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THE CAPE POND ICE COMPANY COLLECTION

Creator:	Scott Memhard; various
Dates:	1848-1990 (bulk 1941 – 1969)
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Biographical Note

The Cape Pond Ice Company had its beginnings in 1848 with blacksmith Nathaniel R. Webster and continued by his son, Nathaniel, Jr. in 1865. The Webster family were the first of five family groups that owned and operated what became known as the Cape Pond Ice Company. Webster dammed a local brook, created what became Webster's Pond, and built his first icehouse. He also built ice houses on Upper- and Lower-Day's Pond and on Cape Pond in Rockport, responding to the need for a substantial and reliable source of ice to support the growing fishing industry in Gloucester. Fish had historically been salted and stored in flake yards.

The fishing industry continued to flourish after the Civil War. In 1876 brothers William and Francis W. Homans formed an artificial 32-acre man-made lake called Fernwood Lake off Essex Avenue in West Gloucester and built the largest

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icehouse in the country, preserving the ice with salt marsh hay, cork, and sawdust. That same year Frank Homans partnered with some of the largest fish industry ice buyers to stabilize the fluctuating ice prices. Upwards of 4,000 tons of crystal-clear, 12” or more thick ice was stored in the Fernwood Lake icehouse at any given time.

The Abbots - Freeman Abbott, his son E. Raymond Abbot and Freeman’s cousin James - took over the business in 1916 and expanded from supplying the fisheries to selling high-quality ice to the downtown saloons and summer hotels. At any given point, forty-five men were employed harvesting ice using hand tools and horse-drawn wagons.

John Ryan, very much the entrepreneur, bought the Cape Pond Ice Company in 1943, used modern electricity and ammonia refrigeration techniques to manufacture 300-lb ice blocks in their steel molds in their indoor concrete ‘pond,’ replacing natural ice harvest by the late 1940s. The ice houses at Cape Pond and Fernwood were abandoned, torn down or burned. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the fishing industry thrived under the Magnuson Act and the new 200-mile limit that excluded foreign fishing vessels.

In 1983 Dick Memhard and his son Scott took over as the 5th family to own the business as the fisheries were forced to operate under tough federal fishing regulations, further diversifying markets to include wholesale and retail delivered ice for poultry, produce, and redi-mix concrete.

In the span of about 165 years, beginning with the Webster family, five family groups brought the industry from horse-drawn delivery wagons harvesting ice from ponds and lakes to an ice machine that used ammonia refrigerant to make pristine ice on stainless steel plates.

Scope and Content of the Collection

This is a manuscript collection of the Cape Pond Ice Company, considered an historic business in Gloucester, MA alongside art, fisheries, and granite industries. It is a collection of papers organized chronologically by the five family groups (organized into five series) that created, owned, and managed what became known as the Cape Pond Ice Company. It began in 1848 with Nathaniel R. Webster and continued with his son Nathaniel, Jr. (Series I). William and Francis W. Homans, brothers, followed in 1876 (Series II). Freeman H. Abbot and family (Series III) assumed ownership in 1916 and John Ryan, his son Jack Ryan and John Ryan’s son-in-law, Jack Hodges from 1941 to 1982 (Series IV). The fifth family,

Dick and Scott Memhard and now grandson Larry Memhard took over the business in 1983. Scott is its present owner. The collection ends in 1990.

The collection includes blueprints, land surveys, numerous deeds of property, warrants, and mortgages for parcels of land, as well as copies of photographs, company stock purchase and sale, U.S. Internal Revenue reports, and United States Patents and Patents from England, Mexico, Sweden, Iceland, and Canada. There is numerous business, financial, and legal correspondence that supports the above documents and activities.

The bulk of the documents relate, firstly, to the invention and patent in the 1950s by John Ryan (Series IV) of a method of treating (dehydrating) fish and the resulting product used, for example, for the manufacture of cat and dog food. Included are diagrams of the equipment. Secondly, there are numerous documents supporting the transfer / purchase / sale / mortgage of land in Gloucester, Magnolia, Manchester, and Rockport from one company (Cape Pond Ice Company or others) or one individual(s) to others throughout the Company's 165-year history. Traditional ice-making -- damming ponds and lakes; cutting the ice with long saw blades; scraping the snow from the ice and sawing it into 300-lb. blocks; hauling the ice blocks out by horse-drawn wagon teams and storing ice in the ice houses insulated with sawdust, salt hay and cork -- spanned Nathaniel Webster and his son's ownership until the late 1940s when natural ice harvests were entirely replaced by reliable mechanical refrigeration. As the fishing industry declined (overfishing and stringent federal regulations), owner Scott Memhard was forced to seek out different markets as the fishing industry's need for ice declined. Packaged product for grocery stores, block ice for poultry growers, ice sculpture blocks and the extensive use of ice in making concrete were new markets that Memhard developed.

Series Descriptions

- I. Nathaniel Webster, Sr. and son, Nathaniel, Jr. (1848-1875)
 - II. William and Francis W. Homans, brothers (1876-1915)
 - III. Freeman H. Abbot, Freeman's son, E. Raymond Abbot, and Freeman's cousin James (1916-1940)
 - IV. John Ryan, his son Jack Ryan and John Ryan's son-in-law, Jack Hodges (1941-1982)
 - V. Dick Memhard and his son, Scott (1983-1990)
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Container List

Box 1

Series I – Folder 1. Nathaniel Webster and Son, Nathaniel, Jr. 1848-1875

- I. Handwritten note regarding purchase and sale of real estate, 1894
- II. Mortgage deeds, 1882, 1885
- III. Bill of sale of personal property, 1900
- IV. Assignment of mortgage, 1885
- V. Warranty deeds, 1875
- VI. Payment of principal, 1885

Series II – Folder 1. Francis W. and William Homans, 1876-1915

- I. Broadside location: Archivesflatfile
20.5 x 26.5 including Last Will of Francis Homans. September 23, 1903
- II. Lists/Inventory of Real and Personal Property, Ice Tools, Farm Tools, 189?, 1901-1908
- III. Paper copies of one photograph, Fernwood Lake Ice Co. icehouse with delivery wagons and horses, undated
- IV. Misc. vendor inspection report and contract, 1901, 1908
- V. Blueprint, Plan of Property, Cape Pond Ice Co., Rockport, May 15, 1911
- VI. Various surveys of various locations, 1891-1911
- VII. Handwritten notes, various dates
- VIII. Return of Annual Net Income, U.S. Internal Revenue, Cape Pond Ice Co., December 31, 1910, and December 31, 1909
- IX. Administrators Inventory and Administrators Final Account, estate of Nathaniel Webster, Probate Office, February 9, 1904, and February 5, 1904, respectively
- X. Various handwritten and typed receipts, memos, and promises to pay, 189?-1908
- XI. List of deeds given to Manuel Marshall, belonging to F. W. Homans, 1875-1903
- XII. [List of] Warranty Deeds, Quitclaims Deeds, and Tryst Deeds from Francis W. Homans to Cape Pond Ice Company, undated
- XIII. Numerous leases, partial releases, indentures, agreements, quitclaim deeds, bills of sale, assignment of mortgage, warranty deeds, guaranty of stock, special warranty deed, trust deed, and agreement of association, 1875-1911

Series III – Folder 1. Freeman H. Abbot, son E. Raymond Abbot and Freeman's cousin James Abbot, 1916-1940

- I. Numerous Release, Bill of Sale, Discharge, Agreement, Warranty Deed, Partial Release of Mortgage, Bill of Sale of Personal Property, Statute of Quitclaim Deed, Deed and select copies, various dates
- II. Blueprint, Town of Rockport, September 10, 1924
- III. Various surveys of land belonging to Cape Pond Ice Co., 1923-1933
- IV. Handwritten and typed description of property (land, buildings, tools, equipment) of Cape Pond Ice Co, Tax Evaluation, 1932-1937
- V. City of Gloucester, Description and Assessed Valuation, 1933, 1935, 1937
- VI. Incorporation of the Cape Pond Ice Company, Commonwealth of MA, January 22, 1902
- VII. Articles of Amendment, Increase of Capital, Commonwealth of MA, March 11, 1908
- VIII. Treasury Department, Washington, December 5, 1919. Capital Stock Tax, July 1, 1918-June 30, 1919
- IX. Envelope, Cape Pond Ice Co., June 5, 1928

Series IV – Folder 1. John Ryan, his son Jack Ryan, and John Ryan’s son-in-law, Jack Hodges, 1941-1982

- I. Business, legal, financial correspondence and memoranda relating to the Dehydrating Process Co. and its stock, 1950-1960s
- II. Materials related to Standby Agreement, Correspondence Lease Agreement, Promise to Pay, Certificate of Vote, Real Estate Appraisal, Letters of Employment, 1946-1947
- III. Exhibit B. List of ingredients and costs for manufacturing dog and cat food, undated
- IV. Guaranty, Standby Agreement, Agreements, Leases, Agreement of Sale, Mortgage, Option Agreement, Escrow Agreements, Agreements, Quitclaim Deed, Bill of Sale Personal Property, Bills of Sale related to Dehydrating Process Co., various dates

Box 2

Series IV - Folder 2. John Ryan, his son Jack Ryan, and John Ryan's son-in-law,

Jack

I. Correspondence, Dehydrating Process Co. April 4, 1952 and September 2, 1953

II. Patent Specification No. 651,861, Method of Treating Fish, date of application December 24, 1947; Letters Patent for Method of Treating Fish and Resulting Products granted to the Dehydrating Process Company, Boston, MA. John Ryan, grantee, and inventor of said process, December 24, 1947

III. Letters Patent: Canada, No. 524504, May 1, 1956; Canada No. 492027, April 14, 1953; Iceland No. 253, November 19, 1952; Mexico No. 53564, February 26, 1952; Sweden No. 135628, December 30, 1947; Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions No. 651861, 24 December 1947 [sic]

IV. United States Patent Office No. 2,589,288 Method Treating Fish, John Ryan, assignor to Dehydrating Processing Co., Boston, MA. Patented March 18, 1952. Includes 4 drawings of Method labeled Fig. 1b, 2, 3, 4

V. Three copies of Patent No. 2,589,288, March 18, 1952

Series V – Folder 1. Dick Memhard and son, Scott, 1983-1990

I. Cape Pond Ice Company memo from Scott Memhard to Bob Lawrence, Sonolite Corporation, November 19, 1985

II. Two marketing brochures: Sonolite Corp and Piolite Plastics, Gloucester, MA, undated

III. Two business cards: Robert Lawrence, Sonolite Corp and Scott Memhard, Cape Pond Ice, undated

IV. Four photographic negatives:
One negative, labeled Fernwood Lake Icehouse, Cape Ann Historical Association, undated

V. Three negatives, traditional ice harvesting, January 26, 1936, January 23, 1938, and September 7 or 9, 1931

VI. Xeroxed copies of 13 negatives on two 8.5 x 11 sheets, including the 4 negatives mentioned above. Dates range from September 1931 – January 1938. Accompanied by handwritten letter from Bob Lawrence to Scott Memhard, December 16, 1985

VII. Handwritten note on reverse of Delivery Receipt dated October 9, 1985

VIII. 14 Envelopes, various dates, stored in one large envelope