

Fishing in Smith Inlet

Jim Henderson relates his fishing experiences in Smith Inlet, Wyclese Lagoon and Long Lake in 1915

Jim Henderson: In 1915, I went pulling boat for [my half-brother]. It was all hand-powered boats back then. There were no gas engines, no drums. Often you had to both pull it and handle the oars while you were picking the net up. So I pulled boat for him in 1915. I remember sockeye were 10 cents apiece that year.

Ken Drushka: Where was that?

JH: Smith's Inlet. The Indians were allowed to fish in the lagoon. There were only maybe five or six boats that were Indian anyhow, and one of them had a little gas boat. In the morning we'd all go over to the cannery. The Cannery was just across the Inlet, the old Wallace Cannery. We'd all tow over there, we had just one gas boat, and we'd deliver our fish and hang around the Cannery all day, then go back and tie the nets across. You didn't drift with them like the ordinary gill netting, you just tied them across.

KD: Everybody just tied their nets up together?

JH: Yes. Point to point. Then you just went over them with your boat, if you saw a fish in your web, you pulled it up and took it out, and then went over hand to the next fish. By morning we'd be all fished up and we'd all hook on behind this little boat and tow back to the cannery again.

KD: Did you pull your nets up?

JH: Oh yes, we took them with us. It was quite a snap that. We made one trip after the sockeye were through. There was very little fall fishing in those days. There wasn't the seining like there is now. When the sockeye was over, we made a trip up to the head of Long Lake by hand powerboat. We had to pull the boat up over the rapids at the foot of the Long Lake. You had to pack everything by trail, all your stuff. You couldn't take the chance of leaving anything in the boat. They used to pull the boat by long ropes.

KD: Where is Long Lake?

JH: You go into it through Wyclese Lagoon. You go through two lagoons first then into the lake. The rapids at the foot of the lake are only about a quarter mile long. We took a trip up there and dried a bunch of salmon. You dry them in a hurry, barbecue them first then smoke them a bit. You can use that anytime, we went up and made a bunch of that.

... [Later] We all went back to Long Lake again to smoke sockeye. That was quite interesting for me, it's great country up there you know.

KD: Was there a smoking camp up there?

JH: Yeah. They lived right in the smokehouses. Some houses were almost as big as what you call the Long Houses; whole communities of families would live in it, right in the smoke....we left Smith's Inlet in early December, when we got back from Long Lake. We left Long Lake and we caught the old *Camosun* at a place called Fly Basin.

Source:

Interview with Jim Henderson by Ken Drushka, March 16, 1983

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