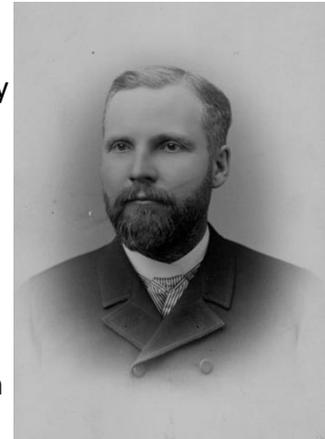


Flour Exchange Building 1892, 1909

On April 18th, 1892, W.H. Eustis secured a permit to begin construction on a four-story brick office building at the corner of 4th Avenue South and Third Street. The St. Paul Globe reported that the building cost was \$200,000, would be completed by October first of that year, and would be called the Flour Exchange. Eustis, an attorney on the east coast, had moved to Minneapolis and begun dealing in real estate. Later that year, William Henry Eustis was elected the seventeenth mayor of the City of Minneapolis.

Ten years prior, the Minneapolis Grain Exchange Building (known at the time as the Chamber of Commerce building) had been built directly across the street. The Chamber building brought street life and traffic to a part of downtown that had been largely vacant. Eustis knew that property values would increase in this developing part of downtown, and he wanted to be involved – and profit – from the real estate deals. He applied for membership to the Chamber and was accepted, despite the fact that he had no business interests in the grain business. As the Grain Exchange building reached capacity, Eustis financed construction of the Corn Exchange building at Fourth Avenue and Third Street, and when that building filled up, he began construction on the Flour Exchange building. With business interests in the area centering on the Chamber of Commerce building, Eustis' profits were dependent on the success of the Chamber, and as owner of two of the three buildings at this intersection, Eustis was a profitable property owner.



William Henry Eustis
Hennepin County Library

The population of Minneapolis was growing rapidly in the latter half of the 1800s and construction in the city was booming. The local architectural firm of Long & Kees was selected to design the Flour Exchange building. Frank B. Long, an architect originally from New York moved to Minneapolis in 1868. He partnered with Frederick Kees in 1884, and their practice furthered the popularity of the Chicago style of construction (steel-frame construction and the use of large amounts of glass).

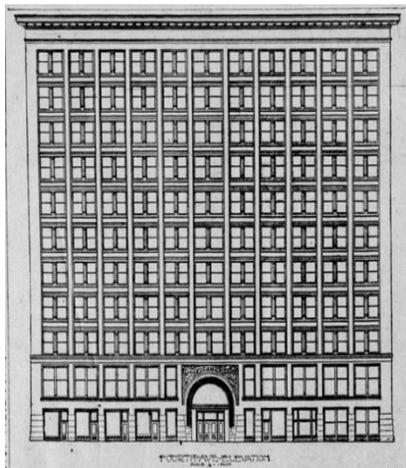
The use of steel construction allowed buildings to be taller. Large vertical strips of windows meant inside spaces were well lit. Long and Kees designed many buildings in the downtown Minneapolis area, including the Lumber Exchange (1885), the Masonic Temple (now the Hennepin Center for the Arts (1888), and Minneapolis City Hall (1909).



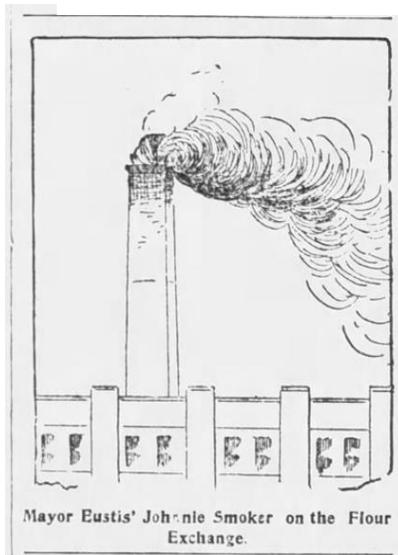
The building shown is only four stories tall. Seven more floors were added in 1909. Note the early car at left and the man with the vegetable cart.
Hennepin County Library

Contrary to the original plan, The Flour Exchange building was not completed in late 1892. Nationwide over expansion, the oversupply of some commodities, and collapsing prices led to financial panic and a run on the nation's banks. The Panic of 1893 forced construction of the Flour Exchange to be halted after only four stories had been built.

The Chamber of Commerce president announced in 1897, that the Chamber would build a new building in a "more respectable part of the city." Washington Avenue had become a row of saloons, boarding houses and "habitations of sundry clairvoyants and fortune tellers." Besides, Chamber members wanted to office closer to the banks and clubs, in the heart of downtown, not on the fringes near Washington Avenue. This had the potential to be a devastating move for Eustis. Discussions over how to proceed dragged on for well over a year. Eustis argued to remain at Fourth Avenue and Third Street. As land deals in the "more respectable part of the city" fell apart, Eustis succeeded in maintain his hold on properties (although it was well known that Eustis cared more about his business interests than that of the Chamber).



The Minneapolis Tribune, February 28, 1909



Mayor Eustis' Johnie Smoker on the Flour Exchange.

Construction on the Flour Exchange building resumed in 1909. *The Minneapolis Tribune* reported on February 28, 1909, that the new Flour Exchange Building when completed "will be as fine as the finest in the city, one that will be in the very front of modern office buildings." The newspaper also reported that with the added stories, the hardwood floors throughout would be removed and replaced with marble flooring. "Everything will be modern and complete. There will be a new smoke consuming heating plant, new elevator system, new plumbing, and ventilating of the most improved design."

In late 1893, before the additional floors were added, the building was already considered a nuisance. *The Minneapolis Times* ran a series of articles about "The Smoke Nuisance" in downtown Minneapolis. The paper referred to the issue as "A Nuisance that Calls for Vigorous Attention." One of the worst chimneys was that of the Flour Exchange, which connected with boilers that supplied heat and power to the Chamber of Commerce and the Corn Exchange. "The Flour Exchange, where



The Minneapolis Tribune, April 18, 1909

Mayor Eustis' Johnny Smoker holds forth, has a smoke consumer, but it seems to be a partial failure, if it is intended to prevent any smoke from issuing from the tall chimney." The paper asked that readers sign and return a statement that read, "The undersigned respectfully petitions your honorable body to pass an ordinance against the smoke nuisance." After much debate, the city council passed a smoke ordinance that went into effect June 1, 1894.

A near catastrophe occurred on October 14, 1909, during the building's final months of construction. A ten-ton electrical generator fell from the eleventh floor of the Flour Exchange building, crashing into the basement. With no warning, the wooden beams supporting the generator had twisted and splintered, sending the huge machine plunging to the bottom of the building. It landed next to the building's elevator, which was filled with passengers waiting to ascend. While there was "mad panic," miraculously no one was hurt.



*The Minneapolis Tribune,
October 14, 1909*



Minnesota Historical Society

The Flour Exchange building has renovated common spaces and today is marketed as a twelve-story building, as the eleventh floor contains a mezzanine.

The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The Flour Exchange building is the oldest Chicago style high rise in Minneapolis.