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Gloucester, Mass.

Capt. John C Mills

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

November 22, 1893

Master of Schooner Senator Lodge of Gloucester. Has been master of a mackerel vessel three years. Has had 12 years' experience mackereling.

As a whole, does not think the mackerel have decreased. Thinks they are just as abundant now as they were 12 years ago. There have been more mackerel reported this year than any year for 7 or 8 years, but the catch has not been as large as in other years because the fleet is smaller.

Does not think the purse seine harms the fish in any way. Does not think it decreases their number. Does not see why the purse seine should scare mackerel any more than the net. A purse seine is only in the water for a few months, not like the net that

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is set day in and day out, to frighten the fish.

Does not know what object there would be to have any regulations.

Before they had the close season, some did well, and afterwards a number of vessels went south and none of them did very well. Of course it might be better next year.

Does not think the close season did any particular good. All the fish that are caught south are spawn fish, and the less of them that are caught the more tendency it would have to increase them. Only once in a while a year that there was many fish caught south.

Does not see why it would be any protection to the fishermen to have a close season. Some fishermen go south and lose

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money and some go and make money. Out of 30 or 40 sails that went last spring, does not think 10 made a profit. Has nothing to say about regulations, because he does not know anything about it.

All kinds of fish that are caught with the purse seine have peculiarities, some years there will be an abundance of them, and some years will not be any. For a few years there were hardly any mackerel on the New England coast, but now they are plenty enough, and the purse seine has been in use all the time.

He never did any hook and line fishing.

Mackerel go to the east and north in the spring, and they are full of spawn when they go down by Cape Breton in June. That is anywhere from the first to the middle

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of June. Some years they will vary a week or so. After we lose them there, we do not get any mackerel to amount to anything until along in July or August, and they are pretty much done spawning, so they sink somewheres down in that vicinity, any nobody knows just where the spawning ground is. Does not think anybody knows when they go out of sight to spawn, or when they are done spawning. Occasionally will find mackerel along in August with some spawn in them, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Does not remember or seeing any on this coast, but has in the Gulf. That is scattering fish that could have some spawn in them.

The most important purse

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seine fishing ground, as a whole, is the New England coast. The coast of Maine and Mass. is the most profitable. Of course we get no mackerel on the New England coast until about the first of June. Then they will begin to strike on the coast here and we get more or less from then on to November. That fishing extends off shore to Georges anywhere from against the rocks to 130 miles off. They do not go to Georges much nowadays, except in the spring. There is very little fishing on Georges for mackerel, with this exception. The Bay of Fundy is quite a place for mackerel. Has been in former years, but this last summer not many fish there, but a year ago this

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summer there was a good catch of mackerel there.

A large body of mackerel go into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They go regularly every year. We know that by the nets on the Cape Shore. If they have westerly or northerly winds the fish go closer to the land, but if they have southerly winds the fish keep out to the sea, and do not go in near enough to fish with the nets.

Some years they school as much in the Gulf as they do on the New England coast, and some years they do not. Was in the Gulf this year for 2 months-July and August. Was only as far as Canso. The Yosemite and the Norembega

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made good hauls there, and the Minnie Maude, a Nova Scotia vessel, and one or two others did well there. That is around Margurie on the north side of Cape Breton.

About 10 sails of Nova Scotia vessels out this year. Most of them hail from around Le Have and Liverpool.

There are two schools which go into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Does not know but what there are three. This last year was fine weather on the Cape Shore. And more mackerel seen than he ever saw there before. The largest fish come first around May. That is they enter the Gulf in May. They enter around by Scatteri and Cape Breton. The later fish seem to be a grade

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smaller. Some years still later in the summer a small school comes on the Cape Shore. This summer then was quite a large body of small fish around the Cape Shore. The most of the second school go around Cape Breton Island, but some go through the Gut of Canso. Different years they take a little different route. Do not always go the same way every year. Of course the weather has a tendency to vary their habits a little.

Do not find many of these large fish of the first school after they get into the Gulf. Apparently these large fish do not school much. The second school distributes itself more over the Gulf than the first school. The

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second schools shown up in schools more than the first. It is hard to tell where the fish go to that occur so abundantly around P.E.I. and the Magdalen's, because we generally lose them for 3 or 4 weeks, and when they turn up they are distributed all over the Gulf.

The fish may go and come more regularly than what we know of, on account of the weather; they may keep below the surface. If we have a run of fine weather this year, say the 10th of June, next year we might have a cold wind on that day and they would not show. If the net fisherman are not getting any fish we know they have not come along much yet. Do not catch as many fish in the

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night as there used to be. No particular difference between the spring and fall fish in this respect.

This fall there have not been many fish caught on the Cape Shore. Capt. Jacobs got the largest school.

This fall did not see but a few fish schooling in the day time. Mostly in the night.

It is hard to say where the fish strike the Cape Shore first because it is seldom they strike two years in the same place and the same date. Most generally in the spring; begin to catch their fish around Yarmouth and Cape Sable in the traps. From Halifax to Scatteri they apparently strike within a day or so, as though it was a big body of fish come in from sea. Looks as though there were millions and

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millions of fish that seem to move right in from sea.

Fish when moving from one place to another sometimes will move about 4 or 5 miles an hour and at other times do not seem to go any, apparently. Sometimes in the spring on the Cape Shore they will average from 20 to 40 miles in 24 hours. The Senator Lodge, with a good breeze, would go about 10 or 12 miles an hour.

Has never seen predaceous fish chasing mackerel much. Of course whales chase them some, and sword fish and dog fish, etc., harass them some. Blue fish chase mackerel more than any other kind of fish. Does not think squid have much to do with mackerel, although they

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will eat them when they get them in the net, but do not scare them. This fall in Barnstable Bay, it was full of blue fish, and no mackerel went into the Bay at all while the blue fish were there, while at the same season other years they always used to go there. That was in October. After the blue fish left the mackerel came in. Blue fish follow the menhaden more than they do the mackerel. Dog fish follow mackerel as much as any other kind of fish, but does not think they will drive the mackerel as much as blue fish. Do not see any dog fish on the Cape Shore in the spring, but find them south quite plentifully. The first dog fish seen in the Bay for 40 years was last year.