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Gloucester, Mass.

Capt. Solomon A. Rowe.

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

Nov. 22, 1893.

Aged 44. Master of the Wm. H. Cross of Gloucester. Made his last trip this season on the Lottie Gardner, which came in Nov. 20, two days ago. Has had experience in the mackerel fishery since 1859. At that time used to fish for menhaden the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May would catch our first menhaden off

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here. Would work until about the 15<sup>th</sup> of August with menhaden and then would begin on the mackerel. Menhaden were used for toll bait in those days for the mackerel in the Bay.

Went south first in 1874 with Capt. Charles Lee. Began to follow the fish up to the Cape Shore about 7 years ago. Some had gone on the Cape Shore a little before that, but not a great many.

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When the schools go north from the south, it looks as if a good many fish that go on the Cape Shore strike right in from off-shore. There is a proportionate number that cross Georges from the southward.

When we first come in with the fish on the Cape Shore, do not have very hard work to catch them. They are moving along quite rapidly, but about every school we got a chance to set at

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we catch. Before they get to the Cape Shore do not catch many, as they are moving fast.

Thinks that when they sink they are on the spawning ground. There have been years when we caught them right along all the season. In 1874 the large fish that were off South Shoal Light Ship the whole of June and July, when they struck our coast, never sunk for the whole year. The bulk of the fish were caught that year with the purse seine.

Fish a little every year with the hook and line. Do not catch as well with the hook and line as they used to.

Sometimes see the spawn running from the mackerel. Has seen it as long as from the 20<sup>th</sup> of June to along about the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of July, both on this coast and in

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the Bay Chaleur; that is, the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Was engaged in the hand line fishery two seasons, -1862-3, from about the 20<sup>th</sup> of July. That would be all up and down Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen's and up to the north ward.

Does not think they find as many large fish as they used to.

Does not think there are as many fish as there used to be.

There are more seiners catching them now. Used to be more hook and lines than there are now. The seining did not disturb the fish much, but made it difficult to catch them with the hook and line.

Fish these late years do not show as they used to when he first commenced to go with his father; who is the oldest man at the business in this place,

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and the first man who started with the purse seine. Capt. Rowe's father's name is Solomon Rowe. His father first began to use the purse seine in about 1851. Never used to go further south than Cape Cod and off Barnstable Bay and Cape Ann, with the first seines. When they fished in the beginning around Cape Cod and Cape Ann, used to go about the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. That is when they first began to go seining there.

Does not know whether the fish have decreased or not. They do not show as they used to. Used to have no trouble in catching fish. Used to see them ringing right round and round. Now they are going as fast as they can go.

Menhaden generally go along slow. Hardly ever cartwheel.

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The movements of the mackerel are regulated a good deal by the winds. S.S.W. are the best winds for catching mackerel. Thinks the weather has a good deal to do with the fish; that is, in showing.

There have been years when the purse seine has injured the fish, and other years it has not. It injured them when they threw away so many. That was about in 1880. He went south in 1885. Was in with 4 trips, and did not get enough to pay his expenses. Had 130 barrels the first trip, and did not get \$10 out of it. Carried in 1200 barrels and got \$600 out of them that spring.

The more seines we set the wilder the fish seem to get. The more anything is hecktored the quicker it will get out

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of the way. A year ago this summer we set 12 times and got 11 schools of fish. The next day did not set so many times but they were harder to catch.

Does not think any legislation should be put upon catching fish. If they have to go fishing, thinks they should go the whole season round. The more fish there are caught the less there are in the water, but does not think the fleet that has been operating the last few years has caught enough to do any particular harm. We commence a good deal earlier to catch fish now than we used to, but knock off earlier in the fall; that is, most of the vessels. The fish we catch in the spring before a certain date are full of spawn. If there were a million barrels of fish caught in the spring that are full of spawn; if

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they were let go there would be just so many more fish in the water.

Does not think the close season for the past five years has helped the fishery any. When we used to go south we could keep around the fish and do well. This year there were no fish caught there. This is the first year he has been south since the law was put on. There was a heavy body of fish south this spring but very few caught.

Would not think it wise to make a close season early in the year. Thinks the close season ought to be from the 15<sup>th</sup> of June to the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. Hardly thinks it would be advisable to have such a close season as they have it hard enough now. Menhaden on this coast used to be very plenty, but since they got these large

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oil works started on this coast menhaden seemed to disappear, and are not as abundant as they used to be.

The best fishing is from August to the last of September. That is, we get the biggest prices then, and probably the most fish.

The Gulf of St. Lawrence is not a profitable fishery as a whole. Never make a great amount of money down there.

Never saw more fish in his life on the Cape Shore going into the Gulf than he saw this spring. They were more abundant there than they were south this year. A large body of fish went into the Gulf this year. Has not been fishing but about 7 yrs. on the Cape Shore. Sees those fish going that way every spring he has been there.

The fish strike the

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Cape Shore some springs at what we call Cape Nigger, about 30 miles east of Cape Sable, and other years further to the east. This year the first fish we saw were off White Head 15 miles to the westward of Canso. He was down there as early as the others. They generally strike the Cape Shore about the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, and from that to the first of June. The 25<sup>th</sup> of May is about the usual time.

Thinks Capt. Joseph Swim got his first fish a little earlier than they were seen off White Head, at Egg Rock, probably 20 miles to the east of Halifax. And others caught them about 20 miles to the eastward of him. All this was before they saw them at White Head. Those are large fish that go down at

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that time. They go in around Cape North. Probably some of this first school go up through the Gut of Canso.

There is also a second school comes along that is a more medium fish-1's and 2's. They come about 2 or 3 days later than the large ones. They generally go through the Gut more than they go around.

He has been up to 7 Ids. and 60 miles north of 7 Islands, and has caught fish on the hook up there in 1857. Knows of their occurring up as far as that. Knows of the medium fish which they supposed to belong to the second school being caught up as far as Magdalen River and 7 Islands.

The length of the fish in the first school is from 14 to 16 and 17 inches. The second

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school about 11 to 13 inches.

Then there is another school that strikes there and stays on the Cape Shore all summer. You will find them most generally in the bays. They do not catch many of these. Those fish are about 6 or 7 inches which stay in the bays and rivers on the Cape Shore, up around Dover. So far as he knows they are rarely taken at all. You will see them along about the first of August, and from that on.