

# What Happened To the Iceman?

He's in the cold-storage business these days

By CLARK SQUIRE

**T**IME was when preservation of food for the next meal in a city kitchen depended on prompt delivery of a chunk of "Arctic scenery" to the back door.

But modern refrigeration has met the spoilage problem. (Also, it has served to curb jokes about the iceman.)

The iceman himself is not disappearing with the lamplighter, the hostler, the streetcar conductor. He merely has reversed an important phase of his operations.

Except in a few instances, the iceman has ceased packing a cake of ice up the back steps. But he either is having perishables taken to his plant for refrigeration or is installing refrigerators and quick-freeze units for his customers.

The Diamond Ice & Storage Co. well may be regarded as Seattle's Mr. Iceman, although it, too, has abandoned ice-making for storage operations.

This pioneer concern made ice more than half a century at Western Avenue and Union Street.

There the incorporators of the firm began manufacturing ice the year of the Seattle Fire—1889. On that site Hans J. Claussen, Charles E. Crane and George E. Sackett established the Seattle Automatic Refrigeration Co., forerunner of Diamond Ice, and built the first mechanically refrigerated ice plant and warehouse.

**P**RODUCTION of ice was the plant's principal function in the early days. However, a small space was used for storing perishables, so long as this did not interfere with making and storing ice. Demand for space was limited, since most products were stored only for short seasonal periods.

Deliveries were made in horse-drawn ice wagons. Only half the teams were needed for this in winter, so the remainder were used by the Seattle Coal & Fuel Co., thus keeping men and horses on the job.

Previously Seattle had used natural ice harvested from lakes in Eastern Washington and Montana and hauled here by the Northern Pacific Railway. Some of this ice came into the area as late as 1915.

The owners of the Seattle Automatic Refrigeration Co. incorporated the Diamond Ice & Storage Co. November 25, 1892. The new firm took over the original property and operated it.

Ten years later the owners expanded by organizing and operating jointly the Mutual Light & Heat Co., which supplied steam heat and electric light and power to a downtown area.

**T**HE Seattle-Tacoma Power Co. in 1905 bought the Diamond Ice & Storage Co. It later separated and expanded the steam-heat and electric-light and power operations, which in 1912 became a part of the Puget Sound Traction Light & Power Co. and eventually a part of the Puget Sound Power & Light Co.

The steam-heat property was sold in 1951 to the Seattle Steam Corp.

The Diamond Ice & Storage Co. continues as a subsidiary of the Puget Sound Power & Light Co.

In the two decades from 1890 to 1910 Seattle's population grew fivefold—from 42,837 to 237,194. Demand for ice and storage space increased accordingly.

In the fall of 1911 Diamond began razing its several wooden buildings and replacing them with a four-story concrete building of twice the capacity. The new service was launched June 6, 1912.

By that time ice-delivery service was being duplicated by several ice companies. This duplication was corrected by formation of a delivery company, which bought its requirements from existing ice-producers.

The new company delivered to hotels, restaurants, saloons, ice-cream companies, markets and homes. It handled the icing of railroad cars and shipped ice, packed in burlap sacks, to nearby points. To help supply the summer demands, ice-manufacturing companies built facilities for ice storage.

**W**ALLS of the Diamond plant are insulated with from four to eight inches of cork. On the walls of rooms and in some overhead places are pipes, or coils, which carry the refrigerant, liquid ammonia. Heat in the room or its contents is attracted to the pipe of liquid ammonia, causing the refrigerant to become a gas.

This gas is pumped to the engine room, where it is compressed and transferred to an evaporative condenser. There heat is extracted from the ammonia and the resulting liquid then is pumped again through the coils.

When the plant was built the plate system, latest development in ice-making, was installed. Each plate of crystal-clear ice, weighing about 9,000 pounds, was lifted to a horizontal position by an electric crane and then was cut with a circular saw into sizes desired. The daily output was approximately 60 tons.

About two thirds of the machine capacity was used for ice-making and ice storage. The remainder was allocated to the cold storage of perishables.

In 1912 about 75 per cent of the space was required for cold storage and 25 per cent for freezer storage (with temperature below the freezing point). Developments in the frozen-food industry have reversed these percentages.

**T**HE iceman was given a severe jolt about 35 years ago, when mechanical refrigerators grew in popularity. As the refrigerator sales volume shot upward, many ice companies throughout the country took a beating and went out of business eventually. Others saved themselves by making wise adjustments in operations.

In 1938 Diamond converted one half of its ice-making space to cold-storage rooms and quick-freeze space. It manufactured ice in the remaining area until 1941.

War demands, however, resulted in resumption of ice-making in 1944 and this operation continued until May, 1949.

The frozen-food industry really



ROY E. FINNEY, left, warehouse superintendent of the Diamond Ice & Storage Co., handed some loose furs to L. J. Bourke, company manager, in a cold-storage room filled mostly with baled furs. The firm, established in 1889, no longer produces ice, its principal function for more than half a century,

began its big expansion in 1929-30. As a result, "fresh" berries, vegetables and other products are made available at neighborhood groceries virtually every day of the year.

In 1930 the Pacific Northwest Association of Cold Storage Warehousemen was organized to exchange methods and ideas, to promote standardization of operations and to act in unison on methods of handling perishables.

To its 35 members, affiliated with the National Association of Refrigerated Warehouses, are made available the latest ideas on food storage and processing.

The association helped the government organize all cold-storage warehouses into a unit for the war effort. The president is Paul V. Henningsen of Portland. W. I. Hunter of Seattle is secretary-treasurer.

Nowadays the principal items stored are fish, shellfish, condensed milk, frozen milk, cheese, ice

cream, nuts, butter, meat, poultry, frozen fruit juices, berries, vegetables, apples and other fruits.

As fish are processed, the trimmings—no longer wasted—are frozen and used as food for pets and fur-bearing animals. Later the cured furs (mink and others) are stored until they are processed into garments.

Also in these warehouses are stored resins and catalysts used in various manufacturing plants of Seattle.

"The cold-storage warehouses are eager to be of service to industry," said Lionel J. Bourke, manager of the Diamond Company. "We are proud of our part in helping to place on the American table products from the farm and from the sea under refrigeration and highest sanitary conditions."

The iceman hasn't melted away. He simply has changed his operations.



FROZEN HALIBUT was stacked high in one of the Diamond Ice storage rooms, where Fritz Lundberg examined a fish.—Times photos by Roy Scully.