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FISHING REPORT

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November 25, 2013 Report

It's time now to look back on the (about, give-or-take-a-few, approximately) 140th season of The Boathouse at Fletcher's Cove. There is not an exact date when a family named Fletcher came down the hill and staked-out a little claim to the river bottom land around a cove along the bank of the Potomac. No information overload back then; no computers or instantly digitized and dated images. Just a hard life trying to eke out a living where the water meets the shore. Judging from the stories I've been told and the gravestones I've observed, it was at least a few years after the Civil War. Things had settled down a bit from previous years. The Union troops guarding Chain Bridge from the Confederates were gone and the cannons of Battery Kemble, up on the bluff, sold off as scrap. The millstones of the Abner Cloud House had recently stopped turning, yet Canal Road had greatly increased commercial traffic helping to feed the newly bulging federal city. Mules pulled canal barges along the C&O Canal and the B&O Railroad engineer would sometimes stop the train on the tracks beside the towpath and trade coal for home baked goods.

Of course the cove has been a magnet for human activity for eons. Long before any Fletcher feet touched the ground, Algonquian Indians set up springtime camps at the cove to harvest the bountiful fish during the runs of March, April and May. Archeologists digging in 1998 found eight underground "silos" used by the Native Americans right in front of the current tackle shack. The engineers building the Powtarmack Canal used the cove as the final access point to the river for shallow draft barges coming down from upstream. And evidence I uncovered in the bowels of an Iowa library suggests that President Andrew Jackson fished for striped bass from a boat launched out of the cove now known as "Fletcher's."

Sadly, (for me, especially) 2013 was the first year in those 140 or so that there was no Fletcher working the river and canal at the boathouse. Joe Fletcher (in 2004) and Ray Fletcher (in 2012) have now retired to spend time with grandchildren and families as well as fish and visit the cove for pleasure rather than toil.



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[Check out Dan's article on Fletcher's Cove in the March 2012 issue of *The Buzz*](#)
(pages 6-7)

[March 2011 issue of *The Buzz*](#)
(pages 11-12)

[Rowin' on the River at Fletcher's Cove](#)
article in *KidFriendly DC*
July 2013

[Click here](#) for a great interactive map
of the area around Fletcher's
(opens in new window)

CHAPTER SHAD REPORTS



During the shad run (usually April thru mid-June), our chapter sends out reports of fishing conditions at Fletcher's Cove and elsewhere as we receive information. If you know someone who might want to receive these reports, [email NCC-TU](#) with "SHAD" in the subject line and provide your name and email address. If you received shad reports last year, you don't need to resubscribe to get them in 2013.

[Click here](#) for a great interactive map of The Boathouse at Fletcher's Cove Area Fishing and Outdoor Fun (opens in new window)

While there were no presidential visits or archeological digs to liven-up the cove this season, it was a good year for business and our many varied customers. Until that absurd and unfortunate event known as the "government shut-down," Fletcher's saw a non-stop parade of fishermen, kayakers, canoeists and bikers. Tourists, school groups and campers all filled our work days with the sounds and smiles of recreational fun. During those two short weeks after the shut-down, those lucky enough to stop by the cove could gaze upon a particularly beautiful vista of fall in the Potomac gorge. The park does stay open all year so do not hesitate to visit during our "off-season."

While the heart of fall fishing was taken away by the two week lock-out, there were some rewards for those who wet a line. As expected, smallmouth bass and blue catfish were the predominant catch. With the frigid north winds sweeping in this Thanksgiving week, our finned friends will now slumber through the winter. Spring in Washington will revive their hunger and, hopefully, our spirit.

It is time to thank those who made this passing season a joy once again. First, to our many customers, regulars and newcomers alike, thank you for your smiles and your dollars! To our crew of energetic employees, for your service and sweat (we REALLY miss you Prescott Martin)! To our parent [Guest Services](#) support team, for your daily assistance. To the personnel of the C&O Canal National Historic Park, for your stewardship of this national landmark. (A particular thank you to those "good-old boys" who re-built the parking lot access bridge so speedily and efficiently this fall. It was an example of just how well our often criticized government agencies can accomplish a job themselves, given the resources.) Thank you to the friendly officers of the U.S. Park Police and D.C. Metro Police as well as the D.C. Fire Department. A special thanks to the officers of the D.C. Harbor Branch Police for patrolling our river and to Linda for her tireless work and generous help in the boat registration process. And finally a fishy thanks to Brian King, Wanda Payne and the staff at the office of D.C. Fisheries.



Yours truly restoring boats for spring, 2014

Here's hoping your holiday season is a wonderful, peaceful time. During the cold days ahead, remember that spring at Fletcher's Cove is just around the corner. Re-read your copy of Louis Halle's "Spring in Washington" to give the spirit a jump-start. We'll be looking for you come March!

Dan



"Newly constructed bridge access to Fletcher's Cove built by U.S. Park Service personnel" (photo by Brian Hixon, provided by Steve LeBel)



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