

# HARVEY'S LAKE HISTORY

## Fishing



Boy fishing near Alderson, 1892 (C.F. Cook photo)

**I**n 1830, a decade before lumbering and farming created the Lake's first settlements, Isaac A. Chapman, an early Wyoming Valley historian, described the Lake's native fish as "trout, perch and sunfish." While a bridle path from Luzerne to the Lake was available as early as 1800, the Lake was not readily open to early recreation until the Lake House hotel was built at Sunset in 1855. Even then stage coach travel, three to four hours from Wilkes-Barre, was not practical for sustained fishing trips. Moreover, the Lake was seemingly more popular for limitless deer hunting.

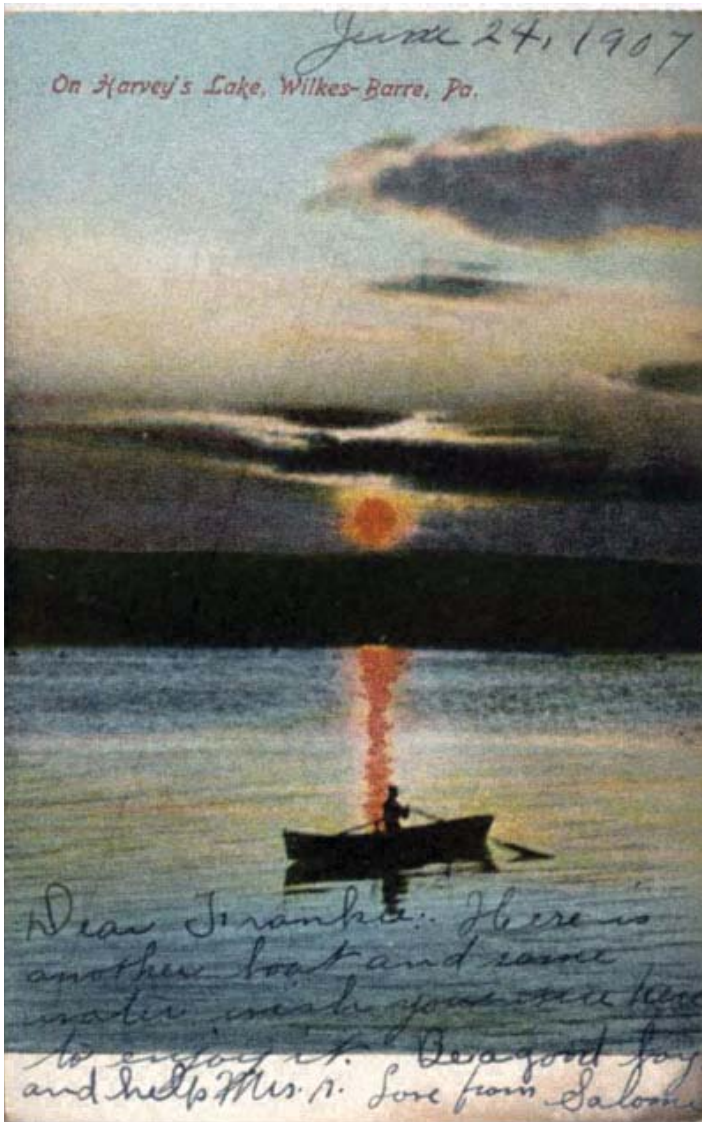
The native trout in the Lake were speckled trout but, by the end of the 1800s they were wiped out by new fish species introduced into the Lake. Catfish, too, and eel were also native fish. Eel were once common in the Susquehanna River and could easily ascend Harvey's Creek at its mouth at West Nanticoke, and swim to the Lake. In 1860 another local historian, Stewart Pearce, reported that "Esox" had been introduced into many area lakes, including Harvey's Lake, destroying native trout populations. It is unclear if Pearce in referring to pickerel – a true esox (pike) species - or to the walleye (also known as the pike-perch or Susquehanna Salmon in an earlier day). The walleye is actually a perch not a pike species but would

have been easily transportable in 1860 from the Susquehanna to the Lake.

In the fall of 1870 Hendrick B. Wright, local congressman, and Charles T. Barnum, local judge, applied to the state for warrants to the land underneath the Lake. Both Wright and Barnum had other property at the Lake. Land warrants to areas under rivers and lakes in the state were not uncommon, and were often purchased by coal mining companies. The Lake was surveyed on November 3, 1870, and patents to the Lake bottom were issued to Wright and Barnum on February 20, 1871.

The Lake patents drew the anger of local residents who protested to the legislature. The legislature responded with a law declaring Harvey's Lake and Harvey's Creek to be navigable waters. The law was actually proposed to the legislature by the Lake's Hoffman Lumber Company, but it had popular local support, with Wright and Barnum opposing the act.

The effect of the law was not to challenge Wright and Barnum's ownership of the land under the Lake, but to assure access to the Lake waters by adjoining property owners. In fairness to Wright and Barnum, they probably never intended to exclude public use of the Lake. Wright and Barnum planned to engage in ice-cutting on the Lake in the winter, and Lake patents arguably provided a legal basis to support the business. They built four large ice houses in the Alderson corner for their ice business. But the Hoffman Lumber Company was booming logs in several sections of the Lake creating an unsightly and sometimes dangerous nuisance. At one time, a log boom threatened to damage the Inlet bridge. By obtaining Lake patents, Wright and Barnum may have been able to limit Hoffman's operations on the Lake and to protect the pristine integrity of the Lake for lakeside owners. Wright and Barnum did exercise a proprietary interest in the Lake by stocking it with three hundred black bass, a new game fish, in late August 1871. (Other accounts claim the State stocked the Lake with bass in



1876 but the 1871 stocking is confirmed).

In time, a number of different game fish would be stocked in the Lake. Bass were introduced in the Lake in the same year that the last reported eel were caught at the Lake for some years. Eel had found their way to the Lake from the Susquehanna River and Harvey's Creek. The dams built in the river earlier in the century to serve the canal system had greatly impeded eel migration to Wyoming Valley, but a few eel still found their way to Harvey's Creek and the Lake. In 1873 eel weighing 8 to 11 pounds were reported caught in the Lake. But small dams built on Harvey's Creek for grist mill operations would finally end regular eel migration to the Lake.

In June 1876 State Representative Charles A. Miner arranged for the stocking of 5,000 landlocked salmon in the Lake. However, the salmon apparently did not thrive – and nearly a century later the State Fish Commission would try again. The principal game fish would remain bass – presumably smallmouth bass at this time. Later in June 1876 a Wilkes-Barre newspaper reported:

The bass placed in Harvey's Lake a few years ago, have multiplied rapidly, and are attaining considerable size. Yesterday afternoon the guests of the Lake House caught nine of different sizes; one of them was seventeen inches long and weighed three and a half pounds. It was caught on a troll line by N.G. Belding and F. R. Rhodes, and is the largest, thus far taken from the lake. It was preserved alive and placed in the Colonel's handsome aquarium, in which he has a splendid collection of bass, pickerel, trout, perch, etc.

The following entry was made on the Lake House register:

*Tuesday, June 13, 1870.*

The Largest bass even taken from the lake, weighing 3 ½ pounds, was caught this

day on troll line by N.G. Belding and F. R. Rhodes. The Colonel is busily engaged in putting his house in order, to accommodate the visitors to this favorite resort this summer.

The Colonel was former Sheriff James W. Rhodes who purchased the Lake House in 1875. It would be renamed the Rhodes Hotel. An account by Rhodes notes:

Mr. Rhoads, proprietor of the Lake Hotel, says: "I have fished in many waters, but nowhere do I find bass so gamey as in Harvey's Lake, and what has been my experience seems to be the experience of every fisherman." Most of the bass are caught by casting and still fishing. The trout found in the lake are not near as gamey as those found in the small mountain streams.

One old fisherman who has spent thirty-five years on the lake says: "No trouble to 'ketch' trout in the 'ere lake! Why they just wiggle up to your hook and fasten themselves on. Of course, if ye wants easy fishin' trout is yer game; but if ye wants genuwine sport, then yer must try and hook Harvey's lake bass."

Fishing at the Lake was mostly the preserve of the moneyed class who could afford the expense of travel and recreation. And, at the Lake, the lawyers, judges, and businessmen all wanted William "Daddy" Emmons as their fishing guide. As a July 1880 account noted:

In a shady spot, about a hundred feet from the Harvey's Lake Hotel, stands a small cabin. It is comfortably arranged inside, and on the outside can be seen poles, lines, nets, and the varied paraphernalia of fishing.

This is the home of William Emmons, familiarly known as "Daddy." He is still hale and hearty, though beginning to show the effects of years of exposure. He came from New Jersey thirty six-years ago and settled at Harvey's Lake. For sixty years

he has been a fisherman and we do not believe there is an older one in the State.

He is now 81 years of age, but has lost none of his love for the sport. In his early life he fished in the Delaware and for about two years in Chesapeake Bay. For the past thirty six-years he has fished at Harvey's Lake and made a fair living.

He has never fished on Sunday – something that few anglers can truthfully say. He is happy in his lonely life, but begins to feel that his days are drawing to an end. The death of Messrs. Houpt, Hancock and Miner caused him much sorrow.

An account of a fishing adventure with Daddy Emmons was written by Caleb Wright, a lawyer-novelist originally from Wilkes-Barre, but who later moved to Bucks County.

### DADDY EMMONS

"I never see the name of this harmless and gentle spirited man, or hear it pronounced, but with reverential emotion. Many years have passed since it was first my pleasure to become associated with him in the mystic art of capturing fish – an occupation that everybody knows is, and always has been, with all men, one of the characteristics of genius.

"The first time I met this ancient fisherman was at Harvey's Lake. There he had his summer cabin, invited to it by the genial warmth that lured also the osprey and the king-fisher, and the like them devoting himself to the one occupation. He had his boat, his bait net, and all his tools of trade at hand; and with the morning dawn was up and abroad upon the waters.

"At our first interview I thought I discovered his merit; and then and there we grew into bonds of affinity. On the little inland sea I was constrained to acknowledge his superior sleight of hand, and often wondered where such matchless skill in capturing pickerel and catfish could have found growth. But when on the bold steam issuing from the density of the Sullivan county woods, armed with the coachman or yellow-sally, my companion

laid down his arms at my feet. The most cautious and alert of untamed things, the trout, challenges a prowess not thrust promiscuously upon the sons of men. It is a special gift.

"With every yard square of the noble sheet of water, largest of Pennsylvania lakes, Daddy Emmons was familiar. The places where, at different times of the day, bait shiners could be scooped up with his net, and at what spots, at different hours, lay the largest of the fish he sought.

"A man may be good on water without much knowledge of woodcraft. This was once demonstrated when the old fisherman undertook to guide George Lear, of the Bucks county bar, and myself from the north shore of the lake to Beaver Run. We wished to reach the run at the foot of the great meadow. It was once a meadow, but of late years an inextricable confusion of alders, through which the stream found its way, a mile or so in extent. Instead of reaching it below the jungle, our conductor brought us in above. Our Bucks county friend started it first. A short distance brought him to the alders. We found his track, where he had penetrated the tangled undergrowth, but that was all. The future Attorney General of the Commonwealth was lost. In hunting for him, having wound up our lines, we got lost too. I don't know how many hours we wandered in the dismal slough, chiefly in circles, but Squire Kocher, hunting his cattle, found and rescued us. Mr. Lear, getting out upon a log road, followed it to the lake, and a lad of Judge Barnum's rowed him across to the hotel.

"There was a pleasing simplicity and honest candor in this old navigator of the lake that commended him to the regard of men far above him in social rank. Judge Paxson of our Supreme Bench, for many years a summer resident of the celebrated resort, spent his days in company of Daddy Emmons. Their communion was a pleasant thing to behold, and the distinguished jurist, in common with many others, will ever bear a kindly remembrance of this old piscatorial veteran, deploring the sad catastrophe that hastened his descent to the tomb."

The death of Daddy Emmons in September 1888 was widely noted:

### **Almost a Centenarian Fisherman.**

The venerable “Daddy” Emmons, the famous fish-erman of Harvey’s Lake is dead, his demise having occurred at Dallas on Sept. 14, at the home of a daughter, Mrs. Davis.

A fortnight ago while walking on the streets of Dallas he was knocked down by a passing team, sustaining the fracture of a hip. At the advanced age of 92 such an injury could not be re-covered from and he passed quickly away.

As the *Leader* says, he went to Harvey’s Lake from New Jersey about thirty-five years ago and ever since has been a prominent character at that favorite resort. Up to about two years ago he lived in a hut in a cove of woods on the banks of the lake, and was looked upon as the ideal fisherman of the neighborhood. He knew just where the finny tribe was most numerous, and seldom failed to make a catch when a proper effort was put forth. He taught many of the prominent men of his day the art of angling, among his pupils being the late Judge Paxson, of Philadelphia. Since leaving the lake he has resided with his daughter.

A July 1901 report by Charles J. Randall, a Columbia County newspaper editor, gave tips on bass fishing at Harvey’s Lake, including insight to Lake fishing guides “Uncle Sank” and “Dutch Thomas..”

The outfit – you want a 10 to 12 foot rod weight 10 ½ To 12 ounces: lance wood preferred but split bamboo will do. The rod should be flexible, but not so much as a fly rod. Fifty yards of good waterproof braided line, size “F,” or medium: an 80-yard multiplying click and drag casting reel, bass size, some heavy 8-yard leaders, best quality; some 3-0 and 4-0 Carlisle hooks tied on the best heavy gut, and some No. 6 box swivels.

For bait use minnows; the silver shiner is best; they should be from two to three inches in length. Of course, you can get them at the lake if you engage them ahead, but if you can procure them at your home it is better to take them with you, then you will be sure of a supply for your

first day’s fishing. Take about a hundred in a minnow bucket. You can keep them very nicely by carrying with you a pocket bicycle pump and occasionally pumping some air into the water.

We’ll suppose that you have your outfit packed and your bucket minnows (and have previously written to Charles E. Rhoades, Lake House, Shawanese, Luzerne Co., PA., and engaged accommodations) and are ready to start. Hunt up “Uncle Sank” and tell him you want to go fishing.

He will know whether “Dutch Thomas” is seasick or not, and if he is not you are all right, for between his spells of seasickness the old man is one of the best guides on the lake.

If Thomas is seasick “Uncle Sank” will procure you another guide, provide you with a boat, give you the necessary instructions and start you out.

If it’s “Dutch Thomas” don’t give him over one good drink after you get started, but promise him a couple after you get back, besides his regular fee. That one will be enough to start him talking, and between Thomas and the bass, if they are biting, you will have a circus. He will keep the boat from 50 to 100 feet from shore, as the depth of the water varies, and taking your station in the stern of the boat you make your cast. The minnow is hooked by passing the hook through the mouth, out through the gills, and then pressing the point of the hook through the side of the fish until it projects upon the other side.

It takes a little time to catch the knack of casting, but a fisherman can get an idea of it from watching some expert, and after a little practice will be able to make a fairly good break at it. You use from 25 to 60 feet of line as the occasion requires, and when you hook your first bass the fun gets fast and furious. Thomas will hustle the boat out into deep water and you fight with your bass.

It’s all kinds of trout fishing rolled into one, and after you begin to wonder when the blasted fish is going to quit tearing around and give up, and make up your mind that if he doesn’t quit pretty soon that you will. Thomas comes to your rescue with a long-hand-led landing net and after



**Ed Swan Boat Rentals at the Inlet basin, 1920s  
(Photo courtesy of Bill Casterline.)**

making a few remarks about things in general he skillfully lands the fish in the boat and transfers him to the jive-box. Then he lights his pipe, which has gone out in the struggle; and makes some more comments.

You sit down in the boat, wipe the perspiration from your face, forget yourself in yourelation and pass the bottle to Thomas, then take one yourself, and after you get over your excitement (the old fishermen call it thebass fever) you're up and at 'em again.And so it goes until you are tired out or have landedall you want.

A dozen bass from one to three pounds is considered a fair trip, but there have been catches of over a hundredto two men. This however, is an unusual catch, but there are plenty of catches on record of from 20 to 50.

The sport may be common to all lakes where black bass abound, but nowhere are the conditions so perfect as at Harveys Lake, or nowhere else will you find such genial surroundings and good accommodations.

The editor was one of a party of fishermen at the lake from June 15 to 18, and though we can generally make a pretty fair stab at almost every kind of fishing, casting for bass was a revelation to us.

Almost the entire history of Sunset to this time was witnessed with bemusement by a unique Sunset institution, the Oxford educated Ed Swan, who had rented rowboats at the Inlet for nearly half a century. Swan immigrated to the United States from England as a young man. He was originally associated with W. W. Finch, who had rented rowboats on the Susquehanna at Wilkes-Barre since 1881. During the 1880s Swan began a rowboat rental service at the Lake.

Originally, his boats were located on the Lake shore near the Rhoads Hotel, but the Lake waves damaged his boat line. Swan then relocated his service to the Inlet basin. Swan's shack along the Inlet shore was filled with a tumbling collection of junk, but it was a special place for friends to idly away time and to watch the seasons turn, until Ed Swan's time also passed in 1933.

The Nanticoke canal dam which impeded eel migration on the Susquehanna was largely destroyed in 1902 and 1904 floods. A renewed eel population seemingly reappeared at the Lake (perhaps illegally introduced since a substantial dam along the Lake's outlet stream would remain a substantial barrier to eel migration). In any event an August 1939 account notes eels in the Lake:

James J. Murray, local realtor, long-time summer resident of Harvey's Lake and perhaps the best known disciple in the Back Mountain territory of the Coolidge type of worm fishermen, has long contended that the peculiar species of the eel family that inhabits the waters of the Valley's most popular resort is a "walking eel."

After threshing the waters of the lake for thirty-five years Realtor Murray is at last in position to prove his contention – and what is more has a witness in Dr. P.A. McLaughlin, who is willing to make affidavit to the Murray statement that "walking eels" do live in Harvey's Lake.

While occupied with his favorite sport of worm fishing, seated as he always is in a comfortable easy chair, one evening the early part of the week Mr. Murray saw his cork disappear.

Grabbing his bamboo pole he felt unusual resistance. But being an expert in landing game fish, a deft pull at the right second sent skyward a wiggling eel.

On examination it did not look any different than any of the hundreds of eels that James has pulled out of the lake. Not wishing to take the trouble to dress his catch for the morning meal, he called to his little granddaughter to bring a bucket filled with fresh water. This done, he deposited the eel in the bucket and placed bucket and eel on his front porch for the night.

What was his surprise the next morning on reaching the porch to find the eel missing. He scanned the area and soon detected tracks of the thing to the ten feet of steps that ascend the way

down to the edge of the water, where his eelship was found dead, with an over-sized frog in his mouth.

"Ah,ha," said James to himself. "My repeated assertions of 'walking eels' in Harvey's Lake has at last been proved."

Incidentally, it is well to state that James is a teetotaler.

**L**ake Trout (*Salvelinus Namaycush*) were the most prized of Harvey's Lake fisherman. The Lake Trout was originally native only in Lake Erie and Silver Lake, in Susquehanna County. They can thrive in deep, cold lakes and were introduced into Harvey's Lake in the 1880s. The Pennsylvania State record is a 36 inch, 27 pound, caught in Lake Erie in 1996. (Currently, Lake Trout are severely depleted at the Lake).

An extensive account of Lake fishing in the early years which notes Lake Trout was written by John Q. Creveling, an area lawyer, in 1952:

Harvey's Lake is one of the finest and most picturesque lakes in Pennsylvania and as a natural body of water has principally spring water in it. It is one of our deepest lakes and its water is cool, being fed mostly by underground springs.

Since about 1890 it has grown into a large and beautiful summer resort, having no equal in Pennsylvania. Its pure water has been the home of splendid fish. Before artificial stocking began, the chief species were pickerel, sunfish, perch and



## Chapter 2

# Lake Trout

catfish. Other species were planted including lake trout, bass, wall-eyes, rockbass, crappies, blue gills, and now brook trout.

The chief attractions of the summer resort are its amusements. These are the picnic amusements, swimming, boating and fishing.

While not the chief amusement, fishing has been indulged in the lake to a considerable extent for many years, and many people have participated in it. In the course of a year many fish are taken. The finest fish have been the lake trout and wall-eyes, also called pike perch.

Pickerel, Bass Plentiful I have caught fish in Harvey's Lake since 1890. After the Lehigh Valley Railroad was built I would take the forenoon train and spend the afternoon fishing on the westerly shore, usually catching bass and pickerel, returning in the evening by train.

In the early days bass and pickerel were plentiful and easily taken. The fisherman became more numerous as the Summer resort grew and gradually it became more difficult to catch a dozen fish, and it soon became evident that the lake needed stocking. However, not much of it was done until about 1910, and thereafter, although I was informed that lake trout had been stocked in it back in 1883.

After the Wilkes-Barre Camp of United Sportsman of Pennsylvania had been formed in 1911, the camp began to secure fish from the

State hatcheries to stock the lake. The camp got shipments of young wall-eyes, bass, lake trout, crappie, perch, blue gills and catfish in large numbers, and deposited them in the lake from year to year. The camp also stocked all the open waters of the county with fish from State and National hatcheries for many years.

### 32-Inch Wall-eye

It is remarkable the great number of small fry it takes to stock the depleted waters. The first stocking of wall-eyes in Harvey's Lake that I remember was 50 cans in about 1910. Each can was said to contain 2,000 fish. Those little fish were less than an inch long. Nevertheless, after they had been stocked three years people began to catch them. They were then about eight inches long. I saw one wall-eye taken from the lake that was 32 inches long and weighed eight pounds and some ounces.

The stocking by the sportsmen's camp was continued from year to year up to the present. In the year 1915 the camp stocked Harvey's Lake with about 400,000 small fry. In 1916 the State Fish Commission cleaned out one of its hatcheries, and that year sent to Luzerne county a large number of fish for stocking the lakes, streams and ponds in this county. One-hundred-and-four members of Camp 103, United Sportsmen of Pennsylvania (the Wilkes-Barre camp) engaged in planting them.

The biennial report of the Fish Commission covering the year 1916, shows there were shipped that year to Luzerne county 2,565,000 fish for stocking the waters of the county, and I know that number were planted in lakes and streams. I mention this to show what a great number of small fry are necessary to restock depleted waters in order to provide and maintain public fishing.

### **Lake Trout Stocked In 1883**

Elderly people informed me that Harvey's Lake formerly had brook trout in it. I never found any there, but in a case of unlawful fishing which I tried in court as a lawyer, I called a witness who testified that the lake was formerly inhabited by brook trout. Benjamin Dorrance, with whom I fished, informed me that he assisted in planting lake trout in Harvey's Lake as far back as 1883. [Editor note: Another account states 1889]

Lake trout thrived in the lake and a large number of those very beautiful fish have been taken. During the earlier years fishing for lake trout was done mostly by outlines, ice fishing, spearing, gill netting and trolling.

It took much effort to get the sport reduced to trolling, but it has now, after 40 years, almost reached that point. Last year the State Fish Commission made a survey of the fish life in Harvey's Lake and it is going to restock lake trout there. This year the commission stocked brook trout and rainbow trout there, and that provided some new fishing. It may be possible to establish the rainbows. I know two lakes in the State where stocked rainbows have grown to a good size.

I think the fish in Harvey's Lake, with the exception of black bass, are the best of our lake fishes, and the lake trout the very best of all its fishes. The brook trout in my opinion does not exceed the goodness of the lake trout when properly prepared for eating. I think the depth of the water and its purity add to the goodness of the fish.

### **Pollution Problem**

I have noticed, however, too many disturbing substances entering the lake. This should be prevented. It is a shame to pollute this beautiful lake. I called the attention of the Sanitary Water Board of the State to it at one time. The board sent an investigator to report on it. I met him at the lake and after making an investigation he said to me: "Don't expect anything to be done about it. I will report it correctly, but I was told before leaving the office to go slow and don't stir up trouble." That was some year ago. Something has since been done but not enough.

I noticed during the period while the new road at the lake was first repaired and paved, that a large number of the lake trout died. I examined many of the dead ones and concluded that they starved to death. The mud from the new road ran into the lake, and all summer long the water in the deep portions remained muddy. The lake trout came out into the shallow warm water, and that not being their element, they died.

I saw a great many dead ones during that period. It resulted in the lake losing almost all of its best fish. Many thousands of bait fish were stocked in order to restore the loss. This stocking would be noticeable for about three years afterward; and then they would disappear. Now it appears they are increasing in the lake.

### **Annual Stocking Necessary**

I believe there is too large a amount of gasoline on the water during the hatching period for these bait fish to increase, and stocking with bait fish will have to be continued annually. As to the quantity of fish taken from Harvey's Lake over the years, the amount is not known. However, in one year, about 1915 or 1916, I tried to furnish the Fish Commission with as accurate an account as possible of lake trout taken in that year. The commission had stocked the lake with 50,000 lake trout fingerlings, up to five inches in length when planted. They had grown two years after planting and when then caught weighed about two pounds each.

I inquired of all persons I knew who had caught them and my total count exceeded for



Amos Kitchen and two lake trout he caught in July, 1938

that one year's catch more than 1,500 fish – of an aggregate weight of a ton of half. The lake is large and it furnished a large amount of fish-ing. I counted 80 fishing boats on the first day of an open season. It is the finest body of water in the State and if properly taken care of will furnish a large amount of fishing and many splendid fish to a large number of fishermen who enjoy the sport. The catching of a lake trout of 10 or 12 pounds in our Pennsylvania lakes will give you a thrill. You have a beautiful fish and splendid food.

The Lake Trout population was severely stressed during the extremely hot Summer of 1966 due to low oxygen levels in the Lake. The Fish Commission, however, continues stocking of Lake Trout.

In an earlier time expert fishermen trolled

the Lake's deep waters for this special fish. Among them was Amos Kitchen (1867-1951), a descendent of the Lake's pioneer settlers. His son, the late Glenn Kitchen, recounted his father's fishing days at the Lake in a 1989 interview with Stan Sowa, outdoor writer for the Citizens' Voice:

Glenn says Harveys Lake was a favorite fishery for many anglers, including his father, the late Amos M. Kitchen. Amos was born at the Alderson and of the lake on Nov. 18, 1867, and spent his entire life there until he passed away in 1951 at the age of 84 years and 11 months. He was an ardent fisherman and, as Glenn puts it, "My dad knew the bottom of the lake like a book." Not so surprising, since he fished the lake on and off for more than 80 years. According to Glenn, Amos operated his own business as a building contractor and constructed numerous summer homes, boat houses and docks at the lake during his life-time. He was considered by those who knew him well to be the most experienced lake trout angler that ever fished the lake.

When Glenn reflects on days past, he recalls his dad telling him about the countless experiences he had while fish-ing for big lake trout.

It seems Amos used to row a boat to work at different locations at the lake before he bought his first Model "T" Ford. During one of his trips to work across the lake he took his lake trout rig along to try his luck while one of his carpenters rowed the boat. The fish were hitting so well he never did get to work that day, but he did manage to catch lake trout. The two trout in the accompanying photo were caught by Amos in July of 1938. They weighed six pounds, two ounces and five pounds and 14 ounces, and were 26 and 28 inches in length, respectively. These were the last lake trout caught by Amos because at that age he was slowly losing his eye sight to glaucoma. He continued to enjoy still-fishing until he was 84 years of age, although he was totally blind by then.

Amos was also an avid walleye and smallmouth bass angler during the years he fished the waters of Harveys Lake, but he was particularly fond of

lake trout. Most of the lakers were caught in deep water (50 to 110 feet in depth) with a copper line and a large spoon with a large single hook. The line had swivels at 20-foot intervals to prevent tangling. His home-made reel was built from a spool of round stock about 8-inches long and

4-inches in diameter with a crank on one end, and it was suspended between two uprights on a small base of wood about 16-inches long. No fancy outfit, but just the tickets for catching the big lake trout that lurked beneath the waters of Harvey's Lake back then.

### Fish Species in Harvey's Lake

In 1951 the Pennsylvania Fish Commission found twenty-two species of fish in the Lake. The following fourteen are listed in order of abundance at that time:



**(1) Bluegill**

**(2) Golden Shiner**

**(3) Rock Bass**

**(4) Pumpkinseed Sunfish**

**(5) Brown Bullhead**

**(6) Yellow Perch**

**(7) Yellow Pikeperch (Walleye)**

**(8) Chain Pickerel**

**(9) Smallmouth Bass**

**(10) White Sucker**

**(11) Lake Chubsucker**

**(12) Largemouth Bass**

**(13) Black Bullhead and**

**(14) Lake Trout.**

Additional species in the Lake were Creek Chub; Spotted Sunfish; Fourspine Stickelback; Spotted Shiner; Bluntnose Minnow; Banded Killifish; Johnny Darter; and Blacknose Dart.



Ice fishermen at Sunset, Feb. 2, 1957

## Chapter 3 Ice Fishing

Recent winters without sustained cold weather have at times limited ice-fishing at the Lake. But in earlier decades the Lake was a major ice-fishing destination – and the Lake’s governing body had to invoke regulations due to debris left on the ice.

Don Shiner, a well-known Pennsylvania angling writer, wrote an account of ice-fishing at the Lake in 1957:

Few lakes in America match the popularity of Harvey’s Lake in Winter. The largest natural body of water within Pennsylvania’s borders, it spans 660 acres and is nestled in the hills of the anthracite region in Wyoming Valley. The cold 150-foot depths hold lunker lake trout.

Five years ago the lake was stocked with rainbows and brooks. Now it provides some of the best trout fishing in the state. Bass fishermen take over in mid-Summer with

husky small-mouth scrappers caught in the pebbly-bottom coves. Walleye trolling becomes the fad during Autumn.

In Winter, when most lakes are glad to rest, Harvey’s Lake is transformed into a popular ice-fishing spot. The highway circles the shoreline, where cottages, amusement centers, miniature gold courses, roller coasters, popcorn and hot-dog stands, snack bars, night clubs, boat liveries and swimming beaches are built shoulder-to-shoulder along the water’s edge. It’s a far cry from a “wilderness” lake.

### Come in Doves

When the cold Canadian blasts push down over Pennsylvania in late November, cottages and snack stands fold up for the Winter. As ice forms across the lake and snow blankets the

countryside, the population thins to ghost-town proportions. But when the ice grows thick enough to hold the weight of a man, ice fishermen come to the lake in droves.

Husky, pickerel, marked like old lace curtains are caught on tip-ups baited with minnows. Big colorful yellow perch are taken by jigging a flashy spoon. As word spreads through the valley that nice catches are being made, the big lake becomes full of hustle and bustle.

I wanted another day of ice fishing, but I was fresh out of pickerel bait. I had used up my supply of minnows caught in Autumn and stored in the river. Suddenly, I remembered the crickets scampering in the cellar. A pair had crawled into the basement of my home during the Summer where they chirped almost every morning. By Autumn I had a full chorus of chirpers crawling over the concrete floor.

I spent an hour catching them, and I canned 14 – plenty of bait. Chucking the gear into the car, I sped over the icy highway toward Harvey's lake.

### **Many Cars at Outlet**

There would be other fishermen on the lake, perhaps a couple in each cove. By driving around the nine-mile shoreline I could learn which parties were catching the most fish and stake my ice hole there. I hit the lake at the southern tip at the little village of Outlet. On the lake side of the road a solid string of cars was parked.

A quarter mile down the lake I eased the car into an opening beside a wharf, then legged it across the ice following a fresh sled trail through the snow. The ice hummed with activity. Some anglers were chopping holes, while others were jigging, tending tip-ups, or gathering in little

groups, swapping yarns or discussing the prospects of this Winter's fishing. I walked from one to another, talked with them, watched their methods of fishing as they took pickerel and perch.

Ice fishermen are apt to feel that fish are hitting better in the next cove. I felt this way, so drove a mile down the road and stopped again at another spot filled with fishermen.

### **Spent Too Much Time**

Time raced so quickly that the sun was far down on the western horizon, casting long shadows across the ice. It was almost too late in the day to start chopping holes. Some fishermen had already pulled up and gone home with nice strings. I had wasted most of the day rovin' instead of fishin'. Had I stayed with the first group or any of the others, I would have caught fish – a fact I always try to remember.

In the short time before sundown, I put the crickets to work. The next few minutes I punched holes through the thick ice. Placing a cricket on a hook fastened behind a small silver spoon, I dropped the outfit through the window and into the dark water, letting it flutter toward the bottom. Jigging it a couple of inches above the gravel, I felt a solid rap. I had not expected a bite so quickly, and the short rod was almost pulled from my hands. I hauled in a perch that lacked a quarter inch from being a foot in length. Five more followed in as many minutes before the school moved toward another hole.

Harvey's Lake seldom lets a fisherman down. Spring, Summer, or Autumn, there are usually some fish a-stir. But angling in Winter has a fascination all its own – no matter where, fish or no fish.



Opening day of trout season at Alderson, April 15, 1972 (*Times Leader Photo. Used by Permission*)

## Chapter 4

### Recent Years

In later years new species were introduced. Smelt were planted in the early 1950s. In 1960 the Commission released 2,000 Kokanee Salmon fingerlings in the Lake. In August 1966 the Commission released 25,000 Coho or silver salmon in the Lake. They are a Pacific-run species and, as a cold water fish, they were taken down to the Lake's depths by a diver for release.

Landlocked salmon were released in the early 1980s to control the exploding smelt population but the illegal release of alewife in the Lake, which competed for the smelt's food supply, likely were the smelt's greatest enemy.

Rainbow and Brook trout were also regularly stocked in the Lake but Brown trout were largely substituted after 1983. Brown trout forage on alewife. Oddly, Brown trout are not native to Pennsylvania. In earlier decades

the shores of the Lake and declining public access points were lined with fishermen for the opening of trout season each April.

With the increasing previtalization of the Lake, public access points are limited and the policy of the Commission limiting or ceasing stocking of adult trout into the Lake prior to the April season has been controversial. The Fish Commission reports that fingerling Lake Trout were last stocked in the Lake in 1991 and 1992, fingerling Brown trout in 1992; adult Rainbow trout in 1996; with fingerling walleye continuously from 1996 to 2006.

The Lake, however, continues to draw fishermen and periodic bass tournaments have been especially welcomed by the fishing fraternity.