

FISHING THE NORTH ATLANTIC

SHOW:
CALTAPEX NATIONAL
Sept 2-4, 2022

For millennia, fishing the North Atlantic Ocean has provided the peoples of Europe and North America with a ready food supply. Not only can a person make a livelihood in fishing, but fishing itself is a commercial backbone of so many coastal nations that one can only refer to them as 'fishing nations'.

This exhibit shows the development of the modern commercial fishing industry in the North Atlantic, from its beginnings in prehistoric, Medieval and early mercantile Europe, through the era of European exploration and settlement of the east coast of North America, and up to the present day. Types of fishing vessels, the varieties of the fish catch, various fishing methods, developments in fish processing, and the lives of fishermen are also included within its thematic treatment.

This is not a thematic exhibit, as it breaks with too many of the thematic exhibiting conventions. However, there is a clear thematic treatment and development. Not only does it break Thematic rules by including corner cards, illustrated mail, picture post cards, and Cinderella (poster) stamps - items deemed 'inappropriate' for inclusion in traditionally-defined Thematic exhibits - it also breaks with the thematic convention of including only one example of a common design issue to illustrate a thematic point.

Nor is this a Display exhibit, as no ephemeral material, non-philatelic, has been included in the exhibit. The closest it seems to come to is as an 'Experimental' exhibit (formerly 'Special Studies' and also FIP 'Open Class') as it includes philatelic and para-philatelic items, and thus a combination of elements, from the list of conventional exhibit types (i.e., Illustrated Mail, Picture Post Cards and Cinderella material are legitimate exhibit types in their own right). I prefer to think of this as a 'hybrid' or 'freestyle' exhibit. Judges more used to the older traditional classes may however find this exhibit difficult to evaluate.

Why include 'inappropriate' items?

It is the opinion of the exhibitor that *such items can and should* be shown to effect in our exhibits.

The exhibit's purpose is to give a more philatelically complete presentation on the topic 'Fishing the North Atlantic' than could be accomplished within traditional thematic guidelines and expectations. The challenge here has been to select as many as possible philatelic items; to supplement these items with other para-philatelic elements to enhance visual interest yet with observing the primacy of philatelic items over para-philatelic items on each page; and to tie this all up within a thematic story line.



Longlining for cod off Iceland



All the necessary ingredients: a fisherman, fishing schooner, coastal boat, trawler, dory, and a cod fish.

EXHIBIT PLAN

1. Early European Fisheries
2. European Fishermen in North America
3. North American Fisheries
4. The Fish Catch
5. Fishing Methods
6. Fishing Vessels
7. The Fishing Industry
8. Fish Processing
9. The People
10. Religion and Philanthropy
11. Fisheries in Crisis

What you should expect to see:

Postal Issues

Postal issues have been selected only from those countries or postal authorities that have an active fishing industry. Pre-production and souvenir material from France or St. Pierre and Miquelon has been kept to a minimum. Instead, as often as not, to load on both difficulty of acquisition and philatelic knowledge, some fuller definitive series are occasionally shown to give a greater illustration of the importance a country has placed on its fishing industry.

The postal issues shown include a reasonably representative display of all postage stamps issued by each fishing nation in recognition of its fishing industry. Care has been taken to select only representative examples of postal stationery, given that the size of the exhibit could then easily exceed the maximum of 10 frames permitted.

Picture Post Cards

Picture post cards, where included, have been selected primarily from the 'Golden Age' (i.e., ~1900-1915), and from as wide a range of fishing nations as possible. Thus there will be seen uncommon cards from smaller entities like Iceland, Newfoundland, the Faroe Islands, and St. Pierre and Miquelon (all which will be appreciated for their relative difficulty of acquisition) as well as cards from larger countries like Norway, Germany, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Canada and the United States, where more numerous exemplars can be found. A conscious effort was made to ensure French and British postcards would not be over-represented. As well, as picture post cards can overwhelm other items on display on a page, only one or occasionally two cards are shown per page, and only as a supplement to the philatelic material. Finally, the selected picture post cards show a direct *topical* link to the topic of discussion on each page. This has necessitated a concerted and lengthy search for such directly-related cards.

Illustrated Mail

Illustrated mail is an important area within which to show the products and services of the fishing industry. Most of the illustrated mail shown also comes from an earlier period of commercial and business mail. Illustrated mail from the late 1800's and early 1900's shows the great skill of the engraver's or photo-lithographer's art and is often very visually attractive in comparison to more modern examples of business mail.

Illustrated mail is more commonly encountered on North American business mail, and less so on business mail of Great Britain or of continental Europe. Nevertheless, great effort has been made to ensure the latter two areas are well represented.

Rarity of illustrated mail has often gone unrecognized as remaining examples are rarely surveyed in a census. As well, the scarcity of illustrated permit mail is underappreciated, several of which are shown in the exhibit. Retail pricing has guided, however imperfectly, my indication of rarity for these items.

Cinderella Stamps

Cinderella and poster stamps provide another adjunct to illustrating the "fishing" topic. Although different entities and or-

ganizations have issued them since at least the early 1900's, fishing-related poster stamps are, in the exhibitor's opinion, much less common than one might imagine. With limited printings and short-lived periods of use, there is a challenge factor behind their inclusion in the exhibit. Again, they have only been used to supplement the philatelic material.

Significant Items

- 1817 London "Two-Penny Postage" folded letter
- 1846 "Newfoundland" postmarked folded letter, discussing fishing
- 1859 "Isles Saint Pierre and Miquelon" postmarked cover
- 1859 Canada 17-cents Cartier, with plate proofs
- Circa 1862 US all-over illustrated mail, Cod Liver Oil, Blackjack stamp
- 1870 US cover, illustrated mail from a fish dealer, Boston
- 1883 British cover - "Fisheries Exhibition" postmark
- 1889 British postal wrapper, with added hand-stamped Illustrated advertising for lobster and salmon products
- 1897 Newfoundland die proof - Seal of the Colony value (Fisherman and Britannia)
- 1900 French cover, illustrated mail depicting a fishing schooner, Boulogne sur Mer
- Circa 1900 US Illustrated mailing permit, depicting long-lining, Gloucester MA
- 1954 Canadian Crash Cover, with illustrated postal meter "Eat More Fish" (Canada's worst airplane disaster)

In addition, there are philatelic studies of the 1865-1896 2-cents codfish issues of Newfoundland, the 1932, 1937 and 1941 "Codfish - Newfoundland Currency" one-cent stamps, and the Faroe Islands 1935 "Spis Faroesk Klipfisk" postmarks, among others.

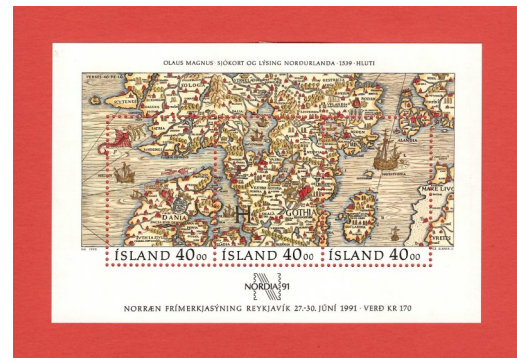
Selected References

- Kurlansky, M., (1997) *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.
- *Encyclopedia and Forum*, shipstamps.co.uk/ (for the identification of fishing vessels depicted on stamps).
- "The English Fishery and Trade in the 18th Century" *Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador*, www.heritage.nf.ca/.
- Piercey, D.J., "Rethinking Thematic Exhibits", *The Philatelic Exhibitor*, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp.26-31, 2021.

Scope of Topics covered in the Exhibit

Early European Fisheries

The earliest commercial fisheries in northern Europe concentrated on both herring, at the time the most commercially important fish, and cod, which became a staple food fish due to the Church's admonition to refrain from eating meat on over 130 days of the calendar. Herring was plentiful throughout the Baltic Sea area, while cod was fished primarily in the North Sea. Between 1200 and 1700 A.D. various nations, city states and commercial alliances all competed in the lucrative fisheries market to supply Catholic Europe.



Trade ships, often the Portuguese-developed caravels, ranged all over northern European waters to import and distribute their fishery products.

The Fish Catch

Cod has historically been the most important fish of the North Atlantic fisheries. It has been a staple in the diet of many Europeans since before the Middle Ages. The development of the cod fisheries are tied up inextricably with the development of mercantilism, and with the emergence of many North Atlantic fishing nations. As well, colonization and settlement in northern Europe and the east coast of North America was significantly influenced by the proximity of the rich fishing banks and cod stocks on the adjacent continental shelves offshore.

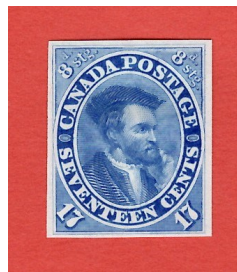


The World's first stamp depicting a fish
1865 American Bank Note Company plate proof ex: ABNC Archives

European Fishermen in North America



In 1497, John Cabot, an Italian sailing under English colours, made the first undisputed landfall in North America, probably Newfoundland. He wrote "the sea is swarming with fish which can be taken not only with the net, but in baskets let down with a stone".



French claims to fishing rights in North America date from the 1534-36 voyages of Jacques Cartier when he laid claim on behalf of France to much of the eastern coastline of what became Canada.

Fishing Vessels

The French call their high seas fishery "la Grande Pêche". For at least four centuries the French have sent schooners and other vessels to fish, particularly for cod, of the east coast of Canada, and also to distant waters off Iceland.



From the time of the Vikings, various wooden boats have been ubiquitous in the prosecution of the fishery in the North Sea, the North Atlantic off Norway and Iceland, and into the Baltic Sea. These boats are characterized by their clinker construction, where the edges of hull planks overlap each other.

Fishing Methods

Hooks and lines are one of the earliest methods of fish capture, and are still utilized among the fishing nations. Fishing hooks are surprisingly sophisticated, and they can be suspended at greater depths underwater to lure and capture fish.



Mailing permit, Gloucester MA, drawn by H.W. Spencer (1870-1941), local civil engineer and draughtsman

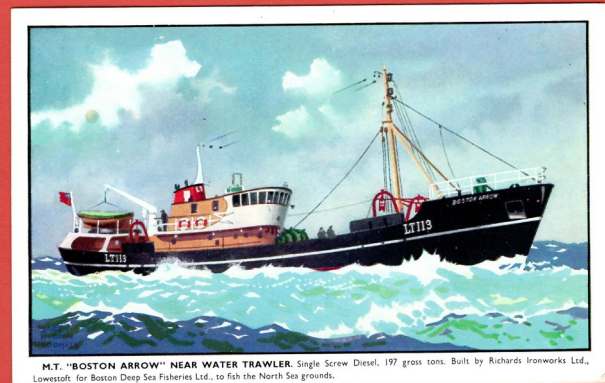
Whether from the shore, or in small boats, or farther out to sea, nets are perhaps the most prevalent method used today in fish capture.

Trawlers and Factory Ships

Fishing steamers were introduced by the British during the 1870's. Being more efficient in catching and transporting the fish catch back to home ports, they gradually replaced sailing ships as the principal deep sea fishing vessel of all the European fishing nations.

Gradually, larger ships were built and with more powerful steam, and later diesel, engines, large trawler fleets soon began to fish the North Atlantic.

Nowadays, Many of the more modern trawlers process and refrigerate their catch directly on board, reducing or even eliminating the need for shore processing facilities.

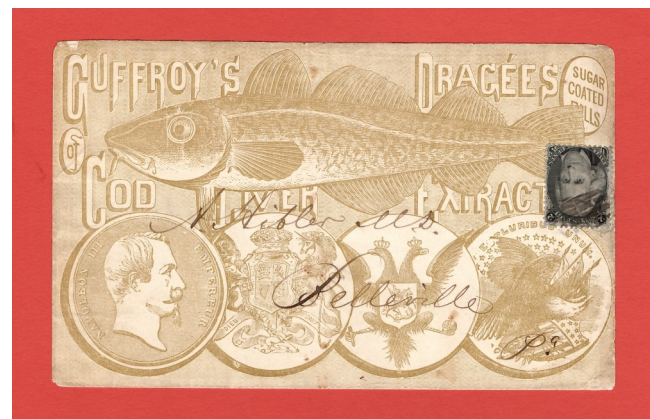


Marketing and Advertising

North Atlantic fisheries products are sold and marketed both locally and internationally. Fortunately for philatelists, vehicles for commercial advertising have extended onto various forms of postal products as well.

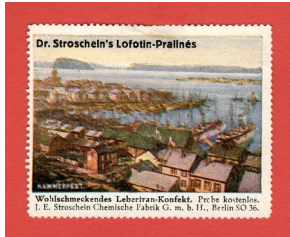


1889 British postal wrapper, with privately added illustrated advertising for lobster and salmon.



Circa 1862 US all-over illustrated envelope, Guffroy's Dragees Cod Liver Extract.

The Fishing Industry



Cinderella stamp: The Harbour at Hammerfest Norway, gateway to the Lofoten fishing grounds.

The harbour provides a secure anchorage and a home base for the inshore and the deep sea fishing fleets. A variety of fishing vessels may thus be found in various fishing ports. The harbour also provides the fish docks - an area to unload, sort and weigh the fish catch, and often also with areas to immediately process and warehouse the catch. A fish market is also often part of the busy harbor scene. It is a commercial area near the docks where the fresh fish is brought by the fishermen and sold to the fish wholesalers or to the general public.



Fish Market B.O. Hull 1887, on GB 5sh (white paper) of 1883.

Fish Processing



*Picture Post Card: Filleting cod on the docks in Portland ME
Publisher: The Hugh C. Layton Co., Portland.*



Historically, filleted and dried codfish was a staple throughout Europe up to the present era. Later, with the advent of flash freezing techniques, 'fish sticks' are now a staple food product.

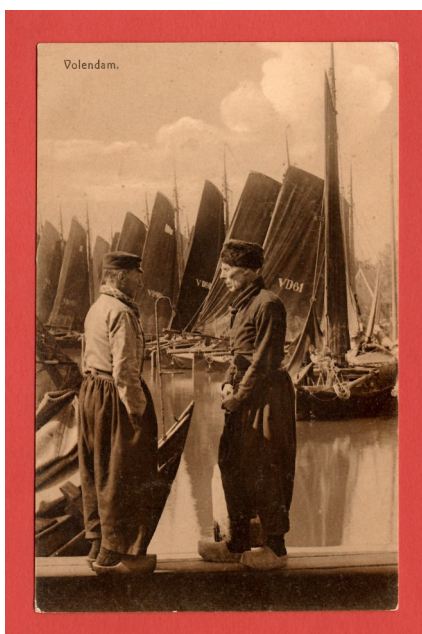
Advertising poster stamp: "Eat Faroe dried codfish-The very best in the world"



Illustrated postal meter: "Tasty Loins" - an early fish stick product

The People

The fisherman is the central character of the fishing industry. It is his skill, persistence, and labour that determines the livelihood of himself and his family and whether the fishing industry itself survives or prospers.



*In the harbour at Volendam, Holland
Publisher: Knackstedt and Nölher, Hamburg*



German poster stamp: "Day of the Deep Sea Fishermen", Bremerhaven 1955.



Religion and Philanthropy

Fishermen are said to be, by their nature and their hard life, deeply religious people.



Religious and philanthropic groups in many fishing nations established charitable services to minister to the needs of fishermen, even providing hospital ships and overseas missions to the fishing fleets while they were away at sea.



Illustrated envelope: Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen

Post card, Cinderella label and pictorial cancel: Société des Oeuvres de Mer hospital ship Le Saint-Yves.



Fisheries in Crisis

Probably as a result of overfishing by large factory fleets and the indiscriminate catching of undersized fish, along with increased ocean pollution, annual catches of traditional stocks are continuing to decline significantly, and both the inshore and off-shore North Atlantic fisheries are in retrenchment.



ICES commemorative stamp and first day cancel

Despite the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) guidelines recommended by the International Council on the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), every North Atlantic fishing nation still regularly violates its TAC agreements. The long-term consequences of such overfishing, compounded by rogue and pirate fishing by other nations in otherwise territorial waters, along with gradual industrial pollution of coastal water ecosystems has resulted in the current fisheries crisis. Are we now nearing the end of a sustainable North Atlantic fishery?