

The American Fly Fisher

SUMMER 1992 VOLUME 18 NUMBER 3

Woody on the Madison River, Montana, 1978. Photograph by Dick Finlay.



Craig Woods

1951-1992

Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.

Henry David Thoreau *Walden* (1854)

OUR CLOSE-KNIT fly-fishing community has been saddened by the early death of writer, editor, area resident, and Museum friend and supporter, Craig Woods, on June 5, 1992 at the age of forty. A resident of Dorset, Vermont, Craig was formerly the editor of *Stratton* magazine, *Cross Country Skier*, and a writer and editor at *Fly Fisherman*, where he began his writing career in the mid-1970s. His work has appeared in most of the major outdoor magazines, including *Sports Afield*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Field & Stream*. He wrote *The River as Looking Glass* and *Fly Fisherman's Streamside Guide*, among other outdoor books, and his new book, *Fly Tying* (Bantam/Doubleday) will be published posthumously in August 1992.

Craig's loves were fly fishing and publishing. And because both those interests were embodied in *The American Fly Fisher*, he was of enormous help to me last year when I first took on the editorship of this quarterly. Not knowing him well at all, Craig was, however, one of the first people I dared call with the timid questions of a novice—I just

sensed from his books and magazine work that he could, and would, help. Sure enough, he took kind pity on me and gave me his visionary support in the form of editorial suggestions and moral back strengtheners. He wrote us: "a magazine is a living thing, just like you and me and Randall." Craig was one of the warm, experienced voices to contribute generously to this journal.

We will miss and remember him.



IN THIS SUMMER 1992 issue of *The American Fly Fisher*, we present an absorbing history of fish plaques and models written by Ron Swanson, which touches on the Scottish model-making pioneers as well as the carvers of England and North America. Ron helped to gather together a splendid exhibit called "Fish Models—An Exhibition" currently on display at the Museum until November 30, 1992, which, for the brilliant craftsmanship represented, must be seen in person.

Mike Nogay writes about the background of the remarkable miniature-

sized Kentucky Reel, with a brief introduction by scholar Jim Brown (author of our book *A Treasury of Reels*). Think about a reel that has a diameter of only 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches!

Our prolific member and Museum friend Dave Klausmeyer has written a concise biography of angling innovator John Alden Knight (author of the *Solunar Tables*), which should serve as an introduction to one of the great figures of fly-fishing history for newcomers to the sport, as well as a refresher for those well acquainted with his name. In our Notes & Comment section, Al Pellicane gives us some more insight into John Voelker (a.k.a. Robert Traver), and Dave Klausmeyer calls for more historic fly recipes. Finally, as part of Notes & Comment, I include one of Craig Woods's last articles, a bit of detective sleuthing on the fly stamps offered last year by the United States Postal Service and how they came to be offered to the public.

Stay in touch—we always look forward to hearing from you.

MARGOT PAGE
EDITOR



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OF FLY FISHING

*Preserving a Rich Heritage
for Future Generations*

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The American Fly Fisher

Journal of The American Museum of Fly Fishing

SUMMER 1992

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ON THE COVER: *Fish models, plaques, and effigies have historically commemorated a splendid salmon catch. The background of this industry/art is discussed by Ronald S. Swanson in one of this issue's feature articles. Here, A. Shiach of Arndilly, Scotland (on the River Spey), is holding a fish model carved by Scottish pioneer John Russell of a 44-pound salmon killed at Aiken Way by W. S. Menzies, circa 1890. From The Salmon Rivers of Scotland by A. Grimble (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1899).*

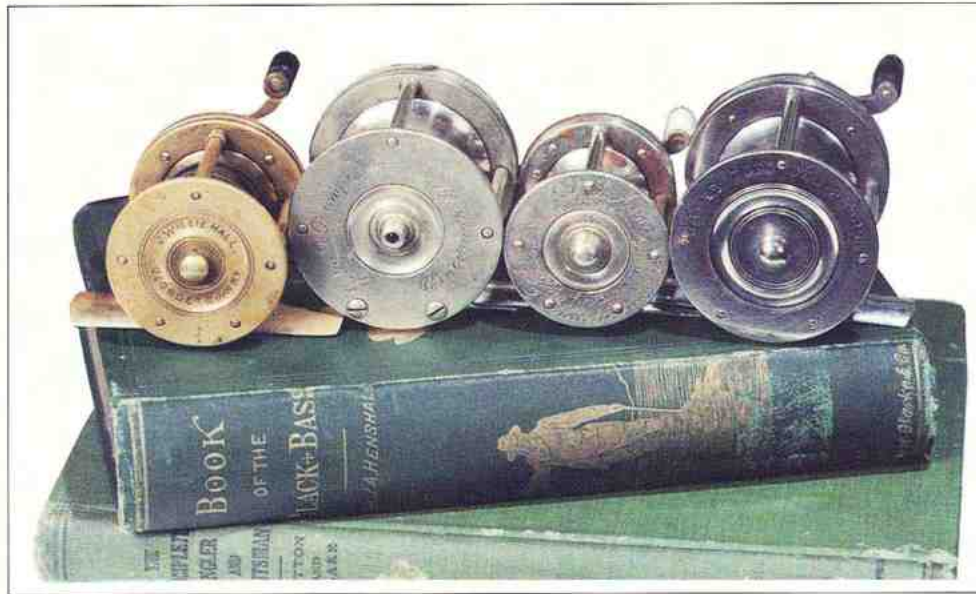
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Early Fly Fishing with the Kentucky Reel

by Michael Edward Nogay

THE KENTUCKY REEL began to appear sometime during the first quarter of the nineteenth century as a copy of the British multiplying reel from that period. Through the efforts of Kentucky reelsmiths such as George Snyder, Benjamin Meek, Benjamin Milam, J. L. Sage, George Gayle, and others, the multiplying reel evolved into a distinctive American product, widely known and respected as a superior casting machine and admired as an elegant item of tackle.

The vast majority of Kentucky reels were made in sizes suitable for medium weight bait casting, usually size No. 3, a 2-inch diameter all-purpose reel that was commonly used for bass fishing. Most makers produced larger sizes for lake fishing and some even produced ocean reels. Nearly all of the Kentucky reelsmiths also made much smaller reels. In the B. F. Meek and Sons catalog of 1899, for example, the smallest reel listed is the No. 1 size. This tiny reel with its 1½-inch diameter is described as a "lightweight reel for trout or fly fishing."

But how much evidence do we really have that Kentucky reels were used for fly

fishing? The following article by Michael Nogay addresses this question.

Michael Nogay is well known to many reel collectors as the founder and president of the Old Reel Collectors Association, Inc. (ORCA). He has done much to encourage the preservation and historical study of antique fishing reels and, therefore, it is with pleasure that I introduce him to readers of *The American Fly Fisher*.
JIM BROWN

NOT LONG AGO an avid fly reel collector sheepishly admitted to me a certain affection for tiny Kentucky reels. One could "imagine," he said, that these multiplying reels were used for fly fishing. Indeed, inasmuch as a No. 1 size Kentucky reel has a diameter of a mere 1½ inches, storing line, as opposed to fighting fish, seems to have been its intended use—which is precisely the case with the single-action fly reel.

An old B. C. Milam & Son catalog published in Frankfort, Kentucky, lends some clarity. "No. 1 Trout Reel. This is a small reel, but will hold ample line for trout fishing," reads one entry. Directly

below, the No. 2 size (1¾-inch diameter) is described as a "Bass and Tournament Casting Reel," and the No. 3 size (2-inch diameter) and No. 4 (2¼-inch diameter) are recommended for "general utility" and "salmon and muscallonge" fishing, respectively. That undated Milam catalog (probably for the year 1914) notes in its prologue:¹

The Milam is a combined multiplying and click reel, and is therefore equally available for fly or bait fishing. . . . For Fly Fishing, it is customary to use the drag, and when desired (as is usually the case), the alarm or "click," but any one of these features can be utilized singly, or all of them collectively at will.

In his now-famous "Evolution of the Kentucky Reel" article published in *Outing* magazine (vol. xxxvii, no. 3) in December 1900, Dr. James A. Henshall (1836-1925) described "pioneers of bass fishing" as using 10-foot cane rods and reels with raw silk line, "the smallest size made, or No. 1." In this instance, Dr. Henshall was using "No. 1" to refer to the size of the line, not the reel.

Opposite: Kentucky reels were handmade and quite collectible. Often they were given as prizes and engraved for their proud owners. The reel on the far left is engraved "J. Willie Hall, Georgetown, KY." The reel on the left is engraved "John P. Roampe, Cincinnati, Ohio"; the reel in the middle was apparently a prize at a fishing contest held in Illinois in 1886. The reel on the right is engraved "James Todd, December 25, 1896."

Nonetheless, the lengthy rod could make up for the lack of spool capacity on the tiny No. 1 Kentucky reel. Dr. Henshall, possibly the first reel collector, went on to write:²

Mr. J. L. Sage, of Lexington, Kentucky, a veteran angler who is still making "Kentucky reels," presented me with a click reel, and showed me his fly rod and flies, all made and used by him as long ago as 1848; so that fly fishing for black bass was practiced as early in Kentucky as in any other section of the country.

There has been speculation that Mr. Sage, a displaced Connecticut gunmaker, brought with him fly-fishing skills learned in his native New England when he settled in Bluegrass country.³

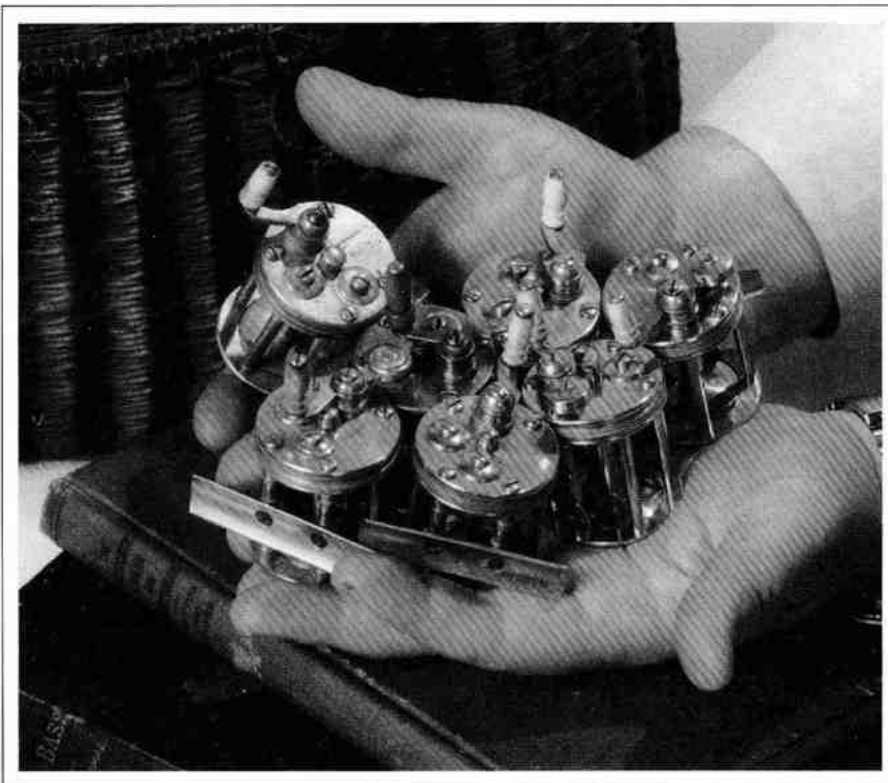
The "click" button is an essential part of a fly reel, because as Dr. Henshall tells us: "... in fly fishing, the line is lengthened gradually, a few feet being taken from the reel by the hand before each subsequent cast, while the click offers the necessary resistance to the rendering of the line to permit this to be done without overrunning."

The tiny No. 2 brass J. L. Sage (circa 1848-1896) multiplying reel (see page 4) shows a single "click" button. The smaller size No. 1 Meek & Milam reels (circa 1853-1880) differ slightly (see page 5). The earlier German silver model with "numbered screws" (necessary in a time when machinists could not mass-produce identical screws) contains click and drag buttons; the later brass model with unnumbered screws contains only a single "click." The two No. 2 brass Meek & Milam reels pictured (one with numbered screws) contain the exact opposite features of their No. 1 counterparts, that is, the earlier model has only a click button and the later model has a click and drag. Obviously, for some anglers, the click button alone was insufficient to prevent overrunning when stripping fly line.

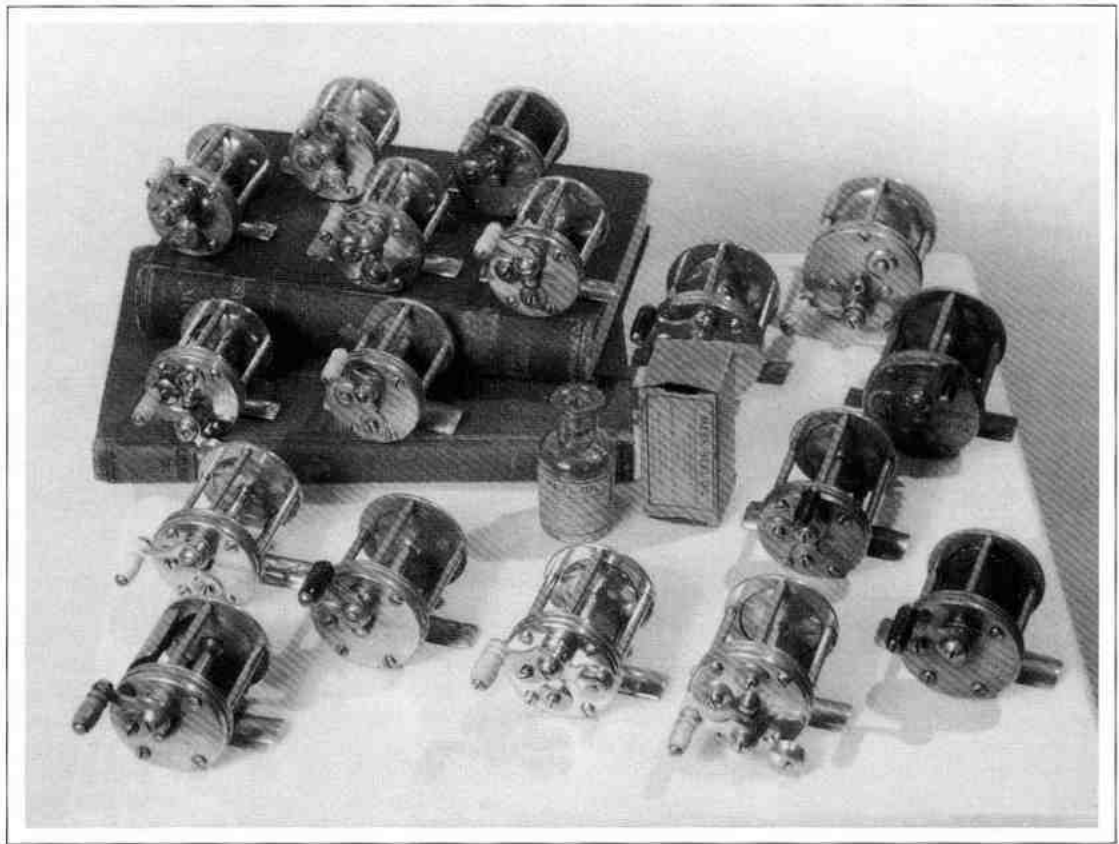
The "B. C. Milam" (circa 1881-1896), the "B. C. Milam—The Frankfort, Kentucky Reel" (circa 1896-1902), and the "B. C. Milam & Son—the Frankfort, Kentucky Reel" (circa 1900-1927), in both No. 1 and No. 2 sizes (see page 5), contain both a drag button and what was called an "alarm" (or "click") button.⁴ The addition of the drag button suggests a bait-casting reel more than a fly reel, although their size made them ill-equipped for the former task (albeit a perfect size for that newfound collectible, the fly rod lure).

In the revised 1915 edition of his *Book of the Black Bass*, Dr. Henshall noted the obvious:⁵ "The two modes of angling in which the (fishing) reel is employed are bait casting and fly fishing, and as the two methods differ so essentially, they require reels of widely different functions. Thus, in bait fishing the multiplying reel is used, while in fly fishing, the click reel is indispensable."

But how about a multiplying click reel? In *A Treasury of Reels*, recently published by the American Museum of Fly Fishing, Jim Brown notes that smaller models of the Kentucky reel "terminating with the tiny model No. 1, mea-



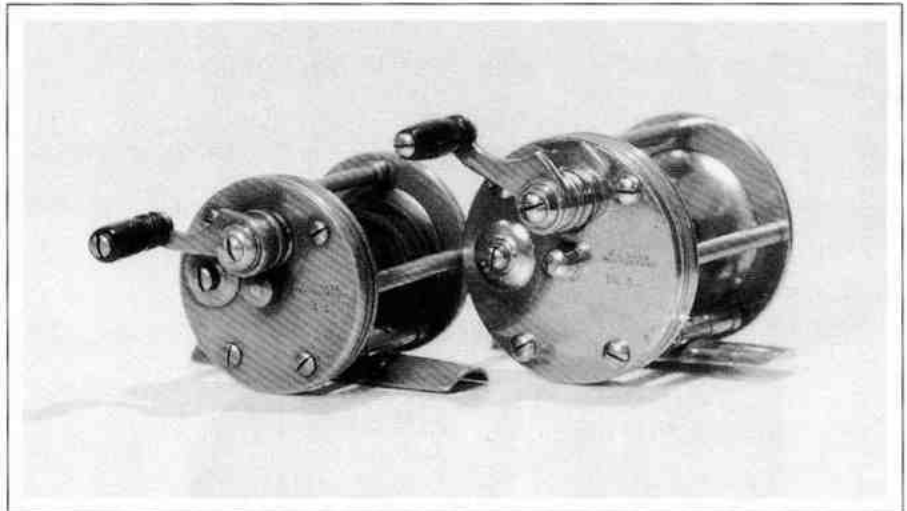
Author holds seven tiny No. 1 Kentucky reels, six of which are made of German silver and one brass. Each reel has an ivory grasp, although some brass models had grasps made of buffalo horn. Four of the reels have a popular "half-crank" handle and two of the reels utilize the more expensive counter-balanced handle. These reels were made by Meek & Milam, B. C. Milam, and B. C. Milam & Son from the mid- to late 1800s.



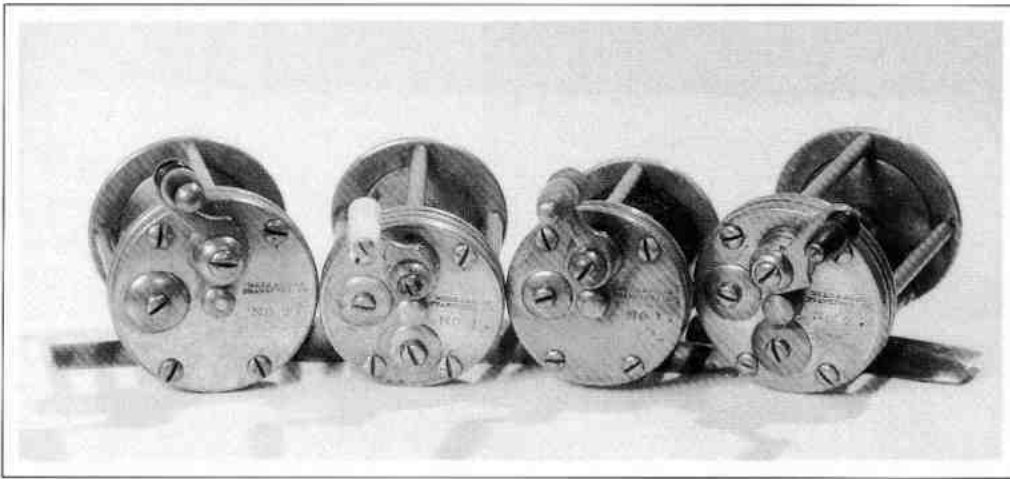
A collection of Kentucky reels and a rare bottle of Meek reel oil with its original box. Three reels in the back right are the slightly larger No. 3 models, including one made by Frank Fulilove of Owenton, Kentucky. These reels were all handmade in the late 1800s and early part of this century.

suring $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter were produced for trout anglers and fly fishers.⁶ Sadly, however, little actual documentation exists concerning such use of the Kentucky reel. One of the few exceptions is found in an article titled "The Milam Frankfort Kentucky Reel" published in the January/February 1985 edition of *Antique Angler* magazine, wherein reel historian Frank M. Stewart notes that the "No. 1 size was recommended for fly fishing" in some manufacturers' catalogs.

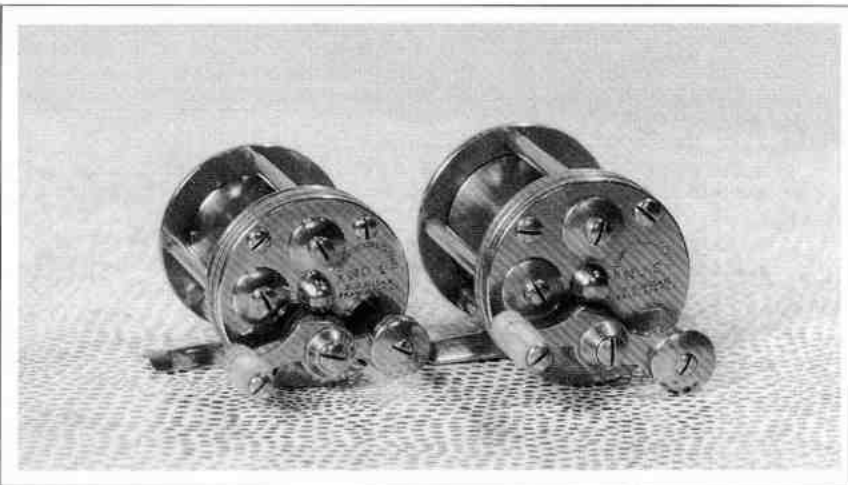
Notwithstanding Jim Brown's contribution, books and articles on fly fishing are conspicuously silent on the use of Kentucky reels, preferring to focus on the highbrow (but in most cases, not nearly as well made) New York/New England makers, such as Leonard, Orvis, and vom Hofe.⁷ Since few, if any, of the Kentucky reelmakers ever sought patents for their products (as opposed to New York makers who patented their ideas—and those of their competitors—*ad nauseum*), perhaps the lack of



J. L. Sage was a Kentucky gunsmith who became a reelmaker. Most Kentucky reelmakers were jewelers and watchmakers. It is estimated that Sage made approximately 250 reels by hand during the last three decades of the 1800s. The reel on the left is a brass No. 2 with a buffalo horn handle. The reel on the right is a slightly larger No. 3 size made of nickel-plated German silver with a buffalo horn handle. Both of these reels have a single click button and four face screws. Each reel has a half-crank, noncounter-balanced handle.



A collection of four Meek & Milam reels made in Frankfort, Kentucky. From left to right, brass Meek & Milam No. 2, with three numbered screws and a buffalo horn handle; German silver Meek & Milam No. 1 with three numbered screws and ivory handle; brass Meek & Milam (no numbered screws) with an ivory handle; German silver Meek & Milam No. 2 with a buffalo horn handle. Two of these reels only have a click switch, the other two have click and drag buttons. All four reels have a half-crank handle indicating they were used for fly fishing as opposed to tournament or bait casting, which usually requires a counter-balanced handle.



Two ultra-rare B. C. Milam reels (without the “& Sons” marking), “The Frankfort Kentucky Reel.” Reel on left is a small No. 1 size and the other a slightly larger No. 2 size. Both reels have counter-balance handle located at the six o’clock position, ivory grasps, and a click and drag button.

scholarly work is due in large part to a lack of verifiable information.⁸ The only obvious exception to the general exclusion of Kentucky makers is again Jim Brown; his writings in regard to the Meek No. 44 fly reel most recently appeared in *Fishing Collectibles* magazine.⁹

When friends see my collection of No. 1 and No. 2 size Kentucky reels they are usually surprised by their toylike appearance. “You couldn’t reel in a goldfish with that thing” is a phrase I in-

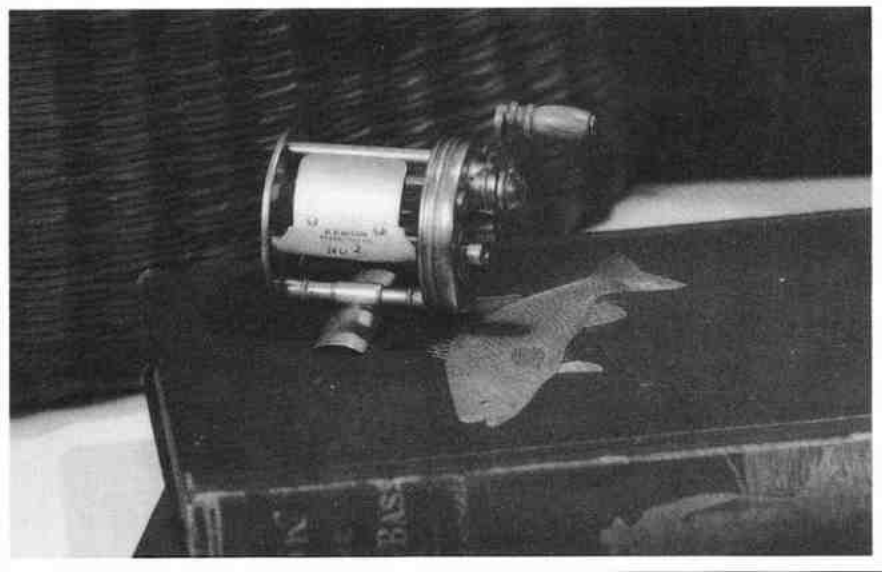
evitably hear. Indeed, collectors of these rare, tiny mechanical wonders often find the reels in mint condition 100 years after they were made, indicating that the original purchasers, likewise, could not bear to do anything with them besides admire their craftsmanship and save them for posterity.¹⁰

B. C. Milam & Son continued to make the No. 1 size reels until the late 1920s (in my collection I have a Milam reel marked serial number 9619, which

suggests a manufacture date of around 1910), but the 1916 Meek catalog (B. F. Meek and Sons having been acquired by the Horton Manufacturing Company of Connecticut) starts its offering with the larger No. 2 size reels, which it recommended for “light bait” and tournament casting. In fact, this writer is unaware of any No. 1 size B. F. Meek and Sons reels in any collection, though there is a reported B. F. Meek (no Sons) No. 1 reel in a Texas collection.¹¹ Additionally, the early J. F. and B. F. Meek reels (circa 1837-1852) have been found in the tiny No. 1 size.

The No. 1 size was not the smallest reel made by Kentucky craftsmen. An ultrarare size 0 Meek & Milam reel is in one California collection. In fact, the reel is so small that the maker’s mark had to be stamped vertically because the name would not fit lengthwise on the reel. Yet another California collector owns a possibly one-of-a-kind size 0 J. L. Sage reel (no size No. 1 Sage reels are known to exist). The Kentucky Historical Society in Frankfort lists several unassembled, unmarked reel faces from Meek & Milam, sizes 0 and 00 among its inventory.

The No. 1 and No. 2 Kentucky reels came with a variety of handles and features. Most well-known is the “half-crank” handle situated at 12 o’clock on the reel face. Such handles are totally inconsistent for use as an effective bait casting reel because the lack of counter-



A rare B. C. Milam No. 2, Frankfort Kentucky Reel. It has a half-crank handle and ivory grasps along with a single-click button. Its rarity is due to the fact that it has a thumb drag made by B. C. Milam, stamped as such. The thumb drag indicates this reel would have been used for bait fishing as opposed to fly fishing, which would have allowed pressure to be placed on the line as it was going out, when the bait was taken.

balance would detract from the spool inertia. More expensive (according to some catalogs) was the "balanced" handle which, at least in my collection, was usually positioned at 12 o'clock or 6 o'clock on the reel face. This counter-balanced handle feature would suggest a reel used to cast bait.

In the early 1900s the art of tournament casting flourished.¹² Although the No. 2 size reel was recommended for such competition, Perry D. Frazer in his book *Fishing Tackle* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922) wrote:

Nowhere else are such perfect reels made as in the United States, and Kentucky has produced the two that are types. For nearly a century the Milam and the Meek reels have been on the market, and the first reels these firms made are almost identical with the modern ones. . . . At a national tournament a few years ago, the winner of the accuracy bait-casting event used a tiny No. 1 reel that had been used by the owner for many years, and by his father before him; more than fifty years in all, surely.

Whatever their ultimate use, I am reminded that if necessity was truly the mother of invention, the tiny Kentucky reels may never have been made; there always seemed to be a bigger (if not better) alternative. But as anyone who has listened to the musical sound of one of these little gems can attest, that truly would have been a shame. ~

ENDNOTES

1. The catalog begins with the sentence: "More than three quarters of a century back, viz: in the year 1839. . . ." The prologue was subsequently quoted verbatim by Thomas Hubert Hutton and Stanley Blake in *The Complete Angler and Huntsman*, a book privately published in 1919 in Berry, Kentucky.

2. In the *Outing* magazine article, Dr. Henshall told of his collection of Kentucky reels, including "those of Snyder, the Meeks, Hardman, Milam, Sage, and others," which he displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893. It is doubtful he kept the collection intact until his death, however, as his biographer, Marguerite Ives, wrote in *Seventeen Famous Sportsmen* (Chicago: Canterbury Press, 1923), that Dr. Henshall was near-destitute immediately prior to his death. His collection has never been located. The Spring 1992 issue of *Fishing Collectibles* magazine (vol. 3, no. 4) contains an article by Mary Kefover Kelly, indicating that Dr. Henshall ran an advertisement in the June 1919 issue of the *American Angler Magazine* offering his collection for sale and using Cincinnati, Ohio, as a return address. Ms. Kelly indicates that there is still question as to whether the collection stayed together in the hands of one 1919 buyer or whether it was scattered across the country.

3. For more on J. L. Sage, see *Lure Collector* magazine, Winter 1986, book no. 2, pp. 14-15, "J. L. Sage 'Manufacturer of Fine Kentucky Fishing Reels,'" by Frank M. Stewart.

4. Dr. Henshall did not use the terms "alarm" and "click" interchangeably as is done now: "I have no use for drag, click, alarm or lock in a multiplying reel," he wrote. However, in an article titled "My Old Kentucky Reel" (*Field & Stream*, January 1953), editor A. J. McClane described Kentucky reels that "actually made music" by use of a "bell click" wherein the alarm bell was tuned in thirds. Henshall also mentions a reel made by B. F.

Meek in 1846 with a "novel feature. . . [a] 'bell-click' made upon the same principle as the repeating watch. . . ."

5. The first edition was published in 1881 by Robert Clarke & Co. in Cincinnati, Ohio.

6. *A Treasury of Reels*, the American Museum of Fly Fishing, Manchester, Vermont, 1990, p. 50.

7. It may be too harsh to blame contemporary indifference alone for the lack of chronicling. Robert Page Lincoln wrote an article entitled "The Kentucky Reel" for the March 1930 edition of *Field & Stream*, which brushes off trout fishing thus: ". . . it was in the taking of (bass) that the (Kentucky) multiplying reel was founded. It was not made to catch salmon, trout, or any other like fish. It was a bass-fishing reel pure and simple."

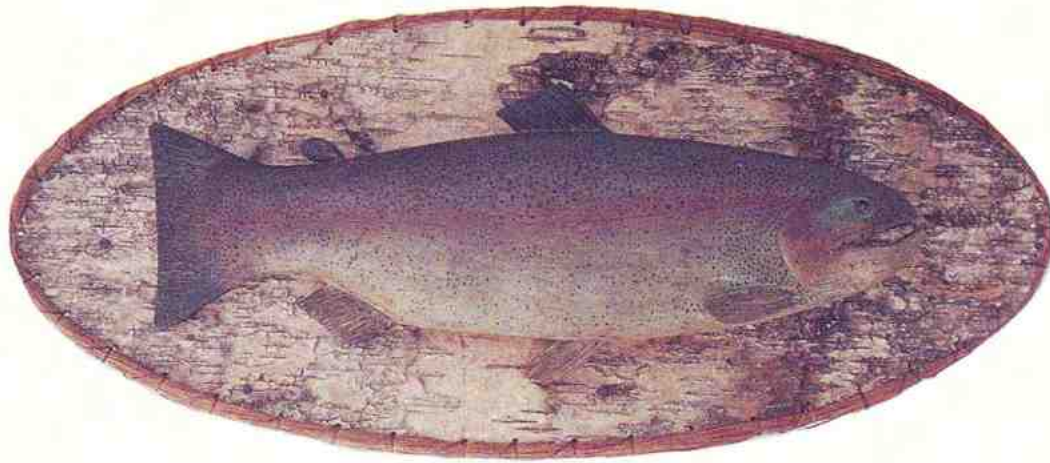
8. On the subject of why he felt patents to be unnecessary, Lincoln quotes Kentucky reel maker, Benjamin Meek as follows: "If any man can produce a reel equal to mine, he is welcome to all the money he can make from it." There is considerable difference among today's collectors as to whether Meek or Milam made the finer reels. As Hutton and Blake wrote in 1919 (see endnote 1), however, "If the Milam people used the same effective advertising policy as do their competitors, no doubt the 'Milam reel' and not the 'Meek reel' would today stand out pre-eminently. . . ." For an excellent contemporary commentary on early reel construction, see Jim Hardman's article "Observations: An Inside Look at Reel Construction," *Fishing Collectibles* magazine, vol. 2, no. 4, Spring 1991.

9. "A Brief History of Meek and the Meek No. 44 Fly Reel," *Fishing Collectibles* magazine, vol. 1, no. 3, Winter 1990, pp. 10-15. For further reading on another Kentucky-style fly reel (which was made in Missouri), see Jim Brown's article "Talbot's Ben Hur Fly Reel," *Lure Collector* magazine, book no. 6 (1987), pp. 12-15.

10. Jim Brown and the author agree that any man or woman wealthy enough to afford such an out-of-the-ordinary reel probably had several other workhorse reels available. The No. 1 would have been their "Sunday reel."

11. According to Stephen K. Vernon and Frank M. Stewart in their recently published *Fishing Reel Makers of Kentucky* (Thomas B. Reel Co., 1992), B. F. Meek offered the No. 1 size reel in his catalogs from 1882 to 1896 or so. At that time, the name of the company was changed to "B. F. Meek and Sons." The 1899 new B. F. Meek and Sons, Inc., catalog also advertised a No. 1 size reel for trout or fly fishing.

12. For an excellent anthology on competitive fly and bait casting as a popular sport, see Cliff Netherton's book, *The History of the Sport of Casting* (Lakeland, Florida: The Merican Casting Education Foundation, Inc., 1983).



Fish Models, Plaques, and Effigies

by Ronald S. Swanson

FLY FISHERS HAVE ALWAYS felt the need to commemorate the memorable fish, whether through prose, painting, etching or photograph. Ron Swanson, of Bloomfield, Michigan, has spent years collecting fish models and plaques from around the world. Fourteen of his exquisite models, in addition to others belonging to various American collectors and clubs, are on display at the Museum in "Fish Models—An Exhibition" until November 30, 1992. Here, chronicling yet another of our sport's efforts to record fish, time, and place—the unique art of model carving—he writes about the history of plaques and effigies from the time of George IV. EDITOR

Above:

A model, or perhaps a plaque, of a plump 4-pound, perfectly painted rainbow trout attributed to George Gillett of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, around 1910. The oval birch-bark backboard with the grass-stitched edge is a uniquely rustic folk art treatment.

DURING THE SHORT reign of George IV of England (1820-1830), angling became a court amusement that attracted the fancy of the aristocracy and a few writers and generated popular interest as well. As fishing for sport gathered momentum, the idea of preserving large or important specimens also gained interest. The science of taxidermy, which had been practiced for centuries, was undoubtedly the first method used to preserve trophies, but until recently this ancient technique was not a permanent way to preserve a fish. In fact, for more than a hundred years the finest British taxidermists have enclosed their stuffed or "put up" fish in airtight glass cases so they might last a little longer. As an alternative to taxidermy, the British made "casts" of trophy fish from plaster of Paris poured into molds, but these were very heavy and never widely accepted. Instead, life-size models, which were traced from a fish's outline, carved out of wood, and then carefully painted with oils, proved to be fairly popular as

a more permanent and attractive way to display trophies. The models were artistically done and very pleasing to the eye, unlike the "put up" fish that were obscured by a glass case or the heavy "casts" that sometimes pulled nails from the wall and smashed to pieces on the floor.

SCOTTISH PIONEERS

Based on current research, it is believed that the art of making models was started in Scotland probably by John Bucknell Russell (1819/20-1893). Russell was born in Edinburgh and was a self-taught artist. Around 1872, he established his artist's studio in Fochabers, a small village near the mouth of the river Spey, bordered by the lands of Gordon Castle. He became known amongst Britain's upper classes for his oil paintings of fish and game. Typical of his work were riverbank or lake shore scenes that usually featured salmon or trout in the foreground. At some point in his career he began to paint fish models, but there is currently a debate as to

whether or not he actually carved them. He was known to have been an accomplished woodworker, however, so it is the author's feeling that he carved at least a few of the early models. Below is a Russell model which is probably from the Spey around 1888.

Russell models are relatively easy to identify because they are beautifully painted fish featuring thin bodies and exquisite fin carving. There is no carving of the face or pectoral fin because all the details are done by the painting technique known as *trompe l'oeil* ("trick the eye"). These half models are done like a *bas relief*, perhaps one-third as thick as they would be in real life. The special carving on the pelvic, anal, caudal, and dorsal fins was carefully done with a small vee-gouge and it appears on most of the Russell models. Only the earliest Russell models lack this very delicate fin carving.

Three of Russell's eight children also became painters: two sons, Charles and James, and a daughter Isabella known as "Dhuie." One of Russell's obituaries stated that he was assisted in his artistic endeavors by several family members. John Tully also helped out. He came to work as a carpenter at Gordon Castle around 1880 and at some point began doing side work at the studio. It is not known exactly when Tully began to carve models, but there was a change in Russell's models between 1885 and 1888 when the extremely delicate fin carving began to appear on them. This same style of fin carving appears on all of Tully's later fish. Whether Russell taught this difficult technique to Tully, or Tully embellished Russell's models from the beginning, will probably always remain a mystery.

After John Russell's death in 1893, models from the Fochabers studio have been found which were undoubtedly carved by John Tully but show a similar painting technique to those commissioned during Russell's lifetime. Perhaps his son, Charles Russell, decorated these

fish before he went off to Dublin to be a full-time painter. At any rate, it is known that Russell's daughter Dhuie, who married John Tully after the turn of the century, was painting the fish by 1896 because that is when her clever and bright, highlighted, bluish decoration began to appear on John Tully's fish models.

Like Russell's work, Tully salmon are fairly simple to identify. First, they are always made as half models usually swimming to the left. Occasionally, they swim to the right and sometimes they are mounted on an angle as if swimming upstream. Almost all of them are painted in Dhuie's bright blue and creamy white colors, but occasionally a "back ender" or a fish in "spawning livery" will show up painted in those much more somber colors of a fish that has been in the river for some time and is almost ready to spawn. The key identifying features, however, are the wonderfully carved pectoral and pelvic fins that are applied to the body. They are present from about 1898 until Tully stopped carving in 1931. See page 9 for a 30-pound salmon caught in the Spey in 1920 and carved by John and Dhuie Tully. The Lemon & Grey fly that hooked it is enshrined on the backboard behind a round piece of glass.

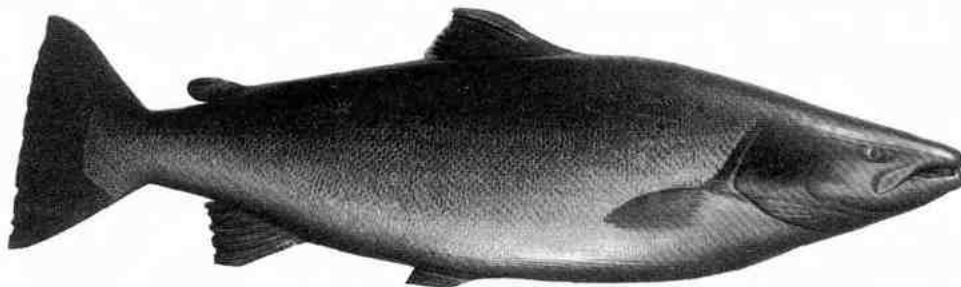
The Tullys made models of fish that were caught all over the world: Great Britain, Norway, Canada, the United States, Africa, Ceylon, India, and New Zealand. The wide and interesting variety of species represented over their long tenure include Atlantic salmon, brown trout, rainbow trout, sea trout, pike, perch, Kodua (giant sea perch), and Tyee salmon (a life-size painting by Dhuie). As reported in John's obituary, the largest model they made was "a 200 lb. perch from the Nile, about a yard deep and seven feet long, while the smallest was an inch long for Queen Mary's doll house."

After John Tully died at age sixty-nine on October 20, 1931 the studio attempt-

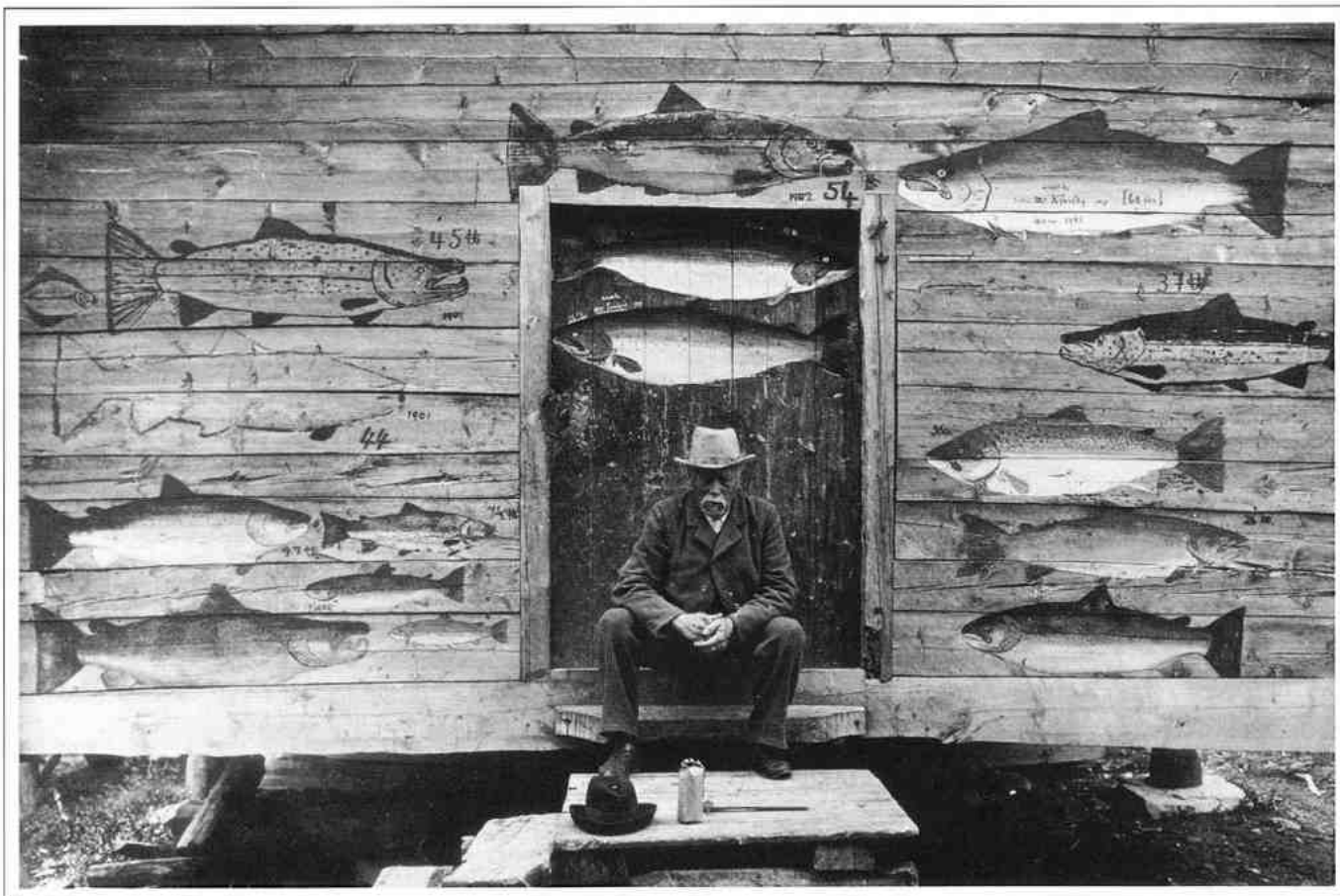
ed to carry on with the carving efforts of Bertie George, another Gordon Castle carpenter. But this was not very successful and eventually the studio closed near the beginning of World War II. On her own, Dhuie did an occasional trophy salmon painting for people who could not afford or did not want a carving. (She died in 1950.) Nearly half of the British models uncovered in the last few years have been made by the Tullys. This attests to their skill and popularity as well as the fact that they sustained their business for a period of roughly forty years.

Among the other professional Scottish model makers, the earliest dated competitor's model thus far discovered is a Malloch salmon from 1900—just a 10-pound fish, but a beautiful model on a gray backboard surrounded by a natural oak frame and signed "P. D. Malloch of Perth" in the upper left-hand corner. The early Mallochs appear occasionally and most of them have backboards that are painted gray or greenish gray with the fish's tail inlaid into it. In most cases, the backboards have attractive natural oak frames. The pectoral and pelvic fins are carved from the body wood in relief, rather than being applied or painted, in order to give greater strength to the weakest parts of the model. Malloch's wonderful carvings are two-thirds models, thus thicker than a Tully half model. This makes them appear to be more realistic or similar to a stuffed fish. In fact, a few of Malloch's wood models were even enclosed in glass cases like "put-up" fish.

There were three model makers who worked for the P.D. Malloch Company over the years. All three of their fish models have the natural oak frames, the painted backboards, and inlaid tails. The illustration on page 10 shows a 50-pounder by the earliest maker that is considered by some to be Malloch's finest salmon model. It is beautifully decorated in spawning livery and was caught on the river Earn by Lord Wolverton in 1904.



A model of a 40-pound Atlantic salmon from John Russell's studio in Fochabers, Scotland, that was probably caught on the river Spey around 1888. It is believed that the art of making models probably originated with Russell whose offspring also became fish model painters.



Fish-related folk art is abundant in Norway's fishing camps and hotels, where effigies or likenesses of trophy fish can be found dating back to 1860. This barn wall on the Årøy River, Norway, shows Anders Årøy, a fishing guide. The better effigies here are by Johan Neset (1877-1951).

Models by the "early" maker were made until the mid-1920s. Very few examples of "middle" and "late" Malloch's have been found. The middle maker produced a few models until 1933 and the later maker is known to have carved a fish as recently as 1952, a record Scottish sea trout from the river Ythan. Also, there are a few models from Scotland that turn up, some excellent, that appear to be Malloch's because of the greenish gray backboards. These are attributed to the "Malloch school."

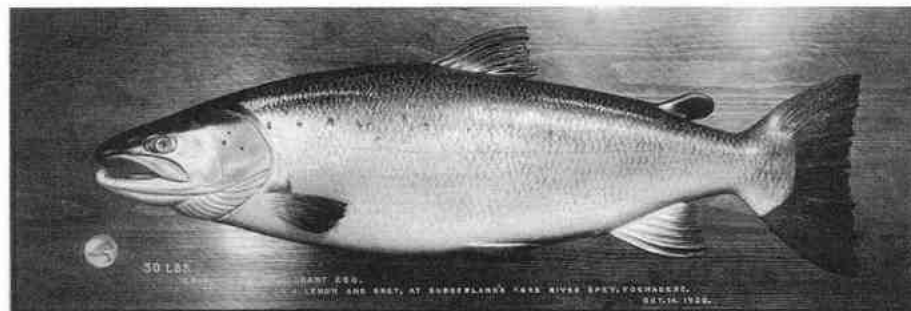
LONDON MODEL MAKERS

There were a great many tackle shops in London during the last century simply because London was the center of everything British and angling was very, very British. Around the time of the Great War, the Tullys were making models for two or three London tackle shops, most notably Farlow's. Other shops, particularly Hardy Brothers, were making their own fish models. Hardy Brothers was founded in 1872 and eventually became one of the city's leading

tackle dealers along with Farlow's, which had started in 1840. As leaders in their field they were, naturally, competitors, and according to currently uncovered accounts Farlow's beat Hardy to the punch with models by Russell (and a little later, Tully) that were advertised as early as 1891.

The first year that Hardy made models was 1895, but signed Hardy models are not known until 1907. From then until the mid-1930s there were two makers who worked for Hardy—they are

This model of an Atlantic salmon was made by John and Dhuie Russell Tully (daughter of John Russell) of Fochabers, Scotland. Notice detailed carved pectoral and pelvic fins, key identifying features of Tully models. The backboard, complete with salmon fly, is inscribed: "30 lbs./ Caught by G. W. H. Grant Esq./ on a Lemon and Grey, at Cumberland's Ford River Spey, Fochabers/ Oct. 14, 1920."



generally referred to as the "early" and the "late" Hardy makers. Models by both of Hardy's makers are every bit the equal of the Scottish fish. For the most part, the signed "early" Hardys are usually half models swimming to the left; however, a few of the earlier unmarked fish by the same maker are three-quarter models swimming to the right. In both cases, all the fins are carved in relief from the body wood like Malloch's models. The photograph on page 11 shows the earliest known signed Hardy from 1907: a 3-pound, 5-ounce brown trout that was caught in Lake Windermere in England's Lake District, signed with a neat, white bakelite or ivory label, inset into the beveled edge of the backboard at the bottom left.

"Late" Hardy models are known to have been made from 1920 to 1934. These later Hardys are three-quarter models that have a wonderful sculptural feeling to them. Usually the mouth is closed, which imparts a somewhat similar look to the faces, but there are enough differences elsewhere, such as the variation in colors of the painting and the treatment of the position of the pelvic fin, that each one is quite different and interesting.

Fish models could be commissioned at several other London tackle dealers and taxidermy shops. Before 1920, Holbrow & Company, Rowland Ward, and, of course, Farlow's were carrying works by the Tullys. During the 1920s and 1930s the taxidermy firms of E. Gerrard & Son, J. Cooper, and W. B. Griggs had their own makers. All three of these taxidermy houses produced excellent models, but they got in the game a bit late and, as a result, examples of their models are rare and difficult to find.

A small group of fish models by an extremely good maker have been discovered recently, the work of an amateur by the name of A. H. Robinson. His models are all of fish that were all caught in the vicinity of Hyen, Norway.

They are particularly interesting because Robinson gave them a degree of animation by carving the models with their tails up in the air. Unlike any other maker, he made the scales by pounding a gouge into the side of the model a few hundred times. Like Russell models and a few very early Tullys made for Farlow's, Robinson used *trompe l'oeil* painting for detailing the face and the pectoral and pelvic fins. The photograph on page 12 shows a 1909 Robinson model of a 5½-pound sea trout from the lake called Hopevand next to Hyen.

On the whole, British models are quite scarce. It is estimated that there were perhaps only 2,000 or so ever made. Undoubtedly a good portion of those have been destroyed in one way or another. For example, one is known to have been used as a cricket bat, another was painted bright red, and a fairly large number of fish models were reported to have been burned when a manor house on the Spey changed hands. Of those fish that have survived, a few have found their way into pubs or fishing hotels in Great Britain and a small number have come to the United States through the antique trade. No doubt, the great majority of the models are still embellishing the walls of studies and hallways or are centered neatly over country house mantels. They are scattered throughout Great Britain and Norway to be seen only by descendants of the anglers who caught them and their guests . . . almost totally invisible to the rest of the world.

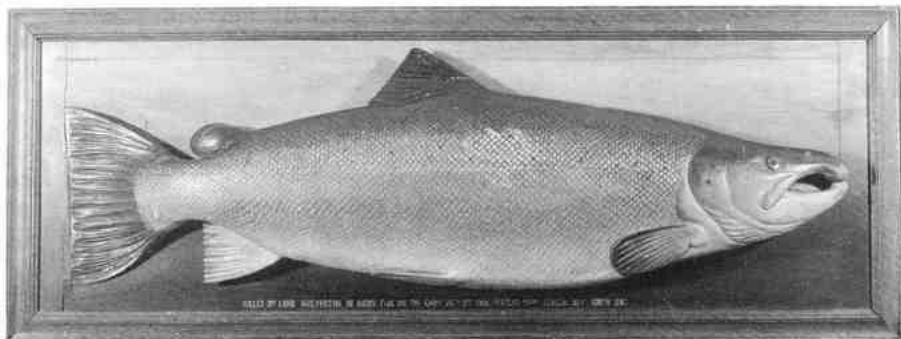
NORTH AMERICA

One of eastern Canada's most famous rivers, the Grand Cascapedia, located on Quebec's Gaspé peninsula, was the private domain of the governor-generals of Canada early in the river's history. These Englishmen had sole fishing rights to the river from 1878 to 1893. Lorne Cottage, which was built by the first governor-general, Lord Lorne, for his wife Princess Louise of England, has a num-

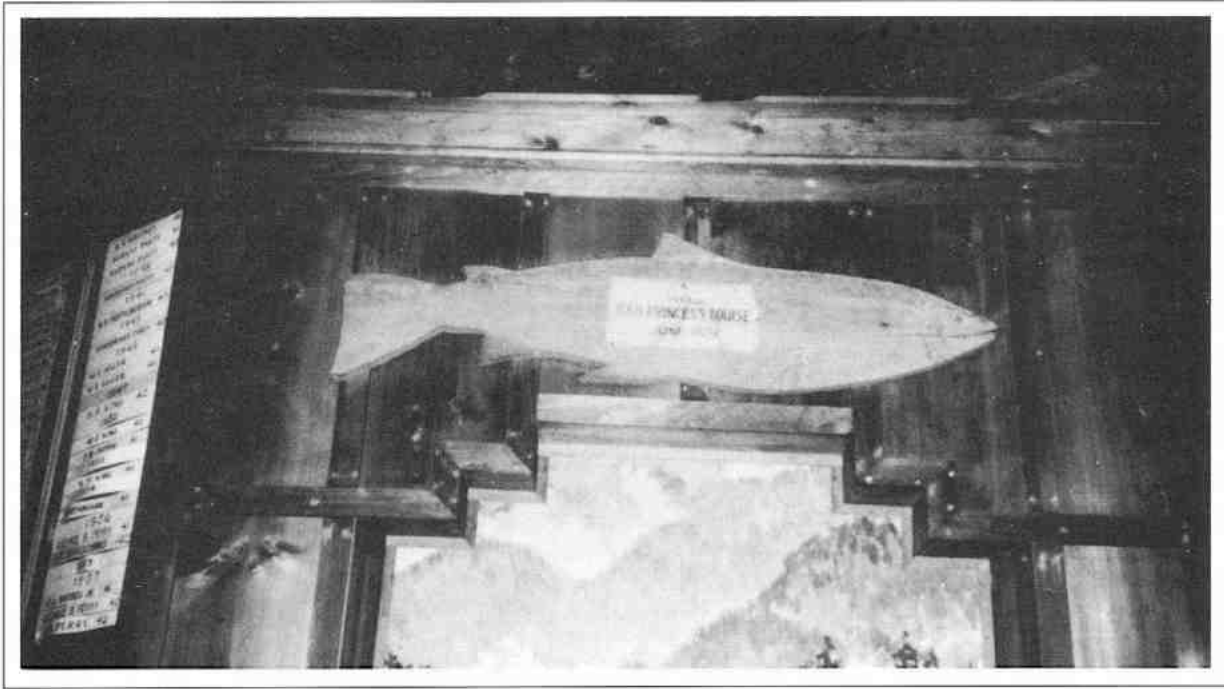
ber of salmon models or "cut-outs" decorating the walls. These are carefully delineated silhouettes of salmon that weighed over 40 pounds. They are by an unknown maker created from varnished, 1-inch pine boards with all the pertinent information of capture neatly inscribed in the center of the fish. Of special interest is the "cut-out" of the Princess's 40-pounder that she caught in 1879, which is the oldest model that has been located in Canada. Models of 40-pounders are found in other camps along the Grand Cascapedia and the more recent ones were made by Warren Gilker.

Apparently, there were a few other salmon rivers in Quebec with fishing camps and clubs that had a history of fish models, but the models were dispersed when some of these were closed by the provincial government in the 1970s so that the rivers could be opened to public fishing. For the most part models are very rare in the rest of Canada, but there are a few exceptions. At the south end of Nova Scotia where deep-sea fishing is the favorite sport, a few scale models have shown up. They are about 18 inches in length and are of deep-sea fish, such as bluefin tuna, marlin, and swordfish. These appear to be factory-made scale models dating from the 1930s to 1950s and may have been produced in the United States. Moving west from the domain of the Atlantic salmon to Ontario, the brook trout comes into its own. Here one carver has been discovered from the Peterborough area, north of Toronto. Thus far, only two of his brook trout carvings are known, both have glass eyes, full bodies, and are signed "Z. Alary." It would appear that these very fine carvings date from before World War II.

Western Canada with its fine Pacific salmon and steelhead fisheries had little or no modeling tradition until 1927 when Tommy Brayshaw made his first model. Tommy had emigrated from Yorkshire, England, in 1912 and became



Beautifully decorated in spawning livery, this model of a 50-pound Atlantic salmon by P. D. Malloch Company of Perth, Scotland (the "early" maker), is considered by some to be Malloch's finest salmon model. Lord Wolverton caught this record fish on the river Earn, a tributary of the Tay, Scotland, in 1904.



In Lorne Cottage on the Grand Cascapedia in Quebec's Gaspé peninsula, which the first governor-general, Lord Lorne, built for his wife Princess Louise of England, the proud husband commemorated his skilled wife's salmon of over 40 pounds caught in June 1879 with a silhouette made from a varnished, 1-inch pine board by an unknown maker.

somewhat of a legend in British Columbia for his artistic and fishing talents. He brought with him the British propensity for making models of good fish that were fairly caught. His models are unquestionably Canada's finest and every bit the equal of the very best British models. Tommy's models were fashioned along the lines of the work done by the carvers for Hardy Brothers and Malloch's. They were made mostly with fuller bodies and all the fins were carved from the body wood. Uniquely, the scales on his models appear to be carved like gun-stock checkering rather than painted like the British models. His large, 40- to 60-pound chinook salmon are extremely impressive. On page 13 is an example of a 48 ½-pound fish—his first salmon model, made in 1934. Tommy died in 1967 at age eighty-two.

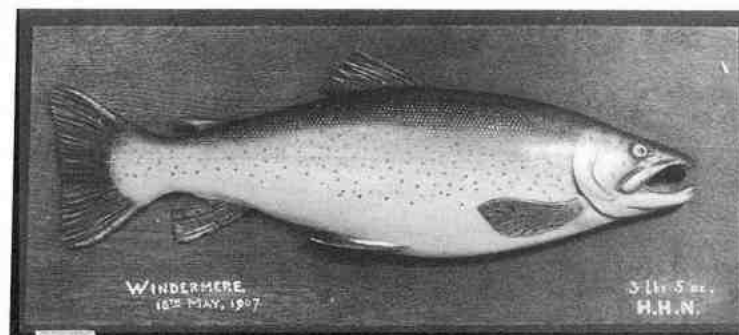
THE UNITED STATES

The tradition of making fish models was more prevalent in the United States than in Canada. One of the reasons is that, like Tommy Brayshaw in Canada, there was an English immigrant, George Gillett, who came to the United States from Preston, England, in 1897, and carried on the British tradition in his new home. He settled in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and after manufacturing brushes for a while, became a taxidermist. He was apparently a well-known and relatively important taxidermist who is rumored to have done work for some of the Polar expeditions that were going on at that time. As the story goes, he retired from taxidermy around 1910 and began carving fish. Three trout and one pike said to be carved by him are known at this time. The fact that Gillett's fish

carvings predate most of the other fish models found in the United States suggests that he may have helped to start the fish modeling tradition. See page 7 for a plump and perfectly painted rainbow trout attributed to him. The oval shaped, birch bark-covered backboard is folk art in one of its purest American forms.

Another reason that model making gained interest in the United States is that, much like in Britain, it was appealing as an artistic improvement over taxidermy. And, in all probability, the tradition of modeling or carving fish gained some momentum in the twentieth century from the famous duck decoy carvers Charles E. "Shang" Wheeler (1872-1949) from Stratford, Connecticut, and A. Elmer Crowell (1862-1952) from Cape Cod. Both of these men

A signed model of a brown trout by Hardy Brothers of Alnwick, England (by the "early" Hardy maker), dated 1907. The fish was caught on Lake Windermere in the Lake District of England in 1907 and weighed 3 pounds, 5 ounces.



carved superb fish. Wheeler made models of fish that he or his friends caught, but Crowell, who spent most of his time hunting, fishing, and carving in Massachusetts, mostly made fish plaques or generic fish carvings to sell. The carving influence of these two men was quite widespread, especially among sportsmen. Wheeler, the more active traveler of the two, fished for salmon a number of times on the Grand Cascadepedia where he was, no doubt, exposed to the salmon "cut-outs" on that river. Perhaps he even saw some British models on his trips to Canada. On display at the American Museum of Fly Fishing until November 30, 1992 is Wheeler's 1927 model of a 12-pound Newfoundland salmon in a jumping position as well as one of Crowell's rare models that commemorates a 1917 fishing trip with a small-mouthed bass, about 2½ pounds, which is dedicated to Joe Lincoln, another famous decoy carver from Massachusetts.

Brook trout have been the fly fisherman's main quarry throughout the years in the East and represent the most common type of fish carving found. But carvings have been found of many other species, such as landlocked salmon, pickerel, large- and small-mouth bass, crappies, perch, bluegills, stripers, rainbows, browns, and lake trout. Pike, muskies, and especially bluefish are rare. Perhaps the most unusual fish carving that has been found is a gaff topsail pompano made in the 1930s by another decoy carver, Lloyd Tyler from Crisfield, Maryland.

The state of Maine, however, with its wilderness of mountains, lakes, and rivers is the true center of the American fish-carving tradition. One of that state's most prolific professional fish carvers was Phillippe Sirois, of Bath. He carved a wide variety of fish models and plaques including most of the fish

species listed above. Additionally, he made some flying grouse carvings (some with real grouse feet attached!) and fish weathervanes. He also painted and collaged a number of pictures, some of fishing scenes and others of all descriptions. Phillippe died in 1980 at age eighty-two and left many admirers of his work. The photograph on page 13 shows a Phillippe Sirois model: a large brook trout, typically bright and colorful, yet modest and appealing. Lawrence R. Irvine of Winthrop, Maine, was born about twenty years after Sirois and began his carving in 1957. His first model was of a 5½-pound brook trout he had caught. He carved fish exclusively until 1989 when he had a minor stroke that made it difficult for him to continue. Most of the fish he carved were models taken from fish or outlines that were brought to him in person. His biggest carving was of a 60-pound chinook salmon from the West Coast.

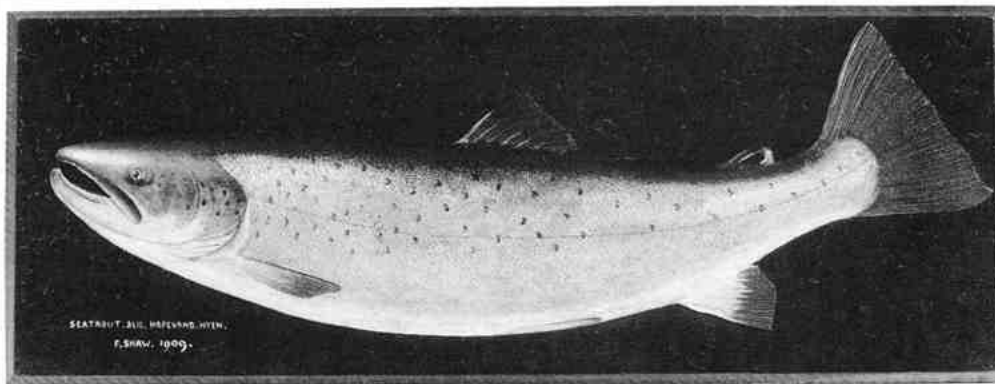
Another man who created fish carvings more recently is Nathan Meyer of Bath, New York. He carved a number of fish in the early 1980s. Almost all of his fish were plaques, but they were based on his firsthand knowledge as a fisherman who had fished at an early age in Wisconsin and then, later, fished most of the streams of New Jersey and New York. Like Wheeler's, a few of his fish carvings are embellished with a tippet and hand-tied fly, as if the fish were still fighting.

Earlier than Sirois, Irvine, and Meyer, were a number of unknown fish carvers whose solitary works have shown up in antique shops and fishing tackle and duck decoy auctions. The oldest fish model found in the United States, so far, is a landlocked salmon from Maine. It is a sophisticated cut-out in natural mahogany and carved on the back is "4¼" and "1879." This is the only one with such markings that has been found, so it

is probably an isolated example. Although a few other fish carvings of unknown origins have been found that appear to be from the Victorian era, this is the only one dated so early.

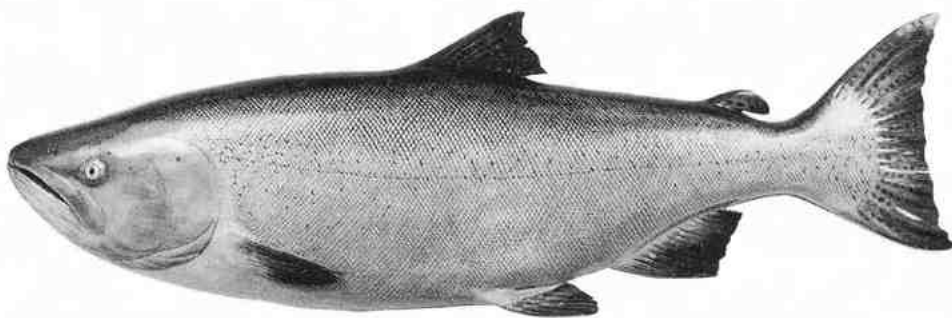
There are other unknown carvers, mostly from Maine, who made enough fish models or plaques to be considered professionals and whose work one could expect to eventually uncover. Three makers stand out and they have been labeled "Heines," "Lead Fin," and "Wobbly Tail." All of these makers appear to have made fish from the 1920s until perhaps the 1970s. "Heines," an unsubstantiated name that came out of an auction catalog, made mostly brook trout carvings, but a model of a lake trout exists that was caught in New Hampshire in 1932; it is absolutely splendid in terms of form and paint. "Lead Fin" seems to have carved only brook trout and they had pectoral and pelvic fins made from sheet lead. Aside from this extraordinary innovation, his carvings were quite competent and very nicely painted. Last is "Wobbly Tail," so named because of the extra piece of wood that was laminated onto the main piece of wood in the tail area. When the fish was carved the tail would stand out from the oval backboard, thus imparting animation to the carving. A number of species by this maker have been found, some from New England, one from New York, and one from Ohio.

In the Great Lakes area models are virtually unknown. In 1979, however, Alton "Chub" Buchmann, a decoy carver from Mt. Clemens, Michigan, carved a model of a rare, tiger muskie that he and his son-in-law accidentally speared while ice fishing in Lake St. Clair. This excellent, lifelike model is fully carved and painted, and is 28 inches long with metal fins and glass eyes like a fish decoy. Fish plaques are not uncommon in Michigan because there were many



A model of a sea trout by amateur maker A. H. Robinson of England, who gave his fish animation by carving models with tails up in air and, unlike any other maker, made scales by pounding a few hundred gouges into each model. Mr. F. Shaw caught this 5½-pound fish in Hopevand Lake near Hyen, Norway, during the summer of 1909.

A model of a 48 ½-pound Tye (chinook) salmon carved by Tommy Brayshaw of Vernon, British Columbia, who became a legend because of his fishing and artistic talents. His models are Canada's finest, made with fuller bodies, the fins carved from body wood, and the scales carved like gunstock checkering. This fish was caught on the Campbell River in 1934 and was Brayshaw's first salmon model.



duck and fish decoy carvers located throughout the state. A few of these men, such as Tom Schroeder of Detroit, Ike Goulette of New Baltimore, and Oscar Peterson of Cadillac, carved a number of plaques. Peterson's plaques stand out as the most colorful and funky of them all.

Another rare model from the Great Lakes is an impressive, full-bodied copy of a world record lake trout carved in 1939 by Captain Hub Hammers of Minnesota. This somewhat primitive yet grand carving was used as a trade sign at the Captain's fishing dock on Lake Superior. Wisconsin, like Michigan and Minnesota, also has had many fish decoy makers, and is a resource for fish plaques and other fish-related folk art. As one goes on to the West Coast of the United States, however, little is to be anticipated except for a possible Tommy Brayshaw carving which migrated down the coast from British Columbia or a scale model of a deep-sea fish. The scale models one might encounter are the same as those from Nova Scotia. These attractive little models used to be sold by Kerr's of Beverly Hills, a famous southern California sporting good store.

ELSEWHERE

There are a number of other places around the world where a fish model or "effigy" tradition was started, usually by British anglers. For instance, fish-related

folk art is abundant in parts of Norway, with the greatest concentrations located in fishing hotels and "English houses" (farm houses rented by the English fishermen as early as the 1830s). Here effigies or likenesses of trophy fish can be found dating back to the 1860s. The oldest effigy of a trophy fish currently known is in Norway. It is a tar outline, painted on a porch wall, of a 34-pound fish caught by James Randall on the Laerdal River in 1863. There are many other variations of salmon and sea trout effigies in Norway, all of which show the outlined fish and note the facts of the catch. There are painted wood cut-outs, barn wall paintings, carved outlines found on doors and floors, colorful and beautiful watercolors and oil paintings, and a few primitive models. The most common are found in the form of pen-and-ink outlines or painted fish fashioned on plain boards.

When the British spent time in other lands they usually went fishing—and if there were no fish they would import them. With fishing established, effigies were soon to follow. There are some effigies of tin that were done in a fishing club in Kenya; fish models were recently reported to have been seen in Mongolia; cut-outs are located on at least one river in Iceland; and a British author wrote about effigies at an English fishing club in eastern Finland in 1876.

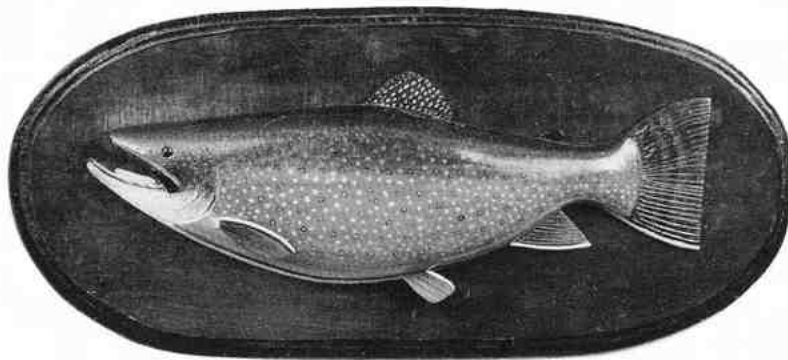
Undoubtedly, there are more exam-

ples in far-off places. Places where a fly fisher had a titanic struggle with a big fish, and honored it by immortalizing the fish in some artistic way. The angler has the joy of catching the fish and the artist the joy of creating the likeness. But the real joy is felt by all the fly fishers who follow—they see the effigy and dream of bigger fish.

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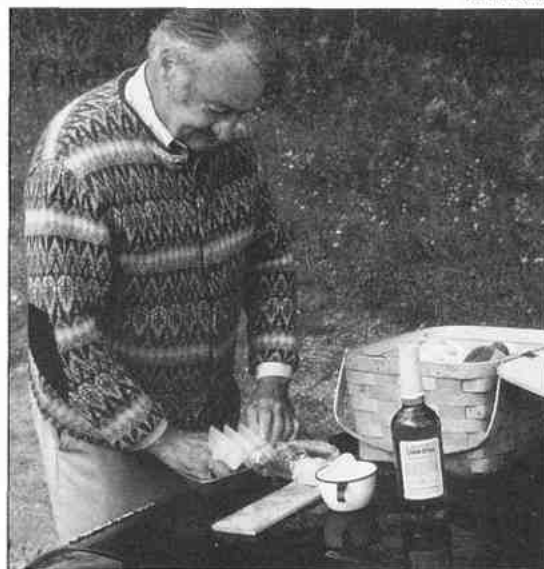
A model of a brook trout by Phillippe Sirois of Bath, Maine, a prolific American fish carver. Typical of his bright and cheerful work, this carving of a 4- or 5-pound fish from Rangeley Lake, Maine, was made in 1949.



John Voelker and the History of “The Cup”

by Al Pellicane

Al Pellicane



THE FALL 1991 ISSUE of *The American Fly Fisher* (Gallery) features a wonderful photo of John Voelker's personal fishing effects donated to the Museum by his wife, Grace. In the center of the picture is “an elegantly battered enamel fishing cup,” an object which fans of The Judge might assume to be the one referenced in a line from his signature piece, “Testament of a Fisherman.” That line reads, “bourbon out of an old tin cup always tastes better out there.” But there's more to the history of “the cup.”

It was my honor and good fortune to be Mister John's guest in the Upper Peninsula for the better part of a week in the summer of 1980. John and Grace had just celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, and the week prior to my arrival The Judge had hosted a visit by television personality Charles Kuralt. The brookies were not cooperating at Frenchman's Pond, and at exactly five o'clock Mister John laid down his rod to prepare a couple of bourbon old-fashioneds for us. There was a ritual to this bartending: it approached the status of an event, the fruit was carefully sliced, and no packaged mix was used. After my first sip from the cup in the photo came the announcement, “Mister Al, I'd like you to know that you've just kissed the lips of the lovely Lee Remick.” I had no idea what that meant until John explained that “the cup” was a permanent

part of his traveling kit and was produced, daily, on the set during the filming of *Anatomy of a Murder*. Apparently, the famous actress shared a fondness for “bourbon out of an old tin cup.” Truthfully, my tastes were less sophisticated and more pedestrian—I'd have preferred a cold beer. Sensing this, in the wry and witty banter that was his trademark, Mister John remarked, “If you're only going to sip it, Mister Al, perhaps I could find you a straw.”

Legions of John Voelker's loyal fans are familiar with his writing about Frenchman's Pond and Uncle Tom's Cabin, but I'm hard pressed to recall a published photo of his camp. As offbeat a picture as one could imagine would pale by the reality. Along the two-rut road leading to camp was a loosely conceived, modernistic sculpture created from a pile of rusted tail pipes and mufflers that John considered a more profound warning than a “Keep Out” sign. This assemblage provided merely a hint of what was to come. The camp looked like a rummage sale in progress; lawn furniture and amenities consisted of discarded chairs and tables covered with AstroTurf, a brick barbecue, pots and pans everywhere, church pews, salt blocks, and holy water fonts converted to bird feeders. Perhaps the *pièce de résistance* was a curious, black-metal weather vane in the shape of a fish (naturally) mounted over a footbridge

crossing the water. The word “character” best serves as the operative description of the camp and the man.

As most fans know, Frenchman's was created by a series of old beaver dams, which mean two things. First, accumulated silt makes the bottom unwadeable, a problem that was solved by the construction of a number of casting platforms, none of which would pass a carpenter's test of squares and levels. Second, dammed water moves imperceptibly, if at all. Those of us who are used to our mistakes being hidden by quick, free stone streams will only find frustration at Frenchman's. A ripple from line slapping the water will telegraph from ground zero to an acre of trout. I felt prepared with a 12-foot 6x leader until the first cast landed like a hawser, and discovered Mister John was deftly working an 18-foot 8x leader with results.

Frankly, I was nervous about accepting Mister John's invitation to come and visit him. Hero worship is a risky affair. The worshiper tends to create an image of the adored that may not be based in reality. In fact, this is how we fell into the “Mister John” and “Mister Al” thing. In the early stages of our relationship, I would address him as “Mr. Voelker” or a loftier “Your Honor,” which he invariably rejected, suggesting that we tone down to a first name basis. I had trouble calling him “John,” as I would a president of the United States, and suggested

the nomenclature of Mister (not Mr.) John, which he accepted and elevated me by equalizing with a "Mister Al."

In creating an image, I had the benefit of having read and reread *Trout Magic* and *Trout Madness*, and had indelibly recorded those wonderful images from *Anatomy of a Fisherman*, specifically, one of Mister John sitting on a fallen tree trunk in a rain-dampened forest, smoking his combination Italian cigar and mosquito repellent, with his cane rod balanced against another fallen tree. The reality was that only the superfluous things had changed. The International Harvester fish car was merely replaced by a four-wheel drive Subaru, which he called his Japanese Jeep. He no longer smoked, but chewed the cigars, and I've kept an unopened pack of Parodi cigars ever since. Dare I say, and despite all he's written about the pleasures and virtues of cane rods, Mister John

did, in fact, come to appreciate the light weight of modern graphite.

But in the things that mattered—his wit, warmth, intellect, and force of presence—not only did he compare favorably to a created image, he surpassed my expectations.

I arrived at the Marquette airport about 11:00 P.M., seven hours after my baggage arrived. Despite the hour, Mister John's friend and innkeeper, Ted Bogdan, met me at his Old Marquette Inn, where we had a nightcap and swapped stories about our mutual friend.

The next morning I answered my phone to a distinctive voice that inquired, "If you could tear yourself away from your Gideon's, Mister Al, perhaps you'd care to go fishing." And off we went. I was anxious to get to Frenchman's as quickly as possible, but John had his own style of travel. We drove the

back roads, hoping the chanterelle mushroom might be in bloom. (It was, and Grace prepared them with breakfast.) Back on the road, such as it was, we sauntered along until an ore train crossed our path. Never before had I seen such a seemingly endless procession of slow moving cars. Unruffled, John killed the engine and, leaving the car, asked if I'd care to gather some "butter and eggs" with him. By the time the train passed, he had a handful of yellow and white wildflowers "for Miss Grace." Along the way, he'd also searched for a ripening patch of sugar plums, raspberries or blueberries, or paused to point out a jack pine that held some significance to him. Obviously, John subscribed to the school of journey-as-its-own-reward and seemed to enjoy every aspect of the day.

I asked Mister John for the key to his literary success and he told me it was

John D. Voelker (a.k.a. Robert Traver), 1903-1991

THE HONORABLE JOHN DONALDSON Voelker, under the *nom de plume* Robert Traver, was the author of such modern angling classics as *Trout Madness* and *Trout Magic*.

Born in Ishpeming, Michigan, on June 29, 1903, Voelker graduated from Northern Michigan University where he studied prelaw; he received his L.L.D. degree from the University of Michigan in 1928. After practicing law for a number of years, he was elected District Attorney in his home county of Marquette, a position he held for fourteen years. After three decades in a distinguished legal career, he retired as Associate Justice of the Michigan State Supreme Court, calling himself "a lawyer gone wrong; a man possessed of a fourteen-carat legal education who has gaily neglected it to follow the siren call of trout."

The beneficiaries of this decision are those who love Voelker's charming and witty tales and fables. In 1960, the year of his retirement, he wrote the first of many contributions to angling literature. *Trout Madness* (St. Martin's Press), subtitled "Being a Dissertation on the Symptoms and Pathology of This Incurable Disease by One of Its Victims," is a unique blend of philosophy and humor which became Traver's trademark.

Anatomy of a Fisherman (McGraw-Hill, 1964; Peregrine Smith, 1978) is two books in one. Six dozen glorious color photos of his Upper Peninsula bailiwick

and trout haunts were selected from the scores of hundreds taken by the talented *Life* photographer, Robert W. Kelley. Voelker's pen adds the icing to the cake. Had he written nothing else, the one short segment "Testament of a Fisherman" alone would have clinched for him a place of renown in angling literature.

Trout Magic (Crown, 1974), illustrated by Milton C. Weiler, was the long-awaited sequel to *Trout Madness* and every bit as enchanting. Arnold Gingrich said of its author, "when better fishing books are written, Robert Traver will write them."

Voelker, a master of the fishing yarn, appeared in various anthologies including Nick Lyons's *Fisherman's Bounty* (Crown, 1970), Brian Murphy's *The Angler's Companion* (Paddington, 1978), Craig Woods and David Seybold's *Waters Swift and Still* (Winchester, 1982), and many periodicals including *Sports Afield*, *Field & Stream*, *Esquire*, *Fly Fisherman*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Rod & Reel*, and *Saturday Evening Post*.

Also under his pen name he had many nonangling works to his credit, which including his district attorney tales *Troubleshooter* (1943) and *Small Town D.A.* (1954). *Danny and The Boys* (World, 1951) is a hilarious turn-of-the-century story of a backwoods lumberjack turned moonshiner, fishing guide, and raconteur, which provided the author a stage featuring yet another of his

talents, that of a master dialectician, which was the subject of an article in the April 1978 issue of *Smithsonian*. This little volume, offered in out-of-print catalogs at thirty times its original price, was reissued in 1983 by Peregrine Smith.

As a novelist, Voelker wrote *Hornstein's Boy* (1962), *Laughing Whitefish* (1965), *People Versus Kirk* (1981), and a legal essay, *The Jealous Mistress* (1968). To nonfishers the author is best known for the courtroom drama *Anatomy of a Murder* (1958), which sold over three million copies and became a major motion picture.

A lover of nature's many splendors and a staunch conservationist, "The Judge," after twenty years of retirement, came out to lead the legal battle to preserve 2,800 acres of Lake Superior shoreland otherwise destined to become an iron-ore waste basin. Voelker was honored by the Theodore Gordon Flyfishers as the 1982 recipient of their coveted Gingrich Angling Heritage Award.

In addition to writing and playing cribbage, Voelker tramped along the back roads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula in search of wild berries and edible mushrooms. At his remote fishing camp on what he called "Frenchman's Pond" (a king's ransom won't secure a map) Voelker cast tiny flies on long, fine leaders to the inhabitants of his beaver-dammed water, the wild and native brook trout which he refers to as his "speckled darlings." A.P.

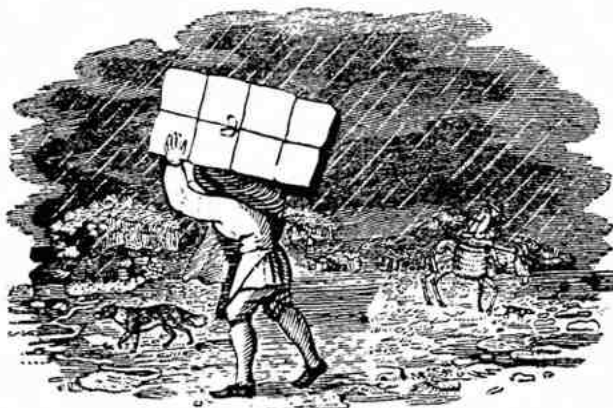
the ability to tell a tale, to spin a yarn. There's a degree of showmanship to successful story telling and I discovered this extra talent in Mister John on two occasions. While having dinner at the Old Marquette Inn, Mister John approached the piano without fanfare and very credibly played *and* sang "As Time Goes By," much to the delight of the patrons. Another night, after a hard day fishing, we stopped at the (unofficially named) Crazy Sisters' Saloon. Mister John fell into entertaining a small audience with those charming broken-English dialects seen in much of his writing. Given a cowboy hat as a prop, he effortlessly switched to a remarkable John Wayne imitation that held the crowd

spellbound.

On the day of departure, we exchanged gifts. Mister John presented me with an inscribed first edition of his *Danny and The Boys*, noting that he had heard such a copy was presently fetching an admirable price among collectors. I retaliated by asking for the cash equivalent. As I boarded the plane for New York, I left with the knowledge that I'd just enjoyed the company of a man who was so extraordinary his reality exceeded the myth.

We continued our correspondence until his death in 1991. The last time I saw Mister John was in the spring of 1982 when he was the recipient of the Theodore Gordon Flyfishers Gingrich

Angling Heritage Award. Having an aversion to flying, he and Ted Bogdan drove to New York by way of Canada. As planned, we had lunch at the Rye Town Hilton. The trip had been arduous. Ted was so exhausted he didn't join us for lunch. Mister John was tired and suffering from a cold and would have been better off if he had stayed in Michigan. Not surprisingly, His Honor rallied for the dinner and delivered his speech with the charm and humor that his fans would expect. Unfortunately, the actual cast for the physical award had been lost or broken. Mister John liked to quip, in good humor, that he traveled 3,000 miles for a nonexistent award. ~



Neither Rain, Sleet, Snow, or Hail

by Craig Woods

IT STARTED OUT INNOCENTLY enough. Like many fly fisherman, last summer I was charmed to visit the post office one morning and see that the United States Postal Service had issued a series of first-class 29-cent stamps featuring popular fishing flies: the Royal Wulff, Jock Scott, Apte Tarpon Fly, Lefty's Deceiver, and Muddler Minnow. The first day of issue was May 31, 1991, and the site was the small Catskill town of Cuddebackville, New York.

This started me wondering . . . Had Lefty Kreh and Stu Apte assumed high-ranking positions in the federal government and clued the folks at the USPS in on the wide popularity of theirs and

others' fly patterns? Was the head of the postal service a closet fly tyer? How indeed did whatever committee, wherever, decide on just these five patterns?

It was a dark and stormy night when, in the best tradition of Lew Archer or Travis McGee, I decided to get to the bottom of the matter. I started at the beginning, followed some leads, hit some dead ends, had some questions answered, and had some questions left unanswered. But as Lew or Trav might say, sometimes that's the way it is in this business. According to Charlie at my Dorset, Vermont, post office, there was a philatelic window up at the post office in Rutland, Vermont, where someone

might know how the government decides on themes for stamps. The guy in Rutland didn't have any answers, but he knew a woman who might—across the state in the village of Brandon. I called Brandon.

Sally Rice at the Brandon post office had some answers. She informed me that the USPS receives about 300,000 suggestions annually for stamp themes, out of which the agency chooses thirty to thirty-five (for individual stamps or series). She alluded to one woman in her seventies who lived in Vermont and has been pressing year in and year out for an Elvis Presley stamp. "She's the ultimate Elvis fan," Rice said. [In June 1992

her dream came true; an Elvis Presley stamp will be issued next year.]

"Looks that way," I said.

But Rice also gave me a name at the philatelic division of the USPS in Washington, D.C., although she pointed out that I would not be able to reach him for a couple of days since she knew he was in Hollywood working on a series of stamps featuring famous comedians.

But I called Washington anyway. They told me to call the philatelic service in Kansas City, Missouri. So I did. Finally I was getting somewhere. And, indeed, at the philatelic offices in Kansas City I hit pay dirt. I talked to a pleasant, interesting woman named Pat Ruff. Ruff told me that stamp themes are suggested to the USPS by mail, over counters at local post offices, and other similar sources, including designers who submit their work for review. The decision to develop a theme is made by a board sometimes as long as two years in advance of issue. The board itself is made up of citizens from all walks of life. (Ruff also pointed out, with some pride it seemed to me, that the philatelic facility in Kansas City is located in the second-largest cave in the world, a converted limestone mining operation now replete with businesses, shops, a restaurant, roadways, and parking lots. The largest cave in the world, similar in nature, is in Sweden.)

Although I had made some headway, the big question had not yet been answered: How did the board decide on the five specific flies mentioned earlier?

Having some loose connections in the world of fly-fishing, I decided to call on them. First I spoke with Philip Hanyok, managing editor of *Fly Fisherman* magazine. Hanyok, himself of a philatelic bent, had naturally seen the flies and admired the stamps, but pointed to some controversy that had arisen around them. To wit: Western anglers and fly tyers were a little put out when they saw that no western patterns were

included. I quote from an article by Publisher Frank Amato that appeared in his July-October issue of *Flyfishing*, a Portland, Oregon-based magazine:

... Two of the flies ... are salt water patterns, yet only 10 to 20% of fly fishing is done in salt water! ... The Jock Scott is a wonderful fly to show ... but it is an English pattern. ...

But both Hanyok and Amato agree that they like the idea of postage stamps depicting flies. "It keeps fly-fishing in the mainstream," said Hanyok.

My next call was to the venerable Lefty Kreh, a longtime acquaintance. Lefty informed me that the stamps were made from paintings by Chuck Ripper of West Virginia and that Ripper was also the designer. Kreh was asked to, and did, make two national television commercials to promote the flies—the first time, he was told, the USPS had done such a thing. Lefty also suggested that I might call Dan Gapen, whose father, Don, originated the Muddler Minnow, one of the featured flies, for further information.



Lefty didn't have Gapen's number or address at hand, so I followed up by calling *Field & Stream* Associate Editor Ken Schultz, since I had once been a publishing consultant on a book that he coauthored with Dan Gapen. Yes, Ken had his number, but Ken had a few things of his own to say about the fly-fishing stamps.

According to Schultz the concept for a series of fly-fishing stamps originated in the Catskills and it was meant to honor the fly-fishing greats of that region, namely Edward R. Hewitt and Theodore Gordon, and the concept included having the first day of issue take place at Neversink, New York, near the hallowed trout stream of that name. Enter New York State Congressman Benjamin Gillman as a promoter of the proposal, and, according to Schultz, the concept went awry. Not only were the classic Catskill dry flies ignored in the final selection, but the first day of issue took place in the earlier-mentioned town of Cuddebackville. Cuddebackville, Schultz observed, fell within Congressman Gillman's district, whereas Neversink predictably fell without.

Undaunted by this turn of philatelic/fly-tying affairs, I called the number for Dan Gapen in Minnesota that Schultz had given me. I was informed that Gapen would be out of town for the rest of the month.

"Likely gone fishing," I thought.

It now seems apparent from my research that the reactions of anglers and fly tyers throughout the country to the fly stamps is very positive, but that the USPS is likely to receive requests for more fishing flies stamps. I hope the USPS understands that there are easily hundreds of thousands of fly patterns out there.

So maybe we should throw our lobby behind the Vermont septuagenarian who's pushing for the Elvis stamp. A compromise, I know, but sometimes that's the way it is in this business. ~

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The Major Pitcher: A Bit of Western Fly Weaving

by David R. Klausmeyer

SOME TIME AGO I requested through the pages of *The American Fly Fisher* that all those interested in preserving our sport's heritage collect and record the histories of little known regional fly patterns. These flies, although unknown to anglers nationally, enjoy great local reputations. Others might be known to only a very few fly fishermen, and so will not be found in the encyclopedic catalogs of fly patterns that have appeared from time to time. These flies, I wrote, would be cataloged and preserved in the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, and, as space permits, their histories and recipes would appear in *The American Fly Fisher*. I'm pleased to offer you the first fly in this series, a traditional wet fly called the Major Pitcher.

THE SNELLED MAJOR PITCHER came unannounced in the mail one day, nestled in a small box with the card of the Museum's good friend Gordon Wickstrom of Boulder, Colorado. That's all there was to the package: a fly and a card containing the notation, "with compliments." It's a beautiful little fly, I thought, but a mystery to me. Shuffling through the rest of the mail, I found a separate envelope containing a letter from Mr. Wickstrom which told the history of the Major Pitcher, and also gave a little insight into Boulder area angling in the very early 1940s.

The Major Pitcher is an elegant tractor fly and quite typical in dressing

of the wet flies at the turn of century. The recipe is as follows.

Hook:

The most popular size was a number 10, standard wet fly hook.

Tail:

A few wisps of barred lemon wood duck.

Body:

Divided into two equal parts, the rear being yellow floss, and front being red floss.

Hackle:

Furnace, palmered over the entire length of the body.

Wings:

Traditional wet fly, white duck quill wings, with an added flourish: a fiber or perhaps two of Silver Doctor blue swan. These thin strips are tied on the outside of, and are the same length, as the wings, with the pointed ends of the swan coming to the top of the wings. The visual effect is to divide wings into two equal sections. Note that these are not married wings, but that the swan acts more as a cheek lying on top of each wing. They are quite striking.

The only reference in print to the Major Pitcher that Mr. Wickstrom or I can find comes from the pages of our own *American Fly Fisher*. In an article on the history of fishing the waters of Yellowstone National Park, Charles E. Brooks refers to an unnamed 1910 book written by an author choosing the pen name Kla-How-Ya.¹ According to Kla-How-Ya, a fly called the Pitcher, with the same dressing as the Major Pitcher, was the

best fly for catching fish in the Park's lakes and streams. It seems that the Pitcher was named for Major John Pitcher, who was the Park superintendent at the time.

Mr. Wickstrom continued on in his letter to explain that as a boy in his early teens (circa 1942), he had a job in the local tackle shop scrubbing floors in exchange for fly-tying materials. On the side he tied flies for the sports at a cost of fifty cents a dozen, and had more orders for the Major Pitcher than he really cared to handle (when was the last time you saw a fourteen-year-old professional fly tyer or paid four cents a fly?). Apparently Mr. Wickstrom took a bit of a gouge out of the business of the other local tyers, who had the audacity to be selling their flies at the steep price of two for a quarter! ~

E N D N O T E

1. Charles E. Brooks, "A Brief History of Fly Fishing in Yellowstone Park," in *The American Fly Fisher*, vol. 2, no. 4, Fall 1975, pp. 3-6.

If you have any little known flies that you feel would be of interest to fellow anglers, your contributions would be most appreciated. David Klausmeyer may be contacted through the Museum or directly at his new address: David Klausmeyer, R.R. 1, Box 59, Steuben, Maine 04680; 207-546-2018. All flies will be added to the Museum's permanent collection.

GALLERY



THE EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION materials from Isaac Oelgart's two-volume limited edition set, *A Book of Small Flies*, was recently donated to the Museum's archives by Vern Gallup of Spokane, Washington. Currently on display at the Museum, the collection includes the original manuscripts, letters from contributing authors, dummy layouts, letterpress typesetting blocks, page proofs, galleys, as well as the elegant publication announcement.

A Book of Small Flies, perhaps the world's smallest book on fly fishing at $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches, features the collective talents of five of the top American fly-tying writers who each contributed an essay and fly for the shadow box display that comprises volume two.

Ernest Schwiebert, master instructor by anecdote, reached back into boyhood memories of Colorado summers spent on the Frying Pan meadows for his chapter, "The Wet Fly," which has a corresponding and exquisitely tied Rusty Spinner and Olive Spinner. "The Dry Fly" by René Harrop extolled the virtues of the classic dry fly, the Quill Gordon, and the new wave no-hackle patterns

such as those popularized by the Swisher/Richards team.

Poul Jorgenson, in "The Nymph," relates the experiences which led to the development of the mini-subsurface patterns, such as the Micro Caddis and Baetis Nymph. S. A. Neff, Jr., an aficionado of the spring creeks of the world and their many land-based insects, wrote "The Terrestrials," promoting two common but often overlooked insects, beetles, and ants, tied in the miniature. An acknowledged expert on fly-tying materials, Eric Leiser's chapter on small fly construction included actual examples of specialized materials.

The slip-cased two-volume set features the text in volume one and, in volume two, a display binding in shadow box form displaying eight mounted flies, especially tied for this book by the respective authors. The frontispiece was etched, printed, and hand-colored by Al Barker. Both volumes are bound in full Hewitt niger leather and gilt tooled. Originally printed in 1983 in a limited edition of sixty sets, of which forty-seven sets were sold, *A Book of Small Flies* was not issued in any other form or edition. ~

CRAIG THOMAS



John Alden Knight: Angling Teacher and Theorist

by David R. Klausmeyer

WHEN I WAS A BOY of about thirteen, I had a friend with whom I shared first names and a love for fishing. He lived a couple of miles from my home, but it was near a stream that contained a few bass, perch, and the like. I would call before I hopped onto my bicycle just to make sure that he was home, and say that I would soon be over to wet a line. More than a few times he would say, "Not yet. The fishing won't start until after lunch." Or other times he would say something like, "It's too late. The prime time was at 6:15 this morning." It wasn't until some years later that I recalled my friend was a believer, like many other anglers young and old, of the Solunar Theory developed and popularized by John Alden Knight.

John Alden Knight made many contributions to fly fishing, and angling in general, as well as to upland bird shooting. In fact, it can be said with confidence that Knight was not a fishing snob. The extensive literature he produced covered a wide range of topics, from fly fishing for trout to spinner fishing for bass and panfish. One can also find references to fishing with worms and other natural baits. He enjoyed fishing throughout the country and it's probably fair to say, after looking over his books and some of the articles he wrote, that his only requirement for enjoying a new part of the continent was that it contain some type of fish to pursue: the species was not important. Such

generalization in this world of specialization is refreshing: far too many of us get trapped in our own cubby holes, and demand of others that they too be specialists before they attempt to tell us anything. Couple his love for angling with that of grouse and woodcock hunting, and you have Knight—the well-rounded sportsman.

John Alden Knight, Jr., was born in Lewiston, Pennsylvania, in December 1890. A descendant of the Pilgrims on his father's side, Jack (as he was known to his family and friends) grew up with a love for the outdoors. Although his father was neither a hunter nor fisherman, the young Knight found the pursuits infectious. He learned to fish and handle boats on the nearby Juniata River, and was given a B.B. gun at a very early age. Jack's father was transferred to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, by the Pennsylvania Rail Road when Jack was fourteen. Here John Jr. could continue to pursue his love for fishing on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and Lycoming and Loyalsock Creeks, and the nearby hills provided grouse and woodcock hunting. What more could a young sportsman want?

The elder Knight and his wife were conscious of the advantages afforded by a good education and sent their son to the better schools. For a time Jack attended Dickenson Seminary in Williamsport, and later Tome Institute in Port Deposit, Maryland. After graduating from Tome, he enrolled in Cornell Uni-

versity to study mechanical engineering. His goal was to become an "efficiency expert," which was a five-year course requiring two years of engineering and three of law. Knight had many involvements while attending Cornell: he was a fraternity member and belonged to a theatrical troupe, and also played baseball, tennis, and golf. It was in a Renaissance literature course that Knight first began to take writing seriously and the teacher let it be known that his pupil had the ability to become an accomplished author. He graduated in 1915, however—the World War postponed hunting and fishing and his career as a writer would be delayed for some years.

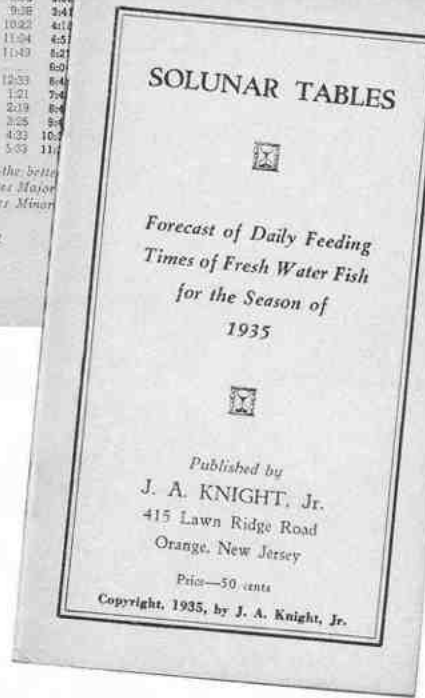
Airplanes were a relatively new invention early in this century, and like many at the time, Knight wanted to be a pilot. He decided to join the Naval Air Force, but found that the Navy was not interested in civilian applicants. Knight asked a cousin who practiced law before the Supreme Court to intercede in Washington on his behalf and eventually the young college graduate was accepted. After attending ground school in Boston, he moved onto Key West, Florida, where he earned his wings by learning to fly a pontoon plane. After this two-month course, his group was transferred to Miami for further instruction and to earn their commissions. With commission in hand, Knight was transferred to Pensacola to become an instructor and test pilot. After mustering out of the Navy at the end



John Alden Knight, author of the *Solunar Tables*, photographed in the "student" (forward) cockpit of a Naval Air N9 pontoon plane during training in World War I. Most likely taken by his instructor, Ensign Bill Fuller of Chicago.

EASTERN STANDARD TIME					EASTERN STANDARD TIME				
July	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	Moon Phases	August	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	Moon Phases
1 Wednesday	5:08	11:10	5:58	☾	1 Saturday	6:22	12:24	5:42	☽
2 Thursday	5:01	12:04	6:22	☾	2 Sunday	7:07	1:13	7:25	☽
3 Friday	5:45	12:52	7:09	☽	3 Monday	7:50	1:57	8:10	☽
4 Saturday	7:29	1:36	7:48	☽	4 Tuesday	8:25	2:40	8:52	☽
5 Sunday	8:12	2:24	8:27	☽	5 Wednesday	9:02	3:24	9:37	☽
6 Monday	8:58	3:06	9:30	☽	6 Thursday	10:05	4:04	10:26	☽
7 Tuesday	9:48	3:47	9:56	☽	7 Friday	10:59	4:57	11:21	☽
8 Wednesday	10:32	4:28	10:45	☽	8 Saturday	11:53	5:34	11:51	☽
9 Thursday	11:24	5:12	11:40	☽	9 Sunday	12:17	6:28	12:50	☽
10 Friday	6:00	12:18	6:03	☽	10 Monday	1:18	7:31	1:49	☽
11 Saturday	12:35	6:54	1:13	☽	11 Tuesday	2:00	8:39	2:53	☽
12 Sunday	1:33	7:54	2:10	☽	12 Wednesday	2:59	9:42	4:01	☽
13 Monday	2:36	8:57	3:13	☽	13 Thursday	4:40	10:41	5:04	☽
14 Tuesday	3:48	9:56	4:17	☽	14 Friday	5:38	11:56	5:58	☽
15 Wednesday	4:50	10:52	5:19	☽	15 Saturday	6:28	12:24	6:44	☽
16 Thursday	5:50	11:45	6:12	☽	16 Sunday	7:11	1:11	7:25	☽
17 Friday	6:43	12:43	6:58	☽	17 Monday	7:50	1:52	8:02	☽
18 Saturday	7:28	1:33	7:42	☽	18 Tuesday	8:29	2:32	8:38	☽
19 Sunday	8:18	2:20	8:33	☽					
20 Monday	9:16	3:02	9:13	☽					
21 Tuesday	9:36	3:41	9:36	☽					
22 Wednesday	10:22	4:14	10:22	☽					
23 Thursday	11:24	4:51	11:24	☽					
24 Friday	11:43	5:21	11:43	☽					
25 Saturday	6:00	12:30	6:00	☽					
26 Sunday	12:33	8:45	12:33	☽					
27 Monday	1:21	7:40	1:21	☽					
28 Tuesday	2:19	8:40	2:19	☽					
29 Wednesday	3:25	9:40	3:25	☽					
30 Thursday	4:23	10:37	4:23	☽					
31 Friday	5:33	11:31	5:33	☽					

For the moon—the better Type indicates Major Type indicates Minor



of the war, Knight moved about the country in search of work. Florida, Chicago, and Binghamton, New York, all provided opportunities and he eventually ended up in the real estate business in New York. With the stock market crash of 1929 the Knight family fortunes began to dwindle, but as he poignantly describes in his book *Moon Up—Moon Down*, it was this adversity which opened up the new possibility of earning a living as an outdoors writer.¹ Knight first hit upon the early kernels of what would become the Solunar Theory while fishing Lake Helenblazes, the headwaters of the St. Johns River of Florida in July 1926. The day was hot and still and he had given up in search of shade and lunch. His guide, Bob Wall, would have none of this. The real fishing was just about to begin, he declared. How did he know, Knight asked. Because the moon would be down at noon, the guide replied. What followed

that hot, dreary day was 12 of the best bass fishing Knight was ever privileged to enjoy. Thus began a lifetime spent learning the affects of unseen forces on wildlife, and an attempt at creating and refining a method which could be made available to all sportsmen to predict the best times to be afield. Anyone who experienced such an event as occurred on the St. Johns would have been impressed. Knight knew that the old market hunters, those who made their meager livings by rod and gun, were careful students of nature and often planned their trips afield by observing the positions of the moon. They had come to believe that game would become more active, given generally fair weather conditions, when the moon was either directly overhead or underfoot (on the other side of the Earth). As a boy he had also wondered why fish would mysteriously "turn on"

and "turn off" to his bait: something that has always troubled and even frustrated the best of fishermen. Bob Wall had given him something to think about. After several years of trial and error, and discussions with other sportsmen, scientists, and researchers in many fields (some of whom, Knight admitted, questioned his sanity or at least took him as somewhat of an eccentric), he devised the following theory, proven, he believed, through repetitive empirical observation. In a nutshell, the Solunar Theory (*solunar* being a contraction of the words *solar* and *lunar*) says that all living things are affected by the gravitational forces imparted on them by the pull of the sun and the moon. The moon, however, exerts the greatest force and so has the greatest affect. This being realized, Knight devised tables that plotted the *major* and *minor* periods of lunar gravitational pull on the Earth and



its inhabitants. A *major* period is when the moon is directly overhead and a *minor* period is when the moon, due to its own revolution as well as the turning of the Earth, is on the opposite side of the Earth. This author, for instance, who lives a five-minute walk from the Atlantic Ocean, is in a *major* period when the coast experiences a high tide and a *minor* period when the tide is low. These periods are plotted by longitude and they move across the surface of the Earth in a westerly direction. It is generally assumed that the periods are close approximations and that the affects of a major or minor period last for an hour or two.

Through his investigations, Knight came to believe that it wasn't exactly precise to say that *gravity* was affecting living things during major and minor periods: he was an ardent believer in not taking for granted apparent cause and effect relationships unless they could be proven. Knight eventually came to the conclusion that lunar gravitational pull caused the concentration of negative ions that had a stimulating effect on fish, animals, and humans. But could this be proven? Well, he said that he did feel somewhat foolish when he first started talking about this possibility, but he found one corporate laboratory that was experimenting with just this phenomenon and their results were posi-

tive. He also found that doctors at Johns Hopkins University Hospital were eager to meet with him about his theory, and invited him to dinner so that they could discuss his research.

Was all of this lunacy and was John Alden Knight a lunatic? Well, that's a matter of opinion, but it was noticed many centuries before his birth that lunar forces did have an exciting affect on those we now call lunatics.

It seems that the best tests of the Solunar Theory come after the end of a day's fishing. Many times anglers asked Knight to predict what fishing was like on some previous outing or when an especially big fish was caught. Some of these anglers are worth mentioning. As a guest of Edward Hewitt at his famous camp on the Neversink River, for instance, Knight proved the validity of his method. Hewitt, who was detained and missed the day's fishing, asked those present when the fishing had been best. Each in turn said that the fish were most cooperative from around 3:30 P.M. until just before 6:00. What, Hewitt then asked Knight, did the Solunar Table predict? Knight consulted the table and found that the local minor period had been at 3:32 that afternoon.

The publisher Eugene V. Connett was another angler who asked Knight about a previous day's fishing as a way to test the theory. Connett, who kept a meticu-

lous fishing diary, selected a particularly memorable day in 1930 and asked Knight to consult his tables and tell him when the fishing had peaked. A week later, when the two met again, Knight told him that the best fishing had taken place between 1:00 and 3:30 in the afternoon of that day. And sure enough, in that two-hour period Connett had caught fifty trout! The publisher eventually asked Knight to write about the Solunar Theory for his magazine, *The Sportsman*. The first article appeared in 1935 and the response was so overwhelmingly positive that Knight launched into the production of the Solunar Tables for the general sporting public.

Although impressing well-known anglers with his theory must certainly have been gratifying, one can easily imagine that he took some of his greatest pleasure from winning new converts by responding to their "guess when" letters. Numerous anglers wrote to Knight asking if he could "guess when," on a particular day and at a particular place, they had a spectacular day's fishing or caught an especially wonderful trophy. Many times these fellows, after receiving Knight's correct reply, wrote back to order a copy of the Solunar Tables.

Knight wrote numerous books and magazine articles, along with a syndicated column entitled "Outdoors" for



the Register and Tribune Syndicate of Des Moines, Iowa. His first book, *The Modern Angler*, was published in 1936, and contained an extensive discussion of the Solunar Theory.² In 1940, on the orders of his doctor who said that he should rest from the rigors of a very demanding job, Knight resigned his position and returned to his boyhood home of Williamsport. Once there, he not only continued to refine the Solunar Tables, but produced a steady stream of books and articles.

Perhaps one of the most impressive aspects of Knight's writings was his careful attention to the needs of the beginner. Many of his books deal with the fundamentals of the sport and for many years his *Modern Fly Casting* was the standard reference for those wishing to learn how to use a fly rod.³ At one point he even taught a course on fishing through the extension program of Columbia University and the notes for that course were worked into a book for the beginner entitled *A Theory of Fresh Water Angling*.⁴ Other books, written largely for the novice, covered the fundamentals of not only fly fishing but also bait and spin fishing. In addition to his extensive literature on fishing, Knight also wrote about upland bird hunting.

Knight was a serious student of tackle construction as well. He became an early user of parabolic fly rods and even

consulted with Charles Ritz on the theory of the parabolic rod. Eventually he worked with Jim Payne on the development of that maker's line of prized parabolic rods. But in the true independent fashion of the rodmaker, Payne took his own tack and developed rods that he thought would better suit the needs of the average angler. The two apparently remained friends, however, with Knight writing a small portion of the Payne catalog in which he sought to explain the virtues of the parabolic rod for its readers.

Finally, John Knight should be remembered for his serious attempts to urge anglers to become good conservationists. He loved his woods and streams and was alarmed at the ever greater number of men and women who sought pleasure from the sporting pastimes. In the late 1940s he conceived the idea for the Half-Limit Club. A cloth patch depicting the club's logo was sent to anyone who would voluntarily limit his catch to only one-half of that which was allowed by local law. Until his death in April 1966, Knight encouraged sportsmen to begin thinking about the necessity to preserve the game they loved so much and to harvest only what they could absolutely use and enjoy.

Upon John Knight's death, his son Richard took up where his father left off. Richard Knight continued to pub-

lish the Solunar Tables for fishers and hunters and also has several books on shooting sports. He soon passed away, however, and his wife Jacqueline took over the publishing of the tables. To this day she continues to calculate the major and minor periods on long legal pads and prepares and publishes the tables for the enjoyment of believers everywhere.

In recent years, the name of John Alden Knight is heard less and less in angling circles. That's a shame, given all the young folks he helped to enjoy the field and stream sports, and who, like my boyhood friend, have come to use his Solunar Theory.

The author would like to thank Mrs. Jacqueline E. Knight, daughter-in-law of the late J. A. Knight, for her gracious help in preparing this piece.

ENDNOTES

1. John Alden Knight, *Moon Up—Moon Down*, revised edition (Montoursville, Penn.: Solunar Sales Company, 1972), p. 17.

2. John Alden Knight, *The Modern Angler* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).

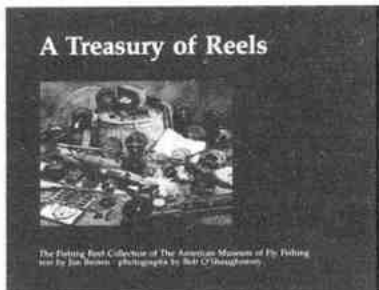
3. John Alden Knight, *Modern Fly Casting: Introducing the Free Wrist Grip and the High Back Cast* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942).

4. John Alden Knight, *The Theory and Technique of Fresh Water Angling* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940).

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A Treasury of Reels: The Fishing Reel Collection of The American Museum of Fly Fishing

Introduction and catalog by Jim Brown
Photographs by Bob O'Shaughnessy



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Author Jim Brown has written extensively on the history of fly reels. His first book, *Fishing Reel Patents of the United States 1838-1940*, is now regarded as a standard reference work in the field. Bob O'Shaughnessy is a Boston-based photographer and dedicated salmon fisherman.

A Treasury of Reels can be ordered for \$29.95, plus \$5 postage and handling, from the American Museum of Fly Fishing, P. O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254; 802-362-3300. Proceeds from the sale of this book directly benefit the Museum.



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Special limited edition print, "Lost Pool," by John Swan. Printed on acid-free paper (15 7/8" x 26 3/4"), ample borders. Each signed and numbered print, \$95. Postage and handling included.

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"World of the Salmon"
(Ogden Pleissner image, 26" x 22")



TIME ON THE WATER · June 1-October 31, 1990
— John Swan

"Time On the Water"
by John Swan (26" x 20")



AN ARTIST'S CREEL · June 9-August 7, 1989
— Peter Corbin

"An Artist's Creel"
by Peter Corbin (26" x 23")



WATER, SKY, & TIME · June 5-September 26, 1992
— Adriano Manocchia

"Water, Sky, and Time"
by Adriano Manocchia (25" x 22")

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Membership dues include the cost of a subscription (\$20) to *The American Fly Fisher*. Please send your application to the membership secretary and include your mailing address. The Museum is a member of the American Association of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History, the New England Association of Museums, the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance, and the International Association of Sports Museums and Halls of Fame. We are a nonprofit, educational institution chartered under the laws of the state of Vermont.

SUPPORT!

As an independent, nonprofit institution, the American Museum of Fly Fishing must rely on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. We ask that you give our institution serious consideration when planning for gifts and bequests.

VISIT!

Summer hours (May 1 through October 31) are 10 to 4. Winter hours (November 1 through April 30) are weekdays 10 to 4. We are closed on major holidays.

BACK ISSUES!

The following back issues of *The American Fly Fisher* are available at \$4 per copy:

- Volume 5, Number 3
- Volume 6, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
- Volume 7, Numbers 2, 3, 4
- Volume 8, Number 3
- Volume 9, Numbers 1, 2, 3
- Volume 10, Number 2
- Volume 11, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
- Volume 12, Number 3
- Volume 13, Number 3
- Volume 14, Numbers 1, 2
- Volume 15, Numbers 1, 2
- Volume 16, Numbers 1, 2, 3
- Volume 17, Numbers 1, 2, 3
- Volume 18, Numbers 1, 2



Museum News

Museum Adds Registrar to Staff

The Museum recently moved another step closer to fulfilling a particularly important requirement for the American Association of Museums accreditation process when it named Jon C. Mathewson its new Registrar.

Jon is ideally suited for this important part-time position. He holds a B.A. in history from Union College and an M.A. in American history from the University of Vermont. He has also worked professionally as a researcher and writer. Jon currently lives in the small Vermont town of Benson, which is located near the southern end of Lake Champlain.

Jon can usually be found in the Museum's second-floor collections management/library area where he assists Alanna Fisher, the Museum's curator, in the registration of objects and where he oversees the expansion and reorganization of the library. Jon is also engaged in researching an exciting new exhibition that will provide Museum visitors with a broad overview of the history of fly fishing. One look at Jon ensconced in the library surrounded by hundreds of

note cards (which contain some amazing early references to fly fishing in China and Macedonia) is enough to tell us that this upcoming display will be a worthy addition to the Museum's in-house exhibition program.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Plans for 1993

The American Museum of Fly Fishing will reach a major landmark in 1993 when it celebrates twenty-five years of continuous museum activity. During its quarter century of operation, the Museum has steadily grown and improved its services, professional management, and programming, and in the process become a singularly unique national educational institution.

The Museum will celebrate its twenty-fifth year in a number of ways, according to Richard Kress and Richard Tisch, trustees and co-chairs of the Museum's Twenty-fifth Anniversary Committee which has met twice in recent months to lay the groundwork for a year-long celebration. The Museum's Annual Festival Weekend in June 1993 will be expanded to include a sympo-



Executive Director Don Johnson (far right) stands with Museum friends/members who celebrated the opening of Adriano Manocchia's art exhibition "Water, Sky, and Time." From the left are Frank Dituri, exhibition catalog designer; Robert Schmidt, of the Pitman Company (exhibition sponsor); artist Adriano Manocchia; Dr. Gary Sherman, friend and member; and John W. Dreyer, chairman of the board, the Pitman Company.



Veteran volunteer Joe Pisarro congratulates a dedicated Don Catalfimo, of Amsterdam, New York, the 1992 winner of the Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award, presented at the annual Manchester dinner/auction.

sium on the history of fly fishing as well as the now traditional dinner/auction, art exhibition opening, and open house. Additionally, a gala evening celebration is being planned for August 1993 at Robert Todd Lincoln's historic house, Hildene, in Manchester. Included on the guest list will be Museum founders, past trustees, officers, and other special guests.

The Museum will also be installing a number of special exhibitions (including one on the history of the Museum); offering many commemorative items, such as rods, reels, books, etc., through its national dinner/auction program, quarterly journal, and gift shop; as well as organizing design contests for a Museum fly and flag that will be open to all members and friends. Plans also call for the publication of a special anniversary issue of *The American Fly Fisher*.

All Museum members and friends are cordially invited to participate in this year-long celebration. A full listing of events, contests, exhibitions, and more will be published in the next issue of the journal. For those members who would like to donate their time, services, or items for fund-raising purposes please contact Don Johnson at 802-362-3300.

1992 Volunteer Award

The American Museum of Fly Fishing recently honored one of its most dedicated volunteers when it awarded Donald F. Catalfimo, of Amsterdam, New York, the Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award at the annual Manchester dinner/auction on June 6.

Don and his yellow Labrador, Dixie, are well-known faces at the Museum and associated functions. It's not at all unusual to find Don staffing the Museum on weekends, researching and writing articles for *The American Fly Fisher*, manning public relations booths at sport shows (Don helped at no less than three such shows—in Manchester, Rye, New York, and Albany—this spring alone), and lending a helping hand in many other Museum projects and activities.

Don was born and raised in Greenwich, New York, where his father taught him to hunt and fish. He currently teaches biological sciences at Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District in Burnt Hills, New York. Don loves salmon fishing and dreams of one day owning a salmon camp in New Brunswick, Canada. He also has a great appreciation for, and knowledge of, salmon books and flies.

Don is really what the Museum is all about: education, dedication, and public service. The American Museum of Fly Fishing is fortunate to have such a great friend.

Austin Hogan Award

Paul Schullery, former executive director of the Museum, past editor of *The American Fly Fisher*, and currently trustee emeritus, has been named the 1992 recipient of the Austin Hogan Award by the Museum's Publication Committee.

The Austin Hogan Award was established in 1985 to honor the memory of

Austin Hogan and is awarded annually to the person who makes the most significant contribution to the Museum's quarterly journal, *The American Fly Fisher*, which was founded by Austin in 1974.

Susan Popkin, a Museum trustee and chairperson of the Museum's Publications Committee, praised Paul for his fine work as editor of *The American Fly Fisher* and for his many contributions to the journal since leaving as editor in 1983. Paul currently practices his trade as a professional historian with the National Park Service in Wyoming. He has written sixteen books, including the landmark *American Fly Fishing: A History*, which was recently reprinted by Lyons & Burford, New York.

Third Museum Festival Weekend

The Museum hosted its third Annual Museum Festival Weekend in Manchester, Vermont, on June 5, 6, and 7, 1992. On Friday night, a cocktail party in the Museum galleries celebrated the opening of a new art exhibition, "Water, Sky, and Time," by well-known New York state-based sporting artist Adriano Manocchia, on display at the Museum until October 31, 1992. Saturday night featured a standing-room only dinner/auction fund-raiser at the newly refurbished historic Equinox Hotel, and on Sunday, a Museum open house with fly-tying and casting demonstrations, tours, refreshments, and a lawn sale.



Rod builder and writer Dave Klausmeyer and trustee Arthur Stern get a few things straight before Manchester's annual auction/dinner.



The cocktail party celebrating Adriano Manocchia's art opening of "Water, Sky, and Time," was held in the Museum galleries on Friday night. Some folks gathered in the reception room where the stunning "Fish Models—An Exhibition" was on display.



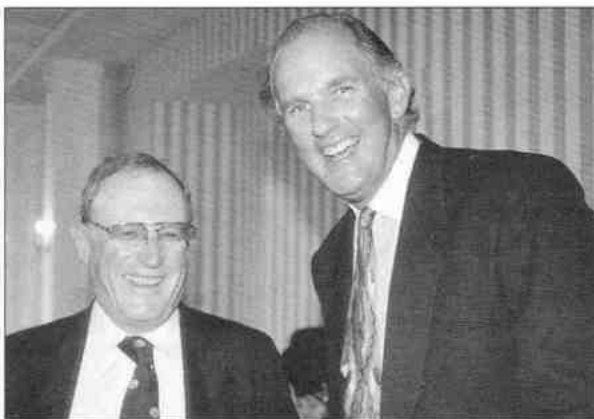
Member Ellen Stern models an auction item (a hand-embroidered designer dress) for interested bidders.



Trustee Bill Barrett and Chairman of the Board Foster Bam at the annual Manchester auction/dinner held Saturday night at the recently renovated Equinox Hotel.



Left: Members Dave and Judi Shirley of Stratham, New Hampshire, toted auction items from the Museum to the dinner venue, sold raffle tickets, acted as "runners" for the audience, worked Sunday's lawn sale, and generally ran nonstop the entire week-end.



Former Chairman of the Board Leigh Perkins and member Dr. Gary Sherman during the cocktail hour.



Curator Alanna Fisher and volunteer Joe Pisarro.

CONTRIBUTORS

Barbara Arter



David R. Klausmeyer holds degrees in English (B.A.) and Political Science (M.A.) from Oklahoma State University. Formerly a management development specialist with the University of Tennessee, Dave now makes fine cane rods on a full-time basis, and is actively involved in Trout Unlimited. He regularly speaks to T.U. and F.F.F. chapters, and appears at fly shops throughout the eastern United States to talk about cane rod construction. Dave, wife Barbara, and their two children live in Steuben, Maine.

Walston Studios



Al Pellicane, of Melverne, New York, is a real estate executive who writes occasionally for *Fly Rod & Reel*, *The Fisherman*, and *The Conservationist*. Married, with two children, Al's other interests are surf casting, astronomy, and sailing. A member of T.G.F., T.U., and other organizations, Al's fishing and relaxation retreat is Arlington, Vermont.

Drew Studio



Michael Edward Nogay is a trial lawyer from Weirton, West Virginia, located west of Pittsburgh. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of West Virginia University and received his law degree from Washington & Lee University in Virginia. Nogay is the founder of the Old Reel Collectors Association, Inc. (ORCA), which has over 200 members from nearly every state and four foreign countries. He and his wife Robin are the proud new parents of triplets, Edward, Maximillian, and Jennifer, their first children.

Nina Hauser Swanson



Ronald S. Swanson is president of a family real estate investment firm near Detroit. An avid collector of duck and fish decoys since the late 1960s, he was a contributor to *Waterfowl Decoys of Michigan and the Lake St. Clair Flyway*, as well as coauthor with Michael Hall of *The Decoy as Folk Sculpture*. He is now in the process of writing a book about fish models, plaques, and effigies along with other fish collectors who contributed to the exhibit that is currently on display at the Museum. He and his wife Nina live in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.



Don Johnson presents Don Catalfimo with the 1992 Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award at the annual Manchester auction/dinner on June 6, 1992.

1993 and Beyond

NEXT YEAR, IN 1993, the American Museum of Fly Fishing will celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary. It should be a year of great activity: we're planning at least two gala celebrations during the summer here in Manchester, and have currently scheduled special publications, exhibitions, a symposium, and two new dinner/auctions.

We call our Museum a vibrant, member-oriented, educational institution. True enough. There is excitement in the air these days. In an organizational sense, I don't think the Museum has ever operated as smoothly as it does today, with trustees, members, staff, and volunteers all working hand-in-hand to make the Museum go.

I want to encourage all of our members to take part in the Museum's 1993 activities. There are a number of ways in which you can help. First, let me know how you feel about the 1992 edition of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Commentary from members is critical if we are to continue to grow and serve.

My door is always open, and if you visit the Museum, please be sure to look in on me in my cluttered office. Letters and telephone calls are also welcome.

Secondly, we invite you to join one of our committees and actively participate in the workings of the Museum. We currently have twelve standing dinner/auction committees and an energetic Twenty-fifth Anniversary Committee that would welcome your involvement. I suspect many of you have worked as volunteers in museums. Why not consider volunteering at the Museum? Even if you are visiting from another part of the country, an hour or two of work here in Manchester, surrounded by the greatest collection of angling objects in the world, can be a memorable experience. While I write, David Klausmeyer, a volunteer from Steuben, Maine, and the author of our next publication on rods, and Frank Tardo, our Boston dinner/auction chairperson from Medford, Massachusetts, are recataloging hundreds of vintage rods in our collections

management area. They seem to be enjoying themselves immensely.

As you already know, the Museum depends on the proceeds from our dinner/auction program for a significant percentage of its operating funds. This program, which has grown dramatically since 1988, has made it possible for the Museum to continually improve its programming and services. We want to encourage our members to participate in our fund-raising efforts through the donation of flies, rods, reels, books, guided trips, and artwork for our dinner/auctions. We receive donations now from all areas of the country, but with the expansion of the dinner/auction program we'll need even more.

Blessed summer. My family and I will be canoeing in northern Ontario, swimming in Lake Michigan, and fishing Wisconsin's Brule. I plan to do some scuba diving in Lake Champlain as well. Wishing each of you a timeless summer season.

DON JOHNSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING, a nonprofit educational institution dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of fly fishing, was founded in Manchester, Vermont, in 1968. The Museum serves as a repository for, and conservator to, the world's largest collection of angling and angling-related objects. The Museum's collections and exhibits provide the public with thorough documentation of the evolution of fly fishing as a sport, art form, craft, and industry in the United States and abroad from the sixteenth century to the present. Rods, reels, and flies, as well as tackle, art, books, manuscripts, and photographs, form the major components of the Museum's collection.

The Museum has gained recognition as a unique educational institution. It supports a publications program through which its national quarterly journal, *The American Fly Fisher*, and books, art prints, catalogs, and newsletters are regularly offered to the public. The Museum's traveling exhibits program has made it possible for educational exhibits to be viewed across the United States and abroad. The Museum also provides in-house exhibits, related interpretive programming, and research services for members, visiting scholars, authors, and students.

The Museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. For information, please contact: The American Museum of Fly Fishing, P. O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254, 802-362-3300.