

Ice Harvesting in Egg Harbor Township and Surrounding areas

Before the 1830's, food was preserved through salting, spicing, pickling or smoking. Butchers slaughtered meat only for the day's trade, as preservation for longer periods was not practical. Dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables subject to spoilage were sold in local markets since storage and shipping farm produce over any significant distance or time was not practical. Milk was often hauled to city markets at night when temperatures were cooler. Ale and beer making required cool temperatures, and its manufacture was limited to the cooler months. The solution to these problems was found in the harvesting of natural ice.

Before the invention of artificial refrigeration in the early twentieth century, ice was harvested every winter and stored in large ice houses, the proprietors of which sold ice to shippers of fresh fish, waterfowl, and produce for train deliveries to large cities.

The ice harvesting process was labor intensive, requiring 20-100 men for one to four weeks.



Ice Harvesting on Bargaintown Mill Pond at Central Avenue

Shown in the picture are Joseph Thoman, Joshua Tindley, Hosea Sutton, Frank Hackett, Herman Shauffer, Robert Lloyd, Joseph Price, sitting on the cake of ice; John Doughty, Joshua Garwood, Ben Sutton, Fred Myers, Joshua Dueble, William Bird, Smith Sutton and Gus Brower. The men are holding saws, and other implements necessary to their trade.

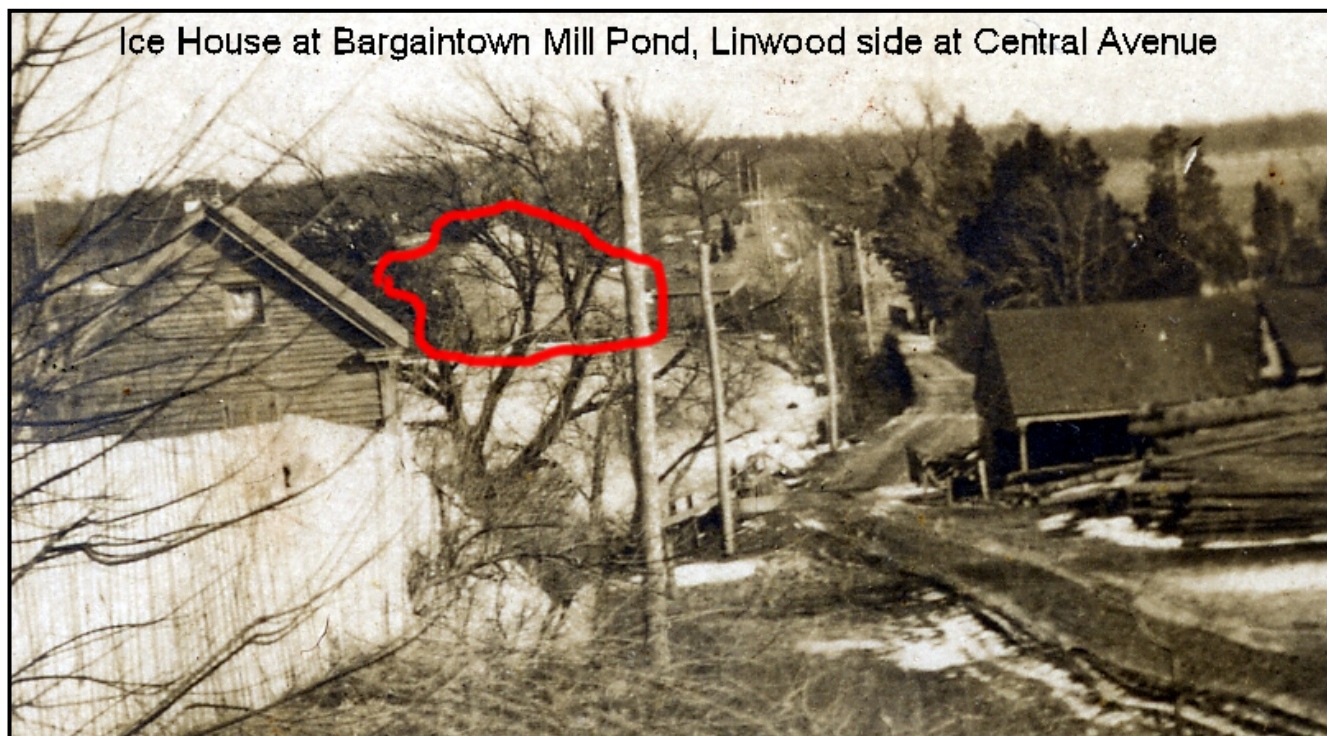
The ice cutting industry flourished until about 1918. Richard F. Collins and Dardel S. Collins, brothers, were the main "ice men". Richard Collins had his icehouse on Mill Rd. near the old stand pipe while Dardel S. Collins had ice houses on Central Ave. (the Mill pond) and in Somers Point.

Nineteenth-century ice harvesting began before the actual cutting. As soon as the ice was strong and thick enough to support horses and equipment, work forces cleared away the insulating snow, repeatedly if necessary, to encourage the formation of stackable, thicker blocks. When the ice was thick enough, the field was marked in squares (usually with a horse-drawn marker), scored slightly deeper, and finally the blocks were cut by hand with the use of large-toothed one-man saws. The blocks were floated to the large adjacent commercial ice house for stacking, or to a railroad loading ramp for shipping. The system proved workable and lasted throughout the century, the major change being the late introduction of rotary saws that would replace hand-cutting.



The latter half of the 19th century was filled with attempts to perfect manufactured ice methods. The Louisiana Ice Manufacturing Company (1868) appears to have been the first one to operate regularly, one of its claims being a price considerably lower than that of natural ice. Others followed. By 1925 factory-made ice had entered the realm of big business, and natural ice had become a thing of the past.

Ice Houses



From the 17th century, the rich and privileged increasingly built ice houses in the grounds of their large houses in the country, and occasionally within town houses to preserve food and provide ice for the table and especially to cool wine.

In the 19th century commercial ice houses were constructed to provide ice for general use, to stock private ice houses when supplies from the local pool were scarce and later to produce “frozen” food.

Some ice house's were really a barn within a barn, with 3 feet of sawdust and salt hay between the inner and outer walls, under the floor and above the room..



Misc. Ice Facts

The Chinese cut and stored ice in 1,000 B.C.

Around 500 B.C. the Egyptians and Indians made ice on cold nights by setting water out in earthenware pots and keeping the pots wet.

In 18th century England, servants collected ice in the winter and put it into icehouses, where the sheets of ice were packed in salt, wrapped in strips of flannel, and stored underground to keep them frozen until summer.

At the beginning of the 19th century, ice boxes were used in the United States and England.

Natural ice was harvested, distributed and used in both commercial and home applications in the mid-1800s. The ice trade between Boston and the South was one of the first casualties of the Civil War.



City dwellers had ice delivered to them by horse and wagon. The iceman had to lift from 25- to 100-pound blocks, according to the order, which was placed by the consumer putting a numbered card in the window that corresponded with the number of pounds of ice they wanted (25,50,75,100). The ice was weighed on a spring scale on the truck, but an experienced delivery man could estimate the weight. The ice was carried to a kitchen using ice tongs, and chipped with chisels to fit the compartment of the ice box.



Delivery men were known for their brawn, as they hauled heavy blocks of ice all day long, and often up flights of stairs. They often had access to the kitchen when no one was home, and they simply placed the ice appropriately. Some city apartments used a suspended box (a small version of the ice box) outside the kitchen window, its contents available to the cook through the raised window; others kept an ice chest outdoors on the porch, or a handsome oak refrigerator in the kitchen. Ice wagons were the delight of children playing in summer's heat; it was a good day when the iceman dropped his ice tongs and used his ice pick to chop a small piece of ice for someone to suck on.

With ice so plentiful, changing culinary fashion exploited it in all kinds of chilled and frozen desserts. In 1914 Linda Hull Larned published a cookbook entirely devoted to the new ice-centered genre, a small volume entitled *One Hundred Cold Desserts*. Her direction, in *Sponge and Fruit Cake Cream* (English Trifle), to put the dessert "on ice" was understood literally. There were more and more uses for ice, and

more spin-off equipment. The 1904 World's Fair (St. Louis) introduced iced tea; a number of different ice cream makers for home use were marketed in the latter 1800s, probably the most famous being the White Mountain hand-crank bucket style.

Ice was the second largest export from the U.S. in the 19th century (Cotton was #1).

Ice Boxes

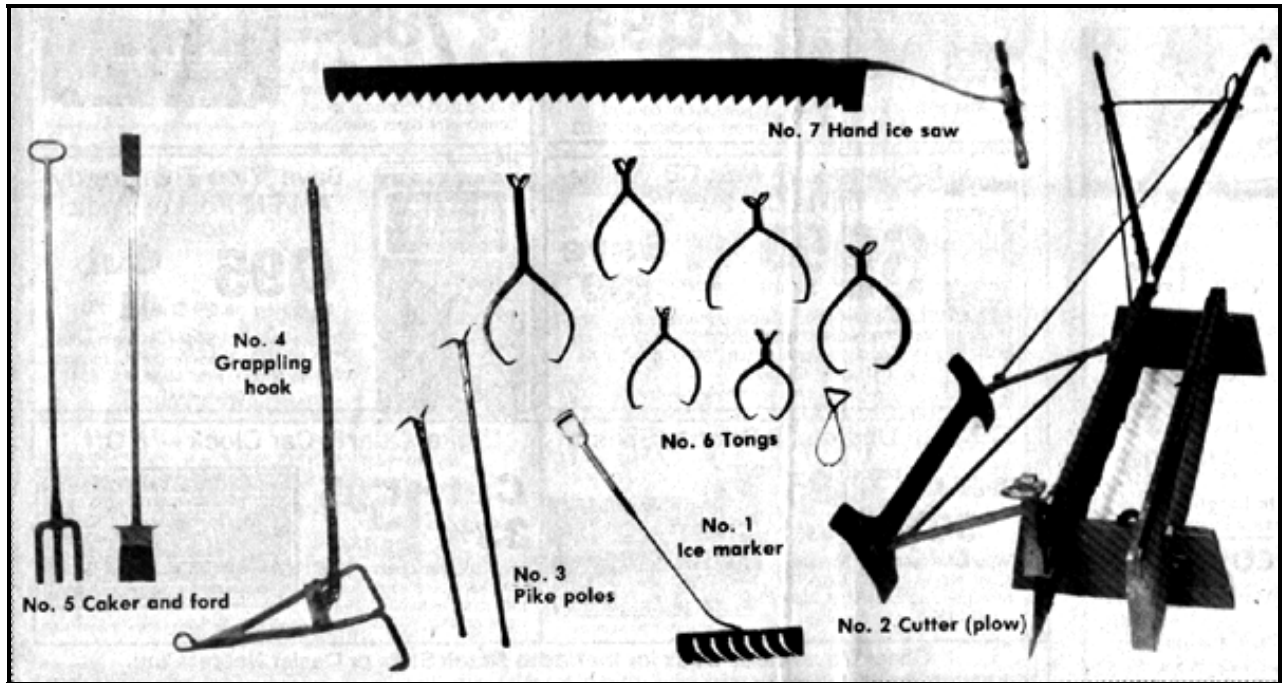
Residential ice boxes, many home-made, were of oak, pine, or ash wood lined with zinc, slate, porcelain, galvanized metal or wood. The insulator between the walls was charcoal, cork, flax straw or mineral wool. Still, the ice lasted only one day.

Wooden boxes lined with tin or zinc and insulated with various materials including cork, sawdust, and seaweed were used to hold blocks of ice and "refrigerate" food. A drip pan collected the melt water - and had to be emptied daily.



Electric refrigerators and freezers would seriously hurt the ice industry. Although the first models were marketed before 1920, it would be a while before everyone had them, and ice therefore continued in use, although decreasingly.

Tools



Early tools for ice cutting were the ax, the scraper, the ice saw, and the breaking off bar. After 1900, the horse-drawn ice marker and ice plow came into use.

By 1918, the power field saw was introduced.

Grapple or ice hook towed sheets of ice along channels and hauled blocks up the chute.



Ice Today

Today we tend to take ice for granted. Perhaps the only moment we pay it full attention is when it has been sculpted, perhaps entered in competitions at winter festivals, or as the centerpiece of a handsomely set table. It is incredibly hard to imagine life without it.