

Captain Harlow's Carp

Captain John Harlow's unfortunate scheme of introducing carp to Oregon diners was described in a 1959 Oregonian article called "Fabulous Failures...Broken Dreams of the Oregon Country." Captain Harlow named his home Troutdale because it had a "small dale" near his house where he had a fish pond which he stocked with trout." He took delivery of the German Carp on May 15, 1880.

Harlow sent to California for the carp to stock a pond at his ranch in Troutdale. He bought 35 of the fish, two years old and 6 inches long, intending to fatten them for the market in the same way one would prepare livestock. The carp are reproductive wonders and in a few weeks the captain had 7,000 carp and expected to make a fortune selling them to Portland restaurants. But the following spring, a dam broke at the pond near the Harlow House and 3,000 carp fry escaped into the Sandy River. The runaways got into Northwest waters where they proliferated, becoming despised and rejected fish. The captain's valuable carp were sold by the ton as fertilizer only a decade later.

