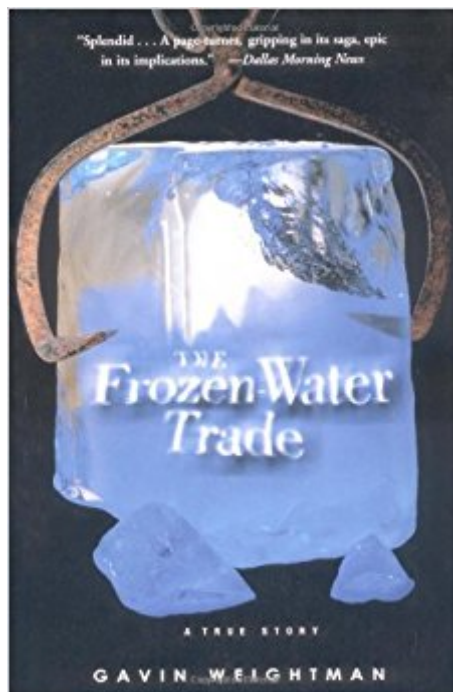


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The Frozen Water Trade: A True Story



Synopsis

Now in paperback, the fascinating story of America's vast natural ice trade which revolutionized the 19th century. On February 13, 1806, the brig Favorite left Boston harbor bound for the Caribbean island of Martinique with a cargo that few imagined would survive the month-long voyage. Packed in hay in the hold were large chunks of ice cut from a frozen Massachusetts lake. This was the first venture of a young Boston entrepreneur, Frederic Tudor, who believed he could make a fortune selling ice to people in the tropics. Ridiculed at the outset, Tudor endured years of hardship before he was to fulfill his dream. Over the years, he and his rivals extended the frozen-water trade to Havana, Charleston, New Orleans, London, and finally to Calcutta, where in 1833 more than one hundred tons of ice survived a four-month journey of 16,000 miles with two crossings of the equator. The Frozen Water Trade is a fascinating account of the birth of an industry that ultimately revolutionized domestic life for millions of people.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Weightman, a London journalist and documentary filmmaker, uncovers a secret history and ends up transforming a dull-sounding topic into a riveting read. He introduces turn-of-the-19th-century Bostonian Frederic Tudor as an indefatigable American dreamer who sought to give people something they didn't know they wanted-and make a killing while he's at it. Tudor hatches scheme after scheme to "farm" ice from New England ponds and deliver chunks of the brand-new commodity to the Caribbean, and ultimately to India and elsewhere, so that items like cold beverages and ice cream become cultural staples. Along the way Tudor encounters disbelievers,

creditors, rivals, imprisonment, yellow fever, warm weather, political scuffles-even pirates.

Weightman also delves engagingly into the science of freezing and the particulars and economics of ice transport and storage. Through it all, Weightman juggles the players in the burgeoning but finally ephemeral business while he spins a tale of a pre-refrigerated world. Issues of commerce and entrepreneurship in an infant nation are revealed in this page-turner, which gets its title from the name of the industry. When Weightman visits Tudor's original ice source, locals think the author is loony for suggesting that cubes from the pond cooled people in Calcutta two centuries earlier-and made one man (and perhaps many others) rich in the process. Weightman takes a relatively unknown part of history (and the figure at its center), and creates a funny, rollicking human adventure. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The idea sounds fanciful: harvest ice in Massachusetts and sell it to people in the tropics. But the nineteenth-century entrepreneur Frederic Tudor was immune to ridicule and single-minded in his conviction that the ice trade could be profitable. He was also right. This entertaining history of his crusade to turn New England into the world's ice-maker shows how the combination of technological innovation and sharp marketingâ "Tudor trained bartenders to use ice in cocktails in order to illustrate the virtues of cold drinksâ "created an industry that sold thousands of tons of ice a year to places like India, Cuba, and the American South. As a case study of the entrepreneurial mind, Weightman's book reminds us that creating demand can be as important as meeting it. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker

We live in a time and place in which we can have ice cold drinks even on the hottest days in the hottest parts of the country. But before anyone could take this for granted, individuals had to first discover how to bring ice to parts of the country that weren't cold. The Frozen Water Trade is an exciting tale of an entrepreneur who took a gigantic step in making this possible. It is the story of Frederick Tudor, the "ice king." The idea of an ice business was initially derided by a parade of seemingly endless critics who laughed as if Tudor did not understand that his ice and his profits would melt if he did not take proper precautions. But he gradually proved the viability of his business. He established an extensive network of ice houses to improve the efficiency of his distribution and so he could stock up on ice in the winter and deliver it quickly in the summer. He wrapped his ice in cloth and packed it in sawdust to reduce loss from melting. He

discovered that his ice would last much longer in his warehouses if he kept it elevated on a grate, so that runoff would pool on the floor rather than around the ice. And he commissioned new tools such as an ice plow so that he could harvest ice much faster. Tudor certainly had many challenges to come beyond the obvious problem of melting. He had to educate his customers on how to properly transport ice, lest they pick up their ice without anything to wrap it in and get frustrated as their new purchase melts away during their trip home. Tudor also had to deal with many property rights disputes. After searching far and wide to find the best lakes for harvesting ice, Tudor found lakes that had a plentiful amount of thick ice and were easily accessible by roads so that he could park his wagons right next to them. Tudor would find himself racing to harvest the ice against competitors who took advantage of these locations after he went through the effort of finding them. Tudor's ice business helped pave the way for many modern conveniences. Thanks to him, landlords were soon able to cool down sweltering theaters, churches, and other crowded indoor spaces by utilizing large blocks of ice. Americans were able to enjoy comforts like ice cream and cold drinks in the summer. Refrigeration and ice boxes soon became a reality, eventually enabling meatpacking industrialists such as Gustavus Swift and Philip Armour to bring beef and pork to the masses. I only recently learned about Tudor thanks to a Boston Globe article that I saw floating around Facebook, but I am glad that I did. I am also happy that Gavin Weightman tells his story in such an engaging way.

The Frozen Water Trade was recommended to me by a family member, and I must admit, I was first hesitant to purchase the book. "I'm going to read a book about shipping blocks of ice?". My first observation was that the book is a fairly easy read but not at the expense of substance. It chronicles the life of Frederick Tudor, the Ice King, who essentially invented an entire industry out of thin air. The book has valuable lessons about perseverance, business instinct and partnerships, and the idea that consumer behavior and tastes are fickle. Finally, it really shows that industries come and go, but the men who build them are strikingly similar throughout time. Moreover, it's just a really interesting history of an industry we now take for granted, but was once one of the most thriving businesses in the nation.

This book tells the magnificent story of Frederic Tudor, the Boston Ice King. First and foremost, this is the story of one man's determination to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds and prove all of his doubters wrong. The book is a success largely because of the great character Mr. Tudor was. At times he seemed as hard nosed as Daniel Day Lewis's character in *There Will Be Blood*. At other

times he seemed like a proud son hoping against hope to restore honor to his family name. Moreover, the book is filled with little historical tidbits that should be of interest to scholars, lawyers, economists, social scientists, and aspiring entrepreneurs. The book spans nearly 150 years, including run-ins with Caribbean pirates, corrupt politicians, Henry David Thoreau, and even Queen Victoria. I found the unique system of ice-harvesting property rights that evolved around the business (and were eventually memorialized in writing by a Harvard Law professor in 1841) to be particularly interesting. I was also amused by the cutthroat competition that was indicative of the ice trade in the early 1900s, around its peak. The sheer quantity of direct quotes from primary sources is impressive. I will never look at a cup of iced water (or a mint julep for that matter) the same way again.

I found this book in my local library, but then purchased a copy on as it was such a well written and interesting story. My grandfather, who lived in Farmingdale, ME, wrote in his diaries in the late 1800's of driving horses on the Kennebec River during the ice cutting operations. It was a flurry of activity for which the local men came out to work in an all out frenzy of activity for a few days or weeks, in order to cut and stash the ice in the huge ice houses along the banks of the river. One of my sons lived along the rail trail in Arlington, MA which bordered on Spy Pond. I now know why that route was planned for the RR, as it was to have a good source of transportation for the ice from Spy Pond. My other son, lives in Mahopac, NY and near Lake Croton, which the book states was a primary source of ice for NYC. So many interesting connections with the ice trade. In Maine, where I grew up, local farmers cut ice from small ponds and had their own private, small ice houses. I remember as a child living in town in the 1940's, that the local ice man made deliveries, and he would chip off small pieces to give to us kids to suck on; probably not too sanitary, but we would scrape off the sawdust and eat it anyway. Ice was such an important supply for the shipping and storage of food before the electric refrigerators became available. Maine and New England played an important role in this activity throughout the US and the world. A great story. Richard

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