

Thomas Robson, Leamington, Ont.

October 10, 1893.

Has been fishing in this bay about 20 years.

There are about 10 pound nets between Point Pelee and McClains (about 7 or 8 miles east of Point Pelee); and about 20 pounds between Point Pelee and Kingsville.

No seines or gill nets are used in this region.

The dimensions of the pounds are as follows:

The pot or crib is from 25 feet to 35 feet square. The depth is also from 25 to 35 feet. They are set in about the same depth of water, but so as not to touch the bottom. The bottom is variable, consisting of sand, clay, gravel and rocks.

The leaders measure from 75 to 100 rods long. They come to within about 20 rods of

the shore, the depth of water at their inner ends being about 11 or 12 feet.

The mesh in the pot is usually $2 \frac{1}{4}$ or $2 \frac{1}{2}$ inches (ext.). He uses 3 inch mesh in the bottom of his pots, where the fish are not liable to gill. A mesh $2 \frac{1}{2}$ inches is too large for the back of the pot where the fish are bunted, as they will gill in it. He uses $2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches there. Some use 2 inches.

The hearts have a 5 inch mesh; tunnels the same; leaders 8 to 10 inch mesh.

He remembers that there were pound nets at this place 35 years ago, but they were not then in general use.

They came into more general use about 25 years ago. About 20 years ago there were probably 10 pounds between Point Pelee and Kingsville. Previously there was little market for the fish, and not many are sold through the neighboring country.

Previous to the introduction of pounds

(35 years ago and previously) seines were used to some extent, mainly about Point Pelee. It was a regular business, but on a very much smaller scale than the present fishery. Some of the fish were salted, but he knows nothing about their sale. The seasons were spring and fall for the herring and whitefish, and summer for black bass, the latter species being also taken in the seines.

The principal fish now taken in the pounds are herring, whitefish, pickerel, black bass, sturgeon, mullet, suckers, sheepshead, maskinonge, catfish (quite a large quantity), ling, sunfish (few), German carp (few). No salmon trout are caught here.

The pounds are generally set about May 1, seldom much earlier, as the weather is apt to be bad, and fish are scarce.

The pounds are taken up between Point Pelee and Kingsville about July 1, as the water becomes too warm for fishing and the nets

readily decay on that account. They are not put down again until September 1, or a little later.

They used to keep them in up to December 1, before the close season of November was forced upon them.

Herring are taken during May and June, but are not so abundant as in the fall, on the west side of Point Pelee. Last spring they caught more pickerel than herring, but this is not generally the case. More whitefish than pickerel, however, were taken last spring.

They begin to get herring again about September 10. They increase gradually in numbers, and are most abundant the last of October and during November.

(The fishery is different on the east side of Point Pelee, where the water is cooler in the summer).

Sometimes they get large catches of

herring the last part of October, while in other years they do not begin to get many until in November. They, however, look for some large catches either the last of October or first part of November.

This species spawns to some extent about here, but not before November 25, and thence into December. Ripe spawning fish are taken in the pounds during that period.

The average run of the herring weigh from $3/4$ pound to $1\ 1/4$ pounds each. Some are taken weighing as high as $3\ 1/2$ pounds. The September fish are apt to be larger than those which come later. In each school the fish run pretty much the same size.

Quantities of very young herring play about the pounds in the spring and fall, but they pass through the mesh. He also sees them along the shores and they enter the creeks. He has seen intermediate sizes at times, but they are never taken in the nets.

If he were obliged to use a 3 1/2 inch mesh in the crib, he would abandon fishing. The smaller herring would go through the mesh; the medium would gill, and only the very largest would be taken alive. The pickerel also would gill. They cannot work a pound if the fish gill in it. The fish die, and if they remain at all make it very disagreeable to handle the net. They also make it very bad for the live fish in the pot.

Late in the fall up to a year ago some gill nets were used in this region, but not many and the business never amounted to much. Their use has been prohibited beginning in 1892

They take quite a quantity of whitefish in the pounds during May and June. The spring fishery is better than the fall fishery up to November 1, but the fattest fish are obtained in the fall.

During the last two springs he has taken fully 1/3 as much of whitefish as of herring by

weight. Previously their relative abundance had not been so great, but it has varied from year to year.

Begin to take whitefish in the fall between October 1, and 15. Only stray ones are caught the first part of October. The last of October they may take anywhere from 50 to 300 pounds at a single lift of a pound, and may then obtain as good catches as at any time in the fall. Thinks they are about as abundant the last of October as in November.

The spring, however, is the best season here for whitefish.

Each pound in this region is not doing so well in the take of whitefish now as formerly, but the entire catch, with the increased number of pounds, is about the same.

Herring are about as abundant as ever in this part of the lake, but they vary in abundance on the two sides of Point Pelee. During the last 2 years they have made immense

catches on the east side of the Cape, but only poor ones on this side. It used to be the other way.

There are not quite so many coarse fish (mullet, suckers, sheepshead, carp, etc.) as there used to be. All fishes are a little scarcer than they used to be, when the catch of individual pounds alone are considered, but the total catch of all the pounds would make a larger aggregate.

Pike (Esox) sell the same as pickerel (Stizostedium), and they get a few in the pounds.

Whitefish average about 4 pounds in weight. They run from 2 1/2 to 15 1/2 lbs. Seldom get small specimens in the pounds.

Whitefish fry have been planted along this part of the coast. His boats have generally been used for this purpose. They are planted about 1/4 mile off shore. He thinks this work has benefited the fisheries, and so do the

other fishermen about here.

Pickereel come next after whitefish in value, and sell for about one cent less per pound. This is the gray pickereel, which is ranked as a hard fish. The blue pickereel goes as a soft fish.

Might take pickereel in April, and they are caught the entire year round. They are most abundant during the spring close season. It is then the run is on shore. Take them more or less all the time. They follow the herring. When there is a run of pickereel, will not see many herring. They feed on small fish, herring fry, etc.

Maskinonge, pike, catfish and sturgeon probably also feed on the fry or spawn of the herring, and on many other things.

Get some black bass in the pounds, but not a very great quantity. He thinks they do not spawn in this region, and never saw their

spawning beds. There is no special sport fishing for bass in this region.

Take a good many perch in the pounds early in the spring. The main run occurs then. Take a few during all the remainder of the year. They are classed as a coarse fish.

Night lines were never used for sturgeon about here. Such as are obtained are taken in the pounds. They are becoming much scarcer than they used to be. They are caught mostly in May and June. More small sturgeon this fall than usual. Not many large ones have ever been taken in the fall. A good sized sturgeon measures about 4 feet. (This does not agree with the Detroit standard. See statement of A. G. McDonald).

He put his pounds in last December after the close season in November, but will not do so again. He fishes 3 pounds; uses 1 boat. Most of the fish from this region go to Detroit. Tugs come around and collect them at the pounds

Many fish are also peddled through the neighboring country.

He has generally fished up to November 20 or 25, sometimes up to December 1. Last year he fished a few days into December, but it did not pay.

So many more pounds are now worked than formerly that it is hard to tell whether there has actually been a decrease in any species.

The gray pickerel, which is the same as the yellow pickerel, is not a large fish. Would average about 1 1/2 to 2 pounds. One pound is as small pickerel as they can market.

No herring or whitefish spawn before November 20 to 25. It is worse to catch them in the summer than in the fall prior to November 20. In the former season they are not in so good condition, and in the latter season they can make more out of them.

Whitefish, however, could not be taken in

this region in the summer unless one went out into deep water for them, and used gill nets. There, are, however, large quantities of herring during the summer.

There is no winter fishery whatever along this part of the coast.

No pounds are allowed in the Detroit River, or for several miles this side of the mouth of the river.

November is the best month for herring and whitefish, but the catch varies with the weather. The best fishing is obtained with the wind off the lake. The catch drops off when the wind changes to the north.

Never get many whitefish after the middle of November. Thinks they mostly move west to spawn. Does not know of any special spawning ground about here.

Sometimes 2 pounds are set one outside of the other, but not in a continuous line. This, however, deepens the water only a very little at the outer end.

Thinks they could get whitefish later in the season if they should fish farther out and in deeper water. Thinks the water gets too cold about here the last of November for them to spawn.

The proposed increase in the size of the mesh in the pots of the pounds would force him to give up the fishery. It would make a gill net of them.

Might establish a minimum size of whitefish and sturgeon to be taken, all under that size to be thrown back into the water. This would be the best method of protecting the sturgeon.

Undersized whitefish are rarely taken. They could readily pick them out and release them from the net. With the herring it would be hard to do this.

Herring and whitefish furnish their most profitable fishery. Does not think it is of

much use to protect the pickerel or pike as they destroy so many young fishes (and presumably the young of the herring and whitefish)

Blue pickerel and sand pickerel are not worth as much as the herring. Gray pickerel are valued higher than the herring, coming next after whitefish. Whitefish and black bass bring about the same price.

Thinks they would fish gill nets about here, if allowed to. They were stopped last fall.

There is a general impression among the fishermen that they would be satisfied with a close season beginning about November 20 and continuing into the winter. A petition to that effect has been sent to the Minister.

If the close season is not extended into November, many fishermen will have to suspend.

An outfit for a pound is worth about \$500. or \$600. Additional pounds could be added at a much smaller price each. A license is

issued for each pound. As a rule about here, each person has 2 pounds. Sail boats are employed to tend the pounds. He has one pound net which is 7 or 8 years old. (This is an unusual age. Generally replaced every 2 or 3 years, according to other witnesses).

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Capt. J. W. Post. (*Sandusky, O.*)

Leamington, Ont., Oct. 10, 1893.

Capt. Post belongs in Sandusky, where he has an office, Post & Co. They fish on that side, and he also buys fish on this (Canadian) side, over a distance along the coast of about 80 miles, including Point aux Pins, Point Pelee and Pelee Island. His father was a pioneer in the pound net fishing in Lake Erie, and established that fishing on the Canadian side, in this region at least. Capt. Post apparently collects for Sandusky market all the fish taken over the 80 miles mentioned, except such small amounts as may be sold locally. He apparently is financially interested in most of the pounds around here. He controls the catch and the fishermen seem to look up to him. He is a sharp business man, well informed, and of good judgment and common sense. His

interests are now mainly with the Canadians about here and he spends most of his time on this side. He has two steamers which carry fish from this side to Sandusky, -City of Dresden and Louise. He has kept careful records of his catch for many years, which bear upon the habits and spawning of the fish, and the temperature of the water. All of these he will place at our disposal to copy from. They are kept at the office in Sandusky. Capt. Dwelle, of the steamer Louise, has an important temperature record covering 14 years, and can also give much information about the fisheries.

He would be in favor of stopping all fishing in the lake for whitefish after Nov. 15, and for herring after Nov. 20 to 25. Has so written to Mr. Tupper, at request of Mr. Wigle, of Leamington, who is working in the interest of the Canadian fisheries at this end

of the lake.

There is an immense amount of gill net fishing out in the lake in the fall, by means of tugs.

These tugs can follow the schools of whitefish and herring in their fall migrations toward the western end of the lake. They will test with their nets until they find where they are. Their nets are set in a sort of triangle. When a school has been found, the direction of their movement can be determined by the direction in which they have meshed. They then follow the school along in that direction, setting the nets crosswise of their course, and may follow them thus many miles, finally practically exterminating the school.

The principal spawning grounds for whitefish are at the head of the lake, around the islands, and off Eagle, Ont. There is a ridge of rocks, serving as a spawning ground, off the

latter place. About the Canadian islands are now the best places, as they have not been fished so much as the others.

Herring spawn mainly at the head of the lake, coming into the reefs and shoals there for this purpose during the latter part of November, and the first week in December. Do not get many spawning herring on this part of the Canadian shore.

Thinks it would be just as well not to take special means to preserve those fish which destroy large quantities of the eggs or fry of the herring and whitefish.

Has seen the stomachs of sturgeon full of the spawn of other fishes.

Pickereel destroy more spawn than he is worth. The herring mature most rapidly, and it is more important to protect the herring than the pickerel.

4, 5 and 6 years ago there were immense

numbers of small herring, which gave them great trouble in sorting over the catch, as they were much too small for market. During the last 3 years this has not been so. It was mainly at Rondeau that they were so abundant.

Knows of herring with ripe spawn being taken in this region during the winter, and as late as February.

In the pots of the pound nets in this region use 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (ext.) mesh for sides, front and bottom, and 2 inch mesh for back where fish are bunted and taken out.

The bottom of the pot (or crib) should not rest upon the bottom of the lake. The tunnel, hearts and leader, however, must touch the bottom.

After November 15, there will be 1,000 miles of gill nets set for herring and whitefish in Lake Erie, west of a line drawn across the lake from Huron, Ohio. At that time the

pound nets may not be doing much, as they will have been largely damaged by storms, and not replaced.

Most fishing for herring and whitefish is done on the American side the last of October and during November.

Agrees in what some of the fishermen have told us about here, to the effect that they do not catch more whitefish in November than in October, and also that the best catches of whitefish are made about here in the spring.

The worst storms occur in the fall, on the north side of the lake between Rondeau and the head of the lake; on the south side the worst storms are in the spring, to the west of the same longitude. That is they blow to the greatest injury of the fishing, as thus described.

Along the north side of the lake the temperature of the water will average cooler

during the summer, than on the south side.

Thinks the best regulation would be to prohibit net fishing of every kind throughout the lake, between November 20 to 25 and April 15. The large lake pickerel spawn during March. The small pickerel, which enter the creeks for spawning, are generally through by April 15. The creek pickerel are yellow in color. The lake pickerel gray. He could not describe their difference, but thinks they are distinct species.

He is not in favor of protecting the bass.

He would exact a heavy fine for taking or disposing of fish below a certain size, the same to be decided after an inquiry. For repetition of offense, he would forfeit fishing privileges.

Thinks the under sizes can be released from the nets alive, if proper care is used. As it is now, it has been necessary to return

the whitefish to the water during November, and this law has generally been observed. The fishermen care to take no risks by retaining them, and it is the same with him as to their purchase and transportation. Should he be detected in violating this law, he would undoubtedly be disbarred from working any more along this shore.

Would make the minimum size of sturgeon to be taken 3 feet.

Believes the hatching work should be kept up and increased. Thinks it has done much good.

Would entirely prohibit the use of gill nets in Lake Erie (not in Lake Huron). There is a much larger percentage of waste from them than from the pounds. Nets which have gone astray keep on catching fish until the nets are destroyed. Has picked up floating gill nets, which have been brought to the surface by dead

and bloated fish. (He fishes gill nets himself because others use them).

The number of pounds should be restricted. They should be licensed in some way. All the kinds of fish in Lake Erie can readily be taken in pounds, and to a sufficient extent. The pounds cannot be fished on the spawning grounds but with gill nets they can follow the schools everywhere and exterminate them.

Does not think that the whitefish should be caught out of the deep hole off Erie. It is of small size, and a resting place for the fish where they should be preserved.

On the American side the pots of the pounds have the same mesh as in Canada, namely 2 and 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches mesh (ext.). The tunnel and heart have 4 to 5 inch and the leader 4 to 7 inch (ext.) mesh.

The water is shoaler on the American side, and roils up more readily. The smaller fish

would there go through a coarse mesh in the leader, which is the reason for having so small a one. A larger mesh leader will stand better in the water, is cheaper, and will take just as many fish in clear water.

In cases where the pound nets are destroyed by storms the fish escape alive. Not so with gill nets.

There is no summer fishing west of Point Pelee to near the mouth of the Detroit River, including Pelee Island. The fishermen in this region, therefore, have good reason to ask that the close season be set back to November 20.

Pelee Island is 3 times the size of Kelly Island. The latter, however, has as many pounds, as the entire Canadian shore, about 200 or more, while Pelee Island has only about 26.

The value of the Canadian catch on Lake Erie, given in Canadian Fisheries Reports, is much too large. The number of pounds will be

the same as the licenses recorded.

On the American side the fisheries have deteriorated greatly, and at the rate they are now declining will amount to nothing after 3 or 4 years.

The strings of pounds off Sandusky are in the way of navigation, and vessels coming out of Sandusky can steer a straight course in only a limited direction. Has never heard ship-masters complain, however. (It will be very important to work this subject up).

On the Canadian side, lines of pound nets go out from the shore only a distance of $1 \frac{1}{2}$ to 2 miles at the extreme. On the American side, however, they may go out 10 or 12 miles and into depths of 55 feet. The inner pots on the American side are some of them in water as shallow as 10 feet. On Canadian side the extreme depth in which the pots are set is about 40 feet.

Pound net fishing began on the American side, at Marblehead, about 1855. On the Canadian side they date back about 15 years. Ten years ago there were nearly as many as now west of Pt. Pins. There have never been more nets than are set this year, but always about the same. Reductions made in some places have been counterbalanced by increases in others.

On the American side the fish will be exterminated in the course of 3 or 4 years, if the fishery goes on as it is now, and many will soon have to give up the business. At least 10 times as much fishing is done on the American side as on the Canadian.

Henry Douglas, now at the Erie, Pa., hatchery, is best acquainted with the habits of fishes in Lake Erie.

No American is allowed to fish on the Canadian side unless he becomes naturalized. There is, however, no law to prevent Canadian,

fishing on the Ohio shore, and they are doing it repeatedly. May fish pounds or by any other means. He may take his boat and apparatus across and has merely to pay customs fee of \$1.50. May put in his twine where he pleases, and even to the inconvenience of an American, who has no redress. Persons who remain there may become American citizens, but there are some, especially young, unmarried men, who go over just for the season when there is no fishing on Canadian side. They generally go to fish for others, having no appliances of their own.

If the proposed extension of the close season, and the enlarged mesh for pounds in Canada, are enforced, it will very likely result in sending many Canadian fishermen to the American side. These persons would probably become American citizens eventually. If too many were going over, it would probably also result in the passage of an American law,

to prevent foreigners fishing on the American side of the lake.

On the American side the twine set is so extensive, and runs out into the lake so far, that it tends to break up the schools, and to turn them from their natural courses.

On the Canadian side the nets are very few, and the case is different. The condition of the fisheries is much better, the system of regulations, in a general way, satisfactory, and the catch per pound net is much greater than on the American side.

Pounds were first established about Rondeau about 5 years ago (there were only 2 in this region previously). There are 30 there now, over an extent of coast reaching from 10 miles East of Rondeau to 20 miles West. At Point Pelee they have existed for some 15 years. Before 5 years ago the summer catch of herring at Point Pelee was very considerable, but since the placing of so many pounds about

Rondeau, it has cut off a large part of this summer catch, seeming to stop, more or less, the westward movement of the fish at this season. It has not apparently made much difference with the spring and fall fishery, which is more scattering.

The pounds above mentioned at Point Pelee are on the east side of the point, where there is a cold summer eddy, and a summer fishery. To the west of Point Pelee there is no summer fishery.

At one of the pounds on the east side of point Pelee, before interfered with as above described, he has known of an instance where for 3 weeks, it was impossible to empty all of the fish out each day, they were so numerous. The pot was never entirely cleaned during that time.

A similar eddy occurs on the east side of Point aux Pins. The difference in the temperature on the two sides of these two points in

the summer was very great, and he had records which will give the exact observations.

(Peter Ditchey is the most intelligent fish man at Sandusky. Fishes and runs in connection with Sandusky Fish Co.).

Black bass cut no figure in the market fisheries, and if thought best, their capture by nets might be entirely prohibited.

Carp are taken continuously in pounds about Sandusky, and find ready sale. It is still a question whether they will harm or benefit the fisheries of the lake.

Eels are moderately abundant on the American side in some places. Also occur on Canadian. Largest he has seen weighed 9 lbs.