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## *The Wave Watcher*

### **Harvesting Ice from Clear Lake was a Major Winter Industry**

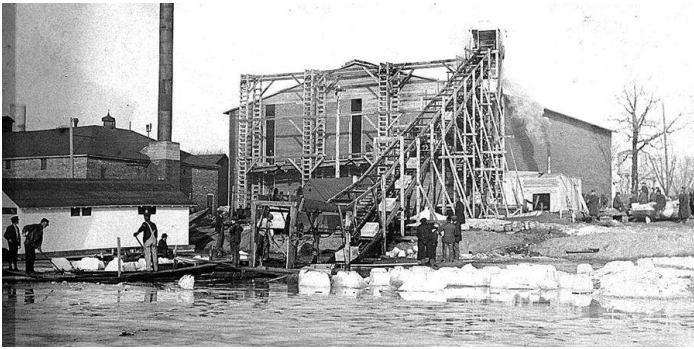
As we all prepare for excitement of watching colorful kites fly over the ice of Clear Lake, let's step back to the early twentieth century when the ice was indeed a place of fun for skating, ice boating and ice fishing, but it was also the location of an important local industry. Clear Lake was known for its winter ice harvests. Each year, beginning in the 1890s, the water beneath the first cutting of ice was tested by the Board of Health for safety. The ice harvesting operation was initially owned by Walter Choate and John Chizek. In the early years, men harvesting ice would use massive saws, which can be seen in the exhibit at the Clear Lake Historical Society Museum and Research Center. The ice saws used in Clear Lake's ice harvest were typical of those used in the industry. The blades are three-times thicker than a wood-cutting saw and the teeth are set farther apart. On Clear Lake, the blocks would be scored about 6 to 8 inches deep and ultimately cut/chiseled into blocks measuring 3 feet by 20 inches. The blocks, which could weigh hundreds of pounds, would bob to the surface once cut loose and the men would float them toward the shoreline by way of rafts. In later years, large gas-powered circular saws were used to cut the blocks of ice and the blocks were floated and traveled to shore by way of a movable belt. At its peak, about 37,000 tons of ice was harvested from the lake each season. Once near the shoreline, the blocks of ice were either placed into train boxcars, which were lined with straw and owned by the Mason City - Clear Lake Railroad or sent up a conveyor for storage in a large icehouse for storage and distribution around the community by ice wagons owned by Choate and Chizek until they sold the business in 1942 to the Stewart brothers. The icehouse was located where the present-day city water plant is located. The rail line came down Main toward the beach area.



**With the Lake Shore Hotel in the background, three major tools for ice harvesting on Clear Lake can be seen together. From left to right, the large gasoline powered cutter, the 57 inch crosscut metal ice saw, and the 5 foot long Gifford splitting chisel.**

See these tools at the ice harvesting exhibit at the Clear Lake Historical Society.

(All photos are from the Clear Lake Historical Society Collection)



The photo on the left shows the ice storage facility with its conveyor system on the lake shore near where the Clear Lake City Water Plant now stands. It could hold several tons of ice for use throughout the year. On Tuesday, April 30, 1946, 8,000 tons of ice were destroyed in a fire at the ice house. The large block, left after the fire can be seen in the photo on the right taken for the *Clear Lake Mirror* on May 2, 1946. The block remained intact until it finally melted away by the end of the summer. Clear Lake citizens stopped by to chisel off chunks of ice for personal use all spring and summer.



***It's the beginning of a new year – time to renew your membership!***

Membership in the Clear Lake Historical Society lasts for a calendar year, that is January through December. January is the month to renew your membership or possibly become a new member of the Clear Lake Historical Society, which is a non-profit organization. Levels of membership are listed below and your check made payable to the Clear Lake Historical Society, can be mailed to our address below. A membership form can be found on our website; the address is below.

We operate based on the devoted work of volunteers, fees collected through memberships and generous donations. We often also apply for grants to accomplish specific large projects, but membership fees cover our day-to-day costs. No one in our organization receives a paycheck. Membership dollars are crucial for us maintain and update exhibits and programs.

We value our members greatly and thank those of you who have already become members of the Clear Lake Historical Society and have joined our group of dedicated volunteers of all ages who are passionate about learning, preserving and sharing Clear Lake history. If you are not a member, think about becoming one, make new friends, renew old acquaintances and help protect and preserve our community's story. Jump in, the water is fine! ☺

Bowman (students and seniors)	\$15.00		Pilot	\$100.00
1 <sup>st</sup> Mate	\$25.00		Captain	\$250.00
Crew (family)	\$60.00		Navigator	\$1,000.00

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