

# Curator's Choice



PHOTO BY PETER LATNER / MHS

**FOR MILLENNIA**, wooden barrels similar to this nineteenth-century example from the Pillsbury flour mills of Minneapolis provided inexpensive storage and allowed one person alone to roll hundreds of pounds of liquid or dry goods to a destination. Crafting a barrel's tight but bulging sides, which, like an arch, give the cylinder its unique strength, required considerable skill and many special coopers' tools. Displayed in the foreground are a medieval-looking cooper's ax for trimming stave ends (left); a hoop driver for seating the split-hazel, willow, wire, or iron hoops that held the carefully planed staves in place (center); and a croze plane for cutting the circular groove into which the barrel head or lid would be fitted (right). In the background are a sun plane (left) for leveling off the finished stave ends and a howel plane for leveling the surfaces that seat the beveled edge of the barrel head.

For the story of the meteoric rise of the coopers' cooperative movement in Minneapolis and its demise with the advent of machine-coopering tools and flour bags, turn to the article beginning on page 386. Tools from St. Paul cooper Gottfried Heiplik and barrel now in MHS collections.



**FRONT COVER:** Oblivious to the wintry cold of a January day in 1936, boys line up for a race on hockey blades, a featured event of the annual Silver Skates Derby at Powderhorn Terrace in Minneapolis.

For a pictorial look at how Minnesotans cope with the state's weather extremes, turn to the article on p. 406. The "album" celebrates the opening of the exhibit *Weather Permitting* at the History Center on January 20, 2002. *Photo in MHS collections; digitally color-tinted by Lois Stanfield, LightSource Images.*



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