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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Harvesting natural ice

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This picture, dated January 1895, shows the Shourds Brothers Ice House in Albion. This was located at the end of East Park Street on the old Mill Pond. George Shrouds is noted as the man to the left. No other individuals are identified.

Now a long vanished industry, the harvesting of natural ice took place in northern climates from the 1830s to the 1930s. During January and February when ice became at least 14 inches thick, it was harvested in cakes and placed in ice houses packed in saw dust.

Ice dealers such as Shourds Brothers delivered ice to local residents for their ice boxes prior to electric refrigeration.

Shrouds advertised their product as Spring Ice. As they were also dealers in coal and wood, they advertised their goods as "The Great Elements of Fire and Water."

In this ice pond scene, we see a man in the center with an ice plow. This piece of equipment would have been pulled by a

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team of horses to make about 4-inch deep grooves in the ice, criss-crossing the pond.

Ice saws were then used to hand saw out the cakes of ice. Hence, we see several employees with such saws. A man with a long pike stands in the center of the picture. He would have been pulling the floating cakes of ice to the edge for loading.

The ice house does not appear to be filled, which suggests that this may have been their first cutting of the 1895 season.

Another item of interest is the steam engine in the background, which is fired up. This would have been like an early tractor and must have played some role at the time in our scene.

C.W. Lattin is the Orleans county historian. His column appears every Thursday in *The Journal-Register* and *The Albion-Advertiser*.