

WINTER ACTIVITIES OF AN EARLIER TIME IN THE AREA

The winter of 1930 was especially good for the ice harvesting business in the area. In March it was still thick enough to support men, horses and machinery. Spring would come before long, but the unusually cold winter enabled local farmers, who were relieved of the toil of planting and harvesting crops, to earn some cash during the winter; hard cash was always hard to come by.

Very early on, farmers who had lakes on their property often harvested ice and stored it in their own ice houses for use by the family. By utilizing a saw with handles on each side, which could be gripped with two hands, ice was cut into manageable blocks. Sawdust from the saw mill and marsh hay was crammed into the closely placed blocks and covered over the top. (Marsh hay was considered by some to be a better insulator than saw dust.) If sufficient ice had been harvested home cranked ice cream would be made for the Independence Day celebration. The ice helped cool food during the summer months.

Between 1832 and 1855 employment in the area was limited to farming (or clearing land), sawyers, millers, tavern keepers, general and dry goods stores, black smithing, foundry workers, distillers, masons, carpenters, teachers, doctors, lawyers and politics. In the winter months some found work at filling a huge ice house at Worden Lake.

Truman B. Worden came to Genoa Township from Wayne County in the spring of 1835. Among the property he purchased were 40 acres in Section 25, most of which was covered by the lake which bears his name. Worden, who had a house on Grand River on top of the hill in town, was the first death in the village in November 1837 and the first buried in the village cemetery. (Rather dubious distinctions.)

Eastern House, built in 1850, got its ice from Worden Lake. Others in the village used ice from the mill pond. (Who the harvesters were we don't know.)

The advent of the rail road to the county was, beyond doubt, a major contributor to the proliferation of commercial ice businesses after 1870. Large ice houses, many stories high, located at Island Lake, Whitmore Lake and Worden Lake, were all near the tracks. These ice companies serviced homes and markets in cities such as Detroit and Toledo, where rail road connections were in place pre 1870. The Toledo Ice house at Whitmore Lake burned c. 1930. It was located near the northwest shore of the lake. (Prepared by Marieanna Bair. To be continued. To make a more complete record for Society files comments, corrections, additions gratefully accepted. 229-6402)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 481
Brighton, MI 48116