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Gloucester, Mass.

Capt. John F. Vanteir(?)

Interviewed by William Wakeham and Hugh M. Smith

Nov. 18, 1893

Aged 32. Has been fishing for 23 years. Captain of Schooner Rapid Transit, of Gloucester, 1893.

Did not go south this year. Was on the Banks up to September.

Has been in the southern fishery. Was at it for about 10 years. Got a fair catch there every spring. Usually struck the fish on the southern coast about the Capes of

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Delaware, and a few springs got them down as far south as Cape Charles. Find the fish 35 to 45 miles off shore there. One spring they were within 8 or 10 miles. As they got up toward New York were right close into the beach. When this school is close in shore there is another school off outside 50 or 60 miles. They are going to the eastward. Suppose they go to the southward of Georges.

Never followed a school

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south of Georges; that is never followed them all the time. One spring found the fish at Sandy Hook, and then followed them way to the south of South Shoal Light Ship. They were bound to the southward of Georges, and if they kept on in that direction would probably strike Cape Sable and the Nova Scotia shore.

When they stop fishing in the spring, have the fish out around Block Island.

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2 or 3 years found them this side of Nantucket Shoals. One year in May we came over the Shoals and found fish there; and worked further to the eastward and got a school in deeper water.

These fish we get in the south spring fishery have spawn in them. This spawn gets ripe sometime in June. Get a very few fish in this fishery that have spawned. When we first catch them in the spring do not dress them, so

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cannot tell. Never salt these fish. Always run them in fresh. After the 1st of May they salt them sometimes. Never make a regular practice of it.

Look for fish in the Bay of Fundy and Cape Cod Bay after the first of June, but not much done in the Bay of Fundy until the middle of June.

Thinks some of the fish they see in the southern fishery come on the New England shore.

Thinks

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mackerel spawn on this coast; some on the Long Island coast, and from that to the Bay of Fundy, and up so far as they go in the Gulf.

Cannot say exactly how long the southern fishery has been carried on with seines, but thinks about 30 years. They did not go down south as early 30 years ago as they do now. When he first began fishing, used to sail south about the 15 or 20 of April. Reach

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the grounds about the first of May. Did not go as far south then as they do now. Never went down there hooking.

Been fishing on the Nova Scotia shore for about 20 years. Would not be there in the summer time. First began to go there in the spring on the Cape Shore 8 years ago. Other vessels had been going there about 3 years before that. Never went there before that because did not know there were

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fish there. Has not gone for the last three years. Always did well when he did go there. Would expect to find the fish there about the 1st of June or 29th of May.

Generally expect to find them first around Cape Sable. Has followed them as far north as Cape North. Never followed them into the Bay in the spring. Those fish had not spawned. The spawn was in them, and was ripe.

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They were large fish most all of them.

The early schools are larger fish generally than the later schools. That spring fishery is very short. Over about the 15th or 20 of June at the outside. The fish are going along the coast quite rapidly. They are pretty shy at that time. Expects it is due to the fact that it is getting near their spawning time. Has followed fish in the fall no

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further than the south of Block Island, and then did not see any. The last fish they saw was off Cape Cod. Has never caught mackerel in the winter. Has seen probably a dozen when herring fishing in the Bay of Fundy, along in January. Caught them in the herring nets.

Has never known mackerel to be found on Western Bank. On the Cape Shore has not found mackerel outside of 25 miles.

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Has taken them that far off. They were going along shore to the eastward. Were running parallel with the shore. Not going directly into land.

Has noticed different kinds of fish preying up the mackerel, and driving the schools. Has seen bluefish and bonitos. Saw lots of them this fall. They give the mackerel a good deal of trouble. Seem to drive them pretty fast.

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Has known them to drive them close in shore. See more less blue fish and bonitos every year. Find the blue fish chasing the mackerel most all seasons of the year on some parts of the coast. Does not think he ever saw them chasing the mackerel in the spring fishing in the south. Would find blue fish no further north than this side of the Bay of Fundy on the coast of Maine.

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Never below Grand Manan. Have seen bonitos inside of the Seal Islands.

No difference in the size of the fish now and those caught when he first went fishing.

Not much difference in the behavior of the fish. When we first went fishing there would be weeks that we would not see them schooling.

Never knew fish so scarce as they have been for the last 5 years. This year

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there was a large body of fish on the coast here, but they did not show.

Late this fall saw as many fish as he ever did. They were from Monhegan to Minot Rock. Those fish appeared somewhere about the middle of September. Had not many fish been seen along there before that.

Those large schools of fish this year were very large fish, nice and fat.

The mackerel

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they take in the southern voyages and on the Bay Shore are about all 3s. Occasionally find a few fat fish among these early ones.

About the spawning time every year the fish seem to go down. They disappear in the Bay of Fundy in the Bay Chaleur and on the New England coast. Stay down sometimes a week or fortnight. Some years they come up in a body. Does not think they will take the hook about spawning time.

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He has had no experience hook and line fishing on the coast. Get a few on the hooks in the fall. Has been trolling fish up and setting seines, probably about 15 years. Got 80 barrels of mackerel one time by trolling them up with bait and then setting seines around the vessel.

Though it was a good thing to try the close time law and see if it would be any benefit. Thinks it is a little too soon to tell

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whether it has been any benefit or not. Thinks the body of the fish on this coast is more than 5 years old. Does not think the law was much benefit because they caught the fish before they spawned anyway. Does not think what vessels go on the mackerel fishery at that time of the year, hunt the mackerel catch.

Thinks next year they will have a good catch of mackerel. Does not think the present

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scarcity will continue. Have had 3 poor years in succession before this. Has no opinion as to the reason of the scarcity. Does not think all the fish have been caught up. Thinks they take some other course. It is due to some natural causes.

Years ago those old folks on Newfoundland would say mackerel were an injury to them, there were so many. They left that coast 15 or 20 years ago. Has

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been a few fish caught there 10 or 12 years ago along the Bay St. George. Began to get scarce there before they did on this shore.

7 years ago got 3 trips of mackerel in the Bay Chaleur.

Does not think the purse seine will hurt the fish any. Does not think it makes them wild. Saw a school caught this summer of about 200 barrels, on Monhegan that were very tame. The weather

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has a good deal to do with catching fish. The thicker the weather the better chance to get a school.

Used to fish some in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Thinks the purse seine fishing is all right there.

Not much been made out of the purse seine fishery of late years. Thinks if they had hung to hooks they would do better than they do now. The greater number of vessels that go and

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heave bait, the more fish they will get. Does not think the average is as good as in old times.

Does not think the fish caught with hook and line are in any better condition than those taken with the purse seine. The gill net fish do not look so well. Does not know of any difference in the market value between hook and line and the purse seine fish. Of the 240 barrels he caught, he saved them all

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in good condition. Had caught 200 barrels this year before that. About the middle of September had 520 odd barrels.