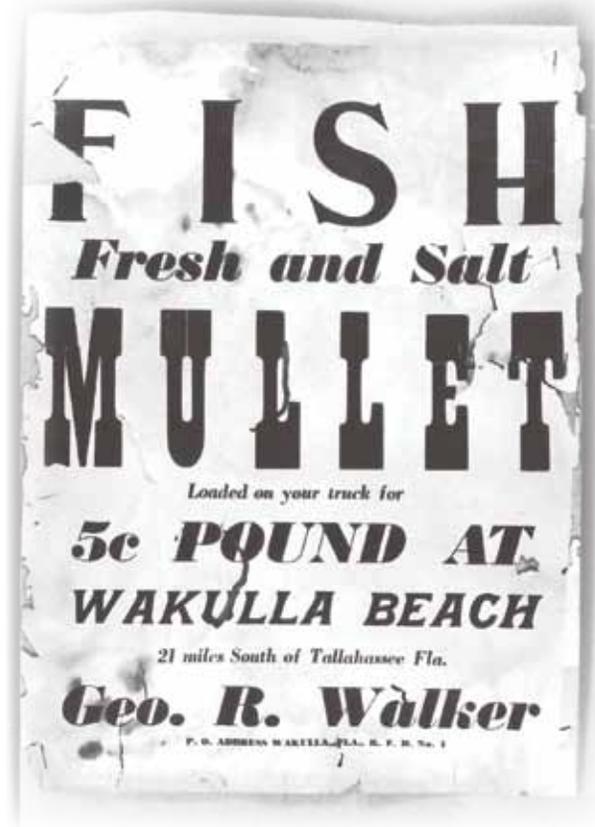


West Goose Creek Seineyard

GPS Coordinates:
84°15.703' W ~ 30° 6.316' N



(Courtesy Mays Leroy Gray)

Seining for mullet was once a popular pastime and is now almost a lost art. People were drawn to the shallow waters of Apalachee Bay to catch the fat fish using large seine nets.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail

1	Wakulla Beach: site of Wakulla Beach Hotel and West Goose Creek Seineyard	84°15.703' W	30° 6.316' N	4	Mounds Station: site of Shell Mounds and Naval Stores	84° 9.869' W	30° 5.282' N
2	Plum Orchard: site of Port Leon	84°8.892' W	30° 9.099' N	5	St. Marks Lighthouse: site of Lighthouse, Ft. Williams, and Spanish Hole/Shipwreck	84° 10.955' W	30° 4.658' N
3	East River: site of CCC and Salt Works	84°8.710' W	30° 7.797' N	6	Mandalay: site of Aucilla River	83° 58.769' W	30° 6.985' N





People seined for mullet at West Goose Creek until the mid-1980s. (Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files)

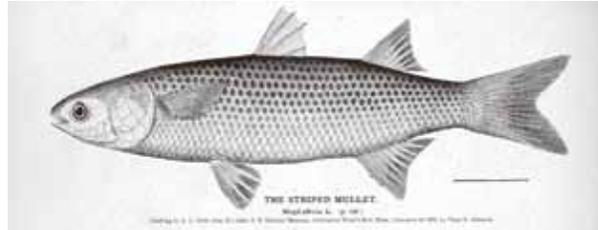
Local people and others from as far away as south Georgia – a journey of several days by wagon – came to help catch the fish. With the fall harvest over, there was no need to hurry. The people could relax and barter hams and other farm produce for barrels of salted mullet.

The locale, called a seineyard and usually named for the owner or the geographic location, was based on the need for fairly shallow water with a bottom free of obstacles that could snag the seine net and a beach where the catch, called a “lick,” could be hauled out and processed.

Approximately 16 seineyards once operated between the St. Marks Lighthouse and Turkey Point in Franklin County. Several seineyards operated on or near the refuge including West Goose Creek, St. Marks River, Wakulla Beach, Shell Point, and Skipper Bay. The seineyards were a source of income for the owner as well as a place for people to relax and meet friends, and ownership might pass through the family or be sold.

Fishing with a rod and reel is often a hurry-up-and-wait activity and using a seine net is no exception. Men rowed

West Goose Creek Seineyard



(Courtesy National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

their boats into the water and played out nets of up to 600 ft. long. Then they waited. When the striker, who usually scanned the bay from a tower, called, “come ashore!” the men strained at their oars as they rowed for shore, trapping the fish.

Others pitched in to draw the fish-laden net onto the beach. Then all hands began the work of removing the catch and preparing the mullet for smoking or salting. Mullet are best eaten



Cleaning the fish as soon as possible was necessary due to the lack of refrigeration. Dogs, birds, and hogs helped clean up, too. (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)



Fall at the seineyard was a time for people to gather. (Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files)

fresh or preserved because the flesh deteriorates rapidly and refrigeration was not available. Many barrels of salted fish were sold and shipped to feed farmhands, turpentine workers, and for home use.

The traditional fall gathering at the seineyards declined as regulations on the fishing industry increased and as the automobile replaced the wagon and other activities competed for people’s time. West Goose Creek is best remembered, perhaps because of the live oak grove that afforded shade and because it operated until the mid-1980s. In November 1985, Hurricane Kate’s winds smashed the last of the shelters at West Goose Creek and brought the era to a close.

The St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., with a matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, produced the signs and brochures for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail. The association is a 501(c)(3) organization that supports educational, environmental, and biological programs of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Visit www.stmarksrefuge.org for more information. 9/2010