

All about nets

Nets were the heroes of rough-fish removal. Seine nets made high-volume carp fishing possible. They were used under harsh conditions and needed constant care. To extend net lifespans, Fish Camp crews tried to avoid dragging the heavy seines over rough lake bottoms. Most of the equipment associated with nets—barges, winches, floats—was simple and durable. Crew members aspired to become “netmen” capable of repairing seines. Netmen were highly skilled and got a higher salary.

1930s winch used to pull in seine nets. All photos courtesy of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

BARGE PULLING IN SEINE



Seine nets stretched thousands of feet long and about 10-50 feet deep. Softball-sized floats of cork (later styrofoam) spaced every couple of feet suspended the heavy nets in water.

NET REELS

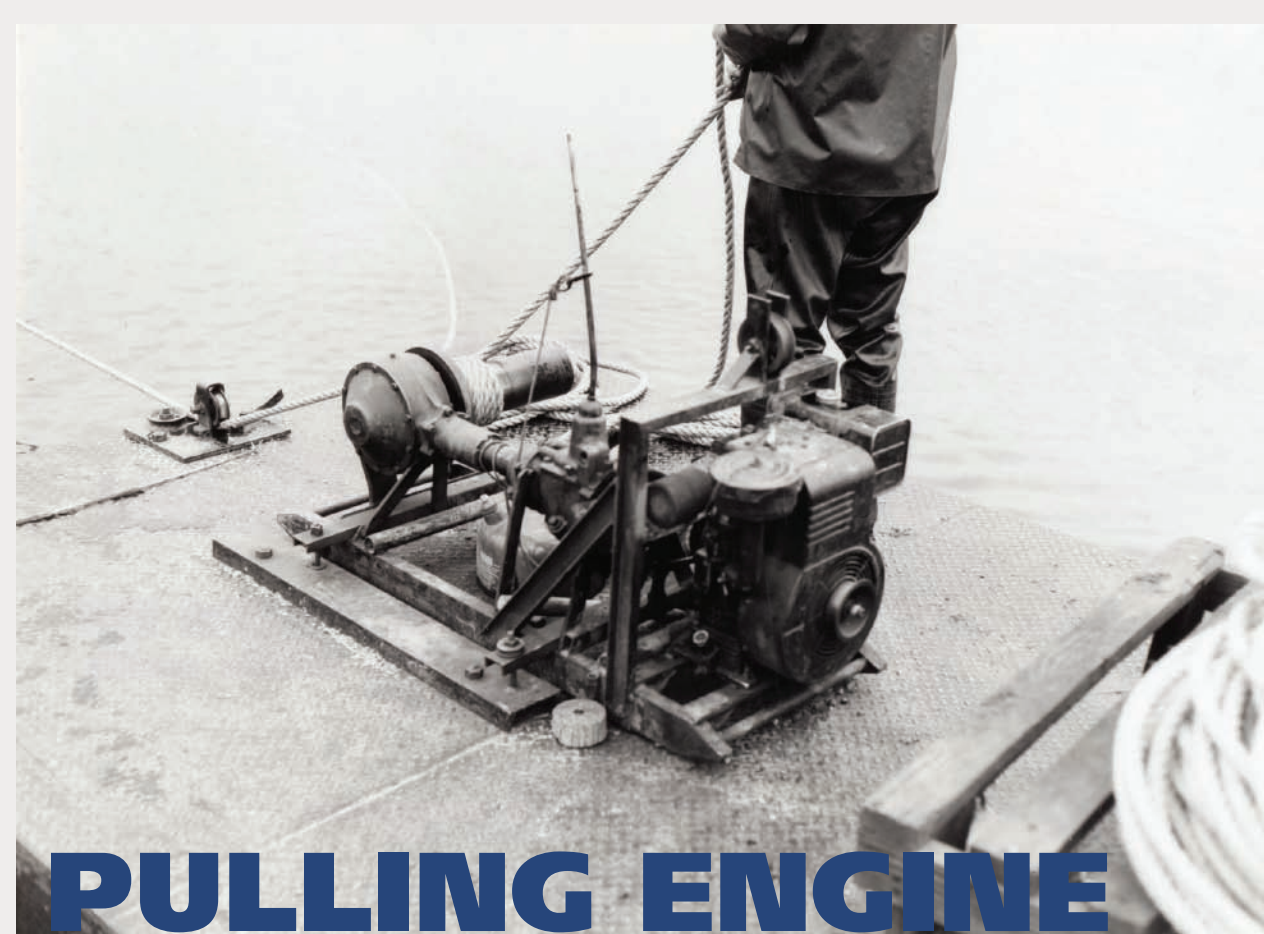


At Lake Kegonsa a net reel held seines when not in use. Here, they could dry and be inspected for damage. Netmen often had to patch holes, some caused by carp dorsal spines.

CORKS & MUD PANS



Mud pans, made of two pie tins bolted together, acted like skis on the bottom of the seine. The pans helped the net move smoothly along muddy lake bottoms. Without them, heavy nets could dig into a soft lakebed.



PULLING ENGINE

A pulling engine was a motorized winch for hauling in nets from barges or from shore. Above is an improved 1950s model, much lighter than the large winch pictured at top.



NET REPAIR & STORAGE

A crew repairs a fyke net at Nevin Hatchery in 1959. Repairing nets was a critical skill for a good “netman.” Winter and bad-weather days were good times to fix equipment.

? KNOW MORE *about the Net House*

The *Net House*, built in 1937 by the WPA, still stands today. It held seine nets and other equipment. Bins in the Net House held nets of various mesh sizes. A 3½-inch opening was best for catching large carp in normal water conditions. At smaller mesh sizes, the net created resistance in the water and was hard to pull—plus, too many desirable sport fish would be caught with the carp.