

KIDS' NEWSLETTER

Pillars of the future,
built on the foundations of the past.

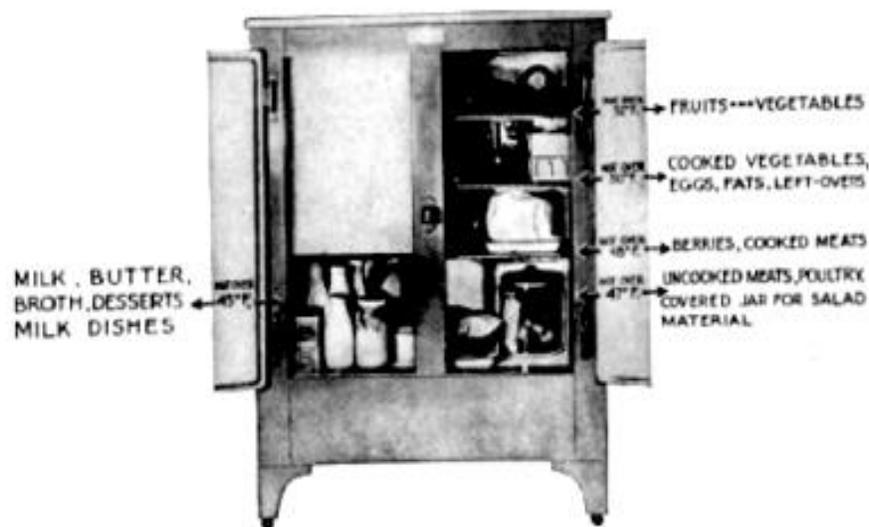
White Pillars Museum • 403 North Broadway • De Pere, WI 54115
Open Tuesday-Fridays 10:00-1:00 • Other times by appointment: 920-336-3877
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Iceboxes



By the early 1900s, most residents in De Pere had an icebox in their kitchen to keep food & milk from spoiling. An icebox (also called a cold closet) is a compact non-mechanical refrigerator which was used before the development of safe powered refrigeration devices. Iceboxes had hollow walls that were lined with tin or zinc and packed with various insulating materials such as cork, sawdust, straw or seaweed. A large block of ice was held in a tray or compartment near the top of the box. Cold air circulated down and around storage compartments in the lower section. Some finer models had spigots for draining ice water from a catch pan or holding tank. In cheaper models a drip pan was placed under the box and had to be emptied at least daily. The user had to replenish the melted ice, normally by obtaining new ice from an **iceman**.

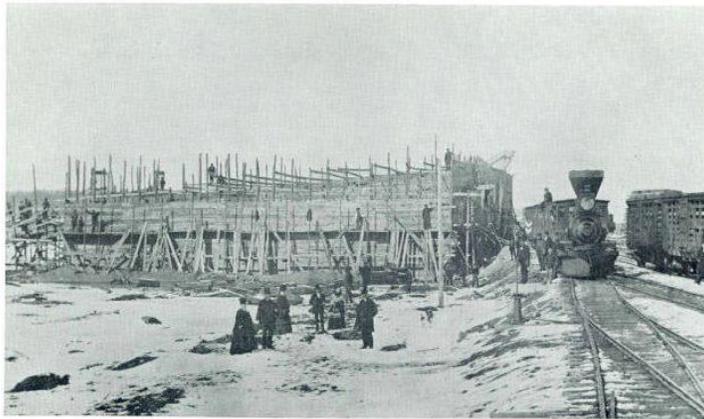


A) Norwegian icebox. The ice was placed in the drawer at the top. B) A typical Victorian icebox, of oak with tin or zinc shelving and door lining. C) An oak cabinet icebox that would be found in well-to-do homes.

The icebox was invented in 1802 by an American farmer and cabinetmaker named Thomas Moore. Moore used the icebox to transport butter from his home to the Georgetown markets, which allowed him to sell firm, brick butter instead of soft, melted tubs like his fellow vendors at the time. His first design consisted of an oval cedar tub with a tin container fitted inside with ice between them, all wrapped in rabbit fur to insulate the device. The Amish community continues to use iceboxes today.

The Iceman

With iceboxes more and more common in De Pere households, the job of providing ice became important. Known as icemen, these, mostly men, spent winters harvesting ice from the bays and rivers, then storing it until local residents and businesses needed it. The blocks of ice would be covered in sawdust and stored in ice houses until needed in warmer weather. During the summer icemen with horse drawn wagons made regular door-to-door deliveries of block ice. They followed predetermined routes, delivering ice to households, restaurants, hotels, and various businesses that relied on this essential commodity. The icemen's schedules were often dictated by the natural melting rate of the ice, requiring them to work quickly and efficiently to ensure timely deliveries. Kids would follow the ice wagons and take chips of fallen ice as treats during the summer.



Society's Iconographic Collection

Ice house under construction near what is now Voyageur Park. Ice stored here was shipped to Chicago



During WWI young women delivered ice



Icemen harvesting ice on the Fox River. St. Norbert College is in the background.



Wagon of ice for delivery to iceboxes

The delivery process was physically demanding. Icemen had to handle heavy blocks of ice, often using large ice tongs or hooks to grip and maneuver them. They would navigate staircases, narrow hallways, and cramped spaces to reach the iceboxes or ice chests where the ice was placed to keep food and beverages cold. The ice was carefully chipped or sawed into smaller pieces to fit the specific requirements of each customer. Some of De Pere's early icemen were: Herman Gauger, Anton Wellens, Al Toonen, Leo Vande Walle, C. Van Dyke, J. Jacobsen and Peter J. Hendricks.

Santa & Mrs. Claus at White Pillars



Photos with Santa & Mrs. Claus

Cookies and candy

Santa & Mrs. Clause will make their annual visit to White Pillars Museum on:

Thursday, December 7 4-7 PM

Friday, December 8 4-7 PM

Saturday, December 9 2-5 PM

For more information about the De Pere Historical Society

Visit us online @ www.deperhistory.org

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