

# Winter's harvest

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The photo reproduced here represents two working men from the late 19th century. They are identified as J.H. Gray and E. Searles. The man at the left is holding a cake of ice with ice tongs as though he was delivering it to someone's residence.

What I find interesting is the fact that these two men are portrayed in their work clothes. Most often when people had their pictures taken in the 19th century they are to be seen in their finery. Notice the hole in the shirt sleeve of the taller man and that his outer sleeves are rolled up. The shorter man has a vest with rips in it. Was the intent of this photo to be artistic? We'll probably never know.

Back when the picture was taken working class men didn't necessarily buy work clothes. Their work clothes were originally good clothes which had become worn and therefore replaced with newer clothing. Hence the old garments became work clothes.

In checking the 1903 Orleans County Directory, I find a James H. Gray listed as a laborer living at 147 Maple Ave. in Medina but no listing in any directory for E. Searles. Laborer could certainly mean he worked as an ice delivery man. The 1903 Directory lists the following ice dealers: W.J. Harrington & Son, Albion; Josiah Hayes,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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## Bethinking of Olde Orleans

Albion; Thomas Flannery, Holley; William Culver, Medina and Samuel Rice, Medina. My conclusion is that J.H. Gray probably was employed by either Culver or Rice at the time.

Electric refrigeration did not come about until the second decade of the 20th Century. So when the photo was made people were using ice boxes. It is interesting to note that the 1915 Orleans County Directory does not list ice dealers but rather ice

manufacturers. Here we find the Medina Cold Storage which suggests ice was then being man made rather than using natural harvested ice from ponds, lakes, etc.

My thanks to the Fern Blackburn estate for sharing this unique photo.