

History of the Ice Business in Arlington, Mass.

Ice Cutting on Spy Pond — 1840s to 1930

Reprint of chapter of *Stories of Early 20th Century Life* Compiled from a Bicentennial Oral History of Arlington, Massachusetts Arlington Arts Council, Penobscot Press, 1992

Interview of Arthur Kimball by John F. Crowley, February 1974 Photographs and Graphics from Arlington Historical Society Collections



Arlington Advocate Article *The Ice Harvest*, January 1873



Ice workers preparing at Spy Pond.

Spy Pond Hotel is pictured upper right. Man with formal clothes and fedora, perhaps the owner.

Howard Russell

Interviewed by John F. Crowley, August 2, 1976

...what a lot of folks don't realize is the fact that Arlington made the ice tools for the whole of New England. William E. Wood down just below the Center on the right on the westerly side of the Avenue, he had a shop down there with about 40 employees where they made all times of ice tools. Of course when I was a kid, they cut lots of ice on Spy Pond, all the ponds around here, that is all the big ponds. I don't know if they did it on Walden or not, but all the ponds that are near Boston. Fresh Pond, for instance, that's where they first began to ship ice. If you read my book *A Long Deep Furrow*, (University Press of N. E. 1976) you'll find out quite a little about it.

A lot of the farm help were employed in the wintertime. People think now its terrible if anybody is out of work for a few weeks, but then there were any quantity of men who would work on farms way up until the first of December, see, maybe the first of November, and then they'd have to take what they could the rest off the winter. So that the ice cutting was a real God-send to them. The Wyman Brothers, for instance, would have a lot of help in the summer time, and they'd have a lot of regular help. But there wouldn't naturally be as much to do in the wintertime even though they had their green-houses. And so their surplus help would be over on Spy Pond working on the ice... The Ice Houses, as ugly was they could be, they're all gone now. But ice business was a big business in those days!