



The American Fly Fisher

Volume 8 · Number 2 · SPRING 1981



Crosscurrents



The Museum, though it is a bit out of the way geographically, is something of a crossroads for information. Because we maintain a library of fly fishing related periodicals and club publications, and because we gather tackle catalogs, we receive a broad view of what's going on in fishing circles around the country. Right now it's not hard to be alarmed about what we see. The Federation of Fly Fishermen Bulletin tells us that new government budget-trimming and changes of direction threaten to reverse recent progress made in California fisheries management. Theodore Gordon Flyfishers is caught up in two immensely important struggles, one to save the Esopus from a devastating water diversion project, the other to control treated-sewage effluents along the Beaverkill. The Everglades Protection Association reports that the Secretary of the Interior is attempting a wholesale reversal of recent gains made in sportfishing management in Florida Bay. Other organizations report similar threats to their home

waters. Of course this is the way it has always been — that's why the organizations were formed — but there seems to be a greater intensity to the alarm these days.

The other direction from which we receive news is the professional museum community. For many reasons, the museum world is long past alarm, well into panic. They were, naturally, braced for a lot of belt-tightening under the new administration, but were unprepared for the extent of the proposed budget cuts. Important and distinguished programs such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts face overall budget reductions of fifty percent or more. Entire programs (important to many museums and other historical agencies), such as The Institute of Museum Services, The National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and the U.S.D.I. matching grants program, face projected budgets of zero dollars; they would be cancelled. The Conservation and Recreation Service of the Depart-

ment of the Interior has already been abolished. A great many museums and historical societies will be affected by the losses to these programs (The Museum of American Fly Fishing doesn't receive any money from any federal or state programs, but you might check how all this will affect other museums you care about).

In comparison, the fly fishing world is in a lot better shape than the museum world. We still have lots of good news, and fishermen are better able to marshal public support than are many interest groups. But it's clear that we're going to have to work harder to keep what we have.

Though it is uncharacteristic in an editorial, we'd like to refer you at this point to someone else's editorial column. Don Zahner's editorial in the April issue of *Fly Fisherman* is an eloquent statement of the choices fishermen now face. It's called "Overswill on the Beaverkill?" We recommend it.



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An Angler's Childhood

being the first publication of the boyhood reminiscences of G.E.M. Skues

by George Edward Mackenzie Skues



I was born on the 13th of August, 1858 at St. Johns, Newfoundland, the eldest child of William Mackenzie Skues, then Surgeon of the Newfoundland Companies, by Margaret Ayre his wife, daughter of Christopher Ayre, Clerk of Parliament and acting Colonial Secretary of the Colony. My Father was eldest son of George Skues, Lieutenant of the Royal Marine Light Infantry by Mary Gibbs Mackenzie daughter of Alexander Mackenzie of Breda in Aberdeenshire – by his wife Maria Rebecca daughter of Colonel William Humberston Mackenzie of Cononshay, sister of the last Lord Seaforth prior to the 1921 creation.

My Father was of Cornish extraction, his forbears having for many generations been Receivers of Tin Dues at Helston for the Duchy of Cornwall.

At the age of three I was brought over by my parents in a sailing vessel to Aberdeen where my Father's parents lived.

In 1863 my Father went to India on service taking my Mother and leaving me, with two small sisters, in charge of his Father and Mother. They left Aberdeen and settled in Langford in Somersetshire, shortly afterwards moving to Wrington – both places on the Somersetshire Yeo, a little below what is now Blagdon reservoir. A tributary or branch of that stream showed itself in a shallow gravelly patch at a corner of a paddock behind the house in which paddock my grandfather used to keep his pony and goats and some aggressive geese – it was in this corner that at the age of 5 or thereabouts I saw my first trout – becoming greatly excited about it. At the front of the house on the far side of the way a tiny stream passed through a hole

in a garden wall of plank and stone and mortar and after running a few yards turned back through another hole into the same or another garden. The little intervening stretch was rich in minnows and I used to watch them and eye their scarlet bellies with a huge excitement which I did not understand.

It was raised to a trembling height on the rare occasions when I saw a trout there. I recall a trout of 6 or 8 ounces lying dead on a plate in the larder and being told by my grandfather that it had been tickled by a labourer in the stream at the end of the paddock.

My grandfather, however, neither did any fishing there nor did he encourage or even notice my excited interest in running water and the life therein. There was a bridge over a stream – it may have been the Yeo – hard by on one of our most frequent walks and it was hard for my nurse to drag me from it when we went that way, so set was I on peering for the fish in the shallow ford below.

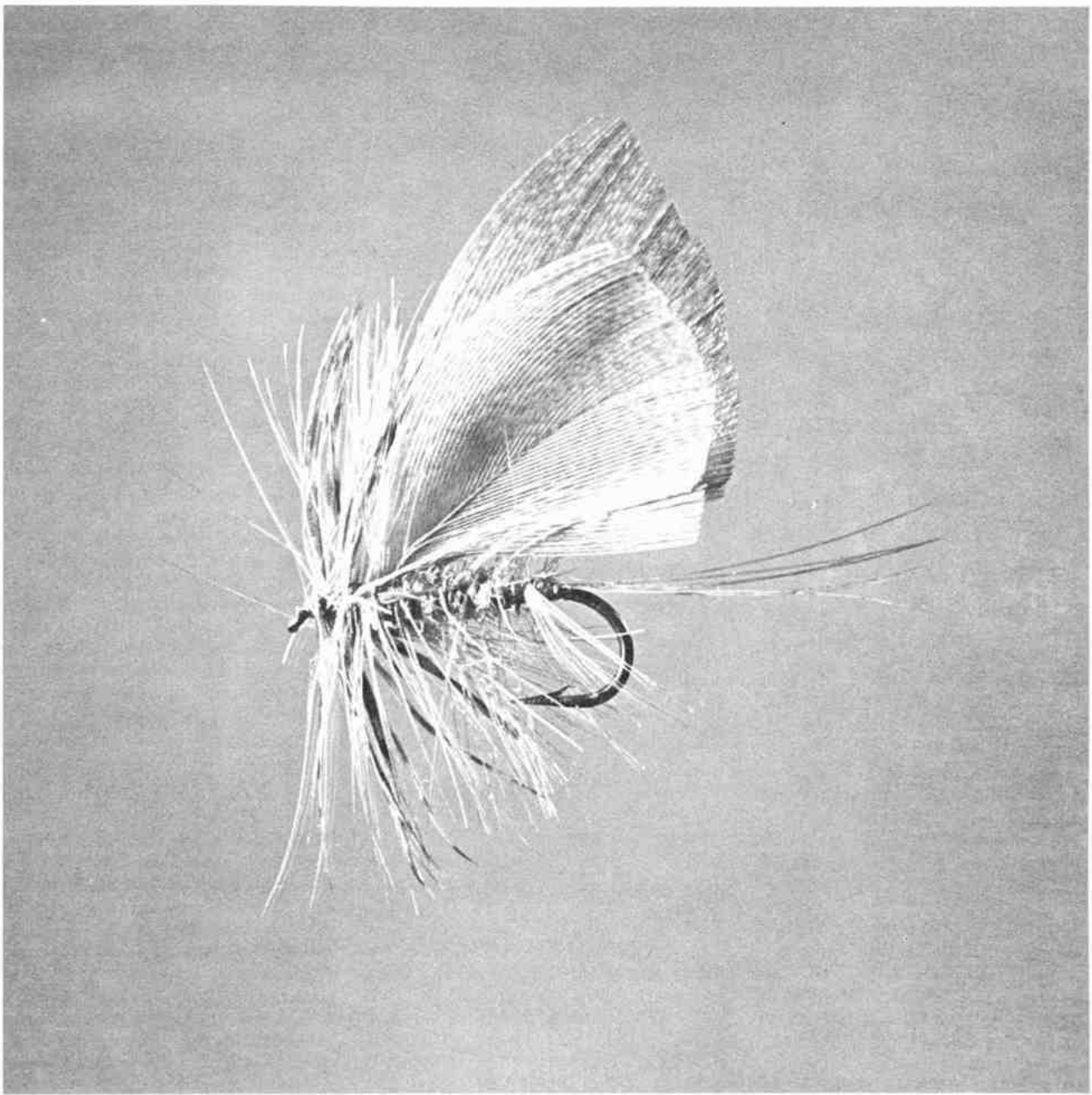
At the age of seven I went to a boarding school near Bristol for a year – and on my Father's return from India I was taken to Portsmouth and Southsea before my Mother was settled near Hornsey Rise. Here, in the intervals of attending day school, I made my first humble efforts at fishing. It was for newts in the clay ponds which abounded in the neighborhood.

One of the schools which I attended was at no great distance from the New River, and there was a little stretch where a number of anglers used to fish for roach and perch. Here I first saw fishing with rod and line and floats – and became greatly excited. I spent every possible half holiday watching the anglers and eventually I invested in a cane winder

with a float and a hook to gut and some shot. But before I could manage a rod I was sent off to a boarding school at Stokes Bay near Gosport. A holiday at Ryde introduced me at the age of eleven to hand line fishing for small wrasse and pout, but pocket money was scarce and I did not attempt to fish from the pier, but investigated the sand pools at low tide. Soon afterwards I was sent to a private school at Alverstoke near Stokes Bay.

Stokes Bay is intersected with a number of brackish moats in which were to be found eels, small perch and shoal bass and mullet. At length I acquired a rod (at the cost of a shilling – a two piece hazel affair) and I set out to catch eels. I did not know enough to dig worms. My observation of roach fishing with paste persuaded me that paste would prove attractive to eels. I was accordingly bitterly disappointed when eel after eel showed a painful lack of interest in my bait. I was going home at length, rod over shoulder with my rejected bait dangling behind me, when I felt a tremendous tug and found that I had hooked a hen belonging to a railway porter who kept a crossing on the Stokes Bay line. The porter and his sons waged constant war with the boys of my school – and so, more than a little scared, I played that shrieking fowl down a hundred yards or so of road and round the next corner before trying to extract the hook. She was too firmly hooked, however, and so I cut the twisted horsehair just above her beak and took to my heels. That was for the time being the end of my fishing, for funds were low and I was not able to buy another furnished line.

In 1871 the exigencies of the Service took my parents to Malta and they made



arrangements for me to spend my holidays with the family of a Doctor in Gosport. It was during the summer holiday of that year that I came across a man fishing with rod and line in the creek for shoal bass and catching them at quite a good rate. He told me how and where to dig the rag worm which he used as bait, but it was not till two years later that I was able to put the information to use.

In July 1872 I was sent up to Winchester College to take the Scholarship Examination – not with any idea that I might succeed, but to practise me in being examined so that I might perhaps succeed in getting a small scholarship at a lesser public school. The examination

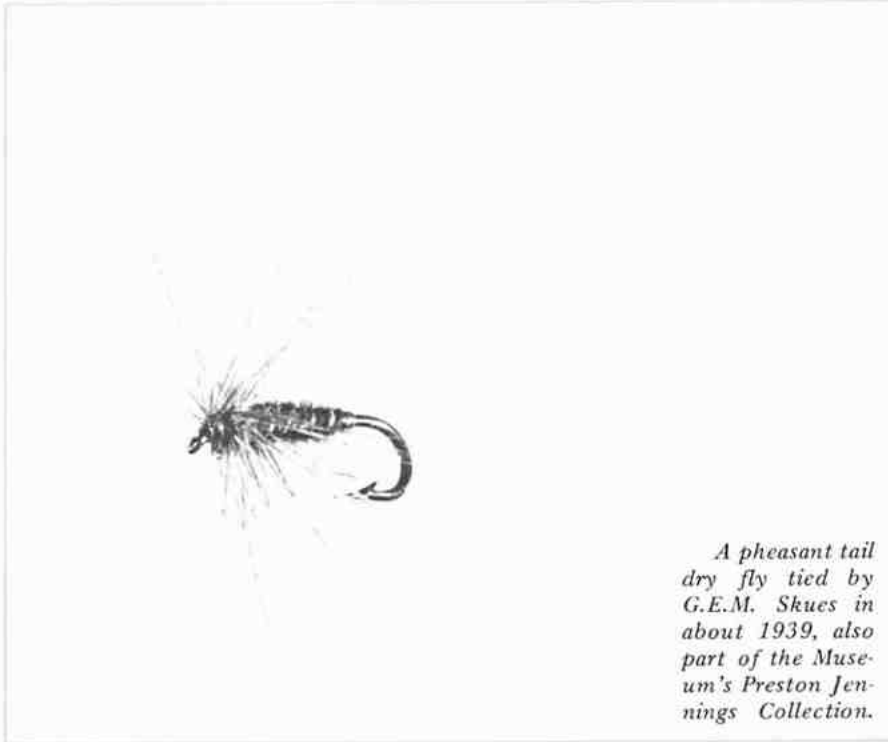
was conducted by a process of sifting. When the final list of 15 came down I found my name fourteenth and went back entitled to wear the gown of a foundation scholar of Winchester. I mention this because it was an occasion which brought me a small harvest of tips – and when I came back from a holiday on a farm in Midlothian I still had enough left to buy a certain 1/6d rod, in some hard white wood, which I had long coveted, together with a hank of twisted silk line and a gut furnished winder. But I was not to use them for some time.

The Old Barge River at Winchester running by the school playing fields af-

An Isonychia subimago tied by G.E.M. Skues in about 1940 and given to Preston Jennings; part of the Museum's Preston Jennings collection of flies donated by George Stagg.

flicted me with a positive nostalgia. I used when I could to hang about any anglers fishing those waters with a fly and on the few – very few – occasions when I saw a trout landed, my excitement was intense, but my finances were not strong enough for rod, reel, line, flies and license.

The winter holidays were devoted largely to following the beagles. The



A pheasant tail dry fly tied by G.E.M. Skues in about 1939, also part of the Museum's Preston Jennings Collection.

summer holidays of 1874 and part of 1875 were again orgies of bass fishing in the creeks and moats about Gosport – and in the Solent. In the winter of 1875 my father was appointed to Jersey as Principal Medical Officer and my holidays were thereafter spent there.

There was then no fresh water fishing in Jersey, except for carp in private ponds, and the sea fishing is extremely poor.

In 1874 I saw and bought, in Hammond's shop in Winchester, some eyed fly hooks on which I used to catch minnows.

My first essay in fly fishing for trout was made towards the end of March on a windy afternoon with a Wickham's fancy. If it had not been for the wind I should certainly not have stretched my fly, for the rod and line were not in the least suited to one another. I remember an older school fellow who came along handling it and saying, "What do you call this thing?" and when I said, "A fly rod," "Oh, do you" he said – and proceeded to crack off one of my flies.

My stock comprised Blue Quill, Red Quill, Pale Watery Dun (with white wool body) Blue Dun and Wickham's Fancy, all on gut. Why I also bought a dozen Champion May flies I don't know, unless it was that John Hammond was too good a salesman for me. I never had a chance to use them, for the May fly had recently disappeared from the Old Barge with the digging of gravel from the bottom by the City Fathers. It was a long time before I caught my first trout. I

recall getting my first rise to a floating Wickham's Fancy, cast with a favouring wind from the bulge at the bottom of the length and being so surprised that I did not remember to strike.

I once saw Dr. Wickham, the inventor of the fly, in Hammond's shop on a leave out day, but I do not recall him. There was a boy in Commoners of the same name and I believe a relation of his who caught an occasional trout in Old Barge. There was another fellow named Paull who had a lovely little 9 ft. Greenheart, with a detachable handle, with a quick and lively action – but it was hopeless and helpless with a trout that went to weed. My own rod was an awful bean pole, eleven feet long and of a paralysing stiffness and quite unsuited to carry the light silk and hair line which was in fashion at the time. Oiled silk lines had still to come. My line had the vice of sticking in the rings and it would not carry against the wind, but it did fall with exquisite lightness on the water. It was well suited to the type of rod old Hammond sold, which was whippy beyond belief. It would have seemed impossible to handle a good fish with it, but I remember seeing old John put a fly with one of them (with the wind) right across the widest part of Old Barge, hook his trout and bring it rolling across to the net at his feet. The fly was the Pale Watery Dun which Hammond called by some name like Infallible or Irresistible – I took it out of the trout's mouth.

Fairly early in that season I lost half a yard of gut in a trout. The cast was a

level one. I had never heard of a tapered one. In time the cast wore out and it was some time before I could afford another. A tip on a leave out day enable me to buy one at Hammond's in the Square, Winchester. In July I think I caught my first trout. It was under size, but I carried it in triumph – curiously enough I got it with a sunk fly. I had only one other trout that season. I had no one to teach me anything of the entomology of the river; I had no idea that the flies did not visit the water from the air and no one explained to me the theory of fly fishing. It is true that a school fellow named Kensington read one evening at a meeting of "Bug and Snail" (The Natural History Society) an article on the Ephemeroidea, mugged up from some Encyclopedia, but I was too stupid to connect this information with the art at which I was so keen and so incompetent a practitioner. I had no literature on the subject and no one gave me a hint – I never saw anyone catch a natural fly from the surface or observe on what the fish were feeding – I went for the Wickham, while I had any, as the most attractive looking of my flies. None of them were built to cock and they invariably fell on their sides. Indeed I should say that they had been shop made for Tweed-side angling. They were quite as well suited for that as for the Itchen.

During 1876 I had a meeting on Old Barge side with a man whom I always identify in my own mind with May or Carlisle. I had just risen a trout and hitting him too hard had left not only my fly but the entire remnant of my cast with him. A bearded stranger fishing close by came along and inquired what was the matter. I told him I had lost all my only cast. He promptly produced a book with an array of shining new casts and gave me one with the utmost kindness. It was tapered from medium gut to quite fine but as usual in those days (and too often at present) it had a loop at both ends. I had never, so far as I knew, seen a tapered cast or heard of one, and I fixed it to my line by the fine end, looped on the fly to the stout end and selected a rising trout. The unstraightened, undamped cast fell in a coil on the water, but I think the trout must have been insane for it sailed up, picked out the fly from the middle of the coil and went under and I, taken by surprise, responded with a violent strike and left fly and cast and all but the loop with the fish. It was the biggest trout I had ever hooked or even seen hooked.

After leaving Winchester I spent a year in the Channel Islands doing a little sea fishing and some carp fishing on a private pond but having no opportunities of fishing with the fly. During the winter I had an accident in the football field

in which I sprained both my wrists so badly that they have never recovered. Indeed for many years afterwards it pained me to write for half an hour at a stretch.

Frank Buckland, whose scob (box writ backwards) I inherited at Winchester, was running the rival paper of the *Field, Land and Water* and I used to study the angling matter in both religiously – but until 1883 when I began to earn a little money, *res angusta* prevented me from doing anything in the way of fishing with the fly beyond a few attempts on the dace and chub of the Thames. In 1879 I became convinced that my fly rod of Winchester days was quite unsuited for fly fishing or any other purpose – and I purchased of Bowness of the Strand a general rod which by using alternate butts and a variety of tops was capable of being converted into anything from a big to a small pike rod, a bottom rod and an 11 foot fly rod. Knowing no better I took immense pride in it and it served me for a variety of purposes for several years till 1887. A tackle dealer in Russell Street, Covent Garden, named Sexton Biggs I used to visit on my way home to my diggings and he put me on to what I found quite the best Thames chub fly – a palmer tied with black hackle dyed a strong magenta, and I often used it on the Thames – until the river manners – or want of manners – of foreigners disgusted me with that river and I abandoned it in favour of better opportunities elsewhere.

Sexton Biggs was not the only tackle shop I haunted – Carter and Peck was another and indeed I used to look the dealers up in a Directory and spent winter Saturday afternoons visiting them and yearning over the treasures I could not afford to buy and occasionally yielding to temptation and buying some quite useless article.

In that year Mr. Irwin Cox gave me my first day on the Itchen above Winchester – and several more followed – and from that time there was never a year, down to his giving up the water at the end of 1918, that owing to his kindness I did not enjoy fishing on that beautiful and extremely difficult water. At first I had only odd days, but when he saw how desperately keen I was he got into the habit of sending me a comprehensive ticket which allowed me to go down whenever I liked. But until 1916 Sunday fishing was barred. For some years my fishing was purely empirical; I had not a notion why one fly offered a better chance than another – and it was not till *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* came out in 1887 that I began to get ideas on the subject. In that year I began to get interested in the



In August of 1980, this simple stone bench was unveiled on the banks of the river Itchen as a memorial to G.E.M. Skues. The plaque reads "In memory of G.E.M. Skues who fished these waters from 1883 to 1938. A man who had a way with a trout." It was built with funds raised from English flyfishers.

subject of fly dressing.

In 1887, my holiday was in July and I spent it with friends on the Wear catching a good many smallish trout on flies of my own make – nothing quite up to 3/4 lbs. I got most by casting from mid-stream to the banks and stripping my flies outwards. It lured many small trout to slash at the flies, mainly red spinners tied with flat gut dyed bright orange. I recall observing Olive Spinners. At this Mr. F. M. Halford sneered, when I mentioned it some years later, saying that there was no such fly – but afterwards he relented.

During this and several subsequent years I spent many of my holiday afternoons in the British Museum reducing into set formula the dressings of innumerable trout flies as described by every angling writer on which I could lay my hands and I have the material which I accumulated to this day. It had the merit of showing me what effect could be got with various materials and so eventually enabling me to discard the formula of the various authorities and dress patterns to my own ideas.

In 1888, I made my first contribution to angling literature in the form of a somewhat bitterly worded protest against the discursive irrelevancies introduced into the bulk of the angling papers of that day (and not unknown at present) and I signed myself "Val Conson."

At that time I used to frequent the theatre (pit entrance) a good deal and I was consumed with ambition to be a dramatic author – and I perpetrated some

appalling trash in pursuit of that ambition. I destroyed all of it long ago, being convinced that I have not the faculty for writing drama.

In August 1890 I had a weekend at Sutton Scotney on the Dover as a guest of Mr. Nicoll and caught some pretty trout of about a pound and a quarter average. He told me (and he seemed to be right) that no fly but the Red Quill was needed on his water. On the Monday we drove over to the Itchen and fished Mr. Cox's water. What a difference! The fish, as almost always, were as persnickety as possible.

In the autumn of 1891 I had a week with my brother C.A.M.S. on the Teme.

My later angling experiences are, I think, sufficiently dealt with in my published books.

*G.E.M. Skues was, of course, one of the giants of Twentieth Century angling, contributing many important books and ideas to the sport. He died in 1949. His unpublished autobiography, *Trivialities of a Long Life*, by a Person of No Consequence, is part of the manuscript file in the Kienbusch Angling Collection at Princeton University. The manuscript was compiled and organized by C.A.M. Skues, the angler's younger brother. This article comprised chapter one of the autobiography, and appears with the permission of Princeton University Library. We thank Jim Merritt, Associate Director of Communications at Princeton, for his help with this article.*

Neversink Idyll

in which the author finds a Catskill Camelot on the eve of World War II

by Maxine Atherton



John had met Edward Hewitt at the Anglers' Club of New York shortly after we moved east from San Francisco. He was known as the dean of anglers in the east and was generally addressed as Mr. Hewitt. He was much older than John, but they had much in common and became close friends.

I met that charming old gentleman the first time in 1939, and by then the stock market crash and Depression that followed had forced him to charge his friends, whom he invited to fish his water on the Neversink River, a small

rod fee each fishing season. And with that arrangement John and I felt free to fish there at any time.

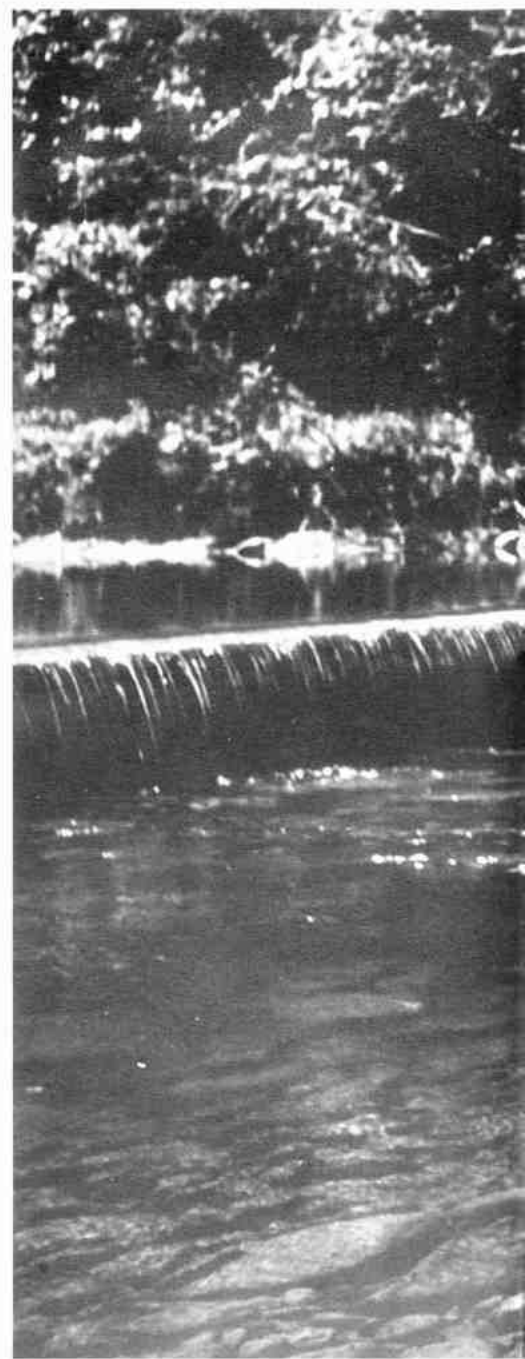
Mr. Hewitt owned seven miles of the Neversink, a lovely trout stream, very clear, and he had the riparian rights on both sides. Very few other fishers came to fish there, generally we had the fishing to ourselves, and we seldom fished together in one pool. There was no need; Mr. Hewitt's section of the Neversink had ideal natural pools, and he had made some excellent pools by putting up a series of log dams.

John and I stayed with him in his

camp, an old farmhouse near the river, and generally we fished until dark. And I cooked a late supper on the old wood-burning stove while my host and husband sat in the kitchen talking about fish, fish, fish, nothing but fish and fly-fishing until I thought they were daft.

However, I loved them dearly and shall be forever grateful for what they taught me about fly-fishing and the habits of trout, especially brown trout, the most erudite of the trout species.

Sometimes I sat on the bank and watched one of them fish. I recall a day that I stopped along the river and watch-





ed Mr. Hewitt fish one of the pools he had made. The low log dam had formed two pools, one above and one below it. Mr. Hewitt was wading knee-deep in the middle of the upper pool, a long flat one, and he was casting a fly to the opposite side of the river, where the current had dug a channel close to the bank. Big brownies liked to rest under the overhanging bank in the shade of branches hanging over the water, he said. And to lure one out he had chosen a Hewitt Skater (like the spider as described in John's book, *The Fly and the Fish*). To get the fly under the branches Mr. Hewitt

used the roll cast and let the fly drop close to the bank, a bit below his stance, and the instant the fluffy fly touched the water he lifted the rod tip, twitched it slightly to set the long stiff hackles on edge, began to strip in the line, and at the same time jerked the rod in a manner that moved the fly in darts and stops across the surface, just like a real live skater. But it did not get far, for a huge brown trout shot out of the pool and water erupted in all directions. When the trout dove down on the fly Mr. Hewitt lifted the rod, struck, played the trout until it tired, and then scooped it up in a

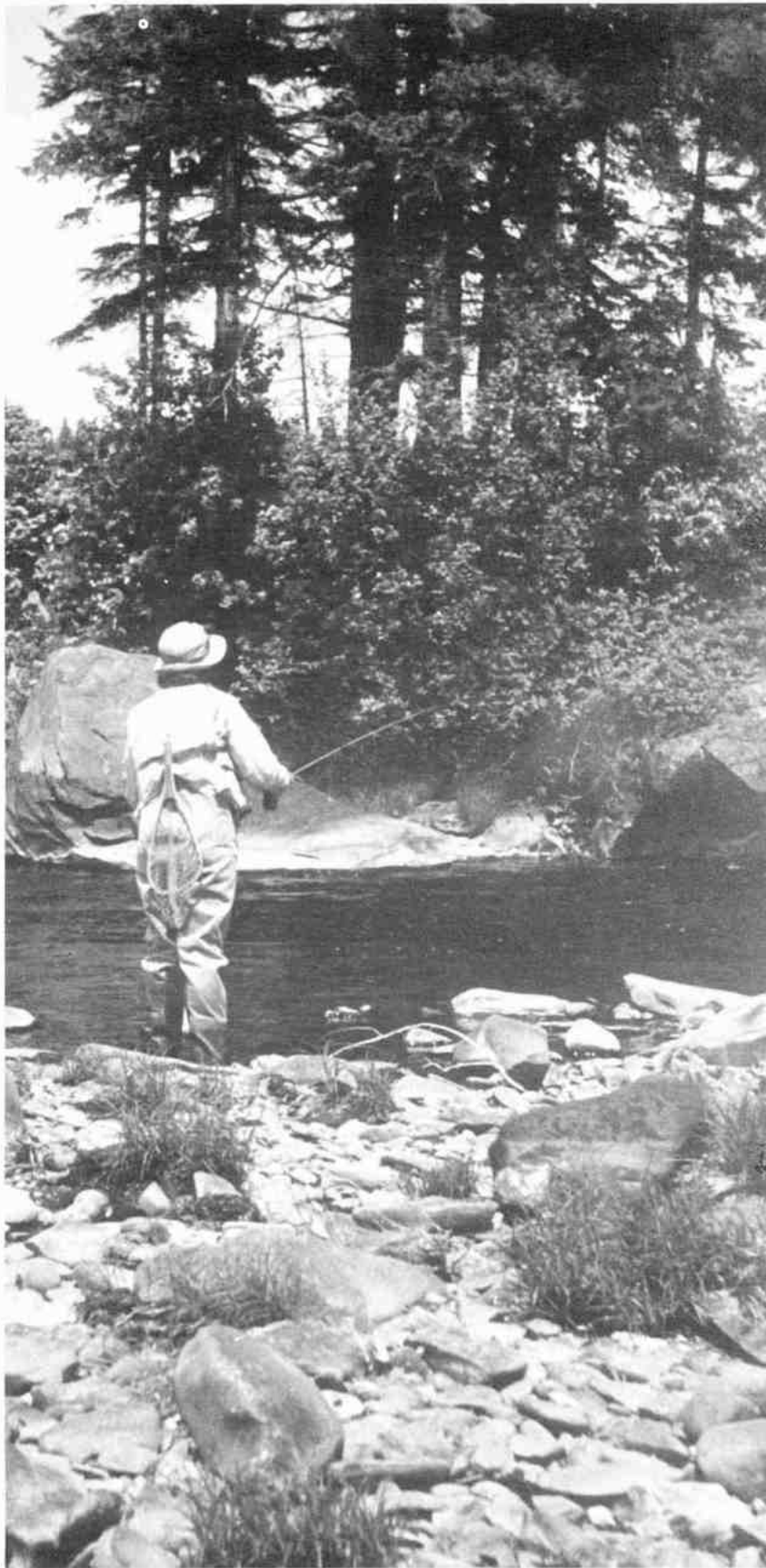
Edward Hewitt enjoying the fruits of his labors: fishing one of the pools he built on his Neversink water.

net and released the trout while holding the net under the water.

"The skater seems to drive big fish crazy. But it's not always easy to hook fish with it," Mr. Hewitt said, wading to shore.

"You made it seem very easy," I said.

"You see," he said, holding the fly out for me to examine, "to keep it light



Maxine Atherton fishing the Little Bend Pool on the Upper Neversink.

in weight the hackles are tied on a tiny hook, and that makes it easy for a fish to spit out before you have time to strike. You should use it only to locate large trout. And be careful not to let the fish feel the hook; if you do raise a large trout, change to a dry fly at once, a variant is good, and fish it carefully. Don't give up until the trout gets mad enough to take a swat at your fly. That may take a hundred casts."

He then suggested I fish the lower pool, a small pool in which the water falling over the dam had dug an ideal hiding place for trout at the base of the dam. And he added three feet of 4x tippet to my nine-foot gut leader (nylon leaders and floating lines had not yet come on the market) and he tied on a Hendrickson, the artificial that matched the natural flies over the water.

Handing the rod to me, he said, "Stand well back, strip out the amount of line you'll need to reach the dam, and cast the fly as close to the base as you can.

Somehow, I managed to drop the fly at the foot of the dam, and I started to strip in line at once, but then a silvery flash rising out of the dazzling dark green depths of clear water was my undoing. I yanked the fly away before what looked like a whale had a chance to get the hook inside its mouth.

Mr. Hewitt patted me on the shoulder, wished me better luck next time, and went off upriver. Of course he knew that smart brownie would not come up again, but I did not . . . until a couple of hours and an aching arm later.

When Mr. Hewitt was not fishing he could be found in his hatchery, working on experiments or improving his formula for a trout diet rich in protein, vitamins, amino acids, and everything nature had invented to make fish, and subsequently man, strong and healthy, as part of her program for the survival of the species.

The hatchery was located near the old farmhouse at the bottom of a slope, and Mr. Hewitt had piped water from a lively spring brook, running down the hillside behind the camp, into the hatchery building, through two long table troughs, and then outside to small rearing ponds. Inside, the troughs were filled with trout fry and fingerlings which had been hatched from eggs fertilized by the largest and healthiest of the trout in the rearing ponds.

And one of those ponds held six or seven brook trout averaging four to five pounds each! Mr. Hewitt said they had grown big because he fed them lights: a mixture of ground livers, gizzards, hearts, and the like — a gourmet delight on the trout menu.

One day I fished the Camp Pool all morning and failed to catch or raise a trout. At lunchtime I returned to camp

Edward Hewitt's hospitality included a comfortable and shady lunch along the Neversink.



and announced to John and my host that there were no fish in the Camp Pool that day. Mr. Hewitt, who was very sensitive to derogatory remarks about his pools, marched out to the hatchery with not a word, returned to the kitchen with a pail of lights, and invited me to follow him. I followed him down to the pool in question and watched as he dumped the lights over the water. The pool exploded trout!

"You see," he said, smiling at me, "they are there all right but are very smart. They've been caught and released more than once and are not likely to take an artificial readily."

Very chagrined, I hung my head and followed him back to camp, silent, with the humbling thought that he and John had no trouble catching wise old brownies in that pool.

John could do anything with a fly, and I learned about dry fly fishing from him. When trees and brush interfered with his backcast he directed the fly in the space over the river and changed its direction in midair on the forward cast. Mr. Hewitt said John had perfect timing and coordination between arm and eye. And I said his movements were as graceful as those of a ballet dancer.

One day Mr. Hewitt took me to the river, greased my line, tied on a heavy gut leader with a strong 2x tippet, and on it he tied a Neversink Streamer, his own pattern, which he said was meant to represent a minnow. He then waded into the river and stopped at the head of a run. I followed and stood beside him as he demonstrated how he wanted me to fish. To get line out, he cast it up-

stream, saying that casting it overhead might scare the trout. He made a couple of casts to get out enough line to reach to the opposite bank, about forty feet away, and then he lifted the line from the water and cast it to the opposite bank, a bit above his stance. He cast slack in the line by jerking the rod tip backward a bit at the end of the forward cast, and the instant the streamer touched the water he lifted the rod and tossed the loop of slack line upstream. He explained that he was using the greased-line method and was mending the line so the streamer could have a chance to sink a bit and swim down along the bank underwater before the current dragged it in a manner no real minnow would ever behave as it swung around in the current at the end of the cast.

His purpose, he said, was to show the streamer to any trout that might be resting under the overhanging bank on the other side. He then handed the rod to me, advised me to fish down to the end of the run, where a boulder protruded above water, and asked me to release any trout I might catch that morning. "Fish carefully around the big rock," he said, and then he wished me good luck and left me to my own devices.

I had a terrible time. The streamer was heavier than any fly I had ever cast before; it simply would not behave as it had for Mr. Hewitt.

However, the six huge brook trout he had taken out of the hatchery and planted around the rock early that morning were very gullible. Each one hooked itself securely when the streamer swung

around in the current a couple inches under the surface near the big rock. I caught and released every single one, six big brookies averaging from four to five pounds each!

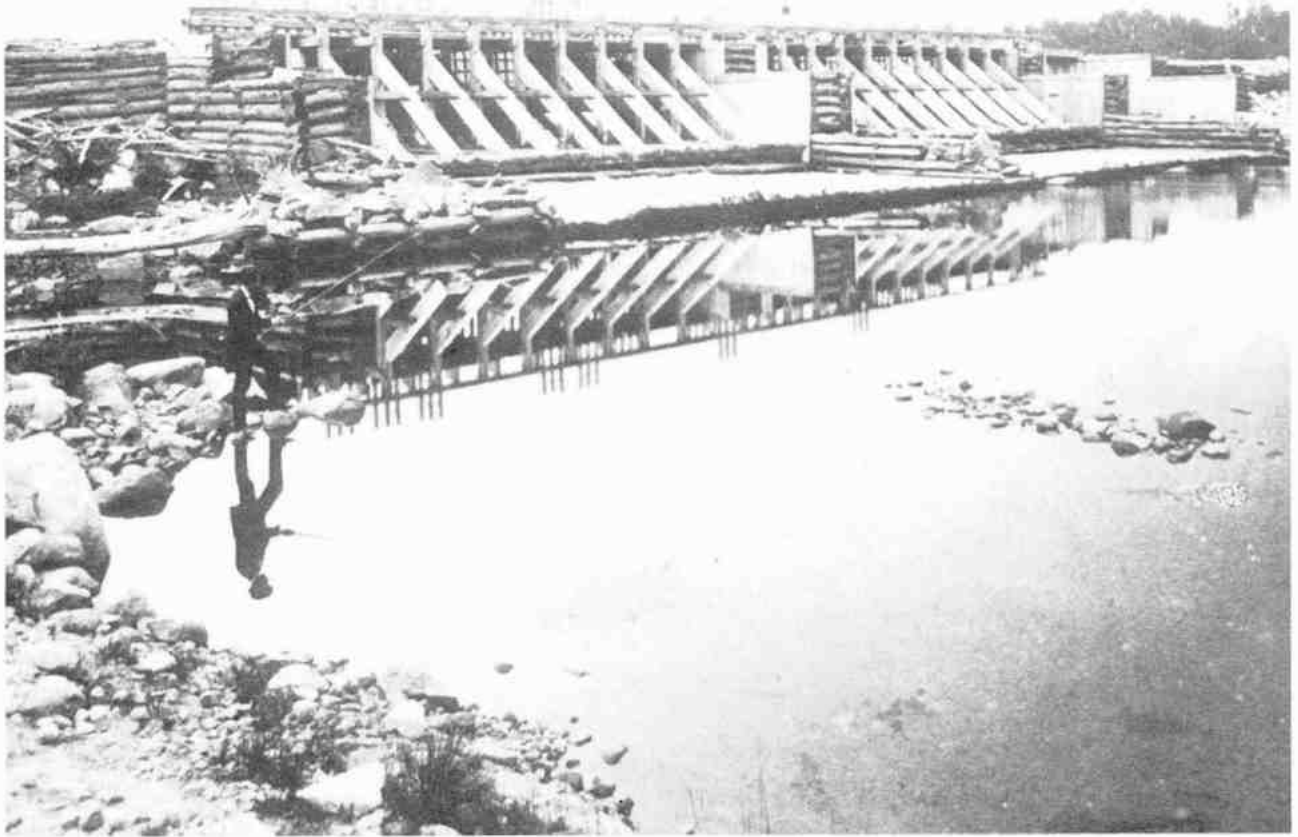
At lunchtime I returned to camp victorious, elated, and irrepressible. And as I described, play by play, just how I had outwitted each monster, my astonished husband turned to our host wide-eyed, asking for an explanation.

Mr. Hewitt nodded and smiled, knowingly. "Yes," he said, "I planted them in the river this morning and took her to the river to teach them to be more cautious next time they saw a minnow with a hook on its bottom."

Later in the season Mr. Hewitt taught me how to fish a nymph by using the greased-line method. I was delighted to discover that when trout were feeding under the surface, fishing with a nymph could be as much fun as dry fly fishing.

I look back at that time when John and I fished the Neversink with Mr. Hewitt as one of the happiest periods of my life, despite what Hitler and Mussolini were doing abroad. Ironically, today Mr. Hewitt's water in the Neversink, and his camp and hatchery too, are covered over by a reservoir for New York City.

Maxine Atherton needs no introduction to anglers; she has fished widely and well, and the episodes recounted in this article are only a small part of her colorful experience. "Neversink Idyll" is part of a book manuscript she is currently writing.



Rangeley Reflections

We recently received some wonderful stereoscopic views of Maine's Rangeley Region. They are entitled "Richardson & Rangeley Lakes Illustrated – Choice Bits of Romantic New England – C.A.J. Farrar, Publisher, Jamaica Plain, Mass." Above is the famous Upper Dam (probably in the 1870s) that divides Mooselookmeguntic and Richardson Lakes. To the left is Middle Dam, at the lower end of Lake Welokenebacook (i.e. Lower Richardson). On page 11, upper left, is a view entitled "Arm of the Lake," which we suspect is on Richardson Lake, but we aren't sure. Do our readers recognize this scene? Below it is Middle Dam Camp, probably about 1877. At that time it was under the control of the Oxford Club. Upper right on page 11 is an interior view of Camp Kennebago, and below it is a non-stereoscopic photo we recently received of the exterior of Camp Kennebago. The camp was constructed starting in about 1869 and became the headquarters of the Oquossoc Angling Association, which had a membership limited to seventy-five with annual dues of twenty-five dollars.





Recent Aquisitions

It has been nearly two years since we listed recent gifts to the Museum, and so the list is quite long. We'll plan to list library acquisitions (including books, catalogs, and assorted manuscripts) in a later issue. Because of the great amount of material we receive it's impossible to give the kind of detail we'd like to give about each item, but we think this listing is still quite useful; it shows the great array of items being received and it gives us a chance to acknowledge the generosity of many people.

This list does not include items donated for our auctions. We list those donors in the Museum News section of the magazine when we report on the auctions.

RODS

Howard Baetjer — three rods, including an F.E. Thomas Special, 13½ ft. fly rod and a Malloch 16½ ft. greenheart fly rod.

Richard Bauer — F.E. Thomas 9½ ft. Dirigo fly rod once owned by Charles Stechel.

Neil Beckwith — three antique fly rods: one by Frost, one by D.S. & K. Hub, and one unknown.

William Cass — Pflueger/Goodyear 9 ft. fly rod and a Heddon "Premier 115" 8½ ft. fly rod.

Winthrop Murray Crane — H.L. Leonard 13 ft. salmon rod, c. 1920.

Charles B. Cumings — six rods from the collection of the late Ed Cumings, well-known Michigan tackle dealer, including a 9 ft. Divine fly rod, an 8 ft. 9 in. Hardy Monogram fly rod, and two Ed Cumings Greenleafs (one custom fitted to Ed Cumings).

Mrs. Bruce Dunsmore — lancewood 9½ ft. fly rod owned by Redfield Proctor (Secretary of War and Governor of

Vermont around the turn of the century).

Frank Fletcher — H.A. Whittemore Kosmic 8 ft. 3 in. fly rod with celluloid reel seat, c. 1900.

Arthur Frey — Abbie & Imbrie Duplex fly/cast combination 9½ ft. rod; Winston 9 ft. 3 in. fly rod; Jack Schneider 9 ft. fly rod.

Major Henry Forester — Hardy 14 ft. Palakona Victoria salmon rod.

Sara Gillespie — a collection of thirteen rods from the Carsten Tiedeman estate, including several modern fiberglass rods, a Heddon Featherweight fly rod and a Paul Young Midge fly rod.

Katherine Holden — Custom built fly rod made by George Parker Holden, author of *Idyl of The Split Bamboo* and other books. 7½ ft. fly rod, two pc., built in 1932.

Timothy Hollander — Hardy 10 ft. fly rod with locking ferrules.

Bart Jacob — Horrocks-Ibbotson "Tonka-Glass" 8 ft. rod, combination cane and fiberglass.

Margaret Jones — two salmon rods; Hardy Palakona 11½ ft., and Scribner's 16½ ft. greenheart rod.

Joseph King — A.W. Gamage 12½ ft. salmon rod used by Zane Grey in New Zealand.

Mrs. John Knott — seven rods, including a c. 1890 9 ft. Orvis; a 9 ft. George Burtis presentation rod, 1915; a William Mitchell 7 ft. Calcutta cane fly rod with patented handle; and a Thomas Conroy 8 ft. greenheart fly rod.

Richard Kress — Goodwin Granger Champion 9 ft. fly rod.

Kenneth Leonard — Thomas Chubb Superb 9 ft. fly rod (Mr. Leonard also donated an outstanding fish recipe to the Director).

Bruce de Lis — custom fiberglass rod by noted builder Cliff Wyatt.

Leon Martuch — sixteen rods from the collection of Leon P. Martuch, including: Hardy Palakona Gold Medal 12' salmon rod; Frank Wire 7 ft. 7 in. five-strip cane rod; Heddon Model 14 8½ ft. fly rod; two Hardy Palakona Phantom Salmon Rods, 8½ ft. and 9 ft.; early Phillipson fiberglass 7 ft. fly rod; Heddon Expert 125 7½ ft. fly rod; H.L. Leonard 7½ ft. Tournament fly rod; several early fiberglass rods.

Mrs. Max Matthes — Orvis "Dry Fly" 8½ ft. fly rod, c. 1930.

William Munroe — Payne 9 ft. 3 pc. fly rod.

Donald Owen — Heddon #10 fly rod and unidentified antique rod.

Leigh Perkins — 10½ ft. unidentified greenheart fly rod.

Lee Richardson — E.C. Powell 8½ ft. fly rod made especially for Lee Richardson by E.C. Powell.

Donald Ross — lancewood fly rod built by Ed Smith, c. 1890.

Mrs. Edwin Schoen — seven rods, including two F.E. Thomas Bangor rods, a Thomas 9 ft. Special, and two Payne rods, 8½ ft. and 9 ft.

Paul Schwindt — three rods by Thomas Conroy, c. 1890: 12 ft. 3-pc. fly rod of four-strip construction; 10 ft. fly/cast combination; 9 ft. casting rod, all three with Conroy patent reel seat.

Philip Townley — Charles Murphy 9½ ft. fly rod, 3-pc.; entire rod has been "silken" wrapped with clear thread.

Mrs. R. Van der Straeten — collection of rods, including H.L. Leonard Tournament fly rod and Von Lengerke and Detmold fly rod, c. 1890.

George Whitney — B.F. Nichols 10½ ft. fly rod.

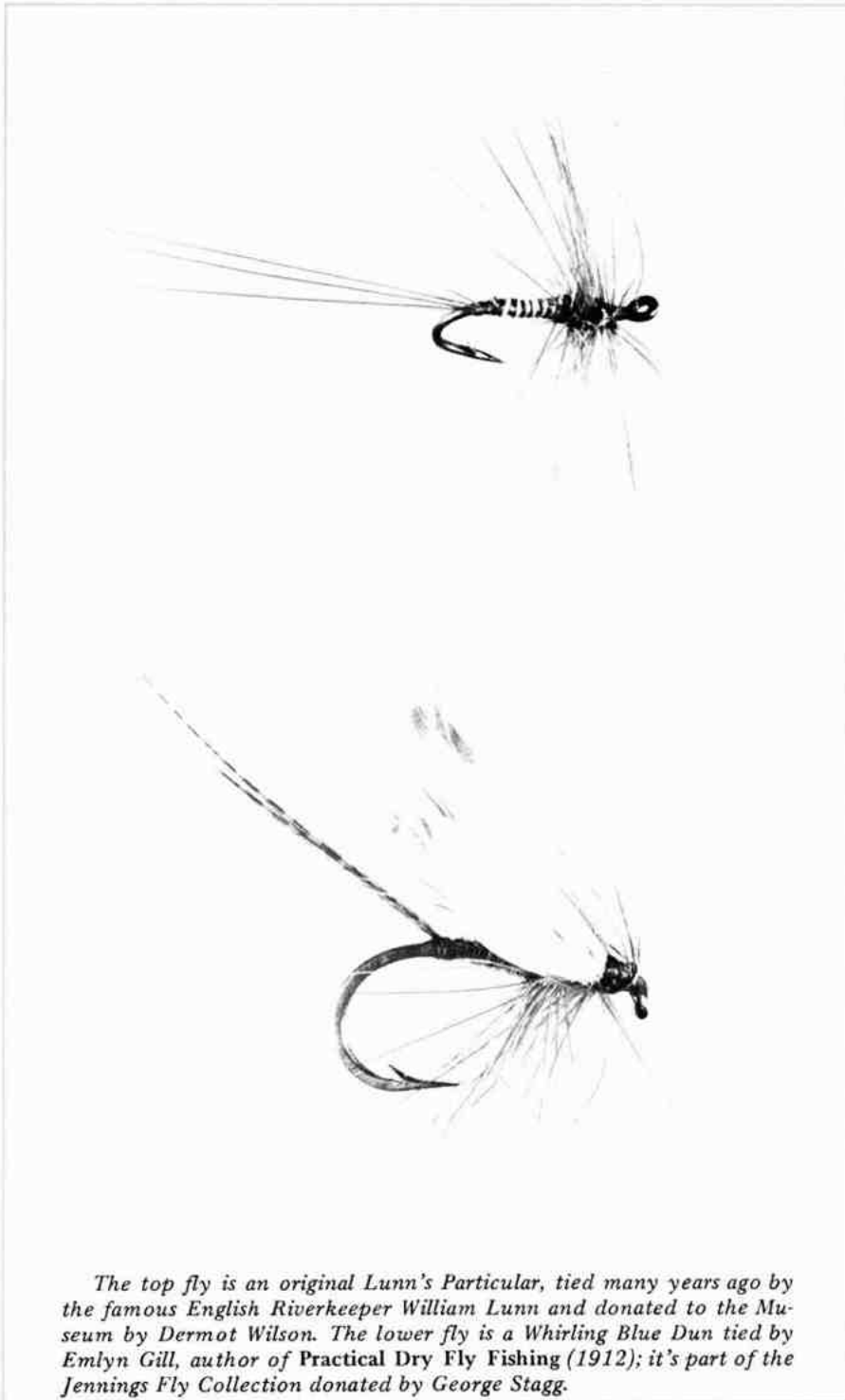
REELS

Mrs. William Bell — small raised-pillar



- Fly reel, unknown date.
- Kay Brodney – Garcia Delta 3 modern fly reel.
- M.T. Bronstad, Jr. – 4 in. dia. wooden troling reel.
- J.M. Burrall – unidentified aluminum multiplying reel, c. 1900.
- Frank Fletcher – Hardy Uniqua fly reel.
- Sara Gillespie – nine fly reels from the estate of Carsten Tiedeman, mostly various Pflueger Medalist models.
- Alec Jackson – antique raised-pillar reel with horse-hair line; reel has ivory handle.
- John Kinnane – Julius Vom Hofe casting reel, c. 1890.
- John Mackiewicz – Pioneer Sports (New Delhi, India) Flyfish aluminum trout reel built in India.
- Mrs. Max Matthes – McVickar Bushkill

Among the recently received reels are these. Starting in the lower left, a Leonard-Mills trout fly reel, a highly desirable collectible donated by Mrs. Henry Van Cleef. Above the Leonard is a hard-to-find Meisselbach Catucci Symploreel, one of the most sought-after of all Meisselbachs. Above it is a fine Edward Vom Hofe multiplier, also given to the Museum by Mrs. Van Cleef. To the right of the Vom Hofe is a Holmes reel (the company was L.W. Holmes, of Oronoque, Connecticut) that was used for many years by the late C. Jim Pray, famous steelhead fly tier. It was donated by Harry Geron. Below the Holmes is an early design prototype of the now-famous Orvis C.F.O. reel, donated by Orvis. Below the Orvis is a brass Malloch reel, circa 1900, donated by William Sipperly. In the center, bottom row, is an Abbey & Imbrie circa 1890 reel donated by Anita Page. In the center of the group is a very small brass reel, unusual in that its pillars are raised; raised pillar reels did not become well known until both Conroy and Leonard began producing them well after the Civil War, and this reel in every other respect appears to be older than that. Our assessment of its age is reinforced by the horsehair line it holds. It was donated by Alec Jackson. The photograph is by Ron Coppock.



The top fly is an original Lunn's Particular, tied many years ago by the famous English Riverkeeper William Lunn and donated to the Museum by Dermot Wilson. The lower fly is a Whirling Blue Dun tied by Emyln Gill, author of Practical Dry Fly Fishing (1912); it's part of the Jennings Fly Collection donated by George Stagg.

Trout Reel.

Donald Noel — Horrocks-Ibbotson Vernley Trout Reel.
 Orvis — early prototype experimental model of the modern C.F.O. reel.
 Donald Owen — Martin Number 2 automatic aluminum fly reel.
 Anita Page — Abbey & Imbrie fly reel with 1889 patent.
 Leigh Perkins — eleven reels, including: Rudal Aluminum trout reel; Farlow Ambassador salmon reel; Hardy Marquis multiplier; Pridex trout reel.

Mrs. Edwin Schoen — seven Hardy reels, including two St. George, a St. George Junior, a Uniqua, a St. John, and two Perfects, in various diameters.
 William Sipperly — Malloch brass reel with ivory handle.
 Mrs. Henry Van Cleef — Leonard Mills fly reel and Edward Vom Hofe Multiplier trout reel.
 V.C. Warren — Bache Browne-Airex Mastereel, c. 1947; one of the first popular modern spinning reels in America.

John Knight Waters — small antique brass reel, c. 1900.

FLIES

Pierre Affre — dry fly box inscribed from Jon Tarantino to Charles Ritz. Box is full of flies, owned and used by Charles Ritz.
 Frank Amato — an original Skunk steelhead fly, tied by Mildred Kogel, the developer of the pattern.
 Maxine Atherton — a large collection of flies tied and used by her late husband and author of *The Fly and the Fish*, John Atherton.
 Joseph Beck — Wheatley 32-compartment fly box with 130 assorted Scottish flies; framed shadow box containing an Alex Martin parachute dry fly from the 1930s and a letter telling the origin of the pattern; west coast salmon and streamer patterns by Bob Zimmerman.
 Al Brewster — twenty-seven assorted flies, some originated by Mr. Brewster, and all tied by him.
 Henry Bruns — four flies tied by Don Martinez, famed western tier.
 Rodolphe Coigney — fifteen assorted nymphs and salmon flies tied by the late Charles De Feo.
 D.C. Corkran — fourteen assorted Irish salmon flies tied by Garnetts & Keegans of Dublin.
 Charles B. Cumings — the sample fly pattern case of Ed Cumings, Michigan tackle dealer; case includes three glass cylinders with a total of 28 assorted sample patterns.
 Wes Drain — five wet fly steelhead patterns tied by Mr. Drain.
 Lindley Eberstadt — unique handwritten book containing 157 flies and extensive notations on their use in the late 19th and early 20th century; leather fly book in slip case, containing 169 assorted wet flies and seven bound-in original pen and ink drawings of fishing scenes from the early 1880s. Six of these drawings appeared in the Museum magazine, Winter 1980.
 Chico Fernandez — twenty-five assorted saltwater patterns, many originated by Mr. Fernandez.
 Keith Fulsher — ten Thunder Creek baitfish imitations, originated and tied by Mr. Fulsher.
 Katherine Holden — 146 assorted flies tied and used by George Parker Holden, in two boxes. One box has Dr. Holden's name inscribed in the top.
 Fred Houwink — two framed sets of Current River (Missouri) feather- and hair-winged flies used in the 1920s.
 Bob Jacklin — five hand-woven Bar X flies, marketed some years ago in Butte, Montana.
 Alec Jackson — steelhead wet flies tied by Jim Pray (one) and Brace Hayden

(six); 28 assorted Alex Martin parachute and realistic flies; 60 assorted New Zealand streamers, including many Matuka variations.

Walt Johnson – four wet fly steelhead patterns tied by Mr. Johnson.

Harry LeMire – two dry fly and five wet fly steelhead patterns developed and tied by Mr. LeMire.

Alvan Macauley – five Orvis trout flies mounted on sales cards from Joseph Marks & Co., Detroit.

John Mackiewicz – five wet flies for use in India, tied in India.

Ed Shenk – assorted original patterns by Mr. Shenk, including cress bugs, hoppers, sculpins, and double spinners.

Anne Simoneau – four Tuttle deer hair bugs.

William Sipperly – three antique leather fly books containing an assortment of wet flies.

George Stagg – the Preston Jennings fly collection, containing more than 1,100 flies that were gathered by Preston Jennings while researching fly fishing subjects. The collection includes flies by most of the 20th century's most famous tiers, including Skues, Gordon, Jennings, La Branche, Hewitt, Harding, Southard, De Feo, Gill, and many others.

Roswell Truman – 106 assorted Abercrombie & Fitch trout flies formerly owned by James Cobb, President of Abercrombie & Fitch.

Karl Upton – five cork-bodied bass bugs, c. 1930-40.

Jim Victorine – three variations on the Rusty Squirrel steelhead fly.

James Waddell – antique leather fly book with 31 snelled wet flies.

Dermot Wilson – a Lunn's Particular trout dry fly, tied by William Lunn.

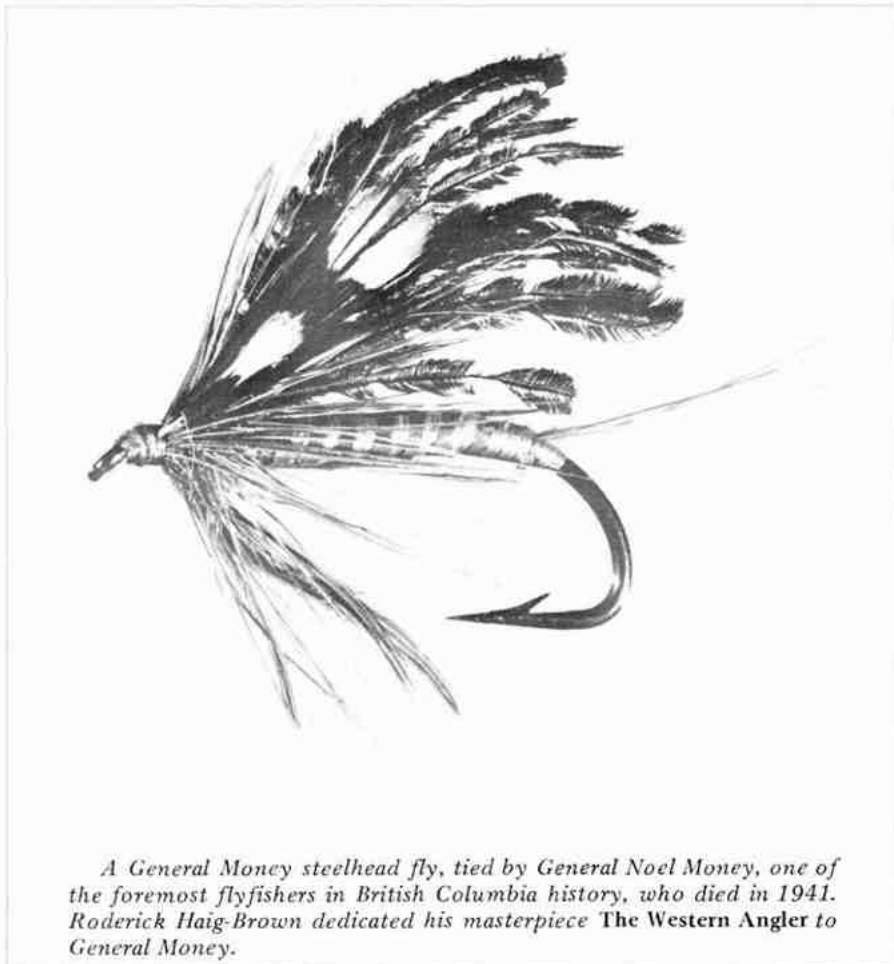
ART & MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS

Jack Brewton – seven William Schaldach etchings; Salmon at a Waterfall, White-water, Leaping Ouananiche, Three Trout, Sunny Run (Brown Trout), Barnhart's Pool – Beaverkill, Leaping Tarpon.

Robert Buckmaster – approximately 400 trout fly hooks of various sizes, mostly for snells, many in original packages (Horrocks & Ibbotson, Harrison, Hemming, Woodfield, Conroy); hooks were owned by the famous writer conservationist Emerson Hough, pre-1930.

Ken Cameron – two fly paintings by Herb Jones; Austin Hogan watercolor of 18 flies; four Austin Hogan pencil sketches of flies; Churchill Ettinger etching "Nearly Netted."

William Cass – eight boxes of Herter's barbless hooks and one box of E. Hille #10 hooks that were issued by the



A General Money steelhead fly, tied by General Noel Money, one of the foremost flyfishers in British Columbia history, who died in 1941. Roderick Haig-Brown dedicated his masterpiece The Western Angler to General Money.

Army Medical Department in World War II to wounded soldiers for therapeutic fly-tying sessions.

Coleman Lake Club (Wisconsin) – woven wicker creel with canvas strap, c.1920.

George Cook III – two large pre-1940 wicker creels and two small belt-looped bait boxes.

Robert Cruickshank – 2 Weber leader-soaking tins and a Hamilton fishing jacket, c. 1940.

Charles Cumings – assorted fishing accessories of Ed Cumings, including a Cumings Carryall fishing jacket, and two landing nets.

Harold Demarest – various fishing accessories for use with Japanese light tackle fishing, including floats, snelled hooks, and leaders.

L.W. Farmer – an Outers locator triangulation device and a Duffy antique fish scaler, c. 1910.

Joseph Hubert – S. Sandstrom print "Atlantic Salmon – Safely Grassed," from an edition of 100 to accompany the publication of *Salmon – Salmon*.

David Kashner – a large collection of Ray Bergman hooks for fly tying, including various price lists and correspondence from Ray Bergman and A.I. Alexander.

Richard Kress – several William Mills gut leaders and an antique collapsible fishing net.

Alvan Macauley – Allcock aluminum wet fly box.

Leon Martuch – a large collection of fly fishing accessories, including various fly boxes, leaders, fly treatments, and fly lines, including a customized Garcia fly line that was probably the first prototype sink-tip line. Eight assorted fly rod tubes, of various materials, including early models by Scientific Anglers and Shakespeare.

Frank Matarelli – a collection of prototypes of fly tying tools, including various open-frame bobbins, whip finishing tools, and bobbin threaders, invented by Mr. Matarelli.

William Siebert – 36 assorted William Mills gut leaders in new condition.

Donald Owen – a wooden fly line spool for storing spare lines.

Anita Page – antique Richardson collapsible landing net.

Leigh Perkins – Fye-type metal fly box with shoulder straps.

Dale Worfel – Allcock's gut leader.

Ed Zern – a vest patch from the Half-Limit Club, organized by John Alden Knight about 1948 to promote conservative killing of fish.

An assortment of recent acquisitions from many sources. The rod in the upper left is a Gamage "Challenge," twelve and a half feet long, that was used by Zane Grey during one of his visits to New Zealand, probably in the 1920s. It was donated by Joseph King. In the upper right is a two-piece seven-foot, seven-inch fly rod built by Frank Wire, a prominent western rodbuilder; the rod is of five-sided construction, and was donated by Leon Martuch. Below the Wire rod is a rattan-handled Charles Murphy rod, the third in the Museum's collection. The rod is nine and a half feet long, three-piece, with two tips, and is entirely wrapped with clear thread in the style of "Silkien" wrappings used on some Thomas Chubb rods. It seems likely that this wrapping took place after the rod was sold by Murphy. It also seems probable that the entire rod was refinished at the same time, because it lacks the intermediate winds that apparently were standard on Murphy rods. The rod was originally owned by Dr. William Andrews of Newark, New Jersey. Dr. Andrews was a near neighbor of Murphy's (see Volume Seven, Number Three, of the magazine for more on Murphy), and apparently fished with him in New Jersey and the Catskills. Dr. Andrews had been a Captain and a surgeon in the Union Army in the Civil War, and died in 1913. The rod was donated by his grandson, Philip B. Townley. The bottom rod is an eight and a half foot E.C. Powell rod built by Powell for the well-known western outdoor writer Lee Richardson and donated by Mr. Richardson.

The three glass tubes containing flies are part of a large gift of memorabilia relating to the Ed Cumings tackle firm that has been well known in Michigan for more than half a century. The flies were samples, carried to show tackle dealers what the Cumings product looked like. From that same gift came the antique landing net in the lower left. The Cumings collection was donated by Charles B. Cumings.

The flat woven creel was a gift of the Coleman Lake Club of Goodman, Wisconsin. The leaders were given by William Siebert, Jr., part of a large assortment of William Mills gut leaders in their original packages.

The Churchill Ettinger etching, "Nearly Netted," was donated by Kenneth Cameron, and the William Schaldach etching, "Leaping Tarpon," was donated by Jack Brewton.







Tackle catalog cover girl Carrie J. Frost proudly displayed this trophy trout she caught, in 1917.

Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1940

Flytying Capital of the World

by Susie Isaksen



An order of flies from England failed to arrive in Stevens Point, Wis., on time for opening day in the spring of 1896. This circumstance, unfortunate as it seemed at the time, eventually hatched into an enterprise producing flies in such numbers as to rival the myriads which rise off a central Wisconsin stream on a prime midsummer's night.

Carrie J. Frost, ace fishing partner and daughter of the flyless angler, took a look at the flies her father did have, many remains of seasons past, and decided to tie some herself. She did a beautiful job, creating replicas of the English patterns that pleased her delighted dad easily enough. It was a bit tougher, though, to please the brook trout for which the Stevens Point sand country streams are still famous. Her flies passed even this ultimate test with flying colors. John C. Frost became the envy of his many fishing friends because of his fishing prowess and especially because of his clever daughter and her skill. Beaming and boasting with all due pride, he lined his daughter up with orders by the score. So many, in fact, that Carrie, working out of the Frost family home in Stevens Point, had more business than she could handle.

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She talked the family's housekeeper into lending a hand. Still, the orders multiplied. More help was recruited from other women willing to tie for what became the C. J. Frost Co., incorporated by Carrie and her brother George W. Frost.

The flies were good. Orders were filled promptly and accurately. Not surprisingly, there turned out to be an insatiably hungry market for a competent source of domestic flies. The delays of dealing by mail with distant-but-traditional English houses had frustrated American flyfishers for years. There were many successful individual American tyers and other company endeavors such as the seven-women Orvis flytying operation begun by Mary Orvis Marbury during the 1870s. It was Carrie Frost, however, who catered to the hardware store market and surpassed all others in volume.

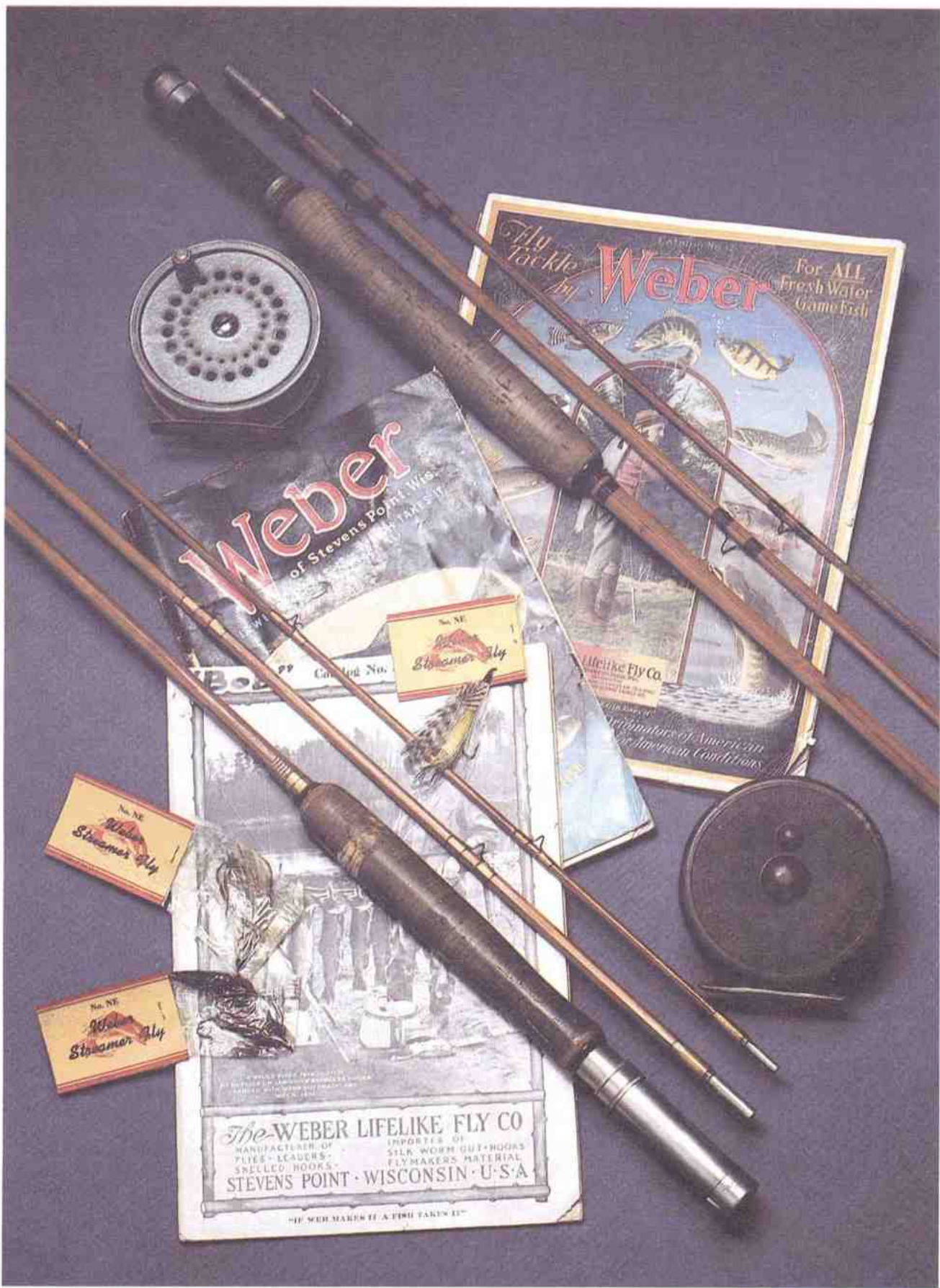
By 1910, Frost's cottage-style industry had transformed into a downtown Stevens Point flytying factory where women worked at long tables divided off into individual lamp-and-vice cubicles. There were almost 100 women working in two factory buildings when, in 1920, Carrie sold her business to Dan Frost, unrelated but wealthy businessman and president of Citizens National Bank, Stevens Point. Oscar L. Weber (formerly employed by Kelley-Howe Co. of Duluth, Minn., hardware distributors

and one of Carrie Frost's biggest buyers) was named manager and treasurer of Frost Fishing Tackle. Investors in the deal included two brothers in the grocery wholesale business, A. M. and Clinton Copps of Stevens Point, and Herbert Weber of South Bend, Ind. Edward C. Wotruba of Stevens Point joined in as sales manager and secretary in 1921 when Oscar Weber left Frost Tackle to start Weber Lifelike Fly Co. The Copps brothers left Frost Tackle to finance Weber. Carrie Frost remained loyal to and active in Frost Tackle.

In 1926, Oscar Weber bought out Frost Tackle and everyone (except Dan Frost who sold out) joined together again under the Weber Lifelike Fly Co. name.

Meanwhile, Carrie's brother George had started (in 1920) his own separate competing company. His sons eventually joined in to form G. W. Frost & Sons, capitalizing on the Frost name. This particular limb of the Stevens Point tyers never achieved the national sales prominence enjoyed by the Weber group.

Oscar Weber was an innovative guy who delighted in retaining his lead as America's biggest (at least so far as this author can tell) purveyor of flies. Publicity stunts and big splashy ads were the marks of his distinct business style. With great fanfare, he hired W. G. Hogg of Inverness, Scotland, to come to Stevens Point and show Weber tiers the true and





historically accurate way to tie the very popular Scotch salmon flies. Hogg, who had tied for Hardy brothers and a few others, was probably never so famous as he was in the mid-1920s when Oscar Weber saw to it that his American tour was noted in the national sporting magazines.

The Weber Company, though its products are not now prized by classic rod and reel collectors, produced some fine equipment. Both the rods pictured from the Museum collection are well made and attractive. The upper rod is an eight and a half foot, three piece model. The lower rod is a "J.A. Henshall" model, three-piece, eight feet long, sold in 1934. The upper reel is a Kalahatch Fly Reel Number 400 (in the 1931 catalog the word is spelled Calahatch). The lower reel is Weber's famous Weber Henshall Number 104. The three streamers are from the 1930s, and were donated by Robert Cruickshank. The upper catalog is from 1931, and the lower catalog is from 1925; both were loaned to the author for use in this article by the Weber people. The center catalog is from 1939, and is part of the Museum collection. The photograph is by Ron Coppock.

"Fly Rod" Bill Cook, expert local fly-fisher, was hired during the late 1920s and sent to the northeastern United States to introduce and promote fly-fishing and Weber's by-then full line of flies and accessories (fly lines, dressings, dry-fly floatant, gut leaders, etc.). Lots of attention focused too on the trout hatchery Weber established near Stevens Point in 1930.

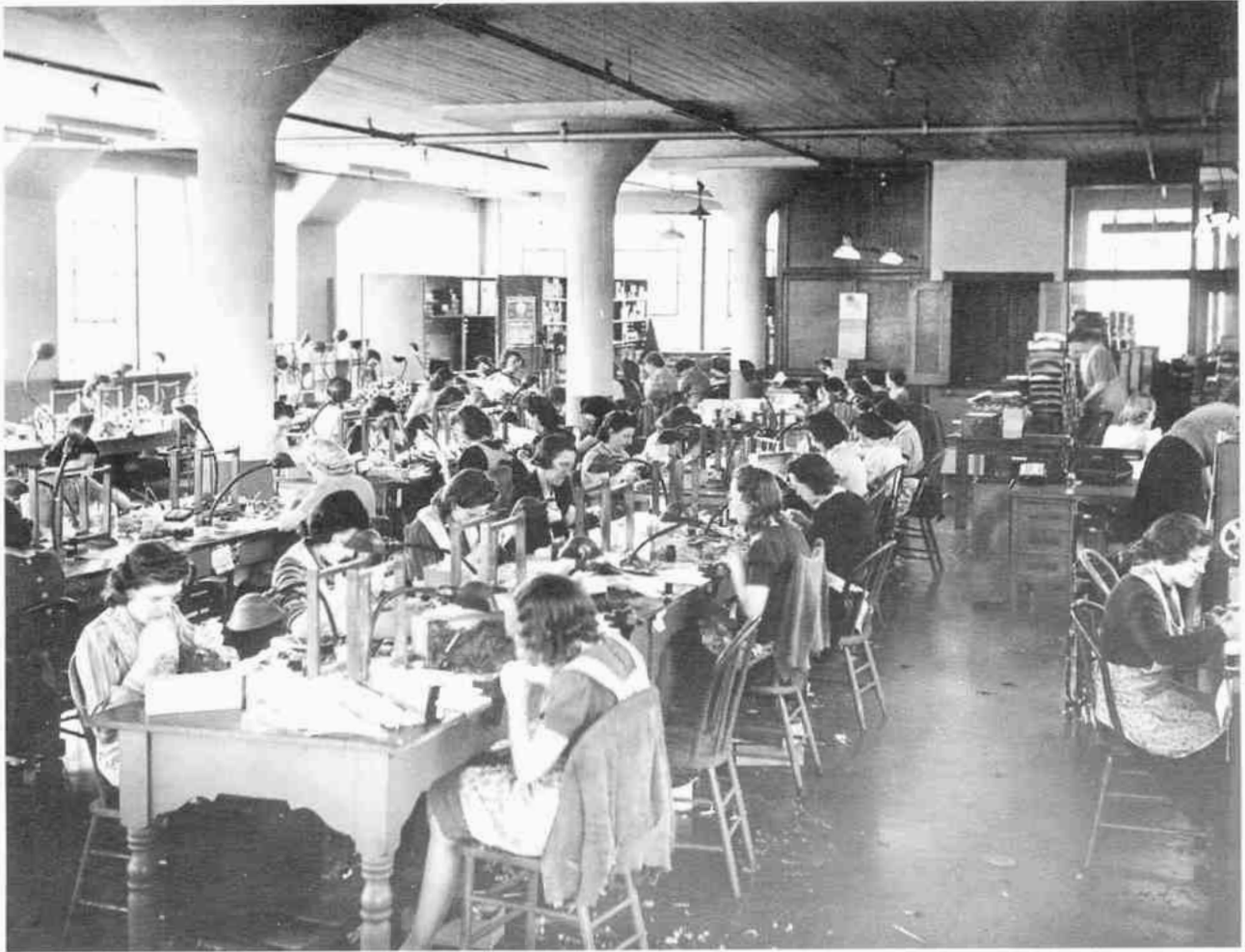
Full page color ads in *Field & Stream* touted Weber products. There were: Weber's own original Hornberg Special, a wet-or-dry trout fly first made in about 1930 and named after (if not also developed by) local conservation warden and flyfisher Frank Hornberg; "Hell On Bass — famous killer" flies, introduced by Weber in the late 1920s and popularizing forked-tail scissor-action streamers as "irresistible" modifications to 12 well-known patterns; the Whiskerbug, developed by Weber during the mid 1920s and sold as "weedless wonders" intentionally tied with stiff bucktail hair preceding the hook to assure a snag-free retrieve; and "Paired Cocked Wing" wet-or-dry flies with upright and divided wings offered in 72 classic patterns.

Anyone who fished knew the slogans: "Fish Fight for Frost Flies," and "If Web Makes It Fish Take It."

But Oscar Weber wasn't able to attract all the limelight. He had too good a thing going. Joseph Worth, a heating equipment engineer and inventor, sold the Kleenaire Corp. he had founded and, in 1940, bought Olsen Bait Co. of Chipewewa Falls, Wis. Worth moved the company to Stevens Point, renamed it The Worth Co., and expanded it into flies.

With Worth's arrival, Stevens Point secured, far beyond all other claims, the title of "Fly Tying Capital of the World." By the mid 1940s over 500 local tiers, mostly women working in factories, made over 10 million flies each year. It was a phenomenal total considering that Orvis, one of the (if not the) biggest contemporary fly sales outfits, last year sold 480,000 flies — more than in any of its other 125 years in the business. Of the Orvis total, 468,000 were tied by American flyfishers, most of them men, working at home.

Weber Co. produced roughly half the Stevens Point total, employing 350 women with wholesale fly sales running about one million dollars annually. G. W. Frost & Sons was second in fly production. Worth sales ran about a quarter million dollars annually, much, but not all, from the sale of flies made by 160 fulltime workers assisted by 20 or 30 part time



Above: part of the Weber operation in the late 1940s, when the Stevens Point companies shared a revolving pool of 500 workers and produced ten million flies a year.

Left: a worker's rest area at Weber about the same time; competition among the Stevens Point companies compelled employers to provide extra benefits such as this.

Both photos courtesy of Weber International, Inc.

home tiers.

Other less prolific producers in the Stevens Point fly tying complex included: Bass Houn (sold to Weber in the late 1920s); Plantigo (sold to Weber in the early 1940s); and Marathon Tackle Co. of Wausau, Wis., which maintained a fly tying factory as a branch operation in Stevens Point (Marathon Tackle is separate from Marathon Rubber Products also of Wausau, manufacturer of waders).

Each company conducted fly tying training courses, recruiting nearly all the young women seeking work out of each year's high school graduating class.

Most trainees could master the easy pan fish flies which sold for 35 cents per dozen wholesale. They were hired to make 16 or 18 dozen of them daily at the basic hourly wage of 35 cents. The very best tiers — only 5 percent of those taken on for training and only after two years of experience — were given more than an hour to complete one of the more complex Scotch salmon flies which wholesaled for from \$3 to \$6 per dozen depending on the pattern. Piecework bonuses were paid to those able to produce more than the expected minimums. The standard wage worked out to annual pay of \$728 with the better tiers earning as much as 20 percent more or \$900. To put the pay rates in perspective: Boss Joseph Worth bought a brand new 1941 Plymouth Special Deluxe, snazziest thing on the road that year, for \$885 less a \$650 trade-in on his year-old car for a net cost of \$235.

Fly tiers capitalizing on the bonus system out-earned factory assembly line workers and laborers. Actually, the tiers were pampered. The various companies scrambled to hire each other's best tiers. Air conditioning (at Worth) and luxurious restrooms were important prerequisites to the production of quality flies. Some extremely skilled company-juggling and secret-swapping prima donnas caused their juggled bosses no end of grief.

No matter, really. The neighboring competitors stayed on more or less friendly terms anyway because there was plenty of business for everyone.

Plenty of business for everyone, that is, until 1949.

Then came the crash.

"There were two post-war trends that led to our demise as fly tiers," explained Robert W. Worth (Joseph's son and present president of The Worth Co.). "First, the Japanese started making flies for the American market. They had a huge source of cheap labor. Their flies hit the U.S. market at three for 25 cents while ours retailed for 50 cents each. At first the Japanese creations were mostly junk; tied by ladies working at home without benefit of training or supervision. Quality

control was nonexistent.

"Then Japanese quality improved while American labor costs kept accelerating. Japanese labor costs increased too but nowhere near as rapidly as ours did. American policy was to encourage the redevelopment of our former enemies so protective import duties and quotas on flies were political impossibilities.

"We were faced with a choice: either import flies or make a patriotic appeal to flyfishers to buy 'made in U.S.A.' quality. We tried the latter. It was a noble idea but it didn't work."

Weber couldn't get much going either. They obtained an exclusive arrangement to sell cheap Japanese flies through their network of sales representatives. But the deal lasted less than a year — foreign suppliers undercut the distributors and started selling directly to retailers.

"The second factor drowning our fly business was the advent of spinning," recalled Worth. "Servicemen returning home from Europe brought back equipment for spinning or 'thread fishing' as it was called in England. It was Bob Abb, a Weber employee, who brought the first spinning gear to Stevens Point.

"Garcia, recognizing a golden and timely opportunity, jumped into spinning in a big way. The new sport became quite a fad. Fly fishermen changed over, some making a complete switch while others still took their fly gear along and alternated between the two methods while astream. The net effect was that fishermen started buying fewer and fewer flies and more and more spinning lures."

Worth Co. was well equipped to cash in on the new market. They had never stopped making the old Olsen Bait Co. Colorado and Indiana spinners designed for use with worms. It was not too difficult to weight them and adapt them for use with spinning gear. Also, flush from big war-time government contracts to make split-rings used as retaining rings on military aircraft, Worth purchased Chippewa Spinner Co. of Eau Claire, Wis. Eventually, Worth phased out of fly production, once half its annual business.

The transition did not come so easily at Weber where flies had been their mainstay. President Edward G. Wotruba (the former sales manager who had been with the company since 1921 and had bought out retiring Oscar Weber in 1947, 14 years after Carrie Frost's death) changed the company name to Weber Tackle to reflect his efforts to branch away from flies.

"We tried a nylon fly reel in 1949 but it was an idea ahead of its time," explained Wotruba. "After we had made them and sold several, we learned that

nylon absorbs up to 5 percent of its weight in water. The spindles froze up and most of the reels ended up back in the factory. We bored out the center posts and put in brass bushings. The repaired reels were marvelous but we had spoiled the market."

Weber Tackle coasted through the 50s with a short-lived Stren distributorship. In 1956, they started making foam buckets and coolers for live bait, six packs and picnics. They also got into salt water terminal tackle with a dazzling line of wiggling plastic "skirts" and trolls sold under the name "Hoochy." Now under the direction of Remer Hutchinson, who bought the company from the Wotruba family in 1979, Weber International Inc. continues to make a broad line of fishing tackle and accessories.

Note, though, that Weber never got wholly out of the fly business. Over the years, they continued to tie high-grade specialty flies — Hornbergs, Irresistibles, salmon flies. In recent years, they have been supplying a few western accounts. More significantly, they have been making 5,000 dozen flies per year for survival kits for all U.S. government planes and boats. (Each survival kit contains eight flies.) They also make decorative flies for manufacturers of cuff links and glasses. Interestingly, Japan has turned out to be a surprisingly good place for Weber to sell their Weedless Moussies for \$5 each. Weber currently provides work for 25 part time tiers working out of their homes and is considering setting up a tying desk or two for stepped-up factory production.

The market for domestically tied flies is making a strong comeback. However, the nature of the sales game has changed. The old manufacturer-distributor-retailer sales system, backbone of the Stevens Point tiers, no longer works because most flyfishers no longer shop at hardware and discount stores.

Acknowledgments

Robert W. Worth, president of The Worth Co., and Edward C. Wotruba, retired former owner of Weber Tackle Co., and his son Edward C. Wotruba, Jr., general sales manager of Weber Tackle Co., graciously provided background information and interviews for this article. Both companies are conducted with an enlightened and refreshing sense of history; both have maintained scrap books and saved items of historical interest.

Susie Isaksen, a long-time Trustee of the Museum, is the chief reason we have so many Wisconsin members. She is former Editor of Trout Unlimited's Action Line and writes on a wide variety of outdoor-related topics.

Montana Odyssey *by George Grant*



The better part of the first two decades of my life had little to do with trout fishing and nothing at all to do with flytying. Born in Butte, Montana, a rough-and-ready mining town, in 1906, my early years were more seriously concerned with a hard struggle to merely survive. Tragedy was a constant companion in the form of mine disasters, violent labor-management disputes that were arbitrated with bombs and guns, brutal killings of striking workers by hired gunmen, interminable strikes that idled men for months, even years, and always long, bitterly-cold winters with not enough food, clothing or warmth. I have memories of World War I, an epidemic scourge of influenza that took hundreds of lives, and persistent post-war depression.

My father was a sturdy Illinois farm hand, a semi-pro baseball player, Spanish-American War veteran, who worked in the hazardous depths of Butte's copper mines in order to feed and clothe his family. He escaped the violent death that befell many, but on a cold January night in 1929 he died as I held him in my arms while the remnants of his metal-laden lungs hemorrhaged out of his nose and mouth in an unceasing, unstoppable torrent of his life blood. My wife's own father was killed in an underground mine accident. These were truly hard times and death, in various guises, stalked the streets and entered the humble homes with great frequency.

It is, however, no longer a question of who was right and who was wrong, or why it had to be that way — these accounts and circumstances are included here only to acquaint the reader with the fact that my youth was spent in a region and an era of violent social change that was not conducive to contemplative, recreational pursuits such as trout fishing. If trout were mentioned at all it would likely have been in relation to their desirability as a meat-stretcher on

Portrait of the angler as a young man: George Grant posed for this, one of very few photographs he has of his early years, in 1933. The location was along the Big Hole near Dewey, Montana, during what George has called the "golden era of fly fishing in Montana."

the table rather than a discussion of the various attributes that are so highly valued today.

My mother, also from a small town in Illinois, was a strong, resourceful, resilient woman tempered with a kind heart that compelled her to feed bread crusts to wild birds on cold, snowy mornings when we had scarcely enough to feed ourselves. She refused to succumb to the rigors of climate or the adversity of fate, persevering to within a few months of her 96th year. An expert seamstress she plied her trade until she was 91. My maternal grandmother was a gentle French immigrant who understood and spoke seven languages sufficiently well to serve as a paid interpreter, was an accomplished self-trained artist, and the mother of thirteen children of which my mother was the eldest. Perhaps somewhere in this ancestry lay the genes that were eventually to result in an individual who believes that flytying is a useful therapeutic tool that on occasion allows the mind to retreat from a world plagued with worry and care; that it is an important art form that satisfies the creative urge of many individuals whose everyday activities may border on monotony; and that it is a most vital factor in the conservation and perpetuation of wild trout, for though it provides an effective means of capture it also allows the quarry to be returned relatively unharmed to continue to exist.

Because I was a frail youngster, the "runt of the litter" in a family of physical stalwarts, I was viewed by them with much consternation and despair for it was evident that my future did not include toiling in the mines or in doing heavy work of any kind. Realizing this, my parents wisely instructed me to enroll in high school courses that would be compatible with my lack of size and strength. I studied typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, elementary journalism, and upon graduation I continued my preparation in business college.

I was fly fishing before I got out of high school, but only now and then because few people owned automobiles and this lack of transportation made it difficult to get to the rivers and lakes. I became interested in flytying about 1928, and it has been a consuming passion ever since. Both of these activities were things that I could do fairly well, which gave me a feeling of confidence and achievement, but even more, they

brought me in touch with a new world of well educated, intelligent and humane individuals who taught me that trout were beautiful, courageous wild creatures that, while intensely interesting to pursue, were also too important and valuable to kill.

At the age of 18 I was personal secretary to the president of a small railroad that ran from Armstead, Montana, to Salmon, Idaho. Residency in Armstead, now drowned forever at the bottom of Clark Canyon Dam, was made more tenable by the close proximity of the Red Rock and Beaverhead Rivers, then renowned for their large rainbow and eastern brook trout, but not yet populated by the now-dominant brown, which was slowly working its way up through the Jefferson.

Later, I occupied similar positions with several prominent men, leaders in forming and guiding the affairs of raucous, immoral, free-wheeling Butte, a place where I was to live all my life but never really belonged — except perhaps for the fact that the site was the hub of a surrounding countryside made lush and green by the world's greatest concentration of beautiful wild trout streams, and possibly, too, because my being there was part of a master plan which I could not alter.

It was exciting to be closely associated with these interesting men and bask in their reflected glory but many days spent at their elbow gave me an insight into their private lives, and it soon became apparent to me that success and contentment were not synonymous. My own life, in contrast, was routine, simple, almost monastic and, while my employers constantly prodded me to become more ambitious ("Young man, you should try to make something of yourself!"), I also sensed a degree of envy among them for my unsophisticated lifestyle and the seemingly unlimited pleasure that I derived from my obsession with the outdoors.

They, of course, had no way of knowing, and even I was not yet certain of it, but desire and circumstance were drawing me irresistibly toward a life so foreign to my family background, my business training, and the mining camp mentality that prevailed all around me, that it was difficult for others to understand my motives. In retrospect, it now is apparent that I was simply pre-destined to lead an idyllic life wading fabulous western trout

streams; dressing artificial creations to copy the aquatic insects and deceive the large wild trout that lived within them; enjoying the mystique and the endless variety that is part of the sport called flyfishing, but which, to many of us, is a passport to another world.

As time passed, unknown to them, but through their writings, I was being instructed in basic flytying by Paul Young, George Herter, Roger Wooley, Major J. H. Hale, and others; in something new and exciting, nymph theory and development, by the early pioneers, Edward Ringwood Hewitt and John Alden Knight; in the then-little-known (to me at least) world of the dry-fly by Emlyn Gill and George La Branche; in the enchanting revelations of trout stream entomology by Louis Rhead and Peter Claassen. I learned about flytying materials from Herter's fascinating and all-encompassing catalog. The flies of Jack Boehme, Bill Beaty and Franz Pott, famous Montana flytiers of the era, were being dissected, thread by thread, on my flytying bench.

I looked upon these men then with awe and admiration because of their knowledge and fame. Today, I recall them as another might recall his favorite college professors. Hewitt seemed to know everything worthwhile knowing about fly fishing, and he presented his ideas with such final authority ("I have spoken!") that even the slightest doubt seemed unthinkable. Herter was similar — everything in his catalog was not only superior, but he seemed to indicate that he had a corner on the market. His way of doing anything was better, ranging from how to cook a trout to how to make insect repellent. I liked Rhead because he called insects by names I could understand and pronounce. To this day I resent his critics. In addition, he was a consummate artist and the color plates in his *American Trout Stream Insects* were and are superb. Major Hale wrote about tying classic Scottish and English salmon fly patterns, and I learned much about attention to detail from him. Paul Young was my favorite because he took time out from a busy schedule to write me detailed letters in longhand that supplied me with answers to many of my flytying problems and fortified my knowledge of materials.

In 1933 a wonderful thing happened — I lost my job. In that time of deep depression you didn't look for another

one because there weren't any. For the next three years, June to October, I lived in a small cabin (rented at a fee of \$5.00 per month) located on the bank of the Big Hole River near a place called Dewey. In the winter I returned to Butte and tied flies, supplementing my income with my typewriter and temporary employment. During those summers I learned a great deal about the river, and I lived the kind of life that many young anglers dream about but probably will never have the opportunity to experience. This was the golden era of trout fishing in Montana, superior to what had gone before, and a time that will never be repeated in the future. The Madison was at its peak, and the Big Hole was probably even better although not as well known. The quality of fishing in Montana west of the main range of the Rockies was unsurpassed any place in the world, and it is quite likely that it was better than that experienced currently in Alaska, British Columbia, New Zealand, Argentina, and other far-away places. My only regret is that at times I considered the mundane requirements of everyday living more important than being on the river.

As my knowledge of trout fishing and my flytying competency increased I began to think seriously about becoming a full-time professional flytier and ultimately the proprietor of my own tackle shop. In those days such a choice of livelihood was regarded as hovering somewhere between foolish and insane, especially if you were trained and qualified to do something more traditional. Over the years my quest for a small amount of success in this field, for recognition, for escape from obscurity, led me into

several phases of flytying and tackle shop operation with results that were less than sensational. There were disappointments, diversions, disillusionments and outright failures, but through it all I somehow retained a dogged determination and spirit of optimism, never losing that intangible attraction that even to this day draws me to the vise in winter and to the river in summer. As one might suspect, I am poor in material things, but rich in flytying and flyfishing experience and memories.

Military service, marriage and entry into the wholesale-retail sporting goods business in later years curtailed my time astream to a certain extent, but only temporarily. I retired early at the age of 61 in order to pursue my flytying ambitions — not because I could afford to do so, but because I had a working wife who understood and supported me, both literally and spiritually, every inch of the way.

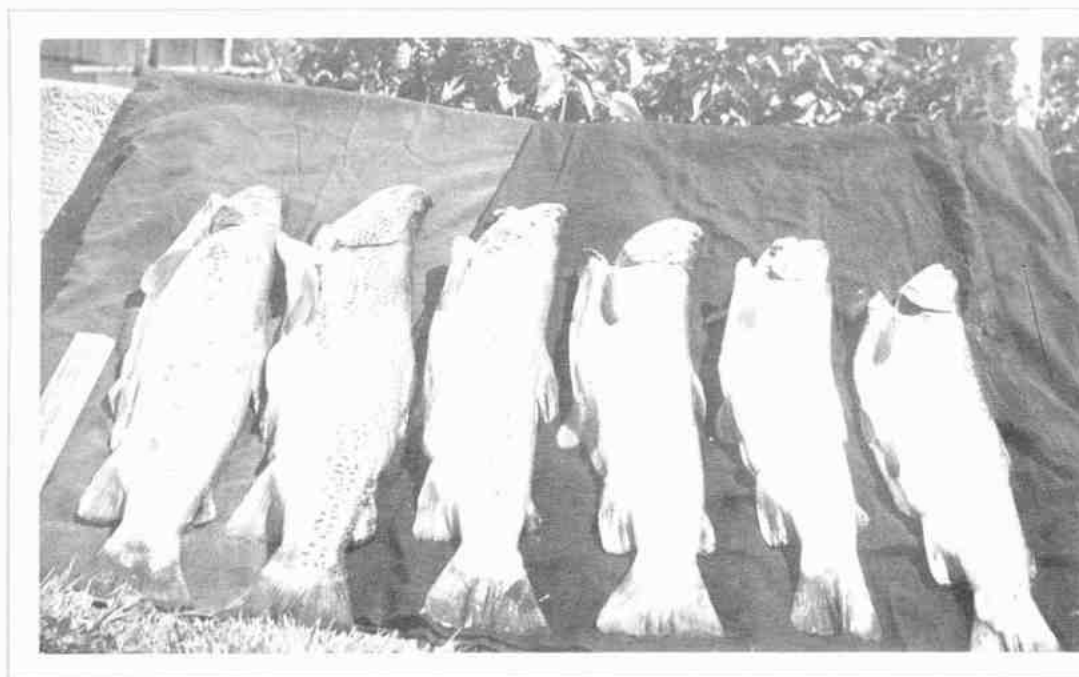
During the first four years after my retirement I wrote two books on flytying, the manuscripts of which were sent to a number of publishers and which were routinely returned with the usual rejection remarks, but at least one from one of this country's foremost publishers of sporting books bore a note of optimism: "We have studied your material and discussed it. Unfortunately, we conclude that while this is fascinating, interesting, provocative, and perhaps groundbreaking, it comes at a time when . . ."

Disheartened, but not wanting to give up, I decided to publish the books on my own. This was done in two paperbacks which, admittedly, were amateurish and crude. Although I lacked artistic

ability I did all the drawings and the results were pretty much as one would expect. Despite all this the books had a combined sale of about 6,000 copies before I allowed them to go out of print. However, what was more important, they introduced my name and my methods to a large number of people.

I was invited to attend, demonstrate my techniques, and display my flies at the Federation of Fly Fishermen national conclave at Sun Valley, Idaho, in 1972, at a time when I was about as well known as my unorthodox flytying processes. Eventually, I found myself seated at a long flytying table alongside such notables as Art Flick, Dave Whitlock, E. H. "Polly" Rosborough, Doug Swisher and Carl Richards. I looked at these individuals, at a sea of faces six deep on all sides, and the only thing I could think of was, "What am I doing here?"

Since early youth I have been afflicted with a hereditary tremor, a mild incurable disorder of the nervous system that can be masked by a self-imposed exterior calm under normal conditions, but is activated uncontrollably under stress. This occasion was no exception. My hands trembled, I dropped tools, I broke threads, and things I could do at home with my eyes closed I could not do well at all. I thought of feigning illness and asking to be excused, but I did not because I desperately wanted to show to this knowledgeable audience the techniques that I had developed over many long years and what I truly believed to be a revolutionary method of flytying. The interest of the onlookers was intense — they had never seen a hackle woven onto thread with hair,



Six large browns taken by George and a friend on the Big Hole near Glen, Montana, in 1937. Fish this size were common enough to be taken regularly by fly fishermen in the 1930s - 1950s.

nor had they ever seen a realistic looking artificial nymph body emerge from a strand of flat monofilament fishing line. These people, all strangers to me, were patient and understanding and their genuine interest enabled me to continue with ever-increasing confidence. Today many of them are among my very best friends and supporters.

The following year (1973), perhaps out of sympathy or to compensate me for the ordeal they had unwittingly inflicted on me the previous year, the Federation presented me with the Wayne "Buz" Buszek Memorial Fly Tying Award, which is given annually to the tier who is considered to have contributed most significantly to the advancement of the art during that particular year or, in some cases, for achievements that have extended over a period of many years. To many people the winning of awards is routine, but outside of a typing medal I had been given in high school and a Good Conduct medal received in the Army, this was the highlight of my life. Since that time, too, my techniques have been given kind attention in such classic works as Ernest Schwiebert's *Nymphs* and Col. Joseph D. Bates' *Streamers And Bucktails (The Big Fish Flies)*. I regard all these events as the culmination of a destiny that was set in stone many years ago, the fulfillment of which while painfully slow was, nevertheless, inevitable.

Remembering my early years, I derive much pleasure from embryo flytiers whose questions and interest take me back to the days when I wrote the great flytiers of the world, many of whom took the time to reply. I quote from a letter received during the past year: "I

admire a perfectionist and I place you in that category. Let me point out one thing about me. I am not a 24-year-old person 'infatuated by the master' but a 40-year-old man who falls into that category. Perhaps you may think I am crazy. In real life I manage a jet engine shop and employ 78 people so I guess I wouldn't fall into the crazy category. What has happened to me in the past four years I am sure happened to you many years ago. I was bitten by the fly-fishing and flytying bug."

The following is an excerpt from my reply: "You must have sensed something in my writings because, at one time, I have little doubt but that I was the world's super-enthusiast in matters relating to fly fishing and flytying. Age and physical limitations no longer permit me to indulge in either of these activities to the extent that I would like. However, I have not lost my enthusiasm, and I sincerely doubt that I ever will. It is a world within a world, and you are most fortunate to have discovered it."

It is probably trite to quote the old saying, "Fishing is a disease for which, thank God, there is no cure," but it is true, and could be extended to include flytying and other aspects of fishing. I know a young man who graduated cum laude from a technical college whose entrance examinations eliminate most prospective students. He could name a starting salary with a choice of large industrial firms but prefers to manage a sporting goods store because it keeps him in close touch with the things he loves and allows him to remain in wild trout country. I know a young artist who would rather draw pictures of trout and mayflies and illustrate articles in fishing mag-

azines than live in a crowded city and make better money working on a nine-to-five job.

I am acquainted with many young men who would sacrifice almost anything to operate a tackle shop in trout country and, while I do not encourage them, knowing that all is not what it seems to be, I certainly understand them to a greater extent than most others would. Who can say that they are wrong?

I believe that as long as we have wild trout and wild trout rivers we will have young men who are captivated by them, and they will continue to enjoy a way of life that has attracted and held such a wide variety of intellects and enthusiasms down through the centuries. I think this is good for mankind in general, and good for the individual who participates in it.

George Grant has written for us several times on historical subjects, but this is the first time he has dealt with his own place in the history of western fly fishing. Since the appearance of his books on fly tying, and especially since the publication of The Master Fly Weaver just recently, George's important place in western fishing history has become widely appreciated. Besides his many contributions to fly-tying, he performed an inestimable service to the rivers he loves as editor of the River Rat, the bulletin of the Montana Council of Trout Unlimited.

This article appears as a chapter in The Master Fly Weaver, and is reprinted by permission of the publisher, Champog Press, P.O. Box 92, Forest Grove, Oregon, 97116.



George Grant fishing the lower river "during a period of extremely low water in 1947."

Books

reviewed by the editors

OLD FISHING LURES AND TACKLE

by Carl Luckey. Books Americana, Inc., 1980, 334 pages softbound, \$14.95 (also available from the author, Rt. 4, Box 301, Killen, Alabama, 35645, \$15.95 postpaid).

We recently reviewed two new books on collecting fishing tackle, and missed a third that will be of interest especially to lure collectors. The book contains considerable material on reels and rods, but is mostly devoted to lures, with ten good pages of color.

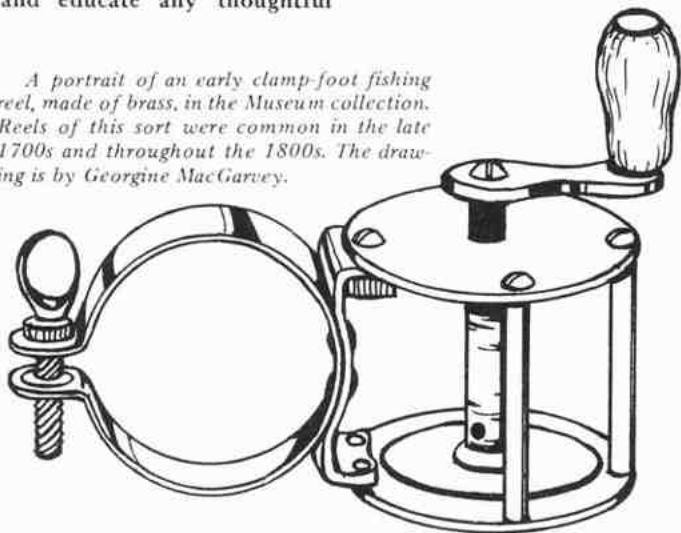
We aren't really in the business of lure-collecting, but we figure that many of our members probably are, and so we want to make sure you know about this important new book on the subject.

AMERICAN WILDLIFE LAW

by Thomas Lund. University of California Press, 1980, 179 pages, \$12.95.

We briefly note this title because so much of Mr. Lund's presentation bears directly on modern attitudes toward wildlife and the evolution of modern concepts of conservation and sportsmanship. The book is, naturally, scholarly (with extensive notes and case citations in the back), but the text is quite readable and intensely informative. Far too few sportsmen are aware of the cultural, social, and political forces that have shaped their thinking. This book will surprise and educate any thoughtful angler.

A portrait of an early clamp-foot fishing reel, made of brass, in the Museum collection. Reels of this sort were common in the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s. The drawing is by Georgine MacGarvey.



TWO MORE HAIG-BROWN BOOKS

Having reviewed the posthumous volume *Woods and River Tales* by Roderick Haig-Brown in Volume Seven, Number Four, we feel a bit of a responsibility to at least inform you of additional titles now appearing over the name of one of North America's foremost angling writers. McClelland and Stewart have now (1981) published the second of three projected Haig-Brown books, *The Master and His Fish*. This is largely a collection of articles and addresses given by Haig-Brown, and any enthusiast of good angling writing will enjoy it immensely. Those interested in angling history and development will find that it makes conveniently available some fascinating material on Haig-Brown's experiments with dry flies for steelhead (and even a coho taken on a dry fly) and fly fishing for Pacific Salmon.

Haig-Brown was a versatile writer, as anyone who has happened upon his juvenile books (such as *Starbuck Valley Winter*) must know. One of the happiest discoveries made by his daughter in sorting his papers was the manuscript of a small book for children now published as *Alison's Fishing Birds*. The book has been published by Colophon Books, 407 West Cordova Street, Upstairs, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 1E7 in a lovely limited edition of 500 (25 in full Oasis Leather, 100 in quarter leather, and 375 in cloth).

Haig-Brown was a keen naturalist, so anyone who enjoys his writings about rivers will enjoy this graceful little book. It is extremely well produced, and we understand there will be a trade edition in a year or so.

We have been told that the three-book series of which *The Master and His Fish* is the second is being distributed in this country solely by the Sportsman's Cabinet, Box 59, Ogdensburg, New York, 13669. *The Master and His Fish* sells for \$15.95 postpaid.

COLLECTOR'S PERIODICALS

We have neglected to tell you about two exciting projects in tackle-collecting newspapers that have been around for a while now. Both seem to be off to a good start, and the editors of both have shown great enthusiasm for the Museum's work; we recommend them equally:

Antique Angler. Paul Webber, Editor. Box 327, Stockton, New Jersey, 08559. This is published quarterly, at \$5.00 for one year and \$9.00 for two. It contains both classified ads from other collectors and considerable editorial material about collectors and collecting. Spring of 1981 was Volume Two, Number Two of the *Antique Angler*.

Tackle Exchange. Glenn Stockwell, Editor. Box 209, Loleta, California, 95551. This is published bimonthly, at \$5.50 for one year and \$10.00 for two. It contains both classified ads and editorial material. The Editor is the author of the book *Fly Reels of the House of Hardy*. The *Tackle Exchange* is now beginning its third year of publication.

We have also learned of a new magazine soon to appear, devoted to various kinds of sporting collecting. The magazine will be *Sporting Classics*, to be published six times a year. The Editor is John Culler, former editor of *Outdoor Life* and the excellent *South Carolina Wildlife*. *Sporting Classics* will feature articles on all aspects of sporting collecting with regular columns on books, stamps, guns, knives, tackle, art, and decoys. A subscription costs \$12.00 per year, available from *Sporting Classics*, Post Office Box 646, Camden, South Carolina, 29020. This will be a high-quality color periodical, and its Editor welcomes inquiries about subscriptions and advertising.

Notes and Comment

SALMON DRY FLIES

The article, "The George La Branche Salmon Flies," in the Fall (1980) issue of *The American Fly Fisher* prompts comment. Even though I have not researched the origins of salmon dry flies it is apparent, from a quick review of the literature, that Monell was not the first to intentionally fish for salmon with them; it's possible he wasn't even the first in North America.

Chaytor, in *Letters to A Salmon Fisher's Sons and Essays Sporting and Serious*, records his having used them in 1896. On May 23 of that year he landed a nineteen pound salmon on a specially dressed dry fly approximately three-quarters of an inch long. Likewise, Ashley-Dodd, in *Fisherman's Pie and A Fisherman's Log*, details Fraser's use of large dry flies as early as 1906. No less an authority than Taverner notes Fraser's accomplishments in his (Taverner's) book *Salmon Fishing*. Details of Fraser's dry

fly efforts have also been reported on in the *Atlantic Salmon Journal* and *The Atlantic Salmon Treasury* by Weeks.

Probably the first salmon caught on a fly was caught on a dry fly. The earliest accounts of fly fishing for salmon support this proposition, as startling as it sounds. Barker, in *Barker's Delight* (1659), writes of salmon rising, like trout, to a fly (I have not seen a copy of *The Art of Angling*, 1651, to check it). Venables, in *The Experienced Angler* (1662), discusses angling "upon or above the water" with artificial flies, and names the salmon first in his list of five fish that will "freely rise at the fly." However, the strongest evidence is found in Franck's *Northern Memoirs* (1694), "writ in the year 1658," where he states "The next thing that falls under the angler's consideration, is the bait or charm for the royal race of salmon; which I reduce under the classis of two general, viz. the fly for frolick, to flourish and sport on the surface of the streams . . ."

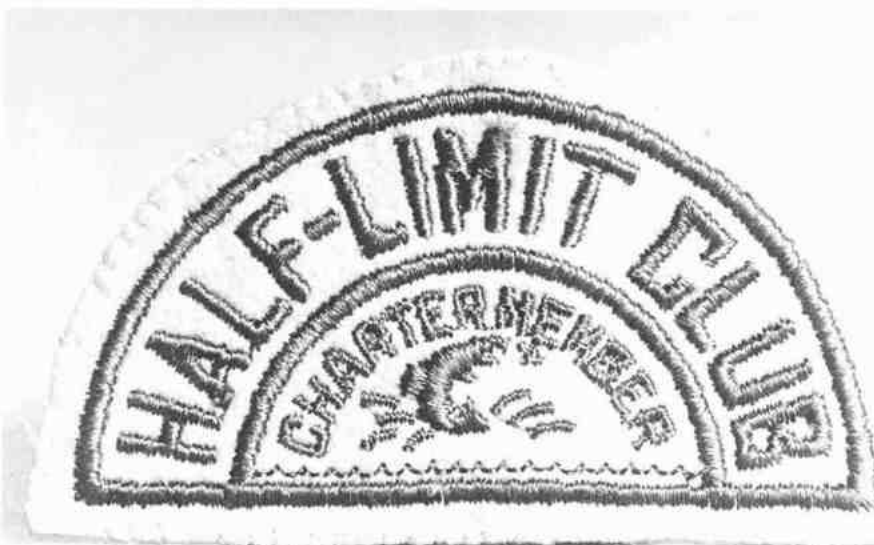
Goodspeed, in *Angling in America* (1939), suggests that Franck fished in North America; if he did then I am reasonably confident that he fished for salmon, and caught them, with a dry fly.

Alec Jackson,
Kenmore, Washington

THE HALF-LIMIT CLUB: AN APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

We recently received a note from Museum Trustee Ed Zern, which is self-explanatory (the note, not Ed):

The Half-Limit Club was thunk up by John Alden Knight; my contribution was telling him I thought it a great idea, which it was for its time (about 1947 or '48, I'd guess, but it might have been a year or two later). I don't know who would have more information on this pioneer effort to reduce the kill on trout streams, but a note in *The American Fly Fisher* might stir up some mem-



The patch of the Half-Limit Club, shown here actual size, was donated by Ed Zern, whose letter we print above. We would like to hear more about this early conservation effort.



Streamers

Fishing writers have credited various individuals, including Theodore Gordon and some of his late-19th century contemporaries, with "inventing" the streamer. It appears to us, however, that streamer fishing has been going on for quite a long time. Austin Hogan and others have pointed out that for centuries people have been catching saltwater fish on a hook dressed with nothing more than a piece of bright cloth, and that early Americans occasionally caught a large pike or muskie by trolling a whole bucktail. Such practices hardly qualify as fly fishing, of course, but they do suggest an awareness of the worth of imitating small fish. We offer here a pair of short references, in the hope that they will inspire some of our readers to look further. Both are from books published before 1850, and both are clear cases of streamer fishing, by which we mean tying and fishing a fly that is imitative of a small fish. We're leaving our definition that vague in order to avoid the already-existing semantic quarrels about definitions (some people say, with good logic, that a streamer is not a fly; it is a streamer, as a bucktail is not a fly, but a bucktail. Others worry about the difference between streamer and bucktail, and how that difference should be defined. For now, at least, we'll bypass all of that). The first quotation is taken from *The Fly Fisher's Text Book*, by Theophilus South, published in London in 1841. South, on page 194, was discussing salmon fishing in saltwater when he quoted one Richard Hely Hutchinson on the subject, as follows:

"I am persuaded salmon never take the fly in salt water; I have heard of men who had heard from others that they did, but I never could yet find any one who either had killed salmon themselves, or known any man who, to his certain knowledge, had killed them in salt water. I have fished a great deal in tide-ways with the fly, and had admirable sport: mackerel, whiting, pollock, and sand-eels, may be taken in great quantities. The fly is a white feather, projecting considerably over the hook, and it resembles the herring fry, of which both mackerel and pollock are very fond."

The second streamer fishing reference we find interesting is from James Wilson's *The Rod and Gun*, published in Edinburgh in 1844. This is not the first edition, which we do not have in our collection. Perhaps one of our readers does have the first edition and will check it to see if this same reference occurs. In any case, on page 234, in a discussion of sea-trout, we find the following footnote:

"We may here add, what we omitted in its proper place, that a singularly successful fly for sea-trout, large or small, may be made with silver tinsel enwrapping the whole body from head to heel . . . the wings, of a narrow elongated form, composed either of pure white or pale gray, or a mixture of both. It has a very glistening aspect in the water, looking somewhat like a small disabled fish, and sea-trout swallow it from a kindly fellow-feeling, believing it to be some relation of their own."

These two passages give us reason to suspect that saltwater fly fishing was at least an occasional pastime by mid-century in the British Isles. There is another book we don't have in our collection, published in London in 1851, entitled *Fly Fishing in Salt and Fresh Water*. The book is reported to have six plates of flies, and we suspect it would answer some of our questions about streamers. Do any of our readers have it at hand? If not we will run it down in one of the major university library collections we know of.

It probably isn't possible to track down the originator of something as general as the streamer, any more than we can be certain of the originator of the floating fly. It should be possible, though, to get a clearer picture than we currently have of the extent of streamer use before such flies became popular in America in the 1890s.

The Editors

ories among readers of my generation and geriatric tilt. (Jack didn't mean to restrict the club to trout fishermen, of course, as he and most of his friends fished for smallmouth bass and other species.) There were no dues or formalities, and membership was open to anyone who would voluntarily agree to restrict his take to half the legal limit, always. It was hoped that wearing the patch would stimulate queries and give the wearer a chance to spread the gospel and exert some degree of moral suasion.

We, like Ed, would appreciate learning more about the origins and efforts of this informal organization. It constitutes a neglected and revealing part of the growth of our modern angling ethic.

ORIGINS OF THE PAUL YOUNG MIDGE

The 1980 Summer Issue of *The American Fly Fisher* contained references to the late Paul H. Young as a superb rod builder and a skilled fly tier, references that are especially interesting to me.

I had been fly fishing Michigan's Au Sable River above and below Stephan's Bridge in the 1940s and 1950s with an 8 and 9 foot Bamboo rod and rarely, at that time, did the Au Sable produce Trout over the 7-10 inch range. It occurred to me it would be more interesting to handle this size Trout on a much shorter rod with power enough to use HEH silk lines, .015 or .013 butts on leaders and flies not larger than 12's or 14's, a rod that could combine both light and semi-light terminal tackle fishing.

I visited Detroit rather frequently on business. So on one of my visits to Paul's Sporting Goods Store (he had previously made up an excellent Bamboo Spinning Rod for me) I decided I would discuss with him the make-up of a 2 piece Bamboo rod between 6 and 7 feet, preferably not longer than 6½ feet.

We talked a great deal about the Au Sable River fly fishing and at the outset Paul wasn't too impressed with the idea of a shorter rod. I persuaded Paul, however, to put a rod together in the two to three days time I would spend in Detroit. When I picked the rod up at the time of my departure Paul still wasn't fully convinced it would be a fitting rod for general use on the Au Sable, principally that a short rod had distance casting limitations on some of the stretches of the Au Sable.

What Paul handed over to me in response to my request for a short rod with sufficient power to handle my HEH silk lines was a 2 piece 6 foot three inch set of Bamboo sections, the very first Young made rod that was later to be named by Paul the—"MIDGE."

I worked with this shorter rod for a

California Tackle Dealers

Our files yielded this intriguing early Orvis leaflet; it was apparently offered by a San Francisco dealer. It is dated 1878 on the reverse. We'd sure appreciate it if one of our western members would check early city directories for this and other early tackle dealers. We know only that Mr. Dunn was a family friend of the Orvises.

Reels and Flies manufactured by me can be obtained of
San Francisco, Cal.

HORACE D. DUNN

PRICE LIST
OF
FISHING RODS AND REELS.
MANUFACTURED BY
CHARLES F. ORVIS, MANCHESTER, VERMONT.

few years – found it to be somewhat Parabolic – casting exceptionally well in the 30-40 foot range – and was very versatile in handling terminal tackle. The cosmetics lacked “finish” but the Bamboo action could not be faulted – it had class.

I read an article in *Field & Stream* (1958), that mentioned Paul Young as one of the world's finest Bamboo rod makers, that prompted me to take the 6 foot 3 inch “dandy” he had made for me to Detroit to show it off to Paul. When I arrived at his store he greeted me very warmly and went on to tell me that after I had left his store he kept thinking that the type of rod he had put together for me ought to have a place in his assortment of rods for what he called “Midge” fly fishing on Michigan's trout waters. He decided to make up a few of them for some of his wealthy friends and patrons around Detroit. When they came back with glowing praise with whatever performances they had with these 6 foot 3 inch rods this prompted Paul to get into full gear to make and promote the model more extensively.

Just a few months after this visit it was necessary to return to Detroit and I made a point of visiting Paul's store again. This time Paul said I've been waiting for you to come back as I've been saving something for you since your last visit. Whereupon he went back to his rod making area and came back with a completed rod and handed it over to me with this remark – “it is complimentary – no charge. It is the least thing I can do in appreciation of your getting me started on the production of my “MIDGES” which have turned out to be my most popular rod at the present time, besides

this “MIDGE” has been improved over the original in workmanship.” What I received was a 2 tip- 2 piece Bamboo Fly Rod – 6 feet- 3 inch with these inscriptions:

Herbert D'Sinter – May '58
“Midge” 6'3” – 1.75 oz.
Paul H. Young – Detroit – Maker

After Paul passed on – his two sons, Jack and Paul, Jr. moved the Sporting Goods business to Traverse City, Michigan. It is still in operation.

Herbert F. D'Sinter
Los Altos, California

Gordon memorabilia stolen from private collection

Some of our readers may already have learned of the recent death of Thomas Capstick of New York. Tom was Editor of the Bulletin of the Angler's Club of New York and was an extremely knowledgeable collector of rare angling items. We have learned that shortly after his death several important items were stolen from his office at McGraw Hill in New York. In an effort to help locate these items, we describe them below. Angling collectors are a pretty tightly-knit group, and should be able to keep an eye out for these items. Any information concerning the items listed below should be sent to Mr. Pat Kelly, Manager of Security at McGraw Hill. His number is 212-997-4998.

Foremost among the stolen items is a large mounting of a Meek Model 44 reel, with four flies, a leader, and a photograph of Theodore Gordon. The reel was Gordon's originally, and the flies were tied by him; the mounting is approximately thirty inches square and four inches deep. Also stolen were two large framings of forty flies each. The flies were tied by noted tier Charles Krom from the color plates in Ray Bergman's *Trout*. An original watercolor, a trout fishing scene by Tom Hennessey, was also taken.

Please help spread the word about these items so that they can be returned to their rightful owners where they will receive the care they deserve.

Museum News

MUSEUM ACQUIRES 1873 LEONARD ROD

The Museum has obtained what many consider to be the most significant rod produced by Hiram Leonard, the famous Howells 1873 rod which is the first known six-strip rod built by Leonard quite early in his career. The rod has often been written about, especially by Ernest Schwiebert, who devoted several paragraphs to it in his recent book *Trout*, describing it as "one of the rare bench marks in our angling history."

We will feature the rod, with a report on its history, in an upcoming issue of the magazine. Right now we want to express our deep appreciation to the Johnson Wax Company, who presented the Museum with a \$3,000 grant to allow us to purchase the rod. This is the most significant single item of tackle we have acquired since we obtained the Daniel Webster rod in 1979 (see the Fall, 1979 issue of *The American Fly Fisher* for the Webster rod), and a rare opportunity to add a magnificent piece of angling memorabilia to our collection. Thanks to the generosity of Johnson Wax we were able to take advantage of the opportunity.

MUSEUM MOVE UPDATE

Since the report given by Leon Martuch, Museum President, in the last issue of the magazine, further progress has been made in the investigations of the proposed move of the Museum to West Yellowstone, Montana. For those who may not have seen the last issue, we will explain that at its Conclave last Fall the Federation of Fly Fishermen decided to move its permanent headquarters from California to West Yellowstone. The Federation further decided to invite the Museum to move to West Yellowstone also so that the two organizations could share a joint facility. This is not a merger, but a common sharing of one roof. The Museum's Board of Trustees voted (in October, 1980) to accept the invitation on the condition that further investigations show that the Museum could support itself in the new location. The Federation firmed up a lease with the town of West Yellowstone at the very end of 1980, and that is where it stood at the time of Leon's report.

Since then, the Federation's Building

Fund Committee, Chaired by former Federation President, Jim Eriser, has hired the professional fund-raising firm of Douglas M. Lawson Associates, Inc. The Lawson Associates firm is currently conducting what is called a preliminary audit of potential donors. This process takes about four months (it began in early March), and it usually gives the firm a reasonably accurate idea of the fund-raising potential of the client. Once this audit has been completed, we will all have a much clearer picture of the proposed Federation/Museum facility's future. In the meantime, Museum Officers are keeping posted on the Federation's investigations and will be meeting at the end of March to discuss various aspects of the move proposal.

For those of you who are also Federation members, news and updates on the situation are available in the Federation's Bulletin. We will of course report again in our next issue.

BACK ISSUES

We have the following back issues available, for \$3.00 each, from the Secretary, The Museum of American Fly Fishing, Manchester, Vermont, 05254: Volume I, Numbers 3 and 4
Volume II, Numbers 2 and 3
Volume V, Numbers 3 and 4
Volume VI, Numbers 2, 3, and 4
Volume V, Number 4, is an index of the first five years of *The American Fly Fisher*. It also contains a brief history of the first ten years of the Museum.

THE NEW YORK AUCTION

On Tuesday, March 31, the Museum held its third annual New York fund-raising auction at the Yale Club. Our total income from the auction and raffle was slightly more than \$12,000, about the same as last year. Attendance was up from last year, and the larger crowd participated in some spirited bidding for some unusual items.

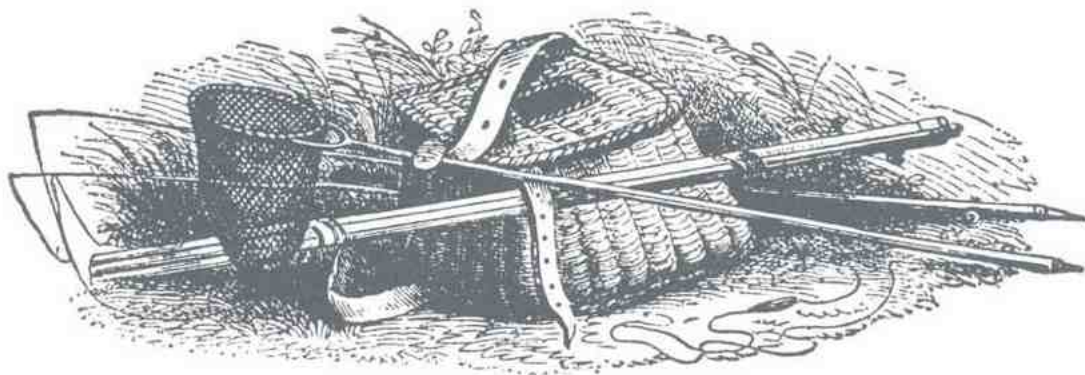
Hosts at the auction were Leon Martuch, Richard Kress, Ben Upson, Laura Towslee, and Paul Schullery. We are grateful to Museum Vice President Gardner Grant for again serving as our Yale Club member-host. We would also like to thank the following: Seth Rosenbaum helped us evaluate our antique lures; Captain Nat Ragland presented

our trip needs to his fellow guides in Florida; John Merwin provided us with typesetting help for our preliminary catalog; and Dick Finlay helped out with bookkeeping during the auction.

Dr. Will Godfrey, of Mapleton, Utah, served once again as auctioneer. Will, who is a Museum Trustee and a Federation of Fly Fishermen Director, has made a great difference in our recent auctions through his talents as auctioneer.

The following firms and individuals donated gifts to the Museum for this auction:

Maxine Atherton
Robert Barrett
Berkley
Charles Brooks
Buck Knives
Clint Byrnes
Eagle Claw
Cortland
Jack Daniels
Dick Finlay
Fly Fisherman
Fly Tyer
Will Godfrey's Fly Fishing Center
Gardner Grant
Gudebrod
Bill Hunter
Susie Isaksen
Martin Keane
Lefty Kreh
Richard Kress
Pete Kriendler
Dana Lamb
Nick Lyons Books
Martin Reels
John Merwin
Mustad
Norton Publishers
Orvis
Pflueger
Plano
Captain Nat Ragland
Ranger Waders
Rod & Reel
Rodon
Seth Rosenbaum
Peter Sang
Mrs. Edwin Schoen
Scott Rod Company
Scientific Anglers/3M
M. Sharf & Co.
Helen Shaw
Tony Skilton
Sportsman's Edge
Stackpole Books
Sunrise India
Captain Bob Stearns
Mike Stidham
Stonewall Press
Thomas and Thomas
Captain Mike Vaughn
Paul Webber
Captain Jose Wejebe
Wild Wings
The Wiley Company
Woodstream



In Future Issues



In our next issue we'll be giving you a good look at the magnificent Howells 1873 Leonard rod we recently acquired (see Museum News, page 32). Among our feature articles will be George Grant's report on the Montana fly tier known as Paul Bunyan, the latest in a series of articles by George (he's working on more for us) about western fly tying pioneers.

We've been busy cataloging and photographing some of our outstanding recent acquisitions, besides those featured

in this issue. Among those chosen for attention in future issues of the magazine are the George Parker Holden collection, which includes the tackle and photographic collection of this important rod-builder of the 1920s and 1930s; the Cahill dry fly, as it has been interpreted by some of this century's foremost fly tiers; Preston Jennings' flies, including both wets and dries; salmon flies by the late Charles De Feo; a spectacular assortment of Royal Coachman variations tied over the past century; and the flies of many other historically significant

people including Herman Christian, Don Martinez, Bill Edson, and Charles Southard.

We've had some unusual responses to our recent plea for historical photographs of American anglers. Some of these will be appearing in upcoming issues much as the Rangeley scenes were presented in this issue. Let us know if you come across any that might be of interest to us.



