

Winter 2018

Volume 52, Number 4

“Another Siberia, Unfit for Human Habitation?”
St. Paul’s Super Ice Palaces, 1886, 1887, and 1888

Robert A. Olsen, page 3



An artist's depiction of the storming the of 1888 Ice Palace. Note the clouds of smoke from burning sulfur fires that caused the palace to glow in multiple colors.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 52, Number 4

Winter 2018

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON JANUARY 25, 2016:

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future

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A Message from the Editorial Board

This year’s lovely Winter Carnival Ice Palace in Rice Park forms a good backdrop for TV shots during the Super Bowl, but Bob Olsen’s article in our Winter issue tells us about the original, huge ice palaces of the 1880s. Built to refute East Coast claims that St. Paul was “another Siberia, unfit for human habitation,” they towered high above Central Park (the current site of the Centennial parking ramp) and hosted the annual overthrow of King Boreas by the Vulcans. The 1888 structure even sported a labyrinth, which later formed the inspiration for F. Scott Fitzgerald’s story, “The Ice Palace.” Victoria Hopwood also shares with us her story of growing up in St. Paul’s Rondo and Merriam Park neighborhoods. Because her father held a good job as a waiter on the Great Northern’s Empire Builder, she spent her youth in a house that was filled with books and music. It also allowed some great vacations to see scenery of the American West! Finally, as a reminder, we now have all back issues of our history magazine (beginning in 1964) available at no cost online at the RCHS website, www.rchs.com, for research and recreational reading. This has been the result of hard work by staff and forms part of the Society’s updated website to give you even better access to our local history.

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

Terror Visits Fort Snelling: The 1940 Murder of Mary Jane Massey

Steve Lydon

Thursday nights I get together with friends to discuss politics, sports, or other current topics. This has been going on for years and over time the group has become known as the Thursday Night Crew. One Thursday night in March of 2015, crew member Jim Miller asked if I could find out if a murder committed in 1940 was ever solved. Jim is the current chair of the board of the nonprofit Friends of Fort Snelling. He explained that another Friends board member ran across some old newspaper stories about the murder of Mary Jane Massey in the summer of 1940 on the grounds of the Fort, but she had not been able to determine if the case was ever solved. She asked Jim if he knew anything about this case and Jim told her he had a friend who was a retired inspector from the office of the Ramsey County Sheriff and he would see if this former inspector could find the outcome of the case involving Mary Jane Massey.

I am the retired inspector. I looked into the murder by reviewing 1940 newspaper articles about the case at the Minnesota History Center's microfilm collection. I was immediately struck by how differently the authorities handled the case nearly 80 years ago compared to how law enforcement would handle such a case today. Both the technique and technological advancements made since 1940 have changed how law enforcement would respond to the same case today. Once I knew the general outline of what had happened that July, I was drawn into the case not only to find out if it had been solved, but also to study how it was handled then compared with today.

My Research

I needed to get the original police records so I could see what was actually done in 1940 in the investigation of the murder of Mary Jane. In my own career, I've had plenty of experience with reports of serious crimes, such as a murder, in newspaper accounts of what happened not being correct when compared to the facts of the cases as determined by members of law enforcement. Thus I was determined not to base my case review on newspaper articles. The articles did, however, pos-

sess valuable leads for me to track down and verify if they were correct. I collected news articles from both the St. Paul and Minneapolis papers of that summer. I also subscribed to an online newspaper archive and must have read 70 different accounts of the Massey murder case in papers from across the country.

Every now and then while reading these accounts from other newspapers, I would find a new bit of information that had been edited out or added to the newspaper reports. Although this was tedious work, it gave me additional facts to work with. I even stumbled on Mary Jane's parents' hometown newspapers that helped me identify the names of her relatives.

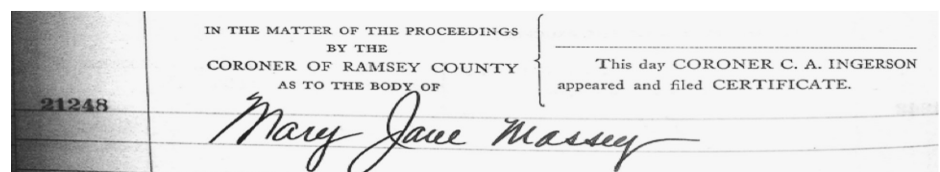
After completing my article review, I walked across the hall from the microfiche room to the Gale Family Library where I requested any documents or pictures of Mary Jane Massey, or her parents Golda and William. There was nothing on file. I requested records from the Office of the

Ramsey County Coroner for the month of July 1940. There I hit a bit of luck. The coroner's log book documented the receipt of the body of Mary Jane Massey.

Then I went down to the St. Paul Police Department's record unit and requested a copy of the case file since one of the newspaper accounts identified two St. Paul detectives, Boyd C. Carrier and (Axel) Morgan Soderberg, as being involved. Boyd C. Carrier, I learned, was appointed patrolman in the Saint Paul Police Department on October 1, 1927. He was promoted to detective on December 1, 1936 and retired from the force on April 16, 1948. His colleague on this case, Axel M. Soderberg, was appointed motorcycle patrolman on April 14, 1921 and was promoted to detective on April 17, 1936. Her retired on March 26, 1948.

The St. Paul police had no record of Mary Jane's murder much less anything else relating to this murder case. The records clerk even checked with the Homicide Unit to see if they had kept the file treating it as an open case. The Homicide unit said their records had nothing on a Mary Jane Massey murder in 1940.

I then went to the office of Dr. Michael McGee, the current Ramsey County Medical Examiner, on University Avenue. I had worked with Dr. McGee over the years and knew that he ran a top-of-line operation and was hoping his records unit would still have the autopsy file. Unfortunately for me, the office had deposited all its old records in the Minnesota History Center.



Next I contacted the FBI in Washington, D.C. and discovered they still had the case file. I made a freedom of Information Act Request for the Massey file and all the pictures the FBI might have relating to this case. Over a year and a half then went by before I got the case file. While waiting for a response from the FBI, I kept searching for information and pictures of those involved. I also went to Fort Snelling several times in an effort to understand what the Fort was like in July of 1940.

The Disappearance

Based on the interview transcripts that I was able to uncover and the information that I gathered from the FBI reports after I received them, July 13, 1940, started out as any other Saturday for thirteen-year-old Mary Jane Massey. After her breakfast, she straightened her room leaving her prize possession, a scout knife along with her harmonica and a few other items neatly on her dressing table. She took a bath and then her mom, Golda, and Mary Jane went out to work in their garden. It was a hot humid day at Fort Snelling. Her mom told her that when a few more vegetables matured she would be able to sell them to the officers' wives. Mary Jane had done this many times in the past few years.

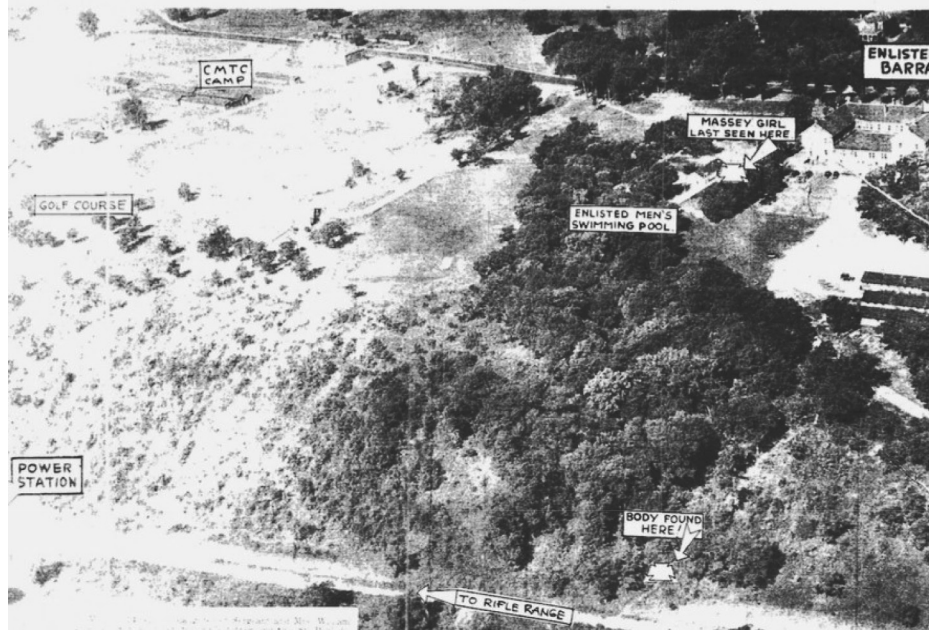
According to the investigative record, Mary Jane was well known at the post. She was born on August 2, 1926, at Fort Snelling where her father Sergeant William A. Massey, had been assigned to the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment since 1921. She had never lived anywhere else in her life.

After they weeded for a time, Mary Jane and Golda went in the house for lunch. Sergeant Massey came home at about 2 P.M. and lay down to take a nap. Mary Jane and her mother went back to the garden to complete their weeding.

Mary Jane looked at her mother as she was pulling the last few weeds and said, "I wish I could go down by the swimming pool." Mrs. Massey replied, "Well, why don't you then." Mary Jane smiled and cocked her head to the side, and then as she usually did, she sheepishly said, "Well, if you don't mind."

"It was about 4:20 or 4:30 in the afternoon," Golda would recall later. "I watched her walk across the golf course toward the

Aerial View of Fort Snelling Shows Where Mary Jane Massey's Body Was Found



This aerial view of Fort Snelling identifies the important places adjacent to the steep, wooded bluff between the fort's enlisted men's barracks and swimming pool and the road along the bank of the Mississippi River where searchers looked for Mary Jane Massey. The map is from the Minneapolis Star Journal, July 22, 1940. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

pool." At the time, Golda didn't know it, but this would be the last time she would ever see her sweet little Mary Jane again.

Golda finished the last of the weeding as Mrs. Black, the Massey's neighbor, stepped out of her quarters. The two families lived in the same building in the part of the Fort known as the Cantonment area. Mrs. Black's husband was also a sergeant. Golda walked over and talked with her about the weather and local Post gossip. Sergeant Massey walked out of their house about 5:30 looking as though he had just awakened from his nap. He said he was going over to the commissary to get the dog some food. The family dog was often a companion of Mary Jane's. The two would be seen tramping all over the Post together.

About 6:30, William returned from the commissary. He walked in and asked about dinner after he saw there was nothing in the way of baking or frying under way. Golda smiled at him, said good bye to Mrs. Black, and went back in her home to begin preparations for dinner. She had decided earlier that day on serving scrambled eggs for their dinner so that there would be no need for her to do

much in preparation or baking on such a hot day for the evening meal.

The Massey family normally ate dinner at 7; thus Golda would only need to scramble up eggs for their meal. They waited a few minutes for Mary Jane to come home. By 7:15 when she still was not home, Golda decided to scramble up eggs for her husband and then she walked out to find Mary Jane.

Golda walked a ways toward the golf course calling Mary Jane's name as loud as she could. She began to worry with each unanswered call. This was not like her daughter. Her motherly instinct told her something was wrong, terribly wrong. She ran into the house and told her husband that Mary Jane had gone to the pool at 4:30 and knew to be back at 7 for dinner. She was worried and told him to go find her.

William could hear the fear in his wife's voice. He wolfed down his remaining dinner in a bite and was out the door walking the route to the swimming pool. Not seeing her at the pool after he arrived, Sergeant Massey checked out the theater and the Post Exchange to see if she had wandered over to one of them and lost track of time. Mary Jane was no-

where to be found. He went back home thinking she probably was already there.

When William Massey left to look for Mary Jane, Golda cleared the table and did the dishes in an attempt to keep from worrying. She remembered Mary Jane talking about a flower in the ravine she liked called a red slipper and thinking maybe Mary Jane went to the ravine and fell, got hurt, and couldn't call for help. Golda went out in front of her home waiting for her husband to return with her daughter.

When she saw him returning alone, her concern for her daughter increased, as did William's when he saw that his wife was standing alone while waiting for him. Together they went back to the pool with greater intensity and a more desperate mood. Then they walked the path down to the bottom of the ravine and back up to the pool worried that Mary Jane had been hurt and was laying somewhere close by.

Fort Snelling is situated atop a bluff overlooking the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. The quarters the Massey family lived in were on the southeast end of the Fort. To their west was the golf course that extended northeast of them between the Cantonment area and the enlisted men's pool and barracks area. The Post is atop a hill that begins to slope down toward the river about 25 yards to the east of the pool. From there a ravine runs down about 50 yards extending to a road. Across the road a short distance away is the Mississippi River.

Golda was worried that Mary Jane may have gone to pick flowers in the ravine and had fallen, hurting herself and was unable to call for help. So she and William walked to a path in the ravine and searched up and down the trail, but they found nothing that would tell them where their daughter was.

Sometime around 9:00 P.M., they returned to the pool area. There they ran into a drunken soldier. Golda asked him for a flashlight. Hearing of their missing child, the soldier volunteered to help find her and said he would go to the guard house to alert the soldiers on duty.

Golda and William then went back to their quarters and finding them empty, Mrs. Massey then called the homes of Mary Jane's friends and Sergeant Massey



A St. Paul police photographer made this photo on July 21 standing on the road along the river while looking up the ravine in the direction of the fort. Mary Jane Massey's body was found about 50 yards away in the vicinity of the light-colored patch of brush in the very center of this photo. Photo courtesy of the Saint Paul Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

went next door to the home of their neighbors. No one had seen Mary Jane and knew where she was. There was no sign of their daughter. Sergeant Massey and Golda then borrowed a flashlight from a friend, Sergeant Staton, and headed back to the pool area between 10:30 and 10:45 P.M. to continue their search for their daughter.

The Search

At the pool they met a small contingent from the guard under the command of Sergeant Dyer, along with the Officer of the Day, Lieutenant Olson, carrying flashlights and a wider search was begun. At the insistence of Sergeant Massey the search covered the pool area and ravine. He was confident his daughter had fallen and was hurt, unconscious, and not able to call out for help.

Major Christian arrived at about 11 P.M. and joined in the search just as the swimming pool was checked with a hand-held search light to assure Mary Jane had not fallen in. The search team thoroughly covered the area around the pool and the ravine. Sergeant Dyer and Lieutenant Olson searched the middle of the ravine. Dyer mentioned seeing a barrel at some point in his search, but he did not inspect it because the search party was focused on finding a fallen and injured child.

Golda had walked up and down the ravine. Sometimes with her husband; sometimes with a soldier from the guard. At about midnight, Sergeant Massey walked to the WPA watchman's shanty and asked

if he had seen Mary Jane. The guard said he had not seen anything or anyone. With all the commotion of the search, Sergeant Massey began to wonder why the watchman had not come over earlier or had asked him at the time what was going on. The major and Sergeant Massey then checked out the bars adjacent to the Fort Snelling Reservation on Seventh Street (Fort Road) in St. Paul and in Mendota asking whether anyone had seen Mary Jane, but there was no indication she had been to any of them. This convinced Sergeant Massey that his daughter must be laying hurt somewhere between the pool and the family's quarters.

At 1:30 A.M. on July 14th, the major called off the search after he concluded that Mary Jane was not in the ravine or the area of the pool. Sergeant Massey, however, continued looking for his daughter with the searchlight hanging from his neck by going up and down the ravine by himself till daybreak. Lieutenant Olson told him in the morning to go home and get some sleep and care for his wife. Olson assured him the military authorities would do everything possible to find his daughter and he would be best to stay with his wife and let the others do the searching.

About 8:30 A.M. on July 14th, a second search of area of the Fort where Mary Jane was thought to have gone was conducted under the direction of Lieutenant Olson. This search consisted of 60 soldiers moving in a straight line no more than three to four yards apart over the grounds. The search area covered from the Officers' Club to the Mendota Bridge to the pool and ravine area. This area included one of the several WPA buildings on the grounds. The other buildings were locked and therefore not searched since Mary Jane would not have been able to gain entry to them. These searchers paid special attention to all creeks, crumpled weeds, and bushes, but the soldiers found nothing that told them what had happened to Mary Jane. Later two additional searches were conducted under the direction of Captain F.H. Boos.

The military authorities conducted these searches assisted by deputy sheriffs and CCC boys (members of the Civilian Conservation Corps) on the morning of the July 15th and the afternoon of July 17th. The results of these additional searches

were also negative. Consequently those in command at the Fort and almost all the people living on the Post concluded that Mary Jane had run away and was not on the base injured or otherwise.

Today's Search Response

Law enforcement has advanced significantly in cases of kidnapping and mysterious disappearance of a child. Tragedies involving children, such as Adam Walsh, Jacob Wetterling, and Megan Kanka, have led to new laws addressing kidnapping: the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, the Jacob Wetterling Act of 1994, Megan's Law of 1996, and the International Megan's Law of 2016.

In addition, the protocol and technology available to law enforcement agencies since Mary Jane's murder have all advanced significantly. At the time of Mary Jane's disappearance, all police officers and crime scene investigators followed the protocols that were in place in 1940 and nothing in this article should be construed as being critical of their actions.

When Mary Jane was late for dinner that summer evening, her parents went looking for her thinking she had lost track of time. Soon that thinking changed to a rescue search for Mary Jane in the belief that she had fallen and was too injured to call for help.

Over the next week when repeated searches yielded no information as to her whereabouts, the base commanders concluded that Mary Jane had run away. Only her mother and father still believed she was somewhere on the grounds of the Fort. Sergeant Massey directed the first military search on the night Mary Jane disappeared. He directed where the search would take place and declared it a rescue search for his injured daughter. The military authorities continued that approach in their later searches. Slowly they came to the conclusion that Mary Jane had become a runaway teenager.

The military authorities never searched for Mary Jane with the possibility that she had been abducted or

murdered. Consequently buildings near where she disappeared that were locked where not searched because the reasoning was that if the searchers were locked out, then Mary Jane would have been locked out too. Thus she could not be inside one of these buildings.

Today the response by law enforcement would be different. After William and Golda Massey determined that Mary Jane was not delayed in returning for dinner but in fact she was mysteriously missing, the FBI and or local law enforcement would respond immediately with the understanding that the crucial first hours following a reported mysteriously missing child might literally mean the difference between life or death for the missing young person.

The FBI now mandates an immediate and aggressive response (FBI Child Abduction Response Plan, 2nd addition). The search would not have been directed by the father. It would have been under the direction of trained law enforcement professionals. The search area would have been mapped out into grids to ensure no location was missed and no time would be wasted by searching the same area twice.

Specially trained dogs would be utilized to track Mary Jane by her scent. Helicopters equipped with forward looking infrared (FLIR) cameras that can detect a person by their body heat in complete darkness would be dispatched to aid in the search. All building structures in the search grid would be entered

and searched whether they were locked or not (with owner's permission or by warrant and or exigent circumstances).

The Body Crime Scene

On Saturday night, July 20, 1940, Mary Jane's father concluded that Colonel B.F. Restine at Fort Snelling wasn't doing everything possible to find his daughter. Close friends had recently told the sergeant that the talk about the Post was that his daughter ran away. The sergeant disagreed with that opinion; so he called the Saint Paul Police asking why their department had not searched the base. He was told that because it was a military facility, the local police had no jurisdiction and would have to be invited by the military to get involved in the case.

Sergeant and Mrs. Massey then went to the colonel's office to ask him to invite the Saint Paul Police to search for their daughter. Successful in their request, the colonel telephoned Saint Paul's chief of police with this necessary invitation and the chief then assigned two investigators to the case.

On Sunday, July 21st, Detectives Boyd C. Carrier and Morgan Soderberg met the Masseys at their home and were filled in on the details of when and where the young girl had gone missing. The detectives asked to start the search from the pool. Sergeant Massey also asked them to check the ravine because he said if he were to hide a body somewhere, that is where he would hide one.

After they searched the pool area, Detective Boyd C. Carrier followed Sargent Massey into the ravine. As they came to a small clearing, Massey asked, "Do you smell that?" Carrier said, "No" but eyed a barrel on its side. He walked over and saw an opening about 14 inches in diameter cut in the lid of the barrel. He asked Massey to help him stand the barrel upright. As they did, Massey exclaimed, "Oh my God! That's her arm." Detective Carrier could not see into the barrel until he repositioned it thereby catching the sunlight



Here the photographer is closer to the crime scene, which was in front of the horizontal log seen in the center. Detective Boyd Carrier, in the white hat to the right center, is assisted by soldiers and Civilian Conservation Camp workers from the Fort. Photo courtesy of the Saint Paul Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

just right. "There's a button," Carrier said, as he looked into the barrel. Massey reached in the opening and snatched the button pulling it out into the sun. Along with it came part of the fabric to which it was attached. "That's Mary Jane. That's her dress."

Colonel B.F. Restine was then notified that the detectives and Sergeant Massey had located Mary Jane's body. He in turn called the FBI, which sent two agents to the Fort. The St. Paul coroner and police crime lab were also notified and the lab's director, Dr. John B. Dalton, responded. An expert criminologist who held a Ph.D., Dalton had been hired in 1935 as the first director of the city's crime lab.

Dr. Dalton then photographed the crime scene. Soon a detachment of soldiers arrived from the Guard on Duty led by Major Christian to provide any assistance that might be needed. Dr. Dalton looked but found no additional forensic evidence at the crime scene. Consequently the decision was made to take the barrel as found, containing Mary Jane's body, and transport it to the St. Paul morgue.

Examination of the Physical Evidence

According to the FBI's documentary record of the case, the barrel from the crime scene was rusty with no real smooth surfaces, which made finger printing useless. Mary Jane's body was in the advanced stages of decomposition. Her panties were tied tight around her neck. They had been used as a ligature and determined to be the cause of death by strangulation. Pieces of grass were entangled in the ligature and they were retained to assist in determining the location of the murder because no such grass grew at the location where the body was found. At this point, the active investigation ended. Mary Jane Massey (1926–1940) was sometime later buried at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

Today's CIS Response

Today there are latent print recovery techniques that might have been successful in



This close-up of the crime scene shows the iron barrel where Mary Jane Massey's body was found after the body had been removed and the barrel repositioned where the search party discovered it. Detective Boyd Carrier is to the right. Photo courtesy of the Saint Paul Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

securing latent fingerprints that could have been on the barrel. In addition DNA science was not known in 1940. The likelihood that DNA samples might have been found on the ligature and barrel are very good. At a contemporary crime scene, the collection of potential DNA evidence would have been a high priority.

Prior to any latent print processing techniques, the barrel and surrounding areas could have been examined using a laser or other forensic light sources to visualize inherently fluorescent fingerprints or to locate body fluids that could be collected for DNA examination. In addition, textured areas of the barrel that would not have been receptive to latent prints would have been swabbed for touch DNA samples. This is done because enough skin cells might have been transferred to the barrel in these textured areas and they could then be collected in the hope of obtaining a DNA profile.

Using DNA, investigators might be able to positively identify a murderer when the DNA profile from the barrel was compared to a suspect's DNA or through DNA database searching. Latent prints found with the use of modern technology would also have been used to search local and national fingerprint databases in an attempt to identify the murderer. If no match was found, the prints would be used to identify the murderer from suspects identified through the other investigative means.

Because I'm now retired as an investigator, I asked the current manager of the St. Paul Forensic Services Unit (formerly known as the Crime Lab), Rosanna Caswell, to review my file on the Massey

murder case to ensure I was accurate in my explanation of advances in forensic science compared to those in use in the early 1940s.

Conclusion

If this crime were committed today, I am confident that Mary Jane would have been found on July 13th, the night she disappeared. I do not know if she would have still been alive, but she would have been found.

Mary Jane was last seen at 6:45 P.M. walking from the pool toward the WPA buildings. The Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council notes that most children are killed within three hours of their abduction. The physical evidence shows that Mary Jane was killed and then her body was moved to the ravine in the barrel. Police dogs trained in suspect searching would have had a high probability of success locating were Mary Jane was if they had been used. Today an officer and a dog would be dispatched within minutes of the receipt of a call to police regarding the mysterious disappearance of a child.

Mary Jane's murder was never solved. Her murderer was never identified and brought to trial. Her parents, William and Golda, left Fort Snelling a year or so after her murder and settled in California following William's retirement from the army. Sadly, not all cases of child abduction and murder are solved today even with all the newer search protocols and forensic technology that are available to law enforcement. The only consolation the Massey family received following this violent crime in 1940 is that today both Mary Jane's mother and father are also buried at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery. Rest in peace, Mary Jane.

Steve Lydon is a retired inspector with the Office of the Ramsey County Sheriff. He thanks the Saint Paul Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Minnesota Historical Society for their help in researching the murder of Mary Jane Massey.

R.C.H.S.

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An artist's rendering of the 2018 Ecolab Ice Palace on the south side of Rice Park in downtown St. Paul. Sketch courtesy of The Cunningham Group.