
◆ Maynard Memories ◆

The Newsletter of the Maynard Historical Society

Issue #1

January/February 2000

Winter 2000 Programs

January 24, 2000

*“The Maynard
Post Office”*
by
David Griffin

February 28, 2000

*“Consumer
Cooperatives in
Maynard”*
by
Roy Helander

March 27, 2000

*“Let’s Go to the
Movies”*
by
Paul Boothroyd

All above programs
begin at 7 PM and are
held at the Town
Building, 195 Main St.

Ice Ponds And Ice Houses

by
Ralph Sheridan
(c. 1960’s)

In preparation for the 100th anniversary of the town of Maynard in 1971, many stories were written and collected. These stories are the memory of our town. We are happy to reprint this article on Ice Houses and Ice Harvesting for the enjoyment of our members. In future issues we will re-print other stories from this vast collection. Ralph Sheridan, the then curator of the Maynard Historical Society, prepared this story. Ralph is responsible for the many stories and material that are presently in the archives. We are indebted to him for his life’s work of collecting and cataloging stories of our town.

Ice Houses and harvesting ice to fill them now belongs to an almost vanished age; but ice harvesting on New England ponds used to be a big winter business. In the 1800’s and early 1900’s, during the months of January and February, it was a common sight on the lakes, ponds and some of the rivers to see

men and horses harvesting ice and storing it in barn-like ice-houses, large and small. There was an occasional year when December was a cold month with below zero temperature, and the ice harvest was completed in December. But, on the average, ice-cutting time did not come until well into

January. The icemen wanted ice that was 10 to 12 inches thick. They hoped for good clear ice that was not mixed with sleet or snow.

It was really hard work and one had to be rugged, with plenty of muscle. It could also be very hazardous work. While the temperature remained in the teens it was good weather for putting up ice, and the colder it was when packed in the icehouses, the better the quality when it was taken out the following summer.

When a boy was twelve years old or thereabouts, it was perfectly logical that he has two opinions about the annual ice harvest. If you were brought up on a farm in the north-land back in the days of iceboxes instead of electric refrigerators, you can probably guess what I mean. Ice-

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Maynard Items for Sale

Update

Millennium Clock Tower Ornament



This limited edition tree ornament features a picture of the Mill Clock with the caption "The Millennium". On the reverse is printed, "Maynard Massachusetts, 2000. This ornament is available for sale at all our meetings or visit the Century 21 Office on Summer Street to purchase yours.

Donation Received

Thank you to Ruth Jones of Summer Hill Glenn, who recently donated a collection of early tools from the Drawing-in Room of the American Woolen Mills, Maynard. These tools were owned by her mother, Gladys Cuttell.

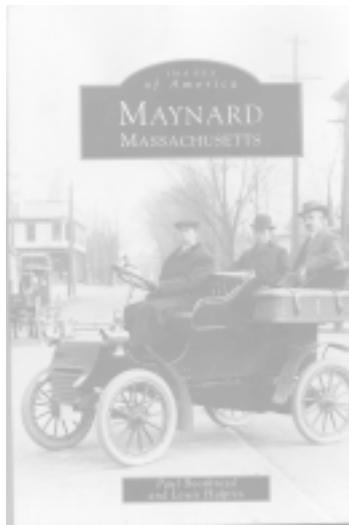
If you wish to donate an items to the Maynard Historical Society, please call Paul Boothroyd at 897-9696.

Books

Maynard, Massachusetts, Images of America Series, by Paul Boothroyd and Lewis Halprin

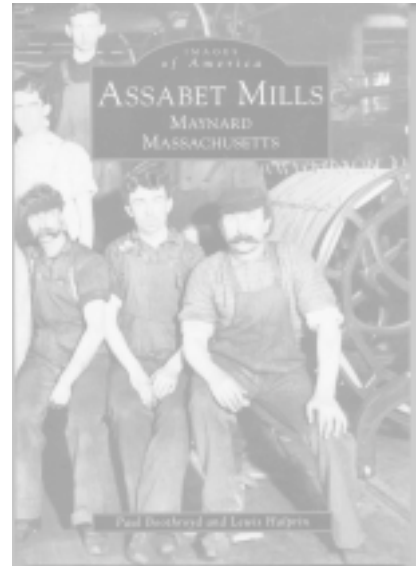
Assabet Mills, Maynard, Massachusetts, Images of America Series, by Paul Boothroyd and Lewis Halprin

These books are realizing phenomenal sales. The books are available at the Paper Store and



at Quaint Things. A percentage of the sales from both these stores is donated to the Maynard Historical Society. Recently we received a second check from the Paper Store for \$1200.

These books sell for \$18.99 and are also available for sale at our meetings.



The Maynard Afghan



This item was sold out, so we are ordering more. Watch for a new shipment of Afghans available in Williamsburg blue, hunter green or dry rose.

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cutting being hard, cold, work; but when a fellow thought of June, July and August, and the six quart ice-cram freezer, he realized there had to be ice before he could enjoy ice cream.

You just don't know what cold is until you have worked on a pond at zero or below with a stiff wind blowing from the Northwest. Dress for such an outdoor job on a cold day, was as follows: heavy wool socks; boots and overshoes; two wool sweaters over a wool shirt; an interlined double-breasted overcoat, knee length; thick wool cap with earflaps down; knitted wool scarf wrapped around face and neck; a pair of wool mittens, and over these a pair of leather mittens.

Usually, local men were hired for the entire harvest. Being seasonal work it might occur when the factories were slack and men would be available. The large ice companies had a crew that went from one job to another as the season progressed. They lived in boarding houses, usually set up nearby the pond. (Once such boarding house was built near White pond by the Independent ice Company, who cut ice on White Pond for many years. When the icehouse completely filled with ice and valued at \$18,000 was totally destroyed by fire on February 3, 1922 (1). The boarding house was sold to the Maynard Rod and Gun Club who occupied it until the early 1940's when it was taken over

by the United States Government as it was within the boundaries of land taken over by them for the ammunition depot for W.W.II. During the war the building was used as an officer's club, ---it is now a private home. The annual harvest of ice from White Pond lowered the water level by 6 inches.

Cutting commenced as soon as the ice was foot or more, thick. Then it was strong enough to hold a team of farm horses and humans. At seven o'clock the whistle sounded and the men moved out onto the ice, or to their places in the icehouses. Horses were used singly and in pairs with the men. If there was snow on the ice it was necessary to scrape the surface clear. One job was holding the scraper. Scraping served two purposes. It removed the accumulated snow so that the ice would freeze to a greater depth (12 inches or more was considered desirable) and made possible the marking and grooving of the ice so that blocks of it could be broken off. A pair of horses pulled the scraper and the snow was dumped onto the shore. Next, the cutter and groover was drawn by a horse across the icy surface scratching parallel lines two feet apart and six inches deep. Then it was drawn at right angles and lines make forming rectangles or a sort of checkerboard pattern. Next come the saws. A big ice saw which needed two men to operate it. The long handle was fixed at right an-

gles to the blade. One small hole big enough to take the saw was chopped in the ice. After that the ax was laid aside and the saws took over. Long strips of ice were sawed loose and floated to a channel cut in the ice which led directly to the lower end of the ramp or 'run', which had an endless belt operated by a steam engine (or horse drawn) to haul the ice up the ramp or 'run' to the proper level of the icehouse, where it would slide by force of gravity to its ultimate resting place in one of the rooms in the icehouse.

The icehouses were strange looking affairs. They looked like large unpainted barns, with an opening in the front that went from the ground right up to the ridgepole. As the store of ice built up, this opening was gradually closed with boards. The commercial icehouses were divided into compartments. Each compartment was insulated with a double wall which was filled with sawdust. Most of the houses were made of wood (lumber and wages were cheap in those days. The inside walls were made of smooth boards so that no timbers would stick out and take up space. The framing was on the outside and the walls were tied together at the roofline. After a few years the buildings often leaned to one side and sometimes collapsed. Many farms had icehouses and some had to haul the ice from the pond. The cut ice would be floated to shore, hoisted onto

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horse-drawn sleds and hauled to the icehouse, sometimes more than a mile away. (During an extremely dry period, they would melt the ice to water the cattle).

As the ice cakes moved up the 'run' they passed under sets of knives. The knives were set one behind the other to trim the ice to uniform thickness. The ice is first packed into the bottom level four feet high, then the staging and 'run' is moved up by winch to the next higher four foot level and continue loading each compartment by four foot levels until the house is full. Each four-foot section was covered with sawdust from the nearest sawmill, thus insulating the ice so that it would last all summer.

As stated earlier in this story, work began at seven o'clock. At noon the horses were watered and fed and the workmen ate lunch in a shed heated with a large stove, with the stovepipe running the length of the center of the shed. The dinner pails were hung near the stovepipe to keep the contents warm. (The dinner pail of those days was a pail and not a lunchkit. The coffee or tea was in the bottom of the pail. Above it was a tray six or seven inches deep in which was the main course, real he-man sandwiches or the equivalent. Above that was a shallow tray for a large piece of pie or other dessert. Then the cover, and inverted on the ring, soldered to the cover was a tin dipper. Such

a pail with attachments was at least a foot tall and had a long bail. After dinner, smokes for the smokers, a few comments on the weather, some tall yarns, and then one o'clock and back to work. Five o'clock was quitting time then home to a hot supper and bed to rest for the next day. (Earnings - \$1.50 for the day.) it was often necessary during zero weather to keep men on the job all night to keep the channels from freezing over.

Some of the hazards of the job – an ice cutter on the pond might slip into the water in zero temperature. If he didn't get pneumonia he was lucky. Or, a 100 lb. Cake of ice might escape and land on his toes or leg. Occasionally, a horse or team of horses would fall through the ice and cause considerable delay and excitement until they were rescued.

One of the first establishments for the storage of ice was in the Maynard territory (2). In 1849, upon the advent of transportation facilities (The Boston and Main Railroad – Marlboro branch) a large icehouse was erected by **Nathaniel J. Wyeth** where the Front Street houses now stand. The building was of brick and held 40,000 tons of ice, which was cut on the Mill Pond and shipped to Boston. Modern machinery was used in the work. About 1864, it ceased to be used, and the Assabet Manufacturing Company purchased and tore down the building, using the brick for mill construction. The granite arch

and keystone may be seen over the door of No. 12 mill near Main Street (3).

In 1871, **Haynes brothers (A.G. & W.A.)** had an icehouse valued at \$100. And, **Ben Smith** had one valued at \$200. (4)

The independent Ice company of Boston cut ice for many years on White Pond.

Jan. 6, 1911 – Ice is being cut on White pond an a good crop is reported. ---*Feb. 24, 1921* – The Independent Ice Company plans to start harvesting ice at White Pond sometime next week. The company is presently filling the houses in Westbrook, NH, and took tools from the White Pond houses to New Hampshire. (5).

This company of the Boston Ice Company had icehouses on nearly every large pond and lake in eastern Massachusetts, southern Maine and New Hampshire. They cut ice for many years on the Mill Pond and had icehouses located on the shore in the rear of where the Sudbury Street blocks are now built.

Nov 24, 1905 – An icehouse is being built at Puffer Pond where a Finnish party will furnish the people of his own nationality with ice next summer.

J. R. Bent had large icehouses on the Assabet River just across the railroad tracks from Th town pumping station. (Where many of the old-timers of today (1960's) including the author

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(Ralph Sheridan) learned to swim.) He cut ice above the Ben Smith Dam. **CC. Murray** cut there for several years.

March 31, 1915 – **Luke Mason** has left the employ of C.C. Murray, iceman, for work in West Acton.

March 31, 1915 – **C.C. Murray** is to build a bathhouse on the Assabet River near his icehouses (5)

He was followed by **John Zaniewski**

December 5, 1919 – The new icehouse built by contractor **Joseph Foster** for **John Zaniewski** is completed. It is situated on the side of the one destroyed by fire and has a capacity of 6,000 cakes.

January 9, 1920 – **John Zaniewski** cut some ice for immediate use during the week. He is to harvest 750 tons within the week, which will fill his new house on the site of the one destroyed by fire near the town pumping station. The new house is completed and in readiness to be filled (5).

The Riverside Cooperative Society had an icehouse in the rear of the C.M. & H. St. Railway barns and cut ice above Ben Smith Dam. **Fred W. Taylor** cut ice above Russell's Bridge on the Assabet River.

May 28, 1915 – The selectmen have awarded the contract for

icing the **Luke S. Brooks** drinking fountain on Main Street to **Fred Taylor** and **Whitney & Hastings**. W & H will furnish the ice during June and July and Taylor during August and September. CC. Murray made no application for the contract (5).

January 26, 1919 – Local ice dealers took advantage of the recent cold spell and harvested ice to supply local trade. F.W. Taylor cut 6 inch ice in Stow, while Whitney & Hastings cut 5 inch ice in South Acton. As their supply was very limited the local dealers hailed the cold wave with delight (5).

Whitney & Hastings harvested ice on the pond near the bridge in South Acton

January 2, 1921 – W. & H. began harvesting ice crop in South Acton Tuesday. There are about 30 men employed and it is expected it will take a week to fill the houses. The ice averages 11 inches and it is the best quality cut in a number of years. It is expected the firm will house between 4500 and 5000 ton (5)

W.O. Strout cut ice on the river and in South Acton.

January 28, 1921 - Local ice dealers are harvesting a 12-inch crop. W.A. Strout began cutting Wednesday and there were more than 100 men on hand applying for work. Fred Taylor began the same day and had the same experience. (5)

J. Leo Comeau was in the ice

business from 1907.

December 24, 1909 – John Comeau is building an addition to his icehouse up the river (5).

He also cut ice in West Concord and East Acton. He made deliveries of ice until May 1965, when he suffered a heart attack and died a few days later.

He can truly be said to be the "last of an era." And, the youngsters of today never have enjoyed the privilege of knowing a real iceman. His was a cool business on a hot day in July. For many years he had a horse drawn wagon, painted red, with his name and the word 'ice' in large letters on the sides.

Later he purchased a second hand truck chassis and mounted the body of his wagon on it. He drove the truck over 200,000 miles. He'd split off a piece of ice from a cake in the wagon, grab it with the big ice tongs, sling it over his shoulder and march up two or three flights of stairs to fill one of those old-fashioned refrigerators.

He wore a rubber poncho to keep from getting soaked with ice water as it dripped under the blazing sun.

One of the most indispensable tools was a whiskbroom to brush off sawdust before delivering the ice. The customer

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would display a card in the window. The iceman supplied these cards. The customer would turn it to the size of the piece they wanted and the iceman could cut the right size of piece. Some of the old time refrigerators had a lid on the top, which covered the compartment where the ice was kept. Some had a door in front for the ice. The y were lined with zinc and insulated. The large markets and provision stores had big refrigerators to store meats. Dairies are the only ones today that use ice in their trucks (1971).

Modern housewives can thank their stars that they don't have to mess around with an icebox. It was a necessary nuisance 40 years ago. Somebody was always forgetting to empty the big, flat pan that held the melted ice water.

When this receptacle overflowed it flooded the kitchen floor, and the water seeped down into the apartment below. When Leo started in the business a customer could get 20 lbs. for 5 cents. The smallest amount buyable now is 25 lbs., which is priced t 25 cents. And it is artificial ice.

The old icehouse has disappeared. They went out of business after folks started making artificial ice in convenient sizes. A while later the home refrigerator that didn't need ice came on the market. Today's methods of keeping humans

and their food cool, is probably, much more efficient, but hardly so satisfying to the small fry as filching bits of ice from the jingling cart when the iceman's back was turned.

Credits:

1. Capt. John Phaneuf, Hudson Fire Department
 2. Annals of Sudbury, Wayland and Maynard
 3. 'A Brief History of Maynard' by w. H. Gutteridge
 4. Town of Maynard – Assessors book, 1871
 5. 'The Maynard News' Yankee Magazine, issues of January 1965-66.
- The Boston Globe
The New England Year – Hayden Pearson
Richard Elson, Boston Globe,
picture and story of Leo Comeau

Letter from the Editor

The board of the Maynard Historical Society welcomes 3 new members. Our new vice-president, David Griffin; our new treasurer, Bob Barta and our new public relations officer , Linda Hart (myself).

Part of my responsibility is to publish this newsletter. Our plan is to publish four times a year. As you can see, we would like to share stories of Maynard for all of our readers to enjoy.

We have a vast collection of written memories in our archives. We plan to draw from these and from yourselves. If you have a story of Maynard you would like to see in print or just a short anecdote, please send it to: Maynard Historical Society, 195 Main St., Maynard, MA 01754, attn: Linda Hart, editor, Maynard Memories. I can also be reached by e-mail: harthn@aol.com.

The Winthrop Puffer Place, circa 1730. Here was born Reuben Puffer a noted minister. (Harvard 1778). The Puffer farm was a great gathering place for wild pigeons, which were caught in nets, one haul netting forty dozen (From a Picture donated by C. Coughlin, 1964)



Maynard Historical Society Membership Application

Renewal

New

Please enter my membership for the following category:

Individual	\$10.00	_____
Family (at same address)	\$15.00	_____
Youth (16-21)	\$ 5.00	_____
Life (Individual)	\$100.00	_____
Donation		_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

Please make checks payable to the Maynard Historical Society, and mail to Maynard Historical Society, Town Hall, 195 Main Street, Maynard, MA 01754

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Identifying the People of Maynard

Throughout our lifetime we collect many pictures and often we cannot identify nor remember who they might be. This picture was taken in front of what is now 93 Acton Street Maynard, often referred to as the 'George F. Brown House'. We suspect the people in the photograph lived in the house. It appears to be 2 sisters, parents and a favorite family pet. There is a chair to the right that is not occupied. Is this the photographer? If you look at the dress of the women, it does give you some hints to the time period. We would love to identify these and other people in photographs in our possession. Do you know who these people are? Could it be George F. Brown, his wife, Mary Eliza Whitman Brown and their daughters? Why have daughters? Why in the picture? If you look closely you will see there is a door-bell to the right of the house electrified? So was the house is 67; today the number on the house is 67; today house is numbered 93. If you have any information as to the people in this picture, please write to the Maynard Historical Society, Town Hall, 195 Main Street, Maynard, MA 01754. If you have pictures taken of townspeople, we would love to receive a copy of them. If you don't know who they are, maybe by printing it in the newsletter, our readers will be able to identify them!



Maynard Historical Society
195 Main Street
Maynard, MA 01754

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Maynard Memories
The Newsletter of the May-
nard Historical Society
195 Main Street,
Maynard, MA 01754
web.maynard.ma.us/history

President
Roy Helander
Vice President
David Griffin
Secretary
Susan Alatalo
Treasurer
Robert Barta
Curator
Paul Boothroyd
Public Relations Officer
Linda Hart

Purpose:
To preserve the memories,
and memorabilia of Maynard
for now and future
generations.

Winter Programs

January 24, 2000
7 pm – Town Bldg.

*“The Maynard
Post Office”*

*Presented by
David Griffin*

*The post office was
the center of activity
in the town. Learn
how it was run, the
memories of it’s
workers and the
townspeople who
frequented it.*

February 28, 2000
7 pm – Town Bldg.

*“Consumer
Cooperatives in
Maynard”*

*Presented by
Roy Helander*

*Coops were founded
by the English, the
Polish and then the
Fins– learn about the
Finnish Working-
men’s Society & the
United Food Coop.*

March 27, 2000
7 pm – Town Bldg

*“Let’s Go
to the
Movies”*

*Presented by
Paul Boothroyd*

*Do you remember
vaudeville, the bang-
bang, Rialto, Colo-
nial? Listen and re-
live the era of movie
theaters and enter-
tainment in Maynard.*