

<b>Filename:</b> Gloucester_2.pdf
<b>Title:</b> 2. Gloucester, Mass. Interviews by Joint Fisheries Commission. November, 1893.
<b>Location:</b> National Archives, College Park, MD. RG 22, Box No 17, E44, Stack Area 150, Row 1, Compartment 17
<b>Source:</b> RG 22. Records of the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Records of the U.S. Fish Commission & the Bureau of Fisheries. General Records. Records of the Joint Committee Relative to the Preservation of the Fisheries in Waters Contiguous to Canada & U.S., 1893-1895. Interviews 1893-1894, Lake of the Woods, Gloucester, MA.

**Page 76 [1]**

Gloucester, Mass.

Charles H. Pew.

(Of the firm of John Pew & Sons)

Interviewed by William Wakeham, Richard Rathbun, and Hugh M. Smith

Nov. 21, 1893

His business was established in 1849. The purse seine came into use somewhere about 20 years ago. It developed slowly at first because they were used at first for menhaden, and then for mackerel. At that time when the purse seines were used for mackerel there was a very large fleet of vessels went mackereling with hook and line. Thinks in some years nearly 1,000 vessels were engaged off our shores, Maine

**Page 77 [2]**

New Hampshire and Massachusetts, catching mackerel altogether with the hook and line. And way back when the business was first started, say, for example, in 1831, there were something like 400,000 barrels caught off Massachusetts alone with the hook and line.

In 1890 the catch of Massachusetts was only about 19,000 barrels. There used to be periods of scarce years, but he does not think the mackerel of those years were really

**Page 78 [3]**

scarce, but thinks the vessels did not reach the proper grounds.

Around Sable Ids. used to be a great place for mackerel. The very largest catches of fish used to be made there. Of late years they have all left there. Does not think the mackerel are as scarce as people think they are.

The vessels then were small and the crews were small, about 8 men with perhaps 2 or 3 boys was the ordering crew. Some of the vessels now carry 22

**Page 79 [4]**

to 24 men.

It is very lately that vessels would go mackereling the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. Usually went after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. That used to be the time when they would leave off cod fishing and take up mackereling but of late years they have caught them the latter part of March. The vessels that engaged in

mackerel fishing in those days also engaged in cod fishing. If we caught 400,000 barrels of mackerel now, do not know where we would market

**Page 80 [5]**

them. Mackerel then were a better article, however, then they are as a whole to-day. Thinks the purse seine and pound fishery both should have restrictions. There is no one fishing for mackerel to-day, with the exception of the pounds and weirs, and they are catching them along all the time. From 150 to a higher numbers of barrels comes up every day from the Provinces.

Mackerel are not a prolific fish, there is no question about that. Take the coast of Norway for illustration. There is nothing used

**Page 81 [6]**

there for mackerel except the hook and line, and they have not to any great extent pursued the mackerel fishery to export to other countries. It is sold simply for local food; and mackerel are not plenty there to-day. One vessel went to Norway this year, and said there were a few fish there, but could not catch them.

Mackerel as a rule are surface fish. Only go into deep waters at times when they are

**Page 82 [7]**

moving, or at spawning time.

They cannot take care of themselves as against other fish. Take the blue fish, they will take care of themselves, but mackerel are a prey for most every fish that there is.

Not being a prolific fish and at the same time a defenseless fish, if let alone they will not increase very fast. Take all the modern appliances, nets, purse seines, pounds and traps, and they do not have a fair show. We have

**Page 83 [8]**

come to the conclusion that mackerel cannot hold their own with the modern appliance that are used to catch them.

In the old days did not begin to take fish until after the spawning season. Does not think, as a rule, mackerel spawn in the English waters until July. In our waters they spawn a little earlier, because our waters are a little warmer. A fish that has a tendency to early fatness spawns earlier. Fish that are

**Page 84 [9]**

poor spawn late usually.

Thinks there should be concurrent action between the United States and the Dominion of Canada in regard to the purse seine fishery. He would say, have no mackerel caught either by purse seines, pounds or gill nets until the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. But it would be pretty hard to have a one-sided regulation or restriction. Pound nets have been used ever since he has had an acquaintance with fishing.

**Page 85 [10]**

Have used them all along the Nova Scotia shore and Cape Breton, and all up on the west shore, but mostly at the Magdalen's. Not as many people are benefited by the purse seine fishery as used to be in the old times. For purse seine fishing they have to have all able bodied men. Thinks the cod fishery of more importance than the mackerel fishery.

In 1884 the catch of mackerel was nearly 400,000 barrels, and only 12,000 or 14,000 were

**Page 86 [11]**

caught in English waters.

As a rule, when mackerel first strike this shore they are small. Sometimes whole schools will come on this shore year after year, and increase in size, and you can trace them year after year. The large catch in 1884 were small fish. The large fish that our vessels caught this year the first of June were undoubtedly the remnants of that big school of fish that had been traveling year after year,

**Page 87 [12]**

and they got down to a very small number and very larger size.

Those fish went to the Bay: the last catch was off Sidney. Capt. Jacobs states that he followed that school of fish way up above Magdalen's and in sight of Gaspe, and there they sunk and he lost them. These fish are not caught again until quite late in the fall, and they are caught almost exclusively by the nets and pounds along

**Page 88 [13]**

the Nova Scotia coast. These fish are the mother fish and are of more importance in the supply of the new schools than any other fish we have on our shore. The loss of life is very much smaller by the modern way of fishing than it was in the old hand line fishing. Then vessels used to fish close together and when there came a gale they would go adrift, and there would be a very large loss of life.

Georges Bank was a

**Page 89 [14]**

very good fishing ground for Gloucester vessels with hand lines (cod fishery, etc.). Caught what was known in the trade as Georges fish, and they were the finest and best fish to be had anywhere. Vessels did not go trawling there until about 20 years ago. Previous to that time some years, perhaps 200 vessels would be fishing on the Bank at one time. They began to use trawls on the Bank, and to-day you cannot catch any fish there with

**Page 90 [15]**

hand lines. In 20 years' time that Bank has been destroyed as a hook and line fishing ground. Used to catch more fish on that Bank than we caught in all the other fishing grounds put together. Today it does not pay to send vessels there hook and line fishing. Thinks it was a shame to allow vessels to go fishing and catch those small cod down around the "Rips" off Nantucket (supposed to be from fry planted by Fish Commission). The vessels have almost broken up that school

**Page 91 [16]**

of fish in 3 years. They fished there 3 years, and this last year there were less than before. The second year they found them they had a larger number of vessels and caught 4,000,000 pounds of them. There were quite a number of vessels there this year, but they did not do as well. If they had left those fish and not caught them for 4 or 5 years we would have had a big supply of larger fish.

The French Government in 1850(?)

**Page 92 [17]**

passed a law that gave a bounty of 50 francs to each man that went fishing, and that law is in force today, with some few modifications. And by their law to-day every French merchant that sells fish to a foreign county, caught by Frenchman in French vessels, and exported in French vessels to the United States receives a bounty of 10 francs on the quintal. That bounty alone amounts, in some years, to the price at which the

**Page 93 [18]**

fish are sold elsewhere. The French merchant brings his fish into the New York market; he pays a duty of 50 cents a quintal, a half a cent a pound, and he pays a freight of 25 cents a quintal, and then he receives from the Government \$1.25 bonus upon every quintal that he sells. It would make us richer than the Vanderbilts if this government would trust us that way. That is the way they have driven English

**Page 94 [19]**

merchants out of the business to a great extent, and they have gone into the West Indies markets, and now they are coming into the United States markets. Knows of one man who has bought 6 to

10 cargoes of them, and the quantity is increasing each year. While such regulations are in force you must give our fishermen every latitude you can possibly, so that they can hold their own. Every fisherman that receives a bounty is registered, and the

#### **Page 95 [21]**

government can take those men whenever they want to. It is understood that they can take them for the Navy at some future time.

Thinks the trawl line is a destructive method of fishing, but does not see how it can be given up simply because that to day is the only way of fishing. The supply would be reduced almost to nothing if we gave up trawl line fishing. Some vessels set

#### **Page 96 [21]**

16 miles of ground line.

The measurement for the small codfish is under 22 inches. They measure it from the extended part of the nape. Measure the shortest distance. Cod fish seem smaller of late years. Everything above 22 inches is a large fish. The live measurement for large fish is 28 inches and over. The cod fish caught around Georges are the best fish caught anywhere in the world. The next grade below 22 inches is 15

#### **Page 97 [22]**

inches. From 15 to 22 inches is medium. Below 15 inches, we call them snappers. The market for barreled fish is limited to May, June, and some very few in July. Those fish are simply salted the same as all pickeled fish.

After cod come from the vessel we want them to be in salt for a fortnight, and then we take them out of the butts and put them in piles about 4 feet high and then we put weights on them for perhaps one or two

#### **Page 98 [23]**

days, and then a very nice dry northwest wind will cure them for the average western market. If we are going to cure them for shipping fish, we have to take 3 different days. When you come to take 85 degrees of temperature, at the larger point where the glue that is between the scales, will melt, and they become what we call burnt fish. They have a system at Halifax where they dry fish that are not pickeled and salted.

#### **Page 99 [24]**

During the close season thinks the mackerel increased on this coast. If there was an early close season the fishermen would follow other kinds of fishing. There is great damage done by the nets

and pounds along shore. They do not catch many mackerel along the United States coast in nets and pounds during the spring of the year, but at Nova Scotia they catch them all the time.

A great many of our

**Page 100 [25]**

fishermen think you must not put any restriction at all on the fishery, but he cannot see how you can have fish preserved unless you do put some restrictions on the catch. Take herring, mackerel, and other edible fish, and the appliances we have will catch the fish, but we do not decrease the number of other fish that prey upon them.

Does not think menhaden or alewives are the natural food of the

**Page 101 [26]**

cod fish. They feed upon fish that are near the bottom of the ocean, crabs, shrimp, etc. The principal food for cod in the northern waters to the Gulf of St. Lawrence is the capelin.

Does not think you ever see cod fish schooling on the surface on the coast. The herring is a quicker fish than the cod, and it is a very rare thing to find cod fish with herring or menhaden in them. Sometimes will see them

**Page 102 [27]**

with squid in them.

Sell the large cod fish for about \$5.25 a quintal and the small ones for about \$4.25, and the snappers would be \$2 a quintal. The snappers are sold in the United States.