



ACRES OF ICE OURAY ICE PARK

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OURAY ICE PARK TIMELINE

Ice climbing enthusiasts have been coming to Ouray, CO, since the 1970s to test their skills on the steep classics that formed on the sheer walls of the Uncompahgre Gorge. Such notable climbs as Stone Free and Tangled Up in Blue were the test pieces in the Gorge located at the south end of the alpine hamlet. Wood-shafted ice axes, flexible crampons, leather boots, wool stocking caps and gloves, and a considerable degree of skill and moxie were the tools of the day.

Although the equipment changed dramatically over the next 20 years, the ice climbing challenges in Ouray remained very much the same. It wasn't until some enterprising local climbers manipulated a nearby water source to divert water into the mile-long gorge and augment the natural climbs that the Ouray ice climbing scene began to evolve into its present state.

KEY HISTORICAL MOMENTS AT THE OURAY ICE PARK:

1970s – Ouray is on the map as an ice climbing destination.

1991 – Informal development of the Ouray Ice Park begins when Bill Whitt and Gary Wild string out some half-inch PVC pipe and an odd assortment of garden hoses and shower heads. So begins the ice farming era in Ouray.

1992 – Eric Jacobsen, owner and operator of Ouray Hydroelectric, purchases much of the property in the Uncompahgre Gorge that makes up the current Ice Park.

1996 – Jeff Lowe organizes the first Ouray Ice Festival to showcase the sport of ice climbing.

1997 – Ouray Ice Park, Inc. (OIPI) is formed to provide formal organization to what previously had been a loosely organized grassroots effort.

2001 – The Ouray Ice Park goes high tech. Thanks to a monumental fundraising effort, OIPI upgrades the Park's infrastructure and taps into overflow from the City of Ouray's water supply tank to significantly increase the ice farming effort. OIPI takes over the Ouray Ice Festival from Jeff Lowe.

2005 – Female competitor Ines Papert wins the Ice Festival's difficulty competition. The Ouray Ice Festival tops attendance records with more than 5,000 visitors and participants.

2009 – OIPI signs an operating agreement with the City of Ouray, recognizing the City as the lead government agency at the Park. The City continues efforts to purchase U.S. Forest Service property within Ice Park boundaries.

2011 – OIPI Hosts the 16th Annual Ouray Ice Festival. Josh Wharton is the first competitor to win the Ouray Ice Festival competition three years in a row.