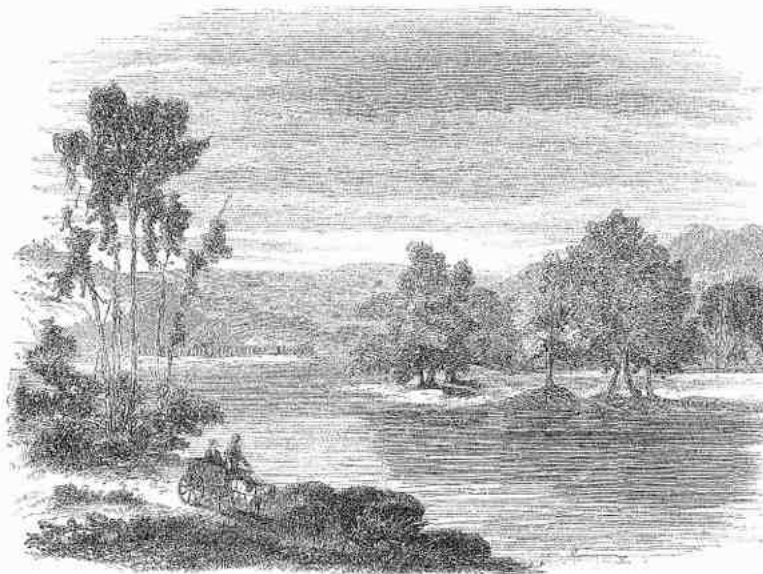


# The American Fly Fisher

*Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing*

SUMMER 1996

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 3



THE JUNIATA AT HUNTINGDON.

## Role Cast

**E**ARLY IN MAY, I treated myself to a weekend of fly-fishing school. I began fly fishing seven or eight years ago, but sporadically—my time on the water tended to happen during those few vacations away from the city. With the move to Vermont and a looming editorship of a quarterly fly-fishing journal, I decided the time was right for some formal instruction.

That Margot Page was one of several instructors leading the school could not have felt more appropriate. Since I joined the staff of *The American Fly Fisher* last September as managing editor, Margot has generously shared both editorial and piscatorial expertise with me. On the water, she gave me some great casting tips. Rarely does an editor pass the torch so gracefully, putting the pieces in place herself for a smooth transition. We at the Museum are sad that we'll be seeing less of Margot, but I'm happy to report that she has agreed to be available when needed as our consulting editor.

As editor, I felt it was high time I met this journal's excellent copy editor in person. In a small-world twist, Sarah May Clarkson moved to Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, in July 1995 when her husband took the job as dean of students at my undergraduate alma mater, Juniata College. We just missed meeting each other here last summer and have been working together via phone, fax, FedEx, and the U.S. mail. I was able to make

a brief stop in Huntingdon on a recent business trip to meet our dear "Salmo" face to face in the town that introduced me to my first fly-fishing friends (a town not far from Spruce Creek and the Little Juniata).

The Summer 1996 issue of *The American Fly Fisher* highlights salmon fishing on the historic Penobscot River in Maine. Author John Mundt discusses the first salmon to be taken with a fly on that river and the several men who have laid claim to that honor. He offers a history of the Penobscot Salmon Club and tells the story of the Presidential Salmon, a 43-year tradition of sending one of the season's first salmon to the White House.

From our library we offer you a collection of opinions published between 1814 and 1926 about fishing and the weather. In the spirit of angling, it contains its share of conflicting advice. In Notes & Comment, R. Patrick Simes argues that in the 1770s, William Bartram penned one of the first written accounts describing fly fishing in the New World. Finally, be sure to check out the photo essay from the Museum's annual Festival Weekend held June 7 to 9.

I'm excited to be taking on the editorship of this journal. Feel free to contact me with letters, suggestions, and submissions.

KATHLEEN ACHOR  
EDITOR



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OF FLY FISHING

*Preserving the Heritage  
of Fly Fishing*

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ON THE COVER: *Opening day of the 1946 salmon season at the Penobscot Salmon Club in Brewer, Maine. Courtesy Penobscot Salmon Club.*

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# The Historic Penobscot: America's Atlantic Salmon Fishing Legacy

by John Mundt

WHEN STUDENTS of angling history turn their thoughts to Atlantic salmon fishing, they can lose themselves in the numerous volumes that recount the tales of those who have angled for *Salmo salar* in the waters of Canada, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom. There is the occasional reference to isolated exploits in New England waters, but a surprising absence of information about the rich angling history and traditions that were established on the banks of Maine's Penobscot River.

A fair quantity of material regarding salmon fishing on the Penobscot can be found in the early issues of the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, later known as the *Bangor Daily Commercial* and now the *Bangor Daily News*. In 1953, Bangor Public Library Reference Librarian Olive M. Smythe compiled much of the information contained in those newspaper articles for a story she had published in the *Bangor Daily News* on April 1 of that year. Her efforts, when coupled with those of later *Bangor Daily News* writers, such as the late Bud Leavitt and current columnist and artist Tom Hennessey, provided the foundation for further research to piece together a brief history of the golden age of salmon fishing on the Penobscot.

## EARLY HISTORY

The Penobscot Valley was originally inhabited by members of the Abenaki or "Dawnlanders" tribe, with western exploration commencing shortly after the voyage of Columbus. In 1604, at the age of thirty-seven, the famous explorer Samuel de Champlain navigated the Penobscot's waters in a region he referred to as Norumbega.<sup>1</sup> During the period from September 6 to 20, Champlain made several entries about his experiences in the area. After making contact with two Indians who were traveling by canoe, he tells us that "having made friends with them; they guided us into their river Peimtegouet (Pentegoet) as they call it, where they told us lived their chief named Bessabez, headman of the river."<sup>2</sup> On September 16, he met with Bessabez on a tongue of land that

was formed where the Penobscot and Kenduskeag rivers meet, which is now part of current-day Bangor. During this meeting, Champlain smoked with the Indians and received gifts of venison and waterfowl from "these people of Norumbega." He in turn gave gifts of rosaries, hatchets, knives, caps, and other knickknacks. Champlain wrote, "I landed to see the country; and going hunting, found the part I visited most pleasant and agreeable."<sup>3</sup> With respect to the fishery, he stated, "The fishing for diverse sorts of fish is very good, as is also the hunting for waterfowl."<sup>4</sup>

In 1614, Captain John Smith (of Pocahontas fame) noted that he went to the region "to take whales and make trials of a mine of gold and copper" and "if these failed, fish and furs were then our refuge." He goes on to say, "let not the word *fish* distaste you, for it can afford as good a gold as mines of Guiana with less hazard and more certainty and felicity." He then asked, "Is it not a pretty sport to pull up two pence, six pence and twelve pence as fast as you can hand and throw a line?"<sup>5</sup> Smith would eventually turn a profit of £1,400 sterling on his voyage, with the proceeds from fish and pelts.

Increased exploration and the subsequent desire to exploit Maine's vast timber resources during the next century eventually led to armed conflict between France and England for control of these lands. In 1759, England won possession after the fall of Quebec in the French and Indian Wars. Ten years later, the site of present-day Bangor was settled by Jacob Buswell. This settlement was recounted during the centennial celebration of that date by Bangor historian and judge, the Honorable John E. Godfrey:

The settlement upon the river was very gradual and did not reach Bangor until 1769. . . . The first of these was Jacob Buswell, or Bussell as his descendants prefer to pronounce the name. He was probably originally from Salisbury, Massachusetts, and had been a soldier in an expedition to Canada, in which his health had suffered. He was poor. He had a wife and nine children. He was a hunter, fisher, boatbuilder and cooper.

This region abounded in game and fish, and was inviting to pioneers such as he. A title to the soil did not probably disturb



Local fishermen on opening day, 1937, at the Bangor Salmon Pool.

his contemplations. . . . He took up a spot of ground upon the top of the hill overlooking the river just below the rocks of Champlain and erected a log cabin thereon; and this was the first dwelling, and his was the first English family known to have been established within the limits of Bangor. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Soon after Buswell's arrival, the American Revolution erupted. In his book *Penobscot*, Gorham Munson explains, "Bangor was to play no glorious role in the Revolution. Some of the fleeing crews of the Penobscot expedition in 1779 landed there but pushed on because the people could make no provision for them. Bangor's destitution at this period was so great that many were compelled to subsist solely upon fish, sometimes boiled with sorrell to improve the flavor."<sup>7</sup>

With victory in the Revolutionary War attained and the subsequent treaty between Britain and the colonies codified in 1783, Maine became part of the Province of Massachusetts Bay. Except for a brief occupation by the British during the war of 1812, Bangor would remain a United States holding, and Maine eventually became an independent state in 1820.

As a last brief point of early historical interest, it should be noted that in 1804 the esteemed statesman and accomplished angler Daniel Webster began practicing law in Bangor. Later, after moving to New Hampshire, he would return to deliver his so-called Bangor Speech during a visit in 1835. "Whatsoever promotes communication, whatsoever extends general business, whatsoever encourages enterprise, or whatsoever advances the general wealth and prosperity of other states," said Webster, "must have a plain, direct, and powerful bearing on your own prosperity."<sup>8</sup>

#### THE FIRST SALMON TO BE TAKEN WITH A FLY ON THE PENOBSCOT

After reviewing earlier research conducted by Charles Goodspeed in his volume *Angling in America*, it appears that we will probably never uncover conclusive evidence as to the identity of the first angler to hook a salmon with a fly in Penobscot waters. Knowing this fact is not of paramount importance, but there are several pieces of related correspondence that give rise to an interesting debate.

The earliest mention of Atlantic salmon taking a fly in Penobscot waters was found in a letter dated 20 April 1831 that was submitted to the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* by one J.R.P. of Augusta, Maine:

I notice in the June No. vol. first, of your magazine, that your correspondent "Walton" wishes to know if the salmon is ever taken with the fly in this country, as in Great Britain. They have been taken in the Penobscot, about 18 miles from the sea, and I presume may be taken in any of the rivers in Maine. I have provided myself with the requisite tackle, and intend fishing for them in the Kennebec in the manner above mentioned. They are abundant in all our rivers in June and July. I shall be pleased, at some future date, to send you a communication of fly fishing for salmon, and hope to settle the question, as to its practicality in this country, as questioned by your correspondent, "Walton." I see no reason why the salmon should not take the fly in the United States as well as Great Britain.<sup>9</sup>

When referencing a Maine map, 18 miles from the sea finds the Penobscot in the vicinity of Bangor and Brewer,

which is exactly where later angling traditions would develop. A more specific claim would later appear in print in the 12 August 1880 issue of *Forest and Stream*, in which none other than H.L. Leonard himself participated in the "first" taking of an Atlantic salmon in the Penobscot:

It has been said that while salmon in most waters take the fly in some seasons, those in Maine have persistently refused it. It would be very gratifying to know why they declined it, and still more so to learn their reasons for reconsidering the question and resolving to accept it. In proof that they now take the manufactured insect, we publish the following dispatch which was received at Portland from Bangor one day last week: "J.F. Leavitt and H.L. Leonard 'the rod man,' have just returned from a trip and have brought with them the first salmon taken with a fly in Penobscot waters. This they took in Wassatiquoik stream, which empties into the east branch of the Penobscot half a mile above the Hunt farm. They report that plenty more can be had in the same way."

Five years after the *Forest and Stream* dispatch, a lumber baron named Fred W. Ayer was credited with being the "first" in the following passage from the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* of Monday, 15 June 1885: "Mr. F.W. Ayer, landed a large salmon with a fly some distance up the river Saturday. This was said to be the first salmon ever taken with a fly on the river."

Local lore holds that Ayer hooked his fish on a Cosseboom pattern, but this would be impossible considering that Clarence Cosseboom was believed to have been born in 1885 and to have subsequently invented the famous pattern that bears his name while on a trip to the Margaree River in the 1920s.<sup>10</sup>

I suspect the reasons that the F.W. Ayer claim was not disputed by H.L. Leonard and Frank Leavitt could be because Leonard had already left Bangor and relocated his rodmaking operation to Central Valley, New York, in 1881. In addition, the Leonard fish was caught in a Penobscot tributary while the Ayer fish was taken on the main branch of the river.

These various accounts reveal that the attempt, if not the actual taking of a salmon with a fly on the Penobscot, had begun as early as 1831, and that for the next fifty years the action of taking a salmon with a fly on the Penobscot would be considered a most newsworthy event. Even though it appears that Mr. Ayer may not have hooked the first Penobscot salmon with a fly, he certainly established the widespread belief that Atlantic salmon *could* be taken with a fly on that river.

### THE PENOBSCOT SALMON CLUB

With the widely publicized success of F.W. Ayer in 1885, it was only a short time later that Bangor became a popular Atlantic salmon sport-fishing destination. Shortly thereafter, the United States would establish its first salmon club on the Brewer shore of the newly christened "Bangor Salmon Pool." The *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* published several descriptions of the fishery and Penobscot Salmon Club in their May 18 and 23, 1887, issues, and through these articles we can form a vivid picture of the scene at the time.

The day looked forward to with such eager anticipation by the lovers of that noble sport, salmon fishing, not only here but all over the country, has arrived, and yesterday witnessed the first catches of the season at the salmon pool below the dam. The water has been so high and roly that though several of our noted fisherman have cast the fly, in the hopes of alluring the tempting



Unidentified anglers outside of the Penobscot Salmon Club-house, c. late 1920s/early 1930s.

prize, all have been unsuccessful until yesterday had drawn nearly to a close, when the reward that sooner or later attends patience and persistence came to two of our successful wielders of the rod and fly.

It was about five o'clock when Mr. William A. Munro "struck" a fish and he played him for nearly an hour before he made a successful landing of a magnificent salmon weighing nineteen pounds. Some time after Mr. Munro struck his fish Mr. Fred W. Ayer, who has caught the first salmon each year since salmon fishing was inaugurated here by him, was also successful in making a strike and after playing him a short time successfully landed one of the finest specimens which would weigh, according to best estimates, twenty-five pounds. Unfortunately, he did not have a chance to get it on the scales, as after he had got it safely landed it slipped from the shelving ledge into deep water and was lost. He had caught his fish just the same.

Rival claims are made as to who caught the first fish, as they were landed at some distance apart and out of sight of each other, so that, as neither took the time when his fish was landed it is impossible to decide, but probably they were very nearly landed at the same time. Mr. Munro's fish was on exhibition last evening at Lynch and Gallagher's market, where it attracted much attention.

Salmon fishermen abroad, who have been waiting for the opening of the season, have been pouring in letters and telegrams asking for the earliest information regarding salmon being struck, and last evening a large number of telegrams were sent off by Mr. Ayer and Officer Allen to their correspondents, informing them of the happy event, and we shall, in a day or two, see a large influx of visitors, equipped with the most approved tackle, wending their way to Bangor's noted salmon grounds.

Among others who will be on the ground early is Archibald Mitchell, Esq., of Norwich, Conn., who made so many fine catches last year, and Bath and Portland, Maine, Worcester, Lawrence and Boston, Mass., are among the places where sportsmen are only awaiting the arrival of news to start off at once.

The water is falling at the dam at the rate of eight inches a day, and now that the fish have begun to take the fly some lively sport may be anticipated.

The club house is in a forward state of completion, but it will probably be nearly a week before the last finishing touches are put on. It will be finely fitted up for the accommodation of the members of the club, and will contain closet room for one hundred and fifteen. The building will be thirty-one by forty-five feet in size, with fourteen foot posts and will have a piazza on three sides. The horse shed will be one hundred feet long.



## F.W. Ayer

BANGOR LUMBER BARON Frederick Wellington Ayer could rightly be considered the father of Atlantic salmon fishing in the United States. It was his early exploits on the Penobscot in 1885 that led to the establishment of the Penobscot Salmon Club and the widespread notoriety of the Bangor Salmon Pool. His obituary in the *Bangor Daily News* on 28 September 1936 reads in part: "The rivers and woods of northern Maine and Quebec were as well known to Mr. Ayer as he to them. In the first rank of salmon fishermen, one of the best shots in Maine, actually the first man to suspect that salmon might be caught on the Penobscot with a fly, and following his intuition, caught the first fish, respected as an expert killer of salmon on the Restigouche and Matepédia Rivers, still his enthusiastic reminiscences were apt to dwell upon the picture of two fawns at play or the secret ways of the salmon out of season."

In addition to his business and outdoor pursuits, F.W. Ayer was a collector of note. He sold his famous collection of stamps to the Duke of York during a visit to England in 1898. (The Duke was later crowned King George V.) In 1929, the F.W. Ayer collection of American furniture was sold at auction by the American Art Association.

Persons are rapidly adding their names to the list of membership of the club and forty have already been secured, a list of whom we shall publish in a few days. They include not only those from our own city and vicinity, but gentlemen from other cities in this State and other New England States. Those intending to join the club should do so at once and Officer Allen would be pleased to receive the names of those desirous of becoming members.

As the Whig has before had occasion to say, Bangor is destined to become one of the most famous sporting resorts in the country. With the finest salmon grounds in the United States on the Atlantic coast, and with splendid trout fishing at Moosehead and other lakes within short distances of us, the disciples of Izaak Walton can here find sport to his heart's content (18 May 1887).

An interesting entry in the "New Advertisements" listing on the same page as the above article stated: "Go to John H. Neal for the best salmon tackle." In addition, with rodmakers Hiram Leonard, Ed Payne, Fred Thomas, Eustus Edwards, and Hiram and Loman Hawes doing business in the area, it is probable that the anglers of the area were well equipped.

For additional commentary about the clubhouse, we turn to the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* of 23 May 1887:

The new club house at the fishing pool is virtually completed, the painting being mostly done on the outside while it is entirely done on the inside, the closets fitted up with keys and racks for fish poles and the keys are now being distributed among the subscribers. As before stated the building is 45 by 31 feet, the longest side facing the river upon the bank of which it sits, and has a handsome piazza on the river front and west end. Outside the building is painted a light straw color with maroon trimmings and the roof will be painted red. The walls and ceilings are painted a light drab, while the closets are stained in cherry and varnished. A tier of closets extends across the east end and another across the south side, and separated from the latter by a walk is a double tier of closets, one set opening into the walk and the other into the club room. Banks of hooks above the closet and hooks on the front give accommodations for forty-eight fishing rods and other banks can be arranged when wanted with an equal capacity. In the closets are hooks for clothing and rods in these cases and other paraphernalia can be placed within, each closet being of a capacity for two members, while there are two larger ones, the whole fifty-four closets furnishing ample accommodations for one hundred and fifteen. A large and handsomely finished chimney, with two broad fireplaces, rises in the center of the room. It is furnished with handsome settees and basket-work chairs, the wood work being in bright vermilion.

A small ell to contain lavatory, water closet, store room and a room for the janitor is being built. The whole presents a handsome appearance and from the piazzas a fine view is obtained of the fishing, while as a lady who was there on Saturday expressed it, "If there was no fishing here it would be well worth coming here on account of the scenery," the view of the river, the dam, and the surrounding countryside being a delightful one.

There was a very large number of people, both sportsmen and lookers on, at the pool on Saturday, and the fishing was eagerly watched, and each fish struck drew forth expressions of pleasure from the crowd, who as soon as a rise was made would follow the lucky fisherman, watching him as he played his noble prey, and kept pace with him along the bank until the fish had been gaffed and successfully landed.

Eleven fish rose to the fly on Saturday but only three were landed, two in the forenoon and one in the afternoon. Mr. Fred Ayer taking one each in the forenoon and afternoon, weighing respectively seventeen and twenty pounds, and Mr. Jerome Philbrook one in the forenoon, from the Bangor side, weighing seventeen pounds.

Yesterday in disregard of the day a large number went up to try their luck, or witness their trial, and the result was that fif-

teen fish were struck and eight landed, one of them tipping the scales at twenty-three pounds and a half. Since the fishing commenced on Wednesday, eighteen splendid fish have been taken with the fly, and they are delighting the palates of friends of the successful catchers here, in Portland, Boston, Connecticut and New York, and there are lots more to follow. Those who are here from abroad are in ecstasies over Bangor's splendid fishing grounds and at the accommodations made for the comfort and convenience of those who come to indulge in the noble sport (23 May 1887).

In reading these firsthand accounts, written less than two years after Fred Ayer landed his famous salmon on Saturday, 13 June 1885, one can sense the incredible enthusiasm that spread within the late nineteenth-century angling fraternity.

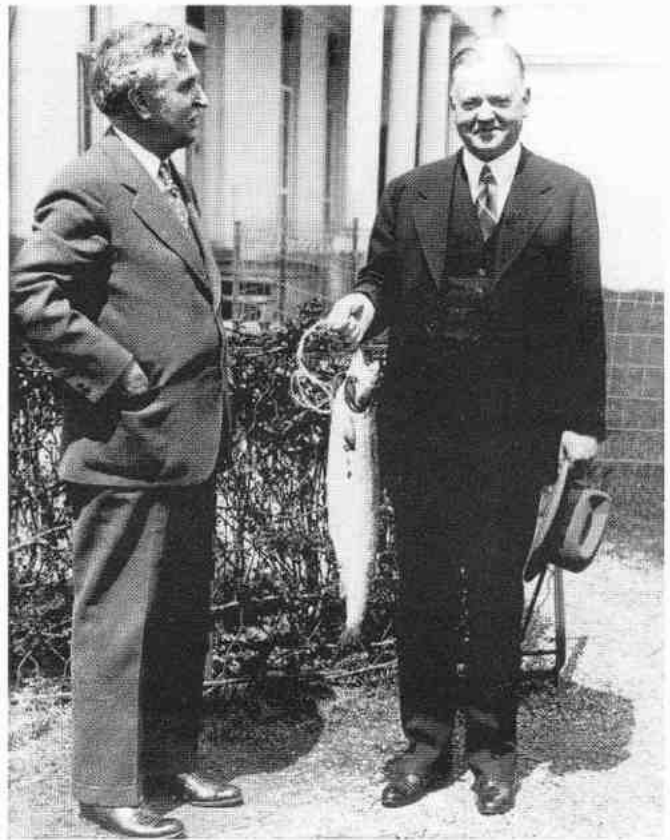
With the Penobscot Salmon Club and the Bangor Salmon Pool becoming the social center of the angling community, an opening-day tradition began to take hold in which "members gathered each April 1st, each with a setter dog, a pound of beefsteak and a quart of whiskey, the steak being for the dogs."<sup>11</sup> Many of these New England gentlemen would travel to this popular destination by the "Boston Boat," described by Tom Hennessey in several articles about the Bangor Salmon Pool and its history in his *Bangor Daily News* sporting columns. In one column he describes how "each Spring, the 'Boston Boat,' a steamship that made weekly runs between that city and Bangor, brought Atlantic Salmon anglers up the Penobscot to test their luck and skills at the now-famous fishing grounds. Many of them had immigrated from England and Scotland, bringing with them the salmon fishing tackle, techniques and traditions of those countries (2-3 May 1987)." The members and their guests enjoyed the clubhouse for the next thirty-five years until sadly, it burned down in the early 1920s, taking many old photographs and records with it. It was promptly rebuilt in 1923 with the Penobscot Salmon Club incorporating itself that same year.

### THE PRESIDENTIAL SALMON

One very distinct American tradition about which I uncovered surprisingly little information in historical texts, such as Goodspeed's, is that of Penobscot's Presidential Salmon. This tradition, which spanned forty-three seasons (1912-1954), developed to the point that the fortunate angler who landed the first bright salmon on the Penobscot each spring would be invited to the White House to present his or her prized catch to the president of the United States.

This tradition grew out of earlier nineteenth-century competitions between local establishments that wished to serve the first salmon of the season to their patrons. Olive Smythe described this practice in her 1953 *Bangor Daily News* article: "At various times during the first years of the pool, the Bangor House and the Penobscot Exchange vied for the honor of serving their guests the succulent morsel. Later, the Congress Square Hotel in Portland was the recipient (1 April 1953, p. 14)." The tradition evolved further when, in the early 1900s, "John McGregor of Lincoln put in a standing order for the first two salmon caught, the first of which was shipped to W. Campbell Clark, President of the Clark Thread Company at Newark, New Jersey, and the second to Andrew Carnegie (1 April 1953, p. 14)."

An interesting twist took place in 1910 when an angler named Karl Anderson caught the first fish of that season as well as the first in 1911 and 1912. The 1910 fish graced the table of Lucius Tuttle, president of the Boston and Maine Railroad. The first fish of 1911 was sent to W. Campbell Clark, and the



Herbert Hoover receiving the 1931 Presidential Salmon from Walter Crossman.

1912 fish was the one to inaugurate the Presidential Salmon tradition.

Mr. Anderson was able to land the first two fish of that 1912 season, according to the *Bangor Daily Commercial* of 2 April 1912.

When the early afternoon train left Bangor for the West Tuesday, a handsome silvery coated, 11 lb. Penobscot River Salmon reposed on ice up forward in the express car, bound for President Taft at the White House in Washington. It was sent as the gift of Karl Anderson, the lucky angler who on Monday, April 1st, landed the first two fish taken at the Bangor Salmon Pool this season.

"As long as Bangor presented the President with its full quota of delegates to the Republican State Convention, Monday night, I thought it would be more than fitting that I should contribute to the city's meed of honor and respect by sending him the Salmon," said Mr. Anderson.

The fish will arrive in Washington sometime Wednesday and it is expected that the salmon will be served for dinner at the White House on Wednesday evening. It was carefully packed in ice and shipped by Oscar Fickett, the local marketman. The Taft salmon tipped the scales at exactly 11 pounds and was caught by Mr. Anderson early Monday afternoon after his having successfully landed a 13 pounder in the morning.

The first fish will go this year to W. Campbell Clark, President of the Clark Thread Company at Newark, N.J., and it also left by express on the early afternoon train Tuesday. Mr. Clark has had the first fish from the Bangor pool for a number of years. It was always sent him by John McGregor of South Lincoln during Mr. McGregor's lifetime and the practice is still carried on by Mrs. McGregor. Mr. McGregor also made an annual practice of purchasing the second salmon also and shipping that to Andrew Carnegie.

There were a number of fishermen at the pool Tuesday, encouraged by Mr. Anderson's success on the opening day of the season. The water was high and muddy but conditions for fishing were by no means unfavorable.

The Presidential Salmon tradition took on a partisan flavor in 1914, as indicated in the *Bangor Daily News* of April 6:

The second salmon of the season was landed at the pool Saturday morning, April 5, by Gus Youngs. It was an 18 pounder and as handsome a specimen as ever came out of the Penobscot. Mr. Youngs had not been on the pool more than 10 minutes when he got the strike and his fish hooked hard. This fish will be sent to the McGregor family of Lincoln who for years sent the first salmon to a thread manufacturer in New Jersey. The first salmon of the season was taken by Michael Flanagan. It was an eighteen pounder and this was the first time he has caught the first salmon although he had the honor of catching the second salmon several times. This fish was bought by Connell J. Gallagher for \$27. The Democrats went ahead and purchased the fish to send to the White House for President Wilson.

The following year, the 2 April 1915 headline read "President Gets Bangor Dinner":

President Woodrow Wilson won't have to go marketing for his Sunday dinner, for it was sent to him on Thursday by five enthusiastic Democrats of Bangor, who got it at Gallagher's market and paid a fat price for it. It is some dinner, too—perhaps the choicest to be had in America, for love or money—the first Penobscot salmon of the season, a sixteen pounder, taken at 5:30 Thursday morning at the Bangor Pool below the waterworks dam by John L. Thomas of Rockland and sold by him to Gallagher's for \$2 a pound, or just \$32. This is the highest price ever



Charles Bissell often hooked the first salmon of the season.

paid for a salmon in the city, so all the fishermen declared, and there was, also, general agreement that no handsomer fish ever swam.

The article concludes: "Conditions never were better for early salmon fishing—ice gone, river low and water clear. Hence the great luck. No one is fooled who lands a Penobscot salmon on April 1, or immediately following that date. It's next to picking up diamonds."

The Presidential Salmon tradition was now in full swing and for forty-three years, the tradition would continue with only two minor diversions. In 1925, Charles Bissell's 11 ¼ pounder caught on 2 May was not sent to President Coolidge as a result of an apparent miscommunication with Oscar Fickett's Market "who wasn't directed to send to the President." Mr. Coolidge would have to wait another two weeks until Adolph Fischer, a Bangor sausage maker, landed a 20 pounder on May 17, before he would be able to dine on Penobscot salmon. And in 1938, a Bangor woman and staunch Republican named Sylvia Ross decided that she did not want to see the first fish of that year sent to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, so she went ahead and purchased the 7 ¼ pound fish at a premium price of \$2.50 a pound. The fish was caught by Adolph Fischer, according to the *Bangor Daily News*:

On a large freak fly which he tied Monday night, Adolph Fischer of Bangor captured the first fish of the season, a 7 ¼ pound female, in the tumbling waters of the Salmon Pool shortly after 10 o'clock, Tuesday morning.

The salmon although small as the silversides run at the pool, staged one of the liveliest battles seen at those waters in years. Seeming to possess an inexhaustible supply of energy, the stout silverside made numerous runs and broke water a half dozen times during the struggle (6 April 1938, p. 14).

His fish was listed as the Presidential Salmon that year, but it appears that Sylvia Ross may have indeed had her day, for it is not known whether FDR ever received another fish in its place.

Another interesting historical footnote concerns an angler who cast the fly that caught the Presidential Salmon, but could not cast a vote for or against the man who would dine on it. The *Bangor Daily News* of 7 April 1916 reads:

In the course of a day or two they will have something fit to eat at the White House—the season's supreme delicacy, in fact, for early on Friday a group of Bangor Democrats, ardent admirers of President Wilson, will forward as a gift to the nation's chief executive two beautiful Penobscot river salmon, the very first of the season.

These salmon were taken with the fly at Bangor pool on Thursday afternoon, the first weighing ten pounds by Miss Jeanette Sullivan, of 377 Hancock street; whose boatman was Patrick Nelligan of 385 Hancock street, and the other weighing eleven pounds, by Michael Flanagan of 34 Pearl street. Miss Sullivan is a famous angler, whose skill with rod and fly has been demonstrated on many occasions. Mr. Flanagan took the first salmon landed in 1914 and the second in 1915.

Thursday's captures, both very handsome fish, were taken to Gallagher's Uptown Market, 271 State street, where they were much admired by throngs of people who called to take a look at the President's dinner, and where they are to be packed for shipment by express to Washington.

It would be four more years before Miss Sullivan was legally able to cast a vote for a president. She had years earlier caught the first fish of the 1901 season, a 16 ¾-pound fish that she successfully landed on April 3 of that year.

An impressive run of forty-three Presidential Salmon years would come to an end in 1954 when Dwight D. Eisenhower received the last Presidential Salmon of that era. As a direct result of increased dam building and growing levels of pollution, the Penobscot had reached a point where the salmon run was no longer sustainable. John Kent's 25 pounder of 1894 was the largest salmon of reward up to that point.

## FISHING METHODS AT THE BANGOR SALMON POOL

The Bangor Salmon Pool was fished primarily from cedar-planked, canvas-covered boats, known as "double-enders," that were launched from the Penobscot Salmon Club on the Brewer shore. Once a fish was successfully hooked, the angler would attempt to finish the fight from shore whenever it was possible. Tom Hennessey described fishing from a double-ender in the following passages from his May 2-3, 1987, *Bangor Daily News* column.

Stable, and extremely responsive, the slick-rowing craft were ideal for negotiating the conflicting currents and swift tidal flows. While one angler rowed and fished what was called the "drag line," his partner occupied a seat toward the stern. The boat was maneuvered so that their flies probed the edges of rips and the tails of sprawling pools. Periodically, the anglers would make casts to present the feathered lures at different angles and drifts. This method of boat fishing is called "harling" and is not to be confused with trolling.

During early-April fishing, there was a constant danger of boats being capsized by slabs of floating anchor ice that the tides lifted off the shores. Besides keeping a sharp eye out for those threats, anglers depended on each other for shouts of warning. There was not, if you can believe it, a life jacket or a flotation device among them.

In addition to these unique boating methods, Hennessey mentions some interesting uses of tackle during these earlier times:

In the early 1900s there was no such thing as a sinking fly line. Naturally, April anglers at the Pool were confronted with the problem of getting their flies down to the salmon, which were lying deep in the cold water. Innovative and resourceful, many of them made sinking lines by rubbing white lead into lengths of saltwater handline. Others attached a few feet of wire between lines and leaders.

By soaking them in tea and coffee grounds, some anglers stained their leaders to match the dark complexion of the Penobscot's "alder water."

Those were the days of two-handed rods that could lift fifty feet of sodden silk line and cast it as though it were a length of yarn. Built, of course, from split bamboo, the 12- to 16-foot Thomases, Paynes, and Leonards were works of art.

Affixed to those long rods were large reels—Hardys, Farlows, Vom Hofes—with drags that could turn a team of horses, and voices that could hit a high C and hold it.

One innovative angler named Charles E. Tefft who, according to the *Bangor Daily News* of 12 April 1905, hooked the first salmon of that season and "had no landing net. So he shot the fish with a rifle." It was a 22 pounder that we assume he did not intend to release.

Douglas Blanchard was a local guide who wrote an article for the April 1967 issue of *Down East* magazine about his experiences during the golden era of salmon fishing at the Bangor Salmon Pool. He described how a lone angler would fish from a double-ender:

Often a fisherman would fish alone. He would lay his fly rod in the boat, hook the heavy reel behind the rowing seat and extend the tip of the rod out over the stern. The amount of line dragged in this manner depended on what section of the pool he was fishing, but it was never more than he could cast.

Occasionally, he would drop his oars, strip in the line and make a cast. He would then place the rod quickly back into its original position, grab the oars and make up the distance he had drifted downstream.

A hooked fish required furious action by a lone angler. He had to maneuver the boat out of a rocky stretch of water, at the same time following the racing fish downstream. With one hand he would hold the rod high, while with the other he tugged on an oar to keep the boat straight in the strong current. Sometimes a fisherman would ignore his fish completely, giving his strength and skill to running the rapids while the salmon danced on his tail a hundred yards below in the slack water.<sup>12</sup>

Blanchard also mentions a few of the local personalities who fished the pool and some of their unique traits:

Then there was Wingate Cram, the president of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad. I remember watching him one day as he and his guide were fishing the Cow and Calf, a pool so named because of its rock formation. Mr. Cram had hardly soaked his leader and made a few well placed casts with his Thomas rod before he was fast to a fish. He managed skillfully to hold the fish in the upper pool and completed the battle from shore. Within a few minutes his guide lifted out a 14-pound silverside, fresh from the sea. Five minutes later, the old gentleman was giving battle to another fish, and in a short while he landed it.<sup>13</sup>

The late Bud Leavitt, who was with the *Bangor Daily News* for forty-two years, recalled in an interview in the book *Penobscot River Renaissance*, by James E. Butler and Arthur



### FIRST-SALMON-OF-THE-SEASON

DATE		NAME	No	WEIGHT
1897	April 3rd	C.E. Bissell & Roy Getchell	1	15 LB.
1907	" 4th	Valentine & Bissell	2	18 & 8/16
1908	" 6th	C.E. Bissell Alone	1	16 1/2
1909	" 3rd	C.E. Bissell "	1	10
1913	" 4th	C.E. Bissell "	1	16 3/4
1919	" 2nd	C.E. Bissell "	1	16
1925	May 1st	C.E. Bissell "	1	12
1936	April 9th	C.E. Bissell "	1	11 1/2

On display at the Penobscot Salmon Club is a tally of Charles Bissell's first salmon of the season.



An unidentified angler on the banks of the Bangor Salmon Pool. Note the rod length and attire.

Taylor, how Wingate Cram was “a huge man, God, he must have weighed 300 pounds, would come in with his chauffeured automobile, always with a couple of fresh bottles of scotch. He’d put them on the table, and they’d get half drunk. I was a kid and I’d look at these people with awe.”<sup>14</sup>

Blanchard described those times as “the days when Atlantic salmon taken on the rod and reel from this short stretch of water added to the hundreds. At the same time thousands more were being caught commercially lower down the Penobscot by weir fisherman.”<sup>15</sup> He also made mention of his guiding three-time Presidential Salmon angler Walter Crossman who one morning “scored a double and lost a third fish in a matter of two hours.”<sup>16</sup>

“And this too shall pass” was stated long ago by one who was himself associated with fishermen. And in 1954, so passed that grand first era of salmon fishing at the Penobscot’s Bangor Salmon Pool. ~

then and now called the Cosseboom.” This seems improbable when one refers to Joseph D. Bates, Jr.’s *Atlantic Salmon Flies and Fishing* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1970). According to Bates, John Cosseboom was credited with first tying a bucktail pattern that bore his name on the Margaree River in 1922 (p. 237). The Cosseboom Special, which is usually called the Cosseboom, was first used on the Margaree in 1923 (p. 237). Lastly, John Cosseboom would have been a young child in 1885 when Fred Ayer hooked his fish if the assumption that Cosseboom lived between 1885 and 1935 is accurate (p. 235).

11. Olive M. Smythe, *Bangor Daily News*, 1 April 1953, p. 14.

12. Douglas Blanchard, *Down East* (April 1967), p. 36.

13. *Ibid.*

14. James E. Butler and Arthur Taylor, *Penobscot River Renaissance* (Camden, Maine: The Silver Quill Press, Down East Books, 1992), p. 122.

15. *Down East* (April 1967), p. 38.

16. *Ibid.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Graham Munson, *Penobscot: Downeast Paradise* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1959), p. 5.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 329–30.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

8. Richard N. Current, *Daniel Webster and the Rise of National Conservatism* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1955), p. 106.

9. *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 9 (May 1831), p. 452.

10. “Local lore” is attributed to a quote contained in a column by the late Bud Leavitt in the 29 April 1986 issue of the *Bangor Daily News* (p. 13), which reads, “There is no pattern record, though several historians have claimed Ayer used John Cosseboom’s dressings,

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to extend his sincerest thanks to the individuals and organizations that assisted with the research required to complete this piece: Roger D’Erico, registered Maine guide and historian for the Penobscot Salmon Club, who made the club’s photos available to us; Tom Hennessey, sports columnist and artist for the *Bangor Daily News*, who holds the distinction of being the 1986 Presidential Salmon angler; the Bangor Public Library; the Bangor Historical Society; and Arthur Taylor.

For those interested in learning about early conservation efforts and the subsequent revival of the Penobscot salmon run, I recommend the book *Penobscot River Renaissance* by James E. Butler and Arthur Taylor.

The Penobscot Salmon Club is America’s oldest salmon club and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The clubhouse grounds are located off Route 9 in Brewer, Maine.

## Weather Lore and the Opinions of Anglers



*WILL IT RAIN? From which direction is the wind blowing? Does it matter? Through the years, many have opined on signs of the changing weather and the expediency of fishing under various conditions. To some, weather is the all-important factor in determining a good or bad day on the water; others refuse to take it too seriously in pursuit of fish. Included here are passages culled from the following works: Trout Lore, by O.W. Smith (1917); Fisherman's Weather, by F.G. Aflalo (1906); Fly-Fishing: Salmon, Trout, and Grayling, by Edward Hamilton, M.D. (1885); The Art of Angling, Tenth Edition, by Thomas Best (1814); Trout Fishing, by W. Earl Hodgson (1904); and Fish Facts and Fancies, by F. Gray Griswold (1926). Enjoy the free advice.*

EDITOR

EVER SINCE Noah looked out of the Ark each morning and asked, "Is it still raining?" weather has been the paramount subject of discussion. In city or country, by radiator or camp-fire, it is always our first and last resort in conversation. To the angler no topic is of greater importance than this hackneyed one of weather, for upon it, he thinks, hinges the fortunes of his day a-stream. Be it far from me to shatter the idols of any brother of the angle, or to simply run amok amid fishing traditions, but I think the importance of mere weather has been much overrated. Have we not all heard from youth up: "Fish bites best when it rains," "Fish will not rise in a thunderstorm," "It is useless to fish for trout when the sun shines full on the stream," etc., etc. In fact, if we were to believe *all* that we heard as to *when* to fish, we would never cast fly or boat, for, to borrow an old saw, weather which is "one man's meat, is another man's poison."

—SMITH

FISHING, while never perhaps wholly arrested by any condition except drought, is more susceptible than most sports to those shades of difference, on which the favourable conditions directly depend: the level and colour of the river on the rainfall; the hatch of fly on the temperature; the success, or even possibility, of fly fishing on the strength and direction of the wind.

—AFLALO

THE FISHERMAN'S first impulse, on getting out of bed on a holiday morning, is to pull up the blind and look at the sky. An aneroid barometer knows more of the coming weather than the sky, yet both are untrustworthy so far as the mood of the fish is concerned; and the best plan, unless the day is actually too bad for enjoyment, is to take no notice of the weather, but to get to the waterside as soon as possible and there tempt fortune.

At the same time, even though, in the

light of past experience or in obedience to the warnings of those who know, we refuse to let the sky signs move us to either unwarranted optimism or unnecessary despair, it cannot fail to be of interest to determine such conditions of light or temperature, such manifestations of electrical disturbance, such changes in the quality or quantity of the wind as appear to exercise an appreciable, though not a constant, influence on the sport of fishing with rod and line.

To attach, therefore, a due and not exaggerated significance to the part played by atmospheric conditions in the day's bag is not necessarily to go to the other extreme, and invariably tax the weather with the responsibility for an empty creel, which should rather have been attributed to bad fishing. Failure invariably seeks an impersonal excuse, usually summed up in the somewhat vague expression "bad luck," and the weather is, in the course of such explanation, apt to come in for more than its share of the blame. Success, though quite as likely to be due to similar causes, is rarely accounted for on such grounds. Yet there is no weather, indeed no art, so bad as invariably to produce a blank day. Success, as unexpected as it is delightful, is always possible by reason of the caprice of fish.

—AFLALO

WHEN WE GO "a-fishing," we anxiously look at the barometer and at the sky, hoping for a soft south-wester or a showery day; but we Londoners cannot choose our days, and must take

them as they come, fine or wet; and many a bright holiday have I spent by the river-side with little prospect of much sport, and yet I seldom came home with an empty basket.

—HAMILTON

AS IT IS HIGHLY necessary that an angler be able to form a judgment of the change of weather, on which his sport entirely depends; if he observes the . . . signs, it will soon become familiar to him.

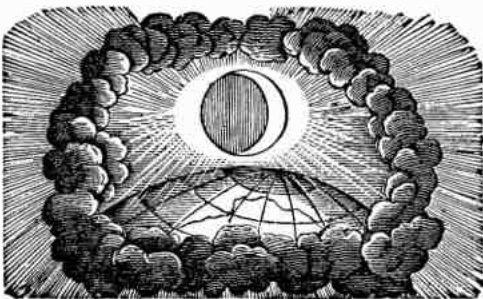
—BEST

THERE IS A SCHOOL of sportsmen which regards an alleged preference for fishing in dirty weather as the stamp of true sportsmanship. "Alleged" rather than real, because such professions of indifference to climatic discomfort are probably as little sincere as the assurance of those who go on the sea for pleasure that they find no enjoyment in smooth weather. Here and there, it might be possible to find a joyless temperament capable of preferring Nature in her uncouth moods, but the normal human being is for her smiles.

—AFLALO

I FEEL THAT TROUT should be lured only when the weather is as beautiful as the fish. Gentle sunshine, spring flowers, and soft south winds make days a-stream in springtime a delight. Upon the other hand, if I am fishing and the wind whips round into the east, I do not reel in my line and make my way homeward; indeed not! More than once I have made record catches when the wind was blowing a half-gale from the east, the sky overcast with heavy clouds. The secret of the matter is here: if we *think* we can catch trout, we generally can; if we think the weather is against us, we only half fish and lay our failure to the weather.

—SMITH



## WIND

NO ANGLING SUPERSTITION is more prevalent than the one which asserts that trout will not rise to a fly when the wind is from the east; indeed, so ingrained is the belief that we accept it almost without question, and it is not uncommon to see carved above the angler's fireplace some such statement as, "May the east wind never blow."

—SMITH

THERE ARE, no doubt, localities in which an east wind puts fish off the feed. Nevertheless, much of the prejudice which exists against it is a matter of tradition rather than of actual experience. This attitude on the part of fishermen may in part be accounted for by the depressing influence which this wind has on many people, notably on those subject to neuralgia, whom I have known to suffer acutely during its prevalence in places as far apart as Melbourne and Gibraltar.

—AFLALO

IF ANYTHING CAN make an easterly wind still worse for fishing, where it is already bad, it is a touch of north in it. Though this, again, is not without many exceptions, a northeasterly wind probably has more enemies among fishermen than that blowing from any other quarter.

—AFLALO

IF THERE IS NO WIND, the boat will not drift, and the trout will not rise to artificial flies. If there is too much wind, the drift will be so quick that many a fish which would rise had it a chance will be passed over while another is being played into the landing net. To most anglers this exasperating state of affairs is very familiar. At the close of a good day on a lake during a high wind, who has not felt that it would have been much better if only the boat could have been stopped whenever a trout came on? Is it not an article of faith that where one fish rises a good many others are probably feeding?

—HODGSON

WHAT OF THE WIND? Is it high, or low, or moderate? Is it from the west or from the south? Is there in it a touch of east or north?

These are the queries of the angler as

he looks out upon the morning of a day to be spent in pursuit of trout. Saving that his hope faints if there seems to be "thunder in the air," the other conditions of the weather are comparatively insignificant. What matters it if there be a little rain? A shower now and then is refreshing to man and fish; besides, there will be fair intervals, in which one's clothes will dry. Perhaps the sunshine is oppressive; but that need not cause despair, for clouds are likely to come.

—HODGSON



ALTHOUGH MUCH STRESS has been laid on the wind, and, as every fly fisher knows, a balmy, breezy, cloudy day, with the wind from the south or west will give a better chance of sport, yet that cannot always be commanded, and when one is obliged to take the day as it is, whatever the wind or weather may be, experience tells me that many a good day's sport has been had with the wind in the north or in the east; in fact, let the wind do its worst, I heed it not. I can remember having capital sport in some open water in Hertfordshire years ago, the wind from the north-east, and snowing all day.

—HAMILTON

WHEN THE WIND veers about, uncertainly, to several points of the compass, rain is pretty sure to follow.

Some have remarked, that if the wind, as it veers about, follows the course of the sun, from the east towards the west, it brings fair weather; if the contrary, foul; but there is no prognostic of rain more infallible than a whistling or howling noise of the wind.

—BEST

## RAIN AND THUNDER

As we have all heard from childhood, "trout bite best when it rains." . . . Trout do bite when it rains and rains hard. . . . Such fishing is preeminently worm-fishing; the large fish will not as a rule rise to the surface under such conditions—indeed, the water is too roily for a trout to see a fly. For fly fishing the best sort of weather is the very best that Nature can manufacture, clear sky with fleecy clouds now and then shutting out the sun. Ofttimes when the sun is dazzlingly brilliant trout will not rise to the feathers, but when a shadow cast by a cloud crosses the water, they will display unusual activity.

—SMITH

WHEN YOU can see houses or other objects at a great distance with scintillating clearness, it means wet weather for the reason that the unnatural clearness of the air is caused by invisible vapor which is likely to turn to rain. Such beautiful days are called weather-breeders. Sounds also carry much further when there is much moisture in the air.

—GRISWOLD

REFERRING . . . to an ancient belief . . . "Trout will not bite during a thunderstorm." The theory is that the reverberations of the thunder cause the earth to tremble and the disturbance is of course communicated to the water and the fish are frightened. It is a very

plausible theory. However, I have proved to my own satisfaction that trout will take both artificial flies and bait during such atmospheric disturbances. I have caught trout on flies again and again when fierce thunder and lightning all but drove me from the stream, though the fish never seemed disturbed in the least; they continued to rise so long as the water remained clear. . . . Yes, trout will bite in a thunderstorm if they are hungry; and I think that is the whole secret—if they are hungry.

—SMITH

## CLOUDS AND MIST

IT IS A VERY considerable symptom of fair weather, when the clouds decay, and dissolve themselves into air; but it is otherwise when they are collected out of it.

Against heavy rain, every cloud rises bigger than the former, and all the clouds are in a growing state.

This is most remarkable on the approach of a thunderstorm, after the vapours have been copiously elevated, suspended in the sky by the heat, and are highly charged with electrical fire; small fragments of flying clouds increase and assemble together, till in a short space of time they cover the sky.

When clouds are formed like fleeces, deep, and dense toward the middle, and very white at the edges, with the sky very bright and blue about them, they are of a frosty coldness, and will soon fall either in hail, snow, or in hasty showers of rain.

If clouds are seen to breed high in the

air, in thin white trains, like locks of wool, or the tails of horses, they shew that the vapour as it is collected is irregularly spread and scattered by contrary winds above; the consequence of which will soon be a wind below, and probably a rain with it.

If the clouds, as they come forward, seem to diverge from a point in the horizon, a wind may be expected from that quarter or the opposite.



When a general cloudiness covers the sky above, and there are small black fragments of clouds, like smoke, flying underneath, which some call messengers, others Noah's Ark, because they sail over the other clouds, like the ark upon the waters, rain is not far off, and it will probably be lasting.

There is no surer sign of rain than two different currents of clouds, especially if the undermost flies fast before the wind; and if two such currents appear in the hot weather of the summer, they shew that a thunderstorm is gathering; but the preparation which precedes a storm of thunder, is so generally understood, that it is needless to insist upon it minutely.

—BEST

LONG streaky light clouds brushed back at the ends mean a change of wind. Small black clouds traveling fast mean strong winds.

If the sun sets in a dark unbroken cloud, it will probably rain, and grey clouds divided by green sky are a sure sign of wet weather.

Small black clouds with red borders mean storm with strong winds, and heavy grey and black clouds with copper-red borders promise storm accompanied by rain.

—GRISWOLD

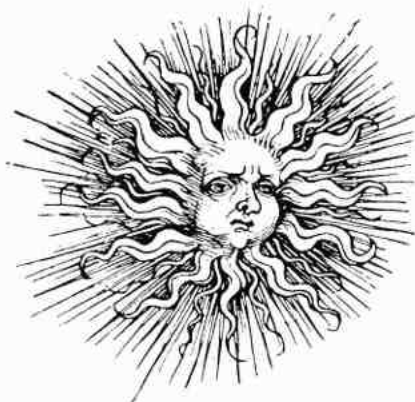


**I**F A WHITE MIST in an evening or night is spread over a meadow, wherein there is a river, it will be drawn up by the next morning's sun, and the day will be bright afterwards.

Where there are high hills, and the mist which hangs over the lower lands draw towards the hills in a morning, and rolls up their sides till it covers the top, there will be no rain.

In some places, if the mist hangs upon the hills, and drags along the woods, instead of overspreading the level grounds, in a morning, it will turn to rain; therefore to judge rightly of the appearance of a fog, it is in some degree necessary to be acquainted with the nature of the country.

—BEST



### TEMPERATURE

**O**FTEN YOU HEAR an angler explaining away an empty basket by saying that the weather on the water was too "muggy" or too "close"; but you never hear him saying that it was too warm. In his estimation heat in itself is no hindrance to his efforts: it is only the conditions which sometimes accompany heat that are a trouble. On the other hand, he will often tell you, without hesitation, that the weather has been too cold. Cold, he will say, puts down the trout.

The proposition, which is usually absolute, made without reference to times or seasons, is not in accord with experience.

—HODGSON

### LIGHT

**I**N MOST human beings there is implanted some survival of pagan sun worship, nor are the latest discoveries of the therapeutic magic worked by the

sun's rays likely to lessen our faith in that source of all natural light and heat. Those of us who have in the Great Desert covered from his fierceness under burnous or tent may also have feared it, but the instinctive reverence for the sun is not altered. Yet, agreeable though its warmth and brightness makes indulgence in any outdoor pursuit, the sun is not invariably a friend to the fisherman, who always fears its light, as betraying his guile, and sometimes also has reason to resent its heat, as spoiling either the condition of the water or the appetites of the fish.

—AFLALO

**I**T IS REASONABLE that when we go fishing we should be anxious about the light. What is wanted, it is commonly supposed, is a light that will blot out the rough edges of the tackle, soften down any excess of gaudiness in the flies, and make the lures look natural.

What is this light? The answers by any dozen anglers, even if they were men of much experience, would be of striking variety. One would say that a dull day is the best. Perhaps that would be the general opinion. . . . Each of the rest of our dozen witnesses might have a theory of his own. As a rule it would be a negative theory. "A glare on the water" would be the bane of one; another would like a thin veil of fleecy clouds; another would prefer the light of day, characteristic of April, on which the sun is hidden and peeps out alternately; another would have but little hope if the ripples were tipped with silvery gleams; another would dread "lanes of light" lying upon the surface of the water; others, according to individual fancies, would think well of any light in which the water was not too blue, or too gray, or too yellow, or too red, or too green, or too purple. Probably the only thought on which all would be unanimous is that the light which falls from a cloudless sky would never do at all. It is generally supposed that good sport is not to be had in unmitigated sunshine.

—HODGSON

**T**HE VIEW commonly held as to the effect of bright light is that it frustrates the angler's purpose by betraying himself and his tackle to the fish—an opinion that, no doubt, receives support from the success which often under such conditions attends the use of small



flies and fine tackle. There is, however, an alternative possibility which we must reckon with, and this is the dazzling of the fish by the sun shining full in its eyes. . . . Dazzling may operate in one of two ways. It may prevent the fish from seeing even the lure, and with salmon which are not actually feeding, but merely rising in half-hearted and wanton fashion at the fly, this is all likelihood its effect. On the other hand, with fish like the bass, of which I have caught all my best in gin-clear water and glaring July weather, it may just dazzle the fish to the extent of hiding the tackle and hook.

—AFLALO

**E**VEN THOSE who, under given conditions, either prefer or tolerate sunshine, differ in many matters of detail, as the two following remarks illustrate:—

"I do not mind sunshine when fishing a lake for trout, *provided the sun is not directly facing me* and there is a good breeze to ruffle the water."

"In bright sunshine, *provided the angler has the sun in his face*, so that the shadow of his rod and line do not fall on the water, sport is frequently excellent."

The italics are my own.

—AFLALO

**W**HATEVER objections fishermen may have learnt from experience to raise against sunshine, there seems to be no doubt whatever about a condition of alternating sun and shade, with gleams between passing clouds, being particularly favourable to sport, and preferable even to uniform dullness of the sky. What precisely may be the effect of such chopping and changing of the light on the vision of fishes we cannot know, but the results, as measured by the catch, are almost invariably satisfactory.

—AFLALO

## COLORS OF THE SKY

**A** WEATHERWISE sailor once told me that if the sun rises red it is a sign of stormy weather, but if it rises a bright clear yellow it indicates fine weather. If the atmosphere is grey and hazy at sunrise it promises good weather.

—GRISWOLD

**I**F THOSE VAPOURS which the heat of the day raises from the earth are precipitated by the cold air of the night, then the sky is clear in the morning; but if this does not happen, and they remain still in the air, the light of the morning will be coloured as it was in the evening, and rain will be the consequence.

There is commonly either a strong dew, or a mist over the ground, between a red evening and a grey morning; but if a red morning succeeds, there is no dew.

It is a bad symptom when a lowering redness is spread too far upwards from the horizon, either in the morning or in the evening; it is succeeded either by rain or wind, and frequently both.

When such a fiery redness, together with a raggedness of the clouds, extends towards the zenith in an evening, the wind will be high from the west or south-west, attended with rain, sometimes with a flood. . . . When the sky, in a rainy season, is tinged with sea-green colour, near the horizon, when it ought to be blue, the rain will continue and increase: if it is of a deep dead blue, it is abundantly loaded with vapours, and the weather will be showery.

—BEST

**A**T SUNSET, if the sun sets red and not sharp enough to dazzle the eyes, fine weather is to be expected. Light grey and damp atmosphere at sunset is also a good sign, and means light winds. Small light clouds, a so-called mackerel sky, at sunset, promise fine weather and brisk winds.

—GRISWOLD

## SIGNS FROM ANIMALS

**T**HE INSTINCT which foretells coming changes of the weather is familiar in both wild and domestic animals, and few of those who live in the country are unfamiliar with such signs of rain as the sight of swallows flying near the

ground or the sound of asses braying. It is not improbable that the significance of these alleged indications of bad weather is much overrated, but they are popularly accepted in this light, and many folks would soon trust their infallibility than that of the barometer. At any rate, it is only what we should expect that animals living in a medium so sensitive to pressure as water should be in close sympathy with the barometric variations.

—AFLALO



**S**O LONG AS the swallows fly aloft after their prey, we think ourselves sure of a serene sky; but when they skim along near the ground, or the surface of the water, we judge the rain is not far off. . . .

If the sheep wind up the hills in the morning to their pasture, and feed near the tops, the weather, though cloudy and drizzling . . . will clear away by degrees, and terminate in a fine day; but if they feed in the bottoms, the rains will continue and increase.

Dogs grow sleepy and stupid before rain, and shew that their stomachs are out of order, by refusing their food, and eating grass . . . this they cast up again soon afterwards, and with it the foulness that offended their stomachs. Water-fowl dive and wash themselves more than ordinary; and even the fish in rivers are affected, because all anglers agree that they never bite freely when rain is depending. . . . Flies, on the contrary, are particularly troublesome, and seem to be more hungry than usual; and toads are seen in the evening, crawling across the road or beaten path, where they seldom appear but when they are restless with an approaching change. . . .

Birds of all sorts are in action: crows are most earnest after their prey, as are also swallows and other small birds, and therefore they fall lower, and fly nearer to the earth in search of insects and oth-

er such things as they feed upon. When the mountains of the earth begin to be capped with fogs, the moorcocks and other birds quit them, fly off in flocks, and betake themselves to the lower lands for the time. Swine discover great uneasiness; as do likewise sheep, cows, and oxen, appearing more solicitous and eager in pasture than usual. Even mankind themselves are not exempt from some sense of a change in their bodies.

—BEST

**B**IRDS AND ANIMALS seem to have stronger premonitions as to changes of the weather than we mortals enjoy. The loons call, the crows croak, the blackbirds are noisy, and all animals seem to be restless and uneasy.

—GRISWOLD

## CELESTIAL SIGNS

**W**HEN THERE IS a haziness aloft in the air, so that the sun's light fades by degrees, and his orb looks whitish and ill-defined, it is one of the most certain signs of rain.

If the moon and stars grow dim in the night, with the like haziness in the air, and a ring or halo appears around the moon, rain will be the consequence.

If the rays of the sun, breaking through the clouds, are visible in the air, and appear like those horns of irradiation which painters usually place upon the head of Moses, the air is sensibly filled with vapours, which reflect the rays to the sight, and these vapours will soon produce rain.

If the sun appears white at his setting,



or shorn of his rays, or goes down into a bank of clouds, which lie in the horizon; all these are signs of approaching or continuing bad weather.

If the moon looks pale and dim, we are to expect rain; if red, it is a sign of wind; and if white, and of her natural colour, and the sky is clear, it will be fair weather. . . .

If the moon is rainy throughout her course, it will clear up at the ensuring change, and the rain will probably commence again in a few days after, and continue; if, on the contrary, the moon has been fair throughout, and it rains at the change, the fair weather will probably be restored about the fourth or fifth day of the moon, and continue as before.

—BEST

WHEN an aurora borealis appears, after some warm days, it is generally succeeded by a coldness of the air: as if the matter of heat was carried upwards from the earth to the sky.

—BEST

#### MISCELLANEOUS SIGNS

IF THE DEW lies plentifully upon the grass after a fair day, another fair day may be expected to succeed it; but if after such a day there is no dew upon the ground, and no wind stirring, it is a sign that the vapours go upwards, and that there will be an accumulation above which must terminate in rain.

—BEST

A RAINBOW in the evening is supposed to promise good weather, while one in the morning means rain. I cannot remember ever seeing one in the forenoon, probably owing to the high sun.

—GRISWOLD

ANOTHER most interesting hypothesis . . . is that periods of European earthquake have been synchronous with poor fishing results. This suggestion, which may perhaps be borne out by the experience of others, may prove that the influence of even remote seismic disturbance can make itself felt on a class of animals that, outside the area of actual upheaval, would seem peculiarly immune from its effects.

—AFLALO

#### MORE ADVICE

A GOOD DAY is not the rule. It is the exception. This will be found out by anyone who fishes every day for a month. As I write these words I am in the midst of an even ampler experience. On most days during the latter half of March and the beginning of April sport was good; after that, for nearly a month, it was on most days poor; since then, on a few days, there have been signs of a revival. Is not the moral manifest? The chances are that if I had been on the water only one day, instead of for many days consecutively, it would have been a day of poor results; and probably that would have been attributed, conscientiously but without much thought, to the aspect of the weather, in which, as a rule, the quality of the light is the most noticeable phenomenon.

—HODGSON



THE ANGLER should never be discouraged from trying his luck by any weather condition condemned by the text-books, but should persist in the face of apparently hopeless circumstances. A too careful attention to the fact of the sky may at times baulk the over-cautious fisherman of what might, by trusting a little more to luck, have been a red-letter day.

—AFLALO

THERE ARE only two features of the atmosphere that, in my opinion, are fatal to success with trout, and, in less degree, with salmon: the one is a mist, coming down thick and low on the river; the other is the appearance of bright, white, hummocky clouds in a clear sky. People will tell you a lot about fish coming short in consequence of the angle of light on the water. This, I think, is all

very speculative. Again, when they tell you that fish rise directly after the rain begins and stop as soon as it leaves off, I think this really means that when the drops were falling, the surface was broken by them, and the lure was therefore able to delude the fish as it could not when the surface was calm. Wind, of course, acts in the same way, more obviously in loch fishing. In a ripple, you will catch fish at every cast, but when it dies down, you will not catch one. If the water is low, you will not catch fish with a bright, clear sky, but again it is all a question of the fish seeing the lure too plainly. Naturally, the indirect effects of weather, in altering the height and colour of the water, have an immense influence, but the immediate effect of changes is either nil, or else so subtle in its cause that we cannot understand it. That, at least, is my opinion.

—HORACE HUTCHINSON, IN AFLALO

THE ONLY TIME I feel absolutely certain of good sport is when the barometer is rising in the recovery of the atmosphere from an outbreak of lightning and the wind. When the recovery is complete the sport becomes inconstant. Then, howsoever agreeable the weather may be to society at large, to the angler it is a speculative risk. The trout may rise freely; but that they may not is just as probable. Indeed, it is more probable.

—HODGSON

IN DRY, hot weather, a heavy shower, without thunder, will often bring trout up and set them feeding briskly, and, on the other hand, a gleam of sunshine, occurring on a dull, depressing day, will have an exactly similar effect. Ideal "fishermen's weather," therefore, would seem to consist in a happy alternation of blue skies with sunshine and clouds with rain. But I repeat that the experience of anglers is so infinitely varied—inasmuch as success is often attained under conditions apparently the most adverse, while failure as often results under those that seem most favourable—that any attempt to be dogmatic on the subject would be absurd.

—HENRY POTTINGER, IN AFLALO

GOOD WEATHER is when trout bite, speaking from the fisherman's view-point.

—SMITH

# Dapping in the New World

by R. Patrick Simes

*HE* [John Dennys, author of the 1613 poem *The Secrets of Angling*] says also that May, June and July are the best months, which alone proves him a fly fisher. In the evening a fly with a short line moved on the crust of the water under trees or bush is deadly, provided you are well hidden. This, now called dapping or daping, he calls bushing.<sup>1</sup>

FROM ITS FIRST publication in 1791 to the present, naturalist William Bartram's *Travels* continues to mesmerize its readers. Exploring mosquito-infested lagoons, eluding gigantic alligators, and observing poisonous snakes appears to have been as delightful to Bartram as it would have been terrifying to one more interested in his own survival. Joy was inseparable from the study of nature for Bartram, despite the fact that during the early days of American exploration there were neither laboratories nor museum collections to aid him in identifying the plants and animals he encountered. There were only old world origins, few of which were directly applicable for a naturalist working in America. Regardless, the pioneer's vision of a terrestrial paradise added an entirely new chapter to natural history.

Accounts of the New World, whether for propagandistic or scientific reasons, were popular reading throughout Europe and in England. For the early colonists, such information gave them a better understanding of the American continent's large and unknown regions. Writers who described their travels in settled areas also helped to forge a sense of national identity by making distant places familiar, so that readers could see they shared some important traits and had common interests with their countrymen hundreds of miles away. In Europe, the pastoral patterns of Bartram's *Travels* influenced the poetic works of

William Wordsworth (*Ruth*) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*Kubla Khan*), the latter praising *Travels* as "a work of high merit in every way."<sup>2</sup>

For four years, from 1773 to 1777, Bartram traveled through North Carolina, Alabama, and Florida. During this time of observation and discovery, Bartram wrote a piece entitled "Trout Fishing in Lake George Florida," which fishing historians should note as one of the first written accounts describing fly fishing (what Dennys called dapping) in colonial America:

I found some of my companions fishing for trout, round about the edges of the floating nymphaea, and not unsuccessfully, having then caught more than sufficient for us all. As the method of taking these fish is curious and singular, I shall just mention it. They are taken with a hook and line, but without any bait. Two people are in a little canoe, one sitting in the stern to steer and the other near the bow, having a rod ten or twelve feet in length, to one end of which is tied a strong line about twenty inches in length, to which are fastened three large hooks, back to back. These are fixed very securely and covered with the white hair of a deer's tail, shreds of red garter, and some parti-colored feathers, all which form a tuft or tassel, nearly as large as one's fist, and entirely cover and conceal the hooks: this is called a bob. The steersman paddles softly and proceeds slowly along shore, keeping the boat parallel to it, at a distance just sufficient to admit the fisherman to reach the edge of the floating weeds along

shore. He then ingeniously swings the bob backwards and forwards, just above the surface, and sometimes tips the water with it; when the unfortunate cheated trout instantly springs from under the weeds and seizes the supposed prey. Thus he is caught without a possibility of escape, unless he break the hooks, line, or rod, which he, however, sometimes does by dint of strength. To prevent this, the fisherman used to the sport is careful not to raise the reed suddenly up but jerks it instantly backwards, then steadily drags the sturdy, reluctant fish to the side of the canoe and with a sudden upright jerk brings him into it.<sup>3</sup>

What Bartram describes as a "bob" is certainly known to fly fishers today as a very large bass bug or streamer of some sort. His description of the fishing techniques used are very similar to Thomas Barker's and Charles Cotton's gear, which consisted of spliced ash or hazelwood rods and horsehair lines. These lines were twisted into lengths, then joined with a water knot. Each length had fewer and fewer hairs, starting perhaps with ten to twelve and finishing in a twist of four hairs—what modern fly fishermen now call a tapered line.<sup>4</sup> We should also note that Bartram's depiction of casting above—"ingeniously swings the bob backwards and forwards, just above the surface, and sometimes tips the water with it"—should not be confused with what Norman Maclean refers to as shadow casting because of the different techniques and flies being



Engraving of Mico Chlucco the Long Warrior, or King of the Siminoles [sic] which appeared as the frontispiece in William Bartram's *Travels*, published by J. Johnson, London, 1792.

used. Shadow casting involves the use of dry flies and dry-fly fishing, which A. J. McClane noted "did not exist as a definitive method (flies were tied in wet-fly configuration), but with the line dancing in the wind . . . it would be impossible not to catch an occasional trout on the surface."<sup>5</sup> Whether or not the technique involved the use of wet or dry flies, Bartram gave a very accurate account of the sport and the art of dapping (or fly fishing).

According to Bartram's detailed drawings, what he saw his companions fishing for were not trout but large-mouth bass. Bartram's written description of the trout verifies the actual species.

The head of this fish makes up about one third of his length and consequently the mouth is very large: birds, fish, frogs, and even serpents are frequently found in its stomach . . . the whole body is covered with large scales . . . this fish is remarkably ravenous; nothing living that he can seize upon escapes his jaws.<sup>6</sup>

In his book *American Fly Fishing: A History*, Paul Schullery acknowledges that Bartram's written account is one of the first known references to sportfishing (dapping) in colonial America.

However, Schullery's assertion that Bartram "observed southern Indians fishing for trout" is not correct.<sup>7</sup> First, when Bartram referred to "my companions," he was not speaking about Native Americans, but rather the party of Englishmen that was traveling with him. Textual support for such an assertion is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is obvious from *Travels* that Bartram was a stickler for detail. Distinctions made between various plants, wildlife, native people, and Englishmen were second nature to a scientist of Bartram's caliber. Furthermore, the Cherokee and Seminole Indians were not "sport" fishermen. The Cherokee and Seminole, like most Native Americans of the colonial era, were interested in efficiency when it came to hunting and fishing. In fact, the term "harvesting" is used quite frequently by anthropologists when describing the techniques used for hunting and fishing by Native Americans.

Starting with the basic device of attaching bait to the end of a line, the progressive order of fishhooks used by the native people seems to be as follows: a) the gorge hook, a spike of bone or wood sharpened at both ends and fastened at its middle to a line (a device used also for catching birds); b) a spike set ob-

liquely in the end of a pliant shaft; c) the plain hook; d) the barbed hook; e) the barbed hook combined with sinker and lure. This series does not exactly represent stages in invention; the evolution may have been affected by the habits of the different species of fish and their increasing wariness. The materials used for hooks were bone, wood, shell, stone, and copper. The Mohave employed the recurved spines of certain species of cactus, which are natural hooks. Data on the archeology of the fishhook have been gathered from the Ohio mounds and the shell heaps of Santa Barbara, California. Unbarbed hooks of bone have been found at a number of Ohio sites, and gorge hooks have been found at Santa Barbara. And when we look closer at Bartram's journal, there is detailed evidence regarding the primitive fishing techniques used by Native Americans in Florida.

One of our Indian young men, this evening, caught a very large salmon trout, weighing about fifteen pounds, which he presented to the Col. who ordered it to be served up for supper. The Indian struck this fish, with a reed harpoon, pointed very sharp, barbed, and hardened by the fire. The fish lay close under the steep bank, which the Indian discovered and struck with his reed; instantly the fish darted off with it, whilst the Indian pursued, without extracting the harpoon . . .<sup>8</sup>

But there is no mention of a bob or fly used by the Native Americans. The more modern fishhook, however, is used by the North Pacific tribes and the Eskimo of Alaska. The Makah of Washington have a modified form of the gorge hook, consisting of a sharpened spine of bone attached with a pine-root lash to a whalebone. British Columbian and South Alaskan tribes used either a simple hook of bent wood having a barb lashed to a point or a compound hook consisting of a shank of wood, a splint of pine-root lashed at an angle of 45 de-

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grees to its lower end, and a simple or barbed spike of bone, wood, iron, or copper lashed or set on the outer end of the splint. Eskimo hooks frequently consisted of a shank of bone with a curved, sharpened spike of metal set in the lower end, or several spikes were set in, forming a gig. Usually, however, the Eskimo hook had the upper half of its shank made of stone into which the unbarbed curved spike of metal was set, the parts being fastened together by lashing of split quill. A leader of quill was attached to the hook and a bait of crab carapace was hung above the spike. This is the most complex hook known in aboriginal America. If the southern Native Americans had or used bobs, it is likely they were given as gifts or exchanged during trade with the white Europeans. Again, if we look closely at Bartram's journal we find the evidence to support such a claim.

Soon after entering the forests, we were met in the path by a small company of Indians, smiling and beckoning to us long before we joined them. . . well mounted on fine horses, with a number of pack-horses; the man presently offered us a fawnskin of honey, which we gladly accepted, and at parting I presented him with some fish hooks, sewing needles, &c. For in my travels amongst the Indians, I always furnished myself with such useful and acceptable little articles of light carriage, for presents . . .<sup>9</sup>

More importantly, historians note the term "bob" used by Bartram to describe the lure/fly employed by his companions, but they do not mention Bartram's own use of a bob.

Having collected a good quantity of wood for the purpose of keeping up a light and smoke during the night, I began to think of preparing my supper when, upon examining my stores, I found but a scanty provision. I thereupon determined, as the most expeditious way of supplying my necessities, to take my bob and try for some trout.<sup>10</sup>

My assertion, then, is that from William Bartram's journal we now know that he not only documented one of the first occurrences of dapping (fly fishing) in the New World, but that he, along with his companions, were some of the first known Europeans to sport fish in the New World. 

## ENDNOTES

1. John Waller Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1926), p. 43.

2. Helen Gere Cruichshank, *John and William Bartram's America* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1957), p. 6.

3. Francis Harper, editor, *The Travels of William Bartram* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1958), pp. 69-70.

4. John McDonald, *Quill Gordon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

5. A.J. McClane, Introduction in Rodolphe Coigney, *Izaak Walton: A New Bibliography 1653-1987* (New York: J. Cummins, 1989), pp. x-xi.

6. Harper, p. 70.

7. Paul Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: Lyons & Burford, 1987), p. 20.

8. Harper, p. 29.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

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NEITHER AUTHOR nor tacklemaker, Myron Gregory may not be a name many fly fishers know, but his efforts made all angling easier. Born in Santa Cruz, California, in 1908, Gregory caught his first fish at age five—on a worm. He remained a dedicated drowner of worms until 1932 when, while fishing in the High Sierras, he met a fly fisher of such amazing competence and style that Gregory decided he had to learn the art of fly fishing.

Like many other converts, Gregory immersed himself in fly fishing, especially fly casting. In 1948, he entered his first casting tournament in Fort Worth, Texas, and showed success not only then, but consistently during the next fourteen years.

Having successfully conquered the American competitions, he looked for new waters in which to cast about. Because there was no real organization promoting international competition at the time, he founded, with others, the International Casting Federation in 1955. Myron Gregory served as its first president and saw international rules for competition standardized.

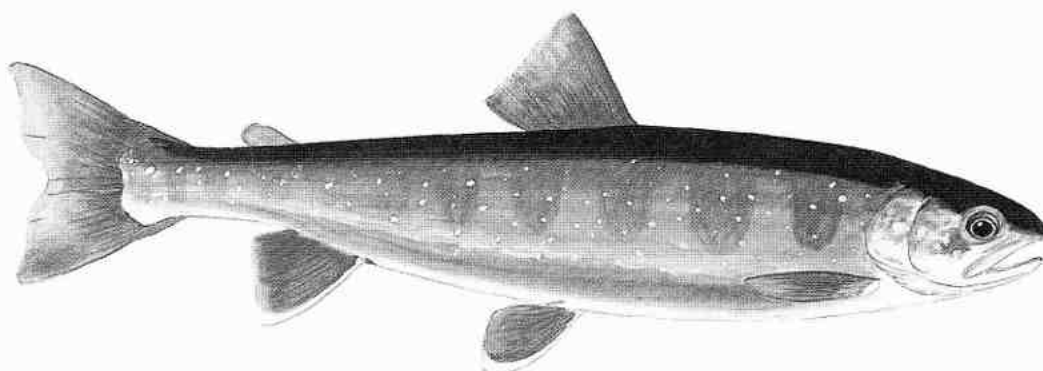
With this standardization in place, Gregory moved on to his next concern: fly lines. At the time, every line company in the world had its own line size measurement and designation. Most of these were unreliably based on line diameter, not—as Gregory thought it should be—on line weight. So, in the late 1950s, Myron Gregory began lobby-

ing the American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association (AFTMA) to adopt a standard line measurement based on weight. He gained several allies in the effort, most notably Art Agnew of the Sunset Line & Tackle Company. In 1960, AFTMA introduced line weight designations that are not only still the standard, but are part of every fly fisher's vocabulary.

Gregory retired as a conductor with the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1974 and spent his remaining years finding new streams to fish from Mexico to British Columbia. After he passed away in 1978, his cousin's husband, Alan Nunes, donated much of Gregory's fishing apparel to the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Pictured here are some small parts of the Gregory collection: an award from the Netherlands Casting Federation, one of his customized two-piece Winston casting rods, his Hardy & Pflueger reels, and a sketch done in 1958 by Eric Turner of Gregory standing in front of a row of international flags, each mounted on a fly rod. Most memorable of the items, though, is a mounted plug, presented to him by the British Casting Association. A card Myron Gregory taped to the bottom of the trophy explains this unusual memento: "Presented at Oslo, 1961: in 1959 I had made a new world record cast with this plug (30 grams) — 523 feet — that hit a building or would have gone further."

JON MATHEWSON, CURATOR



## James Prosek

July 12 — August 27

**J**AMES PROSEK of Easton, Connecticut, is an undergraduate at Yale University, an enthusiastic fly fisher, an accomplished watercolorist, and author of the book *Trout: An Illustrated History*, published this year by Alfred A. Knopf.

Inspired by John James Audubon's classic bird portraits and frustrated by the lack of similar references for trout species, Prosek decided to combine his passions for trout fishing and painting. When he was unable to find any photographs or drawings of the nearly extinct blueback trout of northern Maine, he began researching and creating his own watercolors of trout, at times traveling thousands of miles to catch, photograph, and release rare species.

Prosek has painted all the popular species of North American trout, as well as rare and extinct species, subspecies, and strains. More than seventy paintings illustrate his book. A selection of these will be on display at the Museum from July 12 to August 27.

**G**EORGE THOMAS was a young boy when he began summering on Nantucket in 1945 and started drawing and painting watercolors. Now he lives and paints there most of the year and spends July and August in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Today he works primarily in pastel and watercolor.

Thomas has been a fly fisher for about thirty years, as long as he has

lived at the mouth of the Margaree River in Cape Breton, where he fishes for Atlantic salmon and for trout in the tributaries. He also enjoys fishing for bonefish west of Islamorada and Marathon in the Keys and for landlocked salmon in Maine.

"I catch very few salmon," he says, because "when on the water I am mesmerized by the miscellaneous adjacent visual treats—for example, water in motion, transparency, reflection, blurring

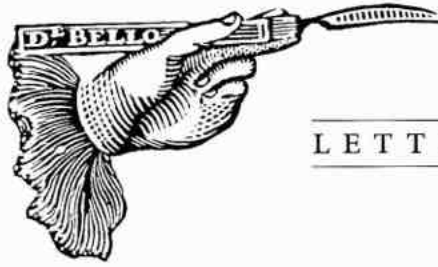
through motion—and consequently I miss most salmon strikes (to the chagrin of my sons)."

Thomas studied art history and architectural design at Princeton, spent three years as an artist with the U.S. Navy, worked as a documentary photographer, and received a master of fine arts degree in printmaking at the Boston Museum School. He has taught art at Milton Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His work is owned in private, public, and corporate collections throughout the United States and Canada.



## George Thomas

August 30 — October 15



## LETTERS

### Livingston Collection

Just a brief note to tell you how much my wife and I enjoyed and appreciated your featuring the Livingston collection in Gallery of the Fall 1995 issue. We know that the collection is in the right place and were pleased that it was shared with the entire membership. The Livingston sisters would certainly be pleased as well. Thank you for your efforts.

Michael Kashgarian, M.D.  
New Haven, Connecticut

### On France and Gordon

Congratulations on another fine issue of the journal [Winter 1996]. Some random notes, however.

First, the author of *With Rod and Line in Colorado Waters* is indeed Lewis B. France, but in all the years that I have seen copies of this book, I have always seen the author listed as "Bourgeoise," which is a *nom de plume* of France. I don't say that there is no copy with the author's name, but I do say that I have never seen one in forty years of collecting.

Regarding the article on Theodore Gordon, your readers may be interested to know that the only article he ever wrote appears in Sir Herbert Maxwell's *Fishing At Home & Abroad*. The article is entitled "American Trout Fishing." This book was published in London (1913) in an edition of 750 copies and is scarce and pricey. The article also appeared in *The Gordon Garland*, published in a limited edition in 1965 by Theodore Gordon Flyfishers and in the subsequent trade edition by Alfred A. Knopf in 1966, entitled *American Trout Fishing*.

Gordon and Frederic M. Halford exchanged flies and correspondence, although I can find no written mention of this. The Anglers' Club in New York has a series of the Halford flies that were stored after being damaged in the 1975

bombing. The Flyfishers' Club in London may have the Gordon flies, although I do not recall ever seeing them there.

Col. Henry A. Siegel  
Angler's and Shooter's Bookshelf  
Goshen, Connecticut

[The Museum's murky photocopy of *With Rod and Line in Colorado Waters* has Lewis B. France's name handwritten on the title page.—Ed.]

### Advertising Angle

You asked for members' thoughts concerning advertising in *The American Fly Fisher*. In the interest of providing income for the Museum, I would see nothing wrong with the concept, but would suggest advertising be limited to companies, organizations, and individuals involved in fly fishing (or even ex-



Champion H. Mathewson

panded to fishing in general). General advertising would, in my opinion, detract from what is now an excellent publication. Surely there are enough manufacturers and retailers of rods, reels, clothing, publications, etc., who would welcome the opportunity to advertise their wares to a specific audience.

On another subject, the enclosed photograph of the father of the Museum's curator is yours to do with as you wish (Jackson Lake Lodge, Wyoming, August 1935). The trout was caught in a beaver pond with a borrowed rod and reel using (and it hurts to tell you folks this) a freshly caught grasshopper as bait. The rod broke as a result of surprise and inexperience on my part, but the owner did not seem to mind since such a large fish was landed by one who had never before fished.

Hazen Y. Mathewson  
Benson, Vermont

### Mystery Creel

I eagerly await your magazine each quarter. Friends and I have mostly stopped reading the standard fly-fishing magazines, although of course we glance at some occasionally. We are all collectors of classic cane rods, and some of us are makers. Whenever you publish something about cane we are excited and pleased.

My favorite article in the Winter 1996 issue was "A Creelful of Sporting Prints." I would like to know who the man in the pictures, described as "one of the greatest makers of fly rods this country has ever known" is. I repeatedly read this article and look at those pictures. It would be so wonderful to find a set of those prints somewhere.

Thanks again for a fine publication and museum.

George Boehme  
Venice, California



[We provided all the information we had on the Henry Hintermeister prints found in our collection. If any reader knows more about the prints or the people who appear in them, we'd like to hear about it.—Ed.]

## Festival Weekend

**F**RIENDS OF THE MUSEUM gathered June 7 to 9 in Manchester for our annual festival weekend. An opening reception was held on Friday night at the Museum, where newly designed exhibits and the work of artist Anton Stetzko were featured.

Saturday night's annual dinner/auction was held at the Equinox Hotel with auctioneer Lyman Foss. Committee members Angus Black, Jean Black, Brad Coursen, Joe Dion, Hut Ferree, Ted Ferree, Jim LePage, Joan Mathews, Joe Mathews, Joe McCusker, and Dawn Murray worked hard to make the auction a success. They were ably assisted by Ginny Hulett, Lillian Chace, Jon Mathewson, Darlene Cole, Bill Chandler, and Kimberly Bushnell.

Time was set aside after dinner to recognize some important personal contributions to the Museum. This year, the Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Joe McCusker and Bob Blain. Margot Page was recognized for her years of service as editor of *The American Fly Fisher* and presented with two bound volumes of the issues published during her tenure.

Open house at the Museum on Sunday featured events both on Museum grounds and at Equinox Pond. The Museum offered a bamboo rod-building demonstration by Fred Kretchman and fly-tying demonstrations by Wade Caler and Bill Chandler. Angus Black gave a casting demonstration on the lawn. At Equinox Pond, Trustee Tom Rosenbauer and his daughter Brooke Page-Rosenbauer gave fly-tying demonstrations. Trustee Jamie Woods and instructor Jennifer Winder oversaw casting lessons and fishing, and Steve Sanford, guide and naturalist, spent the day in the bow of the Museum's Adirondack guide boat.

Kathleen Achor



Joe Pisarro, Angus Black, and Ted Ferree kick off the annual festival weekend at Friday night's opening reception.

Margot Page



Maxine Atherton of Manchester, Vermont, was escorted to the dinner/auction by Peter Castagnetti of Ashland, Massachusetts.

Kathleen Achor



Heidi Humphrey, designer of several of the Museum's new exhibits (including "Politicians in the Stream"), attended the opening reception with her family.

Margot Page



Dinner committee members Joan and Joe Mathews participate in the bucket raffle at the dinner/auction.

Tom Rosenbauer



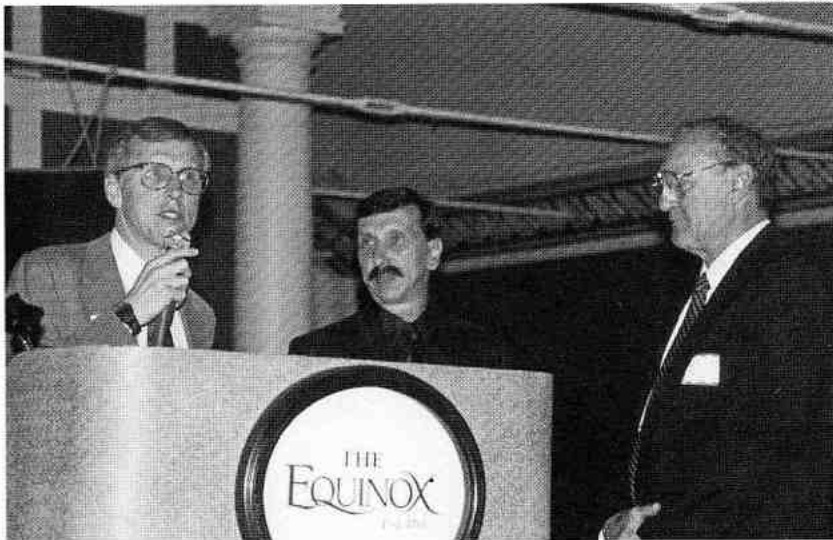
Executive Director Craig Gilborn recognized Margot Page for her years as editor of *The American Fly Fisher*. She was presented with two bound volumes of issues published during her tenure.

Margot Page



Trustees Walter Matia and Janet Mavec attended the dinner/auction at the Equinox.

Margot Page



President Richard Tisch presented the Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award to Bob Blain of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and to Joe McCusker of Manchester, Vermont (see story on page 26).



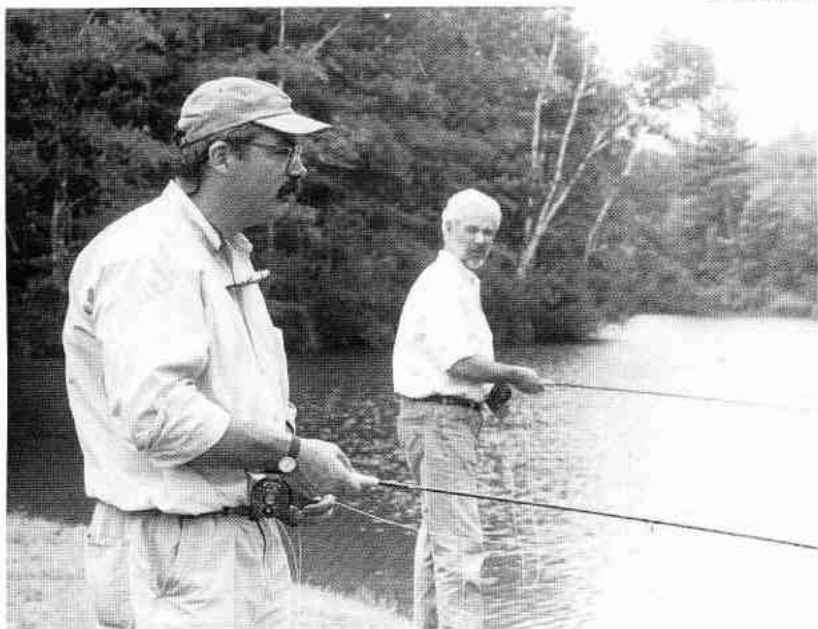
*Fred Kretchman of Nashua, New Hampshire, demonstrates how he builds his classic split-bamboo fly rods.*



*Wade Caler of Dryden, New York, demonstrates fly tying at the Museum's open house.*



*Trustee Pamela Bates Richards and fly tyer Bob Warren at the Museum's open house. Bob Warren is one of several classic and contemporary tyers featured in a new exhibit designed by Pam Richards that displays various salmon fly patterns from the collection of Joseph D. Bates.*



*Trustee Jamie Woods and Bill Dreyer fishing Equinox Pond on Sunday.*



*Guide Steve Sanford gave tours of Equinox Pond in the Museum's Adirondack guide boat.*



*Mark Wesner and sons of Cambridge, New York, hone casting skills at Equinox Pond during the Museum's open house.*



*After volunteering his services at the dinner/auction on Saturday night, Bill Chandler of Burlington, Vermont, shared his fly-tying skills on Sunday.*



# Museum News

## Volunteer of the Year Award

The annual Joe A. Pisarro Volunteer of the Year Award was presented at the Manchester Dinner/Auction on June 8. This year, two equally deserving volunteers were recognized. Joe McCusker of Manchester, Vermont, serves on the Manchester Dinner/Auction Committee. During the Museum's exhibit space transition, he has chipped in to paint walls and set up new exhibits. Joe has volunteered on numerous occasions (and on short notice) to open the Museum on weekends and greet guests. Bob Blain of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, is a member of the Boston Dinner/Auction Committee. He also organized and ran the Westford auction. Bob manages to find many of the items for the auctions, and he donates many items himself. Both Joe and Bob are dedicated workers. The Museum is proud to recognize their contributions.

## Journal Wins NEMA Award

The New England Museum Association has awarded *The American Fly Fisher* and Designer Randall Perkins first place for design of a scholarly journal in their 1996 Publications Awards competition. The annual awards recognize excellence in design, production, and effective communication in all aspects of museum publishing. Awards are given to the entries that most effectively present their message to the intended audience.

TAFF staff submitted the Spring 1995 issue (vol. 21, no. 2) for consideration in this category. The issue featured an article by Richard C. Hoffman about Conrad Gessner's artificial flies and a 1918 article by Louis Rhead about angling bookplates.

## Museum Exhibits Change

Those who have visited the American Museum of Fly Fishing before will immediately notice the changes we have made in recent months. First, the gift shop has been masterfully expanded and improved, thanks to the dedicated assistance of Joan and Joe Mathews.

The exhibits have changed as well.

The opening hallway introduces visitors to the Museum and presents a general overview of the history of fly fishing. This lays the groundwork for the rest of the exhibits, which expand on parts of this general history. The reel exhibit showcases twenty-two early American Reel Patents. The Camp Life and Fly Fisher's Sanctum show the fly fisher's natural habitats and include reproductions of wonderful old photos culled from our collection.

**Politicians in the Stream and Personalities in the Stream** display the lives and artifacts of some of the well-known anglers represented in our collections. Currently included are John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Grover Cleveland, Herbert Hoover, Dwight David Eisenhower, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, George Bush, Ernest Hemingway, Aldo Leopold, Bing Crosby, Glenn Miller, and Babe Ruth.

Next is **Julianna Berners's Legacy: Five Hundred Years of Fly Fishing Tackle**. This four-case exhibit shows the general evolution of fly rods, reels, flies, gadgets, and ethic. Featured in these displays are imitations of Berners's flies and original flies by Gordon, Hewitt, Jennings, and Atherton; Kosmic and Garrison rods; and dozens of other historically significant artifacts.

Past visitors to the Museum will also remember the Mary Orvis Marbury Panels and Bamboo Rod Construction exhibits. These have both been relocated within the Museum with only one other change: visitors can now actually handle the pieces in the bamboo rod exhibit. The long hallway is our fly fisher's art gallery, featuring the pick of our collection, presenting prints, etchings, and original oil paintings and watercolors from 1865 to the present. Artists on display include Chet Reneson, Ogden Pleissner, Winslow Homer, S. A. Kilbourne, S. F. Denton, William Schalldach, and Ralph Ludwig Boyer.

The audiovisual room is the same, but the walls are now adorned with selections from our collection of shadow boxes framed by the famed William Cushner. The framings in this room have—with some exception—been selected to represent fly tyers not represented in other current displays. These include Vince Marinaro, Carrie Stevens, Theodore Gordon, Charles DeFeo, Lee Wulff, George LaBranche, and Edward Ringwood Hewitt.

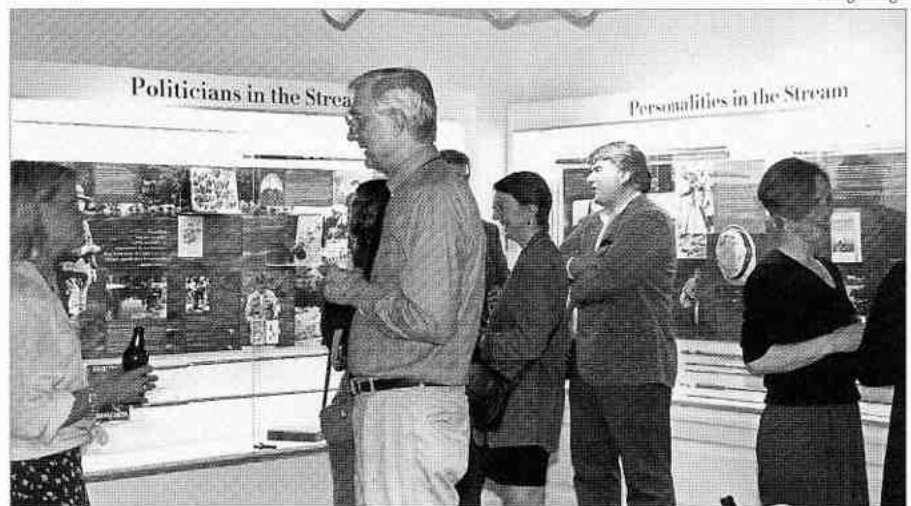
The last room is dedicated to rotating exhibits. This year we have so far featured Thomas Bewick, Anton Stetzko, and James Prosek.

These and other exciting changes are going on at the Museum. But don't take our word for it—stop in and see for yourself.

## Angler's Luck

When Joan Mathews attended the Museum's open house for volunteers on February 9, little did she know how well her skills would match our needs. But as

Margot Page



Visitors enjoy the May 10 opening reception for Anton Stetzko amidst new Museum exhibits.

Executive Assistant Ginny Hulett began talking with Joan and her husband Joe, it became apparent that Joan was the perfect person to oversee our planned gift shop expansion.

After years of vacationing in the area, Joan and Joe Mathews moved to Manchester from Florida in November 1994. For fifteen years, Joan managed the gift shop of the Science Museum in West Palm Beach. Before moving to Vermont, she managed the Loxahatchee Historical Museum gift shop in Jupiter, Florida, for two years. Since becoming a Vermont resident, she has also volunteered at Hildene (home of Robert Todd Lincoln).



With Joan's help, the front room of the Museum is now devoted entirely to the gift shop, featuring art, books, T-shirts, stationery, jewelry, and logo items. Joan has designed the displays and ordered lots of new products. She and Joe put up the new shelving, hung the art, and even donated a cash register to the Museum. We are happy to welcome this valuable volunteer.

## Art Openings

A crowd of people was on hand for the March 29 opening of "Thomas Bewick: Small Worlds." Bewick (1753-1828) was one of England's greatest wood engravers. His method of wood engraving ultimately became the most popular way of illustrating books until photoengraving was perfected. The largest of the twenty pieces on display was approximately 3½ inches by 3 inches. Magnifying glasses were provided for guests to better view the detail of the works.

The works on display were printed from 1970 zinco reproductions made from the original woodblocks. These reproductions produced a quality of print that Bewick never saw in his own lifetime. Some of Bewick's tools and original blocks were also featured in a dis-



Cape Cod artist Anton Stetzko with one of his watercolors on display at the Museum.

play case, where explanations and examples of some of his techniques were presented. The exhibit closed May 7.

On May 10, the Museum opened "Art of a Cape Cod Angler: The Paintings of Anton Stetzko" to an enthusiastic crowd and held a reception for the artist. Stetzko, both a painter and salt-water fly-fishing guide, lives in Orleans, Massachusetts. The twenty-eight watercolors in the show included salt- and freshwater scenes. Stetzko's paintings were on display through July 9.

## Catskill Connection

The staff enjoyed a visit from Lisa Lyons, director of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, on March 20. Ms. Lyons stopped in to research the history of line development and to look through some original papers in our collection. The information she garnered, along with some items we will be loaning, will be part of the Catskill Center's line development display being installed this summer. Because there are only a handful of fly-fishing museum conservators in the world, Lisa and AMFF Curator Jon Mathewson also enjoyed talking shop (it was a rare experience for all involved).

## Summer Hours

The Museum began its summer schedule April 13. From now until October 31 we are open every day, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. (except July 4 and September 2). Make a visit to the Museum this summer and check out our new exhibits and gift shop. And don't forget to send your friends our way.

## The Long Run

Do you have a complete set of *The American Fly Fisher*? We would like to document where these sets of the journal exist, both with individuals and in libraries. A complete set thus far consists of volumes 1:1-4, 2:1-4, 3:1-4, 4:1-4, 5:1-4, 6:1-4, 7:1-4, 8:1-4, 9:1-3, 10:1-3, 11:1-4, 12:1-4, 13:1-4, 14:1-2, 15:1-2, 16:1-3, 17:1-3, 18:1-4, 19:1-4, 20:1-4, 21:1-4, and 22: 1, 2, 3. Let us know if you have a set with every issue. (Many back issues are still available for those who want to fill out their collection. See Members box, page 18.)

## Letters, Anyone?

Angelo Droetto, a Museum member in Italy, would like to correspond with members in the United States. If interested, please write directly to him: Dr. Angelo Droetto, Medico Veterinario, Mura delle Cappuccine 35/13, 16128 Genova, Italy.

## Call for Books

In the Spring 1996 issue, we listed ten books published before 1760 needed by the Museum's library. This time, we bring you up to 1800 with ten more titles:

- The Angler's Guide to the Tweed and Whitadder*. Berwick, 1781.
- Bowlker, R., et al. *The Universal Angler; or That Art Improved in All Its Parts, Especially Fly Fishing*. London, 1766.
- Brookes, R. *The Natural History of Fishes and Serpents; To Which Is Added an Appendix, Containing the Whole Art of Float and Fly Fishing*. London, 1790.

Cole, Ralph. *The Young Angler's Pocket Companion*. London, 1795.  
*Essay on the Right of Angling in the River Thames and in All Other Public Navigable Rivers*. Reading: Smart, c. 1785.  
 Fairfax, Thomas. *The Complete Sportsman, Or Country Gentleman's Recreation*. London: J. Cooke, c. 1760.  
*The North-Country Angler, or, the Art of Angling as Practised in the Northern Counties of England*. London, 1786.  
 Salter, Robert. *The Modern Angler, Being a Practical Treatise on the Art of Fishing, &c.* London: J. Salter, Owestry, n.d. (second edition, 1811).  
 Shirley, Thomas. *Shirley's Angler's Museum; or, The Whole Art of Float and Fly-Fishing, with Portrait of Kirby, the Celebrated Angler*. London, 1784.  
 Smith, Thomas. *Every Man His Own Fisherman*. London, c. 1770-1776.

## Reel Needs

Below is a list, prepared for the Museum by Jim Brown, of significant reels that the Museum does not have in its collections. Donations are welcome.

Edward Vom Hofe "perfection" trout reel  
 Bradford [retailer] (any—if multiplier, 2 1/2-inch diameter or less)

Bradford & Anthony [retailer] (any)  
 M. A. Shipley fly reel  
 Pettengill Mohawk #2 or #3  
 Sellers "Bas-kit" reel  
 J. J. Ross 1869 patent  
 Bogdan small trout reel  
 J. Conroy (any—if multiplier, 2 1/2-inch diameter or less)  
 Julius Vom Hofe "Wells"  
 Talbot "Ben Hur"  
 Redifor Model X  
 Enterprise Mfg. Company (Pflueger) Medalist (first model)  
 Hardy 1896 brass Perfect with logo  
 Hardy Bougle  
 Hardy Cascapedia  
 Malloch Sidecaster  
 Allcock Aerial

## Recent Donations

Frank Harding of Jupiter, Florida, gave us two books written by George F. Kelson: *The Salmon Fly* (1895) and *Tips* (1901). The Reverend Stephen Paul Booth of Mississauga, Ontario, gave us an 1889 edition of Charles Kingsley's *Prose Idylls*. Bill Cummings of Woodbury, Connecticut, sent a copy of his book, *A Master's Guide to Atlantic Salmon Fishing*.  
 Leon Martuch of Orlando, Florida, sent a copy of his memoir, "A History of

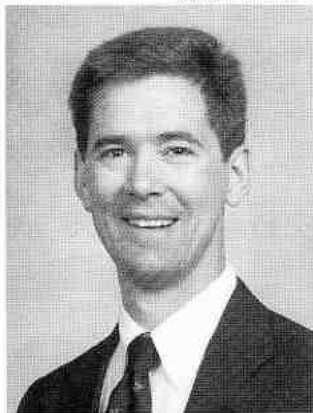
Scientific Anglers from 1945-1973." Leigh Perkins of Manchester, Vermont, sent a copy of *Antiques* magazine from June 1974, which featured articles on fishing tackle.

Dick Finlay gave us a prototype Orvis Golden Eagle fiberglass rod. The New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, and Wildlife sent two "Christie" flies, tied in honor of their fly-fishing governor, Christine Todd Whitman. Joseph M. McNulty of Hinsdale, Illinois, sent us a collection of line storage devices, a creel, and a combination knife/gaff.

Joe Pizarro of East Wallingford, Vermont, presented us with letters written to him by Vince Marinaro, Sparse Grey Hackle, Hermann Kessler, Arnold Gingrich, Austin Hogan, Roderick Haig-Brown, and John Voelker.

Ed Mitchell of Wethersfield, Connecticut, gave us a collection of flies belonging to pioneering saltwater angler Frank Woolner who, among other things, was the long-time editor of *Salt Water Sportsman*. The impressive selection includes early versions of saltwater flies tied by Joe Brooks, Harold Gibbs, John Fabian, Bill Gallasch, Gordon M. Dean, Al Rudnickas, Captain Bill Curtis, Homer Rhodes, Joe Bates, and Bill Catherwood.

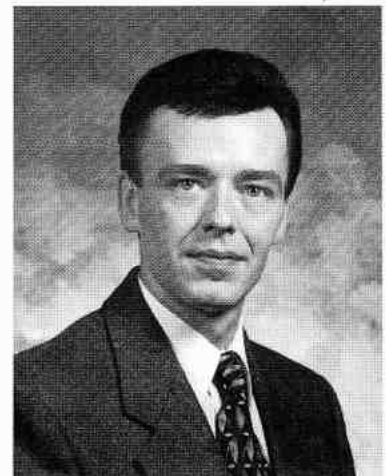
Marilyn Dalla Valle



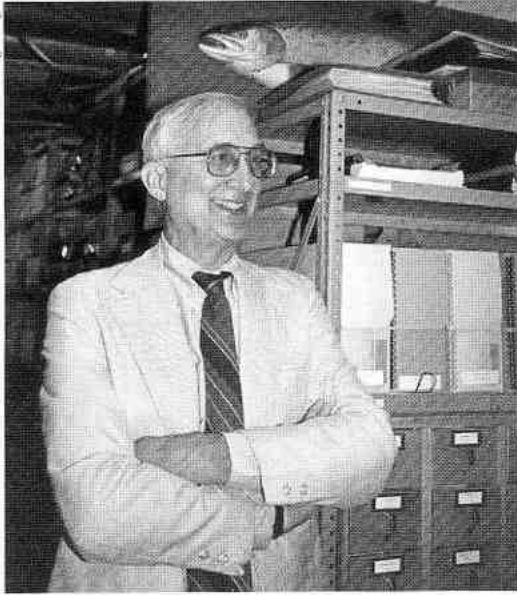
John Mundt, a previous contributor to *The American Fly Fisher*, resides in Simsbury, Connecticut, and is a member of the Museum's Hartford Dinner/Auction Committee. He and his wife Joyce celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary in June. They enjoy spending their free time in Maine and Canada. In addition to angling and history, John's other interests include hunting, theology, and collecting.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Broody Studio



Patrick R. Simes is an English and philosophy major at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. At Wilkes he is the English as a Second Language Coordinator, a research assistant, a member of Sigma Tau Delta and Chi Alpha Epsilon, and editor of *Amnicola*.  
 Pat lives in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, with daughters Tiffany and Sasha and fiancée Laura White. Besides free-lance writing, he enjoys building home pages and surfing the internet. When he has time off, Pat enjoys fishing with his family and loves hiking along creeks, rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. After graduating from Wilkes, he plans to study early American colonial literature and environmental ethics.



## Camelot Reprised

THE PRICES paid in April for personal belongings in the estate of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis so exceeded the auction house's estimates that reporters and participants were seen struggling sheepishly to answer why. A table that sold for \$1.4 million had been valued at \$30,000 or less. A cigar humidor went for \$574,500, two sets of golf clubs were knocked down for more than \$1 million, and a putter brought \$30,000. The Sotheby's sale was treated as a major news event for each of four successive days, but, as if to prove sanity, people joshingly referred to it as a garage or yard sale, these things being castoffs the Kennedy children did not want.

A milestone had been reached, but the significance eluded grasp. No one—none that I heard, anyway—claimed the princely sums, media hoopla, and glitz meant anything one might point to with pride. Was the auction equivalent to bungee jumping, without redeeming social content, but too much of a spectacle to go unnoticed?

A superior attitude is unbecoming here, for museum collections and some museums would not exist except for the questionable or murky motives with which collectors and founders often pursue a passion. Margaret Woodbury Strong, heiress to the Kodak fortune, emptied antique shops of Victoriana—glass paperweights, dolls and doll houses, buttons, patent furniture—and

stored them in her large home in a suburb of Rochester, New York. The \$60 million from her estate was used to care for this trove and to construct a museum building for it. She had called her creation-to-be "Museum of Fascination," but this appellation was discarded, perhaps because it suggested

eccentricity (as its founder had been rumored to possess). Today the Strong Museum is a serious history museum, interpreting American taste and technology of the nineteenth century.

No fishing tackle was in the Sotheby's sale, but this museum would have been a bidder, albeit one left in the dust of the rich and richer. Jack Kennedy occasionally fished, but he did not use a fly and may have been advised to spare his bad back. I would gladly have joined what one reporter called a "feeding frenzy" in order to add one more rod to the presidential rods collection at the Museum, and I have no doubt the Museum's supporters, if asked, would have done the same.

If a museum has a claim, wouldn't that redeem the purchase from criticism? We'd applaud a golfing museum that paid a cool million for clubs used by Jack Kennedy, said to have been the finest golfer among presidents who played the game. Why deny the privilege to an individual? The question is fair, and it is answered only partly by the difference between museums and individuals: museums act for a *public* benefit in contrast to a personal one.

Bidders invariably cited "history" when asked why they paid such high prices. The ungenerous might see history as a fig leaf for covering extravagance. "This wasn't just a humidor," said the buyer of what one journalist called a "cigar box." It was a "piece of history." A

Louisville matron who publishes a pizza magazine got an ink drawing and a mirror for \$25,400. She seemed regretful, a *New York Times* reporter thought, that she'd failed to get other items—she had five nieces and three stepdaughters and had wanted to give each of them "a little piece of history."

The sale was about celebrity, which may be history of the most accessible kind. "Mystique" was the polite euphemism in the press for what fans of Elvis Presley know is hero worship. Again, smugness is not becoming here because museums tap into the interest people have in the possessions of the rich and famous. Such things are regarded as witnesses to history and confirmation of our own place in it. Lewis H. Lapham, in the May 1996 *Harper's*, averred that Americans were not the materialists they were said to be, but quite the opposite: "We are a people captivated by the power and romance of metaphor, forever seeking the invisible through the imagery of the visible." The Kennedy sale was not on his mind when he wrote that, but it might as well have been.

Were a vote taken, it would be the rods of four U.S. presidents at the Museum that would get the nod of the general public, who in the aggregate are less interested in the details of fly fishing than about men lucky enough to make a difference in their lifetimes—men who put pants on one leg at a time as they hastened to get to the stream before sunup. Just like us. Museums are the watchers at the gate to the past. They have no monopoly on the truth, but they have a franchise of sorts on one-of-a-kind things that are witnesses to the past. This is perhaps the Museum's best lure.

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.

