

Park County Historical Society Presentation

February 16, 2013

Maddox Ice Company

Article by Jim Glenn/Park County Historical Society volunteer with editing by Earl Clay Maddox III

For 90 years (1902-1992) the Maddox family battled warehouse fires, roof crushing 45 inch snow storms and even floods in order to provide ice to Denver. It all began in 1902 when William Clay Maddox traveled to Shawnee Co. in search of land to build lakes for his ice business. The land had to be where there was a supply of clean water, it had to get cold enough to freeze quickly and it also had to be served by the railroad for shipment to Denver. He found what he was looking for in Shawnee and purchased 320 acres for \$3500. The Maddox Ice Company employed nearly 100 ice cutters, loaders, warehouse workers and delivery workers to supply Denver. Between 1902 and 1937 hundreds of thousands of tons of ice were cut into blocks measuring 24" wide, 24" thick and 60" long weighing approximately 840 pounds each from the Maddox lakes and shipped on the Colorado & Southern railroad from Shawnee down to Denver where the ice was stored in warehouses and insulated with sawdust. Each morning crews would wash the sawdust from the ice and load 21 horse-drawn Ice Wagons which would make ice deliveries throughout Denver.

Earl Clay Maddox III presented the history of his family's ice business to 68 attendees of the Park County Historical Society on Feb 16th at the Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran Church in Bailey. The Maddox Ice Company was established by Earl's great grandfather, William Clay Maddox in 1902. They cut winter ice from manmade lakes in Shawnee to be shipped to Denver. William's wife, Mrs. Hilda J. Maddox, served three meals a day to the ice crews throughout the winter season and the early ice wagons bore her initials, H.J. Maddox. Before any ice could begin freezing the lakes had to be "floated" that is all leaves and floating debris had to be removed from the water to ensure good clean and pure ice was produced. Some of the earliest photos at Shawnee show William Clay Maddox scoring the lake ice with his son, Earl Clay Maddox Sr. (who was our presenter's grandfather) using a horse-drawn saw which provided guide lines for the gas powered saws. Blocks were then cut 14 inches deep with a gasoline circular saw, called a 'Buddha' Saw. The final 10 inches had to be cut by a gasoline-powered reciprocating saw or by hand. Earl Clay Maddox III still has one of these six-foot hand ice saws used by his grandfather and great grandfather to cut ice. These cuts were across ponds that were more than several football fields in length and width. In a good year the ponds could be harvested two or three times beginning in December and ending in March or April. A warm winter would stop work halfway through the season. By the time our presenter, Earl Clay Maddox III, came along in 1954 the Denver to Shawnee railroad had been gone for 17 years and the horse-drawn wagons had given way to gasoline trucks for ice deliveries. Without the railroad to ship ice from Shawnee ponds and upon returning from World War II, Earl Clay Maddox Jr. (our presenter's father) began managing the Beatrice Creamery's ice plant and purchasing ice from them and other competitors until their own ice plant was built in 1952. One of Earl Clay Maddox III's jobs as a young boy was to ride with the delivery truck throughout Denver. As new drivers started work, the young Earl was too young to drive, but he was in charge of showing the drivers where to deliver as he knew where every customer was located. Earl Clay Maddox III did not seem to regret that he missed cutting ice by hand with his (family treasure) six-foot ice saw.



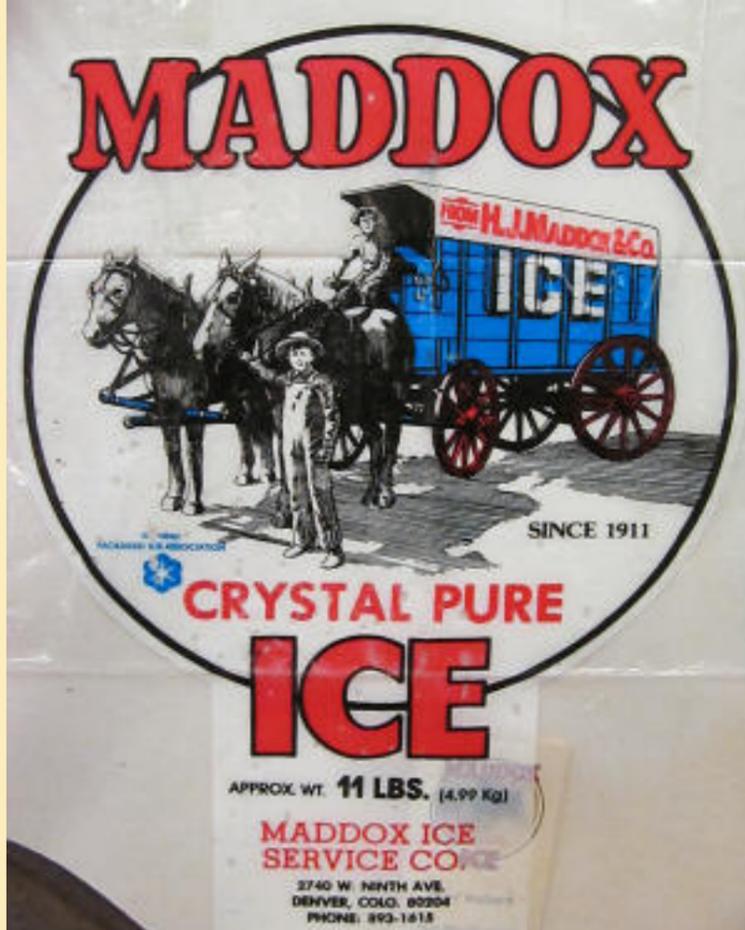
Earl Clay Maddox III

Earl answering one of many questions from the crowd of 68 attendees. Photo by Arthur Hall/PCHS.



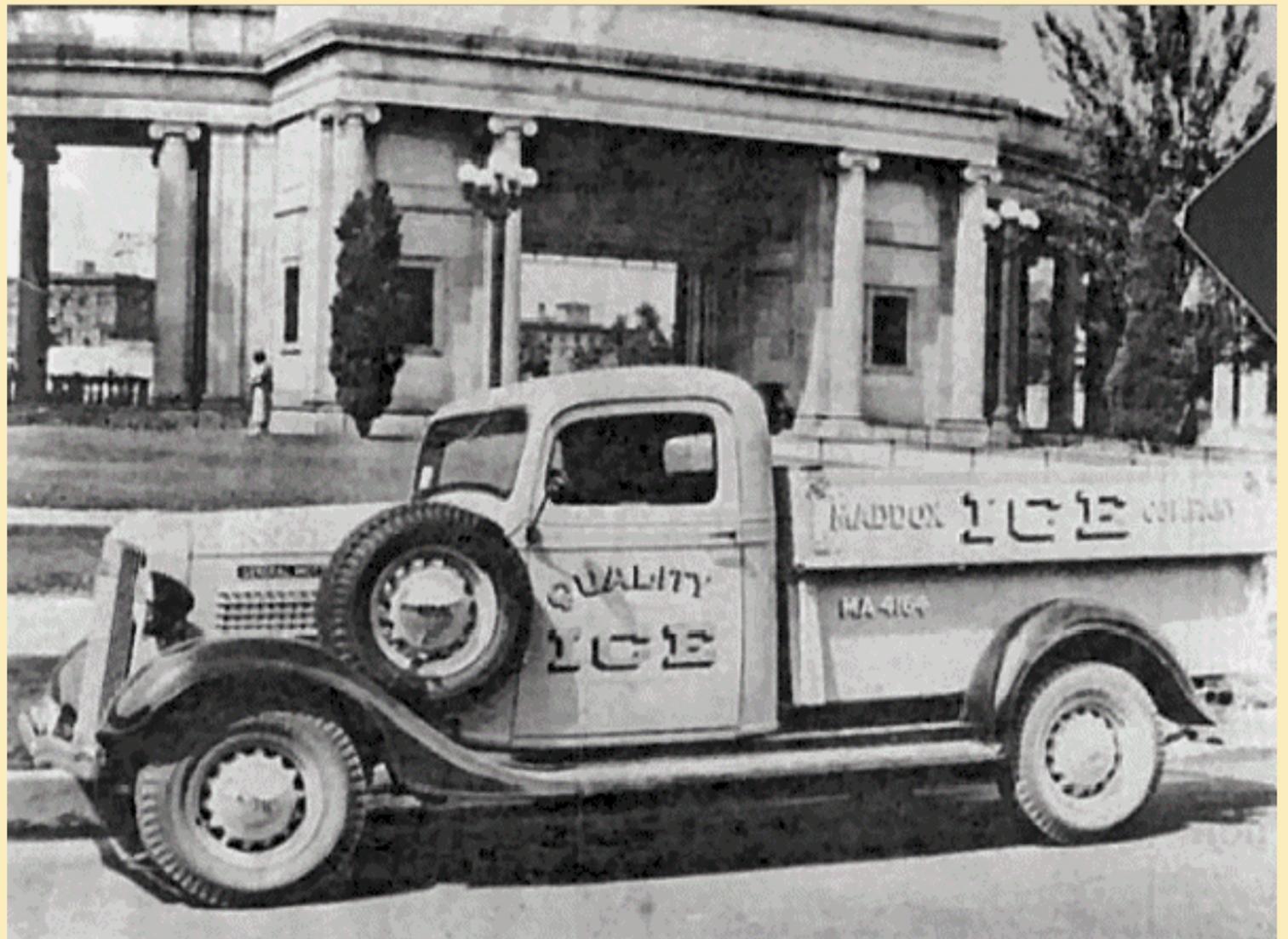
Ice Tools

Earl Clay Maddox III has ice tools in their family collection. On the right of photo are horseshoes fitted with ice studs to work on the ice ponds. Photo by Laura Van Dusen/The Flume).



Maddox Ice Company logo

The Maddox logo of a horse-drawn wagon is based on a photo of Earl's grandfather leading the wagon when he was a young kid. Photo by Laura Van Dusen/The Flume).



Photos courtesy Park County Local History Archives