

Cutting Chamcook's Crystals

LOOK AT AN industry now dead - the cutting of ice on Chamcook Lake. The local hardware store has on its wall a 6-foot, single-handed saw with massive teeth thought once to have been used in this trade. In later years tractors with a large circular saw blades did the job. Early and late, the blocks of ice were hoisted onto a sluice at the dam and slid down to icehouses at the harbour along the track of the river. There were also slides along the railway track for loading directly into boxcars. Businesses had their own icehouses or contracted to have ice delivered; and there was also a 500-ton icehouse at the railway station in which ice packed in sawdust was known to last more than two years. Ice was shipped by schooner to New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and even Texas, though the ice-business seems not to have been an especially lucrative venture. This section also includes an account of the death of five men who, returning by night from a camping trip on Chamcook Lake had their car fall into an ice-hole left by McQuoid's ice-cutting team. When help arrived, the car's lights were seen shining twenty feet down, and pictures taken that day were printed in the *Beacon* from a camera found in the car. Strangely, the sole survivor was the only man who could not swim. It is sobering, in this time of global warming, to read of ice being cut in April. ~

Pilot

March 23, 1880

The schooner *H. V. Crandall* is loading ice at Chamcook for New York on owners' account. They expect to ship 5,000 tons. The schooner is owned by Mr. Robert Ross and others. The facilities for shipping ice from Chamcook Lake cannot be surpassed.

*Pilot***April 4, 1880**

Chamcook lake presents just now a very busy scene, Mr. Robert Ross having a number of men engaged there on cutting ice for shipment, and besides Mr. Ross, an association of Bangor gents associated under the title of the Chamcook Ice Company has a large number of persons employed getting out ice and storing it in houses now being erected on the eastern side of Chamcook harbor. They are carrying on operations night and day, and hope to get out ten thousand tons of the crystallised water. All the latest appliances for the purpose are being used under the superintendency of Mr. Buxton, a very energetic and active gentleman. They are getting out from four to five hundred tons a day. Mr. Mitchell, another member of the firm, is superintending the erection of the ice house and the storing of the ice. Had they not been unduly delayed by the detention of lumber on the N. B. and C. R. R., most of the quantity of ice mentioned would have been stored. The ice on Chamcook Lake is very pure, solid and of exceptional quality. In these operations on the lake about 75 men and 35 teams are employed.

*Pilot***March 16, 1882**

The Chamcook Ice Company are hard at work securing their crop of ice. They have built a sluice a fraction over half a mile long, extending from the lake to the ice houses at Chamcook harbour, of which there are to be five, each 200 feet by 30 and 23 feet high. The ice on the lake is about two feet thick. It is cut into blocks four feet by two; these are hauled by a 12-horsepower donkey engine up an inclined plane from the lake to the sluice, down which they run to the icehouses at the rate of a mile in two minutes, sometimes with even greater velocity. On arriving at the icehouse men armed with hooks seize the blocks and in a twinkling guide them to the place of deposit. It is a busy scene; every man appears to be doing his level best, and it seems odd to see men working amid ice in their shirt sleeves, the perspiration pouring from every pore. Sixty-odd men are employed, a number of whom are boarded by the Company in a house near Chamcook Mill bridge, over the door of which the passer-by can read the sign

“Delmonicos” saloon; we doubt however that the meals served there will compare in quality and style with those served in its world-wide namesake in New York. We were indebted to the courtesy of Messrs. McGrath and Mayes, who occupy the position of managers for the Company, for an opportunity to see the details of the work. There is a second donkey engine standing in the engine house, which was expected to be in operation yesterday; this will double the capacity for work, for which the weather this week has been favorable. We hope it will continue so for some days longer.

Pilot

April 6, 1882

The Chamcook Lake Ice Company is erecting a 90 by 200 foot icehouse near lake, which they hope to fill soon. They now have seven ice houses and capacity for 3,000 tons. One cargo of 467 tons has shipped to Galveston, Texas.

Beacon

Dec. 5, 1889

What the Enterprising Men of St. Andrews Intend Doing this Winter

“We are to begin shipping haddies at once,” remarked Mr. G. D. Grimmer to the *Beacon* when he was asked what he intended doing in the fish business, “and as soon as the weather gets cold enough, we will begin sending forward frozen fish.” The haddies will be put up by Messrs. Petrie in their fish shed at the Point. It is Mr. Grimmer’s intention to ship none but the best. The boxes will be made in Saint John. They will be made of planed boards, and will in every respect compare favourably with the American article, with which it will have to compete. In order to facilitate summer shipments, Mr. Grimmer intends erecting a packing and icehouse in the rear of his store. He will get his ice from Chamcook.

*Beacon***Feb. 27, 1890****Cutting Chamcook's Crystals****The Icemen Hard at Work Preparing for the Harvest**

The ice boom has evidently come to stay, and the boomers are getting in their work in this neighborhood in a lively fashion. Once more the sound of the workman's hammer and the woodsman's axe reverberates through the forest glades of Chamcook, waking up echoes that have long been silent, while about St. Andrews station the shrieking locomotives and the rushing trains make pleasing melody.

Outside of the local people who are cutting for their own use, there are but two concerns operating there, one of them being Fisher Bros. of Saint John, and the other Stetson, Cutler and Co. The former firm, as has been stated, have secured shipping privileges at Chamcook and are making active preparations to avail themselves of them to the fullest extent. From the foot of the lake to the point at the head of Chamcook bay, where the firm intend erecting their icehouse and making their shipments from, there is a neck of land about 3,500 feet across. Messrs. Fisher propose traversing this distance with a sluice, and they have a large gang of men now engaged in its erection. About one-quarter of the sluice is now in place, and by Saturday night it is expected that the heaviest part of it will be completed. Capt. Herbert is superintending the work. Mr. Angus Stinson, with a gang of men, is making the erections. The ice, after it is cut into blocks, will be floated under the railway track, and then, by means of an engine, hoisted into the sluice, when it will start on its "march to the sea." As the grade is pretty heavy, it is expected that the distance will be quickly covered. Next week, this firm will begin cutting ice.

Messrs. Stetson, Cutler and Co. are conducting their operations in a different manner. They intend shipping from St. Andrews, hence all their ice will be carried by rail; Manager Cram is here with two engines and a lot of cars, and is doing his level best to give matters a good start. Messrs. Cutler, of Boston, are personally superintending operations. They have a large crew clearing off the snow where they intend cutting while another crew, under Mr. Robt. Stevenson, is

building a temporary platform, making the necessary sluices and arranging for the construction of storehouses at St. Andrews. The ice will be stacked here, and the houses built over it. A market will be sought for the most of it in the south. Messrs. Cutler say that they have about closed a charter of a steamer to load here. Besides this steamer they will have a number of smaller vessels. Next week both firms will probably have all their cutting crews at work. The New York people who secured privileges have not yet arrived, although Mr. McGrath, who represents them, is daily expected.

Beacon

Jan. 26, 1899

Mr. Joseph McCullough has been awarded the contract for hauling the ice for the Algonquin Hotel Co. for use in their hotel next summer. Mr. McCullough had the contract last year.

Mr. James Cummings is preparing to store 150 tons of ice for W. A. Robertson and Co. for use in their fish business.

The ice on Chamcook lake is of a splendid quality this year. So far it is all clear ice, free from any snow deposits on the surface.

Mr. Angus Kennedy will store about 50 tons of ice this year for use in his hotel. The favorable weather and good hauling are being taken advantage of to fill all the private ice houses in town, and truck men are busy.

Beacon

Feb. 1, 1900

David McCoubray is getting out one hundred tons of Chamcook ice for Sir William Van Horne. He has also been awarded the contract for supplying the Algonquin hotel.

Beacon

May 17, 1906

Senator MacKay's Summer Abiding Place

A Beautiful Building Beautifully Located

... A feature of the property is the icehouse, which is built of stone largely, and which cost \$2,000. It is somewhat inconspicuously located.

*Beacon***Sept. 14, 1911**

Twenty years ago, or thereabouts, two companies of the United States capitalists were spending their money in the development of an ice business here. It did not prove a very profitable venture for those engaged in it, but it was a source of profit to the town while it lasted.

*St. Croix Courier***Jan. 27, 1938****Five St. Andrews Men Drown When Car Drops Through Ice-Hole at Chamcook**

On their way home after a carefree weekend outing at Chamcook Lake, five of a party of six well-known St. Andrews men were drowned Sunday evening when the car in which they were riding over the frozen surface of the lake skidded into a gaping hole left by ice-cutters and became their death-trap. As the machine settled to the bottom, its headlights still burning, one man, Joseph Gibson, somehow struggled out and saved himself. The others, paralyzed by the sudden plunge, drowned apparently without making an effort to escape.

Mr. Gibson, a 55-year-old mason, came up under the ice the first time he rose. The second time he found himself in the ice-hole. As soon as he regained sufficient strength, he climbed out on the solid ice and, realizing that his companions were beyond aid, ran nearly three-quarters of a mile to a telephone and gave the alarm which brought help from St. Andrews. Victims of the tragedy were Albert Storr, 70, superannuated baggage employee of the C. P. R.; William Craig, 60, manager of the general store of J. A. Doon and Co.; Louis Hivon, 55, manager of the St. Andrews store of the New Brunswick Liquor Control Board; Ralph Howe, 40, painter; and Carten McCurdy, 24, express driver.

The town of St. Andrews was plunged into mourning by the swift tragedy - mourning which was shared throughout the district as the news rapidly was spread. All the victims were well known and enjoyed the respect of the community. The tragedy which cut

off their lives so abruptly led to the cancellation of all functions of a public nature in St. Andrews this week. Yesterday one of the most poignant scenes ever witnessed in the old Shiretown of Charlotte County was enacted as the five victims were buried with impressive funeral rites.

The party went to Mr. Craig's camp on Chamcook lake Sunday afternoon, driving up over the lake ice which was of ample thickness to support the heavy car. Near the end of the lake next the road was a gaping hole in the white expanse - left by ice-cutters of William McQuoid and Son, who on Saturday were at the lake getting out a supply of ice under the supervision of Henry McQuoid. After spending the balance of the day about the camp, the six men boarded the car for the return trip, leaving the camp about 9:45 Sunday evening. Driving down over the smoothly frozen ice the car skidded but did not get out of control. The driver straightened away on what he believed to be the course once more. The night was clear, but an overcast sky hid the stars. In years of camping on the lake William Craig had come to know it intimately. A shadow appeared on the ice ahead, but no one noticed until suddenly the black patch slid under the car wheels and Mr. Gibson shrieked a frantic warning: "We're in McQuoid's ice-hole. Get out!"

Sole survivor of the ill-fated outing, Mr. Gibson could not explain how he escaped from the car while the others stayed inside. When the car struck the open space he shouted a warning, and as the car began to sink pried at the nearest door, but it would not open. The machine settled to the bottom of the lake. Somehow, the door did open, and Mr. Gibson felt himself outside rising to the surface of the lake. He came up under the solid ice the first time, but the second time he broke through in clear water and a few minutes later scrambled out on the frozen surface of the lake. His clothing soaked with the chill lake water, he walked and ran three-quarters of a mile to the home of Mrs. Ernest Watts, where the nearest telephone was located, and from where news of the tragedy was sent to Wilfred and Max Rankin.

While they went back to the lake with a truck, Mrs. Watts telephoned St. Andrews where the Town Marshal, Howard MacNichol, and others made up a party of volunteers. Despite his

wet clothing, Mr. Gibson insisted upon returning to the lake with the Rankins, but when they arrived they were unable to do anything until further help came on the scene.

The headlights of the car, shining through 15 or 20 feet of water, made it easy for the volunteers to locate the scene of the tragedy. Willing hands cut a lane through the ice to the lake shore, then a stout chain was dropped to the car and worked around until a hook on the end caught on the bumper, after which the car with its five victims still inside, sitting in the positions they occupied when Gibson last saw them, was hauled ashore by a heavy truck.

Beyond a scratch on Mr. Craig's nose there were no marks on any of the bodies. Nothing about them indicated that they had made an effort to get out. Mr. Craig, who had been driving, still held the wheel. Both he and Mr. Storr had been smoking and in their hands they held their pipes. In the front seat with the driver were Mr. Storr and Mr. McCurdy. In the back seat Mr. Hivon was on the left side, Mr. Rowe in the centre, and Mr. Gibson had been on the right-hand side until he made his way to safety.

Mr. Gibson was, strangely enough, the only member of the party who could not swim and he was the only one to escape. Apparently little the worse for his soul-searing experience he later gave a graphic description of the horror he passed through while his companions were going to their deaths.

"I'll never forget it in my life," he said.

"What did you think about when you were under the ice?"

"I couldn't tell you what I thought. It all happened in the twinkling of an eye. When the car struck the open space I shouted 'We're in McQuoid's ice-hole, Get out!'"

"I put the pressure to the door, but it wouldn't open. I didn't expect to get out alive. The car settled to the bottom and somehow I got the door open and I could feel myself rise. Then my head bumped against the ice. I was under the solid ice. The bump didn't hurt, I couldn't feel any pain. I just knew I had struck the ice. Then I sank again. I rose the second time - and I came up I the open water."

His lungs bursting, he came up where he could breathe again and clawed at the jagged edges of the ice. With an almost superhuman effort he dragged himself out onto the solid ice and looked down into the hole.

The car lights were still burning. He could see the dim beams in the depths. Heavy clothing soaked, overshoes full of water, he set out on a three-quarter of a mile run to the nearest house where there was a telephone. He was almost exhausted when he struggled into the home of Mrs. Ernest Watts and panted the story of the tragedy. She telephoned Wilfred and Max Rankin.

Disregarding the fact that he was wet to the skin, Mr. Gibson hurried back to Lake Chamcook with the Rankins. They took a truck with them. "We couldn't do a thing," Mr. Gibson said. More than 150 men arrived at the lake. Through the ice they sawed a channel eight feet wide 175 feet to the shore from where the death car lay at the bottom. "We left the camp (Mr. Craig's) at 9:45, watch of one man stopped at 10:45, and that of another at 10:20. Mr. Storr's watch was still running when they got the car ashore."

Mr. Gibson said the automobile, a sedan, did not turn over, but simply settled down to the lake bottom on four wheels. He estimated that there were two fathoms of water over its roof.

St. Croix Courier

Feb. 3, 1938

Victims and Scene in Chamcook Lake Tragedy

Pictures made from an unfinished roll of film found in Carten McCurdy's clothing when his body was removed from the bottom of Chamcook Lake after the tragedy which took the lives of five St. Andrew men Sunday night, Jan. 23, formed the basis of the above group of pictures. At top is shown William Craig's camp where the party spent their ill-fated outing and the iceboat on which they were riding that afternoon. Below, at left, is Louis Hivon; centre, above, Albert Storr, and William Craig; centre, below, Ralph Howe; at right, Carten McCurdy. Two of the pictures, that of the iceboat and that of McCurdy, were taken the day of the tragedy and were on the roll of film taken from his camera and developed by Archie Shirley, the St. Andrews photographer. The film was undamaged by its immersion

Caddy Norris
and Henry
McQuoid
ice-cutting
on Chamcook
Lake.
Charlotte
County
Archives.
p.295.575



in the water. The snapshot of Carten was taken in the yard of his home that tragic Sunday before he left to spend the day at the lake, and he himself took the top view while at the camp. These and other pictures were made available to the *Courier* through the kindness of relatives and friends of the five victims and are believed to be the best and most recent now available.

St. Croix Courier

Feb. 20, 1941

"Shiretown Items"

McQuoid's, with a fleet of trucks and a crew of men, have been busy during the past few weeks filling local ice-houses. Conley's alone have put in about a thousand tons which will be used next summer

in shipping fresh live lobsters to all parts of the States and Canada. Lack of snow has made for good hauling. The ice is now 21 inches thick and crystal clear. The blocks weigh about 450 pounds each. One driver told me he sometimes loads, hauls and delivers over two hundred of these blocks a day and sleeps quite well at night.

St. Croix Courier

March 6, 1941

"Shiretown Items"

Improvements

An up-to-date refrigerator is being installed at J. A. Doon's store. Formerly, depending on ice alone, much meat was lost during the summer weather. The proprietor hopes by another year to be able to install a refrigerator counter as well in order to properly display cuts of meat.

St. Croix Courier

Sept 27, 1951

"News Notes from St. Andrews"

This part of the country is experiencing a severe shortage of storage ice for domestic use. Even with the great number of electric refrigerators in use today, large numbers of householders still use natural ice. George Higgins, the local ice merchant, supplies over 150 accounts with block ice during the summer season. During the last month he has been buying up any surplus stock wherever he can find it. Finally, he has had to call on the artificial ice plant in Saint John for assistance. With so much ice available in Chamcook Lake in the winter it would seem like a wise move to establish a large icehouse at the lakeside and save the expense of trucking it to town to be stored. In the spring and summer, the ice has to be dug out of the sawdust and trucked again to the consumer. By having a storage supply at the lake, it could be sluiced into the icehouse easily and then the one trucking and handling would give it to the consumer directly from the lakeside.