

# OYSTERS NOT SCARCE.

## Newspapers and Officials Prove That Virginia Has Plenty of Bivalves, but no Market.

[FROM NORFOLK LANDMARK, NOVEMBER 4.]

Regarding the condition of the oyster industry locally, a prominent dealer and packer said yesterday that the trade is much better than it has been so far this season.

The supply was never better. Cooler weather has increased the demand, but prices are low on account of surplus stock in other oyster producing States.

[FROM NORFOLK LANDMARK, NOVEMBER 5.]

"There is absolutely no truth in the reports to the effect that oysters are scarce in Virginia, except on the upper James and Potomac."

This was the reply made last night by Chairman W. McDonald Lee, of the State Commission of Fisheries, when asked if it was true that there was a scarcity of oysters in Virginia.

Mr. Lee said that there were some folks who insisted on talking about the alleged oyster scarcity when, if the facts were known, they know nothing of the question.

"The only scarcity of oysters in the entire State," declared Mr. Lee, "is on the upper James river and the upper Potomac river.

"Why, the Norfolk and Hampton buyers are getting all the shucking oysters they want up on the Potomac at from twenty to twenty-five cents a bushel.

"At this time last year these same buyers were paying from forty to fifty cents per bushel for oysters not one bit better or more desirable.

"From my own personal knowledge I can say that there are on hand today from 25 to 50 per cent. more oysters than at the same period a year ago.

"There is no scarcity of oysters in Virginia, except in the places I mentioned.

"So plentiful are oysters in the Potomac that dredgers have left that vicinity for the reason that they could not make sale of their catch.

"If there were a scarcity of oysters in the waters of the Old Dominion the prices would soar, and the extremely low prices now being received by the dredgers and tongers is ample proof that the statements are unfounded."

[PORTSMOUTH STAR, NOVEMBER 7.]

While oysters in this section have not been of extraordinary size and quality this year, the local dealers do not feel any apprehension. The bed rocks are yielding as well as can be expected. Bivalves are selling at moderate rates, and the lover of the oyster need feel no fear that his taste in that direction will not be gratified. Moderate prices prevail and rather good oysters are at hand.

Not so with Baltimore. In the Monumental City there is not only a scarcity of oysters, but a raise in prices and a reduction in size. Speaking of the matter the Baltimore Sun says:

"In contradiction of the encouraging reports given at the opening of the season that the Chesapeake bay and tributaries would give an abundant supply of oysters, later investigations of (Md.) beds and natural rocks show that there will be only about one-half the quantity caught compared with that of previous years. One encouraging feature, however, is that what oysters are being caught are fat and excellent in quality, but small. The grade known as selects will be very scarce. Reports from the Potomac river state that the supply there is about one-half of that expected, and the same condition exists elsewhere in the bay.

"An investigation down the western shore of the bay develops that there will be in that section a great shortage in the catch anticipated by the oystermen at the beginning of the season.

"The results from a dredge thrown overboard from Cove Point to Holland Point, where heretofore the best oysters have been caught, brought to the surface nothing but dead oysters and shells. Off Point Lookout it is reported more than one-half of the oysters are dead, and at Drum Point, which heretofore contributed a generous supply of fine stock, the same condition exists. In Tangier sound, it is stated, there are now but about a half dozen small scrapers of the large fleet which regularly work in that territory, and with the exception of the vessels mentioned the vessels have left to try their luck elsewhere in the bay."