

The Icehouse Cometh

My fascination with ice houses stems from my past. My grandfather was an ice man in Sea Cliff, NY in the 1920's on. So, when I stepped into an icehouse in Southold, from long ago, I was hooked. Many are round and were built into the ground for insulation, and all predate electric refrigeration. These were usually built out of bricks, domed at the top, and farmers had them on their property to keep eggs, milk, and meat from going bad. Often, they were built near freshwater lakes or rivers for easy access.

In the 1800's in the dead of winter here on the East End, men would take sleds pulled by horses to freshwater ponds and cut the ice to place on the sleds. Then they would transport the ice to the ice houses on farm properties. Inside they dug down into the ground, below the frost line to keep the ice cold and stuffed each layer with straw as an insulation. Food was kept cold for up to a year! Amazing old technology, and it worked!

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