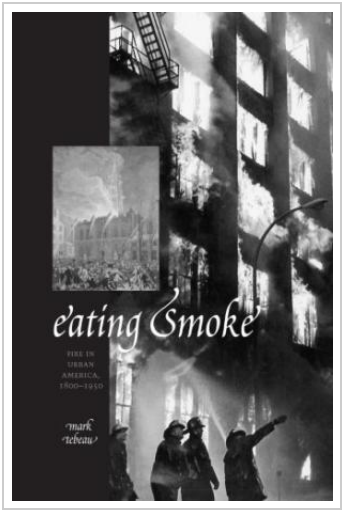

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Eating Smoke: Fire in Urban America, 1800-1950

By Mark Tebeau

Johns Hopkins University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Eating Smoke: Fire in Urban America, 1800-1950, Mark Tebeau, During the period of America's swiftest industrialization and urban growth, fire struck fear in the hearts of city dwellers as did no other calamity. Before the Civil War, sweeping blazes destroyed more than 200 million in property in the nation's largest cities. Between 1871 and 1906, conflagrations left Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, and San Francisco in ruins. Into the twentieth century, this dynamic hazard intensified as cities grew taller and more populous, confounding those who battled it. Firefighters' death-defying feats captured the popular imagination but too often failed to provide more than symbolic protection. Hundreds of fire insurance companies went bankrupt because they could not adequately deal with the effects of even smaller blazes. Firefighters and fire insurers created a physical and cultural infrastructure whose legacy - in the form of heroic firefighters, insurance policies, building standards, and fire hydrants-lives on in the urban built environment. In "Eating Smoke", Mark Tebeau shows how the changing practices of firefighters and fire insurers shaped the built landscape of American cities, the growth of municipal institutions, and the experience of urban life. Drawing on a...

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