

*“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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*Publication of Ramsey County History is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon*

### 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](http://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

# *“Another Siberia, Unfit for Human Habitation”?*

## St. Paul’s Super Ice Palaces, 1886, 1887, and 1888

*Robert A. Olsen*

In 1885 St. Paul was one of the fastest-growing cities in North America. It was home to over a dozen railroads that hauled Minnesota’s grain, timber, and iron ore east, returning with thousands of European immigrants—people needed to work in the fields, forests, and mines of the state.

Great efforts were made at the time to portray Minnesota’s climate as hospitable, even temperate, to these new Americans. Newspaper advertisements and magazine articles proclaimed the virtues of Minnesota’s four seasons, and extolled the long growing season and abundant sunlight in hopes of attracting talented and hardworking immigrants. So, it came as quite the blow to the egos of St. Paul’s boosters, especially those in the business community, when in 1885 a New York correspondent quipped that St. Paul was “another Siberia, unfit for human habitation” in winter.<sup>1</sup>

The response was immediate. On November 2, 1885, a meeting was held at the newly completed Ryan Hotel to discuss what to do about St. Paul’s image. Prominent city business owners were in attendance, including George R. Finch, a dry-goods merchant with Auerbach, Finch and Van Slyke; George Thompson, editor of the *St. Paul Dispatch*; William A. Van Slyke, Finch’s partner; Albert Scheffer, president of Commercial State Bank; Alfred S. Tallmadge, secretary of St. Paul’s Chamber of Commerce; and J.H. Hanson of St. Paul’s Contractors’ and Builders’ Board of Trade, as well as influential men from the railroads.<sup>2</sup> At that meeting, one man stood out in the conversation: Charles E. Joy.

Joy was an architect who designed and supervised the construction of new passenger stations as the railroads were being built westward across the country. Joy knew how the citizens of Montreal had made the most of promoting their

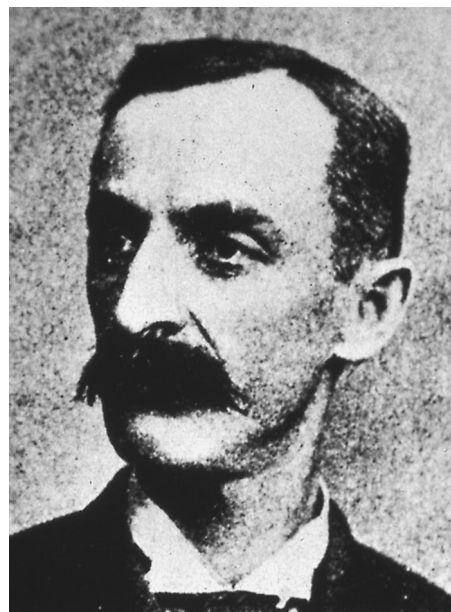
climate, and especially their winters: Montreal had hosted carnivals the three previous winters, and had great success encouraging city residents and visitors to take advantage of the health benefits of a brisk northern climate by engaging in outdoor sporting events. Central to the Montreal carnival was the construction of a palace of ice, the promotion of which drew thousands of tourists to the city in the coldest part of winter.

Unfortunately for Montreal, the city was quarantined in the fall of 1885 because of a smallpox epidemic. It also forced the cancellation of its 1886 winter carnival. Fortunately for St. Paul, Joy knew the architect of the Montreal ice palace and the contractor who had built it; he suggested to the St. Paul business leaders that they hire the Canadians to bring their expertise working with ice to St. Paul, which would then organize its own winter carnival.

After its meeting, the newly formed Saint Paul Ice Palace and Winter Carnival Association declared that for the next thirty years they would hold a carnival that would glorify the things that were possible to do in a climate such as St. Paul’s . . . starting in February of 1886!

### **The 1886 Ice Palace**

At the advice of Charles Joy, the Hutchison brothers of Montreal were hired to design and build St. Paul’s first ice palace.<sup>3</sup> J.H. Hutchison was responsible for building the structure, having proven his engineering skill with the Montreal palaces of 1883, 1884, and 1885. His brother,



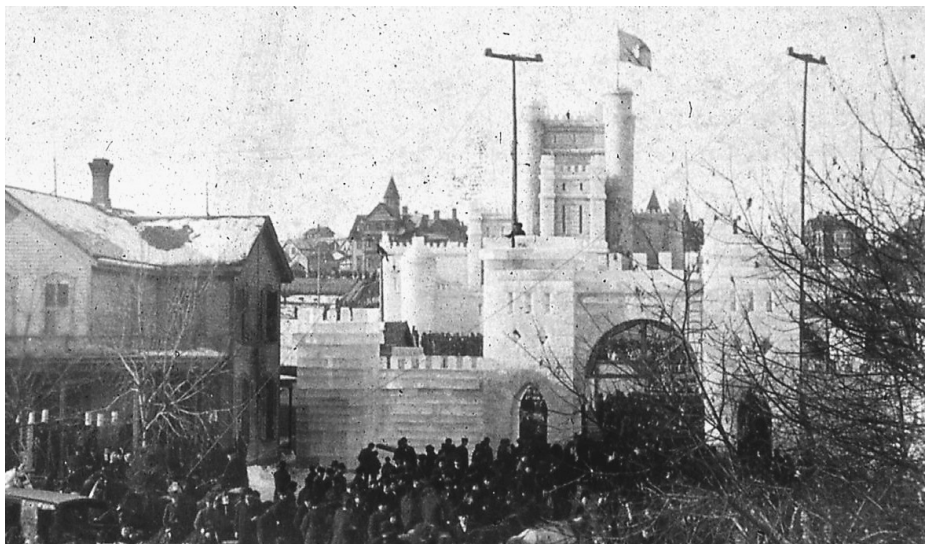
*In 1886 Charles E. Joy (1840–1928), an experienced architect, inspired the people of St. Paul to build the city’s first ice palace using plans prepared by a firm from Montreal. The following year the city used a design that Joy developed for a new ice palace. Photo courtesy of Robert A. Olsen.*

Alexander Hutchison of Hutchison & Steele Architects, designed the building.<sup>4</sup> The local Association then sold stock to cover the cost of the palace: \$5,210 at \$10 per share.

Not everyone in St. Paul endorsed building a palace of ice. H.H. Young of the State Board of Immigration feared that potential immigrants from Europe, reading of a place with buildings made of ice, would not choose Minnesota as a destination.<sup>5</sup>

Undeterred, J.H. Hutchison arrived in St. Paul on December 29, 1885, with the ice palace plans in hand. With only a few modifications, the plans were accepted by the Association. The site chosen for the ice palace was Central Park, an eight-acre area bounded on three sides





Looking north, this 1886 photo shows the crowd of people at Carnival Park (Central Park) in front of the Thirteenth Street entrance to the ice palace. Schlattman Brothers & Ladd photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

by busy thoroughfares: Thirteenth Street on the south; Robert Street on the east; and Cedar Street on the west. This meant that Carnival Park (as it was known during the Carnival) and the ice palace were within walking distance from any of these streets, making an adventure immediately available for visitors just arriving by rail.<sup>6</sup> Today this location is just east of the Centennial Building.

On Thursday, January 7, 1886, workers began digging the foundation for the palace, but construction was soon delayed due to temperatures above freezing. When architect Alexander Hutchison arrived, he concurred that work on the palace needed to wait until temperatures dipped under 32 degrees, which happened on Sunday, January 10.<sup>7</sup>

Much of the ice for the palace was harvested from the Mississippi River. Horses and teamsters scrapped snow and scored ice into uniform dimensions. Sawyers used long saw blades to cut the ice into cakes, which bobbed in the water toward a chute where they were pulled up onto sleighs to be transported to the palace site. The design of the palace included four corner towers, each outfitted with an interior wooden derrick for hoisting the blocks into place. Ropes, block and tackles, and much horsepower lifted the ice blocks toward the top, one by one, where workers swung them into place. A

bucket of water was then poured onto the top of the wall, and each new block was lowered into place, freezing instantly. Once a course of blocks was in place, the top surface was smoothed and leveled with an axe and made ready for the next course.

Communities from across the state contributed additional ice for the palace: White Bear Lake, Big Stone Lake, Glenwood, Wahpeton, Minnetonka, and even from North Dakota, Fargo and

Bismarck. Stillwater sent the cornerstone, a cube of ice over four feet on a side, cut from the St. Croix River.

The fickle Minnesota weather challenged the first days of construction. Work slowed as the thermometer plummeted to nearly -30 degrees at first. When the weather moderated, the workers were able to make up for lost time, only to have the temperature drop to -34° a few days later. Progress was glacial.

The editors of the *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press* suggested in an editorial on January 25, that perhaps Carnival planners had outstepped their expectations of the giant ice palace. The Hutchison brothers responded in the same paper the next day, saying, "It will be finished, and on time," even suggesting that work might continue 24 hours a day and on Sundays, if need be. Working on Sundays raised a few eyebrows in the community, inspiring Rev. Bird Wilkins to bring the topic up in his Sunday message to the congregation at First Baptist Church. "God bless the Carnival," the Reverend Wilkins exclaimed, extolling the ice palace for providing work and food for one hundred men and their families.<sup>8</sup>

As February crept closer, the temperatures moderated and the pace of construction picked up. The sight of ice cutters and haulers and workers in the



The 1886 ice palace seen from the corner of Robert and Thirteenth Streets, looking toward the northwest. Central Methodist Church is in the background to the left and the curling rink is in the foreground. Schlattman Brothers & Ladd photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



construction area was quite a spectacle, and attracted large crowds, who watched the palace grow. On January 25th the crowds reached nearly 8,000, forcing Hutchison to ask the Association to construct a wooden fence around Carnival Park and permitting only work crews inside so construction could continue without interruption.<sup>9</sup>

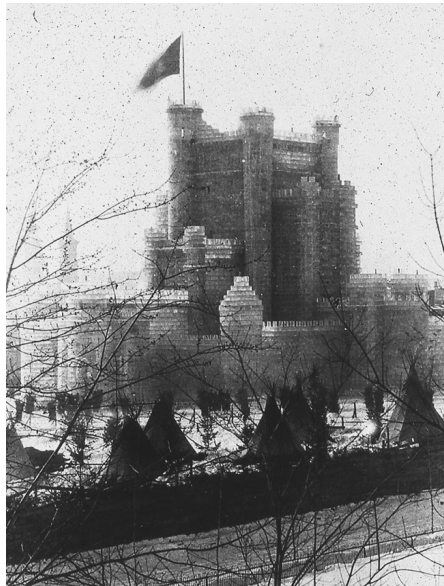
When the Carnival's Opening Day of February 4, 1886, arrived, the ice palace was complete, save a few finishing touches. Throngs of people streamed into Carnival Park, paying 25 cents to marvel at the palace. As described in the Crystal Carnival souvenir booklet:

*It is one hundred and eighty feet in length by one hundred and sixty feet in width, with a grand massive, central tower attaining an altitude of one hundred six feet. This tower is provided with battlements and embrasures. . . . The main tower is defended by an outwork about thirty-two feet in height with battlements and embrasures and towers at the angles. The outer walls are twenty inches thick, and the central tower, forty inches thick and something over twenty thousand blocks of ice are required in its construction.*

There were four grand entrances to the palace through which spectators passed through various apartments, halls, and corridors of solid, transparent ice and containing booths and displays of Minnesota resources. One reporter lamented that the interior sculptures could only be temporary.<sup>10</sup> And perhaps one of the greatest marvels of all, the building was lit at night by about fifty large incandescent bulbs, making the ice palace one of the few buildings in St. Paul with electricity.

On the seventh day of the Carnival, the palace went through a transformation. As the weather—once again!—turned warm and sunny, the palace became opaque and milky white. Minneapolis journalists pounced on the palace's new image, complaining that the structure was now corrupted by the coming of spring.<sup>11</sup> St. Paul reporters were quick to retort that the palace would stand and endure any weather.<sup>12</sup>

The ups and downs of weather certainly didn't deter Carnival participants. Crowds in the thousands showed up at



*St. Paul's 1886 ice palace in Central Park. Here the photographer is looking southwest with the village of Indian teepees in the foreground. The twin towers of Assumption Catholic Church are visible in the distance. Photo courtesy of Robert A. Olsen.*

Carnival Park day after day for snowshoeing, curling, ice skating, skijoring, and, of course tobogganing. Social clubs sprang up seemingly overnight, embracing the health benefits of the cold, ozone-laden air in the lungs and the rosy cheeks resulting from participating in winter sports. Ladies and gentlemen were invited to participate in organizations with club names like the Aurora, Rainbow, or

Washtae toboggan clubs, or if you were a bit more upper crust, the St. George's Snow Shoe Club, or the party-loving Nushka Club, which included founders of the Saint Paul Curling Club and the Town & Country Club.

Carnival visitors were also able to visit the Sioux Indian village adjacent to the ice palace in Carnival Park. The village included many teepees that were occupied throughout Carnival, in exhibition of a culture thousands of years old juxtaposed with a modern demonstration of architectural prowess. Just 24 years after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 and the resultant hanging of 38 Dakota men in Mankato, the Sioux Indian village must also have been controversial.

As with all good things, the first Winter Carnival and ice palace came to an end, and a fiery one at that! Over the run of Carnival, a homespun mythology had emerged, one that included Borealis, the Ice King who came from Manitoba to St. Paul in his ice-encased train car to take over the city as his winter playground, and Fire King Coal, who emerges as the hero, saving the city from a fate of perpetual winter. These two rivals battled each other in Carnival Park, with Borealis defending the ice palace hurling snowballs, while Fire King Coal set the palace aflame with fires. One observer of the festivities wrote, "you can't imagine how pretty it looked . . . the company would march up



*Members of the St. George's Snowshoe Club at the west entrance to the 1886 ice palace. T.W. Ingersoll photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

## *The Legacy of Ice Palace Construction*

There are few places on earth that have built ice palaces: St. Petersburg, Russia; Quebec City and Montreal, Canada; Leadville, Colorado; Saranac Lake, New York; Sapporo, Japan; Harbin, China. What makes Saint Paul unique among its peers is the number of substantial ice structures attempted and completed. In addition to those already mentioned, other St. Paul ice palaces include:

1889 and 1890 palaces that planners expected to build on Harriet Island. Both were cancelled due to warm weather.

1896 palace at Dunning Field. A freak thunderstorm on the final day of Carnival ruined the finale with its storming of the palace and the fireworks display. The cost of the palace put the Carnival into bankruptcy.

1916 and 1917 palaces at Harriet Island, Rice Park, and the Town & Country Club were part of Louis W. Hill's Saint Paul Winter Sports Carnival events.

1937 palace was erected to the west of the Minnesota Capitol.

1938 ice court was constructed in Mounds Park.

1939 palace was built on the shores of Como Lake.

1940 palace in Como Park near the pavilion featured an official U.S. Post Office in one of its towers.

1941 palace, also in Como Park, was saved by school children who plastered newspapers on its exterior to hold in water and reduce the melting.

1942 palace at Highland Park golf course melted before it was completed.

1947 palace, also at Highland Park golf course, also melted before it was completed.

1975 palace was on Harriet Island.

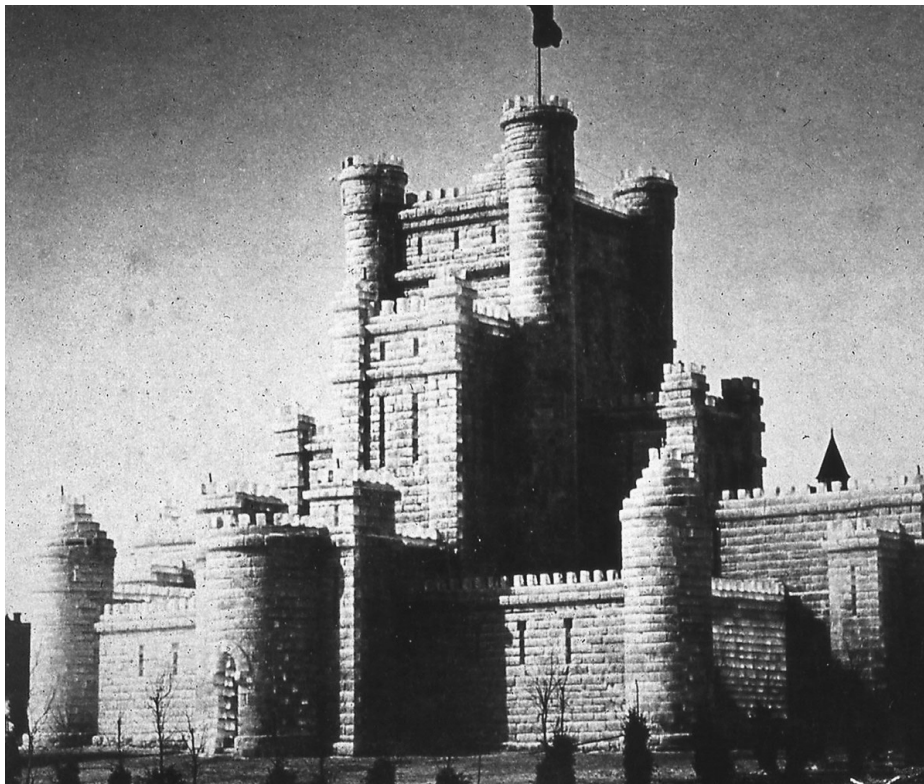
1976 U.S. Bicentennial palace was in downtown Saint Paul.

1986 Winter Carnival centennial palace at Phalen Park used prefabrication to build the tallest tower on the ground and then safely hoisted it into place with cranes.

1988 palace was erected at Harriet Island.

1992 palace at Harriet Island broke all height records at 162'-9".

2004 palace in downtown St. Paul allowed people to go inside the structure for the first time since 1941.



*The 1886 ice palace in Central Park as seen from the southeast. Photo courtesy of Robert A. Olsen.*

headed by Bands and form around the Palace, each bearing torches . . . [and] on all four sides the rockets and candles and lights went up, every color in the rainbow, so many at a time you couldn't see the palace."<sup>13</sup> After "storming the palace," the Ice King released his hold on the city to the Fire King, and the St. Paul ice palace and Winter Carnival came to a close.

Almost.

As the cold weather lingered, the ice palace remained standing in Central Park, now devoid of the ice rinks, toboggan slides, and the Indian village. The society pages in the newspapers reported people touring around the palace in their father's hansom, and visitors asking directions to the palace in the early summer. For its part, the Saint Paul Ice Palace and Winter Carnival Association promised that it was incorporated to exist for thirty years and would build a palace and conduct a festival every year. As winter turned to spring, organizers let it be known that "[This] initial carnival . . .

will bring improvement and we promise in advance a much grander affair in 1887, when St. Paul will again be in festive garb and 'At Home' to her friends."<sup>14</sup>

### The 1887 Ice Palace

The St. Paul Ice Palace and Winter Carnival Association took all the lessons learned from the 1886 Carnival experience and used them to create a winter spectacle in 1887. The first order of business was to hold a competition for the design for the ice palace that would, once again, stand in the center of Central Park. The grand prize was \$200 (about \$2,500 in 2017 dollars) for the winning scheme, won by Charles Joy.<sup>15</sup> The budget for the 1887 ice palace: \$7,500!

Joy set about to test the structural limits and aesthetic nuances of ice. In plan, the palace footprint was in the shape of a Roman cross, 194 feet by 217 feet. The main entrance to the palace was on the south side, through a semicircular archway over 15 feet high, atop which sat a sculpture of the Ice King, Borealis flanked by polar bears. Through this



*This stereoscopic view of the main entrance to the 1887 ice palace showcases the skill of St. Paul's stonemasons, which is evident in the high degree of architectural detailing and joinery that was used in the construction of the archway. Henry Hamilton Bennett photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

entrance, the visitor arrived in the central courtyard surrounded by buttressed walls nearly 25 feet tall, which also included a large sculpture of a bull. As visitors moved either to the left or right of the

courtyard, they were lead to other chambers and towers on the east, west, and north side of the structure. The west entrance had both square- and flat-topped, round towers at the outworks, and the

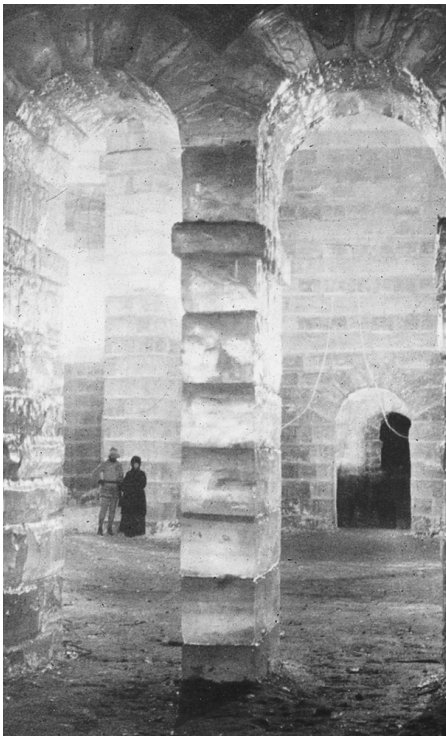


*The 1887 ice palace in Central Park that was designed by Charles Joy. This view is to the northwest. Photo courtesy of Robert A. Olsen.*





*While a crowd in the rear of this photo waited to enter the arched entrance to the 1887 palace which carried the sign "Borealis," other enthusiasts of winter tossed a hardy celebrant into the air with a blanket. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*



*Looking from west to east, this close-up view of the 1887 ice palace emphasizes the finely detailed, or rusticated, finish that the stone-masons gave to each ice block, thereby conveying a sense of permanence to a palace that would soon melt.*

east entrance sported a steepled entrance gate.

A central octagonal tower with a diameter of about 50 feet dominated the palace, and it is here that Joy chose to push the limits of ice architecture. Since ice is a rock at temperatures below freezing, the structural rules for making a masonry building were in force: all of the weight of the tower needed to be carried by the bottom layers of blocks. In order to distribute some of that weight away from the sheer walls, four belt courses of ice blocks were utilized to transfer weight laterally to corner towers, including the main 140-foot-tall flag tower (which flew a flag of a polar bear rampant on an azure field atop its 20-foot pole). From each of these corner towers, flying buttresses transferred the structural load of the walls outward perpendicularly to massive pilasters five feet thick!

Stone masons earned 10 cents a day working on the 1887 ice palace, and their handiwork can be seen everywhere in photographs of the building. At the pedestrian level of the building, each block was meticulously prepared, or "dressed."

The faces of the blocks were rusticated to give the appearance that they were blasted out of some large iceberg, while the corners of the blocks were provided with sharp edges to ensure a tight fit from block to block. As the visitor's eye gazed upward, the wall surface became more refined, with evidence of diamond-shaped inserts. Toward the top, the walls became smooth and plate-glass transparent. This high attention to architectural detail has led some historians to speculate that Cass Gilbert had a hand in the ice palace's design.

In the end, the 1887 palace was truly a residence for the mythical Ice King visitor from Manitoba. From the throne in Carnival Park, Borealis held an icy grip on St. Paul, plunging temperatures below zero nearly every day at the end of January and the beginning of February. Twice the Fire King stormed the ice palace to overthrow Borealis to bring about the warmth of spring. In the second assault, 20,000 people bombarded the palace with Roman candles until the monarch from the North retreated . . . until 1888!

### **The 1888 Ice Palace**

The 1888 ice palace was Charles Joy's colossus of ice architecture. Construction began on December 19, 1887, and was completed for the opening of the Winter Carnival on Wednesday, January 25, 1888, at the cost of \$7,000. Of the eight acres of Carnival Park, this fantasy of ice covered an acre of the site! The contractor, Rheame & St. Pierre, was an experienced builder of railroad turntables, water tanks, tank and engine houses, pile bridges, and railroad trestles, which accounts for its success in building the largest structure of ice on earth so expertly.<sup>16</sup> Rheame & St. Pierre used over 55,000 blocks of ice, each measuring 22" x 32" x 18" and weighing in total over 16,000,000 pounds to build this ice palace.

During the month of construction, St. Paul experienced one of its most severe winters. Temperatures barely rose above zero. On January 21, 1888—four days before opening day—the thermometer bottomed out at -33°, a week later at -41°, and a few days after that at -34°. Yet the

## Architects of St. Paul's Ice Palaces

Alexander C. Hutchison (1838–1922; the 1886 ice palace)  
• Hutchison, a Canadian, was a gifted designer of masonry buildings, including the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, Canada.

Charles E. Joy (1840–1928; the 1887, 1888, and 1889 ice palaces) • In addition to the three St. Paul palaces, Joy designed several homes along the Mississippi River near Battle Creek and the Leadville, Colorado, ice palace of 1896.

Melville C. Wikinson (1835–1898; the 1896 ice palace) • Brevet Major Melville Wilkinson, a native of New York who had volunteered for service in the Union Army during the Civil War and was wounded at Antietam, was stationed at Fort Snelling as a member of the Third U.S. Infantry. For the 1896 Winter Carnival, he directed the construction of a stockade and Fort Karnival. He also has the distinction of leading—and losing—the last armed confrontation between Indian tribes and the army at Leech Lake, Minnesota, in 1898. He later died from wounds suffered in that fight.

Clarence W. Wigington (1883–1967; the 1937, 1938, 1940, 1941, 1942, and 1947 ice palaces) • A prolific designer, Wigington was responsible for numerous public buildings and schools throughout St. Paul. When he started working in the city architect's office in 1914, he was Minnesota's first registered African American architect, and the first African American municipal architect in the nation.

Stirling "Jack" Horner (1884–1968; the 1938 ice palace)  
• Horner's monumental Ice Court featured a large public

skating rink and amazing lighting. Horner was a member of the St. Paul architectural firm headed by Clarence H. Johnston Sr. and was also the architect of the third White Bear Yacht Clubhouse, built in 1939 and razed in 1998.

Milton Bergstedt (1907–1998; the 1939 ice palace) • Bergstedt's tongue-in-cheek "Arabian Nights" palace was the fantasy of a locally renowned Modernist designer and architect who was also the founder of the BWBR architectural firm.

Bob Olsen (the 1975 ice palace) • While he was a college student, Olsen convinced the faculty at St. Olaf College that the best way to earn a degree in music was to build an ice palace. They agreed.

Craig Rafferty and Jeri Zuber (the 1976 ice palace) • Rafferty and Zuber won the design competition with a palace of undulating walls of manufactured ice laid out in a plan reminiscent of the 1886 building.

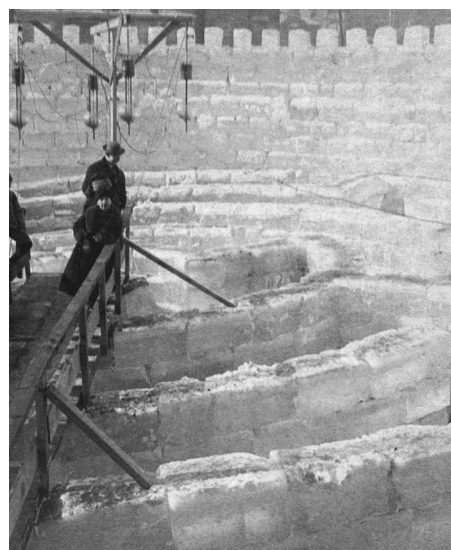
Ellerbe Architects, Karl Ermanis (the 1986 ice palace) • Ermanis chose to express the palace as a series of inverted icicles reaching toward the winter sky.

Rust Architects, Bill Rust (the 1988, 1992 ice palaces) • Rust's unique structural system carried the weight of the record-shattering 1992 palace's tower of 162'-9" through a series of walls and towers capped by colorful fabric tops.

SLL/Leo A Daly Architects & Engineers (the 2004 ice palace) • A slow freeze-up in area lakes meant that ice blocks were very narrow, giving the palace a look that was even more massive than it already was in design.



Here an elk delivers a visitor to the 1887 ice palace in a sleigh. Henry Hamilton Bennett photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



The 1888 ice palace included an 80-foot circular labyrinth with an overhead observation platform. Henry Hamilton Bennett photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



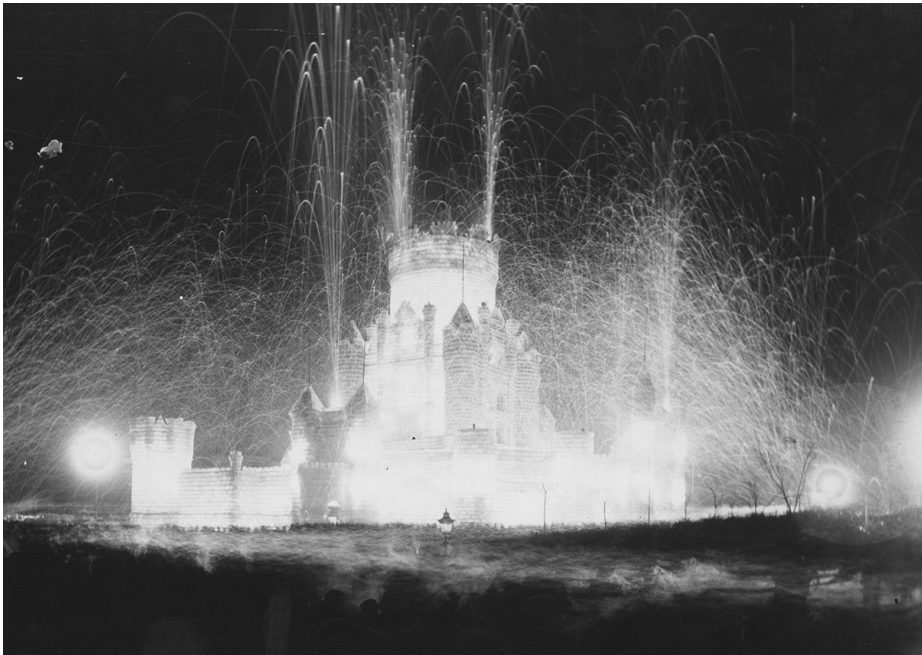
*The main entrance to the 1888 ice palace. This view is to the west. Large ice sculptures of a polar bear and various figures with toboggans, ice skates, curling stones, and snowshoes were prominently featured in niches built into the building's façade and facing the entrance. The circular labyrinth is on the right rear side. Northwestern Photo Company photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

crowds came to see this latest palace, streaming out of the passenger trains from across the country.

For his second major ice palace, Joy found inspiration from more exotic visual sources. The Official Programme of the St. Paul Winter Carnival and

Ice Palace described the medieval and Arabic-influenced design in detail:

*The main tower of the Palace starts at the base fifty feet square, with smaller circular towers at the corners twelve feet in diameter. This shape is carried to a height of eighty feet, when the corner towers end,*



*Photographer T. W. Ingersoll captured the brilliance and the spectacle from the fireworks used in the storming of the 1888 ice palace. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

*and the grand central tower assumes a circular form, and, with a diameter of forty feet, rises to a height of about one hundred thirty feet. On the sides of the tower spacious niches will contain images of snowshoers, tobogganers, skaters, and animals modeled in ice. The Palace is so designed that the perfection of electric illumination from the interior of the Palace is achieved, and that the grandest effect of fireworks will be produced.<sup>17</sup>*

In this design, Joy was again working out how to achieve the greatest height in ice while maintaining the magical transparency of the material, to a much different physical conclusion. Joy was also striving to give the Carnival participant something more to do INSIDE the ice palace itself. Unique to the 1888 palace was the inclusion of labyrinth eighty feet in diameter. There were five separate paths which led to the center of the maze and a circular stairway that led up to a platform from which one could observe participants seeking to solve the puzzle. St. Paul native F. Scott Fitzgerald used this ice palace and its maze as the basis for his short story, "The Ice Palace."

When it was time for Saint Paul's third Ice Palace and Winter Carnival to come to an end, it took THREE stormings by Fire King to defrost Borealis. Over 30,000 onlookers shot 100,000 Roman candles toward the palace while sulphur fires burning within the palace glowed yellow, red, green, and blue. When the author asked an elderly eyewitness to this final storming what he remembered most about the 1888 ice palace, he replied, "I remember how it . . . SMELLED!"

*As a youngster, Bob Olsen became enamored with ice palaces after discovering a 3-foot x 6-foot photograph of Wigington's 1941 ice palace hidden behind a wall in the Eastman Kodak building in downtown St. Paul. His dad, Jim Olsen, introduced Bob to the city architect's office and the Minnesota Historical Society, where the younger Olsen spent much of his free time as teenager, researching ice palaces. Bob is a former board member of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



## *The 2018 People's Ice Palace*

Rice Park has been home to numerous ice structures over the years, and for the first time since 1917, the park will be home to the St. Paul Winter Carnival ice palace.

For inspiration, architect John Culligan of Cuningham Group has reached back to historic imagery first imagined by Clarence Wigington's 1940 palace that assigned characters from the Winter Carnival mythology to multiple towers. "In addition to all the other outdoor activities in Rice Park," said Culligan, "people visiting downtown St. Paul will enjoy a spectacular ice palace that is the centerpiece of

the Carnival and will create memories frozen in time! The six spires of the 2018 Ecolab Ice Palace represent King Boreas, Queen Aurora, and the four Winds of the Winter Carnival Royal Family. This is an event that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will talk about for the next 100 years."

Indeed, the 2018 Palace will solidify an icy tradition. Photographs of the 1917 ice palace show that structure stunningly embraced by buildings that still surround Rice Park: the St. Paul Public Library, St. Paul Hotel, and Landmark Center. This year's Palace will provide very updated and modern

imagery to ice palaces, and bring new design elements to St. Paul ice palace vocabulary, including dual thrones for the monarchs of ice and snow and a fiery cauldron that is a warm reminder that spring is soon on its way.

The historic Rice Park features 17 days of Carnival activities. In addition to the 70-foot tall People's Ice Palace, the Park is home to the sparkling Ice Sculpture Garden, which will include stunning masterpieces created by area artists using an array of scrapers, knives, chainsaws, and other tools. Live music is available daily. Outdoor bar service will fea-



*Building the 2018 Ecolab Ice Palace in Rice Park is just one part of this year's Winter Carnival in St. Paul. The construction work requires members of the building trades who have a wide variety of skills and tools ranging from large machines to chain saws and spirit levels. In the upper right-hand photo, workers on lifts position a block of ice in one of the two primary towers. The George Latimer Central Library is visible behind the Ice Palace. In the lower right-hand photo, workers install the first block of ice as part of the foundation for the Ice Palace. Darrin Johnson photos. Photos courtesy of Darrin Johnson and the Saint Paul Winter Carnival.*

ture wine, hot mulled wine, and local craft beers and spirits. Three Winter Carnival parades have their terminus in Rice Park, including the traditional Torchlight Parade, which features fireworks at the conclusion of Carnival pageantry. Ice skating, a disco dance, and Minnesota displays round out the many activities available in Rice Park.

The 2018 Ecolab Ice Palace is a contemporary interpretation of classic palace forms. Its two primary towers represent Boreas—King of Winter and Aurora—Queen of the Snows. These interconnected spires are flanked by four additional towers representing Boreas' brothers who control the Four Winds: Titan, the Prince of the Blustery North Wind; Notos,

the Prince of the Balmy South Wind; Euros, the Prince of the Irresponsible East Wind; and Zephyrus, the Prince of the Bountiful West Wind. Each tower is composed of spiraling, stepped-ice walls erupting from St. Paul's snowy and rugged terrain. These tapered towers rise up to sloped and angled open tops from which colorful lights stream into the winter sky.

The square Palace towers are placed on angle so they virtually change shape and size when seen from varying viewpoints around Rice Park. This design strategy results in more dynamic palace perspectives. A frozen ice moat contains the Palace and Boreas' centrally located balcony ties the entire composition together.

Carnival Royalty will welcome their loyal subjects from this prominent perch. Boreas and Aurora's thrones, which the public can sit on and have keepsake photos taken with the Palace in the background, flank the courtyard gateway to the Palace.

Beautifully festive light and sound shows will emanate from the Palace each night culminating on Carnival's final evening while the Torchlight Parade swirls around Rice Park. Fireworks will explode overhead and the Palace will turn bright red representing Vulcanus Rex's victory over Boreas Rex and the coming of Spring!

Information on all St. Paul Winter Carnival activities can be found at [www.wintercarnival.com/events](http://www.wintercarnival.com/events).



Looking down at Rice Park in the direction of the George Latimer Central Library, this nighttime photo accurately captures the size of the footprint for the 2018 Ecolab Ice Palace. Darrin Johnson photo. Photo courtesy of Darrin Johnson and the Saint Paul Winter Carnival.



Large cranes are essential tools in the hoisting and maneuvering of the 400-pound ice blocks that are used in the construction of the 2018 Ecolab Ice Palace. In the rear of this nighttime photo, lights illuminate the lobby of the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. Darrin Johnson photo. Photo courtesy of Darrin Johnson and the Saint Paul Winter Carnival.

## Endnotes

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3. Donald J. Leyden, *The St. Paul Winter Carnivals of 1886, 1887, 1888, 1916, and 1917* (St. Paul: St. Paul Winter Carnival Association, 1917), 5.
4. As explained in W. George Beers, *Over the Snow, or, The Montréal Carnival* (Montreal: W. Drysdale and J. Theo. Robinson, 1883), 54, J.H. Hutchison, the brother of architect Alexander C. Hutchison, de-

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  8. *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, January 25, 1886.
  9. *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, January 26, 1886.
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11. *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, February 10, 1886.
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15. Leyden, 5.
16. *St. Paul City Directory, 1879-80*, 497.
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# R.C.H.S.

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Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society  
323 Landmark Center  
75 West Fifth Street  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

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ORGANIZATION

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Twin Cities, MN  
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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.*