



## Places – Sites – Monuments History

### Benjamin M. Robinson Ice Pond

Henry E. Tracy Ice Pond

Christopher Wendell Lawler Ice Pond

Chris' Pond

Uncle Bill's Pond

Ice Business

Skating Pond

Address: 17 Chris' Lane

City: Southwest Harbor

State: Maine

Map and Lot: Map 3 – Lot 37

Map: SAN 1921 – LAWLER ICE BUSINESS

Date Founded: Circa 1860

Duration: 1860-1947

Original Owner: Robinson - Benjamin M. Robinson (1826-1901) – Christopher Wendell Lawlor's great uncle.

Subsequent Owners:

Tracy - Henry E. Tracy Jr. (1849-1925)

Lawler - Christopher Wendell Lawler (1893-1956)

Sklaroff - William "Bill" Sklaroff (1882-1967)

Town of Southwest Harbor

"Capt. Benjamin Robinson had a pond constructed on his property and established an ice delivery business in the village, which still continues being now owned by Christopher W, Lawler." -

"Traditions and Records of Southwest Harbor and Somesville, Mount Desert Island, Maine" by Mrs. Seth S. Thornton, 1938, p. 92.

"The Lawler ice house [behind Main Street, Southwest Harbor] was built by Benjamin Robinson, who also dug out the swamp near it making a pond, and established an ice business which he conducted for some years. After his death the business was purchased by Henry Tracy who carried it on for some time and then sold to Christopher Lawler who still owns and conducts it." - "Traditions and Records of Southwest Harbor and Somesville, Mount Desert Island, Maine" by Mrs. Seth S. Thornton, 1938, p. 155.

Benjamin M. Robinson (1826-1901) was Christopher Wendell Lawlor's great uncle, the brother of Chris' maternal grandfather, James E. Robinson.

The ice house was nearest to Main Street, then the barn, then the pond.

Chris hired men from the Getchell Ice Cream Company, after they had finished bringing in the ice in Bangor, to help him harvest ice in Southwest Harbor.

A January 28, 1939 Southwest Harbor fire happened at low tide. The firemen drained the ice pond to fight it. Chris lost his ice supply and had to haul 20 trucks of it from Somesville Pond that winter.

The September 1947 fire that destroyed the Lawlor ice house was started by a tramp who was staying in the hay loft when he lighted his pipe. All four of Chris' work horses, pet percherons, died in the fire. The horses kicked so badly that they left horseshoe prints on the rafters of the barn. Chris was devastated and had lost everything as he had no insurance.

"Icehouse and Barn Lost by Fire at Southwest Tues.

Fire of undetermined origin destroyed the ice house and barn of C.W. Lawler, of Southwest Harbor, early Tuesday morning.

The fire, in which four horses and valuable equipment were lost, was discovered by a neighbor, Leon Rich, [Leon T. Rich (1910-1979)] but as the buildings were entirely in flames it was impossible to save the contents. Mr. Lawler attempted to enter the barn to save the horses but was driven back by the smoke and intense heat.

The buildings were located near the center of the town on the road to McKinley, but efficient work on the part of the fire Department protected the surrounding property." - The Bar Harbor Times, Thursday, December 11, 1947.

"Investigate Fire at Southwest Har.

Two men questioned Wednesday in connection with the destruction of a barn and the death of four horses in a fire at Southwest Harbor December 9, allegedly admitted that the blaze was accidentally set while they were in the barn, according to Dep. Sheriff William Billings of Sea Wall.

Billings said the two men, Charles Rice [Charles E. Rice (1904-1999)] and Mitchell Gordius [George Mitchell Gordius (1908-1979)] of McKinley, broke into the barn of Christopher Lawler, lit matches to uncover bottles of beer left there earlier in the evening, and accidentally ignited the building.

Frightened by the sudden blaze, Billings continued, the men did nothing to quench the flames, ran from the barn and failed to notify either neighboring families or the fire department.

The two men were released without charge. The case is still under investigation by William Ricker of Blue Hill, special investigator for the Maine State Insurance Commission; County Attorney Edwin Smith, of Bar Harbor; Dep. Sheriff Lyle Reed of McKinley." - The Bar Harbor Times, Thursday, December 18, 1947.

"C.W. Lawler, who lost his four horses in the recent fire which destroyed his barn and icehouse, is purchasing other horses and will go into the northern woods in the employ of the Great Northern Paper Company." - The Bar Harbor Times, Thursday, December 18, 1947.

The town of Southwest Harbor acquired Chris's Pond on March 4, 1957 at the Town Meeting.  
(Warrant article #37)

After Christopher Lawler died in November 1956, William "Bill" Sklaroff (1882-1967) bought the pond and offered it to the town with the proviso that it be called "Uncle Bill's Pond." The voters of Southwest Harbor had the wit to accept Mr. Sklaroff's offer, though I believe that the pond is generally referred to as "Chris's Pond." – Meredith Hutchins 02/15/2013.