

With ingeniously devised fish hooks, deftly made spears, and strongly woven nets, the Indians caught the large quantities of fish that formed so important a part of their sustenance.

FISH HOOKS

Starting from the simple device of attaching the bait to the end of the line, the primitive Indians progressed to the more efficient gorge hook, which consisted of a spike of wood, bone, or antler, sharpened at both ends, and fastened at its middle to the line. From a spike set obliquely in the end of a pliant shaft evolved a plain hook, then a barbed hook.

The materials used by the Wisconsin aborigines for the manufacture of fish hooks, included wood, bone, shell, antler and copper. The few flint fish hooks to be seen in some collections are regarded as frauds.

In view of the fact that fishing with hooks was commonly practiced by the North American Indians at the time of their first contact with Europeans, the comparative scarcity of fish hooks in the regions formerly occupied by them is unusual.

Bone Fish Hooks

Only a limited number of bone fish hooks have been collected in Wisconsin. A logical inference that the primitive Indians of Wisconsin used bone and antler fishing implements prior to those of copper may be drawn from the report of Dr. Alphonse Gerend that the Black River village sites, Sheboygan county, were formerly inhabited by a shell-using people usually termed "clam eaters." (Wis. Archeol., v. 19, no. 3)

"These shell using people, whether or not they formed a class distinct from the ordinary villagers, whose remains are found in predominant numbers, are nevertheless characterized by customs not observed by the majority of the former."

"In the first place they employed the common unio shell in their arts and used the animal within as an article of food. On account of this fact they have been termed clam eaters.