

Danny Rice: One of the sections of the book that I found most appealing was after the fair had ended, and all the pomp and circumstance had kind of faded away, the kind of disrepair that the fair fell into after the fact.

Erik Larson: Right. Right, and the fire and all that stuff. That to me was so powerful. It was such a metaphor.

Danny Rice: Yeah. It reads like symbolism, and to some degree it is, I suppose.

Erik Larson: The thing is that the fair, and this was a debate for a while, the fair was built ... Was not built to last. It was built to be this amazing, one-time thing that was essentially built to disappear. It was not meant to linger forever, and it didn't. The decay of the buildings happened very quickly. The fire was drastic and dramatic, and yeah, it was just ... I loved that sort of circuitry of it, because it put a giant black period at the end of the fair.

Danny Rice: Yeah, absolutely.

Erik Larson: I really like that. Also, another thing that really, really blew me away ... I mean, lots of stuff blew me away. I mean, just the fact that the Ferris wheel was really the first ever Ferris wheel built, and it was gigantic. It was gigantic, and it worked. The egos, and the hubris of these people who existed in that era is just beyond belief. You know, Burnham wanting to build a fair, as I said, in like a year and a half. Olmstead agreeing to do all the landscaping in just a fraction ... Not a fraction, but in about that same time period when usually Olmstead thought in terms of projects that took 10, 20 years.

Danny Rice: Yeah.

Erik Larson: All these people taking a hand at this monumental thing, so you know, you had the Ferris wheel, and the fact that the first time it ran ... The first time it turned, the city engineer rode in the car with his family. You know, he just gets on with his family. There aren't even windows in this thing.

Danny Rice: Right.

Erik Larson: There's the rattle of bolts falling on the roof of the car as the thing turns, all the bolts from the construction work. I mean, all these things were just [inaudible 00:25:22], but then also just the things that happened around the fair. I mean, the fact that there was this national financial panic emerging, and also the fact that the mayor of Chicago was assassinated.

Danny Rice: Right.

Erik Larson: Assassinated during the fair. I mean, it's like everything came together for this project.

Danny Rice: Yeah. I don't know if you saw, but the footings for the original Ferris wheel were recently discovered on the University of Chicago's campus.

Erik Larson: Yes. Actually, I read that on. On the Midway.

Danny Rice: It's fascinating to kind of forget that the location where the fair took place is now just kind of ... Many of the locations are kind of pedestrian places where you don't even realize that that's where these magnificent structures used to be.

Erik Larson: Right. Right. I mean, obviously Jackson Park is still there. It's a nice park, and the wooded island is still there. Not what it was when the fair was underway, and of course as we mentioned, there's the Museum of Science and Industry, which is a really stunning structure, and vast, you know? Yeah, you have to really stop and think, "Well wait a minute, that Museum of Science and Industry, that was just one of ..." I can't remember exactly how many were structured around the central lagoon, but I think it was like six large structures. Again, the manufacturers' building being the biggest and probably twice, maybe even

three times the interior volume of the Museum of Science and Industry, as hard as that is to believe.

Danny Rice: Yeah.

Erik Larson: You've got to just sort of stop and say, "Whoa." Now, there's another little footnote about Jackson Park. At the fair there was a very tall, a very tall sculpture that was in the lagoon, and it was a gilded structure.

Danny Rice: Yes.

Erik Larson: In Jackson Park today, there is also a tall sculpture, but it is very important to note that that is one-third the size. It's a one-third the size replica.

Danny Rice: Wow.

Erik Larson: If you know the one I'm talking about, anybody who's been there in the park and you're standing, looking at that thing, don't for a moment think that that was the one from the fair. The one from the fair was three times as tall.

Danny Rice: Right. Oh my goodness.

Erik Larson: You know, all those little details, you'll say like, "Whoa."

Danny Rice: Yeah. Let's move on to Holmes quickly. Now, there's some disputes still about how many victims he actually did murder.

Erik Larson: Yeah. I don't think we'll ever know.

Danny Rice: No. I don't think we will either. I think a large part of that is because his confession, the nature of his confession was very odd.

Erik Larson: His multiple confessions, yeah.

Danny Rice: Yeah. How exaggerated do you think his confession was, if at all?

Erik Larson: How exaggerated do I think his confession was? Which one?

Danny Rice: That's a good question as well.

Erik Larson: You know, I don't think his confession was exaggerated. Was it accurate? No. Probably not. But the theory is ... I had a forensic psychiatrist read the whole manuscript, because I was perplexed by the motivation of Holmes. What drives somebody like this? He felt it was really quite obvious that this guy was a full-blown sociopath or psychopath, [inaudible 00:29:20] psychopath. That is to say he had no moral core whatsoever, you know? I mean, if you can imagine that. Again, just like walking through Jackson Park, you need to sort of stop for a

second and just try to get your mind around that. What that means is that he'd just as soon kill you as, you know, take you out to dinner. Each option has similar moral valance. That is to say, none.

He was very much like the Anton Chigurh character in No Country for Old Men. The famous coin toss, you know? That was actually very compelling to get that sense of him, and this forensic psychiatrist also said that he believed that Holmes was probably killing as early as childhood, you know? Or at the point where we would say people were in middle school. His autobiography certainly includes a tantalizing reference to the death of a so-called friend that, boy, sure sounds in retrospect, knowing what we all know about Holmes, like he killed him.

Danny Rice: Yeah.

Erik Larson: Anyway, we'll never know, though, exactly how many people he killed. The only ... I can't even begin. I apologize. I can't even remember the actual number of confirmed deaths in my book, but I think it's like nine?

Danny Rice: Yeah.

Erik Larson: I think that was it. Nine. That's just the tip of the iceberg.

Danny Rice: Yeah. There's a scene in the beginning of the book when Mudgett at the time, Herman Mudgett, was a young boy, and his friends take him into the doctor's office to look at the skeleton.

Erik Larson: Right.

Danny Rice: You wrote something along the lines of, "It probably happened similar to this." Then you kind of write the scene out. How do you decide which liberties it is acceptable to take when you're writing a scene that there's no record of?

Erik Larson: First of all, the word "liberties" is not one that I adore. I don't take liberties, but I try to approach things in sort of a very rational way, if I feel there is something to even speculate. Case in point is there were a couple of murders of women, and I felt, and my editor felt also that it was important to try to convey a sense of how these murders actually played out, as opposed to just sort of a static, the killing of a woman in this locked room. I said, "Okay. This is how I'm going to approach this. I'm going to approach this as if I were the prosecutor in a murder trial." The prosecution tries to take all the pieces of available evidence and weave it into a story, with which it then tries to convince the jury that this person is guilty. The defense, of course, tries to weave an opposing story.

I decided, "Okay, I'm going to take the available evidence, and I'm going to present it as if I were a prosecutor in a murder trial, and run it past the jury." But further, though, what resolved also was that I was going to make clear that

that was my approach in the footnotes. If you go to the footnotes, you'll see that ... This is the footnotes for the available evidence, but you will see my explanation of how and why I did that at that scene, because I think that's important. I think it's important to be very transparent.

Danny Rice: Yeah. Yeah. Very nice. Now, there's also a section toward the end of the book regarding Daniel Burnham and kind of his legacy. Now, especially here in Illinois, Daniel Burnham is still a figure who's still talked about, still referenced when it comes to architecture. What stood out to me was the idea that Burnham did a great job with the fair, but if John Root, his long-time associate had not passed away, that it would have been kind of even better. Do you think that that was an idea that Burnham struggled with?

Erik Larson: You know, I can't tell you what Burnham struggled with or didn't, but do I think the fair would have been better or more beautiful or more striking? I don't know. John Root, the architecture might have been more sophisticated, but would that necessarily have made the fair better? You know what I mean? I mean, Burnham, in choosing this classical path of having everything painted white, wittingly or not, turned it into this amazing, mystical, Brigadoon-like space. It really worked. Now, the question, the debate was, well, by choosing the neo-classical approach, was that essentially letting down architecture in the Chicago school, and turning back the clock, as some contemporary critics have charged? You know, Burnham was a damn good architect, and frankly I think sometimes that people who are the Louis Sullivan advocates and who always use Louis Sullivan as a way to trash Burnham, I think Sullivan's overrated, but that's just me, you know? I think Burnham did one hell of a job and had a huge ... In terms of impact, a huge lasting impact on the American landscape. I mean, just drive through Upstate New York today and you've got towns with classical names, you've got post offices with neo-classical columns and all that stuff, for better or worse. Those aren't necessarily paragons of incredible architecture, but the impact was there.

Danny Rice: Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much for being with us.

Erik Larson: Sure. You made it very painless.

Danny Rice: Thank you.

Erik Larson: See you in a month, I guess.

Danny Rice: Yeah. Sounds good.

Erik Larson: All right. Talk to you.

Danny Rice: Bye.

Once again, Erik Larson will be in Bloomington on Wednesday, April 12th, and Thursday, April 13th. On the 12th, from 6 PM to 7 PM, he will be hosting a ticketed reception at the BCPA. There will be 100 tickets available at \$50 a piece, and tickets can be purchased at the Bloomington Public Library or at BloomingtonLibrary.org, starting at nine AM on Saturday, March 4th. Starting at seven that same evening, he will then switch to a free author's presentation, followed by a Q and A and a book signing. On April 13th at 9:15 AM, in the Bloomington Library Community Room located downstairs, Larson will attend and participate in a discussion of his book, *The Devil in the White City*. Attendees should arrive with their comments and questions about this engaging book.

That's all the time we have this month for Shelf Understanding. Thank you so much for listening. I hope you enjoyed. If you did, please help us spread the word by telling your friends, subscribing and watching for future episodes. As always, if you did not enjoy, please keep it to yourself. Thanks again for listening to Shelf Understanding, and stay tuned for full details of all of the Devil in the White City programs coming up at our library.

On Saturday, March 18th, at 2 PM in the Community Room, join us as we watch an hour-long documentary titled, "H. H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer," while enjoying free popcorn. Afterwards, director John Borowski will be on hand for a Q and A and a discussion about his research and the making of the film. Copies of the DVD will also be available for sale. On Sunday, March 19th, at 2 PM in the Community Room, join us for Chicago: City of America's Gilded Age. This program provides an overview of Chicago's Gilded Age from the Great Fire of 1873 through the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and the Pullman Strike of 1894. Alan Lessoff, PhD, is an ISU professor specializing in US and comparative urban history. On Monday, April 3rd, at 7 PM at the upper level of Luga Grill, join us for a book discussion on *Devil in the White City*. On Sunday, April 9th at 2 PM in the Community Room, Illinois Wesleyan Associate Professor Jim Matthews will discuss the importance of train travel in the United States during the late 1800s and early 1900s, for a program called Train Travel at the Turn of the 20th Century.

On Monday, April 10th, at 7 PM, in the library's Community Room, join us for Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation. Bloomington Police Detective Scott Matthewson, a member of the International Association for Identification, the world's oldest and largest forensics organization, will discuss forensics and share how expert crime scene investigators collect, preserve, and analyze scientific evidence during the course of an investigation. We will also consider how forensic processes in H. H. Holmes' time may have contributed to apprehending the serial killer. Lastly, on Saturday, April 15th at 1:30 PM at the Route 66 Visitor's Center, the McLean County Museum of History, join us for *The White City in Downtown Bloomington*. This architectural walking tour with retired director of the McLean County Museum of History, Greg Koose, will highlight how the White City influenced the rebuilding of Bloomington's downtown after

the Great Fire of 1900. Portions of the walking tour are outside, but the majority will be inside the Old Courthouse. The tour will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Songs from today's episode are from the Ivan Illich album Romantic, entitled Intermezzo in E Major, Opus 116 Number Four, and Intermezzo in E Flat Major, Opus 117 Number One, both by Johannes Brahms. The titular song from the Mundi album, My House is the Sky, acquired from Magnitune.com. Magnitune: We are not evil.

How did we do?



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