

## HAWARDEN....HOW IT ALL BEGAN

### TRAGEDY ON THE ICE FIELDS

#### Chapter 39

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Several months ago I wrote an article on one of Calliope and Hawarden's most fascinating and historic industries, the Ice Harvest. The article talked about the young men who worked on the ice harvests each year. A cold hard job. When the ice was ready to harvest a crew of men were hired to cut, break and move the cakes of ice to the large ice houses that would hold around 5,000 tons of ice. As you can imagine this work was difficult as well as dangerous.

Soon after the article on the Icehouses was published there was a knock on my front door. When I opened it I was greeted by Judy Danielson. In her hand she held a yellowed copy of her grandfather's obituary. Judy's mother had sent her to my house to show me this sad, but historical accounting of the tragedy of harvesting ice. Judy's mother is Lois DeVries who is now residing at Hillcrest Care Center and the obituary carried the headlines: SAD DEATH OF WAYNE HEDDEN: Wayne was Lois's father.

I am quoting from the obituary from the Hawarden Independent dated January 19, 1928, over eighty-four years ago.

Wayne Hedden, a lifelong resident of this community, was accidentally drowned in the icy waters of the Hawarden Sand and Gravel Co's pit in the west part of town about 7:30 last Friday morning. He was working for the Hawarden Ice Co., assisting in putting up ice in the new ice house which has recently been constructed at the gravel pit. A considerable quantity of ice had been cut loose and this was being floated in blocks or rafts to the chute leading to the ice house. Wayne was working along the edge of the solid ice near the shore, pushing these ice rafts along with a 30 foot pike pole. A dozen or more men were employed at various phases of the work, but none of them happened to be near when the accident occurred and the first they knew he was in the water was when they heard his cries for help and saw him struggling. It was believed that while pushing the raft along the shore, he must have lost his footing and pitched head first into the water.

There was only a few feet of open water between the shore ice and the floating ice raft. The footing on the shore ice was very slippery and slanted towards the water. Guy Krull and Charles Armstrong were the nearest workmen to him, but they were at least 100 yards away. The two men immediately rushed to save him, and if they had reached the point a little sooner, they could undoubtedly have rescued him as he was not over two or three feet from the edge of the ice. Just as Guy Krull reached the edge of the ice near him, Wayne sank out of sight and did not re-appear. The water was about 12 feet deep at the point where the drowning occurred. Other workmen quickly rushed to the scene but there were no tools at hand with which to immediately recover the body. The pole that Wayne was using was lying on the floating raft of ice and a boat was obtained to retrieve it. It is estimated that over twenty minutes elapsed before the body was retrieved. Dr A.J. Meyer had been summoned by telephone and was there when the body was recovered. Attempts to revive Mr.Hedden were made by the use of a pulmotor, but these were to no avail.

Wayne had informed fellow workmen the day before that he could not swim. It was believed that if he had been able to swim at all he could have kept himself afloat until help arrived. This was his first winter at work with the ice crew. In December he had assisted in the filling of the ice houses on the north side and work at the gravel pit had started only two days before the accident. Following the accident on Friday, all work was suspended until the next Tuesday.

Wayne Hedden was born April 30, 1894 and died January 13, 1928 at the age of 33 years, 8 months and 13 days. His entire life was spent in this community. He was married to Anna Kavanaugh of Spink in 1916. He was the father of eight children. He was preceded in death by a 7 month old daughter. The seven children who were left fatherless ranged in age from 10 years to just a few months old. Six daughters and one son.

It is amazing that when Lois DeVries read the stories about the ice houses earlier this year, she could go directly to this treasured obituary and share it with me. She was less than 10 years old at the time of her father's death so I am sure that this yellowed piece of paper contains most of her memories of her dad. Imagine the struggles of the mother, widowed after only 12 years of marriage with seven young children, headed for the depression years of the 30's and facing the future of raising her family alone.

This story needs to be told if for no other reason than to impress on our present generation the hardships that families have faced from the earliest days until now. Hardships that have made our country strong and its people unshakeable. Hardships that continue to teach us lessons about love and family and endurance.