The Ice King of the Hudson

John Clark was born in Northern Ireland in about 1840. His father was an officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary (this is the police force). His uncle, Capt. ? Clark was an officer in the Royal Irish Dragoons and fought against Napoleon in the battle of Waterloo.

John Clark’s father immigrated to the U.S. in about 1850 with his wife and their four children, John Clark, David, Maggie & Jennie, and settled in New York City. There in about 1852 Letty (my grandmother) was born.

John Clark went to work for an ice company at an early age as a laborer. He worked his way up to become in his later years the owner, and was a multi-millionaire. He was called “The Ice King of the Hudson”, supplying most of the ice to the population of New York City. He lived in a big estate in Yonkers, N.Y.

In those days there were no electric refrigerators. Ice had to be cut from the northern parts of the Hudson River and brought down to Yonkers (a suburb of New York City) for storage (packed in sawdust for an insulator) and then cut into smaller pieces and sold to the people and food stores, restaurants etc. of the city on a daily basis. Delivery was by men called the “Iceman” using yellow painted wagons with big red letters stating “Knickerbocker Ice Co”. The electric refrigerator naturally put all the ice companies out of business.

John Clark had one son. My father who was named after his Uncle John Clark, cannot recall, or never knew what became of that branch of the family. The families were not close in their latter years because of a feud between John Clark and my father’s brother William, who apparently “appropriated” some of his uncle’s money while in his employ. John Clark was a tough, hardworking, unforgiving man, who made it the hard way.

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