

Dedicated to the Memory of Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore Jr.

# PLAY

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

FALL  
2004

## FISHING & HISTORY

fishing  
spearhead  
and bone hook  
circa 1550-1575,  
from Lancaster  
County



### Today

we think of fishing as a fun outdoor activity. But it wasn't always like that. Fishing was much different long ago. Humans fished because they had to for food. And the ways they fished were different.

Ancient cultures used spears, nets, bows and arrows, baskets and simple fishing poles. The Egyptians used casting nets tossed from a boat or shore. Some Native American cultures stalked large fish with spears or used a birch-bark basket to catch smaller fish.

Humans also learned that fish could be attracted to bait. One early fishing tool was a gorge made from wood, bone or stone.

It had sharp points at each end, and it was tied to a line and then covered with bait. A quick pull wedged the gorge in the fish's gullet, and it could be pulled in.



Some cultures even got fancy. The Chinese used line made of silk, hooks made of needles, bamboo rods, and rice as bait.

Humans even learned that fishing could be good sport—it *could provide food and be fun at the same time!*

This issue looks at the history of fishing, tackle changes over the years and even the gadgets we use today. *You'll even get a chance to invent your own lure.*

[www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us)



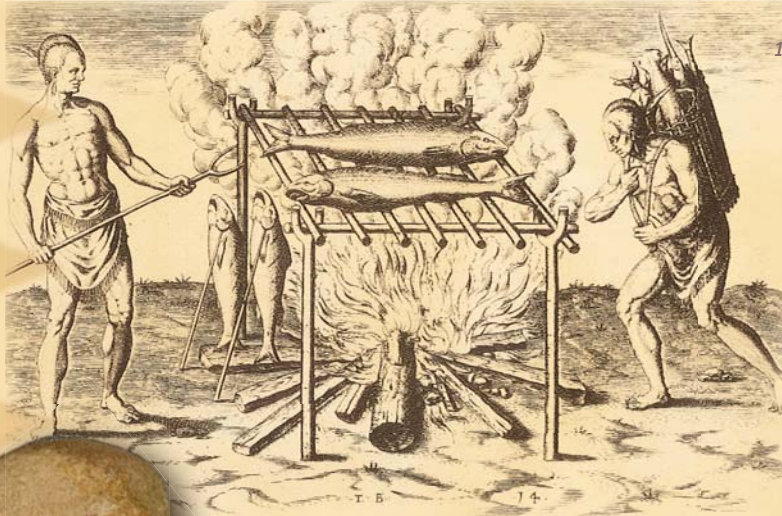
# FISHING THE NORTH AMERICAN WAY

**Native Americans** had many different ways of catching fish. The Delaware Indians in the Chesapeake Bay area shot fish with a bow and arrow from a dugout canoe. They trapped fish behind dams and caught them with their bare hands. Sometimes they constructed weirs (wooden fence-like enclosures across a stream) to funnel fish into a woven trap basket. Nets (seines) were made with spun grass and stone sinkers. They even made hand lines with twisted plant fibers and hooks of bone or dried bird claws.

Tribes from the Great Lakes area, like the Menominee, went out at night in birch-bark canoes. Then they attracted fish with torchlights and speared them.



stone  
sinker  
circa  
1550-1575



bone fishing hooks circa 1550-1575

from Clinton, Lancaster and Greene counties

## Eskimos

along the Arctic Coast made spears with prongs, called "leisters." They constructed two dams across a stream and left one with a small opening. Char (a salmonlike fish) swam through the opening and became trapped. The Eskimos then speared the fish with their leisters.

Colville Indians along the Columbia River in Oregon let the fish do all the work for them. They built big baskets and hung them off the edge of cliffs near waterfalls. Migrating salmon jumped into the air to get over the falls and sometimes flopped into a basket.



## ENOUGH FISH FOR EVERYONE

### PENNSYLVANIA'S ANCESTRAL TRIBES

This list\* includes Native American groups that lived in what is today Pennsylvania. Some are listed in other areas because those groups have relocated elsewhere.

Absentee Shawnee Tribe  
of Oklahoma  
Cayuga Nation  
Delaware Nation,  
Oklahoma  
Delaware Tribe of  
Indians, Oklahoma  
Eastern Shawnee Tribe  
of Oklahoma  
Oneida Indian Nation  
Oneida Tribe of Indians  
of Wisconsin  
Onondaga Indian Nation  
Seneca Nation of Indians  
Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma  
St. Regis Mohawk Tribe  
Stockbridge-Munsee Community of  
Mohican Indians of Wisconsin  
Tonawanda Seneca Nation  
Tuscarora Nation



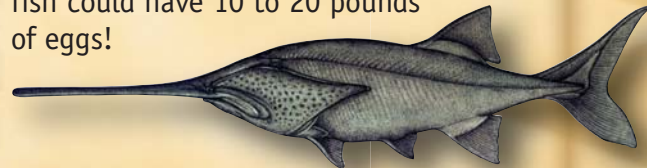
The first visitors to America were amazed with the rich, clean aquatic habitats. And they took advantage of all the fish in those habitats. They first caught fish on a small scale—just enough to feed their families. Settlers soon learned to focus on migratory fish. It was the best way to catch a bunch of food at once. America's population grew, and that's when commercial fishing became important.

American shad, shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon, American eels and paddlefish were plentiful. They were also easy to net or capture on their migration journeys to spawning areas. Sturgeon migrated up the Delaware River and were prized for their meat and caviar (eggs). American shad migrated up the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers. Fisheries were set up in the 1800s to net the shad. Dried and salted shad were an important food source at that time.



Even odd fish like eels and paddlefish were commercially harvested. Eels were a delicacy when smoked.

And their skins were used to wrap the handles of buggy whips. Paddlefish live in the Mississippi River up to the Ohio and Allegheny rivers in Pennsylvania. Their eggs made a great substitute for sturgeon caviar once the East Coast fisheries declined. One female paddlefish could have 10 to 20 pounds of eggs!





# Fishing Rod History

## Some historians

believe that the ancient Egyptians were the first to use fishing rods. Their rods were very long cane poles with some type of string line attached to the end to catch the fish.



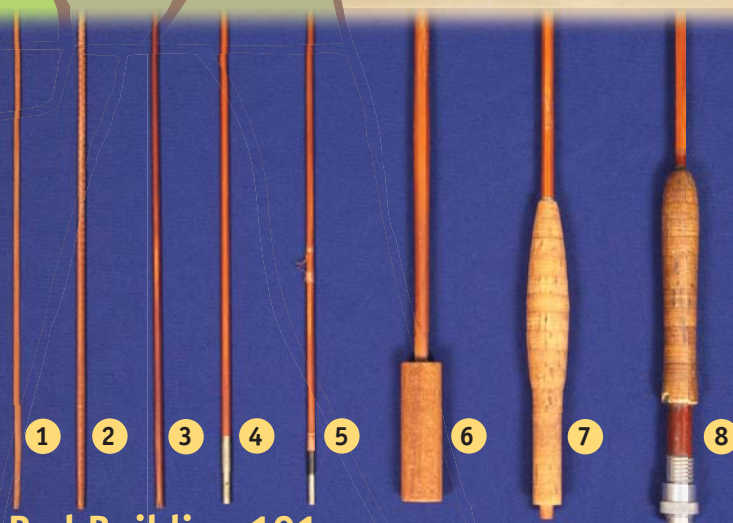
**Rod builders** in the late 1800s began using metal to make fishing rods.

**In the 1600s,** anglers began using wood for their rods. Many rods were 19 feet or longer in length! Wooden rods were carved to a point to get just the right amount of flexibility for angling.

**In 1845,** Samuel

Phillipe, a violinmaker from right here in Pennsylvania, built the first split-cane rod. He split cane into small strips and glued them together, making a rod that today is called a split-bamboo rod. Phillipe used three to four strips when building his rods. Several years later, rods were improved by making them with six strips, which is how they are still made today.

1940-50s fly rod



Rod Building 101

single triangular strip

six strips to form a rod

Wooden fishing rods like the ones shown on the left are built in steps. **Steps 1 through 5** show how rod sections go from one split piece to six pieces glued and sanded to finishing with hardware. **Steps 6 through 8** show how sections of the grip start and finish.



1934



*Commissioner Deibler congratulates David Shuey for landing the largest trout of the day.*

1938



1944



### During the 1900s,

rod builders made the greatest improvements in rod construction. Fiberglass was the first great improvement. By the end of the 20th century, rods were made with graphite (a lightweight, manmade material). Our rods today are much lighter and more flexible because of the variety of manmade materials.



1957



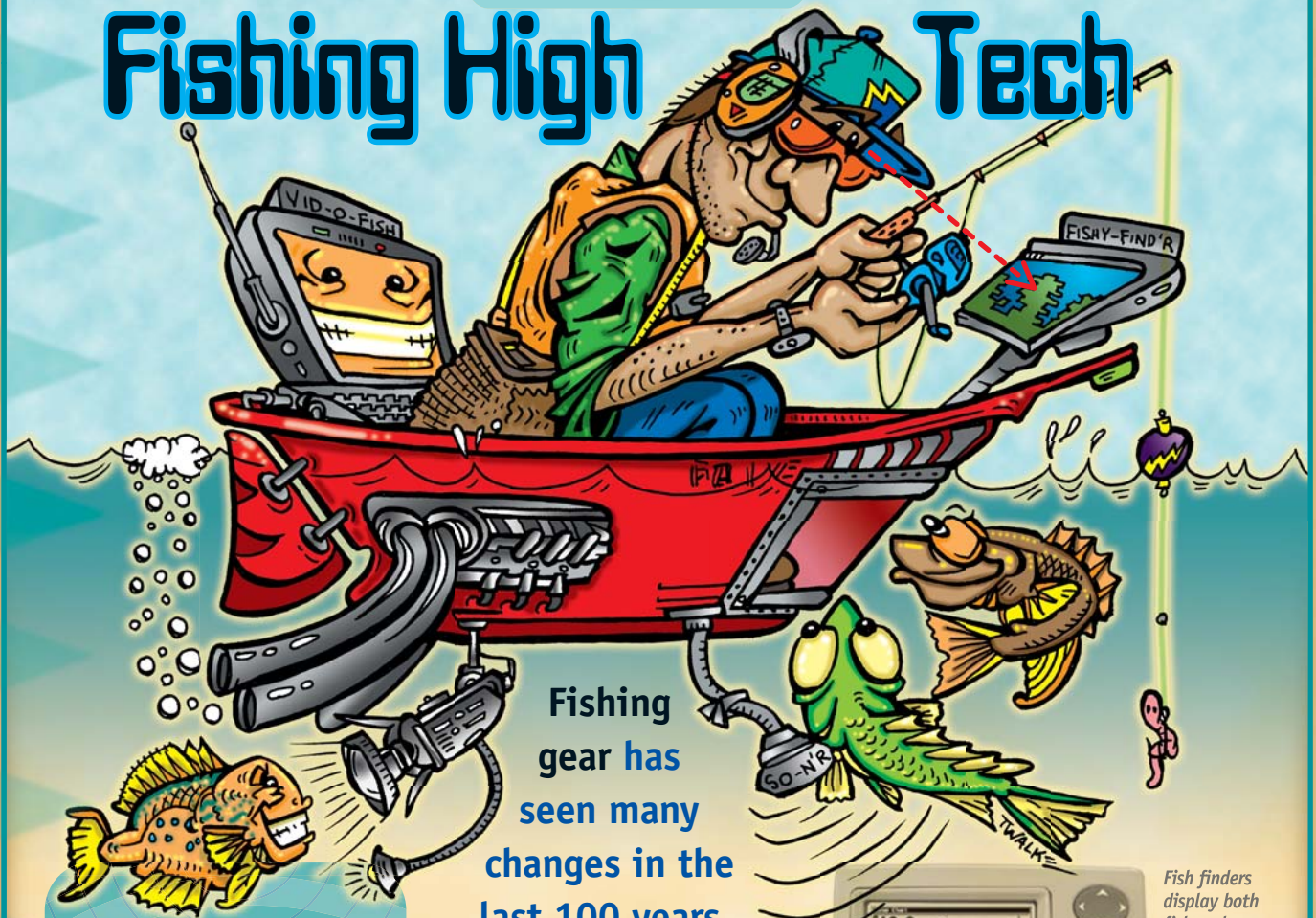
**Who knows  
what the  
future  
will hold?**

Maybe you will build  
the next great fishing rod!





# PLAY Fishing High Tech



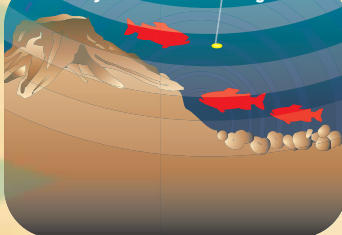
Fishing gear has seen many changes in the last 100 years.

Your boat...  
...it's the hub  
of location.

Your location through G.P.S.



The fish's location through sonar



Many changes happened just after World War II. Sonar was first invented for use in the Navy. Anglers then adapted it for use in "fish finders." They check the depth of the water. They can also see if fish are below your boat. New types of plastics were also invented. One type was the fishing line used by almost every angler today. Other lures were made of new hard and soft plastics. Today, some new inventions stretch the imagination. Just think of using a video camera to look underwater. Now you can. You might even see if the fish are biting!



Fish finders display both fish and bottom structure. The first models had a black-and-white screen.

Global Positioning Systems (G.P.S.) are also available. They provide mapping and show your boat's location.



Some of these models combine both fish finder and G.P.S. as one unit.

illustration by Ted Walke





pre-1920s antique lures



# The Future of Fishing

From plain wooden plugs to neon paints and glitter,

lures have come a long way. What used to simply float or dive now buzzes, rattles, spins, glows and even stinks!

Fishing has changed a lot over the years. There are more types of tackle available today than ever before. Anglers have many options for the types of lures available. How do you think lures will change in the future?

Design a lure that could be the next **hot-selling item**. Consider these things as you plan your design:

1. Which characteristics seem to attract fish?
2. Which characteristics will your lure use to attract fish?
3. When your lure is fished, what will it do? How will it act?
4. Why will fish be attracted to it?
5. Which materials will your lure be made of?
6. Which fish will your lure be designed to catch?
7. Will you use any of the "tricks" that ancient cultures or Native Americans used?

Draw your lure above and use the space below to explain all about it.

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