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THE FISHERIES.

THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MIRAMICHI FISHERY SOCIETY.

THE SEA and the SOIL are the two great sources, out of which are brought almost everything that is necessary for the sustentation and comfort of the human family! Hence FARMING and FISHING have always been esteemed as the most important, ancient, and honorable, of all the occupations that engage the time, and demand the attention of our race. Of those illustrious personages of by-gone days, whose lives most adorn the human character,—of those men whose names shed a halo of glory over the pages of the past, shining in history as suns that never set not a few have been Farmers and Fishermen.

If the Soil and the Sea then, be sources, the cultivation of which is so interesting and honorable, and above all so indispensable to the maintenance and comfort of our race, surely it becomes alike the duty and interest of every right-thinking person, to fall into the ranks of Institutions having for their objects the advancement of Agriculture, and the success of the Fisheries; and to lend all such Institutions, a hearty co-operation and a helping hand.

A Society for the advancement of Agriculture, has existed at this place ever since the year 1824, and almost every field and furrow within the sphere of its operations, affords ample proof of the good it has achieved. Northumberland, previously among the least advanced as an agricultural district, of all the Counties in the Province, has under its fostering influence risen to be, in some respects, the foremost of them all. During the early years of its history, its inhabitants were chiefly employed in the lumbering business. But the amount of supplies in order to make and bring to market, the two to four hundred cargoes of Timber annually exported, about equalled the net proceeds of the sale of the Timber.

How long this lamentable state of things would have continued it is hard to say, had not the existing Northumberland Agricultural Society sprung into existence. Its first annual Report—published in 1838—had the effect of suddenly arousing the public, to the absurdity of prosecuting the Lumbering, or any other business, under such disadvantageous circumstances. It pointed out in the clearest and most cogent terms, the errors of the past system; and proved distinctly that in the cultivation of the Soil, and the production of those articles of food which had cost the county tens of thousands of pounds annually, could a remedy be found?

To the first Secretary of the Northumberland Agricultural Society—the late Rev. James Souter, A. M.—this County owes a debt of gratitude which it can now never repay. His admirable Reports prepared for the Society did more to correct the errors blindly prosecuted, and avert the consequent ruin to which the county was hastening, than any other means which has been employed; and the name of James Souter, cannot fail to be perpetuated, as one of Northumberland's earliest and best benefactors.

The Northumberland Agricultural Society, and the Miramichi Fishery Society of which this is the first annual Report, may be termed sister Societies! They resemble each other, in almost every feature!

The object of the former, is to encourage Farming! the object of the latter is to encourage Fishing! Their Constitution, sources of support, and systems of usefulness, are very similar.

The Miramichi Fishery Society, was instituted the 27th day of February 1852. Its objects, as expressed in the Constitution, are to promote the extension of the River and Gulf Fisheries, to improve the mode of catching, curing, barrelling, and inspecting Fish &c.

The business of the Society is conducted by a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and a Committee of thirteen other Directors. Any Resident of the County, by paying five shillings may become a Member of the Society for the Year, or Five Pound and become a Life Member. A Special Meeting of the Board of Directors, may be called at any time, on the Requisition of any two Members of the Board to the President, stating the object for which they wish such meeting to be called, and the Secretary must give five days Notice of all such meetings! For every Dollar subscribed to its funds, the Legislature, to a limited amount, grant three Dollars.

During the past year, your Committee have applied themselves faithfully to the duties which devolved upon them as Directors of your Infant Society! Conscious of their inability to perform these duties aright, owing to their lack of information respecting many of the details connected with the working of the Society, their first step was to devise means by which to obtain the desired information. At their first Meeting, it was Resolved, That a Committee of five persons be chosen to obtain information, and report on the best mode of offering Bounties on the catch of Codfish, Mackerell and Fall Herrings. The amount to be granted to each Vessel, and the manner the Fish should be inspected, together with the proof to be required before paying the Bounty, or any other particulars they could procure for the information of the Board. This Committee opened a correspondence through the Secretary, with some of the most intelligent and respectable men engaged in the Fisheries in Nova Scotia, Prince Edwards Island, and this Province. From the Hon John E. Fairbanks one of the Gentlemen addressed, they promptly received a communication fraught with valuable information, dated Woodside, Halifax, 14th April 1852:

and from Adam Gordon, E. q. of Pictou, N. S. they were favoured with two long and interesting Letters dated 22nd and 29th April, together with a copy of a Communication to him from James Morrison, Esq. dated Buckie Banffshire, Scotland, 7th July 1851; as these Letters contain a vast amount of useful information regarding the Fisheries, they are hereto appended. The thanks of the Society were unanimously voted by the Board, and conveyed to these Gentlemen for their prompt attention to the request of the Directors, and for the valuable information they were pleased to communicate.

In possession of the knowledge thus obtained, your Committee, at an adjourned meeting held 13th day of May last, Resolved unanimously, "to appropriate ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY POUNDS of the Society's funds towards the following objects, viz:

A Bounty on Mackerel to be graduated by the Season's catch,
A Bounty on Fall Herrings " " £80
3 prizes to the 3 boats that catch the largest quantity of Codfish, £6 each
4 prizes to the 4 boats that catch the next largest 3 each
5 prizes to the 5 boats that catch the next largest 2 each

The conditions upon which the above-mentioned Bounties and Prizes were to be competed for, and the terms upon which the Prize Monies were to be paid, were fully detailed in large printed Handbills, profusely circulated throughout this and the adjoining Counties.

A Special Meeting of the Board was convened at Chatham, on Friday the 14th day of last month, for the purpose of awarding Prizes and Bounties, agreeably to the Society's advertisement, dated 12th May last.

At this meeting a disinterested Committee of three persons was elected for the purpose of examining and reporting on the several applications for bounties and prizes, lodged with the Secretary.

This Committee having submitted their report, which was closely scrutinized by the Board, it was resolved unanimously that the Bounty on Mackerel, to be paid to qualified applicants be five shillings per barrel, and on Herrings three shillings per barrel.

The Bounties on Herring and Mackerel, and the prizes for the largest catches of Codfish were awarded as follows:—

HERRINGS.

To Peter Loggie, Jr., for 1 bbl No 1 Herring,	£0 3 0
Roderick McLeod, Esq., 119 do., do.,	17 17 0
Israel St. Croax, 23 do., do.,	3 9 0
Laurel St. Croax, 14 do., do.,	2 2 0
Charles Palmer, 49 do., do.,	7 7 0
David Palmer, 34 do., do.,	5 2 0
George E. Letson, 55 do., ds.,	8 14 0

298

£44 14 0

CODFISH.

CLASS FIRST.

Murdoch M'Kenzie, No. 1 fish,	
Martin O'Savoy 2 "	
Henry Charson, 3 "	
	£6 each. £18 0 0

CLASS SECOND.

John McEvor, No. 4 fish,	
James McMahan, 5 "	
Israel St. Croax, 6 "	
Laurence St. Croax, 7 "	
	£3 each. 12 0 0

CLASS THIRD.

Birde & Farlot, No. 8 fish,	
Daniel Burdo, 9 "	
Deniel Gay, 10 "	
Francis Bredo, 11 "	
Domine Soure, 12 "	
	£2 each. 10 0 0

17 competitors in all—12 successful. £40 0 0

MACKEREL.

Peter Loggie Jr., 14 bbls. No 1 Mackerel 5s.	3 10 0
do, 3 do 2 do. 2 6	0 7 6
W. J. Fraser, 30 do 1 do. 5	7 10 0
do, 15 do 2 do. 2 6	1 17 6
Roderick McLeod, 2 do 1 do. 5	0 10 0
Charles Palmer, 1 do 1 do. 5	0 5 0
George E. Letson, 2 do 1 do. 5	0 10 0
	£14 10 0

By the above statement it will be seen that the maximum rates of bounty—as fixed by the Board, in their advertisement dated 12th May last—were paid for the catch of Mackerel and Herrings; and that the whole sum voted for prizes to Codfish has been paid.

The objects contemplated by the Miramichi Fishery Society are—

- 1st. The promotion and encouragement of the River and Gulf Fisheries.
- 2nd. The improvements of the modes of catching, curing, barrelling and inspecting Fish.
- 3rd. The procuring and publishing information respecting the Fisheries in other Counties.

The measures adopted by your Society, as the most likely to promote and encourage "the River and Gulf Fisheries," have been noticed in the narrative given of the Society's

operations during the past Year. There can be no question but that these measures may be greatly modified, or amended, by the successors of the retiring Board, but it is equally certain, that some good has already been achieved, in the way of awakening a deeper interest in favour of Fishing as an occupation, and creating in those who do fish, a greater thirst for information respecting the business they profess. The information appended to this Report respecting the 2nd and 3rd objects contemplated by your Society, has been derived from sources of unquestionable authority—and as great care has been taken in condensing the statements of others, not to pervert the meaning intended to be conveyed, implicit confidence may be placed in the directions given.

APPENDIX

TO THE FIRST REPORT OF THE MIRAMICHI FISHERY SOCIETY.

Directions as to the most approved mode of catching and curing Herring, Codfish, and Mackerel! 1st.

HERRING.

*FRESH HERRINGS, when in prime condition, form a cheap and nutritious article of food, but their value necessarily depend on the condition of the Fish when caught, and on the degree of promptitude and care, which may be exercised in Curing them.

HERRINGS, in regard to their condition are usually divided into three classes. Viz. No. 1 *Maties*, No. 2 *Full Fish*, and No. 3 *Spent Fish*.

MATIES, are those in which the Roes and Milts are perfectly, but not largely developed, and it is well to understand that this is the state of the Fish, in which it is truly in the best condition for food, and when it will be found most delicious to eat, as well as most nutritive. Although it does not exhibit while in this condition, so bulky an appearance as it does when it is in that of a full fish, it is in reality much fatter, for the bulk of the full fish is deceptfully produced by the great enlargement of the Roe or Milt, and this does not take place without a corresponding diminution of the body of the Fish.

The *FULL FISH* however are those which are most sought after in a Mercantile point of view, because of their larger appearance.

The *SPENT FISH* having just performed their function of spawning and having been thereby reduced to a miserable, lean and poor state, are unpalatable, and more or less unwholesome as food, when in a fresh state, and in a still greater degree when cured. The more immediately they are taken after spawning, the worse they will be, and the longer the time that expires after their performance of that function the less unpalatable and unwholesome they become. But it is always advisable to avoid taking or using them in any way, until they have had time to be fully recruited after their thorough exhaustion from spawning.

The different classes of persons employed in the trade which produces this article of Commerce, called

SALTED OR PICKLED HERRINGS—are *Fishermen*, *Fish-Curers*, *Gutters*, *Packers*, and *Coopers*, and if the portion of work which more immediately belong to each of these classes, be in any instance imperfectly performed, the whole value of the article may be so impaired, as to be rendered altogether unmarketable. Each class therefore should perform its duties carefully and expertly, so that by the care and attention exercised by all of them towards one object, their united exertions may bring the manufactured fish to the highest degree of perfection, of which it is capable.

1st. *Duties of Fishermen*.—It is advisable in the first to understand those things which require to be attended to in the capture of the Fish. The mode of taking them by employing schooners of from thirty to ninety tons has many advantages especially that of enabling the crews to cure their Herrings immediately on board, and almost before they are well dead; because they suffer to a certain extent every moment they remain without having salt applied to them. In one point, however, boats have an advantage over schooners, that much finer nettings can be used in them; the larger vessels requiring stronger nets, made of heavier twine, which is not likely to be so successful in taking Fish, as nets made of a finer description.

It is most essential that all boats should be furnished with pumps, the occasional working of which, if necessary, will keep the boat dry. Nothing is found to be more prejudicial to the fish, than their being permitted to wash backwards and forwards in a bath of sea water filling the bottom of the boat, by which they have their scales rubbed off by friction against each other, and they are macerated in such a manner as to lose the greater and richer part of their natural juices, and to become flabby unsightly, and tasteless. And it in addition to the pump, the boat were floored with boards, perforated with holes large enough to allow any water that might be shipped to find its way downwards, it would not only add greatly to the comfort of the Crew, but it would tend to keep the fish in much better state, till they should be landed.

Whenever the Fish are landed, the whole interior of the Boat should be properly washed and scrubbed. This should be done daily during the Fishing Season, and thus the *glut* is much more easily removed, and the Boat is rendered clean, and freed from all taint or smell, before proceeding to sea on each successive voyage. The train of Netts, having been carefully and regularly coiled up in the Boat should on arriving at the Fishing ground, be gradually shot out with equal care and attention, and then the Boat lies with the train attached to it; after the train has remained in the wa-

* Report of British Fisheries. † Report of British Fisheries.