

# Ice worth cold cash to Lakeville settler in '30s



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This story is the latest in a continuing series celebrating Dakota County's sesquicentennial. **Next:** The Lake of Many Colored Feathers.

## ■ German emigre, family survived Depression

**TIM CAREY** STAFF WRITER

Carl Krause was short in stature but big in ambition. He also knew a valuable natural resource when he saw one – including Lake Marion's greatest winter asset – ice.

Krause emigrated alone from Germany in 1893 at the age of 13 and settled in Lakeville. When he got there, he alternately worked with his hands as a carpenter and farmed the area's land. In the 1930s he found a way to combine the two into a little business where he could earn some cold hard cash.

He harvested ice from Lake Marion and sold it in Lakeville.

"He really wasn't a very big man," said John R. Krause, Carl's son, who helped deliver ice in Lakeville while he was growing up. "He was only about 5-foot-8 and weighed about 150 pounds. But he knew how to handle himself and that heavy ice pretty well. He harvested during the Depression, and there weren't

many ways to make a living in those days."

Carl farmed when he first came to Lakeville. Then in 1902, he married Elizabeth Gardt and managed his father-in-law's wagon shop and did carpentry work in the village. But Lake Marion's potential beckoned.

In the 1930s Carl hired 10 harvesters who worked the winter months cutting the ice into huge blocks. He also hired four men to stack the ice in a barn next to McClintock's Store in Lakeville. The men earned \$1 a day and worked during daylight hours during the five or six coldest weeks of the winter when ice was thickest.

"We had an old Model A engine and this huge homemade circle saw on a sled," said John, who still lives in Lakeville. "We'd pull it along the ice until we found some that looked good and we'd start cutting. But we never cut all the way through because the ice wouldn't float if we did.

"We'd go to about 2 inches from the bottom and we cut the ice into these huge 300 to 400 pound blocks," he said. "The size of the ice depended on how thick the lake was at the time. Then we'd float the cakes to the trucks and hauled them to the barn."



Carl  
Krause

The ice was packed in sawdust to keep it from melting during the warmer days of the spring, summer and fall.

"There was always some waste," John said. "But the amount depended on how it was packed and stored. You could cut down on that waste by packing it right."

Carl and his sons, John, Ray and Jerry, delivered the ice by horse and wagon to houses and stores in the village.

And kids came running, gathering around the wagon waiting for ice chips to fall.

"He used to tell me about the kids," said John C. Krause, Carl's grandson who also lives in Lakeville. "That was a big treat for them."

Carl charged 50 cents per 100 pounds of ice. "But of course, we'd offer a deal to our regular customers," John R. Krause said.

Deliveries were made where the ice was needed most, including Lakeville's homes, general store, meat market, creamery, confectionery and saloons.

"I remember going to the creamery in town where we made butter," John R. Krause said. "There were these big ice cars and I remember there were at least one or two carloads of butter packed in ice going out of there every day.

"You never realize how valuable ice and refrigeration is until you see that," he said.

Ice was also taken from waters that are polluted today. But in South St. Paul, where the majority of the state's meat packing was done, ice from any

source was considered an extremely valuable commodity by the area's meat packing companies.

"You have to remember that the water was a lot cleaner back in those days," John R. Krause said.

Swift and Co. In 1919 cut and harvested 50,000 tons of ice from the Mississippi River. Armour and Co. Also took 35,000 to 40,000 tons from the Mississippi that year.

Ice dealer H. Whaley harvested 4,000 tons from the river in South St. Paul in 1919 and built a plant to manufacture artificial ice in 1920.

Carl Krause, who died in 1973 at the age of 93, eventually left the ice business.

Modern refrigeration has replaced iceboxes, but a trip to the kitchen for cold food rarely provides the adventure it once did.

"Sure, you'd find a few minnows in the ice once in a while," John R. Krause said, "but that didn't mean that it wasn't safe to have that ice around the food."

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