The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

SPRING 1996 VOLUME 22 NUMBER 2

Hello and . . . Goodbye


Tom Rosenbauer

In this spring issue of *The American Fly Fisher,* we are very proud to present you with a comprehensive history of women and fly fishing, adapted from Lyla Foggia's newly published book, *Reel Women.* This volume is a rich fount of information, full of personality, surprises, and great photographs. As many of you know, the subject of women and fly fishing is an area that is growing rapidly, both in the marketplace and in historical research. Indeed, when this editor first came to the Museum, there was less than of handful of articles about women and our sport in all of the archives.

As somewhat of a balance, we also present an excerpt from the nineteenth century, *Salmonia* by Sir Humphrey Davy, that gives full testimony to the erudition of its time. It demonstrates the era's dry, formal, and complex prose style; you can see both the life in it and the limitations. One must remember upon reading the lectures of the rather pompous windbag narrator that this was one method of teaching, as well as a literary style, encouraging the reader to fish along with the main characters, learning almost painlessly. *Almost.*

On a personal note, I must report that as of June, I shall be retiring from my position as editor of *The American Fly Fisher.* The last six and a half years have been an exciting era at the Museum. The publications office has been part of much change, much accomplishment, much growth, and I have been so very proud to be witness to it. My decision to leave in order to find more time to finish a second book and, hopefully, begin others—in other words, to fulfill some of my own dreams—was difficult to make. The shepherding, grooming, and growing excellence of this magazine has meant a great deal to me and I have learned invaluable editorial lessons from my stewardship of this publication. I will miss working with my colleagues here: Jon, Craig, Kate, Lil, Joe, and, of course, Ginny; and particularly Randall Perkins, whose collaboration on and artistry in publishing these years of *The American Fly Fisher* have been a rare and true professional joy. Indeed, I shall miss all of you readers and members out there. But now it is time for me to do other things.

Handing over the reins to the exceedingly capable Kathleen Achor, who has been managing editor since September 1, has been the easiest part about this decision. Kate hit the ground running last fall and her professionalism is impressive. I am confident about her upcoming leadership of the journal and hope you will be generous with your ideas and suggestions.

Please know that I will remain a staunch supporter of and a friend to the Museum in all ways, as I hope you will. Stay in touch.

I wish you many happy rivers.

Margot Page
Editor

The American Fly Fisher

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ON THE COVER: *While organizing our collection of photographs this past summer, intern Jan McCormick came across a couple of old glass slides (sadly, with no corresponding information as to their origin). The Spring 1996 cover features one of these—a "reel woman" from days past.*

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Reel Women: The World of Women Who Fish

by Lyla Foggia

Lyla Foggia's new book, Reel Women: The World of Women Who Fish, *is the first book devoted to the history of women and the sport. Beginning with Dame Juliana Berners and bringing us to the present day, the text introduces us to those who blazed the trail for women in the sport, as well as fly-tying artists, fishing legends, guides, and competitors. We are honored to present some choice excerpts here.* The Editor

Trailblazers in Fly Fishing History

Thanks to the contributions of the women described here—among the best the sport ever produced—we will never again think of women's participation in this branch of the sport as only a recent phenomenon.

Cornelia "Fly Rod" Crosby

Cornelia "Fly Rod" Crosby was not only Maine's first registered guide, but she also pioneered use of the lightweight fly rod and artificial lure for women, authored possibly the first-ever nationally syndicated outdoors column, and reigned for three decades as one of the first prominent sports celebrities capable of filling an arena on name value alone. She was also the "wearer of the first liberated woman's hunting suit (including bustle) seen in the woods," according to Victor Block in *Outdoors Unlimited.*[1]

Born in 1854 to Lemuel and Thurza Crosby of Phillips, Maine, Cornelia worked odd jobs in summer camps in Rangeley, Maine, as a young girl, where legend has it that she learned the fundamentals of fishing from friendly Indians and local guides, and she was adept with both a rod and a rifle by her teens.

Following graduation from an Episcopal school, she worked briefly as a bank clerk until contracting tuberculosis and was told by her physician to "take to the woods" to recover her health—a prescription that undoubtedly thrilled her. Just before her departure, a friend presented her with the prototype of a lightweight fly rod to field test and, notes Kenneth Smith in *Discover Maine,* "in Cornelia's hands the fly rod became a magic wand that launched her amazing career."

Smith also reports that "she caught so many huge salmon

Cornelia Crosby/AMFF (Maine State Museum)

Beulah Cass, Bonnie Smith, and Frankee Albright/Courtesy of Ben Estes

and trout that the local sports nicknamed her 'Fly Rod.' Her fishing talents, combined with her innovative fly-tying skills, provided her with a statewide reputation as one of the premier anglers in Maine. Cornelia hooked these creations [her artificial flies] around the band of her felt hat, instituting a sports fashion which has lasted until today."[2]

What led Cornelia to write for publication is not known, but there's no disputing that it was an extraordinary ambition for a woman at the time. J. W. Bracket, editor of *The Maine Woods,* is said to have given her the by-line "Fly Rod's Notebook" and launched her career nationally by distributing her column to other papers. While major metropolitan newspapers closely followed her adventures, at the same time her articles appeared in such prestigious publications as *Field & Stream* and *Shooting and Fishing,* according to historian Austin S. Hogan in *The American Fly Fisher.*

By 1895, Cornelia "had become a star employed by the Maine Central Railroad to advertise the advantage of travelling by rail to the fishing resorts," writes Hogan. Each year, her tour would include arenas throughout the eastern United States, climaxed by appearances at the sportsman's shows in New York and Boston. "Taking advantage of her talent for showmanship, they put her in charge of their exhibits and with a coterie of guides and two beautiful Indian girls, Fly Rod pulled them in by the thousands."[3]

But it was more than her skills with a rod and rifle that sent shivers through the crowds. Fly Rod had star quality. Sporting an outfit that featured a skirt "nearly a foot shorter than accepted fashion," Smith writes, she literally dazzled them. "Tall, attractive, and modest, with a resonant speaking voice and attired as she was, the effect was electric. Crowds flocked, lingering for her lectures and demonstrations. Cornelia's garb served to create a new fashion trend for American women."

Who knows how long Cornelia could have kept up such a demanding career, if it hadn't been sidelined by a misstep off a slow-moving train at the age of fifty? And though the resulting injuries kept her off the road and out of the woods for the rest of her life, this robust woman nonetheless survived another forty years, until 1946, when she died two days after turning ninety-two.

"Bonefish" Bonnie Smith, Frankee Albright, and Beulah Cass

During world war ii, when young women across the country were discarding their aprons and heading for aircraft factories and shipyards, sisters "Bonefish" Bonnie Smith, Frankee Albright, and Beulah Cass did something even more remarkable for the times. When Bonnie's husband joined the armed forces, the three sisters picked up the slack and literally guided themselves into saltwater fly-fishing history in the Florida Keys. And though their husbands would ultimately receive the acclaim as famous guides in the area, time has not snuffed out the legend of the three sisters and their notable achievements.

Bonnie was the first to venture to the Keys, where she met and married flats guide Bill Smith in the late 1930s. It's possible that Bill had not yet picked up a fly rod when Bonnie was given one by George LaBranche from his personal collection.

LaBranche (one of the most influential figures in dry-fly fishing after the turn of the century) also hired the dean of Keys guides, Preston Pinder, to teach her how to use it. "Pinder did such a good job that in the late 1930s his eager student was able, in turn, to teach her two sisters, Beulah and Frankee, how to fly cast when they moved from Georgia to join her," relates George X. Sand in *Saltwater Fly Fishing*.[4]

The fact that Bill would be the first, in 1939, to catch a bonefish on an artificial fly foreshadows an event that would put Bonnie on the map during his wartime absence. It seems that in 1942 one of Bill's childhood friends, Charles "Barrel" Bowen, was about to be shipped overseas and approached her with a special request. "'There is one thing I'd like to do—in case I don't come back,' Bowen told Bonnie earnestly. 'I'd like to catch a bonefish on a fly, like Bill did,'" recounts Sand. Bowen not only got his bonefish, but he and Bonnie were back at the dock within two hours! It was a remarkable feat, considering that "what makes [a bonefish] the ultimate quarry in the sport is that you must see it—sometimes from eighty feet away—before you can cast to it," declares Dick Brown in *Fly Fishing for Bonefish*. "You stalk it like a predator. You track it down, you take aim, and cast with precision. You must make no mistakes. The ruthless, primitive instincts of this skittish creature leave no room for error."[5] No wonder everyone else was going after them with spinning gear. How many would have the casting skill, even today, to drop a fly right in front of a fish's nose over such a distance? But Bonnie certainly did.

Also during the war, Bonnie guided another young soldier, Jimmie Albright, to his first bonefish. Stationed aboard a deep-sea fishing vessel out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Jimmie was introduced to Bonnie's sister, Frankee, and they eventually married.

Immediately after the war, many of the servicemen who had been trained or stationed in Florida found their way back to the Keys. Among them was Joe Brooks, later a renowned angling author, whom Bonnie guided to his first permit on a fly.

During those postwar years, according to Sand, Bonnie and Bill "built one of the best known and most successful guide businesses in the Keys," with a celebrity clientele that included baseball great Ted Williams and movie actress Madeline Carol. In honor of her Midas touch with the game fish that everyone admired but few could catch, Bonnie became "Bonefish" Bonnie within the saltwater fly-fishing fraternity.

By 1950, catching a permit on a fly rod was the challenge of the day. Bonnie and Bill, along with Joe and Mary Brooks and a few others, tried their luck in that year, to no avail. In 1952, a year after Joe had brought in the first one, Bonnie caught hers, becoming the first woman to take a permit.

Meanwhile, Frankee was racking up her own list of achievements. Among them was a 48.5-pound tarpon on an Orvis rod and 12-pound test tippet in just fifty minutes. She also guided an elderly George LaBranche to his first bonefish on a fly. That he chose her to guide him instead of one of the sisters' husbands says much about Frankee's stature as a professional guide at the time.

The youngest of the three sisters, Beulah Cass, gave up guiding early to become a successful real-estate developer in Islamorada. By the mid-1960s, "Bonefish" Bonnie had retired from guiding and spent much of her time teaching the fundamentals of flats fishing to others. (She and Frankee also became passionate orchid growers.) Bonnie died in the 1970s; Beulah, in the early 1990s; and Frankee, at the age of eighty-four, in January 1995.

Kay Brodney

As impersonal as labels are, it's hard to resist calling Kay Brodney the Indiana Jones of women's angling. Kay, however, would never have been bothered with collecting valuable antiquities like Indiana, even if she had to step over them in the jungle on the way to what she cherished more: a great fishing hole.

And just as the fictional Indiana led a double life, so did Kay. Hers was as a librarian who spent every vacation period in her later years stalking the uncharted wildernesses of South America.

"She did it all," recounts Jim Chapralis in *The PanAngler* newsletter. "Kay fished in Argentina and was one of the first anglers to take a dorado on a fly. She fished the jungles of Brazil camping out in areas where the Indians were considered unfriendly. 'We didn't carry any weapons—and I think they knew this and therefore we weren't considered threats,' she said. But what if they attacked? 'If we die, we die,' she replied."[6]

Born in 1920, Kay grew up in Wisconsin and did some fishing as a child, but did not get the fly-fishing bug until 1948 when she happened upon a casting tournament in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. "I saw those lines swishing about and it changed my whole life," she later related to *Sports Illustrated*'s Clive Gammon. "Women weren't recognized for doing much distance casting then, just accuracy events. Once [in 1950] I took third place in the Western Championship down at Long Beach. I went to get my prize but I found I hadn't qualified because I wasn't a man."[7]

Kay Brodney/Courtesy of Jill Ozaki

After working several jobs, Kay eventually realized that a master's in library science was the only way she could make enough money as a woman to support her unique lifestyle. So she headed to Rutgers University in Camden, New Jersey. After graduation, she began a long career at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

In 1962, Kay took her meager savings and headed for the Florida Keys where Stu Apte was with her the day she landed a 137.6-pound tarpon on 12-pound tippet. "Right in front of Ted Williams and a multitude of other people, Kay caught this humongous tarpon. At the time, there had only been one, maybe two, caught bigger than that by anybody on a fly," Apte says, noting that fly-fishing legend Joe Brooks's world record was only 11 pounds heavier at 148.5 pounds and that Kay had made her own fly rod, line, and fly. (No store-bought tackle for her, then or later!)

From there, she apparently turned her attention to the jungles of South America, "[and] we're talking fishing the real outback country, not five miles from a comfortable air-conditioned oasis," notes Chapralis. Accompanied by an outfitter, "they often probed uncharted waters, slept outside and fought the elements, and 'trespassed' areas where unfriendly natives observed them constantly with a baleful eye. These trips were for weeks at a time, and I don't know of any visiting angler—including the late A. J. McClane—who spent more time fishing South American jungles than Kay Brodney."

In the early 1980s, when Kay was sixty-one and the head of the Library of Congress's Life Sciences Subject Catalog Section, *Sports Illustrated*'s Gammon was given the unenviable assignment of shadowing her while she stalked two elusive freshwater fish, the tucunare and the arapaima, deep within the Amazon rain forest of Brazil. For Gammon, it would turn out to be almost as dangerous as covering a war from behind enemy lines.

From the moment he set down in a patch of cleared jungle in the middle of nowhere to the day of his anxious departure, Gammon found himself dodging venomous and bone-crushing snakes, electric eels, vampire fish, piranhas, wild pigs, deadly spiders, vampire bats, jaguars, "endlessly attacking" cabouri flies, and stingrays—not to mention surviving daily rations of mysterious origin.

Meanwhile, the indomitable Kay was completely oblivious to it all. "People think that I'm a mad, brave old woman to come out fishing in a place like this, living like an Amerindian," Kay told him. "But, hell, I've been robbed twice on the streets of D.C., and each time it was more frightening than anything I've met in a rain forest."

Unfortunately, Kay paid a hefty price for her far-ranging freedom. "She picked up this terrible disease," says Joan Wulff, her friend since the early 1950s. Sitting on a stump in the middle of a jungle clearing, "after a while, she realized she was being bitten by some kind of tiny, tiny thing. She said she was bitten from her feet up to her waist. And so she thought that's where the disease came from which attacked the inside of her arteries and scarred them.

"She ended up with restricted circulation. They put her on terrible drugs. She gained weight. The sun affected her and made her break out, and yet in 1992, she met me in Great Falls, Montana—I flew out there—and we drove up to Calgary for a Federation of Fly Fishermen's conclave. And we came back down and went to the Missouri River, where we spent five days fishing; except that she didn't fish. She sat in the boat and I fished. I mean, it was unbelievable what she was going through, and yet she did not act as if she was putting up with anything. She just put up with it."

It was apparently true of every obstacle Kay faced in life. "She never complained about her infirmities or inconveniences. She was a very courageous lady," says Apte.

We lost this intrepid spirit on 21 July 1994, at the age of seventy-four. It's obvious that Kay's life force was sustained by a personal challenge entirely outside the realm of the average angler: fishing where no one had dared venture before. "Her life was so remarkable: the things that she did, the places that she went, and the way she went about it," says Apte. "I mean, she was fearless!"

Helen Robinson/Courtesy of Lefty Kreh

Helen Robinson

Helen Robinson never fished anything but conventional tackle. And yet, in collaboration with her husband, Webster Robinson, and Captain Lefty Reagan, she pioneered a technique for teasing billfish to an artificial fly that is practiced around the world today.

In the late 1930s, Web (as he was known to his friends) severely injured his back in an automobile accident. Helen suggested they take up fishing so that Web could build up the muscles that supported his spine and possibly relieve the constant pain. They ventured down to the Florida Keys from their New York home base and "began to wade the flats, particularly at Marvin Key, which is outside of Key West. And they waded these flats almost everyday for years," angling writer Lefty Kreh recalls from his long friendship with them.

In 1959, Web developed an overwhelming urge to go after big-game fish, though he was sixty-three and Helen was fifty-nine. They bought a boat and hired Captain Lefty Reagan —who, says Kreh, was "regarded by many as one of the *great* pioneers in offshore fishing, particularly in the Keys"—and set off on a four-year fishing trip to Panama, Peru, Chile, and other points. When they finally returned to Florida, Web sat down and tallied up their catches: he had 115 black marlin to his credit (double that of anyone else in the history of the sport) and Helen had 37. Among Helen's catches, however, were two world records: a 796-pounder on 80-pound test and a 584-pounder on 50-pound line, which brought her tremendous prestige within the saltwater world.

Sometime in the early 1960s, Web, who approached angling the way a scientist goes after a cure for a life-threatening disease, got another inspiration. Since no one had ever caught a billfish on an artificial fly, he suggested the three of them team up to see if it was possible.

So while Lefty ran the boat and Web stood by ready to cast, Helen became the master teaser. "Most of the billfish that Web Robinson ever caught anywhere were caught with Helen actually teasing the fish up to the boat so he could make the cast," says Kreh, one of her ardent admirers.

"Helen became a consummate teaser of billfish. She was absolutely superb at figuring out when a fish was really hot and would take the fly. Once the fish was [ready], of course, then it was Web's problem. But up until the point that she directed him to throw the fly, she was in control."

So while Web received all the acclaim "as the most innovative ocean angler since Zane Grey" and the one who would go down in the record books as the first angler to capture a sailfish by "pure" fly casting, it was Helen who actually provided the talent that produced the results.[8]

Web died in the 1960s, almost twenty years before Helen. So deep was their love that Helen committed herself to completing the rest of his dreams after his death. Then in her early seventies, she took the footage he had shot and produced a public-television documentary called "Marlin to the Fly." She also appeared in and produced a BBC special called "The Old Lady and the Sea," shot off Australia. When it was all done, legend has it that Helen put down her rod for the last time.

Patterns of Excellence: Fly Tyers in History and Today

No matter when they worked, the women who distinguished themselves in the art of fly tying have been, by nature, a breed of their own: ingenious, artistic, and industrious.

Elizabeth Benjamin

Elizabeth benjamin is one of the more obscure fly-tying personages out of the past. We know of her now only because, according to Paul Schullery in his definitive tome, *American Fly Fishing: A History,* historian Austin Hogan uncovered a letter written in the 1930s by her only child, Joseph, at the age of eighty-one.[9]

The wife of a railroad conductor, Elizabeth's moment in history occurred during one of the Benjamins' summer sojourns to Ralston, Pennsylvania, just prior to the Civil War. As her son Joseph related in his letter, Ralston was famous for its speckled brook trout, for which city anglers flocked to the area "loaded down with all kinds of fancy fishing tackle" between the years 1858 and 1860. What they encountered, however, were fish so fickle that most returned home with empty creels.

But Elizabeth happened to notice that the local tavern owner, Mr. Conley, seemed to have all the luck. Every afternoon he'd head out fishing and each evening return home with a mess of trout to fry up. Intrigued, she followed him down to the creek, making sure to stay out of sight, and watched the largest trout gobble up his flies the moment they touched the water. Upon returning home, she told her husband of her fortuitous discovery, "and they worked nights making nets," Joseph recalled, to snare the insects that hovered around the creek, which were placed under "glasses on a table until they would 'shed their coats.'" Elizabeth then sent her son out gathering feathers from the "roosters, chickens, ducks, pigeons and bird nests" in the area, which she "fastened by hand to fishhooks with different colored silk thread." Elizabeth's flies were so successful, Joseph related, that word quickly spread among visiting anglers who "paid her fabulous prices for all she could make."

It was not to be the only time that a woman suddenly found herself in the fly-tying business as a result of stumping nature and saving her fellow fishermen from many fishless days on the water.

Sara Jane McBride

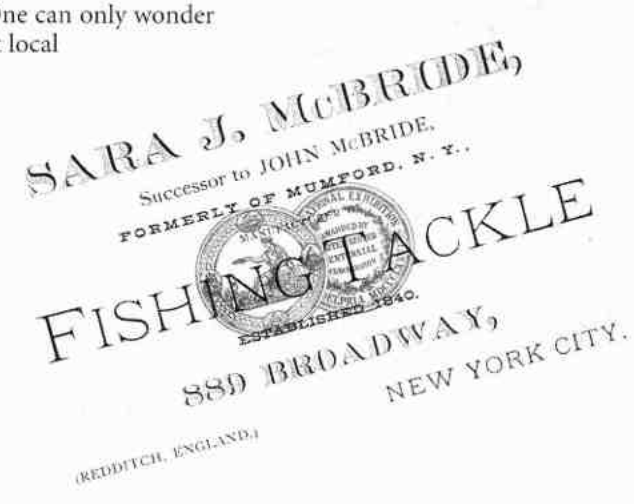
Almost two decades later, a self-taught entomologist by the name of Sara Jane McBride wrote what Kenneth M. Cameron in *The Fly Fisher* has called "the first American papers of any consequence on the subject of aquatic insects from the angler's point of interest."[10]

Her extraordinary thesis first appeared in 1876 in *Forest and Stream* as a three-part series called "Metaphysics of Fly Fishing" and in *Rod and Gun* a year later under the title of "Entomology for Fly Fishers." Adding to the prestige of having her work published by such prominent journals was *Forest and Stream*'s editorial blessing, which read: "The subject matter of these articles we believe to be altogether new in the Angling Literature of America, and certainly reflects much credit upon the author, who shows herself to be a patient and close observor [*sic*]."

Sara would also distinguish herself as a fly tyer, for which she won a bronze medal at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, and find a permanent place in the annals of the applied art when Mary Orvis Marbury referred to her findings in *Favorite Flies and Their Histories* in 1892.

Sara "was way ahead of her time," current fly-fishing legend Joan Wulff declares in *Joan Wulff's Fly Fishing.* "The fly-fishing fraternity, as a whole, didn't have a clue about insect life and most fly patterns were what we now call 'attractors.'"[11]

One can only wonder what local



Mary Orvis Marbury/American Museum of Fly Fishing

gossip must have accompanied sightings of Sara grubbing around in the mud while studying the various stages of insect life as well as the effects of water temperature and climatic conditions on the "food-rich" Spring Creek, which ran through Caledonia, New York, near Rochester on Lake Ontario. Considering that "fancy flies" were still the fashion of the day, it's unlikely she had the approval of many!

There's no doubt, however, that she was a woman who understood her mission fully. One of five children of well-known Irish-born fly tyer John McBride, Sara apparently learned the craft before her inquiring mind took her off in search of new methods.

Not surprising for the times, she went uncredited within the scientific community, whose job it was to document stream insect life in its natural habitat. Whether it was her lack of academic credentials, the possibility that her research had trod on too many fragile egos, or her gender, Sara's work was not even acknowledged in an important report of the time, the New York State Fishery Commission's 1877–1878 study of Spring Creek. "Too bad," notes Cameron, "for although [J. A.] Litner [the report's author] worked from water and moss samples sent to him by [Seth] Green, Sara probably could have provided him with all stages of the most important insects."

Though Sara's achievements are now a well-documented part of fly-fishing folklore, facts about her personal life remain largely a mystery. By consulting original census records, Cameron was able to establish her birth at about 1845, and it can be assumed that she never married, based on her continuing use of her family name. In June of 1879, *Forest and Stream* reported that she was "about to close up her business" and six months later ran "a cheerful and chatty letter" from her about a particular tackle company, Cameron notes. After that, she completely vanished without a trace!

"It is fitting, at least, that she is remembered through the work of Mary Orvis Marbury," adds Cameron. "The two women were opposites in many ways, and their approaches to fishing and flydressing were quite different. One was an original, the other a collator, but they were alike in their ability to achieve in a field where women were otherwise treated as the handmaidens of a masculine pastime."

Mary Orvis Marbury

One of the prominent figures in the history of fly fishing, Mary Orvis Marbury achieved her fame inadvertently. She simply saw a problem and proceeded to solve it by compiling and writing the first definitive reference book on American fly patterns, *Favorite Flies and Their Histories*, published in 1892.[12]

It was an astounding accomplishment. More than 500 pages in length, with thirty-two color plates featuring 290 different regional patterns, Mary's book was the long-awaited answer to a dilemma that threatened to paralyze both the sport and the fly-tying industry that served it.

By the 1870s, fly fishing had become so popular in this country that anglers were fervently developing new artificial fly patterns, as well as producing variations on old standbys, to fish the specific waters in their own region. And like pollen spread by a summer breeze, the most successful of those patterns ventured across state lines, carried by visiting fly fishers who hoped their magic would have the same profound effect on their home streams and lakes. The patterns often under-

went further modifications and even name changes as they were passed from hand to hand in new locales.

It wouldn't have mattered what anyone called their flies or how they made them if every angler tied his own. But even then, in the late 1800s, many anglers turned to professional fly-tying companies to replenish their supplies, and many of them were sorely disappointed when the patterns that came back in the mail were not the ones they had intended to order.

The first child and only daughter of Charles and Laura Orvis, Mary was born in 1856, the same year her father started the long-famous company that introduced affordable rods, reels, and finely tied flies to the mass public. At the age of twenty, she took over the company's commercial fly-production department, after apprenticing under the auspices of an expert dresser hired by her father to teach her the craft. "Mary's half-dozen tiers, all young women, worked upstairs in a white clapboard building on Union Street [in Manchester, Vermont] that still belongs to Orvis," notes Silvio Calabi in *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Fly Fishing.*[13]

By 1890, Mary's tiny but industrious operation was not only turning out untold quantities each year of the 434 different patterns listed in the Orvis mail-order catalog, but struggling to keep up with special orders as well. It was undoubtedly the latter dilemma that led her father, Charles, to do a mass mailing to leading anglers in the nation's fishing hot spots, soliciting detailed information on their favorite flies and how to fish them.

The project was an immense success. More than 200 fly fishermen in thirty-eight states responded, whose letters Mary edited for inclusion in her text. *Favorite Flies and Their Histories* was not only an instant best-seller—with more than six printings in America and England in just four years—but a highly celebrated one as well.

"It has been given credit, more than any other event, for helping standardize the tangle of fly-pattern names and dressings that had by then become the curse of American fishermen and fishing tackle dealers," writes Paul Schullery in *American Fly Fishing: A History.* "It was a magnificent book. . . . Not the least, it gave Mary a lasting place in the pantheon of famous angling writers."

Mary Orvis Marbury's mark on angling history is undisputed, as evidenced by the headline attached to her obituary in London's *Fishing Gazette* in 1914: "Death of the Most Famous but one Female Angling Author."

The one? Dame Juliana Berners, of course.

Carrie Stevens

On 1 July 1924, Carrie Stevens, a milliner by trade and a world-class fly fisher and expert shot by reputation, on an impulse, whipped up an artificial fly out of gray feathers to resemble a smelt.

She attached her crude creation to her line, and on its maiden voyage across the placid water of the Upper Dam pool of Lake Mooselookmeguntic in western Maine, it landed her a 6-pound, 13-ounce brook trout—the largest recorded in those parts in thirteen years!

Too excited to unhook it, Carrie grabbed her netted fish with one hand and her rod with the other, and raced down to the center of town to weigh it. "There, at the hotel to witness Mrs. Stevens's catch, were some of the country's most affluent anglers, men whose private rail cars were parked beside the railhead at Middle Dam. As Mrs. Stevens showed off her fish, the assemblage of anglers became curious as to what fly she had used," recounts Susie Isaksen in *The American Fly Fisher.*[14]

"The talk around the potbellied stoves that night was about one subject only, and you know what it was! The tycoons in the cabins and the others in the hotel ordered Gray Ghosts as fast as Carrie could dress them and took them home to proudly pass around. The new fly was launched—probably the most famous streamer pattern ever originated," writes Joseph D. Bates in *Streamers and Bucktails: The Big Fish Flies.*[15]

Not only did Carrie's Gray Ghost revolutionize the way streamer flies would be tied thereafter, but her fish took second prize in *Field & Stream*'s annual competition that year. And this was a woman who had never tied a fly before!

From the publicity generated by the *Field & Stream* article, as well as the verbal wildfire that flashed through the Rangeley Lakes region, this 42-year-old housewife was suddenly inundated with orders and virtually thrust into the fly-tying business.

Operating under the name Rangeley's Favorite Trout and Salmon Flies, she single-handedly produced some 2,000 specimens a year at $1.50 each, providing her with an annual income of about $3,000! It should be noted that her growing client base included such angling notables as President Herbert Hoover and author Zane Grey.

The Gray Ghost may have been the most famous, but Carrie's handiwork over the years also resulted in more than two

Megan Boyd/American Museum of Fly Fishing

dozen successful streamer patterns that endure today. And yet she guarded her particular tying methods like a corporation protects a trade secret, divulging the particulars to only one person, author Joseph D. Bates, who was allowed to publish them in his book, *Streamer Fly Tying and Fishing*, long after her retirement.

Twelve days after Carrie died in 1970, friends and admirers, as well as the governor of Maine, gathered to erect a permanent plaque at the site of her greatest angling achievement, on the edge of the Upper Dam pool. It reads in part: "This table is placed here to honor a perfectionist and her original creations which have brought recognition to her native Maine and fame to the Rangeley Lakes region."

Megan Boyd

When the late author Joseph D. Bates polled the world's leading fly anglers for their opinion on who should be rightfully acknowledged as the master of fly tying today, the response was overwhelming: "The best are in Scotland and of course Megan Boyd is the best in Scotland."[16] During the six decades that Megan Boyd created her magical concoctions out of feathers and fur, she did indeed produce flies that many regard as the Tiffanies of the twentieth century.

The most important of the many accolades she received during her active years was the British Empire Medal, bestowed upon her by the Queen of England in 1971—making her the only fly tyer to receive that lofty recognition. (Notoriously reclusive, Boyd refused to travel to London to attend the ceremony.)

How such perfection could emerge under the primitive circumstances in which she worked is a testament to the fortitude of this single-minded Scot. Her studio was nothing but a drafty old wooden garage which she had pulled onto the property next to her bungalow overlooking the North Sea in the Scottish Highlands. Spending between fourteen and sixteen hours a day, six or seven days a week at her bench, she didn't even have electricity until 1985, having relied solely on one gas lamp that served both as her light and single heat source!

By the time of her retirement in 1988, Megan's flies had reached fame of such mythical proportions that she had orders stacked up dating back to 1973. Even so, she never hiked up her prices, which were always just under an American dollar per specimen—despite the fact that wealthy anglers from around the world were begging to pay more if she would simply supply them. "I had masses and masses of letters from people who wanted to buy flies to frame," she told Judith Dunham for *The Atlantic Salmon Fly*. "As long as I was tying flies for the fisherman—which I started off doing to earn my daily bread—I kept doing it. All the other orders had to go to the bottom of the pile."[17]

Born in 1915, Megan got the inspiration to tie flies at the age of twelve, after her father brought home a couple he had found along the riverbanks. The riverkeeper on a nearby estate taught her the craft by having her disassemble a finished fly and then reconstruct it on a smaller hook.

At the age of twenty, in 1935, Megan moved to the bungalow in Kintradwell where she spent the next fifty-three years. She "had hoped to die making flies out there," she told Tena Robinson for *Fly Rod & Reel*. "That didn't quite come off . . . so I did what I never thought I possibly could do. I shut my hut door and walked out." The reason for Megan's retirement? Every artist's worst fear: failing eyesight. "I knew that my eyesight was going because I was making bigger heads on the flies," she said to Dunham, "and once you start to do that, it's no use."

Today, Megan's flies fetch as much as $1,000 each at collec-

Helen Shaw/Courtesy of Helen Shaw Kessler

tor's auctions. She's not impressed, however. "It's an awful waste of money," she insisted to Robinson, although she is apparently pleased that some of the flies have ended up in the protection of institutions like the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Manchester, Vermont.

Even though Megan did her best to pass on her skills—she gave fly-tying lessons to hundreds over the years—she lamented to Robinson that she was not able to find a suitable heir. "There is only one man I taught that could tie a decent fly. He is dead now. The modern ones just want to tie something quick and scrappy and sell it."

Perhaps the most amazing detail about this complex woman's life was the fact that Megan Boyd did not fish. "I was certainly invited to fish here and there," she explained to Robinson. "But I've never fished in my life. And I wouldn't kill a salmon if I got one. That part of it's the only thing I didn't like about my work."

Helen Shaw

In a 1989 *American Angler & Fly Tier* profile of Helen Shaw, author Dick Talleur recounts a story that so aptly sums up the reverence with which fly-fishing connoisseurs regard this extraordinary woman's life work that it bears repeating:

"Arnold Gingrich, the renowned editor of *Esquire* magazine and an inveterate angler and fly fishing writer himself, was presented with a special collection of one hundred of his favorite flies tied by Helen, in commemoration of the magazine's fiftieth birthday," Talleur relates. "It is a matter of record that upon opening the box, he tearfully remarked, 'I never had a Helen Shaw fly; now I have a hundred. Nobody's worth that much.'"[18]

Helen not only ranks among the greatest fly tyers in the history of the sport, but she was also the first to demystify this arcane skill with her 1963 landmark book, *Fly-Tying*.[19] Rather than another weighty dissertation on fly-tying techniques that only an expert could decipher, Helen's was ingenious for its deceptive simplicity. Through it, armchair fly tyers everywhere were suddenly given a rare chance to observe a master at work—with step-by-step photographs of Helen's hands in action demonstrating the entire construction process, accompanied by succinct explanatory captions and an enlightening introduction to the essential elements of a tyer's treasure trove.

Helen once said that when she glimpsed her first trout at the age of three, it was "love at first sight." Born in Madison, Wisconsin, she learned to fish from her father and began tying flies as a youngster. Though no one in particular influenced her style, she absorbed the techniques of local tyers, thus refining her skill so early that she was already producing flies for a growing clientele by the time she graduated high school.

At twenty, her business had flourished to the point that she

was able to set up a shop in Sheboygan, initially with a partner, producing flies for such notables as President Herbert Hoover, among others. Fly-tying materials were obtained either by mail or by foraging such places as the Chicago stockyards for calf tails. And according to Talleur, she was "an active and enthusiastic flyfisher" who often joined some of her customers out on the water.

If Helen was unaware of the oddity of her profession, especially for a young woman, she was made aware of it during an emergency visit to the hospital for a chronic kidney infection. As she humorously related to Talleur: "A young intern, while doing a work-up of my case, asked me what I did for a living. I told him that I dressed flies. He turned to the nurse and said, 'How long has this patient been delirious?'"

Surprisingly, she was not the only woman tying in the Midwest prior to World War II. "There were a fair number of female commercial tyers," she told Talleur, "but they didn't operate as individual professionals. They tied on a piecework basis for large distributors, principally the Webber Company, which had ninety to a hundred women tying all the time. They would start a week with a huge pile of materials for a single pattern. The Monday-Tuesday flies were pretty fair, but by the end of the week they had gone far downhill, as the materials got picked over and fatigue and tedium set in. Webbers' offered me the head job once, but I wanted no part of it. I was always a meticulous tyer, and speed and production are contrary to what I do."

One of the most significant unions in the fly-fishing world was formed when Helen met her future husband, Hermann Kessler, already the art director for *Field & Stream,* a position he would hold for some twenty-five years. (Hermann would also later conceive and serve as the founding president of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.) During a visit to Milwaukee to fish, Hermann stayed with one of Helen's friends, who introduced them. They married in 1953, and she closed up her little shop in Sheboygan and moved to New York to join him.

Working out of their Manhattan apartment, Helen was immediately deluged with orders from the city's corps of discerning fly fishers, particularly members of the New York Anglers' Club. Her flies also began receiving deserved publicity in publications such as *Field & Stream,* and she occasionally demonstrated her fly-tying prowess to enraptured audiences at expositions throughout the city—although she found these exhibitions less than ideal as a teaching tool because only those standing closest to her could get a full view. Hermann, who was an accomplished photographer but not a tyer himself, envisioned a book illustrated with photographs that a complete novice like himself could follow with ease. Thus, *Fly-Tying* was born out of a collaboration in which Hermann composed and photographed each step of the process and Helen supplied the editorial contents.

Fly-Tying was an instant best-seller upon its publication in 1963, even though it appeared "at least five years before the beginning of the tying/fishing boom," Talleur notes. As important, writes Talleur, it "lifted Helen Shaw out of virtual obscurity and secured for her a well-deserved niche in the top echelon of the world's fly tyers." Though it hardly seems possible, especially considering the proliferation of fly-tying how-to books over the last thirty-two years, Helen's book has never been out of print except for one brief period.

Helen and Hermann collaborated twice more: once for her second book, *Flies for Fish and Fishermen,* which was published in 1989, and also for a third volume, which remains incomplete due to Hermann's death in 1993. Through the years, Helen also wrote numerous magazine articles and contributed to other books on the subject, among them Art Flick's *Master Fly-Tying Guide.* Two examples of her stunning handiwork are also featured in Judith Dunham's *The Art of the Trout Fly.*

Perhaps Art Smith best explained in his glowing 1963 review why Helen's name does not readily roll off the lips of the latest generation of fly fishers: "I think that it is typical of Helen Shaw, whom I know and greatly admire, that she should have produced a book so utterly devoid of pretense or condescension, because this is exactly the sort of person she is. In going through *Fly Tying,* I found just three uses of the pronoun 'I.'"

Winnie and Mary Dette

There is a fly-tying tradition in the Catskills, born out of the growing demand for the magical imitations that were meticulously tied by a dozen or so of the finest tyers who have ever lived. In a class of their own, however, are what are known simply as the Dette flies, produced for more than sixty-five years by Walt and Winnie Dette.

Born in 1909 in Roscoe, New York, in a thirty-six-room boardinghouse on the Beaverkill River built by her grandfather, Winnie grew up around many of the world's fly-fishing notables, including famed hotelier Charles Ritz, who took up seasonal residence at the Ferdon's River View Inn during the 1910s and 1920s.

In 1928, at the age of nineteen, Winnie married Walt Dette, a local boy who worked down at the drugstore. An avid fly fisher—Winnie would become one as well—he had already gotten one foot into the fishing business by convincing the owner of the store to let him set up a tackle shop in one corner. He also had the inspiration to learn how to tie flies himself and offered Rube Cross, one of the premier tyers in the country, $50 to teach him. But Cross turned him down flat.

Undeterred, Walt rented a room on Main Street for $12 a month, and he, Winnie, and a friend, Harry Darbee, began teaching themselves. "Learning to tie flies was one of their first priorities. That was accomplished by taking apart various Rube Cross, and other, patterns to see how they were constructed," Eric Leiser explains in *The Dettes: A Catskill Legend.*[20] "As Walt carefully unwound each turn of thread, Harry and Winnie would watch and take notes. Then all three would try to put one together again."

While all three held down their full-time jobs, Walt and Harry started a sideline business repairing and wrapping fly

rods, and Winnie tied the first Dette flies, which were sold out of the cigar counter in her father's inn for a quarter apiece. In 1929, Walt and Winnie moved into the inn to help run it and set up their fly-tying operation in an upstairs room. They put out their first mail-order catalog, offering 100 different dry-fly patterns—twenty-five of which were their own designs or modified versions of old standards. Walt also began raising chickens to supply them with their fly-tying feathers.

During the next two years, "the legend of the superb Dette flies was born," Leiser writes. "Those who gathered at the inn soon spread the word that this was the place to be and that the patterns tied by Walt and Winnie were among the best in the country. . . . It became a mark of distinction among anglers to say, 'I have my flies tied by the Dettes.'" Orders began pouring in from members of elite angling clubs, and it was all Walt and Winnie could do to keep up while working their full-time jobs, a problem which continually plagued them over the years.

For whatever reasons, the devastating effects of the depression had not yet hit little Roscoe by 1931, when Walt and Winnie took out a bank loan to purchase the inn from her parents and had their first child, Mary. A year later, however, the anglers suddenly stopped coming, forcing them to deed the property back to the bank and move to a small house owned by Winnie's grandfather, where they attempted for the one and only time in their lives to support themselves entirely by their fly-tying labors. To carry them through the winter months, they began tying for wholesale companies.

In 1933, Harry Darbee returned to the area and signed on as a partner to help out with the escalating workload. Winnie was pregnant with her second child, but continued to put in long hours at her bench. A year later, they were so desperate for help that they hired a young woman, Elsie Bivens, to sort hackles and other materials. But Harry and Elsie eloped in 1935, and the partnership came to an end as the Darbees lit out to set up their own fly-tying business. Somehow Walt and Winnie survived, even filling one wholesale order for more than 12,000 flies of various patterns. That same year, they put out their second and last catalog, offering tools, hooks, assorted fly-tying materials, and their trademark flies.

In 1946, the Dettes were among those profiled in a *Fortune* magazine article about the Catskill tradition. It only added to their legend. Over the years, other newspaper and magazine articles followed, although the Dettes never sought out the publicity.

"As their reputation grew, the Dette home became the hub around which fly tyers and anglers would gather, not just to buy flies or garner information, which was always freely given, but to belong and perhaps by being there become part of the tradition," Leiser writes.

In 1955, soon after having her first child, their daughter, Mary, approached her father about learning how to tie. Three children later, she was still at it. "While kept busy pinning diapers and warming bottles, Mary was also busy tying flies to make spare money. Once the children were grown, fly tying had become too much of a part of her life to be abandoned. . . . Today she ties most of the flies bearing the Dette brand and style," Leiser reports.

Walt passed away in 1994 and Winnie is now retired. With the Darbees' deaths in the early 1980s, this great tradition is now literally in the hands of only one person, Mary Dette.

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Adapted from Reel Women: The World of Women Who Fish, *by Lyla Foggia (Hillsboro, Oreg.: Beyond Words Publishing, Inc., 1995).*

Salmonia: or Days of Fly Fishing

by Sir Humphrey Davy

Sir Humphrey Davy (1778–1829) of England was an accomplished chemist and, later in life, a natural historian. Although the bulk of his work bore such titles as "On Heat, Light, and the Combinations of Light," "On Phos-oxygen and Its Combinations," and "Researches, Chemical and Philosophical, Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide and Its Respiration," in 1828 he published Salmonia: or Days of Fly Fishing. In a Series of Conversations with Some Account of the Habits of Fishes Belonging to the Genus Salmo. By An Angler. *At the time it was a work of great scientific interest and written in a style to reach a wide audience. Note in this excerpt that some aspects of the sport appear changeless: a love of nature, a respect for the resource, and a highly developed sense of confidence on the part of certain anglers. Sir Humphrey Davy was a serious scholar and presented even this account with exhaustive precision. In his spare time, he went fly fishing.* The Editor

From the Preface . . .

These pages formed the occupation of the Author during many months of severe and dangerous illness, when he was wholly incapable of attending to more useful studies or of following more serious pursuits. They formed his amusement in many hours, which otherwise would have been unoccupied and tedious; and they are published in the hope that they may possess an interest for those persons who derive pleasure from the simplest and most attainable kind of rural sports and who practise the art, or patronise the objects of contemplation, of the Philosophical Angler.

The conversational manner and discursive style were chosen as best suited to the state of health of the Author, who was incapable of considerable efforts and long-continued attention; and he could not but have in mind a model, which has fully proved the utility and popularity of this method of treating the subject—*The Complete Angler* [*sic*], by Walton and Cotton.

The characters chosen to support these Conversations are Halieus, who is supposed to be an accomplished fly fisher; Ornither, who is to be regarded as a gentleman generally fond of the sports of the field, though not a finished master of the art of angling; Poietes, who is to be considered as an enthusiastic lover of nature, and partially acquainted with the mysteries of fly fishing; and Physicus, who is described as uninitiated as an angler, but as a person fond of inquiries in natural history and philosophy.

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First Day.

Halieus—Poietes—Physicus—Ornither.

~

Introductory Conversations—Symposiac.

Scene, London.

Phys.—Halieus, I dare say you know where this excellent trout was caught: I never ate a better fish of the kind.

Hal.—I ought to know, as it was this morning in the waters of the Wandle, not ten miles from the place where we sit, and it is through my means that you see it at table.

Phys.—Of your own catching?

Hal.—Yes, with the artificial fly.

Phys.—I admire the fish, but I cannot admire the art by which it was taken; and I wonder how a man of your active mind and enthusiastic character can enjoy what appears to me a stupid and melancholy occupation.

Hal.—I might as well wonder in my turn, that a man of your discursive imagination and disposition to contemplation should not admire this occupation, and that you should venture to call it either stupid or melancholy.

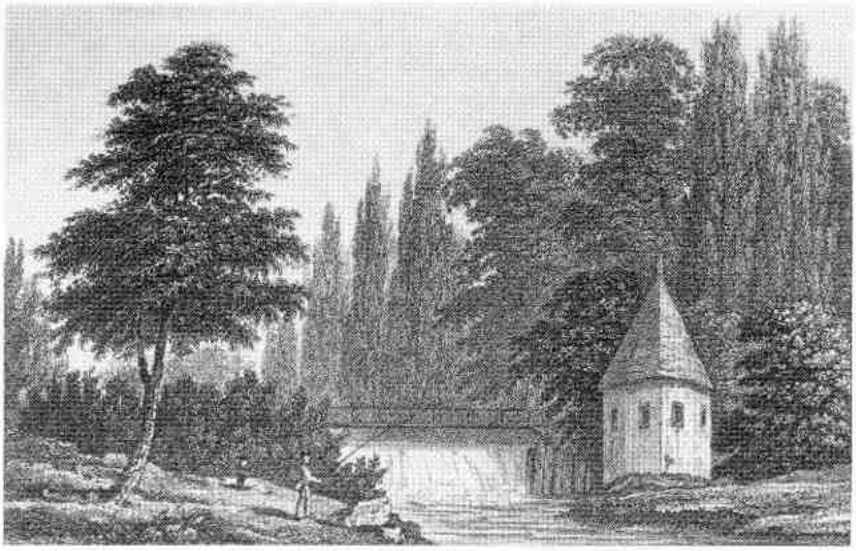
Phys.—I have at least the authority of a great moralist, Johnson, for its folly.

Hal.—I will allow no man, however great a philosopher, or moralist, to abuse an occupation he has not tried; and as well as I remember, this same illustrious person praised the book and the character of the great Patriarch of Anglers, Isaac Walton.

Phys.—There is another celebrated man, however, who has abused this your patriarch, Lord Byron, and that in terms not very qualified. He calls him, as well as I can recollect, "A quaint old cruel coxcomb." I must say, a practise of this great fisherman, where he recommends you to pass the hook through the body of a frog with care, as though you loved him, in order to keep him alive longer, cannot but be considered as cruel.

Hal.—I do not justify either the expression or the practise of Walton in this instance; but remember, *I* fish only with inanimate baits, or imitations of them, and I will not exhume or expose the ashes of the dead, nor vindicate the memory of Walton, at the expense of Byron, who, like Johnson, was no fisherman: but the moral and religious habits of Walton, his simplicity of manners, and his well-spent life, exonerate him from the charge of cruelty; and the book of a coxcomb would not have been so great a favourite with most persons of refined taste. . . .

Phys.—I do not find much difficulty in understanding why warriors, and even statesmen, fishers of men, many of



whom I have known particularly fond of hunting and shooting, should likewise be attached to angling; but I own, I am at a loss to find reasons for a love of this pursuit amongst philosophers and poets.

HAL.—The search after food is an instinct belonging to our nature; and from the savage in his rudest and most primitive state, who destroys a piece of game or a fish with a club or spear, to man in the most cultivated state of society, who employs artifice, machinery, and the resources of various other animals to secure his object, the origin of the pleasure is similar and its object the same: but that kind of it requiring most art may be said to characterise man in his highest or intellectual state; and the fisher for salmon and trout with the fly employs not only machinery to assist his physical powers, but applies sagacity to conquer difficulties; and the pleasure derived from ingenious resources and devices, as well as from active pursuit, belongs to this amusement. Then as to its philosophical tendency, it is a pursuit of moral discipline, requiring patience, forbearance, and command of temper. As connected with natural science, it may be vaunted as demanding a knowledge of the habits of a considerable tribe of created beings—fishes, and the animals that they prey upon, and an acquaintance with the signs and tokens of the weather and its changes, the nature of waters, and of the atmosphere. As to its poetical relations, it carries us into the most wild and beautiful scenery of nature; amongst the mountain lakes, and the clear and lovely streams that gush from the higher ranges of elevated hills, or that make their way through the cavities of calcareous strata. How delightful in the early spring, after the dull and tedious time of winter, when the frosts disappear and the sunshine warms the earth and waters, to wander forth by some clear stream, to see the leaf bursting from the purple bud, to scent the odours of the bank perfumed by the violet and enameled, as it were, with the primrose and the daisy; to wander upon the fresh turf below the shade of trees, whose bright blossoms are filled with the music of the bee; and on the surface of the waters to view the gaudy flies sparkling like animated gems in the sunbeams, whilst the bright and beautiful trout is watching them from below; to hear the twittering of the water-birds, who, alarmed at your approach, rapidly hide themselves beneath the flowers and leaves of the water-lily; and as the season advances, to find all these objects changed for others of the same kind, but better and brighter, till the swallow and the trout contend as it were for the gaudy May fly, and till in pursuing your amusement in the calm and balmy evening, you are serenaded by the songs of the cheerful thrush and melodious nightingale, performing the offices of paternal love in thickets ornamented with the rose and woodbine.

PHYS.—All these enjoyments might be obtained without the necessity of torturing and destroying an unfortunate animal, that the true lover of nature would wish to see happy in a scene of loveliness.

HAL.—If all men were Pythagoreans and professed the Brahmin's creed, it would undoubtedly be cruel to destroy any form of animated life; but if fish are to be eaten, I see no more harm in capturing them by skill and ingenuity with an artificial fly than in pulling them out of the water by main force with the net; and in general when taken by the common fisherman, fish are permitted to die slowly, and to suffer in the air, from the want of their natural element; whereas, every good angler, as soon as his fish is landed, either destroys his life immediately, if he is wanted for food, or returns him into the water.

PHYS.—But do you think nothing of the torture of the hook, and the fear of capture, and the misery of struggling against the powerful rod?

HAL.—I have already admitted the danger of analysing too closely the moral character of any of our field sports; yet I think it cannot be doubted that the nervous system of fish, and cold-blooded animals in general, is less sensitive than that of warm-blooded animals. The hook usually is fixed in the cartilaginous part of the mouth, where there are no nerves; and a proof that the sufferings of a hooked fish cannot be great is found in the circumstance that though a trout has been hooked and played for some minutes, he will often, after his escape with the artificial fly in his mouth, take the natural fly, and feed as if nothing had happened, having apparently learnt only from the experiment that the artificial fly is not proper for food. And I have caught pike with four or five hooks in their mouths and tackle that they had broken only a few minutes before; and the hooks seemed to have had no other effect than that of serving as a sort of *sauce piquante*, urging them to seize another morsel of the same kind.

PHYS.—Fishes are mute, and cannot plead, even in the way that birds and quadrupeds do, their own cause; yet the

instances you quote only prove the intense character of their appetites, which seem not so moderate as Whiston imagined, in his strange philosophical romance on the Deluge; in which he supposes that in the antediluvian world the heat was much greater than in this, and that all terrestrial and aerial animals had their passions so exalted by this high temperature that they were lost in sin, and destroyed for their crimes; but that fish, living in a cooler element, were more correct in their lives, and were therefore spared from the destruction of the primitive world. You have proved, by your examples, the intensity of the appetite of hunger in fishes; Spalanzani has given us another proof of the violence of a different appetite, or instinct, in a cold-blooded animal that has most of the habits of the genus—the frog; which, in the breeding season, remains attached to the female, though a limb, or even his head, is removed from the body.

HAL.—This is likewise in favour of my argument, that the sensibility of this class of animals to physical pain is comparatively small.

PHYS.—The advocates for a favourite pursuit never want sophisms to defend it. I have even heard it asserted that a hare enjoys being hunted. Yet I will allow that fly fishing, after your vindication, appears amongst the least cruel of field sports;—I can go no farther; as I have never thought of trying it, I can say nothing of its agreeableness as an amusement, compared with hunting and shooting.

HAL.—I wish that you would allow me to convince you, that for a contemplative man, as you are, and a lover of nature, it is far superior, more tranquil, more philosophical, and, after the period of early youth, more fitted for a moderately active body and mind, requiring less violent exertion; and, pursued in moderation, affording an exercise conducive to health. There is a river, only a few miles off, where I am sure I could obtain permission for you and our friend Poietes to fish.

PHYS.—I am open to conviction on all subjects, and have no objection to spend one May day with you in this idle occupation; premising that you take at least one other companion who really loves fishing.

HAL.—You, who are so fond of natural history, even should you not be amused by fishing, will, I am sure, find objects of interest on the banks of the river.

PHYS.—I fear I am not entomologist enough to follow the life of the May fly, but I shall willingly have my attention directed to its habits. Indeed, I have often regretted that sportsmen were not fonder of zoology; they have so many opportunities, which other persons do not possess, of illustrating the origin and qualities of some of the most curious forms of animated nature; the causes and character of the migrations of animals; their relations to each other, and their place and order in the general scheme of the universe. . . .

HAL.—It is not possible to follow the amusement of angling without often having your attention directed to the modes of life of fishes, insects, and birds, and many curious and interesting facts, as it were, forced upon your observation. I consider you, Physicus, as pledged to make one of our fishing party; and I hope, in a few days, to give you an invitation to meet a few worthy friends on the banks of the Colne. And you, Poietes, who, I know, are an initiated disciple of Walton's school, will, I trust, join us. We will endeavour to secure a fine day; two hours, in a light carriage with good horses, will carry us to our ground; and I think I can promise you green meadows, shady trees, the song of the nightingale, and a full and clear river. . . .

SECOND DAY.

HALIEUS—POIETES—ORNITHER—PHYSICUS.

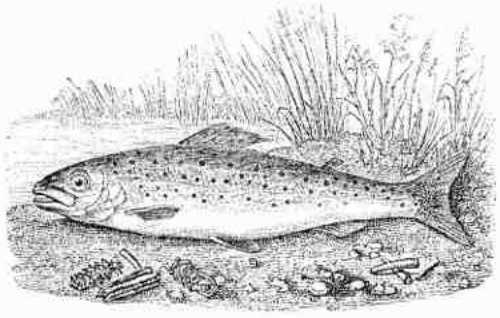
Trout Fishing—Denhem, May 1810.

Morning.

HAL.—It is ten o'clock: you may put up your rods, or take rods from the hall; for so hospitable is the master of this mansion that every thing is supplied to our hands. And Physicus, as you are the only one of our party ignorant of the art of fly fishing, I will fit you with a rod and flies; and let me advise you to begin with a line shorter than your rod, and throw at first slowly and without effort, and imitate us as well as you can. As for precepts, they are of little value—practise and imitation will make you an angler.

POIET.—I shall put together my rod and fish with my own flies. It may be fancy, but I always think I do best with tackle with which I am used to fish.

HAL.—You are right; for fancy is always something: and when we believe that we can do things better in a partic-



ular way, we really do, by the influence of imagination, perform them both better and with less effort. I agree with moralists that the standard of virtue should be placed higher than any one can reach; for in trying to rise, man will attain a more excellent state of being than if no effort were made. But to our business. As far as the perfection of the material for the angler is concerned, the flies you find on this table are as good as can be made, and for this season of the year, there is no great variety in this river. We have had lately some warm days, and though it is but the eighteenth of May, yet I know the May fly has been out for three or four days, and this is the best period of this destructive season for the fisherman. There are, I observe, many male flies on the high trees and some females on the alders.

PHYS.—But I see flies already on the water, which seem of various colours—brown and grey and some very pale—and the trout appear to rise at them eagerly.

HAL.—The fly you see is called by fishermen the alder fly and is generally in large quantities before the May fly. Imitations of this fly, and of the green and the grey drake of different shades, are the only ones you will need this morning, though I doubt if the last can be much used, as the grey drake is not yet on the water in any quantity. . . .

POIET.—The water is quite in motion: what noble fish I see on the feed! I never beheld a finer sight, though I have often seen the May fly on well stocked waters.

HAL.—This river is most strictly preserved; not a fish has been killed here since last August, and this is the moment when the large fish come to the

surface and leave their cad bait search and minnow hunting. But I have hardly time to talk; I have hold of a good fish: they take either alder or May fly, and having never been fished for this year, they make no distinction and greedily seize any small object in motion on the water. You see the alder fly is quite as successful as the May fly; but there is a fish that has refused it, and because he has been feeding, gluttonlike, on the May fly: that is the fifth he has swallowed in a minute. Now I shall throw the drake a foot above him. It floats down, and he has taken it. A fine fish; I think at least 4 lbs. This is the largest fish we have yet seen, but in the deep water still lower down, there are larger fish. One of 5 lbs. I have known taken here, and once a fish a little short only of 6 lbs.

POIET.—I have just landed a fish that I suppose you will consider as a small one; yet I am tempted to kill him.

HAL.—He is not a fish to kill, throw him back, he is much under 2 lbs. and, as I ought to have told you before, we are not allowed to kill any fish of less size; and I am sure we shall all have more than we ought to carry away even of this size. Pray put him into the well, or rather give him to the fisherman to turn back into the water.

POIET.—I cannot say I approve of this manner of fishing: I lose my labour.

HAL.—As the object of your fishing, I hope, is innocent amusement, you can enjoy this and show your skill in catching the animal; and if every fish that took the May fly were to be killed, there would be an end to the sport in the river, for none would remain for next year.

PHYS.—The number of flies seems to increase as the day advances, and I never saw a more animated water scene: all nature seems alive; even the water-wagtails have joined the attack upon these helpless and lovely creations from the waters.

HAL.—It is now one o'clock; and between twelve and three is the time when the May fly rises with most vigour. It is a very warm day, and with such a quantity of fly, every fish in the river will probably be soon feeding. See, below the wear, there are two or three large trout lately come out; and from the quiet way in which they swallow their prey, and from the size of the tranquil undulation that follows their rise, I suspect they are the giants of this river. Try if you cannot reach them: one is near the bank in a convenient place for a throw, for the water is sufficiently rough to hide the deception, and these large fish do not take the fly well in calm water, though with natural flies on the hook they might all be raised.

POIET.—I have him! Alas! He has broken me, and carried away half my bottom line. He must have been a fish of 7 or 8 lbs. What a dash he made! He carried off my fly by main force.

HAL.—You should have allowed your reel to play and your line to run: you held him too tight.

POIET.—He was too powerful a fish for my tackle; and even if I had done so, would probably have broken me by running amongst the weeds.

HAL.—Let me tell you, my friend, you should never allow a fish to run to the weeds or to strike across the stream; you should carry him always downstream, keeping his head high, and in the current. If in a weedy river you allow a large fish to run upstream, you are almost sure to lose him. There, I have hooked the companion of your lost fish, on the other side of the stream—a powerful creature: he tries, you see, to make way to the weeds, but I hold him tight.

POIET.—I see you are obliged to run with him and have carried him safely through the weeds.

HAL.—I have him now in the rapids on the shallow, and I have no fear of losing him, unless he strikes the hook out of his mouth.

POIET.—He springs again and again.

HAL.—He is off; in one of these somersets he detached the steel, and he now leaps to celebrate his escape. We will leave this place where there are more great fish, and return to it after a while, when the alarm produced by our operations has subsided.

☾ ☾ ☾

HAL.—It is now a quarter of an hour since we left the large pool: let us return to it; I see the fish are again rising.

POIET.—I am astonished! It appears to me that the very same fish are again feeding. There are two fish rising nearly in the same spot where they rose before: can they be the same fish?

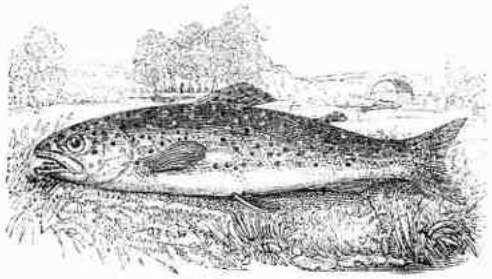
HAL.—It is very possible. It is not likely that three other fish of that size should occupy the same haunts.

POIET.—But I thought after a fish had been hooked, he remained sick and sulky for some time, feeling his wounds uncomfortable.

HAL.—The fish that I hooked is not rising in the same place, and therefore, probably was hurt by the hook; but one of these fish seems to be the same that carried off your fly, and it is probable that the hook only struck him in a part of the mouth where there are no nerves; and that he suffered little at the moment and does not now feel his annoyance.

POIET.—I have seen him take four of five flies: I shall throw over him. There, he rose, but refused the fly. He has at least learnt from the experiment he has made to distinguish the natural from the artificial fly.

HAL.—This, I think, always happens after a fish has been hooked with an artificial fly. He becomes cautious and is seldom caught that year, at least with the same means in the same pool: but I dare say that fish might be taken with a natural fly; or, what is better, two upon the hook.



POIET.—Pray try him.

HAL.—I am no great artist at this kind of angling, but I will for once try my fortune, though it is hardly fair play; and it is rather to endeavour to recover your tackle than for the sake of the fish; for this method I seldom practise and never encourage.

POIET.—Pray make no apologies for the trial. Such a fish—certainly a monster for this river—should be caught, by fair means if possible, but caught by any means.

HAL.—You lost that fish, and you overrate his size, as you will see, if I have good fortune. I put my live flies on the hook with some regret and some disgust. I will not employ another person to be my minister of cruelty, as I remember a lady of fashion once did, who was very fond of fishing for perch and who employed her daughter, a little girl of nine years of age, to pass the hook through the body of the worm! Now there is a good wind, and the fish has just taken a natural fly. I shall drop the flies, if possible, within a few inches of his nose. He has risen. He is caught! I must carry him downstream to avoid the bed of weeds above. I now have him

on fair ground, and he fights with vigour. Fortunately, my silk worm gut is very strong, for he is not a fish to be trifled with. He begins to be tired; prepare the net. We have him safe, and see your link hangs to his lower jaw: the hook had struck the cartilage on the outside of the bow, and the fly, probably, was scarcely felt by him.

POIET.—I am surprised! That fish evidently had discovered that the artificial fly was a dangerous bait, yet he took the natural fly which was on a hook and when the silk worm gut must have been visible.

HAL.—I do not think he saw either the gut or the hook. In very bright weather and water, I have known very shy fish refuse even a hook baited with the natural fly, scared probably by some appearance of hook or gut. The vision of fishes when the surface is not ruffled is sufficiently keen. I have seen them rise at gnats so small as to be scarcely visible to my eye.

POIET.—You just now said that a fish pricked by the hook of an artificial fly would not usually take it again that season.

HAL.—I cannot be exact on that point: I have known a fish that I have pricked retain his station in the river and refuse the artificial fly, day after day, for weeks together; but his memory may have been kept awake by this practise, and the recollection seems local and associated with surrounding objects; and if a pricked trout is chased into another pool, he will, I believe, soon again take the artificial fly. Or if the objects around him are changed, as in Autumn, by the decay of weeds, or by their being cut, the same thing happens; and a flood, or a rough wind, I believe, assists the fly fisher, not merely by obscuring the vision of the fish, but, in a river much fished, by changing the appearance of their haunts: large trouts almost always occupy particular stations under or close to a large stone or tree; and probably most of their recollected sensations are connected with this dwelling.

PHYS.—I think I understand you, that the memory of the danger and pain does not last long, unless there is a permanent sensation with which it can remain associated—such as the station of the trout; and that the recollection of the mere form of the artificial fly, without this association, is evanescent.

ORN.—You are diving into metaphysics; yet I think, in fowling, I have observed that the memory of birds is local. A woodcock that has been much shot at and scared in a particular wood runs to the side where he has usually escaped the moment he hears the dogs; but if driven into a new wood, he seems to lose his acquired habits of caution and becomes stupid.

POIET.—This great fish, that you have just caught, must be nearly of the weight I assigned to him.

HAL.—O no; he is, I think, above 5 lbs. but not 6 lbs.; but we can form a more correct opinion by measuring him, which I can easily do, the butt of my rod being a measure. He measures, from nose to fork, a very little less than twenty-four inches, and, consequently, upon the scale which is appropriate to well-fed trout, should weigh 5 lbs., 10 oz.—which, within an ounce, I doubt not, is his weight.

PHYS.—O, I see you take the mathematical law that similar solids are to each other in the triplicate ratio of one of their dimensions.

HAL.—You are right.

PHYS.—But I think you are below the mark, for this appears to me an extraordinarily thick fish.

HAL.—He is a clean fish, but in proportion not so thick as my model, which was a fish of seventeen inches by nine inches, and weighed 2 lbs.—this is my standard solid. We will try him. Ho! Mrs. B!—bring your scales, and weigh this fish. There, you see, he weighs 5 lbs., 10 ½ oz.

PHYS.—Well, I am pleased to see this fish and amused with your sport; but though I have been imitating you in throwing the fly as well as I can, yet not a trout has taken notice of my fly, and they seem scared by my appearance.

HAL.—Let me see you perform. There are two good trout taking flies opposite that bank, which you can reach. You threw too much line into the water and scared them both; but I will take you to the rapid of the Tumbling Bay, where the river falls; there the quickness of the stream will prevent your line from falling deep, and the foam will conceal your person from the view of the fish. And let me advise you to fish only in the rapids till you have gained some experience in throwing the fly. There are several fish rising in that stream.

PHYS.—I have raised one, but he refused my fly.

HAL.—Now you have a fish.

PHYS.—I am delighted;—but he is a small one.

HAL.—Unluckily, it is a *dace.*

PHYS.—I have now a larger fish, which has pulled my line out.

HAL.—Give him time. That is a good trout. Now wind up; he is tired and your own. I will land him. He is a fish to keep, being above 2 lbs.

PHYS.—I am well pleased.

HAL.—There are many larger trout here; go on fishing, and you will hook some of them. And when you are tired of this rapid, you will find another a quarter of a mile below. And continue to fish with a short line, and drop your fly, or let it be carried by the wind on the water as lightly as possible. . . . I hope, Ornither, you have had good sport.

ORN.—Excellent! Since you left me, below the wear, I have hooked at least fifteen or twenty good fish and landed and saved eight above 2 lbs.; but I have taken no fish like the great one which you caught by poaching with the natural flies. The trout rose wonderfully well within the last quarter of an hour, but they are now all still; and the river, which was in such active motion, is now perfectly quiet and seems asleep and almost dead. . . .

HAL.—It is Physicus, who has this day commenced his career as a fly fisher; and who, I dare say, has been as successful as the uninitiated generally are. I hope you have followed my advice and been successful?

PHYS.—I caught two trout in the rapid where you left me; but they were small, and the fisherman threw them in. Below the wear, in the quick stream, I caught two dace and what astonished me very much, a perch, which you see here, and which I thought never took the fly.

HAL.—O yes, sometimes; and particularly when it is below the surface: and what more?

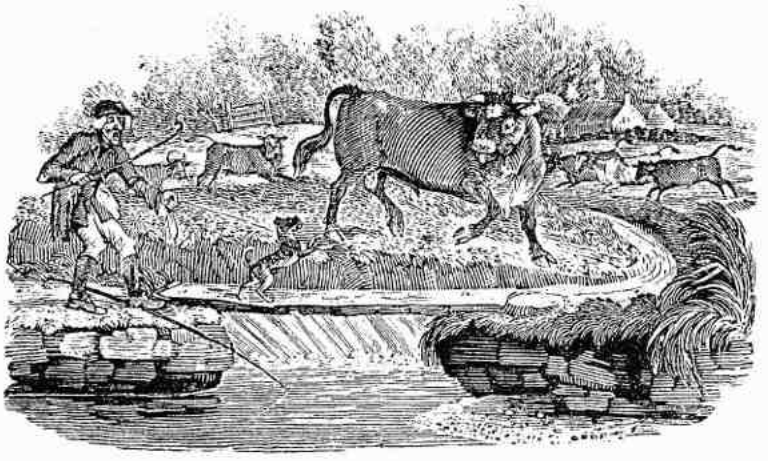
PHYS.—By creeping on my knees, and dropping my fly over the bank, I hooked a very large fish that I saw rising and which was like a salmon; but he was too strong for my tackle, ran out all my line, and at last broke off by entangling my link in a post in the river. I have been very unlucky! I am sure that fish was larger than the great one you took with the natural fly.

HAL.—Come, you have been initiated, and I see begin to take an interest in the sport, and I do not despair of your becoming a distinguished angler.

PHYS.—With time and some patience: but I am sorry I tortured that poor fish without taking him.

HAL.—I dare say you are.

(They go to dinner.)



Thomas Bewick

March 29 — May 7

THOMAS BEWICK (1753–1828) was one of England's greatest wood engravers. He was born in Cherryburn, about twelve miles from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where his father operated a small coal mine. As a boy, Bewick's main interests were in nature and in drawing. He was apprenticed to an engraver in his early teens. Bewick is often credited with introducing wood engraving as a way to print pictures with the text in books—engraving on metal was more popular, but the printing had to be done separately. Ultimately, wood engraving became the most popular method of illustration until photoengraving was perfected.

Of fishing, Bewick reminisced: "Well do I remember mounting the stile which gave the first peep of the curling or rapid stream, over the intervening, dewy, daisy-covered holme—boundered by the early sloe, and the hawthorne-blossomed hedge . . . and the enchanting music of the lark, the blackbird, the throstle, and the blackcap, rendered soothing and plaintive by the cooings of the ringdove, which altogether charmed, but perhaps retarded, the march to the brink of the scene of action, with its willows, its alders, or its sallows, where early I commenced the day's patient campaign."

The American Museum of Fly Fishing will exhibit Thomas Bewick prints from March 29 through May 7.

ANTON STETZKO of Orleans, Massachusetts, is a 1972 graduate of the DuCret School of Art, as well as an avid fisherman and saltwater fly-fishing guide. Living on Cape Cod, he fishes more than 300 days a year, primarily for striped bass. In fact, he holds the world record for catching the largest striped bass—73 pounds—from the surf.

He describes the Outer Beach's inspiration this way: "The pounding surf at the foot of high sand cliffs, the ever-changing flat spits of sand with the turbulent Atlantic on one side and calm bays and marshes on the other are absolutely magical. I am transported by this place, made one with nature. My mind empties of problems and stresses of the human condition. I breathe clean, sharp salt air and concentrate on the challenge of catching the wily striper. So many days and nights in this wondrous place leave me with crystal clear images which become the fabric of my paintings."

Stetzko's watercolors were featured in *Little Rivers: Tales of a Woman Angler* by Margot Page (Lyons & Burford, 1995). He was subsequently commissioned to paint a new cover for the 1996 paperback version by Avon Books. The American Museum of Fly Fishing is pleased to present "Art of a Cape Cod Angler: The Paintings of Anton Stetzko" from May 10 through July 9.

Anton Stetzko

May 10 — July 9

The Case of the Disappearing Drink

OUR LEAD STORY in the Fall 1995 issue, "'A Sportsman's Paradise': Fishing at the Adirondack League Club," prompted this response from Robert J. Behnke, professor in the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology at Colorado State University.

PAUL SCHULLERY'S story of the Adirondack League Club and the advent of the scientific management era initiated by Dwight Webster of Cornell University recalled to mind a standard drink of nineteenth-century sportsmen in the Adirondacks: the mountain ash or Adirondack cocktail, which vanished from history and was rescued from oblivion by Webster.

In 1971, I spent a few days with Dwight (known as "Webby" to his friends) and Bill Flick visiting various lakes and ponds of the Adirondack League Club where experiments with various strains of brook trout were being conducted. I was impressed by Webster's knowledge of Adirondack fish history and in the following years we exchanged bits of historical information on early fish culture and fish stocking. One such exchange concerned two articles by Richard U. Sherman on "the Bisby trout" in October 1883 issues of *The American Angler* that I had come across. Sherman mentioned that the "mountain ash cocktail" was the usual breakfast drink at the Bisby Lodge. I was curious what kind of cocktail or toniclike drink was taken with breakfast. I consulted bar guides and dictionaries of mixed drinks, but could find no mention of the mountain ash or Adirondack cocktail—evidently it had vanished from current history.

I thought if anyone could inform me on the mountain ash cocktail, it would be Dwight Webster. I sent a copy of Sherman's articles and an inquiry on the subject. Shortly before, Dwight had independently found Sherman's articles and began an investigation to solve the mystery of the mountain ash or Adirondack cocktail. The results and a recipe were published in *The Anglers Club Bulletin* (New York) in 1981, which appears below.

There is still some mystery as to why such a popular "standard" drink among nineteenth-century Adirondack sportsmen faded into obscurity during the twentieth century. It may have to do with Webster's taste tests, which concluded that only straight rye whiskey can make a proper mountain ash cocktail. During the twentieth century, rye was replaced by bourbon and sour mash whiskies because the preferred American whiskey and the "bitters" provided by the mountain ash bark to such whiskies were unpalatable to most tastes.

ROBERT J. BEHNKE

. . . . . .

The Adirondack or Mountain Ash Cocktail

by Dwight Webster

FIRST NOTICE of a mountain ash cocktail came to my attention while searching out material for a brochure commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Adirondack League Club. It was in an article by General R. U. Sherman entitled "The Bisby Trout" in *The American Angler* (Oct. 13 & 20, 1883). Bisby trout were a diminutive form of lake trout, averaged about 12 inches, and inhabited a chain of four lakes owned by the Bisby Club. That organization predated the Adirondack League Club and merged with them in 1890. Sherman, one of the first New York Fish Commissioners, was knowledgeable about fish and fishing in the Adirondacks, and, it would appear, about related subjects as well. "The Bisby Trout" piece ended like this: "A visitor, for the first time last summer to the Bisby waters, declared in his enthusiasm of his first breakfast, that Delmonico, with all his skill and wealth of resource, could not produce a dish like this—broiled Bisby trout,—nor concoct a

drink equal to the Mountain Ash Cocktail, the usual precursor of the morning meal at Bisby Lodge."

I didn't pay much attention to the last part of the sentence at first, figuring in my naiveté that the concoction referred to something like tomato juice laced with spices. I was wrong.

The 1904 yearbook for the League Club contained an article by W. H. Boardman. "How Deer Live in the Winter" described their food and condition and ended with a list of browse eaten as reported to Boardman by a local guide: ". . . The deer eat mountain ash ½ inch thick. I send you a chewed specimen. You sportsmen scrape this bark for bitters to make the 'Adirondack cocktail,' but the deer use it without whisky."

As one who samples spirits on occasion, the notion of a potion named after a favored locale or native tree piqued my imagination. Intuitively, I concluded that "mountain ash" and "Adirondack Cocktail" referred to the same drink. What were the ingredients beyond "bitters" and whiskey, and how were they put together?

That information was located fortuitously in *The Lovers of the Woods,* a book published in 1901—the author, W. H. Boardman. It contained yarns about various experiences in the North Woods around the turn of the century and this clue turned up in a story about a sickly sport, recently arrived from the City, looking for rejuvenation:

> "I have brought you six feet and four inches and two hundred and forty pounds of bad health and low spirits, John."
>
> "I'd never 'a' knowed it, Colonel, but we'll make it two hundred and ten pounds and high spirits in about a week. We've got plenty of black flies to bleed you, and you've got me to tramp with; that makes two reducers; and you'll drink a little tamarack tea every night and mornin'; that'll cure your dyspepsia and give you an appetite."
>
> "That is good, John. It is what I came here for, but I have an idea that you can condense the medical treatment into one sweet moment of medicinal bliss if you will scrape a little of the tender bark of the mountain ash and make an extract with two ounces of whiskey. Two ounces of spring water and a lump of sugar mixed with this in a tin cup and handed to me will blind me to your few faults, and,—
>
> "I'll take no care, though the weather prove fair,
> And reck not e'en though it rain,
> We'll banish all sorrow, and wait for the morrow,
> And angle, and angle again.'"

There was the recipe, almost complete! A major problem remained—what kind of whiskey? It required an active research program to resolve this final question, an endeavor enthusiastically shared by several fishing cronies. The spelling, whisky or whiskey, might have given a clue, but inconsistency nullified that. No matter. We tried scotches, bourbons, and blended ryes. None came through as idyllic although we managed to spoil several quarts accumulating this negative knowledge.

Then one of the research team came up with the final detail on the moving ingredient—from an old-timer and former forest angler encountered on the Moose River plains. He had been chore boy in a tavern, in the southern foothills of the Adirondacks, so my associate recognized the opportunity and put the question: "What did a man drink in those days?" Came the answer: "Why, sir, gentlemen drank rye."

Somehow, we had missed the boat by using blended varieties, currently more readily available, rather than straight rye. We found a couple of brands. There was no question that the flavor of this, melded with aromatics extracted from mountain ash bark, made the drink. When one of our group traveling through Maryland found "Pikesville," we wrote the final chapter.

Over the years, preparation for this libation became a ritual celebrated on many a May Adirondack trouting expedition. Someone would be delegated to fetch a few twigs of the past year's growth of mountain ash. In strange territory this can take a bit of doing, especially when there is enough of a winter deer population to browse all lower twiggery within range of an animal standing on its hind legs. Near our base camp, the only mountain ash with accessible twigs grows atop a glacial erratic, a massive boulder of sufficient elevation to put lower branches out of the grasp of hungry whitetails. Most of our sources are spotted in advance along trails or shorelines, and twigs are harvested as needed. The European variety of mountain ash commonly used as an ornamental is worthless for drinks, probably just as well because otherwise the puny specimen growing in our yard in Ithaca would soon suffer from overpruning.

Our senior fishing buddy, whose daughter provided the sketch on p. 20, always prepared the concentrated elixir several hours ahead of anticipated need. In early spring, as the ash buds are swelling, the aroma of the green cambium layer of the bark is most pungent. The cambium is easily separated, then bruised, and immersed in several ounces of rye. A mortar and pestle is ideal for this chore, but the butt of a knife handle and small bowl suffices. Add sugar, about ½ teaspoon per drink, and let the mixture steep for at least a half hour. The fragrance of the bark is distinctly almond and a hint of that can be detected in straight rye. Perhaps the mountain-ash extract merely enhances and fortifies this. We use a bit more water than the equal parts suggested in the Boardman account and substitute a couple of ice cubes to cook the libation to "spring" water temperature. Flavor is deadened if the drink is made heavily iced, but added dilution does provide a bit more margin of safety. These are stout drinks, and with sugar speeding up stomach absorption, consumption of two produces a fair buzz. Even a toddling grandchild got into trouble with an inadvertent sip, as indicated in the following experience.

I had just mixed a round at a small family gathering. A portion of pure elixir had slopped on the counter and I mopped it with what was seemingly the bar cloth. It turned out to be a grandchild's "ditty" rag. Now as any good parent knows, a child and its ditty are not long parted, and it wasn't long before someone commented on how strangely the kid was behaving. No doubt about it, with a juicy section of ditty and thumb tucked in mouth, garrulous and rubber kneed, slobbering and slurping, the little rascal exhibited classic symptoms of being in the bag. I attempted to relieve the anxiety of the mother with what seemed a perfectly innocent explanation. But I sensed from the icy look that I was condemned of a nasty prank without benefit of due process, so let the matter drop with a silent chuckle.

Long after the researching phase to reconstruct the drink was completed, I found out that the mountain ash plant is a botanical with medicinal qualities and that, among other things, "The bark is used as a tea . . . to cleanse the blood in the spring" (*A Guide to the Medicinal Plants of the United States,* Krochmal and Krochmal, 1973). This doubtless explains why imbibing an Adirondack or mountain ash cocktail makes one feel so good.

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A Talented, Close-Knit Family

THE LEONARD ROD LEGACY is well known and has certainly been described in the pages of *The American Fly Fisher* many times. However, to recap: Hiram L. Leonard and his nephew Hiram Hawes set out for Bangor, Maine, in 1869 to start a gunsmith shop. With orders for firearms low, they soon saw opportunities in the new field of split-bamboo fly rods. They learned this craft and excelled in it, receiving several rod and reel patents (along with various national and international awards), and soon became known as among the finest and most innovative of rodmakers. Their growing shop served as school for some of the world's best rod craftsmen: George Varney, Eustis Edwards, Fred Thomas, and Edward Payne, among others.

After entering into an exclusive distribution agreement with William Mills & Sons of New York, Leonard began to lose control of the company. In 1886, the rods bore the imprint of "Leonard & Mills" and by the time of his death in 1907, Hiram Leonard was serving only as titular head of the company he founded. The cofounder, Hiram Hawes, moved to Canterbury, Connecticut, three years later and started the H. W. Hawes Rod Company with Leonard's widow Elisabeth.

Such rodmaking success makes for interesting and well-known bits of fly-fishing lore. Part of this success rests with the Leonard family: Hiram Leonard and his wife, their daughter Cora, her husband Hiram Hawes, and his brother Loman Hawes, all of whom were endowed with passions and talents beyond the realm of tackle manufacture. Hiram Leonard was a practiced flutist, for instance. According to legend, he would take his flute streamside and fill the silence of the deep Maine woods with its beautiful sounds between hatches. Later in life, when his duties at Leonard & Mills were mainly honorary, he designed a flute and sent the specifications to various musical instrument companies.

Elisabeth Leonard painted, wrote poetry, and later served as Hiram Hawes's business partner. The Museum possesses two of her oil paintings, as well as one of her books of verse, *Pansies: Poems of Thought and Feeling*. In a poem reminiscing about the adventures had in an old birchbark canoe, she wrote:

'Tis there we cast the gaudy fly
And heard the line's soft swish
The click of the reel on the bending rod
And the rush of the captured fish.
The paddle flashed 'mid the diamond spray,
As homeward we swiftly flew,
Proud of the silvery scales that shone
Through the net, in our birch canoe.

She was less than cheerful in describing the activities of commercial fishermen:

With quiet, measured tread
love's labor o'er
Ye seek no more
The lake's given up its dead.

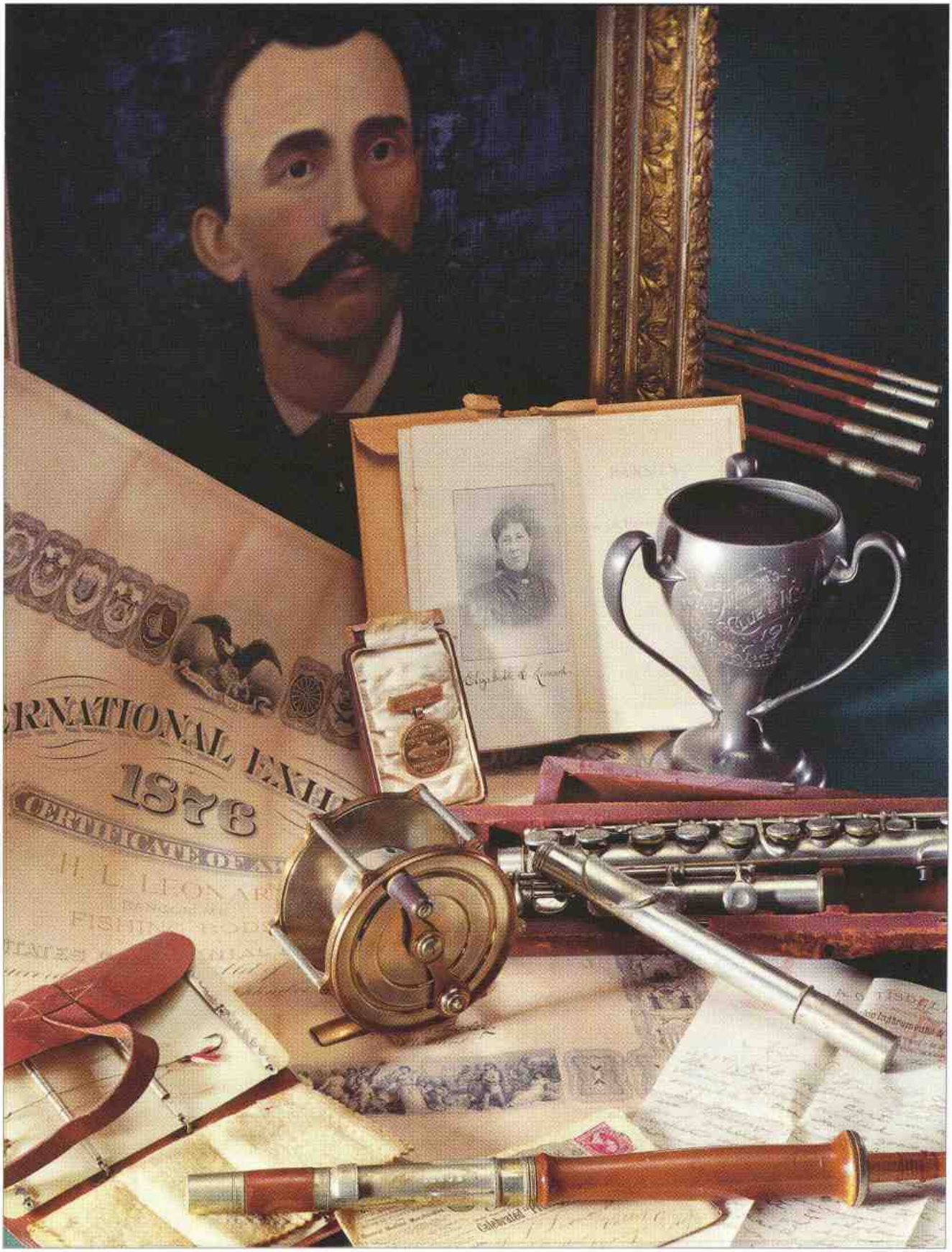
Loman Hawes left the Leonard factory in 1889 to help start his own company, Thomas, Edwards & Hawes. His 1890 ferrule patent was one of the primary features that set the company's Kosmic rods apart from the pack. Loman left the partnership inside of a year, however, and nothing is known of his life after that point.

Cora Leonard Hawes, daughter of Hiram and Elisabeth Leonard, was a championship fly caster. In 1898 she set the first national record for casting by a woman: seventy-three feet. Her husband Hiram Hawes was also a championship caster as well as championship rodmaker.

The Leonard and Hawes families were diverse in their passions, but all shared a common adoration for fly fishing, and that was the area in which they excelled.

Pictured in this issue's gallery are some of the Museum's artifacts attesting to these interests. Included are Elisabeth Leonard's portrait of Hiram Hawes, the frontispiece to Mrs. Leonard's book of poems, an award cup won by Hiram Hawes in the 1911 Anglers' Club of New York competition, a certificate awarded H. L. Leonard at the 1876 Philadelphia centennial exhibition, a medal awarded Leonard, Hiram Leonard's flute, an 1877 Leonard patent reel, and an H. W. Hawes Rod Company rod with a unique grip. The Leonard pack rod and reel in the background is supported by a rod-drying rack from the Hawes shop in Canterbury, Connecticut.

JON MATHEWSON
CURATOR



Photograph by Cook Neilson

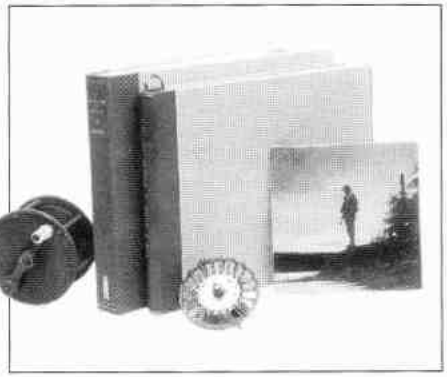
Museum Gift Shop

Vest Patch. Museum logo, hunter green with silver/gray. $5

Pin. Museum logo, hunter green with silver. $5

T-shirts. Museum logo, specify hunter green with white or heather gray with hunter green $12

Ceramic Mug $6



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

by Jim Brown, photographs by Bob O'Shaughnessy. Deluxe edition is handbound and boxed, with a signed and numbered print by John Swan. $450 each.

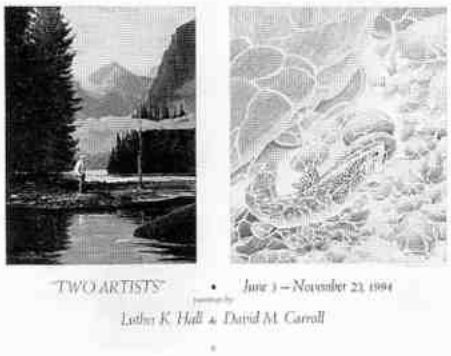
Up/Downer Hat. Durham Ranger fly. Specify bright blue or tan supplex $18

Baseball-style Hat. Durham Ranger fly. Corduroy available in burgundy or teal. Supplex available in bright blue, teal, or tan $14

25th Anniversary Poster.
by Terry Heffernan (20" x 30")
$19.95

Please add $5 for postage and handling for this item.

"A Painter's Angle"
C.D. Clarke
(26" x 20")



"Two Artists"
Luther K. Hall & David M. Carroll
(26" x 20")

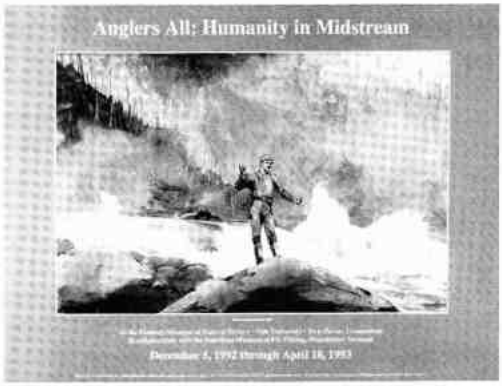
Please make checks payable to AMFF and send to P.O. Box 42, Manchester, VT 05254. Telephone orders: 802-362-3300. Mastercard, VISA, and American Express accepted. $3 postage and handling for first item, $1 for each additional item.

"Lost Pool"
by John Swan (15⅞" x 26¾")
edition of 400
$95 each

Limited Edition Prints

Printed on acid-free paper, ample borders. Each signed and numbered. Postage and handling included.

"Battenkill Afternoon"
by Peter Corbin (30" x 22")
25th Anniversary Edition of 200
$175 each



"Anglers All: Humanity in Midstream"
Casting by Winslow Homer
(18" x 24")

"The World of Salmon"
Wind Clouds by Ogden Pleissner,
(26" x 22")

"Berwanger's Pasture"
by Thomas Aquinas Daly (9¼" x 14")
$25 each

Exhibition Posters

Printed on high-quality glossy stock with ample borders. Each poster is $15.

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

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

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

Please make checks payable to AMFF and send to P.O. Box 42, Manchester, VT 05254. Telephone orders: 802-362-3300. Mastercard, VISA, and American Express accepted. $3 postage and handling for first item, $1 for each additional item.

The American Museum of Fly Fishing

Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254
Tel: 802-362-3300. Fax: 802-362-3308

JOIN!

Membership Dues (per annum*)

Associate*	$35
Sustaining*	$60
Benefactor	$125
Patron*	$250
Sponsor*	$500
Corporate*	$1,000

Membership dues include four issues of *The American Fly Fisher* ($25). 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 nationally accredited, nonprofit, educational institution chartered under the laws of the state of Vermont.

SUPPORT!

As an independent, nonprofit institution, the American Museum of Fly Fishing relies on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. We ask that you give our museum 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!

Available at $4 per copy:

Volume 6, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 7, Numbers 2, 3
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, Number 1
Volume 15, Numbers 1, 2
Volume 16, Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 17, Numbers 1, 2, 3
Volume 18, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 19, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 20, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 21, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4
Volume 22, Number 1

Museum News

Annual Festival Weekend

The dates for this year's Festival Weekend have been set for June 7 to 9. We'll kick off the festival with a reception at the Museum on Friday evening from 5:30 to 7:30. "Art of a Cape Cod Angler: The Paintings of Anton Stetzko" will be a featured exhibit. Saturday evening we will host our annual dinner/auction at the Equinox Hotel. Sunday is Family Day at the Museum—we will present a wide range of demonstrations and activities both at the Museum and nearby Equinox Pond. Don't miss this exciting event!

Kimberly C. Bushnell

Mathewson Named Curator

We are pleased to announce that Jon C. Mathewson, who has served as registrar of the Museum since 1992, was appointed curator in February. During his tenure, he has made significant improvements in the organization of the collection, in part through implementing a computerized collection management system. He has helped in the research for many outside projects. One can often find him credited in fly-fishing books requiring such research (including Lyla Foggia's book *Reel Women*, excerpted in this issue). Jon is the driving force behind the reinstallation of historic artifacts that has been under way at the Museum this winter. Among his exhibits will be tackle and memorabilia belonging to American presidents and celebrity fly fishers, along with displays of the evolution of tackle over the centuries and fly fisher's *sanctum sanctora*.

Jon received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in history from Union College and the University of Vermont, respectively. At UVM, he served as a research assistant in the Canadian Studies Program. He has taught history at the high school and college levels. Off duty, he enjoys hiking, camping, and writing poetry and fiction. In 1995, he published *Mammoth Cave and Other Poems* (Naked Santa Press).

Mission Statement

The following revised mission statement for the American Museum of Fly Fishing was adopted by the Board of Trustees on March 13, 1996:

Our mission is to ensure that the history, tradition, literature, art, and artifacts of fly fishing are preserved and interpreted, and that the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the sport of fly fishing are nurtured and expanded.

To this end, we shall:

~ Collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret the tackle, tactics, and gear of fly fishing;
~ Collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret the literature and art relating to fly fishing;
~ Maintain and operate a museum and library, the collections of which shall be made available to the public, and encourage scholarly research in the sport of fly fishing;
~ Sponsor educational program within and without the Museum to reach out to both the fly-fishing and non–fly-fishing public;
~ Encourage and support the conservation of national and international fisheries;
~ Publish a magazine and other literature of admirable literary and educational merit; and
~ Solicit membership and other support of the Museum worldwide.

Envisioning the Future

The hardiness of fly fishers was demonstrated on a recent Saturday morning in Manhattan. On February 3, eight inches of snow had already fallen, yet most of the fourteen trustees were ready for a day-long retreat by the 9 A.M. start-up time at the Anglers' Club. The session had been called by President Richard Tisch to see if a vision for the Museum might be extracted from the perceptions and hopes of those present. Conducting was Richard Rardin, a professional facilitator. Craig Gilborn, executive director, also attended.

The *modus operandi* was for small teams to meet and report back to the large group and for findings to be discussed and written on tear-sheets. First, the Museum's past was examined. Memories were short, as expected, so inferences were drawn. The Museum's early years were seen as formative and key to its twenty-eight-year history. For example, the Museum did not have a director for its first nine years. This and other facts were added to a time line at the front of the room.

Later that morning, the group looked at the Museum's present. The portrait that emerged was mixed: the strengths include the preservation of a superlative collection of rods, reels, flies, and other artifacts, and the excellence of the Museum's journal. Opportunities include the Museum's continuing financial challenge and unclear values or objectives. This latter point led to a consensus by day's end that the Museum revisit its mission statement.

The biggest nut to crack followed lunch, when the group addressed the question, "What would greatness look like five years from now?" The Museum that emerged is modern and adequate to preserve and display its holdings and to serve both fly fishers or specialists and general visitors, including kids in and out of the company of their parents. It is endowed and holds occasional capital drives. It derives operating income from gift shop sales, admissions, advertising ("discreet") in its journal, and benefit events like the current dinner/auctions.

It was nearly 4 P.M. when the group expressed satisfaction that they had reached a measure of consensus about past, present, and future. The director was asked to prepare a two- to three-year plan for review by the Executive Committee and the full Board of Trustees in June, implementation to begin "in time for the Light Cahill hatch."

Spring Dinner/Auctions

MARCH 14
New York Dinner/Auction
The Anglers' Club

APRIL 8
Key Largo Dinner/Auction
Ocean Reef Club

MAY 2
Cleveland Dinner/Auction
The Country Club, Chagrin Falls

JUNE 8
Manchester Dinner/Auction
The Equinox Hotel and Resort
Manchester, Vermont

Craig Gilborn

A team of volunteers painted the Museum's walls during this winter's renovation (see "Two Roads," inside back cover). From left: Ted Ferree, Joe McCusker, Curator Jon Mathewson, and Bill Bridges.

Volunteers

Like most American museums, the AMFF relies on volunteers. Indeed, volunteer hours are required on applications for government assistance, participation being a measure of community support. That volunteerism may sometimes be a career choice is shown by the *New York Times* editor who identified the author of a letter on the editorial pages as a science "volunteer" at the American Museum of Natural History.

Fourteen volunteers came to an informal wine-and-cheese reception held at the Museum the evening of February 9. The director thanked them for their support and noted how essential they are to the Museum. If it were not for volunteers, for example, the Museum could not be open to the public on weekends.

Dick Finlay, who has been associated longer and more intimately with the Museum than anyone else, took the initiative in bringing the group together. In addition to Dick and several staff members, the following were present or signaled their support: Angus Black, Bill Bridges, George Butts, R. B. Dundon, Ted Ferree, Alice Gilborn, Ronald Lewis, Richard S. Lyons, Joan Mathews, Joseph Mathews, Joe McCusker, Wallace Murray III, Don Phillips, Steve Roberts, Janine Small, Kenneth V. Smith, Jamie Woods, and Paula Wyman.

Recent Donations

Joan and Joseph Mathews have donated a cash register for our gift shop.

O. Mustad & Son (USA) Inc. have given us a beautifully framed set of innovative flies crocheted by Torrill Kolbu of Norway.

Dick Finlay, ever a fount of fascinating fly-fishing ephemera, has given us a Hardy magnifying glass, some John Betts manuscripts, and a copy of Bob Zwirz's *The Complete Book of Fresh Water Fishing.*

Don Philips of Florida sent us the

annual update to his fly-fishing magazine data base, which is an essential tool used daily at the Museum.

Chat Lee of Philadelphia enriched our library with a history of the Pohoqualine Fish Association, *Many Happy Days,* which he coauthored with F. Markoe Rivinus and James M. Hartzler.

Trout Unlimited, through Dick Finlay, gave us the George Gordon collection of books and tackle formerly belonging to one of the original instigators of TU in Vermont.

Professor Richard Hoffmann once again sent us one of his engaging articles. This one was "The Craft of Fishing Alpine Lakes, c. A.D. 1500," from *OFFA–Archeo/Ichthyological Studies: Papers presented at the Sixth Meeting of the C.A.Z. Fish Remains Working Group.*

1996 EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

March 29 – May 7	Thomas Bewick (1753–1828), wood engravings
May 10 – July 9	Anton Stetzko, watercolors
July 12 – August 27	James Prosek, watercolors
August 30 – October 15	George Thomas, pastels and watercolors

Exhibit openings will be held the first night of the show.
For more information on the Bewick and Stetzko exhibits, see page 19.

Call for Books

In the last issue, we listed ten books published before 1700 needed by the Museum's library. This time, we bring you up to 1758 with ten more titles:

The Angler's Eight Dialogues, In Verse. London, 1758.

Browne, Moses. *Piscatory Eclogues* (later published as *Angling Sports, in Nine Piscatory Eclogues*). London, 1729.

C. G. *The Secrets of Angling.* London, 1705.

Keill, James. *A Practical Treatise Upon Angling With Small and Great Rode, Shewing The Different Flies and Baits Through The Various Seasons of the Year.* 1729.

North, Roger. *A Discourse of Fish and Fish Ponds.* London, 1713.

N. Owen. *The Angler's Magazine, Or Necessary and Delight Store-house.* London, 1754.

Steele, Richard. *An Account of the Fish Pool, Consisting Of A Vessel So Called, Lately Invented and Built For The Importation of Fish Alive and In Good Health From Parts However Distant.* London: Black Fryars, 1718.

Whitney, John. *The Genteel Recreation: or the Pleasure of Angling, A Poem.* London, 1700.

The Whole Art of Fishing (later published as *The Gentleman Fisher: or The Whole Art of Angling*). London, 1714.

Williamson, John. *The British Angler: Or a Pocket Companion For Gentlemen Fishers.* London, c. 1740.

Thanks to Sponsors

The trustees and staff of the American Museum of Fly Fishing wish to thank the sponsors of our 1995 dinner/auctions: E. M. Bakwin, Peter and Sally Bergsten, Robert Blain, A. Tucker Cluett, Connecticut Outfitters, Inc., Paul Dahlie, Mrs. Gaylord Donnelley, Finn and Stone, Inc., Fly Casters of Boston, Art Kaemmer, Bob McLellan, Mark and Barbara Mishkin, E. Richard Nightingale, Tony and Claire Paskevich, Ralph F. Peters, Susan and Ivan Popkin, Jim and Carol Ann Spendiff, Arthur Stern, Frank Tardo, Felix and Peggy Trommer, and Pip Winslow.

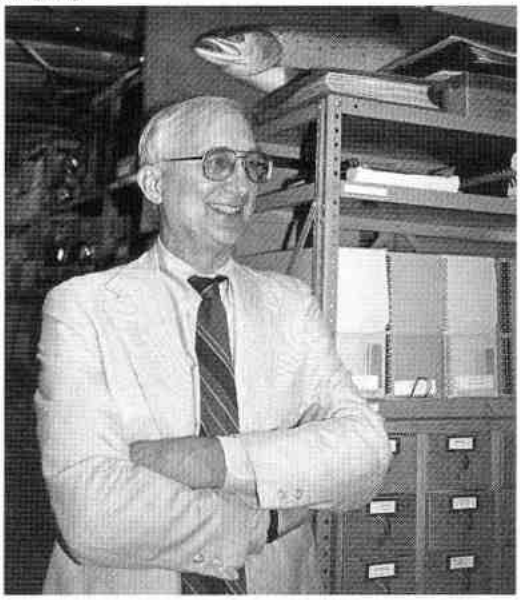
CONTRIBUTOR

Lyla Foggia has been a writer and national publicist for nearly twenty years. She was the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts writing fellowship in 1977. During a decade of executive work in the motion picture industry in Los Angeles, she became the west coast vice president of publicity for Tri-Star Pictures. After returning to her native Northwest in 1987, she served as the national publicity consultant for "Live with Regis & Kathie Lee."

She now lives with her husband, Kelly Neal, on the Salmon River at the base of Mount Hood and fly fishes for steelhead. *Reel Women* was inspired by her intense dedication to angling and her long commitment to raising awareness of women's unique capabilities and contributions.

Mark Bachmann

Margot Page



Two Roads

OVER THE WINTER, the Museum has been housecleaning and undertaking renovations. We're aiming for a March 29 completion date to coincide with the opening of the Thomas Bewick exhibition. This opening will mark the start of the 1996 exhibit season (see page 19). A summary and a context are in order, both for those readers who can visit the Museum and for those who can't.

The most obvious changes will be in the galleries and gift shop. An all-new exhibit would have meant script, design, preparation, and installation—efforts both expensive and time consuming. Even if we had all the necessary resources, a makeover at this point would not have addressed attendant problems of a facility less suitable as a museum today than it was eight years ago.

For example, the Museum is nearly out of storage space upstairs for its collections. The storage situation points to the folly of long-term investment downstairs. The same is true of the gift shop, which must be improved but not made over.

Once our policy of allowing visitors to make voluntary contributions was replaced by a $3 admission fee, exhibit work was necessary. What did we do? We rehung exhibit cases and removed others, opened up the room by cutting down a partition and cantilevering an oak counter on the top, and improved the lighting. We painted the walls—a task in which a team of volunteers, led by Trustee Ted Ferree, came to the rescue of Jon Mathewson, the registrar-just-appointed-curator. Jon, who was a painter for a brief period during his college years, had completed two areas, but turned his rollers to Ted's team in order to concentrate on the artifacts and their corresponding wall labels.

Besides changes to exhibits, we looked at improving the gift shop. Here, again, the task was daunting, as potluck museum shops are increasingly things of the past. Luck struck once more in the form of two volunteers, Joan and Joe Matthews, who recently moved here from Florida. Joan helped manage the shop of a science museum in south Florida. Work on the store, with Joan's help, is under way.

These changes are part of the behind-the-scenes operation of any museum and would not deserve notice here except for the larger context in which they should be regarded. I offer them now to introduce our friends to the proposition that the Museum has *two* roads in its future, not just one, and for a time it will of necessity have to follow both roads simultaneously.

The Museum must make mundane changes like those mentioned above to maintain its professional status. It needs income from exhibit admissions and gift shop sales to help pay for a greater portion of the operating expenses. Call this the Low or Lesser Road in a strategic plan, but think of it as an investment, albeit short-term.

The High Road looks to long-term solutions to the Museum's challenges. We must begin thinking about a new building and the people needed to staff it. The Low Road is an interim route. That is the dilemma. Short-term measures don't address the issue of the adequacy of the Museum as it now exists to do what it says it's doing: vouchsafing fly fishing in its many guises. We have little storage for acquiring tackle and books and no space for paintings and prints.

We could stop accepting gifts, but this would turn the Museum into a warehouse and deprive it of authority. Besides, too many kinds of angling-related artifacts still need to be collected. People who may care little about fly fishing will pay to enter a museum if they expect to find art or a human story about the outdoors and how men, women, and children have enjoyed it and celebrated their pleasure. The Museum has little art and relatively few of the oddments—memorabilia—that can breathe life into an exhibit.

Following two roads will take vision, but also an extraordinary summoning of energy and cooperation. Watch this space and let us know your views.

CRAIG GILBORN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING, a nationally accredited, 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 collections.

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, and catalogs 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.

Accredited by the American Association of Museums