

Architecture on Ice: A History of the Hockey Arena by Howard Shubert

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Architecture on Ice
A History of the Hockey Arena

By Howard Shubert

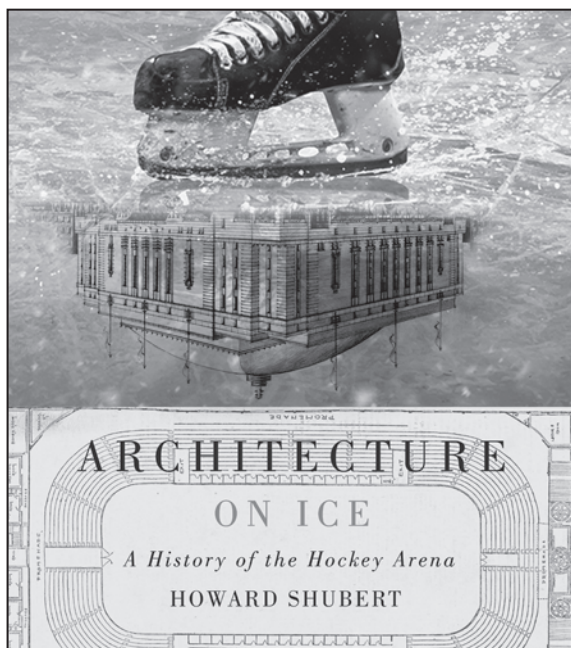
Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016. 328 pages. \$49.95 hardcover ISBN: 978-0773548138 (<http://www.mqup.ca/>)

Despite the longstanding status of hockey as “Canada’s game” and all its attendant history, little attention has been paid to the buildings necessary to hockey and its evolution. From repurposed barns and trolley sheds to the opulent multi-purpose arenas of today, author Howard Shubert points out arenas and rinks are considered culturally important, but not architecturally important. There is no significant overarching architectural theme in their history. There are no famous architects at work, no common theme in the edifice and facade, only in their function-

ality, which in turn informs the shape of the structure. Is there, asks Shubert, such a thing as the Ur-arena?

Using a collection of well-curated photographs, prints, paintings, and plans, Shubert traces the evolution of the hockey arena from its most humble beginnings in barns where it was designed as a pleasure skating attraction first and hockey as an afterthought. A careful and clear line is drawn from “standing around the edge of the ice” to the various iterations of bleachers and then multi-tiered seating and finally, suites and skyboxes. The book even wades briefly into the issues of social tension and separation that have accompanied the deliberate design of self-contained club and suite-level seating with their own restaurants, bars, entrances and exits away from the average fan. (It should be noted here that community arenas are excluded from Shubert’s study.)

Without focusing entirely on NHL arenas or even Canadian arenas, and without sentimentality, Shubert examines the thought process behind the arena and explores how the specific needs of a team inform the arena design while balancing the needs of the building’s owner to make money year-round. The Montreal Forum’s evolution from arena to cathedral (both in secular terms and as the location of superstar Howie Morenz’s funeral) to repurposed has-been is included, as is the Maple Leaf Gardens’ role in implementing



the press box in arena design. The author also observes that Maple Leaf Gardens was one of the earliest attempts at making the building more than an arena, with its plans originally calling for shops integrated into the design, which was placed on a street slated for retail development, a common theme in arena planning today.

Written in an engaging style, it is not merely a timeline of architectural changes, costs, building materials, and future predictions; Shubert also engages the history of hockey, the forces driving the sport indoors, to artificial ice, to the necessity of creating multipurpose arenas. It wanders a little far before making its point at times, especially when it suddenly spends several pages devoted to the Astrodome before drawing a comparison point with hockey arena architecture. Shubert also tried to make an argument for hockey to return to a vintage architectural style, using a recent baseball trend (i.e. Camden Yards in Baltimore) which is not particularly feasible though certainly emotionally agreeable.

Another minor issue is that in the attempt to place the arenas in historical context, Shubert struggles at times with the socio-political tensions at play, particularly in Quebec. There is also a hesitation to delve much into the context of who historically attended games. The types of crowds who attended games informed the seating structure and the future demand, as well as arena location and transportation options and deserves more attention than it was given.

The casual fan or even the avid fan looking for a book of NHL building photos and tidbits will be disappointed, though there are certainly many interesting tidbits and photographs to be had. The reader does not need a degree in architecture to read *Architecture on Ice*, nor do they need any deep historical background, though a smattering of specific architectural references may be puzzling. All in all, *Architecture on Ice* is an interesting examination of the past and future of the hockey arena.

Jennifer Conway
Hockey Historian

Making a Global City *How One Toronto School Embraced Diversity*

By Robert Vipond

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. 249 pages. \$34.95 hardcover
ISBN 978-1-4426-3195-3 (www.utppublishing.com)

Robert Vipond's book, *Making a Global City: How One Toronto School Embraced Diversity* makes a strong contribution to the study of immigration and state citizenship. A professor of Political Science, Vipond presents a history written with a strong political lens that explores the impact of waves of immigration on one

inner city elementary school community in Toronto, from 1920 to 1990. The book chronicles the shifting demographics of Clinton Street Public School, established in 1888, as a microhistory of Toronto's immigration history to trace the broader political and social changes taking place in Canada. Vipond organizes the school his-