The Fisherman--- Ancient and Modern Mariner

Since the beginning, fish have been a palatable food for man. In the early days they were taken with spears and later gill, trap and submarine nets came into prominent use. The Indians used hooks, fashioned out of bone, for catching fish, and this method is in use today, although the hooks are of other materials and somewhat differently fashioned.

It is quite possible that fishing has been going on in the vicinity of Rogers City ever since man has inhabited this country.

The first boat used in fishing from this port was probably a row boat; later sailboats were used. Then came the steam fishing tug with its steam driven net lifters. Later the gasoline, and more recently the Diesel engine.

Reminiscing in the bye-gone days of the fishing industry, some of our older townspeople recall the name of Fred Lincoln, perhaps the first to fish out of Rogers City in a sailboat. Others to follow were the Platz brothers and the Vogelheim brothers.

The ELLEN GERTRUDE was the first steam tug to fish out of this port. A few years later the steam tug FISHERMAN made her appearance. She was first owned by Otto Bruder and later by Captain Joseph Valentin. However, the steam tug's life in this trade was a short one, as operating expenses, along with a decline in catch, made profit impossible.

All of the above fishing had been done with gill nets; there was, however, a fishery just south of Grace Harbor known as Godard's Fishery where fishing was carried on with trap nets for trout and white fish. And in those days sturgeon six and seven feet long were caught in these nets, and because there was no market for them and they were ruinous to the nets, these fish were dragged out in the wilds and left to spoil.

In 1909 the Wenzel brothers converted their sailboat, which they had been using for fishing, into a gasoline driven boat, and two years later, in 1911, the Mertz brothers, Clarence, Lawrence and Louis, began fishing.

Somewhere about 1913 or 1914 the Platz-Wenzel Fish Company was organized, this company fishing principally gill nets for chubs. Their boat was named the HAZEL.

In 1915 Chas. Summers, Paul Wenzel and Fred Schmeckel started fishing hooks. This consists of setting small mesh nets, called bait nets, for small chubs, and these in turn are used to bait the hooks used for trout fishing. Their first boat was called the RAMBLER and their second the EMMA B.

In 1926 the Mertz brothers built the first Diesel driven boat, THE TRAMP. She was followed by others until all the boats fishing out of Rogers City now, except the trap net boats, are powered with Diesel motors.

Deep trap nets were first used out of here in 1930 and for a time were a profitable investment.

In the fishing years there are good seasons and off seasons and lifts of eight to twelve hundred pounds of fish were not uncommon. However, when the fish are most plentiful, the prices are down, and of course when they are scarce, the prices are up. 1925 seems to have been the banner year for chubs. Whitefish, trout and chubs have been the principal fish caught, and on the market the whitefish of course have always demanded the best price.

Of late years fishing has been somewhat lighter, and there are those who voice the opinion that our lakes are becoming depleted; others say it is just the off season in the cycle. And then we hear that the little smelt, which are multiplying so rapidly in our lakes, feed on the eggs and minnows of the other fishes and that as they increase, and there seems to be no way to stop them, the more desirable fish will eventually become very scarce in our waters. The government has sought to enact legislation for the control of fishing in the type of twine and nets used, and months in which— (Continued on Page 964)