

**“May the holes in your net be no larger than the fish in it.” ~Irish Blessing**

# The History of Fishing on Five Mile Beach Island

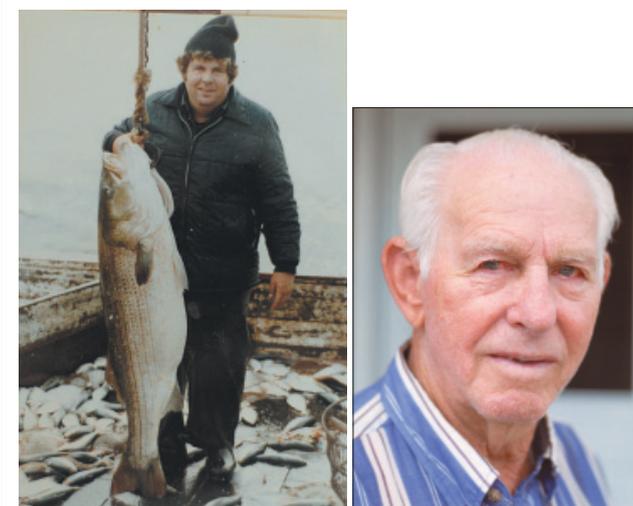
Story written by Shannon Maurer for The Sun  
Photos and Captions collected by Dorothy Kulisek



The crew on board the Nancy Elizabeth Scallop Boat which is docked at Two Mile Landing in Wildwood Crest, L-R Bob Copsand- first-mate, Bruce Hill- Deck Boss, and Captain Dave Novsak

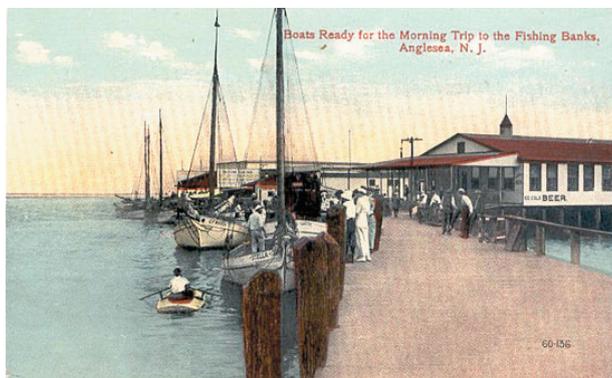


Surf fishing, Anglesea, circa. 1900, from the Hereford Lighthouse Archives

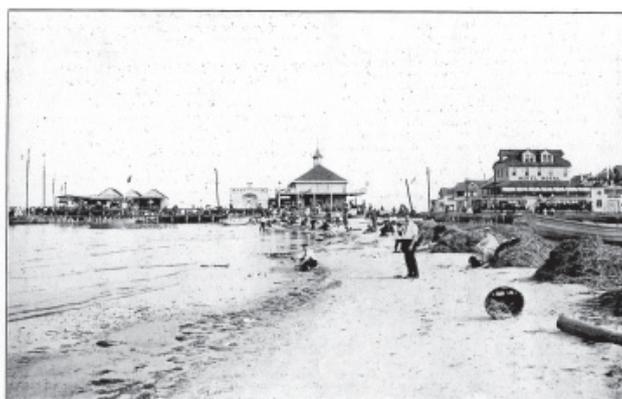


Robert Kulisek for The SUN

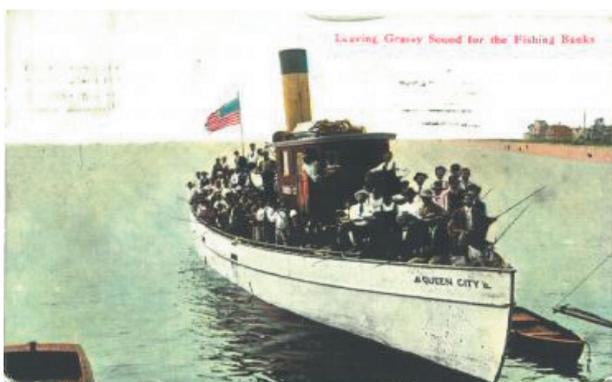
Capt. Kenneth Shivers, spent 62 years on the ocean as a commercial fisherman. He is pictured above, along with the Anna S, one of three his boats, and his son, Ken with a real Keeper. (Sadly, Ken, jr. lost his battle with cancer in 2002



Boats ready for the morning trip to the fishing banks, Hereford Inlet



Surf fishing on the Beach at Anglesea, N.J.



Party boats leaving Grassy Sound for the Fishing Docks

One doesn't need to look far in the distance off 5-mile island to take an educated guess as to what the foundational industry of the Wildwoods might be. Of course, with the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Delaware Bay to the west, the most logical answer, and the right one, would be fishing.

Fishing off the coast of the Wildwoods dates back to before Europeans settled in North America. The Lenni-Lenape Native American tribe migrated to the shoreline to fish and clam in the summer months of the year. In the mid-1600s mainland European settlers learned to fish from the local natives and the island became a useful place to fish and bring in catches.

In these early days the area was still very true to the current name of the island, heavily wooded and very wild. And the waters were just as wild as the land.

According to an article in South Jersey magazine, "the maritime waters between Sandy Hook and Cape May Point have long been known as among the world's most dangerous..." These unruly waters claimed many ships in wrecks as well as the sailors and fishermen on board.

The fishermen in the region recognized the dangers and in 1849 established a Life Saving Service in Anglesea which used men and boats to help save distressed sailors. Later on in 1871 the Hereford Inlet Lifesaving Sta-

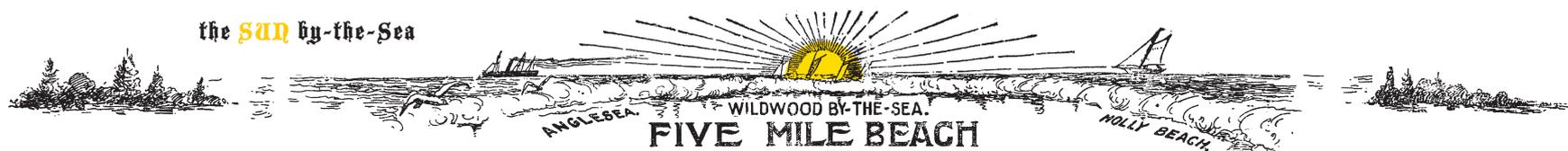
tion No. 36 was built. Shortly after, in 1874, the federal government also recognized the danger and sanctioned the building of the Hereford Lighthouse.

The island as we know it started taking roots in the early 1870's when Scandinavian fishermen became the first, official settlers in Anglesea. Streets started to be cut through the dense brush of the island in 1879 as the fishing industry began to thrive.

The Hook and Line Fishing Association was formed in 1899 in Holly Beach. It was a group of men who would partner together, loading their simple fishing rods and lines in their wooden rowboats and sailboats in order to make their living. After 12-14 hours at sea the pair would return with one and a half to three barrels of fish. They would then take the barrels to the train platform at Burk Avenue and Railroad Road- now Park Boulevard- where the catch of the day would be shipped to market.

The yields of the day would be brought back to dock before being shipped to market, though. One of the most famous docks on the Hereford Inlet in Anglesea was Mace's Pier. Mace's Pier was where many of the commercial vessels would tie up. It was a place where many locals and visitors could spend time walking up

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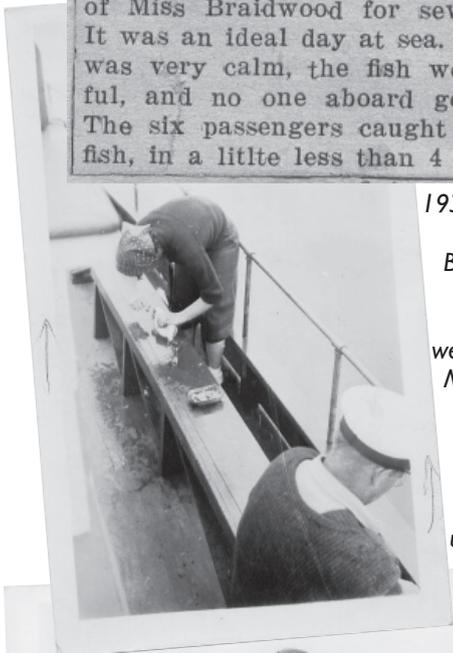
**“Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.”**

~Henry David Thoreau

Captain Clarence Pensno of the party boat Wildwood II took out a party one day last week. Among the passengers were Mr. Harold Braidwood, Miss Betty Braidwood and Miss Evelyn Young, who has been a guest of Miss Braidwood for several days. It was an ideal day at sea. The ocean was very calm, the fish were plentiful, and no one aboard got seasick. The six passengers caught about 600 fish, in a little less than 4 hours.

1936~ Interesting News Clipping. Betty also noted that several baskets of fish were taken to Dr. Mace's Hospital that day.

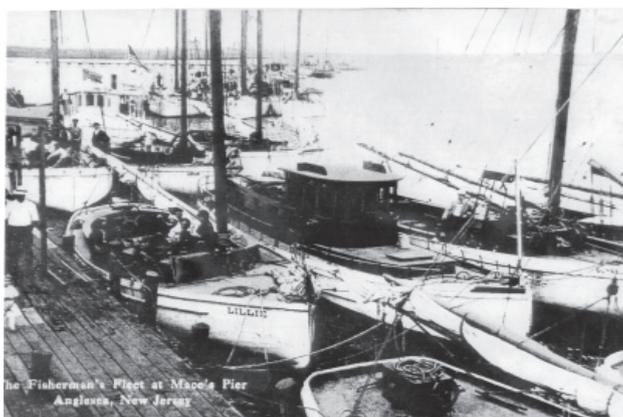
To Left~ Betty Braidwood unhooking a fish.



Harold Braidwood cleaning fish.



FROM THE BETTY BRAIDWOOD TAYLOR COLLECTION



The Fishermen's Fleet at Mace's Pier with Capt. Joshua Shivers' boat the "Lillie" in foreground.



A misty morning on Olsen's Boatyard by Charles Neill



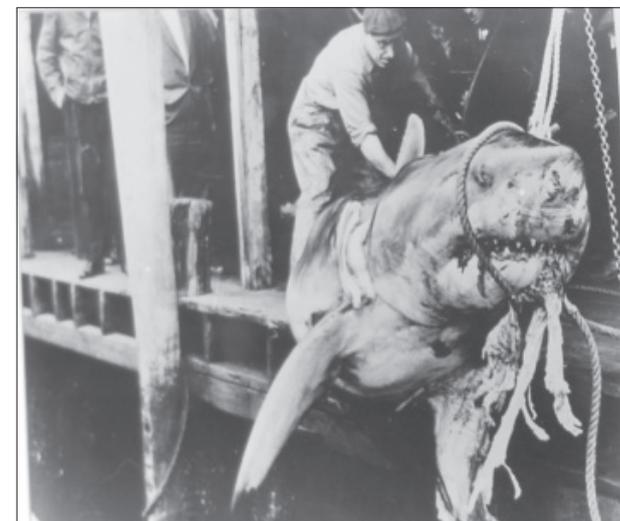
PHOTO TAKEN BY CHARLES NEILL, CIRCA 1950s ~ Olsen's Boatyard next to Mace's Pier in Anglesea on Hereford Inlet where local fishing boats were made. William Streaker, known to everyone as "Unkie", worked at the boatyard caulking boats.

and down the docks checking out the catches and the activities of the fishermen. People could even drop their own lines in hopes of taking home dinner for the day or just passing some time.

The rudimentary ways of the early, area fishermen were often rivaled by more established commercial companies. On July 25, 1885 a letter from the citizens of Holly Beach appeared in the Cape May County Gazette. The letter stated, "The people of Holly Beach in common with us all who reside along the coast don't fully appreciate the efforts of the Menhaden steamers to gobble up all the food fishes along our shores..."

The particular steamer, the Samuel Allen, was "received with the volley of rifle balls from Holly Beach." This strong reaction was threatened to be more forceful if Samuel Allen or another steamer were to get too close again as the letter said the residents would next resort to the use of a cannon.

The letter shows the importance of the fishing industry- and Menhaden, or poggy, fish in particular- to the early islanders. Menhaden, or poggy, fish were, and still are, used for bait. The loss of this fish not only meant fewer opportunities to catch bait fish, but Menhaden also act as stabilizers of the Atlantic Ocean ecosystem. Taking too many Menhaden out of the waters results in the loss of other fish due to the unbalance. Now there are laws against over fishing, but back in the early days of the 5-mile island, the Holly Beachers took the situation into their own hands. Menhaden continued to be a pivotal part of the fishing industry as many may remember the Menhaden plant on Wildwood Boulevard (currently, the MUA plant near Rio Grande).



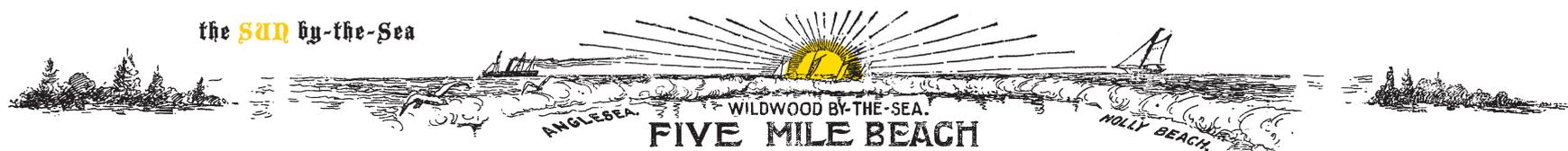
Great White, Anglesea, from the Hereford Lighthouse Archives

As time went on, fishermen sought ways to increase their profits and soon hook and line fishing was left to non-professionals. The new method, which saw its heyday between the 1930s and remained popular through the 1960s, was pound fishing.

Pound fishing involved setting large traps far out in the ocean. The traps would be set up by installing pilings, or 70 to 80 feet hickory poles were jumped (yes, jumped- two men would actually stand on top of the poles and jump up and down until the pilings were secure) down into the ocean floor. Around the pilings were attached wire nets. A chute in the nets would allow the fish to come in but would not allow them to escape.

One of the notable pound fishing companies based

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**“Three-fourths of the Earth's surface is water, and one-fourth is land. It is quite clear that the good Lord. . .**



Published by R. W. Ryan.  
Boat Landing, Anglesea, N. J.



Published by R. W. Ryan.  
Pier, Anglesea, N. J.

Mace's Pier, Anglesea, N.J. Post Cards, circa early 1900s



Fishing Docks, Anglesea, N.J.

in Anglesea was the Union Fish Company. Union had four pound boats with a 7 man crew for each. The catches from the pound excursions by Union Fish Company and other businesses were huge in comparison to the few barrels caught by the hook and line fishermen. The catches could be up to 200 barrels a day, weighing over 200 pounds each. There are reports that show that during the first part of 1928 a total of 20,000,000 pounds of fish were shipped to northern markets.

Though based in Anglesea, Union Fish Company and most of the other boats in the 1920s and beyond began to dock their boats in Ottens Harbor. The focus of the fishing industry had shifted from the north side of the island to the western side at a new and deeper waterway compared to Hereford Inlet. The days of well-dressed women sauntering down Mace's Pier while the fishermen went about their business were over and a new era of commercial fishing began. Despite the new location of the industry, Otten's Harbor was just as booming.

As the commercial industry brought income and more career fishermen to the area, the rich waters also

brought other less serious fishers, like those on Mace's Pier, and the beginnings of Wildwoods tourism.

One advertisement posted in July of 1893 for the development of buildings and cottages on Holly Beach Harbor, for example, boasted the “easy access to the best fishing, crabbing, and gunning grounds that can be found anywhere.” The ad described the Harbor as being “3 thousand feet long and 190 feet wide and having an average depth of 30 feet,” it started at the “western end of Andrew Ave. and extend[ed] from near the center of the resort to the waters of Grassy Sound.” It was said to be perfect for the leisure fisherman.

The growth of the island and expanding interest in recreational fishing started the trend of party boat fishing trips. The Power Yacht Lillie operated by Capt. Joshua Shivers took daily trips off of the Anglesea coast and attracted customers by emphasizing that the black mussel beds and numerous wrecks on the ocean floor made the waters ideal for fishing for many types of fish including sea bass, flounder and salt water eels.

Similar party fishing boats still thrive on the island today. Many skilled fisherman and boat captains will lend their expertise to vacationers, providing all the equipment and knowledge needed to haul in a good catch. Party fishing boats are not the only signature aspect of the early fishing industry in the Wildwoods still alive now.

Though not the sole or primary industry anymore, commercial fishing still exists on Five Mile Island. Captain David Novsak's, of the Nancy Elizabeth, has family ties to fishing in the Wildwoods that are as historical to as the industry itself. Of the five generations of fishermen in his family, the first was a fisherman originally from Sweden that came over in the late 1800s. Other ties to Wildwood fishing include the Carlson side of his family that worked for Dock Street Fishing.

Novsak, himself, has been in the fishing industry for 10 years. Currently he scallops with his crew, including a 3 generation local, Bruce Hill. They fish from the Canadian line all the way down to southern Virginia and out to the Hunter Fathom edge, located 70 to 100 miles offshore where the ocean shelf drops off. When the Nancy Elizabeth returns from a trip it calls the docks at the 2 Mile home and sells its catch to Lunds.

Fishing is how Novsak makes his living and he says there is still a good number of fishermen on the island that do, but it continues to get less and less. The Captain noted that in the height of Otten's Harbor a person could walk fully across the harbor because so many boats would be tied up side by side. Now, he observed, there are only a few boats with seasoned fishers that unload at the Harbor.

Captain Novsak attributes the decline in the boom of commercial fishing to a few various reasons. First, is simply a change in the times. The focus of the Wildwoods has shifted from fishing to tourism and the space and energy of the citizens are focused more on sustaining that aspect of the economy. Second, is that Novsak says there are fewer, young and new fishers choosing the profession.



Otten's Harbor, Wildwood, N.J.  
from the Wildwood Historic Museum



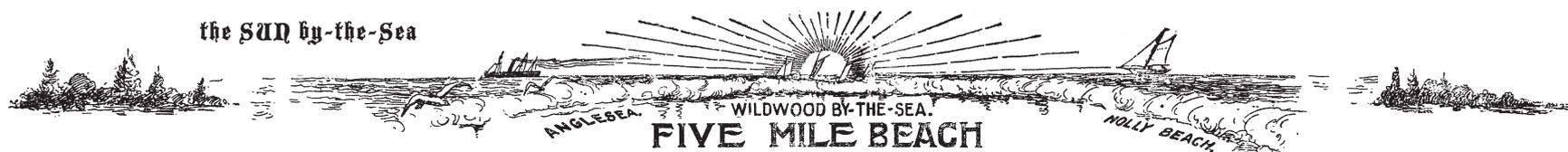
Vintage Postcard ~ Fisherman Returning by Moonlight

The third and perhaps most contrasting to the early days of fishing is government regulation. Unlike when the early settlers had to take the law into their own hands, the government now grants limited access to the waters. The fishermen are told where they can fish, what they can fish, how much they can catch, what kind of gear they can and can not use, how large the crew has to be, etc.

Still, fishing, as Novsak put it, is “what Wildwood is all about.” And he has a point. Though fishing will likely never be what it once was, it is the foundation of what the Five Mile Island has become. There will likely always be some form of commercial fishing and certainly many forms of recreational fishing on the island. So, whenever you see a fisherman lounging with his pole or a rigged boat maneuvering under the bridge in to its dock, remember that it is not just about where the boat has been or where it is going, but it is where it all came from.

Thank You to the folks at the Wildwood Historic Museum, Mr. Ken Shivers, Hereford Inlet Lighthouse, Steve Murray, Capt. Dave Novsak, Charles Neill, Betty Braidwood Taylor

More Fishing on the next page. . . Read On! >



FIVE MILE BEACH

“Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.”

~Henry David Thoreau

September

	High		Low	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
1 Mon	9:44	9:58	3:23	3:38
2 Tue	10:25	10:38	4:02	4:24
3 Wed	11:06	11:19	4:41	5:09
4 Thu	11:47		5:18	5:56
5 Fri	12:00	12:31	5:57	6:47
6 Sat	12:46	1:20	6:38	7:43
7 Sun	1:39	2:17	7:27	8:45
8 Mon	2:43	3:20	8:25	9:48
9 Tue	3:51	4:21	9:28	10:45
10 Wed	4:53	5:16	10:28	11:33
11 Thu	5:46	6:04	11:22	
12 Fri	6:31	6:47	12:15	12:10
13 Sat	7:12	7:27	12:53	12:55
14 Sun	7:50	8:07	1:29	1:39
15 Mon	8:28	8:45	2:05	2:23
16 Tue	9:07	9:25	2:42	3:07
17 Wed	9:47	10:07	3:20	3:54
18 Thu	10:30	10:53	4:00	4:44
19 Fri	11:18	11:43	4:45	5:39
20 Sat		12:12	5:35	6:40
21 Sun	12:43	1:15	6:32	7:48
22 Mon	1:54	2:28	7:39	9:00
23 Tue	3:13	3:43	8:53	10:08
24 Wed	4:27	4:51	10:05	11:09
25 Thu	5:30	5:51	11:10	
26 Fri	6:25	6:43	12:02	12:08
27 Sat	7:13	7:29	12:49	1:01
28 Sun	7:56	8:11	1:32	1:49
29 Mon	8:36	8:51	2:11	2:34
30 Tue	9:15	9:30	2:49	3:17

October

	High		Low	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
1 Wed	9:52	10:08	3:25	3:59
2 Thu	10:29	10:46	4:00	4:41
3 Fri	11:07	11:26	4:35	5:25
4 Sat	11:49		5:11	6:12
5 Sun	12:10	12:36	5:51	7:05
6 Mon	1:02	1:31	6:39	8:03
7 Tue	2:05	2:33	7:39	9:03
8 Wed	3:13	3:35	8:46	9:58
9 Thu	4:15	4:32	9:50	10:45
10 Fri	5:08	5:22	10:47	11:28
11 Sat	5:53	6:08	11:39	
12 Sun	6:35	6:51	12:08	12:28
13 Mon	7:16	7:34	12:46	1:14
14 Tue	7:56	8:17	1:26	2:02
15 Wed	8:39	9:02	2:07	2:49
16 Thu	9:23	9:49	2:49	3:40
17 Fri	10:11	10:39	3:35	4:32
18 Sat	11:02	11:35	4:25	5:29
19 Sun		12:01	5:20	6:31
20 Mon	12:40	1:05	6:22	7:38
21 Tue	1:52	2:17	7:32	8:45
22 Wed	3:07	3:28	8:46	9:49
23 Thu	4:16	4:33	9:56	10:46
24 Fri	5:15	5:30	10:59	11:36
25 Sat	6:07	6:20	11:56	
26 Sun	6:51	7:05	12:20	12:46
27 Mon	7:32	7:46	1:01	1:32
28 Tue	8:10	8:26	1:39	2:15
29 Wed	8:46	9:04	2:15	2:56
30 Thu	9:22	9:41	2:50	3:36
31 Fri	9:59	10:19	3:25	4:17

Moon Phases

First Quarter	..... 7
Full Moon	..... 15
Last Quarter	..... 22
New Moon	..... 29

Moon Phases

First Quarter	..... 7
Full Moon	..... 14
Last Quarter	..... 21
New Moon	..... 28



UNION FISH COMPANY TRAP BOAT ON ATLANTIC OCEAN COMING IN WITH FISH-1932

FALL Fishing on Five Mile Beach

9/05-07 **39th Annual Surf Fishing Tournament** - 3rd Ave. Gazebo Registration. 522-2955

10/04 **Pennsauken Surf Fishing Club Tournament** Registration Anglesea Firehouse 2nd & NJ Ave. 856-786-0070 www.asaconline.org

10/13 **Great Fall Classic Surf Fishing Tournament** Registration 15th & Beach 522-1526 www.nibba.org

10/25 **Anglesea Surf Anglers Surf Fishing Tournament** Registration Anglesea Firehouse 2nd & NJ Ave. 522-1526



“Pound Fishing~ 1850 -1960”

by Anne Vinci

What’s a pound boat? Unless you’re part of what is now a legendary, historic piece of sea life that is gone with the wind and the tides of time, you may not have a clue.

Pound fishing flourished in the South Jersey area from about 1930 to 1960. The first pound net was introduced to Raritan Bay and other New Jersey sites in the mid 1850’s by George Snediker, a fisherman from Gravesend Bay. It was private enterprise conducted by individuals, men, who sought to extend the catch of fish beyond that of the area’s commercial fishing fleets. Their aim—to obtain huge catches of fish by a “trap” laid far out at sea. A pound net could trap up to one thousand bushels of fish a day. (Expansion of the Fisheries: 1855-1910)

The pound boat was about 40 feet long, with just a number for a name. It was somewhat reminiscent of a canal boat, but divided down its length into lidless bins, open to receive fish. Cape May Star & Wave, May 1, 1997

The early pound nets were netting knitted by local fishermen and women during the winter, but this method became too slow after the turn of the century, when fishermen installed motors in their boats and were able to install more pound nets. The first engines made for boats had only one cylinder and four horsepower. Thereafter, most nets came from a New York company that made them by machine.

Around 1900 a net cost five hundred to six hundred dollars, and the remaining items—the poles, ropes and stones—brought the cost to about \$1,000, not including the boat (Red Bank Register, 23 March 1898).

Each pound net had 70 hickory or oak poles, each of which was 30 to 40 feet long. When fisherman were ready to install their pound nets, they slid the poles into the water, tied them in bundles, and towed them to the site. It took three or four days to install a single pound net; two or three days to set in the poles and a day to tie on the sections of net. In the late 1800s, most crews had only one pound net; some had two. As boats became motorized, each crew increased its number of pound nets to two or three.

If you would like to learn more about this lost industry, visit the Wildwood Historic Museum and see a collection of photographs depicting Pound boats berthed at Ottens Harbor, like the one pictured above.

The museum is fortunate to have this collection donated by the late Charles Henry James in 1999, in loving memory of his father, Captain Jonathan James, a pound fisherman.

(This was originally published in the Wildwood Museum Newsletter)

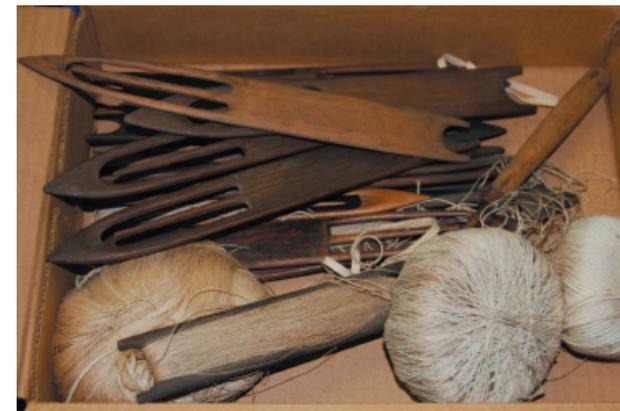


PHOTO BY SHARON MILLER FOR THE SUN

Donated to the Wildwood Historic Museum by the Agostino Mattera Family ~Wooden needles that were used for mending nets in the 1930s to the 60s. Fishing crews would weave the needles to repair the nets when they were in from sea or as needed out at sea.

The nets that were mended with these light weight needles were used in off-shore otter trawler and smaller in-shore draggers. There are some heavier ones that were used with tarred manila twine, also. Most of the nets that trawlers use these days are made of much more durable materials. There is not much use for needles to mend nets any more. There aren’t many men or women who know how to do the mending; however, **Mr. Ken Shivers** has informed us that he occasionally mends fishing nets still to this day.



The above snapshot is one of many wonderful photos sent in by Inge Friesenborg Laine (of the Wildwood Historic Museum) of her father, **Capt. Ehlko Siefried Friesenborg**, who immigrated from Germany around 1922 and found his way to Wildwood by about 1930. Inge notes: The photo was taken on the Irma Pauline. This was not an uncommon size of a flounder caught in the 1940s and 50s. “Daddy could bring home one flounder, clean it, and Mom would cook it and feed the family of five!” Look for this fishing story to continue in the next edition of The SUN by-the-sea, due out November 6th, 2008.