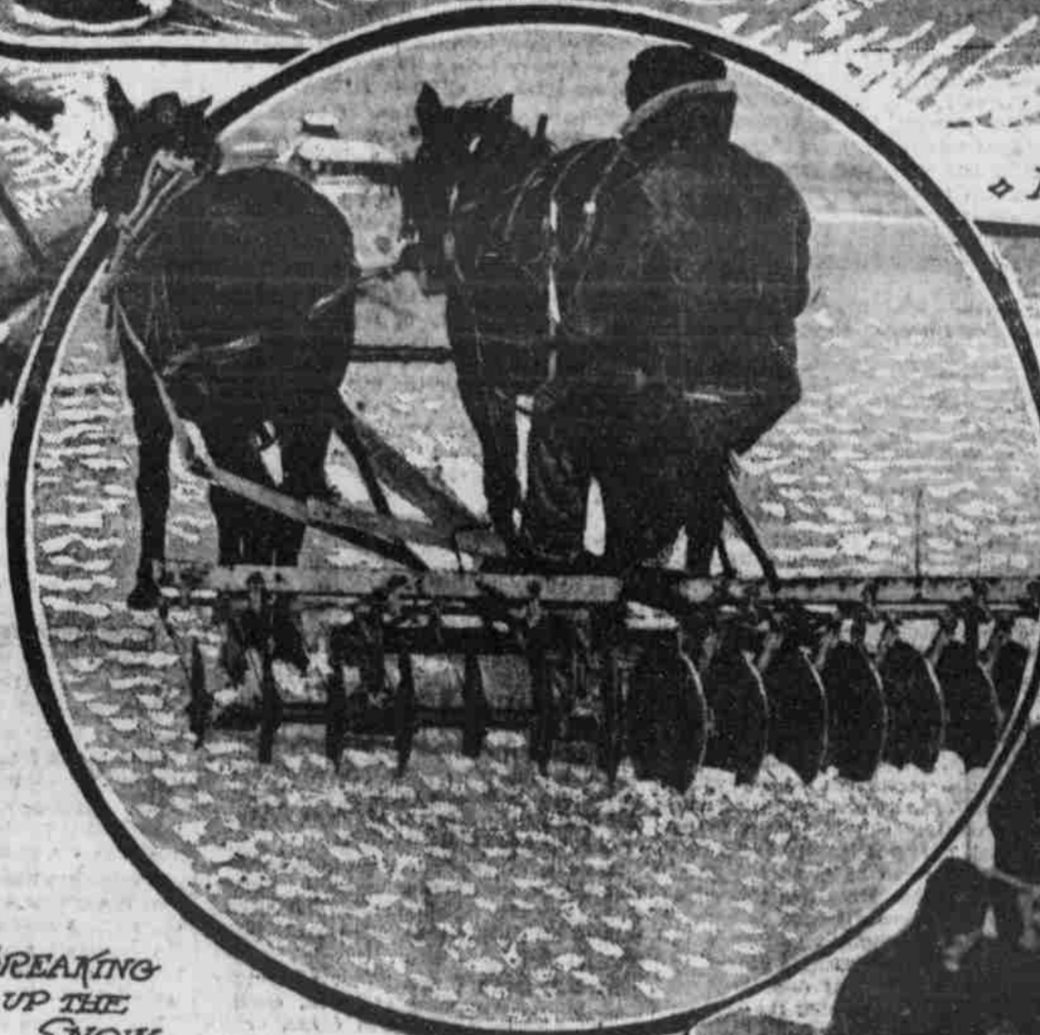


Harvesting the Ice Crop for Omaha



MARKING OFF

SAWING

SPLITTING UP THE CAKES

Ice Cutting and Packing Has Proceeded Almost Without Interruption for a Month and the Ice Houses from which Our Next Summer's Supply Will Be Drawn Are Now Practically Filled to Capacity

By A. R. GROE.

DO YOU believe in preparedness—for summer's heat?

The ice man does. He "makes ice while the cold holds" as the farmer "makes hay while the sun shines."

Ice—thousands and thousands and thousands of tons of ice are being "harvested" from the thickly frozen streams and lakes in Omaha and vicinity these cold days.

A great army of men and horses and machinery is occupied in the big midwinter job.

Into the ice houses are sliding the big cakes to take their places and lie in those cool retreats while spring breaks and until the summer's heat comes.

Then they'll be brought out and hauled away in box cars and in wagons to keep the butter in your refrigerator hard, to keep that meat from spoiling so you can make hash with it tomorrow, to keep the lettuce and celery crisp, to cool the grape juice and ginger ale, to make the pudding nice and hard so it will take the shape of the "mould," to make ice cream and ices, to cool the drinking water and keep the milk and cream in a well-chilled condition, and to perform many other services for your comfort, including the concoction and pleasing preparation of all the delectables at the soda fountain and—eh—other places.

It is said that the ice harvest employs between 4,000 and 5,000 men in the district of Omaha and vicinity. And it comes just at a time of the year when employment is needed by men of many occupations who are idle during cold weather.

The ice men watch the advance of cold weather and keep a close lookout on the thickening ice. When it has reached ten to twelve inches the cutting is likely to start. For, while still thicker ice would be more desirable, the weather is never certain.

But this year ice in this part of the country under the influence of the long continued cold has reached a thickness of twenty inches even on the Missouri river, and the harvest is now pretty nearly finished and the ice houses will soon be packed to the roofs.

The principal places where ice is cut around Omaha are Carter lake, the city reservoirs, the Missouri river, Seymour lake, Memphis, Neb., and Ashland, Neb. At the last three places named Cudshys, Armours and Swifts, respectively, have big ice houses. The Rock Island railroad has a big ice house at Meadow, Neb., which it has about filled.

Two characteristics of ice make the filling of an ice house a comparatively easy thing. These are its buoyancy and its small friction. Because

of the first characteristic it floats and can be transported easily through the water. Because of the second it can be "slid" easily to the place where it is wanted.

Let's go out to the ice fields of Carter lake. Far out in the middle of the lake men are driving horses and, coming nearer, we find the horses are drawing ice plows which are simply steel cutters that cut down into the ice a couple of inches. By this means the ice field is marked off into rectangular spaces, each the size of a cake of ice.

Then come men with long saws and they saw loose big areas consisting of many of these rectangular spaces. These ice floes are then taken in charge by men with long, steel-pointed poles, and they push them along slowly through the water until they arrive at the end of a long, open space about twelve feet wide leading up to the ice house entrance. Here the ice floes are further subdivided before being steered into this long lane. Men with ice poles are stationed along the sides of this lane and keep pushing the chunks along.

When they arrive at the inner end of the lane other men with crowbar-like instruments separate them into the final sizes, which are cakes of ice about 5x2½ feet, and of whatever thickness the ice happens to be.

The cakes are now at the foot of a chute on which runs an endless chain with blocks about every ten feet. As these blocks come along underneath the chute and around a wheel under the water at the bottom of the chute they grab the cakes of ice and hustle them up the chute. Arriving at the top, they are released and go sliding down into the dark interior, where more men are busy packing them away.

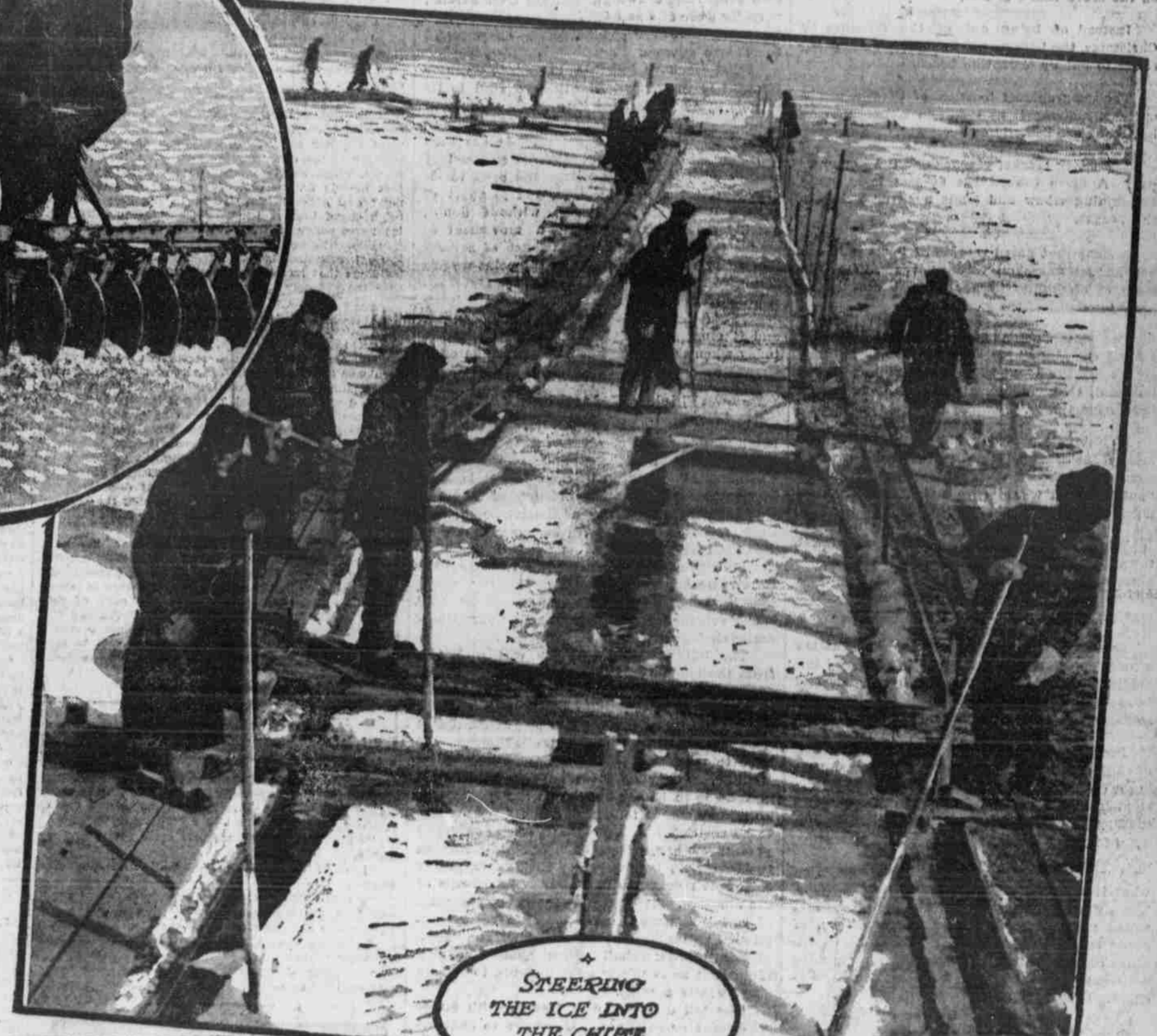
When there is snow, as there has been this season, it is removed with big scoops drawn by horses. And when the snow and sleet freezes into hardness on the ice it is loosened up by means of a disk harrow before being scooped off.

It's a cold job, and the men are bundled up in overcoats, caps, mufflers, felt-lined boots, over-shoes—anything that will shut out cold.

Old Mother Nature is still the best ice-maker. She can make it in a few days by the millions of tons. There are several artificial ice plants in Omaha, but these operate principally as auxiliaries. Natural ice is the cheapest and easiest to get just as natural sunshine is better than the best artificial light; the soft breezes of the south wind are better than the spasmodic roaring of an electric fan, and rain is better than irrigation.

Oh, it'll be nice, when summer comes, to have that ice.

And let us hope for the best regarding the price.



STEERING THE ICE INTO THE CHUTE



SCRAPING OFF THE SNOW