



# Fishing the Great Lakes: An Environmental History, 1783-1933

*Margaret Beattie Bogue*

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*Fishing the Great Lakes* is a sweeping history of the destruction of the once-abundant fisheries of the great "inland seas" that lie between the United States and Canada. Though lake trout, whitefish, freshwater herring, and sturgeon were still teeming as late as 1850, Margaret Bogue documents here how overfishing, pollution, political squabbling, poor public policies, and commercial exploitation combined to damage the fish populations even before the voracious sea lamprey invaded the lakes and decimated the lake trout population in the 1940s.

From the earliest records of fishing by native peoples, through the era of European exploration and settlement, to the growth and collapse of the commercial fishing industry, *Fishing the Great Lakes* traces the changing relationships between the fish resources and the people of the Great Lakes region. Bogue focuses in particular on the period from 1783, when Great Britain and the United States first politically severed the geographic unity of the Great Lakes, through 1933, when the commercial fishing industry had passed from its heyday in the late nineteenth century into very serious decline. She shows how fishermen, entrepreneurial fish dealers, the monopolistic A. Booth and Company (which distributed and marketed much of the Great Lakes catch), and policy makers at all levels of government played their parts in the debacle. So, too, did underfunded scientists and early conservationists unable to spark the interest of an indifferent public. Concern with the quality of lake habitat and the abundance of fish increasingly took a backseat to the interests of agriculture, lumbering, mining, commerce, manufacturing, and urban development in the Great Lakes region. Offering more than a regional history, Bogue also places the problems of Great Lakes fishing in the context of past and current worldwide fishery concerns.

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