

## Icehouse at Georgian Museum Reborn

Before homes had refrigerators, they had iceboxes. Icemen (and women) delivered blocks of ice to homes. Before companies delivered ice directly to homes, families would cut blocks of ice in the winter from frozen bodies of water and transport it by bobsled to an icehouse near their home. Large blocks of ice stored in layers of sawdust or straw in an icehouse would last from late winter to late summer.

*“In my youth we cut ice from the Park Street Reservoir for our home and stored it in an underground icehouse near the south side of the Presbyterian Church. We brought to the house between 20 to 25 tons annually,”* wrote Ralph Maccracken in 1963. He was the son of William Brooks Maccracken and lived at 105 E. Wheeling Street in the late 1880s.

About 100 years later the FHA was ready to uncover their icehouse and return it to its place in the history of what had become The Georgian Museum. *“Plans are now complete to reconstruct the icehouse...”* These words appeared in the Summer 1979 issue of the *FHA Quarterly*.

Max Stebelton and Hans Faber were instrumental in uncovering and reconstructing the icehouse (1979-1980) that had been “hidden by time” below ground in the backyard of the Georgian Museum.

Often misidentified as a smokehouse or outhouse by visitors, the icehouse stood proudly in the back yard for 20+ years and the weather took its toll. By 2008 the cedar shake roof was badly deteriorated and in need of repair.

The family of Irvine and Petie Smith was seeking a way to honor their memories. Petie was one of the original seven women who founded the Fairfield Heritage Association. When the Smith family learned of the restoration work the icehouse needed, they asked friends and family to dedicate memorial gifts to be used toward the icehouse restoration and enhancement. It seemed a fitting memorial to honor both Petie and Irvine.

Thanks to many generous donations and additional support from the Smith family the roof was replaced with a standing seam terne roof to match the Georgian’s roof, the doors were replaced, an iron gate and lighting were installed, a display of ice cutting tools created and the area around the ice house was landscaped with native plants and limestone walkways. Max Stebelton Contractors generously donated materials and labor for the project, and Max Stebelton donated antique ice-cutting tools for permanent display inside the icehouse.

The icehouse and garden were dedicated on July 18, 2009, and now provide an important education component for visitors of all ages to the museum.