

COMMERCIAL EEL FISHERIES in NORTH AMERICA, PAST and PRESENT



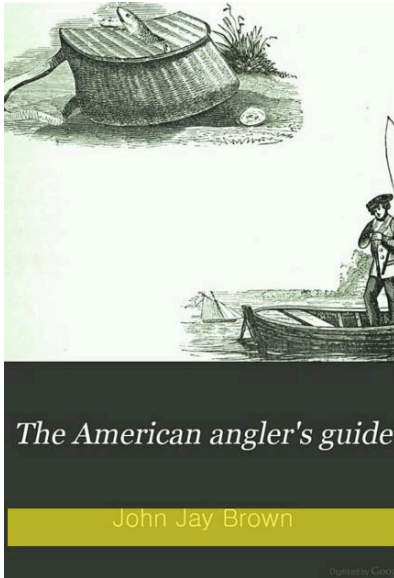
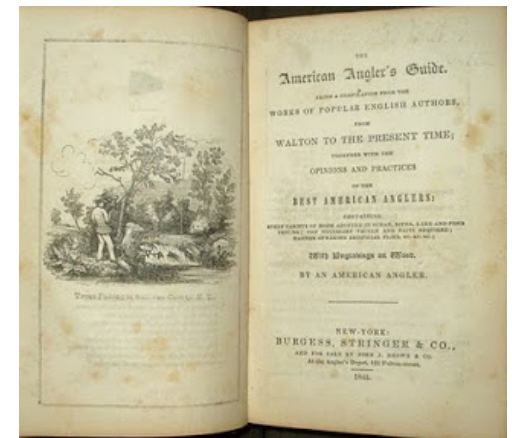
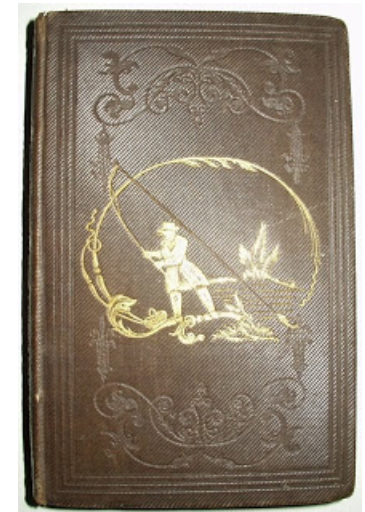
Eel Spearing at Setauket (1845) William Sidney Mount

HISTORICAL FISHERY IN U.S.

THE EEL.

This serpentine looking animal has its friends and foes, and is found in almost all fresh and salt water streams that circumvent the globe. In ancient times, it was highly valued; and at the present, although looked upon as belonging to the snake tribe, is considered, by the majority of fish eaters, as forming a very savory dish. Those that inhabit the salt water, are sometimes taken of a very large size. The largest taken, on record, was caught in one of the bays in Long Island, and weighed sixteen and a half pounds. They also, in some instances, grow very large in fresh water streams, and have been taken from seven to ten pounds weight. They are not game, but occasion the angler much trouble wherever he drops his line, by sucking off his bait or insisting upon being hooked; when, with all care, the most experienced sportsman seldom escapes without great derangement of tackle. When sought after, he is taken (we say taken, because no difficulty is ever experienced where he is) with any kind of tackle and any bait. The most common mode, however, with those who make a practice of taking him, is with a common drop-line, and a small black-fish or eel hook, No. 8 or 9.

A singular and beautiful description of the eel, if any beauty can be attached to the tribe, is found in some of our fresh water streams, called the lamprey or seven-eyed eel.



HISTORICAL FISHING METHODS



Historical Weir Fishery



Modern Weir Fishery

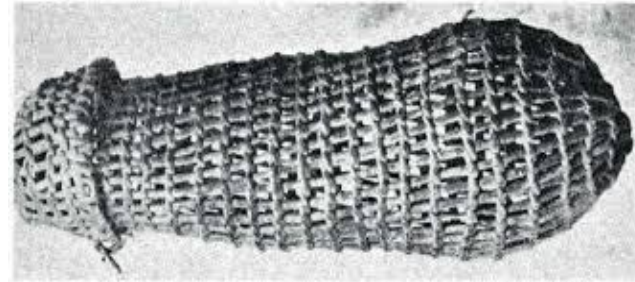


FIG. 67—Bait-pot used with eel-pots set in open water. Length, 10½ in



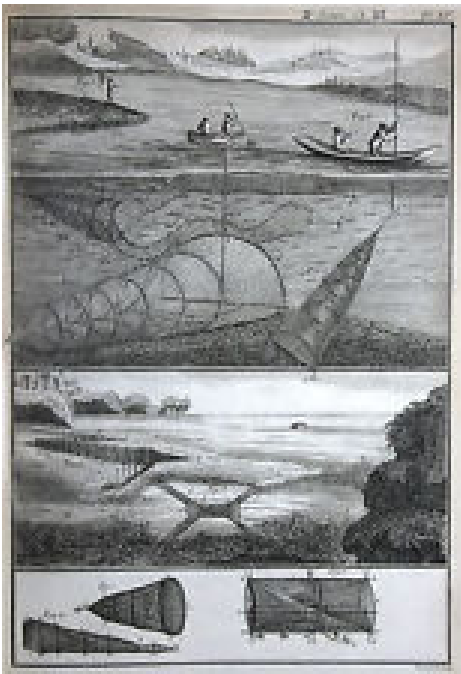
Historical Pot Fishery



Modern Pot Fishery



HISTORICAL FISHING METHODS



Historical Fyke Net Fishery



Historical Spear Fishery



Modern Fyke Net Fishery



Historical Spear Fishery

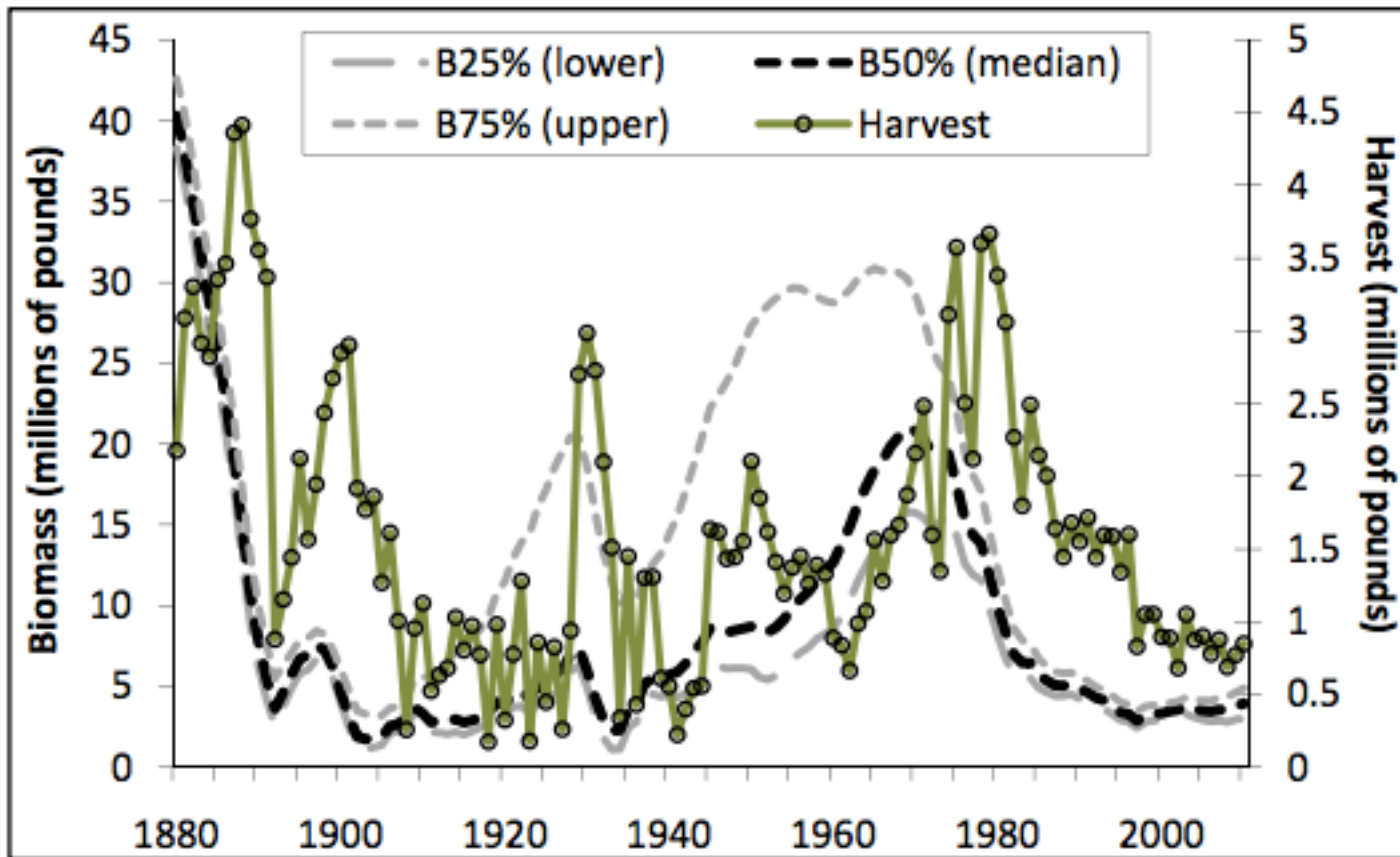


Antique Eel Spears



Modern Glass Eel Dip Net

U.S. COMMERCIAL EEL LANDINGS



ASMFC American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment
(May 2012)

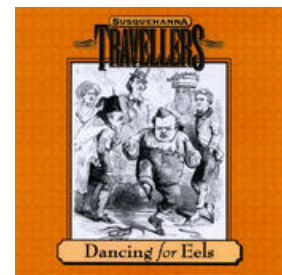
EARLY EEL FISHERY IN U.S.

The artistic inspiration for this *Vanity Fair* cartoon is a well-known lithograph first produced in 1848 by James and Eliphalet Brown to advertise Frank Chan Frau's popular play "New York As It Is." There are slightly different versions of the lithograph, which is entitled "Jack, A Negro and Dancer for Eels" or simply "Dancing for Eels." The lithograph is based on an earlier folk drawing called "Dancing for Eels, 1820 Catharine Market."

Catharine's Fish Market was located at the Catharine Street boardwalk by New York Harbor in a working-class area of New York City. The original drawing is based on a time when slaves from New Jersey were sent to Manhattan to sell their masters' produce at the "Bear Market." (Because New Jersey's emancipation law was implemented gradually, the state still had some slaves circa 1820.) The slaves were then joined at Catharine Market by free blacks from the city. If they were unable to win money at gambling, the black men would literally dance for the eels or fish sold at Catharine Market. Such a sight was typical of the theatrical nature of street culture in 19th-century New York City.

In this *Vanity Fair* cartoon Stephen Douglas, the leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, assumes the role of the dancing black man. The artist moves the market from Catharine Street to Charleston, South Carolina, the site of the first 1860 Democratic National Convention. As Douglas performs, he is surrounded by major Democratic politicians dressed in various working-class attire. They are (clockwise) President James Buchanan (1), former president Franklin Pierce (2), former Virginia Governor Henry Wise (5), Senator Robert M. T. Hunter (4), and Senator Jefferson Davis (3). Hunter, a challenger to Douglas for the nomination, is depicted as a slave woman with a basket of eels on her head.

Source consulted: W. T. Lhamon Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).



EARLY EEL FISHERY IN U.S.



The Catherine Market in the 19th century was a mixed meeting place for people of various backgrounds, and white working-class people were frequent spectators of the dancing contests. According to W. T. Lhamon, blackface performance was strongly influenced by Catherine Market dancing elements. Modern rap and hip-hop performance also contain traces of gestural continuity from the New York street dancers, which, for example, can be observed in MC Hammer using the Market Step in his video *U Can't Touch This*: a knees open, heel-to-toe rock, often accompanied by one or both hands overhead. This move traces back to *Dancing for Eels 1820 Catherine Market*, one of the folk drawings depicting the old competition. This drawing is supposedly the source for a later painting, which dates to 1880-1890s. This painting is oil paint on canvas, laid over a tin backing. The subject and composition has a long popularity in American culture.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dancing_for_eels



OLD EEL RECIPES

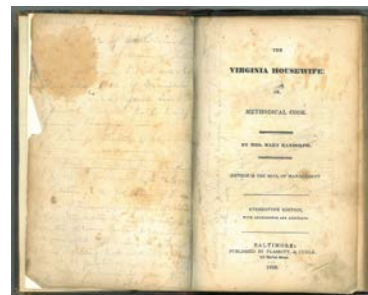
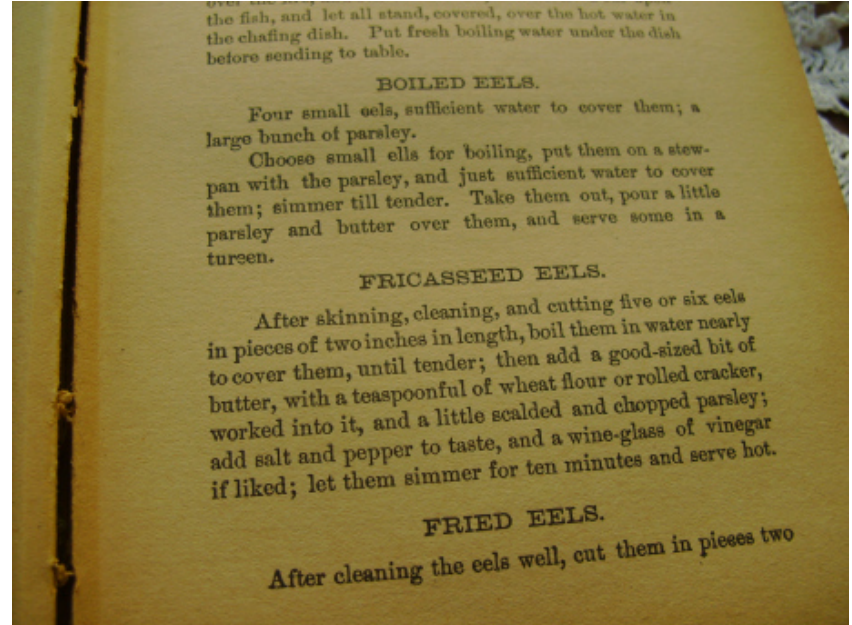
STEWED EELS. ✕

Inquire, before buying, where they were caught, and give so decided a preference to country eels as to refuse those fattened upon the offal of city wharves. Nor are the largest eels the best for eating. One weighing a pound is better for your purpose than a bulky fellow that weighs three.

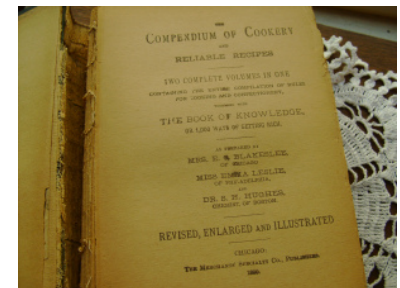
Skin and clean, carefully extracting all the fat from the inside. Cut into lengths of an inch and a half; put into a saucepan, with enough cold water to cover them; throw in a little salt and chopped parsley, and stew slowly, closely covered, for at least an hour. Add, at the last, a great spoonful of butter, and a little flour wet with cold water, also pepper. Serve in a deep dish. The appearance and odor of this stew are so pleasing as often to overcome the prejudices of those who "Wouldn't touch an eel for the world! They look like snakes!" And those who have tasted them rarely enter a second demurrer.

TO PITCHCOCK EELS:

Skin and wash your eels, then dry them with a cloth, sprinkle them with pepper, salt, and a little dried sage, turn them backward and forward, and skewer them; rub a gridiron with beef suet, broil them a nice brown, put them on a dish with good melted butter, and lay around fried parsley.

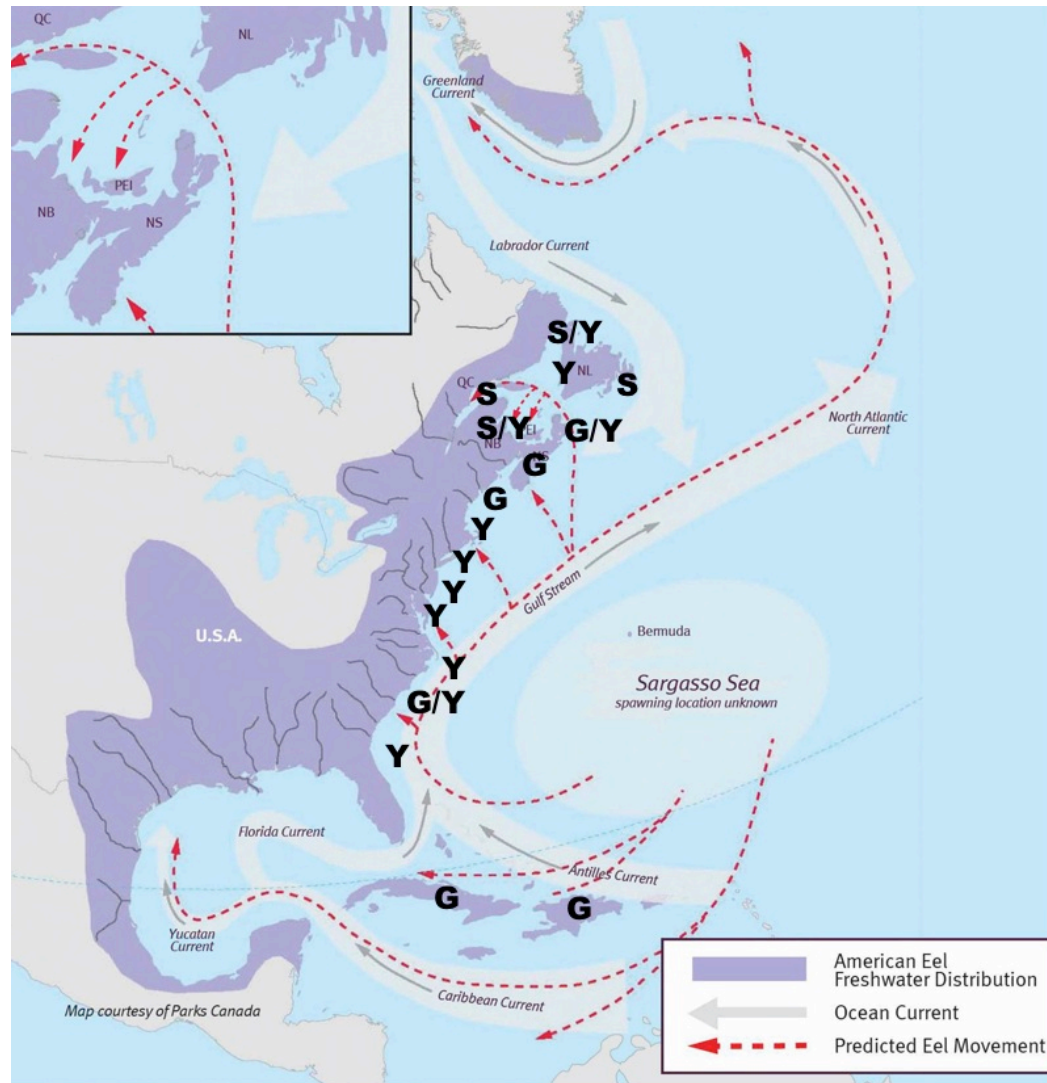


The Virginia House-Wife
(1824)



The Compendium Of Cookery
and Reliable Recipes
(1890)

LOCATION OF MAJOR EEL FISHERIES IN NORTH AMERICA



EEL MARKETS WORLDWIDE



Spain



Netherlands



Korea



England



USA



Italy



Japan



UNAGI KABAYAKI



FRESH EELS



Eel in Green Sauce



Jellied Eel



Marinated Eel



Eel Stir Fry

SMOKED EEL



CANNED EELS



Japan



China



Thailand

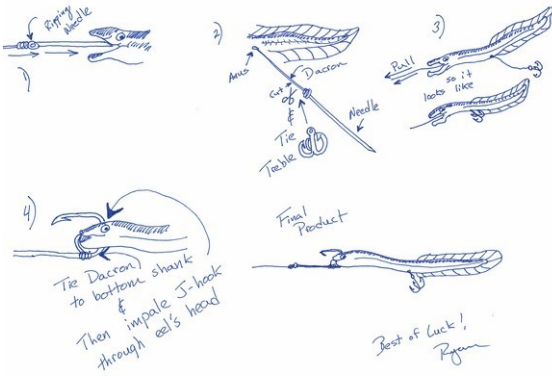


Portugal

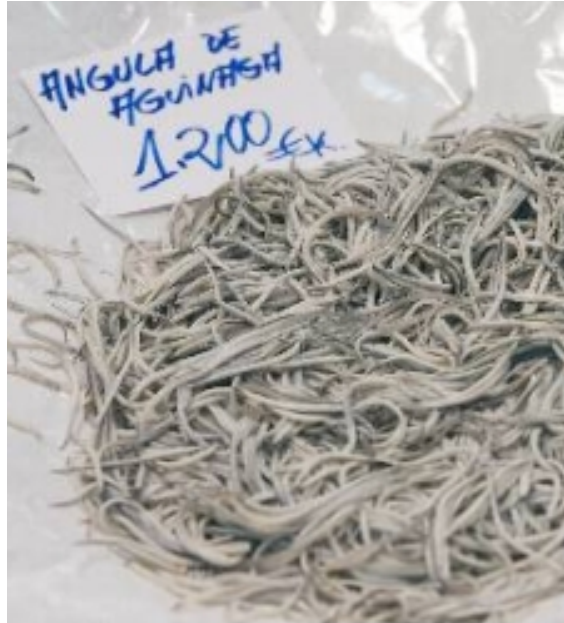


Estonia

BAIT EELS



GLASS EELS



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

