



# THE MACKEREL FISHERY OF CANADA

## Interesting Facts and Statistics From U. S. Consular and Trade Reports.

By U. S. Consul WESLEY FROST, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

ORTY years ago the mackerel industry of Canada ranked next to the cod industry as the greatest and most remunerative of the Dominion's famous sea fisheries. It supplied one-fourth of the entire value of the country's fish production, and attracted to the maritime waters the fishing vessels of half a dozen foreign powers. Unfortunately, the industry was so strenuously prosecuted, by American purse-seiners and others, that by the close of the nineteenth century the mackerel had for some years been either exhausted or driven away from their Canadian resorts. The decline of the fishery attracted general notice and re- sulted during the past decade, how- ever, in the mackerel take, while not large in comparison with those of the years, which so many fishermen still remember, has nevertheless maintained itself fairly well. For a number of years past the fishery has held its ground as eleventh among those of the Dominion; in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, it ranks fifth, and in Prince Edward Island seventh among the pro- ducible sea-food resources.

**Dominion Mackerel Statistics.**  
The trend of the industry can be seen from the following decennial statistics of Canada's exportations of mackerel by fiscal years ending March 31 (the figures for 1871 being estimat-

Exports of fresh Mackerel.		Exports of salt mackerel.	
lbs.	Value.	bbis.	Value.
3,000	\$1,000	219,916	\$1,029,677
723,962	22,355	167,285	794,194
3,737,754	156,419	72,803	773,780
380,336	18,134	40,130	283,157
1,420,882	89,730	9,281	136,838
3,118,541	175,488	15,871	195,320

The exportations of fresh mackerel have in fact increased rather than decreased, as the figure for 1891 was very abnormally large. This is of significance to the United States, because the country takes, and has always taken, the entire volume of fresh mackerel exported from the Dominion. Not only does the stability of this trade seem assured, but with the rapid development of facilities for refrigeration and transportation, the sales of fresh mackerel to New England and New York seem certain to increase steadily. The completion of the Prince Edward Island car ferry in 1915 alone release for marketing in a favorable condition 600,000 pounds of mackerel, which must at present be pickled for shipment. Of course exports of (pickled) mackerel from Canada to the United States takes approximately one-third, the remainder—inferior quality fish—going to the British West Indies. The removal, by the American act of October 3, 1913, of the import duty of 1 cent per pound upon mackerel may divert even the latter portion to the southern part of the United States.

The mackerel fishery in Canada is confined exclusively to the four lower Provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island. The value of the output, both fresh and salt mackerel combined, during the fiscal year ended March 31, 1913, was \$635,293, and was distributed as follows hundredweight—100 lbs.):

	Cwt.	Value.	Barrels.	Value.
N. S.,	48,771	\$322,696	11,944	\$156,191
N. B.,	6,010	60,100	45	675
P. E. I.,	504	5,310	1,647	27,369
Quebec,	20	200	3,922	62,752

**Prince Edward Island.**  
The figures for Prince Edward Island give an incorrect impression, since the island's mackerel take in 1912-13 was by no means up to its standard quantity. During the season just closed the island's catch of mackerel, on the other hand, was exceptionally large, totaling 11,588 hundredweight, valued at \$44,721.

### Spring Fishing Season.

There are two mackerel seasons on Prince Edward Island. The first occurs late in May or early in June, by which time the schools which American fishermen meet off Cape Hatteras in April have made their way north to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. For 10 days or a fortnight, while passing the island en route to their spawning grounds around Bay Chalour in northern New Brunswick, considerable quantities of the fish are taken by net fishing. As they are merely in transit they do not come inside the bights of the coasts, and the fishing has to be conducted outside the 3-mile limit, where the depth is 18 to 25 fathoms or more, and the fishing can only be effective with nets.

These mackerel nets, which are obtained for the most part from New England cordage companies, are usually about 25 fathoms long and hang to a depth of 8 fathoms. The mesh is 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches, the average being 2 3/4 inches, and the nets are about 200 meshes deep. It is said that they cost the fishermen about \$12. Each net requires about 30 pounds of cork floaters, which the fishermen cut in 4-inch squares out of sheet cork 1 1/2 inches thick and attach to the top line with twine about 15 inches apart. The sheet cork costs the fishermen 5 cents per pound. In some cases the fishermen anchor one end of a net, leaving the other end to swing free, and in other cases they anchor both ends. In calm weather when the fishing is brisk they occasionally float a "fleet" of four to six nets, free at both ends, and drift all night with this fleet. In such instances the number of fish obtained from each net is 75 to 90, or not far from one-half of a barrel of 180 fish.

The spring fish are lean and of poor flavor, although many are weighted

heavily with roe. At the eastern end of the island, where the shallow water runs far out to sea, the nets are not infrequently so tossed by storms as to injure the fish. The average price of spring fish averaging 180 to the barrel is only \$8 per barrel, and often the take is composed of fish so small as to average between 200 and 300 to the barrel. For the most part the spring fish are pickled for the West Indian market, but a small share is peddled through the island. Last spring the Rustico branch of the North Atlantic Fisheries Company is said to have shipped a quantity of fresh spring mackerel in ice to Halifax, and to have held them there in cold storage into the early summer, receiving as high as 50 cents per fish at that time. The mackerel shipped fresh, at any season of the year, are not drawn. These round fish, in the spring, average about sixty 3-pound fish to the barrel, the same grade of barrels being used as in the case of salted fish.

### Summer Fishing Season.

From early in June until the latter portion of July no mackerel are fished. By early August, the spawning process is well over and the mackerel appear again in the island waters. At this season they come closer inshore, where the depth is only 5 to 15 fathoms; and as this brings them within the 3-mile limit the fishing can, under Canadian regulations, be done only with hook and line. Occasionally an American or French vessel equipped with seines operates successfully for a few days outside the international line. The great majority of mackerel fishing of every description is carried on along the northern and northeastern shores of the Province, the Bradley bank, five miles off Souris, being especially actively fished.

The ordinary mackerel hook, known as a "jigger", is 2 1/2 or 3 inches in length, with a loop one-half inch wide, and is manufactured in Scotland. Salt herring usually constitute the bait, and a barrel of herring will last three or more days of the most active fishing. Most fishermen put up from 40 to 50 barrels in April or early May of each year for their season's cod and mackerel fishing. Clams and capelin are also used for bait. When ground bait is used, it consists of the various fish just mentioned ground up in a small bait mill, costing about \$15.

The summer fish are known as the "fat mackerel", and bring the fishermen \$5 per 100 fish for small sizes running 200 or 220 fish to the barrel up to \$12 and \$14 per 100 fish for bloaters running 85 or 100 fish to the barrel. Each fisherman works independently, although customarily with the aid of a relative or hired assistant using a 22-foot gasoline boat, and disposing of his catch to buyers at the landing stage. The boats go out at 3 a. m., when the fish are said to bite most freely, and remain out until noon. In warm weather it is advisable to get the fish ashore by midday, but in cool weather the boats remain out until 4 p. m. or later, and even boats which come in at noon return for the afternoon's fishing. The mackerel season closes each year at about the 10th or 15th of October.

### Methods of Packing.

The mackerel upon being brought ashore are immediately split and cleaned, and after one or two hours

soaking in sea water are rimmed or plowed along the inside of each flank to aid in curing. After an all-night immersion in sea water, or a less period if the temperature is warm, the fish are then rubbed freely with salt and laid away in large butts or puncheons for two weeks or more to shrink. The puncheons used are bought for 60 or 80 cents from country and town merchants, coming originally from the Barbados filled with molasses. They hold four barrels of mackerel. After the fish are shrunk or "struck" they are rubbed with salt, weighed carefully, and packed 200 pounds in a barrel. A beam scale and tub are used in the weighing process. The barrels, which are mostly made by island coopers from stave wood brought from New Brunswick, cost 75 cents each and weigh about 30 pounds when empty. After the barrels are packed they are headed up and a hole is bored, through which they are filled with a saturate solution of salt water—or, as the fishermen put it, with water salt enough to float a salt mackerel—so that none of the salt encrusted on the fish will be melted off. The barrels when ready for shipment weigh about 300 pounds.

It is said that a few mackerel were formerly canned in Prince Edward Island, but the official statistics for some years back show no evidence of this practice. At all events, it has now been discontinued.

### Prince Edward Island Catch, 1913.

The following tablets show the quantity, value, and distribution of the island's mackerel take during 1913, as compiled from the monthly bulletins of sea-fishery statistics for the calendar year just concluded:

#### Mackerel Caught.

Month.	Cwt.	Value.
May	20	\$80.00
June	4,355	14,434.00
July	1,037	3,129.00
August	894	4,116.00
September	3,228	15,182.00
October	1,554	7,770.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,588</b>	<b>44,721.00</b>

#### Mackerel Marketed.

Month	Salted.		Fresh.	
	Barrels.	Cwt.	Barrels.	Cwt.
May		20		
June	941	2,032		
July	335	30		
August	290	23		
September	902	520		
October	511	19		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,979</b>	<b>2,644</b>		

#### Mackerel Caught and Landed.

Month	Kings County.		Queens County.		Prince County.	
	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.
May	20					
June	1,914	1,003	1,938			
July	345	170	522			
August	75	354	465			
September	1,800	1,236	192			
October	1,500	54				
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,654</b>	<b>2,817</b>	<b>3,117</b>			

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# WANT ALL FISH SOLD BY WEIGHT

## Master Mariners Assn. Will Send Delegation to Strongly Favor the Bill at State House Hearing Tomorrow —Is Done in Maine.

An important bill pending before the legislature in which every fisherman is interested is one which would compel the buying and selling of all food fish by the pound, similar to a law in operation in Maine.

The sale of mackerel by weight was urged by the Master Mariners' Association two years ago and an attempt was made to bring about an agreement with the New York and Boston

buyers to that end, but nothing was accomplished towards making a hard and fast rule in this direction. Mackerel, however, have been sold by weight in many instances and last fall when the spurt was on, most of the fish sold that way rather than by count.

At tomorrow's hearing, the Master Mariners' Association will send a delegation, including Capt. Peter Grant, president, Capt. James H. Stapleton, secretary, and possibly others.

### Take Stock in New Fish Pier.

Despite the supposed "tightness" of money just now, it developed at a meeting of the directors of the Boston Fish Market Corporation, held on T Wharf Saturday morning, that a Boston banking firm inside of one hour sold to Boston investors, Thursday, \$850,000 worth of preferred stock in the new Boston Fish Pier in South Boston, and the Commonwealth Ice and Cold Storage Company, which will run the immense cold storage plant being built there.

Practically every wholesale fish dealer on T wharf owns stock in the two corporations, and now that the two issues of preferred stock have passed into the hands of Bostonians, the two enterprises will have the distinction of being owned and managed by Boston capital and Boston men.

The construction work on the new pier is being finished rapidly, and the 25th of this month the dealers for the past 30 years housed at T Wharf will start to move to the new pier. As the lease of T Wharf held by the old T Wharf Corporation, expires April 1, all the dealers must be in their new quarters by that day.

Although work on the big freezer is being pushed, the recent storms have delayed the machinery, made in Philadelphia, and now in transit here. The machinery will be set up as soon as it arrives, and May 15 the directors expect the new plant to start turning out 200 tons of ice a day. When things get going properly the new freezer plant will not alone provide heat and ice for the dock, ice for the vessels and cold storage for fish, but will also provide room for storing other eatables, and ice will be sold.

Business at the new dock will be conducted quite differently from the methods followed at T wharf. The pier and every store will be flushed down each day; the employees will be neatly uniformed; the wooden handcarts will be replaced by more sanitary conveyances, and the overcrowding, so noticeable on the old pier, will be

### Portland Fishing Notes.

Following sensational stories that have been in circulation for several days to the effect that the Portland lobster dealers were selling lobsters which had been destroyed in the cars by the recent heavy rain storms, a thorough investigation of the wholesale lobster shops was made Friday by the local Board of Health officials. The result of the investigation was the giving of a "clean bill of health" to the wholesale dealers, the officials finding that not a single lobster had been placed on the market which any one of the dealers would not have used on his own table, all found dead in the cars having been dumped into the sea at a safe distance from the city. This report was forwarded to State Commissioner John A. Roberts of Augusta, who had heard the sensational reports referred to and was planning to make an examination himself. The dealers say the loss of lobsters in the recent rain storms has been greatly exaggerated and would not amount to over \$1500 all told.

About 60,000 pounds of fish were brought in Friday by vessels of the local fleet, the majority of them making harbor before the storm commenced. The sch. Eleanor brought in a good fare and also had in tow the fishing steamer Elthier which she had picked up in a disabled condition, the latter's wheel having dropped off when about 10 miles off shore. The steamer had part of her gear hauled in when the accident occurred, but she was forced to leave the remainder out. She was rendered perfectly helpless by the loss of her wheel, and it was well that the Eleanor caught and every store will be flushed down each day; the employees will be neatly uniformed; the wooden handcarts will be replaced by more sanitary conveyances, and the overcrowding, so noticeable on the old pier, will be

# THE FISH TRADE OF PORTO RICO

Says the Halifax, N. S., Maritime Merchant:

In 1916 Porto Rico will lose the entire advantage she has over Cuba in the marketing of sugar in the United States. We asked a well informed member of the fish trade how he thought this would affect Porto Rico's capacity for fish purchases in this market. He said he thought it would affect it, but just how seriously it was impossible to tell. If, said he, Porto Rico is not able to make money out of sugar under her present opportunity for marketing, she is very likely to make less under the new one. It would be a bad thing for Nova Scotia to lose even a portion of her Porto Rico fish trade, unless she found something that would take its place. At the present time the total consumption of codfish in Porto Rico is about one hundred and seventy-five thousand quintals;—half the Lunenburg catch, perhaps more than half, is sold to Porto Rico. Now, suppose that Cuba is able to produce sugar so cheaply that Porto Rico cannot compete, and as a result her purchasing capacity of fish is cut in halves. This we admit, is an extreme expectation, but suppose it happens; shall we be able to get an increased trade from Cuba to compensate for our loss with Porto Rico? Perhaps we shall and perhaps we shall not, for Cuba seems to be divided upon the question of fish purchases. In the eastern end of the Island, she has a large consumption of Canadian fish, but in the Havana market of late years our fish have been displaced by Norwegian and Scotch fish. The Scotch and the Norwegian shippers seem to use Havana as a dumping market, and the values they supply to purchasers there are very hard to beat. However, we do not think we need lose any sleep over the prospect of a reduction in the purchasing capacity of Porto Rico, for if that should come about, and if it should happen too, that Cuba failed to make good, Porto Rico's deficiency, our shippers would simply need to switch to the United States market, whatever portion they needed to sell in order to maintain prices in the West Indies.

### Pensacola Arrivals.

There were few arrivals from the snapper banks at Pensacola last week, but those coming in docked good catches:

	Snapper	Grouper
Maud F. Silva	30,755	18,660
Ida L. Brooks	29,415	2,430
Mary B. Greer	31,905	10,305
Rena A. Percy	35,915	6,410
Silas Stearns	12,625	5,175
Saladin	30,000	5,000

### Lobsters Are Lobsters.

Says the Fishing Gazette: Lobsters are making a record this winter, but 50 cents a pound does not mean much to the fishermen when gear is destroyed in the storm and it is impossible to reach the traps.

# CHAMPIONS THE LOWLY FLOUNDER

W. H. Ballou, writing in the York "Pres," champions the

flounder in the following manner: "The nearest imitation we have in the European sole is our little flounder. To those who don't know the difference, it is just as good as the real sole. The real sole is preferred for picnics, but not all of us regard the fine distinction of flavor, and in consequence any kind of flounder is served by restaurants as filet-de sole. Our restaurants and hotels now follow the pure food laws. Every other restaurant must make their ware correspond to their labels. If their ware is not true, the producer must label it as such."

"Our little winter flounder (domestica) attains more than three pounds. It loves cold water, and that is its chief value to the consumer. If as big as your hand (not a size), it is large enough for a child. It is all flesh, save a bone. It lives only in cold water, and is not so liable to parasites as warm water fishes. It is safe, delicious food. One cannot eat a quail a day, but I have eaten a flounder at each meal, three times a day for two months at a stretch, without tiring of it at Enos, Forth, N. J. For this small fish men in the coldest weather, and men will chop holes in the ice, and net in under the ice to supply the evergrowing public demand. Every householder knows here is a really fresh fish in the best weather, that has not been stored, but came direct from the ocean bed, where at a depth of water, he has found a temperature and enough to eat all the hot season, no longer true. It knows that the bays are full of practically all other fishes, particularly sharks; that it can be everywhere unmolested and free of its kind of food suspended in water and existing in the bays on the bay floors.

"Right here let me say that contrary to the general view, the flounder loves most little flounders. The summer pursues in our bays the young of the summer flounder, maybe you call it—in preference to other food. Our little winter flounder knows this by heredity through thousands of years of the young of the summer flounder. It knows it by any such doctrine, because its parents, selected never having been molested by the activity, have not conveyed the information they do not possess progeny.

"They may be caught around Manhattan and State from the wharves or in rowing the shore. About six feet of the correct depth in which them. Jamaica Bay is another water in which to find them. It is far easier to say where they are found than where not. They are omnipresent."

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