

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

February 2019

The Valentine Issue

Ahh, Valentine's Day – when young lovers' fancy turns to . . . Ice Harvest!!

What could be better than spending the most romantic day of the year out on a frozen lake teaching your love how to saw ice? The invigorating air (10° F), the brisk breeze (wind chill -12°) and frozen mittens. What better way to ignite a romance? How about coming to the Francestown Heritage Museum instead where we can show you all these ice harvest tools and photos of them in use on our own local ponds? But seriously, ice harvest was a necessity of life and also a profitable business.



ICE BLOCK HARVEST

The harvesting of ice consisted of cutting large blocks of ice from the pond and then moving them into an ice house where they were packed in sawdust to help prevent thawing as the weather got warmer. The steps involved:

- an ice saw used to cut the block of ice free from the pond.
- an ice pick used to maneuver the block of ice while it still floated in the water.
- an ice tong was useful for gripping the blocks of ice and lifting them from the water and also in the ice house where they had to be stacked.
- an ice gaff was also used to maneuver the block of ice, especially once it was being loaded into the ice house.



The photos below depict these tools in use.



Specific exhibits at the Heritage Museum include the following:

ICE SAW



Ice was the first important product of the year being harvested in January and February. In Francestown, most ice was taken from Scobie Pond (aka Haunted Lake). An ice house was located on the shore for storage. An ice saw was used to cut the ice into blocks for removal from the pond and storage for later use.



ICE TONGS



Once the block of ice was sawn and floating freely in the pond, it would be maneuvered into place by pushing/pulling it to the edge using the ice pick. Once the block was positioned the ice tongs were used to grab onto the block and lift it from the pond. It was common to place the block on a sled to be pulled to shore.



ICE WINCH

Once the winch was available they would often build a wooden chute out across the ice to where they were cutting. The blocks would be connected to the winch by a cable/rope hooked to ice tongs and the ice blocks pulled to shore or to a means of conveyance to the ice house or market.



This winch in the Heritage Museum came from Scobie Pond.

The photo below depicts a typical scenario where a wooden chute was constructed out over the pond to the area where they were cutting the ice. The winch is set at the shore end of the ramp and pulls the cut blocks of ice to shore.



So now what?

Quite often the ice was then stored in an ice house usually located at the shores edge. It was also common to load the ice on wagons and take it to market or even to trains for the trip to Boston and other areas.

ICE TRANSPORT

While the ice chute and winch aided significantly in moving the large, heavy blocks of ice, they were limited in the distance they could move it. Ice blocks would be moved greater distances to shore using horse drawn sleighs -



Or overland in ice wagons -



And finally to your home for the icebox -



Getting ice from the frozen lake in winter to your home in summer required storage and there was no refrigeration in those days - there was the ice house.

ICE HOUSES

Alas the Francetown Heritage Museum does not have an ice house on exhibit. But since we raised the topic we should provide some information.

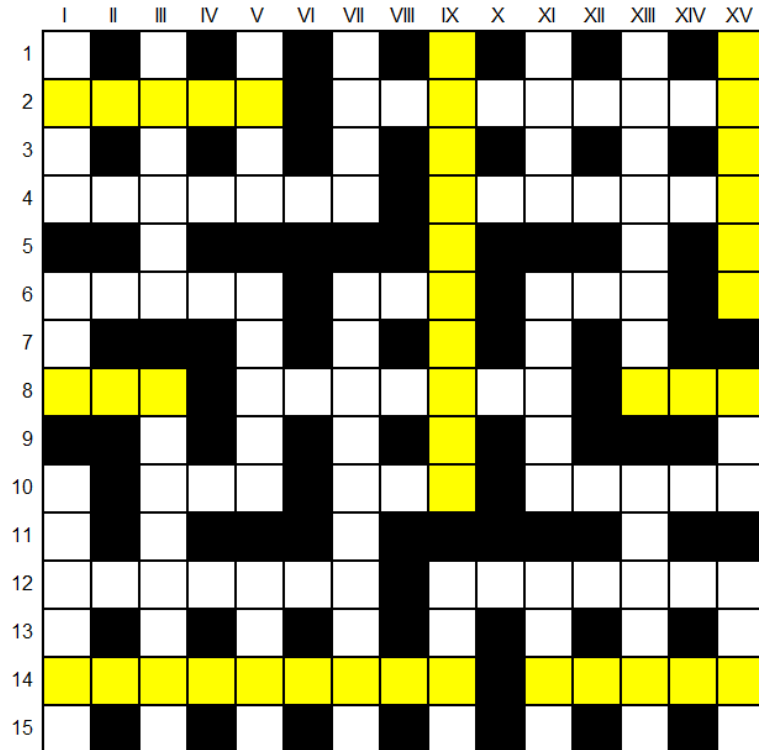
The lakeside ice house was generally a wood building with heavy wooden walls filled with some sort of insulating material (sawdust, old acorn shells, etc.)



The ice blocks were piled inside and often covered with sawdust to further insulate the layers.



FEBRUARY THEME CROSSWORD – this month’s theme is Ice Harvest



This is a French grid crossword. There are no numbers in the cubes but rather along the margins. Therefore any one line or column can have multiple words in it. For example line 1 has no three or more open adjoining spaces so there are no words in this line. However, line 2 has 5 adjoining open spaces and also has another 9 adjoining open spaces. This line has two words and in looking at the clues you see there are 2 clues for 2 Across – a “Place to store ice” would be “House”. The second nine letter word clue is “Not a toll call”.

Across

2. Place to store ice
Not a toll call
4. Not poetic
Earthenware brazier
6. Chaotic situation
Honorific address
Belonging to a male
8. A necessity of life and profitable business
A ray of sun
Needed to harvest a necessity of life
10. Come to have
Cholesterol lowering grain
Unprotected
12. Casual tops
One who delivers to young lovers
14. What 12A delivers to young lovers
Grasping devices

Down

- I. Send ice to a customer
Glide on snow
Voluntary offering
- III. Polar lights
Type of finish with a light sheen
- V. Second of a series of items
Disrupt
Small or stunted animal
- VII. Group sharing a common purpose
Fail or succeed entirely
- IX. Récolte de glace (this is a French grid crossword)
Easily imposed on
- XI. Slovenly person
Musclemen
Infatuated with (I'm really ____ that)
- XIII. Unconsciousness produced by drugs
Worn with an obi
- XV. Horse drawn sledge
Bundle of soft material
Fit together

