Some Historical Records of Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) in the Upper Midwest

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The Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) is a large and distinctive fish. Its spawning migrations take it into areas where it is easily observed (Fig. 1), and it was an important source of food for Native Americans during the time of European exploration and settlement. Moreover, it would have been easily identifiable as a sturgeon to anyone familiar with any of its relatives in Europe or along the Atlantic coast of North America. It is not surprising, therefore, that early European explorers, missionaries and traders provided many accounts that can be reliably attributed to this species. For example, reports by Jesuit missionaries of Native American use of sturgeon in the Great Lakes during the 1600s and early 1700s have been discussed by Beck (1995). Some historical accounts have been incorporated into the Lake Sturgeon literature (Harkness and Dymond, 1961; Holzkamm and Waisberg, 2004), and some are discussed in books on regional fish faunas or natural history (e.g., Bates, 2001).

The purpose of this note is to discuss some historical references to Lake Sturgeon in the upper Midwest that, to my knowledge, have not been cited in previous papers or accounts devoted to this species. These include mentions of sturgeon in the diaries of four individuals associated with the early fur trade (Gates, 1965) and newspaper accounts of sturgeon caught by commercial fishermen and anglers. I am currently involved in an attempt to detail the original geographic range of the Lake Sturgeon in the Lake Michigan basin (Cochran and Elliott, 2003). Part of this effort involves searching microfilm of old newspapers in towns along tributary rivers for accounts of sturgeon caught by anglers and commercial fishers, primarily in the latter half of the 1800s and the early 1900s. Newspaper records from the Lake Michigan basin will be presented elsewhere, but those for the Mississippi River drainage will be presented here. Additional newspaper records were obtained by taking advantage of the Winona Newspaper Project, a Web site that permits electronic searches of newspapers published during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Winona, Minnesota (www.winona.edu/library/databases/winonanewspapers.htm).

In the accounts that follow, I have quoted the authors as their writings have appeared with original spelling, grammar and punctuation (or lack thereof). In some cases, the dates of birth or death may be approximate. A table of common and scientific names of fishes is also provided (Table 1).

Peter Pond

Peter Pond (1740-1807) was a native of Connecticut known primarily for his role in the exploration and fur trade of western and northwestern Canada, but he also explored and traded in the Upper Mississippi River drainage. His narrative of his experiences in the latter region in the early 1770s, reproduced with supplemental biographical information by Gates (1965), included an account of his entry into the area via an old, traditional route—from the Straits of Mackinac through northern Lake Michigan into Green Bay, then up the Fox River to the point where a portage was made to the Wisconsin River, then down the Wisconsin to the Mississippi River. In a passage on the fish of the Mackinac region, Pond stated:

Fig. 1.
Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) in the tailwaters of the De Pere dam on the lower Fox River, approximately 12 km upstream from Green Bay of Lake Michigan, Brown County, Wisconsin. The tailwaters are situated just upstream from the Claude Allouez Bridge, named for the Jesuit missionary who on April 17, 1670 recorded that Lake Sturgeon were harvested by Native Americans from the rapids that formerly occupied this site: "*From one side of the river to the other, they made a barricade, planting great stakes, two fathoms from the water, in such a manner that there is as it were, a bridge above, for the fishers who by the aid of a little bow-net easily take sturgeons and all other kinds of fish which this weir stops, although the water does not cease to flow between the stakes.*" Photograph by Colleen Martin.

> [T]his lake or Strate abounds in all sorts of fine fish I have Wade a trout taken By Mr Campo with a Hoock & lind under the Ice in March Sixtey Six Pounds wait I was Present the water was fifteen fatham Deape; the white fish are another Exqiuseat fine fish thay will way from 2½ to 9 & 10 pound wt . . . the Sturge[on] are the Best in these Lakes & the Harens Exsead in flaver the waters are transparent and fine (Gates 1965, pp. 32-33).

Lafayette H. Bunnell, M.D.

Lafayette H. Bunnell was born in New York in 1824. He moved to Detroit in 1832 and from Detroit to Trempealeau, Wisconsin, on the Mississippi River between LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and Winona, Minnesota, in 1842. The latter trip took him along roughly the same old route taken by Pond 70 years earlier, but he lingered for a time around Little Bay du Noquet (now Little Bay du Noc) near the present site of Escanaba, Michigan. In a reminiscence of this area (Bunnell, 1897, p. 177), he wrote:

> [T]he herring could be seen like clouds passing over the water, and after a gale that swept into the bay, wall-eyed pike lined the shore under the lee of the point in such numbers that in crowding, their backs showed above the water, like salmon going over riffles. The sturgeon were also very numerous on the bars of the bay, in the season of their spawning, as we were informed by the Indians, and large quantities were cured by them with smoke and heat.

John Macdonnell

John Macdonnell (1768-1850) was born in Scotland but his family moved first to New York and then to Canada. A portion of his diary was reproduced with supplemental biographical information by Gates (1965) and covers the

beginning of his career as a clerk with the Northwest Company. In 1793 he traveled to Fort Espérance on the Qu'appelle River, a tributary to the Assiniboine River in the Red River drainage (Lake Winnipeg basin of the Hudson Bay drainage). Of the Assiniboine River he wrote on October 8:

> The River is stocked with the following fish viz—Sturgeons which ascends it to spawn in the spring of the year, Breams, suckers or carpes, Pike, Doré, Cat fish or Barbue, Mullets, *Mâe Achigan* called by the Men Mâle Achigan and Nacaishe. The men call these latter Lacaiche, and they abound in some places to the degree that I caught a score of them with a hook while the canoes stopped to smoke their pipes (Gates 1965, p. 116).

Hugh Faries

The probable author of the diary reproduced in Gates (1965) was employed by the Northwest Company at the Rainy Lake post, a large fort on the north side of the Rainy River below the outlet of Rainy Lake (Hudson Bay drainage). I have excerpted below only comments concerning sturgeon. However, note that at the same time that some men were being sent to catch sturgeon, others were being sent after whitefish.

> August 30, 1804 – "Old Godin came in the evening for provisions. he told us there was plenty of Sturgeon below. Mailloux went down with a Seine to try whether he could catch any."
>
> August 31, 1804 – "Mailloux return'd today but caught no Sturgeon."
>
> October 4, 1804 – "we went as far [down the Rainy River] as the Big Forks [Big Fork River], where we found Mailloux. we slept there. he had caught 3 sturgeons to day."
>
> October 5, 1804 – "Mailloux caught 5 Sturgeons this morning. we took 8 in our canoe, and arrived at the fort after dark."
>
> October 10, 1804 – "La France Coutu and the 2 Iroquois went for wood below, and took the Seine with them."
>
> October 11, 1804 – "La France & the 3 men, arrived with a load of wood & Hay, but no Sturgeon."
>
> October 15, 1804 – "The Seines got ready to go a Seining tomorrow."
>
> October 16, 1804 – "Mailloux La France & 2 Iroquois set off at ½ past one oclock A.M. to go a Seining . . ."
>
> October 18, 1804 – "Vaillant & Coutu went down to the Seines for Sturgeon."
>
> October 19, 1804 – "In the evening Vaillant and Coutu return'd with 16lb Sturgeons."
>
> October 24, 1804 – "Boulanger & Vaillant went down for Sturgeon."
>
> October 26, 1804 – "In the afternoon Boulanger and Vaillant, arrived. they brought 15 Sturgeons and a few small fishes."
>
> November 9, 1804 – "I sent 2 men down for Sturgeon . . . [In the evening] The Seiners came home with 50 Sturgeons. The men who went off this morning, met them (at the little Forks . . ."
>
> April 18, 1805 – "I sent Mailloux & Coutu down to the Seiners. the former is to stay there a few days to Seine . . . In the evening, Mr Lacombe's wife arrived from below making sugar. She brought me 2 Small Sturgeons, that the Seiners sent me by her. they are the first that we got from them since they left this."
>
> April 19, 1805 – "In the evening Mailloux & Coutu arrived with 14 Sturgeons."
>
> April 23, 1805 – "Jourdain arrived with 9 Sturgeons."
>
> April 24, 1805 – "Jourdain set off again to the Seine."
>
> April 28, 1805 – "About 12 oclock arrived one of the Sainers with 7 Sturgeons."
>
> April 29, 1805 – "The Sainer set off. I sent old Azure with him to fetch the horses up . . . In the evening Azure return'd without the horses. Grenier brot us 10 Sturgeons."
>
> April 30, 1805 – "Grênier set off again to the little Forks with the Sainers."
>
> May 2, 1805 – "One of the X. y. Men arrived from the little Forks with sturgeon. he brought Six for us."
>
> May 6, 1805 – "I sent Mailloux & Azure to the Saine, in place of the other Sainers."
>
> May 8, 1805 – "I sent 2 men to the Little Forks for Sturgeons. they return'd in the evening with 16."
>
> May 9, 1805 – "at 10 oclock, we embark'd on our way home, at the Little Forks, en passant we got 18 Sturgeons from the Sainers."
>
> May 13, 1805 – "The Sainers brought 40 Sturgeons."

Thomas Connor

Thomas Connor was an employee of the Northwest Company. His diary, reproduced in Gates (1965), was written during the winter of 1804-1805, when Connor established winter quarters and a trading post along the Snake River near Cross Lake in Minnesota (St. Croix River drainage). Despite

Table 1. Probable modern equivalents of fish names mentioned in the historical accounts. The equivalents for such terms as "catfish" or "trout" are less definite in the Mississippi River drainage than for the Great Lakes or Hudson Bay drainages. Some of the French names were listed by Scott and Crossman (1973).

	Modern Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Sturgeon, rock sturgeon	Lake Sturgeon	*Acipenser fulvescens*
Shovel nose	Shovelnose Sturgeon	*Scaphirhynchus platorynchus*
Nacaishe (lacaiche)	Goldeye	*Hiodon tergisus*
Suckers (carpes) Mullets	suckers, redhore or Quillback or *Carpiodes cyprinus*	*Catostomus* spp., *Moxostoma* spp.
Buffalo	buffalo fish	*Ictiobus* spp.
Piconoes (piconou)	Shorthead Redhorse	*Moxostoma macrolepidotum*
Cat fish (barbue)	Channel Catfish	*Ictalurus punctatus*
Pike	Northern Pike	*Esox lucius*
White fish	Lake Whitefish	*Coregonus clupeaformis*
Harens	herring	*Coregonus* spp.
Trout	Lake Trout (in Great Lakes)	*Salvelinus namaycush*
Rock bass	Rock Bass	*Ambloplites rupestris*
Bream	Bluegill	*Lepomis macrochirus*
Sun fish	sunfish	*Lepomis* spp.
Black bass	Largemouth Bass or Smallmouth Bass	*Micropterus salmoides* or *M. dolomieu*
Doré Wall-eyed pike	Walleye	*Sander vitreus*
Pickerel	Walleye, Sauger or Northern Pike	*Sander vitreus, S. canadensis* or *Esox lucius*
Mâe achigan (Mâle achigan)	Freshwater Drum	*Aplodinotus grunniens*

Connor's lack of specificity in most references to the fish caught by his men, the following excerpts suggest that two types of net were set for fish and that one of them was referred to as a "sturgeon net." At least one sturgeon was captured.

October 9, 1804 – "Orderd the Sturgeon Net in the Water."

October 10, 1804 – "took a Pike of 37lb Weight in our Net the largest I ever yet saw."

October 17, 1804 – "took 3 large Piconoes in our Net."

October 18, 1804 – "took one Sturgeon & 3 piconoes in our Net."

March 15, 1805 – "this Afternoon Messrs Bellaux Seraphim & one of my Men put a Net under the Ice."

March 16, 1805 – "took a Pike of 10 lb in the Net set Yesterday."

March 17, 1805 – "fishermen took a Small Carp in the Net which was greatly injured by floating trees. they took it up & this afternoon set a new one."

March 18, 1805 – "A Mild Day with a Considerable thaw. Cloudy weather. fishermen found their Net broke in half. of Course no fish."

March 19, 1805 – "A Rainy unpleasant Day Wind N E. Hail & Snow at intervals. sent one of my Men with a Canoe to set a Net where the river is free from Ice. he returnd without Success."

March 25, 1805 – "Men set a Net."

March 26, 1805 – "took a small Pike & a Pickerel in the Net."

March 27, 1805 – "2 Small fish in our Net."

March 29, 1805 – "Men took no fish in their Nets."

March 30, 1805 – "fishermen took a pike in their Nets."

April 2, 1805 – "not a single Fish in the Nets this evening. Orderd the Sturgeon Net in the Water."

April 3, 1805 – "no fish in the Nets."

April 8, 1805 – "no fish in our Nets."

April 9, 1805 – "no fish in our Nets."

April 10, 1805 – "no fish in our Nets."

April 11, 1805 – "no Fish in the Nets."

April 12, 1805 – "took 3 fish in our Nets."

April 13, 1805 – "2 fish in our Nets."

April 15, 1805 – "took 4 fish in the Nets."

Fig. 2.
The Mississippi River at the site used by commercial fisherman Lee Wallett of Warsaw, Hancock County, Illinois, sometime between the construction of the Keokuk Dam in 1913 and his death in 1935. This photograph was supplied by Wallett's great nephew, Mr. Eldon Launer.

Sturgeon persisted in the Snake River system into the 20th century. As of 1939, they were thought by Eddy and Surber (1947) to be increasing in the Snake, Cross, and Kettle rivers and in Pokegama Lake, due to protective laws. The same authors also reported that hundreds of spawning-run sturgeon in May and early June moved from the St. Croix River up the Snake River and aggregated below the dam at Cross Lake.

Miscellaneous Reports from the Upper Mississippi River Drainage

Much information on the history of Lake Sturgeon in the Upper Mississippi River, including accounts by early explorers and consideration of both commercial and recreational fishing, was provided by Carlander (1954). Historical accounts of sturgeon in the Upper Mississippi River must be interpreted with caution because both Lake Sturgeon and Shovelnose Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus platorynchus*) occur in parts of the river and its major tributaries. This was understood by the late 1800s. For example, of sturgeon in the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Winona, Minnesota, Bunnell (1897, pp. 320-321) wrote:

> I know but two species of the genus *acipenser* in the waters of the Mississippi, the rock sturgeon and the shovelnose. Both fish are eaten by some, but the rock sturgeon are generally preferred. Neither species are, however, equal to those of the Hudson river, known in olden times as "Albany beef," or those of the Great Lakes. The sturgeon of the Columbia river seem to be another species, with much coarser meat. It has been dried and imposed upon some grocers as dried halibut, but the imposition was soon detected. The roe of the sturgeon is manufactured into *caviare*, and it becomes, in the process, almost as fragrant as Limburger cheese.

To this day, commercial fishers in the Winona area still refer to Lake Sturgeon as "rock sturgeon." Much like the sturgeon of the Columbia River referred to by Bunnell

(1897), Lake Sturgeon in the late 1800s were smoked and sold as a substitute for halibut (Harkness and Dymond, 1961). For example, those caught in pound nets in Lake Michigan off St. Joseph, Michigan, were "shipped to Chicago where they bring good prices and are converted into delicious smoked 'halibut' which is sold in groceries" (*St. Joseph Herald & Traveler*, April 29, 1881). Bunnell's (1897) seemingly unenthusiastic opinion of local sturgeon as food may have been shaped by an event reported in the *Winona Daily Republican* 10 years earlier. On June 13, it was reported:

> Some thirty or forty people at Rochester were taken quite seriously ill on Friday with symptoms indicating poisoning. By prompt medical attention they were saved from any serious consequences. An examination as to the cause of the trouble revealed the fact that they had been eating smoked sturgeon. It is of the opinion of the physician, we understand, that the fish must have been improperly cured. The fish came from Lake Pepin and was shipped up the Midland Narrow Guage [*sic*] railroad, being distributed among the local dealers along the way. Conductor McGuane, of the Winona and St. Peter road, and a few other train men were among the sufferers.

Two days later in Rochester:

> The cases of poisoning from eating smoked sturgeon multiply. Many cases developed nearly 48 hours after the first was eaten, and it is believed that fully one hundred persons in this city are more or less ill, although most of them are convalescing . . . No effort has yet been made to arrest the merchant who supplied the fish . . .The matter will be handed over to the State board of health.

Finally, on June 29:

> A test suit is about to be brought against A.W. Pingree, the merchant of the smoked sturgeon which were eaten in this vicinity last week with such unpleasant results. The victims numbered over one hundred, and a few are still ill with cramps and blood poisoning. It is alleged that the merchant knew of the imperfect condition of the curing of the fish and sold it nevertheless. If the first suit for damages succeeds, others will follow.

It is not clear from these accounts whether the tainted sturgeon from Lake Pepin were Lake Sturgeon or Shovelnose Sturgeon. Similarly, H. R. Schoolcraft observed in 1820 that a Sioux village near the present site of Red Wing, Minnesota, subsisted primarily on sturgeon from Lake Pepin (Mossman, 1993), but he did not indicate if one species was more important.

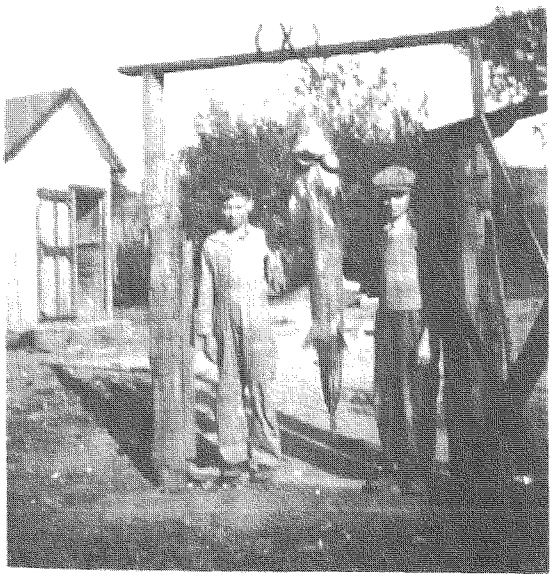
Fig. 3 (right).
Lake Sturgeon caught in the Mississippi River by commercial fisherman Lee Wallett of Warsaw, Hancock County, Illinois, sometime between the completion of the Keokuk Dam in 1913 and his death in 1935. The rapids that were submerged by this dam may have been important spawning habitat for sturgeon. These photographs, which may have been of the same fish, were supplied by Wallett's great nephew, Mr. Eldon Launer. Note the protracted mouth in the photographs on the left and the Flathead Catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*) in the lower right photograph.

The following accounts are from the *Winona Daily Republican* unless otherwise specified. The identity of the sturgeon species captured can sometimes be interpreted from the sizes reported (Lake Sturgeon attain a much larger size than Shovelnose Sturgeon). In cases where large numbers of sturgeon were caught by angling, I suspect that Shovelnose Sturgeon were involved.

> May 13, 1856 (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*) – "STURGEON. – They are having great times a[t] the [Wisconsin] Dells [on the Wisconsin River] now, catching sturgeon. They tie the end of the spear cord to a bush or tree, throw the harpoon into the fish, and safely lead him in. They are from three feet to five in length, and weigh from 25 to 75 pounds. We saw a man dragging one across the bridge, one day last week, that he said would weigh 70 pounds; and in another place we saw a number nearly as large, piled up like cord-wood. Sturgeon seem most plenty, but pickerel, bass, buffalo, red-horse, cat-fish, &c., are caught. – *Newport Mirror.*"

> June 28, 1858 (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*) – "LARGE FISH – ITS SINGULAR CAPTURE. – A large Sturgeon was captured last Thursday at Maxwell's dam, near this village, by one of our citizens, named George Brown, in a most singular manner. Having seen the fish from the bank, and being unprovided with either line or net, he despatched a boy in search of something with which to secure the prize, while he remained to watch him. The Sturgeon happened to approach the bank during the messenger's absence, Brown suddenly gave him a blow on the head with a stick, and on the moment jumped into the water waist deep, raised the fish's head out hugging him close, and, after a close tussel in which he was once thrown, made his way out of the river with his prey, longer than himself. The fish, which was no doubt slightly astonished at the mode of capturing whales practiced in Baraboo, weighs *forty-nine pounds*. Though not so large as the one captured in Reedsburg a few weeks since, which weighed *sixty pounds*, it is, considering the manner of its conquest, fully as remarkable. – *Baraboo Republic.*"

McPhee (2002, pp. 83-84) noted that Wisconsin removed the Wonewoc Dam on the Baraboo River in 1996, and that



"Baraboo" was once "barabeau," meaning "sturgeon." Since then three additional dams on the Baraboo River have been removed, and sturgeon once again have ready access to the formerly impounded reaches.

> July 7, 1875 (*Green Bay Daily State Gazette*) – "A skin of a sturgeon, caught by the surveyors of the St. Croix canal route, is on display at Stillwater. The fish weighed 200 pounds, was seven feet in length and 42 inches in circumference."

An angler's account of catching a Lake Sturgeon on the modern St. Croix River was recently published (Capecchi, 2006).

> April 25, 1879 (*Kewaunee Enterprise*) – "A sturgeon about 4 feet long, weighing 35 pounds, was caught in the Chippewa by some boys on Thursday."

This story was repeated the next day in the *De Pere News* and the *Oconto County Reporter*. Egan (1996, pp. 8-10) reminisced about catching a sturgeon from the Chippewa River at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, as a boy during the Great Depression. From his description ("three and a half feet," "spiny back," "sharply pointed head"), it may have been a Shovelnose.

> December 28, 1881 – "The largest catch of fish ever made in the Mississippi at this point was that of Martes & Cook with their nets on Tuesday. The aggregate was two thousand pounds and included pickerel, pike, rock bass, black bass, sturgeon, Buffalo, and sun fish. Some of the sturgeon weigh thirty pounds each. Go down to the market on the levee and see them. They are beauties."

> May 1, 1883 – "Mr. G. McGilvray, of Trempealeau [located on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River between Winona, Minnesota, and Lacrosse, Wisconsin], captured a sturgeon weighing fifty pounds dressed."

> October 31, 1885 (*De Pere News*) – "[Wisconsin State News] A sturgeon weighing sixty-five pounds was speared in Black River, near Onalaska."

Lake Sturgeon remains have been recovered from several Oneota (800-400 years before present) sites in the vicinity of the Black and Mississippi rivers near LaCrosse (Theler, 2000), and they are still occasionally captured in the Black River (Fig. 4).

> July 21, 1887 – A group of sportsmen on an excursion by boat from Winona to the Saint Croix River reported, "The second day out we made our best catch of fish, although every day we have made catches nearly as good. In two hours fishing we caught ninety-seven catfish, twenty-six bass, one hundred and fourteen trout, forty-eight sturgeon and fifty-six pickerel, making a total of three hundred and forty-one fish, or twenty-eight and five-sixths of a fish every five minutes. We have already more than paid the expenses of our trip by selling the fish we did'nt [*sic*] need from day to day."

> May 2, 1889 – "A New Ulm fisherman caught 1,000 pounds of sturgeon [possibly Shovelnose] in the Minnesota river at one haul of the net."

> May 20, 1891 (*The Racine Journal*) – "A sturgeon has been caught in the Namakagon River [tributary to the St. Croix River in northwest Wisconsin] that was 5 feet and 7 inches long and weighed 82 pounds."

> February 13, 1908 – "A monster rock sturgeon weighing 80 pounds and measuring 5 feet 10 inches from tip to tip was caught in the hoop net of W.H. Keene at Onalaska Wednesday afternoon and landed safely after considerable exertion."

> September 24, 1908 – "A party of local fishermen . . . caught a sixteen pound shovel nose sturgeon in Trempealeau bay last Sunday. The monstrous fish measured fifty-one inches and it is reported that the fishermen experienced great difficulty in landing their prize."

General Discussion

It is well known that Native Americans used Lake Sturgeon extensively (Beck, 1995; Holzkamm et al., 1988; Holzkamm and Waisberg, 2004; Martin and Brashler, 2002 and references therein). However, it would be easy to get the impression from casual reading that Lake Sturgeon were not targeted by those of European descent until the latter half of the 19th century. The phrase "piled on shore like cordwood" has been used repeatedly to describe how 19th century commercial fishermen discarded the large fish that ripped their nets (e.g., Harkness and Dymond, 1961; Scott and Crossman, 1973) prior to the time when a growing appetite for caviar and sturgeon meat could be fed by improved technology for processing these products and transporting them to market.

Some historical analyses, however, have bridged the gap between the early observations of Native American harvest of Lake Sturgeon in the late 1600s and the overexploitation of most stocks in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Tower, 1909). Goodier (1984) discussed sturgeon harvest associated with 19th century trading posts on the north shore of Lake Superior, whereas Holzkamm and McCarthy (1988) and Holzkamm and Waisberg (2004) treated the Rainy River region farther west and several authors have examined sturgeon use in more northern areas (Ray, 1999; Tough 1999; Usher and Tough, 1999). Not only were sturgeon used

Fig. 4.
A small Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) mounted on the wall of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Black River Falls Service Center in Black River Falls, Jackson County, Wisconsin. The label mounted next to the fish states that it was caught illegally in the Black River, where sturgeon are considered to be rare, and that it is about 14 years old. Photograph by Phil Cochran, 31 May 2006.

as food, but they were also targeted for isinglass, a substance associated with the swim bladder. Isinglass was used by Native Americans as a component of paint, but it was also highly valued in Europe to make glue and as a clarifying agent in the production of wines and beer. The references to Lake Sturgeon reported in the present paper reinforce the findings of earlier reviews and extend them a bit chronologically and geographically. That the diaries in Gates (1965) have not been cited in these previous reviews of sturgeon harvest (Goodier, 1984; Holzkamm and McCarthy, 1988; Holzkamm and Waisberg, 2004) might be attributable to the latter's emphasis on Canadian portions of watersheds shared with the U.S. and their emphasis on records of the Hudson's Bay Company. The diarists presented by Gates (1965) were associated with the Northwest Company, a rival firm that did not merge with the Hudson's Bay Company until 1821.

The newspaper accounts presented herein date from a later period, a time when Lake Sturgeon were not only being harvested in greater numbers commercially for distant markets but also being caught by recreational anglers. They were also being affected by habitat degradation due to such factors as water pollution and dam construction. During this period, Lake Sturgeon populations plummeted (Tower, 1909). The capture of a large sturgeon became ever more newsworthy, to the point that stories originally printed in local newspapers were often reprinted in other towns and cities.

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Fig. 5.
Lake Sturgeon and Flathead Catfish caught in the Mississippi River by commercial fisherman Lee Wallett of Warsaw, Hancock County, Illinois, sometime between the construction of the Keokuk Dam in 1913 and his death in 1935. This photograph was supplied by Wallett's great nephew, Mr. Eldon Launer.

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