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Gloucester, Mass.

Capt. Joseph Graham

Nov. 17, 1893

Interviewed by William Wakeham and Hugh M. Smith

Has been fishing 20 years. Mackerel fishing about all of the time, with the exception of about two years. Captain of Sch. Hattie M. Graham of Gloucester.

Was down at the southern fishery this last spring. Usually strike the spring schools off about Hatteras, Cape May and along that shore. Sometimes 20 miles off; sometimes 100 miles; all the way

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from Hatteras north. At that time they are heading to the north and east, N.N.E. About 35 miles off shore we first meet them. Keep about that distance every year. The first fish that we see are in large schools. Have followed spring schools:- that is one school:- from the time we strike south; that is about the 10<sup>th</sup> of March

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to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April; have followed them about 3 weeks; possibly a distance of 100 to 150 miles. The first part of the season they do not move very fast; probably about 5 to 6 miles an hour; sometimes more, sometimes less; especially when they strike places where they feed. Do not move much then for a week at a

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time. They are small fish and very poor. Have noticed spawn in these early fish. The small ones do not have spawn. Another school comes about three weeks afterward, large fish, what we call 1s and 2s. Have noticed the spawn in them. This second school comes in the same direction, just as far

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south as the other school. The small ones are not too young to spawn: they are No. 3 fish, about 10 inch.

Have found mackerel as far north as the Bay Chaleur about 30 miles north of Prince Edward Island. Was a place near 7 Islands in years gone by, about 80 or 90 miles north of Prince Edward Ids.,

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where they have been caught.

Has fished on the Nova Scotia shore this spring. The fish were taken as they were going down to the eastward. Never saw them going in from off shore. Have caught mackerel all the way from 5 to 15 miles off that shore, but have been seen as far as 35 or 40 miles off shore.

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Usually first strike them on the shore at Cape Sable, or a little south of that point, say 5 to 10 miles. They come in from about S.S.W. along the eastern edge of Georges, and go up in the Bay of Fundy. They catch them up as far as St. Johns.

Does not think the same fish which occur on this coast appear on the Nova Scotia coast and in the Gulf

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of St. Lawrence. They follow them out of the Bay in the summer time until they lose sight of them, at Browns Bank. They were going about S.S.E. The farthest is about 70 miles S.S.W. from Cape Sable.

Most of the fish that struck our coast last year were No. 2 fish. Never struck this coast this year at all. Do not

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know where they went to. All the fish which we got here this year were large.

Has followed schools in the fall as far off shore as Chatham. They were heading to the S.S.E. out through the Channel. Have followed them off the Nova Scotia shore in the fall. Sometimes they are in close and sometimes off quite a distance. Generally lose them

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about Little Hope, Nova Scotia. They take the same course going back as they do going in. When they leave in the fall, they leave gradually; about the same as they come. Come on in schools and leave in schools. When last seen in the fall they are in schools. Do not notice any difference between the size of early schools and the late schools.

The

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fish are at their best as regards fatness, in October. From the 1<sup>st</sup> of August to the last of October. After that they begin to lose their fat.

Has never caught mackerel in the winter. Has known them to occur in winter off this coast. Shore fishermen have caught them on their trawls in the winter; about 15 to 20 miles off shore from Cape Ann. A few are

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Caught most every winter, in the months of December and January. Does not know their condition, but thinks they are poor. The trawls are set in all the way from 35 to 70 fathoms of water.

Look for the fish to strike about the same part of the coast every year. Always fish about 30 to 40 miles off, and find them every spring about the same.

Generally strike them on the

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Nova Scotia shore from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. Seiners get them there at that time. Do not know if they strike at one point on the Nova Scotia coast earlier than they do others. They get them at Yarmouth in traps before they do at any other part of Nova Scotia. It is pretty hard to tell where the best fishing grounds are on this coast. In the first part of the

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year all along the coast from Monhegan to St. Johns. Fish there about the first of October and then work to the westward. The fishing grounds vary with the season.

The movements of the schools are influenced by fishes preying upon them. Last year saw what we call blue fish drive the mackerel off the coast sooner than they would

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have gone otherwise. Blue fish come about the last of July. Look for a spell of bad fishing after the blue fish come. Fish called bonitoes also prey on mackerel. Do not know of any others. Dog fish are hard on them, but do not drive them. Do not think whales hurt mackerel any; not half as much as blue fish. Have never known

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blue fish to drive them out to sea. Has known them to drive them on the shore. Blue fish this fall around Cape Cod the first part of the fall kept mackerel from coming there altogether.

Find different size fish in the schools. Find some schools containing fish of uniform size. No particular

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season when we look for the same size fish in the schools.

The largest mackerel I ever saw measured 17 inches. Had a number of that size this fall, probably 15 or 20. Caught them about 6 or 7 miles off Cape Ann. The smallest mackerel I ever saw schooling were about 4 or 5 inches long. They occur generally in the fall, about October. Thinks

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they were hatched that spring, in June.

Do not know much about where they spawn. It is pretty hard to tell. Have never found any place yet where they spawn. Thinks they spawn in deep water: down on muddy bottoms. The first fish we get in the spring tastes rather muddy. Thinks they spawn in June, because we get them down

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the Cape Shore the first of June and they are full of spawn then; almost running out of them. All the fish we get on the Cape Shore have spawn in them; that is before a certain date. The early fish all have spawn, also what we get south. The fish never strike this coast much before June, and have spawn then. Have seen it just running

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from them; not in the water, but on the vessel's deck. That was down on the Nova Scotia shore. All the mackerel we get in the southern spring fishery are full of spawn, except those that are too small to spawn.

Has not noticed any peculiarity about the habits of the mackerel at the time they spawn. They are easy to catch then, and seem to be

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rather dead. More apt to catch a school then than at other times. There is a dull period for mackerel fishing about the time they spawn every year. Always dull about the last of June. Thinks they disappear and remain down for a fortnight, somewhat according to the weather. When they come up after they have spawned they are very thin and poor. Can tell

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before opening them whether they have spawned or not, by their appearance. They are lank after spawning; do not look near as big – are long and slender. They fatten rapidly after spawning. About the last of July they get quite fat.

Thinks there are just as many mackerel now as ever, but do not catch as many. Thinks

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they are wilder and harder to catch. Saw as many fish this year as ever, but did not catch as many on account of the water being so clear. Fish see the seines and go under them. Do not know the cause of the wildness. Find them wild through the entire season. They are generally more shy towards the fall. Fat mackerel are harder to catch

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than thin ones. Fish on the Nova Scotia shore are very easy to catch. Harder to catch them south. It is on account of the white water. Could put a bullet(?) down on the sounding line and see it 12 fathoms below the surface.

Mackerel feed on different things. Have seen live feed, shrimp; and then there is a kind

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of red seed in the water. Do not know what it is. Some call it cayenne. They feed upon it. Find them full of it sometimes. It is pretty well distributed along the coast. See it some springs. Last spring saw lots of it. This last couple of years have seen just as much as we used to, but before that, was not any on the coast for a number

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of years back. Find the same feed in the North Bay. More there this year than for 15 years before, so the fishermen say. When mackerel are among line feed; what we call shrimp, they are very hard to catch. That food does not burn them as the red food does.

Does not think the close time law any benefit to the mackerel. Thinks the

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law was passed because they thought there would be more fish come on the coast then. Does not know any other reason why they passed it. Does not think it affords any protection to the fish during the spawning season. The southern spring mackerel fishery has not been profitable as a general thing. Has for a few vessels, but not for the fleet

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in general. Has been as high as 250 sails south fishing, and probably not over 15 sails would pay their expenses. They engaged in it, probably, because they did not know what else to do. Were fitted out for the business and did not wish to change for another voyage. Might be 15 sails go there this spring and do well, and perhaps 15 sails the next

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spring – all different vessels. The crews were anxious to go on the southern voyage in the spring. There was some advantage in starting early. Have been ships in New York on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, that gets a trip in early, and get more money for them then. Can get a better selection of men for the crew by fitting out early.

Have been hook and line fishing

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for mackerel every fall, would raise them and set around the vessel. Just as soon as one pull them up we generally set around the vessel. Used to go regular hook and line fishing in the North Bay, about 15 to 18 years ago. Did not catch as many then with hook and line as we do now with purse seines, not near as many. Did not begin hook and line fishing

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until it was pretty well over. There were 10 or 15 sail hooking at North Bay this summer; about the same number every year. The “Notice” was down there and got 150 barrels of fish.

Does not think the seines hurt the fish much; not half as much as the nets do. Thinks a good many seines operating along the coast tends to drive them off. The

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wildness of the fish may be due to the purse seine – at least it helps them to be wild. Has know large quantities of small mackerel to be meshed in the seines. Has not been much destruction of fish in that way of late years, but 8 or 9 years ago there was quite a large quantity of mackerel destroyed in that way.

No means of telling what the school is like, especially at

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night. Can tell pretty near in the day time if the weather is fine so that you can see them on top of the water.

Thinks the present scarcity of mackerel on our coast is partly due to the blue fish. They keep them off shore all the time.

Thinks the fish on this coast this year were down and (?) showed only at certain times. Quite a large quantity of fish

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caught in October, but not many before.

Have not had the same number of vessels in the business since 1886 that there were before. Last year not over 70 sails on the coast. Not over 150 this year. Used to be 400 or 500 sails in the business. Vessels are not making quite as large fares as they did (?) years ago, but some make very large fares.

Would not favor a

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renewal of the close time law. Does not think that the purse seine needs any regulations. If they were to give the purse seine up, does not think they would make enough with the hook and line to pay running expenses. We have had vessels in it every year, and they do not any more than pay their bills. Take a whole fleet at that business and

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they would not do anything at all. It used to be a profitable business. The effect of using so much bait tends to keep the fish together. They do not seem to bite as they used to do. Raise fish on this coast now and you will not get more than 4 or 5, and then they will disappear.

Has caught the most of his fish on the Maine coast, all the way from Cape

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Ann to Mount Desert. Had best fishing off Cape Ann in October.

Caught about 150 bbls. this year in the southern fishery. Sold them in Philadelphia. Brought all the way from 8 to 15 cents. They have run bigger prices than that in New York. Sold as high as 30 cents apiece there last spring. Do not get those prices very often though.

Was in the

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Southern fishery in 1885 when as many fish were thrown away. They were mostly small fish though. Threw a good many away himself. The reason they threw them away was that there was no demand for them in the market. Got them off Sandy Hook all the way from 20 to 30 miles. Was off one trip 75 miles E.S.E. from New York. Just as many out there

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as there were in shore, and all the same kind of fish. Did not use any large fish out there that year.

The fish go into the Gulf of St. Lawrence around Scatteri, Cape North and Cape Breton, and they come out the same way. Have been seen going through Canso, but he never saw any. Has seen them at the mouth of the Straits on the

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north side.

Does not think the majority of the fishermen care much about the close time law. Do not care about signing it again. It does not mean a very serious interference with the fisheries, and does not fully protect the fish during the spawning season. Thinks June is the principal month for spawning.