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Good Read BY CHRIS LINENDOLL

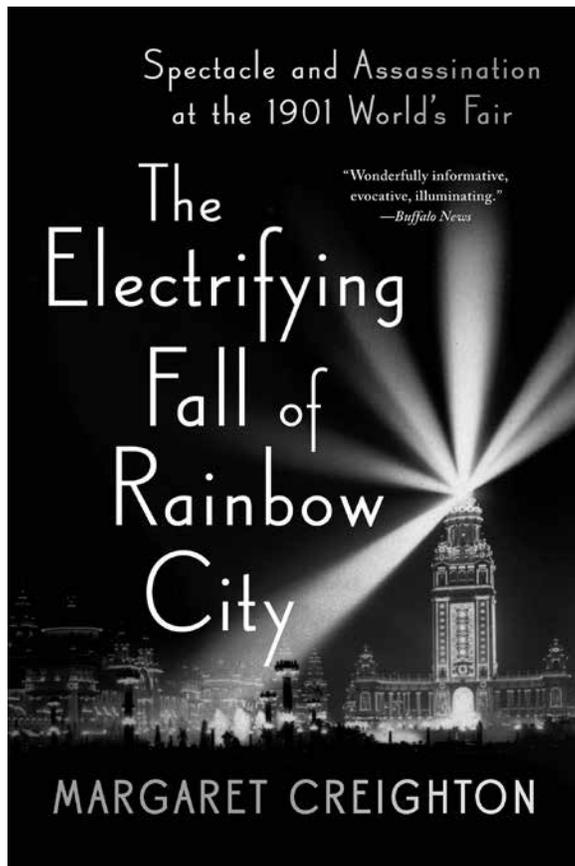
The Electrifying Fall of Rainbow City: Spectacle and Assassination at the 1901 World's Fair

By Margaret Creighton. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 352 pages, November 2017. 5.6 x 8.3 in. ISBN 978-0-393-35479-9, \$16.95, paperback.

Buffalo, New York, has always been something of an anomaly. It is the second most populated city in New York, but it has never quite prospered in mainstream popular culture quite the same way that Toronto, just across Lake Ontario, has. Although it does claim professional sports teams in nearly all the major leagues, and the birthplace of the ubiquitous Buffalo Wing, the city itself has struggled in modern times to compete as a major economic hub, or a tantalizing tourism destination.

That was not the case in the early 20th century, however, as the city hosted the Pan-American Exposition, a major World's Fair that covered 350 acres of land. Due to the city's proximity to the famous Niagara Falls, as well as the ease of travel due to nearby railroad lines, Buffalo was seen as an ideal location to host this wonder of wonders. No one could have foreseen the tragedy that was about to strike.

Today, the Pan-Am Expo is mostly remembered as the site of the assassination of our 25th president, William McKinley. The doomed president was always reluctant to surround himself with muscled guards and genuinely enjoyed meeting the public and shaking hands with the average working man. It was the lax security that led to his being shot twice by Leon Czolgosz while in the Temple of Music, a concert hall built specifically for the Pan-American Expo. McKinley would die of in-



fection eight days after suffering these wounds.

This dreadful murder was not the only storyline of the exposition. Annie Edson Taylor, turning 63 years old, sought to become rich and famous as the first woman to survive a plunge over Niagara Falls. Despite all odds, she survived her trip over the falls in a custom-made barrel, with only minor injuries. As one might expect, she was never quite able to translate this experience into much financial gain, though.

One of the darker chapters in Buffalo history also occurred at the Fair's close in late 1901. After being attacked by his performing elephant, Jumbo II, Frank Bostock decided that he would execute his prized elephant in front of a sold-out

crowd. What he did not expect was that the thick hide of an elephant would not conduct the electricity he had planned to use in killing Jumbo II, and was laughed out of the arena and forced to provide refunds in the thousands.

All of these tales and more are recounted in Margaret Creighton's *The Electrifying Fall of Rainbow City: Spectacle and Assassination at the 1901 World's Fair*. This is an incredibly well researched portrait of a time when all the wonders of the modern age seemed like magic and of a brief time in which the city of Buffalo was the center of the universe. Highly recommended.

—Chris Linendoll
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