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Midway Plaisance Ice Rink



People across the world have enjoyed ice skating for centuries and Hyde Parkers have been no exception. In the early days of the City of Chicago, people would skate on Lake Michigan. Skating was a big deal, but sometimes, it got risky—especially if people were skating on Lake Michigan. Skaters risked getting stuck on drifting ice chunks or falling through the water!

In the 1860s, the Hyde Park Hotel made a huge pond for skating, and folks would come in horse-drawn sleighs from the city just to skate there. In the 1870s, in addition to the hotel skating pond, there were reports of Hyde Parkers flooding vacant lots in the winter to create their own skating rinks.

After the 1893 World's Fair, the parks had deep lagoons for winter fun. Skating was for everyone, rich or ragged, and it brought people together. Other winter sports were popular in Hyde Park as well. Another popular past time was Curling. Curling is a game where teams slide heavy stones on ice, trying to get them as close as possible to a target. Teammates then use brooms to sweep the ice and control the stone's path. Curling clubs even developed and had their own ice section, and they hosted competitions from Chicago to Scotland. Toboggan slides and speed skating races were also very popular! However, by the 1930s, the Park District took over, and these once popular activities seemed to fade away.

In 1999, the University of Chicago and the Chicago Park District built a special ice rink on the Midway, ensuring that the joy of ice skating in Hyde Park could continue.

