

= Victoria Skating Rink =

The Victoria Skating Rink was an indoor ice skating rink located in Montreal , Quebec , Canada . Opened in 1862 , it was described at the start of the twentieth century to be " one of the finest covered rinks in the world " . The building was used during winter seasons for pleasure skating , ice hockey and skating sports on a natural ice rink . In summer months , the building was used for various events , including musical performances and horticultural shows . It was the first building in Canada to be electrified .

The rink may be most famous for its connection to ice hockey history . It holds the distinction of having hosted the first @-@ ever recorded organized indoor ice hockey match on March 3 , 1875 . The ice surface dimensions set the standard for today 's North American ice hockey rinks . It was also the location of the first Stanley Cup playoff games in 1894 and the location of the founding of the first championship ice hockey league , the Amateur Hockey Association of Canada in 1886 . Frederick Stanley , the donor of the Stanley Cup , witnessed his first ice hockey game there in 1889 . In 1896 , telegraph wires were connected at the Rink to do simultaneous score @-@ by @-@ score description of a Stanley Cup challenge series between Montreal and Winnipeg , Manitoba teams , a first of its kind .

The rink was also notable for its role in the development of figure skating in Canada . It held some of the first competitions in the sport in Canada . During its existence , it was the home of two important clubs , the Victoria Skating Club and the Earl Grey Skating Club . It was the home rink of Louis Rubenstein , considered one of the first world champions of the sport , and also an important organizer .

The rink was located in central Montreal between Drummond Street and Stanley Street , just north of René Lévesque Boulevard (formerly Dorchester Boulevard) . It was located one block to the west of Dominion Square (today 's Dorchester Square) , where the Montreal Winter Carnivals of the 19th century were held . Surpassed by other facilities , including the Montreal Forum , the rink was sold in 1925 and today the site is occupied by a parking garage .

= = Building = =

Designed by Lawford & Nelson , Architects , the building was a long (252 feet (77 m) x 113 feet (34 m)) wide , two @-@ story brick edifice with a 52 feet (16 m) -high pitched roof supported from within by curving wooden trusses , which arched over the entire width of the structure . Tall , round @-@ arched windows punctuated its length and illuminated its interior , while evening skating was made possible by 500 gas @-@ jet lighting fixtures set in coloured glass globes . At a later date , the lighting was converted to electric , making the building the first in Canada to be electrified .

The ice surface measured 204 feet (62 m) by 80 feet (24 m) , dimensions very similar to today 's National Hockey League (NHL) ice rinks . It was surrounded by a 10 feet (3 @. @ 0 m) -wide platform , or promenade , which was elevated approximately 1 foot (30 cm) above the ice surface and upon which spectators could stand or skaters could rest . Later , a gallery was added with a royal box for visiting dignitaries . The ice itself was a ' natural ' ice surface , frozen by the coldness of the season , not by the later invention of mechanically @-@ frozen ice .

At the time of its construction , the Rink 's location at 49 Drummond Street (now renumbered to 1187) , placed it in the centre of the English community in Montreal , in the vicinity of McGill University . The area is referred to today as the " Golden Square Mile , " the area of central Montreal populated then by rich businessmen of British descent who had made the city the budding centre of commerce in Canada . One block east was Dominion Square , where annual outdoor winter sporting events were held and later the Montreal Winter Carnival was held . Across the street to the east , the Windsor Hotel , a long @-@ time centre of social life and meeting place of several sports organizations , was built in 1875 . Nearby is old Windsor Station , which was the eastern terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway , built in 1889 .

= = History = =

The Victoria Skating Club was incorporated on June 9 , 1862 , with a sizable capitalization of \$ 12 @, @ 000 , for the purpose of buying the land and building the rink . The directors included members of prominent families of the Square Mile : John Greenshields , whose family owned the largest drygoods wholesale firm in Canada and James Torrance , whose family owned a prosperous provisions wholesale firm . The Rink , one of the first and largest indoor rinks in North America , was completed and opened on December 24 , 1862 . However , it was not the first indoor rink in Montreal . The first had opened in 1859 , at the north end of St. Urbain Street , for the Montreal Skating Club . It was the first of numerous ice rinks in Canada to be named after Queen Victoria . By about 1880 , membership in the Victoria Skating Club had reached 2 @, @ 000 , mostly drawn from Montreal 's upper classes , who enjoyed considerable leisure time and could afford to participate in such events as the fancy @-@ dress balls , which were a regular feature at the rink .

A quote from the 1870s that appeared in the book Montreal Yesterdays captures the essence :

? When many hundred persons are upon the ice , and with every variety of costume , pass through all the graceful figures that skaters delight in , the scene presented to the spectator is dazzling in the extreme . ?

The rink became a major attraction for visitors to Montreal . In 1886 , visiting Captain Willard Glazer described the scene :

? One of the principal points of attraction in both winter and summer is the Victoria Skating Rink , in Dominion Square . This extensive building is used during the milder months of the year for horticultural shows , concerts and miscellaneous gatherings . In the winter the doors of this place are thronged with a crowd of sleighs and sleigh drivers , while inside , skaters and spectators form a living , moving panorama , pleasant to look upon . The place is lighted by gas , and men and women , old and young , with a plentiful sprinkling of children , on skates , are practicing all sorts of gyrations . The ladies are prettily and appropriately dressed in skating costumes , and some of them are proficient in the art of skating . The spectators sit or stand on a raised ledge around the ice parallelogram , while the skaters dart off , singly or in pairs , executing quadrilles , waltzes , curves , straight lines , letters , labyrinths , and every conceivable figure . Now and then some one comes to grief in the surging , moving throng ; but is quickly on his or her feet again , the ice and water shaken off , and the zigzag resumed . Children skate ; boys and girls ; ladies and gentlemen , and even dignified military officers . Some skate well , some medium , some shockingly ill ; but all skate , or essay to do so . It is the grand Montrealese pastime , and though the ice is sloppy , and the air chill and heavy with moisture , everybody has a good time . ?

The Rink hosted pleasure skating and masquerade balls during the 1880s Montreal Winter Carnivals , which took place a city block to the east in Dominion Square .

= = = Ice hockey = = =

The first game

On March 3 , 1875 , the Rink hosted what has been recognized as the first indoor organized ice hockey game , between members of the Club , organized by James Creighton , a member of the Victoria Skating Club and a figure skating judge . The match lays claim to this distinction because of several factors which establish its link to modern ice hockey : it featured two teams (nine players per side) , goaltenders , a referee , a puck , a pre @-@ determined set of rules , including a pre @-@ determined length of time (60 minutes) with a recorded score . Games prior to this had mostly been outdoors , with sticks and balls , with informal rules and informal team sizes . In order to limit injuries to spectators and damage to glass windows , the game was played with a wooden puck instead of a lacrosse ball , possibly the first time such an object was used . The two teams , members of the Club , included a number of McGill University students . Sticks and skates for this game were imported from Nova Scotia , including Mic @-@ mac sticks and Starr skates . This first game was pre @-@ announced to the general public in the pages of the Montreal Gazette newspaper :

Announcement

Victoria Rink - A game of Hockey will be played at the Victoria Skating Rink this evening , between two nines chose from among the members . Good fun may be expected , as some of the players are reputed to be exceedingly expert at the game . Some fears have been expressed on the part of intending spectators that accidents were likely to occur through the ball flying about in too lively a manner , to the imminent danger of lookers on , but we understand that the game will be played with a flat circular piece of wood , thus preventing all danger of its leaving the surface of the ice . Subscribers will be admitted on presentation of their tickets .

By moving ice hockey game indoors , the smaller dimensions of the rink initiated a major change from the outdoor version of the game , limiting organized contests to a nine @-@ man limit per team . Until that time , outdoor games had no prescribed number of players , the number being more or less the number that could fit on a frozen pond or river and often ranged in the dozens . The nine @-@ man per side rule would last until the 1880s , when it was reduced during the Montreal Winter Carnival Hockey Tournament to seven per side .

Role in organized ice hockey

From 1875 until 1881 , hockey matches would be held between hockey @-@ playing members of the Skating Club and outside teams , such as McGill University and the Montreal Hockey Club . In 1881 , the Victoria Hockey Club was organized and made the Rink its home . Play at first was by exhibition only as there were no leagues . The Rink was used for exhibition games or as an indoor facility if the outdoor rink was not available during the annual Winter Carnivals . It was for the 1883 Carnival that hockey team sizes were reduced further , to seven per side , which was the common size for the next thirty years . Eventually the tournament play led to plans for a league . The Rink hosted the founding meeting of the Amateur Hockey Association of Canada (AHAC) league in December 1886 . The AHAC was the second organized ice hockey league in Canada , and the first championship league .

Lord Stanley , later to donate the Stanley Cup trophy , witnessed his first ice hockey game at the Victoria Rink on February 4 , 1889 , seeing the Victorias defeat the Montreal Hockey Club 2 ? 1 . According to The Globe , " the vice @-@ regal party was immensely delighted with it . " The Rink would later host the first Stanley Cup playoffs in 1894 . By that time , the building had gained an elevated balcony for additional spectators and a projecting loge , precursor of today 's luxury boxes . In 1896 , the rink was connected by telegraph to distribute the Montreal @-@ Winnipeg Stanley Cup series score immediately . This is considered the first ice hockey broadcast by wire .

= = = Ice skating = = =

The Rink was built for the Victoria Skating Club and skating was its primary use at first . The Rink was prominent in the development of the sports of figure skating and speed skating . Figure skating , known as " fancy skating " began in the 1860s and the Rink held championships starting in the 1870s . A combination of racing and fancy skating championships was held in February 1888 was announced internationally in the February 1 , 1888 New York Times . The races were " 220 yards , quarter mile , half mile , mile , five miles , 220 yards over six hurdles 27 inches high , and junior championship races . " This was followed a week later by the fancy skating championship of figures .

Victoria Rink was the home rink of Louis Rubenstein , Canadian and world figure skating champion . Rubenstein first won the Montreal Championship in 1878 , and won his first Canadian championship at the Victoria Rink in 1883 . At the time , the Victoria Skating Club was considered " the most important one in the Dominion , if not on the continent . " In 1887 , the Club arranged for the formation of the Amateur Skating Association of Canada , the first national governing body of skating in Canada .

In 1906 , the Victoria Skating Club sold the rink , dissolving the Club . Ice skating continued under the new ownership , and on December 19 , 1908 , the Earl Grey Skating Club was founded at the Victoria Rink . In a ceremony at the rink , the club 's patron , Governor @-@ General Albert Grey formally initiated the club . Club honorary president Sir H. Montagu Allan and Lady Evelyn Grey were the first to appear on the ice . Mrs. Helen Joseph became the president of the Club . The Earl

Grey Club would move to the Montreal Arena by 1911 .

== Musical performances ==

The Rink hosted many musical performances . In 1878 , a benefit concert was held to aid yellow fever victims in the southern states of the United States , featuring soprano Leonora Braham . In 1890 , an audience of 6 @, @ 000 attended a benefit for Montreal 's Notre @-@ Dame Hospital featuring a performance by soprano Emma Albani , as well as pianist and composer Salomon Mazurette , violinist Alfred De Sève , and the Montreal City Band under the direction of Ernest Lavigne . The rink is also known to have held performances of the Montreal Philharmonic Society , which existed from 1875 to 1899 .

== Other events ==

The Rink was large enough to be used for conferences and exhibitions during the months that no ice was installed . From the 1860s onwards , the Rink hosted the annual Montreal Horticultural Society Exhibition each September . A description of the 1864 exhibition notes that " in addition to prizes for Agriculture , Horticulture , Poultry , Birds , Paint , etc . , \$ 200 is offered as prizes for the best band and best solo performer on bugle , fife and drum . " The Presbyterian Church in Canada held their inaugural meeting there on June 15 , 1875 , and other local assemblies , including an assembly of Sunday School students on October 1 , 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria 's Jubilee , attended by approximately 10 @, @ 000 children . The programme included " singing by the children and by the Fisk Jubilee singers , and exhibition by a number of deaf mutes and also by several Indians from Algoma . "

In September 1891 , the National Electric Association of the United States held its convention in Montreal , including demonstrations of electrical technology by Thomas Edison and a public lecture by Nikola Tesla . In August 1897 , the British Medical Association held a medical conference with an exhibition of pharmaceutical preparations , surgical and medical appliances , and " everything that interests the physician " at the Rink .

== Decline ==

By 1906 , the building needed repairs and rather than spend money on rebuilding the Rink , the Victoria Skating Club sold the site to J. William Shaw , a piano merchant , who planned to build a concert hall on the site . Shaw planned to rebuild the structure into an auditorium of 2 @, @ 000 to 2 @, @ 500 capacity , suitable for orchestra or opera concerts . Shaw deferred his plans due to the high cost of construction and a low expectation of profits . He continued the use of the building for skating and hockey matches , introducing a summer use for car parking .

Smaller hockey leagues continued to use the Rink , such as the Commercial and Steamship League , the Inter @-@ School Hockey League and the Manufacturers ' League . McGill University also occasionally used the rink . The final game of any note reported by the Montreal Gazette was a semi @-@ final of the Canadian National Railway Hockey League (CNR) between Car Department and General Office on March 3 , 1925 , exactly fifty years after the first game . The playoff final game of the CNR league was not held at the Victoria ; it was held at the Forum which had opened that season . The CNR game drew 1 @, @ 200 spectators .

During the summer months , dog shows , vaudeville performances , the horticultural show and various trade exhibitions continued at the Rink . By the 1920s , the building had deteriorated and the gallery became unsafe to use . Shaw sold the site in 1925 for \$ 250 @, @ 000 to the Stanley Realty Corporation to build a parking garage . The Victoria closed and a parking garage was built in its place .

== Today ==

As shown in the photos , the parking garage is still in use by a local branch of National Car Rental . Today , the highest level of ice hockey is played nearby at Centre Bell , the home arena of the NHL Montreal Canadiens , located two blocks south . Ice skating for pleasure remains a popular pastime and an indoor ice skating rink exists nearby in the concourse of the ' Le 1000 de la Gauchetiere ' office building , open year @-@ round .

= = IIHF recognition = =

In 2002 , the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) announced that it would acknowledge the site of the Rink with " a commemorative plaque or other historical site marker to remind the passers @-@ by of the existence of the Victoria Skating Rink , the birthplace of organized hockey . " The commemoration has been marked in two ways . On May 22 , 2008 , a commemorative plaque was dedicated at Centre Bell , along with a plaque honouring James Creighton . Further , the IIHF created the Victoria Cup , a trophy named for the arena , for which ? along with 1 million Swiss francs ? one National Hockey League team and the champion of the European Champions Hockey League play off annually . The first Cup match was held in Berne , Switzerland on October 1 , 2008 between the New York Rangers and the Metallurg Magnitogorsk .