

The Beverly Review

Local author in ‘Great Chicago Fire’

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Ellen Skerrett, of Morgan Park, will be interviewed in the upcoming documentary “The Great Chicago Fire.”

The one-hour special will air on WTTW on the 149th anniversary of the Great Fire of 1871, Friday, Oct. 9, at 8 p.m.

The program tells the story of this defining moment in the city’s history when Chicagoans faced massive destruction and then worked together to rebuild and prepare the city to recover and enjoy a thriving future.

A published historian of Chicago and its neighborhoods with a special interest in Irish America, Skerrett has been researching and writing books, curating and mounting displays, delivering lectures, and conducting tours with an emphasis on mid and late 19th-century Chicago.

Among Skerrett’s special areas of focus is the role that the people of two of the five public buildings to survive the fire played at the time—Holy Family Church, founded in 1857 by a Holland immigrant Jesuit priest, the Rev. Arnold Damen, and its neighbor, St. Ignatius College Prep, the forerunner of Loyola University Chicago, also founded by Damen, the university’s first president.

Both the church and school are featured in the WTTW documentary, as is Holy Family parishioner Catherine O’Leary, on whose property, legend has persisted, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 was ignited.

For more information, visit the website at wttw.com.

