

Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, Inc.
8 Meetinghouse Lane
Madison, Connecticut 06443
203 245 5667

Number 1

Cutting Ice on Tuxis Pond



Cutting ice on Tuxis Pond

Before the advent of electricity and refrigerators the only way to keep food from spoiling was to preserve it with salt or find some ice to keep it cold. – difficult to do in the summer.

When winter comes most of us think of ponds as a place to skate or perhaps a place to go ice fishing. Before electricity and refrigerators people thought of ponds as place to cut ice to keep food cold in the warmer months.

When winter came to Madison in the early 20th century, men like S. Arthur Scranton cut blocks of ice from Tuxis Pond and stored in a big barn called an icehouse until the summer when it could be sold. At the time every house had a large insulated box called an icebox.

Behind the present Cafe Allegre on Main Street stood an icehouse belonging to Mr. Scranton. As the weather grew colder he would watch the ice testing to see how thick it was. When it was the correct thickness, he would hire some men to mark the surface of the pond into a series of rectangles the correct size for a block of ice. The men used a special plow pulled by a horse. After the plow had cut grooves in the ice, another group of men with large saws would cut the blocks of ice. Other men with poles would push floating blocks of ice to a ramp leading up into the ice house.

Oxen were then used to pull the blocks of ice up the ramp into the ice house where other men would slide them around to make a huge pile of ice.

To keep the Ice from melting in the summer the men would cover it with a layer of sawdust or salt hay.

As soon as summer came Mr. Scranton would load blocks of ice into wagon and drive around town selling ice. If a family needed ice they put a large sign with the word "ICE" printed on it in a window.

As you know ice melts in warm weather so Mr. Scranton had good business. The melting ice also created a problem for families because they had to remove the water from the ice melting in their icebox. The water dripped into a metal pan in the bottom of the icebox and some one – usually a younger member of the family - had to take it outside to dump it. Carrying a large heavy pan full of water is not a easy thing to do.

Directions: The best way to see Tuxis Pond is to park behind CVS and walk along the Tuxis Walkway. You will see the back of the present Cafe Allegre which was formerly the Methodist Church shown the picture above. You may also access the Tuxis Walkway from Main Street between the firehouse and the Cumberland Farms Store.