

ULINE ICE PLANT
Corner of 3rd and M streets, NE
Washington
District of Columbia

HAER DC-66
DC-66

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ULINE ICE PLANT

HAER No. DC-66

- Location:** Corner of 3rd and M streets, NE, Washington, DC
- UTM Coordinate:** 18, 326372.43E, 4308166.53N
The coordinate represents the approximate center of the building. It was derived from Google Earth Pro v5 on December 10, 2010. The imagery dates from August 29, 2010.
- Present Owner:** Douglas Development Corporation, Washington, DC
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Significance:** The Uline Ice Plant is significant as an early-twentieth-century ice manufacturing plant and for its role in producing the ice for the ice rink in the adjacent Uline Arena (later called the Washington Coliseum).
- Historian:** Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, 2003-2004, updated 2010
- Project Information:** The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is a long-range program to document historically significant engineering, industrial, and maritime works in the United States. The HAER program is part of Heritage Documentation Programs, a division of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Richard O'Connor, Manager.

For more information about the adjacent Uline Arena, see HAER No. DC-63.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of Construction: March-July 1931

2. Architect/Engineer: Kubitz & Koenig

Kubitz & Koenig was a construction engineering firm based in Baltimore, Maryland. Otto Kubitz immigrated to the United States from Germany in the 1890s. He served as a Baltimore city building inspector before forming Kubitz & Koenig with Martin Koenig in the early 1920s. Koenig was a Baltimore native who graduated from the University of Maryland's College of Engineering. The firm served as the consulting engineer on a number of Baltimore buildings,

including the University Hospital, a warehouse for the Baltimore News Company, an addition to the Carr-Lowery Glass Company, and various public schools.¹

3. Builder: Building permits for the construction of the ice plant designate the builder as Consolidated Engineering Company of 203 Franklin Street in Baltimore, Maryland.²

4. Original Plans: The 1931 building permit estimated the cost of the structure would be \$35,000 and indicated it would be constructed of 130,000 bricks and 600 yards of concrete. The ice plant had a concrete foundation and a flat, asbestos roof. A floor plan accompanying the building permit indicates the plant was approximately 200' x 100', and a platform was located in the northeast corner.³

5. Alterations and Additions: Building permits reveal a number of additions and alterations were made to the ice plant after its initial completion in 1931. A second-story brick addition designed by R.W. Hodge was erected in 1934 and contained office space.⁴ Concrete entrance steps for the doorway to this second story space were built in April 1934 under a separate permit.⁵

In 1935, Uline contracted M.S. Rich, a structural engineer, to design a one-story brick truck garage and an ice storage room to the rear of the plant. The storage room measured 22' x 18' on the interior, while the truck garage measured 105'-6" x 67'-6" on the interior. The construction of the two structures required 100,000 bricks and 170 cubic yards of concrete.⁶

A second addition was built in September 1936 to create another office, which was specified as having wood floors. No plans were provided with the building permit, but the details of the construction indicate it was a one-story brick addition with a flat roof that was built on top of the plant at the corner of 3rd and M streets. M.S. Rich is again listed as the structural engineer in charge of the work, which was estimated to cost \$5,000.⁷

Electric signs by the Beacon Sign Company were installed at the plant in 1937. One 20' x 3'-6" sign read "Uline Ice" in 18" letters with "Never Fails" below in

¹ "Martin Koenig Dies at Age 63," *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], June 4, 1953, p. 9; "Plant on Old Hotel Site," *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], October 3, 1911, p. 5; "Otto Kubitiz," *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], December 7, 1953, p. 22; "Real Estate Deals and Building News," *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], December 10, 1930, p. 18.

² Building Permit No. 140710, March 18, 1931. Building permits are available at the Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, DC.

³ Building Permit No. 140751, March 19, 1931.

⁴ Building Permit No. 169114, February 14, 1934. The addition cost \$1,800 and was built from February to April 1934.

⁵ Building Permit No. 170372, April 12, 1934.

⁶ Building Permit No. 185384, October 14, 1935.

⁷ Building Permit No. 195613, September 24, 1936.

14” letters. A vertical sign on the 3rd Street side of the building read “Uline Ice.” In 1938, a neon double-faced sign measuring 19’ x 42’ with the words “Uline Ice” was installed.⁸

Chas. J. Cassidy Co. Inc. constructed a one-story concrete addition in 1944 using plans developed by G. Miller, Chief Engineer. This space was designated for use as a laundry room, which may have been used by performers or staff in the adjacent Uline Arena.⁹

B. Historical Context: Migiel Uihlein immigrated to the United States from his birthplace of Noord Brabant, Netherlands, at the age of 16 with his family after flooding financially devastated them. His name was eventually Americanized to “Michael Uline” (sometimes he was even referred to as “Uncle Mike”), illustrating his transformation from immigrant to American businessman. In fact, his biography reads like a classic American success story. By the age of 21, he had managed to work his way up from a stone digger in a Cleveland, Ohio, quarry to a business owner with the purchase of his first ice plant. Eventually, he would own more than thirty ice plants in Ohio, including ones in Cleveland, Toledo, and Warren. Uline was also an inventor who held nearly seventy patents, many of which were related to the ice-making industry. His patents included an ice conveyor, both a process and a machine for making clear, oblong blocks of ice, a drain fixture for refrigerators, and an ice cutting machine. Other patents included a “tamper-proof pocket autographic register” that kept a carbon copy of a sales receipt locked within the body of the device. After his marriage to his first wife Caroline fell apart, Uline moved to Washington, DC, in 1931 and established first an ice plant and later an arena, in the process earning a reputation as a “fiery impresario.” He engaged in charitable work in the city, including providing bus transportation for local children to parades as well as other outings. He also served as the first president of the District of Columbia Society for Crippled Children and Adults.¹⁰ Uline died from an “acute coronary occlusion” at the age of 83 after a five-year-period of decline resulting from a fall on the ice that left him a semi-invalid and nearly blind.¹¹

⁸ Building Permit No. 202369, August 11, 1937; Building Permit No. 216869, September 26, 1938.

⁹ Building Permit No. 269962, June 7, 1944.

¹⁰ For biographical information on Uline, see Al Costello, “They Talked of an Arena, He Built One,” *Washington Star*, January 25, 1970, in Washington Coliseum vertical file, Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as vertical file); Dave Brady, “Uline Played Host to Big-Time Sports,” *Washington Post*, February 23, 1958, vertical file; Linton Weeks, “Ice in His Veins,” *Washington Post Magazine*, November 17, 1991, p. 7; Gordon Brown, “Uline Arena: Stellar Past, Uncertain Future,” *Voice of the Hill*, August 2003, p. 10; “‘Mike’ Uline Dies at 83; Ice Executive, Sportsman,” *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, February 23, 1958, p. B2. The patents are available on the U.S. Patent Office website, <http://patents.uspto.gov/>, by number. Patents held by Uline include: Ice Conveyor, Patent Number 1,789,504, patented January 20, 1931; Method and Apparatus for Manufacturing Oblong Blocks of Clear Ice, Patent Number 2,082,665, patented June 1, 1937; Drain Fixture for Refrigerators, Patent Number 2,089,231, patented August 10, 1937; Machine for Cutting Ice, Patent Number 2,107,968, February 8, 1938; Tamper-Proof Pocket Autographic Register, Patent Number 2,622,898, December 23, 1952; Portable Pocket Carrying Tamper-Proof Autographic Register, Patent Number 2,707,644, May 3, 1955.

¹¹ Uline’s personal life was a bit of a mess and further added to his notoriety. In 1952, the nearly 80-year-old Uline was granted an absolute divorce from his first wife, Mrs. Caroline (also spelled Carolyn in other articles) Eierman

The Uline Ice Plant, located on the 1100 block of 3rd Street, NE, supplied ice both wholesale and retail.¹² The 1932 City Directory of Washington listed the plant as one of about seventy-five ice dealers in the area, but by 1941, it was one of a handful of ice manufacturers and wholesalers. Uline's business remained solvent even as the need for ice decreased as greater numbers of city residents purchased refrigerators. After Uline's death in 1958, his daughter, M. Uline Pratt, became the president of the Uline Ice Company with Elizabeth Stine as the vice president. Soon after, Harry G. Lynn purchased the plant and arena. The 1970 and 1973 directories reveal that Harry G. Lynn served as president of the Uline Ice Company, and Richard G. Henderson was the vice president.¹³

By the late 1930s, Uline had either decided or been convinced to branch out from the ice manufacturing business and engage in other ventures. He claims he was not interested in sports but that newspapers in town convinced him to build an arena next door to his ice plant. Regardless of the motivation, Uline was a savvy businessman who recognized the increasing popularity in the city of ice skating and hockey in the late 1930s. He capitalized on that popularity by constructing an arena with an ice rink next to his ice plant and utilizing the ice-making equipment already in place. The ice plant remained in operation in some format until 1986, when the Takoma Park Christian Faith Center leased both the plant and arena with an option to purchase both by 1991.¹⁴

Alvin Jones and his wife Martha had founded the Takoma Park Christian Faith Center in their home in 1981; they also broadcast a radio/TV show called "Successful Living" in Washington, DC, and Dallas, Texas. After seeing DC-based churches move to the suburbs, Jones decided to establish his church in the city. He and his wife embarked on a \$6.5 million renovation to the complex that included creating an indoor prayer garden, Christian bookstore, and administrative offices, and refurbishing the coliseum by

Uline, whom he had married in 1895. Two years earlier, he had obtained a divorce from Caroline and married his second wife, the former Mrs. Elva Houseman on the same day in Juarez, Mexico. His first wife, Caroline, claimed that she had tried to reconcile with him every year at Christmas from 1935 to 1949 by letter, but Uline argued he had not heard from her since 1933. A year later, however, the United States Court of Appeals sent the case back to the District Court on the grounds that the District Court's findings were not specific enough. The legal wrangling continued after Uline's death. His second wife, Elva, requested that a court-appointed collector operate his business until the validity of his will and codicil could be determined. The will in question gave 1/3 of the estate to Elva, the legal minimum, and \$10,000 to Elizabeth Stine, executive vice-president of the Uline Ice Company. The rest of his estate was placed in a trust for his first wife, from which she could draw \$700 per month, and his two daughters. After fifteen years, or the death of Caroline, the trust would be equally divided between the daughters. A codicil dating to December 1957, however, revoked the section of the will that gave his personal property to Elva and provided payments for their home. Eventually, the matter was settled, but no newspaper accounts were found describing the resolution. Mike Uline, "Ill at Home, Wins Divorce," *Washington Post*, December 11, 1952, p. 27; "Uline Divorce Suit Remanded by Court," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1953, p. 20; "Mike Uline's Widow Attacks His Will which Reduced her Legal Third," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, March 27, 1958, p. A1; "Probate Sought for Will Fought by Uline Widow," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, March 29, 1958, p. D2.

¹² Liberty Café at 804 K Street, NW, was one establishment that purchased its ice from Uline's operation. See Ad, *Washington Post*, February 16, 1935, p. 4.

¹³ Washington, DC, City Directory, 1932, 1943, 1960, 1970, and 1973. Directories are available on microfilm at Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, DC.

¹⁴ Jerry Davis, "Mike Uline Misses His Reading," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, May 1, 1955, p. C6.

increasing the seating to 8,600 and improving the acoustics. Jones planned to hold the Faith Center services for the 700-person congregation in a smaller room while the arena would be available for use by religious groups and television ministers. Long-term plans by Jones included building a private K-12 school and minister training school and buying additional land for parking. Jones estimated this work would cost \$17.5 million and expected that some funding would come from donations. These plans for the center never materialized.¹⁵

LG Industries (who later merged with USA Waste and again with Sanifill to become Waste Management) purchased the property in May 1994. The former arena was then used as an illegal trash transfer station. The operation was finally closed down, and the site was abandoned until 2002 when the Douglas Development Corporation purchased it. Redevelopment plans remain unknown as of 2010.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The L-shaped ice plant is a concrete block structure clad in painted common-bond brick. A parking lot is now located in the ell made by the building at the corner of 3rd and M streets, NE. The south portion of the building, which originally housed the ice manufacturing equipment, stands one-and-a-half stories tall while the north half of the building stands two-stories tall, the result of additions made in 1934 and 1936. Originally, the flat roof was asbestos, but portions of it are currently missing. Ornamentation is minimal, comprised primarily of belt courses, coping on top of the parapet, and pilasters.

The east façade of the one-story section of the building, facing 3rd Street, NE, is divided into six irregular-sized bays by vertical pilasters. The window and door openings in each bay have been closed in with concrete blocks.

The office addition, divided by a pilaster into two bays, stands two stories tall. A doorway with concrete steps provides access, and there is a large opening to the north that has been closed in with concrete blocks. The original multi-light steel second-story windows have been covered with plywood on both the east and north facades. A triple-row horizontal belt course runs along the top of the second-story portion of the building, and the roof is also flat.

A loading dock was originally located along the east façade of the north half of the building on M and 3rd streets, NE. The concrete platform that extended along this façade has been removed. Brick pilasters divide the north wing of the building into five bays. The second story is pierced by ten multi-light steel windows that have been covered with plywood. A triple-row horizontal belt course also runs along the top of the second-story,

¹⁵ Sandra Saperstein, "Coliseum to be Reborn," *Washington Post*, December 8, 1986, pp. B1, B10.

while a single horizontal belt course delineates the original construction from the second-story addition.

The north façade of the ice plant features double doors at the second-story corner with a projecting I-beam and brace. This was probably used to lift ice or other materials since it is located in the ice storage portion of the building. Pilasters divide the north façade into four bays; the two bays at the western end were part of the office addition, as indicated by the triple-row horizontal belt course, plywood-covered window openings, and a belt course showing the location of the original roofline. The east two bays are undecorated and show no evidence of former window or door openings.

The portion of the west façade visible from M Street, NE, is also undecorated. The Uline Arena (see HAER No. DC-63) adjoins a portion of the west side of the ice plant.

The interior of the ice plant was not available for inspection, but recent photographs indicate the machinery has been removed.

The rectangular garage located behind the ice plant and Uline Arena's entrance building on 3rd Street, NE, is built of painted brick and has a flat roof. The front façade has a stepped parapet. A garage door is centered on the front façade, and doorways flank either side of the garage door. A parking lot separates the entrance building from the garage.

1. Character: Although the ice plant still stands, little of its original character remains.

2. Condition of Fabric: The building's fabric is deteriorating due to the long period of abandonment and exposure of the interior to the elements.

B. Construction: No information has been found regarding the construction of the plant.

C. Mechanicals/Operation: Little is known about how ice was produced at the plant.¹⁶ Building permits provide some information on the types of equipment used in the manufacturing process at this plant. Permits from April 1931 encompassed the installation of the refrigerating system, which included three evaporators, three compressors, 2,000 pounds of refrigerant (ammonia), pumps of various horsepower, two crusher cubers, two dehumidifiers, cranes, agitators, excitors, air compressors, and an ice scoring machine. These were installed in the engine room, tank room, and platform.¹⁷ In July, York Machinery Corporation installed a 30-horsepower motor to run the ice making

¹⁶ Information on ice production in general can be found in LeeAnn Bishop Lands, "Atlantic Ice and Coal Company," HAER No. AL-188, Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, August 2000.

¹⁷ Building Permit No. 141327, April 6, 1931; Building Permit No. 142089, April 22, 1931. Motors for the main compressors were also installed at that same time by Howard P. Foley Company, see Building Permit No. 141329, April 6, 1931.

machinery in the engine room. During that same month, a permit for installation of a refrigerating system was also submitted. The 30-horsepower system used ammonia as the refrigerant and included a compressor.¹⁸

In 1932, the Uline Ice Company applied for a permit to install five motors totaling 248 horsepower in the plant's engine room.¹⁹ Accompanying this was another permit for installation of a Class A refrigerating system, comprised of two compressors and two evaporators, both supplied by York.²⁰

The Uline Ice Plant is depicted on a Sanborn map, which indicates it operated day and night. The north section of the building was used for ice storage while the freezing and manufacturing took place in the south half where there was also an ammonia tank. Drivers working for the company delivered ice throughout the city, and the company's trucks were stored in the garage on the property.²¹

D. Site Information: The plant is bounded by M Street to the north, 3rd Street to the east, the entrance building for the Uline Arena to the south, and the Uline Arena itself to the west.

Part III. Sources of Information

A. Primary Sources

Ad. *Washington Post*, February 16, 1935, p. 4.

City Directory, Washington, DC, 1932, 1943, 1960, 1970, 1973. Directories are available on microfilm at the Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, DC.

Davis, Jerry. "Mike Uline Misses His Reading," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, May 1, 1955, p. C6.

"Martin Koenig Dies at Age 63." *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], June 4, 1953, p. 9.

"'Mike' Uline Dies at 83; Ice Executive, Sportsman." *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, February 23, 1958, p. B2.

"Otto Kubtiz." *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], December 7, 1953, p. 22.

"Plant on Old Hotel Site." *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], October 3, 1911, p. 5.

¹⁸ See Building Permit No. 145144 and 145145, both from July 27, 1931.

¹⁹ Building Permit No. 150253, February 9, 1932.

²⁰ Building Permit No. 150294, February 10, 1932.

²¹ Sanborn Map, Vol. 4, 1928-December 1959, Sheet 438.

“Real Estate Deals and Building News.” *The Sun* [Baltimore, Maryland], December 10, 1930, p. 18.

Sanborn Map, Vol. 4 1928-December 1959, Sheet 438.

Building Permits, available at the Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, DC:

Building Permit No. 140710, March 18, 1931
Building Permit No. 140751, March 19, 1931
Building Permit No. 141327, April 6, 1931
Building Permit No. 141329, April 6, 1931
Building Permit No. 142089, April 22, 1931
Building Permit No. 145144, July 27, 1931
Building Permit No. 145145, July 27, 1931
Building Permit No. 150253, February 9, 1932
Building Permit No. 150294, February 10, 1932
Building Permit No. 169114, February 1, 1934
Building Permit No. 170373, April 12, 1934
Building Permit No. 185384, October 14, 1935
Building Permit No. 195613, September 24, 1936
Building Permit No. 202369, August 11, 1937
Building Permit No. 216869, September 26, 1938
Building Permit No. 269962, June 7, 1944

Washington Coliseum Vertical File, located in the Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, DC. Contains newspapers articles from various local papers. The following were used in this report:

Brady, Dave. “Uline Played Host to Big-Time Sports.” *Washington Post*, February 23, 1958.

Costello, Al. “They Talked of an Arena, He Built One.” *Washington Star*, January 25, 1970.

B. Secondary Sources

Brown, Gordon. “Uline Arena: Stellar Past, Uncertain Future.” *Voice of the Hill*, August 2003, p. 10.

Saperstein, Sandra. “Coliseum to be Reborn.” *Washington Post*, December 8, 1986, pp. B1, B10.

Weeks, Linton. “Ice in His Veins.” *Washington Post Magazine*, November 17, 1991, p. 7.

Appendix A: Field Photographs



Image 1: East façade of ice plant, showing two-story addition for office with loading dock and addition in background. Photograph taken by Justine Christianson, 2004.



Image 2: North façade of ice plant with adjacent Uline Arena to right. Photograph taken by Justine Christianson, 2004.