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Gloucester, Mass.

Capt. Wm. M. Hartly.

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

Nov. 22, 1893

Master of the Frederick (?) Jr. Has had 40 years' experience as a fisherman. All that time in the mackerel fishery.

When they went hooking altogether used to go cod fishing until about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and then started for the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Does not think mackerel are as abundant as when he first went fishing. In 1881 he caught a trip in a week with the hook, and when he started for home they run for 60 or 70 miles through nothing but solid mackerel in every direction. Now if you see them extending for 6 miles you think it is a pretty good body.

Has seen them at Prince Edwards Island, nothing but mackerel in shore and off. In 1862 we went into the Bay; left

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here the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> and about the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June got to North Cape and caught 80 barrels the first day. The next day we went around west of the Cape, and took 60 barrels and the next day 40. Then we run up the Bay Chaleur and caught 108 barrels in three days there. Then left there and went on Orphans Bank, and in three days filled our vessel full. In just 28 days we got back home with a full trip.

There was a large fleet there that year. The whole American fleet, about 300 vessels. Just as many fishing there then as now, but the vessels were not quite as large; about 15 to 18 men, more or less. About 65 tons would be the average. Has been south fishing 8 or 9 years for fresh mackerel. But 2 or 3 years

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salt mackerel fishing.

When they went hooking used to start south about the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Would meet the fish a little south of New York. Occasionally as far as the mouth of the Delaware. Then would go north with them. Would follow them as far north as Vineyard Sound, when they would have about a trip.

The fish then would sink for spawning, and you might not get any. They would be down about 10 days, and none would be seen schooling.

Then they would come home and go down to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Some started as early as the first of June. Has known vessels to leave here the latter part of May, but the bulk of the fleet went in the Gulf about the

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4<sup>th</sup> of July. That is, they would leave here about the 4<sup>th</sup>. Get into the Gulf about the 10<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>. That fishing ceased about 1872.

Commenced to get lots of seines then. As the seines increased the hook and line fishing diminished, because there was no bait heaved.

The fish work a little wider off now in going down to the Gulf than they used to. No fish on this coast at all now. Thinks that the constant seining of fish at the south has driven them off shore. He thinks that this year and last year they have worked in again, because there has been no one driving at them for the last 4 or 5 years.

Once if you began seining in the night would always

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get a school of mackerel, but now you miss them about as often as you do in the day.

There is a change to be noticed in the habits of mackerel, from earlier times.

The trawls drive codfish from one bank to another. What kills fish with the trawls so much is lots of fish lying dead on the bottom on those trawls, and the fish will never stop there. Will leave that ground afterwards. A great many trawls lost that way. They have lost a whole set, and not got a hook out of the whole set. A vessel the other day lost 40,000 hooks at one set. Trawl fishing injures shore fishing.

Have been catching mackerel on the Cape Shore in the

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spring for 10 or 12 years. Did not go before that because they did not know the fish were there so early. Did not think they were so plenty. Considers the Cape Shore, if clear weather, about a sure thing. Some springs it is so foggy that they get very few. Needs to be good weather.

The fish there go right in to the Gulf and feed on the bottom. If people would heave bait there as they used to would catch them just the same. Never knew so many fish off Margurie and some of those places as there were this fall.

Has fished up the River St. Lawrence to the St. Arms. Has seen plenty of fish up there. Has not been to the 7 Islands since about 1859.

In 1881-2-3-4 there was as

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good fishing on this coast and the Bay of Fundy as we have ever had. The vessel he was in cleared \$15,000 one year.

They used to get lots of mixed fish up there, and would throw the small ones away. If the purse seine were given up, he thinks the fishery could go on with hand lines just as well before. Around Block Island and No Man's Land every year about 100 sails, small crews, go there to fish with hook and line, and they heave bait and keep fish biting there every year.

Would make the close season up to the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

About the first of June is just the time when they are spawning. Fish spawn around Block Island the latter part of June. On the coast of Maine and on this coast they sink

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and you do not see many of them. In the Gulf fish do not spawn much before the first of July, and into July. Has seen fish caught the latter part of July full of spawn. That is scattering ones.

Late this fall a school of fish struck at No Man's Land, and were just as poor as spring mackerel and full of spawn. That was in October. Would allow them to fish with hook and line at any time. The more bait they heave the better it would be. Thinks it would be better not to use the purse seine at all. As a compromise, would say that a close season up to the 10<sup>th</sup> of July would do some good.

He was the first one that ever went into the Gulf with

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a purse seines. That was in 1854. We smuggled it over to fish with it. Got the seine here and got a Nova Scotia vessel and put it in. A part of our crew went from there. Did not have the right to fish down there then. That was the only vessel there that year. Did not go down there again with the purse seine.

Soloman Rowe was the first man to catch mackerel off here in deep water with the purse seine. That was in 1855.

Thinks a larger number of people were benefited in the old days of hook and lining than now.

In the spring the fish go about E.N.E. All the fish that go up in the Nova Scotia region come from

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the gulf stream over Georges and down to the Nova Scotia coast. But those fish that strike Scattari about the same time were never out as far as Georges. The fish that are south get along about Nantucket and Block Island and then they stay and spawn. The fish here in Cape Cod Bay in the spring are the ones that strike down along the Delaware and Chesapeake. They work along in about 28 to 40 fathoms of water. The school that comes into Cape Cod Bay comes in through Nantucket Shoals and around there. Think some come through Vineyard Sound because they catch them in the trap at Falmouth. Think those outer schools used to go down closer in shore before the use of purse seines.

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Have had traps on the Nova Scotia shore for mackerel about 20 odd years. In returning south from the north they used to hug the shore closer than they do now. Used to catch so many at Canso and Fox Island years ago that they could not handle them. There is a first school of very large fish goes into the Gulf and then there is a small one. They catch the first school about the latter part of May and the second school comes along not long afterwards, and there a small school comes along about the last of July. Those fish that go in late do not go far north. They second school does not go very far to the north. Not much farther than North Cape or Prince Edwards Id.

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Always large fish in the northern part of the Gulf, and the small fish around P.E.I. Never see small fish around the Magdalen's. Fish at times go through the Gut of Canso. The second schools are apt to go through the Gut of Canso. (Calls Antigonish Bay what Dr. Wakeham calls St. Georges Bay). The best hooking he ever saw was from Cape George to Punkett Island. Those were large fish. When the fish are going south they go out through the Gut of Canso also. Think the wind has a good deal to do with it. Does not know when the large fish are all out of the Gulf. Has caught them on the hook the 16<sup>th</sup> day of November off

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Georgetown. Caught 45 barrels one day and 65 another. Does not know whether they stay later than that or not.

Has caught mackerel the 25<sup>th</sup> of November on the coast of Maine. Vessels knock off earlier now than when they went hooking. They will fish around Block Island until as late as December. Has sometimes caught them there then.

The furthest off shore he has seen fish at the south was the edge of the gulf stream just about on the edge of soundings in about 100 fathoms of water.

Has never caught mackerel in the winter, unless it was a few scattering ones on Georges in codfish. Once in a great while they will catch a few

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scattering ones among the herring at Newfoundland.

While torching herring last night in Ipswich Bay they caught quite a lot of mackerel mixed with the herring. Those would be this spring's mackerel. A few were last year's spawn. These were about 5 inches in length, but a few would go 7 or 8 inches.

The best place for hook and line fishing on this coast is around Block Island, Gay Head and No Man's Land. For purse seining it does not make any difference. They will go until they find them. Some of the best places to hook mackerel are right off brooks and such places; Never saw them amongst the ice.

All kinds of fish prey upon mackerel, that are large enough. Cod

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fish, porpoises, sharks, sword fish, and all sorts of fish. On this coast blue fish are the most destructive. There is a fish that is worse than any of them, especially in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and that is albacore. Squid cannot trouble mackerel a great deal, but will eat them up if they get them in the nets, but they do not drive them. Cannot do much with them in the open sea.

Some years there will be all signs of fish in the same school. At Block Island this year there would be 3 or 4 different sizes. The first school that goes in the Gulf of St. Lawrence are all large fish. They mix up more on this coast than they do in the Gulf. Those big fish

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in the gulf keep clear of the summer fish.

Some fish stay on the Cape Shore during the season. The first schools pass right along and do not stop.

The first fish that come along go very fast; as fast as you can sail. Some of those fish go up to the 7 Islands. They are all the largest kind.

The red seed is the most common food for mackerel, unless it is along sandy beaches, where you get the sand fleas. They feed upon shrimps also. All-eyes are a little bit of a fish about an inch long. Mackerel feed upon them a good deal. Find those all eyes in the Bay of Fundy out of sight of land. Will see the water all full of them. Do not notice

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that they are in schools. Never notice them in the Gulf.

It is hard to tell whether mackerel feed much during the spawning season or not. Before they spawn they will feed. Will bite like everything on the hook just before the spawn.

After they get the spawn out of them they fatten up fast. Will fatten a little before they get the spawn all out. For the reason that they stop going so fast when they get ready to spawn, and will then begin to fatten up.

Does not think mackerel grow very much during the winter, because the small fish that leave in the fall, the first you see in the spring are about the same size.

Very early in the spring

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you see schools about 5 inches in length. One spring Capt. Gray caught a school that were so small he could hardly keep them in the net. That was about 12 years ago. This year out around Block Island there were millions and millions of 5 inch fish, and, in fact, they have been there for 4 or 5 years. Fish that were spawned the year before. Mackerel come back to the same place where they were spawned.

Never heard of mackerel being seen out beyond the gulf stream in winter. Saw fish in the night in 1862, about the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of January, down off the Virginia coast, about 15 or 18 miles off shore. Knew they were mackerel. Was going down for a cargo of oysters.

Some days mackerel will be logy

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and the next day as wild as the dence(?). Do not seem to be very logy just before spawning. There are times when they get sort of logy and dead when they get filled with that red feed.

Some years we think there are going to be large schools the next year, and it turns out the other way, and another year think they are going to be poor, and it turns right around the other way. Cannot tell much about it, when there are lots of small fish one year, whether there will be large schools the next.

The spring schools in coming up will go about 15 miles each day and each night. About 30 miles in 24 hours. Sometimes they will go about 60 miles in 24 hours. Has seen fish in the middle of the day when you could not keep up with them in a row boat.