

The Catch

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Editor's Note

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Fishing has always been important to life in eastern Maine.

Pollock is the namesake fish of the Passamaquoddy Tribe of Native Americans, and Bar Harbor was first known as the clam-gathering place. Wooden ships, their holds heavy with salted cod, crowded the harbors of Frenchman Bay. The weir, which visually represents the journal's title, trapped herring in nearly every cove and curve of shore. In the rivers, men worked nets filled with salmon, alewives, and rainbow smelt.

It is true that these fisheries are history. But it is also true that people here remain connected to the sea through the harvest of eels, mackerel, lobster, urchins, scallops, mussels, clams, and seaweed, among others. Atlantic salmon are farmed in the waters of Washington County, and American oysters flourish in the cold tides of Hancock County. Traps are stacked at the edge of the yard, boats are built and repaired, waterfronts still work.

The continued harvest of marine resources occurs amid sometimes catastrophic environmental and social changes in the surrounding landscape. As communities work together to address these changes, they may draw upon "social memory," a term that describes the importance of local knowledge to maintaining cultural identity.

The Downeast Fisheries Trail is sharing knowledge of fisheries past and present with visitors and residents at 45 sites from Penobscot Bay to Campobello Island. But information alone is not enough. We need art, too.

As keepers of culture, artists help us remember the past, not for pure nostalgia, but so we might imagine new futures. This is the spirit of *The Catch*, as captured by the writers from within and outside the region who are featured in this inaugural issue.

Some of these works are elegies for the sardine industry that dominated the twentieth-century waterfront. Others are narratives of men and women at work on land and water. Urgency and hope have their place here, too, as do documentation and restoration. In their reflections on granite sculptures completed as part of the Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium, Carl Little and Joanne Jacob add another layer to artistic interpretation and reimagination of the coast.

With this journal, we hope to inspire writers near and far to visit Downeast Maine, perhaps using the Downeast Fisheries Trail as their guide, and to send us their own perspectives on the meaning of this place.