

**38.—INAUGURATION OF THE FROZEN-HERRING TRADE.****By J. W. COLLINS.**

The following brief account of the first attempt to establish the frozen-herring trade is given as it was told the writer by Capt. Henry O. Smith, of Gloucester, Mass., who was the pioneer in this business.

The inauguration of the frozen-herring trade was one of those instances of combining the result of accident and enterprise which so frequently influences the welfare of mankind. Captain Smith was engaged in fishing for halibut along the west coast of Newfoundland and elsewhere during the summer of 1853, and learned, while in Port au Port, that in the winter season halibut were generally very abundant at Harbor Le Coue, on the west coast of Newfoundland. He was told by a resident of that place that the halibut followed in after the school-herring, which generally arrived on the coast during December, and that for the remainder of the winter there was always an opportunity for catching as many of these fish as might be required. Accordingly, in the latter part of 1853, Captain Smith, then in command of the schooner *Flying Cloud*, determined to make a voyage to Newfoundland in pursuit of halibut, with the intention of freezing his fish and bringing them into the markets of the United States.

He started about the 20th of December. On the last of that month he was caught in a terrific northwest gale near the western part of Newfoundland. After lying-to under a close-reefed foresail throughout the gale, the wind finally moderated on the morning of January 1. The weather cleared up and the snow-clad hills of Newfoundland were visible in the distance. Captain Smith judged his vessel to be near the port for which he was bound. As soon as practicable reefed sails were set, and the schooner headed for the land. As she approached the shore, to which the crew were entire strangers, no indication of a harbor could be made out. Knowing the abrupt character of the coast, however, and the general freedom from outlying dangers, Captain Smith stood fearlessly on in his ice-covered vessel, approaching the towering snow-laden mountains. At last an opening was seen, which he thought might be Harbor Le Coue, and into this he sailed, passing the headlands and coves, one after another, until he finally came to the head of the harbor, dropped anchor, and furled his sails. As soon as the vessel was moored she was boarded by residents of the place, who expressed great surprise that he had successfully entered that port under such circumstances. In reply to the inquiries of Captain Smith, the local fishermen stated that halibut, contrary to their usual custom, had failed to strike in dur-

ing that winter, but reported herring and cod abundant. It is enough to say here, that halibut failed to make their appearance during the winter, and that while the Flying Cloud was in Harbor Le Coue, she was able to procure only 4,600 pounds of these fish.

Captain Smith, finding that there was no hope of obtaining a cargo of frozen halibut, decided to do the next best thing, and to secure as many fresh codfish as he could, freeze and pack them away in the hold. The chances for obtaining a full load of cod were favorable, but the thought occurred to him that he might do well to take home part of a cargo of frozen herring to be used as bait by the George's cod fishermen. He was induced to take this step by an incident which had occurred in his previous experience, of which the following is an account: While in command of the schooner Columbia, in 1846, and engaged in the winter George's cod-fishery, he had taken a good catch of herring in nets on George's bank; and when he started for home he had 450 of them which had not been used. After leaving the bank the weather was extremely cold, and the herring which had been left on deck during night were frozen as "stiff as sticks." It occurred to Captain Smith to save these fish for another trip, and accordingly he packed them away carefully in the hold, so that the frost might be retained in them. On his succeeding cruise he found the bait which he had thus saved was of great service to him; and the consequence was that he obtained a full fare of fish in a much shorter time than the other vessels which were sailing in company. Here, then, was the starting-point, so to speak, of the frozen-herring trade. Captain Smith succeeded in procuring a fare at Harbor Le Coue of 64,000 pounds of frozen cod, 4,600 pounds of frozen halibut, and 80,000 frozen herring. For the herring he paid \$1 per barrel, which would be about 20 cents per 100. Arriving in Gloucester, he found the George's fleet about ready to start on their first trip to the bank, and offered his herring for sale to them at \$1.50 per 100 in number. Unfortunately a large portion of the George's fleet was frozen in, so that they could not easily get out; but, nevertheless, this was so great an innovation in the fishery that few of the skippers could be found among those ready to sail who would venture to take a supply of frozen herring for bait. Three of the captains, however, decided to make the trial. One of them was Capt. Theodore Parsons, who bought 1,000 herring, half of which he sold to another vessel before sailing; while the third vessel took 500 herring. Finding that there was little probability of selling his herring in Gloucester to the Georgesmen, Captain Smith went to Boston, where he sold them as food at from 75 cents to \$1 per 100.\* In the mean time the three vessels which had taken bait from him, notwithstanding the small

\* Before going to Boston he sold 20,000 of the herring to a stable-keeper, at Gloucester, by the name of Floyd, who took the fish on teams to the east side of Cape Ann, where the most of them were sold for bait to the boat fishermen, the remainder being hauled to Swampscot and sold there for a similar purpose.

amounts, had been very successful, and brought in fares ranging from 80,000 to 90,000 pounds of codfish. As soon as they arrived at Gloucester and reported how much the voyages had been benefited by the use of frozen herring, the owners at once sent an order to Captain Smith, who was in Boston, for 30,000 herring; but at this time all of the fish had been disposed of for food, and consequently the Georgesmen could not obtain them. Nevertheless, the seed had been sown from which the frozen-herring trade has grown to its present proportions, exerting an almost incalculable influence on the fisheries as well as providing the masses with a large amount of cheap and wholesome food.

**39.—MINUTE UPON THE DEATH OF OREN M. CHASE, GEORGE W. ARMSTRONG, AND CHARLES H. BROWNELL.**

**By THE MICHIGAN BOARD OF FISH COMMISSIONERS.**

The Michigan State Board of Fish Commissioners directs this minute to be spread upon its records in respectful and affectionate remembrance of a friend, as well as in sincere sorrow for the loss of their most efficient and helpful officer, Oren M. Chase, superintendent of fisheries for the State of Michigan, and in memory of two of his most trusted and respected assistants, George W. Armstrong and Charles H. Brownell, the overseer and assistant of the Petoskey Station.

In the fateful storm which swept over the Great Lakes on the 11th day of November, 1883, which will long be remembered throughout this State by reason of the loss of life occasioned, Oren M. Chase, George W. Armstrong, and Charles H. Brownell, while engaged upon the work of this commission, were drowned in Little Traverse Bay, opposite the village of Petoskey.

No man who knew either of them doubts that they each met death as bravely and quietly as they met the duties and responsibilities of life, nor do we doubt that they made as brave a struggle for life as ever men made when overwhelmed by cruel seas and bitter cold which no mortal strength or skill could overcome or long resist. For each possessed the best things that made life dear and worth a manful struggle to retain, as sterling characters, health, and a hopeful future of honorable usefulness in their chosen work, and, more potent still, homes where their loss can never be repaired.

Oren M. Chase was born at Rochester, in the State of New York, in the year 1840, where he spent his childhood, and at the age of about twenty years removed to Michigan, beginning life as a farmer near Dimondale. By his own efforts he cleared a farm of about 40 acres, upon which he remained for a number of years, and then returned to Rochester to reside. After his return he was employed by the New York Central Railroad as baggage-master at Rochester. While con-