



## “The Contemplative Man’s Recreation”



“You are assured, though there be ignorant men of another belief, that Angling is an Art: and you know that Art better than the others; and that this is truth is demonstrated by the fruits of that pleasant labour which you enjoy, when you purpose to give rest to your mind, and divest yourself of your more serious business, and, which is often, dedicate a day or two to this recreation.” - Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 1653.

### The Fruits of that Pleasant Labour

Not only does fishing put a meal on the table it is a recreational activity. Fishing has been a popular pastime across the world for centuries and has not changed much from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. People value fishing for many reasons. It might represent the survival of man, natural order or bio-diversity and water ecology, self-relection, or the mere fun of the sport. Whatever it represents, those who truly love fishing find it a pleasant labor. People, past and present, aren’t so different as many have found enjoyment in fishing.

### The Compleat Angler



Being a Discourse of  
**FISH and FISHING,**  
Not unworthy the perusal of most Anglers.  
Written by Izaak Walton, 1653.  
London, Printed by T. May for I. Blount, Stationer, in  
St. Dunstons Church-side, Fleetstreet, 1653.

Fish was undoubtedly a valuable food source for Native Americans and settlers. Fishing can also be a relaxing and rewarding pastime. This could not have been lost on Ninety Six’s early residents. The literate among them may even have read Izaak Walton’s famous treatise on fishing, *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man’s Recreation: Being a Discourse of Fish and Fishing, Not Unworthy of the perusal of most Anglers*. First published in 1653, Walton’s book is one of the most popular ever printed in English. Walton wrote that fishing was “a rest to his mind, a

cheerer of his spirits, a diverter of sadness, a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a moderator of passions, a procurer of contentedness; and that it begets habits of peace and patience in those that professed and practiced it.” Walton’s *The Compleat Angler* was written, not only to act as a guide to fishing, but to celebrate the spirit and art of fishing through poetry, legends and songs. The piece honors reflection and wisdom of the angler. The contemplative angler certainly finds joy in a simple activity such as fishing.

### Fysshing Roddes



Colonists engaged in fishing we would recognize today, with poles, line, floats, weights, and hooks. Angling equipment and strategy has changed little over the years, although slightly modified through human ingenuity and modern technology in recent times. Light or hollow wood, such as switchcane, was used to create “fysshing rodde.” Fishing rods should be at least 6 foot long and were constructed through baking, removing the core and assembled into

several fitting parts. Fishing line was made of cotton or linen thread and strung through the noose. A local blacksmith could create delicately wrought iron noose and hooks. Lead weights could be created by anyone with a cast mold. Floats were made of cork or other light wood. Insects and their larvae made for excellent bait. With such materials readily available and many rivers and streams easily accessible, the settlers of Ninety Six would have had little difficulty

### Man vs. Fish



Next time you find yourself fishing, recall that centuries ago, the colonial angler found similar inspiration as we do today.

The approach and equipment may seem different as the gear and composition has advanced, but the idea and purpose remains practically the same. The game is still man versus fish.

We aren’t so different from our ancestors after all.

