

# A-CHS Newsletter

Established 1980

ISSUE 96

FEBRUARY 1998

LOCAL BUSINESSES - 1900 - 1925

## COMMERCIAL FISHING ON POCOMOONSHINE LAKE

In the 1890's Fred Harriman and his brother-in-law Sidney Cheney arrived from the Gardner, Maine area. Fred acquired most of lot 18 from Jasper Bailey in Alexander and Sidney acquired all (or part of) lot 19. They built houses on either side of the Pokey Road near the shore of Pocomoonshine Lake.



HARRIMAN MEN: FRED, JR., FRED, SR., JAOb, WITH KENNETH IN FRONT CA 1909  
four generation photograph loaned by Mazie Cheney Blaney

Sidney Cheney (1861- ) was married to Flora Harriman, daughter of Jaob and Harriet (Brann) Harriman. Sidney was a millman and built a sawmill next to his home. He sawed long lumber with this steam powered mill.

Fred Harriman (1855-1938) was Flora's brother. He apparently worked in the mill with Sidney (and Sidney's son Harold). Fred was also a farmer and a fisherman.

In the old days Pocomoonshine Lake contained white perch and square tailed trout. In the 1890's, Fred Harriman and Frank Averill brought pickerel over from Big Lake in barrels with a team, and released them into Pokey. There were no laws back then preventing this. They were commercial fisherman and there was a market for pickerel. In a few short years the fish grew and multiplied.

The open water fishing routine would use up to six men, each in a canoe or boat. Sometimes these watercraft were poled, sometimes paddled, and sometimes rowed. Fred apparently rowed an 18 foot canoe. This all depends on whose memory we use, and likely on the man providing the muscle power.

The tools included a pole about 15 feet long. Bamboo was probably preferred because it was light and easy to handle, but cedar was also used. Attached to the pole was a line of about equal length with a three gang hook. The hook was baited with a strip of either red flannel, or white flannel, or salt pork (again depending on memory and /or what the fisherman happened to like or have on hand). Again memories or practices differ; some fishermen were said to have used hand lines with 50 feet of line and a red, white and silver spoon with three gang hook with feathers. Each fisherman had two wooden boxes with him, one empty for the fish and one full of ice.

Besides Fred, men who fished on somewhat a regular basis his son Arthur, his son-in-law Blake Eastman, and Durias Williams. Frank Averill may have fished, but does not show up on Alexander or Princeton census records. Others fished occasionally and we'd like to complete this list.

The fishing process was simple. The hooks were baited and the lure was cast then skittered along the water surface back to the boat. The fish (not just pickerel, yellow perch from the river and white perch as well) were placed into the empty box and covered with ice.

When the box was full (or when the sun was setting) the fisherman would return to the fish house on the shore of the lake west of where Fred lived. Here the fish were cleaned and packed into new boxes with fresh ice. The heads and tails were left on. One report stated that the fish were not gutted before shipping. At a time in the 1930's the fish may have been packed in barrels.

On a regular basis, Fred drove his wagon over and down through the water to soak the wooden wheels tight in the iron rims, the boxes were loaded onto the wagon, taken to the Woodland railroad station, and shipped to the Boston market. They'd be there the next morning! By 1931, Roland Perkins had a new Ford truck and would haul the fish to the railroad station in Calais.

The ice that was used for packing and preserving the fish came from Pocomoonshine Lake. It was cut early in the season, when the ice was about a foot thick. Thicker blocks would be harder to handle. The ice was stored in the icehouse behind the fish house and packed in sawdust. Those ice blocks were probably about 18 inches square. The boards for the fish boxes and the sawdust had to have come from Sidney's mill.

Fred fished through the ice too. He would cut the holes in a circle. He said, "The fish are attracted to the light." Ice fishing is cold work and he wore a heavy long coat and a big hat with a kind of netting or veil hanging from it to protect his eyes from the sun.



