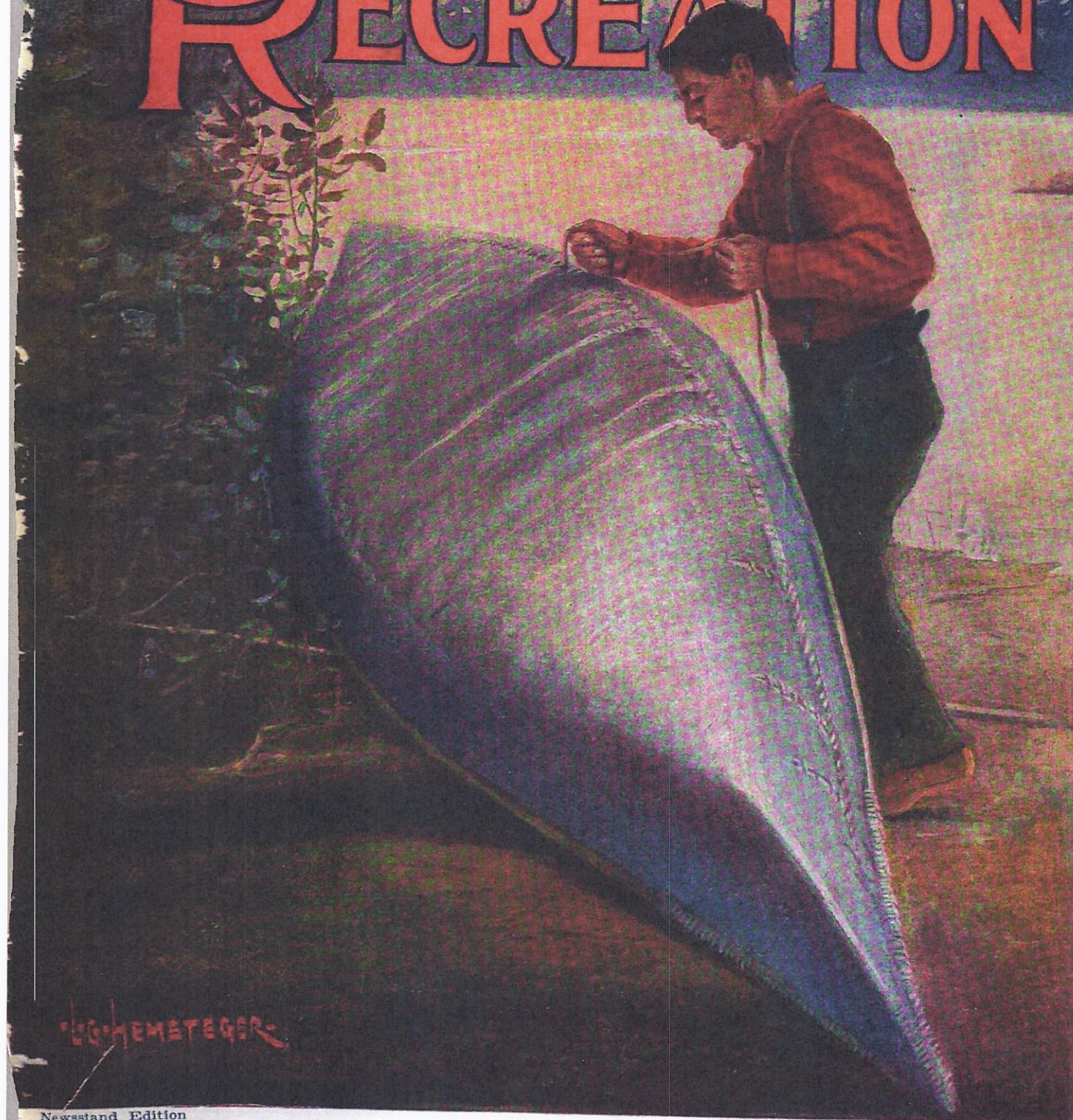


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RECREATION



W. C. HENRY

Newsstand Edition

ON THE NAGOGAMI

A Tale of the Wilderness

By T. E. B. HENRY, X.Y.

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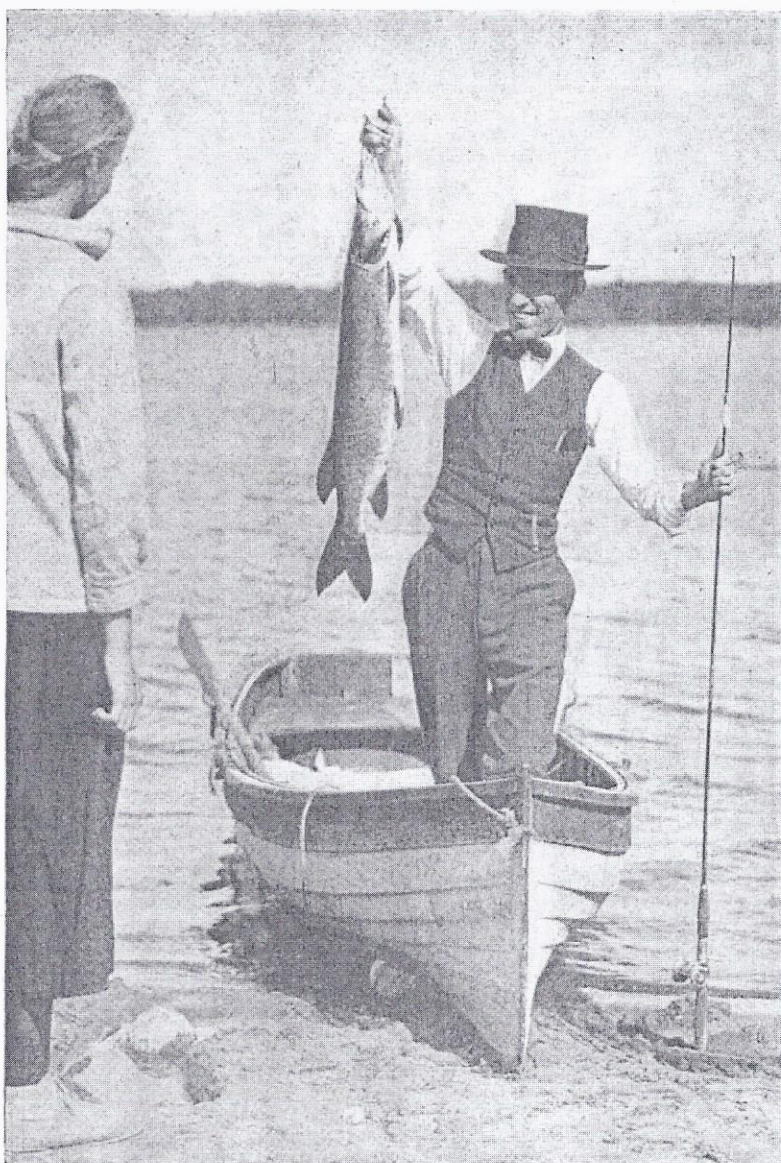
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Pretty good for bass tackle with no gun or gaff

Stone, Mud and Clear Lakes

By E. C. Potter

Editor's Note:—This is the fourth of a series in OUTERS'-RECREATION of a description of the fishing grounds in the Manitowish waters, a short distance east of Manitowish, Wis. Previous chapters of this series were: in April issue, Rest Lake; in May, Dam, Sturgeon and Benson Lakes; in June, Spider Lake. Each chapter is a description of one or more lakes and illustrated with map and photographs by the author.

JUST north of Spider Lake, which I described in last month's story in OUTERS' BOOK-RECREATION, lie Stone, Mud and Clear lakes. In that narrative I mentioned the entrance from Spider to Stone Lake, a very narrow,

short channel in which are some weeds, a good place to troll through, as many nice muskies and pike have been caught here. This is the extreme south portion of the map that illustrates this chapter. Entering this channel from Spider Lake let us turn to the left.

Let me say first, however, to describe these three lakes and illustrate with a map just what you will find there is somewhat of a difficult undertaking. One thing I can do for you, nevertheless, is to give you a very good general idea of what is there, even if this map may not be so easy to follow as previous ones when you are rounding the weedbeds alert for a strike. The average lake as it is indicated on lake region maps means

nothing more to the stranger than so much water surrounded by land. If I haven't any idea what a lake is from a fishing standpoint I often hesitate to leave a good fishing lake to investigate one I do not know, and I find many other fishermen feel the same way. Later I found that I had passed up some of the best grounds, and while the contour of these three lakes may not seem to you just as this map indicates them, you'll find the fishing grounds there all right and that's what you are most interested in.

And here let me say a word about maps. Most lake maps don't seem to correspond exactly to the lakes as you find them. But here, as everywhere, there's a reason. In recording a survey, an area must be either land or water. If it is a swampy back bay, even though there be not sufficient water to float an empty canoe, it is in a general description termed a portion of the lake, for it is more nearly a lake than dry land, that's certain. Then, a large portion of the surveys on which maps were based were made some years ago. Dams have changed water conditions since then, higher water backing up lakes into these swampy bays and lower water changing what was once shallow water to a swamp, etc. This, you will readily see, can make a great difference in the contour of a lake with a goodly portion of shallow shores, so one cannot question the correctness of lake maps unless he knows the dates of the last surveys of the region and all about water conditions since then.

THE contour of Stone, Mud and Clear Lakes as shown on some lake region maps and their relative position doesn't seem to me to at all agree with the water conditions as they are now. In fact, this is also true of Spider Lake, although not so much so. For this reason, and the added reason that it is necessary to make this lake map so it will fit the printed page, I have indicated the map about as it seems to me, and this story will give a good general idea of what you will find there and about where you will find it.

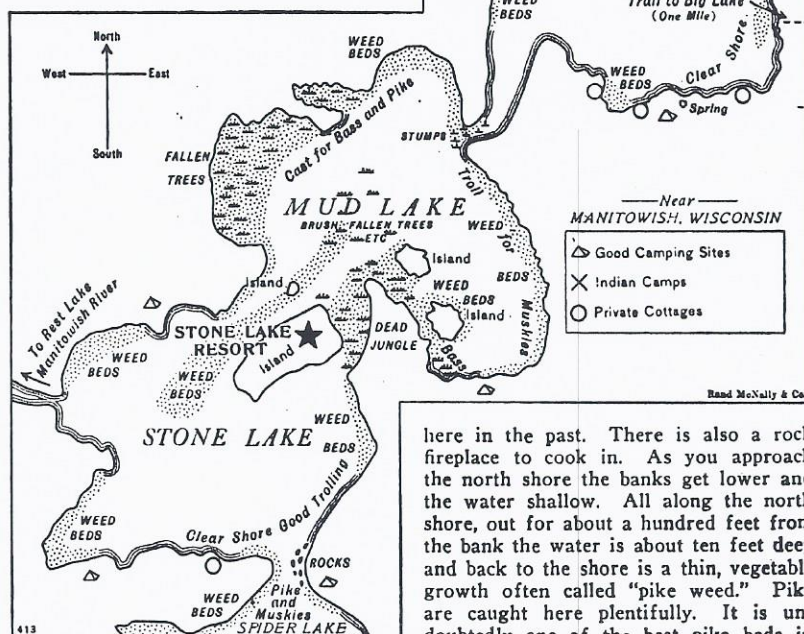
The shores of Stone Lake are very irregular, mostly sand and gravel, and surrounding it is second-growth timber, young birch and larger trees. After you leave the channel you will find the shore a clear one down into the first bay. In the bay is some vegetable growth, always worth trolling around or casting along. The chances are that what you catch here will be pike, still you may get a musky when you least expect it. I would not suggest spending so very much time in this bay as there are grounds further on that will probably yield better results, but pike, as most fish, move from one place to another, and you shouldn't go past the bay without a trial. If you happen to be there when a school of them are in the bay and in a biting mood you may fare excellently. After you leave the weeds it is practically a clear sand-gravel shore for quite a little distance. Shortly you will come to a channel which is the Manitowish River,

the outlet from Stone Lake and which leads to Rest Lake. Just after you pass the channel you will find a small weed bed, worth a few casts, or to troll past. It, like the bay just mentioned, is most likely to yield pike. Passing this weed bed the shore is comparatively clear for a short way, then a few weeds commence, leading up to a small point. Passing the point you come to a jungle of fallen trees, brush, stumps and what not, more than one can show on a small map, with a vegetable growth in front. On the opposite side on an island is a resort location, but which seems to have always been unprofitable. This resort has been opened two or three times but apparently without success, and seems to have finally been abandoned—at least it was vacant again last season when we were there. Also, just ahead, is a small island. All around back of the large island on which the resort is located is a jungle of brush, stumps, etc. Between the large island and the west shore there extends toward the center of Stone Lake a rather large weed bar. All along this bar is excellent grounds for pike. You are also likely to catch bass here part of the time. If you follow the shore line of Stone Lake on around you will find a few small weed beds after you leave the brush, etc., back of the island, and then practically a clear shore back to the channel into Spider Lake.

BUT to continue the shore line description into Mud Lake. Mud Lake is a comparatively small body of water. It is but about half a mile in diameter, but in the map it is indicated considerably larger as compared with the other two lakes than it really is, owing to the large amount of other things than water and fish that will be found there. You can always locate the open channel from Stone Lake to Mud Lake by going to the resort on the island, between the small island that lies a little to the northwest, and by zigzagging around the small brush clumps and blown-over trees can be dodged. After passing the last brush island you come to open water which is Mud Lake. It is a shallow lake and always well worth trolling for muskies, for the large ones come in here to feed. To the right (the southeast) there are some more islands, and around in back of them you will find some good looking grounds, weeds, small stumps and jungle, which is the place the bass seem to prefer. The south shore is high, with some good timber on it, and a good location to camp. Around the shore from here on there is a scattering vegetable growth, good to cast or troll along. Shortly you will come to a small channel, so small it will not be noticed until you get practically into it. This channel leads to Clear Lake. Going past this channel (not through it) you will find somewhat the same vegetable growth shore line, except that there will be more flooded timber, especially along the northwest shore. All along this northwest shore of Mud Lake is a good place to cast for bass and pike. If you follow it on far enough you will find yourself back among the brush islands and dodging around

them you will come again to the channel that leads to Stone Lake.

But to go back to the channel into Clear Lake. To go through it you must be careful as there are several stumps, but by keeping close to the south shore they can be passed without difficulty. Clear Lake is quite large, being about three miles in diameter, and owing to its size a good breeze will make it quite



here in the past. There is also a rock fireplace to cook in. As you approach the north shore the banks get lower and the water shallow. All along the north shore, out for about a hundred feet from the bank the water is about ten feet deep and back to the shore is a thin, vegetable growth often called "pike weed." Pike are caught here plentifully. It is undoubtedly one of the best pike beds in the chain. Our catches here averaged from two to five pounds in weight. Here you will also find the muskies but it is probable most of your catch will be pike. Back in the northwest corner of the lake is some more dead jungle, stumps, limbs, etc., impossible to get a boat through or to get a fish out of when hooked, but another one of those places where, when the fish are feeding on still evenings, the back bay among the stumps is a constant ripple and splash, ample evidence of its attractiveness to the fish. This offers you an excellent opportunity to cast around in front of this cover and cure once and for all the curiosity of those investigative old fellows that come out prowling around "seeking what they may devour." Following the shore around back to the channel to Mud Lake it will be found much the same as the south shore; clear spots, weed beds and an occasional clump of submerged stumps.

WHILE most of the banks of the Manitowish waters are sand and gravel, some of the more inland lakes have muskeg banks, that tough, treacherous moss that grows out sometimes several feet on top of the water. It sinks down like a sponge when you step on it, and when you least expect it, down it goes, letting you through into the water like rotten ice. The fish go back under this muskeg and to cast right on the edge of it and reel the bait off into the water often brings them out with a rush that is apt to startle you, particularly after a period of unfruitful casting, but there does not seem to be any of this muskeg around Mud Lake; if there is we didn't see it. There



Casting for muskies along a muskeg bank on the Manitowish River

is one, McCabe Lake, not shown on the lake region maps, but about a quarter of a mile from the central west shore of Rest Lake, just west from the Indian Camp (where the Indian Trading & Outfitting Co. benevolently furnish the North Woods visitor with everything he wants, sometimes for less than it costs them), all banks of which are muskeg. If you ever go over there you want to be careful to step on a board or branches to get out to the canoe, or you may get a wetting you're not expecting.

Take it all in all, I believe the Manitowish chain is about as good a place to fish as you will find in the Northern Wisconsin-Michigan territory. The entire chain is connected by fairly deep channels; it is good spawning grounds and there is lots of deep water so there is no possibility of winter killing the fish. While there is some excellent fishing over east of the divide at the head of the Presque Isle-Ontonagon waters, particularly for bass, the big fish over there are the great northern pike, and when it comes to going after big fish most of us prefer the muskellonge. Some of these big great northern pike make quite a fight, but no red-blooded fisherman that's ever had a ferocious fight with a husky musky will entuse very much over an exhibition match with a pickerel-pike.

About as good an example of that as I've seen is the case of one of the boys who was with us last season at Rest Lake. His name, by the way, is Green

but there was nothing green about him but the pattern in his necktie. He had always said he didn't give two whoops for any fishing but bass. He's small of stature but large on pep, progressiveness and perseverance. When we got to Rest Lake he wanted to go over in the weeds and cast for bass, so, as it was rather windy, he and I went over to the bay on the east side of the lake between the two clear shores. All of a sudden, after casting around for possibly half an hour, just as his bait hit the water beside a clump of half submerged stumps, there was a flash of white, and a splash broke the stillness like someone dropping a paving brick from the top of a precipice.

THE instant I saw that flash I started to pull the boat out into the middle of the lake for there's some brush in this bay and it's no place to fool with a musky on a bass line. With bass tackle he could only reel in when the fish slacked up, which wasn't often, and every time the musky started away Green had to let him take about what line he wanted. We had pretty good luck, however, and got the fish out into the middle of the lake without accident, so I stopped rowing and let Green fight the fish, which, while it didn't break water much, tried about every other trick known to fishology, but, fortunately, it was well hooked. Green doesn't weigh over 110 lbs., and I can't imagine anything funnier than the way he looked sitting in the back

of that boat hanging on to the fish, with every line of his face expressing the desperation of a man who knows he's fighting a losing fight, but is determined never to give up. Starting out for bass we did not take gun or gaff hook and Green had forgotten his new little pocket bass net—in fact he was always forgetting fishing tackle anyway, leaving it in the stores, on the train and at camp. We rowed in as near to the shore where the camp was as we dared and yelled and whistled in the hope of getting someone to bring us a gun or a gaff hook, but there was nobody home. Finally we started across the lake again, hoping to get the fish up on a shallow sand point and maybe land him some way when a motor boat musky party happened along and shot him for us. Altogether we spent nearly two hours worrying with that fish. It wasn't very big, only weighing about fourteen pounds, but on the light bass tackle it certainly made some fight. Since that time Green's forgot all about bass fishing and talks incessantly about the muskies we're going to catch this year.

And that's the way with a good many fishermen. Musky fishing grows on them. There's nothing like as many people go to the Manitowish chain as frequent the lakes farther south, and while they catch a good many muskies down around Woodruff I don't believe they get as many in proportion to the number of people fishing as they do in the Manitowish.