

After peaking in the 1940's, then suffering a sharp decline in the 1950's, New England's shrimp fishery has increased rapidly as...

## European Demand Helps Spur New England Shrimp Catches

JOHN R. KALLIO

After an upsurge in the 1940's (Maine landings of northern shrimp in 1945 totaled 580,000 pounds) and subsequent rapid decline, the fishery for northern shrimp was revitalized in the early 1960's in Maine and Massachusetts (Table 1).

In 1961 67,000 pounds were landed with a value of \$14,000. Landings increased year by year, reaching a peak in 1969 of 28.3 million pounds valued at 3.5 million dollars. Although landings dropped during the next three years, the value of the catch averaged about 4.7 million dollars for 1970-1972. Ex-vessel prices have ranged from a low of 9.5 cents a pound in the early 1960's to a high of 32 cents in the winter of 1972. Fishing grounds ranged from Stellwagen Bank to Mt. Desert Island off of Bar Harbor.

### MASSACHUSETTS

Almost all of the landings of northern shrimp are at Gloucester although small amounts are landed at Provincetown.

Landings at Gloucester were very light until 1969 when the inshore fleet entered the fishery. Landings in 1969 increased greatly to nearly 4 million pounds and Gloucester found a replacement for the dwindling whiting resource.

In 1970, with increased fishing effort, landings increased to almost 6.5 million pounds valued at 1.2 million dollars. Landings were down slightly in 1971 but increased in 1972 not only because of increased fishing effort but also due to an apparent increase in the availability of the resource. Landings in 1972 totaled 8.2 million pounds valued at 1.4 million dollars.

There is only one processing plant in Gloucester that processes in any volume. Nearly 80 percent of the Gloucester landings is trucked to plants in Maine for processing. Labor costs are relatively low there, allowing Maine firms to sell the finished product at a lower price than if the shrimp had been processed in Gloucester. A good percentage of the finished product is exported to Europe.

The three principal fishing grounds are Stellwagen Bank, Ipswich Bay, and Jeffreys Ledge.

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Landings in New Hampshire are small, although increasing slightly each year. There are only a few small boats in this fishery and several land their catches at Maine ports. Principal fishing grounds are the Isle of Shoals and Jeffreys Ledge.

### MAINE

George Kern, owner of the Eastern Fish Company and a fish market in Portland, was one of the persons principally responsible for the revitalization of this fishery. In the early 1960's he encouraged several boats to go shrimping. The catches were sold in his market in the shell and some were peeled in his plant. He had a contract with a firm in Georgia that bought his surplus supplies. The Georgia plant sent a large trailer truck up to Portland nearly every week. Of course, there was no European market at this time.

Landings increased every year as more vessels entered the fishery and more processing plants were set up to process shrimp. The landings nearly doubled between 1966 and 1967 as the European market was developed. Landings reached a peak in 1969 with over 24 million pounds valued at over 3

Table 1.—New England Shrimp catch, 1962-72. Quantities (heads-on) in thousands of pounds; value in thousands of dollars.

Year	Maine		New Hampshire		Massachusetts		Total	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
1962	352	51	—	—	—	—	352	51
1963	538	64	—	—	23	3	561	67
1964	925	112	—	—	7	1	932	113
1965	2,075	243	—	—	18	2	2,093	245
1966	3,831	542	40	4	23	3	3,894	549
1967	6,925	865	44	5	22	2	6,991	931
1968	14,363	1,590	95	10	114	11	14,572	1,611
1969	24,235	3,045	128	15	3,908	418	28,271	3,478
1970	17,004	3,512	120	19	6,398	1,167	23,522	4,698
1971	18,419	3,671	112	18	6,005	964	24,536	4,653
1972	16,587	3,232	230	41	8,212	1,424	25,029	4,697

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary

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million dollars to the fishermen. This fishery was developed during the years when the inshore fleet was beginning to feel the effects of the dwindling whitening resource.

For several years in the middle 1960's, some boats used propane gas cookers to cook the shrimp at sea. After a few years, this practice was abandoned. Boats that were landing the raw product were making more than the boats cooking. It was not profitable to buy

cookers, tanks of propane gas, lose about 20 percent in weight from cooking, buy salt, and put on an extra man to cook the shrimp.

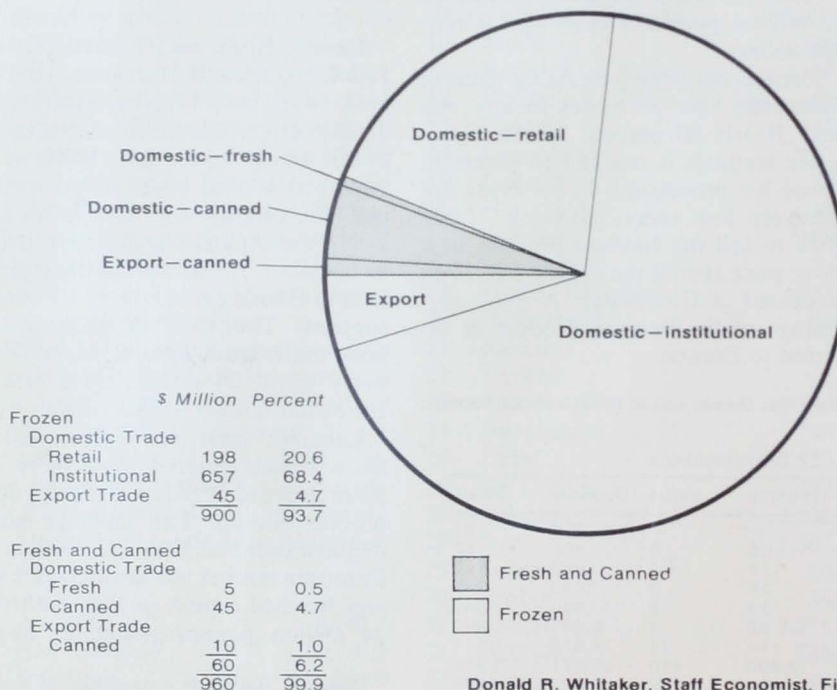
The two major ports for landings are Portland and Boothbay Harbor. The first peeling machine was installed at the Marine Biological Supply Corp. in East Harpswell and the second machine at the Central Wharf Fish Plant in Portland. These companies exported some of their finished product to England

as prawn. The foreign market was developed with the assistance of the Market Research and Services Division, NMFS. These plants were also the first to establish an IQF line for freezing shrimp. Automatic peelers were necessary because of the small size of the shrimp and a shortage of help.

The grounds principally fished are located between Jeffreys Ledge off of New Hampshire to Mt. Desert Island off of Bar Harbor, Maine.

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## The Shrimp Dollar, 1972



The U.S. shrimp industry is fast approaching the billion dollar mark in sales. The dollar value of final sales in 1972 is estimated at \$960 million. Frozen shrimp dominates sales. Most frozen shrimp goes to the institutional market (restaurants and other food service outlets). As the frozen shrimp market has expanded, fresh shrimp sales have accounted for a smaller share of the total market. Most canned shrimp is sold at retail, and sales have increased in recent years because of rising production in Alaska. The export trade in shrimp is significant and accounts for 45 to 50 percent of the total value of edible seafood exports exported by the United States.

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