

BLOOMSBURG ARTIFICIAL ICE COMPANY

One of Bloomsburg's many small industries in the 1890s was the Bloomsburg Artificial Ice Company established in 1892 and located on the north side of East Seventh Street between Catherine and East Streets. Besides making ice, the plant had eight large cold storage rooms for holding perishable items. A newspaper, *The Bloomsburg Daily Item*, reported in 1902 that the ice plant employed between ten and twelve people during the summer months. It also observed that ". . . there being very few towns the size of Bloomsburg that can lay claim to one of a similar nature." The officers of the company at this time were: Myron I. Low, president; W. R. Kocher, secretary; and C. C. Peacock, treasurer.

The building, a brick structure which is still in use, is across from the First Church of the Nazarene. The following newspaper article appeared in the *Democratic Sentinel* on July 5, 1895, and described the manufacturing process of producing of ice:

A FINE ICE MANUFACTORY

How the Bloomsburg Company Competes with Jack Frost

in Changing Water to Ice

Although Bloomsburg has one of the largest and finest ice manufacturing plants in this part of the State, our readers may not be acquainted with the mode of transforming water into solid form. The plant is owned by the Bloomsburg Artificial Ice Company, which is a stock concern, and the manufactory is located on Seventh Street between Catherine and East Streets. Mr. A. B. Heller is the manager for the stockholders. The cost of the plant was about thirty thousand dollars and has been in successful operation for several years. All of the machinery is of the latest, and best patterns and fine samples of the best skill of modern machinists.

The plant consists of a substantial building, forty by one hundred feet in size. The water from which the ice is made is obtained both from the town reservoir and from a forty foot deep well on the property. An artesian well is now being drilled for the purpose of procuring a good supply of perfectly pure water. The water now used is perfectly pure, as has been proved by numerous chemical analysis, but notwithstanding this seeming purity, it is doubly distilled before it is ready for use, as the least impurity in the water would effect the quality of the ice. From the well or hydrant the water is pumped into boilers where it is converted into steam, which is then turned back to water in the steam condensers. The water is reboiled, and after having been cooled is passed through a coarse clay filter and two charcoal filters. Here it is run into a storage tank where it is cooled down with ammonia.

Here, after all this purifying of the water has been gone through, comes the real ice-making or freezing. This is done in the tank from where 221 cans, each as large as the cakes of ice seen on the ice wagons, are used for the purpose. These cans are surrounded with coils of heavy pipe through which the ammonia is carried. The cans, which contain three hundred pounds each, are set in salt brine. The ammonia which runs through the pipes keeps the salt brine at a temperature of ten degrees above zero which freezes the water. Pumps are used to agitate the brine and keep it moving about the cans. It takes thirty-six hours to freeze a can of ice. One hundred cans of ice are lifted every twenty-four hours. While the water in some of the cans is frozen solid, in others it is in different stages of congelation.

The company has two refrigerators, twelve by forty and twelve by thirty-four feet in size. These refrigerators are lined with mineral wool and connected with the tank room. The ammonia condenser, containing two thousand feet of pipe, is near the large fifty horsepower engine which furnishes the motive power for the pumps and condensers.

The larger portion of ice manufacturing is sold to hotels in Bloomsburg, merchants and private families. The surplus ice is shipped to the Wilkes-Barre Ice Company over the D. L. & W. R. R., which has a track to the buildings. The plan is complete in every particular and a visit to it is profitable and fraught with pleasure, as the gentlemen in charge Messrs. S. E. Reynolds and M. M. Hartsell, are most courteous and obliging and intelligently explain the process of converting water into ice.