

Morse's whopper

The nosey fish from Keuka

Fish stories come and go, but probably the outstanding fish story to come from the confines of Keuka Lake and its shores involves a youngster.

On a sunny afternoon, August 27, 1873, Mrs. Florence Ione Morse, widow of Myron Morse, and daughter of Reuben L. Corey, of Penn Yan, with her little son, Harry, of seven years, was fishing at Brandy Bay on Lake Keuka.

The boat lay a few rods from shore, and the mother was watching her line on one side of the boat, while the boy was doing the same thing on the other. Suddenly, she was startled by a scream from the boy, and looking around, saw her boy with a frightened, bloody face, and a trout of eight pounds weight floundering by his side in the skiff.

A person on shore called to her to strike the fish with an oar, which she did, and thus quieted him, when she rowed to shore. It was found the trout had suddenly leaped from the water, and seized the boy by his nose, inflicting a long gash, from which the blood flowed freely. The force with which the trout leaped, in his onslaught upon the boy, as the little fellow drew back, landed the finny game over the boat side and cost him his life. This incident was so strange and unheard of, that it made no little sensation, and was the subject of much wonderment and many newspaper paragraphs.



Photo courtesy of the Oliver House

Young Harry Morse, whose nose was gashed by a trout when he was just 7 years old, grew up to be a steamboat captain.

As far as anyone has ever been able to ascertain, the story is true. Steamboat Captain Harry Morse, the same Harry Morse in the story, died on January 3, 1936...and until his dying day, never denied this story.

The account given above was printed on a postcard which is in The Oliver House's collection now, but was sent to a woman in Minnesota with the following note:

"This is the fish story of Mrs. J's that I believe because I know the man, and he still has the scar on his nose."