

# LAKE-RUN SALMON

## on the Pere Marquette

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #209 —

The Pere Marquette is a small, short river, with lots of smaller tributaries. It flows west, out of central Michigan, into Lake Michigan, near the town of Ludington, which is about a four hour drive north of Chicago. In the fall, as the colors of the maple leaves begin to change, three-year-old king salmon enter this river system to spawn; which was the very reason we were there!

There haven't always been king salmon in the fresh waters of Lake Michigan; it all got started as an experiment in the 1960s, when the Michigan Department of Conservation introduced several hundred thousand salmon smolt into the tributaries of the lake. Those fish grew a little, then swam down the streams and into the lake – where they grew up.

By 1967 the stocked smolt were mature adult fish and returned to the tributaries

to spawn; it has been “fish-on” ever since.

Son Russell and I planned this trip quite a bit in advance. He drove up from Chicago with all the fishing gear, while I flew from Missouri to

Grand Rapids, where we met up. Then we proceeded on to the little town of Baldwin, spent the night in a small cabin and prepared to get on the water the next day.

Early that morning, Russell and I were at the bait and tackle shop, anxious to begin fishing. It was a beautiful, clear day (probably too clear) as our guide launched the drift boat and invited us in. Russell had fished this river



*Russell and I in Baldwin Bait and Tackle.*

a few times before, but it was my introduction. The first thing I noticed, and one of my greatest memories of the trip, was how much timber there was in the deeper holes – where the salmon were. It was truly an obstacle course for fishing – hard to get the fly in the right place and equally difficult to keep hooked fish from tangling up in the logs. Our guide was constantly tying on new leaders and flies for us – especially me.

**“...it all got started as an experiment...”**

We used Russell's 9 weight fly rods with a two-fly rig — a black stone fly up front, with a trailing egg pattern. I would call it an “average” fishing day; possibly, we would have had a few more takers, if it had been a bit overcast. However, when you get a day to go fishing, you don't often have the opportunity to choose the weather.

**USA**  
**Midway**

Larry Potterfield

Pere Marquette River  
Baldwin, Michigan  
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*An average salmon from the Pere Marquette River. This far up the river, it was pretty small water.*



*Russell, with a “fish on,” the maple trees were spectacular.*