

# Time Tracs

## by Jim Ingram

Today many areas of Michigan depend on skiing and snowmobiling to provide prosperity to its citizens during the winter months. To Lake Orion in the early 20th century it was the cutting of ice from the lakes that provided winter employment of those who worked in the booming lake resort during the summer months.

In 1906, Pittman and Dean Company erected their ice houses on the southwest side of Long Lake where Franklin Settlement now stands. In 1911, Hacker and Machrohd Company of Detroit built their ice houses in the center of town.

The buildings are now occupied by the Lake Orion Lumber Company. Another ice house, owned by George Cole of Lake Orion, was on Buckhorn Lake.

After the lake was frozen, huge slabs of ice were taken from the lake by tools called a cutter and spike. The ice was then horse-drawn on a sled from the lake to a conveyer belt on shore.

The conveyer would then take the ice into the icehouse where it was packed with sawdust and put into railroad boxcars. It was then transported to Detroit where it was sold on the old ice wagons. The wagons peddled ice from house to house to service the "icebox" before the advent of electric refrigeration.

Long-time Lake Orion resident Pete Poulin was interviewed several years ago by The Lake Orion Review about his recollections of working when he was only 14-years-old and continued for many years.

"We made 55 cents an hour," Poulin said, "which was pretty good wages in those days."

He said that many a time a horse would fall through the ice and had to be rescued by workers with a few planks of wood.

Not only were the horses in danger, but Poulin also told of broken hips and sometimes death due to slippery surfaces and sharp spikes used to cut out the ice.

Poulin and many Lake Orion residents in those years worked at these ice houses during the winter months. With the invention of artificial ice and refrigeration, the industry and its men slowly faded into another segment of Lake Orion's past.

The ice houses were torn down in 1931.