

# Historical Clippings

Three Lakes Museum

March 2022

## *The Ice Man*

In 1906 the Eagle River Light and Water Commission built the Otter Rapids dam west of Eagle River across the Wisconsin River. An electric transmission line connecting the dam with Three Lakes was erected in 1923 and the town was electrified. Prior to this and the development of mechanical refrigeration, harvesting of ice was a big business, a necessity to support the community within and beyond the reach of the novel power lines in town.

Thousands of years ago civilizations understood that ice and cold could be used to preserve food. Just as the pencil was once considered modern technology, the iceboxes found in early Three Lakes businesses' and residences were considered state-of-the-art. Three Lakes in 1881 stored their perishable food in these insulated iceboxes that were usually made of wood and lined with tin or zinc. A large block of ice was stored inside to keep these early refrigerators cold. The ice was delivered by the Ice Man who made regular rounds through town.



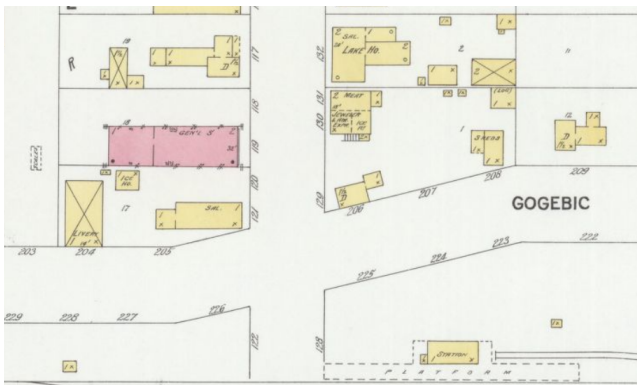
The icebox on the back porch of the Johnson House.  
Three Lakes Museum



An early icehouse in town. The back of the picture states "located behind the current site of The Chalet"

Many residents took up the seasonal business of cutting ice off the frozen lakes and storing the blocks in sawdust packed ice houses scattered throughout the town and lake country resorts.

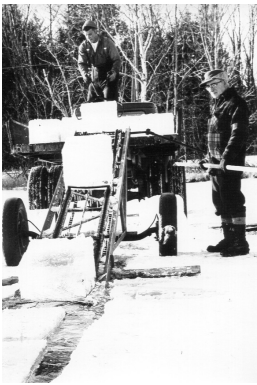
From Ed Epler writing in *Eighty Years In God's Country* -  
*By 1910, business in Three Lakes was growing and many more summer homes had been built around the lakes. All had ice houses to be filled during the winter. John Korzelius and James Nelson bought a set of the most modern ice harvesting equipment to be had at that time, and put up ice for several summer home residents until 1915, when James Nelson purchased Mr. Korzelius' interest in the equipment. James Nelson continued until 1919. when his son Arthur (Archie) took over. In 1930 Nelson sold to Glen Small, who in turn sold to Art Godleski in 1931.*



The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1901 shows the probable location of the ice house in the picture - at the back of the building in pink.

Pink indicates a brick structure, the only brick building in Three Lakes at the time. This was the FS Campbell Mercantile. Mr. Campbell built the two story building in 1902 of brick for longevity, insurance against the possibility of fire that could take down a town. Ironically in 1908 the building was destroyed by an explosion, possibly dynamite.

continued from *Eighty Years in God's Country* -  
In 1915 Dell Brewster bought the necessary equipment, and started in the ice business. Dell, who was a genius finding ways to make hard work easier, built a gas powered ice saw and gas powered elevators to load the ice on sleighs and trucks. As time went on, more of these labor saving devices were built by others in the business.



This series of pictures shows Art Godleski cutting ice on Spirit Lake in 1952. As the cut ice blocks floated free, they were guided up an elevator onto a truck for a trip to icehouses, where they were insulated between layers of sawdust.

The job of putting up ice phased out slowly as it took quite a few years for electricity to reach all ends of Three Lakes. Art Godleski, the only one left who had the equipment to do the job, continued to cut ice into the 1950's. Art helped Billy Brucker put up ice, which Bill sold to the cottage owners and fishermen in remote areas which did not have electricity.

From *The Pine the Plow and the Pioneer* -

During the winters at Van Bussum's Resort on Long Lake, the men cut ice in blocks from the lake and put it in a large ice house, each layer covered heavily with sawdust so there would be an ample supply for all the cottages all summer - as there was no electricity at the resort for many years. The cottages were equipped with kerosene stoves and lamps and Coleman lanterns were used for lighting until 1933. In 1933, Steve installed a private electric system for the resort, but it was only turned on in the evening from 6 to 12 for lighting. The private system served from 1933 until the highline came through in 1946.



## *From the Archives*

Three Lakes did build ice castles too. The exact number has not been determined but there are at least three photos in the Museum archives and documented stories too.

from *The Pine the Plow and the Pioneer*

*One way we added to the winter beauty of Three Lakes was by building an ice palace. Art Godleski and his men cut and hauled the ice free of charge, and other residents volunteered to build and decorate the palace. The main tool used to even and shape the ice blocks and arch them where necessary, was called a "slick." It was a four inch chisel with a long wooden handle.*

*The Palace was lit by several large electric bulbs with colored paper between the ice and each bulb. Sunny days were hard on the exterior, but it would be freshened during the night with water sprayed from a hose. Unfortunately, the practice of building an ice palace was discontinued a few years ago.*

Most recently from *Welcome to Three Lakes Wisconsin 1984*

### **ICE PALACE 1984**

Three days of hard work and a lot of fun by a group of dedicated Three Lakes residents went into building this beautiful Ice Palace. Designed by Dan Harlow, this imposing structure measures 80' long, 15' high and contains 200 ice blocks each measuring 2½' x 2' x 1' and weighing 200 lbs. each. The palace is illuminated by 13 red, yellow, blue and green spot lights giving night viewers a spectacular prism of color.

#### **Workers**

Brian Boers  
Cher Boers  
Jim Bollmann  
Nancy Bollmann  
Tim Bollmann  
Frank Bonack  
Tom Brassell  
Don Burnside  
Carol Coates  
Larry Coates  
Corky Evenson  
Bruce Gensler  
George Gensler  
Cindy Harlow  
Dan Harlow, *Designer*

#### **Jerry Javenkowski**

Dan Katzner  
Sue Katzner  
Tim Kordula  
Roger Krinn  
Mike Kuehl  
Pete Lawonn  
Steve Lawonn  
Bill Martineau  
Russ Nooyen  
Joe Polarski  
Wayne Roberts  
Dave Rychlock  
Willie Samuelson  
Arlene Stastny  
Tom Stastny

#### **Young Helpers**

Adam Boers  
Chris Boers  
Jimmy Bollmann  
Marci Bollmann  
Kay Coates  
Nikki Coates  
Toni Coates  
Joe Harlow  
Ben Lawonn  
Bret Stastny

#### **Special Thanks to These Businesses and Organizations**

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Three Lakes Vol. Fire Dept.  
Town of Three Lakes

