

"FROM THE HISTORIAN'S FILE"

"Ice Harvesting in the Long Ago"

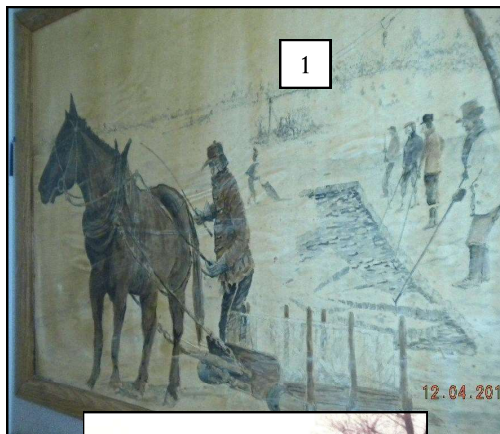
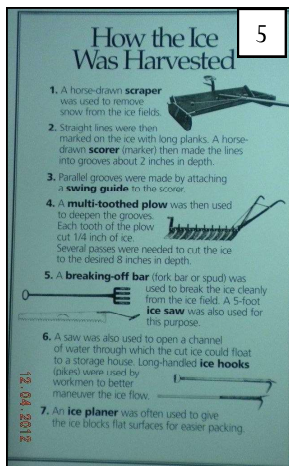
When some local farmers saw the thermometer dipping colder and colder below freezing for a few days they knew that it would be time to get the ice harvesting equipment ready for use on the ponds and a few temporary dammed creeks in Greece. Long Pond and Cranberry Pond were ideal places for such a labor intensive operation. When the ice was four inches thick it would support a horse. Five inches or more would be safe for a team of horses with a two ton loaded sleigh.

Ice cutting might start at the end of December and continue until late February. If it was a very cold winter two harvests might be possible. Rain would shut down any further harvesting as it became too slushy for man or beast. Some years there was no harvesting as the ice never became thick enough.

The general weight of each cake might be 300 to 400 pounds. The cakes were stored in insulated frame storage buildings, close to the body of water. They could be as small as today's garden shed or as big as a horse barn. Most in our area were of a fairly modest dimension. During the warmer months local folk usually visited the large ice houses where they could purchase ice cut in 25, 50 and 100 pound blocks. These were the convenient sizes to put in their own ice boxes. The many summer hotels along the lake frequently obtained ice locally or they might have their own ice house.

Artificial ice making machines began to appear in the late 19th century, but at first this industry mainly supplied the railroad refrigerator cars. By about 1910 the first electric home refrigeration machines came on the market. They were expensive, plus the cooling machinery was large and often relegated to the basement. The cost and size of the refrigerator dropped by the mid-1920s with the introduction of the G-E monitor top model, available in several sizes and prices. This spelled the quick demise of ice harvesting in Greece and elsewhere. The electrification of Greece was completed by the late 1930s and time payment plans were available to purchase a new "electric ice box", as they were often called.

Visit our museum and see additional information on ice harvesting and view two walls of Walt Goulding's paintings of ice harvesting in the early days. Also on display are several ice harvesting saws and ice pole-hooks, part of our collection from the Skinner family of Manitou Road. There is a golden oak ice box and in our 1930s exhibit, see a "Mrs. Happy Housewife's" G-E monitor top ELECTRIC Refrigerator.



1. Goulding painting
2,3,4. Ice Harvesting
5. Ice Harvesting guide.

Photos, data supplied by **Alan Mueller**, Greece Historian's Office.
If you have any information on our photos, call Alan at 663-1706