

CHICAGO RECEIPTS OF FISHERY PRODUCTS, 1948

By C. M. Reardon*

INTRODUCTION

The total 1948 receipts of fresh and frozen fishery products in the Chicago wholesale fish market was the highest on record, surpassing the previous record in 1947 by three percent. Receipts in 1948 amounted to 97,311,000 pounds, compared to 94,650,000 pounds in 1947. The gain was in the salt-water fish and shellfish arrivals, an increase of 5 percent and 6 percent over 1947, respectively. Fresh-water fish receipts in 1948 were less than one-half of 1 percent greater than in 1947 (Figure 1).

SOURCES OF RECEIPTS

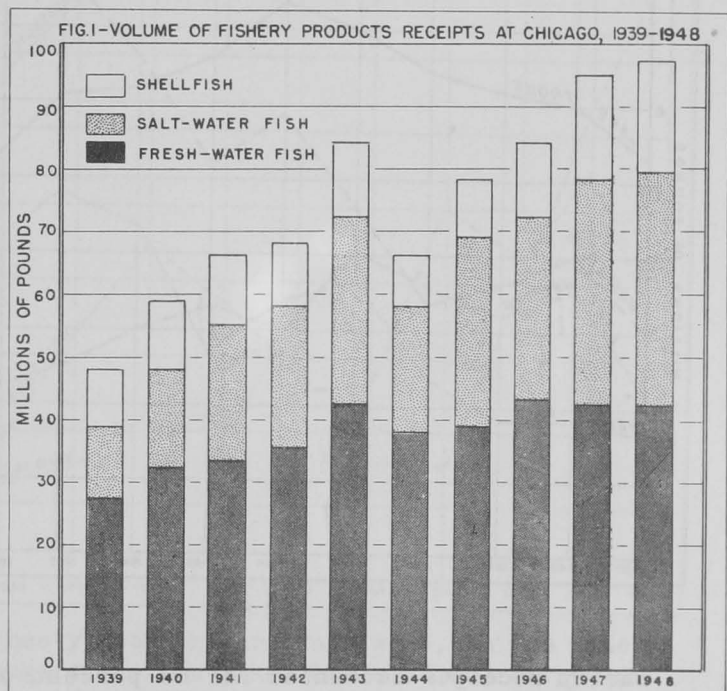
For the first time in recent years Massachusetts, with an increase of 40 percent over 1947, surpassed British Columbia as Chicago's leading source of fishery products. The 16,223,000 pounds received from Massachusetts comprised 17 percent of the total Chicago receipts.

The second important source was British Columbia with 13,209,000 pounds, or 14 percent, but as usual, included fish caught by United States fishermen and shipped through Canada to the United States in bond. United States-caught fish shipped from British Columbia in bond made up 55 percent of the total receipts from that Province.

Wisconsin ranked third in importance, accounting for 10 percent of the total receipts, but it was first among the States shipping fresh-water fish. This State was followed closely by Michigan (9 percent). States contribut-

ing 3 million pounds or more to the total receipts were, in the order of their importance: Texas, Louisiana, Washington, and Iowa. In addition to British Columbia, other Canadian provinces that shipped important quantities were: Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Alberta.

There was also an unidentifiable amount of fish which originated in Alaska but was shipped to Chicago from Washington; therefore, Alaska is not listed as a source.

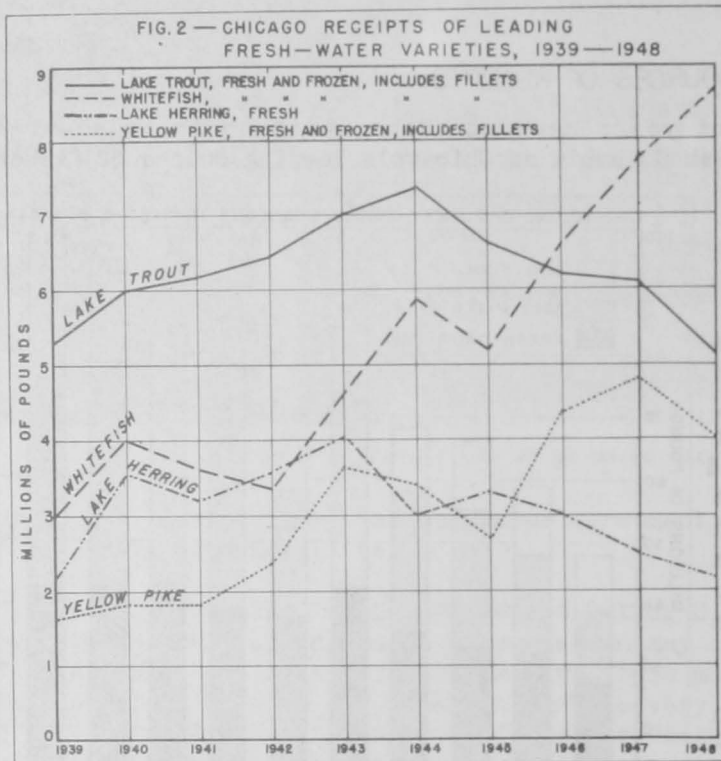


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Fish and shellfish shipments from domestic sources, including American-caught fish shipped via British Columbia, accounted for 80 percent, or 77,898,000 pounds, of the total Chicago receipts. Direct imports into Chicago accounted for 20 percent, or 19,413,000 pounds. Certain imports, such as, shrimp from Mexico, spiny lobster tails, and frozen fillets from Iceland and Norway have been credited to the State from which the shipment originated in the United States. Attempting to identify the country of origin for some of the imported fishery products after they reach Chicago would be a time-consuming task.

RECEIPTS BY SPECIES

With each species divided into classifications of fresh, frozen, fillets, steaks, etc., the number of varieties of fishery products received at Chicago totaled 146, divided into 48 fresh-water, 70 salt-water, and 28 shellfish and related aquatic varieties.



Of the fresh-water species received, whitefish was the most important, followed by lake trout and yellow pike (Figure 2). These three accounted for 43 percent of the fresh-water total of 41,654,000 pounds. Following these were carp, chubs, buffalofish and yellow perch.

Halibut receipts led all salt-water varieties, and exceeded the former highest total (1947) by a little over 1 percent; rosefish fillets were next followed by cod and salmon (all species). These four varieties accounted for 73 percent of the salt-water total of 37,512,000 pounds (Figure 3).

Shrimp receipts accounted for 60 percent of the shellfish arrivals. This was slightly higher than the former highest total in 1947. Oysters (shell and shucked), spiny lobster tails, and scallops followed shrimp in importance. There were also substantial arrivals of lobsters, clams, and squid.

METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION

During 1948, motor trucks handled 34 percent, or 32,560,000 pounds of Chicago's 1948 fishery receipts, 14 percent more than in 1947. Beginning shortly after the war, when more equipment and fuel became available for civilian use, truck transportation of fishery products made steady gains. Flexibility in delivering LCL shipments and the time saved on short hauls are the two most important features of motor transportation (Figure 4).

Railway express transported 31 percent, or 30,648,000 pounds, a decline of 5 percent compared with 1947.

Rail freight handled 35 percent, or 34,103,000 pounds, a gain of less than one-half of one percent compared with 1947. A larger gain was not made in rail freight shipments because of the inroads made by motor trucks in the transportation of frozen salt-water fish from the East Coast. Most West Coast shipments continue to be made by rail freight due to the long hauls, and have not yet been affected by the encroachment of motor transportation.

The bulk of the domestic receipts was handled by motor truck while the major portion of the imports was moved by rail freight. Some arrivals of fishery products were received by air express, but the total was relatively unimportant.

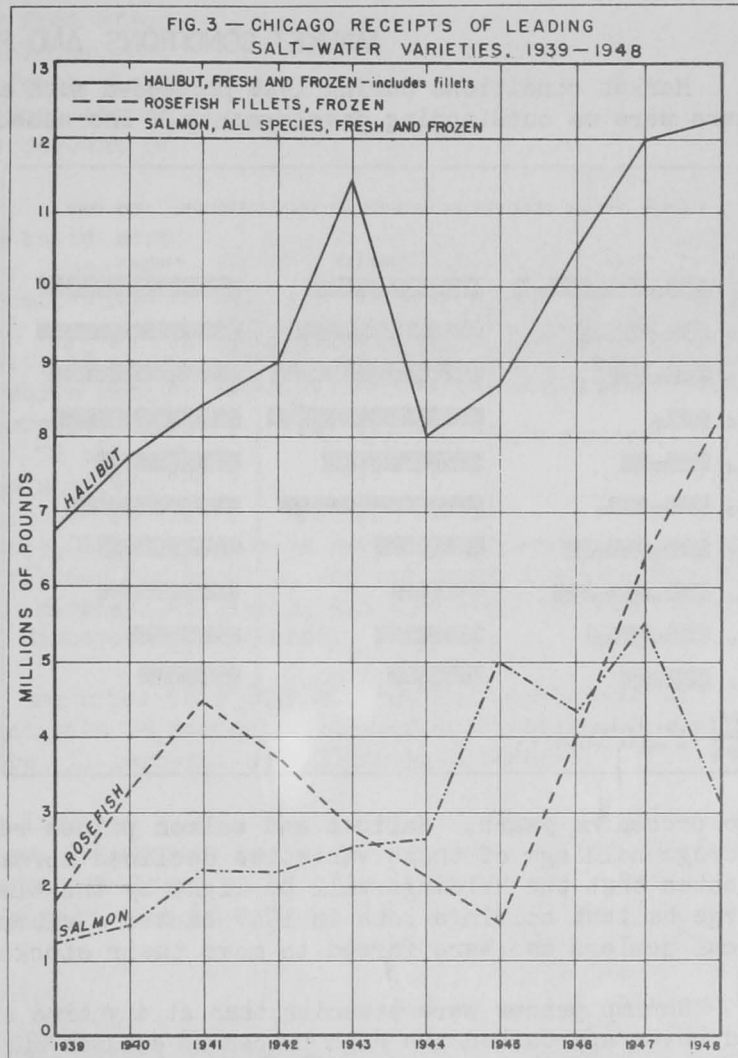
SEASONS

Receipts of fishery products in 1948 reached their highest monthly pack during August, although June and September were not far behind. During 1947, receipts were the heaviest in October.

The greatest quantity of fresh-water varieties was delivered in February with June second, and September third. Contributing to the heavy February arrivals were, in the order of their importance: whitefish, saugers, yellow pike, buffalofish, carp, lake herring, and smelt.

Salt-water arrivals were greatest during August, with June second, and September third. The chief reason for the heavy salt-water deliveries during August was the heavy receipts of frozen rosefish fillets from the East Coast. While arrivals of other varieties of frozen fillets were below normal during August, those for rosefish fillets (nearly 1,500,000 pounds) were the highest in the history of the Chicago wholesale market.

Halibut was second in importance in August and with rosefish composed 59 percent of August's salt-water receipts. June was the month with the heaviest receipts of halibut (1,451,000 pounds).



Receipts of salmon (all species) reached a maximum in September, followed by November, August, and February.

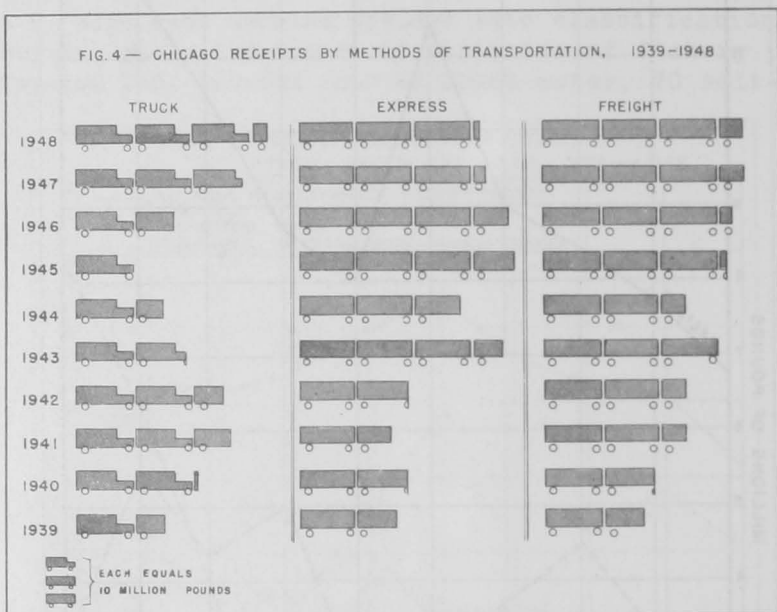
Shrimp arrivals reached their peak in December, followed by October, November, and June.

MARKET CONDITIONS AND PRICES

Market conditions during 1948 proceeded much along the same lines as in 1947. There were no outstanding developments. Increased arrivals of fishery products

did not affect the market as definitely as in 1947 or in the preceding three years, receipts were not curtailed by any labor and transportation difficulties, and shipments arrived steadily and more uniformly. Transportation differences on the West Coast did not affect frozen halibut arrivals as most shipments originated in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, which was undisturbed by the labor dispute in progress during the greater part of the halibut season.

Prices on most varieties fluctuated far less than in 1947. Both buying and selling were more settled in the



two preceding years. Halibut and salmon prices remained steady all year as cold-storage holdings of these varieties declined normally, and at a rate which indicates that the holdings will be light by the time the season opens in 1949. Large halibut holdings late in 1947 caused a slump in prices seriously affecting local dealers who were forced to move their stocks at a loss.

Shrimp prices were steadier than at any time since the lifting of OPA controls, and never approached the high prices so evident during the two preceding years. A growing demand for Mexican shrimp on the local market was noted during 1948.

Demand for fishery products did not increase noticeably during the Lenten Season and the Jewish holidays. For the third successive year the dealers, in anticipation of these holidays, made larger purchases, but they were unable to move all of their supplies. Prices, which usually followed an upward trend during these periods, declined on most items due to the heavy supplies and a dull market.

LEADING VARIETIES AND MARKET FORMS

Whitefish, the most important fresh-water item on the Chicago wholesale market, totaled 8,694,000 pounds, with 13 percent shipped frozen. Most of the whitefish were dressed, and only a small amount (chiefly from Lake Erie) arrived round at certain times of the season. Some of the frozen receipts were filleted. Of the states shipping fresh whitefish, Wisconsin led with 28 percent and Michigan ranked

second with 27 percent. Arrivals from other states were comparatively unimportant. Of the Canadian provinces, Alberta led with 14; followed by Manitoba, 7 percent; and Ontario, 3 percent. Manitoba accounted for 80 percent of the frozen whitefish.

Receipts of lake trout were second in importance among fresh-water varieties, with 14 percent shipped frozen. Michigan led with 40 percent, followed by Wisconsin with 24 percent. Arrivals from other states were comparatively unimportant. Among the Canadian sources, fresh lake trout shipments from Manitoba contributed 7 percent, and Alberta only 5 percent of the total.

Yellow pike receipts, the third most important fresh-water variety, totaled 4,010,000 pounds, with 10 percent shipped frozen. Minnesota shipped 15 percent of the fresh yellow pike; Ohio, 13 percent and Michigan, 12 percent; while Manitoba led all sources with 42 percent. The latter was also the source of 78 percent of the frozen receipts of this species.

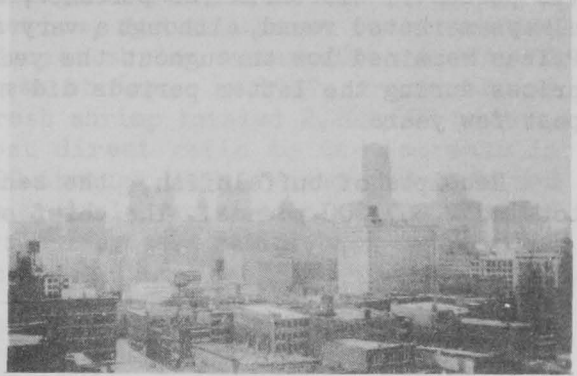
Chub arrivals amounted to 3,025,000 pounds—a new high, according to available data. Nearly all chubs are utilized for smoking, and commanded the most consistent price in the past five years. Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin shipped 93 percent of the chubs with Indiana and Minnesota the balance.

Receipts of yellow perch amounted to 2,603,000 pounds, with less than one percent frozen. Ohio was first with 28 percent, followed by Michigan, 22 percent; Minnesota, 12 percent; Manitoba, 11 percent; and Illinois, 8 percent.

Arrivals of lake herring totaled 2,263,000 pounds, of which 70,000 pounds (from Wisconsin) arrived frozen. Wisconsin led with 48 percent of the shipments; Minnesota was second, 29 percent; followed by Michigan, 21 percent. Most of the bluefin herring received in Chicago were from Minnesota. Nearly all herring arrived dressed and were sold fresh as there is little demand for salted or smoked fresh-water herring. Some of the herring were smoked as "bay chubs".



CHICAGO'S WHOLESALE FISH MARKET (CORNER OF FULTON AND UNION STREETS).



VIEW OF CHICAGO'S SKYLINE.

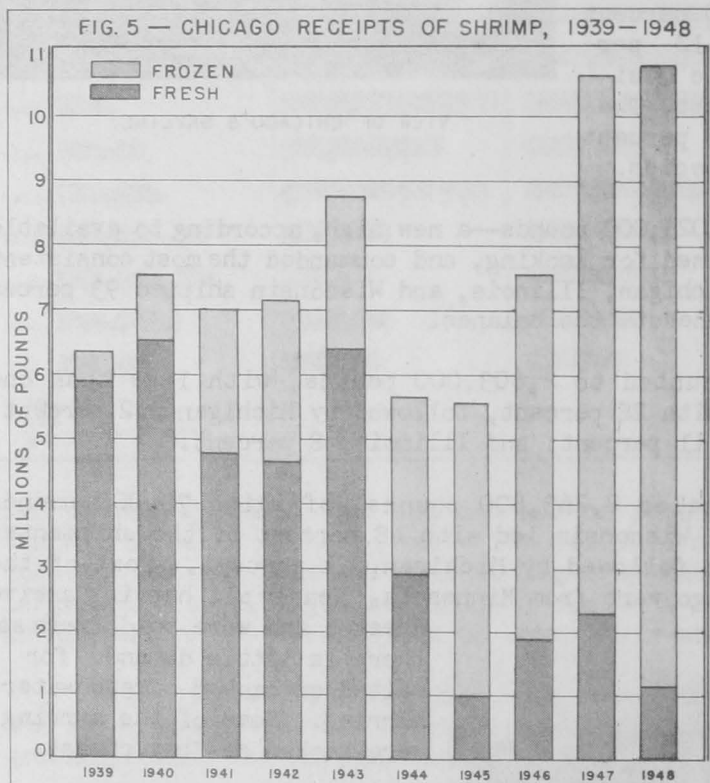
Sauger receipts totaled 1,064,000 pounds, and 41 percent were received frozen in the round and as frozen fillets. Manitoba accounted for 83 percent of all shipments. Saugers were usually sold round, with a few small fish dressed or filleted.

For the fourth consecutive year smelt arrivals have shown a substantial increase.

In 1948, the smelt receipts totaled 921,000 pounds (5 percent frozen), the highest amount received in the Chicago market since 1943. Wisconsin, the leading source of supply, shipped and accounted for 69 percent of the receipts, while Michigan, the only other State of importance, shipped 30 percent.

Among rough fish, carp led with 3,838,000 pounds, mainly coming from Iowa (40 percent), Wisconsin (33 percent), and Illinois (17 percent). They were nearly always marketed round, although a very small amount was fleeced for special orders. Prices remained low throughout the year, except during the Jewish holidays, but prices during the latter periods did not approximate the prices paid during the past few years.

Receipts of buffalofish, the second important variety among the rough fish, totaled 2,867,000 pounds. The chief sources of buffalofish in this country were Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, which accounted for 79 percent of the total. Saskatchewan was the only Canadian province that shipped any amount of buffalofish, and accounted for another 15 percent. Prices on buffalofish were consistently high all during the year.



Substantial deliveries of buffalofish and carp were, for the most part, due to planned fishing by the three State Conservation Departments of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

Sheepshead receipts totaled 1,967,000 pounds, with a negligible amount shipped frozen. Iowa shipped 28 percent of this; Michigan was second, with 26 percent; and followed by Wisconsin and Ohio, 20 percent each. Iowa's receipts consisted mostly of the soft-meated variety. Due to the demand for it,

soft-meated sheepshead will usually sell at from two to three times the price of the hard-meated fish. Nearly all Ohio sheepshead are hard-meated, while Illinois and Wisconsin ship both kinds, with the hard-meated fish predominating. All sheepshead are marketed round.

Arrivals of suckers (all fresh), totaled 1,178,000 pounds. Wisconsin and Michigan shipped 84 percent of the suckers. Suckers are usually sold dressed, while those sold round are called "mullet" on the Chicago market.

While relatively unimportant among the items received at the Chicago wholesale market, the continued increase of blue pike arrivals in the past three years should

not be overlooked. Of very minor importance in 1946 when only 120,000 pounds were received, the 1948 arrivals have risen to 661,000 pounds. This total, however, is far below the 1944 receipts of 2,237,000 pounds.

RECEIPTS OF FROZEN FISHERY PRODUCTS CONTINUE TO INCREASE

Probably the greatest development in Chicago's receipts of fishery products has been the annual increase in frozen varieties, and an almost corresponding decrease in fresh varieties. Arrivals of frozen shrimp amounted to 9,585,000 pounds compared with 1,151,000 pounds of fresh shrimp. In 1947, frozen shrimp receipts amounted to 8,330,000 pounds and fresh shrimp totaled 2,269,000 pounds. This shows frozen shrimp increasing in almost direct ratio to the decrease in fresh shrimp arrivals. During the years 1939 through 1943, frozen shrimp formed approximately 25 percent of the total shrimp arrivals; were about equally divided in 1944; but after 1944, frozen shrimp arrivals increased rapidly and during 1948 composed 89 percent of the total shrimp receipts.



MINNESOTA CREWS REMOVE ROUGH FISH FROM THE STATE'S LAKES UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION.

What is true of shrimp is also true of halibut to a lesser degree. From 1943, when 58 percent of the halibut receipts arrived fresh, frozen receipts have gained steadily and in 1948 made up 92 percent of the total halibut arrivals.

Although the total was not impressive, there was an increased amount of frozen halibut arriving as fillets and steaks during 1948. This method of handling part of the catch is comparatively new, with the processing being done at the initial landing point. Dealers are unanimous in declaring fresh halibut will never again be an important factor in this market.

Continuing the trend which started to take shape in 1945, frozen receipts of other species, such as, cod, haddock, rosefish fillets, and whiting, have almost totally displaced the fresh on the Chicago market. In 1948, fresh receipts of these species were negligible, and consisted almost entirely of fresh fillets.



BOILING NETS TO REMOVE SLIME AT NAUBINWAY, MICH.

The year 1948 also saw the appearance of more fishery items in small or consumer-size packages. Some of these were 12-ounce, some 10-ounce, but the bulk was one-pound packages. All of these packages were designed to provide a convenient portion for family use. Frozen fillets, shrimp, scallops, spiny lobster tails, and crab meat were the leading items merchandized in consumer-size packages in this area. However, frozen salmon loaf, shrimp Creole, fish and chips, and others were also of some importance.

The concerted movement to increase the attractiveness of the packages, which started in 1946, progressed to a point in 1948 where fishery products were appearing in more stores and in deep-freeze cabinets. Alongside fruits and vegetables, the attractive packages were convenient, moderate in price, and contained instructions for cooking on the wrapper. This method of merchandising is definitely overcoming the average housewife's reluctance to make use of fishery products.

There was a growing tendency among some of the local dealers to cover some distant areas with refrigerated trucks, basing at important points in their territory and carrying a full line of frozen and processed fishery products, permitting instant deliveries to the small stores on the route. As a definite weekly schedule is maintained, in some cases biweekly, this method of merchandising allows the retailer to inspect the purchases before buying, and allows limited purchasing to fit estimated needs.



WASHING NETS AT ROGERS CITY, MICH. IN BACKGROUND (RIGHT) IS A TYPICAL NEW-TYPE GREAT LAKES COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL.

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